

## **BOOK REVIEWS**

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### **Bosko I. Bojovic – *L'Eglise Orthodoxe Serbe. Histoire – spiritualite – modernite*, Institute des Etudes Balkaniques, Belgrade, 2014, 372 p.**

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The history of the Serbian Orthodox Church is not very well known in the Romanian space. Some pages from the works about the history of the universal Church published by authors like Father Ioan Rămureanu<sup>1</sup>, Father Nicolae Chifăr<sup>2</sup>, Father Vasile Muntean<sup>3</sup> or Father Mircea Păcurariu<sup>4</sup> show some aspects of it (especially from the medieval period, when this Church had also a Patriarch) and some works present the relationships between this Church and the Romanian Orthodox Church<sup>5</sup>. However, these works only give a general vision (and not always a complete one) about the history of this important ecclesiastic institution.

This is the reason why, in this essay, we will try to present the work of the Serbian

historian Bosko I. Bojovic, published in 2014 at the Institute for Balkan Studies in French, which offers a complete presentation of the multi-millenarian Serbian Orthodox Church in a well-known language. The author, who works as research manager at the aforementioned institute, being also a member of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, a Professor at the Belgrade University and an Associate Professor at *Ecole de Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales from Paris*, already enjoys good recognition amongst contemporary researches. His works, in which he analyses the History of the Byzantine Empire, the one of the Ottoman one and the History of the Balkans are therefore well known.

His research is divided in three big parts, which are themselves segmented in several unities. The first one is dedicated to the evolution of the relationships between Church and State between the 12<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (pp. 17-108), the second one to the relationships between Royalty and the evolution of the Orthodox Church in the aforesaid space (pp. 109-202), and the third one, entitled "Tradition and modernity" (pp. 203-324), highlights the biographies of some important personalities like Nikolai Velimirovic (pp. 205-224) or Justin Popovic (pp. 225-237), the links between the two, as well as some aspects of historical demography (pp. 255-266) or aspects about the links between ethnicity and confession.

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<sup>1</sup> Ioan Rămureanu, *Istoria Bisericească Universală* [History of the Universal Church], 1-3th volumes, (Bucharest: Press of Biblical and Mission Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church, 1987).

<sup>2</sup> Nicolae Chifăr, *Istoria creștinismului* [The History of Christianity], 1-2th volumes, (Sibiu: "Lucian Blaga" University Press, 2008).

<sup>3</sup> Vasile Muntean, *Istoria creștină generală* [The History of general Christianity] (Bucharest, Press of Orthodox Biblical and Mission Institute, 2008).

<sup>4</sup> See: Mircea Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române* [The History of Romanian Orthodox Church] (Bucharest: Press of Biblical and Mission Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church, 2006).

<sup>5</sup> See, for example: Lucian Mic, *Relațiile Bisericii Ortodoxe Române din Banat cu Biserica Ortodoxă Sârbă în a doua jumătate a secolului al XIX-lea* [The relations between the Romanian Orthdo Church from Banat with the Serbian Orthodox Church, in the second half of the XIXth century] (Cluj-Napoca: Cluj University Press, 2013).

In the forward, Bosko I. Bojovic speaks about the importance of spirituality for the Serbian people<sup>6</sup> and about the role of the monasteries from this area. He shows that the monastic life constituted a modality of practicing and transmitting the principles of this spirituality:

“This spirituality is embodied in the faith and practice through the introduction of the cult of the saints in the liturgical calendar of the Local Church, with its own particularities. These are the coenobitic monasteries, inspired by the ones from the big spiritual centres of Byzantium (e.g.: the great Monastery of Theodoros d'Evergetis from Constantinople) which are at the basis of the coenobitic rules, namely the monastic *typika* (pp. 9-10).”

Further on, he presents each part of the history of this national Orthodox Church, but not only by presenting data and information, but also by highlighting the relations between Church and society, by analysing the importance of ethnicity in the constitution of the Serbian Patriarchate during the medieval times and during the contemporary period or, by analysing important contemporary problems.

At the end of the book, there is a long bibliographical list (pp. 325-364), comprising especially Serbian titles, which shows the quality of the research and can be useful to the reader who wants to study more thoroughly some of the problems<sup>7</sup>; it also includes two maps (363-364) and an index (pp. 365-370).

In conclusion, the work of Bosko I. Bojovic, entitled *L'Eglise Orthodoxe Serbe. Histoire – Spiritualité – Modernité*, can be considered an important research about the history of the Church, which is also very useful for Romanian historians who want to find more things about this important neighbouring Orthodox Church.

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<sup>6</sup> “The thinking and the theological literature from the Orthodox space rely especially on the ascetical hermitic spirituality, but also on the cultural and liturgical experience. This is the reason why the hagiographic writings, but also the liturgical ones, or the legal (canonical) ones, with their rhetoric and laudatory preambles, are the first expression of this theology of the faith accompanied by politics.” Bosko I. Bojovic, *L'Eglise Orthodoxe Serbe. Histoire – Spiritualité – Modernité* (Belgrade: Institute des Etudes Balkaniques, 2014), 9.

<sup>7</sup> Romanian readers can be proud when they find works of authors like Nicolae Iorga cited among other masterpieces in the domain. Cf. *ibid.*, 338.