



This is My Own (1940). *In the Year of Our Lord* by Rockwell Kent.

Islam, Catholicism and Orthodoxy: The Matrices of Conceptual Transfer

By Rusmir Mahmutćehajić

Beyond the modern outlook

Today, as always in times past, humankind's image of Reality and Reality itself need to be reconciled with one another. Never before, though, has there been more experience for such an undertaking than now. In this experience, confirmation could once again be found for the view that human liberation from fear and hatred can be achieved through a shift in the understanding of Reality and its images; for Reality itself remains essentially unalterable and, as such, independent of all its images. It is only through assent to human openness towards the Absolute that every image of the world shows itself to be contingent, and that the human individuals who hold that image are beings whose original and final nature may be guaranteed only by the humility and generosity through which they draw perpetually nearer to the better and distance themselves from the worse. If, on the other hand, the image is taken for the Absolute, individuals elevate themselves above it and inevitably commit violence against themselves, the world and God. These two opposing possibilities must be distinguished one from another if our insight into the causes and effects of fear are to have a surer foothold in the human quest for original and final perfection.

If the conflicting identities in the Balkans are sketched out as they are today, here – as in every other similar situation world-wide – it is possible to opt for differing ways of construing their relations. One of these is by defining their ethnic identities, which are demarcated along political, cultural and economic fault-lines. The tensions at those demarcation

lines, which manifest themselves as fear and hatred, are not a perpetual condition. The prevailing understanding of these tensions is reached through the modern outlook on this condition of both the human individual and society, which is taken to be the only one capable of shedding light on the human predicament. The majority of contemporary analysts are unaware that there is another possible way, different in principle, of seeing humankind and the world. And even if they acknowledge its existence, they accord it lesser value and a subordinate position in the absolutizing images that have arisen and are upheld in the era of modernity. The problem is that an understanding of the nature of these images cannot simply be transposed from one era to another, nor set in some unalterable relationship with one another or transposed from one outlook, one mindset to another.

Every self can be said to be the other facet or manifestation of the Self that is the root of all things. Here too, in construing this self/Self differentiation, two wholly contradictory approaches are possible. In the first, the Self is the first principle of all things: which means that there can be no self without the Self. Reason is a lower degree of potential of the self in its orientation towards the Self. This orientation leads to the ultimate limits of the quantifiable, measurable world in which its potential to raise itself towards the Self, as the foundation of all, is still present. In the second approach, the principle of the self lies in its basest content – in a drop of dark matter. Here, reason is its highest potential, in which the self achieves itself as the ultimate level of all existence. In this, it is self-sufficient in its opting for the best choice among the innumerable multiplicity of ends towards which the course of history runs.

The concepts of tradition and modernity may be associated with these differing outlooks in the light of their predominant content. The totality of existence is arrayed from the Highest towards the lowest in the traditional view, and from the lowest to the highest in the modernist. Since human individuals, too, are located on that vertical axis, their existence includes the descent to lower levels and the ascent to higher levels. Their origin, too, may derive from above or below – from the word, or from matter. Derivation from above is the correlate of creation, that from below is the correlate of evolution. If the self is created or derived, it reflects the Creator or the Word, as denoted by the words of the Torah and the Recitation¹: *So God created man in his own image, in the*

*image of God created be him*²; *We indeed created Man in the fairest stature*³. Here the Word is the creative principle, the beginning and end of all things⁴.

In both cases the presence of evil is inherent in the issue of this differentiation, which leads to tension in the world and orientation towards the Absolute. If the basis of the mindset is the lower and lesser, human development, or the ascent from humankind's dark origins, should mean a distancing from evil. The reality of humankind, society and the world, however, does not bear evidence to this. With evolution, the enigma of evil becomes ever more complex, with the result that most modern ideologies have given up even trying to find answers to it. In the outlook that sees creation arrayed in descending order, from the Truth – which is to say from the wholly good – to contingent or conditional modes of manifestation and existence, the human potential for free will remains embroiled in the inevitability of good and evil: for evil is an attribute of the quantifiable world, which means that it belongs, too, to humankind and all its views and interpretations. Evil cannot be overcome, then, solely by that which is constrained and confined within the world and the human individual.

Demarcations and tensions between ethnic identities, which inevitably involve the issue of good and evil, can characterize the relations between ethnic identities – as it might be Serbs, Croats, Bosniacs and others. If these terms are taken to mean national demarcations, it is

¹ Here the noun “recitation” is used as a translation of the Arabic word al-Qur’an, the original meaning of which is “recitation”, “reading”, “narrating”. It is also the name given to the entire Divine Revelation to the Prophet Muhammad. The Recitation takes the shape of an entire book with signs (*ayat*) and images (*sura*).

² Gen 1:27

³ Sura 95:4. [Except where otherwise noted, Qur’anic quotations are from the translation by Arthur J. Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964. *Trans.*]

⁴ Here it is important to refer to the perennial religious teachings on God’s creation by the Word. The creative Word in the Recitation, *kun*, corresponds to the Biblical *fiat*. This is not *flatus vocis*. It infers being in truth. Creation has purpose, although God has no purpose other than Himself. *And when He decrees a thing, He but says to it “Be”, and it is* (Sura 2:117); *and the day He says “Be”, and it is; His saying is true* (Sura 6:73). This corresponds to the words at the start of the Torah: *And God said, Let there be light: and there was light* (Gen. 1:3). The same notion is to be found in Psalm 33 (v.6): *By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.* Creation, then, is an annunciation in which God speaks of Himself. [All Biblical quotations are from the 1611 Authorized Version of King James VI. *Trans.*]

worth noting that their most important element – the presence and influence of national ideologies – is an input from modernity. It is in these that the beginnings of national awareness, the foundation of the state, and the focus on its future realization in conformity with the given ideological image are construed. In this view, the initial vision, its champions, and their initial achievements encounter resistance from others, who come from the ranks of outsiders or traitors. The course of history is cut short by some disruption or disaster; and it is here that suffering and death, errancy and expectation begin. The decline is halted by a new pure nucleus which takes upon itself the promise, and undertakes to shape a new beginning in which all the values of the chosen model will be understood and reinforced. The self-understanding of this nucleus is that it is the finest expression of the misunderstood and forgotten in the national totality. Its “we” is totally exclusive: all those who do not accept its construction of reality and its appeal remain beyond the bounds of the declared homogeneous entity, as an obstacle that must be removed. Their alterity cannot be translatable through the unicity of the transcendent authority of the Self. Religion and the sacred tradition are coopted and exploited by modern ideologies, but are always in a subordinate position. In this neither the Word nor the Name that both permeate and transcend every individual entity of language, meaning and symbol are recognized.

The modern understanding of humankind, society and the world is an outlook that differs from one era and region to another. If, for example, history and religion, and their concomitant narratives, have acquired distinct and differing images in Bosnia’s modern identities within the various ideological entities, comparing them with real or imaginary perceptions from earlier periods could contribute to identifying reasons for tolerance. As well as an organized society, experienced as the reality, there are also other experiences: the spiritual experiences of order as expressed in prophecy, metastatic faith, apocalypse and gnosis, described by Eric Voegelin as “the in-depth differentiations of the ground of being by mysticism on which are based tolerance and the balancing of the symbolism of order by the ineffability; further still the experiences of rebellion with the corresponding ‘philosophies of history’ and their mass movements, and so on.”⁵

Religious teachings, rituals and virtues, with meanings that were markedly different in premodern times, are a part of the existing ideological tensions that have modern civilization as their framework. Understanding these differences is a prerequisite for a transformation of the prevailing tensions of the individual, society and history. Contemporary fear of the Other, and the hatred that it gives rise to, incorporate the languages, meanings and symbols of tradition into modern ideologies. Tradition is thereby inverted, and transformed into its opposite. The fears of one period are simply transposed to times when traditional languages, meanings and symbols have essentially different ontological implications. From this emerges an interpretation of history as an uninterrupted welling-up of hatred. Modernity, with its ideology and all its consequences for the circumstances of the individual and society, is justified by appeal to its links with ancient roots. But the heart of the question remains: how is modernity linked with tradition; how did the notion of the autonomy of the self and the sufficiency of reason to build a social order without the need for a transcendent foundation arise?

These questions are inseparable from the entanglement of two languages, the modern and the traditional. The failure to articulate their differences is a barrier to establishing relations that could become the translation of one and the same perennial teachings into a multiplicity of languages, meanings and symbols, for only thus would it be possible to identify the extent to which adopted interpretations and emerging images of humankind, society and the world have been mutilated. The history of the Bosnian case offers paradigmatic experiences for the potential premised in these terms. In that country, differing Christologies that are a part both of the traditional outlook – as their essential compo-

⁵ Eric Voegelin, *Anamnesis*, trans. and ed. Gerhart Niemeyer, Columbia: University of Missouri Press., 1990, p. 207.

ment – and of the modern – where they take the form of resistance to ideological blueprints – have met and collided throughout history⁶.

Unbroken continuity

Every ideological identity strives to justify itself by reference to history and to demonstrate its unbroken continuity of evolution from some archetypal nucleus that it preserves, transmits and confirms. This is the normal and prevailing concept or illusion of modern ideology, central to which are the arrogation and understanding of the self as wholly autonomous and sufficient in itself to construct the social order. The ramparts of this undertaking are the Enlightenment and rationalism. In this view, the claimed unbroken continuity can be demonstrated in two ways. A clear differentiation of these two modes could contribute to a better understanding of old and new tensions of the identity-based I/we towards the Other. Tolerance is the measure of tensions at the interface of that duality of identity.

The first mode is through a fundamentalist perspective. Here archetypal phenomena of the self and/or of society are defined, and there is always some time and place associated with them in which the Word has potential unity with Reality, since when Reality has parted company with

⁶ The term Christology is used here to designate a theological understanding of Jesus Christ (Christos, Messiah, Mesih, the Anointed One), particularly as regards his nature. Although the Gospel describes Jesus Christ in various ways, neither Christ's revelation of himself nor the narratives of his disciples concerning him need be regarded as Christological, since ecclesiastical reflections on the nature of the person of Jesus Christ did not appear until the first centuries of the early Church. Both the Gospels and the epistles of St Paul emphasize both the human and the divine nature of Jesus Christ. The early Church was soon drawn into an acrimonious and exhaustive debate on the nature of Christ. Towards the end of the first century the Docetists who, like the Greeks, equated sin with the corporeal, believed that Christ had only apparently taken on human form. They also believed that Jesus's earthly life, suffering and death were almost wholly illusory. The Ebionites denied the divinity of Christ, and asserted that he was only a human being. The early Church was thus faced with two opposing standpoints. The flames of the debate were stoked in the fourth century by Arius's interpretation of Jesus Christ as having neither eternal nor divine nature. The Church Fathers proclaimed the divinity of Jesus Christ and his oneness with the Father at the Council of Nicaea in 325 CE. The debate on the dual nature of Jesus Christ continued, for all that, over the ensuing centuries. Proffering and advocating various notions and interpretations became an open-ended and ramifying trend. The mediaeval experience of the Bosnian *Krstjani*, followers of the distinct Bosnian church, also belongs in that much-ramified debate.

the Word and become increasingly a denial and betrayal of it. The Word, however, no longer exists as one and the same presence, but “sinks” into history. The guardians and interpreters of the Word, as they claim and many believe, know how to eliminate the fissures and rifts that external enemies and internal inconsistencies have produced. This knowledge, as proposed by those who claim ownership of it, can be materialized in a remoulding of society around the “pure centre.” Its modern, ideological nature is what determines this bid for social change as the final and complete moulder of human destiny. In the ideological blueprint, it would be the means of “returning,” through social action, to the “golden age,” which would be to achieve a society without tensions or wholly focused on eliminating them. In such a link with the archetype, in or through which the Truth is manifest in human speech, the sequence of transmission from one generation to the next is repudiated. Anything that happened between the archetypal beginning and the unacceptable present is denied and rejected as a “betrayal.” The “pure nucleus” represents itself as the possessor of knowledge and the link with the paragon society in the distant past. Its “we” subjugates all those who associate themselves with it and excludes all those who do not. There is nothing above it to which it would bear witness in submission.

The other mode is the conception and realization of the national state, an undertaking that also accepts the view of the course of history as flowing from the constructed beginning to the new inversion: the sea change. In this view, historical circumstances have impeded the full evolution to social and state power. The original formula, however, has undergone all kinds of trials and transformations. This model is adopted by the new national elite, which sets it at the heart of the ideology that adopts, develops or assumes an appropriate philosophy of history. Here the construction of a new social order is shifted to a level that transcends the individual: the promised order becomes a god to which the individual is subject. There are no external interdicts to that relation between the given order in history and the individual who materializes it. The ideological elite proclaims itself, and subjugates its disciples to itself as the possessor of knowledge; its members bridge the temporal disjuncture between the distant archetype and the disordered present whose reshaping into order they promise. This is a reshaping of society and state in the quantifiable world, whose boundaries, and the content they

encompass, are defined by a rational blueprint to which all available and sustainable means are permissible.

In both cases – the fundamentalist and the nationalist – “we” designates the “pure centre.” In this view, everything that lies outside it is represented as an immature or hostile element in history, the elimination or destruction of which is justified by equating the ideological “we” and the inexorable course of history, or truth itself. In each case it is possible to reconstruct both the scientific and the religious image of humankind, society and the world into constructs from that pure centre. The expression “I” in relation to the higher levels of being cannot surpass that ideological “we.” The self is thereby closed and isolated, and its foundations reduced to society, or rather to the image of society proposed by the ideological interpretation. The openness of the self to the Self is repudiated for the sake of the assumption that society can be reshaped according to formulae that are compatible with the rational attitude to nature and its matter.

Tradition has its own self-imposed constraints that the Enlightenment lacks. This difference should be recognized and given shape in selfhood. As long as the Divine interdict has meaning, there remains the potential for soul-searching and the openness of the self to the Foundation in which lies the guiding call to the good. To acknowledge the interdict means to accept that the Good does not depend on the individual, but that it is the individual’s perpetual and inexhaustible potential. If the interdict is disrupted, the potential for constraints within the traditional entity also vanishes. The correlate of this is the two differing responses to the cruciality of the Divine decree – the human and the satanic. After violating the Divine interdict and succumbing to temptation, leading to the Fall from the original condition, humankind acknowledged: *Lord, we have wronged ourselves!*⁷ Satan’s response is the opposite: *Now, for Thy perverting me . . .*⁸ In these two patterns of consciousness of the relationship between the contingent and the Absolute, the created and

⁷ Sura 7:23

⁸ Sura 7:16

the Eternal, are comprised two views or voices in the human centre.⁹ The first view or voice accepts its existence as a long submission to the Absolute, which is external, and yet such that there is no interiority that it does not encompass. The second view or voice repudiates the Absolute, and sees its own interiority as sufficient for its own self-rule. In the first view, the individual is perpetually facing the Truth; in the second, the individual confronts the totality of the material world. Submission and humility are the nature of the first condition, pride and power of the second. Tradition is the domain of the first, modernity of the second of these two mindsets.¹⁰ In these views, the issues of evil and good, of rights and duties are addressed differently; their origins and purpose, too, are different.

In the modern view, impediments to the evolution of the original nucleus are understood as external and objective circumstances. In this view, evil comes from without; it is a subjective fact for humankind, not the reflection of the state of the individual self. The division of phenomena into being and knowledge is transformed, when the link with the Logos is lost, into a duality of distinct and apparently self-sufficient forms of existence. Each of them may impose itself on another as superior and greater. The greater the force of that imposition, the wider the gulf between being and knowledge, and the more numerous the damaging consequences in the human individual and in the world. By influencing and changing these circumstances, this environment, it is possible, in the ideological image of humankind, society and the world, to ensure the full manifestation of this nucleus of social evolution. Natural and social circumstances are what mould every individual, and thus changes to nature or nurture lead to the elimination of these hindrances in the human individual.

⁹ In the modern meaning of the terms *Satan* and *hell* it is hard to find anything corresponding to their meaning in traditional speech. Here the differentiation advocated between the modern and the traditional viewpoint implies the ability of the reader to understand that Satan and hell are in the individual. See, for example, Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, "Who is 'Satan' and Where is 'Hell'?", in *Coomaraswamy: Selected Papers, Metaphysics*, ed. Roger Lipsey, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977, pp. 23-33.

¹⁰ The term *tradition* corresponds, more or less, to the Arabic *din* and the Latin *religio*. This is the top-down sequence that is wholly inverse to the modern evolutionary picture of development from the lesser to the greater. See, for example, Huston Smith, *Forgotten Truth: The Common Vision of the World's Religions*, San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1992.

Tradition sees things the other way around. No external circumstances can prevent the self either from distorting its original rectitude or from finding itself there once again. Different levels of human potential, manifest in degrees of will, love and knowledge, retain both oblivion and recollection. Distortion or decline is an expression of forgetfulness, while the rediscovery of rectitude derives from recollection, which is none other than perpetual openness of the self to the Self. The basis of all creation, as a whole and in all its elements, is the one and the same word. That it is always one and the same can be confirmed by the multitude of its expressions or traditions. As soon as a given tradition, which is *per se* both exclusive and inclusive, denies that link with the unicity of the creative or original word, which is ever the same, it can no longer be translated into another traditional language, nor, retaining its fullness, can it receive and acknowledge that same principled inclusivity and exclusivity of every other tradition. But when tradition is thus reduced to untranslatability, its denial and violent denigration of others becomes the only way for it to affirm itself, though this affirmation is a mere fantasy of privilege and power. Exclusivity and inclusivity with the Logos are then reduced to the denial and annihilation of the other for the sake of idols by which openness to the Truth is turned into *ideology*.

At various periods these two mindsets have been present in different ways and had different impacts. Modernity has arrogated to itself superiority over the traditional; but its experiences of ordering the world have undermined its delusions of superiority. This facilitates a discussion on the traditional understanding of humankind, society and the world, the doctrines, rituals and virtues of which modernity repudiates entirely. Given the prevailing disruptions, violence and destruction of modernity, this raises the question of whether it is possible to restore an intellectuality in which different traditions would be recognized as different expressions of one and the same Logos, and whether they would become translatable through this intellectuality, which would imply the other ceasing to be *a priori* the unalterable facet of the unknown that prompts fears and is reflected in hatred.

Fear and knowledge

Tensions between societies and communities are a reflection of the state of the individual selves that form those communities. Fear of the

other depends on the porosity of the boundaries between them and the knowledge of what lies beyond them. One could say that when the relationship between “us” and “them” is one of tension, it amounts to the sum total of the individual fears of the members of one collectivity in regard to another. When these fears persist, they manifest themselves as hatred. The demarcation line of the individual or collective self in regard to alterity is thus the occasion for fear or hatred, with the presence and nature of the unknown or alien other as the source of fear. If the self is that which knows, knowledge is the relationship between it and the known; and the known is everything within and external to the self. It is a process that acquires its mutability from Reality and gives of itself to Reality. There is, as a result, a tension in knowledge to which there are two facets. If both are quantifiable, comparing them cannot be without residue: there are always differences between them. But if one facet is the Absolute, the other is merely its sign or manifestation. Beyond the bounds of individuality, therefore, there remain two possibilities: the first is finitude, the second the Absolute. In finitude, everything is possessed of duality or comparability; but the Absolute is one and only, like nothing else and not to be compared with anything else. If there is no world beyond the quantifiable, comparison or translation is never without residue. In consequence, ignorance of alterity is insoluble. Inherent in every bestowal of trust in alterity there is also an unresolvable fear.

If, on the other hand, the relationship between the phenomena of the quantifiable world is reduced to the expression of voluntary submission to the Absolute, fear of the other as a quantifiable expression becomes transposed from the Unquantifiable to a differentiation of awareness with the testimony that there is no self other than the Self. Then the one and the same Self, the one and the same Word, the one and the same Truth lies beyond the boundaries of the self. Every individual turns to that Self with the potential of experiencing It through Its Name, while maintaining the diversity of doctrines and rituals.

The greater the ignorance of what lies beyond the boundaries, the stronger the fear of that unknown. As a result, fear and knowledge are interdependent as well as conditioned by the absence of an awareness of the self that may always and everywhere be witnessed and called to. The demarcation line between the self and its alterity may be permeable, or may be crossed by a forcible incursion into alterity in order to subjugate

or know it, or both. The attitude towards alterity may take different forms – discovery or translation into one’s own language, inclusion within it to the accompaniment of changes to or loss of the previous distinctive identity, enduring the other and different, taking possession of all that lies beyond the boundary, or wreaking havoc on or annihilating the other. Be that as it may, the mutuality of fear, permeability of boundaries and knowledge is identifiable, and can be algebraically designated with the formula:

$$F = M (I)$$

where F = fear, I=Ignorance, and M = the manner of their mutuality.

Given that contemporary fear is in some way an extension of previous fears and, as a result, invariably the uneffaced imprint of earlier traumas in the totality of the human being; and given, too, that during the past millennium its duration in Bosnia has been defined by two important dividing lines – the first in the fifteenth century, when Muslims became an additional element of the Bosnian self and alterity, and the second in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when the modern ideological delineation and remoulding of humankind, society and the world began – insights into alterations of knowledge of the self and others call for a definition and comparison of the essential elements of past and present fears of the other. This consideration is aimed at developing a procedure for the comparison of present-day or modern (F^m) and traditional (F^t) fears in Bosnian society, applying them to selected examples of modern understanding of the relationships between different identities and their imposition on premodern concepts. This is expected to facilitate an understanding of forthcoming shifts from modern ideologies to a new presence of intellectuality of which the essence is the perennial wisdom.

If it can be reliably ascertained that the fears and hatred between Bosniacs, Croats and Serbs are the cause of the dangerous tensions among them, tensions that cannot be brought into equilibrium, alleviating them is possible by a diminution of ignorance about themselves and others and of the impermeability of the boundaries with the unfamiliar or unknown. Given the impact of the lasting tensions in question, alleviating or eliminating them is a need common to every participant in the country’s social diversity.

The principal ignorance in modern ethno-national ideologies appears to lie in the understanding of the place and role of religious differences. The reason for this is the diminished importance of religion in the modern mindset, and the determination to treat it as such in periods that are epistemically ordered by a wholly different view of humankind, society and the world. Since the state of the individual self in the modern mindset is subordinate to the undertaking of remoulding society, it would be worth bringing the fears among Catholics, Muslims and Orthodox¹¹ into a more clearly articulated relationship with their knowledge one of the other. Here the qualitative mutuality between these concepts in the contemporary or modern and the traditional eras of Bosnian society will be introduced:

$$\begin{bmatrix} F_c^m \\ F_m^m \\ F_o^m \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} C^m C^m & C^m M^m & C^m O^m \\ M^m C^m & M^m M^m & M^m O^m \\ O^m C^m & O^m M^m & O^m O^m \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} I_c^m \\ I_m^m \\ I_o^m \end{bmatrix}$$

where F_c^m , F_m^m and F_o^m are the fears of Catholics, Muslims and Orthodox in the modern era; $C^m C^m$, $C^m M^m$, $C^m O^m$ the attitudes of Catholics towards themselves, Muslims and Orthodox, or the impermeability of the boundaries of one self towards its own openness and towards others, in all the mutualities here under consideration (and *mutatis mutandis* for Muslims and Orthodox), and I_c^m , I_m^m and I_o^m stand for the ignorance of Catholics, Muslims and Orthodox in that same era.

If this same ratio is set in the previous qualitative matrix equation to relate to the particularities of religious communities in Bosnian society of the fifteenth century, the Bosnian Krstjani, followers of the Bosnian Church¹², should be substituted for the Muslims.

¹¹ Although this consideration is rhetorically confined to Christian-Muslim relations, with particular reference to the Bosnian experience, it is essentially inseparable from the direct and indirect presence and involvement of the Jewish element in each of the phenomena with which this study deals.

¹² The Bosnian Krstjani were members of the strictly organized Bosnian Church, the existence of which is inseparable from the various forms taken by the Bosnian state and society from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries. They regarded themselves as the “true apostolic church”, and were resolutely opposed to both the Catholic and the Orthodox churches. The phenomenon as a whole forms a particularity of doctrine, ritual and structure, which regarded its justification and interpretation as an unbroken and faithful descent of the tradition from Christ to their own spiritual leaders. They called their community the Bosnian Church, and themselves Krstjani. Others, against their will, called them Patarenes, heretics, Manicheans, Bogomils, Babuni, and so forth.

Impermeability at the interface between different selves may also be represented by the untranslatability of their languages, meanings and symbols. Thus if, for example, the doctrines, rituals and virtues given shape by Catholicism suit or fit one self, the boundary between that self and the Muslim or Orthodox self is impermeable to the extent that their doctrinal and ritual languages, meanings and symbols are untranslatable. Translatability means that, notwithstanding their distinctiveness as a whole, different sacred languages, meanings and symbols invariably express the one and the same Ineffable that is their root and fruit, their beginning and their end, their interiority and their exteriority. Adherence to the inexpressible that confirms unicity, and that unicity in turn multiplicity, is an element of every tradition in the original meaning of the term. It is the relationship of the manifest to the Nonmanifest or of the spoken to the Silence¹³.

It is precisely here that there lies the differentiation between the modern and the traditional outlooks on the potential for changes to fear. In the traditional view, the ultimate cause of fear is the absolute: fear of the absolute liberates the individual from all other fears. The Self then manifests Itself as utter alterity to the totality of being that phenomena manifest and to which they bear witness. As a result, each individuality, including every language, regardless of its distinctive features, maintains the link with the Absolute and through it is translatable into every other individuality, while at the same time preserving and enhancing its own particular nature. This totality of existence reveals the Truth: in humankind is summed up all of existence, and the individual human self is the concentrated totality of the universe. They are like two mirrors in which the Self reveals itself in the selves and the outer world of existence. Language, meaning and symbols may differ, just as monastery, church, synagogue and mosque are different, but in all of them, with the mention of God's Name, the one and the same Word is present, transcending their spatial and temporal measure. It is through that Word that they are inter-translatable, and cannot be reduced solely to ratios of quantity and power.

If humankind, society and the world are wholly within the scope of

¹³ For this consideration it is instructive to refer to the opening words of the Recitation (Sura 2:1-3): *That is the book, wherein is no doubt, a guidance to the godfearing who believe in the Unseen.*

rational potential, they are quantifiable. Ineffability and unquantifiability must be either disregarded or repudiated. Liberation from fear assumes a knowledge of all that is outside of and contrary to the individual. But this is simultaneously to postulate that everything that exists may be contrary to the human being who will transcend it. In this view, the universe is not identical to the human being. Its signs do not speak of the truth in the same way as can human beings who remember their original and final perfection.

The impossibility of simple transfer

Present-day Bosnian society is paradigmatic of the world as a whole. Although historically, territorially and linguistically one, it is divided into opposing ethnic, religious and political entities, known today as Bosniacs, Croats and Serbs. These are not religious communities; but in their ethno-national and political ideologies, religion is an element without which, it seems, the existence of these different entities in their entirety would not be possible. Religion retains the consciousness of historical existence, but its doctrines, rituals and virtues have become subjugated and reshaped in order to be coopted into the ideological blueprint. The key concepts of religion are losing the meanings that they had in traditional intellectuality, meanings that are commonly inverted to the opposite of their original sense. The endeavour to use those altered meanings to describe and study past historical phenomena invariably leads to a flawed or distorted picture. Today's Christianity – both Orthodox and Roman Catholic – and Islam are not and cannot be the same concepts and phenomena with the same meanings that belonged to them in any earlier era. The simple transposition of today's meanings to other periods cannot but do violence to the process of presenting and interpreting historical phenomena. The consequences of this are the loss of religious intellectuality and its original, authentic meaning. The language, meanings and symbols of religious doctrine and ritual are losing their links with virtue. Their cooption into ideological narratives and social undertakings deprives them of their link with the supra-individual. In this way they acquire an existence that is detached from the Foundation and is construed as reality itself. There follows from this a distortion of awareness, which gives rise to grotesque social phenomena of which the worst forms are the massive violence and destruction of the twentieth century.

Unicity manifest in the apparent duality of the self and the Self is riven apart. The awareness of humankind, society and the world becomes frozen into one or other of its images, and in so becoming, its alterability is denied. There is no more reality of the self, and the contingent images that the self has accepted are thus declared to be absolute. The human individual, society and the world, which are undeniably out of kilter with that image, must be transformed. This collision between the human remoulding of the world to bring it into conformity with an absolutized image, on the one hand, and the eternally unseizable reality, on the other, takes on a grotesque manifestation in which political power inevitably gives rise to suffering, death and destruction.

This paper aims to indicate this relationship between the contemporary image of Bosnia – in the modern and the traditional outlooks – and the way it was remodelled in the transitional period of the fifteenth century.

Contemporary phenomena and the extension of the power of modern structures have not left a single corner of the world untouched. It may well be, though, that they manifest themselves paradigmatically in the Bosnian individual and social reality more clearly than anywhere else. It was a society that, intuitively or consciously, fostered the desire to maintain an equilibrium between and right to differences. Its modern fate reflects global circumstances as a whole. As a result, it is possible to recognize and study in its language, meanings and symbols, which are associated with religious differences, the major instances of distortion of the religious in modernity and vice versa.

The key concepts of Religion may take different forms and have different meanings, but as long as they belong to religion they cannot lose their link with the Ground of being. When this loss does nonetheless occur, they become coopted into ideological discourse, in which the interdict at the centre of human openness acquires the form of unchallengeable ideological postulates. This corresponds to the teaching about forgetfulness as ignorance, in which human individuals become detached from their selves to the extent of which the measure is their forgetfulness of the Self: *Be not as those who forgot God, and so He caused them to forget their souls; those – they are the ungodly.*¹⁴ Religious concepts thus

¹⁴ Sura 59:19

have two essentially different meanings – one in their original traditional context and the other in modernity. Depending on which of these two meanings is adopted, an entirely different view of humankind, society and the world results. If the interdict with its transcendent reason is introduced solely with rational foundations into the dis-enchanted world, that interdict cannot be other than an acceptance of the inevitability of error or falsehood in the ideological map of movement from the lower to the higher. In this understanding, both the world and the human individual originate in non-intellect, and somehow manage to develop that *non* into reason. That *non* becomes an ineradicable flaw in every development or evolution, given that it is a matter of principle and as such denied or disguised. One of the solutions to this collision of meanings is to accept that the Truth was once with humankind and the world, only later to abandon them to solitude and self-sufficiency.

Different relationships between reality and its name can be ascertained. Changes in the way reality is construed may reach such an extent that the starting point is fundamentally reshaped. Reality remains eternally one and the same, despite the fact that its images and interpretations constantly change. The names that are assigned to reality and its images may remain unaltered during that entire process of change, but their meanings alter, and may be replaced with entirely new ones. What is meant today by the terms Catholicism, Orthodoxy, Judaism and Islam, with the concomitant symbolic crystallization of their doctrines, rituals and virtues in monasteries, churches, synagogues and mosques, is not exempt from those altered images and understandings of reality. That this is so may readily be demonstrated by a study of the meanings of the terms *prayer, mosque, church, praise, anointing* and so forth in the two outlooks – the modern and the traditional.

The term religion, in its original sense, means the linking of self and Self through knowledge and being, with the inclusion of consciousness. Reestablishing that link means recognizing the truth in its image, or vertical orientation towards the original perfection. Religious doctrine and ritual derived from none other than that towards which the link or verticality is established. They are revealed or sent down so that the self may recognize and embrace them through free will or the adoption of what the truth itself entrusts to it. Their language, meanings and symbols translate from multiplicity towards unicity. But since unicity is con-

firmation of the ineffable, the multiplicity of languages, meanings and symbols – which is to say, too, of sacred doctrines and rituals – reflects perfect translatability through that unicity that descends and ascends as the Word. The Word is both accessible and absent in every individual, regardless of language, through the presence of its name, without which the world, matter and time can only be death veiled by the illusion of life and power. It is only in this way that different religious languages are mutually translatable, which is the precondition of their potential for directing the self towards its foundation. Free will as the reality of the self is recognized in the potential to reject the Will of the Self. It is only in the potential to embrace what That Will offers that human reality manifests itself: as recollection or forgetfulness, acceptance or rejection, loss or discovery. If that potential for differentiating between will and Will is reduced to the quantifiable world, the same forms of language, meanings and symbols thereby acquire a different content, and their transposition from one era to another is impossible without taking into consideration the essential transformation they undergo when they pass from one outlook to another. Modernity does not rupture its links with tradition by discarding the sequence and duration of language, meanings and symbols as spoken forms: it retains them, but radically reshapes them. What is conferred on them by their introduction into a new mindset cannot be simply transposed into their original horizons in the heritage of languages, meanings and symbols. It seems, then, that it would be more correct to speak of an inversion or distortion of the traditional outlook in the modernist, rather than of a rupture between them. A recognition of this could contribute to understanding the sources and causes of the grotesque modern condition in which individual and collective orientation towards the Self is replaced by ossified images or interpretations of Reality.

Islam, Catholicism and Orthodoxy

In the modern religious and political mindset, or mindsets, Islam and Christianity are separate and often confrontational phenomena. This separation cannot be transcended in the modernist reduction of tradition to the world as the one and only level of being, for the reason that only the quantifiable world is accessible to rational knowledge. If there is no descending hierarchy of worlds or levels of being from the Heavens to

earth, from Unicity to multiplicity, there can be no encounter of different doctrines and teachings in the Logos. Furthermore, national ideologies, as a modern phenomenon, do not evade the sequence of evolution from below upwards the consequence of which is that nothing in the totality of humankind, society and the world transcends quantifiability. The human being is at the peak of that evolutionary path. Human reason and the ability to recognize the course of history enables the individual – or so the ideological outlook believes – to devise and put into effect a blueprint for the world order. In this approach, religions are a social and historical phenomenon, and human individuals are always superior to them in their potential for unlimited development. There is no *religio perennis* as the irreplaceable and inexhaustible content of every religion or, in other words, of the link with the Truth. There is no Name through which the one and the same Eternity is present in every place and at every point in time, and open to the call in every language. There is no Word that enables human beings, for all that they are “barred in with bones woven in flesh,”¹⁵ continually to renew their link with the Infinite. Humankind is not seen as the image of God – on the contrary, God becomes the image, the projection of humankind.

It can be ascertained of all three forms of Christianity in Bosnia – the Bosnian Church, Catholicism and Orthodoxy – that they are historically and doctrinally inseparable from the canonic New Testament and the Nicaean creed. It can therefore be said that the Bosnian Krstjani, Catholics and Orthodox possess the same books in principle, but that the interpretations and structures that they derive from them differ. For the Catholics, their understanding of the scriptures and their structure are inseparable from the Church authorities, which regard themselves as the heirs and guardians of the original doctrines, rituals and virtues as taught by Christ to his disciples and taken up and preserved by the Church as they spread through the world and over time. The doctrinal and ritual schism between the Roman Catholic and the Eastern Church was regarded by both as a departure from the truth or as the other’s flawed doctrine. This discord never remained external to politics or without political consequences. Their understandings or images of the reality of

¹⁵ Mak Dizdar, *Kameni spavač/Stone Sleeper*, trans. Francis R. Jones, Sarajevo: Did, 1999, p. 33.

Christ were represented as that reality itself, and as a result, there remained no place for different understandings, which means that there was no place, either, for anyone who did not submit to that absolutized image of Reality.

The Bosnian Krstjani had similarities in principle and common doctrines, but differed essentially in their understanding of the holy scriptures, as an anonymous Catholic reported to the Cardinals of Rome in 1623 when meeting their evangelists:

... habent in suo vulgari textum s. Evangelii Christi secundum Ecclesiam Romanam, sed commenta et glossae sunt haereticæ secundum varias haereses, precipue circa haeresim Pauli Sosometani, a quo denominantur Paulini.¹⁶

It was from these understandings of the holy scriptures that the doctrines, rituals and structure of the Bosnian Church were derived. The Church and its members were denied any validity, their doctrines and rituals were regarded as untenable, and they were indeed denied the right to life itself. The differences that separated that Church from its neighbours can be identified from its own writings¹⁷ and from those of Catholic¹⁸ and Orthodox¹⁹ circles. The arguments over the nature of Christ indisputably fall into this category. The consequences of disagreements in understanding manifest themselves as openness to the major issues of doctrine and ritual that were central to the ecumenical councils of Nicaea, in 325, Constantinople, in 381, and Chalcedonia in 451 CE. The arguments and debates over these fundamental issues did not cease. Faith in judgment through the Holy Spirit became ever weaker. At the heart of the debate there occurred, between 610 and 632 CE, yet another

¹⁶ Eusebius Fermentžin, *Acta Bulgariae ecclesiastica, Mon. Slav. Merid.*, vol. 18, Zagreb, 1887, p. 21. For Bosnian manuscripts in Bulgaria see also Aleksandar Solovjev, “Vjersko učenje bosanske crkve”, Zagreb: Yugoslav Academy of Science and the Arts, 1948, pp.44-45.

¹⁷ See Herta Kuna, *Srednjovjekovna bosanska književnost*, Sarajevo: Institute for Literature, 1992.

¹⁸ See Dragutin Kniewald, “Vjerodostojnost latinskih izvora o bosanskim krstjanima”, *Rad JAZU*, CCLXX, Zagreb, 1949, pp. 115-276.

¹⁹ See Aleksandar Solovjev, “Svedočanstva pravoslavnih izvora o bogomilstvu na Balkanu”, *Annual of the Historical Society of Bosnia and Herzegovina*, V, Sarajevo, 1953, pp. 1-103.

“opening of the Heavens”²⁰ and “descent of the Holy Spirit” so that, as it claims and its followers believe, the dispute over Christ should be completely and finally resolved. In this way there entered into the course of history further discussion on Christ on the part of those who found their reasons, evidence and understanding not only in the New Testament but also in the Qur’an. Debates among Bosnian Krstjani, Catholics and Orthodox, along with altering political circumstances, led to gains and losses of strength, of greater or lesser porosity or impermeability of the boundaries of these religious communities. These debates are inconceivable and inexplicable without taking into consideration the phenomenon that acquired the name Islam only in the modern era.²¹ Philosophically speaking, the phenomenon is the ontological indebtedness or duty – the correlate of this being the Arabic term *din* – of all that exists to the Ineffable. Seen from the human perspective, this indebtedness has three degrees: submission (*islam*), faith (*iman*) and dedication (*ibsan*). Here Eternity manifests itself in the moment, and history in distortion.

The Bosnian social reality as a whole, then, in both its modern and its traditional expressions, comprises both Christians – Catholics and Orthodox alike – and Muslims. In the modern era this social reality has lost the openness of the individual to Transcendence. As a result, the fundamental concepts of *anointment* and *submission* have also become distorted.

The cosmos, or the totality of existence, in submission to Unicity – with the exception of that element of human free will that enables the individual to become conscious of the Divine Name – is evaporating in modernity as the vital evidence of human orientation towards the Ground of being out of free will, an orientation that expresses itself as recollection of the Creator and addressing Him through the Name. Being through submission to God ceases to be the fullness of the human individual as the image of God in the way that characterizes all the worlds: *To Him has surrendered who so is in the heavens and the earth*.²² The traditional

²⁰ See Martin Lings, *His Life Based Upon the Earliest Sources*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1988. The reference is to p. 376 of the translation of this work by Rusmir Mahmutćehajić, *Mubammed. Život njegov osnovan na vrelima najstarijim*, Ljubljana: Oslobođenje International, 1996.

²¹ On the modern introduction of and content of the term “Islam”, see Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 199.

²² Sura 3:83

view of submission and anointment as identical is unrecognizable in the modern bottom-up hierarchy. *Anointment* or *baptism* make sense if they are sent down; and this means that the entire universe is baptized, in the original sense. The perfect image of this is the Anointed or the Submissive, in whatever archetypal manifestation it may be: *The baptism of God; and who is there that baptizes fairer than God?*²³; *I am the first of those that surrender.*²⁴ Baptism is the relationship between God, Who baptizes, and the human individual that receives the baptism. If this relationship is full and perfect, there remains nothing in the self of the baptized other than the Self of the Baptizer. The same is true of the triad Praiser – praise – Praised.²⁵ When the relationship is perfect, the Praiser reveals the Word from the centre of his self, which is none other than the Self.

As against that submission or humility as the supreme human potential in the face of Perfection, the converse is humankind's notion of the individual as a *being of sufficiency and power*.²⁶ If it is accepted that anointment or baptism means the acceptance of submission or humility as the supreme human potential in relation to the absolute, that submission and humility can only mean the willing exposure of the self to the readiness and expectation of receiving and accepting baptism as the self's supreme potential. In this neither language, nor the meanings, nor the symbols of the sacred teachings and rituals are other than a

²³ Sura 2:138

²⁴ Since God is the first unicity, willing submission to this unicity in all its fullness is the first submission. The Praised One is total submission and anointment, just as the Anointed One is total submission and all praise. This is the meaning of the words of the Recitation (Sura 6:138): *No associate has He. Even so I have been commanded, and I am the first of those that surrender.* God is close to all things. In relation to Him, all things are as nothing, while He is All in relation to all things. The acceptance of submission, anointment and praise entails being part of that nothingness on the one hand and fullness on the other (Sura 10:62): *Surely God's friends – no fear shall be on them, neither shall they sorrow.* The verb *waliya*, with its derivat noun *wali*, pl. *awliya*, means primarily to be close to. Thus *God is near unto those who have faith* (Sura 2:257, in the translation by Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur'an, translated and explained*, Gibraltar: Dar al-Andalus, 1980). The same term can be used to designate relationships between people, but then, from the perspective of tradition, it includes derivation from the first submission and nearness, as can be considered in other concepts of sacred teachings also, such as confidence, covenant, prostration in prayer and so forth.

²⁵ "Praised" is a literal translation of Muhammad, from the verb *hamida*, to praise, and is used by the author of this paper to designate the Prophet Muhammad. *Trans.*

²⁶ As the Recitation says (Sura 96:6-8): *Surely man waxes insolent, for he thinks himself self-sufficient. Surely unto thy Lord is the Returning.*

means or signs in the self and in the outer world that continually bear witness to the Truth as the fount of all that exists. If it is otherwise, they become part of the discourse of ossified images and interpretations of Reality that have been taken as sufficiency. *Anointment* or *baptism* and *submission* must then be reduced to certain interpretations that find their justification in historical narratives and representations. The result of this is a diversity of languages, meanings and symbols that no longer confirms the unicity of the common word. Monasteries, churches, synagogues and mosques lose the call of the one and the same Name, and become separate material entities subjugated to comparisons and quantifications of individual and collective power.

Translation of languages

Despite the uncontested similarities between the teachings of the Bosnian Krstjani, Catholics and Orthodox Christians, their insistence on differences of interpretation, ritual and modes of expression of virtue is what defines them as separate entities. With a common Word, their differences are sustainable; without it, they are unresolvable. Any concessions by the Bosnian Krstjani to the Catholics or the Orthodox meant being submerged by them as the result of losing their distinctiveness. If what is known of them and their Church is studied, it can be shown beyond doubt, as Aleksander Solovjev notes, that “for the most part the accusations levelled against them by Serb archbishops and ecclesiastical councils, by the Pope in Rome and by Franciscan monks, are accurate, and correspond to the actual state of affairs.”²⁷ These differences can be linked to the perennial endeavour of Christianity as a whole, as well as of other sacred traditions, to find answers to the question of the coexistence of evil and good, and to shed light on the mystery of the precedence of good. Although both Christianity and Islam resolutely reject the possibility of there being two principles, one of good and one of evil, throughout history there has been no reading or interpretation of the tradition in which the issue is not debated. It has never been hard to accuse others of *dualist* beliefs, although the reasons adduced have in principle almost invariably been equally true of the accuser.²⁸

²⁷ Aleksandar Solovjev, “Vjersko učenje bosanske crkve”, pp. 44-45.

²⁸ See *Christian Dualistic Heresies in the Byzantine World, c. 650 – c. 1450*, a selection, trans. and annotated by Janet Hamilton and Bernard Hamilton, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998.

Suspicion of the Bosnian Krstjani provoked by their difference from the Serbian Orthodox and Roman Catholics could be resolved by their renouncing their insistence on the specific nature of the doctrines, rituals and virtues that their Church fostered and interpreted. Since the tradition of the Bosnian Church was freely accepted by its members, the debate with the other, the difference, which is the essence of that and every other specific entity, was meaningful as long as violence was no part of it and it recognized the possibility of manifestation of the one and the same Word in differing teachings and ways. Throughout the history of the Bosnian Church, however, there were efforts to divert its members from their faith by force and to detach them from their freely chosen witnessing to the Word. This radically refocused their quest for new reasons and interpretations of distinctiveness, above all in the light of those who had opted for violence as a means of altering the interpretation of the sacred tradition to which the members of the Bosnian Church were true. Recantation of this kind could be interpreted as being for evangelical reasons, just as could their insistence on the specific nature of their teachings. Furthermore, the reason for safeguarding the right to difference from the Catholics and the Orthodox could be found in the introduction into the debate of the Recitation, as the Word sent down by God to the Praised One in the new opening of the Heavens. Here, too, the reasons could be wholly evangelical. There is not a single contested issue of the doctrines on Christ that cannot be found in the Recitation, where there are also interpretations and judgments from God and through the Holy Spirit. As a result, all the terms and concepts of evangelical language of which they emphasized the differences are differently focused on the issue of *Christ* (the *Anointed*) and *Muhammad* (the *Praised*). The loyalty of the Bosnian Krstjani to their belief in the decisiveness of God's mercy found full confirmation in the fact that the Recitation is founded on the words *In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate*. The Recitation thus proffers both witness to and support for their faith, and opens up a way to unification through the crucial words of prayer: *Our Father which art in heaven*²⁹ and *Praise belongs to God, the*

²⁹ The Lord's prayer, Matt. 6: 9-13 and Luke 11:2-4. In its Bosnian Church form the opening words of the Lord's prayer read: *Oče naš i že esi na n(e)b(e)sib'*. From *Zbornik krstjanina Radoslava*. See Franjo 'anjek, *Bosansko-bumski krstjani i katarsko-dualistički pokret u Srednjem vijeku*, Zagreb: Kršćanska sadašnjost, 1975, p. 159.

*Lord of all Being.*³⁰

All the elements of the sacred language, which offer and preserve the duty and right to difference, are now focused on *translation* from the Gospel according to the Qur'an and vice versa. Once the nature of the two epistles as two manifestations of the Word is recognized and attested, their transmitters – Christ and Muhammad – must be inherent in them as in their first principle. And there, in the traditional language, the historical link between the two is no longer at issue. They bear witness, one to the other, to the Truth, the Holy Spirit and the Word. For this to be comprehensible, a mindset is required in which the heavens and the earth are signs of the Spirit and the body, between which is the fissured, fractured human soul. The opening words of the Gospel according to St John point to this hierarchy from the top down, from the one and the same Word to the multiplicity of its manifestations:

<i>In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.</i>	<i>Iskoni bje slovo, i slovo bje ot' boga, i bog' bje slovo. I se bje iskonje u boga. I vsa tjem' bješe, i bež nego že ničože ne bje eže bje. V'tom' život' bje, i život' bje svjet' člov[je]kom,' i svjet' bje v'tmi svitit' se, i tma ego ne obuje.³¹</i>
--	--

Since God is the Praiser, human perfection lies in the exclusion of everything from the self except praise of Him, so that in the praise that links the Praiser and the Praised is nothing other than *I am*. The Praiser is then the same as the Anointed, for in the fact that there is no self other than the Self all dualities are resolved.

In the ideological blueprints of collective identities, developed in the raising of awareness and enhancement of power in relation to others, it is impossible to speak of the principled oneness of differing sacred languages. This is the result of the fact that sacred languages, meanings and

³⁰ Sura 1:2

³¹ John 1:1-5. The Bosnian Church version is taken from *Obrednik Crkve bosanske (Zbornik krstjanina Radoslava)* in Franjo Šanjek, *Bosansko-bumski krstjani i katarsko-dualistički pokret u Srednjem vijeku*, p. 160.

symbols can no longer have a lasting connection with the Word as their foundation, as derived from traditional teachings. Focusing on that foundation, for which reason is a means, maintains tensions within the consciousness and gives rise to constant changes in the notion of reality. Not one image of reality is the same as reality itself. Everything remains behind the veils of the world, but what is behind them becomes ever more present as the truth of existence. Individuals are thus constantly moving towards a foundation from which they remain infinitely distant as long as there can be any independence from the Self in that tension within the self. Independence is in fact merely a phantom duality from which there arises the fantasy of power summed up in the postulate that human beings can be reduced to their desires and the rationalization of their existence. If this reductive view is trapped within the quantifiable world, it can resolve nothing of the human orientation towards the Ultimate. It becomes mere passion for the acquisition of more and more, in which greater power means greater suffering and a greater distance from the meanings symbolized by *baptism* and *submission* in regard to Perfection.

The Bosnian Church, comprised by “*vsī naricajušte se krstjani i krstjanice, a ne klajajušte svetim ikonam i krstu časnome*” (All the lamenting Krstjani, who do not pray to the holy icons and the holy Cross),³² was indeed a community with its own teachings on Christ, its own rituals, its own interpretations and expressions of virtue. It was incessantly controverted and ravaged in the name of the doctrines and rituals of others, its followers continually subjected to investigation and forcible conversion to mainstream Christianity. There is not a document or book on that period of Bosnia’s history that does not provide evidence of the persecutions and denial of the Bosnian Krstjani.³³ Contrary to their belief that the Bosnian Church was the only apostolic

³² From Serbian synodal documents, in which the “*bosanski krstjani i krstjanice*” – Bosnian Krstjani, men and women – are anathematized from the first half of the thirteenth century on. See, e.g. Aleksandar Solovjev, “*Svedočanstva pravoslavnih izvora o bogomilstvu na Balkanu*”, p. 57.

³³ See, e.g., Aleksander Solovjev, “*Nestanak bogomilstva i islamizacija Bosne*”, *Annual of the Historical Society of Bosnia and Herzegovina*, I, Sarajevo, 1949; Dominik Mandić, *Bogomilska crkva bosanskih krstjana*, Chicago: The Croatian Historical Institute, 1962; Ante Babić, *Bosanski heretici*, Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 1963; Franjo Šanjek, *Bosansko-bumski krstjani i katarsko-dualistički pokret u Srednjem vijeku*.

church and that there was no salvation outside it, similarly exclusivist views were expressed for both Roman Catholicism and Rascian Orthodoxy.³⁴ The persecutions and forcible conversions of the Bosnian Krstjani reached their peak in the fifteenth century, when even the Bosnian king, under pressure from external religious and political will, joined in their annihilation.

The choice given them, of conversion or death, is seen from two perspectives that are different in principle. The first is that the One God eternally reveals only one truth and that it must have only one doctrine and one form of ritual. As a result, those who adhere to the unicity of God, doctrine and ritual cannot reciprocate with a language that is different in principle from theirs. Such difference is an error that has no rights. The other is determined by bearing witness to Unicity that is eternal and omnipresent, and as such is accessible to every human individual. The first view does not allow for the coexistence of monasteries, churches, synagogues and mosques; the second does. Given that in every human individual there lies one and the same potential, the openness and presence of the Name remains unalterably within the diverse manifestations of the transcendent archetype of the multitude of sacred doctrines and rituals. Monasteries, churches, synagogues and mosques comprise within themselves, in different languages, the one and the same essence that bears witness to the descending and ascending mode of the Divine Name. Those who belong to them are linked to that Ineffable Name in a unity of believers. And this means that in each of their forms of knowledge there is the presence of the halo that quantifiably and in finite mode transposes them towards the unalterable and eternal. Every act of good or evil, regardless of how infinitesimal or great it may be, has a consequence in the unconditional and just judgment. The names Jew, Christian, Sabaeen and Muslim, for example, lose all content other than what belongs to them in the one and the same, the first and the last, the inner and the outer nature. Measured against the absolute, they will retain no

³⁴ Evidence for these beliefs of the Bosnian Krstjani is to be found in *Popis zabluda bosanskiib krstjana*, dating from 1375 (see “Vjerodostojnost latinskih izvora o bosanskim krstjanima”, p. 168), and *Rasprava između rimskog krstjanina i bosanskog patarena*, dating from 1421 (See Franjo Rački, “Prilozi za povijest bosanskih patarena”, *Starine*, I, Zagreb, 1869, pp. 112-16.) [The attribute “Rascian” derives from the mediaeval name for the area, corresponding to modern south-western Serbia, settled by the Serbs and known in the later Middle Ages as Raška or Rascian. *Trans.*]

ignorance, which means no fear or grief.

There is an inherent exclusivity in the phrase “one or the other,” in which God’s Name, confirmed by multiplicity in the phrase “monasteries, and churches, and synagogues, and mosques” and by the diversity of sacred doctrines and rituals that are from the One and the same God and oriented towards Him, becomes a means of imposing denial or exclusion on every sacred doctrine. For if there is not a single individual who is not created in and for the sake of perfection, this must be true of all people. Only thus is it possible to explain the transition from one language to another from the perspective of submission to God as an expression of utter free will, as a duty in which there is no compulsion,³⁵ where one and the same submission lies at the basis of that transition and reconciliation.³⁶

The Anointed and the Praised

If the link between the Anointed and the Praised through the Ineffable that confirms the Word is repudiated, what is left is historical phenomena in irreconcilable opposition. This, indeed, is the nature of the modern reduction of the totality of being to its spatial and temporal mode. In this view, all changes occur in the course of history. The immeasurable and unquantifiable is denied. Reason ceases to be the expression of

³⁵ See Sura 2:256.

³⁶ On the acceptance of the Recitation and the Praised One among Bosnian Krstjani, see Mehmed Handžić, *Islamizacija Bosne i Hercegovine i porijeklo bosansko-hercegovačkih muslimana*, Sarajevo: Islamska dionička štamparija, 1940; Aleksandar Solovjev, “Nestanak bogomilstva i islamizacija Bosne”, pp. 42-79; Muhamed Hadžijahić, “Jedan bogumilski relikv u kulturi Bosanskih Muslimana”, *Pregled*, LIX/4-5, Sarajevo, 1968, pp. 558-66; *ibid.*, “Zemljišni posjedi Crkve bosanske”, *Historijski zbornik*, XXV-XXVI, Zagreb, 1972/1973, pp. 461-80; *ibid.*, “O jednom manje poznatom domaćem vrelu za proučavanje Crkve bosanske”, *Prilozi za orijentalnu istoriju*, X/2, Sarajevo, 1974, pp. 55-109; *ibid.*, “O nestajanju Crkve bosanske”, *Pregled*, LXIV/11-12, Sarajevo, 1975, pp. 1309-328; *ibid.*, “Sinkretistički elementi u islamu u Bosni i Hercegovini”, *Prilozi za orijentalnu filologiju*, XXVIII/XXIX, Sarajevo, 1980, pp. 301-29; Adem Handžić, *Studije o Bosni: historijski prilozi iz Osmansko-Turskog perioda*, Istanbul: Research Centre for Islamic History, Art and Culture, 1995. Assaults on the Bosnian Church, and persecutions and the forcible conversions of its followers, filled the last decades of the Bosnian kingdom. See, e.g., Aleksandar Solovjev, “Fundajajiti, paterini i kudugeru u vizantiskim izvorima”, *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta* I, Belgrade, 1951, pp. 121-47; Sima Ćirković, *Istorija srednjovekovne bosanske države*, Belgrade: Srpska književna zadruga, 1964, pp. 307-40; and Boris Nilević, “Slika religioznosti srednjovekovne Bosne pred osmanski dolazak”, *Prilozi za orijentalnu filologiju*, 41, Sarajevo, 1991, pp. 336-45.

Intellect, a means through which the individual focuses on the Ground of all being. Instead, one or another ideological or dogmatic image of Reality becomes its master. The Anointed and the Praised become merely exceptional historical phenomena, and all the forms of their openness to the Immeasurable are expressed as miracles and ways of speech from olden times. This excludes and denies the role of intellect in the creation of humankind and the world.

Diversity of language confirms the one and the same Word. If that Word is disordered or excluded as the higher principle of every manifestation of the eternal Praised and Anointed, Muhammad and Christ, they become no more than two historical phenomena that are neither reconcilable nor translatable. Their reality is then associated with delusions of power through which, it is believed, alterity could be dominated and obliterated. For only with the obliteration of alterity can the fantasy of power in the self that is isolated in its own reason or the quantifiable world be attested to. Discussion with and recognition of the other is no longer possible, since the Word is not manifest in that other. “We” thus cease to confirm the unicity of the Word that manifests itself in multiplicity. The transcendent unicity migrates into the ideological “we” that denies or denigrates the other, as can be seen in a modern Bosnian example with these words of Bishop Ratko Perić:

I have personally conducted a written religious dialogue with a representative of the Islamic community and have seen how far off the mark he is when he points out that Jesus announced the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, but believes that the Paraclete is Muhammad, or that Jesus and Muhammad are wholly the same in the one God. It would be meaningless to persist with such religious affronts.³⁷

One could say of differences of understanding of the nature of the Anointed that they are true on condition that it be accepted that multiplicity reveals and confirms unicity. When this is so, different interpretations are different languages in Unicity. When the converse is true, the other and different are in error, and deny the Unicity that makes Itself known in only one revelation. This makes it possible to explain why some accede to crime and atrocities and justify them by reference to differences in the tradition of the other, as the ideological ruminations of

³⁷ In an interview with Goran Vukman: “Božja ruka jača je od svake politike”, *Hrvatsko slovo*, 362, Zagreb, 29 March 2002, p. 3.

Bishop Peri demonstrate:

There have always been in the world those who have taught that Jesus did not suffer and die on the cross, and as a result was not resurrected from the dead. The Qur'an explicitly says of Jesus's crucifixion: "They did not slay him, neither crucified him, only a likeness of that was shown to them. . . they slew him not of a certainty" (4:157). But from the Christian perspective, it is not merely a serious fallacy, but a serious affront, to refute the fundamental Christian doctrine. The Gospel precisely and *extensively* describes Christ's bloody crucifixion on the wooden cross, which the Jews of the day had demanded and the occupying Roman authorities carried out, followed by the true physical death of Jesus and his surrender into the hands of God and the true and miraculous resurrection from the dead of Our Lord!³⁸

In passing over in silence and denying that the Qur'an is the speech of God, and that it reveals Unicity in a different language, through the one and the same Holy Spirit, the Bishop concludes that it is impossible to translate these different languages, and thereby justifies violence. Since neither Muslims nor Jews accept the Bishop's reading and understanding, they are unacceptably Other. And thus those three languages can be adjudged only in relation to quantity and power. The word as the root and fruit of all differences is disavowed by such views. There can be no resolution of the differences of the contingent world in the perfect fullness of the Word:

You write of the Lord Jesus and of Muhammad (p. 15): "They are wholly the same in the One God, but different languages in their temporal presence." Here, Doctor, lies the entire doctrinal dialogue between Islam and Christianity, between you and me. So there will be no further need to conduct any dialogue.³⁹

If the issue of the link between fear and knowledge, or the demarcation lines between selves, is presented in the form of the matrix Krstjan-Orthodox-Catholic-Muslim, it can be ascertained that there are perpetual discords, disputes and denials between the first three members of that formula. What the Krstjani say of the Anointed is unacceptable both to the Orthodox and to the Catholics. The Bosnian Krstjani express their view of the Anointed from a different understanding of the Evangelical

³⁸ From a letter by Ratko Perić, Bishop of Mostar-Duvno and Trebinje-Mrkanj, to Senad Mehmedbašić, president of the Association for the Restoration of Civic Trust in Stolac Municipality, 14 December 2001. Quoted in "Četvrto pismo biskupu Periću", *Obnova Stoca*, no. 9, Sarajevo, 2002, p. 7.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

narrative. According to Cardinal John Torquemada, before whom three Bošnjans recanted their Krstjan faith on 14 May 1461 in Rome in the presence of Pope Pio II, their testimony included the words:

Christum non veraciter passum, nec mortuum, nec descendisse ad inferos, nec in celos ascendisse, sed quod omnia fecerit apparere fantastice.⁴⁰

For the Bosnian Krstjani, the denial of this and other interpretations of the Gospel meant the loss of the specific nature of their selfhood, since it took a different form from that of the Catholics and Orthodox. If they wanted to preserve that specific nature and form of their selfhood, they could turn to the Recitation, as the Divine revelation, and find in it a bulwark and arbiter:

And for their saying, “we slew the Messiah,
Jesus son of Mary, the Messenger of God” –
yet they did not slay him, neither crucified him,
only a likeness of that was shown to them.
Those who are at variance concerning him surely
are in doubt regarding him; they have no knowledge
of him, except the following of surmise;
and they slew him not of a certainty –
no indeed; God raised him up to Him; God is
All-mighty, All-wise.⁴¹

There is not a single issue of their dispute over different understandings to which they could not find an answer in the Recitation, and thereby preserve their witness and distinctiveness. And for that they had the permeability of the boundary between the Gospel and the Qur’an. For them, what Jesus says of the Paraclete in the Gospel was testimony of the

⁴⁰ From *Rasprave kardinala Torquemade protiv “bosanskih manijehaca”*, quoted in Dragutin Kniewald, “Vjerodostojnost latinskih izvora o bosanskim krstjanima”, p. 179; see also Dragutin Kamber, “Kardinal Torquemada i tri bosanska bogomila (1461)”, *Croatia sacra*, 2, Zagreb 1983, pp. 27-93.

⁴¹ Sura 4:157-58.

Praised One.⁴² Jesus and Muhammad, as the evidence and manifestation of the Logos, bear witness to one another. The Anointed announces the coming of the Praised One, of whom he says: “He shall not speak of himself: but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me.”⁴³ And the Praised One says of the Anointed: “I am most akin to the son of Mary among the whole of mankind and the prophets are of different mothers, but of one religion, and no prophet was raised between me and him.”⁴⁴

The Recitation explicitly speaks of the testimony of the Praised One in the words of the Anointed, which is to say that it speaks of the oneness of their glad news of mercy. These words of the Anointed are two linguistic expressions with their unicity in the *I am*:

But when the Comforter is come,
whom I will send unto you from the Father,
even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth
from the Father, he shall testify of me:
And ye shall also bear witness,
because ye have been with me from
the beginning.⁴⁵

And when Jesus son of
Mary said, “Children of
Israel, I am indeed the
Messenger of God to you,
confirming the Torah
that is before me, and
giving good tidings of
a Messenger who shall
come after me, whose
name shall be Ahmad.”⁴⁶

⁴² In Sura 61:6 there is direct confirmation of Christ’s annunciation of Muhammad. The most ancient manuscript of the Prophet Muhammad that has been preserved is evidence of the reading of the Gospel according to St John (14-16) as the annunciation of Muhammad: Ibn Ishaq, *Sirat Rasul Allah (The Life of Mubammad)*, trans. Alfred A. Guillaume, Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1980, pp. 103-104. On testimonies of the knowledge and belief that this was so among the Bosnian Krstjani, see Rusmir Mahmutćehajić, *Dobra Bosna*, Zagreb: Durieux, 1997, pp. 112-16 (trans. by Marina Bowlder, *Bosnia the Good: Tolerance and Tradition*, Budapest: Central European University press, 2000, p. 110, note 30); and Aleksandar Solovjev, “Nestanak bogomilstva i islamizacija Bosne”, pp. 68-69.

⁴³ John 16:13-14.

⁴⁴ *Sabih Muslim*, IV, trans. Abdul Hamid Siddiqi, Riyadh: International Islamic Publishing House, s.a., p. 1260.

⁴⁵ John 15:26-27.

⁴⁶ Sura 61:6. The Prophet says: “I am Muhammad and I am Ahmad and I am al-Mahi (the obliterator) by whom unbelief would be obliterated, and I am Hashir (the gatherer) at whose feet mankind will be gathered, and I am Aqb (the last to come) after whom there will be no prophet.” (Sahih Muslim, IV, pp. 1254-255). *Abmad* is the emphatic form of the noun, used as *nomina agentis i nomina patientis*. In the first form it means the supreme praiser among the praisers of God, in the second it means he who has the supreme and most outstanding right to be praised. *Mubammad* designates the one in whom the most praised of attributes are so perfectly assembled that nothing remains to be added or improved upon.

In these two testimonies, both of which, as their own words claim, were sent down from the heavens, the potential for translation through the Word can be ascertained. The openness of the human self is predisposed to this translation. If, however, it is introduced into the project of rational quantification, which does not accept the Ineffable, the argument is unresolvable. Nor is this all: it also deprives both testimonies of their quality of being sent down, and transforms them into an obfuscation of what lies at the foundation of phenomena.

Modern language gives precedence to the historical images of Jesus and Muhammad, unlike the traditional, in which they are above all two manifestations of one and the same Logos and, as a result, wholly mutually translatable through their heavenly unicity.

The Lord's Prayer and the Opening

The prayer that begins with the words "Our Father. . ." is the key mode of address to God for Catholics, Orthodox Christians and Krstjani, a prayer that they received from God through the Anointed, also known as the *Lord's Prayer*.⁴⁷ Sura *al-Fatiba*, The Opening, has for Muslims a significance comparable with that of the Lord's Prayer for Christians. It is also known as *Umm al-Kitab* (the Essence of the Divine Writ), *Surat al-Hamd* (the Sura of Praise), *Asas al-Qur'an* (the Foundation of the Qur'an) and *As-sab' al-Matbani* (the Seven Oft-Repeated [Verses]).⁴⁸

These two prayers to God, taught by the Anointed and the Praised One to their disciples, do not have the same meaning in modernity and in premodern times, nor could they. If they are deprived of their essential quality of *revelation* and the mention of God's Name as accessible to

⁴⁷ Its phrasing is taken up in the prayer recommended by the Praised One: "Our Lord God, who art in the heavens, holy is Thy name. . ." (Abu Daud, *Kitab as-Sunan*, IV, Cairo: Darul-hadith, s.a., p. 11).

⁴⁸ *As-sab' al-matbani* is the name given to the Opening in Sura 15:87. St Maximos the Confessor says of the Lord's Prayer: "Of these mysteries that He has granted to me in His boundless generosity, seven are of more general significance: and it is these whose power, as I have said, lies hidden within the Lord's Prayer. These seven are theology, adoption as sons by grace, equality with the angels, participation in eternal life, the restoration of human nature when it is reconciled dispassionately with itself, the abolition of the law of sin, and the destruction of the tyranny that holds us in its power through the deceit of the evil one". (St. Maximos the Confessor, "On the Lord's prayer", in *The Philokalia: The Complete Text*, collated by St Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain and St. Makarios of Corinth, Vol. II., trans. G. E. H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard, Kallistos Ware, London: Faber & Faber, 1981, p. 287).

everyone everywhere, they remain two linguistic expressions in which differences are untranslatable. Today's Catholics, Orthodox Christians and Muslims, to whom, as participants in the modern and prevailing image of the human being as an autonomous self that denies the supra-individuality and non-individuality of the Truth, these prayers are for the most part remote and unclear in their original meaning; for today's believers, then, these two forms are untranslatable elements. And yet, a revival of their teachings could contribute to a study of that sense of untranslatability in which the other is ignorance and, as a result, a perpetual source of fear that has congealed into hatred. In the quest for this translatability it would be worth bringing these two testimonies into a single speech, and to find in God's Name, as their unalterable centre of all things, the principle that confirms diversity in the world. This is important also for the study of relations between the transitional period of the fifteenth century and the understanding of tensions in the current era, determined by fear and uncertainty. In the ritual of the Bosnian Krstjani, the Lord's Prayer had a central role.⁴⁹ Its translation into Bosnian had some barely noticeable differences by comparison with other; but its understanding, which is to say the way it was brought into connection with the Ineffable, must have had an entirely different expression. This understanding reflected the original attitude to one and the same writ, while rejecting any imposition of the understanding itself as the reality that always remains behind what it attains in each individual reading. It is reasonable to consider the premise that it was this attitude that enabled the Bosnian Krstjani to find in the Opening the perfect reflection of the Lord's Prayer. In consequence, it would be worth recognizing in them the key terms of that translation that confirms them in relation to the first and last source and recourse of human rectification:

⁴⁹ See, e.g., Aleksandar Solovjev, "Vjersko učenje bosnaske crkve", p. 35. In *Zbornik krstjanina Radoslava*, written in the time of King Tomaš and *Did* (elder of the Bosnian Church) Ratko for the Krstjan Gojsav, the elements of divine service in the Bosnian Church are set out. The Lord's Prayer occupies the chief position in that service, along with the mystical opening verses of the Gospel according to St John, on Christ as the Word or Logos and the eternal light.

Our Father which art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done in earth,
as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
And forgive us our debts,
As we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil:
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory, for ever.

Amen.⁵⁰

In the Name of God,
the Merciful, the Compassionate.
Praise belongs to God,
the Lord of all Being,
The All-merciful,
the All-compassionate,
the Master of the Day of Doom.
Thee only we serve:
to Thee only we pray for succour.
Guide us in the straight path,
the path of those whom Thou
hast blessed,
not of those against whom
Thou are wrathful,
nor of those who are astray.

Amin.⁵¹

The translatability of these two central prayers will be considered in the light of the meaning of the following concepts: *Thy name/the Name of God, Our Father/Lord of all Being, in heaven/the straight path, our debts/the Day of Doom, Thy will/Thee only we serve, deliver us from evil/against whom Thou are wrathful, temptation/who are astray.*

Before considering some possible meanings of these comparative terms, it is important to note that from the perspective of the Gospel message Christians cannot find a single doctrinally unacceptable word in the Opening. For Muslims, on the other hand, addressing God as *Our Father* can seem offensive and discordant with the Qur'anic mode. However, the two terms are perfectly concordant in meaning: the Hebrew *'ab* (Greek *pater*) has a markedly broader meaning than the one commonly read into it, while the Arabic *rabb* encompasses a broad field of meaning, including the meaning of the right to ownership of something, and in consequence of governance or rule over it, as well as of rearing or bringing up, maintaining and feeding something from its conception to its final completion. A head of household is thus known

⁵⁰ Matt. 6:9-13.

⁵¹ Sura 1:1-7.

as *rabb ad-dar*.⁵² Both concepts denote the link between self and self as effect and cause in which the oneness and completeness of the other are not denied. Addressing God in this way bears witness to human beings as an ontologically lower level who carry within them and confirm the Sublime.⁵³

In the Christian and Islamic traditions, the Name of God is the crucial link between humankind and God. All that is created – humankind and the worlds, the entirety of being, alike – reveals that name. It draws the individual who appeals to God Himself closer in a mysterious way. In both prayers the Name is the central concept in addressing God.⁵⁴ The Recitation has a clear response to the question of this or that name: *To God belong the Names Most Beautiful; so call Him by them*.⁵⁵ Among them is the *All-boly*,⁵⁶ which embraces every other remaining, eternally unattainable and enabling consecration to the one who appeals to him. If humankind is created, then all that may be regarded as its own is received. Thus human nature confirms the sense of indebtedness towards the Bestower or the Lord, symbolized by the father-son relationship. This indebtedness includes the praise of the one who gives. He manifests Himself in His creation: *We shall show them Our signs in the horizons and in themselves, till it is clear to them that it is the truth*.⁵⁷ The signs

⁵² In *Sirat Rasul Allah* by Ibn Ishaq (The Life of Muhammad), p. 104, is the following passage: "It is extracted from what John the Apostle set down for them when he wrote the Gospel for them from the Testament of Jesus son of Mary: 'He that hateth me hath hated the Lord. If I had not done in their presence the works which none other before me did, they had not had sin: but from now they are puffed up with pride and think that they will overcome me and also the Lord. But the word that is in the law must be fulfilled, "They hated me without a cause" (i. e. without reason). But when the Comforter has come whom God will send to you from the Lord's presence, and the spirit of truth which will have gone forth from the Lord's presence, he (shall bear) witness of me and ye also, because you have been with me from the beginning. I have spoken to you about this that ye should not be in doubt'.

The *Munabbemana* (God bless and preserve him!) in Syriac is *Muhammad*; in Greek he is the *paraclete*." This quotation from the Gospel according to St John (15: 23ff) was taken, as the translator notes, from the Palestinian Syriac lectionary.

⁵³ On this in the Gospel and the Old Testament see Carmine Di Sante, *Jewish Prayer: The Origins of Christian Liturgy*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell, New York: Paulist Press, 1991, pp. 19-23.

⁵⁴ On the appeal of the Name, see Whitall N. Perry, *A Treasury of Traditional Wisdom*, Cambridge: Quinta Essentia, 1971, pp. 1001-1042.

⁵⁵ Sura 7:180

⁵⁶ Sura 59:23

⁵⁷ Sura 41:53

in the selves have their correlates in the horizons – spirit-heaven, body-earth, and the soul that lies between them. The heavens are the sign of the spirit or Intellect, the first to be created, and in consequence closest to the Creator. The orientation from lower to higher is the discovery of the human self in its principle, or of the manifest in That which manifests it. To turn to the heavens is to focus on the Supreme, to become upright, to move from the earth, the corporeal, towards the Spirit. The notion of indebtedness designates the connection between giver and receiver. Since there is nothing of which the existence can in principle be other than the Nonexistent, God the Nonexistent has full rights towards all things created. And this, viewed from below, means that humankind is indebted to God. God's will is complete, but this completeness of the Divine will demands of humankind the acceptance of submission to God, which is also to expect anointment by Him: *The only [true] religion in the sight of God is [man's] self-surrender unto Him;*⁵⁸ *and who is there that baptizes fairer than God?*⁵⁹ Human poverty in the face of God, human servitude to Him, entails inclusion in His will and liberation from the illusion of power outside His power: *O men, you are the ones that have need of God; he is the All-sufficient, the All-laudable.*⁶⁰ The straight path, the path of the righteous or upright, is thus humankind's turning towards the Higher. The converse of this is the wrath of God, or the descent from on high, of which the correlate is the lack of the good or of light in the human self, manifesting itself as greater evil and a more impenetrable darkness. Movement or presence without that orientation, up or down, means to be captive within a single level of existence, without the recognition of any possibility of transcending the lower by the higher or the lesser by the greater.

The Lord's Prayer and the Opening are indeed two different expressions of the One and the Same, but they are wholly intertranslatable. This attribute of translatability of theirs derives from the perennial essence of every sacred tradition and the Name at its centre. If their connection with this unicity and Name is sundered or impeded, the prayers are necessarily reduced to the sensory, without openness to the Intellect, and then ossify into their outward appearance, with hermetically

⁵⁸ Sura 3:19, in the Asad translation.

⁵⁹ Sura 2:138

⁶⁰ Sura 35:15

closed boundaries, to become phenomena that are wholly detached from the Name through which humankind otherwise returns to the truth as source and final recourse. They are thus the shaping of fears of imprisonment in the quantifiable world as the only world. The fact that this fear cannot be resolved in the closed self of the human being who accedes to that impenetrability within the self, imposes a uniform picture of the other. Others from the boundary of that impermeability are blamed for the fact that there are no ladders within the self for the perpetual ascent.

The Cross

The modern significances of the cross among Catholics, Muslims and Orthodox are different from the traditional one. They do not have the meaning of a symbol that translates through different levels of being. On the contrary, different understandings of the same symbol are a reason for exclusion of the other, as the aforementioned Bishop of Mostar, Ratko Perić, so clearly demonstrates as an example from Bosnia's recent history. In his view, where differences of understanding meet, the possibility of debate ends. He believes it is for others to submit to the interpretations of the more powerful, given that there is no eternal, omnipresent Word, independent of human power. With his support and justification, a huge number of concrete and wooden crosses have been erected throughout his bishopric, casting their shadow over the killing fields and burned remains by way of reminder of the atrocities committed. And all this is supposed to facilitate justice and confidence between the various elements of the Bosnian diversity. Here the cross is used to present an ideological image of the world in which it loses its link with the transcendent foundations of the self or the Word. It is an image that proclaims itself to be pre-eminent and sealed off from Unicity, thereby losing its translatability into other meanings. It and all within it become an idol that can find its affirmation only in the denial and subjugation of others, even to the point of violent conversion or annihilation. Those who have or advocate such an image of reality accept neither poverty nor submission. They place themselves above the Word, and consider themselves to be the judges and arbiters of everyone else. In this the purpose of the cross is to render the demarcation line between different languages, meanings and symbols as impenetrable as possible, and to im-

pose ideological hegemony and judgment upon others by force, thereby denying both those others' and its own openness to the Word.

In the new era the sporadic use of the cross and other Christian signs and symbols has been noted for purposes that are not unambiguously religious, or which have more of an external, demarcatory role. This confers upon religious symbols, consciously or unconsciously, features that do not originally belong to them. In truth, this is nothing new; it has been seen before. Similarly, the markedly excessive size of the symbols leaves room for doubting their authentic religious purpose, to say nothing of the obvious lack of those exalted Christian virtues of modesty and self-restraint. It is as though there was the wish to send a message to *those others* who are of different spiritual and cultural affiliation.

This, at least in part, is the consequence of the war in this part of the world, but also of the tradition characteristic of the population of the region. Their own history is viewed uncritically, and the past is regarded as the main signpost to the future. Consequently, the political pragmatism of certain circles, with the tacit presence of individuals from the ecclesiastic structures (including those of high rank in the hierarchy) has inaugurated the use of signs and linguistic models of expression from the religious domain to promote their own political ends.⁶¹

Differences in the significance of the cross for Catholics, Krstjani, Orthodox and Muslims determine the boundaries of their separate entities. To renounce these different readings of one and the same symbols would for each of them mean a betrayal or loss of the specific identities that are based on readings and interpretations of the holy scriptures. Ignorance, and the fear that grows out of it, are the source of denial of those specific identities and the imposition of one language on another, often expressed in hatred and violence. Since the cross symbolizes the openness of the human self to Eternity, every form of transformation of this symbolism into closedness is a limitation on it, and renders it untranslatable from one to another sacred doctrine. With such symbols, the human self, too, loses its orientation towards the Ground of all being, and its interface with others manifests itself as a point of unresolvable tensions and conflict.

It is hard to find any other sacred symbol with so many different readings as the cross. Whenever it loses its link with or openness to the absolute, its assignment as a means of suffering to others becomes a necessary consequence. Since the suffering of the closed self is unresolvable, and the relationship with the other in the quantifiable

⁶¹ Marko Karamatić, "Uporaba simbola", *Bilten Franjevačke teologije*, no. 28/I, Sarajevo, 2001, p. 7.

world is never reducible to fullness or unicity, fear of human nature itself, which is poverty, become the most powerful moving force in the unassuageable rapacity for power and material wealth. The symbol of suffering is transformed into a means of demonstrating dominance over others.

It can be ascertained that before the period of changes under consideration, in the fifteenth century, Krstjani, Catholics and Orthodox understood the symbol of the cross differently. What it meant for one was not acceptable to the others. If that symbol had remained untranslatable, it would be possible to claim that its denial of the Word as the beginning and end was inherent in it. But if it is oriented towards the Word, its multiplicity of meanings are a necessary consequence. Differences of understanding vanish in the unicity towards which they are directed and lead through different teachings and rituals. In consequence, different interpretations converge and meet in the transcendent unicity. Thus the Bosnian Krstjani, in all the fullness of their specific identity, did not regard the cross in the same way as the Orthodox and Catholics. This means that they had a different understanding of its meaning, which as such could not be detached from the Truth:

neither *djed* nor *gost* permitted it on their graves, the bans and kings did not set it on the charters they issued to their vassals. A degree of concession was allowed only in regard to foreigners – the people of Dubrovnik. In this case, when they put a cross at the head of the charter, the bans probably made use of *reservatio mentalis*: this is not the sign of a wooden cross, but the symbol of Christ with arms outstretched.

The attitude in the land of Hum was more relaxed; here the Orthodox tradition was stronger. The cross was viewed with greater respect here, but still in conformity with the esoteric Paulinian understanding: the sign of the cross is the personification of Jesus Christ himself.⁶²

The Recitation tells of Jesus that he is the slave of God, prophet and messenger, the Word and the Anointed. It explicitly denies that he suffered crucifixion and death on the wooden cross. But the cross as a symbol designates the tension between heaven and earth, between the eternal and the finite. In the three spatial dimensions and six directions – forward and back, right and left, up and down – the revelation is mani-

⁶² Aleksander Solovjev, "Jesu li bogomili poštovali krst?", *Glasnik Zemaljskog muzeja u Sarajevu*, Sarajevo, 1948, p. 99. [Djed: "Grandfather", Elder of the Bosnian Church; Gost: "Guest", envoy of the Djed. *Trans.*]

fested of one and the same source and recourse, which is in space and time, and yet also external to them, for it is their first principle and ultimate end.

The final verse of the Opening can be linked to the symbolic meaning of the cross: the upper vertical extension denotes the appeal *Guide us in the straight path, the path of those whom Thou hast blessed*; the lower vertical points to the words *not of those against whom Thou are wrathful*, and the supports *nor of those who are astray*. The point of origin and return of the six spatial directions corresponds symbolically to the “seventh ray” or “seventh heaven,” the point where Eternity touches time or Infinity encounters quantifiability. The fullness of recollection at that point of contact, the inherency in it, is none other than submission, praise and baptism. Here Unicity manifests itself in multiplicity, and multiplicity in Unicity.

The persecutions of the Bosnian Krstjani that took place in the second half of the fifteenth century, when the last Bosnian king swore allegiance to the Pope in Rome, gave rise to two essentially different understandings of the cross. In the one, it becomes a sign of victory and dominance over the exponents of the other understanding, in which there is a shift towards openness to the Word and opposition to its being set up in its material form for the purpose of delineating and sealing off the demarcation lines between different languages, meanings and symbols.

One church and demolition

The ideological interpretation of the world rejects the traditional; but to recognize and prove this is no simple or easy undertaking. The ideological expression “we” elevates the speaker to the level of a god, and thereby obligates all others to submission and assent. Everything is judged from this level of the “pure centre,” for there is nothing that transcends this “we” equated with the speaker. In the traditional outlook, “We” is always an expression of supra-individuality. To recite the Lord’s Prayer, or *Thee only we serve; to Thee alone we pray for succour*, entails the submission of the self to the Self or of ourselves to the Ourselhood. Neither “I” nor “we” can ever be the arbiter of exclusion of the other, for if it has recourse to such, it must inevitably rely on violence or appeal to violence. The self then becomes equated with its consciousness or understanding of the world, and denies all that is above or external to that understand-

ing. The subjugation and denial of alterity is necessary to a demonstration of this. But alterity cannot be either subjugated or dominated, although without this there is no resolution to their relation. Menace and fear are the most important elements in measuring their differences.

At the time when Bosnian towns and cities were under siege, the Bosnian Muslims being persecuted, driven from their homes and killed, and their mosques being systematically demolished, Radovan Karadžić set out, in ideological rhetoric, his understanding of Serbdom as the arbiter of the “we” that necessarily annihilates alterity:

It is clear that the road to salvation of Serbs of the Muslim faith is a return to Orthodoxy. I say this in all earnestness; I know that not everyone can do so and that it is not easy, but I also know that it would be the only way to overcome the duality in their being, and the fact that they have temporarily – I say temporarily, for by comparison with eternity a few hundred years is temporarily – been in another faith, whether under pressure from the occupying forces or for the sake of their personal comfort (for “the timid and the lax Turkify themselves”) does not mean that there is not within them a great deal that is Serb, Christian and Orthodox.⁶³

If salvation in perfection is the potential of every individual, does it not inevitably entail the potential for different doctrines and rituals to attain the absolute? The postulate *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*⁶⁴ cannot mean the denial of that multiplicity of paths to the Truth. But this conclusion means that it is in the specific nature of each path and the fullness of the individual that follows it. There is no fullness, no absolute outside the Truth, and the paths both are and are not the Truth itself. But when the individual is closed to fullness, differences are turned into relationships

⁶³ Interview with Radovan Karadžić, “Vaskrsenje šćućurene duše”, *Svetigora*, Podgorica, April/May 1995, p. 16. The duration of this ideological exclusion of the Muslims as others can be delineated by stepping back in time to refer to another two testimonies. In 1917 Stojan Protić, at the time a former Serbian minister, said: “When our army crosses the Drina, it will give the Turks twenty-four hours, or even forty-eight, to revert to the faith of their ancestors, and anyone who does not wish to will be put to the sword, as we once did in Serbia.” (Ivan Meštrović, *Uspomene na političke ljude i događaje*, Buenos Aires: Knjižnica Hrvatske revije, 1961, p. 73). In 1870, inciting insurrection against the Turks in Bosnia, Milivoje Blaznavac, regent of the Serbian prince Milan, told Brother Antun Knežević: “When the uprising comes, issue a proclamation to the Turks forthwith: either be baptized at once, or leave for who knows where, and anyone who does not will be hacked to death!” (Antun Knežević, *Njeke moje bilješke iz zadnjih godina*, ed. Miroslav Karaulac, Belgrade: Rad, 2001, p. 54).

⁶⁴ The assertion can be read that Origen first expressed this aphorism. See, e.g., Italo Sciuto, “Univerzalnost i isključivost u kršćanskoj tradiciji”, trans. Nadira Šehović, *Forum Bosnae*, 16, Sarajevo, 2002, pp. 140-154.

between images of reality that are detached from reality itself. Reason, as a means of Intellect, becomes separated from its first principle and is incapable of resolving the difference of alterity. Understandings of Reality, in becoming detached from that Reality, proffer and impose themselves in its place. Ideology cannot admit a rival, nor anything external to itself that refuses to submit to it. If religion is appealed to, all its other forms, which means other communities too, must be excluded. For Bosnia, that means that the mosques and churches of others must be destroyed⁶⁵ so as to create a homogeneity with the self of nation as the unchallengeable god, a grotesqueness that arose from the loss of the relationship with the Name.

The Bosnian Krstjani rejected the temple, the separate place of worship, in which the potential in their every individual vanished. For them the Face of God, as the absolute, omnipresent and eternal Alterity, made every place a *housse*, a place of worship and a doorway to the Centre. In their view, isolating a given space to the exclusion of another was a denial of the truth that the whole of the earth is a place of submission to God and of glorification of His name:

Ecclesias materiales contempnentes dicunt eas synagogas sathane et adorantes in eis committere ydolatriam.⁶⁶

Ecclesiastical buildings did not have the same significance for the Bosnian Krstjani as they did for the Orthodox and the Catholics. As Aleksandar Solovjev claims, “from the beginning of the thirteenth to the end of the fifteenth century there were no Bosnian churches, no frescoes, no sculptures, at the very time when in neighbouring Dalmatia and Serbia ecclesiastical art was experiencing a brilliant flowering.”⁶⁷ In the view of the Krstjani, the entire earth was accepted as a place where submission and humility could be expressed. The absolute that deserved such witness, in the eyes of the Krstjani, could not be curtailed or confined to a place allocated and defined by people.

⁶⁵ The destruction of mosques in Bosnia can be seen throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. See, e.g., Amra Hadžimuhamedović, “Graenje i rušenje mesdžida u Bosni”, *Blagaj*, 1, Sarajevo, 1996, pp. 45-49.

⁶⁶ From *Rasprave kardinala Torquemade protiv “bosanskih manibejaca”*, quoted in Dragutin Kniewald, “Vjerodostojnost latinskih izvora o bosanskim krstjanima”, p. 179.

⁶⁷ Aleksandar Solovjev, “Jesu li bogomili poštovali krst?”, p. 89

When the last Bosnian king accepted the authority of the Pope in Rome, and began to erect a church in Bobovac,⁶⁸ it also entailed a clash between the Bosnian Krstjani and converts. The divisions and conflicts between them led to an upheaval of major proportions, since what was at issue was salvation resolved by the denial of different paths. Their flight from persecution, recounted by contemporary witnesses,⁶⁹ also took the shape of a shift towards enhancing their differences from the forcibly imposed view that there was no salvation outside the one and only Church.

If the different sacred teachings and ways do not betray the one and the same perennial essence, there can be no proof of existence in them other than submission and generosity. Humility before God, which reaches its acme in total submission, links the self with others through that submission of the self. The world is then transformed into a mosque, a *masjid*, a place where submission to God is demonstrated:

Hast thou not seen how to God bow all who are in the heavens
and all who are in the earth,
the sun and the moon, the stars and the mountains,
the trees and the beasts,
and many of mankind.⁷⁰

The fact that all things bow down to God except some people indicates the distinctiveness of humankind. Their acceptance of the trust offered them, which everything else in existence had rejected, signified

⁶⁸ Pavao Anđelić, *Bobovac i Kraljeva sutjeska: Stolna mjesta bosanski vladara u XIV i XV stoljeću*, Sarajevo: Veselin Masleša, 1973.

⁶⁹ In 1460 Pope Pio II wrote: "The King of Bosnia, to wash away the stain of having surrendered Smederevo to the Turks, and to give proof of his (Christian) faith, or, as many maintain, prompted by greed for money, forced the Manicheans, of whom there were many in his kingdom, to leave the kingdom, abandoning their property, if they would not accept the baptism of Christ. About two thousand of them were baptized, while about forty thousand or somewhat more, who obstinately clung to their fallacious beliefs, fled to Stjepan, a Bosnian duke, their comrade in unbelief." (Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini, *Commentarii rerum memorabilium, qua temporibus suis contigerunt*, Romae, 1534, V 227, quoted in Dominik Mandić, *Bogomilska crkva bosanski krstjana*, Chicago: The Croatian Historical Institute, 1962, pp. 418-19.

⁷⁰ Sura 22:18.

human free will.⁷¹ The acceptance of the offer is possible out of free will, as is rejection; and voluntary acceptance is submission. In this submission are present in seemingly incomprehensible fashion both freedom and the identification with the rejection of any possibility of choice. It is out of this same free will that humankind can refuse to submit. In submission, individuals discover their original nature, which they repudiate in rejection. In submission, the self is open to recognizing the phenomena of the world as signs that point to reasons and purposes beyond themselves. And that which, originating in free will, transcends phenomena in their quantifiability, and thereby the whole of existence, is none other than faith. Its openness to this manifests itself beyond phenomena as intimations of meaning and revelation of the truth in contingent time and space. It gives rise to ease before beauty, with which infinity reveals itself in finitude and eternity in time. And this is love, which manifests itself first in an easing of the self, and then as its contraction and attraction to that which is its original and ultimate purpose. Faith becomes differentiated into love and knowledge. There are two potentials in knowledge as its vital element – the horizons of the outer world, and the interiority of the self. It is through the outer world that its identical potential in the human inner self is recognized. This duality of the inner and the outer are subsumed and returned to the first Principle that manifests itself in all things but never ceases to be what it is. This subsuming or returning in existence transforms the self into the safety of standing before God in full sanctity: for “though you don’t see Him, He, verily, sees you.”⁷² The totality of the world offers humankind this potential for submission, faith and sanctity, and is not limited by either time or space. The world is full submission. Its creation neither adds to nor subtracts anything from the Creator, but is merely the revelation of the Ineffable. Full knowledge of this is the attainment of a view in which the known manifests its foundation. This is its original and ultimate potential. Humankind, however, is more than this, and for the human self submission, in which the whole world becomes its witness, is but a

⁷¹ The account of the differentiation between being and knowledge, or submission and will, as human nature, is to be found in Sura 33:72: *We offered the trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they refused to carry it and were afraid of it; and man carried it.*

⁷² *Sabib Muslim*, 1,2.

starting point from which it attains to faith as love and knowledge, and discovers its original perfection as Nearness and Sanctity – for God is Near and All-holy. Submission to Him means openness to those attributes.

The word and the covenant

On 11 March 1993 Dobrica Ćosić, one of the champions and interpreters of earlier anti-Bosnian blueprints, said of the Bosnian Muslims, Croats and Serbs: “they can no longer live together nor do they any longer wish to do so.”⁷³ This was a view founded on the absolutization of difference. The separate ethno-religious identities of those peoples were postulated as separate and mutually untranslatable languages, meanings and symbols. Their acme is reason, transformed in history and ideology into ethno-national collectives, hermetically sealed off from anything higher. This reason, and the free will connected with it, do not and cannot have any sense of responsibility to anything higher through which the translatability of languages, meanings and symbols into and from one another could be sustained. In this, “our god” is different from “their god.” It follows that the speaker who is equated with this “ideology of national will” expresses the binding principle of what the people may or may not do, want or do not want. In such an arbitrary view, there is no responsibility even to “our god.” This is the essential nature of an ideology that excludes the revelation of the principle: *And say: “We believe in what has been sent down to us, and what has been sent down to you; our God and your God is One, and to Him we have surrendered.”*⁷⁴ This principle of the Word that manifests itself in different “sendings-down” in a multiplicity of languages, symbols and meanings, or doctrines and rituals, is the warrant of translatability and the potential for differences to be in the first principle confirmed by the covenant. Whenever that one and the same Word is not present as the first principle of every difference, the other is the source of fear and insecurity: there is neither principle nor measure by which the other can be assigned recognition and translatability. The connections between human individuals then become horizontal. This is trust, in which the others are postulated as equal. Their freedom cannot transcend the patterns and formulae of the history and

⁷³ Dobrica Ćosić speaking to a delegation from the Greek parliament, 11 March 1993. Quoted in a report in the Belgrade newspaper *Borba* of 12 March 1993, p. 3.

⁷⁴ Sura 29:46

ideology of nation. Instead of orientation towards the depths and openness of the self, the correlate of the heights and immeasurability of the heavens, the state and its borders become the be-all and end-all of national unity and security. In this viewpoint there is no omnipresent Word, eternally and identically present on both sides of the border.

During the fifteenth century, Bosnia was scarred by bitter conflicts, persecution and killing. The Bosnian Krstjani were denied the right to their own way. Royal power turned into violence against their being followers of Christ according to different teachings and rituals. This denial excluded the common Word as the first principle that is confirmed by the diversity of sacred doctrines and ways; and this exclusion of the common Word with its different doctrines and ways, in turn, led to its being impossible for monasteries and churches, synagogues and mosques to be present at the same time in the same land, for God's Name was confined to the non-transcendent logos or quantifiable world as the sole world accessible to reason. And when this happens, there is nothing above reason, nor can there be anything that transcends it and by which it could be guided and served. The self then becomes self-sufficient: it is illumined or enlightened solely by society as a more powerful quantity. Given that the self is sealed off to everything that transcends reason, society becomes the stage of creation and judgment, and from it are derived measure and decision. Every blueprint for the transformation of humankind, society and the world, in consequence, includes the will to become reality through the use of power. Out of the fantasy of the sufficiency of the self and power emerge different projects aimed at subjugating the poor and weak. Fear is determined by the attitude to the quantifiable alterity: the less this is, the greater the self that measures itself against that alterity appears to become. Fear of the presence of the other in such a relationship, or ratio, can be dealt with solely by the total subjugation or annihilation of difference.

The need for openness of the self to the Logos demands the opposing view, as the experience of recent centuries demonstrates, which is either the denial of a higher reality or the rediscovery of the potential for the Word to be confirmed in differing sacred teachings and ways. It is only in the attitude to this higher reality as fullness that the self can be liberated from the illusion of autonomy and power and recognize itself in multiplicity as the manifestation and confirmation of Unity. Fear of this

highest reality, as utter alterity, is liberation from the delusion of individual autonomy, and a diminution or complete elimination of fear and insecurity among people.

By way of historical example of that recognition of the one and the same first principle that would be confirmed by the diversity of sacred languages, meanings and symbols, one may take the Letters of Allegiance sent by Sultan Mehmed el-Fatih in 1453 to the Orthodox Patriarch, Gennadius Scolarius, in Istanbul, and to Brother Andeo Zvizdović, the custodian of the Bosnian Franciscans, in 1463.⁷⁵ These letters are part of the wide-ranging and perennial endeavour to find a principled basis of unity in diversity.⁷⁶ One of its expressions is the modernist postulate of the autonomy of the individual, with reason sufficient for freedom of choice of the route to be taken to the imagined future objective. But the experience gained during those centuries calls for a re-examination of the covenant of people through the Word, so that a discussion on the basis of humility in knowledge might divert one from another in their aspiration to transform the spectre of power into the denigration of the other. Averting one people from another, or the harmony of opposites, means that the right to speech is inseparable from the duty to listen. If the silence is revealed and confirmed in speech, which makes sense only if there is a listener, the one who listens and receives has the right of response to the speaker or to what has been heard. The original predisposition of every individual to listen and to respond in speech, which is a relationship of right and duty, is the surety of the word that is revealed and accessible in the same way in principle to every human individual.

Every historical achievement of the covenant through the Word calls for study, and not one of its manifestations can be taken as an unalterable template. Consciousness is constantly changing, and not one of its states can be taken as having attained what the self is open to. Whenever that changeability that is the warrant of openness is disrupted, there

⁷⁵ For more on the latter see “The Friar and the Sultan: In search of the perennial thought in the memory of the meeting between the Friar Andeo Zvizdović and Sultan Mehmed al-Fatih” in Rusmir Mahmutćehajić, *Prozori: riječi i slike*, Sarajevo: Did, 2000, pp. 13-45.

⁷⁶ On various endeavours to establish legal relations between Muslims and Christians in the Ottoman Empire, see “The Status of the Greek Orthodox Patriarch under the Ottomans”, in Halil Inalcik, *Essays in Ottoman History*, Istanbul: Eren, 1998, pp. 195-223.

occurs a forgetting of God, which necessarily means the forgetting of the self in its original nature. The assumption that the quantifiable world is independent of its unquantifiable first principle is equivalent to denying that principle. This forgetting of God, with its concomitant forgetting of the self, takes place in a sealing off of languages, meanings and symbols from the Word, and this means, too, a failure to understand the meaning of the covenant:

If God had willed, He would have made you
one nation; but He leads astray
whom He will, and guides whom He will;
and you will surely be questioned about
the things you wrought.
Take not your oaths as mere mutual
deceit, lest any foot should slip after
it has stood firm, and you should taste
evil, for that you barred from the way
of God, and lest there should await you
*a mighty chastisement.*⁷⁷

The allegiance or link is the inescapable human mode of relationship with the contingent alterities, society and the world to which God is eternally the complete witness:

Fulfil God's covenant, when you make
covenant, and break not the oaths
after they have been confirmed, and you
have made God your surety; surely God knows
*the things you do.*⁷⁸

The covenant of God (*'abd Allab*) includes the spiritual, moral and social duties that derive from belief in God. This entails the nature of allegiance and the undertaking made by one person to others. Any oath of allegiance by one person to another is, ultimately, allegiance to God. If, however, the potential for a willing acceptance of the proffered trust – which means the recognition and acceptance of the Truth in the outer horizons and the inner selves – is forgotten or repudiated, the relationship with phenomena is reduced to *trust*. It then seems that the reins of the destiny of each individual are in the hands either of that individual or

⁷⁷ Sura 16:93-94.

⁷⁸ Sura 16:91

of alterity. Here lie the essence and cause of the rising fears and uncertainties throughout the modern era. With the denial of every level of being other than its spatial and temporal manifestations, confidence is reduced to trust.⁷⁹

Testimonies

One and the same country is host to people with different paths to the truth. For the truth to draw them towards itself, they must be free. If the sole attraction were to be the mere will to truth, it would not include confidence in the truth, as accepted by humankind in its origins, with the response to God's question *Am I not your Lord? – Yes, we testify*.⁸⁰ This openness to human diversity may be represented by the image of Ibrahim's hospitality under the wing of his submission to God. On the stećak of Gost Mišljene, in the village of Puhovac near Zenica, this inscription is carved:

Here lies the noble gentleman Gost Mišljene whose great hospitality was by the decree of Avram. Good sir, when you come before our only Lord, Jesus Christ, mention us too, your servants!⁸¹

A miniature in a Bible from Souvigny, dating from the twelfth century, shows the prophet Ibrahim lovingly holding in his lap Jews, Christians and Muslims, in a unity of diversity and concord of debate.⁸² They are in Ibrahim's lap and sight – the four of them, with God as the fifth: Ibrahim witnessing for them, and they for him. Their languages are different, but with God they are one and the same Word. In this miniature, created in the fullness of solitude and freedom therein, the latency between the pages of the Bible express the deepest yearning; it is the speech of the soul rebuking itself, and the very opposite of the illusion of power in which monasteries, churches, synagogues and mosques have a meaning even without the mention of God's name. In this utterance by means of

⁷⁹ On the various sociological views of confidence and trust, see Adam B. Seligman, *The Problem of Trust*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997, in particular the chapter "Agency, Civility and the Paradox of Solidarity", pp. 44-74.

⁸⁰ See Sura 7:172

⁸¹ From Marko Vego, *Zbornik srednjovjekovnih natpisa Bosne i Hercegovine*, IV, Sarajevo: National Museum, 1970, p. 61.

⁸² There is an illustration of this miniature on the cover of Ugo Bonanate, *Il Dio degli altri: Il difficile universalismo di Biblia e Corano*, Torina: Bollati Boringhieri, 1997.

the miniature, fear and hatred of the other wane through submission to the common Word in which differences find a harmonious connection with Peace as their beginning and end. Although this and similar miniatures are hidden away in treasuries behind the scenes of power and exclusivity, it is only they that promise a shift in the view of today's conflicts of ignorance into a harmony of differences. In this contemporary expression of diversity in unity, with its visible fear in the face of modernity's grotesque features, the writer is enraptured by the spectacle of Abraham's confirmation of diversity among his descendants. As a result, he is seen as a more important witness than Moses, Christ and Muhammad. But are there witnesses to the reasonableness of Abraham's taking all of them into his lap? There can be none if there is anything, individual or collective, that is without utter alterity. But this can only be He – the First and Last, the Inner and the Outer. With His Word, every language is translatable. Just as Abraham is a witness for Moses, Jesus and Muhammad, so are they for him. *Three men conspire not secretly together, but He is the fourth of them, neither five men, but He is the sixth of them, neither fewer than that, neither more, but He is with them, wherever they may be.*⁸³ Witnessing, then, is the relationship between the one bearing witness and that to which he bears witness. The prophet Abraham and all those in his fold show themselves in harmonious disquisition by witnessing to the One and the Same. Their doctrines and rituals, notwithstanding all their differences, manifest the Word as their beginning and end.

In the church of St Anthony of the Franciscan monastery in Poljude near Split there is a painting of a group of thirty-nine saints and disciples, gathered around the figure of Mary, testifying for Mary and her son.⁸⁴ Most of them are holding scrolls, tablets or books. Among them is the Prophet Muhammad, on whose scroll are inscribed his words: "Nullus est ex Adam qui non tenuerit Satan preter Mariam et Filium eius."⁸⁵ This testimony of Muhammad's for Mary and her son, along with the constant

⁸³ Sura 58:7

⁸⁴ The history and a description of the painting are given in Radoslav Tomić, *Splitska slikarska baština: Splitski slikarski krug u doba mletačke vladavine*, Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 2002, pp. 136-40.

⁸⁵ Among four narratives on this in the collection *Sabih Muslim*, IV, p. 1261, the most similar to that of the Poljude painting reads: "The Satan touches every son of Adam on the day when his mother gives birth to him with the exception of Mary and her son."

presence of God with them, is also their identical response for Muhammad.

On the last page of a Bosnian manuscript dating from the sixteenth century, there are four miniature drawings.⁸⁶ In their central squares these verses are inscribed: *Had God not driven back the people, some by the means of others, there had been destroyed cloisters and churches, oratories and mosques, wherein God's name is much mentioned.*⁸⁷ Say: *"People of the Book! Come now to a word common between us and you, that we serve none but God, and that we associate not aught with Him, and do not some of us take others as Lords, apart from God."*⁸⁸ *Dispute not with the People of the Book save in the fairer manner, except for those of them that do wrong; and say, "We believe in what has been sent down to us, and what has been sent down to you; our God and your God is One, and to Him we have surrendered."*⁸⁹ *Surely they that believe, and those of Jewry, and the Christians, and those Sabaeans, whose believers in God and the Last Day, and works righteousness – their wage awaits them with their Lord, and no fear shall be on them, neither shall they sorrow.*⁹⁰ Around the square field of the inscriptions, bordered in gold, are a monastery, a church, a synagogue and a mosque. These in turn are bordered with calligraphy of the Divine Names. In opposite corners of the miniature are a red rose and a white lily – symbols of the transmission and receipt of the Word. Around the rose is the appeal: O Lord, join with the Praised One!, and around the lily: *He has chosen thee above all women.*⁹¹ Minor differences can be seen in the four representations of the monastery, church, synagogue and mosque; but their colours are visibly different. The one and the same Word manifests itself, in these miniatures, in different doctrines and rituals; and these differences confirm Unicity.

As well as these miniatures, their menacing denial must also be mentioned. Outside the cathedral in Strasbourg are two statues of human figures, representing the people of the synagogue and of the church. The figure representing the people of the synagogue has its eyes bound and its head bowed. In its lowered right hand are the tables of the Law,

⁸⁶ The manuscript is now in the collection of the Mahmutćehajić family in Sarajevo.

⁸⁷ Sura 22:40

⁸⁸ Sura 3:64

⁸⁹ Sura 29:46

⁹⁰ Sura 2:62.

⁹¹ Sura 3:42

bashfully shielded, while in its left it holds a broken spear. The purpose is to represent the people of the synagogue as blind to the Truth, their religion rejected and replaced by a new religion, the one represented by the second statue, the statue of the people of the church. Here the erect, crowned head and wide-open eyes indicate its superiority. In the right hand, held aloft, is a cross, and in the left a chalice.

In this view, the Word is captive, closed off. Those who elevate themselves above it can find no evidence in anything except in the denial of the other, which means that fear and hatred cannot be prevailed over. Contempt for and subjugation of the other, in this image, should bear witness to those who do not recognize the openness of every human individual to the Word.