

## **Methodist Christianity, Gulen's Sufism, Perfection, Free Will, Tolerance, and Democracy—Ted Dotts**

Abstract: Fethullah Gulen, Gregory of Nyssa, and John Wesley use the idea of perfection, assume free will, practice tolerance, and nourish democracy. The cultures of Gulen, Gregory, and Wesley reveal a commonality of approach in unfavorable political settings, an approach that produces the response of tolerance -- a necessary step toward democracy. The terms defined include thesis, theory, secularism, free will, tolerance, democracy, and perfection.

### **Introduction**

I am a United Methodist Christian who visited Turkey as the guest of the Institute of Interfaith Dialog (IID) in May 2005. For twelve days in Turkey, scholars, scientists, business professionals, health care providers, musicians, journalists, and students shared information and, dialog. In addition, the IID generously included ancient Christian shrines and historic sites in the trip.

Konya is one of the most beautiful and fertile cities of the world. Turkey serves as a bridge for and to civilizations historic and prehistoric. At the center of that bridge is Konya (ancient Iconium), one of the larger cities in modern Turkey and the capital of Lycaonia during the Roman and Greek rule. An old proverb says "See all the world, but see Konya." Two early Christians, Saint Paul and Saint Barnabas, preached there. (Acts 14, II Timothy 3:11) Saint Paul's preaching upset some of the citizens. Rather than engage him in full, free dialog to create a community of love, they complained and threatened him. Paul and Barnabas, perhaps unable by weakness of faith or by lack of vision to risk the danger of trying to initiate full, free dialog, went to Lystra.

That tiny story in the Christian tradition set me wondering: What if the citizens of Konya invited Barnabas and Paul to something like the IID where people deliver papers and discuss them in full, free dialog? What if Saint Paul and Barnabas proposed an IID-like meeting with those who complained and threatened? If we can't leave this deeply connected world every time we disagree or experience upsetting differences, what can we do? Does Fethullah Gulen present a vision of human community for this systemic world? And, with the grand hospitality the Turkish people fresh in my life, I also ask if the vast ancient and modern experiences of humans on Turkish soil influence Fethullah Gulen's vision and how?

### **The Land**

Anatolia and Turkish Thrace, modern Turkey, occupies an area larger than Texas. Turkey was a land bridge for people traveling between Europe and Asia since before recorded history. It was also a region worthy of invasion and settlement by many different peoples. For instance, the Hittites invaded in 1900 B.C.E. and built large cities. Nomadic Turkic tribes of Central Asia conquered the land in the 11th century C.E. and provided the name "Turkey" as they founded the Seljuk dynasty. The Ottoman Empire arose in the 13th century C.E. In its more than 600 years the Ottoman Empire expanded Turkey into areas of Eastern Europe, the Middle East,

and North Africa. The travel, invasion, settlement, and acquisition experienced by the people made diversity common fare in the land.

A modern response to the diversity appeared in the leadership of Mustafa Kemal (Ataturk), who met the volatility of diversity with the principle of secularism. Secularism to manage the besetting issues of religion and politics was a strong idea that aimed to create community from powerful forces. The strong idea met danger four times—1960, 1971, 1980, and 1997—when the military supported the secular principle and quieted the religious riots of the 1970s and 1990s.

Centuries before the rule of Ataturk, the issue of politics and religion occasioned tumult in the land. For instance, after 313 C.E. Christian monks founded monasteries in and around Konya to resist the ruination of their religion brought on by the favored status granted them for political gain by the Roman ruler, Constantine (288 - 337). Some Christians, probably monks in primitive monasteries, asked Saint Gregory (c.330 - c. 395), Bishop of Nyssa, for guidance to a closer relationship to God and to one another. Monks, like all humans, find it extremely difficult to practice the mutuality necessary to a community of God's love. Gregory sent them a treatise on perfection. Less than a thousand years later, in the same area, Sufism of the Mevlevi order was founded in 1273 C.E. after Rumi's death. From the 4th century C. E. through the 13th century C.E., the people of the land experienced especially intense diverse influence. Christian monks studied perfection and Sufi Muslims followed . . . a stricter way of self-purification in order to penetrate the 'inner' dimension and meaning of Islamic rituals, to reach a deeper understanding of the meaning and purposes of Divine acts, and to thereby acquire knowledge and love of God. (Gulen, 2004, viii)

Christians from people of the land around and in Konya influenced the Methodist tradition through Gregory's teachings. The founder of the Methodists, John Wesley (1703 - 1791), studied Gregory's thought about perfection. Wesley lectured and sang that same concept of perfection into Methodists. I imagine that the ancient Anatolian Gregory's influence on the monks in and about Konya resides, however faintly, in the people of the land where Islam's Mevlevi Sufi spirituality emerged. At the least, there are happy similarities, happy because Gregory's thoughts on perfection and Gulen's Sufism provide guidance for a flourishing life.

For example, as a model of good teaching, Gulen offers succinct summaries of the generally favored definitions of Sufism. (xiii - xiv, Gulen, 2004) Then, he forms a definition of his own: Sufism is the path followed by an individual who, having been able to free himself or herself from human vices and weaknesses in order to acquire angelic qualities and conduct pleasing to God, lives in accordance with the requirements of God's knowledge and love, and in the resulting spiritual delight that ensues. (xiv, Gulen, 2004, emphasis added) The three phrases highlighted in Gulen's definition parallel thoughts of Gregory in his essay "On the Christian Mode of Life." (Ascetical Works, 1967), and John Wesley in his sermon Christian Perfection (The Works of John Wesley).

As we toured the Sufi sites, we heard Sufi history recounted and we beheld Sufi artifacts. I felt the similarities between Methodist and Sufi practices. Sufi spirituality carries the tone of the purity sought by Methodists and Sufi music stirred memories of Methodist singing during revivals.

Acquaintance with the ancient Sufi in Konya felt like visiting the Native American pueblos of northern New Mexico, pueblos probably spun off by the magnificent cultures of Mexico and

Central America sixteen hundred years before Columbus came to the New World. Those Native American cultures, although centuries gone, hold similarities, not only through place names, but through spiritual practices like hospitality. If one responds to the often offered invitations from the pueblo inhabitants to experience the hospitality of the table with hosts entirely unknown, one recognizes similar hospitality in the Turkish culture. Native American hospitality, although centuries old, still lives and shapes the surrounding cultures, especially the conquering culture of the European American in Santa Fe and Albuquerque. I like to dream that Turkey's ancient people, Sufi and Christian, continue to influence civilization in similar ways.

To illustrate, consider the caves at the village of Sille outside Konya. Christians lived in those caves the first three centuries to hide their illegal religion from Roman authorities. Then, when the Roman emperor favored Christianity in the fourth century, some Christians, although freed from persecution as lawbreakers stayed in those caves to escape the impurity of identification with civil religion. In Sille, a church building built by the emperor Constantine's mother, Helen, still stands. A Muslim man, somewhat aware of ancient Christian practices, cares for the church building without charge.

Turkish hospitality, the reverence of our hosts for sites dear to Christians, the similarities of the Sufism of Konya with Methodist tradition of the United States, the realization that ancient Native American cultures continue to influence culture became personally available through the IID's commitment to Fethullah Gulen's ability to teach and model tolerance.

## **Thesis**

I lay down a thesis\* from my experience of Fethullah Gulen's vision in the land of Turkey: The idea of perfection nourishes democracy.

\*A thesis is a theory to be tested, not an unassailable nugget of reality. Or, a thesis is an experience to be explored, not imposed. The word "thesis" comes from the Greek *tiqhmi*, to lay down.

## **Theory**

Theses work by means of theories. The English word "theory" roots in a Greek word, *qeoros*, which implies speculation. To theorize is to speculate. Speculation is from the Latin *speculari*, "spy out." Imagine sitting in a watchtower. Far in the distance something moves. The watcher speculates about the movement until nearer proximity turns into assured recognition.

In this paper, I think I see something. But, what I see is too dim for certainty. So, I speculate. That is, I run searches through memory for the familiar to make the dim plain. Specifically, the words Gulen, Gregory, and Wesley use about perfection imply similarity. In *On the Christian Mode of Life* by Gregory, "Christian Perfection" by John Wesley, and *Key Concepts in the Practice of Sufism* by Gulen I found image-sharpening memories about perfection. Two such memories took first order: free will and tolerance. Gregory of Nyssa wrote Christian perfection has but one limit, that of having none. (Gregory, 1978, page 30 ) The question of free will arises if perfection is perfectibility. And, once having arisen, in what does it issue? Tolerance, the reception of what is. Once what is arises, a possibility to choose follows.

However, the sharper image took an unexpected turn when I remembered that the focus on perfection by all three appeared in a setting common to all three, namely, political turmoil. With that in mind, the thesis to speculate with a theory appeared: The idea of perfection begets democracy. But, that seemed too speculative and too enormous a task for me; so, I toned the thesis down with nourishes over begets and set out to wonder about the settings for the three writers as they spoke of perfection.

### **Geographical Settings**

The fourth century Christian Gregory lived, worked, traveled, preached, and taught in what is now modern Turkey. He was born near Niksar, Turkey, west of the birthplace of Fethullah Gulen, Erzurum. He served as bishop of Nyssa, a town whose location is unknown today, but supposition locates it on the south bank of the Kizilirmak, a river comparable in length, almost 800 miles, to the Brazos River in Texas. Gregory was influential in the Christian council meetings in Nicaea (modern Izmit), and furnished written guidance to monasteries of Asia Minor and beyond, especially Egypt. He traveled to the Holy Land (modern Israel) to view Christian holy places only to report that Christians need not spend their time and money on such visits. God is available in the ordinary.

John Wesley traveled Great Britain constantly. He also spent nearly three years serving as priest in the southern English colonies in America. He also spent time in Germany. Most of his adult life he rode horseback or walked to teach, preach, and offer spiritual direction wherever he went. Like Gregory before and Gulen after, Wesley deposited ideas in many and numerous sites.

Fethullah Gulen completed his military service, which he used to read the classics of West and East. Then, he taught in Edirne until he was transferred to Izmir. While living in Izmir, he began to travel throughout Turkey lecturing "on subjects from Darwinism to social justice in Islam..." (ii Gulen, 2004). For decades he traveled in many countries responding to requests for his educational endeavors and for his tolerance-building activities.

### **Politics**

The idea of perfection in Gulen, Wesley, and Gregory emerges in political situations particular to each. Although each setting for each scholar is unique, still, the idea of perfection serves in all three political settings to guide people, whether Christians of the fourth and eighteenth centuries or Muslims of the twenty-first century.

Three different political situations lead these three men, widely separated by time and by cultures, to the similar response of perfection. Although each response is somewhat different, the varied responses flow from common views of perfection. So, I question: What is in the concept of perfection that provides a resource in political settings, especially unfriendly political settings?

To explore the question, I begin with summaries of the political settings of Gregory, Wesley, and Gulen.

Groups of Christians in the 4th century withdrew into monasteries. They sought guidance for their communal lives as well as instruction in the traditions basic to Christianity. The political scene caused the strategy of withdrawal into monasteries. Constantine lifted the pall of illegality from Christianity in 313. Suddenly, Christianity, heretofore illegal, became

legal and favored by the Roman ruler whose mother came forth to admit she had long been a closet Christian. People flocked to join -- many because of the political advantage. Small groups of Christians gathered in secret. Their tiny numbers flooded with people who wanted in but who knew nothing of the tradition. That is, Constantine's approval of Christianity was a kiss of dilution for Christianity. So, Christians withdrew to protect their tradition.

Wesley experienced the kiss of weary dissatisfaction, ennui, also diluting. English society deserted tenant agriculture for the more profitable livestock grazing. The livelihood of people in the rural areas disappeared. Rural farmers became refugees in vast and sprawling industrial centers. In those industrial centers, the agrarian refugees suffered rampant abuse. The religion of Great Britain stumbled about disheartened and fumbling while the political power of Parliament offered the masses dissatisfying lip service.

Gulen faces a different kiss, the kiss of threat. Gregory's early Christianity found danger in being embraced by the political rulers. Wesley's religious culture stumbled about in confusion as the change from agrarian society to industrial society emerged. For Gulen secularism lurks mightily in Turkey's political climate. Gulen believes the benefits of religion are too valuable to concede to secularism. Like Gregory and Wesley, one of Gulen's responses is to teach and model the idea of perfection.

The secularism confronting Gulen holds three aspects: First, the secularism of the assertion that the scientific method is the only means to knowledge. (9, Ogden) Gulen responds with visions of educational institutions able to tolerate by means studying the best science offers. Second, the secularism of anti religion uses religion as a scapegoat. (xvi, Yavuz) Gulen receives scapegoatism with strong tolerance, the tolerance which trusts itself with the tenacious view that society will live best by incorporating the values of Islam. Third, the secularism that seeks to eliminate religion from the human scene entirely. (Xvi, Yavuz) Gulen, whether by design or mysterious destiny, gathers followers' faithful enough in themselves to practice tolerance at its most faithful, namely, the hospitable reception of the enemy.

Gregory and Wesley did not experience the overt threat of removing religion entirely from the scene. Gulen does experience that threat. He responds without resorting to emotional, if not physical, violence, without yielding Islam's value, without undue reverence for the scientific method.

Gulen's Sufism, Wesley's Methodism, and Gregory's Christianity raise the same question: How does religion survive and thrive in settings of rejection, worship of the status quo, and victimization? They also pursue the same answer. Gulen illustrates the answer when he writes, "Sufism is based on observing even the 'trivial' rules of the Shari'a [Islamic law] in order to penetrate their inner meaning." (xiv, Gulen, 2004) Penetration to the inner meaning marks a necessity for Gregory and Wesley, too. They turned to the concept of perfection. That concept is well expressed for all three in Gulen's words "to strive continuously," (xiv, Gulen, 2004)

Gulen's Turkey purposefully attempts to create and sustain a secular state. In addition to the issues faced by Gregory and Wesley, Gulen must address how one lives in a state bent on rejecting religion? Gregory served the state by withdrawal to maintain religious purity. Wesley assumed religion's value for the state. Gulen poses the issue directly by asking rhetorically how can a state expect to survive and flourish without the benefits of the values embedded in Islam? To penetrate to the inner meaning, Gulen offers an idea so obviously in both Gregory and Wesley as to register as a common theme: "It requires the initiate to strive continuously . . ." (xiv, Gulen)

"To strive continuously." Wesley, through his study of Gregory, uses "going on to perfection" to answer how his society will survive and thrive. "After all," Wesley and Gregory might say in unison, "if you are not going on to perfection, where are you going?"

To get a feel for the reception of Gulen's "strive continuously" or Wesley and Gregory's "going on to perfection," consider jihads. The Muslim concept of jihad today gets a reception similar to the reception given the idea of perfection in the fourth and eighteenth centuries. Scoffers decried perfection as an impossible ideal to discard. Enthusiasts claimed to have achieved the state of perfection and excused themselves from receiving critiques. The majority discounted the idea as the fanciful piety of fanatics, and ignored it. The concept of a jihad today receives the additional indignity of reduction to violence. That reduction ignores the greater essence of a jihad, namely, purification of oneself. The reductive charge of violence only magnifies out of proportion the smaller essence of a jihad, namely, defense of one's religious community and the prevention of oppression.

To illustrate the purification of the self, the defense of the community, and the prevention of oppression, consider Gulen's work on Good Nature (Khuluq) as he writes of those who experience "harsh treatment."

Many people seem to be good natured, mild-mannered, and humane, although good conduct and mildness are no more than affectations. When they experience a little irritation, anger, or harsh treatment, their true nature is revealed. One who has good nature does not change his or her manners even when in a hellish state, but remains mild and shows no hardness. A heart open to good nature is like a very broad space to bury one's anger and rage. . . It is by good nature that a man can be perfected; it is by good nature that the order of the world is maintained. (75, Gulen, 2004)

Wesley's similar answer posits Christian Perfection as

The loving God will all our heart, mind, soul and strength. This implies that no wrong temper, non contrary to love, remains in the soul and all the thoughts, words and actions are governed by pure love. (284, Outler)

which interprets the words of Gregory to the ancient monks in Anatolia about Moses:

... the perfect life ... the continual development of life to what is better is the soul's way to perfection. (133, Gregory, 1978)

## **Perfection**

Gulen, Gregory, and Wesley present the idea of perfection. The idea of perfection they present includes the purity of the believer, the use of sacred scripture, and the will of God.

For instance, in Gulen's work on Sufism, Key Concepts in the Practice of Sufism, he writes: Through this method of spiritual discipline, the individual's heart is purified and his or her senses and faculties are employed in the way of God, which means that the traveler can now begin to live on a spiritual level. (xv, Gulen, 2004) In his defining sermon on perfection, Wesley argues that perfection is called for by Sacred Scripture. (97, The Works, volume 2 ) Gregory begins his work by speaking of the perfect will of God. (168, Gregory, 1967,). All three authors depict the idea of the perfection of the human being as a guide to a dynamic religious path in the midst of opposing or diluting cultures.

What assumption underlies the idea of perfection presented by three authors so many centuries and political situations separated? Answer: free will.

### **Free Will**

Struggles with the concept of free will breaks many a philosophy. I could simply posit the assumption and move on as did Dr. Samuel Johnson (1709 - 1784) whose biographer, James Boswell, reported: Dr. Johnson shunned to-night any discussion of the perplexed question of fate and free will, which I attempted to agitate. "Sir," said he, "we know our will is free, and there's an end on't." (217, Ayer, 1992)

However, the free will assumption remains too important to dodge difficulty. Besides, concepts of free will remain in need of definitions. Attempts to define free will make dialog a possibility. So, I offer a definition of free will I believe pervades the work of Gulen, Wesley, and Gregory: Free will is what flows from being with God (495, Barth) and tolerance is one sign of free will. Gulen writes . . . that one's free will is included in God's "determination" of events. (173, Gulen) Which I take to mean that free will flows from submission to Allah. Gregory writes We are in some manner our own parents, giving birth to ourselves by our own free choice . . . (56, 1978) and Wesley argues Yea, I am persuaded, every child of God has had, at some time, "life and death set before him," eternal life and eternal death; and has in himself the casting voice. (485, *The Works*, volume 2).

In short, free will is the act of a human being freed by God for communion with God, self, and others.

### **Tolerance**

The assumption of free will fuels an emphasis on tolerance. If one is free, one may choose to tolerate, to receive. Gulen strives continuously to model tolerance of the secular state with its secularism to keep and gain a place for Muslim values. Tolerance, as reception of difference, is a bold venture, since the secular state of Turkey originated when . . . fear of differences became the guiding principle of the Kemalist state. (xxi, Yavuz)

For Wesley, going on to perfection, striving continuously, denies that tolerance means yielding to determinism. For instance, he writes of those who claim humans are trapped (determined) in their estrangement: The grace of God was surely sufficient for them. And it is sufficient for us at

this day. With the temptation which fell on them that was a way to escape, as there is to every soul of man in every temptation; so that whosoever is tempted to any sin need not yield; for no man is tempted above that he able to bear. (112, *The Works*, volume 1) In Wesley, going on to perfection emphasizes resistance, which implies tolerance in the sense of maintaining relation. Resistance is resistance against temptation, but temptation remains, else there is nothing to resist and thus no tolerance.

Gregory's approach ranges tolerance with cooperation. When one tolerates, one cooperates, which is the high danger of tolerance; namely, to give place to ideas despised. Yet, free will encourages effort to move beyond what one might despise. Gregory writes: The growth of the soul depends, unlike that of the body, upon man's own free will; the Spirit grants it according to the spoudh (diligence, earnestness, eagerness) of him who receives it;

the farther we extend the efforts of our works the more the soul grows through our efforts. (93, Jaeger)

Tolerance as reception, resistance, and cooperation is means to perfection, not perfection itself. Perfection is a going on, a perfecting of the perfectible, dynamic, not static. As Gulen put the case, perfection is "continuous striving." But continuous striving or going on or perfecting the perfectible implies something yet to emerge. Tolerance is not the finished state, but a dynamic discipline one exercises who strives continuously, who goes on to perfection.

What then, is next? If tolerance is not the goal of perfection, but a vision one uses in this life to move on, what is next?

What is next must be specific to this life. Gulen, Wesley, and Gregory all address their witness to the idea of perfection to their context. None of the three relegate tolerance to life after death, life beyond this life. All three thinkers speak to their context, to people in particular political situations.

What is specific to this life and inherent in the idea of tolerance? Answer: Democracy.

### **Democracy\***

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Europe people violated each other with torture and death to such an extent that toleration emerged to assure diversity of religion. Toleration was an unintended consequence of the wars of religion in Europe. (32, Gamwell)

Out of toleration grew a bent toward full and free discussion–dialog–made possible by toleration which Gulen encourages along with Wesley and Gregory.

What happens, or what may happen, when people engage full and free discussion, dialog? They reason their way to a community of love. The combatants in the wars of religion in Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries set toleration over violence and thereby set the stage for a community of love. In their case, the beginning was a negative one: We will not kill each other. But, the negative became the positive approach of reason over violence.

Gulen, Wesley, Gregory used the idea of perfection to get to a community of love.

Of course, a community of love is an ideal not realized. The ideal of community is only approximated and barely glimpsed; nevertheless, it is better to have an approximation to the community of love than no community at all. Democracy is an approximation of the community of love in this life, now, because Democracy at its core is full, free discussion to create a community of worth for all citizens. Against a strong and offending and offensive view that Democracy is a majority vote, Gulen, Wesley, Gregory went for Democracy – dialog which creates worth revering communities.

\*This section is indebted to Franklin I. Gamwell's work in Politics as a Christian Vocation (see Bibliography)

## **Speculation about Penultimacy**

Yet, if tolerance is a penultimate approach to communities where the worth of all is affirmed, why stay in the penultimate? Or, why does Gulen stay with tolerance? Why not leave the emphasis on tolerance and use his influence to promote Democracy specifically and exclusively?

Aside from the obvious, namely, that one does not step until one's step is secure, I speculate that Gulen is very much aware that tolerance must convert, change, leave behind, heal the idolatries to which humans are prone, idolatries described well by Francis Bacon (1561 - 1626).

## **Idolatries**

In the *Novum Organum* Francis Bacon writes:

Four species of idols beset the human mind, to which (for distinction's sake) we have assigned names, calling the first idols of the tribe, the second idols of the den, the third idols of the market, and the fourth idols of the theatre. (109, Bacon)

I suppose the human mind functions with images. The English word idol is a transliteration of the Greek word *eidwlon*. Idols are images of Ultimate Worth, of God. Idols are patterns, perception, humans use to work out surviving and flourishing.

In my speculation, Gulen's emphasis on tolerance means the reception of the idols of the human mind, not a reception of approval, but a reception of acceptance, of receiving what is to perfect it.

Using Gulen's approach of striving continuously, which is similar to Gregory and Wesley's perfecting, I will speculate about the four idols of the human mind depicted by Bacon's.

First, the idol of the tribe makes the conventions of the tribe ultimate. But, in Gulen's religious values, only God is ultimate. For instance, tribe with the conviction that secularism is ultimate owns a worthy value, but not an ultimately worthy value. Perhaps Gulen's tolerance will take the value of secularism, affirm its worth and bring it to a Democracy that values all "tribes" in the community, even those tribes who are religious.

Second, the idol of the den is a pervasive idol, at least in my culture in the United States. The idol of the den is the perception that autonomy is primary and sufficient to make a good life. What is good for the individual is good for all. Liberals imagine government exists to help people with what they want; Conservatives imagine government exists to improve their private virtue. Democracy, dialogue to create a community of love, gets overshadowed by the individualistic-abetting of autonomy. Perhaps Gulen's tolerance approach to autonomy will lead individuals to the realization that to be is to be with, that community, not dens, make a flourishing life.

Third, the idol of the market, in our time the free market, for all it's good, also makes a greater gap between rich and poor. Perhaps Gulen's tolerance will receive market values and improve them to the point that the poor are noticed and provided for.

Fourth, the idol of the theatre leads human minds to see the form and to ignore the substance. In my country, I think the idol of theatre reveals itself in the emphasis on opinion polls rather than on visions risky enough (faithful enough) to make new communities. I think

especially of our current debates on immigration when our politicians scheme to build 700 mile fences to keep Mexicans

out. What if someone thought up a vision in which Mexico and the United States developed economic programs that made our two countries both attractive to and supportive of citizens? That is, what if one could earn \$900 per month in Mexico as well as earning \$900 per month in the United States? Perhaps Gulen will tolerate the idol of theatre long enough to let it take on substance, the kind of substance that aims to include humans rather than exclude them.

### **Summary Conclusions**

First, a similar concept of perfection appears in the works of Gregory of Nyssa in the fourth century, in the thought of John Wesley in the eighteenth century, and in the study of Fethullah Gulen in the twenty-first century.

Second, the practice of tolerance generated by the idea of perfection assumes free will.

Third, the practice of tolerance is a penultimate step to Democracy.

Fourth, when Methodists study Gulen's work on Sufism, they may sense tones of the doctrine of perfection and feel familiarity with Sufism.

Fifth, when one's religion is rejected, co-opted, or abused in a political setting, one's submission to God reveals one is free to choose tolerance, not acquiescence or competition or overpowering violence, but tolerance.

Sixth, since tolerance flows from submission to God and not from what it may or may not achieve in a harsh and politically needy world, tolerance is a faith response to despair.

Seventh, tolerance is the practice of piety, about which Gulen wrote: In its comprehensive meaning, taqwa is the only and greatest standard of one's nobility and worth. The noblest, most honorable of you in the sight of God is the most advanced of you in taqwa (49:13). (44, Gulen)

Eighth, Gregory, Wesley, and Gulen make tolerance dependent on God and not an end in itself. Because tolerance is of God, the tolerated, whether our self or our neighbors, should sense that improvement is in the offing. To tolerate the self and others puts fourth notice that God has improvement in mind.

Ninth, we exist to be with God. Tolerance of the self and of each other is an act of submission to God who receives us and thereby makes us good. To tolerate the self and others is to receive the self and others as persons so deeply and finally loved as to be completely free to love well even to and through death.

Tenth, Gulen stays with tolerance, although it is penultimate, because the receptivity of tolerance is the necessary step toward healing the idols of the human mind and to free that mind for Democracy.

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