



House of
Lords



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27.10.07

SATURDAY

The Place of the Gülen Movement in the Intellectual History of Islam, Particularly in Relation to Islam's Confrontation with Postmodernism

by Bruce Eldridge

Panel:
Evaluation of Gülen's
Thought and Methodology

Venue:
Old Theatre,
LSE

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

The world is changing at an unprecedented rate. Established religions are struggling to come to terms with societies that are increasingly secular and sceptical about the certainties of the past. They are struggling to come to terms with the new modes and speeds of communication and the moods and ideas that can now be spread so fast. How Islam will eventually respond to the post-modern world is still to be determined. Some want nothing to do with that world, others understand the need to take the opportunities and rise to the challenges. Fethullah Gülen is one of the latter.

This paper places the Gülen movement and Fethullah Gülen himself in particular, within the context of Islam's confrontation with modernity and post-modernity. It demonstrates Gülen's awareness of Islam's intellectual legacy and the extent to which he utilises the methodologies of earlier scholars. Gülen interprets Islam's foundational texts in a way that picks out their relevance to today's world. He is unafraid to engage with other philosophies and faith communities. The schools established by his followers have developed curricula designed to produce the next generation of leaders. Gülen envisions a world where people are deeply grounded in a moral and ethical tradition, where humility and service are highly valued and where reason, science and technology are fully utilised for the benefit of all. This paper shows that when confronted by the uncertainties and relativities of postmodernism, Gülen has located a middle way able to sustain itself in a globalised, postmodern world while remaining true to its Islamic heritage.

Bruce Eldridge

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Bruce Eldridge: (graduated in social work at University of South Australia, 1984; some years of social work; then aged care chaplaincy and pastoral ministry with the Uniting Church in Australia) Coordinator of Pastoral Care with Ballarat Health Services in rural Victoria, Australia. He carries responsibility for ensuring that all patients and residents, regardless of religious background, have access to relevant, effective spiritual support. To that end he successfully petitioned for a prayer room at the Ballarat Base Hospital for the use of Muslims – staff as well as patients and their families.

Eldridge has recently completed a course in theology at the Australian Catholic University and is currently doing a Masters programme there. His current area of interest is comparative religion, in particular the three 'Abrahamic' religions.