Review of Djurić's "Biblijom i Kur’anom do jednoga Boga stvoritelja [With the Bible and the Qur’an to the One Creator God]"

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Reviewed by Dr. Adnan Silajdžić, professor at the Faculty of Islamic Sciences, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

This book has been penned by an interesting and unusual author in many ways. Although not a theologian, philosopher, political scientist, or a religious studies scholar by profession, Marko Djurić builds his view of interfaith dialogue through complex topics from the spheres of religion, theology, philosophy, politics and social practice. That is why this book, *Biblijom i Kur’anim do jednoga Boga stvoritelja*, among other things, is perceived as the result of devoted reading of thematically diverse literature and publications, and the outcome of a lengthy pondering on the Christian-Muslim dialogue conducted in the contemporary world in general, as well as in the Balkans.

During his work on the book, the author consulted informative and conceptual sources in a very broad and diverse literature, from theological and philosophical to legal-political, sociological, psychological, etc. He applied the methodology which, in the history of dialogue, was introduced by classical Christian and Muslim writers; in other words, he cites short fragments which include particular issues from a large number of books, acquiring in this way the opportunity to express his opinion on these issues or problems.

Although the author does not possess a basic theological education, it still should be noted that we encounter certain disputable and simplified interpretations. For example, in the chapter *Where to Find or How to Reach the Merciful God*, which deals with Biblical and Quranic theology, he courageously engages in a consideration of the basic meanings of Jewish, Christian and Muslim religious creeds, i.e. religious beliefs, but not with the intent to demonstrate his knowledge on the history of monotheistic religions, or to get involved in barren, dull, dogmatic-
theological disputes, but rather to articulate the idea of a dialogue as a natural state of a human being as the crown of God’s creation (*eikon*-*suretullah*).

Thus, the author does not approach the dialogue through theological and dogmatic narratives, constructs, stereotypes and worn out phrases, so typical for the so-called institutionalized, confessional, normative and even national religions which were dominantly shaped in these parts [the Balkans] since the 1990s, because such an approach imprisons Christians and Muslims into their own tradition, and thereby removes them from life and from current social affairs. That is why he tries to critically challenge the credibility of the Theology of Identity, developed over a longer period of time, especially the one presented by the Serbian Orthodox Church (usually called *Svetosavlje*), burdened with theological disputes on God and on other central Christian-Muslim doctrines (in the name of my own doctrine I challenge the tradition of others), which may not be resistant to intolerance, penitence, xenophobia, stagnation, spiritual and intellectual sluggishness, ideologically-determined perception of everything other and different.

According to Djurić, a dialogue is possible only through free, creative, responsible, mature and living faith, which comes as the result of spiritual growth and maturity of each believer; the immanent faith which enters into the will of each and every Christian and Muslim through intellectual cognition, into their life through decision-making, into their action through conviction, into orthopraxy and religious culture through action. Only such a faith and spirituality can contribute to the shaping of mentally and physically healthy individuals and social communities, capable of confronting all forms of humiliation of human dignity, such as consumerism, egoism, killing, oppression, etc. (to restore the dignity assigned to human beings by the Bible and Quran), and, in addition, open to the other in accordance with the principles of a pluralistic theology of reciprocity.
The author of this book, Marko Djurić, undoubtedly personifies that type of religiousness, and it is precisely because of this quality that his essays on dialogue between Christians and Muslims have strength, authority, and moral credibility, by which they engage and obligate every benevolent and earnest believer. Consequently, in relation to other Serbian and local [Balkan] writers in general, he stands out exactly because he enters into the dialogue via his own reading, understanding and experiencing of an authentic, ideologically unburdened Christianity; in other words his religiousness and acceptance of the other are born out of personal freedom but also out of the frustrations brought by the era and historical context in which he lives. That is exactly the greatest asset of this book, and the reason why we recommend it warmly to readers.