

Chapter 17: The Church That Persecutes

“These things I have spoken to you, that you should not be made to stumble. They will put you out of the synagogues; yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service. And these things they will do to you because they have not known the Father nor Me.”¹

“The church persecuted and oppressed, whether it was Greek or Latin, could be Christ’s Church; but the church which persecutes and oppresses cannot possibly belong to Him, for Christ is the God of peace and love, not of hostility and persecution. Deeds of service, these are the true sign of true Christianity, and whoever says that he believes rightly, but instead unrighteously lives for evil, he is nothing but an illusion from head to toe, nor does he have faith nor law.”²

The secular pagan Roman Empire failed to stop the progress of the gospel of Christ among the unsaved. After the first few centuries of this failure, the Devil changed his tactics. He decided to infiltrate the very clear and simple message of salvation of New Testament Christianity with the clouds of numerous pagan beliefs and philosophical ideas. Thus, the Devil allowed godless (yet very religious) people who ostensibly served the Church to infiltrate and do what the Lord strictly prohibits. The devil’s new tactics included the addition of new teachings and interpretations of Christ and apostolic doctrines which were never taught nor believed in the first place.

Earlier chapters in this book have already covered these teachings. Together with going astray from the beliefs of the first century Church, the so-called official Christian Church used physical force and worldly methods to suppress its religious opponents who adhered to the true Gospel of Christ. Any reader of the New Testament is able to recognize easily that Christ (and the later apostles) always emphasized peacemaking and non-violence.³ Christ also emphasized love – not only for our neighbors, but also for even our most bitter enemy. Jesus taught that every believer who is given spiritual rebirth by God must deny himself and take a cross upon his shoulders (Matthew 16:24). Every believer must be filled with love to such an extent that he could not even think, let alone commit, evil against another person. Here are some Scriptures to support these points:

“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.’ But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother⁴ without a cause shall be in danger of the

¹ John 16:1-3.

² Dositej Obradovic, *Collected Works*, Vol. 1 (Prosveta: Belgrade, 1961), 672.

³ See Matthew 5:7, 9, 38-48; Romans 12:14, 17-21, and others.

⁴ Jesus uses the term “brother” to refer not only to a close blood relative (as might appear at first glance), but rather a member of his own nation, or more generally to every descendant of Adam and Eve, our common ancestors.

*judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire."*⁵

*"But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you... **And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise.**"*⁶

*"**For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: 'Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth'; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously...**"*⁷

In these verses, Christ revealed the related concepts of love, forgiveness, blessing and suffering for others - both for kind and malicious people. However, as we shall see, satanic influence starting in the fourth century onwards crept into the official Church, which today exists in the forms of Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy. These groups rejected the norms for Christian behavior in the early Church. Instead, Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy began to apply behavioral standards inherent of people who do not know God. So-called "Christian" thinkers and emperors acted as if they had forgotten what it was like for their predecessors who had endured cruel torture and bloodshed. Historian Wil Durant cites historical data about the gradual "modification of Christian ethics" that resulted in the Church rejecting love and forgiveness and instead practicing a religion of violence:

*"The most serious problem for the Church, immediately after the acceptance of its ideals along with its survival, consisted of finding ways to coexist with the State. The rise of religious organizations alongside government officials caused a power struggle in which each side's mutual subordination became a prerequisite for peace. In the East, the Church became subservient to the State. In the West, at first the Church fought for independence, but then it strived for superiority to the State. In both cases, the alliance of Church and State demanded a substantial modification of Christian ethics. **Tertullian, Origen, and Lactantius had taught that war violates God's law. However, now that the State protected her, the Church compromised by giving approval to those wars that were seen as necessary to protect either the State or the Church. She herself had no means of force, but when power seemed beneficial, the Church could apply to the 'secular arm' to carry out its will.**"*⁸

At the time of persecution of the Church, Tertullian, a prominent leader, pointed out a very important evangelical rule, which we, with the conclusion that it was she (the Church) initiated further persecution, according to Alexander Schmemmann:

⁵ Matthew 5:21-2.

⁶ Luke 6:27-8, 31. Author's emphasis.

⁷ 1 Peter 2:21-3. Author's emphasis.

⁸ Wil Durant, *History of Civilization, the Age of Faith*, Vol. 1 (Alfa the People's Publisher: 1998) 65. Author's emphasis.

“It must be frankly admitted that the Church demanded of the state that it combat paganism and itself denied the principle of toleration. It had forgotten the words of Tertullian, addressed to the persecutors of Christianity: **‘Both common right and natural law require that each man bow down to the god in which he believes. It is not right for one religion to violate another.’**”⁹

This teaching of the Church reaffirms the ideas of first century Christianity that the Gospel can be spread only through peaceful preaching of love and truth, and not by means of coercion toward potential converts.

However, contrary to this teaching, the later Church conformed to the people’s saying: “Give a man power, and you will see who he really is.” Emperor Constantine, “equal to the apostles” and especially his “Christian” heirs, under the influence of the Church, commenced to persecute the heathen followers of pagan religions. Indeed, these emperors acted in the same way as the pagan emperors had persecuted Christians in the past. They apparently had forgotten the words of Christ and the apostles that teach us not to return evil for evil.

Russian Orthodox theologian Alexander Schmemmann describes these crimes of so-called “Christians” against unbelievers:

“With the reign of the Emperor Theodosius the Great (379-95), the first cycle in the development of new relations between Church and state came to an end. **An edict of 380 declared Christianity the required faith and made it finally the state religion. The freedom announced in the Edict of Milan was ended, but it had been doomed from the start.** It was precluded by the very nature of the ancient state, whose basic feature, a theocratic conception of itself, was actually reinforced by the conversion of Constantine. In Constantine’s reign the persecution of paganism began. It grew in strength under his sons; in 341 the “madness of sacrifices” was forbidden by law, and in 353 all cults of idols were condemned and their temples closed. True, these laws were hardly enforced in practice; paganism still represented a considerable force, which explains the attempt to revive it under Julian... The Christian writer Firmicus Maternus exhorted them: ‘Come to the aid of these unfortunates; it is better to save them *in spite of themselves* than to allow them to perish.’ **But the minds of Christians, in which the evangelical ideal of religious freedom had flared up briefly during the experience of martyrdom, were blinded for a long time by the vision of a Christian theocracy that would bring men to Christ not only by grace but by law as well. Much time passed before the pagan nature of this theocracy was recognized.** State sanctions gave the Church unprecedented strength, and perhaps brought many to faith and new life, but after Theodosius the Great it was no longer only a community of believers; **it was also a community of those obliged to believe.**”¹⁰

⁹ Schmemmann, *The Orthodox Way*, 149. (Translated by Lynda Kesich) Author’s emphasis.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 148-9. Author’s emphasis.

This text shows us clearly that in a very short time after the ending of her own persecution, the Church had departed from the New Testament ideals which espoused mankind's freedom to choose his own religion. The Church now became a powerful organization that forced pagans to undergo baptism for their "salvation". Momir Jovic elaborates:

"Tolerance to the absolute minimum led to utter domination and an intolerance of everything else that remained unchristian... Another consequence of the development of Christianity in the fourth to sixth centuries was the abolition of the last ancient institutions: the closing of the nine century old Academy of Plato, **the mass destruction and burning of ancient monuments and documents, all of which was instigated by the fanaticism of major church authorities.**"¹¹

Wil Durant also writes about the hatred expressed by the "Holy" Eastern Patriarchs against their religious opponents:

"Christianity now (the year 400) was about to conquer the East. In Egypt, the domestic Christians (Copts) already represented a majority of the population, and maintained hundreds of churches and monasteries. Ninety Egyptian bishops acknowledged the rule of the Patriarch of Alexandria, whose power was almost as big as that of the former Pharaohs or Ptolemy. **Some of these patriarchs were ecclesiastical politicians of a totally malicious sort, including Theophilus¹² who ordered the pagan temple and library of Serapis to be burned to the ground (389).**"¹³

With regard to the destruction of pagan temples and libraries by Christian "servants of God" as led by Metropolitan Theophilus, our famous astronomer Milutin Milankovic held in his hands fragments of old parchments kept in the Metochion Monastery in Constantinople (Istanbul). These parchments describe the horrors of destruction that took place many centuries ago:

"In the fourth century, when Christianity dominated all of Alexandria, thus perished almost all interest in Greek science. In the year 392, human barbarism overcame order to such a frenzy that, like a whirlwind, it destroyed all the works of Greek art and science stored in Alexandria as well as our home.

It was a terrible day. Early in the morning, we heard that the mob bought weapons to demolish and destroy all traces of Hellenistic culture in Alexandria. **Indeed, in the afternoon, a vulgar crowd surrounded our temple, burst into its premises, and destroyed and looted everything.** For an incredibly short time, the entire temple was completely ransacked. The streets overflowed with scattered scrolls of papyrus and parchment. Among those ruptured fruits of Greek poetry and wisdom lay the shattered remnants of the classic works of

¹¹ Momir Jovic, *Early Christianity in the Balkans*, 16-7. Author's emphasis.

¹² The name "Theophilus" in Greek language means "lover of God."

¹³ Durant, *History of Civilization, the Age of Faith*, Vol. 1, 82. Author's emphasis.

Greek sculpture. The rabble was not concerned about these pieces. Rather, they quarreled over the golden robes of the statue of Serapis and the gold and silver offerings of worshipers in the temple. **The vulgar ruckus abounded with curses, which boiled over into vicious fighting and bloodshed.**

Suddenly, there was silence. ‘Metropolitan, Metropolitan!’ was whispered from ear to ear. At the scene of the mob’s furor appeared Theophilus, the Metropolitan of Alexandria. In a row, everyone fell on their knees.

The High Priest of Alexandria surrounded by his entourage watched the work of benevolence by his congregation. **‘Blessed,’ he said, ‘is your God-honoring act of destroying the pagan temple,** the last refuge of heretical faith and teachings. You have finished the work once started by our holy fathers, the first Christians and apostles. *As it is written in the nineteen chapter of the Acts of the Apostles: Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.* May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God the Father and the only Holy Spirit be with all of you. Amen.’”¹⁴

In addition to this “blessed” burning of the Alexandrian library and the temple of Serapis, Milanovic also describes the death of the learned Hypatia, daughter of the famous philosopher and mathematician Theon, who was attacked in the street and stoned to death by the “Christians” at the church. Dositej Obradovic comments on these crimes committed by people spurred on by the diabolical Alexandrian patriarchs:

“At that time (just as the church history testifies), the most prominent sages of the Greek Empire came to listen to the teachings of this woman, who was praised for her wisdom and integrity of life (also having a beautiful body) in addition to her knowledge.

Of this very woman, Saint Cyril utterly slandered: firstly, because she was not a Christian but a Greek, as her father and whole family was, and secondly, because she was so frequently praised and honored almost like a goddess.

Peter, a reader for Saint Cyril, fierce and ardent in his faith to God and to Saint Cyril, **gathered a host of Orthodox volunteers; one night they went out and seized Hypatia. They dragged her off to the church, stripped her naked, and flayed her skin with oyster shells. After tearing her up alive, she died, and they threw her body parts into the fire.**

Who can fail to see that which is godless, heathen, and accursed? This account, my brothers, comes word by word straight from the church history. Now let us compare the deeds of these saints with the teaching of the Holy Gospel. We will see how their deeds stand... They who dismembered the body parts of the wise and lively Hypatia – what else, under the false name of

¹⁴ Milutin Milanković, *Through the Universe and the Ages*, 101-2. Author’s emphasis.

Christians, could these saints and pilgrims be, but raging dogs, mad murderers, and demons?”¹⁵

That such “God honoring” deeds could be carried out by any rational contemporary Christian, who obeys Holy Scripture and the teaching of Christ the Savior, will be shown to us by a passage written by the renowned Serbian psychiatrist and writer Vladeta Jerotic:

“A man would rather forget the historical evidence of the cruel persecution of pagans by the Christian emperor Theodosius (346-395), including prohibitions against such household customs such as decorating their homes with flowers, suppression of talking about astrology and other forms of divinations and various oracles, which with a fanatical spirit dominate our world today just as it did many centuries ago. The barbaric murder of opponents by Theodosius’s predecessor, the Christian emperor Valens, resembled Herod’s massacre of killing children born at the time of Jesus Christ. Valens ordered the murder of people whose names began with “Theod”. Iamblichus, a disciple of Plato, issued a public prediction that after Valens died, his successor would bear a name starting with ‘Theod’. Iamblichus committed suicide so as not to fall into the hands of the cruel emperor Valens. Ironically, after Valens died in battle, Theodosius, dubbed ‘the Great’, became his successor.

It is noteworthy that **in the midst of the unmerciful battle of young Christianity against paganism** in the fourth century after Christ, the youngest of all the magical arts, alchemy, exploded in popularity. (Its greatest apologist was Zosimos of Panopolis.) **This occurred in spite of Theodosius’s persecution of alchemists, including orders to burn their books in the presence of a Christian bishop.**

The history of burning books, that probably did not end in Hitler’s Germany or Stalin’s Russia, began in the midst of a newly born Christian state.”¹⁶

This politic of persecuting of people who believed and thought differently continued through all succeeding centuries of the so-called “Church”, e.g., churches that consider themselves to be successors of the dominant religious organization of the fourth century Roman Empire. (About the internal conflicts of various factions in the “Church”, as well as the bloodshed committed in conflicts between the “orthodox” and the “heretics”, we already discussed in the chapter on the Ecumenical Councils. Thus, it is not necessary to repeat them again.)

We will be able to draw clear conclusions from the examination of the historical picture of events in medieval Serbia. This examination will confirm the fact that the majority of

¹⁵ Dositej Obradovic, *Collected Works*, 656-7. Author’s emphasis.

¹⁶ Vladeta Jerotic, *The Old and the New in Christianity*, (Belgrade, 2000), 37-8. Author’s emphasis.

confessional communities in our country, which derive their origin from the “Church” of Emperor Constantine and his successors, continue to follow the same principles and methods of operation in relation to their religious opponents.

Although the Orthodox Church in Serbia wants to deceive our people (who incidentally show great ignorance of their own national history) with regard to the history of our country, the next section will demonstrate that the Serbian Orthodox Church of the Middle Ages to almost the same extent possessed the spirit of the Inquisition that was present in Roman Catholicism in the West.

Genocide against Nonorthodox Serbs in Medieval Serbia

In literature over the last twenty years directed against sectarians as the “Orthodox response” to the increasing activity of Protestant religious groups in Serbia, the Orthodox Church has repeatedly claimed it has never persecuted anyone. In other words, the Orthodox Church claims it has never endangered the freedom of religion of people who believe and interpret the Bible differently than Orthodoxy. To answer the concerns of Evangelical Christians, who since the beginning of the nineties have felt increasingly threatened by the religious majority (about which we will elaborate a little later), the Orthodox cite the following claims in order to present themselves in a more favorable light than today’s reality:

“Antic¹⁷ tells reporters that, in his view, hatred is spreading in our country and recalls memories of the Middle Ages with its bonfires (**as if Eastern Orthodoxy had bonfires in the Middle Ages?**).”¹⁸

“It is known that the Orthodox Church has never employed torture on heretics, nor has threatened a “St. Bartholomew Evening massacre”, nor has carried out wars of extermination against heretics. It is known that the Orthodox states never forcibly baptized anyone, nor have they restricted science, nor have they directed crusading wars.”¹⁹

“Orthodoxy never carried out ‘Holy Inquisition’.”²⁰

“The Orthodox heritage belonging to the majority of our country’s citizens **never taught us to persecute** members of other religions or denominations.”²¹

¹⁷ Dr. Radisha Antic, a leader in the Adventist Church in Serbia.

¹⁸ *The Bible without God, Christianity without the Church; Orthodoxy and Sects II*, (Svetigora: Cetinje, 1997) 167-8. Author’s emphasis.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 171-2. Author’s emphasis.

²⁰ Ed. Vladimir Dimitrijevic, *From Utopia to Nightmare, Orthodoxy and Sects I*, (Svetigora: Cetinje, 1997), 11.

²¹ Zoran D. Lukovic, *Sects: a Manual for Self-Defense*, (Draganic: Belgrade, 2003) 8. Text from Lukovic’s preface. Author’s emphasis.

“Some ways to protect against sectarians cannot be accepted or recommended for us Orthodox people. For example, we were never **allowed to carry out Inquisition, coerced baptism, or religious persecution; none of these actions has ever been carried out nor conform** to the divine origin of our Church.”²²

However, is it really true that Orthodoxy has never persecuted anyone? Is it true that the Orthodox Church does not threaten anyone today? Yet we have just learned that certain Christian emperors (some of whom Orthodoxy venerates as saints) and bishops were major persecutors and destroyers that did not conform to the contemporary “Church”! Russian author L.S. Vasiliev gives us the following answer to these questions:

“For the Orthodox Church in general, because of its relative weakness and minor political significance, **there has never been mass persecution on the scale of ‘Holy Inquisition’**. However, this does not mean that the Church has never **persecuted heretics and sectarians** in the name of strengthening its influence on the masses.”²³

Vasiliev claims that the Eastern Orthodox Church, albeit to a lesser extent than the Roman Catholic Church, persecuted religious dissenters. The claims of adherents of the Serbian Orthodox Church that Orthodoxy never persecuted anyone are in error. They deny the historical facts of the twelfth century. The reign of the grand prince Stefan Nemanja resulted in state persecution against Serbian citizens who “dared” to refuse Orthodox and confessed the faith of the Bogomils.

As we shall soon see, the persecution against the Bogomils, which today’s Serbian Orthodox Church dubs as merely “the salvation of Byzantine Orthodoxy from evil heresy”, was not a war against heavily armed soldiers. Instead, this persecution consisted of a massacre of innocent men, women, children, and elderly people, whose only crime consisted of using their own God-given free will to choose to believe differently from the ruling majority. Vasiliy Markvoic describes how “God fearing” Stefan Nemanja and other Orthodox rulers (especially those in Byzantium) dealt with the Bogomils:

“According to Domentian, major credit for the destruction of heresy on behalf of Orthodoxy belongs to Stefan Nemanja... Nemanja adopted his policy against the Bogomils from the Byzantine dynasty of the Komnenians. Alexios I (1081-1118) was a champion of Orthodoxy. His daughter Anna boasted of the work of her father and dubbed him with the title ‘the thirteenth apostle’. Alexios was very devout and personally entered into detailed discussions with the Bogomils and Paulicians. **When they refused to adopt Orthodoxy, he turned them over to be burned...** **And Nemanja punished Bogomils under the auspices of Byzantine law.** In Byzantium the Bogomils were persecuted under the rule of Manuel Komnenios. A particularly strong persecutor of the Bogomils was the

²² Ranko Jovic, *Sects and False Prophets*, (Negotin 1994). Author’s emphasis.

²³ L.S. Vasiliev, *History of the Religion of the East*, (New Deal: Belgrade-Prosveta, 1987) 82. Author’s emphasis.

emperor Alexios II (1080-3). Several decades later, the Bulgarian emperor Boril conducted in Tarnovo in 1210 a church synod that condemned the Bogomils. About this synod, the Bogomils were slandered and considered ‘as fish without a voice’. They, who did not confess to the true Orthodoxy, **‘were sentenced to various punishments and imprisonments.’** Before this time, there had never been such a synod in Bulgaria.

Nemanja was not original in his persecution of the Bogomils. He looked to the Byzantine Komnenians and, apparently, adopted their church policy. **Seven waves of severe persecution of the Bogomils** were known and drew Alexios I close to the [Orthodox] clergy.”²⁴

“In the mid-13th century, writes Domentian, owing to the God-blessed Nemanja, in Serbia ‘temples’ (polytheistic, e.g., Bogomil churches) ‘were razed’ and ‘churches of Christ were erected.’”²⁵

Historian Stanoje Stajonevic presents similar historical data:

“When Nemanja discovered that the Bogomil heresy was spreading throughout Rascia... Nemanja put the question of the Bogomil faith to a state council in order to resolve the matter. But the matter was not simple and not easily resolved. Many nobles present at the council had adopted the new religion themselves, and there were also others who sympathized with its followers. All of them out of conscience or self-interest vigorously opposed the proposal to take action against the Bogomils. **Finally, after bitter debate and conflict, the council issued an edict to uproot the Bogomils.**

The Bogomils reacted with armed resistance, and **Nemanja undertook an official war of crusade against them.** This war defeated and broke the Bogomils. **On this occasion, many supporters of the new religion were killed, many fled to the surrounding regions,** but others remained in the kingdom and hid. These Bogomils held to their teaching and faith, which suited their spirit and guided their worldview. Yet in Rascia never again did the Bogomil question ever resurface.”²⁶

Historian Vladimir Corovic adds a few more details about the brutal methods (imported by the “God-pleasing” Stefan Nemanja most likely from Alexios I Komnenos the “thirteenth apostle”, making Nemanja the “fourteenth apostle”) used against these poor people:

“Particularly attention was directed toward eradication of the Bogomil heresy and strengthening of the Orthodoxy faith. **Very harsh measures** were employed

²⁴ Vasilij Markovic, *Orthodox Monasticism and Monasteries in Medieval Serbia*, (Lio: Gornji Milanovac, 2002) 55-7. Author’s emphasis.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 58.

²⁶ Stanoje Stanojevic, *History of the Serbian People*, (Prosveta: Belgrade 1989) 101. Author’s emphasis.

against heretics: **cutting out the tongues of their teachers, taking their followers and burning them** or putting them on the run, confiscation of their property, and **burning their books.**”²⁷

Even the priest Ranko Jovic, as if he had forgotten what he had written a few sentences earlier, admits that the Orthodox ruler of the Serbian state (later canonized as “Saint Simeon the Myrrh-Streaming”) employed armed confrontation with the Bogomil question of the Serbian people for the sake of protecting the official church apparatus:

“Let us recall the history when Stefan Nemanja **even summoned the army to protect Orthodoxy**, and thus the union of church and state, during the struggle with the sectarians (Bogomils).”²⁸

What we see from these excerpts from known historians as well as the Orthodox priest is that Stefan Nemanja in the so-called “war of crusade” eradicated the Bogomil name from under the skies of Serbia with the most severe of methods. These methods have always been employed only by the most brutal of totalitarian states, both ancient and modern – Tsarist and Stalinist Russia, Nazi Germany, or Afghanistan under the Taliban.

It is worthwhile to give a brief commentary on the statement by the historian Stanojevic when he states that “the Bogomils reacted with armed resistance”. This statement might lead to the (erroneous) conclusions that this religious movement possessed a well-equipped military. This claim (about the armed resistance of the Bogomils) is abused by modern Eastern Orthodox propagandists to rationalize the perceived potential danger of sects to national security – because of the threat of military coup and overthrow of the holy Orthodox rulers.

However, did the Bogomils truly represent a threat to national security? Cedomir Marjanovic comments in his book *History of the Serbian Church*:

“With regard to the state, the Bogomil movement presented a problem to the monarch and the nobles, especially because of its **literal interpretation of the sixth commandment ‘Thou shall not kill.’ They considered going to war as sin.**”²⁹

Thus, the Bogomils considered all forms of killing as sin because of their literal interpretation of the sixth commandment. This commandment is identical to that taught by Christ and the apostles.³⁰ For this reason, Nemanja had no concerns about the Bogomil movement ever committing “murder” against him or threatening his royal position.

²⁷ Vladimir Corovic, *History of Serbia*, (Publik-Praktikum: Zemun 2004) 135. Author’s emphasis.

²⁸ Ranko Jovic, *Sects and False Prophets*, 57. Author’s emphasis.

²⁹ Cedomir Marjanovic, *History of the Serbian Church* (Belgrade 2001) 53. Author’s emphasis.

³⁰ Matthew 5:21-2; 1 John 3:10-12.

On the other hand, the Bogomil effort to resist with weapons in hand against those who attempted to murder them can only be understood as a desperate effort by Serbian lords to defend their families and fend off the massacre. (“Weapons” must refer to crude hunting weapons, such as arrows and knives, which every family at that time possessed in their home, similar to butcher’s tools today.)

However, the resistance of the Bogomil minority failed. At the very least, in an effort to preserve their very lives, some of the Bogomils felt compelled to renounce their faith. Some were pursued and ultimately slain or burned at the stake. Others were forced to abandon their ancestral lands leaving everything behind and flee for their lives. Their properties were then divided up by the Orthodox without regard to the tenth commandment that God forbids covetousness of one’s neighbor’s possessions.

But it would be useful to study more details about the error that was (and today still is) blamed on the part of the Bogomils. What led to their ultimate extinction? In an effort to justify the crimes of Nemanja against the Bogomil question of the Serbian people, here is how contemporary Orthodox authors describe the consequences if the Bogomils had allegedly triumphed in medieval Serbia:

“If this heresy were to overtake Serbia, it would have completely destroyed and perverted the Orthodox society; it would have been the spiritual and physical suicide of an entire people. Fortunately, God blessed us at that time by seating on the Serbian throne Saint Stefan Nemanja.”³¹

But is this really true? According to many historians, the Bogomils were appealing to many of their contemporaries. Their worship was acceptable to a wide mass of people because of its clarity and simplicity:

“This teaching was **attractive** to simple people, who lived under a patriarchal system in communes and tribes. Add to this the fact that their prayers, lessons, and sermons were **in the vernacular language**, it becomes obvious why this teaching suddenly expanded. Additionally, Greek Christianity at baptism christened people with Greek names according to the church calendar. However, **the Bogomils rejected the Greek practice and gave only Slavic names...** The Bogomil movement spread so rapidly that Nemanja himself at **the council of the nobility and the clergy** admitted that it was **attractive to their contemporaries** by virtue of its appeal to the nationalism of the people. This is indicated by the fact that there was a high level of literary development and **fluency in the national language** in which the Bogomils wrote their works. **Nemanja ordered their books to be burned.** Undoubtedly, he realized that their literature written in the pure Serbian-Slovenian vernacular helped to spread their teaching.”³²

Anti-sectarian Orthodox literature proliferates in spite of violating directly the provisions of the Serbian Constitution and laws of the nation (which guarantee the

³¹ *From Utopia to Nightmare*, 101.

³² Marjanovic, 53. Author’s emphasis.

equality of all religious communities). This literature makes the following allegations of the “mortal sins” of the Bogomils and the justification for the so-called “Inquisition of Nemanja”: contempt for the Holy Cross, saints, and the Virgin, rejection of transubstantiation (e.g., “denial of Communion”), contempt for priests and icons. Orthodox apologists also insinuate that the Bogomils did not submit to state authorities, believed that the devil (evil god) created the material world, and did not respect marriage and family and practices castration of men.³³ The Orthodox also made spurious allegations that the Bogomils believed that every person was possessed by the devil and that believers should pray for the devil to leave people.

Thus, according to the Orthodox, the Bogomils are described as anarchists who adhered to a Manichean faith (dualism – faith in two gods, one good and one evil). As such, they were declared enemies of the state who without intervention would have brought down the existence of the nation.³⁴

What is important to emphasize at this point is the fact that Nemanja burned all the literature of the Bogomils. Thus, we are unable to learn about their beliefs from original sources. We are confined only to using literary sources authored by their opponents who committed genocide against them.

This implies that we cannot have very much confidence in contemporary teachings about what the Bogomils had actually believed. When we consider that all autocratic

³³ See: *From Utopia to Nightmare*, 98-100.

³⁴ The justification for the massacre of many Protestants in Europe during the Middle Ages by Roman Catholics was based on pretenses similar to those used against the Bogomils and other groups in earlier times. These pretenses were all lies and slander intended to falsely portray a sense of danger to Roman Catholic countries in the event that the “new teaching” would take hold.

Here is what John Calvin, one of the leaders of the Reformation, in his 1535 letter addressed to Francis I, King of France, wrote in defense of Protestant beliefs: “I am aware, indeed, how, in order to render our cause as hateful to your Majesty as possible, they have filled your ears and mind with atrocious insinuations; but you will be pleased, of your clemency, to reflect, that neither in word nor deed could there be any innocence, were it sufficient merely to accuse. When any one, with the view of exciting prejudice, observes that this doctrine, of which I am endeavoring to give your Majesty an account, has been condemned by the suffrages of all the estates, and was long ago stabbed again and again by partial sentences of courts of law, he undoubtedly says nothing more than that it has sometimes been violently oppressed by the power and faction of adversaries, and sometimes fraudulently and insidiously overwhelmed **by lies, cavils, and calumny**. While a cause is unheard, it is violence to pass sanguinary sentences against it; it is fraud to charge it, contrary to its deserts, with sedition and mischief. That no one may suppose we are unjust in thus complaining, you yourself, most illustrious Sovereign, can bear us witness with what **lying calumnies it is daily traduced in your presence**, as aiming at nothing else than to wrest the scepters of kings out of their hands, to overturn all tribunals and seats of justice, to subvert all order and government, to disturb the peace and quiet of society, to abolish all laws, destroy the distinctions of rank and property, and, in short, turn all things upside down. And yet, that which you hear is but the smallest portion of what is said; **for among the common people are disseminated certain horrible insinuations**—insinuations which, if well founded, would justify the whole world in condemning the doctrine with its authors to a thousand fires and gibbets. Who can wonder that the popular hatred is inflamed against it, **when credit is given to those most iniquitous accusations?** See, why all ranks unite with one accord in condemning our persons and our doctrine!” [Translator’s note: see <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/institutes.ii.viii.html> .]

(authoritarian) systems resort to falsification of documents and attribute non-existent crimes to their opponents, we should not believe the allegations of the Orthodox. This perspective in light of other established facts (on which we will elaborate later) shows us the sea of misinformation prevalent in modern anti-sectarian Orthodox literature. These propagandists of the “one holy and apostolic Church” of the 21st century spread lies and slander. Their work is spread in spite of the existence of a wealth of literature among religious minorities (praise God that they were not burned unlike that of the Bogomils) from which a thinking person can draw his own conclusions first-hand as to what they believe.³⁵

Of course, a big question arises. How was it possible that such misguided teaching (which the Orthodox allege the Bogomils to have taught) on the denial of marriage and family and the castration of males could have been adopted with such enthusiasm by the nobility, clergy, and ordinary people?

It is much more likely that these allegations are false, just as we see false allegations against religious minorities today.³⁶

However, we should observe another important point. The passages quoted earlier mention that a number of the Byzantine emperors deserved to be called “apostles” for their extermination of heretics. A logical person, who carefully studies the Scriptures, cannot forget the warning Jesus gave to the saints and the apostles. He predicted the time would come when people who do not know God will kill people and think that they are serving Him (John 16:2-3). However, let us look at another example where the Orthodox Church yet again teaches false doctrine.

In recent times, the policeman Zoran D. Lukovic, a very famous Serbian sectologist (cult researcher), wrote the following interpretation of the sixth commandment of God: “*Thou shalt not kill*”. This passage appears only in the abridged version of his book:

“‘Thou shalt not kill.’ Almost everyone knows this commandment. However, many who ought to know better (and this is why we need good religious teaching) do not realize that the literal Hebrew language translates the command as ‘Do not murder.’ So this commandment does not refer to killing out of obligation, for example in the execution of the death penalty against a criminal or taking life of an enemy in defense of the state during war.

This authentic interpretation gives us answers to the constant dilemma: how should we behave in the army? What about war? What about the police? Thus

³⁵ It is a great tragedy that the majority of people in our country ignorantly believe in the misinformation propagated by such Orthodox propagandists regarding the beliefs of religious minorities in Serbia. If today’s public disinformation about religious communities in Serbia proliferates despite the abundance of literature with the truth, how much easier is it to mislead the public of the beliefs of the Bogomils, whose literature was destroyed long ago and from whose hand we do not have one single work?

³⁶ Sociologist Milan Vukmanovic agrees. He writes: “Naturally, we can assume that such charges against these people arise **out of hearsay**, stereotypical and popular misconceptions about their teachings and activities.” See: M. Vukmanovic, *The Sacred and the Masses*, 78. Author’s emphasis.

we show the original religious-doctrinal position does not command faith with defeatism. This clearly demonstrates the harm coming from improper religious teaching to the citizens of the state regarding the functioning of its organs, the army and the police.

Saint Filaret of Moscow says: ‘Love your (personal) enemies, **hate God’s enemies, crush the enemies of the Fatherland.**’ And the Lord Jesus Christ warned, ‘*And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places.*’ (Matthew 24:6-7)

So wars, unfortunately, are a phenomenon about which the Lord Himself foretold, and you should be prepared and valiant to defend the people and be equipped to fight.”³⁷

So, according to the interpretations of the Russian saint and the Serbian policeman, God’s commandment “*Thou shall not kill*” does not prohibit killing itself. In fact, it demands that we “crush the enemies of the Fatherland.” This means that Stefan Nemanja did not violate the sixth commandment by exterminating the Bogomils – rather, he correctly interpreted and obeyed God’s commandment that forbids killing. The Bogomils, who literally understood this commandment and obeyed it literally, were obviously wrong in their interpretation. The true meaning of this command advocated by the saint and Lukovic himself (and this from a policeman of all people!) allows for the free extermination of heresy and dissent, just as it was carried out in the Middle Ages and afterward. Such spiritual powers encourage the misinterpretation of God’s commandments as superfluous and speculative.

On the other hand, it requires little thought to refute Lukovic’s pretensions regarding the interpretation of Jesus’s prophecies on wars in Matthew 24. Contrary to Lukovic’s assertion that Jesus tells His disciples to prepare for and participate in bloody war, the truth is that the context of the passage demonstrates that Jesus is telling His disciples to flee their persecutors. They are to do this without involving themselves in the wars. Instead, they are to pray to “*escape all these things that will come to pass.*” (Luke 21:36)

At the end of this section that discusses the tragic fate of the Bogomil Serbs at the hands of the noble and godly Nemanja, I will cite another statement from a contemporary Orthodox fanatic. This statement represents the pinnacle of irony and the “icing on the cake” of citations thus far. This Orthodox fanatic comments on the justification for physical and spiritual genocide in Serbia during the twelfth century and warns of a similar fate for members of non-Orthodox communities in modern Serbia:

“Many ‘humanist intellectuals’ accuse Nemanja of ‘brutality’ in dealing with the Bogomils, especially **for cutting off the tongues of their pastors.** They believe

³⁷ Zoran D. Lukovic, *Religious Sects: a Manual of Self-Defense*, (Belgrade 2003) 86-7. Author’s emphasis.

everything could have been achieved through peaceful means without bloodshed; they accuse the Orthodox Church of having a ‘spirit of Inquisition’ and even question the piety of St. Nemanja... As Budimir Aleksic properly notes, ‘Nemanja did not persecute them because of their faith as such, but rather because of their intentions to impose their faith on the united baptized people.’³⁸ In other words, Nemanja did not go to Bulgaria to turn the Bogomils away from their religion (**in this case, addressing the accusation of his being “undemocratic”**). Rather, the Bogomils came to Serbia from Bulgaria with the intent of turning the Serbian nation away from its faith.”³⁹

So, this criminal endeavor of the Grand Prince that included the slaughter of children, women, and elderly people is considered “performed the democratic way”. The reason is that Nemanja never killed Bogomils in Bulgaria, but he killed them only in Serbian towns and villages. (Apparently, the violence of the Serbian Orthodox Church in our country against religious minorities is “democratic” because it does not threaten them abroad – where Serbian Orthodoxy is still a minority religion – but only in Serbia.)

We have clearly addressed the issue of whether the Orthodox (meaning specifically against other Serbs) ever had conducted its own inquisition. Not only can we conclude that the Serbian Orthodox Church has conducted inquisition, but we also notice that the

³⁸ Is it really true that the Serbian people in Nemanja’s time were actually Orthodox (and thus had no need for a different “faith”)? Stanoje Stanojevic in his *History of the Serbian People* explains: “Due to the strong political and religious influence of East and West in the countries and regions surrounding Serbia, there arose a religious question among the Serbs from the time they had settled in the fatherland. The topic of religion among the Serbs was in play because of the rivalry between the Churches of Rome and Constantinople. Christianity among the Serbs had not been truly defined at this time. There was Christianity among the Serbs that dated before the time of state religion, but among Serbs there remained many adherents of the ancient religions, including their traditions and rituals that attracted all the conservative elements... In such a terrain vague and unsettled regarding religious matters for Serbs did arise a new sect, the Bogomils. They had already taken root in Bulgaria and from that land began to strengthen and penetrate the Serbian land, finding very fertile soil.” (99-100)

This historical description demonstrates that Serbs were not unanimously Orthodox during the time of Stefan Nemanja. (Indeed, there were Serbs who were Roman Catholic. Initially, Stefan Nemanja was baptized under the Western Latin Rite.) There were also many Serbs who were pagans. This would mean that the Bogomils had a vast field from which to evangelize Serbs, including those who were still pagans. Thus, we must reject the Orthodox claim that alleges the Bogomils aimed to impose their faith upon the “united baptized (Orthodox) people.”

³⁹ *From Utopia to Nightmare*, 102. Author’s emphasis. At this point I would like to mention another important historical fact that informs us about one of the main reasons for the popularity of the Bogomil movement in Serbia during the Middle Ages. Our next citation comes from a member of the Orthodox clergy. The testimony of the famous presbyter Kozma does not give the impression that the Orthodox clergy lived with excessive spirituality. Indeed, he portrays them as living quite an immoral, perverted, and unspiritual life. The historian Corovic cites the words of Kozma in justifying the criticism of Orthodox priests by the Bogomils: “That social criticism had its justification can be seen in the words spoken by Kozma himself: ‘Priests wandering into Serbia from foreign countries, as well as native born, **do not care for the congregation. Instead, they only care about themselves and their own families. They get into fights or drinking, ‘whose god is their stomach’, being carried away by lusts; or being occupied in business; when they go to the monasteries, they cannot tolerate asceticism and discipline, and they return to their own lives ‘as dogs return to their own vomit.’**” The teaching of the Bogomils had great success especially amongst the Slavs.” *History of Serbia*, 99. Author’s emphasis.

Orthodox preceded the Roman Catholic Church in that regard! Stefan Nemanja with his son Rastko (St. Sava) persecuted the Bogomils in the twelfth century – half a century before the official start of the Roman Catholic Inquisition, which began in the thirteenth century.⁴⁰

Such clear historical facts leave us with a much more serious problem. This problem pertains to modern discrimination (more specifically, the vilification of legally recognized religious communities, both in Serbia and internationally) and the endangering of basic human and civil rights in Serbia on the part of the Serbian Orthodox Church, which still operates on assumptions dating back from the darkness of the Middle Ages.

Human Rights Violations and Discrimination against Religious Minorities in Serbia

This section before us will grip the reader with one very serious problem. This problem relates to the gross violation of fundamental human rights and freedoms, such as the right of confessing the religion of one's choice and assembly of like-minded believers. Since the start of the 1980's, and especially during the war in the former Yugoslavia and international sanctions, many books written by Orthodox authors (both clergy and laity) in the crudest manner threaten not only basic civil liberties, but even the lives of many citizens.

Similarly, the autocratic system which at that time controlled our country drove the media to pronounce opposition parties and their supporters as traitors and foreign mercenaries. The government brutally suppressed activists and non-governmental organizations. The Serbian Church used similar means to reestablish its power, thus demonstrating its undemocratic and totalitarian spirit.

The Serbian Church and government have behaved as if Serbia did not belong to Europe and the civilized world which are supposed to be governed by principles of democracy, equality, and tolerance of diversity. Instead, several extremists from the Serbian Orthodox Church behave as if we lived not in the 21st century but rather in the early Middle Ages.

For more than two decades (just considering only the recent past), discrimination against minority religious communities and violation of the basic principles of democracy have escalated. It is a known fact that prior to the mid 1990's, the name for members of minority religious communities used to be "new believers". However, that name has since changed to be "sectarians" [cult followers].

⁴⁰ Information about the dates of the inception of the Inquisition in the West along with methods used to persecute heretics (methods identical to those used in the East) is found in the book *2000 Years of Christianity*: "The Inquisition (Latin "inquisition" = investigation; sanctum officium "holy duty") was established by the Roman Catholic Church, whose task was to track down, prosecute, and punish heretics. The official inception of the Inquisition belongs to the person of Pope Gregory IX (1227-1241)... Obstinate heretics were condemned to death and burned at the stake... Properties of heretics were confiscated by the state or Church or even the Office of Inquisition itself." (Information Agency Vukan's: Belgrade 2000) 74-75.

Also during this time, beginning from the book *Church and Sects* by Lazar Milin to more recent publications dealing with similar themes, all non-traditional religious communities originating from the Reformation along with their members are considered enemies of the state and society, heretics, followers of Satanic teaching, and mentally ill.

Needless to say, such serious accusations are completely baseless – at least when they are addressed toward evangelical Christian communities and those similar to them. My intention is not to contend that there do not exist any Satanist or occult groups that commit crimes – against such things it is necessary to contend but under the auspices of the law.

Rather, it is because I am a great opponent of equating minority Protestant communities with destructive cults. Such accusations are fomented maliciously and falsely just like the Byzantine mindset manifested over many centuries. Such a mindset, equivalent to the conduct and rule (regarding “toleration” toward religious opponents) of the founding leader of Serbian Orthodoxy, is held by the leaders of the Serbian Orthodox Church. They intentionally spread disinformation about religious minorities with the assistance of the state apparatus with the goal of ruthlessly crushing them.

One major problem of Serbian society with relation to the activity of Protestant religious communities on the one hand and Satanic cults on the other hand, is that of generalization and stereotyping. Indeed, as we will examine in detail soon, Orthodox theologians and other “experts” about sects present information to people about the destructive impact of Satanic sects. However, at the same time, they sweep under the name “sect” Protestant (considered “nontraditional” in Serbia) Christian fellowships. By doing this, these Orthodox propagandists deliberately create the false impression that all “sects” are negative and dangerous as Satanic worshipers. The main reason for this deliberate confusion of non-Orthodox believers with Satanists on the part of the defenders of the “one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church” is (as we have already demonstrated in this book) their blind and utterly mistaken view that they are upholding the law of the Lord’s Church based on the teaching of Christ and the apostles. Thus, the Orthodox appeal to Scripture and apostolic warnings of the coming of false prophets and teachers. They assume these false teachers refer to someone else rather than to themselves. As the apostle Paul said:

*“But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, **let him be accursed**. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, **let him be accursed**.”*⁴¹

Logically, according to the Eastern Church and the apostle himself who was “Orthodox” (just like all the clergy who possess apostolic succession), anyone who does not profess the Eastern Orthodox faith (even if they are quite moral people) must be accursed. This

⁴¹ Galatians 1:8-9. Author’s emphasis.

reveals the rationale why Orthodox apologists include evangelical Protestants along with sectarians, heretics, and Satanists.

Yet the Orthodox know full well that Baptists, Methodists, Nazarenes, Pentecostals, Evangelical Free, and other evangelical Christians are not completely negative for the societies in which they live.

Consider the example of the tragic death of the President of Macedonia, Boris Trajkovski, who was very active in the Methodist Church (which is “sectarian”?) and who enjoyed renown both in his country and internationally for his policies as well as his generosity and morality. Nonetheless, because he believed differently from the “apostolic” Orthodox Church, he is also considered “accursed”.

No matter, if one still believes that evangelical Protestants bear upon themselves the curse of the Lord Himself because of their confession (apostasy) of false doctrine, that means the true (Orthodox) Church of Christ must protect truly faithful people and warn them about the great danger threatening them. Proof that Orthodox theologians and cult experts know that evangelical Christians are not Satanists, but rather are moral people and good citizens, comes from two excerpts from literature directed against evangelical Christians:

“Thus, we conclude: no one has to be openly destructive in order to be dangerous. Just the opposite, sectarians try to be attractive in order to gain more followers. There appeared to be nothing wrong, so they said, about a Baptist in our own country 3,000 kilometers from Belgrade who for 3 years carefully studied Serbian language and committed nothing horrendous. Later on, he was expelled. **This kind of sectarian will not commit a compromising crime.**”⁴²

“Finally, we must say something. **Spreading rumors in the media tabloids about neo-Protestant groups and comparing them to Satanic cults which promote immoral behavior, drugs, drinking, and the like – this is shameful and cannot be justified at all.** Such things are not disseminated in the Orthodox press or messages of Orthodox bishops and priests.”⁴³

These passages which are written by authors not at all sympathetic to “neo-Protestant sects” inform us that the common opinion of most people in Serbia of evangelical Protestants is shaped by biased, false information of “media tabloids” (newspapers and magazines, radio, and television). No priest of the Serbian Orthodox Church has any business in promoting such slander about “neo-Protestants”.

However, even if you believe that Orthodox bishops and other clergy have never referred to members of religious minorities as alcoholics and prostitutes, problems still

⁴² Zoran D. Lukovic, *Religious Sects: a Manual of Self-Defense*, (Belgrade 2000), 3rd edition, 302. (Text of Aleksandr Senic titled “Psychological Warfare as a Weapon for Religious Sects”.) Author’s emphasis.

⁴³ *The Bible without God, Christianity without the Church; Orthodoxy and Sects II*, (Svetigora: Cetinje 1997), 181. Author’s emphasis.

exist. The fact remains that these same priests and others on the hunt (with the blessing of the Serbian Orthodox Church) write and speak about evangelical Christians as hyenas, destroyers of the Serbian people through biological warfare, as well as destructive and totalitarian groups.⁴⁴

We will begin a more detailed review of Orthodox literature that shamefully and falsely equates evangelical Christians with Satanists, alcoholics, and drug addicts. However, first let us read a couple of excerpts that demonstrate the case that these Orthodox apologists, under the influence of misguided patristic theology, label people whom they know to be honest and moral as Satanists for one reason alone: the fact that evangelical Christians have different beliefs than the Orthodox Church. For this reason alone, and no other, do Orthodox writers slander them!

Vladimir Dimrijevic, editor of the book *From Utopia to Nightmare* published by Svetigore in 1997, explains why he felt led to put out this book:

“This book was written in a time of great adversity for our people, by our own fault, and by the will of the powers of this world, suffering more than any other time in our history. In addition to war, economic hardship, the collapse of individual and societal morals, crime, political schisms and strife, **there appeared an evil worse than all others**, evil striking at the very heart of the Serbian people – **the evil of false religion and dangerous spiritual apostasies.**”⁴⁵

“Humanity fell into mass heresy, that which the history of many nations has shown, while conversion from heresy to Orthodoxy can be observed in a small number of individual cases, albeit rare. **Oh, how terrible is the poison of heresy! It is difficult to recover from this poison – e.g. heresy...** Someone who has been overcome by the sin of heresy and schism, the devil no longer tempts with other lusts and obvious sins. And why should the devil tempt and struggle with someone who **by the mortal sin of heresy** has already been killed with eternal death and **has already reached a demonic state?**”⁴⁶

⁴⁴ The insinuation of evangelical Christians (“sectarians”) as hyenas, mercenaries, and religious agitators from the West can be found in the January 1995 “Christmas letter” of Patriarch Pavle and the Archbishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church. Irinej, Bishop of Nis, in the middle of the 1990’s called upon the entire Serbian people to stand up against the sectarians who wished to annihilate with biological warfare the Serbs (“Official Gazette”, June 14, 1994). See: Goran Maksimovic, *Why Was Christ Crucified?* (Nis 1995) 46, 79. Also, Aleksandr Senic writes that the very nature of their internal organization makes **all** sects **totalitarian** and the consequences of their activities **destructive** (of course, “sects” include all non-traditional evangelical Protestant religious communities). See Zoran D. Lukovic, *Religious Sects, a Primer for Self-Defense*, (Belgrade 2000) 300.

⁴⁵ Ed. Vladimir Dimitrijevic, *From Utopia to Nightmare, Orthodoxy and Sects I*, (Svetigora: Cetinje, 1997), 5. Author’s emphasis.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 65. Author’s emphasis.

So, the point is clear. All non-Orthodox believers (especially “non-traditionalist” Protestants and those like them) have reached a “demonic state”. Such people are like wolves in sheep’s clothing, more dangerous than followers of Satan himself.⁴⁷

Since they speak of “sects as the evil above all evils” that have abandoned the teaching of the holy fathers who say the blessings of heretics actually bring curse,⁴⁸ then it is no wonder that Orthodox leaders condemn charitable works of minority religious communities in helping the poor, the vulnerable, and the homeless. The Orthodox consider such charity as “false good deeds”. In their view, how could the “demon-possessed sectarians” promote any blessing?⁴⁹

But, in order to be completely familiar with the entire spectrum of views and misinformation about non-Orthodox religious communities spread by the followers of the noble Nemanja, we have to read the following texts, which present a detailed review of “ant sectarian” books, some of which have been published in multiple editions.

Many False Witnesses Will Come

Police captain Zoran Lukovic, a renowned Serbian “expert” on religious cults, does not act in the interests of all citizens of the state he is supposed to serve (even though he receives a salary from the government budget supported by taxes from members of all ethnic and religious groups). Rather, Lukovic acts as a partisan for the interests of the Serbian Orthodox Church. He makes the baseless allegation that evangelical communities not only should not be called “churches”, but they should not even be given the title of “minority religious communities”! In his narrow view, the appropriate name for them is “sect”:

“Is it justified for them [evangelical Protestant churches] to be included as ‘minority religious communities’? **They are sects.** Minority religious communities in Yugoslavia and Serbia include Judaism, the Slovak Evangelical Church, the Romanian Orthodox Church, Lutheran, Russian Orthodox Church. Although they are small in numbers, these are formal traditional, local religious communities, and most importantly, they perform no malicious activities toward other peoples and religions in our country.”⁵⁰

Lukovic’s collaborator, the now deceased Alexandar Senic, states that all sects are totalitarian and destructive – without any exception. Perhaps the “neo-Protestants” do not perform ritual suicides like the Satanists, but they do seek to destroy the state and subject the population to their programs. He also alleges that they spy for foreign

⁴⁷ These descriptions of “sectarians” as wolves in sheep’s clothing who are more dangerous than actual Satanists can be found in many places in literature and newspaper articles written by Orthodox authors over the past 15 years. One source is the book by Goran Maksimovic, *Was Christ Crucified?* (Nis 1995) 56, 90-1.

⁴⁸ See: *From Utopia to Nightmare*, 32.

⁴⁹ See the chapter “Right to humanity” in the book by Goran Maksimovic, *Was Christ Crucified?* (Nis 1995) 62-68.

⁵⁰ Lukovic, *Religious Sects: a Manual for Self-Defense*, (Draganic: Belgrade, 2003) 9. Author’s emphasis.

intelligence services. Here are some passages from Mr. Lukovic and the psychiatrist Vukadin Svetanovic:

“Available data reliably indicate that religious sects serve as a very convenient tool for achieving the goals of ‘the New World Order’. **In fact, regardless of type or origin, sects are under partial or complete control of the intelligence agencies of one or more foreign powers.**”⁵¹

“Cleverly disguised, but basically **the ultimate goal of all religious sects is power**, and that, above all, religious, financial, political, educational, cultural, and, finally, military.”⁵²

“**All religious sects**, no matter what type of religious interpretation they teach, have a universal character and global ambitions. Their relationships are allied against state and the Church which are seen as the major obstacles hindering the sectarian goals **aimed at establishing utter and absolute power and domination of wealth, lands, and populations.**”⁵³

We should add to this list of dangers presented by the followers of totalitarian and destructive sects (all of them – for all are totalitarian and destructive) a threat to one’s family. A member of some (anonymous) sect in Russia, according to Andrey Kurayev, killed his mother and grandmother and mailed to his address the decapitated head of his mother.⁵⁴ By this logic, all “neo-Protestant” groups should be declared as dangerous to the state and people – and thus outlawed.

Such a “solution” (the banning of all “non-traditional” religious communities in Serbia) is advocated by the psychiatrist Vukadin Svetanovic. Citing the proposal of Deacon Kurayev sent to the Russian Duma (parliament) to regulate the activities of sects in Russia, Svetanovic states that if his proposal were implemented in Serbia, it would divide all religious entities into four groups:

“The first group would include **the Serbian Orthodox Church, as the protector of the traditional religious sentiments of the Serbian people**, with whom the state would have a relationship of cooperation for the mutual benefit of the Serbian people. The second group would consist of traditional faiths in the European lands: the Roman Catholic Church, Jewish and Muslim communities, the Anglican Church, and the Evangelical Church. With regard to these religious communities, the state would tolerate and in extreme situations cooperated with them when it is in the national interest. The third group would include those classified as pseudo-Christian sects **whom the state would not**

⁵¹Zoran D. Lukovic, *Religious Sects: a Manual of Self-Defense*, (Belgrade 2000), 3rd edition, 300. (Text of Aleksandr Senic titled “Psychological Warfare as a Weapon for Religious Sects”.) Author’s emphasis.

⁵² Lukovic, *Religious Sects: a Manual for Self-Defense*, (Draganic: Belgrade, 2003) 99. Author’s emphasis.

⁵³ Text of Dr. Vukadin Svetanovic in *From Utopia to Nightmare*, 238. Author’s emphasis.

⁵⁴ See: *From Utopia to Nightmare*, 216. Essay by Deacon Andrey Kurayev “Sects as a Social Problem”.

recognize as religious communities. The state would consider them as organizations that are harmful to national security and thus the interests of the people (included would be Jehovah's Witnesses, Adventists, Pentecostals, etc.). The fourth group would unite religious sects, guru movements, and psychological organizations that wage religious terrorism and conduct illegal criminal activity.”⁵⁵

The main problem with Svetanovic's proposal (based on the proposal of the Russian Orthodox Church theologian) to solve the "problem" of sectarian activity in Serbia and the danger to national security allegedly posed by evangelical Protestant communities in Serbia is that not one argument supports his claim. The allegations of this psychiatrist about the violation of national interest by "neo-Protestants" are based on extremely dubious and unverified information. The accusations that "all sects" are connected with foreign intelligence services and the ambition of all of them to acquire "unlimited financial, political, and military power" are baseless. (It is quite possible that some pseudo-Christian or Satanic cults pursue these goals, but that certainly does not apply to evangelical Protestant communities in Serbia which are reaching the third century of their existence and who are well-known by the civil authorities through their actions and beliefs.)

Furthermore, evangelical believers express their sincere Christian love and kindness toward people of all nationalities and religions. (Evangelical believers also live together as part of a multi-ethnic community.) Imitating the model of Christ and the apostles, they proclaim their loyalty to the national identity (but without falling into the trap of extreme nationalism).

Evangelical believers are accused of collaborating with the "New World Order", which seeks the dissolution of the nation and the national religion. They are blamed for weakening the system of national defense of nation-states through their refusal to bear arms and abstain from armed conflict.

Such charges could possibly have been popular prior to October 5, 2000.⁵⁶ Prior to that time, the national leadership of our country pursued a policy of general global isolation and fought against the civilized countries of Europe and North America (e.g., against the so-called "New World Order"). Almost all of the books attacking sects were written prior to this date. However, in spite of the advances of political progress in our country, such as admission to the Council of Europe and other relevant international institutions, as well as the establishment of unarmed military service for conscientious objectors, which include many Orthodox, many people continue to believe these accusations!

However, many of our people continue to read books attacking sects (making accusations that time has rendered obsolete) and written during Slobodan Milosevic's regime. Consequently, after October 2000, nothing has changed in terms. Our

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 239. Author's emphasis.

⁵⁶ October 5, 2000 marked the day when Serbian despot Slobodan Milosevic was ousted from power by the mass protests of several hundred thousand protesters.

government must take responsibility before the international community in its behavior toward democracy and human rights and freedoms. Thus, it remains necessary to conduct a detailed review of Orthodox literature attacking sects and demonstrate persuasively that a person should be embarrassed to possess in their hands, let alone read them, due to their many lies about the activities of the evangelical Protestant communities in Serbia.

Brainwashing – the Enslavement of People

“Among good company it is good to learn; but if you fraternize with those who do evil, you will lose your mind. This should apply not only to your actual relationships, but also to the books you read. **There exist all kinds of nonsense that are written and published that are better left unread;** otherwise, whoever reads them will lose his ability to think logically and discern what is good from what is useless.”⁵⁷

This section will provide more evidence that the authors of numerous books and newspaper articles attacking sects demonstrate nothing more than ignorance on the one hand and malice on the other hand. We will examine what used to be a very popular book *Soul Hunters* by the journalist Biljana Djurdjevic-Stojkovic, which is similar to the book *Religious Sects: a Manual for Self Defense* by policeman Zoran Lukovic. After reviewing in detail these two books that attack evangelical Christians and other communities arising from the Protestant Reformation, we will say a few words about other types of literature in the Serbian language that slander minority religious communities.

Soul Hunters (Encyclopedia of Religious Sects)

Journalist Biljana Djurdjevic-Stojkovic has published four books dealing with problems of sects. They include *Soul Hunters*, *Confessions of Victims of Sects*, *Cult Watch*, and *Encyclopedia of Religious Sects*. We will refer to the last book published in 2002.⁵⁸ This edition dates several years after the first edition – which means this author is well-known by the Serbian public.

The back of this book *Encyclopedia of Religious Sects* contains a number of flattering accolades of the author:

“Biljana Djurdjevic-Stojkovic is a journalist and writer from Belgrade. She wrote the book *Religious Sects and Movements – Soul Hunters*, **which has been received positively in the professional community: listed in the library of the world’s major publications on sects, as well as the national library of publications, and recommended by the Ministry of Education of Serbia as a reference for the education** of teachers, educators, psychologists, high school

⁵⁷ Dositej Obradovic, *Collected Works*, vol. 1, 620. Author’s emphasis.

⁵⁸ Translator’s note: a more recent version was released in 2005. See: <http://www.feniks-libris.com/verske-sekte-leksikon-knjiga-1231>.

students, and students of sects. *Soul Hunters* was included on the 1998 List of European Best Sellers of local authors, and that same year, the RTV program “Pink” declared the author as “Woman of the Year”... *The Encyclopedia of Sects* is substantially based on the book *Soul Hunters*, but it is otherwise conceived and tailored conceptually to the needs of modern readers, including significant changes and supplements from the previous book. This new book by Biljana Djurdjevic-Stojkovic presents valuable material for researchers of this phenomenon. It is **especially recommended** for students of Philosophy, Theology, Medicine, Psychopathology, Law, Political Science, Military and Police Academies, employees of **government agencies, and other interested institutions and individuals**. We are absolutely certain that this *Encyclopedia* ought to belong in the home library of every family for the prevention and protection of its members.”⁵⁹

Obviously, all these warm accolades partly originated with officials of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Serbia. This very flattering review of the author’s competency in her first book *Soul Hunters* tells us of its inclusion in the library of the world’s major studies on sects. Her second book has significant changes and updates (which should mean it has better and more detailed documentation than the first book). In her preface to the *Encyclopedia*, Biljana Djurdjevic-Stojkovic wrote the motto that guided her in the preparation of her work:

“The motto of my previous book ‘**Knowledge protects, Truth wins!**’ fully applies to this book *The Encyclopedia of Sects* also, which every institution and every family in our country should possess.”⁶⁰

Clearly, the author is convinced that her information about non-Orthodox communities is completely accurate and substantiated. She recommends that students of all possible majors as well as institutions acquire this book so that they might be objectively informed about the “greatest malady of our times”. Uninformed readers might easily be swayed by the deluge of accolades written about the books of Ms. Djurdjevic-Stojkovic and fail to doubt the veracity of the accusations they contain.

But, unfortunately, all these words of praise and commendation only reinforce the very discouraging fact that even those who study religious organizations and consider themselves “experts” are, in fact, terribly ignorant of their subject matter! Her books display an extremely high degree of ignorance. Inclusion of this author’s books among the major national and world libraries simply defies logic.

The facts that this author was named “Woman of the Year” in 1998 by RTV’s “Pink” and her book *Soul Hunters* made the best-sellers’ list make quite clear the wide scope of misinformation to which many citizens of our country have succumbed.

⁵⁹ Biljana Djurdjevic-Stojkovic, *Encyclopedia of Religious Sects*, (Narodna Knjiga: Belgrade 2002) text on back cover. Author’s emphasis.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 7. Author’s emphasis.

Professor Dr. Dragoljub Djordjevic, one of the truly world-renowned experts of the sociology of religion, felt compelled to publish his own book dealing with the same issues because of the very negative impact brought about by the works of this journalist. Here is what this renowned author wrote in the preface to his book that explain his reasons for publishing it:

“This book stereotypes regular churches and stigmatizes them by roping them in with cults and sects, declaring them as satanic, totalitarian, and destructive quasi-religious phenomena. She chose a time like ours with organization and targeted, randomly and spontaneously creating a strong anti-cult and anti-sectarian movement to focus public opinion to fight ‘everything and everyone’. ‘Do not separate the wheat from the chaff’ has sown damage to everyone everywhere... Although I myself in the past chafed at the extreme behavior of anti-cult movements... now I publish the book *Prophets of the New Truth: Sects and Cults (What Should We Know about the New Religious Movements?)* **in response to the entrenchment of uncultivated, immature, and naïve anti-cult activity among us. Movements spawned by one mother – the ‘writer’ B. Djurdjevic-Stojkovic and her *Soul Hunters: Religious Sects and Movements* (Self-published: Belgrade 1997) – ‘enrage’ ignorant and uninformed citizens with reckless and zealous passion** and have inflicted great damage on the Serbian Orthodox Church, for whom all these movements are supposedly fighting.”⁶¹

This author has presented many lectures to the Ministry of Education and participated in debates throughout the country⁶² and opposes the notion taught in many books about sects by Orthodox authors that they have “drank in all the knowledge on the earth”. He demonstrates that a large number of our people have very little knowledge of the origin and activity of minority religious communities in Serbia and shows that most Serbs are prone to manipulation by self-promoted “experts”:

“Finally, I traveled throughout Serbia over the past couple of years and held, often before the Ministry of Education, dozens of public lectures and panels before thousands of listeners: directors, teachers, students of primary and secondary schools, lecturers of sociology in high schools and universities, participants in various seminars on democracy, multiculturalism, and ‘ordinary’ citizens. **More or less, they lack any systematic knowledge of minority religious movements. Some were even ignorant of the basic differences among types of religious organizations.**”⁶³

⁶¹ Dragoljub B. Djordjevic, *Prophets of New Truth: Sects and Cults*, (Nis 1998) 7. Author’s emphasis.

⁶² The citation above demonstrates the utter ignorance of members of the Ministry of Education on this issue. Specifically, the Ministry, under whose auspices Dr. Djordjevic gave lectures about the book *Soul Hunters* by Mrs. Djurdjevic-Stojkovic and who warned them about this book, still gave a very positive review by recommending it to all citizens of Serbia.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

The question arises: how is it, on the one hand, that some “professionals” give a very positive evaluation of the work of Ms. Djurdjevic-Stojkovic, yet on the other hand, one of the leading experts in the country claims her works “enrage ignorant and uninformed people”? Someone on this issue has to fall in the category of “ignorant and uninformed”! Moreover, in her book, Mr. Djordjevic cites a number of books that he does not recommend for people who truly want to have objective information about the origins and activity of minority religious communities in Serbia – especially those belonging to the Protestant movement. Here are the books he lists:

“Do not read them. These books are not recommended for people who truly seek a detailed introduction to a balanced and professional study of the phenomenon of religious organizations from theological, political, and sociological perspectives. **The content of these books is biased and one-sided;** a great question mark overhangs these writers as to whether they have correctly portrayed the Orthodox position of what is not a church:

1. Dzomic, V.M. (1994), *Sects, Satanism, and False Prophets*, Kraljevo, EUO Diocese of Zicka, 120.
2. Milin, L. (1982), *The Scientific Justification of Religion – Church and Sects*, Kraljevo, Diocese of Zicka, 472.
3. Milin, L. (1997), “New Faith – Old Apostasy”, in: Lazar Milin, *Bishop Nikolai (Velimirovic)*, Orthodox People’s Christian Community of Sabac, 117-151.
4. Milosevic, Z (1995), *Religion of the New Global Movements*, Sabac, Self-published, 106.
5. Stojkovic-Djordjevic, B. (1997), *Soul Hunters*, Belgrade, Self-published, 191.”⁶⁴

Does the renowned sociologist of religion have the right to tell us that on the front of these books should have a label of “Do not read”? Regarding Lazar Milin’s book *Church and Sects*, we have already examined his misinterpretations of Holy Scripture as well as his false accusations against Protestants. We will not repeat them here. The other works mentioned by Djordjevic are similar in many aspects to those that we will mention later. It is no wonder that he included them on his list for those not recommended to people who wish to retain their sanity.

The conclusion at the end of this chapter will confirm beyond a shadow of a doubt that Professor Djordjevic is correct in including these books as biased and one-sided (and thus discriminatory and “enslaving”).

Let us cite one example of the reaction of an evangelical Protestant theologian to the various lies abounding in the book *Soul Hunters*. This confirms Dr. Djordjevic’s thesis that this and other books on his list ought not to be read, let alone given any credence. Under the headline “Fraud from the Positive Recommendation of the Ministry of Education”, Branko Bjelajac wrote the following:

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 13-4. Author’s emphasis.

“The so-called ‘expert’ on religious sects and movements, journalist for the periodical *Army* Biljana Djurdjevic-Stojkovic, who typically in her articles makes no distinction between Pentecostal and Baptist religious communities, who with regard to Pentecostals makes a totally inaccurate claim that their church is called ‘the Gideon church’, and who is the author of two widely circulated books: *Soul Hunters* and *Confessions of Victims of Sects*, previously published in parts in the journal *Army* and as a special report on ‘the Evening News’, erroneously put together actual destructive cults with communities of religious minorities.

In her chapter ‘Christian Reformers or Apostates’, the author lists the following groups: Bogomils (exterminated from Serbia long before the Reformation), Cathars (for centuries, they have not existed under that name), Hussites (the last ones were assimilated before the eighties in Vojvodina into another Protestant community), Protestants (the author makes no distinction between Protestant faith movements and local congregations registered under that name in Serbia), Mennonites (the author claims they neither use electricity nor read news and consider driving a car to be sin! She also cites the scandals among the Mennonite Central Committee in Geneva and at one of their universities in Canada, the US, and Holland. Yet, she omits mention of their humanitarian aid provided to Yugoslavia), Quakers (who have never been in our country), Lutherans and Slovak Evangelicals (the author does not realize that this is the same church, the only difference being that believers of two different nationalities, German and Slovak, are registered under two churches), and Word of Life, the Christian movement founded by Ulf Ekman (the author calls him Olf Ikran). About this movement, the author alleges that he maintains contact with the Association of Evangelical Clergy and Believers of Serbia, which she also alleges to include the Slovak Evangelical Church (allegations which are inaccurate).

Later, the author claims that the organization ‘New Life’ in Belgrade ‘closely collaborates with the Salvation Army’, which she accuses of being a tactical military unit comprised of nearly 6,000 American mercenaries with hundreds of thousands of volunteers in 131 nations around the world! (The Christian organization New Life is known around the world, and it attracts young Christian believers of various denominations in student towns and universities. According to their program with the Hungarian government, they educate students in middle school about the prevention of the HIV virus and their feature film Jesus appears on state and private television stations every Christmas and Easter...)

Furthermore, the author cites several religious groups which have never ever existed in the territory of Yugoslavia. Although these groups are known to be destructive and dangerous, the reality is that the essence of their beliefs is not Christian, though they might be mistaken. First of all, there is the People’s Temple (the cult which carried out the mass suicide of 940 people 25 years ago), the White Brotherhood (a cult active in Ukraine and Russia and is trying to

become politically active), and the Branch Davidian (led by David Koresh who led himself and his 85 followers to their deaths). The motives why the author chose these three movements are unclear, but she diabolically identifies these foreign groups with the local religious minority communities of Serbia, despite the fact that they have nothing in common. The author plays shenanigans in ‘shoving’ onto the list the ‘pseudo-Christian community of Universal Life’, a group which believes in the teachings of the prophetess Gabriele and in any case does not belong in the Christian religious community. This deliberate confusion of Christian minority religious communities with cults serves only one purpose – to deprecate their existence and activity.

Considering the lack of evidence for this author’s allegations, we marvel at how her book ever could have received such accolades from the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Serbia. Its seal of approval is printed on the cover to give great credibility to the book:

‘From all that has been written, it follows that this book is suitable for the education of teachers, aides, and educators, as well as all others who work professionally with young people... Hence, it is recommended for use in schools.’”⁶⁵

After having recognized all the previously exposed and malicious misinformation which the author propagates under the motto “Knowledge protects, Truth wins!”, we shall finally review the “revised and expanded” version of the *Encyclopedia of True Sects*.

As one should expect from a lexicon, all the terms are arranged in alphabetical order. (Yet what is incomprehensible is the fact that this book, which purports to fight zealously for Serbian culture and Orthodoxy, is printed in Latin, not Cyrillic.) Without any distinction, in order to utterly confuse naïve readers, the lexicon combines so-called traditional Protestant churches as “neo-Protestant” with occult groups, witches, Hindu guru movements, and Satanic cults. Thus, Adventists are listed with Alawites (an Islamic sect), ancient polytheists, AMORC (the Ancient and Mystical Order Rosae Crucis), and assassins (murderers). Baptist churches are listed with white witches, the Brotherhood of the Snake, and the Brotherhood of the Inner Light. The Church of God and the Gideon Church (a misnomer for Pentecostals) are under the letter “C” grouped along with the Satanic cults the Black Rose and the Black Scorpion. The traditional Evangelical Church (which the author erroneously calls “Evangelistic”), which is not considered a sect even by Zoran Lukovic, is listed in the Lexicon under the letter “E” along with the EGC (the Gnostic Catholic Church – another Satanic cult). Later, the Churches of Christ, Christ’s Church of Evangelical Brethren, and Christ’s Spiritual Church are listed on the same page as the People’s Temple and the Temple of the Sun (cults whose members committed mass suicide in 1978 and 1995, respectively). Regarding the Evangelical Church mentioned earlier, also listed as “Lutherians” (the correct name is “Lutheran”), she lumps them in the company of destructive cults with

⁶⁵Branko Bjelajac, *A Blow against True Freedom*, (Alpha and Omega: Belgrade, 2001) 106-110. Author’s emphasis.

the letter “L”, including the Lucis (Lucifer) Trust and the Branch Davidian. The evangelical Protestant denominations of the Mennonites and the Methodists are included with international witches and the Mysteries of the Brotherhood of the Snake. Pentecostals are grouped with the Pagan Movement and Prostitutes for Jesus, and the traditional Protestant Reformed Church (incorrectly labeled “Reformist” by the author) and Reformed Adventist Movement are thrown in with satanic and esoteric cults Heaven’s Gate, Red Solar Table, and the Rosicrucians. To rub salt into the wound, the author for the third time mentions the Evangelical Church (now under the name “Slovak Evangelicistic Church”). She lumps this church in with the Church of Satan, the Church of Satan of England, and the Path of Gnostic Light (also occult organizations).

In addition to the malicious classification of Protestant churches beside satanic cults in an effort to mislead the public that they are one and the same thing, Biljana Djurdjevic-Stojkovic states a number of lies regarding the teachings and activity of Christian communities out of her own utterly superficial knowledge of such matters. Not only does she unfairly associate them with destructive cults and omits mention that they are legally recognized communities, but the author also exaggerates the numbers of members of Christian religious minority communities to exceed 460,000 members!

According to the national census of 2002, only about 20,000 people considered themselves as members of non-traditional Christian communities, and another 1,000 people who came from the Far East. That number is realistic when one accounts for about 8,000 Adventists, 3,000 Baptists, 4,000 Pentecostals, and several thousand members of other groups. Here we only consider adult members of religious communities. If we include children who attend religious education classes, as well as friends (i.e., “sympathizers”) who occasionally visit, perhaps that adds another 10,000 people. So we see that the author’s number does not conform to reality at all, while the census has a more reasonable estimate of religious minorities in Serbia.

Further commentary on the author’s specific allegations against specific religious communities is in order. In addition to the inaccurate estimate of 80,000 members of the Adventist Church in Serbia (who probably could cite the popular saying, “From your mouth to God’s ears!”) the author alleges that they forbid men to bear arms and serve in the military. Yet, a few sentences later, the author contradicts herself and states that they do serve in the military and bear arms.

Regarding Baptists, the author inaccurately states that this “sect” was founded by Thomas Mincer in the sixteenth century. She also makes the spurious accusation that the Baptists collaborated with the Ustashi in Croatia during the Second World War and allied themselves with the Bulgarian guerrillas in Macedonia.⁶⁶ (Translation: Baptists like all other sectarians are enemies of the Serbian people.) She also incorrectly states that Baptists refuse to bear weapons in the military. (I personally know of Baptist believers who not only carried weapons as members of the Yugoslav Army, but who

⁶⁶ Ms. Djurdjevic-Stojkovic fails to present a single shred of evidence to support her accusation that Baptists or other religious communities collaborated with enemy military forces.

also served during the 1999 bombardment and fought at Kosovo and Metohija against the armed terrorist groups of the Kosovo Liberation Army.)

In the end, the author concludes that Baptists cannot be considered as a real church because they lack a relationship with Jesus Christ as inspired by the Holy Spirit. She believes that newly baptized members neither receive the Holy Spirit nor care about the Spirit in general in Baptist worship. (She literally quotes the words of Zoran D Lukovic in his book *Religious Sects: a Manual for Self-Defense*, 61.)

Regarding the Evangelical (i.e. Lutheran) Church, the author alleges that during the Second World War, its German bishop Dr. Philip Popp became an informer for the Gestapo and his son Edgar was a captain in Pavelic's home guard army. Philip Popp himself, according to the author, received the punishment he deserved after the war ended (having been executed by the partisans as a collaborator with the Nazis). She expected to prove with all her data that the Evangelicals, like the Baptists, were enemies of the Serbian people.

Yet, in comparison, the author forgot to mention the fact that during the Second World War, many Orthodox Serbs (baptized "in union with Christ" before the war) divided into more armed factions that fought each other and whose members slaughtered one another (Partisans, the Chetniks of Draza Mihailovic and Kosta Pecanac, factions allied to Ljoticevic and Nedicevic).

Her discussion about the Jehovah's Witnesses in regard to their refusal to bear arms in the military is noteworthy:

"The Jehovah's Witnesses deliberately omitted other parts of 'the Holy Book', **specifically the oldest and most authentic part of the New Testament, the book of John, where Jesus Christ appears with sword in hand** along with a whole procession of officials, military officers, and soldiers who, because of their participation in wars of liberation for their nation and religion, have become – Saints! The new covenant, namely the Bible in its entirety, is very far from any kind of pacifism.

The German scientist Sylvio Gessell goes a step further and based on Deuteronomy 30:23-38 argues that the Bible records a recipe for explosives in the so-called burning bush used to demolish Egyptian chariots, tear down the walls of Jericho, and even to detonate an earthquake to swallow the sons of Korah. In addition to the description of Moses receiving the commandments with 'fire and thunder', he states a theory that the prophet **Moses in the court of the Egyptian Pharaoh Rameses, with the help of his father-in-law Jethro, performed experiments with explosives and had to recover from being injured by them over forty days.**"⁶⁷

⁶⁷ *The Encyclopedia of Religious Sects*, 123. Author's emphasis.

Ms. Djordjievic-Stojkovic demonstrates great ignorance of the Bible in this passage. Firstly, the so-called “book of John”, e.g. John’s Revelation, is not the oldest but the youngest part of the New Testament. Secondly, with regard to its authenticity (which, admittedly, is beyond doubt), the Revelation of John stirred up the most debate among church authorities in the second through fourth centuries. In fact, this was the latest book accepted by early Christianity as canonical. Of course, nowhere in John’s Revelation is there even one description of Jesus Christ with a sword in His hand. There are two places which describe Him as One from Whom a two-edged sword comes out of His mouth. (This does not conform with the description concocted by the author.⁶⁸) Her allegation of “Jesus with a sword in hand” is dangerous, as it implies that many more people will be killed in political and religious conflict – at the hands of the so-called “Saints” (does one become a Saint by killing religious dissenters in war?)!!!

It is difficult to take seriously this journalist, the author of these works, and her opinion that the Bible (especially the New Testament) condemns pacifism (peacemaking) and espouses religious war.

Even more interesting are the conclusions of certain scientists, who allege that Moses constructed and used explosives that apparently had malfunctioned because he had suffered some serious wounds (perhaps self-mutilation?) that had to be treated over 40 days. (It would be good to hear how Orthodox theologians would respond to this interpretation of the life of Moses by the “defender” of Orthodoxy, Ms. Djurdjievic-Stojkovic!)

This expert on sects is completely wrong in claiming that the Mennonites do not read newspapers, do not use electricity, and reject outright schooling their children. Contrary to her claim that 9 out of 10 Mennonites are illiterate (apparently, the author confused her sects and replaced another religious community with the Mennonites), this denomination has numerous schools and universities around the world. It is also in error to assert that members of this religious community refuse to ride cars or airplanes or wear belts on their pants because they consider it as sin.

Here is an excerpt from “The Protestants” in her book

⁶⁸ The description of the two-edged sword coming forth from the mouth of Jesus Christ (Rev. 1:16; 19:15), based on the very words of Jesus in John 12:47-8 and Hebrews 4:12-3, might symbolize his willingness to judge fairly and punish all the wickedness of man committed during His earthly life. The sharp two-edged sword could also encapsulate tremendous power that in the future (Rev. 19:15) could strongly oppose and defeat the army of Antichrist (Satan) gathered at Armageddon to be followed by the establishment of His Messianic Kingdom on earth.

On the other hand, during His earthly life and beyond, there was no one more in favor of peace among men and removing violence. The apostle Peter says of Him “*Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously.*” (1 Peter 2:22-3)

“However, based on available data, it can be said that five Protestant churches operate within our country: Evangelical (Lutheran), Reformers (Calvinist), Methodist, Baptist, and Church of Christ... Quite often lurking behind these religious organizations are foreign intelligence agencies, which use them as part of their operating system of ‘shadow government.’”⁶⁹

So now these religious communities are not considered “sects” (and classified along with destructive cults), but they represent the Protestant Church?

Of course, many more than 5 Protestant churches exist in Serbia. And after reading all this information about how many of them exist, the confused and outraged reader (who has learned that all these religious organizations, whose members loiter and recruit new members to work under the auspices of foreign intelligence services) discovers further new information (which probably reveals the scope of the power of this “shadow government”):

“All of the Protestant Churches are registered in the territory of the Yugoslav Republic of Serbia in Jakovo, near Belgrade. Practically, they do not exist because their only remaining member is an 80 year old woman.”⁷⁰

Let us summarize the information out of this “extremely important book” so that the reader can understand: there are five Protestant churches in Serbia, all of them are registered in Jakovo near Belgrade, and all of them together have only one single “remaining” member (who works for the intelligence agency of all foreign powers in the world). Is not this a “brilliant” conclusion?

This is indicative of the confusion of the author. There is no such denomination as “the Protestant Church”. Rather, the term “Protestant churches” refer to all denominations that sprung out of the Reformation that occurred in the sixteenth century in Central and Western Europe.

What is quite obvious is that the book *Soul Hunters* and its amended version *Lexicon of Sects* abound with misinformation, false comparisons, and very malicious misrepresentation of the Bible and of various religious communities.

The best thing for a person to do with these books (and many others by the same author) is to close his or her eyes, ignore the flattering accolades gushed on the author by ignorant “experts”, and to heed the advice of Professor Dragoljub Djordjevic. Put this book on a list of “do not read” – if the reader wishes to retain his or her sanity.

Religious Sects – A Manual for Self-Defense

In addition to the books of Ms. Djurdjevic-Stojkovic, we must also add the book *Religious Sects - A Manual for Self-Defense* by police captain Zoran Lukovic to Dr. Djordjevic’s “Do not read” list. This book is full of misinformation and prejudice on the

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 164-5.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

part of the author. The reason why this book is not included on the list is because it was published after Dr. Djordjevic came up with the list warning the Serbian public about the dangers arising from the impact of chauvinistic “idlers” (to borrow from Obradovic) on the consciousness and behavior of the masses.

Before we examine the details of the author’s prejudice and misinformation abounding in his book, let us note with special emphasis the preface of the third edition of this book. It is written by First Dean Vajo Jovic, Elder of the Orthodox Missionary School of St. Alexander Nevsky Church in Belgrade, who also is labeled as the co-editor of the book. Indeed, the preface exudes an air of satanic intolerance and every quality that does not belong to Orthodox Christianity. Thus, it is quite logical to expect such a spirit in Lukovic’s work. Here is Jovic’s description of the activity of religious communities described by Lukovic:

“We grieve for the Orthodox land of Serbia, founded by St. Sava with his father St. Simeon, where evil people have sown **seeds of apostasy** and have forgotten the centuries of rich material and spiritual heritage of the Serbian people. Joyful feelings overwhelm us, though, because of our people, thank God, in government agencies, serious fighters, who opposed falsehood, crime, destruction, and totalitarianism brought by the **sectarian seeds of apostasy**. It also gladdens us that this book will be in very great demand by some innocent souls, as it will reduce the power of sectarian recruitment and manipulation conducted by **wolves in sheep’s clothing**. The sectarian spider web in **its hunt for human souls** stretches wide and into it fall many lost sheep. In the author of *Religious Sects – A Manual for Self-Defense*, Brother Zoran Lukovic, we see **a brave knight immersed in Christian faith, truth, justice, and love**. The author through argumentation breaks apart the web of the black widow spider and renders its impotent of its deception, or at least he prevents others from being entrapped... How do you keep away from apostasy?... When victims lose their connection with the historical spiritual canon, they become easy **prey for Satan**. In these realms, such a spiritual atmosphere beacons vultures to **encircle human souls**... Victims of sects are our compatriots and fellow citizens. They were recruited and manipulated by people. They are victims whom we should not show a hostile and vindictive attitude. **This diseased tissue of our body, these patients**, we love and seek to heal them... The book *Religious Sects – A Manual for Self-Defense*, along with the seven books of Mr. Vladimir Dimitrijevic offer **a unique and strong defense and response of the Serbian Orthodox Church** to the spiritual plague of the present time.”⁷¹

So, members of evangelical Protestant communities, which are legally registered in this nation and have operated in the region for decades and even centuries, are called patients, vultures of human souls, and servants of Satan (wolves in sheep’s clothing) using demonic strategy to murder the souls of themselves and others!

⁷¹ Lukovic, Preface. Author’s emphasis.

On the other hand, “Brother” Lukovic is called a brave knight of baptized faith, truth, justice, and love, who with knowledge and persuasion fights against the sectarian seed of apostasy. At the end of the preface, Jovic states that Lukovic’s book represents the defense of the Serbian Orthodox Church against the activity of sects. It shows that Mr. Lukovic did not write his book as an independent and objective expert. By his own description of service in the Interior Ministry of Serbia, Lukovic fails to serve all the citizens of his country, including those who belong to religious minorities. Instead, Lukovic pejoratively refers to them as “cults”, while he exclusively confesses his membership in the Serbian Orthodox Church. One example of the numerous proofs that Lukovic wrote his book with a prejudicial view is shown in the following excerpt, where he presents the Orthodox views as his own. Specifically, Lukovic speaks in the plural with terms such as “we confess”, “we believe”, “we consider them”, and “we cannot”. Does Lukovic believe he speaks for his fellow officers (who lack the competence to judge controversial religious issues, which also disqualifies Lukovic himself) as faithful believers of the majority Church in Serbia and its clergy?

“Let us understand: just as to the Mother of God, **so we turn** to prayerful intercession before God, and not as to idols (and obviously **we do not confess** to polytheism, which the sectarians accuse **us** of being, quite mistakenly and maliciously).”⁷²

“Thus, a sect is a heretical religious community, and not a church.”⁷³

“Moreover, sects are religious communities that lack an ecumenical (catholic) faith and apostolic succession. Thus, their self-appointed and self-anointed ‘priests’ have no relationship with the founder of the Apostolic Church, **our** Lord Jesus Christ. So, although many call themselves churches, even if some have millions of ‘believers’, numerous facilities, and abundant material wealth, despite their involvement in many charitable works (which we believe the Lord will view positively on Judgment Day), **we cannot consider them** as churches under the criteria of church dogma.”⁷⁴

The third chapter of the book, entitled “The Activity of Religious Sects”, has the subtitle “The external, general, or public ways of representation and influence of religious sects on the population”. We find several malicious citations. Pages 26 and 27 show the contents and Christmas greetings from the magazine, “Christian Review” published by the Pentecostal Church of Belgrade. Right under the Christmas greetings is the website address for one of the satanic organizations, followed by the comment: “Satanists in recent months have flourished on the Internet.” The author of this work knows full well that it is simply wrong to combine the activity of evangelical Protestants together with Satanists. He knowingly manipulated and displayed the advertisements of both these groups in one place – without any distinction.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 17. Author’s emphasis.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 18. Author’s emphasis.

Pages 28 and 29 are no less malicious. For example, the top of the page shows a comic strip invented by the author to falsely portray Jehovah's Witnesses. (Indeed, this clearly demonstrates Lukovic's ignorance of the teachings and writings of various religious groups.) The comic strip allegedly portrays their understanding of God's salvation. The bottom of page 28 and page 29 show a display of occult satanic teachings posted on the Internet.

However, far greater stupidity (perhaps the most egregious example) of the book by this author renowned as "a knight immersed in truth" manifests itself in the author's ignorant commentary on the essence of all Protestant churches: the principle of salvation through faith. Lukovic, apparently utterly blind to his ignorance, makes this statement:

"What is the core principle of Protestantism that forms the ultimate basis for the emergence of sects?

1. The material principle of the Reformation: a man is justified by faith before God, not good works. The rule is '**Sin some, believe even more, and you will be saved.**'"⁷⁵

Anyone acquainted with Protestant theology must answer Lukovic with the popular saying that some people "appear wise when they are silent." Indeed.

Not only does Lukovic erroneously state the belief of Protestants regarding justification and salvation by faith alone, but this author also turns out to be a sloppy plagiarist. Specifically, his accusation that Protestants believe "Sin some, believe even more, and you will be saved" comes from Lazar Milin's work *Church and Sects*. Furthermore, that is not what Milin really said. Here is a quote from Milin:

"In fact, Luther's argument accepted by other Protestant states that man is justified before God only by having faith in Christ and the redemption for mankind to relieve their misery... It turns out that Holy Scripture directly states that which Luther declared to be the material principle of the Reformation that 'a man is saved by faith alone.' **Luther's assertion was met with huge sarcasm by his critics, who invented the saying, 'Sin some, have more faith, and you will be saved.'**"⁷⁶

So we see that Protestants in no way teach that a person can sin as much as he wants and find salvation through faith. Rather, only Luther's critics misunderstood his interpretation of the Bible. Indeed, the apostle Paul taught in the New Testament what evangelical Protestants completely accept as truth:

"For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace. What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 59. Author's emphasis.

⁷⁶ Milin, *Church and Sects*, 52. Author's emphasis.

*not... But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.”*⁷⁷

In any event, Mr. Lukovic puts his proverbial “foot in his mouth” in misrepresenting the view of Protestant religious communities. He should know that his allegations are false and would avoid the ridicule of people much more knowledgeable about this subject matter than himself, a police officer.

Indeed, the author of this *Manual for Self-Defense* ought to read chapters 2 and 3 of my book for a more detailed introduction to the biblical doctrine of salvation through faith held by evangelical Christians.

The only thing Lukovic proves with his statement is that which Dr. Radovan Bigovic, professor of Orthodox theology, recognizes and is cited by Vladeta Jerotic. Here is what he writes:

“Except for rare individuals, we know embarrassingly little about contemporary Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Anglican theology. Yet this does not prevent us from imposing categorical judgments and allegations that often contradict the facts.”⁷⁸

“Only” these errors would suffice for many intelligent readers to move on and lose confidence in the credibility of the rest of Lukovic’s book. However, for the sake of other readers, we will continue in further analysis of the *Handbook for Self-Defense*.

Lukovic further demonstrates his utter ignorance of Baptist doctrine by regurgitating allegations from Milin’s book such as “Baptists do not believe in depravity inherited from Adam.” (This is an accusation made often without any further substantiation by all the other authors in Serbia who write about “sects”.) If Lukovic had spent any time reading Baptist literature or speaking with Baptists, he would find out the Baptists do believe in the existence of depravity inherited from Adam.

Similar to Biljana Djurdjievic-Stojkovic, Lukovic also alleges that Baptists oppose military service. Lukovic mentions the issue of the house of worship of the Baptist Church of Pec (in the village of Ljevoshko near Pec, which is located in the diocese of Pec). The preacher Simo Ralevic had a large private library with thousands of books. Additionally, there was a warehouse with several hundred thousand copies of books written by the preacher, true believers, and other friends of the Baptist Churches of Serbia (ex-Yugoslavia). All of these were burned to the ground following the withdrawal from Kosovo of the army and the police prompted by the bombardment of NATO forces. Here is Lukovic’s commentary:

“It is not widely known that [sects] build their places of worship on [Orthodox] church property (e.g., the land around the diocese of Pec).”⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Romans 6:14-15, 22. Author’s emphasis.

⁷⁸ Vladeta Jerotic, *Faith and Nation*, 17. Author’s emphasis.

⁷⁹ Lukovic, 2003, 97.

This begs the question: where on earth did Mr. Lukovic get the idea that the church building was actually built on the property of the Serbian Orthodox Church? The fact of the matter is that the property a long time ago used to belong to the Orthodox diocese, but in the nineteenth century, it had passed into private ownership under the name of the Ralevic family. It was handed down to Simo Ralevic through family inheritance. Thus, the Baptist Church had been standing for over two decades. It is logical to conclude that the Serbian Orthodox Church has no right to lay claim on this land. Yet again, Mr. Lukovic puts his foot in his mouth. Yet, the attentive reader will spot more misinformation in the next example. On page 61 of the third edition published in the year 2000, Lukovic alleges the “magnificent, modern architecture of the Baptist house of prayer” actually “was ‘empty’⁸⁰ for the Ralevic family was spared during the violence and left Kosovo.” This quote is deleted in the fourth edition of the book entirely.

This latest edition leaves the text of the two earlier editions as if circumstances remained the same prior to the NATO bombing. Thus, it appears that the cited “magnificently” built Baptist churches in Ljevosio still exist (and the Baptists still hold religious services there). Lukovic makes it appear as if the Baptists suffered no damage (which is false), in contrast to the destruction of numerous churches and monasteries of the Serbian Orthodox Church, particularly after the violence in Kosovo on March 17 and 18 of 2004 (when more Serbian properties were destroyed).

Again it begs another question: what compelled Lukovic to delete this reference in the latest (fourth) edition and leave only one (albeit vague) allusion to the destruction of one Baptist church in Kosovo and Metohija? Why is this in the “updated” version? Why is it that no one has corrected Mr. Lukovic who hides the truth to the Serbian people? Members of religious minorities suffered just as much as anyone else in the wars of the last decade of the twentieth century.

Without a doubt, disclosure of the full truth of religious minorities portrayed in a fair light does not serve the agenda of the “knights of the Orthodox Church”, who seek to perpetuate a negative of “sects” held over two decades.

Lukovic makes other unfounded allegations against evangelical Protestant communities. First, he lists many evangelical communities in the same category as various cults and other religious movements under the name of “sects”:

“Adventists (Sabbatarians), Baptists, Children of God, Orthodox Church of the West, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Creationists, Mormons, Nazarenes, Apostolic Church, Pentecostals, Word of Life, the Free Church, Universal Life, Church of

⁸⁰ The word “empty” is a completely inaccurate description of the state of the building after the war in the summer of 1999. The Baptist church was burned and razed to the ground. Thus, the Ralevic family which departed Pec and the Baptist church building had both suffered irrecoverable damage. The expression “empty” implies a structure that remains intact but to which no one goes any longer. It is clear that our “knight immersed in truth” sought to suppress the truth that Serbian victims of the war in Kosovo and Metohija not only included those affiliated with Orthodox churches and monasteries, but also included members of Protestant churches.

Christ, Christian Church of Evangelical Brothers, Church of Christ of Little Baptism, Church of God...”⁸¹

Then we find out why these “sects” are so destructive:

“The basic needs of members are subordinated to the interest of the sect and blind obedience to its leader.

Cartoons and comic strips are communication intended for younger people. Sometimes, they can be fatal especially because children live in fantasies. One girl who was trying to imitate Batman jumped through a window and broke her leg. One boy also was imitating Batman and was hanging on the chandelier, while a second boy twisted his head to imitate Robocop.”⁸²

After we learned that fictional heroes of comics and cartoons⁸³ can convert someone to join a sect, we learn that all sectarian gatherings use drugs to facilitate the manipulation of members’ behavior:

“Although drugs are not necessarily a sign of a sect (except in the case of Satanists), let us not forget the manipulation, illusions, and impresario that constitute the main weapons that sectarians use to recruit candidates. **Thus, we cannot exclude the abuse of drugs**, perhaps not as a rule, but as **a powerful and time-proven weapon held in reserve** for the recruiting process (manipulation) of new candidates and the retention of current members.”⁸⁴

“One of the most destructive effects of the sect is a disastrous impact on health of its members. According to the new international nomenclature, **the mere presence of a sect is a disease and a new form of addiction. As a rule, drugs are an integral part of their rituals.**”⁸⁵

According to Lukovic, the maximum exploitation of their members by sects lowers them to abnormal living conditions and brings deleterious effects to their families. Thus, all sects have an organization of a criminal nature:

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 24.

⁸³ That no children’s cartoon heroes are harmless, but they can draw kids into sects, is revealed by the following news article. The headline “There is no Smurf that is so naive” tell us: “It might sound naïve (but the Institute of Mental Health VMA would never joke or exaggerate) that even a small, blue, sweet, and clever Smurf is not harmless. But how? By posing a danger in hastily drawing an inverted pentagram, which insiders know is a satanic sign. The sign of the “great beast” saved the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles from trouble when they wrote 666, and few did not know that it is also a symbol of the devil...” *Weekly Struggle*, May 17, 1998.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 24. Author’s emphasis.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 46. Author’s emphasis. Let us not forget that Lukovic considers all religious communities in Serbia as “non-traditional sects”, even if some of them include tens or even hundreds of millions of members in the world. Thus, millions of Baptists, Adventists, Pentecostals, and others, according to the police officer, are sick and abnormal people who needed to be rehabilitated for their addiction disorders (both of the “sin” of belonging to these “sects” and the use of drugs in their rituals).

“Sects have long since lost their exclusively religious character and have become associations of constantly changing and new forms of commercial manipulation, psychotherapy, pseudoscientific, prophetic... Everything said thus far is confirmed by the meaning of the word ‘sect’. Namely, sects in recent decades are a manifestation of **psychological manipulation and a new form of addiction**... **Consequences of the activity of sects**, at least based on experience in the field, lead to the conclusion that they can be viewed as a form of **abuse**... Some members of sects never were on the preached path to enlightenment of virtue and salvation, but instead have committed the most serious of crimes, such as murder, robbery, rape... We emphasize that this does not pertain only to Satanists, but also to members of **all other sectarian organizations**. Prostitution in some sects is even included in their ‘mission statements’... Cases of human disappearance are typical of **all** sects.”⁸⁶

On page 112 of the revised version of this book, this “religious expert” of sectarian worship and ceremonial rituals performed in evangelical Protestant communities makes other accusations that ought to be examined carefully:

“Rituals performed in communities – initiation **varies by sect**, but here **are some common elements**: dim lighting, special ambience, many occult symbols, relics of the sect (or group), a special place for initiates, who, mostly through meditation, hypnosis, or other rituals, **are put into an altered state of consciousness** and made to repeat the magic words said by the leader, become members.”⁸⁷

Although this text belongs under the section “Occult-Magic Rituals” and his remarks are directed exclusively to satanic cults and the New Age movement, it would have been fair if the author had spelled out that these rituals are not conducted among members of Protestant religious communities and only amongst spiritualist cults. In contrast, under the title “Early Christian Sects”, he lists Ebonites, Gnostics, Montanists, Arians, Nestorians, Monophysites, Iconoclasts, Bogomils, Cathars, Old Believers, the Reformation, and Lutherans. Then under the subtitle “The Basic Principles of Protestantism that Gave Rise to Sects” are included Baptists, Nazarenes, Seventh Day Adventists, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Mormons, Pentecostals, Creationists, Church of God, Children of God – the Family of Love... and all the way up to Universal Life. Lukovic continues to sow deliberate confusion with his use of terms. The author steps into greater spiritual darkness as he describes syncretistic concepts and practices, as well as extrasensory phenomena, techniques, and skills (all under the general title “Early Christian Sects”). Only after describing the “Occult Magic Rituals” does he begin with a new main title of “Syncretistic Sects”. Under these syncretistic sects, the author

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 31, 34-5, 37, 75. Author’s emphasis. Such generalization of all sects constantly made by the author of *A Manual for Self-Defense* (the name *A Manual for Self-Deception* is more appropriate) is a disgrace. An ignorant member of the Serbian people who reads this text deliberately and maliciously invented by Lukovic will jump to the conclusion that even evangelical Protestant communities practice murder, rape, prostitution, kidnapping, etc. just like satanic and other similar destructive cults.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 75. Author’s emphasis.

mentions certain totalitarian cults such as the Order of the Eastern Temple (Ordo Templi Orientis), the White Gnostic Church, the Unification Church of Sun Myung Moon, and Aum Shinrikyo (the Japanese cult under Shoko Asohara that was outlawed in the mid 1990's after attempting an attack on the Tokyo subway with the nerve gas sarin). After describing these sects, Lukovic gives another title "Far Eastern and Pseudo-Hindu Techniques and Phenomena" followed by the next title "Satanic Cults" (including truly satanic groups such as the Church of Satan, Free Spiritualists, International Association of Witches, the People's Temple, Red Solar Temple, and others).

The way Lukovic organizes these four headings (along with a fifth called "Commercial Cults") attempts to lead the reader to conclude that some evangelical Protestant groups conduct similar rites of initiation just like the cults presented by this police captain (in dim light, occult symbols, and hypnosis with puts a new member in an altered state of consciousness). Of course, this is the reason that Lukovic implies that such rites of admission of satanic and other occult organizations also apply to religious communities associated with the Reformation. In any event, if the author and his publishing associates truly had good intentions and a sincere desire to inform the public of the truth, they would not have allowed such a big "failure". However, if Mr. Lukovic truly believed in the error that drives his readers to avoid attending some "neo-Protestant" worship service during the testimony of baptism, then it proves that he knows the subject about as well as an isolated simpleton talking about international travel.

In truth, baptisms in evangelical churches are the most festive events performed during the year. They induct new believers into the fellowship of the community. They are performed in well-lit areas or outdoors (in rivers, lakes, or the ocean). A large number of church members as well as guests from other denominations often attend. Also, the relatives of the newly baptized members attend. Sometimes they belong to traditional religions or declare themselves to have no religion. In any case, Lukovic's accusation that evangelical Protestant communities conduct satanic rituals of initiation during the solemn act of Baptism is the product of extreme ignorance and open hostility on his part.

Finally, I would like to examine a few remarks regarding "the high degree of theological education" of Mr. Lukovic. One of the recommendations to read *A Manual for Self-Defense* comes from the pen of reviewer Bishop Porphyrius Peric.⁸⁸

When the author of *A Manual* talks about how sectarians interpret Holy Scripture, he criticizes them in a variety of areas:

"All of this, the fascination with commentators and their teaching credibility, **associated with selected quotations from Scripture**, [is used] in order to frighten, destabilize, and then force the listener to entrust his problems, dilemmas, and, finally, his soul to the sect."⁸⁹

⁸⁸ Here is what Bishop Porphyry writes in his review: "This book deserves particular attention due to its **amazingly high theological level**, given that the author is no theological lightweight..." Text on back cover of the book, third edition. Author's emphasis.

⁸⁹ Lukovic (2003), 42. Author's emphasis.

So, sectarians cut out selected quotations from the Bible, for which of course they given an errant interpretation, with the goal of recruiting a new soul into their heretical organization. However, anyone at all familiar with Scriptures and has read through Lukovic's book probably could not believe or even stop from laughing when at the same time, our author-critic does the same thing in his book. Specifically, Lukovic in a comic strip on page 67 of his book erroneously assigns the following statement to the Jehovah's Witnesses:

“Jesus never called people to join a church or religion! He only called them, ‘Follow me!’”⁹⁰

Lukovic offers his commentary on this verse beneath the comic strip:

“Pure untruth. Before His crucifixion, Christ said to the apostle Peter: ‘On **your back** I will build my Church.’”⁹¹

First of all, our esteemed police captain yet again displays his ignorance. First, he cites the incorrect reference, Matthew 11:28,⁹² when he really intended to cite Matthew 16:18. Secondly, he misquotes the verse. Here is the actual verse:

*“And I also say to you that you are Peter, and **on this rock** I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.”*

What is certain is that no Orthodox theologian would agree with Lukovic's bold statement (which remained unchanged up until the fourth edition) that the Christ's Church would be built upon “the back of the apostle Peter”. Such a belief (that Jesus Christ would build His church on the back of Peter) is not confessed by Eastern Orthodoxy or Roman Catholicism. It would be interesting to know from where Lukovic got this idea, as it exists in no known Bible translation anywhere, not even those of the Roman Catholics.

Let us compare a few more verses from the “Bible” presented to us by Lukovic with texts from actual Bible translations:

“The Holy Apostle John the Theologian warns: ‘Whoever transgresses and does not abide in Christ's teaching does not have God. He who abides in Christ's teaching has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and **brings this doctrine** (heretical or sectarian), do not receive him into your house nor greet him.’”⁹³

“Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, 67.

⁹¹ *Ibid*, 67.

⁹² “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Matthew 12:18.

⁹³ *Ibid*, 86 (2003). Author's emphasis.

*Son. If anyone comes to you and **does not bring this doctrine**, do not receive him into your house nor greet him.”⁹⁴*

As we can see, the author inauspiciously altered the biblical text and attributed the opposite meaning to it. If we were to examine the actual biblical text and to add Lukovic’s supplement written in brackets, this would imply that Christians are not welcoming people who teach heretical doctrines. Does Lukovic really imply that Christians should only welcome teachers who are heretics and sectarians?!! Although Lukovic never really implied this, he should have realized that he had no right to alter the text at his own discretion. After all, omitting the word “not” ruins Lukovic’s case and spoils the whole context of this short epistle.

Here is another “amended” New Testament verse:

“The apostle Paul said: ‘Everyone who wants to live a godly life will be persecuted, **not only by people, but also by demons.**’”⁹⁵

“Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.”⁹⁶

It would undoubtedly be interesting to know which Bible translation Mr. Lukovic used to find these references to persecution by people and demons that do not exist in any other official Bible translation.

However, it is obvious that there exists a Bible translation possessed only by Lukovic and no one else. Here is a philosophical thought attributed to the apostle Paul in the gospel according to Lukovic:

“St. Paul teaches: ‘As pride exceeds humility, anger exceeds tolerance, sadness exceeds Christian peace, so love is the highest Christian virtue which is faith in the resurrection and eternal life.’”⁹⁷

So much for the high degree of theological education exhibited by Inspector Lukovic, particularly with regard to his ignorance of sectarian practices and consistent miscopying and misinterpretation of biblical texts!

After reading this analysis exposing the misinformation in Lukovic’s book, is there any way to agree with the opinions of the remaining two reviewers? Specifically, in his review of the book, Professor Dr. Bratislav Petrovic comments on Lukovic and his book (it is as if he had not even opened the book):

⁹⁴ 2 John 9-10. Author’s emphasis.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 92. Author’s emphasis.

⁹⁶ 2 Timothy 3:12-13.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 92.

“The author shows an orientation neither ‘pro-cult’ nor ‘anti-cult’. Rather, this book that addresses ‘the sects’ **allows the reader to draw his own conclusions**. The material is very comprehensive **and authentic** that is supported by examples from his own professional experience, for the author’s primary goal is to inform and thus protect the reader.

Of course, the freedom of conscience, belief, religious beliefs, confession, and rites are respected. Individual freedom applies to the extent that the freedom of belief and activity does not impinge upon that of others. We live in a multinational, multiconfessional, and multicultural community **which the author takes into account**... This book on religious sects by Zoran Lukovic makes a significant contribution to a **realistic perspective** on the phenomenon of sects today that wage a ruthless war against our land.”⁹⁸

The evidence shown earlier refutes the confident claims of Dr. Petrovic. (He probably is competent in medicine, but his knowledge of the teachings of various religious minorities in Serbia is dubious.) Petrovic’s boasts of the objectivity of Lukovic’s book that provides “realistic perspective” on sects and is neither “pro-cult nor anti-cult” are laughable.

Zoran Lukovic sheds off any veneer of objectivity in being very “anti-cult” oriented. He fully advocates the interests of the Serbian Orthodox Church in painting a simplified and utterly unrealistic picture of the various religious communities that have legally operated in Serbia for decades and even centuries. We are convinced that, unfortunately, the author does not care at all about freedom of conscience, belief, and religion for members of our country’s religious groups. Indeed, his work threatens them to the utmost.

The second reviewer is Milenko Ercic, a lawyer with the Serbian Ministry of the Interior:

“I speak about a **competent author** based on his fifteen years of service in dealing with this phenomenon.

The quality of work is reflected in the wealth of information provided by the author about the genesis, forms, and mechanisms of activity of religious sects and movements in the territory of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.”⁹⁹

We have already seen evidence for the “competence” and “quality of work” of Lukovic. No further comment is needed.

Orthodoxy and Sects I (Svetigore Publishing)

⁹⁸ Review by Professor Dr. Bratislav Petrovic on the back cover of Lukovic’s 3rd edition (2000). Author’s emphasis.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.* Author’s emphasis.

Published by Svetigore, under the auspices of the Metropolitan of Montenegro and the Littoral are seven books on the theme “Orthodoxy and Sects”. The first two books discuss activities and teachings of the evangelical Protestant religious communities. The other five pertain to activities of the New Age religions, eastern religious movements, and others. We will only examine the first two books in the series. They cast a derogatory light on non-Orthodox Christian communities that operate legally and whose members are supposed to enjoy equal rights under the law, according to the Constitution.

In his preface to the first book called *From Utopia to Nightmare*, a book published in 1997 at the time of UN sanctions and before the conflict of the police and military with ethnic Albanian extremists in Kosovo and Metohija, Mr. Vladimir Dimitrijevic, the organizer of this series, wrote:

“Before the reader is a book written during a time of extreme adversity in which we live... The book was conceived in a great age of tribulation for our people, who not by their own fault but rather at the will of the powers of this world, suffer more than any other time in history. **In addition to war, economic poverty, the collapse of individual and societal morality, rising crime, and political factions and schisms, an even worse evil has appeared.** This evil spirit which attacks the Serbian people – **the evil of lying faith and dangerous spiritual apostasy...** In the midst of true, and not exclusively, spiritual terror over us, we face, this is no exaggeration, the danger of spiritual genocide as a free and baptized people if we do not take action.”¹⁰⁰

So, “lying faith” which sects are preaching is a much greater evil than bombardments, wars, crime, and every kind of immorality. In the midst of the actual danger of ultimate spiritual genocide of the Serbian people who are baptized in Orthodoxy (read: true belief before God), Dimitrijevic exhorts the reader to take action. (Perhaps he is in accord with the words of St. Filaret of Moscow, quoted earlier, who commanded us to “crush the enemies of the fatherland”.)

Here is what some of the holy fathers, whose teachings guided Mr. Dimitrijevic, said regarding the relations of Orthodox to non-Orthodox. These fathers taught that Orthodox should treat non-Orthodox believers without any love or mercy nor to pray for them before God. These saints do not consider “heretics” as real people, but more like domestic animals and beasts:

“The Venerable Agathon of Egypt in the Fathers writes: ‘Heresy is separation from God, the heretic has separated himself from the living and true God and follows the devil and his angels, one who is separated from Christ does not have God who can forgive his sins.’ In response to the question, ‘Why is it written about heretics: *Do I not hate them, O Lord, who hate You?* (Ps. 139:21) and *You*

¹⁰⁰ *From Utopia to Nightmare*, 5. Author’s emphasis.

*shall hate every man... (Lev. 19:17)?*¹⁰¹ Saint Ephrem the Syrian answers, ‘Heretics, as scoundrels and enemies of God, are not called men by Scripture, but dogs, wolves, swine, and antichrists, as the Lords says, *Do not give what it is holy to the dogs.* (Mt. 7:6) John says, *Even now many antichrists have come.* (1 John 2:18) **Do not show them any mercy** not protection nor should you eat with them...”¹⁰²

Later in the text of *From Utopia to Nightmare*, the author describes members of religious minorities:

“Who are the members of sects? They are ours, a pain to Orthodoxy... They are also **sick** and spiritually wounded people, in most cases, **the victims of others’ manipulation**... They are sick, mentally and physically wounded, poor people, who sought the Light and found themselves in the dark... What about their families!”¹⁰³

As Dr. Vukadin Cvetanovic and V. Dimitrijevic advocate the idea that all religious communities should by law be classified into four groups. Here is their proposed solution to this “problem”:

“In a normal legal system, all religious communities and faiths could be divided into four groups. The first groups would consist of sects with tangible evidence that they commit terrorism and pose a threat to citizens (for example, Aum Shinrikyo, which in 1995 conducted a poison gas attack against passengers on the Tokyo subway). The second group would consist of sects known to be potentially dangerous and have been put on trial in other parts of the world (such

¹⁰¹ Translator’s note: Lev. 19:17 actually states the opposite: “*You shall not hate your brother in your heart. You shall surely rebuke your neighbor, and not bear sin because of him.*”

¹⁰² Judin Poljubac, *Apostasy and “the Serbian Orthodox Church”*. (Monastery of the Holy Assumption “Esfigmen” – Sveta Gora: Belgrade, 2004) 288-9. Underlined emphasis from the author of this text. Bold emphasis is mine. All grammatical mistakes are in the original and not corrected.

Ephrem incorrectly quotes out of context the verses from Psalm 139:21 and Leviticus 19:17. These verses do not teach us to express hatred toward people with different beliefs! In fact, Psalm 139:21 is an expression of David (who was sinful and fallible) toward God’s enemies, including those who sought to slay him.

With regard to Leviticus 19:17 (and reading it with verse 18 – written several centuries before David’s birth), we notice the behavior that should characterize the true servant of God: “***You shall not hate your brother in your heart. You shall surely rebuke your neighbor, and not bear sin because of him. You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.***”

On the other hand, the Lord Christ uses vernacular language when he calls the enemies of God “*dogs*” (Mt. 7:6) to show the apostles the dangers they will face as harmless doves and innocent lambs of God in preaching the Gospel to unbelievers. (See also Mt. 10:16.)

After all that has been said, it would be good to ask these Orthodox “zealots” how they use Scriptures to rationalize their belief in hating their enemies, when Scripture is God’s “love letter” to humanity preaching forgiveness and love for all people?

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 8. Author’s emphasis.

as the Moon Unification Church which has overt political objectives and possesses and manufactures weapons). The third would consist of traditional confessions of faith that have been on our soil as faiths of individual peoples (Roman Catholicism, Lutheranism, Islam, etc.). The fourth group, and the first in importance, would be the Orthodox Church, the Church of the native Serbian people, which the state should assist.”¹⁰⁴

What is ambiguous in the scheme of Mr. Dimitrijevic is where he lists evangelical Protestant communities. They are neither “traditional” nor do they belong to terrorist groups such as Aum Shinrikyo! Neither have their religious leaders been “put on trial” many times around the world nor do they possess weapons factories. The only possessions of evangelical churches, in addition to liturgical items, include various day care centers, schools, and universities, nursing homes, health clinics (hospitals), and humanitarian organizations that distributed several thousand tons of food, medicine, and clothes during the UN sanctions. Such aid has been disbursed to all kinds of vulnerable people, especially the large number of Serbian exiles from the other republics of the former Yugoslavia and Kosovo and Metokhija (many of whom are Orthodox and never had to renounce their faith to receive help).¹⁰⁵ However, it is clear that Dimitrijevic and Dr. Cvetanovic would group evangelical communities into the category of “potentially dangerous” (along with the Moon Unification Church that produces weapons), even though they are unable to produce a shred of evidence to show that evangelical Protestants are dangerous.

The first chapter of the book, “Many False Prophets Have Gone Out into the World” on pages 31-7, is probably the most extreme in the whole book. Its author, a member of the more beautiful and gentle gender, is Ms. Ksenija Koncarevic.¹⁰⁶ She starts the chapter by describing modern Serbia as resembling the land of the Gadarenes,¹⁰⁷ a country ruled by “legions of dark forces and militant spirits of evil and falsehood”. Naturally, the author of this chapter describes the activities of the non-Orthodox religious groups

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹⁰⁵ Orthodox cult watchers (including priests) distort the facts by alleging that at times, Protestants distributing humanitarian aid and literature also used the classic “recruiting” tactic of forcing aid recipients to “sell out their religion for the sake of dinner” (see Goran Maksimovic, *Why Did They Crucify Christ?* (Nis, 1995) 62-8. Furthermore, the only literature Protestants distributed were almost exclusively copies of Holy Scripture – New Testaments (the official Serbian translation by Vuk Karadzic, Emilian Carnic, and Dimitrije Stefanovic). Sometimes, recipients of humanitarian aid were given materials to explain the main teachings of a religious minority in order to make them less fearful of accepting help when their lives were endangered, yet they refused because of an irrational fear of “sects” instilled by such propaganda as what we have been reading. Giving out reading material on the beliefs of evangelical groups was intended to acquaint people with the fact that evangelical Protestant churches, like other churches and government agencies, care for the vulnerable. Their doctrines contain nothing of “satanic elements” as maliciously impugned to them by the mass media. No one was ever denied humanitarian aid, even though the majority of recipients remained in their religion (that was and still is Orthodoxy). This fact is more proof that charity on the part of Protestants never had “proselytism” as its main objective. Indeed, Protestant charity was intended as a demonstration of Christian love to people in distress and need.

¹⁰⁶ Translator’s note: Dr. Ksenia Koncharovic is listed with a PhD in Theology from the University of Belgrade. <http://www.bfspc.bg.ac.rs/sr/studije/profesor/dr-ksenija-koncarevic-redovni-profesor>

¹⁰⁷ See Luke 8:26-39.

(sects) as “fallen from Christ the Savior and speaking blasphemy of the Holy, Ecumenical, and Apostolic Orthodox Church”. All believers and friends (sympathizers) of these religious communities are called “swarms of hypnotized and powerless flies, out of their minds, unbaptized souls, without Christ, who because they abide in darkness, are attracted by the pale deceptive light of perverted sectarian teachings.” She claims that the teachings of Holy Scripture and sacred tradition are equally inspired sources for Christian faith by the Holy Spirit. The Orthodox Church is the only one that abides in Christ’s all victorious truth. On the other hand, the author acknowledges the mutual equality of all teachings outside of Orthodoxy (thus including the teachings of “sects”, as well as Roman Catholicism, Islam, Judaism, and traditional Protestants, that is all who today study religious education in public schools). She writes:

“And the equality of all non-Orthodox teachings is well known – all of them has their place ‘*where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth*’.”¹⁰⁸

The author exudes religious intolerance and advises readers how to discern if the person with whom they are speaking is Orthodox or not:

“One simple method to discern who you are dealing with is to ask the person if he/she makes the sign of the cross or venerates Orthodox icons. Whoever refuses to do this practices heretical insanity, and it should not shock you: the venerable cross and the holy icons, preserves of soul and body of Orthodox believers, terrify the evil one and make his demonic hordes flee.”¹⁰⁹

As we learned in the chapters on “Veneration of Holy Icons” and “Ecumenical Councils”, icons never existed in first century Christianity. Moreover, all the church authorities of the Church of the first centuries strongly opposed the fabrication and veneration of icons. Only when pagan influences infiltrated the church did they succumb to icon veneration. Thus, according to Ms. Koncarevic, the apostles and all early Christians were heretically insane, not to mention oppressed by the demonic hordes that would have otherwise fled from the holy icons.

The author further expresses her amazement at the “grace shown to such a mad, hedonistic civilization” (in reference to the United States) where barely literate farmers and psychiatric patients report “heavenly visions”. She uses this argument to try to discredit all the numerous religious communities existing in America today by comparing them to the Mormons, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and other non-Protestant organizations (which evangelicals consider to be pseudo-Christian cults).

The author is inconsistent, though. Ms. Koncarevic forgets to cite the fact that Orthodoxy itself observes religious holidays based on “heavenly visions” received by psychiatric patients. (One example is the “Day of Protection of Our Most Holy Lady Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary”. This holiday is based on the vision of St. Andrew the Fool in the 10th century and was established in the twelfth century on October 1

¹⁰⁸ *From Utopia to Nightmare*, 33. Verse from Matthew 8:12.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 35.

according to the Julian calendar. Andrew was one of “God’s fools” discussed in the chapter on “Lives of the Saints”.)

She gives some interesting advice to the Serbian people. They should not pay too much attention when Orthodox priests and bishops live wicked and godless lives, for it is normal. They are people like us who have many weaknesses.¹¹⁰

At the end of the chapter, she advises readers to openly confess their Orthodox faith to sectarian preachers and strongly oppose them. She exhorts readers to counter their arguments by claiming that Orthodoxy comes from the original doctrines of Christ, the apostles, and the church fathers.

All the evidence we have read, including the chapter by Ms. Koncarevic, demonstrates, on one hand, the ignorance of these authors of Holy Scripture and church history, and also, on the other hand, the insensitivity and intolerance of these “defenders of the true faith”.

Orthodoxy and Sects II (Svetigore Publishing)

And we have the second book in the series on sects entitled *The Bible without God, Christianity without the Church: Orthodoxy and Sects, Neo-Protestantism Here and Now*. This book follows in the same spirit as the first volume. In the preface to the chapter “From Bibliolatry to the Book of Mormon”, the editor Vladimir Dimitrijevic explains that this section describes the teaching and activity of “Neo-Protestant sects”. The editor explains this concept:

“We introduce the term ‘Neo-Protestant sects’ in order to emphasize the distinction between traditional Protestantism (starting from Luther onwards and comprising Protestantism that opposes tradition as well as the church and emphasizes rational thinking and faith without the need for deeds) and those sects formed in the United States in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. These groups differ from traditional Protestantism on several important points.”
111

The editor further states that neo-Protestant theology is very primitive. (He lumps Baptists in the same category as Mormons.) He further alleges that some of these sects are radically opposed to society and culture and concurs with Russian theologian Andrey Kuraev who says that the infiltration of these sects into the territory of Orthodox countries is a fundamental tragedy. Amongst other things, this tragedy consists of the following:

“For Adventists, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Pentecostals, Baptists, and others like them have never given the world anyone who has made a significant contribution

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 36.

¹¹¹ *Bible without God, Christianity without the Church*, 5.

to science or the arts, or nothing that enriched the nations where they conducted their activity.”¹¹²

In this case (and in many others), Mr. Dimitrijevic once again demonstrates his vast ignorance of his subject. If by chance he would have inquired of one of his comrades, he would have learned that some renowned writers and scholars came from the Baptists amongst others. Biljana Djordjevic-Stojkovic explains in her *Encyclopedia of Sects*:

“The Baptist ranks include such writers as John Milton (author of the world famous works *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*), Beecher H. Strouve (?!), Daniel Defoe (author of the novel *Robinson Crusoe*), and the world famous metaphysician Dr. B.T. Spenser.”¹¹³

In addition to the information obtained by Ms. Djurdjevic-Stojkovic, we must add to the Baptists the Nobel Peace Prize of 1964. Due to his struggle for human rights, Martin Luther King was assassinated on April 4, 1968. Since the death of this Baptist preacher, the birthday of Martin Luther King, January 15, has been declared a national holiday.

The Baptists also gave us a writer of the seventeenth century. His work *The Pilgrim's Progress* ranks amongst the greatest works in English and world literature. His name was John Bunyan.

We can also add Jan Amos Komensky, also a member of the evangelical wing, to the list of those whose works rank among the greatest of world literature.

All these examples demonstrate that evangelical “Neo-Protestants” have contributed significant ideas and works. Additionally, many scientists of all disciplines belong to these churches, as well as business executives and ministers in many countries along the world. (The example closest to us by geography is the tragic story of President Boris Trajkovski of Macedonia, who was very active in the Methodist Church.)

The book *The Bible without God* explains the teachings and activity of the following groups: Baptists, Adventists, Pentecostals, Mormons, and Jehovah's Witnesses.

Concerning “the intimate apologetic dialogue of Archpriest Kirill Zayets with the Baptists” (of which the editor informs us), it occurred in 1927 on one Russian train and later carried over to an Orthodox Church. The editor portrays the main Baptist speaker in his “apology” as a person of little intelligence and weak knowledge of Holy Scripture. The Baptist “chases his tail” in uttering clichés such as “We are saved”, “We are holy”, “Christ is our brother”, “Orthodox people are idol worshippers”, and others. Clearly, the Baptist believer is a simple peasant. (Yet, the editor of this book uses him as a caricature of the entire denomination of Baptists – bearing the implication that Baptists have a poorly developed theology and accuse Orthodoxy of heresy in their ignorance and “without proof”.) In contrast, the editor presents the sharp witted Orthodox priest as

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 6.

¹¹³ *Religious Sects – Encyclopedia*, 42.

having answers to all questions and able to utterly refute all the claims of the Baptist “preacher” in a fascinating manner before a mob of Orthodox believers.

Let us hear the remarkable arguments posed by the Orthodox teacher to refute those of the Baptist “preacher”:

“Please allow me to ask you several clear questions and be so kind as to reply to them clearly, without any misleading eloquence... Tell us, have you preserved the great spiritual wealth which the Holy Apostles have given to Christ’s Church, or have you never thought of this? In fact, have you ever heard of this wealth?

[The sectarian remained silent.]

Do you have the priesthood? No? But it has been in the Church from Apostolic times. It was passed on by the apostles, and it is clearly spoken of in that very Holy Bible which you are now holding in your hands.

Have you preserved all the Mysteries (sacraments): baptism, chrismation, repentance (i.e., confession), the Holy Eucharist, marriage, holy orders, and unction? These things were already established in the times of the Apostles and they are spoken of in the holy books of the New Testament.

Do you obey the Holy Gospel by honoring the Mother of God?

Do you have prayerful fellowship with the Church in Heaven, the Holy Apostles, whose writings are in your hands, along with the saints, martyrs, and all the righteous ones?

Do you have prayerful fellowship with the angels?

Do you pray to your guardian angel?

All this was in the Apostolic Church, and all this remains with us in the Orthodox Church.

Do you have prayerful communion with deceased fathers, mothers, grandparents, and all those who have reposed in the faith? Do you pray for the dead, or have you forgotten about them so that death for you has proven to be stronger than the love of Christ?

Don’t you know that they prayed for the dead in the Apostolic Church?

You do not honor icons nor do you honor the life-giving Cross of the Lord? And do you sign yourself with the Holy Cross? Do you wear the cross on your breast in accordance with the words of the apostle “*bearing the reproach that he bore*” (Hebrews 13:13)? All this was known in the Apostolic Church.

My questions are clear and simple. Answer them. Why are you silent? Well, what is there for you to say when you do not maintain any of this? Can't you see that this is great spiritual wealth?"¹¹⁴

Apparently, in the eyes of ignorant people (similar to today's Serbian people), this Russian priest cited a series of historical inaccuracies. Just the opposite of his claims, my book has detailed that early apostolic Christianity knew nothing of what the priest alleges! Just as we have seen in numerous other examples previously, Orthodoxy makes claims to ignorant people based on so-called sacred tradition and takes Scriptural passages out of context. (Naturally, people do not recognize the difference between these two sources of faith and thus "amen" everything told to them from the mouths of the religious leaders of "their faith".)

After "proving" the "truth" of Orthodoxy in this and other examples, the Archpriest Zayets recounts an event that occurred 15 years earlier (1912) in the province of Vitebsk. Specifically, in one village arrived some Baptists – "propagandists of a strange religion". The local priest is worried about the religious apostasy of his flock, some of whom begin to visit the Baptist prayer meetings. He calls in Kirill Zayets to turn people back to Orthodoxy.

So one morning, the Archpriest addresses the people gathered on the grounds of the church. He preaches the ancient unbiblical doctrine of salvation gained through good works (being ignorant of the biblical doctrine of justification by faith as outlined in chapters 2 and 3 of my book). He convinces the people that the Baptists are false prophets, wolves in sheep's clothing, who are preparing the way for Antichrist – against the one holy, catholic and apostolic church – Orthodoxy. And so on.

From these limited excerpts and quotes from this book, we could not really discover anything of real substance of the "radiance of the apologetic dialogue" waged by Kirill Zayets. Just the opposite, his speech was full of accusations hurled at the Baptists. (He calls them "criminals" for not allowing babies to be baptized and thus forbidding them to attain salvation before God. He also accuses the Baptists of pride – satanic sin, calls them blasphemers, fools, etc.)¹¹⁵ Yet Zayets presents virtually no valid theological or historical arguments. Moreover, according to the Scriptures and historical facts, the truth almost entirely sides with Baptist theology.

On the other hand, it would have been interesting to see a valid defense of Orthodox theological ideas and doctrines versus those of evangelical Protestants. Zayets never permitted a serious dialogue (or theological discussion) conducted, for example, between two doctors of theology from these two different currents of faith. Clearly, on

¹¹⁴ *The Bible without God, Christianity without the Church, Neo-Protestantism Today and Tomorrow*, 45-7. Author's emphasis. [Translator's note: see excerpt from "Missionary Conversations with Protestant Sectarians" by Rev. Kirill Zayets (spelling?) (New Sarov Press Edition, 1993) on http://www.trueorthodoxy.org/heretics_protestants_missionary_conversations.shtml .]

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 64-5, 75, 77.

the basis of previous studies presented in earlier chapters of this book, the outcome of such discussions would have been unfavorable for the representatives of the Church of the East.

Thus, it is not surprising that we do not find this sort of apologetic in the pages of Orthodox anti-sectarian literature. Rather it only shows (with the doubt of whether this account is without bias) a dialogue between the learned Orthodox priest and a simple rural Baptist believer (before the Second World War in Russia) who was not very familiar with the facts of church history. If Orthodox cult watchers and defenders of “orthodoxy” did not have better examples for demonstrating the superior arguments of their faith over Baptist theology, they can only appeal to uninformed Serbian readers and not convince nor receive any praise from readers who know their material.

What else can we observe in this book, which shows us the “radiant” way of demystifying sectarian and even gives the Orthodox response to their unbiblical assertions?

Well, we have this example. First one can read some excerpts about Adventists. Later, the chapter deals with some teachings of the Pentecostal Church based on the research of evangelical author Kurt E. Koch’s book *The Devil’s Alphabet* (published in Serbian by House of Prayer – Peci Baptist Church, 1999, now relocated to Arandelovac).¹¹⁶ Of course, though he used a book published by the Baptists, the author of the section on Pentecostalism never informed the readers of this. Rather, he simply tells cites a “German author”.¹¹⁷

The situation is similar in the chapter on the history and teaching of Jehovah’s Witnesses. The authors of this section also used data from Baptist sources, with the difference that they now respect Baptist pastors with titles such as “Reverend” and their publishing and movie production arms as “respected homes of traditional Protestants”:

“June 1912: the Reverend J.J. Ross, Baptist pastor from Hamilton, Ontario published a tract entitled ‘Some facts about the so-called pastor Charles Taze Russell’. He wrote about Russell’s personality and his ‘theology’, which he called, ‘anti-rational, anti-scientific, anti-biblical, anti-Christian, and a pathetic distortion of the Gospel of God’s Beloved Son.’”¹¹⁸

“The secret lives of Jehovah’s Witnesses are often filmed in America. The respectable production house of Protestant films ‘Jeremiah Films’ created a

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 117.

¹¹⁷ The aforementioned book *The Devil’s Alphabet* represents a kind of “lexicon” of occult phenomena arranged in alphabetical order. Specifically, the author of the Orthodox book applies the information in this book to Pentecostal churches in Serbia, including various ecstatic manifestations found in extreme charismatic movements (cults), which apply only to a small percentage of the local Pentecostal churches in our country.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 134-5.

documentary that, because of its graphic and factual nature, can be viewed as a prime example of anti-cult documentary film.”¹¹⁹

These passages written by Orthodox hands acquaint the reader with all kinds of evangelical Christians throughout the world. Whether such evangelicals exist in the majority (book publishers and film producers of “traditional Protestants” in the USA are not managed by Lutheran or Reformed churches – groups who are considered as traditional in Serbia – but rather by Baptist, Methodist, and other evangelical Protestant groups) or dwell in the minority, Orthodox authors seek to combat the spread of pseudo-Christian doctrines from such religious movements. However, these Orthodox authors combat them not with reasoned and documented argument based on interpretation of biblical passages. Instead, these Orthodox authors resort to emotional insinuation and false accusation in an effort to provoke emotional outrage from people.¹²⁰

The inconsistency of Orthodox cult researchers, who write derogatory articles about evangelical Christians yet use their literature to attack cults, reveals a bit of hypocrisy in the next example.

In the chapter “Neo-Protestant Activity among Us”, the author points out that in addition to the traditional Protestant denominations, which include “Lutherans, Calvinists, Methodists, etc.” (the “etc.” begs the question as to which other Protestant denominations fall under this category, when all the other denominations are lumped into the category of “nontraditional sects?”), these neo-Protestant sects proselytize and aggressively pursue the premier “Serbian” people. Included in this group of sectarian aggressors are Adventists, Baptists, Pentecostals, and Jehovah’s Witnesses. The Orthodox author wants us to believe that their religious “fanaticism” contains nothing harmless and that it can drive its converts to suicide (although it is quite well known that none of these religious communities endorse or advocate suicide). Apparently, Jehovah’s Witnesses are listed together with the rest because some of their members are known to refuse blood transfusions and succumb to disease.

At the end of the chapter, the author claims that sectarians in our country are attempting to provoke a rebellion against the Serbian Orthodox Church (though in reality, the opposite is the case). Here is his explanation:

“Amongst citizens of the Former Republic of Yugoslavia, especially those not familiar with the facts of our area of study, the sectarians have attempted to provoke a revolt against the Serbian Orthodox Church and its efforts to inform believers of dangerous sectarian activity against our spiritual and national security. These sectarians write literature about their alleged ‘persecution’ despite the facts that not only the government, obviously, refuses to prevent their

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 139-40.

¹²⁰ There exist several books on sects, cults, and the occult translated from foreign Baptist and other evangelical authors in our country. A few of them include: *Explaining Cults* and *Occult Phenomena* by Josh McDowell and Don Stewart, *Under Satan’s Influence* by Ernest Moderzon, and *The Devil’s Alphabet* by Kurt Koch.

activity through its passivity which favors them, but also the Orthodox Church has no desire, means, nor policy of persecuting sectarians contrary to their hysterical hallucinations.”¹²¹

To the assertion whether the Serbian Orthodox Church has no policy or desire to carry out “persecution” (e.g. threatening human rights and freedom of conscience) against religious minorities, thus denying their “hysterical hallucinations”,¹²² we have already offered a partial rebuttal earlier. We have analyzed the jargon used by Orthodox priests and cult watchers and revealed the mountain of disinformation deliberately propagated by them. We also learned that many Orthodox “partisans” believe that the activities of “sects” should be outlawed or at least publicly declared (without any valid evidence) to be dangerous to national security.

Other Literature

Before reviewing a small sample of the ocean of newspaper articles presented to the public in the last decade on the activity of minority religious communities and the operation of anti-sectarian Orthodox organizations, I want to make a few comments about two other books from the same body of anti-sectarian literature.

The first book is written by Ranko Mandic. It is titled *A Cannibal in the Serbian House – Satanic Sects and their Influence on the Serbian People*. Although this book devotes itself exclusively to attacking Satanists, Masons, and similar secret organizations, its introduction, however circuitously, also lumps in Christian religious communities that act legally elsewhere in the world:

“On the territory of the Serbian Republic of Yugoslavia during the post-communist period, the collapse of ideology softened the ground for **the expansion of sects**, various movements, and secret societies... Serbia seems to have become a real Mecca for the operation of various sects. According to unofficial data, in Belgrade alone there operate 200 religious organizations, of which only 40 are officially registered... Sects are not required to inform the

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 167.

¹²² Concerning actual “hysterical hallucinations” of persecution, similar to the first centuries of Christianity, let us look at the following news article. In reference to his arrest in January 2004 by the Macedonian police, Jovan Povardarski, Metropolitan of Veles (Serbian Orthodox Church), stated: “Of course, it is now clear that the allegations of the government of Macedonia along with the schismatic synod of Skopje wage terror on a **scale equal to that during the persecution of Christians in the first centuries of Christianity**. Their claim that they stand for the independence of the nation and the state is a complete and unambiguous lie. Instead, we are exposed to brutal terror and a complete violation of human rights.” *Center*, Tuesday, January 13, 2004, 7. Author’s emphasis.

Let us contrast his allegation to the facts of history. The first centuries of exile were characterized by mass executions of believers, including burnings at the stake. The only “hysterical hallucination” we see here is on the part of Metropolitan Jovan, who was simply taken into police detention and questioned by the judicial authorities (who did not remove a single hair of the defendant). Jovan embellished in order to create the impression that his suffering equated to that of the persecution of Christians during the rule of pagan Rome.

governing institution about what they preach. If they were to have such a requirement, most likely many of them would never have been established... These groups, societies, and associations present ‘ticking time bombs’ for our people and nation. They threaten them in all areas: cultural, religious, spiritual, economic, health, national, and biological security... None of these existing sects were born on our soil, nor do they have any cultural ties. All came from foreign countries and cultures... When all the evidence is accounted for, one can conclude without hesitation that sects serve **as special operations forces** led by some of the great foreign powers... Their doctrines are **deeply hostile** to the nation, **God, Christianity**, Orthodoxy, and are atheist... Their strategic objectives include the creation of a universal religion, a worldwide state, and global government. To achieve these goals, the sects **work toward the mental, physical, and spiritual disintegration of individuals and families, the destruction of Christianity, the Orthodox Church, nation-states, and their institutions**: education, financial system, economy, military, police, etc... **All this is to say that their aims are no less than to conform and correspond with the identical goals of the New World Order and Freemasonry**... The sects have substantial financial resources available to them based on their association with the centers of financial and political power in the world.”¹²³

So, while registered religious communities in Serbia have existed all over the world for centuries (alluded to in his mention of 200 communities, only 40 of which are registered) have nothing in common with Satan worshipers, references (albeit unnamed) in this book dealing with the activities of secret societies and occult groups lead the uninformed reader to lump them all together as groups bringing serious harm to society.

The oversimplification and stereotyping in this last excerpt serves to confuse and mislead readers of his book. Whoever wrote the introduction did a dishonorable thing.

The final book we will examine is the work by Velibor Dzhomic called *Sects, Satanism, and False Prophets* (published in 1994 by the Diocese of Zhichko).

Let me defer to the commentary of Protestant theologian Goran Maksimovic, who wrote *Why Was Christ Crucified?*, with whom I fully agree:

“Let me mention one Velibor Dzhomic, Orthodox publicist under the page ‘Orthodoxy’ in an article called ‘In the Service of God and His People’ notes that ‘State authorities do not care about the rampage of heresy in Serbia’ and ‘the spiritual suffering of our people.’ In the same article, the author of the work *Sects* freely judges them as a major danger to national security. His particular concern about non-Orthodox believers inspired Dzhomic to write the book *Sects, Satanism, and False Prophets*. It is hard to ignore the impression after reading this book that physical violence and reprisals against non-Orthodox religious communities could result, and not without the responsibility of the author Dzhomic. Specifically, after the author lists the tasks of individual believers of

¹²³ Ranko Mandic, *Cannibal in the Serbian Home*, (Belgrade 1995) 5-9. Author’s emphasis.

the ‘other’ churches of Kragujevac, their family problems, parental origins, and the like, he proceeds to condemn them as satanic communities full of brainwashing, malice, and other evils. After making such vitriolic accusations, the author gives addresses, places of meeting, and even residential addresses of individual members of such communities. Such arbitrary judgments, stereotypical labeling, and division of people into enemies and patriots, our and foreign people, sometimes can be used for the achievement of specific agendas and totally fit the philosophy of totalitarianism – the end justifies the means. Adherents of this philosophy care only about their desired goals. The means in such situations are irrelevant... I believe **such treatment of dissenters violates the basic principles of democracy as an important achievement of civilization and ushers in totalitarianism.**”¹²⁴

Discrimination against Religious Minorities through Mass Media

Although biased and prejudicial writing and reporting in the media (radio, television, and newspaper) about the origin, activity, and objectives of minority religious communities existed earlier, the mid 1990’s represented a turning point in this issue. The period of the fiercest journalistic controversies with “cults” erupted over three consecutive years from 1996 to 1999.

According to my recollection, everything started over events in Novi Sad in January 1996 surrounding the tragic death of Mladjan Kostic, a student from the town of Zajecar. According to the media at the time, he belonged to a Baptist Church. The media drew this conclusion because they found in his home some books by the Baptist preacher Simo Ralevic. The press alleged that the Baptists were responsible for his death. They noted that the young man from Novi Sad lived at the dormitory of the Baptist Theological School. In the eyes of the press, it was crystal clear: Baptist religious teaching was the only reason to drive this young man to end his wave in the cold waves of the Danube River.

At that time, various daily newspapers having circulation of over several hundred thousand copies carried titles such as “Suicide in the Name of Christ” (*Our Struggle*), “Do Not Be Troubled, I Will Resurrect” (*Evening News*), “Protocol of Death” (*Timochkakrimea Review*), and others. Daily newspapers (around Christmas 1996) reported on the event and revealed “new information” about the tragedy.

As expected, the journalistic articles were full of misinformation and deliberate lies. One such lie was a fictional conversation between the youth Kostic, who was located at that time in Zajecar, and pastor Zharko Djordjevic of the Baptist Church of Novi Sad. Here is one such “conversation” as conveyed to a journalist in Zajecar in the article “Our Struggle” written in *Timochka Crime Review* (Issue 5, March 20, 1996, page 10):

¹²⁴ Goran Maksimovic, *Why Was Christ Crucified?* (Nis 1995) 59-60. Author’s emphasis.

“The tragedy happened right after Christmas, when Mladjan, after a brief stay at the family home in the village Salasha, near Zajecar, due to an emergency returned to Novi Sad, where he studied. The return to Novi Sad was a result of a telephone conversation with a certain Zharko from Novi Sad, who told Mladjan that he was not obeying Jesus’s will. Borivoje, his father, thought his son’s behavior was suspicious and overheard the conversation. He overheard Zharko to say in defense that ‘Now God could forgive you, but...’”

The tragically suffering youth in his family home in Salasha had a great number of books by Simo Ralevic. The journalists deliberately chose only two provocatively sounding titles: *From Alexander to Antichrist* and *How Will the Dead Resurrect?* The journalists deliberately misled readers by implicating the contents of these books as responsible for the youth’s suicide. (In reality, these titles are easy to understand in light of the contents of these books: the former is a commentary on Daniel 11 and the latter is a commentary on 1 Corinthians 15. Neither book has the slightest allusion of calling someone to suicide.¹²⁵) In addition to these books, there were certainly other titles that spoke of the love for God and neighbor.

However, the author of the article “Neo-Protestant Activities among Us” in the book published by Svetigore hints that this tragic event illustrates a specific “danger” of the non-Orthodox that threatens society:

“The well-known Baptist preacher Simo Ralevic of Peja... His zeal is not harmless, as testified by the suicide of Mladjan Kostic, a 21 year-old student from Zajecar who committed suicide in Novi Sad by jumping into the Danube River. His father Bora recalled him saying: ‘Do not worry, Father, I will resurrect again. I pray for all of you. Send my regards to the family.’”¹²⁶

Subsequent news articles about this tragedy included manipulative allegations that the “sect” financially exploited its members. Specifically, several references in the newspapers alleged that Mladan Kostic sent to Ralevic a voluntary contribution of 3,000 dinars (which in 1996 would have equated to 1,000 DM, or about 4 months average wage). The evidence stemmed from thank-you cards mailed from Pec that were found on the farm. However, nowhere do these articles mention that the money was sent over a period of several years during which high inflation (dates on the cards stretched back to 1992) would have greatly eroded their value.

Let us hear the explanation of this tragedy on the part of the man declared responsible for the youth’s death, Baptist preacher Zharko Djordjevic, in the newspaper *World*:

“‘The first time I saw Mladjan,’ said Djordjevic, ‘was last September when he submitted an application for our dormitory. During the last few years, our

¹²⁵ Even Orthodox authors know full well that Baptists do not advocate suicide. The book *The Bible without God, Christianity without the Church* states “Surely, no one argues that Baptists teach suicide – it would not be fair to them as people, neither to the Truth.” 166.

¹²⁶ *The Bible without God, Christianity without the Church*, (Svetigora: Cetinje 1997) 166.

religious community due to financial difficulties was forced to take in people who were not our students or even believers. Thus Mladjan found a home here among us. His mother, who first showed interest over the phone in having her son stay with us, brought Mladjan for a visit. To my knowledge, she had no objections. We were pleased with Mladan's behavior, he was a very quiet young man and, most importantly, he respected the house rules. That is all we asked of him, because he was not a member of our religious fellowship... Mladjan contacted me the first time on January 9 around 10 PM. He called me from his home in Zajecar. He was in a very euphoric mood and was quite confused. I was fairly tired and did not immediately realize what was happening. However, his statement that he was going to display his full spiritual power given to him by one of his 18 demon friends shocked me. His next statement was no less shocking, 'Here, my three angels, take my energy, it is time for me to leave.' I was speechless. I tried to reason with him, to convince him that what he was doing was not good, that he was imagining it all. However, I did not have much success. I told him to call his father so we could talk a little, but he did not. **Bora Kostic that evening was not at home but in a town called Bora. It is an outright lie, as some have reported, that he overheard our conversation.** I continued the conversation with Mladan's mother. I asked her if he were healthy. Mrs. Kostic in a sad and mistrustful manner responded that he was all right. Mrs. Kostic and I at one point agreed to cooperate in attempting to break Mladjan away from his dark thoughts...' 'As a professional clergyman,' says Pastor Djordjevic, 'I can convince myself to waver between acts of commission versus omission in the case of Mladjan. Had I realized how desperate the situation was, I still wonder – would I have the right to send someone else's child to see a psychiatrist, when that child has a father and mother who could decide his fate. Now I very much regret that I was not decisive, perhaps it might have prevented the tragedy. The words to express sadness for this young man are inexpressible. On his account, at least within these walls, only said good things, through this accident has greatly harmed us as well as other religious institutions. And I wish to emphasize: all the statements in the press given by Mladan's family – we understand their despair, pain, and desire to find a culprit. We are not offended, but we forgive them... I am sorry that this tragedy has been exploited by someone in the media to persecute the further work of Baptists, but you know that even though we as citizens are wronged, we are accustomed to the attitude of ignorance toward us on the part of the government. However, we will not just let it go,' regretfully comments Zharko Djordjevic."¹²⁷

Even though the youth who tragically suffered was not a member of the Baptist church, despite that he possessed and probably read literature by Ralevic (which, and it should be clearly understood, is sent to anyone by mail without charge on the basis of the completed order form, thus making it impossible to assess the mental state of the recipient) filled with messages and calls for obeying higher moral principles and acquiring Christian virtue, his suicide triggered an avalanche of mostly unjustified

¹²⁷ *World* (date unknown). Author's emphasis.

accusations against a vast number of minority religious communities in Serbia and Montenegro.

Years after this event, due to sensationalism and the desire to sell more product, journalists, backed by members of the clergy and other alleged cult watchers of the Serbian Orthodox Church (whose works were mentioned earlier in this chapter) filled numerous pages with much unfounded information. They exhibited not one hint of “compassion” toward those who were stigmatized. Logically, members of religious minorities were given no opportunity to defend themselves.

Here are just a few titles of articles on religious sects published in daily newspapers from 1996 to 1998:¹²⁸

“Illusion instead of real life” (*Borba*)

“Truth against dogma” (*Borba* learns about a new Yugoslavian movement formed in Belgrade to defend children against religious sects) (*Borba*)

“Tears against nightmares” (Report on legislative initiatives to outlaw dangerous religious sects) (*Politics Express*)

“Sects suppress national identity – the sociology of minority religious communities” (*Politics*)

“Prophets tugging our sleeves into the cells and the squares –the phenomenon of sects” (*Politics*)

“The Mother of Satan – on the trail of New Democracy’s proposed legislation to ban activities of dangerous religious sects” (*Politics Express*)

“Saved by a missionary – whether the repaganization of the Serbian people has begun” (*Politics Express*)

“United against evil – the founding of the Yugoslav Movement of Children and Families against Sects” (*Politics Express*)

“A gang of spiritual deceivers – eminent Russian theologians recently in Vrnjachkaja Banja discuss religious sects” (*Politics Express*)

“Sects in the schoolyard – emergence of a growing worry” (*Politics*)

“Organized crime – tracking legislative initiative to ban dangerous religious sects” (*Politics Express*)

“Albanian narco-mafia supplies religious sects with drugs”

“Sectarians desecrate Orthodox traditions at a funeral”

“Disintegration of the Serbian national identity”

“The cession of mind and soul”

“Ten thousand Jehovah’s Witnesses invade Serbia” (*Weekly Telegraph*, November 25, 1998) with subtitles “Jehovah’s Witnesses pillage soul and money”, “Shameless profanity”, “Brainwashing the helpless”, “Robbing people of their religion and their children”

“The new saviors destroy community – the Easter epistle of Patriarch Pavle of the Serbian Orthodox Church” (*Blic*)

“False messiahs and prophets” (*Orthodoxy*, March 1, 1995)

¹²⁸ Adapted from the book of Dragoljub B. Georgevic: *Sects, Cults, and Prophets of New Truths*, 117-118 and 36-37.

“Religious sects and sex – the horror of Babylon” (*Evening News*, March 6, 1998)
“Sects plague our city” (*Nasha Rec*, local newspaper of Leskovac, November 23, 2001)
“False soul savers” (*Pancevac*, July 19, 2002)
“Diversion of the line – the work of unknown sects?” (*Balkan*, September 2, 2004)
“Sects disguised as Santa Claus – packages sent to the Baptist Church in Bora are confiscated” (*Evening News*, December 24, 2004)
In addition to many more articles...

After this cursory review of titles of newspaper articles with attacks on “sects” hurled by the very negative attitude of the Serbian Orthodox Church and its believers with unsubstantiated charges of all sorts of crimes, let us do a more detailed review of two periodicals. (Compared to the numerous allegations against religious minorities, seldom does an article appear that objectively examines the other side of the story.)

Although the first publication because of its content ought never to be considered in most situations of serious research, we are forced to include it because of its inflammatory articles on sects. It typifies the general hysteria that dominated Serbia in 1998. Here is a sample of what our poor citizens were forced to put up with by our “professional” journalists:

On the front page of the December 10, 1998 issue of *Eyewitness – Dossier X* is printed in capital letters “SECTS” with a background of a cold, bare skull and props for performing satanic rituals. The newspaper published an interview with Nikola Radmanovic, detective for the private Belgrade agency “Soko Security”, and his associate, the famous anti-cult “warrior” Dr. Vukadin Cvetanovic. Clearly, this interview abounds in false allegations and unsubstantiated accusations. Of course, we must affirm that the overall knowledge of religious sects by these detectives is “deficient” and leaves us with the folk saying: “God save us from the experts!” Here are some of their statements:

“Sects are backed by major world powers, which we might call Satanic Freemasonry... We believe there exist more than 250 sects consisting of 380,000 members. More than 80 of them are registered as citizens’ associations, charitable organizations, governmental organizations, or religious groups. Over the last 10 years, we have seen the emergence of a religious supermarket that offers ‘something for everyone’. **In principle, more or less, these sects are dangerous.**”

In response to the question of which sects are the most dangerous, the detective answers:

“Of the pseudo-Christian sects, by far the Jehovah’s Eyewitnesses¹²⁹ which are centrally located in Zemun in the Serbian Republic of Yugoslavia. The Pentecostal or Pentecoster¹³⁰ Church based in Siminoj 8 in Belgrade is another. Why are they dangerous? The Jehovah’s Eyewitnesses have the most elaborate

¹²⁹ Our “experts” do not even know how to pronounce the names of their religious communities correctly!

¹³⁰ Our dear “expert” Dr. Cvetanovic constantly uses this incorrect name in the interview.

methods, the most money, and the longest tradition. They were first registered by us in 1914 in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.¹³¹ They are organized like a classic intelligence organization with a spider web and headquarters in Brooklyn. The Pentecoster Church is a direct representative and promoter of American foreign policy... They are nothing more than ‘helping hands’ for American diplomacy in the interests of the Pentagon leadership.”

Under the subtitles “Satanic sects infect Serbia” and “More new sects”, our periodical reveals some names of different groups (apparently ignorant of the fact that some of “them” have existed for decades or even centuries):

“On the territory of the Former Republic of Yugoslavia, numerous religious sects and communities operate. The most prominent include: the Pentecostal Church, Nadventists (Adventists), Scientologists, Baptists, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Hare Krishna, Order of the Eastern Templars, Evangelicals, Mormons, Moonies, Sri Chinmoy, Order of the Eastern Temple, Veda, Satia Sai Baba, Knights of the East, Unification Church, Rotarians...”

This periodical does not satisfy expectations for a professionally and expertly delivered list of religious communities! Not only do we see “babies and frogs” lumped in the same basket together (e.g. Baptists with “Order of the Eastern Templars” and “Rotarians”), but also the periodical shows a distinct lack of knowledge by repeating the same groups twice despite its limits on space. For example, the “Moonies” are identical to the “Unification Church”. The “Order of the Eastern Templars” is identical to the “Order of the Eastern Temple”. We should not neglect to mention the backdrop of a photo showing some naked dead bodies of people (probably older children) from a mass suicide attempt.

What can we say about all this?

Or should we just ignore *Dossier X*, even though the text was authored by a person who should have shown greater expertise, at the very least judging by his advanced theological education?

The second periodical we will examine contains the article of an Orthodox priest, Archdeacon Vladislav Vulovic, entitled “Sects: the Path to Insanity and Damnation”. Issue number 5 from October 1998 of the monthly journal *Eternal Phenomena* presents the article by this Orthodox priest as a hot issue.

The front cover misleads readers into a state of horror even before reading the article. A photograph of a member of an indigenous group with his face painted in different patterns, bloodshot eyes, pierced tongue, and holding in his hands above his forehead a carved wooden knife.

¹³¹ Our “detective” should bear in mind that his statement is an historic impossibility! In 1914 there was no such thing as the “Kingdom of Yugoslavia” or a kingdom of the Serbs to precede it.

So readers could not forget what they saw on the first page, and before they read the article about “The enemies of Orthodoxy”, they can receive a special black and white supplement on sects. The author on the first place of this supplement explains that “the term ‘sect’ was devised by Orthodoxy, but he has come up with a more accurate definition:

“A conscious and willful departure from the holy will of God, also known as apostasy or backsliding.”

Archdeacon Vulovic explains the Orthodox understanding of the identity of those involved in “apostasy” and “backsliding”. His exhortation for his readers to take his lessons to heart demonstrate the cruel spirit of extreme intolerance and bigotry that predominates amongst young Orthodox seminarians:

“Apostasy or backsliding (heresy) are terms considered ambiguous and ugly of a sect (the inappropriate usage of these terms has resulted in great confusion and ambiguity in professional circles as well as among religious believers, even the common people) **consist of a conscious and deliberate deviation from the truths revealed by the holy God which are now preserved exclusively by Holy Orthodoxy.** Apostasy and backsliding deny the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, the Savior, and the true Incarnation... Apostasy was born in the West, in the bosom of a depraved orthodoxy and a perverse conception of God. Raised from despair as moral opposition to Catholicism, it replaces the lost moral authority of religion with the goal to satisfy the spiritual thirst of humanity. It does not offer salvation through Christ, but rather through violence. Thus, it proposes freedom through means of violence, union of blood with the sword. **Therefore, the great enemies of Orthodoxy consist not only of atheistic, satanic, demonic, or pagan thought, but they also include the perverted face of Western Christianity, in the first place, Roman Catholicism. Protestantism** and all its surrogates revealed today are, in fact, **simply a continuation of atheism**, which in many respects has brought the world to ‘the great harlot of Rome’.

What do we see in this text? First of all, we read the phrase “enemies of Orthodoxy” represent all possible churches and religious communities ranging from the monolithic Roman Catholic community to all Protestant churches and their “surrogates” to overt atheists and Satanists! Beautiful! What else can we expect from this auspicious beginning? Nothing gets better. (The following pages list some of the numerous minority religious fellowships with a couple of brief, categorical, and vague sentences which reveal no information about their most essential beliefs, let alone giving no valid reasons as to why their appearance presents “danger”.)

Our prominent sociologist of religion, Milan Vukomanovic, in his book *The Sacred and the Masses* renders his judgment on the oft-manifested phenomenon of unfounded stigmatization of minority religious communities in Serbia:

“Seeking sensationalism, this irrational, utterly paranoid fear of sects is **propagated the most by our mass media**. As a reminder of some of the titles bandied about in newspapers: ‘Sects: Weapons of the West’, ‘Sects Plague Serbia’, ‘Sectarianism Is Disease’, ‘Sectarianism is Sin’, ‘Sects and the New World Order’, or just the definition that ‘Anything Not Orthodox Belongs to a Sect’. **A whole series of brutal murders and suicides among us is arbitrarily blamed on various ‘sects’ and ‘satanic cults’ that would later come to trial. The courts would determine that the true motives of these tragic events had nothing to do with religion and even less with Satanism.** As a result of such fear of the ‘non-Orthodox sectarian’ religious groups and movements, **various anti-sectarian and even quite militant organizations have arisen in the public eye.** Such a phenomenon is confined not only to our seminarians, but also to our psychiatrists, lawyers, private detectives, and even soldiers! **They methodically spread their baseless research in our most widely circulated newspapers.** For example, one article in a popular Belgrade newspaper claimed that as many as one out of five schoolchildren belong to one of a number of Satanic sects. That is, one out of five children ages 7 to 14! This information is based upon **one extremely problematic research sample** of 194 students from 2 grades at the same elementary school.”¹³²

The comparison of Christian churches with Satanists along with their joint caricature as atheists and wicked enemies of Orthodoxy in media articles over the last two decades has resulted in a deeply negative attitude of the majority of Serbian people toward all minority religious groups.

One example of such hostility toward minority non-Orthodox religious communities will be demonstrated by two responses to my letter to the daily newspaper *24 Hours* issue number 235, page 7, dated March 13, 1998. Pay close attention to the good efforts made to express the views in my letter, followed by the tone and the “interpretation” of those who responded:

The Problem of Sects

Dear Editor of *24 Hours*:

Almost every day, we find newspaper articles writing about the negative effects of religious sects. Frequent discussions held by alleged experts on television are also shown. These examples treat all non-Orthodox religious groups as sects, with equally negative connotations and without any clear distinction among them. That is, Protestant communities that interpret the Bible differently than the Orthodox Church are equated to occult magic groups and satanic cults. All these mass media programs discuss cults in general and highlight the negative impact of occultists and Satanists on our nation. They provide a misleading impression by equating all religious communities of Protestant origin with the negative activity of Satanists.

¹³² Milan Vukomanovic, *The Sacred and the Masses*, 124-5. Author’s emphasis.

We must not forget that in our own country there exist many national minorities (Hungarians and Slovaks) who are not traditional Orthodox like most Serbs, yet many if not most belong to Protestant churches. Do we have the moral or human right to tarnish people of other nations as sectarians and cast dirt upon their religious affiliation? For do they have the right in their own countries to condemn the Orthodox Church, a minority in their homelands, as a sect? Many former Protestants have converted to Orthodoxy, and the Orthodox Church boasts of them, yet why should the Orthodox Church oppose the human right of every Serb or anyone else who chooses to join a Protestant fellowship?

I believe on this issue that we should not use double standards. Give every person the freedom to choose. Proper reporting should serve the ultimate objective of informing the public about the work of all religious communities in Yugoslavia. The incitement of hatred is one of the greatest evils. Listen to the Incarnated One who taught: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'

Kind Regards,
Ivica Stamenkovic
Belgrade

Regarding the Deception of the Ignorant

Protestant churches arose in reaction to the supremacy of the Roman Catholic Church, by which logic all Orthodox Churches in essence would be Protestant. But it is untrue that the (so-called ruling) Orthodox Church (who and where?) should be thrown into the same bag as the Protestant sects and churches. Not only is it insulting, but it is also a malicious allegation (again who?). The Orthodox Church does not harass our Christian brothers and sisters who belong to other churches. On the contrary, there is ongoing cooperation with churches, not with cults.

However, our "simple religious people" (presumably Serbian) are not so gullible that they are unable to tell the difference between a horn and a candle. Probably there exist a few of them who will buy into the lie that the difference between churches and sects consists merely in that sects "interpret the Bible differently than the Orthodox Church." The differences are much deeper. More needs to be spoken openly about our insurmountable differences. This should be seen as a pretense to equate religious cults with the Protestant churches. The inaction of the Serbian Orthodox Church in certain parts of the country has allowed the religious cults to gather strength. This true objection to cults should be shared by other Christian churches.

Thank you,
L.M.
24323 Feketic
(24 Hours, Issue 242, March 21-2, 1998)

The Problem of the Problem

I am writing in response to the letter published in *24 Hours* (Issue 235, March 13, 1998) entitled “The Problem of Sects”.

If you continue to publish such letters, our national problems will never be solved. And again, although the government gives registration to the sect of Mr. Ivica Stamenkovic as a religious community, it does not mean that it is one in reality. The law of the land in this area does not have another term. But, even if the law does not recognize this term, doctrine does. Religious communities and sects are two different things.

I am surprised that Mr. Stamenkovic uses the term “Incarnation”. This word is exclusively an Orthodox term that denotes such serious weight that it should not be used casually by anyone for any reason. The quote to which he refers was not said by the Incarnation, but by God Himself in the Old Testament.

I do not believe that Mr. Ivica Stamenkovic loves anyone, Serbs especially.

S.J.
Jagodina
(*24 Hours*, March 23, 1998)

Now we have chronicled the mental manipulation and brainwashing of people by the Orthodox clergy-inquisitors and their colleagues, the pseudo-experts such as Biljana Djurdjevic-Stojkovic and sympathetic journalists. They succeeded in producing the intended effect of poisoning most Serbs to the Gospel of Christ and inducing in them an extremely negative attitude toward all non-Orthodox and especially “sectarians”. It is now appropriate to describe some of the concrete events that have occurred in more recent years.

The Consequences of Religious Discrimination and Propaganda among the Citizens of Serbia and Montenegro

After the bombardment of propaganda in the texts we have just read, a sea of lies and half-truths placed with malicious intent to manifest hostility against minority evangelical Protestant and other religious communities, these waves still pound the minds of our people with the same force. They have brainwashed our citizens with fear and hatred and deprived them of what little reason they had.

What consequences can our society expect from such a diabolical effort?

Certainly not positive interpersonal relationships, democratic awareness, or toleration of diversity!

What we can expect is the rage of misguided citizens toward “evil members of destructive sects” portrayed as masquerading as moral and decent people (“wolves in sheep’s clothing”). These misguided citizens desire vengeance against Christians who are lied about as people who threaten children and young people, i.e. those who are

guilty of almost every evil that has recently occurred in our country (such as drug addiction, alcoholism, human trafficking, kidnappings, disappearances, murders and suicides, military defeats, etc.).

A poll of public opinion was conducted in Serbia and Montenegro in the year 2000. The Yugoslav Association for Religious Freedom (JUVS) surveyed 1,000 participants, including 741 from Serbia and 263 from Montenegro.

In response to the question “Do you consider yourself tolerant?”, only a small percentage in Serbia and Montenegro gave a negative response:

“The dilemma, or more specifically the concern about tolerance, especially manifested themselves in the respondents’ answers about themselves and their personal attitude to tolerance. Only 3% in Montenegro and 5% in Serbia consider themselves fundamentally intolerant, while 75%, or 3 out of 4, in Serbia and 67%, or 2 out of 3 people, in Montenegro positively assessed themselves as ‘very tolerant’ or ‘a person who strives to be tolerant.’”¹³³

However, despite such a large number of “tolerant” responses, the same study shows that these people demonstrated a high lack of tolerance towards people of faith different from themselves and their activities. Here is what the survey reveals:

“Where do we find people not to be tolerant? The results reveal a significant lack of religious tolerance, particularly with regard to minority religious communities. Adventists, Baptists, Methodists and Pentecostals were singled out in the literature as being ‘sects’.

The research shows that many respondents hold a negative perspective of ‘sects’. **They mostly connect minority religious communities with negative, deviant social groups such as ‘Satanists’, etc.** This is very evident when respondents were asked about the activities of churches in the area of youth evangelism. 79% in Serbia and 76% in Montenegro did not approve of such activities of religious minorities. **Respondents expressed intolerance and even hostility toward religious minorities** as ‘religious apostates’. 41% of respondents in Serbia and 52% in Montenegro **favored the prohibition with additional means of force to combat ‘religious apostates’** of minority religious communities.”¹³⁴

Dr. Novak Popovic, the head of the Center for Media and Communications, cites three primary reasons for hostility toward the so-called “sects”: (1) the ignorance of citizens, (2) the lack of knowledge about basic human rights (including the right to choose one’s own religion), and (3) the cultivation of prejudice (for people have never seen any actual

¹³³ Novak A. Popovic, “Are You Tolerant?” (JUVS: Belgrade, 2001).

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 21. Author’s emphasis.

examples in daily life or society of negative activity of the just mentioned minority religious communities).¹³⁵

On the other hand, we can conclude that a fundamental reason why people are so ignorant is because of the misinformation disseminated to them through the publication of works such as those earlier mentioned in this chapter. Unethical authors having written cheap books (which have no right to be considered serious, documented research) and sensationalist newspaper articles to poison people's openness to the Gospel!

The survey just mentioned before also reveals that a large number of respondents favored the use of violence in order to restrict the future activity of religious sects. Unfortunately, many did not choose to stop with just words. Since the early part of the 1990's, numerous acts of physical violence have been committed against the religious life of minority religious communities.

The last portion of this chapter will describe some of the events that have ensued in the last few years. Many citizens of our country never have heard of these events due to the media's censorship and unwillingness to tell the truth to domestic and international audiences about the Serbian Orthodox Church and her storm troopers. Not only do such events pose a threat to religious freedom, but they even threaten the lives of religious dissidents, honest and decent citizens of our nation.

Consider that the entire series of "incidents" have impacted many human lives. Some of them involve physical attacks on members of minority religious communities. Let us first examine events that occurred only a few years ago at the start of the 21st century.

My reason for omitting earlier human rights violations is simple. The Serbian Orthodox Church has perpetrated so many violations of religious rights and freedoms that it would take an entirely separate book to list and describe them.

The first such event regards a seminar on the topic "Religious education in school?" hosted by the Departments of Philosophy at the University of Novi Sad on April 19, 2001. Three professors from the Departments of Law and Philosophy were to present and happened to be members of 3 minority religious communities: Adventist, Baptist, and Evangelical (Pentecostal) Churches.

The event was promoted days in advance. Posters were plastered around the city. Stapled on top of these posters were other posters on which were written in large letters the word "CULT". On the eve of the seminar, two large double windows of the Baptist Church were shattered. This further raised tensions provoked earlier by the posters. A journalist with the newspaper *Citizens' Paper* learned in an interview with one of the

¹³⁵ "However, one must pay special attention to Serbian respondents' answers to the very concept of a sect as 'aggressive and dangerous' entities. Such opinions, especially pertaining to these specific religious communities, are flawed and shocking, considering that these communities have not manifested any negative behavior nor fomented any form of intolerance toward their environment or society." *Ibid.*, 12.

elders of the Baptist Church that the windows had been shattered several weeks before. Graffiti with the words “Heresy” and “Leave Serbia!” were sprayed on the front of the church.

During the morning television show on Novi Sad TV, giving an interview on the occasion of the seminar, Bishop Irinej Bulovic uttered that “no sect has the right to dictate the formation of the nation’s conscience” and called for the imposition of compulsory religious instruction in schools.

Before the seminar commenced at the Department of Philosophy, the police arrived, followed by members of the “Serbian National Front” and only afterward the attendees of the seminar. The “Serbian National Front” handed out flyers to all the citizens with the message “Say NO to sects” and the explanation that every true Serb must be Orthodox and all else is sectarianism.

One of the members of this organization proclaimed to the reporters gathered that the “Serbian National Front” was founded just days prior to the date of the seminar as a revolt against the invasion of sects against Serbia. He announced that the organization consisted of students from various departments in Novi Sad with the goal of protecting the holy Serbian people. Representatives of these organizations denounced all the churches represented at the seminar as sects.

It should be mentioned that the seminar participants invited representatives of the Serbian Orthodox Church to participate. However, they did not respond as they did not want to be in the company of sectarians (which part of the audience cheered loudly).

Aleksandr Mitrovic, Protestant bishop of the Evangelical (Pentecostal) Church, told a reporter that the Serbia Orthodox Church had organized incidents occurring before and during the evening of the seminar. He based his conclusion on seeing Orthodox priests amidst the members of the “Serbian National Front”. He believed that “this information only stirs up citizens into revolt and is an attempt to distract them from their overall national, religious, and political discontent. This comes on the evidence that youth participated in violence, even supported by organizations such as the Church of St. Alexander Nevsky.”

Mr. Mitrovic back in January 21, 1998 had filed a protest with the government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. He had complained of the promulgation of libel against religious minorities by equating them with satanic cults. His protest elicited no response.

In that very same year, just the opposite occurred in Vojvodina. The local Assembly passed a law that established a series of protective measures against religious sects. The law never gave a clear definition of what exactly a sect is.

Mitrovic explained that after all these years, some teachers in the public schools mocked children of believers as “cult ambassadors”.

A short report in *The Public Voice* dated April 17, 2001 describes an incident occurring the day before the vandalism of the Baptist church in Novi Sad and two days before the seminar. Under the heading "Belgrade", the article reports that unknown assailants demolished an Adventist church building in Borci. Here is an excerpt:

"The Adventist church in Borci on 6 National Street once again was attacked by vandals. Unknown suspect broke through the doors and shattered the glass in the windows.

'Our church has been under attack for several months. In December, someone sprayed our whole church building with black paint. Last month, someone broke down the gate. The entire interior of the church building is still covered with glass. In all three incidents, the police came and filed a report, but they have done nothing, except to conclude that there was no burglary because nothing was stolen,' related Vlastimir Rancic, pastor of the Adventist Church."¹³⁶

June 2003

Pastor of the Evangelical Methodist Church of Vrsca, Jano Sjanta, informed other the other minority religious communities about the attack on their property on the eve of their worship service on Sunday, June 15. (Apparently, the intent of the attack was to prevent them from holding their regular weekly worship service.) He noted that a rock weighing 600 grams, the size of a man's fist, smashed a window around 1:15 A.M. and made an indent in the wall with its sharpest edge. The pastor stated that attacks on their religious fellowship began a few years ago when they found a tablet with the name of their church broken. Since the first incident, the church has suffered 8 attacks with stones and bricks. On three of these occasions, they suffered shattered windows, broken shutters, and even a broken metal grill. One of these attacks set a new notorious record. The result of 7 bricks having been thrown at the church and broke 11 windows. One brick weighed 4 pounds. One time, the pastor's automobile was damaged when he had parked it on the street outside the church. Local police tried to persuade believers that these attacks were perpetrated only by drunkards. However, the believers maintain that these attacks were deliberate and well-planned.

June 2003

Almost simultaneously with the latest attack on the Evangelical-Methodist Church in Vrsac, the Baptists in Pancevo also had stones thrown at their church building. For several consecutive nights, unknown assailants repeatedly broke through the gate and shattered glass within the church building. (One time last year high above the gate, they wrote in graffiti: "THIS IS A SECT.") On the evening of June 21/22, they broke through and destroyed a chandelier and some flowers. The local church filed a criminal complaint against the person of N.N., but police even five years later have never come up with any results.

June 2003

¹³⁶ *Public Voice*, April 18, 2001, 11.

The First Baptist Church of Belgrade filed a criminal complaint on Monday, June 30, 2003. An unknown criminal inscribed threatening graffiti on the building several days before. On the wall of the door was inscribed: "GET OUT OF HERE! DEATH TO THE SECTARIANS!" and above these words: "SERBIA!" The police report noted that this was not the first time that such graffiti was found. Indeed, it had occurred over the last 2-3 years. Every several months, the criminals would return and paint the same messages, adding paint to the graffiti.

August 2003

The elders of the Evangelical Pentecostal Church of Vrsac announced the writing of large insulting graffiti on the façade of their church building. They informed the local Interior Ministry inspector familiar with religious affairs. He confirmed that such an act is an open threat to religious liberty. The elders also informed other minority fellowships that over a period of months, vandals would break the windows of the church building. A few years ago, some vandal stuck a poster on the church building listing the beliefs of satanic cults. It stated that the church was responsible for its own persecution.

February 2004

During the night of February 26-7, windows at the Novi Sad Baptist Church once again were shattered.

March 2004

On March 18 around 11 PM, a group of around 30 hooligans hurled Molotov cocktails at the Biblical Culture Center in Nis, an affiliate of the Church of God. Their intent was to burn the building down. Were it not for the quick intervention of some neighbors, more damage might have ensued.¹³⁷

April 2004

At the end of April around midnight, large rocks were thrown and shattered 3 windows at the Christian Fellowship in Novi Sad. The elders reported that the building suffered extensive material damage.

August 2004

Over the course of 3 days, from Saturday, July 31 until Tuesday, August 2, nearly 10 windows were destroyed in 2 churches in Novi Sad: the Baptist Church and the Christian Fellowship.

The news program on television-radio B-92 reported that early in the morning of August 4, unknown attackers broke 4 double-glass windows on the building of the Christian Fellowship. Just before vandalizing this building, they shattered glass windows and a door of the office of the Christian charity "Rainbow".

¹³⁷ These events have connection with the events in Kosovo and Metohija of March 17 and March 18, 2004. Albanian fanatics burned down many Serbian homes and buildings owned by the Serbian Orthodox Church. In retaliation, radical Serbs destroyed property, including mosques, in Belgrade and Nis.

During the middle of the night between Sunday, August 8, and Monday, August 9, hooligans broke the glass of the windows and door of the Roma center “Oasis” and the premises of the Evangelical Roma Church. Another similar crime occurred earlier on the evening of June 4 and 5 of the same year. This facility served to host worship services for the Evangelical Roma Church and classrooms and a nursery for Roma children.

December 2004

On Christmas Eve (according to the new calendar, Orthodox Christmas), 1 minute after midnight, a group of hooligans tossed a firecracker into the church building of the Church of God in Sremska Mitrovica. They stomped their feet on a detached part of the door.

However, not all incidents are confined solely to the physical property of minority religious communities. Some of them had the intent of threatening and endangering the lives of visitors to gatherings organized by religious minorities.

For example, in 2001 the United Pentecostal Church (which has been present in Serbia for over 80 years) organized a conference in the stadium “Tikvar” in the town of Backa Palanka. The purpose was to celebrate 100 years of Pentecostalism in Europe. Similar celebrations had been conducted in other countries such as Belgium, Belarus, Russia, Ukraine, Spain, Norway, and Germany. All of them took place without any incident. However, this conference in the “mountainous Balkans” (even in multi-ethnic Vojvodina) would turn out a different way.

Many foreign nationals attended this conference. Extending our foreign guests “hospitality” was a group of some 20 extremists who identified themselves as members of the Serbian Orthodox Church. These protesters threatened to chase away and lynch the organizers of this conference. Furthermore, they threw Molotov cocktails at the guests arriving in buses.

Let us refer to an article “Shame of the City” written by the journalist L. Petrovic (unfortunately, I do not know from which newspaper this came) on July 19, 2001:

“They (the protesters) also broke down the door of the stadium and destroyed property worth DM 2,000 of the Christian Center. After negotiations, the protesters allowed 600-700 attendees to leave. They threw rocks at two of the buses and physically beat up a foreign national. One of the guests was sent to a local hospital in Novi Sad with a fractured skull. Others suffered minor injuries and material damage.”

Minority religious communities would suffer even worse evils after this event. On August 8, 2003 in the town of Vrdnik, a concert of Christian music was arranged to honor the 30 year anniversary of Christian camps in this place. A large number of over 350 young people, mostly under the age of 25, attended from all parts of Serbia as well as from abroad: Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Germany, Canada, USA,

and the Netherlands. The police were fully aware that the concert was taking place, yet they did not send anyone to be present.

The concert went smoothly for the first hour. Then at approximately 10 PM, an unknown perpetrator, most likely with an axe, cut power from the sound system. A brother familiar with electronics managed to repair it after 15 minutes. The concert resumed.

Half an hour later, the concert was interrupted by the sound of a large explosion caused by a hand grenade (or something similar). An unknown terrorist hurled it into the audience and stole away quickly into the darkness. Thank the Lord that another bomb went off between parked cars and did not throw shrapnel into people. The bomb knocked down some tree branches and frightened the visitors.

The police came only after a long delay when the criminals had left the scene of the crime. They looked around, found nothing, and left. A number of the visitors left the concert. However, that was not the end of their troubles.

After the concert ended around midnight, as the organizers were packing their equipment, a black automobile appeared. (The head organizer recognized its license plate from before.) The driver kept driving his car straight at the people and tried to kill them with his car.

The police were called once again. When the driver saw them approaching, he sped away from the scene.

The next day, the police returned and conducted an investigation. The concert organizers visited the mayor of the town who expressed his concern and condemned the violence of fanaticized rebels.¹³⁸

As you can see, Serbia is not a safe place for minority religious communities and their members to minister. The shameful propaganda of the Serbian media continues to do damage in the form of damaged facades, shattered windows, broken doors, and other destroyed property of nontraditional faiths in our country.

However, we should also be stunned that only a handful of media outlets on rare occasion report on these events. Such events perpetrated are great tragedies. The evil is not just that the media continues to cover up the threats made to non-Orthodox citizens of Serbia, but they do it with the full backing of official government authorities by giving people false information!

One specific example is the crude distortion presented by the media of the report of the US Department of State regarding religious freedoms in Serbia and Montenegro performed on behalf of the United Nations in late 2003. The newspaper *Today* renders

¹³⁸ All the information about these incidents (including the ones listed by date) were sourced from the news group pismo-o-srbiji@yahoogroups.com.

its version of the events and draws a “response”¹³⁹ from the Protestant theologian Radovan Bogdanovic:

“Someone Does Not Understand English

Please compare these two reports. It is more than obvious that both cannot be true. In this country, one is either stupid, deceitful, or simply does not understand English.

‘Ljadic: Progress on Human Rights

Belgrade – Rasim Ljadic, Minister of Human Rights and Minority Affairs of Serbia and Montenegro, met with representatives of the US Embassy in Belgrade. He stated on Friday (December 19) that the US Department of State noted significant progress on the part of the Serbian government in defending human rights and the religious freedoms of minorities. Political advisors to the US Embassy Louis Krisok and Laura Luftid delivered the report on the status of religious freedom and minority rights in Serbia and Montenegro to Ljadic. This report will also be submitted to the Security Council of the United Nations.

The report notes the positive developments in the field of religious freedom and cites a decline in the denial and abuse of freedoms of religious minorities as well as prompt government intervention in individual violations. The US Embassy representatives praised the work of the Ministry of Human Rights and Minority Affairs of Serbia and Montenegro in this area.’ (B92, December 19, 2003)

The Original Report

‘Serbia and Montenegro, International Religious Freedom Report 2003; Released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, US Department of State...

Minority religious communities report continued problems with vandalism of church buildings, cemeteries, and other religious premises. According to the Forum 18 News service, approximately 30 attacks occurred during the period covered by this report, including a Molotov cocktail being thrown at a Sanatan residence outside Belgrade. Many of the attacks involved spray-painted graffiti, rock throwing, or the defacing of tombstones but a number of cases involved much more extensive damage. There were about ten incidents in which gravestones were desecrated, including those in Jewish, Islamic, and Lutheran cemeteries.

Journalists and religious leaders noted the continuation of anti-sect propaganda in the Serbian press. Minority Christian churches, like Baptists, Adventists, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and others often are given the sect moniker in the press in

¹³⁹ The letter can also be found dated February 2, 2004 on pismo-o-srbiji@yahoo.com .

Serbia and Montenegro. Religious leaders have noted that instances of vandalism often occur soon after press reports on sects. According to some sources, the fact that one of Serbia's leading experts on sects is a police captain whose work are used in military and police academies further complicates this situation.

Released on December 18, 2003.”¹⁴⁰

In spite of the nearly daily violation of fundamental human rights of members of religious minorities, such fellowships have not ceased to conduct humanitarian operations. Since the early 1990's, evangelical Christian groups have continued to offer charitable aid to all, especially to Orthodox Serbs.

Moreover, during the official visit of a delegation of religious leaders from the United States to Serbia in 2004, Pastor Michael Faulkner, elder of the largest Baptist church in New York, expressed his sincere desire for American Baptists to “adopt an Orthodox parish in Kosovo and Metohija” and provide financial assistance for the repair and reconstruction of destroyed religious sites and church buildings. An article on page 7 of the August 13, 2004 issue of *The Evening News* elaborates on the visit and includes a quote by Dr. Alexander Birvis, president of the Union of Baptist Churches of Serbia:

“A delegation of officials from churches and religious communities in the US arrived in Serbia and met with leading government officials and leaders of the Serbian Orthodox Church. The Americans repeatedly expressed their sincere Christian solidarity for the suffering of the Serbian people and loss of sacred sites in Kosovo and Metohija.

Their true purpose for visiting, as expressed by the Americans, was to examine the religious side of the truth about the events in Kosovo and how American churches might provide assistance to the afflicted.

Michael Faulkner, pastor of the largest Baptist church in New York, attracted the most attention. His desire for his church to ‘spiritually adopt’ one church and parish in Kosovo and Metohija to help it to stand on its feet created uncertainty. Many who doubted wanted to know what specifically he meant by his statements.

The Serbian Orthodox Church, represented by Patriarch Pavle and some bishops who received the delegation, had no answers. ‘Spiritual adoption is a vague term. It is difficult to conclude what the guest from America wanted to say,’ stated Bishop Gregory of Zahumlje-Herzegovina and a member of the Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church. ‘I think it was probably a crude American idiom. All that is offered in good faith should be welcomed.’

¹⁴⁰ The text of this release from the US Department of State came from: pismo-o-srbiji@yahoo.com as of December 19, 2003.

However, the head of the Baptist churches of Serbia and Montenegro, Dr. Alexander Birvis, said that Faulkner's message was very clear. 'They clearly do not intend to impose their faith upon anyone. However, they offered to become a kind of patron saint for a church and parish in Kosovo and Metohija. They intend to help reconstruct buildings, to re-establish religious life, and to provide scholarships for the training of priests in America. Their ultimate intentions are sincere. Personally, I am convinced that upon their return to America, these people will organize fund raising to fund the restoration of Orthodox churches. It would be a truly great deed.'"

However, despite Dr. Alexander Birvis's conviction that the Baptists in New York were serious about keeping their public promise (in spite of the fact that there was also a large Baptist church that was burned down in Kosovo and Metohija in 1999) to help reconstruct Orthodox churches rather than Baptist churches that were stoned and damaged, great question centered on whether it would actually happen. If the help from the American Baptists did not occur, there is only one place to point the finger. None other than Dr. Milan Radulovic, then Minister of Religious Affairs in the Republic of Serbia, would be to blame.¹⁴¹

So how did the Serbian people respond to the gracious offer of the American delegation? Would they change after past actions of fanatic Orthodox believers smashing windows and demolishing Baptist and other evangelical churches in Serbia? Would they be touched by the offer of aid after the streams of tears shed over the destruction of churches and monasteries in Kosovo?¹⁴²

Even as the US delegation had not even packed its bags to return home, the Serbian newspapers published more negative propaganda: "Religious communities in Kragujevac: 6 pseudo-Christian and 1 Satanic", in which the Baptist Church was characterized as pseudo-Christian, i.e. fake Christians.¹⁴³

¹⁴¹ Specifically, Minister Radulovic did not share the opinion of Bishop Gregory that "all in good faith should be welcomed." In his interview with the American delegation, Minister Radulovic categorically stated that the Orthodox parish in Kosovo "did not have adoption". He warned that the Protestant churches existing in this province (and working among Albanians) should abstain from missionary work because they can be exploited for working toward the independence of Kosovo. Radulovic alleged that in contrast to the embattled Serbian Orthodox Church, "the neo-Protestant churches" in Kosovo were threatened by no one. He accused them of being "loved by the Albanian political elite." (*Evening News*, August 19, 2004)

In response to the statements of the Serbian Minister of Religious Affairs, Serbian Minister of Foreign Affairs Vuk Draskovic issued an official apology for Radulovic. "He insulted the American religious leaders and brought into doubt their good intentions." Draskovic thanked them for their brotherly willingness to assist in the reconstruction of destroyed churches and monasteries. "By his attitude, Radulovic insulted not only you, but also the Serbian people and their Christian sentiments." (RTS, Thursday, August 26, 2004)

¹⁴² Streaming tears of the journalists reporting from the scene are shown in photographs. *Politics*, August 17, 2004.

¹⁴³ The situation with regard to human rights and particularly religious freedom has not changed much since the 2003 report from the US State Department. The report of the Council of Europe in 2008 gives details. As reported by news agency Tanjug on April 29, 2008, the European Commission against Racism

Once again, we see the true state of our national culture. To state otherwise is without logical or factual foundation.

Conclusion

What can we say to all this credible evidence that undoubtedly confirm the fact that Eastern Orthodoxy in general, and one of its branches, the Serbian Orthodox Church, utilize principles of the Middle Ages in relations with believers of different religious groups? We saw that the Eastern Orthodox Churches, just as the Western (Roman Catholic) Church, throughout history employed various methods to suppress believers of different movements. Such methods range from intimidation to open persecution and murder of those who dared to think and believe differently.

Precisely for this reason in regard to its relation to outnumbered religious minorities, the standards of Holy Scripture reveal that the Orthodox Church does not follow the teachings of the One and Only and Righteous Christ and the apostolic doctrine.

In contrast, because of its adherence to the theology and teachings of the Church Fathers, Orthodoxy is filled with erroneous interpretations of God's Word. (Remember the example of St. Filaret of Moscow who taught the idea of "crushing the enemies of the Fatherland". Contrast with the Holy Scriptures: "*Thou shall not kill.*")

The logical conclusion of Orthodoxy's straying from God's Word leads to the fulfillment of Christ's warnings given to His disciples:

*"...the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service."*¹⁴⁴

and Intolerance notes that Serbia fosters a climate of hostility toward national and ethnic minorities. With regard to the status of religious minorities, the report cites the Serbian Law on Churches and Religious Communities as having "contributed to creating a negative climate under the so-called 'non-traditional' religious communities, such as Jehovah's Witnesses and some evangelical groups." "Specific representatives of the Serbian Orthodox Church, which plays an important role in the social and political life of the country, have vested interests in encouraging hostility toward these groups, which they label 'sects', and whose members are accused of being worshipers of Satan." (The details of this report can be found in pismo-o-srbiji@strategicnetwork.org from April 30, 2008.)

¹⁴⁴ John 16:2.