

Gülen's Response to the 'Clash of Civilisations' Thesis

by Richard Penaskovic

Part I contains an exposition of Sam Huntington's thesis about the clash of civilisations according to Gülen. Huntington's writings are far from being realistic evaluations regarding the future. Rather, they are more like a self-fulfilling prophecy. Gülen argues that by creating new enemy fronts, Huntington actually sows the seeds for a clash of civilisations on the basis of religious and cultural differences. Part II looks at Gülen's response to Huntington's thesis and has three parts: tolerance, interfaith dialogue, and compassionate love. Tolerance means closing our minds to the faults of others, respecting ideas with which we disagree, and when attacked verbally, responding with mildness or as the Qur'an says, with 'gentle words.' Interfaith dialogue involves stressing the commonalities between the world religions, rather than past polemics and historical differences. In regard to compassionate love Gülen calls the universe a symphony of compassion because without compassion everything is in chaos. Souls filled with love are in Gülen's view, the greatest heroes in the cosmos. The way of love is the way of the prophets. Part III contains my own views on the clash of civilisations. Written in the spirit of Gülen, I argue that in contradistinction to Huntington, the Muslim world is not monolithic, that many of the past wars and clashes were within the same civilisation, and that the real clash is between extremists of all types and moderates within the same culture or civilisation. I also highlight the ecumenical message of Islam, namely, that all religion deserve respect and courtesy, that followers of different religious traditions should compete with one another in piety, and that the rope that links us to God also links us to one another (Qur'an 3:103).

Panel:
Co-Existence and Dialogue

Venue:
Old Theatre,
LSE

27.10.07 Panels	Parell Session 1	Parell Session 2
9:30-11:30	Presentation: 02	
13:00-15:00		
15:10-17:00		

Richard Penaskovic is Professor of Religious Studies and Immediate Past Chair of the University Senate and University Faculty at Auburn University in Alabama, USA. Penaskovic possesses a B.A. in philosophy, the equivalent of a MA in theology from the University of Wuerzburg, Germany, and received the doctorate in theology *magna cum laude* from the Ludwig Maximilians University of Munich. Penaskovic has over 100 publications to his credit. His latest book, *Critical Thinking and the Academic Study of Religion*, is distributed by Duke University Press. His many articles and book reviews have appeared in such journals as *The Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, *Augustinian Studies*, *Theological Studies*, *The Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, *Louvain Studies* (Belgium), and *The Heythrop Journal* (London). He has appeared on radio and TV in the United States and his current research interests are the Muslim-Christian dialogue, spirituality, and ecclesiology.

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