

Fethullah Gülen Chair

Inaugural International Conference, 2009

From Dialogue to Collaboration:  
The Vision of Fethullah Gülen and Muslim-Christian Relations

15-16 July 2009

Australian Catholic University (ACU National)  
Melbourne Campus (St Patrick's)

Mercy Lecture Theatre  
Young St  
Fitzroy, Victoria

Fethullah Gülen Chair  
Inaugural International Conference, 2009  
From Dialogue to Collaboration:  
The Vision of Fethullah Gülen and Muslim-Christian Relations

The conference aims to explore Fethullah Gülen's worldwide contribution to Islamic studies, education, philanthropy, and interreligious dialogue, through the prism of his personal and theological profile. His vision of dialogue and Muslim-Christian relations will be brought into relation with developments in the Catholic Church and other Christian Churches since *Nostra Aetate* (1965).

The conference is proudly presented by  
Australian Catholic University  
in partnership with  
Monash University  
and the Australian Intercultural Society (AIS).

And with special support from:  
Asia-Pacific Centre for Inter-religious Dialogue (APCID/ACU)  
Fethullah Gülen Chair in the Study of Islam and Muslim-Christian Relations (ACU)  
Centre for Islam and the Modern World (Monash)  
National Centre for Australian Studies (Monash)  
Monash Centre for EU and European Studies  
Global Terrorism Research Centre

## CONFERENCE ORGANISING COMMITTEE

Professor Ismail Albayrak	Australian Catholic University
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Mr Orhan Cicek	Australian Intercultural Society
Mr Emre Celik	Australian Intercultural Society
Mr Mete Temurcin / Mr Salih Tuncer	Australian Intercultural Society
Professor Greg Barton	Monash University
Professor Constant Mews	Monash University
Dr Salih Yucel	Monash University

## MESSAGE FROM THE AUSTRALIAN INTERCULTURAL SOCIETY

We would like to thank the organising Committee, the Vice-Chancellors, Deans and Head of Schools of ACU National and Monash Universities, and the Board of Directors of the Australian Intercultural Society for organising this significant conference. We would also like to thank the speakers for participating in this event.

## *CONFERENCE LAUNCH*

Sir James Augustine Gobbo  
Melbourne

Sir James Gobbo's parents migrated to Australia from Italy in 1928 and after James was born in Melbourne in 1931, they returned to Italy where he spent his early childhood. His family returned to Australia in 1938 when he was aged seven. He was educated in Melbourne and at Oxford University, where he was Victorian Rhodes Scholar for 1952, and he was President of the Oxford University Boat Club, rowing in the crew which won the 100th Oxford-Cambridge Boat Race. Sir James Gobbo was admitted to practise law in 1956 and after a year as a solicitor, went to the Bar where he practised for 21 years. He took silk in 1971 and was appointed a Judge of the Supreme Court of Victoria in 1978. He retired from the Court in 1994 and in 1997 was appointed Governor of Victoria. His term concluded in December 2000. Sir James has maintained a long interest in Italian Community affairs in Australia, as reflected in his former Presidency of Co.As.It. (Italian Assistance Organisation), the largest migrant welfare organization of its kind in Australia. Since 1975, Sir James has served on various advisory bodies to the Federal Government in connection with Immigration and Refugee affairs. He was the Founding Chairman of the Australia Council of Multicultural Affairs in 1989. Sir James has served on the Catholic Archdiocese Finance Advisory Council and was Chairman of Mercy Private Hospital for 10 years, Chairman of the Council of Caritas Christi Hospital for 10 years and Board Member of Mercy Maternity Hospital for 20 years. Sir James was President of the Scout Association (Victoria) from 1987 to 1997.

Sir James was honoured by Her Majesty the Queen with a Knighthood in 1982 for services to the Community. He was again honoured for service to the Law, Multicultural Affairs and Hospitals by the award of Companion of the Order of Australia in 1993. He has also received the award of Gran Croce all'Ordine di Merito of the Republic of Italy. He has a number of honorary degrees, including the Degree Honoris Causa from Bologna University.

Sir James' current positions include Chairman of the Council of the National Library of Australia, Chairman of the Australian Multicultural Foundation and Chairman of the Council of the Order of Australia. He is a Vice President of the Order of Malta, which is involved in the provision of home-based palliative care through Eastern Palliative Care (EPC), which provides palliative care in the Eastern Corridor of Melbourne, covering circa 1.3 million people.

## CONFERENCE PROGRAM

### Wednesday, 15 July

8 am Registration

9 am *Acknowledgement of Country*: Naomi Wolfe

*Welcome*: Professor Gabrielle McMullen,  
Pro-Vice Chancellor (Academic), Australian Catholic University

Mr Orhan Cicek  
Executive Advisor, Australian Intercultural Society

*Conference launch*: Sir James Gobbo AC, CVO, KStJ, QC,  
formerly Governor of Victoria

*Message*: Mr George Lekakis, Chair, Victorian Multicultural Commission

9.30 am *Opening addresses*

Chair: Thomas Michel SJ

Abdullah Aymaz: The Gülen movement: past and present

Daniel Madigan SJ: *Nostra Aetate*'s Unanswered Questions

11.00 Morning Tea

11.30 *Panel 1: Fethullah Gülen: sources and traditions*

Chair: Greg Barton

Prof. Dr. H.M. Amin Abdullah: Muslim-Christian Relations: Reinventing the  
Common Ground to Sustain a Peaceful Coexistence in the Global Era

İsmail Albayrak: Gülen's approach to the Qur'an and exegesis

Philipp Bruckmayr: The Naqshbandi tradition and Fethullah Gülen

Mehmet Şeker: Sufism and Fethullah Gülen

1.15 pm Lunch

2.30 *Panel 2: The Gülen Movement and active engagement with society*

Chair: Emre Celik

David Tittensor: Not Just Talking Heads: The Gülen Movement Translating Rhetoric into Action

Hasan Hörküç: Externalism and Internalism Reconsidered:  
Fethullah Gülen: A Case Study

Jonathan Lyons: Islam and Science: Reclaiming a Lost Legacy

4.00 Afternoon Tea

4.30 *Panel 3: Perspectives on Dialogue*

Chair: Daniel Madigan SJ

Anne Hunt: Interfaith dialogue and the meeting of hearts

Mahsheed Ansari: Gülen's philosophy on *compassion* and *love* and the momentous role of *dialogue* in constructing global peace

Gerard Hall SM: Inter- or *Intra*- Religious Dialogue?

6.00 Close: Day 1

## Thursday, 16 July

9 am *Panel 4: Fethullah Gülen and interfaith dialogue*

Chair: Jonathan Lyons

Mehmet Özalp: A chance for a step forward in dialogue or Islam's Trojan Horse? Fethullah Gülen and interfaith dialogue

Züleyha Keskin: Principles of Dialogue in the Fethullah Gülen's Thought

Greg Barton: Interpreting the Gülen Movement within the Context of Modern Islamic Thought and Social Movements

10.30 Morning Tea

11.00 *Panel 5: Nostra Aetate and Muslim-Christian Dialogue*

Chair: Ismail Albayrak

Kath Engebretson: Muslims, Catholics and the Common Purpose of Justice and Peace

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

Constant Mews: Catholicism, *Nostra Aetate*, and Interreligious Dialogue: From Multi-culturalism to Interculturalism

12.30 pm Lunch

2.00 *Panel 6: Aspects of Gülen and the Gülen Movement*

Chair: Neil Ormerod

İhsan Yılmaz: Towards a New Interpretation of Islamic Politico-Legal Philosophy on the State in the Light of Fethullah Gülen's Ijtihad

Çemen Polat: Gülen-inspired Schools in Australia: Educational Vision and Funding

3.30 Afternoon Tea

4.00 *Concluding Plenary*

Chair: Constant Mews

Neil Ormerod: Secularisation: a matter of common interest and concern for Muslims and Christians

Reflections from the floor

5.00 Break and Refreshments

5.45 Sufi Music

6.30 *Public Lecture*

Fr Thomas Michel SJ:  
Where to now? Ways forward for interreligious dialogue

Chair: Professor Anne Hunt

Response: Professor Joseph Camilleri

## **Abstracts and Biographies**

## *OPENING ADDRESS I*

### **The Gülen Movement: Past and Present**

Abdullah Aymaz, Germany

In this paper, Abdullah Aymaz will focus on his first encounter with Gülen, and then on his subsequent talks with Gülen about his vision. Here the primary focus is on Gülen's lectures in Izmir as part of the course he taught there on the Qu'ran. The paper will also give detailed information about Gülen's unceasing encouragement in the mid-1970s to build modern colleges so as to prepare a new generation equipped with both moral and scientific knowledge. The paper further traces the stages of the spread of these schools and colleges throughout Anatolia, Central Asia and many other countries. Consideration will also be given to Gülen's fresh approach to dialogue. Discussion will focus on dialogue meetings held both inside and outside Turkey, with special reference to Gülen's meeting with the late Pope John Paul II. Finally, the question of tradition and modernity in the light of Gülen's thinking will be addressed.

### **Abdullah Aymaz**

Abdullah Aymaz was born in 1945 in Kutahya, Turkey. A graduate of Izmir University's Divinity School (1972), he taught Islamic sciences in high schools and colleges from 1968 to 1983. From 1984 to 1988 he was the director of the Konya educational Foundation and, from 1988 to 1992, as Editor-in-Chief of ZAMAN Newspaper, also published ZAMAN USA from 1992 to 1995. In 1995 he became the honorary president of the Journalists and Publishers Foundation established by Fethullah Gülen and concurrently continued his duty as Editor-in-Chief of ZAMAN from 1995 to 1997.

As one of the closest companions of Fethullah Gülen and a forerunner of the Gülen Movement, Abdullah Aymaz has made many significant contributions to interreligious dialogue, including the following: meeting between Orthodox Patriarch Bartholomeos and Fethullah Gülen (1995); meeting with Armenian Patriarch Karekin II (1995); meeting between Greek, Bulgarian and Austrian journalists and Fethullah Gülen (1996); delivery of four letters written by F. Gülen to Peter Hans Jörg Bitterlich, Austrian Angelic Movement Foundation, Dalai Lama's Central Museum of Buddhism (Austria) and Cardinal Franz König. He also participated in the meeting with Pope John II at the Vatican on 19 March 1997 and handed F. Gülen's letter to Cardinal Michael L. Fitzgerald. On 21 March 1997 he wrote to Pope John II requesting a private audience for Fethullah Gülen.

As part of his commitment to dialogue Mr Aymaz has also met with key religious and academic authorities, including: Professor Bert Breiner, representative of National United Churches of America (New York); Cardinal Keeler of Baltimore; Anglican Archbishop Dr George Leonard Carey in London; and Bishop Allan Smithson at Jarrow. He has also

visited Birmingham University, Centre for Islamic Studies and Muslim-Christian Relations, where he met with Professor David Thomas and other scholars; attended a symposium in Greece organized by the journal *God and Religion*, leading to the publication of his article “Miriam of all of us” in the Greek magazine INFO; and participated in the Rotterdam Children’s Rights Conference, where he presented a paper on “The Rights of Children in Islam”. In 2000 Mr Aymaz organized the International Abraham Conference in Urfa, Turkey, and in same year, was invited by Lord Nazir Ahmed to the House of Lords where his achievements in interfaith dialogue were formally recognised. In the same year he also attended a symposium organized by the Strasbourg Dialogue Education Centre on the theme “Rights of Children in the Religions”. In 2001 he arranged a meeting with Patriarch Bartholomeos’ European representative in Bonn and, in the following year, he established the Intercultural Dialogue Forum in Germany. In 2003 he also met at the Vatican with Monsignor Pier Luigi Gelata, General Secretary, Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue.

Abdullah Aymaz has written more than twenty books, some of which have been published in German (e.g., *Der Islamische Glaube*). He is also a poet, and one of poems from his book on Miriam has been published in English. Since 1988 he has been writing a regular column in ZAMAN, and also contributes regularly to the magazine *Sizinti* (i.e., the Turkish version of *Fountain*). He is also Editor-in-Chief of the magazine *Yagmur* and is the General Coordinator of European ZAMAN.

Abdullah Aymaz is married with four children – two girls, Ummu and Adile, and two boys, Fethullah and Abdurrahman.

## *OPENING ADDRESS 2*

### ***Nostra Aetate's Unanswered Questions***

Prof. Daniel A. Madigan SJ, Washington, DC, USA

In *Nostra Aetate* the Second Vatican Council chose not to deal exhaustively with all the questions raised by the plurality of religions, but rather left some questions open for further reflection. The question, for example, of whether other religions have a salvific role and, if so, what it might be, also raises the question of how salvation is to be understood. The Council avoids any discussion of Muhammad, the Qur'ân, the Shari'a, etc., and limits itself to a recognition of the positive elements in the life of the Muslim believer, and an affirmation that we adore the same God. In doing so, the Council avoids making a controversial judgement about Islam; yet at the same time it leaves the impression that Muslim religiosity exists without a history and a context. This paper will examine the possibilities and the limitations of a Christian response to the question Muslims put to us about the Prophet and The Scripture in whom they put their faith.

### **Prof. Daniel A. Madigan**

Jeanette W. and Otto J. Ruesch Family Associate Professor, Director of Graduate Studies  
Department of Theology, Georgetown University, Washington, DC

Daniel Madigan S.J. is an Australian Jesuit priest. After studies in History at Monash and in Theology at United Faculty of Theology, Melbourne, he studied and worked in India, Pakistan, Egypt and the US, where he received a PhD in Islamic Studies from Columbia University. Before moving to Georgetown in 2008, he taught in Rome (2000-7), where he was founding director of the Institute for the Study of Religions and Cultures at the Pontifical Gregorian University. His main fields of teaching and research are Qur'anic Studies, Interreligious Dialogue, and particularly Muslim-Christian relations. He is an honorary Adjunct Professor at Australian Catholic University.

**Gülen's approach to the Qur'an and its Exegesis**

Prof. İsmail Albayrak, Melbourne

Although a number of conferences have been organized in recent years emphasizing the social, civic and educational activities of the Gülen Movement and his contribution to interreligious dialogue, very little attention has been paid to his own formal and informal education, scholarly works, and his interpretation of basic Islamic disciplines in the modern period. In fact, his expertise goes beyond the limitations of the modern academic compartmentalising of Islamic studies. This paper aims to explore Gülen's personal and theological profile on the basis of the Qur'an and its interpretation. It will also examine his re-reading of the Qur'anic text, his approach to the status of the Qur'an as revelation, the notion of abrogation, and the occasion of revelation. The main questions explored in the content of this paper are as follows: What is the difference between Gülen's reading of the Qur'an and that of his counterparts? Does Gülen offer a new way of reading way different from others or does he follow very well established exegetical tradition? How does he deal with the modern sciences and ongoing scientific developments in relation to the Qur'anic verses? Do Muslims need a new type of hermeneutics in interpreting the Qur'an? What is the status of the Qur'an in Gülen's point of view?

**Prof. İsmail Albayrak**

Fethullah Gülen Chair in the Study of Islam and Muslim-Catholic Relations,  
Australian Catholic University, Melbourne

İsmail Albayrak completed his MA at the University of Ankara in 1995 and received his PhD degree from Leeds University in 2000. He then took up a position at Sakarya University in Turkey, where he taught and wrote on Qur'anic Studies, classical exegesis, contemporary approaches to the Qur'an and Orientalism. He also has research interests in the place of Muslim communities and their activities in a globalizing world. In November 2008 he was appointed to the newly established Fethullah Gülen Chair in the Study of Islam and Muslim-Catholic Relations at Australian Catholic University.

## **The Naqshbandi tradition and Fethullah Gülen**

Philipp Bruckmayr, Vienna, Austria

My recent study of the role of Islamic literary tradition in Gülen's discourse has come to the conclusion that among Sufis who can be associated with a particular brotherhood's tradition, Naqshbandis and former adepts, who have eventually decided to leave the brotherhood's framework to blaze their own trails, feature most prominent in his writings. Dealing with Gülen's view and presentation of these figures, as well as measuring their thought's influence on Gülen, should be of interest for several reasons. Firstly, Gülen himself is perceived as both a scholarly and, although staying clear from intermingling in politics, a definitely this-worldly Sufi. Similarly, the Naqshbandiyya came to refer to itself as *tariqa al-'ulamā'* (brotherhood of scholars), and always discouraged disengagement of its members from worldly affairs. Secondly, the brotherhood was not only known for its strong emphasis on correct religious practice and dogma, but some of its members were also at the forefront of major Muslim reform missions, both on the purely religious plain as well as in the political realm, as is best exemplified by the support of and bearing on the reforms of the Ottoman Sultans Selim III and Mahmud II by some of its members. As Gülen has been fully endorsing the role of renewal or reform of some of these scholars, it seems to be useful to look for differences and similarities between their agendas and his. Still, a third aspect appears to be noteworthy. Those major Muslim groups tracing their origins to the former Naqshbandis Said Nursi and Shāh Walī Allāh, although mostly exhibiting a strong identification with the Sufi aspect of their respective eponym or subject of particular reverence, have all acquired a form and self-image completely different from organized Sufism, something which also applies to the Gülen movement.

### **Philipp Bruckmayr**

PhD Candidate

Institute of Oriental Studies, University of Vienna

PhD Candidate in Arabic & Islamic Studies. Currently pursuing research on the historical and religious development of Cambodia's Cham Muslim minority. Winner of the third prize of the Young Scholar Awards of the Dutch *Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World (ISIM) Review* in 2007 and contributor to the *Muslim Civilisation Abstracts* program of the Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations (Aga Khan University London) in 2008.

## **Sufism and Fethullah Gülen**

Mehmet Y. Şeker, Melbourne

Sufism, as the ‘science of the heart’, continues to attract the attention of thinkers, writers and aspirants in our modern world. The dynamics of the human ‘heart’ as the node of spiritual life, central in the understanding of the metaphysical realm in Islam, is what underpins much of the practical experience of Sufism. This paper will explore the key facets of Sufism as the life lived at the level of the heart, highlighting key terminology and concepts that have come to be accepted throughout the ages. Moreover, it will illustrate the thoughts and approaches to Sufism of Fethullah Gülen, modern day scholar and thinker, and locate key elements of such a spiritual life in his esteemed personality.

### **Mehmet Y. Şeker**

Theologian, Author, PhD Candidate

Australian Catholic University, Melbourne

Mehmet Seker was born in Tavsanlı, Turkey in 1969. Having undertaken a Bachelor of Theology at Ankara University, Turkey, he completed his Masters degree at Sakarya University in 1999, examining in his thesis, *Satan According to the Islamic Point of View*. This was later published as a book in both Turkish and English. He has authored several other books. Having spent seven years living under the auspices of Fethullah Gülen, he studied various Islamic sciences from the primary sources in Arabic and in Turkish. Mr Seker went on to spend five years in the USA. He currently resides in Melbourne, Australia. He is a regular columnist for *ZAMAN Australia* weekly newspaper and is currently working on his PhD thesis on *The Qur'anic Origin of Sufism*. He is frequently invited to speak at conferences and workshops nationwide.

**Not Just Talking Heads: The Gülen Movement Translating Rhetoric into Action**

David Tittensor, Melbourne

A young man from South Africa I met in Turkey told me that in recent times he had his worldview completely changed. Previously, due to apartheid he disliked and distrusted all white people and because of the media coverage regarding Islam he simply understood that it is a religion of violence. However, these days he says he knows better. How? For three years he attended and graduated from a Turkish High School founded by teachers who follow the philosophy of Fethullah Gülen, a Turkish Muslim Scholar and intellectual. Since the 1990s Gülen's humanitarian outlook which emphasises both tolerance and dialogue between faiths, has inspired thousands of teachers develop and service more than 800 schools across five continents with aim of breaking down both religious and ethnic barriers. In this paper, drawing on interviews with these globetrotting teachers and the student case study outlined above, I will seek to illustrate that how Gülen has developed a dialogic philosophy of action that goes beyond rhetoric.

**David Tittensor, PhD Candidate**

PhD Candidate

Monash University, Melbourne

David is currently writing his PhD dissertation on the Gülen Movement of which the working title is: 'New Islamic philanthropy and the vision of social development through self-development: a study of the Gülen Movement's investment in schools and colleges in Turkey and abroad'.

## **Externalism and Internalism Reconsidered Fethullah Gülen: A Case Study**

Dr. Hasan Hörküç, Durham, United Kingdom

Fethullah Gülen is a Muslim scholar and founder of one of the most renowned faith-based movements in modern Turkish history. The movement seeks to raise religious consciousness through the development of an education system and civil society based on Gülen's ideas. Gülen attempted to develop guidelines for morally appropriate or "right" behaviour of individuals within a complex society. The Gülen movement has also garnered considerable attention in the wider Muslim world, and has in recent years become the subject of debate and research among an increasing number of academics in the field, eager to understand the religious underpinnings of the movement and what attracts people to it. They are particularly known by their tireless efforts for inter-faith activities all over the world despite all the critics they should go through.

One should look at Gülen's discourse to see underlying causes of the attention he receives from the public and inter-faith activities based on his ideas. This paper is an attempt to study and analyse Fethullah Gülen's discourse on religious 'internalism' and 'externalism'. Islam is a religion with fundamental views on humankind, society and history. Some of its teachings are germane to the collective aspects of human life and how man the believer is to regulate various aspects of his interactions with others in order to create the 'ideal society' for this life and the hereafter. The summary of how this – the idea of an ideal society – has been implemented in practice throughout Islamic history is far beyond the scope of this study. The aim of this paper is to distinguish the politically-oriented, religiously externalist ideas of social reform from the faith-based internalist notion of personal moral reform, thus highlighting and clarifying Gülen's unique approach to social change as compared with the majority of his contemporaries. To this end, it attempts a general survey of major internalist and externalist currents and uses this as a backdrop against which the idiosyncratically internalist approach of Gülen can be appraised. We also aim to analyse whether Gülen was descriptive in his formula or prescriptive. This will provide us with some insight into his uncompromisingly faith-based discourse, which accords primacy to personal moral development over all other considerations.

### **Dr. Hasan Hörküç**

Research Fellow

Durham University, UK

Research Fellow in Islamic and comparative studies. Director of Durham University Risale-i Nur Studies Programme. Especially specialised in Nursian studies, the origins and development of Nursian exegesis, the history of Nursian studies, Nursian movement and afterwards. Fethullah Gülen and his discourse; the evolution of Sufi thought and discourses of Ghazali, Al-Rumi, Al-Arabi, Shirazi (Mulla Sadra), Al Jilani, and Imam Sirhindi etc are the other areas of studies he is interested in. His most recent publication is Horkuc, Hasan & Turner, Colin, *Said Nursi: Makers of Islamic Civilisation*, Oxford University Press, 2009.

## **Islam and Science: Reclaiming a Lost Legacy**

Jonathan Lyons, Washington, DC, USA

Medieval Muslim science and philosophy, encouraged by Islam itself, laid the basis for what is generally seen as Western civilization. Yet, this invaluable legacy has largely been obscured by the anti-Muslim sentiment that historically predominates in both public and academic discourse. This wilful forgetting of the Muslim intellectual tradition has contributed to today's common perception that Islam is inherently anti-science and anti-modern. Rebalancing the relationship between the Islamic world and the West today requires a critical re-examination of the history of ideas and the restoration of the rightful place of Islam in the global history of science. This, in turn, also requires us to rephrase the rhetorical question that has long predominated in the West – *What's wrong with Islam?* – with the more uncomfortable query, *What's wrong with us?*

### **Jonathan Lyons**

Lecturer, George Mason University, Washington, DC

PhD Candidate, Monash University, Melbourne

After more than twenty years as an editor and foreign correspondent for Reuters, much of it in Turkey, Iran, Russia and Indonesia Jonathan now lives in Washington, DC, where he teaches Islamic studies part-time at George Mason University. *The House of Wisdom: How the Arabs Transformed Western Civilization* is his second book. His first, *Answering Only to God: Faith and Freedom in 21st-Century Iran*, co-authored with Geneive Abdo, was published by Henry Holt and Co. in 2003

Jonathan is affiliated with the Global Terrorism Research Centre (GTReC) and the Centre for Islam and the Modern World at Monash (CIMOW) where is completing his doctorate in sociology of religion.

PANEL 3: PERSPECTIVES ON DIALOGUE

**Interfaith dialogue and the meeting of hearts**

Professor Anne Hunt, Melbourne

God is One; there is no Other. This monotheistic faith we share. But, while we believe in and worship the one God, we approach the mystery of God from different perspectives; we see it, so to speak, through different lenses, seeing and privileging somewhat different aspects of the Godhead. Therein lie the precious insights that each of us has to offer to each other. Clearly, one of distinguishing features of the Christian faith is the understanding that God is Trinity, by which we mean that the One God exists in three ‘persons’ (‘persons’ for want of a better word). Christians are monotheists, but they are *trinitarian* monotheists. For us, the divine Oneness is not the last word about the Godhead. We believe that Jesus of Nazareth was the Word of God made human, that he is truly and fully God, as well as being truly and fully human. It is through Jesus that Christians came to believe that the divine Oneness admits a threeness, an otherness, a diversity, and mutual exchange of love *within* the Godhead. This faith in God as Trinity has far-reaching ramifications for Christian life. It inspires us to respect otherness and to treasure diversity. It motivates us to enter, with respect and with love, into dialogue with our brothers and sisters of other faiths. In ecumenical dialogue in recent years (i.e., dialogue between the different Christian denominations), the notion of “spiritual ecumenism” has become a key expression, indeed a core value. It highlights the importance of a meeting of *hearts* for genuine dialogue, for only then can we really appreciate each other’s faith and spirituality. I suggest that this same principle also applies to interfaith dialogue. The issue then is how to facilitate the meeting of hearts.

**Professor Anne Hunt OAM,**

Professor of Theology and Philosophy

Dean of the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy, Australian Catholic University, Melbourne

Professor Anne Hunt OAM is the newly-appointed Dean of Theology and Philosophy at Australian Catholic University. Her area of special interest is Trinitarian theology. Her most recent book is *The Trinity: Nexus of the Mysteries of Christian Faith* (Orbis, 2005). She is currently working on another book on Trinitarian theology, focussing on the mystery of the Trinity as gleaned through the experience of those mystics who have had distinctly Trinitarian insights. She also has a particular interest in the visual arts as a medium for communicating the mysteries of faith and has prepared a book on the mystery of the Trinity as expressed in the visual arts.

## **Gülen's Philosophy on Compassion and Love and the Momentous Role of Dialogue in Constructing Global Peace**

Mahsheed Ansari, Sydney

*"Like a Messiah, revive people with your breath"* (F. Gülen)

The current world order appears bleak. There is discord, division and danger of yet another war. Mayhem is prevalent therefore on the myriad of socio-economic, environmental and political facets wherein instability dominates. Problems are compounded further in the third world countries; as a result, the threat to global peace may appear imminent. Against such backdrop, the ramifications can be equally gloomy. Discord inherently leaves open many windows of opportunity for the 'under-dog' to be unleashed, cause chaos and put up resistance to the perceived 'tyrannies that descend from the above'.

In such a desolate state, there is a deep yearning for harmony, order, balance and therefore for real peace. Such a world in its state of ineffectiveness is in quest of an alternative that is effective. It needs an approach that is practical, adaptable and measurable, and a method which underpins principles with universal echoes, which every corner, every state, and every level of development can embrace. In other words, it needs a philosophy which transcends the shackles of time and therefore grounds permanence in order, permanence in peace.

At the backdrop of this austere global situation, which has been over sensationalised as the 'clash of civilisations', many advocates of peace would argue that dialogue is critical in the quest to bridge the gaps of unawareness between people. It can be the vehicle for the peace process. In the Muslim world, the unique, innovative approach and outlook of one man has dominated the discussion in this field. Muhammad Fethullah Gülen, a Muslim Turkish scholar from the East, comes with a paradigm-shifting remedy: to open hearts and minds with kindness and compassion that is demonstrated with love and benevolence. He has a unique proposal for world peace: 'Christ-like compassion' in line with the Muhammadan pbuh way and tradition. Through this unique approach to dialogue he has made a lasting impact that has inspired thousands of people to collaborate with others for the sake of global peace.

This paper will examine the philosophical beliefs that underpin Gülen's thought. What is the depth in such thought, which increasingly attracts millions of followers worldwide? The focus will be in particular on the notion of love and compassion that is characteristic of the movement. Gülen calls for a united collaborative effort in order to attain balance, harmony and global peace. This will be critically analysed with the help of examples from the volunteers' movement.

According to Gülen, a real collaborative effort means embodying a state of selflessness and compassion that enables one to 'be like a messiah reviving people with each breath'.

**Mahsheed Ansari**

PhD Candidate, Sydney University

Mahsheed Ansari completed an undergraduate degree in Arts majoring in History, Politics and Philosophy, and a Bachelor of Laws, from the University of Western Sydney. She currently holds a Practising Certificate in Law in NSW and is a registered Legal Practitioner and Solicitor. She has worked in various industries, more particularly in the areas of Law, youth and social work, migration, aged care and, more recently, as a High School teacher of 'Religion and Values' in Sydney. Her latest employment is as a Family Law Solicitor in Western Sydney. She is currently completing her postgraduate Masters degree in Arabic & Islamic Studies at Sydney University.

## **Inter- or Intra- Religious Dialogue?**

Associate Professor Gerard Hall, Brisbane

The paper examines obstacles to dialogue especially between Christians and Muslims. Such obstacles arise from doctrinal differences as well as historical, cultural and political complexities. If interreligious dialogue is to succeed, it must not only deal with doctrinal issues, but create the circumstances in which people of diverse religious traditions may come to understanding (not necessarily agreement). For this, Raimon Panikkar suggests that a different kind of hermeneutic—what he calls “diatopical hermeneutics”—is required. Elements of this type of religious encounter include humility, empathy and hospitality—or what Panikkar calls *intra*-religious dialogue. These are examined in relation to Islamic-Christian dialogue.

### **Associate Professor Gerard Hall**

Associate Professor, School of Theology  
Australian Catholic University, Brisbane

Gerard Hall is a Catholic priest (Marist) and Associate Professor at St Paul’s Theological College, Australian Catholic University, Brisbane. He is a member of Brisbane Archdiocesan Commission on Ecumenism and Interreligious Relations and the Asia-Pacific Centre for Interreligious Relations. He has recently been involved in the International Spirit of Religion Project inspired by interfaith scholar, Raimon Panikkar.

*PANEL 4: FETHULLAH GÜLEN AND INTERFAITH DIALOGUE*

**A Chance For A Step Forward In Dialogue or Islam’s Trojan Horse?: Fethullah Gülen and Interfaith Dialogue**

Mehmet Özalp, Sydney

Fethullah Gülen is considered one of the most important and influential spiritual leaders of our time advocating dialogue and understanding between faiths and cultures. In recent years though, a number of articles have been published arguing that behind the facade of dialogue lies a fundamentalist and missionary agenda. In support of their claims, these articles use various court cases and allegations attributed to Fethullah Gülen and his followers in Turkey. Then, a generalisation is made to brand anyone or any organisation inspired by the teachings of Fethullah Gülen as “the Trojan Horse of Islam” implying that ultimately the aim is to conquer the castle from within.

In this paper, I will critically analyse this claim by examining the relationship between religion and state in Turkey; how Fethullah Gülen’s call for dialogue began in early 90s in order to end the long-existing antagonism between “religious” and “secularist” camps in Turkish society; and, more importantly, what has been the result of Gülen’s dialogue activities fifteen years down the track. I will then move to explore how the call for dialogue extended to the whole world where Gülen has become a catalyst to accentuate interfaith dialogue to new levels in the post 9/11 world.

**Mehmet Özalp**

Author, PhD Candidate in Islamic Theology  
Sydney University

Mehmet Özalp has been involved in social, cultural and religious work since 1991 as one of the co-founders of Affinity Intercultural Foundation, president of Affinity (2001-2007), director and the serving Executive Officer of Affinity Intercultural Foundation (present). He teaches religious and Islamic studies since 1992. He has publications, public lectures and talks, conference presentations about Islamic theology, history and contemporary issues on Islam and Muslims. Mehmet is the author of two books: *101 Questions You Asked About Islam* and *Islam in the Modern World*.

## **Principles of Dialogue in the Fethullah Gülen's Thought**

Züleyha Keskin, Sydney

Every era brings with it its unique challenges that societies and humanity as a whole has to grapple with. These challenges are addressed by people of extraordinary vision and activism. One of the most imperative challenges in our time is how people of different cultures and faiths could peacefully coexist in the era of globalisation.

Fethullah Gülen is a visionary spiritual leader who has energised the slow-progressing field of interfaith and intercultural dialogue. In doing so he has set new approaches and principles emerging from his Islamic tradition. In this paper, I will identify and outline principles of dialogue according to Gülen's thought and explain the implications of these principles for dialogue activists.

### **Züleyha Keskin**

Vice President, Affinity Intercultural Foundation  
Sydney

Züleyha completed her degree in Pharmacy and went on to complete her Masters in the Arabic and Islamic Studies Department at the University of Sydney, writing her thesis on "Interfaith Dialogue from a Muslim Perspective". She is frequently requested to do talks at churches, schools and other functions regarding dialogue and Islamic issues. Zuleyha is the Vice President and Team Executive Manager of the Affinity Intercultural Foundation.

## **Interpreting the Gülen Movement Within The Context Of Modern Islamic Thought and Social Movements**

Professor Greg Barton, Melbourne

Over the past decade the Gülen movement has been increasingly studied and discussed by academics in western universities, just as it has itself become significantly more self-reflexive and open. Nevertheless, the movement is still widely misunderstood. This is in large part because of its unusual attributes and unique scale and scope – it is literally without parallel. This paper seeks to locate the Gülen Movement in the broader context of Islamic thought and social movements, and within its own Turkish context, in order to facilitate better understanding of its true nature and character. The paper concludes by arguing that the Gülen Movement, together with the movement/s associated with Said Nursi that preceded it, represents an essentially progressive Islamic movement that parallels the Islamic modernism initiated by Afghani and Abduh but one that has ultimately proven more complete and sustainable.

### **Professor Greg Barton**

Herb Feith Research Professor for the Study of Indonesia  
Political and Social Inquiry, Faculty of Arts, Monash University

Dr Greg Barton joined Monash University as the *Herb Feith Research Professor for the Study of Indonesia* in January 2007, based in the school of Political and Social Inquiry (PSI) in the Faculty of Arts. At Monash Greg is Acting Director of the *Centre for Islam and the Modern World* ([www.arts.monash.edu.au/politics/cimow](http://www.arts.monash.edu.au/politics/cimow)) and *Deputy UNESCO Chair in Interreligious and Intercultural Relations – Asia Pacific*. Greg teaches undergraduate and postgraduate units on the politics of the Muslim world. His research is primarily focussed on religion and modernity with a particular interest in progressive Islamic thought and social movements and in contemporary Indonesian society and politics. Greg has an abiding interest in inter-faith dialogue with a particular interest in Muslim-Christian relations. He also teaches and researches in the field of counter-terrorism and has a deep interest in comparative politics. For some years he has been engaged in a comparative study of Islam and social movements in Indonesia and Turkey and is extending this comparative research to include South Asia.

Greg has written or edited five books and published dozens of refereed articles and book chapters in this field. His biography of Abdurrahman Wahid *Abdurrahman Wahid, Muslim Democrat, Indonesian President: a view from the inside*, was published in 2002; *Indonesia's Struggle: Jemaah Islamiyah and the Soul of Islam*, was published in 2004. He is currently working on two other book projects: *Progressive Islamic thought and social movements in Indonesia and Turkey* and *Islam's Other Nation: a fresh look at Indonesia*.

**Muslims, Catholics and The Common Purpose of Justice and Peace**

Associate Professor Kath Engebretson, Melbourne

This paper traces Catholic teaching about Islam since the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) particularly focusing on those texts from Vatican II (*Nostra Aetate* and *Lumen Gentium* in particular) and those post-conciliar papal speeches and writings that have promoted the search for common ground and have advanced dialogue. This is put into the context of Catholic social teaching, particularly showing that the call for inter-faith understanding and dialogue is a call for justice. In light of this, the principles of human dignity, freedom of religion and conscience, the fight against poverty and the quest for peace, are analysed from the Qur'an and Catholic social teaching. Into this analysis is woven supporting teachings of Fethullah Gülen or commentaries on his teaching, in order to illustrate that there is a way forward for Catholics and Muslims in the dialogue of action for a more just and peaceful world.

**Assoc. Prof. Kath Engebretson**

Lecturer, School of Religious Education

Australian Catholic University, Melbourne

Kath Engebretson is a scholar, researcher, writer, teacher and teacher educator in the field of religious education and religious studies. Her latest book is *In Your Shoes: Inter-faith Education for Australian Schools and Universities*. Her writing and research have appeared for some years in Australian and International journals.

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

Salih Yücel, Melbourne

Through the turbulent era leading up to the demise of the Ottoman Empire and the climax of European colonisation, 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 *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 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 / institutionalization and cultural acceptance of the dialogue movement.

### **Dr. Salih Yücel**

Lecturer

Centre for Studies in Religion and Theology, Monash University, Melbourne

Salih Yücel completed his BA (University of Ankara in 1982) and MA (University of Sydney in 1996) in Islamic Studies, and received his PhD in Boston University in 2007. Currently, he is lecturer in the Centre for Studies in Religion and Theology at Monash University. He worked as the cofounder, director, and consultant of the interfaith dialogue foundations and pastoral care consultant for Muslim patients in Harvard Medical School's hospitals.

## **Catholicism, *Nostra Aetate*, and Interreligious Dialogue: From Multi-culturalism to Interculturalism**

Constant J. Mews, Melbourne

In this paper, I explore the theological roots of *Nostra Aetate* and comparing its teaching on catholic attitudes to other religions with past policies of the theological church. I consider the various meanings that have been given to the notion of "catholic" Christianity, arguing that too often it has been understood as Roman rather than as catholic or universal Christianity. I consider parallels between Islam and the development of catholic Christianity, in particular the way in which catholic Christianity has often evolved out of an interaction between different religious traditions. I consider the opportunity presented by dialogue with Islam, and argue that we need to move beyond respect for multi-culturalism towards a genuine interculturalism, in which we profit from genuine exchange between two religions.

### **Prof. Constant J. Mews**

Director, Centre for Studies in Religion and Theology  
Monash University, Melbourne

Constant Mews is a specialist in the religion, thought and culture of medieval Christian Europe, but has a strong interest in interreligious and intercultural dialogue both within the medieval and contemporary period.

**Towards a New Interpretation of Islamic Politico-Legal Philosophy on the State in the Light of Fethullah Gülen's Ijtihad**

Associate Professor İhsan Yılmaz, İstanbul, Turkey

Fethullah Gülen has stayed away from ideologisation and instrumentalisation of religion in politics. While Islamists had conceived Islam as identity, ideology and politics and focused on religion instead of religiosity, Gülen had been harshly critical of Islamists. He clearly discerns political ambition from religious activism. In his view, in Islam it is not possible to limit the concept of governance and politics into a single paradigm, unlike the principles of faith and the pillars of Islam. Gülen also puts that in this age Islam does not need a state support to survive. He puts that “(i)f a state... gives the opportunity to its citizens to practice their religion and supports them in their thinking, learning, and practice, this system is not considered to be against the teaching of the Qur’an. In the presence of such a state there is no need to seek an alternative state” (Gülen 2005: 451). He also emphasizes that establishing an Islamic state is not a religious duty for Muslim individuals and that in this age civil society can independently maintain Islam even where Muslims are not in majority. This paper argues that in the light of the literature on Islamic political philosophy which underscores the indivisible unity of *din wa dawla* (religion and state), Gülen’s views on state viz. Islam are products of his new *ijtihad* and he is gradually developing a new jurisprudential understanding that espouses the idea of mutual autonomy of state and Islam. In this renewed understanding, he may be aiming to put the emphasis on *ulama* (religious scholars) instead of the statesmen which was may be an aim of the authentic Islam as highlighted in the prophetic saying (*hadith*): *al-ulama warasatul anbiya* (scholars are the successors & inheritors of the prophets).

**Associate Professor İhsan Yılmaz**

Lecturer

Political Science Department, Fatih University

İhsan Yılmaz is a political scientist. He received his BA in Political Science and International Relations from the Bosphorus University in 1994 and completed his PhD at the Faculty of Law and Social Sciences SOAS, University of London in 1999. He then worked at the University of Oxford as a fellow between 1999 and 2001 and he taught Turkish government and politics, legal sociology, comparative law and Islamic law at SOAS, University of London between 2001 and 2008. He was also the Deputy Chair of the Centre for Ethnic Minority Studies at SOAS (2003-2008) and the director of the London Centre for Social Studies (2003-2008). Currently, he is a lecturer in the Department of Political Science and Public Administration at Fatih University, İstanbul. Dr Yılmaz is also a regular columnist of Today’s ZAMAN, an English language daily published in Turkey.

## **Gülen-inspired Schools in Australia: Educational Vision and Funding**

Çemen Polat, Sydney

The establishment and foundation of Gülen inspired schools began in Australia in 1996. By 2009, 16 Gülen inspired schools had been established in Australia. Gülen schools have produced a high standard of education in the short period since their establishment. This paper endeavors to examine the potential reasons for opening private Turkish schools in an advanced economy such as Australia, a nation with quality education. It aims to illustrate the main purpose of Gülen's educational vision, which is the "marriage of mind and heart". Therefore, along with academic excellence in education, Gülen inspired schools in Australia impart universal ethical values. It is expected that this vision will help establish a world of peace where "people love love and hate hatred". The Gülen inspired schools in Australia espouse a vision of nurturing a 'Golden Generation' who will avoid a predicted 'Clash of civilization'.

Gülen schools have been established in every continent of the world. Usually the funding system of Gülen schools is associated with suspicion and misunderstanding. However, Australia's unique private education funding system for both establishing and managing private schools has supported rapid establishment of Gülen schools between 1996 and 2008. The Howard Government encouraged non-government schooling through its funding policies between 1996 and 2007. A neo-liberal approach was used by the Howard government to promote quality, choice and equality within education. In 2008 the Rudd government continued this policy. Australia exhibits a school choice philosophy that promotes parental choice through the funding of private schools.

As well as government, other sources of finance in the Gülen inspired schools in Australia are; donations provided by committed and generous Turkish communities in Australia; trustees, working middle class volunteers; teachers who are willing to receive lower levels of remuneration than other teachers; and school fees. Each Australian state has its own education funding system and works autonomously from other states.

Consequently, the second part of this paper will explore the sources of funds for Gülen inspired schools in Australia.

### **Çemen Polat**

Senior Economics and Business Studies Teacher and Research Student

Şule College, Sydney

Çemen studied Bachelor of Economics and Business Administration between 1992 and 1996. In 2002 she extended her study and completed Master of Teaching in Social Sciences at the University of Sydney. Since 2003 Çemen has been teaching Senior Economics and Business Studies and has also been involved in administrative duties. She has been appointed as HSC Economics marker by NSW Board of Studies for the past three years. Currently, she is undertaking a research project on 'The Worldwide Turkish School Movement: Funding and Features'.

*CONCLUDING PLENARY*

**Secularisation: a matter of common interest and concern for Muslims and Christians**

Professor Neil Ormerod, Sydney

The recent analysis of the rise of secularisation in the West by Charles Taylor (*A secular age*) provides a framework for evaluating the gains and losses evident in that rise. Christians and Muslims need to address the issues of secularisation and may find in Taylor's work resources for distinguishing both progress and decline in our modern context. It can help us to distinguish different arenas for action and cooperation, as well as opening up points of dialogue between our two religious traditions.

**Prof. Neil Ormerod**

Professor of Theology

Australian Catholic University

Neil Ormerod is Professor of Theology at Australian Catholic University. He is widely published in Australia and overseas. His book, *Creation, Grace and Redemption*, received an honorable mention at the American Catholic Press Association Awards (2008) His next book, with Pentecostal theologian, Shane Clifton entitled *Globalization and the Mission of the Church* (T&T Clark) will be published in 2009

***PUBLIC LECTURE***

**WHERE TO NOW? WAYS FORWARD FOR INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE**

REV. DR THOMAS MICHEL SJ

**Rev. Dr Thomas Michel SJ**

Woodstock Theological Centre, Georgetown University, Washington, DC

Based in Ankara, Turkey

After completing his doctorate in Islamic thought at the University of Chicago in 1978, Thomas Michel taught at Sanata Dharma University in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. In 1981 he was appointed to the Asia Desk of the Vatican Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and in 1988, became Head of the Office for Islam in the same Vatican department. In 1986, he also became Director of the Jesuit Secretariat for Interreligious Dialogue in Rome, Italy. Thomas Michel has had extensive contact with the Gülen movement and is today a fellow of the Woodstock Theological Center at Georgetown University, based in Ankara, Turkey. From 1994, he has also served as Executive Secretary of the Office for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences in Bangkok, Thailand.

**Response: Prof. Joseph Camilleri:**

Director of the Centre for Dialogue, La Trobe University, Melbourne

Prof Joseph Anthony Camilleri is Professor of International Relations and founding Director of the Centre for Dialogue, La Trobe University; Fellow of the Australian Academy of Social Sciences; author of numerous books on international relations, and the role of religion and culture. He chairs the Editorial Committee of the scholarly journal *Global change, Peace and Security*. He is the recipient of St Michael's Award for distinguished service to the community, and the Victorian Government's Award for his contribution to multicultural harmony.