

The Orthodox Church in the 21st Century

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Foreword to the Third Edition

The book that is before you is of great value for many a reason, but we will emphasize just two: the first is the theme it is dealing with, and the second is the uniqueness of the person whose pen served as the medium for the outpour of those very themes.

Today's role of the Orthodox Church has for the past two or three decades been an important point of discussion in the societies not only of such countries where the Orthodox form the dominant religious community, but also elsewhere. Likewise, the role of the Serbian Orthodox Church has also been a frequent subject matter in many contexts both in Serbia and in the neighboring regions where she has many of her faithful and many religious objects. Both the European and the world public were given opportunity to familiarize with individual views on the same theme, but positions on the subject matter that had their source from within the Church were rare; and it is precisely an *ad intra* assessment that is always more than welcome if current problems are to be solved and not only thematized. Publication of an English language edition of this book will make it possible for the intellectual circles worldwide to become acquainted with an analysis of current issues that is coming from within the Orthodox Church.

The late Fr. Radovan Bigović of blessed memory was an accomplished theologian well known far beyond the borders of his Church and his country. His theological thought on issues regarding the relationship between the Church and the society has in many ways contributed towards the development

of inter-religious dialogue both in Serbia and on the international level. However, this book does not provide definite answers to the above mentioned issues. It offers a basis for further dialogue within the Orthodox world and the Christian Oecumene, serving as an excellent starting point for an inter-religious, intercultural and interethnic dialogue, and, last but not least, as a basis for a further development of the important dialogue between the Church and the society. Fr. Radovan Bigović witnessed the great importance of dialogue with his very life by organizing and participating in various gatherings which he believed beneficial for the common good. The following citation articulates his position on this matter: “Dialogue is not only a requirement for better relations between people and nations, a requirement for a higher quality and more rational living. Dialogue is life itself. The fullness, the entirety, the joy, the greatness, and the beauty of life are in dialogue.”¹

Vukašin Milićević
Jelena Jablanov Maksimović

¹ Bigović, Radovan: *Crkva i društvo*, Beograd 2000, p. 30.

THE CHURCH AND POSTMODERNISM

At the close of the second and the beginning of the third millennium the Church is being confronted with a completely new world, and, as genetics would have it, perhaps even with a transformation of human nature. According to *The Macmillan Atlas of the Future* and its most learned contributors representing different areas of research, it is predicted that:

a) by the year 2010 a whole series of artificial human organs will be created: heart, fingers, ears, hands, pancreas, etc.; cloning technology will be able to produce human blood cells and nerves;

b) by 2030 there will be artificial brain cells, lungs, reproductive organs, kidneys, liver; medical drugs will help prevent memory loss;

c) by 2050 artificial eyes and peripheral nerves will be created, as well as whole sections of the brain which would be replaceable;

d) by 2030 it is predicted that it will be possible to connect the human brain to a computer, and from 2035 computers will be able to replace large segments of the brain; some predictions say that computers will have their own personality by 2040; computers will independently open, create, and send electronic mail; they will be able to understand and write all types of texts, and communicate with each other using human speech; by 2015 computers will be capable of thinking analogically, just as human beings do, and they will have feelings similar to those of the humans.

e) by 2035 artificial human brains will be available; it is

predicted that six billion people will be put under biometrical supervision by year 2013.

Christian societies and Christian nations have all but disappeared. The Church no longer standardizes public and social life. Christians are now a minority in those regions where, until only recently, they used to form a clear majority. The Church is not entering the third millennium in triumph, but with a consciousness that she is being stalked by great new temptations. The Gospel gives us no motive to conclude that the future of both the world and the Church will become any brighter, more just, or more Churchlike – on the contrary.

It would be an intricate effort to judge and evaluate preceding Christian epochs from the standpoint of present-day values. However, it would not be difficult to understand Church history to this day as “the tragedy of sin and the mystery of salvation” (G. Florovsky), as a history of great successes and great accomplishments on all levels, but also of great downfalls. It is a history of the struggle for and against Christ. Church history saw its beginning through the authority to serve others on a voluntary basis (the authority of the ministry). As time went on, the authority of the ministry had more or less gone through a transformation turning into the authority to rule over others, which became the greatest abomination to the world, finally causing the Church to lose its social influence. Fortunately, there have been, and there still are to this very day, such individuals within the Church who have managed to resist this perni-

cious temptation thus continuing to reveal Christ to the world by way of their own personalities.

The new epoch the Church is now facing some call the *postmodern* age, others call it post-Christian, while some others see it as being post-historical and post-political. This new epoch is a mortuary of great ideas and ideologies from the past two centuries. Great social utopias, which have until recently attracted great masses of people, are now being extinguished. Man seems to be embracing isolation turning into a self-sealed monad, a tough competitor, and a cruel professional. The Post-modern denotes a crisis (perhaps even the end) of all the myths and divinities as created by the Modern, these being: reason, science, progress, democracy, nation, human rights. Men are no longer prone to acknowledge theoretical or abstract thought. They prefer to play with superficial notions. The picture is more important than the text, the sound is more important than the music.

Postmodernism has its own special values, which are supposed to be accompanied by the inner feeling of leisureliness, excitement, and contentment. These values are: comfort, humor, youth, cosmopolitanism, and mobility. Man no longer feels that glory, dignity, and exaltation are of any significance to him. It is important to be seen as being likable, powerful, fascinating, seductive, always emphasizing one's own significance. It is also important to have an aversion towards war and violence, towards warrior ideas and nationalism. But this aversion is more an expression of hedonism rather than being an expression of a sincere concil-

iatory attitude towards others.

The Postmodern is being accompanied with an imperative for constant change and constant novelty. It is rapidly breaking all ties with the past or simply giving it an archeological significance. The Postmodern presumes the full personal independence of each human individual, and as J. Jukic would say “a privatization of human decisions”. The process of a full conversion to hedonism has been completed. In his book *The Defeat of the Mind*, French philosopher Alain Finkielkraut says that a democratic man sees his own self as an independent being, as a social atom; being simultaneously isolated from his ancestors, his contemporaries, and descendents, he, above all, desires to satisfy his private needs, and to be equal with other men. The individual is above the society and the community. The cult of a “multicultural” and a “multi-religious” loner is being formed, where both the multicultural and the multi-religious characteristics denote a “richly garnished dish”. An intellectual of the Postmodern shows obedience towards the desire for power as expressed through show business, fashion, and advertising. Initially, individualism used to symbolize a demand for equality among the human beings, and, in its own way, a statement of resistance to all hierarchical inequality. Individualism and individual freedom are the greatest values of the Postmodern. There is nothing which surmounts the freedom of the individual, or limits him in any way. Freedom towers above solidarity and duty. Man invests in himself, his looks, attractiveness, health, body,

beauty, independence, and individual freedom. He is narcissistic, and he has almost transformed his own self into a religion. Food, money, and fame – the three temptations always used by the devil to lure man – paralyze in him all love towards Truth, goodness, and justice.

Hyper-individualism cannot stand communion or the spirit of communion. It necessarily requires *pluralism* on all levels. Postmodern pluralism does not only represent a great multitude of people that have different skin color, religion, language, customs, behavior, or culture; it represents, above all, a variable state of mind (consciousness) which is capable, without any difficulty, to accept differing ideas, opposing values, and contrasting objectives. This state of mind is mostly being sponsored and promulgated by the media. In each and every corner of this planet the media makes present the entire world in its full diversity, thus shattering religiously and nationally homogenous regions and worlds on a global scale.

Apart from individualism and pluralism, the third essential characteristic of the Postmodern is secularization. In spite of being an ambiguous concept, it essentially denotes “a decline of the social significance of religion” (Wilson, Mates). Upon excluding the Islamic world, we might say that faith and religion still have some individual meaning and significance, but that they have no influence as far as the formation of social or national identity is concerned. The Postmodern is not anti-religious, but it is anti-ecclesial to a great extent, because the Church is an explicitly social phe-

nomenon. It even creates and nourishes its own religion which lies in contradiction to classical forms of religiousness. In its character, religion of the Postmodern is syncretistic, esoteric, and occult. It is a *civil* religion or the *new age religion*. As a counterpart to pluralistic thought and freedom of choice, we have, on the religious plan, religious syncretism, “religion without affiliation”, religion without any articulated and established dogmas, canons, and institutions of its own. Man is free to choose anything that personally suits him from any religion, but he accepts no religion in its entirety, including Christianity. Essentially, he creates his own religion. Civil religion – “religion without God” is essentially a system of beliefs and rituals, and a means by which contemporary societies sacralize their own mundane complexities, and support common devotion to the social order of the civil society.

Contemporary societies function independently in relation to Church authorities, religious dogmas, and canons. The world is not permitting the existence of God as a subject of history. The Church has no influence on human behavior or on human social life. Contemporary man does believe in some god, he believes “in something”. This can even be the Christian God, but the contemporary man refuses to accept Church institutions, or to allow the Christian God to interfere in the domain of his social and political life. He rejects Church institutions in favor of the principle of individual freedom and independence, or because he regards them as being excessively archaic and bureaucratized. Men have

taken the path of freedom without frontiers. Individual piety has taken the place of Church experience. Christianity has become “a seasonal faith”. It has been mainly reduced to four rituals: baptism, matrimony, breaking of the Slava cake¹, and the funeral service. There is some movement and dynamics within the Church, which is being characterized as a revitalization of faith, but there is no movement and dynamics of the Church herself. It is sometimes possible to gain the impression that her life depends on the failures and inadequacies of others, and on folklore and national traditions which have become permeated with religion.

Western societies have long ago put a market value on faith, or had it reduced to individual pleasure. Post-communist societies of the Christian East have put religion in service of “the secular religion of nationalism”. Today in the West, *being Christian* means being a decent and a law-abiding, honest individual who regularly pays his taxes and who is reasonably mindful of philanthropy. On being asked if he prayed, one of the most significant protestant theologians, Paul Tillich, answered: “No, I meditate”! As far as Orthodox Christians are concerned, being Orthodox often means being an ethnic Serb, Russian, Bulgarian, or Romanian. It is as if Christians have become tired of being Christian. Western Christians accept the world of individualism, pluralism, liberalism, and secularism (together with their accompanying values) as being their world. The Orthodox

¹Part of the Serbian Orthodox tradition (*translator's note*)

Church puts up with the values and the objectives of the Postmodern, but does not accept them in their totality as yet. Folkloristic Christianity has weakened the prophetic role of faith. There are plenty of Church parades and rituals on TV, but there is very little faith. Faith is being accepted in words, but not in deeds. It is as if Christians have sterilized the Gospel; there is essentially no difference between the everyday life of a Christian and the life of an agnostic or a non-Christian.

Today's Orthodox Church is being pressed between two cultures: *the culture of tradition* and *the culture of the (Post)modern*. They represent both her challenge and her temptation. The entire culture of tradition draws water from the past, and this also applies to religion. Men of tradition are turned to the past and to the memory of the past. They are prone to an idealization and even a sacralization of past generations and epochs, and their methods of life. As far as they are concerned everything from the past is good and everything in the present is bad. This type of mind and mentality gives precedence to order, social order, and an eternal repetition of the same. They are always inclined to impose and deify those methods of life that have already gone by. Since religion has become closely tied to tradition, many, including a great number of Christians, see the Church today as the guardian of the national tradition and ideology. Contrary to her, the culture of the (Post)modern appears as a constant change, a constant novelty, and a total brake with the past. Protagonists of the culture of the (Post)modern un-

ceasingly demand of the Church to keep bringing its entire structure up to date. This mainly applies to her institutions and organizations. Such demands often stem from within the Church also.

Traditionalists see the Church exclusively as “the memory of the past”, while others see her as “the memory of the future”. While some identify her with history, others strive to banish her from history. As far as the Church is concerned, both positions are equally dangerous to her. Christians are in the world, but not of the world. The Church of Christ is both “the memory of the future”, but also “the memory of the past”, “the memory of that which has occurred for our sake”. Christians cannot bring back the Christian past, “the good old times”, but they need to respect them; Christians need to encompass the past, the present and the future, both through and inside their own persons. They cannot change and reform the world, but they can change and reform themselves. The change of one’s own person is simultaneously the change of the surrounding world. Changes in the external structures of the world do not necessarily cause personal and real changes for the better.

The Postmodern is employing everything at its disposal to induce Christianity into becoming a natural religion, into becoming a Christianity without Christ, into becoming a system of prohibitions and sanctions; and, what is most tragic – to induce it into a non-acceptance of others. Christians are expected to resist this temptation. It is not up to them to rectify forms and institutions of contemporary so-

cieties; they should be constructing “the new society” which is the Church; they should be living out the permanent Christian antinomy of *being in the world, but not being of the world*. It is up to them to reveal Christ to the world, the true God and the true man, through their method of life, and to be weary of religious individualism and faith without good deeds.

The power of love and ministry is the power of Christ. Accepting the other, and habituating to the other to the point of identification with him/her, is the very essence of the Christian philosophy of life. If the power of ministry should triumph over the power of ruling others (to which the Church showed partiality, and especially so during some periods of her history), then the world would be right to hope for a better and a brighter future. Christian faith needs to be lived as *the freedom* in the Holy Spirit. Biblical-Patristic personalism on all levels, together with the Church spirit of communion and community, present the only hope for the postmodern world which is finding itself in death agony. Modern and postmodern myths see “systems”, “ideas”, and “programs” everywhere, but the Gospel of Christ sees living persons everywhere. The Church of Christ is not faced with a choice between the traditional and the postmodern, but with the eternal choice between good and evil, between Truth and falsehood, between Christ and the false gods of this world. Unless she desires to betray her own self, she needs to reject *the Manichean* and *the magic-idolatrous* association with the world, since they are both equally dan-

gerous to her. The Church is required to live in the world, which is now the world of the Postmodern, but it is called to transcend that world at the same time.

Orthodoxy is no longer only “eastern”. Today it is oecumenical, universal – not only in the geographical sense of the word, but also essentially and content-wise. This is why it needs to hold back the psychology of the tribe and genus which has been imposed on it by centuries of its enslavement, while working on the spirit of catholicity, on the development and maintenance of the universal and the pan-human mind; it needs to cultivate care, emotion, and love. All this has to be done in history or, as some might prefer to say, in post-history, or in the age of the Postmodern.

FAITH AND POSTMODERNISM

Today, many words and notions are being revalued, many losing their original sense. This is also happening to the notion of faith. It is being reduced to a simple human belief.

In the “post-Christian epoch”, for the “postmodern man”, and as far as the “well-intentioned” are concerned, faith has become a set of good notions; for those who are “moral”, it represents a set of moral regulations; for the “pious”, it is a set of worshiping rituals; “patriots” see it as a part of their national tradition; “modernists” see it as a symbol of conservatism; as far as the “scientists” are concerned, faith is a symbol of darkness and ignorance; “merchants” see it as a spiritual profit; for those who are “sorrowful” it is consolation. Believing, having faith, means accepting certain notions, positions, truths and values without investigation, without seeking proof or authentication. Faith is often understood as a “persuasion” or a “conviction”. Being faithful means being a convinced adherent to a teaching, a doctrine, or an ideology.

Having faith means accepting a teaching, a cosmology without logical and empirical proof. For some, believing in God means believing in God as an idol, a dispenser of blessings, and a guardian of their power or property. For the “servile” and the pseudo intellectuals, believing means accepting but not understanding.

“Believe and do not investigate”(!) is a motto of unknown origin. Some see in it a “quintessence of metaphysics” (Christos Yannaras). In this case, faith is blind

requiring absolute respect of authority. Such faith is the ideological foundation for any form of totalitarianism: ideological, political, religious.

“Without strife there is no worship” (a popular saying). People often believe in and search for God in times of fear, war, natural disasters, suffering, pain, or need. When such times go by, they return to a life that has no relevance to God. They believe when they are in need of something, and when this need is no longer there they proceed with their lives as if there were no God. There are those who do not believe in God, but who say that they are religious. They like to visit the church informally and spontaneously – drop in when there is no one inside. This “comforts” them. It is then that they find “peace” and “tranquility”. Faith is some sort of a pleasurable, recreational indulgence in things that are “holy” and “sublime”. In a civilization where the basic meaning of life is seen in an ever-increasing production and consumption of goods, faith is necessary and useful as far as the national interests, the family, and the society are concerned. It makes people good and honest. If you are “good” God rewards you, if you are “bad” He punishes you. This is how all human (in)justice is being solved. Faith is important in the education of children and the young generations. It is expected of her to “train” them to become submissive and obedient. Faith is a therapy; it is a source of help and consolation, a guarantee of individual happiness and pleasure. For some it represents just a “carnation on a lapel”. They believe in that which is paid the most. Faith is interpreted

by some as a “tradition” and a “nice custom” (we are obligating ourselves to accept something from the past and make it our style of present-day living).

What faith is not? Faith is not intellectual knowledge, neither is it a periodically experienced religious feeling that is there one minute only to disappear in the next. Abstract ideas are not the subject of faith, but some very concrete trusted persons. Faith is not some sort of an opinion, a moral regulation, a conviction founded upon relentless meditation. Faith is not mechanical repetition, recitation of something learned by heart, neither is it an acceptance of a theory on things we really know nothing about. Post-modern man understands faith as a former style of existence, as something belonging to the past. Faith is conservatism, something which is opposite to the modern. We are obligating ourselves today to accept something that has already become “yesterday”. Faith is not a scientific truth, a social custom, a national tradition. Faith is not an impression or a feeling, optimism regarding life, or a fulfillment of the desire for certainty. However, it is something of all this.

What is faith? Faith is confidence, a personal relationship.

Faith is a gift of God. Faith is life, an I-You relationship. Faith is touching Christ, an encounter with Christ, confidence in Christ.

Believing means “acquiring the Holy Spirit” (St. Seraphim of Sarov). Faith is not a private search for truth. It is an acceptance of truth.

Faith is accepting Christ's view of ourselves, of other people, of things around us, of humanity, of history, of universe, of God Himself.

Faith is a light that permeates and illuminates life.

Faith is experience, relationship, communication. It can be direct and indirect; gradual. Faith is putting trust in the Gospel (St. Nikolaj) and in Christ's joyous and salvific news.

Believing means trusting God, trusting the testimony of our forefathers, prophets, apostles, saints.

For a Christian the essential question is not "do you believe in God", but "do you trust God who has revealed Himself in time and in space, of whom the Church is telling you about and testifying about.

Faith is not I and my problems and needs. Faith is ecstatic.

Believing means being there for others. He who believes belongs not to himself, but to the one he believes in.

True faith is free because it liberates man from his own self, from all things and objects.

Faith is an "offering", it is a giving. He who believes most, gives the most.

Faith is love. It asks for nothing. If it is given only to achieve gain, then nothing is to be gained and everything is to be lost. If everything is being given without expecting anything in return, then everything is being gained.

Just as love, faith is forgetting oneself, renouncing one's self, an "exodus" from oneself.

Faith is hope, “the evidence of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1).

Faith is a quality of human beings only.

Faith is yearning for, longing for, and a hope-filled expectation of something being desired (A. Schmemmann).

In a “world without the other” faith is a permanent “presence in absentia” of the Other who is made precious and sensible exclusively through life.

Faith is touching the other.

Contemporary man is turning himself into religion; he absolutizes himself and his own. He builds identity upon his own self. Believing means renouncing oneself and one’s own (one’s self, one’s nation, one’s culture, one’s ideology, one’s political party); it means cohabiting with not-I, with God.

People often utilize God and others around them. Faith makes them serve both God and their neighbors.

When people say today that they believe in one God, by that they usually understand believing in all gods. Believing in one biblical God, the Holy Trinity, means believing in the only God excluding all others. This is why faith in Christ is often characterized as a “narrow-minded fanaticism”, while superstition is seen as “broadminded outlook” on the world.

Christian faith presupposes unity, synthesis, balance between the other-worldly and the worldly, between God and man, soul and body, faith and reason. Faith in the incarnated God Logos is a faith in the creative force of reason. Believing but acting unreasonably is contrary to the very nature of

God (Benedict XVI).

The postmodern “club of the selfish” (the arrogant, the greedy, the egotistic) also turns God into a “market product” which is being offered and modulated according to clients’ needs. The “hungry surrounded by abundance” measure Church faith by evaluating what it can do for man (nation, political party, state, the world), and not for what it is. For Christian faith *to be* is more important than *to have*.

Today people often transform the Church into religion; religion then becomes culture, then politics, and then it gains market value. I purchase, therefore I am! Everything is being bought, including “religious goods” in the plentiful supermarket of pseudo-spirituality. This is why they always want something of God, they do business with Him. Instead of desiring to do the will of God, they want Him to do their own will and to realize their own plans. In a time of “global” anguish and poverty, believing means living for others, loving others and sharing everything with them.

Faith is man’s dialogue with God, nature, and other men.

Faith is a method of life, and not one of many life segments.

THE CHURCH, POLITICS, DEMOCRACY (The principles of the Orthodox philosophy of politics)

Orthodox Theology has never shown much interest for political theory despite the fact that the Orthodox Church has exercised, up until recent times, a dominant influence on East-Christian nations and their public and social life. This is why there is no well-founded and systematically developed theology of politics, or an Orthodox political philosophy, in existence today.²

²For a wider study of Orthodox political philosophy see: . @25;5@, *Политичка идеологија Византијског царства*, Београд 1988 (E. Arveler, *The Political Ideology of the Byzantine Empire*); Д. Богдановић, *Политичка идеологија средњовековне Србије, Градац*, 110, 1993, 85-95; Из политичке идеологије светих отаца, Прилог познавању византијске политичке мисли, *Православна мисао* 7/1, Београд 1964, 10-19 (D. Bogdanovic, *Political Ideology of Medieval Serbia; From the Political Ideology of the Holy Fathers, Contribution Towards Cognition of Byzantine Political Thought*); С. Шаркић, *Правне и политичке идеје у Источном римском царству*, Београд, 1984 (S. Sarkic, *Legal and Political Ideas in the East Roman Empire*); М. Петровић, Положај и права византијског цара у Цркви, *Градац*, 110, 1993, 78-84 (M. Petrovic, *Position and Rights of the Byzantine Emperor within the Church*); К. Ђурић, *Црква и држава*, Београд 1923 (K. Djuric, *The Church and the State*); Н. Милаш, *Правила Православне Цркве I*, Нови Сад 1895; (N. Milas, *Orthodox Church Rules I*); Г. Л. Куратов, Политическая теория в ранней Византии, *Зборник Култура Византии I*, Москва 1984, 98-119; З. В. Удальцова, *Идейно-политическая борьба в ранней Византии*, Москва 1974; А. Шмеман, Судба, Византийской теократии, *Пра-*

Politics has become a sort of a metaphysic to contemporary man. All of us who presently live in this region of Europe are experiencing a general politicization of life with emphasized tendencies towards “Church politicization”. This problem leaves Orthodox theologians, as well as the entire Church, facing great dilemmas and much confusion. Should the phenomenon of politics be ignored or taken into serious consideration? At this point it should be mentioned that it is a fact that neither scholars of political science, nor for that matter the jurists, sociologists, or economists have up until now taken any serious consideration of the Orthodox social, socio-political, and economic thought and practice. As if there was nothing important or essential to be found here which might relate to the contemporary man.

Observed on the sociological plane, the Orthodox Church is a distinct social, cultural, and political phenomenon. The Church is a community and a communion (“*а вoславня Мысль V*, Париж 1947; *О неопапизме, Церковний весник 5*, Париж 1950; Е. Липшиц, *Юриодеческие школы и развитие правовой науки*, *Зборник Култура Византии I*, Москва 1984, 358-370; С. Троицки, *Црквенополитичка идеологија светосавске Крмчије, Глас САН, ССХII*, Београд 1953 (S. Troitsky, *Ecclesial-Political Ideology of the Krmchia of Saint Sava*); *Theocratie ou Cesaropapisme, Contacts*, 1958, 22, 55-59, 23, 78-83; Panayotis Nellas, *Orthodoxie et Politique, Messenger de l'exarchat du Patriarche Russe en Europe occidentale* 59-60, Paris 1972, 34-51; A. N. Nissiotis, *Les Eglises d'Europe et le monde, Contracts* 34, 1961, 121-131; J. Meyendorf, *Justinian, the Empire and the Church, DDP* 22, 1968, 43-60; М. Δ. Θεοκλητος, *Ορθοδοξια και Πολιτικη, Θεσσαλονικη* 1981.

novel society”) being active both in time and space, and her mission cannot but have political implications. The only question is what kind of political implications? Church non-interference in politics is also a politics of its own kind. This is why it seems quite justifiable to say that Orthodox theologians, and not only they, interpret political processes through the prism of the Orthodox philosophy of life.

Throughout her history the Church has existed in societies and states with diverse social and political systems. This is the way it is now, and it shall most probably be so in future. Regardless of the state and the political or social system within a state or a society, the Church always seeks to establish her *modus vivendi*. There is no state model, or a model of any political system, which the Orthodox Church might identify with or legitimize. In the Christian East there persists a self-awareness that the Church and the state are two different and diametrically opposed realities; between them there exists a state of fundamental tension and permanent contradiction, along with the indispensable state of mutual conditioning and interdependence. The Church and the state, regardless which or what kind of a state is taken into consideration, are two distinct “cities” having two distinct orders and modes of existence. The Church is “a city that is set on a hill” (Matt. 5:14). She should be the model to all earthly cities (states, societies). Christians are subjects of a certain state, but at the same time citizens of the “heavenly Jerusalem”.

Christ established the Church as a living Theandric or-

ganism, and not as a state. It was his will that the entire world should become “a cosmic Liturgy”, and not a planetary state. It is true that Christ did not abolish the state, but He certainly “demystified” it. He removed from it all essential and absolute values thus giving it (bearing in mind the weakness of human nature) a conditional and a relative value, a functional meaning, and a functional significance. It is the Church which is essential to every Christian; as to what state he is living in – this is essentially irrelevant as far as he is concerned. This does not mean that it is of no importance to Christians where they live, i.e. what type of state they live in; this is only to say that the type of state they live in determines neither their life’s essence, nor the meaning of their existence.

In relation to the world the Church has a “program” which is applicable to all ages, and this “program” is the Gospel of Christ. However, this “program” can only serve as a foundation for the endeavor of Church building, and not for the construction of a state. If we should envisage that any single state might at some point in time turn Gospel into everyday life, i.e. realize it in practice, then that state would immediately cease to exist. It would have transformed becoming the Church; it would have abolished its own self becoming the best and the most ideal order in the world.

There is a qualitative distinction between the Church and the state which is equivalent to the distinction between the Old and the New Testament, “the old” and “the new” Adam, or “the old” and “the new” man. Despite all temptations and

this self-awareness, Orthodox Christians did not succumb to moral idealism and socio-historical utopia. Being above all aware of the state of human nature, they maintained the positions of Christian realism and those of the above mentioned antinomy: *the Church and the state as two distinct world orders and social structures*. At a certain point in time some monastic circles in the East held a perception that the Church should signify the end of the state, stubbornly insisting that monasteries should be “extraterritorial”, but the idea of having the Church without having the state never prevailed. Owing to a set of numerous circumstances, the Christian West for many centuries endeavored to establish “a Christian state”, i.e. the Church without the state, the main person behind this idea being St. Augustine. This attempt of transforming the state into the Church ended tragically by a transformation of the Church into a state, which became the greatest Christian abomination to the world. The present day symbol of this medieval Christian state is the state of Vatican. The Orthodox East has never supported the idea of a theocratic and a clerical state, although there were some individuals who demonstrated their partiality to this idea.

Being conscious that the Church and the state were two distinct realities, Orthodox Christians also developed a consciousness that there were two types of political principles in coexistence, a “heavenly” (Phil. 3:20) and a mundane (earthly) type, together with a consciousness of a coexistence of two types of authority – a spiritual and a worldly

one. Each has its own sphere of activity and neither of them should interfere in the other's "internal affairs". The principle of autonomy of two political principles, i.e. "separation" of the Church from the state, is in effect since the apostolic times. This standard was established and legalized both by the Church canons and by state legislation. "In any case, separation of the Empire from the state was a fact established by Byzantine law, respected by both sides, although there were attempts on both sides to meddle in each other's affairs... But all these attempts were the work of individuals, and not of institutions",³ says E. Arveler when attempting to reconstruct the political ideology of Byzantium which served as the model for the Balkan states.

For many centuries it was an apolitical (and not only political) ideal among the Orthodox to establish "harmony" or "symphony" between the two distinct political principles and the two authorities: authority of the priesthood (*sacerdotium*), and the authority of the Empire (*imperium*). Just as there is a state of interdependence between the soul and the body, there is also interdependence between the Church and the state. Although they bear distinct sets of values, there should be a state of "symphony", cooperation, and interdependence among them. Thus, those that carried state functions were expected to respect Church canons, and members of the Church were expected to respect state laws. They are always in a position to refer to the other, being even mutually dependent, i.e. interde-

³ E. Арвелер, *Политичка идеологија Византијског царства*, 140 (E. Arveler, *The Political Ideology of the Byzantine Empire*).

pendent. Limits of autonomy and cooperation are precisely defined by the *nomocanons*. In any case, Orthodox nations based their social order on several principles, two being the most important: the principle of *state order* (which was founded on the Roman-Byzantine law, and, to some extent, on the legal theory of the Beirut School), and the principle of Church *oikonomia*. These two principles were always interpreted as being complementary and interdependent. The idea of “symphony” was never abandoned even when it did not work in practice, which was most often the case.

Up until the 19th century, Christian East held that the “mystical foundation of authority” (J. Derrida) of the Church and worldly authorities, the Church and state political principles, was to be found in God. He is the foundation and the source of all authority; He is the only owner and ruler (*Pantocrator*) of everything in existence. Man is only the steward (*oikonomos*) of God’s property and he is “bound to manage it *bona fide*, i.e. by following owner’s instructions”.⁴ Earthly authority is conditioned and limited by divine authority. It is legitimate if it is being exercised in harmony with the will of God. Moral and customary laws, Church canons, and state legal norms were founded upon divine law and justified by it. The Christian East and the Christian West did not have essentially different positions regarding these metaphysical foundations of politics. However, the differences were evident in regard to the very notion of the Church and the state, and their mutual relationship.

⁴Д. Богдановић, *Политичка философија средњовековне Србије*, 93 (D. Bogdanovic, *Political Philosophy of Medieval Serbia*).

It remains an open question to what extent did these foundations of politics and law correspond to Orthodox theology, and to what extent did they correspond to Jewish theocracy, to Roman legal and political philosophy, and to oriental monarchies and theocracies. God, as the foundation of all politics and the source of authority, is not the controversial principle. The point of controversy is – which God, and what kind of a God. The impression is that both the state and the Church politics (their “official” politics), as well as state institutions and those of the Church, were for many centuries founded on the notion of a classical religious monism and monotheism, on the notion of the Old Testament Jehovah, and it is on these foundations that the rigid monarchic-hierarchic organization of the state and the society, and that of the Church itself, was deduced from and theoretically justified. Authority comes from “above”, and it is being transmitted in a downward direction. Its maximum is at the very top (in the hands of one person), and its minimum at the bottom of the pyramid. There is the one who rules and administers (or there are those who rule and administer), and there are those who are being ruled and administered. All this has led to a division of the society into social classes which suited the feudal system well. This hierarchic and monarchic structure, as well as the notion of authority and social order, was reflected in all levels of the society be it the state, the Church, the family, or any other social institution.

In Byzantium, as well as in all other Balkan medieval states, under the influence of Orthodox theology and monasticism, there emerged a particular idea regarding the very

notion of authority. Doctrinally speaking, authority was understood as a *ministry*, as a means of doing service to others, and not as a means of exercising superiority over others. Unfortunately, both in the case of the state and the “official” Church, it was the latter that dominated everyday practice. This state of affairs was resented both by ordinary people and, especially so, by members of the monastic order who became a sort of an “opposition” to the official state and Church authority. If monastic constitutions, the *typikons*, and monastic institutions are carefully analyzed, an inevitable conclusion would be arrived at: that these were much more suited to the very nature of the Orthodox Church than the official Church institutions and Church legislature. Their foundations were based upon Orthodox Triadology, while official Church institutions and Church legislature rested upon foundations comprised of classical religious monism and monotheism. This monistic political principle, which to this date has not been overcome, served as a host for the ideological and metaphysical foundations of European totalitarianism and authoritarianism.

In the Christian East, as in the West, there has been despotism and totalitarianism, but it does seem that an objective comparative analysis would demonstrate that the peoples and the societies of the medieval Orthodox East enjoyed more freedom, and considerably so; they seem to have been more nuanced, more “liberal”, more dynamic, and more versatile. This is supported by the fact that there have never been any social revolutions or bloody wars between the Church and the state. Throughout more or less their entire history, Orthodox Chris-

tians enjoyed, both theoretically and practically, political pluralism; there existed two authorities which definitely exerted some limitations upon each other.

Apart from the principle of separation between the Church and the state, and aspirations to achieve “symphony” in their mutual relationship, the East saw in its midst the formation of several other vital and social ideals which were to have long-reaching political consequences. These ideals were: love, repentance, self-limitation, forgiveness, peace, accord, sanctity, martyrdom, obedience, the providential role of each nation (people) in history (the idea of “the people of God”), and catholicity.

For East Christian peoples *sanctity* is the most significant and the most essential objective in life. All policy or politics, be they spiritual or worldly, should strive towards the category of sanctity. A morally spotless life, together with a state of constant repentance for all misdeeds and actions that were contrary to divine will, was demanded from all in the position of authority. Since sanctity was the essential objective in life, East Europe saw the notions of the “holy ruler”, the “holy soldier”, the “holy people”, and even the “holy land” take shape. It was required and expected from the emperor, from the patriarch, and from each and every Christian that they should reflect God through their method of life, which should be the testimony of their faith. *Martyrdom* implied active testimony (witness) of faith, regardless of life’s circumstances. A true witness (martyr) was a person who, when faced with the dilemma to suffer vio-

lence or to exert violence, choose to suffer. The only violence which was tolerated, but not justified, was violence performed in self-defense. Thus, the Orthodox ideal of martyrdom is in no way related to any form of masochism or necrophilia, as some would have it.

Obedience was not simply an ethical category, since it also had political implications. Authority had to be obeyed and respected simply because authority served, and it was required to serve, God, thereby emulating divine order on earth. Obedience to the authorities did have its limits. Authority was obeyed and respected only as long as it was respecting divine law. It might be interesting to mention that Orthodox Christians never advocated violent destruction of authority. However, history has shown that there were countless examples of this practice, just as the category of obedience often succumbed to its own pathology and turned into submissiveness; authority of love and voluntary ministry (*theodoulia*) often turned into an authority of compulsion, superiority, and enslavement.

Orthodox anthropology has always emphasized that every nation, as well as each individual, had its special, God given, gifts and abilities (various talents), and, stemming from this, a special role (ministry) in history which it was supposed to realize and articulate. Out of this there emerged an important political idea of a “providential people”, or the idea of a “people of God”. Orthodox idea of a “providential people” is essentially different from the idea of the “chosen people”. Idea of a “providential people” presumes both

equality amongst all peoples (nations), and a special role each of them should play in history. Each people (nation) has the right and the duty, on one hand, to articulate its own gifts and develop them to their maximum, and, on the other, to like, respect, and assist other peoples (nations), and to cooperate with them. This is why Orthodox peoples (nations) have always resolutely resisted all attempts of world and life unification, as well as any efforts which might lead to a suffocation of any particular people's sense of national self-consciousness. Contrasting this, the idea of the "chosen people" has led in the direction of supremacy and domination (hegemony) of one people (nation) over all others.

Catholicity as part of the very nature of the Orthodox Church, together with the institution of Church synods, exercised great influence over the social and the political life of East Christian nations. The Institution of Church synods became the model for clergy-lay assemblies and state assemblies of medieval Serbia, and, perhaps in some way, the formal prototype of contemporary state assemblies and parliaments. The idea of catholicity encouraged each individual and the entire nation to establish its individual mind, love, care, feeling, and responsibility, all on a catholic (universal) basis. Both the individual and the nation as a whole are obligated to "externalize", to become accustomed to "the other" and to cooperate with "the other". Orthodox anthropology and political philosophy are open and communicative.

Orthodox catholicity served as the foundation for the

idea of the *pan-human* and *pan-humanhood*, which emerged during the second half of 19th and the first half of the 20th century in Russia and the Balkans, being represented by Dostoyevsky, and a number of Russian religious philosophers. The most prominent representatives of this idea among the Serbs were Bishop Nikolaj Velimirovic, Dimitrije Martinovic, Pavle Jevtic, and Milos Djuric. Orthodox thinkers opposed European nihilism and Nietzsche's idea of the superhuman by employing biblical and Orthodox humanism and universalism.

The insistence of Orthodox theologians on the principle of catholicity motivated many scholars to accuse them of collectivism and egalitarianism. However, even the shallow knowledge of Orthodox life philosophy, which is heterogeneous, would unequivocally reveal that the Orthodox were fervently hostile to any form of collectivism, individualism, and egalitarianism. Individualism, collectivism, and egalitarianism emerged in the Christian West, and not in the East.

In the Christian East, Church and state principles of politics were two distinct politics although they did condition and permeate one another well into the 19th century. It is impossible to make an absolute distinction between them up until that time, but they are certainly distinguishable. At the beginning of the 19th century there occurred a "Copernican turn" in the political philosophy of the traditionally Orthodox peoples. There began a universal process of "Europeanization" of the Christian East. The Church and the state had found themselves running on opposite railway tracks.

The ideal of the secular and the “lay” state was emerging. Under the influence of western political ideas, ideas of national and state sovereignty were being formed which negated any role of the divine both in politics and in history. The state and the nation had become new deities. Church self-consciousness was weakening at an incomprehensible pace. The secularization process had taken hold of the family, the school, culture, and all social and state institutions. All this was inevitably projected on the Orthodox Church. Autochthonous Orthodox culture and principles of politics were becoming weaker day by day, keeping, at best, an archeological significance. The Orthodox have become a “minority” in those regions where they used to form a 100% “majority” for centuries. Orthodox states, societies, and cultures tumbled like towers of playing cards. The European West triumphed over the European East in all aspects, including politics. Western lifestyle and the western way of thinking also triumphed. Essential distinctions were being eradicated, leaving behind only formal and ideological differences which did not have an essential impact on real life. The East faithfully follows European processes of “modernization” and “democratization”, being unfortunately late for a whole century, but not entirely through its own fault. In this period in time there is no Orthodox political philosophy in East Europe. There exists only the western political theory and practice.

The State-Nation Ideal

Ever since the fall of Constantinople (1453) and the medieval Balkan states to the Turks (by the end of the 15th century), there persists in this region the ideal of identifying faith (the Church) with nation. Many factors influenced the development of this idea. First, it is a fact that throughout several centuries, Orthodox faith was seen as the essential content of national identity. Somehow it was simply presumed that an ethnic Greek, a Russian, a Bulgarian, a Romanian was Orthodox. It is possible that the notions of faith and nation were regarded as being identical because of the influence of the Islamic *millet* theory. Since this period in history saw the development of a serious “crisis” of Church identity, “autocephaly” of local Orthodox Churches also contributed to the fusion of the two notions (faith and nation). The fact that most Orthodox peoples did not have a state of their own during this particular time in history, and that the Church assumed the role of the state – patriarchs became “ethnarchs”, also influenced this symbiosis and amalgamation. These were nauseating times for the Orthodox Church and the Orthodox peoples. Both the faith and the nation were under a serious threat of extinction, which made their alliance and identification with one another psychologically understandable. This became the means of survival, being also the means of gaining national liberty and achieving restoration of the state.

This period of European history was marked by the

emergence of a new state model, the model of a *state-nation*, i.e. the idea of the national state. Since the French revolution, it is the nation which becomes the source and the foundation of all authority.⁵ In the Balkans this model *state-nation* and *faith-nation* was fashioned into the political ideal *one state-one nation*.

This ideal became the common aspiration: for the people, the Church, and the state. They all had their own reasons for this and their own objectives. Many Balkan nations achieved this ideal with great difficulty. The Serbs have not achieved it to this day⁶, although they have spilt a lot of their own blood

⁵ The principle of all sovereignty resides essentially in the nation. No body or individual may exercise any authority which does not proceed directly from the nation” (*Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*, 1789, Article 3). The same principle is confirmed by the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, 1948, Article 21/3, the only difference being that this declaration speaks of a *people* and not of a *nation*.

⁶ *Translator’s note*: The author wrote this text when Serbia and Montenegro comprised member states of “The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia”, which was formed in 1992 as the successor state to “The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia”. Since then, “The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia” evolved into “The State Union of Serbia and Montenegro” in 2003. In 2006 Montenegro seceded from the common state with Serbia, and their state union was thus dissolved. Consequently, Serbia became a fully sovereign state in 2006. However, a great number of Serbs still remain outside her present day (2007) borders which, due to the crisis in its southernmost province of Kosovo and Metohija, have not been definitely established and recognized by the international community

for the idea. Even though this ideal and this model might seem both rational and justified, it will prove, where Serbs are concerned, tragic by its consequences in relation to the wellbeing of the Serbian state, the Serbian people, and the Serbian Church. It was unachievable because of both the internal and the external factors. During periods of their bondage (to the Turks, the Venetians, and the Austrians – *translator's note*) a great number of Serbs converted to Islam and Roman Catholicism. Later on many have become atheists, agnostics, or members of other Christian denominations. By changing their faith, Serbs also changed their national identity. By a convergence of many circumstances, one people – the Serbs – became the source for the creation of new nations in this region.

Since the interests of the great powers and those of the Serbian people almost never matched, and bearing in mind that which has already been said above (internal discord and disintegrative processes within the Serbian nation), the political ideal *state–nation–Church* became an utopia. Judging by the consequences, it would not be hard to conclude that the Serbian nation has suffered permanent reduction. Today this can also be said of the Serbian state, the final deduction being that the future of both the state and the nation is extremely uncertain. The Serbian Church has lost a great deal of “her” territories, a large number of believers, and especially potential ones since it has become an unwritten rule that a member of the Serbian Church could only be a person declaring himself/herself a member of the Serbian nation. And, unfortunately, there is still that widespread opinion within the Church that he/she who is

not Orthodox cannot be considered a member of the Serbian nation. This is being justified by the “national interest”, but the fact is that this position has become an agent of destruction and reduction of the very nation which it is, supposedly, striving to protect.

The impression is that the last two centuries saw a lot of political realism and pragmatism lacking as far as the Serbian state policy (politics) was concerned. This can also be said for the Serbian Orthodox Church, and the Serbian people as a whole. It is now futile to start guessing what could have happened if only this or that had in the meantime occurred. However, it is certainly justifiable to pose the question whether the present situation with the Serbian state, the Serbian Church, and the Serbian people would have been completely different had the Serbian national state developed as a state belonging to a nation with “three faiths”, or as a state with one faith and several nations, or as a state with several faiths and nations. In any case, there are now more than enough reasons to put the model *state–nation* and *faith–nation* under a serious question mark, and this might also apply to Serbian politicians, the Serbian people, and the Serbian Church, which have all, to a lesser or a greater extent, been advocates of this ideal.

The Orthodox Church has condemned ethnophyletism as far back as 1872, but, in reality and to this day, she has not freed herself from secularized and godless national-romanticism, which in itself represents an “ecclesiological disease”.

The Orthodox Church is neither, as many might think, “national”, nor “non-national”, nor “supranational”. Judging by the national affiliations of her members, it should be considered as being simply *multi-national*. It is understandable that Church members might be affiliates of a single ethnos should the territories under jurisdiction of a given local Church be inhabited by a nationally homogenous population. Today, each Orthodox local Church is the Church of a certain ethnic group. Realistically speaking, the centuries-long territorial principle of Orthodox Church organization no longer plays a practical role. Precise territorial limits of each local Church are presently unknown. Owing to constant migrations of the planetary population, we are now being faced with a reality characterized by mixed and overlapping jurisdictions which often give rise to great misunderstandings among Churches. In any case, today we have an ever-diminishing number of “ethnically pure” regions and territories. Even if there was a time when nations as such might have “given wings” to the Church (since nationally homogenous regions and states did exist), it could now be said that nations represent nothing but shackles for any given Church of today. The “national” is losing its battle with the “civil”, the “non-national”, and the “international”. Conditionally speaking, traditionally Orthodox peoples are moving and migrating all over the world. Their native lands are increasingly being populated by peoples, nations, and national minorities belonging to other religions or other Christian denominations. This is why every present-day

local Orthodox Church is being faced with the dilemma whether to abandon, both definitely and “officially”, the territorial principle of its organization and to accept and make official the national principle (making each Church *national*, i.e. the Church of only one people). It would probably be most realistic, and in accordance with the spirit of Church *oikonomia*, to have both principles coexist on an equal footing, and to have them combined wherever possible. The worst scenario would be *either-or*. In any case, the fundamental nature of the Church, its essence, is touched neither by the national nor by the territorial. The Church is “wider” than the Universe. All nations can fit under a common Church roof, but the Church cannot fit under the roof of any single nation (Bishop Nikolaj Velimirovic).

The Church and Democracy

Today, neither Church nor state policy (politics), or for that matter worldly politics in general, can in any way be regarded as identical in all countries (states) of real-socialism or, to use a contemporary neologism, in societies “in transition”. Objectively observed, the Church has no social or political power there. She standardizes neither public nor social life. In simple words, the Church still finds herself in exile and in “diaspora”. Her social and political role (be it positive or negative) regarding historical processes in the European east is negligible, which is not the case in the West. Certainly, the situation is not the same everywhere,

but that does not make any essential difference.

After the long-lasting communist totalitarianism, after a lot of suffering and hardship, all east European states and societies have opted for democracy and democratic processes, for the collective adventure of the modern world. Local Orthodox Churches have “officially” supported the “perestroika” and the “democratic processes”. In any case, apart from a certain number of dissidents, the Church used to be the only real adversary and “opposition” to communist dictatorship and terror in East Europe, for which she suffered vicious martyrdom. Who but slaves, those being oppressed and deprived of all rights, would have a greater desire for freedom, justice, the rule of law, and democracy? Nobody. But, in spite of an indubitable desire for democracy, democratic processes have slowed down, and it would seem that “democratization” is not giving desired results. Moreover, many pathetically and nostalgically wish for the return of communism since, as they say, people enjoyed “a better living” then.

What is it which is slowing down “democratic processes” in the countries of East Europe? Causes differ from state to state. As far as Serbia is concerned, democratic processes are still being held back by the negative consequences of the violent breakdown of the Yugoslav state, and the civil and national-religious war (both of which came as a consequence of this violent breakdown of the common state). These democratic processes are slowed down by “masked” communist nomenclatures and oligarchies, and

by incorrect perceptions of democracy, human rights, and freedoms (democracy is seen by many as a source of unlimited wealth and hedonism, or as a source of unlimited and unrestricted rights and freedoms). Furthermore, undemocratic and even inhumane policies of the Euro-American continent towards the region are more than evident. In addition to this, there is a state of economic, technological, scientific, technical, and educational backwardness in the country, combined with a lack of informational technology. The list continues with: moral and spiritual numbness, fear of change in concert with the fear of diversity, ideological prejudice, bribery and corruption, frightening militarization and criminalization of the entire society, xenophobia and xenophilia, unresolved national questions, etc.

What is the position of the Serbian Orthodox Church regarding democracy? Inside the Serbian Orthodox Church there are different political ideas and opinions concerning democracy. Some are rejecting it a priori, some are accepting it uncritically, and some are in favor of democratization but only under specific circumstances.

At the occasion of its regular session in May 1990, the Holy Synod of Bishops “salutes democratization and indications of freedoms in our society”.⁷ The same statement

⁷Саопштење Светог архијерејског Сабора Српске Православне Цркве, *Гласник* (службени лист Српске Православне Цркве) 6, 1990, 124 / Statement of the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church, *Glasnik* (Official Register of the Serbian Orthodox Church) 6, 1990, 124.

goes on to say: “And the Church of Saint Sava has always been patriotic and never party-minded, i.e. a devotee of our fatherland and not of political organizations. This is why she gives her blessing to the return of freedom to our country, and salutes the prospect of an availability of true choices in regard to political and social options. However, she sees this prospect, together with the principle of unalienable rights of each individual, as a potential for the multiplication of various gifts that were given to men by God”.⁸

In the Holy Synod’s message to the Serbian people in advance of the first multiparty elections in Serbia and Montenegro it is said that “The Holy Synod of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church salutes the dawn of political freedom in our country and the first post-war (World War 2, *translator’s note*) free elections”.⁹ “After elections (the Church) expects to regain her place in the new democratic society, the place which historically and naturally belongs to her within the Serbian nation... she hopes to return to schools, hospitals, media, and the public life in general, in order to effect spiritual renewal and moral renaissance among our young generations”.¹⁰ At the occasion of its extraordinary session (November 30th - December 6th, 1990) the Holy Synod of Bishops was assessing the question of democratization. Its official statement emphasized that “the

⁸Ibid. 125

⁹Порука Светог архијерејског Сабора, *Гласник* 12, 1990, 251 / Message of the Holy Synod of Bishops, *Glasnik* 12, 1990, 251.

¹⁰ Ibid. 251

Church rises above mundane politics and all political parties; the Church does not divide, she assembles and unifies, and therefore calls all faithful not to forget that they are all one body of Christ in the Holy Communion, regardless of their political options and party affiliations. The Synod especially emphasizes that any professional political engagement of the members of the clergy is inadmissible, and especially their active engagement in political parties”.¹¹

These public statements of the Holy Synod of Bishops may lead to an unequivocal conclusion that the Serbian Church supports democratization of the society, political and political party pluralism, that it remains neutral in relation to political parties, and that her clergy cannot be “professional politicians”. These standpoints should have a mandatory character regarding all members of the Serbian Orthodox Church, but it is not so in practice. An analysis of the Church press and texts published in other publications by members of the Holy Synod and scholars of theology, together with an analysis of public communications and opinions as expressed by some of the Serbian Orthodox intellectuals, would clearly demonstrate that their political outlooks may radically differ. Some are not only against democracy, but they seem to identify it with absolute evil. At this moment we shall not enter into a detailed analysis of these anti-democratic pamphlets and examples of a mainly ideologically-based criticism. However, we shall mention opin-

¹¹ Саопштење Светог архијерејског Сабора, *Гласник* 12, 1990, 247 / Statement of the Holy Synod of Bishops, *Glasnik* 12, 1990, 247

ions belonging to some of the prominent bishops and theologians of the Serbian Church which certainly deserve attention.

Dr. Atanasije Jevtic, retired Bishop of Zahumlje and Herzegovina, is one of the best contemporary scholars of theology, and he says: “Church, as a living reality, as the soul of our spiritual and historical reality, cannot be against any given political party or against the free competition of human gifts and talents”¹²; “The Church can never condone the ownership of any person or the enslavement of any person”¹³ The Church, as “an icon of the Kingdom of Heaven, acts as a ‘corrector’ for all political parties of the world”.¹⁴ This position is identical to the position of the Holy Synod of Bishops.

Dr. Amfilohije Radovic, Metropolitan of Montenegro and the Littoral, a prominent scholar of theology, is not inclined to support Western liberal democracy. He corroborates “Theodemocracy” and “Christian democracy”.¹⁵ He mentioned the idea of Theo-democracy at the occasion of several public lectures, but he has never expounded on it in any detail, either theologically or theoretically, which, had he done so, would have

¹² Епископ Атанасије Јевтић, Црква и политика, *Градац* 110, 1993, 8 (Bishop Atanasije Jevtic, Church and Politics)

¹³ Ibid. 8.

¹⁷ Ibid. 8

¹⁵ Амфилохије Радовић, Национална Црква и свети народ, *Погледи* 4, Сплит 1983, 90-91 (Amfilohije Radovic, National Church and the Holy People). Idea of Christian philosophy was affirmed by the Russian philosopher and theologian Fedotov (Тяжба о России, УМСА PRESS, Париж 1982, especially chapters Foundations of Christian Democracy and Our Democracy)

certainly been of great significance. As things stand, it is unclear what is meant by this neologism, and it is impossible to evaluate its theoretical and practical values and implications.

Dr. Danilo Krstic, the late Bishop of Buda, was the most prominent champion of Orthodox monarchy and an establishment of a “symphony” between the Church and the state.¹⁶ He has remained unclear as to what exactly was meant by the term Orthodox monarchy and whether he spoke of a parliamentary monarchy or not. One might deduce from the entire context that he was referring to the Orthodox monarchy of Byzantium and medieval Serbia.

Dr. Irinej Bulovic, bishop of Backa, has never explicitly concerned himself with the question of democracy. He was concerned with the relationship between the Church and the state, which is, amongst other things, certainly connected with the question of democracy. He is an advocate of the principle of “a free Church within a free society (state)”, and of an organic relationship between them: “The only natural and healthy relationship would denote mutual support and cooperation, with a full respect of mutual differences, and in full awareness of the limits of this cooperation. The Christian state, state Church, state without a Church, or state instead of the Church – one might say that these are all different versions of the same utopia”.¹⁷ Bishop Irinej feels that

¹⁶Епископ Данило Крстић, О православној монархији, *Градац* 110, 1993, 9-10 (Bishop Danilo Krstic, On Orthodox Monarchy).

¹⁷Епископ Иринеј Буловић, Црква и политика, *Градац* 110, 1993, 7 (Bishop Irinej Bulovic, Church and Politics)

“politics is to be found within the very being of the Church”¹⁸ and this is why the Church cannot ignore politics and be indifferent to political processes and political questions.

Father Justin Popovic, the most prominent and the most significant Serbian theologian of the 20th century, bearing in mind the totalitarian character of modern states, did not support cooperation between the Church and the state. He was in favor of their “coexistence within different institutions”.¹⁹

At the occasion of their meeting on the island of Patmos, heads (patriarchs) of local Orthodox Churches have emphasized: “Concerning the matter of political changes, the Orthodox Church shall continue keeping to her usual principle of non-interference in politics”.²⁰ This position should be understood and interpreted as a message that clergymen should not take up politics professionally. It is not as an attitude whereby the Church should be indifferent towards the public and social life, or be indifferent as to what states her believers (the Church herself), and the populace in general, should be living in.

One cannot exhaust the problem concerning the relationship of Orthodoxy and democracy just by quoting and an-

¹⁸Ibid. 6.

¹⁹Јустин Поповић, Црква и држава, *Градац* 110, 1993, 12 (Justin Popovic, The Church and the State).

²⁰Порука поглавара Православних Цркава, *Православље* (лист Српске патријаршије), October 15th1995, 2 (Message of the Heads of Orthodox Churches).

alyzing “official” and “unofficial” positions of various individuals. This can be achieved only through serious interdisciplinary scholarly research. Apart from the already mentioned principles, we shall also point out some other essential principles and categories which determine the structure, the organization, and the very nature of the Orthodox Church, and then see how compatible they are to the principles of modern democracy.

Orthodox ontology and anthropology are extremely personalistic, which, thus, also applies to their axiology. The very essence of Orthodox values could be expressed in a single sentence: *everything for the person, the person for nothing*. The person of God and the person of man are the highest values for Orthodox Christians, which cannot be subordinated or sacrificed to any other objectives or values, even if these should be proclaimed as sacred. Everything else – politics, state, science, technology, culture – needs to be in service of the realization of the fullness of human personhood. Man is a free and a unique (unrepeatable) being; he is also a social being, and, as such, referred to establish and maintain communication both in the vertical and in the horizontal direction. If man should develop evenly both as a personal (individual) and a social being, he would then realize the fullness of personal existence. From this ontological-anthropological position there follows a principle which the Orthodox Church has relentlessly adhered to for two millennia. This is the principle of balance and interdependence covering the relations *God–man, soul–body, individual–community, one–many, local–universal*. This principle

is to be found within the very essence and structure of the Orthodox Church, her constitution, and her organization.

To make it simpler, the Orthodox Church keeps to the principle of *unity in diversity* or *diversity in unity*, the foundation of which is Christology. Diversity presumes freedom, and vice-versa. Love makes it possible for the many (the diverse) to be in unity, and while being in unity not to lose their personal and unique (unrepeatable) identity. Diversity is a given thing, a natural category, while unity is a task, something needing to be accomplished. How could diversity (pluralism, freedom) and unity be reconciled with each other? It is as if the world has no right solution to this problem. An unwritten rule seems to be perpetually repeating in history: either unity swallows up freedom (diversity, pluralism), or freedom destroys unity. Both versions are tragic. The former inevitably ends up in monism, single-mindedness and totalitarianism (no matter which), and the latter in divisions, conflicts, partitions and anarchy. The Orthodox Church has, more or less, managed to maintain this balance owing to her method of life. Modern states and societies attempt to solve this problem by maintaining the “balance of power” through the redistribution of power, and by combining the principles of liberalism (which stand in defense of freedom and diversity, respect of human rights and freedoms), democracy, and the rule of law (which provides for unity). Without liberalism, democracy would unavoidably end up in a dictatorship and in an implementation of the terror of a “majority” over a “minority”. This is why the *Char-*

ter of Paris for a New Europe says: “Democracy has as its foundation respect for the human person and the rule of law”.²¹

Wherever there is a functional balance between unity and diversity, one and the many, pyramidal conceptions of the state and the society are impossible, as well as all forms of unitarianism, unification and centralism. Unless willing to betray her own self, the Orthodox Church needs to oppose all forms of dictatorship, either of a majority or that of a minority; it needs to oppose all forms of unitarianism and centralism, hegemony and imperialism, caesarism and authoritarianism. If the person of God and the person of man are the highest values for the Church, then it should only be natural that the Church should be at the forefront in respecting and defending elementary human rights and freedoms.

The question of property is very important in relation to the question of democracy. Democratic societies mainly know of private property and of state property. Throughout her entire history the Orthodox Church knows and nourishes on an equal basis both forms of property,²² since this primarily has an an-

²¹ *Документи КЕБС 1975-1995*, Belgrade, 144 (*Documents of CESC*).

²² On the social doctrine of the Orthodox Church: Николај Велимировић, *Средњи систем*, СД V, Düsseldorf 1978; *Оченаш као основа друштвеног уређења*, Сабрана дела VIII, Düsseldorf 1978 (Nikolaj Velimirovic, *Middle System; Our Father as the Basis of the Social System*); Г. Флоровски, Социјални проблеми у Православној Цркви од Истока, *Теолошки погледи* 1-2, 1982

thropological justification. This is one of the most essential conditions for establishing a balance between the person and the community. Church legislature knows of the principle of the division of authority into legislative, executive, and judicial authority. If the Church herself adheres to this principle, it would be unreasonable not to accept it on the state level, and the principle of the division of authority is one of the essential characteristics of any democratic state with the rule of law. The Orthodox Church knows of the principle of *electiveness*. She is estranged to the principle of nomenclature. Throughout history the Orthodox Church has endeavored to reach decisions by consensus, and when that was impossible decisions were made by a “majority of votes”. Both of these principles – *the principle of electiveness* and *the principle of a majority of votes* – are principles of democratic states.

Today’s political theory and practice speaks a lot on polycentrism and regionalism, which implies a maximum of power at the local and regional levels, and minimum power on the universal or sub regional level. It is through the “autocephalous” character of local Churches (denoting nothing but polycentrism and regionalism) that the Orthodox Church also accepts this.

At the head of the Church there is always *the one* (the

(Georges Florovsky, Social Problems in the Orthodox Church of the East); Димитрије Богдановић, Основи социјалне теологије Св. Јована Златоуста, *Православна мисао* 11, Београд 1968, 23-47 (Dimitrije Bogdanovic, Foundations of St. John Chrysostom’s Social Theology).

monarchic principle), and not a collective body. The monarchic-hierarchical organization was understood precisely through this principle. This is why the Orthodox exhibit an inclination towards monarchy. However, as far as the Church is concerned, *the one, the first (protos)* can do nothing without the others, just as they can do nothing without *the one*. There is always, or there always should be, a state of balance between the one and the many. In this case one can speak of no superiority of the one over others, which, however, was the case in all classical monarchies, except for parliamentary monarchies. The pyramidal organization of the state and the society cannot be justified with Orthodox theology. After all, the Orthodox Church does not have a pyramidal concept of the Church. Conditionally speaking, the Orthodox Church has three principles: monarchic (the one is always at the head), democratic (the one must be elected and confirmed by all others), and aristocratic (bearers of the most responsible ministries are the best and the most righteous – morally, spiritually, and intellectually; those that are predisposed for these ministries).

There are three principles in the Orthodox Church which serve to regulate relationships between members, these being: morals, custom, and law (canons). The principle of *oikonomia* comes into effect when decisions are to be made which of the above-mentioned principles (and in what cases) are to be applied – the first, the second, or the third. If the Church employs legal principles in regulating external relationships between her members in such cases when the

“law of love” fails to give results (if any given problem cannot be solved by it), then there is no reason why the Church should not support the state exercising the rule of law (not nomocracy or plutocracy). The law is there to protect an individual from another’s ill will, and this is why it cannot be denied significant value in its relation to inter-human relationships. The law requires a force which will ensure that it is being respected, i.e. which will ensure that law-breaking would be sanctioned. Ultimately, the rule of law would imply the use of physical force. Physical force is at the disposal of the state, and this is something that the Church cannot accept or justify. This is the point of divergence between her and every form of state. Although the Church cannot justify the use of force, she does tolerate it as a necessary evil if it is employed in accordance with the principles of justice and law, and in the case of self-defense. If human beings were holy and perfect, the use of force would be ruled out.²³ Since they are neither holy nor perfect, the use of force is, more or less, a necessary evil, which is being made use of so as to prevent a greater evil from coming into effect.

²³ “Christian Church is a holy-cracy (rule of the holy, *translator’s note*). It is the saints who should be leading the humanity, and not the great men of the world. When all human beings become holy, neither leaders nor authority, and neither laws nor punishments will at all be necessary”, says Bishop Nikolaj Velimirovic (*Агонија Цркве*, СД II, Химелстир 1986, 121). Unfortunately, “holy-cracy” shall remain a desired ideal, hardly becoming a reality.

Orthodoxy is neither monarchic nor republican; neither democratic nor autocratic. Orthodoxy is the Church. The Church cannot identify herself with any type of state. However, if principles and forms are being taken into consideration, then it is completely clear that the principles and forms of a democratic state (regardless of it being a monarchy or a republic) are far closer to the Orthodox Church than the principles of any other type of state. If a state should exercise the rule of law, if it is truly free and democratic, then the Church functioning in such a society would have the necessary freedom of action, i.e. the freedom to put her mission into practice.

The metaphysical paradigm of democracy, utilitarian ethics, and axiology, which dominate liberal-democratic societies, are all unacceptable as far as the Church is concerned since they encourage egotism and the desire for power together with numerous other deformations and anomalies both on the individual and on the social plane. It is impossible to separate these from liberalism and democracy as part of a political system, but liberal-democratic ideology should be distinguished from liberal-democratic politics. A true liberal-democratic state is ideologically neutral. Authority is exercised in accordance with legal norms and “the rules of play”. Citizens are free to be faithful, atheistic, or agnostic. The state does not interfere with their choice.

Greek scholar of theology and philosopher, Christos Yannaras, one of the most prominent Orthodox experts in the field of west European political thought, has said: “De-

clarations of human rights and the struggle for their implementation, progressive political movements and their efforts to extract power from subordination to the interests of the economic oligarchies, syndicalism and the organized struggle for the rights of unprotected workers – perhaps all of these forms of moral mobilization did not turn this world into paradise, but they have, and most of all in western societies, achieved a significant improvement of objective living conditions of human beings; they have, to a certain extent, appeased the arrogance of autonomous structures, and achieved a fairer distribution of life resources”.²⁴ The state is not a deity, an end in itself, an absolute value, but a means by which objective life conditions are being brought to a higher level. If all types of states in history are compared, then it becomes clear that liberal-democratic states, although not ideal, were the most successful in achieving this. As Winston Churchill would say: “It has been said that democracy is the worst form of government except all the others that have been tried”.

Liberal and democratic principles and the ideology of human rights may succumb to their own pathology; as everything else in this world, they may be misused so that the struggle against totalitarianism could result in an even worse form of totalitarianism. There are a lot of signs which indicate that democracy is becoming a huge potential for a general catas-

²⁴ Христос Јанарас, Историјске и друштвене димензије црквеног етоса, *Градац* 110, 1993, 15 (Christos Yannaras, Historical and Social Dimensions of Church Ethos).

trophe of mankind, since it is increasingly turning, and on a daily basis, into a deadly amalgam of arrogance and power. “Corporate power” is undermining the very foundations of political and economic liberalism. Corporations are close to the totalitarian ideal. Absolute power is centralized at the top. Decisions are transmitted in a downward direction reaching several layers of managers. At the bottom of this corporal structure there is the common work force which is expected to submit unconditionally to all decisions coming from above.²⁵ “Rocket diplomacy” and the sheer scope of physical force threaten the survival of the entire planet. Emil Cioran’s words sound as a warning: “Desire for power and authority has overshadowed the soul excessively; once it imposes its rule on everything around it, it will have no authority over its own end”.²⁶ However, Orthodox Christians should not be discouraged by all this – “the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one” (1 John 5:19) – and they should not give up the effort to uphold: security and dignity of the human person, non-discrimination among human beings and nations, a more just redistribution of life resources, love, peace, and accord among men. This effort should never be given up, even when it seems that it is not giving desired results.

The process of world integration is reaching an unbelievable velocity today. A “planetary civilization” is being cre-

²⁵ Ноа Чомски, *Јуриш државног капитализма*, *НИИ* 2342, 17. 11. 1995, 42 (Noah Chomsky, *Charge of State Capitalism*).

²⁶ Емил Сиоран, *Кратак преглед распадања*, Сомбор 1995, 121 (Emil Cioran, *A Short History of Decay*).

ated, which is radically different from all previous ones. Cultures and religions are permeating one another. From the standpoint of the former way of thinking, former mentality, habits and values, we no longer know the true significance and value of our local history and culture, since everything is being pushed into the background by the rise of “the mass-culture”. Being one of the most prominent Orthodox theologians of our times, Metropolitan John Zizioulas says: “Mankind is not only moving towards a single global community of interdependent nations, but also towards a cosmological unity which dramatically demonstrates the acuteness of the ecological problem; the patristic idea of “a cosmic Liturgy”, where everything is being united into interdependence and symphony, is becoming a reality”.²⁷ Today everybody lives in a “virtual reality”, in “cyberspace”, in an all-inclusive “ecstasy of communication”, and this applies even to Orthodox Christians.²⁸ They live all over the world. Simply said, they live in a new reality and under new conditions. Turning back is impossible. Models and forms of life from the past are no longer applicable. The past should be respected, but not worshiped. Contemporary Orthodox Christians should not initiate a panic-stricken negation, or an uncritical acceptance, of the existing world, its culture, and civilization; they should make a creative effort to interpret and explain contemporary processes and to witness the Gospel of

²⁷ Митрополит Јован Зизјулас, *Пристап лечењу*, Србиње 1995, 3 (Metropolitan John Zizioulas, *Approach to Healing*).

²⁸ Жан Бодријар, *Друго од истога*, Београд 1995, 7 (Jean Baudrillard).

Christ in the world such as it is. They need *to be* divine love and goodness in relation to their contemporaries, their ancestors, and their descendants. Today, perhaps for the very first time in history, we are witnessing such a distinctly expressed “holistic” image of the world both as far as the doctrine and the reality are concerned. In actuality, it is the task of Orthodox theologians to answer the question whether the world is drawing closer to “a cosmic Liturgy”, or drifting further away.

Nations and societies do not differ much from the state anymore, since they are “totally saturated with political authority”.²⁹ The Church is drawn into a web of political, economic, social, and communicational affairs. Members of the Church (the faithful) are actively participating in different political parties, movements, and societies. Many of them hold prominent political and state functions. By participating in elections they exercise indirect influence over political decisions. Since the constitutive factor of the Church is her faithful, it would then follow that the Church is also engaged in politics – the only question being what kind of politics? Are the faithful striving to establish Christian and Gospel principles within the society, or are they accepting and establishing such programs which are contradictory to the spirit of the Church? The latter seems to be happening much more often. Are Christians founding their political, economic, and social programs on an Orthodox metaphysic

²⁹Franz Neumann, *Demokratska i autortitarna država*, Zagreb 1974, 3 (*The Democratic and the Authoritarian State*),

or on some other metaphysics and political philosophies?

The Gospel needs to inspire and permeate all areas of human life, including politics. Apart from the already mentioned existential and social categories, *self-limitation* (*askesis*) has, or may have, far reaching positive consequences in relation to efforts directed at solving social, political, economic, ecological, cultural, and political problems. A self-limiting endeavor regarding limitations of an excessive use of material resources (food) might be the best way to reduce the gap between the rich and the poor. Social justice would, thus, be prompted, and there would certainly be a significant reduction of people dying because of the lack of food. World ecological problems cannot be solved without self-limitation. It is the best way of putting an end to greed and selfishness. It is the best way of containing an ill will which is present in every human being, an ill will which even the most perfect laws and legal norms are unable to control fully or suppress. Self-limitation protects and saves culture from all forms of utilitarianism. It protects cultural treasures and resources from becoming merchandise. Not to speak of the significance *askesis* has regarding human psychological, spiritual, and physical health. *Askesis* (self-limitation) seen as a means to prevent illnesses and a method of therapy is no longer a matter of controversy either in medicine or psychiatry.

Being an old European nation, Serbs have in their past participated in various cultures: Ancient Roman, Byzantine, and numerous other Slavonic and west European cultures. They were open towards the East, the West, the North, and

the South. They created their own autochthonous culture, but they also participated, with such means as were at their disposal, in the creation of the European culture in general. There is no reason why this process should not continue in the future, should Serbs desire to maintain the continuity of the Orthodox tradition. Through their gifts, their abilities, and their natural predispositions, they do not lag behind other European nations so there is no reason why they should feel inferior. Owing to a set of numerous circumstances, their state and social institutions are at present lagging behind their counterparts in Europe. Serbs are behind in their scientific, technical, and technological development, but all of this can be brought to a higher level in a relatively very short time should the desires, the abilities, and the will of the people be directed towards that which is good.

At present, Serbs are a pluralistic people on all levels; they have been caught up in a flood of disintegration and disorientation. God-given diversities are turning into divisions and conflicts. The essential present-day question is how to reconcile diversity and unity. Party political, ideological and even state unity is impossible because Serbs now live dispersed all over the world. Creating a unity founded on national ideology, on the unity of “flesh and blood”, would be both tragic and dangerous, and it would bear a resemblance to the party political, and ideological unity they have already experienced in the recent past. The Orthodox have always offered Christ and faith as the contents of unity. Their centuries-long experience has taught them that only

this kind of unity was fruit bearing and salvific. Any other form of unity is dangerous and risk-bearing because it jeopardizes human freedom. If Christ is not the axle of Serbian unity today, if faith is no longer the factor of unity of the people (since Serbs are divided on this matter also), then the contents of unity should be *dialogue*, a self-realization of all subjects of the nation that they are indispensable to each another, that it is their duty to cooperate, to love and respect each other, and, by doing so, to respect mutual differences and diversities. This internal dialogue is the precondition to the external dialogue with the world.

The Church would give her best contribution to the renaissance and the transfiguration of the Serbian nation if she should effect a “churching” of her own organization, and the sooner this is done the better. Amongst other things, this would mean that she should renew the parish on a Church-liturgical basis, incorporate the best and the most recent achievements of Orthodox theology and other sciences in her educational programs and institutions, and, last but not least, renew to the fullest possible extent the internal dialogue in her very own midst.

ORTHODOXY AND DEMOCRACY

Democracy has become a “myth”, a religion of its own kind, and a universal ideal for the entire humanity. Rejection or critique of democracy has almost become a crime and a heresy. Democratic political order is the present-day framework within which the Church actualizes its mission today. This world is also penetrating the Church. Today, Orthodoxy is criticized as being the most responsible for impeding and slowing down “democratic” processes in “transitional” societies, including our own. These are just some of the reasons why this matter should not be ignored.

Democracy is a complex phenomenon of which theoreticians indicate that there exist more than one hundred definitions. There are many historical-philosophical theories, different types of democracy (revolutionary, socialist, direct, representative, liberal). Today, apart from being a political concept, democracy is also an ideological, axiological (“democratic values”), moral, and a culturological notion (“democratic culture”).

As far as the political meaning is concerned, liberal democracy is not a mythological “will of the people”, or such a political form where “everybody rules”. It is a collection of activities and “game rules”, a political form where people (citizens with the right to vote) elect and control those who rule, and where discharge of authority is associated with a state-legal procedure. It is a political order consisting of mutually supporting and limiting competences and freedoms. Its aim is to protect human rights, freedoms, and dignity, to enable common action of all with an aspiration

to create a “common good”. Modern democracies presume:

1. A constitution limiting authority and protecting many civil rights;
2. A universal right to vote regardless of race, gender, property status, language, profession, culture, religious affiliation (principle of non-discrimination);
3. Human rights, which may not be put to question by anyone;
4. A distinction between the state and the society;
5. The existence of a “civil society”;
6. Freedom of speech and media;
7. Freedom to gather, equality before law, and the right to court proceedings in accordance with law;
8. Independent judiciary, and education of all regarding their civil rights and duties;
9. Principles of “division of authority” and mutual control between different branches of authority;
10. Co-operative separation between the Church and the state.

The Church today exists within the “global democratic village”, where different nations, with all their respective particularities, are engaged in developing a planetary political, economic, and technological-informational order. It is sometimes possible to gain the impression that the Church is still sentimentally tied to the “good old times”, to the pre-modern notions of the state and the society, to the so-called “popular Orthodoxy”. It is for this reason that she is becoming less of an active factor in history and more of a passive spectator of various processes, which seem to be slipping past her. She is turned more to her own self, and more engaged with her own matters than with the world around her, this world being post-Christian or the world of postmodern democratic pluralism.

In contemporary theological literature belonging to all Christian Churches, in statements of most influential people, as well as in official public communiqués, it is possible to read or hear that modern democracy is rooted in Christianity, and that “democratic values” are essentially nothing but alienated and secularized Christian values. This might lead us to conclude that democratic and ecclesial orders are almost identical. However, such standpoints are either absolutely wrong or, at the very best, only partially correct. Democracy is based on such ideological foundations, which are different and even contrary to Christianity. This does not mean that there are no similarities among them at least on the surface, and that the Church lacks its own “democratic potential”. In postmodern societies, there is a permanent state of tension between the Church and democracy. There exists an “irreconcilable distinctiveness” between them, which is often being transformed into a state of mutual opposition and animosity similar to modern attempts to pit faith against mind, spiritual against material, earthly against heavenly, God against man. Moreover, this is the cause of many schizophrenic states, social pathologies, and reductionist views on life.

The Orthodox Church cannot identify with any political order, including democracy. Throughout history, she existed in monarchies and republics, in anarchies, in fascist, communist, conservative, social democratic, and Islamic societies, as well as in various forms of despotism. To a greater or a lesser degree, she has always adapted her institutions

to a given period and a given political order, but she also never failed to highlight her particularity and distinctiveness in relation to them. Being in the world and not being of the world is an antinomy, which is always being manifested in the life of the Church. This is the reason why her life in all epochs is so dramatic, full of rises and falls, tensions between the “old” and the “new”, the Old Testamental and the New Testamental, between law and love, the institutional and the charismatic. Here it should be emphasized that the Church never founded her life on any single principle. Elements of monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy may just barely be recognized in her structure, particularly institutional. However, it is important to underscore that ecclesial institutions, in contrast to those of the state and other secular institutions, have no *raison d’être* in themselves and by themselves, but always in relation to something which is external to them. They need to be supple, flexible, “iconic”, and in a permanent state of appearing and disappearing. Every Liturgy (which represents the identity of the Church) “liberates” man from all shackles of institutionalism and constitutionalism – of enslavement to law. Institutions are useful to man as an illusory source of security, while the Church provides him with freedom, which makes him the icon of God.

As far as Western Europe was concerned, initial relationship between the Church and democracy stood under the sign of mutual repulsion and rejection. During the course of the second half of the 19th and the first half of the 20th cen-

tury there came into being such movements and political parties (Christian-democrats) which endeavored to reconcile Christian faith and its ethical and social principles with institutions of contemporary states and societies. They were more or less characterized by conservatism. Their love of the past ended up most often in an idolatrous bond with the past. The unwritten rule required both acceptance of the past and subservience in relation to it. This is why they did not exercise any substantial influence on the development of temporary societies. In practice, the Orthodox Church had its encounter with democracy during the course of the second half of the 20th century and at its very end, and only to some extent between the two World Wars.

Today, all autocephalous Orthodox Churches, as well as other Christian Churches, officially support “democratization of the state and the society” (which does not exclude resistance and opposition to this notion) by opposing all forms of totalitarianism and use of violence as a means of solving disputes and conflicts. The role of the Church in relation to the disappearance of communism in Eastern Europe is not at all minor or insignificant. “Oppositional” political parties and movements, as well as critical intellectuals, either came into being within the Church or received substantial support from her. However, although endeavoring to promote “democratization of the society”, the Church simultaneously remains firmly resolute in resisting all (both external and internal) demands for “Church democratization” by emphasizing that the Church is not a

“democratic”, but a “hierarchical” community. Primarily selfish interests motivate external demands for “Church democratization” as requested by many centers of political and economic power. These requests are an expression of a desire that the Church should also be included and functionalized in accordance with the “codes” of consumer and democratic ideology of progress. Internal demands for “democratization”, coming from within the Church, are a consequence of a centuries-long disorder related to the correlation between the priesthood (hierarchy) and the faithful (*the laos*). Often the Church is solely identified with the priesthood, the faithful thus exclusively becoming “customers”, “consumers of religious goods”, and an “obedient” flock. These internal demands essentially reflect a desire to include the faithful as active participants in the election of priests and bishops, in Church administration, and in her entire life as such. Essentially, this would mean that the Church is being asked to emulate the democratic secular order. The conflict between the “klēros-cratic” and democratic principles within the Church poses a threat to her, which might lead to unpredictably tragic consequences.

Ecclesial and democratic orders (ecclesial and democratic authorities) are two completely different orders mutually irreducible and inapplicable. It is utterly nonsensical to apply the model of democratic authority to the Church, and vice-versa. All endeavors to do so have most often ended up tragically. The Church is a Theandric communion and not a community of human beings. Within this concept,

God is not only the Creator of the world and man, but man's alter ego and an active subject of historical processes. He is the life of all living beings and of everything that exists. The Church is founded on Divine law. Essentially, she is administered by God, and not by the faithful or the clergy. Her life is not dependant on a "majority of votes" (although some decisions in the Church are sometimes taken through a majority vote). If faith should ever become dependent on a "majority of votes" that would then lead her to her own death. Democracy, however, is founded on a distinct anthropocentric metaphysics and anthropology, on the "law of reason" (Habermas). As far as the Church is concerned, the source and the foundation of all authority is God Himself; democracy finds its source and its foundation in the mythologized, mystified, and sacralized "will of the people". The Church remains faithful to the so-called principle of the "authority from above", which spreads in a downward direction; democracy, on the contrary, depends on the principle of "authority from below", which spreads in an upward direction. This is why ecclesial organization, be it "monocentric" (Roman) or "polycentric" (East Christian), has, to some extent, a pyramidal structure irresistibly reminding (externally) of a semi-absolutist monarchy. This is not cancelled out even by the so-called "synodical" structures, or various "boards" and "committees", their positive role not being doubted anymore by anyone. Even if the Church should allow the faithful to elect priests and bishops (or be given some kind of right of consent), the election itself

would not make the candidates become ordained priests or bishops; this is exclusively achieved through the “laying on of hands” (*cheirotonia*), which alone legitimizes and legalizes all authority and charisma within the Church.

The very nature of political democratic authority is essentially different when compared to ecclesial authority, i.e. the authority of the Church, which is the “authority” or the “power of love”, and a voluntary service to another. Worldly authority is jurisdictional and it is chiefly manifested as the power to rule over the other (in accordance with law). Throughout history, there were attempts from both sides to identify these two types of power with one another, or to have one cancel out the other. The relationship between these two types of authority is not *either – or*, but *and*. This is how the principle of Church and state autonomy should be interpreted. It is necessary to draw a distinction between the two, but it is utterly nonsensical and tragic to pit one against the other. In history, they need to coexist with a certain degree of interdependence where such interdependence is necessary.

Ecclesial order (authority) is mainly associated with the principle of the “unity of authority” (ecclesial authority). Verily, most of the contemporary ecclesial constitutions also know the principle of the division of authority, although it is of no essential influence in practice. This principle of the “division of authority” (legislative, executive, and judicial) is an indispensable characteristic of any democratic society. Without an established “balance of power” between wield-

ers of authority, democratic order (and especially so liberal) would be quite impossible.

The Orthodox Church sees herself primarily as a “charismatic organism”, i.e. as a communion of love, which, in itself, includes various ministries (organs), and never as an exclusively legal institution, regardless of the fact that law and institutions also exist within the Church. The Church utilizes law (canons) just as the science of medicine, for example, uses surgical procedures (only when no other solution may be applicable to save a life or solve a particular medical problem). Within the Church, there is a coexistence of both the principle of *akribeia* (respect of law), and the principle of *oikonomia* (forgiveness and love). The Church sometimes holds fast to the “letter of the law”, and at other times it does not (“each case should be viewed in its own light”, patriarch German). Democracy presupposes the rule of law. Contemporary man cannot envisage his life outside institutions and law. We are facing a distinct tendency which would have all aspects of human life institutionalized and legally regulated. This is fast becoming a universal ideal. It seems that more law produces more power. The more power and might there is on one side, the more fear there is on the other. To a certain extent, this affirms such notions that see modern societies characterized by a particular dialectics of power and fear, revolt and subjugation.

Drives and insistences regarding “the need for Church democratization”, regardless of direction they are coming from, are unnecessary, harmful, and inappropriate. How-

ever, that does not mean that the present-day Church does not require a “Christianization” (an “attainment of Orthodoxy”) of/by all ecclesial institutions to which the faithful have developed a sense of resistance triggered by their (institutional) atrophy and, consequently, their tendency to paralyze Church life. This “Christianization” of institutions should primarily be seen as their conformation to the nature of the Church and not to the state. Institutions should be made “iconic” and, what is most essential, the Church should see it as her imperative to establish a permanent state of interdependence between her ministries, as well as a balance in the *one – many* relationship. Everything should be done to have the *laos* truly become a constitutive factor of the Church. The Church is “hierarchical” and this should not be brought to question, but it would be a great and a tragic mistake to interpret this attribute as entailing subordination, as many, unfortunately, often do. Such interpretations and the deriving practices are turning the Church into a totalitarian collective and/or a military barracks, while, concurrently, turning personal relationships between her members from being full of grace and based on love into a superior-subordinate and a slave-master relationship, which take the Church back into deep prehistory. The Church should always be at the forefront as the champion of freedom and human dignity. Her members need to have freedom within the Church, and never be placed in such a position where they should aspire to obtain freedom from the Church; they should participate in the authority of the

Church, and not struggle to obtain authority over the Church. It is a *no* to Church reform and democratization, but a *yes* to reform within the Church, and to a metamorphosis of all her institutions. This is achievable with the aid of both theology and the worldly sciences of sociology, law, and politics.

Christians are expected to serve God and the Church, and not to utilize God and the Church to achieve their own personal ends and means. Although the Orthodox Church is not “democratic”, she has in her own nature a “democratic capacity” and a twofold social role. First, she needs to be open to the world, to strive towards salvation of time and the world. She has no reason to deny her support to all individuals, political parties, movements, and social subjects who advocate a non-etatist state founded on justice and the rule of law; a state which champions human rights and freedoms, upholds cultural, scientific, technological, and informational development; a state which prevents all forms of discrimination and violence; a state which strives to reduce the gap between the rich and the poor, and advocates the greatest degree of world demilitarization; a state which promotes dialogue and cooperation between all nations of the world, and cares for the protection of the natural environment, since “nature rights” have become a precondition to all human rights. Concurrently, the Church has a duty to “demystify” democracy, to deny it any form of misappropriation of absolute value and significance, which should be recognized only as conditional and relative. She should also

highlight the social pathology of liberal-democratic societies so that they might constantly transform and make progress.

The democratic order is not an ideal one. However, it still makes it possible for the Church to carry out her mission in the world without external pressure, while discouraging her from “exclusivist” tendencies and denying her the right to exercise state authority, thus protecting her from the pernicious temptations of political power and the desire for world domination.

CHRISTIANITY AND POLITICS

“For the Christians are distinguished from other men neither by country, nor language, nor the customs which they observe. For they neither inhabit cities of their own, nor employ a peculiar form of speech, nor lead a life which is marked out by any singularity... But, inhabiting Greek as well as barbarian cities, according as the lot of each of them has determined, and following the customs of the natives in respect to clothing, food, and the rest of their ordinary conduct, they display to us their wonderful and confessedly striking method of life. They dwell in their own countries, but simply as sojourners. As citizens, they share in all things with others, and yet endure all things as if foreigners. Every foreign land is to them as their native country, and every land of their birth as a land of strangers... They are in the flesh, but they do not live after the flesh. They pass their days on earth, but they are citizens of heaven. They obey the prescribed laws, and at the same time surpass the laws by their lives. They love all men, and are persecuted by all... To sum this all up in one word – what the soul is in the body, those are Christians in the world...” (The Epistle of Mathetes to Diognetus 5, 6; Christian writing from the second century AD)

Throughout history, Christianity has been confronted with two equally dangerous temptations: to escape from the world, or to submit to the world. The third way is the well-known antinomy: to be “in the world, but not of the world”. Being a Christian in the contemporary, secular, post-modern world almost means not having anything to do with politics.

Relativism of truth and ethics, and the establishment of the social order upon such foundations which do not stem from faith, form the key to our understanding of contemporary Europe. Up until the close of the 16th century the mystical foundation of all authority (be it ecclesial or worldly) was God. In its opposition to Christianity, the modern world has installed human nature, instead of God, as the basis of its social order. This has produced the system of natural rights (present-day human rights), natural morality, natural authority (social contract theory), and even natural religion. Contemporary secular societies exclude God as the subject of social and political processes. Faith is being pushed out into the “private” sphere of human emotions. Public (secular, political) life is seen as being “emancipated” from any influence of the Church, and this means an “emancipated” politics, economy, law, education, and art. Faith is being set to oppose the human mind, and the spiritual is being set against the material. Laicism and secularity is understood by many as a struggle against the Church and religion in general, or as the means to have them banished to the very margins of the society. The Church is being denied all right to pursue political activity. Today, even a large number of Christians feel that this is normal since, for God’s sake, politics is a “dirty business” representing nothing but greed for power and money. Apparently, Christian ethics and politics cannot walk hand in hand.

The first decade of the third millennium in Europe sees more and more discourse on the matter concerning the so-

called “de-privatization of religion”, and the revival of Christian values in the society. The notion of separation between the Church and the state (the worldliness of politics) is seen less and less as a struggle against the Church and religion. Exceptional to this are the so-called “societies in transition”. Politics is “mundane” (it has its “autonomy”) because it is dealing with the problems of this world, and not because it is non-religious or anti-ecclesial. Lay Christians who are engaged in politics and who actively participate in political life are not seen today as striving to create a “Christian”, or a “theocratic” state. This would mean that they are also striving, together with all others, to develop a state founded on justice and law, a state which protects human dignity and human freedoms, social justice, mutual care, solidarity, responsibility, and accountability.

Before its modern counterpart, there existed a Christian secularism. It was reflected by the fact that Christians have seen (and still see) each and every social and political order as being relative and imperfect, since no social and political order of human origins could equal the Kingdom of God. Christians are people who live in a state of permanent tension between their historical engagement and their hope in the eschatological ending of history, between the fragmentary and fullness, between radical and absolute Gospel values, on one side, and their ever relative and limited realization in the life of the earthly city, on the other. It is impossible to cancel this antinomy. Being engaged in politics within this context would primarily mean demystifying

the state and politics by denying them any absolute value, while recognizing only their conditional and relative values. “Everything” is politics, but politics is not “everything”. In concert with others, Christians should be engaged within the process of building the state “for man” and “in the service of man”, always witnessing that real authority is the *authority to serve* others, and not the *authority to rule* over others. The primary task of the Church is to change and to transform (transfigure) the world, to redirect the flow of the movement of life, to save the world from death and oblivion, to confront human beings with a “completely different perspective”, with supra-political and supra-state objectives and values.

Seen from the historical-sociological aspect, the non-engagement of Christians in public and political life would denote an attempt to escape from history and to create a self-imposed isolation of the Church into some sort of “Christian micro-environments”, while delegating responsibility for the quality of life and the destiny of the society to the “less perfect” people and their political programs. On the other hand, every attempt to create an integral Christian social order is today impossible and represents an utopia. On her own, the Church cannot regulate the public and the political life, but, in concert with other religious communities and all other subjects of the society, she should create and make possible a humane form of politics. How should the Church engage in politics today? Past models (the state Church, the state against the Church, political activity of the

Church through the so-called Christian political parties and movements) all seem exhausted and anachronistic. It seems that times are coming when it might prove necessary to search for new models of the interrelationship between the Church and politics. At present, it is possible to discern three new models. Sociologists call the first of these the fundamentalist model (“anti-modern modernization”) or an intertwinement of Church and politics; the second model is the political engagement of the Church through the civil society; jurists call the third model the model of cooperative separation. In the first case, and on the level of its social and political activity, the Church finds her allies in rightist and conservative political parties, together with such nationalist, pietistic and moralistic movements whose basic characteristic is a form of a panicky negation of all that is modern and contemporary, together with an idolatrous reference towards the past. This model is very apparent today. It is very risky as far as the Church is concerned since, at the very start, it alienates all those who have a different political orientation, and especially the young who always wish to be “in” and “trendy”. Her justified struggle against a multitude of social anomalies of the present day world should not justify a sort of a “coalition” between the Church with the above-mentioned social groups. She is expected to give answers to the challenges and problems as faced by contemporary man. The Church needs to take a critical stance towards all forms of one-sidedness and the social pathology as represented both by both the right and the left. She is

above “conservatism” and “progressivism”, “traditionalism” and “modernism”, “globalization” and “anti-globalization”, but, at the same time, full of infinite care and love for each and every human being regardless of his/her political orientation. The Church is “contemporary” only if she functions in a churchly way. Christians are “modern” only when they live authentic Christian lives. The Church always needs to keep her mind on the welfare of all and on the world as a whole; she needs to be *present-absent* in the world. Christianity needs to be a sort of an “opposition” to each state and every political order, since this role has enabled her to initiate and carry through some of the most fundamental political changes in history.

THE CHURCH AND THE CIVIL SOCIETY

The term “civil society” came into being close to the end of the 20th century. This concept has appropriated a magical connotation, especially so in the societies of the south-west Balkans and Eastern Europe. It is most commonly understood that it implies an active participation of all citizens in those areas of life which are deemed to be of no concern to state administration and/or economy.

Until recently, no distinction was made between the state and the society. Starting from the 19th century, and up until the end of the 20th century, the role of the citizen in the society was seen in his participation in the political life of the national state (“participative democracy”).

Civil society (“non-governmental organizations”, “the third sector”, the “non-profit sector”, “the voluntary sector”) comes into existence as a reaction to an exaggerated etatism of the state, to an ever increasing power and influence wielded by multinational companies and informal centers of power, to various distortions and deformations of democratic societies. As a subject striving to break away from the compulsion and the tutorage of the state, the civil society endeavors to make the state “weak”, to have it stripped from all authority by denying it all divine attributes seized upon by the modern secular state. The so-called “strong state” suffers permanent pressure from the civil society. It is for this reason that civil society is called by some “social romanticism”.

Today there mainly exist two theories of the civil society:

1. *Anti-etatist*. It opposes social-political activities of

the state. Here, the civil society incorporates the subjects of the economy and the market;

2. *The communicative-liberal variant*. Its understanding is that the civil society is independent from the state and the sphere of the economy and the market. Its main role is to create *publicity* through media, free press and television.

Civil society characteristics are the following:

1. *Plurality* (acknowledgment of diversity on all levels. On the ethical level this often creates moral relativism as a consequence);
2. *Autonomy* (man is an independent being – independent even from God);
3. *Civility* (where individuals and associations on all levels are conscious of their mutual duties and their responsibilities towards the community and the society. The ideal and the goal is that no one should be in isolation although enjoying personal and private spheres of life. Some also call this *relationism*);
4. *Publicity and communitarianism*, which are pre-conditions to the so-called “open society”.

Thus, under the notion of the civil society, we should understand such institutions and phenomena of organized life, which are founded on voluntariness, which complement each other, which are mainly financially independent, which are autonomous in relation to the state, which respect the law and order and accept the so-called social values.

It is expected from the civil society to:

- * facilitate citizens to self-organize and become an active part of the society;
- * be critical of political, economic, and state generated centers of power;
- * take special care of the weak and the frail, of those in the society who are imperiled and being discriminated against. It can, thus, often be heard from the Churches in Western Europe that they “do not wish to be involved in politics”, but that they “wish to make politics possible”.

In Western Europe today, within the process of modernity and post modernity, there exists a tendency to drive out faith from the state and the political sphere (in the narrow sense of the word) and position it within the sphere of the civil society. Churches in Western Europe, and especially so the Roman Catholic and the Evangelistic-Reformatory, see the sphere of the civil society as being essential as far as the future Christian political activity is concerned. The promotion of the civil society is put on the same plane as the promotion of the Christian message and the mission of Christianity. There are such beliefs and interpretations that say that, without Christian tradition in Europe, the civil society cannot be sustained in the long term.

In the Southwestern Balkans, states are still to a great extent etatist and ruled exclusively by political parties. Civil society is only being born. It is looked upon, more or less, in a negative way. People involved in its creation are seen as “traitors”, “foreign mercenaries”, and “governmental

non-governmental organizations”. On the other hand, the so-called civil society in these regions holds a mainly negative attitude towards Churches, religious communities and national traditions. States, rather than the non-governmental organizations, maintain a more positive attitude towards religion.

Dialogue between the Church and the civil society is either insignificant or virtually non-existent. Both sides tend to ignore one another, or exhibit mutual mistrust and suspicion. Churches and religious communities resist all attempts to be positioned as being part of the civil society and to be treated as non-governmental organizations.

The Church is a distinctively social phenomenon. She acts in the world aiming to save the world from oblivion, from sin and death, and not to “free” man from the world. She needs to hold dialogue and to cooperate with the civil society on all questions of general significance, especially encouraging and aiding those subjects that endeavor to help the feeble, the handicapped, and those being discriminated against. The Church cannot but support the right of each man to actively participate in social and public life. The need to associate is the primordial need of all human beings. It is a manifestation of the most profound longing of one man for another. Today, within Churches and religious communities, there are many “brotherhoods”, “sisterhoods”, “movements” and other organizations that have come into existence as a consequence of dysfunctional (in the ecclesial sense of the word) parishes and dioceses, and/or of a distinct

expression of *clericalism* within the Church. Conditionally speaking, there are manifestations of the spirit and the mentality of the “civil society” within the Church herself. Present-day man desires to be the subject and not a passive object of the historical processes. Believers want to be active and creative members of the Church and not a submissive “flock” or “customers”. Nonetheless, the Church and the religious communities cannot drown into, or identify with, the civil society, as is also the case in their relationship with any type of the state. The Church can accept all the associations of this world under her own roof, but the Church cannot fit under the roof of any single one of them.

I am not at all convinced that the most reliable way for the Church to exert her influence on the society and politics is to be found by her participation in the civil society. It is through their anticipation of the future that Churches and religious communities should search for the most appropriate method of their activity regarding politics and public life. All previous models have now become inapplicable.

The identity of the Church and the religious communities within the social-political processes needs to be recognizable and clearly articulated. It might perhaps be worthwhile considering the possibility that the Church and the religious communities should painstakingly and patiently construct a common social-political philosophy which would be on equal footing with other political ideas and programs. Unless desiring to betray her own self, the

Church cannot but attempt to inspire the sphere of politics and the civil society with the Gospel, all the more so since politics has become a religion of its own kind and a metaphysics. European peoples, societies and states should accept the Church and religion as positive values and see them both as “public property” – not as a “private matter” or a “necessary evil” which, for one reason or another, has to be tolerated. I fear even to think about the future of Europe without the presence and the influence of the Church on its public and political life. Just consider what Europe would look like should its political life be deprived of the influence of sciences, philosophy, art, or should it be the case that European peoples and societies begin to treat all these just as a “private matter” as is now, more or less, the case with religion. It would be a continent of unsuccessful and unaccomplished men. John Meyendorff in his book “Witness to the World” states that one of the biggest mistakes, repeated by many, is considering the option of refraining from politics since people have already become accustomed to seeing political activity as being necessarily ambiguous and often dirty. Furthermore, he states that, in reality, refraining from politics means giving passive, unconscientious and irresponsible support to those who are about to assume authority. It is often the case that wrong people come to power at a wrong time just because of an indifferent majority. To this we may add that temptation and danger for the Christians does not lie in political activity but in the loss of Christian identity. Meyendorff also says that the Church encourages

and she shall always encourage the faithful to participate in politics and to exercise responsibility, because if they won't do it then the others will.

Present day deliberations on the Christian dimension of Europe are not to be interpreted as a sign of the "restoration of the European past" or a step in a backward direction, but as a step forward. It goes without saying that the Church should renounce all of her social "exclusivity" and provide for a reintegration of the human being, which presupposes an establishment of a synthesis between faith and knowledge, laws and love, law and morality, the religious and the secular. Europe needs to establish a balance regarding the relation God-man, person-community, time-eternity, local-universal. This balance and reintegration is impossible without the Christian vision and the Christian method of life.

PRINCIPLES OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH SOCIAL DOCTRINE

Social theory in the Orthodox Church is not as developed as its counterparts in the Roman Catholic Church and Protestant religious communities. Sociological-social matters are not essential or primary questions she is concerned with. Orthodox Church is neither a political force, nor should she be one. Her greatest strength lies in her social powerlessness. By her nature, and consistent with her mission, she stands above political, class, national and other social structures. This does not mean that she is apolitical and utterly uninterested in social affairs. On the contrary, the Church takes interest in all matters that concern humanity – from justice and peace, to ethical principles and the political order. However, these questions are of a conditional and a relative value.

The primary objective of the Church is to evangelize and Christianize the society thus saving the world from sin and death. Sociologically speaking, the Church is a distinctively social phenomenon. The Church is “the new society”, “a city that is set on a hill” (Matt. 5:14), the model to all earthly cities and societies. However, her role is not to uphold any social order, or to be altogether mobilized in achieving objectives as laid down by any social structure and ideology. Her task is to liberate men and entire societies from the shackles of history, from social institutionalism and constitutionalism, which always poses a threat and a challenge to human dignity and freedom. She reveals both to the entire world and to the dimension of time the supra-historic, supra-

social, transcendental objectives and values. She reveals that which is ultimate and final, eternal and permanent.

On the Euro-American continent of today, there are no more open animosities and conflicts between modern societies and the Church, but there do exist some fundamental tensions and contradictions. The Church no longer regulates public or social life. She is either on the margins of the society or functionalized within the codes of the consumer ideology of progress. Liberal-democratic societies (and even more so the societies “in transition”) tend to use all their energy and resources to “emancipate” the entire social life and their institutions from Church influence and to exclude God as an active subject of the socio-historical processes.

A large number of people are convinced that the Church and the civil society cannot go hand in hand, that they represent mutually excluding notions. In a more radical form, there exists a dilemma: either freedom or God. Here in Serbia, this adversative notion also bears pedagogical implications projected through a compelling alternative: Church or civil upbringing and education. In our midst (and not only here) there are voices that say that the Christian and the modern are incompatible, that a society cannot enter Europe with Orthodoxy, that Orthodoxy is nationalistic, conservative, turned towards the past and not the future, that it is, even, an obstacle to liberal and democratic processes. Unfortunately, the European Union has not as yet determined an appropriate attitude towards Christianity and the Church, an attitude which would befit their historical role and their

significance in relation to Europe and, at the same time, be consistent with the nature of a secular political community. Modern societies are not antireligious (they even produce certain forms of secular religiousness), but they are largely anti-ecclesial and, even more so, anticlerical. More and more, Christianity is transforming into a natural religion. We are being faced with an explosion of pagan consciousness and religiousness, often seen going hand in hand with the practice of magic.

As it is widely known, the basic postulate of Christian faith is the faith in the Holy Trinity, or such a teaching which says that the Christian God is a Triune God existing as a communion of three divine Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These three persons are equal (identical, particular in nature). These three persons are made a single being by the Person of God the Father and free, unselfish and infinite love. Each person of the Holy Trinity has its own unique personal identity. Persons of the Holy Trinity are different, but they act in concert, in synergy, in unity. The first pages of the Bible state that man is the image of God, that man is called to exist in the same way God exists. In other words, the Holy Trinity serves as the model for the Church, the human society and the world.

What are the social implications of such a Christian ontology? I shall refer to just a few of the most significant categories:

The Orthodox theology emphasizes the *equality* (equal worth) of all human beings by nature. This implies equality

of genders by nature and impossibility of *subordination* among persons, peoples and genders.

Apart from the principle of equality in human nature, there is also the principle of *pluralism* (diversity). Diversity is a natural category. This means that a unique and an unrepeatable personal identity needs to be acknowledged in each and every human being. In addition to being proclaimed, this principle also needs to be protected and respected. Negation of diversity (pluralism) is essentially a negation of freedom. It should be emphasized that this implies religious, cultural, national and every other type of pluralism.

Third principle is the principle of *unity* (harmony, cooperation, synergy, symphony). God calls different people and nations, with no exception or discrimination, into communion with Him. He calls them to live in unity, accord, harmony. The world is called to be a “cosmic liturgy”. Unity of mankind is not a given thing, but a task, the ultimate objective. This unity does not imply any sort of unification or uniformity in the society, and even less so a suffocation or an eradication of personal, national, religious and cultural identities. Christian unity is the *unity in Christ-the-Truth, a unity of diversities* or *diversities in unity*. Centuries-long experience of the Church shows that unity without pluralism (diversity) on the social plane produces a totalitarian collectivity. Diversity (pluralism) without unity, on the other hand, produces anarchy, conflicts, divisions and animosities, and, ultimately, death among individuals, nations and religions. The essence of the Christian understanding of unity

is love, and not selfish interest. As far as Christians are concerned, *the other* is not a necessary evil that needs to be endured and tolerated for one reason or another; *the other* is the other half of our own being, our *alter ego*, our brother, regardless of the fact whether we are talking of *the other* on the vertical or on the horizontal plane.

The fourth principle is the principle of *balance* when we are speaking of the relation God – man, person – community, one – many, private – common, unity – diversity, local – universal, national – multinational. It wasn't always easy to achieve this balance, but the principle of balance was never given up.

The principle of *autonomy* (separation) between the Church and the state, but also of an awareness that cooperation among them is necessary. This is how the famous theory of *symphony* between the Church and the state had come into existence in the Christian East.

The category of *self-limitation* on all levels has always had an important role in the history of Christian peoples and societies. In addition to self-limitation, we should also mention *love, forgiveness, reconciliation*, the idea of *sainthood* and the idea of a *providential people*, which should be distinguished from the idea of a *chosen people*.

Category of *martyrdom* (testimony), which has nothing to do with necrophilia. Its significance lies in an attitude, which excludes any use of force as a means of resolving disputes and conflicts among men. This means that a man, faced with a dilemma of *suffering violence* or *performing*

violence, chooses suffering. This also implies giving up on taking revenge, since revenge is nothing but a repeated and a magnified crime.

Non-violent settlement of disputes and conflicts, which are, unfortunately, inevitable in history.

The persons of God and man are the greatest values of all worlds, thus they may not be sacrificed by any attempts to attain impersonal objectives or values.

A careful comparative analysis of numerous conventions and declarations on human rights, on one side, and many ecclesial documents which relate to the same social problems, on the other, would most certainly demonstrate great similarities between them, and even identicalness when speaking of matters concerning social ethics and axiology. The greatest divergences have to do with the question of abortion.

Sociologists and scholars of political science emphasize that the basic attributes of a civil society are pluralism, autonomy, civility, publicity, voluntariness, communal structures, solidarity, and subsidiary organization of the society. None of these principles are in disagreement with the principles of Christian sociology.

Lest she should betray her own self, the Church of Christ cannot but be in a permanent motion of non-violent resistance to all forms of totalitarianism, chauvinism, nationalism, etatism, egalitarianism, racial or religious discrimination. She has no single reason to deny her support or encouragement to all those who promote respect of

human personhood, human rights and freedoms, but also responsibilities, and to all those who promote a fairer redistribution of material goods, protection of the human environment, and disarmament. She needs to support all justified struggle against crime, terrorism, people trafficking and the trafficking of narcotics; against numerous other social anomalies such as alcohol abuse and the abundant abuse of science, technology, information technology, the media, the practice of “rocket diplomacy” and so on.

The Church should neither *a priori* accept social processes, nor negate them in panic. She is expected to interpret and explain social phenomena responsibly, critically and creatively. She is also expected to use Gospel and prophetic language whenever speaking out, and never form alliances with the most powerful social authorities.

On quite a few occasions, all local Orthodox Churches have given their support to democratic processes within the countries of ex-real socialism. The Church was the only “opposition” to communist dictatorships and, at the same time, their main victim. She should support the integration of Europe and the world, but she should also resist all forcible assimilation and unification. The Orthodox Church has been part of the ecumenical movement from the very start. From the theological standpoint, the need for inter-Christian and inter-religious dialogue and cooperation cannot be brought to question, mainly for soteriological rather than utilitarian reasons. Church history is always a reminder to us that the Church is faced with two equally pernicious

temptations – the temptation to “escape from history” and the temptation to “submit to history” and its natural social unbridled elements. I hope that the Church will know, in the future, how to resist both temptations, and that she shall always live according to the well-known antinomy: the Church is in the world (to watch over it and provide salvation for it), but not of this world. This is the optimal mode for the realization of her mission in the world.

All previous models regarding the relationship between the Church and the state have proved unsuccessful, at moments even tragic, both for the Church and for the world. If there is any truth in this, then we are facing a challenge of finding new forms of coexistence between the Church and the society, the Church and the state, which will be different from those of the past. “No one puts new wine into old wineskins” (Mark 2:22; Luke 5:37).

ORTHODOXY AND RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE

Relations between numerous religions, confessions, and denominations are better and more tolerant today than perhaps ever in history. Their conflicts do not cause tragic consequences as was often the case in the past. Nevertheless, it seems that hate, war, and violence among men and nations are hardly diminishing at all.

As far as the greatest part of the world is concerned, the Church and religions no longer standardize public and social life, nether do they exercise a decisive influence on the life of contemporary man. Their role has been taken over by the state, by political party leaders, bankers, representatives of the press, and the mass media. But this certainly does not mean that believers and religious-minded people in general bear no responsibility for everything that is going on in the world, for many of its tragedies and misfortunes.

Article 18 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* guarantees freedom of religion: "Everyone has the right to manifest his/her religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance, either alone or in community with others, and in public or private". Article 20 of the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* states that "any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence shall be prohibited by law". Both of these principles find their implementation within the positive legislation of all democratic states. This will direct us to the following conclusion: the greatest degree of freedom, religious tolerance and tol-

erance of any kind, exists there where some freedoms and faiths (religions) are prohibited – those that constitute incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence. On the other hand, where all faiths (religions) are tolerated, where every freedom is permitted, it is there that we have the greatest level of intolerance.

The notion of *religious tolerance* has been created by the liberal legal and political philosophy, and this is the reason why theologians prefer to speak about ecumenism and dialogue. No matter how noble and acceptable this idea is or might be, the Orthodox Church is skeptical towards the notion of *religious tolerance*. I will state several reasons for this: 1) Religious tolerance often emerges as an expression of religious indifference, faintheartedness, irresolution, and lack of concern towards the Truth; as a lacking of conviction and belief; 2) It is often reduced to and understood as a manifestation of religious and ecclesial diplomacy and tactics. It is then that *religious tolerance* may be seen as being in function of *religious manipulation*. All other faiths and religions are being tolerated declaratively, but only as a means of reinforcing the position of one's own faith and religion; 3) Religious tolerance is sometimes manifested as an attempt to negate and relativize all the so-called great classic religions, as a form of religious syncretism, as an attempt to create a new world religion which is today called "the religion of peace", "the universal religion", "the new Christianity", "the religion of the mind". The creation of an inter-religious god, "the cosmic apostle", "the world archi-

lect”, who then becomes apparent through numerous religions as “energy” in its own way, has all but become a fashion with the intellectuals. In the United States of America there exists a temple of all religions, “the temple of understanding”. There also exists the so-called “United Religions Initiative” consisting of several projects aimed at creating an institutional association of religions envisaged as a match to the United Nations. Regardless of their motivations and intentions, attempts to merge all religions into one essentially lead towards a religious unification of the world and religious monism. However, each monism, be it even religious, ends up either with the death of God or with the de-personalization of man. In other words, it ends up with spiritual totalitarianism; 4) Religious tolerance may be seen as being in function of attempts to conform and adapt religious institutions to those of the world, i.e. those belonging to the state (social and political institutions), which are then meant to serve the consumer society attain its own objectives.

If judged by its consequences and not by intentions behind the idea as such, religious tolerance is, unfortunately, often in the function of that which Markuze has called “repressive tolerance”, i.e. in the function of attempts to de-personalize and humiliate man or, even if unconsciously, of giving support to the most potent “power centers” of this world.

One of the most important issues of our time and epoch is the problem concerning ecumenism, religious tolerance,

and dialogue. This is an ontological, anthropological and an existential problem, and it is dangerous to reduce it to the level of a “moral” improvement of relations between numerous religions, confessions and their institutions. They should be in the function of salvation of the world and man, of a revelation, and of the establishment of a novel way of existence, of a freer and a more joyous method of life. Unfortunately, today as in the past, this appears to be an unsolvable problem, the solution of which is always being postponed. Anti-ecumenism and religious intolerance are still on fertile grounds. There is an abundance of attempts to justify them both by the use of numerous argumentations, but they are, nevertheless, unjustifiable. Ecumenism, as a desire to unify all Christians and to establish and maintain dialogue between Christians and non-Christians, should be seen as a permanent objective and an unrelenting task even when it might seem that it is not bearing any real fruit or any concrete results.

The Church exists in this world in order to unify all men and nations, the entire cosmos, with the Holy Trinity. This is “the program” of the Church, and the task of the Church. She sees herself as a synodal, a convergent, and a catholic communion. The Orthodox Church has a catholic mind, nurturing affection and concern for all men and nations regardless of their doctrine, denomination, gender, language, color of skin, or nationality. As far as Orthodox theology is concerned every *other* man is a necessity, a brother, an icon of God, the most cherished of all sanctities. It is not religions,

theories, cultures, teachings, dogmas and nations that enter into eternity; eternity is being entered by living and very concrete human beings. The Church does not support any attempts to relativize the Truth; she does not tolerate demonic elements of this world, faiths, teachings and religions that desecrate human dignity. She hates sin and deviation from the Truth, but she loves man. God loves us not because we are good, tolerant, moral, or true believers, but, simply, because He loves us. God's love requires no reason. Throughout the entire Church history, divine love and the love of the Church have also been manifested towards those who were outside the Church, even towards enemies. The most concrete proof of this is the fact that saints have performed miracles over the non-Orthodox.

The Eucharist is not celebrated just for the sake of the Orthodox, but for all human beings and the entire cosmos. At the occasion of each of her services the Church prays "for peace of the whole world" and "for the unity of all". Apostle Peter says: "God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him" (Acts 10:34-35). Saint John Chrysostom, one of the leading theologians and Fathers of the Church, says that he does not believe in the salvation of anyone who would spare effort to save others. This would mean that we the Orthodox cannot find salvation if we should fail to do all we can so that others may be saved and that others may also have everlasting life. This implies that we should not exert any violence against other faiths, and that it is not

enough just to “tolerate” them with indifference. We are asked to do much more – to externalize from our own selves, to conform to the *non-I*, to other human beings and nations that belong to other religions or other Christian confessions. We should be able to get to know them, to understand their sufferings and their problems – to be able to enter their world. This means that we should love them.

As far as the Orthodox Church is concerned, her participation in the ecumenical movement and the dialogue with non-Christian religions is not a matter of tactics and diplomacy. It represents the *mission* of the Church – manifestation of the very identity of the Church. The question of religious tolerance and ecumenism is primarily a *soteriological* problem and a *soteriological* question, i.e. it is an expression of Church’s concern for the salvation of all. Anti-ecumenism is often being justified with an ostensible concern for the safeguard of the “Orthodox Tradition” and the preservation of the “Faith of the Fathers”. This is something that might be heard from the mouths of some theologians. However, non-participation in the ecumenical dialogue, and an exhibited lack of concern, responsibility and love for those who do not belong to the Orthodox Church, would essentially mean a capitulation of the Orthodox to an un-Orthodox mind and an un-Orthodox spirit. Such an attitude on the part of the Church would imply a renunciation of her own *mission* – a renunciation of her own self. If I correctly understand Orthodoxy and the nature of the Orthodox Church, the measure of the Truth is not in her

doctrine, conviction, religion, text, dogma, canon; the measure of the Truth is the living person of God-man Christ, i.e. the Church as the Body of Christ and a communion of love. The expression of love on the part of Orthodox Christians for those who do not think the same, who are non-Orthodox, non-Christian, and even enemies, in no way implies that in doing so the Orthodox need to abandon their own Tradition, their dogmas, canons, and teaching. On the contrary, this would be a confirmation in practice of all of the above mentioned.

The Orthodox cannot renounce religious tolerance whose *telos* is the Truth, for it is only the Truth that liberates and regenerates. “Vertical” ecumenism, the unity in faith and the unity in Truth, is the necessary precondition of “horizontal” ecumenism. Without a living and a personal God there can be no peace and good will among men. Should the Orthodox ever decide to abandon their faith, their Tradition and teaching, this would then mean that they would be abandoning the ecumenical movement and the ecumenism of love which is the only one giving true fruit. This would imply a self-negation of the Church, a reduction of the Church to the level of a religious society with a special agenda. The objective and the aspiration of the Orthodox is to obtain the unity of all in Christ, the unity in faith and the unity in Eucharist. Their centuries-long experience teaches them that there cannot be any transformation, any change for better, or true human freedom unless the Truth is separated from falsehood, and the good separated from evil. Ec-

umenism and religious tolerance presuppose personal self-limitation, repentance and forgiveness, which are in their turn conditioned by the ability to forget sins and crimes of the other, and the capacity to wage war against one's own self. This means that it is necessary to perform a "podvig" (a spiritual struggle) which might enable us to restrain such impulses of our nature which otherwise coerce her to embrace egoism, selfishness, self-isolation and hate.

Both religious tolerance and ecumenism are in crisis today. This crisis has been conditioned by a serious crisis of ecclesial self-consciousness. Secular culture and secular civilization have penetrated all aspects of Church life. The world is almost mesmerized by the "ideology of a painless existence" (Thomas Macho). This type of existence inevitably presupposes a life without love. This method of life – life without love – brings about mental impotency, intellectual confusion and spiritual sclerosis. Efforts are being made to substitute love among human beings with a Pharisaic cordiality, and an overly sweet *moralism*. In such a spiritual environment ecumenism is being reduced to the level of an often unsuccessful religious diplomacy, to barren "communications", "declarations", and "appeals" for peace and good relations between men.

Division, separation, pluralism of faiths, religions, and truths shape the destiny of history, the destiny of fallen man. It is as if disputes and conflicts are some sort of a historical inevitability. But this doesn't give us the right to give up on our hope and our ambition that all should become one in

Christ. Even if disputes and conflicts between different religions, faiths and men cannot be completely eradicated, it is worth exerting all efforts to reduce them to the smallest possible measure. If we desire to be “the salt” of the earth and of this world, it is then our obligation to feel the pain and sorrow, to show our love for those who are walking other paths, and all this for the sake of unification of all in Christ, for the sake of the Grace of unity, the unity in freedom and diversity. Any dialogue is better than no dialogue at all. As long as we incline toward maintaining communication, toward bringing people together and establishing unity among them, and if we do so with love and for the sake of Christ, then there is still hope that we might reach our desired objective. Should we fail to move in this direction we risk losing even the natural inclination we have towards each other, thus turning the other into our own *hell* (Sartre) instead of making him our brother.

Today we live in an age of unbelievably rapid world integrations. We are faced with an intensifying permeation of different faiths and confessions. All societies and states have become multiethnic and multi-confessional. Local problems are becoming global and general in their character, for the world has become extraordinarily interdependent. There are numerous signs and developments which point towards the possibility of a serious and even dramatic future conflict between the Islamic and the Euro-American (one might say, with all reservations, *Christian*) civilizations. If we also remember the Orthodox diaspora, i.e. the fact that the Ortho-

dox Church now exists on all continents, then this should be more than enough to bring our awareness to such a level where we should find that our dialogue with other Christians and non-Christians is absolutely necessary. However, there are some preconditions to this.

In order to establish and lead a true dialogue with others we must first establish a dialogue among ourselves, among all Orthodox Christians. One might say that present-day dialogue inside each Orthodox Church, as well as the one between respective Orthodox Churches, is almost symbolic, nominal, and reduced almost to the bare minimum. There are such relationships between some Churches which are cold and indifferent in their character. There exists a state of discrepancy and divergence between the nature of the Orthodox Church and the ecclesial institutions, between the form and the content. Manifestations of formalism, juridical mindedness, moralism, secularism, and bureaucratization of ecclesial institutions are some of our most serious temptations. The Church is being shaken by the principal heresies of our age – ethnophyletism and ethnocentrism. There are many today who nationalize Christ and adapt Christ to their own national passions instead of striving to become truly Orthodox and truly Christian, i.e. instead of adapting both themselves and their lives to Christ. There are some striking manifestations of “righteous arrogance”. There exists a widening superiority complex stemming from the false notion of “the innocent East” and “the rotten West”. It is as if it is being overlooked that the East is now in the West, and

the West in the East. Many historical false notions are still “alive and kicking”, together with all those prejudices and ideological clichés which we employ as optical instruments for observing others. All these problems prevent the Church from implementing her mission and from assuming her true role in the world.

Save for some very rare individuals, our knowledge of Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Anglican theology is at an intolerably low level, but that does not seem to prevent us from articulating categorical judgments and assertions which are often in contradiction to the bare facts. This has an effect of turning our points of view into ideological judgments and prejudices. I am afraid that the situation is no better on the other side, i.e. when other Christian Churches, denominations, and confessions are observing us. There exists an even greater lack of information and a state of ignorance regarding Islam, Buddhism, Zen, and Judaism. Prior to entering into dialogue with the non-Christians, i.e. before making dialogue with them at all possible, it is necessary to effect a clear theological position regarding non-Christian religions. It would be necessary to obtain a clear answer as to which aspects of those religions might be positively assessed by our side.

The twentieth century has seen a great renewal of authentic Orthodox theology. A vision of the world and life has been revealed from this perspective, but this vision has not as yet achieved connection with real and concrete life which is conditioned by another, completely different phi-

losophy. Within the concrete life of the Church there still exists a mentality which has been created by the “imported” apologetic and scholastic theology which is, essentially, nothing but a sort of a “legal representation”, or moralism. Initially, theses are being put forward, most often by employing the principle of the so-called negative selection; then there follow objections, and in the conclusion we have the judgment and the verdict. Both the Gospel and the entire theology are reduced to a moral system of prohibitions, to regulations regarding offences and penalties which sometimes end up as legal norms. The consequence of this is that the law of love, being the only law of the Church, is being substituted by a positive legal norm making the Church function as a legal institution, no different from any other legal institution. There is a real danger that such mentality and such a state of mind might turn ecumenism into *corporatism*. If this trap is to be avoided it is necessary to effect a true theological “podvig” (a spiritual struggle) along with an effort to create a theological mind and a theological way of thinking; to develop intellectual ripeness, soberness, and responsibility.

Orthodox anthropology is exceptionally personalistic, communicative and open. Man is a *communicative* and a *communal* being. Dialogue and mission constitute the very nature of the Church. Reserved exclusiveness and self-isolation, sectarian logic and psychology, are all foreign to the Orthodox Church. Obviously, there are those among the Orthodox who are overcome by these temptations, but they

certainly do not form a majority. Guided by the principle of economy (*oikonomia*), the Orthodox Church has always been indulgent, condescending, and tolerant towards those who were not her members. Christians are being expected to be strict and unrelenting only in relation to their own selves while being gentle to the other, this, of course, being the means of winning someone over for Christ. However, condescension and tolerance can only be practiced to the point where they are not jeopardizing the very being of the Church.

Ecumenism and religious tolerance are problems, the solution of which may affect the future destiny of the world. We simply cannot but invest everything at our disposal to raise ecumenism and religious tolerance to the highest level possible. We cannot be satisfied with that which has been done to this date. However, there is no place for discouragement in this matter, since there are such things which have already been achieved. It is perhaps necessary to effect a change of principles and perspective; we should perhaps substitute ritualistic and congressional ecumenism for an ecumenism of love. Nonetheless, although it is undisputable that dialogue, tolerance, and ecumenism are all a necessity, we should not fail to keep an open eye for such great perils that might lay in ambush and turn things into their own contradiction. My feeling is that there is no place either for a panicky negation, or an uncritical reception. As far as the attitude to such important issues is concerned, exercise of sobriety and caution is well justified; the same should apply when making use of the dialectic relationship *akrebia – oikonomia*.

THE ORTHODOX CHURCH AND THE NATION

It is pretty much a widely held opinion that the local (autocephalous) Orthodox Churches are also national Churches, i.e. that within Orthodoxy there exists an identification of faith with nationhood, i.e. ethnicity. Other Churches (Roman Catholic and Protestant Churches, and religious communities) are thought to be international in their character. Quite a few people in Serbia see the Church as one of the national institutions whose task is to safeguard Serbian national characteristics, customs, language, folklore, culture, as well as the “territorial integrity and sovereignty” of the Serbian state. From the standpoint of history, the Orthodox Church has truly formed the national identity of East-Christian peoples. The same also applies to the Latin Church as far as the West-European nations are concerned. Throughout most of its history and until the most recent times, Christianity permeated and inspired all pores of popular and social life: culture, art, politics, economy, literature, and public morality. During periods of foreign occupation, the Church also wielded political authority, since civil political authority did not exist (it was not allowed to exist). As a consequence, today’s ethnic Greeks, Romanians, Bulgarians, Russians, and Serbs feel Orthodox “by birth” (an ethnic Croatian feels Roman Catholic), although faith is always considered an act of free will and free choice.

The Christian notion of the nation differs substantially from that of present day secular societies. Christian nations were open both vertically and horizontally. A nation’s ob-

jective was to serve God and realize God's will on earth. The Church transformed (transfigured) nations; she Christianized them and directed them towards supranational aspirations and values. It was the same case with Christian nations in the West. Modern secularized nations become a myth, a totem, a divinity, "the mystical foundation of all authority". National will is the source of law and politics. A modern nation strives to "emancipate" the entire life of the society from Church influence, since it (the nation, *translator's note*) is in itself a pseudo-church. Both God and the Church are being subjugated to national egotism and are being included to become part of the code to an own messianic national ideology. The amalgamation of faith with such a notion of nationhood is a heresy known as ethno-phyletism (religious nationalism). Justin Popović says: "The Church is oecumenical, synodal, Theandric, eternal; it is thus a blasphemy, an unforgivable blasphemy against Christ and the Holy Spirit, to make of her a national institution, to narrow her down to petty, temporary national objectives and methods... It is time; it is the twelfth hour that some of our Church representatives cease being exclusively servants of nationalism and politics, regardless of which and whose politics, and become archpriests and priests of the one, holy, synodal, and apostolic Church". "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28). He is "all, and in all" (Col 3:11).

It might be read in some historical-sociological, and

even theological literature, that the Orthodox Church is “national”, “non-national”, “oecumenical” (international), “supranational” etc. All of these assertions may be partially correct. The Church is not an abstract community. She is always manifested within a certain nation, certain time, and certain space. From her very beginnings she proclaimed the Gospel within the categories of local culture and local language. At the same time, she opened up any given nation, freeing it from national egotism and self-sufficiency; “she forced it to exteriorize” and establish coexistence with other nations. The Church does not negate national entities, but she denies all forms of subordination among them, as well as moral or axiological superiority. According to national affiliation of her faithful, any local or autocephalous Church may be multinational (if the geographical area covered by the given Church is inhabited by members belonging to different nations), or single-national (if the geographical area covered by the given Church is nationally homogenous). Theoretically speaking, a local Church may also be non-national should her faithful not wish to identify with any nation. Therefore, the Church neither negates nor does she strive to make the national factor absolute; she brings about unity within a diversity (“a reconciled diversity”) of many nations. The Church herself is the “new Israel”, the “people of God”, the “new society”, her members belonging to different historical peoples and nations.

Each nation has the right and the opportunity to enter the Church with a prospect of keeping its national identity

within, but no nation has the right to have its “very own” exclusive “national Church” which would “nationalize” Christ, consolidate national egotism, or deify its own self.

Without minimizing the ecclesial-doctrinaire causes, historical conflicts among nations (all being within the Church) have produced some truly tragic consequences. The conflict between the Greeks and the Latins had brought about the tragic schism of 1054 which has not healed to this date; the same would apply to the conflict between the Latin (Romanic) and German worlds in the 16th century. When it is said in a colloquial speech that a certain local Church is “Greek”, “Russian”, “Bulgarian”, “Macedonian” that does not mean that we are talking of distinctive, independent, and self-sufficient Churches. No local Church may be independent in relation to other local Churches. One faith, one Church of Christ is actualized among various peoples, nations and states, always remaining the one Church of Christ. This is why it would be more appropriate to speak of the Orthodox Church in Serbia, Russia, Montenegro, Europe, Asia, Africa... Autocephaly of local Orthodox Churches should not be identified with the 19th century idea of national sovereignty, although this is still done by some today.

The Church always communicates with very concrete persons, and not some faceless entities. The Church is not an archeological institution safeguarding decrepit national traditions. The mission of the Church cannot be functionalized to satisfy the needs and objectives of any form of secular nationalism or internationalism.

ECUMENISM

There still seems to be no end to various disputes on the subject of ecumenism, as is also the case regarding the processes of globalization, mundialization and McDonaldization. For some, it is the “greatest evil”, “betrayal of Orthodoxy and national interests”, “loss of identity”. For others, ecumenism is the affirmation of the Church, her testimony and preservation of her identity. Some negate ecumenism in great panic; others accept it uncritically, while there are those who accept it, but only under specific conditions.

Why is it that the Orthodox Church today participates with other Christian Churches in the ecumenical movement and dialogue? It is because her very nature is *dialogical*. Should the Orthodox Church ever cease her dialogue with other Christian Churches, non-Christian religions, secular religious movements, and all ideological and spiritual challenges of the modern world, she would then cease to be the Church and transform into a sect. “Not a single historical ecclesial communion can pretend to be the Church if it ceases to strive towards unity with other Churches” (John Zizioulas). The Christian God (the Holy Trinity) is fundamentally defined through the category of a *relationship*, both internally and externally in relation to the world; Christian ontology is dialogical. God is love, the *I–You* relationship. Being the basic source of Christian learning, revelation of God has a dialogical character where, on one side, we have God revealing Himself and, on the other, any given man accepting and communicating this revelation to others.

As far as Christians are concerned, being true man entails coexistence with the other. Man is not a self-enclosed and a self-sufficient monad, but a being in service to the other. It is this dialogical and relational dimension, rather than his intellectual and ethical characteristics, which makes man a unique being – an icon of God. The Orthodox method of life has always been seen as an effort of self-subjugation of a merely self-centered mode of existence. Being Christian means maintaining a permanent process of liberation from personal and collective forms of egotism and exasperation caused by an injured sense of selfishness. Everything within the Gospel is under the sign of an encounter and the joy effected by the encounter with the other. Christian gnoseology is dialogical. Knowing God (world and man) has always meant loving Him and forming a relationship with Him. Everything within the structure of the Orthodox Church is interdependent. No one and nothing can exist just for one's (or its) own sake. Orthodox Liturgy, representing the identity of the Church, is entirely dialogical. Fasting and asceticism have as their goal victory over selfishness, externalization from one's own self, and movement towards the other. "Nothing is more typical to our nature than our communion with another" (St. Basil the Great, 4th century). The Church exists within the world so that it might effect an existential transformation (transfiguration) of humanity, otherwise divided and torn into pieces through sin, into a communion of free persons united with God and with one another so that the entire world might become a "cosmic

Liturgy”.

The Church can never reconcile with schism and disunion, or strive towards her own “independence” in relation to others. Those who do reconcile with the state of schism and disunion commit a graver sin than those who have originally effected it, since they are thus in denial of the will of God which says that all should be one at the end of history. Christian identity presupposes denial of one’s own self and liberation from all shackles of nature and history by, amongst other things, building one’s confidence and one’s identity upon the other. Christian freedom is not freedom from the other, but freedom for the other. Christian dialogue should be a dialogue in truth and love. It does not strive towards the unification of Churches, but towards a “reconciled diversity” (unity of diversities). Such a dialogue guards the Church from two equally dangerous temptations of “open relativism” and “introverted fanaticism”.

Ecumenism is not a “fashion” or a matter of ecclesial tactics and diplomacy. It is not motivated by unilateral but, above all, existential and ontological reasons. It is not an expression of weakness or feebleness, but a manifestation of the very nature of the Church. Therefore, the “idea of Christian unity and unification is the theme of the century, the theme of time, the theme of history” (George Florovsky) and, unavoidably, an imperative for all Christians even when it is not giving desired results. The most prominent personalities of the Orthodox Church have created the idea and the notion of a pan-human, of pan-humanhood, of pan-

human brotherhood, panhuman communion, panhuman love, panhuman care, panhuman mind and panhuman sensibility. Narrow-mindedness, fanaticism, introversive attitude to life, and non-acceptance of others have never been characteristic to East Christian peoples until recent times, when a considerable number of individuals have become susceptible to this and at a very wrong time – when the entire world is integrating at an incredible speed, on all levels, and as never before in world history.

CHRISTIANITY AND SCIENCE

During a dramatic and at moments tragic history of the relationship between Christianity, theology and science, there existed (and there still exist) scientists believers, scientists agnostics, and scientists non-believers. On the other hand, there also existed such theologians who ignored reason and cognition through reason, who ignored science having a negative attitude towards it. There also existed those who accepted science under certain conditions and, of course, there were (and there still are) such theologians who had a positive attitude towards knowledge gained by science. Although there are numerous theories on the relationship between Christianity and science, they could all be reduced to three:

1. Generally, science and religion, and thus science and Christianity, are mutually *exclusive* notions. They may be in absolute opposition to each other: science deals with the material world, visible and tangible; on the other hand, religion and theology solely deal with the transcendental or the otherworldly. This implies that only hostility may exist among them, or a mutual state of total disregard and indifference.

2. Theory of *concord* or *complementariness*. Science and theology, i.e. science and religion relate to distinctive realities, but their mutual relationship is not hostile, neither does it need to be; there exists a state of association and interdependence between them.

3. An endeavor to create a *Christian science* (Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and Pavel Florensky). They attempted to cre-

ate a unique vision of the world, a cosmology equally open to science, philosophy and theology.

It is the opinion of many scientists, even those involved in natural sciences, that modern science is inherited from Christianity. It is a product of the West European culture, which, of course, does not imply that other cultures and religions, such as those belonging to the Ancient Egyptians, the Chinese, the Greeks, the Jews, and people belonging to the Islamic tradition, etc., did not have their own contributions to science. This is being stated by many scientists including one of the best theoreticians of science, Alfred Whitehead, in his famous work *Science and the Modern World*. In order to understand this correctly, one must appreciate that Christian medieval Europe represented a world ruled by order. Medieval thought is entirely rationalistic, having as its source scholastic logic and theology.

When Europe rejected scholastic religious-philosophical thought, the scholastic way of thinking was retained in the minds of European intellectuals – philosophers, scientists, theologians. It is evident that this very type of thought is typical for science itself. It has come into existence under the influence of Greek philosophy, Roman law, and, of course, medieval theology. The essential characteristic of the European spirit is the conviction that there exists law and order in nature, and that it is possible to discover this law and order, implying nothing less than the possibility of discovery of the causes and consequences in nature, i.e. the cause of causality without which classical scientific theories

are unimaginable, although these are today being seriously challenged by modern physics. In a long process, the European man developed an ideal of a world governed by laws. There even existed a belief (which still exists today) that the world could be rationally organized in such a manner that (from such law and order) even life might be created. Until the 17th century it was not possible to draw a demarcation line between theology, philosophy and the sciences, and even the arts. Christian theology and the sciences were mutually conditioned and mutually permeated.

It was only during the 18th and the 19th century that there occurred a separation between theology and science and a development of mutual antagonism. It was also during this period that science acquired the characteristics of religion, and that religion acquired the characteristics of science. Logical positivism and scientism were announcing the end of theology, the end of religion, the death of metaphysics, and the death of God. According to these theories scientific truths are not only absolute and certain, and not only does science have a monopoly in discovering truth, but, as Bertrand Russell would say, there can be no knowledge outside science. If science can say nothing on any given matter, this would then imply that we are dealing with something which is incogitable; it is senseless even to think about this matter, since it simply does not exist. It was during this period that theology developed the so-called apologetic thought which endeavored to offer scientific evidence on the existence of God; it was mostly concerned with numer-

ous scientific hypotheses on God, and especially so with those which were negative. Tragic consequences of science turning into religion and religion turning into science have not been fully evaluated to this day.

Such tendencies lingered on into the 20th century, but there simultaneously developed an awareness and a conviction that a dialogue between theology and science was necessary. Werner Heisenberg, the famous physicist, once said that science and religion could manage without one other, but that humankind could not cope without either of them. This great scientist often emphasized that the most productive development always occurred when both (different) types of thought were involved in solving a given problem. The prevailing attitude among scientists today is that science has its limits and that there exists a point beyond which science cannot be applied. There are such questions for which science cannot provide answers; there exist such manifestations which are incomprehensible to science. Furthermore, it is a prevalent opinion today that science does not necessarily lead into atheism as it was believed in the recent past. Danish physicist and Nobel Prize winner, Niels Bohr, said that those that state that anyone involved in scientific research necessarily becomes atheists must be pretty stupid. More and more scientists and theologians are coming to the conclusion that there are daily indications which offer new preconditions and reveal a necessity for a successful dialogue and development of cooperation between science and theology.

Many feel that theology needs to rely more on scientific discoveries, since it is these that often confirm various theological statements and positions. As an example of this many quote the cosmological *Big Bang* theory and the entropic principle of the Second Law of Thermodynamics. Contemporary physics is shaping a new vision of the world with its fundamental principles touching upon and coinciding with Christian theology. It gives preference to probability and freedom over necessity, and communication over individuality. More and more it is being said on holistic medicine, and even on holism in theology, within the Church, not to mention cosmology and communications.

It is my profound belief that science without faith is often one-sided, cruel, and even brutal. On the other hand, faith, theology and religion without science may often be blind, turning into superstition and even magic. Russian religious thinker, Nikolai Berdyaev, wrote that times are coming where an ambivalent science will not be possible; it will have to be either Christian or become a manifestation of black magic. Today it is no longer necessary to convince anyone (and not as an expression of some sort of a new fashion among intellectuals) as to how important for the destiny of the world is a true and a creative dialogue between religion and science.

CHRISTIAN CULTURE³⁰

Today everybody speaks of a “crisis in culture”. This imposes many questions: What is culture? What is the relationship between traditional and modern culture? Does culture have its worth by its own self and in its own self? Isn’t culture a luxury, or just some sort of a game? Isn’t it just vanity, arrogance, or extravagance? Isn’t it a trap for the soul?

Has the contemporary mass and consumer culture become merchandise? Is the “man of culture”, or the “civilized man”, better and more noble in comparison to the “non-cultured”, or the “uncultivated man”? What is the attitude of Christians towards culture? What is the value of the traditional Christian culture for the contemporary man? Is it existential, museological, or archeological? What is the nature of Christian cultural creativity today? How do Christians see the contemporary ideal of multiculturalism? How is trash culture to be differentiated from genuine culture? Are there attempts to idolize and mythologize culture, and then have it offered as an opium to the meta-physically insensitive masses?

These are just some of the questions which require answers. Instead of answering these questions, I shall offer a few principal standpoints that are related to questions being posed.

1. Man is a creative being and, in a sense, the vice-creator

³⁰ Lecture delivered at the Seventh International Conference of the Middle European Diocese of the Serbian Orthodox Church, Evangelical Church of Germany (EKD), and the German Conference of Bishops (DBK) “Clash of Cultures”, Golubac, 25-27 November, 2005

of the universe. Man is a being of cult and culture. It is through culture that he is being realized as a person; it is through culture that man attempts to amalgamate his past, present, and future. As a God-like being, he belongs to two worlds: the created (material), and the uncreated (divine). By utilizing his creative potentials and his energies, man transcends the created world thus freeing himself from the shackles imposed by the elements of nature. It is through culture that he cries out for a new world, for a new life, “the new earth and the new heaven”. Man uses his creativity to build his very own world. It is through culture that matter is being transformed into spirit, while the spirit is being objectified and turned into matter. There was a time when creative effort in culture was compared with priesthood. Culture is a means of communication among men. Culture is a **gift** and a wealth of riches.

2. Essentially, Christian culture may be seen as being the frame of Christ’s icon, despite the fact that it is not monolithic and that there exist several types of Christian culture: Romanic (Latin), German (Gothic), and Byzantine (Orthodox). Orthodox culture is theurgic; it is the culture of **eschatological realism**, a prosopography of its own kind. In all of its forms both here and now, in time and space, and in history, it makes present and objectifies the future Kingdom of God. This culture is iconic since it iconizes the Archetype, the Person of God-man Christ, the true God and the true man. Cult is the source of Christian culture, which has no *raison d’etre* in itself and by itself. Both the cause of cul-

ture and her objective lay outside her own self. Culture is in the function of Liturgy. Architecture, iconography, frescoes, music, applied art – these are all in the function of Liturgy. The church as a temple is “the image of heaven on earth”. The icon is “the window to heaven”, i.e. it is “the veneration” leading up to the prototype. Christian culture is that external ambience the purpose of which is to stimulate and direct man towards an existential encounter with God. Culture is a means of communication with the other; it is a means to ennoble character, to tame human nature which has turned wild through sin. The principle purpose of culture is to overcome selfishness, pride, and man’s biggest enemy – death.

3. When culture is separated from cult and ascetic life, she herself becomes subservient to objects instead of freeing man from slavery to objects. She then becomes a myth and a fetish. Estrangement from God has as its consequence an attitude of idolatry in relation to culture. It is then that culture and its components are being sacralized thus becoming new deities. Even the Christians were not immune to idolatrous culture.

4. Contemporary Christian cultural creativity (including that of the Orthodox) is endangered both from the outside and from the inside. It is justifiable to pose the following question: Are contemporary Christians truly creating new themes in culture or are we dealing here with copies, reproductions, restorations, photography, and general attempts to conserve the past. It seems that the latter is the case, and all

under the excuse of being true to the “faith of the Fathers”. Today all Christian nations suffer from romantic visions of the past when everything “used to be ideal and perfect” as opposed to being “perverse and defective” today. An icon or a church is “more Orthodox” if it is a better copy of an already existing, old one. This tendency threatens to turn the Church into an ordinary museum of art or cultural antiquities and customs, undoubtedly stunningly beautiful, but tragically lifeless. The power of this cultural ultra-conservatism is neither small nor negligible, regardless of the fact that there still exist such people in culture today who draw their inspiration from the **eschaton**. We do not need an “exotic” Christian (Orthodox) culture today, but such a culture which is capable of “marrying” and inspiring the contemporary age; we need a culture which is capable of expressing that which is radically new, that which Christ has given to the world, that which is to be realized in full in times to come. Freedom is the necessary precondition to any true and authentic Christian culture.

5. The Orthodox Church has never advocated a cultural unification of the world. Yesterday, today and tomorrow, her stance was, is, and shall be the coexistence and permeation of different popular cultures. Each nation and each individual has the right to manifest its/his own faith within categories of its/his own culture. Gospel enculturation into each local culture is a must. This is why Europe should be seen as a mosaic of different cultures. We live in an age of cultural globalization, of an unbelievable global integration.

Owing to the informational and techno-technological advancements, man is now able to participate in all the cultures of the world, and this is the new reality we are now facing. Cultural globalization gives rise to a sense of vulnerability and hazard among all national cultures (be they great or small). And yet, today's world belongs to no single nation or culture. Today's world belongs to all cultures which are capable of creating their own place in it. Christianity has a distinctly personalistic and an open anthropology and ontology, as well as an open and a communicable culture. This is why it can never accept cultural ghettoization and isolation.

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Biography

Professor Radovan Bigović, ThD, was born in Nikšić, Montenegro, on January 17, 1956. He was educated at the Orthodox Seminary in Krka Monastery before graduating from the Faculty of Orthodox Theology, University of Belgrade, in 1980. He also graduated from the Faculty of Philosophy (Department of Philosophy), University of Belgrade, in 1982. He earned his Doctorate of Theology at the Faculty of Orthodox Theology in Belgrade in 1993. At the same Faculty he was appointed Assistant Lecturer in 1986, Senior Lecturer in 1993, Associate Professor in 2000, and Full Professor in 2011. He reposed in the Lord on May 31, 2012 at the age of 56.

In the Faculty of Orthodox Theology he taught three undergraduate courses: “Introduction to Theology,” “Introduction to Roman Catholic Theology,” “Introduction to Protestant Theology,” and at the graduate level he gave lectures on “Ecumenical Theology.” On two occasions he was elected Dean and Vice-Dean of the Faculty of Orthodox Theology.

Domestically and abroad Professor Bigović took part in many symposia, seminars, conferences, and round tables, also giving numerous lectures in various ecclesial and secular institutions. He published numerous studies (From Pan-human to God-man, The Church and Society, St. Basil of Ostrog Monastery, The Church in Postmodern Times, The Orthodox Philosophy of Politics, Metaphysics of Pan-Humanhood, and Sailors of the Sky), as well as articles and essays. His book *The Church and the Society* is translated into Bulgarian and some of his articles are also translated into

English and Italian. For more than a decade he acted as the chief editor of the theological journal *Teološki Pogledi* (Theological Views).

In addition to being a priest at the Monastery of the Archangel Gabriel in the township of Zemun and a professor at the Faculty of Theology, his other public activities were numerous. He was a member of the Governing Body of RTS (Radio and TV of Serbia), of the Advisory Committee of the Military Medical Academy in Belgrade, of the Ethical Committee of the Children's Medical Institute in Belgrade, and of the Yugoslav Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Professor Bigović was also a member of: the Association of Writers of Serbia, the University Council of the University of Belgrade, the Governing Body of the Alumni Association of the University of Belgrade, the Editorial Board of the Serbian Biographical Dictionary of *Matica Srpska*, and the Cultural and Educational Community of Belgrade. He was also a member of the Amnesty Commission of the President of the Republic of Serbia and of the Republic of Serbia Commission for Cooperation with UNESCO. He was one of the founders and the first president of the Christian Cultural Center in Belgrade and the initiator of the establishment of the St.s Cyril and Methodius Fund. He was the publishing editor-in-chief of the philosophical-theological library of the Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia.

Professor Bigović was married with two children and three grandchildren. Within the Serbian Orthodox Church he held the highest office for married priests – Protopresbyter-Stavrophore.

Katalogizacija.....