

WHEN MEVLANA⁷⁸ COMES

ABOUT THE TURKISH THINKER'S PARADIGMS AND RUSSIAN SOCIOCULTURAL PECULIARITIES

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The answer to this question is as simple as a sigh and as difficult as life. The teacher of the teachers, The Conscience, Honesty and Hope come to our world according to the Act of God and owing to the fervent and heartfelt prayers of the believers. Prayers of the people who have found themselves in front of a choice of the way of existence those who have lost under the pressure of life and new demands, social difficulties and political crises which as rule alongside with natural catastrophes. In such situations people wait for a calm, well-balanced person who they can trust to...

This is how I, a historian of the Oriental Studies and an Orthodox citizen of Russia, estimate the coming into this world full of violence and unbelief of Muhammad Fethullah Gulen, the most famous Turkish Islamic theologian, a poet and writer, a true ulema, admitted both by the Islamic ummah and by the religious authorities of all existing religions, an elevated expert of Koran and Hadiths, a spiritual exegete of fiqh and Sufism.

My belief in Russian ancestors and my scientific analicity don't let me become an Islamic "fethullahchi", the follower of the teaching of my outstanding contemporary and a brilliant and deep world creator, Mevlana Gulen. However, being the Osmanist and the Turkologist and having been studying Turkey, Islam and the Orient for fifty years, I am absolutely certain and have no doubts about the fact that our great contemporary's path was heaven-born, believe in the importance of his words for the humanity and see the Act of God behind his deeds.

He came to this world in the flames of the 2nd World War. He was born in Eastern Anatolia where different world civilizations have been intertwining for thousands of years. Here, in the shade of age-long traditions the Turkish nation, young and energetic, which started to unite the East and the West centuries ago, continues its development. This is the nation which might become the systemic factor in the difficult world of dynamic Globalization and stable Faith.

⁷⁸ Mevlana – master, teacher, advisor, and highly-respectable person.

When such righteous people and philosophers as Mevlana Gulen come into this split and distraught world there is nothing accidental neither about the place of their appearance nor about the time. The years of formation of Fethullah Gulen's Islamic understanding and main principles spent in Erzurum (or Arzurum as it was called by the Great Russian poet and Sufi A. S. Pushkin who loved this city very much) appeared to play a significant role in his world outlook and creative work.

In spite of the fact that Erzurum is considered to be an important contact region of interreligious and international communication, a significant element in the creation of the Democratic Republic of Turkey, family and traditional values of the Turkish ethos have always been strong in this area as well.

It is evident that in the land of Abraham's religions which comprises the Eastern Anatolia and the neighboring territories of the Western and Southern Caucasia, current Armenia and, of course, Russia there were the most optimal conditions for the formation of young Fethullah Gulen's wide outlook and tolerance. As it is said in Koran: "...But ye will not, except as Allah wills..." (76:30), "... Allah thus sends astray whomever He wills, and guides whomever He wills..." (74: 31).

Mevlana Gulen's tender attitude towards his native places and ancestors inspires deep respect and spiritual understanding. Adherence to social and cultural traditions which has no time or space limits but is in the Power of God represents the strongest point of Fethullah Gulen as a philosopher and a poet. Let's recollect Pushkin's everlasting love towards "paternal graves" and loyalty to the earth of Svyatogorski and Mihaylovski castles.

Not by chance that a significant role in the formation of ethical ideals and stable moral values of these absolutely different but distinguished by the Grace of God poets, A. S. Pushkin and F. Gulen, belongs to two old women who were dedicated to God. The first one is Arina Rodionovna and the second one is Gulen's grandmother Munise Hanim. A Russian and a Turk who could not meet in this worldly life blessed their spiritual children on the search of good and justice.

There are more than 50 handfuls of earth from all corners of Turkey in F. Gulen's house who lives in the USA now. They symbolize his inextricable connection with his Motherland. And it is wonderful.

And this is a big lesson.

The historical fate of Russia made millions of our countrymen to migrate on the territory of our vast country and beyond. Changes in the way of life, views and ideas happened. In the throes of revolution of the XX century sociocultural principles of the Russian people were broken as well as their spirituality, Faith, and religiosity as the main constants of their sociocultural identity. For many of us visiting of

Ahlat – the land of forefathers – became impossible, connection of times and generations which supported our nation in difficult periods of life disappeared. Faith, such as Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Judaism and other confessions of our multiconfessional Motherland, was substituted by the pragmatics of the official political dogmas.

In present Russia of the XXI century the procedures of revival and strengthening of spirituality are observed in the society.

In this regard personal spiritual and creative path of Fethullah Gulen as vaiz (a preacher) in Turkey and as a social public figure famous in the whole world is invaluable. And I want to repeat once again that it is valuable for everybody without any confessional or political distinction. Actually, the author of these words from the point of view of a historian and a member of the Academy of Natural Sciences in some Russian and Turkish editions («Наука и религия», «Перекрестки эпох», «Геополитика и безопасность», «Геомилитаризм», «Новые грани») has already supported the idea of genetic basis of religion in *Homo sapiens* which is His creation as well as the surrounding world. Koran says: "Most surely in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of the night and the day there are signs for men who understand."(Koran 3:187)

A very delicate person, a deep philosopher and a theologian Mevlana Gulen can formulate his brilliant paradigms which are simple and easy to understand at the same time in such a way that they leave no indifferent people among those who become acquainted with them.

People who have lost faith or haven't got any one yet can find some religious rigorism in F. Gulen's words. Unfortunately Mevlana met such political figures in his life and not to his, F. Gulen's, good or health. Let God judge them especially taking into the account the fact that these are the politicians of another country.

But other people, Christians, Muslims and people of other confessions, perceive Fethullah Gulen, the keeper of sociocultural panhuman values, adequately. He says: "I'm the man whose goal is *eternity* (the italics is given by the author of the article V. S.) but not only what will happen tomorrow. I think about the future of our country and try to do everything possible for it. I have never tried to turn it back neither in my works nor in my speeches nor in my deeds. But no one has the right to call faith in God, worshiping Him, moral values and other things pertaining to man's essence and existence which have no time limits, *irtica*⁷⁹ (reaction).

⁷⁹ Fethullah Gulen – Essays, Perspectives, Opinions. M., 2005. p. 79.

Returning to the past is impossible and harmful for the development of everything in this world but observation of the cultural past as a whole is *the way of tolerant wisdom* which F. Gulen follows as a personality and which he wants us to follow as a scientist and a teacher.

We can maintain that the sources of our Eastern Christian and Slavic perception of the world are close or identical to the Arabian concept (in the interpretation of ulemas) of *irtica* – returning to the foundations. In this respect we can say that the statements of the Turkish Islamic theoretician and practician concerning the sociocultural values correlate with those which have been developed for some years at the Faculty of sociocultural problems of the Russian Academy of Natural Sciences (see the almanac «Перекрестки эпох». vol. 1-4. М., 1996-2004; «Истоковедение». vol. 1-6. М. – Vologda, 1999-2005 and other works by the members of the Faculty).

In his works «Критерии, или Огни в пути» (Izmir, 1998), «Сомнения, порожденные веком» (with the preface written by the author of this article), vol. 1-2 (М., 2005) and in a number of articles F. Gulen says: "If the day will come when due attention will be paid to them (the sociocultural values – V. S.) it will mean that we have reached one of the most important goals."⁸⁰

Our Russian experience involves seeking for our "own way" from Monarchy, Orthodoxy and Nationality through "...razing and then building a new world of our own..." to some kind of Eurasian self-sufficiency. But there is always one panhuman fundamental thought: "Who teaches our teachers?"

The idea of continuity of education and upbringing is not new. The peculiarity of Mevlana Gulen's thinking is his refusal to use religion for political purposes and consequently his refusal to turn education into a political issue. For modern Russian reality with its pluralism of textbooks (especially on the humanities) and innumerable number of educational schemes the following F. Gulen's (who is the Teacher of teachers) statement deserves our particular attention:

The most perspective is such an educational system in which scientific and religious knowledge is inseparably connected with high morals and spirituality of the *teaching layer of the society*. Man's heart must be enlightened by faith and his mind equipped with exact sciences. It is no more than a coincidence, of course, but the educational concept of the International University "Man. Nature. Society." with Doc. Oleg L. Kuznetsov, professor, the President of the Russian Academy of Natural Sciences at the head (the author of the preface to the book written in partnership with F. Gulen called "Islam about terror and acts of the suicide-bombers" (М., 2005)) is close or almost identical

⁸⁰ Ibid.

with F. Gulen's view of the problem. Its main point is to overcome the gap between rational, "scientific" and supersensory, intuitional and god-inspired in order to bring up a harmonious and well-educated personality with full understanding of basic human ethical norms and adequate social, economical and political realities of the time (see F. Gulen *The Necessity of the interreligious dialogue*. // «Turkish Daily News», 2000, Jan. 11-12, O. L. Kuznetsov and etc. *The System: Nature – Society – Man. Steady Development*. M., 2000).

According to the fundamental principles of Existence which reveal themselves only before those scientists who realize His Will in the latest scientific approaches including social pedagogics, F. Gulen is an example of the Teacher from the capital letter T without any national or confessional distinctions which fundamentalists try to make. Unfortunately, there are many of them in all countries and only people with high morals and tolerance such as F. Gulen and O. Kuznetsov Teachers can rebut fundamentalism.

Tolerance or patience, permanent willingness to conduct a dialogue with "different" people, "*ahlu kita*" in combination with deep and stable Islamic principles make Mevlana Gulen's works useful both for vast Islamic *ummah* in Russia and other citizens of different confessions.

One of the basic Mevlana Gulen's conceptual thoughts sounds as follows: "The statement of Islam: "There is no deity except Allah..." *is the invitation to abstain from something so that the followers of the existing religions could put an end to their disagreements*" (the italics are given by the author of the article V.S.)⁸¹.

"Independently from each other we and our Turkish colleagues have arrived at the conclusion that in order to provide stable development of the Humanity it is necessary to follow the universal laws of the Nature." These words belong to one of the most outstanding geoscientists of the planet and the President of the Russian Academy of Natural Sciences, Professor Doc. Oleg L. Kuznetsov , the foundation of the theory of stable development of the Earth in the context of globalization and they were said by him in the Month of zulkaada, 1425 Anno Hegirae or in the beginning of January, 2005, on the occasion of the above mentioned collection of the works of Turkish scientists and theologians, all together contesting against Islamic and other terrorism.

Actually, I suppose I have given the answer to my own question about the significance of the sociocultural positions of Mevlana Gulen for our reality. For me as the Osmanist and the Historian of the

⁸¹ Ibid p. 42

world civilizations is immanent the idea of F. Gulen that *pillars of the faith* (iman) are not exposed to the influence of time and changes in the social or political organization of the society.

"Let us no bring in our days problems which caused conflicts in the past in order not to cause new problems" said Mevlana Gulen in the interview to "Zaman" newspaper in March, 2004.

"... My longing for Turkey I hide in my breast," says F. Gulen as since 1997 he has been living far from his Motherland for some health problems (diabetes and heart disease) and some other reasons which do not depend on him. I have not met any apology of the Ottoman past and imperial nostalgic laments in his works as well as there are no caliphate ideas which were eliminated in Turkey long ago, in the days of my favourite historical figure Mustafa Kemal Ataturk. But it is impossible to ignore the history of The Great Ottoman Empire (1299-1923) for those scientists who are involved into the problems of Islam and who study the history and culture of Turkey and the relations between the confessions and nations in retrospective.

Mevlana Gulen is a citizen of the world as well as the patriot of his own country that's why he appeals to its past, present and future without intentional enlightening of its history. As we have mentioned above F. Gulen's homeland Erzurum influenced the formation of his initial views. With care of a well-intended observer I would presume that the most powerful influence on Mevlana Gulen's creative development and service of God had his work in historical centers of "Old" Turkey. This is first of all Edirne – Adrianople, the ancient capital of Osmans, Istanbul – Constantinople, the capital of Ottoman Turkey for more than 500 years, and Izmir – Smyrna, which is almost as ancient the previous cities. These are the most significant contact zones where starting from the Sultanic and finishing with the Republican Turkey different cultures, ethnos and confessions have always been interconnected and *continuously* manifested themselves in the pulsating rhythm of "breathing in and out" or "rise and fall" from XIV till XXI century⁸².

F. Gulen's historical and philosophic, religious and ethical points of view regarding relations between Islam and Christianity, the history of the invasion of Ottoman Turks into Europe and the relations between Turks and Europe in the past and present are of great interest and need special study. Inshallah!

⁸² Sheremet V.I. Kemal Ataturk – Sociocultural portrait // «Geomilitarism. Geopolitics. Security». issue. 9. M., 2005.

For the time being I want to share my doubts brought forth by Gulen's works with you as doubting is the best way to gain full understanding. To understand Mevlana Gulen today means to understand the modern world and the role of Islam in it.

One of the main ideas of F. Gulen's creative work both written and oral is the idea of justice. Muhammad, the Seal of Prophets, many times repeated and it is recorded in many Hadiths that "all people are equal like the teeth of a comb."⁸³ And this first of all means the refusal of Islam to accept racial, ethnical and physical peculiarities of people. This is a basic principle of Gulen without however the idea of forced equalization. Islam and violence are incompatible this is the truth of Koran and a repeated refrain of Mevlana Gulen.

Islamic civilization accepts the absolute meaning of 5 values. They are Faith, Life, Knowledge, Posterity and Property. Faith means the confession of the true religion, proclaimed by Prophet Muhammad. Life must be dedicated not only to God but also to people (and first of all family). Mind and knowledge must be connected with faith and verified by it. Posterity, or children, means the intergenerational continuity, the reproduction of life on the Earth which is willed by God. And, finally, the last but not the least principle of practical philosophy of Islam. It is maintenance and transferring of property.

F. Gulen emphasizes that nowadays in the beginning of the XXI century Islamic understanding of the quality of life is based on the same principles as one thousand four hundred years ago (I would like to remind you that we live in 1426 Anno Hegirae). This continuity regarding the qualitative standards of man's worldly life is the first thing that we must understand while speaking about social principles of Islam. In the course of time some notions, of course, changed in this or that way but I want to emphasize once again that maintenance and transferring of property have always been an inherent part of the Islamic society.

The Islamic civilization is a specific form of life which has got its own regional and cultural peculiarities. I don't think that it will be productive to compare the points of view on the quality of life in the Islamic and Eastern Christian countries. Today all of us use cars, computers, dictaphones and etc. but there are essential differences in our world outlook. For Muslims God's Word became a Book and was

⁸³ See my publications in Russian, Balkan and Turkish publications: Становление Османской империи. XIII–XVI вв. // Новая и новейшая история. 2001, № 1. Osmanlı reformları ve Avrasya diyalogu // Diyalog Avrasya. 2001, No 5. Türkmen halkynyň geçmişi boýunça resminamalar... // Miras. 2002, No 3(7). European Turkey as inter-civilizational contact zone of the Ottoman period. 14th-20th centuries // Hierarchy and Power in the History of Civilization. 2nd International Conference. St.-Petersburg, July 4-7, 2002. Abstracts. Moscow, 2002. Туркмено-османская империя: становление цивилизации регионального уровня // Miras. 2004, No 3 (15).

revealed to people through Muhammad whilst for Christians It (the Word) "became the flesh and lived among us" (1:14) and appeared like Jesus from Nazareth.

According to the Islamic teaching Sacred Koran is not just a god-inspired Scripture but God's Word revealed to us directly. For a Muslim believer the Word is beyond exception and It regulates not only spiritual and general practice but also personal everyday life including estimation of the quality of life. We must perceive Christianity and Islam as two different entities and while comparing the realities of civilizations it is necessary to remember that for Muslims Koran is God's Word but not the Muhammad's Word.

At the same time we must not ignore the cultural particularities of different regions of the Islamic civilization. Maghreb Countries, Turkey, the Middle East, Iran and other regions of the Islamic world have their own peculiarities and each of them faces the European culture in its own way. But still the Islamic cultural scientists who study their own traditions "from within" (and in the first place among them I would name Fethullah Gulen) point out some elements which are common for the worldwide *ummah*.

The attitude of Muslims to the material welfare and prosperity is based on the concept that Allah rescues believers from worldly hardships and misfortunates. He gives and takes life according to His Will and can bring the man back to life.

A Muslim believer approaches the quality of life through the distinction of righteousness and sin. It can be formulated in the following way: the quality of life in the Islamic understanding is avoidance of any kind of sin (there is a personal sin, the sin before yourself, the sin before God, the sin before the whole mankind, the sin before concrete people and at last the sin before your community – *djamaat*).

The core moment of Islamic outlook is the significance of *every human life* given by Allah. But in distinction from "Judaic and Christian materialism" Islam states that long life by itself is not the value which we must long for by all means. It is more important not to commit injustice and always remember that All-seeing Allah will not leave our bad deeds unpunished. Here the importance and necessity of the faith of Allah are emphasized as life without faith (irrespectively of the prosperity level) loses its sense. "The blessing of the afterlife" exceeds the faulty pleasures of the worldly life. "The wish of pleasures in the immediate life leads to the deviation from the faith of Allah and to the debauch" (Sura "Al-Bakara," 212).

What is struggling for better quality of life in the Islamic understanding then? The answer is very easy. It means to surpass each other in good deeds. "Try to surpass each other in good deeds and Allah will

recompense for it. Wherever you are Allah will gather all of you on the Day of Resurrection. Truly, Allah has got power upon everything – upon life and resurrection” (“Al-Bakara,” 148).

An important qualitative characteristic is our active life position. Creative activities are welcomed by both traditional Islam and modern theologians including F. Gulen.

It differs from the opinion widespread in the West that the Islamic East is the world of sweet delight immersed into the historical dream... Such faulty views distorting the situation go back to the times of Crusades. In the XIX century they were brought to life again. It was the period when Islamic countries were viewed as an object of colonial expansion. In reality Islam is completely against self-complacency, relaxation and spiritual *kaif*. This religion has always been emphasizing the necessity of constant self-improvement and such important notion as *jihad* which first of all means inner development of the person.

The Islamic tradition is characterized by the call for moderation and prudence. Passions, of course, exist but they must be under the control of our mind. And with no doubt we must avoid evil passions. We must be moderate in everything. And there is no need to repent for the manifestations of your sensitive sphere. Sensuous pleasure is a natural spiritual move and all natural things are desired by Allah.

It is said in the Hadiths that doing good is desired by Allah but *doing no* evil is also good. In Hadiths there is also one Eastern wisdom: “If your eye arrests at somebody who exceeds you in wealth, social standing or physical features look at somebody who concedes to you according to these points and be satisfied.”

Moreover, there is no idea that poverty is sacred in the Islamic civilization (in comparison with Medieval Europe). Poverty is not welcomed and begging for money is a sin. One of the Hadiths says: “A really poor man is the one who having no means of living does not show his poverty to others in order to get help and does not live by alms.” In other words for a true Muslim begging for money is impossible.

Beggary by itself doesn't bring us closer to God as it makes people struggle for living and gives no opportunity to stop and think about the divine sense of existence. Besides, the poor man can not help or support those who really need it. It is considered that if you are at least relatively able to work you must do everything possible in order to overcome poverty.

Public opinion in the Islamic countries welcomes beautiful clothes, shoes, good cars and etc. on condition that their owner fears of God and helps those who are weaker and poorer. People who

became poor because of some objective reasons (illness or disability, family misfortunes, wars or natural disasters) are supported by the Islamic community. The quality of life and social welfare are as high as the charges of well-to-do Muslims in favour of the poor, lame and impotent.

There is a clear concept of social justice in Islam. You deserve God's Mercy to the extent you contribute to the improvement of your community (*ummah*) fellows. The person who gives his debtor enough time for debt repayment or lets off what he owes him will be under Allah's protection in the Last Day. While usurers can not reckon upon God's Mercy.

Islam fixes a certain succession of addressees for help. First, the person must render assistance to himself (he can not help others if he can not maintain himself), then he must help his children, wife or wives and his community... It means that the person must first give a hand to his close relatives and then to the distant ones.

Modern Muslims especially those who live in the European countries clearly understand that modern world is a jungle. The following Muhammad's words are of great importance for the Islamic community: "In the Last Day I will be the Prosecutor of three categories of people those who turned a free man into a slave, those who sold a man and spent the money and those who hired a man, used his labour and didn't pay." Modern European muftis emphasize that different illegal ways of using gastarbeiters (foreign workers) falls under the category of enslavement of free people.

Mevlana Gulen's personal extreme modesty which borders on ascetism is not a dogma and not even an example of a teacher who calls his followers to accept his way of austerity. Gulen's personality does not need exterior comfort. But this is Gulen! The greatness of the teacher is in the fact that he offers a choice of the way and the choice is after those who believe.⁸⁴

Nowadays more and more often Islam is spoken about as a teaching encouraging active life position and creative activity. At the same time it is a historical fact that the Islamic world falls behind the West in the sphere of exact sciences and industrial development. The rivalry between civilizations today is first of all the rivalry of technologies. And meanwhile the Islamic world is behind in this competition.

Islam is against primitive usury in any form. Using surplus exchange value in the process of enlargement of the production is not pleasing to God. The Islamic world sacrificed accumulation of capital in order to create a society with an averaged model of prosperity and without extreme forms of

⁸⁴ Ф. Гюлен «Сомнения, порожденные веком. Т. 1. М., 2005. С. 77-78.

exploitation. From the point of view of industrial and technological development it was a minus, of course. So, an idealized and absolutized abstract idea of social justice had a bad effect.

Moreover, traditionalists' positions have always been very strong in the Islamic society. Islam as a religion gives the traditionalists a very powerful argument. They can ask about every innovation the following question: "Is it mentioned in Koran?" And nowadays many theologians but not F. Gulen estimate modern technologies (including digital and information processing technologies) from the point of view of their value for spreading Islam.

Hard business competition is not appreciated in the Islamic tradition people must compete only for being more righteous before God. Contrary to the widespread opinion Islam welcomes knowledge and science: "The one who follows the path of knowledge goes directly to Allah..." But in this statement human sciences are meant in the first place. As far as the technologies are concerned it is necessary to mention that the East first of all adopted the military ones. Moreover, they were perceived separately from the technological progress in general.

The main changes in the traditional Islamic understanding of the quality of life happened in the result of collision with the Western world in the XVI–XIX centuries. In my opinion, the first stage of such transformations happened in the period of Sultan Suleiman Kanuni, in the second third of the XVI century when the Muslims saw not just Europe but a developed and in many points superior to them civilization with the centre in Imperial Vienna. The next historical period was at the end of the XVII century when the Islamic world suffered some smashing defeats from Europe which created the "Holy League".

The press of the West continued in the period of Napoleon wars when a global *secular* project based not on the European Christian values but on universalism of the age of Enlightenment was opposed to the "Islamic project." We must not forget that Napoleon's plans were really worldwide. He intended not only to invade the Eastern Mediterranean but also to activate positions of France in Hindustan... During this period the Islamic world realized that scornful and contemptuous attitude towards non-Muslims in Europe is no longer possible (as well as the extensive spreading of Islam).

After that a civilizational dialogue between Islam and the West followed. In the middle and in the second part of the XIX century the world *umma* experienced the time of reforms and adaptation processes. Let's remember the reforms of Mohammed Ali in Egypt, the reforms of "tanzimat" (reorganization) period in Turkey, the *babid and behait* movements in Iran, and the activation (which lasted till the XX century) of the Islamic political organizations in Hindustan.

It is early to speak about the results of the meeting between Islam and the New European civilization. But one certain moment can be mentioned. In comparison with Shinto and Confucian civilizations which managed to adopt the European developments as a whole the Islamic world always perceived and adopted them selectively (military technologies, for example). In the result guns and cannons, for example, were considered to be acceptable while printing the books was not. The first printed Koran appeared in Turkey somewhere in 1730.

In such a way regarding the progressive technologies Muslims followed the way of users but not creators. In addition, the adoption mainly started in extreme situations like military collisions with Europe, for instance.

There is one more relevant question about the actuality of the Islamic approach to welfare and prosperity for modern Russia, the country where a considerable part of population is comprised of people with values formed under the influence of the Islamic tradition. In this respect Mevlana Gulen's opinion that our epoch needs the potential of creative activism which characterizes Islam sounds perspective. Being a Russian, I personally think that nowadays it is actual for our country to start perceiving labour activity as an important component of person's spiritual development. A high status of knowledge and intellectual activity, not ostentatious but true following the principles of social justice, responsibility of the whole society for old people, orphans and those who are ill taught by Gulen, all these principles of the Islamic civilization are highly called for in our days.

"When we look at the righteous life of our Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace – s.a.s.), – says F. Gulen, – We can see that he practised what Koran teaches us."⁸⁵ We can also maintain (by no means comparing the figures of Muhammad (s.a.s.) and the hero of this article) that Mevlana lives in the way he teaches others. F. Gulen follows the truth which I found in his works and its simplicity and completeness gave me a real shock:

F. Gulen quotes Rasulullah: "I was not sent to anathemize but to be a mercy." And then continues by himself: "He was Allah's Mercy to everybody. That's why the Messenger of Allah wanted everybody to be rescued even the greatest enemies of Islam and took pains to do it."⁸⁶

In his endless care and desire "not to feel an ant under his foot" F. Gulen does not emphasize some painful moments in the relations between "the world of Islam" and "the world of the Cross", between Europe and Turkey, and I can understand why. But from the point of view of a secular Orientalist I

⁸⁵ F. Gulen: Essays..., p. 65

⁸⁶ Ibid, p. 55

would like to share some of my doubts with you. And all my doubts I address not only to Mevlana Gulen but to all readers irrespectively of their religion, language or political views.

Muhammad, the Last Prophet in the history of mankind, called the "Seal" in Islam because he "seals all Revelations of God," is considered to be God's Mercy *to all things, phenomena and creatures* on the Earth without exception.

"And We have not sent you but as a mercy to the worlds, for the 'Alamîn (mankind, jinns and all that exists)" (Surah "Al-Anbiya," 21 (107)).

The Man in the Divine Sense is the Lord of His Creation, the Lord of all. "And We have not sent you but as a mercy to the worlds" (Surah Al-Isra, 17 (70)). It must be understood and it is interpreted by modern Islamic theologians in the way that life, dignity and property of any person including a non-Muslim are sacred.

The proclamation of justice or *adalet-i mahza* is found in Koran while taking life of even one innocent human being is equal to killing all people in the world. Trampling human rights is unacceptable even to the benefit of the whole society. F. Gulen constantly says it and it is easy to understand but... not always and not in all situations.

I have given just some examples of the ideas which the Medieval Europe (of the VIII–IX centuries) had to face in the process of formation of new approaches to the place and role of an individual in the young Christian community consisting of different ethnoses after losing the Roman civilization.

Islam was formed as a solid (in the main parts) teaching in the VII century in the South-West of Arabia. Natural changes of state structures, centuries-long stable religious communities together with economical reasons predetermined the continuity and maturity of Islam.

Muhammad realized himself as *the last one* in the succession of the main Biblical Prophets – Abraham, Moses and Jesus Christ.

The prophecies of Muhammad of the early period (from 610 till his death in 632) were perceived quite positively (as a rule) and with adequate understanding of the meaning by his contemporaries – the Jews and Christians. A there was one reason for it.

The Prophet, one of the laity, was persuading people that his mission was to repeat, to specify, to record in the written form and to clarify the postulates of his precursors – the Biblical Prophets. The idea of "being the last one" was meant for Muslims, the followers of Muhammad, but it was also

understood and to some extent shared (especially on the issue of appearance of some Messiah) by local Jewish and Christian communities.

Persecution on the part of compatriots caused *hicra* – the migration of Muhammad’s followers from Mecca to Medina in 622 A.D. In my opinion, the desire to be isolated from the neighbouring Jewish tribes, from the neighbours (both Arabs and not) hostile to Muhammad’s monotheism mainly due to some mercantile reasons, and from the pragmatic interest of some chieftains, new neighbours of the Prophet determined two features of the Islamic community mentioned by the way by F. Gulen.

I name two features (and they are fully preserved in our century) considering them to be the most significant in the relations with the non-Moslem world. Firstly, it is the idea of ummah, a special community which is quite independent in social, ideological and political respect. Secondly, it is the idea of division of the inhabited world into two unbalanced parts – “the land of Islam” and “the other part of the world.” The relations between them are established according to a social and political agreement which is offered and formulated by the Islamic part. In this case its maintenance is sacred for the Islamic ummah and its leaders.

Muhammad’s prophecies of the years 610-632, Hadiths and deeds of the caliphs, his successors, formed the idea of “those who accepted God” and “those who surrounded” (meaning Muslims and non-Muslims) which still continues to be one of the basic points of Islam as a *particular form of collective human life* characterized by a number of absolute common features and only some regional and cultural peculiarities.

The common features include shariat as the only source of rights, responsibilities and rules of behaviour of a Muslim in ummah and out of it. During 1400 years shariat became a form of sacralization of worldly entities of a Muslim despite the place where he lives from Singapore to Hamburg and Houston. Regional peculiarities comprise, for example, some everyday differences in the life of Turks in Germany, or Arabs in France, or the Iranians in the USA and etc.

I would like to remind you that initially the following appositive understanding (or more often misunderstanding) of the postulates of Christianity and Islam existed.

In the Christian world the Word of God was embodied in our God, Jesus Christ, it (literally!) became his flesh.

In Islam the Word of God was embodied in the Sacred Book, Koran.

Consequently the initial differences of the Christians and Muslims were based (and still are based) on fundamental constants which can not be compared.

We should compare not the Bible (Gospel) and Koran but Koran and Jesus Christ. These notions which are not compatible in the Christian perception still determine the views and the dualism of values formed in the historical perception of the world of Islam and Christianity. Notice that in Fore-Asia they coexisted in continuous collaboration since Nativity and will continue to exist to the Day of Judgment, I suppose.

The first non-Muslims who turned to the problem "to understand Islam" were the Christian heretics and the Jews of the Fore-Asia driven away by Rome and Byzantium. There were Copts, Arians, Nestorians and Jacobites among the Christians as well as the Jews, immigrants from Sasanid Iran and sometimes from Egypt.

There was no oppression of non-Muslims or their enslavement by the force of the Islamic arms. In the 1st – 2nd centuries of "*hicra*" (VII-IX A.D.) the so-called "heretics" were looking for social freedom from the power of Rome and Byzantium in their "new neighbours," a solid ummah of Muslims,.

Jesus Christ foretold (see Gospel according to St. John: 14, 26) the acts of Mani and the last one demanded the refinement and clarification of Moses' and Jesus' prophecies. In such mutual observation passed the first centuries of the development of Islam and its understanding in the world of neighbours, non-Muslims.

Delicately, as if it is a crystal dewdrop on a soft cheek of a child, touches Mevlana Gulen the problem of war and peace – jihad.

The war aspect of spreading Islam in the Mediterranean region and in the Middle East starting from the second part of the VII century and until the beginning of the XXI century must be viewed according to the Sunni and Shiite concepts of legitimacy of power succession in ummah. I would like to remind you that spiritual and worldly beginnings in Islam are inseparable that's why secular power (of sultan) is combined with spiritual power (of caliph-sultan).

That's why nowadays especially after the tragedies that happened in the USA on the 11th of September, the terrorist acts in "Nord-Ost" and Beslan, Russia, in Madrid and London we must attentively study the division which exists within Islam into:

- those who honor only Koran
- those who honor Koran and shariat-adet
- and those who admit not only the completeness and eternal essence of Koran but also the idea of changeability of this world and understand that theological statements must be made according to them.

The influence of these three conventional groups might determine the relations between the worlds – Islam and non-Islam in the 21st century and afterwards. It makes F. Gulen’s careful calls not to harden the hearts of the deluded even more significant for our understanding.

After the abolishment of (quite peaceful) caliphate in the Turkish Republic (in 1924) there is practically no one, single Head of Sunnis – a caliph or a Prophet’s successor (mind that he is not considered to be the Messenger of Allah).

Shiite imams practising secular and spiritual power at the same time can be found in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

In the new history of Europe of the XV-XVIII centuries inappropriateness of understanding of these realities by the monarchs and leaders of the Christian world lead sometimes to different incidents. Christianity of the VII-VIII centuries met the Islamic postulates with caution and such attitude continued to be transmitted for many centuries by both Churches, an Orthodox and a Catholic one, as well as by their bishops. This attitude is first of all based on the following positions:

1. The fear of the Christian clergy to have an opponent in the face of Islam as the last religion having clear common roots with Christianity and having no religious establishments mediating between the God and the Man.
2. Initial understanding of essential logics of Islam by Christian fathers of the Church which was at the same time closed for millions of Christians.

Islam represents the ethics and norms of a mass of people (ummah) but not a philosophical teaching especially prepared (and renovated if necessary due to the wish of the authorities, for example).

3. The Christians of the Near East (Arabia, Egypt and Syria) and Byzantium saw in the absolute values of Islam (Faith, Life, Posterity, Mind, Property) the grounds of the civil society as we understand it in the XXI century.

For many years F. Gulen has been arguing against the faulty understanding of Islam as a militant religion which appeared under the influence of immense social and political changes caused by the invasion of Crusaders into the Fore-Asia, South-East and Central Europe in XI-XIII centuries.

We must also remember that those Christians who died in the military collisions with the Saracens were considered to be Martyrs. And in the Eastern Christian Church which experienced not only collisions with Muslims but also suffered from a smashing blow into the back of the Catholic knights soon started to consider that it happened due to the Islamic rivals. It is in this period (XI-XIII centuries.) when the image of a Muslim as a cruel killer inclined to public suicides in the acts of terrorism was formed in the mind of Christians.

We must also understand that the split of the Christian Church into two as a consequence of the Crusades which has not yet been eliminated by the Pope and the Patriarch is more significant for the history.

I would also like to emphasize that Koran, actually, fully completes the number of categorical prohibitions of killing innocent people: the Bible (the Exodus, 21-12, Leviticus, 24:17-18), Koran, 2, 178-179. Koran is one of the monotheistic teachings which forbids suicide (4, 29) and killing women and children as an ungodly act (Koran: 25 (68), 6 (151).

The postulate "not peace but sword" (Gospel according to St. Matthew, 10 (34-35), and Gospel according to St. Luke 12 (51-53)) does not correspond to the Islamic understanding of jihad (a sacred war) as a way to serve people including the use of force (Koran 5(54), 9(19), 8(72), 16 (110), 29 (6,8) and other surahs and ayats).

I would also like to note that in the XIII-XIV centuries during the Mongol invasion the perception of Chingishan as a destructive figure was characteristic for both Europe and Islam in Egypt and Arabistan, for example. But the Mongols and Tatars united by Chingishan and his close descendants accepted Islam in a short period. And in the result of this poorly studied phenomenon the Christian perception of the Mongol army as "the plague for people," "God's judgement," the ruiners of the Christian, Iranian, Arabic and other civilizations was later transferred on all Islamic countries and the Islamic world in general.

In reality the antique philosophy and the human and scientific heritage were preserved for Europe by pre-mongolian Islamic caliphates while the Mongols actively destroyed the traces of the antique culture.

May be one day the great culture of the West will find place for International Gulen's Readings. Then the character of the Islamic invasions in Europe (including the Ottoman Turks) which can be compared to the world civilizational process and which is poorly studied both in the East and in the West will be analyzed. The Islamic consciousness of a modern Muslim, the citizen of the European country (including Russia, of course) and his views on the historical process of spreading Muslims in Europe must be studied.

It is important to know that the threat from Ottoman Turks to the world of West (the 3rd and 4th waves of invasion into Europe after the Huns) did not have a religious basis but a vivid social, political and military one. If we compare it to the XXI century then we can say that it was a kind of sociodemographic expansion and a form of terrorism and latent conflicts of low intensity.

The reason for differences in views lies in the deep past, in initially different range of world outlook of the West which started to explore the New World – America, and tried to united the pieces of the habitable oecumene and the "mysterious" East which lived in its own world and didn't need any discoveries. We must also take into consideration the different level of expectations of the two parts – the Christian Europe and the Islamic Turkey in the period of their aggressive and hostile approach to each other (under the influence of Ottoman invasion into the Balkans in the XIV-XV centuries) as well as to take into account the incommensurability of the evolutionary movements in the societies of the Age of Reformation in Europe and the blossom of the Ottoman Empire (in the XVI-XVII centuries).

Europe in its dynamic and constantly rising consumption and reproduction needed first of all stable deliveries of cheap food of high quality from the Eastern Islamic countries and only in the end of the XVIII – beginning of the XIX century started to need raw materials as well. While the Mideast countries till the end of the First Industrial Revolution needed mostly tax revenues or in other words were interested only in the number of their nationals.

Here we must consider "an inverted analogy": Islam penetrated into Europe and the Christian East in the VII-XII centuries mostly by ways of "penetrating" into the weak layers of the Christian civilization. The Western model found "a breach" in the Islamic (and Ottoman in particular) civilizational model much later in the XVIII-XIX centuries represented by non-Moslem nationals of the Islamic states who protected their *own* sociocultural values and wanted to adapt Islamic personal liberties to the European advantages.

The growth of intensity of the relations and the abruptness of the Islamic world in the Age of Industrialization outwardly had a religious character but these processes were first of all based on a great economic gap between the Islamic world and the West expressed in the stagnation and partial imitation of the consumer demand samples.

At that time there were two coexisting but opposite to each other processes:

- The West tried to unite those countries which were equal in their development
- Islam tried to preserve its world through partial adjustment to the exterior factors, through modernization and westernization.

In this way for many centuries the West and the East were not studying each other but trying to adapt the adequate consumer level without its full understanding.

The simulation of the Islamic (and in the first place Ottoman) isolationism in the consequence of their economic lag made by the great states of the XIX-XX centuries as well as hot spots on the outskirts of Europe aroused a protective reaction of the inadequate level in the object.

Domination of the inner stimuli towards reorganization and reforms in Turkey in 1850-1980 was accompanied by growing Islamism (especially after the epoch of secularism of Atatürk).

A low amplitude of fluctuation of the existing demands of the Islamic society in the XIX-XX centuries was combined with a massive consumption of the European goods which symbolized a so-called joining of the Ottomans to the European world. There was no *idea of discovering the world* in Islam of this period. The existence of a great consumer demand complying with the standards had just a demonstrational effect in order to say, for example, "My clothes are as good as Selim's and Vilko or Hristo's clothes are even better." The Ottoman Centre – the imperative of the power, could not fulfill the distribution functions in a satisfactory manner and did not want to study deep interior processes of the development of the Western world that's why it came in nowhere.

The vector of the main efforts of the Ottoman Islamic State were aimed at the military political system which determined the failure of Tanzimat.

The vector of occasional decisions and searches intending to stabilize the Ottoman subsystem went away from the vector of development and knowledge adopted by the Atlantic civilizational model.

For example, systematic study of Islam in Europe started in the XIII century while the study of the Christian model (don't mix with the antiquity) in the East started only in the XVIII century. The West studied the intellectual component of the East while the Islamic scientists studied the military art and law of the period of industrial revolutions but not the philosophy of development.

Pragmatism of the Islamic study of the Western values:

- Commercial and industrial exhibitions are attended while the libraries are not.
- In the face of consciously closed by the Islamic authorities opportunities to understand the West Islam transforms into a kind of social consensus.
- The superiority of the Islamic thesis "learn and make it your own" and refusal from another thesis "learn – comprehend – improve" are especially dangerous for the collaboration of Islam and Christianity which must become the central process in the XXI century.

In the conclusion.

- The activation of dogmas of the Islamic world through separating the communities into developed and peripheral ones takes place in the world.
- The inner problems of the Islamic community as a result of slow adaptation in the global information world are growing.
- Absolute impossibility of any kind of military solutions in the united (European) surrounding.
- A Muslim emigrant as the citizen of Europe is a contradiction of the XXI century.
- A wide access to weapon has become a symbol of being a free citizen in the Islamic countries in the first turn.
- The challenge of "an Islamic loner" to the consolidated European civil society arouses a protest of such great minds as Fethullah Gulen.
- Misunderstanding and discriminative perception of the rights of an Islamic individual in the new limits of the united Europe can be overcome in the dialogue.

In order to study the above mentioned problems we need:

Historicism,

Self-control,

Very high level of awareness of the basic cultural values,

Respect and care about the traditions of Islam and Christianity.

These are the basic structural elements of the penetration into the essence of the subjects of our study.

F. Gulen, Mevlana of the XXI century, devoted his whole life to these positions. He lives among us – calm, modest and sympathizing.

Let us thank God that there are such people in the world.