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# NIKOLAI BERDYAEV'S IDEAS ON ORTHODOXY – PROJECTIONS ON THE CONTEMPORARY ORTHODOX COMMUNITY IN BULGARIA

***Abstract:*** *The most important judgment in Orthodoxy as a religion is that you do not become Orthodox, you are born Orthodox. This is the most important conclusion in the works of the great Russian philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev 1874-1948. His ideas about Orthodoxy prove to be extremely relevant in our current times. The present text aims to project these ideas onto the Orthodox community in Bulgaria in the 21st century, with a particular focus on some of the decisions made by the Orthodox Church in Bulgaria. Most of them resemble policies that may serve the power elite, but move away from Orthodoxy and its traditions. Among them are the controversy over the Russian Church in Bulgaria, the unleashing of Russian spy-mania, which has no analogue, the putting into the mouth of the sick and dying patriarch of claims about the war of Russia and Ukraine, which, besides being secular, are also conjunctural, etc. Berdyaev's ideas check that existential minimum without which Orthodoxy not only departs from itself, but loses its specificity of doctrine and religion. We, the laity, cannot watch this process idly, for both state and church must serve the people. Orthodoxy is entering its final battle because it is not a religion of individual faith like Protestantism, nor of authority and hierarchy like Catholicism. It is a religion of "internal devotion, liturgicality, conciliarity, freedom and eschatology", to use Berdyaev's words. Will we, as Orthodox, all be able to defend the right to be so, and trust in the Holy Spirit sent by Christ after the Resurrection as the Spirit of truth?*

***Keywords:*** *N. Berdyaev, Orthodoxy, inner tradition, liturgical, conciliarity, freedom, eschatological, Holy Spirit as truth*

# ИДЕЈЕ НИКОЛАЈА БЕРЂАЈЕВА О ПРАВОСЛАВЉУ – ПРОЈЕКЦИЈЕ НА САВРЕМЕНУ ПРАВОСЛАВНУ ЗАЈЕДНИЦУ У БУГАРСКОЈ

***Сажетак:*** *Најважнији суд у православљу као религији јесте да православан не постајеш – православан се рађаш. Ово је најзначајнији закључак у делима великог руског филозофа Николаја Берђајева (1874–1948). Његове идеје о православљу показују се као изузетно релевантне у данашњем времену. Овај текст има за циљ да пројектује те идеје на православну заједницу у Бугарској у 21. веку, са посебним освртом на неке одлуке које је донела Православна црква у Бугарској. Већина њих*

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*личи на политике које могу служити владајућој елити, али се удаљавају од православља и његових традиција. Међу њима су контроверзе око Руске цркве у Бугарској, разбуктавање „руске шпијуноманије“ без преседана, стављање у уста болесном и умирућем патријарху изјава о рату Русије и Украјине које су, осим што су световне, и коњунктуралне, итд. Берђајеве идеје проверавају онај егзистенцијални минимум без којег се православље не само удаљава од себе, већ и губи своју специфичност учења и религије. Ми, лаици, не можемо немо посматрати овај процес, јер и држава и црква морају служити народу. Православље улази у своју последњу битку јер оно није религија индивидуалне вере као протестантизам, нити ауторитета и хијерархије као католицизам. То је религија „унутрашње преданости, литургичности, саборности, слободе и есхатологије“, како каже Берђајев. Да ли ћемо ми, православни, успети да одбранимо право да то будемо и да верујемо у Светог Духа, кога је Христос послао након Васкрсења као Духа истине?*

***Кључне речи:*** *Н. Берђајев, православље, унутрашња традиција, литургичност, сабор, слобода, есхатолошко, Свети Дух као истина.*

## Introduction

Russian philosophical thought has notable figures, among them Nikolai Berdyaev 1874-1948. He is distinguished by the encyclopaedic and comprehensive nature of his thinking related to both philosophy and religious issues. Among his themes and problems are the philosophy of freedom, philosophy of truth, philosophy of creative truth, etc. The second half of his life he devoted to Orthodoxy as a religion, and this is an invaluable contribution not only to the Russian but also to the world treasury of ideas. Given the new geopolitical conditions of the 21st century, the war and battle are not only for resources, but also for the survival of Orthodoxy. Each of the Slavic states chooses its own way of resistance or pathos, and we will verify through the ideas of N. Berdyaev the ability of Orthodoxy in Bulgaria to defend its original causes. In the times in which we live, individual Orthodox states and communities are gripped by social and political motives that are unacceptable. Through the sieve of the years, an immortal philosopher and theologian stands up with all the greatness and might of his thinking to stop this dangerous trend.

## Geopolitics

The question of space turns out to be one of the most important not only in geography but also in philosophy, especially after the publications of the French sociologist of the 20th century, Michel Foucault. In its classical definition, however, “Geopolitics analyzes international relations and interactions between states, including cooperation and conflict. It attempts to explain how factors such as geography, economics, and culture influence the formation of political networks and tensions. In today’s world, where states compete for influence and resources,

geopolitics plays an important role in determining the importance of ideas and actions in a country" (Wikipedia). Religion cannot remain aloof from this issue, given the centuries-old history of major religions in the struggle for territory and power...

## Geopolitics of Christianity

Christianity has a centuries-old tradition with its main families – Orthodoxy, Catholicism, and Protestantism. Each is distinctive and has its own communities of believers. Regardless of the differences, it is born with common features, related to faith in Christ as the God-Man. Geopolitics, however, also concerns the relationship of the Church as an institution with the State, which is subject to certain rules in the 21st century.

1. Unconditional and unequivocal respect, guarantee, and observance of fundamental *human rights and religious freedoms* both by the State, which has adopted them in its legislation, and by the Church;

2. Maintaining and strictly observing the principle of the *supremacy of the law* as the fundamental basis of the democratic rule of law and its strict application in the field of religious freedoms and church affairs;

3. Building a balanced relationship of *partnership* between the state and the Church in which the distinction of their specific spheres of political and religious autonomy is preserved and not violated (Нушев, 2005). Unfortunately, in the times we live in, an intensive de-Christianization and a literal abandonment of Christian values have begun. There is an interference of the State in the affairs of the Church and the execution of State orders on its part. Let us examine, through Nikolai Berdyaev, the strength of Orthodox ideas and the struggle against Caesar.

## The Truth about Orthodoxy

Orthodoxy is a part of Christianity that hardly changes over time and preserves its values. It is not so much historical or evolutionary, but it is intrinsically free. "The freedom of the Church from the State has always been in danger, but freedom within the Church has always existed in Orthodoxy." Orthodoxy is an orthodoxy of life, not of doctrine, and heresy within it is for those who walk a false spiritual path. The ontology of Orthodoxy also ties it to Orthodox life before it subordinates it to religious thought. In this sense, unlike Catholicism, it is not bound by authority and does not have great thinkers like Thomas Aquinas and others. Nor does it proclaim the personal faith of Protestantism, but is aimed at preserving the creed. Or to put it in the words of the Bible: "Go teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded (Matt. 28:19-20). And behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen!" Orthodoxy

is a collective form of spiritual life in which the Holy Spirit appears and His power is infinite. “Grace is the action of Divine energy upon the created world, the presence of the Holy Spirit in the world,” and the pneumaticity of Orthodoxy is its defining characteristic (Berdyaev, 1952).

Orthodoxy is primarily liturgical in nature, where it is not the norm and the sermon that is the determinant, but the “liturgical action in which the pattern for the transformation of life is given. It also teaches the people through the images of the saints and inculcates a cult of holiness” (Berdyaev, 2006). For Orthodoxy, the Church itself is not so much an institution as a “religious spiritual organism, a mystical body of Christ”. Its last characteristic is eschatology as an attachment not to earthly life but to the kingdom of God and an expectation of Christ’s Second Coming. The drama of orthodoxy and the apocalyptic currents are in the direction of an expectation of transfiguration, and this makes it inherently innovative, not tragic (Berdyaev, 1952).

*Every Orthodox state or community, if it wants to be such, must observe these doctrines. Unfortunately, in both secular and religious communities, they are formally implemented.* This paper attempts to project these ideas onto the Orthodox community in Bulgaria in the 21st century, and in particular, some of the decisions of the Orthodox Church in Bulgaria. Most of them resemble policies that may serve the power elite, but depart from Orthodoxy and its traditions. Among them are the controversies about the Russian Church in Bulgaria, the unleashing of Russian spy-mania in Bulgaria, which has no analogue, putting into the mouth of the sick and dying patriarch claims about the war between Russia and Ukraine, such as that the Church can support the victim but not the aggressor, which, besides being secular, are also conjunctural, etc. When, in 2023, the Pope addressed words of peace to Zelensky, he was forced to apologize. However, the Church can only be a peacemaker and guardian of the faith. The Church does not concern itself with yellow chronicles and journalistic sensationalism. Neither does it serve anyone’s orders and commands... It is clear that the geopolitical situation changes the status quo and the Church itself. The geopolitics of Orthodoxy also went through several periods in the past – at the beginning it was identified with the Byzantine Empire, at a later stage with the fall of Constantinople, and it underwent a new development. The Eastern Church had to contend with the twin pressures of Rome and the Muslim world, and from the 15th century, Russia became the successor of Orthodoxy. Russia itself went through various stages of Orthodoxy, and the liberation of the Balkans from Turkish rule led to a revival of chauvinist ideas as well. Pro-Russian sentiments were also seen as a battle against Rome. and they persisted over time. Europe’s desire to sever the Balkans from Russia will always meet resistance. In the beginning, the geopolitics of Orthodoxy was based on historical and geographical factors. But now it is being perceived on a global political level, and this is changing the choices of the Orthodox

countries, and the church itself is being used for political moves (Thual, 2009). Given that Orthodox states are bound by circumstances beyond their control, they must find forces to counteract in favor of the faith. It is no longer safe to read even comments about Orthodoxy because they may turn out to be lies. However, the most important judgment in Orthodoxy as a religion is that you do not become Orthodox; you are born Orthodox. This is also the most important conclusion in the writings of the great Russian philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev. However, being also a philosopher, he verified the religious idea through several relations = philosophy of freedom, philosophy of truth, philosophy of creativity.

## Orthodoxy and Freedom

H. Berdyaev has several key ideas about freedom. In "On Slavery and Freedom" of Man, Berdyaev speaks of the master, the slave, and the free man. One cannot arrive at the idea of freedom as the preservation of one's own dignity unless one has realized one's split nature and the ability to make one's own choices, and the free person "can manifest the full image of God". Freedom is an intrinsic category, not a conjunctural or political one. In "The Kingdom of the Spirit and the Kingdom of Caesar," Berdyaev speaks of the perfect freedom acquired in the kingdom of the Spirit... The greatest enemy of man is alienation from family, Church or state, or false spirituality. Christianity in history has too often collapsed into the path of coercion, given in to temptation, and denied the freedom of Christ. According to Berdyaev, "God the Person wants not a person over whom He has dominion and who is obliged to glorify Him, but a person-person who responds to His call, and with whom a communion of love is possible" (Бердяев, 2002). There is an ontological gulf between the two realms, and it is unbridgeable. Any attempt to converge the two kingdoms is fatal. The Orthodox Church, through the centuries, has depended on Caesar's power, but the Spirit will always rise above politics. The maximum freedom is freedom of spiritual life, the minimum is freedom of material life, Berdyaev argues, Chapter 6. For Freedom in all its directions, inner freedom is necessary first. In a social sense, Freedom is a matter not of democracy but of aristocracy. This also reflects on the problem of truth. "We live in an age when we do not love or seek the truth. When they increasingly replace it with profit and interest, with the will to power." The Caesar's kingdom is taking over the Church and silencing the Spirit in all Orthodox countries. Caesar's kingdom is aggressive in its nature and seeks to take over Man's personality from the outside, but the kingdom of liberty is from the inside as Man's conscience... (Бердяев, 2002). In the 21st century, we are witnessing the exchange of the Kingdom of the Spirit and the Kingdom of Caesar. The Orthodox Church in Bulgaria is no exception. In the realm of the absurd, there is never a limit, and we as Bulgarians must experience it every day on our backs and participate in it ourselves.

In the words of the Serbian theologian Radomir Popovic: "The aforementioned fall of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe was met with great joy, and also with great expectation: that spiritual freedom would receive its full and true expression. In between, however, came great disappointment and the development that we are now seeing in its true light. Our freedom comes not from the outside, but from the inside, from ourselves as free children of God. Materially and economically depleted and spiritually devastated, in the estimation of many, we now find ourselves in a grave condition, perhaps more grave than in the days of classical communist rule" (Поповић, 2020).

## Orthodoxy and Creativity

In "The Meaning of Creativity", Berdyaev talks about the relationship between creativity and freedom. Only the free can truly create. The one who creates is a supernatural being, not just natural. Creativity is also the purpose of human existence. In the creative act, man frees himself from himself to be himself. That is why the creative act is more valuable than the result. Moreover, creativity is an extension of man's divine ability to create. The very Kingdom of God, being a part of perfection, is born with creativity. Berdyaev also understands philosophy as creativity, calling it the creativity of knowledge. For the thinker, however, there is something vicious in the social, and the sinfulness it brings can be seen in the Church and the State and their history. But one thing is always unconditional, and that is the protection of the individual and his freedom (Fedotov, 2020). Berdyaev is an example of avoiding political ideas and seeking spiritual ones. N. Berdyaev has only one sure definition of himself, and that is genius. In other cases, it is a matter of convention.

He is familiar with Marxism, but did not become a Marxist. He also refuses to call himself a theologian, despite his interest in religion. He was persecuted by the Bolsheviks and lived as an exile, but remained faithful to the Russian idea. Recognizes neither right nor left in politics. Extends only the boundaries of his personal freedom. In the ideas of creativity, he means the creativity of truth, which he has served all his life. In the context of religion, he means the action of the Holy Spirit and his transforming work. It is difficult to implant these ideas in a Bulgarian Orthodox community, and the reason for this is a lack of faith, especially when the masters are constantly changing. The Holy Orthodox Church is losing its footing as an institution of faith, and the power struggle is proving decisive throughout its hierarchy. Here is Berdyaev's response.

"I had to live in an era that was catastrophic for my homeland and for the whole world. I saw whole worlds collapse and new ones emerge before my eyes. I could observe the extraordinary vicissitudes of human destinies. I saw the transformations, adaptations, and betrayals of people, and that may have been the

hardest thing in life. Out of the trials I had to endure, I carried the faith that kept me safe" (Berdyaev, 2007; Berdyaev, 2009).

In Berdyaev's ideas, there is a synergy of Truth, Freedom and Creativity in the direction of the human person. But above all is love and this is his most important message to every Orthodox.

An interview is also included to illustrate the perspectives of both laity and clergy on the issues of Orthodoxy and the Orthodox Church in Bulgaria, presented without additional commentary.

**Questionnaire with Slavka Karkova, Zhulieta Dumbanova and priest Svetlin Kyuchukov**

*1. Questionnaire in connection with a scientific report on the religious foundations of modern society*

• What is Orthodoxy for You?

*Orthodoxy is a right view of God and creation, a true concept of everything, a doctrine of what exists as it is.*

*When one shares this view /or believes/, one recognizes the supremacy of God, believes in the immortality of the human soul and its resurrection, and fulfils the Ten Commandments.*

*Orthodoxy is life itself. I perceive everything happening good or bad as God's allowance.*

*I realize myself as a unique and unrepeatable person, God's image and creation, having a mission and a place in life.*

*For me, God is a person I meet and talk with during prayer.*

*He is my heavenly Father, He knows me and loves me.*

• What do you think is the future of Orthodoxy?

*This is a theological question and it would be answered by theologians who follow the processes in the Orthodox Churches everywhere.*

*In my opinion Orthodoxy will last as long as God decides, as long as people need God and believe in Him, which means - always. Before Christianity there were various, albeit pagan teachings, man has always needed a higher spiritual support, so it has been and so it will be.*

• What is your opinion about the social activity of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church?

*In the face of the Holy Synod, as the governing body of the Bulgarian Church, I do not see any social activity being carried out.*

*First of all because money is needed and the rich people in Bulgaria do not believe and do not go to church. Or if they donate they require to be titled Archons.*

*Have you ever heard of any rich Bulgarian giving money to build schools, scholarships, etc. like the Evlogieff brothers.*

*In the parishes social activities are carried out, minimal sums are collected to donate food to the poor and for utility maintenance of the buildings and so on. For more extensive activity capital is needed.*

*Social activities like meetings and mass talks are hardly conducted by the clergy and bishops.*

*I don't recall, for example, the bishop of the parish of Nevrokop having informal /why not intentional/ meetings with, for example, students, schoolchildren, etc. And there are two universities in Blagoevgrad.*

*Recently I read on the internet that they are giving an award for something to a bishop. But isn't that his job, to serve the society and the state without reservation. What are awards and recognition for! Heaven is watching.*

*The Greek bishops, for example, are constantly among the students. Many of them are educated men with degrees and titles, teaching in universities and serving in the church.*

• How would you characterize the influence of the state on the Bulgarian Orthodox Church?

*Harmful. The Church allows its work to be interfered with. The clergy is always around the politicians and rulers, not the people. Lobbyists of all kinds. It can, but the words of the Gospel must be firmly upheld: "Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and to God what belongs to God".*

• How would you characterize the influence of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church on the state?

*Apart from state celebrations where the Patriarch and members of the Synod are invited to be present, I don't see anything else, and I should.*

*Church authority and secular authority must always go hand in hand so that the public can trust them and the state can move forward. Both must justify the trust and hopes of the Bulgarian people.*

*In Greece, on major Christian feasts, after Mass, the authorities at all levels come out of the Church with the banner, the cross, the icons, the clergy and the people after them. These are Christians.*

*Have you seen tricolours flying in front of churches in Bulgaria? Very rarely.*

• In the context of the two previous questions, what is your attitude in relation to the service of Bulgarian clergy in the Russian Church of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker?

*I don't think it's right for other churches, even Orthodox ones, to own church buildings and have foreigners officiate. It appears that our society cannot tolerate a foreign presence.*

*Even though in Western Europe, immigrant communities build their own churches. The Bulgarians in London are building a temple. But England is an old democracy.*

*We do not tolerate foreign presence and I agree with that. We need strong national awareness, affirmation, love for the homeland and patriotism.*

• What do you think about the topic of "spy mania", which in a certain way also affected the spiritual Orthodox community?

*Unacceptable. He who has pledged himself to God, let him serve God; otherwise, he is serving the Devil. If they are recruited not of their own will, they are to quit the ministry. Church history remembers so many holy men and women killed for the faith. But today's do not want to become martyrs for God, but for ....*

• In your opinion, is there a threat against Orthodoxy in Bulgaria and in the whole Orthodox community?

*No. No one can stop the human spirit. It is impossible. There is nothing stronger than faith and God. Pilate killed Christians, so did the Roman kings, and the Inquisition. God will never abandon His Church and his children.*

• What is your expectation for the spiritual leadership of the Orthodox community by the newly elected Bulgarian Patriarch Daniil?

*Today, I read that the new Patriarch has become a popular and discussed figure on the Synod's Facebook page, and a special person is working on his image.*

*I can't speak about expectations because time is short. But I watched the interview in Panorama, and he answered all the questions asked briefly and with a quote from the Gospel, without giving any broader meaning or relevance to what was being talked about.*

*And here I will express my personal opinion that the clergy in Bulgaria cannot theologise. In the language of pedagogy, they do not know the methodology of teaching. It is very rare to witness a moving and passionate sermon.*

*At the present moment, the Patriarch is leading the tourist march to the Rila Monastery. Oh, no, that's not a job for you.*

*Man, you are the spiritual leader of the nation. You have a different mission and role. You are a model. Forget the hikes. Go among the people, preach!*

*Hopefully, he will come to his senses.*

*May the Lord Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary help him in this difficult ministry.*

*Enough from me!*

*2. Questionnaire in connection with a scientific report on the religious foundations of modern society*

• What is Orthodoxy for You?

*Consciously chosen lifestyle.*

• What do you think is the future of Orthodoxy?

The Orthodox Church is eternal; it will last until the end of time, because it was founded by our Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

• What is your opinion about the social activity of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church?

*The main task of the Church is to lead people to salvation, and social activity is a human work that stems from a person's faith. It is a practice of virtue.*

• How would you characterize the influence of the state on the Bulgarian Orthodox Church?

*The relationship between the State and the Church has differed in different historical periods. The State can influence up to a certain level the Church related to the tangible in this world, but cannot influence the essence of the Church related to eternity.*

• How would you characterize the influence of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church on the state?

*The state does not take enough advantage of the opportunities provided by the Bulgarian Orthodox Church for natural regulation of relations between people and better functioning of society.*

• In the context of the two previous questions, what is your attitude in relation to the service of Bulgarian clergy in the Russian Church of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker?

*The church is "Russian" because the Russian diaspora in Sofia used to worship there. This does not exclude the possibility of Bulgarian priests serving. These people speak both languages. As is the principle of ministry in other foreign subchurches in other Orthodox countries.*

• What do you think about the topic of "spy mania", which in a certain way also affected the spiritual Orthodox community?

*This process is alien to church life and has no place there.*

• In your opinion, is there a threat against Orthodoxy in Bulgaria and in the whole Orthodox community?

*No. The Orthodox Church is not of this world; it is part of the eternal, future world. It has another purpose and tasks. There are no methods for its destruction in the heart of man.*

• What is your expectation for the spiritual leadership of the Orthodox community by the newly elected Bulgarian Patriarch Daniil?

*The generational change in the spiritual leadership of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church clergy is a natural process and it is part of modernity. God, through the Church, always responds to the challenges of the times and gives each person what he or she needs. Let us trust that God has chosen the person who is best suited to the Bulgarian reality.*

**Interview with Zhulieta Dumbanova - representative of the Christian community in Blagoevgrad, held on August 3, 2024**

1. Orthodoxy is a Christian faith that follows the teachings of Jesus Christ and the traditions of the church. Orthodoxy is the one, indivisible and apostolic Church – the Trinity – God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Orthodoxy plays a major role in preserving the morals and spiritual values of the Bulgarians. The Divine Liturgy and Communion hold an important place in Orthodoxy. Orthodoxy is not just a religion; it is a path, a position, a model, a way of life, it is love for enemies and forgiveness for all, it is associated with meekness and humbleness, it is in our hearts.

2. The future of Orthodoxy depends on the faithfulness of the Church's teaching; on international dialogue and cooperation towards different religions; on technology and communications – online presence at liturgies, educational/religious platforms. In this way, young people can stay connected in Orthodox communities. Religious leaders to be more adaptable and open to change to sustain and expand their faith in a changing world. These factors shape the future.

3. It actively participates in various social activities aimed at helping those in need. 1) Charity and social aid – distribution of food to the poor and homeless, clothing, shelter, financial support, health services. 2) Education and culture – opening Sunday schools; cultural events, lectures and exhibitions, establishing and maintaining homes and shelters for the sick and homeless, disaster relief, humanitarian missions, organizing children's camps and youth groups.

4. The Bulgarian Church is independent and manages its affairs without direct state interference. The relationship between the state and the church is complex and dynamic and can change depending on the political, social and cultural contexts (processes).

5. The Bulgarian Orthodox Church plays an important role in preserving the Bulgarian national identity – guardian of the Bulgarian language, culture and traditions. It is an active participant in the education system, in cultural activities – exhibitions, concerts, charity; homes for the elderly and orphanages; participates in debates on family values and education; organizes religious holidays – Easter, Christmas, etc.

6. I welcome the joint services of Bulgarian and Russian clergy during major religious holidays – Easter, Nativity, etc. Both clergymen work together to promote

and spread the Orthodox faith and traditions among the faithful in Bulgaria. The cooperation between the two Orthodox Churches and the spiritual ties between the two Orthodox communities are strengthened.

7. Suspicions or accusations of espionage or collaboration with intelligence services, political influences and conflicts, accusations of espionage, ecclesiastical splits, media noise; I do not approve of such strains on the credibility of the spiritual community. Threats can arise from a variety of factors – social, political and cultural.

8. Dynamic modern changes may lead to a decrease in the number of believers, weaken the religious attachment of Bulgarians, migration, demographic collapse, globalization, church disagreements, etc., which are a threat to Orthodoxy in the Bulgarian community. As long as there are Bulgarians in the world, there will be Orthodoxy.

9. To work for the unity of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church and for the resolution of internal conflicts; to maintain good relations with other Orthodox Churches; to exercise social and charitable activities; to implement reforms for the development of Church structures; to protect the rights and independence of the Church; to promote education and culture; to strengthen the spiritual unity of the Bulgarians.

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