From the Supernatural to the Uncanny

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Edited by

Stephen M. Hart and Zoltán Biedermann

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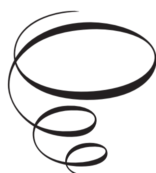

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Dedicated to the memory of Jo Hodges (1959-2017)

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PROLOGUE

SÓLO DIOS BASTA (SANTA TERESA DE ÁVILA): 'GOD-ENOUGH' IN THE EYES OF A TWENTY-FIRST-CENTURY WOMAN PRIEST

THE REVD PREBENDARY
DR JANE TILLIER (METANOIA INSTITUTE)

Introduction

As the warm-up act for the London conference which served as the womb for the papers gathered in this publication, I brought what could be seen as an entirely different perspective to the proceedings. Professor Hart and I were contemporaries and friends as undergraduates and doctoral students in Cambridge in the late 1970s and early 1980s. I have wonderful memories of times spent with him and his wife in our late teens and early twenties. I am godmother to their daughter, Natasha. From the mid-1980s our paths took different turns as I walked away from the hallowed halls of academia and further into the fan-vaulted cloisters of the church. I was delighted (and not a little daunted) to accept his invitation to speak and write now, some thirty years after we were last in a seminar together. In this piece I reflect, with the help of Teresa of Ávila and her less-well-known English near-contemporary, Mary Ward, on the liberating and uncanny power of a supernatural release from fear that can come with a good-enough/God-enough spiritual perspective. I witness further to the impact such freedom has on me and on other women in the peculiar challenges of living the relatively new, ground-breaking reality of being priests and bishops in the Church of our own day.

From Doctorate to Priesthood

My PhD thesis looked at religious references and imagery across a range of fifteenth-century Spanish poetry, some of it overtly devout but most of it clearly 'secular'.[1] I argued for the need for a deeper consideration of religious reference and allusion in *cancionero* poetry and for a more nuanced understanding of the interplay between the sacred and the secular, ideas which I also developed in an article on 'passion poetry'.[2] All this was thirty years ago. It is interesting how relevant these ideas still are as I revisit them now. I am still passionate about the interplay of the sacred and the secular. My reading of biblical texts and of the Christian tradition suggests that Jesus was too.

I have felt profoundly moved while writing this piece. My doctorate was supervised by the incomparable Alan Deyermond (1932-2009) whose obituary in *The Guardian* described him as 'the English-speaking world's leading scholar of medieval Hispanic literature'.[3] I was his sixteenth PhD student and Professor Deyermond took as much, if not more, delight in the prospect of my ordination as he did in the completion of my doctorate. Indeed he wrote a lengthy and enthusiastic reference to the powers that be in the Church of England in support of my application to be selected for ordination, which I treasure to this day. I quote here from his covering letter to the selection panel, dated 10 September 1987: 'My answers to the questions may seem implausibly favourable, but it would be dishonest of me to manufacture doubts about this candidate just to make my answers more convincing… As a lifelong and committed Anglican, I have no interest in burdening my church with unsuitable clergy.' It still makes me smile. With deep gratitude I dedicate what I write here to his memory.[4]

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[1] 'Religious Elements in Fifteenth-Century Spanish *Cancioneros*', PhD thesis, 1985, Cambridge University.

[2] 'Passion Poetry in the *Cancioneros*', *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*, LXII (1985), 65-78.

[3] Nicholas Round, 'Alan Deyermond Obituary', *The Guardian*, 14 October 2009.

[4] Interestingly Professor Nicholas Round makes the following observation in the obituary for his longstanding colleague and friend: 'The new emphasis most evident in [Alan Deyermond's] work was his response to the claims of women. His studies of medieval female writers, and of women as portrayed and spoken for in medieval literature, drew on the work of feminist scholars in many countries. They, in turn, found in Alan that acceptance and support for which younger scholars could always look to him… In all this, his natural gift for friendship was reinforced by lessons drawn from his early experience. Scholars must share their knowledge. What you have been given, you pass on to others' (Nicholas Round, *The Guardian*, 14 October 2009).

What a gift that my doctoral supervisor should also be one who could so wholeheartedly affirm my calling as one of the first women to be ordained as priests in the Church of England in 1994! Uncanny? Miraculous? A coincidence? There are, of course, historical connections between the University and the Church. Universities are, by their origins, religious foundations.[5] Bishops and professors both have a special chair, 'cathedra' – a term deriving from both Latin and Greek, and, as is evident in the Spanish word 'catedrático', indicating a seat of learning.[6] From 1984 to 1988, I tried to live in and link both the ecclesiastical and academic worlds which were claiming my attention. I was appointed as a lay chaplain at Jesus College in Cambridge and I continued to work on my PhD thesis and to teach Spanish in the university. I had the great good fortune to be greeted on my first day by Jesus College's first woman fellow, Lisa Jardine. She gave me a small badge which says 'behave badly ♀'. I still wear it. I am not sure how good I have been at living up to that challenge. As a feminist secular Jew who had been bathed in services of Anglican Choral Evensong when at school at Cheltenham Ladies College, she took great delight in regularly attending services in the college chapel when I was there as a gesture of solidarity with Cambridge's first woman college chaplain. I was saddened by recent news of her death but take great delight in having had the good fortune to know and work with her. I will re-commit myself to behaving badly in her memory. Is there a way in which we could say that Teresa of Ávila, Rosa de Lima, Mary Ward and other remarkable religious women were precursors of the 'bad behaviour' which Professor Jardine saw as so liberating and creative for women? Radical dependence on God is the delightfully reassuring sentiment (and indeed the firm intellectual conviction/foundation/base) that both Teresa of Ávila and Mary Ward are echoing in their writings and in their lives. It sets them free to articulate and initiate remarkable things. It is a sentiment

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[5] 'The Holy Spirit will guide you into all the truth' (*NRSV* John 16.13).

[6] For a discussion of the link, for example, between cathedrals and universities in early modern England – cathedrals were considered as a branch of learning and adjunct to universities, with Oxford and Cambridge fellows frequently holding prebendal stalls, and a number of cathedrals (such as Gloucester) frequently referred to as colleges – see Ian Atherton, 'An Apology for the Church of England's Cathedrals', in Angela Ransom and Sarah Bastow (eds), *Defending the Faith: John Jewel and the Establishment of the Elizabethan Church of England* (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, forthcoming, 2017) and the same author's 'Cathedrals', in Anthony Milton (ed.), *The Oxford History of Anglicanism, vol. 1, c.1530-1662. Reformation and Identity: The Early Struggle for Anglicanism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

– a lived, felt experience – as well as a promise and a belief. As I journey with struggling priests (in my roles as Diocesan Adviser for Women in Ministry and as the Bishop's Adviser for Pastoral Care and Wellbeing in the Diocese of Lichfield) I often ask them to reflect on how things might look 'if God is God'. If God really is God… then things that seem impossibly difficult begin to look a little different…

Rather fortuitously the post of prebendary (which I hold) illustrates this connection between ecclesia and academia. It has roots in England's medieval church – when churches functioned as sites of learning as well as ministering to the people – and was originally ascribed to an individual who had a role in the administration of a cathedral. While most prebends disappeared in 1547 as a result of the Act of the Dissolution of Collegiate Churches, the post was retained in the dioceses of London, Lichfield and Lincoln, along with the church of St Endellion in Cornwall. A prebendary, although unpaid, is still a beneficed member of the clergy with duties represented by occasional preaching and by their attendance at Greater Chapter. When attending cathedral services, prebendaries sit in particular seats, usually at the back of the choir stalls, known as prebendal stalls, and I am the first woman to sit in my particular prebendal stall in Lichfield Cathedral.

But when pushed to articulate the reason why this transition from academia to the priesthood happened in my life I often cite 'serendipity', a concept that I later came to know theologically as what can be called 'the workings of the Holy Spirit', a supernatural sense of how things fit together. In a reflection on those 1994 ordinations the writer and priest Jim Cotter (1942-2014) wrote to me and to other women called to embody this new chapter in priestly ministry: 'You are carrying a weight for all humankind: a burdensome and marvellous weight of history, which in the cathedrals of this land resonates further back than it does in the lands beyond the western and the southern seas, back to our ancestors in faith, pioneers of the Gospel, both Celtic and Roman; and a burdensome and marvellous weight of the unknown future of women and men together ministering among the People of God, a priestly ministry in and for the whole earth.'[7]

[7] Perhaps this should be followed by the observation 'No pressure then…' with a smiley emoticon?

The Struggle Goes on

In recent months the Church of England has been in the process of consecrating its first 'women bishops'.[8] Women were first ordained bishop in the Anglican Communion – the Christian denomination where the Church of England is 'first among equals' – in the Episcopal Church in the United States of America in 1989. The Right Reverend Barbara Harris (Bishop of Massachusetts 1989-2003) was not just a woman but also a black woman to boot. The fear, horror and dread that Freud sees as sometimes accompanying experiences of 'the uncanny' (the unfamiliar breaking through the familiar) are all too evident in the death threats and obscene messages that she received after the announcement of her appointment. She was urged to wear a bullet-proof vest at her consecration service but she refused. In this instance, some people responded violently to the idea of a woman occupying a space inhabited by men for centuries. I was moved to tears when I saw the diminutive figure of the now 85-year-old retired Bishop Barbara in the procession in Canterbury Cathedral when I attended the consecration of Rachel Treweek as the first female diocesan bishop in the Church of England in July 2015. Attending the consecration of Libby Lane as Bishop of Stockport in January 2015 had been equally memorable, though for different reasons. Libby was not only the first but we also had to listen to the person who shouted out by way of protest: 'It's not in the Bible!' Wrong on so many levels….

There is something miraculous that after centuries (millennia) of men running the show in the Church there are now women in most major denominations, in almost all strands of Christian witness and service, including in priestly and episcopal roles. I count it a great privilege and calling to have been part of this sea-change. But, like so many privileges, it has not been without its costs. In 2002 Canterbury Press published some reflections from those of us who had walked that new path ten years previously. My contribution to that volume of essays was called 'Costly Creativity'.[9] And, as in so many areas where women have made great

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[8] Or, perhaps more correctly, 'bishops who happen to be women'? Throughout my time in Cambridge I was taught by Professor Colin Smith, for many years the chief editor of the Collins English/Spanish Spanish/English dictionary. I managed to convince him at a dinner in the mid-1980s that he needed to give both 'obispo' and 'obispa' as the Spanish translation of the English word 'bishop' in his forthcoming revised edition. After some discussion he conceded that I had a point and agreed to include my suggestion in the revised edition which came out in 1988.

[9] *Voices of this Calling. Experiences of the First Generation of Women* Priests, ed. Christina Rees (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2002). See also my essay, 'Magnificat',

headway in recent decades, there is still a strong flavour of overriding patriarchy and, perhaps harder still to deal with and confront, a good dose of benign paternalism at work as well. Pioneering souls need a super-natural sense of courage and freedom in treading previously uncharted paths.

The 500th Anniversary of Teresa of Ávila's Birth (2015)

In this year when we celebrate the 500th anniversary of the birth of Teresa of Ávila, I take heart from the radical freedom that she found in her utter dependence on 'God' (for want of a better word). If God alone suffices, if *sólo Dios basta* (as it claims on Teresa's hand-written bookmark quoted in my title) then we, like her, can have courage to challenge and reform, allowing space for new possibilities beyond the received normal. It seems to me that this is another fruitful way to talk about the super-natural in her day and ours. Empowered and inspired (literally with the breath of the spirit blown into us) in this way then, as Rowan Williams (the former Archbishop of Canterbury) observes in his superb study of Teresa, the supernatural is a most natural outcome.[10] If one is utterly dependant on 'God' then such happenings and insights are not surprising. They spring from a reality that goes beyond the superficial and material. As referenced above, early Christian writers record Jesus as saying that we will be led 'into all the truth' by the spirit. As a woman in my fifties I am encouraged and challenged by the fact that Teresa really only started writing when she was about my age. It is perhaps ironic that she seems to have done so in obedience to advice from her male ecclesiastical superiors. A modern hymn, 'Enemy of apathy' by John Bell from the Iona Community in Scotland, refers to the spirit 'waking tongues of ecstasy where dumbness reigned'. The biblical witness has Jesus speak both of a spirit that leads us into all 'truth' (John 16.13) and also of himself as 'the way, the truth and the life' (John 14.16). I have always been drawn to this notion of truth as a journey, as something alive, organic, moving, growing, developing…

Others are far better qualified to comment than I am on the ways in which these observations also have echoes in the realms of the psychoanalytic and the psychotherapeutic as well as in the worlds of literary theory and academic discourse. But perhaps my perspective is not as 'entirely different' as may have first appeared. I very often, even in Christian circles, feel the

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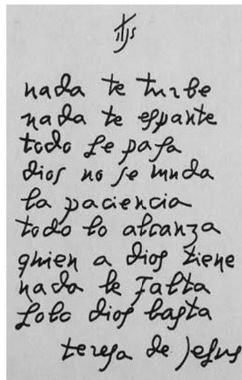
in *Soul Pain: Priests Reflect on Personal Experience of Serious and Terminal Illness*, ed. Jennifer Tann (London: Norwich Canterbury Press, 2013), pp. 50-62.

[10] Rowan Williams, *Teresa of Ávila* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1991), p. 144.

need to place the word (and indeed the theological and spiritual concept) of 'God' in inverted commas; but perhaps never more so than as I try to offer these thoughts in this current context! For too many people God caries too much unexamined baggage. We are, after all, not dealing with an old man with a long white beard. Indeed, just when Teresa died in Spain, another remarkable woman was born in England – Mary Ward (1585-1645), the foundress of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary (now the Companions of Jesus), who wrote about 'the freedom to refer all things to God…', whom she apparently addressed in prayer as 'parent of all parents and friend of all friends'. (I learnt of these phrases from a CJ sister in conversation.) Could we perhaps say that in a supposedly postmodern, western and ever more secular world, suspicious of 'referring all things to God', the uncanny and miraculous are likely to be even more important (in that Freudian sense that the repressed always returns)?[11] Or, to put it in the words of the author of the first work in English identifiably written by a woman: 'All shall be well and all shall be well and all manner of thing shall be well' (Julian of Norwich, c.1342-c.1416).[12]


ihs

nada te turbe
nada te espante
todo se pasa
dios no se muda
la paciencia
todo lo alcanza
quien a dios tiene
nada le falta
solo dios basta
teresa de jesus

[11] The IBVM were known as 'The Jesuitesses', and Carmelite and Ignatian (Jesuit) spirituality were not so different as sometimes suggested, as Rowan Williams points out; see Williams, *St Teresa*, p. 141, n27.

[12] T.S. Eliot incorporated the saying that 'All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well', as well as Julian's 'the ground of our beseeching' from her 14th Revelation, into 'Little Gidding', the fourth of his *Four Quartets*: 'Whatever we inherit from the fortunate / We have taken from the defeated / What they had to leave us—a symbol: / A symbol perfected in death. / And all shall be well and / All manner of thing shall be well / By the purification of the motive / In the ground of our beseeching.'

INTRODUCTION

This book is based on a selection of the papers that were given at the British Academy-funded conference on 'The Supernatural' held in University College on 1-2 May 2015, which itself was a sequel to the AHRC-funded project and publication *A Companion to Magical Realism*, ed. Stephen M. Hart & Wen-Chin Ouyang – published a decade before, in 2005. During the conference we focussed on the expression of the supernatural in history, literature, art and film across a wide variety of national settings and chronological epochs (Medieval, Early Modern and Contemporary). Our main aim was deceptively simple: to answer the question: what is the supernatural, and how, and why, has it changed over time? This question remains at the heart of this book, but – in the two years of gestation since the conference – a number of other concepts as well as new connections have emerged. It became clear, for example, that new post-Freudian methods of 'capturing' the supernatural led to the creation and/or expansion in meaning of terms such as the Uncanny. In order to gain a historical sense of the ways in which extraordinary events or happenings were understood over time – during a period spanning roughly the Early Modern and the Contemporary eras – we decided to divide the book into two complementary sections, the first focussing on the supernatural, the second on the Uncanny. Part I of the book focusses on research on the discourse of the supernatural (including the miraculous) located in the medieval and early modern eras while Part II provides a set of test-cases involving research on the uncanny, often articulated in a post-Freudian sense, as expressed in modern literature, film and art. The eclectic and prismatic approach pursued via a variety of test-cases of the supernatural in this book gives rises to a clear, comparative and diachronic study of the main characteristics of the supernatural.

In his piece on 'Legitimacy through Translation: The Miraculous Transformation of Law and Relics', Zoran Milutinović analyses the process of *translatio* in the medieval Serbian church and identifies a similarity between the movement of religious relics to sacred places and the movement of laws from one language to another; it led to the 'legitimacy of what had already been there' (p. 6), but which – as a result of its mobility – had now taken on a new, miraculous and supernatural significance. Tyler Fisher, in his essay, 'The Supernatural in Spanish

Ballads', questions the veracity of the approach that sees Spanish ballads as rooted firmly in the everyday and the real to such an extent that the supernatural element is rare; he points to a number of examples of supernatural events that are depicted in Spanish *romance*s and argues that it is high time to put to bed 'that curiously persistent error about the *romancero*'s purported paucity of supernatural content' (p. 41). In '"Was it a Vision, or a Waking Dream?" Exploring the Oneiric World of a Seventeenth-Century Jesuit Visionary in Portuguese India', Zoltán Biedermann analyses a little-studied seventeenth-century narrative composed by a Portuguese Jesuit, Fernão de Queiroz, of the life of Brother Pedro de Basto, published in 1689. The *Historia da Vida do Venerável Irmão Pedro de Basto* abounds in descriptions of supernatural events, many of which are linked to the trials, tribulations and reverses of the Portuguese Empire in the East. As Biedermann suggests, this text provides insight into 'a personal, often conventional, but at times highly idiosyncratic, spiritual life in a distant corner of the first truly global empire' (p. 48). Stephen M. Hart, in 'The Role of the Supernatural in the Life and Work of Santa Rosa de Lima (1586-1617)', analyses three alleged 'miracles' performed by Santa Rosa de Lima – her 'expulsion' of the Dutch from Lima in July 1615, her role in the breaking into a sweat of a picture of Christ on 15 April 1617, and the praeternatural concord she had with the mosquitoes of Lima such that they never bit her. Hart also discusses the criteria used by the Holy See in the seventeenth century to determine whether an event could be seen as a miracle, in order to attempt to explain why none of these three events was judged to be miraculous.

Two of the essays in Part I focus on the portrayal of the supernatural in literature of the Early Modern Period. Sander Berg, in his essay, '"No es cosa de burlas": *mira* and *miracula* in Barrionuevo, Pellicer and Zayas's *novelas'*, looks at the role of the Inquisition in seventeenth-century Spain and, in particular, its desire for jurisdiction over what constituted a miracle. Berg also draws attention to the distinction in Early Modern culture between magic and the miracle, and shows how some of these epistemological tensions were portrayed in María de Zayas's fiction. Finally, Zlatka Angelova Stankova, in 'The Uncanny in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*', shows how Shakespeare's play – in its portrayal of the supernatural via ghosts – anticipates Freud's notion of the uncanny as 'eerie' and 'unhomely'.

The essays in Part II focus on the expression of praeternatural events and experiences in the Modern Era. Opening with Jonathan Allison's 'Strange Meeting: Ghosts and Modern Poetry', this section focusses more precisely on a post-Freudian understanding of the experience of the

uncanny as something paradoxical, that is, as 'not known' but also simultaneously as somehow 'familiar'. Allison's essay, in particular, guides us through a number of key poetic 'moments' of early twentieth-century English poetry in which the uncanny vision of a ghost appears. For Sigmund Freud the Uncanny was often experienced as a perturbing mix of the familiar and the unfamiliar, and certainly a number of the experiences of ghostly apparitions described in the poetry of Owen and Yeats appear to echo this idea closely. Owen Williams's '"Grossly Brutal and Sordid Scenes": The British Board of Film Censors' "H" Certificate and the Regulation of Horror Cinema', shows how the British film industry reacted to the threat of the American horror film that was beginning – from the 1920s onwards – to captivate, enthral and thrill British audiences. It discusses how a number of epoch-making films of the early 1930s – such as *Frankenstein* (1931) and *King Kong* (1933) – created a new 'regime of horror', and eventually led to the ratification by the British Board of Film Censors of an 'H' certificate in 1937. Joana Rita Ramalho, for her part, in 'Mobile Maps: The Face of Death in 1940s Romantic-Gothic Films', exposes the ways in which cinema has been linked to magic and the supernatural, and focusses in particular on 1940s Romantic-Gothic films which are underpinned by a ubiquitous tension between art and death. A number of films are analysed in which the parallelism between art and death is evident, including *The Ghost and Mrs Muir* (1947), *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1945) and *Portrait of Jennie* (1948).

The remaining group of four essays in Part II analyse the articulation of the uncanny in the second half of the twentieth century with one essay (Jo Hodges's) also venturing into the twenty-first century. Jo Evans, in 'The Uncanny Valley and *Todo sobre mi madre* (All About My Mother, Almodóvar, 1999)', applies the notion invented by a Japanese robotics expert, Masahiro Mori, of an 'uncanny valley' of revulsion when a humanoid figures starts to look almost human, to *Todo sobre mi madre,* and argues that, despite its phenomenal box-office success, 'this is Almodóvar's most conservative film' (p. 169). Liz Harvey-Kattou, in 'The Supernatural as Decolonial Tactic: Afro-Costa Rican Motifs in Quince Duncan's Fiction', analyses two of Quince Duncan's earliest novels, *Los cuatro espejos* (1973) and *La paz del pueblo* (1978) – and demonstrates how the supernatural economy depicted in both works functions as a critique of Costa Rican society from a post-colonial vantage-point. Camilla Emerson, in 'Doubles, Doubles Everywhere: The Uncanny in Roberto Bolaño's *Monsieur Pain*', analyses the portrayal of the dying moments of Peru's most famous poet, César Vallejo (1892-1938) in Bolaño's rather enigmatic novel, when he was holed up in the Arago

Clinic in Paris, suffering from interminable hiccoughs and being treated by an alleged quack by the name of Monsieur Pain. Emerson discusses the points at which the Chilean novelist departs from the historical record of Vallejo's untimely death, and analyses the reasons behind his imaginative re-creation of Vallejo's last hours on earth. Finally, in 'The Eerie Rise and Fall of Charles Saatchi (1965-2013)', Jo Hodges homes in on Charles Saatchi's uncannily meteoric success for three decades in the world of advertising and then in the art world, followed by his equally uncanny demise in the early twenty-first century. Drawing inspiration from Neil MacGregor's *A History of the World in 100 Objects*, she chooses six poignant images – ranging from Saatchi's *Pregnant Man* (1969) to Jean Paul's photograph taken on 9 June 2013 at Scott's restaurant in Mayfair, London showing Saatchi strangling Nigella Lawson – and uses them to plot Saatchi's trajectory through the years. This collection of essays is dedicated to the memory of Jo Hodges who passed away on 25 July 2017.

Finally, we are happy to record our grateful thanks to the British Academy for its support of the project, 'The Evolution of a Saint: A New Biography of Santa Rosa de Lima' (SG121483: 26 June 2013-26 July 2015) which funded the conference and the papers collected in this volume.

S.M.H & Z.B.

PART I:

THE SUPERNATURAL IN MEDIEVAL AND EARLY MODERN CULTURE

CHAPTER ONE

LEGITIMACY THROUGH TRANSLATION: THE MIRACULOUS TRANSFORMATION OF LAWS AND RELICS

ZORAN MILUTINOVIĆ

The main character in the story to follow will be Sava Nemanjić, a thirteenth-century Serbian prince, monk, traveller, first archbishop of the autocephalous Serbian church – and cultural translator. The focus will be placed on the translation of laws and the *translatio* of relics initiated, organized and performed by Sava Nemanjić, understood as a process of cultural translation with lasting results. I will claim that in each particular instance of transformation and movement – Byzantine law into Serbian law, Byzantine imperial relics into Serbian church relics, a king's body into sacred national relics – something significant was gained: namely, legitimacy of what had already been there. By translating Byzantine laws in such a manner that the translation reflected Slavonic customary law and the needs of the Nemanjić dynasty, Sava Nemanjić granted legitimacy to the latter; by appropriating relics formerly belonging to the emperor's treasury, he legitimized the already existing rule of his father's house; and by sanctifying his father and his brother through the process of *translatio*, he established a holy dynasty as a legitimate ruler.

The main sources for Sava Nemanjić's life are two biographies: the mid-thirteenth-century *The Life of St. Sava* by Domentijan, a monk from Mount Athos who may have known Sava personally, and *The Life of St. Sava* by Teodosije, also a Mount Athos monk, but from a later generation, written perhaps in the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century.[1] Sava was

[1] Domentijan: *Život Svetoga Save i Život Svetoga Simeona* (Belgrade: Prosveta / Srpska književna zadruga, 1988); Teodosije: *Žitija* (Belgrade: Prosveta / Srpska književna zadruga, 1988). There are a large number of modern biographies of Sava, perhaps the most reliable and useful being Stanoje Stanojević: *Sveti Sava* (Belgrade:

born in 1175, the youngest son of Stefan Nemanja, *grand joupan* of Raška, in Serbia. When he was fifteen, his father gave him the province of Hum to govern, which he did for two years. Soon after returning to his father's court in Ras, he escaped and went to Mount Athos.[2] Teodosije tells a story about Stefan Nemanja sending an armed escort to bring the young prince back home, but Sava deceived his pursuers and quickly became a monk – hence placing himself beyond their jurisdiction. In 1196, Nemanja abdicated in favour of his second son, Stefan, and joined his youngest son Sava in Mount Athos. Now named Simeon, the former *grand joupan* sent Sava to Constantinople in 1197 to seek the Byzantine emperor's permission to rebuild Helandarion, a half-ruined Greek monastery not far from another monastery, Vatopedi, where they were enjoying the hospitality of Greek monks. The mission was successful, and the following year the emperor granted Simeon and Sava the authority and powers of management over Hilandar, as the monastery would be subsequently called. Hilandar had enormous significance for Serbian religious and cultural history in the Middle Ages.

For centuries it served as the main channel for transmission of Byzantine culture: in the cosmopolitan atmosphere of Mount Athos, where 'languages' – the Byzantine concept for what we call nations – enriched each other, Hilandar quickly gained the reputation of a major centre for translating Greek manuscripts into Church Slavonic, for disseminating the

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Štampa državne štamparije, 1935). In the collections *Sava Nemanjić – Sveti Sava. Istorija i predanje*, ed. Vojislav Djurić (Belgrade: Srpska akademija nauka i umetnosti, 1979) and *Sveti Sava u srpskoj istoriji i tradiciji*, ed. Sima Ćirković (Belgrade: Srpska akademija nauka i umetnosti, 1998) many historians, philologists and art historians offer valuable contributions to the understanding of Sava's time and the context of his life and work. The most accessible and complete overview in English is Dimitri Obolensky's essay 'Sava of Serbia' in his *Six Byzantine Portraits* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), pp. 115-172.

[2] Mount Athos or Holy Mountain is a peninsula near Salonika in Greece. Although monks lived there in huts since the fourth century, the first monasteries were built in the ninth. In 885 Byzantine emperor Basil I decreed that only monks were allowed to live in Mount Athos, which thus became a self-ruled territory with its own administration. Monks generally managed to protect Mount Athos through diplomacy – Ottoman sultans, despite heavy taxes which at times threaten to ruin the monasteries, and even Adolf Hitler during the Second World War, were enlisted as Holy Mountain's 'protectors' – but the period of Latin Kingdom and raids by the notorious Catalan Company were remembered as the lowest points in Holy Mountain's history. It has been one of the major intellectual and spiritual centres of Eastern Christianity: the place of learning, spirituality and intercultural exchange for Russians, Bulgarians, Greeks, Serbs and Romanians.

theory and practice of contemplative or 'hesychast' prayer, and for acquiring knowledge of artistic skills and styles. Even though cultural transmission from the Byzantine Empire to Serbia had been continuously taking place over the course of the two preceding centuries, Sava's organization and supervision of Hilandar's team of translators raised it to a wholly new level. Although still young, the former prince, with his family ties to the emperor – whose daughter was married to Sava's brother Stefan – and with substantial funding to support other monasteries in Mount Athos, Sava quickly become the dominant figure in this monastic community, and a *ktitor* (founder or protector) or six other monasteries. His high standing was officially recognized when at some stage between 1200 and 1204 he was ordained as archimandrite – the abbot of the group of monasteries – and thus second only to the *protos*, the head of all monastic communities in Mount Athos.

Soon afterwards, the Fourth Crusade put the existence of Mount Athos in peril: after the fall of Constantinople in April 1204, southern Macedonia with Salonica and Mount Athos came under the rule of Boniface, Marquis of Montferrat. All imperial charters which guaranteed the monasteries independence and self-rule became null and void; Cardinal Benedict, the papal legate to Constantinople, pillaged the monasteries and tortured monks to force them to disclose the location of hidden treasures. Sava's homeland went through a turbulent period as well: aided by Hungarians, Vukan – the eldest of Nemanja's three sons – fought Stefan, who had inherited the throne; the latter regained the throne with the help of Bulgarians in 1205. When peace prevailed, both brothers sent a letter to Sava, asking him to bring their father's body back to Serbia. In 1207, Sava travelled from Mount Athos to Studenica in central Serbia, a monastery built as royal mausoleum, where the reburial of his father's remains through a ritual of *translatio* marked Simeon's recognition as a saint, of which more will be said later. Sava remained there as abbot for eight years, using Studenica as a headquarters for his many activities: establishing monasteries, bringing Byzantine architects and painters to work in Serbia, writing a *typicon* (founding charter) for Studenica, and after the sweet-smelling oil had suffused from his father's grave, writing the *Life* of the new saint and the liturgical office in his honour – which completed the process of Simeon's canonization. Sava's *Life of St. Simeon* was the first in the long line of biographies of Serbian kings and archbishops, the corpus which Obolensky considers to be 'the main contribution made by the Serbs to the literature of medieval Europe'.[3]

[3] Obolensky, 'Sava of Serbia', p. 140.

In the thirteenth century Serbia was ecclesiastically divided between Constantinople and Rome: the former enjoyed higher cultural prestige, and most of Serbia belonged to the archdiocese of Ohrid, itself under the Patriarch of Constantinople, while the coastal provinces, a good portion of the Serbian state, belonged to the Latin archbishopric of Bar. Politically, Serbian rulers balanced between the two centres: Nemanja is said to have been baptized twice, in both rites; his son Stefan was crowned with a crown sent to him by the Pope, which implied recognition of the latter's highest authority. It would be anachronistic to interpret this position in light of the sharp division between Rome and Constantinople in later centuries, as in the thirteenth century there still prevailed the sense of a united Christendom. Upon his return to Mount Athos in 1217, Sava's next mission was to resolve this ecclesiastical ambiguity of recognizing the Pope's spiritual authority while being under the Patriarch's canonical jurisdiction. In 1219 he travelled to Nicaea, where the emperor and the patriarch resided during the short-lived Latin empire in Constantinople. The emperor was Theodore I Lascaris, to whom the Nemanjić family was related by marriage. In Nicaea, Sava was consecrated as archbishop and the Serbian Church was granted autocephalous status: *i.e.* its head would in the future be elected and consecrated by its own bishops, without any interference from the Patriarchate, and would enjoy full administrative and judicial sovereignty. The new church needed its own canonical books, and in 1220 Sava organized the writing of *Nomokanon*, to which we shall return shortly. He returned to Serbia in the same year and began organizing his church. After nine years, when most of his administrative and building plans were realized, he undertook a long journey to Palestine.[4] From February 1229 Jerusalem was once again in the hands of the Crusaders and open to Christian visitors. Sava visited Jerusalem, Bethlehem, the Jordan, and the monastery of St Sabas on the Dead Sea, his patron saint. From Acre he sailed to Nicaea to visit the new emperor, John Doukas Vatatzes, and returned to Serbia in 1230 via Mount Athos and Salonika, where he visited Theodore Angelos, the other emperor. This journey, probably motivated by his wish to see the Holy Land, also had a diplomatic and a theological purpose: in addition to political visits to both emperors and Athanasius, the patriarch of Jerusalem, he studied the Jerusalem *Typicon* and the eastern liturgy in the St Sabas monastery, and

[4] A detailed reconstruction of Sava's itinerary in the Holy Land in Miodrag Marković, *Prvo putovanje Svetog Save u Palestinu i njegov značaj za srpsku srednjovekovnu umetnost* (Belgrade: Vizantološki institut SANU, 2009).

upon his return used them to reform the Byzantine-based liturgical practice in Serbia.

After another four years in Serbia, Sava resigned from his archbishop's throne and once again travelled to Palestine. In the spring of 1224, he sailed from Budva in present-day Montenegro to Italy, and from there to Acre. On this second journey, Sava, in addition to the usual Palestinian pilgrim route, went south to Egypt. He visited the patriarch in Alexandria and the monasteries in the Desert of Scetis, which preserved the earliest traditions of Christian monasticism. The Sultan of Egypt provided him with a guide for Mount Sinai, wherefrom Sava returned to Jerusalem, and via Antioch to Constantinople. There is no explanation for a sudden change of plan: instead of going to Mount Athos, he accepted the invitation of John Asen II, the Tsar of Bulgaria, and travelled to Turnovo, the Bulgarian capital. There he died after a brief illness in January 1236, at the age of sixty.

As saints often have remarkable posthumous destinies, Sava's is also worth noting. His nephew, King Vladislav, who ruled Serbia at the time, wanted his uncle to be buried in his homeland, while Vladislav's father-in-law, the Tsar of Bulgaria, preferred to keep him in Turnovo. After prolonged negotiations, Vladislav personally came to Turnovo to take Sava's body and transferred it to Mileševa monastery in Serbia, which quickly became the site of his cult: Bosnian kings came to be crowned near his body, miracles were reported, and Mileševa became the site of pilgrimage.[5] The cult survived the Ottoman conquest, completed in 1459 – contrary to popular opinion, Serbia outlived the Kosovo battle for another seventy years – and moreover attracted Muslims as well as Christians to Mileševa. At the end of the sixteenth century, the Ottoman grand vizier, Koça Sinan Pasha, decided to put an end to the St Sava cult, and ordered that his body be burnt. In 1594, Sava's coffin was brought to Belgrade and placed on a pyre on the hill of Vračar; at the spot where the body of their first archbishop and first writer was burnt, Serbs much later built a church and the National Library.

With his work on *Nomokanon*, Sava Nemanjić was also the first legislator in a country which followed Slavonic customary law, but had no code books.[6] Byzantine law was based on Justinian's *Corpus Iuris Civilis*, an early sixth-century codification of Roman law, which is still the basis of civil law in most European states; it was supplemented by *novels*,

[5] A detailed description of Sava's transfer and further developments in Danica Popović, 'Mošti svetog Save', Ćirković, pp. 251-265.

[6] *Nomokanon* has been recently published as *Zakonopravilo svetoga Save*, ed. M.M. Petrović and Lj. Štavljanin-Đorđević (Belgrade: Istorijski institut, 2005).

decrees issued by various emperors, and by church councils' decisions, regularly accompanied by a selection of authoritative commentaries, such as those by Zonaras and Aristenos. They were collected in books called *nomokanon*, from *nomoi* (laws issued by the state) and *kanones* (laws issued by the church).[7] The new Christian states on the borders of the Byzantine Empire and within its political and cultural orbit could not rely solely on customary law: not only because they needed to regulate their newly acquired Christian dimension and were thus in need of canon law, but also because customary law could not be relied upon in conditions of increasing economic and political complexity. The rulers of the new Christian states were only too happy to introduce Byzantine law, as it provided them with a position much stronger than the one they had under customary law, free from the Byzantine political ideology which connected political power and religious sanctity.[8] Whatever the state of their relations to the Byzantine Empire, even when waging war against it or recognizing the sovereignty of other powers, such as the Ottoman state, they always recognized the hierarchy of states – itself a part of the Byzantine political ideology – which placed the Christian Empire of Romans and its emperor at the top, as there could be only one universal Christian empire and one Christian emperor.[9] By recognizing it, they also benefited from the aura of sanctity radiating from it. The same applied to many aspects of the law of this empire: it was considered binding for all Christian states, as it recorded the proclamations of the ecumenical councils and thus set universal

[7] For a brief overview of Byzantine legal literature with a bibliography of the newer scholarship see Bernard Stolte, 'Justice: Legal Literature', *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies*, ed. E. Jeffreys, J. Haldon and R. Cormack (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 691-98.

[8] On the transfer of Byzantine law to neighbouring Slavonic states, see Dimitri Obolensky, *Byzantine Commonwealth* (New York and Washington: Praeger Publishers, 1971), pp. 314-21.

[9] This meant that a Bulgarian or a Serbian ruler could claim the title of emperor (*basileus*), as Simeon of Bulgaria (893-927) did, and even be recognized as such by the Byzantines, as Simeon's son Petar and Dušan of Serbia (1331-1355) were, but that they could never go so far as to claim to be the emperors of Romans. Dušan called himself and was addressed by the Byzantine emperor as the 'emperor of Serbia', but the addition to his title 'and of Romania', was never recognized: he was not allowed to lay claim to the position which could, at least in theory, be occupied by only one person in the *oecumene*. More in George Ostrogorsky, 'The Byzantine Emperor and the Hierarchical World Order', *Slavonic and East European Review*, 35.4 (1956), 1-14, and 'Srbija i vizantijska hijerarhija država', *O knezu Lazaru*, ed. I. Božić and V.J. Đurić (Belgrade: Filozofski fakultet, 1975), pp. 125-137.

standards, even if the state which issued this law was by no means universal any longer. If, however, some aspects were not related to matters of religious doctrine, they were considered optional and open to interpretation and modification. Thus the translation of the Byzantine legal system in Slavonic states was rarely literal: it was often adapted to the framework of Slavonic customary law. For example, as death sentences were not part of Slavonic customary law, they were regularly omitted in Slavonic translations. Obolensky mentions that in 1308, the Senate of Dubrovnik, at that time an independent city-state with a strong interest in Balkan trade routes, demanded of Serbian king Milutin (1253–1321) to introduce death sentences for murderers of Dubrovnik citizens, as this was, they argued, an aspect of God's justice recognized across the whole world. Milutin replied that when receiving the crown he had sworn not to shed the blood of his subjects, and that murderers would be punished by paying fines.[10]

Today it is universally accepted that upon securing for the Serbian Church its autocephalous status and judicial and administrative independence from the Patriarchate in Constantinople, Sava Nemanjić in 1220 organized the translation of some eight hundred pages of *nomoi* and *kanones.* It is no longer believed that he translated it himself, but he certainly selected the laws and oversaw the work of translators from Greek into Church Slavonic. What he chose to include, and even more what he decided to leave out reveals his vision of the political ideology of the house of Nemanjić. The key text here is *Procheiron*, a collection of civil and public laws from the end of the ninth century, followed by the decisions of the ecumenical councils, and a selection from *Collectio Tripartita*, which contained Justinian's *Code*, *Digest* and *Novels*. When choosing commentaries, Sava included those of Zonaras and Aristenos. He did not include the eighth-century *Ecloga*, the famous forgery *Donatio Constantini*, or Theodore Balsamon's and Demetrios Chomatianos's commentaries.[11] Between the ecumenical councils' decisions and details of punishments for specific crimes, there was enormous scope for political and legal flexibility which offered an opportunity for selection and compilation. Sava Nemanjić's selection, the principles of inclusion and exclusion which

[10] Obolensky, p. 316.
[11] The most detailed discussion of Sava's selection is Sergije Troicki, 'Crkveno-politička ideologija svetosavske Krmčije i Vlastareve Sintagme', *Glas SAN*, CCXII (1953),155-206; less detailed, but more accessible to a non-specialist, is Dimitrije Bogdanović, 'Krmčija svetog Save', in Đurić, pp. 91-99; various aspects of the *Nomocanon* are discussed in Miodrag M. Petrović, *O Zakonopravilu ili Nomokanonu svetoga Save* (Belgrade: Kultura, 1990).

he practised, testify to an ideological choice, something gained in the process of translation: when it came to regulating the relationship between the Church and State, he carefully avoided both the Byzantine model of the Church's subservience to the political power of the emperor, as well as the Church's supremacy over rulers, claimed by the bishops of Rome. With remarkable consistency, Sava Nemanjić avoided all regulations which may have encouraged political interference in Church matters, and also those which could have legitimized ecclesiastical interference in the political sphere. Consequently, both the famous *Donatio Constantini*, a forgery which served to legitimize the Pope's supremacy over secular rulers, and the Byzantine charismatic theory of political power were omitted from his selection, as well as everything which could have supported the claim for supremacy of either the Pope or the Patriarch of Constantinople over one another. The spheres of the State and the Church were clearly demarcated, and they were instructed to strive towards harmony or 'symphony' in their actions. And as an added bonus, there was also the claim that a ruler was subject to the law he himself proclaimed. All these positions were already present in Byzantine law – Sava was not in a position to invent anything, but he could and did choose interpretations and formulations which suited his ideology, claims Troicki.[12] His choice was obviously dictated by the need to strengthen the position of his autocephalous church towards the patriarchate in Constantinople, while at the same time preserving good relations with the Pope in Rome. His insistence on the State's and the Church's independence in their respective spheres, and on their 'symphony', can be understood – as Dimitrije Bogdanović interpreted it – as a return to an earlier Byzantine political philosophy, which in Sava's time was already suppressed by the domination of the State over the Church.[13] As both the Church and the State are necessary, and god created them both, as they need to strive towards the same goal – namely, providing the greatest benefit possible to the people – they will work best if they both obey the same laws and support each other in their respective spheres. Hence, the symphony of the spiritual and temporal powers is regularly represented in frescoes from the Nemanjić period in portraits of Serbian kings and archbishops – who were

[12] Troicki, p. 179. Both the 'symphony' and the idea that emperors are not above the law, for example, can be found in Byzantine law; see Troicki, pp.177-79.

[13] Dimitrije Bogdanović, 'Politička filozofija srednjovekovne Srbije. Mogućnosti jednog istraživanja', in *Studije iz srpske srednjovekovne književnosti* (Belgrade: Srpska književna zadruga, 1997), p. 111.

more than once brothers, such as Stephen the First-crowned and Sava – standing next to each other, as a visual reminder for all.[14]

For more than two centuries, the *Nomocanon* served as the basis for the Serbian legal system, until it was replaced by Emperor Dušan's *Code* in the fourtheenth century. It was also adopted by the Russian and Bulgarian churches, and its canonical aspects became their underlying legal documents.[15] In Serbia, a number of copies of the *Nomocanon* were in circulation, most of which were either lost or destroyed during the Ottoman conquest. In Russia, however, it survived until the time of the printing press, and was thereafter widely available in many printed editions. When after the first Serbian Uprising against the Ottomans in 1804 the insurgents' provisional government set out to reintroduce a Christian legal system, it turned to Orthodox Russia for inspiration, and sent Matija Nenadović, a member of the government entrusted with legal matters, to Moscow and St Petersburg to investigate the possibility of translating Russian laws. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Serbs were well acquainted with the Habsburg empire, where a large number of Serbs lived, but Russia was more a matter of the imagination than a real place: 'We sat sails on the quiet Danube today', writes Nenadović in his memoir, 'to find that country Russia, which we don't know where it may lie, but of which we have heard in songs'.[16] What Nenadović's mission found in Russia was the Russian version of Sava Nemanjić's *Nomocanon*, known under the Slavonic name 'Krmčija'. Nenadović translated some parts of it into Serbian, and thus the *Nomocanon* acquired a new lease of life and a third translation: it had first been translated from Greek into Church Slavonic of Serbian redaction, then into Church Slavonic of Russian redaction, and finally into modern colloquial Serbian. However, this latest translation also brought something new: just as Sava Nemanjić had adapted Byzantine laws so that they could fit both Slavonic customary law and his ideological vision of independence of church and state, so Matija Nenadović adapted the Russian version of the *Nomocanon* in light of what he was more familiar with: the legal system of the neighbouring Habsburg monarchy, in which Serbs had been living for several centuries.[17] The medieval law code was filtered through the prism of a more modern legal system, better suited for the economic and political complexities of the modern age. This unexpected and contingent trajectory

[14] Vojislav J. Đurić, 'La symphonie de l'état et de l'église dans le peinture murale en Serbie médiévale', in Ćirković, pp. 203-24.
[15] Dimitrije Bogdanović, p. 111.
[16] Matija Nenadović, *Memoari*, Belgrade: Nolit, p 93.
[17] For more on Nenadović's adaptation of *Nomokanon* see Petrović, pp. 109-124.