

Religion and Churches in Europe

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The scenario of European societies is rapidly changing, particularly in the field of religion and Churches. New streams of believers and religious organizations are reaching different places in Europe, sometimes very far from their countries of historical origin. The phenomenon of religious acculturation is a kind of challenge between religious movements and local people and culture. European geography has changed a lot in the last decades and is expected to change even more (especially after new countries will be joining the European Union). The concept of Europe itself is now being discussed. Inside or outside Europe? If we decide to include the group of previous Soviet countries, shall we consider Siberia as well? A compromise solution to this problem could be to include Kazakhstan in a larger list of 49 European countries.

Religious Europe at the beginning

There aren't major hindrances in crossing European continent. This is why migrations, invasions, incursions, expansions have easily occurred as well as cultural exchanges of various origins, on a linguistic and political level, as well as economic and legal, ethic and religious. In ancient times polytheistic religions were prevailing in European territories, followed by monotheistic religions of "salvation" such as Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

Ancient Germans as well are considered to be Indo-European. A complex mythology accompanied the religious traditions of ancient Germans, influenced by the trinitarian structure of ancient religions of oriental origin.

When the Romans, and Indo-Europeans as well, met the ancient Germans, they called them barbarians because they had a completely different culture and religion from that of ancient Italy. Roman citizenship also meant accepting a certain religion. *From Judaism to Islam*

The presence of Jewish people in Central and Oriental Europe became important, in fact Judaism developed its own particular culture. The diffusion of Judaism at first in closed oriental territories and after in Europe also caused deep differences inside the religion. Hebrew was nonetheless spoken as well.

It is active in Central and Oriental Europe, and derives from Northern France and Central Europe, but later on, became diffused in Russia and in East-European countries. After 1492 a decisive change in the presence of Jewish people in Europe was registered: in The Netherlands, in Poland, in Lithuania and other East European countries an increase in Jewish population was registered, as well as in Italy and everywhere else in the Turkish Empire. Zionism instead has quite a political nature, it originated from Oriental Europe, is strongly anarchic-socialist and mainly against or

indifferent to religion.

In 1054 the Church was divided into the Roman Church and the Orthodox Church. *The religious outline of contemporary Europe as historically rooted*

In Europe this religion is a minority but growing presence in all these countries where it was pre-existent, such as: Germany, Norway, Russia, and especially England. However, nowadays, migratory flows from India are increasing also towards other European countries, Italy for instance. the Catholic Church is the main religious influence in the central and southern area (Portugal, Spain, France, Belgium, Centre and South Ireland, Italy, Malta, Southern Switzerland, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Croatia, Slovenia, Czechia, Slovakia, Poland, Lithuania, part of The Netherlands, Latvia and Ukraine);

Protestantism is the main religious influence in the centre and northern area (Iceland, England and Northern Ireland, Central and Northern Switzerland, Germany, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, part of Hungary, of The Netherlands, of Belarus);

Greek and Russian Orthodox is the main religious influence in the south-western area (Greece and part of Cyprus and Macedonia, Serbia, Bulgaria, Romania, Ukraine, Moldavia, Georgia, Armenia, Russia, part of Bosnia-Herzegovina, of Kazakhstan, of Estonia, of Latvia and Byelarus);

Muslim is the main religious influence in oriental areas of Europe (Turkey, Azerbaijan, Albania, part of Macedonia, of Kazakhstan, of Georgia, of Bulgaria and of BosniaHerzegovina).

In the eastern part of the continent Christianity faces Islam, which is the less consistent religious group among the book religions (Judaism, Christianity, Islam) notwithstanding a growing number of adepts.

Other religions and other Churches have crossed Europe also exerting a certain political power, thus influencing economy and linked aspects. Christianity also tried religious colonization in South and North America, in Asia and Africa. In other words compact and fragmented Islamic groups were present in Serbia, Bosnia- Herzegovina, Macedonia and Albania.

Mobility inside Europe should also not be undervalued, with various religious characteristics, marked by oriental countries going to western countries, for example from Russia to Estonia, Lithuania and Germany, or from Czechia, Slovakia as well as ex-Yugoslavia towards Germany, or even from Poland to France, from Estonia and Lithuania to Sweden and Northern Europe.

Hebrew Ashkenazi communities of Yiddish language have been in activity for a long time mostly in the central and oriental countries of Europe.

If Christianity occupies a major position in Europe, other religions have significant presence almost everywhere but mostly in the great urban centres, where non-Christian worship places have

dimensions, capacity and visibility which cannot be ignored. Finally, also in Greece, where Orthodox religion prevails, there is a Roman Catholic cathedral; the same happens in Moscow. Also regarding higher education and scientific levels, Moscow and St. Petersburg both have an Orthodox university and Russia has 37 seminars and 38 religious secondary schools. Even if belief in God has increased since the end of the communist regime, people's basic knowledge about religion is still poor. At the same time, most people have a positive, 'open' attitude towards religion and towards the Russian Orthodox Church. The Russian Orthodox Church, with its 1000-year history, represents stability in a society where many institutions of the previous regime have collapsed" (Kääriäinen 1999: 44). Therefore, Russian Orthodox Church would be a sort of "diffused religion" (Cipriani 2001) that, being historically rooted, emerges again whenever favourable circumstances occur for its presence and further canalization. Changes are also evident in other religions of non European origins but present in almost all of Europe. In 2005, 1.472.587 persons officially passed through Europe with a high concentration in Germany, United Kingdom and France.

The mixture of religions, Churches and temples, but also of new religious movements (Barker 1991) is a clear indicator of pluralism that registers through the *European Values Study* of 1999-2000 (the next will take place in 2008) specific convergences/divergences that also create a common shared plateau of values (Inglehart 2003) among areas usually homogeneous. There are traditional countries like Ireland and Portugal but in the predominantly Catholic countries of Czechia, Slovenia, France, Belgium, Austria, Italy and Spain as well as in the Anglican Great Britain and in Orthodox Greece there is a favourable tendency towards both propitious to secular and rational values and values of auto-expression. The relation between state and religion is not the same everywhere throughout Europe: in some countries there is a clear separation even regulated by the law (as happened in France from 1905), in other countries there is a conservatory regime (Spain, Italy and Portugal), and there are also countries with state Churches (Scandinavian countries and Great Britain). As a matter of fact, there are in Europe some secular states that offer many privileges to religious communities. Another possibility is that state and religion do not have a shared identity but do not take complete opposite positions, sometimes they negotiate case by case, as it happens to majority Churches in a country or towards other minority Churches, movements and religious groups. Such *de facto* situation is also officially highlighted by the Catholic Church itself for example, by Pope John Paul II during his post-synod apostolic exhortation on June 28th 2003 with the title *Ecclesia in Europe*, where we can read at point 20: "Particular Churches in Europe are not simple entities or private organizations. *Decline of religious practices* There is a common datum in religions and the Churches in Europe: a visible reduction of religious practice and participation. Apparently, except for wrong sampling, the only country among post-

Communist Europe registering a countertendency is Georgia, as far as religious importance is concerned. Georgia apparently registers an outstanding increase of religious belief rates, as well as an increasing participation and value relevance. Therefore, as far as religious awakening Orthodox Georgia can be considered on the same level as Orthodox Russia's recent positions. In Europe France occupies the last place of the list.

Pippa and Inglehart write (2004: 86): "traditional religious beliefs and involvement in institutionalized religion vary considerably from one country to another; and have steadily declined throughout Western Europe, particularly since the 1960s. The relation between religious participation and religious pluralism is quite interesting. There is a high rate of participation as well as high pluralism in Turkey, Luxemburg, Slovenia, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Finland, Denmark, Russia, France, Sweden and Estonia. *Culture and religion*

Culture plays an important role for the presence of religion and Churches in single nations. This division of religions by their belonging cultures seems to be quite founded because "belonging to a culture is the basic factor for self-accomplishment. In the Urals, in Kazakhstan as well in Turkey settlements of *Old Believers* were also present. Old Believer activists also have a better religious knowledge than Orthodox of the same type" (Lane 1978: 135).

A different case is that of the Lithuanian Catholic Church. *Orthodox Churches*

Nonetheless "the Orthodox Church has its support overwhelmingly in rural areas. It is not by chance that Bulgaria has its own National Orthodox Church with six million believers, twelve dioceses and thousands of priests. In comparison with Russia, Greece and Serbia, Bulgaria has a secondary role within Orthodoxy. In other areas there is a closer relation between the state and Church, as if it was to create a worship of state and its rulers. In this way it is the population itself that supports religion through culture. Apparently, traces of paganism are also present, forms of religion far off from high, intellectual and selected European culture. Also, in recent times, and referring to the wide area of Orthodox culture the limits of "canonical territories" have been redefined in order to stress supremacy rights, especially by the Russian Orthodox Church over the Catholic Church. No religion can be established as a state or compulsory religion". Moreover the document *Basis of the Social Conception of Russian Orthodox Church* says that (III, 3): "the Church cannot take advantage of the points of view of the state". The relation with modernity really makes the difference between Orthodoxy and Western religions (Kaufmann 1997). Leaving aside the significant theological and cultural differences between Western and Oriental Christianity, modernity did not represent an autonomous cultural development of Orthodox countries. Moreover, "from the '800 the Church and the Orthodox culture entered a form of social development which is radically new and with no precedents. It also meant a new form of relationship between the Church and the State as well as new tensions and new alliances between religion and politics because, at

least in Greece, but also in the rest of the Balkans, the institution of the Orthodox Church became a servant of the State and assumed a nationalist way of thinking. The Orthodox Church has also played, as for the migrations of the twentieth century, a decisive cultural role for the Orthodox Diaspora at a World level" (Kokosalakis 1996: 19-20).

The Serbian Orthodox Church dramatically lived through the end of Yugoslavia, with the rising ethnic conflicts in 1991 and the confrontation between Catholics and Muslims. Political, ethnic and religious reasons were bound together giving as outcome an explosive mixture with tragic consequences.

Ethnocentrism and Church dependence on the State are probably the most important issues of the Orthodox Church today" (Makrides 1996: 69- 70). Even if an Orthodox *Commonwealth* will not be realized, nonetheless with the entering of Bulgaria and Romania by 2007 the presence of Orthodox people has increased. Many of them are already operating in Western Europe, Sweden, France, United Kingdom, Switzerland, Germany, Finland, Croatia and Austria.

Post-Communist Religion

Politicizing culture and religion is what Vrcan (2006) points out. Moreover, many particular situations throughout Yugoslavian territories show that national-oriented culture and religious politicization processes were widely popular in the country. In fact Catholicism in Herzegovina was a "religion in a border region", but actually it has become a "border religion" (Vrcan 2006: 222). Tomka's contribution is very relevant and faces diverse issues of East and Western Europe with a comparative approach. He begins with three remarks: religious influence is declining in Western Europe; while Western young people seem to be increasingly less religious, the Eastern and Central situation seems to register an inverted tendency; in ex-Communist countries the role of Churches is increasingly popular. Some central European countries play a different role and are more modernized and represent a solid reference for East countries, which are quite marginal in comparison with Western countries. There are two main guiding factors at the origins of Western Christian Churches: Church as an institution and individual autonomy. However, when we want to distinguish what is peculiar of Oriental Churches respect to Western Churches we come to six differences, according to Tomka (2006: 259-262): a reduced control of the Church and dominance of local factors; the tendency to homologate forms with contents, beliefs with symbols, liturgy with art; a more collective than individual approach to religious belonging and a dominant position of the clergy within an ecclesiastic role hierarchy; religion and culture are mainly considered as one; a formally bombastic liturgy that does not allow adjustments, changes nor a direct participation of laymen; a basic unity between politics and religion, as well as state and Church, just like a "symphony".

Politics and religion

As commonly known, Catholicism prevails in Central Europe, while Orthodoxy is widespread in Oriental Europe: both new normative areas rule the relation between Church and state.

Little is known about practised religions; therefore socio-religious public data do not include the entire resident population. Actually, the most remarkable recovery is shown by the Russian Orthodox Church (Borowik: 2006: 268). "Traditions of strong links and close ties between state and Church provided the basis for the submission of the Church and for co-operation with the state, whichever the state might be" (Borowik 2006: 269). Apparently opportunistic strategies were developed by the Orthodox Church in order to survive bad situations. This was also possible because national Orthodox Churches (in Greece as in Georgia, in Russia as in Serbia) lacked close relations; therefore there was no need for a similar behaviour. It will be part of a generic and omnicomprehensive spirituality that leads to an identification between religion, culture and state: "being Orthodox and Bulgarian, for instance, is almost the same, but withdrawing from religion as moral teachings or as based in religious practice is rather rare" (Borowik 2006: 270). This happens in contexts where Orthodox religion prevails.

"With the collapse of Communism, the countries of Eastern and Central Europe joined the world of growing differentiation and globalization" (Borowik 2006: 272). The operation was easier in Central European countries, especially Poland, in the Baltic area, Hungary, Czechia and Slovakia. Finally, the difference between religions of Western and Eastern Europe is given by the presence of a problem of national identity connected to religious belonging. *Politicization of religion in Eastern Europe*

In Croatia as well as in Poland, for instance, the Catholic Church has fostered the birth of a modern nation-state (Martin 2005: 81, quoted by Marinović Jerolimov and Zrinščak 2006: 289). That of Serbians and the Serbian Orthodox Church, thus sharing a common destiny with other oriental orthodox nations, is a peculiar case". Ethnical and religious conflicts occurred between Serbian Orthodoxes against Bosnian Muslims and against Serbian Catholics with Croatian habits. It is also important to remember that in 1967 an autocephalous Macedonian Orthodox Church was auto-proclaimed in Macedonia, independent from the Serbian Church.

Also Serbian nationalism contributed to a religious rebirth. Moreover interethnic disputes had a religious connotation: Catholics, Orthodoxes and Muslims were fighting one against the other.

State and Religion

From January 1st 2007 Bulgaria (together with Romania) entered the European Union. Greek and

Irish constitutions refer to religion, the German one permits *Invocatio Dei*, the European one does not give any reference at all. This one does not legitimate Macedonian Orthodox Church either.

This, one could surmise, may also create results in the religious-ethical field and within the Churches in particular” (Cipriani 1994: 2). *Religious pluralism*

Speaking of pluralism and respect of religion, Europe develops a number of different issues (Davie and Hervieu-Léger 1996; Davie 2000; Davie 2002; Bolgiani, Margiotta Broglio and Mazzola 2006).

* Religious freedom abolished in 1967, and reintroduced in 1990.

Independently of the type of preponderant religion, problems of freedom of expression and religion practices rise from minority confessions.

The different religions and Churches operating in Europe manifest a variety of behaviours towards religious pluralism. This is the result of a wide inquiry called RAMP (Religious And Moral Pluralism) carried out in many European countries: Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Great Britain, Hungary, Italy, The Netherlands, Norway, Portugal and Sweden (Dobbelaere and Riis 2002). The conclusions of this research are not univocal: “in the model explaining pluralism as a cultural enrichment ... the effect of Church commitment is positive, meaning that people with a high degree of commitment to their Church also tend to appreciate the cultural enrichment of religious pluralism. Actually “the Churches are challenged to change their positions. Formerly, the Churches as authoritative institutions could proclaim a truth that was taken for granted by Church members. Religious identity must then try to take into account the existence of other religious identities, aspects which modify its structure of belief. Young people are the first ones to experience the dynamics of secularization, thus reducing rates of religious belonging feelings, of ritual practices and spiritual dependence. This impetus originates from below: with the diffusion of new religious identities, groups and organisations ranging from Buddhists, to the new Churches of Protestant matrix and the different Islamic communities. There are also pressures that come from above, from the effects of European integration that require a re-negotiation of long-standing Church-state relations” (Bontempi 2005: 166). Actually, “the elaboration of a European right to religion cannot result from any combination of national rights on the issue because the differences between the states are too great. Since 1971 the Catholic Church created a Council of European Episcopal Conferences and in 1980 constituted a Commission of Episcopates for the European Union. Before, other Churches had created a Conference of European Churches, with more than one hundred denominations. Churches practically contribute to civil life, therefore they play an important role in the construction of European identity. In Portugal, for instance, political changes gave way to the new Law of Religious Freedom”.

It can be useful to verify the rate of pluralism by observing the presence of religious teaching in European public school. *Protestantism in Europe*

Later on, other Protestant immigrants arrived in Russia and established themselves mainly in Southern Russia. Dutch Protestants were also relevant presences, even if more interested in economic reasons: already in 1616 there was the reformed Church in Moscow. “The origin of these Protestant currents in Russia, however, is never to be solely explained in terms of cultural and religious infiltration from Western Europe ... That they finally established themselves as independent groups beside the Orthodox Church is due in large measure to the way in which the Church treated these believers” (Hebly 1976: 80).

Later on they could have a certain freedom as antagonists of the Orthodox Church. Certainly, the majority of Protestants is located in Northern European countries: in Finland, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Iceland, and Germany as well. This is quite a united group of countries where “there is a growing interest in the matter of the relationship between Church and state both within and outside the Churches” (Harmati 1984: 13). Also the *folk Church* of the Northern states is the Church of people because it is local and is therefore legitimated by a close relation with the referring nation. In Finland there has been freedom of religion since 1923. The Lutheran Evangelical Church is recognized by Finnish constitution but it is quite autonomous, more than other Churches of the north. Pentecostals are the more numerous religious groups among non-officially registered congregations, while Methodists are mentioned as a free Church. Among Lutherans, Orthodoxes and Catholics there is some sort of collaboration.

“Religious Europe is not only a map of territories characterized by this or that religious culture, Religious Europe has also and moreover the presence of a wide number of minorities: Orthodox or Protestants in Catholic countries, Catholic and Orthodox in Protestant countries, Jews and Muslims in the majority of European countries” (Vincent and Willaime 1993: 91). Resistances against Europe are also present in Protestantism, according to Dreyfus (1993: 128) who underlines that the Protestant states of Western Europe are highly doubtful over the construction of Europe.

However, reality has its own way and develops towards other conceptions thus revealing that Europe is no longer a Western territory, because many Eastern influences can be found all over Europe. The change is clear enough if seen on the gross percentage of religious belonging, carried out by Willaime (2004: 19):

As already said, there are problems with Orthodoxes and Protestants. *Islam in Europe*

In Europe, Islamic East is a recurrent theme also for mass communication. It is not by chance that sociological bibliography on Islam in Europe has rapidly increased (Dassetto and Conrad 1996) and that now some sociologists of religion, who were once mainly experienced in the dominant religion of their home country, have now become Islam experts, studying the relationship between the state and Islamic religion, the integration of Muslims in Europe and the role of Islam inside European

society. France, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Italy, The Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, Spain and Switzerland are among the countries that care more about new themes of Islamic content, in relation to areas such as immigration, citizenship, political representatives, community organization, means of mass communication, identity processes, the perception of European Union, the identification with Europe, Islamization of Europe, Islamic associations in European territory, social and religious Islamic networks, youth education, inter-ethnic conflicts, the use of free time, criminality, entrepreneurship, work, polygamy, minority conditions, linguistic barriers, law statute, places of worship, woman's role, religious practice and conversions.

The question is no more about Islam and Western countries: Islam is inside Western countries. Islam is therefore part of and integrated in Europe, especially as far as the second generations are concerned, who are completely socialized within European territories, speaking one or more European languages, and who are *de facto* Euro-Islamic generations (Allievi and Nielsen 2003; Maréchal 2003). Europe becomes a decisive ground for "Muslim Geopolitics" as well. In the future there is, however, a "plural" Europe (Allievi 2002: 179). Islam itself is "one and multiple", as Pace affirms (2004: 12), passing through the different solutions experienced in Europe for public acknowledgement and state regulation of Islam and Muslim identity. In Scandinavian countries *jus loci* is applied, as well as in France, thus facilitating the citizen's access, but also helping immigrants of European origins limiting access. To conclude about the Islam question in Europe (Bistolfi and Zabbal 1995) a comparative analysis concerning Buddhists and Muslims from European citizens' perception can be interesting. According to some studies carried out in France, Belgium, The Netherlands, Italy, Denmark, United Kingdom, Scotland, Austria, Germany and other places in Europe, appreciation for Buddhism has increased, while appreciation for Muslims has reduced. Furthermore, Buddhism apparently represents the future of Europe. Except for conceiving Islam a sort of new Buddhism, based on some peculiar religious values.

Religions and/in Europe: a conclusion

The four blocks of other religions (Catholics, Orthodoxes, Protestants and Muslims) are a fundamental basis for the construction of Europe. They are actually the corner-stones posed at the four angles of European chessboard: the point of convergence could be Brussels (or Belgium), where the presence of the four religions is clearly shown, with the Jewish religion at a side as a millenarian presence in Europe.

In the nations with a Catholic prevalence there is already a certain number of opinions in favour of the European Union. The relation that other religions have with Europe cannot be denied. Relatively recent data on 49 "European" countries (total amount of 740.000.000 inhabitants) are as follows:

It is not easy to have reliable data on the number of followers of Churches and religions present in Europe. Finally, an intercultural and inter-religious question emerges and the European Union may be asked for an intervention, starting from a legal level.

There are more ancient issues where religion plays a strategic role. Larger divisions are instead those regarding the Caucasus people of Georgia (of Orthodox religion with a minority of Muslims), of Armenia (of Orthodox religion with a few Catholics using Armenian rites, and with a minority of Monophysites) and of Azerbaijan (of Muslim religion, above all Shiites, with a minority of Christians). The perspectives for a European future (Greeley 2003; Knippenberg 2005) cannot leave out of consideration the responsibility for religious problems. In 2007 officially in the European Union are: Portugal, Spain, France, Italy, Belgium, Luxemburg, Ireland, Lithuania, Poland, Czechia, Slovakia, Austria, Hungary, Slovenia, and Malta with a Catholic prevalence; Germany, and The Netherlands with a mixed Catholic-Protestant prevalence; Latvia, with mixed Catholic-Protestant-Orthodox prevalence; Estonia with mixed Protestant-Orthodox prevalence; United Kingdom, Denmark, Sweden, and Finland with Protestant prevalence; Greece, Cyprus, Bulgaria, and Romania with Orthodox prevalence.

New arrivals, especially from Africa and Asia, are changing the inner composition of European nations, also on a religious level, as can be seen in the table below; the data are limited to the 31st December 2000 regarding Europe of fifteen countries, and refer to foreign populations divided into religious belonging:

The importance of new Islamic presences in Europe is far too evident. *References*

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HANDBOOK OF EUROPEAN SOCIETIES

Religion and Churches in Europe

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*In memory of Srđan Vrcan,
a scholar beyond borders and frontiers*

Introduction

The scenario of European societies is rapidly changing, particularly in the field of religion and Churches. New streams of believers and religious organizations are reaching different places in Europe, sometimes very far from their countries of historical origin. The phenomenon of religious acculturation is a kind of challenge between religious movements and local people and culture. Nowadays, the relation between different peoples and religions is becoming more and more frequent and more long lasting than in the past, when the few occasions for a direct contact (*vis-à-vis*) were only due to conflicts and territorial invasions, therefore there wasn't any mediation through travellers and exported goods. In former times, mutual acquaintance was assured by the stories that merchants, ambassadors, military men and explorers would tell about their experiences. At present other media are available: from the telephone to *Internet*, from airplanes to terrestrial and maritime transportation which are becoming more and more rapid, from express mail to communication via satellite.

However, the absence of a direct relationship renders the situation more complicated: linguistic barriers persist, as well as political and national barriers, also the diversity of race and religion keep at a mutual distance. If on the one hand, some improvements have occurred, on the other hand reciprocal mistrust is not diminishing and seems to be rising because of the difficulty in verifying on the reliability of speakers. It is not by chance that nowadays victims pay in economic terms (financial frauds, ghost companies, speculation on economic transactions, informatics theft, e-mail viruses, fraud in the use of credit cards, etc.).

A real knowledge of those belonging to a distant opposite political, ideological and religious belief is hard to be reached. European geography has changed a lot in the last decades and is expected to change even more (especially after new countries will be joining the European Union). The concept of Europe itself is now being discussed. Shall we consider the 27 states already belonging to the EU (constituted on 1st November 1993, in substitution of the European Economic Community founded in 1957), or shall we also include those who are soon to join the Union? How shall the states of former Soviet Union or Russia itself be taken into consideration? Inside or outside Europe? If we decide to include the group of previous Soviet countries, shall we consider Siberia as well? Considering that the Urals and Ural River mark the boundaries between Europe and Asia, how should Kazakhstan be considered, which is half way between the two continents and which in the northern territories on the boundaries with Russia has a strong presence of Christians, as it is in

European countries? A compromise solution to this problem could be to include Kazakhstan in a larger list of 49 European countries.

It is hard to define boundaries, because especially in the field of religion, the choice of one or another solution might give way to crucial consequences. Furthermore, our goal is scientific knowledge applied to different situations from a continental European point of view.

The starting point is that Europe has a generally strong presence of Christians (more than 550,000,000), with its different kinds of Catholicism, which is dominant in the centre and the south, and Protestantism, which is present in the centre and in the north. Since centuries, there are other confessions, but recently new migratory flows have stressed the presence of Islam and some oriental religions.

Religious Europe at the beginning

Since the oldest times European territory was indicated as the northern side of the Aegean sea and Mediterranean sea, on the other side of the Don (or Tanai) River. According to public knowledge, this last boundary before Asian territories slowly extended as far as the Volga River up to the Ural River and Ural Mountains right after the Middle Ages, and particularly starting from the eighteenth century.

That is what the *Erdkunde* retains, the "scientific and historical geography" of the German Carl Ritter (Beck 1979), in the writings on Europe published in 1804 and 1807 as well as in the European geographical maps published in 1806. Urals are actually natural boundaries which divide the rivers that flow into the Caspian Sea from those flowing into the Aral Lake. The Ustjurt plateau is therefore considered the landmark dividing Europe from Asia, according to its geographical position right in the middle, between the land of Kazakhstan and that of Uzbekistan. We may actually consider the Kazakhstan piece of land of the Caspian Depression as belonging more to Europe than to the steppe, closer to the Asian land. However, the general rule is to consider the two lands as one because they actually belong to the same Nation. Therefore the Siberian western lowland, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan as well as Iran, Iraq and Syria remain off from European boundaries.

Orographic peculiarities of Europe have fostered an intense trade between populations during the past centuries: all European chains of mountains can be easily crossed and there are neither deserts nor pluvial forests. There aren't major hindrances in crossing European continent. This is why migrations, invasions, incursions, expansions have easily occurred as well as cultural exchanges of various origins, on a linguistic and political level, as well as economic and legal, ethic and religious. Belonging to the same European racial characteristics has certainly facilitated relations among Europeans, as well as the existence of only three major linguistic families (Slavic, Anglo-Saxon and

Latin, in the order of population density).

Some other linguistic families have a minority position: Albanian, Baltic, Basque, Celtic, Greek, Semitic, Turko-Tatar and Ugro-Finnish, and also their religions present peculiar situations.

From polytheism to monotheism

In ancient times polytheistic religions were prevailing in European territories, followed by monotheistic religions of "salvation" such as Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

Each culture had its own expression of peculiarity, however. In fact, the original context was highly important for the kind of religion coming from it, also in terms of cultural identity. An identical worship was reserved towards shared gods.

It is important to remember that "polytheist populations of ancient times did not use to split and distinguish the religious dimension from all other human activities" (Scarpi 2001: 5-6). Moreover "such religious dimensions are strictly connected with complex and articulated social systems, such as the division and specialization of duties and works, as well as an urban structure and the use of writings. They are geographically located from Mesopotamia to the entire Mediterranean basin up to Central and Northern Europe..., for a time span that can be dated beginning between the end of the fourth Century and the early third Century B.C. and that can be considered finished by the 28th February 380, with the edict of Theodosius *De fide catholica*, with which Christianity was proclaimed the official religion. These were not worlds closed on themselves and non communicating to one another, on the contrary they were continuously under a reciprocal cultural transmission which produced, owing to such exchanges, a never ending process of reformulation and reshaping of traditional wealth which originated in a trans-cultural phenomenon, though maintaining cultural diversities" (Scarpi 2001: 6-7). However, funeral worship (for which the ancient *dolmen* in Italy, Portugal, Spain, France, England, Northern Europe and in the Caucasus are an evidence) was at the origin of religious forms, which were expressed in the worship of mother earth or grand mother or goddess mother that can be found in the Mediterranean world (in Malta as well as in the ancient Baltic populations), that can also be identified with Cybele, an ancient worship from Phrygia (at present a part of Turkey) established in Rome by 204 B.C.

In Greece, Mycenaeans and Minoans were at the origin of Greek polytheistic worships, "without dogmas and without books", only founded on myths and basically celebrated with urban rituals typical of a certain *polis*, whose citizens would decide who was to carry out the sacrificial and sacerdotal function. Ancient Celtic populations, considered as being of Indo-European origins, were occupying the majority of the present Central and Northern Europe, from the North Sea to the Danube, down to the Iberian Peninsula and some parts of Italy such as the Po River Valley, Apulia and Sicily, and in Greece as well, until the sack of the Delphi sanctuary in 279 B.C.

Their language was mostly an oral one; we actually only have a little written evidence, mostly for funeral and religious reasons, like inscriptions and dedications to divinities to whom also human sacrifices were offered, officiated by a priest (called druid in Gallic and Britannic regions). Some believe the Celts were firmly convinced about the transmigration of souls. It is not easy to establish who their divinities were, for the only description we have of them is the one left by ancient Romans. However, it is quite probable that they had a local characteristic, almost tribal, especially in Ireland where four seasonal feasts were celebrated, presided over by druids and recurrent every first day of November, February, May and August. Druids were a well learned elite and were able to intervene with competence in many fields of tribal life, from rituals to justice. They used to be placed close on the right hand side of the chief, and they used to be the first to express their opinion as regards issues of public interest. Bards and prophets were similar to druids; they were priests and experts of the sacred as well.

Ancient Germans as well are considered to be Indo-European. Established between the southern part of Scandinavia and Central Europe, they were able in divination and interpretation of propitious signs and ill omens. The wood was a privileged place of rituals, seat of the divinity Nerthus, to whom animal sacrifices were usually offered. The same occurred in the name of other divinities, among which the Sun and the Moon. A special destiny was reserved to heroes who died in battle: they would go to a place of delight called Valhalla, carried by Valkyries, feminine divinities sent by the god Odin, the head of the German pantheon, followed by Thor e Týr. These three divinities belonged to Asi, a divine world of war and sacred together, different from that of Vani, more related to wealth and fertility. Such a specific division was peculiar of Nordic populations. A complex mythology accompanied the religious traditions of ancient Germans, influenced by the trinitarian structure of ancient religions of oriental origin.

When the Romans, and Indo-Europeans as well, met the ancient Germans, they called them barbarians because they had a completely different culture and religion from that of ancient Italy. Roman citizenship also meant accepting a certain religion. The other Italic civilizations (such as the Etruscans, Latins, Oscis, Sabines, Samnites, Umbrians) slowly adapted to the dominant Roman culture, which had received Greek influences before. However, Janus (the two-faced divinity, lord of peace and war) and Quirino (divinity of the Quirites and of the Curia as well, the meeting place of the Roman assembly) were typical Roman divinities, who formed together with Mars, divinity founder of cities, the triad who was to be replaced by Jupiter, Juno and Minerva, who corresponded to the Greek divinities composed of Zeus, Hera and Athena. Twelve minor deities then followed, to whom non-human, domestic and funerary deities were added, such as Lari, Penati and Mani. Rituals had a peculiar character, to be celebrated with care, according to the tradition, and respecting the

relative liturgy, which was rich in symbols and meanings, presided by various religious representatives, among which the most important was the Pontiff Maximum, head of the College of Pontiffs (from 5 to 16) and only subjected to the sacral king. There were also some haruspices, experts on the interpretation of positive signs from the bird's flight. During the year there were a wide number of religious feasts, according to a calendar that scanned celebrations also taking into account the differences between territories.

When in 204 B.C. the oriental cult of Cybele, the sacred Mother, was established in Rome, a slow but progressively growing attention started towards all cults of Greek and Egyptian origins. Notwithstanding Roman governments were openly against them because of their secrecy, but more than that, they feared the possible unconstitutional outcome, for the wide consensus won among common people. However, at last, by the first century after Christ, mysterious, initiated and esoteric cults also found their adepts in the core of the Roman Empire. In the second century after Christ the presence of taurobolium was registered. It is the sacrifice of a bull whose blood would drip on a person, subjected therefore to a real blood-bath which would make him be born to a new life, just like Attis, the Phrygian divinity linked to the worship of Cybele, who came from Anatolia and Greece.

From Judaism to Islam

Judaism had arrived in Rome long before the affirmation of oriental cults, and it was destined successively to spread throughout Europe. In fact "owing to the Arab-Islamic conquest of Spain in the seventh century, this became the vital centre of Jewish history. Later on, many mystical movements took place all over Europe until 1492, when, with the expulsion of the Jews from Spain, had to keep on living in Palestinian territories. The presence of Jewish people in Central and Oriental Europe became important, in fact Judaism developed its own particular culture. Finally, the century of Enlightenment and emancipation theories caused a deep rethinking in Judaic identity both on a general level inside the doctrine and within the singular Hebrew area, therefore a plurality of answers were to be found, which constitute nowadays contemporary Judaism" (Filoramo 2001:174).

After the Babylonians destroyed the first Temple in 587-586 B.C. and the Romans destroyed the second Temple in 70 after Christ, Judaism - which had started to develop by the second millennium before Christ - entered the multi-secular experience of the Diaspora, which is strictly connected with Judaic religion and represents an essential reference for cultural exchange with other religious experiences. The diffusion of Judaism at first in closed oriental territories and after in Europe also caused deep differences inside the religion. Judaism is first of all a book religion,

more than that it is a religion of books called the Bible, which is based on the belief of one and only one God: 39 books divided into Law (Torah), Prophets and Writings, with a cataloguing which does not correspond to the Catholic one but is accepted by Protestants. There is also the Talmud that gathers law-ritual documents and normative subjects.

During the wider expansion of Arab dominion and up to 1492 (the year Hebrew people were expelled from Spain) the language spoken by the Jewish people was Arabic, in order to partake in the hosting societies. Hebrew was nonetheless spoken as well.

Of great importance for Judaism being in Europe is the distinction between the two ramifications: the first is the oriental or Sephardic, originating from ancient Babylon and existing in the Spanish Jewish culture (Sepharad in medieval Hebrew meant Iberian Peninsula), this ramification derived from previous Byzantine experiences. The second ramification, also called Ashkenazi (from Ashkenaz, which in medieval Hebrew meant Germany), speaks Yiddish of Palestine origins. It is active in Central and Oriental Europe, and derives from Northern France and Central Europe, but later on, became diffused in Russia and in East-European countries. The two ramifications have different behaviour and rituals.

After 1492 a decisive change in the presence of Jewish people in Europe was registered: in The Netherlands, in Poland, in Lithuania and other East European countries an increase in Jewish population was registered, as well as in Italy and everywhere else in the Turkish Empire. Later on, the ghettos were established, where Jews lived apart from the rest of the population (in Venice and Rome for instance).

More recent developments have lead to three different perspectives about Judaism: the orthodox or neo-orthodox perspective which is based entirely on the Torah; the reformed perspective (born in Germany and keen on replacing Hebrew with the German language) which is mainly God founded; and the conservative perspective (born in Germany but likely to find an intermediate position between the first two) which gives a major role to the population. Zionism instead has quite a political nature, it originated from Oriental Europe, is strongly anarchic-socialist and mainly against or indifferent to religion.

Jewish people have to respect 613 rules, among which 248 are positive and 365 are negative. There is a wide number of feasts to be celebrated and some fasts to observe.

In Palestine Christianity started with the birth of Jesus, whose message originated from an innovation of original Hebrew doctrine. The historical nature of Christianity is fundamental. It was widespread in the ancient Roman Empire, notwithstanding prosecution. Rome became the residence of the Pope.

By the end of the fourth century after Christ, the Emperor Theodosius proclaimed Christianity - as

already said before - as the official religion, thus forbidding any other cult. In 496, Clovis, King of France, became Christian and in 800 Charlemagne was crowned Emperor of the Sacred Roman Empire in Rome.

In 1054 the Church was divided into the Roman Church and the Orthodox Church. In 1453 the Turks conquered Constantinople, thus contributing to the extension of Islam.

In 1517 Martin Luther started the Protestant Reform. In Switzerland by 1522 Zwingli was promoting the Reform. In 1531 Henry VIII, King of England, was keeping at a distance from the Church of Rome, he designated Thomas Cranmer Bishop of Canterbury and actually opened the way to Anglicanism. Between 1530 and 1547 in Germany there was the Schmalkaldic League, a confederation which opposed to the injunction of Charles V to remain in the Church of Rome and led to the rising of Lutheran Protestantism, notwithstanding the defeat which occurred after the 8-month-battle. In 1562 clashes between Christians and Calvinists were beginning in France (the Calvinists were called Huguenots, victims in Paris of the massacre of St. Bartholomew's Night in 1572). The peace of Westphalia was decisive for Germany and Europe, because it would end the Thirty-Years War, and would reduce the political influence and confirm the principle according to which religion was a right of territorial belonging: *cuius region eius et religio* (those living in a region were also to accept its religion, otherwise they would have the chance to go into exile, but had to leave all their goods. In other words, the citizens had to follow their sovereign's religion).

Finally, it should be remembered that only in 1965 the reciprocal excommunication between Roman Church and Orthodox Church, also as a consequence of the position taken by the Catholic hierarchy during the Second Ecumenical Vatican Council (1962-1965) in Rome, was abolished.

From this picture it results that primitive forms of cults with mythological and countryside-wood contents, funerary or sacrificial, polytheistic and pagan (of oriental influences as well) were replaced by monotheist movements, mainly founded on the Holy Scriptures: Judaism and Christianity at first and Islam after, with all the inner articulations that respectively move from Sephardic and Ashkenazi to Zionist, from Catholics and Orthodox to Protestants, from Sunnites and Shiites to Sufi. But there are further inner subdivisions, especially inside Protestantism, which also includes the so-called free Churches, that do not formally accept the Reform but actually belong to it, such as Baptists (which started in England in 1640) and Methodists (born in Oxford in 1792). A different case is that of the Valdese Church (counting at present 46,000 people) which preceded the Reform because it was born in 1176 for the initiative of the Lyonese merchant Peter Valdo.

The picture, however, is not complete if we do not take into consideration the fundamental presence of Islam in Europe, and not only in recent times (thanks to the Turkish immigration in Germany) but also in ancient periods. Islam means submission and is seen as an omnicomprehensive religion,

therefore which considers every aspect of human life. It was founded by Mahomet in 622 after Christ. Its fundamental book is the Koran, which means to recite, to read aloud. In fact, in the Koran schools one can learn to read, pronouncing Arab words with a loud modulation. The Koran has 114 suras (chapters), each sura has a title indicating its content.

After the death of Mahomet in 632, a number of caliphs followed, who were the major religious and political authorities. By the middle of seventh century, already, with Utman, the third Caliph, Arabian expansion arrived to the present Turkish, Armenian, Azerbaijan and Georgian territories.

By 711 Spain and France were also part of it until Charles Martello on 17th October 732 put an end to it with the victory at Moussais-La-Bataille (Poitiers). Spain instead remained mainly Muslim for the following 781 years, until 1492 (when Christians won at Granada, the last Arabian fortress and both Arabs and Jews were expelled).

In the meantime the eastern expansion was growing up to the Aral Lake, because of the inclusion of the Umayyad Empire, the actual Kazakhstan. Later on in the sixteenth century, the Ottomans occupied Eastern Europe, especially the Balkans. In the following centuries, the conquest included the Black Sea and arrived at the boundaries with Vienna and Kiev. In the nineteenth century the Arab-Muslim expansion reduced and started to recede, losing territories both in Western and Eastern Europe. However, entire areas previously of Christian religion had become Muslim, like Anatolia, now Turkey. Also in the previously Russian areas Muslims are numerically significant.

The religious outline of contemporary Europe as historically rooted

Hinduism deserves to be mentioned separately. In Europe this religion is a minority but growing presence in all these countries where it was pre-existent, such as: Germany, Norway, Russia, and especially England. However, nowadays, migratory flows from India are increasing also towards other European countries, Italy for instance. Sikhs are also in migrating great numbers from India to Europe (Denti, Ferrari, Perocco 2005) and they combine elements of Hinduism and Islam.

In order to conclude a historical *parcours* explaining the presence of so many different confessions in Europe (Barrett *et al.* 2001) we may say that the continent is defined by four main areas of religious influences:

- 1) the Catholic Church is the main religious influence in the central and southern area (Portugal, Spain, France, Belgium, Centre and South Ireland, Italy, Malta, Southern Switzerland, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Croatia, Slovenia, Czechia, Slovakia, Poland, Lithuania, part of The Netherlands, Latvia and Ukraine);
- 2) Protestantism is the main religious influence in the centre and northern area (Iceland, England and Northern Ireland, Central and Northern Switzerland, Germany, Denmark,

Norway, Sweden, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, part of Hungary, of The Netherlands, of Belarus);

- 3) Greek and Russian Orthodox is the main religious influence in the south-western area (Greece and part of Cyprus and Macedonia, Serbia, Bulgaria, Romania, Ukraine, Moldavia, Georgia, Armenia, Russia, part of Bosnia-Herzegovina, of Kazakhstan, of Estonia, of Latvia and Byelarus);
- 4) Muslim is the main religious influence in oriental areas of Europe (Turkey, Azerbaijan, Albania, part of Macedonia, of Kazakhstan, of Georgia, of Bulgaria and of Bosnia-Herzegovina).

Talking of minorities, there's a good number of Jewish people in Greece and in Ukraine, while in the United Kingdom, in The Netherlands and in Russia there are groups of Hindus.

After all, Christianity with its variations (Catholicism, Orthodoxy, and Protestantism) is largely present and prevailing in contemporary Europe. In the eastern part of the continent Christianity faces Islam, which is the less consistent religious group among the book religions (Judaism, Christianity, Islam) notwithstanding a growing number of adepts.

Christianity faced the erosion of its original matrix. Other religions and other Churches have crossed Europe also exerting a certain political power, thus influencing economy and linked aspects. After the domination occurring in the past, Christianity has often faced a confrontation with Islam. The double failure of the Turkish siege of Vienna in 1529 and in 1683 represented the turning point of history of religion in Europe, that seems to complete the previous peace of Westphalia, stipulated 35 years after the second attempt of conquest by Turks in Vienna.

Christianity also tried religious colonization in South and North America, in Asia and Africa. But the difficulties during the first period of its birth in Europe by the seventh and eight century were to be found again when Christianity tried to export the new belief in unwelcoming countries unwilling to accept religious solutions proposed-imposed by external cultures.

In a certain way Christianity was again experiencing the impossibility of diffusing faith through decrees, as had already happened with the edict of Constantine in 313 and that of Theodosius in 380. Independent Churches were born in Alexandria, Antiochia, Constantinople and Jerusalem, and not by chance. Anyway, if it was easier to succeed evangelizing urban territories, in all the rural territories and the countries Christian influence was far away and old ancestral rituals of pagan origins were still in use. Even nowadays - especially in rural milieus - traces can be found of rituals that date back to centuries ago and are of pre-Christian origin: devotional objects dedicated to ancient rural divinities, patrons of fields and harvests but also believed to have apotropaic powers, to ward off evil forces, diseases and plagues.

Within its organization, Christianity had to face the counter position of the Church of Rome and of the Church of Byzantium (became Constantinople in 330 and Istanbul in 1929). The political differentiation occurred with the division into the Western Roman Empire and the Eastern Roman Empire and even more with the designation as Capital the city on the Bosphorus, also had consequences on a religious level, with the birth of the Orthodox Church that gradually extended its influence to the present Bulgaria and Ukraine already between the ninth and tenth centuries. Later on, after the schism with Rome in 1054, the Orthodox preferred being under the domination of the Turks, who established themselves in Constantinople by 1453. In the following years Moscow also achieved more power and became a sort of third Rome, a real alternative to Constantinople and Rome itself. Some attempts of revising liturgy in the Greek-Orthodox system led to a schism of the so-called *Old Believers*, especially among these peasants in favour of traditions and against innovations. Some after-effects of these and other contrasts were still present in recent times with the Balkan issue, which turned out to be more complicated because of some remains of Ottoman domination. In other words compact and fragmented Islamic groups were present in Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia and Albania.

However, the most relevant datum in the present situation is certainly the high flow of migration streams, in the greater part from Islamic countries of Turkish workers heading for Germany, Egyptian immigrants in Greece, Tunisians and Algerians in France and Italy, Moroccans in Spain, France and Italy, and people from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh migrating to the United Kingdom.

Mobility inside Europe should also not be undervalued, with various religious characteristics, marked by oriental countries going to western countries, for example from Russia to Estonia, Lithuania and Germany, or from Czechia, Slovakia as well as ex-Yugoslavia towards Germany, or even from Poland to France, from Estonia and Lithuania to Sweden and Northern Europe.

Jews people have also reached many European countries right from medieval times - nowadays being still present - and had to pass through persecutions and destructions, up to the Shoah during World War II. Hebrew Ashkenazi communities of Yiddish language have been in activity for a long time mostly in the central and oriental countries of Europe.

Divergences and convergences

If Christianity occupies a major position in Europe, other religions have significant presence almost everywhere but mostly in the great urban centres, where non-Christian worship places have dimensions, capacity and visibility which cannot be ignored. A good example is the Islamic mosque in Rome, which is also a real work of art, designed by the Italian architects Paolo Portoghesi and Vittorio Ghigliotti, and which was opened officially in 1990. Less recent is the Jewish synagogue,

which was built in Rome between 1899 and in 1904. The mosque in Paris, which is also the residence of the great Imam, dates back to the 1920s. It must be considered, however, that even the construction of such buildings for worship is relatively recent, it does not mean that believers of those religions were not already resident in the same territories before. For example, Jewish people were active in Rome before the advent of Christianity and have built synagogues in many parts of Europe, in Venice as well as in Leghorn, Amsterdam and Berlin, in Prague (the famous Maysel) and Nuremberg, Essen, Köln and Plauen, Hamburg and Worms (already in 1034), also Krakow and Frankfurt-on-Main, Ratisbon and Poznań.

All this shows that religious differences in Europe do not start in the twentieth century but their roots date further back. The same can be said for mosques, even if they had been less protected, for reasons linked to the removal of Muslims from Spain by the end of the fifteenth century; and nonetheless the great mosque in Cordoba (which dates back to 785) testifies a wonderful past, which had not been cancelled by the ignorance of the treatise which in 1492 granted freedom of worship to Muslims, but in fact forced them either to convert to Catholicism or to a forced exile. Islamic reaction occurred in the area of Granada in 1566 with the revolt of the Moriscos, but once more the repression occurred and the expulsion decree in 1609 marked the end of Islamic presence in Spain. Finally, also in Greece, where Orthodox religion prevails, there is a Roman Catholic cathedral; the same happens in Moscow. In the Anglican London there is Westminster cathedral, the major Catholic Church of the United Kingdom, which was built between 1895 and 1903, in Byzantine style.

Outstanding changes have recently taken place especially in Russia, where the state atheism has been replaced by the old czarist triad "orthodoxy, autocracy and nationality" so there is a growing number of places of worship. In the past, Moscow had one thousand churches, which had been then reduced to forty by 1989. However, by 1999 they were already 300 and 378 by the year 2006, there are actually other 90 churches under construction and 33 are waiting to be evacuated by misappropriations. Also regarding higher education and scientific levels, Moscow and St. Petersburg both have an Orthodox university and Russia has 37 seminars and 38 religious secondary schools. Orthodox belonging is increasing and apparently passed from 51.7% in 2001 to 64% in 2006. In the same period of time Buddhists reached 1% while before they were only 0.4%. These data have been supplied by a VTsIOM research, the Russian centre for public opinion analysis that has confirmed that the belief level has reached 84% while in 1989 it was only 34%. Such an increase in believer's rate is surprising and may lead to suspicion about the correctness of analysis methodology and other specific factors. However, it is impossible to deny that remarkable changes are in act and seem to refute the Kääriäinen (1999) thesis, according to which after a

certain religious revival the situation would become steady. In other words, the increasing number of worship places would not indicate a religious renaissance.

In fact "it is an exaggeration to speak of a 'religious renaissance' in Russia. Even if belief in God has increased since the end of the communist regime, people's basic knowledge about religion is still poor. Religiousness is not organized or connected with a particular (i.e. Orthodox) confession; on the contrary, it is ill defined, based either on religious upbringing at home or on the religious information delivered by mass media. Only a minority (mostly older people, women and people with less education) believe in the basic doctrines of Christianity, and the nature of God is understood by most in a non-Christian manner. At the same time, most people have a positive, 'open' attitude towards religion and towards the Russian Orthodox Church. The Russian Orthodox Church, with its 1000-year history, represents stability in a society where many institutions of the previous regime have collapsed" (Kääriäinen 1999: 44). Therefore, Russian Orthodox Church would be a sort of "diffused religion" (Cipriani 2001) that, being historically rooted, emerges again whenever favourable circumstances occur for its presence and further canalization. The case can be that in the last few years Russia has registered a much more important renaissance than that registered by Kääriäinen by the end of the '90s.

Changes are also evident in other religions of non European origins but present in almost all of Europe. Besides continuously growing migration flows for working reasons, the wide number of refugees has to be also counted. In 2005, 1.472.587 persons officially passed through Europe with a high concentration in Germany, United Kingdom and France.

The mixture of religions, Churches and temples, but also of new religious movements (Barker 1991) is a clear indicator of pluralism that registers through the *European Values Study* of 1999-2000 (the next will take place in 2008) specific convergences/divergences that also create a common shared plateau of values (Inglehart 2003) among areas usually homogeneous. There are traditional countries like Ireland and Portugal but in the predominantly Catholic countries of Czechia, Slovenia, France, Belgium, Austria, Italy and Spain as well as in the Anglican Great Britain and in Orthodox Greece there is a favourable tendency towards both propitious to secular and rational values and values of auto-expression. These last values are less evident especially in Poland, where there is a certain traditionalism as well as survival values; the same can be said for Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Romania; for other countries such as Slovenia, Bosnia, Lithuania, Estonia, Byelarus, Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia, Hungary, Latvia, Albania, Bulgaria, Russia, Ukraine and Moldavia secular-rational and *survival values* are combined; at the end Protestant Europe is strongly signed by secular-rational and *self expression* values - more than in the European area especially in Germany, Finland, Switzerland, Norway, Denmark, Holland,

Sweden and Iceland. The relation between state and religion is not the same everywhere throughout Europe: in some countries there is a clear separation even regulated by the law (as happened in France from 1905), in other countries there is a conservatory regime (Spain, Italy and Portugal), and there are also countries with state Churches (Scandinavian countries and Great Britain). Reality is, however, much more diversified and goes beyond the declarations of principle and state rules, because of funds for religious education at schools such as in Belgium, Ireland and Holland, or the intervention of Churches as social actors both in hospitals and in schools, for assisting and hosting activities. Especially on a public level there's a wide number of attempts for mediation among different values, thus trying to solve all the problems originated by ideological and confessional pluralism.

As a matter of fact, there are in Europe some secular states that offer many privileges to religious communities. Another possibility is that state and religion do not have a shared identity but do not take complete opposite positions, sometimes they negotiate case by case, as it happens to majority Churches in a country or towards other minority Churches, movements and religious groups. Such *de facto* situation is also officially highlighted by the Catholic Church itself for example, by Pope John Paul II during his post-synod apostolic exhortation on June 28th 2003 with the title *Ecclesia in Europe*, where we can read at point 20: "Particular Churches in Europe are not simple entities or private organizations. Actually, they operate in a specific institutional dimension which deserves to be legally brought out, in the complete respect of the civil right institution". Besides, at point 55 it is said that "it is necessary to build up a deep and smart *inter-religious dialogue* in particular with Judaism and Islam". All this is focused on an evident European perspective because, according to what quoted on point 109 of the same exhortation, "in the actual transformation process, *first of all, Europe is asked to find its own true identity*. In fact, even if Europe is made up of quite a diversified reality, a new model of unity inside diversity has to be found, in order to become a community of reconciled nations that is open to other Continents and directly involved in the present process of globalization".

Decline of religious practices

There is a common datum in religions and the Churches in Europe: a visible reduction of religious practice and participation. According to *The Mannheim Eurobarometer Trend File 1970-1999*, France, Belgium and Great Britain have registered a higher reduction respectively passing from 23% to 5%, from 52% to 10% and from 16% to 4%. Apparently, except for wrong sampling, the only country among post-Communist Europe registering a countertendency is Georgia, as far as religious importance is concerned. Georgia apparently registers an outstanding increase of religious belief rates, as well as an increasing participation and value relevance. Therefore, as far religious

awakening Orthodox Georgia can be considered on the same level as Orthodox Russia's recent positions. A useful religious indicator is furnished by the frequency of preachers among the interviewees by the World Values Survey between 1981 and 2000: highest religiosity rate is that of Ireland, followed by Italy and Austria. At a fair distance there are Spain, Luxemburg, Germany, Belgium, for the Catholic area, as well as Finland, Holland, Iceland, Great Britain and Denmark for the Protestant area. In Europe France occupies the last place of the list.

Pippa and Inglehart write (2004: 86): "traditional religious beliefs and involvement in institutionalized religion vary considerably from one country to another; and have steadily declined throughout Western Europe, particularly since the 1960s. Studies have often reported that many Western Europeans have ceased to be regular churchgoers today outside of special occasions such as Christmas and Easter, weddings and funerals, a pattern especially evident among the young". Moreover, the belief in God has been diminishing in the period 1947-2001, especially in Sweden (-33.6%), Holland (-22%), Norway (-18.9%), Denmark (-17.9%), Great Britain (-16.5%), Greece (-12.3%), West Germany (-12%), Belgium (-11.2%), Finland (-10.8%), France (-10.1 %), Switzerland (-7.2%), Austria (-1.9%). The same can be said for belief in life beyond death: -28% in Norway, -25% in Finland, -23% in Denmark, -22% in Holland, -20% in France, -10% in Sweden and in Greece, -8% in Belgium, -4% in Great Britain, -3% in Switzerland, while it is apparently increased in Italy.

The relation between religious participation and religious pluralism is quite interesting. There is a high rate of participation with low pluralism in Malta, Ireland, Italy, Greece, Romania and Albania. There is a high rate of participation as well as high pluralism in Turkey, Luxemburg, Slovenia, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Finland, Denmark, Russia, France, Sweden and Estonia. There is low participation and strong pluralism in Switzerland, Germany, Latvia, The Netherlands, Great Britain and Czechia. However, differences are not only on these aspects. In fact, it has been rightly noticed (Pippa and Inglehart 2004: 116-117) that "societies in Central and Eastern Europe differ significantly in numerous factors that could plausibly act as intervening variables conditioning the relationship between age and religion. These factors include a society's experiences during the transition and consolidation of democracy, as well as in its historical religious culture, the duration of Soviet rule, the relationship between Church and state under Communism, the success of its economic adjustment to the free market during the last decade, its integration into international organizations such as NATO and the European Union, as well as in its degree of ethno-religious homogeneity and fractionalization" .

The conclusion of Pippa and Inglehart (2004: 131-132) is smart and apt: "It is the more homogeneous cultures, exemplified by the role of Catholicism in Poland, which have best-preserved

faith in God and habitual church attendance, not the most plural. And today the post-Communist states with the greatest regulation of the Church turn out to be the *most* religious, not the least. We argue that this is no accident; it reflects the fact that human security encourages secularization, together with the political rights and civil liberties associated with religious freedom in transitional and consolidating democracies".

Culture and religion

Culture plays an important role for the presence of religion and Churches in single nations. In other words as religion is a fundamental part of each culture, the consequence is that traditions, habits, customs and institutions are influenced at different levels and for many generations, so that at a distance of years and centuries their historical and sociological outcome can be seen. Here is a synthetic picture of the relation between cultures and religions in Europe - on a modification of what Huntington suggested (1996) - but non always the relation is univocal, for example in Bosnia and Herzegovina, of Orthodox culture, the majority of inhabitants are Muslim (a similar situation is that of Kazakhstan, while The Netherlands register a majority of Catholics within a Protestant culture):

| <i>Catholic</i> | <i>Orthodox</i> | <i>Protestant</i> | <i>Central Europe (Christian and Post-Communist)</i> | <i>Islamic</i> |
|-----------------|------------------------|-------------------|--|----------------|
| Andorra | Armenia | Denmark | Croatia | Albania |
| Austria | Belarus | Finland | Czechia | Azerbaijan |
| Belgium | Bosnia, Herzegovina | Iceland | East Germany | Kazakhstan |
| France | Bulgaria | Northern Ireland | Estonia | Kosovo |
| Ireland | Cyprus | Norway | Hungary | Turkey |
| Italy | Georgia | Sweden | Latvia | |
| Lichtenstein | Greece | The Netherlands | Lithuania | |
| Luxemburg | Macedonia | United Kingdom | Poland | |
| Malta | Moldova | West Germany | Slovakia | |
| Monaco | Romania | | Slovenia | |
| Portugal | Russia | | | |
| San Marino | Serbia, Montenegro | | | |
| Spain | Ukraine | | | |

| | | | | |
|-------------|--|--|--|--|
| Switzerland | | | | |
| Vatican | | | | |

This division of religions by their belonging cultures seems to be quite founded because "belonging to a culture is the basic factor for self-accomplishment. In a time of quick changes people automatically look back to the past, because they fear of being separated from their roots. Immigrants, for example, feeling the majority typical values as a menace, they try to maintain social, cultural and religious traditions of their group through many generations, and defending themselves as subcultures especially in the 'melting pot' of the modern megalopolis" (Kerkhofs 1995: 29). On the other hand H  l  ne Carr  re d'Encausse (1978)) was right some years ago when in her book *L'empire   clat  * had foreseen that the Soviet Union would no longer be dominated by the European part, but by Asiatic populations that had a strong political, cultural and religious structure. Moreover, the so-called thawing out of post-iron curtain would originate a growing demand from the populations of the East to the West.

According to Giuseppe D'Amato (2005: 68) "the enlargement of the European Union to the East represents the starting point for a not yet definite process that the fifteen old UE members probably did not expect to trigger off. If the Chancellor Helmut Kohl had to organize German reunification in a few weeks, Brussels will now have to clearly and quickly define, in order not to be anticipated by the events, a common systematic foreign policy to be good neighbours and establish if the Union will be in the future a political entity or simply an economical area and a democratic free place". However, concludes D'Amato (2005: 69), "in the new Europe of 25, 27 or 30 countries, the direction will be decided by the variable majorities, even if now they are more or less stable and will have the ability of compromising". Errors and wounds of the past are not easy to overcome.

One example, for all, is the case of the Baltic area. In Latvia a real independence from Russia arrived only in 1990: as well as Estonia and Lithuania, Latvia was crushed by Nazism and Stalinism in the meantime. Ukraine and Poland have similar problems.

The Baltic territory is characterized by two peculiar presences, that of the Lutherans in Latvia and Estonia (where the influence of Lutheran Germany and Finland is evident) and that of the minority of *Old Believers* in Lithuania and Latvia (respectively in Vilnius and Riga). The *Old Believers* are actually present in Belarus and in Moscow where they are supposed to have a little less than one million of adepts. *Old Believers* are dissidents of the Orthodox Church for liturgic reasons from the second half of the seventeenth century; they are divided in various groups (with or without priests), and they passed through many events and persecutions. In the Urals, in Kazakhstan as well in Turkey settlements of *Old Believers* were also present. It is important to remember that: "both

among Orthodox and Old Believers the bulk of members are traditionalist believers who adhere to their faith because their forefathers have done so far generations before them. Although they still profess a belief in God they are blind rather than conscious believers and do not reflect or even know much about the object of their faith. They practise their religion only very episodically, being mainly connected to the religious collective by the observation of some rites of passage, holidays and, for some, very occasional church visits. The nucleus of convinced and conscious believers among both Orthodox and Old Believers shows a deep commitment in both belief and practice. They are active within the religious community and try to organise their lives in accordance with their religious beliefs. Old Believers, in addition, because they faithfully observe avoidance ritual and taboos, maintain a religious exclusivity and have a stronger elite conception. Old Believer activists also have a better religious knowledge than Orthodox of the same type" (Lane 1978: 135). A different case is that of the Lithuanian Catholic Church. This Church has had and still maintains a national character, which has permitted to hold a long resistance to the secular state, thus becoming *de facto* a sort of national Church: "the better survival of Lithuanian Catholic Church than other Churches in the Soviet Union does not just reflect a slightly more lenient treatment by the political authorities but is in large measure due to the greater vigour, vigilance and militancy of the Church and its believers in the face of efforts to destroy it" (Lane 1978: 209). In particular "the strength of the Lithuanian Catholic Church is due partly to the distinctive supra-national Catholic tradition of close and total relations between the clergy and the lay also preserved in Lithuania. In addition, the Lithuanian Catholic Church derives extensive support from the fact that it is closely identified with the idea of a Lithuanian nation and uniquely suited to serve as a focus of nationalist aspirations" (Lane 1978: 217).

Orthodox Churches

On a general level, the fact to be underlined here is that, for some time - in the countries already belonging to the Soviet Union - there has been an increasing number of religion-oriented people also in urban areas and not only in rural ones. Nonetheless "the Orthodox Church has its support overwhelmingly in rural areas. While in some rural areas the proportion of Orthodox in the population may be as high as 45 per cent, in some large industrial towns it may fall as low as 5 per cent. Members of the Protestant sects, however, once also predominantly rural, are now to an equal or perhaps even greater extent urban. In recent years particularly, there has occurred a process of concentration of believers, leading to a virtual translocation of the sects from the villages to the towns and settlements of an urban type" (Lane 1978: 227).

If in the past, minority groups such as the *Old Believers* and Protestants preferred to settle down in

rural areas, at present cities are privileged both for survival as well as for proselytism. Such phenomenology is extended to a great part of Orthodox religion especially where the nationality issue comes into play, as in Bulgaria after the liberation from Turks, therefore Muslim domination (from 1363 to 1878 and still nowadays testified by a conspicuous presence of Muslims in the country). It is not by chance that Bulgaria has its own National Orthodox Church with six million believers, twelve dioceses and thousands of priests. Since 1947, the Bulgarian constitution already envisaged liberty of worship, even if under state control. Such opportunity was also given to Catholic, Protestant and Jewish minorities. After November 10th 1989, a new pluralism occurred, which weakened both state and institutions, thus permitting in the meanwhile the Orthodox religion to become "the ideological and spiritual ground of national unification" (Bogomilova- Todorova 1996: 161).

In comparison with Russia, Greece and Serbia, Bulgaria has a secondary role within Orthodoxy. In other areas there is a closer relation between the state and Church, as if it was to create a worship of state and its rulers. In this way it is the population itself that supports religion through culture. "Forms of culture that comprehend universal Christian values such as sufferance and sacrifice, applied to solid religions (providential mission of the leader and the population, the fact to be chosen by God), and expressing in conventional civil forms the strong archaic worship of the leader, the prince priest, all that exerts a strong action that shows strongly in its historic universality. Worship of state leaders (Russia) is an actual and effective practice in these countries, which is still part of their recent history" (Bogomilova-Todorova 1996: 162). Specifically, in Bulgaria, religiosity is still mainly rural, peasant, pre-socialist, and is connected to everyday life, with the work in the fields and a natural environment. This would have led more to polytheism than monotheism allowing the conservation of magic and superstitious aspects linked to an "exchange of favour" between human beings and divinities. Such religiosity is solid and contingent. Apparently, traces of paganism are also present, forms of religion far off from high, intellectual and selected European culture. Such traces emerge again in occasion of feasts, rituals, processions and celebrations directly forming part of everyday life. Also in the new religious movements that have adepts among young Bulgarians, psycho-emotional interests prevail and rule all the rest, as a need to be integrated and accepted by belonging to a group. Traditional canons of Orthodoxy are far off; dogmas are ignored; traditions are left behind.

Also, in recent times, and referring to the wide area of Orthodox culture the limits of "canonical territories" have been revenged in order to stress supremacy rights, especially by the Russian Orthodox Church over the Catholic Church. However, there are also other hindrances to such issues, because in Islamic traditional areas the fact that the hegemony of Moscow has been thwarted has been conceived as a legal action. The same can be said for Buddhist *enclaves* and for Jewish

nuclei (whose consistence has highly reduced, compared to the 5 million people in the nineteenth century). Actually the article n. 14 of the Russian Constitution states: "Russian Federation is lay. No religion can be established as a state or compulsory religion". Moreover the document *Basis of the Social Conception of Russian Orthodox Church* says that (III, 3): "the Church cannot take advantage of the points of view of the state". Also in Ukraine lay education is envisaged by article n. 35 of the Constitution, while articles n. 5, 7 and 8 establish freedom of choice and religious organization.

The relation with modernity really makes the difference between Orthodoxy and Western religions (Kaufmann 1997). On this regard Nikos Kokosalakis says (1996: 8): "the relation between Orthodoxy and modernity is basically different from that of other Christian confessions, such as Catholicism and Protestantism. Leaving aside the significant theological and cultural differences between Western and Oriental Christianity, modernity did not represent an autonomous cultural development of Orthodox countries. This way the cultural dialogue between Orthodoxy and modernity has developed differently from that of modernity and Western Christianity. Modernity has a sequential development and from many points of view also consequential within Western Christianity, whereas Orthodoxy has had until now a historical and cultural continuity which has never been interrupted with Christianity of the origins and of the Byzantine one".

As a consequence, also for Orthodoxy the criterion of relative relevance to cultural facts (that are actually global and local at the same time) works out because the confrontation with wider society undeniably plays its role. Moreover, "from the '800 the Church and the Orthodox culture entered a form of social development which is radically new and with no precedents. This actually meant an important meeting with the forces of modernity and with a new form of social organization. It also meant a new form of relationship between the Church and the State as well as new tensions and new alliances between religion and politics because, at least in Greece, but also in the rest of the Balkans, the institution of the Orthodox Church became a servant of the State and assumed a nationalist way of thinking. It is, however, important to observe that the cultural and political role of Orthodoxy changed according to one national state or the other and that in Russia it was all different, for the well known historical reasons. The Orthodox Church has also played, as for the migrations of the twentieth century, a decisive cultural role for the Orthodox Diaspora at a World level" (Kokosalakis 1996: 19-20).

At last, the weight of Byzantine influence at the beginning of the nineteenth century should not be undervalued, as well as the Ottoman influence that came afterwards and the influence of Nationalism right in the middle of the century. All this has produced a peculiar historical and sociological outcome as for the Orthodox Churches of Eastern Europe.

The Serbian Orthodox Church dramatically lived through the end of Yugoslavia, with the rising ethnic conflicts in 1991 and the confrontation between Catholics and Muslims. Serbian Orthodox became the odd men out, accused by Croatian and Slovenians (Catholics), but also by Muslims. At last, it was a war of everyone against everyone else: Croatians against Serbians, these with Croatians against Muslims, as well as Catholics against Orthodoxes and Christians against Muslims. Political, ethnic and religious reasons were bound together giving as outcome an explosive mixture with tragic consequences.

In addition, the problem of Nationalism concerns Greece as well, even if Greece did not enter the war in the nineties. Actually, "particular traditions that originated the Modern Greek state and its mythological history have enabled a productive contact between Orthodoxy and Nationalism. The Greek case with its history is the evidence that traditional ecumenicity of Orthodoxy and the Byzantine *Commonwealth* definitely belong to the past. Ethnocentrism and Church dependence on the State are probably the most important issues of the Orthodox Church today" (Makrides 1996: 69- 70). Even if an Orthodox *Commonwealth* will not be realized, nonetheless with the entering of Bulgaria and Romania by 2007 the presence of Orthodox people has increased. Their number may vary from 40 to 200 million with a further widening towards the east. Therefore they may be the decisive part. Many of them are already operating in Western Europe, Sweden, France, United Kingdom, Switzerland, Germany, Finland, Croatia and Austria.

The Abkhazians deserve a specific quotation (almost one hundred thousand people), residing in the Northern Caucasus (within Orthodox Georgia, but belonging to an autonomous republic) and believed to be partly Christians and partly Muslims: they actually belong to an ancient pre-Christian monotheist religion with a God surrounded by a sort of angels (called *apaimbari*), their religion is quite particular and not easily assimilable to others, apart from some apparent convergences.

Post-Communist Religion

"Russia has no 'civil religion' that could function as a framework for the existence of religion within *res publica*" (Agadjanian 2006: 179). With this statement Alexander Agadjanian does not allow misunderstandings of any sort, as for example an indebt use of the concept "public religion" proposed by Casanova (1994). Just like Kokosalakis (1996: 8) Agadjanian talks about the missed appointment between Orthodoxy and modernity defining the *syndrome of missed modernity* (Agadjanian 2006: 179) which would lead to a distinction between "secular space" and "religious space", therefore between public and private. In this way opposite forms of anti-clericalism and anti-modernism take place. However, religion changes from a hidden element (put in a corner, one may say) into a public object so that to privatize and de-privatize coincide and become one.

Politicizing culture and religion is what Vrcan (2006) points out. He examines the coming together of a nation, culture and religion (van der Veeer and Lehmann 1999) within the countries of ex-Yugoslavia, making a distinction between *borders* and *frontiers*: "the most important distinctive feature of today's frontiers is that they are becoming more volatile and permeated by ideology in the guise of de-ideologized culture than ever before. But they are less territorialized than before. This means that frontiers have now become a strange type of boundary that generates *hostis* or an enemy. This stranger or enemy can be everywhere and nowhere, internal as well as external, highly visible and barely discernible, to be defeated here and now as well as in the distant future - but invariably suitable for extermination" (Vrcan 2006: 218).

Boundaries were also built with the support of the same Churches and religions, which contributed in bringing culture into politics and continuously recalling religious patrimony, leaving on one side all these supporters of tolerance towards differences and not keen on extreme positions possibly leading to hostility. Whereas "Catholicism in Croatia was obsessed by the idea of Croatia because for centuries it had been an *antemurale Christianitatis* under pressure from the East either from aggressive Serbian Orthodoxy or from encroaching Islam. Orthodoxy in Serbia was obsessed by the idea of being situated on the western frontiers of the entire world of Eastern Christianity... Islam in Bosnia was convinced that, since the end of the Ottoman Empire in 1878: 'the entire cultural, political and social life of Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina had been marked by a desire to survive in the new context' " (Vrcan 2006: 219). Moreover, many particular situations throughout Yugoslavian territories show that national-oriented culture and religious politicization processes were widely popular in the country. In fact Catholicism in Herzegovina was a "religion in a border region", but actually it has become a "border religion" (Vrcan 2006: 222). This is the reason why characters of closure towards differences were dominant with nationalism, activism and Church focused principles. As far as Islam is concerned, Muslims from Bosnia and Herzegovina eradicated from some territories have become of strong influence in others. Actually, "nowadays, owing to the drastic politicization of religion and the 'religionization' of politics everywhere - as well to the radical politicization of culture - the re-islamization of Bosnia has made significant progress, This has helped to homogenize Bosnian Islam and to strengthen the feeling that Bosnia belongs to the Islamic world" (Vrcan 2006: 223).

Therefore, from the point of view of sociology of religions and Churches, the indication given by Tomka (2006: 251-265) should be followed: he proposes to take into consideration the "religious settings" and "contextual and socio-cultural elements of different types of religion".

Tomka's contribution is very relevant and faces diverse issues of East and Western Europe with a comparative approach. He begins with three remarks: religious influence is declining in Western

Europe; while Western young people seem to be increasingly less religious, the Eastern and Central situation seems to register an inverted tendency; in ex-Communist countries the role of Churches is increasingly popular. However, not always empirical data confirm such trends.

Three criteria have been formulated to explain the differences between the two Europes: the Communist past, reduced modernization and Oriental Orthodox culture. Some central European countries play a different role and are more modernized and represent a solid reference for East countries, which are quite marginal in comparison with Western countries. There are two main guiding factors at the origins of Western Christian Churches: Church as an institution and individual autonomy. However, when we want to distinguish what is peculiar of Oriental Churches respect to Western Churches we come to six differences, according to Tomka (2006: 259-262): a reduced control of the Church and dominance of local factors; the tendency to homologate forms with contents, beliefs with symbols, liturgy with art; a more collective than individual approach to religious belonging and a dominant position of the clergy within an ecclesiastic role hierarchy; religion and culture are mainly considered as one; a formally bombastic liturgy that does not allow adjustments, changes nor a direct participation of laymen; a basic unity between politics and religion, as well as state and Church, just like a "symphony".

Politics and religion

As commonly known, Catholicism prevails in Central Europe, while Orthodoxy is widespread in Oriental Europe: both new normative areas rule the relation between Church and state.

However, it cannot be forgotten that a significant number of atheists are present both in Czechia and in ex East Germany, as well as in Latvia and Estonia. Little is known about practised religions; therefore socio-religious public data do not include the entire resident population. Moreover, Catholicism is proved to be more resistant to Communism, while Protestantism and Orthodoxy suffered the consequences of state atheism more. Actually, the most remarkable recovery is shown by the Russian Orthodox Church (Borowik: 2006: 268). "Traditions of strong links and close ties between state and Church provided the basis for the submission of the Church and for co-operation with the state, whichever the state might be" (Borowik 2006: 269). Apparently opportunistic strategies were developed by the Orthodox Church in order to survive bad situations. This was also possible because national Orthodox Churches (in Greece as in Georgia, in Russia as in Serbia) lacked close relations; therefore there was no need for a similar behaviour. In fact Orthodoxy is not as central as Catholicism, but Orthodoxy experiences a fragmentation of Protestant denominations.

In Bulgaria as well as in Belarus, Ukraine and Russia a lot of people believe in typical superstitions, recurring to talismans, extra-sensorial communication, and typical New Age modalities. It will be part of a generic and omnicomprehensive spirituality that leads to an identification between

religion, culture and state: “being Orthodox and Bulgarian, for instance, is almost the same, but withdrawing from religion as moral teachings or as based in religious practice is rather rare” (Borowik 2006: 270). This happens in contexts where Orthodox religion prevails.

The Moscow patriarchate remains the most important and influent seat of Orthodoxy. Its recent increased visibility, power and ability in public affairs does not hide that in the past it was more powerful and that the great number of schisms weakened its image. The problems that the patriarchate have to face are as follows: emergence of new independent national Churches; regaining of ecclesiastic properties as a compensation for expropriations carried out after the Leninist decree on nationalization (the subject concerns the conflict with the Greek Catholic Church); lack of religious staff and furthermore its little basic knowledge; the competitive confrontation with Catholicism, Protestantism (both accused of proselytism in Orthodox areas) and Islam.

“With the collapse of Communism, the countries of Eastern and Central Europe joined the world of growing differentiation and globalization” (Borowik 2006: 272). The impact was not the same everywhere, however. In particular, Russia and Serbia had major problems for getting rid of the past, while in other countries religion was a means for the reconstruction of political identity. This was only reached later by Oriental Europe (Russia, Belarus and Ukraine). The operation was easier in Central European countries, especially Poland, in the Baltic area, Hungary, Czechia and Slovakia. Complexity rises if we look at local details: Belarus is Russia-oriented, Ukraine is partly oriented towards a Western identity and partly towards an Eastern one, Russia is probably finding its identity in Orthodoxy. Elsewhere, instead, Orthodoxy is the reason of dissent and differentiation, in order to underline Russian autonomy: this is the case of Ukraine (at least part of it) and Moldova, as well as Latvia and Lithuania. The use of Old Slavonic as the language of Orthodoxy has the same function as Latin for Catholicism. This is a way to discourage independent attempts (like in Ukraine, in Macedonia, in Bulgaria), typical of Churches that use local languages in order to highlight their difference from the Russian Orthodox Church. The Polish Orthodox Church, on the other hand has been independent for many years now, since 1924 when the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople declared its independence. Finally, the difference between religions of Western and Eastern Europe is given by the presence of a problem of national identity connected to religious belonging. Common data regard a low rate of religious practices, autonomy in attitudinal and behavioural choices and a reduced number of atheists.

Politicization of religion in Eastern Europe

There has been much talk about a renaissance of religion in Eastern Europe or its starting up again

from a social point of view, but with remarkable differences between one nation and the other. Religion is supposed to be a reference point for rules and attitudes of behaviour, but it has to compare with a plural ideology. A very detailed analysis presents many methodological problems, especially as far as internal issues are concerned; they are usually so specific that they can be defined unique and not comparable with others within the same national territory. (Marinović Jerolimov, Zrinščak and Borovik 2004). This is the case of Croatia and its Dalmatian macro-regions, East Croatia, Central Croatia, Istria and Primorje. The same can be said for religious affiliation: in Vukovar region the Orthodox presence is 14.1% but it is completely absent from Dubrovnik area. On the other hand, Muslim presence in Dubrovnik is 5.1% but it is completely absent from Vukovar. Such a crossed trend of presences and absences is an unchanging factor in various ex-Yugoslavian areas, both for cultural-historical reasons and for political and military issues (including these operations of forced “ethnic cleaning”). Nor can it be forgotten that in the neighbouring countries heteroclite *enclaves* which are in continuous relation with the original culture can be traced back. This is the case of Croatians in Western Herzegovina (but also of Orthodox Serbians in Croatia and in the areas of Krajina and Slavonia, nonetheless of Magyars and Saxons in Romania, in the area of Transylvania). An “ethnicalization” of politics and a “politicalization” of ethnicity is in general occurring, which also means a “politicalization” of religion as well as a “regionalization” of politics. (Marinović Jerolimov and Zrinščak 2006: 287). As a consequence, activities and official interventions of the Churches always have more of a socio-political nature. In Croatia as well as in Poland, for instance, the Catholic Church has fostered the birth of a modern nation-state (Martin 2005: 81, quoted by Marinović Jerolimov and Zrinščak 2006: 289). All sounds like a challenge, or vice versa a resource, for European integration processes. However, outcomes are not easy to foresee.

After all, Djordjevič and Djurovič (1993: 215) had already stated that “Christian Europe with its noble aim of building up a “European home from the Atlantic to the Urals” cannot leave behind that Christian spirituality which is also based on Orthodox cultural heritage”. Later on, Djordjevič (1996: 29) recalled that “the disintegration of the ‘communist empire’ had set Orthodox nations free from bonds and they now aim at two different goals: at first they turn back to the roots of their culture; moreover, they are involved in contemporary democratic Europe. In both cases there is confusion and misunderstanding, there are also many unexpected and long waited consequences, to which Western Europe pays neither attention nor comprehension. That of Serbians and the Serbian Orthodox Church, thus sharing a common destiny with other oriental orthodox nations, is a peculiar case”. Here is one of the numerous peculiarities to be considered among others, with its ancient history that dates back to the sixth century B.C. having Sava (1174-1236) - who was later canonized

- as founder of the Serbian Orthodox independent Church. A long lasting Ottoman domination occurred up to 1878. And only in 1920 the independence of the Church was conquered again. Ethnical and religious conflicts occurred between Serbian Orthodoxes against Bosnian Muslims and against Serbian Catholics with Croatian habits. Finally, criticism towards the act of mythologizing St. Sava and Kosovo are not lacking (particularly of the battle of Kosovo Polje, where Serbians, even if defeated, defended Christianity against the Turks): both myths are at the origin of an idea of superiority and uniqueness concerning Serbia (Bogomilova 2005: 160-161).

Djordjević (1996: 31) specifies: “every independent Church is usually very devoted to history, traditions and the culture of its population, and keeps some particular characteristics without violating Orthodoxy. Therefore, peculiarities do not represent a difference in theological dogmatism or rites, but in daily and earthly historical, cultural, political activities of the Church. So, with caution we can speak of the Serbian, Bulgarian, Russian or Greek variant of Orthodox Christianity”. However, Serbians have particular characteristics: the *Slava*, a single feast of the first name and of the family saint; a great number of canonized sovereigns, almost to testify the “symphonic” agreement between state and Church. It is also important to remember that in 1967 an autocephalous Macedonian Orthodox Church was auto-proclaimed in Macedonia, independent from the Serbian Church.

Atheism has been an important phenomenon in Serbia as part of the socialist ideology, more important than in Croatia or Slovenia, where anti-religious sanctions did not create problems at work. Widespread atheism in Serbia is also due to a massive activity at the education level. There would also be “a kind of political and cultural shock due to the flow into Marxist ideology, and with the organization of the Communist Party, from communities (especially orthodox peasants) not prepared for it, mainly in terms of religion” (Djordjević 1996: 34-35). Therefore believers have diminished, religious practice has almost disappeared and religiosity remained as a peculiarity of rural milieus, women and elderly people. The process of de-secularization started in the nineties of the last century, with the emergence of ethnic conflicts and with the rebirth both of Catholicism and of Islam in Yugoslavian countries. Also Serbian nationalism contributed to a religious rebirth. Moreover interethnic disputes had a religious connotation: Catholics, Orthodoxes and Muslims were fighting one against the other.

State and Religion

From January 1st 2007 Bulgaria (together with Romania) entered the European Union. Various problems are still without a solution, in particular: “1) harmonizing legislature on state-Church relationships with the international legal tools and European legal standards; 2) forming a

favourable social context for adequate and effective development of the relevant laws” (Bogomilova 2005: 137). Such problems not only regard the Balkan area of Bulgaria, Serbia and Macedonia but they invest many countries inside and out of the European Union. There are state Churches in Finland, Greece and the United Kingdom, there are separations but also agreements in Germany, Austria, Italy and Spain, there is only one total difference in France (but with contradictory situations at an operative level). Greek and Irish constitutions refer to religion, the German one permits *Invocatio Dei*, the European one does not give any reference at all. Somewhere else, there is a reference to God in the introduction of the constitution (in Poland and Ukraine), the religious tradition is recalled (in Czechia and Slovakia) or there is no mention at all and sometimes because the introduction is also lacking (in Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Latvia and Romania). In general, however, God is not mentioned (in Belarus, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Russia, Slovenia, Serbia and Montenegro).

Actually, diverse options concern centrality or not to the act of belonging (Slavic or Latin or Anglo-Saxon or even European). Nonetheless ancient “evangelizations” such as the activities of the Saints Cyril and Methodius, “apostles of the Slavs” in the IXth century, in order to legitimate religious origins relative to the divine election of a population with a special mission to carry out. From the mission the otherness is overcome, because a less differentiated solution is preferred, which goes well beyond true Orthodoxy, to the only Slavonic language, menace that comes from the outside, from the enemy to conquer. However, the premises for a commonly shared more open European attitude, which is less keen on hostilities.

The conflict in Kosovo, lasting from 1990 to 1995, shows the possible consequences of extreme opposition between different religions. Now Kosovo is independent of Serbia-Montenegro, and the United Nations are a guarantee for such autonomy after the disaster which overwhelmed, besides people, also hundreds of sacred places of Serbian Orthodoxy but also of the Islamic part of Kosovo. On the other hand, the attempt to create an independent Orthodox Church in Montenegro is not easily accepted by the Serbian government, which prefers to help Catholic and Islamic people instead of local people, because it only recognizes the Serbian Orthodox Church. This one does not legitimate Macedonian Orthodox Church either.

In relation to what is happening in Serbia and Montenegro, as well as in Bulgaria and Macedonia, “it can be observed that Orthodox Churches themselves in these countries are dependent and not autonomous with respect to the state and politics: a) in their competitive situation as one religion among others, where some of the others might have a richer and more effective experience of working in a democratic and pluralistic environment, the kind of environment to which the Orthodox Churches are not used; b) in matters of ownership, financing, religious education, which

are hard to achieve where civil society is underdeveloped; c) as concerns the complicated situation of some Churches in their status among other Orthodox Churches (Macedonia, Montenegro), and in controlling internal divisions and schisms (Bulgaria, Macedonia, Montenegro)” (Bogomilova 2005: 241).

Again, it can be said that “the Churches” attitudes and actions have been at times those of intervention, at others those of a more wait-and-see kind. Indeed, the marginal function served by the Orthodox Church in Russia in the past contrasts sharply with the greater social commitment adopted by the Catholic Church in Poland. Finally, one should not overlook the re-emergence of ethnic exclusiveness under the banners of nationality and religion of origin. Some speak of a transition from communism to nationalism. The sociological context becomes still more complex when one examines the minority question – from the Hungarians in Romania, to the Volga Germans, to the Kurds, the Armenians, and the twenty-six native tribes in Northern Russia. In all this, much is new and surprising, has a form of a new beginning characterized by the novel experience of a transition towards democracy and the new democratic use of freedom, after being accustomed to totalitarianism. This, one could surmise, may also create results in the religious-ethical field and within the Churches in particular” (Cipriani 1994: 2). Moreover, the following prediction seems to be still valid: “one way or another, the Churches will maintain a role, perhaps more one of conservation and tradition than one of innovation and change” (Cipriani 1994: 16).

Religious pluralism

Speaking of pluralism and respect of religion, Europe develops a number of different issues (Davie and Hervieu-Léger 1996; Davie 2000; Davie 2002; Bolgiani, Margiotta Broglio and Mazzola 2006). In some cases freedom is very limited, in other cases it is reduced, in some nations it is growing and in others is diminishing. According to Asma Jahangir (who operates for ONU on liberty of faith and religion), in Europe as well freedom is limited: like in The Netherlands owing to emerging religious tensions and in France for the law of 2004 (according to which Muslim women are not allowed to wear the *chador* and Christians are not allowed to wear big crosses). Moreover, in February 2006 Thomas Grimaux edited an official document of *Help to a suffering Church* (a public association of European origin), reporting the following situation for the year 2005:

| <i>Country</i> | <i>Religious freedom</i> | <i>Freedom trend</i> |
|---------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|
| Albania* | Very limited | + |
| Belarus | | + |
| Belgium | | – |
| Bosnia, Herzegovina | Limited | + |
| Cyprus | No | = |

| | | |
|-----------------------|--------------|---|
| France | | – |
| Germany | | = |
| Italy | | = |
| Kosovo | Very limited | – |
| Poland | | + |
| Serbia, Montenegro | Limited | + |
| Spain | | – |
| The Netherlands | | – |
| Turkey | Very limited | – |
| Ukraine | | + |
| United Kingdom | | – |

* Religious freedom abolished in 1967, and reintroduced in 1990.

Besides any possible and legitimate doubt from the ideological point of view expressed by the scheme above, some reflections concerning both areas with a major number of Muslims (Albania, Cyprus, Kosovo and Turkey) and Orthodoxes (Serbia, Montenegro), as well as Catholic prevailing areas (Belgium, France and Spain) can be made. Independently of the type of preponderant religion, problems of freedom of expression and religion practices rise from minority confessions.

The different religions and Churches operating in Europe manifest a variety of behaviours towards religious pluralism. This is the result of a wide inquiry called RAMP (Religious And Moral Pluralism) carried out in many European countries: Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Great Britain, Hungary, Italy, The Netherlands, Norway, Portugal and Sweden (Dobbelaere and Riis 2002). The conclusions of this research are not univocal: “in the model explaining pluralism as a cultural enrichment ... the effect of Church commitment is positive, meaning that people with a high degree of commitment to their Church also tend to appreciate the cultural enrichment of religious pluralism. In the second model on pluralism as ‘a private patchwork’, the effect is negative, meaning that the most committed persons tend to state that people should adhere to the teaching of their own religion and refrain from picking and choosing from other religions. This fundamental difference expresses why it is important to refrain from combining these indicators into a single index on religious pluralism” (Billiet *et al.* 2003: 156). Actually “the Churches are challenged to change their positions. Formerly, the Churches as authoritative institutions could proclaim a truth that was taken for granted by Church members. In late modernity, the Churches become optional frameworks united by affective bonds, sustained by a common sacred language and shared traces of memory” (Billiet *et al.* 2003: 157). In practice resistance of Churches is not absolutely guaranteed, because personal choices are always preferred.

According to Bontempi (2005: 162), “long a reality in Europe and still recently, the individualisation of the religious experience has led to a transformation of the intimate structure of belief. This is the development of a pluralism of faiths that is a *fact* in Western society, internalised and lived, though not always positively, as a part of religious identity of the individual believer.

This transformation marking as it does discontinuity in the relations between religion and modernity, is the result of the way in which the very structure of belief has changed in later modernity to incorporate the plurality of beliefs. In a sense that is anything but commonplace, religious pluralism means that a religion goes through a process that has already touched modern society in the public sphere thanks to democracy. That is to say that the individual not only has the opportunity to choose, but that he or she *is obliged to choose*. Religious identity must then try to take into account the existence of other religious identities, aspects which modify its structure of belief. In this sense, even the most conservative religious identities, those most determined to reject this state of affairs, find themselves *chosen* and constantly put to the test". Young people are the first ones to experience the dynamics of secularization, thus reducing rates of religious belonging feelings, of ritual practices and spiritual dependence. However, "the abandonment of organised religion appears as a factor that favours not the decline of religion but its adaptation and re-composition on the part of individuals" (Bontempi 2005: 164).

The changes which are taking place do not allow old situations to keep on being, in particular in the relations between the state and the Church, which are subjected "to a strong pressure for change. This impetus originates from below: with the diffusion of new religious identities, groups and organisations ranging from Buddhists, to the new Churches of Protestant matrix and the different Islamic communities. There are also pressures that come from above, from the effects of European integration that require a re-negotiation of long-standing Church-state relations" (Bontempi 2005: 166). The states decide from time to time with which religions they intend to have privileged relations, they start forms of co-operations, or put up a basis for socio-political support of legitimization from below. After all, "Churches are important actors in many fields where the European Commission and European Parliament also act" (Bontempi 2005: 166). Notwithstanding the attempt of including in the European Constitution a reference to Christian roots this did not succeed and in the constitution a number of forms and contents that refer directly to the life of European citizen still remain, therefore to their own culture and their religious expressions. Actually, "the elaboration of a European right to religion cannot result from any combination of national rights on the issue because the differences between the states are too great. Nonetheless, it is possible to pick out a common *fundamentum* in the principles of secularity of modern constitutionalism that guarantee the protection of the right to religious freedom" (Bontempi 2005: 168).

Since 1971 the Catholic Church created a Council of European Episcopal Conferences and in 1980 constituted a Commission of Episcopates for the European Union. Before, other Churches had created a Conference of European Churches, with more than one hundred denominations. Besides

any form of competition, all Churches together wrote down the *Charta Oecumenica Europea* on the 22nd April 2001. “In EU law, religious freedom is explicitly sustained because it is a freedom relating to the individual” (Bontempi 2005: 171). Churches practically contribute to civil life, therefore they play an important role in the construction of European identity. In the meantime, “the local character of orthodoxy is deeply bound to national realities and, in some cases, to state institutions themselves” (Bontempi 2005: 173). After all, intercultural and inter-religious tendencies of many European countries foster the development of joint-ventures, co-operations and agreements thus promoting integration processes.

Another problem is the Islamic presence and its role within European societies, also considering the many souls of this faith that go from Sunnite to Shiite and Wahabite, from Sufism of the Middle East to Hanefism of Turkey. “Therefore, one may say that Islam represents a condition of the growth of reflexivity for the secular institutions of Europe” (Bontempi 2005: 183).

On the other hand, some European nations are changing their actual legislations in order to be more up-to-date with the emerging European contingencies: that is what happened in Portugal, says Helena Vilaça (2006: 57): “changes of the political system such as the end of dictatorship in Iberian countries, the high number of Islamic people immigrating towards Central Europe or the recent integration of Eastern countries in the European Union, are factors which imply sooner or later a revision of the religious constitution or a rethinking of worship legislation. In Portugal, for instance, political changes gave way to the new Law of Religious Freedom”.

It can be useful to verify the rate of pluralism by observing the presence of religious teaching in European public school. The outcoming picture is once again complex and articulated:

| <i>Country</i> | <i>Religious teaching</i> |
|----------------|---|
| Austria | Catholic or Islamic or Other |
| Belgium | Catholic or Hebrew or Islamic or Areligious-Ethical |
| Bulgaria | Orthodox or Islamic |
| Croatia | Catholic |
| Czechia | Catholic (to be arranged) |
| Denmark | Lutheran Protestant; Religious History in secondary schools |
| Finland | Lutheran Protestant or Ethical |
| France | A free day in primary school to attend religious education in a chosen Church; Catholic in Alsace and Moselle |
| Germany | Catholic or Protestant or Islamic or Other |
| Greece | Orthodox |
| Italy | Catholic or Hebrew or Other |

| | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Poland | Catholic or Other |
| Portugal | Catholic or Other |
| Romania | Orthodox or Other |
| Russia | Cultural Orthodox or Other |
| Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo | Orthodox or Other |
| Slovakia | Catholic |
| Spain | Catholic or Other or Religious History; or Islamic out of school timetable |
| Sweden | No confessional teaching |
| The Netherlands | Protestant or Catholic or Other or Liberal |
| United Kingdom | Interconfessional (Multifaith Religion) |

Bulgaria had an opportune action in this regard: already by the academic year 1997-1998 the optional teaching of religion, both Christian and Islamic, was introduced in schools. However, relations between Christians and Muslims do not foster conflict situations, as a matter of fact fundamentalism does not seem to be so relevant, young people are open to new cultures and religions different from their own. Some prejudices, however, are still present as far as Gypsies are concerned (Bogomilova 2005: 236). They usually decide to follow the dominant religion of the hosting country: that is why there are so many Orthodox, Muslims, Catholics and Jews as well as Protestants among them.

Confirmation about a reduced fundamentalism among young people comes from studies about Malta (Abela 1995). In France (Talin 1995), however, fundamentalism still attracts, especially with the Charismatic Renewal, with Opus Dei, with some forms of conservative movements, in some groups of Protestants and among both Jews and Muslims. In Germany (Wahl 1995) fundamentalist groups among young people are quite varied and are mainly due to problems of social affiliation and look for a gratifying belonging. Finally, in the case of Turkey (Çelebi 1995), the youth called “Young Turks” are not apparently keen on fundamentalism because they are not agents of political Islam.

Protestantism in Europe

Together with Baltic Protestantism, Russian Protestantism is one of the most ancient Protestantisms of the European continent, it actually originated in the sixteenth century, through groups of volunteer immigrants or prisoners of war. “The first Protestant Congregations were born not in the country but in the cities. As early as 1576 there was a Lutheran Church in Moscow composed principally by Latvian prisoners of war” (Hebly 1976: 17). Norms dating back to 1649 forbid to live or to eat together with a Protestant. Later on, other Protestant immigrants arrived in Russia and

established themselves mainly in Southern Russia. By the second half of the ninth century, Lutheran nobles coming from Baltic areas exerted quite an influence in St. Petersburg thus preparing the way for the development of Evangelic movement in Russia. In the meantime other Protestants were arriving from Baden, from Württemberg, from Bavaria and Switzerland. However, “the Protestants in the Russian empire were as strangers pressed into a spiritual isolation, and every manifestation of missionary fervour was repressed by law” (Hebly 1976: 31). Dutch Protestants were also relevant presences, even if more interested in economic reasons: already in 1616 there was the reformed Church in Moscow. In 1812 the Russian Society of the Bible was constituted. By 1860 German pietism of Stundism (from the German word *Stunde*, which means hour, lesson, referring to Bible meetings or worship), was affirming itself and gave way to mixed solutions such as Stundo-Baptist later on. Another Protestant group to remember is that of the Molokans, antiritualists and connected to Bible references. Baptists and Evangelic Christians originated from the Molokans. “The origin of these Protestant currents in Russia, however, is never to be solely explained in terms of cultural and religious infiltration from Western Europe ... That they finally established themselves as independent groups beside the Orthodox Church is due in large measure to the way in which the Church treated these believers” (Hebly 1976: 80).

The Federation of Russian Baptists was born in 1905 but its preliminary symptoms date back to 1884. By the beginning of the twentieth century Stundists and Evangelic Christians had a growing trend. In 1909 the Pan-Russian Federation of Evangelic Christians was founded. But then persecutions started and lasted until the revolution in 1917. Later on they could have a certain freedom as antagonists of the Orthodox Church. In 1929 Stalin decided to collectivize agriculture thus also hitting cooperative initiatives of Evangelic Christians and Baptists, who had to limit their activities to liturgy rites only. By 1943 the situation changed again and they could establish good relations with the state authorities. In 1944 the Union of Evangelic Christians and Baptists was founded. After the war, they could regularly register as a religious community only in 1947-'48. Therefore, Evangelic Christians and Baptists were forced to live illegally, with all the following consequences. The actual number of these people was impossible to find out, not even approximately calculate, because of their living hidden away. In fact, Helby (1976: 109) states that “it is therefore very difficult to get any idea of how great the number of Evangelical Christians/Baptists is. The number of 500.000 confessing members is generally suggested. We must remember, however, that only baptized adults are included in this figure. The fellowship must be considerably larger when one includes family members and sympathizers”.

Certainly, the majority of Protestants is located in Northern European countries: in Finland, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Iceland, and Germany as well. This is quite a united group of countries

where “there is a growing interest in the matter of the relationship between Church and state both within and outside the Churches” (Harmati 1984: 13). Also the *folk Church* of the Northern states is the Church of people because it is local and is therefore legitimated by a close relation with the referring nation. However, values of every day life are quite different.

In Finland there has been freedom of religion since 1923. The Lutheran Evangelical Church is recognized by Finnish constitution but it is quite autonomous, more than other Churches of the north. Pentecostals are the more numerous religious groups among non-officially registered congregations, while Methodists are mentioned as a free Church. A good number of Jehovah’s Witnesses and Mormons (a minority) are also present. Among Lutherans, Orthodoxes and Catholics there is some sort of collaboration.

In Denmark, besides Lutherans, there are also Baptists, Pentecostals, Methodists, and Anglicans. In Sweden Protestantism counts more or less the same groups. The same can be said for Norway, with Adventists and Mormons in addition. In Lutheran Iceland there are also some activities of Pentecostals, Adventists and Baptists.

If in Germany Protestantism is basically as great as Catholicism, in France Protestantism is a minority (Bizeul 1991), except for the areas around the Massif Central, from Ardèche to Poitou, Alsace and Moselle and of the Pays de Montbéliard, the Baptist area of Northern France, but also the Parisian region.

From Lutheranism in Denmark, Finland, Sweden and Norway to Calvinism in Scotland, Protestantism is present in Europe with a wide variety of facets, positions and consistencies, which discuss frontiers and boundaries, practices and values, behaviours and attitudes. “Religious Europe is not only a map of territories characterized by this or that religious culture, Religious Europe has also and moreover the presence of a wide number of minorities: Orthodox or Protestants in Catholic countries, Catholic and Orthodox in Protestant countries, Jews and Muslims in the majority of European countries” (Vincent and Willaime 1993: 91). Also Jews and Muslims have particular characteristics in each nation, sometimes in the specific territory of their establishment. Moreover Jews have a great difficulty, after the Shoah and Diaspora, to identify with Europe just as the Muslims consider the continent as a country of immigration or of exile. Orthodox also have some difficulties in getting use to Western habits and rhythms, to the iconography of Catholic Europe and the Latin way of living: centuries of history; made of separations, divisions, cultural and linguistic diversities, as well as organizational and liturgical differences are not easily wiped out. Also the *immortale odium contra latinos* has to be taken into consideration (Makrides 1993: 109).

Resistances against Europe are also present in Protestantism, according to Dreyfus (1993: 128) who underlines that the Protestant states of Western Europe are highly doubtful over the construction of

Europe.

However, reality has its own way and develops towards other conceptions thus revealing that Europe is no longer a Western territory, because many Eastern influences can be found all over Europe. Frontier limits are no longer a problem: airplanes fly over it, sound waves can go through it, telecommunications do not have barriers, signs can supply the differences between languages. Events do not remain closed up in the place where they actually occur. Everything overflows and goes beyond. Therefore, definitions are unsteady and characterizations do not fit into place as in the past. How Scotland should be defined for example, Calvinist or Presbyterian? And how about France, is it Christian or atheist or soaked with *christianitude* (Poulat 1982), which is to say founded on Christian values?

The change is clear enough if seen on the gross percentage of religious belonging, carried out by Willaime (2004: 19):

| <i>Religions</i> | <i>15 countries Europe</i> | <i>25 countries Europe</i> |
|--------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Catholics | 51% | 55% |
| Protestants | 16% | 15% |
| Anglicans | 6% | 5% |
| Orthodoxes | 3% | 3% |
| Muslims | 3% | 2,5% |
| Jews | 0,5% | 0,5% |
| No religions | 20,5% | 19% |
| <i>Inhabitants</i> | 377.000.000 | 452.000.000 |

Percentage increase in favour of Catholics is due to Poland entering the European Union, with the high number of Catholic adepts, while other rates are decreasing or basically stay the same. Particularly relevant is the reduction of the presence of Jews in Europe: it was 90% of the world Jewish population and has decreased to 8% in 1996, therefore identifying it with Europe is no longer possible (Azria 1996: 254).

As already said, there are problems with Orthodoxes and Protestants. The former, especially at higher levels of the Ecclesia establishment, are afraid that Europe may diminish Orthodox identity thus fostering Anglo-Saxon materialism and liberalism. The latter retain that the European operation has a strong Catholic character, almost of the Vatican; Anglicans in particular turn to the other side of the Atlantic and to the other Oceans (but Scottish Calvinists are more linked to the European continent).

Islam in Europe

Notwithstanding resistances, doubts, fears and misunderstandings the project of enlarging Europe

keeps going on and reaches new goals, even unexpected ones, as in the case of the attempt of a Scandinavian Arab dialogue fostered by the Northern countries with a prevalence of Protestant and Arabian countries with the prevalence of Muslims, thus trying again to tighten relations dating back to centuries ago (Melasuo 1993).

However, Arab-Islamic communities are progressively growing in Europe, as well as Turkish-Islamic communities, Albanian, Bosnian, Senegalese, Moroccan, Tunisian, Algerian, Egyptian, and many other communities (Iranian, Pakistani, Bengali) who are either recently established or since old times.

In Europe, Islamic East is a recurrent theme also for mass communication. A first result is evident already. The European immigrant is no longer Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, but more and more frequently from Morocco, Tunisia or Turkey. Once again it is all assimilated in one generic category: Arab Muslim, even if the indicated individual is neither Arab nor Muslim. At last, generalization is the best way to avoid a deeper knowledge, stigmatizing is the short way to avoid hosting and meeting others. That's why "Muslim immigrants, instead of *being*, they *become* ethnic groups. Ethnicization is a classification process where social actors are low classed and reclassified so that through a system of crossed and complementary imputation re-qualifies social hierarchy. This way, racism confines immigrants in a stigmatized position that puts discredit on them. However, isolated ethnicity never emerges. Ethnicities correspond one to another and are linked to each other" (Bastienier 1991: 15).

It is not by chance that sociological bibliography on Islam in Europe has rapidly increased (Dassetto and Conrad 1996) and that now some sociologists of religion, who were once mainly experienced in the dominant religion of their home country, have now become Islam experts, studying the relationship between the state and Islamic religion, the integration of Muslims in Europe and the role of Islam inside European society. France, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Italy, The Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, Spain and Switzerland are among the countries that care more about new themes of Islamic content, in relation to areas such as immigration, citizenship, political representatives, community organization, means of mass communication, identity processes, the perception of European Union, the identification with Europe, Islamization of Europe, Islamic associations in European territory, social and religious Islamic networks, youth education, inter-ethnic conflicts, the use of free time, criminality, entrepreneurship, work, polygamy, minority conditions, linguistic barriers, law statute, places of worship, woman's role, religious practice and conversions.

Allievi (2002: 30) opportunely considers that "Islam is no more *on the other side*, but is here, among us, in the millions of Muslims present and established and (definitely) European citizens.

Estimates vary between 8 and 15 million or more and the definition of Muslims depends on the countries considered, which were chosen and, obviously, depends on the thesis to “demonstrate”. The frontier between the two worlds has changed: actually, there is no longer only one. The question is no more about Islam and Western countries: Islam is inside Western countries. It is nowadays history”. Islam is therefore part of and integrated in Europe, especially as far as the second generations are concerned, who are completely socialized within European territories, speaking one or more European languages, and who are *de facto* Euro-Islamic generations (Allievi and Nielsen 2003; Maréchal 2003). Actually “Muslims’ Europe is quite different from what we know as an institutional projection. At first, it is larger: it is not limited to the fifteen countries (whose inside and outside boundaries have no relevance to Islam), and strongly headed towards the East. In some East European countries there are, indeed, relevant Islamic non-immigrated minorities, therefore with a regular citizenship, with secular and experienced modalities of relationship with majorities and of institutional management of a specific Islamic religion (which is also linguistic and cultural, thinking about the case of Turkish speaking minorities, last residual of Ottoman domination) from the involved States. Also this Europe starts from the Atlantic Ocean, but is heading more towards the Urals” (Allievi 2002: 141).

Allievi hypothesizes that Europe itself might be *dar al-islam*, which means “nothing but the European part of Umma, but with a different meaning from the traditional one: it is Islamic territory as well, and Islam is only one of the others, with no pretensions over the others, not even for definitions”. Europe becomes a decisive ground for “Muslim Geopolitics” as well. In the future there is, however, a “plural” Europe (Allievi 2002: 179). Islam itself is “one and multiple”, as Pace affirms (2004: 12), passing through the different solutions experienced in Europe for public acknowledgement and state regulation of Islam and Muslim identity. In France, according to Pace, the principle of *jus soli* prevails where each and every citizen has full rights, in Germany, however, *jus sanguinis* is enforced, and it tends to keep citizenship as a privilege for natives only. From these two different conceptions the attitudes towards Islamic people also derive (as well as towards other immigrants). In the United Kingdom “social policies are moved by a social and cultural conception that classifies people according to their human race and, as a consequence, confirm the idea that the diverse ethnic peculiarities of a single race have to be respected, and if they are not, the State is obliged to intervene in order to promote active policies to protect their differences (affirmative action). In this way, British policy was dominated on the one hand by the aim of avoiding any kind of racial discrimination and, on the other hand, by a gradual recognition in public opinion of all the distinctive elements of this or that ethnic group” (Pace 2004: 42-43).

In The Netherlands, at first, the migration flux was accepted, afterwards the system of acceptance

underwent a crisis because many immigrants established themselves in the country with their families (and with their religion, either Islamic or other). Within a decade the Muslim population in the Netherlands doubled and in the meanwhile the Dutch society had to face economic recessions. Especially second generation Muslims were damaged because they experienced a reduction of rights. In Belgium there is a representative organism of Muslims that keeps in touch with the Belgian government but also respects the law.

In Scandinavian countries *jus loci* is applied, as well as in France, thus facilitating the citizen's access, but also helping immigrants of European origins limiting access. However, here a fiscal crisis was registered as well which has complicated the management of immigrant fluxes. Moreover, many refugees have been accepted for humanitarian reasons, but they are submitted to strict controls. Nonetheless Islamic schools and mosques were opened. However, between Scandinavian countries there are some differences, as for automatic registration of newborns to national Churches, in particular to the Swedish Church, which has such privilege since 1990. In Sweden there have been some conflicts with Muslims: that is why there are some difficulties in the "passage from the assimilation policy to that of respectful integration of socio-religious differences in Islam" (Pace 2004: 88). The difficulty also arises from considering Islam as one, as if it were a single "congregation".

Finally, Italy and Spain have demonstrated to be open to Islamic immigration flux, especially at the beginning; only after, restrictions occurred. In 1992 in Spain an agreement for the recognition of the code of law of Islam was signed: but by the year 2000 law restrictions occurred. In Italy, Muslims entrance is growing, from many different origins: their juridical recognition poses many problems which are still unsolved.

To conclude about the Islam question in Europe (Bistolfi and Zabbal 1995) a comparative analysis concerning Buddhists and Muslims from European citizens' perception can be interesting. In fact these perceptions influence legal decisions and the dynamics of future society with their attitudes (Liogier 2006). According to some studies carried out in France, Belgium, The Netherlands, Italy, Denmark, United Kingdom, Scotland, Austria, Germany and other places in Europe, appreciation for Buddhism has increased, while appreciation for Muslims has reduced. In fact, "everywhere in Western Europe Buddhist groups are recognized or on their way to be recognized, notwithstanding sometimes the scarce number of members. Recognition arrives, and is always more rapid than that of Islam, which is better established within European territories than that of Buddhism" (Liogier 2006: 78). Finally, Buddhism is (or appears to be) more European and westernized than Islam. Furthermore, Buddhism apparently represents the future of Europe. Except for conceiving Islam a sort of new Buddhism, based on some peculiar religious values.

Religions and/in Europe: a conclusion

The four blocks of other religions (Catholics, Orthodoxes, Protestants and Muslims) are a fundamental basis for the construction of Europe. They are actually the corner-stones posed at the four angles of European chessboard: the point of convergence could be Brussels (or Belgium), where the presence of the four religions is clearly shown, with the Jewish religion at a side as a millenarian presence in Europe.

History and sociology teach us, however, that such religious blocks may represent an obstacle on the way of a continental unique identity process. It is also true that there are many experiences showing the possibility of a cohabitation of religions. Actually the reference to a common European belonging may prevent the rising of inter-ethnic conflicts. For instance, the entrance of Romania in the European Union may reduce the number of conflicts between established populations on the one hand and nomads like Roms, on the other.

Notwithstanding resistances and perplexities (as for example the problems that emerged for the adoption of the Euro as a unique currency), there is a good basis of agreement for Europe as a social common territory. The idea started in Catholic and Protestant countries, but afterwards the proposal also involved areas of Orthodox and Islamic culture (it is a long time since Turkey has asked to enter the Union).

In the nations with a Catholic prevalence there is already a certain number of opinions in favour of the European Union. Also for this reason the role of Catholicism within the European context has not been treated here in a specific chapter, but it has touched all the topics we have been dealing with. As a matter of fact, what happens even in a small area of the continent is of interest for all, even if awareness of acting interconnections is not always up to the situation: worry occurs especially when a war explodes close to our residences or in a place where we expected to go on holiday in, or even when it involves military intervention of our country, even if only for mediation and peace.

The relation that other religions have with Europe cannot be denied. Bonds are evident, sometimes they are inextricable, therefore they have a certain importance and an influence on Europe. Understanding the significance, as well as knowing the dynamics and evaluating possible consequences of all, is not a small thing. Even collecting data may be an operation full of tricks, misunderstandings, reserves, deformations, ideological censure; methodological and chronological difficulties therefore are comparative difficulties as well. Nonetheless, it was worthwhile consulting different sources, trying inferences, filling gaps of knowledge, so as to offer an up-to-date picture, vast and reliable, even within the limits of such a complicated international approach.

Relatively recent data on 49 “European” countries (total amount of 740.000.000 inhabitants) are as follows:

| BELIEVERS→ ----- COUNTRIES↓ | Catholics % | Protestants (or Christian Churches) % | Orthodoxes % | Muslims % | Jews % | Hindus % |
|---|---------------------------|---|--|-------------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| Albania (2005) | 10 | | 20 | 70 | | |
| Andorra (*) | 92 | 0,5 | | | 0,4 | |
| Armenia (*) | (some) | (some) | 94 (Armenian Apostolic Church) | (Kurdish Sunnites) | | |
| Austria (2001) | 73,5 | 4,7; 0,9 | 2,2 | 4,2 | 0,1 | |
| Azerbaijan (*) | | | (Russians; Armenian Apostolic Christians) | 87 (Shiites) | | |
| Belarus (2001) | 15,7 | 35,7 | 44; 1,3 (Old Believers Church); 0,5 (Uniates) | 0,9 | 0,8 | |
| Belgium (2005) | 75 | 1 | 0,5 | 4 | 0,5 | |
| Bosnia, Herzegovina (2002) | 15 | 4 | 31 | 40 (Sunnites) | | |
| Bulgaria (2001) | 0,6 | 0,5 | 82,6 | 12,2 | 0,001 | |
| Croatia (2001) | 87,83; 0,01; 0,14 | 0,43 | 4,42; 0,91 (Serbians) | 1,28 | 0,01 | |
| Cyprus (*) | | | 78 (Greeks) | 18 (Turkish Cypriotes) ^o | | |
| Czech Republic (*) | 26,9 | 2,3; 3,2 (Hussites) | 0,2 | | 0,1 | |
| Denmark (2002) | 0,6 | 84; 2 (Christian Churches) | | 3 | | |
| Estonia (2001) | | 14 (Lutherans) | 13 | | | |
| Finland (2005) | 0,2 | 83,2 (Lutherans); 0,5 (others); 1 (non registered) | 1,1 | 0,1; 0,4 (non registered) | | |
| France (2006) | 51 | 3 | 1 | 4 | 1 | |
| Georgia (*) | 0,8 | | 65 (Georgians); 10 (Russians); 8 (Armenian Apostolic Church) | 11 | | |
| Germany (2002) | 33,4 | 33; 1,2 (free Churches) | 1,3 | 4 | 0,1 | |
| Greece (*) | 0,5 | 0,4 | 93 (Greeks) | 4,5 | 4,5 | 0,05 |
| Hungary (2001) | 54,5 | 15,9 (Calvinits); 3 (Lutherans) | | | 0,1 | |
| Iceland (*) | 2 | 95 | | | | |
| Ireland (2002) | 88,4 | 2,3 (Anglicans); 0,4 (Presbyterians) | | | | |
| Italy (2004) | 85,1 | 0,6 | 0,1 | 0,5 | 0,005 | |
| Kazakhstan (*) | | 2 | 44 (Russians) | 47 (Sunnites) | 0,9 | |
| Latvia (1999) | 19,6 | 17 | 16,8 | | 0,6 | |
| Liechtenstein (2002) | 76,2 | 7 | 0,7 | 3,6 | | |
| Lithuania (2001) | 79 | 1,04 | 4,07 (Russians); 0,77 (Old Believers) | 0,08 (Sunnites) | 0,03 | |
| Luxemburg (2000) | 87 | 1,1 | | | | |
| Macedonia (2003) | 0,35 | 0,03 | 64,78 | 33,32 | | |
| Malta (*) | 93,4 | | | | | |
| Moldova (2000) | | 0,5 | 95 | | 1,5 | |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------|-----|
| Monaco (*) | 90 | | | | | |
| Norway (2004) | 1 | 86 (Lutherans); 1 (Pentecostals) | 0,1 | 1,8 | 0,02 | 0,1 |
| Poland (2000) | 95 | 1 | 2 (Autocephalous) | | 0,003 | |
| Portugal (2001) | 84,53 | 1,410; 0,555 (Christian Churches) | 0,2 | 0,138 | 0,02 | |
| Romania (2002) | 4,73 (Romans); 0,88 (Greeks) | 3,23 (Reformed); 0,12 (Lutherans); 0,08 (Evangelical Augustinians); 0,31 (Unitarians); 1,49 (Pentecostals); 0,58 (Baptists); 0,43 (Seventh-Day Adventists); 0,2 (Christian Evangelicals) | 86,8; 0,17 (Old Rite Christians) | 0,31 | 0,03 | |
| Russia (2001) | 1 | 1,1; 5,3 (Independents); 0,4 (Evangelicals); 0,4 (Pentecostal/Charismatics) | 51,7 (Russians) | 7,6 | 0,7 | 0,5 |
| San Marino (*) | 90 | | | | | |
| Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo (2005) | 4 | 1 | 78 | 5 | 0,010 | |
| Slovakia (2001) | 68,9; 4,1 (Greeks) | 6,9 (Lutherans); 2 (Calvinists) | 0,9 | | 0,042 | |
| Slovenia (2002) | 57 | 0,8 (Lutherans); 0,1 | 2,3 (Serbians) | 2,3 | | |
| Spain (2005) | 79,3 | 0,5 | | 1,2 | 0,1 | |
| Sweden (*) | 1 | 88 | 1 | 1 | | |
| Switzerland (2000) | 41,82 | 33,05 | 1,81 | 4,26 | 0,25 | |
| The Netherlands (2000) | 17 | 15 | | 5,7 | 0,1 | 0,5 |
| Turkey (*) | | | | 68 (Sunnites); 30 (Shiites) | | |
| Ukraine (2004) | 13,5 | 3,6 | 45,7 | 1,6 | 2,3 | |
| United Kingdom (2001) | 11,5 | 60,1 (Anglicans in GB; Presbyterians in Scotland; Methodists; Baptists; Pentecostals) | 1 | 2,7 | 0,5 | 1 |
| Vatican (*) | 99 | | | | | |

(*) Estimate

(°) 98% in Northern Cyprus

N.B.: "Republics" with a certain autonomy are also to be considered, such as: Nagorno-Karabakh (Armenian, in Azerbaijan), Nahičevan (Islamic, in Azerbaijan), Chechnya (Islamic, in Russia) – which separated in 1992 from Ingushetia (Islamic, in Russia)-, and Kabardino-Balkar (Islamic, in Russia).

It is not easy to have reliable data on the number of followers of Churches and religions present in Europe. Estimates are not even easy, but a brief, partial picture (however more than 25 countries, but Russia is not included) can be as follows:

| RELIGIONS | NUMBER OF FOLLOWERS |
|---------------|---------------------|
| Catholicism | 260.457.890 |
| Protestantism | 73.330.350 |

| | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| Greek Orthodox | 35.861.140 |
| Anglicanism | 32.696.030 |
| Other Christian religions | 9.966.980 |
| <i>All Christian religions</i> | <i>412.312.390</i> |
| Islam | 8.760.660 |
| Other religions | 1.526.490 |
| Judaism | 1.447.140 |
| Non religious | 53.058.980 |
| Atheism | 18.452.730 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>495.558.390</i> |

The nations on which we could base the data taken into consideration above are more numerous than those considered strictly European (25 countries): we should enlarge the statistical diagram to all the following national situations: Albania, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lichtenstein, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Macedonia, Malta, Moldova, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Serbia-Montenegro-Kosovo, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, The Netherlands, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom, including the smaller states such as Andorra, Monaco, San Marino, and the Vatican.

The most important changes in the European setting occurred after the migratory flow which modified in a very relevant way the demographical data of the single nations, on the basis of the number of immigrants which constitute the four main flows of transmigrations prominently coming from North African countries towards Portugal, Spain, France and Italy, from Turkey towards Germany, from the Middle East towards Europe in general, from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh above all towards the United Kingdom. The levels of immigration are the following (but they are not updated):

| COUNTRIES OF IMMIGRATION | NUMBER OF IMMIGRANTS |
|--------------------------|----------------------|
| Germany | 2.000.000 |
| France | 1.900.000 |
| United Kingdom | 1.300.000 |
| Denmark | 850.000 |
| Italy | 830.000 |
| Spain | 450.000 |
| The Netherlands | 380.000 |
| Belgium | 285.000 |

| | |
|-------------|--------|
| Switzerland | 80.000 |
| Sweden | 75.000 |
| Austria | 60.000 |
| Greece | 60.000 |
| Portugal | 60.000 |
| Ireland | 25.000 |

Even if approximately, the data shown suggest some considerations. The numeric entity of fluxes is obviously influenced by social politics carried out by the different countries. Problems emerge when the chain of immigration takes place, that is to say when the families follow the already established immigrant, arriving in the country of destination as well. At this point the bases for a linguistic, cultural and religious community are built. As a consequence, the problem of having a place for worship emerges. However, this is not always immediately realized. Therefore, tensions may occur, also because of some conflicts with religions and Churches established before. Finally, an intercultural and inter-religious question emerges and the European Union may be asked for an intervention, starting from a legal level.

The question, however, does not only involve the outcome of migratory phenomena. There are more ancient issues where religion plays a strategic role. A particular case is that of Cyprus where a part of the Island is Greek Orthodox and the other is Turkish Islamic. Even more complex is the situation in other parts of Europe, especially in the territories which once belonged to the Soviet Socialist Republics. It deals with the Slav roots which include Russians, Belarussians and Ukrainians. Notwithstanding the use of the same language and the use of the Cyrillic alphabet there are substantial differences even within the same Orthodox religion of Byzantine roots. In fact Ukrainians and Belarussians have always defended their own autonomy from the Muscovite Russians. Larger divisions are instead those regarding the Caucasus people of Georgia (of Orthodox religion with a minority of Muslims), of Armenia (of Orthodox religion with a few Catholics using Armenian rites, and with a minority of Monophysites) and of Azerbaijan (of Muslim religion, above all Shiites, with a minority of Christians). Each of these three nations has a very strong identity and this creates conflicts of various kinds which also influence the different religions.

Within Orthodox Georgia there are also the Abkhasians, whose language is substantially different from the Georgian official language. Within Islamic Azerbaijan, there are also Armenian Christians from Nagorno-Karabakh. And finally there are also the Islamic Azerbaijanians from Nahičevan.

Religious and ethnic minorities are also found in Russia and out of Russia where the Russians emigrated, above all in the Ukraine (as many as 11 million) and in Belarus (1.6 million).

In the south of Europe there are very significant groups of Muslims in Istanbul and Turkey but also in Albania, Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Macedonia. But it is the most recent immigration that

brings very many Muslims onto the European continent, so much so as to make Islam the second religion, for the number of followers, in various European nations. One must not forget the Jewish presence for so many centuries, which has resisted against every form of anti-Semitism succeeding in maintaining very solid roots in Europe.

The perspectives for a European future (Greeley 2003; Knippenberg 2005) cannot leave out of consideration the responsibility for religious problems. In 2007 officially in the European Union are: Portugal, Spain, France, Italy, Belgium, Luxemburg, Ireland, Lithuania, Poland, Czechia, Slovakia, Austria, Hungary, Slovenia, and Malta with a Catholic prevalence; Germany, and The Netherlands with a mixed Catholic-Protestant prevalence; Latvia, with mixed Catholic-Protestant-Orthodox prevalence; Estonia with mixed Protestant-Orthodox prevalence; United Kingdom, Denmark, Sweden, and Finland with Protestant prevalence; Greece, Cyprus, Bulgaria, and Romania with Orthodox prevalence.

New arrivals, especially from Africa and Asia, are changing the inner composition of European nations, also on a religious level, as can be seen in the table below; the data are limited to the 31st December 2000 regarding Europe of fifteen countries, and refer to foreign populations divided into religious belonging:

| BELIEVERS→ ----- COUNTRIES OF IMMIGRATION↓ | <i>Orthodoxes</i> % | <i>Catholics</i> % | <i>Protestants</i> % | <i>Muslims</i> % | Total immigrants |
|--|------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Austria | 14,4 | 11,9 | 0,0 | 35,5 | 757.900 |
| Belgium | 3,2 | 45,4 | 8,6 | 22,9 | 861.685 |
| Denmark | 4,7 | 13,7 | 18,3 | 37,4 | 258.629 |
| Finland | 10,8 | 10,2 | 15,2 | 20,6 | 91.074 |
| France | 1,1 | 33,7 | 4,7 | 46,5 | 3.263.186 |
| Germany | 15,4 | 25,2 | 3,9 | 38,8 | 7.296.818 |
| Greece | - | - | - | - | 655.000 |
| Ireland | - | - | - | - | 151.400 |
| Italy | 12,0 | 24,5 | 6,2 | 37,2 | 1.388.153 |
| Luxemburg | 4,7 | 69,5 | 8,5 | 3,6 | 162.285 |
| The Netherlands | 2,7 | 20,9 | 10,3 | 39,4 | 667.802 |
| Portugal | 0,7 | 55,5 | 13,8 | 6,5 | 207.607 |
| United Kingdom | 4,1 | 34,2 | 11,7 | 18,0 | 2.450.000 |
| Spain | 2,5 | 38,9 | 12,0 | 28,9 | 895.720 |
| Sweden | 7,4 | 16,4 | 34,4 | 23,4 | 477.313 |
| <i>EU Total</i> | 8,5 | 27,8 | 6,8 | 33,4 | 19.584.572 |

Source: Pittau, F. (2006) 'Europa, allargamento, immigrazione, religioni', *Religioni e Società XXI* (54): 115

The importance of new Islamic presences in Europe is far too evident. Also the number of Catholics

is quite relevant, but in percentage it is inferior to the number of states taken into consideration and, on the other hand, tends to be added to the states where Catholic presence is already remarkable (Luxemburg, Belgium, Portugal and *in primis* Spain).

Therefore, it can be foreseen that boundaries, also religious ones, will disappear. The Mediterranean Sea towards Africa, the Bosphorus gulf towards the Middle East and the Ustjurt Plateau with the Caspian Sea and Aral Lake towards Asia are no longer obstacles or closed doors. They actually become more and more ways of access, places and bridges of connection.

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