

A Word Between Us

Ethics in Interfaith Dialogue

Johnston McMaster

Centre for
Hizmet
Studies



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Introduction

It is almost a truism now to say that what the world needs is not a clash of civilizations but a dialogue of civilizations. It is through dialogue, not confrontation, still less violent confrontation that a more just and peaceful world can be built. Before 1974 most conflicts were ended by victory of one side over the other. Victory and military defeat are not the way to lasting peace, and, strictly speaking, are not even peace. Since 1974 conflicts have been ended through negotiation. We seem to be learning that talk–talk and dialogue are a much better way to peace and its sustainability. What needs a great deal of sustained will and effort is talk–talk and dialogue that prevents the conflict and violence in the first place, what is being called today, just peace or preemptive peace. The future of the planet depends on dialogue.

It also depends on education. Education liberates from ignorance and its offspring — fear, prejudice, bigotry, hatred, stereotyping and dehumanizing violence. Education which engages the mind and the heart, the intellect and the affect — the thinking intelligence and the spiritual intelligence — can liberate and shape a generation of peace builders and active citizens. Education is preparation for the future and the future of the planet depends on education.

Someone who embodies this in his life's work, worldview, faith and values is Fethullah Gülen. He is 'one of the most influential and impressive Muslim Turkish scholars of the last decades of the twentieth century'.¹ Gülen is a Turkish public intellectual, philosopher, theologian, educationalist and someone who draws on the Sufi tradition within Islam. He was born in 1941 in the Turkish city of Erzurum and from birth was immersed in a religious environment. Early on he learned the Qur'an and his religious and spiritual training owed much to his home. As a young man he was influenced by the thinking of Said Nursi, an earlier Turkish Muslim leader and intellectual. His education grounded him in science, philosophy, literature and history. He first became an Imam in Edirne when he was twenty years old, a post that took him to this city on the border of the Balkans. In 1966 he was appointed teacher of the Qur'an in Izmir, Turkey's third city. By 1970 he had a considerable reputation as a preacher and scholar.

Turkey experienced a military coup in 1971 and Gülen was imprisoned, having been 'arrested unjustly under suspicion of trying to undermine the social, political and economic foundations of the secularist regime in Turkey'.² After six months he was released and continued to preach in different Turkish cities. For some time

he was under military surveillance. Returning to his duties in 1981 he continued to preach sermons until the early 1990s. In 1998 Gülen visited Pope John Paul II in Rome, and a year later in ill health he went to the United States for medical treatment, where he remains to the present.

Fethullah Gülen has published many books and books are now being written about him and the Movement that he inspired. His thought has drawn the attention of a number of scholars.

Dialogue and education are core to Gülen's philosophy and practice. He has been described as a person of 'enthusiastic love and deep spirituality... a symbol of patience' and 'of education'. 'Discernment' and 'wisdom' are also words used of him.³ At the heart of his spirituality is compassion. He writes, 'Compassion is the beginning of being; without it everything is chaos'.⁴

The Movement which he has inspired is founded on the dynamic concept of Hizmet, service to others, the community and one's religious and spiritual tradition without looking for anything in return. It is altruistic or selfless, disinterested service to others. Not surprisingly he has been recognized as one of the leading public intellectuals in the world and the Hizmet Movement is itself global.

A telephone call from some of the Turkish community in Northern Ireland was my first introduction to the thought of Fethullah Gülen. A meeting was requested to explore collaboration in dialogue. My new Turkish friends were from the newly formed Northern Ireland Dialogue Society. Our dialogue continued, friendships developed and programs of dialogue emerged. These included dinners and dialogue breakfasts. Two of Gülen's books came into my possession and in a spirit of dialogue I began to read and discuss, allowing my Christian perspective and Gülen's Muslim perspective to interact. I was not new to interfaith dialogue having designed and organized some community education courses, but this was on another level. Through the various events, dinners, breakfasts and courses, mainly in Belfast, faith has been enriched, friendships have been deepened, and doing theology has moved into a new key as international encounters and visits have become part of the faith dialogical journey.

I received invitations to participate and present papers at conferences about the Hizmet movement in such places as Baton Rouge, Louisiana, New York, Abuja, Nigeria, Istanbul, Turkey and Lahore, Pakistan. In the papers I presented, whatever the theme, I was already developing a pattern of bringing Gülen's thought on a particular theme into dialogue with Jewish and Christian traditions. An Abrahamic dialogue was forming in print. I developed this theme into a proposal including case studies on Hizmet Movement schools. This meant research visits to Urfa, Turkey,

Lahore, Pakistan and Bangkok, Thailand, where lively students were engaged in dialogue around their educational experience. The result is this publication.

Key partners in this on-going dialogue have been Ali Çupur and Uğur Tok. I am grateful for their friendship and encouragement. My thanks also to Maureen Hetherington, the Director of The Junction, a community relations project in Derry/Londonderry, with whom I work on an Ethical and Shared Remembering Project, 1912–1922, events of change and violence that shaped Ireland for the rest of the twentieth century, and to Richie Hetherington, also of the Junction, who has word-processed this manuscript and together with Maureen has prepared it for publication, I am grateful for their patience and hard work.

I have written this book from the perspective of an Irish Christian. This has meant bringing my cultural experience and Christian presuppositions to my interpretation of Gülen's thought, and to the Jewish thought I have introduced to this dialogue. This is inevitable as all writing is filtered through a lens. I hope I have been fair and balanced in my reflections on Gülen's thought and that my interpretations are recognizable by his friends and supporters. Though this book is focused on dialogue between the Abrahamic faiths, there is also the awareness that Gülen's approach to dialogue is more inclusive than dialogue between the People of the Book. Hopefully the book will stimulate thought and action and will provide something of an Abrahamic ethic for our lives together in the twenty-first century.

The Challenge of Hermeneutics

The Qur'an makes a number of references to the 'People of the Book'. These are understood as Jews, Christians and Muslims, the people who make up the Abrahamic faiths. Tracing their roots to Abraham, the faiths share a common ancestor, a common story of origin and in turn have become the People of the Book. Whatever exactly this means, it at least suggests that all three faiths place great emphasis on sacred writings, a text, a written word that in some sense for them is the Word of God. At one level there are three books, each distinctive in relation to a particular faith, and yet sharing many similarities.

The Qur'an contains many references to stories found in the Jewish Torah as well as the Christian New Testament. Many of the characters familiar to readers of the Judeo-Christian texts appear in the Muslim scripture, beginning with Adam.¹

Judaism, Christianity and Islam draw on similar stories and prophetic characters and it can be said that each other's texts are reader friendly. They are not antagonistic to each other and there are no great clashes of civilizations between the texts. Though each speaking with a different accent, there are resonances, common echoes, similar themes and a shared God of all life. In a world where some of the media seem bent on turning the clash of civilizations into a self-fulfilling prophecy, the People of the Book have a major and significant shared heritage.

Though there are many resonances, common echoes, similar themes and a shared God of all life, each tradition understands its sacred writing in a different way. This applies to the nature of the text, its history and the approach to interpretation. The latter is not only the most difficult but also the most crucial for each of the respective faiths, as well as in their relationships to each other. How each interprets its 'book' in the twenty-first century goes to the heart of self-understanding.

The Architecture of the Sacred Writings

Together the sacred writings may be referred to as the Torah, the Bible and the Qur'an. It may be more accurate to refer to the Jewish sacred writings as the TANAK, which is an acronym from the first three divisions of the Hebrew Bible, Torah (Law), Nevi'im (Prophets), and Ketuvim (Writings), and yet the Torah is the heart of the Hebrew Bible.

In relation to a history of Ancient Israel, more assumed than factually outlined in the Hebrew Bible, there are three identifiable periods:

- Pre-monarchial from ancient beginnings to the emergence of King David in 1000 BCE;
- Monarchial from the emergence of David to the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BCE;
- Post-monarchial after 587 BCE, covering the Babylonian exile and return and the formation of Jerusalem.

What we encounter in these three periods is less history and more the reflection of a people on life with God in various sociopolitical and economic contexts. We are not reading history in a modern sense, but collective memory filtered through a number of generations of interpretive process. The Hebrew Bible is the product of imaginative interpretation.

The three divisions of the TANAK are:

- Torah — five books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. They were completed in their present form by the fifth century BCE and they represent the highest textual authority in the Jewish tradition;
- Prophets — eight books of former prophets, Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings. The latter prophets are Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and twelve Minor prophets in one scroll. These were complete in present form by the second century BCE.
- Writings — a somewhat loose collection of eleven books. These are the poetic writings of Psalms, Job and Proverbs; five scrolls of Ruth, Esther, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations and the Song of Songs. Chronicles I and II, Ezra and Nehemiah form a revisionist history with a single apocalyptic type scroll of Daniel.

In the Jewish tradition the authority of each of these three divisions is not the same but reduces from the Torah downwards. It was not until the Common Era (CE) that the list of books considered authoritative was reached. Even then within

Judaism the traditioning or interpretive process was open-ended. The interpretive task within Judaism continues to the present day as imagination, faith and ethics are made contemporary for each succeeding generation. The Christian Testament itself is a very significant act of imaginative interpretation of the Hebrew Bible.

The Bible, as understood by Christians, consists of the Hebrew Bible and the Christian Testament. Again, there are roughly three divisions in the Christian Testament and their chronological order does not follow that of the books in the Christian Testament:

- Letters — written first by Paul and various other authors, not always known, and dealing with practical and often relational problems within early Christian communities;
- Gospels — four from among many more that were excluded by the fourth century CE; not biographies or lives of Jesus, but interpretations of Jesus by faith communities living in different sociopolitical, economic and imperial contexts;
- Apocalyptic — the Revelations, Book of an identical genre to Daniel and other inter-testamental writings produced in a time of crisis, often suffering and always in the shadow of empire, in Revelation's case, the Roman Empire.

The roots of all of these writings were Jewish, with all but one of the authors probably Jewish themselves. Again the Christian Testament is a huge act of imaginative interpretation or reinterpretation of the Hebrew Bible and cannot be understood apart from the Torah, Prophets and Writings. The early Christian movement was one of a member of Jewish reform movements in the first century CE. Later Christian interpretation of the Hebrew Bible, some of which may even be discovered in the Christian Testament itself, saw itself as superseding the Jewish tradition and developed a strong anti-Judaism, especially after Constantine Christianized the Empire in 313 CE. Supersessionism not only became anti-Jewish in religious terms but later developed into the more racial anti-Semitism with disastrous historical consequences. Yet the Christian Testament does not need to be read that way. The Hebrew Bible can be read as an act of faithful imagination and hopefulness in sophisticated, economic and imperial contexts, and the Christian Testament as an interpretation of it in a new sociopolitical, economic and Roman Empire dominated context. For Christians the Bible is both books and the latter cannot be understood or appreciated without the first.

Story and storytelling very much characterize the TANAK and the Christian Testament. The Qur'an is a rather different book, being less story and more exhortation, with frequent references to Hebrew prophets, including Jesus. The

Qur'an assumes that the names of the prophets are familiar.

The Qur'an consists of a revelation given to the prophet Muhammad which commenced when he was in retreat in a cave at Mecca in 610 CE. '*Read in the name of your Lord*', were the first words and the word 'Qur'an' itself lexically means 'reading'. It came to mean 'the text which is read' or 'the written book'. Unlike the Jewish and Christian traditions 'the significance of uttering and writing the revealed scripture is emphasized from the very beginning of Islam, and is locked in the very nouns that designate the Qur'an'.² The word of the Qur'an is understood as a revelation of God to the Prophet. The revelation was given over a period of time, piece by piece and addressed as an imperative, which places 'the authorship of the text outside Muhammad'.³ Over two hundred times the Qur'an describes itself as a book 'sent down' by God to the Prophet. The origin of the Qur'an is from God, and it is God who speaks, according to Muslim belief, in the Qur'an. The Prophet is the 'Messenger' and his task is to communicate the 'Message' to the community. It is not believed to be Muhammad's speech and a clear distinction is made between Qur'anic material and the Prophet's own sayings, known as the Hadith. The Qur'an is about the same length as the four Christian Gospels and in style is quite different from the Hebrew Bible and Christian Gospel. The latter two are heavily characterized by story, while the Qur'an is exhortation addressed by God to human beings. There are rules of conduct and belief that are believed to be the Divine will, and which, if followed, will lead to a better world. Underlying the text is the message of God, and in Islam there is a certainty that here is the Word of God. Not only is this a belief in Divine authorship, but that the text in Arabic that has come down from the seventh century CE through Muhammad is substantially unchanged.

Whilst each of the Abrahamic traditions sees its writings as sacred, inspiration and revelation are not understood in the same way. The literary genres differ, but so too does the understanding of the Word of God. The Word of God in the Qur'an begins as a written text and there is significance in each word. The word and the Word matter. The Jewish and Christian traditions began as oral tradition. Any sense of divine revelation or the Word of God is experienced in story or stories, and before there was a written word, there was an oral storytelling tradition. In whatever sense God reveals Godself, for Jews and Christians it is primarily through story, imagined orally and told from within an historical and social context. Central to the Jewish tradition and foundational also for Christians is the Exodus from Egypt. The story began in experience, the accurate historicity of which has long gone beyond knowing, and which was not even important for the oral storytellers. Oral story was shaped over centuries, not as history or as historically factual, but as a continuously told and heard piece of theological imagination and as a paradigm

of liberation from socio-political and economic injustice. The oral story was eventually written down and imaginatively retold in various forms in new contexts. It was retold as a model of hope towards the traumatic experience of Jewish exile in Babylon. When later people told the oral stories of Jesus and when the Jesus story or stories was written down, the Exodus paradigm became a prism or framework. It has been suggested that the last book in the Christian Testament, the Book of Revelation, is a re-dramatization of the Exodus story told now in a Roman imperial context rather than an Egyptian imperial context.

The revelation of God for Jews and Christians does not lie in an unchanging text or message, as it does for Muslims. Rather it lies in an imaginative story, told, retold and told again, orally and written in ever changing contexts. Jews, Christians and Muslims are People of the Book, but they understand their books or rather the nature of their books, differently. In interreligious dialogues these differences need to be understood. They are often not. It would be a misunderstanding to think that Muslims are word literalists. The message, it is believed, was given clearly to the Prophet, but language is too subtle and complex to allow for a flat literalism. It is likewise a misunderstanding of the Jewish and Christian traditions to think that the lack of agreement about the text is a weakness. There are multiple textual variants in the Hebrew Bible and the Christian Testament, but neither tradition holds that an unchanged, unchangeable text is necessary for authentic revelation. To be sure, there are Muslims who are literalists, as there are Jewish literalists. Those responsible for 9/11 thought the Qur'an had told them so, but such people were driven by anger and hate more than by a text. So too was the Norwegian Anders Brevik, and not primarily by a literal reading of biblical texts. On the right, even far right of the Christian spectrum there are those who claim textual dictation, inspiration and inerrancy, but this theological perspective was only developed in the early twentieth century and is part of Christian fundamentalism held by some in north America and the English-speaking world. The theory of inspiration and inerrancy was read back into the biblical text. It had no basis in the text itself and has never been mainstream Christian belief. Biblical literalism has as much to do with modernist secularism — the need for empiricism, facticity and historicity to be true. Language again is too subtle and complex to be literal and the power of story does not need a once given and unchanging text.

For Muslims, then, revelation comes through the written word. For Jews and Christians, though the text has significance, revelation comes through story or stories. Nevertheless, the three Abrahamic traditions face a common challenge. In an inescapable sense Jews, Christians and Muslims are texted people. The Hebrew Bible and the Christian Testament are books full of stories, stories of meaning and that help make meaning, revelatory stories in relation to God. The Qur'an is largely

exhortation, also believed to be a revelatory word and providing roadmaps for the good of society. They are all texted people and texts always require interpretation. Jews, Christians and Muslims in every generation face anew the challenge of interpretation. Texts need to be interpreted, especially in new and different contexts. Texts never simply say. Even an oral tradition needs interpretation. Stories are always told and retold in different ways. A big question always is, how do we interpret the Hebrew Bible, Christian Testament and the Qur'an?

Interpreting Sacred Texts

The practice of interpretation has never been a static task or a mono-task. The very nature of language itself is not static. All language changes because it is living. When it comes to reading and understanding texts, words not only have a surplus of meaning, there is always the possibility of newness. Texts also have contexts and the power to speak powerfully into new contexts with transformative effect. Reading the text is an imaginative exercise especially in the quest for meaning, and different people or groups have always read sacred texts in different ways, and imagination itself has always created diverse reading or interpretive strategies. How Jews, Christians and Muslims do this is worth observing.

Fethullah Gülen and Interpretation of the Qur'an

There is a given in Gülen's approach to the Qur'an:

In line with the Divine incentive to study and reflect upon the Word of God, Islamic scholars are encouraged to discover the hidden beauties of the Qur'an as there is always more to be found in the verses of the Qur'an.⁴

In Islam attention is given to the disciplines and methodologies of exposition. Does Gülen stand in a well established exegetical tradition or is there something new about his approach? There is a question shared by each of the Abrahamic traditions: Do Muslims need a new type of hermeneutic in their interpretation of the Qur'an?⁵

For Gülen the Qur'an is the eternal Word of God, a book of Divine origin. That it is everlasting 'speech' does not close down interpretation, which for Gülen is the understanding of the inner meaning, and yet the meaning is not always immediately comprehensible. The Prophet received revelation, and there is a uniqueness in that, which is what makes absolute comprehension impossible. Using the analogy of Morse code, Gülen believes that 'God puts thousands of spiritual receptors inside the nature of the Prophet to allow him to receive every divine signal as a specific word.'⁶ This may sound not far removed from the dictation theory of scripture held by some Christians. It is a huge faith claim for a text and is a way of understanding the Divine origin of the Qur'an. God has revealed Godself in the Qur'an, and the

characteristics of God can only be known fully through the eternal speech of God. It is, for Gülen, the shortest way to God. For Muslims, in this perspective, God is central and the Word is central because it leads to God. The eternal speech of God written in the Qur'an is crucial for Muslims. It is the Book of God, and there is a uniqueness about the text. To read the Qur'an is to listen to God. This means that for Gülen it is of the utmost importance to read the Qur'an with great sensitivity and humility.

Gülen believes that it is a book of guidance for life and the good society. It is, he believes, 'a book of wisdom, ritual, law, prayer, contemplation, reflection'.⁷ There is a universality about the Qur'an. It has historical context, and it goes beyond historical context, which means a book for all time.

The above says more about how Gülen sees the nature of the Qur'an, and he holds a very high view of its sacredness and uniqueness. For all that it is difficult to comprehend fully because of its unique association with the Prophet, Muslims are not excused from questing for meaning, especially inner meaning and developing an interpretive approach. For Gülen historical and linguistic analysis is required, along with the light of the heart and mind. This is faith plus reason.

Gülen sees three levels of meaning in the text: contextual meaning; intellectual understanding of some realities; and going beyond the text to experience or 'taste' the meaning. These three levels of understanding hold together mind, heart and inner spiritual being. Reason is applied, feeling is engaged, and if humans are to arrive at a correct understanding of the Qur'an, the whole person is engaged with a complete text. Totally essential for this is faith in God. Without faith in God there is no grasp of the text or being grasped by it. Gülen, though, is no individualist. Interpretation of the Qur'an is not an individualistic exercise, 'it requires the collective effort of experts from various sciences'.⁸ In other words, interpreting the Qur'an requires an interdisciplinary approach and it requires collectivity and community. Gülen's approach to the Qur'an can be described as comprehensive and holistic.

Gülen is at home with both mystical and theological interpretation of the Qur'an. His mystical interpretation allows him to enter into togetherness with God, enhance the level of worship and experience both the closeness and remoteness of God as well as the Unity of God. Gülen is critical of translations, and though he is not a systematic theologian in the sense that some Christians are, he does discuss the relationship between the Will of God and human will. Repentance before death is also discussed with particular reference to Pharaoh. Pharaoh and his like are strong materialists and acceptance of faith is a difficulty. There is, for Gülen, 'no god except Him whom the children of Israel believe in'.⁹ In his interpretive approach there is frequent emphasis on social and ethical issues.

Gülen is in touch with classical interpretations of Islam, and he is also pushing interpretation beyond traditional boundaries. In his interpretive task he is ever conscious of interfaith dialogue. He interprets the Qur'an with other faiths in mind and therein lies his originality as an interpreter.

A Jewish Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible

The Hebrew Bible is a collection of diverse kinds of literature. It is, however, dominated by story. Storytelling remains one of the great characteristics of the Jewish tradition. Of course, the Hebrew Bible contains more than one genre of literature but it is dominated by the power of story and storytelling. Nothing illustrates this more than the books of former Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the British Commonwealth. Frequently Sacks returns to the stories of his Hebrew scripture, and it is in the story or stories that he finds meaning for living in the contemporary world. He outlines 'three divisions' in the ancient history of his people, three tragic experiences which are at the heart of the Jewish story. Three times the Jews have suffered exile. It is a story of repeated tragedy and suffering.

The first is in the days of biblical Joseph. The Joseph story led to slavery and oppression in Egypt. Joseph's brothers hated him and sold him into slavery in Egypt. This led to the enslavement of his entire family and the story moves into the enslavement of an entire people. Eventually, exodus or liberation from imperial and oppressive Pharaoh follows, and the Jewish Passover remains from biblical times as a memory of tragedy, oppression and suffering, as well as an experience of hope for liberation.

The second division or story is one of 'the defining traumas of Judaism, relived each year on the Ninth of Av, the anniversary of the destruction of the Temple, when Jews sit and mourn and read the book of Lamentations as if a close relative had just died.'¹⁰ The dominant power was that of the Babylonian Empire whose military machine razed the Temple and city of Jerusalem to the ground, and utterly destroyed the cultural, social, political, economic and religious basis of the southern Kingdom of Judah. The cream of the population, or the elite, were taken away into exile in Babylon. The internal roots of this tragedy lay in the corrupt politics, economics and religion of King Solomon, whose violent attempt to control and unite a people ended up with the deep division of a Kingdom. The northern Kingdom disappeared in the eighth century BCE, crushed and destroyed by the Assyrians. Two centuries later southern Judah was crushed by Babylon. It was this latter tragic and catastrophic experience that became ultimately defining for the biblical Jewish people, not only shaping their sacred literature, but also a new vision of God and ethics.

The third story may even have been worse. The Jewish people in the first century CE are more divided than perhaps any other period in their history. They are a ‘helplessly divided nation, factionalized in every direction’.¹¹ The superpower is now Rome and imperial ‘divide and rule’ has worked. Politically there are divisions between moderates and zealots and the latter have many sub-divisions. The most radical were the *sicarii* who ‘were among the world’s first religious terrorists’.¹² They were responsible for a revolt which sparked the Jewish–Roman war of 66–70 CE. Rome ruthlessly and brutally crushed the revolt, destroying the Second Temple and forcing many Jewish people into exile. Revolt occurred again in 165 CE, led by Bar Kokhba with the same crushing results.

These three divisions are the heart of the Jewish story and ‘each was a reverberating tragedy’.¹³ When Sacks reflects on the implications of these three stories, he enters into the story of a Jewish people who have been conquered by some of the world’s greatest empires. Each of the empires is only remembered now in museums, outlived by this odd people and yet the implication of each of the stories is that the Jewish people is the only people capable of threatening its own future. Clearly this is not the story of a people in power, controlling and dominating others, nor a story that can be understood by a superpower or any dominant, controlling group. The Hebrew Bible is the story of a powerless, conquered, dominated people who desperately long for justice and liberation. Sacks highlights the great paradox of his own story:

In essence the Hebrew Bible is the story of a single people, the children of Israel, later called the Jews, and their relationship with God. Yet the Bible does not begin with this people. It begins instead with a series of archetypes of humanity as a whole: Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Noah and the Flood, Babel and its builders.¹⁴

The stories found in Genesis I–II are human stories, not Jewish stories. They underline the universality of the Hebrew Bible’s essential story. The God of the Hebrew Bible is the God, not only of Jews, but of all humanity and the insight of the early biblical stories are stories of humanity, our shared humanity. The Hebrew Bible is intentional about where it begins and in the order of its narrative. Universalism is the beginning and end, and when particularism becomes an absolute, a total truth claim, it becomes a distortion with dangerous consequences.

The other essential thing about the biblical Jewish story is that it is anti-imperial. The narrative begins with universalism, a story always bigger than the Jewish people, and it is always a story told in the shadow of empire. Imperialism dominates the narrative, politically, culturally and economically. It means the oppressive experience of injustice and is the reason that the key Hebrew biblical theme expressed in the

many stories is justice. This is why Sacks can make three strong assertions from his Hebrew story or scriptures:

- Judaism is a critique of empire and the rule of the strong... The Hebrew Bible is a sustained protest against empire, hierarchy, ruling elites and the enslavement of the masses;
- The fundamental difference between human sovereignty and divine sovereignty... is that humans impose uniformity; God makes space for difference... totalitarianisms... allow only one image;
- The key to the Hebrew story is diversity. We are all in God's image and we are all different. Human freedom and dignity are permanent.¹⁵

The Hebrew Bible is to be read and interpreted as story and it is a story or stories with powerful and practical implications for faith and ethics.

A Christian Interpretation of the Christian Testament

Christianity from an early stage did not merely forget its Jewish roots, it systematically eliminated them, and by the fourth century CE, in collusion with the power of empire, even made the Jewish religion illegal. One of the consequences of the horror of World War II has been a new awareness on the part of Christianity of its Jewish roots. Jewish-Christian dialogue has flourished with mutual correction and enrichment. Insofar as authors of the Gospels and letters of the Christian Testament can be identified, and in many cases, historically they cannot, the general indications are that all but one were Jewish. There has also been the growing awareness that metaphors, allusions, images and symbols are Jewish. The language of the Christian Testament is Greek, and at another more profound level it is Jewish and not Christian. This has major implications for how Christians understand their faith and especially who Jesus is.

The early Jesus movement was one of about twenty-two Jewish renewal movements of the time. The Pharisees and the Essenes were among the movements. Jesus was Jewish, thought like a Jew, acted like a Jew, spoke of and made more visible a Jewish God. In denying this, Christians deny themselves, their history, and identity.

The process of denial began early; some would say in the literature of the Christian Testament itself. However, Matthew and John need not be scapegoated once it is recognized that the conflict in these two Christian Gospels is not between Jews and Christians but is an intra-Jewish conflict. By the time Christianity was politicized as the state religion in the fourth century CE, and the Jewish religion was declared illegal, and things Jewish were eliminated from Christianity, the Creeds of the Church had turned Jesus into a Greek, and, more, into God. Yet the Christian Testament does not make such a claim for Jesus. Christendom has read its Greek

thought forms and divine absolute back into the sacred text. Whether the authors of the Christian Testament, including Luke, who was not a Jew, would have recognized or understood the later creedal formulations is a serious question and not one that Christendom has ever been prepared to ask.

There is no question that for Christians Jesus is the story. Jesus is the story that shapes their experience of God and of the faithful, ethical life. For those who follow Jesus, he is their way, truth and life, but not in some exclusionist, absolutist and triumphalist way. Christians are more often followers of Christendom than followers of Jesus, and there is the world of a difference. The Jesus story is of primary importance, or ought to be, as their way of knowing God and their way of knowing what they do not know of God.

That the Jesus story is the key story for followers of Jesus means entering into the imaginative riches of the Jewish story, the one that Sacks interprets with such meaningful clarity. This also means grasping the so-called Christological language of the Jesus story in its Jewish context. The story language of the Christian Testament, such as 'son of God' and 'son of man', are not read primarily through Nicea or Chalcedon (fourth- and fifth-century church councils) but through the lens of the Hebrew Bible and the Jewish story. How else would first-century members of the Jesus movement have experienced and understood them? This is also why the thought forms and language of Nicea and Chalcedon would have been incomprehensible to them. Instead of reading the Hebrew Bible in the light of the Christian Testament, as Christendom has for centuries claimed in its supersessionist interpretation, Christians need to re-read the Christian Testament in the light of the Hebrew Bible. This is not just political correctness for the sake of polite interfaith dialogue. It is a matter of truthfulness and integrity for Christians, a greater honesty and maybe even an act of repentance.

The Hebrew Bible is claimed by Christians as part of their sacred text, but rather than being read from an imposed interpretive lens of promise or fulfillment, the Hebrew Bible is to be read in its own context and on its own terms. The model of a book of predictions about Jesus is being discarded and its thought forms are now being recognized as key to making sense of the Christian Testaments' story of who Jesus is. The Jewish Jesus only makes sense when read in the context of the Jewish world and sacred text.

Reading the Hebrew Bible as anti-imperialistic is also a strategy for the Christian Testament. By the first century CE, the Egyptian, Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian and Greek empires had given way to the greatest empire yet, the Roman Empire. The Roman superpower and domination system is the foreground to the writings of the Christian Testament. Roman imperialism, its religion, economics, politics

and military pervade everything. There is no avoiding the imperial presence, and the Christian Gospels and letters make no sense without it. It is the all-pervasive, dominating realm in which God is experienced and in which there is the struggle to live faithfully and ethically. When Christianity became totally identified with empire after Constantine, it tended to read its sacred text from the position of power and dominance rather than as anti-imperialistic. Paul, seven of whose authentic letters are part of the Christian Testament, was read as being anti-Jewish. He was not, but he was anti-imperialistic, subverting the claims and demands of the empire with and for the small faith communities who had nowhere else to live other than in the towns and cities of the empire. His letter to the Romans was written to a faith community at the very heart of empire. Much of his vocabulary in that letter is intentionally Roman language. Like Jesus, he too is rooted in the Jewish tradition and writes in subversion of imperial propaganda:

Paul was anti-Roman imperialism, anti-Empire, anti-domination system and his counter-gospel was on fire with the justice of God. Paul's Gospel of justification by faith was not a narrow, privatized, individualized religious experience, but a social and political vision of right relations rooted in justice in a reconciled and peaceful community, a radical alternative to Pax Romana.¹⁶

Christian Testament vocabulary such as 'son of God', 'Lord', 'Savior', 'salvation', key words in Christian liturgy and theology, were all Roman imperialistic words, in use by the empire long before Jesus and the Jesus movement. The Roman context highlights the subversive use by the Christian community and its awareness of announcing a radical alternative to Pax Romana.

The Christian Gospels are not lengthy documents, but they do give considerable space to the passion story as central to the Jesus story. 'Christ has died' is a key Christian declaration of faith. It has not been without difficulty for Jews and Muslims. Much of Christian history has blamed the Jews for the death of Jesus, with tragic consequences in history. There is now the recognition that this has been a serious Christian error and misjudgment. Muslims, on the other hand, have serious difficulty in accepting a crucified Jesus and deny it by a view suggesting that the real Jesus was not crucified. Christians, however, have insisted that Jesus was put to death and that his suffering and death were in history. Later interpretations of the death of Jesus have removed the crucifixion from history and presented it as an event above or beyond history. Interpreting the passion story needs to remain within history, even though the way the story is told in each of the Gospels is already a theological interpretation enhanced by the theological telling.

Beyond the Jewish and Muslim difficulties there is a core Christian insight, an approach to the story of Jesus' death with contemporary meaning for human experience of political suffering. The passion story in each Gospel cannot be read in isolation from the fuller story presented by each Gospel. The death of Jesus has to be seen in the light of the life of Jesus and the Jewish context and history in which it is located. The Jesus story is a conflict story, and it has two sources of conflict. One strand is the conflict with the Roman powers and system, especially in his native Galilee with the destructive and oppressive power of Roman economics. The Roman economy, especially its dimension of taxation enforced by Roman militarism, was crushing the very life out of Galilean and Judean peasants. In collusion with the Romans, and only in power because of them, was the puppet King Herod and the Jerusalem Temple priesthood, the religious leaders.

The second strand of conflict, especially in Mark's Gospel, is with the Temple religious leadership, their luxurious lifestyle and religious and especially economic injustices against the people. Christians, when they got political power, misread the conflict story and blamed the Jews for the death of Jesus, but Jesus the Jew in his prophetic tradition opposed the oppressive and unjust religious and imperial systems. Jesus the Jew was not anti-Jewish but for his own people and utterly opposed to the religious leadership and system that was trampling his people into the dust. He is represented in the Gospels as saying and doing things that are subversive to those systems.

His key metaphor was the Kingdom or Reign of God, the presence and action of God in the real world for justice and well-being which was what the so-called Pax Romana was not, nor was it the agenda or consequences of the collaborating Temple priesthood. Jesus spoke truth to power and the power executed him.

Crucifixion was a public display of power, intended to terrorize. In crucifixion, Rome sought to display its absolute power over human life by rendering those who resisted utterly powerless. In response to his bold confrontation of their client rulers in Jerusalem, the Romans crucified Jesus...Crucifixion was the most severe form of punishment and execution practiced by the Romans.¹⁷

In approaching the Jesus passion story, it is not the exact historical details or facts that matter. The story is not told in each of the Gospels with that in mind. Rather it is the historical context, the historical understanding of Jesus' crucifixion that is important. In solidarity with his core friends and his fellow Galilean peasants he was opposing and subverting repressive measures by the local and imperial authorities, and he was executed by the imperial authorities.

Periodically, however, in the crucifixion of Jesus the display of power that Rome used to render subjects powerless was transformed into the power to form communities of an alternative social order and, when necessary to maintain solidarity against repressive measures by the local or imperial authorities.¹⁸

When read as a death in history, the passion of Jesus is central for Christians along with his life, teaching and actions, and it forms the story of the faith community as a subversive and alternative social reality in the world. For those who do not share the Christian faith, it is still a story with something radical to say about how we as humankind live in a world where imperialism and domination systems still oppress and dehumanize lives. What does it mean for Jews, Christians and Muslims to live faithfully or ethically in a world of superpowers, domination systems and enslaving economic and political systems?

The resurrection story is not primarily a story of personal life after death, but also belongs to the whole Jesus story and is also read from its Jewish and anti-imperial context. In the late Jewish tradition, that is, between the writings of the Hebrew Bible and the beginning of the Christian Testament, resurrection was God's vindication of justice, social solidarity, *shalom* or peace and well-being in the face of injustice, violence and destruction. The resurrection story is the vindication of all that Jesus was and stood for in the face of oppressive religious, political, economic and military systems. Resurrection is God's 'no' to imperialism in all its forms and God's 'yes' to a radically alternative empire or Kingdom of justice, compassion, peace and well-being.

Reading Together Towards Ethics

Jews, Christians and Muslims are People of the Book, but the nature of their sacred writings differs as does the interpretive approach. The Jewish and Christian traditions are more about story, the Islamic Qur'an is more about exhortation. The literary genre is different, which also means that the reading strategies will differ.

Hermeneutics have to do with the principles of interpretation. Hermes was the messenger from the Gods in Greek mythology. Hermes brought the message from the Gods to humans, so interpretation is crucial and unavoidable. There is no text, however sacred, that does not require interpretation. Fundamentalists in all religions may like to think that the text simply says and they know with certitude what it says. Indeed they delude themselves into believing that they are not engaged in interpretation. The text has only one meaning and they have determined the meaning, or rather know that it is so, but fundamentalist literalism is also interpretation; it is a literal meaning read into the text. There is no avoiding

this. The moment we read a sacred text we are involved immediately in trying to say what it means, for then or now, and that is interpretation. We are engaging in hermeneutics, interpreting the message, which is believed in some sense to have a sacred source.

Yet it is not only fundamentalists who delude themselves. Even the most progressive and liberal people of faith can do that. This is because there is no such thing as presuppositionless interpretation. All bring presuppositions and assumptions to the text. We read from a social location which includes gender, class, ethnicity, culture, even age. To reading the text we bring who we are and where we are. Inevitably this also means that we bring bias to the interpretive task. There are no value-free, innocent, objective readings, and there is no total vision, not least because any God-talk is expressed in finite and limited human language.

To the reading of our respective books we need to bring humility and not pretend that we are always taking God's point of view. If we knew God's point of view, God would cease to be God. It also means that interpretation is a shared exercise. It is not an individualistic project but one which requires company and consensus. Private interpretation is dangerous. Consensus interpretation through shared discourse and dialogue is never infallible, but it is safer. Even then a collective reading, even of a majority or large representative group or school, can be ideologically dangerous. Sometimes, as the prophets of the Abrahamic traditions remind us, minorities may be closer to the truth. A key dynamic in interpretation is power. The same text, read from the Hebrew Bible, Christian Testament or Qur'an, can be read in one way by people in positions of power or wealth, or read very differently by those without power and in poverty. Power or the lack of it will shape the perspective and color the reading lens.

Interfaith dialogue makes the interpretive task all the more complex. The People of the Book not only read different genres and understand their sacred texts differently, they have difficulty reading each other's texts. There are convergences of people and allusions or vocabulary, but there are also 'dramatically divergent retellings of biblical stories, of alternative interpretations of biblical figures and ideas'.¹⁹ This becomes very obvious when the respective texts are placed in parallel columns. This also helps us to see that interpretation is already in the texts before we begin our own interpretive journey. We are interpreting what is already an interpretation.

The key challenge and difficulty is how to read each other's texts from the outside. Reading the Qur'an as a practicing Muslim is not possible for a Christian or Jew, and the same applies across the board. I do not read the Qur'an from within the Islamic history of tradition, nor do my Muslim friends read the Christian Testament from within the Christian history of tradition. This may be an advantage, though, since

neither of us is burdened by the other's tradition, especially a history of tradition. Yet read each other's texts we must, 'critically yet respectfully'.²⁰ If we can read each other's texts together, enrichment is possible and understanding enhanced.

A concrete example of shared reading and interpretation would be the Abrahamic story, often claimed to be common. Yet immediately there is a problem. Which portrait of Abraham is the most compelling, for they differ? Abraham is contested. The profiles in the Hebrew Bible, Christian Testament and Qur'an differ. If all claim a story here, then which story? Genesis 18 is a shared foundation. It is the story of Abraham and Sarah entertaining strangers and experiencing the sacred or God. Jewish interpretation is hesitant about portraying God in human terms. The Qur'anic insists on the utter transcendence of God. Especially through Rublev's famous icon, Christians have read the story as foretaste of the Trinity, an idea incomprehensible to Jews and Muslims. What is the truth? Does one tradition have it all or does each have a little, or is each seriously limited and needing a bit of insight from the others? Interestingly, none of the Abrahamic traditions has read the story literally, and all have felt the need to interpret.

Given the diversity of sacred literature and the diversity of interpretations, there is much to be gained from critical and respectful readings of each other's sacred texts. With all the diversity, there may well be a shared outcome. Whether reading exhortation or story, in our different literature and our different methods of reading and interpretation, there are common ethical values. Stories and exhortations point towards justice. Peace and compassion are also present, as are tolerance, respect, the dignity of the human person, the face of love, the nature of community, self-giving and the common good. However diverse the literature and the interpretive methods, all of the above values may be described as a shared hermeneutical goal. We may still differ in some of our theological maneuvers and in some of our respective theological logic, and God may be less worried about them than we are, but the peace and well-being of the human and environmental community require transformative values more than theological dogmas. Judaism, Christianity and Islam have ethics to share, and they are embodied in our Books.

The Imperative for Interfaith Encounter

There are two realities experienced in the contemporary world. Both have come about because of a shrinking world. Globalization is more than an economic reality. It is political and cultural. We are now all interdependent neighbors. This means an unprecedented close encounter for world religions. The world religions are now neighbor religions, not just globally but also locally. The people next door may well be from another faith tradition. Such close proximity, and sometimes today it is as close as marriage, challenges ignorance and misunderstanding and calls for dialogue and respect. We can no longer live beside one another in the street or on the planet without knowing something of each other, without knowing each other. Dialogue between neighbors may be the friendly exchange over the fence or a shared cup of coffee or cold drink. It may be a breakfast dialogue, national or international dialogue, at whatever level it leads to better understanding and mutual respect. At its best it will live creatively with diversity and differences and discover positive community, especially in values and ethics. Above all, it will be the experience of a shared humanity, where being human will be more important than being Jewish, Christian, Muslim or Hindu. Shared humanity means shared human values and if the respective faith traditions are read from this perspective, or through the lens of humanity, then the shared human values will be found at the heart of each tradition. If our religious traditions have a primary purpose it is to make us more human, not more religious.

Globalization has presented us with another reality. It is the closer proximity of East and West to each other and the unavoidability of encounter, even interdependence. We have, though, been so conditioned by a familiar phrase that we believe it is true and that it always will be. East is East and West is West. The English poet 'Kipling said they shall never meet, Huntington that they will always clash'. Kipling was English, Huntington American. Both were Western voices. The former was perhaps more optimistic than the latter. Kipling did go on in his 'Ballad of East and West' to say that 'when two persons meet face to face there is neither any border, nor any East or West'.¹ Huntington saw only a clash of civilizations, not only as a clash of East and West but Muslim East and Christian West. That may be more apt as a description of 1,400 years of history, but it is a frightening and flawed forecast of the future. Unfortunately, Huntington voiced what many felt and thought, that the

clash of civilizations we will always have with us and that it is the future. Western media at times almost seems to be committed to self-fulfilling prophecy, but Grinell may well be right that Huntington is 'an all-too-ordinary representative of Western modernity, and bordering is a fundamental practice of modernity'.² If we continue to read history, politics and faith of whatever tradition from a modernist perspective, then we condemn ourselves to maintaining borders, creating new ones and living with divisions, East–West being one of many which are destructive of relationships and community. Borders, as all divisions, are for deconstructing, to be overcome and bridges built. Modernity created borders and insisted that they were uncrossable. Beyond modernity, alternative voices are now being heard. A clash of civilizations is not inevitable. The false border or dualism that science is Western and spirituality is Eastern is an expression of our modernist, border mind-sets. This may even have been a Western invention to prove its superiority and domination. It was 'us and them' thinking, which is what every violent conflict is based on and which it reinforces. The deconstructionists and alternative voices are now advocating for a dialogue of civilizations. Engagement and encounter are essential to ending 'us and them' thinking, transcending categories of superiority and inferiority and doing what every religion at its inclusive best has the capacity to do, reconcile opposites that are made to appear mutually exclusive. In the essential nature of religion, dialogue is imperative and ending long-standing conflicts between nations, peoples and communities is the goal of authentic faith.

Gülen and the Dialogue Imperative of Islam

Fethullah Gülen is Turkish and given that all human persons are situated and their thinking and imagination shaped by their situated experience, Gülen brings out of that a unique perspective. The city of Istanbul is a bridge between Europe and Asia, West and East. The Bosphorus is not a dividing border but a highway between two continents and civilizations. As a Turkish citizen, he stands with a foot in both worlds, straddling, as it were, the Bosphorus as symbolic of a great deal more.

We have one side in common with Europe and one side in common with the Muslim world. Our integration with Europe necessarily will bring the other.³

For Gülen there is a double belonging, and it is from this standpoint that he can be and is a firm critic of both sides:

He is as firm in his critique of the lack of intellect and science in the Islamic tradition as of the materialistic denial of the spiritual in the Western tradition. He shows that there is a Western counterpart to the materialistic strand and tries to argue for a different and truer Western canon in contact with Platonist and Christian thinking.⁴

Not only does Gülen see a counterpart in Western Christianity, he believes his own religious tradition can take science seriously, including its Western development:

There is no reason to fear science. The danger does not lie with science and the founding of the new world it will usher in, but rather with ignorance and irresponsible scientists and others who exploit it for their own selfish interests.

He is against Western science's compartmentalized and materialistic conceptions of reality and believes that for Muslims, science needs to be conducted within the spiritual and moral frame of Islam. This avoids the dichotomous and dualistic approach. At the same time Gülen is against 'simple correspondence between today's scientific results and verses in the Qur'an'.⁵

His awareness of the history of science also enables his Islamic tradition to recover its scientific pedigree. Before the European Renaissance which led to great Western scientific development, 'a true renaissance took place in the fifth Islamic century in the Muslim world'. European students came to study and learn from it, and 'the foundation of Europe's Renaissance was laid in the Muslim world'.⁶

Gülen, therefore, builds a significant bridge between science and spirituality or spiritual values, and this is also a bridge between East and West. Dialogue is essential to boundary crossing and bridge building. Given that much of the East–West political and cultural divide has a real religious dimension, East–West dialogue will necessitate a dialogue between the religions. The West may appear to be more secularized, but its values are not just materialistic, they are essentially rooted in the Judeo-Christian tradition. Secularization may mean less place in the public square for religious institutions, the taking over by political powers of the many public roles which churches in the West once had, but this does not mean an absence of spirituality or the elimination of the sacred. Faith in the West is not being abandoned or denied, it is repositioning itself in a new historical context. The dialogue of civilizations required for the peace of the planet cannot avoid being a dialogue of the world or neighbor religions. The East–West dialogue will be impotent unless it is interfaith dialogue because faith and its values, Jewish, Christian and Muslim, are the foundation blocks of East and West. In reality we have never lived, nor do we at present live, in a secular world. This is not to deny the reality of atheism, agnosticism or humanism, nor the contribution they can make to human and ecological flourishing. It is simply to recognize that the world is overwhelmingly religious and the dialogue imperative is also an imperative for inclusivity, a dialogue between all religions and other philosophies in the search for a common good.

Gülen's approach to dialogue is significant. In a globalized world he sees no other way. Dialogue is a necessary life commitment and action. The core focus of dialogue is peace and human flourishing. The practice of dialogue arises from his own Islamic tradition, 'which protects humanity and categorically forbids any disrespect for it'. Dialogue 'between people of different cultures and faiths could bring mutual understanding, respect and dedication to justice'.⁷ For Gülen it is not the acceptance of another group way of life or values, nor is it about assimilation. It is about understanding the other's position, beliefs and ideas which are the heart of their identity. Dialogue does not play down differences, nor does it exaggerate them. It recognizes the differing accents with which cultural or religious groups speak, and it looks for the commonalities. For Gülen, dialogue is 'coming together, discussing and forming a bond among participants'.⁸

Gülen is under no illusion that dialogue is easy or straightforward. He recognizes that there are Muslim difficulties in dialogue. There is a long history of Muslim deaths caused by Western powers. There is what even educated Muslims see as the West's 'thousand-year-old systematic aggression against Islam...Consequently, the Churches' call for dialogue meets with considerable suspicion'.⁹ European colonialism and domination of the Islamic world in the twentieth century also leads to difficulties, such as seeing party ideology in some Muslim countries. This also led some in the West to look upon all Muslims and Islamic activities as suspect. This is especially so when Islam is perceived or presents itself as a political ideology: 'Reducing religion to a harsh political ideology and a mass ideology of independence has created walls between Islam and the West, and has caused Islam to be misunderstood'.¹⁰ However, Christendom too has portrayed Muslims as distortions of Judaism and Christianity and the Prophet as an imposter. Though Gülen does not say it, Christendom has for much of its history been a political ideology and has underpinned imperialistic powers and domination. Muslims may well be nervous of interfaith dialogue, and yet for Gülen,

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. In the West, some attitudinal changes can be seen in some intellectuals and clerics toward Islam.¹¹

Some of these significant changes Gülen sees in the Second Vatican Council of the Catholic Church. It commended the good, true and human side of other religions and did not reject the values of other religions, but called for dialogue to encourage the development of spiritual, moral and socio-cultural values.

In relation to Islam entering into dialogue with other religions, Gülen finds the imperative within the Qur'an. The Qur'an speaks of the People of the Book, Jews, Christians and Muslims and then calls the People of the Book to 'a word that is common between them'. The word between us, which is what the word 'dialogue' means, is the sole worship of God. The Qur'an also calls for acceptance of the Prophets and their books. Muslims are expected to

Argue not with the People of the Book, unless it be in a way that is better
(Sura 29:46).

For Gülen this is about a method of dialogue and behavior in dialogue. He refers to those verses in the Qur'an that shape relationships with all kinds of people, especially its exhortation, '*Peace is good*' (4:128). Islam, for Gülen, is essentially a religion of peace: 'I can and do say that peace, love, forgiveness and tolerance are fundamental to Islam: other things are accidental.'¹² He is clear in his affirmation that 'Hundreds of Qur'anic verses deal with social dialogue and tolerance'.¹³

Perhaps most significant of all in Gülen's commitment to dialogue is what he calls 'the pillars of dialogue', which he believes are universal values: 'Religion commands love, compassion, tolerance and forgiving'.¹⁴ He goes on to unpack these four pillars, describing love as the most essential element in every being with the capacity to resist and overcome enemy force. He considers the universe 'as a symphony of compassion' and therefore compassion as a requirement of every human being. Forgiveness is described as 'a great virtue' which means a repair, a return to an essence and finding oneself again, a virtue in touch with the Infinite Mercy, the heart of God and so essential to healing the wounds of humanity. Tolerance is described as being so broad 'that one can close our eyes to others' faults, show respect for different ideas, and forgive everything that is forgivable.' It is about respecting human values and trying to establish justice. All of this Gülen finds in the Qur'an.¹⁵

Gülen's approach to interfaith dialogue is intensely practical. Not only has he himself been actively involved in a number of such initiatives, he sees dialogue as a global imperative and the concrete response and challenge to materialism. Materialism, he believes, 'is the root of all evils including wars, conflicts, environmental problems, poverty and the loss of morality'. He claims that the materialist assault on religion damages all religions, particularly Christianity. Under this materialist attack, Christianity can fend off materialism only by allying with Islam.

Furthermore, through dialogue there are shared values that can balance the hunger for material gains with service, love and peacemaking.

If the two faiths united to advocate for this in the world stage, this cooperation would create a strong foundation for a just and compassionate globalization, rather than one of unequal destruction and unsustainable consumption.¹⁶

One way to a bridge between East and West, a more peaceful world and a life together rooted in positive ethics and values, is through interfaith dialogue.

A Jewish Imperative for Dialogue

For Fethullah Gülen dialogue is a must, and that is particularly true in relation to dialogue with Jews and Christians. His source of inspiration for dialogue, even in a sense, command, is in the Qur'an. Do Jews and Christians find the same imperative in their respective religious traditions?

A leading Jewish voice in the Western world is Rabbi Jonathan Sacks. He is former Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of Britain and the Commonwealth. He has been described as Britain's most authentically prophetic voice. Sacks has written a number of significant and influential books which not only articulate the heart of his Jewish tradition but help those of other faith traditions to better understanding of the oldest of the Abrahamic faiths. What he writes is also from the imperative of dialogue and challenges other faiths, especially the two other monotheistic faiths, to engage in dialogue and in the process rediscover and even revision the heart of their own traditions.

Perhaps the most significant of Sacks' books is *The Dignity of Difference: How to Avoid the Clash of Civilizations*. It is, in his own words, a plea, 'the most forceful I could make — for tolerance in an age of extremism'. He is aware of rising ethnic tensions, civilization clashes and the use of religious justification for acts of terror and believes that all of this is 'a clear and present danger to humanity'.¹⁷

Globalization, Sacks believes, is the supreme challenge to the world's faiths. It is a challenge that we have been able to avoid in the past but can do so no longer. 'Can we recognize Gods image in one who is not in my image... Can I, a Jew, recognize Gods image in one who is not in my image: in a Hindu or Sikh or Christian or Muslim...?'¹⁸ Sacks is an orthodox Jew described by liberal Jews as a fundamentalist. A tension for Sacks is how to hold one's deepest convictions yet be open and respectful of the views of others which may be different or expressed differently. Yet he is also clear that each of us, of whichever faith tradition, has got to wrestle with the sources of extremism within our own faith. If religious fundamentalism becomes extreme, aggressive or even militant and violent, which usually means it has become heavily politicized, then each has to deal with that within one's own tradition. Jews, Muslims and Christians have each to challenge the fundamentalism

within their respective traditions, not try to remove the fundamentalist speck of dust from the other's eye. This calls for intra-faith dialogue within each tradition, dialogue with the respective fundamentalists.

Not all fundamentalism is politicized, but when it is, it has the propensity for aggression, militancy and violence in the extreme. It is this brand that can create a clash of civilizations. For Sacks, an age of extremism requires a more tolerant, respectful attitude towards political, cultural and religious differences. This calls for dialogue or what Sacks calls 'the art of conversation':

We must learn from the art of conversation, from which truth emerges not, as in Socratic dialogues, by the refutation of falsehood but from the quite different process of letting our world be enlarged by the presence of others who think, act, and interpret reality in ways radically different from our own.¹⁹

If dialogue is no more than my refutation of your falsehood, or what I perceive, often out of ignorance, as your falsehood, then an absolutist truth claim is being made. I am right, you are wrong. My faith tradition has the truth, yours does not. This is not merely about being locked or trapped in a closed system, it is potentially destructive of the other. You have lesser rights than I or because of your falsehood, you can be eliminated, literally in the extreme.

Dialogue is necessary because, as Sacks observes, too often groups speak to themselves and not to one another. Talking to oneself is dangerous, as is Christian to Christian, Muslim to Muslim, Jew to Jew. All we might be doing is confirming our tribal prejudices. Sacks would challenge each of our faiths to find 'a way of living with, and acknowledging the integrity of, those who are not of our faith.' There is a profound challenge in asking ourselves, 'Can we make space for difference? Can we hear the voice of God in a language, a sensibility, a culture not our own? Can we see the presence of God in the face of a stranger?'²⁰ This is the challenge to develop dialogue or what Sacks calls the 'art of conversation'.

He prefers the word 'conversation' to 'dialogue' because he believes that 'dialogue today is associated with formal, staged encounters in which the various sides come with prepared positions. We have a surfeit of dialogues... Dialogues are rarely genuine encounters'.²¹ This may be a generalization and not altogether fair to various dialogue initiatives. Coming to dialogue with prepared positions may be a starting point, but that does not mean that positions cannot be revised or changed in the dialogue process. Yet Sacks makes an important point about conversation, especially as he develops the idea from his Jewish tradition. He talks about a 'theology of conversation', deliberately chosen words, because 'How we relate to

other people shapes and is shaped by how we relate to God'.²²

Sacks makes the point that Judaism is a religion in which human beings talk to, argue and remonstrate with God. Abraham, Moses, Jeremiah, Jonah and Job all argue with God. Furthermore, 'Judaism is the only civilization whose key texts are anthologies of argument'. Not only is argument the primary form of discourse for Jews, argument 'is a collaborative activity, a conversation scored for many voices'.²³ The other Abrahamic traditions may find this strange, if not difficult to comprehend, but then for Jews the arts of listening and conversation go together.

Sacks is critical of his own tradition:

There is too much anger and vituperation in the Jewish world today; too much speaking and too little listening; too much condemnation and too little understanding; too much self-righteousness, too little humility; too much seeking respect and too little paying respect; too much preoccupation with our fears and pains, too little attention paid to other people's fears and pains'.²⁴

That is a very honest piece of self-criticism, which other religions can and need to make of themselves. Clearly conversation is an art and is scored for many voices and not just two, still less one. Of greatest significance in his theology of conversation is 'listening as a Religious Act' and this for Sacks is the difference between Athens and Jerusalem. The former excelled at visual arts with people being spectators. Jews believed in an invisible God, which tended to devalue the visual. Hearing was prominent, so Judaism is a form of listening. Ancient Israel's earliest credo began, 'Hear O Israel', or *shema* — better translated as 'listen'. Sacks points out that biblical Hebrew has no word for 'obey'. Christians and Muslims have the word 'obey' in their vocabularies. Obedience relates to command. Yet biblical Hebrew does not know this word.

The word the Torah uses instead of 'to obey' is the root SH-M-A, which means 1) to listen 2) to hear, 3) to attend, 4) to understand, 5) to internalize, 6) to respond in action, and thus 7) to obey... Judaism is not a religion of seeing, but of listening.²⁵

Sacks illustrates this core insight of Judaism by relating the story of the prophet Elijah (I Kings 19:11–13). The prophet has just emerged from a brutal and violent encounter with the prophets of Baal. This is followed by an encounter with the sacred mystery, God. In quick succession Elijah experiences a powerful wind, an earthquake and a blazing fire, but God is not in any of these wild and powerfully destructive elements. Finally, there is a still, small voice and God is in the voice. The Hebrew can be translated as '*a gentle whisper*' or literally as '*the sound of a thin*

silence'. Sacks offers his own translation. God's voice '*is a sound you can only hear if you are listening*'. God is not absolute, dominating, destructive, violent power. God does not impose Godself on humans. God is always present, but only if humans seek the sound. 'The religious encounter, like a true human encounter, requires active listening'.²⁶ This is an important Jewish insight. The art of conversation, the collaborative activity of argument is only really an encounter with God and each other through active listening. Such active listening needs to be at the heart of the dialogue of civilizations and the encounter between East and West.

Sacks develops another set of metaphors which introduce another element to dialogue. Drawing on the I–Thou metaphor of Martin Buber, the great twentieth-century Jewish thinker, he affirms Buber's insight that 'Judaism is less about metaphysical needs than about the quality of relationship between people'.²⁷ When two people meet and each is fully open to the other, then everything else falls away. Here is depth encounter and the dialogue which is active listening. Hearing, listening, in the Jewish tradition leads to action, and the action takes the dialogue to another level. For Sacks this is the difference between side-by-side and face-to-face. The former is working together and the latter talking together.

He cites the story of Lord Victor Mishcon, who knew King Hussein of Jordan and the Israeli Foreign Minister, Shimon Peres. He invited both to dinner at his home. At the end they expressed gratitude for Mishcon's hospitality, at which point he asked about the washing up. Both removed their jackets, rolled up their sleeves and did the washing up. The result was a friendship that led to a peace treaty in 1994–1995. From face-to-face they had moved to side-by-side, and the latter was highly effective. 'All it takes is a shared task that both of us can achieve together but neither of us can do alone...Side-by-side works better than face-to-face'.²⁸ Face-to-face dialogue can lead to side-by-side and the action of transformative dialogue.

In relation to the extremism of our time Sacks advocates the dignity of difference, at the heart of which is tolerance and respect. Yet the either/or of the particular and universal is inadequate. The former leads to tribalism, conflict and dying for a noble cause. It is also about a single truth claim, a totalism. Universalism by itself is also dangerous because it also leads to a single truth claim which is true for all people at all times. A superficial and false sense of unity is created and imposed.

Sacks draws on the insights of the prologue to the Hebrew Bible, Genesis I–II. Chapter 12 follows with the story of Abraham, a narrative of the particular. Yet the Hebrew Bible does not begin there, and even there, still not with a Jewish character. Only much later in the Jewish history and story is Abraham identified as Jewish. The Hebrew Bible begins with the story of humanity as a whole. Adam and Eve are the human ones as are Cain and Abel, Noah and the flood, Babel and the

tower. These are the ‘archetypes of humanity as a whole’. The stories ‘begin with universal humanity and only then proceed to the particular: one man, Abraham, one woman, Sarah, and one people, their descendants’. Genesis I–II represent a global, monoculture, a world filled with violence which destroys. The covenant made with Noah is a universal moral code. Jews have always been clear about this. There are other chapters in the Hebrew Bible which deal with purity laws and ritual impurity. These are addressed to the Jewish people only, but the moral code in the Noah story is believed by Jews to be for all humankind. The tower of Babel story in some Jewish interpretation is the ‘first’ totalitarianism, repeated frequently in history. ‘It is the attempt to impose an artificial unity on divinely created diversity’, and so one of the consequences of these insights is that Judaism, ‘believes in one God, but not in one exclusive path to salvation’.²⁹ Sacks affirms the dignity of difference which is at the foreground of the dialogue of civilizations.

A Christian Imperative for Dialogue

The Christian tradition also recognizes the importance of interfaith dialogue. The burden of history is great and there are events in history that many wish could have been different. Christians have a long history of anti-Judaism and Islamophobia. The former undoubtedly led to the Shoah or Holocaust of the twentieth century. The history of the medieval Crusades is a terrible story, still with the power to cast a very dark shadow over Christian–Muslim, East–West relations. These relations have been darkened further by Western imperialism and colonialism.

In all of the darkness of Abrahamic relationships, there are also moments when light shone. They are moments when relationships were built and sustained even in conflict and when tolerance characterized some periods of history. In the second half of the twentieth century things began to change, dialogue became more of a norm, yet tensions and antagonisms remain and there is the threat of a clash of civilizations.

Gülen notes approvingly the change in Catholic Church attitudes towards Muslims. Vatican Council II called for understanding and dialogue and encouraged Catholics to engage with members of other religions. It recognized what was good, true and humane in people of other faiths:

The Church encourages its children, together with believing and living as Christians, to get to know and support with precaution, compassion, dialogue and co-operation those who follow other religions and to encourage them to develop their spiritual, moral and socio-cultural values.³⁰

It was a groundbreaking statement of the Catholic Church made in the early 1960s,

which is why it also sounds somewhat condescending and not quite open to a mutual encouragement to develop spiritual, moral and socio-cultural values. Fifty years later it might and ought to be expressed differently, but that would only happen because dialogue has grown and relationships developed.

Yet mutual suspicions, mistrust, and misunderstandings remain. The imperative for a dialogue of civilizations is still real. A leading voice from the Christian tradition is Paul Knitter, an American Professor of Theology. Knitter is a leading figure in relation to a pluralist position on interfaith relations and has written a Christian theological exploration of religious diversity. His significant focus is less on a clash of civilizations and more on the issue of environmental and social injustice as the great threat to humankind's future. His major concern is the salvation of the world and the conversion of all world religions to wholeness or liberation. Knitter has a focal concern for human and ecological well-being.

Knitter is calling for a pluralistic, liberative dialogue of religions, but hesitates to use such language. The worlds of the academy and politics have battered and blurred these words. His preferred language is a 'globally responsible, co-relational dialogue of religions'.³¹ 'Co-relational' recognizes the plurality of religions as a fact of life and the stuff of relationships.

A co-relational model seeks to promote authentic, truly mutual dialogical relationship among the religious communities of the world, analogous to the kind of human relationships we seek to nurture among our friends and colleagues. These are relationships in which persons speak honestly with each other and listen authentically...This is a mutual, back and forth co-relationship, of speaking and listening, teaching and learning, witnessing and being witnessed to.³²

To recognize and affirm diversity is essential, otherwise dialogue becomes a monologue, a talking to oneself in the mirror. Co-relational witness is to the distinctiveness of each religion and to the values at the heart of each faith tradition. At the same time there is a truly courageous openness to the witness to truth that others make, and this requires a setting which is egalitarian and not hierarchical.³³ Fifty years ago the Vatican Council statement quoted by Gülen above was still within a hierarchical community of religions, but co-relational dialogue takes place now in an egalitarian community in which no tradition dominates, stands in judgment of another, claims to hold all the cards, be superior to the others, or to hold the final norm which excludes all others. There is a significant challenge here to all of the world religions, and certainly to the Abrahamic faiths, each with a tendency towards totalizing truth claims, but we have now moved into a different epoch of history where globalization is the reality calling for greater interdependency. Not

only diversity, but also the distinctiveness and uniqueness of each religion can be affirmed without exclusive or totalizing truth claims. Many of the religions may well struggle with others, but it is the struggle to come to terms with the reality of sharing one earth in closer proximity to each other than we have ever been. Theology is not shaped by theory nor propositional mind-sets, but by lived experience in the concrete world. None of us lives in a trans-historical realm, nor do our diverse religions. We are relational beings who live in history and a theology of interfaith dialogue is shaped by that, and this is why, for Knitter, co-relational dialogue has to do with global responsibility. The world presents us with opportunity and necessity.

Knitter recognizes development in working out a viable theology of religions, and he believes that many in the global Christian community also see this. In his own lifetime he has experienced a

movement from an ecclesiocentric (church-centered) theology of religions to one that is Christocentric and then to a theocentric (God-centered) way of approaching religious history and interreligious encounter. Now I suggest, the movement is continuing toward a soteriocentric or salvation-centered focus.³⁴

It was the realization that the other phases were inadequate that necessitated the movement. For Christians, the church, Christ and God are still important, but *soteria* (salvation) or human and ecological well-being is the context and criterion for a theology and dialogue of religions. At the heart of eco-human well-being is the greatest challenge facing the human community. The pain of the world is the religious challenge. Eco-human suffering is for the neighbor religions a common ground and a common cause with global suffering calling for global responsibility. As human beings we share a common human experience of suffering. It is this lived experience within history that is the starting point for a meaningful Christian theology, and it is the starting point for the can and must of interfaith dialogue and action.

Knitter spells out the faces of suffering.³⁵ He quotes fellow American theo-ethicist, Gordon Kaufman: 'How shall we build a new and more human world for all the peoples of the world? This is our most important question'.³⁶ The question is placed by Knitter in the context of four faces of suffering, which in turn become a shared context for interfaith dialogue and action.

Suffering of the Body — Poverty

Two thirds of humanity live in a state of domination and dependence with forty million dying each year from starvation and malnutrition. More than a billion people live in poverty and fourteen million children die each year before the age of

five. Poverty kills, murders people and is the worst form of violence in the world.

Suffering of the Earth — Abuse

The ozone layer is thinning and greenhouse gases are accumulating. Air pollution has reached health-threatening levels. Forests are shrinking, deserts are expanding, croplands are losing topsoil and twenty-five percent of the world's remaining species will be wiped out in the next half century.

Suffering of the Spirit — Victimization

Much of human and ecological suffering is mainly the result of human decision making. We make choices and decisions with destructive consequences for the planet's ecological systems and human community. Profit and gain drive many of our decisions and actions, and these often result in human poverty and ecological destruction. Our decisions translate into economic policies, legal systems and international agreements. A world divided between the have-nots and the have-more, the latter roughly a minority of one-third, means that the decisions and life-styles of a few lead to the victimization of the many. Victimization means not to count, to be discarded. Earth and animals also suffer victimization and such victimization is injustice.

Suffering Due to Violence

The world is characterized by military consumerism and militarism and military violence. Arms production and trade feed violence. Weapons of mass destruction are less in the hands of rogue states than in the possession of the big powers and those whom the big powers find it convenient to support. High technology and computerized weapons devastate civilian populations. The industrialization of warfare in the twentieth century means that war now cannot ever be just.

If this is the reality of eco-human suffering, it is difficult to claim being religious without responding to it. Our various truth claims have more than a hollow ring if we have nothing to say or do in relation to the shared faces of suffering. 'There is something fundamentally awry with such a world. It must be changed. We cannot so continue'.³⁷

The world's religions would seem to believe and affirm that at the heart of their sense of the sacred is mercy and compassion. It is difficult to hold that God, or however the sacred is described, is merciful and compassionate and make no or little response to the world's suffering. Peace also appears to be a shared hope and commitment, the total well-being of human and ecological community. Not only is interfaith dialogue a must in such a world, our diverse religions have little credibility or integrity without it. The challenge for Knitter at this point is the

need for a global ethic. This is the challenge for neighbor religions, to reach a consensus on ethical values and, drawing from Roman Catholic theologian Hans Kung, he affirms that ‘the kind of global ethics necessary for sustained global action cannot be achieved without the introduction of religion, and that means the joint contribution of religious communities’.³⁸ Furthermore, ‘In vastly different symbols and narratives, religions offer their followers a vision of hope — hope that they and their world can be different, transformed, better’.³⁹

Gülen, Sacks and Knitter, Muslim, Jew and Christian may speak with different accents, express their faith through different rituals and symbols, yet they are one in calling for interfaith dialogue, a dialogue of civilizations, the art of conversation including deep and attentive listening and a co-relation in dialogue in response to the suffering and injustices of the world. Judaism, Christianity and Islam more than vibrate sympathetically in relation to values, ethics, hope and peace. Making up, as they do, more than one half of the world’s population, and including as they do many of the suffering of the earth, together and with other faiths, their dialogue is necessary and can contribute toward eco-human well-being.

Moving Beyond Violence and Extremes

Globalization is the major dynamic of our time. It can be thought of solely in terms of economic and cultural imperialism. That is a significant threat to global peace, but globalization can also be engaged as the challenge to realize our interdependence, to overcome barriers and divisions and build a civilization in which we recognize our need of each other to flourish as common humanity, and as common humanity to flourish within a richly diverse yet incredibly integrated ecological web.

Gülen believes that our world is ‘definitely in a process of reconstruction’, and that it will be realized. ‘When this happens, instead of having a world that has been shaped with malice and hatred, a surprising world that has taken its form in a climate of love, tolerance, and forbearance will appear before us. The collective conscience will gladly welcome and place it in its heart’.¹

It is this vision of global civilization with love and tolerance at the heart of it, an ethical globalization, that is the key thread of this chapter. In pursuing Gülen’s vision I want to place Gülen and tolerance in dialogue and explore how this can enable the three Abrahamic faiths to move beyond the violence and the extremes that seriously damage our faith traditions, and more significantly, threaten the peace of the planet, and the realization of a reconstructed world. To do that I want to look at the apparent roots of violence in the Abrahamic faiths, then to place Gülen and tolerance in dialogue with Judaism and Christianity and see if a consensus is possible. Finally, I want to explore tolerance in global action, some specific areas where we might engage together in a shared praxis.

Tracing the Roots of Potential Violence

The extremes in each of the three traditions appear to have no difficulty in finding support for their violence in the respective sacred texts. Verses, images or impressions are quoted or alluded to in order to support acts of violence and war, and this includes the Oklahoma bomber, Timothy McVeigh and those who flew the planes into the Twin Towers. These are only two recent examples, and there are many throughout history. We are immediately faced with the issue of interpretation: how do we interpret the Hebrew Bible, the Christian Testament and the Qur’an? That

is the major issue between all of our fundamentalists and all of our moderates. We are either reading our sacred texts in different and opposing ways, or we are reading selectively. Each of the Abrahamic faiths ascribes sacredness to its texts. In some sense they are for us the word of God, we claim to hear God's voice or discern God's will in our written texts, but all texts require interpretation, and there lies the problem. Moderates complain that the fundamentalists or extremists are hijacking not only texts but God to justify their extremes and violence. Fundamentalists assert that texts are literal and the literal reading is the only authentic reading. There are fundamentalists who do not recognize that a literal reading is an interpretation — it is simply and literally what the text says. That this at times is aggressively dogmatic makes dialogue extremely difficult, if not impossible.

Gülen is, I think, an interpreter of the Qur'an and his interpretive lens is shaped by the Sufi tradition. He brings Sufi presuppositions to the text. We all do this. There is no presuppositionless interpretation; we all come from somewhere, from some perspective, and this is equally true of fundamentalist and moderate interpretive strategies. There is a socio-psychological dimension to interpretation. To risk oversimplification, fundamentalist, fear shapes literal interpretation, fear of difference, fear of change. The fear may be shaped by social and political contexts, negative experiences of childhood, community or world. Moderates, on the other hand, may well have been shaped by a different kind of socialization and human, psychological development. They read the text through the lens of inclusion and embrace. So respective sacred texts are read from very different socially and psychologically shaped perspectives. The result is not only opposing readings, but an interpretive battlefield, and those battlefields exist in Judaism, Christianity and Islam, and on the outcome of those battles of interpretation depends the peace of the planet.

At the heart of a lot of this is the concept of the holy war, and those who embrace it, or are ambivalent about it, can find support in sacred texts. Before the birth of any of our Abrahamic traditions there were gods of terror. There were even gods and goddesses who managed to combine both nurturing and terrifying dimensions. Human experience has always struggled with suffering and evil. Ancient Persian religions engaged with a dualistic struggle between good and evil in which gods and goddesses were involved. The ancient Babylonian creation story had the god Marduk create the world and humans out of violence and bloodshed. In the Ancient Greek world, Phobos was a powerful deity to whom sacrifices were offered by militaristic leaders. Phobos even appeared on their military shields. The Romans had Faunus and Pan, the latter associated with spreading panic among the enemy on the battlefield. 'It was the panic of Pan which was said to have routed the Persians at the battle of Marathon'.²

The Hebrew Bible, which took much of its final shape in the sixth to fifth centuries BCE, in and after the devastation of conquest and exile at the hands of the Babylonian Empire, came up with the image of the 'warrior God' who appeared to drown all of the Egyptian army in the Red Sea and who gave orders to carry out acts of genocide on Amalakites and others. The Christian Testament produced the Book of Revelation, seemingly full of blood and gore, battles and violence, all in the name of God and the God who for Christians has been disclosed in a particular way in the teaching and life of the Jewish Jesus. Revelation has been described as the most bloodthirsty and violent book in the entire Bible.

The Qur'an also has texts which appear to advocate violence and to accept the burdens of warfare and suffering. When four sacred months are over, which prohibited fighting, *'then kill them whenever you may come upon them, and seize them and confine them, and lie in wait for them in every conceivable place'* (Sura 9:5). Combat appears to express loyalty to Allah and war appears to be an article of faith, with a thread that suggests everlasting rewards to those who struggle in physical combat. Muslims who engage with a more careful reading of the Qur'an will point out that texts cannot be dissected, but need to be read in textual context as well as historical context.

Now there are Jews and Christians as well as Muslims who will protest and say that we have to read all of these texts in context, textual, historical and social, and that places a different interpretation on them. The literalists can and have invoked them in the cause of holy war or jihad. In 1099 Christian Crusaders carried out atrocities and massacres which emptied Jerusalem of its Muslim and Jewish population. Truces and treaties were broken by Crusaders because one did not owe truthfulness to enemies of God. 'It was a broken truce that provided Saladdin with justification for launching a holy war of his own that culminated in the capture of Jerusalem in 1187'.³ Christians were beheaded because they were perceived as polytheists because of their Trinitarian beliefs. According to Saladdin's secretary they were 'worshippers of Satan: blasphemers against nature, human and divine'.⁴ The Pope depicted Christ himself calling for a war, and a refusal to serve in a holy war was infidelity to Christ. Violence gives birth to further violence, to counter-violence and so into a spiral. In the Middle Ages Christians and Muslims mirror each other and the doctrines of holy war run in parallel.

If we fast-forward to the late twentieth century to the first Gulf War, there are uncanny parallels between the religious rhetoric of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein and US President George Bush, Sr. Hussein told the Iraqi people that God was 'the great reinforcement' by which Iraq would be victorious. Iraq had been blessed by God as the 'cradle of divine messages and prophecy throughout the ages' and Iraq would fight in the divine cause because 'who is more faithful to his covenant than

God'. Meanwhile, Bush reminded Americans that the United States is 'a nation founded under God and that from our very beginning we have relied upon his strength and guidance in war and peace'. After victory in Iraq, God was thanked for 'helping America, as Christ ordained, to be a light unto the world'. When the American bombers were ordered to bomb the 'no fly zone', Bush said that the bombers had done the work of the Lord.⁵

Now were these two men serious or were they both religious fanatics, literalist fundamentalists? Were they inspired by the Judeo-Christian scripture and the Qur'an? At one level they had texts to invoke. The literal holy war and jihad images are there. Or is the problem in history one of interpretation and are there other ways of reading and understanding the holy war and jihad texts?

In the Hebrew Bible, the texts on holy war and the warrior God are in passages that can be read as theo-myths rather than literally. The power of myth was widely recognized and used in the ancient Near East. The warrior God is reflected in the myths of the neighbors to the Hebrew people, and in turn in the Hebrew writings. There is one big difference. From the Hebrew perspective of the Exodus story, a theo-myth, God will fight, a Hebrew army will not. The supreme paradox of the warrior God theme in the Hebrew Bible is that the warrior God is a call to active non-violence, not to trust in horses and chariots, weapons of warfare. Paradoxically, in the Hebrew Bible the warrior God is the subversion of the holy war theme. Tragically, literalists and fundamentalists read it differently.

The Book of Revelation in the Christian Testament belongs to the genre of apocalyptic literature, fantasy literature which imagines the great battle between good and evil being fought in otherworldly, cosmic terms. Revelation is also a liturgical book expressing prayer and worship in fantasy language as a message of hope and longing for justice by little people struggling to live faithfully in the shadow of the Roman Empire and superpower. Again, tragically, the literalists and fundamentalists totally misunderstand the nature of the writing, distort it and use it to justify militarism and holy or God-authorized violence and war.

Gülen is clear about his interpretation of jihad. Jihad is 'struggling in the path of God'. This is both internal and external. The internal is 'the effort to attain one's essence', the other is 'the process of enabling someone to attain his or her essence'. This essence is further described by Gülen:

The first is based on overcoming obstacles between oneself and one's essence, and the souls reaching knowledge, and eventually divine knowledge, divine love, and spiritual bliss. The second is based on removing obstacles between people and faith so that people can choose freely between belief and unbelief.

In one respect, jihad is the purpose of our creation and our most important duty.⁶

The external jihad as understood by Gülen may mean on occasions military exertion to remove oppression and tyranny. There is a just war doctrine in all Abrahamic faiths, though how relevant that is in the twenty-first century is open to question, but extremists and militants in all three Abrahamic faiths have manipulated and exploited the warrior God, holy war and jihad to give religious sanction to political and violent agendas. Gülen and mainstream Islam considers jihad to be the inward struggle to holiness and submission and the struggle for the welfare and common good of humanity. ‘This is why the word jihad is nearly always followed in the Qur’an by the phrase ‘in the way of God’.⁷ The challenge remains for each of the Abrahamic faiths to counter within their respective traditions, the militants and extremists, the literalists and fundamentalists and their hijacking, manipulation and distorting of the faith traditions.

Gülen and Tolerance in Dialogue

Gülen believes that the life of the Prophet ‘was interwoven with threads of peace and tolerance’. Peace, he states, ‘is fundamental to Islam’. He describes the Prophet as ‘This Man of Love and Affection’. Gülen acknowledges that ‘some try their best to misinterpret the existence of and encouragement to jihad in the Holy Qur’an, and the Sunna as being in conflict with our Prophet’s universal love and affection’.⁸ Significantly, after writing of love, affection and tolerance as belonging to the apex of Muslim civilization, he writes a chapter ‘Real Muslims Cannot Be Terrorists’, where again he affirms what for him is authentic Islam: ‘It is a religion made up entirely of forgiveness and tolerance’.⁹ The terrorists, he believes, have misinterpreted verses in the Qur’an, and they have failed to grasp ‘the true spirit of Islam’. They are consumed with hatred, which has led them to misinterpret. ‘The heart of a genuine Muslim community is full of love and affection for all creation’.¹⁰ That is a big statement pointing out that real community is characterized by love and affection, that it is for all creation, and means love and affection for human and ecological community, the entire community of life.

This, he believes, was not only the essence of the Prophet, it is the understanding of Islam held by Rumi and Yunus Emre, and if that ‘message of love, dialogue and tolerance’ can be got out there, then globally people will come ‘running into the arms of this love, peace, and tolerance that we represent’.¹¹ Furthermore, it is tolerance, ‘so vast that the Prophet specifically forbade people to even say things that could be offensive’.¹²

When Gülen speaks of tolerance he seems to hold a cluster of words together,

interchangeably: tolerance, affection, love, peace, forgiveness. Whatever is meant by tolerance, it includes all of these. Islam as understood by Gülen has no room for hate or hostility. Rather, humans are to relate to one another in a spirit of tolerance which is affectionate, loving, peaceful and forgiving. Gülen illustrates with two particular verses from the Qur'an:

They spend (out of which God has provided for them) both in ease and in hardship, ever-restraining their rage (even when provoked and able to retaliate), and pardoning people (their offenses). God loves such people who are devoted to doing good (Sura 3:134).

And (those true servants of the All-merciful are they) who do not take part in and bear witness to any vanity or falsehood, (and who will not deem anything true unless they know it to be so for certain), and when they happen to pass by anything vain and useless, pass by it with dignity (Sura 25:72).

Tolerance is rooted in the mercy of God, who is 'all-merciful'. Tolerance is also generosity towards others, generosity of understanding, acceptance and forgiveness, generosity which is prepared to swallow anger, even when it is justified or when the natural response is retaliation. It is also generosity to believe the best about the other, to discount untruths and falsehoods, certainly not to contribute towards them, or to be discrediting of another. So Gülen's vision of tolerance in life is a large vision including the practice of acceptance, affection, love, peace, forgiveness, truthfulness and generosity of all these as the basis for inter-personal and community relations.

This does not, of course, mean a naive tolerance of everything. The external nature of jihad means opposing and removing obstacles to human and ecological flourishing, such as oppression, injustice, hatred, and violent hostility. There is a zero-tolerance required towards people who operate out of these intolerant, destructive values, but tolerance will restrain rage, perhaps in the sense of refusing to retaliate with like-violence or shared hate, and positively tolerance is the willingness to look for the good in even the worst other. For Gülen:

Islam is a religion of love and tolerance. Muslims are devotees of love and affection, people who shun all acts of terrorists and who have purged their bodies of all manner of hate and hostility.¹³

Gülen's vision of tolerance is not merely an intra-Muslim praxis, it is a lifestyle that is inter-relational. It is a lifestyle and practice for all human relations. Is there something reciprocal in Jewish and Christian practice? Is a consensus on tolerance possible between the Abrahamic faiths? We have all had our practitioners of holy war, in different ways at different times. Hate and hostility have consumed Jews, Christians and Muslims and turned them to violence, intolerance and killing. Being

truthful means that we cannot deny that strand in history or in the present, but is there another, more tolerant, affectionate, loving, peaceful, forgiving and generous strand, more worthy of our founding figures or prophets, and more capable of enhancing human and ecological flourishing?

The Chief Rabbi of Great Britain and the Commonwealth, Jonathan Sacks, has said that ‘Too often in today’s world, groups speak to themselves, not to one another: Jews to Jews, Christians to Christians, Muslims to Muslims’.¹⁴ Yet in the world of globalization, communication is global, instant and either confrontational or dialogical. Dialogue is important to Gülen, Sacks and many of us. It is the way to avoid confrontation, another 9/11 or Afghanistan, and a way to avoid the so-called clash of civilizations.

Sacks offers his contribution with his book, *The Dignity of Difference*. In it he says that ‘Every scriptural canon has within it texts, which, read literally, can be taken to endorse narrow particularism, suspicion of strangers, and intolerance towards those who believe differently than we do’.¹⁵ He speaks of the ‘generous texts of our tradition’ and whether they will be the interpretive key to a more interconnected future. So he is highlighting the need for fresh interpretive work on all our sacred texts, and also the need to take each other’s humanity seriously, not only as humanity, but also to be able to see in the human other ‘the trace of the divine Other’.¹⁶ He believes that ‘We are not gods, but we are summoned by God — to do His work of love and justice and compassion and peace’.¹⁷ True tolerance is required to live with our particularities and differences and to recall, important for him as a Jew, ‘in the midst of our hypermodernity, an old–new call to global covenant of human responsibility and hope’.¹⁸

The great Jewish idea is covenant. The Jewish sacred text is a story of covenant, a story with lots of tensions as sometimes people emphasized the particular and the exclusive in relation only to the Jewish people, but there were other voices who highlighted covenant as universal and inclusive. In the Hebrew Bible the covenant with Noah is with all people, all animals and all creation. With Abraham the covenant is with all the nations and people of the earth. When the prophet Amos reflected on the Exodus story of his people’s liberation from Egyptian political and economic oppression, he also highlighted God as a God who does Exodus in the plural, liberating people other than the Hebrews. Another prophet Isaiah dared to suggest that God has not one chosen people but many chosen peoples, not only the Jewish people but also the Assyrians and Egyptians, and more, who are also God’s covenant people. Here is the thread in the Hebrew Bible of universality and inclusivity, all of which is rooted in the all-merciful, all-compassionate, all-liberating God or God of freedom.

Covenant is in the Jewish tradition, a social vision, a radical political and economic vision. In the Hebrew Bible there are six covenantal words or values clustered together, inseparable and indivisible. They are: social justice; right relations based on justice; compassion or social solidarity; non-violence; inclusivity; peace or *shalom* — total well-being. These are the ethics of covenant, which are to shape and govern human life together and the whole community of life. Here Judaism and Islam can meet; Gülen and Sacks can meet, and we can find a consensus on tolerance that will critique the hatred and hostility that some Jews and Muslims claim to be real expressions of these traditions.

Is there a Christian tradition of tolerance despite its history? The Christian faith also claims to trace its roots back to Abraham, though a history of supersessionism in relation to Judaism has too often denied these roots. Yet Jesus, the key figure in the Christian story, was Jewish and his core ideas expressed in the four gospels were rooted in his Jewish tradition. The God he spoke of was the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and his central metaphor or idea, the kingdom or reign of God, has its roots in the Jewish prophets, in Isaiah in particular. The classic prayer of the Christian tradition, the Lord's Prayer, reflects Jewish ideas and expressions. The essence of the essence of Jesus' teaching is the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1–11) and all of them have their roots in earlier Jewish ideas. The Beatitudes reflect the values of the Jewish covenant and core to them are: non-violence; social justice; mercy/compassion; peace; solidarity with those who suffer injustice.

These are the covenant ethics of Jesus' Jewish tradition, and whilst the word tolerance is not used, this cluster of social values and ethics runs parallel with those of Islam, certainly as interpreted by Gülen, and of Judaism, as very much understood by Sacks. Gülen, like Sacks, has moved beyond using the word tolerance as it is no longer adequate in the English language. In his native language the word Gülen now uses is *hoşgörü*, with the more positive meaning of 'empathetic acceptance'. It is important to keep this in mind when reading the word 'tolerance' in Gülen quotations and references to tolerance in this chapter. Empathetic acceptance is much stronger than 'tolerating a headache'. One aspect of the teaching and practice of the Jewish Jesus, where he stretches his Jewish roots in a distinctive way, is that of love of enemies. All of what he taught was in the context of the dominating and occupying Roman Empire, a militaristic and oppressive economic system. Read in context, much of Jesus' teaching is subversive of this superpower, as well as of the traditional religious leadership in collaboration with it. Love as seeking the highest good of the other, especially when the other is a Roman soldier or a member of the elitist temple priesthood, is radical action. It is not tolerance as a passive acceptance of what is, a kind of live and let live. External jihad does not stand passively by when people's humanity is being diminished by injustices and oppression. The core

emphasis in all three Abrahamic faiths on social justice does not tolerate injustice and oppression. Seeking the highest good of the other, who may be the enemy is a strategy for transformation, and is a much tougher option than wiping them out.

A consensus on tolerance, and all of the strong values and word cluster associated with it, is possible, and indeed is shared. This is what Gülen described as ‘an Islamic style’, a practice at the heart of what the Prophet was about, the lifestyle also of the Jewish Jesus and Jewish covenantal praxis in social and political life, but it has not always been the consistent practice of our Abrahamic traditions. The battle at the heart of each of our traditions is a battle over interpretation. There is dispute around how to interpret Judaism, Christianity and Islam. There is dispute and disagreement within each of the Abrahamic traditions. There are exclusivists who reject any idea of consensus values, who want to make absolute and exclusive truth claims for their one and only tradition, and to do so aggressively and with violence. What Gülen said of those who take this approach is true also of those who adopt the same exclusive and aggressive style in Judaism and Christianity: ‘the style adopted by those who treat others with hatred and hostility is not in keeping with Islam’.¹⁹ It is not in keeping with Judaism or Christianity either, and we need to support each other in the struggle for more ethical interpretation and ethical praxis within our Abrahamic faiths.

Tolerance in Global Action

The challenge is to turn ‘the Islamic style’, and the ethical Jewish and Christian lifestyles into social practice and public policy. In a globalized world this will mean global action, working together to ensure that in a world of growing interdependence, where barriers and boundaries matter less and less, we are committed to social structures and policies that reflect tolerance and enhance human and ecological flourishing. Tolerance in global action calls for shared commitment to two areas — democracy and human rights.

Tolerance and Democracy

Gülen has a commitment to democracy, and he sees tolerance as indispensable to it. Democracy is described as ‘a system that gives everyone who is under its wing the opportunity to live and express their own feelings and thought’.²⁰ He further believes that democracy is out of the question where tolerance does not exist: ‘it is not possible for democracy to take root in a place where there is no tolerance. In fact, advocates of democracy should be able to accept even those who do not share their views, and they should open their hearts to others’.²¹

Gülen seems to be recognizing that a democratic society is a pluralistic society and that the practice of tolerance implies pluralism. At the same time there are

distinctions such as ‘believers and unbelievers’. He would not want anyone to harm the Prophet in any way, such is the significance of the ‘Pride of Humanity’ to him, but this does not stop Gülen entering into dialogue with someone who thinks differently. In a democracy there is freedom of speech and expression, and freedom of religion and to have no religion. Democracy also means that everyone who lives in a democratic society has rights and responsibilities. It is the tension between these that sometimes creates problems. With freedom of speech there is the freedom to be critical of religious practices or interpretations of belief and practice that have negative consequences. Yet how is this done without giving offence to the other or alienating the other? At the same time how does one exercise freedom of speech responsibly? In a pluralistic democracy how do we live together in tolerance and responsibility, and do we all have the right to be offended? In a world striving for democracy, does a superpower have the right to impose its version of democracy on others? What is really going on in Iraq and Afghanistan, and what will be the ultimate outcome of the ‘Arab Spring’?

Democracy is defined by pluralism and not secularism. That is an important distinction. The Western world sometimes sends signals that suggest to Muslim countries that the foundation of a genuinely democratic society must be secularism, but as Riza Aslan has pointed out, this fails to ‘appreciate the difference between secularism and secularization’.²² The latter is the process by which particular responsibilities pass from religious authorities to political authorities. For example, in Ireland, sectors of education have become the responsibility of the state rather than the church. Secularism, on the other hand is an ideology which wants to see religion eliminated from society. In this sense secularism is anti-democratic and intolerant because it will allow no place for religious freedom of practice. Democracy, instead, is defined by pluralism which allows for the freedom to practice faith and atheism as well. A democratic society is a tolerant society. If one religion does not allow freedom and space for another religion, or wants to eliminate secular humanism or atheism, then there is intolerance and a lack of commitment to democracy and democratic values.

There ought to be no demise or elimination of religion in a democratic society, because democracy is characterized by pluralism, allowing free space for multiple worldviews and faith traditions. ‘Islam has had a long commitment to religious pluralism’²³; for example, the Medina Charter brought together minority Muslims, Jews and polytheistic Arabs as one *ummah*. The Prophet, therefore, created a united community.

The basis of Islamic pluralism is in a remarkable verse from the Qur’an, ‘*There is no compulsion in the Religion*’ (Sura 2:256). Aggression and force, neither physical nor psychological, are used to impose religion. A way is made clear and people have free

choices without compulsion. The Bible, the Judeo-Christian scripture, is also about pluralism. Genuine faith is recognized in a number of non-Jewish people, and God is perceived as working in and through people who are outsiders. If sometimes people of faith limit God to themselves, the Judeo-Christian scriptures disclose a God without limits and boundaries.

The problem, however, for the three monotheistic, Abrahamic traditions is that while God is One, Judaism, Christianity and Islam are definitely not. There are those in each of our traditions who interpret their respective tradition in narrow, exclusive and aggressive or violent ways. For them God the One is not God of the many. Pluralism is not an option, which has divisive and sometimes tragic consequences for a society. There is not space for democracy to flourish, or in the extreme, even to take root.

However, these monotheists who practice mono-theologies, one interpretation of theology only, have misunderstood something about pluralism. Religious tolerance does not mean unbridled or unchecked religious freedom. Religious freedom is governed by public morality and so in the interest of public morality or the common good, the freedom to practice religion which is unjust, violent or oppressive is checked. When religion violates the rights of others or violates or insults another tradition, it cannot go unchecked. Pluralism is religious freedom, tolerance, respect, responsibility, dialogue and the restraints of public morality. So whether it is Western democracy, Islamic democracy, Israeli democracy, or whatever, it needs to be grounded in pluralism, and pluralism requires tolerance, and this leads to the next global action on tolerance.

Tolerance and Human Rights

Gülen describes Islam as a ‘Religion of Universal Mercy’. God ‘sent Prophets and revealed Scriptures out of His Compassion for humanity’.²⁴ Sura 55 is, to someone from outside the Islamic tradition, one of the great texts of the Qur’an. It is about God, the All-Merciful. That is how it begins and goes on to say that God, the All-Merciful ‘*has created human*’, and then follows a series of creation texts. The All-Merciful God embraces all creation with mercy and with mercy embraces humankind without any discrimination between believers and unbelievers, Jews, Christians or Muslims, or other. It is a declaration of God’s universal mercy and compassion, and that is a basis for human rights at the heart of society. God’s mercy and compassion is all-encompassing and all-embracing, of humans, animals, and nature itself. It is not just a vision of human rights, not an anthropocentrism, but animal rights and the rights of creation are there also. At their best the Abrahamic traditions are holistic.

So Gülen believes that ‘Islam is balanced, broad and universal on the subject of human rights’. He then alludes to what the Qur’an says, that to take the life of a person unjustly is a crime against the whole of humanity. This places ultimate value on a human life. The killing of one person is as if all of humanity had been killed. So what in terms of law is indispensable? ‘Freedom of faith, life, reproduction, mental health, and personal property are basic essentials that must be preserved for all. Islam approaches human rights from the angle of these basic principles.’ He concludes his reflection on Islam and human rights with a question: ‘How could a religion that associates [confers] such a high importance upon human beings neglect the human rights of even one person?’²⁵

This is reinforced by another contemporary summary of the core concepts of Islam, which are 1,400 years old and yet match the high ideals of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights adopted in 1948:

- Slavery, while not prohibited by the Qur’an in its seventh-century economic context, is judged to be against God’s will, and setting a slave free is an act of charity and a virtue.
- The right to life and property was sacrosanct according to the Prophet’s farewell address.
- The right to take part in government is put forward by Shariah through *shura*, a consultation process.
- The *shura* principle is only meaningful, if consultation takes place with freedom of expression. Sura 42 in the Qur’an provides a framework by which the community itself decides, through mutual consultation, how it is to be governed.
- The right to freedom of religion and conscience is clearly set out in the Qur’an. ‘*There is no compulsion in the Religion*’ (Sura 2:256).
- Fundamental human equality is underlined frequently in the Qur’an. In the Prophet’s farewell address, ‘No Arab has superiority over a non-Arab as no non-Arab has superiority over an Arab, neither does a man of brown color enjoy superiority over a man of black color, nor does a black man enjoy superiority over a man of white color, except by piety’.²⁶

The addition of piety does not negate the equality of all before the law and equality of respect and opportunity. Piety is highly respected but not to make some more equal than others.

The Judeo-Christian basis for human rights is also rooted in its vision of God. The God who hears the cries of the poor, marginalized and oppressed is the God of ‘steadfast love’, the God in solidarity with the people who suffer at the hands of oppressive, domination systems. The Hebrew Bible declares in its opening that

all humankind, women and men are created equally in the image and likeness of God. Much ink has been spilt over the meaning of ‘image and likeness’, and some Muslims may have problems with that language, at least when taken literally, but whatever it means, it at least affirms the very dignity, worth, and equality of all human beings. In this theology, crimes, injustices and violence against human persons are crimes against the Creator. Human rights therefore matter.

Core to the Judeo-Christian tradition is covenant, God’s pledged relationship not only to all of humankind, but also to animals and all creation. Inclusivity is a key characteristic of the biblical covenant. Central to it is justice — social, distributive and restorative justice. The Judeo-Christian Bible has more to say about justice than any other theme or idea. At the heart of Judeo-Christian ethics is social justice, which is not surprising. This is because the community of people behind the Hebrew Bible and the Christian Testament were minorities, and often suffering, marginalized minorities. People in such a life context, colonized and dominated by successive superpowers, have a primary and urgent concern for social justice. Powerful and majoritarian Christendom rarely understood its sacred texts. Yet the Judeo-Christian Bible is a book on justice and this central emphasis on justice, central to the teaching of Jesus and Paul, is a foundation for human rights.

We are back again to interpretation and how we read and interpret our respective Abrahamic traditions. In none of our traditions are we agreed, there is internal dispute, interpretive dispute.

We also have tension around democracy, pluralism and human rights in action. There are those within our faith traditions who see the ultimate goal or vision as a theo-democracy. They really envision a theocratic state, which is also a form of despotism. Fundamentalism in any of the Abrahamic traditions can lead there and has done so with tragic consequences. Again we are engaged with the struggle in which our sacred texts require human interpretation for the development of human legal systems as the basis of our models of democracy, pluralism, tolerance and human rights. The unavoidable logic of this may well be political secularization. That is where democracy, pluralism, tolerance and human rights will lead us; otherwise, we may bend towards theocracy, and that will, as it always has, deny human rights and claim to know absolutely the absolute will of God. The destructive consequence is injustice.

The Abrahamic traditions, which make up two-thirds of the global population, have challenging collaborative work to do, through dialogue, which is close to Gülen’s heart. Much of that will be around interpretation and will need to address tolerance and global action. Democracy and human rights will be key to a more peaceful, global civilization and neither will exist without tolerance or empathetic acceptance.

Wisdom as an Abrahamic Ethic for Life

Beginning with Gülen's belief that 'the road to social justice is paved with adequate, universal education',¹ this chapter will seek to recover the key practical idea of wisdom as the heart of adequate and good educational praxis. Gülen's highlighting of the Qur'anic emphasis on *hikma* as Divine gift with far-reaching and practical implications will be explored in a dialogical context. Gülen's Qur'anic emphases will be brought into dialogue with the wisdom traditions of Judaism and Christianity in the search for a shared, Abrahamic wisdom ethic. If such a wisdom ethic can be found, then there is a shared educational praxis and an empowering wisdom which can enable a new generation of Jews, Christians and Muslims to build social justice and peace for all. This would represent Gülen's dream for a twenty-first century generation through universal education, nurturing the 'universal man' or person towards a universal praxis of 'salvation'.

Gülen's Wisdom Ethic: Useful Knowledge and Righteous Deeds as Divine Gift

Fethullah Gülen is a scholar with a purpose and a strategy. He is a person with a clear mission strategy which is not exclusive to Muslims but inclusive of all humanity. In this commitment to bringing people together rather than separating them, he is 'deeply averse to unbelief, injustice and deviation'.² There is, therefore, a core commitment to ethical praxis connecting conviction, action and a life pathway. Much of this is shaped by a dream, which is of a 'generation that would combine intellectual 'enlightenment' with pure spirituality, wisdom and continuous activism'.³ This educational dream connects the mind, spirit, wisdom and action. Gülen is clearly asserting the need for practical knowledge, rooted in a life lived in God and directed towards human liberation, justice and peace. If that is salvation, it is also essentially eco-salvation. It is a dream which inspires hope.

Aware of injustices, divisions, violence and destruction, Gülen is nevertheless hopeful for the twenty-first century, seeing a positive, global spiritual climate change. He believes that we live at a time of 'sprouting of a spiritual dynamic that will revive the now-dormant moral values'.⁴ A new understanding and new spirit of tolerance will lead to the co-operation of civilizations rather than their clash. The

twenty-first century will be characterized by ‘intercivilizational dialogue and the sharing of values’.⁵

Gülen’s hopeful dream might be enhanced by two contemporary global experiences. The global credit crunch or crisis in global capitalism may well be leading us to a radical reappraisal of values. A moral economy applies to economics, and we need to recover markets with morals. The crisis is also a moral and spiritual one, and the recovery and sharing of values is therefore imperative.

Without imposing on him the tyranny of expectation, the leader of the world’s sole superpower has engendered hope for a new model of politics and power, and the possibility of building new global relationships, more secure, just and peaceful. All of that underpinned President Barak Obama’s significant line in his first inaugural speech: ‘To the Muslim world, we seek a new way forward, based on mutual interest and mutual respect.’ There is resonance there with Gülen’s dream, and if as global citizens we are to take the way or road to salvation, then Gülen believes we need God-given wisdom to make the right choice. So what does Gülen mean by wisdom and what is his wisdom ethic?

For Gülen wisdom is rooted in the Qur’an and is ultimately the gift of God. The sources of wisdom are divine revelation and inspiration, which Gülen takes to mean all the prophets and all spiritual guides, who are also sages and wise people.⁶ It is ultimately God who puts wise and uplifting thoughts, ideas and purposes into the hearts of saintly people. Above all, wisdom from God comes through Divine Scriptures. There is inclusivity and openness here in Gülen’s thoughts. For him, primarily there is divine revelation in the Qur’an and the door is open to the same God who speaks through the Jewish and Christian scriptures. All the prophets are sages, who speak to us the wisdom of God. Here is Gülen’s ecumenicity and the open door to Abrahamic dialogue through our sacred texts.

In his reflection on *Hikma*, Gülen goes to the wisdom texts in the Qur’an:

He grants wisdom to whomever He wills, and whoever is granted the Wisdom has indeed been granted much good. Yet none except people of discernment reflect and are mindful (Sura 2:269).

Wisdom is affirmed as the gift of God and ‘basically signifies insight, discernment and knowledge of creation, life, right and wrong, and of the Divine system prevailing in the universe’.⁷ Such wisdom, insight and discernment enables positive engagement with life’s ultimate questions and opens up perspectives on creation and moral community.

In the gift of wisdom God also inspires prophethood. To King David, ‘*God granted him kingdom and wisdom, and taught him of that which He willed*’ (Sura 2:251). ‘*We surely granted wisdom to Luqman and said, “Give thanks to God”*’ (Sura 31:12). In what follows Luqman passes on wisdom to his son. Wisdom is transferred to the next generation. Apparently, Luqman is one of three persons cited in the Qur’an about whom it is not clear if he was a prophet or not. He was, it seems, ‘widely known in Arabia before the advent of Islam for his wisdom and spiritual maturity’.⁸

For Gülen the theoretical and practical dimensions of wisdom are made clear by another Qur’anic text: ‘*Call to the way of your Lord with wisdom and fair exhortation*’ (Sura 16:125). In the wisdom traditions of the Abrahamic faiths, Wisdom is frequently referred to as ‘the Way’, with moral choices to be made between different ways. There is often the call or invitation to follow the higher or better way, and here in the Qur’an it is to follow the way of the Lord. For Gülen this is practical wisdom and is practical goodwill towards others in a conflictual context.

The God-source of the wisdom way is again identified in the Qur’an. ‘*Say (to them, O Messenger): “This is my way: I call to God on clear evidence and in sure knowledge”*’ (Sura 12:108). In following the wisdom way Gülen highlights consistency of thoughts and actions. In such consistency or connectedness there is a full grasp of the way of wisdom and this leads to ‘serving our religion and humanity in his way with conscious insight and sure knowledge’.⁹

On the basis of Qur’anic texts, Gülen sees wisdom as ‘being just, moderate, balanced and straightforward’.¹⁰ Wisdom is not theoretical or speculative. It is intensely practical and relational. Knowledge is practical knowledge, a combination of useful knowledge and righteous deeds.

Gülen’s definition of wisdom is as follows:

- Wisdom is unity of thought, intention and action.
- Wisdom is certainty in knowledge, soundness in action, and perfection in any performance.
- Wisdom is grasping the aims of religion and ordering life accordingly.
- Wisdom is perceiving the Creator’s purposes for the existence and life of things.
- Wisdom is living as vicegerent of God and using things within the limits God has set.
- Wisdom is seeing everything in the light of the Divine way.
- Wisdom is adopting God’s way of conduct and treatment of God’s servants in individual and social life, which includes applying wisdom to issues of political governance and power.¹¹

Hikma for Gülen is comprehensive. In relationship with and openness to God, right thinking and behavior are to become second nature. It is the ‘adoption of the Divine way of conduct’.¹² Wisdom is knowledge combined with action, a practical way of life or life praxis. It might also be described as applied wisdom and from Gülen’s definition it is wisdom applied to all of life, interpersonal relationships, the environment and relationship to it and responsibility for it, and to political arrangements of power and governance. Much of this can be summed up in the ethics of justice and peace.

In Gülen’s approach there is no wisdom without reflection. Wisdom is a divine gift but it is received through reflection, which means to ‘think on a subject deeply, systematically and in great detail’. It is reflection as ‘the hearts lamp, the soul’s good, the spirit of knowledge, and the essence and light of the Islamic way of life’.¹³ Reflection for Gülen draws on two sources. The universe itself is a book to study, and on reflection the verses of the Qur’an reveal deeper meaning and secrets. Judaism and Christianity also emphasize two books for reflection and study, the book of creation and the Word of God — the sacred texts. All three Abrahamic faiths look for divine revelation in creation and word. Our dialogue and understanding is enhanced in that we are peoples of two books.

Reflection is key for Gülen. He writes:

Reflection is a vital step in becoming aware of what is going on around us and of being able to draw conclusions from these events. It is a golden key that opens the door of experience, the seedbed where the trees of truth are planted, and the opening of the heart’s eye.¹⁴

Reflection on experience opens us to practical wisdom and the ultimate goal of reflection is the knowledge of God and the love of God. This, Gülen sees, ‘is the way to become the perfect, universal human being’.¹⁵ The mature human person open to life and to others, filled with the life and love of God, living life fully alive, can only do so through reflection. We know God through reflected life experience.

The mutual connection between actions and inner life through deep reflection holds us in, what Gülen calls a ‘virtuous circle’.¹⁶ At the heart of this virtuous circle Gülen sees two supreme values, compassion and love.

Compassion is the beginning of being; without it everything is chaos. Everything has come into existence through compassion, and by compassion it continues to exist in harmony... Everything from the macrocosm to the microcosm has achieved an extraordinary harmony thanks to compassion.¹⁷

As for love it is deeply implanted in the very being of existence, and 'A soul without love cannot be elevated to the horizon of human perfection'.¹⁸ The opposite of love is to be entangled in the nets of selfishness, which can be the experience of persons and groups, communities and nations, though Gülen seems to be reflecting here on the inter-personal. There is no 'universal man' without love because 'Love is the most essential element in every being, and it is a most radiant light and a great power which can resist and overcome every force'.¹⁹ Love at the heart of practical wisdom engages dialogue rather than domination and favors persuasion rather than coercion. Is Gülen, with his essential element of love, also reaching beyond physical and psychological violence to active non-violence?

If reflection for Gülen is on God's two books, nature and word, which is the context for reflection on lived experience, then practical wisdom comes to us through worship. Unsurprisingly Gülen is more poetic at this point than abstract or prosaic. We worship the 'Composer of the symphony, running to Him in love and yearning, and deeply experiencing the awe and amazement of being in His presence'. There is mysticism here, wisdom mysticism, the desire for union with God, to be gathered into the All-Loving, to be lost in God, but Gülen is no advocate of esoteric mysticism, it is practical mysticism rooted in practical wisdom. His poetic and practical wisdom mysticism continues when he summarizes

wisdom begins with reflection, curiosity, wonder and the zeal to study and search, and continues with obedience and worship, ending in spiritual pleasures and internal happiness.²⁰

Two of God's names after all are the All-Loving and Loved and the All-Compassionate, and these also become the core values of our way of life, our wisdom praxis.

Yet Gülen is reminded by the Prophet that there are limits to reflection on the way to wisdom: 'No act of worship is as meritorious as reflection. So reflect on God's bounties and the works of His Power, but do not try to reflect on His Essence, for you will never be able to do that'.²¹ Gülen reinforces the point with a quotation from the writer of *The Way Traced*:

Reflection on bounties is a condition of following the way,
While reflection on the Divine Essence is a manifest sin.²²

That too is profound wisdom, to recognize that there are limits to our human capacity to conceptualize, define and experience God. God is the ultimate mystery, incomprehensible mystery, and to ever think that we can define, confine or adequately speak of God, monopolies God, claim God as exclusively ours, is a 'manifest sin', the sin of idolatry. The Essence of God is beyond us and perhaps that

more often needs to be a starting point for Abrahamic dialogue. The All-Wise God, *Al-Hakim*, is in essence, beyond our words and experiences, even when we have said all we have to say about divine revelation and inspiration. If we could capture the All-Wise God in words and experience, God would cease to be All-Wise and would no longer be God. This is why all our study and research, all our reflection ends in worship, mysticism, practical wisdom mysticism. With Gülen, we know our limits, and the all-too-real limits inspire our deeper yearning, reflection, study and research into the All-Living, All-Compassionate, All-Wise God on the journey to being universal human beings.

Such is Gülen's wisdom and his wisdom ethic. It is profoundly enriching and liberating.

A Jewish Wisdom Ethic

Jewish wisdom literature is a collection of books known in Judaism as 'the writings'. In the collection of Hebrew Scriptures the best known are Proverbs, Job and Ecclesiastes. A secondary canon or list of books includes the Wisdom of Solomon and Ecclesiasticus. Jewish wisdom, therefore, is a body of teaching which has emerged from reflection and discernment and is about the mystery of life. It is grounded in human experience and reflects not only on the mystery of life, but ultimately on the mystery of God. It is alternative literature to the Jewish norm because most of the Hebrew Scriptures are concerned with history, with social, political, economic and military realities. Ancient Israel lived in a world dominated by successive empires and superpowers and it is in this real-life world that there is the real agenda of faith. In the real stuff of life God is encountered and experienced: 'Israel held together the realities of public life and public power and the reality of God in its midst'.²³ Most of the Hebrew Scriptures are set in that historical context. Wisdom literature appears as an alternative take on life and God. There are no major or even minor politico-historical events, no big social upheavals, no liberating stories from superpower oppression or historical dislocation. Instead, we have accumulated wisdom derived from reflection on the mundane, ordinary life on the main street, town square, fields and village crossroads. Jewish wisdom literature is about God in the very ordinary and how to cope with life at work and play, in the search for existential meaning and in innocent suffering.

Such Jewish wisdom literature is not unique. Much of the book of Proverbs has been drawn from sources in Egypt and Mesopotamia. Wisdom writings were a well known and widespread literary genre. The book of Job, an in-depth struggle with the perennial question of innocent suffering and the experienced silence or absence of God, reflects a Sumerian story, a Sumerian Job. The suffering Job in Israel's version is not even Jewish, but from a foreign land of Uz. These widely borrowed

sources are a good example of the pluralism that existed in Israel's faith tradition. Wisdom for life and the wisdom-God could be found and experienced well beyond Israel's particular historical and liberating events. All-important wisdom and a wisdom ethic could be found in Egyptian proverbs and a Sumerian story. God and wisdom are not exclusive possessions.

The book of Proverbs in particular has an educational purpose. Proverbs contains many 'family sayings'. One of the social locations for handing on wisdom to the next generation was the clan or family: '*Those who spare the rod hate their children, but those who love them are diligent to discipline them*' (Proverbs 13:24). Too often the rod has been interpreted to mean biblical authorization for beating, smacking or punishing children, even to justify abuse, but the Hebrew word, *musar*, translated with 'discipline' here, is the word for the shepherd's rod or crook by which he guides and protects his sheep (Psalm 23:4). The image is not one of beating wisdom into children or coercing them, but an image of positive guidance, caring protection and creative nurturing.

As well as the family or clan, another social location for wisdom was the school. The evidence is thin, but it seems likely that the royal court sponsored schools in which the privileged class 'was educated for vocations in the state and in the enomomy'.²⁴ Formal, universal education probably did not exist in Israel or in Egypt, but was confined to a privileged class. Some of Proverbs seems to reflect this, locating wisdom as the basis of higher status living. Some Proverbs favour the rich at the expense of the poor.

Much though is about the ordinariness of life, the mundane experiences at the village crossroads. Jewish wisdom is therefore rooted in common sense, practical common sense: 'wisdom literature asks about "what works", what risks may be run, what realities can be trusted and where the practice of human choice, human freedom, and human responsibility can be exercised'.²⁵ There are the wise, and there are fools. The latter believe that anything goes, that life is pliable, and it can be manipulated however one pleases. Such an approach destroys character and community. Positively, wisdom literature wants to shape human living and community for well-being. This is why sometimes it seems conservative, conserving what is good and what makes community work. Sometimes Proverbs even seems to want to conserve the status quo.

More positively, 'The goal of all wisdom was the formation of character'²⁶, and the focus is more on individuals rather than groups though Israel's perspective was not individualistic, but individual in community. Wisdom's purpose was to shape moral character, whether through the family and clan or in the royal court school. The literature provides us with experiential and theoretical wisdom. The former

was reflected experience, reflection on everyday life. The latter was a 'philosophical probing of life's inequities or as personal reflection on life's meaning in the light of death's inevitability'.²⁷ Job and Ecclesiastes are examples of the philosophical probing. Proverbs represents reflected experience.

There are already connections between Gülen's wisdom and a Jewish wisdom ethic. There is a shared pedagogical intent, the transference of wisdom, knowledge and life skills to the next generation. Wisdom comes from reflection on life experience. We engage reflectively with everyday life and we gain knowledge and skills to make life work. Wisdom is praxis oriented, moral character is shaped and formed through experiential reflection and experiential ethics. As Gülen was open to the prophets, saints and writings of others, so the Jewish wisdom literature embodies a theological pluralism, open to wisdom beyond the conventional boundaries.

We can at this point formally summarize a shared approach to wisdom in which *hikma* and the Hebrew *hokmah* connect:

- Wisdom is reflection on lived experience or ordinariness.
- Wisdom insists that ordinariness is 'shot through with ethical significance and ethical outcomes'.²⁸
- Wisdom is speech, it is reflection and interpretation of experience communicated to the next generation.
- Wisdom is sustained, 'studied reflective judgment about reality', received wisdom for transmission so that the next generation can live well, safely, responsibly and happily.

The Jewish wisdom ethic has four other key characteristics. It is characterized by two ways each calling for choice. Proverbs 1–9 offers two explicit contrasts between 'woman wisdom' and 'woman folly.' There are sayings also about the wise or righteous person and the foolish or wicked person. These are two dynamic ways of living, and they are deeper than our frequent dualism of good and evil. In Israel's tradition the righteous are those committed to the way of justice in the world, who live justly and do justice. They are active for just and right relations, building God's peace on the basis of justice. The wicked or foolish are those who do injustice, exploit, oppress, manipulate others and who destroy relationships and social inclusion. The Jewish wisdom tradition is wise enough to know that 'us and them' identities are not a matter of pride, superiority or smugness. People must walk in the righteous way, act, do accordingly, and one can leave the righteous way at any time. The way of wisdom is an on-going choice, the freedom of human responsibility.

The second characteristic is that Jewish wisdom is theologically centered. The great acts of God as interpreted by Israel in her historical experience, the moments of

divine revelation, disclosure, epiphany, as Israel interpreted them, are missing from wisdom literature, but that does not mean that Jewish wisdom literature is secular. The concept did not exist in that wider world or time. God is not a gap to be filled in Jewish wisdom writings. The reflection on ordinary experience and the observed learning for life is from life in a world willed, ordered, sustained by God. Reflected experience is to connect with God's purposes for God's world. Jewish wisdom is common sense, and it is 'common sense permeated by God's will'.²⁹ Proverbs is a rich, complex collection of wisdom sayings, but what the book holds together is commonsense advice and celebration of mystery: 'the entire spectrum of wisdom teaching in the book of Proverbs has a shared agenda, namely to think, speak, and live in the world according to the given, demanding mystery of God the creator'.³⁰

The motto for wisdom learning in Proverbs is stated at the beginning of the book. It is a God-centered thematic motto: '*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom*' (Proverbs 1:7). The fear is not servile. It is not an image of cowering before God afraid to take a wrong step lest God pours out divine wrath or anger upon us and punishes us. It has been understood in that way, but perhaps that is more a projection of our violence and propensity for coercion to ensure moral conformity. Fear in Proverbs is rather humility and reverence. Human knowledge and wisdom are grounded in humility. As humans we have limits to our knowledge and understanding. We are finite and fallible. This too was Gülen's point in quoting the Prophet. We do not have the capacity to reflect on the Essence of God. We are in the presence of incomprehensible mystery. There are depths to God which are beyond our human intellects, imaginations and experiences.

When the Abrahamic faiths stress their monotheism, we may too often project a God who is not the one and only God but only and exclusively our God to the exclusion of all others who do not share our version of knowledge, conceptualization or wisdom. However, perhaps our monotheistic claims need to acknowledge the one God we do not and cannot fully know. There is a deep wisdom in knowing that we do not know. This also means that our human knowledge and knowing, which is also closely connected to issues of power, even domination, is before God relativize. Totalizing claims often prove to be fragile and our systems of knowledge, theology and thought often reveal in the complexities and experiences of life their provisionality. So the 'fear of the Lord' really is the beginning of wisdom.

At the same time wisdom is rooted in God the Other. In the Jewish wisdom tradition, 'It is a wisdom that is at the same time relentlessly Yahwistic, intensely ethical, and uncompromising in insisting on the world as Yahweh's creation'.³¹

The third characteristic follows. Jewish wisdom theology is a creation theology. With its almost scientific approach to observation and reflection the Jewish

wisdom tradition recognized order and regularity in life and the world. There are regularities of life that give order to reality. The many parts of creation are delicately related in a complex, interdependent web of life. God creates, orders, sustains and renews reality. To live with the grain of things, in relationship and partnership with reality, to observe wildlife, to look at the ants, says Proverbs, is to see a world as God intends it to be, fruitful, productive, safe, prosperous, peaceful and just. The creator has given us the gifts of well-being. 'Wisdom theology is theology reflecting on creation, its requirements, orders and gifts'.³² There is therefore, a reliability, regularity and coherence shaping a wisdom ethic, conduct and action that creates, builds and sustains peace.

A final characteristic of Jewish wisdom is that *hokmah* is feminine. In Proverbs 8–9 wisdom is personified. Woman wisdom is portrayed as present at God's primordial creation and the ordering of all things for good. Woman wisdom in Proverbs is both person and cosmic reality. It is playful poetry in Proverbs 8 and we cannot literalize poetry and its metaphors. Yet metaphors are the only way we humans can speak of God. Aware of that limitation on our human language, some have reflected on wisdom, *hokmah*, as Israel's God in female imagery. Others are disturbed by that, but perhaps we should be equally disturbed by God described in male imagery, especially when God is understood literally as male and, worse, when male is understood as God. A great deal of reflection is needed here, aware that the 'fear of the Lord' is the beginning of wisdom. There is a gender issue in our world, expressed in different ways in different cultures, often expressed in violence against women. Most religions appear to have gender problems. Yet if Israel's wisdom theology is a creation theology inviting us into responsible partnership and interdependence with creation, then however we interpret the surplus of meaning in Proverb's 'woman wisdom', there may also be something in God's purpose for the sexes and gender relations much deeper and richer than we have perceived to date.

In terms of resonance it may be felt that this latter characteristic of wisdom disconnects from Gülen. Wisdom as the way of righteous action, what Gülen called 'righteous deeds', is shared wisdom. So too is wisdom as theologically centered, Divine gift, human responsibility, the humility of recognizing our limitations when it comes to the mystery of God. Wisdom is also creation theology, as is Gülen's call to read the 'book of the universe'. Jewish wisdom and Sufi wisdom do understand one another, and there is a shared wisdom and a shared ethic, but wisdom as feminine? How seriously has the Jewish tradition taken its sacred text? There is no doubt room for a great deal of dialogue on the gender issues. Woman wisdom in Proverbs 8 will not go away, and texts always have surplus meaning. The editor of Gülen's two volumes on Sufism acknowledges a gender problem in translation, making every effort to make the translation gender-neutral, 'for every

aspect of Islam applies to both men and women... Islam is not a religion for men only, as is sometimes assumed by non-Muslims. Both sexes are equally responsible for their actions before God'.³³ The tone of these comments provides space for further shared reflection on gender relations, women's experience including how we language gender and the Divine.

A Christian Wisdom Ethic

The sacred writings which we may call the Christian Testament are a collection of gospels and letters trying to make sense out of a profound religious experience. It is an experience of God, first and last, and it is in some sense mediated experience. A group of Jewish women and men encountered a Jewish teacher whose teaching and way of life and praxis gave them a transforming and dynamic vision and experience of God. They did not believe that he was God. They were Jewish and no Jewish monotheist would ever have thought that about another human being. Their new experience of God, mystical and transformative of life and action was shared and it even travelled beyond the boundaries of Palestine and Jewish boundaries to key locations within the Roman Empire of which this God way of life and experience was deeply subversive. It was their encounter with the teacher called Jesus that somehow mediated their God vision and experience. What he said about God and his life story and practice gave meaning to the ultimate mystery known as God and made sense out of human life and existence within the social and political life of the all-pervasive Roman Empire.

When the second and third generations, now known as people of the Way and as Christians, reflected in their communities and wrote their gospels and letters, they were trying to articulate and make sense of their God experience. They also found as they reflected that they were able to do that by reflecting on and making sense of Jesus. Their reflected experience was that Jesus was key to their transformative and life-giving experience of God. All the writers of the Christian Testament, except one, were Jewish, Jewish monotheists who would never have equated or identified any historical human being with God. That would have been the worst form of idolatry and a defiance of the Jewish commandment to have no other gods before God and to worship only the God of creation and life. So in a new context and for a new and different set of circumstances, roughly in the second half of the first century, they wrote to help communities make sense of God, who had been mediated or encountered in Jesus' teaching and life praxis. From their Jewish religious tradition and scriptures they used all sorts of metaphors and thought-forms to give meaning to what they wanted to say about Jesus and primarily about God. From the riches of their Jewish, Abrahamic tradition they talked about Jesus as 'son of God', which as all good Jews knew was a way of describing a good Jew as a God-like person. They

never said in their writings, nor could they say that Jesus was ‘God the son’. Five and six centuries later, in Nicea, Chalcedon and Constantinople, now in modern Turkey, church councils did say that or appeared to say that. Ironically, most Western Christians have literalized these fifth- and sixth-century creedal formulations and been shaped by them rather than by the primary Christian sacred texts, the gospels and letters, but the Jewish world of the Christian Testament would never have used Greek philosophical categories or literalized them to speak of Jesus as ‘God the son’. ‘Son of God’, yes, in its Jewish sense, and as subversive of the same expression being claimed by the Roman emperor himself. As believing communities of resistance they were stating where their ultimate loyalty and way of life was, the God they had encountered in Jesus’ teaching and way and not the emperor or empire’s way of social, economic and military injustice, oppression, violence and coerced peace.

One of the key metaphors used by the writers of the Christian Testament was wisdom. These gospel and letter writers were steeped in Israel’s wisdom tradition and culture, and so they had no difficulty in portraying Jesus as a teacher of wisdom and as the wisdom of or from God. As a teacher of wisdom he taught important things about God, who God was and what God was like. Also in his way of life, his life praxis, he taught a way of life to be followed and lived, a counter-wisdom to that of the institutional Temple religion and the empire itself. Through stories and sayings, characteristic of the Jewish wisdom tradition, he spoke of a God who was all-loving and all-compassionate. He portrayed an indiscriminate God who makes the sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous (Matthew 5:45). This is followed in Matthew’s gospel with ‘*Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect*’ (Matthew 5:48). The thought of moral perfection, which is how these words are often heard, scares us, but behind the English and the Greek texts is the earlier Aramaic, the language of Jesus, which is more in keeping with the indiscriminate metaphors of sun and rain. Perfect really means ‘all-inclusive’ or ‘all-embracing’. Be all-inclusive or all-embracing as God is all-inclusive or all-embracing. It is a profound insight on the character of God and for the life praxis of those who would follow the way of God in the world. It is an ethic for enemies.

Stories about a lost son, lost sheep and lost coin, speak of a God who is all-merciful and all-compassionate, who does not wait for us to change our minds and leave our out-of-place existence and return from our self-destructive and community-destructive ways. Rather, the all-merciful and all-compassionate God seeks us out, as it were, lures us back to our true existence and meaning and embraces with forgiveness and acceptance.

Jesus the wisdom teacher also enabled those around him to glimpse and even experience the passion of God, God’s consuming interest and total commitment.

Jesus taught that God's passion in the world is justice. The passion for justice is what God is like and it is God's will and purpose for the world. This Divine passion for justice is the social form of compassion, and as the social form of compassion, justice is about politics, politics as the structure and structuring of human communities, from family to society as a whole.³⁴ That this political ethic, the ethic of justice is at the heart of the wisdom teaching of Jesus and his portrayal of God's passion, is not surprising. It is at the heart of the Jewish wisdom ethic and prophetic tradition. The Jewish Bible is pervasively political'.³⁵ The foreground of the entire Jewish scriptures and of the Christian Testament is successive empires, successive superpowers and the dominating and oppressive systems of social, economic, political and cultural injustice. The story of Israel and the early Christians is a story of struggle to live faithfully, ethically, out of alternative wisdom in a world dominated by abuses of power and injustice. The foreground to Muhammad's teaching and action is the same. In this world of injustice God's passion is justice, the social form of love rooted in the all-loving, all-compassionate God.

In this wisdom context Jesus did not talk about himself. Again and again he talked about the kingdom or reign of God. That was his consuming passion, God's Kingdom or action in the world of injustice, empire and domination systems. The Roman empire claimed to embody justice and bring peace, Pax Romana, but through violence, conquest and military force. Jesus the wisdom teacher taught counter-wisdom, that the alternative empire, kingdom or reign of God would bring justice and peace to a broken world. He taught those around him to pray for God's Kingdom, not in some other world, but 'on earth'. Prayer is both political and religious, praying for God's will to be done on earth, God's holiness, God's justice to be realized on earth. Wisdom, as Gülen also reminded us, is pure spirituality and continuous activism, mysticism and righteous deeds. All of which means prayer and action for a transformed world, entering into God's dream for the world, praying and working to bring an end to injustice and violence.

The inclusive and egalitarian nature of wisdom teaching is highlighted in Jesus' use of a banquet metaphor for God's Kingdom: '*Many will come from east and west and will eat with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of God*' (Matthew 8:11; Luke 13:28–29). There is room for everyone at God's table, enough for all at the all-inclusive banquet. The wisdom ethic is an ethic of justice and an ethic of hospitality, equality, inclusivity, not merely in religious terms, but as socioeconomic, political and environmental transformative vision.

When these Jewish writers of the Christian Testament reflected on their experience they also portrayed Jesus as the wisdom of God and wisdom from God. Here the wisdom metaphor was echoing Proverbs 8 with its image of wisdom personified. When they listened to the teaching of Jesus and observed his actions, they felt they

had encountered wisdom personified, wisdom embodied in a person's teaching and actions, and that experience of wisdom personified was ultimately an experience of God. In their real-life encounter or mystical encounter with Jesus they experienced *Sophia*—God, wisdom—God. Their language reflects the more developed personified wisdom metaphor in the Wisdom of Solomon, a wisdom book authored by someone in Alexandria, Egypt, probably half a century before the time of Jesus and written in Greek. As with *Hikma* and *Hokmah*, *Sophia* is feminine and with Proverbs 8 we are again in touch with feminine reality in close relationship to the Divine. The wisdom of Solomon 'presents us with a dramatic exhortation to seek justice. It is the gift of wisdom that makes it possible to live justly and to receive friendship with God'.³⁶ Wisdom shares the passion of God for justice and in friendship with God we live and practice the ethic of justice. It is in wisdom that the God-qualities of *Sophia* are most developed. There is an amazing text in which the qualities of wisdom reflect the very qualities and character of God.

*There is in her a spirit that is intelligent, holy,
unique, manifold, subtle,
mobile, clear, unpolluted,
distinct, invulnerable, loving the good, keen,
irresistible, beneficent, humane,
steadfast, sure, free from anxiety,
all-powerful, overseeing all,
and penetrating through all spirits
that are intelligent, pure and altogether subtle.* (Wisdom 7:22–23)

Sophia is relational entering into relationship with people. 'In every generation she passes into holy souls and makes them friends of God and prophets' (Wisdom 7:27b). All through the Book of Wisdom, *Sophia* 'has qualities and functions normally attributed to God'.³⁷ This Jewish monotheistic reflected experience of wisdom was so deep that she or he was writing of *Sophia* not simply as a personification of wisdom in feminine form, but primarily as a personification of God in feminine form. *Sophia* introduces us or discloses to us Divine reality imaged as a woman. It is this finer-tuned articulation of wisdom that shapes those key texts in the Christian Testament that speak of Jesus as the wisdom of God and wisdom from God.³⁸ These Jewish—Christian writers and faith communities were drawing on an active wisdom tradition to provide them with language or metaphors to interpret their deep experience of God through their encounter with Jesus. The wisdom metaphors provided language to interpret Jesus and make sense of him and their lives in the shadow of empire.

What is significant about the three key texts from Philipppians, Colossians and Matthew is that though they talk about Jesus in wisdom language, they are texts

about divine revelation. In the encounter with Jesus the authors and their faith communities have experienced God, the highest form of wisdom. In the teaching and praxis of Jesus they have experienced *Sophia*–God and have entered into friendship with *Sophia*–God.

Here I think we need to take another deep breath over the Christian *Sophia* language and even disconnect the Christological language of the Christian Testament from the Greek philosophical and metaphysical language of fifth- and sixth-century church councils in Asia Minor. The language of the Christian Testament is not metaphysical or literal. It is Jewish wisdom language and ‘In wisdom Christology the character of that encounter is frequently symbolized in terms of God being revealed’.³⁹ The Philippian and Colossian texts are doxological, the language of worship, metaphoric, poetic, ‘to the glory of God’. To literalize this language is to distort and abuse it. We are reading poetry, dealing with symbols and metaphors, not abstract conceptualizations. Poetry is the language of imagination, and in this language of wisdom Christology we encounter an imaginative expression of the experience of early followers of Jesus. The later church councils may have said or given the impression that Jesus was God or that he was God the Son, but that is not the language of the Christian scriptures. The language of profound experience can only be expressed in poetry and metaphors. In the teaching and praxis of Jesus, early followers experienced and encountered God. In imaginatively speaking of Jesus as the wisdom of God and wisdom from God they were saying that they encountered a revelation, disclosure of the nature of God and of the nature of human existence: ‘in Jesus is embodied and therefore revealed the very wisdom of very God. One encounters God in Jesus by encountering the consummation of God’s wise economy for the world which has been revealed in him’.⁴⁰ Their poetic Christologies were not ends in themselves. They were not writing dogmatic theology or shaping creeded formulations. In poetic and metaphoric language they were attempting to plumb the depths of their experience of God. The Christocentrism of the Christian Testament was ultimately Theocentric. To the question of what is God like, they said Jesus mediates an answer. Their experience was that God was encountered in Jesus. In Jesus they experienced *Sophia*–God, and the way of life that this transforming experience of God had set them on was a way that was meant to correspond with God’s wisdom. As people of *Sophia*–God they were to live the *Sophia* way, shaped by a *Sophia* ethic at the heart of which was God’s passionate justice, love, compassion, hospitality, equality and inclusivity.

Not So Much a Conclusion as a Continuing on the Way

Would Gülen recognize the wisdom ethic that emerges from the Jewish and Christian traditions? I think in his deep devotion to Sufism and commitment to its qualities and values, he would, as well as recognizing the wisdom and ethic in all traditions and worldviews. *Hikma*, *Hokmah* and *Sophia* in their respective languages, Arabic, Hebrew and Greek, are feminine and are therefore sisters together. They have a pedagogical intent, committed to education in wisdom as pervading every branch of knowledge and discipline, and above all as wisdom for life. There is shared commitment to growing knowledge and righteous deeds through the wisdom that is a gift from God. There is shared, diverse mystical experience that leads always to continuous activism. All of life is shaped by ethics, God's wisdom in practice, and in the dialogue of wisdom there is an Abrahamic ethic. For the Sufi, Jewish and Christian traditions justice is paramount, the social justice for which Gülen believes education is key, the same justice which drives and saturates the Jewish wisdom of Solomon, and the passion for justice which ordinary and oppressed people discovered from Jesus was the very passion of God. To be nurtured in wisdom all three traditions have reflected experience at their heart. In reflected experience we know God and enter into friendship with God and our wisdom, ethical praxis is rooted in the God, who is all-loving, all-forgiving, all-compassionate and all-just.

There is a shared wisdom with the rich, diverse nuances of its articulation and expression. There is an Abrahamic wisdom ethic, and a universal wisdom ethic, a lived wisdom with implications for the social and public life of the world. Since there is no value-free education, there is a shared wisdom ethic which can be at the heart of educational praxis, not just for young people but for all ages in a life-long learning process. Our shared wisdom and Abrahamic ethic can empower a new generation and a generational partnership to work for social justice and peace for all. There are, therefore, no conclusions but a continuing journey together.

A Theo-ethic of Social Action

All religions have a focus on the afterlife. If religion is about meaning making then humankind has always wanted to make some sense of death, dying and what is beyond. Sometimes expressions of religion seem to suggest that the afterlife is the sole focus and reason for faith, and, put crudely, religion can be presented as an insurance policy that covers the next world. If that is all there is to religion, the guarantee of life after death in some shape or form, then religion is otherworldly and escapist. More balanced expressions of religion are seeking to express meaning for this world as well as the next. Making sense out of this life is an important role for faith, as much, if not more, than making sense of death, dying and afterlife. For most people on the planet living in poverty and experiencing the suffering of violence and disease, it is a struggle to make sense of life as it is lived. Religion may have an afterlife dimension but the context in which religion is lived and practiced is in this life. Religion, therefore, has everything to do with social responsibility. Salvation does have to do with ultimate well-being and it has a great deal to do with well-being in the here and now. The Abrahamic faiths at their best recognize this, articulate it and translate it into social action.

Fethullah Gülen from his Islamic perspective has developed a strong theology of social responsibility. So too have the Jewish and Christian traditions, and this is not surprising because the Abrahamic faiths are not only monotheistic faiths but prophetic faiths, and the prophetic has to do with social realities, social vision and action. There is a given at the heart of each of these traditions that is about transformation, change and the making of a better world. Prophetic religions are strongly ethical religions, and the social ethics they articulate are rooted in their vision and experiences of God. There is therefore, no dichotomy between the social and the spiritual. They belong together as two sides of the one coin. If they are separated, and sometimes adherents of the Abrahamic traditions do separate them, then social action lacks transformative dynamic and sustainability. Spirituality becomes warped, escapist and otherworldly.

Gülen's Islamic Theology of Social Responsibility

There is no shortage of pessimists, East and West, in relation to social transformation in the world. Yet Gülen strongly believes 'that the three Abrahamic religions, Islam, Judaism and Christianity have the responsibility to construct a better world in the future'.¹ He goes further as a visionary and speaks of a 'second spring' where the gap between rich and poor will narrow, all kinds of discrimination disappear and basic human rights will be protected. Gülen believes that this is God's world and God will bring this new spring about. Underpinning it are four values or actions — compassionate love, dialogue, social justice and the acceptance of others.² It goes without saying that the four belong together and in a very real sense are the four pillars of social change. If compassionate love is about social solidarity, then there is a mutual acceptance, dialogue, which will have empathetic listening at the heart of it, all leading to social justice which is indispensable to peace in the world.

There is much talk of civilization, a clash of civilizations or a dialogue, but what is civilization? Empires and imperial powers have always tried to impose it on the always barbaric people they are seeking to dominate. They have often destroyed more authentic civilizations than the one they were imposing. Imperial civilization has often been militaristic, violent, consumerist, luxurious, at least for an elite few, and not a little dissipated. Gülen is more interested in a virtuous civilization, a civilization with values. 'What it really means is being civil and courteous, kind-hearted, profound in thought and respectful to others'. It is not about wealth, absolutist freedom, scientific achievement, modern transportation, vast urban development and ever higher buildings (which often belong to the financial and banking industries). Civilization is more than these, and it is 'folly and ignorance to identify civilization with them'.

Gülen puts morality and virtue at the heart of authentic civilization. 'If a civilization is not based on morality and virtue and nurtured in the pool of mind and conscience, it is no more than a passing flash of illuminations that serves a couple of rich people and excites some thrill seekers'.³ There is a great deal of delusion, therefore, around what the domination systems and norm makers think is civilization. For Gülen 'One becomes truly civilized only when all human virtues and potentialities have developed to the extent that they become second nature'. This raises the question as to how we develop second nature, human virtues and potentialities. Much of this for Gülen is through education, not only an educational curriculum that is robustly academic and scientific, but also a robust education in human values. This is not some kind of religious, evangelical wet blanket approach to life and living, creating societies that are claustrophobic or oppressive. Such do exist but Gülen's primary concern is with shared human values, not educating children, young people or adults in any kind of confessional religion. It is education in human values which

is liberating, civilizing and ultimately transformative at personal and social levels.

In a European world where aggressive nationalism developed in the nineteenth century and created the most violent continent ever in the twentieth century, and which dragged in much of the rest of the world, nation is a crucial issue. People are born into nations and though nation has become for many a cultural rather than a militaristic or political reality, identity and belonging also require virtues and ethics. Accepting cheating and trickery, or some might say social and political corruption, as norm or valued, is for Gülen an indication that a 'nation is suffering from something like terminal cancer'. Democracy matters for Gülen, and at the heart of that are relationships:

If the people of a nation can establish relationships as strong as those among family members, their nation will develop quickly. On the other hand, a nation whose people do not love and confide in each other cannot be considered a nation in the true sense of the word, and its future holds no promise.⁴

Building loving and confident community relations is essential to the health and well-being of any nation or society. Mistrust, suspicion, hatred, mutual prejudice and ignorance paralyze and destroy a society or nation. Social responsibility requires effort, commitment, advocacy and action to introduce, develop and sustain relational virtues and values.

Gülen speaks of 'righteous servants' who will inherit the world. The 'righteous' will have seven qualities or criteria, four of which are highlighted below.

Faith

Gülen places this first and foremost and draws on the Qur'an as showing the purpose of humanity's creation as belief in God. Humans are spiritual beings whose real quest is for spiritual fulfillment. This is the essence of being human, and by realizing this core part of our being human, we get to the inner reality of existence. Being in touch with the spiritual opens human beings to an inexhaustible source of power and that comes from a life lived towards God.

Overflowing with love

The Divine is love and the power source is love, and to live towards this love is to be surrounded by it or, in Gülen's words, to 'overflow with love'. The Divine love is a boundless and mysterious source of power, and as humans experience and know this source, so there is 'a deep love for humanity and creation'.

Embracing Science with Religious and Moral Values

Humanity is increasingly turning towards science and technology. Life is lived and shaped by scientific and technological discoveries and developments, but this is a world where a chasm has opened up between science and religion, where both have made ultimate truth claims, and we live with the dichotomy of either/or. The antagonism has become so deep that science has become heralded as ultimately liberating and rational. Religion has been characterized as non-scientific, irrational, superstitious, and anti-enlightenment. This has created a 'dark period of history'. The antagonism has been good for neither science nor religion. Scientific knowledge and the religious spirit need to be combined. Science, religious and moral values need each other if life is to be liberated and wholesome.

Re-evaluating the Established Views of Humanity

This also extends to life and the universe. Human beings need to explore the depths of existence. Life lived and the universe which is the context for life 'are three aspects of a single truth, each having a genuine color of its own'. A partial approach is disrespectful to our humanity and 'demolishes the harmonious composition of reality'. The 'Book of the Universe' is to be read, studied, evaluated. Humanity also needs to study, understand and obey the divine Revelation, the Sacred Book, for Gülen, the Qur'an. Reading, evaluating and re-evaluating both books, holding together science and religion is about bringing 'laudable virtues and a sound character' to all of life. That is ultimately liberating and transformative for personal, social and scientific life. For Gülen it is about the development of a collective consciousness rather than individual geniuses, a consciousness which in this generation, can 'give a better shape to the world'.⁵

The above can be seen as Gülen's sense of social responsibility. Virtues, values and ethics are essential to it, and his social responsibility is rooted in his faith or talk of God. Theology is important for Gülen and he can be described as a social theologian, or from within Islam it is possible to speak of Gülen's theology of social responsibility. Islam is familiar with a theology being described in this way.

In the Islamic theology, when an individual does a good action, or is encouraged to do a good action, he or she does not do it just because they are socially expected to but for the sake of God... social responsibility includes the concept of *rida*, or pleasing God, or doing for the sake of God only, with no expectation of personal advantage.⁶

Social responsibility is also described as 'the sense of responsibility before God, the creation, and human beings'.⁷ Christian theology has spoken of 'social gospel' where the emphasis has been less on confessional or doctrinal theology as an social praxis. Praxis has to do with action and reflection leading to renewed action. Praxis

may be described as reflective social activism in the context of theology or God. Gülen also expresses such a model. He is a social activist driven by a sense of social responsibility deeply rooted and motivated by his sense of God. It has been pointed out that Gülen is in the tradition of Nursi, who spoke of the three enemies of Muslims as ignorance, poverty and disunity. Nursi was concerned about defeating those enemies, and decades after him Gülen put the theories into action. He did this largely through educational initiatives which included encouraging wealthy people to establish schools and educational institutions. Muslims, for Gülen, are to be socially active. Social responsibilities are about working for justice and peace in the world.⁸

His theology is interdisciplinary in that it 'goes hand in hand with other contemporary social sciences, such as sociology, economics, and cultural anthropology, as well as ethics'.⁹ His theology of social responsibility, though, has three main sources:

The Qur'an

The Qur'an is his guidance and light and main reference point. He takes seriously an early exhortation in the Qur'an, '*There is no doubt that that this Qur'an is a guide for the pious*' (2:2). 'Therefore, divine imperatives that guide actions, as strongly presented in the Qur'an, constitute the main pillars of Gülen's theology of social responsibility'.¹⁰

The Prophet of Islam

Gülen looks to the exemplary character of the Prophet, and it is in the actions and practices of the Prophet that Gülen's theology also finds its roots. 'Therefore, in Gülen's theology, practice as a relationship between God, human beings and the world, is essential'.¹¹ Responsibility before God cannot ever be separated from responsibility before human beings.

The Cries of Others

To believe in God, in terms of praxis, is not enough merely as intellectual assent. It is a response to the cries of the poor and suffering. There is a social responsibility before God.

One loves everyone and everything for God's sake... The believer hastens to stop cries and responds to grievances, treats pains with antidotes and transforms the cries of people to laughter... The focus of the believer is always on 'we' rather than 'I'. Therefore, the believer is not selfish, but someone who thinks of others.¹²

In his theology of social responsibility, Gülen holds together piety and everyday routines and actions. There is no part of everyday life that is outside of God. Piety,

for Gülen, is not limited to the confines of a mosque. The earth is a mosque and so spirituality and social action are again two sides of one coin and cannot be separated. Piety, for Gülen, is ‘prayer, reflection and forgiveness’.¹³ Social responsibility is action, and Gülen is holding together, prayer, reflection, forgiveness and social action. This reflects the praxis model developed by the social sciences and by liberation theology in the Christian tradition, primarily in its Latin American expression.

It is in this context that Gülen has developed what might be called ‘a theology of *hizmet*’. The word ‘means service, but in reality it is a communitarian imperative for all conscientious people to serve fellow citizens and others who happen to be around you’.¹⁴ Hizmet may also be described as service to individuals, society, and religion.

Gülen’s vision of his religious tradition is Islam by conduct and Islam by product. In this Gülen is joining action, morality and self sacrifice. Muslims constantly are reminded that avoiding sin is not enough; rather, engaging to create a more humane world is required. Salvation means not only to be ‘saved from’ sinful activities, but also to be engaged already in the improvement of the world.¹⁵

Gülen’s theology of *hizmet* is service in the creating of a more humane world. He goes farther in seeing *hizmet* as the way of *jihad*. Jihad is often perceived by the Western world as a battle involving war and violence, but in Islam this is only a ‘lesser jihad’, pursued in self-defense to bring about peace and order in human society. It sounds more like the concept of a just war, which is questioned today by just war advocates and pacifists alike. For Gülen, making jihad is for tolerance. ‘If we don’t announce jihad for anything else, we should announce it for tolerance’.¹⁶ What Gülen is advocating is a jihad for tolerance, dialogue and co-operation among civilizations. Hizmet is service to this end and for this purpose. For Gülen:

The Islamic social system seeks to form a virtuous society and thereby gain God’s approval. It recognizes right not force, as the foundation of social life. Hostility is unacceptable. Relationships must be based on belief, love, mutual respect, assistance, and understanding instead of conflict and realization of personal interest.¹⁷

A Jewish Theology of Social Responsibility

Judaism was the first of the monotheistic religions. It laid the foundation for the monotheistic, prophetic and ethical religions. In a sense the roots of Christianity and Islam are in Judaism. Abraham is our shared father and Sarah our shared mother. Jews, Christians and Muslims are the children of Abraham. That does not mean we are the same, or that there is no daylight between the three faiths. There

are historical, cultural, symbolic, ritual and theological differences, and there are many commonalities, not least in the area of values and ethics. We speak with different accents within each of the three faiths. An imperative of the twenty-first century is to find a shared ethic, shared values which will enable the world to become a safer, better, more just and peaceful place. As prophetic religions, each has a social responsibility for all human and environmental life. It may be described as the humanizing of the human race and the healing of creation. Judaism has a theology of social responsibility.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks is a key Jewish voice in articulating that social theology. Judaism has a passion to change the world, not to make everyone Jews, but a passion for social justice and liberation, which is for all. With that kind of vision there is a keen sense of social responsibility. Sacks traces its roots to a key Jewish experience of God. God is transcendent. That is, God is not found within nature but beyond it. When Ancient Israel sensed the transcendence or otherness of God, they realized that all human institutions were relativized. No human institution or construct has ultimacy or permanency. God is radically free, therefore the human person created in God's image is also free. This too has social consequences.

Hierarchy, inequality, the corruptions of power, the exploitation of the weak, empirical conquest and the enslavement of peoples are not justified merely because they exist. In the first case a gap is opened up between 'is' and 'ought'. Not everything that is, is good. Not all that is done, is right. We can imagine a world different from the way it is now and has been in the past; and because we can imagine it, we can decide to act in such a way as to begin to bring it about... For the first time, religion becomes a world-transforming rather than a world-accepting force.¹⁸

The point for humankind is that being created in the image of a radically free God means being created free to be creative, which is to be change-makers in relation to history and society. Freedom, therefore, is responsibility, and so social responsibility is born, and it is an ethics of responsibility.

Sacks draws attention to four different kinds of ethical life:

- Civic ethic — readiness to die for one's city/country;
- Ethic of duty — strongly associated with hierarchical societies;
- Ethic of honor — common in militaristic societies;
- Ethics of responsibility — emphasis on love of God, humanity and of the categorical dignity of the individual as such, regardless of status or power.¹⁹

This is key to understanding Judaism and its Bible because, as Sacks suggests, the Hebrew Bible is ‘an extended essay on human responsibility’.²⁰

As Gülen drew his inspiration from the Qur’an, so Sacks goes to his sacred text, the Hebrew Bible, and from the Pentateuch (the first five Books of the Bible) he highlights four stories. His four stories are: Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Noah and the Flood, the Tower of Babel.

The stories are from the first eleven chapters of Genesis. They are not history. Ancient Israel knew that and had sufficient awareness of the power of myth to recognize the stories for what they were, and to write them in the first instance. They are more than history. They represent a search for meaning in history. They are, in fact, a philosophical drama in four acts, a sustained and tightly constructed exploration of the concept of responsibility.²¹

Adam and Eve is a story about the birth of the ethical life and the limits of freedom. Here is first principle ethics, only someone who is free can understand a moral law, and only a free agent can breach one. The story ends with a denial of responsibility.

In the Cain and Abel story drama descends into tragedy. Cain murders Abel and denies moral responsibility. He also tries to rationalize his actions. He actively denies accountability. He will not accept morality, and the story acknowledges the connection between religion and violence. The first murder was connected with an act of worship.

In Act 3 Noah is portrayed as righteous and perfect, perhaps one of the righteous servants, to use Gülen’s language. Yet he ends up an embarrassment to his children. Adam and Eve were naked and ashamed. Noah is naked and unashamed. Noah is full of moral integrity. Noah has a personal righteousness, but there is no impact or connection with those around him. Noah fails to exercise collective responsibility. He cannot survive while the rest of the world drowns. He saves himself, but did not succeed in the end.

Act 4 is the Tower of Babel. God creates a world of order. The Hebrew word ‘order’ is used five times in the story, but Babel is confusion. They build the enormous tower and overreach themselves. It is a commentary on the human desire to be God or take God’s place. Babel is the failure to recognize that we are answerable to something or someone beyond ourselves. Responsibility comes from the word ‘response’, response to another. Human beings are responsible, and since ethics are never private, it is social responsibility.

Genesis I–II is an exploration of responsibility and the rest of the Pentateuch continues the exploration. The Hebrew Bible is a major exploration of moral responsibility, not only on a personal basis, but also moral responsibility within societies and nations.

Within this biblical exploration is another key theme, that of covenant. The Hebrew Bible is an exploration of moral responsibility and a vision of a covenanted and morally responsible society. Sacks draws attention to two political theories within Judaism. There is the theory of the state which is sketched in the Book of Deuteronomy and detailed in Samuel. If Ancient Israel, a confederation of tribes, wants a king, they will become a state and at a very high price. Centralization will mean a transfer of rights and powers to the state, but there was also the element of power structures as a necessary evil. With the appointment of a king, Israel became a state.

However, the other political theory is earlier, when Israelite society came into being at Mount Sinai. There was a crucial difference — what Sacks describes as the state created by social contract and society created by a social covenant.²²

The social contract has to do with rights, power and self-interest. Covenant is centered on three very different words. In English they are translated as justice, righteousness and loving-kindness.

Justice

Sacks translates this roughly as ‘justice as reciprocity’ — as you do, so shall you be done to. All are equal under the law, wrong is punished and wrongs redressed. It is the universal minimum of a just society. Justice in this sense is the rule of law under which all are equal.

Righteousness

This is social or distributive justice. For Ancient Israel it was an attempt at the creation of a welfare state and key to it is economics. Covenant is essentially an economic vision, and the vision of righteousness is of a republic of free and equal citizens. There is a recognition that all things belong to God and are therefore held in trust. It is also the practice of social and distributive justice. Society is built on social responsibility or moral responsibility.

Loving-kindness

English translations also have ‘kindness’ or ‘steadfast love’. It is covenantal love, kinship love extended to society where we are all members of a family or children of the one God. The Hebrew Bible’s welfare legislation is one which is not based on

rights and obligations, but in this sense goes beyond the letter of the law, beyond equity and reciprocity. It is rooted in compassion, or social solidarity, a quality of relationship shared where the poor, widow, orphan and stranger are brothers and sisters. Loving-kindness, steadfast love, compassion are the essence of humane, family, communal relationships.

This is a covenantal society. As Sacks puts it, 'A covenant is not held in place by power but by an internalized sense of identity, kinship and loyalty'.²³ It is a vision of society built on justice and compassion, and this is also why Judaism was so strong on education. Festivals, rituals, symbols, prayer and the reading of the Torah were educational and about passing on ideals, vision and the sense of ethical and moral responsibility from one generation to another. Education is an act of social responsibility, which is why education in values, ethics and virtues is so crucial.

For Judaism the ethics of social responsibility and social action were rooted in the experience of God. At the core of the Hebrew Bible is the Exodus story, the political, economic and cultural liberation of an enslaved, oppressed people from a dominating superpower. Whatever we can or cannot know of the historicity of the Exodus story is neither here nor there. The story as it is now read in the Hebrew Bible is a profound theological reflection, told in a theological mythical style. Whether it happened in this way or not, it is true. God is the Just One, the God of justice who hears the cries of the poor, oppressed and exploited, and God liberates. Ancient Israel's identity and vision of God, or its social theology, is shaped by the Exodus story. Crucial also to the story is the event on Mount Sinai which tells the story of the giving of the Ten Words or Commandments. What Moses gave to the people, according to the story, was a moral code. A covenant was made between God and people, a pledged relationship between God, the Just One and liberation, and a society of people now pledged to each other and social responsibility. Israel understood this as Revelation and in that founding moment 'Revelation creates a republic of free and equal citizens under the sovereignty of God'.²⁴ Covenant was a radical social vision. It was the basis of a Jewish theo-ethic, the root of its theology of social responsibility.

A Christian Theology of Social Responsibility

The teaching of the Christian Testament on social responsibility is rooted in the Hebrew Bible. All of its authors, apart from one, were Jewish. The early Jesus Movement, which began with Jesus, was one of many Jewish reform movements at that time and was a reinterpretation of the core paradigms of exodus, exile and covenant, and the social values of these paradigms for a new first-century situation. By the fourth and fifth centuries the Christian church had cut itself adrift from its Jewish roots, and it was only in the second half of the twentieth century that the

Christian ecclesial community began to recover its deep Jewish roots, thanks to dialogue. The gospels, letters, Acts of the Apostles and Apocalypse all give expression to a theo-ethic of social responsibility. Two particular texts are worth exploration.

Before exploration, there are two temptations to which the Christian faith in history has been prone. Jews and Muslims may also recognize them as all three faiths have been susceptible to their lure:

Privatization

Walter Brueggemann, the leading Christian interpreter of the Hebrew Bible describes both as 'pervasive temptations in the church concerning the Bible'.²⁴ Privatization of the faith is because of Western individualism and the escape into otherworldliness. The Bible is read as a guide to personal or individual life, and/or faith is the promise of life hereafter. To read the Bible in this way is to 'disregard the powerful communal dimensions of the text'. Salvation is then personal salvation or the guarantee of heaven while ignoring the social and political context or foreground of the Hebrew Bible and Christian Testament.

Over time this approach to the Bible has so skewed the scope of the Bible that many in the church are scandalized when it is suggested that the Bible lives at the interface of the great issues of war and peace, health care delivery, economic justice and management of the creaturely environment.²⁵

Politicization

Given the socio-political foreground to the biblical text, it may seem odd to suggest that politicization is a pervasive temptation for the church. The Bible and faith are concerned with social responsibility and action, but politicization is when the church is closely aligned with the dominant political power. It is when the church and the state are inseparable and when religion becomes the legitimizing authority for state power. It happens also when faith becomes identified with nationalism. Such politicization of the Bible denies the otherness and mystery of God who cannot be identified with any political or economic construct or nationalist identity. It also denies the future orientation of much of the Bible, a future life that relativisms all humanly designed utopias. God is never a fully committed partner to any of our projects and 'the core biblical metaphor of 'Kingdom of God' cannot be immediately equated with any social construct we may have devised'.²⁶

The Praxis of the Kingdom of God

Matthew's Gospel is by far the most Jewish of the four Gospels in the Christian Testament. It was written for a Jewish community which was part of the Jesus Movement. A core metaphor, used repeatedly in the teaching of Jesus was the

‘Kingdom of God’ or Reign of God, a way of speaking of God’s presence and action in the world. The metaphor is core to Matthew, Mark and Luke, though Matthew writes of the Kingdom of Heaven. This is not an otherworldly reference, a kingdom in the afterlife, but a Jewish way of not speaking the name of God. God cannot be named, so this Gospel uses ‘Kingdom of Heaven’. The main point was that Jesus was remembered, not by the first three Gospels as God, an identity that was only made in the Councils of the fourth and fifth centuries. No Jewish writer in the first century would or could have equated Jesus with God; Jesus, rather, pointed away from himself to the presence and action of God in the world and wanted people to recognize that presence and action in the here and now, as well as expressing a hope for an active, liberating presence in the future. What would this Kingdom of God look like and what would the praxis of the Kingdom look like?

The best expression of the praxis and lifestyle of the Kingdom of God is expressed in Matthew 5:1–12, known as ‘the Beatitudes’. All of them are rooted in the Hebrew Bible, especially in the prophet Isaiah. Jesus was giving fresh meaning to what a Jewish prophet had said out of the exile experience of the Jewish people centuries before. The Kingdom of God is recognizable in core values and lifestyle qualities. An ethical lifestyle is God-blessed or even God-like. Four Kingdom values are worth highlighting:

The ‘*meeek*’ are God-blessed. The problem is that ‘meeek’ has become such a weak word in English denoting a weak even somewhat spineless person, but Matthew’s word really means non-violence. Those who participate in God’s Kingdom, are God-blessed and God-like, are those who live in the world non-violently.

The ‘*merciful*’ are those who live compassionate lives and live for compassionate societies. The Kingdom of God is not a punitive community, but a community where social solidarity and social empathy are practiced. Punishment of wrongdoing has a place but it is not, nor ever the last word.

Kingdom practice is expressed through ‘*those who hunger and thirst for justice*’. Living in the Galilee of the time of Jesus was to know the desperation of hunger and thirst. Roman imperialism saw to that, but those who in the face of great and violent social injustices, hunger and thirst with desperation for social and distributive justice are engaged in the praxis of the Kingdom of God.

The flip-side of hungering and thirsting for justice is active peacemaking. The Jewish tradition never separates justice and peace. There is not one without the other. There is no peace without social justice, and there is no practice of justice that does not bring peace. Active peacemaking is the sign of the Kingdom of God or God’s presence and action in the world. By describing the peacemakers as the

children of God, Jesus the Jew was using a familiar Jewish way of describing the most God-like people, or those who are very close to God.

Non-violence, mercy and compassion, justice and peace are the core values, ethics and praxis of God's Kingdom. All of these are social values and are about the praxis of social responsibility.

The other text from Matthew's Gospel is the Lord's Prayer or the 'Our Father'. (Matthew 6:9–13) It is a prayer that most Christians pray in every liturgy or act of worship. Like the Beatitudes, every petition is deeply rooted in the Jewish tradition, and echoes and parallels are found in the Hebrew Bible. It is a very Jewish prayer and a prayer which is taught as a model prayer of God's Kingdom. Like the Beatitudes it embodies Kingdom praxis and an ethics of social responsibility.

What makes the prayer very remarkable, in the context of interfaith dialogue, is that it has no Christology or Trinitarian emphasis. It says nothing about Jesus and nothing about God as Trinity, but classical Christology and a doctrine of the Trinity were theological constructs of the fourth and fifth centuries and were constructed in a world whose thought forms had no relation to those of the Jewish world of Jesus and the Christian Testament. There is a disjunction between these worlds, something which Christians are slowly, and in institutional religions, very slowly beginning to realize. The Lord's Prayer is a Jewish prayer that can be prayed by any of the Abrahamic traditions.

It might be described as expressing the piety of God's Kingdom. This is how participants in the Kingdom of God pray.

It begins with God, God's otherness, kingdom, will and holy purpose. Its opening lines are expressed in classical Jewish poetry, the use of parallelism, or giving something a double or even triple emphasis. God is addressed as '*Father*', an expression which is found in the Jewish tradition. It is not a description of God as male, nor a suggestion that male is norm. The Roman Emperor described himself as Father, and the prayer is taught by Jesus in a Roman-occupied territory. Ultimate loyalty in the world is not to the Emperor or Empire but to the radically different '*Father*' who is in heaven, who is radically other in relation to all other leaders, powers and political systems. To pray the opening words of this prayer is to relativize every human power and system, including religious ones. The Kingdom of God can be and would have been understood in the world of Jesus as the Empire of God, a very different empire from the Roman or any other empire or domination system.

Yet this is not piety that takes people out of the world. It expresses piety that is socially responsible. There is a petition for '*daily bread*' and, in a situation of brutal

poverty and hunger, that was a desperate cry from the heart and the stomach. People in Galilee had little bread and struggled to survive. It was a prayer for bread enough for today, and it was for 'us', not for 'me'. It was for bread to feed community, shared bread, and it was bread in responsible partnership with God and for a partnership with each other.

The prayer also prays for release from debts. The English translation, 'Forgive us our trespasses' misses not only the lexical significance of the words, but more significantly misses the prayer's rootedness in the Jewish jubilee tradition. The prayer at this point has suffered from privatization. The language is economic and 'trespasses' are really economic debts. In the Galilee where Jesus taught this model prayer, ninety-five percent of the population lived well below the subsistence level and, because of taxation imposed by the Roman imperial power, the local puppet King Herod and the religious institution in Jerusalem, this was a debt-laden society. Debt like bread was a matter of desperation because debt and poverty were destructive of human lives, family systems and communities.

The word '*forgive*' in the Lord's Prayer is the word '*release*' from the jubilee text of the book of Leviticus in the Hebrew Bible. It was the jubilee practice in Ancient Israel of releasing people from debt every seven years and enabling a society to begin again on an equal basis. It was a way of avoiding a permanent underclass. In Jewish terms, it was a covenantal, socially responsible society. When Jesus gave his movement a model prayer addressing a God who could not be equated with any imperial or political system, and who was concerned with bread and debts, he gave a prayer in which piety and social responsibility belong together.

It is on key texts like these that a Christian theology of social responsibility is developed and is a theo-ethical praxis. The Abrahamic traditions may speak in different accents, but they do share a common root. As prophetic faiths they are at their best with a theological praxis of social responsibility. There is no opting out of society or the world, and though there is a concern with the afterlife, each of the faiths is deeply concerned for and committed to this life. Prayer and action are not separated. Praxis and service are central. None of these faiths is a political project but they are committed to mercy, compassion, justice and peace as core values in the public square. For Jews, Christians and Muslims there is no faith without social responsibility.

Non-Violent Values, Actions and Strategies

It is now a truism to say that we live in a global village. In our lifetime the planet has shrunk. We may still complain about the length of the flight from London to Auckland, but just over a century ago when convicts, sometimes for very minor crimes, were transported from Ireland or Britain to Tasmania or Victoria, Australia, it took six to eight weeks by boat. Even in the 1950s immigrants were unlikely to return. Today's world, no matter where the starting point, is closer. Travel, communications, internet and the burst of technological progress have created the global village. Not many generations ago, people would not have travelled far, only a few kilometers in a lifetime. Now we can leave from anywhere and be at a farthest destination next day.

As modern colonialism collapsed in the twentieth century, independence was more often replaced by interdependence. Life is now lived in a world of increased interaction and growing interdependence. It has become impossible in today's world for a nation or an ethnic group to live in isolation. In the face of the technologies that have drawn us away from isolationism into greater interdependency, ethics have not always been able to keep pace with technological and scientific development. Slower still would seem to be the building of human relations. The majority of the world's citizens still suffer from unacceptable levels of violence, war and poverty. The clash of civilizations thesis seemed to set up an East–West, Christian–Muslim conflict. The thesis has not become a self-fulfilling prophecy, not yet, though it is not unlikely. This is not to underplay the role of extreme religio-political forces in both east and west, which rather undermines the secularist thesis. For better and worse the world is still a religious world, but all of this does make a dialogue of civilizations an imperative. It also means taking seriously the East–West relationship of colonialism and recognizing, especially in the west, that every Arab nation has a colonial past, still in some ways present, and that the legacy of the Great War and its peace treaties are still being worked out in uprisings and demands for the end to corrupt politics and tyranny as well as the demand for authentic democracy. It is difficult for a largely Muslim East to not see the West through the prism of crusades and colonization. For all the global shrinkage, there is still a great need for human maturity of mind and spirit to enable global citizens to live in peace, build peace, nurture and sustain it.

Peacebuilding in Gülen's Islamic Perspective

Islam, like Judaism and Christianity, has suffered from a politicization of its beliefs and texts. The outcome of this has been violence in the name of the respective monotheistic religions. This is not to say that the sacred texts have nothing to say to political and economic issues, but when they are read from a politicized, ideological perspective, violence and domination can be justified in the name of God or sacred text. This is the problem with ethnically-based or nationalistically-based readings. With the rise of nationalism in the nineteenth century 'the Qur'an had received more Arabicized readings'.¹ Part of the rise of nationalism was Zionism, which then became a prism for reading the Hebrew Bible, especially its 'land' texts. European nationalism entered the twentieth century in aggressive and militaristic mode, with imperial powers going to war with each other in 1914, much of it from a Christian and religious perspective. The 'Christian' God featured large in the Great War, and Allah was core to the Ottoman involvement. In a real sense all sides saw it as a holy war.

Gülen is conscious of the dangers and distortions of a politicized Islam. He does not believe that the Qur'an is apolitical. Islam, after all, addresses the whole of life and all aspects of life, and this includes politics. However, he is clear that politics is not a vital principle of religion, even though some Qur'anic verses are related to politics.

To consider the Qur'an as an instrument of political discourse is a great disrespect for the Holy Book and is an obstacle that prevents people from benefiting from this deep source of divine grace.

There is no doubt that the Holy Qur'an, through its enrichment of the human soul, is able to inspire wise politicians and through them to prevent politics from being like gambling or merely a game of chess.²

This is not Gülen the social or political quietist, but someone who sees the deeper meaning and spiritual senses and values that are the heart of the Islamic tradition. This is the larger and deeper world than politics, and it shapes and drives Gülen's peaceful spirit and commitment to peacebuilding. Gülen sees peacebuilding as a religious task, one that is rooted in the deep spiritual senses and values of his Islamic faith, and the Qur'an is his primary source:

And if they (the enemies) incline to peace, incline to it also, and put your trust in God. Surely He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing (Sura 8:61).

There is a recognition in the Sura that people may find themselves at war with

others. The Qur'an, though, seems to advocate a just war position. However, peace is primary, and Ali Ünal's comment on this Qur'anic verse is that 'Muslims are peaceful and that they must live peacefully and be representatives of the universal peace'.³ There is a Qur'anic obligation to live peacefully in relation, not just to other Muslims, but to all people:

God does not forbid you, as regards to those who do not make war against you on account of your religion, nor drive you away from your homes, to be kindly to them, and act towards them with equity. God surely loves the scrupulously equitable (Sura 60:8).

Kindness and equity are to characterize Muslim relationships with all people. A war of self-defense or a just war is permissible, but ultimately Muslims are to live in peace and to be scrupulously equitable.

Building a lasting peace is essential in Islam, and all kinds of unjust aggression are prohibited. Through the peaceful spirit of Islam and without violence or clashing with other civilizations and religions, Muslims are called to convey the Divine messages peacefully for the sake of upholding truth, prosperity, and enlightenment for the entire human race.⁴

Not only does the Qur'an make many references to peace, but peacemaking and peacebuilding have been characteristic from the early beginnings of Islam. The Prophet had a reputation for non-violence and peacebuilding skills, so much so that the leader of Medina asked him to build peace among the rival tribes that had engaged for centuries in war and violence.

Gülen is firmly in this peacebuilding tradition. Like many who are committed to peace, he is not only shaped by his religious spirit, but by his experience of growing up in a conflictual Turkish society. Context shapes many peacebuilders. Gülen developed his theology of peace at a time when Turkey was engulfed by chaos and anarchy. There was an armed conflict between communists and nationalists and in two decades ten thousand people died in the conflict. Violence and tragedy were experienced within families, especially where family members were involved on both sides, fighting against each other. It was in this context that Gülen developed his theology of peace and it grew out of his activism at the time for peace. On the basis of his faith he sought to build peace between rival groups. What he sought was order, peace and love in Turkish society.

Gülen's Theology of Peacebuilding

Gülen envisions an ideal world. His ideal world is a place where

There is no bullying, no greed, no quarrelling, no distrust, no lies, no oppression and no deception. On the contrary, there is chivalry, tenderness, the efforts of revival, the love for life, kindness and dialogue, respect for truth, trust, acknowledgement of kindness and generosity, the spirit of righteousness, justice, and the following of the right path.⁵

A great deal of reflection is needed on Gülen's ideal world. Ideals are important and there is always a place for a vision to drive actions for peace. At least two questions stand out. 'The love for life' is counter to the culture of death which drives violence and war. It is a culture of death which portrays dying in a war as supreme sacrifice and which makes heroes or martyrs out of those who give their lives in the violent cause. Not only is this about morally justifying death through violence or war and justifying the cause, it is a culture in love with death and dying. A glorification of death and dying in the national or partisan cause is claimed as a high moral ground, and in some traditions a glorified death required or blessed by God. Gülen advocates a love for life, which is a very different culture that at the very least entails loving the other's life and one's own and loving creatively and imaginatively for the common good.

The 'spirit of righteousness' and 'justice' are also key to the ideal peaceful society. These ideals are rooted in the Qur'an: *'God's love for the scrupulously equitable'*. Right relations in the world are based on equity and justice. Perhaps loving life and the other can be understood as the commitment to and practice of equity and justice.

In building this kind of peaceful world, Gülen is conscious of the power of hatred. Hatred for Gülen is like a destructive flood which destroys trust and relationships, distorts the good and ultimately destroys life. There is also no peacebuilding without patience. Peacebuilders 'have to be patient and uninfluenced by the trend of hasty and sloganeering politics'.⁶ Politics may look for quick fixes and delude by the façade that peace has arrived through slogans. One is reminded of the Hebrew prophet Jeremiah, who complained of the political and religious leaders of his day, crying *'Peace, peace'* when there was no peace. From difficult personal experience Gülen himself knows the bitter opposition to peacebuilding. In the 1990s when he was involved in engaging with different ethnicities and religious traditions, extreme secularists and extreme Muslims strongly opposed him. This forced him in the end for health reasons, and also to avoid conflict, to leave Turkey for the United States of America. He was up against destructiveness and anarchy. There were, he felt, forces 'injecting violence and hatred into hearts that beat with love'.⁷ Gülen's theology of

peacebuilding was hammered out on the anvil of hatred and violence, which is very different from theologies of peace worked out in an armchair or academic tower. What has emerged through his life experience has some key characteristics:

Hope

Gülen is hopeful about the future of humanity. He clearly sees peacebuilding as a global movement or as ‘rivers of love’ already flowing around the world: ‘And in every corner of the world, they are creating islands of peace for stability and harmony’. For him as a Muslim, the teaching of the Qur’an is essential and crucial to this. Gülen’s metaphors are imaginative and poetic, ‘rivers of love’ and ‘islands of peace’. Hope is born through metaphors, through the imaginative and poetic.

No Revenge

Gülen sees no place for revenge in peacebuilding. He is unequivocal about peace without and beyond revenge.

We will not harm those who persecute us. We will not seek an eye for an eye. We will never curse them. We will not break hearts, and in the manner of Yunus [Emre, the famous fourteenth-century Turkish poet] we will invite everyone to love... As a believer, I promise I will never shun any person, and I will not persecute those who have transgressed against me.⁸

To seek revenge would be to meet hatred with hatred, to increase the spiral of bitterness and violence and to push peace further away.

Forgiveness

For Gülen, forgiveness is a prerequisite for peace as well as for being human. There is no peace without forgiveness. There is a broad consensus among Islamic scholars that their religious tradition carries within it rich resources for peacebuilding strategies. Among many principles is forgiveness.⁹ Having no place for revenge, Gülen makes forgiveness essential to his theology of peacebuilding. Relationships matter, and in violent conflict situations they need to be restored and put right. Peace requires letting go of bitterness and hatred and a refusal to allow interpersonal relationships to be dominated by bitterness, hatred and revenge. In terms of how Muslims relate to the Western world and history and to the negative experience that millions of Muslims have had of the Crusades and their legacy and of colonization, Gülen’s generosity towards those historical tragedies is in effect forgiveness in action.

We are resolved not to remember those events and not to give an opportunity for the rebirth of animosity. We strongly encourage the confining of historical mistakes within ... history books so as not to resurrect feelings of animosity among people.¹⁰

Love

This is another essential component of peacebuilding for Gülen. Along with compassion, love is needed, more than water and air. He sees love as a weapon that can be effectively used against violence and violent actions. Not only that, but love is grounded in the human spirit, and it is the supreme guidepost for the journey through life. It also has the power to change and transform oneself, others and violent situations.

In a time when people are defeated by their sense of revenge and animosity, when the masses are driven into struggles and wars, when truth is silenced before force, when those who wield power behave as tyrants against those who disagree with them ... we once again say 'love'. I believe that love has the capacity to change the rhythm of our life.¹¹

Compassion

Love and compassion go together, and together in Gülen's theology are essential for peacebuilding. Gülen not only applies this quality to humankind, but to everything living and created. Compassion is rooted in the essence of God. 'Compassion is the beginning of being; without it everything is chaos... The universe can be considered a symphony of compassion'.¹² Compassion, of course, takes us to the heart of the Qur'an, and without it the conflicts of the world cannot be resolved or peace realized in the world.

Gülen not only sees these components of peacebuilding at the heart of his Islamic tradition, they are at the heart and essence of all religions. Whilst recognizing this universality of values, he himself has drawn on the best theological traditions of Islam. With consistency he refers to hope, forgiveness, love and compassion as the essential elements of faith-based peacebuilding. This, of course, runs completely counter to a Western media portrayal of Islam and a widely held and biased Western perception of Islam. Important strategies for peacebuilding in the world require dialogue and education. These two strategies can counter ignorance, misunderstanding, misinformation, hatred and violence. Gülen, therefore, is deeply and actively committed to dialogue and education as important and indispensable strategies for faith-based and value-based peacebuilding. Are the best theological traditions of Judaism and Christianity equal to the task?

Peacebuilding in Jewish Perspective

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks claims that the Hebrew prophets were the first to conceive of peace, not victory, as an ideal. In relation to all religious traditions this is significant, especially for the monotheistic traditions. Judaism, Christianity and Islam make much of the prophets and the prophetic tradition, and each would see itself as a

prophetic tradition. Peace rather than victory as an ideal may well be foundational to the three religions that account for over half of the world's population. In connection with the claim Sacks also points out that the prophets

were not pacifists, and they recognized the necessity for wars of self-defense, but it remains stunning to discover that God tells David he may not build the Temple because 'you have shed much blood'. His military prowess, which would have made him the ideal person to build a temple in any other country, is a disqualification here.¹³

As in Christianity and Islam there is a just-war position, though it is by no means universally held. It has also become increasingly difficult in a nuclear era to justify a just war where not only would win-lose be catastrophic and unimaginable, the potential for lose-lose goes beyond human comprehension. Significantly, from the Hebrew prophetic perspective the warrior David has too much blood on his hands to allow him to build a sacred place. There is a prophetic disconnect between war and God.

Judaism is a lasting moral-ethical revolution born out of challenging superpowers, empires and domination systems. This is the heart of the Hebrew Bible story. It begins with protest against, resistance to and eventually liberation from the oppression of the Egyptian empire. Not only was this resistance to and liberation from the technological domination of a superpower, it was a rejection of the ideology that peace only comes through victory and that war is the norm and what the violence of war or revolution achieves. It was an ethical revolution that was introduced to humankind by the Hebrew prophets. It was an ethical high water mark also in that it recognized that power often develops a social order for the benefit of the few and the enslavement of the many. All empires do that, as does any form of political hegemony or domination system. So Exodus became the normative narrative of resistance and liberation for Ancient Israel and remains in Judaism the key motif in the face of social orders where there is little or no freedom and equality.

Crucial to this Jewish insight also is the ethical perspective that peace does not come from conquest, assimilation or uniformity:

The value of peace flows directly from that of difference. For peace in the Judaic sense will come not when all nations are conquered (as in tribalism) or converted (as in universalism) but when, under God's sacred canopy, different nations and faiths make space for one another...

Great harm has always been done to the world by religions when they seek to impose their truth on others by force, or when they treat those who do not share their truth as less than equal citizens.¹⁴

Religions too can behave as imperialist powers or domination systems and have at times been prepared to back the sword or the bomb to impose a 'civilized way of life' or values on those who need to be conquered or defeated in the process. Homogeneity does not seem to be in God's DNA and Ancient Israel recognized this in its experience of the sacred. Peace flows from difference and peacebuilding accepts, affirms and nurtures difference. The oneness of monotheism has sometimes been understood as the cultural, religious and political oneness of people. 'One God, one faith, one empire' has echoed in history, but imperial monotheism, including the religious version, is a distortion of monotheism. Ethical monotheism recognized the reality of the many, of difference, and that peace flows from difference, not from conquest or domination.

Sacks believes that the Hebrew prophetic concept of peace as an ideal, not victory, is revolutionary. This is especially true when the vision of peace is viewed in the context of the biblical world. In a world where mythology was a characteristic of every culture, 'conflict was written into the structure of the cosmos'. The various mythologies and writings were full of stories of great battles and heroes. 'Military virtues were the proof of masculinity and strength'.¹⁵ This too was the world with which we began the twentieth century. It was the dominant worldview of the Great War in 1914. It was not until the world went to war again and after yet more millions of deaths in industrialized killing that European mind-sets in particular were sobered. One of the responses to a half-century of industrialized warfare was the foundation of the United Nations. Opposite its New York building are inscribed the words of the Hebrew prophet Isaiah:

*They shall beat their swords into ploughshares,
Their spears into pruning hooks.
Nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
Neither shall they learn war any more* (Isaiah 2:4).

That this prophetic ideal or vision of peace was already core to the Hebrew tradition in the eighth century BCE is shown in its use by a prophetic contemporary with Isaiah, the prophet Micah. Micah adds:

*They shall sit, every man under his vine and under his fig tree,
And none shall make them afraid,
For the mouth of the Lord of Hosts has spoken* (Micah 4:4–5).

It is a vision of peace where weapons are turned into implements of agriculture, ensuring that people are fed rather than killed, where people learn peace rather than war, and where people feel safe and secure, and fear is removed from the social order.

Sacks, though, points out that Judaism pioneered two concepts of peace. The prophetic is the ideal, but while humankind always needs vision and ideals, it also needs strategies and ways of peace. In the second century CE, a millennium later than Isaiah and Micah, Jewish rabbis came up with the 'ways of peace'. They are positive obligations relating to food, illness and seeing to the burial of the dead. These basic human needs and rights are the obligation and responsibility of Jewish people towards all others, especially in situations of civil strife. They are obligations to avoid animosity. They are practical, pragmatic ways and strategies for peace.

As Sacks points out, these are not on the grand level of the prophetic vision, but they are as original. The prophets articulated a utopian peace, which is always needed. What the second-century rabbis did was to point up a non-utopian peace, a pragmatic strategy for peacemaking and peacebuilding. Sacks describes the latter as 'a programme for peace in an unredeemed world'.¹⁶ The 'ways of peace' in terms of strategies and concrete, practical, human actions are also needed if peacebuilding is to become a reality. Referring to the utopian and non-utopian approaches to peace, Sacks says that

The first is inspirational, visionary, hope-giving. The second is a precise programme for good community relations. The trouble with the Isaiah passage is that it hasn't happened yet and is unlikely to do so within the foreseeable future... The formula for the sages did happen for the latter part of twenty centuries, and within limits it worked.¹⁷

Again we need the grand, poetic, hope-filled visions of peace, but we also need lesser, more immediate goals, practical strategies for civil peace or 'ways of peace' in the here-and-now. The peace of the sages is the peace of cohesiveness and elimination of strife within a society. In the end we need, according to Jewish insight, peacebuilding strategies where less is more.

Key to the perspective of Sacks, Jewish poetry and prose of peace is that religious truth is neither universal nor relative. It is covenantal. This is not the truth of dogma or doctrine, but the centrality of relationships and the celebration of difference. It is the realization that God does not ask us to make exclusive or absolute claims to truth, but that relationships matter and relationships are to be reconciled in diversity and that the cohesion and integration of relationships requires the solidarity and commitment of people to each other through ethical values. Covenantal values are justice, right relations, community solidarity, non-violence and compassion. This is where the Jewish tradition and Gülen's Islamic tradition converge in a shared ethic of peacebuilding. At its best it is a Jewish way of life, and Gülen would say that this is also, at its best, an Islamic way of life. Centered, as Judaism is, on covenant and a covenantal way of life, Sacks can say that 'The Jewish people in its very being

constitutes a living protest against a world of hatred, violence and war'.¹⁸ It is also a strategy for peacebuilding.

Peacebuilding in Christian Perspective

Christianity is also a prophetic and ethical tradition. Its foundational documents and sacred texts are the Hebrew Bible and the Christian Testament. The latter cannot be understood apart from the Hebrew Bible and without entering into its Jewish world and thought forms. Like the Hebrew Bible, the Christian Testament is foregrounded by an imperial, occupied world. The Roman empire permeates everything, and what the Christian Testament says about peace cannot be appreciated without grasping in the significance of the imperial domination system and its claims to Pax Romana. The latter was the claim to have brought about peace and prosperity for everyone, but what kind of peace and prosperity was it and how did the superpower attempt to make it a reality? When small Christian faith communities, often still Jewish communities, spoke of peace, in Greek *eirene*, did they mean the same thing, or were they resisting and being submissive?

Pax Romana was proclaimed everywhere. Temples were symbols of it. Victory arches in towns throughout the empire announced it. Coins and currency made it visible through imagery. Eirene was even a god, and before the time of Jesus, Emperor Augustus introduced a Pax cult into imperial Roman politics. In 9 BCE an Altar of Peace to Augustus was erected on the field of Mars, proclaiming the subjugation of the nations to the Roman superpower. In 75 CE Vespasian built a peace temple, its great arch depicting Roman victory and Jewish defeat. Pax Romana was in part conquest, victory and subjugation. It was also a golden age of prosperity which enriched only the few and oppressed the many. The Pax Romana was political, economic, legal, cultural, military and religious. The military expressed peace through victory, the legal, peace through imposed law, and the economic and political were about the few enjoying the fruits of the earth and doing so securely at the expense of the many. The Emperor was deified and served on earth as the vicar of the gods. 'Connected to Rome's unrivalled power and its 'glorious peace' was the emergence of the emperor cult demanding devotion, worship and sacrifice'.¹⁹

The Hebrew Bible had already challenged the peace through war or peace through victory claim. Its key peace word was *shalom* which was inseparable from justice. It was peace through justice and not peace through war or victory. *Eirene* like *shalom* was corporate and relational, and both words were subversive of Pax Babylonia, Pax Romana, or for that matter Pax Britannia or Pax Americana. The early Jesus Movement saw the peace of God and the God of peace as very different from any imperial peace. A peace-theology and a peace-ethics can be traced throughout the Christian Testament, and is an indication that first and second generation followers

of Jesus were actively committed to peace and peacebuilding. They were, in fact, a peace movement.

One of the four Gospels is the Christian Testament in the Gospel of Luke. The Gospels are not biographies of Jesus or 'lives'. Each Gospel reflects the faith challenges and responses of a particular community. The Gospel is an expression of who Jesus is for this particular community in a real-life context. In their location what does it mean to be part of the Jesus Movement and how is the God-life to be lived in the political and economic world of the time? The Gospel of Luke is not apolitical, though in the mid-twentieth century Christian Testament scholarship did say that Luke was non-political and that this early community was no threat to the empire. Contemporary thought now sees the Gospel as having a strong political stance, and in various places political authorities, including empire, are not presented in a positive light. The writings of the Christian Testament, along with the Qur'an, cannot with integrity be politicized. They cannot be made to serve any political program or ideology. Nor can they be depoliticized. Any faith with peace and justice at its heart is never politically neutral. It engages politics and political powers in a deeply ethical way and therefore can be resistant and at times subversive.

The faith community reflected in Luke's Gospel was engaged with the challenges of its time and place, and the Jesus who had meaning for them did have a socio-political stance and agenda. Faith values challenged and, if need be, subverted Rome's values. The God to whom Jesus pointed and to whose presence and activity in the world he drew attention, was the source of a very different set of values and ethics from those of the imperial and dominating system. Peacebuilding in contrast to Pax Romana, for the Lukan community had five major characteristics or components. Put another way, these were the peacebuilding values and strategies of the Lukan community of faith, and these shaped their faithful or ethical living in their society and world. As a Jesus peace movement in God's world in contrast to the imperial world, they practiced the way of peace they had perceived in Jesus.

Jesus had an active concern for the poor and marginalized

These included the economically poor because of the oppressive and unjust economies of the empire. They also included the sick and diseased where illnesses were often the result of poverty and deficient diets. Women too were among the marginalized of the Lukan society, especially those most vulnerable to economic poverty and exclusion through being widows or single or diseased. Patriarchy ensured the vulnerability of women in socio-economic and political terms. The practice of Jesus was shaped by the social themes of Isaiah in Luke 4:18–19, a summary of the socially marginalized in the imperially dominated biblical world.

Jesus opposes the wealthy elite and critiques the rich

Significantly the Gospel of Luke has a great deal to say about economics and reflects a society of haves and have-nots. There are serious economic disparities and injustices. Those at the top of the pyramid are the elite five percent, while those at the bottom are the ninety-five percent. In imperial and colonized societies the few usually get rich at the expense of or on the backs of the poor. Jesus warns in Luke's Gospel against the destructiveness of greed, advocates generosity and giving and calls for a simple lifestyle.

Jesus voices his opposition to and acts against oppressive and unjust practices

Much of this he does through storytelling and a number of the stories feature women. They were among the most vulnerable in a patriarchal and imperial society, often without dignity and worth and stripped of identity. One story features a woman so desperate for justice that she threatens the judge with a black eye if he will not uphold the justice, probably economic justice, of her cause (Luke 18:1–8). Women who are victims of the oppressive system are sick, diseased and mentally stressed to the point of breaking. There are healings of such women, significant actions which are subverting the imperial structural oppression (Luke 8:1–3).

Jesus calls for social relations and power relations to be based on service and humanity

The imperial power is in reality a domination system. They '*Lord it over them*' (Luke 22:24–27). Imperialism is also arrogant with its assertion of right to dominate others. The way of God that Jesus teaches is in stark contrast to emperor and empire. The latter exercise *power over*. In the empire or Kingdom of God the relational and social model is *power with*, a model of serving not dominating. It is also the opposite of arrogance and superiority. Humility is down-to-earth meeting of the needs of those who are vulnerable and marginalized. 'The model of Kingdom behavior stands opposed to the empire model'.²⁰

Jesus is unequivocally against violence

Later, politicized Christianity modeled on imperialism portrayed Jesus as a warrior king and God as an omnipotent emperor who crushed his (sic) enemies. The God of battle was on the side of the state's wars, justified and authorized them. The Lukan community had experienced a very different kind of Jesus and through him a very different God-image. Jesus was unequivocally against violence and taught and produced a robust, active non-violent resistance. Swords and weapons were not part of the reign of God. Those who tried to defend him in the face of the imperial enemy with swords were strongly rebuked and warned that the use of swords kills everyone. The Lukan peace movement remembered a Jesus who called for the peace

of Jerusalem and who wept at the tragic inability of people to see or grasp the moment of opportunity. To reject the call of peace was to refuse to engage with the peaceful presence, energy and activity of God.

Recalling whatever they knew of Jesus, and in their own context of imperial domination and claim to Pax Romana, the Lukan Jesus peace movement realized the destructiveness of violence and embraced the practice of active nonviolent resistance as a strategy for peacebuilding.

As the Lukan community saw it, these five components or ways of peacebuilding were not only core to the practice of Jesus, these were the ways of the God of peace. These were values, practices rooted in who God was, core to what Jesus, as prophets before him had shown, were the core values and practices of the Kingdom or empire of God. The concern for the poor and vulnerable, the critique of the accumulated wealth and riches, the action against structural oppression, social relations based on power with rather than power over, and the unequivocal commitment to active non-violence, were the embodiment of justice and peace. In contrast to the empire's peace through victory, the reign of God and the participative practice of the faith community ran against the grain of empire values and its Pax Romana. In Luke's Gospel the Jesus movement was a peace movement. Peacebuilding was integral to participation in God's alternative empire.

The Abrahamic faiths speak with different accents but they are at their most authentic, peacebuilding movements. The Abrahamic peace ethic is shared and the values converge into hope for a different future for humankind and cosmos. Justice and peace are the essence, and they challenge all strategies that aim for peace through victory. Peacebuilding and the ways of peace stand with the poor, vulnerable and marginalized, resisting the structures of oppression and injustice through the practice of active violence. Abrahamic peacebuilding runs up against the grain of every imperial power and domination system. When Judaism, Christianity and Islam forget or neglect the ways of peace and peacebuilding, they forget or neglect the ways of God in the world.

Towards a Shared Future

In August 1990 the late Vaclav Havel gave a paper at a conference in Oslo on ‘The Anatomy of Hate’. He began by acknowledging that he did not really know hate from the inside. Rather he was an uneasy observer and could only try to reflect on it from the outside. His observations are significant when trying to understand people who kill. They harbor a permanent feeling of injury. They have endlessly wanted to be loved and respected and others do not honor and love them endlessly. They are ignored. Haters feel that they alone possess the truth and therefore deserve the world’s complete recognition. They are people with an energy, that might have been love, but which has been converted into hatred towards the imputed sources of injury. They wish to attain the unattainable and are consumed by the impossibility of attaining it. Their state is the state of a spirit that desires to be God, and they are jealous of God because the road to the throne of God is blocked by an unjust world conspiring against the hater. Such a person overestimates their worth. The surrounding world is to blame but that abstraction has to be personified hatred, needs a particular object, a particular offender. Rather than having an inferiority complex, they are people with a complex based on a perception that the world does not appreciate their true worth.

Another telling observation of Havel’s is that

The man who hates does not smile, he merely smirks; he is incapable of making a joke, only of bitter ridicule; he can’t be genuinely ironic because he can’t be ironic about himself... A serious fad, quickness to take offence, strong language, shouting, the inability to step outside himself and see his own foolishness — these are typical of one who hates.¹

Lacking the capacity to doubt and ask questions, all haters also accuse their neighbors – and through them the whole world – of being evil. ‘In hatred there is a great ego-centrism and great self-love’.² Havel also believed that there is no difference between individual hatred and group hatred, but collective hatred has the power to draw countless other people into its vortex, people who did not initially seem endowed with the ability to hate. Morally weak, selfish people with lazy intellects, incapable of thinking for themselves, are the people who are susceptible to the

suggestive influence of those who hate.

Building, nurturing and sustaining democracy is not only essential to peace building, it is essential to countering hate and overcoming it in individuals and collectives. Havel recognized that the anatomy of hate thrived in the totalitarian regimes of central Europe in the half century that followed the Second World War, the legacy of the Cold War, ethnic and nationalistic intolerance — the fertile soil in which hatred grew and was handed on to some of another generation. Democracy and the anatomy of hate are incompatible.

Democracy and its Development

Democracy is developing. There is no finished product, and there is no one model to be imposed universally irrespective of contexts and cultures. It is not a flawless system either. Winston Churchill once said that ‘democracy is the worst of political systems, except for all the others’. Democracy is about freedom. What the promise of freedom and potential for democracy does induce is an almost universal abhorrence of tyranny. Dictatorships, totalitarian regimes and fascist states do not last and do not satisfy the deepest longings and needs for freedom and participative belonging. Whatever their past history, newly liberated nations usually move towards democracy. In 1918 when Czechoslovakia was born, its President said, ‘our whole history inclines us towards the democratic Powers’. This was repeated in 1989–1991 by leaders of all the countries in the ex-Soviet bloc.³

Democracy has a lineage, a family tree, a rise and fall and a process of development. The Ancient Greeks invented politics, and it began with their city-states. The polis needed governance and there was recognition of a public good, a shared public interest and common concerns, and over these issues there could be argument, debate, discussion, decision and policy making. The assembly of citizens was known as the *ecclesia*, though it was far from being fully participative. It was only for wealthy males, people of power, it excluded women and certainly had no place for slaves and lower classes. Athenian democracy lasted for 185 years. It had limited participation, and Plato even thought that democracy meant the rule of the incompetent. Democracy was forgotten for a millennium.

In the modern era the two great shapers of democracy were the French Revolution and the American Revolution. Any education in pluralist democracy needs to be aware of these seismic events. The history of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe was a history of wars and conflict, and absolutist monarchies and imperial powers. The first political revolution of a new time in European history happened outside Europe, and it led to the dissolution of the first British Empire. It began in 1773 with the Boston Tea Party, and a decade later at a Paris Peace Conference

American Independence was recognized. Now the people of North America ‘could work out their problems virtually untroubled by foreign intervention, a blessing to much that was to follow’.⁴ Popular sovereignty was embodied in the opening words of the Constitution, ‘We the People’. All governments derive their just powers from the assent of the governed. The American Revolution was a landmark in world history.

Then followed the French Revolution, and by 1789, notwithstanding the Terror, great reforms were achieved.

The formal abolition of feudalism, legal privilege and theocratic absolutism, and the organization of society on individualist and secular foundations were the heart of the principles of ‘89 distilled in a Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen... legal equality and legal protection of individual rights, the separation of Church and State and religious toleration were their institutional expression. The derivation of authority from popular sovereignty acting through a unified National Assembly, before whose legislation no privilege of locality or group could stand.⁵

Modern democracy was born and by 1900, albeit still resented in some parts of Europe, the principle of democracy was an idea whose time had come. An education process needs to engage with the historical development of democracy. We may have little consensus about its essence and it remains flawed in practice. ‘We the People’ may even be impossible, strictly speaking, in practice, but democracy as a theory of governance and the ordering of the public good has promoted ‘all the virtues, from freedom, justice and equality to the rule of law, the respect for human rights, and the promotion of political pluralism and of civil society’.⁶

Europe inevitably found itself at war again in 1939. It was indeed a dark continent and after 1945 there was a task of reviving democracy, but when did the war end? Having descended even before 1945 into a series of civil wars, the legacy was a Cold War between the world’s two superpowers, the proliferation of nuclear weaponry, the Iron Curtain and a Europe divided, with East and Central Europe without freedom until 1989. It was only Western Europe that discovered democracy, though; Franco’s Spain and Salazar’s Portugal were shunned. The positives for the West were the United Nations, Human Rights Declarations, the European Coal and Steel Community, which evolved into the European Economic Community, or as some saw it, a Western Club, but France, Germany and Italy put an ugly past behind them and set about building constitutional democracies.

The other half of Europe had to wait until 1989 to be free and democratic. The Soviet Empire began to implode. The emblems of pre-war republics became visible. Events would be characterized by a domino effect. In August 1989 Poland got its

first non-communist government since the 1940s. Then there was the most iconic symbol of the new freedom and hopes for democracy. The Berlin Wall came down. Czechoslovakia had its Velvet Revolution. Then Hungary changed. There was no Soviet invasion as in earlier years. No-one believed any longer in empire. People achieved democracy non-violently. People power was democratic power. The only regime deaf to dialogue was the Ceaușescu tyranny in Romania, but by December he was brutally removed. ‘The most fundamental alteration in the European balance of power created by the collapse of the Soviet Empire was the reunification of Germany’.⁷ This was Kohl’s Germany, not Hitler’s, ‘buoyed up by the resilience of its post-war democratic experience and the historical failure of communism and fascism’.⁸ Then there was the bloody disintegration of Yugoslavia which put violent nationalism center-stage again. Europe thought it was all democratic and at peace. The consequences of communism were devastating. Croatia and Serbia had Serb minorities. In Bosnia the Serbs were fighting for ethnic purity and land. Ethnic cleansing and a strategy of terror were dominant. If Europe’s dark century had begun in Sarajevo in 1914, it also ended there in the brutal bombardment of the same city in 1995. The Western ability to stop the fighting and its reluctance to enforce norms of international behavior did not help.

Ethnic tensions and violence threatened the stability of Macedonia, while in Kosovo it became clear that the Serbs would not repress the Albanians forever. The 1990s saw an arms race escalate between Greece and Turkey with the two countries closer to war than they had been for decades. As the year 2000 approached, Europe was more stable than at any time in the century. Even the separation, or the ‘velvet divorce’, between the Czechs and Slovaks was peaceful. Liberal democracy failed between the wars. Communism and fascism, also part of Europe’s political heritage, failed in the end. Yet twentieth-century Europe saw the rise and fall and rising again of democracy, liberty and freedom, but how much did violence and war in the end shape, even force Europe, into democracy?

The last century introduced ‘new levels of violence into European life, militarised society, strengthened the state and killing millions of people with the help of modern democracies and technologies’.⁹ The levels of killing were unprecedented: in the 1870–71 Franco–German War there were 184,000 deaths; in the First Great War of 1914–18 20 million deaths; and from 1939–45 in the Second World War there were 66 million deaths (two thirds of them civilians).

If post-1989 was the triumph of European democracy, it had to be. The killing dragged on in the Balkans and Northern Ireland, but these legacies of earlier militarization and violence in the end were overtaken also by liberal democracy. For all that, Europe’s place in the world has changed. We no longer live in a Eurocentric world.

Globally, Europe has lost its primacy, and perhaps that is what Europeans find hardest to accept. Yet compared with other historical epochs and other parts of the world today, the inhabitants of the continent enjoy a remarkable combination of individual liberty, social solidarity and peace.¹⁰

For all that, the twenty-first century entered another crisis, an economic recession and collapse. If democracy has been equated with unregulated capitalism, then the present may be one of failure. If 1989 was celebrated as the triumph of capitalism over socialism, then that has been a great delusion. Turkey may no longer be as enthusiastic in joining that delusion. Yet whatever new economic models we may need, democracy remains the way to a peaceful future for global citizens.

What Makes Democracy Democratic?

Advocating for democracy is the way to peace, and overcoming hatred is a noble aspiration, but what is it and what makes democracy democratic?

Fethullah Gülen believes that democracy has developed over time and it will continue to evolve and improve in the future. 'Along the way it will be shaped into a more humane and just system, one based on righteousness and reality'.¹¹ Cornel West, the American Professor, believes that 'all democracies are incomplete and unfinished', which is why he also holds that American democracy is a work in progress.¹² All democracies are in progress, which is why critical voices and critical questioning are always required. Democracy needs to be worked at, revised and renewed. Vigilance and visioning are constantly needed. Rabbi Jonathan Sacks asserts that

Liberal democracy is the single best solution yet devised for a problem as old as mankind: how different groups with different beliefs may live graciously together within an over-arching political framework that respects the integrity of each and assures the equal rights of all under the impartial rule of law.¹³

From each of these voices, one Muslim, one Christian and the third Jewish, we find clues as to the nature of democracy and what makes it democratic. For West, 'Democracy is not simply a matter of an electoral system in which citizens get the right to vote and elected officials must compete for the public's favour'. Democracy is always up against corrupt manipulations such as rigging the vote to limit the competition. There needs to be a public commitment to democratic involvement. In West's words, 'Genuine, robust democracy must be brought to life through democratic individuality, democratic community, and democratic society'.¹⁴

Democracy needs, through public commitment, to challenge the consolidation of elite power and to transform corrupted forms of elite governance. Democracy and

political hegemony, democracy and empire or any form of domination system, are incompatible. This for Sacks is the difference between liberal democracy and the Ancient Athenian democracy. They are opposed in that liberal democracy

does not regard loyalty to the state as the highest virtue or political life as the highest calling. On the contrary, it values the virtues that belong to sub-state institutions; the family, the school, the congregation, the community. It sees loyalty to the state as no more or no less than the basic pre-condition of civil coexistence.¹⁵

Liberal democratic politics is the politics of peace. Like Gülen, West and Sacks envision the virtuous society, which as Gülen declares, is what

The Islamic social system seeks to form... It recognizes right, not force, as the foundation of social life. Hostility is unacceptable. Relationships must be based on belief, love, mutual respect, assistance and understanding instead of conflict and the pursuit of personal interests.¹⁶

This virtuous society is an Abrahamic commonality. Each speaks from their particular faith perspective and we can trace the common thread. ‘When Gülen speaks of freedom, pluralism, tolerance, freedom of choice and democracy, he speaks from an Islamic perspective’.¹⁷ In that assessment of Gülen’s perspective, there is not only the word ‘democracy’, but also the key virtues that make democracy truly democratic, genuine democracy.

Democracy has to do with pluralism. It allows space and freedom for diverse ethnicities, cultures, beliefs and philosophies. It is what the Christian tradition means by catholicity, universal or ‘here comes everybody’.

It is pluralism, not secularism that defines democracy. A democratic state can be established upon any normative moral framework as long as pluralism remains the sources of its legitimacy.¹⁸

There is a frequent confusion of democracy and secularism, and it is a Western confusion and a false one. The premise of secularism, especially in its militant forms, is that religion must be excluded, sometimes completely, from the public square, but such a stance is anti-democratic and anti-pluralist. Militant secularists have not realized, just as dogmatic religionists have not realized, that religion is not incompatible with pluralism. At best the three Abrahamic faiths have a commitment to pluralism. In a democratic society there is room for all. Democracy is defined by pluralism not secularism.

Democracy is then participative. Again, that is more than simply voting every four or five years in an election. If that is all citizens do, then it is not democracy at work. This may well be so in Western societies with indications that electoral turnouts are generally low. Many are not bothering to vote, which may indicate disillusionment with traditional politics. In some of our countries political institutions have lost their moral authority, along with financial institutions and even religious institutions. In my own country the non-voters are women and young people, which is saying something about the state of democracy through electoral politics.

The problem arises when politicians become an elite group, monopolizing power and forgetting that power and sovereignty rest with the people. Participative democracy requires strong civil society where the sub-state institutions are robustly engaged with societal well-being, where democratic individuals form democratic communities and actively engage with politics, economics, education, values, virtues and beliefs, and do so in a spirit of pluralism.

Democracy is diminished when there is exclusion and alienation. There are sectors and groups who are made to feel alienated, who are excluded and where disillusionment turns to anger, aggression and violence. When this happens to groups or subgroups democracy is diminished. Community violence may well be a failure of democracy. That was a failure that helped shape the civil violence of Northern Ireland for thirty-five years of the twentieth century. Democracy, still very much a work in progress, in that part of Europe, has not been possible without inclusion and participation of all. Alienation diminishes democracy, as does exclusion. When all are at the table and all have a share of the cake, democracy works and flourishes.

This is also why tolerance, respect and freedom are essential democratic ingredients. Tolerance in some languages is a stronger and more positive word than others. 'Live and let live' is a weak meaning. 'Putting up with the other' may even be patronizing and condescending. The tolerance of indifference and positive tolerance are not the same. As I understand it, the Turkish word often translated as 'tolerance' means 'seeing the good in the other'. To look for and see the good in the other, especially the other who has already been de-humanized and demonized by social attitudes and prejudices, or who is perceived because of historical or political dynamics as enemy, to see the good in that other requires moral courage and vision. Democracy always needs moral courage and vision.

Democracy needs respect for people and their differences. These differences are often cultural, ethnic and religious or non-religious. What may lie behind the lack of respect is the desire to dominate, where the fear is that there are not enough resources or truth to share, or the others might take over if we do not dominate

them first. The question is real and unsettling, how much pluralism can we live with? How much tolerance is acceptable? Right, not force, is the foundation of social life. Democracy is less about a system and more about relationships, and at the very least, relationships need to be based on love, which is not just about seeing the good in the other, but a practical commitment to the other's highest good. Relationships also require, in Gülen's words, 'mutual respect, assistance, and understanding instead of conflict and the pursuit of personal interests'.¹⁹

Bound up with this is freedom, freedom of expression, freedom to be a rounded, flourishing human being, freedom of identity, be it cultural, religious or non-religious. Democracy is also about freedom of thought. Other forms of government or ways of organizing society suppress ideas through thought control, psychological pressure or physical force, but these do not succeed, and no idea has yet been destroyed by suppressing it. Ideas have outlived empires and states, and yet, there are different balances to be kept. Individualism can be destructive. We flourish as human beings in relationships and in community. Individualism and freedom are not absolutes. Freedom is negotiated freedom meeting social criteria especially when my freedom and the freedom of others clash. Freedom is limited therefore by the common good.

This leads to democracy and human rights, and social and political justice. We are not free from ethical restraints and ethical restraints are constantly being re-evaluated and negotiated to become the moral will of the community and a form of social moral criteria. Human rights develop naturally within a democracy. This is why the rising again of democracy following the destruction of Europe for a second time in half a century produced Human Rights Declarations. Human rights are a legal approach to ethical restraint, necessary to protect us from each other, especially where people are being de-humanized or unjustly dominated by others. For two hundred of America's two hundred and fifty years of history, Afro-Americans were considered legally inferior to whites. Human rights protect a community from social disintegration. We need human rights to protect against racism, sectarianism, sexism, homophobia, economic exploitation, political or state domination.

Democracy requires the practice of justice. Justice has to do with law and order. Without just law and order, anarchy reigns. No section of society is above the law, be they politicians, military or police forces, but justice is also, and perhaps primarily, about distributive and restorative justice. There are equality issues in society — economic, social and political. Inequality and injustice alienate and de-humanize, and anger and resentment can lead to violence, which in turn produces counter-violence, and the spiral of violence destroys the social fabric, corrupts its law and order and undermines democracy. 'Power that is not based on equity and justice deviates into oppression, and thus prepares its own ending.'²⁰

Democracy is not amoral or value-free. It has these values and ethics at its heart and without them is not truly democratic. It always needs to become a more humane and just system.

‘Liberal democracy’, says Rabbi Sacks, ‘is about togetherness-in-difference, and we begin to lose it when we notice the difference but forget the togetherness’.²¹ It is a democratic present worth defending and democratic future worth struggling for and building. For Cornel West

the great democratic battle for the twenty-first century is the dismantling of empire and the deepening of democracy. This is as much or more a colossal fight over visions and ideas as a catastrophic struggle over profits and missiles.²²

Writing from within his American context, West’s next sentence is hugely critical and prophetic: ‘Globalization is inescapable — the question is whether it will be a democratic globalization or a US-led corporate globalization (with their democratic rhetoric).’²³

Democracy and Religion

The Western world is characterized by a religious–secular divide. The language, though, is confusing; ‘religion’ and ‘secular’ often used in very imprecise ways. We can draw a distinction between secularization and secularism: ‘secularization is the process by which certain responsibilities pass from ecclesiastical (or religious institutions) to political authorities.’ This means society freeing itself from religious control, religious domination and interference. ‘... secularism is an ideology based on the eradication of religion from public life’.²⁴ The latter is often quite strident, aggressive and is a form of fundamentalist secularism or fundamentalist atheism. Religion, in the view of secularism, is superstitious, irrational nonsense, and it has to be eliminated from all public life and affairs. In terms of democracy it is being anti-democratic and anti-pluralist, and it is as fundamentalist as any religious fundamentalism. Indeed secularism itself is a closed worldview and behaves as though it were a religion. This means that in religious circles as well as those of secularism, there is confusion around democracy and secularism. According to secularism’s dogma, democracy and secularism are the same ‘that the foundation of a genuinely democratic society must be secularism’.²⁵ Having bought into this view, there are religious societies that feel strongly that their religion and democracy are incompatible, that democracy is anti-religion, but the secularists and those who feel that democracy is in opposition to their religion have failed to see that the foundation of democracy is profoundly moral. This is true of the democracy of Ancient Athens. Demosthenes, the great Athenian public orator, described the

democratizing motivation as ‘a spirit of compassion for the helpless and a resistance to the intimidation of the strong and powerful; it does not inspire brutal treatment of the populace and subservience to the potentates of the day.’²⁶ Athenian democracy developed in opposition to government corruption and in opposition to a market-driven obsession with money making. Unjust and corrupt economics produced the moral and ethical response of democracy. Democracy was an answer to greed.

The rising again of democracy in the aftermath of the Second World War and the framing of the Human Rights Declarations was within a Judeo-Christian and Islamic framework. The Abrahamic faiths and cultures had shaped Europe, and they are very much part of Europe’s cultural and political heritage. That meant that values, virtues, ethics and morals were the basis for democracy and human rights. Secularism is both dishonest and naive to pretend that a faith worldview and values system had no part in building democracy in the twentieth century. Maybe some of the religious communities have forgotten this themselves, and if so, they have short memories. Religious communities are also dishonest and naive if they think that humanism had no significant contribution to make to the shaping and formation of European society and democracy building.

Rabbi Sacks’ Jewish perspective suggests that ‘a free society is a moral achievement and rests on moral foundations... Religion lives in justice and compassion, righteousness and mercy, loyalty and loving kindness.’²⁷ Democracy needs these virtues and values to work and flourish and politics and power cannot ultimately deliver them. Politics and power can only function democratically when shaped by the ethics, morals and values which are the specialism of the spiritual life.

When Gülen speaks of freedom, pluralism, tolerance, freedom of choice and democracy, he speaks from his Islamic perspective, his religious perspective, and he is careful to draw a distinction between religion and political method: ‘Islam is a religion and thus is more than a political method, system or ideology.’²⁸ Like Sacks, Gülen sees ethical religion as the plus factor. ‘Islamic principles of equality, tolerance and justice can help democracy reach the peak of perfection and bring even more happiness to humanity’.²⁹

Christianity also believes that it cannot be equated with any system of government. There is no ideal Christian political model, but it also shares an Abrahamic ethic at the heart of which is justice. ‘Thus Christianity, especially after the twentieth-century experience of Nazi and Stalinist totalitarianism, now appears to be irrevocably committed to the retrieval of democracy as essential to its vision of a just world order.’³⁰ The moral basis that Christians bring to the democracy project are the prophetic tradition of the Hebrew bible and the life and teaching of the Jewish prophet Jesus. The Hebrew prophets proclaimed God’s preferential option

for the poor and marginalized, the oppressed and victims of society. This was and is the effort to overcome social injustices. Jesus was in that tradition and it was expressed and embodied in the core metaphor of his teaching, the Kingdom or Reign of God. That was shorthand for God's action and presence in the world for social distributive and restorative justice and peace, or the total well-being of human and ecological community.

Whether Moses, Jesus or Mohammad, justice and peace were core to their worldviews and to their committed action in their respective times and places. Their spiritual and sacred visions, essentially ethical, are required for the nurturing and sustaining of democracy.

Crucial to all of this is the fundamental dignity of the human person. Gülen quotes the Prophet that 'all people are as equal as the teeth of a comb. Islam does not discriminate based on race, color, age, nationality, or physical traits.' The Prophet declared, 'You are all from Adam, and Adam is from earth. O servants of God, be brothers and sisters.'³¹

In Islam nature and humanity are the two books of creation. Nothing in the universe, according to Gülen, is alien. God, nature and humanity hold together and therein lies the pluralism, and the inclusivity of an inclusive religion. Here is not just the dignity of all human beings, but also the integrity of all nature.

Jews and Christians affirm that every person is made in the image of God. There is therefore a relationship between God and humanity, and it is this relationship that is all-important because it is a relationship of trust and responsibility. Humans made in the image of God are therefore responsible to and for each other and the rest of creation. We are related to each other because we all share a divine spark. Therein lies the human dignity expressed in trust and mutual responsibility. Read in context, with male and female equally made in the image of God, the Genesis poem (Genesis 1) means being made to reflect the non-violence of God. Democracy thrives when the dignity of every person is acknowledged and when violence and militarization are rejected for strategies of peace building.

It has been a hope that democratic systems will produce morally responsible systems, but it may even be more true that 'only people who have been morally formed and empowered are able to make democracy work'.³²

The Fethullah Gülen Model of Education

Each of the Abrahamic faiths believes in the importance of education. Jews, Christians and Muslims believe in the significance of education for young people and in an educational journey from cradle to grave. Learning is life-long. In its Latin derivation 'education' means 'to lead out'. Not all education or educational systems are good, but if education is fulfilling its purpose, then it leads out from ignorance, from all that restricts, hinders, dehumanizes, oppresses, into wider and more liberating places. When this happens people can become more whole and society more enlightened and just. Through education we can fulfill our human potential and become participants in a common good.

Education is both formal and informal. Schools and universities represent the more formal aspect of education, while family, youth groups, local community groups and interest groups represent the more informal. At some level, there needs to be some connection between formal and informal. Parents need to be involved with schools and youth groups. The university needs to be engaged beyond the academy with community learning. In such ways knowledge, skills and experience are shared, and all learning can be life-related and include action-learning. Learning begins in childhood, and the learning experience from nursery onwards shapes the coming civic society, political, economic and community leadership as well as the all-important citizenship.

Fethullah Gülen has inspired an educational movement that is now world-wide. Through his philosophy, ethics and spirituality he has mobilized a model of education that is holistic and educates children and young people for life. It is robustly scientific and robustly value-based. Not surprisingly the movement is now global.

Gülen's Educational Philosophy

Gülen is, of course, Muslim, and that locates him and provides a context for his developing thought and praxis. If, in any context, education does not produce a generation with intellectual and practical skills, a country becomes inefficient and ineffective. Furthermore, if there is no democratization of education, an elite is likely

to emerge holding and monopolizing power, and such power produces corruption. Turkey in the 1960s and 1970s had such an elite with a minority hardline secularist body totally opposed to religious people. It was against this backdrop that Gülen inspired schools, educational centers and universities. What became a movement was underpinned by an educational philosophy.

Gülen's ideal model of an education system is one that raises generations with both good ethics and all kinds of modern skills and capabilities. His idea of education focuses on continuing good morality with science in education... For Gülen, education is for seeking knowledge and developing good, moral character with competence in modern sciences in an effort to raise good human beings irrespective of race, religion, and ethnicity.¹

Ethics, skills, morality, science and the human come before racial, religious or ethnic affiliation. There is something holistic in this approach. It is integrated education at a number of levels. The claim is also made that this is education free from ideological affiliation, but what is meant by ideology? If ideology means a 'set of beliefs held by a particular social group', (Oxford English Dictionary), is anything ideologically free? The word has acquired negative connotations, and perhaps this is the most frequently used sense of the word. This author was born and educated in Northern Ireland and at no time was taught any Irish history. Was that a negative political ideology at work, where those in power preferred only English and some American history to be taught? Why suppress the Irish story? It seems that in the 1960s and 1970s Turkish parents were worried that their children would be influenced by Marxist and atheistic ideas, so Gülen's approach and methodology became attractive. Perhaps this was a situation where contested ideologies were at work. Ideology though, can be a positive word, and Gülen was offering a positive alternative in Turkey and later elsewhere. Critics did see his approach as indoctrination, because this was education that included morality and ethics, but Gülen's educational philosophy was not based on a narrow, doctrinaire version of ethics. Moral values were universal in Gülen's educational approach. They were the values that made people human and cultivated positive civic activism.

What Gülen stood for was relevant in Turkey. The education system was nationalized in Turkey and value-based education was perceived disappointingly as religious education. The Turkish Constitution stated that 'Education and instruction in religion and ethics shall be conducted under State supervision and control' (Article 24/4). Not only were private schools unusual as the Gülen schools were, the value-based education was treading a very fine line in relation to the State Constitution. Gülen very cleverly walked a fine line with a sermon on *shariah al-fitrah*, which in Islam means the 'religion of human nature.' In other words, Gülen preached that the principles are based on the laws of nature. He drew attention to the two books

which are the Qur'an, or the Revealed Book (Divine speech), and the Book of the Universe (Creation).

By reading this Book of the Universe, one can discover the Divine laws of nature such as physics, chemistry, biology, and math. Seeing these two books as two sides of the truth, Gülen said that one can truly prosper in both worlds through abiding by both books.²

He was misunderstood as teaching political doctrine, spent six months in prison and experienced years of military surveillance. He had committed no crime; what Gülen was trying to do was raise Muslim consciousness and awareness of 'the deeper meaning of Islam and to rise above the controversy over state policies and/or less important issues related to Islam or Muslim sentiment'.³ Gülen was not, in fact, talking of political Islam. The Abrahamic religions are not always aware of this fine line, and elements of them veer to the politicization of their faith, but what becomes collusion with political power usually has disastrous results for both religion and the State.

Value-based education, in this approach, is truly human education and transcends politicization. 'Value-based education does not need any special kind of indoctrination to any particular ideology or political system, which might be incomplete, inadequate, and out of date'.⁴ Islam is always more than a political ideology and it can never really be reduced to such. 'The primary concern of the Islamic belief system and action plans based on this are to make human beings spiritually orientated and dedicated to the causes of humanity, peace and glorifying God'.⁵ This does not mean that Islam has no political implications. Like the other Abrahamic traditions, it is a way of life that does not recognize compartments. In much of the West though, religion has been compartmentalized as private and politics as public. The dualism is unhealthy for both. Yet the tension remains. 'Dedicated to the causes of humanity, peace and glorifying God' are not politically neutral activities. Perhaps everything is politics, but politics is not everything.

A variation on the theme is the relation between religious and secular. Gülen is at pains to point out that 'In the schools religious education has not been provided. The courses of 'Religious Culture' and 'Ethical Knowledge' which are part of the curriculum used in the primary and secondary institutions have been studied'.⁶ Religious education in the West, at least in the English-speaking countries, tends to be confessionally based. The focus on doctrine, rituals and symbols does not necessarily lead to ethics and values, nor is it always an education for life.

Religion in the Gülen schools is not seen as a vehicle consisting of certain symbols, in order to develop a consensus for a regime based on the *sharia* but

as a source of cultural solidarity and ethics, inspired by the religion of Islam. The culture of solidarity ... consists of the principles of respect, love, mutual help, and training for a common effort; at the social level, it consists of not going to extremes and extravagancy, not resorting to violence, tolerance for differences, becoming frugal by escaping the attractiveness of consumerism, and producing surplus value by investments.⁷

For Gülen this means an educational process producing a 'civil society initiative'. It is a 'civil mobilization' without political aim or goal and, as for religion, it is 'a system of values orientating humanity'. He is strongly opposed to religion being used as a political agenda to control society and his view on religion–state relations is one of parallel activities. He is consistent with the current view of political science, 'secular society and religion respected by the state'.⁸

There is a clarity and a consistency in Gülen's philosophy of education as he walks the fine line between religion and state, religion and secular, religion and politics. At the heart of his fine line are values which are universal and human, found in Islam, and in the other Abrahamic faiths, and which transcend religious dogma and doctrines.

The importance for Gülen of education across religious, racial and ethnic boundaries is seen in his preference for educational institutions rather than the establishment of mosques.

He believes that people, particularly young generations, are in need of schools and educational opportunities. Also, mosques only serve Muslims, while schools serve all human beings, which is an important aspect of Gülen's theology of social responsibility to serve humanity.⁹

What makes this significant and admirable is that Gülen's source of inspiration for his action-based social responsibility is the Qur'an. He is drawing deeply from his Qur'anic well, but he does not want Muslim-only schools, but schools and education that will serve all humanity. He is not concerned in any narrow or confessional sense to produce faithful Muslims, but to educate Muslims along with Sikhs, Hindus, Christians and Buddhists, as in Bangkok, Thailand, so as to be educated together as common humanity for the good of all humanity. His theology of social responsibility applied to education is in the service of all humanity. His socially responsible educational theology goes beyond sectarianism, racism, ethnocentrism, and anything that creates an 'us and them' or perpetuates societal division.

For Gülen there are also longer historical reasons why his educational philosophy is important. He is aware of the impact of Western thought on the Muslim world. In the Middle Ages, theocracy reigned in Europe, and through the Crusades there was

contact with the Islamic world. The dynamics led to European expansionism, and the big concern was with material needs. In Europe also science and religion split apart. The Catholic Church refused to accept new scientific discoveries and ideas, and the new middle class wanted autonomy from controlling religion. Eventually the Western world or Europe dominated the world: 'global expectation, unending conflict based on interest, two world wars, and the division of the world into political or economic blocs'.¹⁰ The West ruled and the enlightenment reduced human beings to mind only, reason supreme or enthroned. Humans, as only material entities, have created crises that are deeply spiritual. Gülen sees this spiritual deficit and its crises as culminating in the two bloody twentieth-century wars.

Muslims have a different history and belief system. 'Humans are creatures composed not only of a body and a mind, or feelings and a spirit; rather, we are harmonious composition of all these elements'.¹¹ Humans therefore ask deep and profound questions of meaning about life. Though mind is essential, the ultimate satisfaction and meaning comes through the spirit, and there we enter into our essential human identity. 'By embracing our inner and outer worlds, where innumerable mysteries and puzzles reside, we must comprehend the secret of existence and thus rise to the rank of true humanity'.¹²

This is where education becomes important. Education not only serves all of humanity, it serves the recovery or growth of true humanity. Gülen drew on Nursi and developed his thought: 'there is an understanding of education that sees the illumination of the mind in science and knowledge, and the light of the heart in faith and virtue'.¹³ Gülen in his educational philosophy is holding together faith and knowledge. In affirming that religion guides sciences, putting moral and universal human values before science as guides, then:

If this truth had been understood in the West, and if this relationship between religion and knowledge had been discovered, things would have been very different. Science would not have done more harm than good, nor would it have opened the way for producing bombs and other lethal weapons.¹⁴

He also recognized that scientific materialism, cut off as it is from spiritual values, caused the brutal exploitation of humanity and the environment, especially in the twentieth century. Yet for Gülen, 'religion does not oppose or limit science or scientific work'.¹⁵

It is this philosophy that inspired the Hizmet Movement schools with their robust approach to scientific learning and the equally robust approach to education in values, and the integration of the two.

Educational Mobilization

The first visible sign of Hizmet's educational mobilization was in 1979, when a university preparation course was established in Izmir. The Movement in Izmir had been under way from 1975. The process moved through university dorm, university preparation course to the establishment of a high school. The movement spread and generated a profile that was publicly noticed. Given Turkey's location, the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the emergence of independent states provided the opportunity for a similar educational mobilization in the newly independent and former Soviet republics. Even before the momentous change of 1991, possibilities and potential were being explored. Gülen was advocating educational opportunities in sermons he preached in mosques in Izmir and Istanbul and perhaps was anticipating the fall of the Soviet Union, whose territory, after all, bordered onto Turkey. 'Gülen saw the dissolution of the Soviet Union as an opportunity and directed and guided his fellow workers'.¹⁶ By this stage, Gülen-inspired schools had spread across Turkey and were celebrated. These were being driven by business people and educators, and their success was such that 'During the 1980's, no secularist or nationalist group stood up against the Gülen-phenomenon of private schooling that had already become a success story and was popular among the Turkish younger generation irrespective of their religious or secular ideological affiliation'.¹⁷ Given such success and acceptance Turkish business people were in Georgia in 1990. At this point discussions were centered on transferring students from Georgia and Azerbaijan to Turkish schools. This led to the establishment of corporations in Turkey and the outcome was that in many of the Central Asian countries, Gülen-inspired schools were opened. In a very real sense, 'the movement was carrying Turkey to the world, while it was carrying the world to Turkey'.¹⁸ These Central Asian countries had majority-Muslim populations, and even though there was suspicion in some quarters, the schools spread. 'Except Uzbekistan, all other former Soviet states, including the Russian Federation, have allowed the Gülen schools to function in their territories'.¹⁹ People may have interpreted the phenomenon in different ways, including being politically motivated, but Gülen was clear about this educational mobilization. 'Gülen is for spiritual and genuine intellectual revival of the Muslim nations for the betterment of the entire humankind'.²⁰

The most successful region in terms of the educational mobilization was in Kazakhstan, where twenty-nine schools were founded, to be followed within a few years by a university. Though Gülen himself dislikes the term 'Gülen schools', the educational movement he inspired has now gone global. Schools are located in North America, South America, Africa, Oceania, and Asia, including Afghanistan, Burma, Mongolia, Nepal and Yemen. They are also found in Europe, most often as schools, but in some areas as cultural centers. The model of education is now

operating on all five continents. Universities have also been founded in a number of countries.²¹

This educational mobilization is not about Muslim schools. Colonial experiences have had a negative impact on these countries where the population is Muslim, whether Soviet or Western colonialism, and it does need to be remembered that every near-eastern Arab and Muslim state had its borders imposed by British and French colonization after the Paris Peace Treaty of 1918–1919. The colonial approach divided sacred and secular in education, which is not a Muslim way of seeing the world or life. In Muslim countries or states, Hizmet's approach was education for the spiritual and intellectual renewal of Muslim communities so that they could better take their place in a global world and make their contribution to the flourishing of all humanity. Gülen was and is opposed to politicizing Islam. The negative impact of colonialism on education had diminished Muslims as human persons, and Gülen saw education as 'leading out', liberating people from ignorance and the social dynamics that dehumanize. The schools are for the development of more human and humane students, and as later case studies will show, the schools are not specifically Muslim, especially in those countries where there is a multi-cultural, ethnic and religious population. Schools in Bangkok, Thailand, integrate Sikhs, Muslims, Christians, Hindus and Buddhists, all of which provides for a positive and humanizing ethos, at the heart of which is tolerance and respect. They are schools with an educational ethos and methodology that enable young people to respect themselves and each other, and to become active, compassionate and just citizens.

A Quality-Assured Education

As part of a global mobilization, these schools, through the support of business people and educators, constitute a Turkish presence in the world. Critics or cynics may see this as a form of Turkish colonialism, but it is not a political movement, just as Gülen insists Islam is not a political or politicizing religion. There has been a two-way movement with Turkey going to the world and the world coming to Turkey. That, of course, happens in a political context as well as an economic context, but it is also part of the globalization that is more than a capitalist domination system. Globalization is the interdependence of nations and peoples, the sharing of knowledge and culture and the sense of belonging to a global community rather than narrow and introverted nationalities. Turkey, like every other country in the world, cannot live in isolation. Not that Turkey ever did or could. In a sense, historically, it has always been an East–West bridge. Its location means that it straddles the border between them and reflects both. It also has a history, glorious and tragic. Quite a bit of the cradle of civilization is to be found in Turkey, and Ancient Asia Minor was also the cradle of much of the Christian faith espoused by the West, Cappadocia

nurtured and produced some of the great Christian theologians. The great city of Istanbul was once the great city of Constantinople. This is not to lament the loss of a Christian past, nor rejoice that the Haghia Sophia became a Mosque, but to recognize a Turkish world which has been enriched by many and different strands of cultural history. No visit to Istanbul today would be complete without a visit to both Haghia Sophia and the Blue Mosque, and after both visits there is a deep sense of a very rich, pluralist cultural history. The city is historically and culturally unique.

Modern Turkey was born, as were many Western nations, in revolution, after Turkey aligned itself with the German power in the First World War. Gallipoli and the Dardanelles were killing fields, but today are locations where the descendants of these whose lives were extinguished by the catastrophe of the 'Great War' meet in commemoration and reconciliation.

The educational model is driven by a worldview that is inclusive and all-embracing. Gülen is totally committed to dialogue between the neighbor religions. There is more than 'a word between us', which is what dialogue means, there is a fundamental commonality and a shared future. In relation to Turkey taking its place in the global future, Gülen sees Turkey making friends described as 'Catholics, Orthodox, Buddhist, Hindu, men or women, black or white, intellectual or common, at every level'.²² Underpinning this is the conviction that though there are differences between neighbor religions, the similarities are greater. In an era of unprecedented and growing interfaith dialogue, Gülen is confident that 'Gradually, the mutual agreement that we are all the servants of the same Divine Being will develop and mature. This, in turn, will form the basis of solidarity among societies and world peace'.²³ In these ways his quality educational movement is inspired and sustained, and not only does this educational movement generate creative civic power, it is embraced as profoundly spiritual activity.

Gülen also drew inspiration from Nursi. A generation before him, Nursi had identified the three greatest enemies in a struggling Muslim world as ignorance, poverty and internal schism. Gülen also embraced this analysis and, developing Nursi's analysis, stated the antidote:

Knowledge, work capital and unification can struggle against these. As ignorance is the most serious problem, it must be opposed with education, which always has been the most important way of serving our country. Now that we live in a global village, education is the best way to serve humanity and to establish a dialogue with other civilizations.²⁴

Education takes us out of ourselves and beyond ourselves into a dialogue with humanity, other cultures and civilizations. Education ought to provide a global perspective and a sense of global belonging.

Through his refusal to live in a compartmentalized world, Gülen believes education is a humane service. Life is about learning and becoming more fully and truly human through education. Ignorance diminishes our humanity, destroys self-esteem, restricts perspective and inhibits social and relational skills. Aware of how liberating and empowering education can be, Gülen quotes Rumi, 'One of my feet is in the center and the other is in seventy-two realms (i.e. in the realm of all nations) like a compass'.²⁵ Education equips one to live in many 'realms', to include and embrace a common humanity. Knowledge and dialogue belong together in the building of a more humane world.

Ignorance can be defeated through education, poverty through work and the possession of capital, and internal schism and separation through unity, dialogue, and tolerance. As the solution of every problem in this life ultimately depends on human beings, education is the most effective vehicle, regardless of whether we have a paralyzed social and political system or we have one that operates like clockwork.²⁶

Education, though, needs to be quality assured. Not all education systems are. If the majority or a large minority of young people are leaving school with little or no educational achievement, then there is something fundamentally flawed with the system. If children are being categorized at an early stage as failures, again there are moral as well as educational questions to be raised about the system. If education is only for the benefit of the academic elite, or if education is focused solely on academic achievement and is not education for life, if it is academic knowledge without life skills, then there is an educational deficiency. If an educational system keeps children segregated, especially in an historically divided, sectarian or racist society, thereby perpetuating, sustaining and continually causing divisions, there are moral and ethical questions to ask, and the questions are not just economic and the economics of maintaining a segregated system, they are questions about the use and abuse of power and whose power is being maintained by segregation. Is power-over a moral use of power, when it is at the expense of children's social humanity and ability to humanly relate locally and globally? Is holding on at all costs to political or institutional power at the expense of children's lives justified in any historically divided society anywhere in the world? What does quality-assured education from the Gülen perspective look like? What are the characteristics? These have been touched on above, but it might be helpful to structure these characteristics.

Good ethics and modern skills

Some societies may think that education is value-free and this is a perception that some Muslims have of the West. Internal critics in the Muslim world feel that religious education in that world has not equipped people to run a modern business from the local to the international level. These are generalities, which may have some truth, but not all of it. Gülen, though, robustly bridges both generalities. A quality assured education system empowers its participants with both good ethics and modern skills for life. 'His idea of education focuses on combining good morality with science in education... education is for seeking knowledge and developing good, moral character with competence in modern sciences'.²⁷ This is the robust education in the sciences and the equally robust education in values. Not only does this become obvious in visiting such a school, in dialogue with pupils and visits to classrooms, it becomes obvious also when one senses and realizes the global perspective of young people, often at ease discussing geopolitics, whether in Abuja, Nigeria or Bangkok, Thailand. Quality assured education is providing students with good ethics and modern skills and empowering the whole person for life in a globalized world.

Altruism – the service of others

Gülen's educational approach has realized that, positive as education in good ethics and modern skills is, more is needed. Key also to this quality-assured education is altruism. Altruism is defined as unselfish concern for the needs and well-being of other people. Life is lived for the betterment of others, or selfless love and sacrifice for all humanity. Gülen views the human person as having 'a responsibility to show compassion to all living beings, as a requirement of being human'.²⁸ Speaking from within the context of his own Islamic tradition, he believes that women and men have a role in building a compassionate society. It is a distortion of life to merely live for material gain and wealth. This is not to dismiss the significance of material well-being. Most of the world's population have to live without it, and it is only the minority on the planet who have it. It is when material well-being becomes the sole god and obsession of life that human well-being is skewed. The pursuit of material well-being means a Muslim must follow an Islamic way of life. This really means that material goals and spiritual goals are held together in balance.

Religiosity can also get in the way of being truly human. It is not only in Islam, but also in Christianity that critics may be justified in complaining that piety or religious devotion gets in the way of building a humane society. Religiosity can be anti-human. Gülen is aware of this and more:

Muslims constantly are reminded that avoiding sin is not enough; rather, engaging to create a more humane world is required. Salvation means not only to be 'saved from' sinful activities, but also to be engaged actively in the improvement of the world.²⁹

Education is, therefore, altruistic, empowering and equipping people to serve the needs of their community and world through selfless actions and behaviors: 'education, besides being the best way of serving our country, is the way to serve the entire humanity and the most important means for a dialog in the age when our world [has] shrunk like a small village. After all, education is a humane service for others'.³⁰

Social education

Schools are not islands in society. They cannot be separated from the social and political world in which they are located. It could be said that for over three decades of violent conflict in Northern Ireland, schools were a haven for many young people. In many ways they did protect children and young people from the violence of the streets, but not all of those who were combatants in the civil unrest and violence saw it that way. Bombs were sometimes found in school playgrounds. In some areas paramilitaries threatened teachers, especially head teachers, and school activities, especially contact programs between Catholic and Protestant children had to cease. Children were disturbed by events, violence in the streets led to a breakdown of authority in school, and teachers in some situations had to control rather than teach. No doubt this can be replicated in other conflict regions. Schools do not sit isolated from societal dynamics and events. Children are educated or not educated in a societal and political context.

A context of conflict makes education difficult. It can become difficult to teach history and may be easier to avoid it. It is difficult also to teach literature, and art may open up expressions of trauma among young people. Even education for mutual understanding may be difficult in a conflictual context.

Yet schools cannot be divorced from their social setting. Moral courage is required to continue teaching values of respect, dignity and tolerance. Justice, compassion and peace, the deeply spiritual values, cannot be taught in a vacuum nor abandoned in the face of social and political violence. 'Schooling needed to be performed in connection with societal affairs'.³¹

The Gülen model engages with this through what may be called an educational partnership. The school brings together in a very intentional way, children or young people, teachers, parents and financial sponsors. So a community of learning is created. Parents are deeply involved with their child's education. Teachers visit

homes and engage in educational dialogue, including dialogue about values, with parents. It is shared education with partnership education. All are involved, all are participants and there is created a whole community of learning.

An educational environment

Environment and atmosphere matter and the social educational approach of Hizmet Movement schools enhances this. In this the approach to learning is important. The schools hold together the robust approach to science and the equally robust approach to values. Ethics and science are held together, and there is no tension between science and religion. Nor are tradition and the contemporary set in opposition, but a healthy moving in and out of both is achieved. Western classrooms are still often dominated by a science-religion war, if not overt, then denied by a silence on religion. Confusion reigns for children or they espouse science over and against religion, often missing the positive ethical values science and humanity need. It should be said that the religion rejected or shrouded by silence is a distorted and characterized form about which any informed believer should be an atheist.

The Gülen-inspired schools have overcome this dichotomy, not least by being able to read 'both books', according to the Qur'an. A non-literalistic, non-fundamentalist reading of the Hebrew and Christian Bible can do the same, but too often ignorance remains untouched by religious institutions which fail to educate.

Holistic education requires a non-dualistic approach in which an atmosphere of liberating and empowering learning can take place. It requires more than this. Gülen sees a number of dimensions coming together to make for good education

People who want to guarantee their future cannot be indifferent to how their children are educated. The family, school, environment and mass media should all co-operate to ensure the desired result. Opposing tendencies among these vital institutions will subject young people to contradictory influences that will distract them and dissipate their energy.³²

The atmosphere conducive to positive learning is created by the school curriculum and teachers who set both high scientific and moral standards. The physical conditions in which the formal education takes place are also important, but the two key players are family and teachers. For Gülen, 'the home is vitally important for raising a healthy generation and ensuring a healthy social system or structure... the impressions we receive from our family cannot be obliterated later in life'.³³ Learning begins at home and those responsible for parenting can create a learning environment, feeding young minds with knowledge and science as well as truth and values. Good education not only begins at home but it continues to support

the more formal scientific and value-based education of the school. All of this presupposes a healthy home, and it is in this environment that holistic humane character is cultivated and grown. Gülen also sees this as including the significant role of the larger family, all of whom can live and relate in a spirit of compassion. If a child cannot develop and grow in this atmosphere, there is the possibility that ‘scorpions’ are released into the community. Dysfunctional children are the products of dysfunctional family life. Healthy parenting is about good citizenship.

In the model of education inspired by Gülen, teachers are essentially role models. They are educators and mentors, building real human relationships with students and parents, and often keeping in touch with students when they move on to university. They perform an educational and pastoral role. The Gülen metaphor is of teachers who ‘sow the pure seed and preserve it’ through enabling students to develop their scientific and technological knowledge with idealism and good morals.

In addition to setting a good personal example, teachers should be patient enough to obtain the deserved result. They should know their students well, and address their intellects and their hearts, spirits, and feelings. The best way to educate people is to share special concern for every individual not forgetting that each individual is a different ‘world’.³⁴

To spend even a short time in a Hizmet Movement school is to quietly recognize that teachers do exercise this positive role. The relationship between teachers and students is striking, as is the relative youthfulness of teachers. Many are Turkish, abetween twenty-five and thirty-five years old. They are well educated and fluent in the English language. Their own opportunities for education were provided by the Hizmet Movement and their becoming educators in countries around the world is an expression of gratitude for the education, knowledge and values they received. Perhaps, more significantly, ‘They believe that they are doing a service to humanity by being in the movement’.³⁵

The Service Movement

When young Turkish teachers offer to teach in the global educational mobilization inspired by Gülen, they are participating in part of the service movement that Gülen inspired in the 1970s. What Gülen inspired was the social phenomenon known in Turkish as ‘Hizmet’. It means ‘service’ and is the most commonly used term. With Gülen it was faith-inspired, but it was also a bridge to the secular.

Its attraction lies in its potential to show the capacity of an Islam-inspired movement to mobilize huge numbers of religiously-minded and observant individuals not only to accept but to cherish a secular, pluralist, democratic and political order.³⁶

It is a faith-inspired civil society movement that embraces the secular and pluralist order of things. It is significant that the movement has its origins in Turkey and is a creative response to the social and political nature of developing Turkish society. In the West, where the cultural and constitutional relationship of faith and public square has broken down, otherwise known as the death of Christendom, there is dialogue and mutual learning to be engaged in concerning this Service Movement. It has grasped the new relationship between faith and secular in a creative way. This is helpfully articulated by Çetin:

Hizmet recognizes the need for a new and inclusive synthesis arising from the past but based upon universal values and modern relations. The Movement therefore emphasizes a different array of factors, including values, such as equality, freedom, dignity, altruism, good life, ecology and morality: these are needs and issues which the current and prevalent socio-political structure mostly fails to implement.³⁷

Religion and secularism are not in opposition. A creative interaction is possible, through finding common ground in the public space. ‘Gülen argues that secularism should not be an obstacle to religious devoutness, nor should devoutness constitute a danger to secularism’.³⁸

The Social Movement embraces a number of categories including education, social relations (dialogue), health, media and publishing, as well as business and finance and humanitarian aid and relief. Education covers pre-school, primary, secondary, high school, higher education or university. It is in this Hizmet context that teachers are involved in the educational mobilization. Hizmet means three things for a Muslim in this tradition. It is service to others, the community, and one’s faith.

Teachers in this social movement see themselves as responding to these three realities, and in the schools the interactive relationship between faith and secular is maintained, or better, embodied in practice.

A secular education is provided, and there is no religious education only the history of religions... The educational model adopted seeks to reconcile the divisive approaches between secular education and faith, reason, modernity, and tradition.

In this educational endeavor, the aim is not to give religious knowledge or to incubate the consciousness to establish a religious regime, but to make students gain an ethical and moral worldview which sits on universal human values. Of course, the teachers and administrators are sensitive in making sure that those values do not violate the basic Islamic values, but those values are imparted as a cultural element, not as an infrastructure for a political project.³⁹

In a situation such as Bangkok, where five religious traditions share education, the schools are very obviously not operating with an Islamic agenda or trying to establish a particular religious regime. The mutual understanding of students was impressive, but they were being educated, 'led out' into universal human values. Their educators were not only there in the spirit of Hizmet, but were educating in the spirit of Hizmet as well. With all of the Gülen-inspired schools and for teachers in the Movement, there is an overarching purpose and goal.

One of the areas where extra care is taken is that the education provided is to form a setting of peace where the operation is in progress for reconciliation, societal peace, and tolerance.⁴⁰

Not only is this what education and educators are for in the Movement, Gülen has also been careful with language and meaning in a way that expresses the best values of Islam but goes well beyond it, again building bridges, some would say reconciliation, between faith and the secular. His preferred language is 'spirituality' and 'spiritual values' and these do not

signify an aspiration to make the religion dominant in secular societies, as some believe. Spirituality for him comprises virtues such as morality, logic, spiritual balance, empathy, and an open heart.⁴¹

His understanding of spirituality includes justice and peacemaking and teachers in the Hizmet tradition are educating in scientific knowledge and personality development and character building, so that students can live in the world holistically, and where the living of spiritual values is second nature. The schools and teachers in the Hizmet tradition are building bridges or reconciling the relationship between secular institutions and faith. That is no small challenge and a significant creative response in the contemporary globalized world.

Hizmet Movement Case Studies

The last chapter attempted to explore the educational mobilization of the Hizmet Movement, its philosophy, methodology and values. The significance of family, teachers and sponsors was highlighted and the centrality of Hizmet underlined. The prioritization of universal human values was noted, and the creative bridge that the Movement builds between faith and the secular was not only profiled, but recognized as a more than useful point of dialogue with the West. The global educational mobilization is a contribution to a better humanity and more humane world.

This chapter takes the reflection to a more concrete level. It offers three case studies of Hizmet Movement schools in three different locations – eastern Turkey, Lahore in Pakistan, and Bangkok in Thailand. These are three very different locations, each with different social and political challenges and by location offering very different models of integration. This should mean lively profiles of these schools in action and a sense of what the educational philosophy is achieving in diverse and sometimes divided societies.

I was privileged to visit these schools between September 2012 and February 2013. I was accompanied by Uğur Tok from the Northern Ireland Dialogue Society, who has made a very positive contribution to dialogue and understanding between the Turkish Muslim community in Northern Ireland and Protestant and Catholic Christians, as well as various shades of political representation. A deeply divided society, still struggling to embed a peace process after three decades and more of violent conflict, needs the model of positive dialogue that Uğur and others have provided. Istanbul and Lahore also offered the opportunity to present papers at conferences on Hizmet and the intellectual hospitality experienced in both conferences was stimulating and enriching. Dialogue is a two way process and I hope that I have been able to contribute to understanding and a shared humanity in some small measure for the much larger measure of intellectual and spiritual enrichment I have received.

A very special thanks to the remarkable students I met in Urfa, Lahore and Bangkok, and for the openness, thoughtfulness and spirit with which they engaged

in dialogue with me. From different cultures, ethnicities and faiths they provided incredible models of integration, understanding and positive and humane values. Their awareness of the larger world as well as of their own societies was impressive. It was startling to say the least to be asked in an informed way to explain recent civil unrest on the streets of Belfast. The particular Belfast problem had gone global in the media, and the young woman was not only informed but spoke for others around the table. I had some difficulty explaining and making sense of a local dispute about a flag on Belfast City Hall. I realized it was easier to some degree to understand in Belfast than to explain in Bangkok.

These sharp, geographically aware young people were the recipients of high quality education that was truly and robustly scientific and equally robustly value-based. The Turkish educators I met in each location were genuinely committed in the spirit of Hizmet and to the total well-being of their students. One became very aware of real communities of learning and authentic human formation, where young people were being formed intellectually and spiritually for life in any location or culture in the world. It has to be said that while some would leave their country for a university education abroad, there was real commitment to the well-being of their own societies. Their educators were providing high quality and holistic education. My mind was stimulated, imagination inspired and spirit enriched by the encounters and dialogue in each of the three locations. The documentation of these three case studies will hopefully give a sense and flavor of the Gülen-inspired educational model.

Urfa, Eastern Turkey

Urfa is a city in Eastern Turkey, believed by Muslims to be the birthplace of Abraham. A visit to the cave raises awareness of shared Abrahamic roots. The city's Roman story is also being excavated and a visit there brought a more recent civilization closer. A visit to a site a few miles outside the city and into the hills was the most staggering of all, not least because of its antiquity. Here we looked at building and artifacts much older than Abraham. This was the cradle of civilization, the earliest forms of organized life and where our human roots lie. To be on that archeological site outside Urfa was to be aware that before we are Muslim, Jewish or Christian, we are human.

Urfa has seven Hizmet Movement schools and in the province there are three others. The school visited brings young people from three different cultural groups to be educated together. There are Turkish young people and about thirty-three percent of the student body are Kurdish and Arab. In Turkey there are long-standing tensions and conflict between Turkish and Kurdish communities. Only recently has a cessation of hostilities occurred. Yet the school has not experienced tension

on campus. The important role of teachers was stressed as role models. Morality and truthfulness were important teacher qualities. The education itself was moral-centered and global values were prominent. A theological insight was highlighted. God created humans as humans before Muslim, Jewish or Christian; therefore, humans are to respect each other. This theo-human value was core. Moral values were stressed, whether students had a faith or not, and these transcended national identities. The school aimed to rise above national labels. This was significant in a school where all students were Muslim and the political divisions, those mirrored in larger society were nationalistic, that is, Turkish and Kurdish. Commonalities were also shared and identified in terms of global values, truth, patience and compassion.

Religion as such does not feature until the last semester. This is not a confessional approach to religion but a focus on world religions. This approach does lead to better understanding and respect along with the strong cultural value of tolerance, *hoşgörü*, seeing the good in the other.

These general impressions are of a private school, which the Hizmet Movement schools are. Education in Turkey is otherwise state education and state controlled. Yet in Urfa, local politicians send their children to the Hizmet Movement schools because they want their children to learn moral values and share in the academic success. There is a general board responsible for the governance of the seven schools. There are representatives from parents. Each school has a smaller school board. Representatives are elected for fixed terms. Parents are actively involved in making decisions in relation to buildings as well as education.

Student Perspectives

Students engaged in a dialogue expressing views and perspectives on a range of important issues.

Community

Rather than think of the self, it is better to think of community. The practice of empathy provided a lens through which to see the world. Empathy has the potential to create and sustain community. People are created equal, and all are human before any other religious, cultural or political label. The Hizmet Movement is rooted in universal values, and in coming together around these values people share a common humanity. This was important in relation to nationalism. To think in terms of nationalism is too limiting. It limits the person. The Qur'an points to larger and more widely shared values. It is therefore important to look at the world in wider perspective.

Human love is important and that can be taught and learned. God, the Creator is the source of love and this inspires human loving. The Muslim faith teaches the significance of doing for others without expecting anything in return. Humans find this difficult. There seems to be the tendency to nearly always look for something back, but this is a materialistic way of looking at things.

What this conversation identified was the importance of being human and the place of universal human values as a way of community building and focus, locally and globally. Love and altruism are important for seeing the world differently.

Democracy

There are inequalities in society and the world. Money often means power and those without money and power can become subservient to those with power. Sharing ideas is important as this involves listening and understanding. A new generation can share ideas and stop injustice and unjust practices. The living and practice of justice can make us feel more human.

It may be easier to share ideas when younger. Growing older can make it more difficult to change. A saying was invoked: 'The trees bend when they are young'. It is, therefore, better to teach democracy to younger people and help them at a formative stage to have a wider view of things, to be open to critique and to build self-confidence. This is the time to create useful members of society. Democracy, in part, is being open to different ideas and an understanding of these ideas. The teaching approach of the Hizmet Movement schools helps as students feel confident to speak, trust others and enable speech to be rich and productive. As trust is established, a prerequisite for any democratic society, the person does not hide their words.

Relationship between faith and politics

Students felt these should not be confused. This seemed to be a plea for non-politicized faith or, as Gülen has often said, Islam is not a political religion. So religion and politics should not become mixed up. They have different roles in society, though they are not compartmentalized. It was strongly affirmed that faith does not interfere with critical thinking. It is in the critical interchange of ideas that the best information is found. Religion and criticism are not contradictory. Humans need to be open to criticism. Rumi was quoted with approval: 'If all say the same thing, it proves that people do not understand enough'.

Responsibility

Key to this is being human in the world. When students leave school it is important to spread the word of humanity to other parts of the world. This means sharing

the learning around peace, tolerance and togetherness. This is not a verbal project. More important is living. The years in school were about living in an atmosphere of values. In moving into the larger world, other people cannot be coerced to believe anything or practice anything, but through being and living, others will be affected.

Maturity and the process of maturation is important, it enables people to accept limits, certainly their own limits. One can believe something to be correct, but tomorrow there may be a deeper understanding. This seemed to reflect the wisdom that to change is to change often and that there is never the last word on any issue. Accepting personal limits and being willing to change are ways of living responsibly.

The Adam and Eve story was invoked, with God creator or parent of all, so all are human and kin. There is a responsibility for each other, a feeling for anyone in any part of the world.

God has sent messages to humans. The Prophet Mohammed has spread the word to humans. Jesus was another messenger who spread the word through apostles and friends. We all have a responsibility to share humanity, ideas and values. The Hizmet Movement does this through schools and education. Education is a powerful way to resolve problems in the world and to overcome divisions and hatred.

These perspectives were significant in Urfa, with students coming from Turkish, Kurdish and Arab backgrounds. These identities reflect many decades of tension and conflict, including violence. Though all were Muslim, the ethnicities were different as were the cultures and there was and is a history of conflict. Yet in the coming together, education and humanity were shared. Common and universal values were being embraced, and students were being equipped and empowered to be good citizens and responsible members of global society. Much of this was down to teachers, who identified and built trusting and non-judgmental relationships with students. Values were shared, not only in classrooms, but also on football fields.

Lahore, Pakistan

The visit to Lahore including time at two PakTurk schools, a boys' campus and a girls' campus. PakTurk International Schools and citizens are members of a chain of educational institutions established in 1995 for the pursuit of excellence in education in Pakistan. There are campuses in Islamabad, Lahore, Karachi, Quetta, Peshawar, Khairpur, and Multan. The schools have a shared vision:

PakTurk International Schools and Colleges provide a quality education for their students to develop them to think on a global scale while being profoundly

dedicated to the traditions and values that make them the proud citizens of their own country who are well acquainted with the environments they live in and who are capable of forming individual and group relationships to cope with the ongoing and forthcoming challenges locally and globally.

Thinking globally while being proud citizens locally and being empowered to face present and future challenges locally and globally is no restricted vision. This is a large educational map aiming to develop nothing less than global citizens. It is not just academic learning but social learning also. Extracurricular activities through various student societies enable participation in intramural and extramural projects, competitions and arts exhibitions.

Three languages are used as media of instruction. Urdu is taught as the Pakistani national language and English is taught as the predominant second language. At secondary level it is used as the foremost language of instruction. Turkish is taught in its own cultural context, with communicative aspects. Written and audio-visual material is produced and used. Studies range from pre-school to college level and the University of Cambridge International Examinations for O and A Levels are taken. Students achieving the standards required have the opportunity of having a world-quality education at various Turkish universities. Scholarships are also offered.

All students have access to a Guidance and Psychological Counseling Service. This is about capacity building, and exploring talents in students. What it means in practice is that each student's progress and character building is supervised and supported by an advisor (class) teacher from primary to college level. These Advisor teachers are in close contact with parents and through this advisor-parent collaboration a student's real potential is identified. Home visits are a part of this, and this means healthy interaction between school, students and home. Career orientation seminars are also organized, providing one-to-one specialist contact.

Here is what appears to be an interesting motto: 'We believe that what is taught with love lasts forever.'

In keeping with the spirit and practice of Hizmet, Pakistani business people have provided the resources to build these schools. Land has been given by government and much of this is inspired by the high quality of academic and moral education. Given that the Punjab alone has a population of 90 million, the schools are very few, but the first Hizmet Movement school arrived in Pakistan in 1995 and today there are nineteen schools with 530 teachers, 170 of whom are from Turkey.

It was business people from Turkey and Germany who initiated the schools in 1995. Here again finance was freely given in the spirit of Hizmet or service. Local people now see that these schools work. They are perceived as models of peaceful coexistence. Unusually for Pakistan, students from different nationalities are included, and perhaps more unusual, Christian students are involved and supported by the business sponsors. Not surprisingly these schools are attracting the attention of other schools in the country.

Teachers, as in all Hizmet Movement schools, have a close relationship with students and parents. Homes are visited by teachers three to four times per year. The visit will last for two hours and the student's welfare, education and future are discussed. Parents value this close and involved contact. Ten to fifteen international projects are carried out each year. This enhances the global ethos of the school and acts as an encouragement to other schools to participate in this international dimension. Some of the PakTurk students do go to study in other countries. This is believed to be crucial and important as it provides a way forward for global conflict reduction and cohesion. Without global values, it is believed, peace will not be achieved. Globalization means that understanding, respect for everyone and a global perspective are crucial to the future of the world.

Those students who go to study in universities in Turkey, the United States, Australia and Canada, have and want the opportunity to understand the global world, learn to respect differences and then return with their knowledge and experience to Pakistan. Some sponsorship for education abroad is available with the condition that students return and serve their own people. It is not, therefore, the export of the brightest and best or a brain drain.

The key academic subjects are engineering, medical, accountancy, arts, divinity, business administration, technology and architecture, in order of the volume of graduation. Sociology and law are also on the curriculum. Here is the robust education in the sciences characteristic of Hizmet Movement schools. In the PakTurk schools there is also a special department for moral education with full-time teachers. Counselors are also on staff, and all education is for moral values underlining the importance of being human, hardworking and immersed in international global values. Moral values is an examinable subject, not as a mathematics test, but more through student-teacher feedback and observation.

Student Perspectives

Behavior and Lifestyle

Students spoke of learning behavior and of improved behavior which came from changed attitudes. Students and teachers know each other very well, and there were

positive teacher role models. Not only is high quality education given, but also high quality education in moral values. Healthy life-style is taught, as is quality of life. Real-life issues were explored, and there was a very real learning from life.

Given that the schools included Muslims and Christians, there was awareness of the differences in religions, but the approach was equality of treatment and non-discrimination. Religion, and awareness of each other's religions improved how they could live and relate together. Religion, therefore, was not divisive, but a uniting force because of positive and presumably shared values.

Gülen himself was an inspiring role model for students. They spoke highly of his philosophy and approach, seeing him as encouraging a greater working together to remove boundaries. There is no coercion in this model, they believed. No one is forced. Students study in a rigorous academic way and make judgments for themselves. This is not education as control or indoctrination, but education as freedom for freedom.

The student–teacher relationship enables students, not only to make judgments for themselves, but to be able to air their problems and to be empowered for resolution. The pattern seemed to be dialogue–integrate–example–educate, dynamic strands which add up to a lifestyle of learning, a real ‘leading out’ and liberation.

Engaging Problems

A number of times lifestyle was emphasized as important, and education was helping to form and shape a positive, healthy lifestyle. Part of this was learning to communicate in non-sectarian ways in which equality was important. It was significant that the problem of sectarianism was raised. It is a problem shared in a number of global locations. The environment of the school was of crucial importance. It was an international school, whose global perspectives were being realized. The global dimension to experience included international competitions and exchanges.

A lot of the conversation centered on human rights as an ingredient of peacebuilding. Clearly this was an issue which had been discussed in the classroom, and there was a high level of awareness of human rights. Working for human rights was felt to be key, not only for relationships within the school, but in Pakistan and in the world. Education in human rights was key.

The topic of violence, war and non-violence was felt to be significant and, above all, the importance of dialogue. All groups in a conflict need to be at the table in humility, which is an openness to each other and to each group's needs. Dialogue was the way to understanding, not for any one group in the conflict, but for all

and for peace. The resolution of conflict and the building of peace requires moral values. Education plays an important role in developing dialogue skills.

Reflecting the demographics of Pakistan, Christians were in the minority within the student body. Freedom of belief and expression were very much part of the experience, as was mutual understanding and respect for each other's traditions. Sectarianism was not part of the school ethos, which makes the educational experience countercultural. On a visit to England some students were shocked by the media image of Muslims and the association of Muslims with weapons. The Western media generally reflects a negative and stereotypical image of Islam, which is part of the problem in developing a more understanding perspective on East–West relations. Students affirmed again the importance of international perspectives. They had the capacity to discuss large issues of geopolitics and welcomed their educational experience as enabling them to be more open and broadminded, with broader understanding of local and global issues.

Bangkok, Thailand

The three schools visited in Bangkok were multi-national and multi-religious. Though Thailand is a Buddhist country by a large majority, there are other faiths present in society as well as other nationals. Nationalities within the schools include Nigerian, Indian, Egyptian and Burmese. This opened up wide cultural and political divisions, with more exploration of culture in broad terms than any narrow focus on religions. The multi-religious dimensions were not ignored. If anything, politics and food were learning experiences. Shared food from across cultures was increasing respect and understanding. The current state of Egyptian politics provided for lively dialogue, and no doubt still does.

The focus on values was strong and a special class was offered. Values had an Eastern focus, though the universality of human values was emphasized. Education in values explored respect, honesty, trustworthiness, moderation, tolerance, and diligence. It was believed that a multi-cultural education enabled students to become more openminded.

There was an awareness of religious differences and sectarian conflicts, though it was stated that these are not really talked about. Coming as I do from Northern Ireland, this is surprising and not surprising. Religious and political sectarianism can be avoided, and perhaps most people in a society want to do that. Most find silence around sectarianism the better option. Engage and the result may be less dialogue and more confrontation. Perhaps only a few are willing to face the difficult challenge of tackling sectarian issues. Yet without engagement the divisive and destructive issue will not go away.

On the other hand, the schools did talk about other difficult issues. Teachers generally were open-minded and wanted students to argue with them. Students found this helpful. One area of dialogue, as pervasive and divisive as sectarianism, is gender, and this was openly discussed. Theory of knowledge was taught as a subject and helped in the expressing of ideas and views. The death penalty was another difficult issue that was explored. All of this, it was stressed, was not to get everyone to think as you do, but for each to develop their own thinking with respect for each other and for differing views. Education, it was believed, was about making the world a better place.

Student Perspectives

Students on Religion and Culture

Religions were explored in the classrooms with teaching on Buddhism offered by a Buddhist monk. A prayer room was also available. Teachers generally were familiar with the religions and explored these through seminars. Learning and awareness were not only enhanced through the formal classroom, but through experiential sharing of each other's traditions. At Ramadan students would have a meal together, and there would be a sharing of Buddhist activities, including entering into stories. There was awareness too of different types of Buddhism. Key to it all was to study, eat and pray together with a focus on the common ground. Students do not tell stories against each other, but dialogue with a deep sense of respect. Rights are respected and there is a sense of mutuality. There are problems. There are radical Buddhists who do not want the monks in the schools. Fundamentalism exists. The perception also exists that the schools are Muslim, and so parents ask questions before they send their children. Buddhists are in the majority and Muslim students are around ten to fifteen percent of the student body.

Though it was claimed that sectarianism was not talked about, perhaps the schools are finding another way of dealing with it. Rather than direct engagement with the problem, there is a positive evaluation made of the different religions, and experiences of each are entered into with respect and understanding. The root of hard-edged sectarianism is ignorance and here education, especially in values, undermines sectarian mind-sets and actions. It is an appropriate way of dealing with the issue, and so too is the approach that impacts the root causes. What was impressive in conversations with students was the shared understanding of each other's religious traditions. A Buddhist student had the capacity to articulate the religious understanding of a Sikh student, and vice versa. Students had an impressive grasp of the others' religious traditions.

In one situation one student from each of the four religious traditions spoke of their deep understanding.

An Indian Sikh student spoke of food issues as part of the Sikh tradition, and of the belief in one God. Sikhs are here to do good things which is also part of the belief in Karma. Meditation is key and important. There is belief in heaven and a rule for a simple way of life. Temple is attended every Saturday.

The Buddhist found that temples were easy to go to for prayer, though there was some discussion as to whether or not Buddhists actually prayed. Not having a theistic tradition, this sparked an interesting discussion. A young Burmese Buddhist offered a profound understanding that prayer was communion with one's soul. The five pillars of Buddhism were outlined: no killing; sexual purity; speaking the truth; doing good comes back to you; belief in the next life.

A Christian student attended church every Sunday, where he prayed for family and friends. Bible reading each night was an important discipline. Faith was believing in God and following the insights of the Bible throughout life.

A Muslim student spoke of praying five times per day with a place for prayer being provided in the school. A gender issue was raised but not explored, simply stated as a matter of fact, that as a woman she could not pray when menstruating. Monotheism was important, and the Qur'an was central followed by the Hadith, or sayings of the Prophet.

This exchange of self-understandings was freely given in an atmosphere of respect and mutual understanding. Thai people are generally tolerant. There is a lack of insulting language in relation to the multiple faiths. Religion is important to everyone and the practice of various faiths is encouraged. Within the schools there was the openness to ask questions and enquire about the respective religions.

Within the school ethos it was possible to ask about wearing a headscarf or food laws. Holidays are observed for all the religious festivals. Teachers play a significant role in ensuring inclusivity. They are always supportive. Students have a strong sense of community and differences are not allowed to divide. The dignity of the human person is paramount. All are primarily human beings worthy of respect. Knowledge of and appreciation of other cultures is a positive and enriching experience.

Values for Life

Friendship and community were important aspects of school life. Different traditions, including food and dress are respected. Sensitivity about speech was important as care is needed in relating to, communicating and understanding each other. Language can be used in an insensitive and inappropriate way, giving offence or even insulting another. Being sensitive in conversation and dialogue avoids hurt and positively builds relationships. Students deserve to be friends together and

have a sense of the school as a family and a respectful community. It is in this atmosphere, encouraged by the sensitivity of teachers, that students have a positive experience of each other's cultures and religious traditions.

Students summarized the value base of their school or its ethics as: being a good person; ability to interact; following the rules; sharing human problems; accepting difference; tolerance. Religions are an examined subject with an inclusion of all religions, which perhaps helps in the level of mutual understanding. Students of all religions study Buddhism, and there is a freedom to explore multiple faiths. International perspectives from teachers provide a wider sense of culture. The presence of a Canadian teacher meant that Canada Day was observed.

The values and ethics of the schools were clearly formalized and reflect the ethos of this Hizmet Movement model of education in Bangkok: kind and considerate to others; tolerant towards other cultures and beliefs; respectful; creative; mild-mannered; honest; responsible.

The three aims displayed on the exterior of one of the school buildings say something about its ethos: English fluency — Academic excellence — Moral enrichment.

Education in the Present for the Future

These three case studies are only a small example of a global educational mobilization. They reflect three very different contexts and hopefully create an impression of a scientific, value-based, relational and holistic form of education. The dedication and commitment of teachers and the deep sense of being a learning community and laboratory of human character-building as well as peacebuilding, is a mark of an exciting and creative educational project. After visiting a number of schools, Thomas Michel concluded:

I can state without qualification that I find these schools to be among the most dynamic and worthwhile educational enterprises I have encountered in the world.

The strength of their programs in the sciences, information sciences, and languages is shown in their students' repeated successes in academic olympiads.¹

It is an evaluation which can be heartily endorsed. The Hizmet Movement has enacted a dynamic educational enterprise. Gülen, of course, inspired this enterprise in a Turkish context. It was in the context of Turkey's twentieth-century experience that he developed his educational approach. Yet the Movement now has a global profile and the schools in Urfa, Lahore and Bangkok are positive expressions of

that educational vision. There are three things at the heart of this educational mobilization:

Education for the future

Until we help them through education, the young will be captives of their environment... They can become truly valiant young representatives of national thought and feeling, provided their education integrates them with their past, and prepares them intelligently for the future.²

It is clear from the case studies above that this education is producing a generation of young people equipped in mind and heart, with knowledge and values to be positive citizens and community, maybe even state builders of the present and the future. This is education with a future-orientated approach, not only empowering young people in terms of their own development and service to society and the world, but education investing in the future of Turkey, Pakistan and Thailand.

Education Integrating the Spiritual and the Secular

Gülen, as noted in the previous chapter, frequently uses the words ‘spirituality’ and ‘spiritual values’. He is not using these words in any narrow religious sense. In many societies this is language used outside of the synagogue, church and mosque. It is not unusual to hear these words in contemporary secular society, at least in the West, which is considered to be a secular bastion. There is no question that this vocabulary does include the deepest insights and practices of all religions, but this is the vocabulary now for ethics, values, psychological health and effective openness. Gülen’s use of this vocabulary is integrative, a bridge between the sacred and secular.

The centrality of value-based education in these schools is preparing young people for life in a world where the religious and the secular co-exist and hopefully collaborate.

Education for Cultural Rights

Food, dress and festivals were all part of the educational experience in the schools profiled in the case studies. These are aspects of culture and in each of these schools with an international or inter-ethnic student body, cultural diversity and an educational experience in cultural diversity opened up minds and enabled positive inclusivity. Gülen believed that cultural education was missing and was convinced that to give it educational importance would be a major achievement. This too is about integrating the past and the present. Past heritage includes accumulated wisdom which should not be by-passed. There are things from the past which are to be rejected, but there are also positive cultural stories, memories and wisdom.

These need to be integrated with the multi-cultural present to create and prepare for a rich, diverse and more human future.

In human rights discourse, cultural rights are named but are still treated as an appendage. Cultural rights and the limits that diversity requires of them now need to move up the rights agenda and public consciousness. Cultural education in the Hizmet Movement schools is doing this and preparing a generation for a more multi-cultural, pluralist and diverse global and shared future. It is education for a future of cultural rights and responsibilities.

A generation of young people globally is being prepared through a holistic and well-rounded education, to be reformers, change-makers, peacebuilders, state-builders and contributors to a shared global future.

Participating in the Symphony of Love

One of today's crucial questions is, what does it mean to be human? That may even be a more pressing question than who or what is God. Those of the monotheistic traditions may want to say that the two questions cannot be separated. It may be that both questions are to be asked together in much the same way that loving God and loving neighbor are indivisible. It is not that the human person is God. None of the three monotheistic faiths would say that. Rather there is something about knowing ourselves and in knowing something of the depths of ourselves we know something of the divine or the sacred. To encounter the other is somehow to encounter the sacred Other. The divine is at the heart of the human and when truly human we are closest to the divine. Again the human is not God, even though humans may sometimes behave in ways that make them think they are God. When the Qur'an says that God is closer than your jugular vein, it is a way of emphasizing the inseparability of the divine and human. If God is that close then we discover the sacred deep within ourselves, and when we have such consciousness, we are more truly human.

In a world where there is much that dehumanizes people, there is an urgency about asking, what does it mean to be human? War, violence, consumerism, sexualization and exploitation, physical, sexual, psychological and verbal abuse, poverty, domination, all dehumanize. Perhaps every era and generation has had to ask the question anew and struggle with anthropology, but again Judaism, Christianity and Islam would insist that anthropology and theology are inseparable, the human and the divine are inseparable and indivisible. With claims frequently made that the West is a secular society, whatever exactly that means, it is a skewed idea of secular that excludes the sacred. The reverse is also true.

How, therefore, do the Abrahamic traditions perceive the human? What does being human mean from the perspective of Judaism, Christianity and Islam? Fethullah Gülen offers a Muslim perspective, and as in other themes, it will be important to bring his insights into dialogue with Jewish and Christian insights. In doing so, we may truly find a shared humanity.

Gülen and Humanity in Love

In asking the question about what it means to be human we are going beyond individualism. We are also engaging with humanism. When Gülen is asked for Islam's perspective on humanism, he immediately centers on love, which is a social virtue, a relational dynamic with its obvious reminder that we are human in relationships, indeed a whole network of relationships. For individuals, which is what we are, though not individualists, the strength of relationships that we experience and know are family, society and nation. This forms a concentric circle of relationships, the most immediate of which is family, arching out to the wider social/societal relationship and wider still to nation and the belonging of national identity. To be Irish or Turkish is important and there are growing numbers of people today holding dual identities, with up to ninety nations now allowing dual passports and citizenship. Global identity is also an increasing reality in a globalized world. The latter may become too extreme on its own, which is why our core human identity is family.

When Gülen writes of love he is at his most poetic, which is really the only language of love.

Actually love is a rose in our belief, a realm of the heart that never withers. Before everything else, just as God wove the universe like lace on the loom of love, the most magical and charming music in the bosom of existence is always love...

This is so true that the most dominant factor in the spirit of existence is love. As an individual of the universal chorus, almost every creature acts and behaves in its own style, according to the magical tone it has received from God, in a melody of love.¹

Love, for Gülen, is core to being human, the heartbeat of human existence. The individual is more than individual, she or he is of the universal chorus, and while acting out of their individuality, are at the same time part of the melody of love. Only a chorus can sing such a melody. Gülen's imagination touches on a cosmic dimension. 'Universal love shows itself throughout the cosmos in each particle's help and support for every other particle'.² The cosmos itself is relational and exists in a mutual interaction of love. Love is universal and empowers the interdependability and interactive dynamic of particles. From this perspective, expressed poetically, and more profoundly true for that, 'people consciously participate in this symphony of love in existence'.³

For Gülen, this is what it means to be truly human, participating in a symphony of love. It is also how he sees authentic humanism as different from an abstract and unbalanced understanding.

It should be difficult to reconcile with humanism the strange behavior of those who murder innocent people or, even more horrible, those who put some supposedly religious people in their forefront and, without even glancing at the people's tears, stand by and watch.⁴

Not only can religion be abused and misused, it can dehumanize and shatter the symphony of love. There is something distorted about any religion that does not allow the human individual to flourish. Developed persons who do not use their rights and freedom to harm others, but put the interest and well-being of others first, should have the space to flourish as individual persons, but Gülen recognizes another blockage to human flourishing. Speaking in 1997 with honesty about his own nation he claimed it was because 'we are descendants of a militarist nation. It has been passed on by our ancestors'.⁵ It raises the question, can national characteristics be inherited? Is there a nationalist DNA? Gülen's critical comment on his own nation and militaristic ancestors is not exclusive to Turkey. Citizens of the USA, the United Kingdom, indeed much of Europe have militaristic traditions and histories. Ireland has a deep rooted culture of violence, the roots of which are in a colonial experience. How much do human beings inherit a culture of militarism, war and violence, an ethos that reduces humanness and hinders truly human flourishing?

In contrast to this, Gülen also believes that human beings have a natural disposition and inherit elements. In a remarkable piece of positive anthropology he says:

Each individual is equipped with sublime emotions, has a natural disposition toward virtue, and is fascinated with eternity. Even the most wretched-looking person has a rainbow-like atmosphere in his or her spirit comprised of the thought of eternity, love and beauty, and virtuous feeling. If people can develop these most basic, inherent elements of their being, they can rise to the highest ranks of humanity and attain eternity.⁶

All humans have the capacity to be truly human and can develop their inherent sense of transcendence, love of beauty and inner quest and longing for virtue, but cultures and lifestyles and wrong habits of living, the lack of love, and relationships at all levels, can reduce humanity and at worst dehumanize.

Ignorance, lack of understanding and awareness also dehumanize. Ignorance is like a veil drawn over the face of things. The unawareness of God, the sacred or transcendence is, for Gülen, the greatest ignorance, and when ignorance is combined with arrogance, 'it becomes kind of insanity that cannot be cured'.⁷ Ignorance and arrogance lead to violence against others and nature. The delusion of knowing arising from ignorance and really not knowing is dangerous, and is even more dangerous and potentially violent because it is the lack of knowing oneself or self-knowledge. To not know oneself is to not know reality.

At the other end of the spectrum one may know, at least in relative terms, but imagine or claim infallibility. To be always right or imagine that one is always right is to be indifferent to the needs of others. Infallibility is anti-relational because no one else has truth, insights or good ideas. Absolutist truth claims announced with infallibility are dismissive and destructive of others. Religious leadership and institutions are not above absolutist and infallible truth claims and actions, and they are no less destructive and dehumanizing than secular and atheistic regimes as history has shown. For Gülen there is always the possibility of correcting our own ideas and acknowledging the truth and ideas of others, and this acknowledges 'the fact that human beings are prone to error'.⁸ To be human, or to know ourselves is to acknowledge our fallibility, ignorance and finitude.

Human and Responsible

Gülen's anthropology addresses inner profundity, a dimension of being human which is described as 'the essence and the vital element of being, the index and core element of the universe'.⁹ But while understanding what Gülen is trying to say at this point, some will see his perspective as being anthropocentric, a much too human-centered view of things. He does claim that 'Human beings are at the center of creation; all other things, living or non-living, compose concentric circles around them'. This is an honor granted to humanity who are 'the ones who have been granted the privilege to rule and make use of creation'.¹⁰ Critics will claim that it is this kind of anthropocentrism, typical also of Christianity and interpretations of the Jewish creation texts in Genesis, that have been destructive of nature and ecological systems. The flip side of this is that nature, living and non-living, have only value as they serve human needs. Critics will say that a more ecologically aware perspective calls for another model rather than humans at the center and all else in concentric circles. This has too often been modeled as a ladder with each rung down being inferior, which has been a hierarchical or patriarchal model. It is also seen as an exaggerated human role. Anthropocentrism needs to be transformed into a more egalitarian, partnership model where there is greater emphasis on partnership, mutuality and ethical responsibility. It may be that humans are more truly human in an ecological partnership, which is also a deeply relational model, expressing interaction and interdependence. Equality, diversity and interdependence may be a more ethically responsible template than that suggested by anthropocentrism or human as crown of creation.

Gülen quotes the Turkish poet Akif, who also wrote the Turkish National Anthem:

*He is created more exalted than were the angels.*¹¹

This is similar to the sentiments of an Ancient Jewish poet:

Yet you have made them (humans) a little lower than God (Psalms 8:5).

An alternative translation is given as ‘*angels*’. An anthropocentric perspective has been built on such texts and such an interpretation does suggest a very human-centered view of the world. All texts are interpreted and alternative readings are often possible. Read traditionally ‘more exalted than even the angels’ or made ‘a little lower than the angels’ does need to be re-interpreted in the light of contemporary ecological knowledge.

Gülen does see all creation as valuable and a reflection of God, the All-Beautiful and All-Fair. Beauty and fairness are present in all creation which does provide for a more Theo-centered perspective. Interpretive tensions remain for each of the Abrahamic faiths, all of which would affirm a Theo-centered perspective, but not all interpretation has nuanced that, leaning at times towards anthropocentrism.

Yet, if a much less anthropocentric reading is necessary and more than possible, there is no avoiding human responsibility. To be human is to be responsible, for oneself, others and nature. ‘Vicegerent of God on earth’ might be given an anthropocentric interpretation by some, but to live humanly is to live responsibly, and that is the essence of Gülen’s affirmation.

The success of humankind in protecting their relationship with existence and the physical world can be determined by the degree to which they act in accordance with the purpose of all creation. In contrast, those who do not act according to this purpose, and those who may partially neglect their duties, always clash with the gyrating spheres and grinding wheels of the universe, in addition to suffering from their own purposelessness and lack of supervision. In this way, they are able to turn this world, which is their home, and which could become like a palace, into a hell.¹²

Human life is to be lived in harmony with creation, and if we run against the grain, act from our own purposes rather than in harmony with the purpose of creation, then we create a hell on earth. As part of the ecosystem we are to work with it, not against it. We are to be partners, not those who dominate or control. Put another way, humans are not to conquer nature but to be friends with nature. The latter leads to a very different relationship. Humans find their humanity in a shared partnership with nature. This also means an ethical partnership or a life of ethical responsibility for all of life and with the whole household of life.

Gülen sees living as a ‘duty of service and responsibility in the work and service that they carry out’ and this is rooted in the ultimate relationship, the divine-human

relationship, ‘to be a servant and lover of God’.¹³ To live ethically and responsibly in relation to the human and ecological community is ultimately worship of God. Gülen gives profound expression to this experiential perspective on worship:

If worship is the placing of a consciousness of being bound to God into one’s heart, if it is liberation of one’s self from all types of slavery, if it is the title of seeing, learning and feeling the beauty, order and harmony that belong to Him in every molecule of existence — and there is no doubt that it is this and nothing else — then worship is the most immediate way to turn our face to God, with everyone and everything, the soundest and most immediate way of associating everything with Him.¹⁴

Gülen’s anthropology ends in doxology. It is the consciousness of being a knowing, relational, responsible human, centered on the consciousness of the sacred addressed as Allah or God. It is the liberation of the self to be even more truly human from all that dehumanizes and restricts. The responsible human is the lover of God and the lover of life.

The Idea of the Human in Judaism

Judaism is the oldest of the three monotheistic or Abrahamic faiths. It is the root tradition of the other two, and Christianity and Islam cannot be understood without awareness of Jewish roots and insights. This is not to say that the latter two faiths simply adopted the Judaic vision. Roots cannot be denied. If they are, as they were early in Christian history, then anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism have been the tragic results. Yet each tradition developed in somewhat different directions, reinterpreting roots in different contexts. Yet Judaism remains the contributor of many of the most basic ideas of the Western world.

Thomas Cahill believes that the ‘Jews gave us a whole new vocabulary, a whole new Temple of the Spirit, an inner landscape of ideas and feelings that had never been known before.’ He writes also of the legacy of the

Conscience of the West, the belief that this God who is One is not the God of outward show but the ‘still small voice of conscience’, the God of compassion, the God who ‘will be there’, the God who cares about each of his creatures, especially the humans he created ‘in his own image’ and that he insists we do the same.¹⁵

Here also is a strong hint of anthropocentrism. Does God really have more care for humans than the rest of God’s creation? Or is this a human projection of need, perhaps arising from insecurity? Nevertheless, the oneness and compassion of God are shared by all three Abrahamic faiths. Our shared roots in Judaism are further expressed by Cahill.

The Jews gave us the Outside and the Inside – our outlook and our inner life. We can hardly get up in the morning or cross the street without being Jewish. We dream Jewish dreams and Jewish hopes. Most of our best words, in fact — new, adventure, surprise; unique, individual, passion, vocation; time, history, future; freedom, progress, spirit; faith, hope, justice — are the gifts of the Jews.¹⁶

Perhaps all of this is a shared Abrahamic legacy.

Being human in the Jewish tradition lies in being made ‘in the image of God’. The language is poetic and is drawn from the creation poem of Genesis I. This affirmation of the human had a context. Jewish identity was born in the near East of many civilizations and especially in the context of Mesopotamian, Egyptian and Canaanite myths. Here we meet gods of sky, sea and lightning. Gods are portrayed as part animal, part human and the forces of nature are personified. There are battles, struggles to bring order out of chaos and establish hierarchies of dominance. These myths are not just about gods, they are early humanity’s attempt to understand itself. What is a human? Who are we? What are we for? How is power organized? These are the deep questions of meaning and struggle to articulate the human self-awareness. The world of myth is powerful and profound and still is, even though the scientific worldview has reduced myth to fairy tale, what is untrue and cannot be trusted, but in an ancient world threatened by chaos and a contemporary world where the threat of chaos and violence remains, we humans need myths of identity and meaning.

In the ancient world, Kings, through myth and ritual, aspired to be or were declared to be gods. The rest were lesser by a long way, and there were ranks and classes and gradations.

Against this backdrop a sentence was uttered that heralded the greatest paradigm shift in the history of mankind: ‘So God made man in His own image; in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them’.¹⁷

The Hebrew poet quoted earlier (Psalm 8) needs to be heard against this backdrop of large powers and myths of meaning. A counter-myth is being proposed, and this may help to take the poetry of Genesis I and Psalm 8 away from an anthropocentric interpretation. The ancient near-eastern myths which surrounded these early Semitic, Hebrew people were subverted by this new insight. In time it had enormous impact and widespread legacy.

From it would flow the great ideas that changed the West — the sanctity of human life, the dignity of the individual, human rights, the sovereignty

of justice, the rule of law and the idea of a free society. Nothing could have been more counterintuitive. That kings, rulers, emperors, pharaohs were the image of God — that much the ancient world knew. But that we all are — this was revolutionary.¹⁸

It was a revolutionary view of all humanity and what it meant to be human. It subverted hierarchy as patriarchy, even though the Hebrew Bible for the most part cannot escape a patriarchal context, but its expressions of patriarchy are subverted from within the text by the poetry of Genesis I. If both the counterintuitive insight of Genesis I and Psalm 8 emerged from the experience of Babylonian exile in the sixth century BCE, and as a counter myth to the dominant Babylonian myth, then human dignity and all that follows from it was radically affirmed. The Genesis poem or counter-myth was actually affirming the dignity and goodness of all creation. Far from anthropocentrism, a later Western development, this was biocentrism, a life-centered approach to the world rooted in the God of life, in whom all of life found meaning and liberation. Significantly the counterintuitive creation poem of Genesis I is liturgical. It belongs to a worship setting and was probably sung as responsive liturgical worship. The ancient people who first discovered the in-depth meaning of being human, did so in relation to the Creator. This Jewish awareness and insight is echoed by Gülen's Islamic insights into being human.

'In terms of ethics, Judaism was the first religion to insist upon the dignity of the person and the sanctity of human life'.¹⁹ Jonathan Sacks believes that this has had huge implications for humankind. The individual can no longer be sacrificed for the group. Murder is a crime against the human and God. In the words of the American Declaration of Independence, all human beings are 'endowed by their Creator with unalienable human rights'. These are the social and political implications of the human person being made in the image of God.

The sanctity of human life is written into the structure of the universe by the terms of creation. It is a non-negotiable standard by which all human conduct is judged.²⁰

Given that the Genesis affirmation is made in Babylonian exile and is counter to the Babylonian myth, then something subversive is also being affirmed about our DNA and its propensity to violence, a question Gülen raised. At the heart of the Babylonian myth was violence. Creation came out of brutal violence, and from the bloodshed of the goddess humans were made. Myth is an attempt to explain how things are and why we are the way we are. As counter to the Babylonian myth of violence, the exiled Hebrews offered a new myth. Violence is not at the heart of how things are or come to be. God, creation and the human are not born from violence or programmed for violence. Humans created a nationalistic culture

and ethos of violence as in Turkey and Ireland, but our essential humanity is for something other.

Where again did the Ancient Hebrew counter myth take shape? The two founding myths of Judaism were born in two journeys. Abraham set out from Mesopotamia, and Moses led the Ancient Hebrews out of Egypt. In the sixth century BCE when the Jews were exiled in Babylon, these two stories or myths were shaped as was the poem of Genesis I. Abraham, Moses, Exile, they were all about anti-imperialism, protest against the dehumanizing forms of empires and their domination systems. 'Judaism is a critique of empire and the rule of the strong... By stating that not just the King, but everyone, is in the image of God, the Bible was opposing the entire political universe of the ancient world'.²¹

Our humanness is not deepened by imperial powers, empires or domination systems. In Judaism it lies in our being made in the image of God, the God of life, and we are who we are in ourselves as individuals and in relationships as humans stamped with the divine and therefore with dignity and sanctity. Empires, ancient and modern, enslave the masses, seek to define reality and who we are as impersonal objects.

Babel is the symbol of the sacrifice of the individual to the elite. Abraham, by contrast, is to become the symbol of all individuals in search of worth as individuals. The Hebrew Bible is a sustained protest against empire, hierarchy, ruling elites and the enslavement of the masses.²²

Part of this vision is also of a society of free and equal citizens. Human relationships and human society are indispensable to being truly human and realizing our human potential. We flourish in a society of free and equal citizens.

In the twentieth century no one realized this more than Martin Buber, the Jewish philosopher. Buber emphasized the immediacy of human encounters in which two people meet, each fully open to the other. Buber described this as the I–Thou relationship. 'Buber understood that Judaism is less about metaphysical creeds than about the quality of relationships between people'.²³ Relationships are core to being human and in the I–Thou encounter not only do two human beings become fully open to each other, the Divine presence is at the heart of such I–Thou encounters. We become human in encounters, meetings, dialogues.

Being human and responsible is implied in all of this. In the I–Thou encounter we share responsibility for each other. The I–Thou encounter is the experience also of society. Society might be defined as the on-going encounters between free and equal citizens where responsibility for social and human flourishing is shared.

This is the heart of the Jewish vision of covenant. It is a societal vision where all are pledged in relationship and committed to the well-being of each other, where truly human flourishing can take place. Covenant is best defined by three Hebrew words which translate as ‘justice, right relations and social solidarity’. They are indivisible and inseparable. Covenantal society is central to the Hebrew Bible.

Gülen sees the heart of our human existence as love. We are humans in love who consciously participate in a symphony of love. This too is a participation in the Divine. Judaism also places love at the heart of being human, being in relationships and being responsible in human society. Joshua Berman draws attention to the Deuteronomy mandate ‘to love God’ and to the medieval Jewish thinker Maimonides, who perceived this love as like the yearning of a man for a woman who is beyond attainability.²⁴ The analogy is drawn from a patriarchal world, but the point is made. The yearning for God is always incomplete. If it were complete, the human would be lost in God, something not attainable, nor perhaps desirable in this life. Yet ‘love’ was crucially important in near-eastern political treaties, known as covenants. In terms of treaty or covenant, to love was ‘to demonstrate loyalty’.²⁵ To love God, then, as a human person, is not an emotional response, nor has it anything to do with ecstatic experiences. It is to live out a steady loyalty to God through the practice of justice, right relations and social solidarity. In shorthand, it is keeping covenant. To break covenant in the thinking of the Jewish Bible is ‘an act of hate’. It is ‘to display disloyalty, here called ‘hate’.²⁶ This is why the covenantal ‘ten words’ are addressed in the first half as the relationship with God and in the second half as societal welfare and justice. Loving God or sharing in God’s symphony of love is the practice of social justice at the heart of societal relationships. To love God in the Hebrew tradition is to be human through social solidarity and justice which creates humane and right relations.

A Christian Perspective on Being Human

Christian faith, when it acknowledges its Jewish roots, is aware that the Hebrew Bible, beginning with a creation poem which includes the creation of male and female, is not imagining the creation of Jewish male and female. The prologue to the Hebrew Bible (Genesis I–II) is not focused on Jewish people at all. Even the Abraham story which follows is not specifically Jewish. It is more Semitic, and the Jewishness of Abraham is a later creation. The Prologue is about humanity, universal humankind without ethnic identities. When the author of Luke’s Gospel shaped a genealogy, which is more a theological creation than biological, he traced the ancestor of Jesus back to Adam, the human one. For Luke’s Gospel, as with the Prologue to the Hebrew Bible, we all share a common, universal humanity. Before we are anything else, we are human beings. Apart from the theological reflection

of Genesis I and Luke 3, we are human by birth and human in death. We share a common beginning and a common end. Birth and death unite us in a common humanity. The authors of Genesis and Luke are being intentional. We are human before we are Jewish, Christian or Muslim, and if our respective faiths are in any way authentic, they are about making us more truly human, not more religious.

John De Gruchy is a South African theologian in the Christian tradition. He has significant things to say about being human, the title of one of his books. What he says provides connecting points to the Jewish and Muslim faiths, though sometimes spoken in a different accent. The anthropological essentials are common though expressed in diverse ways. This in itself highlights two factors in our humanness. There is difference and unity within and between human beings. We are different, yet share a commonality. This is further highlighted by two other apparent polarities, particularity and universality. There is a uniqueness about every human being, even a uniqueness when we form into diverse cultural or ethnic groups. We are also universal humans sharing a common and universal humanity.

De Gruchy moves quickly to something which is so key to African culture and his South African culture in particular. Human beings are truly human in relationships. In the Xhosa language the word is *ubuntu*. 'We exist as humans in and through others... We exist through others, and we find ourselves, as well as define ourselves, in relation to them'.²⁷ I am because you are, which means we are never self-made people, nor mere individuals. We are only ourselves in relationships.

Christians affirm human relationality on the basis of two theological signposts. The Hebrew Bible is also sacred text for the Christian community and the Genesis poem is important for its affirmation. In Genesis I:26–27 humanity is created '*male and female*' and this 'reminds us that relationality is fundamental to the biblical understanding of being human'.²⁸ Male and female created in the '*image of God*' has been interpreted in different ways by Christians. Created rational may be true but it does not exhaust the '*image of God*' metaphor. This is where Christians have gone beyond the Jewish text and interpretive tradition.

The second theological signpost for a Christian appreciation of human relationality is the metaphor of the Trinity. Here Jews and Muslims are either baffled or they recoil against what seems to be a belief in three Gods. For most of the time Christians are also baffled by the Trinity. In dialogue, Christians will affirm that they too are monotheist, which means that they need to articulate carefully what they are trying to say or imagine when they talk about God as Trinity.

Cappadocia is a region in Turkey, a wild and stunning region. Centuries ago in this landscape Cappadocian Christian theologians developed the metaphor of Trinity.

They did this because, as they realized, God is the mystery beyond us and beyond human words. We cannot really speak of this mystery, and all human language is inadequate. So the Trinity became their key metaphor for God beyond names and words. A metaphor becomes distorted when taken literally, and the Cappadocian theologians were more than conscious of the inadequacy of language and of the nature of metaphor. Jews and Muslims will also acknowledge the mystery and otherness of God. The metaphor of Trinity reflected another key insight for the Cappadocians. It reflected 'God's own relational character', and this therefore reflects 'our innate capacity for a relationship with God and other humans'.²⁹ The great mystery at the heart of the universe is relational, and as humans made in 'God's image' we are relational through and through.

De Gruchy points out our commonality as humans. We share common propensities. There is a rich human diversity and various expressions of these shared propensities through personalities and cultures.

We are all aware of the human capacity to love and hate, to share and to greedily hoard, to speak the truth and to lie, to serve and to dominate, to hope and despair, to express joy and sadness, to embrace and shun others, to feel guilty or ashamed, and to relish acceptance and forgiveness.³⁰

All humans experience and express these propensities whatever our cultures and the uniqueness of our personalities. 'In this sense, we all share a common humanity, even though we all have distinct personalities in and through which that humanity is expressed'.³¹ Whilst we do define ourselves in terms of culture, gender, nationality, occupation, education, sports, and hobbies, we share a deeper identity and a common humanity in the joy, sadness, hope and despair, and all of the other human propensities.

This is why we need to go far beyond national, cultural and ethnic identities to affirm our deepest and truest selves, but we sometimes insist on defining our humanity in lesser terms, and often indulge in pre-judging and stereotyping others. This is a negative part of our being human. It depersonalizes and dehumanizes. It 'feeds xenophobia, and sometimes results in genocide and ethnic cleansing; that is, crimes against humanity',³² but if we cultivate a deep sense of our sharing a common humanity, of being human in relationships together, then this will shape how we live, behave and act towards each other. We realize our being human in treating others as we would have them treat us. It is in this being human in relationships and applying at social and societal level the golden rule that we find human and humane society.

Being human means journeying towards human well-being. De Gruchy recalls an American teacher who had a profound influence on him when a student in Chicago. This professor of Christian education believed that a great deal of 'theological talk' was too abstract and removed people from reality. His aim was 'to develop theological insights incarnate in human life'.³³ One of the first essays he set his students was entitled 'Who am I?', a profoundly human, theological and philosophical question. Later De Gruchy wrote a book, *Being Human*, and began by saying:

This is a book about becoming human. Something we are always about, but never finish.³⁴

All three Abrahamic faiths recognize the human capacity to err, make mistakes and do wrong. We are fallible and finite creatures, in real ways flawed. Yet there is more to us than that, even when it becomes terrible evil in some lives and behaviors. Humans are always in the process of becoming human, always on the journey towards becoming more truly human and developing more truly humane relationships, a humane society. Becoming human is about growing human well-being, and that is about the development of those human and relational propensities.

Becoming more human has to do with the capacity to love, to trust, to forgive, and to be angry when it is right to be so, even if these are expressed in ways that are different. Alongside these is the deepening of the capacity to imagine, to experience awe, to sense injustice, to recognize beauty, to distinguish wisdom from knowledge, to discover joy, to laugh, to live responsibly, and to risk vulnerability. Human well-being has to do with the development of such human capacities in each person in ways that are appropriate to that person, ways that enrich life, enable self-worth, heal, restore and promote mental and bodily health, and develop a sense of connectedness to the earth.³⁵

De Gruchy, from his specifically Christian perspective, finds the guidelines for becoming more humane in 'Jesus' Sermon on Mount and especially the Beatitudes (Matthew 5), for they reflect Jesus' own embodiment of what it means to be truly human'.³⁶

The Beatitudes include the knowing of the self, the practice of non-violence, compassion, the hunger for justice and active commitment to peacemaking. They are guidelines rooted deeply in the sense of the sacred and promote a practical template for human well-being.

All of these truly human qualities are shared by Judaism, Christianity and Islam. All three speak passionately about love, compassion and justice. This is Gülen's participation in the symphony of love, Sacks' and Berman's covenant or social

vision of love and De Gruchy's process of well-being with its capacity to love, and all perceive being and becoming human as relational, related to others and the earth, and the human experience of awe in response to the great mystery of love at the heart of the whole community of life is reflected in all three faiths.

Ethical Globalization

We are over a decade into a new millennium. Has the world changed? Is it a better or safer place? There are indicators that inter-state war, as distinct from civil conflicts, is in decline. By 1918 Europe had become profoundly disillusioned with war, though it repeated the bloody exercise in 1939–1945. The Cold War was a confrontational and frightening era, but a major war did not occur. Given that since the early 1970s most localized conflicts have been resolved by negotiation rather than military victory, and that we have lived through the expansion of democracy, international trade and international institutions, we may be moving towards a better and safer world. At least it seems that developed nations have generally abandoned war as a way of conducting relations with each other. That inter-state warfare is in decline is a hopeful sign. Yet a utopian announcement is not imminent. There are still legacy issues from World War I and the Paris Peace Conference. Colonial and post-colonial issues still dominate, and globalization as the reality of our time has the largely negative dimension of economic imperialism or neo-colonialism. The legacy issues of World War I still threaten the peace of the planet. Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Israel/Palestine are ongoing military and humanitarian crises.

Brutal and inhumane actions by terrorists in the region are abhorrent and beyond any justification or moral category, but they are an immoral response to historic American and Western intervention and interference in the region, which is also without moral justification. Any hope of a better and more peaceful world is tempered by the conflict in what the West has called the Middle East.

To be human is to hope and without hope human societies perish. One of Fethullah Gülen's influential books, *Toward a Global Civilization of Love and Tolerance*, not only gives a general picture of the world of his thought, but also offers a hopeful vision for our contemporary world. Gülen offers global perspectives and affirms that a new world order is being built. Or as he put it more poetically, 'and still, I am keeping my hope alive for the world and humanity, fresh as evergreen leaves and I keep on looking upon tomorrow with a smile'.¹ In the same book Gülen advocates and articulates the necessity and nature of dialogue. He is convinced that social dialogue and tolerance are deeply rooted in the Qur'an, his particular sacred text. Such dialogue is essential to creating a new world order and a new world order, he

believes, requires a new people. Such new people ‘will unite profound spirituality, diverse knowledge, sound thinking, a scientific component, and wise activism’.²

The ‘People of the Book’ have a significant contribution to make to the transformation of people and the world order. As Jews, Christians and Muslims they have differences and commonalities to share on the journey. The commonalities lie, not least, in values and ethics. Monotheistic faiths, despite their shadow sides and distortions, are ethical and prophetic traditions. In bringing Gülen into dialogue with Jewish and Christian faiths, what are some of the key areas of a new world order that can be explored together and addressed from within some shared values and ethics?

Millennia in Transition

There is something in the human psyche that either becomes hopeful or becomes apocalyptic, usually falling into a doomsday scenario. Gülen prefers the metaphors of sunrise and spring as symbols of new beginning and hope. With such an outlook he began the third millennium, but what kind of millennium did humanity leave behind? Was the second millennium a triumph of hope? Gülen recognizes both a negative and a positive, indeed quite a few positives.

The second millennium started with the Crusades and then the Mongol invasions of the Muslim world, which at that time was the heart of the world and history. Despite the wars and destruction, and despite the crimes committed, sometimes in the name of religion and sometimes in the name of economic, political and military supremacy, this millennium saw the apex of the civilizations of the East, civilizations based on spirituality, metaphysical, universal and eternal values, and of the civilization of the West, those based on physical sciences. Many significant geographical discoveries and scientific inventions occurred during this millennium.³

This broad-brush historical perspective encompasses a very real form of globalization. Geographical discoveries and scientific inventions opened up a larger world and a greater potential for interdependence and sharing. The millennium did begin with a dark episode in the history of Christendom, the Crusades, backed by the Pope and all carried out in the exclusive name of the Christian God. The Crusades, lacking ethics as they did, even though carried out in the divine name, left a bitter legacy for Christian–Muslim relations and further exacerbated Christian–Jewish relations. George W. Bush’s use of the word ‘crusade’ to describe America’s response to the events of 9/11, even though withdrawn later, evoked shock and angst in the Muslim world. Something of the past still lived on in the present.

It was also the millennium that saw the rise of Eurocentrism and European

domination of the world. East and West lived separately, though in reality, much of the East became dominated by the imperial West. As in all colonial conquests, the conquered were always portrayed as uncivilized and barbaric, needing to be controlled. Eastern civilization was denigrated by the superior European and Christian powers. There were various waves of European imperialism with destructive consequences.

As a result, the last centuries of the second millennium witnessed disasters that we find hard to comprehend. Due to the growing arrogance and egoism of humanity, caused by its accomplishments, people had to experience worldwide colonialism, rampant massacres, revolutions that caused millions of lives, unimaginable bloody and destructive wars, racial discrimination, immense social and economic injustice, and iron curtains built by regimes whose ideology and philosophy, sought to deny the essence, freedom, merit and honor of humanity.⁴

The last century of the second millennium was the most brutal and bloody of all, with more dead than all the other centuries of recorded history put together. Both big wars were described as world wars. They were in reality European wars largely fought in Europe with soldiers from global, colonial outposts fighting in European theatres of war. There was war in the East and the Americans joined in, but apart from the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Americans at home were spared the ravages of Europe. As the second half of the last century of the millennium set about the reconstruction of Europe, not only did a new form of globalization emerge, it was the beginning of the end of Eurocentrism and European domination of the world.

It is this reality that makes Afghan Muslim, Tamim Ansary's perspective timely and telling. Educated in Kabul, Ansary grew up largely unaware of an Islamic history. The West shared a common narrative of world history running from Ancient Egypt to the last twentieth-century triumph of democracy, and indeed triumph of democratic capitalism. 'But what if we look at world history through Islamic eyes'.⁵ There is an alternative history to be discovered, rather recovered from underneath the superstructure of Western history.

In Shakespeare's day, for example, prominent world power was centered in three Islamic empires. Where are all the Muslims in this canon? Missing. If you didn't know Moors were Muslims, you would not learn it from Othello.⁶

For much of the second millennium, the West and the new Islamic world have lived in separate universes. History is written and told by the powerful and dominant, and the West or Eurocentrism dominated, privileging its own telling of a world narrative. The other narrative was churned under, repressed and ignored. 'So which

is the real history of the world?’ Now an Afghan Muslim posits that world history is ‘the whole story of humankind from a particular point of view, each history containing all the others’.⁷ It is no longer possible to read the story of the last millennium from a Eurocentric perspective. Europe and the West now need to hear a history of the world from an Islamic perspective. It may sound like a different story, but it is really a shared narrative, the whole story of humankind from a particular point of view and valid at that. A dialogue of history is an interesting challenge. ‘The work lies in the never-ending task of compiling them in the quest to build a universal human community situated within a single shared history’.⁸ The building of a new world order may need such active dialogue and work.

We still live in transition. Over a decade into the third millennium, not only has Eurocentrism collapsed, so too has the European phenomenon of Christendom. In the West and Westernized countries the Christendom model of privileged, constitutionally and culturally established churches has come to an end, even though some desperately try to recover it, or pretend it has not happened. Institutional Christianity in the West no longer has privilege, status or political power and a very different relationship between Church and State, faith and politics, will be worked out in the twenty-first century.

The new millennium has begun with its landscape in an on-going process of change. Human beings carry both expectations and angst.

Modern means of communication and transportation have transformed the world into a large global village. So, those who expect that any radical changes in a country will be determined by that country alone and remain limited to it are unaware of realities. This time is a period of interactive relations. Nations and peoples are more in need of and dependent on each other, a situation that causes closeness in mutual relations.⁹

For Gülen the network of relations and interdependency has taken us beyond the old colonialism. Digital electronic technology has not only opened up information but also the transnational exchange of information. Human and social rights now have priority. Gülen quotes a basic Qur’anic principle:

If one person kills another unjustly, it is the same as if he has killed all of humanity; if one saves another, it is the same as if he has saved all of humanity (Sura 5:32).

There is a growing legal acceptance of individual and social rights

such as the protection of life, religion, property, reproduction, and intellect, as well as the basic understanding of the equality of people, which is based on the fact that all people are human beings, and subsequently, the rejection

of all racial, color, and linguistic discriminations. All of those will be — and should be — indispensable essentials in the new millennium.¹⁰

Essential to Gülen's hope-filled millennium is the growing dialogue and interaction of Islam, Christianity and Judaism, and that 'they all stem from the same roots, all have essentially the same basic beliefs, and are nourished from the same source'.¹¹ The new global world and world order need the Abrahamic faiths to overcome their centuries old rivalries and embrace their shared responsibility to build a better world.

To Gülen's hope for the third millennium, Judaism and Christianity bring a theology or philosophy of history that is specifically Jewish in its origins. In the ancient world, until the Jewish people came along, the world and its history were cyclical. It was an endless circle, history repeating itself, and just going round and round. The Jews were the first to challenge this cyclical view. They insisted that history was linear and that every moment was different and had within it the potential for newness. Things do not repeat themselves. Every moment is filled with new possibilities, new relationships, new actions, new directions. Nothing need remain as it is. It has been described as a 'processive worldview' and is 'regularly referred to in history, literature, philosophy, religion and theology texts and regularly contrasted with its opposite, the 'cyclical worldview'.¹² It is the gift of Judaism to the world. We are not tied to a wheel, but can as humans get off the wheel, and furthermore, as humans we have the capacity to change things. In this worldview we can write the history of the third millennium. Christian faith is the inheritor of this radical tradition, and it finds expression in the core metaphor in the teaching of Jesus, the Kingdom or Reign of God. The metaphor was already part of Jesus' Jewish tradition, emerging especially from the sixth-century bce experience of the Babylonian exile. It is the shared conviction that God is not outside history but within it as the source of justice, peace and compassionate transformation. Humans are invited to participate with the rest of creation in what Christians perceive as God's Kingdom project.

Whatever the descriptive language used by people of the Abrahamic faith, they are all committed to a shared purpose, responsibility and goal, and whatever otherworldly dimension there may be to it, their commitment is to change, newness and transformation in this world. The third millennium can be different.

Science and Religion: Towards a New Partnership

For some centuries now science and religion have been bitter enemies. There has been a battle of science against religion or religion against science. A scientific worldview now prevails which many believe has discredited religion. In the West the 'new atheists' dismiss all religion as superstitious nonsense, irrational and poisonous

to all life and society. The fundamentalism and intolerance of the 'new atheism' notwithstanding, religion has brought much of the aggressive opposition on itself. In the West it is Christianity in its Christendom mode that has too often waged war against science. Fundamentalist Christians have waged a war over creationism versus evolution. It even ended up in a court battle early in the twentieth century and it continues with a creationist or intelligent design panel being placed in the interpretive center at a millions of years old site of special geological interest in Northern Ireland. The battle is supposed to be Genesis versus Darwin, but reading the Jewish creation poem or myth as science and as a literal account of creation is to miss the whole point of the opening chapter of the Hebrew Bible. More seriously, it is to distort and warp the profound and deeper truth of the counter-cultural myth.

There are other battles waged between science and religion but as Gülen points out, they never ought to have happened. He may also be right that the conflict gave rise to atheism and nationalism. In a sense science did demystify the universe and made claims beyond its competency, but religion as opposition to science distorted the sense of God and the sacred and made its own contribution to de-spiritualizing the world. The great wrong is that Christian fundamentalism is opposing science and empiricism and bought wholesale into the scientific and empirical method to articulate its opposition and its faith. The problem was that fundamentalism was too often trying to rationalize the absurd. Yet the truth of myth, while not unreasonable, is beyond the rational as a lot of the reality in human relationships are.

Gülen is clear that 'science cannot contradict religion, for its purpose is to understand nature and humanity'.¹³ This too is the role of religion, and science and religion are coming at the same questions from different angles or standpoints. They are each probing the mystery of nature and humanity, perhaps science asking 'how' questions and religion 'why' questions. It is not that the questions are separate, still less in opposition. They belong together as two sides of one coin, and they need each other. Each makes a truth claim, but not to cancel the other out. The truth claims are complementary and provisional. New light and new experience may and does change the data and what is articulated. Both science and religion in the past have overstated their truth claims, each believing that they had spoken the last word. Science and religion in the past both made their claims absolute, each to the exclusion of the other, but scientists and theologians are more humble in the third millennium, more ready to acknowledge the deep down mystery of things and the provisionality of scientific evidence or the human articulation of what has been called divine revelation.

Religion has its source in Ultimate Mystery, and even though Gülen speaks of its manifestation 'in the course of human history as Divine Scriptures, such as the Qur'an, the Gospels, the Torah', these are real issues of interpretation and the pillars

of human language, all too human language of those who try to speak of the Divine source. Scientists now also realize that pure objectivity does not exist, that they too are socially, culturally and geographically located, and that they articulate through a prism, which sometimes has as much to do with power as truth. For all of this, or perhaps because of it, a greater humility on both sides, has opened up a new relationship between science and religion.

Thanks to the efforts of both Christian and Muslim theologians and scientists, it seems that the religion-science conflict that has lasted for a few centuries will come to an end, or at least its absurdity will finally be acknowledged.¹⁴

As a result of this Gülen sees a new style of education 'that fuses religious and scientific knowledge with morality and spirituality.'¹⁵ This very much reflects the educational approach of the movement he has inspired in schools in many parts of the world, and dealt with in an earlier chapter. Religion needs science to inform as to how nature and humanity came to be and how they function, interact and work. Science needs religion with its quest for meaning, ethics and values. The material and spiritual worlds are not two distinct entities, but are naturally integrated. The material without the spiritual is valueless and the spiritual without the material is disembodied and esoteric.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks also stresses the complementarity of science and religion. He entitles his book on the subject *The Great Partnership*. He begins by wondering 'If the new atheists are right, you would have to be sad, mad or bad to believe in God and practice a religious faith'.¹⁶ He rejects this, pointing to the inspired moral greatness of religious human beings and their activism in building more just and peaceful communities. Religion, he insists, does not mean abdicating the intellect or silencing critical faculties. Nor does it mean reading the opening chapter of the Hebrew Bible literally and it does not involve rejecting the findings of science. He sets out the difference and complementarity very clearly:

The story I am about to tell is about the human mind and its ability to do two quite different things. One is the ability to break things down into their constituent parts and see how they mesh and interact. The other is the ability to join things together so that they form relationships. The best example of the first is science, of the second, religion.

Science takes things apart to see how they work. Religion puts things together to see what they mean.¹⁷

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries religion tried to dominate science and at other times science has tried to dominate religion, but from Sacks' Jewish perspective we need both, to see how things work and to see what they mean. The

compatibility of science and religion finds inspiration for Sacks in the Abraham story, or rather the God of Abraham.

The God of Abraham, the voice of the world — that-is-not-yet-but-might-be, the God whose name ('I will be what I will be') means the unknown ability of the future in a world constituted by freedom, is what scientists call a singularity, a one-off, a unique and world-changing event, and we, whether we are religious or not, are in some sense his heirs.¹⁸

To be an heir of Abraham is to embrace science and religion. For Sacks we are guardians of our children's future, which means political, economic and environmental sustainability. This future lies in science and scientific technology. The sacred task of education is important, teaching children to love and therefore hope. Teaching children about the future is about making peace. 'The heart of the spiritual is doing what is right and just.'¹⁹ The heirs of Abraham are concerned with science and religion, the material and the spiritual. It is the journey that Abraham was called by God to pursue, to push out into a future he did not know, to keep moving forward. The faith of Abraham is the faith of a scientist who lives with unknowability and experiment through dynamic movement.

Faith has driven the scientific and religious imaginations along their different paths, but with the same basic refusal to rest content with what we know – with the same non-rational but not irrational willingness to travel to an unknown destination beyond the visible horizon, to attempt dimly to discern an order beneath the seeming chaos, to hear the music beneath the noise.²⁰

The spirituality of Abraham is to 'charge his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice'. (Genesis 18:19). The last two words are core to Jewish spirituality and ethics. They are key covenant words

characterizing individuals and communities that exemplify and promote life and well-being for all in every relational sphere, human and non-human. As such their lives would correspond to God's creational intentions for the world order, including blessing on all nations.²¹

Right relations based on justice encompassing the whole community of life is the heart of the Jewish ethical way of life. The story, in which the above text from Genesis is set, has God drawing Abraham's attention to a situation of injustice. To participate in God's way of life in the world is to be involved in such life situations. Relationships are to be put right in just ways. Justice and its practice is for the healing of relationships.

Abraham is to push out beyond the present boundaries of what he knows and experiences. He is called into the future with all its experiment, risk and vulnerability, into a world of not-knowing. It is the kind of faith that has inspired and continues to inspire scientific quest and probing. In the story Abraham is to teach the present generation and to hand on to the next the core ethic of relational justice. Like everything else science needs ethics, and given that scientific experiments and the pushing of boundaries involve issues of power, including power over, there is no good science without ethics. Religion may not claim to be the only source of ethics, but religion has always been a positive source, even with its shadow side. Justice is key and is the performance of acts of love. Without such justice we cannot hope to build a more hopeful future. That is pretty much what Paul was saying in his Letter to the Romans in the Christian Testament. Immersed in his Jewish roots, Paul's letter is on fire with the justice of God and he applies God's justice to human and environmental relationships. There is no good reason for Judaism, Christianity and Islam to be at war with science, and the new millennium promises a more reconciled and complementary relationship.

Beyond Violence and Terror

Nuclear strikes and warfare are not impossibilities in our third-millennium world. They are unimaginable and unthinkable, and in the end who would be left to tell the story? Nuclear weapons are out there, not in Baghdad, they never were, but always and in large quantities under the control of Washington. In terms of weapons of mass destruction, the USA is the biggest threat to world peace and the world's future. If the more traditional or classical warfare is on the decline, violence and terror have not gone away and have preoccupied much of the human race for the first decade of the twenty-first century. Military consumerism, is a fact of our time. National security and military budgets account for most of the public expenditure in the highly developed and powerful nations, USA expenditure far exceeding most of the top nations put together.

Clearly a new world order, if it is to be constructed, needs to address violence and terror. Gülen recognizes this and calls for technology and science in the service of humanity. Science like religion has a shadow side, which does not mean that we reject either, but in a new world order we cannot go on building and developing larger arsenals of weapons, creating a larger global market in arms sales, ratchet up national security to higher levels or go on announcing orange or red alerts. A war on terror lasting for decades is not how to build a new order of things. All that such a war does is increase the violence and terror for which it is largely responsible in the first instance. The war has been portrayed as a West–East confrontation, which in the popular wartime mind suggests an Eastern world of Islamic terror, but Gülen is right

to call for a much more 'sound diagnosis of the situation'. He recognizes that certain individuals in the Islamic world have become entangled, or are made to become entangled in a web of terrorism. He addresses the problems, first of which is that

Islamic societies entered the twentieth century as a world of the oppressed, the wronged and the colonized; the first half of the century was occupied with wars of liberation and independence, wars that were carried over from the nineteenth century.²²

He further points out that when national states were established in those parts of the world, he might more truthfully have said, imposed in those parts of the world, they were not compatible with their public. Furthermore, 'In many regions of Islamic geography, administrations that disregard and denigrate the public and which are oligarchic in nature, have worked for the well-being of the dynasties'.²³ Western colonial powers which created the problem and the legacy of colonialism and imposed or supported oligarchies, have created an image, driven by Western media, of Islam as an extreme political ideology, with the stereotype that all Muslims are extremists and violent terrorists.

Yet Gülen represents a different face of Islam, which is perhaps the majority face. The 'Christian' West never speaks or reports on 'Christian terrorists', though it could if it were to examine some of the religious language that has inspired some examples of Western terrorism. It is, of course, easy to dismiss any religious undertones as warped and distorted versions of the faith. That would be true but there is less willingness to recognize and describe atrocities committed in the name of Allah as equally warped and distorted. Gülen represents a more authentic face of Islam and is very clear 'that the religion God has sent, whether it be called Judaism, Christianity or Islam, cannot be thought of as allowing terrorism, let alone prescribing it'.²⁴ He is very clear that a terrorist cannot be a genuine Muslim and a Muslim cannot be a terrorist, indeed 'it is impossible for a Muslim to be a terrorist'.²⁵

Muslims have a just war theory, not unlike that developed by Christendom. War is only a condition of defense, Islam never having looked favorably on war. It can only be declared by the state and the innocent are to always be protected. Acts of terror are acts of individuals or organizations, not declared by the state, therefore, when they also happen without restraint, or target and destroy values that must be protected, they have no place in Islam, and Muslims need, according to Gülen, to come out and say so.

Muslims should stand up and say: There is no terror in real Islam. This is so because: Islam equates the killing of one person with unbelief. You cannot kill a human being. Even during a war, you cannot touch innocent people. Regarding this matter, no one can give a fatwa (religious verdict)... Islam has

not approved wars... Muslims cannot commit a terror, without any rules and directed against the values of humanity which needs to be protected... Terror cannot have any place in Islam.²⁶

In the complete text of the above, Gülen appeals to the Qur'an:

(Though killing is something you feel aversion to) disorder (rooted in rebellion against God and recognizing no laws) is worse than killing (Sura 2:191).

'Disorder' or fitnah in Qur'anic Arabic:

denotes associating partners with God and adopting this as a life-style, spreading unbelief and apostasy, committing major sins with willful, insolent abandon, open hostilities to Islam, causing public disorder, and oppression, all of which are worse than killing.²⁷

The problem is that this is a complete section of the Qur'an, with a number of positions being held in tension. All of the Abrahamic faiths have their complexities and inevitably have to hold tensions together as creatively as possible, but then, simplism and certainty are rarely, if ever possible, except in the construct of our own minds. At the same time, it may be that not only Muslims, but Jews and Christians need to all stand up and oppose the violence, terror and war that is sometimes carried out in the name of their respective faiths, or their one God.

In relation to suicide bombers, Gülen's response is short and clear:

No-one can be a suicide bomber. No one can rush into crowds with bombs tied to his or her body. Regardless of the religion of those crowds, this is not religiously permissible. Even in the event of war, during which it is difficult to maintain balances, this is not permitted in Islam. Islam states, Do not touch children or people who worship in churches'.²⁸

A 'sound diagnosis of the situation' whenever terrorism and violence occur is necessary. Condemnation is not enough. A robust analysis of the social and political factors that create terrorists is essential without ever condoning the actions. Understanding is not agreeing or condoning. We also need understanding without ambivalence towards the violence. Gülen is clear about the paradox, and if his clarity was applied not only by Muslims, but also by those in the West who have lived with terrorist violence, as in Northern Ireland, then respective terrorisms, (and Northern Ireland had at least two sides) including State terrorism, would never have been nor will be justified. It can be understood but never justified, and that may be an important distinction that all three Abrahamic faiths need to make and be publicly clear about.

The West makes enormous assumptions about the 'Islamic World', many seeing it as religiously violent and extreme. Gülen's response to the concept of an 'Islamic World' is rather striking:

In my opinion, an 'Islamic World' does not really exist. There are places where Muslims live. There are Muslims in some places and fewer in others. Islam has become a way of living, a culture; it is not being followed as a faith. There are Muslims who have restructured Islam in accordance with their thoughts... It cannot be said that any society with this concept and philosophy exists within Islamic geography.²⁹

If there is no such thing as an 'Islamic World', there is no such thing as an 'Islamic Civilization'. 'No such world exists. There is an Islam of the individual'.³⁰ Much of this may need further thought and development and some Westerners may find it unsatisfactory, but there are shared issues here for Jews, Christians and Muslims. In the West Christendom has died and Christendom was a 'World', a 'Christian World' and it was identified with a 'Christian Civilization'. It lasted for up to 1600 years and it was European and Eurocentric. Is part of the Western angst about an 'Islamic World' to do with the death of the European and Western 'Christian World', and therefore the fear that it is going to be replaced and dominated by an 'Islamic World'? The death of Christendom also raises difficult questions about the twenty-first century relationship between Church and State, faith and politics. That is a third-millennium question that Christians in Europe and the West have not had to ask since the fourth century ce. It was not a question Christian believers of the first two centuries ce had to ask, though they did have very different and difficult questions to ask which makes the Christian Testament a must-read for contemporary Western Christians. They will, though, need to learn to re-read its text, not as the majority, privileged and powerful, but as a minority and in relation to political power, powerless, and as a group of people among the many.

Muslims have similar questions to ask in a more globalized and pluralist context. Is a Muslim State desirable, even compatible with the deepest insights of Islam? Would a Muslim State be as historically bad as a Christian State? Should Muslims repeat the mistakes and corruptions of Western Christendom? Would Muslimdom be good for a third-millennium globalized world? Gülen does not believe that there is an obligation in Islam to create such a state. What Islam provides are general principles for good governance, not an Islamic State, but an empowered civil society. Turkey, which is a bridge between West and East, is a country with a secular constitution and religious tensions. The relation between the two is a work in progress, and the question may not be resolved any faster than it is being resolved in the West. Turkey's unique geographical position is important, and the dialogue between European and Turkish people is of strategic importance for any new world order.

The issue also has deep resonance for Jewish people, not least in the light of the seemingly intractable problem of Israel and Palestine. Is Israel a Jewish State, or if a liberal democracy, as it claims, then what does that mean in global terms? A Jewish homeland is a concept that can be justified, especially in light of the historical treatment of Jews in Europe over the centuries and especially in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but does not the displacement and oppression of the Palestinians, a mirror experience perhaps of European Jewry, raise ethical questions, not least the ethical idea that owes more to Judaism than any other religion, namely justice and right relations based on justice? Was nineteenth-century Zionism just another version and part of the aggressive nineteenth-century nationalism that has had such tragic consequences for Europe and the rest of the world? The various nationalisms with their toxic legacies are no longer meaningful in a globalized world. The Israeli–Palestinian problem is not a self-contained problem. It is set in the larger context of the Middle and Near East and like all conflicts in the third millennium has implications for the global present and future. There will be no new world order without resolution of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, and both Israelis and Palestinians need to show the world that they know that. The peace of Israel/Palestine is inseparably bound up with the peace of the whole region.

So, Jews, Christians and Muslims each have big questions to ask and answer in relation to a shared future for the planet of which they are part. Terrorism and violence and how to overcome them are part of the mix. So too are issues of faith and politics, faith and state-building and faith and liberal, pluralist democracy. Above all a new world order is a global issue and challenge which requires the active participation of the world's State powers, the world's religions and all philosophies of good will.

Foundations of a New Order

If a new order is to be built it will need to have strong political, democratic and economic dimensions, but the foundation goes deeper. Democracy, politics and economics need ethical foundations, and the realm of the ethical is the spiritual. The new order requires a value base which can also be described as its spirituality, its inner ethos or heartbeat. Without ethical values there is no new order of things. So what deep foundations or spirituality does a new world order need?

The 'new springtime', as Gülen describes it, will

see the gap between the meek and poor narrow; the world's riches will be distributed more justly, according to work, capital and needs; there will be no discrimination based on race, color, language, or worldview; and basic human rights and freedoms will be protected. Individuals will come to the

fore and, learning how to realize their potential, will ascend on the way to becoming 'the most elevated human; on the wings of love, knowledge and belief.'³¹

Such a dream will require democracy, politics and economics to work, and the deeper foundation of values and ethics underpins Gülen's vision of the ideal society or new springtime. Human rights and knowledge implies the centrality of education to Gülen's springtime vision. He goes on to articulate the core foundational values:

Yes, this springtime will rise on the foundations of love, compassion, mercy, dialogue, acceptance of others, mutual respect, justice and rights. It will be a time in which humanity will discover its real essence. Goodness and kindness, righteousness and virtue will form the basic essence of the world.³²

Gülen is here expressing the core values of Islam. This is what Islam is essentially for; it is not just the essence of the new order, but also the essence of humanity. The entire world population is not going to become Muslim or Christian, nor will it have to, but there is a human essence and a common humanity and the essence of being good. All religious systems have the moral energy to enhance those values in the lives of their adherents, as can humanism. Gülen is totally committed to the power of love and compassion at the heart of his Islamic faith and its moral energy to transform him, and he recognizes the 'real essence' of humanity which is why he can imagine globally beyond boundaries.

Gülen's dream is of a society of virtuous individuals who have self-confidence and a sense of solidarity with the rest of society. Spiritual values again are necessary to achieve the ideal society and these are found in Islam. Yet, again, he is not an Islamic exclusivist. The bonds of love and solidarity go beyond boundaries and what Gülen calls 'social peace' cannot be realized unless people of all religions and none have the capacity to unite in love and solidarity. Social peace can be realized and achieve 'the unities of mind, conscience and heart which make a human a real human'. A significant ethical value is needed to achieve this and it is tolerance.

The mortar of the bridge between individuals is 'tolerance'. Tolerance is the essential element that must be adopted in individual and societal relationship. According to Gülen, tolerance can be taught and learned.³³

Tolerance in Gülen's Turkish language (*hoşgörü*) is a much stronger word than in English, where it tends to suggest 'putting up with the other'. In Turkish it is 'empathetic acceptance' or 'to see the good in the other'. In societies of conflict and violence where people demonize, stereotype and dehumanize each other, tolerance becomes the huge challenge to see each other differently. Tolerance is a positive value and virtue and the 'mortar of the bridge' between us as humans. When chaos

and turmoil take over there is a breakdown of morality and ethics underlying the disruption and violence. For Gülen high quality education is essential 'to make the climate of love dominant again'. Values and ethics are taught along with science and humanities. 'It is necessary to teach goodness, beauty, and truth, in addition to knowledge, and what is needed for this are 'men of ideals''.³⁴ It is along those very ethical lines that Gülen sees the 'new springtime' growing. There is no new order without core values and core values are possible.

Judaism and Christianity share those core values and see them also as the real essence of humanity. Rabbi Jonathan Sacks draws attention to a short story found in the Hebrew Bible. It is the story of Ruth, a Moabite — not a Jew, but one of the stereotypical, hated others. She refused to leave her mother-in-law after the death of their husbands. They return to Bethlehem, her mother-in-law's home to meet a relative of Naomi; he helps these destitute women and marries Ruth, the foreigner. At one level this little biblical book is 'a tale of kindness to strangers',³⁵ but it is not just a story of romantic love and kindness, even to strangers. When the canon of the Hebrew Bible was shaped, the book of Ruth was inserted as a prelude to the Books of Samuel, the narratives of Israel's Kings. The book was also written in the context of the return from Babylonian exile when people were struggling to build a new order, an order in which a very dominant voice wanted a pure, exclusivist community and others, such as the author of this little story, wanted to build a new order that was inclusive. There were Jewish leaders who had placed a permanent exclusion order on Moabites. So what was really going on in this little story and why was it placed where it was in the Hebrew Bible?

For Sacks, it is

that the book of Ruth is about *chesed*, usually translated as loving-kindness. Perhaps a more accurate translation would be 'covenant love, the love on which a covenantal society is based...The book is about kindness, loyalty, compassion, steadfastness: Ruth's to Naomi, Boaz's to Ruth.'³⁶

The covenantal society at the heart of which is 'covenant love' is the Jewish vision of a 'new springtime' or new order. It is the basis for civil society and, as Sacks points out, as the Hebrew Bible's prelude to the history of Israel's Kings it is stating 'as a fundamental principle, the primacy of the personal over the political'.³⁷ There is something more important than political systems and structures and the power plays of Kings and Kingmakers. It is *chesed*, a thoroughly relational word, loyalty, kindness, compassion, social solidarity. There are 'pre-political' virtues and from the Jewish perspective *chesed* is core and it has been translated as 'civility':

It is kindness and loyalty to other people, ordinary people: family, friends, neighbors, strangers. That is expressed in homes, neighborhoods, communities, congregations; in other words, in civil society.³⁸

Christianity also has a values-based vision of a new order. Jesus summarized the heart of his Jewish tradition by an energized imperative to love God and love neighbor. It was not that the latter followed from the first or was a consequence of the first. God and neighbor were and are inseparable. One cannot love God without loving neighbor and to love neighbor is to love God. The source of this integrated loving was his Jewish tradition where a sixth-century bce prophet, Jeremiah, had declared that to do justice is to know God. When a human person steps out to live justly and do justice in relation to others and creation, the human steps out with the Sacred.

When the Christian Testament was shaped, it included seven letters, which it was believed, were definitely written by Paul. His letters provide insights into the journeys and struggles of faith in very early Jewish–Christian faith communities. Paul too was Jewish. When Jesus summed up the Jewish Torah it was love of God and neighbor. When Paul summed up the Jewish Torah he, some might think surprisingly, simply said it was love of neighbor. Living faith is relational and without love of neighbor there is no faith. Paul also affirmed that faith works through love. Faith is love in action in relational, social and communal ways.

Some of Paul's correspondence was with small faith communities in the Greek city of Corinth. The Christian Testament has two letters, though the second letter to Corinth may be a combination of two letters, while the first letter mentions a letter which no one has. So he may have written four letters to the churches in Corinth, and these seem to have been written in response to a raft of relational problems. Being human and being truly human may not always be the same. We fall short of our best selves, and relationships sometimes fall apart. Corinth was also a city where there were deep class divisions, many slaves, many former slaves and a minority rich and powerful. When the Romans rebuilt the ruined city of Corinth, they populated it with not a few social misfits. Corinth had relational dysfunction built into it and it was reflected in the new Christian communities. After trying to deal with a series of relational problems, Paul set out to show the Corinthian Christians 'a still more excellent way' (I Corinthians 14:31). This he expressed in a magnificent piece of poetry sometimes described as a 'hymn of love' (I Corinthians 13): If I do not have love then I am only a noisy, clanging cymbal. The center-piece of the poem paints a portrait of love in relationship. It might be called social love:

Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes

all things, endure all things. Love never ends (I Corinthians 13:4–8a).

The ‘more excellent way’ cannot be reduced to modern individualism. In an age which has run riot with individualism, self-sufficiency and autonomy, the spirit of this poetry does not fit. It was written to a community where relationships were askew, and love by its very nature only applies to relationships, community and society. The Greek word used is *agape*, which means to seek only the other’s highest good. The ethic of Jesus and Paul includes enemy in this radical, tough love. We are to be actively loving, compassionate and practically concerned with good and bad alike, friends and enemies. How else can a new order be built?

Paul was not confining the practicalities of love (as outlined above in I Corinthians 13:4–8a) to members of a faith community and their relationship with each other. The ‘more excellent way’ is to be loved and practiced in the wider cosmopolitan, flawed society of Corinth. Faith is not a self-enclosed, sub-culture, but in the metaphors of Jesus, salt and light in the world, a radically alternative community in the public fora of imperial cities where the Roman Empire, like all empires, decided reality and loyalty for all its subjects. Paul’s ‘love is patient, love is kind...’ is social and political, and still is. The supreme virtue, love, as Paul expresses it, is necessary for civility and a more civil society. Love is the supreme pre-political virtue.

The poem ends, *And now faith, hope and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love*. (I Corinthians 13:13). The triad is inseparable, and love is the greatest because it is faith and hope in action. Faith is trust, openness to the other and the Other, and it is living with integrity and solidarity and loyalty in relation to human others. Love is justice in action. ‘Hope, in a Christian sense, is love stretching itself into the future’.³⁹ If hope is love stretching itself into the future, then it is reaching for a future in which justice, compassion, solidarity and wholeness or human and ecological flourishing are the foundations of a new order. There is, therefore, no reason why the new springtime, new order or future cannot, for Jews, Christians, Muslims, and others, be a shared future.

The Role of Religion

The dialogue between Judaism, Christianity and Islam presupposes God. The three are monotheistic faiths and as such they encompass two thirds of the world’s population. Their roots are traced back in each case to Abraham, hence ‘the Abrahamic religions’. The Abraham story is one of leaving an old order behind, having been called out by God and then following the sense of the Sacred on a journey into the unknown. It was not a solitary journey, but Abraham with his family, tribe and clan, and its purpose was for the liberated flourishing of the peoples of the earth. He and his people were called out of the oppressive, reality-

defining empire or domination system to live a counter-cultural life without map and certainties, except the promise of the Sacred Presence and a future. It took a lot of faith to set off in pursuit of a new order, and the God of many names was and is believed to be at the heart of this venture. The sacred mystery who is also beyond names and words is the One who inspires, lures, empowers towards the new world order.

Gülen, therefore, speaks of the indispensability of religion in the order of society. That religion is based upon a foundation of putting faith in the existence of a Being whose presence permeates all of life. The faith response to this Being leads to moral formation and the inculcation of morals, values and virtues. 'In truth, in educating humans to become poems of virtues rather than of evil, it is inconceivable that any otherworldly system could replace this belief system'.⁴⁰

More than that, Gülen also believes that 'the ethical principles of religion in particular have a priority that is irreplaceable by any otherworldly thing in the cultivation of humanity'.⁴¹ The cultivation of humanity is human flourishing, which we now realize cannot happen apart from ecological flourishing. The human future and the future of the planet is bound up together. The hope of a new order is not only holistic, the Abrahamic faiths source their hope in the Sacred Mystery called God. How much this impacts humans depends 'on the state of religions, belief and its application in society'.⁴² Yet secular seems to be the norm in the Western world today. What that means is not always clear but believers have a sense, some more anxious than others, that faith has been squeezed to the margins of society and has become increasingly privatized. In the West there is undoubtedly a reaction to organized religion, and whilst the new atheists tend to be noisy, just as noisy as fundamentalist and conservative believers, the noisiness may be an attempt to suppress angst and fear that an old, familiar world is crumbling and dying. Certainly in the West 1,500 years of Christendom have died, with Christian churches de-privileged, culturally or constitutionally disestablished. The death of Christendom creates a new set of conditions for faith. For others, perhaps the noisy atheists (not all are), the collapse of Enlightenment and modernism, which means the dethronement of scientific absolutism and the supremacy of reason, have also led to angst, and a whole new set of conditions for not believing. The West has been living through an 'end of the world', and such periods in history have always been angst-driven, even given to trauma.

Then there is the 'secular' debate with confused and imprecise language. Charles Taylor, a philosopher with a Christian faith commitment has categorized secularity in different ways: the retreat of religion from public life; the decline in belief and practice; the change in the evolutions of belief. The first tends to see public space emptied of God and the big issues of life, such as the economic, political, cultural,

educational, are all pursued without God-reference. Whereas before the Church could prescribe and control, this is no longer the case. What organized religion once dominated and controlled, is now the domain of the State. The third Taylor describes as:

a move from a society where belief in God is unchallenged and indeed, unproblematic, to one in which it is understood to be one option among others, and frequently not the easiest to embrace.

He also observes that there are big differences between societies:

what it is to believe, stemming in part from the fact that belief is an option, and in some sense an embattled option in the Christian (or 'post-Christian') society, and not (or not yet) in the Muslim ones.

What this might mean is that in a globalized context the conditions in which we believe may change for all and not just in the Western and Westernized world. If this is true, or proves to be true, then how we experience God, search for the spiritual and shape our lives ethically will also change. The experience and shape of faith for the majority in a society, as for much of the past centuries in Europe, is different for a minority in a society, and politics and the arrangements of political power are part of the contextualization of faith, whatever the tradition.

Some describe as secularization the withdrawal or marginalization of religious institutions from the public space; that is, where the church ran schools, that is now the exclusive role of the State. Secularism has been described as the elimination of all forms of religion from society because religion is superstitious, irrational nonsense. It is an aggressive secularism, anti-democratic and intolerant.

Perhaps the spirit of plurality, an essential part of democracy, has had a negative impact on believing. From a place where belief in God was axiomatic, now there are alternatives. Humanism is one. Beliefs have also arisen 'in science, reason, or by the deliveries of particular sciences: for instance, evolutionary theory, or neuro-psychological explanations of mental functioning'.⁴³ Some of these are the legacies of the war between science and religion, a war for which there is now no reason. As for the humanist alternative or option, there need not be an incompatibility between faith and humanism, only when the latter becomes exclusive humanism. An exclusive faith, doctrinaire and dogmatic, usually loses touch with the essentially human.

Religion, which becomes a pluralistic choice, will involve for those who choose it, an experience and sense of the transcendent or the Sacred. This may be faith in a power that transcends the ordinary and the now. Or that there is a higher good and

therefore the possibility of transformation. This often means transcendence in the sense that this life is not all there is, but somehow there is a beyond the here-and-now, even with further dimensions of transformation. Yet the new context, with new conditions for believing, means that we can no longer naively acknowledge the transcendent. The centuries old Christian tradition of God as omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent were Christendom images when Christianity was privileged and politically powerful. From a place of marginalization and no political power, those still with faith in God may be more aware and experience a vulnerable God. In a globalized world where most suffer poverty and hunger along with the suffering of the earth, the language we borrow to speak of God and our experience of the Sacred will change. Organized religion may experience decline in belief and practice and find itself at the margins rather than at the center of public and political space, but it will be more ready to search, experience and recognize the Sacred at the heart of the secular. In a democratic and pluralist society religions no longer dominate, but still have the democratic right to be heard and to give voice, but only as one voice among many and only dependent on the power of moral persuasion rather than institutional power.

The problem for religion really lies in its relationship with political power. For Christianity that was the 'Constantinian error', but churches in Western experience are now largely separate from political structures. The development of democracy may have been largely responsible for this, as well as the corruption of power that frequently occurred. The corruption of political power with which churches in the past were closely aligned meant that the church lost its prophetic edge, and collusion meant corruption also. Yet religion becoming a private matter is the antithesis of the spirit of the ethical values at the heart of all religions. Love, justice, compassion, peace and hope are not individualist concerns. They are relational and public values, essential for the ordering of community and human and ecological relationship.

Gülen is right to stress that 'The idealized peaceful world cannot be established by war and spilling blood'.⁴⁴ A balance of power established by force will be short-lived. The world cannot be shaped by malice and hatred but by a climate-change to love as justice in action and hope.

The Jewish insight from the Book of Ruth is pertinent. The story again is about human relationships based on those deeper and pre-political virtues. Placed in the Hebrew Bible as the prelude to the books of Samuel and the narratives of Israel's Kings, the fundamental point is that the personal is always before the political. Human relationship comes before political power and civility trumps power-plays. Rabbi Sacks is worth quoting in full:

From a biblical perspective the desire on the part of religion to control the state is a confusion. Worse, it comes close to idolatry. Religion in the biblical sense is not about power but about influence, not about secular law but love, not about the state but about families and communities. The Bible is first and foremost about freedom: how we construct relationships of trust without the use of power. That is why the Koran is right when it says that there must be no compulsion on matters of religion. When religion seeks power, the result is disastrous, if not immediately then ultimately. The result is tragic for the people, catastrophic for the state, and disastrous for religion. When religion, any religion, seizes power, it forfeits the respect of ordinary, decent, righteous people, who once respected it and now fear and resent it. The result is the defeat of religion, the birth of a new secularism, and a desecration of the holy.⁴⁵

The Abrahamic faiths do well to hear this Jewish insight that is derived from the intentional placing of a little book, at first glance a romantic story, before stories of political power and attempts at theocracies in the Hebrew Bible. It needs to be especially heard when the signs are that an increasingly secular world may not be true at all. According to the title of one book, *God is Back*. Religious fervor and political unrest are reinforcing one another around the world. The first decade of the twenty-first century may well be witnessing a global religious revival. It has been predicted not only that China will be the next world superpower replacing America, but that by 2050 ‘China could well be the world’s biggest Muslim nation as well as its biggest Christian one’.⁴⁶ Such a development will not only change the balance of power in the world, it will change the context in which we live faith. ‘Religion is even (re-)emerging as a force in the very heartland of secularization’.⁴⁷ What the book does not do is decide whether this resurgence of religion is good or bad. Religion is a matter of choice in a pluralist and increasingly democratic world. The choices can be tragic or wonderful, destructive or liberating. For or against religion in the globalized world requires all sides to reappraise.

Secularists need to recognize that the enemy that ‘poisons everything’ is not religion but the union of religion and power – and believers need to recognize that religion flourishes best when it operates in a world of free choice.⁴⁸

If in the twenty-first century any of the world’s religions become joined to power, it will be disastrous for the religion and the state. If the religions can immerse themselves and invite people freely to do the same in relation to those pre-political virtues, the core relational values, then a new order, an ethical globalization may be possible.

*And they shall beat their swords into ploughshares,
 And their spears into pruning hooks;
 Nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
 Neither shall they learn war anymore;
 But they shall all sit under their own vines
 And under their own fig trees,
 And no one shall make them afraid;
 For the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken.*
 Jewish prophet Micah (4:3–4)

*Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first
 heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea (chaos)
 was no more...
 See the home of God is among mortals.
 He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples,
 And God himself will be with them;
 He will wipe every tear from their eyes.
 Death will be no more;
 Morning and crying and pain will be no more,
 For the past things have passed away.*
 Christian prophet, John of Patmos (Revelation 21:1–4)

We pray and beg that the Infinitely Compassionate One
 will not let our hopes and expectations come to nothing.
 M Fethullah Gülen ⁵⁰

Notes

Introduction

- 1 Zeki Toprak, 'Fethullah Gülen, A Sufi in his own way' in Yavuz, M.H. and Esposito, J. L. (eds), (2003) *Turkish Islam and the Secular State: The Hizmet Movement*, New York: Syracuse University Press , pp. 156–169, 156.
- 2 Albayrak, I. (ed) (2001) *Mastering Knowledge in Modern Times: Fethullah Gülen as an Islamic Scholar*, New York: Blue Dome Press.
- 3 Ünal, A. and Williams, A. (eds) (2000) *Advocate of Dialogue: Fethullah Gülen*, Fairfax, Virginia: The Fountain.
- 4 Ibid. p. 25.

Chapter I

- 1 Grieve, P. (2006) *Islam: History, Faith and Politics: The Complete Introduction*, London: Constable and Robinson Ltd., p. 7.
- 2 Haleem, M. A. Abdel, (2011) *Understanding the Qur'an: Themes and Style* , London: IB Tauris., p. 2.
- 3 Ibid. p. 2.
- 4 Khan, M. A. (2011) *The Vision and Impact of Fethullah Gülen: A New Paradigm for Social Activism*, New York: Blue Dome Press, p. 71.
- 5 Albayrak, I. (ed) (2001) *Mastering Knowledge in Modern Times: Fethullah Gülen as an Islamic Scholar*, New York: Blue Dome Press, p. 2.
- 6 Ibid. p. 4. Much of what follows is drawn from the chapter, 'Fethullah Gülen's Approach to Qur'anic Exegesis', pp. 1–37.
- 7 Ibid. p. 5.
- 8 Ibid. p. 9.
- 9 Ibid. p. 29.
- 10 Sacks, J. (2009) *Future Tense: A Vision for Jews and Judaism in the Global Culture*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, p. 30. The 'three divisions' are outlined on pp. 30–33.
- 11 Ibid. p. 31.
- 12 Ibid. p. 31.
- 13 Ibid. p. 30.
- 14 Ibid. p. 75.
- 15 Ibid, a summary of pp. 78–79.
- 16 McMaster, J. in Spencer, G. (ed) (2011) *Forgiving and Remembering in Northern Ireland: Approaches to Conflict Resolution*, London: Continuum, p. 140. The chapter dealing with Paul's letter to the Romans is pp. 129–147.

- 17 Horsley, R.A., (2011) *Jesus and the Powers: Conflict, Covenant, and the Hope of the Poor*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, pp. 179–180.
- 18 Ibid. p. 179.
- 19 Lodahl, M. (2010) *Claiming Abraham: Reading the Bible and the Qur'an Side by Side*, Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, p. 7.
- 20 Ibid. p. 6.

Chapter 2

- 1 Grinell, K. (2011) 'Border Thinking: Fethullah Gülen and the East–West Divide' in Esposito, J. L. and Yilmaz, I. (eds) (2011) *Islam and Peacebuilding: Hizmet Movement Initiatives*, New York: Blue Dome Press, 2011, p. 65.
- 2 Ibid. p. 65.
- 3 Ünal, A. and Williams, A. (eds) (2000) *Advocate of Dialogue: Fethullah Gülen*, Fairfax, Virginia: The Fountain, p. 189.
- 4 Esposito and Yilmaz, *Islam and Peacebuilding*, op. cit. p. 70.
- 5 Ibid. pp. 71–72.
- 6 Ünal and Williams, *Advocate of Dialogue*, op. cit. p. 191.
- 7 Esposito and Yilmaz, *Islam and Peacebuilding*, op. cit. p. 104.
- 8 Ibid. p. 149.
- 9 Ünal and Williams, *Advocate of Dialogue*, op. cit. p. 191.
- 10 Ibid. p. 244.
- 11 Ibid. pp. 244–245. It is important to note that the Hizmet Movement is always adapting and evolving. Though Gülen used 'interfaith dialogue' in his earlier writings, the Movement now prefers the word 'dialogue' because of the way 'interfaith' has been interpreted, or sometimes misunderstood. Dialogue is used in this chapter as relational encounter and the 'word between us' in these encounters.
- 12 Gülen, M.F. (2004a) *Toward a Global Civilization of Love and Tolerance*, New Jersey: The Light, p. 72.
- 13 Ibid. p. 76.
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- 15 Ibid. pp. 253–256. This brief paragraph is an inadequate summary of a profound piece of writing by Gülen on the Pillars of Dialogue.
- 16 Esposito and Yilmaz, *Islam and Peacebuilding*, op. cit. p. 153.
- 17 Sacks, J. (2003) *The Dignity of Difference: How to Avoid the Clash of Civilizations*, London: Continuum, p. vii.
- 18 Ibid. pp. 17–18.
- 19 Ibid. p. 23.
- 20 Ibid. p. 5.
- 21 Sacks, *Future Tense*, op. cit. p. 184.
- 22 Ibid. p. 184.

- 23 Ibid. p. 183.
- 24 Ibid. pp. 183–184.
- 25 Ibid. p. 191.
- 26 Ibid. p. 193.
- 27 Sacks, J. (2007) *The Home We Build Together: Reconciling Society*, London: Continuum, p. 174.
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A Word Between Us

Ethics in Interfaith Dialogue

As we progress through the twenty-first century, globalization has made interfaith and inter-civilizational dialogue the most important challenge of our time. It is through dialogue, not confrontation, still less violent confrontation, that a more just and peaceful world can be built. In this timely, thoughtful and thought-provoking book, Johnston McMaster, a veteran of ecumenical dialogue in Northern Ireland and author of a number of books on the topic, turns his attention to his more recent experience of interaction and dialogue with Muslims from Hizmet, a transnational civil society movement inspired by the Islamic scholar, Fethullah Gülen. McMaster reports on his personal experience of dialogue with the movement participants and reflects on his visits to nondenominational schools which Hizmet participants have established in Thailand, Turkey, and Pakistan.

McMaster draws on academic and religious traditions to examine in detail the three Abrahamic faiths for their resources for dialogue: he interrogates his own cultural experience and Christian tradition; Gülen's interpretation of Islamic thought in his writings and the practice of the movement he inspires; and Jewish thought as represented in the writings of Lord Jonathan Sacks, Emeritus Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth.

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