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"Religion: Hard or Soft Boiled?: understanding sacred violence and martyrdom through the example and writings of Fethullah Gülen." - A Perspective from the UK and Europe.

**Abstract:**

One result of September 11th 2001 and July 7th 2005 has been an apparently greater wish for knowledge about Islam, a realisation that ignorance and indifference is itself culpable, and a feeling that the issues raised by that day are not going to go away.

What is clear, at least for the foreseeable future, is that religion has become a factor in world politics and in local, national and international conflict. This is quite beyond expectation, as we look back to decades of the cold war. Certainly conflicts such as those in Kashmir, Afghanistan, Iraq, the Holy Land, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Northern Ireland, Chechnya, the former Yugoslavia, the Philippines have all had a religious flavour, and been surrounded by religious rhetoric. Communism and colonialism are no longer the central factors. This raises the challenge to all faith communities put by the UK Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks recently, "If religion is not part of a solution, it will certainly be part of the problem."

In this paper I will be examining Fethullah Gülen's teaching and perspectives on Islam as the religion of peace against the rise of sacred violence and martyrdom. Based upon fieldwork in major UK and European cities - Birmingham, Nottingham, Bradford, Lyons and Paris, and experience of inter and intra-faith dialogue with Muslim communities I will indicate

the transformational influence of Gülen's writings and the activities the movement associated with him in the creation of civil societies based upon tolerance, dialogue and compassion.

## **1. Introduction.**

"The terrorist attacks of 9/11 ushered in a new era of global terrorism quite distinct in shape and form from anything that has gone before. Prior to the end of the Cold War terrorism was largely associated with the rise of nationalism and the establishment of the nation state, or more specifically nations without states. For the most part this form of terrorism was undertaken locally with terrorist strategies directed at specific national targets. Those terrorist movements that emerged since the Cold War have a global and geopolitical focus to their activities, in that they seek to restructure world society in their own image. Terrorist organisations such as Al Qa'eda use modern communications systems not only to attack modernity but also to reverse it. The lengths to which these organisations are prepared to go in implementing their strategies are distinctively more ruthless, as illustrated by the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and the subsequent Bali, Madrid and London bombings, than anything previously imagined or seen"

Countering Terrorism: Power, Violence and Democracy post 9/11. A Report by a working Party of the Church of England's House of Bishops. London, Church Information Office. 2005., p6.

In examining: "Religion: Hard or Soft Boiled?: understanding sacred violence and martyrdom through the example and writings of Fethullah Gulen. A Perspective from the UK and Europe". I shall spend sometime on perspectives from the UK and Europe. After all as a recent editorial of the New Republican proposed British Muslims are now more dangerous than overt Middle Eastern Al-Qa'eda groups. I shall also consider how jihad and Shahid are seen and understood in the British Muslim context before assessing the contribution of Fethullah Gulen.

## **2. Reckoning with Tragedy**

For many young people, the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and 7th July 2005 were their first experience with a true national tragedy. Unlike older generations who can recall the assassinations of John and Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King or the death Diana, Princess of Wales in 1997 many for the most part, have grown up during a period of relative peace.

There are many aspects of the tragedy of September 11th or July 7th that teachers are ill-prepared to address. Some key issues require a solid grounding in Middle Eastern and

Near Eastern history, such as why radicalism in that part of the world has taken a religious, rather than a nationalist or a Marxist, form.

Equally there is need to understand the Qur'anic terms and Muslim experiences of Jihad spiritual struggle and Shahid martyrdom.

### **3. Jihad: The struggle of faith.**

Fight in the cause of Allah those who fight you, but do not transgress limits; for Allah loves not transgressors. S 2. 190

This portion of the Qur'an was revealed written in about 606 C.E., when the Prophet Muhammad and his followers were under attack in the city of Madinah. There, they had established their own state. But various coalitions of non-Muslim tribes--including Christians, Jews, and animists continued to go to war with them. This portion of the Qur'an explains their reasoning behind striking back.

The passage actually refers to a defensive war.

You fight back. You go as far as it takes to stop the aggression but you do not go beyond that. So if you have to, you go as far as fighting verbally to get someone out of your home--but you don't shoot him after he is out. You don't keep going on with it--only if you are attacked, if there is oppression applied to you. The idea is that justice prevails. You don't fight because you enjoy fighting, but because there is oppression. To paraphrase this perception: it could be military force or [in today's world] it could be media force, writing against you. But when the hostilities are over and the enemy offers a peace treaty, you should submit and agree to it.. Muslims are obliged to submit to a peace treaty offered by the enemy. You don't keep fighting.....

The word jihad has its origin in the verb jahada which means to struggle, to fight. The word has several connotations, since struggle can occur on several levels.

Muslims understand these levels based not only on the words of the Qur'an, but also on the authentic statements of the Prophet Muhammad as recorded in the Hadith as I shall indicate. There are three levels of jihad:

**3.1 Personal Jihad:** The most excellent jihad is that of the soul. This jihad, called the Jihadun-Nafs, is the intimate struggle to purify the soul of satanic influence--both subtle and overt. It is the struggle to cleanse one's spirit of sin. This is the most important level of jihad.

**3.2 Verbal Jihad:** On another occasion, the Prophet said,

"It is obligatory for one to listen to and obey (the ruler's orders) unless these orders involve one disobedience (to Allah); but if an act of disobedience (to Allah) is imposed, he should not listen to or obey it."

Al-Bukhari Volume 4, Book 52, Number 203: Narrated Ibn 'Umar:

He encouraged raising one's voice in the name of Allah on behalf of justice.

**3.3 Physical Jihad:** This is combat waged in defence of Muslims against oppression and transgression by the enemies of Allah, Islam and Muslims. Muslims are designed to lead peaceful lives and not transgress against anyone, but also to defend themselves against oppression by "fighting against those who fight against us." This "jihad with the hand" is the aspect of jihad that has been so profoundly misunderstood in today's world.

### **3.4 On Non-Muslims:**

Let there be no compulsion in religion: Truth stands out clear from Error: whoever rejects evil and believes in Allah hath grasped the most trustworthy hand-hold that never breaks. And Allah heareth and knoweth all things. S 2. 256.

This passage has been cited to justify expelling non-Muslims from Muslim countries. But no Muslim is allowed to go out and force people to become Muslim. There are also verses in the Qur'an which are religiously pluralistic. For instance, chapter 29, verse 46, says:

And dispute ye not with the People of the Book, except with means better (than mere disputation), unless it be with those of them who inflict wrong (and injury): but say, 'We believe in the revelation which has come down to us and in that which came down to you; Our Allah and your Allah is one; and it is to Him we bow (in Islam) S 29. 46

## **4. Classical Understandings of Martyrdom.**

A community awards the mark of a martyr to those men and women who have offered their lives either voluntarily in solidarity with their group or in conflict with another, ideologically or religiously opposing group. The martyr thus becomes a representative, a champion or defender of their society and its beliefs. In this sense martyrs may be seen as embracing suicide as judicial, political, religious or military authorities will kill most individuals who stand against them. These power holders may execute the martyr as a potential or actual threat to their society's well being, social values or physical safety be it as a criminal or heretic. Both the societies of the one killed and those who undertake the execution have to address and

control the significance of the death of the person or group of opponents: is it to be understood by the wider world as martyrdom or as a judicial and justifiable event?

The literal meaning of the Greek term *marturos* is 'witness' and as such martyrs may be seen as members or representatives of a politically disestablished movement who are seeking self-determination in opposition to an established power bloc. Martyrdom can therefore be a move to break through ideological or political boundaries of authority with a religious or quasi-religious power. A minority's religious assertions may justify opposition to a more powerful enemy, who in turn exercises a violent reaction to the threat:

It is one of the great paradoxes of religious history that sacred injunctions designed to contain the worst impulses of men and women have, when wedded to secular power, so often been vehicles to express those very passions. [Jacoby: 1983. 99].

Such a confrontation between even a minority movement and its more powerful and dominant adversary can strengthen the martyr's people, unite their ongoing opposition as they seek some reformulation of charismatic leadership, and create a structure to maintain their cause and identity. The very example of the martyr can provide an exemplification of faith and courage, which will encourage the followers to maintain their own faith and 'witness' in the face of continued persecution under a cruel enemy. By contrast, the martyrdom and the ongoing opposition of the martyr remnant can strengthen the enemy's determination to suppress any oppositionist movements.

Intrinsic to martyrdom is the creation of a distinct ideology in opposition to the prevailing political culture or accepted religious norm of a society. Such an alternative ideology serves to form symbols around which a movement mobilises itself, principles around which the new society rallies, which reinforce or even cast into radical forms quite ordinary political or economic tensions.

Classical Hellenistic philosophy saw ideologies as cultural realities within which lay the seeds of good and evil forces. The dualism of Zoroastrianism proposed an autonomous evil force, which in the inter-testamental period of Judaism was adapted for a monotheistic faith. The Christian faith brought together the idea of the individual hero/martyr figure, which flowed into Islamic thought, with its ideas of martyrdom, the promise of paradise and rescue from the danger of eternal punishment, and the capacity of the martyrs to intercede for the present realm.

## **5. Shahid: Martyrdom in Islam.**

In both Sunni and Shi'a thought there are several kinds of martyr *shahid* viz., 'battlefield martyrs' and 'martyrs in the next world only'.

**5.1** For the former there is an added description that they are 'martyrs both in this world and the next' shuhada al-dunya wa l'akhira in the sense that they are regarded as martyrs in this world with special burial rites and in the next world. For such martyred figures, it is generally agreed that there will be no necessity for their bodies to be washed ghusl as they are seen as having purified themselves by the nature of their sacrifice. It is also generally affirmed that a martyred person may be buried in his or her blood stained garments as a sign of their status on the Day of Judgement. A more contentious issue centres upon prayer around such martyrs – within Zaydi and Twelver Shi'a thought the precedent of the Prophet praying over those lost at the Battle of Uhud in 3/625 provided sufficient justification for the practice. By contrast the Shafi'i and Maliki schools do not advocate such patterns. The issue in dispute rests on whether the martyrs are purified by the nature of their deaths as to be beyond the need of intercession or whether no one can dispense with the need of a plea to God for mercy and forgiveness.

In the flow of Islamic history there were named companions and blood relations of the Prophet who accepted martyrdom such as his uncle Hamza ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib, and his cousin Dja'far ibn Abu Talib.

There is another example of one who had barely embraced Islam before he died:

A man whose face was covered with an iron mask (i.e. clad in armour) came to the Prophet and said, "O Allah's Apostle! Shall I fight or embrace Islam first?" The Prophet said, "Embrace Islam first and then fight." So he embraced Islam, and was martyred. Allah's Apostle said, A Little work, but a great reward. "(He did very little (after embracing Islam), but he will be rewarded in abundance)."

Al-Bukhari: Volume 4, Book 52, Number 63: Narrated Al-Bara:

There is also the jihad of confronting oppressive rulers:

The Prophet was asked, "What kind of jihd [e.g., major or minor, by hands or tongues] is better?" His reply is recorded as follows:

, "A word of truth in front of an oppressive ruler!" Sunan Al-Nasa'i : 4209.

Considerable numbers died in the defence of Islam after the Prophet's death and subsequently in such times as the European crusades in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries with its resonance of jihad. [Sivan: 1968. 60-62].

In so many ways the concept of a martyr's death has suffused the Muslim imagination and consciousness until modern times. The martyrdom thus becomes the zenith of spiritual ambition for many with its guarantee of God's reward and approbation. The Qur'anic references to the state of martyrdom affirms both their closeness to God and the nature of their rewards:

All who obey Allah and the messenger are in the company of those on whom is the Grace of Allah,- of the prophets (who teach), the sincere (lovers of Truth), the witnesses (who testify), and the Righteous (who do good): Ah! what a beautiful fellowship! S 4. 69

And

And call not those who are slain in the way of Allah 'dead'. No, they are living; only you do not perceive it. S 2. 154

Or

And those who fought in the way of Allah, He renders not their actions vain. He will guide them and improve their state. And bring them into the Garden, which he has made known to them. S 47. 4-6

The promises awaiting the martyr in eternity include absolute forgiveness of sin, protection from any pains in the grave, a crown of glory, and the capacity to intercede for some seventy of his or her relations.

Certainly within Shi'a understanding and practice the reception of news concerning the death of a relation in conflict for the faith is received with joy. The meaning of the martyr's death overcomes any personal grief with the martyr's family being surrounded with admiration and recognition.

**5.2** The second type of martyr is termed 'martyrs in the next world only' shuhada al-akhira, who will not be accorded distinctive burial rites. This category includes a variety of individual situations whose estimations as martyrs are debated by the schools of law. One case includes those who lose their lives in conflict against rebels. The Twelver Shi'a and the Zaydi traditions see 'rebels' as unbelievers so to rise against them is to fall as a 'battlefield martyr'. Consequently, 'Ali's supporters who died at the battles of the Camel, Siffin and al-Nahrawan are such martyrs.

For Sunni jurists those who fall in fighting unjust rulers are victims of injustice. Within this expression are those who die in defending themselves, their families and their property against robbery. A third situation examines whether a person who dies accidentally for example by his own weapon may be seen as a genuine 'battlefield martyr'.

## **6. After the expansion of Islam.**

After the early expansion of Islam the numbers of 'battlefield martyrs' declined and jurists were faced with examining and deciding upon further definitions of martyrdom'. A typology evolved which described three key patterns of martyrdom within Islam.

**6.1** The first type included those who died violent or premature deaths, with a further defining into those who perished in the service of God; those who died for their beliefs; those who died through disease or accident; and the 'martyrs of love'. Those who died violent or premature deaths would include the three caliphs after Abu Bakr viz., Umar, 'Uthman, and 'Ali. The Prophet Muhammad might also be considered such a martyr due to the suggestion that his final illness and death were attributed to eating poisoned mutton given him by a polytheist woman Zaynab ibn al-Harith at the time of the battle of Khaybar.

Within the second type of Muslims enduring violent deaths are some of the earliest Muslims, the Sufi al-Hallaj [Massignon: 1982. I. 560-645] and certainly amongst the Twelver Shi'a the most prominent martyrs are the Imams beginning with 'Ali, and in particular his son Husayn. Husayn is an exemplar in this area as he is regarded as having died self-sacrificially in seeking to revive the genuine rule of Islam and as a 'battlefield martyr' contending against overwhelming odds.

Amongst those who died through disease or accident are numbered victims of contagious illness or fatal accidents, and women dying in childbirth, all of whom are granted the status of martyr in recompense for their suffering as 'Martyrs of love' are seen as those who have been forced to leave their homes in times of persecution and die in a foreign land.

**6.2** A second refinement of 'martyrdom' saw those who died a natural death whilst engaged in pilgrimage, or a journey searching for knowledge. Amongst the Twelver Shi'a there is a firm contention that those who have lived a faithful life waging a personal jihad against their lower nature nafs are to be seen as a shadid fighting alongside the Prophet in this greater jihad of the soul. This would accord with wider tradition, which understands the greater jihad in a similar manner.

Allah's Apostle said, "Five are regarded as martyrs: They are those who die because of plague, abdominal disease, drowning or a falling building etc., and the martyrs in Allah's Cause." Al-Bukhari Volume 4, Book 52, Number 82: Narrated Abu Huraira.

**6.3** A third refining of understanding of the martyr status reflects Sufi approaches to the theme with 'Living Martyrs' i.e. those who have entered the greater jihad in their lives. Al-Sulami [d. 412/1021] considered that the 'battlefield martyr' was a martyr externally but the true martyr is the one whose lower nature nafs had been overcome and whose life continues in such a vein [Kohlberg: 1979. 1. 30].

Does Islam have a special emphasis on martyrdom? In this third sense there is, indeed, a special place for those who die in the service of God, though that service needs to be of a different sort than that provided by terrorists.

So to claim martyr status, all terrorists have to do is convince themselves that they are fighting for "justice," which is, of course, highly subjective. The Qur'an has many passages describing how the ummah is to be single in mind towards fellow Muslims:

If two parties among the Believers fall into a quarrel, make ye peace between them: but if one of them transgresses beyond bounds against the other, then fight ye (all) against the one that transgresses until it complies with the command of Allah; but if it complies, then make peace between them with justice, and be fair: for Allah loves those who are fair (and just). S 49.9

And merciful to those People of Book who are near in kinship:

Throughout the Makkan period, the early Muslims responded to the mental anguish, physical abuse and persistent threats to their lives with passive resistance. It was only thirteen years into his prophetic mission that Muhammad and the early Muslims were permitted to engage in armed resistance, but only under certain stringent conditions.

Permission [to fight] is given to those against whom war is being wrongfully waged. God has indeed the power to succour them: those who have been driven from their homelands against all right for no other reason than their saying, "Our Lord and Sustainer is God! For, if God had not enabled people to defend themselves against one another, monasteries and churches and synagogues and mosques—in which God's name is abundantly extolled--would surely have been destroyed." 22:39-40

it is interesting that the above verses give precedence to the protection of monasteries, churches and synagogues over that of mosques in order to underline their inviolability and the duty of Muslims to safeguard them against desecration or abuse, and protect freedom of belief. The aim of fighting according to this critical verse is the defence not only of Islam, but also of religious freedom in general.

In Qur'anic understanding as well as in the developed Muslim tradition therefore, there is a rich variety of understandings of martyrdom to be found in Shi'a as much as in Sunni Sufi traditions. The former is dominated by the nature of the deaths of 'Ali and Husayn. It can be argued that 'Ali and his younger son died as 'battlefield martyrs' with their intentions of reviving the Prophet's tradition of Islam. Yet a believer's inner feelings and determination are only known to God so much so that individuals can only be assessed by their outward actions.

Martyrdom will transform a mundane event into one of sacred significance. There are the parallels between the change of the sacrificial animal into one of sacred quality, and this sacrality is transmitted to the worshippers as they either consume the Offering. The human martyr also may receive the status of sanctity, with a conviction of purpose about his or her death. The martyr may face death as a challenge to the dominant authority, which perpetrates it. The martyr may also face death, as did al-Hallaj [244/857-309/922] with a conviction of

unity with the divine. Ayoub discusses at length an Islamic approach to and understanding of redemptive suffering in martyrdom with reference to the death of Imam Husayn at Karbala in 61/680. Consequently, the martyr becomes in his or her death, a symbol around which a new, alternative society will form, dependent upon a charismatic authority and as a remnant rejects the prevailing power seeking instead a new spiritual order.

### **7. Political Dimension of Martyrdom.**

Martyrdom is concerned with power and its distribution or balance between two opposing societies or religio-political groups. Thus, examples of martyrdom even prior to the advent of Islam offer paradigms of such actions. The Maccabean Revolt is a model of a minority community resistant to an alien power whose action in desecrating the Jerusalem Temple gave a focal point for resistance. The Christian communities between 64 and 308 experienced martyrdom under official persecution initially from the Jewish and then the Roman authorities. In the New Testament Romans 13 reflects an early Christian understanding of the situation. Thus a martyr seeks to reduce a political authority by challenging its legitimacy whether based on literal force or on a sacred claim to authority. The potential martyr is invariably a rival claimant to authority, which is always seeking political legitimisation. Moreover, this struggle, as we have noted supra with regard to the conflict between the Ummayyad family and the family of the Prophet, can be an internal experience. The apparent political authority may share faith and at least some overt religious ideals with an opposing minority.

### **8. The Exemplary Status of Martyrdom.**

A martyr, who loses his or her life, becomes a model for other and lesser forms of martyrdom. Thus in Islam, the idea of a martyr's death 'in the way of Allah' is equally applied to the giving of the required zakat in the form of sadaqah. In this context there is as much an adversary as an external political or religious authority to be overcome, the bodily desires and weaknesses. The overcoming of such desires is a propeaedeutic for the overcoming of such an enemy.

Moreover, the martyr is a model of the possibility of such an action. A painful exemplary death can lead to the attraction and recruitment of other martyrs. It can also deter weak commitment and deviating from the course of the 'true faith'. If a member of a minority group can demonstrate such devotion even to death is a direct challenge to the dominant power, which has orchestrated the martyr's death. As such, the death has to be as public and dramatic as possible; a private action will fail in this exemplary purpose. Within the Islamic tradition, the concept of shahid 'martyr' is closely linked with that of jihad 'struggle for the faith' and its very public nature. Ibn Rushd [520/1126 - 595/1198] wrote in his work *Bidayat al-mujtahid* that for shahids martyrdom had to be known, voluntary and public [Peters: 1977].

## 9. The Concept of Martyrdom in Islam.

Shahada martyrdom within Islamic thought is linked with the concept of jihad holy struggle. This in turn is linked with the doctrine of seeking the good and rejecting what is evil, al-amr bi 'l-maruf, which finds its source in the doctrine of the absolute unity tauhid of God. Focusing however, upon the relationship between shahada and jihad in the Qur'anic text one finds both words frequently associated.

Those who have embraced the Faith, and those that have fled their land and fought for the cause of God, may hope for God's mercy. God is merciful and forgiving. S. 2. 218

Let those who would exchange the life of this world for the hereafter, fight for the cause of God; whoever fights for the cause of God, whether he dies or triumphs, on him We shall bestow a rich recompense. S 4. 74

Those that have since embraced the Faith and fled their homes and fought with you - they too are your brothers S 8. 76

The term shahada derives from the Arabic verbal root shahada, which signifies 'to see', 'to witness', 'to testify'. Consequently a shahid is the one who sees and witnesses:

We have made you a just community, so that you may testify against mankind and that your own Apostle may testify against you. S 2. 142

The believer therefore may witness to his or her faith physically as much as verbally with a readiness to surrender life as a shahid. In this way, and by his or her struggle jihad they become models or paradigms worthy to be emulated and followed.

Intrinsic to this process is understanding of truth al-haqq with the sense of struggling and fighting for it even to death. Thus jihad is the means of establishing the truth, which may well lead to becoming shahid for its very declaration. In Muslim understanding therefore there is neither struggle jihad nor witness shahada outside the sphere of declaring truth, martyrdom is preceded by struggle for the faith, and struggle for faith is a commitment for the truth.

To find the truth then guidance or a guide is necessary, who in classic Muslim thought is embodied as the Prophet Muhammad. The guide practises what he offers and is the clear model of the truth.

The Apostle believes in what has been revealed to him by his Lord, and so do the faithful. S 2. 285

Muhammad is the model shahid and paradigm uswa of the message and from his Sunna the community draw their sense of being models or witnesses shuhada in turn. Those

who continue this lineage of personal and moral struggle in the cause of truth are mujahids and shahids at the same time.

### **10. Martyrdom within Twelver Shi'ism.**

The doctrine of the Imamate as offering guidance and exemplary leadership is foundational for Shi'ism. This concept of leadership includes three elements: the Imam who leads; those who are being led shi'a or mamum; and the practice of leadership and guidance. The Imams are the living embodiments of the faith for those who are following them.

The entire history of Shi'ism, and the lives of the Shi'i Imams should be appreciated in this context and within the concept of the Imamate which is the leading of humanity to salvation by guiding them to the full implementation of Allah's code for the salvation of humanity... [Ezzati: 1984. 123].

The assassination of Ali at the hands of Ibn Muljam, a surviving Kharijite in the mosque at Kufah in 40/661 is a form of martyrdom, albeit not at the hands of a more powerful enemy. Both his sons, Hasan who succeeded Ali yet abdicated after only some six months reign, and Husayn with his death at Karbala fall more clearly into the model of martyr as the Shi'at 'Ali was moving into its own identity.

The event of Karbala, the very death of Husayn on Ashura, and the struggle which he undertook, plays a very crucial role in the evolution of Shi'a thought. As such this event is portrayed by the Shi'a as the model event by which to understand martyrdom and its inspiration for the believers.

#### **9.1 Imam Husayn: Karbala and 'martyrdom'.**

The death of Imam Husayn ibn 'Ali [4/626 – 61/680] is perceived by the majority of Muslims of both Sunni and Shi'a traditions as a major tragedy for the nascent Muslim community. In those expressions where respect for the Prophet and his immediate family are at a high premium the 'martyrdom' of Husayn is the focus of both public and personal observance. In Shi'a traditions this observance is a period when the public identity of their position is most evident and their faith is most profoundly renewed. Husayn's death, and the deaths of Ali and Hasan, are a series of climaxes in the conspiracy to derail the Prophet's authentic mission itself. This perception transcends the Shi'a historical consciousness from the Safavid era to the late twentieth century in Iran. As Imam Khomeini commented:

The greatest disaster that befell Islam was the usurpation of rule by Mu'awiya from Ali...This disaster was even worse than the tragedy of Karbala and the misfortunes that befell the Lord of Martyrs [upon whom be peace], and indeed it

led to the tragedy of Karbala. The disaster that did not permit Islam to be correctly presented to the world was the greatest disaster of all. [Khomeini: 1981. 200].

Such perspectives reflect a developed set of ideas but in the generations that immediately succeeded Hasan and Husayn there was considerable discussion on the significance of their sufferings and martyrdoms as well as on those of the succeeding Imams. Central to this process of reflection are the fifth and sixth of the Twelver Imamate, Muhammad al-Baqir [57/676 – 114/733] and Ja'far al-Sadiq [83/702/ - 148/765]. During the period of their respective leaderships the doctrines of the sinlessness of the Imam, his humanity, his involvement in the realm of existence after death, and the formation of a theodicy over the suffering of the Prophet's family were developed. Jaffri stresses the major role played here especially by the sixth Imam:

In this setting the strategic task of the Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq was to save the basic ideal of Shi'ism from absorption by the emerging synthesis on the one hand, and to purify it from extremist and activist tendencies within itself on the other. Thus the circumstances in which the Imamate of Ja'far happened to fall afforded him the unique opportunity, denied to his father and grandfather, to firmly establish and explain the principles of legitimacy. [Jaffri: 1979. 289].

Imam Husayn's death at Karbala provided a nodal point of reference for the clarifying of concepts and functions of suffering, intercession and as an eschatological prophetic figure.

Obviously, the death of Husayn in martyr like circumstances had a powerful moulding force upon subsequent forms of Shi'ism both under the Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties.

In the recitation of the events at Karbala many mythic traditions evolved in Shi'a piety. Ayoub relates accounts of Husayn's dreams in which the Prophet foretold his coming death and how bliss awaited him; of angelic longings to intervene in the conflict; of the chosen status of the sixty one men who were to die with Husayn; of Husayn's severed head speaking; and of the fates which awaited his opponents [1978: 120-139].

## **11. The Contribution of Fethullah Gulen and the Turkish Model.**

Gülen states that both Muslims and non-Muslims are responsible for the instability of the world today. Concerning Muslims, he argues that some thoughtless people who lack the power of discernment narrow the broad scope of Islam. For this reason Gülen suggests that such people must first change the image of Islam in their mind.

I regret to say that in the countries Muslims live, some religious leaders and immature Muslims have no other weapon to hand than their fundamentalist interpretation of Islam; they use this to engage people in struggles that serve their own purposes. In fact, Islam is a true faith, and it should be lived truly. On the way to attaining faith one can never use untrue methods. In Islam, just as a goal must be legitimate, so must all the means employed to reach that goal. From this perspective, one cannot achieve Heaven by murdering another person. A Muslim cannot say, "I will kill a person and then go to Heaven." God's approval cannot be won by killing people. One of the most important goals for a Muslim is to win the approval of God, another being making the name of Almighty God known to the universe. On Recent Terrorist Attacks: Tuesday, 05 October 2004. in "Zaman" between March 22–April 1, 2004. <http://en.fgulen.com>.

Because they have no comprehensive understanding of the sources, they take as reference only some sections of the Islamic sources without exploring the Qur'an and the Prophetic tradition, or the understandings of prominent Muslim scholars. They read these texts literally and mostly out of context without examining what precede or follow them. The results are disastrous: they misinterpret their religion and then put this misunderstood religion into practice; consequently they are misguided and they misguide others. Muslims should, Gülen says, begin to re-evaluate the fatwa's of the people who say they represent Islam today, because today everybody experiences directly or indirectly the damage of the terror which directly results from this intolerance and misinterpretation. Thus the authentic understanding of jihad is essential:

Jihad is a balance of internal and external conquest. Reaching spiritual perfection and helping others do so are of the utmost importance. Attaining internal perfection is the greater jihad; helping others attain it is the lesser jihad. When you separate one from the other, jihad is no longer jihad. Lesser and Greater Jihad: Tuesday, 05 October 2004. <http://en.fgulen.com>.

Furthermore, Gülen emphasises the danger of the idea that carrying out terrorist acts under the pretence of 'representing the oppressed nations of the world' against the innocent people of other nations; this notion is by no means compatible with Islam. Terror does harm to Islam, Muslims and humanity at large. In fact Gülen thinks that an Islamic world does not really exist today, as Muslims are divided and scattered throughout the world. Today Muslims are not able to contact one another and constitute a union, or to work together to solve common problems. As Gülen comments,

How unfortunate it is that Islam, which is based on this understanding and spirit [feeding others and giving salaam to those you know and do not know], is shown by some circles to be synonymous with terrorism. This is a great historical mistake, for wrapping a system based on safety and trust in a veil of terrorism

shows that Islam's spirit remains unknown. Advocate of Dialogue: Fethullah  
Gulen: [2005. 194]

### **11.1 A contribution to peace by Muslims?**

Gülen believes that at the moment Muslims cannot contribute to the world peace effectively. There are a number of fossilised problems in the Muslim world and the existence of these problems makes it easy for evil powers to manipulate the vulnerable. Moreover, the ongoing problems of poverty, the lack of education for the poor, states' inability to unite with their citizens, a deficient understanding of the notion of the social state, a lack of democratic governments which give priority to the rights and freedoms of their citizens, and, most importantly, the neglect of the spiritual and ethical life of the people have led to a deformation of the general condition of the Muslim world. All these issues show clearly that the war waged against the terrorist organisations by governments will not be sufficient to stop them. Gülen has stated that to fight against the ideology of the terrorists we need the arguments of the intellectuals. Gülen also notes that one cannot establish order on the basis of crude power; military measures can only result in disorder and injustice

Believers find peace and vitality in such a balanced jihad. They know they will die the moment their jihad ends. Believers, like trees, can survive only as long as they bear fruit. As a matter of fact, when a tree stops producing fruit, it dries up and dies. Observe pessimists, and you will notice that they no longer struggle or explain the Truth to others. Thus, God cuts off His blessing to them, leaving their interiors dark and cold. But those who pursue jihad are always surrounded by love and enthusiasm. Their inner worlds are bright, their feelings are pure, and they are on the road to prosperity.

Lesser and Greater Jihad: Tuesday, 05 October 2004. <http://en.fgulen.com>.

As in the UK recent anti-terrorism legislation is all too easily understood as restricting society's freedoms and privileges. It is also generally acknowledged that an order achieved by mere force and rude power cannot last long Gülen expresses his dissatisfaction with the explanation that the reason behind these terrorist activities is religion, and points out that when religion is held to be the source of violence, the major factor and power goes unnoticed.

The son of Adam, Cain, was the first person to shed blood. Although their names are not mentioned specifically in the Qur'an or in the Sunna, we learn from previous Scriptures that a misunderstanding took place between the two brothers, Cain and Abel, and that Cain unjustly killed Abel out of jealousy, thereby opening an era of bloodshed. For this reason, in one of the hadiths, the Messenger of God said:

Whenever a person is killed unjustly, part of the sin for that murder is credited to Cain, for he was the first to open the way of unjust killing to humanity. Bukhari,

Diyat, 2, Anbiya, 1; Muslim, Kasamah, 27. Human Rights in Islam: Tuesday, 05 October 2004. <http://en.fgulen.com>. And Toward a Global Civilisation of Love and Tolerance [2004. 169]

We will consider now Fethullah Gulen's approach to the problem of overcoming this global calamity of terror. It is important to note that, in contrast to many observers, Gülen, while acknowledging certain negative developments, thinks that the world situation is not deteriorating and there will be no clash of civilisations. According to Gülen, those who are looking forward to a catastrophic future for the world and a clash of civilisations, are individuals or groups who are unable to impose their world view on the people and hope that global antagonisms will ensure the continuation of their power in the world.

This time, by creating new enemy fronts, a clash between civilisations based on religious and cultural differences is being prepared and a new foundation is being laid for the continuation of the rule of the power blocks. Toward a Global Civilisation of Love and Tolerance [2004. 256]

### **11.2 The place of education**

Nonetheless, the global political situation does not look hopeful, and we should not be complacent. Gülen emphasises that education must play a very important role in helping to resolve the world's problems; his experience has thought him that the key problem of our modern civilisation is the education of mankind. Today, many schools and other educational centres established on his advice and initiative both within Turkey and outside Turkey are making progress to achieve this aim.

.....education is a perfecting process through which we earn, in the spiritual, intellectual, and physical dimensions of our beings, the rank appointed for us as the perfect pattern of creation. Toward a Global Civilisation of Love and Tolerance [2004. 202]

In the UK today we are addressing the issue that there is no such concept as value free or value neutral education. All schools and educational institutions convey a range of values implicitly and explicitly, directly and indirectly, deliberately and inadvertently. We speak of the "hidden curriculum" where there occurs a synthesis between the academic set of courses and the spiritual / moral curriculum. The contribution of the Gulen perspectives on education is precisely that education and nurture, intellectual maturity and spiritual development are as one.

Education through learning and leading a commendable way of life is a sublime duty that is the manifestation of the Divine name Rabb [Educator and Sustainer].

By fulfilling this, we are able to attain the rank of true humanity and to become a beneficial element of society. Toward a Global Civilisation of Love and Tolerance [2004. 205]

All this is to occur ideally in a re-Islamisation of human life and experience holistically,

We must reopen the routes to eternity which have been blocked for some centuries. We must raise Islam to the first and most important point on the agenda, one that is to be dwelt on in every element of life. The Statue of Our Souls [2005. 14]

### **11.3 The place of dialogue.**

Besides education, another important activity initiated by Gülen in the cause of world peace is 'dialogue meetings.' Gülen argues that dialogue meetings are primarily concerned with religion and are thus a religious duty. Gülen constantly insists on the religious nature of the meetings because the basic Islamic sources advise Muslims to engage in dialogue with other faiths. Thus Gülen says that the dialogue is not his invention or innovation, but a revival of the most neglected aspect of Islam. His constancy in this regard is very sincere: he has said that even if the sensitive political balance of the world changes a thousand times he will never stop the dialogue meetings; the Islamic sources do allow him only to do so.

In truth, except in certain special cases, the Qur'an and the Sunna always advocate tolerance. Toward a Global Civilisation of Love and Tolerance [2004. 76]

For Gülen, dialogue and tolerance mean accepting every person irrespective of their own status and learning to live together. He is concerned to show that the rights of the religion, life, travel, trade, property, free speech and so on are guaranteed by the Prophetic tradition; the best examples are being the document of Madinah and the farewell speech of the Prophet Muhammad.

Although there are ten years between these two events, Gülen says, there is no difference between them in their approaches to the rights of non-Muslims (Jews, Christians) and even of unbelievers. For Gülen this indicates clearly the religious imperative to continue the dialogues. Gülen also accepts that due to a lack of dialogue, some mistakes have been made by Muslims in the history of Islam, but Gülen argues that the history of Islam is also full of good examples of dialogue. Thus, through his writings and addresses Gülen is consistently an optimist for the future of global humanity; this future however is conditional he states firmly on the continuance of dialogue between religions and civilisations on the Prophetic and Madinan model,

Islam's definition of tolerance is such that the Prophet prohibited verbal abuse. Advocate of Dialogue: Fethullah Gulen: [2005. 196]

I believe and hope that the world of the new millennium will be happier, more just and more compassionate place, contrary to the fears of some people. Islam, Christianity and Judaism all come from the same root...their common points and shared responsibility to build a happy world for all creatures of God make inter-faith dialogue necessary. Advocate of Dialogue: Fethullah Gulen: [2005. 302].

For the UK and other parts of Europe this movement presents an innovative expression of contemporary Islam. At times I have found it easier to term it an "Absent Influence" because it is a face of Islam that mobilises a variety of intentions and aspirations common to the Abrahamic faiths, to those of the Indic enlightenment traditions and indeed for all humankind of good will whilst maintaining a firm commitment to Qur'an and Sunnah, to Shari'ah and a warm tasawwuf. Gulen offers a positive identification of faith with nationality in a global diversity viz., that this is not a movement restricted to a Turkish nationalism for the schools have transmitted Qur'anic holistic ideals to a range of ethnic and national identities, where they have taken root. I would argue that this movement encourages the creation of rich social capital wherever it settles not by engendering a homogeneous Ummah but by stressing the indigenisation of the quintessential Islam in individual societies. The warmth of this moral and spiritual culture offers a valuable ingredient for the UK where the public profile of Islam is contentious and often adversarial in tone.

#### **11.4 The primacy of Love.**

Thus the key word in Gülen's dialogue meetings is love, and this love derives from his understanding of Islam and Sufism practised in Anatolia. Those who seek to profit from chaos, violence and terror will doubtless fail to understand the conception of love in Gülen's philosophy, and will consequently fail to understand Gülen's world view. Philosophically speaking, Gülen, like Bediüzzaman Said Nursi consider love to be the essence of creation. According to Gülen, love is the most essential element, the brightest light, the greatest power in every creature in the world. If one is grounded in love, every kind of difficulty in the world can be overcome.

Love is based upon two important pillars: that which is manifested by the lover's acts [a lover tries to comply with the Beloved's desires], and the lover's inner world [a lover should be inwardly closed to anything not related to Him]. Key Concepts in the Practice of Sufism 1 [2006. 150].

Thus Gülen introduces love as an unquestionable condition for being human. Without love, it is almost impossible to create an atmosphere conducive to dialogue and tolerance. Gülen's love is not an empty conceptualisation; it is directly related to his religion, whose

commandments he sensitively tries to put into practice. Gülen says that religion commands love and peace; love makes people truly human and the spirits of the true will rise to Heaven. Clearly, then, love lights the fuse of dialogue and global tolerance; it paves the way to global peace. For Gülen, man can only communicate actively with all humans and other creatures through love, which leads him to help others. Unlike ideologies based on social Darwinism, which suggest that only the powerful are fit to live and the weak should not survive, Gülen, as a Muslim scholar, holds that love derived from Islam has a great capacity to embrace every person in the world irrespective of their beliefs. Relying on his own conviction and tradition, and on the global transmitters of love such as Abu Hanifa, Ahmad Yasawi, Mawlana Jalal al-Din al-Rumi, Imam Ghazzali, and Imam Rabbani, Gülen describes love and tolerance as 'a mount that, bestowed upon us by God carries forward to the Paradise we have lost' Gülen 2005. 362], But this love must be expressed in its practical and living dimension, and so Gülen has organised many meetings, in which different people with different religious and cultural background come together to discuss the common problems of humanity. The participants of these meetings have initiated various projects and offered many solutions to ameliorate the chaotic situation in our world. Most importantly, these meetings show the people that dialogue is the real remedy for terror, chaos, and intolerance.

Our tolerance should be so broad that we can close our eyes to others' faults, show respect for different ideas, and forgive everything that is forgivable.....

Because:

.....the treatment of He Who is beyond time and space always passes through the prism of tolerance, and we wait for it to embrace us and all of creation. Advocate of Dialogue: Fethullah Gulen: [2005. 254].

## **12. Understandings of the Martyr's death and struggle in UK Islam.**

In contemporary Britain, the contrasting Muslim communities and traditions chiefly of South Asian origin are confronted with their minority status, which is similar to the original context of the Ummah in Makkah as the Prophetic ministry began. The trajectories of the Muslim dawah in the UK may be characterised in the Public, Personal and specifically Symbolic arenas.

**12.1** Firstly, in the Public arena there are pietistic julus processions are used by communities to represent themselves to the Muslim community as a whole and to the wider British society. On Milad ul Nabi Muslims declare their incontrovertible presence, sacralising their immediate environment, and by the use of banners with Qur'anic inscriptions are specifically proclaiming Islam as a faith resident in the UK. In a parallel vein, communities use of Muharram and the processions for Ashura take a 'minority within a minority' group into the

public arena by their processional declarations about Karbala and the deaths of Husayn and his followers

Equally in the public arena has been the development of the earliest visibly public sign of Muslim presence in the mosque building. In the first and second phases of migration into the UK, the mosque provided the space within which the festival and ritual activities could occur. Muslim identity in this period was nurtured in private and thereby to some extent away from overt hostility from either the wider society or a competitive movement.

Controversy in the UK context emerges persistently whether on British Muslim identity, faith schools or as more recently on the issue of hijab or niqah veiling.

**12.2** In the Personal arena, the participation in a *julus* or an *urs* allows the individual believer to affirm his or her connection with a particular Muslim tradition and the undefeated nature of that tradition as it seeks if not a hegemony at least legitimacy for itself amidst wider Islam. The *julus* is a means of self-assertion, of building confidence and of identification. The identification is threefold in the UK context. Firstly, it is a means of claiming equality with other Muslim groups and secondly, it is seeking recognition for the community from public bodies whilst thirdly, on a personal basis it is stating the individual's readiness to be recognised.

**12.3** In the third aspect, the Symbolic arena there are powerful forces to be disposed and understood. For here Islam in the UK has been seeking a way to respond to the dichotomy of modernity / post modernity and Islam. Hitherto it has compromised by either adopting the European Enlightenment monopoly on modernity or by rejecting modernity and retreating into a pious enclave or radicalised oppositionist stance. The Gulen corpus of writings offers an alternative methodology and direction by a synthesis of revelation and reason, religion and empirical science, the individual and the communitarian, stability and openness to change, patriotism and global consciousness. It is based on the key signifiers and unitary concepts of Islam viz, the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet,

Islam, being the 'middle way' of absolute balance – balance between materialism and spiritualism, between rationalism and mysticism, between worldliness and excessive asceticism, between this world and the next – and inclusive of all the previous prophets, makes a choice according to the situation. The Prophet Muhammad: the Infinite Light [1995. 200-201]

### **13. Conclusion.**

Like you I have heard representatives of various religions insisting that the extremist groups who claim the name of the faith have no right to it. That the religion itself is pure and holy; that the terrorists are cynically using religion as a pretext for their atrocities, or are totally

misguided about the character of the faith. While this defensive reaction is understandable on the part of those who see their task as commending religious faith to the public in a situation of acute embarrassment, it does not really help insiders to face up to certain tendencies within their tradition, and it leaves the outsiders unconvinced.

On the other hand, some heroic religious broadcasters are honest enough to acknowledge the roots of terror within their faith tradition.

"if you spurn my statutes, and abhor my ordinances,...I will bring terror upon you" (Lev 26:16).

"a terror from God fell upon the cities" (Gen 35:5).

"You brought your people Israel out of the land of Egypt...with great terror" (Jer 32:21)

To the insider, the elements of threat and terror in any scripture are hardly noticeable but to the outsider, coming to these texts without previous acculturation, they are quite striking. Moreover, the features of religion which lend themselves to terrorist mentality are deeply ingrained into the tradition – the cosmic drama: the ethical command, the distinction between us and them, the hope of final victory, the sense of being a minority in the great society which threatens to submerge us – could we conceive of any major faith tradition without these elements?

But if we acknowledge these characteristics of the religious world view, we are left with the thought that religious commitment can take socially constructive or destructive forms. This is something with which most ministers and spiritual directors are quite familiar: the religious faith of the individual may become parasitic upon the personality, leading to rigidity and closure, or it may lead to a personality orientated towards inclusive love. The emphases of Fethullah Gülen move us to realise the hidden potential of religion for the religious education and spiritual development of humankind. Religion may indeed generate both peace and terror, and an appreciation of one must be superficial without the other.

Gülen is neither creating an eclectic fusion of Islam and modernity nor an accommodation of one with the other by a compromise of principles. The intention is for an interpretation of Islam and modernity which draws upon revelation and reason to be critical of both Muslim inherited traditions and arid rationalism. By this methodology the true Qur'anic status of jihad and shahid is restorable. Cryptically, Gülen describes the moral altruism and balance of the two manifestations of jihad

Jihad is the balance of internal and external conquest. Reaching spiritual perfection and helping others to do so are points of consideration. Attaining internal perfection is the greater jihad; helping others attain it is the lesser jihad.

When you separate one from the other, jihad is no longer jihad. Somerset, NJ, USA Light publications 2005. 74].

Moreover, as Islam in fact is waging a constant jihad upon turmoil, disorder, disunity and fear, which are the antitheses of true Islam, the authentic shahid is the instrument of al-Islam i.e. peace, security and civil order. For Gulen,

A real Muslim, one who understands Islam in every respect, cannot be a terrorist. In True Islam, Terror does not exist: 2004. 5.

For European and UK eyes and ears, which are already attuned in the 21st century to the worst excesses of human violence and selfishness the voice of this perspective has a significant contribution to make. It comes from within one of the Abrahamic traditions which have historically often been called upon to legitimate sacred violence as an instrument of human politics. He seeks to reverse the energies that destroy by indicating that whilst humankind is suspended between God's gift of glory and a downward hunger for the dust of destruction, there is still within humanity a desire for guidance and guides to a new world.

Now as the days turn to spring and dawn chases dawn, we are becoming hopeful, expectant, and praying to our Lord 'Grant us the willpower supported by your Will, which will erect the statue of our souls, make our hearts as green as the slopes of the hills of Paradise, and make our souls reach the secrets of the innermost part of Your divinity. Show our people the ways to revival in the Muhammadi line.' The Statue of Our Souls: 2005. 28

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