

Orthodoxy between two Worlds

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Summary

The author writes about Orthodoxy which has, by the Providence of God, been placed between the Western Christianity, on one side, and the Sunni Islam, on the other. He also writes about church nationalism (phyletism) which was always been present in political and linguistic nationalism in the former Yugoslavia. According to him, the relationship between Orthodoxy, on one side, and Islam and Western Christianity, on the other side, is not satisfactory. In order to become such, it would be important that the Orthodox Church creates new theology which would, primarily, be a theological (Orthodox) response to the signs of the times. However, this has not become reality yet.

Key words: Orthodoxy, Islam, Qur'an, Bible, Catholicism, Svetosavlje¹.

Introduction

The providence of God has set us on the edge of the western parts of Turkish Islam and on the eastern parts of the western Catholic Christi-

¹ Svetosavlje is an idea that appeared in the 1930's in the Serbian Orthodox Church. It has led to equalization of religious confession (Orthodoxy) and ethnicity (Serbian nation). This idea has had a large number of followers among the clergy and high church hierarchy who do not support ecumenism or any type of approximating Catholicism or Protestantism.

anity, so our ecclesiastical and political history has been structured in a different way than the history of other nations. Therefore, we can speak about the impact of different religions, ideologies and cultures on our historical being. However, the least has been written about the impact of the Catholic Church. In this regard our famous historian Stanoje Stanojević wrote: “The impact of Catholicism and the Catholic Church on the Serbs in the Middle Ages has, in general, been little appreciated in our Serbian historiography and has been totally overlooked. But the importance and influence is much greater than it could be expected. It may be said, without exaggeration, and proved by the facts, that the entire political, religious and cultural life of the Serbs in western regions throughout the Middle Ages was interwoven by various influences of the Catholic Church.”² However, historical fact is the following: after the death of our patriarch Dimitrije (1930) the relations between the two churches became tense, and the rise of Svetosavlje ideology only deepened this tension. For this reason the era of the Patriarch Varnava had a distinctly anti-Catholic feature.³ Tense relations between the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Croat Catholic Church are currently influenced by the memory of the famous Croatian Cardinal Aloysius Stepinac, to whom our historians, without any ground and material evidence, attribute some negative things from the Second World War. Having no positive relationship to the Western culture, and towards the Western (Catholic) Christianity - (Justin Popovic, *Svetosavlje as a Philosophy of Life*) – the ideologists of Svetosavlje only deepen the existing tensions between two churches. Using another type of argumentation, which is essentially different from the hesychastic argumentation and the argumentation of Mark of Ephesus, Svetosavlje will, in criticizing the West, remain a type of Russian Slavophilia, what means it is rather an ideology than a theology. The efforts to identify religion and nation have always enabled polarization of the existing tensions. Although the Council of Constantinople in 1872 condemned a theology of a nation, it has remained a theological consciousness of the Orthodox East even today. Given the fact that the concept of “state church” and the theol-

² Stanoje Stanojević, *Borba za samostalnost katoličke crkve u nemanjičkoj državi* (“The struggle of the Catholic Church in the State of Nemanjić”), 1912, str. 18-36, 116-150.

³ Dimitrije Najdanović, *Golijat i David*, (“David and Goliath”), Vesnik 26. 10. 1930; Patrijarh Varnava, *Poslanica na Vaskrs*, Glasnik br. 12/1931.

ogy of nation have always enabled instrumentalization of Church and State, it was not possible to avoid the emergence of state and political Orthodoxy.

Contrary to the modern and past Catholic ecclesiology, which has never emphasized the relationship between Catholicism and the nation, the Orthodox (Eastern) ecclesiology has always done this since the schism (11th century). That is why we know for the Russian, Greek and Serbian Orthodox Church. The connection between orthodoxy and nation and other theological tradition was particularly evident at the end of the 19th century (Nicodim Milaš, 1881; Homajkov (Russia); V. Jagić) and in the middle of the 20th century (Nikolaj Velimirović and others). This connection is emphasized today as it was at the time of St. Save (13th century) who was the creator of the independent Serbian Church in the Middle Ages.

Belonging to the Serbian nation was equalized with belonging to the Orthodox Church and this is done nowadays: one cannot be a Serb without accepting the Orthodox faith (Nikolaj Velimirović, bishop of the twentieth century). This attitude is still present in the Serbian Orthodox Church.

The ideology of Svetosavlje, which brings us back to St. Sava (13th century), has led to a closure of the Serbian Church towards the Western Christianity. Even today, the official Serbian Orthodoxy doesn't have a positive attitude towards Catholic Church, but also towards Islam. Both monotheistic religions are devaluated. When speaking about Catholicism let us recall the latest edition of "Enciklopedije pravoslavlja" ("Encyclopedia of Orthodoxy") published by our church with the blessing of the Patriarch (2010), and when speaking about Islam, let us remember "Krmčija", i.e. "Nomocanon of St. Sava" on Mohammed's teachings (Miodrag M. Petrović: "Zakonopravilo sv. Save o Muhavmedovom učenju" ("Legal Rules of St. Sava on Muhammad's Teachings", pp. 51-65, 1997, Belgrade).

The service books "Veliki Trebnik" ("Breviary"), used for liturgical purposes in Serbian church, has essentially negative attitude towards the faith of the Prophet (Archimandrite dr. Justin Popović, "Trebnik" ("Breviary"), Diocese of Raška and Prizren, 1993, pp. 399-401).

It is generally known that the Serbian medieval kings, up to King Dušan (14th century), maintained good relations with the Roman popes. Subsequent bad relations were influenced by the Greek (theology of

hesychasm), as well as Russian Orthodox Church. But it has not always been this way. “Three Serbian patriarchs from Peć: Jovan Kanataul (16th century), Pajsije (17th century) and Gavriilo Rajić (17th century) maintained close relations with Rome (17th century)” (Dr. Juraj Kolarić: *Orthodox*, Zagreb, 1985, p. 168).

Understanding Catholicism and Islam in the way how St. Sava understood them, which means only negative connotation, the official Serbian Orthodox theology today does not have any positive attitude towards Islam or Western Christianity. Therefore, any type of a dialogue, be it theological or of another kind, is in a constant crisis and there are no possibilities for establishing ecumenism between these religions. It should be mentioned that negative attitude towards Islam and Western Christianity in today’s Serbian Orthodoxy reflect the attitudes of St. Sava. Therefore it would be good to recall the writings “Žitija o Sv. Savi” (“Life of Sv. Sava”) by the monk Teodosije and “Zakonopravila” (“Nomocanon”) by St. Sava.

The Orthodox Church has always been confident in own cognition of the truth, but has never questioned the cognition of other people’s “delusions”. The problems with those who “went astray” were solved by the state. Intellectual tolerance and coexistence of different theological doctrines has never been provided in the normative Orthodox society. Taking this as a starting point, Mark of Ephesus said that Orthodoxy has no shortcomings and, according to Homjakov, as genuine and saving church, theologically and existentially, exists only in “Greek dioceses.”⁴ Nowadays there is no official, canonical and theological opinion about the Western Christianity and Islam in the Orthodox Church, but it is clear that the first connotation towards them is negative. Therefore apologetics and theological exclusivism have always been at the core of Orthodox theology, what excluded a dialogue with the Catholic West and Turkish Islam. Such a context gave a rise to theological tensions.

⁴ Justin Popović, *Dogmatika pravoslavne crkve*, (The Dogmatics of the Orthodox Church), str. 543; A. S. Homjakov, *O crkvi*, (“On the Church”), Sremski Karlovci, 1926, str. 21.

THERE HAVE ALWAYS BEEN VARIOUS TENSIONS

Our Yugoslav political history has always been marked by various tensions that sometimes ended in the worst possible ways. Therefore, here, more than anywhere else in the south-eastern parts of Europe, have occurred many dramatic events, and peace has been lesser present than elsewhere in Eastern Europe. The latest events in the former Yugoslav region indicate the following: when human events reflect the logics of various nationalisms, where political logics is the most aggressive, but ecclesiastical and theological is the most cunning, then, as a rule, a lot of things cannot be avoided and theological devaluation becomes reality. Various nationalisms, like nowhere else on the Balkans, have taken their toll and expressed their inhuman face. Trying to destroy Yugoslavia and its unity, the outcome became obvious. Guided by the logics of their thoughts and listening to the “voices of their blood” they brought all the destabilizing and disturbing factors. Since their leaders allowed all possible things to “come up to the surface”, they are to be held responsible for all the consequences which resulted in chaos and uncontrolled evil. Nationalism of one group was stronger, but did not excluding the nationalism in the other group. Therefore we know for Srebrenica, Vukovar, Kosovo, and other evil deeds. This reminds us of something that Pascal Bruckner called the process of victimization and infantilism.⁵

Even today phyletism and the so-called “state Orthodoxy” can be found on the Christian East, therefore the Church has to find a different manner how to become integrated part of the society. We must go back to the apostolic ideals, in order to experience the Orthodox Church as a moral and not a national paradigm. Identification of Christian religion with a culture has proven to be harmful, therefore we should remember that Christ himself did not accept some moral standards of his time. Every Muslim can say the same about the Prophet. The Christians are primarily invited to serve “the world at this time”, so they have to be critical towards everything and not offend Christ himself. What is not accepted by the Gospel cannot be approved by the Church. Any type of nationalism, when not controlled by faith, can easily turn into chauvinism and racism.

⁵ Pascal Bruckner, *La Tentation de l'innocence*, Paris 1995.

Even our present memories are marked by terrible happenings. However, such a condition in our history has been enabled not only by secular, but also by religious elite. Many have written about that, and there is a lot of knowledge on this topic, so I would not like to dwell on this topic.

FIRST, OUR EYES OF FAITH SHOULD BE OPENED

Here on the territory of former Yugoslavia everything has been different than elsewhere, so what we need the most is “faith that moves the mountains“. Only faith, and not something else, can transform political questions into ethical questions and exclude conflicts, but this is possible only when our eyes are opened by faith (Lk 24,31). The signs of faith, and not of an ideology, lead us to “the signs of encounter“ and a dialogue. We have to show “unlimited willingness to forgive” (Mt 18, 15; Lk 17, 3-4), and this is in agreement with the ethics of honorable Qur’an as well as the Christ’s demands expressed in the gospels. The Gospel of Jesus Christ should primarily be concentrated on the word “reconciliation” as expressed in the words of Apostle Paul (2 Cor 5, 19). If the New Testament says that through Christ God reconciled the world with himself (2 Cor 5, 19), then our reconciliation with Him is impossible without reconciliation with our Muslim and Catholic brothers. Therefore, without remembering the horrors (and the horrors in Vukovar and Bosnian are, in many ways, unique), without compassion with those who still suffer, without a tender handshake with those who need it, there is no reconciliation with Christ. We are still in dispute. Overcoming the present alienation and establishing mutual trust on the territory of former Yugoslavia is not possible without mutual reconciliation. Although in last few years we have been listening to different theological platitudes on brotherhood and love, the relationship between the believers went even further in their “holy hypocrisy” and “ethics of disagreement”.

Our knowledge of the truth in Qur’an and of the New Testament has always been mediated by the Ulama and the Church with their normative theologies. Therefore we do recognize (know) or we do not recognize (do not know) each other as Orthodox Christians, Sunnis, Catholics and Shiites. However, without knowing each other in a critical and objective way, we have often been unable to avoid many inconveniences in our

relationships. We, as believers, have logical reasoning that is different from the one in the secular world, and therefore we face many benefits, but also greater responsibilities. When it comes to modern knowledge about Islam, what is encouraged by ecumenical awareness, we meet only one choice. Our modern perception of Islam should be different from the medieval understanding. In order to lose the resemblance to the traditional and medieval view, which has always harmed us and which has always disqualified Islam by naming it “a Christian heresy” (John of Damascus), there are many things that should be changed in academic Orthodoxy today. The directions which we should take should be something between Orthodox apologetics and flat-rate negative analysis of Islam, on one hand, and Catholic openness and its positivistic evaluation of Islam, on the other hand. But before that, it would be necessary to have an Orthodox version of J. Križanić, a Jesuit from the seventeenth century, who strived for different relations between the Catholic and Orthodox Church. We need someone who would, like Ibn Taymiyyah, open “new horizons” in Orthodox-Islamic relations. “Pointing on the dependence between Islam, the teachings of Torah and the Gospel”, he facilitated a new approach to Christianity that differed from the traditional, what encourages us to think about creating Abraham’s ecumenism on the Balkans. Since theologically and canonically rooted in medieval traditionalism (John of Damascus, VII century), modern Serbian Orthodoxy has no positive relation to Islam. However, the opinion of genuine Islam towards Christianity is theologically different: Islamic orthodoxy has always declared “parallelism of Torah, Gospel and Qur’an” (Karl-Josef Kuschel). The desire to “enrich our mutual differences” can only bring us closer, but until this becomes possible nothing crucial will happen.

THINK IN A DIFFERENT WAY

All that we are to do, both in lively Islam and creative Orthodoxy, is to reflect on both religions (Islam and Orthodoxy) according to the “signs of the time”. The question that demands the right answer is: Which theology will help us start, and where to begin? But before we go on, it is important to know that the things that are theologically important for us will not be important for the Muslims. In order to avoid the way some philosophers reacted to the speech of Paul in Athens (Acts 17,

18), we need to have mutual respect and appreciation. Next, we have to strive for fellowship and companionship through our theological differences. The most important thing is to agree which signs we will recognize as the signs of God's will by paying attention to the recent events. Only recognition and our response to His will may bring us mercy of the lasting grace. We should also know that Islamic orthodoxy does not bring our salvation into question (Qur'an 45, 28) and Islam is for pluralism and a dialogue (Qur'an 5, 51; 3, 64), therefore we all should strive for "religious tolerance, social justice, peace and freedom for all people".⁶ However, all these elements were the least present on this area. There was injustice and a lack of peace. Successful and constructive conversation can be primarily conducted regarding some moral issues. Religious institutions in Islam and Christianity are invited to bring more ethical awareness in our mutual relations and in "present day ideology" (Rudjeri). Since this has not been achieved by any political party, the religious institutions are on the move today. Although we know that no correlation between Islam and Christianity can be based on John's theology (Jn 8, 58), it is certain that some connections can be built on the basis of the Old Testament. Common forefather Abraham (Qur'an 22, 28; Gal 3, 29; Neh 9, 7) is the basis for many things which will bring mutual benefits. But before any encounter and dialogue, we have to be aware (more spontaneously and reflexive, less theologically and scholastically) what are the values of brotherhood and friendship, because we can build "an earthly city to live together" only if we are united. Although the normative Islamic theology will not accept the statement of John (Jn 8, 58), nor will the Orthodox normative society accept Madinah's and Mecca's Christology (Qur'an, 19, 35, 5, 19) by rejecting the Original sin and the Trinity, both religions believe in one God (Revelation 15, 4), and that is sufficient to make a start. Therefore, there is a need for a new theology in which we would recognize others as sons and daughters of one God, the God of Abraham (Romans 4, 3). On the Orthodox East still lies "ifamija heresy" over Islam what causes many tensions, therefore we have to remember the words of Paul addressed to the Thessalonians: all that was inherited and remembered has to be re-evaluated, and "test all things, hold fast what is good, abstain from

⁶ Drugi vatikanski koncil (The Second Vatican Council): *Dokumenti*, (Documents), Zagreb, str. 385.

every form of evil” (1 Thessalonians 5, 21). However, in order to achieve this, we need a new spirit, and also a new theology that would be in accordance with the requirements and needs of our time, a type of thinking that would seclude from traditional and apologetic theology. A successful dialog in all areas and at all levels is possible only if modern perception of Islam is less interested in doctrinal and theoretical matters, but more in ethical and social issues. Both traditional and medieval Islam, but also Orthodoxy, were focused on theoretical and doctrinal issues, therefore their theologies were apologetic and did not lead to a dialogue and mutual conversation.

Although Islamic and Orthodox societies have many differences, some similarities may be noted here and there: faith is a foundation of a society, and is therefore it serves ideology. In medieval Byzantine paradigm we know for an idea of unique world order, so we have one ideology, one faith, one church and one king to protect and defend orthodoxy from heterodoxy. In Islam, we know for a Caliph and one faith. The principle of coexistence and balance isn't fully expressed in these societies, and everything is within the realm of monism that permeates all structures of the society. The questions about the dialogue, tolerance and human rights are not asked, nor stressed. As a contrast, Roman Catholicism has been known for its “papal internationalism”, but after the collapse of the Byzantine state and weakening of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, Orthodoxy became a national and state religion. This all leads us to a conclusion that the relationship between the Church and the Ulama were tense only due to theological, but also other issues.

WE ARE ALL INVITED TO BUILD A COMMUNITY OF VALUES

Since we haven't had our own Orthodox William of Ockham, English Franciscan friar from the 13th century, who shook the “building” of medieval scholastics, there are many things that still run according to the established “timetable”. The Church still remembers traditional cognition of Islam and Western Christianity, and this enhances the growth of many tensions and alienation. Some questions consequently arise: Is it possible that traditional Orthodox views of Islam still exist in this postmodern time? Would a future dialog between academic institutions in the Church and the Ulama indicate all the invalidity of one type of cognition, or would it strengthen our current theological

belief? Should we initiate a dialogue that will reveal all the partiality of our knowledge, or should we strive to reach confidence, knowing that we have claimed one way only because we knew there was no trust in anything that was different?

More important than clear answers to these questions is the fact that we and the Muslims have been invited to build a community of values, and not to enter sterile theological controversies. John Lock, Rousseau and Kant gave rational justifications for the existence of religion and the church (Kant) because of the “community of values”. Therefore, the most important thing is the wellbeing of our brothers (Mt 25, 40), and what will bring us benefits (Mt 26, 26). Having in mind some Suras of the Holy Qur’an (Qur’an, 10, 99), it could be concluded that Islam should be the least accused of fanaticism and exclusivism. However, this was not an obstacle to misuse it and take it as an instrument for political goals.

A modern era happens whenever there is an encounter of “an old system and a new vision” and most frequently habitual and regular activities crush. However, this era has not happened in our Orthodox ecumenism. Although there some theological and other assumptions have been fulfilled, it has not started yet. The resistance to new spirit and, a somewhat different cognition, comes again from the Orthodox summit. The spirit of modern time would certainly not demand from the Orthodox establishment to change orthodox understanding of tradition, but would certainly ask for a new understanding and entirely different theological evaluation of other religious identities and historical churches. Since many are not ready for this change, present Orthodox thought bears the least mark of current time, and therefore we lack modern paradigm of Orthodoxy. The result of this is our traditional unskillfulness in face of new challenges. All this was enhanced by the fact that current structure of orthodox knowledge is static and traditional, what is indicated in the following: there is no strive for critical study of a subject that could be explored, but an attempt to solve the problems by using the views of the “fathers” and medieval authorities. The spirit of modern time should certainly not question loyalty of the Church towards apostolic and orthodox heritage. However, many things in orthodox tradition should be reviewed and brought into exclusive relationship to the word of God. Given that traditional orthodoxy has always been directed towards the state structure, which means there has always been only a formal difference between the opinion of Church

and the opinion of the state, nowadays Orthodox church must be more bound to the word of God. If this does not happen, the Church will be drawn into the mainstream of secular problems and will be identified with this world.

Matching of knowledge and behavior has been the most accurate in the relationship between the Orthodox Church and Islam, on one hand, and the relationship between the Orthodox and Catholic Church, on the other hand. Such a structure of orthodox knowledge that exists even today testifies two things: first, the Orthodox Church has not found its *aggiornamento*, and secondly, the process of “holy self-criticism” has not started yet, however this process did affect the Catholic Church with decisions of the Second Vatican Council. Its theological understanding of Islam from Qur’an is essentially medieval and traditional, but vague and imprecise when speaking about historic Islam. Therefore, for Orthodox normative society Islam has primarily negative connotation. If we define orthodox theology, like Anselm, as “faith that seeks understanding” (*Proslogion I*), then the following may be noted in the case of Islam: Orthodox perception of Islam nowadays is different from the rabbinic (*Maimonides, Lapide*) and Roman-Catholic (*Nostra Aetate*). As it has always been identified with understanding of St. John of Damascus and Niketas Choniates, the following things should be said: when he speaks of “ismaelite superstition” John of Damascus always refers to Islam. This is explained in his work “The Fountain of Knowledge”, where in the second part he discusses about heresy.⁷ Here Damascus describes “103 heresies” from the beginning of the Church until his time, where Islam is “the 101st heresy”. Niketas Choniates, orthodox theologian from the twelfth century, in his book “The Treasure of Orthodox Religion” coherently follows Damascus. He says that Muhammad, whom he calls the false prophet, drew his teaching from the Jews.⁸ Also, in the rules of Jovan Posnik⁹ (St. John IV of Constantinople) Islam is said to be a heresy. Given that in the sixth rule of the Council in Laodicea it is said that the heretics should not be permitted to enter the house of God, than it is understandable

⁷ *De haeribus: Patrologija Greca*, sv. 94, str. 765-774.

⁸ *Božje jedinstvo*, (“God’s Unity“), pg. 140, 105-122.

⁹ *Zbornik kanona Pravoslavne crkve*, (“Proceedings of the Orthodox Church Canons“), Sremski Karlovci, 1997, str. 238.

why the relations between Islam and Orthodoxy were tense. In order to introduce changes into our relationship, two things are necessary: a belief in the events from Qur'an, and a lot of intellectual insight, i.e. wisdom. Wisdom is the highest stage of knowledge, and relying on it we will help us receive true impression about the others. When speaking about wisdom as a way that allows us to discover the most precious things, Aristotle in *Ethics* understands it as a synthesis of discursive knowledge and intuitive mind.¹⁰ So if we want to have different relations with the intention to "build a common city", many things should be changed. We must have another hermeneutics of Qur'an and biblical text. Evangelical understanding of orthodoxy will be protected from heterodoxy in the word of John (Jn 1,7; Jn 4,2), however islamic orthodoxy has never questioned our salvation.

WE SHOULD CREATE A NEW THEOLOGY

Islam and Catholicism present our theological environment, and Muslims and Catholics are our neighbors, so, first of all, we have to develop such a theology that will allow us to socialize with each other and approach each other.

To refer to Apostle Paul (Gal 3, 16) in his Epistle to the Galatians and to the theology of John Damascene would be highly dysfunctional. Although Paul's theology in the Epistle to the Galatians does not refer neither to Muslims nor Islam, but to Judaism and Jewishness, it would be the least in agreement with some signs nowadays and would not contribute to our strive to make a closer relation in theological and existential sense. These texts have extremely anti-Semitic, but also anti-Islamic tone. If we speak of Christ as the only descendant of Abraham (Gal. 3, 16), this necessarily leads the Church into an argument not only with the synagogue, i.e. with the Rabbinate, but also with the Ulama. We have to know that God's promises didn't pass only on Abraham's younger son Isaac, but also on much older Ishmael, so we all have the same status in front of God, the same rights, but different obligations. It is a historical fact that Islam entered our national history through tragic events and that, in a sense, we perceived it as a kind of religious occupation. No matter how incredible this may seem, it is a historic

¹⁰ Aristotel, *Nikomahova etika*, ("Nicomachean Ethics"), Beograd, 1139 b, 1140 a.

fact that after the death of despot Djuradj Brankovic (XV) “we would rather agree to live with the Turks than to accept the supremacy of the Roman Catholic Church”.¹¹ So, for example, Djuradj Brankovic was the only ruler on the Christian East who didn’t want to participate at the Council of uniting with the Roman Church, nor did he allow the church dignitaries to attend the Florentine Congress which was held in the first half of the 15th century. However, not recognizing each other as the spiritual descendants of Abraham we did not feel a need for mutual dialogue and encounter. We haven’t been raised in the spirit of humility and modesty (Qur’an 25, 63; 31, 16), we didn’t acknowledge that some truth can be reached only through the exchange of arguments and opinions, and we didn’t realize that a dialogue is part of our common destiny.

Even today Muslims are a large and influential nation, so through the descendants of Ishmael the dialectic of God’s action is still expressed in one part of the world. In the Genesis we read that He will make “a nation of the son of the bondwoman” (Genesis 21, 13). Not only does God have plans with Jesus Christ, but he has it with Ismael as well. All these plans indicate the following: what God blessed and decided to do cannot be questioned.

Today ecumenical awareness seems to be very demanding. Ecumenical understanding between the Church and the Ulama will not be reached until some necessary assumptions are fulfilled. First, there is a need to love the truth, and justice. Regarding the first, we cannot neglect the importance of a dialogue, and regarding the second – without justice we cannot attain a constructive and tolerant society on the Balkans and in Bosnia. Without these presumptions Abraham’s ecumenism, as a form of our fellowship today, cannot be achieved.

Although we know that God’s will is clearly expressed in the Word of God, our interpretations have always been different. For example, there is a difference between a Christian, Islamic and rabbinic understanding of the Book of Genesis and the text about Ishmael who, according to Islamic orthodoxy, is considered the father of all Arabs, i.e. the Muslims. Even today it is obvious that these different interpretations of revealed truth were an alibi to the religious institutions for wrong policies and inhuman approach towards men with different religious identity.

¹¹ R. Grujić, *Pravoslavna crkva*, (“The Orthodox Church”), 1921, str. 36.

Intolerance and many other things have entered the life of religious community as a result of wrong interpretation of Luke's words "compel them to come in" (Lk 14, 23). A lack of moral engagement with a man of different religious identity has been related to different hermeneutics. All of this can't be explained without a closer look into something we call ideologisation or theologisation of truth, and that can be noted with the Greek sophists. It has been shown that hermeneutical principles largely depend on historical context, and they don't have unconditional importance for all times. For example, the Roman Church held one opinion about Islam between two councils and another after the Second Vatican Council. Second, partial truth was frequently considered whole truth for the purpose of achieving some interests, what meant that ideologisation, i.e. theologisation of truth could not be avoided. This was the reason for the rise of theological exclusivism which led into apologetics and tension in the life of the Church and the Ulama. Absolutisation of partial truth, which has always been reached through theologisation of truth, always requires appropriate hermeneutics of the word of God. Orthodox theology reveals it "creativity" both in its polemical heat, but also in exclusive apologetics. Antisemitism of John Chrysostom (PL, T. 48, 904-916) and anti-Islamism of John of Damascus present a clear testimony even today. In contemporary dynamics of Orthodox-Islamic relations there is a clash of attitudes, and the Orthodox perception of Islam is, in essence, negative. Since the words of the apostle of John (Jn 1: 7) sound "scandalous" to the Muslim establishment even today, we have to find a point where an agreement is possible, in order to open a chance for a successful dialogue. Religious tolerance requires different hermeneutics of *Genesis* (Genesis 21,18). Therefore a theological key for understanding Islam is primarily related to our understanding of Ismael. Negative understanding of Islam has been based on Paul's opinion about him (Gal 4 22-25). We will be able to change our attitude towards Islam only if we accept another interpretation of this person (Gal 4, 22-25). Islam will cease to be one of modern "heresies" if we realise that the lineage of God's promises does not concern only the Christians and the Jews, but also the Muslims (Genesis 16,10). Multiple offspring and promised fertility do not refer only to Isaac, but also to older Abraham's son Ishmael (Genesis 16, 10, 21, 13-18).

WHAT IS AUTHENTIC AND ORTHODOX FOR SOME, IS NOT THE CASE FOR THE OTHER

Photius, Hesychasts, Mark of Ephesus, John of Damascus and other people were authentic in their opposition to Sunni Islam and Roman Christianity. What was authentic on the Orthodox East was at the same time orthodox for the Orthodox Church, so the following can be concluded: authentic, and thus orthodox knowledge of God was, first of all, filled with medieval theological understanding that can be related to some holy fathers whose theology was prevalent on the first councils, and it became official theology of the Church. Speaking about Islam, the Eastern Church has not distanced itself from the views of John of Damascus. Our current Orthodox church has not distanced itself from the views of St. Sava outlined in his “Krmčija” (“Nomocanon”), what brings tensions and polarizations even today. All this resulted in a crisis of the dialogue. Most often it was discussed with the Muslims who were always ready for a constructive discussion. In order to get rid of the things that prevent the dialogue, we need to be aware of the following: the theology of first Councils, i.e. their narrow minded dogmatism (Qur’an 4, 171), separates us Christians from the Jews and Muslims. We Christians accept these dogmas without appealing to our common sense and logics (1 Cor 1, 23; Gregory of Nyssa: *Great Catechism*, S 100, 1988, SB Makarska), but on the “firm belief of our own heart”. Rabbi P. Lapidé says: “Nobody can provide logical proofs for a foundation of own religion” (The Jews and the Christians, Society of the Catholic Apostolate, 1982, P. 36). In every conversation we primarily have to be aware of this fact, and therefore we need humility which does not exclude critical and objective thinking. The signs of time place the Orthodox Church into a new historical context. Islam cannot be seen from the medieval theological perspective. New perspectives could break many blockades. Therefore, we stress the following statement: we all have a share in the blessing of Abraham (Genesis 1, 22, 13, 12, 7; Hebr 11: 8; Qur’an 43, 26-28; 3, 65-68), and therefore we can feel “stakeholders of Abraham’s blessing” together with the Muslims and Jews. We are all children of Abraham. We cannot be Abraham’s only according to Paul’s concept (Gal 3, 16), because this does not bring us together. On the contrary, it only separates us.

CONCLUSION

If we don't want our faith to turn into "naiveté", and to be proven immature, it must be accompanied by a corresponding critical knowledge. We always have to know why we believe it this way and not another. Paul writes: "For this reason I also suffer these things, nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed" (2 Tim 1, 12). That is why we should be extremely careful in our approach to many things, possess reasoned opinion and speak carefully chosen words, in order to win many people for the truth.

Pravoslavlje između dva svijeta

Sažetak

Autor piše o pravoslavlju koje je, prema Providenju Božijem, postavljeno između zapadnog hrišćanstva s jedne strane i sunitskog islama sa druge strane. Piše i o crkvenom nacionalizmu (filetizmu) koji je uvijek bio prisutan u političkom i jezičkom nacionalizmu u bivšoj Jugoslaviji. Prema njegovim riječima, odnos između pravoslavlja s jedne strane, i islama i zapadnog hrišćanstva sa druge strane, nije zadovoljavajući. Da bi se to postiglo, bilo bi važno da pravoslavna crkva stvara novu teologiju koja bi, prvenstveno, bila teološki (pravoslavni) odgovor na znake vremena. Međutim, to se još nije ostvarilo.

Ključne reči: pravoslavlje, islam, Kur'an, Biblija, katolicizam, svetosavlje.