

RESEARCH GROUP: FACULTY OF THEOLOGY, SOFIA UNIVERSITY "ST. KLIMENT OHRIDSKI"  
RESEARCH FIELD: THEOLOGY

RESEARCH AREA:  
2.4. RELIGION AND THEOLOGY  
ARTS AND HUMANITIES

# Orthodox Theology in Dialogue



## METHODOLOGY

Participants will prioritize the historical-critical approach, which involves identifying and analyzing primary sources relevant to the topic under investigation. Additionally, the historical-analytical method will be applied to examine the historical evolution of Orthodox engagement in theological dialogue. To further deepen the study, the comparative-analytical method will be employed, allowing for a detailed examination of how these theological concepts are reflected within contemporary Orthodox thought. The integration of historical-critical and theological-systematic methodologies in the initial phase of the project serves two key objectives: identifying similarities and differences in the faith and doctrinal structures of the three monotheistic religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—by tracing their theological discourse over the centuries. Unveiling theological and dogmatic reflections on the themes of interreligious and interdenominational dialogue, contributing to a more nuanced understanding of their significance within modern theological frameworks.



## RESULTS

This project has conducted fundamental research on interreligious dialogue, focusing particularly on Non-Chalcedonian Orthodox, Catholic-Orthodox, and Orthodox-Protestant interactions. These studies stand out for their innovation and originality, addressing both the contemporary developments in theological dialogue within the Orthodox world and their specific relevance to the Bulgarian context.

In addition to exploring these historical and theological intersections, the project has also examined the broader dialogue between Christian denominations and other religious traditions. A particular emphasis has been placed on the evolving relationship between Orthodox Christianity and Islam, as well as the engagement between Orthodox Christianity and other Christian denominations. This research has sought to illuminate both theological commonalities and areas of doctrinal divergence, fostering a deeper understanding of shared values and historical interconnections.

Additionally, the project has examined inter-Orthodox dialogue, which serves as a foundation for engaging with non-Orthodox religious communities. The findings will be made available to relevant state authorities to support interpretation, analysis, and the management of various sociopolitical and religious processes in Bulgaria, Europe, and the Middle East. These processes have significant implications for security, international relations, and social cohesion, with interchurch and interreligious dialogue playing a crucial role.

Furthermore, as a result of this research, several academic papers will be published in Bulgaria this year, covering key aspects of interreligious and ecumenical dialogue: The Relationship between Orthodox Theology and Islam in Bulgaria. The Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church and on Ecumenical Dialogue.

To ensure the accessibility of these findings, a comprehensive educational resource is being developed. This resource will include translations into Bulgarian of key theological documents from recent dialogue meetings and will be made available to theology students, graduate researchers, and religion teachers at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". The goal is to enhance theological education and promote deeper engagement with interfaith and interdenominational dialogue.

## CONCLUSION

This project has made significant contributions to the study of interreligious and interchurch dialogue within an Orthodox theological framework, with a particular focus on its relevance to the Bulgarian context. By examining theological interactions between Orthodox Christianity and Non-Chalcedonian, Catholic, and Protestant traditions, this research has provided a deeper understanding of both historical developments and contemporary challenges in theological dialogue.

The project has examined inter-Orthodox dialogue, which serves as a foundation for engaging with non-Orthodox religious communities. The findings will be made available to relevant state authorities to support interpretation, analysis, and the management of various sociopolitical and religious processes in Bulgaria, Europe, and the Middle East. These processes have significant implications for security, international relations, and social cohesion, with interchurch and interreligious dialogue playing a crucial role.

The methodological approach adopted in this project—combining historical-critical, historical-analytical, and comparative-analytical methods—enabled a rigorous examination of primary theological sources and a systematic assessment of the evolution of Orthodox theological dialogue. The integration of historical and theological-systematic methodologies allowed for the identification of both doctrinal similarities and differences among the three major monotheistic religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam – and theological reflections on their ongoing dialogue.

Moreover, the research placed a strong emphasis on the current state of theological dialogue within an Orthodox framework, considering how interreligious and interchurch theological specificities, asymmetries, and processes of convergence and divergence impact international relations, cultural cooperation, education, and security. This has been particularly significant for Bulgaria, a country where Christianity, Islam, and Judaism coexist alongside various Christian denominations, including Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant, and ancient Oriental churches.

The project's findings will serve as an important resource for state authorities in their interpretation and management of religious and societal processes in Bulgaria, Europe, and the Middle East. These findings will also contribute to ongoing security, international relations, and social cohesion efforts, where interchurch and interreligious dialogue play a vital role.



## INTRODUCTION

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 Pan-orthodox levels, actively engages in theological dialogue, its primary focus over the past century has been on clarifying positions between different religions and Christian denominations

## PROJECT GUIDELINES

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.
- Investigating the historical and current dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the Islam.
- Examining dialogue with non-Chalcedonian churches, including a study of their history, current status within these traditions.
- Assessing the dialogue between the Orthodox Church and Protestant Denominations and the diverse approaches to dialogue.



Head of the research group:

Prof. DSc Klara Toneva

Members of the group:

Most Rev. Prof. PhD Ivan Ivanov  
Assoc. Prof. PhD Svetoslav Ribolov  
Assoc. Prof. PhD Kostadin Nushev  
Assist. Prof. ThD Zdravko Kanev  
Assist. Prof. ThD Ioannis Kaminis  
ThD nun Methodia (Magdalena Kraycheva)  
ThD Stanislava Bacheva  
ThD student Vesela Xadjimalakova  
ThD student Cvetelina Cekova  
ThD student Grozdan Stoevski  
ThD student Eugenia Komarova-Kaziola  
ThD student Petya Filipova

Contacts: Assist. Prof. ThD Zdravko Kanev

Address: Faculty of Theology, Sofia University

"St. Kliment Ohridski"

1000 Sofia, 19 Sveta Nedelya Sq.

Email: zkunev@theo.uni-sofia.bg