

Institutionalizing of Muslim-Christian Dialogue: *Nostra Aetate* and Fethullah Gülen's Vision

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ABSTRACT

*Through the turbulent era leading up to the demise of the Ottoman Empire and the climax of European colonization, one of the most influential Muslim thinkers of the 20th century, Said Nursi, called for dialogue and cooperation between Christians and Muslims 54 years before the *Nostra Aetate*. Despite the authoritarian tendencies of the time, Nursi knew that humanity would make a fresh call for reconciliation, understanding and cooperation, and that this would work through dialogue. Mainly due to the prevailing political and cultural circumstances in his time and as well as living a life of house-arrest in exile, Nursi was restricted to find the right opportunities to apply his theory to a great extent. His eyes looked towards the future generations to fulfill this call. Fethullah Gülen, one of Nursi's most influential followers and a leader of a global spiritual and educational movement, adopted and applied Nursi's philosophy, despite severe criticism from the both extremes of the religious spectrum. Contrary to Samuel Huntington's postulation of a clash of civilizations, Gülen advocated a cooperation of civilizations, which attracted political and academic interest. He encouraged people to engage in dialogue, and establish centres of dialogue in order to meet this global imperative. This paper will examine *Nostra Aetate* and Gülen's views regarding an advanced stage of dialogue: institutionalizing and cultural acceptance.*

At a time when half of the Ottoman Empire's lands were occupied by Russia, Italy, England, and France, Said Nursi proposed dialogue and collaboration between Muslims and Christians before a congregation of over 10,000 Muslims, including 100 prominent religious scholars, in the Umayyad Mosque, Damascus¹. The strength of Nursi's proposal comes from his foresight when other Muslim thinkers were on the defensive against the invading colonial forces. Nursi held this approach even after the Ottoman Empire had collapsed after a turbulent conflict between the Empire and Europe.

Nursi strongly believed that the source of international aggression is materialistic philosophy. The problem was not East vs. West or Christian vs. Muslim, but the philosophy that he regarded as "the evil of civilization." For Nursi, there are two types of Europe: "the first follows the sciences which serve justice and activities beneficial for the life of society through the inspiration it has received from true Christianity." The second is "corrupt, through the darkness of the philosophy of naturalism... which has driven humankind to vice and misguidance²." This philosophy drives people to greed, which then causes major conflicts from individual to global levels.

This was the reasoning behind his call for unity and collaboration between followers of the two major faiths, namely Muslims and Christians. Both have the common enemies such as the problems of poverty, ignorance, and enmity. "Believers should now unite, not only with their Muslim fellow-believers, but with truly religious and pious Christians, disregarding questions of dispute and not arguing over them, for absolute disbelief is on

the attack³.” Nursi faced imprisonment, political exile, and home arrest during the second half of his life, making him unable to put his vision in practice.

It was over half-a-century after Nursi’s proposal when the Second Vatican Council declared *Nostra Aetate*, “The Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions” in 1965. The declaration was originally intended to deal with the Catholic theological standing towards Judaism. It was not until Arab Catholic, Maronite, and Coptic bishops argued that a statement that ignored Muslims was not politically viable that Muslim were included in the declaration⁴. *Nostra Aetate* is a significant document that challenges Roman Catholics as well as Protestant Churches to open up, rethink their attitudes towards other religions, and consider that all human beings are “but one community”.⁵

Nostra Aetate has been considered the most important turning points in the history of Catholic-Muslim relations⁶. In the words of Pope Benedict XVI in 2005, *Nostra Aetate* is the *magna carta* of the Catholic Church in terms of Muslim-Christian relations⁷. Since 1967, the popes have congratulated Muslims on Eid al-Fitr after the month of Ramadan. In 1974, the Vatican formed the Commission for Religious Relations with Muslims (CRRM). In 1976, the Vatican co-organized the Christian-Islam Congress in Tripoli with the World Islamic Call Society (WICS). In 1990, the Vatican established the *Nostra Aetate* Foundation. In 1994, the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID) led a conference with Muslim World League, the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, and the Muslim World Congress in Cairo. In 1995, the Muslim-Christian Liaison Committee was set up with four international Muslim organizations. The Permanent Committee for Dialogue set up a joint committee with Al-Azhar University’s Monotheist Religions Committee in 1998 with the signing of an agreement in Rome.

In 2001, the previous Pope, John Paul II, visited the Umayyad Mosque as the first pope to visited the mosque, 1,363 years after Caliph ‘Umar ibn Khattab visited the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. 2007 was the year 138 Muslim scholars and leaders signed an open letter called A Common Word between Us and You to Pope Benedict XVI as a response to the Pope’s remarks at the University of Regensburg lecture. In 2008, the PCID and the Centre for Inter-religious Dialogue of the Islamic Culture and Relations Organisation made a join declaration in Iran. Last February, the Vatican and Al-Azhar University’s Joint Committee for Dialogue signed a declaration promoting a culture of peace. In Catholic archdioceses in many countries, there is a committee devoted to interfaith relations. These are all fruits of the *Nostra Aetate* declaration.

Gülen’s Approach

Both Said Nursi and Fethullah Gülen were aware that the theology of dialogue between Christians and Muslims precedes the declaration by centuries. "Dialogue between the two communities, in fact, goes back to the beginning of Islam, and the Qur'an itself invites Christians to dialogue *with fair words* in order to adore the one God (Qur'an 3:64) and invites Muslims to discuss with Christians in a courteous manner."⁸ However, this fact, together with historical and current Muslim-initiated dialogue activities, are not as well publicized as *Nostra Aetate* due to the lack of a religious hierarchy in Islam. Therefore,

Muslim leaders attempt to “offer authoritative statements based on scholarly and sectarian credentials⁹.”

Leading Muslim thinker and global movement spiritual leader, Fethullah Gülen, studied Nursi’s approach to other religions, specifically Christianity, and applied Nursi’s philosophy beyond *Nostra Aetate*. In 1986, Gülen asked his followers to engage in dialogue with people from all different segments of Turkish society, from the left to the right wing, and secular to the agnostic or atheist. He inspired his followers to establish the Journalists’ and Writers’ Foundation in 1994 and other dialogue centers with this aim¹⁰, thereby becoming the first leading person behind the institutionalization of dialogue in Turkish context.

Gülen has been called “one of the most persuasive and influential voices in the Muslim community” calling for dialogue¹¹. Gülen regards interfaith cooperation as “compulsory for Muslims to support peace¹²,” relying on the basic Islamic sources to affirm this point¹³. Enes Ergene, a pupil of Gülen’s study circle, writes that Gülen does not rely on theological sources alone. “These two concepts [tolerance and dialogue], first developed on a small scale, have turned into a search for a culture of reconciliation on a world scale.... Gülen strengthens this search with religious, legal, and philosophical foundations¹⁴.” In his views, a human is related to everything in the cosmos; therefore, to engage in dialogue with the related beings is part of human nature.

Gülen met with Rabbi, Armenian Patriarch Mesrob Mutafyan, Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem, Eliyahu Bakshi-Doron, Christian Orthodox Patriarch Bartholomeos in Istanbul in 1996, and Vatican Representative Monsignor George Marowich, who then arranged Gülen’s meeting with Pope John Paul II at the Vatican in 1998. During his meeting with the Pope, Gülen proposed that a joint school of Divinity be established in Urfa, Turkey, the birthplace of Abraham to disprove the idea of “a clash of civilization”¹⁵. While such meetings may be welcomed today, it was almost taboo during the 1990s in the political and religious atmosphere in Turkey. Both meetings were harshly criticized by ultra-secularists and Islamists. A group of young Islamists argued that he should not have humiliated himself to the extent of going to the Vatican and meeting with the Pope. Gülen, however, responded to this kind of reductionism by saying that humility was an attribute of Muslims¹⁶.

In 1999, Gülen travelled to the US to seek medical attention, and remained there due to the political conditions in Turkey. His followers in the US have been active in realizing his vision, especially after 9/11. With his encouragement, over 50 dialogue centers were established in North America by his followers and supporters. Although no official count has taken place, it is possible that the number exceeds 100 in the Americas, Europe, and Australia. Other Muslim organizations or groups have put effort into interfaith relations, but Gülen’s followers and supporters actually established dialogue centers and given more time, funds, and efforts to this sector.

One reason for the success of the Gülen Movement in Western countries is the universal nature of Gülen’s vision, his nonviolent and tolerant approach during a time of fear of

religious extremism. Based on personal examination of some of these centre's activities via the Internet, these dialogue centers do not engage only with the religious segment either. Besides the usual dialogue activities such as dinners, seminars, and conferences, these centers organize joint projects, such as food drives, interfaith education curriculum design, and joint trips to holy sites in Istanbul, Jerusalem, Rome, and London. They have entered the academic sector and published joint articles, magazines, and books. Through high school and university student exchange programs, these centers are reaching out to the younger demographic to achieve their aim of cultural acceptance of dialogue.

In time, the activities of the Movement gained more attention through public relations works and general publicity. It attracted attention of the academic world, which slowly began studying the projects and productions of this global movement. After some years of study, Gülen's followers and admirers, both Muslim and non-Muslim, founded tertiary institutes devoted to the study and research of interfaith relations, faith, and spirituality. Among these are the Nursi Chair in Islamic Studies at John Carroll University in Ohio, the Fethullah Gülen Chair in the Study of Islam and Muslim-Catholic Relations at Australian Catholic University in Melbourne, Australia, the Fethullah Gülen Chair at Syarif Hidayatullah Islam University, Indonesia, and Gülen Institute at Houston University.

Institutionalizing of Dialogue

In *Christian-Muslim Dialogue in the Twentieth Century*, Ataullah Siddiqui analyzes the definitions and methods of prominent Muslim scholars in the case of interfaith dialogue. Dialogue is understood as meeting and communicating with other faiths, sharing thoughts and exchanging views, and reaching mutual understanding and respect through focusing on common ground¹⁷.

However, Nursi and Gülen go beyond this understanding of dialogue. Interfaith dialogue needs to be institutionalized and collaboration must take place through joint projects for there to be any effectual dialogue in the atmosphere of skepticism. Dialogue programs occur at a local level with small projects on part of other Muslim organizations, but larger-scale programs and projects that attract public attention are needed¹⁸.

It is for this purpose that Gülen proposed a joint divinity school, student exchange program between divinity schools, and joint trips to holy sites when he met with the Pope. There was no response from the Vatican, possibly due to political conditions in Turkey. If this project had become a reality, it would have been a first and original institution, serving as a model in the world.

The silence from the Vatican did not discourage Gülen since he was aiming for more than a Turkey-Vatican dialogue. When Samuel Huntington's wrote about "the clash of civilizations," Gülen put forth his ideas on the cooperation of civilizations. Gülen is working for an inter-civilizational dialogue¹⁹, one that transgresses beyond faith. This points is another significant difference in Gülen's understanding of current dialogue

activities. He bases dialogue not entirely on the grounds of faith, but on *muhabbet*, love. Gülen's social philosophy revolves around the idea of serving humanity, and institutes should serve for this purpose. Institutes formed by one group will not be all-embracing, but those formed by a coalition of groups, such as interfaith groups, will serve a greater population.

Analysis and Criticism

Nostra Aetate was the first step in promoting the culture of dialogue. Despite the mention of shared values between the two faiths and the urge to promote social justice and moral welfare, there are no specifics in terms of collaboration and institutionalization. Most of the joint declarations and committees with Muslims after *Nostra Aetate* could not bring interfaith collaboration into institutionalized dialogue with other Muslim groups apart from the Gülen Movement. However, it is observed above that all that Muslim-Christian dialogue has so far achieved is the recognition of the Abrahamic roots of the faith of the two communities.²⁰

Not all Muslims and Christians embraced the declaration. In 1970, evangelicals convened in Frankfurt, Germany, and signed a declaration called *Frankfurt Declaration*, underlining the mission of Christ, and harshly criticizing organized dialogue as “betrayal of the universality of Christ²¹”. In both the *Dialogue and Mission* statement by the Secretariat for non-Christians in the Vatican in 1984 and in *Dialogue and Proclamation* in 1991, dialogue is placed within the mission of the church, the building of God's kingdom²², thereby evoking apprehension on part of Muslims.

Looking at the prominent Muslim leaders and thinkers of the 20th century, we see Said Nursi and Fethullah Gülen, one of the most prominent leaders who put sincere interfaith dialogue and collaboration at the forefront with the condition of leaving polemics behind and focusing on common points²³. Nonetheless, it should be stated that Muslim thinkers often brought polemics to the table, asking that they be resolved before genuine dialogue takes place. In his response to Pope Paul VI's letter regarding Peace Day, Abu 'Ala Mawdudi (1903-1979), founder of the Islamic revivalist party in Pakistan, Jamaat al-Islami, asked that the Pope use all his influence to remove that which poisons the relations between the two faith groups, such as the attacks on Prophet Muhammad and the Qur'an made by Christian scholars. When the Second Vatican Council was discussing the idea of forgetting the historical troubles between Muslims and Christians, French-Indian Muslim leader Professor Muhammad Hamidullah in France responded with a letter to the Pope, requesting that the Vatican officially disavow the Church's past unjustifiable and anti-Islamic resolutions of Councils and Synods. One viewpoint among Muslim thinkers is that forgetting the past is “a way of getting us to disarming ourselves.²⁴”

Other major thinkers, such as Isma'il Raji al-Faruqi (1921-1986), Mahmoud Ayoub, Hasan Askari, Khurshid Ahmad, Mohammed Talbi, and Seyyed Hossein Nasr, placed other conditions before dialogue. There was skepticism regarding dialogue and fear that it

would be used as a missionary tool and carried political agendas. Khurshid Ahmad posited that the West did not view Islam as a religion or civilization, but “merely as a rival political power,²⁵” thus making dialogue unbalanced. In the basket was the general mistrust of Muslims due to the negative reputation of missionaries in Muslim lands and the double-standards of the West. For example, Ahmad points out how the West accepts everything from the “bikini to the evening dress” as natural, but sees the *hijab* (head scarf) as unnatural and threatening local culture. In 2005, the rector of Al-Azhar University, the most prestigious religious institution in Sunni Islam, asked the Vatican to apologise for the Crusades²⁶.

For Nursi and Gülen to come out with the request for unconditional dialogue is remarkable and bold. If dialogue is institutionalized, it is possible that it will reduce the mistrust and criticism.

The establishment of many interfaith dialogue and cultural centers and academic institutes created skepticism and received criticism in Turkey and abroad. Some opponents accuse the Gülen Movement of concealing a political agenda to change Turkey as a secular republic while others see the Movement as an American project to use soft Islam to control the Muslim world. These opponents range from the ultra-nationalists, radical political Islamists, and ideological leftists in Turkey and some neo-conservatives in the US. On the contrary, the Vatican receives criticism mainly from evangelical groups.

Gülen and his followers have also been accused of being “bad representatives” of Islam, and “cater(ing) to” Jews and Christians²⁷. Mehmet Sevkett Eygi, syndicated columnist for Milli Gazete of former Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan’s Welfare Party, questioned Gülen and Gülen’s followers on their dialogue activities and representation of Muslims. He did not approve of the activities as it opened the doors to missionaries, and went as far as calling interfaith dialogue un-Islamic and unlawful based on religious texts. Despite such accusations, Gülen’s continuation of dialogue is admirable.

The important issue these criticisms raise is one that fails to receive enough attention: that there is no body or institution representing Muslims all over the world, nor is there any agreement on who should represent the adherents of this faith²⁸. Interfaith dialogue by Muslims is carried out by government-appointed scholars who are limited in their approaches, leaders of spiritual groups, or small groups and individuals²⁹. This makes it difficult on the Christian end, leaving them to engage in dialogue with various Muslim nations, institutions, groups, and spiritual leaders. This draws criticism from Muslims who feel that the Christian world is not engaging with the right organization or person. In order to overcome this missing link of representation, Muslims and Christians need to establish joint institutions and social welfare organizations.

In 1993, Pope John Paul II in Rome appealed for peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina and called for a special prayer day at Assisi. 42 delegates, including two Bosnian Muslims, attended the prayer service for Christian, Jewish, and Muslim participants³⁰. It is possible that this

and similar services inspired the cooperation in 1996 when a group of Catholic and Muslim religious people met to discuss how they could support the building of a new water system that would serve both the Muslim community in Fojnica and the Croation community of Kiseljak, two cities that experienced major violence during the Muslim-Croat fighting in 1993-1994. However, due to lack of local personnel and expertise to supervise volunteers, this project was never realized, despite the genuine interest and efforts of local clergy³¹.

CONCLUSION

We have yet to witness another prominent Muslim leader pronouncing dialogue as an “obligation” like Gülen, who holds that dialogue is the duty of Muslims in the struggle to make our world a more peaceful place³². Gülen believes that dialogue is among the duties of Muslims on earth to make our world a more peaceful and safer place.

Both the declaration of *Nostra Aetate* and the vision of Gülen have pushed religious persons to open their doors to each other. Yet, it is only when theories and ideas are applied that they gain credibility and give benefit. Interfaith dialogue faces boundaries of mistrust and skepticism, especially among radical religious people, due to historical relations between the East and West, lack of credibility and results, and political imbalance between the two sides. It is perceived”.

Nostra Aetate was a commendable step. Yet, it was declared over 43 years ago. Vatican and Muslim organizations need to take steps in order to remove the perception of interfaith dialogue as a twentieth-century fashion³³ and “a clubby brotherhood³⁴”. For any Vatican or Christian initiatives to be successful, Muslim leaders and participants in dialogue need to leave behind historical grudges when engaging in dialogue, even if they do not wish to forget the past. Both Christians and Muslims are equal partners, and not opponents, in dialogue. In addition, the issue of representation on behalf of Muslims must be addressed, possibly by forming a pluralistic council where members are democratically elected and representing every nation of the *Ummah*. While this may not be applicable in current global political, social, and religious conditions in the Muslim world, it is a feasible possibility that could be politically and culturally accepted.

In order to clear the air of hidden agendas, leaders on both sides of the dialogue need to undertake theological reasoning to reduce the concept of the “dialogue mission” and “dialogue *da’wa*”- use of dialogue for covert proselytism. While it is not possible to completely erase concealed intentions, whether they are religious, political, or cultural, it is necessary to decrease these and continue the dialogue by focusing on and building from common ground. For Muslims, engaging in dialogue evokes hope and arouses fear at the same time³⁵. This needs further study in order to understand the roots of this issue.

Institution-oriented dialogue grants opportunities for adherents of different faiths to see the world and each other from different windows. This is one aim and meaning of dialogue: creating a common base to combat materialistic philosophy and aggressive

secularism, and working together for social welfare and justice projects. The more this is implemented beyond declarations and discussions, the greater its cultural acceptance. This move to institutionalizing dialogue will gain trust once the joint projects produce visible and measurable results that go beyond the common desire for peace. The goal of interfaith dialogue and collaboration between different peoples is to explore new dynamics that will benefit all humanity.

¹ Said Nursi, *Hutbe-i Şâmiye* (Damascus Sermon), translated from Turkish by Şükran Vahide (1996), Sözlür Publication, Istanbul p.18

² Said Nursi, *Lemalar* (The Flashes), translated from Turkish by Sukran Vahide, Istanbul, (1996) p.161

³ Said Nursi, *Lem'alar* (The Flashes), Translated from Turkish by Sukran Vahide, Sozler Publication, Istanbul, 1996, p 204

⁴ Kail Ellis, O.S.A, "Vatican II and the Contemporary Islam," *New Catholic World*, vol.23, no.1386 (Nov/Dec. 1988), pp.269ff. and Edward Idris Cardinal Cassidy, *Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue: Unitatis Redintegratio, Nostra Aetate*, Paulist Press, New York, 2005, p.127

⁵ Atallah Siddiqui, *Christian-Muslim Dialogue in the Twentieth Century*, Macmillan Press, London, 1997, p.34.

⁶ Scott C. Alexander, "We go way back: The history of Muslim-Catholic relations is one of both confrontation and dialogue." *U.S. Catholic*, February 2007.

⁷ John Borelli, "Interreligious Dialogue as a Spiritual Practice", Georgetown University international conference proceedings, *Islam in the Age of Global Challenges: Alternative Perspectives of the Gulen Movement Conference*

⁸ Khaled Akasheh, "Nostra Aetate: 40 Years Later", *L'Osservatore Romano* (Weekly Edition in English), 28 June 2006, p. 8.

⁹ Turan Kayaoglu, *Preachers of Dialogue: International Relations and Interfaith Theology*, international conference proceedings, *Muslim World in Transition: Contributions of the Gulen Movement*, Leeds Metropolitan University Press, 2007, p.521.

¹⁰ In the US alone, there are over 50 interfaith dialogue centres whose establishment was inspired by Gulen. Thomas Michel, SJ, "Fighting Poverty with Kimse Yok Mu?" *Georgetown University international conference proceedings, Islam in the Age of Global Challenges: Alternative Perspectives of the Gulen Movement Conference*.

¹¹ Thomas Michel, SJ, "Two Frontrunners for Peace: John Paul II and Fethullah Gulen" (<http://en.fgulen.com/content/view/1944/13/>)

¹² Zeki Saritoprak, "An Islamic Approach to Peace and Nonviolence: A Turkish Experience," *The Muslim World*, V.95 July 2005, p.423.

¹³ Ismail Albayrak, "The Juxtaposition of Islam and Violence" in Hunt and Aslandogan, op cit., 127; cf.M. Hakan Yavuz, "The Gulen Movement: The Turkish Puritans" in Yavuz and Esposito, op.cit., p.19-47.

¹⁴ Enes Ergene, *The Gulen Movement, Dialogue, and Tolerance*, 5 Aug 2008, <http://www.fethullahgulen.org/about-fethullah-gulen/an-analysis-of-the-gulen-movement/3022-the-gulen-movement-dialogue-and-tolerance.html>, accessed May 20, 2009.

¹⁵ Loye Ashton & Tamer Balci, *A Contextual Analysis of the Supporters and Critics of the Gulen/Hizmet Movement*, Georgetown University international conference proceedings, *Islam in the Age of Global Challenges: Alternative Perspectives of the Gulen Movement Conference*, p.84.

¹⁶ Zeki Saritoprak & Sidney Griffith, *Fethullah Gülen and the 'People of the Book': A Voice from Turkey for Interfaith Dialogue*, *The Muslim World*. Hartford: Jul 2005. Vol. 95, Issue. 3; pg. 329-341.

¹⁷ Atallah Siddiqui, *Christian-Muslim Dialogue in the Twentieth Century*, Macmillan Press, London, 1997, p.163-169

¹⁸ Mahmoud Ayoub, *Christian-Muslim Dialogue: Goals and Obstacles*. *The Muslim World*. Hartford: July 2004. Vol. 94, Iss. 3; pg. 313-320.

¹⁹ Zeki Saritoprak & Sidney Griffith, *Fethullah Gülen and the 'People of the Book': A Voice from Turkey for Interfaith Dialogue*, *The Muslim World*. Hartford: July 2005. Vol. 95, Issue. 3; pg. 329-341.

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- ¹⁹ Ataullah Siddiqui, *Christian-Muslim Dialogue in the Twentieth Century*, Macmillan Press, London
- ²⁰ Liyakatali Takim. *From Conversion to Conversation: Interfaith Dialogue in Post 9-11 America*, *The Muslim World*. Hartford: Jul 2004. Vol. 94, Iss. 3; pg. 343-357
- ²¹ Yvonne Haddad & Wadi Haddad, *Christian-Muslim Encounters*, University Press of Florida, 1995, p.xiii.
- ²² Edward Idris Cardinal Cassidy, *Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue: Unitatis Redintegratio*, Nostra Aetate, Paulist Press, New York, 2005, p.148-150.
- ²³ Fethullah Gulen (2002) *Essays, Perspectives, Opinion*. Rutherford, NJ: The Light Publication, p.34.
- ²⁴ Ataulah Siddiqui, *Christian-Muslim Dialogue in the Twentieth Century*, Macmillan Press, London, 1997, p.55.
- ²⁵ Isma'il R. al-Faruqi, "Common Bases between the Two Religions in Regard to Convictions, and Points of Agreement in the Spheres of Life", *Seminar of the Islamic-Christian Dialogue* (1976). Tripoli: Popular Office of Foreign Relations, Socialist Peoples Libyan Arab Jamhariya, 1981, p.243 as cited in Ataulah Siddiqui, *Christian-Muslim Dialogue in the Twentieth Century*, Macmillan Press, London, 1997, p.130
- ²⁶ Robert Spencer, "A Vatican Apology for the Crusades?" www.frontpagemagazine.com, March 22, 2005
- ²⁷ This was by two opponents, Haydar Bas, Turkish academic, leader of a small religious community, and politician associated with the Independent Turkey Party (BTP), and Sevki Yilmaz, former parliamentary representative of Prime Minister Erbakan's Welfare Party. In Loye Ashton & Tamer Balci, *A Contextual Analysis of the Supporters and Critics of the Gulen/Hizmet Movement*, Georgetown University international conference proceedings, *Islam in the Age of Global Challenges: Alternative Perspectives of the Gulen Movement Conference*, p.105.
- ²⁸ Yvonne Haddad & Wadi Haddad, *Christian-Muslim Encounters*, University Press of Florida, 1995, p.xv
- ²⁹ Ataulah Siddiqui, *Christian-Muslim Dialogue in the Twentieth Century*, Macmillan Press, London, 1997, p.52
- ³⁰ Edward Idris Cardinal Cassidy, *Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue: Unitatis Redintegratio*, Nostra Aetate, Paulist Press, New York, 2005, p.142.
- ³¹ David Steele, *Contributions of Interfaith Dialogue to Peacebuilding in the Former Yugoslavia in Interfaith Dialogue and Peacebuilding*, Ed. David R. Smock, United States Institute of Peace Press, Washington DC, 2002, p.85.
- ³² Zeki Saritoprak & Sidney Griffith, *Fethullah Gülen and the 'People of the Book': A Voice from Turkey for Interfaith Dialogue*, *The Muslim World*. Hartford: July 2005. Vol. 95, Issue. 3; pg. 329-341.
- ³³ John Borelli, *Interreligious Dialogue as a Spiritual Practice*, Georgetown University international conference proceedings, *Islam in the Age of Global Challenges: Alternative Perspectives of the Gulen Movement Conference*, p.147.
- ³⁴ Thomas Michel, SJ, *Toward a Dialogue of Liberation with Muslims*, <http://www.sjweb.info/dialogo/index.cfm>, accessed 20 May, 2009.
- ³⁵ Yvonne Haddad & Wadi Haddad, *Christian-Muslim Encounters*, University Press of Florida, 1995, p.xiv.