

Studies in Euroculture, Volume 2
Imagining Europe: Memory,
Visions, and Counter-Narratives

Edited by Lars Klein and Martin Tamcke



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Serbian Church and Europe on the Threshold of the Third Millennium*

Vladimir Cvetković

1 Definitions

The shape that the history of relations between the Serbian Church and Europe will have depends directly on the definition of these two terms. If these terms are broadly defined, then one may speak of more than a millennium long history relationship, which passed various historical phases. In broad terms the ‘Serbian church’ designates a church of Orthodox rite to which belongs Serbian Slav population; which has been established in the ninth century by the Greek missionaries Cyril and Methodius and which belonged to the Byzantine political and cultural sphere of influence.¹ In opposition to the Byzantine cultural model stays another cultural model, created through “the confluence of Germanic traditions and Christian-Latin culture”, a model by which is usually from eighth century onward Europe identified.² The things become more complicated if one understands the Serbian Church as an independent or autocephalous ecclesial organization, established by the medieval Serbian nobleman and monk Sava Nemanjić in 1219, and which included most of Serbian population.³ In this case, the long standing divisions Latin/Greek or Europe/Byzantium become precarious, because although it cherished both Latin and Greek Christianity, the Serbian Church attempted to build its own spiritual tradition and organization, often encouraging Serbian rulers to campaign against Byzantium in alliance with Western European Catholic kingdoms

* The article is a slightly revised version of a lecture given in the series ‘State and Religion/Church: Russian and Oriental Perspectives’ on the 4th of December 2014 at the Georg-August-Universität Göttingen. I would like to express my gratitude to Prof. Dr. Martin Tamcke, for inviting me to give a lecture in this series and for considering it for publication in the present volume.

¹ A.P. Vlasto, *The Entry of the Slavs into Christendom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 207-208.

² Norman F. Cantor, *Civilization of the Middle Ages* (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), 185.

³ Vladimir Cvetković, ‘Serbian Tradition’, in: Augustine Casiday (ed.), *The Orthodox Christian World* (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), 130-140: 131-132.

despite belonging to the Byzantine cultural model and despite celebrating in Orthodox rite.

Used in a narrower sense, the aforementioned terms may acquire different meanings: the Serbian Church may be identified with the institutional framework of the Patriarchate of Belgrade or the Serbian Orthodox Church, which is its official name,⁴ while Europe might be used in a geopolitical sense and refer exclusively to the European Union. However, I will avoid the institutional context of both the Serbian Church and the EU. Instead, when I refer to the Serbian Church I have in mind in particular the attitudes of those thinkers who shaped the main tenants of the Serbian Orthodox thought, in the course of the twentieth century. I will refer to Europe not in its physical sense as geographic entity, but I will identify it with those European authors, who constructed European values and later contrasted them to the Balkans or the Orthodox Christianity of the Balkans. The definitions of Serbian Church and Europe in broader and narrower sense are useful for understanding the complex perception of Serbia and Serbian Church by European scholars, journalists or politicians, as well as for understanding the perception of Europe by Serbian churchmen and I will occasionally refer to them. My aim however, is not to argue whether the representation of Europe or Serbian Church are accurate or not, but to investigate the ways in which they were discursively constructed.

2 The Balkans – Colonialism, Post-colonialism, Neocolonialism

Inspired by the fact that in an audience such as this, most of the listeners are of non-European origins, coming from countries that might have experienced some sort of European dominance at some point during their history, I have decided to approach my topic through the lenses of postcolonial theory. First, I would like to clarify my choice. Although the idea of applying postcolonial theory to the Balkans may seem controversial, since the Balkans do not represent distant and overseas colonies, but are situated in the heart of the European continent, the recent studies of Maria Todorova,⁵ Vesna Goldsworthy,⁶ Milica Bakić-Hayden⁷ and Zoran Milutinović⁸ demonstrate that this perspective has been most fruitfully adopted for discussing the cultural legacy of centuries long efforts of various imperial powers to dominate the Balkans. In the period from the end of eighteenth century until today there have been four foreign powers physically present in the western Bal-

⁴ Cvetković, 'Serbian Tradition', 136.

⁵ Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

⁶ Vesna Goldsworthy, *Inventing Ruritania: The Imperialism of the Imagination* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998).

⁷ Milica Bakić-Hayden, "Nesting Orientalism: The Case of Former Yugoslavia", *Slavic Review* 54/4 (1995), 917-931.

⁸ Zoran Milutinović, *Getting Over Europe: The Construction of Europe in Serbian Culture* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2011).

kans: Ottoman, Austrian (latter Austro-Hungarian), Venetian (latter Italian) and French. Germany, Russia, Britain and more recently USA have also attempted to impose their interests to the region either by political and economical means or by military presence.

As the term “colonialism” is not meant to cover all national oppressions, and thus is not applicable to the period before the European colonial Empires,⁹ the five centuries of Ottoman domination of the Balkans, despite having an enormous impact in shaping the identity of the Post-Ottoman Balkans, are not in our focus. Some scholars justify the application of postcolonial theory, because it offers a unique set of intellectual resources for understanding certain processes in the Balkans and the reaction to the Western influences,¹⁰ but they are reluctant to apply the term colonialism or post-colonialism in the strict sense of the words. On the other side, there are scholars, like Vesna Goldsworthy, who think that terms such as ‘colonialism’, ‘post-colonialism’ and ‘neocolonialism’ acquire their true meanings only in the context of the nowadays Balkans, which has remained for Europe ‘the repository for all kinds of unacceptable, and often racist feelings, which could no longer be expressed in relation to the Third World’.¹¹ She substantiates her stance referring to two recent examples: one of the British journalist Michael Nicholson, who in a book about Sarajevo entitled *Natasha’s Story*, published in 1997 wrote: “The ferocity of the Balkan peoples has at times been so primitive that anthropologists have likened them to the Amazon’s Yanamamö, one of the world’s most savage and primitive tribes.”¹² The second example is that of a UN representative in Kosovo who described to *The Guardian* that governing Kosovo is like “dressing a child: you give it the trousers of economy, the shirt of education, the jacket of democracy, etc. And all the while, the child wants to run out and play outside in its underpants. If we let it, it could hurt itself”¹³. By these two examples Goldsworthy actually points to two main features of the European perception of the Balkans, the primitivism and barbarity of its people, that points to their “not yet European” state or the state in which “Europe has already been”,¹⁴ and a permanent need of Europe or the West to supervise the Balkans and to deal with the “ancient hatred” of their people.

⁹ Aijaz Ahmad, ‘The Politics of Literary Postcoloniality’, *Race and Class* 36/3 (1995), 9.

¹⁰ George Demacopoulos and Aristotle Papanikolaou (eds.), *Orthodox Constructions of the West* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 21.

¹¹ Albena Vacheva, Interview with Vesna Goldsworthy ‘Not quite European... Scrutinizing the Balkan’s neo-colonialism’ from 9 July 2004, <http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2004-07-09-vacheva-en.html> (accessed 28 November 2014).

¹² Michael Nicholson, *Natasha’s Story* (London: Macmillan, 1993), 19.

¹³ Jon Henley, ‘Kosovo 1999’, *The Guardian*, Thursday 29 May 2003, <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2003/may/29/balkans.foreignpolicy> (accessed 28 November 2014)

¹⁴ Goldsworthy, *Inventing Ruritania*, 202-212.

3 Orthodoxy and Orientalism: The Orthodox Church in the eyes of Europeans

When it comes to the European or Western depiction of the Orthodox Church of the Balkans, Christopher Johnson lists four different roles that Eastern Christianity plays for the western Christians: 1) historical root and background of Western Christianity, 2) tool for unity between Protestants and Catholics, 3) link for missionaries to non-Christian Orient, and 4) justification for Western intervention.¹⁵ The historical primitivism of the Orthodox in comparison with the Western Christianity and the justification of the Western intervention are identical to Goldsworthy's analysis of the Western perception of the Balkans. Johnson offers a long list of examples that point to the primitive status of the Orthodox Church in the eyes of the western clergyman, including Adolf Harnack's and Arthur Stanley's descriptions of the Orthodox Church as being in a state of "petrification, barrenness, and barbarism"¹⁶ or as expressing "the simplicity of barbarism, not the freedom of civilization."¹⁷

The perception of the other usually includes self-perception. As Milutinović points out, by identifying the European identity with "Christianity", "Civilization", and from nineteenth century with the "West", Western European authors and, in this case theologians, indicated tacit or explicit political and cultural aims.¹⁸ By comparing the progressive and innovative character of their own churches with the ancient customs of the Orthodox Church, the Westerners become convinced not only of the primitivism and backwardness of the Orthodox people, but also of the superiority of their own religious practice. This feeling of superiority inspired them to set their political and cultural aims, which pertain in the Johnson's classification to the second and the third role that the Eastern Christianity played for western Christians, namely to be a tool for Western Christian Unity, as well as a link for their missionaries to the non-Christian Orient.¹⁹ By way of comparison with their Eastern Christian counterparts, the Western Roman-Catholic and Protestant churches realize that they share more common values among themselves that may be preserved by common action. In modern terms this kind of Western mobilization for the preservation of the common values is evident in the tweet of the Swedish foreign affairs minister Carl Bildt, who wrote that the orthodox conservative

¹⁵ 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.

¹⁶ Adolf Harnack, *History of Dogma*, vol. IV, trans. Neil Buchanan (Boston, MA: Little, Brown & Company, 1989), 235.

¹⁷ Arthur P. Stanley, *Lectures on the History of the Eastern Church* (London: J.M. Dent & Co., 21907) (1st edition 1861), 76.

¹⁸ Milutinović, *Getting Over Europe*, 18.

¹⁹ Johnson, 'He Has Made the Dry Bones Live', 830-1.

ideas (of Vladimir Putin) feature anti-Western and anti-decadent character,²⁰ and as such they are an immediate threat to Europe and the West.²¹

Similarly to the Balkans that evoke the metaphor of a bridge between the West and the East,²² the role of Eastern Christianity is to serve as a bridge for Western Christians to access to the non-Christian Orient for the purpose of proselytizing.²³ This is possible only because Eastern Christianity has something in common with both the West and the Orient, and the conversion of Eastern Christians to a Western form of Christianity may serve as prelude for evangelization and further conversion of the non-Christian Orient.²⁴ One may also argue that the geostrategic planning of proselytism of the Western Christians in the past is the germ of modern-day western military interventions. As Orthodox Christianity of the Balkans served as a medium for reaching the non-Christian Orient, the Western 'humanitarian interventions' in the Balkans (Bosnia and Herzegovina 1993-1995 and Yugoslavia 1999) served as model for the future military interventions in Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya.²⁵ Finally, the justification of the intervention of the Western Christians is based on deeply humanitarian grounds, because the Eastern Christians could be saved, which means civilized, westernized and Europeanized by the West, in spite of being "held back by their Oriental nature and their oppressive Oriental environment."²⁶ One may recall similar explanations in modern media and scholarship. Thus, the British journalist Simon Winchester draws parallels between the geology and mentality of the Balkans, claiming that the geological fracture of two mountain chains, the Balkan Mountains and the Dinaric Alps, became a template for the fractured behavior of those who would later live upon it.²⁷ Slavoj Žižek pointed out to a similar treatment of the Greek people in the recent German media. When the Greek accusation of the neoliberal technocracy imposed by Brussels could not be ignored anymore, the German media replaced the story of irresponsible, lazy, free-spending, tax-dodging Greeks with assertions that one cannot

²⁰ Carl Bildt, "Perhaps @McFaul underestimating force of Putin's new anti-Western and anti-decadent line. Building on deeply conservative orthodox ideas.", 24 March 2014, 5:10 AM, Tweet, <https://twitter.com/carlbildt/status/448069450437513216> (accessed 13 July 2015).

²¹ The Russian news agency Rex reported that "Carl Bildt thinks that the Eastern Orthodoxy is main threat to western civilization", which the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs deemed as misinterpretation.

²² Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, 14.

²³ Stanley, *Lectures on the History of the Eastern Church*, 93.

²⁴ Johnson, 'He Has Made the Dry Bones Live', 831.

²⁵ David N. Gibbs, *First Do No Harm: Humanitarian Intervention and the Destruction of Yugoslavia* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2009), 1-2. Similarly to Gibbs, but from a completely different perspective, Marlene Spoerri argues, in her recent book *Engineering Revolution*, that a successful overthrowing of Slobodan Milošević from power in Serbia through democratic 'regime change' engineered and financially backed by US and other Western powers was a preparation to similar 'colour' revolutions in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan. Cf. Marlene Spoerri, *Engineering Revolution. The Paradox of Democracy Promotion in Serbia* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 172.

²⁶ Johnson, 'He Has Made the Dry Bones Live', 832.

²⁷ Simon Winchester, *The Fracture Zone: A Return to the Balkans* (London: Viking, 1999), 26.

blame them, because they are victims of their own nature.²⁸ Similarly to Yugoslavia, which was the main testing grounds for a model of ‘humanitarian intervention’, Greece is, according to Žižek, the main testing grounds for a new socio-economic model of depoliticised technocracy in which bankers and other experts are allowed to demolish democracy. Hayden White unmasks the humanitarian intervention of the West, Europe and the United States claiming that they served only to their economic motivations, which are proclaimed as the global moral model, “the last best hope for mankind”, and the very summit of human community.²⁹ Thus, the “salvation” of the Balkan Orthodox Christians by the Western counterparts whether by means of proselytism and conversion, military conquest or economically impoverishment always served to a politic and economic agenda of the West and Europe.

4 The Serbian Church in the European focus

While in the West it has been extensively written on the Orthodox Church in general, or on the Greek and Russian Church in particular, the Serbian Church came into focus of the Western scholarship relatively late. I would limit myself at the scholarly findings of the German scholarship, which has exhibited especially in the last quarter of century a vivid interest in the Serbian Church.

The doctoral thesis of Thomas Bremer, *Ekklesiale Struktur und Ekklesiologie in der Serbischen Orthodoxen Kirche im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, published in 1992, constitutes a first assessment of the recent history of the Serbian Church outside the Orthodox world. The main thesis of Bremer’s study is that despite the merits of three generations of twentieth century Serbian theologians in rooting the theology of the Serbian Church in the Bible and patristic tradition, the recent theology and ecclesiology represent a step backwards in relation to the ecclesiology of the Metropolitanate of Karlovci, because there the participation of laypeople in Church governance played an important role.³⁰ Although Bremer argues that a particular church tradition should not be evaluated on the basis of a theological and spiritual heritage foreign to it,³¹ he does exactly this by adopting the participation of the laypeople in the leadership of the Church as criterion for evaluation. While this aspect might be highly valued in other Christian traditions, such as Protestant, being the legacy of a secular democratic society, it is, however, alien to the Orthodox tradition.

²⁸ Slavoj Žižek, ‘Save Us From the Saviours’, *London Review of Books* 34/11, 7 June 2012, 13, <http://www.lrb.co.uk/v34/n11/slavoj-zizek/save-us-from-the-saviours> (accessed 30 November 2014).

²⁹ Hayden White, ‘The Discourse of Europe and the Search for European Identity’, in: Bo Stråth: *Europe and the Other and Europe as the Other* (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2000), 67–86: 67.

³⁰ Thomas Bremer, *Ekklesiale Struktur und Ekklesiologie* (Würzburg: Augustinus-Verlag, 1992), 252.

³¹ Bremer, *Ekklesiale Struktur und Ekklesiologie*, 250.

If one applies Johnson's fourfold classification on Bremer's study, his evaluation may be subsumed under the first role that Orthodoxy plays for the Western Christians or Europeans: in comparison with previous ecclesial forms, in which the Serbian Church was more willing to include the legacies of democracy in its ecclesiology, the contemporary ecclesiology of Serbian Church based exclusively on the conciliar tradition of the Orthodox East is retrograde. Read through the prism of the West-East binary oppositions Bremer's assessment may also suggest that the theology and ecclesial organization under the colonial rule of the Austro-Hungarian Empire bore better fruits than in the newly founded Kingdom of Yugoslavia.³²

Bremer's dissertation was followed by further, more historical, studies on Justin Popović, mainly focused on the context of Serbian nationalism. The most illustrious example is that of Klaus Buchenau, who is the author of the most comprehensive studies of the Serbian church in the context of Serbian nationalism and anti-western attitudes. From the perspective of postcolonial theory nationalism should not be considered in its usual sense as building personal identity on belongingness to one nation, and against other nations, but rather as denial of the allegedly subaltern, stateless nations to submit themselves voluntarily to the imperial *Kulturträger* protection.³³ The tendency to interpret theology and ecclesiology of the Serbian church in the context of Serbian nationalism and its anti-western orientation has originated from attempts to understand the Yugoslav wars (1991-1999) in a broader historical setting. By exploring both the church-state and inter-churches relations in his book *Orthodoxie und Katholizismus in Jugoslawien 1945-1991: ein serbisch-kroatischer Vergleich* (2004), Buchenau envisaged possible reasons for the breakdown of Yugoslavia. He argues that due to some internal antagonisms in the church-state relations and due to Tito's refusal to implement democratic liberalism in the Yugoslav society of the sixties, Yugoslavia was doomed to fall apart.³⁴ Buchenau states also that the national mobilization and false evangelization of the Serbian Church, especially connected with the campaign over Kosovo during the eighties bear the responsibility for the turmoil, which happened later.³⁵

In his second book *Auf russischen Spuren: orthodoxe Antinvestler in Serbien, 1850-1945*, Buchenau attempts to demonstrate that the Serbian Orthodox anti-westernism has its origins in the Russian critique of Europe and the West.³⁶ The main thesis of Buchenau's book is based upon the conclusion of his previous studies: by adopting the Russian ideas about the West as the 'other', and thus the gained status of a Russian cultural colony, Serbian people proved their need for

³² Bremer, *Ekklesiale Struktur und Ekklesiologie*, 9.

³³ Mykola Riabchuk, *Vid Malorosji do Ukraini* (Kyiv: Kritika, 2000), 14.

³⁴ Klaus Buchenau, *Orthodoxie und Katholizismus in Jugoslawien 1945-1991. Ein serbisch-kroatischer Vergleich* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2004), 449.

³⁵ Buchenau, *Orthodoxie und Katholizismus in Jugoslawien 1945-1991*, 379-391.

³⁶ Klaus Buchenau, *Auf russischen Spuren. Orthodoxe Antinvestler in Serbien, 1850-1945* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2011).

Kulturträger protection.

Finally, in the recent article ‘Anti-Europeanism in the Balkans, Anti-Americanism in Latin America: a Comparison’, Buchenau, in the fashion of right-wing historians, 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 another purpose and this is 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.³⁷ One of the main conclusions of Buchenau’s recent article is that the Eastern Christianity may serve as a tool for Western Christian unity, specifically for the unity between North-American Protestants and South-American Catholics.

The recent German scholarship with a focus the Balkans and the Serbian Church represents certain variations of the four aforementioned roles that Eastern Christianity plays for the West from early nineteenth century onwards.

5 The Serbian Church – The First World War and the Interwar period

There is unanimous consensus among scholars that the works of two Serbian theologians, the bishop Nikolaj Velimirović (1881-1956) and the priestmonk Justin Popović (1894-1979) particularly represent the spiritual and intellectual directions of the Serbian Church during the First World War and the Interwar period. Velimirović spent the decade preceding the First World War as a student in Switzerland, Germany and England. He obtained two doctorates in Bern, one in theology (1908) and another in history (1910) and allegedly an additional one in Geneva on the philosophy of George Berkeley.³⁸ In similar vein to third-world scholars, who by attending the first-world academic institutions either adopted or challenged the attitudes that Western scholarship held toward their countries,³⁹ Velimirović intended to improve the perception of his religion and history of his fatherland in European scholarship. In his article in the Anglican *Guardian* from 1909, Velimirović argued against the widespread attitude among Anglican divines that the gulf between the Christian West and East is unbridgeable without doctrinal consensus.⁴⁰ He pointed out that if each side makes a first step out of love, they would

³⁷ Klaus Buchenau, ‘Anti-Europeanism in the Balkans, Anti-Americanism in Latin America: a Comparison’, *Religion, State & Society* 40/3-4 (2012), 379-94: 390.

³⁸ Jovan Byford, *Denial and Repression of Antisemitism. Post-Communist Remembrance of the Serbian Bishop Nikolaj Velimirović* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2008), 20-21.

³⁹ Ailaz Ahmad, *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures* (London: Verso 32000), 40-1. Arif Dirlik, ‘The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism’, *Critical Inquiry* 20 (1994), 328-9.

⁴⁰ Nicholas Velimirović, ‘Problems of Reunion with the East’, *The Guardian (Anglican newspaper)*,

discover that this deep chasm is in fact a firm ground. He also argued in favor of another kind of unity, which secures the unity of Europe, the unity among Slavic nations. Velimirović attempted to give to the originally Russian Slavophile idea of unity among the Slavs, that became the political program of the Slavonic people in the Austro-Hungarian Empire,⁴¹ a deeper religious meaning. Thus, the Slavs as the youngest European race should play a messianic role in saving Europe, not by instituting a Slavonic Empire, but by embodying the All-Man (Serbian „Свечовек“) as opposed to Nietzsche’s Übermensch.⁴² During the WWI the Serbian Government sent Velimirović to the UK and the USA to promote the Serbian cause. In a lecture delivered in Canterbury Cathedral in 1915 he praised the British Empire because of its democracy and foundation based on the Christian philosophy of democratic equality and brotherhood. He urged Britain to protect Serbia and other oppressed European nations from German dominion by spreading democracy and Christian values.⁴³ Faced with the catastrophic consequences of the WWI, Velimirović’s enthusiasm for the European Christian brotherhood completely vanished. In his lecture given in 1920 at London’s Kings College, he states that Europe has abandoned Christianity as the centre of its civilization and that it is doomed to decay unless she returns to its centre.⁴⁴ Velimirović spent the interwar period as bishop of Ochrid (nowadays in Republic of Macedonia). Deeply disappointed with the secularization of Europe, he turned his reflections toward the East, seeing in the spiritually rich India the future of world Christianity.⁴⁵ However, in the advent to the WWII, Velimirović attempted to avoid the East-West division by proposing the simple religiosity of Serbian peasants as a model that is beyond East and West.⁴⁶ The WWII further convinced him that Europe is sick unto death. By the end of the war, while still being a German prisoner in the concentration camp of Dachau and experiencing death around him, Velimirović writes:

“All of Europe smells of death. European universities preach death. European writers describe death. European scientists immortalize death. European politicians work for death in youth’s soul. European imperialist disseminate death the world over. European revolutionaries carry the banner of death. Modern Europe is synonym for death”.⁴⁷

17 February 1909.

⁴¹ Diana Mishkova, ‘In Quest of Balkan Occidentalism’, *Tokovi istorije* 1-2 (2006), 29-62: 38-40.

⁴² Cf. Nikolaj Velimirović, *Nietzsche and Dostoyevsky* (1911), *Sermons under the Mount* (1912), *Words on the All-Man* (1920), *Prayers by the Lake* (1922) (All in Serbian).

⁴³ Nicholas Velimirovic, *Serbia in Light and Darkness* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1916), 8-9.

⁴⁴ Nicholai Velimirović, *The Spiritual Rebirth of Europe* (London: The Faith Press, 1920), 20.

⁴⁵ Cf. Nikolaj Velimirović, *Indian Letters* (Belgrade: Evro, 2000) (in Serbian).

⁴⁶ *Above East and West*, in: in: Episkop Nikolaj Velimirović, *Sabrana dela (Collected Works)*, vol. 5 (Düsseldorf: Himmalsthür, 1977) (in Serbian).

⁴⁷ *Words to the Serbian People Through the Dungeon Window* in: Velimirović, *Sabrana dela*, vol. 13 (Düsseldorf: Himmalsthür, 1983), 331-332 (in Serbian). The English translation in: Milutinović, *Getting Over Europe*, 148.

After the war, instead of returning to the communist Yugoslavia, Velimirović chose to go to the USA, where he lived until his death in 1956. He visited Europe just once, being briefly in London, but he never again wrote of Europe. Due to Christian determination and democracy, two values that Velimirović highly esteemed, America became for him the land of hope, and the new light to the world. Velimirović changed his opinions on numerous occasions, adopting vigorously certain ideas and abandoning them abruptly. However, the constant of his philosophical program was a combination of Christianity, which permeates every aspect of social and political life and democracy, and he linked both these ideals to Europe.

Velimirović's disciple Justin Popović, although adhering to his teacher's ideas, took different views on numerous points. In comparison with Velimirović's ecumenical leanings, in his Oxford BLitt thesis (then the highest supervised degree issued by Oxford University) on Dostoyevsky (1919), Popović was very critical of the Papal and protestant role in turning Christianity into humanism in Europe, but also of Christian socialism,⁴⁸ which was then very popular among Anglican divines. In fashion of the European intellectuals of interwar period, who maintained that Europe is sick and that it needs treatment, Popović proposes his diagnosis and prescribes therapy. The main causes of the illness of Europe are: humanism, rationalism and individualism. Drawing on Slavophile ideas Popović proposes: Theohumanism or the process of human perfecting in the God-man Jesus Christ as the cure for western humanism, which proclaims the human being as the supreme value; the integral knowledge as a process of acquiring knowledge by means of faith and love is opposed to the rule of reason; finally, the ecclesial catholicity (*sabornost*) is, in his view, the only remedy for individualism.⁴⁹ Although Popović adopted the criticism of Western ideas from the Slavophile movement, he applied them not in a politico-ideological, but rather in an ecclesial context. He also disagreed with Velimirović regarding the implementation of these ideas, that is not by means of messianic Slavonic race or simple religiosity of peasants, but rather by a return to the ascetical tradition of the Desert Fathers. In his works on Macarius of Egypt (his doctoral thesis from Athens 1926) and Isaac the Syrian (1927), Popović offers the desert, here a synonym for ascetic feat as a solution to the problems of twentieth century European man. At the same time similar ideas, which proposed the ascetical practice of the Christian East to spiritually devastated Europe, circulated among Catholic theologians Henri De Lubac, Jacques Maritain, and Jean Daniélou. In the book *'Svetosanlje* (Saint-Savaism) as the Philosophy of Life" (1953) compiled of his interwar writings on the Serbian medieval saint Sava Nemanjić,

⁴⁸ "Religion and Philosophy of F.M. Dostoyevsky", *Hrišćanski Život* (*Christian life*) 4 (April 1923), 168-180, (in Serbian).

⁴⁹ Vladimir Cvetković, 'Abba Justin Popović, un théologien de synthèse', *Istina* 65/1 (2011), 47-62: 48.

Popović develops *Svetosavlje* as a *tertium quid* metaphor meant to transcend East and West narratives, in both ecclesial and political sense. At the end of WWII, the Yugoslav Communist authorities banned Popović to return to his previous professorial post at the Faculty of Theology of the University of Belgrade, and confined him to the Monastery of Chelie in Western Serbia, where he remained until the end of his life. Europe completely disappeared from Popović's focus in this period. However he continued with similar severity to condemn Yugoslav Communists for adopting atheistic humanism, rationalism and not individualism but collectivism as main social values. Popović deeply inspired the next generation of Serbian theologians, who to great extent shaped contemporary views of Serbian Church on Europe.

6 Justinovci – Communist Era and Post-Yugoslav period

Four Popović's disciples, Amfilohije Radović, Atanasije Jevtić, Artemije Radosavljević and Irinej Bulović, usually referred as Justinovci (meaning 'of Justin') have had a similar intellectual development. All four are theologians and monks, later bishops of the Serbian Church. All four obtained their doctorates from Athens, and as postgraduate or postdoctoral students frequented West European Universities, usually Rome and Paris. As students in Athens during seventies of the last century they took an active role in the so-called Palamite renaissance, a theological movement that reacted against the western theological influence on Orthodox theology by returning to authentic Orthodox sources of earlier times.⁵⁰ Their doctoral theses are fine examples of political theology, being equally critical of the Western theological stances and of the previous Orthodox tradition because of its theological hybridity. While living in Greece and other European democratic countries, they accustomed themselves with the values of democracy. Upon their return to Yugoslavia at the beginning of the eighties, they embarked on a critique of the Communist regime adhering to democratic values, and as professors of the Faculty of Theology in Belgrade they took active roles in numerous dissident forums. In April 1982, after the Serbian Patriarchal Monastery of Peć in Kosovo was set on fire, as a part of larger group of priests they appealed to the Federal authorities to protect the Serbian people and churches in the Albanian dominated province.⁵¹ When at the beginning of the nineties Yugoslavia slipped into the war, all four were already appointed bishops. Despite their nationalist inclinations, they did not find anything in common with the policy of the Serbian president Slobodan Milošević, whom they considered not only a disguised communist technocrat, but

⁵⁰ Vasilios N. Makrides & Dirk Uffelmann, 'Studying Eastern Orthodox Anti-Westernism: The Need for a Comparative Research Agenda', in Jonathan Sutton & William Peter van Den Bercken, *Orthodox Christianity and Contemporary Europe* (Leuven: Peeters, 2003), 87-120:116-117.

⁵¹ 'Appeal for Protection of Serbian People and its Holy Shrines in Kosovo' *Pravoslavlje (Orthodoxy)*, May 15, 1982. (in Serbian).

also exceedingly dangerous for Serbian national interests.⁵² The topic of Europe, which was previously out of their scholarly or political interest, came to be developed during nineties particularly due to the increasing appropriation of Western values by their congregations and due to the involvement of Western diplomacy in the Yugoslav crisis. Thus, although supporting the opposition of Serbia in the struggle for democratic values, Amfilohije Radović, the Metropolitan of Montenegro condemned the West for its preoccupation with material values, for its expansionist impulse, and totalitarianism.⁵³ As the Bishop of Herzegovina (in Bosnia) Atanasije Jevtić was involved in talks with numerous negotiators from the European Community, including the meeting in early 1992 with Lord Peter Carrington. Jevtić's general impression from these meetings at the dawn of the crisis is that Europeans, backed by Americans attempted to impose their control on the region, without observing the interests of local people. Further confrontation of Bosnian Serbs with Bosnian Muslims and Croats led to NATO air strikes against Serbs, which led to a large number of negative depictions of Europe in Jevtić's sermons and public addresses. In 1996 he claimed that: "the real war and the false peace [in Bosnia] are the result of the policy of the UN, the European Community, the Security Council and the European Parliament",⁵⁴ repeating once more the thesis that the Orthodox Balkan is Europe before "Europe" and civilisation before "civilisation", because it bears and guards the Jerusalem-Mediterranean Europeanness.⁵⁵

As the bishop of Kosovo since 1991, Artemije Radosavljević, severely criticized Milošević's policy in this province, for its lack of democratic legitimacy. Deeply believing that the problem of Kosovo could be solved through the process of democratization, he urged the western Governments not to employ force in Kosovo, because that would strengthen Milošević's regime and further radicalize militant Albanian groups such as the Kosovo Liberation Army.⁵⁶ In spite of his appeal, NATO bombarded Kosovo and Serbia. After the withdrawal of the Yugoslav army, including the Serbian administration from Kosovo, Radosavljević as the only representative of the Serbian people continued his efforts for establishing a democratic and multiethnic Kosovo. Since 1999 he pledged UN representatives in Kosovo to make conditions for the return of the Serbian people displaced from

⁵² Atanasije Jevtić, Interview to independent television station Studio B, 12 March 1992.

⁵³ Amfilohije Radović, Opening Address at the Conference on the Future of Montenegro Held on the 18 December 1991 in Podgorica. The English translation in: Ivan Čolović, *The Politics of Symbol in Serbia: Essays in Political Anthropology* (London: C. Hurst & Co. Publishers, 2002), 40.

⁵⁴ Atanasije Jevtić, 'A Worst Than Any Other War', in: *The Lamb of God and the Beast from the Abyss: Philosophy of War*, Collected Papers from the Second Theological-philosophical Symposium Held During The Days of Saints Cyril and Methodius, Edited by: Radoš M. Mladenović & Hierodeacon Jovan (Čulibrk) (Cetinje: Svetigora - Publishing house of Metropolitane of Montenegro and Littoral, 1996). (in Serbian).

⁵⁵ Radović, in: Čolović, *The Politics of Symbol in Serbia*, 40.

⁵⁶ Bishop Artemije, 'The Letter to the Presidents, Governments and Parliaments of the United States of America and Western States', *Sveti Knež Lazar (Saint Prince Lazar)* 26 (April 1999), 5-8: 7.

Kosovo, for legal trials of crimes against Serbs, and for the restoration of destroyed Serbian cemeteries and churches.⁵⁷ However, the fact that just in three years of UN, NATO and EU presence in Kosovo, 260 000 Serbs were exiled, 2000 Serbs killed and the same number kidnapped, 36000 Serbian houses were destroyed and 70000 were taken from exiled Serbs, and 150 monasteries and churches were destroyed,⁵⁸ disillusioned not just Radosavljević, but many Serbian people that the mandate of NATO and EU missions in Kosovo is to secure safety. The majority of the Serbian people consider the US and EU's backing of Kosovo's independence, which has been unilaterally proclaimed in 2008, as a clear violation of the international law. In spite of the official Serbian policy, whose strategic goal is accession into the EU, the reception of Europe in the Serbian Church is usually determined by the role she played in Kosovo and in the NATO bombardment.

For the last two decades Serbian people have perceived European economic policy as a promise of their future prosperity. However, the last few years the European economic model is increasingly associated with colonial impoverishment than with prosperity. Amfilohije Radović recently pointed out that the Church could not accept neo-liberal capitalism, which in his Montenegro, as well as in the entire Europe impoverished the majority of people, enriching just a few.⁵⁹ He concludes that the ideology of contemporary neo-liberal capitalism is rooted in wolfish self-interest (in connection to the proverb *Homo homini lupus*).⁶⁰

Not only the European economic policy and the policy toward Kosovo, but also the European insistence on the right of sexual minorities is a controversial issue for the Serbian Church. On many occasions the Church leaders gave statements against the organization of Belgrade pride parades. In spite of the statements of Church leaders that routinely condemn homosexuality as a threat to traditional family values, it is difficult to say that intolerance of homosexual rights is widespread in Serbia. The recent statement of Radović regarding LGBT rights was a surprise not only for the liberal audience, but also for Orthodox Christians. Asked by a journalist to comment the recent floods in the Balkans, Radović said: "Have a look at this what is going on. What is the priority in Europe now? It is this unfortunate woman, or better said unfortunate man, I do not know his name, who es-

⁵⁷ Bishop Artemije, The Letter to Bernard Koushner from 26 of October 1999, *Sveti Knež Lazar* 27 (1999), 12-13:13.

⁵⁸ Bishop Artemije, 'The Exposition on the Suffering of Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija in Paris, June 2003', *Sveti Knež Lazar* 43 (2003), 152-154: 152 and 'The Letter to the Holy Synod of Serbian Orthodox Church', *Sveti Knež Lazar* 46 (2004), 7-21: 9-10.

⁵⁹ Amfilohije Radović, 'Reality is Not a Measure', *Radio Television of Serbia (RTS)*, 19 October 2011 (in Serbian), <http://www.rts.rs/page/stories/sr/story/125/Društvo/975626/Amfilohije%3A+Realnost+nije+mera.html> (accessed 14 July 2015).

⁶⁰ The Christmas Message of Metropolitan Amfilohije 2011/2012 (in Serbian), <http://www.svetigora.com/node/9736> (accessed 14 July 2015).

establishes himself as Jesus.”⁶¹ In fashion of ancient Christians, Radović explains that the flood in the Balkans is a sign of punishment or of divine warning to Christians not to transgress by popularizing the pop artist and drag queen Conchita Wurst as a model of tolerance and diversity. Radović also stated that the recent gay pride parade organized in Podgorica, as a sign of Montenegro’s respect for the EU gender policy, is Montenegro’s enslavement by the anti-Christian Europe. However, there are different views on this point in the Serbian Episcopate. Ignatije Midić, the bishop of Braničevo and professor of dogmatics at the Faculty of Theology in Belgrade, does not derogate homosexual persons, but he equates them with heterosexual ones in some respect, stating that both homosexual and heterosexual people need divine and human love for salvation.⁶²

7 Conclusion

The relationship between Europe and the Serbian Church in the last couple of centuries has been shaped by the main historical circumstances of the European continent, such as: the nineteenth century imperial dominance, the WWI, the Yugoslav interwar period of limited democratic prosperity, the WWII and the communist revolution, followed by the communist rule, the collapse of communism, the breakdown of Yugoslavia and the decade of wars, and, finally, the period of the last fifteen years characterized by political and economic turbulences. The nineteenth and early twentieth century European scholarship mostly viewed the Balkans and its Orthodoxy in colonial fashion as a historical primitive form of Western Christianity, suitable as a tool for the unity of Western Christians, whose proselytizing mission should progress over the Orthodox world toward the non-Christian Orient. The recent German scholarship on Serbian Church follows this fashion to some extent. The perspective of the Serbian Church on Europe confirms the European colonial approach to the Balkans. Similarly to third-world scholars, who by attending the first-world academe challenged the Western scholarly perspective toward their countries, a generation of Serbian theologians educated in the Western Europe at the beginning of the twentieth century, like Velimirović and Popović constructed ‘Europe’ from their national perspective, which opposes the picture of Europe dominant in the Western canonical formation. Since self-fashioning processes always develop by differentiation from an ‘other’, their construction of the European other also affected their representation of Orthodox identity. Velimirović, and especially Popović considered the Catholic and Protestant Christianity, deemed by western Europeans as progressive and superior

⁶¹ ‘Amfilohije: The Floods are Divine Warning for the Celebration of Conchita Wurst as Jesus and the Gay Parade’ *Portal Analitika*, May 18, 2014, (in Serbian).

<http://www.portalanalitika.me/drustvo/vijesti/146827-amfilohije-poplave-boja-opomena-zbog-slavljenja-konite-vurst-ka0-isusa-i-gej-parade-video> (accessed 14 July 2015).

⁶² Quoted from Bishop Artemije, *Defense of the Orthodox Confession of Faith from the Heresy of Prof. Dr Ignatije Midić the Bishop of Braničevo* (Beograd: Revnitelj, 2014), vol. 3.27, 169. (in Serbian).

in comparison with Orthodoxy, a departure from the true nature of Christianity. A new generation of Serbian theologians and churchmen educated in the seventies and eighties in Greece and Western Europe continued the work of constructing 'Europe' and 'Europeanness' in opposition to Orthodox identity. The western interventions in the Yugoslav wars during the nineties of the last century just deepened the sense of Europe and the West as hostile other. Whether western interventions in the Balkans took the form of cultural enlightenment, political and military liberation or economic prosperity, it is considered by most of the Serbian churchmen and laypeople now, that they are driven not by Christian altruistic, but by imperialistic motives.