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## **How to Cope with Memories? – Mission of the Church in the Balkans**

*Abstract:* The Church today exists within a »culture of oblivion«. Christian culture is a »culture of memory«, but there is a tendency today to have it reduced to submission by the culture of oblivion. Christian memory or recollection is primarily a »memory of the future« and not only a »memory of the past«. Memory, thus, forms the very essence of the Church. Christian memory is the recollection of Christ and of all persons who have been His witnesses throughout history. By its nature the Liturgy (the very heart of the Church) is a memory. Church tradition, essentially, has nothing in common with secular conservatism and traditionalism nor with modernism, although throughout history these two notions have always been at odds with one another within the Church. Today there is a tendency to interpret Christianity as a »beautiful piece of antiquity« and to idealize Christian past. According to some interpretations, being an Orthodox Christian means emulating, copying, and imitating past forms of life and culture. Those who idolize the past also paralyze the present and make the mission of the Church in the world barely noticeable. Secularization of the Christian »culture of memory« prevents the Church from accomplishing a catharsis of »painful memories« from which the Balkan nations suffer so tragically.

*Key words:* recollection, memory, tradition, Liturgy, conservatism, modernism, sacrifice, Church, Christianity, Orthodoxy

*Povzetek:* **Kako obvladati spomine? – Poslanstvo Cerkve na Balkanu**

Danes živi Cerkev v »kulturi pozabe«. Krščanska kultura je »kultura spomina«, danes pa bi jo žeeli podrediti kulturi pozabe. Krščansko spominjanje je predvsem »spomin na prihodnost« in ne le »spomin na preteklost«. Tako je spominjanje v samem bistvu Cerkve. Krščanski spomin je spomin na Jezusa Kristusa in na vse ljudi, ki so bili njegove priče v teku zgodovine. Po svoji naravi je spomin liturgija, ki je pravo srce Cerkve. Cerkveno izročilo v bistvu nima ničesar skupnega s posvetnim konservativizmom in tradicionalizmom, pa tudi ne z modernizmom, čeprav sta bila ta dva načina mišljenja v Cerkvi v zgodovini vedno v medsebojnem sporu. Danes želijo nekateri razlagati krščanstvo kot »krasen starinski kos pohištva« in idealizirati krščansko preteklost. Po nekaterih razlagah biti pravoslaven kristjan pomeni oponašati in posnemati pretekle oblike življenja.

nja in kulture. Toda tisti, ki obožujejo preteklost, tudi hromijo sedanjost in delajo poslanstvo Cerkve v svetu skoraj neopazno. Sekularizacija krščanske »kulture spomina« preprečuje Cerkvi, da bi opravila moralno očiščenje »bolečih spominov«, zaradi katerih balkanski narodi tako tragično trpijo.

*Ključne besede:* spominjanje, spomin, izročilo, liturgija, konservativizem, modernizem, žrtev, Cerkev, krščanstvo, pravoslavlje

»Recollections«, »memory« or Tradition is probably that fundamental question around which the Christian West and the Christian East have found to differ for an already extensive period of time. To the Orthodox it seems that western Christianity, in its very depths, is increasingly renouncing Tradition and becoming »a culture of oblivion« although they, of course, essentially differentiate the »traditional« Roman Catholic Church from the »anti-traditional« Protestant Churches. The Orthodox often interpret and see Western Tradition not as a unity of recollections but as an institutional unity, where the devotion to Tradition is manifested by accordance with and devotion to the highest ecclesiastical authority – the Pope and his representatives. This is also how the Protestants have come to understand the Tradition of the Roman Catholic Church and this became the reason for their rejection of it as a »human concoction« falsifying the life of the Church.

A fundamental analysis would perhaps demonstrate that mutual misunderstandings between the nations of Western and Eastern Europe center on the essential question of »remembrance« and »memory«. The Westerners feel that Balkan and East European nations are suffering from »a surplus of history«, whilst their counterparts (Balkan and East European nations, *translator's note*) seem to think that the Westerners are suffering from »a shortage of history«. It is difficult not to observe that there is an ongoing wrestling match, both in Europe and the rest of the world, between two opposing cultures: *the culture of memory (anamnetic culture) and the culture of oblivion*. The first is being manifested as a culture of the remembrance of God, and the other as a culture of the loss of memory of God – the death of God.

## 1. The culture of oblivion

We are living in a time of the »loss of memory« (Osten 2005, 9) »which encompasses all aspects of life. This is a process of turbulence, acceleration and concealment of tradition in, to this day, unprecedented proportions.« (9) Contemporary man is experiencing an »accelerated amnesia« (9), a »hypertrophic idolatry of the future«, and a »failed memory« (9). Hate towards the past as nurtured by the Modern has its source in the French Revolution (11). »It must be admitted that the process of forgetting is characterized in recent times by a special kind of truth. Expressed as a formula, this truth is the truth of the destruction of memory.« (11) There was a time when Europe sought truth within the domain of »unforgettability«, i.e. in recollection and memory. In recent times memory

loss and forgetting have become virtues and truths of a new Europe. As far as loss of memory goes it can be »private« and »public«, prescribed (legal) and »forbidden« (crimes against humanity).

Today, an illusion is being created »of unburdening memory by the virtue of digital systems with contemporaneous tendencies and efforts to liquidate traditional institutions of memory keeping (libraries, theatres, opera houses, museums, etc.)« (12). Many thinkers speak of a »collective amnesia« regardless and in spite of the digitalization of tradition (»Stored means forgotten« – Hans Magnus Enzensberger). Neurobiology states that recollections may be activated or blocked by the use of an effective external substance. Aging also accelerates the loss of memory. »Research demonstrates that memory deteriorates through aging.« (16) According to some statistics in 2050 every sixth member of the world population will be older than 65. That means that the degree of memory loss will be even higher. There is going to be an »acceleration of memory loss«. Deletion of recollections and memory is connected with the modern idea of progress as an order of time exclusively orientated towards the future. It looks as if the modern man is taking revenge on life with loss of memory! »Don't mention the past to me!« cries out Dr. Faustus, and Nietzsche exclaims »Blessed are the forgetful«! Contemporary men, cruel competitors and brutal professionals, »turbulent and restless«, »legionaries of the moment«, accelerate loss of memory. Today it is justifiable to speak of *ars oblivionalis* (»the art of forgetting«). »History is five days old« says a Californian proverb. There were social subjects in this contemporary world of ours that did their utmost to eradicate from human consciousness all recollections, all memory. »Aim of the National-Socialist education was to eradicate memory of humanitarianism and, on the basis of *tabula rasa*, create a new man.« (49) Communism was also close to this notion.

Punishment *damnatio memoriae*, which the man of Antiquity considered to be more severe than the death sentence (since it meant eradication of all memory of the punished from the minds of every member of the society) still has its life within the Modern. 20<sup>th</sup> century saw millions sentenced to this punishment. The »dark past« was unmercifully eradicated in the name of a »bright future«, development and progress. Paraphrasing an old Jewish proverb the well known Roman Catholic theologian Metz has said: »We live in an era of forgetfulness, in a time of cultural amnesia.« (1999, 115). »Death of God« (Nietzsche) emerged within a culture nurturing the loss of memory of God. Disappearance of God is disappearance of man. Memory of God is an antidote for the death of man (Metz 2009, 111). »It seems that Europe has lost its memory altogether.« (257) Metz arrived at this conclusion when Europe refused to mention God and her Judeo-Christian tradition in her new Constitution. He calls this »cultural amnesia«. He argues that in today's Europe there coexist two opposing tendencies: »a laical and a pluralistic version of a secular Europe« (257). The pluralist version does not banish religion from public life, but it forces it into a public confrontation with the constitutional pluralism of religions and world views. It guarantees both the freedom »to« believe and the freedom »from« belief. Laical version (which has its ideological and historical foundations in France) insists upon the strict privacy of religion. It is not neutral since it gives precedence to the negative freedom of belief (freedom from belief). Laicism is not

building a secular but a »secularist Europe« (259). Democracy can not be built upon the loss of memory but on recollection. »Ethos of democracy is rooted above all in remembrance.« (262) European Christianity on its own has adopted a tendency to forget since the time it started to distance itself from its Jewish roots (Judaism is the prototype of all anamnestic cultures according to Metz). »European Christianity is jeopardized not only by the danger of secularizing its own self, but by the danger of self-privatizing that which is not susceptible to secularization.« (264)

Of all the modern views of the world it was psychoanalysis which put up the toughest resistance against loss of memory. It had been founded upon memory. Each earlier stage of development strives to exist from within the latter which had originally developed from it. In this contest discovery of the past implies liberation of a sort. Neurotic's problem stems from the fact that he is anchored somewhere in his past. Those that suffer from hysteria cannot liberate themselves from the past thus ignoring the present.

In 19<sup>th</sup> century there was a widespread maxim that said: »return to the sources«, which as far as theology was concerned meant »return to the Fathers«. Newer history is privy to a much emphasized fascination regarding »antiquities«, »the long gone«, »the ancient civilizations«. Humanism and Renaissance were some sort of an investigation of the past, a »restoration« of the past. This kind of research of the bygone is the search for the lost identity. But modern historicism and historism, the »historic memory«, did not manage to avert loss of memory and, especially so, the »selective loss of memory«, in spite of all efforts to set up »Biblioteca de Babilonia« (the Library of Babylon).

At the beginning of 21<sup>th</sup> century there is an increased tendency to nurture an obligation of keeping memory (Osten 2005, 53). Close to the end of the nineties of the 20<sup>th</sup> century UNESCO adopted a program called Memory of the World. This is a program which entails establishment of a collective memory of the world which, in its turn, would include significant documents in different forms – written, audio, picture and film. The aim is to digitalize them and have them presented on the Internet. Here is a program where the issue of lasting memory is being treated for the very first time. It is supposed to establish, according to a world value scale, which documents are to be kept in memory. But computer memorization and digitalization is not the same as remembrance. »The computer stores, but does not remember.« (94) Our world-wide-web society, which we are increasingly getting used to, cannot resist loss of memory. »It is in danger of becoming a veritable machine of oblivion: since »storing« information is not the same as keeping it in human memory.« (Metz 1999, 116) »Memorizing means forgetting.« (H. M. Enzensberger) »The computer cannot remember anything because it forgets nothing.« (116) »It is not by accident that the delete button advanced to the position of one of the most important constructional elements of the computer.« (Osten 2005, 21) Neuroinformatics specialists are striving to establish connection between human brain and artificial memory systems (machines).

What is the cause of memory loss? Different and numerous theories treat this question. If we set aside psychological and neurobiological dimensions of this

process, most Orthodox theologians interpret loss of memory as a consequence of a lifestyle and of individualistic anthropology. Contemporary way of living, being ruled by the »tyranny of the moment« (Thomas H. Erickson) and the »tyranny of the new«, favors the culture of oblivion. »When individualism and selfishness start to dominate, tradition is being despised or used exclusively for individual benefit.« (Mandzaris 2003b, 95)<sup>1</sup>

## 2. The culture of memory (anamnestic culture)

»**M**emories« and »recollections« constitute that which we call tradition (Lat. *traditio*: to hand over, deliver, entrust, /stories, messages, beliefs, customs, news, sciences/). Tradition is the process of handing over, delivering and maintaining ideas, values, and behavior models, both orally and in a written form, from generation to generation. Tradition is a polysemantic category which has its own culturological, anthropological, psychological, historical, esthetical, political, philosophical, religious and numerous other connotations. No culture in the history of humanity can exist without tradition. It might be said that it is difficult to imagine the very survival of the human society without tradition. It comes into existence in numerous ways and this is why there exist different traditions.

There are different memories and recollections: individual and collective: »memory of the past«, »memory of the future«, »memory of death«, »memory of oblivion«, »memory of God«, »memory of the dead«, »memory of the living«, »memory of objects«, »difficult memories«, »memories of victims«, »memories of victories and defeats«, »memories of days initiating a process«, »memories of birthdays«, »memories of dying days«, »memories of a Golden Age«, etc. There exists an »anamnestic mind«, and memory as *Memoria passionis* (»com-passion«). »Church of com-passion« is a Church which is capable of delivering a successful witness to the secular and pluralistic Europe (Metz 2009, 277). There are »memories« of youth, of school, of motherland, of love, of war, of the past. There are various »memorials«, »albums«, »images«, »memorial plaques«, »memorial parks«, »memorial centers«, museums, libraries and archives that safeguard objects from oblivion. There are also days and years of remembrance, commemorative gatherings. There are memoires in literature as well as historical writings the task of which would be to keep everything in memory. All this illustrates the complexity of the phenomenon of recollections and memory, and it is very difficult to draw a demarcation line between notions such as: memory, recollection, remembrance, the past, tradition. They should all be distinguished but not separated and even less so mutually antagonized.

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<sup>1</sup> On Christian interpretation of tradition and traditions see Verstraeten 2003. Each tradition, including Christian tradition, is related to a certain life style of the community (Verstraeten 2003, 103; Congar 2010).

### 3. Liturgy as »memory« (recollection)

What are the contents of Christian recollections and memories? Who are we remembering? As far as Orthodox theology is concerned the most precise and the most reliable answer to the question: what are the contents of Christian remembrance, who and what are they remembering, is given by Divine Liturgy. More precisely, for Christian self-consciousness, Liturgy is »remembrance« and »memory of God«. The entire Liturgy is an anamnesis having an anamnetic character. »The Church has a consciousness that Liturgy is a present day repetition of the historical and eschatological reality of Christ's death through remembrance of the sacrifice on the cross ...« (Brija 1999, 14) Remembrance is conversation, prayer. Ceaseless prayer. Where there is no remembrance then there is no other (person, *translator's note*). *Oblivion, loss of memory, is death of the other.* Culture of oblivion is the culture of death. »This do in remembrance of me.« (Lk 22,19) Godman Christ himself is the alpha and the omega of all Christian remembrance. »Remembering, therefore, this command of the Savior, and all that came to pass for our sake, the cross, the tomb, the resurrection on the third day, the ascension into heaven, the enthronement at the right hand of the Father, and the second, glorious coming« (Liturgical prayer). »In remembrance of our Lord and God and Savior, Jesus Christ« (words from the Proskomede – The Service of preparation before the Divine Liturgy). »Do this in remembrance of me, for as often as ye shall eat this Bread and drink of this Cup, ye do proclaim my death and confess my resurrection. Wherefore, O Master, we also remembering His saving Passion and life-creating Cross, His three-day burial, and resurrection from the dead, His ascension into heaven, and sitting down at thy right hand, God and Father, and His glorious and fearful second coming.« (the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great) »Tradition is Christ himself.« (Skuteris 2006) *Anamnesis* (remembrance) is possible by means of *epiclesis* (invocation) of the Holy Spirit.

»For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, this cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.« (1 Cor 11,23–25). Liturgy is not only remembrance of God, but also remembrance of man.

Liturgy is »memory« and »remembrance« of all *witnesses* of Christ: the Most Holy Theotokos, St. John the Baptist, the Holy Prophets, the Holy Apostles, the Holy Fathers, the Holy First-martyred Archdeacon Stephen and other Martyrs, the Reverend and God-bearing Fathers, Holy Wonderworkers and Unmercenary Healers, the Holy Parents of God, the saint commemorated by the temple and the saint being celebrated on any particular day, St. Cyril and St. Methodius, St. John Chrysostomos (St. Basil the Great). We recall and remember all *Bishops* of the Church, especially so the local Bishop, all *presbyters, deacons* and all *brothers and sisters* called by God into his communion. We not only remember the living but also *all those that are dead* from the beginning of times and up to this date. At the occasion of Liturgy we remember and pray: »for the unity of all«, »for the

peace of the whole world» (the Great Litany). Liturgy is Sacrifice. Christians remember Sacrifice. Liturgy is thanksgiving. Through »remembrance«, we give thanks to Godman Christ for His stauro-resurrectional sacrifice and to all of His witnesses throughout entire history for all that they had done for us.

»Remembrance« is an act of *ekstasis*, where we depart from ourselves in order to establish a relationship of common existence with not-I, with the other. This implies giving oneself to the other. Through remembrance we are establishing a relationship with God and all the bygone generations. We are making them present here and now. We are wresting them from oblivion. They are always present in their absence. This remembrance of Him and them forms our identity. Without this memory (of Christ and His followers) we would cease being Christian. There is no Christian life without remembrance and memory. Loss of memory, oblivion, stands for the end of Christian faith. »Orthodoxy is traditional.« (Mandzaris 2003b)<sup>2</sup> »Christianity is blessed remembrance; it is truly an establishment of control over all fragments of time; it is an experience of eternity, here and now.« (Šmeman 2007a, 25) Within the Church »remembrance« is being expressed through Tradition. »Remembrance« is a struggle against death. Death is oblivion. There is no death when there is remembrance – when there is absence of oblivion.

*Remembrance within the Holy Scripture* does not imply a simple retrospective of recollections, a recollection of bygone events, but it implies experiencing repetition of events and a renewal of relationships which constitute the fact of life.

Orthodox Church sees Tradition as its very identity. Church is Tradition, Tradition is Church. »Remembrance is remembrance of the Sacrifice. Our Christian identity is based upon the Sacrifice and Memory; Sacrifice and Memory – this is the mode of our existence: in time, consecrated through the event and remembrance of Christ's sacrifice, and in space which is founded upon the sacrificial altar.« (Šijaković 2002, 95) »Celebrating holydays means turning profane time into a sacred time thus introducing the spirit of eternity into that which is otherwise temporary.« (94) »Memory makes it possible for us to have an identity and to be aware of it. Memory (and with it remembrance) is a condition without which there is no convergent consciousness of the past and of the self in it, and, thus, no capability to comprehend the flow of time as tradition and history.« (95)

Church memory or Church remembrance, or Tradition, is not and should never become an »imitation«, a »copying«, an »emulation«, a »step backwards«, i.e. a matter of pointing life backwards towards the past, or, even less so, an idolatry of the past. »Orthodox Tradition is not some sort of a »habitual order« of Orthodoxy. It is Orthodox faith and life. Safeguarding Orthodox Tradition does not boil down to a simple preservation of its objectivizations. Tradition is safeguarded by becoming a member of its life and its spirit, which is always being accomplished by means of the Holy Eucharist, i.e. the mystical communion of God and man.« (Mandzaris 2003b, 100)

Christian memories and remembrance are in essence the Church Tradition. »Tradition (remembrance) unites the communion which is exposed to fragmentation.«

<sup>2</sup> More on the notion of Church tradition Loski 1970, 61–76.

(93) Unity of mankind is possible only through Tradition. »Tradition is death giving food for life.« (93) Tradition is based upon remembrance, which maintains its pan-temporal unity. »Tradition is our parental home, or, more widely seen, a space crammed full of our parents' and ancestors' memories.« (94–95) Remembrance as Tradition is the way by which the Church maintains her unity in all ages. Devotion to Tradition primarily implies ability to *witness the Truth* – »Tradition of Truth« (St. Irenaeus of Lyons' *traditio veritatis*), and not devotion to the past which then becomes the criterion for the present. »Devotion to Tradition is not devotion to antiquity, but a living relationship with the fullness of ecclesial life.« (Florovski 1995, 248)

Apart from the Holy Eucharist which is the essence of Christian remembrance and Tradition there exist many other, special, traditions, written or unwritten, which the believers are invited to uphold. »Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.« (2 Thess 2,15). In the life of the Church, throughout history, many traditions were formed and maintained, but essential importance may be attributed only to those that have Christ as their center. »Tradition which has no direct or indirect connection with Christ is senseless as far as the Church is concerned. Importance of any individual Church tradition is measured by the degree of its connectivity with Christ.« (Mandzaris 2003b, 97) Not every tradition within the Church is ecclesial regardless of its antiquity, but only that which is directly linked with Godman.

Essential distinction should be made between *ecclesial* (»cultic anamnestic culture«) and *secular* traditions (secular anamnestic culture) and traditionalism. There exists an epigram of an unknown author that states: »Tradition is the living faith of the dead, traditionalism is the dead faith of the living.« (Pelikan 2005, 201–202) Tradition is life but, in time, it can become the dead faith of the living (201).

#### 4. Conservatism

**T**oday it may be heard from most theologians that Christianity is neither conservative nor liberal, neither fundamentalistic nor modern, neither rightist nor leftist. It is »above« such notions and categories. It is for certain that Christianity can not be reduced to any single one of them, but is also quite certain that there were such times, and especially so in some Christian traditions, when it contained at least some of their elements.

Owing to many historical circumstances conservatism has fertile ground among the Orthodox. I believe that this is also the case with other Christian Churches. There is a very pronounced tendency among them to idealize and sacralize the past. Often it is spoken of »the golden age« of the theology of the Fathers. Church was truly the Church only in the past. The very word *past* is acquiring an almost magical connotation. In the past everything was good, ecclesial, Orthodox. Everything is quite the opposite in the present. Criterion of Orthodoxy thus becomes devotion towards the past, the bygone ages. Copying and emulating things from the past is becoming an ecclesial life style and an essential part of its creativity.

Church Tradition, as memory and remembrance of Christ, may succumb to its own pathology, transforming and becoming deformed and deviant. It may then manifest itself as conservatism, fundamentalism, integrism, »traditionalism«, or as »rightwing orientated<sup>3</sup>. It then becomes an illness – an ecclesiological illness – which starts directing the life of the Church towards the past. Like any other form of conservatism Church conservatism is sterile and anti-life orientated. It nails down the Church to the past restricting her present-day mission of renewal. It is then that the past numbs both the present and the future, and turns faith into an ordinary ideology. Conservatism and conservatives were seen in all ages in the past, and there will most probably be a place for them in the future, but that doesn't mean that the Church should be identified with conservatism, integrism and fundamentalism. Honestly speaking, it is a fact that in the past, both in the West and the East, the Church herself gave rise to accusations of conservatism since it exhibited (most mildly said) an inclination towards »rightwing« and »conservative« social and political movements. »Orthodox states of today are found to be in a state of an archeological apathy. They are merely respectful of tradition and are striving to maintain it being fearful to expose it to any outside influence. But a shut-in tradition will sooner or later die. Non-Orthodox states are open to new currents because they are tired of their own tradition. The spirit of patience and openness is aiding them for they are ready to listen.« (Zizjulas 2007, 6–8) »She (the Church, *added by R.B.*) is often such that she glorifies her past whilst too easily accusing the present which was not of her making.« (Rahner 2008, 53)

Church Tradition and the past are not one and the same although Tradition stems from the past. True knowledge of Tradition is not possible without the knowledge of the past. Alexander Schmemann emphasizes that the Church is being faced with two perils: 1. A simple reduction of Tradition to the past, i.e. identifying Tradition with the past thus making the past become not only the content of Tradition but its crucial criterion; 2. Danger lies in making artificial distinctions between Tradition and the past by assessing both the Tradition and the past according to present-day criteria. It is then that things from the past are arbitrarily treated, found »acceptable«, »valid« or »relevant« to the present, and then pronounced as being »tradition« (Šmeman 1997, 14).

## 5. Orthodox Tradition and national tradition

In recent times the Orthodox Church is seen by many as an institution which is safeguarding East-Christian peoples' national identity and national memory. This is why a special correlation has been established between the Church and the nation and to such a degree that they have come to be regarded as being identical. Some Church leaders see themselves more as »national leaders« than as the shepherds of the Church, or as both. There exists a sort of nostalgia for theocracy among the Orthodox. Religious nationalism (ethno-phyletism) has been condemned by the Orthodox way back in 1872 at a council in Constantinople, but

<sup>3</sup> For more on this see Šmeman 1997, 273–284 [Hrišćanstvo iznad levičarstva i desničarstva].

it hasn't been defeated. Many Orthodox theologians have pointed out the dangers of ethno-phyletism. I shall just mention St. Justin the New of Ćelije who is considered by many, even by the Orthodox, as the »patron« of the greater-Serbian Orthodox nationalism. »Reducing the Church to a national institution is an unforgivable sacrilege against Christ and the Holy Spirit.« (Popović 1980, 279) »The Church was being evaluated by the standards set by the nation, while it is the opposite which is normal: the nation should be evaluated by the standards of the Church.« (280)

Church Tradition and numerous national traditions should not be regarded as identical. They should be clearly distinguished, but not be pitted against each other. There exists a dialectic relationship between them. National traditions are being incorporated into the life of the Church, and Church Tradition inspires and saturates these traditions. Church Tradition is being expressed through the categories of the national language and tradition. National traditions serve as a sort of a »costimography« to the Church Tradition. Church Tradition cannot exist in any other way. Although it does not originally stem from history, from this world, it always exists in history, here and now. This is why, throughout entire history, the Orthodox Church has respected national languages, national cultures and traditions. She strove to allow all nations to receive the faith in accordance with their already established categories and to provide them with the means to preserve their particularity and identity. The Church herself adapted to national traditions only to the extent whereby the very essence of her faith would not be seriously threatened. This is perhaps one of the reasons why many people call the local, autocephalous, Churches »national Churches«. However, Orthodox Church is neither national nor a-national, or, for that matter, supra-national as may be sometimes heard or read. If we should consider the national structure of her members, it is simply *multinational*.

No attempts should be made to heal conservatism within the Church by introducing some other illness to it – »modernism«, »liberalism«, or by forgetting the past – but by an affirmation of Church Tradition. As far as the Church is concerned alternative to conservatism and liberalism is to be found in *Christian liberalism*, which makes present both the past and the future. Affirmation of Tradition is the very affirmation of life. It is always in motion straight ahead. *Tradition is always »new».* It is sometimes also manifested as »innovation«. »Tradition as motion and life is sometimes manifested by the introduction of the new. There are many such examples in Church history.« (Mandzaris 2003b, 100) Almost throughout their entire history Orthodox Churches have lived under unfavorable external, historical circumstances. This has often forced them to seek shelter in conservatism so that they might save their identity and their very life. »Orthodoxy has lost its way into the past which (the Orthodox) worship as Tradition. Orthodoxy is literally dying under the weight of the past.« (Šmeman 2007b, 31) This has brought about negative consequences regarding the way the Church was dealing with her ongoing problems. »But when conservatism, as attachment to the past, turns into an order of things it is then that it becomes very dangerous for the Church.« (Mandzaris 2003b, 105) »This is the reason why, for many, Christianity has ceased being an acetic feat and a necessity, thus becoming: an ornament, an antiquity, a

moralizing activity, a philosophizing activity – everything else except a radical transfiguration of man from being mortal to being immortal, from being sinful to being without sins, from being devil's own to being God's own.« (Popović 1980, 154) Church Tradition is not a voice from the past, but the voice of eternity. »She (Tradition, *added by R.B.*) is neither some sort of a sacred archeology nor is she relative to the experience of the past. Importance and significance of Tradition is not in her external historical authenticity, but in her unalterable and always-living voice of revelation. Being devoted to tradition does not merely imply a degree of recognition of historical past, but a pious acceptance of the word of God.« (Skuteris 2006) »The Church was never guided by a retrospective ideology and this was because Tradition was never considered as being the past. Tradition is the self-consciousness of the Church here and now, manifesting itself as an awareness of that which has been passed on, not as some inert treasure, but as an inner dynamic life.« (Taft 2007, 42) *Tradition changes, remaining always the same.* Task of the Church today is not to search out original forms of early Christianity but to look forward to *Maranatha* – to the unity with the Church of the last hour. This is why St. Augustine spoke of the »present times past«, »present times present« and »present times future«.

Therefore, the Church does not celebrate any »defeats« or »victories«, or anything else which is impersonal, although it is often suggested that it does. She celebrates and remembers God and the holy men and women of God. Everything is subordinated to the person.

## 6. Recollections of the »golden age«

Why is it that the past gives shape to the future even when the past is being shaped by the present? What is it that draws man to the beginnings, to the »initial state«? Why recollections of the »golden age«, when it has different significance for different epochs and cultures? There are different types of »golden age« (pagan, Christian, revolutionary, Islamic). According to the interpretation of Anthony Smith, function of the »golden age« is to satisfy the need for authenticity – so that we might find out »who we are and where we come from«. This includes the need for having a homeland (enrooting the nation anew in her historical space), the feeling of continuity among generations, the search for collective dignity; it has to remind members of a particular nation of their greatness and inner worth, of a coming turn of events, of maintaining the sense of a glorious destiny (Smit 1999, 102–104) Relationship towards memory is different among »nations with no history« as compared to the »nations with impoverished history«, or nations whose »ethno-histories merged into histories of their more powerful and better known neighbors« (105). »Restoration of the golden age is an important, probably essential, component of nationalism. Its role is to bring about a new discovery of roots and continuity, as well as authenticity and dignity, within a population which is forming itself into a nation, thus serving as a guide and a model for national history ... Recollections of the golden age play a key role in mobilizing, uniting and directing energy of a population that needs to give an an-

sver to the challenges of nation forming, and this by the use of the myth of a national destiny and history.« (110) Contemporary social engineering sees the return to the common past as a necessary precondition for mobilizing masses. »Invocation of the events from past is an inseparable part of a leadership demagogic counting on atavistic emotions of the masses.« (93) Here we have a case of a »used past«.

## 7. National memory<sup>4</sup>

There are two types of memory: individual (inner) and collective-national (external). (Albvaš 1999, 63) Individual memory merges into collective and this is how a living link is being established between different generations (70). »History is not the past in its entirety, but it is even less only that which has remained of it.« (70) According to this interpretation there are »reconstructed memories« (72), and »wrapped up memories« (74). Collective memory and history are two opposites. Scientific and critical history nurtures a critical relationship towards the collective memory of the nation. »Recollection is largely a reconstruction of the past which utilizes information taken from the present. It is also based on other reconstructions which were executed in previous periods which had given a somewhat distorted picture of the past (73). Made-up history (collective memory) is more real than the so called scientific history<sup>5</sup> since it exists within the real lives of the people.

Who determines what we should remember, what we should have memory of, and what we should forget? Social groups (national elites) determine what is worthy of being remembered. Contents of memory are often being changed. At a certain period of time accent is being put on one thing, and at other times other values and contents are being favored.

History is a reminder and a »guardian of remembrance«, the very »life of memory«, the wall against the torrent of time that takes everything with it into the »chasm of oblivion« (Berk 1999, 83).

Not all nations have the same relationship towards history. Some are »societies of memory« and others »societies of oblivion« (amnesia). Late 19<sup>th</sup> century was an age of »made-up tradition« for the aim was to legitimize the existence of the nation-state (89). During the 20<sup>th</sup> century we had an unbelievable experiment which involved »censoring the past« (Soviet Encyclopedia). Popular memory, recollections, traditions make up the identity of all nations. Without recollections nations become impersonal masses without identity. »If one respects the tradition of any single nation that would imply that one also respects that particular nation itself.« (Mandzaridis 2003a, 338) Theoreticians make a distinction between national memory and recollections. But these notions are most often not being opposed, but treated as complementary (Asman 1999, 122). When speaking of

<sup>4</sup> See Asman 2002 and Albvaš 1999.

<sup>5</sup> On Christian notion of history see: Maritain 1990, Berđajev 1989 and Florovski 1982.

national memory some authors also speak of »anamnetic memory« (133), »eschatological memory« (133) and »animator memory« (133). Remembrance is the bridge linking significant times from the past with future, but through the darkness of the present-day (133).

## 8. Mission of the Church in the Balkans

Church »remembrance« and Church »memories« constitute the mission of the Church and the very content of this mission. »Remembrance« is Liturgy, and Liturgy is the mission *par excellence*. Without »memories« and »remembrance« the Church would not have its missionary character.

Today, it seems that it is justifiable to speak of three aspects of Church mission: *inner, ecumenical* and *external* mission. They are mutually linked and intertwined. Ecumenical and external missions of the Church always depend on her inner mission. Without a critical, creative, sincere and an open inner dialogue within the Church there can be no successful dialogue with other Churches or any successful answers to other, numerous, challenges of the modern epoch. Today, the inner, the ecumenical, and the so called external dialogue are all in a state of »crisis«. This means that the Church mission is in crisis too. It should be added that Church mission cannot always be quantitatively verified.

What are the goals of Church mission? *Man and the world*. Church is new life and not some sort of a society of religious converts or organizations which serve to satisfy religious needs. Since the Church is new life, she is saving entire life, the entire world. »State, society, culture and nature itself are the real objects of the mission, and not some sort of a neutral *milieu* inside which the Church exists with one and only goal: to maintain her inner freedom and safeguard her religious life.« (Šmeman 1997, 255) Orthodox mission is in its essence *liturgical* mission. *Liturgy is the method and the goal of mission*. Liturgical mission is conciliar, all-inclusive, ecumenical, pan-human. This does not put into question occurrences which were characteristic to a certain period of time and a particular understanding of Christian faith. »It is necessary to admit that the most characteristic principle relative to the spreading of Orthodoxy – translation of the Holy Scripture and Liturgy into languages of such populations as those that were receiving Christianity from Byzantium – leads to a constitution of national, administratively independent Churches, that sometimes lacked the sense of the universality of the Gospel. However, such impoverishment of Church's good news should be regarded as a consequence of a later occurrence – as a consequence of the emergence of secularized nationalism in 19<sup>th</sup> century.« (Majendorf 2005a, 5)

Mission is characteristic to the very nature of the Church. Church is not the Church if it is not missionary. »If the Church should cease being missionary and start restricting herself to some sort of self-sufficient existence, or, even worse, if she should introduce ethnic, political, social or geographic limitations relative to the spreading of the Gospel of Christ, it is then that she would cease being the

true Church of Christ.« (Majendorf 2000b, 283)<sup>6</sup> Her mission is »apostolic« in a twofold sense of the word: 1. because it bears apostolic faith and 2. because it was sent into the world in the same manner apostles were originally sent with the task of witnessing Crucified and Resurrected Christ. Mission cannot be reduced to spreading the word of the Gospel through sermon – it also implies witnessing the deeds, as well as the words, of our Lord the Savior.

Apart from certain weaknesses, which are neither small nor insignificant, the Orthodox Church, in concert with other Churches, now has preconditions for a successful educational-cultural mission among Balkan nations, but why not also say among nations of the entire world, since, today, it exists on all continents. I am building this optimism principally upon the liturgical renewal of the Orthodox Church which is so evident, and especially so within our autocephalous Church. Today, this liturgical renewal (renaissance) acts as fresh air in a house which has not been aired for a long time. Renaissance of Orthodoxy during past 20–30 years is quite evident. The Church was not functioning in such a churchly manner since the end of the Middle Ages. It would be difficult to single out any period of time since then when the Church had this many educated bishops, monks, clergy and laics. She never had such high-quality theological literature and media as is the case today, although there are such books that instigate dangerous ecclesiological illnesses. Numerous churches were reconstructed and many new built. There is a great interest for studying theology. There is an ever increasing number of monks and nuns in monasteries. As far as the mission of the Church is concerned it may be said that the Church now acts with complete autonomy, without any serious external pressure. When certain external influences are being applied it is more a case of the Church herself inviting them to occur then of intensions of political subjects to interfere in her inner affairs.

Orthodox mission is the work of the entire Church, and not a »specialty« of individuals or groups which have a special gift for it within the Church. Church's missionary activity is primarily actualized by what she is, and then but what she does.

When speaking about Church mission in Balkans it might be necessary to point out certain obstacles that stand in her way. Within the Orthodox Church today there is a clash of three opposing principles: traditional, conservative-rightwing and liberal-relativist. Tragic historical circumstances have forced the Church to ask *what her identity is*. Although her identity is one, there are individuals who interpret it in different ways, thus reducing it to particular dimensions of Church life. During several previous centuries, Orthodoxy was heavily weighed by many »attachments«, which have been imported and forced upon her from the outside. That which was »imported« and which was »foreign« to the Orthodox Church is today most eagerly and most zealously maintained by Orthodox ultra-conservatives, »lovers of antiquities and the past«. Struggle between above mentioned tendencies sometimes becomes serious and prickly with a lingering threat of growing into a conflict that might lead to real divisions within the Church.

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<sup>6</sup> We find similar thoughts with archbishop Anastasije Janulatos 2005, Stamulis 2005 and in *Globalizam i pravoslavlje* 2005.

When at one occasion speaking of »romantic Orthodoxy«, the great theologian of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Father Alexander Schmemann, pointed out following weaknesses and tendencies in contemporary Orthodoxy that are not always mutually linked: *nominalism, liturgical blind conservatism, cult of the »past«, Fathers being the most common theological theme for discussion, apocalypticism, hate towards the »contemporary world«, emotionalism, cult of the »external« (beard, cassock)* (Šmeman 2007b, 324). Orthodoxy is swamped with idols, he says. »Love of the past always leads to idolatry and the Orthodox live exclusively by this past, or, to be more precise, by the multitude of different pasts«. There is always an »old-believer« lurking in Orthodoxy (327). To this we may add: *ethno-phyletism (religious nationalism), »righteous arrogance«, lack of realism, lack of balance and interdependency among Church ministries* as well as the lack of balance in following relations: *local/regional/universal, spiritual/material, history/eschatology, grace-given/institutional, soul/body, faith/reason.*

Orthodox nations are often accused of »xenophobia« in spite of the fact that no one seems to dispute their gift for hospitality. Today, it might be more appropriate to speak of their tendency towards »xenophilia«. A respectable Belgrade university professor points out three negative characteristics adopted by Balkan peoples: 1. a generalized tendency to be very mistrustful and skeptic towards foreigners and everything that is new; 2. in general, they think of themselves in negative terms. They see themselves as being less worthy and less significant in their relationship with Westerners; 3. egocentricity: each Balkan nation feels a need to exaggerate when speaking of its own self (Mutavdžić 2008, 13–17). However, one can not but acknowledge the fact that »this peninsular harbored roots of some of the most important elements of general European culture, science, education, which make it our source of all sources« (7). Hellenic and Roman worlds exerted key influences on the Balkans throughout history. Even to this day these influences are present although more than two millennia have passed since these worlds have come into existence. Balkans are a crossroads to many other cultures: Romanic, Germanic and Slavonic. Balkans are pluralistic on all levels of their existence.

*The Orthodox sometimes lack realism and a fertile self-criticism.* This is certainly a barrier as far as the mission of the Church and acceptance of her faith is concerned. Permanent determination to idealize and rationalize her every act, to be seen as »holy« and »infallible«, paralyzes Church's life. When external sources, more or less legitimately, point out certain anomalies and missteps in her activities, this is seen as »a misunderstanding of the essence of the Church«, or, what is even worse, as God's will. This is how all responsibility is been simply shaken off. There is little genuine, but plenty »simulated« repentance. There is hardly anything that disputes Christian faith and Christian mission more successfully than the life-style of some of the present-day Christians. It is as if we have become a model of true teaching, but, at the same time, a model of deceitful life.

The Church is holy, »but she is sinful, the Church of sinners; Church is sinful because we, as her members, are sinful. And this sinfulness of the Church does not simply relate to privately hidden sins of her members, even if they be execu-

tors of her most holy ministries. Sinfulness and imperfection of the members of the Church may also be seen in acts and omissions, which, not being in the domain of human experience, have to be characterized as acts and omissions of the Church herself (Rahner 2008, 52). »History of the Church is a tragedy of sin and a mystery of salvation.« (Florovsky)

Is there some sort of a particularity when the Church mission in the Balkans is concerned? Yes and no. When forms are being taken into consideration then it might be possible to speak of particularities. If contents of the mission are being scrutinized then there can only be one mission. Serbs, together with other Orthodox nations, share the same human nature with members of other world nations. They have their faults and their virtues. They have their saints and their criminals. »Each nation, with no exception, no matter how much it may feel persecuted, wronged and righteous – there were undoubtedly times when it became responsible for committing its own share of cruelty, injustice and arrogance.« (Alexander Solzhenitsyn). Nobel Prize winner Ivo Andrić had said that Balkan peoples were susceptible to perpetrate violence and suffer violence both at the same time. They have individuals with souls as wide as the oceans, but they also have those that are narrow-minded and narrow in every sense of the word. Nothing ever happens in Balkans that does not happen in almost all other parts of the world. They are poorer than the »Westerners«, but there are also many poor in Europe and throughout the whole wide world.

Orthodox faithful and people of Balkans see themselves as being Europeans, but not as »Westerners«. They do not accept that they are »Easterners« although they are often being considered as such by the Westerners. In everyday life they are accepting everything that comes from the West. Sometimes the West is seen by them as their very own »myth of the golden calf«. At the same time there also develops an inner resistance in them towards the West and they come to fear it. West-European civilization has become a planetary civilization. In their everyday lives, the Orthodox have lost their own cultural, social, economic, and political models. They have adopted western models. This is why they differ from their western counterparts only by the virtue of their theoretical convictions, and not by their everyday lives.

There exist long-lasting prejudices and stereotypes regarding Balkans. Balkans are »a keg of gunpowder« which can explode at any moment; »unresolved Eastern Question«, *Catena Mundi* (world chain). Being Balkan is a synonym for being backward, primitive, and despotic. Europe is »progressive«, Balkans are »backward«; Europe is »developed«, Balkans are »non-developed« or »in the process of development«; Europe is »rich«, Balkans are »poor«; Europe is civilized, Balkans are »barbaric«; Europe is »cosmopolitan«, Balkans are »provincial«; Europe is stable, Balkans are »unstable«. Sometimes it is necessary to »destabilize« Balkans so that they may become »stabilized« (Čomski 1999, 23). »Stability suggests security for the higher classes and great foreign companies, and their welfare needs to be preserved.« (22)

There is a widespread opinion that Balkan nationalists are always creators of a homeland »which is closely tied with the past, and deprived of a direct link with

the present ...« (Todorova 2010, 35). Balkan peoples live between myth and utopia. A historical fact is overlooked whereby nationalism was »exported« to the Balkans from the West. »Tradition that sees Europe not as a continent, but as a club open only for members who are seen as appropriate by the club management and confirmed by them, is as old as Europe's name. Borders of Europe depend on somebody's point of view. It is a well known fact that Metternich felt that Asia started just beyond the eastern gates of Vienna ...« (Hobsbaum 2003, 238) Borders dividing Europe and the Balkans have been set up arbitrarily. For some they are located in the suburbs of Vienna, for others in the region bordering Hungary and Croatia, or Croatia and Serbia, or Rumania and Bulgaria. At one period in time East-Christian nations had a »graveyard philosophy« (Bulgakov 2000, 192). There is a pretty widespread conviction that communism and atheism are immanent to the Balkans peoples. »Achievement of a certain degree of education is seen by the eyes of our *inteligencia* as a synonym for religious indifference and denial.« (215) There is a euphemism for Balkans today – Southeast Europe. »It is for certain that Balkan Peninsula is a wonder of its own kind. It forms a permanent section of Europe but it is still so far away from it regardless of the fact that Greece, Rumania and Bulgaria are already members of the European Union. It is so specific and, yet, so ordinary. It is very versatile, but, above all, special.« (Mutavdžić 2008, 3) In the end, it essentially needs that which is needed by the entire world: salvation from sin and death, which is the goal of Orthodox mission.

## 9. »Painful memories« in Balkans

Contemporary mission of the Church in Balkans should take into consideration »painful memories« – »evil and painful recollections«, which are very present among the population in this region. There are individual and collective painful recollections. They are remembered and passed on from generation to generation. Painful memories prolong pain and suffering. They tend to keep the victims within the claws of their executioners even if in reality those executioners do not exist any more. History of all Balkan peoples is painful and tragic. They were enslaved for centuries. There has not been a generation that did not participate in a war. For several centuries they were far removed from all civilizational streaming struggling for their very lives. Those recollections of historical pain and suffering, of innocent victims, are the cause of unforeseeable tragic existential consequences: a muffled desire for revenge, fear, anxiety, mistrust. One of the consequences of NATO bombing campaign is the sudden emergence of terminal illnesses such as cancerous tumors and leukemia. Children are being born with numerous deficiencies; natural environment has been contaminated to unforeseeable proportions. Remaining cassette bombs still take lives of innocent people. One of the objectives of Church mission in the Balkans is catharsis, cleansing and liberation of Balkan nations from painful memories. This is possible only by way of a true evangelization. Repentance, Forgiving and Reconciliation are the most reliable medicine for painful memories. These three cannot do one without other. »Repentance places man into the true framework of his own being. It brings him into

the time of the Church, which is the time of remembrance of God. It brings him back from estrangement and disobedience into proximity of God. Repentance does not cancel out the past – it transfigures it so that the past might be regained in another perspective which had been open to the world by the death and the resurrection of Christ. Repentance turns the negative content of the past (sin) into a means for achieving perfection: as an ascetic had said, it becomes a fertilizer for growing virtues. This is how a creative retrospective of the past is being achieved as well as the transfiguration of the past.« (Mandzaris 2003a, 127) Nations should sacrifice themselves for the sake of others and not become each other's victims. Like every Church mission, present-day mission in the Balkans needs to be primarily a *mission of reconciliation*.

Within the context of catharsis and of healing of »painful memories« an effort should be exerted to create a *balance* between »positive« and »painful memories« regarding Western Europe. This balance is either disturbed or it doesn't exist at all. The Orthodox have many »painful memories« of Western Europe, but they should simultaneously have many positive and »joyous memories«. They have suffered a great deal from the Westerners, but they have also received a lot of good from them, which can not and should not be forgotten. Existence of a balance between these two types of recollections may create, when Balkan nations are concerned, a healthy and a positive relationship with Europe. Western Europe should again remind itself that Balkans is the cradle of her civilization, its native soil and identity and not some strange and foreign element belonging to the Orient and Asia. It is up to the European Union today to accept it (not to »extend« into, or to »subjugate« Balkans) as its native soil, or to have this native soil amputated and thrust into the hands of another world and another civilization – Islamic civilization (»the other Europe«).

As far as the Orthodox Church is concerned »idea of Christian unity and unification is the theme of the century, the theme of time, and the theme of history« (George Florovsky). »No historical Church community can pretend to be the Church if it should cease to strive towards unity with other Churches.« (Zizjulas 2003, 52) Ecumenism is part of the very nature of the Orthodox Church. »By her very nature the Church is ecumenical because it is Catholic.« (Popović 2010, 6) »Substance of the Church: Ecumenism« (10), says St. Justin of Ćelije who is seen by many as »the patriarch of anti-ecumenism«. The Orthodox understand ecumenism in its essence as *a testimony and a mission* (Bigović 2010, 201–239). This is why they give such great attention to ecumenism and inter-religious dialogue.

The West most often regards the Orthodox Church as a non-missionary Church. It is often spoken of her »flight from the world«. It is as if the missionary movements, which have so strongly marked the Christian West for several centuries, have bypassed the »static« Christianity of the East. Many in the West have posed the question: can a Church whose life is being directed almost entirely towards Liturgy and the Divine Mysteries, and whose spirituality is primarily mystical and ascetical in its character, be a true missionary Church? Orthodox Church, together with the entire Christian world, stands facing many problems. It is being asked many questions. Both the ecclesial and non-ecclesial circles from the West are

asking the Orthodox the following questions: what is their contribution to the process of »democratization« in »societies in transition«; what are they doing or not doing regarding the problem of protection and respect of human rights and freedoms (especially so concerning the rights of the fourth generation)? What is the role of the Orthodox Church in regard to the processes of European integration? What is her stance towards issues such as: ecology, changes in climate, terrorism, social ethics, abortion, organ transplants, genetic engineering, ecumenism, inter-religious dialogue and globalization? What is the Orthodox Church doing regarding »reconciliation« among mutually antagonized Balkan nations? Is she doing anything so that members of those nations might »free« themselves and »cleanse« themselves from the »surplus of history« and their »tragic past«? These questions being put by the external world are not of primary importance as far as the Church is concerned, but they are not to be ignored since they represent challenges lying ahead. This is her *external mission*. Church councils and synods and their specialized commissions, especially Hellenic and Russian Churches, numerous Orthodox theologians in the East and the West, they are all very seriously treating these problems. This is testified by literature of increasing number and quality.

In spite of all temptations Orthodox Church today, as in the past, safeguards and affirms *anamnestic culture*, culture founded on Liturgy. This »remembrance« of Christ is the content of her mission in the world.

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