

I N M E M O R I A M

M. Fethullah Gülen
1938-2024

THE
Fountain
SPECIAL EDITION

CONTENTS

NOV-DEC 2024 ISSUE 162



M. FETHULLAH GÜLEN

SPECIAL EDITION

4 Hand in Hand,
Heart in Heart

31 Beyond the
Cage of Flesh

40 One Who Has
Reached (*Wasil*)

94 Separation
and Hope

M. Fethullah Gülen



This is a special edition dedicated to M. Fethullah Gülen, our beloved teacher and writer, who contributed to our magazine from the very beginning. After a life of service to God and to humanity, Gülen returned to his Creator on October 20, 2024. Featured in this issue are writers from around the world, sharing their thoughts on Gülen's legacy and how they were impacted by his message. As we present this issue with heavy hearts, we hope their reflections will serve as a testimony to how far and wide his message was welcomed globally and will continue to resonate in our hearts.



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8

The Light Remains

Scott C. Alexander



32

Commemorating Fethullah Gülen

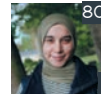
Christoph Bultmann



60

Humanitarian Legacy of Fethullah Gülen

Farid Esack



80

A Reminder for Those Who Remember

Asuman Celik



10

A True Companion

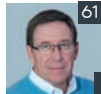
Fr. Thomas Michel



34

Not a Void, But an Inspiring Force

Kareem Irfan



61

Gülen for a Reconciled World

Braam Hanekom



82

A Life of Devotion and Divine Acceptance

Mohammed Ibn Ahmed



11

A Beacon of Light in a World Fraught With Darkness

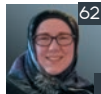
Fatima Chohan



36

Syed M. Fethullah Gülen and the Relevance of His Legacy

Anwar Alam



62

In Memoriam Fethullah Gülen

Margaret A. Johnson



84

His Doors Were Always Open

Alaaka Foundation



12

Exit of a Colossus

Jalal Ahmad Arabi



39

A Hero Who Does Not Disappoint

Greg Barton



64

The Wellspring of Humility

Wahbi Long



85

Awakening of Consciences

Myrna Chayo



14

The True Measure of Greatness

Charles Panganiban



45

A Lifetime Dedication to Service

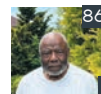
John Ederer



65

He Lives On

John Cardinal Onaiyekan



86

The Rewards of Service

Jon A. Yasin



16

Arriving at Eternal Love

Lindsey Eksli



46

Childhood Memories With Hocaefendi

Ceyda Sablak



65

Rest in Peace

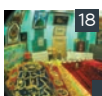
Tushar Gandhi



88

Ghurbah: A Pillar of Ethical Strength in Turbulent Times

Yasien Alli



18

To Allah We Belong

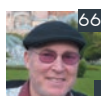
Khalif Syed M. S. Roza



48

Seeing the World Differently Through Gülen

Simon Robinson



66

In Honor of Mr. Gülen

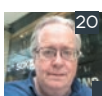
Aaron Cohen



89

Tribute to Fethullah Gülen

Walter Ruby



20

A Personal Appreciation

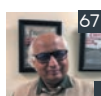
Paul Weller



49

A Great Visionary

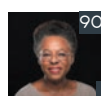
Syed Soharwardy



67

Respected Teacher

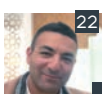
Sudheer Kulkarni



90

A Movement of Peace

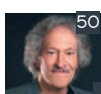
Joyce M. Davis



22

He Lived Because He Loved

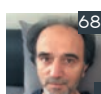
Ahmad Rehab



50

Ruminations on the Transition of Hocaefendi

Ori Z. Soltes



68

Fethullah Gülen Hocaefendi and His Will

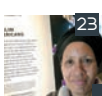
Mehmet Enes Ergene



92

Fethullah Gülen's Gift to the World

Alex Morel



23

Education and Peace for All

Laila Muhammad



52

Building Bridges

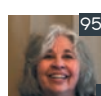
Azam Nizamuddin



72

The Fethullah Gülen I Came to Know

Jon Pahl



95

The Legacy Is Released

Janet Maulbeck



24

A Beacon of Peace

Rajendran Govender



54

Fethullah Gülen, Hizmet, and the Path Forward

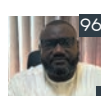
Yakov Nagen



74

The Rain That Gives Life

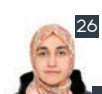
Naveed Sheikh



96

Gülen: A Life of Service

Joshua Ocheja



26

In Memory of Our Esteemed M. Fethullah Gülen

Arzu Ahmadzai



56

Fethullah Gülen: A Man, A Vision, A Movement

Francesco Zannini



76

Models of Education

Daniel Skubik



98

A Lasting Legacy

Inamul Haq



28

God's Voice Gift Which Has Suddenly Gone Silent

Felix Kaiza



59

Destined to Leave a Lasting Impact

Paolo Branca



79

A Spiritual Legacy and a Call to Peace

Gérard Siegwalt



101

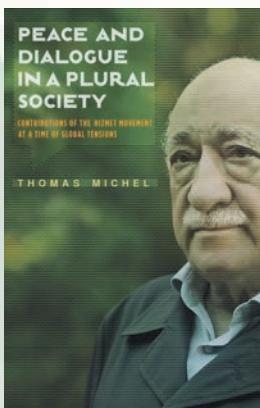
A Life of Service

The Fountain



by Fr. Thomas Michel, S.J.

Reverend Thomas Michel, S.J. is a Catholic Jesuit Priest, a Scholar of Interreligious Dialogue, and Former Secretary for Interreligious Affairs, Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences.



A True Companion

Fethullah Gülen, after a lifetime of faithful service to God, has returned now to his Creator and received his reward. In this world, his legacy lives on in the lives of countless men and women who have found inspiration in his teaching and who have discovered in him a role model whose life has been both deeply Islamic and an expression of true human uprightness.

I personally have been touched by Hodjaefendi and found him a true companion in our common desire to build love and friendly collaboration between Muslims and Christians. I will miss his presence in our common cause, and I share the sadness and joy of many today in Hizmet and elsewhere who are grieving his loss but confident in our faith that he has come to his eternal reward.



In his book Peace and Dialogue in a Plural Society (2014), Fr. Thomas Michel finds a foundation in Gülen's faith and Hizmet's service upon which a healthy, diverse society can be built through education, dialogue, and a respect for basic human dignity.



by Fatima Chohan

Fatima Chohan is the former Deputy Minister of Home Affairs and former Deputy Chair of the South African Human Rights Commission.

To Allah belongs the dominion of all things and to Allah belongs all praise. From Allah do we originate and to Allah is our return.

A Beacon of Light in a World Fraught With Darkness



I have learnt with deep sadness of the passing of the founder of the Hizmet Movement, Mr. Fethullah Gülen, or as he is respectfully known “Hocaefendi.” Our sincere condolences to all of Hocaefendi’s family, friends, associates and the entire Hizmet Family.

The Hizmet movement in South Africa and the world over, has served to advance education and importantly enhance friendship and social cohesion through amongst others inter-religious dialogue and programs.

I was reminded in a letter written to me by Hocaefendi that his teachings were merely a reflection of the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him), the Nabi of Islam, who served humanity, was a mercy to humankind, and who spared no effort to build bridges among different communities.

The practical realization of these values in our time stands in memorial to an extraordinary human being whose ideas and actions have found resonance in millions of people who live their lives as Hocaefendi did: by honoring the Sunnah of the Nabi in their daily lives, and thus being a beacon of light in a world fraught with darkness.

May Allah ta’ala be pleased with Hocaefendi, and grant Hocaefendi jannatul firdous (the highest level of Heaven), and may the Hizmet Movement as a whole be blessed and grow even stronger in the years that follow. Ameen.

To Allah belongs the dominion of all things and to Allah belongs all praise. From Allah do we originate and to Allah is our return.

“So glorify Allah when you enter the night and when you rise in the morning. To Him belongs all praise in the heavens and the earth, in the late afternoon and when you enter midday. He brings forth the living from the dead and the dead from the living, even so shall you be brought forth.” (Rum 30:17-19)

With our sincere condolences and our prayers,
Fatima Chohan and Family

“Every soul will taste death. And We test you, O humanity, with good and evil as a trial, then to Us you will all be returned.”
(al-Anbiya 21:35)



by Jalal Ahmad Arabi

Jalal Ahmad Arabi is the Former Permanent Secretary of the State House in Nigeria.

God has shown grace to Hocaefendi, a man of peace, understanding, and boundless humility.

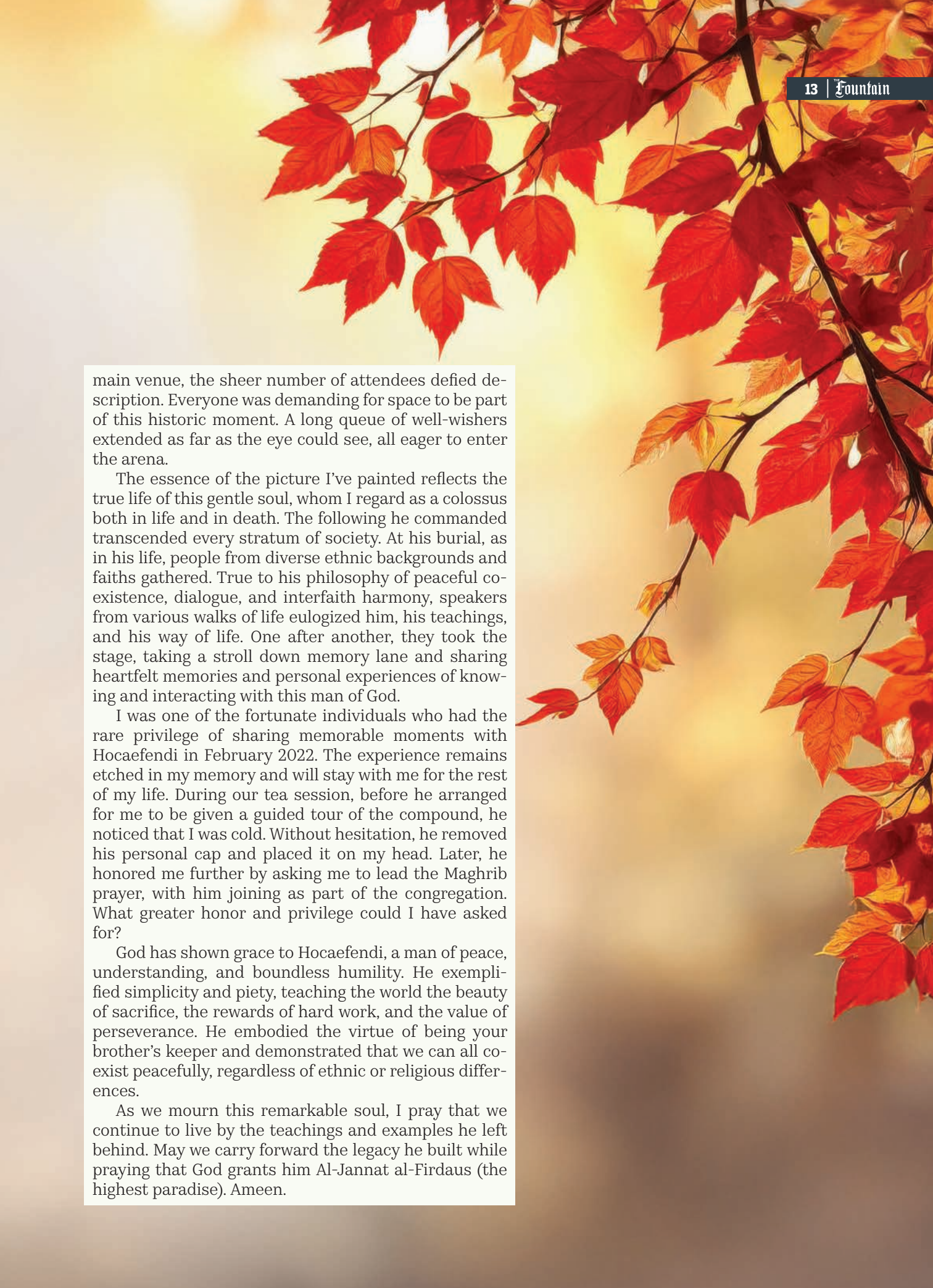
Exit of a Colossus

God has enjoined every soul to not only believe in destiny but to embrace whatever fortune befalls him as an act of worship. That is why whatever afflicts us as Muslims we turn to the Creator in supplication, seeking His favor to make us stronger in faith, and grant us the fortitude to bear the burden of the situation.

It was such a profound moment when God tested our faith as the renowned yet humble Fethullah Gülen, known affectionately as Hocaefendi by his admirers, answered the call of his Creator and passed away at the age of 86.

As a mere student of theology, I may be alluding to matters I am not fully equipped to address—namely, the attributes of Hocaefendi. I will leave that to his contemporaries, colleagues, and those with deeper knowledge of who he was in life and what they envision for him in the afterlife. However, I will say that what I witnessed at his funeral sheds light on a personality that any peace-loving soul would adore.

Having passed away far from his home country, one might have expected a low-key funeral, attended by only a few scholars and clerics to fulfill the necessary rites. But alas, that was not the case. If not for the distinct features indicating religious significance, the gathering could have been mistaken for a massive public event or festival. The crowd was immense and unprecedented. While driving to the venue for the Salatul Janaza (the funeral prayer), a sea of admirers and well-wishers stretched as far as two kilometers on foot, as accessing the venue became nearly impossible due to heavy traffic. Little did I know that this was only the beginning. Upon reaching the



main venue, the sheer number of attendees defied description. Everyone was demanding for space to be part of this historic moment. A long queue of well-wishers extended as far as the eye could see, all eager to enter the arena.

The essence of the picture I've painted reflects the true life of this gentle soul, whom I regard as a colossus both in life and in death. The following he commanded transcended every stratum of society. At his burial, as in his life, people from diverse ethnic backgrounds and faiths gathered. True to his philosophy of peaceful co-existence, dialogue, and interfaith harmony, speakers from various walks of life eulogized him, his teachings, and his way of life. One after another, they took the stage, taking a stroll down memory lane and sharing heartfelt memories and personal experiences of knowing and interacting with this man of God.

I was one of the fortunate individuals who had the rare privilege of sharing memorable moments with Hocaefendi in February 2022. The experience remains etched in my memory and will stay with me for the rest of my life. During our tea session, before he arranged for me to be given a guided tour of the compound, he noticed that I was cold. Without hesitation, he removed his personal cap and placed it on my head. Later, he honored me further by asking me to lead the Maghrib prayer, with him joining as part of the congregation. What greater honor and privilege could I have asked for?

God has shown grace to Hocaefendi, a man of peace, understanding, and boundless humility. He exemplified simplicity and piety, teaching the world the beauty of sacrifice, the rewards of hard work, and the value of perseverance. He embodied the virtue of being your brother's keeper and demonstrated that we can all co-exist peacefully, regardless of ethnic or religious differences.

As we mourn this remarkable soul, I pray that we continue to live by the teachings and examples he left behind. May we carry forward the legacy he built while praying that God grants him Al-Jannat al-Firdaus (the highest paradise). Ameen.



by Lyndsey Eksili

Dr. Lyndsey Eksili is Editorial Director (Youth Titles) at Tughra Books in the United States.

Hocaefendi's presence was a reminder of beauty in service—a grace that lingered, inspiring others to live with the same compassion and humility.


Arriving at Eternal Love

Fethullah Gülen, or Hocaefendi, as many lovingly called him, was like a vibrant rose in a spring garden, emanating love, compassion, and understanding. Just as a rose spreads its fragrance indiscriminately, he shared his wisdom and kindness freely, touching the hearts of all who came near. His presence was a reminder of beauty in service—a grace that lingered, inspiring others to live with the same compassion and humility. His wisdom, carried on the winds of inspiration, reached millions around the world, and each life he touched blossomed a little brighter, nourished by his vision of a world grounded in unity.

I first encountered his teachings more than two decades ago, and they have profoundly shaped who I am. His words offered a path to a higher purpose—one that values compassion, humility, and responsibility toward others, rooted in deep faith in God. Through his teachings, I came to see humanity as a shared journey, where our greatest fulfillment comes from lifting each other up for the sake of God. His lessons taught me that true goodness lies in kindness, understanding, and a life devoted to making a difference in the world. It is these teachings that inspired me to become a teacher and now a contributing editor of his works in English.

My first meeting with Hocaefendi is a memory I will always hold dear. I shared with him how deeply his teachings had moved me, expressing how they had touched my life in ways words could hardly convey. He responded with warmth and humility, saying that my visit brought him joy and that he wanted to share a small gift with his “bacım”—a Turkish term of endearment meaning “dear sister.” As I prepared to leave, he handed me a scarf, his personal *tasbih* (prayer beads), and a small bottle of fragrance oil. These simple yet meaningful gifts reflected the essence of his teachings: that true beauty lies in small acts of kindness and in the connections nurtured through love and sincerity.

In a time marked by division and misunderstanding, his message of compassion, mutual respect, and service to humanity offers a unifying vision. His emphasis on education, ethical responsibility, and interfaith dialogue underscores that positive change begins within each individual and extends



outward. Hodjaefendi's teachings encourage a life of uplifting others, bridging divides, and fostering peace. One of my favorite quotes of his, from a collection of his speeches and articles in the book, *So That Others May Live*, reads, "Let us no longer consider ourselves to be a drop destined to dry and vanish. Instead, let us unite as one cascading river, flowing towards the sea of eternity. We all are human: Our genes contain the trace of Adam, and our essence shares the truth of Ahmad." For communities worldwide, his approach to faith as a vehicle for social harmony and justice serves as a beacon, reminding us that true progress lies in empathy and collaboration. His legacy continues to inspire individuals and institutions to prioritize humanity over differences, building a future rooted in understanding, compassion, and shared purpose.

Fethullah Gülen's enduring influence on the youth around the world fills me with immense hope for the future. Seeing a generation inspired by his teachings, committed to lives of compassion, integrity, and service, reassures me that his vision will live on. These young individuals are not only equipped to excel personally but also carry a deep sense of responsibility to make the world a better place. Through their actions, they embody the values Hocaefendi championed, working toward a more just, peaceful, and unified world. Knowing that his legacy of compassion and understanding will be carried forward by countless young hearts reminds me that, even in challenging times, a brighter future is possible.

Now, with Hocaefendi's departure from this temporary world, it falls to us to carry his message forward—to lift the banner he held high and continue the work he inspired in countless lives. His passing does not mark an end but rather a new beginning for all those he touched, a reminder that his teachings are timeless and that his vision lives on in us. The path he illuminated—a life of compassion, service, and unity—is one we must now walk ourselves, ensuring that his legacy endures in the hearts and actions of future generations. It is our turn to nurture the seeds he planted and to bring his ideals into a world in need of hope, understanding, and kindness.

There is so much more to say, but I end here with a couplet from a poem by Rumi that perhaps describes how we should feel at this moment: "Do not weep for my departure, I am not leaving, I am arriving at eternal love..."



by Paul Weller

Paul Weller, PhD, is Associate Director (UK) Oxford Centre for Christianity and Culture, Regent's Park College; Associate Member of the Faculty of Theology and Religion, University of Oxford.

Dr. Weller interviewing Fethullah Gülen. Pennsylvania, 2017



Hocaefendi Fethullah Gülen

A Personal Appreciation

Much has already been published about the life, teaching and inheritance of Hocaefendi Fethullah Gülen. It is likely that over the coming years much more will be written. Indeed, I have been among those who, as a scholar in the study of religion, have contributed to this literature. However, in this special issue of *The Fountain*, I want to take the opportunity to write a little more personally than usual, not only as a scholar, but also as an individual who seeks to live life dialogically and theologically with others in the Way of Jesus of Nazareth.

Over the years, I came to appreciate that in order better to understand Hocaefendi Fethullah Gülen and his teaching, it was important also to encounter him, either directly or indirectly, as an embodied teacher and person of prayer. And I was fortunate enough to have had the privilege of meeting him in person on two occasions. Both took place at the Golden Generation Retreat Centre in Pennsylvania, USA. The first was in December 2017, during a stay connected with a research project on his teaching and practice, and the development of Hizmet in Europe, which eventually led to the publication of two books [1]. The second was in February 2023, when he was evidently already very frail, but at which I had the honour of being able personally to present him with a copy of these books.

On the first occasion, I had presented him with three small gifts, namely: some tea, brought with me from England, as a typical English drink (although, of course, originating in China); a book on the history of Regent's Park College which, as a Permanent Private Hall of the University of Oxford, had been founded to give opportunity to Baptist Christian believers who had been excluded from mainstream higher education; and finally, bearing in mind the experiences of many in Hizmet following the events in Turkey of July 2016 and the heavy burden that he so evidently felt concerning this, I felt moved to recite the Beatitudes of Jesus from the Christian New Testament (Gospel According to Matthew, chapter 5 v's. 3–10):

³ "Blessed are the poor in spirit,
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

⁴ Blessed are those who mourn,
For they shall be comforted.

⁵ Blessed are the meek,
For they shall inherit the earth.

⁶ Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
For they shall be filled.

⁷ Blessed are the merciful,
For they shall obtain mercy.

⁸ Blessed are the pure in heart,
For they shall see God.

⁹ Blessed are the peacemakers,
For they shall be called children of God.

¹⁰ Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

In relation to this recitation, I explained: “*That’s my prayer as a person of faith*” and that “*I will do my best in my academic work in the service of truth*” meek [2]. And, remarkably, just as I recited the Beatitudes, the Adhan was broadcast in the Centre and the two mingled in a few moments that have stayed with me ever since as among some of the most profoundly moving in my life.

Of the Beatitudes, Mustafa Özcan later explained that Hodjaefendi had asked for a Turkish translation, and after he heard the meaning he had said that, in these words Jesus (peace be upon him) had been referring not only to such people of his time but also to those who will come in the future [3]. Also in relation to this episode, Muhammed Çetin (whose doctoral research on Hizmet I was privileged to supervise) explained that, although in something that he was planning to write at the time, Hocaefendi had originally been going to draw on the Sufi masters to write about how the negativities of modern human beings might be addressed, having been inspired by the Beatitudes, he thought that he should perhaps in that particular writing switch to focusing on the history of the Prophets (peace be upon them all) and what they taught about how to overcome human weaknesses [4].

The second time I was able to meet Hocaefendi Fethullah Gülen was in February 2023, when he was already very frail. But I was nevertheless privileged to be able to

present copies of my books to him, in relation to which Hakan Yeşilova vouchsafed that, on receiving them, Hocaefendi had responded in Turkish, “*Başımın üstüne alırım*”, which, as typical of his gracious humility, meant that he had accepted them with both pleasure but also a sense of responsibility.

Therefore, since Hocaefendi was kind enough in that way to honour my attempts to articulate something of his person and teaching, I will be bold enough to close this personal appreciation with words of my own from the final paragraph of one of these books, namely that: “*...in the final analysis, the creative inheritance of Gülen will not be found so much in the substantive body of his inherited teaching, pregnant though that remains with matters that will remain important into the future; the veneration of his person and/or practice, inevitable as that is likely to be, given the inspiration that he has brought to so many lives; or the copy-pasting of historical Hizmet initiatives, as valid and important as they have been for their contexts and times, but rather is that of a dynamic methodological call to continuously renewed and contextualised engagement with religious and spiritual sources centred on love and the human*” [5].

Notes

1. P. Weller (2022), *Fethullah Gülen’s Teaching and Practice: Inheritance, Context, and Interactive Development* | SpringerLink and P. Weller (2022), *Hizmet in Transitions: European Developments of a Turkish Muslim-Inspired Movement* | SpringerLink
2. P. Weller (2022), *Fethullah Gülen’s Teaching and Practice*, p. 75.
3. For originally cited wording see P. Weller (2022), *Fethullah Gülen’s Teaching and Practice*, p. 103-4.
4. For originally cited wording see P. Weller (2022), *Fethullah Gülen’s Teaching and Practice*, p. 104.
5. P. Weller (2022), *Fethullah Gülen’s Teaching and Practice*, p. 243.





by Ahmad Rehab

Ahmed Rehab is a Chicago-based Public Relations Specialist, Community activist, and writer specializing in American Muslim affairs. He is currently the Executive Director of CAIR-Chicago.

He Lived Because He Loved

Inna lillah wa inna ilayhi rajeoon

اللهم ارحم و اغفر لعبدك محمد فتح الله
جولن و ارزقه الجنة و صبر اهله و اصدقائه

*We must remember one thing:
Bodies leave but legacies live
Souls "return" to Allah
(what better place?)
Legacies don't leave us.
and bodies never were the
point. From dust to dust.
He lived because he loved and
his love through legacy lives on*

This is a man who loved. A man who loved passionately and fiercely. That's his secret. We wonder, how can someone who came from nothing and left with nothing changed so much?

And the answer is, this is a man who loved. This is a man who loved Allah with passion and strength. He loved Islam with passion. He loved humans with passion. Not just Muslims. He loved Muslims, but he loved humanity. And that is his secret. That is what allowed someone who came from nothing and left with nothing to change so much.

The question that we must ask ourselves, friend and foe, and it is an important question: What did he leave behind? Did he leave behind a palace with a thousand rooms or a library with a thousand books? Did he leave behind a trail of tears because of injustice and pain? Or a trail of tears because of the love in the hearts of the people, some of whom never met him? Did he leave behind cars and gold and silver and bank accounts? He left with his garment and left nothing else behind, but his legacy and the love in your hearts that he sow.

I have a message from him, if I may be so pretentious. I can hear him say to you: "Hizmet was never about me. It was always about you. Don't make it about me. I never asked you to make it about me. It's about you and your power. Your power to love and your power to transform. I was not given a special power. Only, I found my power through the love of Allah. Find your power through the love of Allah and the love of humanity. And you will transform as well."

He left behind books, institutions, and soft hearts. That's the only legacy you left behind. All those who doubted, all the cynics, all those who pointed fingers, all those who sowed false narratives: that's what he left behind. He started his career in a cold, barren window in a mosque in the city of Edirne in Turkey. And he left in a small room in Pennsylvania. That was his first abode in palace, and that was his last abode in palace, and transformed the world in between. Not in the sense of revolution, not in the sense of political ideology, not in the sense of creating tribe and nationalism and flag, but in the sense of sowing love in the hearts that then transformed other hearts, and so the fire of love goes.

I knew him not through him, but through you. I knew he was your family and came to love him. Because, as we say in Christianity, "You shall know them by their fruit." And I knew him by his fruit. There was not a member of Hizmet I have met with other than respect and admiration. Who is the teacher who taught these people?

Intelligence is for everybody. Capabilities for everyone. That's not what impresses. And there are tons of it here. But what's unique about this movement is the humility and the dedication and the perseverance and the lack of ego and the love of humanity. That is what made me an admirer of the Hizmet. I sing its praises everywhere. I shall remain an admirer and a friend till the last breath of my life.



by Laila Muhammad

Sister Laila Muhammad is the Director of Compassion Action Foundation in Newark, New Jersey.

Education and Peace for All

When reflecting on the life and legacy of Imam Fethullah Gülen (RA – may Allah have mercy on him), whom I heard of years before I met him, I am reminded of his work as a follower of the Seal of the Prophets, Muhammad, of 1400 years ago (SAW – peace be upon him). Imam Gülen prioritized education, just as the Prophet did, which deeply resonated with me, as education has always been a central focus in the Islamic spaces I grew up in and now work within. I began to see similar efforts and accomplishments in the Hizmet movement as I witnessed growing up in the original Nation of Islam movement, led by my grandfather. Not to mention that the Turkish flag is the mirror to the NOI flag.

I had the opportunity to visit some of the many schools established by the Hizmet movement. These schools serve as places for girls and boys to learn universal values, academics and much needed everyday life skills. When I visited these schools, I felt a sense of home. The schools reminded me of the Sister Clara Muhammad Schools, formerly called University of Islam. One Hizmet school in Africa has particularly stayed in my mind, as it bears the name As Shamsiyyah. This name is also shared by the Domestic Violence program I established in the late '90s and continue to run today, providing support to families in need.

The Quranic recitation we had the privilege of hearing that day continues to feed my soul whenever I recall it. As I listened to the young African men recite, I was reminded of Bilal Al-Habashi (RA – may Allah be pleased with him). Countless Muslims love and respect Bilal (RA), and I do as well, but through the teachings of my father, Imam Warith Deen Mohammed (RA)—the successor to the NOI leader and leader of the Islamic transition in America, now known as the IWDM community—his significance holds an even deeper meaning for African Americans. Imam W.D. Mohammed emphasized Bilal's importance, and as a result, many of us now call ourselves Bilalian. It was a profoundly moving experience that I will never forget.

Over the years I've witnessed not just the diversity of Muslims impacted by Imam Gülen (RA) but also the impact on the broader interfaith community. This emphasis on interfaith dialogue is especially meaningful to me, as it aligns with much of the work I am involved in. We have been blessed with Muhammad (SAW) who was a mercy to all mankind. Imam Gülen understood this, and the Hizmet movement has carried out extensive interfaith initiatives around the world. It is this interfaith work, alongside the educational work, that leads me to call Imam Gülen as Hocaefendi (RA).

There are two blessings that I have received as a result of getting to know the Hizmet movement. The first blessing is to have shared space with such a humble human being, Hocaefendi. When I met him in Pennsylvania, the spirit of peace and G-d Consciousness surrounding him was evident. Despite the inhumane treatment and injustices inflicted upon him and his people by their homeland, he had not allowed it to harden his heart.

This is his legacy: education and peace for all. As an African American (Bilalian), I resonate with and look forward to continued collaboration with the Hizmet movement. May their grief be comforted, and may it inspire them to work even harder for the causes of education and peace.



by Christoph Bultmann

Prof. Dr. Christoph Bultmann is a German theologian and Old Testament scholar at the University of Erfurt.

Gülen placed a strong emphasis on interfaith dialogue, a significant part of the precious heritage he has left behind.

Commemorating Fethullah Gülen

Erzurum is a city with two particularly impressive mosques, the *Selimiye Mosque* and the *Üç Şerefeli Mosque*. It has always been an intriguing thought for me that, in 1958, Fethullah Gülen travelled from Erzurum, the urban center of the region where he grew up and was educated, across Turkey, and only a few weeks later, assumed a position at the *Üç Şerefeli Mosque* after passing the official imam examination at the state directorate of religious affairs in Ankara. I am sure that at some stage in the future a small marble tablet will be put on a wall of the courtyard of the mosque in memory of his service there.

When Fethullah Gülen's statement, "Build schools, not mosques!" is quoted within the Hizmet movement, I sometimes wonder if part of his reasoning stemmed from his familiarity with many extraordinarily beautiful mosques—spaces that, if duly appreciated, offer believers an aesthetic experience capable of lasting a lifetime, whether through an actual visit or even through images.

In 1966, Fethullah Gülen began his service at the Kestanepazarı Mosque in Izmir, where he developed the foundational idea of supporting aspiring students through accommodations that fostered a life of prayer and communal Qur'anic study—safe from persecution. This *sohbet* style of religious conversation creates, on one hand, an atmosphere of personal piety, while, on the other, it encourages religious practice for the benefit of broader society. The origins of Hizmet as an educational movement and as an initiative promoting Islam as a civil religion can, it seems, be traced back to this time. The tradition of small *sohbet* style gatherings has provided followers of Fethullah Gülen with a space for meanh

ingful religious discourse. I believe that the inspiration for Hizmet's extensive work on the international stage, especially in education, was largely developed within this conversational setting, inspired by his sermons and writings.

The texts that first brought Fethullah Gülen's teachings and sermons to my attention include anthologies such as *Criteria or Lights of the Way* (1996), *Advocate of Dialogue* (2000), and *Toward a Global Civilization of Love and Tolerance* (2004). Even more directly accessible for insights into the Qur'an and the revival of Sufi ideas are works like *Emerald Hills of the Heart: Key Concepts in the Practice of Sufism* (2004-2010) and *Reflections on the Qur'an: Commentaries on Selected Verses* (2012).

I can easily imagine how the exposition of texts and ideas in these – and many more – books may guide and stimulate discussion in *sohbet* settings, much as William Penn's simple aphorism, 'We have a call to do good, as often as we have the power and occasion,' has done since its publication in 1693.

These texts invite calm and circumspect reflections on contemporary interpretations of acknowledged canonical traditions. Many students must have benefitted from the way Fethullah Gülen challenged them through his profound and creative teachings.

The tradition of Sufism reflects that Islam is a generous religion and a religion of the heart. When love and beauty are put at the center of faith, interreligious relations do not remain in the shadow of arrogance and controversy. In modern religious studies, scholars refer to this as 'parity pluralism' (Rachel S. Mikva), where believers respect one other and are united in their awareness of God, as well as in their commitment to peace and justice. Fethullah Gülen placed a strong emphasis on interfaith dialogue, a significant part of the precious heritage he has left behind. In this sense, as a biblical scholar, I would like to characterize Fethullah Gülen by quoting a verse from the Biblical Psalms: "By day the Lord commands his steadfast love, and at night his song is with me, a prayer to the God of my life" (Psalm 42.8).





by Kareem Irfan

Kareem Irfan is the former Vice President of ISNA (Islamic Society of North America) and past President of Council of Religious Leaders of Metropolitan Chicago. He is also a computer engineer, IP Lawyer, and Board Director for NASDAQ companies.

(This piece is an edited version of Kareem Irfan's speech at the memorial service in Chicago, November 2, 2024.2024.)

Not a Void But an Inspiring Force

Teachers and scholars exist to impart their inspiration and teaching, then step away. What they leave behind becomes a legacy to be practiced. Since the passing of our beloved leader, the reminder I've been sharing with all the wonderful brothers and sisters in the movement is the same one I give you now: we are here not just for a memorial service, but to celebrate a life of inspired living and teaching. And you all are blessed to be part of that movement to carry that legacy forward. Hold on to the beautiful memories—tears will come, but I'd love for you to wear a smile as well. I say to each Hizmet brother and sister from the bottom of my heart that this is a moment to celebrate that you have been inspired and now have a legacy to live on.

From an Islamic perspective, we must appreciate the saintly qualities that Imam Fethullah Gülen so clearly demonstrated for us to observe and learn from. His exceptional piety, wisdom, and devotion stemmed from his high level of *taqwa* (piety) – a profound fear and reverence for God Almighty. They were also rooted in his *ihسان* (excellence), striving for moral and spiritual growth; his *'ilm* (knowledge), encompassing a deep understanding of Islam, theology, and jurisprudence, coupled with the ability to put that knowledge into practice. His *wara'* – maintaining distance from worldly desires while using the best of this world without becoming attached to it – and his *tawakkul*, complete reliance on the Lord's will and provisions, further defined his character.

He clearly was destined to become the master teacher that he ended up being, inspiring and tremendously influencing Muslims around the globe and people of other faiths, too, as is witnessed by the lovers of the movement here and around the world. He guided us toward higher standards of human excellence, rooted in the Prophetic characteristics that believers

What Gülen has left behind is not a void. It is a tremendously magnetic and inspiring force that shall continue to draw millions around the world.

recognize. His efforts aimed to elevate human moral character and actions to the divinely guided threshold of the highest level of excellence—*ahsan al-taqwim*.

He inspired us through his teachings, lectures, and actions to excel in virtues while avoiding any wrongdoing. His all-encompassing love, goodness, and compassion radiated not only in his lectures and writings but especially in his presence.

I was deeply moved when I had the honor of accompanying dear brothers and sisters from the movement last year to be in his presence. You could feel a profound personal connection. There were hundreds in the room, and out of respect, I quietly entered and sat down, keeping my gaze lowered. Then, I noticed people pointing toward me, and I realized he was saying, “Get up and sit on that chair.”

I did as instructed and again kept my head bowed out of reverence. Then, someone pointed out that he was gesturing toward a cup of coffee beside him, saying, “Take it.” Embarrassed, I hesitated but eventually took the cup and held it in my hands, still looking down. Moments later, someone nudged me again because he was now saying, “Drink it.”

It was an incredible experience because he extended that same warmth to hundreds of people in that room and to millions around the world who have been inspired by him. There was a unique personal connection, a spiritual exuberance, love, and goodness that surrounded him. He inspired this movement of millions to act gracefully in all circumstances, with affection and humility.

My dear brothers and sisters, let the tears flow as your hearts soften, but keep that smile, for it symbolizes your commitment to carrying this legacy forward. As I have repeatedly emphasized in my reflections on the Hizmet movement over the years: these inspirational teachings are not meant to be kept to yourselves. This is not solely a Turkish gift or a gift for the Turkish people. It is a gift for all of humanity, for Muslims and people around the globe.

What has the master scholar left behind? Allow me to give you a different perspective: it is not a void. It is a tremendously magnetic and inspiring force that shall continue to draw millions around the world onto this path of love, goodness, caring, tolerance, wisdom and sharing, so that we may all grow together in excellence and in the service of humanity.

May Allah subhanahu wa ta’ala admit our Imam Fethullah Gülen, into the highest annals of Paradise, inshallah (God-willing). And may He bring comfort and ease to those feeling this loss, inspiring us all to embrace and carry forward the wonderful legacy Imam Fethullah Gülen has left behind.



by Simon Robinson

Rev Dr. Simon Robinson
is Emeritus Professor, Leeds
Beckett University, and Hon
Fellow, Centre for Religion
and Public Life, University of
Leeds, United Kingdom.

Seeing the World Differently Through Gülen

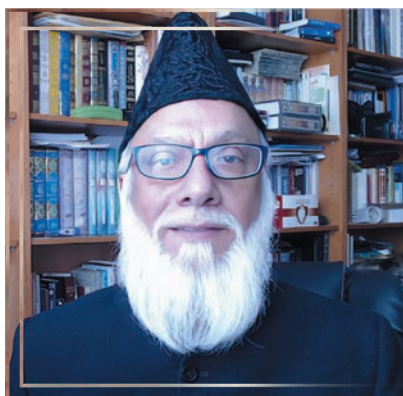
The second time I met Fethullah Gülen was with a group of academics. We were ushered into a room where he was in dialogue with many different people about *Hizmet* issues and he paused to welcome us. He immediately stepped down from his chair (the focus of the assembly), inquired who was the oldest of our group and offered him his chair. Despite his back troubles and the fact that he already had sat through a lengthy meeting, he then sat down in a less comfortable chair and spent the next thirty minutes listening to us. We knew he was actively listening because of his face, open, thoughtful, alert to the meaning of our words, and because of his questions.

We had come to talk to him *about* dialogue and responsibility, and he was *showing* us what dialogue was about. At its heart is humility, a letting go of power. Focused on love, this approach recognizes and respects the other, not as one among many, but as a unique individual. Trust then grows with mutual assurance, and pathways are found together which respond to God and His creation, embodying hope. All of these virtues were not just discussed but lived in Hocaefendi, showing us, that dialogue is primarily about discovery of the self, each other, our world and God.

Fethullah Gülen's contribution to Islam, to other religions and more widely, was precisely to show how truth could only be found through such dialogue. It is focused on our relationships, not in intellectual abstraction, enabling us to continually see the world differently (*metanoia*). This is why autocrats fear dialogue, seeking to silence different voices, and impose their perspective of the world, held in place by fear.

Because of that dynamic Gülen died away from his homeland, which in one sense is a tragedy. He did not get to see the reemergence of democracy in Turkey. In another sense though, the democracy he thirsted for never has and never will flourish fully in our world. This is democracy as dialogue, not simply representation, which seeks to engage everyone in sharing responsibility, a democracy which is always learning, always refreshing itself, always asking questions not just of those in power but of the ordinary person. Gülen gently challenged everybody to serve, to take and share responsibility for each other. Genuine dialogue nurtures freedom through relationships, freedom found in building peace.

His enduring gift was the creation of the *Hizmet* Movement. The very term 'service' counters any temptation to reconfigure religion as a focus of power, nationalistic or otherwise. It looks outwards to share power and create, and so *Hizmet's* home was always destined to move beyond national boundaries. But as Gülen taught us, global reach is not about elevation. Hence, he always resisted attempts to elevate himself, as leader or thinker. Instead, he brought people down to earth, the here and now, to the particular in which the universal love of God is to be found. For that, people of all religions and all nations owe him their gratitude.



by Syed Soharwardy

Prof. Imam Syed Soharwardy is a scholar, a shaykh of the Suhrawardi Sufi order, chairman of the Al-Madinah Calgary Islamic Assembly, and is the founder & current president of the Islamic Supreme Council of Canada.

A Great Visionary

Fadhilatul Shaikh Fethullah Gülen was a great visionary Islamic scholar who loved to serve humanity and stood up for justice and peace in the world. He authored books on very important topics with different views on Islam, God and Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him. His interfaith work is a model to build better relationships among followers of various faiths.

Mr Fethullah Gülen was a man of high moral and spiritual values. His message of tolerance and respect for difference of opinions will guide generations to come. May Allah grant him Jannatul Firdous and give patience to his family and the followers.

Ameen



Photo credit: Soulofsouthafrica

by Farid Esack

Farid Esack is professor emeritus in the department of religion studies at the University of Johannesburg. (First published in its original version in *Mail&Guardian*, South Africa, November 1, 2024.)

Humanitarian Legacy of Fethullah Gülen

Muhammed Fethullah Gülen was an Islamic scholar, preacher and social advocate with a decades-long commitment to education, altruistic service and inter-faith harmony. He was the leader of the Hizmet (service) Movement, making him one of the most influential Muslim leaders in the world, and he died in exile in the United States on 20 October 2024.

The trajectory of his remarkable life, writings and work is easy to follow. Yet, most of what is written about him online is couched in simplistic, sloppy terms, revealing both the shallowness of social media and its power in creating and controlling narratives.

Erdogan's rapid morphing into a 21st century absolutist sultan with plans for a 1000-roomed palace—which Gülen denounced as prohibited by Islam and which Erdogan completed—and his removal of prosecutors investigating allegations of his family's financial corruption were but some of the things that provoked Gülen's ire. Erdogan had to deal with an ancient challenge faced by numerous dictatorial sultans before: "Who will save me from this pesky cleric who had grown too big for his boots?"

The perfect opportunity came in 2016 with an attempted "coup". (Among academic scholars, the jury is still out on whether this was a genuine coup or a planned sideshow by Erdogan to rally support.) Gülen and the movement he led were held responsible.

Gülen's well-documented written works and speeches testify to a person deeply moved by his faith, simplicity, moral values, calls to justice and the spiritual underpinnings he desired as lodestars for Turkish society. He led an austere life, leaving no property or wealth behind.

Not once did Gülen suggest that he was interested in political power. He rejected what he regarded as the politicisation of religion. All the education institutions founded by the Hizmet Movement aimed to produce quality, well-rounded scholars in all fields, including education, science, Islamic and contemporary law.

I have closely observed the Hizmet movement in the US, Europe and South Africa for more than two decades. As a scholar of religion, I can smell a cult a mile away.

Wherever the Hizmet Movement has planted its seeds, its work has been characterised by serious attempts to engage – not proselytise – people of various communities. Notions of winning over "other Muslims" or non-Muslims are absent from its programmes. Its frequent inter-faith dialogue events are just that – to promote understanding between faiths and to advance the values that drive them.

As in 160 countries, Gülen's vision inspired the global Hizmet Movement in South Africa. This movement has established schools producing the finest matric results in the country, charitable organisations and platforms for interfaith dialogue mainly focusing on promoting science, literacy and community service. The movement has a significant and deeply impressive footprint and is run by full-time volunteers and staff on a small budget.

Most moving is watching these volunteers set aside their pain as they go about the daily basis of their calling: living and acting in service of humanity in general and, more specifically, South African society.



by Braam Hanekom

Dr. Braam Hanekom is the vice moderator of the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa.

Gülen for a Reconciled World

It is with deep sadness that we learned about the death of Fethullah Gülen.

Fethullah Gülen was a leader, a reformer, but above all a spiritual leader who was true to his spiritual foundations, but strived for a new, united, reconciled world. His legacy does not only lie in his writings, but in the number of followers that he gathered all over the world who served his vision with commitment and diligence.

May his spirit continue to inspire us as we all struggle to find a world order that will be more peaceful, inclusive, respectful, and hopeful in the century that we live in.

My condolences to his family and followers who are in mourning.



by Margaret A. Johnson

Margaret A. Johnson, PhD, is a sociologist, author, and business owner, based in Germantown, MD.

Hocaefendi was a man of the times in which he lived. Yet, he was deeply connected to the time of the Prophet Muhammad (saw). And through his speeches, he reached back in time and brought the Prophet and his companions to us today.

In Memoriam Fethullah Gülen

I met Hocaefendi in person only once, and the *dua* (prayer) that he made for us remains a most treasured gift. Instead, I came to know him through the *hizmet* community. Attending their *sohbets* (reading circles), learning about the *Risale-i Nur* with its rational approach and powerful metaphors for understanding faith and the nature of Allah swt, I grew in faith. Traveling, working with them, and witnessing their service changed me. Their perfected *adab* (manners), filled with sincerity and concern for others, opened up a side of myself that laid dormant, buried under the layers of growing up in a Western society that prized concern for oneself and material striving above any sacred journey. It says in *The Bible*, “by their fruits you shall know them” (Matthew 7:16). Judged from that perspective, Fethullah Gülen must surely be considered one of the most successful men of our times.

It was 2007 when I first met with people of *hizmet* (people of service), although I didn’t know of their common spiritual heritage at that time. I simply attended *sohbets* hosted by Turkish sisters, which, unfortunately for me, were in Turkish. Still the warmth of their company and hospitality kept me returning and hoping to learn more.

Then with Ramadan of 2008 approaching, one local organization offered a few converts the opportunity to travel to Turkey so that we could experience Ramadan in an Islamic country. There, I had my true introduction to *hizmet*.

I felt like I had hit gold. In my eight years since taking my *shahada*, I had been searching for a community that resonated with me, where I felt I could belong. *Hizmet* blended service with religiosity and spirituality—a continual struggle to improve oneself to draw closer to the Creator. This approach echoed my upbringing in my Catholic family-of-origin. After that life-changing trip, I wanted nothing more than to serve alongside them. It wasn’t easy, as they didn’t quite know what to do with me—an outsider by nationality, language, and gender, but I persisted, and they eventually started giving me various tasks and ways to serve.

In 2015, the decision was made to offer an English version of Hocaefendi's sermons. I had the privilege to be a small part of that process for the very first videos. I edited the translation and along with a few other converts, we debated how we wanted them to be—namely, voice-over or subtitles. We unanimously settled on subtitles, as we didn't want to miss the experience of hearing Hocaefendi's voice, emotions, and pacing. Alone in my office, editing those sermons, I felt myself transported, stepping into a stream of light and goodness.

Although some might describe Hocaefendi as “old-fashioned,” there's no doubt, but that he was a man of the times in which he lived. He encouraged the community to read their time well. Yet, he was deeply connected to the time of the Prophet Muhammad (saw). And through his speeches, he reached back in time and brought the Prophet and his companions to us today.

I recently reread those sermons from so long ago. He advised those dedicated to service to “[c]onstantly feel like you are newly born. Feel like Allah has just sent down His message to you. Imagine that this revelation descending from the heavens is entirely new and vivid. See the new wisdom that this book unveils to you today as a deeper, more profound insight than you understood yesterday.”

In conveying the stories of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, and his companions in a way that made them alive and relevant to our struggles today, he inspired noble volunteers throughout the world towards constant striving. It is through their sincerity, that others, like me, found our humanity. Gülen constantly reminded his followers to strive for *Insān-i Kāmil*, to strive to become the ideal human.

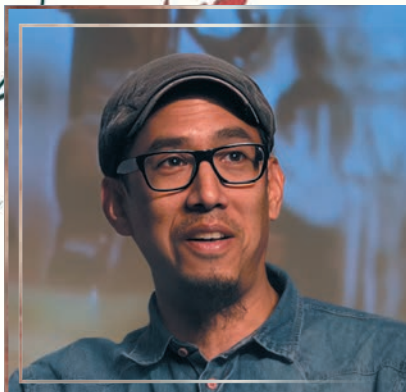
We need the ideal human today more than ever.

Humanity, this is what *Hocaefendi* constantly called us to—to be more fully human. We need an understanding of what this means in our world more than ever today. People present sanitized versions of themselves on social media, while AI and algorithms threaten to distort the truth and our understandings of the world. The great powers of the world act more like Empires seeking wealth and domination, rather than serving as beacons of light.

In these trying times, I leave you with this recommendation from our beloved *Hocaefendi*,

"Renew your ship every day when you wake up in the morning. ... As if you are renewing your vows, as if you are revising everything once again, say to yourself, 'What should I do to feel everything as fresh as the first time when I felt them...like the dew on the rose petals sent from heaven, showering me with gorgeous smiles?'"





by Wahbi Long

Wahbi Long, Ph.D. is a clinical psychologist and professor in the Department of Psychology at the University of Cape Town.

The Wellspring of Humility

My association with *Hizmet* dates back to a *halaqah* (study circle) I used to attend in Cape Town, South Africa, around 2004, when a small group of brothers would meet on a weekly basis to read from, and discuss, the works of the incomparable Said Nursi. The exegetical style of *Bediuzzaman* made an immediate and immense impression on me: elevated, profound, and, of course, rhythmically poetic prose. Then life happened, and I lost touch with the group for a good decade or so.

In 2021—the circumstances evade me now—I returned and, unusually, felt as though I had never been away. Ordinarily one would expect of such a prolonged absence at least a modicum of awkwardness, a need to settle in, acclimatise, and yet there was no need for anything of the sort. In hindsight, I attribute it to the constancy—the fidelity—of the group, for which the work of *Hizmet* continues regardless of who is present and who is absent. The work, in other words, is bigger than any single one of us. New Age gurus may preach the virtues of ritual and routine, but they do so without any transcendent philosophy to sustain such practices. How, then, does one begin to account for the steadfastness—and staying power—of *Hizmet*, despite the traumas and difficulties experienced in recent years? How does one make sense of its awesome global appeal? And to where does one trace the wellspring of humility, sincerity, and generosity that is in evidence each time one sits in a *Hizmet* circle? These are questions that have percolated inside me for some time now, brought once more to the fore in these recent days of shared sadness.

I never had the honour of meeting Ustadh Fethullah Gülen, but the only answer to these questions that suggests itself is this: the faithfulness of the student is surely a reflection of the immeasurably greater faithfulness of the teacher. That is to say: the devotion of *Hizmet* to the life of spirit and mind is a testament to Hocaefendi's own extraordinary devotion to the life of spirit and mind. And in these polarized times in which some lives clearly matter more than others, when the things we cannot tolerate about ourselves we project onto others who become, then, the victims of our paranoid, vengeful destructiveness, Fethullah Gülen's message of interfaith dialogue and understanding has never seemed more vital for the survival of humankind, a reliable guide for the perplexed in the twenty-first century.

In this time of great sorrow and loss, and beyond, may *Hizmet* continue to lead through service, committed to gentleness and compassionate understanding, a place of refuge in this malevolent age.



by John Cardinal Onaiyekan

*His Eminence
John Cardinal
Onaiyekan
is Catholic
Archbishop
Emeritus of Abuja,
Nigeria.*



Tushar Gandhi

*Author & the
great-grandson
of Mahatma
Gandhi and
Kasturba Gandhi*

He Lives On

May the peace and consolation of the Almighty and Merciful God be with you and with the entire Hizmet Community on the passing into eternal life of your great Founder and Leader, Fethullah Gulen. May his dear soul rest in peace.

The late Gulen was a man of great reputation for many people all over the world as an advocate for peace and harmony in our modern, divided and ever dividing world. His powerful message is being carried all over the world by his many dedicated disciples and spiritual children, to whom I express my deepest condolences.

That those who now run the affairs of his dear nation of Turkey do not seem to appreciate his great human values has not reduced the impact of his life and teaching on all who care to listen to this prophet of peace with an open and impartial mind. I am one of his many admirers. I still remember and will continue to cherish my opportunity to meet him a few years ago in his place of exile in the United States of America. That person-to-person encounter has made a permanent impact on me for good.

As we pray for God's mercy on him now that he has died, we also pray that his sacred ideas and teachings will continue to influence our humanity for good in the years that lie ahead. He lives on, not only in heaven but also here on earth.

Rest in Peace

Rest in Peace
Fethullah Gülen
in exile from his beloved country.
Another voice of peace muted.
A great loss to humanity



by Naveed Sheikh

Naveed Sheikh is Editor-in-Chief of the journal *Politics, Religion & Ideology* and Lecturer in International Relations at the School of Social Sciences, University of Keele.

The Rain That Gives Life

In Memoriam of Hocaefendi

A scholar buried is a treasure entrusted to the earth.

In a well-known narration, the Prophet (upon whom be peace) said, “Allah does not take away knowledge by removing it from the hearts of people, but He takes it away by the death of the scholars until no scholar remains. Then people will turn to the ignorant who, when asked for religious opinions, will issue decrees without knowledge. They will be misguided and will misguide others” (Sahih al-Bukhari, 100; Sahih Muslim, 2673). In truth, therefore, the rise of ignorance is predicated on the demise of scholars.

Hocaefendi, Muhammed Fethullah Gülen, a visionary scholar and spiritual leader, dedicated much of his life to promoting knowledge, understanding, and unity among people of all faiths. In a few decades, Gülen grew from a local educator and preacher in Turkey into a global advocate for peace and interfaith dialogue, inspiring millions worldwide with his message of respect, tolerance, and service to humanity. His teachings were grounded in a deep Islamic spirituality, yet his outlook remained inclusive, advocating for harmony across religious and cultural divides. His work found resonance not only among Muslims but also among people of various faiths, who saw in him a man committed to bridging the divides that often fragment communities.

Gülen’s philosophy emphasized that true faith is a source of empathetic engagement and understanding. He believed that love for one’s own beliefs does not diminish the capacity to respect and appreciate the beliefs of others. This conviction led

him to establish dialogue initiatives across the world, seeking common ground between Muslims, Christians, Jews, and followers of other religions. Through platforms such as the Hizmet Movement, Gülen fostered a global community committed to education, social development, and peacebuilding. In his view, service to humanity was the highest form of devotion to God, and he encouraged his followers to embrace education as a tool for enlightenment and societal advancement.

His approach to interfaith dialogue was not just intellectual but deeply heartfelt, driven by the cognizance that the human composite consists of the spirit, the intellect, and the heart. Gülen's words carried a rare poetic depth, often touching on the shared values of love, kindness, and compassion that underpin all major religious traditions. He saw these qualities as essential threads in the fabric of human connection. Gülen likened interfaith efforts to the nurturing of a garden, where every flower represents a different tradition, each contributing to the beauty of the whole. Gülen embodied the paradigmatic Hadith of Mercy: "Those who are merciful are treated with mercy by the Most Merciful. Bestow mercy onto those on Earth, and He who is in Heaven will bestow mercy onto you" (al-Tirmidhi, 1924).

In his passing, the world has lost a scholar who embodied the timeless values of compassion and unity. Yet, his teachings and the movement he inspired live on, continuing to illuminate paths toward understanding and cooperation. Fethullah Gülen's legacy reminds us that even in a divided world, there are bridges to be built and that peace begins with the simple act of seeing ourselves in each other.

In a saying attributed to Abdullah ibn Mas'ud, the Hanafi School's foremost reference among the Sahaba, the company of scholars was likened to the beneficent rain through which the barren land blossoms: "Sit with the scholars and listen to the speech of the wise, for indeed Allah gives life to the dead heart through their light of wisdom, just as He revives the dead earth with rain."

Across faith divides, Gülen rejuvenated countless hearts with his wisdom, much like rain, which when it revives barren land, does not discriminate upon where it falls. His wisdom, preserved in his works and carried by his students, will continue to shower upon whoever seeks it, for just as not all those who traverse the world are truly alive, not all those buried in the soil are truly dead.

A scholar buried is a treasure entrusted to the earth. The treasure is buried, but also waiting to be discovered by those who seek it.

"Sit with the scholars and listen to the speech of the wise, for indeed Allah gives life to the dead heart through their light of wisdom, just as He revives the dead earth with rain."

A Life of Devotion and Divine Acceptance

by Mohammed Ibn Ahmed

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In the quiet, reflective moments of our shared human journey, there arises a rare soul whose life transcends the ordinary, casting a profound light on what it means to serve, to believe, and to love. Fethullah Gülen, known with reverence as Hocaefendi, is one such luminous figure. His life was not only an embodiment of devotion but a testament to divine acceptance, a calling fulfilled through unwavering faith and boundless compassion.

A journey steeped in faith

His was a life steeped in faith and purpose, a testimony to what it means to be accepted by the Lord and a beacon for those who seek to walk a path of divine servitude.

Born in 1938 in the modest village of Korucuk, Turkey, Hocaefendi's journey began with an earnest thirst for knowledge. His life was molded by the teachings of Islam and the rich spiritual tradition that imbued his heart. He was not merely a scholar but a seeker, constantly striving to deepen his connection with the Divine. His teachings transcended the ordinary, emphasizing that true worship is more than ritual—it is a life devoted to God, with each act an offering of service.

Hocaefendi's unwavering commitment was anchored in a profound understanding of Islam as a source of peace and co-existence. He once said, "The true believer finds God not only in the heights of prayer but in the quiet service to humanity." This encapsulates the essence of his teachings, which inspired millions to embody the principles of love, compassion, and humility. He reminded his followers, "Raise your words, not voice. It is rain that grows flowers, not thunder," urging a life where gentle acts of kindness and wisdom make a lasting impact.

The vision of Hizmet: Service to humanity

Hocaefendi's life bore witness to a movement born from sincerity: Hizmet, meaning "service." The Hizmet movement became a transformative force, one rooted in the belief that serving others is an act of worship. Its mission expanded across continents, establishing schools, humanitarian projects, and interfaith initiatives that served as bridges between cultures. This network of service was driven by the understanding that the fruits of one's labor are both temporal and eternal.

Hocaefendi's teachings did not stop at advocating the theological; they blossomed into a movement where actions spoke louder than words. As the Qur'an beautifully encapsulates, "Indeed, it is We who bring the dead to life and record what they have put forth and what they left behind..." (Qur'an 36:12). In this divine promise lies the enduring traces of Hocaefendi's influence: the schools built, the minds inspired, the bridges of peace extended across borders. Every good deed performed by those he inspired contributes to his eternal legacy, a cycle of goodness that yields its fruit until the end of time.

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, "When a person dies, their deeds come to an end except for three: ongoing charity, beneficial knowledge, or a righteous child who prays for them" (Sahih Muslim). Hocaefendi's vision ensured that his legacy would live on through all three, as generations of students and devotees continue to uplift communities and illuminate the world with acts of kindness and knowledge.

A legacy beyond this world

Hocaefendi was undoubtedly a man whose acceptance by the Divine was evident in the immense good that followed him. As I once shared with his close disciples, a person cannot achieve such enduring impact without being favored by God. His trials—exile, accusations, and challenges—were met with patience and unwavering dignity. Even when accused unjustly of leading a coup in 2016, he stood resilient, embodying the Quranic promise: "Indeed, Allah defends those who have believed" (Qur'an 22:38). The trials that might have broken others only deepened his resolve and strengthened the legacy of Hizmet.

Reflecting on the above-mentioned verse of Surah Yaseen, "Indeed, it is We who bring the dead to life and record what they have put forth and what they left behind" (Qur'an 36:12), one can see that Hocaefendi's traces of goodness are inscribed in a register that will bear witness until the end of time. The seeds of service he sowed continue to bloom, and his spirit lives on through the countless individuals who carry forward his vision.

Philosophy of tolerance and peace

Hocaefendi's teachings were a call to a higher understanding, one rooted in the Qur'anic principle of mutual respect and tolerance: "O humankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another" (Qur'an 49:13). He urged Muslims to reclaim Islam's message of love and understanding. His emphasis on tolerance as a divine mandate not only healed divisions but united diverse communities.

Seyyed Hossein Nasr once reflected, "The future of the world will depend on how various world views and civilizations will be able to live together." Hocaefendi's legacy fulfilled this hope. He believed that through service, dialogue, and the embrace of others, peace could flourish, and he devoted his life to nurturing this vision.

Practical advice for those inspired by him

To those who have been moved by his teachings, know this: The greatest tribute you can offer is to continue his work with sincerity and resolve. As Hocaefendi often cited, "Service to others is the rent you pay for your room here on Earth." Let us embody his spirit by serving our communities and fostering the inclusivity he envisioned. This is not just a movement; it is a mindset, one made real through action.

A supplication for the departed

O Allah, shower Your mercy upon our teacher, Hocaefendi Fethullah Gülen. Grant him the highest station in Jannah, for his service was an unyielding act of worship. May his soul find peace in Your presence, and may his legacy inspire us to strive for Your acceptance through the service of others. Inna lillahi wa inna ilayhi raji'un—"Indeed, we belong to Allah, and indeed to Him we will return" (Qur'an 2:156).

Separation and Hope

by M. Feihullah Gülen

I recall the days of separation once more
Gone are the years in tears
I shuddered and froze
Gone are friends with the foes

People, floating in deep slumber
Values have disappeared, one after the other.

Gone is the past, exhausted in blood and sweat
Iron shackles bound to its feet;
A bitter smile lingers on its lips,
Gone, after a fiery clash with a fierce spirit

Darkness lingers on the horizon here and there,
Yet night always gives way to day.

Autumn has struck all the farmland,
Leaves have lost color, flowers withered,
The hero is dead, the steed exhausted,
Gone, having fought a demon, the wicked.

Even if he returns, he is still in the distance,
My gaze fixed on dreamy dawns.

Gone with the caravan of separation,
Are the crowns that once gleamed,
Hillsides that welcomed the crowned,
And the emerald trees on golden slopes.

Yet a spark remains from that fading blaze,
A spark that speaks of returning days

