

ISLAMIC PROSPECTS FOR INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE: THE CONTRIBUTION OF FETHULLAH GÜLEN

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Abstract

Countering extremist ideology may be a problem primarily for the Muslim world, but it has major implications for, and so the interest of, the wider world. Although it might seem that it is the strident militant voices that are gaining ground in the Muslim world, there are also strong voices from within Islam seeking to proclaim the Muslim priority for peaceful and harmonious relations with the wider world, including with religious neighbours. Such a voice is that of Fethullah Gülen.

This paper seeks to understand the prospects and appropriate contexts for dialogue: what enables, and what hinders, good interfaith relations? The paper addresses the issue of Islamic paradigms for inter-religious relations and dialogue, then analyses and critically discusses the views of Fethullah Gülen. The intention is to identify a perspective that will encourage future inter-religious dialogue and enhance the relations of Islam to other faiths, a perspective indicative of transitions within the Muslim world and one that gives cause to be hopeful for the recovery of the true way of peace.

Introduction

It goes without saying that we live at a time where “the importance of dialogue among people of faith for the effective pursuit of peace” is without parallel.¹ The dialogue of civilisations, which is in effect a dialogue of religions, is an imperative which is laid upon us in an unprecedented way. Into this context, as Fr Tom Michel has observed, Fethullah Gülen has emerged as one “of the most persuasive and influential voices in the Muslim community” calling for dialogue as a step toward peace.² Indeed, he offers “a way to live out Islamic values amidst the complex demands of modern societies and to engage in ongoing dialogue and cooperation with people of other religions”.³ And the faith-based movement inspired by him promotes “truly spiritual values like forgiveness, inner peace, social harmony, honesty, and trust in God” as the basis for inter-communal peace and interreligious dialogue.⁴ At times a controversial figure, Fethullah Gülen has had, and continues to have, a considerable impact upon the thinking and sensibilities of Muslims throughout the Turkish Islamic world and beyond. As Paul Weller has observed, Gülen’s teaching “has particularly aimed at encouraging the younger generation to aspire to a combination of intellectual engagement and spiritual wisdom, and to give expression to this combination through concrete commitments in the service of humanity”.⁵

Without doubt “one of the major figures in defining the contemporary global Islamic experience”, Fethullah Gülen’s work “helps to redefine the nature of Islamic discourse in the contemporary world”.⁶ Poet, philosopher and educator, Gülen has “inspired many people in Turkey to establish educational institutions that combine modern sciences with ethics and spirituality”.⁷ Indeed, Gülen and the movement that bears his name may be primarily known in some quarters in respect to such educational activities.⁸ Yet it is educational priority that has lead into interfaith advocacy. And, as well, “Gülen insists ... the basic Islamic sources advise Muslims to engage in dialogue with other faiths”.⁹ In this paper I seek to address, in a somewhat overview fashion, the matter of Islamic interfaith relations and dialogue – the patterns, drivers, and paradigms that we can discern from history – and then identify and discuss some of the unique perspectives of Fethullah Gülen on interreligious dialogue and relations of Islam to other faiths. In what way does Gülen signal new perspectives and transitions for contemporary Islam in a world of manifest religious plurality? But first, who is Fethullah Gülen and what is his significance to interreligious dialogue?

1 See Tom Michel, SJ, ‘Two Frontrunners for Peace: John Paul II and Fethullah Gülen’ (<http://en.fGülen.com/content/view/1944/13/>)

2 *Ibid.*

3 *Ibid.*

4 *Ibid.*

5 Paul Weller, ‘Fethullah Gülen, Religions, Globalization and Dialogue’, in Robert A. Hunt & Yüksel A. Aslandogan, *Muslim Citizens of the Globalized World: Contributions of the Gülen Movement*, Somerset, NJ: The Light, Inc., & IID Press, 2006, 76.

6 John O. Voll, Fethullah Gülen: ‘Transcending Modernity in the New Islamic Discourse’, in M. Hakan Yavuz and John L. Esposito, eds., *Turkish Islam and the Secular State: The Gülen Movement*, Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2003, 238.

7 Ihsan Yilmaz, *Muslim Laws, Politics and Society in Modern Nation States: Dynamic Legal Pluralisms in England, Turkey and Pakistan*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005, 175

8 Cf. Thomas Michel, ‘Fethullah Gülen as Educator’, in Yavuz and Esposito, *op. cit.*, 69-84

9 Ismail Albayrak, ‘The Juxtaposition of Islam and Violence’ in Hunt and Aslandogan, *op. cit.*, 127; cf. M. Hakan Yavuz, ‘The Gülen Movement: The Turkish Puritans’, in Yavuz and Esposito, *op. cit.*, 19-47.

Fethullah Gülen: A Champion of Dialogue

It was Said Nursi who introduced the young Gülen to the idea of dual divine revelation: the Qur'an (or Book of God) and the Universe (or Book of Nature), on the one hand; and also the need to reconcile "the spirituality of the heart (*tasawwuf*) and the intellectual reasoning of the mind" on the other.¹⁰ From the inception of his own teaching and preaching career, Gülen sought to emphasise "the importance of mutual understanding and tolerance" and to stress the need "to harmonise intellectual enlightenment with wise spirituality and a caring humane activism".¹¹ Gülen is pre-eminently a reconciler: material and spiritual values; positive sciences and religion; the ideologies and philosophies of East and West. The way of civilisation is the way of democratic persuasion, not the imposition of force. Democracy not a perfect system, but it is the only viable political system and process appropriate to the modern age: its aim is to "consolidate democratic institutions in order to build a society where individual rights and freedoms are respected and protected".¹²

Fethullah Gülen is a man of many facets. Over the years he "has become increasingly committed to affirming the possibility of and need for inter-civilizational and interreligious dialogue".¹³ Furthermore, his promotion of dialogue "is not merely reactive and pragmatic, but is rooted in his vision of Islam and the contemporary world".¹⁴ He is thus a true champion of interreligious dialogue. For Gülen, "what people have in common ... is far greater than what divides and separates them"; thus his approach is holistic: inner harmony and peace of humankind "only occurs when the material and spiritual realms are reconciled".¹⁵ Indeed, it is of the essence of faith to bring things together, to reconcile rather than divide: "Religion reconciles opposites: religion-science, this world-the next world, Nature-Divine Books, material-spiritual, and spirit-body".¹⁶ Furthermore, in the face of rising secularism and widespread unbelief (or loss of the religious sense) Gülen believes that Muslim-Christian dialogue is indispensable.

In the context of human intellectual interaction, the most common form of interchange is that of debate. However, the context and purpose of debate will most likely set the tone and parameters for the interchange. In the political arena, for example, debate is highly adversarial with, very often, a view to belittling one's opponents and in the process asserting the superiority of one's own policies and actions. Public debates on social or religious issues can likewise be intensely polemical, very often generating more heat than light. Yet debating an issue can be an occasion of enlightenment, as when there is the courteous – but no less intentional and focussed – proffering of evidence, probing of perspective, and critical examination of premises and argumentation, all with a view to expanding the horizons of understanding and deepening the wells of knowledge. As Gülen has remarked, "Debate should not be for the sake of ego, but rather to enable the truth to appear".¹⁷ In this context the art of debate merges with the desire of dialogue. For Gülen, dialogue means "the coming together of two or more people to discuss certain issues, and thus the forming of a bond between these people. In that

10 Emre Celik, 'Advocate of Dialogue: Fethullah Gülen'. Paper presented to the Annual Conference of the AASR, July 2003.

11 *Ibid.*

12 *Ibid.*

13 Weller, *op. cit.*, 86.

14 *Ibid.*, 87.

15 F. Gülen, 'The Necessity of Interfaith Dialogue', *The Fountain*, July-September, 2000.

16 *Ibid.*

17 F. Gülen, *Dialogue with the People of the Book* (<http://en.fGülen.com/content/view/1812/33/>)

respect, we can call dialogue an activity that has human beings at its axis”.¹⁸ Thus dialogue is no rarefied academic pursuit: it is itself a *praxis*; a methodology; a struggle – even an *ijtihad* – in the pursuit of peace, harmony and justice. Gülen

... uses interfaith cooperation and dialogue to prevent future clashes and violence between the adherents of religions... He believes that interfaith cooperation is imperative today... He regards interfaith cooperation as compulsory for Muslims to support peace and harmony.¹⁹

Islam and Interfaith Relations: Context and Perspective

When it comes to Muslim interfaith relations with Peoples of the Book there is a legacy of shared fundamental convictions, as well as a history of divergence. Distinctions are real, and so too are the prospects for peaceful co-existence. There are, of course, deep issues to be addressed and resolved. One starting place, I suggest, is with the underlying paradigms that each side in any relationship holds with respect to the other. But before attending to the matter of paradigms as such, I want to present an overview of the dynamics of Islamic interfaith activity from an historical perspective.²⁰ Jean-Marie Gaudeul has offered a useful review of the history of the relationship between Islam and Christianity in which the mutual challenge and response that has engaged the attentions of each may be tracked through broad ages or epochs.²¹ These ‘epochs’, which I denote for heuristic and hermeneutical purposes as *expansion*, *equilibrium*, *exhortation*, *enmity*, *emancipation* and *exploration*, do not just arbitrarily mark out historical eras. Rather they serve to delineate the ebb and flow of a relationship of encounter, particularly that of intellectual engagement. But as well as indicating the state of play in the relationship between Islam and Christianity at particular times in history, these terms also indicate modes of relationship and interaction *per se*. While each may have dominated a particular historical period, it could be argued that they are always part of the wider picture of interreligious encounter. They certainly persist into the present day so far as the interaction between Islam and Christianity are concerned.

Expansion stands for the expansiveness of self-confidence, embracing self-righteousness on the one hand and magnanimity on the other. Religion in the expansion mode is determined and assertive. This can be seen today in both Islam and Christianity, for instance. But there is also more than a hint of *equilibrium* that shows through in the hesitancy to be overly self-assertive: an inclination to humility that properly counterpoints self-righteousness; a measure of openness that marks a balanced approach to the religious ‘other’. Mutual *exhortation*, the proclamation and witness which, in its more extreme forms, seeks to declare an exclusive truth and engages with the ‘other’ in order to win, is certainly very much evident in some quarters. And, as well, there is evidence aplenty of *enmity*: of dismissive, derogatory and deprecatory prejudice that makes of the religious other an enemy to be fought and vanquished. At the same time, the cultural and socio-political expressions of, and concomitant realities in respect to, the religions of Islam and Christianity, as well as Judaism I would suggest, are ever engaged in the quest for *emancipation*: that seeking for self-determination and finding a rightful place in the affairs of the day, of finding and asserting meaningful identity as

18 F. Gülen, *The Two Roses of the Emerald Hills: Tolerance and Dialogue* (<http://en.fGülen.com/content/view/1806/33/>)

19 Zeki Saritoprak, ‘An Islamic Approach to Peace and Nonviolence: A Turkish Experience’, *The Muslim World*, Vol 95, July 2005, 423.

20 Cf. Douglas Pratt, *The Challenge of Islam: Encounters in Interfaith Dialogue*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005.

21 Jean-Marie Gaudeul, *Encounters and Clashes: Islam and Christianity in History*. Rome: Pontificio Instituto di Studi Arabi e Islamici, 1990.

communities, and for the individuals who comprise those communities; of seeking socio-economic justice, and of sustaining unique ways of life and cultural expressions.

Interpretive perspectives on the past notwithstanding, perhaps we might say that the underpinning feature of the early twenty-first century of the Common Era, and that holds all these dynamics together in some sort of creative tension, is the motif of *exploration*. For, despite evidence of resistance and instances of opposition, there seems to be abroad in the world today intimations of a spirit of sincere, tentative, open and honest questing to know the religious other – for Christians, Jews and Muslims to come together in a variety of forums, for instance – and to do so in a climate of mutual recognition of integrity and validity, even as there is recognition of real difference and diversity. But in order for the exploration to proceed, it is necessary to identify not only the patterns of the past, but also the predominant paradigms that influence the present which, if not properly understood and possibly modified, will predetermine the future of interfaith relations.

Islamic Paradigms for Interreligious Relations and Dialogue: An Analytical Review

In seeking to discern Muslim paradigms governing interfaith relations, we need to begin at the beginning, with the life and times of the Prophet Muhammad himself. What may be called ‘originating paradigms’ emerge out of the life and times of Medina and the revelations given in the Holy Qur’an. What I refer to as ‘historico-legal paradigms’ emerge around the phenomenon of dhimmitude; the rules and protocols governing the so-called ‘Peoples of the Book’, the dhimmi communities. Finally, in an attempt to discern dominant contemporary paradigms, the focus is on what may be termed the emergence of an Islamic Exclusivism.

Originating Paradigms: Medina and the Qur’an

Although Muhammad was born in Mecca in the year 570CE, received his calling and began his preaching task there, his founding of the Islamic community proper—the Ummah—occurred after the flight (*al-hijra*) in 622CE from Mecca to the northern city of Yathrib. This city was renamed Medina (in full, Medina-al-Nabi, the ‘City of the Prophet’) in honour of the presence of Muhammad and the rights granted to him to undertake sweeping social and political reforms. The town’s leaders and people desired strong political and religious leadership in order that internal dissension and disputes might be resolved. Medina is the place where the structures, policies and ideology of the Islamic theocracy were inaugurated. In the process, two developments occurred that were to determine the essential shape and dynamic of the religion: political consolidation that provided the power base, and religious practices that were to become the ‘pillars’ of Islam. The mandate for this development was given in a treaty document, the Constitution, or Covenant, of Medina.²² Significantly, when it was first promulgated it upheld and promoted the peaceful co-existence of Muslims and Jews. Later this attitude of acceptance and incorporation would be extended to Christians. Indeed, as Esposito remarks, “Muhammad discussed and debated with, and granted freedom of religious thought and practice to, the Jews and the Christians, setting a precedent for peaceful and cooperative interreligious relations”.²³

22 See Muhammad Husein Haykal, *The Life of Muhammad*, trans. Ismail Raji al-Faruqi. Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 1993, 180-183.

23 John Esposito, *What Everyone Needs To Know About Islam*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002, 73.

As the new community developed, alliances with local Jews and neighbouring pagan Arabs for the purposes of defence and security within Medina were secured. The city of the Prophet was by no means made up wholly of Muslim Arabs. Furthermore, the Muslims of Medina were themselves by no means a single homogeneous group. In fact, Medina comprised for the most part Arabs who were either Muslims or non-believers together with three tribes of Jews. Also, Arab Muslims were either immigrants from Mecca (the *Muhajirun*) or those who originated from Medina (called the *Ansar*, or ‘helpers’). These had previously converted and so assisted the Meccan Muslims at the time of the *hijra*. Muhammad had initially been asked to arbitrate in a bitter feud between the two main Arab tribes. But soon tensions arose between the original Meccan Muslims and those originally of Yathrib, as well as between some of the Jews and the Muslim newcomers.²⁴

The socio-political context in which Islam came to birth was decidedly diverse. But in this context the founding Islamic attitudes toward religious plurality were positive. Significantly, as one Muslim commentator has noted of the situation at Medina, it “was absolutely necessary that the Muslim, the Jew, and the Christian have an equal opportunity in their exercise of religious freedom as well as in their freedom to hold different opinions and to preach their own faiths”.²⁵ However, in the establishment of the new Islamic *Ummah* (community), nothing less than a far-reaching socio-political upheaval was required. This involved, at least on the part of Arab converts, the relinquishing of the ways of old and *becoming* ‘muslim’, that is, subscribing and submitting to a political and social order which was “carefully established and observed in the here and now as a road to the afterworld”.²⁶ Arabic personal and societal identities were to undergo an immense upheaval. Of course, this was not possible for everyone to undertake, and certainly not for the three Jewish communities initially resident in Medina. By the time of Muhammad there were certainly considerable numbers of Jews in Arabia who were, by and large, well integrated into the life and culture of the peninsula.²⁷ They “spoke Arabic, were organized into clans and tribes, and had assimilated many of the values of desert society. They formed alliances and participated in intertribal feuds”.²⁸ Yet, even though there was a relatively high degree of assimilation into Arabian society, “Jews were still viewed as a separate group with their own peculiar customs and characteristics”.²⁹ As it happened, when in 624CE Muhammad moved against one of the Jewish tribes, evicting it from Medina after a short siege, the others offered no assistance.³⁰

At this stage, the precipitating issues were tribal, not religious or in any sense ‘ethnic’. In the following year, when a second Jewish tribe failed to support Muhammad in battle (the fight took place on the Jewish Sabbath and the Muslim forces were at this time defeated), Muhammad moved decisively against them. When Medina was besieged by the Meccans in 627CE, the remaining Jewish tribe in Medina assisted with the erection of defensive fortifications, but then vacillated about active participation in aiding the Muslims against the Meccans. In essence they trusted neither side. This marked the end of the prospect of Jewish

24 Fred M. Donner, ‘Muhammad and the Caliphate: Political History of the Islamic Empire up to the Mongol Conquest’ in John L. Esposito, ed., *The Oxford History of Islam*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, 9.

25 Haykal, *op. cit.*, 175.

26 Abd al-Rahman Azzam, *The Eternal Message of Muhammad*. Leicester: The Islamic Texts Society, 1993, 22.

27 Cf. Bernard Lewis, *The Middle East: 2000 years of History from the Rise of Christianity to the Present Day*. London: Weidenfield and Nicolson, 1995, 47.

28 Norman A. Stillman, *The Jews of Arab Lands: A History and Source Book*. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1979, 4.

29 *Ibid.*, 4.

30 See *Ibid.*, 13.

participation, let alone assimilation, within the emerging Islamic Ummah. If there had been an early anticipation that Jews, and then Christians, might simply conjoin with Muslims this expectation had to be re-thought: Jews and Christians would continue as distinct, even in some sense rival, religious communities.

The political problem posed by the relations between Muslim and non-Muslim was already clear in the lifetime of the Prophet, and the principles for its solution are contained in the Qur'an. As chief magistrate and later ruler of the community of Medina, the Prophet had Jewish subjects; as sovereign of the Islamic state he had relations with both Christian and Jewish neighbours in other parts of Arabia.³¹

Thus it was that, at the birth of Islam, in the city of Medina the first intimations of the nascent religious system were positive so far as relations with both Christians and Jews were concerned, but as developments unfolded things tended changed for the worse. As Esposito has remarked,

... [the resulting confrontation] became part of the baggage of history and would continue to influence the attitudes of some Muslims in later centuries. Recently, this legacy can be seen in official statements ... (that amount to reiterating) ... an age-old conflict dating back to the Jews' 'rejection and betrayal' of Islam and the Prophet's community at Medina.³²

If the problem of the relationship between Muslim and a non-Muslim who was yet a theistic believer (as in being a Jew or a Christian, for example) was evident during the lifetime of the Prophet, what are the clues to the Quranic solution? What, indeed, can we say are the paradigms of Islamic attitude toward, and relationship with, non-Muslim People of the Book that have been bequeathed to Islam from out of the Medinan context and the resulting formulation of the Qur'an? A careful reading of the Qur'an, especially in the light of the biography of Muhammad, indicates an early Medinan period in which Judaic and Christian elements and issues loomed large, albeit generally in a favourable light. The emerging Muslim faith seems to have been viewed as relating positively to these forebears. Muslims, Jews and Christians were to be honoured as co-equally 'People of the Book', even though, from an Islamic theological point of view, Jews and Christians may have gone somewhat astray.³³ So, the principal originating paradigm of Muslim interfaith engagement could be said to that of 'contending with ambiguous otherness' denoting a need to relate to faith communities with which there is an awareness of affinity, but also difference and distinction.

As Arabia came under Muslim rule Jews and Christians both paid the *jizyah*, initially a tribute, then later, from 632CE, a poll tax. This taxation was understood to have received divine sanction in 630CE with the revelation of Sura 9:29, which speaks of both the payment and the humility of the one paying. The ambiguity of the other is thus ideologically contained – the ambiguous other is subservient – and the groundwork was laid for a perspective of divine legitimacy for the Muslim superiority over, thence humiliation of, non-Muslim Peoples of the Book as a tool of reinforcing a modality of relating governed by the paradigm of the 'subservient ambiguous other'.

The injunction was clear and unequivocal ... The non-Muslim was to be subjugated. He was made to be a tribute bearer, and he was to be humbled. Just how he was to be humbled was to be more explicitly defined as time went on. But the basis for his position in Muslim Arab

31 Bernard Lewis, *The Jews of Islam*. London: Routledge Kegan Paul, 1984, 11.

32 Esposito, *What Everyone Needs To Know About Islam*, 81.

33 See Michael Lecker, *Muslims, Jews and Pagans: Studies in Early Islamic Medina*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995.

society was permanently established by the eternal word of Allah.³⁴

The late Medinan period is noticeable for a hardening of attitude to Judaism and Christianity, and a series of proclamations of the final triumph of a distinct teaching, namely that which Muhammad had been commissioned by God to convey. The late Medinan Quranic suras are also marked by a pronounced legislative tone; they are less combative and often convey a sense of dominating authoritative pronouncement. There is, clearly, a negative portrayal in the later suras which arguably reflect Muhammad's own interaction with Jews and Christians.³⁵ There was a corollary of political and theological perspective at play, and the juxtaposition of these two dimensions would redound through the ages in terms of other contexts of Muslim interfaith engagement with others.³⁶

We need to remember that, from out of the early Quranic material and the Covenant of Medina, there were certainly paradigms of positive predisposition and relationship. Historically, however, it would seem that such originating paradigms were for the most part eclipsed by a relatively negative perspective, namely that of regarding interfaith relations with Peoples of the Book in terms of a requirement to contend with an ambiguous other in the context of a belief in the divinely-ordained socio-political subservience of that other. Arguably, this set the scene for the development of Islamic theological and legal perspectives and paradigms with respect to dealing with the ambiguous other.

Historico-legal paradigms: dhimmi regulations

The Prophet Muhammad arguably came to regard himself as a political and military leader on a divinely sanctioned mission. He thus “became a statesman in order to accomplish his mission as a prophet, not vice versa, and it is clear that the more strictly religious aspect of these relationships was also a prime concern”.³⁷ The primary task, given the context of religious plurality of the day, was to assert the dominance of the one true religion over all others such that “political classification was between those who had been conquered or who had submitted themselves to the power of Islam and those who had not”.³⁸ From out of this context there arose regulations of protection, submission and deference applied to communities of those religions that were also ‘of the Book’, such as Christianity and Judaism – the so-called *dhimmi* communities.³⁹ But the Quranic injunction to honour such co-religionists was tempered by the motif of submission. Muslim superiority to both Jews and Christians soon became asserted in overt political terms. During the reign of the Caliph Umar (634–44CE) a treaty between the People of the Book and the Muslim state was enacted. Known as the ‘Pact of Umar’, it was

...a writ of protection (*amaan* or *dhimma*) extended by Allah's community to their protégés (*ahl al-dhimma* or *dhimmis*). In return for the safeguarding of life and property and the right to worship unmolested according to their conscience, the *dhimmis* had to pay the *jizya* (poll-tax) and the *kharaj* (land-tax). They were to conduct themselves with the demeanour and comportment befit-

34 Stillman, *op. cit.*, 20.

35 Robert S. Wistrich, *Anti-Semitism: The Longest Hatred*. London: Mandarin, 1992, 199.

36 Cf. Bruce Feiler, *Abraham: A Journey to the Heart of Three Faiths*. New York: William Morrow, 2002.

37 Lewis, *op. cit.*, 12.

38 *Ibid.*, 21.

39 Cf. Bat Ye'or, *The Dhimmi: Jews and Christians under Islam*, Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Press, 1985.

ting a subject population.⁴⁰

Many of the provisions and restrictions of the pact were only elaborated with the passage of time. It is clear that terms imposed upon the conquered peoples varied greatly, and this variation depended upon the conditions surrounding their surrender. So, the principal originating paradigm of the subservient ambiguous other was re-cast as the paradigm of dhimmitude. But it was not the only historical paradigm in respect to Muslim interfaith relations that applied.

Although, together with Christianity, there is a distinctive influence upon Islam that can be traced to Judaism, the historical and prophetic lineage of the religion of the Jews clearly meant Judaism ranked as the primary ‘other’ over against which Islam, in its formative years, had to distinguish itself. Furthermore, linguistic affinity meant that some Jewish terms and concepts crossed over into the speech of Arabs. Similarly, religious ideas, ethical notions, and the like were disseminated among Arabs who came into close contact with Jews. So, in the very process of determining its own identity and points of reference, Islam found itself drawing upon various types of literature which Muslim scholars attributed primarily to Jewish sources.⁴¹ The Oxford scholar, Ronald Nettler, has concluded that the “presence of the *Isra’iliyyat* within Islam constitutes an important example of traditional Islamic–Jewish cultural interaction and symbiosis which implicitly overrode the built-in monotheistic exclusivism on both sides ...”⁴² This suggests one very positive paradigm of Muslim interfaith relations, namely that of an enriching cultural interaction. Nevertheless, the predominating paradigm throughout much of Muslim history was that of dhimmitude.

Clearly Islamic authorities were concerned that taxes be paid and that dhimmi subjects acknowledge in a variety of ways, some more and some less humiliating, the superiority and domination of Islam. “As long as the non-Muslims complied, they were accorded a good measure of internal self-rule. However, even in the conduct of their own communal affairs, they were not entirely free of government supervision and, at times, downright interference”.⁴³ At best dhimmi communities would enjoy considerable communal autonomy “precisely because the state did not care what they did so long as they paid their taxes, kept the peace, and remained in their place”.⁴⁴ Nonetheless, the scene was set for a problematic history of interaction. A lot would depend on local circumstances. Clearly, a paradigmatic line was established: limits to dhimmi autonomy would be determined down the centuries of Islamic rule by Islamic expectations. Non-Muslims would know themselves to be a people submitted to those who themselves live in submission to Allah. If the originating Islamic paradigm of interfaith relations was on the basis of a concept of the “ambiguous other”, and the historical paradigm has been largely that of subservient dhimmitude, what appears to be the case at present?

Contemporary Paradigms: Islamic Exclusivism

With the dawn of the modern era, and the early penetration of European influence and colonisation with respect to Islamic lands of the Middle East, there was a weakening of traditional

40 Stillman, *op. cit.*, 25.

41 Ronald L. Nettler, ‘Early Islam, Modern Islam and Judaism: The *Isra’iliyyat* in Modern Islamic Thought’ in Ronald L. Nettler and Suha Taji-Farouki, eds, *Muslim–Jewish Encounters: Intellectual Traditions and Modern Politics*. Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1998.

42 *Ibid.*, 3.

43 Stillman, *op. cit.*, 38.

44 *Ibid.*, 39.

Islamic norms of society and a concomitant improvement in the lot of dhimmi communities. Although reforms were slow, eventually the Ottomans, for example, abolished the *jizya* tax. On the other hand, in Iraq, and particularly Baghdad, throughout much of the nineteenth century relations between Muslims and non-Muslims were most often quite tense. There were, for instance, “numerous anti-Jewish and anti-Christian riots, some limited and some on a large scale” often because “Jews and Christians were especially vulnerable to accusations that they had blasphemed against Muhammad or that they had once converted to Islam and thereafter apostasized. Capital punishment was called for in either case”.⁴⁵ Furthermore, the late nineteenth century saw the appearance of European-type antisemitic literature within the Arab world, especially within communities under French influence. Stillman remarks that, in general, the inception of antisemitism in the Arab world could be seen

...as part of the struggle of one partially emancipated minority – the Christians – to protect itself against the economic competition of another partially emancipated but less assimilated minority – the Jews. The vast majority of Muslim Arabs did not yet perceive the Jews as an economic or political threat. This would come in the twentieth century with the confrontation of opposing Jewish and Arab nationalisms.⁴⁶

While political and ideological elements play a part, the underlying paradigmatic driver is, arguably, theological or religious. For example, from a Muslim perspective “Islam didn’t supersede Christianity and Judaism, it preceded them. Islam, in fact, was the faith of Abraham, which his descendants twisted for their own purposes”.⁴⁷ First and foremost of the descendants doing the twisting is, of course, the Jews; but today, often, Christians may be viewed as not too far behind. Sadly, the twentieth century has also seen a distinct upsurge of anti-Jewish – i.e., antisemitic – literature within the Islamic world, most disturbingly with the coming together “of archetypes fixed in the consciousness of early Islam with the theories of a ‘world Jewish conspiracy’ adapted from modern European antisemitism”.⁴⁸

Arguably there is both a theological and metaphysical dimension to the clash between Islam and the Jews.⁴⁹ The Arab–Israeli conflict is not simply territorial and political. It is inherently religious. Palestinian anti-Zionist rhetoric earlier in the twentieth century tended to focus on the desire to protect the Islamic and Arabic character of Palestine and its people from a perceived secular threat.⁵⁰ A report of some field research, involving an interview with a local Imam in East Jerusalem, is most telling. Although, of course, hard-line exclusivist perspectives can be found to a degree in all religions, the point is made that, in this context at least, the viewpoint of the Imam does rather represent wider and more generally held popular Muslim perspectives. Jews and Christians are alike dismissed as inferior to Muslims in their devotion and correct worship of God.⁵¹ Of course, in the context of contemporary Israel–Palestine, such profoundly negative views come as no surprise. But that does not lessen the problematic, nor diminish the thesis, of interfaith paradigms I am here exploring.

Contemporary attitudes have contemporary referents; but in this case they also have a

45 *Ibid.*, 103.

46 *Ibid.*, 107.

47 Feiler, *Abraham*, 176.

48 Wistrich, *op. cit.*, 222.

49 *Ibid.*, 223.

50 *Ibid.*, 242.

51 These People of the Book are given “opportunity to submit ... and follow the rule of God. But you ignore him because you have become strong. ... You do the opposite of what God wants. ... God gives you many chances, but of course we know you are not going to follow”. Feiler, *op. cit.*, 179.

paradigmatic history. And what much contemporary Muslim rhetoric seems to suggest is that a predominant interfaith paradigm is that of Islamic Exclusivism: an exclusive and excluding portrayal of Islam is found in many quarters. But is it the only contemporary paradigm? As I have argued elsewhere,⁵² the exclusivist paradigm can itself be construed in three modes – open, closed, and rejectionist – denoting a development that ranges from a clearly held exclusive understanding that nevertheless allows for some measure of relational, if not exactly dialogical, engagement with other faiths; through an exclusivism that prefers to ignore, or at best mutely tolerate, the presence of other faiths; to an extremism that takes active steps to curtail or even eliminate what is perceived to be a dangerously threatening ‘other’. All three can be found within Islam today. Patterns and paradigms are instructive. We need to be aware of them and to appreciate them in terms of both their historical significance and their contemporary impact. But we are not bound by them: innovative religious thinkers who appreciate the traditions of the past can offer illuminating insight an interpretation that yields fresh appreciation and even novel application. Thus a new future can be envisioned. Fethullah Gülen, as we have already noted, is just such a thinker. It is to his perspectives on Islam and interfaith dialogue that we now turn to see what contribution can be made that could complement the past and open up the future.

Fethullah Gülen on Interreligious Dialogue and Islamic Interfaith Relations

Fethullah Gülen is absolutely correct in noting that desire for mutual understanding, a dedication to justice, and a priority on mutual respect are requisite principles for engaging in interreligious dialogue.⁵³ Gülen is of the view that, in today’s world, the task of “representing faith with its true values has gained an even greater importance than before”.⁵⁴ Indeed, he regards interfaith engagement as a function of the “necessity of increasing the interests we have in common with other people”.⁵⁵ He and the movement seeking to promote his teachings and views within the Islamic world and beyond are firmly committed to the cause of interreligious engagement and dialogue. In the light of my general analysis of the paradigms and dynamics that have pertained to Muslim interfaith relations, what might be the paradigmatic perspective and prospects that are embedded in the thought of Fethullah Gülen? Lester Kurtz, noting that, for Gülen, “spiritual practice and morality are ... more important than ritual and dogmatism” speaks of four pillars of dialogue – love, compassion, tolerance and forgiveness – as descriptive of Gülen’s understanding.⁵⁶ Indeed, it is this perspective “that opens the way for dialogue with other faith traditions” for Muslims.⁵⁷ My own reading of Gülen expands this threefold analysis. I suggest that, from Gülen, we may derive some seven elements for a possible contemporary Islamic paradigm for interreligious relations and dialogue.

52 Douglas Pratt, ‘Pluralism and Interreligious Engagement: The Contexts of Dialogue’, in David Thomas with Clare Amos, eds., *A Faithful Presence, essays for Kenneth Cragg*, London: Melisende Press, 2003, 402–418.

53 F. Gülen, *The Two Roses of the Emerald Hills: Tolerance and Dialogue* (<http://en.fGülen.com/content/view/1806/33/>)

54 F. Gülen, *Dialogue in the Muhammadan Spirit and Meaning* (<http://en.fGülen.com/content/view/1811/33/>)

55 *Ibid.*

56 Lester R. Kurtz, ‘Gülen’s Paradox: Combining Commitment and Tolerance’, *The Muslim World*, Vol 95, July 2005, 377.

57 *Ibid.*, 378.

1. Distinction of Values: Primary and Secondary

Arguably, love is a primary word in Gülen's vocabulary of dialogue.⁵⁸ Love, he says, "exists in everyone as a seed. This seed germinates under favorable circumstances and, growing like a tree, blossoms into a flower, and finally ripens, like a fruit, to unite the beginning with the end".⁵⁹ Indeed, it is clear that, for Gülen, primary values such as "peace, love, forgiveness, and tolerance are fundamental to Islam" whereas values such as jihad are regarded as a secondary matter.⁶⁰ Keeping these categories of primary and secondary value distinguished and in proper perspective is critical for, as Gülen avers, "failure to establish a proper balance between what is primary and what is secondary leads others to conclude that Islam advocates malice and hatred in the soul, whereas true Muslims are full of love and affection for all creation".⁶¹

2. Intentionality: A Principal Perspective

Intentionality is also an important element of Islamic thought and a key to Gülen's perspective: "In every task undertaken, there should be a certain meaning, sincerity should be sought, and reason and good judgment should be the priority".⁶² Gülen remarks that the "Prophet of God said: 'Deeds are judged by intentions', and he emphasized that the intention of the believer is more important than the act itself".⁶³ Intentionality is applied naturally to the sphere of interfaith engagement. And noting the "Qur'an calls people to accept the former Prophets and their Books", Gülen avers that "having such a condition at the very beginning of the Qur'an seems very important ... when it comes to starting a dialogue with the followers of other religions".⁶⁴

3. Tolerance: An Inherent Element

Gülen argues that "Society has to uphold tolerance. If we don't announce jihad for anything else, we should announce it for tolerance".⁶⁵ Tolerance, properly understood, is inherent to dialogue for, as well as "being commanded to take tolerance and to use dialogue as his basis while performing his duties", Muhammad was guided toward things in common with the People of the Book (Jews and Christians), as the Holy Qur'an (Al-Imran 3:64) bears witness: "O People of the Book! Come to common terms as between us and you: that we worship none but God; that we speculate no partners with Him; that we take not some from among ourselves for Lords other than God".⁶⁶ Tolerance – together with forgiveness – is a virtue enjoined throughout the Qur'an such that, in the contemporary context of today, Gülen is quite clear: Muslims are to "behave with tolerance and forbearance" in the interfaith arena.⁶⁷ In his critique of certain Muslim propensities he asserts that "the method of those who act with

58 Albayrak, *op. cit.*, 127; cf. F. Gülen, *Toward a Global Civilization of Love and Tolerance*, Somerset, NJ: The Light, Inc., 2004.

59 F. Gülen, *Pearls of Wisdom*, Somerset, NJ: The Light, Inc., 2005, 21.

60 F. Gülen, *Dialogue in the Muhammadan Spirit and Meaning* (<http://en.fGülen.com/content/view/1811/33/>)

61 F. Gülen, *Islam-A Religion of Tolerance* (<http://en.fGülen.com/content/view/1808/33/>)

62 F. Gülen, *Sports and the Process of Dialogue* (<http://en.fGülen.com/content/view/1813/33/>)

63 F. Gülen, *The Two Roses of the Emerald Hills: Tolerance and Dialogue* (<http://en.fGülen.com/content/view/1806/33/>)

64 F. Gülen in Ünal & Williams, *op. cit.*, 251

65 F. Gülen, in Ünal & Williams, *op. cit.*, 206

66 F. Gülen, *Tolerance and Dialogue in the Qur'an and the Sunna* (<http://en.fGülen.com/content/view/1810/33/>)

67 Cf. F. Gülen, *Tolerance and Dialogue in the Perspective of the Qur'an and Sunna* (<http://en.fGülen.com/content/view/1340/13/>)

enmity and hatred, who view everyone else with anger, and who blacken others as infidels is non-Islamic, for Islam is a religion of love and tolerance”.⁶⁸ Yet Gülen is positive overall: “We are rediscovering tolerance, something that is inherent in the spirit of Islam and something that was explained to us in the Qur’an and by Prophet Muhammad”.⁶⁹

Of course, tolerance is not to be equated with attitudes of ‘passive putting-up with’ that which we would prefer to have nothing to do. This is often the default perspective that we find in our societies – what might be better called ‘mere tolerance’. The tolerance to which Gülen alludes, on the other hand, is far more active and intentional, for it has to do with an underlying aim of dialogical engagement: the fostering of that peace and harmony to which the Qur’an refers and for which Islam stands: “peace is better” (Al-Nisa 4:128). Gülen asserts that “Muslims will lose nothing by employing dialogue, love, and tolerance,” and that, indeed, there are many verses in the Qur’an that extol these virtues.⁷⁰

4. Dialogue: An Expression of a Divinely-Inspired Love

Fethullah Gülen arguably regards interfaith dialogue as an expression of a divinely-inspired love, for the primary theological verity that binds together all peoples of the Book – Jews, Christians and Muslims especially – is the belief in God as Creator. The act of creation is not that of arbitrary whim but intentional love of the Creator for the creature. As Gülen states, “Love is the reason for existence and its essence, and it is the strongest tie that binds creatures together. Everything in the universe is the handiwork of God”.⁷¹ Love issues in practical actions, and at the level of inter-communal and inter-religious relations, love is expressed in terms of dialogical engagement: thus “dialogue is the real remedy for terror, chaos, and intolerance”.⁷² Gülen is himself succinct and to the point: “those who seek to build the happy world of the future on foundations of spiritual and moral values should arrive first at the altar of belief, then ascend to the pulpit of love, and only then preach their message of belief and love to others”.⁷³

The complementarity of tolerance and love as being not just human virtues but in reality indicators of primary values which the Creator imbued the creation underscores an essential oneness of human existence that itself suggests dialogue is the right and proper mode of interaction. “Even though we may not have common grounds on some matters”, says Gülen, “we all live in this world and we are passengers on the same ship. In this respect, there are many common points that can be discussed and shared with people from every segment of society”.⁷⁴

5. Reconciliation: The Essence of Religion

The motif of religion as a force for and of reconciliation is very strong with Fethullah Gülen. Indeed, love, compassion, tolerance, and forgiveness are at the heart of all religions.⁷⁵ It is

68 F. Gülen, *Islam-A Religion of Tolerance* (<http://en.fGülen.com/content/view/1808/33/>)

69 F. Gülen, *Making the Atmosphere of Tolerance Permanent* (<http://en.fGülen.com/content/view/1801/33/>)

70 F. Gülen, *The Two Roses of the Emerald Hills: Tolerance and Dialogue* (<http://en.fGülen.com/content/view/1806/33/>)

71 F. Gülen, *Making the Atmosphere of Tolerance Permanent* (<http://en.fGülen.com/content/view/1801/33/>)

72 Albayrak, *op. cit.*, 129

73 F. Gülen in Ali Ünal & Alphonse Williams, eds., *Advocate of Dialogue*, Fairfax, Virginia: The Fountain, 2000, 107

74 F. Gülen, *Tolerance in the Life of the Individual and Society* (<http://en.fGülen.com/content/view/1800/33/>)

75 F. Gülen, *Love, Compassion, Tolerance, and Forgiving: The Pillars of Dialogue* (<http://en.fGülen.com/content/view/1339/13/>)

thus of the nature of religion to promote the values and virtues that engender reconciliation. Specifically, for Islam, the Qur'an itself enjoins reconciliation with the wider religious context of the Peoples of the Book, a view that Gülen derives directly from Sura al-Baqara.⁷⁶ Allah commands against disputing one with another; instead the reconciling interaction of dialogical debate is encouraged. In particular, Gülen notes that there are "many common points for dialogue among devout Muslims, Christians, and Jews".⁷⁷ The imperative to dialogue is therefore strong, and must be conducted in a context of "giving precedence to common points, which far outnumber polemical ones".⁷⁸

6. Hermeneutical Authority for Dialogue

Gülen recognises the need to read the Qur'an carefully and intelligently when it comes, for example, to the issue of specific relations with Jews and Christians. Some expressions in the Qur'an regarding Christianity and Judaism are indeed very sharp and rather negative, even hostile in some cases. At best there seems to be a measure of revelatory paradox. But such paradox may be the effect of taking things out of context, or at least not taking context sufficiently into account. Thus, on the one hand "verses condemning and rebuking the Jews and Christians are either about some Jews and Christians who lived in the time of the Prophet Muhammad or their own Prophets", as opposed to all Jews and Christians at all times; or on the other hand they are about "stubborn unbelievers who lived during the Prophet's lifetime and insisted on unbelief" who happened to be Jews or Christians.⁷⁹ Such verses cannot be taken to refer to all Jews and Christians since, for it was never Jewish or Christian belief and believing at such which was being criticised, but the presence of unbelief – Jews and Christians ignoring their own heritage wherein they, together with Muslims, are together believers in the one God. As Gülen himself remarks, it was not Christianity or Judaism that was the subject of condemnation but rather "the Qur'an goes after wrong behaviour, incorrect thought, and resistance to the truth, creation of hostility, and non-commendable characteristics".⁸⁰ Rather than counting against dialogue, a careful and correct contextual reading of the Qur'an would seem to be advocated by Gülen. In this way a proper interpretive Muslim authority for dialogue may be discerned.

7. *Ijtihad*: The Struggle for Dialogue

The final element in a possible Islamic paradigm for interreligious dialogue and relations has to do with the notion of *ijtihad* as meaning a proper intellectual and spiritual struggle. Ihsan Yilmaz argues that

Gülen believes that there is a need for *ijtihad* in our age. He says that he respects the scholars of the past but also believes that *ijtihad* is a necessity: to freeze *ijtihad* means to freeze Islam and to imprison it in a given time and space. He argues that Islam is a dynamic and universal religion that covers all time and space, and renews itself in real life situations; it changes from one context to another, and *ijtihad* is a major tool in enabling this.⁸¹

The struggle to live a life of true faith, to follow the way of peaceful submission to God,

76 Cf. F. Gülen, *Dialogue with the People of the Book (Jews and Christians)* (<http://en.fGülen.com/content/view/1341/13/>)

77 *Ibid.*

78 F. Gülen, *Dialogue Is a Must* (<http://en.fGülen.com/content/view/1336/13/>)

79 F. Gülen, *Jews and Christians in the Qur'an* (<http://en.fGülen.com/content/view/1342/13/>)

80 *Ibid.*

81 Ihsan Yilmaz, *Muslim Laws, Politics and Society in Modern Nation States: Dynamic Legal Pluralisms in England, Turkey and Pakistan*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005, 175.

has led Fethullah Gülen into significant arenas of social and educational action, not the least of which is the promotion of interfaith dialogue and interreligious relations. Such dialogue inheres to the agenda of the Gülen movement because Gülen juxtaposed the struggle to live as a good and true Muslim with the task of engaging with the religious neighbour. This contrasts with forms of *ijtihad* coming from other quarters in the Islamic world that result in advocating jihad against the religious other. Thus Lester Kurtz can speak of Gülen's "paradoxical fusion ... of intense faith commitment with tolerance", for example, thus resulting "in a paradigm of Islamic dialogue".⁸² The essence of Gülen's paradigm is nothing less than the application of *ijtihad* to the question and challenge of Muslim interfaith relations. Hence, "tolerance of others and genuine interfaith dialogue are not simply a pleasant ideal that will be fulfilled in some future paradise, but ... (are)... at the core of what it is to be Muslim in the here and now".⁸³ Indeed, Gülen argues that dialogue is demanded by the very nature of religion as such.

Conclusion

Yilmaz notes that "Gülen has found a wide audience for his ideas, which are described as reformative by some scholars", yet the thrust of reformation, interestingly, is that in "exercising *ijtihad* without flagging it as *ijtihad*, Gülen reinterprets Islamic understanding in tune with contemporary times and develops a new Muslim discourse".⁸⁴ Today, Fethullah Gülen "continues to practice the theology of dialogue, since he believes that his teachings are well grounded in the principles of Islam".⁸⁵ A relatively cursory reading of some representative works of Gülen yield elements for a paradigmatic perspective that is indicative of new possibilities for Muslim interpretation of, and sensibilities toward, interfaith relations and dialogue. Where these values, patterns and perspectives on dialogue are not put into place, the outcome is quite dire. Gülen himself avers that "The present, distorted image of Islam that has resulted from its misuse by both Muslims and non-Muslims for their own goals scares both Muslims and non-Muslims".⁸⁶ In reality, at the heart of Islam is the call to dialogue.⁸⁷ Peace also lies at this heart; "war and conflict as aberrations to be brought under control" with security and world harmony the underlying divinely desired goal.⁸⁸

It must be remembered that for any faith-based movement there is a dialectical tension in respect to its ongoing relationship to its founder: on the one hand it always stands open to the criticism of not living up as fully as it might to the standards, demands, or expectations of its founder; on the other hand neither must it remain bound by the inevitable limitations that any human founder brings. Rather, the trick is to proceed along the path in the direction pointed to by the founder, cognizant of the values and insights supplied, but capable of applying and developing them as new circumstances and contexts arise. This is the stuff of the inherent and internal dialogical dialectic of all faith-based movements. The Gülen Movement is no

82 Lester R. Kurtz, 'Gülen's Paradox: Combining Commitment and Tolerance', *The Muslim World*, Vol 95, July 2005, 373.

83 Kurtz, *Ibid.*, 375

84 Ihsan Yilmaz, 'Inter-Madhhab Surfing, Neo-Ijtihad, and Faith-Based Movement Leaders' in Peri Bearman, Rudolph Peters and Frank E. Vogel, eds, *The Islamic School of Law: Evolution, Devolution and Progress*, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2005, 200.

85 Saritoprak, *op. cit.*, 424.

86 F. Gülen, *Jews and Christians in the Qur'an*

87 Cf. F. Gülen, *Islam's Ecumenical Call for Dialogue* (<http://en.fGülen.com/content/view/1337/13/>)

88 Cf. F. Gülen, *How to Interact with Followers of Other Religions* (<http://en.fGülen.com/content/view/1338/13/>)

exception. Paul Weller has rightly observed that Fethullah Gülen himself affirms

... the existence of a fundamental continuity in the issues faced by human beings in relation to their behavior with one another and their place in the universe. At the same time, he recognizes the specific nature of the challenges of diversity and plurality – challenges which have previously been present in individual historical societies but which, in the 21st century, have been elevated onto a global stage. ... Gülen stands against ways of thinking and acting that promote the illusion that the uncomfortable plurality of the contemporary world can simply be abolished.⁸⁹

In respect to the issue of relations between Christians and Muslims, or more broadly speaking between the West and Islam, and prospects for the ongoing dialogue between those two faiths and their respective cultures, we might agree with Charles Kimball that:

For many people in both communities the basic theological issues constitute the primary agenda.... Understanding different orientations is an important step, but it does not resolve the seemingly inherent conflicts. Thoughtful, creative, and persevering efforts are required in order to bridge some of the real and perceived differences in foundational theological understandings. ... Although we all carry the cumulative baggage provided by our deep-rooted heritage, developments in the past 150 years have challenged traditional assumptions and prompted the vexing questions confronting people of faith today.⁹⁰

Religious prejudice, expressed in forms of claims to superiority and exclusivity of one over another, is an issue that ever needs to be addressed. Parties to any Muslim interfaith dialogue – be that Jewish, Christian, Muslim or any other “religion of the book” – need to recognise that, indeed, “each religion is an interpretive venture”.⁹¹ The ‘book’ is ever a text requiring interpretive understanding and application. Triumphalism must be countered if there is to be any genuine eirenic advance. As Rabbi David Rosen, a leading Jewish figure in the cause of interfaith relations, has commented: “We should indeed keep the differences ... and learn to respect them. Each religion has its *particular* approach to God. But we also have a *universal* dimension to our traditions that we share, and we must emphasize that as well”.⁹² By pursuing the challenge of dialogue we seek to comprehend better the respective faiths in which we live, and move, and have our being.

In dialogue with Fethullah Gülen Muslim and non-Muslim alike are moved “beyond prejudice, suspicion, and half-truths so that they might arrive at an understanding what Islam is really about” and to see that “tolerance, love, and compassion are genuinely Islamic values that Muslims have a duty to bring to the modern world”.⁹³ The call of Islam is a call to dialogue. Fethullah Gülen certainly offers “Muslims a way to live out Islamic values amidst the complex demands of modern societies and to engage in ongoing dialogue and cooperation with people of other religions”.⁹⁴ Dialogue with Gülen and the movement that bears his name is an avenue wherein the non-Muslim can join with Muslims in the greater journey of the dialogical quest.

89 Weller, *op. cit.*, 88.

90 Charles Kimball, *Striving Together: A Way Forward in Christian–Muslim Relations*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1991, 48.

91 Feiler, *Abraham*, 202.

92 Cited in Feiler, 204.

93 Michel, ‘Two Frontrunners’ *op. cit.*

94 *Ibid.*