

Transition in Turkey: An overview of Bediüzzaman Said Nursi, His Life and Works for *Medresetü'z-Zehra*

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Abstract

Bediüzzaman Said Nursi became concerned with reviving Islamic ethics together with traditional Islamic sciences in a highly secularized world. He sacrificed his life for the preservation of Islam in a society dominated by westernization and secularization. Throughout his life, he encountered significant reformations and revolutions in political, educational and social aspects. The present study has twofold objectives. First, it focuses on three different periods of Nursi's struggles in Turkish society to provide a general view of its eastern and western parts. The impact of Nursi's political, intellectual and spiritual life had a significant influence on the political and social movements that he established. Second, it discusses about Nursi's contributions to the revival of Islamic ethics and sciences through of his texts and the *Nur* movement. To conclude, Nursi's political movement and struggles in social movements was studied to understand the roots and subsequent growth of the contemporary Nur community and their movement which has spread all over Turkey and different parts of the world. Charisma and leadership attracted the attention of many scholars, politicians and the masses of his time. After his death in 1960, this charisma, reflected in his texts and movement, continued to attract the attention of all levels of society, young and old alike.

Keywords: *the Old Sa'id, the New Sa'id, the Third Sa'id, the Risâle-i Nur, Medresetü'z-Zehra*

Abstrak

Bediüzzaman Said Nursi memberi perhatian yang berat kepada pemulihan etika Islam bersama dengan sains Islam tradisional dalam dunia yang cukup sekular. Beliau mengorbankan kehidupannya untuk mengekalkan Islam dalam masyarakat yang didominasi oleh pembaratan dan sekularisasi. Seluruh hidupnya beliau menghadapi reformasi penting dan revolusi dalam politik, pendidikan dan aspek sosial. Kajian sekarang mempunyai dua objektif. Pertama, ia memberi tumpuan kepada tiga tempoh yang berbeza dalam perjuangan Nursi dalam masyarakat Turki untuk memberi pandangan aspek timur dan baratnya. Dampak kehidupan politik, intelektual dan spiritual mempunyai pengaruh yang signifikan terhadap pergerakan politik dan sosial yang diwujudkan. Kedua, ia membincang sumbangan Nursi terhadap pemulihan etika dan sains Islam melalui penulisannya dan pergerakan *Nur*. Sebagai kesimpulan, Pergerakan dan perjuangan Nursi dalam pergerakan sosial dikaji untuk memahami akar umbi dan seterusnya pertumbuhan masyarakat *Nur* kini dan pergerakannya yang sudah berkembang ke seluruh Turki dan pelbagai tempat di seluruh dunia. Karisma dan kepimpinan Nursi telah menarik perhatian ramai sarjana, ahli politik dan rakyat pada zamannya. Selepas beliau meninggal dalam tahun 1960, karisma ini, yang terpantul dalam penulisan dan pergerakannya, terus menarik perhatian semua lapisan masyarakat masyarakat, sama ada muda ataupun tua.

Kata Kunci: the Old Sa'id, the New Sa'id, the Third Sa'id, the Risâle-i Nur, Medresetü'z-Zehra

Introduction

Bediüzzaman Said Nursi: Early Life and Education

Nursi was born in AH 1294 (1293)¹/AD 1877-1878² in Nurs, a small village, in the İspart Township, in the Hizan sub-province, in the Bitlis province of eastern Anatolia. Bediüzzaman Said Nursi was the fourth of the children of Mirza, son of Ali, son of Hızır, son of Mirza Halid, son of Mirza Reşan (Badıllı:1998). His mother's name was Nuriye. His father Mirza, who belonged to *Sayyids* lineage, was known for his virtue and his keenness to only earn a living through lawful means.³ His parents had a small holding of land.⁴ Nursi and his siblings were known for their intelligence (Badıllı:1998). Thus Nursi was raised in an honored family who cared most for the rules of Islamic ethics diligently. His family took care of Nursi's early education. Nursi's curiosity started when he was two years old, gazing at the minute beings such as the leaves on the trees around his house. Nursi in his 70's could still remember his childhood curiosity on godly arts. (Şahiner: 1990)

He received his informal education especially from his mother until he was nine years old,⁵ continued another year with his elder brother who was a student of a *medrese*.⁶ After that, he studied in about seven various *medreses* for four years.⁷ He did not stay constantly and regularly in these *medreses*.

¹ All the years which are shown within the brackets refer to Ottoman Fiscal Rûmî Calendar that was in use during the end of the Ottoman Empire.

² There are some discrepancies between the dates given for his birth in the available sources, but majority give it as 1293 according to the Rûmî calendar, then in use in the Ottoman Empire. However, some says it to be according to Hijra calendar. If we consider according to Hijra, his birth year becomes 1293H/1876-1877. Rûmî calendar consists twelve months those are Teşrîn-i Evvel, Teşrîn-i Sâni, Kânûn-i Evvel, Kânûn-i Sâni, Şubat, Mart, Nisan, Mayıs, Haziran, Temmuz, Ağustos, and Eylül.

³ While he was driving his cows and oxen, Mirza used to bind their mouths because of possibility they would eat produce of field that belonged to someone else. Because of his strong Islamic ethics, he extremely avoided to feed his animals with illicit foods.

⁴ Despite there being no explicit claims to being a Sayyid, that is, a direct descendant of the prophet, in Nursi's work, there are several first-hand reports of his stating this verbally. Nursi told Sâlih Özcan that his mother was "Husaynî," and his father "Hasanî." It was probably the political implications which deterred Nursi from mentioning the matter in his written works. However, there is no record of his family being known as a Sayyid family.

⁵ During his childhood Nursi was so curious on occurrences in the space so that he used to ask about them to his mother. One day a lunar eclipse had occurred in the space and Nursi asked his mother why that happened so. His mother said that a snake had swallowed the moon. Nursi asked why it still could be seen. She said the snakes in the sky were like a glass so that they showed whatever inside. His mother knew the real reason but she explained to him with this kind of a comparison since he was child. When Nursi studied astronomy he understood the real reason and that his mother's comparison was true (B.S. Nursi, *The Flashes Collection*, Sözlere Neşriyat A.S, Istanbul, 1995, p.261.)

⁶ The name of *medrese* is not known. Since there was no *medrese* in Nurs, Nursi and his brothers had to go to the nearest *medreses* to their village.

⁷ The *medreses* that he studied were *Medrese* of Taği in the village of Taği, a *medrese* in the village of Pirmis, the village of Nurşin, the village of Kuğak, the city of Siirt, the village of Geyda in the sub-province of Hizan in Bitlis, the village of Arvas, *Medrese* of Mir Hasan-ı Veli in the sub-district of Müküs in Van in sequence of time.

In the eastern provinces, *Tasawwuf* (Sufism) was very important. This explains why most of the important *şeyhs* (saints) of *Tarîkat-ı Nakşibendî* (*Nakşibendî* Sufi Order) (Sell: 1908.) had appeared in this area, especially in vicinity of Bitlis. Hizan, the sub-province of Bitlis, was known with one of the famous *şeyhs*, namely Sibghatullah Arwasi,⁸ from the chains of *Tarîkat-ı Nakşibendî*. Nursi's father, Sofi Mirza, was one of this *şeyh's* *mürîd* (disciple). Most of the *şeyhs* in eastern Turkey had control over religious education through *medreses*. They were also usually believed to have some supernatural powers such as the ability to foresee events, control or read people's minds, etc. Some of these *şeyhs* had predicted that someone was coming to the world as a great servant for Islam. This was later interpreted to mean Bediüzzaman Said Nursi. (Badıllı:1998).

Until the age of fifteen, Nursi studied in the *medreses* around his hometown Bitlis. At the age of fifteen, he went to the *medrese* at Doğubayezid⁹ now on the border with Iran. This was his first time to be far from his hometown and for the longest period. Thus, the longest period he ever stayed in a *medrese* was only three months. At Doğubayezid Nursi succeeded to graduate within three months, for a course that normally would take fifteen to twenty years.¹⁰ Behind this success, he was to possess extraordinary ability and intelligence. However, afterwards Nursi claimed that this ability was a gift from God with the purpose of laying the groundwork for the *Risâle-i Nur* which would appear later on, and not his own effort. The point to be noticed here is that he studied ninety books, including those which were part of the curriculum of the traditional *medrese* and others which were not, in three months. Nursi obtained his *icâzet* (diploma) from *Şeyh* Muhammed Jelâlî.¹¹ After that Nursi spent sometimes learning the way of the Sufis, whereby he practices the *riyâzet* (asceticism), surviving by eating grass only. There could be two possible explanations for this kind of *riyâzet*; first, he might have wanted to preserve and improve his memory, and second, he could have wanted to avoid eating doubtful foods which could have been illegitimately acquired.

Nursi's behavior shows that 15 to 20 years normal period of *medrese* education was long enough for him and there must have been a shortcut to it. As different from the other students, he was trying to approach the teachers or the owners of the *medreses*. His ability caused two reactions in the teachers, jealousy or appreciation. He argued with the jealous teachers on the one hand, and the other, he showed his other remarkable abilities to the appreciative teachers. As for the students, they were all older than Nursi. The fact that he became close to the teachers who showed concern for him caused jealousy among his fellow students who tried to keep Nursi under their thumb. Their behaviors sometimes touched Nursi's honour, leading to arguments which turned into quarrels. At the age of 14, his thirst for knowledge even influenced his dream. In a dream, he asked the Prophet Muhammed (PBUH) for knowledge. The Prophet (PBUH) said he will be given

⁸ Sayyid Sibghatullah Arvasi (?-1871) was the first *khalifah* of Sayyid Tahay-i Nehri who was the *khalifah* of Mawlana Halid-i Baghdadi who was from the chains of *Tarîkat-ı Nakşibendî*. He was born in the village of Arvas in the sub-district of Müküs in Van. He was called Ghaws-ı Hizan.

⁹ Doğubayezid was the sub-province of Erzurum that time. Now it is the sub-province of Ağrı in the east of Turkey.

¹⁰ In the curriculum of *medrese* the books about *sarf*, *nahw*, *mantiq*, *kelam*, *fiqh*, *aqâid* etc. and their stages from basic to the advanced were taught in fifteen or twenty years.

¹¹ *Şeyh* Muhammed Jelâlî was a scholar who is from the local Jelâlî tribe. Afterwards he migrated to the town of Silvan in Diyarbekir when the First World War started and he stayed there till the end of his life.

the knowledge based on one condition that is he cannot pose any question to the Muslim community. From that day, a fresh enthusiasm arose in Nursi.

After his graduation, Nursi continued to visit other *medreses*, (Badıllı:1998, Süzen: 2000.) with a different purpose. The certificate and the appreciation of his teachers that he got at a young age encouraged him to hold debates with teachers and scholars in other *medreses*. Since the eastern society mainly consisted of simple rural people (the tribes in Turkey), the eastern people, and especially the people of Bitlis, and the people of Nursi's village, Nurs, used to enjoy being praised, a trait that Nursi had a good share of. (Nursi:1993)

Thus being praised by his teacher from whom he had taken the *icâzet*, encouraged him to approach other famous scholars and gain their praises. He was so successful in this that he was given the title of *Bediüzzaman* (Wonder of the Age) by one of the most famous *ulema* (scholars) in the area, Molla Fethullah, (Badıllı:1998) at the end of an oral examination. This title carried more meaning than an *icâzet* which simply confirmed someone as an *âlim* (scholar). This caused a lot of jealousy among teachers and students who had failed to get a good share of the education of *medrese* in Siirt. They went to the extent of making plots and conspiracies against him. The matter was prevented from escalation because the public of Siirt supported Nursi. After this event, Nursi left for Bitlis.

As we will see, in Nursi's entire life, wherever he went, he found himself interfering in the events which were related to him directly or indirectly. Although it did not seem related to him, Nursi interfered in a case involving a clash between the scholars and the saints in Bitlis, when he undertook to reconcile them. In doing so, he used words that normally a young student should not use, giving the impression that he exceeded the scholar's authority. Upon a complaint to the scholar Mehmed Emin Efendi, one of the parties to these arguments, the scholar looked down on Nursi. Doubting Nursi's majority, Mehmed Emin Efendi gave him an examination Nursi's success in this examination gave him an opportunity to deliver a speech in the Kureyş Mosque in Bitlis. This was his first major speech at the age of fifteen. Because of this speech, many supporters gathered around him. Due to a political suspicion he was asked to leave the city by the Bitlis governor of the time. In 1310(1309)/1893, he went to Şirvan to the south of Bitlis. Here too, he faced envy from the *medrese* teachers and students leading him to withdraw from public life for a while.

When he left for Tillo, Nursi memorized a large portion of the encyclopedic dictionary called *Kamus-u Okyanus* or *Kamus-u Muhit* until the letter of sin He was planning to prepare a thesaurus, showing how many words were equivalent in meaning to one term, unlike the usual dictionaries which show the reverse. Upon learning that a similar work was being prepared in Egypt by a group of *ulema*, he gave up his intention. During this phase, Nursi was deeply engrossed in religious thought, focusing on the spiritual realm.

The adventures of Nursi in the Miran tribe were heard by the other tribes. When he came to Mardin in 1894, he continued with his debates with the scholars of the area which doubled his fame. Because the governor of Mardin had political suspicions¹² he drove him out Mardin in handcuffs, in

¹² Then it was the time of so-called oppression which was claimed that Sultan Abdulhamid II applied. However, the governor of Mardin was the official of that government. Nursi then had first time involved in social issues and supported the supporters of the freedom in his speeches among public. So the governor of Mardin drove him because of Nursi's suspicious situation on behalf of the Istanbul administration.

1312(1311)/1895. Until 1895, Nursi dealt with the *medrese* scholars in the villages and the cities, as well as with the tribal chiefs. After 1895, events pushed Nursi to deal with the governors. After this time he had deals with three governors¹³ who respected him because of his scholarship. When he was exiled from Mardin to Bitlis, he lived in the mansion of the Governor of Bitlis, Ömer Paşa, for around two years. During this time, he memorized many of the books on theology, grammar, syntax, logic, Qur'anic exegesis, traditions of the Prophet and jurisprudence in the library of Ömer Paşa. Two years later in 1314(1313)/1897, upon the invitation of the Governor of Van, Hasan Paşa, he went to Van where he lived in the mansion of the Governor. When a new governor, İşkodralı Tahir Paşa, was appointed, he too accommodated Nursi in his mansion. This time Nursi started to memorize not only religious books but also books on engineering and mathematics. During the time he stayed in Bitlis and Van, he is said to have memorized 80 to 90 books, spending around two to three hours a day repeating them from his memory. At the end, he memorized so many books about religion, science, philosophy, literature, and history. According to Nursi's brother Abdulmecid, the books he memorized were equivalent to around 30 copies of Holy Qur'an in volume. (Badıllı:1998). Again according to Abdulmecid, Nursi memorized Qur'an in only 15 days.

Nursi's early life and childhood were full of actions and journeys in search for educational perfection. His active and mobile life style helped to spread his fame in spite of his young age. His continuous search for pure knowledge led him to practice the Sufi path, being in the spiritual mode for sometimes. His unusual behavior and attire, extraordinary memory and influential speeches attracted the attention of many eastern people. In the course of time, his fame encouraged him to start to involve in solving the social and political problems. These initial political incidents that he faced during this period laid the foundation for his future attempts to make educational and religious reforms by means of politics.

Teaching and Works

After graduation, the actual beginning of Nursi's teaching career was at the age of fourteen with his elder brother Molla Abdullah. Later, he went on to teach his teacher, Molla Ali Sohran, who used to teach him a year before he gained the title of Bediüzzaman. Because of his very young age, besides refusing the scholars' attire, he did not want to formally teach in *medreses*, as this might touch the honor of the students and teachers. Because of that Nursi concentrated on informally teaching some of the teachers and the students who appreciated his knowledge and virtue, individually or in groups at different places out of the curriculum of the *medrese*. During his stay in Bitlis and Van, the governors in whose mansions he stayed respected him and benefited from his knowledge. It was apparently because of this that they welcomed and accommodated Nursi in the first place.

When Nursi came to Van, he acquired knowledge of the modern sciences through reading scientific books. By now he was more mature and felt free to open a *medrese*. In Van, he opened his own *medrese* where he taught his students engineering, accounting, algebra, physics, history,

¹³ The three governors are Ömer Paşa, the governor of Bitlis; Hasan Paşa, the governor of Van; and Tahir Paşa, the subsequent governor of Van.

and geography as well as religious lessons. But this *medrese* lasted for only six to seven months because of the envy of some teachers. Prior to this, Nursi had been overwhelming *medrese ulema* in debates. After coming to Van in 1897, he started to overwhelm the school teachers in debates in physics and chemistry because of his vast knowledge of modern sciences. His idea of integration of religious and modern sciences originated from this time.

Between the years 1314(1313)/1897 and 1317(1316)/1900 while he was in Van, Nursi had his own cave-like *medrese* in the citadel of Van where taught his students for about two years. In his *medrese* which he called Horhor, he used to dictate the instrumental knowledge to his students from memory. He treated his students more as friends than as students. This is clearly evident in his dialogues with his students such as Ali Çavuş and Molla Hamid. Sometimes he even played games (Badıllı:1998) with them. He often visited the rural areas in the company of his students. Nursi followed neither the traditional style of *medrese* nor the system of the modern schools. His intention was to develop a style of *medrese* education in which classical *medrese* and modern *mekteb* would be integrated together. He named the educational establishment where this would be practiced as *Medresetü'z-Zehra*. After 1900, Nursi's ideal of *medrese* became more intense, especially after Europe used science and philosophy against religion.

After 1900, the attacks of Europe on Islam and al-Qur'an changed the direction of Nursi's purpose. After this year, he turned all the knowledge he had acquired simply out of curiosity and self-illumination, into tools to show the miraculousness of the Qur'an. From then on he opened his vast stores of knowledge and poured them forth onto the pages. From the year 1901 onwards, he focused more on writing than on teaching students, but he still continued to teach. His initial works might be considered introductory, aiming at the explanation of the miraculousness of al-Qur'an. In fact he could have written more works, had he not been semi-literate, in his own statement, a condition which necessitated relying on transcribes. If these initial works are compared with later works written 25 years later, they were so scholarly that only the high scholars could understand them but not the ordinary people. Two out of the three books he wrote were in Kurdish. Both were lost in a fire at Tahir Paşa's mansion. These books were mostly about logic, the meanings of the divine signs in the human body, engineering and mathematics.

At the end of 1907, Nursi went to Istanbul. The first and the most important reason for this journey was to propose to Sultan Abdulhamid II his project of *Medresetü'z-Zehra*. The second reason was to meet the *ulema* of Istanbul. However, Tahir Paşa had encouraged him to offer himself to be examined by the Istanbul *ulema* so that they could know him, as he was already quite well-known among the Eastern *ulema*. In the early months of 1908, after he submitted his proposal for the establishment *Medresetü'z-Zehra* to the Sultan's officials, he failed to get immediate result, but he succeeded in attracting the attention of the scholars. A paper he hanged on the door of his hotel room was enough to attract their attention. On the paper, he wrote that he was ready to answer all questions but he was not going to ask people any question. The questions to be asked could be from any subject such as science, philosophy, religion etc. and anybody was free to ask, including modern teachers, *medrese* scholars, both non-religious and religious individuals. Nursi claimed to have been ordered like that in his aforementioned dream of the Prophet (PBUH). This was an opportunity for him to put it into practice.

In 1326(1324)/1908, 1327(1325)/1909 and 1338(1336)/1920, Nursi wrote articles in journals and newspapers such as *Şark ve Kürdistan Gazetesi* and *Volkan*. (Badıllı:1998). His

articles, which were initially published in the Kurdish newspapers, were later published in the Turkish ones. He discussed his petition about his *Medresetü'z-Zehra* project to the Sultan in an article published in *Şark ve Kürdistan Gazetesi*. At the end of 1908, he stopped contributing to the Kurdish newspapers and began to write mainly in the *Volkan* journal. Between March and April 1909, Nursi wrote many effective articles in that journal, (*Volkan* 1909) which by then reached a large mass of the readers in Turkey. He wrote a total of around thirty articles in the newspapers in one and half years between 1908 and 1909 (Badili:1998). Later, three thousand people including Nursi and the owner of the *Volkan* journal were arrested under the suspicion of supporting Sultan Abdulhamid II and his administration. Nursi was released after successfully defending himself in the *Dîvân-ı Harb-i Örfî* (the Court Martial). His defense later became famous and was published as a booklet, namely *Dîvân-ı Harb-i Örfî*.

Just before the First World War, Nursi had a dream (Nursi:1997) in which the Prophet (PBUH) ordered him to explain the miraculousness of Qur'an. After that dream Nursi realized that an important mission had been placed on his shoulder. As a way of fulfilling this mission, he started to write, with the assistance of his student Molla Habib, a commentary of the Holy Qur'an called Signs of Miracles. During the First World War, he continued to write *İşârâtu'l İ'caz* on horseback, in the trenches, and even on the Pasinler frontline in Erzurum by dictating to his scribe Molla Habib. As a member of *Dâru'l-Hikmeti'l-İslamiye*, he had the duty of answering the questions about Islam, especially the questions asked by the foreigners. When the British controlled Istanbul in 1918, the chief cleric of the Anglican Church arrogantly asked six questions to the *Şeyhü'l-İslam*. The office of *Şeyhü'l-İslam* asked Nursi to respond to those questions. Considering that this was an opportunity for him to fight he published a treatise namely Six Steps challenging the British occupation forces because of their wrongdoings.

During the period of eleven to twelve months in the Eskişehir prison in 1935 and 1936, Nursi wrote six treatises; the 27th, 28th, 29th, 30th Flashes, and the 1st and 2nd Rays. As we will observe in the lifetime of Nursi, he wrote the treatises which explained and cleared up the most difficult and ambiguous matters of Islamic faith in his most distressed periods. Nursi faced more oppression in Kastamonu than in Barla. Thus, for the first two years, he did not write any treatise in Kastamonu. After two years, he wrote the 5th, 7th, 8th and 9th Rays, *Hizbü'l-Ekber-i Nuriye*, the first part of *Asâ-yı Mûsa, A Guide for Youth, Sikke-i Tasdik-ı Gaybî*, and so on. Meanwhile, he published the treatises written in Eskişehir prison through his new students. The treatises, which had not been arranged according to a specific order, were ordered and numbered afterwards.

Nursi wrote his treatises for specific reasons in the most difficult situations. These reasons were usually in the form of attacks on the Islamic faith or difficult questions about religion. Because most of the defenses of Nursi had similar characteristic, they were also included in the *Risâle-i Nur* collection. The defenses were made by Nursi in the service of Islam rather than to prove his personal innocence. According to Nursi, whenever someone attacked him, the real was Islam. Thus his defenses were in the essential character of the lessons of Islam and true justice given to the judges and public prosecutors. While he was in Denizli prison, he gave lessons to the prisoners which were published under the title of *Meyve Risâlesi*. When the prisoners read these treatises, they changed drastically. They suddenly became pious and started to perform their prayers. In the period between Denizli and Afyon prison, while he was in Emirdağ, Nursi wrote the

10th and 11th Topics of *Meyve Risâlesi*. At the same time, he sent more than 200 letters to his students, which were later published.

Afyon prison too, was turned into a *medrese*, like Eskişehir and Denizli prisons. As usual, Nursi was isolated in a cell. His students busied themselves with the lessons of the *Risâle-i Nur*, reciting Qur'an and performing the prayers. Nursi continued to write new treatises such as *Al-Hujjatu'z-Zahra*, the 15th Hope of the 26th Flash, besides the letters and court defenses. Nursi used to write some treatises and put them in the match box to give his students whenever they passed in front of the door of Nursi's cell, for copying. (Şahiner: 1980)

He experienced the most difficult period of pressure in the Afyon prison. In 1951 when pressure reduced with the change of government, for the first time since 1925, a religious booklet was published for the first time in a press in Turkey by a young university student. This booklet was *Gençlik Rehberi* (A Guide for Youth) which Nursi himself had put together based on the *Risâle-i Nur*. After the government allowed the publication of this booklet, Nursi and his students felt free to legally print and publish the other books and booklets in the Presses.

In 1956, upon the judicial decision to quash an indictment of the *Risâle-i Nur*, Nursi wanted it to be printed by the government. To this effect, he sent one of his students to the Prime Minister, Adnan Menderes, who accepted and directed Nursi's student to the Director of Religious Affairs. However, Ahmed Sâlih Korur, the permanent undersecretary of the Prime Minister, became an obstacle (Şahiner: 1980), mentioning the national origin of Nursi to the Director of the Religious Affairs. Later, Nursi asked his student to print them in view of Government's inadequate interest on the *Risâle-i Nur*. In 1956, the *Risâle-i Nur* was published freely in Turkey for the first time. The first parts to be published were *Sözler*, *Asây-ı Mûsa* and *Mektûbât*. Nursi's written works during his life time totaled six thousand pages, including his correspondences in the form of letters, which are around one thousand pages. All were collected into fourteen volumes in Ottoman Turkish language.

Conclusion

Nursi had witnessed three regimes during the end of the Ottoman State and the birth of the Turkish Republic. He played active roles in these three periods. Nursi had become the centre of attention of the educational and political leaders and the people of the areas where he lived, by his scholarly abilities and virtues since his childhood. The scholarly aspect of Nursi was manifested when he taught the Eastern students and *ulema*. His political ideas came into being with his articles and sermons in the last decades of the Ottoman Empire. His intellectual and spiritual aspects overwhelmed the previous aspects in the unfolding events of the transition period between the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic. However, Nursi's transition periods from the Old Sa'id to the New Sa'id and from the New Sa'id to the Third Said demonstrate a continuity with the political transition periods. Nursi's contender characteristic is observed in each period of his life. He acquired this characteristic from his scholarly background and the local nature of the East. He set his contending forth in the most critical period when the Islamic world experienced its turning point which had commenced at the beginning of the 18th century. He mostly concentrated his efforts on the reformation of education since his childhood.

Hence, Nursi gave shape to his ideal with the project of a university, namely *Medresetü'z-Zehra*, which he requested the politicians to support. When obstacles prevented the physical establishment of this university, he had his own way through writing the *Risâle-i Nur* and establishing his movement. Finally, he succeeded producing and disseminating his works and establishing the legal links of a movement which could not be stopped till this time by irreligious efforts, in spite of all the difficulties and obstacles. Nursi diagnosed the social problems of the society, claiming that he had the remedies from the pharmacy of the Qur'an to cure the society. In his life, he served as a model of Islamic faith, always paying attention to his own behaviors because he wanted to preserve the honor of the scholars. At the same time, as we see from his biography, he encouraged people to understand and use modern technology, and to be moderate through conducting dialogues and taking positive action. His political way of guidance was about supporting the truth and whoever supports the truth, rather than being a partisanship of any political party, when multi-party system established in Turkey and in most of the Islamic countries. Although the multi-party system was founded by the founding of Republic, it was not really put into practice until World War II. Following World War II, religious issues were naturally given more prominent space in the public debates than had been the case previously.

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