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SHORT STORIES
volume I

BANJA LUKA, 2020

EXECUTION

The Roman governor of Judea, the procurator and the hegemon Pontius Pilate, had a conversation with the High Priest Caiaphas about how the preparations for the upcoming Passover festival were taking place. Five cohorts of Roman soldiers had already been deployed on the main access routes, overseeing who, among the pilgrims, were entering the city. Two cohorts, headed from Caesarea, a port city in the north of the country, were only half a day riding from Jerusalem and would be deployed in the city itself as reinforcements to Roman soldiers who had already been there and who were in charge of keeping peace and arresting the perpetrators and Zealots. The Zealots often had used the Passover season to destroy the emperor's eagles and invite people to rebel against Rome. The procurator knew the history of Jerusalem well. He knew it was the capital of David's empire even ten centuries ago. David's successor, his younger son Solomon, expanded and adorned the city. He also erected defense walls, imperial palace and magnificent temple. It was the temple of God in which the Ark of the Covenant was kept. During great holidays, people prayed there. The incense and fruits of the harvest were burned, and sacrifices were offered on the altar to God. There were many people employed in the service and maintenance of the Temple. At the time of Passover, harvest and gathering, pilgrims from everywhere were arriving at Jerusalem for worship while singing psalms. It is then said that all roads lead to Jerusalem, not to Rome. At the time of the Paschal festival commemorating the exodus of the Jews from the Egyptian slavery, the population of the city often increased as many as tenfold, because for most of the common people it was the center of all Jews, not only of those from Judea, but also of those from Edom, in the South, and those from Samaria and Galilee, a little further to the North of Jerusalem. This First Temple, erected by Solomon, was destroyed by the Babylonian ruler Nabu-kudurri-usur six centuries later, when the Jews fall again into slavery this time it was Babylonian. Having been liberated from the Babylonian slavery and returning to Jerusalem, which the Jews celebrate as their second exodus, they erected the Second Temple. The procurator and hegemon Pontius Pilate also knew that the Second Temple and the city walls were destroyed by the Roman legions under the command of General Pompey which conquered the Jewish provinces of Samaria and Galilee in the North to Judea and Edom in the South.

The construction of the Third Temple began during the time of the King of Herod the Great, appointed by the Romans, and the works were still ongoing, but religious ceremonies did not stop for a single day. The procurator was mostly concerned about some groups of Zealots that might mix with not only thousands of pilgrims who arrived every day but also with numerous builders and carpenters working on the reconstruction of the city walls. The stream of pilgrims were pouring in the city daily, and among them there were charlatans, astrologers, magicians, stars, prophets, thieves, rogues, robbers and murderers. If rebels and villains were infiltrated among them, then it would be difficult to detect them. Pilate had already received news from his informants, and also from the High Priest Caiaphas that half a million people could come to celebrate the Passover in the city this year, which was almost ten times the number of people who lived there

permanently. Other cities, Caesarea, Khan, Nazareth, Jericho, Hebron, and Qumran did not have much fewer inhabitants during the year than Jerusalem, but during the Passover, Jerusalem became several times bigger than them, because only one God's temple is inhabited by God, and it is this one in Jerusalem. There is no place like this and it cannot be found anywhere else, because the Ark of the Covenant is kept in the Temple of Jerusalem. Therefore, the stream of the pilgrims began pouring like a spring from the mountains to the city even a month before the beginning of the Paschal festival. Jerusalem then shadowed all other cities of the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire, even Antioch in Syria, Corinth in Greece, Alexandria in Egypt, and Tars in Cilicia. And Ephesus, the capital of the farthest Roman province of Asia, famous for its 127-pillar temple, dedicated to the goddess of fertility and abundance, Artemis, was forgotten at that time of the year. The excitement in Jerusalem was growing, becoming greater and greater as each day of spring in the month Nisan passed approaching the Passover festival. It could not be said that the procurator worried much, but he was certainly uncomfortable. He thought that something could get out of control and turn into a rebel or, even worse, that the Zealots might start the riots, and then use them for the general rebellion of people against Rome. If such a report was sent to Rome, the Emperor Tiberius would certainly not invite him to his birthday celebration, as he had done so far. Only he, the governor of Judea, among all the eastern provincial governors, was in the emperor's lodge during the battle of gladiators in the arena last year. The emperor rewarded him knowing how difficult it was for him to keep control of the troubled province, to stifle rebellions and to enforce Roman laws. The entertainments and feasts that Tiberius organised in the arena, at the stadium, the circus and the amphitheater were still vivid in his memories. Pilate remembered well that Tiberius entrusted food preparation for his last year birthday party, not only to public chefs, but also to the hosts of respectable houses were involved. The gladiators, who had already become famous and who were said to be brave fighters, were dragged out of the arena and kept for the events.

Pilate recalled how Tiberius liked to repeat the saying that Guy Julius Caesar uttered persecuting his opponent General Pompey. When Pompey escaped from Rome in Brindisi, leaving his army at the mercy of Caesar's legions, he said: "Now I am attacking the army without a leader, and then I will turn into a leader without an army."

What now calmed the hegemon down was that a whole legion was deployed in the city and around it on time. On the accesses to the main gate of the city that admitted columns of pilgrims from the direction of Hebron, Jericho, Kumran, Vitania and other cities that once were parts of the mighty David's empire, there was one cohort. The guards and on-callers were placed on small roads and forest paths, so the city was surrounded. In the event of a rebellion, no one would be able to withdraw unnoticed, even under the protection of the night, which the organisers of rebellions and uprisings had often done before. Ten days ago, the procurator learned that, three months before, the Emperor of Tiberias had ordered three legions from Rome to move to the remote eastern provinces of the Empire. The hegemon was surprised that nothing he had not been informed from Rome, as was always the case. It had been customary until then that the town councilors of the eastern provinces were informed on time about greater movements of the Roman legions in that direction. He anxiously thought that the Emperor Tiberius could dismiss him because the legate who commanded the legion of Jerusalem had not yet visited him, although he had already been to Rome twice, demanding from the

Emaror at least five cohorts, if not the whole legion, to keep peace in Judea during the Passover. The procurator still hoped that both legions would arrive in Judah on time and be deployed in Jerusalem and Caesarea as an additional reinforcement, although he did not know anything reliably about this. By this act, the Emperor would again demonstrate great efforts of the governor of Judea, and that it was not easy for him. It would also eliminate the last doubts that arose after unconvincing stories that the emperor intended to soon dismiss several Roman rulers in the eastern provinces of the empire because of the failure to apply Roman laws and the mild punishment for the rebels who had demolished imperial eagles and disobeyed Roman laws.

It had been more than half a century since the Roman commander of Pompey conquered Judea and Jerusalem, and later other Jewish provinces. After many rebellions suppressed in blood, the Romans put Herod the Great in power, their vassal, loyal to Rome. Herod, whom the Jews despised, because he was appointed by the Romans, and for whom they said was not a Jew, in order to get the affection of the people, began great works, and in just twenty years, the city experienced great changes. Many theaters, amphitheaters and even a hippodrome had been built like those in Greece and Rome. Herod also began building the Third Temple according to the plan and on the foundations of the First, Solomon's Temple. The Third Temple was built of white stone and coated with gold panels, and the whole plateau where the temple was located was covered with colorful stone slabs making mosaics that could be seen only on the squares of the largest cities of the Empire. But most Jews continued to despise Herod because of his non-Jewish origin. The Pharisees called him: the slave from Edom. But he was more persistent and decisive than ever to gain the affection of people, and therefore married Mariamne from the Hasmonean dynasty, restored the temple, developed foreign trade by building a harbor in Caesarea, kept order in the kingdom, and reduced taxes. At the same time, he was a cruel ruler and merciless against his opponents. He cruelly suppressed the revolt of the Pharisee. He did not even spare his family: he executed his wife Mariamne and several of his sons who had been suspected of conspiracy.

Now the temple built by Herod the Great, with its luxurious marble pillars, at the same time scared and amazed the procurator himself. The riots and rebellions in the past had always started here, on this plateau around the temple. In order to free himself from these gloomy thoughts, the hegemon, who had not been even able to sleep lately, learned a skill that helped him regain peace. He noticed that, whenever he created the images of Rome, the capital of the world, before the eyes, as he liked to tell the legate and the High Priest, with its large squares and imperial gardens, villas and palaces along the coast of the Tiber River, the images of the temple of Jerusalem and Jerusalem rebels suppressed in blood would disappear. Only when severe pain in his backs began, which he got at his young age with continuous riding for several days when he chased with his cohorts the barbarians who attacked the northern borders of the empire, for a moment these visions would disappear and resume once the pain went away. The courage he showed in those struggles allowed him to get his service in the Pretorian Guard, where, after ten years, he was appointed the imperial governor of Judea, where he still was hoping for transfer and return to Rome.

- "Jerusalem is mentioned only for a few days a year, at the time of the Passover, and Rome is the eternal center of the world," said the procurator to himself, praying to Jupiter to be transferred there as soon as possible. He was able to create the images of the

Eternal City on seven hills along the left bank of the Tiber River and famous imperial palaces, gardens and temples to the glories of Jupiter, Janus, Mars, Venus, Caesar, Augustus and Minerva. Not only the pictures of Jupiter's temple were especially vivid and frequent, but also that of Janus', which was open only during the wartime. When he was at the military service in Rome, he often went to the Temple of Vest, where the vestals, the priestesses of the temple continuously kept the fire of Rome. He remembers well how Tiberius himself built the Temple of Augustus. Even when he was an invincible horseman, Pilate was often called upon to secure the stadium with the Pretorian Guard, where the emperor would come to watch chariot races, or when the whole stadium was turned into a lake to present naval battles for the emperor and imperial family. Pilate was constantly on horseback and on the move, riding from one end to the other end of the lake without taking off a heavy armor and helmet and with a spear in his hand, he repelled the crowd that would hurl through the thick lines of the Pretorian Guard to see at least some of what was happening on the lake. At that time, it seemed to him that the whole of Rome came to watch the scenes of the naval battle, and that imperial palaces and gardens, forums and basilicas on the left bank of the Tiber were completely abandoned. On the days of such events and games, he would be in charge of deploying guards around the city so that the wanderers would not rob the city, now that few people stayed at home.

Now the image of the full arena from last year's emperor's birthday celebration came to his mind, when he was invited to attend the event for his merit as the governor of Judea. Prisoners of war, slaves and prisoners sentenced to death appeared in turns in the arena, having been given another chance to fight for life among themselves or against hungry wild beasts. He recalled well the scene when the Emperor lifted his thumb to save the life of a young slave who had been defeated by a powerful gladiator from Thrace. The cry of approval burst into the arena echoing even in the procurator's ears as though this was happening now and in front of his eyes. In this dusty and bustling city in the center of Judea, there were also Roman baths with warm water under the sun that was constantly heating. As a young horseman and Pretorian, he attended the royal birthday celebration countless times. Tiberius often organised such games at the beginning of his reign. These were magnificent and costly events and festivities. The emperor knew that people compared him with two great predecessors, Caesar and Octavian, who were great military leaders and great rulers and who expanded and secured the borders of the empire and contributed to the peace and prosperity of Rome. Tiberius could not boast about this, so he turned to expensive festivities and events in order to draw attention to himself at the same time. Thus, Tiberius distracted the attention of people from the problems that appeared more often: riots and rebellions in remote provinces, hunger, unknown diseases, disobedience of the general. That is why Tiberius frequently organised such expensive entertainments and festivals in the amphitheater, as well as in the arena and the stadium. At the stadium, where many people could be seated, he liked to organise chariot, double and four-wheeled carriage races. At that same stadium, he also organised battles not only of infantry, but also of horsemen. After that, he would order to flood the entire stadium and turn it into a lake to perform and show real naval battles. At night, at the arena, with many torches lit up, he organised the gladiator battles with beasts or men against each other. On one occasion he ordered that the same performance be performed, but this time there were woman prisoners, who fought one another against life and death.

All these procurator's images and memories were interrupted by heavy swelter of Jerusalem and burdening consciousness that imposed peace ruled in Judea and rebellions that could break out any time. The procurator also knew that the territories conquered by Rome were managed in two ways. The Senate provinces were under the control of the Senate, and the imperial provinces had been recently conquered and under the direct control of the emperor. Since total peace had not been established yet, therefore, they had imperial governors. In some of smaller provinces, such as Judea, where Jerusalem is, which were difficult to manage and apply Roman laws and where rebellions often occurred, permanent presence of the Roman army was required. That is why the procurator was subordinate to the legate, the Roman general, under whose command the Roman legion was in Judea. Pontius Pilate, the imperial governor, was concerned about this because the legate had travelled to Rome twice, and he, the governor of Judea, was not even informed about this. Pilate continually prayed to Jupiter that it had nothing to do with his suspension, and that the legate only went there to demand reinforcements, about which he was not obliged to notify the procurator, even though it was customary. The Procurator retained an advantage over the legate regarding the application of Roman laws. He had in his hands the right to sentence to death the rebels who were against Rome. For a long time, Rome had established a rule to obey the laws and customs, especially the religion and the conquered nations, but retained the right to sentence to death. Thus, the procurator Pontius Pilate dispelled the thought that the legate could arrest and send him to Rome with a military escort for trial, not only for suspension. This had already happened to some imperial governors in the provinces where frequent riots occurred and when the emperor suspected that some of the governors of these provinces were covertly supported the local leaders of rebellious people, and in return they were given rich gifts.

- "The mission of the Roman army" - Pilate courageously spoke to himself whenever he was alone - "is to preserve the borders of the empire and to suppress the riots when they occur, not to arrest the governors of the rebellious eastern provinces. That is why Caesar moved all legions to the distant and imperiled parts of the empire on all four sides of the world: from Hispania to Asia and from the Baltic to Africa, and in Rome only the Pretorian Guard remained to care about the order and to protect Caesar. "

Now, as the Paschal festival approached, the governor was not even aware of how little he knew about the religion of people, who headily stick to their customs and religious laws. He knew only that the Jews believed in one God, whose name they could not even utter out of awe. Although he knew Caiaphas, the Jewish High Priest, who had been responsible for the temple and presiding over Sanhedrin for a long time, he had never managed to get so close to him to ask for an explanation of the old Jewish writings without any hesitation. He heard about Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, and Solomon, but this alliance between one God and one nation was so strange and unreasonable for him that he did not even want to talk about it with Caiaphas. That the High Priest had to be loyal to him was only important to him, because they needed each other and could not rule this strange people and even stranger city without one another. Only with the help of the High Priest and his informants, the hegemon found out on time everything that happened not only inside but also around the temple in Jerusalem and throughout Judea. The informant network was so well distributed that only those news

were considered as true if they were confirmed from multiple sources, i.e. if they were confirmed by the sources that were controlled by the informers of the very governor of Judea. The Procurator only knew that in Judaism there were several groups, often opposing, but with one common goal, to lead the holy war against Rome and to free the Jewish people. He only knew that the Pharisees were zealous Jews who knew the religious law well and adhered to it. They did not allow themselves to be in contact with sinners, and they considered it to be a great shame. They awaited the arrival of the Messiah and the Kingdom of God with impatience. This arrival could only be accelerated by the careful obscene of the religious law. He knew about Sadducees even less, and almost nothing about the Essenes. What concerned him more was the news about Zealots, the zealous Jews who called themselves true believers. They were mostly poor Jews who hardly bore the fact that the Romans had conquered the land. That's why they rebelled, destroyed emperor eagles and attacked the Roman legions from ambush. They advocated the beginning of the "holy war" against Rome. Pilate himself, with the help of the Roman legions, suppressed such rebellions several times. The last, not so long ago, was suppressed in blood.

- "This time the Zealots will not succeed. All main entrances and gates of the city are secured and hundreds of our soldiers are there. In the Kidron Valley there are five centuries. All important places in the city: the Temple, Tower Antony, Herod's Palace, Hasmonean Dynasty Palace, Amphitheater, Hippodrome, Mount of Olives and Garden of Gethsemane are protected by our soldiers with shields, spears and swords. I have done everything I could, and now it is up to you, the High Priest, to supply information in time through your informers about who is coming to the Temple and what is happening around it, and leave the rest to me. No Zealots should enter the city, either under the cover of darkness or through secret passages and overgrown paths."

However, the High Priest no longer listened to what the Roman kept speaking. His thoughts swirled around his head about the self-proclaimed prophet from Nazareth, Jesus, Yeshua, or Ha-Nozri, as his followers called him in Aramaic. Caiaphas was surprised at what this self-proclaimed prophet and the ordinary carpenter did only for the last three months of his activity, especially when all these wonders were attributed to him.

- "What shall we do with the self-proclaimed prophet and the rebellion of Nazareth of Galilee?" Suddenly the High Priest asked.

- "What rebellion?" What prophet? Is that the crazy preacher who has recently appeared and who performs wonders and rises from the dead? What do they call him?" The procurator asked mockingly.

- "He has several names and I still do not know which the right one is. Some call him Yeshua, others Ha-Nozri, or Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee. I only wonder how such a bad man, cheater and magician, who treads the common people to tricks and ops, can have so many followers when they know who he is. "

- "So you know who he is?"

- "My informers have already discovered everything. He blasphemes against God and undermines our religion. He abolishes the Mosaic Law, and every day he has more and more followers. We don't understand it. He rises and rebels against Rome and leads the people under the Roman swords. His remaining alive it is not beneficial for Judea."

The High Priest said this, like anybody else who is not sure about what he is talking about, without looking the procurator right in the eyes, but he looked aside.

- "Why are you so afraid of this prophet? There were many of them among your people before. Such wandering preachers have not proved to be dangerous for Roman law so far. "

- "But now it's more dangerous than ever. This one is more dangerous than anyone else. He claims that he is not an ordinary teacher and preacher, but the son of God. It's all unreasonable. He says blasphemes against God. How can anyone be both a man and God at the same time? That's the most irrational thing I've ever heard. And even this: how, then, he had brothers and sisters and was the youngest of Joseph's children, if he were the unique Son of God as it is claimed. It's a fraud, and my informers have found out everything. Everything is known and the neighbours saw everything: when and where he was born, who gave birth to him and how he grew up, how he stole fruit from other people's garden and beat with other children, and there was no coming from heaven. No one had ever seen it, nor had it happened. Since he was a child, he was rebellious and did not get along with his brothers and sisters, so he was chased off from home because he did not want to do anything, except for making crosses. He was obsessed with them and, they say, he liked to watch crucifixion of rebels on those crosses. Somehow, it is said, he learned a carpenter's job, but he never worked as a carpenter because he was lazy. He liked to lecture others about what and how they should do, but he did not want to do anything. So he had to leave his father's home early because his brothers could not stand him due to his laziness. Suddenly, they say, he disappeared as though vanished in thin air. For more than fifteen years nobody had seen or heard of him. Then he suddenly appeared, as a thirty-year-old man, much wiser and armed with tricks he had learned from Indian fakir. There, in India, it is said, they perform great wonders and lots of miracles because they also have a lot of people, and that's why they know a lot. And those who cheat people well know most. In particular, Indian yogis are known to do so. They are all great magicians and gods there. In very Madras, they believe there are hundreds of them. And there are even more in Calcutta and Bombay. There people believe in hundreds of gods. They have one God for each their need. Jesus had someone to learn from there. And I could perform those wonders if I had spent fifteen years in India. So, you see why nobody knew where he had been until his thirties, because he had even reached far India so that he could learn from fakirs and the sorcerer tricks to deceive common people. He is always surrounded by twelve of his most loyal disciples who never separate from him."

- "You, the High Priest, are worried about Ha-Nozri, the prophet from Nazareth, and I am about Zealots," said the hegemon, and waved his hand giving a sign to the High Priest that there was no need to talk about it anymore and continued:

- "The mission of the Roman army is to protect the borders of the empire and to suppress riots of rebellions. My informers found out that, as you say, the self-proclaimed prophet from Nazareth or Yeshua or Jesus or Ha-Nozri, whatever they call him, does not invite people to rebel against Rome in his preaching or lead them under Roman swords. He did not say anything bad about the emperor. Therefore, be careful, the High Priest, that your informers should not intrigue with lies to condemn Ha-Nozri because he threatens your religion, or rather your position, the High Priest Caiaphas, and not Rome. "

Under the impression of what the High Priest spoke about the self-proclaimed prophet of Nazareth, the procurator immediately, on the same day, dispersed his spies and informers to find out more about him. The next day he learned that this self-proclaimed prophet from Nazareth, Yeshua, or Jesus was born in Bethlehem during the reign of Emperor Augustus and in the last years of the reign of the Great Yarmouth Roman Vassal from Edom. Yeshua spent his youth in Nazareth, a small town in the north of Palestine. Nothing is known about his life until his thirties. Only then, as a grown-up and mature thirty-year-old man, he met for the first time on the banks of the Jordan River with another prophet called John the Baptist, who baptized people in the river and preached to small groups of people about the coming of the Messiah. Jesus or Yeshua or Ha-Nozri joined him for a while, then he separated himself and began to preach about the coming of the Kingdom of God.

Yeshua or Jesus or Ha-Nozri spread preaching first in Galilee, and then throughout the whole of Palestine. Everything he said terrified the High Priest and the whole Sanhedrin, for it disturbs the fundamental laws of the Jewish religion. That's why the Sanhedrin wanted to arrest and trial him in order to execute him, but they could not do it without the help of the Roman army, because he had many followers, and the last word about the sentence and the execution of the death penalty was in the hands of Rome. Now the procurator was somewhat clearer why the High Priest was lying that Ha-Nozri stir up the Jews to rebel against Rome. For the first time, he suspected that the High Priest, perhaps, in collusion with the legate, prepared a trap, so that the procurator himself was accused of using the army to resolve religious disputes among the Jews, which had never been done and should not be done. This is not the task of the Roman governor, but merely seeking the army to suppress the Zealots' rebellion and other groups that attack Roman legions, fortifications and bases, and stirring up people to rebel against Rome.

The next day, when the High Priest appeared in the palace garden in which the procurator was when he arrived from Caesarea. Mosquito nets were set beside the fountain. The procurator coldly greeted him and immediately told him that he could not detain any Roman soldiers for the arrest of Ha-Nozri or Yeshua for now, because they had already been deployed in more important places in the city and around the city, but when the cohorts, heading from Caesarea, arrived one centurion might be deployed for what the High Priest was asking.

- "After all, what kind of evidence do you have to arrest and trial him?" - Asked the procurator.

"It's dangerous for our religion; it's more dangerous than ever. Yesterday, in front of the Temple, he turned down the tables, threw out the merchants, and threw away their goods. Thus he creates a mess that can turn into rebellion, and that is dangerous for Rome as well. We tried to approach and arrest him, but he is always surrounded by numerous followers and his loyal disciples who follow his every step. We need, at least, one centurion to arrest him. He is cautious and never alone, and he always stays at night out of town. These poor and misguided people follow him as sheep because in what is happening to him and around him they see the fulfillment of the words of our prophet Zechariah, who lived several centuries before, and said: 'And here your emperor comes to you, he is righteous and he can save you. This is also dangerous for Rome,' continued the High Priest, -"for more and more people are joining him and shouting out with all their

voices: 'Hosanna to the son of David. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna at the height. "And you know what it is about, hegemony. That's how it happened yesterday when he entered the city. It's dangerous, more dangerous than ever, I tell you. We need a centurion to arrest him and trial him."

- "But, in all that you say, I do not see any reason for condemnation, you are known as a nation that always had prophets who spoke nonsense. So it will be with this self-proclaimed prophet from Nazareth. Now he has appeared and alarmed people a bit, and in a few days after the Passover he will be forgotten. Nobody will ever know that there was a self-proclaimed philosopher, preacher or prophet from Nazareth, by the name of Jesus, Jesus, or Ha-Nozri. Call him whatever you like. After all, give at least one proof of why he should be tried. Even your Sanhedrin, which deals with the religion issues does not have any."

- "It does, prosecutor, they have too much, and he should have been tried for what he has already done so far. He's dangerous, I tell you, procurator, both for you and for us."

- "You just say: 'He's dangerous, he's dangerous'! And you are not giving any evidence, High Priest Caiaphas. You are scared of this self-proclaimed prophet and ordinary carpenter from Nazareth and his twelve rogues as if he were Alexander of Macedonia with his twelve generals," - the procurator added mockingly, and continued to talk more to himself, but now in a frenzy.

- "In one attack, Alexander conquered the entire Persian empire and destroyed Persepolis to the ground in a revenge against Xerxes and the Persians for the destruction of Athens. He, then, entered India with his invincible army and stopped on the shores of the Holy River. If he had not died very young at the age of 33, he would, as he had planned, have also conquered the entire Western world. "

Here Pilate stopped talking, while returning to reality again and turning to the High Priest, he said:

- "Nothing without proof, High Priest ... And how to trial someone who performs such miracles ... and nothing against Rome? How? And why? "

- "I already told you that he rebels and leads people under the Roman swords, but you will not, or you are afraid, hegemony, to admit it, because you do not want the emperor to know that Judea is still not at peace and conquered. You could have collected as much evidence as you want. Since you are looking for evidence, the list made in Sanhedrin is already long," said Caiaphas and continued: "First and foremost, he violates the Sabbath rule as a non-working day. When he came to the synagogue in Capernaum, he cured a man on Saturday. And this is not the first time that he violates the Sabbath rule as a non-working day. In addition, he hangs around and eats with the tax collectors and sinners, and his disciples tear the wheat ears in the field to feed the rogues on the Sabbath day. All this is not allowed under the law of our religion. That is forbidden."

The procurator laughed loudly at these words of the High Priest and dismissed him with a motion of his hand, saying:

- "It is not in my power to arrest him, but I can talk to the legate to release a centurion to search for him and bring him to court. And, you know, the High Priest, that the mission of the Roman army is not to arrest your crazy philosophers and prophets, but to protect the borders of the Empire and suppress the rebellions if they occur. "

- "Procurator, now I can tell you something important. My spies have already found out that Yeshua or Jesus of Nazareth will be in Jerusalem at the Passover dinner tonight with his disciples, and that tomorrow, during the Passover, he will be in the city a whole day. We have not found out yet in which house, but during the night it will be revealed and we can take him by surprise and arrest him at night. We have our people in his closest circle, among his most prominent followers. That's the least he expects, and this guarantees our success. Some Judas Iscariot, called the red-beard, his closest and best disciple, agreed to betray him for 30 silver coins. "

Having said that, the High Priest fully covered his head with the hood and disappeared from the garden.

The procurator returned to the stretched hammock next to the fountain and moistened the towel, placing it on the right side of the head which ached him unbearably.

- "For me, this spineless old man of Caiaphas is more dangerous, far more dangerous than that Yeshua or Ha-Nozri but I have to tolerate him until I go to Rome and present the evidence to the emperor that the Sanhedrin is not working for Rome "- the procurator told to himself. As soon as he thought of Rome, images of the royal birthday celebration appeared to him, first in the arena, where the battle of the gladiator was held, and then the night images of the torches, illuminated imperial gardens and basilica in the vicinity the Temple of Vesta.

The image of the temple itself was long before his eyes. Vesta, the Roman goddess of peace and honesty, seemed to give him the strength and returned the good mood whenever he was in such a state of despondency. In the Temple of Vesta the fire was constantly burning. The priestesses of the temple, the vestals, vowed to preserve the honesty and service thirty years to goddess Vesta. During that time, they were not allowed to break the law of virginity, and if they did, they were punished with death. If it happened to the supreme priestess of the temple, then she would be buried alive in the ground. In front of his eyes, he saw the graceful faces of vestals, the devoted priestesses of the temple, who with their hands raised above their heads, were holding lit torches while moving in a circle and singing. Thus, they kept the fire of Rome and the vow of virginity in the temple of Vesta. In the temple of their goddess, the vestals often kept important Roman and state documents and could appeal to the emperor for the forgiveness of the death penalty for someone to whom the goddess would show kindness and mercy..

Pilate now remembers that he also once addressed the vestals to appeal for the forgiveness of the death penalty for his young soldier who was so frightened and fled from the battlefield in his first fight with wild Germanic tribes, who attacked the northern borders of the empire. The hegemon also remembered an old event in which he was involved. During the time of Octavian, as a young soldier, he accompanied the legate Piso, who travelled to the far eastern provinces by ship to suppress the rebellions. A pirate attack took place near a small island near Crete. They defended successfully against the attack, but two of the soldiers who were in legate's escort were captured. One of them was Pilate himself. He spent 40 days in captivity because the legate could not collect ransom so quickly. He would have stayed even longer if Piso eventually had not asked for help from the vestals. While he had these visions in front of his eyes, the pain in

his back and the head went away, or he forgot about it, or the sense of joy he had at that time overwhelmed it. Thus, in that dreaming, he spent the rest of the day, next to the fountain, protected by the stretched nets against mosquitoes. When the night fell, whilst walking with difficulty and feeling the pain in the back again, he slowly stepped, with the help of the guard, on the balcony facing the fountain, where his bed was prepared. Only isolated and with the freshness that came from the fountain, he could fall asleep.

When the procurator woke up the next day, he tried to remember the dreams he had. First, blurry images from the hippodrome and chariot races appeared. Then the images became clearer, and tens of thousands of people present at the hippodrome shouted cheering brave fighters and greeting the emperor. He enjoyed his dreams for a moment when they reported that two Temple supervisors had come to inform him that Ha-Nozri, Yeshua, Jesus, or the prophet from Nazareth had been arrested this morning before the dawn. When the Temple supervisors entered the balcony to meet the procurator, he had been already dressed.

- "And? What does the High Priest Caiaphas ask for now? "

- "Just to inform you that Ha-Nozri or Yeshua or Jesus, the self-proclaimed prophet of Nazareth, was arrested tonight, and that his trial began in the Sanhedrin. The verdict will be quickly passed and the High Priest just asks you to be in your palace to confirm the judgment until the main Passover festival begins. "

The procurator told them that, after the trial in the Sanhedrin, the arrested person had to be sent to tetrarch, the son of Herod the Great, because Ha-Nozri was from Galilee, which was under tetrarch administration.

From the Sanhedrin, they brought the tied Ha-Nozri to the tetrarch, who humiliated him during the interrogation and ordered his soldiers to beat him. Yeshua had a large black bruise under the right eye and blood leaked from his nostrils. The tetrarch's guard put a crown of thorn on his head, clothed him in a white robe, and mocked at his wish to be the king of Judah. The guard on his right hand hit him firmly on the back, and Yeshua fell to the ground as if had been slashed. While he was still lying, they splashed him with cold water, and then they pulled him up and began to drag him along the path to the north wing of the palace where the Roman governor was located.

When he was brought to the procurator, tied and beaten, the procurator looked at him astonished.

- "Here's the man! This man about whom people talk a lot"- said the procurator and, after a break, during which he carefully examined the tied and beaten Ha-Nozria, continued with the question:

- "Are you a wandering preacher, a prophet or Zealot, a rebel against Rome, what are you?"

Jesus did not answer, but tried with effort to lift his swollen eyelid.

- "Why did you have to mess with the gods? You could have lived in peace without having your hands tied behind your back like a robber."

- "There is only one God, Hegemon," the prisoner answered reclining his head to remove the bloody strand of hair that had fallen over his eyes.

- "And you are his only son? The Son of God, aren't you? " The procurator asked mockingly.

- "You say that I am."

- "This document has been taken away from a Levi Matthew from your group, who is claimed to have written everything that you were saying, so that the Sanhedrin has evidence against your destruction of their religion, and of your attacking Rome in your sermons," said the procurator, pointing to the scroll of parchment he held in his hand.

- "He did not understand anything what I had said, and that's all wrongly written."

- "The High Priest says you caused a rebellion against Rome."

- "It's not true, hegemon," said Ha-Nozri, and tried to move his head to chase away the fly that flew down on his bloodied forehead because his hands were tied.

The Roman governor turned aside, towards the registrar, and as if asking himself a question, he said aloud:

- "The truth? But what is the truth? How to sentence to death a man who performs such miracles and rises from the dead? However, he must be a fraud, but he does not jeopardize Rome. It is important."

The heat was an unbearable, and the procurator went out to the balcony where the crowds gathered shouting at the square near the palace. The crowd asked, as it was customary, from the Roman governor to commute one prisoner's death sentenced for the Passover feast. The procurator expected, that out of four prisoners, Yeshua and three robbers, they would demand to free Yeshua because he was innocent. But the gathered crowd shouted to release the robber Barrabas. The Roman infantry had already occupied all the roads to the palace and, in the form of a long chain, and located on the road leading to the foot of the Bare Hill. From the distance, the Arabian cavalry toppled to help the infantry in establishing the order in the city and on the road towards the Skull Hill where execution would be carried out.

- "Free Barrabas, not Jesus!" - Loud cries were heard.

The Roman governor did so and immediately washed his hands as if he had nothing to do with the death sentence by crucifying the wandering philosopher of Nazareth of Galilee on the cross, who seemed to him innocent. The procurator was pleased with how the announcement of the death sentence of Ha Nozrius was accepted. His words still echoed in his ears:

- "The name of the one who will be released now ..." - here he made a long pause and there was a complete silence on the crowded square - "is ... Van Raven."

After that, for a few moments, there was a dead silence, and then an undetermined cry that seemed to come from the sky and from the womb of the earth suddenly broke out, mixed with and intensified the cries of those present on the square. The gathered crowd simply exploded. At the same time, they heard painful cries, screams, sob, howl, titter, and whistling. The behavior of the crowd on the square could not have been different, because they saw with their own eyes a miracle how a man who had already been in the hands of death escaped from those hands. This could happen only once a year, on the Paschal holiday. That's why so many people gathered. Not only was the square crowded square, but also many boys and tramps occupied flat roofs of houses, which surrounded the square, so that they could see the whole event better. The dissolute crowd screamed and watched with their own eyes how the Roman soldiers untied the ropes on the Barrabas' hands, and how he, with a painful grimace mixed with a silly look and disbelief what had happened to him, was rubbing his wrists where the ropes had cut in deep dark blue scars. With the scream and howl of the crowd, the shouts of the messengers in Aramaic and Greek were also heard:

- "Van Ravan is set free, and tied Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee, shall be executed!"

Having lost the balance due to uncontrolled movements caused by great excitement, the crowd swayed from one end of the square to another. The soldiers had already been pushing tied Jesus and two robbers toward the square, where a procession was formed that would accompany them to the Skull Hill, where the execution would take place. Many hit Jesus on the head, mocking him:

- "You say that you are Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth! Foretell who hits you! "

Many other cries and mocks were also heard.

- "Let me hit him, so I can see if he will stay on his feet ..."

Roman soldiers did not only defend him, but also stirred up the crowd to beat him even more. They hanged a board with the inscription "this is the king of Judah" around his neck, and they laughed, saying, "If there is an emperor, then it needs to be known."

Jesus stumbled and fell under the heavy cross that he carried ascent to the Skull Hill. Simon from Cyrene wriggled to Yeshua, and with the approval of Roman soldiers, he took from him the cross to help him carry it. At the back of the procession, whose front with convicts and a larger group of soldiers had already begun to climb uphill, pilgrims, who did not fear hellish heat, went on and moved steadily forward hoping to reach the top of the hill to watch the execution with their eyes. When they returned home, they would talk about it days later - as they personally had watched the execution of two robbers and a prophet from Nazareth of Galilee. A woman, loudly sobbing, begged to be allowed to bring water to Yeshua and to wipe his sweat. She said that Jesus did nothing against Rome, and that he did not come to stir up people but had come to free the soul of man from sin. Three hours later, under the hot sun, the front of the column reached the plateau on the Skull Hill, where the executioners nailed large beams with the help of Roman soldiers.

Fearing that the Zealots might attack and free the prisoners or use the gathered crowd for rebellion, The Roman legate made three rings around the Skull Hill. At the foot of the hills, four cohorts were deployed, and soldiers made an uninterrupted chain and from time to time they moved away from the heating sun under rare trees. One squadron of the Arabian cavalry rushed in the gallop towards the second infantry ring, which was halfway towards the top of Golgotha. Three cohorts were deployed there, making another impenetrable live shield that admitted only the column that followed the prisoners. The other two cohorts made a ring on the very top of the Skull Hill. This ring stopped the front of the procession. Roman soldiers only admitted the escort that led three tied prisoners and immediately began to set and nail crossbars. Two centurions constantly watched the prisoners and re-established a ring that occasionally was torn apart due to the pressure of the crowd that was coming to observe the execution. Often, soldiers in heavy armors and helmets could not withstand heat and fatigue, tore the ring, occasionally moving under cross-set spears on which they spread their cloaks to make some kind of shade. When centurion Vinci spotted them, he began to shout and tear down their little shelter from the hot sun with his spear, and then, waving his sword, he compelled his horse on them. The horse was upset and moved back prancing. The soldiers quickly put their helmets on their heads and took shields rushing to the place where they had been previously deployed. The sweat was flowing down their neck and face and they only thought of how happy they would have been if they had been deployed at the foot of the

hill, where the sun did not burn and where there was at least water to moisten their scarves, chill their foreheads and wipe the sweaty faces. Those at the foot of the hill, at least had some trees to get out of the sun, and there was a small spring that had not yet dried up. A huge crowd was created at the spring, as all pushed to fill their wooden water bottles or moisten their towels for the face. Some soldiers managed to send wet towels and water vessels to the second ring, located halfway from the foot of the Skull Hill to the top, where the execution would take place. But nothing reached to the very top and third ring. That is why the soldiers and the front part of the procession, which managed to arrive before the ring closed, suffered not only hellish heat, but also an unbearable thirst.

Using this confusion and a small wall, the miserable remnant of an ancient fortress, as a shelter on the south side, a man crawling all wet with sweat and heat, managed to drag himself to a large stone. He clung firmly against the ground trying not to be noticed by Roman soldiers. When he raised his head again and wiped the sweat from his forehead, he noticed that someone else was hidden behind the large plate on his right. He gave him a sign to lower his head so that the soldiers could not see him and showed him with a hand that he could come closer to him, where the better shelter was.

– "You are Levi Matthew," the stranger said quietly.

He did not respond, but suddenly roused, because he recognised a zealot in his interlocutor who, two years ago, told Yeshua and his disciples Matthew, Peter and Judah to join him and go to the hills, from where he would attack the Roman legion from the ambush and destroy imperial eagles.

A Roman soldier, taking the red-hot helmet off his head, approached a few steps from the wall, but, the zealot and Levi Matthew were lucky as he went back without looking whether there was anyone there. The two did not talk anymore, realising they could be easily detected. Levi Matthew pulled out a scroll of parchment from the belt trying to spread it on a flat stone. He looked at the Roman soldier who was still close and took off his red-hot helmet again, placing it on a nailed spear. He placed his heavy shield next to the spear, and leaned his belt with a sword and knife on it. The soldier was now looking at the prisoners' tied arms and legs for the beams, and how they nailed spikes in their feet and palms with a heavy hammer. The painful prisoners' cries intermingled with the shouts of the crowd that was arriving breaking through a weakened ring on the top of Golgotha. the zealot, knowing that the Roman soldier was completely busy watching the act of crucifixion and could no longer hear them due to the cry of the spectators who had managed to reach Golgotha in this heat, tried to say something to Levi Matthew, but gave up. He did not even listen to him anymore, but he noted some, for him, the zealot, meaningless words on the widespread scroll of parchment. the zealot looked towards the place where three crosses were erected and three convicts crucified. Hidden behind the wall, he could see well that Jesus was crucified in the middle cross, and still alive. Five executors had finished their work and placed ropes, hammers and remaining spikes in wagons that were nearby. the zealot also saw how one of the executioners, with a hood on his head, raised a wet sponge on the cane and gave it to Jesus, called Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus only tried to turn his head to the other side, but it fell on his chest, and remained so.

- "They can break his body, but cannot his soul," Levi Matthew wailed, and for the first time since the execution had begun, he left his parchment, and the zealot could read the words.

- "They killed the Son of God. The foundations of the world have been shifted. This is the most horrible and most notorious hill in the universe, but this is also the heavenly point on earth, from which the prophesied time begins to fulfill. "

The zealot marveled at Levi Matthew's writing something and murmuring to himself in his chin during the entire execution, and only a few sentences were written on the parchment.

- "It is better for you to tear it immediately, because, if they find us, we will also hang on the cross."

With horror in the eyes, the zealot saw a shabby dog that appeared from somewhere, attracted by the breath of sweat and blood. The dog must have come with the pilgrims from a remote place and apparently was very hungry. He began to nuzzle and lick the blood-spattered ground under the crucifixion. A distraught woman somehow managed to get through the ring and, having removed the scarf from her head, tried to chase off already enraged hungry animal.

Centurion Vinci began to shout again and to push away the crowd with his spear that had already come close so that the two women were crying and while striking their chest shouted that Jesus had been executed innocent and that he did not raise people in rebellion against Rome, but he came to free the soul of man from sin.

Suddenly, a Roman horseman appeared who, swaddling his sword, began to force a distraught animal against the mob that broke the ring and pushed them back.

The zealot felt the breath of a fresh breeze, and it astonished him. He looked at the sky and saw that the sun, which was still hot, and would be soon covered with heavy black clouds that suddenly appeared from nowhere in the sky. It seemed to him that Jesus' head moved on crucifixion and that he was still alive. He clearly saw the swarm of flies and mosquitoes flew down on him. Being unable to move, Jesus could not get rid of the insects that fed his battered and bloody body causing him terrible and unbearable pain. The zealot shuddered at this scene and began to quietly yell, praying for Yeshu to die as soon as possible to end his anguish. For a moment, he looked up at Levi Matthew, because he again began to murmur to himself and scribble on the parchment. the zealot read illegible words:

- "The new age begins. All barriers and divisions fall dawn. We are all equal in God's eyes. There's no more mine-yours. We are all one people. "

The zealot did not understand a word. He did not understand what this all had to do with what was happening and with the crucifixion of Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth.

Suddenly the clouds covered the sun and it darkened. The lightning flared the sky. Thunders started to hit. Storms and thick rainy clouds made the sky and the earth meet and a strong wind started to blow. The crowd began to run downhill toward the city, searching for shelters. the zealot looked at Levi Matthew with astonishment as he began to write down something again, while the wind was rolling a scroll of parchment and throwing off the robe from his head. He now remembered when he had met Jesus on the Jordan River for the first time two years ago and how Jesus, at that time, had told him zealously that the man's heart would change, only the soul had to be freed from the sin.

- "What soul! What are you talking about?" the zealot muttered. - "First, we must free the body from the Romans, and then the soul from sin. It is the only and the right path: first freedom for the body, then freedom for the soul. We do not build a house from the roof but from the foundation. "

- "But what is the foundation? For you the foundation is the body, and for me it is the soul. The foundation is the soul," Jesus replied.

Shortly after Jesus' execution and burial, his disciples announced the astonishing news: Jesus, who had been crucified, was resurrected from the dead by the God. He really was the Messiah of God, his envoy who created a new world. The universal revolt of man against the sin began, and the way of salvation for all, not only of the Jews and Greeks, but also of all the nations of the world.

REBELLION

According to what is written in our sacred books, it can be concluded that Jesus Christ is the central figure of the events that took place more than two thousand years ago in the Holy Land and the Holy City, Jerusalem - the city of God as they call it. He was born in Bethlehem in Palestine, which was then under Roman rule, during the reign of Emperor Augustus and in the last years of the reign of King Herod the Great. He spent his youth in Nazareth, a small town in Galilee, in the north of Palestine. Nothing is known about his life in his youth. When he was in his thirties he met the prophet John the Baptist on the banks of the Jordan River, who preached to a group of people. He joined him for a while and then separated from him and began to preach about the coming of the Kingdom of God, first in Galilee, then throughout Palestine, and beyond its borders. His proclamation simultaneously spread and shook the Jewish religion. In just a few months, Jesus aroused the delight of many people who recognised him as a prophet. But gradually, they left him, because Jesus did not respond to their expectations that a political empire be reestablished in Palestine and that he would become the heir to David. At the same time, he also faced increasing attacks by Jewish authorities and priests. During Jesus' last stay in Jerusalem, his opponents captured him, with the complicity of one of his disciples, and handed him over to the Roman occupying authorities, accusing him of plotting against the Roman emperor. The Roman governor was trying to save him, but eventually he succumbed under pressure. Jesus was sentenced to crucifixion and died in terrible torment.

-After the execution and burial, his disciples announced the astonishing news that God resurrected Jesus from the dead so that he would be the Messiah of God who created a new world on earth. That's how it all started and for centuries the struggle of his followers for the religion he founded had lasted - the monk said: "First we need to see not only who really Jesus Christ was, but also to understand better the times when He appeared and the place where it all happened.

- They, his disciples, began to spread the teachings of Christ or the religion that got the name after the teacher. They first spread their religion in Jerusalem and Judea, and then throughout the Roman Empire. But from all these stories in the New Testament

Gospels, we could not conclusively conclude what really had happened there and which story is true and which is not, says the monk and continues.

- It seems that it is less important for the apostles and disciples of Christ to describe what really happened, and more in a mystical way to show what they believed in. All this creates uncertainties and disagreements about what really happened. So, according to some of them Jesus was in agony on crucifixion, and to others he was completely calm and controlled the situation to the extent that he prayed to his Father, God, to forgive his torturers. There are those pilgrims who disagreed even with regard to the genealogy of Jesus of Nazareth. Some speak of Jesus' journey to Egypt, while others do not even mention it. Some say that his teaching and public activity lasted three years, and the others that it was hardly three months. Some say that Jesus died on the cross at nine, and the others that it happened at noon. According to some, women who, after Jesus' death and burial, went to visit his grave saw only one angel, and according to others, they saw two. According to some these angels were outside, and to others within the grave. The same happens with their perceptions after Jesus' resurrection. Everyone saw something different. But what the New Testament gospel agrees with, as well as the greatest number of Christian pilgrims, and what we heard from their stories when they rested here in our grove, is that Jesus died in anguish and was buried by some Joseph of Arimathea, helped by Nicodemus. According to the pilgrims' stories, this Joseph of Arimathea asked from Pontius Pilate a permission to bury Jesus' body according to the tradition. He took him from the cross, wrapped in a linen cloth, and laid him in a tomb carved into a rock. It was Friday. According to the contemporary customs, the dead were to be buried before the sunset. As a member of the Jewish clergy, Joseph knew about such customs, and therefore he dared to ask Pilate for permission to bury Jesus. The Jews usually bury their dead in caves, carved in rock, and at the entrance they placed stone to close the entrance to the tomb. This Joseph of Arimathea was a Jewish priest and a rich, but righteous and good person with a reputation among the Jewish people. Apparently, he was the Christ's follower, secretly, not daring to publicly express his faith in Jesus since he was a Jewish priest and a devotee of the Old Testament, as well as Nicodemus, who helped him for the funeral.

- We have heard that after Jesus' execution and burial, his disciples announced the amazing news: *Jesus, who had been crucified, was resurrected from the dead by the God. He really was the Messiah of God, his envoy who created a new world. The universal revolt of man against the sin began, and the way of salvation for all, not only of the Jews and Greeks, but also of all the nations of the world.* Jesus did for man what no one else had done before or after him, nor could do it: he was freed from guilt and punishment for sins what enabled him a new beginning. That is why it is said that the one who repents for his sins and ask for forgiveness from God, becomes re-born and begins a new life without sin. The arrival of Jesus Christ established a new era for man. No nation is more privileged including the Jewish. Jesus' death removed all barriers among men. There is no

need for someone to stand out, neither the Jews nor Greeks, nor anyone else. Even mankind has become one nation. There are no more slaves or liberals. All divisions and barriers fall down and disappear. We are all equal in God's eyes. God's plan for the destruction of evil, suffering and pain explains everything. First, the causes of evil should be destroyed, and then the consequences of evil must be eliminated. How the causes of evil are destroyed is described in detail in the book of God, in the Bible and in the Gospels. The problem of evil that is found in the human heart, and whose source is the human heart, is eliminated and solved in only one of his words: *forgiveness*. This is the most important word for relationships among people, in order to have less suffering, hatred, envy, fear and pain. That is why God will forgive everyone, only if we repent and seek his mercy. Now we can all see how perfect, but yet so simple, the God's plan is, understandable and accessible to all. God performs his deeds in this way.

Such a miracle could have happened only in Jerusalem, for that is the city of God in which the Ark of the Covenant is kept. Then all of this started and did not stop for a single day for more than two thousand years. His disciples died for the faith of Christ. This was also the case with hundreds of thousands of other famous and unknown followers. They agreed to die in miserable torments: Saint Peter, Saint Paul, and St. James, and St. Stephen and millions of others. They were crucified, thrown into the fire, and in the lion's jaw and none of them wanted to abandon the faith and teachings of Christ. The orders of the Roman Emperors were also been given so that anyone could kill a Christian anytime and wherever they met him.

Everything was in vain because God's flock was not destroyed, but it grew bigger. The more germinated seedlings and buds were cut off from the tree, the more new seedlings and buds sprouted, and their growth was unstoppable. The tree rooted deeper and deeper fed its seedlings and strengthened the faith of Christ in which the man is not a mistake of the heaven, but its gift, his love.

To the opponents' cries that Jesus was just an ordinary man, a bad one, an opener and a fraud and a savage and that the story of Jesus is a false and deliberate fiction, the Christians responded:

-You do not know how big our love for God is. We Christians know well who we believe in and why the life makes sense for us, because the one who knows *why* he lives he will also endure the *way* he lives. Millions of Christians were tormented but we did not give up their faith. Starvation and thirst were used as a means of torture. The executioners first cut the fingers on their feet, then on their hands, then their legs and arms and finally their heads, but the martyrs never gave in. They died with the name of Christ on their lips and in their heart. These false stories of our salvation were invented by his adversaries because they were afraid of the truth that He is God in the human body and, therefore, they were constantly saying that he was only an ordinary preacher who spoke well and nicely. But if Jesus were only an ordinary preacher and teacher, executed in such a terrible way, why his followers would abandon their peaceful and safe lives

and, by spreading his teachings, exposed themselves to persecutions and tortures and destiny as his. These false stories of our Savior were created by His enemies and enemies of the Truth. They were afraid of the Truth that Jesus Christ was the Eternal Son of God, crucified, died, and resurrected, proving that there is immortal life. Indeed, many false stories about our Savior are fictitious because there is only one Truth and only one true story. If there had not been this true story, there would not have been those false ones, which were created by His enemies and the enemies of the Truth. Even common sense tells us that a true story comes first, and many false ones are created later to distort the Truth. When the enemies of the Truth fail, then they invent new false stories. These false stories are not only opposite to the Truth, but they are opposite to each other. It only indicates their inability to resist the Truth and His Light. All of this leads to greater anger and more distress. It even affected their minds. There can be only one true story, because there is only one and only Truth, and there are countless false stories and it is, exactly, the greatest proof that they are false and fictitious. As soon as a lie against the Truth fails, another lie is created and therefore there are countless of them. The truth is only one: Jesus was crucified, he died and resurrected. If it had not been the Truth, the life would have been meaningless and there would have been neither salvation nor redemption. For us the Christian meaning of life is more important than the life itself. Exactly, the existence of many false stories about our Savior is the best proof that there is one truth. And this is written in the Gospel: Jesus was crucified, he died, and resurrected. Because of this, there are so many false ones.

- One false story invented by his opponents cannot do with people what Jesus really did. The time before the Savior and that after Him will never be the same again. With the coming of Jesus, the foundations of the world sifted. Our time begins with the birth of Christ. What was before His birth can be studied, but this is no longer our age, it is marked with other numbers and other ways of thinking and life. The Age before the Savior is dead and does not bestir history or people any more. Caesar, Augustus, Nero, Caligula and other Roman emperors raised a great noise, and they say, created and wrote history. But who is today so ardent for Caesar or against Caesar, for August or against August? Jesus, on the contrary, continually lives in us. There are others who love Him and who hate Him; who respect His suffering and who enjoy His humiliation and His torments. But, precisely, the fact that such people exist, who humiliate and hate him, tells us that he has resurrected and that he is alive.

- Opponents to our religion think that Christ did not exist; he did not resurrect or appeared again. Such pagans and unbelievers think that they can erase everything he has done and created with one stroke of feathers. But what about Christianity? It cannot be erased. If this could have been done, it would have been done by the Roman emperors who had the largest army and the largest empire on earth. Our Savior and his followers defeated this force barehanded, with their benevolence, hope, forgiveness, and love. Therefore, a miracle might have happened. Jesus was more loved by those who had hated

him before. This happened to St. Paul. With the birth of Jesus, the foundations of the world shifted, because the heart of man moved and changed.

- Many say that Christ is the prophet of the weak, and He, on the contrary, gives strength to those exhausted, and rises the oppressed above the emperors. Some, again, say that Christ's teaching is the religion of those who are sick and those dying, and He heals the sick and resurrects the dead. Some say that He is the God of grief, and He invites his faithful followers to rejoice and promises eternal joy to his friends.

- First Christians at the time of the Roman Empire were arrested, persecuted, and tortured only because they followed a certain thinker or teacher, as you atheists say and think. They were punished because they worshiped God materialised in Jesus of Nazareth. This is exactly why many of His followers lost their heads and were thrown into the lion's jaw, for their commitment to Jesus at the same time meant the cessation of the celebration of the Roman Emperor as God. By the arrival of Jesus Christ, the Roman emperors realised that God rules the entire universe and that their so-called "divine empire" had come to an end. Why would the apostles and the first Christians spread the untruth about Jesus from Nazareth? Did it bring some glory or wealth to them? Did what they preached make their lives more comfortable and secure, or expose them to even more severe persecutions and torments? St. Paul was not a mere wandering weaver of rugs and parachutists, but something more than that, the messenger of God. He was a sinner and spiritually drowsy, but it was before repentance and promise to the religion of Christ. And he did not suffer from megalomania, as you claim, because your opinion is fading away before the testimony of history and the court of later generations. His deeds and his life made him a little more than an ordinary village weaver.

- And now, let's ask just one simple question: Would anyone suffer what the first Christians and apostles suffered for something that is made of lies? It is possible, and really there is this possibility that a man will willingly give his life for a lie, not knowing it is a lie. But there is no one who would willingly give his life for a lie, knowing it is a lie. The Apostolic Gospels show that this is not about fabrications. Why then would they give their lives for the Christian doctrine? They had the experience of Jesus of Nazareth as a human being, God in the human body, and gave their lives for Him.

- This is the only truth: Jesus was crucified, died, and resurrected. If it had not happened, the life would have been meaningless. For us, the Christians, the meaning of life is more important than the life itself. Let me tell you once again: if there had not been these true stories about Jesus and his apostles, recorded in the Gospels, there would not have been so many of your false ones. There is only one truth and one true story about our Savior and it is this in the Scripture: Jesus was crucified, died, and resurrected. There is the immortal life. Jesus had come once and would come again. Exactly, many were frightened of his return, so they invented these false stories, because they were terrified of the crimes they had committed and for which they would be judged before the Great and Righteous Judge.

- Despite all bad, severe, and tragic abuses that happened in the development of Christianity, which we had already written about, this religion continues to persist and as if it had the capacity to renew and strengthen itself. For all of us the question is why the story of Jesus Christ, especially the story of the last three days of His earthly life, made the most radical shift in human history and, as such, embedded in the foundation of the emergence and development of Christianity, and of Western civilization in the whole. Certainly, this is also because these events from the story about the last three days of Jesus' earthly life took place so quickly and so dramatically. It's as if centuries were squeezed and turned into days, and days into hours. These condensed events in a short period of time, and especially their speed (everything that was important took place in only three days: the conflict with merchants in the Jerusalem Temple, a secret dinner, betrayal, arrest, sentence with death by crucifixion, resurrection) increases drama. And again, we say that as if centuries were turned into days, and days in hours. It's that familiar effect that is so common and which we have in eventual accelerating of an event: the higher the speed of the occurrence of an event, the greater is the drama. This feeling of the speed of the act increases the drama. We often have such acceleration when something else was foretold and awaited for a long time. According to the Old Testament it can be seen when his prophets had been announcing the arrival of the Savior for four thousand years. A storm signaled His coming to Jerusalem. By accelerating and multiplying the action, as if they wanted to bridge the centuries, to compensate for all the unfulfilled dreams and fulfill all the centuries old desires - the arrival of the Savior. Even the speech and language of the story of Jesus Christ is dramatic. The language of the story is detailed and striking, sensual and dramatic. Everything in this story has individual and universal meaning. The strength of this story lies in the fact that it unites the external and the inner, individual and universal, individual and general, individual becomes universal and universal individual. This is so when the story speaks of both justice and injustice, and of endurance and suffering, morals and immorality, betrayal and loyalty. His betrayal by one of his disciples - Judas Iscariot is especially emphasised in the story of the last three days of Jesus' earthly life. The betrayal is also crucial for the outcome of later events. Therefore, the experience of betrayal and abandonment is so striking in this story. And the last hours of Jesus' earthly life are filled with betrayal. They betrayed him three times: first Judas, then his asleep disciples, and, finally, the corner stone of the church - Peter (moreover, Peter denied Him three times). This multiple betrayal has its meaning, because it leads to the fulfillment of what was prophesied and predestined: Crucifixion, Death on the Cross and Easter. Therefore, the motive of betrayal lies in the very center of the Christian mystery. Jesus was betrayed and died a martyr crucified. But betrayal not only brings danger, but also allows for further growth. The betrayal is at the same time both a working principle and a driving force. The betrayed, whether it is Christ or anyone else, after betrayal, must resurrect in some way, make a step forward, interpret and understand what happened. In this way, another

motive - the motive of necessity or predestination is fulfilled in some way. Through betrayal the fate redeems, it is necessary. Jesus must be betrayed and crucified in order to resurrect. Again, I repeat that, in this story of Jesus Christ, obviously, all the most important events of the Old Testament had been prophesied and announced for thousands of years having culminated and fulfilled in just three last years, especially for the last three months, or, better to say, the last three days of Jesus earthly life. From the Old Testament it can be seen that there have always been holy people, since the beginning of the world, who said that the Redeemer would be born, who would save the fallen mankind-the monk said and continued his story telling.

- And whatever it might have happened more than two millennia ago, for true pilgrims, Jerusalem was and will remain the place where the Heaven and the Earth meet, the place where God and man meet. That is why Jerusalem is the sanctuary of the world. The ardent pilgrims firmly believe that right there, at this place, the issue of the end of the world will be decided, because the Abrams' religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) believe in the Apocalypse. The fact that Jerusalem has been the Holy City for more than 1000 years increases its holiness. Its holiness also increases its suffering and destruction by great invaders, both from the east and from the west. First, they were the Babylonians, then the Romans, etc. This is also enhanced by the fact that there are three great monotheistic religions that meet and compete here, striving to occupy larger and better place under the Heaven to be closer to God as much as possible. Christians who, with an unshakable ardent believe in Christ, still make their tea on Mount of Olives, preparing for his Second Coming, and those most zealous heat the milk all the time in the event that the Lord comes and hold the assed donkeys in case that Jesus appears. Some among these most ardent pilgrims really believe that He will never die and sincerely assure each other.

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THE FALL OF CARIGRAD

‘There have always been holy people, even from the beginning of the world, who have told that the Redeemer would be born who would save the mankind’, said the monk and continued his story. ‘After a long time, there was Abraham and he said that prophets and sages had told him that the Redeemer would be born of him, his kin, from his son Isaac that he Abraham would have with Sarah. Later, again, Isaac’s son Jacob said that from his twenty sons He would be born of Judas. Later Moses and prophets came and announced the time and the way of His coming. They also said that their law was valid only until the coming of Messiah because His law would be eternal. Thus our Savior came under all these prophesied circumstances. But people were confused because he did not appear in the expected glory, as the heir to David’s throne. That was why many thought He was not the one, our Savior. But are the external appearance, wealth and splendor of this world not illusive? God does not rejoice in the external splendor and wealth of this world but the purity and modesty of the heart.

Even when the scepter was in the hands of the rulers of Babylon, Egypt and Rome, one could hear the murmur of Christ’s coming that had been prophesied ceaselessly for four thousand years. There had been prophets before Christ, which meant that there had been prophets in the Old Testament. Both testaments, the Old and the New, are focused on Christ: the Old in expectation and the New as the reality and the ideal. Prophets did say that God would not be easily recognized.

According to the Old Testament, when Jews came out of Egypt and after forty years of roaming arrived to the Promised Land, they chose their first emperor, one ruler, as other people in their surroundings had done before them. Until then, they had lived in twelve separated tribes that were named after the twelve Jacob’s sons and that had joined together only when a common danger threatened them. That was why they chose their first emperor, who was called Saul. After Saul died, his younger son David, known from the Bible as the conqueror of Philistines’ champion when they attacked Jewish tribes, inherited the throne. David chose Jerusalem as the capital, the fortified city that was situated on a hill in the middle of his kingdom. He named it David’s City and built his palace there. That was how David made Jerusalem, the great religious center of his kingdom. He wanted to build a temple as well, in which he would keep The Arc of the Covenant (Moses’ law of the covenant between God and Jews). The prophet Nathan told David that his descendant would build the temple and strengthen his empire for eternity. From that moment on, there was a strong bond between God and David’s lineage. Thus the emperor became the living sign of God’s loyalty for Jews. David ruled by law and justice. He was succeeded by his son Solomon. Using the period of truce with the neighbors, he strengthened his father’s empire and made it famous. He started great works all around the country. He widened Jerusalem and built a great palace and a glorious temple in which he kept The Arc of the Covenant. It was being built for seven

years. Later, David's empire fell apart and it was divided into smaller countries. Everything got worse from then on.'

'Similar to Jews, us Serbs also had smaller countries and areas in which discordant and alienated lords ruled. My dear father, Stefan Nemanja, invested a great effort and persistence to unify those areas into a united country', said the great parson.

'When David's empire split into smaller countries and areas, Nabuchodonosor, the powerful ruler of Babylon, first conquered Assyria and then Egypt and its allies. Then he targeted Judea and Jerusalem. Jews had to pay great taxes so they decided to rebel. The prophet Jeremiah warned his people that they should not oppose the potentate of Babylon because he would crush and enslave them. This was what happened. It was in 597 before Christ. Nabuchodonosor besieged Jerusalem and they surrendered. The emperor and his councilors were taken to Babylon. Life became difficult for Jews and they again rebelled, together with their neighboring countries, and plotted against Babylon. The prophet Jeremiah again warned his people of the futility of resisting the Babylon giant. He told them: 'It is better to carry your burden and save your head'.

Instead of listening to the prophet, they accused him of being the enemy's spy. They judged him and put him into the dungeon. But Jeremiah was right. The impact was horrific. Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem and took a great number of people into slavery. Jerusalem was havocked. It was a great tragedy for Jews, the one that had not happened before. The Holy City was robbed and burned and the walls of the temple were leveled with earth. Many people were killed. Even the members of the imperial family were executed. Thousands of prisoners were taken to Babylon to join their brothers who had been taken there ten years earlier. Zedekiah, the last king of Judea, was among prisoners. He was blind because the soldiers had plucked his eyes. Although they were doing the hardest jobs in the countryside and in the cities of the Babylonian colossus (they built dams, roads, bridges and fortresses), prisoners had certain freedom. They were allowed to build their own houses, to have gardens, to gather in order to study or pray, to remember Zion and Jerusalem. Still, terrific questions shook the faith of the outcasts. If the Promised Land was enslaved, did God withdraw His blessing and the covenant? If the temple was no more, did God leave His people? If David's lineage disappeared, did God forget His promise? But beside all this, their prophet Hezekiah, banished with his people, announced a vision in which the exiled would survive and return to their country. Indeed it happened. Babylon, that was considered invincible, was conquered by the Persian emperor Cyrus the Great. All the people enslaved by Babylon greeted the new ruler of the whole ancient east as a liberator. He treated them much better than the Babylonians and he allowed them to return to their homes. Jews went back to Jerusalem and restored the temple.¹ All this caused thrill and indescribable joy of the people and outcasts who came back and the ones who remained there and suffered and endured even greater torture.

¹ In the center of Jerusalem there is the Temple of God. It is God's dwelling place. Every day, as well as on days of great holidays, people pray in it. They burn incense and the fruits of the harvest and they bring animal sacrifice to the altar, usually sheep. By giving their most precious goods, believers want to show that they give the best of them. The first temple was built by King Solomon in the X century before Christ and it was destroyed by Nabuchodonosor, the Babylonian emperor, in 587 before Christ. The second one was built in 515 before Christ. The building of the third temple began 20 years before Christ, during the rule of Herod the Great and it lasted for eighty years. This temple was destroyed by the Romans seventy years after Christ. (J. Musset: The World of the Bible)

Revenants celebrated this liberation as the new coming out, as well as the first coming out of enslavement by Egypt. This return from Babylon to the Promised Land lasted longer. Dozens of thousands of Jews started a journey without return, impatient to see the land of their ancestors again. They even had a song of return: *When God brings about the return to Zion,² we were like dreamers. Then our mouths will be filled with laughter, and our tongues with joyous song. Then it was said among the nations, the LORD has done great things for them. The LORD has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy. Restore our fortunes, LORD, like streams in the Negev. Those who sow with tears will reap with songs of joy. Those who go out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with them.*

Two years after the return to Jerusalem, revenants began restoring the temple. There were some difficulties and discordance because of the scarceness. They did not have houses and they lacked food because of the drought. They did not even have money to buy food. But thanks to encouragement of the prophet Zechariah and the coming of cheerful caravans of revenants from Babylon, bravery and their will for living returned. Revenants brought good news with them. Darius, the new Persian prince, allowed the temple to be restored and he even sent help for the construction. This other temple was not magnificent or luxurious as the Solomon's was but it symbolized the renewal of Jewish people. The lustration of the temple gathered not only revenants from Babylon but also the Jews who remained in the country and rejected idolatry. Still the whole century passed from their return from the exile and the renewal of Jerusalem and the temple still wasn't finished. The havocked Jerusalem was still a great construction site and it needed the defensive walls as well. Money was lacking and the regent of Samaria opposed the construction. In their sorrow, Jews again appealed to the Persian emperor Artaxerxes. He gave them everything they needed for completing the temple and the walls of the city. All the residents of Jerusalem enthusiastically took up the job, despite the intrusions and threats from Samaritans. The city was simultaneously defended and built. Encouraged, Jews, despite all the difficulties, finished the construction of the city and the temple that had begun long ago. After fifty-two days of insecurity and feverish work, the defensive walls were built as well. When all the work was finished, the lustration was attended by Jews from Jerusalem, but many others from the vicinal and distant countries as well. They sang, danced and rejoiced: *Sing the ruins of Jerusalem, for the Lord has comforted his people and delivered Jerusalem.*'

'After that, there was a period of peace and prosperity', continued the monk, 'only the lords changed. The great commander, Alexander of Macedon, conquered the whole Persian Empire and expanded his power all the way to Greece and India, including Egypt, in 332 before Christ. He imposed the Greek language, culture, religion and customs. It was a big upheaval in the countries of the Middle East. Thus, without knowing it, he prepared the court and made accepting Christ easier. Alexander also built great megalopolises, libraries, theatres and stadiums, like those in Greece. He wanted to conquer the whole then known western world but he was prevented by an early death.

² Zion is the hill on which Jerusalem was built and where Solomon built a temple. People went to pilgrimage there, singing psalms called *Psalms for singing*. (Ps. 120-134)

What he couldn't do with his sword, our savior did with forgiveness, love and atonement, three centuries later.'

Here the monk, with a deep sigh, stopped and after a short pause he again continued: 'Unfortunately, what happened to us on the Holy Mountain, and especially in Constantinople in Byzantium, shows that there are always forces of darkness and that everything that has been achieved is again called in question. We have to go back to the beginning, to the original Christ's teaching in which love, forgiveness and atonement have to have the central place in human relations. Crusaders and bandits didn't have mercy for the innocent people in Constantinople and their holy temples that were made in the glory of God for more than a thousand years. And it will always be like this; there will always be bandits and criminals until angels, God's army, come down to earth, with their shiny swords, to cleanse it from weeds and sow the new seed. The same bandits who came by sea and attacked and burned our monastery joined the Crusaders later in their strike on Constantinople and Byzantium, where they committed greatest crimes.'

'I have already told you that our court and our people will help to build your holy temple. We will send the whole caravan with horses and mules loaded with chests, bags and bundles full of food, gold and silver coins and everything you need in this difficult situation. We will also send our best masons, carpenters, icon-writers and sculptors, and a duke with a large group of soldiers who will follow and protect the caravan from bandits and robbers on its way to the Holy Mountain as well. It is important that the caravan avoids ambushes and roads which Crusaders and bandits usually take, in order to arrive safely to their destination. It is indeed a great tragedy that happened to your fraternity and monastery. And what happened to Constantinople and Byzantium is even greater tragedy, considering the crimes that were committed by Crusaders and bandits. It is a tragedy not only for the Greek people but for all the people who lived in the Eastern Roman Empire, as you like to call your Byzantium. We, Serbs, and our Serbian court are deeply shaken by the events in Constantinople because we are kin with the imperial family. You in the holy Mountain know more than we do of what really happened there and what tragedy and evil hit not only Constantinople but the whole Byzantium and its people. When and how did the news of these events get to you, considering that the Holy Mountain is not that far from Constantinople?', asked the Serbian ruler.

'Some of the rare who were lucky to survive the first three days of the greatest slaughter and horror, managed somehow to reach their boats and arcs in order to hide on the vicinal islands and they even succeeded in sailing to our Holy Mountain. They brought the news of the fall of Constantinople and the havoc in Byzantium. When in the first Crusades western feudatories and knights came to Byzantium and in touch with its people, it turned out that there were many misunderstandings among them. Beside the differences that existed in opinions, there was the issue of insincerity and the need to misuse each other. Considering other prejudices, this caused bad blood. At that time Constantinople was one of the most beautiful and wealthiest cities in the whole known world, the Empress of cities, as people used to call it, and the center of Byzantium. Everybody wanted to get it – first Persians from east, then Arabs and Turks. The same tendencies were shown by people from west – Goths, Bulgarians, Russians, Franks,

Germans, Normans, Latins and Hungarians. With its beauty and wealth, Constantinople especially clung to the western eyes when the Crusades began. It was particularly true during the Second and the Third Crusade, when the thought of taking over Constantinople and destroying Byzantium first occurred. One writer from Byzantium noted: *‘Latins compare our regions with heaven and they burn with desire to come and get rich on our account’*.

Byzantium was right to be afraid of the Westerners. They had already been attacked by the Normans from the southern Italy. Still, the most dangerous ones were the Venetians because they had the most of the trade between the East and the West in their hands and they enjoyed many privileges on account of this. The basileis³ from Byzantium revoked these privileges during the Crusades and many merchants from Venice were robbed and banished. The Venetians prepared the revenge with the tendency not only to reestablish their business in Constantinople and Byzantium but to take them over. The Fourth Crusade came as ordered for them and they could realize their ideas of taking over Constantinople and destroying Byzantium. In the Fourth Crusade they succeeded in crushing Byzantium, conquering Constantinople and founding the Latin Empire in 1204, in which all the authority and power went to the Venetian noblemen and knights. Under the excuse of going to liberate Christ’s grave from Saracens, Catholic Crusaders attacked then weakened Byzantium and Constantinople. There were the most beautiful churches and temples. There was Hagia Sophia as well, the most beautiful church ever built in the glory of God. Inside there were icons plated in gold and silver, golden chalices and plates with gold and silver coins. Crusaders were joined by bandits, robbers, bums, pirates and killers. Everybody knew what treasure had expected them there and what they could take. There is a story that, beside Crusaders, Cretan pirates and other marine robbers from Longos and Kassandra did the greatest crimes, robberies and destruction in Constantinople, where they built their camps and attacked monasteries on the Holy Mountain and all Byzantium from there.

The previous basileis from Constantinople used to melt golden plates in order to buy wheat or build bulwarks or pay the mercenaries in the time of wars and crises. These walls could not defend the city from the overrun by Crusaders, bandits and killers. Not even prayers of priests and monks helped. In all the temples day and night prayers could be heard and the Mass was held shortly before the battle. Every moment great groups of people moved toward Hagia Sophia. In it there were thousands of candles that lit up the image of the Savior, saints, emperors and empresses. Underneath them, in solemn robes, church dignitaries held the Mass. No one, not even women, children nor old people remained at home; they joined the prayers to God to save the city. They believed in the old prophecy in which the attackers would be banished by the angel of God with his shiny sword. Before the battle, all holy temples buzzed with prayers and Masses all night until dawn. Every person who was able to fight joined the others on the bulwarks of the city. They pledged an oath to die for their religion, emperor, their city and their families. Their generals reminded them of glorious days and the noble tradition of Constantine’s city and encouraged them to be worthy of their ancestors.

³ Greek term and [title](#) that has signified various types of [monarchs](#) in history and it means king or emperor.

The attacks and the attempts of Crusaders to conquer the city came one after another, but the defenders succeeded in resisting them. Every moment swarms of arrows flew from the bulwarks toward the attackers. Fire, hot oil and heavy stones were thrown at them, while the Crusaders hit back the walls and gates with catapults. They brought the catapults on their arcs near the bulwarks and defensive towers and bombed them from close by. Ceaseless dragging of stones and its throwing to the walls, gates and defensive towers lasted for five days. They had flamethrowers and they made great fires in the city, which spread around without control. The scenes of this fire exceeded all catastrophes seen until then. Palaces and stairways collapsed. Nothing could resist the fiery storm. Big pieces of burning coal and flames flew and joined in the air as a united fiery torch and fell on unprotected and distraught people who couldn't find the shelter and salvation from the flames and their unbearable heat. As soon as any group of people could extinguish fire somehow, it would change its direction and the new fire would appear from nowhere at some other place. It seemed as though the Devil himself was making them. The fire came so close to Hagia Sophia that only God saved it with the wind from the opposite direction, but it also made it burn the whole quarters east from the church. Neither the baked brick nor the deep foundations helped – everything collapsed and disappeared in the firestorm. Only a small breeze was enough to move the fire, even if it looked as though it was extinguished. Fiery coal was carried by the firestorm and it flew even over the bulwarks; it shifted the fire outside the walls and burned several arcs in the port. It seemed as though the land and the sea burned together. Crusaders watched all this from the other side of the bay and regretted the wealth that was disappearing in the flames in front of their eyes, thus reducing the spoils they expected to gain. In those moments everybody who was not at bulwarks, the young and the old, went to extinguish the wild fire that threatened to ruin the whole city. It looked like this strain would last forever. Still, for days and nights the defenders resisted. At one moment even the news that Crusaders were retreating was carried around, because they could not break the walls and take over the city in their first attempt. That caused happiness among the defenders and the thankful prayers to God and angels and old prophecies were spoken in temples because the city was saved once again.

The attackers obviously spread this false news via their spies on purpose, in order to make the defenders relax and lose their focus. The tragedy happened quickly afterwards. Thankful prayers were not even finished when, before dawn, Crusaders suddenly gave an order for the attack. The impact was so horrific that bulwarks, gates and defenders could not stop it and the predecessor of the army of savages, robbers and killers entered the city. Priests did not stop their prayers, even then, to try to find the way out and the Crusaders slaughtered them with their swords while they were praying. Children, old and weak people were killed at the spot and girls were tied to one another in order to be used for the greatest scurrilities and sacrileges. The terrible scenes of robberies, dishonor and bloodshed lasted for three days. *'Even the Saracens were merciful and mild in comparison with these people who carried Christ's cross on their shoulders'*, cried the witness from Byzantium, the historian Niketas Choniates. *'There were more burned houses than in the three biggest cities in the French Kingdom'*, said the French Crusader Vilarduent, who left the description of the siege of Constantinople. He then spoke of great treasure that Crusaders took from the imperial palace and castles of Byzantine

noblemen and continued: *'And others spread across the city and took the great spoils; it was so big you couldn't count it – gold and silver, silver plates, jewels, satin, silk dresses, fur coats made of squirrels and ermines and all the precious objects one could ever find in a country'.*

Another Crusader, also a witness, said: *'Upon the truth and consciousness, since the world began, there were no such spoils in one city. Two thirds of the world's wealth must have been collected here in Constantinople and the remaining third was scattered around the world'.*

After having conquered the capital of East, Crusaders robbed churches, monasteries, took the artwork, sacred relics and treasures all around the Orthodox Byzantium. All the chroniclers of this time noted that the plundering of Constantinople was unprecedented in history. It was the capital of the Christian civilization for over a thousand years and a great city. It was full of monuments inherited from the ancient Greece, master-pieces of Byzantine art. With these stolen treasures, the Venetians, Germans and the French ornamented their squares, churches and palaces of their cities in West. Catholic monks also participated in this. The greatest crimes were committed during the Fourth Crusade. There are many historical sources on what happened in Constantinople and Byzantium then. In their fourth attack in 1203, Crusaders were already beneath Constantinople and in a year they took over the city. They first surrounded the city from all sides, from the sea and the land. The whole year they gathered armies and fleets on the land and the warships came by sea. It was a huge army. The sign for the attack from the sea was awaited by hundreds of Venetian arcs with two rows of paddles. They were coordinated by over forty thousands of soldiers craving for blood and plundering. On the land the same sign was awaited by twice as many archers, armors, gunmen and over fifty thousands of infantrymen, gonfaloniers and sneaks.

In the first half of April of 1204, after two fierce attacks on bulwarks of the city from the sea and the land as well, Constantinople was entered by Crusaders who were promised the three days of plundering if they conquered the city. Destruction and violence followed. Chroniclers noted that Catholic Crusaders bathed in blood of the Orthodox Christians and that they publicly manifested the most shameful lust, without sparing mothers, virgins or nuns. When they satisfied their stealing impulses in the imperial palaces and private houses, they started robbing churches and temples. The greatest spoils they gained by plundering the golden iconostasis of Saint Sophia and they plucked out pearls and jewels from the relics and the holy plates which they then showed in their binges and orgies. In their obscenities they went so far that they brought a prostitute to the throne of the Patriarch of Constantinople to amuse them with dancing and singing naked. Chroniclers noted that the whole West and the whole Catholic world of that time did not have that much gold as they did when Crusaders robbed not only the Orthodox Constantinople but other Byzantine cities and places. So much silver and gold, ivory and jewels, claimed the chroniclers, were not taken even by the great commander Alexander the Macedon in his robbing and conquering all countries from Egypt to India.

Indeed, for years, heavily loaded galleys sailed from Constantinople with all its treasure to many regions of Italy, France and Germany. There were so many ornamented relics, icons, church plates and other objects made of precious metals, jewelry made of ivory and objects ornamented with jewels, that special treasuries had to be made in West to fit the robbed spoils. The most famous of these treasuries of the robbed pelf is situated in the Church of Saint Mark in Venice and on its western façade there are still four bronze figures of horses that used to decorate hippodrome in Constantinople. These marvelously beautiful figures were sculptured by Lysippus, the most famous of ancient artists. The fall of Constantinople into the hands of Latins and their systematic robbery and destruction of what had been acquired for thousands of years was the beginning of the end of the Orthodox Byzantium – the Roman Empire. When these rapacious robbers finished with their endeavor and burning the churches, monasteries, palaces and everything that was valuable, they started robbing and burning private houses from which they not only took valuable objects but the food as well: dry fish, onions and garlic, dry figs and plums, pitchers of wheat and barley flour, walnuts, numerous jugs of mead and barrels of wine.

Crusaders thus succeeded in destroying and conquering the whole Byzantine Empire that used to be very powerful; violence and robberies followed that had not been seen before. Nothing was sacred to Crusaders. While ones greedily took off gold and jewels from the dead emperor Justinian's body, others were taking jewelry from his magnificent church Hagia Sophia and had orgies inside. *'Do these people carry Christ's cross in their hands as well?'* – asked the witnesses of these terrifying events.

Under the pressure of the cruel and tragic reality, even Pope Innocent III could not be silent because in all of this Catholic monks participated as well, following the Crusaders in their endeavors. The Pope had to say something and mildly condemn these crimes, robberies and blasphemy of Crusaders. Before these horrific scenes of crime and violence, done by his Crusaders, he was not much appalled because he was the one to allow them in the first place. After the robbers were done with taking, slaughtering and destroying one of the most glorious cultures, he asserted that nothing was sacred to Crusaders, not even children, women, old people, temples nor icons. One chronicler of that time noted the following words of Pope Innocent III he wrote in a letter, describing horrors done in Constantinople:

'These so called Christ's soldiers did not spare religion, age or sex. In the middle of a day, they committed adultery, harlotry and greatest scurrilities. Decent matrons, virgins and even nuns were left to the hideous brutality of these so called Christ's soldiers. Churches were sullied, burned and robbed; some of them were even turned into stables. Soldiers, even the bishops, entered the holy temples on horses. Drunken Crusaders demolished, shattered and destroyed everything they came across; they tore the manuscripts, books, treaded over icons, stole golden and silver chalices, drank wine from them and from the robes on the altar they plucked out jewels and gold and gave it to harlots.'

Catholic bishops and priests used this tragedy of Orthodox Christians to show their talents as skilled tradesmen. There are many stories of this. One of them tells of some abbot called Martin. While he was watching Crusaders taking gold and jewels from the precious chest that kept the sacred relics in the church of our Savior, he made a plan for himself. He rebuked Crusaders for the blasphemy they were doing and when they went away, the church was devastated. There were only the destroyed chest and the scattered sacred relics left. *'This is enough for me'*, he said to his chaplain and started putting the sacred relics into his robes. He knew that relics were more valuable than the chest that Crusaders destroyed seeking jewels and gold. These relics later reached unimaginable price on the free market in Venice and other cities of the Catholic West. Abbot Martin had a way with the noblemen then, telling them that the one who owned even the smallest piece of the relics, owned the keys to heaven.

He indeed believed this, forgetting his greed and the sin he was doing. And so, selling piece by piece of these relics, he became rich and he bought a title of nobility for himself. Thus Abbot Martin made a bigger fortune on the tragedy of Orthodox Christians than Crusaders who fought and killed each other over the robbed gold.

There is another story of a Catholic priest who, after the robbery of churches and monasteries in Constantinople, came back to Venice and bragged for a long time how he owned the most sacred relics – two pieces of the Holy Cross, the iron point of the spear that Christ's ribs were stabbed with, two nails His hands were pinned down to the cross by Roman soldiers and the robes He wore while they were taking Him to Golgotha.

One chronicler left the following story in his testimony. Some Greek salesman, who used to be a scholar and a translator from Latin to Greek language in the Byzantine court when he was young, somehow survived the first, most difficult days of the slaughter and with his small arc he succeeded in reaching the Holy Mountain. That was how the news of terrible and tragic events in Constantinople came there. This salesman, when he came to Athos, asked the monks to receive him as their brother so he could forget what he had seen in the enslaved Orthodox East. The images of horrific events in Constantinople haunted him and he was never in peace. In his testimony he said that he had wandered for days, distraught, from one monastery to another, and that he could not settle anywhere until one old monk asked him if he knew how to write. When he said he did, this old man told him: *'Take the quill into your hands and describe everything you saw of these horrible events. Only when you do that and take it out to the light of the day, you will be able to find peace'*. That was what he did and thus left behind the most tragic testimony of that time. The most part of this manuscript was burned in a fire, but several damaged pieces of the parchment remained and they testify of the drama that happened to the Orthodox Christians in Constantinople.

'Although weak and helpless in their number, Byzantium and Constantinople fought bravely. Crusaders committed such a crime to the innocent people that the history of human existence will remember forever. Burning Constantinople and the whole Byzantium part by part, Crusaders destroyed the greatest achievements of the material and spiritual culture. Crusaders manifested lowest animal instincts during the robbery and

destruction of everything that crossed their way. These crimes and perversions of the human mind could make you stop breathing and your words unspeakable. When children, women, old and weak people who could not avoid the slaughter saw their fate and what awaited them, they decided that they would rather bring death to themselves by hanging or jumping into the sea without return. They went to death voluntarily only to avoid the fate of falling into Crusaders' hands. Mothers decided to jump into fires or water with their children rather than let their children be stabbed by the swords of these wild dogs. Thus, whole families chose death by hanging, burning or jumping into the sea with heavy stones bound to their necks to sink faster just to avoid being captured. When nothing was left to be taken, burned or killed, there was a horrible silence. Neither barking of dogs nor the crying of children could be heard. Finally, when everything became peaceful, when there was nobody to be killed, the orgies in temples and gambling with the taken gold began. No true believer should think for once that Christ would have wanted these animals from West to come to his holy grave.

But, gradually, God's punishment came upon them. They started killing each other over the gold, with which they played as children, attracted by anything shiny or glowing. The curse of the stolen treasure and the innocent who were killed reached them and soon they started stabbing each other with their swords and executing each other as wild dogs. Many of them were hit by even more terrifying death than the one they brought to the innocent and weak residents of Constantinople. Everything that happened just confirmed what Jesus always used to tell – people have no other enemies but themselves'.

'These crimes done by Crusaders brought everything in question and we have to go back to the beginning, to the original Jesus' teaching', said the monk and continued. 'Our Savior always said that love, forgiveness and atonement had to have the central place in human relations. A westerner was, as an easterner, until now, a man of talk but without the spiritual power or renaissance. That is why it was possible for him to commit terrible crimes in the name of his religion. All this is even harder to understand if we know that the Bible, the most valuable book of the West and its civilization, was a gift from East. Everything valuable that West has is only a copy of an original taken from East. And now these copies turned against the original. Did the greatest values in poetry, science, religion, philosophy and society in West not come from East? Construction and sculpture appeared in East, as did literacy and the first scientific knowledge. Greek, Israeli and Arabic people created it. Westerners wanted to ruin and destroy these originals in order to be able to say, in several centuries time, that all that was made in West. But Aristotle, Socrates and Plato were born and lived in Greece; Homer, Lysippus, Phidias and other great Greek people created their art in Greece. Greek and Israeli people created and they are the source of literacy and knowledge that West uses today. The word *istok* (east) in all Slavic languages means *spring*, the source of everything good and holy. The holiest book of West, the Bible, a gift from East, although geographically foreign to a westerner, took the central place in the western world, pushing out their books, myths, legends and stories, at the same time, which were in whole the product of West. Thus the foreign book from East played the unrepeatable and the most radical role in the development of the western civilization, because other books, made in West, could not do

it. Roman and German mythology, written in numerous books, could not do it nor could the secret tradition of Celts and the cults of Slavs written in birch bark.

But sins of the East are no less. That is why they received God's punishment. He sent it to warn us. Even the old traditions before Christ announced such a punishment. That is why we experience the apocalypse every day. On one hand we had power, luxury and hubris of the Byzantines and Byzantine basileis and the appalling greed of westerners on the other; of their salesman, soldiers and pilgrims in an insatiable desire to reach the treasures of East. That is why we, 'Romans', kept this feeling of insecurity and aggressive destructiveness. It could have happened that our common people robbed and burned shops of Latins and killed the salesmen and pilgrims from West. They cut off the head of the papal legate and bound it to a dog and they used Greek fire to burn merchant ships and men on them. As the revenge to Greeks, Latins attacked wealthy ports and monasteries on islands while they were withdrawing to the distant provinces. The cause of this was in Constantinople that did damage to its people, left completely unprotected in distant provinces. Common people knew that the damage that had been done to Latins would not be unpunished and they would pay for it with their lives and with robbing and destruction of their estates. Basileis from Constantinople and their noblemen did not think about what common people had to endure and what suffering they experienced from Latins that were withdrawing. That is why God cursed us too, especially Constantinople and its basileis and all the residents of the city. Before the Crusades, Constantinople was merciless toward the neighboring countries, but toward their own people as well, who escaped from Anatolia before the attack of Turkish and Mongolian tribes. These tribes plunged from Pamir and Altai Mountains and with the speed of storm broke through the Asian steps toward Anatolia, Syria, Bagdad and Constantinople. These people who had to leave their homes, lived in dumps of Constantinople and cried for help: 'We are hungry', but nobody heard them. We were arrogant and insensitive and we did not help them but looked upon them with disdain. So God's punishment followed. It is a fact that people who have no mercy and pity for others are arrogant and they usually lose their minds. God cast His wrath upon us by sending Crusaders as a punishment. We imagined we were above the other nations and that drove us crazy. Thus is the way of God: if He wants to punish somebody, first he takes his mind, throwing him into arrogance and pride. The cleft between 'Romans' and Latins grew wider because it was based on the mutual hatred. What Crusaders did in Constantinople would only deepen this hatred. With the destruction of Constantinople, Crusaders wiped out the Byzantine Empire from the face of the earth. The last basileis from Constantinople madly spent the imperial treasures, living in luxury and abundance, without considering the defensive capacity of the city and the empire, without building and strengthening defensive walls and reinforcing the army. We have had our revenge only recently, when Crusaders came and when we saw that imperial treasuries were empty, that everything was robbed by emperors and noblemen and nothing was left to be used for the defense of the city, for strengthening bulwarks and paying mercenaries to defend the city. Byzantines created so many enemies because they were arrogant toward other nations. They considered Latins primitive and vile and on other neighbors and nations they had even worse opinion. Thus the Greeks and the Latins, in hatred toward each other, became sinful and malevolent people.

The great tragedy for Byzantium was also the fact that during its millenary existence it had to fight on the four fronts. It was attacked from four sides: east, west, north and south as well. Everybody wanted to get to the Empress of cities, the glorious Constantine's city, as it was often called. From east Persians, Arabs and Turks wanted to reach it. From west it was attacked by Goths, Slavs, Bulgarians, French, Russians, Germans, Normans, Latins, Hungarians and Serbs. Thus every generation in Byzantium, especially in the last centuries of its existence, experienced an attack of a foreign army and havocs followed by numerous human losses and the losses of material assets.

A common Byzantine was prone to accuse Constantinople as the center of the empire for his calamities. It would later turn out that weakening of the city meant strengthening of regional lords' power in coterminous and distant provinces of the Roman Empire. It seemed that this led to the fall of Constantinople and disappearing of Byzantium. Several of the last basileis of Constantinople weakened the power of the empire and emptied the imperial treasuries that their predecessors gained with hard work and even losing their lives, instead of spending these gold and silver plates to pay for the renovation of bulwarks and mercenaries for its defense. Byzantine history was also famous for court deceptions, plots, bloody duels and the cruelest executions. That happened in the imperial family as well, in a desire to take over or keep the crown. That is how fratricides and patricides began, as it was usual for Roman emperors. Everybody heard the story of the basileus from Constantinople, from the VII century, the emperor Constans II, who, in fear from the possible ambitions of his younger brother Theodosius, first made him become a monk and then had him brutally killed. People of Constantinople were appalled by this fratricide and the emperor soon got a new name Cain, after the story of Cain from the Bible, who killed his brother Abel. Often the pretenders to the throne from the same family led armies against each other and spilt the blood of common people, but their closest relatives as well, because of their selfish aims. Thus, the decline of the empire's power began. But still, the weakening of the millenary empire was mostly caused by the appearance of regional lords, especially in the distant and coterminous provinces of the empire, which was especially the case during the Crusades. Regional lords often fought battles against each other and thus weakened the power of the empire. But they joined together as well, in order to attack the emperor. They weakened the capital of the empire, Constantinople, without which Byzantium was unimaginable. Constantine's city was not only the biggest and the most fortified city of our times, but also the most wonderful one. The provincial and the regional spirit became dominant over the universal spirit of the empire, whose center, as the Sun in the universe, was Constantinople, once a proud Constantine's city. The global Byzantine patriotism was gone and the regional spirit took over. That was why it was possible that distant and regional provinces watched the destruction of Constantinople and did not send any help to the occupied capital; they calmly observed its agony for months. Many social classes in the city were also indifferent toward the destruction of their capital because they knew its rulers and their injustices. Even the poor of Constantinople rebelled. And it is common for the poor to express their misery and liberate themselves, even if it means joining in with their enemy. One little spark is enough to make a great fire which will obliterate everything.

That is why one could see big groups of the miserable and the poor, together with Crusaders and bandits, use the turmoil and chaos to rob the city, imperial courts and courts of noblemen and wealthy monasteries. It seemed as though the Byzantine Empire was already gone without return. Pretenders to the throne fought each other, but common people started hating and fighting each other as well. Divisions, moral decadence and other difficulties occurred. Everybody was against everybody – pretenders to the throne fought among themselves, the poor against the rich, children against their parents, bishops fought among themselves, knights, noblemen, peasants and monks as well. Everything was pointing to the breakdown and the Crusaders only speeded up the process. In every city and every village there were such divisions and nobody had a peaceful and secure life. Wild masses felt so powerful that they robbed and destroyed everything they came across. This chaos and strife could only be God's punishment for the sins of Byzantines and their incapable rulers. There were no laws and murders started to happen. The humiliated and the oppressed got the weapons and became the lords of their lords and their lives. They attacked homes and turned many villages and cities into wasteland and ruins. Death threatened to everybody and many trembled with horrors that happened every day. Because of that fear, there was no shelter. Salvation could not be found in churches, wells or woods any more. People used to hide inside tombs to find a safe haven in the rotten and heavy stench, but still they found no peace because of the tomb raiders. One of the witnesses of these terrific events cried: *'Oh, all-seeing sun, have you seen anything like this before?'* It was the end of the first and the beginning of the second millennium after Christ. Because of their horror, these events could only happen once in a millennium and the next time it will probably be during the transition from the second to the third millennium, at the end of the XXI century'.

'In many cities of the Byzantine Empire, in every place and every step, one could see cracked heads, spilt brains, broken spines and arms and scattered bodies of the dead, disfigured beyond recognition. Prisons for torturing people appeared everywhere. The worst of bandits and pirates had their own dungeons for keeping slaves they sold in Libya, Arabia, Tunisia and Egypt later. Even in the imperial palace's basements there were several dungeons in which basileis used to hold and torture their enemies and slaves for selling; common people knew nothing of this. Emperors often blinded their opponents with hot iron or plate they would keep in front of the convict's eyes until he lost his sight completely. Thus Isaac II Angel was blinded and thrown off the throne by his brother Alexei III Angel, shortly before the beginning of the Fourth Crusade. These punishments, based on the ones popular in Byzantium, were taken over by the neighboring. The blinding of 14 000 Samuel's soldiers by the cruel Byzantine emperor Vasyli is known in history; he left every hundredth soldier one eye so they could lead the army to their emperor. Besides the blinding, a frequent punishment among the pretenders to the throne was mutilation by cutting off a nose, hands or a tongue, considering that a cripple could not be an emperor. In the Byzantine Empire blinding was the most frequent punishment for the opponents in the race for the crown and benefits of being an emperor. The blinding was done by pouring hot vinegar in one's eyes and then plucking them out. Because of these cruel duels inside Byzantium itself, the empire weakened and it started to play the subordinate in the battlefield. Weakening of Byzantium was first felt by its neighbors – Latins, Bulgarians, Cumans and others. In such circumstances it was not hard

to take over great parts of Byzantium which was falling apart from some foreign army. To heal these wounds and divisions between East and West it will take another thousand years. It will be the return to the beginning. Until that happens, the disempowered will always be rebels. This is also the case because western and eastern society became obsessed with the issues of 'gaining happiness' and material wealth, forgetting the issue of the meaning of life and wiping out the boundaries between good and evil'. The remaining pieces of the parchment were damaged beyond reading.

THE PHENOMENON OF BIRTH ORDER

Since ancient times it was pointed out that there had been a connection between certain family variables (the size of the family, factors of inheritance, family atmosphere and its dynamics, the order in which children were born and similar) with the frequent manifestations of talent and creativity. The researches that dealt with variables of the order in which children in one family were born and with the manifestation of talent and creativity of first born children, second born and the youngest children were especially curious. Some modern studies (F. Sulloway: Born to Rebel and others) focused more intention to the younger children in a family. Analyzing the bigger number of studies and latest researches on this subject we can state the following:

The stories of younger children who exceeded their older brothers and sisters can be found not just in fairy tales and legends, but in the oldest written testimonies on mankind. In the Bible it is also a frequent subject and the youngest child is always the one who wins and conquers. Many significant Old Testament names were not the first born children. Isaac, Joseph, Moses, David and Solomon, forefathers of Israel, were younger children and they made radical turns in their lives. This type of the younger child, and most often the favorite one, who develops into a strong personality, is best illustrated by the Old Testament story of Joseph. This story, not just clearly and picturesquely, but intentionally, speaks of the position of the favorite child in a family and the importance of the order of birth of children, it is almost certain that the creators of this story had knowledge we acquire with difficulty nowadays. All the great men: Nikola Tesla, Ruđer Bošković, Mihajlo Pupin, Jovan Cvijić, Meša Selimović, P.P. Njegoš and others are not the first born children in their families. In Njegoš's case this can be traced back more than eight generations in the past. His father Tomo, grandfather Marko, great-grandfather Damjan, his father Stefan, his father Radul, Radul's father Stjepan and Stjepan's father Petar were younger children in their families. However, this phenomenon is frequent in other Slavic people as well. The great Russian writers Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky were also younger children, as well as the brilliant Polish woman Marie Curie. Something similar we have in East and West. R. Tagore, B. Franklin, T.A. Edison, W.A. Mozart, J.J. Rousseau, B. Pascal. T. Wolf, N. Copernicus, Gertrude Stein, Mark Twain and Charles Darwin were also younger children. Darwin was the youngest of brothers and fifth born among six children, such as our Tesla. Darwin was not only the youngest in his family, but also the youngest son of the youngest son, since Darwin's father was also the youngest son of his father. But he was also the youngest child in the whole family. What is more interesting, similar thing can be found on his mother's side of the family as well, because Darwin's mother was also the youngest child, as was her father was in the family of thirteen children. It is the same thing with the mentioned great people, who were born as the youngest children and in families of ten and more of them. The four most important followers of

psychoanalysis (Ana Freud, Karen Horney, Melanie Klein and Helen Deutsch) were the youngest children in their families. The majority of leaders of the French and the Russian revolution, events that shook and changed the world and brought tragedies to millions of people, were younger children. Of many rulers in our previous country, three had the greatest significance in its building and appearance, or both. They were, too, the youngest sons in their families. From the mentioned, we can see that radicalism in the area of political and social revolutions meant violence and great human and material losses. However, radicalism can mean a turn in a personal life and way of thinking with the goal of devoting to some idea from science and creativity generally or devoting to the welfare of others. This is more humane aspect of radicalism. Radicalism in scientific and artistic work means turns in the sense of producing (discovery) of something completely new which can contribute to the development of the whole mankind. This contribution in the area of scientific and artistic work was given by great men, such as Tesla, Andrić, Edison, Selimović, Pupin, Dostoyevsky, Einstein, Tolstoy, Pascal and many others.

The phenomenon of order of birth is taken only as one of the reasons for writing which means that there are many first borns who have also indebted their people or the whole mankind. However, it should be considered that first borns have the advantage at the start: their parents have already invested much in them until other children were born and they are favored in all the cultures according to principles of primogeniture. Who has heard of a culture or community where younger children inherit family and other titles? For privileges that the first borns have, younger children have to fight with their own work and efforts in the majority of cases. To gain a better position for themselves, they have to develop some characteristics that are not common for the first borns. All the other children in the family can be thrown over of the throne except the youngest. The youngest does not have a successor but it has many role models to learn from. It gets so much support and help for developing its spiritual strength and talents and it enjoys attention from everybody. It is in no danger of being rejected or neglected, as it happens to the first borns. Younger children are known for 'rebellious' against the current conditions and they often resist elders and authority based on force generally, although they use it themselves. Psychological studies show that younger children are more open for new ideas and more eager to make radical changes in their lives. They make friends more easily and they develop this skill very early. They risk more often and change their minds faster. Thanks to their openness for new ideas and their genetic basis (only rare ones have it and they are often referred to as *God given*), they can become successful scientists, artists, writers, merchants or businessmen and often leaders of state, political, religious and cultural movements with radical turning points.

BIRTH*

For a few years already the winter was not so strong. The first snow which fell very early and covered the roads had melted. There was still no new snow, but big colds

have formed. Hoar 2 decorated the trees, and fields and roofs of houses were white from frost. In swampy areas and swamps full of pond birds and fish ice was caught. Wild ducks looked for shelter in the dense and dried pond grass. Rabbits made warm habitats in the thicket above the swampy area and listened to the barking of dogs somewhere in the distance. The night had already pressed the ground and in the palace of the great prince of Rashka fires and candles were burning late into the night.

Sitting ruminant next to the warm ground oven, the great Serbian prince Nemanja did not even notice when princess Ana approached him and, after gently dropping her hand on his shoulder, she said:

- Now that you with your sword, decisiveness and wisdom have united and created our unique state, tell me why are you ruminant?

- I have already told you about that. Even though we have two sons Vukan and Stefan, I would like us to have another male child. This is now a very big country and there will be space for all – said Nemanja and, after lightly touching Ana's hand, he asked her to sit next to him.

I too have thought about that. If God would fulfill our prayers to get another male child, then it would be some big sign. That child of ours would be not only our youngest son, but he would also be the youngest son of the youngest son, said the princess and continued – Because you too are the youngest of the four brothers, the sons of master Zavid. Tihomir was the oldest brother, then Stracimir, then Miroslav and finally you, the fourth and the youngest Zavid's son.

- *Many years will pass and the above mentioned did not give birth, the good-natured Ana* – is written in the biography of Teodosija. But the Great prince and the princess did not lose hope and they constantly prayed to God for their wish to come true.

- *God almighty, give us, in accordance with your blessing, another male child, which will be the consolation of our soul and the successor of our state and the scepter of our old age on whose hand we will rest after we lay down. And we mutually make a pledge to You: from conception of the child we will decide and we will preserve ourselves, each of us individually, in the purity of body until the end of life* – prayed the parents.

Not even a year had passed from that pledge, when everyone in the palace of the great Serbian Prince were already preparing for the welcoming and the birth of the child. Even though it was the beginning of November, the warmth and the mellowness of the Indian summer was still felt. Golden yellow peaks of mountain masses were still reflecting in the sun. The great Serbian Prince was coming back with a group of his warriors from the Byzantine border where he was in military exercises. He was not in the palace for a month already, and he was wondering how princess Ana was doing. Both of his sons, older Vukan and younger Stefan, despite still being boys, went with him and participated in military practice. In that manner Nemanja was preparing them for what awaits them in life: to be warriors, military commanders and rulers of the state. This

military exercise and camping did not last as usual, for six weeks, but two weeks shorter. The Serbian ruler wanted to be as close as possible to the palace during the

***Reminder:** The narrator or the storyteller uses the Jekavian, and all characters in the novel use the Ekavian dialect.

giving of birth, but also later, as much as it is possible and as much as activities of managing the state that he created allow him. The child was expected some time before Christmas. And now, while he was camping and touring the border, he constantly prayed to God that the child and Ana be good. Even while he was getting close to the palace, murmur was heard. The palace servants were preparing wood for winter.

The Great prince decided that he will not go anywhere far from the palace these two last months in the year. He wanted to be at home during the birth of the child. Since he finished the touring of the border, he decided that during the day he will go hunting roe deer and deer in the nearby grove or fish and birds in the swamps near the river. He had time to think about what clergymans from the East and Mount Athos told him which came to his palace six months ago. He thought about the universe and the stars. Everything is written there, they told him, and that is where human souls live. They told him how phases of the Moon have an effect on the plants, on rivers and seas, on women, on vine in the container, on growth of hair and trees, on growth of wool in sheep, on how many eggs a chicken will lay, on ripening of fruit and its sweetness, on spawning and growth of fish. They also told him about how different positions of stars have an effect on people and events on earth. He thought about the secrets of life and destinies of people, about sons Vukan and Stefan, about princess Ana and the child which will be born. Clergymans already knew that that Nemanja had become and true and loyal Christian and that many in his people are following his example in helping the clergy and building of holy temples. One of them told this to the Serbian ruler:

-Christianity already gave a lot to your people, as well as other peoples, not only in the religious respect, but also in the building, education and every other respect. God does that for every people. That's why a redeemer will be born in your people, a holy man. He will exhaust himself with fasting and prayer and he will walk barefoot, because he will give all his goods to the poor. He will go through the path of our Savior Jesus Christ, and that will be his only path until the end of life. He will be kissed by all peoples, emperors, saints and they will look after him like a heavenly pearl. His action will be spread significantly wider outside the borders of your country and your people. He will be recognized on the basis of loyalty to Christ's teaching, the strength of his will and renounce for the benefit of the just and the tormented. He will exhaust himself with prayer and fasting, but his body and spirit will not run out of strength. He will have many gifts. He will reconcile not only estranged brothers and neighbors, but many people. He will write books and build holy temples, and he will be the founder of the educational, literary and scientific work in your people. He will teach his people literacy and many practical knowledge. He will open hospitals, schools and holy temples from which rays of light and enlightenment will be spread. Your people will create many stories and legends about him, because his work will be the lighthouse and the *God sent light and the inextinguishable candle* for the Serbian people through the centuries which are coming. I will pray that such a man is born in your people as soon as possible, and God can

determine that he is of a noble gender. Again I say, God does that for every people. I know that you and the princess constantly pray to the Creator to give you another male child. You already have two sons, but this is now a great and united country and there will be enough space for all. And I will pray that your wishes come true.

- *Who knows how many centuries will pass until such a holy man is born in my people, and will he be born at all?* – thought Nemanja and, while crossing himself, silently added to himself: *But everything is possible to God.*

He thought of Princess Ana and her coming giving of birth. *In the stars it is already written whether a boy or a girl will be born*, he silently said to himself and prayed.

-How big is the Ecumene and are there as many stars as there are people? All of that is a limitless mystery but God's power is great and it can keep all that together and in balance, to create harmony from chaos. The whole nature and the universe are regulated according to laws that God created and only in one act of creation. Only God can carry that out. His powers of goodness and light conquer evil and darkness. From the chaos in the universe he creates harmony and order. He also thought about how he will never cease to admire the act of Divine creation and God's work. Once again he looked at the sky full of stars. That is where the souls of our ancestors live, Nemanja thought.

He thought a lot these days not only about the secrets of life and the destiny of people, but also about the secrets of the life of animals and their destinies. To an ordinary man incomprehensible are some of their behaviors like for example 'gatherings' of birds that live in one region.

He noticed, as a good and experienced observer of the surroundings and everything that is happening in it, that some birds suddenly gather, always in the same place and in the same time of the year, they spend a few hours together on some tree, without a quarrel, and then they fly away. He noticed that such gatherings are held by swallows every year in autumn before moving to the far South, where there is no winter. A whole flock gathers on some big tree, often on village houses and they agree on when and how to fly. They also discuss the situation in the flock and whether they are all healthy and capable of travelling. They also agree on who will help the weaker ones and the inexperienced and what to do if someone becomes exhausted during the long flight. They specially and carefully agree on the direction of the flight and about who will be the leader of the flock and in what formation they will fly. Cats also have their 'parties'. A few of them gather, sit together for some time and split up. Bees scouts convey to bees collectors the knowledge about the place where food is located.

The Great prince admired everything in nature, especially that which for him was mysterious and incomprehensible, everything that ordinary people cannot explain to themselves. He knew only that behind everything there is Divine power and strength. In autumn he often observed how great flocks of birds fly towards the south and wondered how one small bird endures such a long trip to warmer south seas and countries and gets to its goal without a mistake, where it stays during winter. In the spring it again goes back

and without a mistake finds its nest and its way to it. How can it do it, wondered Nemanja, if it flies high above the sea through the sky and where no trace can be left. It is a huge distance and it is a huge space.

- *God himself knows all that, because he created all that*, he would say silently to himself.

Last autumn, while he was hunting wild ducks, one rainy day, he observed how one big flock of birds is flying towards the south. That event deeply stuck in his memory, because for a short time a rainbow appeared in the sky. He noticed from afar that four or five of them increasingly lagged behind the main flock. He was surprised when he noticed that they dropped to a nearby lonely tree on a clearing close to him. They did not notice him because he was hidden in a thicket. He was even more surprised when he saw that another group of about twenty birds separated from the same flock and came back to those four-five which earlier dropped on the lonely tree to rest. Nemanja noticed that they are small, tiny birds, a little bigger than a sparrow. They were quickly shaking their tiny body and they were spreading their little wings to dry faster. They were happily chatting, and those that dropped first, it is as if they gained strength and support from those that came back and again they all together flew and continued their trip in the direction of the south and towards the rest of the flock, which was already far and could no longer be seen on the sky. A strong impression was left on Nemanja by the knowledge that other birds did not want to leave behind those four-five tired birds which had to separate from the flock and drop to rest. That's why from the flock about twenty of them separated and came back to help and encourage those that had to cease their flight for a short time due to tiredness.

In order to easier deal with the expectation and anxiety of whether everything around giving birth will end up as it should and whether princess Ana and the child will be good, these days Nemanja more frequently went hunting and learned a lot of new things about animal behavior.

-*People just don't understand their life. They can also be happy and sad just like people – he thought-and that's why ancient peoples, like Egyptians, rose them to deities.*

The end of December was getting close when Nemanja invited guys which were following him to hunt to prepare for the following day in order to be near the river at dawn. The Great prince, by going hunting, wanted to kill boredom, because he learnt to always be on the move, touring the country and the military fortresses on the border. Now he made a decision to not go anywhere and to postpone all military and state activities wanting to welcome the birth of the child at the palace. If he prayed to God for that moment, then he could not imagine himself in some distant military hikes or camping. Going hunting did him good, not only to kill time but also to fight against anxiety of whether the giving of birth will end whether God will grant his request to get a third son. He did not talk about this with others, except with princess Ana, and only in the beginning. Later they did not talk about that, but they only prayed that their wish comes true and that the child is healthy. And now when he goes hunting with both of his sons, he thought about that and he was wondering whether his wish is right and whether he is selfish when he is praying for something that God already gave him twice. Going hunting calmed him down. The deep silence of the forest and the dried pond grass in which were hidden wild ducks and water beetles brought him tranquility in his soul.

- Always wanting new excitements, Vukan and Stefan asked their father to come with him. In the beginning he made a decision to leave them at the palace, but because of their insistence and pleading, he changed his decision. He still had vivid memories on the experience of child's happiness and excitement when he himself went with his father Zavid to attach nets and hooks in these same rivers and swampy area or when he would take him to set up traps for rabbits and foxes. He especially remembered his excitement and happiness when he went early at dawn often by himself to visit the set nets and the attached hooks on the river. It often happened that on the bait of the hook a great trout is attached which would notice his arrival. The fish would then become disturbed and it would begin to tighten the strong thread tied to the attached fishing rod or some branch along the river bank. In that fight for life it would jump out of water and it would make strong twitches which caused it pain, because the attached iron hook would rip the live flesh and blood began to show on the gills. It would happen that the fish breaks the thread and so with the hook and the bait in its womb it runs away into the invincible depths of the river. Vukan could so skillfully throw a spear at a fish when he is running down the mainstream, that everyone would envy him and tell him that he will be a great warrior. Stefan put well nets and hooks with baits that nearly every time he would find a rich catch of trout and carp. Twice on his hooks were caught wild ducks and water beetles, and because of that the older brother teased his and often made jokes about him, telling him that with his attached hooks he catches more birds than fish.

Guys from the hunting entourage brought news that only about three hours of riding from the palace towards the North some snow had fallen. It is as if that made the Great prince happy, because it will make it easier for him to uncover and follow the wildlife. He decided to spend less time hunting roe deer and deer in groves in order to spend more time with his sons and to help them to hunt fish in whitewater and in swampy areas from both sides of the river. He does that for them, which very much enjoy fishing. He himself often went there as a boy with his father Zavid and older brothers, but even now he would happily come back to those places. Today he also decided to go with his entourage to a known place. There nearby a small hunting hut was made, so if it gets too cold, a fire can be made. He decided to go there also because of the princess Ana, because that is close to the palace and every moment he can quickly come back if needed. The time of Christmas fasting has just set in, and princess Ana has just mentioned to him the other day that she even wishes for some scent of prepared fish. She is in the last month of pregnancy and the Great prince does not want to go far from the palace, which almost always happens if he goes with hunting dogs into the mountain to hunt wild boars or mountain goats, which live in inaccessible rocky cliffs of remote mountains. He will, while Vukan and Stefan go fishing on the river, with a part of the hunting entourage in nearby groves, hunt deer and roe deer which there were many there. He will be nearby in order to be able to at the same time monitor the happenings on the river, where his sons will be. The Great prince did not take his whole entourage, but only four guys and both sons. They went at dawn. The morning was cold. The horses were rested and fed. The hot steam from their nostrils was mixing with the cold. Nemanja and sons were wearing warm and long wool robes, just like the guys from the entourage. Fur caps were protecting their head from the cold. They were riding with a light trot and they quickly arrived at the destination. They came to a place where the river made a curve. There they

jumped off their horses and left the horses next to the hunting hut which was built from logs and covered with reed. It served hunters as a shelter from storms and cold. They decided to light a fire, and two of their dogs ran into the nearby thicket. A few wild ducks suddenly fluttered. Everyone was surprised by the speed of the events and not a single arrow flew. One scared duck, which because of an injured wing did not fly, quickly slid into the cold water. A dog which carelessly jumped after it soon came back to the river bank shaking off the cold drops. The duck looked for safety in the thicket in the middle of the pond and disappeared there. Dogs felt that and with continuous barking from the river bank they were saying that they will not so easily give up the already injured prey.

Two days before going hunting the Great prince first talked to military commanders and advisers about previous camping and touring of the border. It has been concluded that some fortresses and border stations need to be strengthened. Those days, to the palace also came two clergymans from the East. They were monks from Mount Athos. One was Greek, and the other was Russian and they spoke Serbian very well. They came to ask for contributions for building of a monastery in Mount Athos. They already knew that the Serbian prince strongly prefers East Orthodoxy and that he richly donates to clergymans and helps the building of churches. Two evenings ago he went with them to the hill above the palace, because one of those clergymans said that he knows how to look into the stars, and he was talking very interestingly about everything that the Great prince liked to listen to him. Now, that he was alone in his hunting hut preparing new nets and baits for hooks, he thought about that conversation with clergymans from Mount Athos. One of them talked about how stars affect a man's life and how our mood depends on them.

- Both our past and our future are written in the stars. Our whole life is written in the stars. God created all that.

Nemanja was confused by those words, because he heard them for the first time so clearly and so directly spoken by some clergyman.

When Vukan and Stefan with the guys from the entourage went out of the hut, they immediately went directly towards the river carrying their spears. They were almost sure that there are some big fish there which could be shot with spears.

The boys also thought about how near the start of spring, some time at the end of February of last year, they had a rich catch of fish during spawning. That is repeating unmistakably and in cycles every year. Not far from the prince's palace there are a few rapid little mountain rivers and streams in which fish come in great flocks during spawning. Then the fish can be hunted constantly and with bare hands. It then, as if it is blind and intoxicated, only throws roe and milt. Memories were coming back of how last year at the end of February and at the beginning of March for three weeks, which is how long the spawning lasted for, they caught so much fish that the servants in the prince's palace were stretching it and drying. Just last year, at the beginning of March, big flocks came into those mountain rivers and streams three times just before dawn, each in a space of seven days. Even though the water was very cold, not only adults came to fish but children too, because the water was shallow. Adults were fishing with knitted nets, and children with pots and little panniers, and even with their bare hands. Vukan and Stefan still remember how they, with other children from their father's palace, but with an even greater number of village children, walked in the shallow water and caught fish and enjoyed doing that. So much fish is caught that all that all that time feasts last on the

prince's palace, but also in villages, when from every village house the scent of tallow and fish is felt. That is how it is repeated in cycles every year near the beginning of spring. Fish in inevitable cycles every year near the beginning of spring comes from big rivers and just glistens in flocks in little mountain rivers and streams, where it was its destination for spawning. Even though spring was still far away, Vukan and Stefan were happy even just at the thought of that and they were arranging how to better prepare for that event, than they did that the previous year.

Nemanja continued with preparation of nets and hooks, but he still thought about what the clergyman told him about the stars. He also thought about Ana and their mutual life, about children Vukan and Stefan, about the child which will be born soon. What is the destiny of all of them?

Is everything written in the stars? Now he remembered the event from three days ago when one young nobleman during dinner surprisingly asked – is it possible that stars move along the firmament (he says that he heard that from someone, although everyone, he says, can see that stars do not move and that they are eternally still) and that they with their movement have an effect on the behavior and actions of people. Now he has with pleasure remembered his answer to that young nobleman, exactly from word to word: - *How can you even think, you ordinary little man which is what we all are, small and tiny under the firmament, that we are not affected by mysterious relations that rule amongst millions of stars? Why don't you ask yourself what moves the seas and the oceans from our sea and other mysterious and huge sea depths, to Hercules's pillars, there far in the West.* Now he was himself scared from such an answer and he began to pray to God.

- *Everything is written in the stars. It is also surely written in the stars whether a boy will be born or a girl. Ana and I were praying to God for a boy. All that is already written in the stars* – he thought to himself and again continued work on the preparation of nets and hooks while continuing to talk to himself.

He could not have known how much time he spent in thinking about the sky and the stars and about man's destiny. Happy murmur of boys was heard outside. They caught five big trout and three carps. They entered the hut and proudly showed the catch to their father. Nemanja himself was surprised to find out how his sons became skillful in fishing and shooting trout which are rapidly running down the mainstream. Barking of dogs was heard outside which felt the smell of fish. Sons were surprised that their father still did not manage to set his nets and they asked if they could help him. The Great prince agreed, and he himself began to prepare for an urgent return. He himself did not know why, but he wanted to get back to the palace as soon as possible, before dark. He shouted to Vukan and Stefan to not set new nets and hooks.

- Why are we going back so quickly? We came to stay all day. You said that today you will go to hunt roe deer and deer in groves across the river – the sons tried to convince their father to stay until the night itself.

- Today you have already had enough luck. You quickly caught five big trout in whitewater and three carps in a pond, and that is completely enough. You will make your mother happy. She likes fish with barley dims when that is prepared on the incandescent coal of the kitchen oven. We need to return to the palace immediately, before dark. They listened to him and got on their horses. As soon as they got to the steep pathway next to the river, they heard a distant barking of the dogs, but also the sounds of the palace

trumpet. Soon, the tramping of horse hooves was heard increasingly louder. Two riders were rapidly getting closer from the direction of the palace.

After they hardly stopped their horses, they shouted:

- Master, we came to inform you that princess Ana gave birth to a healthy male child.

The Great prince got off his horse, lifted his head towards the sky and said three times: *God, Thank You!* He richly donated to the messengers, and then they all rushed in a gallop towards the palace. When they arrived, the yard was already full of people. They were chanting and singing to the newborn son of the Great prince. His servants were holding his horse and he got off the horse. They made a passage for him. After entering the room in which Ana and the child were lying, he kneeled down next to the bed and with a gentle movement of the hand he was touching her hair. He never saw so much happiness in her eyes like now. The child was sleeping in a cradle.

- God has granted our wishes and prayers. We will announce the birth of our son in all churches and monasteries, and to the rulers of neighboring countries I will send gifts and a report about a happy event, Nemanja said shining of happiness. Then he announced that the people will celebrate for three days with food and drinks, he shared rich gifts to the people of the palace and he released all military fugitives and captives from the dungeon. He climbed the highest tower of his palace, lifted his head towards the sky and again three times said: *God, thank You*. Then he returned to the room of Ana and the child. He took the child from the cradle into his arms and started talking to him in a delirium of joy and his faith, as if the just born child completely understands him.

- Merciful God has fulfilled our wish and gave us a third son only because we pledged that he will inherit the crown and be the ruler of all Serbian land. Let his name be Rastko, to grow up as soon as possible and to be as strong as an oak in order to better prepare for holy duties which God has intended for him. Even though she knew her husband well and she tried to understand his happiness because of the birth of their son, Ana also dreaded Nemanja's great happiness and bequeathing of the just born child. She invited the most loyal palace lady Kosara to share her fears. Kosara was always with her, both when she was sad and when she was happy. She could trust her with anything and be sure that nobody else will ever find out about it. She also helped her in the last days of pregnancy and birth both now and when Vukan and Stefan came into the world. For more than thirty years already she serves at the palace of the Nemanjici and she was a little older than Ana. She came to the palace of Nemanja's father Zavid when he came back from Ribnica to Rashka. Nemanja and his brothers were still children and she raised them as her sons. She especially loved Nemanja and protected him whenever his older brothers would attack him during play or some quarrel. Maybe because he was the youngest, he took hard the orders of his older brothers and father, so he often rebelled and Kosara would then help him. Now she was also participating in raising of Nemanja's sons, as if they were her children. She herself did not have children even though she had been married. She was not in a marriage for even three months when the battles began of Zavid's sons for the throne of the Great prince. Her husband Grubisa disappeared in those clashes while fighting on Nemanja's side. It was never exactly determined how and where he perished. Rumors were going around that while persecuting Nemanja's oldest brother Tihomir, together with him, he disappeared in waves of muddy and raging

Sitnica. She, for some time after the end of the battles and Nemanja's victory against his brothers, still believed that Grubisa somehow saved his life and that one day he will come home. She imagined that maybe he went to some other country, and that he was captured there and thrown into a dungeon, and that one day he will be released and that he will come back. She often even had such dreams. She would go out into forest roads nearby the palace hoping that she will be the one who first sees him when he comes back. But as time passed by, hope was fading away and she found comfort in helping princess Ana in raising children. When they informed her that the princess is looking for her, she ran into the room thinking that the child or she is not well. After getting into the room, she saw that the child was peacefully sleeping. Ana offered her to sit on the bed next to her.

- I know that you are most loyal to me and that I could always trust you with my secrets, my fears and my joys. The Great prince was here a few moments ago and while holding the child in his hands, all delirious, three times he pledged to God that the just born son will be his successor and ruler of Serbia. He loves this child so much that I am scared. I am scared also because of the sin towards older sons Vukan and Stefan, because the throne belongs to them through the precedence of birth. But it is not only about that. I feel that God has intended a special role for our youngest son, but I myself cannot explain what kind of role. He will be different from the other brothers. And I only pray that God keeps him safe and preserves him. I need to tell you what I have been thinking about looking while my just born child was sleeping. While I was breastfeeding him, this thought occurred to me and I have already once talked with the Great prince about this. This child of ours, our Rastko is the youngest of the three brothers, but his father the Great prince Nemanja, is also the youngest son in the family, amongst four brothers. The oldest one was Tihomir, then Stracimir, then Miroslav and fourth was Nemanja as the youngest. So now it can easily be seen that this, our youngest child, our Rastko, is not only the youngest son, but is also the son of the youngest son. That must be some great sign which we still do not understand. I only pray to God to keep him safe. God always knows what he is doing and only He knows what role he has awarded to this child.

- Do not dread, princess, because of the great love of a father towards the just born child. You know yourself how much you prayed to God and how much you waited for this child, your youngest son. That is why he is the favorite of not only the family but the whole palace. That father's big excitement will pass. Even in the Old Testament we always run into the favorite son: Abel as opposed to Cain; Jacob as opposed to Esau; Joseph as opposed to his older brothers.

- I have already told you that it is often spoken about this in the Bible and the one which wins and conquers is always the youngest one. He was Jacob's eleventh son and he was for a long time the youngest and he became his father's favorite, because the twelfth, Benjamin, was born ten years later. Joseph had enough time to strengthen his position as the youngest child in the family and to become the favorite of his parents Rachel and Jacob, which were also younger or later born children in the family. Rachel died while giving birth to Benjamin, so only Joseph until the birth of Benjamin was the second youngest and he was the favorite son and he had immeasurable love from both parents. That's why Joseph's life path was the typical life path of the youngest child. He always asserted his superiority over older brothers. They were scared of him and they strived to set themselves free from him. However, Joseph from the last became the first. Later he was the pillar and the support of the whole family. For that reason, dear princess,

you should rejoice, and not be worried. This child of yours represents some great sign, because you got him in your late years. That only happens in Bible stories. Abraham's wife Sarah also gave birth to son Isaac in late years. In those Bible stories the youngest child is not only the main support, but also the savior of their family and that can not be a coincidence. People have always known and talked about the powers of the youngest. The youngest child is really in a very favorable position, because that child enjoys the help and support of not only parents, but also the brothers and sisters, from which it can always learn something new. And for that reason, dear princess, instead of equality of all children in the eyes of parents, we always run into the favorite son, which is most similar to the father and whom the father loves the most and proclaims as his successor and his heir. There is nothing unusual when the youngest child, especially the son, who you have waited for so long, is loved the most. So Nemanja's father Zavid has loved Nemanja the most, his youngest son, just like your parents love you, their youngest and dearest daughter, their favorite daughter. That's why this child really is some big sign, because this son of yours that was just born, is not only *the youngest son of the youngest son*, but also *the youngest son of the youngest daughter*. You can see yourself that you and Nemanja have achieved the most and surpassed your older brothers and sisters. Everything is like in a Bible story with Jacob and Rachel and his son Joseph. You yourself used to tell me about those miraculous events from the Bible.

So the youngest son of the Great prince Nemanja and princess Ana became the favorite son of the whole family and the whole palace of Nemanjici. A biographer of that time, Theodosius, has left us clear data that the child was beautiful, had a happy soul and so reasonable that everyone was saying: *This child will be some new sign*. In Theodosius's biography it is also asserted that Rastko even in childhood began to spend a lot of time reading *holy books*, just like he early on devoted himself to learning, religious service and fasting. He did not like to participate in parties in the palace even though it was expected from a prince. He was gentle and tame towards everyone and, as Theodosius testifies, *he kissed poor people like rarely anyone else*. Years passed quickly and the child was growing up surrounded by the attention of the whole palace.

The Great prince would always feel joy whenever he would see how his youngest son is quickly progressing in everything that he begins to learn and do. He was especially joyful because of Rastko's big curiosity and his persistence to get to know the life of not only of a warrior, but also of a plowman in a field and the guard of big herds on a mountain. Nemanja not only supported him in all of that, but also encouraged him and therefore he allowed him to stay with guards of herds on a mountain even for a few days. Ana was then worried about her youngest son, that something might happen to him, and every day she would send a servant to visit him and to bring news about her youngest child. The Great prince was telling the princess that there is no reason to worry, because Rastko has already grown up and he is a clever boy, and in addition to that, with him are always two very strong guys from the palace which always accompanied him.

That was the best way for Ratko to get acquainted with the life of a plowman, cattleman and hunters. The Great prince warned the princess that her excessive worrying and protective relationship towards the youngest son is not only unnecessary, but it can also be harmful.

- It is best to learn from life itself, and not only from books. Nowhere is life at the same time beautiful and brutal like in the mountain. And nowhere are people so directed towards each other like in the mountain. Only in those difficult moments, in time of the biggest storms and snowstorms, it is possible to meet the character and strength of every man. There, strengthened is the will and the moral strength. The continuous battle to preserve own life, but also the lives of other guards, as well as herds themselves, in dramatic situations which mountain life often imposes – is an opportunity for every individual to better get to know themselves and others, to comprehend their stronger and weaker sides, but also the advantages and deficiencies of those that they are cooperating with. Only when we better meet ourselves, we can become better people.

- But I feel that Rastko has that power which seldom any boy of his age possesses. Even now he is physically stronger and more skilful than many of his peers, but he surpasses them even more in the spiritual respect. That's why I feel that he is predetermined to be a spiritual shepherd and a spiritual leader of his people, and not a shepherd in a mountain – angrily, said the princess.

-In order for someone to become a good ruler, or a good commander in chief, he also has to be spiritually and physically prepared. But, neither physical nor spiritual uplifting cannot be achieved only by reading books, but also by learning from life itself, from different situations and circumstances which life imposes.

Rastko talked to his mother about his stays on the mountain with guards of the herd, when he would, all tanned from the wind and the sun, return to the palace. He talked to his mother about the animals and the plants which he saw for the first time and with excitement he told her about everything that he experienced in the wild. Every time when he came back, he would bring samples of nicely arranged and dried mountain plants. He noticed that flowers which is growing in high regions can have very beautiful colors. He told his mother how the guards of the mountain taught him about which plants are medicinal and which are poisonous. He was especially in detail acquainted with different types of mushrooms which are growing in regions grown with forests and he learned how to recognize which mushrooms are edible. He told his mother about how he went with the guards of the herd to look for mushrooms and how they prepared them on ember of the fire which the shepherds made during rainy days. From the discussion with the youngest son the princess saw how he is developing into a good researcher of nature, patient and persistent observer of behavior of plants and animals. She noticed his curiosity and the characteristic of a persistent and patient observer very early. Even when because of some greater bad weather he could not get out to research the surroundings, he found a way to fulfill his curiosity. By noticing and caring for the spiritual strength of her youngest child, Ana always had in mind what she told the Great prince, that their youngest son will also be the spiritual shepherd and the spiritual leader of his people. Rastko especially admired the skill of a shepherd to quickly make a fire and skillfully make a shelter from the bad weather. He was thrilled by the huge sheepdogs which helped in preserving and protecting the herd from the wolves. They were so strong, but also cuddly, with great smart eyes. He was surprised and he admired how they learned and understood every command of the shepherds, whether the herd needed to be gathered or returned so that it doesn't cross on the other side of a ravine or so that it doesn't go astray into forests full of beasts. On one occasion his parents allowed him to stay a whole week in the mountain. He slept together with shepherds in their huts in front of which

fires were burning throughout the whole night. He often stayed up late with them around the fire and listened to their stories. Shepherds were competing in various games and songs, especially in the evening, when they would close herds into pens around which great fires were made at night. All that thrilled him and he enjoyed everything. He especially liked to listen to their storytelling with quiet sounds of the shepherd's flute.

During the day shepherds showed him nests of eagles on high cliffs. He liked to observe those proud masters of the sky as they fly high and with dignity, waving only occasionally with their gigantic wings so it looked like they were floating in the air without any effort. Shepherds were telling him that they, when they have young ones in the nest which need to be fed, know to attack other birds, rabbits and little lambs. Rastko himself could see how they hunt their prey in pairs. Shepherds told him that eagles make their nests in inaccessible regions on big and steep cliffs, but also on some very high tree. They took him to a mountain cliff nearby, where near the actual peak, in a small dent there was an eagle's nest made from tiny branches and dry leaves. Every day one of the shepherds would be in charge of following Rastko in his walk through the forest and the nearby clearings. He enjoyed in the forest silence and peace. He was not interested in hunting of rabbits and birds, as other shepherds did that and he would always ask them to release the caught animals. He was more interested in finding out where their dens are, how they bring young ones into the world, what they eat and how they get to food, how they raise and look after their young ones, how and where they build their dens. He liked to study their habits and ways of how they protect themselves from attackers.

It was already the middle of May and the whole forest had grown leaves, and there was plenty of juicy green grass for herds. Apart from the sheepdogs which helped to preserve the herd, with shepherds was also a dog dachshund. That dog caught Rastko's attention because of the low growth and short legs, which enabled him to crawl into holes under ground and in that way cast out animals from their hidden den.

There, on the mountain, shepherds also had two proper hunting dogs which were sniffing something all day long and they were pursuing through the forest. Their barking was heard occasionally, and usually when they would lift a rabbit or some other animal from its lair. They would pursue their prey so far that their barking could no longer be heard at all. Shepherds, with loud shouts, tried to encourage them to continue the pursuit or to bring them back. At night, besides the fire, next to the hut, late into the night he would listen to shepherd's stories and he would observe the clear sky full of stars. He wondered how is God so powerful when he created the stars, and the sky, and the forests, and people and animals, and earth, and the rivers. Since he was here, at the mountain, with shepherds, he learned a lot. His ability to concentrate and observe, for hours, without moving and without disturbing the animal that he is observing – became even bigger and better trained. He especially liked to observe the movement of roe deer and he admired how they are quick and lovely. He saw them nearly every day. Sometimes two or three roe deer with a fawn went out into the nearby clearings, where they grazed young green grass. While they were unaware, Rastko would get close to them, and observe them while being covered in the thicket, without disturbing them by anything. He admired their long jumps with which, without any visible effort, they skip over wide ravines, high hedges and fences. What especially surprised him, was that even the small fawn was able to do all that. Rastko remembered last summer, when he saw a herd of roe deer when they were crossing the deep river in the valley. Then he saw how roe deer were good

swimmers and how they are swimming one behind the other like by a command in a column.

He especially liked to listen to the saying of the main shepherd Radisav, which was also the oldest and the most experienced amongst them and who everyone respected. Last night he told Rastko about how he saved a small fawn from an attack of a big eagle a month earlier. The fawn was lying hidden in a fern. It could not be known why its mother left it alone. Maybe she was uncovered by wolves and pursued her, or maybe she herself decided to distance herself from the fawn in order to bluff the wolves and to get them away from the young one. Rastko liked to listen to Radisav and his stories of saving of the small and powerless animals, such as the young birds, which would often fall out of the nest and would be in danger from snakes, wild cats, and bird predators. He also found interesting the stories about wolves and foxes. Radisav told him that a wolf is a very capable and bloodthirsty animal, but that it is very careful and cunning.

They attacked our herds a few times already last winter and at the beginning of this spring. Now they also have young ones so they need food for them too. If they cannot find and catch some other animal, roe deer, fawn, rabbit, wild goats and similar, then they attack our herds and drop from the mountains into the villages. Then they attack everything that they come across: cattle, calves, dogs. Wolves go to hunt their prey in groups and in an organized manner – Radisav continued to say, warning Rastko that his curiosity should not take him deeper into the forest, because he could run into dangerous and hungry beasts.

Wolves are very dangerous, but also smart animals. Once they uncover their prey, then they pursue it in a group and in an organized manner. In a mutual pursuit of the prey, a herd of wolves splits up. While one group is pursuing the prey, the other group tries to cut or block the way. I observed that last winter when they aimed at a few roe deer. When they come across a herd of sheep, then they do it so that one part of the herd of wolves strives to distance the guard dogs as much as possible from the herd of sheep, and the second part awaits hidden in an ambush and attacks the unprotected herd of sheep. That's how they did great damage to us twice last autumn. In autumn and winter the herd of wolves gathers by howling and that's how they start their attack, in the worst weather, when it is raining, when it is windy and when there is fog. They are especially dangerous when they have a brood of young ones. That is when the wolf and the she-wolf are especially impudent, and they grab a lamb or a sheep from the herd in front of the shepherds.

While living a few days with cattleman on the mountain, Rastko had an opportunity to look for answers and to find out all sorts of things about some occurrences which, as a four year old or five year old child he could not understand. Now, as a twelve year old child, he could understand some legalities and regularities according to which occurrences in nature unfold. His curiosity, patience and persistence have enabled him to explore and study some occurrence which he is interested in. This is exactly what gave him a great advantage over peers which have superficially perceived things. However, his characteristic of a good observer, Rastko has developed even since the earliest days. Now, on a mountain, with guards of the herd he remembered everything that he came across in childhood. Those memories were so vivid to him that he could see pictures of occurrences and events from those days, especially those that related to whether changes

such as storms, floods, big snows. He had a very good and picturesque memory. Here, on the mountain, he often observed not only the sky full of stars, but also the big autumn storms and the warm spring whirlwind.

He especially remembered one experience from early childhood, which was deeply carved into his memory. He was only five years old when his mother invited him to come to the window and to observe and listen to the roar of the spring whirlwind which announced storm and rain. In the sky, hard black clouds piled up, and the whirlwind was roaring through the chimneys and the huge oaks of treetop. Leaved branches of powerful trees were weighing down under the strikes of wind. Mother was sitting next to the window, and put him into her lap and showed him some black and mobile dots in the sky. She told him that they are jackdaws which are announcing storms and bad weather. What drew his attention was the wonderful dancing of those birds in the wind. He could clearly see how they cast off from branches of trees spreading their black wings which the whirlwind would catch and lift into the height easily like a straw or a feather and so it would enable them to float high in the sky without a single swing, using only the ascending drift of the wind.

Even though he was only a five year old child, he even then felt that the birds performed that game with the whirlwind because of their own enjoyment. He only then could not know and understand how birds perform that by using the power of the wind. Now, here, on the mountain, he often observed such scenes and could better understand how a bird uses ascending drift and air whirlwind. He remembered how in his mother's safe arms he like to observe the stunts of birds in the wind. At first sight, it seemed to him that the wind is playing with the birds like a cat with a mouse. Only here, on the mountain, he realized that birds actually, are playing with the whirlwind, and not the whirlwind with them. The birds only at first sight, left to the mood of the whirlwind, allowing that the wind rapidly lifts them and throws them into the height, by which an impression is gotten as if the birds are falling upwards, and then only with a gentle twitch they turn on their back and for a split second they gather their wings and start to tumble with multiple acceleration of the free fall. In their wonderful swift flight downward with gathered wings, contrary to the whirlwind which wants to blow them away towards the east, they manage to sustain themselves, spread wings and make a turn towards the west. Then, like a five year old child, he was scared for the life of fearless fliers, and now, as a twelve year old, he was fascinated by their superiority over the raw power of the whirlwind. That's why he liked to observe that wonderful dance of the fliers of the sky.

Every night, next to the big fires besides the shepherd's hut, Radosav would tell him about the life of a cattleman in a mountain and of what importance it is to have self-sacrificing and bold sheepdogs, irreplaceable guards of the herd.

-You see, here in the mountain every moment something happens, you only need to be a good and careful observer. Our sheepdogs can sense a wolf or some other beast at a great distance. Once they notice the beast, they start to persistently pursue it and they do not give it peace until they expel it far from the herd. But, it also often happened that wolves, when they are very hungry, lure away one of our dogs, because they would not be able to do anything to two of them in a pair, they separate it from the others and attack it while it is lonely. Most often the poor dog could not be saved. It can also often come to a fight of the dogs between themselves. That happens when two herds gather and the

sheepdogs do not know each other enough. Then they fight for predominance, for territory and herds. When two such fighters run into each other and neither one of them does not want to subjugate to the other, then in that case the fight can last until the death of one of the fighters. But then usually the guards of the herd get involved and separate them, so seldom some of our sheepdogs suffer during a fight.

- It is interesting to observe what happens if one of the two dogs which are fighting for predominance senses that it is the weaker one and that it will pass badly. Then it surrenders on time. I often observed even the smallest movement of animals in those tense moments. When the weaker dog surrenders, then the jaw of the winner is located right at the neck of the subdued, which holds its head turned to one side and without protection offers the opponent and his big white dogteeth his unprotected neck which is the most vulnerable place on the whole body of the animal. Because, when it comes to a fight, then every animal strives to protect their neck first. When one of the dogs retreats and surrenders, as a sign of submissiveness it has to offer its neck on which every bite is lethal. And just when you think that the winner will actually do that and inflict the lethal bite and with its big jaw and as white as snow dogteeth momentarily tear apart the neck veins of the subdued, it does not come to that.

-What has happened, what has stopped the winner from doing that, asked Rastko all radiant and happy because the conflict has ended so peacefully and because neither animal will suffer or be injured.

- The superior and the stronger dog will not do that, even though it can be seen on it that it would gladly do it, but it cannot, because something is stopping it from doing that. The winner growls, grumbles and snaps with his jaws in vain, but it never hurts its subdued opponent which has admitted defeat and offered its unprotected neck. Such strange behavior and restraining of the winner lasts only until the defeated dog is in such a 'degrading position'. If the defeated animal showed even the least amount of protest or tried rebellion or escape, it would be attacked again and its life would this time surely be endangered.

- It is as if in a winner there is something that is preventing it to hurt the one that has surrendered and which is weaker. How can that be explained? – Rastko asked again.

- It is hard to give an answer to such a question. Only God knows why that is so, because He has created all this, the whole world, and animals, and plants, and the sky, and the stars and the earth, and the rivers and the mountains, and people. Only He knows why that is so. Maybe the winner was, at the moment of the attack on the subdued opponent, stopped by God himself from inflicting a lethal injury. Because if there was no that, then very quickly many animal species would disappear from the face of the earth. God has created all that with a certain reason – only we still do not understand His ideas, so things look mysterious and unclear to us. This expressing of humility towards the winner in order to save own life, can be seen in other animals too. I have already mentioned wolves, but also in a great number of birds we have a similar occurrence. There it can also be seen that the one which begs and prays for mercy always offers the opponent the most sensitive spot on its body which during fighting becomes the main target of the attack. In wolves and dogs it is the neck, and in some birds it is the back of the head. When a defeated crow, jackdaw or wild goose express their submissiveness towards the winner of the same species – then it bends over a little, stretches its neck and lays its head, i.e. the back of its head to the winning side from which mercy is requested.

- Is there something similar in people? – asked Rastko and continued – Last winter at the palace of my father stayed one Greek monk, a scholar from Thessaloniki. I used to hang out with him a lot, because he knew our language and in such an interesting way he was telling the events which were recorded by their famous poet Homer. He also told me about their well known philosopher Aristotle, which was a teacher of Alexander the Great, which with his unbeatable army conquered all areas from Egypt to India. I myself would like to one day learn the Greek language and to read about those military campaigns and conquests of that unbeatable commander in chief. Homer in his works described the most dramatic events of that time, especially the big wars which happened a long time ago in the past. From the monk's story about those events which Homer describes it can be seen that some warrior which wanted to surrender and begged for his life, he threw away his sword and shield, fell on his knees and lay his head on the ground to the legs of the winner. But, this occurrence in animals does not have much connection with Homer's heroes, because it seems that they did not have such a soft heart and they did not forgive nor have pity and mercy towards the defeated opponents. Homer in his works cites many examples where it can be seen that the one who asked for mercy was, still, unmercifully killed, despite a request to save their life. But, those were Pre-Christian times and Homer lived in the times of polytheism. So the monk told me. Jesus came to save the fallen mankind, even sacrificing his life. Christ's mercy and moral laws give hope that feelings of love and justice will also triumph in man.

- But how much time will pass until the power of love includes everything that lives on earth. We still do not know what God wants to do with us and why He needs us – said Radisav.

- The thing that surprises me in all of this is that it is really magnificent that the winning animal cannot lethally injure the subdued opponent of the same species, but even more startling and more magnificent is that the defeated one can completely rely on that. The dog winner or the wolf winner will never lethally injure the defeated opponent of its species which prays for mercy. Is this also not the most admirable example of knighthood and moral, where one animal entrusts their life to another. But, it is not the same with us people, and Homer and other great poets have introduced countless proof for that. All this helps me to at least a little better understand that often misunderstood message from the Bible, according to which even I myself often had strong resistance. *'When someone hits you on one cheek...'** The winning dog has taught me that actually, the other cheek is not shoved to the opponent so that he could hit us once more, but we do that so that he could not do that anymore.

* Jesus's words: *To the one who hits you on a cheek, also turn the other cheek*- are often misinterpreted. This attitude is neither cowardly nor passive: it is about a true internal strength. Refusing to respond to violence with violence can *alter the behavior of the opponent*, to end the spreading of roughness. Gospel illustrates that Jesus's fight without violence.

The human kind has a great ability to learn – Rastko said, and continued. We all know that the human individual is born as the most helpless of all other beings on earth, but thanks to their spiritual gifts has great possibilities to learn and multiply spiritual gifts. It in a short time surpasses, according to its development, its capabilities and its accomplishments, all other living beings. That's why we need to hope that man will again be able to gain control over its impulses, which will, if they could not be restrained, inevitably lead into sins and the disappearance of the human kind. The human conscience and moral principles given by God takeover the role of breaks which animals have, and which God gave them. He gave them internal breaks, and he gave people a conscience and moral principles. All those that commit injustices to others should feel a guilty conscience. Murderers and criminals should need to feel horrific fear from the conscience, from responsibility in front of themselves because of their unreasonable acts and that constantly torments them and makes them upset and nervous. In Homer's works described are such individuals which have committed serious crimes and lived and died filled with fear and dilemmas which were tearing them apart. They could not hide anywhere from their upset conscience.

While looking after herds on mountain pastures young prince Rastko mostly hung out with the main commander of the guards of the herd Radisav, because he liked to listen to his simple stories from the history of our people and spreading of Christianity in us. In the evening besides the camp fires, Radisav would talk about the bright examples of the Christian faith and patriotism in first Orthodox monks, ascetics and saints. He also talked about how monasticism and asceticism are the truest forms of faith and love in God and that the ideas of monasticism and asceticism in us, were coming from the East.

- I was lucky that I learned to read early and in hagiographies and other writings and legends I found a lot about the life and ventures of the first ascetics and monks such as St. Joakim Osogovski, St. Jovan Bigorski, St. Gavriilo Lesnovski, St. Jovan Vladimir etc. said Radisav and continued. – In hagiographies which are written about them, it is talked about how they with their life and work contributed to the spreading and strengthening of the Christian faith in our people. Those first ascetics, hermits and monks were distancing themselves from the world, but the world was also following them. Their honest Christian love towards everything that God created and the love of our whole people towards them have led to the emergence of our first monasteries which like towers of Orthodoxy had an effect on the spreading of Christian faith and science in us.

- Tonight could you please tell me about the life of St. Joakim Osogovski, and so on. I very much like to listen when you talk about it, said the young prince.

Radisav was glad that he can transfer his sciences to such a clever and curious boy, the youngest son and the favorite son of the Great prince of Serbia, which has an unappeasable thirst for knowledge, and he began. – The biggest joy that I can experience is a prayer to God and a discussion about the life of ours and others ascetics and saints, said Radisav and continued. – Saint Joakim Osogovski made amends in the XI century in Osogovo Mountains. Tradition has stayed in people that he came somewhere from the west late at night. First he came to one village under the Osogovo Mountains in which a little church was located. The saint entered the church and prayed, and then went out and sat on the stone block in front, waiting for someone to come. And really, soon some nobleman of that village came which asked the saint for a blessing and started a conversation. Saint Joakim told him that how he heard that in the Osogovo Mountains

there are lovely places for ascetics and monks, and that he is searching for such a place. That man sent him to a gorge in the Osogovo mountains through which a rapid little mountain river rich in fish goes by.

- Above the river itself in steep cliffs a cave is located which is suitable for an ascetic life – he told him – Saint Joakim immediately tomorrow went and found that cave and he took up residence there. Some hunters found him there which lived from hunting and in that way supported their families. Since the saint blessed them, luck began to follow them and they started to come to him more often. He lived there for a few years faced with frosts and storms and torturing himself with starvation. It happened some time before winter when they once came to visit him and bring him some food. When they entered the cave they found him dead. The hunters mourned their protector and saint and they buried him with respect. After that they often came to his grave and brought incense and candles. They vowed to keep the secret about the place where they buried their benefactor, and when they died, nobody knew about his grave, but his name was still known and respected in people. It happened many years later that some man by the name of Teodor decided to become a monk submit to the ascetic and hermit life, having in front of his eyes the example of St. Joakim. While he in his soul cherished the thought of his asceticism, St. Joakim talked to him in his dream and sent him to the place where he practiced asceticism. That is where Teodor, as monk Teofan, built a monastery just beside the little river nearby the cave where many years earlier St. Joakim lived. Teofan also became the first prior of that monastery when again in his dream he talked to a saint and uncovered to him the secret of his grave. That is when Teofan transferred holy relics into the monastery, which did wonders of healing.

- For a long time I wanted to ask you how come only you, of all the guards of the herd, have so much knowledge and know how to read and talk so nicely, Rastko asked curiously?

It is as if Radisav was just expecting such a question from the young prince, because it enables him to tell more about himself, and he couldn't wait to continue: - It can only be God's will that you too as a twelve year old boy hear for the first time this story about the life of St. Joakim Osogovski just like I heard it the first time when I was the same age as you are now. I too was the youngest child of eight children of my parents. Only my parents have died early and my older brothers and sisters often made me, in the rain and in the cold, both hungry and barefoot, to safeguard the herds just like I safeguard them now. I have often thought about running away from home and I have done that a few times, but after a few days I would return, because they would find me wherever I was hiding or wherever I went. It would especially be hard for me in the winter when I could not go anywhere because of big snow and a strong winter. Big frosts, when everything would crack from the cold, lasted for a few days, and even weeks in a row. It was always easier for me in summer, because I was safeguarding herds here on the mountain with other shepherds. When I would run out of food in my bag, it was usually dry bread with a little piece of goat cheese, the other shepherds would always give me some of their food so I was never hungry. Besides that, in groves and in edges of pastures there was always tasty wild fruit, pears and apples, during spring and summer and a lot of tasty mushrooms. Near the end of summer and at the beginning of autumn we always had enough of that, we even had plenty of wild grapes which were as sweet as honey. And where there are various grasses and fruits there are always bees. That is how

nearly every year we would find in dents of big trees pears or walnuts and big swarm of bees and rich parts of comb full of honey. Then we would have real feasts. When big winters would begin big snow would fall we would all climb down the mountain and return home with our herds. And so that would repeat every year, in spring we would all go to our herds on the mountain, and in the winter we would return to our villages. It happened one winter that through the village some old man was passing in a lacerated suit and nearly barefoot, with a stick in his hand and a worn-out bag on his back. According to everything he looked like a beggar and actually richer villagers would give him a piece of bread and cheese, or even a piece of dried meat. But he would always take only bread and say that he is fasting. He was so skinny that it looked as if he only has some grass to eat, if he found it, in order to satisfy his hunger. But he did not need more. Older villagers used to say that it is some ascetic which lives in the nearby mountains in a small cave located in an inaccessible gorge above the little river itself, where only mountain goats could live. As much as that man looked poor and miserable I wished to come with him. I wanted to be free like him, even if colds and hunger tormented me. I have thought about that for a long time and decided to ask him to join him when he appears the next time. I valued his freedom that he had, for which I have also longed for.

Over the summer and in the autumn the old man did not appear and I had lost hope that I would see him again. I was concerned that something bad happened to him or that he had gone to some other place. The Indian summer was still lasting and we were with our herds still here on the mountain and there was plenty of food for everyone. Both for cattle and people. We the guards of the herd ran across the surrounding dimes and groves to collect the last fallen ripe fruits of wild pears, walnuts and apples which the night storm shook from the tree. We used nearly every day to do that and filled our bags which we will carry home on donkeys and horses when we leave the mountain before the beginning of winter and return with the herds to our villages. From such collected ripe fruit and medicinal herbs, at home we made jam, vinegar, teas and other healing drinks. While collecting those ripe fruits of ripe wild fruit on the warm Indian summer one day I noticed some old man collecting fruits under a big old walnut. Immediately in him I recognized that same old man which I saw a few times earlier as he was passing through our village. He notice me too and told me that he comes here every year at this time, because he knows that this place has the best growth and the best quality of both medicinal herbs and wild fruits of pears, apples and walnuts, as well as wild grapes. He was still skinny, poorly dressed and barefoot, but he got that healthier color of face, which is typical for a man which often stays in the open doing some job. He told me that he since the beginning of winter visits all regions in the surroundings and that's why he knows where is the best quality of medicinal herbs and wild fruit. Therefore, the old man was completely the same, only somehow happier and healthier. At least that's how it seemed to me. Only his grey hair was thinner and grew falling on his shoulders. Long grey beard grew all over his face. He sat on one stone and started to explain to me where there are the best ripe pears as sweet as honey, and where there are apples and walnuts, where there is ripe grapes, and where there are edible mushrooms. I thought to my self that I should not miss the opportunity to ask him whether I can come with him so that I also devote myself to ascetic life and monasticism. The old man sat for some more time

and as if he was thinking about what I had asked him. I was standing beside him and waiting for him to say at least something.

-You know what, he said and continued, ascetic and monastic life is not for you. You are still too young. You are too young for ascetic and monastic temptations. You still don't know yourself enough, so that's why you want to go over the limits of your possibilities. Monastic and ascetic life is not for everyone, because not everyone is ready to be subjected to such challenges and unavoidable suffering. Our life is hard and full of temptations and you are too young to succeed in that. Wait a few more years in order to better meet yourself, your stronger and weaker sides. Those that are not predetermined and blessed for a ascetic and monastic life, will only suffer a lot and at the end they will give up on the started road.

When I heard the old man's words I nearly cried. I was completely speechless from disappointment and the old man stood up and hugged me. Only then he started to cry and I started to sob loudly. He released his hands and started to look for something in the pocket of his lacerated robe which was wrapped around the body and tied with some twine. He took out some two sheets from parchment on which with black color in regular lines were written some curved lines or pattern. Then he told me: - Do not cry and do not be sad. I will teach you how to read. I could also teach you how to write but we don't have with what. In the beginning it is enough for you to know how to read and later you yourself will easily learn to write if you want to. You see, in these sheets are written letters from which words are compiled. These words here on these sheets tell us the prayer to the Most Holy Mother of God. The one who learns the letters and learns to read the prayer to the Most Holy Mother of God has a God's gift and God's blessing. We will start immediately today- he said, and every day we will learn a few letters until we learn all of them for this month that you will still be staying here on the mountain with your herds. That is how it was, and the old man came every day into the surrounding thickets and groves nearby our pastures. The weather was nice and warm and the scent of ripe fruit and ripe and medicinal herbs was felt everywhere. He would teach me and show me letters, and I helped him to fill his bag with tasty fruits. And like that every day in a row and for more than thirty days until I learned all the letters and could read the prayer. It is impossible to find words to describe that happiness and that joy when you become aware that you learned all the letters and that you can read what is written on the parchment. You already know that because your parents the great Serbian prince Nemanja and princess Ana on time found for you the best teachers which taught you not only how to read, but also to write and many other things from the history of our people and other people. To know to read and write, that is a gift from God and not everyone can do that, because it is such a great invention that it surpasses the human mind and can only be given by God. That's why it is always said that a book is a gift from God. The one who gets that gift, he can travel into the past hundreds of years backwards and read about the events and significant people, emperors and commanders in chief of that time. He can travel for hundreds of days and nights from the place where he lives and find out about events in the near or the distant past in those distant places. The one that has that gift can read the predictions of great prophets and to travel into the near or distant future, to travel a few or hundreds of centuries into the future and read about the events which will just happen in the distant future.

-That was the last autumn when I for the last time saw the old man which at that time taught me to read which is the biggest wealth that I have. None of the other guards of the herd cannot feel how important that is, because none of them do not know how to read, nor do they have any interest for that. A few times I even asked them and told them that I will show them everything, but they did not show any interest except for safeguarding and cultivating of the herd, which they really do well. It is as if God has given them only a gift for safeguarding of a herd, but not a gift for reading and learning from books. But that's why they have a big number of gifts for learning from nature and everyday life. That's how we are created by God, someone has a gift for this, someone for that. Someone can have multiple gifts, and someone only one or does not have any at all. But, nobody should be angry, says St. Paul, because the one who has gotten more gifts, will spill more sweat, because he has a greater responsibility to multiply the obtained gifts. So if someone has obtained four gifts it is his duty to put those gifts to use of others and to multiply the same number of new gifts and to build at him. And to not be proud or disdainful because of that. Because that is only an act of God, and not the merit of that man. That is how God acts through people. Everything that great artists have created, sculptors and others is actually an act of God, God acts through them giving them those gifts through the Holy Spirit. And nobody should be angry, says Paul the Apostle: because the one who obtained smaller gifts will spill less sweat and will have less responsibility. Every man's work should be harmonized with his spiritual gifts. People are actually different because some have a gift of prophecy, second ones have a gift for learning, third ones have a gift for curing or healing, fourth ones have a gift for learning of foreign languages, fifth ones have a gift for miraculous powers, sixth ones have a gift for merciful acts, seventh ones have a gift for wisdom and acquiring knowledge etc. Even now I keep with me those two sheets of parchment on which a prayer of the Most Holy Mother of God is written and every evening before I go to sleep I pray to God and I read the written prayer to the Most Holy Mother of God. And every day, and every time when I pray to God and read this prayer, I remember the holy old man which taught me to read, hoping that I would maybe one day run into him somewhere on the road. But many years have already passed and I never saw him again nor did anyone from our village, because he did not pass there anymore. I often wondered what happened to him. And whether he is still alive or has he finished his life like St. Joakim Osgovski abandoned and forgotten by everyone, but certainly not by God and the Most Holy Mother of God. That's why I pray every day to God and the Mother of God that the old man contacts me at least in dreams. I would like to know what happened to him and whether he is still alive. Hope will never leave me that I will again run into him and talk to him, at least in dreams. He taught me to read and therefore he gave me another set of eyes to see better and another set of ears to hear better. Because of that he is a holy old man for me, a holy man. He was so unselfish. He never even told me his name, but he was satisfied that I call him only *old man*. His life completely reminds me of the life of St. Joakim Osgovski, and that's why I call him holy old man. I did not fulfill my today's wish to leave home and to become a novice and I have already gotten used to the job which I am doing now and which I have been doing for so long. And I am happy that I listened to the old man to not leave home, just like I was lucky to meet such a man, a holy man, which taught me to read and transferred to me much of his knowledge and scholarship. So, this was my story about what you asked me how I learned to read and

where I got this knowledge from about which I told you. And just like it was mysterious to you how come only I of all the guards of the herd know how to read and who taught me that, it seems that to me also until the end of life it will be mysterious how my holy old man learned to read and write and who taught him that. I am sorry that I did not ask him about that, but once he himself mentioned that for a long period of time he stayed in some monastery. The monastery burnt to the ground in a sudden fire and the monasticism had to split up, and he chose to live as a hermit and novice.

Of three sons of the Great Serbian Prince, two older ones, especially Stefan, extended their father's work in managing the state, and the youngest Rastko by God's will was determined to achieve and perpetuate his father's religious orientation. Historians say that Nemanja's Orthodoxy gained in his third son a genius protagonist, which managed to make Orthodoxy not only a state religion in Serbia, but that it becomes a carrier of national culture, and a true spiritual property and understanding of the Serbian people. Rastko was born in late years of his parents. A tradition is left about how much Nemanja and Ana wanted and waited for the birth of another child. Older sons, Vukan and Stefan, were already grown up and began to help their father in affairs of managing the state when Rastko was born. Left are the records of many chroniclers of that time about how big the parents' joy was when their wish came true by the birth of the third son.

-His parents, having supernatural, immeasurable love towards him, were always looking at him with an insatiable soul, and a nobleman told them that he will be the most accomplished amongst his brothers. Theodosius has left us clear data that the child was beautiful, a happy soul and so reasonable that everyone was saying *This will be some new and great sign.*

The Great prince himself, while watching how quickly the child is growing up both by body and mind, often told Ana about that.

God has given us this son to continue my work, to strengthen and expand our country. Rastko will be more capable to hold a sword, dispel the enemy and to safeguard his country, than his older brothers. He is calmer and more reasonable and in difficult situations he makes better decisions than Vukan and Stefan.

Ana often warned her husband to not express and to not show openly so much of his love towards the youngest son.

-That could induce envy of older brothers towards him, especially if you openly informed them that you are preparing the throne of the Serbian ruler for the youngest, and not for the older sons. See how much Rastko is righteous and how much he loves his older brothers that he would not even think about that, let alone do it. Even though he is now only fourteen years old, he is so reasonable that he himself knows, already, that the throne of the Great prince, after you, belongs to our oldest son Vukan.

- I don't think that it will be exactly like that. I know that it is not easy, because I myself have suffered a lot as the youngest of brothers fighting for the throne of the Great prince. Concerning that order of birth, Rastko is in a similar situation that I was in, but he will not fight for the throne of the Prince with his brothers like I had to do it. He is so good by both body and soul, and by reason superior over his peers that everyone will wish: his brothers, the whole people and the clergy – him for the ruler. God has determined him to be that. Don't you see that, when Vukan and Stefan were his age, that they were behaving

like all other children and they did not stand out by anything from the other peers, sons of our gentry and military commanders. And look at Rastko, he not only physically surpasses his peers and beats them in wrestling and running, not only is he the best in equitation and throwing of a spear and arrow, but he also spiritually surpasses them in everything. Just his spiritual strength will take preponderance in people and everyone will demand that exactly he be the Great prince and the leader of his people. And which is even more important, because of his mentioned characteristics he will be respected and loved by both the whole people and his older brothers. Nobody else will have so much strength to resist the Roman Pope and his aggressive bishops not only with a sword and with his mind, but also with his fierce Orthodox faith. Because of all that, I not only love Rastko the most, but I also see him as my successor.

Many learned and wise people from the West and the East would come at that time to the palace of the Serbian ruler. Most of them stay for a few days, and some stayed for a few weeks. Most often they were ones chosen by God from the East, Russian and Greek monks. Since he was a small child Rastko listened to their stories about history and the Orthodox faith. The parents early on noticed his thirst for knowledge and they did not forbid the boy from socializing all day long with monks when they come to the palace of the Great prince. All of them were bringing books, and especially those of religious and spiritual content. Rastko was especially attracted to with what fierceness and picturesque the clergy talked about the events from the Bible, about the lives of famous saints and ascetics. All that early in him developed feelings of loyalty and respect towards God and prayer.

That was said by all those that saw him and observed him while he was praying to God in the palace chapel or in the nearby church.

-He is so enthusiastic in prayer that he does not notice anything else. It is as if he is directly talking to God. There are only a small number of those which can get close to God so much with prayer. In Rastko's still childish body there is a spiritual power stronger than the spiritual power of an adult man.

Rastko himself noticed that he is different from the other children and that he spiritually surpasses them, but he did not want to show that so that he would not stand out from the others. He did not like to long for standing out, for fame and competition and he stayed away from that as much as he could. The Princess Ana spent a lot of time with the youngest son and better met his spiritual gifts and his soul than the Great prince. Often she herself was left speechless by the power of his reasoning and loyalty to the spiritual life, about which she also wanted to talk with the Great prince, his father.

- I know what you want our youngest son Rastko to be, and I see that you are already preparing him for that. But it took me a long time to collect both bravery and strength to also tell you this: a long time ago I have noticed that Rastko's path is not going as you want. He has already completely surrendered to the spiritual life and prayers. He has already visited all the monasteries and churches in our country. Everyone has noticed, not just the clergymans and the monks, but ordinary people too, that Rastko is different from all of us. You were once absent for fifteen days while you were touring. It was four years ago. Rastko was then only ten years old. He suddenly disappeared at that time. We all hurried to search for him. Somehow nearby a hieromonk of the nearby church appeared and said that he saw Rastko kneeling in front of an icon and praying to God. That hieromonk said that he never saw anything more touching, but nor more

beautiful in his life: the child was praying like a grown man, but with greater honesty and devotion to God and prayer. This conversation with the princess spurred the Prince to think about Rastko, not only as a military commander and a statesman, but also as a unifier of Serbs through Orthodoxy. That vision flashed to him only for a moment. Quickly prevailed pictures of Rastko as a military commander and a statesman, which is what he wanted his youngest son to be from the very moment of his birth.

ESCAPE **(The Prince who did not want to be it)**

Mother new the son better than the father. Even in his early childhood she noticed his spiritual power. She was confused by his constant questions about everything, and usually the ones to which she herself did not know the answers. He was only five years old when he asked her: Why is the sky blue? Why does the wind blow? How do fish breathe? How can birds fly so high? Why and how does the rainbow in the sky emerge? Who created the whole world and forests, rivers, seas, plants, animals, people?

Since early on Rastko has showed that he is extremely gifted and that he has an unquenchable thirst for knowledge. He was good-natured, pious and withdrawn. As the youngest son of the Great prince he was assigned to rule Zachlunia which his uncle Miroslav ruled earlier. However, the young prince was not interested much in neither state jobs, nor knight games and parties. Even before his fifteenth year, he began to think how to go to some monastery and to completely devote himself to prayer and serving God. Learned people and monks from the East and from the West used to come to the Nemanjic palace. Rastko rapidly learned about the life in a monastery, and he was especially interested in the ascetic life of monks in Mount Athos on Halkidiki in Greece. From conversation with Greek and Russian monks which came to the Nemanjic palace to collect gifts for building of a monastery on Athos – Rastko found out what it is like to live there and that it was exactly like he wanted to live his life. About the life of monks in Mount Athos he also read in old books. During one such visit to the Russian monk, a

Mount Athos resident from Athos, he decided to go there with him and to forever leave his parents' home, and devote his whole life to prayer, asceticism and serving God.

-That is all I think about, most holy father – Rastko was saying to the monk from Mount Athos. –I feel that God has answered my prayers and sent someone to help me. I cannot be what my dear father wants me to be. I was not born for what he wants me to be. You are my only hope. Help me and take me with you to Mount Athos to put on the monastic cassock.

-It is impossible to do that now. Your father loves you very much. He would punish all of us because of that. And you are too young for monastic temptations. The monastic path and the monastic life are not for everyone, and not everyone is ready to be subjected to such challenges and unavoidable sufferings. The monastic life is both hard and full of temptations, and you are not used to that, nor are you ready for that. Those that are predetermined for monks and blessed, will only suffer a lot and in the end they will give up from the started path. In addition to that, you are still so young and your convictions are still not solid, they can easily change, like it is the case with most young people. Wait a few more years, to better get to know yourself. Our monasticism orders big renunciations. But there are also other problems. The Great prince always helped us when we came and asked for it. How could we make such a breaking of faith to the one who has done us and is always doing the biggest benefaction amongst all rulers, to steal his palace, to take away his dearest and youngest child, his favorite son, who he is preparing for a ruler, and not for a monk. That would not be a huge blow only for your mother and your father, but also for whole of Serbia.

-Most honorable father, didn't you yourself tell me that God has intended for each of us a certain mission in this world which needs to be fulfilled. I feel, and my heart wants it, that God has predetermined me for a monastic life. That is how I can best serve Him. My older brothers were born for rulers, and I will, to Serbia, to my people, and to my parents and brothers, maybe help more as a monk than as a heir to the throne or a ruler. If I stay in the palace, my life will be aimless and worthless. These words scared the Mount Athos resident that the young prince could do something that would even more sadden his parents, but did not show it, but still stood behind what he said.

Seeing that the Mount Athos resident is not giving in and that he will not fulfill his request, in desperation the young Nemanjic fell to his knees in front of the icon of the Mother of God and began to cry.

-Has God left me? Merciful God, do not leave me. I just want to serve You and pray to you my whole life. Mother of God, don't you hear my cries and requests? Most Holy Mother of God, help me.

The Mount Athos resident observed the drama of the young guy which, while kneeling, was crying in front of the icon of the Holy Mother of God to grant his request. Shook by that scene, and such a big desire of the young guy to become a monk, he decided to help him. Knowing that his parents will not allow him that, the young guy decided to use a little trick. He asked his parents to let him go hunting with an entourage, which they often did earlier, so that they would not have doubts and prevent him in execution of his intention. Previously he agreed with the monk how to during hunting during the night unnoticeably leave the group and go to Mount Athos. Nobody noticed his disappearance until it was dawn. When the news arrived to the palace that Rastko disappeared during the night, the desperate parents immediately organized a search,

praying to God to save their favorite son from any danger. They thought that someone, probably robbers, maybe committed a kidnapping of the young prince in order to put the Great prince and the Princess in trouble and ask for a big ransom. Everyone knew and it was heard far away, how gifted the young prince is, and how much his parents love him, and that they would give everything they have so that nothing bad happens to him. The search did not bring any results, and the worried parents remembered that he could have gone with that monk Russian-resident of Mount Athos because he was missing too. Great sorrow and panic ruled the palace. The Great prince immediately sent a governor with an armed entourage to Mount Athos to find and return his son to him. The governor hurried as fast as he could and through Thessaloniki arrived to Athos. He immediately started to ask the monks of Mount Athos about the young prince and found out that he is located in the Monastery of Saint Panteleimon. When the governor found Rastko in the monastery, he told him that his father Nemanja ordered to bring him back ordinarily or by force, even tied up. Seeing that everything has become very serious, and that his fierce wish to be devoted to God might not be fulfilled, Rastko tried to calm down the governor and his entourage. He convinced him that he is obeying his order and asked him that he and his entourage stay overnight at the monastery, so that they can, together, the next day, go rested back to Serbia.

In the evening Rastko asked the prior to prepare a good dinner for the governor and his entourage. After dinner, they altogether went to a vigil. Religious service lasted for long, and the governor and his entourage, tired from the long trip and a little drunk from the wine, fell asleep at the church. When he noticed that, Rastko sneaked out with a clergyman and went to a high monastery tower, where the clergyman tonsured him and put a monastic cassock on him. After receiving the tonsure, he also got a monastic name Sava. At some time of the night, after the religious service at church had finished, the governor and the entourage woke up and noticed that Rastko is gone. They immediately started to search making big noise, beating monks and requesting of them to tell them where the young prince is. When Sava heard the noise and the howling, he appeared at the monastery tower and shouted at the governor and his entourage to calm down, because he is there and tomorrow they will see each other. The Serbs calmed down and set guards around the tower. When it was dawn, Sava called the governor and his entourage and showed himself to them on the tower in the monastic cassock. After seeing what happened, Serbs started to cry and lament, mostly because of the fear how they will appear in front of the Great prince with an unfinished task. Sava comforted them with words that it is God's will and asked them to peacefully return home. He dropped his secular suit from the tower to them and his cut hair for them to take it to his parents and therefore convince them that he already became a clergyman and monk Sava. He also gave them a prepared letter for his father and mother and said to them:

“Take that to my parents and tell them that my new name is Sava. With this act of becoming a monk I am born again and that's why I also got a new name.”

When the pursuit returned to Serbia and brought news that Rastko has become a monk, the parents did not get out of the palace for days. They were grieving for him and constantly asked themselves the question: Why did he do it?

-Maybe God decided that the one that I have helped the most causes me the most pain.

Those monks from Mount Athos were frequent guests at our palace and they were always well welcomed and they were sent off with rich gifts. How could they cause me such pain, to take from me what is dearest, my favorite son and the youngest son whom I was preparing for the crown of the Serbian ruler? But, my youngest and dearest son has also acted worse than the debauched son from the Biblical story, because that one at least repented and in the end returned to his father and my son does not have that intention-said to himself the inconsolable Prince.

Since he was unable to accept what happened to him and everything that befallen him, the Serbian Prince increasingly fell into a bad mood and anger. He no longer cared about what he said or to whom he is saying it. Nobody in the palace, not only servants, but nor the members of family, except the Princess Ana and his brother Stracimir, were not allowed to appear in front of him. As soon as they saw him, the servants ran into the closest corner. They knew how big the pain in Nemanja's soul is for his youngest son. They would often see him talking to himself. In those moments desperation would come over him and he would start to shout at anyone that he saw, blaming them for anything. However, he most often thought about his runaway son, shouting at even just the mentioning of his name. He was shouting at him as if he is there, in front of him, and that, like a little child, he is amenably listening to his lecturing and reproach. Because of grief for the favorite son, one day he, it seemed, had a little to drink. That was the first and the last time in his life. That whole day he was leading a loud monologue about how by this act of the youngest son everything that was accomplished was again brought into question.

-Look what he did. He ruined everything. He does not want to be a prince. It has never and nowhere happened that someone does not want to be a prince...How will I go to negotiations with Venetians, Germanics, Hungarians, Byzantines? Their rulers will pretend to understand my sorrow, but they will laugh behind my back and endeavor to, from my misery, get out as much benefit as possible – he was saying to himself loudly. And everything could have been different and as it should be. He could have married some princess, from some of the neighboring states. They were expecting such a move of our palace. We have sons, other ruling families envy us, because they all have daughters, princesses. Everyone could not wait to marry off their daughters into the ruling family of Serbia. That's how we could have strengthened our palace. I have already figured how to negotiate that, and now everything is ruined. He could have married a Russian princess...no, no...I will not have anything to do with Russians anymore...They did all this. What vileness...And they always kept saying...we are brothers, Slavs...Serbs and Russians love each other the most...And look what our Russian brothers have done to us now...Knife in the back...They took our youngest and the most capable son...Russian brothers are just looking for a way to get to the warm south seas, but via us Serbs...And they always kept saying, we are brothers...we will defend you if someone attacks you...I don't want their defense...as long as they leave us alone...Moscow...Third Rome...What brothers, we are brothers to Russians only until they reach the warm south seas. That is important to them. No, we don't want a Russian princess...we don't need a third Rome. It is better to marry some princess from Tsargrad. That is the Second Rome. That is where Orthodoxy arose. Tsargrad is the Second Rome, and not the third...What Kiev...what Moscow. This Second Rome both better and more powerful now even than

the First Rome. Look at what cards the Russians are playing...Moscow, the third Rome...They are not any kind of brothers when they could do this to me...They sent a monk to rob my palace. And he did rob it, he took the youngest and the dearest son. What vileness...they are worse than Romans...they do everything behind your back like Romans, they are worse than Romans, even the Romans would not do and hurt a father in this way... No, no, not at all a Russian princess. Look what the Russian brothers can do, our great brother. And they keep telling us – you shouldn't be afraid of anyone while we the Russians exist. It is enough, they say, that we threaten them with a small finger and they will give up from the thought to cause you some evil, or injustice to us Serbs. Their emperor says-his small finger is enough if someone attacks us! No, no, nobody is allowed to touch the Serbs while we Russians exist, and we are eternal! When he says: No, no, nobody is allowed to touch the Serbs, everyone knows what that means. And our enemies quickly realize what they need to do. They bow to us and get out of our way wherever we go and they suddenly start to say: We like you Serbs...You cannot trust anyone today, nor those Russians of ours, nor those that suddenly started to like us. They only look at their interest. See what they have done to us. No, not the Russian princess, not at all. We don't want anything to do with them anymore. Not at all, it is enough. Even a Bulgarian princess is better than the Russian one. At least the Bulgarians openly tell us that they do not like us. So what, if they don't like us, we should not resent them, they are not Slavs. That is some stray Avaric tribe or some other tribe which found itself in the Slavic sea. As if they fell from the sky...What else is left for them but to receive Christian Orthodoxy, when they are surrounded by Orthodox peoples from all sides. And not only that, not only have they become Orthodox Christians, but overnight they also became the biggest Slavs, my brother. See what Bulgarians are...No, no, we don't want a Bulgarian princess neither. It can go like this and like that, my brother, see that's what Bulgarians are like...as long as they survive and get something by cheating. They are something similar to Hungarians. The invasion of the Huns has subjugated Europe and under the leadership of the cruel Attila, God's Whip, as they called him, came there, to the banks of the Dunav, and stopped there for some time. Later, when the main part of the Hunnic military withdrew to Asia, one small part or one of their tribes stayed in the Pannonian Basin, there around Dunav, and today's Hungarians originate from them. Even today it is talked about their great and cruel military commander Attila which has brought his warriors from distant Asian steppes. He was the youngest son of some wild and bloodthirsty tribal chief which had tens of women and children. Even when he was small Attila put up with huge torture and he was tortured with hunger, and thirst, and cold, in order to be prepared to later become as durable and as cruel of a warrior as possible. He could, in the biggest run, while riding his horse, skillfully shoot with an arc or an arrow and in a moment he could hang to his horse's neck, enveloping it with his legs with his head downwards so that his hands would be free for carrying and use of the arc and arrow. That is how he sow panic and horror in opponents' rows that they were scared of him more than the devil. While he was growing up, he acquired the characteristic of slyness of a fox and he quickly got rid of his older brothers by killing them all in just one night. It is said that he carried that out by luring them to a mutual dinner by which he ostensibly wanted to celebrate the overtaking of an administration in some newly conquered area far in the East behind Caucasus which was assigned to him as the youngest prince, as a gift to administer it. That is how he overtook power over the whole

Hunnic Empire and went into new conquests in the West. How awful of a warrior and military commander was the cruel Hunnic emperor Attila also says the song:

- Black and dark like a Mozilla is the chilling Hunnic emperor Attila. God's whip, fierce force, that is the Hunnic emperor Attila.

- Therefore, Hungarians had a similar destiny such as the Bulgarians. They too i.e. Hungarians, came to these areas at the time of the Hunnic invasion and their only tribe is left around Dunav, in the Pannonian Basin, and received Catholicism. Now they are bigger Catholics than the Pope...so what, they should not be resented...they could not resist that Catholic force from the West...Hungarians therefore did not have any other choice...they had to accept Catholicism. The Germanic crowd is in the West, and the Pope is in the West. They are great powers, and Hungarians did not have any option but to receive Catholicism, and now they are bigger Catholics than the Pope himself. But at least they honestly say: we were that, and now we are this...now we are bigger Catholics than the Pope... And, Bulgarians, no, they never want to admit that they were Avars, and they get offended...We were always, they say, Slavs, always Christians, my brother...Don't mention Russians, let them be the greatest, the strongest, the oldest, but with them nothing anymore...done. Better a Bulgarian princess than a Russian one. They are a small country just like we are, but who cares, the kingdom is in question...We will become related by marriage for the first time with some royal descent...royal dynasty...kingdom the size of a yard, but who cares, it is a kingdom, a kingdom is a kingdom, it is a royal dynasty, it is not a small thing...Our ruling family has a chance for the first time to become related by marriage with some foreign ruling descent, ruling family...Well, if Bulgaria is small, Byzantium is not, but it is the biggest empire in the world and the biggest power...why not, exactly the Byzantium princess...Byzantium emperor has a lot of daughters...he can settle all European palaces and something will still be left for us Serbs...Nothing with Russians and Bulgarians, only Byzantium. It is the biggest and the strongest, and it is the center of Orthodoxy...it has originated there and stayed...from them we have learned everything like the others...the Russians and the Bulgarians also learned from them. Tsargrad is the center of the world. Tsargrad is Tsargrad...the centre of Orthodoxy... That's why it is called Tsargrad...Tsargrad is the richest in the world. The biggest palaces all in gold are there...and the biggest holy temples...The biggest Orthodox holy object of churches our Holy Sofia is also there. To marry a Byzantine princess, absolutely...To become related by marriage to the most powerful imperial family, with the most powerful dynasty in the world which rules both the continents and the seas. What Russians, what Bulgarians...But, if he doesn't want a Byzantine princess, let it be the Germanic princess, or from the Republic of Venice, or from Rome, who cares...He can choose, let him choose! Every one of them cannot wait to marry him. It is the best to be related by marriage to a strong and big enemy such as the Republic of Venice...who cares that they are Catholic...they are close to the Pope curia...and that can only be of use to us...they are always our big opponents...but Catholics...those wise and vile Romans...those Venetians...only their princess...to be related by marriage with them...then we do not have dangers from the West...anyway they want to enslave us and to impose their authority and Catholicism...but when we become related by marriage and become friend, then they will not, we will be friends, then we are spared from everything...they will leave us alone...they would not attack their friends even though they are Romans...they are not like the faith breaking Russians,

why do we need Russians...why do we need Bulgarians or Greeks...To get related by marriage to Romans...but always to be awake, on guard...with them you can never know when they will stab a knife in your back...Romans and it is done, just constantly be on guard...just marry a princess from the Romans, but always be awake...nobody else and no one else...marry him to a princess from the Romans, when I tell you, just be wise and on guard...so that we are a little cunning and wise...just like the Romans...But no, it's not worth it...we can't and we don't know it...its not in our blood...to be cunning, vile and wise...No, no, it does not go! It's not for us!...Is possible that Russians have done that to us...and what if it was a Bulgarian or a Byzantine spy...or even worse, a spy from the Republic of Venice...that would not even make me that angry...it is expected from the Romans, they are like that, those vile and cunning Romans...but what if it is the Russians...what a breaking of faith! Russian brothers to do this to us...what a trick, they sent a monk to do such betrayal and such breaking of faith...like Serbs will not come up with that...they are blinded by love towards the Russia...Do not mention Russians and Serbs to me anymore! Enough of that, we Serbs and Russians, we Serbs and Russians...big brothers...even more than brothers!...And look at what Russians did to us! They sent their spy to steal our palace, to take our most capable child from us, the biggest value in the state. That is a state conspiracy. That is also an attack on our state. State interests are in question. And where were our spies, what were they doing, they only eat and drink, lazybones, with them they could take the roof over our head, the whole palace, without them noticing it...how can they notice it when our guards are always drunk. And they constantly used to tell me: Master, do not worry at all, there are no such spies anywhere in the world...even a bird cannot get out of our network of informers...we know everything that is being done and who is doing it...And look what happened now. Not even a bird, he says, master, cannot get in or get out from our encirclement. That's what only a few days ago the main guard commander told me. Thee encirclements, he says, we have set master, with five hundred warriors...Not even a bird, he says, cannot get in or get out. More than half of them is always drunk. When I have once, while touring the guard, found a drunken group, they unanimously told me "master, we are not drunk". We have uncovered, they say, a new occurrence how a strong plum brandy works. This is our invention, but only when we drink plum brandy: we are drunk only when we are sober, and sober when we are drunk. That confuses our enemies, and they are never sure when is the best time that they should attack us. They can't figure out our secret at all, because we are different. I thought that the idlers are just joking. Something similar, they say, can be found in Russian brothers, but they drink vodka. They are also sober when they drink vodka, so they chase Tatars like crazy. Tatars see that Russians are in a big delirium and that they have some unearthly power but they don't know that this state of delirium comes from the vodka. This is only a Russian invention...and the Tatars, they keep running, because they don't know how vodka is made, nor are they allowed to drink it, because their faith forbids it. Our people think that this state of holy sublimity and delirium they can achieve with plum brandy, but you see what happens...we cannot like the Russians...we cannot with the Russians...but you cannot prove that to our fools...nor Germanics nor Romans cannot with the Russians...Nor Tatars...Did I mention Russians and Tatars...No, no, they were not Russians and Tatars, but Russians and Huns, and Tatars will come later...they are already invading from the

distant desert regions of Asia...I guess they originate from Mongolians, and maybe they do not have anything in common with Huns, as I thought in the beginning.

-That's why I immediately ordered commanders of guards to severely punish everyone who comes drunk to the guard place. But now I see that it was not worth it. They are not listening. And look what happened! They could have steal and rob the whole palace, take into captivity all members of our ruling family. But they did actually take what is dearest and most valued to me, the youngest and the dearest child! The most capable son! My Rastko! Immediately hang the commanders of guards, and commanders of unit and squadron which were securing the whole area around the palace...why do we need them...Imagine, Ana, only that one Russian monk comes, a Russian spy, a worldly wanderer, which pretended to be a monk and our friend, and he stole our palace and he took what is most precious...and dearest. That's how Russian brothers do it. They don't want just anything...they know what is valued! Where are our spies now?...They escaped into the forest like shepherds...to get sober from gulping and drunkenness...Why don't they come in front of my eyes...Don't mention Russians nor Serbs to me anymore. Us Serbs by no means...Look what kind of people we are...we started to divide even before coming to this area. That is already in our blood. Look how far reaching our divisions are, far...far into the past. Do you know, Ana, that our only tribe, on the occasion of leaving the original homeland had a fight with the main body, separated, and went West and so arrived to the West, further from the river Oder and Neisse...into the Lusatian area and joined the Germanics . Per the area which they have settled, they are now called the Lusatian Serbs. And imagine, they renounced everything, both their faith and their customs and their language. A what is a people without a language and without their word. Nothing! Nobody and nothing! That's worse than when a man loses his hand, because a language reaches further than a hand, further than a sword and than a hand. Our Germanic or Lusatian Serbs now became bigger Germanics than the real ones. Only, says, that we are not Serbs...that it is known that we are no longer Serbs and that we have nothing to do with the rest of you! And done! Now they have completely forgotten their customs...their brothers and their language...and what is a people without their language. They kept only one part of their name as if they are still Serbs, but they added another name...now they are Lusatian Serbs...Only, says, that we are different from those of you who went South...we will not have anything to do with you! We are now Germanics and quits! What can you do to us! It would have been better for you if you came to the West with us and immediately became Germanics like us. We will kill you all anyways. You cannot be saved down in the South. Just so you know what is awaiting you. We cannot, he says, forget the injustice which you have caused us on the occasion of the last division of the prey while we were still together...That was our last mutual hike on the Avaric areas and settlements behind the Carpathian. And we always used to say – we are Serbs and brothers even though we were divided into 12 tribes, like the Israelis. We were always similar to Israelis, because in the ancient times we lived close to them and we learned a lot from them. From them we also learned to go into refuge often just like them as soon as a stronger enemy attacks us. That says the story which is passed on from generation to generation. Well, you should know, Ana, there were 12 tribes of us Serbs just like the Israelis and that one Serbian tribe which got angry because of the division of the prey went to the West and they disappeared in the Germanic sea just like one Israeli tribe disappeared, Judah's tribe...You see Ana, we also have our lost tribe just like the

Jews, that is our twelfth, lost tribe, that is our Judah's tribe. Oh, God, why do all Serbs get angry and quarrel, because of some division of a robbed prey. You see Ana, the story has stayed like that and it is passed on from generation to generation, but what really happened and why they got angry it is hard to know now because it has not been written, at that time nobody knew how to write. However, what is certain is that nobody went so many times into refuge and migrations like us and the Jews. That was until now our destiny, because we are small peoples so we cannot defend from a stronger, and we do not want to put up with oppression. I am just wondering if that is our destiny will we also in the future go into refuge and migration. I hope we will not...maybe we will be able to defend from the attacker.

-And our Serbs-Germanics became worse than the real Germanics. Who knows what trouble they will cause us in the future, those new Germanics together with the real Germanics. You see, only Serbs can do something like that! Betray their kind and renounce their kind, well that's the biggest disgrace and sin. Maybe that will also happen later in the life of our people and even bigger betrayals and unbelief might be done, who knows, anything can happen. There are still some people here in us that secretly want, they are scared to openly convert into Catholicism or even into Bogomils. Such people would be capable of converting into any faith, even into the Agarenian only to withdraw some benefit for themselves if those Agarens would sometimes come to these areas. That would be such a great betrayal if that would happen. To renounce your everything...to step on the parents' pledge...We are located all over the world...Even now some of them come, those new Germanics which are of our origin, here into these regions and work for real Germanics as miners...very skillful and intellectual repairmen for everything, but there is no worth when they are no longer Serbs...they don't know any of our words...they drowned in the Germanic sea...see what kind of people we are. People that forget their customs and their language is no longer a people. It is someone else. And not only that: our former Serbs are now bigger Germanics from the real Germanics. Only Serbs can do that! I have some nasty presentiment that those real Germanics will cost us...constantly they say...to the East...to the East...Drang nach Osten...Drang nach Osten...Only penetrate to the East...that is where our life area is...that's where our Lebensraum is...that's where our Lebensraum is and that's it...Barbarossa was shouting from the top of his voice...only penetrate to the East...let's throw all Slavs into the sea, but first the Serbs...let's throw them all into the sea...that is our life area, say the Germanics. Serbs always bother us...they are exactly on our way for the East, our penetration to the East...let's throw them into the sea...they are bothering us...the Germanic ruler Barbarossa already took out a sword and while holding it he was hurrying high on his horse and he was leading the Germanic units shouting from the top of his voice...to the East, to the East...assault, Germanic brothers...only to the East...that is our life area. Let's penetrate to the East...Drang nach Osten...Drang nach Osten...Only penetrate to the East...That is our life area...That is our Lebensraum...that is our Lebensraum and done..Let's throw all Slavs into the sea, but first the Serbs, they always complain about something...Now or never...take the whole East...how can we drink so much Bavarian beer and vine and not take anything...We also have a blessing of the Roman Pope to do it. Firstly to rob, and then to burn everything. Burn all Orthodox countries, the whole Serbia and Byzantium, especially the Orthodox Tsargrad.

-Those Germanics...! I have a nasty feeling! They will commit some great evil, continued Nemanja...When I only think about them...Their ruler Barbarossa taking them towards Constantinople...Barbarossa is taking his units of crusaders through the valley of Dunav and he is climbing down gradually towards the south, towards us...In a day or two, through the valley of Morava, he will come to Nis. I am going, says Barbarossa, with my crusaders to free Christ's grave from Saracens...the Roman Pope, says Barbarossa, knows all this, and he has approved and blessed this military campaign. The pope gave me a blessing and said: burn, Barbarossa, in Serbia and Byzantium as much as you want and rob everything and bring it to us here in the West, but, he said, do not tell anyone that I, the Roman Pope, approved it, but say that you are going on Jerusalem to free the Christ's grave...Let that be, he said, an excuse for you so that you can rob and burn everything in Serbia and Byzantium. Take all the gold of the holy temples and palaces from Orthodox Tsarigrad and bring it here so that we share it mutually...Don't tell under no circumstances and to nobody that I, the Roman Pope, told you to rob, but only say that I, the Roman Pope, approved and gave you a blessing to free with your military Christ's grave and Jerusalem from atheists, Saracens, And you, I guess, won't, he says, forget what I, the Roman Pope, really told you...You need to rob and conquer the whole of Serbia and the whole of Byzantium, and not free Jerusalem from Saracenes. And when you rob everything and burn in Serbia and Byzantium, you should, says Barbarossa, come back. Let's leave Jerusalem for later, and why do we need Jerusalem...it has already been robbed by the Saracenes...That's why we should rob Constantinople. It is far richer...Constantinople is the capital of the Orthodox Byzantium...Byzantine empire...Orthodox East...It was never robbed by anyone until now...We should rob it first...it is important to be first in a robbery.

Don't, Barbarossa, says the Roman Pope, forget this neither: that you obligatory on the way to Constantinople first rob, and only then burn all Serbian churches and monasteries when you pass through their country. Serbs need to be punished well, my Barbarossa because they rudely preferred eastern Orthodoxy and joined Constantinople and Byzantium, and therefore finally rejected our Rome and us Romans. And imagine everything that we were offering them, even an independent country, of course, that was only our sham, only so they would accept our Rome and Catholicism! But no...they are rudely turning our backs and are joining the eastern Orthodoxy. That's why, Barbarossa, they need to be punished well, and I, the Roman Pope, am ordering you that and you will not bear any church curse for that. Everything is already forgiven to you and you will not carry or have any sin for that. Just burn everything in Serbia...or the Rascian country of Rascia, as they like to call it sometimes. But first rob everything...Listen carefully to what I am saying to you...Serbia needs to constantly be punished and it needs to be taught a lesson that it is dealing with someone stronger and that it must join our Catholicism. First rob all those Orthodox churches and monasteries, and bring it to us Romans here to our Rome and to our Venice. Their churches and monasteries are known to have many valuable icons hemmed with gold and silver, many big vessels which are filled with gold coins and silver coins and many other golden and silver objects which they got as a gift from Orthodox rulers of the East. In addition to monastery treasuries, you should also rob monastery basements which are full of various stocks of food: many wreaths of garlic and onion, countless wreaths of dry figs and plums, many bags of wheat and barley flour, as well as the best quality walnuts, tens of jugs full of meads, countless

barrels of vine...Just don't touch that their spicy plum brandy. They invented that recently and nobody know how or why! They say that it is their evil drink, and it is best not to touch it because that is not for us. Be careful, Barbarossa first rob all that, and then burn all Serbian countries and all Serbian churches and monasteries. Kill and burn everything so that there is no trace left of those Serbs, so that it will never be known that some Serbs lived there. Only our Robe is eternal, and they should eternally be Roman countries, and repressed should be every trace and seed in the root of Serbs. Do exactly that, Barbarossa, and every sin of yours will be forgiven in advance, I give you redemption in advance, Barbarossa, our proud emperor and knight. You will no longer carry any church curse because of some of our quarrels in the past. That's what I, the Roman Pope, say to you. You can easily do all that, because you are leading an army with more than one hundred thousand warriors in which are the best shooters, armored soldiers, a few squadrons of the light cavalry...You also have many standard –bearers, gunsmiths and infantryman, informers, plotters...Use all of that...Serbs are known for easily quarreling and fighting amongst themselves...Just do that...make them quarrel...promise to some of their princes that you will give them the ruling crown and immediately in them you will get your ally and a Serbian traitor...Serbs are already well known for that, and in the future they will be even more...We will do everything that it be that way...That's what I'm telling you, Barbarossa...That's what I, the Roman Pope, am ordering you! Just assault to the East...burn and rob everything, everything that is Orthodox...first Serbs, because they're first on our way, and let Serbs well see who is Rome...that they cannot just play with Rome and that they see that Rome is not a joke!

- Barbarossa is not going with his huge army of crusaders to free Jerusalem and the Christ's grave from Saracens. That is just his excuse...With his huge army of hundreds of thousands of Catholic crusaders he is going to rob the Orthodox East with a blessing of the Roman Pope. Nobody is allowed to oppose them...Who dare to do anything to Germanics...When they drink Bavarian vine and beer they run like they are angry...Only Orthodox Russians when they drink vodka can oppose them, and to return them all the way to Rajna...When the Russian emperor Boris gets drunk with vodka, a whole liter at once bottoms up, what Barbarossa and his Bavarian beer and vine...! That is nothing compared to Russians and vodka... We Serbs also drink plum brandy really good, but not as good like Russians drink vodka...! We cannot with Russians... Eh...! Every Russian emperor which drinks good Vodka instead of emperor Boris I call Drunk Boris...and it is not important what is his real name...because in Russians every Boris drinks vodka good!...And what kind of an emperor is it if he doesn't drink vodka like every Russian...just like every Russian!...And it is a known thing that every Russian whose name is Boris drinks vodka good...That's why I rather call every Russian emperor Drunk Boris instead of Great Boris. Germanics, Hungarians, Venetians, Tatars and Huns are more afraid of Drunk Boris than Great Boris. At least that is clear, and should not be specially proved.

-Ana, what is happening...what happened to our tribe and our Serbian people?! We have begun to divide even before we moved to this area. We have begun to divide even before we crossed the Carpathian Mountains. And just what did we do when we came here, where we are now, and we have nowhere else to go, because the deep sea has welcomed us, and we cannot cross it like we have crossed many rivers,...and we do not have a ship,...and what is even worse, we cannot go back neither, because our original

homeland is now occupied by others, stronger, first Mongolians, then Tatars...The only thing that we always did good is, that we divide and quarrel and we have continued to do that even more when we came here...Every cobbler in his village wants to participate as a prince or even a king...Recently I have run into one such so called village prince...and when I asked what he was doing in his village and what little state of his is he talking about...and he immediately said...Why not and why does that bother you..? We have everything that is needed for our state: territory, population, faith, language...Is that so, I shouted...Well what is your territory, and he said to me...Well that is that beautiful plateau where our village is located, bordering with three mountains. Those mountains are at the same time a natural border, since we separated from you Serbs, and that's why we are now called Gorani people, and our state the Gora region. We also have our new faith and we are no longer Orthodox Christians, but Bogomils. That means that we are dear to God, heavenly people, and not you Serbs. Jews are no longer the only chosen God's people, but we too, because we are dear to God. We are a mountainous heavenly people, because the peaks of our mountains run into the heaven (although you fiercely want to be the heavenly people), per your will you have stayed what you were, Orthodox Christians, but we have nothing with you anymore and quits. And that church of yours, which you have built in the middle of our village, now our state, we don't need it anymore, he says...Oh really, what are you telling me...what do you mean you don't need it, and how did Bogumils arrive to the middle of the Serbian Orthodox Christian country?, I say...Did you maybe come through the sky from Bulgaria...secretly in the night, like devils, and climbed down here in the middle of Christian Orthodox Serbia to proclaim your state...Well we are still one people and that's what we always were, and we have everything in common, I say to him, faith and state and language, so it cannot be forgotten overnight and disappear and that you turn into something else, we all together have been creating that for hundreds and hundreds of years, and a majority of our people will not allow that it is done like that, I continue to speak further...We have all together been creating this Serbian country of ours, because we are one people, fighting and losing lives for hundreds and hundreds of years to protect our people...It will not go so easily, as you think, and that every carpenter or cobbler, just like you yourself are, in their village can proclaim their little state and become a prince, or a king. That does not exist anywhere, so it will not exist here neither, and it is impossible that so to say that overnight you separate and immediately get a state, a faith, a people and a language...well all of our people have not gone crazy, like you and your village...Let go, he says, of the people...To the people you only promise this or that, as long as it is something new and the people will run after you like crazy...and the people will follow you only if all that is well prepared. But first let's get something clear, I prince to you am talking in your Serbian language, only because you still do not know our Gorski language, and I know your Serbian language, because that was my mother tongue until half a year ago, until I invented this new Gorski language. Look at everything that we have achieved, my Gorski people and I, in a very short time, in a few months of preparation and work, we have everything that is needed for our state. For now it is most important that we have our territory: one village on the plateau bordering with three mountains, which are also our natural borders and according to which we are called Goranci*, and our country is called Goranka, and we have nothing to do with the rest of you Serbs, and quit. We also have our new faith which we have also created within less

than a month. And what more do you want? We are now longer Serbs, but Goranci, we also have our state which is called Goranka, and the language will be called Gorski and not Brdjanski as some of our people proposed in the beginning, but we are still working on that...How come you already have a new language? I shouted...Why do you need that when there is our beautiful Serbian language which both you and I speak, and that our ancestors were speaking since our existence and since we know of ourselves. This Serbian language of ours is so beautiful, beautiful like a beautiful song, so other people want to learn it, and many have already learned it and understand it, and you are the only one that wants to renounce it you rusty rust? This saying did not originate by accident: *Speak Serbian so that the whole world can understand you*-I say to him...It is already known by Bulgarians, and Greeks, and Russians, and Polish, because it is beautiful understandable and easy to learn, like a song...The problem is in that...he says to me and continued...You prince use your Serbian language (which was mine until recently, but it isn't anymore) to try to dominate with this whole area from the cold northern to the warm southern seas, from the Baltics to the Adriatic, but you will not succeed, because we, both small and big peoples, will not allow that. Germanics and the French and the Romans and the Hungarians and the Bulgarians everyone will be against you and

*The Gorani language and Goranci or the Gorani people which are mentioned in this novel are completely made up and have no connection with any people in these areas, nor with Gorani people which really exist in today's Serbia or anywhere else. Also, any similarity with some other contemporary events is completely accidental.

on our side. And when Turks-Seljuqs join us...their hordes are already invading from the Asian steppes, and they are already conquering and burning and sowing fear on the eastern borders of the Byzantium, you Serbs will not be anywhere. Therefore, Turks will also be on our side and you cannot be saved, so you should run wherever you know while you still have time. There was enough of that...we Serbs this, we Serbs that...we Serbs have everything the best and the most beautiful, both the language and the state, and the people and the brandy. That cannot be put up with any more and that's why we the small people are creating our own languages and our own states. Prince you are complaining because we Goranci have our own state and our people, and our language, but you still do not know what is our final goal and where all this leads. Only then you would open your mouth in surprise, he says to me and continued – Our and my final goal is that the state becomes increasingly smaller as opposed to you which want the state, I means the Serbian state, to be increasingly bigger. My final goal is that every man has his own state and has his own language, that every man is a state for himself. That would be the most humane, because only then he could develop into a versatile, independent, self-confident, self-governing, and free person. That means, that whenever that man would want to enjoy in peace, and undisturbed by anyone, he simply closes the borders of his state, i.e. he withdraws into himself and he is no longer interested in what is happening outside of his state borders, i.e. outside of his integrity. Then nobody is allowed to endanger the territorial integrity of his state, i.e. the integrity of his personality. It is only enough that nobody does not threaten his integrity, his state and its borders. If by accident urgently come up some interstate affairs, i.e. to talk to some other person, i.e. statesman and his state, then he carries out those statesmanship affairs with himself, only that than he leads a dialogue with himself and in some foreign language, i.e. the language of the other

statesman, so that all of that would appear more official. That everyone has their state is the most humane form of social arrangement, because otherwise cannot be solved the issue of respect of individual and social differences, which is also most tightly connected to the *issues of freedom and equality*.

- And you Prince, he tells me, do not respect not only individuals, but neither whole peoples, and you are sending your people on all four sides of the world to cross borders of other states however they want, and whenever they want. Now because of that we are not wanted even by those states in which your people live too, in a very big number, because you do not respect their independence and integrity. Albanians must have planted opium, or some other opiate, maybe even some other stronger drug, like hashish, so you are wondering and roaming as if you are drugged, or like sleepwalkers, and are crossing borders of other states, as if they do not even exist. Bulgarians are complaining about you, my brother, and you have even gotten to Russians, and they are also angry at you and they say: no, no former brothers Serbs, this is now only our country, even though we once used to be brothers...With Hungarians, which by the way originate from Huns, it is even harder, and they immediately threaten you, we will bring you Attila, God's whip...He is anyway buried somewhere nearby here in the Tisa river in a golden coffin, but we will resurrect him, so you Serbs look where to run away. But they do not even have to resurrect him, it is enough that they sing you the song: *Black and dark like a Mozilla is the chilling Hunnic emperor Attila. God's whip, fierce force, that is the Hunnic emperor Attila...*If you only knew how sinful you are and that God's whip will punish you because of that. And when you want into the clean Lepa, immediately some quarrel happens about who will safeguard the borders of Krajina...and whose sea is it from Skadar to Zadar...and then you quarrel and slaughter. Not long after that, international conciliators come, and reconcile you, taking everything from you about which you quarreled and slaughtered. Why do you need that, they tell you, it is better for you that it belongs to us, because you would still fight and quarrel about it. And you the warring sides, under the influence of conciliators, begin to apologize to each other, and then you hug and kiss and while sobbing in tears you say that you are brothers and that you should never forget that you are brothers...and you swear ...never again...we are the closest Slavic brothers,...good compassionate Slavic soul...never again...you repeat while you sob in tears. But not long after that, you again begin harmless discussions which little by little become serious quarrels, then fights,...and again about who first came to these areas and whose people are the oldest...and who does this holy land belong to...and each one begins to say for themselves that they are oldest and that they were here before the arrival of Slavs...and even that you are not Slavs, but Dardanians, Triballi, Dacians or Thracians, Sarmatians...and that you were always where you are now...and again begin fights and slaughters, and again come foreign conciliators...and again they take from you everything that you have...and again they reconcile you...and you hug again, kiss and swear...never again...we are a cultured people...never again...and like that in a circle. There is no peace amongst you anymore and you constantly persecute and attack each other. International conciliators cannot wait for that, to once again rob you good...and to sell you their newest weapons and to try it out first on you. So in Lijepa which is now clean they now tell you that they don't need you for safeguarding of Krajina, we have, they say, now our own army, our guard, our soldier with our spear on his shoulder, with our shield on his chest and with our wallet full of

Kunas in the pocket...They don't need your Dinar anymore, they say. Look, Prince, if you were in a quarrel with everyone, and then you say that it is a world conspiracy, Vatican, Pope, Germanics, Bulgarians, Hungarians, Romans...How everyone is against you,...global conspiracy,...globalization...you only complain and scare other small peoples, that you small peoples will disappear, because big states will eat small states like big fish eat small fish, and that therefore small peoples will disappear, as well as their languages and their cultures and history.

Don't prince, he says to me, always be in some fear and distrust towards other peoples, especially not towards us which have only recently separated from you, and created our own state and our own language, he tried to soften me, and continued further. It is better, he says to me, that you help us to build our small state, so that you have a friend in us, and not to dispute the language, and the faith, and the state and the people, and then we have to be enemies. Is this too much that we seek of you. Think a little. Be contemporary and advanced. Now is the time of the minorities and minorities rule the majority. Let go of those crazy and backward Greeks which have invented democracy where the majority needs to rule over the minority. What their Homer, Socrates, Aristotle, Heraclitus, Democritus, Alexander, Pericles and his democracy. What poets, minds, philosophers and military commanders are we going to have, only if you support us to strengthen our young state, and then we will become friends. We will not do like those backward Greeks, like their Pericles. Already in our constitution we have written that a minority rules the majority, and whenever someone wants to separate that right will be given to them...Prince, help us to strengthen our young state, our culture and our religion, especially language, because it is the biggest sign of identity and the specialness of our young people.

-Is that possible, I say to him, that you will also have your own language, and your state, and your faith, and your territory, and so to say overnight, and many big peoples, and big states, and big kings, and big emperors, were losing heads in vain for hundreds of years and could not achieve and create that as fast as you, one ordinary mountain village....Eh,...who should they blame, he says, when they did not have such capable and wise leaders, emperors and kings...and you should know that you are no longer our Great prince and we would even rather be called Egyptians, than Serbs, and we would rather call their pharaoh to be our ruler, only so that you are not. Now we are creating our own language, which we are already calling Gorski...and all that will be my invention...What did you just tell me, you will also have your own new language, as if surprised I said. I am interested to know how will you so quickly create your new language, again I said. And he said all proud...The most simplest way how it is done, or how most new peoples and new states do it now which arise overnight and want to immediately and quickly to have their own language too, is to quickly invent a new name for the language that they have been using until then. And they say, now we have our own language, even though they really only have a new name of their language, and all the words have stayed the same also in the language which they have used until then. They even seek a translator when they meet with the people from which they have separated, to translate only the name of their new language, so that all that would seem more official, he says, because all other words have stayed the same. But we do not want to use such cheap, unfair and low tricks, he says, but we really want to have a completely new and original our language. We are a new people and we want to begin fairly and

from the beginning we want to have everything new, a new people, new language, new faith, new state,...yes, yes...to immediately also have our faith and our language, and not to steal someone else's. And, in us, from the beginning, a rule is valid, We do not want someone else's, we will not give what is ours. That is how it is in us now, my prince. Yes, yes, a completely new language, our Gorski language, a completely new language...We did not want it to be Hungarian, Bulgarian, Albanian, Roman or Greek, and especially not Serbian, but our new Gorski language...Could it be that your Gorski language will completely be different from our Serbian language, I said...It will, why not, why are you surprised..? That is my invention...Nobody in the world has ever invented something like this until now, and because of that I am a genius and the biggest scholar ever born, but we will talk about that later. I could be selling this invention of mine to others and to get rich...and to create so many languages that every village can have its language, if it wants its country. And why would it not want it, who would not want to have their own state, but to have a state you also must have your language. That is my invention, as soon as you start creating a new language, you actually also begin the creation of a new state...See that is that trick, while others come up with what we want and what we are preparing, we already have everything, we have already created our state, and our language and our people...I could become the richest man in the world, if I have time to sell this invention of mine about how new countries are created, new languages, new peoples...who would not want to know that today...? And not only that, I can create so many new languages, same as the number of people on earth, and that means that the same number of states can arise, or better said, that every man can have his state just for himself, he simply closes into himself, he withdraws to himself, and you cannot cross his border by any means and peek into his state, because the most important requirement to have your own state is to have your language. The borders of his state are closed for you, and everything there is clear, and there is nothing to add. It is his thing when he will open his borders, get out of himself and when he will start to speak to you, or to someone else. So that is our final goal, that every man becomes a state for himself because everyone will have their special language. A language is even more important than territory on earth, because many of us will in the future be able to live in heaven, especially we as the heavenly people, because now we have our state, which which is of all the states the closest to the heavens, which is the closest to heavens than all the other countries, because it is located on actual mountain peaks and forests which shoot into the sky, touch the sky and that is where the boundaries between Goad and man get closer, and that's why we have already become the heavenly people, and you Serbs are not. That's why we Goranci have immediately sang the anthem to our independent state, on our Goranski language, to celebrate our forest or better said our Gorska freedom and new Bogomil faith. Look how beautiful it is. Hear at least the first verse according to the first easier variant of our Gorski language: *Through the forests and the mountains of our country going proud are the troops of Bogomils, they are carrying their faith with their battle.* And here we have a second variant of this verse (for everything we have two variants) which reads as follows: *Through the forests and the mountains of our country proud are going troops of Bogomils, carrying God's glory...*I think that this other variant is a little better, because the word *battle* is not mentioned and let God and everyone else see that we are a peaceful people and that we *serve* and celebrate *God*. And now, the great prince, you yourself can see how great and genius this discovery of mine is, about

how new language are created, new states and new peoples. ..What are you telling me, I say to him, I do not believe my ears what I hear from him...So that means that every man will in the future have their own state and their language,.. then a total confusion will arise and a mess and nobody will be able to understand anybody,...so it is going to be like in that Biblical story about a Babylon tower...The only solution so that it doesn't come to such a confusion and mess is to have a few hundred times more translators than languages and that is the same as the number of people on earth,...then scholars and translators of languages will be the most profitable occupation in the world,...if every man has his language, then everyone will need to have for their language at least a few translators, tens and even hundreds of translators and scholars of languages, if only a conversation with other people your people is wanted, or, even, only with your family, what I hear from you cobbler is really that a man goes crazy. What you are talking about is surpassing the human mind so how can I not go crazy from that...Oh, you great prince of Serbia, how can you not see that now is a different time and that now the basic principle is learning, how can you not see that a man changes and improves by learning?...The ability to learn needs to be developed,... how can someone know so many languages without learning...Our Gorski people has also updated the most important principle from the Bible that man is destined to be free, to have a freedom of choice, but also responsibility for their choice and their actions, and their acts...but we Goranci, our Gorski people have still updated and complemented that God's principle, and nobody has succeeded to do that for five thousand years. We, our Gorski people say that we are alone, every man is today destined not only to be free until the end of life, but also to lifelong learning. Didn't Heraclitus, that great Greek philosopher, say that *Everything is flowing, everything is changing*, therefore new things must be learned which lead to the improvement of mankind. That is permanent, or lifelong learning so that time would not run us over. Therefore, great prince, we are destined not only to be free, but also to learn lifelong and create new knowledge, new inventions, new languages...to foresee the future...Because, when I create new languages, I also think about the future, and to have as much work as possible, and that people are not unemployed, and that they increasingly devote themselves to learning of languages and spiritual uplifting, and not only that they safeguard sheep and wage a war, that is now the past and I guess it is time that we get out of that. This is now an eternal and an all over principle of the universe.. *Everything flows, everything is changing*...new peoples are being created,...new states,...new languages...According to this genius idea of mine, I will eternally be celebrated and remembered, because the whole humankind will be for the first time employed, and for the first time nobody will be without a job,...everyone will have some job, because there will be hundreds and thousands of new languages so there will be need for hundreds and hundreds of thousands more translators, than there are people on earth...Tell me please, great prince, who does not want to have their own language if they have any self-respect, to develop self-respect and to be an equal and self-administering, free and independent person. Don't you see, great Serbian prince, how great this genius invention of mine is, because I not only create new languages, new states, and new peoples, but also new personalities and new jobs. How can you prince not see that what I have invented is the most genius invention of all times, because it so openly, picturesque and simply speaks about that, how new peoples are created, new states, new languages, new occupations, new jobs, new people...everything new. Is there a more humane invention from

permanently resolving the issue of unemployment. As many new languages as possible, new peoples, new states, that will be needed and more envoys, ministers, princes, emperors, kings, translators, copiers, cooks, governors, meetings, discussions, agreements, and once again I emphasize, especially translators. And you just keep going...I and I...we Serbs this, we Serbs that, we Serbs the oldest, we Serbs the most numerous,...Serbs everything and everywhere, anywhere you go Serbs are everywhere. You cannot do that. Wait a little,...look at others too,...I will in a few years also write a new history in which we Goranci will be the oldest people in the world, from whom originated all other peoples, and even you Serbs. And so it will stay written in history for centuries, because you prince, should know that history isn't actually what really happened, but what is written. And now you should know, prince, this too: I do not study history, I make it, just like Cesar was making it. And this too, I do not search for the truth, I make it...Do you understand, prince, how horrific this discovery of mine is, and how big it is, and what consequences it will all have. With this invention of mine I have solved all that, and creation of new languages, and creation of new people, and creation of new states, and creation of new peoples, and creation and writing of new history...and what is even more important, creation of new jobs, all people will be employed, and have an opportunity that everyone develops into a versatile, free, humane and self-administering person. Imagine, nobody without a job, the issue of unemployment will be solved permanently and eternally until the earth exists, until the end of the world comes and judgment day, and then we will begin everything from the beginning...that is an eternal circle,...eternal movement...Therefore, this invention of mine how to create new languages, and new people, and new states, and new peoples, is eternal and has led to another one, an even more important invention, and that is how can we all be employed...And let me tell you, I have already developed a principle, how from one language tens of others can arise, hundreds, and even thousands of new languages,...so many combinations are possible only with thirty letters...Well, can you at least name one or two examples of how you do it, so that I am also convinced of that, I say to him...I will not reveal my secret to you, he says, but I can explain to you at least in principle, he said and continued...Lets take for example only one of your Serbian word, which was ours too until recently, because we were also Serbs until recently, but we will not be that anymore, and quit...so that you see how we make of it tens of our new words, like this: ...Sometimes in front of that word we add only one new letter and we get our new word, sometimes we add some other letter at the end of that same word and we again get a new one, now our word, sometimes we add some other letter at the end of that same word and we again get a new one, now we our word, for the third time, we can insert that letter in the middle of that same word and we again get a new word, now our word,...just like that...After this we can change this principle, so we do not add new letters in front, in the middle, or at the end of the word, but we simply change some letter in the word and instead of it we put another letter, and so the number of combinations and making of new words increases endlessly,...see, he says, how genius this invention of mine is and how come I can create so many languages as many as there are people on earth, or stars in the sky. But for now we will not go so far, because it cannot be so quickly secured and so many translators...and for now we have directed all strengths to the creation of our Groskog language...And you say, I tell him, that you Gorski language is completely new...Yes, yes, completely new,...why are you surprised?,...eh, my prince, it is as if you

are living in the past,...everything is changing,...that is an eternal rule. We have created our new Gorski language, completely new, we even have a few variants of our Gorski language, and there is no other language in the world, except our Gorski language, and in that we are unique...Don't tell me, you already have more variants of your Gorski language, I pretend to be surprised and admired...Yes, certainly...we have that first easier variant, which can be learned by anyone, because there we have only changed the name of the Serbian language, and everything else and every word has stayed the same, so that instead of Serbian, it is now called the Gorski language, and everything else has stayed the same from word to word...that is for those which are lazy and which a little weaker learn languages and learning is not easy for them, and want to learn it quickly.. Eh,...here, you see, not everything is fair and it looks like some trick,...that's why we will allow only one transitional period, a few years...we will have to assign to them precisely the deadline, for how the longest this transitional period can last. But for those which want to be fair and to invest their effort and learn their completely new language from the beginning, the thing is a little harder, but also more fair...Unbelievable, I shouted, you have more variants of your Gorski language. It seems to be that not a single other language has that. Really wisely, the first variant I learned first and it is really easy, the rest is all the same like in our Serbian language, only the name of the language is now Gorski, and not Serbian, is that so?..That is right, he says...And can you name to me at least a few examples for that other variant of your Gorski language, I say to him...Of course, he couldn't wait,...and this other harder variant you could, he says to me, learn easily if you only put a little effort into it. Is that possible, that I can learn your new Gorski language, even the other harder variant,...come on, show me that in a few examples, that I become convinced of that,...for example, how do you, in your new Gorski language, according to your second harder variant, say *čovjek (man)* ...Nothing easier, he says, only there now in addition to this Serbian word of yours *čovjek (man)*, we have two sub-variants, other harder variants of our Gorski language. Both variants are equal for now, until we agree differently. According to one, i.e. the first variant other harder variants of our Gorski language, into your word *man* we have added another letter, the letter *j*, somewhere in the middle of your word, and that is now our word, of our Gorski language, and it reads *čovjek (man)*. And according to the second variant of this harder second variant, we have again added another new letter, and that is the letter *I*, into your Serbian word *čovjek (man)*, but we took out one letter, the letter *e* and now, again, we have our new word, of our Gorski language, which reads *covik (man)*, with the same meaning like the first word *čovjek*. Immediately I will say that there are not many words in our Gorski language with such double pronunciation, he said to me and continued, only those words where we could still not agree on have that, and both variants are in use, until we finally agree. That is not some big problem for us, so we can not immediately and in the beginning and over night solve all the problems, solve every little thing, and let some things be a matter of further discussion and agreement. What is most important, is that we have agreed on creation and name of our state Goranka, creation and name of our Goranski, or Gorski people, and the creation and name of our new Gorski language. Could it be that it is so easily done, and that it is so simple, I was surprised,...how come nobody else remembered to do that but only you...? It is that a person goes crazy, as soon as we Serbs learn one variant of your Gorski language, you take out of your sleeve another one and you lead us to confusion, to madness and therefore we will never catch

up with you...Oh my prince, this is a new time and everything is flowing, everything is changing, there is need to constantly learn. That's how it is today. It is important that it can be learned, because it is simple, and therefore it is also genius. All big things and great discoveries and inventions are in fact simple, but that needs to be realized, a brain needs to be had, so ordinary people like you, say...how did I not think of that,...but God gave only to a few of us that power and that's why it is said that we are born rich, or better said chosen by God to lead and advance the human kind, to create new languages, new people, new peoples and new states, new jobs, to constantly learn and to make others learn...Only Alexander Macedonian was given the power and the brain by God to know how to untie the Gordian Knot, nobody could do it until him...and later everyone was wondering and saying...how did I not think of that,...it was so easy, obvious and simple,...yes, yes...easy and simple for Alexander Macedonian, but not for all the others...You say well, I told him, to further draw him into the discussion, so that he would unconsciously and in delirium of his success uncover some more of his genius principles in creation of new states, new peoples and new languages, so I said to him: How would you in your Gorski language say *rđav čovek* (*rusty man*). Nothing easier he said, without realizing what I am trying to do, but he continued in a delirium...There in your first Serbian word *rđav* we only add one new letter, the letter *h* in front of your word *rđav* and we get a pure Gorska word *hrđav*, and there we immediately agreed, because we do not have two variants just like with your word *čovek* (man): *čovjek-čovik*. Therefore, in our Gorski language we say *hrđav čovjek* (rusty man) or *hrđav čovik* (rusty man). My dear princess, at that moment I could no longer take it and I got angry because of his variants and sub-variants, he drove me crazy with them, so when I shouted at him telling him...Do not lie, you idler, it cannot work like that, you drove me crazy with your variants. I just learn one, and you immediately pull another from your sleeve. You cannot even be a *rđavi čovek* (rusty man), nor a *hrđav čovjek* (rusty man), nor a *hrđav čovik* (rusty man), but you can only be a rusty monkey, you rusty monkey, just like all of us are, which are participating in that general stupidity, in this general madness. You drove me crazy with your variants and sub-variants of your forest-mountainous language. As if it is so important whether he is *rđav* (rusty) or *hrđav* (rusty),...a bad man and that's it, what is there to be made up and philosophized. When he saw how angry I was, he started to run, and I even started to kick the ground with my feet, in the place, so that he would think that I am running after him and that I am chasing him, but actually I was just laughing to myself regarding his ingenuity, persistence, and devotion to his thing and his invention about how to create new languages, new states and new peoples...What persistence, those Serbs – Goranci are something similar to our Serbs-Gemanics, or as they are now called Sorbs, which separated from us seven centuries ago and went to the west, and joined with Germanics, and now they are no longer pure Serbs, but are like Sorbs which have also forgotten our language. You see, dear princess, now we at least know that all peoples in the world originate from us, and that we Serbs are the oldest, so let's even disappear. Look only, how many new peoples and new languages has become from us, and in a very short time. By dividing we will disappear only illusionary, because our blood will stay in the veins of those new peoples, and they will not even be aware of that, they will think that they are someone else. At least we solved one problem, now at least it is known who are the oldest people in the world and from whom have originated all other languages. Our blood will stay in all peoples of the world, isn't that so Ana.

Until where will only these Serbs-Goranci come when they have so much enthusiasm in the beginning, and just how are they all unique. They will come further than Serbs-Germanics or Sorbs as they are called now, they will surpass everyone. I guess it is like that with everyone, when something new and challenging is begun, and later when that is achieved, that enthusiasm is gradually decreased and lost. But all that remains to be seen. For hundreds of years we are fighting a battle to have unique country, and it did not go easy,...my own brothers attack what I have created until now, to take everything for themselves and to tear apart, and to destroy everything out of envy. I am thinking to submit all of this to them, my older brothers Stracimir and Miroslav, even that is better, than to, while fighting for power, again bring into question everything that has been achieved...that everything is destroyed,...isn't that so Ana, turned the great prince seeking her approval.

-It is not so, for the first time interrupted into prince's monologue princess Ana and continued. -The thing about languages and peoples I do not know, but about your older brothers and about power I know. -They cannot take power from you. What comes from the heavens cannot be taken forcefully. God has chosen you for that and that's why the people chose you, and not them. You were chosen by God and by people to be the ruler of Serbia, because you, with God's help, created it, and not your brothers. You cannot take forcefully what comes from God and the people, and what has been given to you by God and people, - decisively said the princess and continued-If you submitted power to your older brothers, everything until now achieved in the building of our country would be brought into question, and probably even lost. And what would the wives of your older brothers do to me, my sisters-in-law, how they would only degrade me and mock me, and laugh in my face.

When the great prince felt how much princess Ana fiercely supports him, that encouraged him so he continued. - You yourself know, Ana, how much torment I needed to make them come to their senses by both sword and ingenuity, to prove to them that we are brothers, and that we need to be together in order to be stronger, and that there can only be one ruler...and that they leave that to me that I rule, because I know best how it is done. But nobody in the beginning was listening to me. My own brothers attacked me. They wanted to destroy me, that's what!... But God sees everything and God knows who he will help! With God's help, I defeated them all...and created a unique state...But, I wonder for whom...Look, Ana, a little into the past, and you will best see how and from whom we originated. Slavs were all one people, that's why we all got the mutual name Slavs... But, look at what we did...divided into Russians, Polish, Slovaks, Czechs, Serbs, Croats, Slovenians, Macedonians. And while we are separated and tiny, everyone can attack and conquer us. The bigger fish eat smaller fish. Slavs have pressed the area from the cold north, to the warm south seas, from the Baltics to the Adriatic. They could be the biggest empire on earth unified, but what can you do,... when we have divided and quarreled... Some even go as far, that they say that they are not of Slavic origin but that they originate from the Tatars, or Pechenegs...Only, they say, so that we are different!...We will make up, they say, anything just so that we are no longer Slavs and quit! Some have even gone so far that they take Tatar, Germanic, Greek or Latin words into our brotherly Slavic language and are making new languages...see who we are and what we are like. That's why I constantly say, that when someone is left without their language and without their word that is worse than if they stayed without their hand,

because a language reaches further than a hand,...further than a sword and a hand. And we, those South Slavs, that cannot be found anywhere...How we can quarrel and divide,...that was all one people, South Slavs. And look now! Every village here says we are a special people and we need to have a special state, and that's it...We have created tens of little states and the same number of languages. And everyone for themselves says, we are the oldest in Europe, we have the oldest culture and the oldest language. And those little states of ours can be conquered and occupied whenever and by whoever wants to do it. One ordinary unit of Germanics or Romans, can in one day, occupy one by one of our little states, without problems. And who knows for how long it will be like that...I guess until we disappear...Not a single of their soldiers should perish...We ourselves quarrel and kill each other,...they only come when everything is done...Even if we sometimes reconcile, Germanics and Romans quickly make us quarrel...They throw in just one ember and this whole area catches fire...Crazy South Slavs...And when someone tells me, we and the Russians! Do not mention to me neither Serbs nor Russians...I have had enough of everything. Who?! Russians? Do not mention them anymore...! They only say no, no...do not be afraid, Serbian brothers...And they are taking care of themselves...That monk of theirs stole from us a gift from God, the youngest, dearest and the most capable son.

The only ones who dared to interrupt this prince's loud monologue were the princess Ana and his brother Stracimir. Even though she was herself crushed by pain and sorrow, Ana now had to take care of the health of the great prince, because she saw that, because of the sorrow for his favorite son, he was getting worse every day and that he was not well. She felt sorry for him, looking at how he was ruined from the sorrow for his runaway son. It was already started to be talked that the great prince has gone mad from the sorrow, because he was talking to himself constantly. A mental crisis was taking more sweep and shook him well. Only occasionally princess Ana dared to get involved into the prince's dialogue with himself, and more to support him and to ease his pain.

-Those Russians of ours were telling us that they were our brothers and that they will always help us, and look what the Russian monk did to us. He took, better said he stole and took our youngest and dearest child. We received them in our palace so many times and gave them presents and gifts. They would stay at us even for a few weeks and to sit at our table from morning to evening.

-The princess would not say even this if she knew what will happen to her. The great prince suddenly turned towards her and shouted. –Don't touch the Russians! They are our brothers. I talked badly about them but you know yourself that I don't mean it and now it is even harder for me because of that. They are our brothers. They did not do that to us, I am sure. No, no, the Russians would never do that to us. That monk was not Russian, but a Bulgarian or a Greek – Byzantine, he was only pretending to be Russian because he was a Byzantine or a Bulgarian spy. He pretended to be Russian so that we would not figure out what they are preparing for us, because they know how much we love Russians. How did I not think of this earlier? No, the Russian brothers would not do that to us. We and the Russians are brothers, the closest, the closest brothers among Slavs, both by blood and faith. They could not make a treachery. We don't have other help except our brothers Russians. And we will always love them. True, they have never helped us until now, even when that help was most needed, but they never forget to tell

us that they love us. And when they say that, we simply go crazy of joy. It is enough that their emperor threatens with a small finger and shouts...No, no...Nobody is allowed to touch Serbs...Everybody knows what that means and that's it! Nobody is allowed to attack us and disturb us. Everyone suddenly wants to be friends with us. That gives us wings, that helps us to withstand...We are brothers by blood and by faith, so how can we not like them. Hopefully they will help us sometime in some faraway future. When some following eight to ten centuries pass, maybe Russians will then be more needed by us than now...When we build this country and holy temples in it, our Kosovo will be our Holy land, our Zion, our Jerusalem, a second Jerusalem.

-This is still a deserted and non-built country, but in the following eight to ten centuries, we will build so many holy temples that this will become a Holy land, our Holy Kosovo, our Zion and our Jerusalem. If there is a First and Second Rome, let there be a First and Second Jerusalem. Our Kosovo will be a second Jerusalem, our Holy land, our Zion. Kosovo is in the heart of Serbia! And in our heart! In our chest! Then we will need Russians more...to defend our Zion and our Jerusalem. Let's not call them for every little thing, because of some insignificant incident on the border, or because of some theft, but when we are attacked by big ones, whether they are from the East or from the West, or both at the same time. Then it will be seen who are Serbs and Russians and what kind of brothers they are and how much they love each other. Maybe we will need them more in the twentieth or the twenty-first century than now...Then we will have more enemies than now, because we will be a rich and built country and everyone will want to conquer us. Our country is like a house in the middle of the road, everyone attacks it and wants to conquer it. Anywhere that the thieves and enemies attack us. It is like a house on a crossroads, and whoever starts, from the west or from the east, to attack our house...and thinks that they can come by, burn, rob, take what they want and continue further. He takes the youngest and dearest child from you, as if he took an ordinary thing, and without asking anyone anything, he takes the child...But he will not be able to do that always...We annoy many, those from the East and those from the West...We will need Russians more when we build holy temples like those in Jerusalem and Tsarigrad, because then it needs to be defended. Let Russians help us then, because then everyone will assault us, both from the East and from the West, because this will be the most built and the holiest country in eight to ten centuries. In the following eight to ten centuries the whole Serbia will become the Holy land, and not just Kosovo, and powerful people will hurry to conquer it jointly both from the East and from the West. Then we will need the help of Russian brothers, to defend ourselves. Nobody will be able to take away our children from us...We will more need the help of Russians in the twentieth century than now. Then everybody will assault us to get hold of our Serbia and our Holy Kosovo, because nowhere in the world there will not so many holy temples like here in the center of our state, our Kosovo. It will be a Holy Kosovo in the heart of Holy Serbia. Kosovo is in the heart of Serbia. And in our heart! In eight to ten future centuries we have enough time to build that and it will be, I tell you, our Zion, our Holy Kosovo, a second Jerusalem. They will come here for pilgrimage from all of Europe, to bow to holy temples which we will build...Where will your soul go, Ana, when you are speaking so ugly about our Russian brothers...They are the biggest and the strongest people on earth. Yellow Rujo will rule the world. They are the most numerous, and they are the strongest...If you only saw what necks their warriors have, short but fat, like in a bull,

they almost don't have them, the head grew together with the shoulders. Nobody can do anything to them, not even ten Germanics can do anything to one Russian. And at least one hundred Romans are needed to topple one Russian. Russians are our brothers and they will always help us when we need help. Russians are Serbs too, so of course they will help us. Isn't that so, Ana, if they are of our faith, then they are Serbs too, our blood. It is just that they are not aware of that, because that is hereditary. What else could they be but Serbs, and the biggest Serbs, when I tell you. They will never leave us in trouble.. Now everyone wants to be Serb, but they cannot, only Russians can do that. It is easy to understand why Russians love us so much, because they are Serbs too. Maybe they are not aware of that, but they have that feeling in their blood and that's how it is transferred through inheritance from generation to generation. They like us, but they themselves do not know why they like us, but they like us, that is important. We, in ancient times, only that has been forgotten because then there were no written history like today, lived down somewhere in the south nearby the Jews and the Greeks. We were always nearby the Jews and the Greeks and that's why we are so smart and wise like them. We were small peoples and we were attacked by great invaders, Persians, Romans, Egyptians and we had to escape a few times. We were migrating and moving towards the north, because that was the only free path, because then there were no Tatars, nor Hungarians, nor Mongolians, nor Huns, they will appear only later, they will come from the East. That's how a few times we were crossing the Carpathian Mountains and we were mixing with the Slavic tribes, and mostly with the Russian brothers, and again we were coming back, but our blood was left in our descendants, mixed with Russian. That is how we are now Slavs and Serbs and Russians. Not without Russians by any means. We and the Russian brothers have become one blood, and that's why they like us so much, brotherly blood even though they are not aware of that. All that was a long time ago, then forgotten, because it was not written. Then nobody even knew how to write. Then there were no letters or books. Only with Russians, we stick with the Russians. They are our brothers and they will never do anything bad to us...and they did not...that monk was a Bulgarian or Germanic spy...he was only pretending to be Russian. Ana, where is your soul going to go when you so unfairly blame our great Russian brothers. I never want to hear that from you again.

-God with you, prince, it is as if you have had something to drink, interrupted his brother, Stracimir, wanting to protect the princess Ana from his anger and fury- Who knows whether Russians and Serbs will exist in eight to ten future centuries, or Bulgarians or Venetians, Greeks, Germanics, Hungarians...Who knows who will rule these area in the XX or the XXI century? Who knows which and what great power will rule these areas? Who knows what is located on the other side of the great sea on the West and...maybe from that side attacked will first be the French and the Germanics, and then the whole of Europe. We should take care of today. Other empires have existed in history and other great peoples, much bigger than us, and they still disappeared, they don't exist anymore and it is as if they never existed. The swords by which Babylonians and Egyptians cut each other have been blunt and broken a long time ago. And who are they today? Nobody and nothing! As if they don't exist. Some others now rule their areas. Who know if then there will be, in nine or ten centuries, Germanics, and Romans, and Rome,...and Slavs, and Russians and us Serbs. They are huge time ranges...It is not eight to ten years, but eight to ten centuries...Who knows that? Who knows what can

happen and what changes can arise in these areas until the twentieth of the twenty-first century? Until then, all these today's peoples can disappear and some others can appear...those that are invading from Asia...Rastko will come back, when I tell you, monkhood is not for him and he will not withstand the hard novice life. He is going over the borders of his capabilities, because he does not know himself well. He is young. It is youth and likes challenges, but he tries all that and sees that it is not for him, he will come back...Well, if he really stays a monk, you still have two more sons, Vukan and Stefan and you can achieve all your plans. If you continue like this, everything achieved will again come into question. You are my brother, I see how and how much you are suffering and I am worried about your health. You have changed a lot in those few days. You are not eating, you are not sleeping, you are dispelling everyone around you, you are talking to yourself...all jobs are waiting...nobody is allowed to do anything without your knowledge and without your approval.

But the great prince sunk into his thoughts and continued to do what he wanted to do. Hopefully those Russians will help us once, we will not lose hope...it is enough that they exist and that we can scare others with them, even if they never help us, but they will help us, it is brotherly blood, isn't that so, Ana? Who? Russians disappear?! Never! You brother Stracimir, do not know what you are saying. Everyone can disappear, only Russians cannot! How is that not clear to you already? Russians are an eternal, heavenly people, and with them we are eternal too. And our names are already written in heaven...Up there we are also next to our brothers Russians and with Russians...Who else has that God's mercy, to be along with Russians and with Russians? Nobody and nobody, except us, when I tell you. Do you know how many of us and Russians there are? So many that even the number is not known. Eh...if only our Germanic Serbs were with us, which are now called Sorbs, how many of us would only be then?...Like this there is not a lot of us, but with Russians there is a lot of us...Russians can do anything, only if they want to. Russians are everything and everywhere. Anywhere you go, Russians are everywhere. They are the most numerous, they are the greatest, they are the strongest! Yellow Rujo will rule the world, when I tell you. They can do anything only if they want to...It is not important even if they don't help us, it is important that others think that they will help us and then they will not dare to touch us...Enough will be a small finger of their emperor so that other kings and emperors shake from fear, even Barbarossa...and when they hear No, no...do not touch the Serbs!...Everything is over...everyone knows what that means...they need to be good with Serbs...and everyone is running and kissing us and they always tell us: we love you Serbs...See all the things that the Russian emperor Boris can do...and how powerful he is,... that is almost unbelievable, and he drinks vodka well...a gallon bottle up...Not only their emperor, but also all Russians drink good...vodka is, they say, in our blood. We Serbs drink well too, only plum brandy. But Russians are better and must be better...Vodka is not the same as plum brandy. How their emperor drinks vodka with bottle up...so when he takes Russians into a battle...Tartars immediately get scared and runaway...We are running away, brothers Tatars, says their commander, Russians are chasing us like furious, like drunk from vodka, and when they are in such a delirium, nobody can stop them, they win all the battles...and what is even worse, you can never know when they are drunk...that is their invention with vodka...when they are drunk then they are sober, and when they are sober then they are drunk...and so you cannot know anything nor

when they are drunk nor when they are sober...Just don't touch the Russians anymore, we have only them left as real friends. And we should not call them to help us for every little thing, because of some little incident on the border, but when powerful people from the West attack or from the East, or at the same time from both sides...Then we should call our great brothers Russians...our country is located on a crossroads, and whenever someone starts to attack, those from the North, and those from the South, and those from the West and those from the East they first attack us Serbs...That was a Bulgarian or a Byzantine spy...he was only pretending...they only have interests to weaken and break our palace and our state, because they do not want a strong Serbia on their borders. We are distanced hundreds of days and nights from Russians and they did not have anything to do with this. When I tell you Ana, that was a Bulgarian or a Greek-Byzantine spy, he was only pretending to be Russian, thinking that in that way he will decrease our vigilance, knowing how much we like Russians. They know that we simply go crazy from joy when somebody tells us that Russians like us, just like brothers Croats also go crazy from joy when someone tells them that Romans or Germanics like them.

-It is even possible that the monk was Roman, a spy from Venice or even from Rome. Everything is possible...only Romans can pretend like that and treacherously do behind one's back...But that's why have our brothers Russians, the great Russians...What can you do, all small ones must have their big brother. We got hold of Russians, and Croats got hold of Romans and Germanics...But those others from the east aren't any less dangerous...Bulgarians and Greeks, Byzantines are on our borders, and not the Russians. Bulgaria and Byzantium have interests to weaken the Serbian palace and the Serbian state, and not just the Romans and the Germanics. And they do not want a strong Serbia on their borders. We only need to be vigilant, to be on our guard. Nobody wants a strong Serbia on their borders...nor Bulgarians, nor Hungarians, nor Greeks, nor Romans, but what can they do to us, we have Russians. That monk was most probably a Bulgarian spy. Russians would never do this to us, they are our brothers, the closest brothers, by faith and by blood. I tell you that Russians would never do that to us. It is not known what is worse, on our borders from the north and the west we have the Republic of Venice – Roman people, Hungarians, and Germanics are not far, and in the south and the east there are Bulgarians and Greek-Byzantines. They are all worse than Russians. The fact that I thought that Russians are doing things behind our back and head...was only my mistake. I did say that, but while I was angry...I never really thought so. Who? Russians disappear? Never. Everyone can disappear, only Russians cannot! They are an eternal and heavenly people just like us, so how can they disappear. You Stracimir, do not know what you are saying. When there is need to defend this Holy land, Russians will help. And again I say to you Ana that you should not speak badly about our brothers Russians, good Slavic soul. And, again I say, only with Russians...we should stick with Russians. Everyone is our enemy, only Russians are not. Yellow Rujo will rule the whole world, because they are the biggest and the strongest. That is our father, my dear.

-God with you, master, I am not attacking anyone, but you yourself are both attacking and defending the Russians. I only wanted to co-participate in your pain, while fighting with my own pain, which is maybe nothing smaller than your pain. The princess stopped talking there, not being allowed to speak anything further, as she was afraid that she will say something that will not be according to the will of the great

prince and make him even angrier. The great prince would still continue the speech into which nobody else would dare interrupt.

-It was no longer important who was the monk: Russian, Bulgarian, or Greek. Everything is over and all my plans are falling into water. There is no more prince Rastko, nor the princess, nor the Russian one, nor the Bulgarian one, nor the Germanic one...everything is ruined...everything achieved is again brought into question!

In such moments of resignation he wanted to direct his thought and his action into some other direction, just so that he would not go crazy, and he was holding for a straw, continuing his monologue:

-Well, if our youngest and dearest son did not want to be a prince and to marry a princess, he did not have to, who cares...if he had only stayed here and if he had married anyone...it's not important. If he could just have descendants, so that his descent and blood is continued. And in this way, by going into monks, none of that will happen. When he dies, it will be like he never existed. Nothing will stay behind him. It is as if he has already died. From the day he dies, nobody will even remember him, nor who he was nor what he was. He will be completely forgotten, immediately, after only seven days, if he stays in that faraway country. No, not even seven days, the same day when they bury him, he will be forgotten. But it could have been different. Who will remember him in eight or ten future centuries as a clergyman...Who will remember him in the XX or XXI century as a monk? Nobody and nobody, and Serbs would have remembered him as a prince, king, commander in chief and for longer than centuries, certainly. He could have been whatever he wanted to be. Serbs could have celebrated him for anything...he could have been a prince, king, commander in chief...whatever he wants...it was intended for him, and not to be a monk, clergyman, a tree without fruit, a tree which does not bear, which does not give life, or different in relation to this world...Come on, tell me who will in eight to ten centuries remember him as some anonymous monk. Who would remember some Serbian clergyman, let's say in eight to ten centuries in the future, nobody...Who will remember him in the twentieth and the twenty-first century...nobody, and if he had stayed a prince...a commander in chief...a king...extended his country...built holy temples...he would go down in history and he would be remembered forever...See, that's how it is. That is destiny. The one who can does not want to, and the one who wants to cannot...that's how it is. If he had only stayed here. He did not have to be a prince nor a ruler, if he did not want that. He could have been a mason, a cobbler or a carpenter, he could have been that too and marry some reputable honest girl from an honest and reputable caring house and have children...have descendants...the biggest joy on earth...And this way nothing...He did not even have to be a prince, nor a commander in chief, nor a prince, nor a king, if he did not want that. Nobody was forcing him. He did not have to marry a princess if he didn't want to, nor a rich girl, but some completely ordinary, even a poor girl if he wanted...If he had only married an ordinary village girl and had children, so that he is happy and so that he goes to church on Sunday with his children and his darling just like all happy people. He could have learned to be a carpenter to make cradles and stands for babies and swings, coffins and bowls for flour and milk, tripods, yokes for bullocks. Even that is better, he did not have to be a prince if he didn't want to, but only to get married and to have kids...And look what he chose, to go into monks, to be a novice...A dry tree that does not give fruits! No, no, that is not for him...he will come back home...Let him be a carpenter if he does not want to be a

prince...who cares...as long as he marries and has descendants...He could, again, live happily, to have children, to make swings, tripods and cradles, coffins for flour and bowls for cheese and milk...he can do all that if he wants to do it. As long as he is here and that he does not go to such a distance. Everything is ruined if he does not come back! Everything achieved is again brought into question. He will die and he will be forgotten as if he never even lived. What he did is worse than what the prodigal son from the Biblical story has done. The one from the Biblical story has spent his father's estate, by living promiscuously and wastefully, but at the end he repented and returned to his father and asked for forgiveness...And our son, it seems, does not have that intention...-Who knows what things that monk-spy told him and how he seduced him with lies about the beauties of a monastic life. He became a monk, and put on a monastic cassock and therefore sent a message that he will never return from the path that he has started...He voluntarily renounced family, descendants, joy, children...Children of children...the biggest joy on earth...But, a novice life is not for him...he is not used to penury...sufferings...to be barefoot and...hungry...He will not be able to withstand that. He is young and he thinks that he can do that...He still doesn't know himself well...he is searching for himself...he is testing and checking his strengths...that's why he is going over the limits of his capabilities, because he does not know himself...but when he finishes all that and when he learns where it is better for him and when he compares all that...he will regret it...he will come back, isn't it so Ana, it's not for him? When he gets hungry and cold, he will come back, I tell you...Where is it better for him than here. He doesn't have to do anything if he doesn't want to. He doesn't even have to get married, isn't it so Ana, who cares, as long as he comes back...I am still hoping and I am not losing faith... We pray to God regularly and every day...God can do anything, even bring our youngest son back...How many times have our requests and prayers to God been answered, let's pray to God this time too...Ana, we should just pray and God will help us. He will not leave us to live in desperation...God can do anything...So whatever dear God decides, let it be that way...Only He knows the meaning of everything...We cannot perceive what is the role of all this in the divine plan of creation...If God determines that our Rastko be a clergyman and a novice, and not a prince, or a carpenter or a mason...it will be that way. Maybe God is in this way testing us and our son...who will bow to whom...whose star will prevail...either Rastko will bow to our star or we will bow to his star. God knows what he is doing...God will no...hopefully...request that we bow to our child at this age. A child should listen to their parents, isn't that so, Ana...God knows what he is doing...Everything is possible to him. We should just pray.

At the palace everyone was now worried and in fear, not only what will happen further with the runaway prince, but also with the great prince. Recently he has completely changed, and he was increasingly becoming more quiet and started to fall into despondency, to withdraw into himself, and that would last for a few days, and then he would again become angry and begin to shout and without any reason he would attack anyone. So, recently, without any cause, he suddenly said to princess Ana:

-The one who got a child is still not a parent, but a parent is the one who deserves it.

He directed these words as a rebuke to himself, constantly wondering where and when he made a mistake with the youngest son. Princess Ana was carrying her sorrow in herself, but she was also thinking about the great prince and his pain. She too thought that Rastko

has heavily hurt his father, but she could not nor did she want to compare his act with the act of the prodigal son. She, with more calmness, tried to understand what happened and to comfort the great prince. She knew how much pain Rastko caused him when he said such heavy words about his son. In addition to the sorrow which arose by the departure of the favorite son from home, now, with these words about Rastko, the great prince is causing her even greater pain. The son's departure and husband's words had strongly hurt her.

-Rastko can be a lost lamb, but not a prodigal son. The great prince cannot sensibly reason in his grief which has struck him by the runaway of the youngest son to Mount Athos. Our youngest son did not squander his parent's estate, but he will increase it in spiritual gifts.

The mother better knew the son and therefore she better understood both his actions and his behavior. Even from the day that he was only ten years old and when he got lost and when a monk found him in church while he was praying, she was increasingly better meeting his loadstar. When he was sixteen years old and when the great prince, his father, gave to administer and to rule the Hum area, she noticed that Rastko was a little happy about that. Even then she already knew that the thought about war glory has left him and that he most likes to live solitary and aloof, something that his brothers Vukan and Stefan laughed at, and the great prince Nemanja, his father, looked at with a lack of understanding and sorrow. The mother already at that time noticed that Rastko is beginning to live such a life as if he is gradually renouncing this world. That was the final stage of the process of maturation which in the end leads to a complete break up and renunciation from glory and wealth. The mother knew that there was no place for him in the world in which he lived until then and she felt that he is assigned to serve what doesn't have any relation to this world and with the glory on this earth, but she herself could not know to what or how, nor when it will completely manifest itself. In recent years she was often observing him how, while hiding from the father and brothers and while running from the company with which he still did not completely break up, he falls on his knees in front of every icon and in front of every cross and in front of every entrance into the church and prays to God "to show him the way how to serve Him". She was observing him how he was becoming increasingly more generous towards poor people and beggars and all money that he gets he gives away, without keeping any money for himself. If some money is leftover for him, he donates it to the church. Often, already as a ruler and the prince of Hum, which was earlier ruled by prince Miroslav, his uncle, they saw him go out and tour his principedom not to enjoy in his power and glory, but as he was contritely collecting stones around the rusty and demolished churches and chapels and repairing them. Some villagers in his Hum area were wondering is the young prince, now a prince and their ruler, normal, when he is not enjoying in his power and lordship, but is living the most modest life of a novice. Mother Ana knew all that but she was afraid to speak about that to the great prince. She felt that there was no return there, and that the great prince is hoping in vain that his youngest son will become famous not only for his beauty and strength, but also for his bravery and for his heroism, as a fearless commander in chief and a respected ruler. She felt that he, her son Rastko, would preferably immediately show everyone in the palace, that everything that is loved and wanted in this world, needs to be hated and despised and that he would preferably walk in the clothes of a beggar and barefoot, and all his shining prince's suit he would give to

poor people and those that do not have anything. She felt that he would rather go to places where there are lepers to help them in their trouble and clean and bandage their wounds, even though that used to fill him with special disgust and repulsion. That's how the mother knew that he was in that way preparing for a spiritual accomplishment for which he was determined. Rastko himself one day confided to his mother, that in church, when he stayed alone and was praying, (he used to come first of all on prayer and always left last), heard, while listening to Gospel, that real Christ's pupils should not have new suits and footwear, but to live a poor life, to serve others and to walk barefoot and with a beggar's stick in hand. At the end that too needs to be thrown away and a person should just cover themselves with a modest mantle and tie it around themselves with some rope. He felt sorry for the poor and beggars which others, roughed in their wealth and power, in wars and debauchery, pushed away and rejected from themselves and did not receive them, but they only mocked them, chased them away from their table while they were hungry, thirsty and cold and called them danglers and cheaters.

As time went by, the great prince and princess Ana wanted to think in their solitude about their favorite son and the reasons for his runaway and monasticism. They wanted to be alone in their grief, constantly praying to God. It is as if the great prince had lost his safeness, because collapsed were his plans that Rastko steps to the forehead of the people and the state. Everything achieved was again brought into question.

But, as time passed by, the already old prince began to increasingly return his balance and peace in soul, comforting himself by saying:

-Why am I so unjust towards God? First I prayed to Him that he gives me a third son, and now I am asking and praying to God that he still does as I wish. I am sinful because of that and I am not allowed to grieve anymore. Rastko went where God invited him.

Princess Ana grieved for a long time because of the departure of her favorite son, without a goodbye and without a hug, but she knew that he was happy now, because he is living a life that he always wanted.

-God knows what he is doing and he certainly needs more Sava than we need Rastko.

Even if we lost Rastko in something, we all also gained someone who will know how to pray for all of us and to spiritually bring us closer to God. Even from his early youth it could be seen that by the beauty of his body and soul he is surpassing his peers. Even as a child he fascinated us all with his cleverness. He was always of a pure heart and a bright mind. He zealously stayed in church during the whole religious service, kissed the fasting, and avoided babbling and inappropriate laughter and jokes. He hated rude words and dissolute songs. He was always gentle, attentive and tame, kind towards everyone. Like seldom anyone he kissed the poor and he liked monks and the monastic act. He also protected and defended animals and he would get out of the way of ants only so that he doesn't bother it or so that he doesn't step on it – she increasingly frequently began to say to Nemanja, to whom it increasingly brought peace in his soul...

Little by little Nemanja also returned his balance and realized that nothing can any longer have an effect or change in the decision of the youngest son, and with peace in his soul he gradually began to accept the decision of the youngest son to become a monk. He began to spend increasingly more time outside walking in the forest which was gradually returning peace in his soul. Recently he even submitted to the spiritual

influence of his favorite son. He began to frequently send him gifts due to personal wellbeing and to give to others. And so, gradually, as the letters were more frequently coming from Mount Athos and were retorted with gifts, Sava's parents completely overcame their sorrow and as proper Christians they began to think about the example of their son. Even now Nemanja for a moment remembered the prophecy of the clergymen from the East and Mount Athos which were in his palace just before Rastko's birth, eighteen years ago, but he did not say anything about it to princess Ana, neither now nor later.

In letters which were sent to his son Nemanja called him a father and a teacher and a representative at God, being ashamed to call him his son. They were also ashamed of their selfishness and ingratitude towards God, because he gave them a child into whose hands they can submit *"both their home and their souls."* *"And we are all in your will"* – they always ended their letters to son Rastko, now monk Sava. A long time did not pass, and through Mount Athos it was heard that the son of a Serbian ruler came to live amongst the ascetics, so everyone wanted to see him. The archclergyman of all Mount Athos monks, upon finding out who and whose Sava is, on the actual day of Annunciation approved his transfer into the biggest Mount Athos monastery Vatopedi, where the former prince was produced into a monk.

After that Sava wrote a letter to his parents in which he is asking and advising his father:

-Nobody should be kissed more than God. Because it was said: Who kisses a father or a mother more than me God, is not worthy of me. That's why I tell my holy father: Let my advice to you be pleasant as good: despise the earthly kingdom and wealth as inconstant and worthless; leave the world and its wonders and all visible treasures as vain and short-lived: spend a night with me so that you could, with prayer and fasting, meet God purer. And the good Mrs. and my mother should in the same way, among her people, separate from everything towards God.

Not long after this Sava's letter, the parents listened to the advice of their favorite son and they became monks. Nemanja took a monk's name Simeon, and Ana became monk Anastasija.

Sava wrote to them again. *–Only in that way we will be able to best prepare for the eternal life in heavens. This short-lived life on earth is only a dream and an apparition*–he ended his letter.

The brotherhood of the monastery in the beginning with curiosity watched how the recent prince Rastko Nemanjic, now monk Sava, will manage in the new environment, in which he is residing for the first time. Many have thought that a scarce and a strenuous life and work of a monk will not suite him. He grew up in a ruling palace in abundance and comfort. Maybe these are, they thought, only transitory wishes of the young man which likes to tryout his strengths just like the majority of young people of his age. But Sava was already spiritually well prepared and he had his objective to which he wanted to devote his whole life – to follow Christ's teaching and to kiss God. That's why everyone noticed that he was quickly adapting to the life in the monastery. He did not have any separate requests and needs. For days and nights he learns languages, studies old handwritings, adopts the rules of the monastery life and he regularly prays to God. It was already said about him in Mount Athos:

-His soul is the most beautiful God's gift, a gift that can be desired. A gift to our Mount Athos and our Orthodoxy.

In Mount Athos Sava had found all that he strived for, and the ability to completely be devoted to prayer and asceticism. In the monastery Vatopedi an excellent library was located, where Sava learned Greek and Armenian and read much in order to quench his inexhaustible hunger for knowledge. He began to tour in order monasteries of Mount Athos, but also the monks which secluded themselves and lived in caves and dents on steep cliffs of Athos, completely devoting themselves to prayer and asceticism. And the other Mount Athos monasteries (Greek, Russian, Georgian) were to Sava everything that he needed: centers of culture and literature, museums, libraries and schools.

-Sava was fascinated by everything that he saw on Mount Athos, and especially the accomplishments of lonely ascetics and old men or holy people, as they called them. A few times Sava asked the prior of the monastery Vatopedi that he also be allowed to be secluded in a desert and to completely devote himself to asceticism and prayer, but the prior did not approve that to him. That's why he took up the strictest asceticism, living in the monastery itself. During the day he served the monastic brothers, and during the night he learned and spend time in prayer. With such his life at a very young age Sava was a wonder even in Mount Athos. He did all the monk activities, and because of his modesty he became favorite everywhere. But the constant day and night work and prayer debilitated him so much that he almost became bodiless in his thinness. With the light of the candles and old icons, once famous for his beauty and strength, like his father and brothers, now he seemed to Greek monks as a moving shadow. From food he was only taking some bread and water. As he was always walking barefoot, the skin on his feet became so strong that not even sharp stones nor steep Mount Athos cliffs could hurt him or injure him. From one to the other Mount Athos monastery he would always go barefoot and he would carry food and water to those which secluded themselves and were starving in the depths of the chasms and in caves, dented in steep, Mount Athos cliffs. With gold and other gifts which his father as the Serbian ruler sent him, he began to construct multiple story monasteries and numerous cells, thinking also about how to bring his father one day to together spend their life devoted to God and prayer in monastic silence. *-All conditions for that are fulfilled, he renounced power and became a monk, he is already wearing a cross and he completely devoted himself to Orthodoxy –* thought Sava.

While working and learning in the monastic library, Sava used to find in papers much about the life of an ascetic and their accomplishments, just like he listened about them from the monks from the East which were coming to the palace of his father while he was still a child. Such holy ascetics were firm Christians, full of faith and desire to uplift in moral improvement. He was especially impressed by the lives and the accomplishments of the saints: Jovan Rilski, Prohor Pcinjski, Jovan Biogorski, Gavriilo Lesnovski, Joakim Osogovski, Jovan Vladimir and others. From monastic stories which he listened to as a child and now in the papers about the lives of those saints and ascetics, he was strengthening in the knowledge that they, with their life and accomplishments, contributed to enrooting of Christianity in our people. He could, also, see that those old hermits were distancing themselves from the world in order to be able to carry out their mission, but also that the world was going after them drawn by their actions and accomplishments.

About The Author

Petar Stojaković was born in 1945. He graduated from the Faculty of Philosophy in Sarajevo. He finished his postgraduate studies at the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade and got his PhD title at the Faculty of Philosophy in Sarajevo, where he later worked as a professor of psychology. After that he got a job as a professor at the Faculty of Philosophy in Banjaluka, where he worked until his retirement. He published many scientific books and expert essays in the field of psychology (thirty books), as well as textbooks for psychology for all the levels of education, from preschool to the university level. As a scientist and a lecturer in the field of psychology, he dealt with studying the connection between psychology and other sciences, especially literature (the connection between psychology of creativity and literature). He worked at universities in the USA (he was included in Fulbright program several times) and Canada for many years. In 2010 he was chosen for a foreign member of the Serbian Academy of Education in Belgrade. Beside his work at the university and his scientific work, he did literary work and he wrote four novels, three collections of short stories and four volumes of essays on books and writers until now. He lives in Banjaluka (The Republic of Srpska, Bosnia and Herzegovina) and he is still engaged in scientific and literary work.

