

How the Hizmet works:
Islam, dialogue and the Gülen movement
in Australia

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ABSTRACT

The story of the Gülen Movement in Australia has never been documented in any great detail and consequently is not well known. It deserves study for a number of reasons, not least being that the pioneering nature of the *hizmet*, as it likes to refer to itself (*hizmet* means service) and the fact that 'New World' Australian society is frequently at the leading edge of social change on many issues. As is generally the pattern around the world, *hizmet* activities in Australia initially focused on education. Alongside education, the other major focus of activity of the *hizmet* in Australia has been dialogue and bridge-building. In 2000, the Melbourne-based Australian Intercultural Society (AIS) was established, only six years after the pioneering Journalists and Writers and Foundation (Gazeteciler ve Yazarlar Vakfi – JWF) was set up in Turkey. This was followed in 2001 with the establishment of the Affinity Intercultural Foundation (AIF) in Sydney.

Gülen Movement activities in Australia follow a familiar pattern but are shaped by local factors. As elsewhere, the movement takes the form of a loose semi-autonomous network directed by local initiative but global in inspiration. Given the fact that only 3,000-4,000 people - around five percent of the 60,000 Turkish-Australians are thought to be closely affiliated

with the movement in Australia, the achievements are remarkable by any measure. In global terms (in Turkey and around the world, including Australia) the movement represents one of the world's most significant examples of progressive civil society Islamic activism. It displays strong parallels with earlier forms of religious philanthropy in the West over the past four centuries and represents an important counterpoint to Samuel Huntington's 'clash of civilizations' thesis.

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The story of the Gülen movement in Australia has never been documented in detail and consequently is not well known. It deserves study for a number of reasons, not least being that the pioneering nature of the *hizmet*, as it likes to refer to itself (*hizmet* means service) and the fact that 'New World' Australian society is frequently at the leading edge of social change on many issues.¹ With around 60,000 people identifying as Turkish-Australians the absolute size of the community is several fold smaller than that of the Turkish-American community but represents a significantly larger proportion of the national population (0.3 percent of the Australian population of 21 million). Australia is fifteen times smaller than the USA but, leaving aside New York, Los Angeles and Chicago, the cities of Melbourne, Victoria, and Sydney, NSW, are comparable with large American cities, and with Turkish populations in excess of 26,000 and 22,000 respectively, are home to Turkish communities larger than most, if not all, those found in US cities. At the same time, whilst less than one in five Muslim-Australians have Turkish heritage, their national profile, thanks in large part to the work of the *hizmet*, is much greater than these numbers would suggest.

Evidence of this can be found in recent activities such as the several dozen public Ramadan *iftar* fast-breaking dinners held in September 2008. In Melbourne these included the first ever *iftar*

held at Government House, hosted by the Governor of Victoria, the second Australian Federal Police *iftar*, the fourth Victoria Police *iftar*, the first Turkish Consulate public inter-faith *iftar*, the first Masonic Lodge *iftar*, and so forth. 2008 also saw the commencement of the *Fethullah Gülen Chair in the Study of Islam and Muslim-Catholic Relations* at the Australia Catholic University and a similar, hizmet sponsored, *Lectureship in Islamic Studies* at Monash University

Turkish migration to Australia began in 1967 with large numbers of Turks settling in the 1970s and 1980s, with inflows peaking in 1976 but continuing in a steady stream thereafter through to the present. In the first two decades Turkish migrants to Australia came predominantly from rural Anatolia. At that stage, influenced by the experience of Germany, most expected to ‘come for two years and then return to Turkey’. Most settled permanently and raised families.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s the dynamic started to change as significant numbers of urban Turks begin to arrive. Amongst these urban Turkish migrants were followers of Fetullah Gülen. As has been general the pattern around the world, hizmet activities in Australian initially focussed on education.

The history of the hizmet in Australia is interesting for a number of reasons not least being that it represents a stand-alone case study of how the social and organisational dynamics of the hizmet work. The hizmet continues to be widely misunderstood, and in some circles, particularly in Turkey, viewed with suspicion rising in part because of misunderstandings about how it functions. The organization and direction of its many far-flung activities, the financial sponsorship that supports them, and the individual and group motivations of hizmet members represent a mystery to most onlookers. For most it presents a social movement unlike any other that they have encountered. Arguably no social organization or movement is entirely unique just as no big idea is truly unique, but for all intents and purposes the hizmet does represent a unique development.² To be properly understood it needs to be read in the

broader context of not just Muslim history but the history of religious philanthropy more generally. Strong parallels can be found between the activism of the *hizmet* over the past three decades and the development of Christian and Jewish philanthropy, in particular educational philanthropy, over the past three centuries.³ Viewed in this broader context of the underlying dynamic and vision of the *hizmet* does not appear so mysterious. Most who encounter it, however, particularly in Turkey and Central Asia do not view it through this frame of reference. And sadly, in the West, there was much too much readiness to view Islam as an existential other and consequently too little preparedness to recognize the many parallels between the three Abrahamic faiths of Islam, Judaism and Christianity, and between Muslim social movements and Western religious social movements.

One of the causes for misunderstanding about the *hizmet* is that its social dynamics are difficult to explain. Although not a particularly secretive organization, and in fact in recent years it is strikingly self-reflexive and open organization, the dynamics of the movement remain mysterious to most outsiders.⁴ After all, general experience would suggest that religious movements or social organization responsible for more than 500 schools and dozens of colleges and universities throughout Turkey across Central Asia and around the world must have a high degree of centralised coordination and unified planning.⁵ When one adds to that the extensive media and publication ventures associated with the *hizmet* it seems only natural to assume that it must be guided by a very astute CEO and board of management. It therefore follows that the Fethullah Gülen himself must necessarily be not merely an inspirational religious figure but also a brilliant organisational leader and astute businessman. In some respects, this assessment does hold true, but the details of the way in which Fethullah Gülen actually engages with the movement that has grown up around him run contrary to most expectations and do not fit the regular model of either religious organizations or business enterprises. There is no doubt that

much of the big picture vision and direction for the hizmet does come from Fethullah Gülen himself, but he nevertheless appears remarkably disengaged with the fine-grained detail of what is now a truly global network. Nor do any of his immediate associates, including those living with him in his rural retreat in Pennsylvania, appear to be functioning as hands-on executives. Rather, the hizmet appears to function just as Fethullah Gülen describes it as functioning. That is to say, it appears to be a loosely connected network of significantly autonomous and spontaneous local initiatives. These local initiatives are very aware of what many of their counterparts in the hizmet are doing, whether within the nation in which they are located, or in other nations around the world, and they frequently model themselves upon, and draw inspiration from, these other initiatives.

At the same time the entire hizmet network clearly draws considerable inspiration and motivation from the writing and teaching Gülen himself and from the movement's reading of the Koran and Sunnah, mediated to a considerable extent through the reading of *Risale-i Nur*. Funding for the various initiatives likewise appear to flow reasonably spontaneously and autonomously from local groups, whilst receiving some assistance from older hizmet communities of businessmen within Turkey. Foundational to the financial support of hizmet ventures is sustained, generous, giving by businessmen associated with the hizmet who understand it to be their 'calling' to work hard and produce wealth that can be used for the work of the hizmet.⁶ These businessmen, whose ranks now number in the thousands, typically donate 10 to 70 percent of annual income to the work of the hizmet.⁷ They belong to local *sobbet* communities with whom they meet on a daily basis for encouragement, fellowship, devotional studies and philanthropic planning (*intisare*), led by senior members serving as trustees (*mutevelli*), and in their personal commitment (*himmət*) enjoying remarkable social capital and sense of purpose.⁸ The various business enterprises associated with the hizmet such as the Zaman

newspaper group, Samanyolu Television and Isik Publishing, to name but some of the largest, are autonomous enterprises linked by social ties rather than by any formal business connections. The same can be said for the many NGOs associated with the hizmet.

A close examination of the development of hizmet in Australia reveals these underlying dynamics very clearly. It is then, precisely because what has happened in Australia is not unique in that it is instructive to look carefully at this particular case study. As is the case with many parallel developments in the hizmet around the globe the early story of the hizmet in Australia is tied up very closely with the story of one individual. This story and this person, Orhan Cicek, and his family, are simultaneously remarkable and ordinary at a number of levels. Remarkable because what has been achieved and the manner in which it has been achieved exceed the usual expectations that one might apply to religious philanthropy. Similarly, the determination and vision of the individual involved and, one might say - invoking an other religious philanthropic tradition - the sheer *chutzpah*, are truly remarkable. And yet, the pattern in Australia is a familiar one to people studying the hizmet around the world. And the individual involved is genuinely modest and unassuming. Because of the central role played by this individual, particularly in the first two decades of hizmet activism in Australia, and because of the illustrated the nature of this story it is worth spending a little attention to the personal story.

By 2008 the hizmet in Australia is estimated to involve several thousand people, including dozens who work full-time for its schools and NGOs. In 1981, when Orhan left Ankara for Melbourne, the hizmet had no presence in Australia. By then end of the decade a small but enthusiastic hizmet community had been established and the foundations laid for future growth. In 1985, prompted by concerns about delinquency amongst second-generation Turkish youth, Orhan established *The New Generation Youth Association*, based in the Melbourne suburbs of Richmond, Sunshine, Broadmeadows and Dandenong. Two years later, in 1987,

the *Light Tutoring Centre*, a free tuition centre aimed at Muslim students, was set up in inner-city Melbourne. Around this time, in December 1989, senior Gülen movement leader Mehmet Ali Senegal began, to make regular visits to the community in Australia and in 1990, less than ten years after the first *hizmet* schools were established in Turkey, the Selimiye Foundation was established with the aim of building a school in Melbourne, an aim that was fulfilled with the opening of Isik College in 1997, one year after Sule College was opened in Sydney.

When Orhan Cicek arrived in Australia in 1980 not only was there no *hizmet* in Australia the sense of there being a broad social movement associated with Fethullah Gülen, even within Turkey itself, was much very novel. Between 1969 and 1980 Fethullah Gülen, then employed as a state *imam* (a civil service position in Turkey where the state preferred to control public religious affairs) had concentrated on building up small communities in the cosmopolitan Mediterranean port city of Izmir involving summer camps for youth, sponsored *isik evler* 'lighthouse' student hostels and, most importantly, *dershane* reading groups that met weekly to read and discuss together the Risale-i Nur, the multi-volume thematic commentary on the Koran penned by the great Turkish Sufi scholar Said Nursi in the first decades of the 20th century.⁹ The *hizmet dershane* largely followed the pattern of other Risale-i Nur *dershane* that had been meeting across Turkey since the 1930s but infused the insights and action-orientated outlook of Gülen to the study of Nursi's much loved text. In time these small groups became the nuclei local *hizmet* communities and fostered an extraordinary degree of social capital. In 1982 a second *hizmet* school opened in Izmir and the following year a school was opened in Ankara. In December 1983 the moderate Turgut Özal was sworn-in as prime minister, following three years of military-rule and a decade of social upheaval. He was the only the third democratically-elected leader in the history of the Turkish Republic. Özal himself was a keen student of Said Nursi and, unlike most earlier leaders, did not

harbour deep suspicions about all religious-based social movements.¹⁰ Under his leadership private schools were encouraged as part of a program of educational reforms and the way was opened for the nascent *hizmet* to enter into educational philanthropy on a significant scale. In 1986 Özal overturned the charges that the post-coup military regime of 1980 had brought against Gülen.¹¹ These charges caused the nascent *hizmet* to disperse from Izmir to Istanbul and Ankara as Gülen himself resigned his civil-service post in Izmir and relocated to Istanbul, precipitating a new phase in the development of the *hizmet*. Liberalization of laws relating to the establishment of private schools followed by the relative stability and openness of the Özal government opened the way for the *hizmet* to focus on building schools, building on the earlier work with students through hostels, tutoring centres and summer camps. It was only a decade after the first school opened in Turkey that a school was established outside of Turkey when in 1991 a *hizmet* School was opened in Azerbaijan. The impetus, and the opportunity, to open a school in Central Asia arose directly from the collapse of the Soviet Union and awareness of the dire needs that existed in the former Soviet republics of Central Asia. It was this that precipitated the expansion of the *hizmet* outside of Turkey and, in time, led to activism across Asia and in Europe and the new world. Australia led developments in the western hemisphere with Sule College opening in Sydney in 1996, one year before the first school opened in America. In Europe it was not until 2000 the first schools were established in Denmark and the Netherlands.

The steady expansion of the *hizmet* from decade to decade, from small circles based upon *dershane*, *isik evler* and student summer camps in western Turkey in the 1970s, to schools and colleges across Turkey in the 1980s, to media enterprises, dialogue NGOs and schools throughout Central Asia and beyond in the 1990s, to diverse educational and dialogue initiatives in the Western Hemisphere in the 2000s, has clearly been shaped by political and social changes.¹² But more than this, it has also been directed by the

development and growth of thinking about Islam and society within the *hizmet*, beginning with the efflorescence of the thought of Gülen himself. Gülen modestly describes his own thought as subject to growth and development as providence delivers new experiences. Speaking with Hakan Yavuz in Philadelphia in October 2000 he says:

We all change, don't we? There is no exit from change. By visiting the States and many other European countries, I realized the virtues and the role of religion in these societies. Islam flourishes in America and Europe much better than in many Muslim countries. This means freedom and the rule of law are necessary for personal Islam. Moreover, Islam does not need the state to survive, but rather needs education and financially rich communities to flourish. In a way, not the state but rather community is needed under a full democratic system.¹³

This dynamic is captured by Marcia Hermansen in a brilliant essay about the “cultivation of memory in the Gülen community” where she highlights the importance of the stories that the *hizmet* tells itself. Introducing a well-known story about Fetullah Gülen (affectionately known, after the Turkish manner of referring to religious teachers, as Hoca Effendi/Hocaefendi) within the *hizmet* she writes:

The development in Gülen's outlook from earlier Ottoman/Turkish nationalism to a pan-Turkic and ultimately more global and even universal perspective may be represented by “the map story”. In my interviews I heard the story as follows from a businessman and early supporter, Ali Reza Tanrisever:

On the wall in his dormitory room, Hoca Effendi used to have a map of the Ottoman empire with the inscription ‘you are still in my dreams’. Later this was exchanged for a world map and finally a satellite view from space.¹⁴

Orhan Cicek grew up in the Turkish capital of Ankara and immediately prior to coming to Australia had been studying at a state college for imam, completing some but not all of his theo-

logical studies. He was a keen student of the Risale-i Nur and was close to some of Fethullah Gülen's first generation of disciples, or 'students' as they were referred to themselves. These first generation students of Gülen, addressed within hizmet circles as *Abi*, or older brother, such as Mehmet Ali Sengal, belonged to the same generation as Gülen himself, being born around 1940.¹⁵ Orhan is around fifteen years younger than this first cohort and represents the generation of students first drawn into the nascent hizmet network through *isik evler*, *dershane* and summer camps conducted in the 1970s. Living in Ankara Orhan was removed from the early hizmet's nucleus in Izmir and from Gülen himself but was nevertheless exposed to *dershane* meetings and seminars led by *abi* visiting the capital. When faced with an opportunity to immigrate to Australia he sought advice from the *abi* who advised him to see this as an opportunity to take the teaching of Gülen to Turkish communities living outside Turkey.

After arriving in Melbourne Orhan married and settled down in the inner-city, working-class, Melbourne suburb of Richmond. His wife's family had moved to Melbourne in 1972 and had several of his brothers. When he settled in Melbourne he knew of no other followers of Fethullah Gülen in Australia. He had no particular sense of what he might do in Australia save to replicate the sort of hizmet activities that he had become familiar with in Turkey, as the opportunity arose. In 1981, a year after he arrived, a small number of followers of Said Nursi settled in Australia. For the next five years Orhan was active in setting up and running Risale-i Nur *dershane*. Most of the members of these reading groups had not previously been familiar with the Risale-i Nur. They consisted mostly of Turkish Australians in their 30s and 40s who had moved to Melbourne in the past decade or so. By 1985 some of the earliest migrants had been in Australia for 16-17 years and had teenage children born to them in their new 'temporary' home. Orhan had settled in Richmond because of family connections but later came to see his location as providential. As it happened, within Rich-

mond there were beginning to be a number of Turkish teenagers coming to the attention of local police because of delinquent behaviour. Their parents had difficulty in relating to their children's lives in a Australia. Most had moved to Melbourne directly from the Anatolian countryside and spoke little English, having started out with thoughts of soon returning to Turkey after having made some money in Australia. In 1985 Orhan started a drop-in centre and youth program that he called New Generation Youth Association (NGYA).

Inspired by Gülen's teachings about the importance of soundly educating and developing youth and the potential for youth-driven generational change through the development of a 'golden generation' (*altın nesil*) Orhan was convinced that he should focus his efforts on trying to help second-generation Turkish Australian youth.¹⁶ He sought to mentor the youth that he encountered and engage them in practical programs involving sport and outings and some basic tutoring. He also began to lead Risale-i Nur reading groups amongst these teenagers as well as amongst their parents. NGYA extended its active activities to the Melbourne suburbs of Sunshine in the west and Dandenong in the south. Orhan's actions came as a result of him trying to do what he thought best in the situation he found himself in, and drawing upon what he knew of Fethullah Gülen's circles in Turkey. In the late 1980s Orhan made several trips to Turkey and met with followers of Fethullah Gülen there. In 1987 the hizmet in Turkey had started a tutoring centre and learning of this Orhan decided to try to do something similar in Melbourne. Later that year he started the Light Tutoring Centre in inner city Melbourne, with the primary aim of helping struggling Turkish and other Muslim youth.

At this stage Orhan and his wife were still the only members of the hizmet living in Melbourne. They were beginning to build a small community around them are people who would become committed supporters but for guidance and encouragement of had to travel back to Turkey. Some years he had been encouraging the

abi to visit them in Australia and to encourage the work there. These pleas finally bore fruit when Mehmet Ali Sengal visited Melbourne for the first time in 1989. Thereafter Mehmet and others of the senior *abi* made visits to Australia once or twice a year.

By 1989 the character of Turkish migration to Australia had begun to change. Whereas the first wave of migrants who began arriving in 1968, and those that followed over the next two decades, came from rural Anatolia, beginning in 1989 a number of urban professional Turks began to settle in Australia. These included some who had become active within the *hizmet* in Turkey. By this point, foundations had been laid to build the work of the *hizmet* not just in Melbourne but also in Sydney. Orhan visited Sydney every month, or so, to encourage the small *hizmet* community that had formed around recent migrants with *hizmet* connections in Turkey. In the late 1980s the activists in Melbourne and Sydney were committed to working with youth through *dershane*, tutoring centres and *isik evler* student hostels but beyond that had little sense of how the work would unfold. By this stage, on his trips back to Turkey Orhan had talked with Gülen and the *abi* about his work in Australia, and had received general encouragement to pursue opportunities as they came up. It was always assumed that the focus would be on education and the development of youth, together with initiatives in dialogue and media.¹⁷ But beyond these general lines of encouragement there was no specific guidance given, nor was there any automatic line of financial support.¹⁸ The *hizmet* supporters in Melbourne and Sydney began to get a sense of what might come next when the collapse of the Soviet Union, together with the growth of the *hizmet* schools and social networks across Turkey, led to the first *hizmet* school outside of Turkey being opened in Azerbaijan in 1991, just a decade after the very first school had opened in Turkey. As it happened, in April 1992 Fethullah Gülen visited Melbourne and Sydney for the first and, so far, only time and encouraged the young *hizmet* communities to pursue their dreams of expanding their. To Orhan and the several

dozen families around him that now constituted the hizmet in Melbourne, it seemed that the time had come for the community to open a school in their city.

The small hizmet community in Melbourne began exploring their options and looking around for models to base their educational programme on. Orhan began making visits to independent 'religious' schools in Melbourne to learn from the experience of others and look for templates that might be copied. He visited King Khalid Islamic College, Melbourne's first Islamic school that had opened in the Northern suburb of Coburg in 1983 with a mixed Islamic and secular curriculum. He also visited Christian and Jewish schools such as the Methodist Wesley College and King David School, a progressive Jewish day school. Orhan eventually spoke with the leaders of seven different schools and examined their foundational documents and organisational structure.

Although he was looking to these schools for practical details about the 'nuts and bolts' of building and running an independent school the broad vision of what they hoped to achieve came from the hizmet schools in Turkey. Their vision was to build schools that provided high standards of academic achievement and general discipline and an environment that encouraged students to develop to the best of their potential. They wanted the schools to be accessible to working-class people, particularly in the north of Melbourne where there were very few opportunities for affordable quality schooling. Importantly, they also were firmly convinced that the schools should be completely secular in their curriculum, and whilst initially meeting the needs of Muslim migrants they should be open to people of all backgrounds.

Gülen and the *abi* in Turkey did not prescribe a detailed plan for how the schools should develop but it was very clear that schools should be secular in nature and conform with the vision of *temsil* - 'preaching by example' rather than preaching - *tablig*.¹⁹ The conviction that the schools should not be 'religious' was not merely a product of the political environment in Turkey, or in any other

country, but rather was a conviction that came from the heart of Gülen's teaching. Gülen urged his followers to a life of willing service out of compassion for others and the sincere desire to serve God by helping young people to reach their full potential and become a 'golden generation' who would help transform society. He encouraged the development of spirituality through the education and training of both heart and mind but he also argued that this spirituality did not have to be Islamic. For Gülen, religious service through the *hizmet* could be fulfilled through entirely 'secular' activity. Education was an end in itself and although it might be inspired by religion did not need to be expressed through religion. In fact, Gülen argued, *temsil* – living out a positive example – was much to be preferred to *tabligh* – telling people what to believe.²⁰ This is why he taught his community to devote themselves to building schools rather than mosques, saying that 'Turkey already has enough mosques'. Consequently, the model that Orhan had in mind was much closer to that of Wesley College and Kind David School than that of King Khalid Islamic College.

Eventually it was decided to establish a not-for-profit foundation expressly focused on education, and in 1990 the Selimye foundation was established in Melbourne, becoming one of the first not-for-profit Muslim educational foundations in Australia. It was very much the ethos of the *hizmet* from the beginning that individuals and local communities took responsibility for their own initiatives and gave sacrificially of their own resources. Consequently, it was following a typical pattern – one that occurred across Turkey for more than a decade and was to occur around the world in the decades that came – that Orhan and the several dozen families that formed the nucleus of the *hizmet* community in Melbourne pooled their resources to make a start on their ambitious programme. And so it was that one evening in late 1991 around 40 people gathered for a fund-raising event prepared to make substantial donations towards acquiring a property that could be used as a student dormitory *cum* tutoring centre. They had been preparing to

this event for much of the previous 12 months. By the end of the evening they had raised \$70,000, enough to purchase a modest two-storey ex-Housing Commission house in the working-class suburb of Dallas, on the edge of Broadmeadows. The Broadmeadows area on Melbourne's northern rim was best known for its Ford car plant and the large migrant communities associated with its workforce lift roundabouts, including many Turkish and other Muslims. Melbourne's largest mosque was located in the suburb. Clearly, although that is community was still small it evidenced a high level of social capital and collective commitment.²¹

The following year the Dallas/Broadmeadows house became the *hizmet*'s first boarding college and marked a transitional step towards establishing a school. In that same year, 1992, the Aurora Sydney Education Centre was established and *hizmet* developments in Sydney began to track those in Melbourne.

In 1993 the Feza Foundation was established in Sydney and a boarding 'college' formed in Sydney. In 1996 Sule College was opened in Preston, Sydney, followed in 1997 by Isik College in East Meadows, Melbourne. Today there are four schools on three campuses in NSW and eight schools on six campuses in Victoria. 2001 saw primary schools open in the rural Victorian cities of Mildura and Geelong. In 2003 a primary school was established in Adelaide and the following year a primary school opened in Perth. In 2006 the Queensland Education and Culture Foundation was founded, land was purchased, and planning commenced for a primary school to be latter followed by a secondary school. By mid-2008 there were 16 *hizmet* schools in Australia serving a collective student body of over 6000.

Within Turkey, and around the world, the second focus of the *hizmet*, one that has steadily grown stronger over the past two decades, has been initiatives in print and electronic media. Unlike education it can be said that this in the field the *hizmet*'s work in Australia has lagged behind the experience of the *hizmet* in Turkey and in Europe and North America. No particular significance

should be attached to this, however, as there are clearly different dynamics at work. Whereas the schools program, and educational initiatives in general, are very local in focus (even when international collaboration is involved such as in the sponsoring of schools in Asia by Turkish business communities at home) it is the nature of media, particularly electronic media, to be oriented towards global networks. Most of the media content required by the *hizmet* in Australia can now be readily obtained from the movement's networks, whether in Turkey itself or in North America. Nevertheless, it is interesting that from the earliest days of *hizmet* was involved in some local media initiatives. For example, Orhan was a sub-editor of several Turkish newspapers between 1984 and 1988 and later worked for 4 years (1990-94) with 3ZZZ community radio – four days a week for one to two hours at a time discussing general issues, politics in Turkey, Australia, culture, history, religious matters (at the time, and even today, the Australian government sponsored Special Broadcasting Service, SBS, TV and radio broadcasts of Turkish content, tended to represent the views of staunchly secular Turks). In 1993 *The Fountain* English language magazine was launched in USA but distributed globally, including in Australia. Four years later, in 1997, eleven years after its birth in Turkey in 1986, and one year launching its online site, *Zaman Australia* was launched. The newspaper started with a circulation of 1,000. Today its regular circulation is around 6,000 copies, suggesting that thirty to forty percent of Turkish-Australian households receive *Zaman Australia*. Most of the content of the paper comes from the Turkish edition but Australia-based journalists and editors provide local content.

Alongside education the other major focus of activity of the *hizmet* in Australia has been initiatives in dialogue and bridge-building. In 2000 the Melbourne-based *Australian Intercultural Society* (AIS) was established, just six years after the pioneering NGO on which it was based, the *Journalists and Writers and Foundation* (*Gazeteciler ve Yazarlar Vakfı – JWF*), was launched in Tur-

key.²² JWF was a direct inspiration and model for AIS and in turn became a model for other similar dialogue NGOs around the world, reflecting a core concern of Gülen.²³

AIS commenced its program of dialogue by holding the first annual *Abraham Conference* intended to promote greater understanding between Muslims, Christians and Jews. This was followed in 2001 with the establishment of the Affinity Intercultural Foundation (AIF) in Sydney. Apart from holding conferences, seminars and public events such as Whirling Dervish performances and music evenings AIS and AIF began to take groups of Australian community leaders, politicians, academics, police and journalists to Turkey on intercultural study tours. In 2001 the first major public *iftar* dinners were held, with the tradition of inter-faith home *iftar* dinners commencing in 2004. 2004 also witnessed the establishment in Melbourne of the inter-faith magazine *Dialogue Australasia Pacific*. More recently, in 2007, the *Intercultural Harmony Foundation* (IHF) was founded in Perth. Planning is currently underway to hold two major international conferences in Melbourne in July 2009: *The Vision of Fetullah Gülen and Muslim Christian Relations – From dialogue to collaboration* at the Australian Catholic University and *Islamophobia – Confronting Fears in Old and New Worlds* at Monash University. Such conferences mark a new level of self-reflexivity and confidence within the *hizmet*. This is by no means unique to the Australian context. Rather, the *hizmet* in Australia is responding to initiatives taken there throughout the western hemisphere.

CONCLUSION

Despite there being no central board of management and no unified source of direction *hizmet* initiatives tend to develop along familiar lines. Most of the more senior members of the *hizmet*, and certainly those working for it a full-time capacity, in cities across Europe and North America and Australia, know which other well and regularly

interact in public and in private gatherings. In Australia, as in North America, the individual branches of the hizmet tend to function at a sub-national city level. So whereas AIS in Melbourne and AIF in Sydney in regular contact with each other they are responsible for activities in their own city and state, and remained completely autonomous. When needed, they are quick to help each other, as happened particularly in the earlier days when Orhan Cicek from Melbourne helped establish the work in Sydney, are generally they operate with a healthy sense of competition, spurring each other on. The activities undertaken in each city tend to follow a familiar pattern but they also respond to local conditions and opportunities. In Sydney, for example, where the Hizmet leadership is composed of more recent migrants from Turkey coming from a more cosmopolitan background, and from Second-generation Turkish Australians, AIF proudly boasts a circle of active members in which only half have Turkish heritage and the rest come from Arab, Asian and European backgrounds. This represents a significant development as the Hizmet moves away from the predominantly Turkish character to become more truly universal.

Hizmet activity around the world tends to revolve around autonomous, city-based, local branches, with their own schools and dialogue associations, whose lack of uniform naming convention reflects the decentralised, organic, autonomous nature of the movement. Nevertheless, it is meant as a whole can clearly be categorised as a transnational Islamic social movement. This is significant for a number of reasons, not least being that almost all other transnational Islamic social movements are Islamist in nature. Moderate and progressive Traditionalist and neo-traditionalist Islamic movements, such as Indonesia's Nahdlatul Ulama, tend to be very regional and national in focus. The major transnational social movements, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, Hizbut Tahrir and al-Qaeda tend towards exclusivism and fundamentalism. As a result, they tend to have an uncomfortable relationship with their host societies and encourage in their members a siege mentality. As

the example of hizmet activism in Australia makes very clear, the Gülen movement has a very different relationship with host societies. The movement is characterised by a positive, optimistic, and forward-looking outlook that consistently sees opportunities for friendship rather than enmity, and cooperation rather than conflict. Rather than a siege mentality there exists a strong sense of connection with, and responsibility for, host societies. The Hizmet members put down roots and embrace the cities and nations to which they have moved.

This positive attitude tends to produce its own positive results. Members are driven to engage in dialogue comfortable in the conviction that dialogue and cooperation is what God intends and encouraged by the realisation that they are not called to convert but simply to serve. This awareness is deeply rooted in the thought of Fethullah Gülen, reflecting a central theme within the writing of Said Nursi which in turn was partly inspired by the ecumenism arising from the centrality of love and of God's grace in the works of the earlier Anatolian Sufi writers Jalal ad-Din Rumi and Yunus Emre.

Gülen has a clear sense that he is articulating a 'Turkish' interpretation of Islam that is distinctively different from some other interpretations that vie for influence in the modern world, including Arab Salafism, although he is careful not to denigrate other them by name. He is convinced that the Turkish, Sufistic, understanding of Islam that emphasises tolerance of, and respect for, difference, based on love – what can be said to be a theistic humanism - reflects a deeper and more complete understanding of the message of Islam:

The Hanafi understanding and Turkish interpretation dominates more than three-fourths of the Islamic world. This understanding is very dear to me. If you like you can call this Turkish Islam. Just as I see no serious canonical obstacle to this, I don't think it should upset anyone. The Turkish nation interpreted Islam in the areas open to interpretation ... it attained a very broad spectrum and became the religion of great states. For this

reason, I think the Turkish Muslimness is appropriate. Another aspect of this that in addition to profound devotion to the Qur'an and Sunnah, the Turks always have been open to Sufism, Islam's spiritual aspect. Turkish Islam is composed of the main, unchanging principles of Islam, found in the Qur'an and Sunnah, as well as in the forms that its aspects open to interpretation assumed during Turkish history, together with Sufism ... This is why Turkish Islam always has been broader, deeper, more tolerant and inclusive, and based on love.²⁴

Gülen taught his followers to look beyond sectarian differences, to respect and love all humankind and to recognise and value goodness and belief wherever they are found:

Applaud the good for their goodness; appreciate those who have believing hearts; be kind to the believers. Approach unbelievers so gently that their envy and hatred would melt away. Like a Messiah revive people with your breath.²⁵

Whether you're a Christian, a Jew, a Buddhist, or of another creed, ... you're carrying a believer's attribute."²⁶

Regardless of how their adherents implement their faith in their daily lives, such generally accepted values as love, respect, tolerance, forgiveness, mercy, human rights, peace, brotherhood, and freedom are all values exalted by religion. Most of these values are accorded the highest precedence in the messages brought by Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad, upon them be peace, as well as in the messages of Buddha and even Zarathustra, Lao-Tzu, Confucius, and the Hindu prophets.²⁷

Members of the hizmet believe that when they take the initiative and reach out in goodwill that their good intentions will be rewarded. And indeed, this does tend to be the case. Hizmet leaders in Australia such as Orhan Cicek have built up good relations with state and federal politicians up to the level of ministers and prime ministers. They enjoyed good relations with senior police officers and civil servants and have access to a wide range of decision-makers and leaders, who for their part tend to be only too glad to find Muslim leaders who desire to engage to take initiatives in dia-

logue and cooperation. Given the fact that only 3,000-4,000 people - around five percent of the 60,000 Turkish -Australians are thought to be closely affiliated with the movement in Australia the achievements are remarkable by any measure.

In global terms the movement represents one of the world's most significant examples of progressive civil society Islamic activism. It displays strong parallels with earlier forms of religious philanthropy in the west over the past four centuries and represents an important counterpoint to Samuel Huntington's 'clash of civilizations' thesis.²⁸

NOTES

- 1 For a discussion of *hizmet* refer to: Talip Kucukcan. 2007. "Social and Spiritual Capital of the Gülen Movement", *Muslim World in Transition: Contributions of The Gülen Movement Conference Proceedings - London October 2007*, Leeds: Leeds Metropolitan University Press, p.193; and Helen Rose Ebaugh and Dogan Koc. 2007. "Funding Gülen-inspired Good Works: Demonstrating and Generating Commitment to the Movement", *Muslim World in Transition: Contributions of The Gülen Movement Conference Proceedings - London October 2007*, Leeds: Leeds Metropolitan University Press, p.548-9.
- 2 For a comparison with Indonesia's Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama, two of the *hizmet*'s closest analogues, refer to: Greg Barton. 2006. "Turkey's Gülen *hizmet* and Indonesia's neo-modernist NGOs; remarkable examples of progressive Islamic thought and civil society activism in the Muslim world", in Fethi Mansouri and Shahram Akbarzadeh (eds), *Political Islam and Human Security*, Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, p.140-160.
- 3 Bekim Agai, Bekim. 'The Gülen Movement's Islamic Ethic of Education'. in Hakan Yavuz and John Esposito(eds) (2003) *Turkish Islam and the Secular State: The Gülen Movement*, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2003, pp. 48-68; and Osman Bakar. 2005. 'Gülen on Religion and Science: A Theological Perspective', *The Muslim World: Special Issue, Islam in Contemporary Turkey: The Contribution of Fethullah Gülen* Vol. 95 no. 3 July 2005, pp.359-72.
- 4 Muhammed Cetin. 2007. "The Gülen Movement: its Nature and Identity, *Muslim World in Transition: Contributions of The Gülen Movement Conference Proceedings - London October 2007*, Leeds: Leeds Metropolitan University Press, p.383; and Muhammad Cetin. 2005. 'Mobilization and Counter Mobilization: The Gülen Movement in Turkey'. a paper presented at the conference: *Islam in the Contemporary World: The Fethullah Gülen Movement in Thought and Practice*, November 12-13, 2005, Herring Hall HE 100, Rice University, Houston, TX.

- 5 Marcia Hermansen. 2007. "The Cultivation of Memory in the Gülen Community", 2007. *Muslim World in Transition: Contributions of The Gülen Movement Conference Proceedings - London October 2007*, Leeds: Leeds Metropolitan University Press, p.61. Although Hermansen refers to there being "over 500 schools world wide" in her 2007 paper, as this figure has been quoted for some years now it is likely that this considerably understates the current extent of the schools. With no central registry of hizmet schools it is difficult to be sure of precise numbers but in light of the steady growth of the community around the world the total number of schools might now well exceed 600-700.
- 6 For a discussion of this refer to: Selcuk Uygur, "Islamic Puritanism' as a source of economic development: the Case of the Gülen Movement in *Muslim World in Transition: Contributions of The Gülen Movement Conference Proceedings - London October 2007*, Leeds: Leeds Metropolitan University Press, pp.176-97.
- 7 Helen Rose Ebaugh and Dogan Koc. 2007. "Funding Gülen-inspired Good Works: Demonstrating and Generating Commitment to the Movement", *Muslim World in Transition: Contributions of The Gülen Movement Conference Proceedings - London October 2007*, Leeds: Leeds Metropolitan University Press, p.545-7.
- 8 Ibid, pp.548-9.
- 9 For more on the Risale-i Nur see: Sukran Vahid, 2005, 'Bediuzzaman Said Nursi and the Risale-i Nur', in Ian Markham and Ibrahim Ozdemir (eds), *Globalization, Ethics and Islam: The Case of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*, London; Ashgate.; and for more on Said Nursi himself refer to the above mentioned volume and to: Ibrahim M.Abu-Rabi (ed.), 2003, *Islam at the Crossroads: On the Life and Thought of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*, Albany, NY: SUNY; Markham, Ian and Ozdemir, Ibrahim (eds). 2005. *Globalization, Ethics and Islam: The Case of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005; Vahide, Sukran. 2005. *Islam in Modern Turkey: An Intellectual Biography of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*, Albany: SUNY Press, 2005; and Zeki Saritoprak. 2005. 'An Islamic Approach to Peace and Nonviolence: A Turkish Experience', *The Muslim World, Special Issue, Islam in Contemporary Turkey: The Contribution of Fethullah Gülen*, Volume 95, No.3, July 2005, p.413-27
- 10 Yavuz, Hakan. 2003. *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.75-9; Massiom Introvigne, "Turkish Religious Market(s): A View based on the Religious Economy Theory", in Yavuz, Hakan (ed.). 2006. *The Emergence of a New Turkey: Democracy and the AK Parti*, Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, pp.38-40; and Andrew Mango, 2004, *The Turks Today*, Woodstock and New York: The Overlook Press, pp.81-91. See also: Ersin Kalaycioglu, 2002, 'State and Civil Society in Turkey: Democracy, Development' in 'Civil Society in the Muslim World: Contemporary Perspectives', edited by Aryn B. Sajoo. London: I.B.Tauris; and Jenny B. White. 2002. *Islamist Mobilization in Turkey: a study in vernacular politics*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002.
- 11 For a discussion of critiques and attacks on Fethullah Gülen by ultra-nationalist elements within the Turkish establishment, which include a brief period of imprisonment in 1971, charges in 1980 and an insidious media campaign in 1997, refer to: Ozdalga, Elisabeth, 2005. 'Redeemer or Outsider? The Gülen Community in the Civilizing Process), *The Muslim World* Vol. 95 no. 3 July 2005, pp.429-46; and

- Dale F. Eickelman. 1998. 'Inside the Islamic Reformation, *Wilson Quarterly*, Winter 1998, Vol. 22 Issue 1, p.80-90.
- 12 For an explanation of *isik evler* and of hizmet summer camps refer to Marcia Hermansen. 2007. "The Cultivation of Memory in the Gülen Community", 2007. *Muslim World in Transition: Contributions of The Gülen Movement Conference Proceedings - London October 2007*, Leeds: Leeds Metropolitan University Press, p.69 and p.72 respectively.
- 13 Yavuz, M. Hakan. 2003. 'The Gülen Movement: The Turkish Puritans, in M. Hakan Yavuz and John Esposito (eds.) *Turkish Islam and the Secular State: The Gülen Movement*, Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, p.45.
- 14 Marcia Hermansen. 2007. "The Cultivation of Memory in the Gülen Community", 2007. *Muslim World in Transition: Contributions of The Gülen Movement Conference Proceedings - London October 2007*, Leeds: Leeds Metropolitan University Press, p.67.
- 15 For discussion of the role of the *abi* refer to: Marcia Hermansen. 2007. "The Cultivation of Memory in the Gülen Community", 2007. *Muslim World in Transition: Contributions of The Gülen Movement Conference Proceedings - London October 2007*, Leeds: Leeds Metropolitan University Press, p.75. Every three to four years Gülen takes on a new cohort of 15-20 private students who, as they graduate and move out into the broader hizmet community, add to the ranks of *abi*. Rifat Atay. 2007. "Reviving the *Suffa* Tradition" *Muslim World in Transition: Contributions of The Gülen Movement Conference Proceedings - London October 2007*, Leeds: Leeds Metropolitan University Press, pp.467.
- 16 Marcia Hermansen. 2007. "The Cultivation of Memory in the Gülen Community", 2007. *Muslim World in Transition: Contributions of The Gülen Movement Conference Proceedings - London October 2007*, Leeds: Leeds Metropolitan University Press, pp.70-1.
- 17 On dialogue see: Zeki Sariotoprak and Sidney Griffith. 2005. "Fetullah Gülen and the 'People of the Book': A Voice from Turkey for Interfaith Dialogue", *The Muslim World* Vol. 95 no. 3 July 2005, pp.329-340.
- 18 For a discussion of Gülen's thinking about education and the thinking and social dynamics behind the hizmet refer to Rifat Atay. 2007. "Reviving the *Suffa* Tradition" *Muslim World in Transition: Contributions of The Gülen Movement Conference Proceedings - London October 2007*, Leeds: Leeds Metropolitan University Press, pp.465-6; Ozdalga, Elisabeth. 2003. 'Following in the Footsteps of Fethullah Gülen: Three Women Teachers Tell Their Stories', in Yavuz, Hakan and Esposito, John (eds) *Turkish Islam and the Secular State: The Gülen Movement*, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, pp. 85-114; Thomas Michel. 2003. 'Fethullah Gülen as Educator' in M. Hakan Yavuz and John Esposito (eds.) *Turkish Islam and the Secular State: The Gülen Movement*, Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, p.69-84.; and Bekim Agai. 2003. 'The Gülen Movement's Islamic Ethic of Education'. in Hakan Yavuz and John Esposito(eds) (2003) *Turkish Islam and the Secular State: The Gülen Movement*, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2003, pp. 48-68.

- 19 Yavuz, M. Hakan and Esposito, John. 2003. "Introduction: Islam in Turkey: Retreat from the Secular Path?" in M. Hakan Yavuz and John Esposito, eds. *Turkish Islam and the Secular State: The Gülen Movement*. Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press: xiii-xxxiii; and Ahmet T Kuru. 2003. "Fethullah Gülen's Search for a Middle Way Between Modernity and Muslim Tradition." in M. Hakan Yavuz and John Esposito. eds. *Turkish Islam and the Secular State: The Gülen Movement*. Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press: 115-30.
- 20 Yavuz, M. Hakan. 2003. "The Gülen Movement: The Turkish Puritans, in M. Hakan Yavuz and John Esposito (eds.) *Turkish Islam and the Secular State: The Gülen Movement*, Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, p.41; and Greg Barton. 2007. "Preaching by Example and Learning for Life: Understanding the Gülen Hizmet in the Global Context of Religious Philanthropy and Civil Religion", *Muslim World in Transition: Contributions of The Gülen Movement Conference Proceedings - London October 2007*, Leeds: Leeds Metropolitan University Press, pp.450-62.
- 21 Is with considerable pride that Orhan recalls the imam of this mosque berating his community for failing to give on the same scale as the small hizmet community. The Imam of Broadmeadows pointed out in his Friday sermon that when 3-5000 people had gathered at the mosque the previous week on the 27th night of Ramadan – the holy 'night of power' – the offering taken up for charity came to only \$5,000.
- 22 Zeki Saritoprak. 2005. 'An Islamic Approach to Peace and Nonviolence: A Turkish Experience', *The Muslim World, Special Issue, Islam in Contemporary Turkey: The Contribution of Fethullah Gülen*, Volume 95, No.3, July 2005, p.423
- 23 For further discussion of Gülen's personal involvement in dialogue see: Michel, Thomas S.J. 2005. 'Two Frontrunners for Peace: John Paul II and Fethullah Gülen,' at the "Frontrunners of Peace" symposia organized by the Cosmic Foundation, Holland, at universities in Tilburg, Erasmus, and Amsterdam, March 16-18, 2005; available at <http://en.fGülen.com/a.page/life/commentaries/a1944.html>: Zeki Saritoprak and Sidney Griffith. 2005. "Fetullah Gülen and the 'People of the Book': A Voice from Turkey for Interfaith Dialogue", *The Muslim World* Vol. 95 no. 3 July 2005, pp.329-340; and Fethullah Gülen. 1999. "The Necessity of Interfaith Dialogue: A Muslim Approach". speech given at the Parliament of the World's Religion. Capetown. 1-8 December 1999.
- 24 Fethullah Gülen, quoted in Ihsan Yilmaz. 2005. "State, Law, Civil Society and Islam In Contemporary Turkey", in *The Muslim World (2005) Special Issue, Islam in Contemporary Turkey: the Contributions of Gülen*, Vol. 95, No.3, July, 2005, Blackwell Publishing. pp. 395. On Gülen and Sufism see: Thomas Michel. 2005. 'Sufism and Modernity in the Thought of Fethullah Gülen', *The Muslim World* Vol. 95 no. 3 July 2005, pp.341-58; and Zeki Saritoprak. 2003. 'Fethullah Gülen: A Sufi in His Own Way', in Hakan Yavuz and John Esposito. (eds) *Turkish Islam and the Secular State: The Gülen Movement*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2003, pp. 156-169. See also Fethullah Gülen. 2005. 'An Interview with Fethullah Gülen – translated by Zeki Saritoprak and Ali Unal', *The Muslim World, Special Issue, Islam in Contemporary Turkey: The Contribution of Fethullah Gülen*, Volume 95, No.3, July 2005, pp. 325-7. For works by Gülen in English see: Fethullah Gülen, 2005. *The Statue of Our souls: Revival in Islamic Thought and Activism*. The Light Inc.,

- Somerset, New Jersey; 2004. *Toward a Global Civilization of Love and Tolerance*, New Jersey: Light.; 2001. 'A Comparative Approach to Islam and Democracy', *SAIS Review* 21, no. 2. p. 133-8.; 2000. *Prophet Muhammad: Aspects of His Life*, translated by Ali Unal, Fairfax, VA: The Fountain; 1999; "The Necessity of Interfaith Dialogue: A Muslim Approach". Speech given at the Parliament of the World's Religion. Capetown. 1-8 December 1999; 1997. *Understanding and Belief: The Essentials of the Islamic Faith*, Izmir: Kaynak; and Ali Unal, and, Alphonse Williams. 2000. *Fethullah Gülen: Advocate of Dialogue*. Fairfax, VA: Fountain; and John O. Voll. 2003. "Fethullah Gülen: Transcending Modernity in the New Islamic Discourse." in M. Hakan Yavuz and John Esposito. eds. *Turkish Islam and the Secular State: The Gülen Movement*. Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press: 238-47..
- 25 Fethullah Gülen, quoted in Kurtz, Lester R. 200. "Gülen's Paradox: Combining Commitment and Tolerance", *The Muslim World, Special Issue, Islam in Contemporary Turkey: The Contribution of Fethullah Gülen*, Volume 95, No.3, July 2005, p.376.
- 26 Ibid, p. 377.
- 27 Ibid, p.377
- 28 Samuel Huntington. 1993. "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs*. (Summer) and Samuel Huntington 1996. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order*. New York: Simon and Schuster.Huntington.

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