

The Orthodox Christian Philosophy of Life

Foreword to the Serbian Edition¹

This is a rare book by a rare writer.

The author Justin (Blagoye) Popovich (b. 1894, d. 1979) was born of father Spiridon and mother Anastasia on the Feast of Annunciation in 1894 in the town of Vranja. He was schooled in the Theological Academy “Saint Sava” in Belgrade, in the Oxford University and finally in Athens, where he received his degree of Doctor of Theology. Having known the vanity and evanescence of earthly life in his early youth, he became a monk quite young. As monk Justin devoted his entire self to theology, for which reason he even declined the rank of Bishop which was offered him. For more than a year he worked as a teacher of theology (in Karlovtsi, Prizren and Bitolya) until he finally found the place of his calling—a theology professor at the Belgrade University. After the end of the Second World War he was coerced to quit his cathedra and the capital and to retire to a small monastery, where until this day [1953] he continues, as a man of prayer and fasting, his indefatigable spiritual and literary activity.

Justin Popovich’s first work was dedicated to Dostoevsky. His study was composed in Oxford, in English, and was later translated and printed in Serbian. It became a real spiritual and literary sensation. In the estimation of the specialists, this work was, on the whole, one of the best studies on the great Russian writer.

Together with Hieromonk Iriney Dzhordzhevich, later Bishop of Dalmatia, Justin Popovich worked long years as editor of “Christian Life”. He was also a co-worker of “Christian Thought”, a truly elite journal of religion and philosophy. This was the time when two large volumes of his capital work “The Dogmatics of the Orthodox Church”, which brought him renown throughout the entire Orthodox world.

But, in our opinion, this most recent work of Justin Popovich—*The Orthodox Christian Philosophy of Life*—outstands all, which this great man of spirit has hitherto written, in both national feeling and churchliness, in plainness and

¹ <http://www.svetosavlje.org/biblioteka/DuhovnoUzdizanje/Svetosavlje/Svetosavlje.htm>

literary eloquence, and, what is most important, in firmly established Christian belief and youthful fervour, which attracts irresistibly.

Justin is unsparing in his criticism of Europe, because “it is beyond doubt,” as he says, “that entire Europe is mined with volcanic contradictions which, if not resolved, may soon explode and completely destroy the European culture.” But after a detailed and acute analysis of the European culture and the fabricated substitutes of Christianity (humanism, positivism, evolutionism etc.) the author actually does not foresee the self-destruction of this culture, but already weeps over its grave.

What does this imply?

In this book of his, Justin presents the Holy Orthodox Christian faith, for the first time in a systematic way, as an accomplished and perfect philosophy of life.

It is worthy of note that these lectures were addressed to the educated youth of Serbia—secondary-school graduates and students—and delivered during the German occupation: a time of immemorial suffering of the Serbian people at the hands of both external and internal enemies. As Gottlieb Fichte [A German philosopher, b. 1762–d. 1814], during the sufferings and humiliation of the German people by Napoleon, vindicated and encouraged his people by writing his eminent “Addresses to the German Nation (1922)”, in like manner Justin was, with these discourses of his, by far the only person who, during the time of the Second World War, was raising the spirit and the national pride of the Serbian youth as the heir and bearer of the brightest and sublimest of all philosophies of life in the entire world. These discourses of the Serbian cleric, full of heartfelt freshness, intellectual power and extraordinary boldness, will be forever welcome for the Serbian educated youth and will never become outdated. They will still be spiritual food for the future generations, signpost and protection from all confusing and negative tendencies. These discourses will be as umbrella to the people’s soul, protecting her from fear and despair during severe tempests and from misuse of freedom during sunny times of peace.

The Serbian people still live in the convulsions of suffering and pain, but they live and will live on forever. May this book by this rare author help them to live a fuller, brighter and stronger life.

America, 1953 — Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich