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SAVA'S LEGACY: SERBIAN THEOLOGY AND JUSTIN POPOVIĆ

Abstract: *The subject of Sava's legacy represents a challenging question in academic theology: who is Sava in the context of Serbian Theology and who might stand as a legate of Sava's legacy. Sava's life work deserves more academic attention especially in theology which is beyond scope in this paper. Besides panegyric conclusions on Sava's life work, this study is a critical assessment of what might stand as Sava's legacy. The challenge is to contextualize the idiom Serbian Theology and Justin Popović life work as Sava's legacy. The goal is to revalue few aspects of Sava's contribution on a larger scale especially through the life work of Justin Popović.*

Key words: *Sava, Legacy, Tradition, Serbia, Theology, Justin Popović, Godman and Eucharist.*

In order to fully appreciate what the title entails, the leading argument is divided in three different subthemes: a) Legacy: Sava's Freedom for Christ, b) Sava and Serbian Theology and c) Sava's Legacy and Justin Popović. The challenge is to rediscover few aspects of Sava's legacy within the context of Serbian Theology as vigorously witnessed by Justin Popović. The references in the main body of the text are heavily drawn from Justin Popović's theological opus. This study is by no means an assessment of Popović's lifework as a whole, influence or significance for theology today. Rather it is an invite to acknowledge what Popović acknowledged not as mere metaphysical concept but as a historic reality and challenge for theology in future. Also, the challenge is to bring some parallel personal, socio-historical and universal context of the Church as experienced both by Sava and Justin Popović. Therefore, some indicative references to the History of Church, Liturgy and Dogmatics are complementary in this study.

Legacy: Sava's Freedom for Christ

This chapter discloses the meaning of the term legacy as well as a person associated with the same term. The claim is the term legacy carries the meaning of relational mode since the term is associated with a person and not only with an expression of belief through commemorative rituals. The multiply connotations of the term legacy are not questionable at this point as the essence which the term might express.

The basic meaning of the term legacy denotes something left rather handed down by a predecessor, e.g. Medieval Latin *legatia*, *legate*. Its meaning is something rather extraordinary which becomes a part of tradition and eventually tradition itself. Even though the terms legacy and tradition are not interchangeable in this case they are complementary for the following reason: the meaning of legacy or tradition cannot be passed as a fact, custom or belief only.

The term legacy (tradition) carries rather includes person (al) in nature as extended by the same person who handed down (παράδοσις) something for the benefits of others. Legacy or tradition is a person extended through time and space in a specific manner or expression. Semantics goes beyond the previous statement because legacy in theological context is manifested in the person of Lord Jesus Christ whom Apostles preached and the (Church) Fathers preserved. Legacy is encapsulated in the person of Christ and passed unto others in His Church for the benefits of the same Church.¹

If the person of Christ is the eternal Truth that enters into the world (John 1, 17), that is the one who dwells in time and space then Christ cannot be taken as a philosophical notion reasoned through the scholastic enterprise of the conceptual necessity. The legacy is a personified reality constituted primarily as relational mode of existence. Christ constantly referred to the Heavenly Father. In this regard, Christ is *the* patrologist (Очелов) rather than *a* patrologist. Christ witnessed the Father throughout His entire life not just in terms of the constant reference as (my) Father.² Christ revealed His Father, but (the) God ο Θεός as our Abba, by way of his Incarnation.³ Therefore, legacy is not a message either. It is the transcendent living message in the person of Christ. Without Christ, humanity can never escape its solipsistic sphere nor can it rediscover the meaning of what personality and legacy might truly entail. More importantly the invisible God the Father through Christ became visible, known and as such was passed (Предање) to humanity.

Legacy in the Church

Christ is the transcendent living message who happens in the particular context. That which stands in the core of the transcendent living message occurs in the Church. The particular event which essentially defines the Church is the Eucharist. Within that event the transcendent God occurs as the Incarnate Logos, the Second person of the Trinity in the form of bread and wine so that humanity may partake of God's transcendence through Christ's body. Legacy in terms of Christ cannot be excluded or exchanged without the Eucharist. Legacy is institutionalized in the Church but as a person. The particular *locus* where Legacy occurs is the Church which extends Christ through the ages.⁴ This *locus* rather establishment is the irrevocable anthropological reality evident in the Eucharist: Emmanuel—God is with us in flesh and shared with others. The term legacy goes beyond commemorative rituals and has no meaning as a mere idea or a theory secured by a rational demonstrative argument. Legacy is a personal, e.g. relational not expressional category.

1 "What is Tradition? It is the Lord Jesus Christ, the Godman himself, with all the riches of his divine hypostasis and, through him and for his sake, those of the holy Trinity. That is most fully given and articulated in the Eucharist (communion), wherein, for our sake and for our salvation, the Savior's entire theanthropic (богочовечански) economy of salvation is performed and repeated. Therein wholly resides the Godman (Богочовек) with all his wondrous and miraculous gifts; he is there, and in the Church's life of prayer and liturgy. Through all this, the Savior's philanthropic proclamation ceaselessly resounds: *And, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world* (Mt. 28 20)"; Popovich 1981, 32.

2 Written in one of the notebooks from the Oxford period, dating from 1916. These writing are not yet published.

3 Confessor 1982.

4 "Everything which was created by the Logos under heaven and on earth enters into the Church as its body whose head is Lord Christ", Popović 2004, 10.

The Legacy and (de)legate

Considering the claim Christ is the Legacy incarnate extended through the Eucharist in His Church, no scientific method then could exhaust an experience the legacy without a personal relationship with Christ. This personal relationship with God is experienced through *сазрцавање*—contemplation as (re) commanded by Sava: "Let our mind be of God, contemplating heavenly, Eden beauties, eternal residences, angelic festivity, (and) after life, (contemplating) where and/or how the souls of are righteous or sinners."⁵ Sava's freedom for Christ meant rather freedom from earthly for the sake of heavenly beauty: in the Eucharist.⁶ The Eucharist is a/the method of embracing knowledge of the Legacy and ultimately knowledge of a (de)legate himself, e.g. Sava.⁷

The very condition for Sava to experience rather contemplate the Legacy was accomplished primarily through a prayerful theology (молитвено богословље) rather than theology of prayer.⁸ This experience cannot be regarded as "some dogmatic tractate, but one hymnal, psalm chanting glorification, theological-liturgical doxology to God the Father, the Incarnated Son and the Spirit Comforter."⁹ Even though the Eucharist stands for its worship of God in the Trinitarian manner, its primary purpose is celebration of the encounter with the Legacy and the "eternal communion with Christ unto all ages."¹⁰ This encounter is the very best of the Legacy which happens in the Church. The Eucharist is an event beyond simple rite or an expression of belief only. It is an event of God human communion where Christ is fully offered to all partakers and the visible oneness with Christ is articulated through a prayerful glorification. There is no more suitable theanthropic (богочовечански) encounter as the Divine-human *μετάληψις*, and celebration of such an event but through the *λογική λατρεία* which precedes and confirms theology of the Eastern Christianity.¹¹

Legacy through Doxology

The encounter with the Legacy crowned in the Eucharist goes beyond a simple reflection or imitation of Christ through a certain virtuous lifestyle. Sava's life in prayer affirms

5 *Biography of St. Simeon* (1992), лист 116 г, страна 267.

6 Who is Sava and why his name always goes with the name of his father Simeon is an extensive argument which deserves its proper introduction. The claim is that Sava's name always presupposes the name of Simeon, his father. There is no mention of Sava's name without Simeon and vice versa. Both names rather lives of these saints, father and son are one, undivided milestone of theology in Serbia. Sava always looked upon the life of Simeon as a rule of life for monks in Studenica monastery. See also in: Rakićević 2015, 307.

7 One of the synonyms that Popović used for the communion is the law. In the following statement he referred to a local Serbian tradition: "What is the law for God? Holiness, love, righteousness, goodness, wisdom and the rest of the perfections. Such is the law for men because they are beings in the image of God. There is one law for God and for man: the Gospel. That is why our people call the Gospel the law, and the foremost mighty act of the incarnate God—Holy Communion—that call the law. 'I have received the law' is what our people say when they commune"; Popovich 2009, 40.

8 "One can receive love from God through prayer, but cannot, in any way acquire it without the struggle of prayer"; Čelijski 1999, 164.

9 Popović 2004, 847.

10 "That is why" Popović stated, "we pray in the Eucharist after Holy Communion: Make us partake of You more intimately into the unweaving day of Your Kingdom"; Popović 2004, 813.

11 All other prayers, sacraments and feats as part of the ecclesial lifestyle are preparation for the Eucharist because "the entire life of the Church is unceasingly serving God, constant worship and therefore every day in Church is a feast day"; Popović 2004, 638.

the most distinctive mark and the key of doing theology in the Orthodox Church.¹² So, if the Orthodox theology in the Eucharist truly encounters the receptive, cognitive and effective side of human faculty in its totality, then an outcome of the God-human encounter cannot but express a gladsome event of the communion of the *Theologian* and *theologians*. The synergism of a sacramental and ascetical lifestyle of humanity on the one side, and the benefits from the communion of the Theologian—Christ on the other, establishes theology as an interpersonal event celebrated in doxological manner. Considering Legacy and legate in this context, the term theology establishes new meaning primarily in its festal fashion of which the Fathers spoke, e.g. Cyril in *Mystagogical Catechesis* and Gregory Theologian in *Word and Hymns*. In fact, the term theology (богослѡвие) and theo-doxology (богослѡвие) even etymologically are not distant from each other. Theology (богослѡвие) and theo-doxology (богослѡвие) do not stand as simple parallel living realities, but they actually coincide as a confession, thanksgiving and celebration of a living encounter with Christ, the Legacy and the Theologian.¹³ Sava's freedom for Christ is actualized as a constant praise of the Legacy as observed by Popović:

Gentlemen, Sava's philosophy of the world is run by two basic and powerful principles. The first principle: the world is Theophany, and the second: humanity is doxology (богослужење). The entire life of Saint Sava in this world was built on these two principles: his life was unceasing service to God, unceasing doxology (богослужење) because he considered this world to be a magnificent temple of God where the unceasing Theophany is taken place.¹⁴

This doxological character is retrieved primarily from the essence of the very Divine revelation in Christ and the obvious cosmic fact: humanity is truly a proof of God's glory and all people are called to become a priest that is to live with God and glorify God's name. Also, this doxological character of (doing) theology is pivotal in the period after Sava where the socio-political setting seriously injured Serbian state and at the same time determined theological consciousness of the Orthodox Church in Serbia.

Sava and Serbian Theology

Part of the introductory notes in this chapter is indebted to the recognition of history of the particular church and nation of which Sava had a great part. The same recognition is especially significant regarding the origin and history of theology in Serbia.¹⁵ The notion of history of the local church within the state of Serbia will help one to understand a larger setting of theology. The Medieval history is the official story of reception and development of the biblical-patristic and liturgical heritage of the (Orthodox) Church in Serbia. Some demographical and political events such as life under the Ottoman Empire for over four

12 "Every (holy) dogma of our Theanthropic faith has its own feast day: the Incarnation—Christmas, the Resurrection—Easter, faith—celebrating holy martyrs. All services are nothing else but experiencing and surviving of the holy and eternal truths of dogmas: the dogma of Theandricity of the Lord Jesus which is strongly experienced in the holy feast days of the Lord: Christmas, Theophany, Easter and others. The Orthodox worship that is the Holy Gospel and the Holy Tradition translated into the prayers, sung into the marvelous and life giving chants, troparions, kondakions, canons, verses, songs, sighs, cries and tears"; Popović 2004, 641.

13 Theology is an experience of an alternating apophatic and kataphatic doxological celebration whether in the visible or invisible Church; Areopagus, 1032.

14 Popović 2001, 191.

15 Garadasević 1977.

centuries, migrations to the North, import of the Russian liturgical books and influence of the scholastic theology cannot be disregarded as irrelevant for understanding theology in Serbia.

The history of the Serbians reveals a bold premise for the modern nation and Church in Serbia. Serbian history could not be adequately analyzed nor understood without serious consideration of its cultural rituals which carry a two-fold identity both ethnic and religious.¹⁶ Obviously there is no theology on a neutral ground. In fact, is there any point of doing theology without social and political context?

History of the Serbians and Serbian theology one might argue, officially begins when the culture of the particular entity 'got impregnated' with a new monotheistic religion—Christianity. On the larger scale of events, history of the Serbians was on the cross roads which is marked by Christ' (de)legate Sava and his freedom for Christ, the Legacy. Sava's choice left long lasting consequences for the state and Church in Serbia. Therefore, history of the Serbians is arbitrarily divided in two periods: 1) the first period narrates the coming of the Slavs to the Balkans before the birth of Simeon and Sava and the rise of Nemanjić dynasty, and 2) the second period is after Simeon and Sava until the present day. Furthermore, all previously mentioned factors prove theological imperative of the great commission in its cosmic dimension: to glorify God the Father in Christ and to "become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Eph 4, 13).

Sava: a (De)legate of the Legacy

Theology requires an experience of a socio-political and temporal setting according to the Theologian who entered the space and time and ἐσκήνωσεν ἡμῖν (Jn 1, 14). Way of doing Theology in Serbia during the time of Sava and generations after him was rooted in the literature foundation along with the Church lifestyle according to the same foundation. The official story of theology in Serbia continues with Simeon and Sava and works produced by their successors, close disciples, bishops, metropolitans and patriarchs and their spiritual children until present time. But, what are the characteristic of Sava's theological reception? Translated biographies, and the long list of read bibliographies hardly reflect an experience and Christian life in Serbia. Certainly Christianity already reached the lands of the Southern Slavs before Sava. Relying on the discourses of Gregory the Theologian and Gregory Palamas, Atanasije (Jevtić) boldly confirms adopted theology in time of Sava as to συγγενέσθαι Θεό, which is experiential theology—to be (come) and live with God, to be in communion with God.¹⁷ A great part of understanding life in/with God was embraced through hesychast

16 One of the peculiar characteristics of this ethnic and religious identity is due to Krsna Slava: "...The custom served as a preserver of the Serbian-Christian identity under the Muslim rule, the Communistic regime, and the Post-Communistic chaos. Following the Byzantine pattern, Christianity had been introduced to and institutionalized among the Serbs from the top to the bottom, that is, from the political/ecclesiastical leadership "down" to the masses. Consequently—especially because the Justinian concept of the "symphony" between the Church and state had been so effectively applied by St. Sava—the national and the religious identity of the Serbs was intimately intertwined in the very foundation of the Serbian culture during and after the time of St. Sava. Slava has gradually become the symbol of such national-religious identity of the Serbs that carries both great advantages and dangers. The great advantages were in preserving Christian identity under Muslim rule and Communistic atheism and in transmitting the Christian faith, giving both the advantages of preservation and one aspect of mission. The danger was that right from the beginning there was an inherited tendency towards diluting the meaning of the authentic Christian distinctiveness of the followers Christ, bringing in the dangers of nominalism"; See in: Popadić1996, 4.

17 Jevtić 2001, 249.

teaching in *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith* even in time before Palamas.¹⁸ Although key of doing theology requires theoretical investigation, e.g. particular literature foundation in the Bible and Liturgical texts, it is experienced in the communion with God, e.g. the Eucharist as repeatedly mentioned earlier. Acknowledging the feat in Sava's life toward God as both theoretical where the term theoretical denotes merely academic knowledge and practical which is ascetic-sacramental discipline, Domentian stated: "(Saint Sava) prayed to God unceasingly during all night vigils by silent (ησυχία) theology; by way of often one-heart and one-soul prayers, he was approaching God."¹⁹ Similar comment is found in Sava's other biographer, Theodosius: "(Sava) unceasingly studied day and night, determining all in fear of God; self-indicating a model of virtue and choosing the best God-knowing—theology (богоразумије)—and directing all toward god-lovingness (богољубље)."²⁰ Therefore, it would be very difficult to argue on the one hand, whether there is Serbian theology as such, without a story of a biblical and patristic heritage which reached the lands of the southern Europe and Balkans as intertwined with the religion of the Slavs officially by the end of the first millennium. On the other hand, it would be a misinterpretation also if one were to confound Sava's theological view with any particular school, region or local church as well. In fact, how does one define the term Serbian theology under the claim if there is such a term at all?²¹

In order to narrow down the further history of theology in Serbia one might question also theology of any school of thought and entity such as French, Greek or Italian. The same question might include the typical polarization such as Eastern and Western Theology. Instead of answering this question directly, which is a challenge itself, the goal is rather to provide historic epochs in which theology got adopted and propelled.

Theology in Serbia: Origin and History

History of the Serbians as a branch of the southern Slavs, a new Christian and independent nation, officially begins with two names: Rastko Nemanjić and Stefan Nemanja. The central role of Rastko also known after his monastic name Sava occurs along the rise of the Nemanjić dynasty founded by a Serbian landlord, Sava's father, Stefan Nemanja (1114-1120), and later monk Simeon, also known as Symeon the Myrrh-streaming. The history of the Nemanjić dynasty which ruled Serbia up to 1374 carries unique significance. The life and work of the medieval Serbian rulers, viz. the Nemanjić dynasty, made precedence as a role model in the history of any dynasty of theocratic polity in Serbia and beyond. The new Nemanjić dynasty made a historic turning point for the Church in Serbia by working in two directions: 1) one direction was religious and cultural (education) executed mainly through the ecclesial agenda, and 2) the other was social and economical through the political agenda.

The Fall of Serbian Kingdom

Many political and economic events in the period after the ultimate fall of the Serbian Kingdom (1459) became a great factor for quality of doing (living) theology in Serbia. The

18 Bogdanović 1981.

19 Domentian 1865, 129.

20 Theodosius 1973, 204.

21 Justin Popović having an opportunity to study abroad in many different states or using many languages in his early period of life left nevertheless a strong impact on his intellectual and theological diapason. At the same time none of them cannot be clearly discerned and disengaged from any of the examples mentioned above in particular, viz. Greek, Anglican or universal theology, but rather all combine.

argument is that very same factor had not undermined theological quality in Serbia, but rather invigorated and propelled it. In order to support this provocative claim, chronological intersection between theological writings and their adequate reception ought to be analyzed in parallel manner. For the same reason, it is possible to appreciate history of the inseparable bond between the cultural life of one nation and (Christian) religion as a two-fold reality of the same identity.

If taken into account that theology in Serbia had its long and productive history, the proponing issue is not just when or by whom does it start as much as the question of how theology was nurtured in the lands of the southern Europe and Balkans? How did theology intertwine officially with the already religious Slavic mindset by the end of the first millennium? More importantly, how does one perceive the notion of reception-effect of theology in medieval Serbia?

The way of doing theology in Serbia along with its main emphasis was through the contemplative method, e.g. ascetical-sacramental which reached its culmination in the Church, the place *par excellence* for theology. To understand theology in Serbia adopted mainly from the Eastern Christian wing means to situate its endeavor into the concrete ecclesial setting rather its prominent place, the Eucharist.

The most prominent places where theology is being transmitted and nurtured were the Serbian monasteries. Monasteries, whether in Serbia (Dečani, Pečka Patrijaršija, Sveta Trojica Pljevaljska, Žiča, Gračanica, Studenica, Mileševa, Ravanica, Kalenić, Ljubostinja, Manasija) or on the mount Athos (Hilandar), were and remained to be the locus of a Christian conservatism and traditionalism, but not as a mere ideological position or state polity as in the early age of the Serbian kingdom. It became a lifestyle, a strong Christian consciousness and attitude of Serbians. And it remained to be a way of preserving (Orthodox) Serbian identity, rather preserving it rightly.

Defending the (Christian) faith of the fathers was a matter of historic instinct formed especially when imposed by severe circumstance such as the occupation under the regime of Muslim faith. Despite political and economic pressure, the new setting under the Ottomans (from 1389 until mid-1800) became a gateway of the orthopraxy to the generations to come.

The (Christian) faith of the fathers which was passed on the lands of Balkans orally and eventually through the patristic, ascetical and liturgical writings is barely a beginning of the history of theology in Serbia. All the writings and literature of any sort were only academics at that time and were mainly preserved in the monasteries.²² Even though printing facilities²³ were a revolutionary preserver of the cultural and religious heritage, soon after Serbian monks were compelled to return to hand-writing in their monasteries.²⁴ Theology in this context means primarily tradition received from the Church Fathers and their theological writings, monastic mystics and other holy interpreters of the dogmatic and biblical sources beginning with Cappadocians, Alexandrian and Byzantine theologians whose works were translated in Serbian almost in totality. The theological literature²⁵ read in medieval Serbia, especially in the ecclesial-ascetical context, represents a constitutive element of theology in Serbia.

22 Deretić1987.

23 One of the first European and Slavic printing facilities was established in Cetinje (1494-1496). Founded by Đurađ Crnojević, the ruler of Zeta (1490-1496), the printing press was operated by supervision of monk Makarius.

24 See the history of the Serbian typography in: Pesikan, Mano-Zisi, Kovacević1994.

25 Podskalsky2000, 865–1459; Lazić2008.

Modern Period: Theology and Serbian Migrations

In the series of events in the following periods such as the Austro-Turkish wars, and two Great Serbian migrations (First one led by Patriarch Arsenije III Čarnojević,²⁶ from 1689 to 1690, the Second Migration led by Patriarch Arsenije IV Jovanović Sakabenda, 1737-1739),²⁷ Serbia had a nostalgic existence while living under two influences on their social and spiritual life. As a matter of fact, Serbia actually suffered from two changes in the new Habsburg territory—demographical and cultural change.²⁸ Its life was divided by the state border, Danube River between the Ottoman and Habsburg Empires. In the former empire which included Bosnia, Montenegro, and Serbia, the Church continued its existence in very hard circumstances of constant pressure. The Church task was to preserve the cultural environment of Serbians in terms of religious and national identity in front of the Ottoman state. In the latter, Serbians integrated themselves in to the life of civil society of the Habsburg Empire, and though they were exposed to the ecclesial influence of predominantly Catholic State, their life was still incomparably convenient in respect to other Serbians who lived in the Ottoman Empire.

When Serbians came in the military border of the southern Hungary, they brought with them old manuscripts written in a Serbian variant of Church Slavonic language along with the relics of saints. Soon after they imported (liturgical) books predominantly from Russia which later on effected rather created the language reduction of the Serbian Slavonic to the Russian Slavonic, viz. the official liturgical language of the Orthodox Church in Russia. This shift did not mean only linguistic change since the Russian wave of professors, literature, art²⁹ and philosophy brought a specific scholastic model of Orthodox theology in seminaries and catechetical institutions.³⁰ The catechetical text books (obligated either by the Serbian metropolitans or Maria Teresa), along with some introductions to Orthodox theology by Peter Mogila, Alexander Mitrophan Crytopoulos and Cyril Lucaris (who was highly influenced by Calvinistic theology), bear strong influence of the Latin and Protestant theology of that period. The sensibility of the influence was not perceived by way of (officially or unofficially) accepting dogmas, but in exposition and methodology of experience of the same dogmas. Theology from Russia influenced by movements and categories of the western theological systems of Reformation and Contra-reformation brought a challenge to theology in this region. This has been criticized by modern theologians as ‘Babylonian (Western) Captivity’ of

26 Another refractive point in the Serbian history is described as a prayer by the leader of the same migration, patriarch Arsenije himself. The touching text of suffering and prayer is found as a poem in: Pavlović1960.

27 The age of Enlightenment in the XVIII century touched upon theology in Serbia generally speaking. But, more effective and long lasting consequences were experienced in other fields of popular and cultural life such as education, art, architecture and moral code. The same turbulence was effective until the end of the XIX century when there is a rise of many individual rather independent researchers especially in theology.

28 It is out of the scope in this study to elaborate the history of catechetical organization in Serbia especially in this period. What has been true for the medieval history of Serbia regarding mutual relationship between theology and education, has been applied until the first Emigration in 1769. Before this official date, Serbian schools were in collaboration with the Church. Rather, the Church’s task was catechesis and religious education as the constitutional identity. Afterwards this task passed on the ministry of public instruction and education.

29 Medaković1980.

30 See in the history of the oldest theological center in Serbia: Gavrilović 1984.

Orthodox theology.³¹ To what extent this captivity affected modern Orthodox theology is yet to be evaluated, especially in ecumenical movements and dialogs where the language of categories, methods and terminology on the official ecumenical level is slowly being compromised.

The Russian and Slavophil wave were not the challenge in the life of Serbians on the left side of Danube as much as the new European age of Enlightenment and rationalism. It was the epoch of debate or generally articulated as philosophy of humanism and renaissance. The new age for Serbians was particularly experienced under the supreme Austrian–Hungarian culture at least in two directions: a) primarily, it challenged the Serbian culture and theology of centuries before by disclosing a wider specter of philosophical and theological milieu in Europe, and b) secondly, it gave rise to another parallel approach to theology, especially in the academic circles as recently criticized as theology of baroque.³²

With rise of the new independent state of Serbia marked by efforts in two great uprisings in 1804 and 1815, the ruling dynasties of Obrenović and Karađorđević attempt to collaborate with organization of theological education in Serbia. The official monument of that attempt has been recognized by establishing the first clerical theological institution in Belgrade. Ever since the seminary was opened in 1836, it did not cease to educate and form future priests and theologians.³³ The modern ultimatum was that the new Serbian state had to grow at least civically according to the European patterns. In the same period, another great source of theological education was in Kiev along with the German-speaking Orthodox Theological Seminary of Czernowitz³⁴ and Russian Theological Academies.

Another historic momentum in history of the Serbians, especially in the new kingdom of Serbians, Croats and Slovenians in 1918, expanded Church unity and jurisdiction from various jurisdictions. This radical expansion took over not just a complex of Serbian pre-history, but also various prehistory of other constitutional nations (Croats and Slovenes) as well as identity issues of still unformed and constitutionally not recognized, viz. Muslim population, Albanians, (Slavic Macedonians) and others. But, more importantly for theology in that setting, was the influence rather reception of the Russian emigration after the October Revolution in 1917 and Civil War in 1919. Bringing diversity to the Slavic and Orthodox commonwealth, theology in Serbia (whether in its academic or ecclesial form) gave birth to era of new illuminators and at the same time highly educated theologians. The most prominent Serbian names after Sava are recently canonized saints: Nikolaj Velimirović (1879-1956) and his student Justin Popović.³⁵

Sava and Serbian Theology: Conclusion

Theology in Serbia and the concluding remarks on its history are a matter of methodology and understanding of the term theology to begin with. Very often and in many instances the term theology is understood primarily or exclusively as a part of academics or one of the scientific disciplines. The main concern in the following paragraphs is to clarify any possible attempt which criticizes by way of historic method and makes tribute to Sava and the so-called Serbian theology or its development:

31 Florovsky 1979; Yannaras 1972.

32 Vukašinović 2010.

33 Marković 2011

34 Rakić 2009.

35 A small collection of Popović's writings regarding various books by Velimirović see in: Popović 2003.

a) The term θεολογία stems from the first and ἔσχατος (ultimate) Theologian. The mystery and truth of what the term truly signifies—rather, who is a theologian—is proclaimed in the Gospel: *No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known—εξηγήσατο* (Jn. 1, 18). The claim in the former part of the statement is that no one can do theology. But, in the latter the truth about theology has been disclosed in Christ. This implicates the only historic fact needed to understand the source of theology—Christ is the one who can reveal God and speak of God.³⁶ Theology begins with the Theologian and it has been inaugurated in and with the person of Christ. Theology is the living person of Christ, the Theologian who revealed Θεός to humanity by way of his Incarnation and ultimately in the Eucharist.³⁷

b) The facts about glorious and unfortunate history of the political setting of Serbia affirm theology in its particular setting. Despite the various meanings and interpretations that could be easily confounded with a particular school of thought or entity, the term theology arguably denotes a two-fold meaning: a) the term theology as a scientific discipline with all its academic fruits, viz. writings and recollections of all sorts which also include folklore, relics and artistic heritage and b) the term theology as a (Christian) lifestyle experienced in the Church, e.g. the Eucharist.

c) Theology in Serbia begins with Simeon and Sava's freedom for Christ. In particular, Sava's belief is cultivated through the inherited writings which Sava translated and produced on his own.³⁸ More likely theology was understood as life according to the same writings. Sava's understanding of theology was not separated from the praxis of the Church. Rather, it was identified with it.³⁹ Also, Sava was a contemporary theologian because he has always been connected to the eternal reality, the image according he shaped the public sphere in Serbia of that time. Only in this relationship: co temporal –eternal or Divine-human, Sava remained to be the historic figure of the supreme faith authority, but the figure of future (post-modern) life in Serbia also.⁴⁰ An example of the Exemplar, Sava truly became the *legend* in the Serbian hagiographical writings, popular stories and folk songs. The neologism

36 The claim that no one can know God and do theology except God's Son is supported by many Apostolic and Church fathers who agree and come to the same conclusion clearly stated by Gregory Palamas where Christ is self-truth, the pre-eternal God who for us became the Theologian; the preacher of truth which was the reason of coming into this world to witness the truth.

37 Confessor 1982.

38 Sava wrote the following: (1) Tipik Karejski (orig. Устав, meaning constitution, or, rules) for his monk's cell in Kareja; (2) Služba Svetom Simeonu (the liturgy dedicated to St. Simeon) that he wrote one year after the death of his father; (3) Tipik Hilendarski, the rules written for the monk's brotherhood of the monastery Hilandar on Mount Athos; (4) letter to his brothers Stefan and Vukan that were in dispute; (5) Tipik Studenički, the rules for the monastery of Studenica; (6) Žitije Svetog Simeona, "The Life of St. Simeon," the oldest Serbian bibliography; and (7) the letter to the chief monk of the monastery Studenica, Spiridon (1234). St. Sava's translation works (either these are his own translations or he supervised those translations, and thus approved them) includes: (1) Zakonopravilo Svetoga Save (usually considered to be Photius' Nomocanon); (2), Veliki Služebnik, or, Чиновник, a basic handbook for the liturgy and the ordination; and (3) Psaltir, a guide for the readings of the Psalms; Burković 1925. For Sava's collected works see in: Bogdanović 1986.

39 "The Kingdom of God as the theandric reality reveals into the world as the Eucharist which structure actually enacts the future reality"; Devrnja 2012, 644.

40 Negrišorac 2018, 240.

Svetosavlje (Светосавље) named after the combination of words Orthodoxy (Православље or Правомислије and ultimately Правосведочење) and Sava's name witness even more about authentic reception and adoption of theology in Serbia.

Sava's Legacy and Justin Popović

Sava's legacy and his life work achievements were not just examples according to his lifestyle preferences. The same aspiration especially for theology shared the generations of Serbian rulers and clergy who consequently followed the ascetical way of Christian life. One of the most prominent protagonists of Sava's legacy is arguably Justin Popović. In attempt to compare or learn from two saints, one can always find a leading thread of thoughts or a certain lifestyle distinguishing rather bringing two saints on the same ground. The following section indicates few moments regarding their adoption of the Legacy and in what way it determined their lifework.

A strong oral Serbian tradition regarding Sava's example brings a new reception and adoption of theology. Even though, the historical turning point for theology in Serbia starts with the evangelization of the Slavs, it actually grows along the evangelization with (in) a young prince Rastko.⁴¹ In one of his late writings, *The Life of Stefan Nemanja*, Rastko summarizes the hagiography of his father which becomes evident in his own experience of conversion as well: "First he revealed piety in himself, and then he taught others."⁴² Rastko already at age of eighteen had entered the cloister of Mount Athos (1192). The conversion of a young novice led to an experience of monk Sava and ultimately gave birth to a saint hence *educator*, diplomat, councilor etc.⁴³

This inward conversion of Rastko carries a parallel mission who undertakes every (de)legate of Christ: 1) to know yourself in the communion with God and 2) to bring others to the same acknowledgement. An ultimate result of the God-human communion brings out reality known to us as saints. The recently canonized Abba Justin Popović was revered for his uncompromising faith.⁴⁴ Those who have heard of him at all arguably know him only as a theologian and perhaps as a philosopher.⁴⁵ However, his life and work permeated his philosophical thinking, as in a short note Meyendorff highlighted:

41 Domentian wrote "The Life of St. Sava" and "The Life of St. Simeon" as the Serbian king, Uros I, asked him to do so. The authentic Domentian's work *The Life of St. Sava* has been preserved, and it is from 1243 or 1254. (See Bogdanović 1992). Even though Pavle Josif Shafarik's (Јосиф Шафарик) edition (1833) was the first publication (but incomplete and unclear because of the damaged manuscript) of Domentijan's works, Djuro Dančić's (Ђуро Даничић) edition (1865) was the first complete edition of the Domentijan's works and it was done upon the different, readable manuscript which Dančić (Даничић) has founded in Vienna soon after 1860. Lazar Mirković (Јазар Мирковић) has translated Domentijan's work from the Dančić's (Даничић) edition and the Serbian Literary Association (Српска књижевна задруга) published it in 1938 in Belgrade. A younger biographer Theodosius, was a monk in Hilandar—the monastery in the Mount Athos established by Sava. The earliest known manuscript of the Theodosije's "The Life of St. Sava" ("Житије Светог Саве") is the manuscript of Teodul from 1336.

42 Kantor 1983, 259.

43 For the detailed analysis on the relationship of education and illumination see in: Popović 1999, 254.

44 The full text on the glorification of Abba Justin Popović can be found in the official document of the Serbian Patriarchate: ПРОСИЈАЛИ НОВИ СВЕТИ ЦРКВЕ ПРАВОСЛАВНЕ (Dano u Patrijarsiji Srpskoj u Beogradu, dana 16/29 aprila 2010. Godine – AS Broj 14/zap.93 I AS Broj 15/zap. 94).

45 Justin Popović is one of the founders of the Serbian Philosophical Society, founded at the initiative of Branislav Petronijević on October 22, 1938.

Not only his love for the Father, not only the severe, but enlightened monastic tradition of which he was the spokesman, but also his concern for Orthodoxy as a whole, his openness to and appreciation of both Greek and Russian theological thought and, above all, his ability to see theology as a living philosophy of Truth.⁴⁶

Both Sava and Justin share the same legacy in academic and private life which became one inseparable life. Instead of the introductory notes regarding Popović's bio-bibliography, the following remarks are distinguishing features of Popović's reception and adoption of theology as a living philosophy of Truth:

- Popović's withdrawal to Ćelije, a small St. Archangel Michael monastery near Valjevo in 1948 meant life practically under house arrest while working on translations and compositions of his own. He daily celebrated the Eucharist, during which he shed copious tears. The gift of tears was not just Popović's urge to improve, but a yearning for restoration in Christ as being amplified by sweet tears of joy.⁴⁷ With the same juxtaposition, as an act by disclosing the gateway of the sorrow-joy attitude, Popović approached the Eucharistic by developing a prayerful theology as a normative methodology for theology.

- The event of the Godman holds the pride of place in Popović's thought and spiritual engagement. *The Man and the Godman* sums up Popović life's work with all the explosion of the novelty of the Godman.⁴⁸ The extraordinary character of the Truth ought to be embraced through the event of Incarnation and His Church.

- In "*The Highest Value and Last Criterion of Orthodoxy*" (1935), Popović introduced the ecclesial concept as the playground where Christological and anthropological disciplines meet and create the theanthropic experience. The ecclesial theme that especially permeates the third volume of Popović's *Dogmatics* is in fact the ultimate theme of the theanthropic reality.⁴⁹

Popović's lifework: Academics and Private Life Combine

In the following chapters, there is an overview of two most extensive Popović's life work: (1) *Dogmatics* and (2) *The Lives of the Saints*. Both of these works deserve more critical assessment as elaborated elsewhere.⁵⁰ The main argument for Popović' lifework is the twofold reality of Godman expressed in *Dogmatics* and *The Lives of the Saints*. His *Dogmatics* attracted more attention, despite the fact that *Dogmatics* cannot serve as a source without

46 Meyendorff 1979, 118–119.

47 For lack of better translation of the gift of tears and the state in which Popović was during the Eucharist celebration, the Greek word πένθος suggests the meaning of mourning, or grief for sin along with the joy bearing an element of that spiritual sorrow. In this process of joyful mourning, Popović's testimony confirms the distinctive anthropology of the body as being seen as an important agent of spiritual growth through the physical expression and the restored state before the Godman.

48 Popovich 2009.

49 There is no catholicity outside the Church. Only the true and genuine life of the Church creates in man the feeling of the wholeness of faith, truth, and life, that is, to live 'with all the Saints' with all the members of the Church throughout the centuries; Popovich 1994, 84.

50 Petrović 2015.

constant references to *The Lives of the Saints* by which reciprocal relationship they both complete their purpose as essential factors of Christian anthropology.⁵¹

Dogmatics (Dogmatics of the Orthodox Church)

The setting of *Dogmatics* and the proper interpretation of its context is the life of the Church.⁵² The entire experience of dogmas springs out of the experience of the Church through its services, rites and the relics of the saints. Yet, when Popović speaks about the ecclesial experience of the dogmas in over two thousand pages of *Dogmatics*, he raises eyebrows by leaving less than ten pages for the Eucharist. However, one should not ignore the prayerful (sacramental) theology which Popović defined as the feature par excellence of the Godman event.⁵³ On the contrary, it is the prayerful (sacramental) theology that permeates all aspects of the ecclesial experience of dogmas.

The *Orthodox Philosophy of Truth* or *Dogmatics* is an enriching collection of a Christian praxis analyzed through and in the Eucharistic experience. *Dogmatics* did not place the Eucharist simply as a permeating theme or the central act in a Christian life. The Eucharist holds the primary content and method of studying dogmas also. The rich ecclesial content of *Dogmatics* emphasizes the integrity of the way of life which follows and confirms the truth of the Godman. Along with sacramental theology, it is an ascetical experience of the Church where genuine anthropology is constructed. Therefore, the main theme in *Dogmatics* is ascetical in nature where the Church life style is apt to generate ultimate meaning and purpose in the Eucharist.

The Lives of the Saints

The only goal of the dogmas involving humanity, as the only task with which man should be concerned is to accept the eternal truths through faith, and through the graceful evangelical feat (подвиг); to convert them into his life (work) and thought.⁵⁴ This axiom sustains Popović's anthropology toward living the truth, but at the same time excludes any notion of the Christian life as a utopian enterprise. The Christian life is always an experiential

51 *Dogmatics* elicited some studies on Popović outside of the Orthodox world as well. Before 1992, Popović's writings were hardly noticed, let alone studied, in the wider circles outside of the Orthodox world. In that year the first translation of his *Dogmatics* appeared in French and excerpts became available in English as well. These translations made reaction in: Bremer 1992, and further provoked interpretation in the context of Serbian nationalism and its anti-westernism in Buchenau 2004.

52 The methodology and style of *Dogmatics* does not follow the scholastic approach. In the deliberately undervalued structure for *Dogmatics*, Popović considered all dogmas to be integral in the dogma of the Godman. The style of his *Dogmatics* is neo-patristic and its methodology that of the history of dogma. The numerous chapters and themes of his *Dogmatics* overlay reflection on the truth of the Godman through the use of doxological language with references to the Eucharist and other Church services. The density of pages on Christology and Soteriology rooted in biblical and patristic theology is augmented by Church hymnography, especially that of the Paschal and Festal services: Τὰ τῆς ἐκκλησίας δόγματα, τὰ ἐκκλησιαστικά δόγματα in Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomius* 12; John Chrysostom *Galat. Hom. 9.1*; De vita s. p. Ephrem Syrian; Popović 2004, 9.

53 The Godman event and, most of all, the Christocentric approach which permeates the third volume of *Dogmatics* is actually dedicated to the Church. The Godman is the cause of the primary importance and the true identity of the Church. Human effort and participation is triggered by the first cause and comes second. One of the first commentators outside of the orthodox world failed to fully appreciate this structure in Popović's greater ecclesial mosaic is: Bremer 1992.

54 "Orthodoxy is not a library that one can study, but a life to be lived"; Jevtić 1980, 8.

science and the parameter of understanding is indicated through the Lives of the Saints, Orthodox encyclopedia. The Saints are a dynamic execution of dogmas; a perfect equilibrium between Dogmas and the life which ought to be led. The saints are “an experimental Dogmatics,”⁵⁵ experience by the holy life of the holy people of God who live by holy and eternal divine truths.⁵⁶ Christ is addressed in all ages and in all places through his saints who fill the space left vacant by the ‘departure’ of their Master.⁵⁷

Popović identified saints as a living continuation of Christ’s ministry. That which is Christ’s becomes theirs.⁵⁸ Equipped with virtues and sacraments in the Church, the saints became a joyful outcome, which confirms that the Incarnation did not happen in vain.⁵⁹ Saints make Christ present by their own life in their epoch and region, establishing a natural extension and living representation of Christ in the world.⁶⁰

The saints have surely made an impression in the Greco-Roman world.⁶¹ From the antique period of exemplars through the association of Hellenistic culture inherited on the

55 Jevtić 1980, 164.

56 “For in them (saints) all the holy eternal dogmatic truths are experienced in all their life-creating and creative energies. In the lives of the saints, it is most evidently shown that dogmas are not only ontological truths in themselves and for themselves, but that each one of them is a well spring of eternal life and a source of holy spirituality”; Jevtić 1980, 47.

57 The new humanity is able to begin that endless journey towards Divine thank to salvific act of Incarnation and Resurrection. He made us ‘worthy’ in order to become gods—not according to His nature, but to His grace. Indeed, Edith is right when she said that ‘human nature, however, cannot conform itself to divine perfection. Thus *imitation Christi* is an unrealizable imperative because the life of Christ cannot be replicated.’ It cannot be replicated, but is there a need for? If the task of saint is to bring closer Divine into the reality of the communion, then uniqueness of that way of bringing it and saint’s personality remains unrepeatable and original. See more in: Wyschogrod 1990, 13.

58 “What is the “Acts of the Apostles”? They are the acts of Christ which the Apostles do by the power of Christ, or better still: they do them by Christ Who is in them and acts through them. And what are the lives of the Apostles? They are the living of Christ’s life which in the Church is transmitted to all faithful followers of Christ and is continued through them with the help of the holy mysteries and the holy virtues. And what are the “Lives of the Saints”? They are nothing else but a certain kind of continuation of the “Acts of the Apostles.” In them is found the same Gospel, the same life, the same truth, the same righteousness, the same love, the same faith, the same eternity, the same “power from on high,” the same God and Lord”; Popović 2007, 160.

59 “The Lives of the Saints show forth those persons filled with Christ God, those Christ-bearing persons, those holy persons in whom is preserved and through whom is transmitted the holy tradition of that holy grace-filled life. It is preserved and transmitted by means of holy evangelical living, for the lives of the saints are holy evangelical truths which are translated into our human life by grace and feats. There is no evangelical truth which cannot be transformed into human life. They were all brought by Christ God for one purpose: to become our life, our reality, our possession, our joy. And the saints, all, without exception, live these Divine truths as the center of their lives and the essence of their being. For this reason, the Lives of the Saints are a proof and a testimony that our origin is in heaven; that we are not from this world but from that one; that a man is a true man only in God; that on earth one lives by heaven; that *our conversation is in heaven* (Phill. 3: 20); that our task is to make ourselves heavenly, feeding ourselves with the *heavenly bread* which came down to earth (Jn. 6, 33,35,51)”; Popović 2007, 161.

60 The monk, like the martyr, is in the front line of the battle against the powers of evil and sin. In the same manner Athanasius of Alexandria understood the monastic life, as we can see from his *Life of Antony*. Also, very closely this ascetic approach parallels his understanding of the Incarnation; for, in the Incarnation, God the Word takes the body so as to be able to meet the powers of evil on their own ground and defeat them. For more on Monastic Contribution see: Louth 2007.

61 The expression “The civilization of the *Paideia*” used by Peter Brown serves to describe the Mediterranean society and its elite within the Greco Roman world. He holds the civilization of the *paideia* is similar to our own today of advanced technology. Let us mention here some original remarks on the

philosophical ground with the advent of Christ, the Church makes a precedent with a genuine message where the old constellation of examples could never look the same. Thus, the anthropological postulate in Dogmatics and the Lives of the Saints sums up the twofold reality of Christ: a) the Incarnation whereby God's becoming man endows him with the capacity to see the invisible in the visible, and b) [the] Church—the final outcome of the Incarnation. In the former, Divine Truth enters into the world (John 1, 17) as a personified reality, not as a philosophical notion reasoned through the scholastic enterprise of the conceptual necessity. In the latter Church is not a theory secured by a rational demonstrative argument either, but the completion of the Incarnation, the establishment of the Divine and the human communion, e.g. the community of saints.⁶²

Conclusion

Knowing that history of persons is immensely more complicated and intricate than history of events, one may argue how hard is it to find explanations of what lies behind one's history that is one's life. More importantly, what is a creating force as Popović argued that reshape and transform human personality, e.g. Rastko into Sava?⁶³ History often undermines or omits these "little" details in one's life as almost insignificant. But, if one carefully examines these (little) details, one might detect not only transformation of one's personality, but consequently influence on others too.

Sava's legacy is an experience of Christ through his daily struggle to live in Christ. By rediscovering Sava's personality one actually realizes Rastko's desire for Christ as feat in Church and for Church in the medieval Serbian state. Arguably, the task of scholars and all those interested in Sava's life includes scientific method along with a personal struggle to recognize Christ as the goal in Sava's life. Sava or Justin Popović's personality would have never been completed without Christ. Indeed, who is Sava or Justin without their struggle for and life in Christ? The concluding words regarding Sava's legacy as lived through Sava's prominent followers thus extends the field of theology to science and culture. The Legacy is one's life lived in doxological manner primarily through a sacramental-ascetical lifestyle. The Legacy is a theological-cultural paradigm which overcomes academic scholasticism and pietism also. The main features of those paradigm areas are following:

a) Renewal of the patristic way of thought and doing theology within the socio-political context,

term *paideia* and the way it was understood in this period of history. The child from the natural and ethico-religious standpoint shows the original positive estimation. In the pre-Greek Mediterranean world and the early Greek world, in part even into the classical period, children, especially sons, were desired to enhance the labor force, the defensive power of glory of a house. Children were even desired by god. Rediscovery of the child in Hellenism brings us to the realm of the second century where classical disciplines—poetry and art—begin to acquire a closer relation to the child. An echo of ancient mythical motives of the divine child is revealed with a new tone. The Incarnation is the example of prophesy of Christ seen in Church. The art of antiquity depicts the child as a small adult. Having a significant attention in classics child is presented as a goose slayer in Boetho's or as the boy with a thorn. They are depicted on frescoes as imitators of the adults. Even though, Antiquity primarily sees in the child the element of the immaturity or childishness, we are using term *paideia* as a diminutive or pre-incarnation of sanctity or saints; Brown 1981.

62 "The Godman is the substantial identity of the Church: The Church in the Eucharist, the Eucharist in the Church. Where there is no Godman—there is no Church; and where there is no Church—there is no Eucharist"; Popović 2004, 567.

63 Popović 2005, 341.

b) Freedom from the (“Babylonian”) captivity of academic scholasticism and pietism, and

c) New approach to religion/faith and ontological questions by way of (prayerful) theology and academics combine.

Publicity of Sava’s and Popović’s work through panegyric critiques generally shared in the Orthodox world does not challenge the fact of the theological consciousness and the reference to the same consciousness in Serbia. Sava’s and Popović’s representation of that theological consciousness should be elaborated through other scientific categories such as pedagogy, pastoral care, linguistics and education. Theology through Doxology, e.g. the Eucharist, points its universal character of doing theology regardless of predisposition or willingness to pursue theology whether through its apologetic character, viz. against heresy, dogma development and others, or in its academic endeavor. Nevertheless, doxological character cannot be substituted by any given examples in the previous statement.⁶⁴ Any criticism of Sava’s and Popović’ life work thus ought to be criticized rather acknowledged within the doxological character of theology, e.g. the communion with Christ in the Eucharist.⁶⁵

Instead of the conclusion, the closing words are rather a call to elaborate more on Sava’s Legacy explored through the term Serbian Theology and Justin Popović. Also, it is particularly noteworthy to indicate names of archimandrite Tihon (Rakićević) and two young philosophers, Bogdan Lubardić and Vladimir Cvetković. These two philosophers within the last two decades rediscovered Popović’s work in a critical and systematic manner. Archimandrite Tihon’s refreshingly new studies on Sava, viz. *Eshatološka vizija Teodora Studita (Hilandar 387) u ktitorskom Žitiju Tipika manastira Studenice* (IX H 8 [Š 10]) shed light upon theological significance of Sava’s life work.⁶⁶ However, all three names introduced Sava and Justin Popović to the larger theological circles inside and outside of academia in Serbia.

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64 The ultimate goal to embrace theology in doxological and academic manner is achieved or at least recognized by Church as such only in few cases of so called Theologians.

65 “(Saint) Sava without the Christ the Lord, this is the most offensive nonsense of the Serbian historiography. Where do the fundamental power and might, the main all-power and main all-might of Sava lie? (They lie) only and exclusively in wondrous and wonder-working Lord Christ, eternally alive and life-giving Godman. Without Christ, Rastko would forever remain to be Rastko, and would never become and remain to be Sava, (the) holy and eternal consciousness of the Serbian people”; Popović 1972.

66 Rakićević 2016.

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САВИНО НАСЛЕЂЕ: СРПСКА ТЕОЛОГИЈА И ЈУСТИН ПОПОВИЋ

Тема Савиног наслеђа представља изазовно питање у академском богословљу: ко је Сава у контексту српске теологије и ко стоји као легат Савиног наслеђа? Савино животно дело заслужује више академске пажње нарочито у теологији. Поред хвалоспевних закључака о Савином животном делу из других радова, ова студија покушава да допринесе једном критичком осврту на важност теме Савиног наслеђа. Изазов је да синтагму српска теологија и животно дело Јустина Поповића разоткријемо као Савино наслеђе. Поједине уопштене напомене из црквене историје су допуњујуће, а из области литургије и догматике неизбежне у овом раду. Задатак је да опишемо једно од Савиних достигнућа у ширем оквиру нарочито кроз његов допринос теологији и кроз животно дело Јустина Поповића.