

Orthodox Theology in Dialogue

Research Group: Faculty of Theology. Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"
Research field: Theology

Head of the research group:
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Project guidelines

This project proposal presents research in the field of religious studies and comparative theology, specifically focusing on interfaith and interreligious dialogue. As a dynamic process that has undergone significant development over the last century, theological dialogue poses a substantial challenge for Orthodox theology today. While the Orthodox Church, at both the local and Panorthodox levels, actively engages in theological dialogue, its primary focus over the past century has been on clarifying positions between different religions and Christian denominations.



Introduction

The project encompasses four main areas:

- Exploring the role of interreligious dialogue as a catalyst for understanding, promoting security, and fostering progress in contemporary society.
- Investigating the historical and current dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church.
- Examining dialogue with non-Chalcedonian churches, including a study of their history, current status, and the diverse approaches to dialogue within these traditions.
- Assessing the dialogue between the Orthodox Church and Protestant denominations.



Methodology



Initially, participants will prioritize the historical-critical approach, which entails identifying primary sources relevant to the topic under scrutiny. Additionally, the historical-analytical method will be employed to dissect the historical trajectory of Orthodoxy in dialogue. The comparative-analytical method will then be utilized to scrutinize how these ideas manifest within the theological framework of contemporary Orthodox theology. The integration of historical-critical and theological-systematic methods and approaches in the initial phase of the project serves two primary objectives: firstly, delineating the similarities and disparities among the faith and doctrinal structures of the three monotheistic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) by tracing the theological discourse on the subject across centuries; secondly, unveiling theological-dogmatic reflections on the dialogue topic.



Conclusion

In all four areas, the emphasis will be on the current state of theological dialogue within an Orthodox context. This will include an examination of the impact of interreligious and interchurch theological specificities, asymmetries, processes of convergence and divergence, and how these factors influence international relations, cultural cooperation, education, social activities, and regional and global security. The primary focus of the research will be on the Bulgarian context, where major monotheistic religions such as Christianity, Islam, and Judaism are represented, along with various Christian denominations including Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant, and ancient Oriental churches.



Expected Results

Conducting fundamental research on interreligious dialogue, particularly focusing on Non-Chalcedonian Orthodox, Catholic-Orthodox, and Orthodox-Protestant interactions. These studies are characterized by their innovation and originality. On one hand, they will consider the current developments in theological dialogue within the Orthodox context today, while on the other hand, they will be specifically tailored to the Bulgarian context. In this regard, inter-Orthodox dialogue will also be examined, as it establishes fundamental principles for engaging with non-Orthodox religious communities. The findings will be made available to relevant state authorities for interpretation, analysis, and management of numerous processes in Bulgaria, Europe, and the Middle East that influence security, international relations, and social dynamics, with interchurch and interreligious relations being integral elements. A comprehensive educational resource will include translations into Bulgarian of key documents from dialogical meetings. It will be provided to students majoring in Theology and Religion in Europe at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski," as well as to graduate students and Religion teachers, aiming to enhance and deepen their qualifications in the field of dialogue.

Members of the group:
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