



27.10.07

SATURDAY

‘A station above that of angels’: the Vision of Islamic Education within Pluralistic Societies in the Thought of Fethullah Gülen. A Study of Contrasts between Turkey and the UK

by Ian G. Williams

Panel:
Education and Common
Values in Practice

Venue:
D202,
Clement House, LSE

26.10.07 Panels	Parallel Session 1	Parallel Session 2
9:30-11:30		Presentation: 04
13:00-15:00		
15:10-17:00		

Gülen cites ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib as saying, ‘... if a person’s intellect dominates his or her desire and ferocity, he or she rises to a station above that of angels ...’.

Both historically as well as in modern contexts Muslim education is not characterised by uniformity but rather by a plurality of actors, institutions, ideas and political milieus. The two central questions are: What is required to live as a Muslim in the present world? Who is qualified to teach in this time? The debate over the nature and purpose of Islamic education is no recent phenomenon. It has been conducted for the past two centuries throughout the Islamic world: the transmission of both spiritual and empirical knowledge has always been dependent upon the support of religious, social and political authorities.

Based on fieldwork in Turkey and the UK amongst schools associated with the Gülen movement, examination of national government policies and on readings of contemporary Muslim educationalists, this paper seeks to examine the ideals of Fethullah Gülen on contemporary Islamic and religious education. It reports critically on the contribution of these schools to social cohesion, inter-religious dialogue and common ambitions for every child and student.

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