

# Flying with Two Wings



Flying with Two Wings:  
Interreligious Dialogue  
in the Age of Global Terrorism

Edited by

Virginia Burnett and Yetkin Yıldırım

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P U B L I S H I N G

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## INTRODUCTION

# FLYING WITH TWO WINGS: INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE IN THE AGE OF GLOBAL TERRORISM

VIRGINIA BURNETT

The terrorists attacks of September 11, 2001, seared in popular consciousness the new paradigm that would define the global order in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century: a primal confrontation between the modern, capital-rich, socially forward-looking, technologically advanced West (a region once known as Christendom), and the theocratic, wealthy, atavistic, and insular world of fundamentalist Islam. The equally tragic events that have followed the September 11 attacks, including a needless war, the alienation of US allies, the dismantling of nation-states, additional deadly terrorist attacks, and the radicalization of a new generation of some young Muslims, all suggest that the paradigm of a new world order, based on competition for power, wealth, resources, and cultural influence, reaches far beyond the terrifying yet elusive “war on terror.” The language of that complicated encounter, especially in the popular imagination, is cast in simple and uncomplicated imagery as a confrontation between two colliding worldviews: that of the West (read: the secular/Christian world of Europe and the United States) and of Islam.

In this volume, we propose first to confront the notion that conflict between Islam and the West is inevitable. Although there are many reasons to dispute this basic premise—including the fact that the majority of Muslims are neither militant nor sympathetic to terrorism, nor do most Christians in the West define what political scientist Samuel Huntington called a “bloody clash of cultures” in fundamentally religious terms—this work will take the basic framework and language of the debate to suggest alternatives to violence and mis-encounters.

This is not to take a naïve view. We appreciate that, for example, the increased presence of Muslims in Europe poses a genuine challenge to that

region's traditional culture, political and legal values, and, indeed, Europe's own religious heritage. We also observe that an increasingly globalized milieu, which is largely defined by Western commercialism, secularism, and an oft-eroticized popular culture, defies and rightly offends traditional Muslim beliefs and sensibilities. Yet we suggest that the challenge of peaceful coexistence and respect between Muslims and Christians is neither impossible nor unprecedented. Just as there is a strong historical trajectory of hostility and violence between the two traditions, there is likewise a long history of complicated, but peaceful, coexistence between Christians and Muslims in places like Spain, Turkey, Lebanon and elsewhere. In our work, we put forth arguments in favor of peaceful coexistence, which, we will argue, can only be made possible by a full understanding of the "Other," as made possible through interreligious dialogue. It is the methods and expectations of interreligious dialogue that is the focus of our proposed work.

This volume consists of a group of papers produced for a series of conferences that were held to explore the work of Fethullah Gülen, the prominent Turkish scholar whose influential work has encouraged devout Turks to work within the limits of secularism to reach their full potential, especially through education and a deep understanding of science. Since September 11, Gülen's work has been increasingly preoccupied with decoupling Islam from violence, which he believes to be inimical to the teaching of the Prophet as they appear in the Qur'an. Gülen is a strong promoter of interreligious encounters and dialogue at both the institutional and person-to person level, as a method to replace violence and distrust with understanding and tolerance.

Although Gülen is a controversial figure in Turkey (where he has over a million supporters) and currently lives in the United States, his theology lies solidly within the mainstream of Turkish Sunnism. The uniqueness of Gülen's thought is his emphasis on how Muslims can live and respond to the modern world, rather than to reject it. Gülen's teachings offer a counterpoint to the radical conservative Islam of certain Shia' sects, Wahabism, or the political, violent groups like Al Qaeda. One of the central purposes of this volume is to examine Gülen's specific teachings on dialogue and how his methodology for interreligious communications functions when put into practice between ordinary Muslims and Christians.

This volume addresses the Christian side of the equation by first addressing some of the issues that, for some, serve as a deterrent to interfaith dialogue. (We distinguish here between ecumenism, which takes place among various sectors of Christianity, and *interreligious* dialogue,



which occurs among people of different faiths). Among evangelical Christians, the issue of dialogue has been challenged by an outlook that stressed Christian exceptionalism and the mandates of the “Great Commission” –Jesus’ call to “make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28: 16-20)—views that largely precluded dialogue as a viable or desirable option in approaching people of different faiths. Modern Protestants and, increasingly, Catholics, however, have begun to view the issue of interreligious dialogue through a different lens, seeing it as a useful means of furthering basic Christian values of brotherhood, tolerance, and positive relations among all of God’s people, especially in pursuit of peace and social justice. This volume, in part, will examine Christian attitudes toward interreligious dialogue and how those attitudes are impacted by contact with members of the Gülen movement. We are especially interested in synergies that occur between Muslims and Christians when interreligious dialogue is allowed to take place.

There is a fairly extensive body of literature, even in English, on Fethullah Gülen, but most of these works do not reach a large or popular readership. Our volume is different in two ways. First, it positions Gülen’s work within a broader context that allows for an increased understanding of the merits and challenges of dialogue. Second, it seeks to reach an audience that has not had prior exposure either to Gülen’s work or that had not even given previous consideration to the possibilities of interreligious dialogue. We firmly believe that one of the merits of this volume is that it suggests new opportunities and methods for peaceful co-existence. We are not so naïve as to suggest that interreligious dialogue offers a panacea for the problems that exist between East and West, Christian and Muslim, secular and religious. We do, however, believe that interreligious dialogue, in the service of peace and reconciliation, offers a viable and, indeed, critical alternative to a world defined by the politics of terrorism and anti-terrorism.



## CHAPTER ONE

# ADVOCATE OF DIALOGUE: A LOOK INTO FETHULLAH GÜLEN'S WORLD

YETKİN YILDIRIM

Increasing globalization and recent terrorist attacks in the U.S. and Europe make the need for dialogue between religious and cultural groups more evident. Interfaith dialogue has become increasingly popular as individuals from both the east and west have sought answers and explanations to world events. Amongst those who promote interfaith dialogue, the Muslim visionary and educator Fethullah Gülen stands as a prominent figure. Gülen's emphasis on interfaith dialogue has gained him a worldwide audience of various religious and cultural backgrounds. Thus, the Gülen movement has spread rapidly throughout the world with its schools, cultural and media activities, and dialogue projects. Gülen focuses on universal values which are embodied in all major world religions. Among these universal values, dialogue and tolerance have a special place in Gülen's teachings. Much of Gülen's writings focus on the need for establishing tolerance and dialogue; he writes that tolerance and dialogue are crucial for building bridges of understanding and appreciation among diverse cultures and religious faiths. Citing the Qur'an and hadith, Gülen discusses the importance of these values in Islamic teachings. He shows the long precedence of tolerance and dialogue in Islamic history by giving examples from the Ottoman Empire and other Islamic civilizations. Gülen encourages his audience to practice tolerance and dialogue in an effort to coexist with all civilizations of the modern world. Gülen envisions world peace brought about by the global practice of tolerance and dialogue. This paper focuses on his teachings of tolerance and dialogue through an analysis of his writings.

## Fethullah Gülen's Writings on Tolerance and Dialogue

Gülen uses the word *hoşgörü* in his writings, but this word does not have a direct translation in English. The word “tolerance” is generally used in translation of this word. Where *hoşgörü* has only positive meaning, “tolerance” might have negative meanings in some cases. Therefore, translating the word *hoşgörü* to “tolerance” will not necessarily convey the same connotations and nuances as *hoşgörü*. Since “tolerance” is the preferred translation of *hoşgörü* in Gülen's other writings, in this work we have used the same word.

In Gülen's view, ignorance and the derived negative stereotypes are the source of the current conflict between Muslims and other civilizations. Ignorance and misconception can be solved through tolerance and dialogue. Tolerance opens the doors to dialogue and dialogue helps people to learn about each other. Gülen addresses the practice of tolerance as a personal activity and as a trait that finds its source from the individual's soul and ultimately from God. Dialogue serves as a method for erasing ignorance and misrepresentations of Islam as well as for building better understanding and appreciation of other cultures and religious faiths. It is through the practice of tolerance and dialogue that Gülen states peace among the diverse peoples of the world will be achieved.<sup>1</sup> Tolerance and dialogue will be the main tools for building understanding and finding solutions for our world.

For Gülen, “tolerance does not mean being influenced by others and joining them, it means accepting others as they are and knowing how to get along with them.”<sup>2</sup> He sees tolerance as a method to achieve coexistence with others. Tolerance is being able to live with others while maintaining your identity. Gülen explains dialogue as the social extension of tolerance and as an interactive, outwardly social activity. Gülen defines dialogue as “two or more people coming together to talk and meet on certain subjects and, by means of this, to draw closer to one another. From this respect, we can say that dialogue is an activity with a direct ‘human’ axis.”<sup>3</sup> For Gülen, dialogue is a tool for people to get closer, to know and learn from each other, which will prevent misconceptions of the “Other.” Healthy dialogue among people of different cultures and religions is not possible without practicing tolerance. Therefore, Gülen dedicates much of his writings to analyzing other moral values that are necessary for the practice of tolerance in the modern world.

Gülen also speaks to non-Muslims to move beyond their prejudice, distrust, and misinformation in order to arrive at a “proper” understanding of Islam. Gülen engages non-Muslims in a discussion of dialogue by

expressing the values shared by Islam and many religions, values that he believes are universal. For Gülen, these universal values include the practice of tolerance and dialogue. According to Gülen, tolerance is an inherently personal activity, founded on an individual's moral outlook on his relationships with fellow human beings. He stresses this idea through his writing style, which is usually addressed directly to individuals. In addition, his emphasis on education indicates his belief that the self-improvement of individuals will bring about a better society. In Gülen's words, "people of tolerance will build a world based on tolerance."<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, Gülen states, "It is not possible to talk about common ideas or a collective consciousness in communities where individuals do not look upon one another with tolerance...."<sup>5</sup> Tolerance in Gülen's writings is not the restraint from acting against others or the resistance of contact with others; it is a moral imperative to reach out and offer tolerance to others and to seek it for oneself.<sup>6</sup>

Gülen considers the ability to forgive as essential to the practice of tolerance among all civilizations. In his teachings, tolerance and forgiveness go hand in hand. Gülen claims that forgiveness is the essence of tolerance. He writes, "An individual can fully forgive any injustice made to him/her and forgo any further claims on anyone. That's the essence of tolerance."<sup>7</sup>

Gülen emphasizes that tolerance should be at a level where it opens doors to forgiveness: "We should have such tolerance that we are able to close our eyes to the faults of others, to have respect for different ideas, and to forgive everything that is forgivable."<sup>8</sup> Gülen implies that the practice of tolerance requires effort and is not necessarily something that may come easily:

The Qur'an strongly urges forgiveness and tolerance. In one verse, it says of pious people: *They swallow their anger and forgive people. God loves those who do good.* (Al-Imran 3:134) In other words, Muslims should not retaliate when verbally abused or attacked. If possible, as Yunus says, they should act as if they had no hand or tongue with which to respond and no heart with which to resent. They must swallow their anger and close their eyes to the faults of others. The words selected in the verse are very meaningful. *Kazm*, translated as swallowing, literally means swallowing something like a thorn, an object that actually cannot be swallowed; thus it denotes swallowing one's wrath, no matter how difficult.<sup>9</sup>

Gülen's commentary on practicing tolerance "no matter how difficult" might be a call to the Islamic concept of *jihad*, which is commanded of each Muslim and is defined as the personal struggle to become a better Muslim, to better follow Islamic teachings for the purpose of drawing

closer to God. For example, Gülen writes, “Jihad gained a special characteristic with the advent of Islam: struggling in the path of God.”<sup>10</sup> Therefore, by making the effort to practice tolerance in even the most difficult of circumstances, Muslims are in effect practicing *jihad*<sup>11</sup> and getting closer to God.

## **Tolerance and Dialogue in Islam**

Gülen’s ideas are attractive today because they give guidance on how to live combining Islamic values together with the demands of the contemporary world. Gülen believes that Muslims can follow the teachings of Islam on dialogue, following a principle of “reflecting God’s Mercy onto themselves.” Gülen cites the Qur’an to support his argument that forgiveness is crucial for the practice of tolerance, but he also makes it a point to address the tradition of tolerance and dialogue in Islam. The sources of knowledge in Islam are first and foremost the Qur’an itself, which is the divine revelation of God, and secondly, the Sunnah and Hadith, which are records of the Prophet Muhammad’s life and sayings. Thus, Gülen supports his claim that the practice of tolerance has a long tradition in Islam by citing the Qur’an, Sunnah, and Hadith. Gülen provides extensive citations from the Qur’an, Sunnah, and Hadith in his writings to reveal that tolerance is a trait most loved by God and that it is fundamental to being a true Muslim, and thereby sheds light on the importance of tolerance in the Islamic identity. For example, he states:

The blessed life of the Pride of Mankind, upon him be peace and blessings, was woven with threads of peace and tolerance just like a beautiful piece of lace. To begin with, peace is basic to Islam.<sup>12</sup>

Gülen cites the Qur’an. He indicates that The Qur’an strongly urges forgiveness and tolerance. Gülen encourages others to “behave tolerantly, overlook, and forgive (other’s faults)... (64:14)”<sup>13</sup> Gülen further cites the following verses from the Qur’an as example of the presence of tolerance and dialogue in Islam:

In addition to being commanded to take tolerance and dialogue as his basis while performing his duties, the Prophet was directed to which points he could hold in common with the People of the Book (Jews and Christians): “Say: ‘O People of the Book! Come to common terms as between us and you: that we worship none but God; that we associate no partners with Him; that we take not some from among ourselves for Lords other than God’ (3:64).” In another verse, those whose hearts are exuberant with belief and love are commanded to behave with forgiveness and tolerance,

even to those who do not believe in the afterlife: "Tell those who believe to forgive those who do not look forward to the Days of God: It is for Him to recompense (for good or ill) each people according to what they have earned (45:14)."<sup>14</sup>

Furthermore, Gülen notes that even during challenging times, tolerance must always be advocated: "According to Islam, tolerance is essential in every area of life. Even during warfare, the Qur'an exhorts the Muslims to stop fighting and make peace if the other side offers peace."<sup>15</sup> Gülen continues, "everything should be evaluated on the basis of right and truth. From the very beginning of Islam, the believers endured all hardships and tried to maintain their relations with others within the framework of tolerance and dialogue."<sup>16</sup>

## **Tolerance, Dialogue and Coexistence**

Gülen dedicates much of his writings on tolerance and dialogue to citing their precedence in Islam and history. By showing his audience the tradition of tolerance and dialogue in Islam, Gülen effectively discredits misrepresentations of Islam as a "violent" religion. Non-Muslims may be ignorant of the presence of these moral values in Islam, especially when they are confronted with media depictions of terrorist attacks. It is important to note, however, that ignorance of the peaceful values of Islam may run both ways. Non-Muslims may fall victim to misinformation and misrepresentation of Muslims and the religion of Islam, but uneducated Muslims, too, may be ignorant of the Islamic commands for practicing tolerance and dialogue.

Gülen's appeal to the Muslim community to "melt even the hardest meteors cast at him/her" suggests that there is nothing that Muslims cannot find within their hearts to forgive. This appeal is akin to Jesus' command for his followers to "turn the other cheek" and indeed, Gülen himself compliments this behavior.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, Gülen entreats the Muslim community not to respond to attacks with violence, anger, or hatred but rather with "love, affection and dialogue." The ability to tolerate the most difficult attacks is like "melt[ing]...the hardest meteor" and the capacity to love and promote dialogue is like "radiat[ing]...light." And the power source for these actions is faith in God.

Gülen criticizes those who misrepresent Islam in their advocacy of intolerance or violence. Gülen states that they are not understanding Islam and misinterpreting its teachings by focusing only on some parts of it. For example, of Bin Laden and Al-Qaeda, he states:

Taking the Prophet's actions as essentials, it is understood that Bin Laden cannot cast a comprehensive look onto the matter. He is taking as reference only some sections; he does not explore in general terms the Qur'an, the Sunnah, and the understanding of the salaf-i salihin (prominent guides among the Companions and their followers)... Similarly, the section in the Qur'an that states, "kill polytheists wherever you see them" is taken literally and out of context (by Osama and others like him) without looking at what precedes or what follows this verse. Such an understanding brings about misinterpretations. This verse means "to punish those who have accepted you and become part of you, and who have then rebelled and betrayed the nation in hostility." Every State protects itself from such treachery, and punishes the traitors. This verse is followed by, "if they return, say their daily prayers, fast during Ramadan, and find their original paths, release them." The interpretations of Bin Laden and others like him come out if the arguments are based upon one single word that is taken out of context.<sup>18</sup>

## **Tolerance, Democracy and Education**

The conducting of dialogue is essentially an activity to educate. Dialogue implies that the people involved have a voice, an opportunity to speak their opinions and points of view. Gülen states: "The person we are speaking to should certainly be given a chance to speak and when speaking be listened to with proper attention. The other's ideas should be respected and tolerated."<sup>19</sup> Therefore, true dialogue should be a democratic and educational activity. For example, Gülen states:

Debate should not be for the sake of your ego, but to enable the truth to appear. When we look at political debates in which the only thought is to beat the other person, there can be no positive result. For the truth to emerge in a debate of ideas, such principles as mutual understanding, respect, and dedication to justice cannot be neglected. As a Qur'anic rule, this can only take place in a good environment for dialogue.<sup>20</sup>

It is no wonder then that Gülen speaks so fervently of the importance of dialogue for building democracy. On the relationship between respecting others' opinions and maintaining democracy, Gülen states: "Democracy is a system of freedoms. However, because we have to live together with our different positions and views, our freedom is limited where that of another begins."<sup>21</sup> Gülen focuses much attention on the role of education in the promotion of dialogue, because of the belief that "true human progress and evolution in relation to our essential being is possible only through education."<sup>22</sup> An inability to cultivate dialogue is almost



always a result of ignorance. Responsibility for such ignorance lies squarely on the individual refusing to learn, as “the solution of every problem in this life ultimately depends on the individual.” However, “education is the most effective vehicle” to combat ignorance “regardless of whether we have a paralyzed social and political system or we have one that operates like clockwork.”<sup>23</sup> With proper education, dialogue will follow, resulting in a better chance in achieving a social system that “operates like clockwork.”

In encouraging his audience to strive for peaceful coexistence, Gülen discusses the importance of practicing tolerance for building democracy. Gülen's discussion of the relationship between tolerance and democracy coincides with his appeal to his audience to support positive models of education for spreading the universal values of tolerance and dialogue around the world.

Gülen remarks that tolerance is an extension of a true social democracy, and that the best way to promote the concept of tolerance is through centers of education. Of tolerance and democracy, Gülen states: “since tolerance is a broad dimension of democracy, in regard to democratic rights and freedoms, everyone should be evaluated in the same scale and everyone should have a share of tolerance.”<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, Gülen states: “[I]n a place where there is no tolerance, it is not possible to talk about a healthy media, scholarly thought, or pertinent cultural activities either.”<sup>25</sup> Gülen states: “We believe that forgiveness and tolerance will heal most of our wounds, if only this celestial instrument will be in the hands of those who understand its language.”<sup>26</sup> And for Gülen, the language of tolerance is best taught through centers of education: “[S]ociologists, journalists, artists, statesmen, politicians and soldiers—who have examined the activities of education...have emphasized that these activities will make an important contribution to regional and world peace.”<sup>27</sup>

## Conclusion

The concepts of dialogue and tolerance are two important universal values Gülen emphasizes. In his writings, he emphasizes the importance of these concepts for establishing peace in the contemporary world. Gülen sees tolerance and dialogue as methods by which ignorance and misunderstanding among people of different cultures and religious faiths may be erased. For Gülen, tolerance and dialogue are the necessary elements for coexistence and ultimately, peace, among the world's civilizations. Gülen defines tolerance as the acceptance of other people for who they are and the ability to coexist with them. As such, Gülen believes

that forgiveness is the primary moral trait that is intrinsic to tolerance; without the ability to forgive, tolerance cannot fully blossom within a person's soul. Gülen defines dialogue as an inherently social activity between at least two people. In his discussion, Gülen cites the Qur'an and Sunnah to show his audience that the practice of tolerance and dialogue has precedence in Islam. By revealing the presence of tolerance and dialogue in Islam, Gülen succeeds in debunking misrepresentations of the Islam and encourages Muslims and non-Muslims alike to build tolerance and dialogue among different communities. Likewise, by showing the precedence of tolerance and dialogue in Ottoman history, Gülen shows that it is possible for civilizations to coexist harmoniously around the world. Gülen discusses the importance of tolerance and dialogue for healthy democracies, and he suggests education to be one method for spreading these moral traits. Ultimately, Gülen envisions a world of peaceful coexistence, which he firmly believes may be brought about by the faithful practice of tolerance and dialogue.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Gülen, M. Fethullah. (2004a). *Love and the essence of being human*. Istanbul: Da Publication. p 38

<sup>2</sup> Gülen, 2004a. p 70

<sup>3</sup> Gülen, 2004a. p 50

<sup>4</sup> Gülen, M. Fethullah. (2004b). *Toward A Global Civilization of Love and Tolerance*. New Jersey: The Light, Inc. p 45

<sup>5</sup> Gülen, 2004b. p 35

<sup>6</sup> Gülen, 2004a. p 42

<sup>7</sup> Gülen, 2004a. p 43

<sup>8</sup> Gülen, 2004b. p 33

<sup>9</sup> Gülen, 2004b. p 61-2

<sup>10</sup> Gülen, 2004b. p 171

<sup>11</sup> Gülen, M. Fethullah. (2002). *Essays Perspectives Opinions*, Rutherford: Fountain. P 96

<sup>12</sup> Gülen, 2004a. p 64

<sup>13</sup> Gülen, 2004a. p 30

<sup>14</sup> Gülen, 2004a. p 62

<sup>15</sup> Gülen, 2004a. p 43

<sup>16</sup> Gülen, 2004a. p 45

<sup>17</sup> Gülen, 2004a. p 43

<sup>18</sup> Gundem, Mehmet. (January 18, 2005). Osama Bin Laden's terror on the one side, with Gülen's love, dialogue, and understanding on the other? *Milliyet*, n.v. Retrieved August 18, 2005 from

[http://en.fGülen.com/a.page/press/interview/mehmet\\_gundem\\_milliyet/a1921.html](http://en.fGülen.com/a.page/press/interview/mehmet_gundem_milliyet/a1921.html).

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<sup>19</sup> Gülen, M. Fethullah. (1993). *Questions and answers about faith*. Fairfax: The Fountain. p 19

<sup>20</sup> Unal, Ali and Alphonse Williams (2000), *Advocate of Dialogue: Fethullah Gülen*. Fairfax, Virginia: *The Fountain*. p 259

<sup>21</sup> Unal, 2000, p 151

<sup>22</sup> Gülen, 2004b. p 194

<sup>23</sup> Gülen, 2004b. p 199

<sup>24</sup> Gülen, 2004a. p 42

<sup>25</sup> Gülen, 2004a. p 35-6

<sup>26</sup> Gülen, 2004b. p 29

<sup>27</sup> Gülen, 2004a. p 100



# CHAPTER TWO

## INTERFAITH DIALOGUE FOR MUSLIMS AND CATHOLIC CHRISTIANS

YETKIN YILDIRIM  
AND VIRGINIA BURNETT

### **Introduction**

Interfaith dialogue is the key that opens the door to peaceful coexistence. It is a sensitive process that requires understanding and a deep analysis of the backgrounds of the participants. In order for dialogue to be successful on all sides, their conditions, previous commitments, and flexibilities should be identified and included in the calculations for a peaceful solution. This can be obtained in a healthy way through the respected representatives of the traditions willingness to participate in the dialogue. This paper attempts to highlight some critical concepts of interfaith dialogue through the teachings of two respected scholars of their own traditions: Fethullah Gülen and Cardinal Arinze.

Today, through developments in communication, people from many different religious traditions interact much more frequently than they did in the past. As modernization has spurred conversion, secularism, and the end of many religious monopolies, religious pluralism—an extension of globalization—has become the norm. With the rise of “religious” extremism in the early twenty-first century, the search for ways to live peacefully with people from different religions has become an ever-greater priority.

Many Islamic-based interfaith dialogue organizations are largely inspired by the writings of the eminent Turkish scholar Fethullah Gülen.<sup>1</sup> Gülen’s emphasis on interfaith dialogue has garnered a worldwide audience, including individuals of eclectic religious and cultural backgrounds. The Gülen movement has spread rapidly throughout the world in the form of schools, cultural and media activities, and dialogue

projects. In his writings, Gülen focuses on common values among religions, specifically, dialogue and tolerance.

As with Islam, there is no single person or entity that speaks for all Christians, but within the Roman Catholic tradition, a great advocate of interreligious dialogue has been Cardinal Francis Arinze, who served under Pope John Paul II. Born in Nigeria, Francis Arinze was made cardinal in 1985. In 1984, he became president of the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Interreligious dialogue, where he served until 2002. In that position, Cardinal Arinze traveled the globe pursuing greater interfaith understanding and appreciation between the Catholic Church and other religions.

This chapter begins with a look at the Gülen movement and the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue. We explore Gülen and Arinze's definitions of dialogue, followed by an analysis of the *Nostra Aetate* from the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). We next examine the motivations behind and the benefits from dialogues, with a focus on pluralism and the idea of a global village for Arinze and globalization for Gülen. Next, we break down the authors' writings about how to carry out a productive interfaith dialogue. Cardinal Arinze lists the four kinds of dialogue: 1) dialogue of life, 2) of action and collaboration, 3) of experts (theological dialogue), and 4) dialogue on the spiritual life. Gülen focuses on universal values, which he believes are embodied in all major world religions. He specifies the pillars of dialogue as love, respect, tolerance and forgiveness.<sup>2</sup> Much of Gülen's writings focus on the need for building tolerance and dialogue; he indicates that tolerance and dialogue are crucial for building bridges of understanding and appreciation among diverse cultures and religious faiths. Both scholars teach how to handle similarities and differences between cultures and emphasize the importance of respect within dialogue. Lastly, this chapter then deals with the challenges to interfaith dialogue, which include a lack of knowledge about one's own religion, increased secularization, religious extremists, and the fact that, for religious people of any faith, their faith itself is not negotiable.

In a world where religious extremism appears almost daily in the headlines, the search for ways to live peacefully with people from different religions is attracting much attention among more moderate but devout people of many different faiths. In Gülen's view, ignorance and the resulting negative stereotypes are the primary sources of the current conflict between Muslims and other civilizations. Ignorance and misconception can be solved through tolerance and dialogue: tolerance

opens the doors to dialogue, and dialogue helps people to learn about each other.

Historically speaking, the Catholic Church has not been open to ecumenical or interreligious dialogue, but this changed, as did so many aspects of Catholic teaching, with the Second Vatican Council and the Vatican's new challenge to "open the Church to the world." In the late 1960s, Pope Paul VI established the Secretariat for Non-Christians, now called the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, an office that would be supported and expanded by his eventual successor, Pope John Paul II.<sup>3</sup> In 1984, John Paul II chose Francis Arinze, a Nigerian archbishop who became a cardinal in 1985, to be president of the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, where he served until 2002. In the Council, Cardinal Arinze traveled the globe pursuing greater interfaith understanding and engendering mutual appreciation between the Catholic Church and other religions, particularly Judaism and Islam.<sup>4</sup> Under the leadership of Pope John Paul II, it seemed as though some progress was being made toward the goal of creating positive dialogue between Christians and Muslims. John Paul II was the first Pope to enter a mosque and refer to Christians, Jews, and Muslims as the three "sons of Abraham." He vigorously supported dialogue in spite of his near-fatal shooting by the terrorist Mehmet Ali Ağca in 1981 and an attempt on his life by an al-Qaeda-affiliated suicide bomber in the Philippines in 1995. Pope John Paul refused to blame Islam or its followers for these crimes. To the end of his life, he ardently opposed the notion that the religion of the Prophet itself was "at the root of Islamic terrorism."<sup>5</sup>

Things changed in April 2005, when the newly elected Pope Benedict XVI was installed as Pope after John Paul II's death. The former Josef Ratzinger, who had for many years headed the Congregation on the Doctrine of the Faith (formerly known as the Office of the Holy Inquisition), took a more neutral view of interreligious dialogue than did his predecessor and generally took a more conservative approach to the relationship between religion and culture. On March 11, 2006, Pope Benedict sparked controversy when he united the Pontifical Council for Interreligious dialogue with the Pontifical Council for Culture. Many felt that this unification represented a negative change in focus, from a prior emphasis on "the faith and practice of the Catholic Church's dialogue partners" to a new focus on the church's "contributions to local culture and on fostering joint culture projects."<sup>6</sup> A few months later, at a lecture in Regensburg, Germany, on September 11, 2006, Pope Benedict offended many Muslims worldwide by quoting Byzantine Emperor Manuel II Paleologos, alluding to the spread of Islam by the sword and reawakening

stereotypes of Islam as uniquely violent. Controversy developed once again. The Pope's relations with Muslims soured, and did so at a critical juncture, when the wars stemming from the September 11 attacks and the popular notion of an "inevitable clash of civilizations" between the Western and Islamic worlds were reaching a fever pitch.<sup>7</sup>

Pope Benedict, however, was responsive to the outrage caused by the Regensburg remarks, and eventually made efforts to mend fences with the Muslim world, in part through emphasizing inter-religious dialogue. On September 1, 2007, the Pope Benedict XVI named Cardinal Jean-Louis Pierre Tauran president of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious dialogue. That same day, the Pope re-instituted the Pontifical Council for Interreligious dialogue, which thereby "regain[ed] its original status as a separate Vatican office, thereby restoring its high profile and status."<sup>8</sup> Cardinal Tauran replaced Cardinal Paul Poupard, who was previously the President of the Pontifical Council for Culture and was also made leader of the PCID directly after both groups were integrated. These changes have helped repair the Pope's damaged relations with the Muslim community. The new appointment of Cardinal Tauran reflects Pope Benedict's willingness to promote interfaith dialogue with Muslims and members of other religious groups. Cardinal Tauran is knowledgeable in Middle East affairs and is respected for his former title as the Secretary for Relations with States.<sup>9</sup> While Cardinal Tauran's efforts show great promise, we will for the purposes of this chapter limit our discussion to the work of his predecessor, Cardinal Arinze, whose well-established corpus of writing on tolerance and dialogue closely parallel those of the Turkish scholar Gülen.

## **Definition of dialogue**

Gülen asserts that dialogue is the social extension of tolerance; it is an interactive, outwardly social activity. Gülen defines dialogue as two or more people coming together to talk and meet on certain subjects and, by means of this, to draw closer to one another. In this respect, we can say that dialogue is an activity with a direct 'human' axis;<sup>10</sup> dialogue is a tool for people to become more familiar with each other and to learn from one another, thus preventing misconceptions and stereotyping of one group by another.<sup>11</sup> Gülen defines tolerance thus: "Tolerance does not mean being influenced by others and joining them; it means accepting others as they are and knowing how to get along with them."<sup>12</sup> He sees tolerance as a method to achieve peaceful coexistence among differing groups. Tolerance is being able to live with others while maintaining one's own identity.



It is important to note that for Gülen, tolerance and dialogue are two sides of the same coin and should be practiced simultaneously. In other words, according to Gülen, healthy dialogue between people is itself impossible without a foundation of tolerance. Tolerance for others' opinions or ways of life opens the door to true dialogue and the opportunity for greater understanding. Gülen believes strongly that peace in the world can be achieved through the simultaneous practice of tolerance and dialogue among civilizations; tolerance can prevent conflicts and lead to dialogue, and dialogue can provide a means for building understanding and finding solutions to social strife.

In many respects, Cardinal Arinze's beliefs on dialogue echo those of Gülen. Where Gülen says that tolerance will allow for dialogue to occur, Cardinal Arinze asserts that interreligious dialogue tends to "[begin] when people of different religious convictions meet one another."<sup>13</sup> Cardinal Arinze believes that dialogue should be more "a meeting of 'hearts'" than of minds.<sup>14</sup> He states that dialogue is mostly about "approaching the other with a sympathetic attitude" and "listening and trying to understand."<sup>15</sup> Cardinal Arinze breaks down interreligious dialogue into four methods, which will be discussed below. He believes that "interreligious relations" may be a more accurate term to describe these interactions.<sup>16</sup>

In Arinze's teachings, interfaith dialogue finds its bases in *Nostra Aetate*. Declared on October 28, 1965, at the Second Vatican Council, *Nostra Aetate* is the "Declaration on the Relation of the Catholic Church to non-Christian Religions." It opens:

In our time, when day by day mankind is being drawn closer together, and the ties between different peoples are becoming stronger, the Church examines more closely the relationship to non-Christian religions. In her task of promoting unity and love among men, indeed among nations, she considers above all in this declaration what men have in common and what draws them to fellowship.<sup>17</sup>

In *Nostra Aetate*, the Catholic Church focuses on the common ground among different religions as the source and foundation of interfaith dialogue. *Nostra Aetate* cites the Bible to show the precedence of commonalities among religions:

One is the community of all peoples, one their origin, for God made the whole human race to live over the face of the earth (*Acts* 17:26). One also is their final goal, God. His providence, His manifestations of goodness, His saving design extend to all men (*Wis.* 8:1; *Acts* 14:17; *Rom.* 2:6-7; 1 *Tim.* 2:4), until that time when the elect will be united in the Holy City, the

city ablaze with the glory of God, where the nations will walk in His light (*Apoc.* 21:23f.).

*Nostra Aetate* highlights the questions which are common to all individuals as well as all of the world's major religions in the struggle to find meaning in human existence:

Men expect from the various religions answers to the unsolved riddles of the human condition, which today, even as in former times, deeply stir the hearts of men: What is man? What is the meaning, the aim of our life? What is moral good, what is sin? Whence suffering and what purpose does it serve? Which is the road to true happiness? What are death, judgment and retribution after death? What, finally, is that ultimate inexpressible mystery which encompasses our existence: whence do we come, and where are we going?

*Nostra Aetate* accepts the existence of truth and holiness in other religions:

Likewise, other religions found everywhere try to counter the restlessness of the human heart, each in its own manner, by proposing "ways," comprising teachings, rules of life, and sacred rites. The Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions.

*Nostra Aetate* notes important similarities between Islam the Catholic faith. The common ground includes the following: submission and belief in one God; regarding the Prophet Abraham<sup>18</sup> as a common ancestor; admiration of Jesus and the Virgin Mary; belief in the Day of Judgment; existence of common moral values, and the importance of worship in the form of prayer; almsgiving and fasting. As *Nostra Aetate* points out, since Islam, Judaism, and Christianity share a common background, there are many common points upon which to form a dialogue.

The question of universalism, of the notion that God recognizes many paths to Him, is a modern conundrum that Christians and Muslims alike struggle with. In his 2004 book, *Building Bridges*, the cardinal speaks to this directly. Quoting *Nostra Aetate* directly, Arinze writes: (11): *Men look to their different religions for an answer to the unsolved riddles of human existence...throughout history even to the present day, there is found among different peoples a certain awareness of a hidden power, which lies behind the course of nature and the events of human life....The Catholic Church rejects nothing of what is true and holy in these religions. She has high regard for the manner of life and conduct, the precepts and doctrines which, although differing in many ways from her own teachings, nevertheless often reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens all men."*

While no Universalist himself, Cardinal Arinze underscores the role of the Church in relating to believers of other faiths: “The Catholic Church has developed a clearly formulated theology that provides motivation for dialogue with adherents of other religions.”<sup>19</sup> In this assertion, Arinze advanced the Second Vatican Council’s invitation to all Christians, to work together with all men and women in establishing a “peace based on justice and love and in setting up agencies for peace.”<sup>20</sup> The Church thus calls upon Catholics to use dialogue with members of other religious groups, in order to promote “spiritual and moral values”; it also asks them to work alongside other “peacemakers” in the establishment of peace.<sup>21</sup>

### **Motivations behind dialogue**

Gülen believes that globalization is an important motivating factor behind the need for dialogue. He argues that the myriad problems facing the world today have made “many other concerns...come to the fore: peace, contentment, ecology, justice, tolerance, and dialogue.”<sup>22</sup> Gülen indicates that people are not addressing these problems the way that they should:

At the root of the problem is the materialist world view, which severely limits religion’s influence in contemporary social life. The result of such a situation is the current disturbed balance between humanity and nature and within individual men and women. Only a few people seem to realize that social harmony and peace with nature, between people, and within the individual only can come about when the material and spiritual realms are reconciled. Peace with nature, peace and justice in society, and personal integrity are possible when one is at peace with Heaven.<sup>23</sup>

It is easier to make this peace across societies when there is productive dialogue. Gülen also asserts the need for balance in all areas of life. Though he believes that religion is directly linked to achieving this balance, the various groups in the religious sector must first be at peace with each other before achieving any other form of tranquility. Dialogue serves as a vehicle leading to this much sought-after peace.

Cardinal Arinze’s ideas about interreligious dialogue are largely driven by the prominence of religious pluralism and the need to reconcile religious differences in today’s global village. As Cardinal Arinze’s interviewer, Donald W. Mitchell, puts it:

Given the political, economic, social and ethnic tensions in the world today, and given that religions find themselves caught up in these tensions,

and even used at times to promote these tensions, there is need for interreligious dialogue on a global scale, and this need has never been more compelling.<sup>24</sup>

Cardinal Arinze reveals that the differences among religious groups can foster global instability, including many present-day wars, which makes the need for interreligious dialogue all the more urgent. Cardinal Arinze explains that peace is not something that is arrived at once and for all, but it is something that must constantly be built up. He says that the establishment and survival of peace requires “a firm determination to respect other people and their dignity, as well as the constant practice of fraternity and solidarity.”<sup>25</sup> The application of Cardinal Arinze’s teachings on interreligious dialogue is key to resolving many of the world’s existing problems, for interreligious dialogue can lead to greater understanding, fostering the development of fraternity between different religious groups.

Another inspiration for Cardinal Arinze in promoting interfaith dialogue is the deep enrichment this brings to his own faith. He feels that dialogue can lead to reflection on one’s individual faith and that one’s faith can be strengthened if the other dialogue participant has a deeper or stronger faith. Cardinal Arinze asserts that “dialogue should lead not to a kind of new teaching, but to mutual enrichment,” as both participants in the dialogue reexamine their identities. Another benefit of interfaith dialogue is that “[it] helps us realize in a positive way how the Holy Spirit can also be active in other cultures, religions, and peoples.”<sup>26</sup> Using the Holy Spirit as a symbol for truth and holiness, Cardinal Arinze is elaborating on the idea presented in the *Nostra Aetate*, which explains how these principles can be found in other religions.

## **Methods for Interfaith dialogue**

Following examples from Islamic teachings and history, Gülen endeavors to promote dialogue and tolerance of all people, Muslim and non-Muslim alike. Gülen is very adamant on this practice. Not only does he appeal for tolerance and dialogue with other “People of the Book – Jews and Christians – but he also proposes sympathy for and discourse with all people of the world, whether they be monotheistic, polytheistic, or atheistic.”<sup>27</sup> For Gülen, a believer must practice tolerance and dialogue with all other people, not because they are Jews or Christians, but because they are human beings, writing that “showing compassion to all living things is a requirement of being human.”<sup>28</sup> He implores the believer to

be as vast as the oceans and take every soul to your bosom! Let faith keep you alert, cherish a never-ending affection for humanity, and leave no broken heart forgotten or ignored! Applaud the good for their goodness, appreciate those who have believing hearts, and be kind to them. Approach unbelievers so gently that their envy and hatred melt away. Like a Messiah, revive people with your breath.<sup>29</sup>

Gülen believes that Muslims can follow the teachings of Islam when practicing interfaith dialogue, specifically through the Islamic principle of “reflecting God’s Mercy onto themselves.” Gülen also urges non-Muslims to move beyond their prejudice, distrust, and misinformation in order to arrive at a “proper” understanding of Islam. Gülen engages non-Muslims in a discussion of dialogue by expressing the values shared by Islam and many religions, encouraging them to practice tolerance and dialogue in an effort to coexist with all civilizations of the modern world. He writes, “we should ignore others’ faults, respect different ideas, and forgive what is forgivable. We should do this to touch hearts and benefit from contradictory ideas that force us to keep our heart, spirit, and consciences in good shape.”<sup>30</sup> Gülen envisions world peace brought about by the global practice of tolerance and dialogue.

One of the ways that Gülen attempts to maintain peace among various religious groups is by taking an active approach in organizing interfaith events involving individuals of differing beliefs. Gülen holds the title of Honorary Chairman of the Journalists and Writers Foundation, a group which organizes intellectual and cultural events focusing on interfaith dialogue. The Journalists and Writers Foundation has served as a role model for many interfaith organizations. Instead of representing a particular group, the Journalist and Writers Foundation serves as a voice for many different individuals, while it addresses issues that are relevant to all human beings who wish to establish universal peace. Some important principle matters that the foundation focuses on are illiteracy, ignorance, violence, terrorism, prejudice, lack of education, hatred, and hostility. “It is decisive to drain every swamp that infects humanity and to fight against [these evils].”<sup>31</sup>

The Journalist and Writers Foundation has even established the Intercultural Dialogue Platform, which was formed as a meeting ground on which to discuss possible “solutions for old problems facing humanity in the cultural hoop consisting of Islam, Christianity, and Judaism.”<sup>32</sup> At the group’s gatherings, anyone from clergymen to scientists can be seen. A wide variety of topics are discussed at these meetings, ranging from world-wide child poverty, to the possibility of achieving a universal morality. As they claim, “the efforts [of this platform] stem from [their] values.”<sup>33</sup> The

members of this group hold the belief that the problems faced by humankind today are not simply linked to economic and material dilemmas, but rather, the problem is one that stems from simply from the human condition. They believe that “if the architects of our time are planning to build a new world, it has to be based on love. An individual of love starts the efforts of rehabilitation within himself.”<sup>34</sup> The foundation promotes this idea in their actions by ensuring that individuals can gather together to peacefully discuss matters that extend beyond themselves and into the larger world.

Interfaith “breaking of the fast dinners” put on by the foundation for community members including the Greek Orthodox, Syrians, Armenians, Catholic Christians and Jews provide an ideal environment for this type of progressive discussion.<sup>35</sup> One of the first of these dinners put on by the Journalists and Writers Foundation was a 1995 Ramadan dinner. In the brief speech he gave at the Ramadan dinner in 1995, Gülen began by explaining that the idea for this dinner was rooted in respect for all the people in the community. He declared, “we must temporarily forget some focal points of controversy between Christian spiritual leaders and us and seek dialogue with them...noble and enlightened spirits believe they will realize their goals by thinking and talking.”<sup>36</sup> Though it was a surprise to some extremists that he was involved in organizing the 1995 Ramadan dinner, Gülen’s response was simple and non-combative: “By making every social event a subject for fighting and polarization, we can never protect our peace and unity.”<sup>37</sup> It is apparent that Gülen is striving to bring to light how struggles within religious and political groups can create greater tension outside of those groups and throughout the rest of the world. It is only by focusing on the common ground between different groups that peace can be achieved.

In 1999, the Journalists and Writers Foundation began holding a weekly dialogue platform every Tuesday at the Foundation Center in Istanbul. The individuals who attended this platform represented a variety of groups; “experts on subjects ranging from the press to the economy, from politics to the arts, from diplomacy to defense and from history to law spoke freely at [the] Foundation before a distinguished audience in a warm atmosphere.”<sup>38</sup> Here, enlightened individuals from “every view in Turkey’s heritage” were able to openly discuss solutions and recommendations to the country’s problems.<sup>39</sup>

During a seminar sponsored by the Foundation, entitled “Call to a New Vision of Others and Ourselves Through Inter-religious dialogue: Focused on Islam,” Cemal Usak, Secretary General for Intercultural Dialogue Platform and Vice Chairman of the Journalists and Writers Foundation,