

Ascending

Modern interpretations of Bosnian historical continuity are dominated by notions of rupture. Historical representations of Christian history that serve ideological purposes treat the Muslim presence as intrusion by force followed by a break. Such essentially ideological images underpin anti-Bosnian and anti-Muslim projects. They break down, however, under a history of religion that entails an image of world and self together with ever-present God.

God's ever-presence as creator and ruler cannot be regarded as a source of history; it is essential to each instant, each thing. Exclude it and you may associate temporal duration with any of the countless things which one may term a "first cause" or "source." The modern absolutization of reason views the world in time in this way. It entails silence about the other aspect of existence over which reason has no power. Histories without God therefore proceed under their own steam, determined by causes that can be described once and for all. Historical phenomena are thus bodies for which the other is a disease from which to be freed.

Rule God out of the world, however, and history of religion, properly understood, becomes impossible. Then the variety of religious forms takes on quite a different meaning, on the assumption of the potential reification of phenomena in history, as postulated by modern science. For such views, the religions are forms of the perennial religion, which admits countless religions over time, while always remaining the same. Central to this view is that the perennial symbols of religion perdure, from tradition to tradition.

To better understand the continuity of Bosnian history, let us look at how two key symbols of the Muslim faith, the links between the valley of Becca and Mount Sion and the Virgin Mary and her son Jesus have been approached. Our treatment is based on the heritage of old Bosnian Christianity and its assimilation into Muslim religious forms. Our purpose is to show that the constant process of losing one and discovering other sets of meanings for symbols and myths is inextricable from presence in religion.

What was forgotten can be remembered, what was lost found. God created us in His image and our authentic nature encompasses all knowledge. In it we know everything, but our time as a created being constantly reminds us that we are not God. Our potential for perfection is perfect service of God; only then do we receive everything from God as our Lord. Remembering the forgotten and finding the lost presuppose admitting that we forget and knowing that

we seek, and bearing witness to God's ever-presence in all things, including us. The teachings and rituals are there to help us recall the forgotten and to cleave to our eternal essence, from ever, forever.

As One, God reveals Himself through His most beautiful names.¹ He created us and taught us those names,² preparing us to be His steward, as He said Himself.

It is God who made the earth a fixed place for you, and heaven a building; and He formed you, He made your forms beautiful, and He provided you with the pleasant things.³

He created the heavens and the earth with the Truth, He formed you, and He made your forms beautiful; and to Him is the homecoming.⁴

We have received His most beautiful names, as has existence as a whole, which manifests them. Our return to God means realizing the received, revealing our service as the reception and return of what is beautiful from and to our Lord. God asks only being-at-peace in payment of our debt, but this requires self-realization through His names. This is how we return to, find or discover ourselves in authentic nature. Our final goal in return is to be God's steward, as one of the good.

Our debt is service and being-at-peace. From it derives our right to develop in perfection and to expect forgiveness for betraying what we received. This correlation between debt and right is God's revelation to humankind. From it derives the tradition that encompasses all times and places. The debt is personal. It affects each of us individually. It is being in the instant, without past or future, or anywhere but where one is. The revelation is inextricable from Unity, infinity and perfection. Tradition encompasses all time and place. Our debt to God, as He reveals it, is the source of tradition, so tradition can never replace the debt itself.

There are many revelations, but one source. Only that source is real. We may see it in anything and discern it against the unreal. Each revelation appears all-comprehensive, but each differs from the rest. And whatever touches revelation appears as perfect in its beauty.

We are in the depths, in the manifold. Realization lies in ascent, return to the initial height, where we received existence and knowledge of it. Height

¹ See *Qur'an*, 59:24.

² *Ibid.*, 2:31.

³ *Qur'an*, 40:64.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 64:3.