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27.10.07

SATURDAY

Gülen and Sources in Islam for Interfaith Dialogue

by Alan Godlas

Panel:
Co-Existence and Dialogue

Venue:
Old Theatre,
LSE

27.10.07 Panels	Parallel Session 1	Parallel Session 2
9:30-11:30	Presentation 05	
13:00-15:00		
15:10-17:00		

The central argument of this paper is that although Gülen is clearly an original thinker about interfaith dialogue, his writings on this subject are nonetheless rooted in the Qur'an and *Sunnah*, and in the thought of prominent Turkish-Muslim writers such as Ahmet Yesevi, Jalaluddin Rumi, Yunus Emre, Niyazi Misri, and Bediüzzaman Said Nursi. This combination of original thought that nevertheless relies on fundamental Islamic principles and sources is crucial to the Islamic process of 'creative renewal' (*tajdid*). One original contribution of Gülen's to Islamic thought on interfaith dialogue is his formulation of the four-fold principles of interfaith dialogue in Islam: love, compassion, tolerance, and forgiveness, which he supplements by his urging of 'self-reform' (Gülen: 'The Necessity of Interfaith Dialogue: A Muslim Perspective').

This paper (1) surveys Gülen's writings available in English (focusing on *Toward a Global Civilization of Love and Tolerance, An Analysis of the Prophet's Life*, the article mentioned above, and some secondary materials, notably Ünal and Williams, *Advocate of Dialogue*) and locates Gülen's direct sources for dialogue in Islam in the Qur'an, *Sunnah*, and in the Turkish-Muslim writers mentioned. Then (2) it marshals additional quotations from the Qur'an, hadith, and the Turkish-Muslim writers as further evidence for Gülen's contentions. The paper (3) adopts Gülen's four principles plus 'self-reform' as a method of organisation. And (4) it explains the relationship of his sources to Gülen's own philosophy of Islamic interfaith dialogue to support the claim that Gülen is participating in the Islamic tradition of *tajdid* in the area of interfaith dialogue.

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Alan Godlas: Associate Professor in the Department of Religion at the University of Georgia. In addition, he is the Co-Director of the UGA-Morocco Maymester program. At UGA he teaches Islamic Studies and Arabic courses as well as a survey course on the world's religions. Dr Godlas received his MA (1983) and PhD (1991) in Near Eastern Studies from the University of California at Berkeley. Dr Godlas has conducted extensive research in manuscript libraries in Egypt, Morocco, and Turkey. His professional experience includes being on the editorial board of the journal, *Sufi Illuminations*, and being a member of the steering committee of the Study of Mysticism and Study of Islam sections of the American Academy of Religion. In January 2003, Dr Godlas was chosen by the US Department of State and the Emir of Kano to give two presentations on Islam for a bilateral conference in Northern Nigeria.