

Update

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Editorial: Sectarian Self Engaging the Other

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The apartment was modest for a family of such material wealth. I saw something on the credenza that gave the impression that they had traveled to Sydney, Australia. So, I asked if they had frequent opportunity to travel. The father spoke with little hesitation of seven or more of the world's largest cities where he had taken his family, in part because he felt they needed to learn of Others and the way they live.

Our dinner was delightful, but at one point I embarrassed myself a bit when I burst out laughing. You see, in the middle of the conversation around the dinner table, his phone rang. Not uncommon these days, regardless of time or place, to be interrupted by a cell phone. What struck me, however, was his ring tone, "Oh Susanna!" Here we were in Antalya, Turkey, having dinner with a Muslim family, talking about things that matter, and the reach of another culture came right into the house and interrupted our dinner conversation.

No one, it seems, in any place on the globe can escape the reality of the interplay of culture and religion in our present day. Nor do we want to avoid it, at least most of us. For bioethics as an academic discipline, as well as a clinical skill consulting in difficult decision-making, we simply must pay attention to the radical new context in which we live. For those of us engaged in education and offering of health care today, our cloistered, sectarian ways are a vestige of the past. But are we truly prepared for the mix of faith and culture into which we step when we do our work? Seventh-day Adventism has always stepped out into this mix with regard to education and the offering of health care. But has our theological and religious tradition prepared us well for a true engagement of the Other?

In my own experience of conversion to Christianity, and in education in Adventist pastoral theology at Walla Walla College and Andrews University Seminary, I was taught, appropriately, an apologetic approach to the Other, all Others. While at the University of Virginia for my PhD in religious ethics, I sat in the class of one Abdulaziz Sachedina, professor of Islamic theology and ethics, a devout Shi'ite Muslim with whom I bonded very closely, in part because of his belief and encouragement toward the idea that God is really involved in the life of human beings. While sitting in his class one day listening to his portrayal of Islamic theology, I found myself exhausted. Tired of sifting all that he said through the apologetic sieve of my interfaith training. Not that it wasn't both informative and enjoyable to do so; comparing and contrasting my faith with this Other was a good thing. But I just couldn't keep up the pace of this sifting process. There in class I decided to simply hear what my teacher felt was important for me to learn about Islamic theology and ethics. It was a bit of a turning point with regard to my interaction with the Other. It was the end of an era for

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me; the end of the idea that the end goal of any and all interaction with Others was to convince them to join my Seventh-day Adventist faith and community. A beginning as well; the dawn of a time when I could find satisfaction in some level of dialogue that simply brought understanding. I was finally able to put off the words of one of my Seminary instructors, “If the person you are visiting is not open and moving toward positive decisions to join our church, stop wasting your time and move on to someone that is.” I understand that mindset, and I do not condemn it. But in the current mix of faith and culture in the global society, I must find a place short of that in which I may rest, sure of having made a positive contribution to the Other and our mutual society. Should the Other find joy in my belief in Jesus and my Adventist community of faith this would be wonderful! But it is okay if they do not.

What is there in Adventism that provides foundation for such a view, such an experience? In the New Testament accounts of Paul’s interaction with the religious and philosophical Other, one finds reason for both pessimism and hope. Stories in the book of Acts and in the Pauline epistles are rich with snapshots of interaction and dialogue. Paul was a hard-driving person, and we are hard-pressed to find much of an open attitude toward spending time with the Other in purposeful conversation that is not heading toward conversion. His experience at Mars Hill in Athens is unique.

In early Adventism, Ellen White and other Church leaders found common cause with Others in precious few situations. Certainly in the temperance movement and perhaps in helping to end slavery, early Adventists were willing to engage in positive dialogue with Others for mutual concern and benefit for society at large. Other illustrations of this sort of dialogue might include working with others on matters of religious liberty, peacemaking, tobacco eradication, addressing issues of gender abuse, and health care delivery. We routinely send observers to meetings of the World Council of Churches. Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) is another prime example of working together with Others, finding common cause for the mutual benefit of our society.

On the website of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, one finds a statement titled “Relationships with Other Christian Churches and Religious Organizations” <www.adventist.org/beliefs/other_documents/other_doc5.html>. Another statement on the ecumenical movement in Christianity <www.adventist.org/beliefs/other_documents/other_doc3.html> states the following: “In 1980 the General Conference set up a Council on Interchurch Relations in order to give overall guidance and supervision to the Church’s relations with other religious bodies. This council

has from time to time authorized conversations with other religious organizations where it was felt this could prove helpful. Adventist leaders should be known as bridge builders. This is not an easy task.... Adventists have not been called to live in a walled-in ghetto, talking only to themselves, publishing mainly for themselves, showing a sectarian spirit of isolationism. It is, of course, more comfortable and secure to live in a Seventh-day Adventist fortress, with the communication drawbridges all drawn up. Of course, these statements focus specifically in the area of dialogue with other Christians, what may more properly be called intrafaith dialogue rather than interfaith dialogue.

Of primary importance in our dialogue with Islam, the General Conference-sponsored “Global Center for Adventist-Muslim Relations” leads the way. This Center is a tremendous positive force for change in our tradition of dialogue with the Other. One of the emerging principles of dialogue is the idea that when we study together with Muslims, we do so for the mutual benefit of drawing closer to God, learning from each other how best to honor and praise our Creator.

One of the realities for those of us who seek interfaith dialogue and cooperation is that we have little encouragement from the history of our Church. This is true also of those Others coming to the dialogue from Islam. Yet, from within Islam, if I am reading things correctly, there is a foundation for and a history of engaging the Other in fruitful dialogue. Fethullah Gülen is leading many sincere Muslim people into a renewed (not new) emphasis of interfaith dialogue and peaceful coexistence.

IN THIS ISSUE OF UPDATE:

We have included in this issue of **UPDATE** an article from *The Muslim World* that will introduce you to Gülen and those who agree with his teaching. It is difficult to say how many people would consider themselves significantly influenced by his interpretation of Islam for our time. Suffice it to say, however, there are millions who are influenced positively. His supporters are both Muslim and non-Muslim, and together they constitute a social, civil, and apolitical movement. There is no “membership” in this movement and there is no necessary connection to Turkey or any other national or political entity. When asked by those who support his work, what he, himself, would like for them to do in support, his consistent answer is two-fold: build schools and engage in dialogue with Others.

As a result, those influenced by him have built and operate the equivalent of our K-12 schools in at least 100 different countries. These are not parochial, sectarian, Qur’an-only

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schools. They are schools that follow local secular educational guidelines in whatever country they are in. Organizational structure and oversight for these schools is in the hands of local people dedicated to Islam and the Gülen movement.

While on tour in Turkey, in the city of Antalya, our local guide was someone whose life had been touched by the Gülen movement. A Muslim himself, raised in Bosnia and having a Turkish mother, Lachman Kurt told us a story of how he came to support this movement. In his 30s and in the military in and around Sarajevo, Lachman had fallen into the duty of protecting and translating for a small group of people from Turkey who had simply shown up on the borders of the city during the war. As he described the personal impressions this group made, he told of his own descent into the barbarian ways of fighting that swept the city and its people. He broke down in tears as he began to describe the stark contrast of this small group of Gülen supporters. This small group of dedicated Muslims proposed to build a K-12 school that would teach peace in war-torn Sarajevo. The influence of this little group as they set about teaching peace in their school grew in Lachman’s heart and in the community in which they served. They continue their work to this day.

Ibrahim Barlas, the leader of our trip, is now president of Pacifica Institute, which works in Southern California in support of the Gülen movement. Pacifica Institute <www.pacificainstitute.org>, formerly known as Global Cultural Connections, was established in 2003 with the express purpose of helping “establish a better society where individuals love, respect, and accept each other as they are.” It sponsors conferences, panel discussions, public forums, and art performances in the effort to bring people together. While it is particularly keen toward enhancing interfaith dialogue, its overarching goal is to “serve their communities,” strengthen “civil society,” and promote the “development of human values.”

It is a true joy getting to know Ibrahim. He is a Kurd by ethnicity and a Turk in national pride. He is an international businessman and lived for many years in Singapore, where he married a local woman and started a family. Now he lives in Los Angeles and has a vivacious passion for sharing the beauty of Islam with Others. We also enjoyed sharing baklava together!

The Pacifica Institute is one of perhaps 15 associations of Gülen supporters here in the United States and around the world. Despite the international reach of this civic movement and the vast numbers of those affected, there is no structural connection among the various groups and

schools. Our trip, as well as seven others this summer for a total of about 100 persons, was sponsored by these people. While we paid for our airfare, the rest of the trip was paid for by the generosity of those who believe in this effort.

The sponsors were incredibly hospitable as well. We enjoyed many delicious meals in their homes and stayed one night in their homes as well. In every case of such home visits, we were given gifts from our hosts in an effort to share their delight at our having come. On one beautiful morning in the city of Izmir, we were hosted for breakfast by a group of local businessmen supporters of Gülen and these interfaith dialogue trips. We shared stories around the breakfast table. One of them told the fable of the ant who was trying to put out a fire. When asked by another creature just what the ant thought he would be able to do to the fire with one single drop of water, the ant replied, “I am at least able to proclaim what side I am on.” The man telling the story, like the ant, wanted to be known as firmly planted on the side that advocates peace and tolerance in a global society that seems bent upon cataclysm.

In this issue we offer you two articles written by Gülen himself and one analysis of the Gülen movement. What does any of this have to do with bioethics and the Center for Christian Bioethics here at Loma Linda University? Not much when one looks at the traditional narrow, clinical orientation of medical ethics. Under a much broader view, however, bioethics must pay some attention to such matters. This is particularly true for those of us engaged in the theological and medical traditions within Adventism. We have been engaged in the Islamic world, working together with them in peace in several locations across the world. We do well to consider them friends and allies in the increasingly hostile global context that tries to pit Christians against Muslims in the so-called “clash of civilizations.”



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The Necessity of Interfaith Dialogue

Fethullah Gülen

People are talking about peace, contentment, ecology, justice, tolerance, and dialogue. Unfortunately, the prevailing materialist worldview disturbs the balance between humanity and nature and within individuals. This harmony and peace only occurs when the material and spiritual realms are reconciled.

Religion reconciles opposites: religion–science, this world–the next world, Nature–Divine Books, material–spiritual, and spirit–body. It can contain scientific materialism, put science in its proper place, and end long-standing conflicts. The natural sciences, which should lead people to God, instead cause widespread unbelief. As this trend is strongest in the West, and because Christianity is the most influenced, Muslim–Christian dialogue is indispensable.

Interfaith dialogue seeks to realize religion’s basic oneness and unity, and the universality of belief. Religion embraces all beliefs and races in brotherhood, and exalts love, respect, tolerance, forgiveness, mercy, human rights, peace, brotherhood, and freedom via its prophets.

Islam has a prophetic tradition that Jesus will return during the last days. For Muslims, this means that such values as love, peace, brotherhood, forgiveness, altruism, mercy, and spiritual purification will have precedence. As Jesus was sent to the Jews and all Jewish prophets exalted these values, dialogue with the Jews must be established, as well as a closer relationship and cooperation among Islam, Christianity, and Judaism.

There are many common points for dialogue. Michael Wyschogrod writes that there are as many theoretical or creedal reasons for Muslims and Jews drawing closer together as there are for Jews and Christians coming together.¹ Furthermore, Muslims have a good record of dealing with Jews: there has been almost no discrimination, no Holocaust, denial of basic human rights, or genocide. In fact, Jews were welcomed in times of trouble, as when the Ottoman State embraced them after their expulsion from Spain.

MUSLIM DIFFICULTIES IN DIALOGUE

In the last century alone, far more Muslims have been killed by Christians than all Christians killed by Muslims

throughout history.² Many Muslims, even educated and conscious ones, believe the West seeks to undermine Islam with ever-more subtle and sophisticated methods.

Western colonialism is remembered. The Ottoman State collapsed due to European attacks. Foreign invasions of Muslim lands were followed with great interest in Turkey. The gradual “transformation” of Islam into an ideology of conflict and reaction or into a party ideology also made people suspicious of Islam and Muslims.

Islam was the greatest dynamic for Muslim independence. It has been viewed as an element of separation, a harsh political ideology, and a mass ideology of independence that raised walls between itself and the West.

Christendom’s historical portrayal of Islam as a crude distorted version of Judaism and Christianity, and the Prophet as a fraud, still rankle.

“Islam has a prophetic tradition that Jesus will return during the last days.”

DIALOGUE IS A MUST

For interfaith dialogue to succeed, we must forget the past, ignore polemics, and focus on common points. The West’s view has changed. Consider Massignon, who says Islam is

“the faith of Abraham revived with Muhammad.” He believed that Islam has a positive, almost prophetic mission in the post-Christian world, for: “Islam is the religion of faith. It is not a religion of natural faith in the God of the philosophers, but faith in the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Ishmael, faith in our God. Islam is a great mystery of Divine Will.” He believed in the Qur’an’s Divine authorship and Muhammad’s Prophethood.³

The West’s perspective on our Prophet also has softened. Such Christian clerics and people of religion like Charles J. Ledit, Y. Moubarac, Irene-M. Dalmais, L. Gardet, Norman Daniel, Michel Lelong, H. Maurier, Olivier Lacombe, and Thomas Merton express warmth for Islam and the Prophet, and support dialogue.

The Second Vatican Council, which initiated this dialogue and so cannot be ignored, shows that the Catholic Church’s attitude has changed. In the Council’s second period, Pope Paul VI said:

“On the other hand, the Catholic Church is looking farther, beyond the horizons of Christianity. It is turning

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towards other religions that preserve the concept and meaning of God as One, Transcendental, Creator, Ruler of Fate, and Wise. Those religions worship God with sincere, devotional actions....

“The Church reaffirms to them that in modern society in order to save the meaning of religion and servanthood to God—a necessity and need of true civilization—the Church itself is going to take its place as a resolute advocate of God’s rights on man....

“In our world that has become smaller and in which relations have become closer, people expect answers from religion regarding mysterious enigmas in human nature that turn their hearts upside down. What is man? What is the meaning and purpose of life? What is goodness and reward, what is sin? What is the source and point of suffering? What is the path to true happiness? What is death, what is the meaning of judgment after death and receiving the fruits of what one has done? What is the mystery surrounding the beginning and end of existence? ...

“The Church encourages its children, together with believing and living as Christians, to get to know and support with precaution, compassion, dialogue, and co-operation those who follow other religions and to encourage them to develop their spiritual, moral, and socio-cultural values.”⁴

Pope John Paul II admits in his *Crossing the Threshold of*

Hope that Muslims worship in the best and most careful manner. He reminds his readers that, on this point, Christians should follow Muslims. ■

¹Prof. Griffith, Sidney, ‘Sharing the Faith of Abraham: the ‘Credo’ of Louis Massignon’, *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, vol. 8, No. 2, pp. 193-210)

²All the above mentioned quotations from the Ecumenical Council are translated from: Prof. Yildirim, Suat, ‘Kiliseyi Islam ile Diyaloga Iten Sebepler,’ *Yeni Umit*. No. 16, p. 7.

³Izzeti, Abu’l-Fazl, *Islamin Yayilis Tarihine Giris* (trans.), 1st. 1984, p.348).

⁴Elmalili Hamdi Yazir, *Hak Dini Kur’an Dili*, 1st., Vol.2, pp. 1131-2. July-September 2000, Issue 31



Fethullah Gülen was born in 1941 in Erzurum, eastern Turkey. After graduating from a private divinity school in Erzurum, he obtained his license and began to preach and teach the importance of tolerance and understanding.

He is deeply respected for his passion for all humanity and his averseness to unbelief, injustice, and deviation. He is considered

by Turkish intellectuals and scholars to be among the wisest activists of 20th-century Turkey or even the Muslim world.

A Comparative Approach to Islam and Democracy

Fethullah Gülen

Religion, particularly Islam, has become one of the most difficult subject areas to tackle in recent years. Contemporary culture, whether approached from the perspective of anthropology or theology, psychology or psychoanalysis, evaluates religion with empirical methods. On the one hand, religion is an inwardly experienced and felt phenomenon, one that, for the most part, is related to the permanent aspects of life. On the other hand, believers can see their religion as a philosophy, a set of rational principles, or mere mysticism. The difficulty increases in the case of Islam, for some Muslims and policy-makers consider and present it as a purely political, sociological, and economic ideology, rather than as a religion.

If we want to analyze religion, democracy, or any other system or philosophy accurately, we should focus on humanity and human life. From this perspective, religion in general, and Islam in particular, cannot be compared on the same basis with democracy or any other political, social, or economic system. Religion focuses primarily on the immutable aspects of life and existence, whereas political, social, and economic systems or ideologies concern only certain variable social aspects of our worldly life.

The aspects of life with which religion is primarily concerned are as valid today as they were at the dawn of humanity and will continue to be so in the future. Worldly systems change according to circumstances and so can be evaluated only according to their times. Belief in God, the hereafter, the prophets, the holy books, the angels, and divine destiny have nothing to do with changing times. Likewise, worship and morality’s universal and unchanging standards have little to do with time and worldly life.

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Therefore, when comparing religion or Islam with democracy, we must remember that democracy is a system that is being continually developed and revised. It also varies according to the places and circumstances where it is practiced. On the other hand, religion has established immutable principles related to faith, worship, and morality. Thus, only Islam’s worldly aspects should be compared with democracy.

The main aim of Islam and its unchangeable dimensions affect its rules governing the changeable aspects of our lives. Islam does not propose a certain unchangeable form of government or attempt to shape it. Instead, Islam establishes fundamental principles that orient a government’s general character, leaving it to the people to choose the type and form of government according to time and circumstances. If we approach the matter in this light and compare Islam with the modern liberal democracy of today, we will be better able to understand the position of Islam and democracy with respect to each other.

Democratic ideas stem from ancient times. Modern liberal democracy was born in the American (1776) and French Revolutions (1789–1799). In democratic societies, people govern themselves as opposed to being ruled by someone above. The individual has priority over the community in this type of political system, being free to determine how to live his or her own life. Individualism is not absolute, though. People achieve a better existence by living within a society, and this requires that they adjust and limit their freedom according to the criteria of social life.

The Prophet says that all people are as equal as the teeth of a comb.¹ Islam does not discriminate based on race, color, age, nationality, or physical traits. The Prophet declared:

You are all from Adam, and Adam is from earth. O servants of God, be brothers [and sisters].²

Those who were born earlier, who have more wealth or power than others, or who belong to certain families or ethnic groups have no inherent right to rule others.

Islam also upholds the following fundamental principles:

- Power lies in truth, a repudiation of the common idea that truth relies upon power.
- Justice and the rule of law are essential.
- Freedom of belief and rights to life, personal property, reproduction, and health (both mental and physical) cannot be violated.

- The privacy and immunity of individual life must be maintained.
- No one can be convicted of a crime without evidence, or accused and punished for someone else’s crime.
- An advisory system of administration is essential.

All rights are equally important, and the rights of the individual cannot be sacrificed for the sake of society. Islam considers a society to be composed of conscious individuals equipped with free will and having responsibility toward both themselves and others. Islam goes a step further by adding a cosmic dimension. It sees humanity as the “motor” of history, contrary to the fatalistic approaches of some 19th century Western philosophies of history, such as dialectical materialism and historicism.³ Just as the will and behavior of every individual determine the outcome of his or her life in this world and in the hereafter, a society’s progress or decline

is determined by the will, worldview, and lifestyle of its inhabitants. The Qur’an says:

God will not change the state of a people unless they change themselves (with respect to their beliefs, worldview, and lifestyle). (Ar-Rad 13:11)

In other words, each society holds the reins of its fate in its own hands. The prophetic tradition emphasizes this idea: “You will be ruled according to how you are.”⁴ This is the basic character and spirit of democracy, an idea that does not conflict with any Islamic principle.

As Islam holds individuals and societies responsible for their own fate, people must be responsible for governing themselves. The Qur’an addresses society with such phrases as: “O people!” and “O believers!” The duties entrusted to modern democratic systems are those that Islam assigns to society and classifies, in order of importance, as “absolutely necessary, relatively necessary, and commendable to carry out.” The sacred text includes the following passages:

Establish, all of you, peace. (Al-Baqara 2:208)

Spend in the way of God and to the needy of the pure and good of what you have earned and of what We bring forth for you from the Earth. (Al-Baqara 2:267)

If some among your women are accused of indecency, you must have four witnesses (to prove it). (An-Nisa 4:15)

God commands you to give over the public trusts to the charge of those having the required qualities and to judge with justice when you judge people. (An-Nisa 4:58)

Observe justice as witnesses respectful for God, even if it is

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“The Prophet says that all people are equal as the teeth of a comb.”

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against yourselves, your parents, and relatives. (An-Nisa 4:135)

If they (your enemies) incline to peace (when you are at war), you also incline to it. (Al-Anfal 8:61)

If a corrupt, sinful one brings you news (about others), investigate it so that you should not strike a people without knowing. (Al-Hujurat 49:6)

If two parties among the believers fight between themselves, reconcile them. (Al-Hujurat 49:9)

In short, the Qur’an addresses the whole community and assigns it almost all the duties entrusted to modern democratic systems.

People cooperate with one another by sharing these duties and establishing the essential foundations necessary to perform them. The government is composed of all of these basic elements. Thus, Islam recommends a government based on a social contract. People elect the administrators and establish a council to debate common issues. Also, the society as a whole participates in auditing the administration. During the rule of the first four caliphs (632–661) in particular, the fundamental principles of government mentioned above—including free elections—were fully observed. The political system was transformed into a sultanate after the death of Ali, the fourth caliph, due to internal conflicts and the global conditions at that time. Unlike the caliphate, power in the sultanate was passed down through the sultan’s family. However, even though free elections were no longer held, societies maintained other principles that are found at the core of liberal democracy of today.

Islam is an inclusive religion. It is based on the belief in one God as the Creator, Lord, Sustainer, and Administrator of the universe. Islam is the religion of the whole universe. That is, the entire universe obeys the laws laid down by God; everything in the universe is “Muslim” and obeys God by submitting to His laws. Even a person who refuses to believe in God or who follows another religion has to be a Muslim perforce as far as bodily existence is concerned. Our entire life, from the embryonic stage to the body’s dissolution into dust after death, every tissue of the muscles, and every limb of the body follows the course prescribed for each by God’s laws. Thus, in Islam, God, nature, and humanity are neither remote from one another nor are they alien to one another. It is God who makes Himself known to humanity through nature and humanity itself, and nature and humanity are two books (of creation) through which each word of God is made known. This leads humankind to look upon everything as belonging to the same Lord, to whom it itself belongs, and therefore regarding nothing in the universe as being alien. His sympathy, love, and service do not remain confined to the people of a particular race, color, or ethnicity. The

Prophet summed this up with the command, “O servants of God, be brothers (and sisters)!”

A separate but equally important point is that Islam recognizes all religions that came before it. It accepts all the prophets and books sent to different peoples in different epochs of history. Not only does it accept them, but it also regards belief in them as an essential principle of being Muslim. In this way, it acknowledges the basic unity of all religions. A Muslim is at the same time a true follower of Abraham, Moses, David, all the other Hebrew prophets, and Jesus. This belief explains why both Christians and Jews enjoyed their religious rights under the rule of Islamic governments throughout history.

The Islamic social system seeks to form a virtuous society and thereby gain God’s approval. It recognizes right, not force, as the foundation of social life. Hostility is unacceptable. Relationships must be based on belief, love, mutual respect, assistance, and understanding instead of conflict and the pursuit of personal interests. Social education encourages people to pursue lofty ideals and to strive for perfection, not just to run after their own desires. Justified calls for unity and virtues create mutual support and solidarity, and belief secures brotherhood and sisterhood. Encouraging the soul to attain perfection brings happiness in both worlds.

Democracy has developed over time. Just as it has gone through many different stages in the past, it will continue to evolve and improve in the future. Along the way, it will be shaped into a more humane and just system, one based on righteousness and reality. If human beings are considered as a whole, without disregarding the spiritual dimension of their existence and their spiritual needs, and without forgetting that human life is not limited to this mortal life, and that all people have a great craving for eternity, democracy could reach the peak of perfection and bring even more happiness to humanity. Islamic principles of equality, tolerance, and justice can help it do just this. ■

* This article originally appeared in *SAIS Review*, 21:2 (Summer-Fall 2001):133-38.

¹Abu Shuja’ Shirawayh ibn Shahrardar al-Daylami, *Al-Firdaws bi-Ma’thur al-Khitab* [The Heavenly Garden Made Up of the Selections from the Prophet’s Addresses], Beirut, 1986, Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiya, 4:300.

²For the second part of the hadith see the sections “Nikah” (marriage contract) in Abu ‘Abdullah Muhammad ibn Isma‘il al-Bukhari, ed., *al-Jami‘ al-Sahih* [A Collection of the Prophet’s Authentic Traditions], Istanbul: al-Maktabat al-Islamiya, n.d., ch. 45; “Birr wa Sila” (Goodness and Visiting the Relatives) in Imam Abu Husayn Muslim ibn

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Fethullah Gülen and the ‘People of the Book’: A Voice from Turkey for Interfaith Dialogue

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The term “People of the Book” or *Ahl al-kitab* is mentioned in the Qur’an 24 times, referring to Christians and Jews in particular. The context of these Qur’anic references varies. Some of these verses praise the People of the Book for their righteousness and good deeds and faith in the Afterlife (Qur’an 3.113). Others rebuke the People of the Book for not following the way of God (Qur’an 3.99). A group of these verses invites the People of the Book to a common ground between Muslims and themselves (Qur’an 3.64). Another group of these verses indicates an intimate relationship between Muslims and Christians (Qur’an 5.82). The relationship between Muslims and the People of the Book, Jews and Christians, has been a subject of discussion among Muslims throughout the centuries. Islam’s long-time ecumenical roots are easily traced to the famous verse in the Qur’an:

Say (O Prophet Muhammad): Oh People of the Book! Come to an agreement between us that we will not worship other than God, and that we shall ascribe no partner unto him, and that none of us shall take others for lords beside God ... (Qur’an, 3:64)

This verse, revealed in the ninth year of the Hijra (629 CE), is one of the greatest ecumenical calls of Prophet Muhammad’s time. The sources of Islamic law have dedicated certain chapters to explain the legal status of the People of the Book in Islam. The Ottoman Empire presented a great example of the Islamic understanding of tolerance towards non-Muslim subjects, in particular, the People of the Book. In our contemporary world, the issue has become even more relevant because of a tremendous need for interfaith dialogue and understanding. We aim to elaborate on the ideas of the contemporary Turkish theologian Fethullah Gülen in this article. His ideas are of paramount importance as far as Muslim/Christian dialogue in the modern world is concerned.

Gülen, known as one of the pioneers of inter-religious understanding since the early 1980s, has laid the groundwork for an Islamic approach to interfaith dialogue.¹ To fully appreciate the significance of this accomplishment, one must understand the perspective from which Gülen approaches

this subject. Accordingly, the purpose of this article is first of all to introduce this important Islamic thinker to a Western audience, and then to set out in some detail his ideas about the encounter of the world’s major religions in modern times, concentrating in particular on Muslim/Christian dialogue.

A THOUGHTFUL PREACHER

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, increasingly large congregations were gathering on Fridays in mosques in Edirne, Izmir, and Istanbul to hear a young, itinerant preacher who had the gift of speaking of the traditional values of Islam in a modern idiom that recognized the importance of the sciences and the culture of the colleges and universities that many in his audience were attending. Gülen himself had a very traditional Islamic education. He was born in Erzurum in eastern Anatolia on April 27, 1941, the very day when Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, founder of modern Turkey, died in faraway Istanbul. According to his biographer, as a young man Gülen accepted the new Turkish national identity; he was also searching for ways to incorporate the lifestyle of the companions of the Prophet of Islam into modern society.² This concern of his was due in no small part to the influence of his father, who was very much involved in the Sufi circles of Erzurum, as well as to the piety and prayer of some of Said Nursi’s (1876–1960) disciples, who were achieving a wide popularity in Turkey in the middle of the twentieth century. In fact, in his early 20s Gülen began to systematically read the works of Nursi, an experience which would prove to be of no small significance in the development of his own thought.

Gülen’s mother, Rafi’a, was his first Qur’an teacher; in the local educational institutions he attended alongside the public grammar school, he came under the tutelage of Muhammad Lutfi Efendi, a member of the Qadiri Sufi order. Although we no longer know much about this man, it is clear that he was an inspiration for the young Gülen. He awakened in him the desire to live his whole life in accordance with Islamic values, and it was under his direction that Gülen committed the Qur’an to memory, an accomplishment that

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serves him well to this day. His father, Ramiz Efendi, who had many connections with the Naqshbandi Sufi order, also exerted a major influence in his son’s life, being his first Arabic teacher and the one who gave him a wider entrée into the world of the classical thinkers of Islam. In addition to the ideas of early religious figures such as al-Hasan al-Bari (d. 728) and Harith al-Muhasibi (d. 857), al-Ghazzali (d. 1111), and Jalal ad-Din ar-Rumi (d. 1276), Gülen avidly read the more recent works of two Indian writers, Ahmad Faruqi Sirhindi (1564–1624) and Shah Wali Allah al-Dihlawi (1703–1762) as well as some Western classics such as Victor Hugo, William Shakespeare, and Honore de Balzac.

For Gülen, the writings of Ahmad Sirhindi were important because of the emphasis this writer put on the observance of the practice of Islam in the true spirit of the Prophet Muhammad. Sirhindi came from within the Naqshbandi Sufi tradition, and many of his letters and other writings were concerned with the renewal of the spiritual teaching of this tradition by insisting on the primacy of following the way of the Prophet in the cultivation of spiritual endeavors, rather than the more esoteric methods of some earlier Naqshbandi teachers.³ In fact, for a long time he used to teach the books of these prominent Muslim scholars, such as Sirhindi’s monumental book, *al-Maktubat*, to students who attended his learning circle. In this endeavor he did not abandon Sufism, but found a way to renew it for his day. This is the insight that excited Gülen. They did not so much follow the teaching of Sirhindi as they were inspired by his discernment of the centrality of following the *Sunnah* of the Prophet Muhammad, even in the realm of the personal, spiritual growth and development.

In this connection, another idea that Sirhindi explored in his writings was the concept of loving friendship (*khillah*)⁴. Yohanan Friedmann has explained the centrality of this concept for Sirhindi. He says that, in his works, the Indian teacher spoke of the task of each believer as being connected “with the spiritual relationship between Ibrahim and Muhammad and with the Sufi concept of friendship (*khillah*).” He went on to say:

This friendship, which is the highest manifestation of love (*hubb*), is the principal force responsible for the creation of the world and its continued existence. Originally it belonged to Ibrahim, the Friend of Allah (*khalil Allah*).

Having reached this exalted stage, Ibrahim was made the *imam* of all, and even Muhammad was ordered to follow him.⁵

This idea, as we will see below, would in due course inspire many Sufis, including contemporary Turkish writers and spiritual leaders such as Nursi and Gülen, to cultivate a spiritual friendship with all those who profess the faith of Abraham, even those outside the Islamic community among the People of the Book.

From Shah Wali Allah al-Dihlawi, Gülen would have learned how to think about the role of traditional Islamic mysticism in the modern world.⁶ In particular, Shah Wali insisted that Muslim thinkers should always incorporate the lessons learned from the Sufi masters of the past into the framework of the traditional Islamic teachings. He said, “Sufis without knowledge of Qur’an and *Sunnah*, and scholars who are not interested in mysticism, are brigands and robbers of the *din* (religion).”⁷

Nursi’s books were widely available in the Sufi environment in which Gülen grew up.⁸ His writings, particularly the *Risale i Nur*, or the *Treatises of Light*, had by the middle of the twentieth century already become the most popular Islamic reading in the country after the traditional *Hadith* collections of Bukhari and Muslim.

Gülen began reading them in the 1960s, when he first met the disciples of Nursi in his hometown of Erzurum. These disciples were the backbone of the then emerging Nur movement. While Gülen was never formally associated with the movement, and therefore he was not, strictly speaking, a follower of Nursi, he nevertheless began to incorporate many of Nursi’s ideas into his own teaching,⁹ especially in his sermons and informal talks when he became a preacher in the mosque in Edirne in the early 1960s.

ISLAM AND THE DIALOGUE OF WORLD RELIGIONS

In modern Turkey, a number of prominent Muslim figures have promoted the ideas of tolerance and dialogue with the adherents of different religions. The Ottoman experience, with its *millet* system, has left behind a remarkable memory of more harmonious inter-religious relations. The Empire was composed not only of Muslims, but of many Christian and Jewish groups, and even some Zoroastrians. Until the emergence of modern nationalistic ideas, Muslims, Christians, and Jews had managed to live together more

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“Gülen ... has laid the groundwork for an Islamic approach to interfaith dialogue.”

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peacefully and productively in Ottoman times than has been possible more recently in the twentieth century. This legacy of mutual recognition between members of different faith communities can arguably be claimed to have been, at least partially, the result of the teaching of some Turkish Sufi masters, such as Ahmed Yesevi (d. 1166), Yunus Emre (d. 1321), Haji Bayram-i Veli (15th cent.), and Aksemseddin (15th cent.), the Sufi master of Mehmet II, the Fatih (Conqueror).¹⁰ All of these teachers, in this very early period, espoused ideas of interreligious tolerance, and to some extent even of interfaith dialogue. Gülen is one of the modern beneficiaries of this Sufi tradition. A close examination of his thinking shows that he is one of the few Muslim scholars of the present day who promotes dialogue and tolerance between the several Muslim communities who differ among themselves in many important ways, as well as between Muslims and the adherents of other religious traditions.

Examining Gülen’s teaching on interreligious dialogue, one notices in the first place that he traces the idea back to basic Islamic themes. As a student of the Qur’an, Gülen took the “*basmala*,” the beginning of almost every chapter of the Qur’an, as a point of departure. In this phrase, God’s attributes are recorded as “the Compassionate and the Merciful.” The recurrence of this phrase over and over again in the Qur’an, 114 times, must be taken seriously, according to Gülen.¹¹ He proposes that by this means, God wanted to teach Muslims, among other things, to be compassionate and merciful in their relations with their fellow human beings, and with nature. In one of his articles on compassion Gülen says:

Compassion is the beginning of being; without it everything is chaos. Everything has come into existence through compassion and by compassion it continues to exist in harmony.... Everything speaks of compassion and promises compassion. Because of this, the universe can be considered a symphony of compassion. All kinds of voices proclaim compassion so that it is impossible not to be aware of it, and impossible not to feel the wide mercy encircling everything. How unfortunate are the souls who don’t perceive this.... Man has a responsibility to show compassion to all living beings, as a requirement of being human. The more he displays compassion, the more exalted he becomes, while the more he resorts to wrongdoing, oppression, and cruelty, the more he is disgraced and humiliated, becoming a shame to humanity.¹²

Gülen’s understanding of the quality of compassion can best be seen in what he said during an interview conducted by Turkish journalist Eyup Can. In the interview it is clear that Gülen’s compassion extends all the way from a physi-

cally draining reaction to the plight of the innocent human victims of chemical weapons in northern Iraq, to a deep sensitivity to the need to respect the life of such an insignificant creature as an insect. In the tradition in which Gülen was brought up, his understanding is that no matter how small, every creature praises God in its own tongue, and therefore deserves its proper respect and compassion.

One can argue that there is a similarity between the traditional Sufi teaching about nature, and that of Gülen in our day. Yunus Emre, for example, is said to have been asked, along with other *murids*, to bring a bouquet of flowers to his master. The master wanted to appoint a successor, which is why he wanted to test those of his students who were considered among the candidates for his succession. In the evening when everyone had brought a bouquet of flowers, Yunus Emre happened to come with empty hands. Answering the master’s question as to why he had no flowers, Yunus said that whenever he wanted to pick a flower, he heard its voice praising God. For that reason he was unable to cut any flower. This well-known story illustrates the spiritual approach towards nature that is characteristic of the Sufis and of Gülen.

Having said that Gülen’s teaching of compassion resonates well with traditional Sufi doctrine, we can now turn our focus to the concept of love as we find it in his writings. Speaking of love in the Sufi tradition, Gülen focuses his attention on one of the “beautiful names” of God, *al-Wadud*, the Beloved One.¹³ By implication, he points out that Muslims are expected to reflect this attribute in their lives by being a people of love. In fact, Said Nursi, Gülen’s predecessor, made love the motto of his own philosophy. Gülen says, “There is no weapon in the universe stronger than the weapon of love.”¹⁴

Gülen’s understanding of love is evident in the following quotation: Love is the most essential element in every being, a most radiant light and a great power that can resist and overcome every force. Love elevates every soul that absorbs it, and prepares it for the journey to eternity. Souls that have made contact with eternity through love exert themselves to implant in all other souls what they receive from eternity. They dedicate their lives to this sacred duty, for the sake of which they endure every kind of hardship to the end. Just as they pronounce “love” with their last breath, they also breathe love while being raised on the Day of Judgment.¹⁵

Clearly, then, the concepts of compassion and love are basic principles of Gülen’s teachings. With a strong voice, he advocates tolerance, forgiveness, and humility as central Islamic ethical values. They are interrelated and the one requires the other. In a recent article, Gülen has the follow-

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ing to say about tolerance:

Those who close the road of tolerance are beasts who have lost their humanity.... Forgiveness and tolerance will heal most of our wounds, but only if this divine instrument is in the hands of those who understand its language. Otherwise, the incorrect treatment we have used until now will create many complications and continue to confuse us.¹⁶

Gülen finds the roots of these themes in the teachings of the Prophet of Islam himself, from whom he quotes the following tradition, “Whoever is humble, God exalts him; whoever is haughty, God humiliates him.”¹⁷ In this thought, which is at the heart of Islamic ethics, Gülen finds the basis for interreligious dialogue. He believes that dialogue will be the natural result of the practice of Islamic ethics. Someone who believes in his own superiority will never come to the way of dialogue. The opposite is the case for one who humbles himself willingly; this person will be more likely to settle differences by dialogue with others.

After Gülen’s meeting with Pope John Paul II in February 1998, he was severely criticized by a group of young Islamists who argued that he should not have humiliated himself to the extent of going to the Vatican and meeting with the Pope. Gülen responded by saying that humility was an attribute of Muslims, and gave an example of an incident that occurred between Rumi and a Christian priest. According to the story, a priest visits Rumi and wants to kiss his hands out of respect. Yet, Rumi is quicker and he kisses the hands of the priest first. Regarding this story, Rumi says that even in humility, he wants to be the first. According to Gülen, therefore, dialogue with adherents of other religious traditions is an integral part of an Islamic ethic that has been neglected for a long time.¹⁸ In this connection, too, Gülen quotes Jesus’s saying in the Gospel, on the occasion when some people brought to him a woman caught in adultery, asking what was to be done with her. Jesus said, “Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her” (John 8:7). By this, he means that people should not think of their superiority over others. Instead they should be humble.

FETHULLAH GÜLEN AND INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

Turkey, from the perspective of the Vatican, is very significant. For this reason, after becoming the Pope in 1979, John Paul II visited Turkey as his first visit to a foreign country.

Fethullah Gülen’s visit to Pope John Paul II in 1998 marked an important step forward in Muslim/Christian relations, especially in Turkey. But at the same time it brought into focus the full spectrum of the opinions of those who oppose Gülen’s point of view. Gülen’s visit came at a time when interfaith dialogue was necessary to stave off conflict. Samuel Huntington’s¹⁹ idea of the alleged “clash of civilizations” was gaining prominence, but Gülen, despite this, saw the need to further efforts to establish dialogue.

Through this meeting, Gülen and his associates had received wide public support in his native country, Turkey. Yet, at the same time, he was severely criticized by two groups—hard-line secularists and a minor radical group of Islamists. The two differed in the way and reasons they criticized Gülen. He has also been criticized by radical Muslims for talking less about an “Islamic state” than he does about a

fly. Referring to this criticism, Ali Ünal, one of Gülen’s associates, says, “Yes, the Qur’an speaks of a fly, spider, and ant as evidences of His existence by their very creation, and names its chapters after them.”²⁰ Yet, it does not speak of an Islamic state.”

Hard-line secularists have rebuked him based on the contention that absolute authoriza-

tion is necessary.²¹ Since Gülen was not appointed by the state, he had no right to speak to someone like Pope John Paul II on his own behalf. This was the result of a government desire of its own outstanding control on all kinds of personal enterprises. Therefore, according to this group of secularists, Gülen required governmental permission to meet with prominent foreign religious leaders, even to promote interfaith dialogue.

The radical Islamists’ reaction to Gülen’s visit was slightly different. They considered it a humiliation. A Muslim should not go and visit non-Muslims. They also believed that the visit of a prominent Muslim religious leader to a Catholic religious leader would to some extent cause some Muslims to convert to Christianity.

From Gülen’s perspective, this is not real Islam, which has promoted and practiced dialogue with adherents of other religions since its beginning. It is important that people rid their minds of this idea, for this kind of fear of dialogue is completely invalid. This attitude, Gülen says, stems from lack of trust in the religion of Islam.²² Gülen says that humanity is entering the age of knowledge and sciences. Sciences

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“Compassion is the beginning of being; without it everything is chaos.”

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will rule the world to a larger measure in the future. Thus, the adherents of a religion like Islam, whose principles are supported by reason and science, should not be doubtful or find difficulty in dialoguing with adherents of other religions. According to Gülen, dialogue is not a superfluous endeavor, but an imperative. Gülen believes that dialogue is among the duties of Muslims on earth to make our world a more peaceful and safer place.²³

The two groups who oppose Gülen are in fact marginal, comprising only a small percentage of Turkish society. The majority was supportive of Gülen’s meeting, which arguably had very positive results. One fruit of their efforts came in the form of an interfaith conference organized by an interfaith dialogue organization, the Foundation of Journalists and Writers in Turkey. This conference, called the Abraham Symposium, was held in southeast Turkey in the city of Urfa, believed to be the birthplace of Prophet Abraham. Another potential fruit is the establishment of an interfaith university in the same city, currently under consideration among members of the interfaith dialogue community backed by Gülen and Pope John Paul II. Gülen’s visit to the Pope has continued to bear fruits of dialogue among various groups. Recently, a Chicago-based organization which is inspired by the teachings of Gülen invited about 30 members of religious communities in Chicago to Turkey for an inter-religious dialogue conference. Again, one of the fruits of this visit is that the Vatican representative in Turkey has worked actively to realize Muslim/Christian dialogue in more appropriate ways.

The necessity of Christian–Muslim dialogue is evident, according to Gülen, for the purposes of re-establishing good relations between science and religion. Science in the West has been an enemy of religion for several centuries. Christianity has suffered very much from this. Through Muslim–Christian dialogue, both religions will be able to once again reconcile religion and science. Gülen says, “If there were no other reason for promoting Muslim–Christian dialogue other than this, this reason would be enough to engage in that dialogue, as being of utmost importance.”²⁴ Gülen asks Muslims to be self-critical and maintains that they should not make the religion of Islam an ideology. Making Islam an ideology in fact has brought it to the politi-

cal arena, thereby preventing Muslims from entering dialogue with adherents of other religions. “Ideologies are divisive rather than uniting. This is a social and historical reality.”²⁵ He sees that Islam must be seen as a religion, exemplified in mind, heart, and daily life, and should not be a means of selfish partisanship, personal or national hatreds, and feelings of enmity.

Pointing to a historical event that occurred at the time of Caliph ‘Umar bin ‘Abd al-‘Az or Omar II, Gülen asserts that the Muslims’ reference point should be based in Islamic principles. The story states that Umayyad governors were taking *jizya* (poll tax) from their non-Muslim subjects, even from those who had embraced Islam, claiming that they had embraced it in order not to have to pay the tax. When Omar II came to power, he vetoed legislation supporting this practice. The governor of Egypt, Ayyub bin Shurahbeel Al-Ashbahi, wanted exemption from this rule, and Omar II replied with a letter stating, “You will not take taxes from (former) non-Muslims who embraced Islam. God, the Almighty, did not send Prophet Muhammad as a tax-collector, but as a guide.”²⁶ Referring to a prophetic tradition, which says “Make it easy (*Yassiru*) do not make it difficult (*wala tu’assiru*). Make it beloved (*habbibu*) and give good news (*bashshiru*). Do not make it hated (*walatunafiru*),” Gülen says, “Fulfillment of this prophetic tradition can be achieved only through love and dialogue with followers of other religions.”²⁷ Gülen frames his

“Gülen believes that dialogue is among the duties of Muslims on earth to make our world a more peaceful and safer place.”

idea of dialogue around the following Qur’anic verse: “all mankind, we have created you from male and female and have made you nations and tribes that you may know one another” (Qur’an 49.13).

One can see in Gülen’s writings that the ecumenical aspect of Islam and its theological foundations for dialogue are under focus. His point of view is that the religion of Islam, beyond accepting the formal origin of other religions and their prophets, requires Muslims to respect them as fundamental Islamic principles. A Muslim is the follower of Muhammad at the same time that he or she is a follower of Abraham, Moses, David, Jesus, and other Biblical prophets. From Gülen’s perspective, not to believe in the Biblical prophets mentioned in the Qur’an is enough of a reason to place someone outside the circle of Islam.

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Gülen’s good relations with minority leaders in Turkey also lends support to his reputation for evenhandedness and openness. Two examples are enough to give an idea about his efforts in creating peace among nations. First, it is well-known that the situation of Greeks in Turkey is affected by Greek and Turkish politicians almost daily. In the late 1980s, Gülen initiated dialogue, and he has become a hope and a guarantor for Greeks in Turkey. Jewish and Christian minorities are very supportive of Gülen. He established good relations with the Greek Orthodox Patriarch, Bartholomew. Second, in spite of much opposition, he has worked to set up an educational program in Armenia. He exhorted some Turkish businessmen to establish a high school in Yerevan, the capital city of Armenia, to serve the younger generation in the country. Another group of Turkish businessmen established a high school in Moscow at Gülen’s behest. Today a similar effort is being made to establish a high school in Greece. Gülen’s efforts show that he wants to establish bridges between people and cultures in order to decrease enmity. Even in Turkey, he believes that only well-educated Turks will be able fully to participate in the progress of humankind. According to him his activities are not nationalistic: “Our ongoing activities are for the good of all humanity. They should not be considered limited to our own country, Turkey.”²⁸ Gülen is looking for an inter-civilizational dialogue.

Gülen perceives that all humans are servants of God regardless of their ethnic or religious background. “The religion of Islam gives the same value to all humans, and calls them servants of the Most Compassionate One (*‘Ibad al-Rahman*).”²⁹ It also accepts universalism by which it announces the Prophets’ rejection of superiority on the basis of color, nationality, race, geography, or profession. The Prophet of Islam says that there is no superiority of Arabs over non-Arabs, and of non-Arabs over Arabs.³⁰

Gülen holds that the tendency toward factionalism exists within human nature. A pointed goal should be to make this tendency non-threatening and even beneficial. Without a positive channel for its outlet within humans, this tendency will develop in a negative direction. This is especially the case when ignorance, uncivilized behavior and extremism help by fomenting social diseases such that societies come to severely and incessantly fight each other. On the other hand, as knowledge, gnosis, and tolerance spread, society will approach the “line of peace” toward understanding and social reconciliation.³¹

In conclusion, one can arguably say that although Gülen is criticized for his dialogue efforts by some radical Islamists, the Qur’anic teaching provides much support for his approach towards People of the Book and adherents of other

traditions. Gülen, being very pious in his personal conduct, finds this to be an essential element of the teaching of Islam. Especially now, a time when hatred is widespread and the clash of civilizations is predicted, Gülen’s efforts are of paramount importance for modern humanity. ■

FOOTNOTES

¹Selcuk Camci & Kudret Ünal (eds.), *The Climate of Tolerance and Dialogue in the Speeches and Writings of Fethullah Gülen [Turkish]* (Izmir: Merkur Yayinlari, 1998).

²L. Erdogan, *Kuçük Dünyam* (Istanbul: Milliyet Yayinlari, 1995), 46.

³See Y. Friedmann, *Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi: an Outline of his Thought and a Study of His Image in the Eyes of Posterity* (Montreal & London, 1971); J. G. J. ter Haar, *Follower and Heir of the Prophet; Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi (1564–1624) as Mystic* (Leiden: Het Oosters Instituut, 1992).

⁴Nursi considers the concept of Khillah as his *mashrub* (modus operandi) in his treatise on sincerity. See Nursi, *Risale-I Nur Kulliyati*, Vol. 1, 668–672. (Istanbul: Nesil, 1996).

⁵Friedmann, *Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi*, 18–19.

⁶See J. M. S. Baljon, *Religion and Thought of Shah Wali Allah Dihlawi 1703–1762* (Studies in the History of Religions, XLVII; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1986), 7.

⁷Quoted in Baljon, *Religion and Thought of Shah Wali*, 78.

⁸Serif Mardin, *Religion and Social Change in Modern Turkey; the Case of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1989); Sukran Vahide, *Bediuzzaman Said Nursi; the Author of the Risale-i Nur* (Istanbul: Sozler Publications, 1992) and I. Abu-Rabi, ed., *Islam at the Crossroads: On the Life and Thought of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*, (Albany: SUNY Press, 2003). See now the special issue of *The Muslim World* 79, nos. 3–4, (July–October, 1999), in which articles by more than a dozen authors study the life and teachings of Nursi.

⁹See M. Hakan Yavuz, “Towards an Islamic Liberalism? The Nurcu Movement and Fethullah Gülen in Turkey,” *The Middle East Journal* 53 (1999), 584–605 ISI, where the author loosely uses the expression ‘neo Nurcu’ movement to describe Gülen and his followers. See also Hakan Yavuz and John Esposito (editors), *Turkish Islam and the Secular State: The Gülen Movement*, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2003).

¹⁰On these and other Sufi masters of the time, see Annemarie Schimmel, *The Triumphal Sun; a Study of the Works of Jalaladdin Rumi* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 10.

¹¹The phrase is mentioned at the beginning of all chapters in the Qur’ān, with the exception of al-Tawba (ch. 9). The phrase also is mentioned in its complete form in another

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chapter, al-Naml, (27:30). This makes the total 114.

¹²M. Fethullah Gülen, *Towards the Lost Paradise*, (London: Trustar, 1996), 40–2; see also M. Fethullah Gülen, *Fatiha Uzerine Mulahazalar* (Considerations on the Chapter Fatiha), (Izmir: Nil Yayinlari, 1997), 90–95.

¹³M. Fethullah Gülen, *Kalbin zumrut tepeler* (Pirlanta Kitap Serisi; Izmir: Nil Yayinlari, 1994), 215.

¹⁴Compare this to when Nursi said that “We are devotees of love and don’t have time to hate,” Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *Divan-i Harbi Orfi*, in *Risale-I Nur Kulliyati*, vol. II, 1930. See also Fethullah Gülen, *Hosgoru ve Diyalog Iklimi* (ed. Selcuk Camci & Kudret Unal; Izmir: Merkur Yayinlari, 1998), 132.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 59.

¹⁶M. Fethullah Gülen, “Forgiveness,” *The Fountain* 3 (April–June 2000), 4–5.

¹⁷M. Fethullah Gülen, *Key Concepts in the Practice of Sufism* (Fairfax, Va.: The Fountain, 1999), 76.

¹⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁹Samuel P. Huntington, *Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Touchstone, 1997).

²⁰See Qur’anic chapters al-Nahl [the bee] (ch. 16), al-Naml [the ant] (ch. 27), and al-’Ankabut [the spider] (ch. 29). For radical Islamicist criticisms of Gülen, see Mehmet Sevkett Eygi, “Papalikla Gizli Anlasma” (“Secret Agreement with Papacy”), *Milli Gazete (National Gazette)*, May 26, 2000.

²¹See Necip Hablemitoglu, *Yeni Hayat (New Life)*, Issue 52.

²²Fethullah Gülen, *Hosgoru ve Diyalog Iklimi*, eds. Selcuk Camci and Kudret Unal, (Izmir, Merkur Yayinlari: 1998), 37.

²³*Ibid.*, 38.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 31. See Gülen’s ideas on the subject in Osman

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Hajjaj, ed., al-Jami’ al-Sahih, op. cit., ch. 23; and for the first part see “Tafsir” (The Qur’anic Commentary) and “Manaqib” (The Virtues of the Prophet and His Companions) in Abu ‘Isa Muhammad ibn ‘Isa al-Tirmidhi, al-Jami’ al-Sahih, Beirut, Dar al Ihya al-Turath al-‘Arabi, n.d., chs. 49 and 74, respectively. The original text in Arabic does not include the word “sisters” in the command. However, the masculine form used refers to both men and women, as is the rule in many languages. An equivalent in English would be “humankind,” which refers to both men and women. By saying “O servants of God,” the Prophet also means women, because both men and women are equally servants of God.

³See Karl R. Popper, *The Poverty of Historicism*, trans.

Bakar’s article in this current issue.

²⁵See details of Gülen’s opinion on this in *Ibid.*, 23–26.

²⁶See Gülen *Ibid.*, 26.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 38.

²⁸Fethullah Gülen, Bahari Soluklarken, (Izmir: Nil Yayinlari, 1993), 39.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 32.

30. Ibn Hanbal, *al-Musnad*, Vol. V, 441.

31. *Ibid.*, 72–73.

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Sabri Orman, Istanbul, Insan Yayinlari, 1985.

“Ala al-Din ‘Ali al-Muttaqi al-Hindi, *Kanz al-‘Ummal fi Sunan al-Aqwal wa al-Af‘al* [A Treasure of the Laborers for the Sake of the Prophet’s Sayings and Deeds], Beirut, Mu’assasat al-Risala, 1985, 6:89.

NEWS FROM THE CENTER

International scholar visits the Center

This past winter quarter the Center for Christian Bioethics welcomed visiting scholar Maria Magnolia Pardo-Lopez, a professor of constitutional law and human rights attorney from the University of Murcia in Spain.

Dr. Pardo-Lopez earned her licenciado en derecho (the equivalent to our juris doctor) from the University of Murcia. She has a master's in legal reasoning and a PhD in law, specializing in judicial power and disciplinary liability of judges (Doctor en Derecho). Dr. Pardo-Lopez chairs the committee at the Faculty of Law at the University of Murcia that hopes to establish a master's level program in bioethics and law.

Dr. Pardo-Lopez chose to use her sabbatical at Loma Linda University, Center for Christian Bioethics, after attending the February 2007 international conference on bioethics in Eliat, Israel. Dr. Pardo-Lopez was presenting a paper on end-of-life law with regard to health care ethics, highlighting the seminal Spanish legal case of Ramon San Pedro. Whitney Braun, MPH master's student in the biomedical and clinical ethics program at Loma Linda University, was also presenting a paper. Ms. Braun shared with Dr. Pardo-Lopez the wonderful facilities available to her at Loma Linda University, including the Ralph and Carolyn Thompson Ethics Library at the Center for Christian Bioethics. With that, she planned to spend her sabbatical here at Loma Linda University.

The new Spanish government wants to regulate euthanasia and assisted suicide, and also wants to introduce free-choice abortion, which was Dr. Pardo-Lopez's impetus for coming to Loma Linda University. She researched the United

States' views on assisted suicide, euthanasia, and free-choice abortion.

During her time at Loma Linda University, she also met with many of Loma Linda University's professors and several members of the legal community to gather data about human rights and health care in the



Maria Magnolia Pardo-Lopez (left) and Dawn Gordon, manager, Center for Christian Bioethics

United States. She also attended many of the 2008 Provonsha Lecture Series presentations on the moral status of the human embryo.

Her research also included a trip to Folsom State Penitentiary. Her previous view of the United States prison system was provided by Hollywood, so the tour of Folsom Prison provided Dr. Pardo-Lopez a wealth of comparative information on both the facilities and services provided by a United States prison versus what is provided by a Spanish prison facility. Dr. Pardo-Lopez, being a constitutional attorney, is interested in the health care provided to inmates and the conditions under which they live. The tour included an unreserved look at the health care provided to inmates at Folsom, as well as a candid experience on daily prison life. This visit inspired both Dr. Pardo-Lopez and Ms. Braun to write a comparative study on the health care system within the penal system to present at the World Congress of Bioethics in Rijeka, Croatia, in September of 2008.

Center participates in dental ethics society



Anika Ball presenting at an ASDE board meeting

The American Society for Dental Ethics (ASDE) is an international non-profit organization of dental educators, practicing dentists, dental hygiene faculty, ethicists, and other persons in dental health care.

Originally founded in 1987 as the Professional Ethics in Dentistry Network (PEDNET), the organization is dedicated to enhancing the growing dialogue about ethical issues

in dental health care and fostering more effective ethics education in this field.

PEDNET came into being in 1983 as the mailing list of an informal newsletter on teaching ethics in dental schools. A group of teachers of dental ethics who had attended a workshop hosted by Muriel Bebeau at the University of Minnesota, together with anyone they could find who had written on the subject or was known to be teaching dental ethics, received that first newsletter. The network was declared to exist when about two dozen recipients indicated an interest in continuing to communicate back and forth.

PEDNET became a formal organization four years later in 1987 when the members were invited to join the Society for Health and Human Values (SHHV), a predecessor organization of the American Society for Bioethics and Humanities (ASBH). The Network has conducted three

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Update

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News from the Center continued...

meetings each year since then, as well as a biennial Dental Ethics Workshop, and has provided ethics programming assistance to numerous professional dental societies.

PEDNET was converted to the American Society for Dental Ethics in 2005. This was the same year that ASDE entered into a contract with the Center for Christian Bioethics to provide office space for the executive director, Anika Ball, RDH, MA, and to provide administrative assistance. Ms. Ball received her master's degree in biomedical and clinical ethics from Loma Linda University in 2005.

It has been an excellent opportunity for the Center to work more closely with Loma Linda University's School of Dentistry and the special ethical issues dealing with dentistry.

For more information on the American Society for Dental Ethics please visit its website at www.societyfordentalethics.org.



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