



DIALOGICAL AND TRANSFORMATIVE RESOURCES: PERSPECTIVES FROM FETHULLAH GÜLEN ON RELIGION AND PUBLIC LIFE ³⁹⁰

PAUL WELLER ³⁹¹

Abstract

With the continuing evolution of the European Union by incorporation of new member states and the extension of its competence into ever-wider areas of social policy; the increasing ethnic and religious diversity of its populations; the debate over the accession of Turkey into the EU; and the emergent questioning of the previously held European models of, on the one hand, 'multi-culturalism', and on the other, of 'laïcité', there is growing debate on the relationship between religion and public life in Europe. Since the Madrid train bombings and the 7/7 London attacks; the murder in the Netherlands of Theo van Gogh; and so-called 'cartoons affair' in Denmark, many of these debates have focused on the position of Islam and Muslims. Because of these events, the debates have often, and unfortunately, been constructed in terms of a conflict between ideologically Islamist and ideologically secularist positions, as if these were the only alternatives. It is, however, the argument of this paper that there are other more constructive ways forward that promote equity for religious minorities, inclusivity on the part of the state, and participation in civic society. In exploring such alternatives, this paper brings perspectives from the teaching of the Turkish Muslim, Fethullah Gülen, into critical interaction with seven recently published theses on religion and public life in the UK and Europe that have been developed by the author over the past quarter of a century of practical and academic engagement with issues of religious diversity and public life. Through interaction with these theses, key aspects of Gülen's thought and teaching are explored. These include, for example, Gülen's position, that '....Islam does not need the state to survive, but rather needs educated and financially rich communities to flourish. In a way, not the state but rather community is needed under a full democratic system'. They also include Gülen's commitment to inter-religious dialogue. Taken together, these key positions are then explored through the notion of what Ihsan Yilmaz articulates in terms of the possibility of a commitment to *dar al-hizmet*, in which an Islamic contribution is made to public life, as one contribution to civil society set alongside others.

³⁹⁰ Not for quotation without the author's permission. The author can be contacted at: p.g.weller@derby.ac.uk

³⁹¹ Professor of Inter-religious Relations at the University of Derby and Head of Research and Commercial Development in its Faculty of Education, Health and Sciences; Visiting Fellow in the Oxford Centre for Christianity and Culture at Regent's Park College, University of Oxford; and Vice Chair of the Multi-Faith Centre at the University of Derby. Current interests: issues in the relationships between religion, state and society. Recent publications: *Time for Change: Reconfiguring Religion, State and Society* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2005) and 'Fethullah Gülen, Religions, Globalization and Dialogue', in R. Hunt and Y. Aslandoğan (eds.), *Muslim Citizens of the Globalized World: Contributions of the Gülen Movement* (Somerset, NJ: The Light Inc. and IID Press, 2006). He is editor of *Religions in the UK: Directory, 2007–2010* (Derby: University of Derby and Multi-Faith Centre at the University of Derby, 2007).



1. The European and Netherlands Context

In the Europe of today there are considerable tensions and challenges to peaceful co-existence in terms of the relationship between Muslims and others in a secular context. These challenges are perhaps particularly sharp and poignant in the Netherlands, the country in which this conference takes place. This is because it is here that the murder of the artist Theo Van Gogh by Mohammed Bouyeri, took place on 2nd November 2004.

This was an event that sent shockwaves through a society that, on the basis of its historical roots as a seventeenth century refuge for Christian religious minorities³⁹² as well as on the basis of its more recent history, had generally had held to an image of itself as, on the whole politically liberal, and of its religious minorities as generally well integrated with the wider society.

In the Netherlands, an historical approach to the pattern of relationships between different religious groups, and also organised secular movements, had been developed a policy has been followed known as *Verzuiling*, (Dobbelaere, 1988), often translated into English by means of the none too elegant terminology of "pillarisation". The roots of this approach are to be found in the origins of the country itself that emerged out of a revolt, inspired by Calvinist Christianity, against Spanish and Roman Catholic rule.

The product of this was, in the first instance, the establishment of what was basically a Calvinist state, but which also had a number of Roman Catholic enclaves. In the newly independent state the Dutch Reformed Church was the only officially recognised Church. The worshipping life of Protestant dissenters, Jews and Roman Catholic was tolerated, but initially they were excluded from holding public office.

In his book on Dutch Society, Goudsblom (1967:18) argued that the commercial interests of the Dutch burghers and merchants modified the initial religious zealotry of the Calvinists with the result that a Dutch society of "varied religious composition" came into being. In connection with this, he (Goudsblom, 1967: 71-73) also went on to note that: "religious diversity has remained a pervasive determinant of social and cultural distinctions, giving rise to the curious phenomenon of 'bloc' formation known as *verzuiling*." Commenting on the potentially wider relevance of this approach to religious plurality for contexts beyond The Netherlands, Ahmed Andrews (1994: 127) described this "pillarisation" in the following terms:

At its most fully developed the structure of *verzuiling* enabled a person to live their whole life within their confessional or secular bloc. Once born into the system it has been possible to be educated in one particular bloc from school to University: join a confessional or non-confessional trade union or professional body and be employed within the same bloc. Marriage within the bloc was also the general rule. In addition, one could read a newspaper published within one's bloc and even receive television and radio broadcasts put out by the confessional or secular segment of society to which one belonged. Finally one's social and

³⁹² Thus, for example, the Netherlands provided a refuge for the Mennonites and also for a group of English Separatists who, under the leadership of John Smyth, migrated there in 1606 and founded, together with the support of Thomas Helwys, the English Independent Church in Amsterdam. Helwys and others of the group returned to England in 1611/12 to found the first General Baptist congregation in England and Helwys (in Groves, R., ed., 1998) penned his 1612 *A Short Declaration of the Mystery of Iniquity* addressed to King James I of England, and in which he developed one of the first theologically developed arguments for religious liberty to be published in the English language.



sporting activities were catered for within the bloc, owing to each having its own sports and social clubs.

Historically, conflicts between the “blocs” were generally managed within the overall framework of a system that has some success in relation to the criteria of social and political stability. In Andrews' (1994: 127) evaluation, this was due to two factors: “Firstly, the *verzuijing* structure arose in a society which was already clear about its national identity to which all groups had an attachment, unlike India or Pakistan, for example, where attachment to one's state or ethnic region often appears to be stronger than attachment to the nation. Secondly, all blocs have equal access to resources.”

Initially, however, state-funded education was initially an area in which *verzuijing* did not fully operate. However, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, after a campaign that saw the orthodox Calvinist and Roman Catholic blocs co-operating in opposition to the secular Liberal Protestants, the principle was established that the state could support denominationally-based schools to the same extent as non-denominational schools. Like Christopher Bagley (n.d.; 1971a, 1971b) before him (who undertook comparative work on race relations in the Netherlands and the UK), writing in the mid-1990s, Andrews argued that he believed that this *verzuijing* model may have had something wider to offer in relation to the challenges posed by religious diversity.

Thus Andrews (1994: 127) noted that, “At first sight this segmentation of Dutch society might appear to lead to social instability.” However, although “it is not as strong as it was in the 1960s,” Andrews arrived at the overall judgement that “pillarisation” could still offer a “useful model” and that, especially when linked with a proportional representation model of democracy, it could remain a “useful illustration of how a segmented society, a plural society, has met the needs of various conflicting groups and achieved a stability based, since the late 1800s, on equal treatment for all”.

However, in the Netherlands itself, questions increasingly began to be asked about the structure (see Gowricharn and Mungra, 1996), with some arguing that it was becoming a relic of a previous age. In particular, issues emerged about the extent to which this structure could, in reality, “stretch” to accommodate new Muslim migrants in the Netherlands (Rath, Groenedijk and Penninix, 1991; Shahid and van Koningsveld, 1996; Feirabend and Rath, 1996).

It is both because of its inheritance of toleration and of the system of *verzuijing*, as well as because of the intensified social and political ferment that followed the killing of Theo Van Gogh, that it is all the more appropriate that a conference of this kind and on this theme should take place here in The Netherlands.

2. European Context for Religion(s), State and Society

But the issues involved and challenges for peaceful co-existence in Europe are not for the Netherlands alone. With the continuing evolution of the European Union by incorporation of new member states; the increasing ethnic and religious diversity of its populations (Davie, 2000); the debate over the accession of Turkey into the EU (Bilici, ed., 2006); and the questioning of previously developed European models for the relationship between religion(s), state(s) and society (Robbers, ed. 1996), the issues in the relationship between religion(s), state and society are ones with which all states and societies in the EU and in the wider Europe are having, once again, to wrestle with (Madeley and Enyedi, eds., 2003).



While tensions and even violent conflict involving religions did continue to exist in parts of Europe (for example in the religiously-related dimensions of the national conflict in the North of Ireland), for the majority of Europeans these were seen largely as things of the past. Thus, the overall perspective of the majority was one that – perhaps somewhat complacently – had come to see religion as primarily something for the private sphere.

Although labour migration and refugee movements of peoples changed the composition of European societies in the years following the Second World War, there was initially very little reflection on the implications of this diversity in relation to religion, with ethnicity and culture receiving much more emphasis. Thus, in 1989 in connection with the early years of The Satanic Verses controversy, the veteran British socialist politician, Tony Benn MP (1989), could write: “Now, all of a sudden, arguments which had almost disappeared into the mists of time have to come into sharp focus and are hotly contested across the world, involving diplomatic relations, trade arrangements and stretching into the heart of religious communities where people of different religious convictions have to live side by side.”

In fact, it is arguable that the controversy around Salman Rushdie's (1988) book, *The Satanic Verses* contained in microcosm many of the themes, issues and debates which have since come to form such a large part of public, religious and political debate and consciousness and, in relation to which, with hindsight, one can see that the controversy was an early “lightning rod”.

Although there were firebombings of some bookshops stocking the book; threats against those supporting Salman Rushdie; the killing of an imam in Belgium; and threats to a number of Muslim organisations and place of worship, the form of conflicts that ensued were, in Europe, primarily located in the cultural, social and political domains. More recently, many of the original issues involved in *The Satanic Verses* controversy have been reprised in the so-called “Cartoons Controversy” that developed around the images published in the 30th September 2005 edition of the Danish daily newspaper, *Jyllands-Posten*, and which gave rise to similar widespread media, public and street-level debate.

However, while the *The Satanic Verses* controversy entailed (following the *fatwa* or “legal opinion” pronounced by the Iranian religious leader, the Ayatollah Khomeini) the threat of targeted violence towards Salman Rushdie and those directly associated with the publication of his book, together with some more generalised violence in other parts of the world, the “Cartoons Controversy” took place in the context of a more general association of Islam and violence in Europe. This association was in itself a contributory factor to the controversy since the *Jyllands-Posten*'s cartoons were deemed so offensive by many Muslims because, among other things, they depicted the Prophet Muhammad as having a bomb under his turban and the *Shahadah* - or basic Muslim declaration of faith - being written on the bomb.

What had happened in between was, of course, the seismic and global impact of the events of 9/11 in the USA, followed in Europe by the 3/11 (2003) Madrid train bombings; the 2nd November 2004 van Gogh murder; and the 7/7 (2005) London transport attacks. In other words, in between *The Satanic Verses* controversy and the “Cartoons Controversy” the violence associated with the emerging cultural conflicts had become very explicit, and also in the heart of Europe itself (Guelke, 2006; Abbas, ed., 2007). Because of these events, and others like them that would have taken place had they not been foiled by the security services, the debates arising about the possibilities or otherwise for peaceful co-existence of Muslims and non-Muslims in a secular and European context have become sharpened.



3. Old Models and Their Alternatives

As a result of all this, the opening years of the 21st century have seen a growth in questioning of the previous European models for the management of religious and cultural diversity – including those of “*verzuijing*” (or “*pillarisation*”) in the Netherlands; “*multi-culturalism*” in the UK; and “*laïcité*” in France. Unfortunately it has often been the case that the debates that have emerged around this have often been constructed in terms of a conflict between ideologically “*secularist*” and ideologically “*Islamist*” positions, as if these were the only alternatives.

It is, however, the contention of this paper that there are other ways in which these debates can be approached. On the basis of both academic reflection upon, and practical engagement with, issues arising from religious plurality over the past quarter of a century the author of this paper has elsewhere argued (see Weller, 2005a) that these alternatives are not the only options and that there are other, more constructive ways forward.

Furthermore, it is argued that these alternatives are capable at one and the same time of promoting equity for religious minorities, inclusivity on the part of the state, and participation in civic society, all of which are necessary for the healthy functioning of diverse and plural European societies, including the religious traditions, communities and groups within these societies. These perspectives that were developed by the author are distilled into seven theses, propositions or principles on religion and public life in the UK and Europe.³⁹³ In exploring these and other approaches it is important that this is done in active dialogue with Muslims and their own thinking on these matters. This is because it is unlikely that any positive way forward can be identified, and much less implemented, unless European Muslims can contribute to its creation as active social participants rather than merely passive recipients.

Of relevance to this is something that the historian of religion and theologian Wilfred Cantwell Smith (1981: 101), in his book *Towards a World Theology: Faith and the Comparative History of Religion*, spoke about as a process in scholarship of engaging with the otherness of the other that culminates in a “*we all*” are talking with each other about “*us*”:

The traditional form of Western scholarship in the study of other men’s religion was that of an impersonal presentation of an “*it*”. The first great innovation in recent times has been the personalisation of the faiths observed, so that one finds a discussion of a “*they*”. Presently the observer becomes personally involved, so that the situation is one of a “*we*” talking about a “*they*”. The next step is dialogue, where “*we*” talk to “*you*”. If there is listening and mutuality, this may become that “*we*” talk with “*you*”. The culmination of this process is when “*we all*” are talking with each other about “*us*”.

Such ideas about methodology in the study of religion were applied to the practical field of inter-faith relations by Kenneth Cracknell (the former Executive Secretary of the British Council of Churches’

³⁹³ The origin of these theses can, perhaps significantly, be found in a paper given by the present author on the topic of “*Jews and Muslims in Europe: Some Propositions and Questions for European States, Societies and Religions*”, presented at a conference organised by the Simon Wiesenthal Centre Europe’s initiative, *Academic Response to Racism and Anti-Semitism and Racism in Europe on “From Xenophobia to Tolerance: Jews and Muslims in Europe”*, and held at France-Amerique, Paris, 28th-30th October, 1995, as well as in a paper on “*Religion(s), State and Society: Theses and Propositions for Europe*” prepared for the Council of Europe Seminar on Religion and the Integration of Migrants, the Palais de l’Europe, Strasbourg, 24th-26th. They have subsequently been published in slightly variant forms.



Committee for Relations with People of Other Faiths) in a thought-provoking lecture published as Cracknell (1986), 'We Talking About Us': The Implications of the Ending of Religious Isolationism. They also, I would suggest, have contemporary relevance and resonance in reflecting on the relationships between religion(s), state and society in Europe.

And in facilitating the kind of approach that enables a "we talking about us" and which can contribute to the overcoming of religious isolationism, a key Muslim contribution to this dialogue (albeit one that is not yet as well-known as it should in many parts of Europe) comes from the teaching of the Turkish Muslim, Fethullah Gülen, and the work of the movement associated with his teaching.

4. Theses on Religion(s), State and Society: A Conversation with Gülen

Having set something of the current European context, this paper now focuses on key themes in Gülen's teaching by bringing them into critical interaction with the theses on the relationships between religion(s), state and society that have previously been developed by the present author. The theses have developed over the past decade since they were first formulated, and so have appeared in slightly variant published form (see Weller, 2002a; 2002b; 2002c; 2005a; and 2005b).

As presented below,³⁹⁴ they are, in a way, the equivalent of newspaper headlines, with some brief editorial comment appended. There is much that could be said about them by way of qualification. As propositions they do not claim to be either a detailed survey or the last word. They paint on a broad canvas, standing back a little from the detailed histories and variations that exist within the European context. Thus they are intended to provoke reaction, not as systematic statements, but as succinct formulations that others can react to in affirmation or disagreement, uncovering the presuppositions that underlie particular positions on the relationships between religion(s), state and society.

At the same time, they were formulated not only as "debating principles" in the sense of facilitating abstract discussion alone. Like Gülen's teaching, the theses outlined below are intended to have at least the potential of being "principles for a change" that can be translatable into "working principle" that could inform a direction of social and religious change to which they might themselves also actively contribute.

5. "The Importance of Not Marginalizing Religions from Public Life"

"States which assign religions to the private sphere will impoverish themselves by marginalising important social resources and might unwittingly be encouraging of those reactive, backward- and inward-looking expressions of religious life that are popularly characterised as "fundamentalisms" (Weller, 2005a: 197).

Gülen rightly does not accept the kind of uncritical use of the term "fundamentalism" – which in the thesis is also deliberately framed by inverted commas to indicate that the term can only be legitimately used in the context of more carefully defined meanings – that has become among the media and among the commentators of the "chattering classes" when referring to a whole range of

³⁹⁴ The form in which they are quoted in this paper is taken from the form in which they are published and discussed in P. Weller. (2005a) *Time for a Change: Reconfiguring Religion, State and Society*. (London: T & T Clark), 197-198



different religious phenomena beyond those of liberal religion. Thus Gülen (2004: 35) points out that the term has become “another fashionable term with which to smear ...those who did nothing more than express their religious feelings have been branded as reactionaries, fanatics, and fundamentalists.”

In other words, in the context of concerns about the emergence of conflictual and violent religion there can all too easily emerge a simplistic secular misunderstanding in which, as Gülen puts it, “Unfortunately some people do not distinguish between being truly religious and blind fanaticism”, and fail to differentiate between different strands of more conservative religious expression. But given that there do exist religious expressions by those who are called Muslims (and others) that, in the name of religion, tend towards the undermining of civility and co-existence, the irony is that particular approaches of the secular that are concerned with keeping such expressions out of public life can, in fact, be precisely those kind of approaches that can lead to the further entrenchment and development of these forms of religion.

While the “secular” is often said to be the foundational of contemporary European models for the relationship between religions states and societies its meaning is not self-evident, and it is in fact referred to in ways that relate to a variety of diverse and contested meanings (see Weller, 2006a). As explained by Hakan Yavuz and John Esposito (2003: xvii), “In many developing countries, secularism has become a theology of progress and development” and that “normative fault lines of modernity are nowhere else as clear as in Turkey.” This is, of course, the context from which Gülen and the community that has emerged around his teaching derive and in the setting of which they have had to chart a course that both engages with, and also differentiates itself from the twin challenges that arise from ideological “secularism” and political “Islamism”.

In the twentieth century Turkey’s story is one that has been dominated by the ideology of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (1881–1938), the founder of the modern Turkish state who abolished the Muslim Caliphate in 1924. Yavuz and Esposito (2003: xxiii) point out that in Kemalist ideology, “modernity and democracy require secularism”. Indeed, the version of secularism that has been dominant in Turkey is that of what these authors (Yavuz and Esposito, 2003: xvi) call a “radical Jacobin laicism” in which secularism is treated “as above and outside politics” and in which, therefore, “secularism draws the boundaries of public reasoning”.

Thus, until only a few years ago, any attempts to use religious language in public debate could result in the banning of any political party that did so and, notwithstanding recent developments following the double electoral victory of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the leader of the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, or AKP), ongoing conflicts related to the historical inheritance are, as yet, to be fully resolved. Forged in this crucible, Gülen’s teaching offers a critique of a socially exclusive secularism. Thus of the Turkish Republic, Gülen (in Ünal, A. and Williams, A. ed., 2000: 148) warned that “The republic is obligated to protect its citizens’ religious faith, feelings, and thoughts. If its leaders do not do so, but rather hold people in contempt because of their religious feelings and thoughts, violate their rights, and smear their good names, in reality they are holding the republic in contempt and violating all that it represents.”

At the same time, in contrast to those Muslims who advocate a defensive holding back from the public sphere Gülen’s teaching – as also, and importantly, expressed in the educational, media, and other social institutions created by the movement associated with it - encourages Muslims actively to engage with the wider (religious and secular) society. On the other hand, it also critiques those forms



of involvement in which religion is politically instrumentalised and instead argues for engagement that is based on a distinctive Islamic vision characterised by robustness and civility.

Thus, in ways that speak both to ideological “secularists” and political “Islamists”, and with relevance beyond the Turkish context, Gülen distinguishes between an understanding of the “secular” that is concerned with the participation of citizens of all religions and none in the public life of a society and an ideological form of *secularism* that is concerned to promote positivist philosophical positions and their philosophical and political consequences.

6. “The Need to Recognize the Specificity of Religions”

“Religious traditions and communities offer important alternative perspectives to the predominant values and power structures of states and societies. Religions are a reminder of the importance of the things that cannot be seen, touched, smelled, tasted and heard, for a more balanced perspective on those things that can be experienced in these ways” (Weller, 2005a: 197).

Because of the distinctive perspectives held by religions, there is a fundamental sense in which religions cannot allow nation, state, or political ideology to claim ultimate value for itself. In the perspective of religious traditions, this is a usurpation of the loyalty that should only be offered to that which is unconditioned. Perhaps precisely because the ideas of the modern nation and of the state can have such a tendency to claim absolute power for themselves and their political values, religions offer important institutionalized reminders that the nation and the state are not the only significant realities; that they do not represent the only form of authority; and that the authority that they do have is not absolute.

As Gülen (in Ünal, A. and Williams, A. ed., 2000: 149) summarises it in his own words, “Power’s dominance is transitory, while that of truth and justice is eternal. Even if these do not exist today, they will be victorious in the very near future. For this reason, sincere politicians should align themselves and their policies with truth and justice.” This does not, of course, mean that civil belonging and loyalty is unimportant. But it does mean that they are to be understood in the context of other and more ultimate values. In his historical reflections on what are still the historically recent European attempts made to build societies in the absence of spiritual values. Again, as Gülen (2004: 194) explains in his own words, but which also have resonance with this particular thesis:

Enlightenment movements that began in the eighteenth century saw human beings as consisting of the mind only. Following that, positivist and materialist movements saw humans as solely material or corporeal entities. As a result, spiritual crises have followed one after another. It is no exaggeration to say that these crises and the absence of spiritual satisfaction were the major factors behind the conflict of interests that enveloped the last two centuries and that reached its apex in the two world wars.

At the same time, it is clear that the historical record of religions has not always been in line with that to which they seek to point. Gülen (2004: 194) recognises this, noting that, “Claims are made today that religion is divisive and opens the way for the killing of others.” Nevertheless, while it is certainly the case that religions have been historically ambiguous, Gülen points out it is possible for the criticism of the role of religions by those who are secular to be informed by as much lack of self-criticism as can be found among the religious. This, in turn, can lead to a superficial criticism being made of religion as something that is at the root of social conflict, but without adequate reflection



taking place on the significance of the suffering brought about by the secular ideologies of fascism, Bolshevik communism, and capitalism.

As Gülen (2004: 196-197) explains it, religion (and especially not Islam) did not lead to what he calls the “merciless exploitation” that could be found in, “....the wars and revolutions of the twentieth century that killed hundreds of millions of people and left behind even more homeless, widows, orphans, and wounded” Rather, Gülen argues that the roots of this suffering was to be found in “Scientific materialism, a view of life and the world that had severed itself from religion and a clash of interests caused this exploitation” and also that this brought about environmental pollution as a consequence of a perspective that “nature is an accumulation of things that has no value outside its ability to meet physical needs”.

In contrast, Gülen speaks of nature as having “a certain sacredness” because he sees it as “an arena in which God’s Beautiful Names are displayed.” He (Gülen, 2004: 194) also reflects that, “Humans are creatures composed not only of a body and a mind, or feelings and a spirit; rather, we are harmonious compositions of all these elements”. Developing this further, he explains that “Each of us is a body writhing in a network of needs; but this is not all, we also possess a mind that has more subtle and vital needs than the body” and that, “Moreover, each person is a creature made up of feelings that cannot be satisfied by the mind, and a creature of spirit; it is through the spirit that we acquire our essential human identity”.

7. “The Imperative for Religious Engagement with the Wider Community”

“Religious communities and traditions should beware of what can be seductive calls from within their traditions to form ‘religious unity fronts’ against what is characterised as ‘the secular state’ and what is perceived as the amorality and fragmentation of modern and post-modern society” (Weller, 2005a: 197).

While setting out the distinctive contribution that religion can offer, Gülen’s approach can be seen as being over and against an understanding of religion which (by analogy with what used to be the internal perspective of Soviet Communism and its fellow-travelling supporters) takes a form of an idealisation that is blind to the failings of the communities of “really existing Islam”. At the same time, it is also to be distinguished from the (ironically) modernist and political “Islamism” which (also by analogy with the history of Communism) could be seen as a kind of “Trotskyite Islam” that is dedicated to a permanent revolution against not only of “secular”, but also all existing forms of governance developed among “really existing” Muslims, and which seeks the future establishment of an ideal global Muslim Khalifate which is not yet here.

As a defensive mechanism in societies in which there is clear evidence of at least some degree of hostility towards Muslims and Islam (see Allen and Nielsen, 2002), a significant section of the “really existing” Muslim community with migrant origins tend towards a defensive cultural and intellectual insularity over against their perceptions of the secular. Such Muslim reactions and groups are concerned primarily with trying to preserve Islam – sometimes understood in a way that is all too uncritically elided with manifestly specific minority cultural traditions – in what can be perceived as a sea of alien cultural, religious, intellectual and legal influences. In relation to this response among Muslims, Gülen (in Capan, 2004: 3), “Islam has become a way of living, a culture; it is not being followed as a faith.”



Other Muslims – often identified by the term “Islamists” - have a more ideological project in relation to the secular and that is concerned with what, for example, the more modernist “Islamist” group Hizb ut-Tahrir calls the “carrying” or “passing on” of “the concepts” (see Husain, 2007) which they seek to inculcate among Muslims in contradiction to what is seen as a “kafir” secular system. Thus they campaign against this system using the slogan “democracy is hypocrisy”, on the basis that it is “haram” or forbidden to participate in something that is rooted in secular principles that are, by them, deemed to be contrary to the fundamental principles of Islam.

With regard to “Islamism”, the contradictions that can emerge among the adherents to its principal groupings are well illustrated in Ed Husain’s recent book, *The Islamist: Why I Joined Radical Islam in Britain, What I Saw Inside and Why I Left*. Of his personal experience, Husain (2007: 148) says, “My life was consumed by fury, inner confusion, a desire to dominate everything, and my abject failure to be a good Muslim. I had started out on this journey ‘wanting more Islam’ and ended up losing its essence.” By contrast, while teaching that that religions do indeed have something distinctive to offer, Gülen, stresses that only those who are self-critical can make an effective contribution.

Therefore, instead of spiritually bankrupt “Islamism” vividly portrayed by Husain, Gülen (2000: 9) argues that, “Those who want to reform the world must first reform themselves. In order to bring others to the path of traveling to a better world, they must purify their inner worlds of hatred, rancor, and jealousy, and adorn their outer worlds with all kinds of virtues.” And because of this, rather than anathematising the secular world, Gülen’s practical actions have been geared towards overcoming the divide between the “religious” and the “secular” that can otherwise so easily be exploited by the ideological zealots of both traditions.

What this means can be seen especially in the work of the Journalists and Writers’ Foundation, founded in 1994, and the seminars held by the so-called Abant Platform, one of the aims of which is “dialogue and reconciliation in the light of knowledge and experience”. The Platform’s first meeting three meetings (1998-2000) – all held in Abant, Turkey – were on, respectively, the themes of “Islam and Secularism”; “Religion, State and Society”; and “Pluralism and Social Reconciliation”. Two meetings have also been held in Europe, one on “Culture, Identity and Religion in the Process of Turkey’s EU Membership”, held in Brussels, Belgium, in 2004; and “Republic, Multiculturalism and Europe”, held in Paris, France, in 2006.

The last two of these meetings were also followed up outside Europe, but with a Turkey-France emphasis in the Platform’s 2007 meeting in Istanbul, Turkey, on “Turkey-French Conversations II.” This has been of particular significance both because of the relatively strong French opposition to Turkish membership of the European Union, but also because it has been the French model of republicanism, citizenship and secularism that has played an important role in relation to the Turkish intelligentsia following the Kemalist revolution. Such Turkish-French political and philosophical dialogue is therefore of significance both in Turkey and in the EU.

The principles of the Platform can be seen as embodied in the commitment to it of some of its key participants. Thus a former chair of the Platform was Professor Mehmet Aydın who, between 2002-2007 was Minister of State for Religious Affairs in the AKP (Justice and Development Party) Government. Since 2006, Professor Dr. Mete Tuncay of Bilgi University has been Academic Co-Ordinator of the Abant Platform. This is itself a clear embodiment in action of the principle of a Platform created out of a religious spirit. This is because Professor Tuncay refers to himself as, “a



person who believes in agnosticism in religion” and as one those “who accept the notion of living in justice and freedom without referring metaphysics.”

In relation to his own context, Professor Tuncay points out that, “In Turkey, there has been a dispute among those who acknowledge religion and those who believed that religion and religious thought was the cause and the sign of ignorance and underdevelopment for at least two hundred years” and so “We have to comprehend and implement secularism in an appropriate manner” which he defines in the following way: “The bottom line is to attain a capacity of living together with a common sense of citizenship without changing each other.” (<http://en.fGülen.com/content/view/1778/18/>)

In relation to a “secularism” that is understood in this way, as Gülen (in Ünal, A. and Williams, A. ed., 2000:167) summarises it, “Secularism should not be an obstacle to religious devoutness, nor should devoutness constitute a danger to secularism.”

8. “The Need for A Reality Check”

“National and political self-understandings that exclude people of other than the majority religious traditions, either by design or by default are, historically speaking, fundamentally distorted. Politically and religiously such self-understandings are dangerous and need to be challenged” (Weller, 2005a: 197).

Gülen’s thought has sometimes been seen as being related to a strain of Turkish nationalism in which there was deemed to be a close relationship between the Turkish nation, the religion of Islam, and the glorious past of the Ottoman Empire. Thus Bekim Agai (2003: 63) argues that Gülen’s notion of a “Turkish Muslim identity” (Türkiye Müslümanlığı) was, until the late 1980s, “...to a large extent based on a nationalistic, Islamic chauvinism” which included such ideas as “Europe wanting to destroy Turkey by Christianizing it” and “enemies within Turkey wanting to destroy the Islamic identity of the Turks”, but that this changed during the 1990s.

Therefore in a 2000 interview with Hakan Yavuz (2003: 45), Gülen acknowledged: “We all change, don’t we?By visiting the States and many other European countries, I realized the virtues and the role of religion in these societies. Islam flourishes in Europe and America much better than in many Muslim countries.” At the same time Gülen (2004: 42) is certainly not apologetic about the achievements of Ottoman civilization and, in particular, highlights the religiously informed realism of the Ottoman rulers in dealing with the cultural and religious diversity of their Empire:

.....our glorious ancestors captured the hearts of people by means of tolerance and became the protectors of the general peace. The longest period of peace in the Balkans and the Middle East, which have always been volatile areas, was realized with the enduring tolerance of our ancestors. From the moment that tolerance and those great representatives left history, this region became void of peace and contentment.

At the same time, while noting and praising the close relationship that there has been between the Turkish nation, the Ottoman Empire and the religion of Islam, Gülen (in Ünal, A. and Williams, A. ed., 2000:166) makes the telling observation that, “Politicizing religion would be more dangerous for religion than for the regime, for such people want to make politics a means for all their ends. Religion would grow dark within them, and they would say: ‘We are the representatives of religion.’ This is a



dangerous matter. Religion is the name of the relationship between humanity and God, which everyone can respect.”

In the European inheritance, very close relationships have existed between religion and the state. In the first instance in western Europe this was manifested in terms of the religio-political entity of Catholic Christendom. But with the historical eruption of a Protestantism that was strongly related to areas of princely rule and territorial belonging, there also emerged what the Church of England Bishop and critic of established forms of religion, Colin Buchanan (1994), has called religion as a “nationalised monopoly”.

The forms of these “nationalised monopolies” varied throughout Europe (Robbers, G, ed, 1996) but in each case they reflect the outcome of struggles for power and influence between different versions of Christianity as well as the espousal by rulers and politicians of these various forms of religion for diverse motives. In various ways these “institutionalised monopolies” of religion and state have been responsible for centuries of discrimination on the basis of religion. This discrimination has extended from the perhaps more “passive” effects of disadvantage experienced by those with less “social space” and less access to the instruments of state power, through to the active persecution of religious minorities.

The tensions between these new forms of relationship and the old socio-religious order resulted in the savage and bloody religious bigotry of the Wars of Religion. It was then partly the moral reaction to the suffering and destruction of these years led to a growing religious indifference, scepticism, and the desire to confine religion to the private sphere. Eventually, this reaction also led to the development of the notion of the secular state. For much of the second half of the twentieth century, in the central and eastern parts of the continent with Communist governments, this reactive historical inheritance was further reinforced by the state-enforced separation of religion and state, informed and under girded by the promotion of state-sponsored atheism, more less vigorously pursued according to specific national contexts.

In contrast to much of this European history of Christendom and the secular reaction to it, as also the “Islamist” attempts to form either nation state-based (for example, Iran under the mullahs or Afghanistan under the Taliban) or more global forms of theocratic systems (of the kind that Hizb ut-Tahrir and others are seeking to establish), Gülen (in Capan, 2004: 3) argues that, “In my opinion, an Islamic world does not really exist. There are places where Muslims live. They are more Muslims in some places and fewer in other.”

9. “The Need to Recognize the Transnational Dimensions of Religions”

“Religious communities and traditions need to pre-empt the dangers involved in becoming proxy sites for imported conflicts involving their co-religionists in other parts of the world. But because they are themselves part of wider global communities of faith, religions have the potential for positively contributing to a better understanding of role of the states and societies of their own countries within a globalising world” (Weller, 2005a: 198).

The salience of this thesis is much clearer in the European context after the Madrid and London bombings than it was when it was first articulated in the mid-1990s. In between times, there have been significant research programmes on transnationalism with regard to communities, including especially one sponsored by the UK Economic and Social Research Council and led by Dr. Steve



Vertovec at the University of Oxford. In relation to this globalised work of transnational ethnic and religious communities, Gülen (2004: 230) has observed:

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 current realities. This time is a period of interactive relations. Nations and people are more in need of and dependent on each other, which causes closeness in mutual relations.

In an increasingly “glocalised” world in which all religions are increasingly becoming “diaspora” religions, the transnational connections of religions have the positive benefit of offering channels of insight into varied cultural contexts. But tragically they can also become conduits through which conflicts are transported from one part of the world to another. This, of course, is also a by product not only of scientific and technological developments, but also is a result of the history of colonialism and imperialism - words and concepts which are in many ways out of fashion in the polite western society of today, but which do describe historical realities of immense significance and import for contemporary life, including the question of co-existence between religious groups. As Gülen (2004a: 239) has observed in realistically evaluating the current global context:

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 carried over from the nineteenth century. In all these wars, Islam assumed the role of an important factor uniting people and spurring them to action. As these wars were waged against what were seen as invaders, Islam, national independence and liberation came to mean the same thing.

And it is against such a background that, despite the routine denials of, for example, the UK Government that terror actions should be discussed in relation to the impact of foreign policy and wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, there can be little doubt that for radicalised young Muslims in Europe such a connection exists. Thus, as clearly explained by Shehzad Tanweer, one the young 7/7 bombers in London, in a taped message broadcast on the al-Jazeera satellite TV station on the first anniversary of the bombing:

For the non-Muslims in Britain, you may wonder what you have done to deserve this. You are those who have voted in your government who in turn have and still continue to this day continue to oppress our mothers and children, brothers and sisters from the east to the west in Palestine, Afghanistan, Iraq and Chechnya. Your government has openly supported the genocide of more than 150,000 innocent Muslims in Fallujah.

The message concluded that, “You will never experience peace until our children in Palestine, our mothers and sisters in Kashmir, and our brothers in Afghanistan and Iraq feel peace.” In the face of such perceptions of the world that are held much more widely among Muslims far beyond the small numbers who carry out acts of terror, the US and UK governments have argued and acted on the basis that military intervention in Afghanistan and Iraq and a “War on Terror” is necessary for ultimately enabling the possibility of peaceful co-existence. But in relation to the actions of Osama Bin Laden and those inspired by him, such as Shehzad Tanweer, Gülen (in Çapan, 2004: 5) explains his position that: “...the only way to prevent this kind of deeds is that Muslims living in the countries seeming to be Islamic – and I stated earlier that I do not perceive an Islamic world, there are only countries in which Muslims live – will solve their own problems.”



10. “The Importance of Religious Inclusivity”

“Religious establishments as well as other traditions and social arrangements that provide particular forms of religion with privileged access to social and political institutions need to be re-evaluated. There is a growing need to imagine and to construct new structural forms for the relationship between religion(s), state(s) and society(ies) that can more adequately express an inclusive social and political self-understanding than those which currently privilege majority religious traditions” (Weller, 2005a: 198).

In recent years there has been considerable debate among both Muslims and others around the relationship between Islam and democracy. Radical secular liberals, traditional “Islamists” such as the Muslim Brotherhood or the Jamaat-I-Islami, and modern “Islamists” have all shared agreement that there is a fundamental incompatibility between the two. However, beyond that basic point of agreement, these three groups diverge. Secular liberals, for example, insist that Muslims have to “reform” and to “modernize” Islam in order for Islam and democracy to be a compatible in a way that, from the perspective of the “Islamists”, would be tantamount of “selling-out” authentic Islam.

Traditional “Islamists” – while ultimately seeking to use the modern instrument of the state to introduce a polity based on the application of the Shar’iah throughout society – have generally been prepared to use electoral politics as a means towards this end. Others, such the Wahabis of Saudi Arabia assert their traditions as the authentic form of Islam, while the dominant clerical groupings among the Shi’a in Iran claim that the revolution that was ushered in by the Ayatollah Khomeini has created a real Islamic state.

In contrast to these views, Gülen (in Ünal, A. and Williams, A. ed., 2000: 151) points out that while “Supposedly there are Islamic regimes in Iran and Saudi Arabia”, in fact “they are state-determined and limited to sectarian approval”.

Gülen’s perspective is different and starts from the position that, “Islam is a religion. It can’t be called anything else. When the West defeated the Islamic world in military and technology, salvation was sought in politicizing Islam or transforming it into a political system.... Islam as a religion is based on enlightening the mind and brightening the heart. Thus faith and worship come first. The fruit of faith and worship is morality.” Thus, although as previously noted, Gülen does sometimes point to the positive aspects of the Ottoman heritage, this is not on the basis that it was a model Islamic state.

In contrast to the regimes in majority Muslim countries who claim to adopt the mantle of Islam, modern “Islamists” seek to bring about an Islamic polity that is not national in scope, but global, under that is understood to be a recreated global Muslim Khalifate. As Husain (2007: 142) explains it, in such a vision, existing majority Muslim countries are “imperial creations and deserved no recognition”, while the duty of Muslims living in any historical state is, “to prepare the *ummah* for the caliph, to swear allegiance to the future Islamic state” (Husain, 2007: 135).

In such an approach, in words originally coined by the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, “al-Islam huwa as-hall”, or “Islam is the solution” – a phrase which has widespread resonance among ordinary Muslims but which, in the thinking and action of Islamists of both the more traditional and more modern kinds, is reinterpreted to refer to the establishment of an Islamic state as the answer to the fragmentation, tensions, conflicts of the contemporary world.

Again, Gülen’s vision is one that different from this. Based not only on political realism but also Islamic scholarship and Qur’anic interpretation, Gülen (2004: 249-250) argues strongly against



entertaining the illusion that difference will be left behind, maintaining rather that the “...different beliefs, races, customs and traditions will continue to cohabit in this village”, and also that wanting anything else is “nothing more than wishing for the impossible.” As a result, he argues that the future peace of the world lies in “respecting all these differences, considering these differences to be part of our nature and in ensuring that people appreciate these differences.” Without such dialogue Gülen believes that “...it is unavoidable that the world will devour itself in a web of conflicts, disputes, fights, and the bloodiest of wars, thus preparing the way for its own end.”

Thus Gülen accepts neither the attempt to recreate an imagined historical unity, nor one to bring this about in the future. At the same time, he does advocate a future-oriented vision of Islam, but of a different kind and with equal relevance to Islam and Muslims in both majority and minority contexts. Thus in a 2000 interview with Hakan Yavuz, Gülen (in Yavuz, 2003: 45) summarized his position as being that, “...Islam does not need the state to survive, but rather needs educated and financially rich communities to flourish. In a way, not the state but rather community is needed under a full democratic system”.

11. “The Imperative of Inter-Religious Dialogue”

“Inter-religious dialogue is an imperative for the religious communities and for the states and societies of which they are a part. There is a need to continue the task of developing appropriate inter-faith structures at all levels within states and societies and in appropriate transnational and international structures” (Weller, 2005a: 198).

Modern Islamists have no time for dialogue – certainly not as a principled activity, but also not either as a pragmatic or even tactical response to the existence of religious and philosophical plurality. As Husain (2007: 142) puts it, “Muslims who advocated inter-faith dialogue and co-existence were condemned as having a ‘defeated mind.’” By contrast, Gülen most certainly does not accept such a contention, nor even does he see dialogue only as a pragmatic response to the need for co-existence amidst the realities of a pluralistic world. Rather, he sees inter-faith dialogue as an Islamic imperative, rooted in the Sunnah of the Prophet.

The core of Gülen’s (in Ünal, A. and Williams, A. ed., 2000: 241-256) commitment to such dialogue is set out in his article on “The Necessity of Interfaith Dialogue: A Muslim Perspective”. This, it is important to note, was published prior to 9/11. His commitment to dialogue is therefore not merely reactive and pragmatic, but is rooted in his vision of Islam and the contemporary world. Perhaps the most comprehensive collection of his thinking about dialogue was developed in his (Gülen: 2004) book, *Towards a Global Civilization of Love and Tolerance*.

Of this book, the Catholic priest Thomas Michel (in Gülen 2004: i) has said in a foreword that a significant part of its purpose was as “.....a call to Muslims to a greater awareness that Islam teaches the need for dialogue and that Muslims are called to be agents and witnesses to God’s universal mercy” while at the same time (Michel, in Gülen 2004: i-ii) it was also “an invitation to non-Muslims to move beyond prejudice, suspicion, and half-truths in order to arrive at an understanding of what Islam is really about.” In his reflections for the Millennium, published *Towards a Global Civilization of Love and Tolerance*, Gülen (2004: 231) set out his conviction about the importance of dialogue in the following way:



I believe and hope that the world of the new millennium will be a happier, more just and more compassionate place, contrary to the fears of some people. Islam, Christianity and Judaism all come from the same root, have almost the same essentials and are nourished from the same source. Although they have lived as rival religions for centuries, the common points between them and their shared responsibility to build a happy world for all of the creatures of God, make interfaith dialogue among them necessary. This dialogue has now expanded to include the religions of Asia and other areas. The results have been positive. As mentioned above, this dialogue will develop as a necessary process, and the followers of all religion will find ways to become closer and assist each other.

12. Conclusion

In Europe at this historical juncture, there is a need for positive resources that can be drawn upon by Muslims, Christians and other members of civil society, to contribute to a transformation in the relationships between religion(s), state and society that will allow peaceful co-existence to become embedded in the present and to flourish for the future.

That the historic relationships in Europe between religion(s), state and society - and especially between religion(s) and secularity – are shot through with ambiguity is clear for all to see. And that the presence of Islam and Muslims presents a challenge to previous models is also clear. Within this ferment, it is important for Muslims to engage with, and try to understand, the particular histories that gave rise to the current sets of arrangements (see, for example, Weller, 2006b) in different European countries. It is also important for the wider society to try, in relation to these matters, to gain a better and more refined understanding about the inherited traditions of the Islamic world that have a bearing upon contemporary Muslim understandings of these questions – from classical forms of Islam found Muslim Empires of the past, through the newer perspectives of traditional “Islamists”, and of more modernist “Islamists”, to the kind of ideas expressed by Fethullah Gülen.

In parts of the world where Islam has had particularly strong influence, such as the Middle East, the image of a “mosaic” of religions and culture rather than a “melting pot” of them has historically been invoked as one that offers the most appropriate pattern for structuring these complex and challenging relationships. In many ways the classical expression of this was the “millet system” that developed in the Ottoman Empire and has often been held up by Muslims as an example of the Islamic accommodation of the plurality of beliefs. In reality this was historically far from perfect, with Christians and Jews often being treated as inferior members of the Islamic empires (see Ma’oz, 1978). But in due course reforms granted Christians and Jews official equality within the political community, although those who insisted on their legal rights of emancipation were often bitterly opposed.

Thus, partly due to the historical inheritance of this pattern, and partly as a consequence of the history of colonialism and present global conflicts, the contemporary position of the ancient Christian communities (see Wessels, 1995) in the Middle East is one in which, as minorities, they have suffered considerable social and demographic pressure and consequent population attrition, leading to migratory and refugee movements to the Netherlands and other European countries. Consequently, in their key areas of historic geographic presence in Syria, Turkey and other similar countries, the ancient Christian Churches have been struggling to maintain a social foothold.



It is also the case that, within the Islamic Empires, Muslims of traditions other than the majority Sunnis, such as the Shi'as, Ismailis, 'Alawis and Druzes, have often had an even more difficult position since they were viewed as being unorthodox or, at best heterodox. They were therefore sometimes seen as more of a threat to the unity of the ummah than people of religious traditions and communities that were completely distinct from the household of Islam.

Nevertheless, relative to the history of the patterns found in Christendom for the relationships between religion(s), state and society and exemplified by the Holy Roman Empire and the Papacy, or the later Protestant-influenced approach of *cujus regio, ejus religio*, the traditional "mosaic" approach was relatively successful within the boundaries of the predominantly Muslim societies in which it operated. Hence, for many Muslim minorities in Europe today, it continues to have an appeal as a possible model that, with appropriate modifications, it is argued could now be applied for understanding and accommodating a variety of religious beliefs and practices in public life.

In fact, within contemporary Europe there are some adaptations of this classic "treaty-based" approach that might to some extent resonate with what Muslims could realistically hope for within a European context where they are in the minority rather than majority position. An example of this can be found in the not widely known but significant *Acuerdo de Cooperación del Estado Español con las Comisión islamica de España*³⁹⁵ that, in 1992, was ratified by the Spanish Parliament. This is an agreement between the Spanish state and its Islamic communities (see P. Antes, 1994, 49-50) and is parallel to other treaties of a similar kind established with both Protestant Christian and Jewish communities.

It guarantees a range of rights for Muslims such as civil recognition of religious marriages and the declaration of mosques as inviolable. As Peter Antes (1994: 50) commented, "The treaty is the most comprehensive recognition of Muslim rights signed in Europe so far". However, while this traditional "mosaic" model might be able to claim some historical success in relation to diverse populations of broadly settled geographies, its weakness is that it admits of little movement or change. It is therefore questionable how adequate it is in the context of the globalized population movements and the highly mixed societies of the contemporary world.

There are no easy solutions here. But in moving towards a conclusion, with regard to the situation of Christians, people of other faiths and the secular in Europe, it perhaps worth bearing in mind the following points about "the secular" within the contemporary Christian, secular and religiously plural landscape of Europe, and as identified by the author as summarised in a recent paper.³⁹⁶

³⁹⁵ In English, "Co-Operation Agreement of the Spanish State with the Islamic Commission of Spain."

³⁹⁶ The title of the paper was "Human Rights", 'Religion' and the 'Secular': Variant Configurations of Religion(s), State(s) and Society(ies)", and it was given at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, Clemens Nathan Research Centre and Martinus Nijhoff Publishers' Colloquium on Human Rights and Religion, held at The Institute of Commonwealth Studies, London, On 28th February 2005. These summary forms were also presented at in an unpublished conference paper by the author on "Insiders or Outsiders? Religious Groups, Polite Society and the (Post?) Modern State" at St. Columb's Park House 8th Inter-Isles Forum on "Faith and State: Getting the Balance Right", held at the University of Westminster, London, 27th January 2007. Publications by the author that expand upon and discuss the summary presentations of these points as presented here include Weller, 2006b and Weller, 2007.



1. In the totality of a global historical perspective it is perhaps worth remembering that it is the “secular” that must be considered to be a new experiment in social organization and integration.
2. The reactive origins of the “secular” can be found in the European inheritance of the Inquisition, “nationalised monopolies of religion” and the impact of the seventeenth century Wars of Religion and the responses to these of economic liberalism, revolutionary Republicanism, and the emergence of socialism and Marxism
3. The European roots of the “secular”, which can make it problematic for societies whose other experience of imports from Europe has been in terms of colonial and imperial take-over.
4. There remains a need to see especially how the “secular” can relate with the Muslim civilisational heritage.
5. Acknowledgement of the need explicitly to consider the “secular” can result in formerly “common sense” formulations of problems and issues being turned on their head, making it possible to see them from new and previously unrecognized perspectives.

The Christian theologian Robin Gill (1975) once argued that, while reductionist sociological theory seeks to “explain away” religion in terms of social and economic determinates, because religious teaching is itself a social factor, and religious bodies are social actors, it is entirely possible that, “theological variables can become social determinates”.

Bearing this in mind, it is the argument of this paper that the thinking of Gülen and the practical initiatives of the community that has been inspired by him offers resources that engage with the secular; are ready for dialogue with Christians; are confident of what Islam can offer, and yet also acknowledge the current reality of the situation for Muslims and Islam in Europe rather than promoting only an idealized vision.

While reflecting in a mature way about the achievements of Islamic and Ottoman civilization, they do not idealize past Islamic states, support current theocratic claims of “really existing Islam”, or support a radical Trotskyite type “Islamism” that seeks for a future global Khalifate. Because of all this, it is argued the “theological variables” of Gülen’s teaching and of the movement associated with him have the potential to become positively transformative “social determinates” towards the embedding and development of co-existence in European societies.

For the Muslims of Europe, the transformative resources offered by Gülen’s teaching recognise the need for Muslims, by the way in which they articulate and seek to live out Islam, to overcome the association that, post-9/11 and 7/7 has become widespread between Islam, Muslims and terror. As Gülen (in Ünal & Williams, eds., 2000: 248) puts it: “The present, distorted image of Islam that has resulted from its misuse, by both Muslims and non-Muslims for their own goals, scares both Muslims and non-Muslims.” Taken in the round, Gülen’s key approaches offer the possibility to Muslims to live not according to a traditional distinction between *dar al-Islam* (the land of Islam, or peace) and *dar al-harb* (the land of war, or conflict) – which in the hands of “Islamists” have become corrupted politicised concepts that tend to accentuate division and promote conflictual understandings that undermine the possibility for peaceful co-existence – but according to the newly articulated concept of *dar al-hizmet* (country of service).



Such a rethinking is not an example of the kind of calls for superficial “modernization” of Islam heard so often today among the secular liberal elites of Europe. Rather, as Yilmaz (2003: 208-237) puts it in the title of a paper on the movement that has formed around Gülen’s teaching, what his Gülen’s teaching stimulates is an “*ijtihad* and *tajid* by conduct”. In other words, it is the deployment of an appropriate *ijtihad* or interpretation that is directed towards Islamically faithful engagement with the realities of the current historical and geographical and socio-political contexts. And such *ijtihad* is both based upon, and directed towards, a *tajid* or “renewal” of Islam and of Muslims in which Muslims are once again called to live according to the authentic spirit Islam, whether doing so in majority Muslim societies or as minorities.

Indeed, it is the argument of this paper there is benefit both to Muslims and the wider society, when a contribution is made to civil society and to public life that is based on clear Islamic perspectives and motivations, but which is offered, seen and accepted as one contribution alongside others which also have their own integrity. For the wider society, the challenge is to appreciate the great depth and breadth of resources that exist in the heritage of Islamic civilization; the contribution that Anatolian heritage can make through the full membership of Turkey in the European Union; and also the spiritual insights and alternative perspectives offered by Islam itself.

For both Muslims and European societies and states, neither phantasmagoric and prejudicial enemy images, nor real threats to co-existence, can ultimately be overcome by security measures, however important such measures may be for the immediate safety of citizens and residents. Rather, whatever are the enemy images and whatever might be the enemy realities that exist, Muslims and others have no choice but to live alongside one another in Europe.

The only question is about the *way* in which Muslims and others are currently living in European societies, and about *how* they will do so in the future. In responding to that question, this paper argues that resources from Fethullah Gülen and the movement associated with his thinking offer important and transformative resources for religion in public life, and for the co-existence of people of diverse religions and philosophical beliefs.