

CHAPTER 3

Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's Approach to Religious Renewal and its Impact on Aspects of Contemporary Turkish Society

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Bediuzzaman Said Nursi (1877–1960) was distinguished from other religious leaders in the Islamic world in recent times by his seeking to reverse its decline *vis-à-vis* the West not through political struggle or the establishment of the Islamic state or other means, but through the revitalization of faith or belief (*imān*). He identified the gravest danger to “the edifice of Islam” as coming from the decay of its intellectual underpinning, which had been weakened over the centuries by currents of alien thought and was then facing renewed threats in the form of materialist philosophy and modernity, which he expressed in terms of “philosophy”¹ and “modern civilization.” The greatest danger these posed was to the faith of the mass of believers. Hence in Nursi’s view, the restatement of the basic tenets of the Islamic religion, and “the renewing and strengthening of belief” through new methods, were of paramount importance and took precedence over every other form of struggle aimed at reconstruction.

To reorient believers towards their Maker and instill in them a Qur’anic worldview in the way Nursi envisaged would also render them capable of coping with the intellectual and ethical challenges of the rapid secularization and Westernization that took place in Turkey following the founding of the Republic in 1923. Such building of morally strong believers would lead inevitably to the strengthening and consolidation of society, which he felt was threatened with dissolution due to the displacement of Islam. Although Nursi’s writings, known collectively as the *Risale-i Nur*, uncompromisingly expound the fundamentals of belief while refuting the bases of materialist philosophy, the method of serving religion that he developed has, since 1950, for the most part been implemented successfully within Turkey’s secular system. The *Risale-i Nur* has continued to be popular among succeeding generations, despite the changes

wrought by the ongoing secularization process, just as it was taken up enthusiastically in the early years of the Republic by sections of the Anatolian populace raised in Ottoman times. With its many bifurcations and offshoots, the movement that grew up around the *Risale-i Nur* (the Nur community or movement) continues to be one of the largest religious movements in Turkey, making it a significant social and political force within the country.² It is also active in a number of other countries worldwide.

This chapter will examine two areas of Nursi's thought that are directed towards religious renewal and that have had an impact on various aspects of Turkish society. These are firstly his ideas related to the revitalization of belief and moral renewal; and secondly, his ideas concerning the character and functions of the Nur movement, and its mode of struggle in a secular society. The two areas are interrelated. The latter will include discussion of Nursi's attitude towards political struggle in the cause of religion, as well as throwing light on his understanding of secularism.

It will assist in explaining the impact and continued relevance of Nursi's thought if we look briefly at his aims and endeavors in the early period of his life during the final decades of the Ottoman Empire. For although he himself divided his life into two distinct periods, which he called the Old and New Said, and there were fundamental changes in his stand towards a number of matters, this early period has a direct bearing on the matters discussed in this chapter, particularly in respect of his stated goals in life and his acquaintance with the currents of European thought that became progressively influential in Turkey.

From his earliest youth, Bediuzzaman Said Nursi³ was possessed with the desire to restore Islam to its rightful position as "master of the sciences" and fount of knowledge, for it was the source of "true" civilization and human progress. To this end he dedicated himself to the reform and updating of madrasah education in his native eastern Anatolia, and of the disciplines taught therein. His particular concern was firstly with *'ilm al-kalām* (theology), as the main means of intellectual defense against the attacks of rationalistic skepticism, and secondly, with *tafsīr* (Qur'anic exegesis), as the means of explicating Islam's principal beliefs. Nursi's conventional education was minimal, but through his own exertions he obtained a firm grounding in both the traditional madrasah sciences, and, uniquely among members of the learned profession in the East at that time, in the modern physical and mathematical sciences. Fundamental to his projects for the restructuring of education was the reintroduction of the latter and their combined teaching with the religious sciences:

The religious sciences are the light of the conscience; the sciences of civilization are the light of the intellect. The truth is made manifest through the combining of the two. The students' aspirations will take flight with those two wings. When they are separated, it gives rise to bigotry in the one, and wiliness and skepticism in the other.⁴

Prompted by explicit outside threats, around the turn of the century Nursi took the decision to focus his attention on the Qur'an itself. We are told that all the sciences he had learnt became "steps to understanding it." However, according to his own account, the pressing social and political questions of the day diverted him, and it was only later that he addressed himself to it seriously.

Nursi became involved in the struggle for constitutional government, and for three or four years after the Constitutional Revolution of 1908 worked for its acceptance, especially among his fellow-countrymen of the Eastern Provinces. During these years, which he spent partly in Istanbul publicizing the problems of the East and trying to win support for his projects, he witnessed at first hand the debates that raged around current issues.⁵ The initially few, but active, proponents of materialism and positivism contributed to the debate. Nursi did not take part in these polemics, but in his works of the period he replied to some of the materialists' assertions, in order to dispel the doubts they had raised about aspects of the Qur'an and matters of belief. He thus became closely acquainted both with the liberal ideas of constitutionalism, some of which he himself adopted, and with positivism and other philosophical currents whose advocates in Turkey were challenging Islam in the name of science.

Following World War One and Ottoman defeat, Nursi suffered a spiritual crisis, and after a period of inner turmoil, emerged as the New Said. The upshot of this inner struggle or quest for "a way to the essence of reality" was that he took the Qur'an with its message of pure divine unity (*tawhīd*) as his "sole guide," and attempted to divest himself of the influences of "philosophy" and science. These had "plunged him into materiality" and provided him with no answers to the fundamental questions he had been driven to ask by war, death, and the transitoriness of things.

Nursi supported the independence struggle and was invited to Ankara by the national government. He eventually arrived there from Istanbul sometime around the time of the Turkish victory in October 1922, and was offered various religious posts in the Eastern Provinces by Mustafa Kemal, who wanted to profit from his influence. Nursi, however, refused them, for he perceived that his hopes for the country's future were at odds with the new leaders' plans for its Westernization and secularization. It had been his intention to assist in remaking Turkey as a center of Islamic civilization. He concluded that political opposition would serve no positive ends, so renouncing political involvement of all kinds, he returned to Van where he retired into solitude. It was from there that in March 1925, following the Shaikh Said Revolt, he was rounded up together with many of the region's tribal and religious leaders, and thousands of its people, and sent into exile in western Anatolia. Contrary to the government's accusations, he had advised against the revolt. Regarded as a potential threat by the government, he was held for the next 25 years in what was nominally exile, but was often little better than house arrest. He served three terms of imprisonment along with numbers of his students. It was under these constraining conditions that Nursi wrote the *Risale-i Nur*, in which he sought to explicate the basic teachings of the Qur'an in such a way as to refute the basic assumptions of positivist philosophy, one of the ideological bases of the new state. It will be useful before examining how Nursi tackled these problems, to mention a few facts about the series of reforms that were enacted after the founding of the Republic.

It was Mustafa Kemal's avowed aim "to achieve an unconditional transformation to Western civilization,"⁶ and to build a modern nation-state out of what remained of the Ottoman Empire. Such a project required the rapid modernization, Westernization, and therefore secularization of Turkey. The process had begun with the modernizing governmental reorganization known as the Tanzimat (1839–76); its military, legal,

bureaucratic, and educational reforms, together with subsequent measures, had to a great extent reduced the areas of Islamic jurisdiction, in effect secularizing the state. Yet despite these reforms, apart from the official classes who were involved with the reformed institutions in some capacity, the character, culture, and identity of the Muslim population remained largely unaffected. After taking the momentous steps of abolishing first the sultanate (November 1, 1922) and then the caliphate (March 3, 1924), therefore, most of the rapid succession of reforms enacted by Mustafa Kemal were directed at social and cultural institutions, which would effectively remove all outward signs of Islam, and strike at the root of popular culture.⁷ In addition, a radically reformed “national” education system, the function of which was to inculcate “universal, humanist, secular, positivist” principles,⁸ was also to educate the people in the six principles of Kemalism.⁹ Of these latter principles, which were made both the program of the party founded by Mustafa Kemal, the Republican People’s Party (RPP), and the ideological basis of the state, nationalism and secularism were the most stringently enforced. The intention was to eliminate all existing religious identities, and create a uniform secular, nationalist identity.

The Revitalization of Belief and Moral Renewal

This section will describe the method Nursi developed to prove the essential teachings of the Qur’an in the face of the projected replacement of Islam, not only as a system of government but also as a religion and way of life, by Western systems and philosophies. It forms the basis of his extensive writings, the purpose of which was to renew and revivify the people’s faith, and was undoubtedly one of the chief reasons for their impact, both in the early years of the Republic and subsequently.

Said Nursi was an Islamic scholar and teacher who in his writings propounded orthodox Sunni doctrines related to all the principal tenets of belief, on occasion citing arguments refuting Mu’tazilite and Predestinationist (Jabriyyah) tendencies and other deviations from “the middle way.” In this sense, his thought is not original; his main contribution, which may be seen as innovative, was, besides his making his goal the revitalization of the faith of ordinary believers, the method he developed to do this. Arguably, in his early works there is a discernible influence of modernist trends, especially in his emphasis on science and rationalism. The distinguishing mark of the New Said was the primacy he gave to revelation over reason,¹⁰ and his endeavors to prove the Qur’an’s “miraculousness” (*i’jāz*) and self-sufficiency as a source of knowledge and of the principles and precepts of human life. In fact, he admits that as the Old Said he tried to fight the materialist philosophers with their own weapons, which probably refers to his attempt to develop a rationalist method, but that this was unsuccessful.¹¹ So as the New Said he strove to develop a method or system of thought inspired directly by Revelation, that is, a purely Qur’anic method. And this he claimed to have achieved with the *Risale-i Nur*. It comprises several elements.

The chief elements of Nursi’s new method occurred to him during his transition into the New Said, and are based on observation of and reflective thought (*tefekür*) on the beings and processes of the natural world in the manner of the Qur’an. The key concept

here is what Nursi called “*manâ-yı harfî*” (lit. the significative meaning [of things]), a term he borrowed from Arabic grammar¹² by which he meant considering or “reading” things for the meanings they express and “on account of their Maker;” in other words, the Qur’anic viewpoint or way of looking at things. This is in contradistinction to materialistic science and philosophy, which look on beings as signifying only themselves (*manâ-yı ismî* – the nominal meaning [of things]). For example, he writes:

According to the Qur’anic view, all the beings in the universe are letters, expressing through their significative meaning, the meaning of another. That is, they make known the names and attributes of that Other. Soulless philosophy for the most part looks in accordance with the nominal meaning and deviates into the bog of nature.¹³

As a methodological device, the significative (*harfî*) viewpoint is supported by, or functions through, “deductive argumentation in the form of proofs.”¹⁴ Beings are seen as evidence for their Maker’s attributes and are pondered over in such a manner as to deduce proofs of them. Using argumentation of this sort, Nursi offers numerous proofs of the Creator’s existence and unity, and for the resurrection of the dead and other “pillars of belief,” as well as for many other cosmic truths. Likening the universe to a book, he emphasizes the mutually interpretative relationship between it and the Qur’an; that is, he demonstrates how, by both expressing the same truths, the one interprets and expounds the other.¹⁵ Furthermore, by “reading” the beings in the world around us in this way, he is at the same time seeking to point out the invalidity of the basic postulates of naturalism, positivism, and other materialistic philosophies: the concepts of nature, causation, chance, and coincidence. With this approach, Nursi is also intending to clarify confusions caused by these concepts. For instance, in his *Treatise on Nature*, he says: “. . . [T]here are certain phrases that are commonly used and imply unbelief. The believers also use them, but without realizing their implications.” He then lists three such phrases: “Causes create this.” “It forms itself (spontaneous generation).” And “It is natural. Nature . . . creates it,” and through nine “impossibilities,” proceeds first to demonstrate their logical absurdity, and then to prove the necessity and truth of divine unity.¹⁶ Part of the “First Impossibility” of the third phrase is as follows:

If the art and creativity, which are discerning and wise, to be seen in beings, and particularly in animate beings, are not attributed to the pen of determining and power of the Pre-Eternal Sun and instead are ascribed to nature and force, which are blind, deaf, and unthinking, it becomes necessary that nature should either have machines and printing-presses for their creation, or include in everything the power and wisdom to create and administer the universe. The reason for this is as follows:

The sun’s manifestations and reflection appear in all fragments of glass and droplets on the face of the earth. If those miniature, reflected imaginary suns are not ascribed to the sun in the sky, it has to be accepted that an actual sun exists (lit. has external existence) in every tiny fragment of glass smaller than a match-head . . . In exactly the same way, if beings and animate creatures are not attributed directly to the manifestation of the Pre-Eternal Sun’s names, one has to accept that present in each being, especially if it is animate, are a nature, a force, or quite simply a god, possessing infinite power and will, knowledge and wisdom. Such an idea is absurd . . .¹⁷

Nursi expanded and elaborated his method when he started to write the *Risale-i Nur* in exile. Allegorical comparisons are a device he came to make extensive use of, an example of which is given in the quote above. He said they were inspired by the comparisons of the Qur'an and are an aspect of its miraculousness since, like "telescopes" and "stairs," they are a means of bringing close and reaching distant, lofty truths. They thus induce certainty, causing "the intellect, as well as the imagination and fancy, and the soul and caprice . . . to submit."¹⁸ Nursi often uses such comparisons to illustrate the superiority in various fields of the Qur'an, belief and guidance, over "philosophy" and misguidance.

It may be noted at this point that because of the function Nursi foresaw the *Risale-i Nur* fulfilling in the particular conditions of the twentieth century, he endeavored to bring together in complementary fashion different disciplines and types of knowledge. His objective was to revivify belief through developing new teaching methods, where existing forms were inadequate or had been abolished. As a popular didactic work, therefore, the *Risale-i Nur* performs the function primarily of *tafsīr* (Qur'anic exegesis or explication), and of such other traditional madrasah sciences as logic, *'aqā'id* (doctrine), *uṣūl al-dīn* (the principles of religion), and *kalam* (theology). Nursi himself emphasized its primary function, perhaps because of its original, unfamiliar form and style.¹⁹ He also called it "a work of *kalam*,"²⁰ and has been credited with carrying out a genuine renewal (*tajdīd*) in this field.²¹ He looked on the work as being in the madrasah tradition, yet, since, as he frequently stressed and is noted in the next section, it addresses the human inner faculties (the heart) in addition to the intellect, it is probably fair to say that he intended it to perform also what he perceived to be the essential functions of Sufism.²² Nevertheless, he denied any connection with Sufism, although he was frequently accused by the government of founding a new *tarikāt* (Sufi order). The orders had been declared illegal in 1925 and their activities banned. Nursi was not opposed to Sufism, but stated that he considered it inappropriate for modern times since it was ill-equipped to respond to the attacks of science and materialism. Some writers have found elements of his style and method to be reminiscent of Sufi works.²³

A further significant matter is Nursi's incorporating modern scientific knowledge in his expositions of the Qur'an's verses. This had been one of the main features of his projected reformulation of the madrasah sciences in his youth (as had been the bringing together of the three main educational traditions represented by the learned profession, Sufism, and modern secular education), but it was as the New Said with his discovery of the Qur'anic method based on the significative (*ḥarfī*) viewpoint that he may be said to have achieved it. He concluded that when considered from the significative viewpoint, "the physical sciences become knowledge of God."²⁴ What this amounts to is that Nursi utilizes scientific facts when describing the processes of the natural world to prove "the truths of belief." For example,

It is as if each particle were aware of every single task . . . for it hears and obeys every dominical command that courses through the air. It aids all animals to breathe and to live, all plants to pollinate and grow, and cultivates all the matters necessary for their survival. It directs and administers the clouds, makes possible the voyaging of sailing ships, and

enables sounds to be conveyed, particularly by means of wireless, telephone, telegraph and radio, as well as numerous other functions.

Now these atoms, each composed of two such simple materials as hydrogen and oxygen and each resembling the other, exist in hundreds of thousands of different fashions all over the globe; I conclude therefore that they are being employed and set to work in the utmost orderliness by a hand of wisdom.²⁵

There are numerous such examples in the *Risale-i Nur*. It could be added that very often the imagery Nursi uses to depict the universe is distinctly Newtonian or mechanistic in that he likens it to “a machine,” or “factory,” or “clock,” made up of component parts. His interpretation is, however, strictly Qur’anic, as mentioned. Nursi’s main purpose here was most probably educative, and, by updating Qur’anic exegesis by authentic methods, to demonstrate how science might be used to prove the truths of religion rather than to confute them. Furthermore, he intended to rebuff the imputed clash and conflict between religion and science that had caused so much confusion and was intended to discredit Islam. In this connection, it should be pointed out that in distinction to post-Enlightenment Western thought, which is epistemologically “compartmentalized” and based on the fundamental differentiation and dichotomy between mind and matter, body and soul, science and religion, and so on, Nursi tried to establish an “epistemological wholeness” and organic relations between the various categories of knowledge, revealed and scientific, and art, ethics, and belief,²⁶ and within man himself with his many faculties. This is consistent with the Qur’an and its insistent teaching of divine unity. The fundamental epistemological dissimilarity between the Qur’an and “philosophy” is also the basis of the dissimilarity between the harmonious interrelation of man, society, civilization and the cosmos as taught by the Qur’an on the one hand, and the conflict underlying all man’s relations as taught by “philosophy” on the other, that Nursi was at pains to illustrate with his many comparisons between the two.

Belief and man

Nursi’s treatment of belief or faith (*imān*) is one of the most original and effective aspects of the *Risale-i Nur*, and his persuasive analyses are certainly one of the main reasons for the work’s impact on successive generations. In this brief discussion, it will be useful to consider it in tandem with his treatment of man; that is, the human being.

Nursi’s intention with the above-mentioned method was to gain for people a dynamic, living faith that he calls “belief by investigation” (*imān-ı tahkiki*). This form of belief, which is a conscious affirmation and verification, is the opposite of “belief by imitation,” which can be easily dispelled by doubts. Belief by investigation may be attained through reasoning reflective thought on the divine works and names, and rises in degree and strength to the number of the names and cosmic truths that are thus comprehended. According to Nursi, “it contains degrees to the number of the manifestations of the divine names,” and may “reach the degree at which the whole universe

may be read as though it were a Qur'an."²⁷ Such belief is thus closely linked to the sort of knowledge ('ilm) he terms "the sciences of belief ('ulum-u imaniye)." The vital property of such knowledge is its being "the light and sustenance for man's many subtle inner faculties;" "after entering 'the stomach' of the mind, the matters of belief that come with [such] knowledge are absorbed by the spirit, heart, inner heart, soul, and other subtle faculties; each receives its share according to its degree."²⁸

Belief in God and its necessary corollaries, knowledge of God and worship, are, according to Nursi, the purpose of man's being "sent to this world." They are also his innate or primordial duty. So too, belief in God is "the highest aim of creation and its most important result."²⁹ By virtue of these complementary facts, it is only through belief that human beings can find happiness and fulfillment. This constitutes one of the main themes of the *Risale-i Nur*, which Nursi elaborates with numerous allegories, comparisons, and arguments. It is also an area in which he points out the paradoxes and failures of "philosophy" and "misguided science," which, although their stated aim is the conquest of human happiness, have rather brought humanity pain and suffering, since they have sought it in worldly pleasures and through their false principles and viewpoint. With these comparisons, which disclose both the reality and the causes of "the misguided's" circumstances, Nursi is aiming to deter "the sensible among them" by demonstrating that "in misguidance is a sort of hell in this world, and in belief, a sort of paradise." It was to this analytical, psychological approach that Nursi ascribed the *Risale-i Nur's* spread, despite all the hostile propaganda and efforts to prevent it.³⁰

Nursi's whole system of thought hinges on his understanding of the human "I" or ego, and on the concepts of the significative meaning of things and the nominal meaning, which have been described. The "I" is one aspect of the Trust assumed by man,³¹ which he can truly carry out only when he ascribes to the "I" a significative meaning. That is to say, when a person's "I" understands that it is "mirror-like" and that its power, knowledge, ownership, and other attributes are merely apparent, and are imaginary "tiny units of measurement" for understanding the Creator's true knowledge, power, and ownership – that "[the 'I'] is a measure that makes known the absolute, all-encompassing and limitless attributes of the Necessary Being," then the person will see the universe as it is in reality and "the duties it is performing." He will abandon his imaginary ownership and ascribe all power to the True Owner. He thus purifies his soul, and truly carries out the Trust. Conversely, "if the 'I' views itself solely in the light of its nominal and apparent meaning, if it believes that it owns itself and its attributes, then it betrays the Trust." For as it ascribes power to itself, so it will ascribe power to causes in the outside world and fail to see the universe for what it is; it will associate partners with God on a grand scale.³²

Nursi's approach to ethics and moral renewal

Moral renewal was a question to which Nursi attached the greatest importance, both in the early period of his life,³³ and as the New Said after the foundation of the Republic. However, in that he treats ethics as a dimension of his cosmology or of the cosmic

system, in this second period his approach differs considerably. He does discuss ethical and moral questions in a variety of other contexts, but essentially his approach is to present moral precepts and values as a part of the whole (holistic) Qur'anic order or system.³⁴ The precepts of "justice, frugality, and cleanliness" may be taken as an example.

To show how basic these three qualities are to human life, Nursi points out how they are manifested in the cosmos as universal laws and govern all beings. Briefly, the wisdom (*hikmet*) apparent throughout the universe "turns on economy and lack of waste," commanding man to be frugal. And the justice and balance in all things enjoin justice on him. While the constant cleansing "cleans and beautifies all the beings in the universe. So long as man . . . does not interfere, there is no true uncleanness or ugliness in anything." In this way Nursi points out how closely connected these Qur'anic injunctions and Islamic principles are with the universe, and that it would be as impossible to uproot them as it would be to change the universe's form.³⁵ That is to say, he convincingly shows that if one acts contrarily to them, one does so in defiance of the whole universe.

Thanks and gratitude to Almighty God are another example. In a short piece entitled *On Thanks*,³⁶ Nursi cites some of the many Qur'anic verses enjoining thanks, and demonstrates how both the Qur'an and the Qur'an of the universe "show thanks to be the most important result of creation."

Conscious thanks and praise for the innumerable bounties dispersed through the universe are also the chief of man's three primordial "duties." These bounties he receives and experiences on multiple expanding levels, from that of the physical senses to that of belief, which extends beyond the sphere of contingency.³⁷

Another universal principle or law that Nursi explains, this time to berate the idle and urge the lazy to work, is that of the pleasure to be found in exertion and work. He illustrates his point persuasively with a series of delightful examples from the animal, vegetable, and mineral realms.³⁸

Nursi's vision of the cosmos also connects man to all beings, revealing the existential brotherhood and love between him and all things.³⁹

Many of the moral qualities that Nursi wishes to impress on his readers, he explains within the framework of his comparisons between the ways of revelation and philosophy, contrasting them with their opposites. At the base of these is the concept of *ubüdiyetye*, which may be translated as worshipful servitude or service of Almighty God, and is the worshipful attitude that a believer adopts when he internalizes the Qur'anic (*harfi*) viewpoint.⁴⁰ Ethics are of course an inseparable part of religion, or even the same thing,⁴¹ and proceed directly from belief. Thus, in other contexts Nursi links desirable qualities with a particular tenet of belief. For example, he enjoins "contentment and resignation" on himself when suffering his unjust imprisonment since it was divinely determined (*kader*), and to meet it with "endless thanks and patience" since it was also necessitated by divine wisdom and mercy, and even to magnanimously forgive the officials responsible.⁴²

The moral quality Nursi emphasizes above all others, however, is sincerity (*ihlas*). As the quality he most wanted to inculcate in his students, it is discussed in the following section.

The Main Features of the Nur Movement, and its Mode of Struggle in a Secular Society

In this section, an attempt will be made to outline Nursi's ideas concerning the functions, character, and mode of service of the Nur community, and to indicate the areas of Turkish life – religious, social, cultural, ethical, and political – on which they have had most impact. A number of studies have been published on developments associated with the movement subsequent to Nursi's death in 1960, and its impact on political and other matters.⁴³ Here, discussion will be limited to the movement's main features and to its activities during his lifetime.

A striking feature of the community that grew up around Nursi's writings was its focussing on these writings rather than on their author, despite his powerful charisma. This marked a shift from the traditional focus on the shaikh or religious leader that was notable among the Sufi orders. It has been said that the Nur community pioneered this transition,⁴⁴ which, with improvements in education and communications, was in time adopted by the orders,⁴⁵ and by Islamic groups generally. This aspect of the Nur movement thus paved the way for the expansion, revitalization, and diversification of the Islamic movement in Turkey in the final decades of the twentieth century.⁴⁶

As a mode of religious struggle, text-orientation was to an extent forced on Nursi. For both the surveillance under which he was kept in his places of exile, and the constraints legal and otherwise on numbers of people for gathering, particularly for any activity that could be construed as religious, precluded his teaching personally or acting as a religious guide in the traditional sense. However, this looking to the text for guidance was also his choice. For he always modestly insisted that he was a mere student of the *Risale-i Nur* like his students; that is, the Nur students. One reason for this was his wish not to obscure "the sacredness of the Qur'an" reflected in his writings, and so negate their effectiveness.⁴⁷ Another was the question of "sincerity," which is discussed below.

Moreover, the movement itself grew up around the *Risale-i Nur*; the *Risale* was its *raison d'être*. It was composed of students dedicated to the writing out and dissemination of the *Risale* in the extremely adverse conditions of the early years of the Republic, whom Nursi strove to bind into a cohesive community. Notwithstanding both the economic hardships, and the persecution suffered by the Nur students, punctuated by terms of mass imprisonment, their numbers increased as they spread Nursi's writings. Women and children were no less keen to participate in this joint effort to spread "the lights of the Qur'an," despite the practical difficulties involved – the overall literacy rate in Turkey in 1928 was only around 8 percent.⁴⁸ In the course of time, the underground campaign to disseminate the *Risale-i Nur* undoubtedly had the secondary effects not only in keeping alive the Arabic script after it was banned at the end of 1928, but also in raising the literacy and cultural levels of large numbers of people.

Central to Nursi's conception of how service of the Qur'an and belief may be carried out effectively in contemporary society is the notion of the collective personality (*şahs-ı mânevî*).⁴⁹ According to Nursi, the modern age is the age of the community or social

collectivity, and the collectivity gives rise to a spirit or collective personality through which it can function much more productively than if represented by an individual, no matter how powerful.⁵⁰ Individual persons would most likely be defeated in the face of “the aggressive collective personality of misguidance.” Thus, one of Nursi’s main endeavors was to impress on his students the importance of such a collective personality and to inculcate in them the moral qualities necessary for its formation. The chief of these was sincerity, the greatest strength of the *Risale-i Nur*’s way,⁵¹ and its basis. It necessitated renouncing the ego so as “to transform the ‘I’ into ‘we’; that is, to give up egotism and to work on account of the *Risale*’s collective personality.” For “. . . To have a large pool, the ice-blocks of the ego and personality have to be cast into the pool and melted.”⁵² This required that they should seek nothing but God’s pleasure in their actions, practice self-abnegation before their brothers, and participate in their communal struggle with resolute, unwavering devotion.

A letter instructing the students in other qualities Nursi deemed vital, namely *taqwa*, variously translated as fear of God, God-consciousness, or piety, and good works (*ameli salih*) states clearly the function he foresaw them, as students of the *Risale-i Nur*, fulfilling in society. This, by their “avoiding sins and what is forbidden” (*taqwa*) and “acting within the bounds of what is commanded and in the way of winning God’s pleasure (good works),” was to resist and repair the [moral] corruption caused by the “shaking” of the rules and precepts of Islam.⁵³ This function he frequently mentions in his writings and court defenses, but usually without defining precisely what it entails. The letter here is useful in that it links the *Risale-i Nur*’s “repairing” function to another area of Turkish life on which Nursi had an impact: his revival of the traditional emphasis on “personalistic” social relations and related ethics, and his seeking to reform society through the reform of the individual.⁵⁴ In contrast to the modernist view of society in which individual persons are merely components or “lifeless atoms” subject to the mechanistic functioning of fixed laws, and subordinate to the entities of state and society, Nursi, following the Qur’an, situates persons at the center of social relations; he puts them in the traditional categories of father, mother, children, the aged, the youth, the sick, and so on, and treats them in terms of ethics. An example is the above-mentioned letter:

Respect and compassion, the most important principles in administering social life, have been badly shaken. In some places it has had grievous consequences, concerning aged parents. . . . [W]herever the *Risale-i Nur* encounters this fearsome destruction, it offers resistance and repairs the damage.⁵⁵

That is to say, Nursi intended through the *Risale-i Nur*’s proofs of “the truths of belief” to strengthen traditional Qur’anic values and institutions, so as to combat the disintegrative forces unleashed by modernization, and repair their harm. For, indeed, a specific purpose of the new educational system, and the other secularizing reforms, and the whole drift of cultural Westernization, was “the liberation of the individual from the collective constraints of the Muslim community,” and “to replace (the) personalistic ties . . . by a set of rules that tried to obviate control . . . ,”⁵⁶ and to substitute Islamic ethics with positivistic ones.

Nursi's great fear, especially with the rise of communism, was that the rejection of Islamic behavioral norms would lead to a moral decline and slide into anarchy, because, he argued, "Muslims do not resemble others; if they abandon their religion and divest themselves of their Islamic character, they fall into absolute misguidance, becoming anarchists, so that they can no longer be governed." In consequence, although the Nur students' primary duty was "to save belief and teach the people about 'belief by investigation,'" their second duty was "to save this nation and country from the danger of anarchy."⁵⁷ Nursi frequently emphasized this function of the *Risale-i Nur*, also making it one of his main lines of defense in the court cases brought against him. He pointed out that by strengthening the five principles of "respect, compassion, refraining from what is prohibited (*ḥarām*), security, and the giving up of lawlessness and obedience to authority," the Nur students were preserving public order and saving social life from anarchy.⁵⁸ He therefore impressed on the authorities that they should realize "the country and nation's" need for the *Risale-i Nur*, rather than trying to suppress it.⁵⁹

Religious repression continued in Turkey until the coming to power of the Democrat Party (DP) in the elections of May 1950, although with the beginnings of the multiparty system⁶⁰ after the end of the World War Two, the government made some concessions to the people's religious needs. The Soviet Union's domination over eastern Europe, and its belligerent demands over the Istanbul Straits, probably with a view to extending communist influence over the Middle East, helped to push Turkey into joining the Western alliance, now led by the United States.

Nursi's continuing struggle has to be seen against the backdrop of increasingly severe treatment, culminating in 20 months' imprisonment in Afyon in 1948–9. The Nur community took shape as events unfolded, its members being molded and tempered by their lengthy ordeal. Nursi was the main defendant in three major trials, in connection with which he was imprisoned together with varying numbers of his students, a result of which a fair proportion of his writings with effect from 1935, consist of his defense speeches, and petitions and letters to judicial and other authorities. At every trial virtually the same charges were brought against him, although he was acquitted by Denizli Court: founding a secret political organization, founding a Sufi order, engaging in activities that "might" disturb public order, exploiting religion for political ends,⁶¹ and so on. The onus was on Nursi to prove the falsity of the charges. It should not be understood from this, however, that Nursi tailored his method of service under force of circumstance to fit the charges – although undoubtedly he conducted his defenses very skillfully. As the next section will show, it was his view that such a method was necessitated by the adoption of the secularist principle. Moreover, the harsh and completely unjustified treatment the Nur students received may be seen as serving to forge them into a disciplined, self-sacrificing, and seasoned community capable of pursuing their goals in unfavorable conditions of all kinds.

Positive action and jihād of the word

Nursi defined their struggle in terms of positive action and *jihād* of the word (*jihād-i mânevî*), by which he meant a non-physical or moral *jihād*. In a passage interpreting the

verse, "Let there be no compulsion in religion," (2:265), he argues that given the circumstances of the day, *jihād* should take this form:

By [the matters of] religion being separated from [those of] this world on that date, freedom of conscience, which is opposed to force and compulsion in religion, and to religious struggle and armed *jihād* for religion, [was accepted as] a fundamental rule and political principle by governments, and [this] state [also] became a secular republic. In view of this, [*jihād*] will be a non-physical religious *jihād* with the sword of 'belief by investigation' (*imān-ı tahkikî*). . . . a great hero in the contest of this *jihād* of the word . . . is the *Risale-i Nur* . . . for its immaterial sword has solved hundreds of the mysteries of religion, leaving no need for physical swords. . . .

. . . It is due to this mighty mystery that the *Risale-i Nur* students do not interfere in the politics and political movements of the world and their material struggles, nor attach importance to them, nor condescend to [any involvement with] them. . . . They feel not anger at their enemies, but pity and compassion. They try to reform them, in the hope that they will be saved.⁶²

As is seen from this, Nursi's interpretation of secularism was at variance with the official version, which, inspired by French thought, sought the eventual elimination of religion since it held it to be the chief obstacle to progress, or at least its complete domination by the state. He therefore always denied the persistent accusations that he had contravened the principle of secularism. He argued that "freedom of conscience governs everywhere in this age of freedom,"⁶³ and that accordingly, since "secularism means being impartial, . . . the government should not interfere with the religiously-minded and pious, the same as it does not interfere with the irreligious and dissipated."⁶⁴

According to this line of argument, it was perfectly licit for the Nur community to pursue its endeavors to strengthen and save religious belief through the *Risale-i Nur*. Nursi asserted also that at the present time there is a vast difference between internal *jihād* (within the realm of Islam – *İslam dairesinde*) and external *jihād*. Force may only be used against outside aggression.⁶⁵ Nevertheless, given the potentially volatile situation and the facts that he and his students were in a defensive and vulnerable position *vis-à-vis* the authorities and subject to constant provocation by their agents, he constantly stressed their "duty" of preserving public order and security, and insisted that they directed all their energies to their *jihād* of the word and always acted positively, disregarding worldly currents and avoiding any actions that might lead to strife. Avoidance of direct involvement in political and social matters has thus become one of the most distinctive characteristics of the Nur movement. Nursi offered numerous reasons for his insistence on this question. The main ones are as follows.

Firstly was "the sacredness" of the Nur students' service, and its importance, alluded to in the passage quoted above. According to Nursi, their striving to win eternal life for themselves and others was incomparably more important than the misguided's efforts to secure fleeting worldly life, so they should evince no curiosity about worldly affairs. Moreover, preoccupation with peripheral, political matters causes a person to neglect his essential duties and to waste his life on trivia,⁶⁷ as well as causing heedlessness and damaging belief and spiritual life.⁶⁸

Also, because of the partisan nature of politics, a person who becomes involved with them cannot preserve his sincerity; the likelihood is that he will sacrifice everything for his political ideals. "Whereas the truths of belief and sacred service of the *Risale-i Nur* may not be made the tool of anything . . . and have no aim and purpose but God's pleasure."⁶⁹ Political involvement may thus lead to the degradation, exploitation, and betrayal of the Qur'an's truths.⁷⁰

Nursi says too that having been exposed to the misguidance of science, what the people of Islam now most need is to be shown "the light of the Qur'an," so their hearts can be healed and their belief saved. If confronted by "the club of politics," it either scares them off or causes them to waver and doubt, and even to disbelieve. They have to be shown the light and be guided to it.⁷¹ Moreover, there are people open to the truth in all political currents, so the one presenting them should remain impartial.

The reason Nursi cites most often for his opposition to political involvement is that it may lead to the harming of innocents, which is contrary to the "compassion, truth, right, and conscience" of the *Risale-i Nur*, and to justice. He often explains this in connection with the verse, "No bearer of burdens can bear the burden of another," (Qur'an, 6:164, etc.) interpreting it as, "no one is answerable for another's error or crime, even a relative's." The brother, family, or children of a criminal cannot be held responsible for him and made to suffer due to partisanship, as is often the case.⁷² He reckoned that it was because the 500,000 Nur students had complied with this principle that the forces working to disturb public order had failed to do so, while they had succeeded in other countries.⁷³

Finally, Nursi was anxious that the Nur students should act in a conciliatory manner towards believers, including heretics and even Christians, so that "nothing should happen in social and political life that might prevent the spread of the *Risale-i Nur* in the Islamic world."⁷⁴

For a more complete picture, however, the above reasons should be seen in tandem with the expansion of the Nur students' activities after the coming to power of the DP and its partial relaxation of strict secularist policies of the single-party era.

Expansion in the 1950s

The Democrat Party era (1950–60) marked a watershed for Nursi and the Nur students in that it provided the opportunity for him both to train a new generation of young students, and after the *Risale-i Nur* was finally cleared by Afyon Court in 1956 to establish the guidelines for its greatly expanded publication, and to found the system for the "*dershanes*" (Nur study centers), all of which were key elements in the formation of the now swiftly growing Nur movement and its future activities.

These last 10 years of Nursi's life are sometimes differentiated from the New Said period and called the Third Said period. According to some sources, the name refers to the expansion of the movement's activities,⁷⁵ while according to others, it refers to an expansion of Nursi's own activities,⁷⁶ for on the coming to power of Menderes and the DP, he gave them his enthusiastic support and, with the aim of "making politics serve religion," concerned himself to an extent with political developments.

Arguably, this was not much of a departure from his earlier practice. During his trials in Denizli (1943–4) and Afyon (1948–9) and the years between he had sent numerous petitions and letters putting his case to departments of government and the judiciary. Similarly, he had sent letters of advice such as the one (ca. 1946) to Hilmi Uran, the ex-Minister of the Interior and then General Secretary of the RPP, warning that the Turkish nation could resist the communist threat only by relying on the Qur'an.⁷⁷ With the Democrats, he extended this practice: he sent a few chosen students to Ankara to further their case, and from time to time wrote letters of encouragement or advice to Menderes and other members of the government. The most significant of these explain what Nursi called "fundamental Qur'anic laws;" that is, fundamental revelational principles the application of which would remedy economic, social, and political ills that had arisen from the introduction of principles of "human" origin; that is, principles originating in Western philosophy.⁷⁸

In this connection, it may be recalled that Nursi had been an ardent supporter of constitutional government at the beginning of the century. Now that Turkey had a government that was sympathetic to Islam and intended (or so he hoped) to govern in accordance with principles congruent with "Islamic" government, Nursi equated it with the constitutional government of that time. During the 1950s he republished for his younger students some of his works – those cited here are newspaper articles – of the former period, but substituted the word "constitutionalism" with "republicanism:" "Republicanism consists of justice, mutual consultation, and restriction of power to the law."⁷⁹ In another, the original title of which was "Long live the illustrious *sharī'ah!*" which he changed to "Long live the fundamental laws of the Qur'an!", he equated constitutionalism with "republicanism and democracy (*cumhuriyet ve demokrat*)."⁸⁰

From this it is understood that in the tradition of Namık Kemal, and following him virtually all the Ottoman intellectuals and *ulama* of the day,⁸¹ Nursi accepted as "Islamic," representative government in a Muslim society when based on such principles as justice, consultation, and the law. He therefore urged the Democrat government to adopt and apply the above-mentioned principles.

Again during this period, Nursi both sought ways of disseminating the *Risale-i Nur* in the Islamic world, to strengthen "the brotherhood of belief," and he encouraged Menderes to heal the breach with it and re-establish ties. In this connection, he supported Turkey's joining the Baghdad Pact in 1956, writing Menderes and the President, Celal Bayar, a letter of congratulation.⁸²

These are all questions that were influential on the future course of the Nur movement. Another, interfaith dialogue and cooperation, was pioneered by Nursi in the 1950s, and has subsequently been advanced by some branches of the Nur movement.

With the change in the configuration of world powers after the Second World War, Nursi modified his attitude towards the West and looked positively on it in so far as it upheld Christian values. So too, within the framework of adherence to revelational principles, he advocated cooperation between Muslims and Christians in combating aggressive atheism.⁸³ He himself initiated dialogue with Christian leaders by, in 1950, having one of his works sent to the Pope in Rome, and, in 1953, personally visiting the Greek Orthodox patriarch in Istanbul, Patriarch Athenagoras. Underlying these moves

was Nursi's urgent wish to bring about reconciliation on all levels in order to establish universal peace.

The Nur community's positive action and efforts to strengthen society in the face of "the immaterial destruction" of irreligion, and its support for the Democrat Party, won the government's confidence. As one historian has noted, by acknowledging its support, the Democrats implicitly legitimized the movement.⁸⁴ It was a great victory for Nursi, vindicating his method and rewarding his 30 years of patient, silent struggle. Although the Nur students were still subject to police raids and had to act with caution, they were free to publish the *Risale-i Nur*. For the first time, its volumes were printed in the Roman alphabet on modern presses. The movement was not suppressed, and Nur study centers (*dershanes*) were opened all over the country. In Diyarbakır and the East there were around 200 in operation, with "four or five" for women in the town itself.⁸⁵ Nursi also encouraged the Nur students to turn their houses into "home madrasah," allotting time to communal readings of the *Risale*, the distinctive feature and central activity of the Nur movement. The movement grew in influence,⁸⁶ especially as the government's popularity waned in the second half of the 1950s, its vote in the 1957 elections allegedly being a decisive factor in the Democrats' victory.⁸⁷ In the decades following Nursi's death, its influence further increased as it grew in strength and numbers.⁸⁸

Conclusion

Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's endeavors in the field of religious renewal were directed towards the revivification of faith in the fundamental "pillars of belief." For in his view, it was through the strengthening and reconstruction of these foundations, "the refuge" of the mass of believers, that Islam could best withstand the onslaughts of modernity and overwhelming currents of materialist thought of Western origin. When faced with their particular manifestation in Turkey, he expounded in the *Risale-i Nur* a comprehensive system of thought which was inspired by the Qur'an and which sought to situate "the truths of belief" within a coherent picture of the cosmos that was informed by modern science and would provide a "modern" God-centered alternative to the positivist vision. Nursi's main objection to materialist philosophy was that, because of – in his view – its false principles and denial of the metaphysical, it was detrimental both to the individual and to society. In his writings, therefore, he attempted to bring together and combine different disciplines so as to prove the essentials of religion in a way that would both afford intellectual certainty, and satisfy spiritual needs and man's inner faculties. The revival of Qur'anic values and ethics thus effected would strengthen the bonds of society. In this way he sought to compensate for the failures and deficiencies of the modernizing project and to mend its harms.⁸⁹

Nursi's belief in the self-sufficiency of the Qur'an obliged him at the outset to turn down offers of posts in the new government and to not allow himself to be co-opted into its cadres.⁹⁰ This was the main reason for the years of persecution he suffered. His conception of religious struggle in terms of *jihād* of the word and positive action, however, transformed the disadvantages into advantages and made possible the even-

tual successes of the Nur movement in carrying out religious renewal in a secular society.

Notes

1. The term philosophy is used in the *Risale-i Nur* to denote aspects of Western civilization: "European philosophy and human science . . . are the spirit of [modern] civilization." See Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *The Words* (Istanbul: Sözlür Publications, 2002), 423. It is often used to mean natural philosophy, naturalism, or a materialist interpretation of science, or may refer to modernity with its science and technology. It represents the dominance of reason and rejection of revelation.
2. See Hakan Yavuz, *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).
3. For Nursi's life, see relevant sections in Şükran Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey: An Intellectual Biography of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2005).
4. Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *Münâzarat* (Istanbul: Sözlür Yayınevi, 1977), 72.
5. See Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 347ff; S. Hayri Bolay, *Türkiye'de Ruhçu ve Maddeci Görüşün Mücadelesi* (Ankara: Akçağ, 1995).
6. Berkes, *Development of Secularism*, 464.
7. See Erik J. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2001), 200–1.
8. See Sina Akşin (ed.), *Türkiye Tarihi* (Istanbul: Cem Yayınevi, 1989), iv, 471–4.
9. For the six principles, see Şerif Mardin, "Religion and Secularism in Turkey," in Hourani *et al.* (eds.), *The Modern Middle East* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1993), 365; Dietrich Jung with Wolfgang Piccoli, *Turkey at the Crossroads: Ottoman Legacies and a Greater Middle East* (London: Zed Books, 2001), 75–8.
10. Nursi stated that "the doors of *ijtihād*" were open, but that in the "stormy" conditions of the times (1929) when denial is rife and Islam is under attack by "the customs of Europe and legions of innovations," they should be kept fast shut." See, *Words*, 495.
11. Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *Letters 1928–1932*. Eng. trans. Şükran Vahide (Istanbul: Sözlür Publications, 2001), 516.
12. Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *Barla Lahikası* (Istanbul: Envar Neşriyat, 1994), 348; Farid al-Ansari, "The Theory of Ethics in Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's Works," in *Sixth International Symposium: Globalization, Ethics and Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's Risale-i Nur* (Istanbul: Sözlür Publications, 2004), 292.
13. Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *The Flashes Collection*. Eng. trans. Şükran Vahide (Istanbul: Sözlür Publications, 2000), 156.
14. Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *Mesnevî-i Nuriye*. Turk. trans. Abdülkadir Badıllı (Istanbul: 1998), 236.
15. See, for example, Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *The Rays Collection*. Eng. trans. Şükran Vahide (Istanbul: Sözlür Publications, 2002), 163; Nursi, *Words*, 145, 251.
16. See, Nursi, *Flashes*, 232–54.
17. Nursi, *Flashes*, 238–9.
18. Nursi, *Letters*, 443–4.
19. See, for example, Nursi, *Letters*, 434, 437; *Rays*, 90, 399, 512–13; Nursi, *Kastamonu Lahikası* (Istanbul: Envar Neşriyat, 1994), 48.
20. See Nursi, *Barla Lahikası*, 162; *Kastamonu Lahikası*, 172; Nursi, *Emirdağ Lahikası* (Istanbul: Envar Neşriyat, 1992), i, 90.

21. See Muhsin Abdulhamid, *Modern Asrın Kelam Alimi, Bediüzzaman Said Nursi*. Turk. trans. Veli Sırım (Istanbul: Nesil, 1998), 63ff. See also Hamid Algar, "The Centennial Renewer: Bediuzzaman Said Nursi and the Tradition of *Tajdid*," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 12/3, 2001, 291–311.
22. In several places in the *Risale-i Nur* Nursi quotes Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi, "the hero and sun of the Naqshbandi Order," as saying, "The final point of all the Sufi ways is the clarification and unfolding of the truths of belief" (*Letters*, 40) and, "The unfolding in clarity of a single truth of belief is preferable to a thousand miraculous deeds and mystical visions" (*Rays*, 188) Nursi also stated that the *Risale-i Nur* contained "the essence of all the twelve great *tarikats*." See, *Emirdağ Lahikası*, ii, 54. Moreover, he confessed that among his "masters" were al-Ghazali and Jalal al-Din Rumi, Sirhindi, and 'Abd al-Qadir Gilani. The latter two were instrumental in his finding his path during his transformation into the New Said and were influential on him in various ways, but not in Sufism. Sufism, perhaps, should not be confused with "spirituality."
23. See, for instance, Algar, "The Centennial Renewer," 306; Hamid Algar, "Sufism and *Tarikat* in the Life and Work of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi," *Journal of the History of Sufism*, 3, 2001, 217; Şerif Mardin, *Religion and Social Change in Modern Turkey: The Case of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989), 176. For Nursi's own comparisons between the methods of the *Risale-i Nur* and both 'ilm al-kalam and Sufism, See, *Letters*, 388–9.
24. Nursi, *Mesnevî*. Tr. Badıllı, 86.
25. Nursi, *Rays*, 133.
26. See Mehmet S. Aydın, "The Problem of Theodicy in the *Risale-i Nur*," *Islam at the Crossroads: On the Life and Thoughts of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi* (New York: SUNY Press, 2003), 219, 222–3.
27. Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *The Key to Belief* (Istanbul: Sözler Publications, 1998), 104–5.
28. Nursi, *Letters*, 389.
29. Nursi, *Letters*, 265.
30. Nursi, *Rays*, 639–40.
31. See Qur'an, 33:72.
32. Nursi, *Words*, 558–60.
33. See, Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *The Damascus Sermon* (Istanbul: Sözler Publications, 1996), 25–58.
34. A number of writers have referred to this aspect of Nursi's thought. See Mardin, *Religion and Social Change*, 224; al-Ansari, "The Theory of Ethics," 282–4.
35. Nursi, *Flashes*, 402.
36. Nursi, *Letters*, 428–32.
37. Nursi, *Flashes*, 456–7.
38. Nursi, *Flashes*, 169–73.
39. Nursi, *Flashes*, 324; Nursi, *Letters*, 342.
40. See, Nursi, *Words*, 562.
41. See al-Azzawi, "The Ethical System in Said Nursi's Works," *Sixth International Symposium: Globalization, Ethics, and Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's Risale-i Nur*, 247, quoted from Taha 'Abdel Rahman.
42. Nursi, *Flashes*, 329.
43. Yavuz, *Islamic Political Identity*, Chapters 7, 8; Hakan Yavuz, "Print-Based Discourse and Modernity: The Nur Movement," *Third International Symposium on Bediuzzaman Said Nursi 1995* (Istanbul: Sözler Publications, 1997), ii, 324–50; M. Hakan Yavuz, "Nur Study Circles (*Dershanes*) and the Formation of New Religious Consciousness in Turkey," in Ibrahim Abu-Rabi' (ed.), *Islam at the Crossroads*, 297–316; Metin Karabaşoğlu, "Text and Community:

- An Analysis of the *Risale-i Nur* Movement," in Ibrahim Abu-Rabi' (ed.), *Islam at the Crossroads*, 263–96.
44. Yavuz, "Print-Based Discourse," 327–8.
 45. See Mardin, *Religion and Social Change*, 230; Yavuz, *Islamic Political Identity*, 130.
 46. For detailed discussion, see Yavuz, *Islamic Political Identity*, 103–31.
 47. Nursi, *Letters*, 377.
 48. Feroz Ahmed, *The Making of Modern Turkey* (London: Routledge, 2002), 82.
 49. The concept of the collective or corporate body was introduced into Ottoman thought by Namık Kemal, who took it from Rousseau. See Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 333–4. There is no conception of, or provision for, corporate bodies in the *sharī'ah*. See, Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 393. Nursi adopted the idea in his youth along with others of Namık Kemal, but in the later period assigned it novel functions.
 50. See Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *Mesnevî-i Nuriye*. Turk. Trans. Abdülmecid Nursi (Istanbul: Envar Neşriyat, 1994), 102.
 51. Nursi, *Kastamonu Lahikası*, 149.
 52. Nursi, *Kastamonu Lahikası*, 143.
 53. Nursi, *Kastamonu Lahikası*, 148–9; Nursi, *A Guide for Youth* (Istanbul: Sözler Publications, 1991), 79–81.
 54. Mardin offers illuminating discussion of these latter matters in *Religion and Social Change*, 10–13, 165–71.
 55. Nursi, *A Guide for Youth*, 81. For further examples, see, Nursi, *Words*, 674–6; *Rays*, 203–5, 242–7; *Letters*, 492–7.
 56. Mardin, "Religion and Secularism," 368–73.
 57. Nursi, *Emirdağ Lahikası*, i, 21.
 58. See Nursi, *Kastamonu Lahikası*, 137, 241; *Rays*, 372.
 59. Nursi, *Kastamonu Lahikası*, 241; *Emirdağ Lahikası*, i, 78.
 60. The DP was officially registered January 7, 1946. See, Zürcher, *Turkey*, 221ff.
 61. See, for example, Nursi, *Emirdağ Lahikası*, i, 28; ii, 127–8.
 62. Nursi, *Rays*, 290.
 63. Nursi, *Letters*, 503.
 64. Nursi, *Rays*, 386, 305. See also, Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *Tarihçe-i Hayatı* (Istanbul: Envar Neşriyat, 1996), 219, 231.
 65. Nursi, *Emirdağ Lahikası*, ii, 242.
 66. Nursi, *Emirdağ Lahikası*, i, 43–4; *Rays*, 384.
 67. Nursi, *Rays*, 223–4.
 68. Nursi, *Emirdağ Lahikası*, i, 56–8.
 69. Nursi, *Emirdağ Lahikası*, i, 38–9.
 70. Nursi, *Rays*, 372; *Kastamonu Lahikası*, 117–18, 146.
 71. See Nursi, *Flashes*, 143–4; *Letters*, 68–70.
 72. See Nursi, *Emirdağ Lahikası*, i, 39; ii, 241; *Rays*, 372.
 73. Nursi, *Emirdağ Lahikası*, ii, 77.
 74. Nursi, *Kastamonu Lahikası*, 247.
 75. Nursi, *Tarihçe*, 612.
 76. Necmeddin Şahiner, *Bilinmeyen Taraflarıyla Bediüzzaman Said Nursi* (Istanbul: Nesil, 2004), 383.
 77. Nursi, *Emirdağ Lahikası*, i, 217–20.
 78. For discussion of these ethical principles, see, Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey*, 317–18, 327–9.