

# PHILOSOPHOS – PHILOTHEOS – PHILOPONOS

STUDIES AND ESSAYS AS CHARISTERIA  
IN HONOR OF PROFESSOR BOGOLJUB ŠIJAKOVIĆ  
ON THE OCCASION OF HIS 65<sup>TH</sup> BIRTHDAY

EDITED BY

**MIKONJA KNEŽEVIĆ**

IN COLLABORATION WITH RADE KISIĆ AND DUŠAN KRCUNOVIĆ



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**Philosophos – Philotheos – Philoponos:** Studies and Essays as Charisteria in Honor of Professor Bogoljub Šijaković on the Occasion of His 65<sup>th</sup> Birthday, edited by Mikonja Knežević, in collaboration with Rade Kisić and Dušan Krcunović, Belgrade: Gnomon, Podgorica: Matica srpska 2021.

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**Philosophos – Philotheos – Philoponos:** Студије и огледи као χαριστήρια у част професора Богољуба Шијаковића поводом његових 65 година, приредио Микоња Кнежевић, у сарадњи са Радом Кисићем и Душаном Крцуновићем, Београд: Гномон, Подгорица: Матица српска 2021.

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приредио

**Микоња Кнежевић**

у сарадњи са Радом Кисићем и Душаном Крцуновићем



Гномон Центар за хуманистику  
Матица српска – Друштво чланова у Црној Гори  
Београд / Подгорица  
2021



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Gnomon Center for the Humanities  
Matica srpska – Društvo članova u Crnoj Gori  
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## **The Reception of the Serbian Orthodox Church in the 21<sup>st</sup> century German Academia\***

*Abstract:* The aim of the paper is to analyse the views of Klaus Buchenau, Stefan Rohdewald and Julia Anna Lis on the Serbian Orthodox Church. The paper argues that authors form their attitudes towards Serbia and the Serbian Orthodox Church along the lines of the German press, which portrays the Serbian Church as nationalistic, violent, bigoted and backward. The paper embarks on the task to investigate the motifs of the authors for such negative views on the Serbian Church, by arguing that authors build their scholarly constructs on the political narratives of global Western dominance on the one hand, and on the revision of German historical responsibility for the two world wars on the other hand.

*Keywords:* nationalism, anti-Westernism, Saint-Savahood, Postcolonial critique, violence.

The Yugoslav wars during the 1990s were the major event in the Balkan region after WWII and they attracted much attention from politicians, journalists and academics. In comparison to politicians and journalists, the academics had no restrictions imposed by media and they could not only ponder on the immediate reasons of the Yugoslav wars, but could also look for their origins in the modern history of the region. This search boosted the historical studies of Serbia, Yugoslavia and the Balkans as a whole. Since the amount of literature produced is enormous and its detailed analysis would require several volumes, the scope of this paper will be restricted to the historical studies written in the last two decades in German academia, with a specific focus on the Serbian Orthodox Church. In my analysis of contemporary German works dealing with the SOC I will first make a comparison between the attitudes of German scholars towards the SOC and the dominant views on the Serbian Church in the German press. I will explore next the way in which the most prolific contemporary theologian and recently canonized saint of the SOC, Justin Popović is represented by German scholars. Finally, I will interpret the studies of German authors in the framework of postcolonial theory and security studies, as well as in the context of the recent revisionist tendency among German historians of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

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### German media and German academia: Brothers in arms

In her article on the Serbian Orthodox Church in the German press, Jelena Jorgačević Kisić distinguishes three phases in the approach to the Serbian Church in the 21<sup>st</sup> century German press, the first up to 2004, the second between 2004 and 2013 and the final after 2013.<sup>1</sup> The first phase is characterized by a neutral approach towards the Serbian Church. The Serbian Church is considered as one of the various agents in a very complex social and cultural milieu of the post-Yugoslav era. The 1990's black and white depiction, that draws divisions between Roman Catholic democracy of Slovenia and Croatia and Eastern Orthodox communism of Serbia, is replaced by the theory of cultural types, which goes along the line of Samuel Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations*.<sup>2</sup> Thus, Yugoslavia has been perceived as an artificial creation, with the impossible mission to unite two irreconcilable cultural types, civilized westerners and backward easterners.

In the second phase in the German press that falls between 2004 and 2013 the perspective towards the SOC is shifted. Thus, instead of playing an auxiliary role, the Serbian Church became a key actor, responsible for most if not all problems in the region. It is perceived as a stronghold of nationalism, conservatism and anti-modernity. Even events such as the eruption of Albanian violence on the 17<sup>th</sup> of March 2004 in Kosovo and the destruction of a number of churches, are described in the German press as self-victimization of the SOC.<sup>3</sup>

From 2014 onwards the interest for the Serbian Church in German press is substituted with the interest for the Orthodox Church in general and the Russian Church in particular. One may see that the same pattern applied to Serbia and the Serbian Church during the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is now employed on the conflict in Ukraine. Similarly to the depiction of Slobodan Milošević who could not tolerate pro-Western and democratic Croatia, Vladimir Putin does everything to stop pro-Western and democratic developments in Ukraine. Moreover, it became a commonplace in German press to find the explanation for Russian aggression on Ukraine, as for Serbian aggression on Croatia, Bosnia as well as Serbia's own province Kosovo in Orthodox Christianity, or, to be specific in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Orthodox nationalism and anti-Westernism by which these Churches are now driven.<sup>4</sup> The previous interest of German scholarship in certain religious aspects of the Yugoslav crisis are now replaced with wider interest in the destructive, militant and fundamental elements of the Orthodox Church at large.

Similarly to German media the focus of German academia, when it pertains to the Serbian Church, are on Serbian nationalism and its alleged anti-Western orientation. In German historiography, like in the German press until 2004, the SOC is one of the multiple agents in the complex Yugoslav reality. The publication of Klaus Bu-

1 Jelena Jorgačević Kisić, "The Serbian Orthodox Church in the German Press: How far is Byzantium", in: Wolfgang Dahmen und Gabriella Schubert (Hrsg.), *Schein and Sein: Sichtbares and Unsichtbares in den Kulturen Südeuropas* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2017), 199-211: 206-207.

2 Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).

3 Jorgačević Kisić, "The Serbian Orthodox Church in the German Press", 204.

4 Kristina Stoeckl, "The Orthodox Component in the Russian Support for Eastern Ukrainian Separatists" in: <https://www.iwm.at/transit-online/orthodox-component-russian-support-eastern-ukrainian-separatists/>

chenau's book *Orthodoxie und Katholizismus in Jugoslawien 1945–1991: ein serbisch-kroatischer Vergleich* in 2004 coincides with the end of this approach to the Serbian Church in German press. By exploring both the church-state and inter-churches relations in his book, Buchenau proposed possible reasons for the breakdown of Yugoslavia. He argues that due to some internal antagonisms in the churches-state relations and due to Tito's refusal to implement democratic liberalism in the Yugoslav society of the 1960s, Yugoslavia was doomed to fall apart.<sup>5</sup> Buchenau states also that the national mobilization and false evangelization of the Serbian Church, especially connected with the campaign over Kosovo during the 1980s bear the responsibility for the turmoil, which happened later.<sup>6</sup> Although Buchenau tackles on its allegedly negative role, the SOC is portrayed as one of many factors in the complex historical process that led to the dismemberment of Yugoslavia and the consequent wars.

Similarly to the German press of the 2004–2013 period, the Serbian Church becomes the main protagonist in Klaus Buchenau's book *Auf russischen Spuren: orthodoxe Antiwestler in Serbien, 1850–1945*, published in 2011. Buchenau argues that the slower civilizational progress of Serbian Orthodox people in comparison with the West is not only due to their mentality, but also due to the Serbian Church's adoption of Russian anti-Westernism and hatred towards the West and Europe.<sup>7</sup> The critique of European internal conditions that led to WWI and consequently WWII by leading Serbian theologians Nikolaj Velimirović and Justin Popović, that are in the main focus of Buchenau's book, were not considered as a discussion on European identity, as critiques of other religious and secular European thinkers of that time, but as a form of anti-Westernism. The fact that the Serbian people adopted Russian ideas about the West as the 'other', points for Buchenau to their need for being under Russian *Kulturträger* protection and of being a Russian cultural colony and it also proves their cultural inferiority. At the same time the book points to a danger coming from reviving Russian 'anti-Westernism' and fits perfectly into the western geopolitical agenda.

In the article "Anti-Europeanism in the Balkans, Anti-Americanism in Latin America: a Comparison" of the same period, Buchenau argues in favor of North America's and Europe's leading role in developing modernity, enterprise, democracy, human rights, individualism as 'global' values, and explores the denial of this role in the Latin America and the Balkans. The comparison has actually the purpose to show that while the Catholic and Protestant mentalities of the two Americas are not so incompatible, the 'othering potential' between Orthodoxy and the West is much higher, due to the dominant and stable anti-European discourses of Balkans' Orthodox theological elites.<sup>8</sup> One of the main conclusions of Buchenau's article is that Eastern Christianity may serve as a tool for Western Christian unity, specifically for the unity between North-American Protestants and South-American Catholics.

<sup>5</sup> Klaus Buchenau, *Orthodoxie und Katholizismus in Jugoslawien 1945–1991. Ein serbisch-kroatischer Vergleich* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2004), 449.

<sup>6</sup> Buchenau, *Orthodoxie und Katholizismus in Jugoslawien 1945–1991*, 379–391.

<sup>7</sup> Klaus Buchenau, *Auf russischen Spuren. Orthodoxe Antiwestler in Serbien, 1850–1945* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2011).

<sup>8</sup> Klaus Buchenau, "Anti-Europeanism in the Balkans, Anti-Americanism in Latin America: A Comparison", *Religion, State & Society* 40/3–4 (2012), 379–94: 390.

Similarly to the third period in the German press dating from 2013 onward characterized by the wider interest in the destructive, militant and fundamental elements of the Orthodox Church as large, the research interest in the German academia is spread from the Serbian Orthodox Church, to other Orthodox Churches of the Balkans, such as Bulgarian, Macedonian and Greek.

By portraying the patron saints of Serbia, Bulgaria and Macedonia, St Sava, St John of Rila, and St Clement of Ohrid as national 'gods' for the Orthodox in his book *Götter der Nationen* from 2014,<sup>9</sup> Stefan Rohdewald reduces the millennial Orthodox experience to the modern phenomenon of nationalism. The same tendency to interpret the Orthodox theological heritage of the Balkan Churches through the prism of nationalism and anti-Westernism may be observed in Anna Julia Lis' monograph *Zur Konstruktion des „Westens“ in den Schriften von Nikolaj Velimirović, Justin Popović, Christos Yannaras und John S. Romanides*, published in 2019 by Peter Lang.<sup>10</sup>

Since the works of the aforementioned scholars cover different periods, authors and themes in the modern history of the SOC, it would be pertinent to choose a case study common to them in order to value their academic contribution. One of the common topics, at least for Buchenau and Lis is the Serbian 20<sup>th</sup> century theologian Justin Popović, whose works are perceived by these authors as the Bible of Serbian Orthodox anti-Westernism.

### The main suspect: St Justin Popović

Klaus Buchenau's attitude towards Justin is very critical. Thus, in the study of *Svetosavlje* (Saint-Savahood), Buchenau considers Justin as an anti-Westerner and anti-ecumenist who, by relying on Dostoevsky, promotes the "Orthodox" God-man, as opposed to the fallen "European man-god".<sup>11</sup> According to Buchenau, the influence of Russian Orthodox anti-Westernism on Justin is indisputable, and it emerges due to Justin's short stay in St Petersburg during 1916 and through Metropolitan Antony Khrapovitsky whom Buchenau considers the spiritual father and confessor of Justin during his stay in Sremski Karlovci.<sup>12</sup> According to Buchenau, Justin is connected with the so-called "Renaissance of Orthodoxy", which began with a theological congress in Athens in 1936. Buchenau also equates Justin's idea of *Svetosavlje* with his anti-Westernism and finds the political realization of this idea both in the popular movement "Zbor" of Dimitrije Ljotić, with whom Justin was allegedly very close, and

<sup>9</sup> Stefan Rohdewald, *Götter der Nationen. Religiöse Erinnerungsfiguren in Serbien, Bulgarien und Makedonien bis 1944*. (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 2014), 512-546.

<sup>10</sup> Anna Julia Lis, *Zur Konstruktion des „Westens“ in den Schriften von Nikolaj Velimirović, Justin Popović, Christos Yannaras und John S. Romanides* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2019). Lis is also an author of the article "Anti-Western Theology in Greece and Serbia Today", in: A. Krawchuk & T. Bremer (eds.), *Eastern Orthodox Encounters of Identity and Otherness: Values, Self-Reflection, Dialogue* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2014), 159-168.

<sup>11</sup> Klaus Buchenau, "Svetosavlje und Pravoslavje, Nationales und Universales in der serbischen Orthodoxie", in: Martin Schulze Wessel (Hg.), *Nationalisierung der Religion und Sakralisierung der Nation im östlichen Europa* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2006), 203-232. Cited according to the reprinted version in: Klaus Buchenau, *Kämpfende Kirchen: Jugoslawiens religiöse Hypothek* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang 2006), 36.

<sup>12</sup> Buchenau, *Kämpfende Kirchen*, 36-37.

in the royalist Četnik movement of Draža Mihailović which from 1944 published a magazine bearing the title *Svetosavlje*.<sup>13</sup>

In his book *Auf russischen Spuren*, Buchenau further develops the interpretation of Justin's ideas. Here Buchenau describes in detail Justin's stay in St. Petersburg, then in Oxford, as well as his acquaintance with Metropolitan Anthony Khrapovitsky. Justin's text "The Mystery of Metropolitan Anthony's Personality and His Significance for Orthodox Slavs" has served to Buchenau as a basis to investigate the relationship between the two clerics.<sup>14</sup> Buchenau believes that Khrapovitsky was for Justin a living example of Russian messianism, which he found in Dostoevsky only in the form of fiction. Buchenau analyzes Justin's text "The Mystery of Metropolitan Anthony's Personality", delivered as a lecture at the commemorative academy dedicated to the memory of Khrapovitsky, and published in 1939,<sup>15</sup> immediately after the section dealing with Justin's short Petrograd experience, and before Justin's flight to Oxford in 1916.<sup>16</sup> Buchenau claims that Khrapovitsky represents to Justin a model of a religious nationalist, who cultivates a penchant for civilizing ideas. However, in the same article analyzed by Buchenau, Justin argues that all religious nationalisms, including Slavophilism, are mere chauvinisms, if they do not promulgate Orthodoxy to the world, clearly referring to the ironic advice of Khrapovitsky to chauvinists and nationalists not to read the ninth article of the Creed, which mentions faith in one, holy and catholic Church, because faith in the nation excludes the faith in the Church.<sup>17</sup> Buchenau concludes this chapter dedicated to the young Justin with an interesting construction. Placing Justin symbolically between St. Petersburg, i.e. Russia and Athens, i.e. Greece Buchenau claims that although Justin received his doctorate in Athens, he found his "living saint" and a charismatic role model in Khrapovitsky, and not for example in his Greek friend and colleague, later professor of theology at the University of Athens, Ioannis Karmiris.<sup>18</sup> Buchenau's statement is simply surprising, because it is more than logical that, for a thirty year-old monk, a greater spiritual and theological authority represents a thirty-year-older hierarch of the Russian Church Abroad, who was a former candidate for the patriarch of Russia, a former metropolitan of Kiev, a former rector of the Moscow Spiritual Academy and a leading Orthodox theologian, than a Greek undergraduate student of theology ten years younger than Justin. Buchenau argues further that being far more radical than most of his Greek colleagues in the 1920s, Justin brought anti-Westernism to Athens, which was later embraced by a new generation of Greek theologians educated after WWII. In order to better substantiate his thesis that Russian anti-Westernism was spread through Russian spiritual academies and the Russian emigration first to Serbia and then further

<sup>13</sup> Buchenau, *Kämpfende Kirchen*, 37-40.

<sup>14</sup> Buchenau, *Auf russischen Spuren*, 128-137.

<sup>15</sup> Justin Popović, "Tajna ličnosti Mitropolita Antonija i njegov značaj za pravoslavno slovenstvo" (The Mystery of Metropolitan Anthony's Personality and His Significance for Orthodox Slavs), *Bogoslovlje (Theology)* 14/1 (1939).

<sup>16</sup> Buchenau, *Auf russischen Spuren*, 129-132.

<sup>17</sup> Popović, "Tajna ličnosti Mitropolita Antonija".

<sup>18</sup> Buchenau, *Auf russischen Spuren*, 137.

to Greece, Buchenau overemphasizes several issues<sup>19</sup> in regard to Khrapovitsky's influence on Justin and to Justin's influence on contemporary Greek theology.

First, it should be noted that Khrapovitsky is neither Justin's spiritual father, nor his confessor, nor his spiritual and intellectual role model. As Bogdan Lubardić points out Justin adopts almost nothing of Khrapovitsky's theology of "moral monism".<sup>20</sup> The young Justin might have appropriated from Khrapovitsky the ideal of Dostoevsky's all-embracing Christ<sup>21</sup> and the respect for the patristic tradition,<sup>22</sup> but Paul Florensky played a far greater role in Justin's decision to return to the Fathers.

Second, the emphasis on Justin's role in the "Renaissance of Orthodoxy", which allegedly commenced with the theological congress in Athens in 1936, and on his influence on post-WWII generations of Greek theologians to critically constitute their attitude towards the West is also an exaggeration. Justin was not in the delegation of the Faculty of Orthodox Theology of the University of Belgrade at the Orthodox Theological Congress in Athens, so he could not contribute to it. When the Orthodox theology had been reborn in the Parisian salons during the 1930s as a result of the encounter of Russian Orthodox emigration with the West,<sup>23</sup> and proclaimed at the Congress in Athens in the form of the "return to the Fathers" and "neo-patristic synthesis",<sup>24</sup> Justin had already produced his major patristic studies, including the two volumes of his *Dogmatics*.

Buchenau's claim about Justin's influence on the post-WWII generation of Greek theologians and their adoption of Justin's critique of the West and Europe is, at least in the case of the two most important critics of the West, Christos Yannaras and John Romanides, also unfounded. Yannaras' rebellion against the West, in the form of the struggle with Western religiosity in himself, began at the time of his membership in the pietist movement Zoe, which he left in December 1964.<sup>25</sup> Yannaras challenged the Westerner in himself, after realizing that most of his ideas were second-hand goods adopted from the European intellectual supermarket.<sup>26</sup> The volume 'Man and Godman' consisting of Justin's alleged anti-Western articles was translated into Greek by Atanasije Jevtić in 1968. Therefore, anti-Western trends in Greek theology, particularly in Yannaras, occurred much earlier that Justin was available to Greek students in their mother tongue. A sim-

<sup>19</sup> Radmila Radić points out that Buchenau overemphasizes the influence of Russian anti-Western ideas and the ideologies that emerged from them on the predominantly illiterate, agrarian Yugoslav society. See: Radmila Radić, "Review of *Auf russischen Spuren: Orthodoxe Antiwestler in Serbien, 1850–1945* by Klaus Buchenau", *Slavic Review* 71/1 (2012), 163-164: 164.

<sup>20</sup> Bogdan Lubardić, *Justin Ćelijski i Rusija (Justin of Ćelije and Russia)*, (Novi Sad: Beseda 2009), 97, 104-105.

<sup>21</sup> Bogdan Lubardić, *Justin Ćelijski i Rusija*, 24-25.

<sup>22</sup> Atanasije Jevtić, "Žitije prepodobnog oca našeg Justina Novog Ćelijskog" (Vita of Our Venerable Father Justin the New of Ćelie), in: Prepodobni Justin Ćelijski, *Na Bogočevčanskom putu (On the God-human Way)* (Valjevo: Ćelije Monastery 2014), 64.

<sup>23</sup> Matthew Baker, "Neopatristic Synthesis and Ecumenism: Towards the 'Reintegration' of Christian Tradition", in: Andrii Krawchuk and Thomas Bremer (eds.), *Eastern Orthodox Encounters of Identity and Otherness: Values, Self-Reflection, Dialogue*, 235-260: 235.

<sup>24</sup> Georges Florovsky, "Patristics and Modern Theology", in: Hamilcar Alivisatos (ed.), *Procès-verbaux du Premier Congrès de Théologie Orthodoxe à Athènes: 29 novembre-6 décembre 1936* (Athens: Pyrosos 1939), 238-242.

<sup>25</sup> Evaggelia Grigoropoulou, *The Early Development of the Thought of Christos Yannaras* [Ph.D. dissertation] (Durham: University of Durham 2008), 51-52.

<sup>26</sup> Christos Yannaras, *Ta kath' eauton* (Athens: Ikaros, 2005), 39.

ilar case is that of John Romanides. Already during his teaching tenure at the Orthodox Faculty of the Holy Cross in Brookline, USA which lasted from 1956 to 1965, Romanides outlined his critique of Frankish thought,<sup>27</sup> for which, even if he wanted to, he could not find inspiration in Justin. First, Justin's critique of the West refers to the last several centuries and does not extend to the middle ages, and second, by 1968, Justin's works were available only in Serbian, meaning that Romanides was not able to read them.

Regarding the idea of *Svetosavlje* and its political realization, in his *Auf russischen Spuren*, Buchenau repeats and elaborates his previous views from the work "Svetosavlje und Pravoslavlje". In addition to declaring Justin a follower of Dimitrije Ljotić and Draža Mihailović, collaborators to the Germans during the WWII, Buchenau claims that during WWII Justin used the anti-liberal educational reforms of the collaborationist government of Milan Nedić to deal with his opponents at the Faculty of Theology, by propagating the "God-human" nature of Saint Sava as an ideal.<sup>28</sup> Buchenau further points out the difference between Bishop Nikolaj Velimirović, who entered WWII as a nationalist with an anti-Western background, sacralizing his own nation, and Justin, who, according to Buchenau, completely identified God-humanity with Saint Sava and opposed them both to the Western man-god.<sup>29</sup> Thus, for Buchenau Justin's *Svetosavlje* became the national name for universal anti-Westernism.

Since it is very difficult to understand how Buchenau draws the final conclusion on the basis of Justin's book *Svetosavlje as a Philosophy of Life*, it will be good to begin the analysis from some widely accepted premises, for example that Justin advocates the idea of *Svetosavlje* as a weapon against his opponents at the Faculty of Theology. Already in the mid 1930s, Justin considered the communists as his opponents at the University of Belgrade, because of their atheistic propaganda. In the student journal *Svetosavlje* of the Faculty of Orthodox Theology in Belgrade, Justin published the article "Rastko and modern Serbian youth", in which he claimed that the only true revolutionary among the Serbian people was Rastko – Saint Sava who stood up against death and sin, and not the communist revolutionaries, because they stood up for far less.<sup>30</sup> The members of the journal's editorial board became later the followers of Dimitrije Ljotić, such as Djoko Slijepčević and Dimitrije Najdanović, but neither this fact, nor the fact that Justin criticized communism placed him on the side of Ljotić and "Zbor" or brought him closer to the policy of Nedić's Government of National Salvation. In the article "Svetosavsko sveštenstvo i političke partije" (Saint-Savian Priesthood and Political Parties) from 1940–1941, Justin attacked severely the lower clergy of the SOC for supporting Ljotić's movement "Zbor", claiming that the political engagement of clerics is contrary to the basic principle of *Svetosavlje*, that a human being cannot be an enemy to another human being.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>27</sup> John S. Romanides, *Franks, Romans, Feudalism, and Doctrine: An Interplay Between Theology and Society* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1981).

<sup>28</sup> Buchenau, *Auf russischen Spuren*, 443.

<sup>29</sup> Buchenau, *Auf russischen Spuren*, 455-456.

<sup>30</sup> Justin Popović, "Rastko i savremena srpska omladina" (Rastko and Modern Serbian Youth), *Svetosavlje*, 12 (1935).

<sup>31</sup> Justin Popović, "Svetosavsko sveštenstvo i političke partije" (Saint-Savian Priesthood and Political Parties), *Žički blagovesnik*, 12 (1940), 2 (1941).



As for the support of Draža Mihailović's royalist Četnik movement, Buchenau refers to Justin's writing of a memorandum about the future relations between the state and the church in post-WWII Yugoslavia for the Saint Savian Congress, held from the 26<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> of January 1944 in the village of Ba in central Serbia. This congress gathered a large number of representatives of political parties from all over Yugoslavia, and Mihailović himself, as the Minister of War of Božidar Purić's Yugoslav Royal Government in exile, was the representative of this Government at the Congress.<sup>32</sup> So it should be no surprise that, as a long-time loyal civil servant of the Yugoslav Ministry of Education, Justin agreed to write such a document. However, the representatives of the Congress were not satisfied with this document, but not because that document contained sharp criticism of the West, as Buchenau believes. In Justin's *Vita*,<sup>33</sup> Atanasije Jevtić writes that this document from 1944 later served to Justin for writing the "Memorandum on the Truth about the Serbian Orthodox Church in Communist Yugoslavia" from 1960, in which Justin claims that when "the authorities are afraid of good deeds and when they persecute the Lord Jesus Christ and his Church, then such authorities should not be obeyed or listened to".<sup>34</sup> Such a view would seriously endanger any government, regardless of its ideological orientation.

In the summer of 1944, in his sermon of the Feast of St John the Baptist in the Kalenić monastery, Justin seriously criticized the "program from Ravna Gora" for depriving the Orthodox Church of its leading role in Yugoslavia, which only confirms that he was not a follower of Draža Mihailović and the royalist Četnik movement.<sup>35</sup> Therefore, Buchenau erroneously draws an equivalence between the God-man and Saint Sava in Justin's thought, just as he erroneously claims that Justin inspired Ljotić's movement "Zbor" and Mihailović's Četnik movement on the political realization of his idea. If in his lectures delivered at the Kolarac People's University in Belgrade during WWII Justin sharply criticized the West by opposing *Svetosavlje* to it, as Buchenau points out, it may be for the simple reason that the same West (first as Austria-Hungary and Germany, and then as Germany and the Axis powers) twice during his life militarily attacked and dismantled his country, committing monstrous crimes against the civil population.

In her book *Antiwestliche Diskurse in der serbischen und griechischen Orthodoxie* Julia Anna Lis largely relies on interpretations of the interwar Yugoslav period offered by Klaus Buchenau and Maria Falina.<sup>36</sup> She accepts the theses of Nikolaj Velimirović's and Justin Popović's sacralization of the Serbian nation and religious anti-Westernism, as well as their good relations with the fascist movement "Zbor" and Dimitrije Ljotić.<sup>37</sup> It is very instructive the way in which, for example, Lis analyzes Justin's thesis that the murder of

**32** Saša Ilić, "Veliki nacionalni kongres u selu Ba 26-28. januar 1944. godine" (The Great National Congress in Ba village on 26-28 of January 1944), *Arhiv: Časopis arhiva Srbije i Crne Gore (Archive: The journal of Serbia and Montenegro's Archives)* 1-2 (2003), 160-171: 165.

**33** Jevtić, "Žitije prepodobnog oca našeg Justina Novog Čelijskog", 91-92.

**34** Justin Popović, *Istina o Srpskoj pravoslavnoj crkvi u komunističkoj Jugoslaviji (Memorandum on the Truth about the Serbian Orthodox Church in Communist Yugoslavia)* (Valjevo: Manastir Čelije 1990), 5.

**35** Jevtić, "Žitije prepodobnog oca našeg Justina Novog Čelijskog", 92-93.

**36** Maria Falina, *Pyrrhic Victory: East Orthodox Christianity, Politics and Serbian Nationalism in the Interwar Period* [PhD dissertation] (Budapest: Central European University, 2011).

**37** Lis, *Antiwestliche Diskurse*, 32-33.

God leads to suicide, both on a personal and collective level.<sup>38</sup> Lis attributes to Justin the claim that Jewish experience of persecution and Shoah was the collective punishment for their murder of God, concluding that such a cynical claim is a good example of Justin's anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism.<sup>39</sup> The problem with this interpretation lies in the fact that Justin does not refer to Jews, but to Judas Iscariot, who in the biblical narrative betrayed Jesus, and after Jesus was crucified he committed suicide.<sup>40</sup> The only plausible benevolent explanation for Lis's interpretation is that she identified by mistake 'Jude' (the accusative of the Serbian noun 'Juda'), which refers to Judas with the German noun 'der Jude' ('die Juden' in plural) which refers to a Jew or Jews.

Since there is no room here for a more detailed analysis of Lis's work, the focus will be only on the conclusions she has offered. For Lis, Justin, like other authors, draws a clear dichotomy between the West and Orthodoxy, whereby the West can no longer be located in the geographical west of Europe, but is an internal other to Orthodoxy.<sup>41</sup> According to Lis, the opposition that exists between the West and Orthodoxy is exactly the one Justin draws in his vision between a humanistic and Christocentric society. If an individual or society do not aspire to the God-man, they miss the meaning and purpose of their existence. Unlike Buchenau, Lis offers a far more precise image of Justin's *Svetosavlje*. She claims that Justin attempts to convey the concept of the Godman to the Serbian people through *Svetosavlje*. According to Lis, Justin perceives the fulfilment of the purpose of the Serbian, but also other peoples, in the transformation into a community that strives for deification, that is, into integration with the Church. Lis rightly notes that all social, political and economic issues are secondary to Justin in relation to that Theo-human reality.<sup>42</sup> However, in spite of valuable insights in the interpretation of Justin's thought, Lis uncritically adopts Pantelis Kalaitzidis' claim that the "return to the Fathers" movement was actually a theological construct primarily defined in opposition to the West.<sup>43</sup> Thus, Lis identifies the patristic or neo-patristic orientation of Justin Popović, Romanides and Yannaras with their alleged anti-Westernism. Kalaitzidis' arbitrary thesis about the "return to the Fathers" and the "neo-patristic synthesis" as an essentially anti-Western platform,<sup>44</sup> has been refuted by Matthew Baker in regard to the Georges Florovsky's works and by Sotiris Mitralaxis in regard to Christos Yannaras' works. Building his argument on the texts of George Florovsky, Matthew Baker clearly demonstrates that, in addition to the internal renewal of Orthodox theology, Florovsky's neo-patristic synthesis was an ecumenical program.<sup>45</sup> Thus, according to Baker it would be erroneous to consider that the purpose of 'neo-patristic synthesis' is to es-

<sup>38</sup> Lis, *Antiwestliche Diskurse*, 89-90. This was not the original thesis of Justin, but he borrows it from Dostoevsky.

<sup>39</sup> Lis, *Antiwestliche Diskurse*, 89-90.

<sup>40</sup> Justin Popović, "Svetosavlje kao filosofija života", in: *Sabrana dela*, vol. 4, 223.

<sup>41</sup> Lis, *Antiwestliche Diskurse*, 357.

<sup>42</sup> Lis, *Antiwestliche Diskurse*, 360-361

<sup>43</sup> Lis, *Antiwestliche Diskurse*, 365.

<sup>44</sup> Pantelis Kalaitzidis, "From the 'Return to the Fathers' to the need for a modern Orthodox Theology", *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, 54/1 (2010), 5-36:7

<sup>45</sup> Baker, "Neopatristic Synthesis and Ecumenism", 235-260.

establish an Orthodox identity on criticism of the West. Sotiris Mitralaxis has challenged Kalaitzidis' interpretation of Yannaras' anti-Westernism, demonstrating that Kalaitzidis totally overlooks that Yannaras' critique of the West is self-criticism. Mitralaxis exposes Kalaitzidis' intention to present himself as a liberal and open-minded theologian as opposed to the ultra-conservative and reactionary Yannaras.<sup>46</sup> By accepting the thesis that anti-Westernism is inseparable from the "return to the Fathers" movement and neo-patristic synthesis, Lis follows an academic trend widespread among some Orthodox scholars to deem the elements of Orthodox spirituality and culture not coherent with modern Western liberal values, a form of political fundamentalism. The works of both authors contribute significantly to the studies of Justin Popović, but they also indicate certain problematic tendencies in the German academia.

### **What we can learn about Germany through German regional historiography?**

All these examples show that in its approach to the Balkans, and through it to Russia and Turkey,<sup>47</sup> the German scholarship of the 21<sup>st</sup> century follows a certain geostrategic agenda promoted by German politicians and media. This approach does not question European or German pretensions to deem every phenomenon that opposes modernity, capitalism, democracy, human rights and individualism as negative and backward. The scholarly focus is always on issues that seem to be incompatible with the proclaimed global values of modernity and western style liberal democracy. As Sotiris Mitralaxis rightly observes in the case of George Demacopoulos' and Aristotle Papanikolaou's application of the postcolonial critique to the Balkans, this is an unusual twist.<sup>48</sup> Although Buchenau, Rohdewald and Lis do not claim the use of postcolonial critique they maintain a similar outlook. They do not see a problem in an 'Orientalist' or 'Balkanist' outlook, stating that the West is superior and the Orthodox is inferior, but rather in a critique that challenges "the residual effects of Western exploitation of the colonial subject, the 'subaltern,' in all of its cultural, political, and economic manifestations",<sup>49</sup> which they identify with 'anti-Westernism'. This also leads us to the question of the role that Orthodox Christianity plays for the western Christians. According to Christopher Johnson the western perception of Orthodoxy is: 1) the historical root and background of Western Christianity, 2) a tool for unity between Protestants and Catholics, 3) a link for missionaries to non-Christian Orient, and 4) justification for Western intervention.<sup>50</sup> The aforementioned German

<sup>46</sup> Sotiris Mitralaxis "On Recent Developments in Scholarly Engagement with (the Possibility of an) Orthodox Political Theology", *Political Theology*, 19/3 (2018), 247-260: 254-255.

<sup>47</sup> See the project "From Informality to Corruption (1817-2018): Serbia and Croatia in Comparison" funded by Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (<https://gepris.dfg.de/gepris/projekt/418675522>) dealing with corruption in contemporary Serbia as the consequence of the public mistrust and informality in the late Ottoman Empire.

<sup>48</sup> Sotiris Mitralaxis 'On Recent Developments in Scholarly Engagement with (the Possibility of an) Orthodox Political Theology', *Political Theology*, 19:3, (2018), 247-260: 252.

<sup>49</sup> George E. Demacopoulos and Aristotle Papanikolaou (eds.), *Orthodox Constructions of the West* (New York, Fordham University Press, 2013), 18.

<sup>50</sup> Christopher D. L. Johnson, "'He Has Made the Dry Bones Live': Orientalism's Attempted Resuscitation of Eastern Christianity", *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 82/3 (2014), 811-840: 829.

authors are in agreement with their German predecessors, such as Adolf Harnack, for whom the Orthodox Church is characterized by “petrification, barrenness, and barbarism”.<sup>51</sup> Therefore, the historical primitivism of the Orthodox, as well as Muslims in comparison with Western Christianity becomes the justification for the Western military intervention, that has already happened in the Balkans, northern Africa, the near and middle East, and is under way in Russia.

The second element emphasized by the authors is the perception of “Orthodox Renaissance”, “the return to the Fathers” or “neo-patristic synthesis” as an anti-Western movement. As Irena Pavlović Zeltner noted, the Byzantine heritage of the Orthodox Church is perceived among some German scholars as a core element of ‘the culture of violence’.<sup>52</sup> Thus, the so called ‘potential for violence’ tends to determine the scholarly interest of German academics in Orthodox Christianity, or, in the last decades, in Islam. Although Germany is not burdened with an imperial past like Great Britain and France are, by cultivating such approaches to the ‘third’ world, German academia is nesting Orientalism and Balkanism, about which Edward Said<sup>53</sup> and Maria Todorova<sup>54</sup> insightfully warn.

The third element that one may notice in the writings of the three scholars is an attempt to relate the figures of their interest with WWII fascist ideology, which again may indicate a German sense of collective guilt for the WWI and WWII. After Christopher Clark’s *The Sleepwalkers*<sup>55</sup> and Herfried Münkler’s *Der Große Krieg*<sup>56</sup> questioned the role of Germany in provoking WWI, a number of younger German historians have rushed to offer an alternative, many would say a revisionist reading of the German past.<sup>57</sup> The best way to free oneself from the sense of historical guilt for the WWI and WWII is to share it with or to transfer it to others. Thus, Buchenau, Rohdewald and Liz point to the interwar Yugoslav fascist or clero-fascist movement “Zbor” of Dimitrije Ljotić. But their extensive elaboration and the significance they ascribe to this political movement is in grave disproportion with its real political power, because at the Yugoslav parliamentary elections in 1935 and 1938 this movement won less than 1% of votes. As Heinrich Winkler observes in all European countries that entered WWI existed one militant party, but only in Germany this party came to power.<sup>58</sup> The same can be said in regard to European Nazi and fascist parties: they existed everywhere in Europe, but only in Germany and Italy came to power in the interwar period.

51 Adolf Harnack, *History of Dogma*, vol. IV, (trans. Neil Buchanan), (Boston, MA: Little, Brown & Company, 1989), 235.

52 Irena Zeltner Pavlović, *Religion, Gewalt und Medien. Die serbischorthodoxe Kirchenpresse in den postjugoslawischen Kriegen* (Erlangen: Christliche Publizistik 2013), 39-40.

53 Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

54 Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

55 Christopher Clark, *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914* (London: Allen Lane, 2012).

56 Herfried Münkler, *Der Große Krieg: Die Welt 1914 bis 1918* (Berlin: Rowohlt 2014).

57 Dominik Geppert, Sönke Neitzel, Cora Stephan, Thomas Weber, “Der Beginn vieler Schrecken”, *Die Welt*, 3.1.2014: [https://www.welt.de/print/die\\_welt/politik/article123489102/Der-Beginn-vieler-Schrecken.html](https://www.welt.de/print/die_welt/politik/article123489102/Der-Beginn-vieler-Schrecken.html)

58 Heinrich August Winkler, “Und erlöse uns von der Kriegsschuld”, *Zeit Online*, 31. Juni 2014: [https://www.zeit.de/2014/32/erster-weltkrieg-christopher-clark/komplettansicht?fbclid=IwARo73h8aM9qV\\_joCckV\\_CdpUz1wrLf6dWl552MGyaDaw7bAd4e5a5HGjphI](https://www.zeit.de/2014/32/erster-weltkrieg-christopher-clark/komplettansicht?fbclid=IwARo73h8aM9qV_joCckV_CdpUz1wrLf6dWl552MGyaDaw7bAd4e5a5HGjphI)

In conclusion, the contemporary approach of the German scholarship to the Serbian Church, at least in the works analyzed here, suffers from certain deficiencies. First, it is more an instrument for implementing a certain political agenda to the region, by offering support to German foreign policy and media, than the systematic investigation that broadens the horizons of human knowledge. Secondly, this scholarship relies on the same stereotypes from the past in its attempt to describe and meet future challenges. Thus, the roots of the provoked violence are not seen in the provocation, but in the violent nature of the other. Thirdly, the historical burden of collective guilt should be seen as a means to control the other by perceiving it morally inferior and the worst-case strategy of getting rid of this guilt is to transfer it to the other. I do not intend in my analysis to belittle the scholarly dedications and efforts of these authors, whose works display a great care for historical facts and attention to detail, but by questioning their ideological stance I hope to open room for scholarly debate. By accusing the Orthodox Church for 'othering potential', the German scholarship views the Orthodox Christians as being intrinsically different either in a moral or intellectual sense from the Westerners,<sup>59</sup> which does not help in overcoming divisions neither among Christians nor among Europeans.

**Владимир Цветковић**

**Рецепција Српске православне цркве  
у Немачкој академској јавности 21. века**

*Сажетак:* Циљ рада је да анализира ставове Клауса Букенауа, Стефана Родевалда и Јулије Ане Лис о Српској православној цркви. У раду се тврди да аутори формирају свој став према Србији и Српској православној цркви по узору на немачку штампу, која Српску цркву приказује као националистичку, насилну, нетрпељиву и назадну. Рад покушава да истражи којим се мотивима аутори воде при стварању негативних погледа на српску цркву, тврдећи да троје аутора своје научне конструкције граде на политичким наративима глобалне западне превласти с једне стране, и на ревизији немачке историјске одговорности за два светска рата, с друге стране.

*Кључне речи:* национализам, антизападњаштво, Светосавље, постколонијална критика, насиље.

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<sup>59</sup> Michael Schwalbe et al., 'Generic Processes in the Reproduction of Inequality: An Interactionist Analysis', *Social Forces* 79/2 (2000), 419-452: 423.