Religious Liberty, New Religious Movements and Traditional Christian Churches in Eastern Europe[1]

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The new political, economic and cultural situation in Eastern Europe after 1989, and the radical and dramatic transformation towards democratisation, deeply affected all strata of society. Inevitably, the search for new foundations of public and private life and for new spiritual orientations came to the fore, together with a suddenly emerged cultural pluralism and religious diversity, unknown under the confines of Marxist–Leninist dogma. Initially, this process was connected with a fresh experience of openness and freedom for religion after the old restrictions on religious activity were abolished. Later, a feeling of cultural shock, a growing sense of insecurity and a loss of orientation among a considerable part of population (to a great extent arising from the lack of deeply-rooted unifying public ideas and shared values in postcommunist society on the one hand, and the challenge of the new religious groups to the traditional Christian churches on the other) brought about the urgent need for redefinition of the public place and role of religion. This redefinition has several aspects: the relations between the state and religious organisations – both mainstream churches and new religious movements (NRMs); the interaction between religion and politics; the institutional and spiritual influence of the 'national' churches, and inter-religious relations. The question of religious liberty includes as well specifications about the extent to which the state should be involved in attempts to resolve disputes between NRMs and other groups and institutions.

The NRMs in Eastern Europe are not an isolated phenomenon which might be investigated in isolation from the overall state of affairs in society; they are to be seen as a focus for a wide range of problems, currents and controversies of very various backgrounds. They are a conflict-engendering field, but in a restricted sense; much more are they to be conceptualised as indicators of societal difficulties and tensions which already exist or are in the process of emerging. They might be discussed from different perspectives: sociological, historical, psychological, theo-logical. The pre-eminently cultural-critical approach of this study places NRMs in the conceptual and socio-political framework of the right to religious liberty in its interconnectedness and interrelatedness with cultural-religious pluralism, as long as these two principles are among the conditions indispensable for the (re)construction of civil society and real democratisation. The fulfilment of the political project of civil society in Eastern Europe is not an easy task and will take much more effort and time than was supposed in the euphoria of the first years after the fall of the Berlin

Wall. The major impediments have arisen from a deficiency of basic political culture among both the general public and many of the governmental elites, as well as from a lack of well-functioning legislative regulations and friction-eliminating institutions, and last but not least from insufficient societal and individual dispositions towards tolerant modes of behaviour.

In this article I seek to analyse the appearance of NRMs on the postcommunist cultural-religious scene and the controversies which their presence has inspired: with governmental authorities; with traditional Christian churches; and with the general public, whose main sources of information are the mass media and various anticult organisations.

When discussing the theme of NRMs and religious liberty in 'Eastern Europe', I am fully aware of the possible shortcomings ensuing from putting together a cluster of countries which are of different historical, cultural, and – especially – religious backgrounds and traditions, and which are also becoming increasingly different from each other economically and socially after the collapse of communism. However, I believe that the application of the 'cultural models' approach will produce appropriate understandings of how these countries are to cope with the new realities they face. This approach involves a study of the newly-emerged religious pluralism and the challenges it brings through the perspective of the facts that all these countries have belonged to the same political system for a period of half a century; that the uniformity of the methods and activities of their governments towards religion at that time is reflected today, in one way or another, in the uniformity of the methods and activities of the democratising postcommunist states[2]; and that at present they meet (to a large extent) similar difficulties and problems when defining their attitude towards religion, which was under heavy restriction until only just over a decade ago.

In the last few decades radical cultural and socio-political shifts all around the world have produced genuine alternatives to the inherited ecclesiastical institutions. A large number of the new forms of religiosity can be interpreted as comprising a mixture of secular and religious attitudes and orientations, directed mainly to inner-worldly issues and decisions. This is to say that, while claiming a religious nature, NRMs are often oriented towards largely profane objectives, strategies and practices; they employ a variety of secular methods and modern ideas and technologies.

There is no agreement among scholars as to whether NRMs are a consequence of and reaction to the process of secularisation, and therefore a confirmation of secularisation hypotheses, rather than a genuine religious revival,[3] or whether they are to be seen as signs of the exhaustion of the secularisation process and of authentic religious and spiritual resurgence.[4] Whether new expressions of 'the great process of trivialisation' of the sacred, to use the evocative phrase of Friedrich Tenbruck, or manifestations of new spiritual revelations, they have become an integrative part of cultural semantics since the 1960s, needing explanation and response.

The most exploited terminology in the search to define the contemporary religious situation hinges on notions such as syncretism, eclecticism and pluralism. Pluralism, however, does not always designate a peaceful coexistence and dialogue between old and new cultural-religious forms. Unfortunately, it rarely means such co-operativeness in the social milieu of Eastern Europe.

It is commonly agreed that only now is Eastern Europe experiencing the emergence of a secularism of the western type and that the challenge of pluralism – especially in the religious sphere – has turned out to be the main cultural phenomenon.[5] The upsurge of religion in the aftermath of 1989 went hand in hand with its instrumentalisation. As one writer has commented:

Before, the communist ideology was in fact an overwhelming *pseudo-morpheme* of religion and full of religious overtones. Now, in the new secular atmosphere religion becomes an instrumentalised symbol used for legitimisation (or to say with Mircea Eliade and Peter Berger, 'cosmisation') of a new reality that still lacks order.[6]

Gradually, pluralisation became not only a powerful cultural symbol of the process of transformation, but also a pledge for its success. 'The success of transition … depends on the fulfillment of two conditions in the cultural setting: legitimation of plurality (in a wide sense) and mitigation of one of its manifestations, social inequality'.[7]

Religion and religious liberty in post-totalitarian society can thus be seen as one of the major fields where the dynamics of the current political, ideological and cultural transition find their immediate and resonant reflection, insofar as the 'legalisation' of religion was and is one of the key tokens of the fundamental changes in Eastern Europe. Of course, there are many different positions on the meaning of religious liberty; yet, as Kevin Hasson has pointed out, 'What a State sees as the content of religious liberty reveals not so much what religious liberty itself is, but rather the fundamental attitude of the State toward human rights'.[8] In this sense, attitudes towards NRMs indicate quite clearly the character and direction both of the political 'civilising' processes in these countries and of the societal 'normalising' practices (to use the language of Michel Foucault) expressed in the way they cope with the problem of the 'other', the alien and still unknown. The NRMs, for their part, challenge and influence society and government authorities, provoking them to react, to put questions and to seek for new interpretative frameworks in order to provide a generally acceptable solution to problems posed by the rise of religious pluralism.

Generally, the issue of religious liberty and NRMs has two aspects: a formal, institutional, legal aspect; and an informal aspect, connected with social and personal attitudes towards the new forms and manifestations of religiosity. Both aspects are mutually interrelated and interpenetrating.

New Religious Movements and the Postcommunist State

The relationship between the state and the various religious organisations is normally articulated through relevant legal regulations. Though the situation differs from country to country, some common features in the policies of postcommunist governments can be identified.

One of the first steps of the new governments after 1989 was to pass new laws on religion. As Paul Mojzes has emphasised:

Throughout the region, constitutions and laws were written that contained guarantees for human rights and religious liberties, bringing Eastern European states in line with the Western democratic civil rights tradition. Otto Luchterhandt, in a review of these legal documents, pointed out that many of them went even beyond the international human rights and religious liberty declarations generally providing a bright future for the legal guarantees of religious freedom.[9]

However, the implementation of the new legislation turned out to be a serious stumbling-block for policy towards religion. In 1990 in the Soviet Union the Law on Freedom of Conscience replaced the restrictive 1929 Law on Religious Associations

and guaranteed believers a wide range of religious liberty. It confirmed legally the new statute of the Russian Orthodox Church adopted at the 1988 Millennial Church Council, which restored the self-governing parish. The law recognised registered religious organisations as social organisations with the status of legal persons and the right to disseminate their teachings. It declared both religion and atheism separated from the state and approved an alternative civil service for conscientious objectors on religious grounds. Religion became an optional subject in state schools. The state gave full recognition to the central Patriarchate, dioceses and parishes. Charters of religious groups had to be registered within one month of application; religions were allowed to engage in business and to possess land.[10]

In accordance with this law and the principle that no organisation might be set up to decide on questions linked to citizens' religious rights, the Soviet state's Council for Religious Affairs was dissolved in January 1991.[11] The Russian Federation's version of the same law passed in 1990 was even more liberal. In April 1993, a few days before the nationwide referendum on his presidency and the reform programme, President Yel'tsin invited to the Kremlin the leaders of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Russian Baptist Union, and leading representatives of the Old Believers, Muslims, Jews and Buddhists. Yel'tsin acknowledged the guilt of the state for past persecution of religion, promised to continue to allocate state funds for the restoration of religious buildings and announced a decree inaugurating a programme to return property confiscated from religious bodies by the Soviet regime. The patriarch and other denominational leaders complained that the authorities allowed too much freedom for foreign missions. Traditional religious groups expressed concern that legal personality and the corresponding privileges available to religions might be gained by any group able to register an association with only ten signatories; they said that parishes which existed only on paper were being created overnight. Consequently, as Marat Shterin and James Richardson have commented, several drafts of amendments or of completely new laws were proposed by various groups of different political orientations but were either never discussed by parliament or passed but then vetoed by President Yel'tsin. After a series of dramatic debates and events, a draft of amendments to the 1990 law which eventually became a completely new bill was passed by the Duma (the lower house of the Russian parliament) in 1997 and then adopted by the Council of the Federation (the upper house).

> The new law signifies a radical departure from the very spirit and concept of the 1990 Law. The law favors the role of the Russian Orthodox Church as an 'inseparable part of the all-Russian historical, spiritual, and cultural heritage' and mentions the state's recognition of Islam, Buddhism, Judaism, and other religions and local beliefs 'traditionally existing in the Russian Federation' (the Preamble). It makes several types of distinctions between religious formations. First, between 'religious organizations' which are granted all the rights of a legal entity, and 'religious groups' which can carry out their activities within the limits of a whole range of restrictions. Second, between local and all-Russian religious organizations which differ in scope and mode of their operation. It also introduced a special category of 'foreign religious organization' which cannot have its 'representatives' in Russia unless invited by a Russian religious organization with permission of the Russian federal government.[12]

The new law on religion has met with heavy criticism from human rights activists, social and political scientists and representatives of minority religions. Its adoption

has been a 'legislative and political step backwards from building a lawful demo-cratic society', according to Sergei Filatov, who points out that the law places rigid restrictions on the religious activity of foreign missionaries in Russia; he sees the law as in some ways 'a repetition of the Soviet experiment'. In fact, the law does not limit the activity of the so-called totalitarian sects and destructive cults, as its supporters claim it does, because they carry on their activity even without legal rights and are experienced in ignoring bans. It affects primarily both religious organisations of normal law-abiding citizens who find it unnatural to operate in semi-clandestine conditions and members of international religious communities with active relation-ships with fellow-believers outside Russia. The law thus discriminates first of all against Christian minorities such as Catholics and Protestants, and not against foreign and 'nontraditional' religions.[13] According to Lawrence Uzzell, 'Russia has become to a great extent a non-law-governed state with regard to state-church relations'.[14]

In Bulgaria the first noncommunist constitution after the Second World War, passed in 1991, prohibits any restriction on rights or privileges on the grounds, *inter alia*, of race, ethnic identity, religion and opinion. Article 13 protects the freedom of religious practice, declares the separation of religious institutions from the state, proclaims Orthodox Christianity to be the traditional religion and prohibits the use of religious denominations, institutions and beliefs for political ends. Article 37 states the inviolability of freedom of conscience, freedom of thought and free choice of religious or atheistic views, but prohibits the practice of religious freedom to the detriment of national security, public order, public health and morals, or the rights and freedoms of others. The constitution also protects freedom of expression, including the publication of religious materials. However, the legacy of the communist regime still influences relations between the state and religious groups, especially in the highly controversial matter of registration. Up to 1989 only the Orthodox, Muslim, Jewish and Armenian-Gregorian denominations were officially registered. One of the most contested issues has been the registration of religious denominations, which is a necessary condition for the use of public space (buildings, parks, street processions), the opening of bank accounts, the ownership of property and tax exemption. Under the system which existed until early 1994 religious organisations could operate as legal entities if they were registered as 'religious denominations' with the Directorate of Religious Affairs at the Council of Ministers, under the Religious Denominations Act of 1949, or as non-profit organisations under the Person and Family Act of 1951. In April 1994 the government initiated measures for the streamlining of religious procedures, requiring registration of all organisations undertaking religious activity under the Religious Denominations Act of 1949. Some 30 denominations and 22 associations and foundations were registered, including the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), but the applications of 24 of the formerly registered organisations were not successful, among them the White Brotherhood, Angels of Salvation, Soldiers of Christ, Soldiers of Justice, Wassan, Emmanuel, Gedeon, Salvation and Jehovah's Witnesses. The new pro-cedure for registration was met with sharp criticism from human rights groups because of the total discretion it granted to government officials to define which activities were religious, as well as to cancel previous court decisions on registration without any hearing.

In Hungary two laws protecting the freedom of religion and conscience and promoting religious activity were passed in 1990 and 1991. Religious groups needed only 100 declared adherents to be eligible to register with the court and share the funds provided for religions. The 1990 Act guarantees the autonomy of religious

institutions, prohibiting the establishment of any organisation for their supervision, and treats the violation of religious freedom by force or threats as a criminal offence punishable by up to three years' imprisonment. One of the conflicts connected with the rapid development of new religious groups after 1989 has concerned state support. In 1993 parliament debated whether every registered religion seeking state support was worthy of it. State support was refused to three of them (the Unification Church, the Church of Scientology and the Jehovah's Witnesses). In the debates on whether the 1990 law needed to be modified to include criteria on the basis of which an institution could be considered for registration as a church, the traditional churches insisted that law should require a membership of 10,000 adherents and allow registration only of groups established before 1991. The opposition parties argued that lists of adherents constituted an invasion of privacy and it was discriminatory not to allow newer groups to operate. Thus there is currently no limitation on the free operation of religious groups. The long parliamentary debate in 1990 concerning compulsory religious education ended with a decision in favour of an obligatory moral education programme without any explicit link to Christianity; religious education was declared to be a matter of parental choice.

In Poland in 1994 there were already 80 officially registered churches and religious organisations. When compared to the citizens of most of the Eastern European countries, Poles can be seen as more deeply committed to their traditional religious faith. The Roman Catholic Church in Poland was allowed to continue a relatively active institutional life during communism, with the freedom to organise religious instruction for children and adults through its parishes and through its university in Lublin and academy in Warsaw, publishing houses and clubs of Catholic intelligentsia. The concordat signed in 1993 between the government and the Vatican specifies that church and state are 'autonomous and independent' but implicitly gives a privileged status to the Catholic Church. This has aroused much controversy as well as fears and negative attitudes among the minority religions. Catholic religious instruction has been introduced into state schools and religious symbols have been restored in the army.

In Romania the 1991 constitution guarantees fundamental human rights, including freedom of religion and belief. It proscribes religious enmity and proclaims that religious organisations 'shall be autonomous from the state and shall enjoy support from it, including the facilitation of religious assistance in the army, in hospitals, homes and orphanages'. The Romanian Orthodox Church was not accorded a special place in the constitution, but an informal alliance between the Orthodox Church and the National Salvation Front (former communists) opposed the disruption of the existing power alignment in church and state. Nationalists, who have been represented in government since 1994, have demanded the formal recognition of the special status of the Romanian Orthodox Church. The Ministry of Religious Affairs, which had existed for only six months, was reduced to a secretariat in 1990. A draft law on religious freedoms issued by the State Secretariat for Religions in 1992 provoked various objections which still have to be addressed. The draft law defines the Romanian Orthodox Church as the 'national church', proposes a system of state registration of religious faiths, lists 14 of them as having fulfilled the conditions and requires other religions applying for state recognition to 'respect the constitution, laws and conventions' of the Romanian state. Article 4 provides that 'religious denominations are equal amongst themselves and before the public authorities without any privilege or discrimination'. However, the influx of foreign preachers has been a cause of concern to the authorities. An invitation by a Romanian organisa-

tion has been made a necessary condition for admittance to the country. Foreign religious groups should not engage in 'religious propaganda or proselytising activities, which could offend the religious faith of Romanian believers'. The draft law allows the churches to organise educational institutions, provided 'legal provisions are respected'. Religious education is protected by law and is available through the state school system. Confession-based seminaries and theological institutes have already been established in the country. However, the educational domain is a matter of particular concern to religious minorities. Confessional schools were the first to be established in Romania: some Hungarian Catholic and Protestant schools have a centuries-long history; German and Romanian confessional schools were founded in the sixteenth century. In 1948 the communists nationalised 1600 confessional schools, and the draft law would leave them under state control. This provision has met with strong opposition from the Hungarian minority. New Protestant faiths have also expressed fears that their freedom to organise church schools may be considerably curtailed.

This brief survey of the situation in some of the postcommunist countries shows the radical change in state policy towards religion in Eastern Europe and the introduction of a new issue in this policy – the presence of new religious groups and the necessity of dealing with them in accordance with the European Convention on Human Rights (1948) and the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief (1981). The governments of the postcommunist countries have undertaken broad legislative measures in order to come to terms with the new reality and with the provisions of basic human rights documents. However, the passing of a law does not guarantee its immediate implementation.

Obviously, one of the major problems concerning the attitude of the postcommunist state towards NRMs is a lack of understanding and agreement on the matter. There is no clear, noncontradictory definition of what exactly a New Religious Movement is. As a rule, the 'traditional' churches are taken to be the point of reference; these are typically the faiths which have had an officially recognised character for a relatively long period (most commonly from the time before the communist takeover) and have already been 'accepted' as a natural part of the country's religious landscape. Those groups which have appeared since the fall of communism and which generally have foreign origin (though in certain cases they could be of domestic creation) are usually designated as 'new'. However, in countries which are relatively homogeneous ethnically and religiously, and where the traditional faith has a historically approved role and place in the national self-definition, the common perception places all religious denominations and groups other than the 'traditional church' in the list of NRMs, no matter how long they have been present in the respective country. A very salient example has been reported from Poland. As Halina Grzymala-Moszczynska has commented,

> In the Polish context the established religion means Roman Catholicism. … The category of New Religious Movements functions in the social consciousness in Poland as a generic term for all non-Roman Catholic groups. The majority of Poles so identify not only various Buddhist groups, the Hare Krishna Movement, the Unification Church, which were established in Poland in the late 1970s, but also Christian Orthodox and Muslims (present in Poland since the fourteenth century), Protestant Churches (Lutheran, Calvinist – present since the sixteenth century),

> Baptists and Adventists (present since the nineteenth century), and Pentecostals and Methodists (present since 1920).[15]

In situations like this all religions except the 'incumbent' faith are deemed to be alien to the prevailing national ethos and often become the target of accusations of betrayal of national interests from nationalistically-minded circles. At best they risk becoming objects of hidden societal intolerance.[16]

This scenario is an immediate repercussion of the general postcommunist agenda connected with the need and search for symbols, myths and narratives helping people to orient and positively identify themselves in the new circumstances. Inevitably, the traditional Christian faith and the culture moulded historically by its ideas and practices are seen as an important aspect of this identification, especially when the church has played a crucial role in the formation and preservation of nationality during past periods of foreign domination. The following questions therefore arise. First, how is the proclamation and affirmation of religious liberty and pluralism in Eastern Europe to be effectively combined with the search for national self-definition and intra-societal integration? Second, can the noncritical application of universal concepts of western political theory such as democracy, liberty and human rights, provide for their real functionality in the considerably different socio-cultural context of Eastern Europe? Tolerance of religious diversity and genuine religious freedom can hardly be introduced through abstract legal frameworks and governmental provisions expressing the postcommunist endeavour to become more modern and more European. They need creative and careful development in accordance with the positive features of the cultural background and certain historical manifestations of tolerance in the society, notwithstanding how rare such cases may be. Here we touch on questions of the role of religion in the public life of the 'nascent democracies', and the vital necessity for religious organisations to become part of the emergent civil society rather than to seek unhealthy political alliances with the state.

Bryan Wilson distinguishes four major points at which the teachings and practices of new religions[17] may bring them into conflict with state authorities: (1) when the NRMs directly challenge the authority of the state; (2) when the ideas of the NRMs are considered to contradict particular aspects of public policy; (3) when the NRMs are deemed to endanger even the rights of their own adherents; (4) when the civil authorities are constrained to defend conventional morality and to protect the public.[18] General commitments to human rights norms and agreements and 'the spirit of expanding religious toleration which in broad measure has been evident throughout the Western world'[19] do not deter even the most liberal western states with their prevailing atmosphere of tolerance from undertaking surveillance of new religions and restriction of their activity when this is thought to be appropriate. The Cottrell Resolution, for instance, based on a report on the activity of certain NRMs within the European Community and approved by the European Parliament in 1984, explicitly recommended such measures. The European Parliament expressed concern about the infringement of human rights by some NRMs and suggested specific criteria for investigating their activity, simultaneously insisting on the principle of religious freedom. In 1992 the Council of Europe issued a report on NRMs which on the one hand admitted that their presence and activities could lead to social problems, and on the other hand stressed freedom of conscience and religion.[20]

Discussing religious liberty in Western Europe, Massimo Introvigne is concerned that

The Solar Temple incidents have been used as a catalyst in a number of countries to propose actions against literally hundreds of groups thrown together under the label of 'cult'. In the wake of the Solar Temple, a dangerous ideology, hostile to religious minorities in general, seems to have made inroads in political and administrative circles.'[21]

Bryan Wilson's conclusion that toleration towards the new religious phenomena 'probably and paradoxically owes more to the rationalisation of modern societies and its implicit marginalisation of spiritual concerns than to the liberalism which these societies espouse as part of their civic creed'[22] brings to the surface a serious issue which is usually overlooked when the virtues of western liberal democracies are advertised in Eastern Europe. The question of how deep, authentic and effective is the western governmental authorities' commitment to the project of human rights in general and religious liberty in particular has to be given serious consideration, discussed, analysed and proved against the reality.[23] The question has hardly been debated in the prolific western social and political science literature on human rights and religious liberty. As this is an issue going far beyond the theme and aims of the present work, I will limit myself to a reference to the cautious warning of Bryan Wilson that reality is often fairly resistant to the political projects about it:

The consciously created state – such as the United States – may, after all, order its affairs in accord with abstract, rational principles, but most modern states – those of Western Europe, for instance – are what may be designated as continuing societies, not consciously created so much as merely evolving from pre-political systems. These societies inherit a customary commitment to a particular tradition of religious faith which is identified with the political, social, and cultural patterns of the people's way of life. That religion may have acquired formal legal status – often by a process of the accretion of custom, as well as by legal enactment – may have accumulated a wide variety of privileges and assumed, unchallenged, and even automatic rights. Such religions are preferred religions, enjoying advantages not available to other faiths, or, if available, then available only as concessions. The rational principle of religious equality is almost everywhere qualified by the actual historically determined practices, procedures and dispositions of each society and its people. The law of any country is not quickly responsive, and perhaps not at all responsive to those bland and unexceptionable pronouncements, somewhat facilely promulgated by international organisations, which commend religious freedom on the basis of abstract, general, rational, and liberal assumptions about what a society might be like.[24]

If 'getting rid' of cultural-religious inbuilts in the constitutional provisions on religious liberty is so much of a problem in Western Europe, then, what is to be said about Eastern Europe, where for historical reasons the processes of nation-building and national self-determination have typically included the active participation and even leadership of the traditional churches, and where consequently national identification was (and still is) closely interrelated with religious affiliation. These inbuilts are much deeper than the libertarians are prepared to accept, and cannot be eradicated overnight by a bill proclaiming the full equality of all religions – old and new, traditional and nontraditional. The guarantee of equal rights to all of them is a *sine qua non* for the processes of democratisation in postcommunist society. At the

same time, the historically and culturally privileged position of the faiths perceived as national – although this privileged position should not be constitutionally pre-supposed – is not to be overlooked or underestimated in a detailed assessment of the situation. In a nutshell, the constitutional and the cultural establishment (and dis-establishment) of a religion are fairly different things.

Problems in Postcommunist Legislation

Let me summarise briefly the major problem areas with regard to postcommunist legislation on religious freedom.

The Claims of 'Traditional Religions'

There is a general agreement on the necessity for constitutional guarantees for the protection of the freedom of religion and belief. New legal frameworks were proposed immediately after the change of the political constellation in 1989. This has not been an easy process: in some countries, such as Romania for example, the draft law is still under discussion; in Russia, as already commented, an amendment to the 1990 law generally considered to be restrictive to the operation of NRMs in the country was passed in 1997 after vigorous arguments, including President Yel'tsin's veto of the first two drafts. Experience shows that the framers of the postcommunist constitutional provisions for religious liberty generally tend to interpret the notion of religion in Christian terms and even in the terms of the Christian church(es) traditional for the particular country. This trend is nurtured by a common lack of religious culture, not to say ignorance in religious matters, understandable after 45 years of atheistic indoctrination, but hardly justifiable at the level of state policy. One possible interpretation of the favoured treatment given to the traditional Christian faith is that this is a conscious attempt to endorse a new 'state' ideology on the pretext of 'the need to fill up the spiritual vacuum[25] after the collapse of Marxism–Leninism'. Criticising the theological, psychological and sociological non-sustainability of 'talk of some "spiritual vacuum" left by communism', Fr Innokenti Pavlov identifies the threatening fact that what is actually hidden behind such talk, as well as behind expressed anxiety about 'spirituality' and 'traditional moral and cultural values', is the ambition of particular circles to approve Russian Orthodoxy as a new compulsory 'national' ideology in the empty place of the old one.[26]

In this situation, NRMs are perceived as inconvenient and intrusive mediators of alien interests and foreign policies. 'Politicians recognise the implicit threat of enclaves in which alien values are nurtured, even if, in practice, they need rarely fear that such movements will effectively challenge the operation of the state and economy.'[27] The fact that NRMs are in principle multinational, that most of those present in Eastern Europe have made their way there via Western Europe and originally came from the USA, has frequently been emphasised by their opponents, especially when appealing to the state authorities to take measures against 'foreign religions' in order to defend national security.

On the whole, postcommunist laws on religion are more favourable towards individual than towards corporate religious freedom. The reason for this is to be seen primarily in politicians' fear of institutional opposition. An 'organised religion' is deemed to be much more 'dangerous' than nonorchestrated searching for transcendence by individual persons.

Registration

A highly controversial issue in state policy towards NRMs is that of the conditions for their registration. As Eileen Barker has found,

> One way that the State may control religious minorities and, to some extent, religious majorities also, is through registration. States differ in the extent to which they consider that this is necessary and/or desirable. Sometimes the law makes it particularly difficult for minority religions to register and there are great disadvantages in not being registered … . While there are ways in which registration will provide positive assistance to a religion by giving it money or subsidies, and permitting it to act as a corporate body in law, registration can also function as a means of curtailing the activities of the religion – dictating, for instance, how the children are to be educated. … States do not need to pass discriminatory laws to contribute to a society's discrimination. Even if the legislature does not discriminate against minority religions (and several post-communist Constitutions are scrupulously exemplary in their care not to do so), the actual implementation of the law may be discriminatory, and there are numerous instances of a non-discriminatory law being grossly violated.[28]

A closer look at the laws on religion in Eastern Europe shows that many articles deal with the conditions for registration and that these are sometimes very restrictive, imposing requirements which are nearly impossible to fulfil. For instance, in some countries, such as Hungary, one of the criteria proposed is that the religious organisations must have been established before 1991, which according to George Chryssides 'is a source of serious concern for many new groups, since it seems effectively to rule them out'. Although

> refusal of registration does not entail a prohibition on religious activities … for several NRMs registration provides a formal recognition of their own perceived identity: they see themselves as religious groups, perhaps newer and smaller than the established ones, but nonetheless religions – not business companies or political organisations. Second, registration entitles a religious group to be eligible for government finance – not a large amount (100,000 forints, which is roughly £625 sterling) – and for tax exemption. Finally, registration entitles a religion to become a legal entity and own its own property.[29]

Minority religions thus often have to struggle for a redrafting of the law if they want to operate legally. In 1999 four evangelical churches in Macedonia, supported by local human rights groups, successfully opposed some restrictive elements of the 1997 law. The Constitutional Court voided six of the eleven articles they challenged, namely Article 3, which banned 'religious work and rituals' by unregistered groups; Article 10, which required at least 50 adult members before a religious group could be formed; Article 11, which required that detailed information about the groups be presented to the Office for the Affairs of Religious Communities and Religious Groups; Article 13, which established an official register of legal religious groups; Article 14, which granted legal status to a religious group from the date it was recorded in the official register; and Article 22, which required permission from the Office for the Affairs of Religious Communities and Religious Groups for the construction or acquisition of religious buildings.[30]

Defining a 'Religion'

It is obvious that religious freedom cannot be guaranteed without limits or specifica-
tions. There are a number of cases when religious groups have perpetrated serious
crimes (the tragedies of Jonestown in 1978 and Waco in 1993, and the suicides and
homicides in the Order of the Solar Temple in Switzerland in 1994, in France in 1995
and in Canada in 1997, for example). Undoubtedly those responsible have to be
brought to justice. In a general sense, alongside nonendorsement of any particular
religious views, constitutional provisions on freedom of religion should include
clauses preventing the possibility of its misuse, for instance through criminal
behaviour presented as religious activity. Laws on religious freedom have a specific
regulatory function: they should restrict activities deemed to be incompatible with
other laws, with the rights of other people or with the general welfare of society.
Topical in this respect are also questions of the autonomy of religious organisations
and the extent to which the state should be involved in resolving controversies
between them and other institutions, religious and nonreligious.[31]

   In this context, the issue of the liability of the state authorities to define what is
religion and what is not arises. This issue is often connected with the wish to prevent
the misuse of privileges granted to religious organisations by groups claiming
religious status illegitimately. However, state authorities may also make an instru-
mental use of the privilege to endorse their own definitions of religion and to
discriminate against particular religious groups by denying their religious character.[32]
Echoing Roland Robertson, James Beckford has pointed out that NRMs 'lacking
long-established credibility and deep roots in communities, are ... the first victims of
the increasingly restrictive definition of religion for legal purposes'.[33] Beckford has
expressed his fears that

> despite the protections afforded by various constitutional guarantees of
> religious freedom, religious organisations have been adversely affected by
> the growing capacity of the State to influence and monitor more and more
> of the activities of the citizens. The tensions between agencies of the State
> and various NRMs[34] are but one relatively small aspect of much larger
> problems concerning the disputed frontier between the public and private
> spheres of life.[35]

Warnings that the NRMs might be the first victims of the total secularisation of the
state and the expanding of its monitoring aspirations have already been articulated in
the context of the modern western liberal state, and they are not to be ignored or
hastily dismissed as inadequate to the Eastern European situation, especially after the
experience of totalitarianism.[36]

Relations between Religions and the State

Church-state relationships in the postcommunist countries have been undergoing a
process of radical redefinition. While constitutional provisions explicitly favour the
model of separation between church and state (in all Eastern Europe except for
Poland), this separation is articulated within the terms of the 'accommodationist'
approach – that is, of what Mark Howe calls 'the liberal principle of tolerance', in
contrast to 'the radical principle of religious liberty'.[37] The 'accommodationist'
approach has been preferred in European legislation (with some exceptions), and it
has also emerged as suitable to the historical background and socio-cultural context

of the new Eastern European democracies. In practice, however – not unlike the situation in Western Europe – a preference is given to the traditional churches. In other words, the constitutionally promulgated state neutrality towards religion does not mean indifference and, for instance, this was explicitly declared in 1993 by the Constitutional Court in Hungary.[38] Identifying four types of church-state relationships – endorsement, cooperation, accommodation and separation – Helen Hartnell defines the Hungarian system in mid-1994 as 'a cooperationist one, with some accommodationist undertones, enhanced by occasional separationist rhetoric'. She finds that 'the limitation on the principle of neutrality appears designed to recognize the Catholic Church as "first among equals". … Neutrality, in other words, does not mean inactivity, nor does it require the state to neglect religion.'[39] The frequently-met constitutional references to the historical role of traditional churches in Eastern Europe as a whole,[40] the introduction of religious education, which almost inevitably implies the endorsement of the positions of the majority religion, and, in the extreme case of Poland, the concordat with the Vatican and the refusal to separate constitutionally the state from the Polish Roman Catholic Church[41] all contribute to the assessment of postcommunist freedom of religion in terms of 'positive liberty' and probably cast fresh doubt on the general applicability of the 'negative liberty' project (to use the terms of Isaiah Berlin[42]) in the (Eastern) European context. As Helen Hartnell has argued,

> While civil libertarians throughout the world share similar views on many fundamental aspects of religious freedom, there is one important difference between the American and the other mentioned formulations. The U.S. Constitution is framed solely in terms of a *limit* on the government's power to affect religion, whereas the Hungarian and international formulations impose some *obligation* on government to promote or protect thought, conscience or religion. This difference between 'negative' and 'positive' rights points up an important difference in attitude towards the role of the state in religious life. In its grossest form, the difference is that an American expects the state not to interfere at all in religious life, whereas the others expect the state to enable it. Traditional American notions of autonomy run deep.[43]

Roman Herzog points out that the constitutional right to religious liberty takes into account the human search for meaning and spirituality. He sees this fact as a proof that the free democratic state which acknowledges constitutionally the fundamental principle of human dignity and the need for spiritual orientations cannot be indifferent to, or simply reject, the churches and religious communities whose most important function is precisely to provide for such orientations.[44]

The trend towards an explicit or more often implicit favouring of the traditional faith is thus not limited to postcommunist law. It can be found across much of Europe, although in the West it is not backed up by an urgent search for self-definition and common spiritual and moral values which could bind the nation together. Religion still remains in many societies an important constituent of legitimation, as John Markoff and Daniel Regan have emphasised.

> Even constitutions which contain neither an explicit statement framing the operations of constitution-making with an eye on eternity nor specific institutional mechanisms assuring the primacy of ultimate values over the works of man may nevertheless provide for at least a fleeting reminder

of a transcendental authority. … There is a gap between trends in the generalised content of constitutions on the one hand and their religious particularities on the other. Such a gap suggests the importance of religious questions to governing elites. They try to appropriate religion, through the constitutions that both constrain and empower them, for political legitimation.[45]

The question whether these new manifestations of a predominantly utilitarian and instrumental approach towards religion are at all appropriate in a secular society, and especially in a society aiming at 'modernisation' and 'democratisation', is too complex and comprehensive to be discussed at length here. It is my contention that the attempt at a postcommunist use of traditional religions is to a certain extent comparable to the promoting of the idea of civil religion in the USA at the end of the 1960s, despite the differences in the context and in the content of Robert Bellah's adaptation for a new life of the old vision of Jean-Jacques Rousseau.[46] According to Roy Wallis,

> Bellah claimed to be able to identify an institutionalized collection of beliefs and symbols embodying the common elements of all major creeds in America, and providing the basis for integration around a common system of beliefs and symbols, and a set of rituals, such as Memorial Day, Thanksgiving, Veterans' Day, etc. through which common identities and commitments could be reaffirmed.[47]

However, it is worth remembering that only a few years later Bellah announced American civil religion, a series of 'covenants' which shaped society and its self-understanding, to be an 'empty and broken shell'.[48] Drawing on Michael Novak, James Beckford notes:

> The career of the Civil Religion concept exemplifies a drift away from the organic, meaning-conferring functions as delineated by Robert Bellah in 1967 toward a concern with the struggle waged by numerous interest groups to acquire power for their particular (and often exclusive) version of the concept.[49]

One of the most vigorous critics of the vision that civil religion integrates society, Richard Fenn, emphasises the distinction between cohesion and integration. According to him, civil religion might provide only for societal cohesion at the expense of minority cultures.[50]

It is also noteworthy as Bryan Wilson has argued, that

> The law tends to have a limited view, requiring that all religions be necessarily recognizable by reference to established or received traditions: thus, the law in Europe maintains its distinct monotheistic bias with its attendant assumptions about the necessary styles and forms of religious activities, entrenched in the law of 'worship'.[51]

The author distinguishes 'two radically divergent positions': on the one hand, the rational position of the international agencies claiming full equality of all religions before the law, and on the other hand, the conservative contention insisting that

> The law of any country should seek to reinforce historical cultural values, the spiritual inheritance of the people, and to protect these in the face of the mounting pluralism of what might be held to be morally disruptive

phenomena which bring uncertainty, contradiction and unrest in the religious and cultural sphere.[52]

Postcommunist legislation on religion provides a recent illustration of the ongoing cultural-political clash between these two attitudes.

New Religious Movements and Traditional Churches

Undoubtedly, in postcommunist societies interreligious relations are to be considered in the light of the new position gained by religion in general and by the traditional Christian churches in particular.

When discussing religion in Eastern Europe we cannot avoid taking into consideration two fundamental facts: the thoroughgoing atheistic policies of communist rule, and the complex and radical processes of political, economic and cultural transformation at work today, which directly and indirectly influence the (new) place and role of religion in the region.

The question of the 'unfreedom' of religion during communism has been widely and abundantly elaborated by scholars in the West and more recently in the East as well. Numerous books, based on a great deal of documentary evidence, have presented the simultaneous endorsement of the Soviet model of atheisation in all the countries which found themselves in the Soviet sphere of influence after the Second World War. Here I shall limit myself to a brief description of the process of *forceful secularisation*. I choose this notion because it focuses both on the universal character of the historical phenomenon under consideration (secularisation is a worldwide and not only Eastern European phenomenon) and also on the procedural practices of its application in communist society (deliberate campaigns to outlaw and marginalise religion through persecution, steady repression and constraint).

In general, secularisation is considered to be 'that process by which religious thinking, practice and institutions lose social significance and become marginal to the operation of a social system',[53] or 'a societal process in which an overarching and transcendent religious system is reduced to a subsystem of society alongside other subsystems, and the overarching claims of which have a shrinking audience'.[54] Social scientists usually link the declining social significance of religion with the processes of industrialisation, bureaucratisation and urbanisation,[55] modernisation, social differentiation, societalisation and rationalisation.[56] The 'dissolution of the traditional, coherent sacred cosmos' renders religion 'invisible',[57] and bears upon radical transformations of its influence at the societal, individual and institutional levels.[58] Another theoretical approach to secularisation suggests that in its radical version it could hardly give a proper description of the relationships between politics and religion during the last two centuries, notwithstanding the fact that Christianity has partly lost its predominance in the cultures moulded by it.[59] Although the interpretation of secularism as a part and as a result of societal processes of differentiation[60] has persisted, the secular-religious character of these societal, political and cultural processes has often been pointed out,[61] and some authors go so far as to insist that all important notions of the modern doctrine of the state are secularised theological notions[62] and even claim back an acknowledged place for religion in politics.[63] In principle, it seems to be agreed that not only has the sacral been secularised but that the secular has also undergone a partial sacralisation.[64]

The diversity of definitions and interpretations of secularisation and secularism[65] displays the complexity of the phenomena under consideration, which resist one-

dimensional definitions. However, all theorists agree that modernity brought about radical changes in the position of religion in society.

In the West evolutionary secularising processes resulted in the separation of church from state and the formation of the modern liberal secular state. In Eastern Europe, however, the spontaneous development of these trends was interrupted by the forceful attempt at implementation of a socialist secular state model. This model was constructed according to official Marxist-Leninist ideology and religion came to be seen as a rudimentary survival of the 'old bourgeois system', an opiate or superstition which was to be eradicated from the new society in the name of reason and progress. Religious instruction was excluded from the school curriculum and later 'scientific atheism' was introduced. Most of the religious schools were closed. Those which remained open were put under the firm control of the state. Militant antireligious propaganda was overwhelming: atheist campaigns in the media and 'scientific works' explaining the defects and the harmfulness of religion; and in most Eastern European countries schoolchildren were enrolled in communist youth organisations which became vehicles for atheisation.[66] An eloquent example of this strategy is the youth initiation ceremony *Jugendweihe*, introduced in East Germany in 1954 as an atheist substitute for Christian confirmation in which young people professed their loyalty to the state.[67]

In other words, then, the communist state implemented a systematic policy aimed at the devastation of religious communities. Clergy were systematically repressed and persecuted. In Russia the number of the clerics killed during the Soviet years is reported to be about 200,000, while another half million underwent repression;[68] in Romania the number of Orthodox clergymen jailed between 1946 and 1964 is estimated to be about 6000.[69] Not only were the churches financially impoverished by the 'nationalisation' of their buildings, lands, charities and property, or by the destruction of many of their worship houses, but they were in practice deprived of their position in society and pushed to the margins. Believers could not be members of the Communist Party, which in itself barred them from pursuing prosperous careers. Those attending church were in most countries under the surveillance of the security agencies and persistence often meant a job loss. No wonder that believers gradually came to be seen as second-class citizens.

The new legislation on religion and the policy of the communist regime towards the religious organisations in each country followed the general lines of Soviet legislation and policy, so I shall present them only briefly.[70] The decree of the Soviet of People's Commissars on Separation of Church from State and of Schools from Church of January 1918 proclaimed that 'in all official documents every mention of a citizen's religious affiliation or nonaffiliation shall be removed'. It granted citizens the right to 'confess any religion or profess none at all', free performance of religious rites 'as long as this does not disturb public order or infringe upon the rights of citizens of the Soviet Republic' and the right 'to receive and give religious instruction privately'. The decree, however, revoked virtually all the rights of religious associations, not only those of a religious character such as the administration of oaths, the sanctification of public ceremonies and the registration of marriages and births, but also the rights to hold property, to organise schools and to seek legal protection. It denied categorically 'the rights of a legal entity' to all ecclesiastical and religious associations. Access to the confiscated property was granted only for the performance of 'religious rites'. Implicitly, the decree outlawed all types of activities of religious associations except the performance of rituals: for example social service, missionary work, political action and religious publishing.

Although the decree of 1918 did not mention atheism, the constitution of 1936, and especially that of 1977, granted a kind of establishment to atheism by according the leading role in Soviet society to 'the Communist Party armed with Marxist-Leninist doctrine' (Article 6) and by giving atheists the right to conduct atheistic propaganda (Article 52).

The Soviet approach was applied by the communist parties in Eastern Europe immediately after they came to power, without taking into account the specific historical and cultural contexts of each country. However, some differentiation in the policy towards the churches in the different countries and in the way the churches responded to restrictions and oppressions became gradually visible. The religious organisations were forced to pledge their loyalty to the government. Non-cooperation meant persecution and harassment; there were numerous cases of imprisonment, exile to remote places, and murders of clergy and hierarchs, especially in the first years of the communist regime.[71] The results were gradually seen: 'Church attendance dropped off in most of the countries, reaching the lowest levels among East Germans, Czechs, Serbs, and Bulgarians. In Albania the government simply closed all churches and mosques in 1967 and declared religion "abolished". Gradually the number of registered adherents dropped.'[72] Naturally, the imposition of atheism was most successfully accomplished in those countries where the churches were traditionally weak.[73]

A radical consequence of communist policy towards the mainline Christian churches was their use for political and practical purposes. Procommunist propaganda exploited the churches to promote the interests of the state, especially after the change of climate in the 1960s, as well as in times of national calamity. During the Second World War the Russian Orthodox Church experienced a kind of revival in consequence of the shift in Stalin's strategy and his decision to use the church's willingness to help defend the country against the Nazi invasion. A number of concessions thereafter (including the election of a new patriarch two decades after the death of Patriarch Tikhon and the reopening of many churches) contributed to a limited revitalisation of church life. In Bulgaria, as well as in Romania and Serbia, the Orthodox Church was a faithful ally in the nationalist aspirations of the government. By the mid-1980s the communist regime in Bulgaria had reduced the church 'to a state of absolute impotence. While this is more or less the case for all churches in Eastern Europe, in Bulgaria this policy has been carried to the point of total annihilation of religious freedom.'[74]

The Main Problems Facing the Churches in Postcommunist Society

Today the mainline churches in Eastern Europe find themselves in a complex situation. On the one hand, they have to recover from the spiritual and institutional stagnation they experienced under communism. On the other hand, they have to come to terms with the new social realities they face and to respond to the new challenges, the greatest of which is perhaps that of religious pluralism.

Let me outline the major problems confronting the traditional churches in post-communist society.

Persistence of a 'Fortress Mentality'

The 'fortress mentality' typical of communist times is still widely persistent. This specific stereotype of behaviour by a church was aimed at gathering all its spiritual

and institutional powers in order to enable it to endure the oppression imposed by the totalitarian regime. The communist socio-political system was seen as the major enemy before which the unity of the church had to be preserved. For a long time the churches eliminated and repressed all inner tensions and differences. Discussing the Polish Roman Catholic Church, David Martin has pointed out that 'the paramount need for unity' silenced the interpretation and implementation of the reforms of the Second Vatican Council, 'because this could create divisions for the government to exploit'.[75] The situation was, however, skilfully exploited by the hierarchy to maintain discipline in the ranks and to 'exert pressure against those who break ranks over the issue of "traditional" versus "transformed" Christianity and to mute the divisions consequent on different receptions accorded to the Vatican Council'.[76] The experience of the Hungarian Roman Catholic Church was similar. As George Chryssides comments, 'The oppression of the Christian faith under communism has tended to make the churches somewhat static, at a time when, for example, the Roman Catholic Church in Western Europe was enjoying a new freedom in the form of the post-Vatican II liturgical innovations.'[77]

Unfortunately, new expressions of the old 'fortress mentality' are frequently encountered today, particularly in the attitude of some mainstream churches to non-Christian religions and even to other Christian denominations.

Churches Identified with the Regime

The mainline Christian churches in Eastern Europe were involved in close co-operation with the communist regimes, initially in order to survive repression and later because the practice turned into a kind of routine assuring particular advantages. Of course the modes of collaboration and the extent to which the churches compromised their authentic vocation varied from one country to another. However, as David Martin warned a long time before the end of the Cold War, 'a church straightforwardly incorporated in the power structure will be involved in the ruins of that structure'.[78] The churches have consequently been seriously affected by the collapse of the communist system and have experienced a specific identity crisis. The need for repentance and renovation has often been disregarded by the church hierarchies and this has caused serious problems, and even divisions, within the churches and has had a very negative impact on their postcommunist image, in the eyes of believers and unbelievers alike.

The systematic political use of the churches by the communist regimes has perpetuated the model of 'functional religion'. Closely related to this model is the use of political manoeuvres and flirtation with the powers of the day on the part of the church hierarchy for allegedly religious aims. The Bulgarian Orthodox Church has turned into a sad illustration of this trend. Immediately after 1989 Khristofor Subev, who suddenly emerged as a leader of the movement for revitalisation of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church and a political activist in the Union of the Democratic Forces and was subsequently defrocked, used to declare that 'up to now the church has been used for political aims, but from now on politics will be used for the aims of the church!' The results were soon evident. In 1992 the Bulgarian Orthodox Church went through one of the most tragic experiences in its history. It was divided into two, not without the active help of the state authorities, which registered and thus legitimated an alternative Synod. So far, most attempts to resolve the controversy have failed, with disastrous consequences for the church.

Outdated Social Teaching

The outdated social teaching of the churches generally does not answer the needs of the day and complex new phenomena such as postcommunist cultural plurality and religious diversity. The churches which were more independent under the totalitarian regimes and more active in the life of society played a considerable role in the opposition movements and in the transition towards democracy.[79] They also have a real chance to play an active role in the reconstruction of civil society in the region. Unfortunately, they are not always able to rise to the challenge. The need for updated social teaching is particularly to be felt in the Orthodox churches because their doctrine is traditionally focused on the soteriological role of the church in terms of eschatology. In this regard, Veniamin Novik has warned:

> We need to interpret new socio-political and economic realities, but there are no significant conceptual precedents for this in the Holy Tradition. This being the case, social doctrine might remain on the level of non-committal phrases of a general nature about the necessity for reconciliation, peace and other similarly good things about which there was a great deal of talk in the pre-*perestroika* period.[80]

A belated or completely absent critical response to events and developments incompatible with the Christian world-view and morality has been a weak point for many of the traditional churches in the postcommunist period. The Russian Orthodox Patriarch Aleksi, for instance, has been criticised for failing to condemn 'either extremist elements in his church or morally questionable state policies, such as the Chechen war'. According to Elena Chinyaeva,

> despite the proclamation of neutrality toward the state, some of the Patriarchate's actions provided grounds for concern. Two issues in particular – the tendency by some within the church to sympathise with so-called red-brown political forces and the Patriarchate's attitude toward foreign religious missions – have caused major controversy.[81]

The church hierarchy has also been reproved for taking a nondemocratic position and waging a 'tough political battle' in connection with the preparation and adoption of the 1997 law on freedom of conscience.[82] According to Stan Markotich, the Serbian Orthodox Church in rump Yugoslavia 'has played a prominent role in politics throughout the recent period of a regional conflict. Generally speaking, the church has lent its support to Serbian expansionism, endorsing those policies and politicians that have advocated creating an enlarged, or "greater", Serbia.'[83] The failure to develop a relevant theological understanding and explanation of the new processes and to react properly to them could have grievous results for the traditional Christian churches in Eastern Europe.

The Reaction of the Mainline Churches to New Religious Movements

Lacking experience of competing religious organisations and communities, the post-communist churches have reacted to the influx of new religious groups from the West with anxiety and fear. Commenting on the situation in Russia, Dimitry Pospielovsky writes:

> Churches competing with each other, trying to outdo each other, taking advantage of the economic bankruptcy of the Orthodox Church and, as it

were, buying converts by offering free English-language classes, credits to businessmen, and food parcels for converts, in which American funda- mentalists are actively engaged, makes religions in the eyes of the average Russian no better than traders in the marketplace.[84]

This anxious response to NRMs is, not confined to the Eastern European churches. Discussing theological approaches to the new religions in the West, John Saliba has found that 'Christian reactions to the presence of the new religious movements have been sporadic and at times vociferous. There is no consensus among Christian writers about the meaning of the new movements and the proper way a Christian should respond to their successful missionary activities. ...'[85] The author dis- tinguishes three general types of response by the mainline Christian churches to the new religions: neglect, the apologetic approach and the dialogue approach. While recognising that the most common reaction has been to ignore the NRMs in both theory and practice, Saliba insists that this attitude

> fails to recognize that a major religious shift might be occurring in Western culture and that the ideas which the new religions propagate might influence Christianity, even if they do not survive ... Neglecting the study of new movements might be a form of escapism from the issues that Christians are facing towards the end of the second millennium.[86]

The apologetic approach focuses on the defence of the Christian faith. It takes two forms: positive apologetics, which 'expounds and clarifies the tenets of Christianity, pointing out how they differ from, and excel over, all other religious claims'; and negative apologetics, which 'attacks other religious beliefs, pointing out their weak- ness and inconsistencies'.[87] A refusal to see any positive features in the non- traditional religions does not explain why people join them, however. Thus, apologetics can hardly provide an effective tool for the objective assessment and understanding of these newly-emerged religious phenomena. Among other dis- advantages,[88] it can easily 'degenerate into an attack against both the new religions in general and the honesty and intentions of their leaders and members',[89] and thereby produce antagonism and animosity. The only theological method conducive to an understanding of the 'other religions' and to the development of interreligious relationships is the dialogue approach. It has acquired actuality since the early 1960s through the efforts of the World Council of Churches and the Second Vatican Council and has gradually become the officially declared position of the majority of the Christian churches.[90]

In its *Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions* the Second Vatican Council recognises the long spiritual traditions of the world's great religions, and gives consideration to what human beings share and what promotes mutual conversation and fellowship. In its *Declaration on Religious Freedom* the Council emphasises the need to respect individual conscience even when people maintain unorthodox religious beliefs. It calls upon Catholics to abandon the attitudes of suspicion, prejudice and hostility to other religions, and acknowledges that a personal commitment to Christian truths and values in daily living is a more effective and convincing way of spreading the Gospel than forceful proselytising.

In 1986 the Vatican published a preliminary report which focused on the recent emergence of NRMs and their impact on Christian faith. The report promotes the Second Vatican Council's principle of dialogue recommended in interfaith relations.

Though the report expresses concern that many Catholics are joining new religious groups, it emphasises the dignity and inviolable rights of the human person in accordance with the Council's *Declaration on Religious Freedom*. It denounces the use of psychological and/or social pressures to convert other people as an infringement of the right of individuals to religious liberty. The authors recommend genuine and meaningful communication with the members of NRMs, and focus on the lessons that can be learned from the success of the NRMs.

Interfaith relations and the principle of religious liberty have been among the issues of central concern to the World Council of Churches and the theme of many discussions held under its auspices. The prevailing attitude is that the Christian mission to preach the Good News is irreconcilable with any political, economic, psychological or religious pressures on non-Christians to abandon their religious convictions and traditions. There is a shared understanding that the search for unity of the Christian churches does not have as a final goal creating one new church to replace all denominations, nor is it to be achieved by forcing any Christian church to accept a new identity. A range of documents discusses the dangers of compromising the authenticity of the Christian faith and warns against syncretism. The *Summary Statement and Recommendations* prepared jointly by the World Council of Churches and the Lutheran World Federation at a consultation in 1986 stresses the need to understand the NRMs and to protect their right to religious liberty, even if their beliefs and world-views are radically different from those of Christians. The statement, like the 1986 Vatican report, is evidence of the search for reconciliation.[91]

At an international ecumenical consultation held in Switzerland in 1998 the World Council of Churches issued a statement on human rights in which it expressed its concern for the situation after the Cold War. The statement pays special attention to the difficulties experienced in Eastern Europe and to the dramatic repercussion they are having on the ecumenical movement.

> Today … religion has re-emerged as a significant and sometimes dominant factor in internal conflicts and in national and international politics. … The list of countries that have declared an official state religion grows, giving to religion constitutional and legislative powers and privileges. In a number of these cases, the freedom of citizens to choose and practice the belief of their choice is more and more severely restricted. The secular and plural basis of the state is under widespread assault, and religious extremism and intolerance is on the rise. Former Communist countries struggle to revise or adopt new basic laws on religion and religious practice under pressure to pattern such legislation after Western models, creating a 'free market' of religions. Churches and other faith bodies argue for protection against an invasion of exogenous religious movements and proselytism as they seek to recover from decades of oppression and atheist rule. Difficult new questions arise for the ecumenical movement which has declared opposition to proselytism, and at the same time advocates for religious freedom based on the provisions it has been instrumental in having included in international human rights standards.[92]

Two main negative trends are generally to be observed in the policy of the mainline Christian churches in Eastern Europe towards alternative faiths.

First, they usually claim a special status, most commonly presented in terms of a 'national church'. The basis for this claim is seen in their centuries-long religious

tradition and the fact that they represent the majority of believers in a particular country. They claim that this status should guarantee them maximum privileges, such as special state funding, greater access to the mass media and the introduction of religious instruction in schools, but above all that it should bring them the benefits connected with what David Robertson calls 'the enormous persuasive influence of any state-wielded symbol'.[93] In connection with their endeavour towards a monopoly position, the mainline churches often insist on including antiproselytising provisions in the law on religion: that is the limitation of the activity of the 'newcomers' in a territory and among populations over which the churches claim to have 'historical rights'. Exemplary in this respect are the initiatives of the Russian Orthodox Church. At the same time, the approval of restraint on the activities of NRMs in Russia is not at all limited to the Orthodox Church.

> Remarkably, sociological polls reveal that 60 per cent of Orthodox and Muslim believers, as well as 30 percent of Catholics and Protestants, approve of restrictions on non-traditional denominations. Meanwhile, 80 percent of Muslims and 30 percent of Orthodox respondents would like to see a closer union between the state and the Orthodox Church.[94]

Second, lacking any experience of secularisation and pluralism, the traditional churches in Eastern Europe are not inclined to enter into dialogue with NRMs, or even to negotiate with them over matters of common concern; rather their strategy is connected with a search for ways to influence governmental authorities to curtail the advantages of the new faiths provided by postcommunist laws on religion. In its most negative manifestation this leads to the rejection by a church of everything outside its particular Christian tradition: it will treat the other Christian denominations with suspicion and fear, and relate the non-Christian religions and NRMs to Satanic powers. As Vladimir Fedorov has noted, no theological dialogue today could be conducted on the basis of arguments such as those used by Feodosi Pechersky, who in the eleventh century denied the Latin faith with the comment that the Latins 'eat with dogs from the same bowl'.[95] Comments and attitudes at this level promote new 'us'/'them' boundaries and foster animosity to the 'other', and thus deprive the traditional churches of their authentic role, to witness to the Truth and to unite people in the name of Christ.

The Social Controversy over New Religious Movements

The presence of NRMs in the societies of Eastern Europe, which are economically unsettled, socially disintegrated and culturally fragmented, raises a number of questions. Do the 'guests' just add to the difficulties, or do they simply contribute to the inevitable concomitant of democracy – a 'market' of world-views, faiths and ideologies? What are their similarities and differences with regard to their western 'prototypes'? What is the psychological and social profile of their recruits?

In searching for an answer to these far-from-easy questions, I take the view that, despite prevailing explicit and implicit hostility to NRMs in Eastern Europe, and despite the warnings of some authors that the emerging religious landscape could well result in a redefinition of the particular social values articulated in these societies and that this in turn might intensify social tensions,[96] their appearance is, in fact, a challenge which may be assessed in positive terms. If democracy is considered to be 'a system based on the principles of political choice and social tolerance',[97] the presence of NRMs gives society the opportunity to test the genuineness and level of

its democratisation. It gives the traditional churches the chance to prove the relevance of their response to the new socio-political environment and to show in practice the advantages they claim for their message. A multicultural and multi-religious environment gives people an opportunity to overcome the dogmatic visions and stereotypes inherited from communism and to acquire new perspectives for understanding themselves and the other.

Discussing the social controversy over NRMs in the West in the 1980s, James Beckford has emphasised some points which seem to have become pertinent to post-communist societies as well.

> The issues raised by the controversy are probably more significant for the future of western societies than are the NRMs themselves … . In particular, they have inadvertently and indirectly helped to reinforce (a) major cultural and social boundaries between images of the normal and abnormal person, (b) legal definitions of the limits of defensible action to be taken against an individual's wishes but allegedly in his or her own best interests as determined by agents of the states or close relatives, and (c) new ideas about the extent to which the economic base of religious groups can benefit from protection by the law on charities. In these, and other, respects the cult controversy is a barometer of changes taking place in a number of different societies. NRMs represent an 'extreme situation' which, precisely because it is extreme, throws into sharp relief many of the assumptions hidden behind legal, cultural and social structures. The operation of many NRMs has, as it were, forced society to show its hand and to declare itself. … At a deeper level of analysis, the presence, methods of operation, and problems of NRMs can help to trace changes and tensions in whole societies. To adapt the argument of Léger and Hervieu,[98] NRMs can be seen as microcosm of their host societies.[99]

In other words, questions about the societal response to NRMs, most generally assessed in terms of tolerance or intolerance, focus on fundamental problems which refer to the mode of existence of a given society and to the direction of its development, that is to its normative system, its values and its aims.

The fact that most of the NRMs in Eastern Europe are 'imported' from the West requires the use of comparative method, the drawing of parallels between their activities and strategies in the West and in the East, the audiences and problem fields addressed, the resolutions suggested and the social tensions provoked. However, the following considerations seem to be significant and need to be borne in mind when searching for similarities, distinctions or possible interpretations. First, the immense differences between the liberal-democratic societies with their relatively high level of political stability and cultural integrity and the societies in transition groping after their democratic self-determination are very persistent and put their imprint on the ways both types of society react to new religious phenomena. Second, the NRMs are signs of societal difficulties and tensions already existing, and not the cause of them, or to quote Bryan Wilson, 'The NRMs, however they may be evaluated … are responses to the malaise, not the symptoms or its source'.[100] Third, the NRMs are in no way imaginable as a unitary and semi-mythical 'multinational' phenomenon, moving across continents, borders and societies. They have come into being because of a specific constellation of cultural, political and economic conditions in the 1960s, and their spread is to a great extent connected with the processes of globalisation and the internationalisation of culture.[101] Nevertheless, they are hugely diverse[102] in their

teachings, orientation, organisation and operation,[103] and at the same time they are constantly subjected to modification and development in terms of growth or decay: that is, they experience changes which are functions of a range of external and internal factors.

Trying to outline the social and psychological profile of adherents of the alternative religions in the West, some theorists have pointed out that NRMs in the USA, for instance, are often middle-class phenomena, similar to the new left, feminist and ecology groups of the period.[104] Some writers have seen the new forms of religiosity as symptoms of social stress associated with 'the fragmentation of the cultural symbol system' in the later 1960s and the lack of 'clear standards for sexual, social, and political behavior' among young people.[105] The potential of NRMs to facilitate the adaptation of young people to the societal environment has also been emphasised. Eileen Barker has drawn an interesting comparison: while the new religions in the West have appealed mostly 'to young people who have not been socially, economically or politically disadvantaged, but who might claim that they have been spiritually oppressed', in postcommunist societies they attract people who have not only been brought up in spiritual vacuum but who have also 'suffered from relatively severe economic and perhaps social and political oppression'. The motivation for joining an NRM is thus totally different in West and East: postcommunist members 'wish to *espouse* the very rewards of capitalism – consumerism and materialism – from which the Western membership wanted to escape'.[106] According to an analysis by the Christian Interdisciplinary Centre for the Study of NRMs in St Petersburg, one of the major reasons in the East for joining new religious organisations, especially those funded from abroad, is purely pragmatic: they provide 'free seminars with meals, books, etc.'.[107] Young people find especially attractive the possibility of receiving free instruction in the English language, and even funding for study abroad.[108] Some minority religions, such as the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Lord's Church (*Bulgarska bozhiya tsurkva*) in Bulgaria,[109] are apparently also having success in recruiting people from the marginal sectors of society such as the Roma, because of the social welfare facilities (mainly food and clothes) they provide for them.[110]

In the USA it has been reported that some NRMs are typically absorbing representatives of the counterculture of 1960s – from disappointed students with left-wing orientations to hippies and former drug addicts (for instance Synanon and The Children of God). Thomas Robbins argues that the development of new religiosity in American society started in the mid-1960s. The period to the early 1970s was characterised by diffuse counterculture activity in the form of student protest, psychedelic utopianism, the hippy movement and so on. From the end of the 1960s radical political activism waned and countercultural values were assimilated into the dominant culture; new religio-therapeutic movements, successors to the broader countercultural protest, came to the fore. In the 1970s the controversy over 'destructive cults' increased, anticult movements emerged and 'deprogramming' entered the English language. This period is characterised by an increase in 'financially and commercially diversified … movements'. The later growth of 'conservative' and evangelical churches and denominations in the USA has been a basic religious trend for over two decades.[111] Roy Wallis, for his part, argues that 'only a limited range of new religions can reasonably be presumed to have played a reintegrating role with the decline of the counter-culture'. He sees them more in terms of 'a stage between it and the final return to conventional society for individuals who had become thoroughly alienated by the failure and decay of hippy life, radical politics, drugs, and secular communitarianism'.[112] Concerning the political

attitudes of the devotees of new religions, Robert Bellah finds that those attracted to oriental religions tend to be distinctly more radical politically than those attracted to neo-Christian movements. 'The major theoretical resources of left-wing thought do not allow it to take religion seriously, even when there is some recognition of religious communities as sources of potential allies in the political struggle'.[113] The lack of statistical data concerning the political orientations of the adherents of NRMs in Eastern Europe impedes conclusions in this area, though it is logical to assume that people who follow a minority religion would favour the further democratisation and liberalisation of society as presumably providing more guarantees for religious liberty.

A society which is experiencing enormous economic difficulties and cultural and moral disorientation, and which also lacks traditions of tolerance, may easily embrace intolerant attitudes and modes of behaviour. A 1993 sociological investigation into the prevailing social views on NRMs in Bulgaria showed that 68 per cent of those interviewed held that the activity of alternative religions in the country should be forbidden. The most tolerant were young people between the ages of 15 and 24. The age groups 25–34 and 45–54 had the most negative attitude, while half of all those interviewed were convinced that new religions had no place in a democratic society.[114] In general, the investigation revealed a higher level of negativity among women than among men. It also produced a picture of the typical Bulgarian member of an alternative religious group: two thirds of them were male, many of them upper- or high-school students, many of them middle-aged, with a good education and regular work,[115] not necessarily married. Relatively few were retired, unemployed or young mothers. Most of the adherents of NRMs lived in small towns rather than in the capital or in villages. Most expressed themselves not fully satisfied by their membership of the NRM.[116]

The investigation revealed clearly the prevailing intolerance and lack of understanding among the general Bulgarian public about the nature of the processes of democratisation. People are not ready to accept the legitimisation of alternative religious formations or to coexist peacefully with them.[117] They are not generally religious, but fall into a position of religious chauvinism alongside ethnic and racist manifestations of intolerance. The language and the rhetoric of an official statement of the ultranationalist Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation (*Vutreshno-makedonska revolyutsionna organizatsiya* (VMRO)) in connection with their hostile actions against the participants in a national Christian conference, organised by the United Churches of God (*Obedineni bozhii tsurkvi*) and the Union of Evangelical Pentecostal Churches (*Suyuz na evangelskite petdesyatni tsurkvi*) in May 1997 in Sofia, are highly indicative in this respect.

> Our aim was to demonstrate somehow that we belong to an ages-old civilisation and culture with its own history of struggle and suffering in establishing its identity, and not to something that is being imported from God knows where. We protest against this second wave of hooking and zombying people, which is in progress with frankly pecuniary aims. Our action was to show to the people that we are here, that we belong here … We wanted to remind some people across the Atlantic that they must conform to certain phenomena of the Bulgarian political and historical reality.[118]

This dangerous kind of attitude is often unconsciously or deliberately overlooked by the state authorities and even fuelled by nationalistically-minded circles among the

political elites. In the light of the persisting economic depression, rising unemployment, insecurity and alienation it seems to be extremely difficult to overcome attitudes of this kind, and at the same time an urgent task. As Sabrina Ramet has warned,

> an intolerant society is more threatening to the preservation of personal autonomy than an intolerant state … Without freedom in society no constitutional provisions for the political sphere can make much difference. These considerations point to the most serious challenge confronting the Eastern European political system in the wake of communism's collapse.[119]

My contention is that the attitudes of intolerance and animosity persistent among the public at large in Eastern Europe are to a great extent connected with the social mentality developed under communism. The 'brainwashing' metaphor provides a more or less accurate description of the way political propaganda operated during totalitarian times. An existence in conditions of constant fear and suspicion, and the promotion of an 'us/them' mentality, made people not only psychologically and spiritually unfree, but intolerant as well. It will take a long time and much effort to overcome these dispositions, especially taking into consideration the lasting hardships of the transition.

Elements in the Predominantly Negative Response of Postcommunist Society to NRMs

Media Hostility

The wider public, including journalists in the media, do not have much knowledge about the teachings and practices of the various new religions and do not see great differences between them. Quite often they arbitrarily impute characteristics of one faith to another, or apply ready-made abstract negative paradigms, such as 'brainwashing' or 'mind control', and evaluative notions such as 'destructive cults' and 'totalitarian sects', to all the alternative religions. The allegations spread in the mass media against the NRMs typically remain unproved and often turn into inflammatory propaganda. They thus seem to reveal a search for sensationalism on the part of the journalists rather than a sincere concern for supposed infringements of law, order and morality. Hostility towards the NRMs is articulated mainly with regard to their practices – real or imagined – rather than to their ideas and doctrines.[120] Massive and often fairly aggressive recruitment campaigns by some movements have provoked much controversy and enmity. Penny Morvant writes on the situation in Russia:

> By the early 1990s, evidence of their activity was everywhere: pamphlets and posters were littering the metro, while several radio and TV stations were broadcasting their shows. Today, Russian media reports say hundreds of thousands of Russians belong to 'cults' (or what Russians term 'totalitarian sects'). One account has even put the figure as high as 5 million, or 3 percent to 4 percent of the population, but it is not always clear what is meant by 'totalitarian sects', and that figure most likely also includes members of Christian fundamentalist denominations and religious sects.[121]

The NRMs, for their part, seek to answer the hostility orchestrated against them in

the media. Their limited (or altogether nonexistent) access to the public tribune usually leads them to seek help and collaboration from human rights organisations. Some of them enter into close partnership with other NRMs in order to build an anti-anti-cult front and to lead a common struggle for their judicial and cultural legitimisation. The 'Word of Life' Church (*Tsurkva 'Slovo na zhivota'*) is widely attacked in Bulgaria and did not succeed in reregistering under the new provisions for registration introduced in 1994. One of its members told me that 'the activity of the media only improved our relationships with the other churches'. At the same time, however, fundamental and irreconcilable differences between their teachings and practices, and their exclusivist value-systems and modes of behaviour, often prevent the NRMs from establishing more comprehensive and multifunctional collaboration.

Generally speaking, the social tensions which emerge in connection with the activity of the NRMs are not religiously based. NRMs are usually considered to present 'a deviant and abnormal threat to the conventional, generally a-religious social practice'.[122] However, the rejection of alternative religions as 'totalitarian sects' and 'destructive cults' is in no way a solution to the controversy. Although the structure and modes of operation of some of them display certain authoritarian features, we need a balanced and informed assessment on the basis of a close study of the doctrine, organisation, activity and methods of recruitment of each particular NRM in its particular environment if we are to understand what motivates people to join it and the reasons for its success or failure and for the specific tensions arising between a particular NRM and society at large.

Anticult Collaboration

Although it is possible to argue that the strongest and most explicit negative attitudes to NRMs are expressed in this or that quarter (traditional churches, media, recruits' families for example) with the aim of organising an anticult[123] response intended to influence the state authorities to limit or prohibit their activities, a very typical tendency seems to be the facile and unproblematic relocation of negative attitudes from one sector of society to another. Consequently, a mutual influencing and reinforcement of negative dispositions among the distinct anticult formations is to be observed, as is the building of a common front for 'struggle with the sects' – that is, a strategic collaboration among the concerned parties – in some countries with strong anticult feeling, such as Russia.[124] As James Beckford has noted, 'the fact that the public response is more evident and better documented than the movements them-selves is a revealing comment on their status. Very few people have taken the trouble to study them closely, but many more people are prepared to organize defences against them.'[125]

Generally, the anticult movements in Eastern Europe follow the strategies and language of their counterparts in Western Europe, a fact which leads some authors to claim that they are 'imported' from the West, as are the NRMs themselves.

Perceived Threat to Political and Social Stability

In Eastern Europe the NRMs do not usually have political aspirations and do not endanger the state; just the opposite: most of them openly declare their willingness to abide by the law and work for the wellbeing of society. However, in general in Europe they are often 'felt to threaten certain cultural and social norms'.[126] Gradually,

the theme of conspiracy has received widespread currency,[127] and negative attitudes to NRMs in postcommunist countries are increasingly being articulated in terms of nationalist protectionism. As Eileen Barker has commented,

> While the hostility that the new religions have experienced in the West has been largely, although not exclusively, due to their being new and their questioning the social and political *status quo* … the hostility that is extended to the new religions in Central and Eastern Europe is more likely to be because … the movements are perceived as foreign, a threat to the security of the countries and in direct competition with the traditional, national religions.[128]

Most often, they are deemed to be an unwelcome import of American culture. In Hungary, for instance, as Helen Hartnell has noted, 'Despite the absence of formal investigations, Parliament considered allegations that certain "destructive" organisations (for example the Jehovah's Witnesses, the Church of Scientology, the Unification Church, and the Hare Krishna Society) were breaking up families and posing the danger of "Americanisation" to Hungarian society'.[129] Such attitudes are fostered by a lack of proper information about the economic policies and practices of the new religions and by the fact that they are typically sponsored from abroad. The financial capacities of some of them have raised fears that they could establish a kind of 'state-within-a-state'.

Overestimation of Strength

The numerical strength of the NRMs has commonly been exaggerated. One reason for this is that the NRMs themselves claim a larger membership than they in fact possess in order to justify their presence and acquire a more sound social standing. At the same time, it is obviously in line with the aims of the anticult formations to emphasise that alternative faiths pose a threat to society because of their growing popularity, apart from any other negative impact they may have. According to a recent reference book published by the Missionary Department of the Moscow Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church, entitled *Novyye religioznyye organizatsii v Rossii destruktivnogo i okkul'tnogo kharaktera* (*New Religious Organisations of Russia with Destructive and Occult Character*), the 'adepts' of 'religious sects' in Russia are thought to number between 3 and 5 million, 500,000 of whom are under 18, and one million between 18 and 25 years old. Between 500,000 and 900,000 of all sectarians are said to be 'adepts of destructive religious organisations'. The book maintains that even these data are incomplete, because some 'destructive religious groups have been registered as social or business organisations', and a great number have been operating without registration. A general view of the situation abroad presents a picture which is in no way less threatening: '600,000 adepts of 400 new religious and pseudoreligious movements' in 'relatively small Italy', 400,000 in England, 15 million in the USA where the number of the 'destructive cults' is reported to be between 2500 and 3000, and so on.[130]

In fact, a considerable decline in the influence and significance of NRMs seems already to be an emerging trend in Eastern Europe. In 1995 I interviewed the director of the Bulgarian government's Directorate of Religious Affairs (*Direktsiya po veroizpovedaniyata*) who pointed out that the smaller alternative religious groups had started to join some of the larger organisations. The influx of NRMs and the rapid rise in their membership in the first years after the fall of the Berlin Wall had ceased.

According to data quoted by Neli Hadzhiiska,[131] in 1993 about one per cent of the Bulgarian population, that is about 85,000 people, had been registered as members of alternative religious movements. The approximate number of adherents of NRMs which I counted up on the basis of data given by Todor Petkov[132] for the different religious communities in a book of interviews with their leaders showed that their membership had dropped to about one tenth of what it had been a decade earlier. I relate this decline to the fact that Bulgarian society is fairly highly secularised[133] and to growing material hardship, physical insecurity and overall stress caused by the difficult transformation process. In Bulgaria at least, people are overwhelmed by the daily struggle for survival and do not seem to have time and energy to concern themselves with their spiritual salvation.

Clashes about Values

As most writers on NRMs will agree, 'The conflicts between NRMs and the rest of society must be understood as the result of clashes between different sets of values.'[134] In other words, in the sphere of religion-related interactions and controversies different interest groups are to be discerned. They compete for the power to decide about what religion is, whether and when religious freedom may be limited or curtailed, what model of church-state relationship should be followed, and so on. In this respect, Bryan Wilson discerns two radically different positions: on the one hand, 'the formally rational position adopted by high level (but remote) international agencies: that all men are to be regarded as equal, so their religions should be so regarded'; and on the other,

> the alternative, conservative contention is to suggest that it is appropriate that the law of any country should seek to reinforce the historical cultural values, the spiritual inheritance of the people, and to protect these in the face of the mounting pluralism of what might be held to be morally disruptive phenomena which brings uncertainty, contradiction and unrest in the religious and cultural sphere.[135]

The painful need for consensus about basic social values in postcommunist society often prompts the mainline Christian churches to promulgate paradigms by which they seek to overcome diversity in world-views and morality by enforcing their own 'traditional'[136] patterns of religious and social behaviour. However, the integrative effects they claim to ensure become contestable in the light of the external difficulties and internal controversies and divisions they experience when struggling to come to terms with a complex multireligious and culturally diverse environment. A vivid description of the situation in Romania by Ion Bria is relevant to the rest of Eastern Europe and the traditional faiths there as well:

> Despite the immediate euphoria following the end of the communist era, the predominant mood of Romanian Orthodoxy today is not one of utopia or jubilation … Life in society and church alike is distorted and incoherent. Nobody has yet offered an adequate description of the new reality, and as a result the image of the country is becoming anonymous.[137]

Social theorists seem to agree on certain functions performed by religious symbols at a time of perceived moral crisis. Some authors such as Anthony Wallace have argued that times of grave crisis and social disorganisation make a society receptive to new forms and expressions of religiosity.[138] Another has suggested that 'a cultural

shift that discredits the assumptions of the old religion and a social collapse that renders the society vulnerable to NRMs' may 'facilitate the replacement of one religious tradition by another'.[139] However, the situation in Eastern Europe is unique, and its peculiarity is to be seen *inter alia* in the fact that the 'old' churches 'entered' the suddenly pluralised religious market after 1989 simultaneously with the new religions. Therefore, in a particular sense, they turned out to be 'new' for many newly converted people, or people who for the first time in their life could take a closer look at religion. The 'old' Christian churches, despite the political collaboration of some of them with the communist regimes, are much better off than the alternative religious movements in terms of their centuries-long historical presence and the fact that they have been explicitly or implicitly favoured by political and cultural elites. The NRMs in Eastern Europe, at least in the present socio-cultural environment, could hardly provide either the language needed for 'an adequate description of the new reality' or the symbols for the integration of society. Benton Johnson has mentioned that NRMs lack an 'adequate theory of society', which makes them unlikely to produce the social change they themselves seek.[140] Bryan Wilson has emphasised that NRMs do not have much chance to 'become a source of new values for society as a whole … if they appeal only to sectional minorities … if they remain so widely diverse in orientation and structure … if they fail to acquire purchase on any facet of the institutional order'.[141]

The new religions in Eastern Europe could have some success by responding to the specific needs, aspirations and grievances of the people who are bearing the burdens of a transitional period; indeed, some of them have already demonstrated certain abilities to help with adaptation and the overcoming of identity crises and to provide maintenance for the social sphere. Hardly any of them, however, are in a position to propose a comprehensive and long-term response to societal anomie and the destruction of the 'meaning-system'. At the moment they are acting as specific mediators between public problems and the fragmented private ways in which members of society try to cope with them, but their *ad hoc* pragmatically oriented approach to postcommunist reality is mostly piecemeal and highly uncontextualised. In this way they contribute to the further fragmentation of the social and cultural structure exactly at a time of urgent need for the unifying of public forces. Last but not least, the lack of a dominant culture, in confrontation with which the subculture choices could be constructed and routinised,[142] makes their future in Eastern Europe fairly uncertain. Or, to quote the apt phrase of Rodney Stark, they attempt 'to spread the wrong message in the wrong time and place'.[143]

In this respect the traditional Christian churches, despite their deficiencies, which are not to be overlooked, seem still to have their chance. However, they have to accept that 'freedom of religion' means rights for all faiths, not only for their own, and that their place and role in postcommunist society are not to be taken for granted and/or constitutionally safeguarded, but have to be fought for day by day. The competition presupposed by the new situation of religious liberty and pluralism is a challenge which could bring them to a genuine revival, if taken in positive terms and met with responsibility, dignity and honour, rather than with hostility, fear and a search for new alliances with the state.

Notes and References

[1]   I am grateful to The Becket Institute at St Hugh's College, Oxford, for the visiting scholarship during 1998–99 when this work was written.

[2]   Patrick Michel, *Politics and Religion in Eastern Europe: Catholicism in Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia* (Polity Press, Cambridge, 1991), pp. 8, 19.

[3]   Bryan Wilson, *Contemporary Transformations of Religion* (Oxford University Press, London, 1976).

[4]   Rodney Stark and William Bainbridge, *The Future of Religion: Secularization, Revival, and Cult Formation* (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1985). A more detailed discussion of the current theories on new religions can be found in John Saliba, *Perspectives on New Religious Movements* (Geoffrey Chapman, London, 1995).

[5]   As Sabrina Ramet has commented, 'In communist aspirations secularisation was supposed to eliminate popular belief in the supernatural and to cut the institutional umbilical cord with Tradition, that obstacle to orthodox communist resocialization as it was conceived in the decades prior to Gorbachev. But as Peter Berger noted more than two decades ago, the principal effect of secularisation is to bring about "a demonopolization of religious traditions [which] thus, *ipso facto*, leads to a pluralistic situation". Hitherto unchallenged spiritual and normative explanations are challenged in the course of secularization; this, combined with social change and culture contact, increases the likelihood that alternative explanations may find receptive audiences.' (Sabrina Ramet, *Social Currents in Eastern Europe: the Sources and Consequences of the Great Transformation* (Duke University Press, Durham, 1995), p. 176).

[6]   Alexander Adadjanian, 'Religious responses to social changes in Russia: traditional and new religions compared', *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, vol. 11, no. 1, January 1996, pp. 69–76, here p. 70.

[7]   *ibid.*, p. 71.

[8]   Kevin Hasson, 'Thoughts toward an anthropology of religious liberty', *Religious Liberty and Secularism* (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1998), pp. 37–40, here p. 38.

[9]   Paul Mojzes, *Religious Liberty in Eastern Europe and the USSR before and after the Great Transformation* (University of Columbia Press, New York, 1992), p. 383.

[10] Dimitry Pospielovsky, 'The Russian Orthodox Church in the postcommunist CIS', in Michael Bourdeaux (ed.), *The Politics of Religion in Russia and the New States of Eurasia* (M.E. Sharpe, New York, 1995), pp. 41–74, here pp. 43–44.

[11] In the following short country-by-country survey of the new legislation on religion in Eastern Europe I draw heavily on Kevin Boyle and Juliet Sheen, *Freedom of Religion and Belief: a World Report* (Routledge, London, 1997), pp. 374, 282–84, 341–43, 360–62, 368–70. When discussing critical attitudes towards the 1997 Russian law on religion I use other sources, as indicated in the text.

[12] Marat Shterin and James Richardson, 'Local laws restricting religion in Russia: precursors of Russia's new national law', *Journal of Church and State*, vol. 40, no. 2, 1998, pp. 319–41, here pp. 323–24.

[13] Sergei Filatov, 'Rossiiskiye traditsii dukhovnoi tiranii i novy zakon o religii', in *Zakon o svobode sovesti 1997 goda: mezhdunarodnyye normy i rossiiskiye traditsii* (Moskovsky Obshchestvenny Nauchny Fond, Moscow, 1998), pp. 4–10.

[14] Lawrence Uzzell, 'Rossiisky zakon o svobode sovesti 1997 goda i mezhdunarodnyye normy', in *Zakon o svobode sovesti 1997 goda …*, pp. 11–23, here p. 19.

[15] Halina Grzymala-Moszczynska, 'Established religion vs. new religions: social perception and legal consequences', *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, vol. 33, no. 1, Winter 1996, pp. 69–73, here p. 69.

[16] Halina Grzymala-Moszczynska's investigation-based findings bring us closer to the uneasy situation of religious minorities in postcommunist society. 'In the social context [of Poland] all religions except Roman Catholicism are both new and alien and are characterised as outsiders of the society. Research conducted in the samples of the Polish members of the Lutheran and Orthodox churches in Warsaw demonstrated that, in fact, these minorities not only feel their minority status *vis-à-vis* the Catholic majority but also perceive themselves as a helpless, discriminated against, and endangered group. At the same time, they compensate their negative emotions by stressing positive features of their

own denominations ... The representatives of both confessions feel discriminated against not only in a social sense but also in respect to their professional careers. Their endangered feelings stem from the fear of potentially being assimilated as a group into the Catholic majority, because in the case of mixed marriages the Roman Catholic Church requires that children will be educated into the Catholic religion.' (*ibid.*, pp. 70–71.)

17 In his studies of alternative religions and their adherents Bryan Wilson typically uses the terms 'sects' and 'sectarians' (without any negative implications) to designate mainly those which have come into being through schisms from the established Christian churches (although he disagrees with Rodney Stark who supposes all sects to be a consequence of schism and emphasises that some of them have come into being through the activities of new visionaries; others as a result of the activity of 'seekers'; others as spin-offs of inter-denominational revivalism; yet others as a result of internal revitalisation – see the Introduction to Bryan Wilson (ed.), *Patterns of Sectarianism* (Heinemann, London, 1967), p. 17) – in contrast to the NRMs which are characterised by more diversified claims and looser boundaries. In the present work I use the terms 'NRMs' and 'new religions', despite their imperfection and their possible ambiguity (see on this matter for instance Saliba, *op. cit.* (ref. 4), pp. 8–11), mainly because their use has generally been accepted in the most recent specialised literature as up-to-date and evaluation-free. James Beckford, for example, refers the term NRM 'to those movements which have become *controversial* in a number of countries' (James Beckford, 'States, governments and the management of controversial new religious movements', in E. Barker, J. Beckford and K. Dobbelaere (eds), *Secularization, Rationalism and Sectarianism* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1993), pp. 125–43, here p. 127). Although he has titled one of his books *Cult Controversies*, he has argued for a replacement of the terms 'cult' and 'sect' by 'NRM' (James Beckford, *Cult Controversies: the Social Response to New Religious Movements* (Tavistock, London, 1985), pp. 75–76).

18 Bryan Wilson, *The Social Dimensions of Sectarianism: Sects and New Religious Movements in Contemporary Society* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1992), p. 31.

19 *ibid.*, p. 26.

20 Saliba, *op. cit.* (ref. 4), p. 146.

21 Massimo Introvigne, 'Religious liberty in Western Europe', *ISKCON Communications Journal*, vol. 5, no. 2, December 1997, pp. 37–48, here p. 37. Introvigne supports his claim by a number of examples from France, Switzerland, Belgium and Germany.

22 Wilson, *op. cit.* (ref. 18), p. 45.

23 One cannot help noting the fact that western societies often avoid applying a commitment to human rights to legislation regarding citizenship. These generally nondemocratic provisions have of course their socio-political explanation and careful judicial backing, but the facts remain facts however one chooses to explain them.

24 Wilson, *op. cit.* (ref. 18), pp. 69–70.

25 I do not think that the notion of 'spiritual vacuum' which has gained a wide currency in the literature about postcommunism provides a correct description of the overwhelming mood after the collapse of the old regime. It is doubtful whether there was a place for much spirituality under a system of social engineering supposed to demonstrate the ultimate victory of 'historical materialism' and 'scientific atheism'. The predominant feeling after 1989 could be described as an identity crisis: that is, shattered social and personal frames of reference and a loss of orientation and of a sense of continuity.

26 Innokenti Pavlov, '"Impersky revanshizm" i svoboda sovesti', in *Zakon o svobode sovesti 1997 goda …*, pp. 46–51, here pp. 48, 51.

27 Wilson, *op. cit.* (ref. 18), p. 223.

28 Eileen Barker, 'But who's going to win? National and minority religions in post-communist society', in Ulrich Nembach, Heinrich Rusterholz and Paul Zulehner (eds), *Informationes Theologiae Europae: internationales ökumenisches Jahrbuch für Theologie, 7. Jahrgang* (Peter Lang, Frankfurt am Main, 1998), pp. 11–39, here pp. 35–36.

29 George Chryssides, 'New religious movements in Hungary and Britain: a comparison', in

Robert Traer (ed.), *Religion and Human Rights in Europe* (International Association for Religious Freedom, Oxford, 1995), pp. 89–97, here p. 95.

30 Felix Corley, 'Macedonian evangelicals successfully challenge restrictive law', *Compass*, 19 February 1999/*Human Rights Without Frontiers*, 1 March 1999: http://www.hrwf. net. I am grateful to Professor Bryan Wilson for bringing this document to my attention.

31 The suggestion of Massimo Introvigne that 'in case of common crime (a different thing from the imaginary crimes of "belonging to a cult" or "using mind-control techniques") the suspects should be investigated and prosecuted as criminal suspects, not as members of religious minorities' (*op. cit.* (ref. 21), p. 48) needs further elaboration. The situation is made more complex by the fact that the motivation of the perpetrators of a crime in the case of socially dangerous religious groups most often ensues from the teaching they claim to follow or to have received as a 'revelation'; that is, the crime itself is in fact connected to their specific 'religious' beliefs. There are numerous examples in the history of mankind of social or psychological pathology manifesting itself under religious garments. The question of the possible uses and misuses of religion is hardly to be resolved without taking into consideration all the aspects of the *particular* case. However, the crimes should be punished as *crimes*, and not as *religious* crimes, and in cases where certain religious groups have to be restricted or even banned altogether as 'dangerous and destructive cults', this should be done because they really are 'dangerous and destructive', and not because they are 'cults'.

32 Massimo Introvigne underlines the fact that 'a technique has been used to discriminate against unpopular groups by redefining the notion of "religion". While most scholars favor a broad definition of religion (for example, as a system of answers to the basic human questions about the origins and destiny of humans), institutional definitions by political and judicial actors are often result-oriented … . It is … difficult to avoid the impression that in some European countries today, the selection of a set of criteria among the many that are available are governed primarily by whether an organisation deserves protection or punishment. Only broad definitions of religion appear to be consistent with the aims of religious liberty embodied in a number of rational constitutions, institutional declarations and conventions.' (*op. cit.* (ref. 21), pp. 37–38).

33 Beckford, 'States, governments …' (ref. 17), pp. 131–32.

34 In this respect, James Richardson has registered the decline of the 'traditional flexibility and freedoms usually afforded religious groups in the US' (quoted in *ibid.*, p. 129).

35 *ibid.*, pp. 125–26.

36 To refer once again to James Beckford: 'The significance of NRM-related controversies is potentially very wide indeed, and goes to the very heart of debates about the protection or expansion of autonomy for all regional and minority cultures, voluntary associations, and social movements in Western States. The various modes of exercising control over controversial NRMs may be the first stirrings of a breeze that could develop into a storm for relations between religion, the State, and governments.' (*ibid.*, p. 141).

37 Phillip Hammond, *With Liberty for All: Freedom of Religion in the United States* (Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, KY, 1998), p. XI. On the discussion of the two competing approaches towards the nature of the separation itself – the 'accommodationist' and the 'separationist' – see *ibid.*, pp. 1–21. The author clarifies: 'Underlying the accommodationist approach is the assumption that what is to be accommodated is easy to identify. It comes in many guises, and all – within reason – are to be tolerated; no accommodationist favors one established *Church*. Rather, accommodationists believe all religions are to be shown preference over nonreligion, or else religion cannot be freely exercised. For this reason, the accommodationist approach is sometimes referred to as "nonpreferentialism". By contrast, the separationist approach is based on the "radical principle" that truly guaranteeing free exercise requires government to offer no aid, to give no privilege, to *any* religion, nor to religion over nonreligion. For separationists, religion is not all that easily identified.' (*ibid.*, p. 3).

38 See Boyle and Sheen, *op. cit.* (ref. 11), p. 341.

39 Helen Hartnell, 'The five-year span (1989–94): a status report on law and religion in Hungary', in Traer (ed.), *op. cit.* (ref. 29), pp. 71–87, here pp. 73, 79. According to Hartnell's definitions of these four types, given in the endnotes to her article, the endorsement model is to be found in those countries which 'acknowledge the special role played by a particular church, without going so far as to designate it the official church of the country. The accommodation model is characterised by the state's "benevolent neutrality" toward religion – including a policy of providing exceptions to generally applicable laws that burden some because of their religious beliefs (e.g. conscientious objectors) – but there is no direct state funding of religion. The separationist model tends to produce more rigid separation between public and religious life. In a strict separationist system, there would be no direct or indirect state funding for religious activities; no religious exceptions from generally applicable laws; no religious teaching in public schools; and no religious symbols in public.' (*ibid.*, p. 84).

40 In its general discussion of church-state separation, the Hungarian Constitutional Court emphasises that 'the relationship between church and state is a function of each country's history. In defence of the extensive degree of church-state entanglement in areas such as education, health care and charity, the Court refers to the historical role of the churches in these fields, and argues that *separation* and *cooperation* are not contradictory. The Court treats the constitutionally-mandated *separation* as a strict ideal which cannot be readily achieved in practice, and accepts *cooperation* and *accommodation* as unavoidable during the period of transition.' (*ibid.*, pp. 79–80).

41 The striving of the Polish Roman Catholic Church to a kind of omnipresence at a societal and political level has not been accepted with unanimous approval by the public at large. According to Jakub Karpinski, 'In surveys reporting on attitudes toward the Catholic Church as a public institution, approval has oscillated at around 50 percent in recent years, while disapproval has reached 40 percent. When compared with the 93.4 percent of Poles who are nominally Roman Catholic, those figures are striking.' Jakub Karpinski, 'Poles divided over church's renewed political role', *Transition*, vol. 2, no. 7, April 1996, pp. 11–13, here p. 12.

42 In his famous work *Two Concepts of Liberty* Isaiah Berlin writes: 'Pluralism, with the measure of "negative" liberty that it entails, seems to me a truer and more humane ideal than the goal of those who seek in the great, disciplined, authoritarian structures the ideal of "positive" self-mastery by classes, or peoples, or the whole of mankind. It is truer, because it does, at least, recognize the fact that human goals are many, not all of them commensurable, and in perpetual rivalry with one another. To assume that all values can be graded on one scale, so that it is a mere matter of inspection to determine the highest, seems to me to falsify our knowledge that men are free agents, to represent moral decision as an operation which a slide-rule could, in principle, perform.' (Isaiah Berlin, *Four Essays on Liberty* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1969), p. 171).

43 Hartnell, *op. cit.* (ref. 39), pp. 72–73.

44 Peter Mikat, *Geschichte – Recht – Religion – Politik*, vol. 2 (Paderborn, 1984), p. 838.

45 John Markoff and Daniel Regan, 'Religion, the state and politics: legitimacy in the world's constitutions', in Thomas Robbins and Roland Robertson (eds.), *Church–State Relations: Tensions and Transitions* (Transaction Books, New Brunswick, 1987), pp. 161–82, here pp. 169, 180.

46 Robert Bellah, 'Civil religion in America', *Daedalus*, vol. 96, no. 1, 1967, pp. 1–21.

47 Roy Wallis, *The Elementary Forms of the New Religious Life* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1984), p. 65.

48 Robert Bellah, *The Broken Covenant: American Civil Religion in Time of Trial* (The Seabury Press, New York, 1975), here p. 45.

49 James Beckford, 'The restoration of power to the sociology of religion', in Robbins and Robertson, *op. cit.* (ref. 45), pp. 13–37, here p. 27.

50 Discussed in Karel Dobbelaere, 'Secularization: a multi-dimensional concept', *Current Sociology*, vol. 29, no. 2, Summer 1981, p. 176.

[51] Bryan Wilson, *Old Laws and New Religions* (University of Kent, Canterbury, 1989), p. 32.

[52] *ibid.*, pp. 33–34.

[53] Bryan Wilson, '"Secularisation": religion in the modern world', in Stewart Sutherland and Peter Clarke (eds), *The World's Religions: the Study of Religion, Traditional and New* (Routledge, London, 1988), p. 196.

[54] Karel Dobbelaere, 'Secularization theories and sociological paradigms: convergences and divergences', *Social Compass*, vol. 31, no. 2–3, 1984, p. 200.

[55] David Martin, 'Towards eliminating the concept of secularization', in J. Gould (ed.), *Penguin Survey of the Social Sciences* (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1965).

[56] Roy Wallis and Samuel Bruce, 'Secularization: the orthodox model', in Samuel Bruce (ed.), *Religion and Modernization: Sociologists and Historians Debate the Secularization Thesis* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1992).

[57] Thomas Luckmann, *The Invisible Religion: the Problem of Religion in Modern Society* (Macmillan, New York, 1967), p. 101.

[58] Dobbelaere, *op. cit.* (ref. 50), pp. 11–12.

[59] Erhard Forndran, 'Religion und Politik – eine einführende Problemanzeige', in Erhard Forndran (ed.), *Religion und Politik in einer säkularisierten Welt: Veröffentlichungen der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Politikwissenschaft*, vol. 9 (Baden Baden, 1991), p. 32.

[60] Niklas Luhman, *Funktion der Religion* (Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1977).

[61] Friedrich Tennbruck, 'Die Glaubensgeschichte der Moderne', *Zeitschrift für Politik*, vol. 23, no. 1, 1976; Gottfried Küenzlen, *Der neue Mensch: zur säkularen Religionsgeschichte der Moderne* (Fischer, Munich, 1994).

[62] Carl Schmitt, *Politische Theologie*, part 2 (Duncker & Humblot, Berlin, 1970).

[63] Hermann Lübbe, *Religion nach der Aufklärung* (Verlag Styria, Graz, 1986).

[64] Forndran argues as follows: 'Hierzu kommt, daß zentrale Begriffe und pragmatische Aspekte der Politik der Moderne häufig … auf religiösen Ansichten gründen und daß auch in den demokratischen Gesellschaften eine Reideologisierung und Rereligiösierung nicht zu übersehen ist. Insgesamt hat es nicht allein eine Säkularisierung des Sakralen gegeben. Daneben steht auch eine teilweise Sakralisierung des Säkularen mit einer Einebnung der Differenz zwischen Transzendenz und Immanenz.' (Forndran, *op. cit.* (ref. 59), p. 61).

[65] Bryan Wilson considers secularism to be an ideology which denotes 'a negative evaluative attitude towards religion, and might even be appropriately seen as a particular "religious" position, in the sense that secularism adopts certain premises *a priori* and canvasses a normative (albeit negative) position about supernaturalism' (Wilson, *op. cit.* (ref. 53), p. 196).

[66] See Ramet, *op. cit.* (ref. 5), pp. 155–59. In her discussion of secularisation in Eastern Europe Ramet has presented some statistical data, according to which secularisation was most successful among the Bulgarians and the Czechs, of whom a majority declared themselves to be nonreligious as early as the 1960s, in contrast to the Romanians and the Poles, more than 80 per cent of whom were recorded as believers at the beginning of the 1980s.

[67] Mary Gautier writes: 'For a time, the church opposed this ceremony and refused the religious equivalent to those youth who had participated in the secular ceremony, but by 1960 the number of young people opting for religious confirmation had dropped so drastically that the church lifted its ban. It was clear that the social pressure to participate in the *Jugendweihe* was stronger than the power of the church to oppose it.' (Mary Gautier, 'Church elites and the restoration of civil society in the communist societies of Central Europe', *Journal of Church and State*, vol. 40, no. 2, Spring 1998, pp. 289–317, here p. 295).

[68] Elena Chinyaeva, 'Russian Orthodox Church forges a new role', *Transition*, vol. 2, no. 7, April 1996, pp. 14–18, here p. 15.

[69] Dan Ionescu, 'Romanian Orthodox leaders play the nationalist card', *Transition*, vol. 2, no. 7, April 1996, pp. 24–28, here p. 25.

[70] In the following I draw on Paul Valliere, 'Russian Orthodoxy and human rights', in Irene J. Bloom, Paul Martin, Wayne L. Proudfoot (eds), *Religious Diversity and Human Rights*

(Columbia University Press, New York, 1996), pp. 278–312, here pp. 285–86.

71 According to Paul Mojzes, 'the end of 1948 saw the climax of religious persecutions in most East European countries' (Mojzes, *op. cit.* (ref. 9), p. 143).

72 Ramet, *op. cit.* (ref. 5), p. 157.

73 Spas Raikin summarises communist policy towards the Bulgarian Orthodox Church as follows: 'The taming of the church in the late 1940s involved expropriation and desecration of church buildings, intimidation of worshippers at church doors, and proliferation of fear. Step by step, the church was stripped of its privileges and freedoms and completely deprived of carrying out activities of educational and missionary work outside of church buildings; it was limited to performance of religious rituals only. Prayers and religious instruction in schools were discontinued at once and replaced by classes in atheism. Church marriages, church funerals, divorces and baptisms, previously mandatory by law, were now left to the discretion of the individuals concerned. Fearing to compromise their career opportunities, the young preferred, in general, to stay away from church.' (Spas Raikin, 'The Bulgarian Orthodox Church', in Pedro Ramet (ed.), *Eastern Christianity and Politics in the Twentieth Century* (Duke University Press, Durham and London, 1988), pp. 160–82, here p. 172).

74 Raikin, *op. cit.* (ref. 73), p. 181.

75 David Martin, *A General Theory of Secularization* (Blackwell, Oxford, 1978), p. 138.

76 *ibid.*, p. 210.

77 Chryssides, *op. cit.* (ref. 29), p. 92.

78 Martin, *op. cit.* (ref. 75), p. 96.

79 Mary Gautier has warned against generalisations by Western academics that communist societies 'had been so thoroughly secularised and the churches there had been so effectively marginalised as to pose no threat to political authority'. She has presented a detailed picture of the 'structural support for those groups and organisations which sought to overthrow the Soviet regime' on the part of the East German Protestant Church and the Polish Roman Catholic Church, and their share 'in the pro-democracy movements which culminated in the democratic transformations of 1989' (Gautier, *op. cit.* (ref. 67), pp. 289 ff.).

80 Veniamin Novik, 'Social doctrine: will the Russian Orthodox Church take a daring step?', *Religion, State and Society*, vol. 26, no. 2, June 1998, pp. 197–203, here pp. 202–3.

81 Chinyaeva, *op. cit.* (ref. 68), pp. 16–17.

82 See Filatov, *op. cit.* (ref. 13), pp. 7, 9.

83 Stan Markotich, 'Serbian Orthodox Church regains a limited political role', *Transition*, vol. 2, no. 7, April 1996, pp. 30–32, here p. 30.

84 Pospielovsky, *op. cit.* (ref. 10), p. 55.

85 Saliba, *op. cit.* (ref. 4), pp. 173–74.

86 *ibid.*, pp. 174–75.

87 *ibid.*, p. 176.

88 Saliba provides a detailed analysis of the deficiencies of the apologetic approach in both its forms (*ibid.*, pp. 182–83).

89 *ibid.*, p. 179.

90 In my description of the World Council of Churches and of Second Vatican Council documents on interreligious dialogue and freedom of religion I draw on *ibid.*, pp. 184–86.

91 Both documents can be found in the appendices of Allan Brockway and J. Paul Rajashekar (eds), *New Religious Movements and the Churches* (WCC Publications, Geneva, 1987), 'Summary statement and recommendations' (pp. 171–79); 'Sects or New Religious Movements: pastoral challenge' (pp. 180–97). The Vatican report provides a detailed discussion of the main needs and aspirations which the NRMs appear to satisfy: (1) the quest for belonging; (2) the search for an answer; (3) the search for wholeness; (4) the search for cultural identity; (5) the need to be recognised as special; (6) the search for transcendence; (7) the need for spiritual guidance; (8) the need for vision; (9) the need for participation and involvement.

92 Clement John (ed.), *Human Rights and the Churches: New Challenges. Reports and Papers of the Global Review of Ecumenical Policies and Practices of Human Rights* (World Council of Churches, Geneva, 1998), p. 18.

93 David Robertson, 'The legal protection of religious values in Europe', in *Religious Liberty and Secularism* (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Vatican, 1998), pp. 175–92, here p. 186.

94 Chinyaeva, *op. cit.* (ref. 68), p. 19.

95 Vladimir Fedorov, 'Barriers to ecumenism: an Orthodox view from Russia', *Religion, State and Society*, vol. 26, no. 2, June 1998, pp. 131–43, here p. 134.

96 Ramet, *op. cit.* (ref. 5), p. 457.

97 *ibid.*, p. 13. Discussing the virtue of social tolerance, Ramet connects it intimately with 'first, a respect for difference and an allowance that different people may have legitimate differences of need, custom, belief and behavior; second, the acceptance that the basis for assessing to what extent needs, customs, beliefs and behavior may be worthy of toleration or not is the criterion of harm to human or animal life, and third, acceptance of the principle that there is an important operational difference between universal reason and restricted associational assent in defining what is and is not morality … . Hence, when a moral minority … attempts to impose its moral norms on society as a whole, a tolerant person will oppose that minority. Tolerance, in short, does not mean anything goes; and it certainly does not mean a tolerance of intolerance.' (*ibid.*, pp. 14–15).

98 D. Léger and B. Hervieu, *Des Communautés pour les temps difficiles* (Le Centurion, Paris, 1983).

99 Beckford, *Cult controversies …* (ref. 17), p. 11.

100 Wilson, *op. cit.* (ref. 18), p. 217.

101 Globalisation of culture, according to Friedrich Tennbruck, means that 'alle … alten und neuen Nationalkulturen in eine durchgängige und allseitige Beziehung getreten sind, in der sie einander präsent sind und einander durchdringen … Die Kulturgrenzen fallen, der allseitige Austausch wird zur alltäglichen Realität.' (Friedrich Tennbruck, *Die kulturellen Grundlagen der Gesellschaft: der Fall der Moderne* (Westdeutscher Verlag, Opladen, 1989), p. 273).

102 Social scientists have often pointed out their 'bricolage' character, their complex combination of religious and secular elements, or, as Eileen Barker has come to suspect, that they 'represent simply a highly publicised collection of options selected from the enormous variety already available in modern society, which celebrate neither belief nor ideology under any single canopy'. Eileen Barker, 'New Religious Movements: yet another great awakening?', in Phillip Hammond, *The Sacred in a Secular Age: toward Tension in the Scientific Study of Religion* (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1985), pp. 36–57, here p. 47.

103 The numerous attempts to classify and typologise them just illustrate how problematic the framing of their diversity is under one or more common denominators. On the diversity of the NRMs, which impedes the construction of an ideal type, see for instance Bryan Wilson, 'The new religions: preliminary considerations', in Eileen Barker (ed.), *New Religious Movements: a Perspective for Understanding Society* (The Edwin Mellen Press, New York, 1982), pp. 16–31, here p. 24; Barker, *op. cit.* (ref. 28), pp. 14–16.

104 Thomas Robbins, *Cults, Converts and Charisma* (Sage, London, 1988), p. 44.

105 See Ramet, *op. cit.* (ref. 5), p. 26.

106 Barker, *op. cit.* (ref. 28), p. 19.

107 This quotation comes from a paper by Vladimir Fedorov, *'Religious Revival' and the Spread of Sects and Cults in Russia* (1994), which I found in the archives of the 'Dialogue-Center' in Aarhus, Denmark. The analysis of the Russian situation shows that another major reason for people to join NRMs is 'a dramatic response to materialism and readiness to rush into any opposition' along with other reasons specific to postcommunist society, such as 'a complete religious ignorance of the society as a whole, and its authorities in part', 'a lack of Christian unity and ecumenical consciousness', 'the closedness and formality of the most of the traditional church communities, their lack of interest in the

personal problems' and 'lack of assistance in Bible education by the traditional communities'.

[108]   This is why religious organisations such as Scientology, which offer courses for large fees, seem to be completely irrelevant to the generally poor material conditions in Eastern Europe and therefore without much prospect of expanding their membership in the region.

[109]   A newspaper article called 'Protestanti spasyavat romskite dushi s topla supa i pesni' ('Protestants save the Romas' souls with hot soup and songs') (*Sega*, 6 February 1990) gives a picturesque presentation of the successful missionary activity of the Bulgarian Lord's Church in one of the biggest Roma quarters of Sofia.

[110]   James Beckford has called attention to the fact that when attacking the French government for turning a blind eye to the 'dangers' coming from the 'new sects' in that country, one of the major French anti-cult organisations, L'Association pour la Défense de la Famille et de l'Individu, accused it of 'profiting from the sects' capacity to recruit and rehabilitate various kinds of marginal people for whom the state is thereby relieved of the burden of providing social welfare' and of following the reasoning 'it is better for a youth to join Moon than to join the barricades' (Beckford, *Cult controversies* … (ref. 17), p. 268).

[111]   Robbins, *op. cit.* (ref. 104), pp. 11–12.

[112]   Wallis, *op. cit.* (ref. 47), p. 74.

[113]   Robert Bellah, 'The new consciousness and the Berkeley new left', in Charles Glock and Robert Bellah (eds.), *The New Religious Consciousness* (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1976), pp. 77–92, here pp. 90–91.

[114]   These data support the observation of Eileen Barker that in Eastern Europe 'for a sizeable proportion of the population, pluralism, in the sense of a peaceful co-existence of alternative religions, has been, and for many remains, an alien concept' (Barker, *op. cit.* (ref. 28), p. 20.

[115]   The investigation showed that NRMs in Bulgaria were not very popular among the unemployed, indicating that they were not seen as suggesting an alternative solution to the problems of such people.

[116]   For more details see Neli Hadzhiiska, 'Za nyakoi problemi, svarzani s novite religiozni dvizheniya v Bulgariya', *Filosofski alternativi*, no. 3, 1995, pp. 139–53.

[117]   Some private conversations with families of members of NRMs in Bulgaria have led me to an interesting finding: middle-class families typically take the unconventional religious choice of their offspring as a shameful fact which is to be fought against, but first of all *kept secret*, because it is thought to threaten the family's honour and social prestige.

[118]   *Obektiv* (newsletter of the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee), February–May 1997, p. 24.

[119]   Ramet, *op. cit.* (ref. 5), p. 454.

[120]   Massimo Introvigne distinguishes between 'anti-cult' and 'counter-cult' movements, locating the former in secular society and the latter in Christian circles which confront the alternative religions on the grounds of their teachings. 'Modern anti-cult movements (in opposition to older counter-cult coalitions) are defined as primarily secular organisations fighting "cults" based on brainwashing or mind control paradigm.' (Introvigne, *op. cit.* (ref. 21), p. 39).

[121]   Penny Morvant, 'Cults arouse concern in Russia', *Transition*, vol. 2, no. 7, April 1996, pp. 20–23, here p. 20.

[122]   Wilson, *op. cit.* (ref. 18), p. 47.

[123]   I find the description of a movement, organisation or response as 'anti-cult' unhelpful in the interest of trying to apply objective and nonevaluative definitions as agreed among social scientists to the movements themselves and to the people who for one reason or another take a negative position towards their activities. The designation 'anti-cult' automatically implies that one is thinking about a particular movement as a 'cult' or 'sect'. However, the scholars who feel free to use this word would emphatically oppose a reference to the alternative religions in these terms. A possible explanation of this inconsistency is the wish to focus on the intolerance of the formations called 'anti-cult' and the way they label the NRMs, but I am not sure that this is appropriate to all of them. I allow

myself to use a notion that I object to only because it has already been incorporated in the lexicon of contemporary sociology of religion.

[124] In a publication on the local laws restricting religion in Russia at provincial level Marat Shterin and James Richardson describe the opposition to the NRMs there as Anti-Cult Movement (ACM) and not movements, and emphasise that 'Russia differs from Western countries in terms of implications of stratification for social control over minority religions. In Russia the ability to "use the law" against the minority religions seems to depend not so much on a higher social status of those participating in the ACM as on their ability to point to the inferior cultural status of "foreign religions" and the superior cultural status of the Mother Church or traditional religions. "Relational distance" between those who enforce the law and their targets is created not only by the lack of "shared social values" but by perceived national cultural alienation of the minority groups. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Russian ACM is organised around the Russian Orthodox Church, It is mainly the church to which the ACM owes its credibility with the Russian authorities and easy access to them. This is especially the case in the provinces where "foreign religions" are particularly perceived as alien.' (Shterin and Richardson, *op. cit.* (ref. 12), p. 336).

[125] Beckford, *Cult controversies* … (ref. 17), pp. 250–51. The author presents a detailed analysis of the different emphases of the anti-cult campaign in the West. 'Thus, whereas in the USA the dominant anxiety about "cults" concerns their effect on the minds of individual recruits, anti-cult sentiment in France is dominated by a basically political anxiety about the power that is allegedly being sought and accumulated by their leaders.' (*ibid.*, p. 265). 'The distinctiveness of the response to NRMs in the FRG can be characterised in terms of (a) the very high level of agreement about the nature of the "cult problem" which prevail in a wide variety of social spheres, (b) the connection between different "youth religions" and the roots of terrorism, (c) the dense network of agencies in federal and provincial government, churches, political and social service organisations which co-operate in combating cultic influence, and (d) the strongly intrusive role played by the Federal Ministry for Youth, Family and Health in giving encouragement to diverse expressions of anti-cultism.' (*ibid.*, p. 262). In sum, 'Sentiments and events have been canalised in distinctive ways in accordance with a range of identifiable social, cultural and political factors.' (*ibid.*, p. 274).

[126] *ibid.*, p. 273.

[127] At a conference organised by the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee in 1995 the main arguments against the NRMs used by nationalists, anti-cult parents' committees, politicians and administrators emphasised that they were 'a threat to national security', 'a form of invasion by foreign governments' or even 'a geopolitical intervention of the world powers which are aiming at the destruction of the unique Bulgarian culture'. For details see Mario Marinov, 'Novi religiozni dvizheniya: problemut za semeistvoto v Obedinitelnata tzurkva', *Sotsiologicheski problemi*, no. 3, 1993.

[128] Barker, *op. cit.* (ref. 28), p. 19.

[129] Hartnell, *op. cit.* (ref. 39), p. 85.

[130] Discussing the social perception of NRMs in Britain, James Beckford points out that the total number of people committed to NRMs in Britain 'at any point in the past decade or so has never exceeded about 15,000 and is therefore too small to have aroused widespread concern. Moreover, most movements have given little cause for complaint.' (Beckford, *Cult controversies* … (ref. 17), p. 244).

[131] Hadzhiiska, *op. cit.* (ref. 116), p. 145.

[132] Todor Petkov, *Putevoditel za dukhovnite obshtnosti v Bulgariya* (Litavra, Sofia, 1998).

[133] The observation that Bulgarian society is one of the most secular – see for instance David Martin, *Forbidden Revolution: Pentecostalism in Latin America, Catholicism in Eastern Europe* (Mercer University Press, Macon, 1996), p. 91; Ramet, *op. cit.* (ref. 5), p. 157 – is confirmed by the data quoted by Hadzhiiska (*op. cit.* (ref. 116), pp. 145–46). She points out that in 1990 only four per cent of those interviewed answered in the affirmative the

question whether they believed in God. I am sceptical about the reliability of data supplied by Hadzhiiska (*op. cit.*, pp. 145–46) on a subsequent huge growth of those claiming to be 'believers' (25 per cent in 1991 and 63 per cent in 1992).

[134]   A report by H. Berger and P. Hexel, *Ursachen und Wirkungen gesellschaftlicher Verweigerung junger Menschen unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der 'Jugendreligionen'* (European Centre for Social Welfare Training and Research, Vienna, 1981), quoted in Beckford, *Cult controversies …* (ref. 17), p. 258.

[135]   Wilson, *op. cit.* (ref. 51), pp. 33–34.

[136]   Bryan Wilson has suggested that 'the idea that a given people inherit a common culture and a common religious tradition becomes more and more of a fiction, yet it is a fiction embodied within the law' (*ibid.*, p. 31).

[137]   Ion Bria, *Romania: Orthodox Identity at a Crossroads of Europe* (WCC Publications, Geneva, 1995), p. 51.

[138]   Rodney Stark, 'How new religions succeed: a theoretical model', in David Bromley and Phillip Hammond (eds), *The Future of New Religious Movements* (Mercer University Press, Macon, 1987), pp. 11–29, here p. 20.

[139]   William Bainbridge, *The Sociology of Religious Movements* (Routledge, London, 1997), p. 418.

[140]   Benton Johnson, 'A sociological perspective on the NRMs', in Thomas Robbins and Dick Anthony (eds), *In God We Trust: New Patterns of Religious Pluralism in America* (Transaction Books, New Brunswick, 1981), pp. 51–66, here p. 62.

[141]   Wilson, *op. cit.* (ref. 18), p. 224.

[142]   In his analysis of the Hungarian situation, for instance, George Chryssides writes: 'Unlike Europe and America, Hungary is only beginning to re-establish a Christian voice with which the teachings and practices of the new movements might be compared.' (Chryssides, *op. cit.* (ref. 29), p. 91). Discussing the British establishment, Jonathan Rowland focuses on the view of Jonathan Sacks that the proper function of cultural diversity 'requires a background culture which creates a unified culture within which different values can be publicly expressed'. Jonathan Rowland, 'Religious liberty and the argument for disestablishment', in *Religious Liberty and Secularism* (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Vatican, 1998), pp. 119–28, here p. 126.

[143]   Rodney Stark, 'The rise of a new world faith', *Review of Religious Research*, vol. 26, no. 1, 1984, pp. 18–27, here p. 25.