

Preachers of Dialogue: International Relations and Interfaith Theology

by Turan Kayaoglu

While the appeal of ‘civilisational dialogue’ is on the rise, its sources, functions, and consequences arouse controversy within and between faith communities. Some religious leaders have attempted to clarify the religious foundations for such dialogue. Among them are Jonathan Sacks, the Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of Britain and the Commonwealth, Edward Idris, Cardinal Cassidy of the Catholic Church, and Fethullah Gülen.

The paper compares the approach of these three religious leaders from the Abrahamic tradition as presented in their scholarly works – Sacks’ *The Dignity of Difference*, Cardinal Cassidy’s *Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue*, and Gülen’s *Advocate of Dialogue*. The discussion attempts to answer the following questions: Can monotheistic traditions accommodate the dignity of followers of other monotheistic and polytheistic religions as well as non-theistic religions and philosophies? Is a belief in the unity of God compatible with an acceptance of the religious dignity of others? The paper also explores their arguments for why civilisational and interfaith dialogue is necessary, the parameters of such dialogue and its anticipated consequences: how and how far can dialogue bridge the claims of unity of God and diversity of faiths? Islam’s emphasis on diversity and the Quran’s accommodation of earlier religious traditions put Islam and Fethullah Gülen in the best position to offer a religious justification for valuing and cherishing the dignity of followers of other religions.

Panel:
Evaluation of Gülen’s
Thought and Methodology

Venue:
Old Theatre,
LSE

27.10.07 Panels	Parallel Session 1	Parallel Session 2
9:30-11:30		
13:00-15:00		
15:10-17:00	Presentation: 12	

Turan Kayaoglu (PhD, University of Washington, Seattle): Assistant Professor of International Relations, University of Washington, Tacoma, Department of Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences. He teaches international relations, international human rights, and religion and politics. His recent article ‘The Extension of Westphalian Sovereignty: State Building and the Abolition of Extraterritoriality’ appeared in *International Studies Quarterly* (September, 2007). Currently he is working on a book manuscript on the emergence of sovereign state system.

**Turan
Kayaoglu**

t.kayaoglu@gulenconference.org.uk