

V. BOOK REVIEWS

Radomir Popovic, *Serbian Orthodox Church in History* (translated in English by Petar V. Serovic, Belgrade and Novi Sad: Art Print, 2005), 135 p.

The history of the Serbian Orthodox Church is known in the Romanian space, but also in the other Orthodox spaces, mostly due to the activity of some important Serbian personalities, like Saint Nikolas Velimirovic¹ or Saint Justin Popovic². The

main reason for such a problem is the fact that most of the works dedicated to this subject are not translated in English or France.

Therefore, the publication of some works like the one of Bosko Bojovic³ about the Serbian Orthodox Church means a lot for the research of this subject in other cultural spaces. However, if the aforementioned work is addressed to specialists, the one of Professor Radomir Popovic, who teaches the History of the Church at the Faculty of Orthodox Theology from Belgrade, can be read and analysed by anyone who wants to improve his/her knowledge about this subject. It is similar to the synthesis about the history of our Orthodox Church, realised by Father Mircea Păcurariu⁴.

His research is segmented in 11 chapters. In the first one (pp. 9-19), he speaks about the arrival of the Serbs in the Balkans and their Christianisation. In simple words, he shows that they became Christians in the 7th century and this process was influenced

¹ Saint Nikolas, who lived at the end of the 19th century and in the first part of the 20th one, studied in Oxford and, during the First World War, travelled to the United Kingdom and to the USA to support his country. Some of his conferences about the history of his homeland were published in English. For more information about his life and activity, see: Nicolaj Velimirovic, *Religion and Nationality in Serbia*, (Breingsville: PA USA, 2010); Nicolaj Velimirovic, *Short works of Nikolai Velimirovic* (Lexington: BiblioBazar, 2008); Mark D. Chapman, "The Church of England, Serbia and the Serbian Orthodox Church in the First World War, in Vladislav Puzovitzky (coord.), *Pravoslavi Svet i Prvi stecki pat*, (Belgrade: Pravoslavni Bogosloviki Fakultet Universiteta, 2015), p. 385-401; Nicolaj Velimirovic, *Bishops, Saints and Politics* (London: T&T Clark, 2007); Nicolaj Velimirovic, *The Fantasy of Reunion: Anglicans, Catholics and Ecumenism 1833-1882* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Valentine Chirol, *Serbia and the Serbs* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1914); Nikolai Velimirovic, *Serbia in Light and Darkness*, (London, New York, Bombay, Calcuta, Madras: Longmans Green and Co., 1916); Nikolai Velimirovic, *Christianity and War; Letters of a Serbian to his English Friend*, (Lexington: Bibliolife, 2010).

² For more information about his life and activity, see: Justin Popovic, *Time is a Fragment of Eternity* (Los Angeles: Sebastian Press, 2014); Justin Popovitch, *Commentary on the Epistles of St. John the Theologian*, translated by Radomir M. Plavsic (Los Angeles: Sebastian Press, 2009); Irinej Bulovich, Atanasie Jetvich, „Foreword”,

in Justin Popovitch, *Commentary on the Epistles of St. John the Theologian*, translated by Radomir M. Plavsic, (Los Angeles: Sebastian Press, 2009), p. 7-9.

³ Bosko Bojovic, *L'Eglise Orthodoxe Serbe. Histoire - Spiritualite - Modernite* (Belgrade: Institute for Balkan Studies, 2014).

⁴ See: Mircea Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române - compendiu* (History of the Romanian Orthodox Church - compendium), 3rd edition, (Bucharest: Basilica, 2013).

by the Byzantine Empire⁵. Then, he presents the development of the Church under Saint Sava (pp. 21-32), the most important aspects of its archbishopric administration (pp. 32-37), and the history of the institution during the period of the Serbian Patriarchate (pp. 38-50). He shows that the last one of the mentioned moments happened in the moment of a big increase of the territory of the state:

"Serbs occupied Thessaly, the region from the Holy Mountain to Christopolis, Epirus and Albaina (during the Emperor Rusan – 1331-1355). King Dusan proclaimed himself Emperor in 1346. Byzantium was greatly weakened by internal crisis and Dusan strove to substitute once powerful Byzantine Empire with his own Serbo-Byzantine Empire. He considered himself the Emperor of Serbs and Greeks. In order to legitimate his title, he needed to elevate Archbishopric to the level of the Patriarchate. This was done on the occasion of a Church-State council held in Skopje in 1346, on the day of the Feast of the Entrance of Our Lord into Jerusalem"⁶.

The 5th chapter is dedicated to the Turkish enslavement (pp. 51-54), the 6th one to the renewal of the Patriarchate of Pec (pp. 55-58), and the other ones up to the

9th one to the development of the Church in this period. Then, the 10th one (pp. 71-96), segmented in seven small parts, presents the evolution of the Church between 1766 and 1920. In the last chapter (pp. 97-135), Father Radomir presents a list of the Holy Serbs (pp. 109-116), short biographies of the most important Serbian rulers (pp. 119-131), and a list of the Patriarchs (pp. 133-135). His work is, as we can see, a brief presentation of the millenary history of the Church he belongs to, which helps the reader to travel back in time, to see the most important personalities of the Serbian Orthodox Church and to understand what this institution meant for the history of the medieval, modern and contemporary state of Serbia. This is the reason why we strongly recommend to the reader who wants to know more about this important ecclesiastical institution, its rulers and its personalities, to read this book and to complete the information provided by it with data from other similar sources.

Review by MAXIM MORARIU

⁵ "According to a Byzantine writer, the emperor-historian Constantine VII (913-959), Serbian tribes adopted the new faith very slowly, i. e. it took them quite a while to renounce their ancient pagan customs and convictions. Same author recorded that the first occurrence of an en-masse baptism among the Serbs happened during the reign of Emperor Heraclius (610-641). First Christian missionaries among the Serbs came from the East, arriving from renowned Byzantine Christian and spiritual centres such as Constantinople and Thessalonica. However, there is no doubt that Christian influences also arrived from Adriatic coastal towns, where organisation still remained well intact". Radomir Popovic, *Serbian Orthodox Church in History*, translated in English by Petar V. Serovic (Belgrade: Novi Sad, Art Print, 2005), p. 10.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 37-38.