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## A Few Questions regarding Life, Work and Education of St. Jakov (Radoje) Arsović

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**Abstract:** In the recent publications on St. Jakov Arsović, there are many claims that he earned a double doctorate in France. However, in literature written in Serbian, there is no clear reference on his postgraduate studies, his research, or his thesis or theses. In the present article, we will offer a short review of known facts regarding Arsović, and we will try to find traces of his education and life in France in his writings. We will also pose certain questions regarding his opus. As the main goal, we will try to present known information regarding the issue of his postgraduate studies and to offer a review of relevant sources and literature.

**Key words:** Jakov (Radoje) Arsović, University of Montpellier, University of Sorbonne, Blaise Pascal, Serbian Orthodox God Worshipper Movement, Mission.

St. Jakov of Tuman, whose baptismal name was Radoje Arsović (in Serbian: Радоје Арсовић), was born in the village of Kušići near Ivanjica, in 1893 or 1894. According to the literature available in Serbian, after primary and secondary education, Radoje was eager for science and knowledge, so he continued his edu-

cation abroad (Plećević 2015, 44; 2016, 7),<sup>1</sup> and he completed his studies earning a double doctorate in France.<sup>2</sup>

It is possible that Arsović somehow found his way to France through the events of World War I, pushed by the consequences of war like many other Serbian soldiers and refugees. Probably he was mobilized — sergeant Radoje Arsović is mentioned in a short communication delivered by Jovan Premović from Geneva (cf. “Missing and Correspondence” 1916, 6),<sup>3</sup> as well as in war news (cf. “Communications” 1917a, 2; “Communications” 1917b, 2);<sup>4</sup> maybe he was even in France in 1916 already (cf. “Missing and Correspondence” 1916, 6).

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<sup>1</sup> In the list of references at the end of this paper, we will offer a bibliographical key for the author–date system of citation according to The Chicago Manual of Style used here, both for the references in Serbian (which we will primarily list as translated in English) and other languages.

<sup>2</sup> Different information can also be found; for instance, a claim that Arsović finished his higher education in Serbia (cf. Radosavljević 2012, 11 — although here it is not clear if it refers to high school education or to university studies). Maybe he attended Gymnasium at Kragujevac for his secondary education (cf. *A Commemorative Book of the Male Gymnasium in Kragujevac* 1934, 544 — in 1906–1907 Radoje Arsović enrolled the 1<sup>st</sup> grade of Male Gymnasium in Kragujevac; that could be R. Arsović from Kušići).

<sup>3</sup> Premović delivered a report from Rajko Krivokuća, which could be future (?) husband of Ivana Arsović, sister of Radoje which is mentioned on school bell in the elementary school in Kušići (cf. Svetković and Dimitrijević 2010, 8; cf. also Svetković and Obradović 2010, 29).

<sup>4</sup> After World War I, Arsović was promoted from a rank of sergeant to a rank of second-lieutenant (in Serbian: потпоручник) as reserve officer in infantry troops by decree of King Alexander Karađorđević (cf. “Promotions and the Highest Orders” 1919: 234; “Correction” 1920: 959–960). An organization of veterans of war searched for his address in 1934 (cf. “A List” 1934, 21). Later he was disengaged as the reserve officer by decision of King Peter II regents (cf. “Promotions, Installations and the Highest Orders” 1938: 850) — maybe this disengagement was somehow connected to his monastic attitudes, since he was not too old for military obligation at that time (cf. Law on Organization of Army and Navy of Kingdom of Yugoslavia, article 137, par. 2 — which is mentioned in the decision — in “Law on the Organization of the Army” 1929, 1642; cf. also “Law on Amendments” 1931).

## Questions Regarding Arsović's Studies and Life in France

Unfortunately, there is not much information on his studies published so far. Allegedly he graduated at two faculties (cf. Nikčević 2015, 153), or even at three faculties (cf. Svetković and Obradović 2010, 20). According to literature, after graduation, Arsović enrolled in postgraduate studies and obtained a Ph.D. degree (Radosavljević 2002, 247–248; Janković 2008, 269), or two Ph.D. degrees (Nikčević 2015, 153; Plečević 2020, 96). There are different claims regarding his postgraduate studies. On one hand, there are claims that Arsović pursued a Ph.D. degree in Philosophy, which he defended at Sorbonne University in Paris (cf., for instance, Radosavljević 1994, 85; Dimitrijević 2007, 67; Svetković and Dimitrijević 2010, 25; Panev 2017). There are also claims he pursued another Ph.D. degree in Laws, at the University of Montpellier, as it is written in an article on St. Jakov in Orthodox online Encyclopaedia “Drevo” (cf. “Jakov Arsović” 2017) or in Wikipedia (cf. “Jakov of Tuman” 2020; “Tuman Monastery” 2020; cf. also Panev 2017; Marković 2020). Besides that, on the other hand, there is a claim that Arsović pursued a Ph.D. degree at the University of Montpellier, after studying the thought of Blaise Pascal (1623–1662) — a French mathematician, inventor, philosopher and theologian (cf. Nikčević 2015, 153).

As we can read in his biographies published in Serbian, Arsović worked as a clerk in the diplomacy of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, i.e. Kingdom of Yugoslavia in France (Radosavljević 1994, 85; Dimitrijević 2007, 67; Dimitrijević 2010, 48; Radosavljević 2012, 12–13, etc.). There are also claims that he was even engaged as an Ambassador of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in France during 1929–1930. But there is no known evidence so far, and it seems there is no known archival source regarding the diplomatic engagement of Arsović (cf. Svetković and Obradović 2010, 10–11).

## Arsović as A Reborn Christian in Serbian Orthodox Context

According to literature in Serbian, while resting in Vrnjačka Banja in the 1930s — or during a funeral service of Rajko Krivokuća in Čačak, according to a different source, i.e. according to notes of Boško Topalović (cf. Radosavljević 2009, 45–46; Svetković and Obradović 2010, 29), Arsović met Bishop Nicholai Velimirovich and his Serbian prayer movement, i.e. God-worshipping movement (in Serbian — “богомолјачки покрет / bogomoljački pokret”).<sup>5</sup> Namely, by chance, he was present during the assembly of the Serbian worshiping fraternities. Arsović was amazed by the sermons of Bishop Nicholai and the clergy, and especially by a sermon of a simple Serbian peasant. Touched on that occasion by the grace of God, he left his worldly life and went to Bishop Nicholai with a request to be a novice (Radosavljević 2012, 13). Radoje left the diplomatic service and dedicated himself to monastic simplicity, becoming monk Jakov. He did not talk too much (Radosavljević 1994, 86), and he rather chose to stay anonymous. He became a tireless ascetic and missionary, dedicated to publishing and editorial work in missionary journals and spiritual literature (Radosavljević 2002, 253–255). He was engaged in translating, writing, and editing missionary material, but his humble personality was often hidden because he published his writings anonymously (Svetković and Obradović 2010, 21; Plećević 2015, 48), or he hid

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<sup>5</sup> The informal name of this movement is transliterated or translated to English in different ways. For example, as “Bogomoljacki pokret” (cf. Micich 2000), “God-praying movement” (Miljković Matić 2016, 32), “God Worshipper Movement” (cf. Radić and Djurić Milovanović 2017; Radosavljević-Čiparizović 2017), “Movement of the God-Pray-ers” (cf. Storheim 2020) etc.

For a critical review of the negative role, and also of certain negative aspects and subversive influence of the “God-praying movement” activity, with profound notes and insights on problematic pietistic presumptions of this movement, cf. Matić 2020, 189–198.

himself behind pseudonyms and acronyms — sometimes he was signed simply by R. A., R. J. A., R., J. A., etc. (cf. Svetković and Obradović 2010, 19).

In 1932<sup>6</sup> or at last in 1933, Arsović was already involved in translation and editorial work in a missionary publishing house established by Velimirovich: cf. *Readings from St. Anthony* 1933<sup>7</sup> — which was translated by Radoje Arsović; cf. also his other translations of patristic texts, for instance excerpts from the writings of St. Ephraim the Syrian on spiritual experience, self-distortion and confession, fasting, repentance (cf. St. Ephraim the Syrian 1933a, 1933b, 1933c, 1934). From the writings of St. Dimitry of Rostov, he translated a lesson on the soteriological dimension of humility (cf. St. Dimitry of Rostov 1933). Humility is again the topic of an excerpt from the ascetical discourses of Abba Isaiah of Scetis, which Arsović translated under the title “Mustard Seed” (cf. Abba Isaiah 1933). He also translated excerpts from the writings of St. John Chrysostom (cf. “Chrysostom’s Golden Words” 1933; St. John Chrysostom 1934a, etc.). In a preface to *Readings from St. Anthony*, Justin Popović described him as “a hardworking novice, brother Dr. R. A.” (cf. Popović 1933, 4). In the years to come he continually contributed to missionary periodicals, both as an author as well as a translator. Starting from 1935, he becomes an editor and afterward also the editor-in-chief of missionary journals such as *The Missionary* (published in Bitolj and Kragujevac; in Serbian: *Мисионар: ордан Савеза њравославних брајисѣава Народне хришћанске заједнице*), *The Little Missionary* (published in Bitolj and Kragujevac; in Serbian: *Мали мисионар*:

<sup>6</sup> According to literature — cf. Svetković and Obradović 2010, 14. Allegedly, Arsović in 1932 translated excerpts from ascetical lessons of St. Ignatius Brianchaninov (Игнатий Брянчанинов, 1807–1867), but we have no information where these translations originally appeared, and in literature there are no bibliographical references regarding original publication (cf. Svetković and Obradović 2010, 131–136; Radosavljević 2012, 210–218).

<sup>7</sup> A selection of lessons of St. Anthony — translated (and edited) by Arsović — appeared in March 1933 in the journal of the Pilgrims Society (cf. “Lessons and Thoughts of St. Anthony the Great” 1933a, 1933b).

десѣлаѣни годѣѣак Мисионарских ѣисама),<sup>8</sup> *The God's Husbandry* (published in Bitolj and Kragujevac; in Serbian: *Њива Божија: годѣѣак Мисионару*), *The Letter* (published in Monastery of Žiča; in Serbian: *Писмо: ѣѣромесечни црквени листѣѣ*), etc. He used to stay in Ohrid and Bitolj, and after 1935 in Kragujevac, where he led an editorial and publishing office of God worshiper movement for some time (approximately 1936–1937) (cf. Saračević 2010, 33; cf. also Velimirovich 2016b, 124). He later moved closer to Bishop Nicholai, namely to Monastery of Žiča, where he was engaged in the pressroom of the monastery's publishing house (Radosavljević 2012, 17; Dragojlović 2014, 126). Finally, in 1938 or 1939, according to literature, he became a monk, now known as Jakov (cf. Radosavljević 2002, 251; Dragojlović 2014, 126).

But the last claim is unconfirmed by sources. However, it is likely that Arsović became a monk sometime between September 1939 and August 1940. In 1939 two translations and a few short articles signed by R[adoje]. A[rsović] were published (cf. “What is Ours on Earth?” 1939; “The Wisdom” 1939; Arsović 1939a; 1939b; 1939c). In an article published in December 1939, he is mentioned not as a monk but as “brother Arsović” (cf. Ljubibratić 1939, 29). According to an article published in January 1940, Dr. Radoje Arsović was a delegate sent by Bishop Nicholai Velimirovich to a gathering of the Serbian God worshiper movement held in Belgrade on September 27, 1939 (cf. “From the Life of Fraternities...” 1940, 30). In a publication from the printing office of Monastery of Žiča (where Arsović was engaged in printing job), printed for Easter 1940, the editor (and the owner) is signed as “Rad[oje]. Arsović” (cf. Velimirovich 1940: [IV]).<sup>9</sup> But in August 1940 he was already a

<sup>8</sup> For a report where Arsović's editing and publishing efforts were mentioned, cf. Milutinović, Nastić and Karić 1936, 240–241. Cf. also Vojinović 1971, 359; 2013, 303–304; Cisarž 1986, 48, 52; Radosavljević and Jovančević 2007, 14.

<sup>9</sup> However, this publication could be printed earlier, for instance in 1939. But it is more likely it was printed in 1940 — since it was an (special?) issue of the journal edited by Arsović, namely issue IV for 1940, according to the information on the cover page (cf. Velimirovich 1940).

monk in Žiča, according to an article from *Pravda* (cf. “Between the Walls of Monastery with Two Doctorates” 1940, 16 [in this article he is wrongly signed as “Josif Arsović”]). In another article from the same year “Fr. Jakov Arsović” is mentioned as one of the speakers at the gathering of God worshiper movement in Krnjevo during that year, probably sometime during summer, before August 12<sup>th</sup> (cf. Kovačević 1940, [III]). The oldest mention i.e. the first known public appearance of monk Jakov we found — as “a new monk Jakov (doctor Arsović)” — was at a huge gathering of believers on the feast of St. Archangel Gabriel in Guča on July 26<sup>th</sup> (13<sup>th</sup> O.S.) 1940, where he held a remarkable speech during the lunch (cf. “From the Life of Diocese of Žiča” 1940, 30).<sup>10</sup>

If Arsović was not dressed in monastic robes on a gathering held in Holy Trinity Monastery in Ovčar on the feast of Annunciation in April 1941, according to the remembrance of Fr. Slobodan Nikolić (cf. Svetković and Obradović 2010, 23), that could be a feature of his striking asceticism, rather than a consequence of mobilization to military service.<sup>11</sup> Or that could be, more likely, the wrong dating of this event, which would hardly occur on the second day of the Nazi German invasion of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1941 — if that event occurred one year earlier, it would easily fit the context.

<sup>10</sup> We were not able to find more mentions of monk Jakov Arsović in 1940; of course, we hope some future research will reveal more information. Monk Jakov is mentioned as a member of monastic community of Žiča Monastery in a monograph published in 1941 — perhaps it was Arsović (cf. “Holy Žiča Today” 1941, VII; “Holy Žiča” 2016, 748). That monograph is attributed to Bishop Nicholai, and later included in his *Collected Works*. However, Velimirovič is not the author of that publication (according to information in Catalogue of National Library of Serbia in Belgrade) — it’s the unsigned 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of monograph edited by Vlahko Vlahović (originally published in 1937 — cf. Vlahović 1937), with an addition of the final chapter (cf. *Holy Žiča* 1941, I–VII).

<sup>11</sup> Since he was disengaged as a reserve officer in 1938 (cf. “Promotions, Installations and the Highest Orders” 1938: 850), and since in Kingdom of Yugoslavia clerics and religious could be exempt from military service (cf. “Law on the Organization of the Army” 1929, 1642 [par. 137, art. 2]) — as maybe Arsović was exempted.

## Arsović as An Orthodox Author: Traces of French Influence

Starting from 1935 — and ending in 1936 — Arsović's articles were published in Serbian highly circulated missionary journals. In these pieces, it is obvious that there was a kind of connection of Arsović to France. In his writings from the 1930s, one can find a certain influence of the French culture. So there are reflections on events from the history of France, or on French society and culture in general — both positive (as the observance of Sunday — cf. Arsović 1936j, 169–170) and negative (as the legacy of French Revolution — cf. Arsović 1936l, 207–209 — or French educational system infected by skepticism — cf. Arsović 1936j, 169). He used to mention France (cf. Arsović 1934f, 7–8; 1935b, 9; 1936a, 9; 1936d, 43–44; 1936g, 171–172), Paris (cf. Arsović 1934a, 7; 1936k, 197; 1936l, 207), and also churches of Paris — as Saint-Étienne-du-Mont (cf. Arsović 1934e, 26). On the other hand, he criticized the secular principles of French society. He was a bitter critic of Parisian fashion (cf. Arsović 1936k, 197). Chaotic Parisian bourse for Arsović was an image of the corrupted and unreasonable world (cf. Arsović 1936l, 209).

In his critics of the secular world, Arsović used to employ topics from contemporary France. So while criticizing secular science and praising the advantages of the world-view based on the Holy Scripture, Arsović mentioned recent events from Paris. He used images from the burial of faithless French mathematician Paul Painlevé (1863–1933) and from the burial of a religious scientist Léon Charles Albert Calmette (1863–1933).<sup>12</sup> Interestingly, he writes as an eyewitness of those burials (cf. Arsović 1934a, 7–8; cf. also Arsović 1935e, 44) — but we do not know if that is just a stylistic figure.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> A pious Christian who was a French physician, bacteriologist and immunologist, whose faith is praised by Arsović.

<sup>13</sup> It is interesting to note that Arsović wrote on Jerusalem and Holy Land as an eyewitness as well (cf. Arsović 1934e, 25–27; 1935a, 7–9 etc.). It would be possible that he was a pilgrim to Jerusalem (there were numerous Serbian pilgrimages to Holy Land at the



He mentioned other pious examples and events from French history, as a pious priest and wondering ascetic Francis who acted in the eve of the French Revolution (cf. Arsović 1936g, 139–140). According to Arsović, the faith of two Parisian monks who prayed for religious schools in France — a joint effort of two people which he compared to efforts of Sts. Cyril and Methodius or St. Sava of Serbia and Theodore I Lascaris — resulted in Church schools which nowadays defend the Western world (cf. Arsović 1936j, 170–171). He also used examples from contemporary history — as the humble personality and piety of French general Ferdinand Foch (1851–1929), who served as the Supreme Allied Commander during World War I (cf. Arsović 1936d, 44).<sup>14</sup>

French influence could also be found in the manner of Arsović's transcription of names and terms. In writings of Arsović, St. Dionysius the Areopagite becomes St. Denys Areopagite (in Serbian: *Денис* instead *Дионисије* — cf. Arsović 1935a, 9; 1936g, 139).<sup>15</sup> Masonry becomes franc-*maçonnerie* (in Serbian: *франмасони* instead *масони* — cf. Arsović 1934d, 7; 1936l, 207).<sup>16</sup> Names of

time — cf. Mladenović 1933, [71]; Mikijelj 1935, [5], etc.), especially when we know that Bishop Nicholai Velimirovich and Serbian worshiping fraternities organized pilgrimages to Jerusalem in 1930, 1931, 1932 etc. (cf., for instance, Velimirovich 1930, 203–204; “Pilgrims” 1930, 226–227; Milivojević 1930, 1–5; Dimitrijević 1933a, 63; 1933b, 63; Subotić 1996, 97; Mavrogiannakis 2003, 441–442). Velimirovich established connections with Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem already in 1922 (cf. Petrović 2019, 696–701), and he continuously supported pilgrimages (cf. Savić 1935, 2). It is also interesting that, according to Velimirovich's book *Divan*, Scottish journalist John Paterson asked Arsović to let him know if Serbian Pilgrims Society, established by fraternities of God worshippers, organizes a pilgrimage to Jerusalem — because he would like to join (cf. Velimirovich 2016b, 199). It should be noted that Arsović was a contributor to the journal of Serbian Pilgrims Society in 1933 (cf. “Lessons and Thoughts of St. Anthony the Great” 1933a, 1933b).

<sup>14</sup> In a journal edited by Arsović there were also short anonymous notes and articles regarding different topics related to France, like religiosity of French statesman and military leader Napoleon Bonaparte (1769–1821) (cf. “One Opinion of Napoleon” 1936, 218–219), or pious movements in France (cf. “The Christian Movement in France” 1936, 219), etc.

<sup>15</sup> These examples could be found only in original publications of Arsović's writings. In later reprints the text was obviously edited and changed (cf., for instance, Svetković and Obradović 2010, 60, 107, or Radosavljević 2012, 127, 201 etc.).

<sup>16</sup> But this could be the influence of Russian as well (in Russian: *франкмасонство*).

Jannes and Jambres (mentioned in 2 Tim. 3: 8) are transcribed in an unusual way, according to Western reading (in Serbian: *Јанес и Јамбрес* instead *Јаније и Јамврије* — cf. Arsović 1936g, 139).

He used Latin (cf. Arsović 1936g, 139<sup>17</sup>), and he even gave biblical quotations according to Vulgata (cf. Arsović 1936d, 44;<sup>18</sup> 1936k, 195<sup>19</sup>), which was quite unusual in the Serbian Orthodox context of that time. On the other hand, he used apocryphal and hagiographical material borrowed from Latin medieval tradition, like a spurious letter attributed to St. Ignatius of Antioch — the so-called *The Epistle of Ignatius to St. John the Apostle*, in which a reference to Holy Theotokos Mary can be found (cf. Arsović 1935a, 9).<sup>20</sup> It is interesting to note that, according to memories of Bishop Jovan Velimirović (in Serbian: Јован Велимировић, 1912–1989), Arsović was deeply inspired by the works of St. Francis of Assisi (1181/1182–1226). Velimirović claims Arsović approached Christ and Christianity through the works of Francis of Assisi, which he zealously read and knew almost by heart (Janković 2008, 269).

Zeal for proper understanding and practice of Christian faith is present in Arsović's writings (cf. Arsović 1934c). He criticized proselytism and the viewpoints of Seventh-Day Adventists. He

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It seems Arsović was fluent in Russian, since he read Russian (cf. Arsović 1934b, 12 — where he referred to *Russian Prologue*) and he translated several pieces from Russian — for instance, ethical lessons of St. Dimitry of Rostov (cf. St. Dimitry of Rostov 1933) and — according to literature — St. Ignatius Brianchaninov (cf. Radosavljević 2012, 210–218), and also from Church Slavonic language (cf. *Lives of Saint Virgins* 1937) (cf. also Arsović 1995 — for an interesting mixture of Church Slavonic and Russian terms in the text in Serbian).

<sup>17</sup> Here he quoted “poor” Cicero (“dii immortales”).

<sup>18</sup> Through the mouth of Foch: “Non nobis, Domine non nobis; sed non to da gloriam” (Ps. 113: 9).

<sup>19</sup> He quotes Genesis according to Vulgata: “et erunt duo in carne una” (Gen. 2: 24). It is interesting to note that in an unsigned article published in the same journal one month earlier, regarding same topics — Jewish bolshevism and nakedness of women — there are also quotations from Vulgata (“superbia vitae” — 1 John 2: 16 — and “Cecidit Babylon magna, Quia de vino irae fornicationis ejus bibernut omnes gentes” — Apoc. 18: 2–3): cf. “Polish Cardinal” 1936, 190–191.

<sup>20</sup> He probably also used other apocryphal material, which is suggested when he uses a story describing how statues of Jannes and Jambres fell when Jesus came to Egypt — cf. Arsović 1936g, 139.

argued against the observance of the Sabbath and urged for the advantage of the New Testament above the Old Testament (cf. Arsović 1936e). He also criticized Protestant understanding of Holy Mysteries, i.e. their rejection of the Real Presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist, illustrating it with examples from history — regarding horse which kneeled in front of Holy Communion (cf. Arsović 1934g, 15). Similar episode — with the mule who knelt before the Eucharist — could be found in hagiographical material on the life of St. Anthony of Padua (1195–1231), or also in works of Robert Bellarmine (1542–1621), an Italian Jesuit and a cardinal of the Catholic Church (cf. Elliott 1851, 99). Arsović argued against spiritism — a demonic trap for humanity (cf. Arsović 1936g; 1936i).<sup>21</sup> Here we find another connection to the French context. In the first place, Arsović gives references to misconceptions of Hippolyte Adolphe Taine (1828–1893), a French critic and historian, and Cesare Lombroso (1835–1909), an Italian criminologist and physician who wrote also in French, before he reflects on Serbian context (cf. Arsović 1936g, 139–140).

Arsović also showed that he was able to discuss with scholars, and that he will not keep quiet if the truth of the Christian faith is questioned. When Serbian philosopher Branislav Petronijević (Бранислав Петронијевић, 1875–1954) wrote an article on the interpretations of Beatitudes by Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) and Leo N. Tolstoy (Лев Николаевич Толстой, 1828–1910), published in the Serbian newspaper *Politika* (cf. Petronijević 1935), Arsović's reaction was very quick and very fiery (cf. Arsović 1935g, 81–86). He also argued with a certain professor — actually with Russian thinker Evgeniy Vasilyevich Spektorsky (Евгений Васильевич Спекторский, 1875–1951). Namely, Arsović's harsh reaction to an earlier article of Spektorsky (cf. Spektorsky 1934) is published in *The Missionary* (cf. Arsović 1935e).<sup>22</sup> But in those

<sup>21</sup> Unsigned articles on the same topic can be found in the same volume of journal which was edited by Arsović at that time — cf., for instance, “Spiritism” 1936, 219.

<sup>22</sup> By the way, Velimirović had a different opinion regarding work and contribution of Spektorsky in general. After World War II, he was concerned for publishing Spektorsky's book (cf. Spektorsky 1953), and wrote a foreword for it,

writings published in religious publications, Arsović revealed no information on his education (with exception of “Dr.” title which he used occasionally), or on his studies in France, both graduate and postgraduate. However, it is interesting to note that a kind of reservation regards science and academy can be found in Arsović’s articles (cf. Arsović 1935e, 44; 1935h, 94; 1936b, etc.).

On the one hand, a kind of radicalization towards fundamentalist positions can be found in Arsović’s mentioned works published during the 1930s. He became focused on certain moral issues, and argued for traditional moralistic positions regarding questions of inappropriate language (cf. Arsović 1936h), or modern fashion, or emancipation of women in general (cf. Arsović 1936k), etc. He also gave attention to some popular and contemporary topics of the time — like questions regarding masonry, questions regarding the place and role of Jewish people in the world’s history, and so on. Freemasonry (*franc-maçonnerie* in Arsović’s expression) attacked the Serbian nation (cf. Arsović 1934d, 7). They have already taken rule in England, so even English bishops are freemasons. Behind the scene, there are Jews, real rulers. By the means of rationalism, they destroyed the spirit of the French nation and initiated the French Revolution. And now they transfer their literary logic from France to Russia — introducing another revolution (cf. Arsović 1936l). These viewpoints could be inspired by a controversial piece *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* — a piece which is probably compiled by Russian-French journalist and political activist Mathieu Vasilyevich Golovinski (in Russian: Матвей Васильевич Головинский, 1865–1920) circa 1900. In some way, *The Protocols* are, so to say, of Francophone origin. Namely, this work was based on parody by Maurice Joly (1829–1878) — a political satire which was written in French (cf. Joly 1864). After a few editions of the *Protocols* in Russia (cf. Butmi 1906; Nilus 1911, 57ff), this book was also published by Russian émigrés in Berlin

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praising his scientific contribution (cf. Velimirovich 1953). Velimirovich invested a lot of effort to publish this book, as showed his correspondence with Fr. Aleksa Todorović (1899–1990), partially published in Vol. XIII of his *Collected Works* (cf. Velimirovich 2016c, 697, 700, 708–709, 719–721).

(cf. *Worldwide Secret Conspiracy* 1922) and in Paris (cf. *Zion Protocols* 1927). It impacted certain circles in Russian intelligentsia, especially in the traditional Russian Orthodox context (it is worthy to mention that the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of *Protocols* was printed by the press office of The Trinity Lavra of St. Sergius in 1911), and later in exiled Russian communities. In Arsović's homeland, this material appeared in the 1920s, at the time when Russian refugees came. Since it was also published in France, both in Russian and French (cf. *Protocols* 1920), Arsović could become familiar with this pamphlet during the years he spent abroad. As we mentioned, Arsović probably was fluent in Russian (and he was a great admirer of Russian culture, holding an idea of the special Russian role in history — cf. Arsović 1935f, 49), and, as we will see, he spoke French — so he also could read this publication before he came back to his homeland. On the other hand, he could receive ideas launched in *The Protocols* from Russian émigrés as well — both in France or in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. *The Protocols* were acknowledged and influential in the Christian context of that time. Publisher of the 2<sup>nd</sup> French edition of *The Protocols* in 1922 (and of the next few editions as well) was a Roman Catholic priest Ernest Jouin (1844–1932). In Yugoslavia, this piece was regarded as authentic in Russian as well in the Serbian Orthodox Christian context of that time (cf. Lišančić and Naumović 2014, 155; a review of the *Protocols* appeared in the journal of God worshiper movement in 1926 — cf. Butmi and Tomić 1926b) — or in a wider context of the time.<sup>23</sup>

But ideas from *The Protocols* are a kind of side topic in Arsović's writings. On the other hand, Arsović's main preoccupations were spiritual issues. He was deeply focused on ascetic virtues. He constantly dealt with topics of humility, faithfulness, repentance — which was obvious from his writings and his asceticism as well. At the same time, while he was strict towards himself, he showed pa-

<sup>23</sup> In Kingdom of Yugoslavia *Protocols* appeared in Croatian translation; first they were partially published as a series of articles printed in the Roman Catholic theological journal *Nova Revija (Nouvelle revue)* starting from 1925 (cf. Butmi and Tomić 1925, 1926a), and later as a book in 1929 (cf. Butmi and Tomić 1929), and again in 1934 — translated in Serbian (cf. Patriotikus 1934).

tience and understanding for other people, for instance for female novices (cf. Svetković and Obradović 2010, 28–29). His humble personality made a strong impression on people who were in personal contact with him. But he was not focused only on inward issues. He was aware of and touched by the sad and cruel realities of this world. It looks like he was deeply compassionate with contemporary persecutions of Christians. He showed concern and compassion for the sufferings of brotherly Christian people, especially in Russia i.e. Soviet Union (cf. Arsović 1934b, 13; 1934d, 6; 1936d, 44–45; 1936j, 168–169, etc.). But he also was compassioned with the sufferings of Christians in Armenia and Ethiopia (cf. Arsović 1936c, 24). Anyway, history could be changed. Temporary sufferings are allowed by God's Providence. But only for reasons of the proclamation of God's glory, like it was when the Turkish Empire was defeated by small nations of Serbs, Bulgarians, and Greeks in 1912 (cf. Arsović 1936c, 24). As it was in Serbia in the past, in Ethiopia there is a holy moral flame, which God can bring to Russia (cf. Arsović 1936d, 46). Ethiopia is a pious country, according to Arsović (cf. Arsović 1936f, 81).

### Some Preliminary Questions Regarding Arsović's Works

It seems the Arsović's literal activity was suddenly interrupted after 1936. In 1937 his translation of selected hagiographical sketches of devoted Christian virgins was published. But it looks like there are no know his articles published during that and next year.<sup>24</sup> An excerpt from St. John Chrysostom's writ-

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<sup>24</sup> In a few publications dedicated to Arsović, an article published in 1937 is attributed to him — namely, an article written by editor of *The Missionary* (cf. Radosavljević 2012, 157–16). However, although Arsović was a responsible editor of the journal at that time, operating editor and author of that article was Hieromonk Jovan Rapajić (1910–1945), his younger colleague in editorial office of missionary journal (cf. Rapajić 1937, 336–343; cf. also Radosavljević and Jovančević 2007, 238–244).

ings translated by Arsović appeared in 1939 (cf. “What is Ours on Earth?” 1939), then a few patristic thoughts translated by him (cf. “The Wisdom” 1939), his translation of an article by Ivan A. Ilyin (Иван Александрович Ильин, 1883–1954) (cf. Ilyin 1939), a short article on the first icon of Christ (cf. Arsović 1939a; also reprinted as Arsović 1939b), and another one on religious press (cf. Arsović 1939c) but there seem to be no more known writings of Arsović published later. We are wondering what could be the reasons for his — so to say — Arsović’s literal inactivity. Maybe he simply became focused on his own inner life and lost his interest in writing. Or he wrote anonymously. Of course, there could be more reasons which generated this kind of retreat, of which we don’t know.<sup>25</sup> The next (and maybe the last) piece which is attributed to Arsović (although he is not signed) is a booklet — actually an open letter to Serbian clergy published during World War II, probably somewhere between 1942 and 1944 (cf. Saračević 2010, 35).<sup>26</sup>

There seem to be a lot of questions regarding the authorship of articles published in missionary journals of the God worshiper movement edited by Arsović and elsewhere. As we mentioned above, he used to stay anonymous (cf., for instance, Arsović 1936d). On the other hand, as it was a manner

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<sup>25</sup> For instance, certain authors suggested that there was a kind of tension and misunderstanding between Arsović and Rapajić, who finally succeed Arsović’s position as editor-in-chief of *The Missionary* in 1938 (cf. Pavlović 1994, 14, 26).

<sup>26</sup> Arsović’s pseudonymous *An Epistle to God-Beloved Clergy* (which originally was signed by the “Serbian Church Mission of Monks, Priests and Lay People, Belgrade, Prištinska Street 1”) was reprinted under the name of Monk Jakov Arsović in 1959 (cf. Svetković and Obradović 2010, 39–40) and later as well (cf. Arsović 1995; Arsović 2008; Svetković and Obradović 2010, 82–87; Radosavljević 2012, 173–171). Bishop Pavle (Stojčević) of Raška and Prizren (later Patriarch of Serbia) in 1984 considered this publication as Arsović’s work (cf. Stojčević 1984, 32).

It is interesting to mention another epistle to clergy of Belgrade, similar in manner of criticism, probably also written during the World War II, which is suggested by the text. This piece is posthumously attributed to Bishop Nikolai and published in his *Collected Works* “for the first time” — according to editor’s note (cf. “Priests of Belgrade” 2016, 158–159).

in Serbian Orthodox periodical press during 20<sup>th</sup> century (and even today), there are numerous articles published during the 1930s which are not signed by an author. Bishop Lavrentije Trifunović mentioned difficulties regarding the questions of authorship for certain unsigned articles — namely, it is not possible to conclude if they were written by Velimirovich or by Arsović (cf. Svetković and Obradović 2010, 21). We will mention some interesting examples. For instance, Bishop Nicholai wrote 300 missionary letters, originally published in a missionary journal named *The Missionary Letters* (in Serbian: *Мисионарска писма*) which was printed in Bitolj 1932–1934. More missionary letters appeared later, of which some were written by Velimirovich (cf., for instance, Velimirovich 1935a; 1935b; 1936a, etc.). On the other hand, Arsović used to write missionary letters as well (cf. Arsović 1935c; 1935e; 1935i; 1935j; 1935k; 1935l). But there are also unsigned missionary letters,<sup>27</sup> usually attributed to Velimirovich (cf. Janković 2003, 710ff; Protić 2016, 343ff), since Velimirovich also used to write anonymously or pseudonymously. For example, in the journal *The God's Husbandry* — more actually a supplement to the journal *The Missionary* in 1935 and 1936, a few unsigned missionary letters were printed.<sup>28</sup> All of those letters are attributed to Velimirovich (cf. Janković 2003, 717, 720; Protić 2016, 361–362, 370). The same applies to many unsigned articles and letters published in the journal *The Missionary* in 1935, 1936, and later. The style of these letters is very similar to those written 1932–1934 and later by Bishop Nicholai. One would say — the same. But there is a difference. There is no blessing or prayerful greeting at the conclusion of some of these letters, which, on the other hand, was somehow usual for Velimirovich's letters. Also, the use of the exclamation mark in some of these letters is frequent. Combined with warnings and monitions. That was

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<sup>27</sup> Cf. “A Missionary Letter to An Intellectual” 1935 (in which there is a reference to *De bonis et malis* of St. Augustine, which is interesting), “A Missionary Letter to A Woman” 1935 etc.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. “The 1<sup>st</sup> Letter” 1935; “The 2<sup>nd</sup> Letter” 1935; “A Letter to A Priest” 1936.



a kind of feature in Arsović's style rather than Velimirović's (cf., for instance, Arsović 1935d). And this feature is obvious in other articles published anonymously during 1935 as well: a lot of exclamation marks, and a lot of warnings.<sup>29</sup> All of those unsigned articles are later attributed to Velimirović.

But the situation regarding authorship for mentioned letters and articles is not simple at all. For instance, in one of the mentioned letters printed in *The God's Husbandry* in 1936, there are references to persons from French history, namely to Denis Diderot (1713–1784) visit to Moscow, and on the other hand, there is no blessing at the conclusion (cf. Velimirović 1936c, 12). Like we showed above, images from the French cultural context were a kind of feature in some articles written by Arsović. However, the same letter (with a slightly altered title) is also published in *The Missionary*, again unsigned, but according to information on the front matter, the author is "E. N." — which could be (and probably is) an abbreviation for "Bishop Nicholai" in Serbian (cf. Velimirović 1936b).<sup>30</sup>

At least, the authorship of these letters — and the authorship of dozens of shorter articles — which are originally published anonymously and later attributed to Velimirović, should be reconsidered and examined. Actually, there are cer-

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<sup>29</sup> Cf. "Judges of Christ" 1935; "Service of Christ" 1935; "Olive Mountain — the Mountain of Mercy" 1935; "The Prophet Isaiah and Today's Generation" 1935 (with a bitter critic of Parisian fashion) etc.

Many other articles, published pseudonymously or anonymously, are also interesting for our research — for instance: Hist. 1935 (with mention of France, Paris and Voltaire — François-Marie Arouet, 1694–1778); A. 1935 (signed by an interesting acronym — a text regarding fashion); R. 1935 (signed by an interesting acronym — a text regarding missionary work); "Are There Predictions?" 1935 (unsigned, with mention of France, Louvre, Basilique-cathédrale de Saint-Denis, narrow streets of Paris) etc. Similar articles, with a kind of reference to France, appeared until the end of 1930s as well — cf., for instance, "Poincaré" 1939 (the last article was also later attributed to Velimirović, and published in his *Collected Works*, Vol. X, 519).

<sup>30</sup> Velimirović used to abbreviate his sign in the same manner until the last days of his lifetime (cf., for instance, a letter of Bishop Nicholai to Fr. A. Todorović, written on December 15 1954, in Velimirović 2016c, 727).

tain letters and articles which were signed by Arsović in the original publication, but later republished as Velimirovič's. It also should be noted that some of Arsović's writings are published in *Collected Works* of Velimirovič (cf., for instance, Velimirovič 2016a, 707–709).<sup>31</sup>

The situation is practically the same regarding some unsigned translations. There are unsigned translations of patristic texts which are of special interest for our topic — namely, the excerpts from the writings by the same authors and with the same topics which Arsović translated during the 1930s. These translations are published in the same journals where Arsović's translations already appeared (cf., for instance, St. John Chrysostom 1934b). Some of these translations are signed by three asterisks — \* \* \* — in a manner in which Arsović used to sign his own writings (cf. St. Dimitry of Rostov 1934, 6 and Arsović 1934g, 15; 1936f, 81). However, the situation is not clear because there are also anonymous articles signed in the same manner (cf., for instance, “A Strange Sign” 1936, 87).

Arsović by no means edited hagiographical material published in journals where he was engaged as an editor.<sup>32</sup> On the other hand, maybe he was not just an editor, but also a translator as well. In literature, there are mentions of Arsović's translations of hagiographical sketches, which were later used by other authors (cf. Svetković and Obradović 2010, 19). For sure he

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<sup>31</sup> It is interesting to note that the publishing institution of the missionary movement connected to the printing office, established in the Monastery of Žiča, where Arsović was in charge, started publishing anonymous publications in late 1930s. In a number of these missionary publications, compiled from short articles, spiritual reflections, translations of patristic lessons, hagiographic and other appropriate material, there is no single information on editors, authors, translators etc. — no single name (cf., for instance, *Žiča Wreath* 1939; *Žiča Treasury* 1940; *Holy Žiča* 1941, etc.). On the other hand, interestingly, these anonymous publications (and other as well), prepared and printed in pressroom where Arsović was engaged, were later attributed to Bishop Nicholai (for three anonymous publications mentioned in this footnote, cf. Janković 2003, 748, 758; Protić 2016, 454, 482, 484, 513).

<sup>32</sup> Besides that, publishing institutions of God worshiper movement printing offices, where Arsović was engaged, printed numerous hagiographies during 1930s (cf. “The Lives of Serbian Saints” 1936, 319).

translated *Lives of Saint Virgins* in 1937. But maybe he also translated other hagiographical material — such as *The Life of St. Nicholas of Myra* published in Serbian translation in Arsović's journal (cf. "Saint Nicholas of Myra" 1939, 1–31). This translation is not signed. In the edition of *The Lives of Saints* later published by Fr. Justin Popović (the complete edition was finished in 1977, but partially published earlier), the text of this hagiography is very close to Arsović's edition. The same stands for *The Life of Holy Great-Martyr Demetrius*, published in Arsović's journal in an unsigned translation in 1939 (cf. "Saint Demetrius the Great-Martyr" 1939, 1–13). Of course, *The Life of St. Demetrius* and *The Life of St. Nicholas* could have been translated by Popović as well,<sup>33</sup> even for publication in Arsović's journal — we already saw that they were close to each other, and Bishop Nicholai for sure was a kind of connection for both of them. They also could use the same original, translating it independently. But how about the *Lives of Saint Virgins*? Since here again we can see that Popović's edition is very similar to Arsović's translation in some portions of the text. Maybe Popović used Arsović's translations for his edition of *Lives*.

As we can see, researchers have to face many difficulties when studying Arsović's works: in a lot of publications that appeared in his environment there is no sufficient information regarding authorship, or regarding translator, editor, even regarding volume and issue of the publication (cf. Velimirovich 1940). It looks like the authors who were behind these publications tried to hide their identity, or they simply did not care too much regarding their own authorship. As for Arsović, we are pretty sure that was the case since he signed himself fully only on a few publications. When considering Arsović's opus, however, researchers have to deal with many problems. Questions of

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<sup>33</sup> Or by Hieromonk Dionisije Milivojević (Дионисије [Драгољуб] Миливојевић, 1898–1979; later Bishop of America and Canada) — who translated and published several hagiographies starting from 1920s (cf. Milivojević 1925a, 1925b etc.), or also by some other translators who contributed to publishing activities of God worshiper movement.

authorship and authenticity are of such kind. There are also serious obstacles regarding the availability of his works and relevant publications. Original publications of missionary periodicals and other printed material from the 1930s and 1940s are hardly available, sometimes preserved only in a few copies. On the other hand, some of these publications are very rare. We are also afraid that some of these publications are not preserved at all, or they are preserved only partially. In the light of those circumstances, a research of Jakov Arsović's legacy will probably look similar to a detective investigation.

### **On the Arsović's Last Years**

In the eve of World War II, Arsović's ascetical practice became strict and striking (cf. Radosavljević 2002, 254–255; Dimitrijević 2010, 50–51). His monastic feat was prominent. He practiced foolishness for Christ, and also a very rigid fasting practice (cf. Radosavljević 1994, 87; Svetković and Obradović 2010, 20–21, 24; Plećević 2015, 48–52). He lived in extreme poverty, without any possession, dressed in old and dirty monastic robes (Plećević 2016, 8). He used to shock people and clergy by his outfit, and also by his unusual asceticism (cf. Saračević 2010, 33–34; cf. also the remembrance of Fr. Sava Ćirović (Сава Ћировић, 1924–2004) from the Monastery of Vaznesenje in Ovčar, in Svetković and Obradović 2010, 20–21). During this period he could be seen at an unusual place — namely at the entrance hall to Patriarchate building, witnessing evangelical call for repent in his own manner, by simply keeping silent (cf. Brzović 2010; cf. also Plećević 2019, 100).

According to literature, during wartimes he was in Žiča until November 1941 — actually, after Žiča was bombed he lived in a mountain with the rest of the brotherhood (Radosavljević 2012, 21–24). During this time he used to write lessons for novices (Radosavljević 2012, 24–25), but unfortunately we do not

know if any are preserved. Later he was with Bishop Nicholai — during the period of his confinement in Ljubostinja (cf. Radić 2006, 231; Radosavljević 2012, 25–26; Brotherhood of Tuman Monastery 2018, 11). Invocated to the mission, he used to go across occupied Serbia as a missionary, receiving torture both from Nazis and from Communist Partisans (cf. Radosavljević 2012, 26; Plečević 2019, 103–104). He also spent some time in Belgrade, engaged in preaching and mission (cf. Janković 2008, 270; Dimitrijević 2010, 50). During the time he was in Belgrade, as some authors claimed, he wrote and published an epistle mentioned above (cf. Saračević 2010, 35).

He died as a confessor of faith in 1946, after being tortured and beaten by representatives of the new regime (cf. Jović 2012, 97–98; Brotherhood of Tuman Monastery 2015, 30), and he was buried in Tuman monastery (cf. Plečević 2016, 9). He was officially recognized as the saint at the Holy Assembly of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church in 2017, and he is celebrated together with St. Zosimus of Tuman on August 21<sup>st</sup>.

### **Arsović's Ph.D. Theses**

However, since there is no critical biography of Jakov Arsović so far, and there are just a few short known facts on his life (Plečević 2015, 43), certain suspicions regarding his Ph.D. degrees arose over time. Namely, in his biographies and literature on Arsović there is no single mention of the title of his Ph.D. thesis, so a question can be posed: did he earn a Ph.D. degree (or degrees) in France?

If we look at the Church historiography of our recent past, we can see that the lack of a critical approach, for instance, led certain authors to erroneous claims regarding Nicholai Velimirovich's education. Consequently, in literature written in Serbian one can find mentions of more than ten Ph.D. degrees Velimirovich earned at various Universities — at Halle, Bern (two Ph.D. degrees), Lausanne, Geneva, Paris, London — at

the Oxford University and King's College, and at Sankt Petersburg, Glasgow, Edinburgh, and also at the Columbia University in New York. However, Velimirovich defended two Ph.D. theses — both at the University of Bern in 1908 and 1909 (cf. Arx 2006, 313–315) — and received two honorary Ph.D. degrees — one at the University of Glasgow in 1919 and another one at the Columbia University in 1946. But uncritical reading and interpretation of literature and secondary (or tertiary) sources generated confusion regarding Velimirovich's education and degrees.

So, there was a doubt regarding Jakov Arsović's Ph.D. degree, since there is no mention of topics or titles of his thesis in literature, i.e. no clear mention of the topic of his postgraduate research. On the other hand, Arsović used to sign himself as “Dr. R[adoje]. A[rsović].” or fully as “Dr. Radoje Arsović” in a few of his articles published during the 1930s (cf. Arsović 1936, 22; cf. also impressum of *The Missionary* in 1936 — “Editor-in-chief: Dr. R[adoje]. J. Arsović”<sup>34</sup> — etc.). In 1936 he was sued as “Dr. Radoje Arsović” — as a responsible editor of missionary journal in which a critical article regarding missionary activities of Seventh-Day Adventists appeared (cf. Rapajić 1937). There are testimonies that Bishop Nicholai used to call him simply “Doctor” at that time (cf. Radosavljević 2012, 18), and that it was his nickname (according to an article by Bishop Sava Saračević, originally published in 1959, republished in Svetković and Obradović 2010 — cf. Saračević 2010, 35). Also, in an article in Serbian newspaper *Pravda* from 1940, there is a claim that Arsović earned a double doctorate at the University of Sorbonne (cf. “Between the Walls of Monastery with Two Doctorates” 1940, 16). In a book entitled *Conversations* [in Serbian: *Divan*], dedicated to Serbian God worshiper

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<sup>34</sup> Similar can be found in the impressum of *The God's Husbandry* in 1935 and 1936: “Editor-in-chief: Dr. R[adoje]. Arsović”; cf. also the impressum of *The Little Missionary* in 1935–1937 (starting from March 1935, ending in October 1937): “Responsible Editor: Dr. R[adoje]. [J.] Arsović.”

movement, written by Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich in 1951<sup>35</sup> and published in 1953 — in which Velimirovich recollected his own memories and reflections on pious fraternities gatherings, “Dr. Radoje Arsović” is mentioned several times as one of the remarkable figures (cf. Velimirovich 2016b, 124, 195, 197, 199, [201]). Velimirovich also mentioned him as “Dr. Arsović” in one of his letters in 1953.<sup>36</sup> There’s a claim that Arsović studied at the University of Sorbonne and that he was a doctor of both philosophy and theology, in an article by N. Brzović, originally published in 1958, republished in Svetković and Obradović 2010 (cf. Brzović 2010, 30–32).

Anyway, there was almost no information on Arsović post-graduate studies so far. But now, thanks to the efforts of today’s monastic community of Tuman monastery near Golubac, under the leadership of Archimandrite Dimitrije Plećević, we are happy to know a bit more regarding education i.e. regarding postgraduate studies of St. Jakov of Tuman. After efforts made by the Tuman brotherhood, the thesis which Radoje Arsović defended at the University of Montpellier was recently found. The authenticity of this thesis was later reconfirmed by the catalogues of French universities and libraries, and also by literature. Now we know that Arsović defended this thesis in Montpellier in 1925. The full title of his thesis is “Pascal and experiment at Puy-de-Dôme,” in French:

R. Arsovitch, “Pascal et l’expérience du Puy-de-Dôme: thèse Présentée devant la Faculté des Lettres de Montpellier.” Thèse par R. Arsovitch pour obtenir le grade de docteur de l’université

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<sup>35</sup> Cf. a letter of Bishop Nikolai to Fr. A. Todorović, written on November 21 1951, in which he says that the manuscript of *Divan* is finished, in Velimirovich 2016c, 664–665.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Velimirovich’s letter to A. Todorović, written on January 13 1953, where Bishop Nikolai mentioned Arsović’s huge efforts in reconstruction of Holy Trinity Monastery in Ovčar, in Velimirovich 2016c, 687–688; cf. also Velimirovich 2016b, [201].

(Mention Lettres), 4 Juin 1925. Université de Montpellier — Faculté des lettres, 1925 (Montpellier: Imprimerie de Firmin et Montane, Rue Ferdinand-Fabre et quai du Verdanson, 1925). In-8, 76 p., fig.

In this research, Arsović offered a contribution to the history of this experiment, its relationship with the experiments on the vacuum in the vacuum, and on Descartes' relations with Pascal.

Arsović's thesis was a so-called University doctorate. Namely, at that time, in postgraduate studies in the French educational system, "there was the University doctorate (doctorat d'université) which, however, carried little prestige, and the state doctorate (doctorat d'état), which was the standard requirement for a position as a full professor in an University" (Gutting 2001, 391). Arsović's Montpellier thesis is written on 76 pages (which was not unusual at the time, as can be checked in academic catalogues), and contains a list of members of Faculty of Letters at the University of Montpellier (p. 4), a dedication and an acknowledgment to Kosta Kumanudi (In Serbian: Константин Коста Кумануди, 1874–1962), "professor at the University of Belgrade, former Minister of Finance, a former delegate at the League of Nations" [A monsieur Kosta Koumanudi, professeur à l'Université de Belgrade, ancien ministre des Finances, ancien délégué à la Société des Nations, *très respectueusement*.] (p. 5), the text of thesis (pp. 7–68), an appendix (Appendice. Le texte de la «Gravitas comparata», pp. 69–71 — with a commentary on conclusions of a Catholic theologian and French grammarian Étienne Noël (1581–1659) and a French physicist and philosopher of science Pierre Duhem (1861–1916)), followed by 4 + 4 figures of Pascal's devices reconstructed by P. Duhem (pp. 72–73), 3 proposals for further reading ["Propositions de la faculté"] (p. 74) and a bibliography (pp. 75–76).

During the same year, Arsović's thesis was published as a book — probably with some corrections, so it is maybe dif-



ferent than his thesis defended at the University of Montpellier (according to the note in the catalogue of the National Library of France), although the number of pages and physical description of this book is the same as the description of his thesis — and even same typos are printed in both publications (cf. Arsovitch 1925a, 69 and Arsovitch 1925b, 69: *Granvitas*) — which leads us to the presumption that these are slight differences.<sup>37</sup>

R. Arsovitch, *Pascal et l'expérience du Puy-de-Dôme* (Montpellier: Imprimerie de Firmin et Montane, Rue Ferdinand-Fabre et quai du Verdanson, 1925). In-8, 76 p., fig.<sup>38</sup>

It is interesting to note that in 1925 an article written by Arsović, regarding a problem of Pascal's writings (cf. Arsovitch 1925c), namely an article on a letter which should be

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<sup>37</sup> We compared Arsović's thesis and his publication, and the only differences we noted are those in the impressum — pp. 1, 5 — regarding information on defense of the thesis, and on the last page — p. 76: in his thesis Joseph Vianey (1864–1939) — the dean of the Faculty of Letters (Faculté des lettres), and Jules Coulet (1870–1953) — the rector of the Academy of Montpellier (Académie de Montpellier) are signed. Their signatures are dated to February 1925, as follows (cf. Arsovitch 1925a, 76):

Vu:  
Montpellier, le 2 Février 1925  
Le doyen de la Faculté des lettres,  
J. Vianey

Vu et permis d'imprimer:  
Montpellier, le 3 Février 1925  
Le Recteur,  
J. Coulet

<sup>38</sup> Both Arsović's thesis and his book are included in the voluminous *Serbian Bibliography*, under nos. 1805 and 1804 (cf. Živanov et al. 1989, 165). In the same publication there is a reference to an extant copy of his thesis, preserved in the National Library of France (Bibliothèque nationale de France), and also a reference to a copy of his book which is preserved in the Library of [the Faculty of Philology at] the University of Belgrade, which we used for the purpose of this paper. However, it seems that previous researchers did not note these references.

attributed to Pascal, since no one except Pascal could have written it — which Arsović shows through textual analysis<sup>39</sup> — was published in *Review of Literary History of France* (in French):

R. Arsovitch, “Une lettre qu’il faut attribuer à Pascal,” *Revue d’Histoire littéraire de la France*, 32<sup>e</sup> Année, No. 3 (1925): 406–415.<sup>40</sup>

So we can conclude that Arsović studied Pascal’s thought, as some earlier authors claimed, and he pursued a Ph.D. degree at the University of Montpellier in 1925. His doctoral research on Pascal’s experiment was noted and acknowledged in international scientific circles (cf., for instance, “Livres reçus” 1925, 45; Ritter 1925, 176; “Recent Publications” 1926, xcvi; “New publications” 1927, 126; Peyre 1930, 337; Andison 1948: 44, 54;<sup>41</sup> Giraud 1958, 153; Leclercq 1960, 59; Leclercq 1964, 42; Mesnard 1970, 675). The same could be said for his research on Pascal’s letter as well (cf. Magne 1925, 167; Ritter 1925, 176; Josserand 1953, 8; Giraud 1958, 153; Cabeen 1961, 451).<sup>42</sup>

<sup>39</sup> It is a kind of paradox because one decade later Arsović himself generated a confusion regarding his own writings — publishing it anonymously, pseudonymously, or signing it by acronyms.

<sup>40</sup> This Arsović’s research was also known in his homeland, as well as his thesis defended at Montpellier (cf. Ibrovac 1927, 93).

However, although there was certain interest for Pascal in Arsović’s homeland of that time (cf. Atanasijević 1935; Milojević 1938; Jagodić 1939), and Holy Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church published a translation of Pascal’s *Pensées* (by Hieromonk Hrizostom Vojinović) in 1946 (cf. Pascal 1946), we were not able to find any other reference to Arsović’s research on Pascal in Serbian literature except the one mentioned above.

<sup>41</sup> Andison underlines: “Nor should one fail to mention the thoroughly objective thesis devoted to the Great Experiment, presented in the University of Montpellier in 1925 by R. Arsovitch.” — cf. Andison 1948, 44.

<sup>42</sup> In Cabeen’s influential work, we can read the following description of the Arsović’s article: “A *Lettre au père Annat* was included with *Provinciales* until Bossut’s ed. of *P[rovinciales]*. in 1779. Author restores it to *P[rovinciales]*., arguing soberly and convincingly from internal evidence.” — cf. Cabeen 1961, 451.

As for his Ph.D., which he allegedly obtained at the Sorbonne University, we could not find any information. In the catalogue of Ph.D. theses defended at French Universities from 18<sup>th</sup> century to 1940 there is just one thesis defended by Arsović — a mentioned thesis from the University of Montpellier (cf. Huguet 2009).

However, there are traces of his activity at Sorbonne. According to the list of thesis subjects deposited at the Faculty of Letters at the University of Paris before January 1, 1938 — and here please note that it is the list of subjects of theses which are not defended — which is published in the *Annals of the University of Paris* for 1938, Arsović deposited a subject for his Ph.D. thesis, i.e. subjects of theses for his state doctorate (D. E. = Doctorat d'Etat) in 1927. At that time, this degree required two theses, a primary one (Th. Pr. = Thèse Principale) and a shorter “complementary” thesis (Th. Sec. = Thèse Secondaire) “typically on a historical topic related to the main thesis” (Gutting 2001, 391–392). According to the mentioned list, Arsović deposited subjects for his primary and secondary thesis at the University of Sorbonne on July 7<sup>th</sup> 1927. In the mentioned list of subjects, in chapter 3 — with subjects in French literature (Littérature française), in subchapter C — with subjects on 17<sup>th</sup> century (XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle), under nos. 634 and 635, the subjects of Arsović's theses from 1927 can be found (cf. “Liste de Sujets de Thèses...” 1938, 362):

634 — Pascal. — ARSŒVITCH<sup>43</sup> R. — Essai sur les *Pensées* de Pascal. — *Th. Pr. D. E.* (7 Juillet 1927).

635 — ARSOVITCH R. — La maladie de Pascal. — *Th. Sec. D. E.* (7 Juillet 1927).

We don't know if Arsović defended these theses at the University of Sorbonne. However, it is not likely he continued

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<sup>43</sup> His surname is misspelled here, and it was corrected to Arsovitich on the last page of *Annals* (cf. “Corrections a la Liste de Thèses” 1938, 580).

his doctoral studies at the University of Sorbonne during the 1930s. As we mentioned, according to the literature, he was in Yugoslavia during the 1930s, and it seems he lost his interest in studying secular science, becoming focused on Orthodox spirituality and missionary work.

On the other hand, in a prestigious publication of the time, which was aimed to list theses (i.e. dissertations) in progress and “to serve as a clearing-house for dissertation subjects”, namely in the *Work in Progress in the Modern Humanities*, we can find mentions of those theses. This leads us to the presumption that in the late 1930s the scientific community was expecting an outcome of Arsović’s research on Pascal at the University of Sorbonne. Both of his theses are here listed again, and marked with the letter “D”, which signifies that “the work will be submitted for a degree, nearly always for a doctorate, at the university named” (cf. Osborn and Sawyer 1939, xiv). So we can read as follows, under nos. 3446 and 3447 (cf. Osborn and Sawyer 1939, 168):

3446. Arsovitch, R. (Paris). Essai sur les *Pensées* de Pascal. D

3447. ——— La maladie de Pascal. D

However, regardless of expectations the scientific community had — or at least regardless of expectations the editors of the *Work in Progress* had — it seems Arsović did not earn a state doctorate at the University of Sorbonne in the 1930s. And nor before nor after that time. But since he deposited subjects of theses for his state doctorate in 1927, why he did not finish his studies and crowned it with a doctorate? What could be the reason that made him give up on this prestigious title? There could be many reasons. Maybe he simply gave up. Since in meantime he became a novice and later a monk, we can guess he probably was not interested in an academic career. Similar to Pascal,

it seems he abandoned the scientific worldview as non-sufficient and put his attention to questions of Christian spirituality and asceticism. Maybe he lost his interest in studies or interest in secular science in general. On the other hand, maybe he was unable to finish his research since he chose poverty as a manner of life. And also, and this should be underlined, war troubles cut communication and changed the world, so even if he would have liked to defend his second Ph.D. thesis and obtain another doctorate, Arsović was not able to do that.



**Figure 1. Photograph of Jakov / Radoje Arsović.  
The credit goes to the present Brotherhood of  
Tumane Monastery**

## **Conclusion**

We could not find any information on Arsović's graduate studies in France nor on the defense of his theses at the University of Sorbonne in the 1920s and 1930s. The only thesis Arsović wrote we know of so far is the thesis which he defended at the University of Montpellier in 1925. Our quest through literature and the catalogues of French libraries revealed no information on the defense of other doctoral theses by Radoje Arsović at the University of Sorbonne or other French universities. However, we would prefer not to draw conclusions, since there are traces of his research on Pascal at the University of Paris. Hopefully, some future research will shed light on his education and more generally on this period of his life.

However, in published works of Radoje / Jakov Arsović there are obvious traces of the influence of French culture, sociological and political context, there are frequent references to people from French history, and knowledge of French history as well. It seems his world view was significantly marked and shaped by his French education and life in France, both positively and negatively. This is obvious in his reflections on contemporary issues, where he used to mention France in both ways — by underlining examples of pious and religious people and by examples of secular and corrupted i.e. non-Christian way of life. But the questions regarding Arsović's opus are standing in the way when considering the actual extent of influence of his life and education in France to his world view and his theological insights.

Concluding this paper, we would like to add three short suggestions:

1. An archival investigation in ecclesiastical, public, and university archives — both in France and in Ex-Yugoslavia — would be necessary for the study of Arsović's life and work; hopefully, an outcome of that investigation would be more information for Arsović's biography.
2. A preliminary research of periodicals and publications from the time when Arsović flourished — which would bring out at least an annotated bibliography of Arsović's works — is needful to establish a frame for future research of his contribution.
3. At last, but not least, a critical edition of his works would be a presumption for proper understanding and interpretation of his thought in the future. And also an important step towards clarification regarding authorship of certain writings attributed posthumously to Bishop Nicholai Velimirovich.



**Figure 2. Bishop Nikolai (in the middle) with Monk Jakov Arsović (on the right) among faithful people. Source: Plečević 2019, 100–101.**

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