

Hizmet Studies Review

Vol. 2, No. 2, Spring 2015, 51-66

Fethullah Gülen's Contribution to Muslim-Christian Dialogue in the Context of Abrahamic Cooperation

PIM VALKENBERG, Valkenberg@cua.edu

The Catholic University of America

ABSTRACT *This article highlights the most important aspects of Fethullah Gülen's contribution to inter-religious dialogue between Jews, Christians and Muslims from the point of view of Catholic theology. Taking Gülen's seminal article on the "necessity of interfaith dialogue" as a point of departure, the author looks at points of common interest between the three Abrahamic religions as indicated by Gülen, but also notes a few important differences.*

In the last couple of decades, the Hizmet movement inspired by Fethullah Gülen has developed as one of the most promising partners for Christians engaged in dialogue with Islam. Whilst much attention has been paid in the recent past to the Hizmet movement and its institutional presence, less attention has been devoted to Gülen and the inspiration that he gives in his theological works to intercultural and inter-religious dialogue as one of the elements of the faith-based service movement (Yavuz 2013; Hendrick 2013; Tittensor 2014). This article highlights some of the basic ideas in Gülen's contribution to inter-religious dialogue as represented by his reflections on 'The Necessity of Interfaith Dialogue'.¹ Since most Christians are more likely to come across Muslims inspired by Gülen than directly encounter his thoughts in his writings, I shall start my reflections by telling about my encounters with Turkish people in the Netherlands where I worked at a Catholic university. For me, this encounter with Muslims was the beginning of an extended study of Gülen's thinking that involved me in some of the conferences organized by members of the Hizmet movement.² At the same time, these encounters with supporters of the Hizmet movement is a suitable way

to start my reflections because of the nature of Gülen's thoughts about dialogue. As Thomas Michel – one of the first Christian theologians to recognize Gülen's importance – has noted, he is more famous as an activist in the areas of education and public communication than as a thinker or a writer (Michel 2002). One may be expected, therefore, to encounter Gülen's followers in the practice of inter-religious dialogue before reading his ideas on dialogue. This was what happened in my case as well.

Since my work as a Christian theologian in the Netherlands at that time involved engagement in dialogue with Muslims, I was happy to be invited – together with my wife who worked as a pastoral worker – to an *iftār* dinner by the local branch of the Islam and Dialogue Foundation in the Netherlands. In those days, a few months after 11 September 2001, I was particularly interested in the hotly debated issues of the relation between religion and violence. When preparing a symposium on *God and violence in the three Abrahamic religions*,³ my attention was drawn to what I considered to be an interesting contradiction in the self-representation of Islam by the Islam and Dialogue Foundation. On its web site, the Foundation presented its mission statement in rather irenic terms, stressing that violence and terror are out of place in Islam. In its printed public relations brochure, however, the Foundation included the following English quotation: “Loving affection and detesting hate are the most distinguishing qualities of a heart exuberant with faith”. In my opinion, this quotation expresses the true nature of faith in God and its ambiguous nature better than the somewhat idealistic mission statement. Although it is understandable that Muslims resorted to apologetics in the atmosphere of Islamophobia after September 11, the statement that religion has nothing to do with violence simply does not do justice to the complicated relation between religion and violence. If I understand the quotation well, it says that religious persons will love everything that is good, but abhor everything that is bad. So there is a positive and a negative power in religion, and it is the task for human beings to transform this negative power into a constructive social force. I shall not go into the details of the theological consequences of such a view, but rather concentrate here on the source of the quotation.

After some research, I found some similar quotations in the works of Gülen: one of these was “The most distinctive feature of a soul overflowing with faith is to love all types of love that are expressed in deeds, and to feel enmity for all deeds in which enmity is expressed” (Ünal and Williams 2000: 198). According to Gülen, the positive and the negative power cannot be put on a par. In an interesting exegesis of the verse “Do not take Jews and Christians as allies” (Qur'an 5: 51), Gülen argued that this verse has to be explained according to the context. In some specific conditions, it may be necessary that Muslims do not cooperate with Jews and Christians; but in general, it is better to cooperate, as the Qur'an says: “Peace is good” (Q. 4: 128) (Gülen 2004: 167). This is a hermeneutical rule

that helps Gülen to avoid the extremes of an unrealistic irenism on the one hand, and a belligerent polemic on the other (Valkenberg 2013). Peace between human beings and between religions should be promoted in all circumstances, unless justice is violated by some persons to such an extent that there is no alternative but to treat enemies as enemies. Whilst tolerance is an extremely important virtue that should always be promoted, it is necessary to be realistic as well. Whilst tolerance and forgiveness may be good at the individual level, the law may require mutuality and justice (Gülen 2004 : 94). Sometimes, it may be good to turn the other cheek – a clear reference to Jesus's saying according to Matthew 5: 39 – but at other times, it is necessary to take care to establish balance in tolerance. To quote Gülen once more: “Being merciful to a cobra means being unjust to the people the cobra has bitten” (Gülen 2004: 207; Ünal and Williams 2000: 260).

In this contribution to *Hizmet Studies Review*, I propose to read one of Gülen's most important writings on the dialogue between religions with this hermeneutical rule in mind. Since my reading is a Christian reading of Gülen's texts, I shall concentrate on his remarks on Muslim-Christian dialogue. In the end, however, I hope to make clear why and how Jews will have to be included in this dialogue as well.

The Necessity of Interfaith Dialogue

In his recent book about Gülen, M. Hakan Yavuz has shown that three formative factors shaped the life and works of Gülen: his family, Sufism, and in particular the writings of Said Nursi (Yavuz 2013:26). In fact, the hermeneutical rule just mentioned was derived from Said Nursi.⁵ It can be found in Nursi's *Damascus sermon* and in some parts of his *Risale-i Nur* as well, where Nursi showed that negative approaches to people of other religions in the Qur'an usually apply to specific situations only, whilst the more positive evaluations of others have a more universal value. Something similar can be said about the quotation about loving good deeds and detesting bad deeds, since in the same *Damascus sermon* from 1911, Said Nursi stated that “the thing most worthy of love is love, and that most deserving of enmity is enmity.” (Nursi 1996:49) Gülen's writings can be characterized as deeply steeped in Islamic theology and spirituality, and in that sense he is a very traditional scholar (Albayrak 2011). Yet at the same time his works also contain a fair number of references to Western philosophers and theologians, and in that sense he is certainly a renewer.

Gülen has written about dialogue many times, so much so that one of the volumes in which his writings have been collected is entitled *Advocate of Dialogue* (Ünal and Williams 2000). Most of his writings about dialogue originated in the period in which Gülen developed a number of initiatives in the 1990s, first in Turkey and later abroad, to overcome disunity as one of the basic evils that di-

vides humankind. Yet the roots of his engagement in dialogue go back to his work as an imam in Izmir in the 1960s. Some of his older friends and students tell that he used to visit the coffee houses and talked with all kinds of students, even atheists (Valkenberg 2015:84). Among these writings, Gülen's essay on 'The Necessity of Interfaith Dialogue' is of paramount importance, since it was presented at the Parliament of the World's Religions in Cape Town, South Africa, in 1999 and has subsequently been published in English versions several times.⁶ The essay consists of five short parts, an introduction and a conclusion.

In the introduction, Gülen argued that dialogue between Christians and Muslims is indispensable in view of the now prevailing materialist worldview. He pointed to a Muslim *hadith* that says that Jesus will return during the last days, which means that the central values of Judaism, Christianity and Islam as prophetic traditions will in the end prevail. It is interesting to note that this *hadith* was quoted by Said Nursi in his *Damascus sermon* as well: "... it is Islam that will be the true, and spiritual, ruler over the future, and only Islam that will lead mankind to happiness in this world and the next; and that true Christianity, stripping off superstition and corrupted belief, will be transformed into Islam; following the Qur'an, it will unite with Islam". (Nursi 1996: 35-36). Whilst it is clear that Islam will be the most important eschatological power in the writings of Said Nursi, and that Christianity will only be able to cooperate with Islam if it cleanses itself from superstition, Islam and Christianity seem to be equal powers in Gülen's reception of the *hadith*. Moreover, Jews are explicitly included as well. Gülen referred to the Jewish philosopher Michael Wyschogrod who argued – in a session of the Islamic Studies Group at the annual conference of the American Academy of Religion, New York 1979 – that Jews and Muslims have as many points in common as Jews and Christians (Wyschogrod 1982:16). Moreover, Gülen added, Muslims have generally treated Jews quite fairly in history.⁷

Muslim Difficulties in Dialogue

After these introductory remarks, Gülen gave four reasons why Muslims often have problems with dialogue. First, many Muslims have been killed by Christians, especially in the last century. Therefore, many Muslims tend to think that the West continues this systematic aggression with more subtle means, such as dialogue. As a Christian, I have heard this suspicion more often – not only from the side of Muslims and Jews, but also from the side of Hindus and Buddhists. In most cases, adherents of other religions are suspicious because they notice that dialogue is, for many Christians, still connected with missionary activities and the proclamation of the Gospel.⁸ They are right that this is somewhat peculiar, yet on the other hand it is a consequence of the missionary character that Christianity has in common with Islam. It is my contention that Christian mission and Islamic *da'wa* are not so different at all, since both religions hope that the whole

of humankind will accept what they see as the best guidance. In itself, there is nothing wrong with such forms of persuasion as long as one accepts the condition of mutuality in such persuasion. However, the mutuality is often jeopardized by power imbalances. I think that this is an issue on which challenges to dialogue between Christians and Muslims still exist. Therefore, Gülen pointed to the lasting influence of colonialism on the one hand, and the desire to become independent from the West on the other. So, in my opinion, Muslim suspicions about Christian invitations to dialogue are primarily political in nature, not theological. When I travel to a Muslim country, for instance the Middle East, I notice that many people call me to account for Western politics, and the politics of the United States in particular.

Whilst the first three reasons for Muslim suspicions about dialogue are of a political nature, the fourth reason is theological: the distorted image of Islam as a degeneration of religion, and of the Prophet as an imposter. At this point, I must confess that Christianity has been guilty of such distortions in most of its historical encounters with Islam. There is a fateful continuity between the Christian image of Islam, as described by Norman Daniel in his *Islam and the West*, and the cultural tradition of Orientalism described by Edward Said (Norman 1993; Said 1995). The Christian theologian Yanah ibn Sarjun ibn Mansur, better known as St John of Damascus, was an early and very influential exponent of this tradition. In the final chapter of his book on heresies, he introduced this new religion as a deceptive superstition and a forerunner of the Antichrist, and described Muhammad as a false prophet (Damascène 1992; Valkenberg 2005). Since he had been educated at the Umayyad court in Damascus around 680 AD, John knew quite well what he was talking about. However, he could only measure this new religious phenomenon by the central norm of his Christian tradition, and it is precisely because the Qur'ân contains traditions about Jesus Christ that John could deem them inadequate and therefore heretical. At that time, the new religion handed down by Muhammad was not yet known as Islam, and therefore John of Damascus used three names that connect this religion with the stories about Abraham or Ibrahim: Ishmaelites (children of Ishmael, the first son of Abraham), Hagarenes (children of Hagar, Ishmael's mother, but the Arabic may also mean 'those who have performed the *hijra*'), and finally Saracenes. This final name became the standard name for Muslims in the Middle Ages; John of Damascus associated it with 'those who were left destitute by Sarah', but again the Arabic probably has a different meaning: people coming from the East (Davids and Valkenberg 2005: 79-80). The references to Abraham's children indicate that Christianity and Islam are two genetically related religions, together with Judaism. In such a relationship, the younger religion is able to give itself an identity by relating itself to older traditions. In theory – not always in fact – Islam recognizes the Scriptures of the Jews and Christians who are characterized therefore as *ahl al-kitâb*, 'people of the Book'. At the same time, Islam claims to possess the true

and unadulterated interpretation of these Scriptures. For the same reason but the other way round, the older religion finds it much more difficult to relate itself to its younger sister that pretends to have fulfilled its mission. If Christians think that Christ is God's final and unsurpassable revelation – in the same manner as Muslims think that the Qur'ān is God's final and unsurpassable revelation – they have great difficulty in recognizing Muhammad as God's prophet and messenger because that would jeopardize their confession of Christ as God's final Word. This genetic relationship makes it understandable – though not excusable – that Christians have given such a distorted picture of Islam and the Prophet Muhammad in history,

Dialogue is a Must

After having identified these difficulties, Gülen came to the core point of his message: “Interfaith dialogue is a must today, and the first step in establishing it is forgetting the past, ignoring polemical arguments, and giving precedence to common points, which far outnumber polemical ones” (Ünal and Williams 2000: 244-5). On this point, Gülen did not explain his rather categorical statement that dialogue is necessary today. One may be inclined to think that he simply contrasts the polemical mentality of the past with the dialogical mentality of the present. This would, however, be a lopsided interpretation. A few pages later, Gülen went on to argue that the Qur'ān urges Muslims to respect the followers of other religions and to accept former Prophets and their Books. So he insisted that an attitude of dialogue is not only required by modernity but also by the very source of Islam.

Gülen proceeded to indicate the method of dialogue: forgetting the arguments of the past, and concentrating on common points. Again, as a Christian theologian, I want to make a few remarks with respect to this method. First, I notice a convergence between the attitude of Gülen and the attitude prescribed by the second Vatican Council which said, in its declaration *Nostra Aetate* on the relation of the Church to non-Christian religions, with reference to Muslims in particular, the following: “Over the centuries many quarrels and dissensions have arisen between Christians and Muslims. The sacred council now pleads with all to forget the past, and urges that a sincere effort be made to achieve mutual understanding; for the benefit of all, let them together preserve and promote peace, liberty, social justice and moral values” (Vatican Council II 1996).⁹ Although Gülen and the second Vatican Council seem to suggest that we need to forget the past, I would argue that recent developments in the study of inter-religious dialogue have demonstrated that there is more continuity between the apologetic tradition of the past and the dialogical endeavors of the present. The main result of this insight is that differences and particularities are part and parcel of every dialogue and that it might be dangerous to try to forget or ignore them (Cheetham and

all 2013; Cornille 2013).¹⁰ An appeal to ignore the differences runs the risk of narrowing inter-religious dialogue down to a form of polite conversation which is not very helpful when religious violence determines the larger context of this dialogue. Focusing on common points may be an important strategy when mutual suspicions are still prevalent, but if dialogue is to change the mentality of the partners involved, a 'reconciliation of memories' has to take place. This phrase was coined in Christian ecumenical dialogue to indicate the need to consider historical dissensions in a new light, in order to be able to understand each other. In this sense, I would say that differences are important as well as common points to come to a mutual understanding between Christians and Muslims. Meanwhile, the second Vatican Council seems to have had a more specific common effort in mind: Christians and Muslims can easily agree on promoting common values such as peace and justice. I shall come back to this method of stressing common points later on with reference to the possible Jewish contribution to dialogue between the Abrahamic religions.

In the next sentence of his text on the necessity of dialogue, Gülen referred to Abraham as well by quoting Louis Massignon, a French Islamicist and Christian scholar who referred to Islam as "The faith of Abraham revived with Muhammad" (Griffith 1997: 201). In this sense, by re-awakening the faith of Abraham, Islam can have a positive prophetic mission in the post-Christian world. Sidney Griffith, Gülen's intermediary to Massignon, argued that Massignon's ideas about the religious significance of Islam would radically alter the Christian views of Muslims if most Christians would accept them (Griffith 1997: 198). On this point, Gülen mentioned several other Christian voices supporting the call for dialogue with Muslims. He also mentioned some stimulating texts from the second Vatican Council and from Popes Paul VI and John Paul II. He did not, however, mention the fact that the second Vatican Council seems to endorse Massignon's plea to acknowledge Abraham as a common father for Jews, Christians and Muslims in two very important texts.

The first text is from *Lumen Gentium*, the dogmatic constitution on the Church which states, in a paragraph on the relationship between the Church and those who have not accepted the Gospel, that "the plan of salvation also includes those who acknowledge the Creator, first among whom are the Moslems: they profess to hold the faith of Abraham, and together with us they adore the one, merciful God, who will judge humanity on the last day." (Vatican Council II 21-22). This is a text of enormous importance for Christian-Muslim dialogue since it clearly states that the faithful of both religions adore the same One God and Creator who will judge us all. It also seems to recognize the Muslim claim to be in continuity with the faith of Abraham. Whilst Jews and Muslims converge in their claim to be the physical heirs of Abraham through Isaac and Ishmael respectively, Christians and Jews converge in their claim to be spiritual heirs of Abra-

ham. The same recognition can be heard in the declaration *Nostra Aetate* quoted above: “The church has also a high regard for the Muslims. They worship God, who is one, living and subsistent, merciful and almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth, who has also spoken to humanity. They endeavor to submit themselves without reserve to the hidden decrees of God, just as Abraham submitted himself to God’s plan, to whose faith Muslims eagerly link their own”. (Vatican Council II : 571). In this text, the Vatican Council recognized the name *muslim* for people who submit themselves to God with reference to the faith of Abraham as someone who was “upright and devoted to God”, according to Abdel Haleem’s translation of the words *hanif* and *muslim* in Qur’ān 3: 67 (Abdel Haleem 2004:39). The tendency of Christians and Muslims to take Abraham/Ibrāhīm as the epitome of faith might facilitate inter-religious dialogue between them; yet at the human level, taking Abraham as an example is not without some serious problems as a careful reading of the stories concerning Abraham in the Hebrew scriptures shows. Apart from various forms of sexual violence and abuse of power in these stories, Abraham’s faith seems to imply the willingness to sacrifice a human being – a threat of terror that has been hovering around absolute submission to the will of God ever since (Trible 1984; Sherwood 2004).

Towards the end of his argument that Christians agree to give Islam a special prophetic mission in this time of secularization, Gülen mentioned an interesting statement by Pope John Paul II who gave Muslim prayer as an example for Christians, because Muslims often worship in the best and most careful manner.¹² It is true that Pope John Paul II expressed this opinion many times, not only with reference to prayer but also with reference to the fasting of *Ramadān* (Sherwin and Kasmow 1999: 58-69). Gülen stated that Christianity and Islam can learn from each other: the West has its technological and scientific supremacy, whilst Islam is supreme in its religious fervor. It is certainly true that Islam, precisely as a religion of submissiveness to God, may be an incitement for Western people to remember their religious roots. In Dutch public debates, Islam already has this function, albeit in a negative vein. But in such a view, the West is identified with the secular world over against Islam as a religious power. I think that it may be possible to do more justice to the power of Christianity as a religious presence in the Western world on the basis of the very same idea of mutual exemplarity or – as I would prefer to call it – spiritual emulation. This idea may be particularly fruitful between Abrahamic religions, or – as the Qur’ān names them – the ‘people of the Book’. The Qur’ān addresses them – Christians and Muslims – and says: “If God had so willed, He would have made you one community, but He wanted to test you through that which He has given you, so race to do good”(Q. 5:48). A Christian reading of this text might connect it with St Paul’s writings in the New Testament about the ‘holy envy’ between Jews and Gentiles to become acquainted with God’s mercy in Christ.¹³ Such a reading may show the relevance of differences between religions as a means to mutual incitement. Again, the life

of Louis Massignon and his discovery of the meaning of Ibrāhīm in the world of Islam may serve as an illustration (Basetti-Sani 1974; Gaudeul 1984). By 'passing over' to the world of Islam, Massignon discovered the value of his own Christian background so that it is legitimate to say that the encounter with Islam caused his 'conversion' to Christianity (Gude 1996: 55). Although he did not use the words 'spiritual emulation', I am convinced that Gülen would endorse this idea of using differences between religions as a motivation for dialogue. In his life and his writings, he constantly shows how Muslim sources can motivate us to engage in dialogue with other religions. For this to succeed, however, it is necessary that the other religion be acknowledged as a religion and not as a political system only. It is at this point that people from the West often go wrong in their approach to Islam, as Gülen remarked toward the end of this section. They see Islam as a political force, an ideology or a terrorist threat. In this context, an explicitly Christian approach to Islam may be of help.

Islam's Universal Call for Dialogue

In the third section of his article on the necessity of interfaith dialogue, Gülen referred to the Qur'ān and its call to the people of the Book to come to common terms concerning the One God (Q. 3: 64). In the interpretation by Abdul Haleem: "Let us arrive at a statement that is common to us all: we worship God alone and ascribe no partner to Him". This is the basic Muslim call to dialogue. If the others do not accept it, they may go their own way, while Muslims remain faithful to their path. Such differences, however, should not lead to disagreements, but rather to different ways of confessing the same God. In this respect, Gülen quoted from a statement by Said Nursi who, while praying the words "You alone do we worship and You alone we ask for help" (Qur'ān 1:5) in the Bayezid Mosque in Istanbul, imagined three circles of congregations that together worshipped God.¹⁴ The first congregation consisted of Muslims who were brought together with others who affirmed divine Unity. Yet God is also praised by other creatures, human and non-human. Explaining this vision of Nursi, Gülen concluded that Islam offers a broad path of salvation to the whole of humankind.

In the fourth section, '*How to Interact with Followers of Other Religions*', he stressed the common points between Islam and the people of the Book once again: the Qur'ān accepts former Prophets and their Books, therefore Muslims should not enjoy defeating others in discussing matters of faith. Gülen explained the important reminder to "argue only in the best way with the People of the Book" (Q. 29:46) as: discuss not except with means better (than mere disputation) (Abdel Haleem 2004:255). I agree with Gülen – who once again borrowed his interpretation from Said Nursi – that the words for debate and disputation, *jidāl* and *munāzara*, are often used negatively as signs of human ignorance in the Qur'ān (McAuliffe 2001: 511-14). Yet at the same time, I am convinced that the

rules for debate formulated in the Qur'ān and in subsequent Muslim tradition may still be meaningful for determining the agenda of modern inter-religious dialogues. It is possible to think, for instance, about the rules for organizing court disputations or *majālis* between scholars with different religious backgrounds at the court in the Abbasid period (Yafeh and all 1999). Again, I would underscore the role of differences in inter-religious dialogues between the Abrahamic religions somewhat more than Gülen has done. Therefore, I would say that debate and disputation may be meaningful contributions to inter-religious dialogue provided that they be implemented “in the best possible way”, as the Qur'ān says. If we are prepared to learn from one another as a means of intensifying our faith instead of showing off against each other, we may come close to “mutual enrichment” or even “mutual transformation” as the goal of inter-religious dialogue.¹⁵

Promoting Positive Values

In the final section of his contribution, ‘the necessity of interfaith dialogue’, Gülen named four fundamental universal values that are sustained by religion and are therefore to be promoted in inter-religious dialogue. It is a matter of fact that these four words, love, compassion, tolerance and forgiveness, may be very important subject-matters in dialogue between Christians and Muslims, because both traditions may offer some profound spiritual teachings with regard to these values.¹⁶ Moreover, it would be a good thing if Muslims and Christians together could promote these values as a basic ethic for the whole of humankind. Yet again I would like to complement this agenda for Christian-Muslim dialogue with some reflections on the role of the differences between religions and the question of how to deal with these differences without violence. I would like to argue in favor of a contextual analysis in which the specific place and function of dialogue between two religions might be assessed properly.

My considerations on the importance of differences as an instrument for improving inter-religious dialogue have been derived from my Jewish dialogue partners. Apart from the pervading influence of Emmanuel Lévinas and his insistence on the importance of the otherness of the religious other, pioneers in inter-religious dialogue such as Jonathan Sacks and Jonathan Magonet have opened my eyes to the importance of differences in dialogue (Sacks 2002; Magonet 2003). More particularly, Alon Goshen-Gottstein has argued that Jews are quite often only implicated bystanders in Muslim-Christian dialogues on Abraham (Goshen-Gottstein 2002). I have indicated some of the reasons for this earlier: apart from the fact that the contemporary use of the term ‘Abrahamic religions’ originated with Louis Massignon in the context of dialogue between Christians and Muslims, Jews cannot identify with the stress on the faith of Abraham/Ibrāhīm in the same way as Muslims and Christians can.¹⁷ But if we want to remain true to this Abrahamic heritage, we cannot exclude Jewish voices from our Christian-

Muslim dialogue, but should let them interrupt it, even if their voices are quite often disturbing. As Farid Esack has argued convincingly, Christian-Muslim dialogue may become a dialogue of the powers that be if it is not opened up to the broader vision that Said Nursi saw in the Bayezid Mosque (Esack 1977: 258). Nevertheless, the dialogue between Christians and Jews may be in many contexts and places a dialogue of the powers that be as well. A contextual analysis shows that, whilst Muslims may be inclined to stress common points both because their religion is so often connected with violence and other vices and because of their genetic place as youngest of the Abrahamic religions, Jews may be inclined to stress differences because of their minority position and because they belong to the oldest Abrahamic sister-religion. The situation of Christians is most peculiar, because they behave differently towards their Jewish 'elder sisters', with whom they would like to discuss common points, whereas Jews tend to find the differences more interesting. On the other hand, Christians always have felt the need to underscore the differences with Islam as their 'younger sister', whilst many Muslims rather like to discuss the similarities. Moreover, Christians are often seen as not-so-religious citizens of the Western world where the real powers that be hide. Because of this global context in which the Christian partner in dialogue as a rule is the most powerful partner, it would be important to let the agenda of dialogue be determined by those who are not in power. For Christians in the West, this could mean that they stress common points in dialogue with Muslims and stress differences in dialogue with Jews. In this sense, Gülen's insistence on love, altruism, compassion, forgiveness and tolerance as the pillars of dialogue may be an excellent starting point for dialogue between Muslims and Christians in the broader context of Abrahamic religions.

NOTES

1 This article was presented to the Parliament of the World's Religions in Cape Town in 1999 and published in several forms shortly thereafter.

2 The main part of the following text was originally presented at a conference on Islam in the Contemporary World: The Fethullah Gülen Movement in Thought and Practice, at Rice University, Houston, November 2005. Some part of it has also been published in Valkenberg (2006) and (2015).

3 The contributions to that symposium were published in Dutch as Pim Valkenberg (2002).

4 The website www.islamendialogo.nl was accessed several times between 2001 and 2008 but is no longer active; the quotation is from a pamphlet printed and distributed in 2001.

5 For Nursi's view on collaboration between Muslims and Christians, see his Damascus Sermon (1996), and the fifteenth letter from his *Risale-i Nur* (1997: 78-79). Also, Michel (2003: 20-32).

6 Original versions in Turkish Daily News of 11-12 January 2000, and in *The Foun-*

tain of July to September, 2000. Somewhat different English translations have been published in *Advocate of Dialogue*, 241-56 and in *Gülen, Essays – Perspectives – Opinions*. Compiled by The Fountain (Rutherford N.J.: The Light, 2002), 32-43. The essay was published separately as *The Necessity of Interfaith Dialog: a muslim perspective*.

7 Gülen's argument was corroborated in broad outline by Cohen (1994).

8 See the document *Dialogue and Proclamation. Reflection and Orientations on Interreligious Dialogue and the Proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ*. This joint declaration by the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue and the Congregation for the Evangelization of People has been published in *Bulletin Pro Dialogo* 26 (1991), 210-50.

9 Second Vatican Council, *Declaration Nostra Aetate on the relation of the Church to non-Christian religions*, no. 3. Translation in: *Vatican Council II. The Basic Sixteen Documents. A Completely Revised Translation in Inclusive Language*, Austin Flannery o.p. (ed.), (Northport N.Y.: Costello Publishing – Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1996), 571-72. For a comparison between Gülen's ideas on dialogue and *Nostra Aetate*, see the recent article by Salih Yucel (2013).

10 Two good surveys of recent developments in dialogue studies are: Cheetham and all (eds), (2013); Cornille (ed.) (2013).

11 This recognition is not without some restrictions, as the Council documents merely state that Muslims claim to be in continuity with the faith of Abraham. For a fuller account, see D'Costa (2013: 208-222).

12 Gülen referred to a book with interviews by Messori (1994).

13 The idea of 'holy envy' has been made famous in Christian ecumenical circles by Krister Stendahl. For an interpretation of Qur'an 5:48 and Romans 9-11 along these lines, see Valkenberg (2006: 150-62).

14 The reference is to Said Nursi's 29th letter, first section, sixth point. English translation in *Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, Letters 1928-1932* (Istanbul: Sözlür Neşriyat, new edn, 2001), 461-63.

15 See Cobb (1982). It should be noted that the document 'The Attitude of the Church toward Followers of Other Religions: Reflections and Orientations on Dialogue and Mission', published in 1984 by the Vatican's Secretariat for non-Christians, uses the terminology of 'mutual enrichment' as well (text in F. Gioia (ed.) (2006: 1116-29).

16 For the role of these notions in Gülen's reflections on inter-religious dialogue, see Yavuz (2013: 181-91); for a reflection on the sources and the history of Islam with respect to inter-religious dialogue inspired by Gülen's thoughts, see Kurucan and Erol (2011).

17 Two very different but equally skeptical contributions from Jewish scholars: Aaron Hughes (2014) and, more convincingly, Jon D. Levenson (2012).

REFERENCES

- Albayrak, İ. (ed.) (2011). *Mastering Knowledge in Modern Times: Fethullah Gülen as an Islamic Scholar*, New York: Blue Dome Press.
- Basetti-Sani, G. (1974). *Louis Massignon (1883-1962): Christian Ecumenist; Prophet of Interreligious Reconciliation*. Edited and translated by Allan Harris Cutler, Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press.
- Cheetham, D., Douglas Pratt & David Thomas (eds) (2013). *Understanding Interreligious Relations*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Cohen, M. (1994). *Under Crescent and Cross: the Jews in the Middle Ages*, Princeton N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Cornille, C. (ed.) (2013). *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Inter-Religious Dialogue*, Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.
- D'Costa, G. (2013). 'Continuity and Reform in Vatican II's Teaching on Islam', *New Blackfriars* 94, 208-222.
- Damascène, J. (1992). *Écrits sur l'Islam*. Présentation, commentaires et traduction par R. Le Coz, Sources Chrétiennes, 383. Paris.
- Daniel, N. (1993). *Islam and the West: The Making of an Image*, Oxford: One-world.
- Davids, A. and Pim Valkenberg (2005). 'John of Damascus: the Heresy of the Ishmaelites', in: Barbara Roggema, Marcel Poorthuis, Pim Valkenberg (eds), *The Three Rings: Textual Studies in the Historical Trialogue of Judaism, Christianity and Islam*, Leuven: Peeters, 71-90.
- Esack, F. (1977). *Qur'an, Liberation and Pluralism: an Islamic Perspective of Interreligious Solidarity Against Oppression*, Oxford: Oneworld.
- Gaudeul, J.M. (1984). *Encounters and Clashes: Islam and Christianity in History*, Rome: PISAI.
- Gioia, F. (ed.) (2006). *Interreligious Dialogue: the Official Teaching of the Catholic Church from the Second Vatican Council to John Paul II (1963-2005)*, Mahwah N.J.: Paulist Publications, 1116-29.
- Goshen-Gottstein, A. (2002). 'Abraham and 'Abrahamic Religions' in *Contemporary Interreligious Discourse: Reflections of an Implicated Jewish Bystander*', *Studies in Interreligious Dialogue* 12, 165-83.
- Griffith, S. (1997). 'Sharing the Faith of Abraham; the 'Credo' of Louis Massignon', *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 8, 193-210.
- Gude, M. L. (1996). *Louis Massignon: the Crucible of Compassion*, Notre Dame

and London: University of Notre Dame Press.

Gülen, F. (2000). 'The Necessity of Interfaith Dialog: A Muslim Perspective', *The Fountain*.

Gülen, F. (2002). *Essays – Perspectives – Opinions*. Compiled by The Fountain (Rutherford N.J.: The Light, 2002), 32-43.

Gülen, F. (2004). *Love and the Essence of Being Human*. Prepared for publication by Faruk Tuncer, translated by Mehmet Ünal and Nilüfer Korkmaz, Istanbul: Journalist and Writers Foundation.

Hendrick, J. (2013). *Gülen: The Ambiguous Politics of Market Islam* (New York: New York University Press).

Hughes, A. (2014) *Abrahamic Religions: On the Uses and Abuses of History*, New York: Oxford University Press.

John B. Cobb, J. B. (1982). *Beyond Dialogue: Toward a Mutual Transformation of Christianity and Buddhism*, Philadelphia: Fortress.

Kurucan, A. and M. K. Erol (2011). *Dialogue in Islam: Qur'an – Sunnah – History*, London: Dialogue Society.

Lazarus, H. and all (eds) (1999). *The Majlis. Interreligious Encounters in Medieval Islam*, Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz.

Levenson, Jon D. (2012). *Inheriting Abraham: the Legacy of the Patriarch in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Lumen Gentium, no. 16. Translation in Vatican Council II. The Basic Sixteen Documents, 21-22.

Magonet, J. (2003). *Talking to the Other: Jewish Interfaith Dialogue with Christians and Muslims*, London: I.B. Tauris.

McAuliffe, J. D. (2001). 'Debate and Disputation' in id. (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*, vol. I, Leiden: Brill, 511-14.

Messori, V. (1994). *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*. Its original edition, *Varcare la soglia della speranza*, was published by Mondadori in Milano, 1994.

Michel, T. (2002). 'Turkish Experience For Muslim-Christian Dialogue. A Thinker: B.S. Nursi; An Activist: M.F. Gülen'. In *Travelling Together Beyond Dialogue: Peace and Dialogue in a Plural Society, Common Values and Responsibilities*, Melbourne: Australian Intercultural Society, 33-40.

Michel, T. (2003). *Reflections on Said Nursi's Views on Muslim-Christian Understanding*, Istanbul: Söz Basım Yayın.

Nursi, B.S. (1996). *Damascus Sermon*, Istanbul: Sözlere Neşriyat.

Nursi, B.S. (1997). *Risale-i Nur*, Istanbul: Sözler Neşriyat.

Nursi, B. S. (2001). *Letters 1928-1932*, Istanbul: Sözler Neşriyat, new edn, 461-63.

Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue and the Congregation for the Evangelization of People (1991). *Dialogue and Proclamation. Reflection and Orientations on Interreligious Dialogue and the Proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ*, Bulletin Pro Dialogo 26, 210-50.

Sacks, J. (2002). *The Dignity of Difference: How to Avoid the Clash of Civilizations*, London: Continuum.

Said, E. (1995). *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1995.

Sherwin, B. L. & Kasmow, H. (eds) (1999). *John Paul II and Interreligious Dialogue*, Maryknoll: Orbis Books.

Sherwood, Y. (2004). 'Binding – Unbinding: Divided Responses of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam to the 'Sacrifice' of Abraham's Beloved Son', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 72, 821-61.

The Qur'an (2004). A new translation by M.A.S. Abdel Haleem, Oxford – New York: Oxford University Press.

Tittensor, D. (2014) *The House of Service: The Gülen Movement and Islam's Third Way*, New York: Oxford University Press.

Trible, P. (1984). *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

Ünal, A. and Williams A. (2000). *Fethullah Gülen, Advocate of Dialogue*. Fairfax VA: Fountain Publications.

Valkenberg, P. (2006). *Sharing Lights on the Way to God: Muslim-Christian Dialogue and Theology in the Context of Abrahamic Partnership*, New York: Editions Rodopi.

Valkenberg, P. (2013) 'Fethullah Gülen and Peace as Horizon of Tolerance and Dialogue', in *Preventing Violence and Achieving World Peace*, O. Soltes & M. Johnson (eds), New York: Peter Lang, 41-53.

Valkenberg, P. (2015). *Renewing Islam by Service: A Christian View of Fethullah Gülen and the Hizmet Movement*, Washington D.C.: CUA Press.

Valkenberg, P. (red.) (2002). *God en geweld*, Budel: Damon.

Vatican Council II. The Basic Sixteen Documents (1996). A Completely Revised Translation in Inclusive Language, Austin Flannery o.p. (ed.), Northport N.Y.: Costello Publishing – Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1996, 571-72.

Vatican's Secretariat for non-Christians (1984) *The Attitude of the Church toward Followers of Other Religions: Reflections and Orientations on Dialogue and Mission*.

Wyschogrod, M. (1984). 'Islam and Christianity in the Perspective of Judaism'. In Isma'il Raji al-Faruqi (ed.), *Triialogue of the Abrahamic Faiths*. Papers presented to the Islamic Studies Group of the American Academy of Religion (Washington D.C.: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1402/1982).

Yavuz, M. H. (2013). *Towards an Islamic Enlightenment: The Gülen Movement*, New York: Oxford University Press.

Yucel, S. (2013) 'Muslim-Christian Dialogue: Nostra Aetate and Fethullah Gülen's Philosophy of Dialogue', *Australian eJournal of Theology* 20.3, 197-206.

Muslim Christian. Dialogue. By H. M. Baagil M.D. , 'pJlJU;:tCl+ll c*r1i a{r& :grrlr e,-itAr.Â In the Name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful I am grateful to Allah for having read the manuscript of tvtuslInn-CmrsrrAN DIALoGUE and being asked to write an introduction to this remarkably eye-opening book' Anyone interested in comparative religion will find in this book many surprises that challenge what many once believed to be the absolute truths. Dialogue The Contribution of Fethullah GÃ¼len Prof Douglas Pratt. 35 9:30-11:30 02 GÃ¼lenâ€™s Response to the 13:00-15:00 â€˜Clash of Civilisationsâ€™ Thesis Prof Richard Penaskovic.Â 58 12 Promoting Human Rights Values in the Muslim World: the Case of the GÃ¼len Movement Mr Ozcan Keles.Â He regularly conducts seminars on Christianâ€“Muslim relations in Indonesia, the Philippines and Malaysia. t.michel@gulenconference.org.uk Professor of Applied and Professional Ethics, Leeds Metropolitan University, Associate Direc- Prof. Rev. The worldwide extent of Fethullah GÃ¼lenâ€™s educational network testifies to the internationalist, even imperialist, nature of the movement. It is densest in the former socialist bloc, especially in the former Soviet Union. We know that GÃ¼len often expresses his admiration and nostalgia for the imperial Ottoman past (GÃ¼len, 1994, pp. 1â€“5).Â Downloaded By: [University of Arizona] At: 18:48 12 November 2009. Fethullah GÃ¼lenâ€™s Missionary Schools 157. Table 2. The schools of Fethullah GÃ¼lenâ€™s movement in Central Asia (1997â€“98)*. Country. Population (Millions). Posted in Videos on Fethullah GÃ¼len. P. Valkenberg on "Fethullah GÃ¼len's contribution to Muslim-Christian dialogue in the context of Abrahamic cooperation" [Part-2]. P. Valkenberg on "Fethullah GÃ¼len's contribution to Muslim-Christian dialogue in the context of Abrahamic cooperation" [Part-2]. Link: <https://youtube.com/embed/-nsORjCqVdk> Tags: The Fethullah GÃ¼len Movement in Thought and Practice. Fethullah GÃ¼len is a Turkish Muslim scholar whose ideas have inspired and influenced many Turkish intellectuals, educators, students, businessmen, politicians and journalists inside and outside...Â GÃ¼len frequently repeats that people who are responsible for the education of youth in the modern period have not developed a holistic approach to education. This failure results in the creation of a young generation with no ideals, as if they were animated corpses (GÃ¼len, 2004). The pressure of globalisation in this process cannot be denied.