

## Tolerance in the Theology and Thought of A. J. Conyers and F. Gülen

by David B. Capes

In *The Long Truce* (Spence Publishing, 2001) the late A. J. Conyers argues that tolerance, as practiced in Western democracies, is not a public virtue; it is a political strategy employed to establish power and guarantee profits. Tolerance, of course, seemed to be a reasonable response to the religious wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but tolerance based upon indifference to all values except political power and materialism relegated ultimate questions of meaning to private life. Conyers offers another model for tolerance based upon values and resources already resident in pre-Reformation Christianity.

In this paper, we consider Conyers' case against the modern, secular form of tolerance and its current practice. We examine his attempt to reclaim the practice of Christian tolerance based upon humility, hospitality and the 'powerful fact' of the incarnation. Furthermore, we bring the late Conyers into dialogue with Fethullah Gülen, a Muslim scholar, prolific writer and the source of inspiration for a transnational movement. We explore how both Conyers and Gülen interpret their scriptures in order to fashion a theology and social paradigm conducive to peaceful co-existence. Finally, because Gülen's identity has been formed within the Sufi tradition, we reflect on the resources within Sufi spirituality that make dialogue and tolerance key values for him. In the end we argue that strong resonances are found in the notion of authentic tolerance based on humility advocated by Conyers and the notion of '*hoshgoru*', roughly translated as 'empathic acceptance', in the writings of Gülen.

**Panel:**  
Co-Existence and Dialogue

**Venue:**  
Old Theatre,  
LSE

| 27.10.07<br>Panels | Parell<br>Session 1         | Parell<br>Session 2 |
|--------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| 9:30-11:30         | <b>Presentation:<br/>04</b> |                     |
| 13:00-15:00        |                             |                     |
| 15:10-17:00        |                             |                     |

David B. Capes (PhD, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Texas, 1990; following Master of Divinity at same Seminary, 1982; BA, Mercer University, Atlanta, 1978): serves as Chair of the Department of Christianity and Philosophy at Houston Baptist University. In 2000 he was appointed Visiting Fellow of the Faculty of Divinity at the University of Edinburgh where he carried out research on early Christian worship practices. In 1992 he published *Old Testament Yahweh Texts in Paul's Christology* (Tubingen: J. C. B. Mohr). Since then he teamed up with Etty Boochny of Tel Aviv to write *The Footsteps of Jesus in the Holy Land* (Jerusalem: Steimatsky, 1999). He serves as the theological review director of a new Bible paraphrase called *the Voice* (with Thomas Nelson). His research interests include Christian origins, Biblical interpretation, Christology and worship. For years he has been active in Jewish-Christian dialogue in Houston and around the nation.

**David B.  
Capes**

db.capes@gulenconference.org.uk