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St Justin Popović: Critical Reception of British Theology, Philosophy and Science

Sveti Justin Popović: kritično ovrednotenje britanske teologije, filozofije in znanosti

Abstract: During the First World War the Faculty of Theology in Oxford received a group of over fifty theological refugees from Serbia. Amongst the first to arrive was Fr Justin Popović. He was accepted to read for a *Baccalaureus Litterarum* degree. The thesis presented by Popović did not receive the merit of a certificated degree from the University's examiners, especially due to his sweeping attacks on Western Christianity. This study explores *pro et contra* arguments in relation to such an outcome. The author demonstrates that, next to a negative view of Western Christendom and Western culture, Popović does manifest a positive relation as well. This more inclusive side of Fr Justin's relation to Western, particularly Anglican, Christians remains indicative of a dimension of mystical fellowship forged by those on both sides who, despite confessional differences, have become Christ-like themselves.

Key words: Oxford University, Serbian theological refugees, Dostoevsky, Justin Popović, Walter Frere, Anglican-Orthodox dialogue, Christian fellowship

Povzetek: Med prvo svetovno vojno je Teološka fakulteta v Oxfordu sprejela skupino nad petdeset teologov, ki so kot begunci prispeli iz Srbije. Med prvimi prišleki je bil oče Justin Popović. Odobrili so mu študij za pridobitev univerzitetne diplome (bakkalavreat). Diplomskega dela, ki ga je predložil Popović, ocenjevalci niso potrdili, zlasti zaradi njegovih ostrih napadov, usmerjenih proti zahodnemu krščanstvu. Ta študija se pogloblja v *pro et contra* v zvezi z razlogi za takšen razplet. Avtor dokazuje, da je Popović poleg svojega negativnega pogleda na zahodno krščanstvo in na zahodno kulturo izkazoval tudi pozitiven odnos. Omenjena bolj vključevalna plat Justinovega razmerja do zahodnih kristjanov, predvsem do anglikancev, ostaja povedna glede na razsežnost mističnega prijateljstva, h kateremu so težili udeleženci obeh strani, s tem pa so kljub konfesionalnim razlikam postajali podobni Kristusu.

Ključne besede: univerza v Oxfordu, srbski teologi begunci, Dostojevski, Justin Popović, Walter Frere, anglikansko-pravoslavni dialog, krščansko prijateljstvo

1. Justin Popović in Oxford: a disputed thesis on Dostoevsky

Fr Justin Popović (1894–1979), recently canonized as St Justin the New of Čelije (2010), was one of the member of a smaller group of four (soon to be five) Serbian theological refugees who had arrived in England ahead of others (some fifty more seminarians). We find him in London's Mills Hotel on 8 August 1916, then at St Stephen's House, Oxford, on 2 November of the same year. The mentioned five had completed their seminary schooling in Serbia by 1914. They were accepted as non-collegiate students to read the Oxford University's Bachelor of Letters (*Baccalaureus Litterarum*) courses, commencing in 1916. The five were thus allowed to enter the first level of post-graduate studies, without a provision necessitating the continuation to the level of Doctor of Letters (*Doctor Litterarum*). Aside from Fr Justin, the group included Fr Irinej Đorđević (later vicar bishop of Srem and bishop of Dalmatia), Fr Jovan Stojanović and Fr Pavle Jevtić (both became prominent religious philosophers and churchmen), and Fr Jelisije Andrić. Under the auspices of Regius Professor Arthur C. Headlam, the Serbian students were given adequate supervisors and the titles of their B.Litt. theses were approved.

The young hieromonk, Fr Justin (aged 22 on arrival), was the only Serbian aspirant not successful in defending his thesis, entitled *The Religion of Dostoevsky*.¹ The other four passed their thesis examinations with flying colours. In circles of scholars that explore Fr Justin's thought and mission, this *débâcle* remains a debated and beclouded subject. The matter is complex, somewhat sensitive and it did cause a stir at the time. In the Report of the Examiners to the Board of the Faculty of Theology (Oxford University Archive signatura: FA 4/19/2/2, p. 22), Fr Walter Frere (1863–1938) and Nevill Forbes (1883–1929) signed the following statement:

»We find that the thesis is a very detailed and eloquent exposition of the religious beliefs of Dostoevsky with which it appears the candidate wholly identifies himself. It has been composed with great care and much hard work, but it is almost totally lacking in any serious criticism and fails to offer any appreciation of the vital connection between Dostoevsky's views and prophecies with recent events in the history of Russia and Orthodoxy.«

Firstly, the Examiners were right from the strictly scientific point of view. Fr Justin's thesis was expounded in full identification with Dostoevsky's Slavophile and anti-Western views. He advanced within a narrative that doesn't question Dostoevsky's fundamental premises, not even formally. Alongside, he expounded a rather confrontational narrative, especially in the concluding sections (Popović 1999a, 174–209; 210–216). Successive negative verdicts were passed against Western Christian bodies, including Western culture, notably its humanism. It is true that, from a methodological point of view, Popović failed to implement a meta-

¹ After his return to Serbia, Popović published his Oxford thesis. The title was slightly altered, the work was somewhat expanded, and some new sources were added.

-critical approach. The Examiners felt he was »preaching« a pre-given confessional truth. Dostoevsky's views on the nature of religion and its socio-political and cultural impact, particularly those regarding the confrontational placement of the eastern and western forms of Christianity, were taken for granted. In the thesis (defended in 1919 at the University where the likes of John Locke or Lewis Carroll imprinted the world) Popović exclaims: »The spirit of Europe is the greatest danger for humankind and for our planet.« (Popović 1999a, 189) Whether one is inclined to accept this or not, the dissertation offers little or no evidence of *audiautur et altera pars*. The Orthodox Church's teachings were tied to those of Dostoevsky, and both presented as the full truth: one to be accepted by all other Christians, under the condition of »repentance« (2 Tim 2,25). Repentance is needed because, on Dostoevsky's and Popović's terms, Roman Catholicism and Protestantism are »apostatic« realities stemming from an uncurbed humanistic (human-centric) proclivity, one asserted over and against divine-human (theo-human) reality.

As Fr Justin and his Russian sources see it, the affirmation of the principle of the self-sufficient individual in relation to hierarchy, Bible, doctrine and tradition (*sola fide et sola scriptura*), in the final count, seems to represent a Protestant interiorization of papalism and its underlying »humanism«. In connection with this Fr Justin doesn't valorize the third dictum of Protestant teaching: *solus Christus*.² He joins F. M. Dostoevsky (1876/1877) and A. S. Khomyakov (1872) in concluding that the Church in the West is compromised by humanism from within, and that it has fallen apart: divided between the spiritual Roman Empire (hierarchical collectivism) and fragmentations of the Protestant republic (anarchic individualism). Even fifty-five years after his return from Oxford, Popović holds these views steadfastly. In 1974 he re-focuses his critique and directs it against the challenge of the ecumenical movement. He contends that Western Christian ecumenism (2001) cannot be the solution for a problem it has itself caused. It rests on a double movement, erroneous in its core. On one hand, it affirms humanity at the expense of god-humanity, yet it posits divine goals, at least formally. He qualifies this as a »pan-heresy« (2013, 11). On the other hand, it affirms the ambition to forge Christian and pan-human unity through a dialogue of caritative love: regardless of the consequences of the previously mentioned reduction of god-manhood.

Secondly, due to the listed reasons the Examiners failed to appreciate aspects of substantial originality brought out in Fr Justin's B.Litt. thesis. The work presented by the young Serbian was brimming with notable spiritual and existential insights. In the thesis' conclusion Fr Justin refers to John Middleton Murry's 1916 work on Dostoevsky. Murry (1889–1957) himself states that, as yet, English culture has not one adequate monograph dedicated to Dostoevsky, except for two published in 1902 and 1916 respectively: Dmitry Merezhkovsky's *Tolstoi as Man and Artist: With an Essay on Dostoïevski* and Evgeny Solovyev's, *Dostoevsky: His Life and Literary Activity*.

² Except when he states, rather sardonically, »The cries of individuals in the Protestant world: *Zurück zu Jesus!* Back to Jesus! are merely powerless screams in the darkest night of humanistic Christianity.« (1999c, 333).

»Dostoevsky is a phenomenon which has lately burst upon our astonished minds. /... / Dostoevsky is a power where the influence may well be incalculable – not upon the form /... / but upon the thought and spirit of our literature,« confides Murry. He swiftly adds something of considerable interest: »In a sense this has been a pioneer work at times seemed a lonely one for want of company.« (1916, v–vii)

Fr Justin's Oxford thesis, therefore, represents a bewilderingly timely reaction in respect to the »loneliness« Murry refers to. Despite the drawbacks mentioned, it represents another trailblazing contribution to English and world culture. In fact, Popović's approach overcomes Murry's romanticized apotheosis of Dostoevsky's tragic and seemingly resigned outlook on matters of life, soul, humankind and God. What is more, Popović's thesis (1919) represents one of the first »neo-patristic« readings of the worlds of Dostoevsky's novels. Inasmuch he surpasses and broadens Murry's non-Christian naturalist reading. This enables Popović to display the full implications of Dostoevsky's organic connection to Russian Orthodox spirituality: implicit and explicit strands of Dostoevsky's substantial god-seeking (*bogoiskatel'stvo*). A Christocentric interpretative framework is set in place. Hosts of holy fathers of the Church are introduced to offer points of existential and exegetic orientation. Dostoevsky's proximity to the Russian spiritual fathers (*Startsi*) and the *Philokalia* (*Dobrotolubie*) movement is brought forth convincingly. The novels, and the notable positive heroes thereof, are seen in effect as stylized lives of saints as in the case of Fr Zosima (or as lives of »anti-saints« in the case of Dostoevsky's dark heroes, e.g. N. S. Stavrogin). This allows Fr Justin to claim that Dostoevsky's fiction, at its deepest existential core, depicts in fact the drama of the human being called to accept, and free to reject, union with God in Christ the Godman.

Thirdly, many sensitive points were active in the background: running through existential, cultural and national-political lines. This delicate approach wasn't fully registered by either party involved. As regards to the young Serb, he failed to account for the wider British political-cultural context. On Fr Justin's reading, Dostoevsky offers the following alternative: either humanism leading to Communism or the Orthodox Church's spiritual teaching clad in a Slavophile aura. He thus lost sight of Dostoevsky's own »third path«: namely, Christian socialism as an alternative. For the same reason he lost sight of the Anglican Christian social democracy, a position which seems close to Frere's own (Phillips 1996, 38–39). Overall, little consideration is given to the burning issue of how Christianity under the pressure of revolutionary Communist terror forges a plausible working solution in a concretely applicable model. Therefore, amid military and revolutionary turmoil of the First World War, the Examiners demanded a more explicit »appreciation of the vital connection between Dostoevsky's views /... / with recent events in the history of Russia«. The upheaval of the workers movement in the United Kingdom, the growing anti-German sentiment and vulnerability of the monarchy (with Saxe-Coburg-Gotha and Hanoverian links), the conflation of Sovietophobia with Rus-

siophobia – these important complexes were not calculated to reflect in Popović's thesis. Together with his sweeping attacks on Western culture and Christianity, this deficit of socio-political contextual sensitivity might have frustrated the Examiners.

On the Examiners side, next to the mentioned silence on Fr Justin's pioneering »patristic« reading of Dostoevsky, one may note their silence on Fr Justin's legitimate criticism of what he calls modern »evils«: rationalism, materialism, positivism, individualism, anarchism and nihilism – criticism of what he calls »humanism without the living God«. The Examiners (and many others since) fell into the trap of conflating Fr Justin's critique of godless humanism with their fears that he is, basically, disqualifying Western European civilization as such. His diatribic-polemical style facilitated this course of events. Despite many heated and unjustifiably harsh generalizing statements in Fr Justin's works, a total disqualification of the West is not the intention of Popović. A Lutheran theologian has proposed a convincing explanation of what is truly at hand:

»Justin talks about something which is here, about us, even about himself, who is sinful, as the sole criterion of truth. »European man« is not really a man who lives in the continent of Europe (west of Eastern Europe), but »European man« is a metaphor, a synecdoche *pars pro toto* for a sinful man. /... / This is Europe in a nutshell, ontologically and historically. Both mean the same: separation of man from God, rejection of faith and rejection of the Church of Christ.« (Širka 2018, 340–341)

Fr Justin utilizes terms, such as »Europe«, »the Pope«, »Luther«, etc., as polemical types (*typoi*),³ examples (*exempla*) of states of things, not necessarily as (or only as) descriptions of geographic, geopolitical or cultural landscapes or mindscapes pertaining to the entire reality in the West without exception. Rather, these types depict the human condition, ontologically and historically speaking. Admittedly, the starkest crisis of the human condition, in Fr Justin's view, is to be found in the West: the West itself is an *exemplum* precisely of that. It is true that the problem of man-centred humanism is all-pervasive, as are the workings of sin (Rom 5,12). But, on Fr Justin's terms, it emerges first from within Western domains of world history: socio-political or ecclesial, whence it is »universalized«.

All things said, Fr Justin's thesis was shot-through with an uncompromising view purporting polemically that »Catholicism« (through a series of dogmatic innovations) was the generator of the age of modern self-sufficient humanism (where »Catholicism« is a word which in his idiom subsumes and almost compounds »Rome« and »Wittenberg« as epitomes of Western »heterodoxy«). Construing a world of binary oppositions, neglecting counter-examples which could suggest otherwise, he concludes by counter-positioning what he blatantly names the »anthropomaniacal spirit of the West« (with its »Hosannah to man and mankind«)

³ One biblical grounding of the function and usage of *typoi* is given by St Paul: »Now these things are warnings (*typoi*) for us, not to desire evil.« (1 Cor 10,6)

to what he names as Dostoevsky's »Hosannah to the God-man and god-manhood«. The Christian West (heterodoxy) is portrayed as a world of monohumanism in contrast to the Christian East (orthodoxy) as the domain of theohumanism. »Yes, in the West there is no Church or Christianity, although there are many Christians, and ever will be.« (Popović 1999a, 187) With such a conclusion the thesis was doomed. The dialogue ended before it started.

Overall, this was a rather paradoxical history. As one imbued in the movement of patristic renewal, Popović failed to appreciate that Fr Walter Frere was a leading representative of the same (albeit differing and variegated) pan-European movement of renewal of Christian tradition, where the ancient Church was taken as criterion for evaluating the modern Church. Especially if one bears in mind the Oxford movement's Tractarian – »Puseyan« – trajectory of goals (Chadwick 1990, 41–42). In a way, the two sides, represented by an older and a younger living saint (Davies 2011, 61–62), were closer than would have been formally obvious. The two sons of Christ were very similar in active piety, with prominent tokens of ascetic prayer feats, spiritual commitment to liturgic life (including its social implications) and to monasticism.

2. Justin Popović and other British minds: theology, philosophy, science

We may classify the relation of Popović to Frere's and Forbes' views as a negative exclusive influence. Popović himself admitted he had declined to heed their advice to »tone down« his disqualifications of Western Christianity and to endorse a more critical attitude to Dostoevsky. A closer reading of his thesis will also show that Fr Justin's relation to John Middleton Murry's *F.M. Dostoevsky: A Critical Study* (1916) is a semi-negative yet inclusive relation of influence. He qualifies Murray's views as »partially interesting yet with an unacceptable conclusion« (Popović 1999a, 215). That is not all. In Fr Justin's written opus, we also find positive inclusive instances of the relation towards notable British minds. Four instances warrant brief commentary.

Firstly, next to Murry's study, in his thesis Popović incorporates the findings of Eugène M. de Vogüé's classic work, *The Russian Novel*, in H.A. Sawyer's translation for Chapman and Hall publishers (London 1913); additionally, the *Letters of F.M. Dostoevsky to His Family and Friends* are read in Ethel C. Mayne's translation (London 1914/1917). These works may have been made available through the courtesy of Forbes or Frere, or through some other Oxford based Russian Slavonic erudite.

Secondly, again in his thesis, by directly rejecting the pro-papal views of Cardinal Newman, Fr Justin actually endorses William E. Gladstone's critique of the First Vatican Council, and does so indirectly. The critique is laid out in Gladstone's *Vatican Decrees in their bearing-on Civil Allegiance* (1874). In his polemical response

the British Prime Minister thinks that »Individual servitude, however abject, will not satisfy the party now dominant in the Latin Church: the state must also be a slave.« (Gladstone 1874, 40) In a follow-up to this tract, in *Vaticanism: An Answer to Reproofs and Replies* (1875), Gladstone (1809–1898) continues his disapproval of the implications of the dogma on infallibility. He reiterates that the Roman Catholic Church is demanding allegiance not only in matters of faith, but in matters concerning political and civic loyalty as well. Papal authority, thinks Gladstone, is set against the principle of neutral separation of civic and ecclesial allegiance (Mk 12,13-17). In response to the views of Gladstone, Cardinal John H. Newman (1801–1890) issued a no less famous reaction: *A Letter Addressed to His Grace the Duke of Norfolk on occasion of Mr. Gladstone's recent expostulation* (1875).

Fr Justin Popović is adamant in rejecting the standpoint promulgated by Cardinal Newman. He cites a whole passage from Dostoevsky's *A Writer's Diary* (March 1876, Ch. I:5) (Popović 1999a, 179–180): »Do know that the Pope keeps the keys of St Peter and that the faith in God can only be faith in the Pope.« Into this line Popović interpolates a telling note (180, note 8). The note refers to Newman. It is expanded into an illustration aimed to offer additional support for the views of Dostoevsky. Popović indicates negatively at the apologetic expounded by Newman. He quotes Newman correctly: »We must take things as they are; to believe in a Church is to believe in the Pope. /... /; we should not believe in the Church at all, unless we believed in its visible head.« Following the lines from Newman, Popović adds Khomyakov's statement: »For Romanism the Church is truly comprised only in the person of the Pope.« (Khomiakoff 1872, 60) This is highly important because it shows that Popović aligns with the Anglican rejection of papalism (papal primacy) and, by transitivity, the rejection of the dogma on papal infallibility (1870). According to Popović's lasting opinion, these two Roman Catholic doctrines are the greatest obstacles that hinder the long-sought union of Churches: that of the East and that of the West. To an extent Popović was prepared for this as early as 1909 by Nikolai Velimirović's (1909, 186–203) critique of Newman's endorsement of Roman Catholicism, and by his questioning of Newman's theory of development of Christian teaching.

Thirdly, in the essay *The Invisible in the Visible*, written between the two wars (Popović 1936) in an attempt to refute vulgar materialism and affirm the spiritual origins of creation, Popović opens his exposition with a stark quote from Francis Thompson's *The Kingdom of God (In no Strange Land)* (c. 1880s). Francis Thompson (1859–1907) was an English Roman Catholic poet with an Anglican background, inasmuch as he came out of a family of Anglican converts to Roman Catholicism. Significantly, Thompson's uncle Edward H. Thompson (1813–1891) was a close friend of Cardinal Henry Edward Manning (1808–1892), one-time prominent member of the Anglican Oxford movement. The editors of Thompson's poetry, Wilfrid and Alice Meynell (London 1913), too, stood close to the Oxford movement's programme.

Fourthly, in a number of mid-war essays, collated in his *Философске урвине* (*Philosophical Crevasses*) (Popović 1957/1999c) and in *Saint-Savaism as the Phi-*

losophy of Life (Popović 1953/1993), Popović recurs to the staggering discoveries of modern British and American cosmologists, astronomers, physicists, philosophers of science and science journalists. Therefrom he receives respectable knowledge regarding the origins, forms and dynamics of the cosmic universe, notwithstanding current philosophical theorizing in modern cosmology viz. Planck, Einstein, Hubble, Heisenberg, Schrödinger and others. His theological reflections on the created natural order, as well as his theological inferences from astrophysical and cosmological ideas and data, utilize these findings as informative frames of reference. The following works have been read and well utilized: Arthur S. Eddington's *Stars and Atoms* (Oxford 1927) which (alongside other works by Eddington, a scientist of Quaker background, where the basic views of his philosophy of nature are expounded) has helped Popović in conceptualizing his *The Invisible in the Visible* (1936); James H. Jeans's *The Stars in Their Courses* (1931) and *The Mysterious Universe* (1930/1937). The mentioned works aimed at popularizing astrophysics and cosmology within an idealist philosophy of nature verging on the thresholds of a theistic worldview. Lastly, Popović absorbed James G. Crowther's *An Outline of the Universe* in two volumes of the Penguin Pelican edition (1938).

These readings manifest Popović's effort to ally science and reason to faith and spiritual experience through an apologetic strategy. Modern British astrophysics and cosmology are received and creatively synthesized within Popović's biblical and neo-patristic understanding of the genesis, structure and meaning of creation as of divine intention revealed in Christ the God-man.

3. Mystical fellowship: transcending confessional borders

Regarding the written references, it can be safely said that most of these are intoned by Popović as positive acquisitions to the stores of his cultural and theological knowledge. The written references are not as sparse nor are they as superfluous as would seem *prima facie*. It is good advice not to overestimate their bearings on Fr Justin's thought in general. Fr Justin always proceeds by critical creative synthesis: immersed in Orthodox spiritual discernment (*diakrisis*) and working within the Orthodox dimension of the paradigm of neo-patristic synthesis. Still, these references and the insights they convey are indicative and remain as lasting, mostly positive worthies.

The previously mentioned quotation from Francis Thompson is very illustrative in this regard. Fr Justin's gesture of quoting the Roman Catholic poet Thompson allows us to glean an exemplary space where denominational barriers between visible Churches, even those valiantly defended by Fr Justin, seem to fade-out in favour of visions granted to those given over to Christ in and through a boundless rush of divine admiration. »O world invisible, we view thee, / O world intangible, we touch thee, / O world unknowable, we know thee, / Inapprehensible, we clutch thee!« Having read D. H. S. Nicholson's and A. H. E. Lee's *The Oxford Book of En-*

glish Mystical Verse (1917), with Thompson's poem *The Kingdom of God* included, Popović, too, embraces Thompson's vision.

Suchlike references to pathways opened by the paradox of mystical God-knowing may help us spot a space of »mystical fellowship«. In this space differences are laid to rest. It is a domain exempt from the strictures of the historically more formal barriers laid out before Christians and their Churches. This is not intended as a relativization of doctrines of any Church; nor is it meant as an attempt to promote religious poetry as a force which is to supplant theology. Rather, it is to illustrate that, if a boundless love for Christ is granted, we may reach a state of being, a vision here poetically exposed, in which as corollary we find that others are truly our brothers – on this side of denominational barriers. Seeking Christ, and Christ alone, on his own terms, from time to time effectuates a fellowship with unlikely others, prophetically indicating a future yet to come (Jn 17,21).

In the same poem, despairing in view of gloomy and grim realities of city life, Thompson confides strikingly: »But (when so sad thou canst not sadder) / Cry – and upon thy so sore loss / Shall shine the traffic of Jacob's ladder / Pitched betwixt Heaven and Charing Cross.« In the same time kept city, in London on 8 August 1916, Justin Popović writes: »Where is Christ (in Europe): Where is Christ to be born? Is it to be the iron cradle where the German child was born – the European war? I see Christianities here, Christianities there; in desert in city; in artillery in murders – but no Christ.« (1980, 136) One year later, from St Stephen's House in Oxford, at midnight on 10 May 1917, he confesses something of the quality resonating in Thompson's lamentations, notwithstanding consolation and direction for the overcoming of these:

»The extremes part more and more /... / a vast evil, a vast good, man in the abyss in between /... / and desperation grows /... / nothingness – oh, a desperation clad in light, oh, an illness with acute sight, oh, deep death – helplessness, nothingness, brother of the worm. /... / Christ, it is only he who unites the disunited.« (135)

4. Truth in Love and Love in Truth: concluding reflections

We may now propose the following concluding reflections. Firstly, next to a negative view of Western Christianity, Fr Justin Popović, nevertheless, in certain passages of his published opus, does indicate a positive relation as well: one which covers concrete Christians in person as well as Christians as persons. Admittedly, it is a relation which does not implicate ecclesial bodies at the same time. If we carefully contemplate the implications of these sincere gestures made by Fr Justin, then we might grasp that acknowledging the presence of this more inclusive relation or dimension, expressed in such gestures. This may alleviate the usual view, according to which in his thinking about the Western culture and Christianity there is nothing else except »anti-Western« diatribes.

Secondly, this relation, composed of more positive notes, is revealed in the discrete yet indicative web of positive references to Anglican minds, British religious culture and British natural science open to faith and religion. Within this web of cross-references and remarks, we find a surprising openness, if not a congeniality of Fr Justin regarding knowledge and wisdom of some concrete Christians of the West – notably, Anglicans. It is this that allows us to glean a dimension in Fr Justin Popović which displays an important aspect of his deeper and more intimate heart. In the case of apostrophizing Francis Thomson, it is his »Philokalic« dimension of heart (Eph 3,16-19), which comes forth to embrace the Roman Catholic poet's creative excellence in Christ. As we wrote elsewhere, indicating the Philokalic vein of Popović's person: »He views each created being through the eyes of Christ's unfathomable love by the Spirit. /... / It is he who wrote: ›The soul of every ailing creature should be approached on pigeon's feet of prayer.‹ Therefore, his vision does allow for an accommodation of otherness /... / in terms of an empathetic praying-for, or praying-with.« (Lubardić 2017, 222)

Thirdly, one needs to be aware of the dangers of enthusiastically overloading the interpretation of a selected set of passages. Keeping this caveat in reserve, we venture to claim that this more positively inclusive side of Fr Justin's relation to Western, particularly Anglican, Christians, albeit quietly present, remains indicative of a dimension of mystical fellowship forged by those on both sides who, in virtue of their boundless love for the Lord, have offered their whole lives to Christ as God. It is this, in Fr Justin's earlier oeuvre – for instance, his sympathetic apostrophizing of mystical English verse (viz. Francis Thompson, a noted Roman Catholic Englishman) – that brings him closer than expected to his Western Christian brothers. Still, it is here that the following query might emerge: »Why is this ›Philokalic‹ dimension not developed on the level of theological doctrine (say, dogmatically and ecclesiologically), where and when it comes out to address otherness, culturally regarded?« (222)

Fourthly, on Fr Justin's terms, however, the one Church is the Orthodox Church. Taking his cue from Ephesians 4,15, Fr Justin states: »Truth is the heart of love.« (Popović 2013, 22) Regarding the Orthodox Church he adds: »We would be lying to the Church as well if we should say that the entire Truth, the God-man, does not dwell in her.« (22) He goes on to conclude by invoking 2 Tim 2,25: »First, repentance: that leads to a full knowledge of truth.« (22) Due to such postulations, which seem to subtract substantial ecclesial subsistence from the non-Orthodox, Fr Justin's mystical empathy with chosen Anglicans (or Christians of the West) might seem paradoxical. For, on one hand, he covers Anglicans in love. Yet, on the other hand, he reprimands the Anglican Church for what he deems a falling-out with truth, especially in regard to the ecclesiology backing the so called Branch theory (Jovanović 2007). »A branch withers if it falls off the vine (John 15,6): and then, not earlier than the 16th century: a branch? Therefore: there is no organic connection.« (20) Nevertheless, Popović's standpoint is only seemingly paradoxical. Or, better said, it is paradoxical in formal terms, but not contradictory in terms of substance. Indeed, Popović does ground love discourse in truth discourse: »Love

loves for the sake of Truth.« (Popović 2013, 22) However, this does not prevent love to remain love – as of the boundless embrace of one's other, by the Spirit. If we take this insight into consideration, then Popović's embrace of Western Christian others may be interpreted as a sign (*symbolon*) of things that are yet to come in the prophetic and eschatological sense: regarding the unity of Christians (Acts 2,42-44).

Fifthly, if this more inclusive side of Popović's reflections on Western Christians, regardless of its paradoxical nature, is taken into consideration by a non-Orthodox Christian, and is spiritually understood as a promising contact-point (*Anknüpfungspunkt*), then Popović's uncompromising (dogmatic-canonical) strictures regarding the Western Christian denominations might not present a sufficient reason for their premature departures from his spiritual, theological and philosophical oeuvre. On the contrary, he or she may come to contemplate, and profit from, the magnificence of Fr Justin's saintly experience of living in Christ the God-man by the Spirit: in prayer, in ascetic toil, in liturgical worship, in letter writing and spiritual counsel, in exegesis, in Christian philosophy, and in deep spiritual meditations on the mysteries of blessed life in Christ with God. They might come to understand that it is primarily his liturgical-ascetical communion with the living God-man, Christ, which represents the fountainhead of Justin Popović's thought: not some »anti-Western« intellectual or psychological agenda, not Orthodoxy reduced into a religious geopolitical resource. Accordingly, his »anti-Westernism« emanates from his theohumanistic criticism of seemingly ubiquitous monohumanistic man-centeredness and not from some supposed hatred or xenophobia regarding things western. *Mutatis mutandis*, the same goods (benefits from a more refined hermeneutical approach to Fr Justin's views) may be bestowed upon a carefully discerning Orthodox (Eastern) Christian, and for the same reasons.

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