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## **Integrating Secular and the Sacred Branches of Knowledge: Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's Perspective**

*Bediuzzaman Said Nursi'nin Perpektifinden: Dünyevi ve Kutsal Bilgi  
Dallarının Birleřtirilmesi*

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**Integrating Secular and the Sacred Branches of Knowledge:  
Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's Perspective**

**Abstract:** There is no denying of the fact that Islam lays a great thrust on education but the duality in the education system has created a huge gulf between the secular and the sacred. Religious educational institutions have been cut off from the scientific knowledge and hence from the world altogether, and the secular educational institutions are cut off from the Wahi (the Divine guidance), hence cut off from the other world. Under the prevailing setup, both systems are inadequate to produce the desired man-the Khalifa. Therefore, Nursi views integration of both streams of knowledge as the only solution not only for the progress and development of the Muslim world but also for curbing and eliminating fundamentalism and religious intolerance. Nursi views Integration of knowledge as the only way forward for reviewing spiritualism and belief. His integrated system of knowledge aims to build a cohesive society based on values, spiritualism and morality. Said Nursi believes that the secular and the sacred should be taught under the same roof. His Medresetu'z-Zehra model presents a workable model for institutions to follow. The study focuses on presenting Said Nursi's education thought as a solution to educational dualism faced by the entire Muslim world today. Said Nursi, unlike Said Qutub and Sayyed Maudoodiseems more concerned for building a progressive state, indeed Islamic, but did not seem much concerned about political Islam or the creation of Islamic state. Said Nursi's approach is faith based rather than ideological. The paper begins with a short biographic note of Said Nursi. The second part deals with the educational thought of Said Nursi and its relevance today. In the third part of the study the main arguments are concluded.

**Keywords:** Madrasa education, Risale-i-Nur, Medresetu'z-Zehra, Integration of education, Said Nursi and education.

**Bediüzzaman Said Nursi'nin Perpektifinden: Dünyevi ve  
Kutsal Bilgi Dallarının Birleştirilmesi**

**Öz:** İslam'ın eğitime büyük önem verdiği inkâr edilemezse de ancak eğitim sistemlerindeki ikilik dünyevi ve kutsal olan arasında büyük uçurumlar oluşturmuştur. Dini eğitim kurumları bilimsel bilgiden ve dolayısıyla dünyadan ve dünyevi eğitim kurumları da Vahy'den ve dolayısıyla öteki dünyadan tamamıyla kopmuş durumdadır. Bu mevcut şartlarda her iki sistem de arzu edilen insanı yani Yeryüzünün Halifesini ortaya koymakta yetersiz kalmaktadır. Bu sebeple Nursi her iki bilgi akımını birleştirmeye (entegrasyona) tek çözüm olarak bakmaktadır. Bu sadece Müslüman dünyasının ilerlemesi için değil aynı zamanda fundamentalizmi ve dini müsamahasızlığı törpülemek ve ortadan kaldırmaya da yöneliktir. Nursi

bilginin birleştirilmesini maneviyat ve imanın güçlenmesinin de tek yolu olarak görmektedir. Onun birleştirilmiş bilgi sistemi değerlere, maneviyat ve ahlaka dayalı uyumlu bir toplumu inşa etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Said Nursi Dünyevi ve Kutsal olanın aynı çatı altında çöretilmesinin gereğine inanmaktadır. Onun *Medresetu'z-Zehra modeli* kurumlara uygulanabilir bir model teşkil etmektedir. Bu çalışma Said Nursi'nin eğitim düşüncesini bugün tüm İslam dünyasının karşı karşıya olduğu eğitim ikiliğine bir çözüm olarak sunmaya odaklanmıştır. Seyid Kutup ve Seyyid Mevdudi'den farklı olarak Said Nursi gerçekte İslami olan ilerici bir devlet inşası ile ilgilenmekte ancak siyasi İslam yada İslami bir devletin meydana getirilmesiyle pek alakalı gözükmemektedir. Onun yaklaşımı ideolojik değil iman esaslıdır. Makale Said Nursi'nin kısa bir özgeçmişi ile başlamakta ve onun eğitim düşüncesi ve günümüzle olan münasebeti ile devam etmektedir. Üçüncü bölümde ise ana fikirler özetlenmektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Medrese Eğitimi, Risale-i-Nur, Medresetu'z-Zehra, Eğitimin Birleştirilmesi, Said Nursi ve Eğitim.

### 1. Epistemological Framework of Nursian Education

Education based on faith is the central theme of Nursian educational philosophy. He believed that the conscience is illuminated by the religious sciences and the mind is illuminated by the positive sciences and wisdom occurs from the combination of these two.<sup>1</sup>Said believes that knowledge, education and faith form not only the prime ingredients for renewal of civilization but the integration of the three provide the platform for development and perfection. This linking of knowledge (*ilm*) with faith (*iman*) forms the core of Nursian model of education system. True knowledge caters the inner and the outer needs of mankind. The Quran mentions that those people who say “*Our Lord, grant us what is good in this world, such shall have no share in the Hereafter. And there are others who say: Our Lord grant us what is good in this world and what is good in the World to come.*”<sup>2</sup> Nursi tries to fulfill this Quranic criterion through his integrated system of knowledge. It is, indeed, the *Ilm* granted to Adam that Allah uses to justify Aadm'svicegerency. The Quran mentions that “*And He taught Adam the Names, all of them*”<sup>3</sup> Nursi writes about this Verse that,

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<sup>1</sup> Ian S. Markham & Suendam Birinci Pirim, *An Introduction to Said Nursi, Life, Thought and Writings* (England: Ashgate, 2011), 10.

<sup>2</sup> Al-Qur'an, Chapter 2, Verses, 200-201.

<sup>3</sup> Al-Qur'an, Chapter 2, Verse, 31.

“it was the teaching, due to man’s comprehensive disposition, of countless sciences, and numerous all-embracing branches of knowledge about the universe, and extensive learning about the Creator’s attributes and qualities, which afforded man superiority over not only over angels but also the heavens and the earth and mountains in the question of the bearing of the Supreme Trust.”<sup>4</sup>

Knowledge can be defined as the outcome of the encounter between human mind and its environment. If so, then the pedagogy for encountering the environment needs to be defined and drafted and the objectives fixed. Said Nursi provides us with that pedagogy and the objectives. For Said Nursi, the epistemological framework to encounter, understand and to interpret the created Quran (the cosmos) is the belief in God. Nursi believed that there are two holy books man must read- the revealed Book (the Quran) and the created book (the Cosmos).<sup>5</sup> To him the source of knowledge is ‘I’ (man’s ego), which to him, is a Trust<sup>6</sup> given to Almighty to the humans. This ego is the key to unlock the hidden treasures of the cosmos to reach to the creator. As he writes that “just as the ‘I’ is the key to Divine Names, which are hidden treasures, so it is the key to the locked talisman of creation; it is a problem-solving riddle, a wondrous talisman.”<sup>7</sup> He believes, as Markham as put it, that “unless humans were provided skills of comprehension, speech, seeing, hearing, and all capacities for understanding, it would not be possible for them to grasp Divine attributes and the ways they operate in the cosmos.”<sup>8</sup>

Nursi places huge emphasis on reading the created Book for knowing the *Gaib ul Gayoob (unseen of the unseen)*. For him the first revealed verse *Iqra* (read) does not mean only to read the words of God from the revealed Book but also the words of God as made manifest in the created realm. Nursi believed that in the command to ‘read’ there was also the command to interpret.

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<sup>4</sup> Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *The Words* (New Delhi: Barla Publications, 2015), 254.

<sup>5</sup> Nursi, *The Words*, 171.

<sup>6</sup> He is referring to the Qu’ānic Verse, “*We did indeed offer the Trust to the heavens, and the earth, and the mountains; but they refused to undertake it being afraid thereof. But man assumed it; indeed, he is most unjust, most foolish.*” (Al Qur’ān, Chapter 33, Verse, 72).

<sup>7</sup> Nursi, *The Words*, 558.

<sup>8</sup> Markham & Pirim, *An Introduction to Said Nursi*, 30-31.

However, the created Book can be read from two different and diametrically opposed hermeneutical positions, that is *mana-i-ismi* (self-referential) and *mana-i-harfi* (Other-indicative). Simply stated, either one interprets the cosmic verses as indicating none other than their own existence or interpreting them as signs pointing to the Creator.<sup>9</sup> Nursi places huge stress on knowing the Creator through His creation. So, any attempt to understand the created world must be an attempt to reach to the Creator. His *Risale-i-Nur* contains many passages that instruct to employ the 'Other-indicative' frame to understand the Creator.<sup>10</sup> This 'Other-indicative' frame, believes Markham, guides one to pass from cause to the source of the cause.<sup>11</sup>

This faith-based approach of knowledge is a peculiar characteristic of Nursi's educational thought. Nursi educational reforms are faith based and aim to strengthen the belief in the tenets of Islam as he believed that the contemporary problems in Muslim world had roots in the weakness of faith and throughout his life, he dedicated his writings and endeavors to this cause.

## 2. Finding the Context

Said Nursi, was born in 1878<sup>12</sup> and died on 23th March 1960. Nursi lived in one of the most significant periods of human history. He saw the two world wars, the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the emergence of a secular Republic of Turkey; he experienced colonization and decolonization of Muslim lands, he saw rising and dying of different ideologies; he saw the onslaught of modernization, westernization and secularization in Muslims lands.<sup>13</sup> Nursi perceived the decline of the Muslim world in weakening of the belief and concentrates all his energies in reviving the belief of the people. Nursi, while explaining the root cause of the decline of the Muslim world (especially of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire), stated that the missing point was not political

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<sup>9</sup> Colin Turner & Husan Horkuc, *Said Nursi* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 67-68.

<sup>10</sup> For instance see the Twelfth Word in *The Words*, 2015, 143-149, The Third Ray in *The Rays*, 2015.

<sup>11</sup> Markham & Pirim, *An Introduction to Said Nursi*, 35.

<sup>12</sup> Some of the biographers have mentioned the year as 1877, for example see Ramazan Balci *Bediuzzaman Said Nursi: Wonder of the Age*, (2009).

<sup>13</sup> Markham & Pirim, *An Introduction to Said Nursi*, 3.

and economic reforms but the deviation in faith or the faithlessness. To him, it was not the state that collapsed rather it was people that collapsed. So, rebuilding and reconstruction must come from below. The reconstruction of people's lives became the base and the goal for Noor Movement.

Said Nursi did try in the early years (Old Said) to revive Islam and society by means of politics but once he realized that the state in Attaturk's new Turkey was going to be a secular state, he abandoned political and social activism and decided to revive the faith of the individuals, hence choose a bottom-top approach for socio-political change. The years that saw the transition of Turkey from Empire to Republic, also saw the transition of Said Nursi from "Old Said" to "New Said".<sup>14</sup> Colin Turner writes that Nursi's stay in Ankara<sup>15</sup> convinced him that in the then situation any attempt to ameliorate the situation politically would be fruitless. So, he emphasized on belief and stated that man's true happiness and progress could be achieved through adoption of new forms of education and theology.<sup>16</sup> Nursi concluded that serving Islam by means of politics is of little significance when compared to serving it through belief. So, he fostered all his energies to foster a culture of belief upon which modern and successful society can be based.<sup>17</sup>

### **3. Dualism in Muslim Education System and the way forward: Nursian Perspective**

Said Nursi did not receive conventional education of his times. He did not fit in the education systems of his native state, hence became disappointed with the entire system of education. During his times the Turkish education system had two tiers, religious and secular. It was the time when, almost in the entire Muslim world, the education had got divided into religious sciences and the modern sciences. The religious sciences were taught in *Madrasas* and the modern sciences in secular institutions called *Maktabs*. Nursi was troubled by this dualism and concluded that

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<sup>14</sup> Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *The Damascus Sermon* (New Delhi: Sozler Publications, 2010), 8.

<sup>15</sup> Said Nursi moved to Van on invitation of Hasan Pasha, the Governor of Van, in 1895 or 1896 (Sukran Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2005, 27). He stayed there for next fifteen years.

<sup>16</sup> Turner & Horkuc, *Said Nursi*, 33.

<sup>17</sup> Turner & Horkuc, *Said Nursi*, 34, 49.

none of the systems serve the purpose. The *Madrasas* were cut off from the modern sciences, hence were unable to solve the problems of day today life. On the other hand, the secular institutions were cut off from *Wahi* hence were taking society towards disbelief, corruption and various other evils. Nursi also believed that this education system caused a chasm between religious scholars not familiar with the modern education and the modernists not familiar with the religious education. The condition of Turkish *Madrasas* is summarized by Vehide in the following words:

“With their syllabi and curricula virtually unchanged since the fifteenth century, their buildings in advanced stage of decay, the student facilities nonexistent, and their independent source of income (the pious foundations) having been appropriated by the central government in 1840, the condition of the Madrasas by the end of Abdulhamid’s reign can only be described as lamentable.”<sup>18</sup>The roots of this educational decline can be traced in Tanzimet period <sup>19</sup> reforms. The reforms of Abdulhamid <sup>20</sup> , according to Vahide, also played their part in the decline of the *Medrese* education.<sup>21</sup>

Said Nursi’s dissatisfaction with the *Madrasa* education became evident as he wondered from one *Madrasa* to another in search of the desired knowledge. His wondering, SukranVahideargues, hinted towards reformation of *Madrasa* education. <sup>22</sup> Markham writes that ‘*his travels around the medāriscontinued for about five years and left Nursi unsatisfied with his experience. He did not fit in the education system of the*

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<sup>18</sup> Turner & Horkuc, *Said Nursi*, 44.

<sup>19</sup> The Tanzimet is the name given to 37 years period from (1839-76) in which the Ottoman sultans introduced large scale reforms in government, administration and many areas of the Ottoman life along Western line. The motive was to restore the empires fast declining power. (Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey*, 34).

<sup>20</sup> Abdulhamid built hundreds of schools, and in some schools attempts were made to teach modern sciences with religious science but, according to Markham, ‘due to a deep social cleavage, only a small minority benefited from these schools.’ (Markham, *An Introduction to Said Nursi*, 10).

<sup>21</sup> Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey*, 44.

<sup>22</sup> Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey*, 10.

*time and was disappointed with not finding the type of quality and attentive education he sought.*<sup>23</sup>

*Makatib* and *madaris* represented two different approaches to knowledge. The former represented a positivist approach to science while as the later represented classical Islamic education. There was not a single influential educational institution where religious and modern education was taught together, instead, *makatib* and *madar is* were taking a great pride in their separate curricula and were critical of each other.<sup>24</sup> Having received *madresa* education and having equipped himself with the modern scientific knowledge,<sup>25</sup> Nursi now proceeded to formulate his ideal system of knowledge. He identified the main problems in the existing system and formulated his own solutions. He proposed to establish a University in Eastern Anatolia, a university where religious education will be taught along with modern sciences. He named this university as Medresetu'z-Zehra. Nursi stated that "the religious sciences are the light of the conscience and the modern sciences (lit. "the sciences of civilization") are the light of the reason; the truth becomes manifest through the combining of the two. The students' endeavor will take flight on these two wings. When they are separated it gives rise to bigotry in the one, and wiles and skepticism in the other."<sup>26</sup>

Nursi writes in *Munazarat*,

In this university (Medresetu'z-Zehra, the sister of Al-Azhar University of Cario) "the language of Arabic is obligatory, the language of Kurdish is acceptable, and the language of Turkish is to be necessary."<sup>27</sup>

Nursi moved to Istanbul, the capital of Turkey in 1907, to present his proposal to Sultan for the University. He was also

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<sup>23</sup> Markham & Pirim, *An Introduction to Said Nursi*, 8.

<sup>24</sup> Markham & Pirim, *An Introduction to Said Nursi*, 10.

<sup>25</sup>Nursi's stay in Van, helped him to acquaint himself with modern sciences. His friendly relations with Tahir Pasha gave "his access to Tahir Pasha's library, where he studied math, physics, astronomy, chemistry, biology and geology, and gained depth into history and philosophy". (Markham, *An Introduction to Said Nursi*, 9. See Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey*, 27).

<sup>26</sup> Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey*, 10.

<sup>27</sup> Hakan Gok, *Selected Readings from Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's Risale-i-Nur* (Clifton: Tughra Books, 2016), 40.



motivated to engage with broader spectrum of intellectuals, scholars and officials in Istanbul.<sup>28</sup> Serif Mardin states that there are no clear reasons which would have prompted Nursi to move to Istanbul, but he argues that it might have been the deterioration of economic conditions throughout the Ottoman Empire that gave a new urgency to Nursi's desire to present his educational reforms to the sultan.<sup>29</sup> Vahide, however, believes that he moved to the capital for getting support for the Islamic university.<sup>30</sup> His idea to move to the capital was motivated by his educational views and his aim to propose reforms. Nursi was greatly concerned with the growing gap between *mekteb* and *medrese* scholars and students. He wanted to share his apprehension and warn against the dangers of such a split among the educated of the nation. Accordingly, he proposed integration of religious education with modern sciences. This blending, Nursi believed, could be either a major in science with a minor in religion or the other way round.<sup>31</sup>

Said was not only dissatisfied with the methodology and the curriculum of the *Madrassa* education but was also pained to see disunity among the three main streams of education—the religious schools, the modern schools and the *sofi tekkes*. He believed that this disunity among the three has been the biggest reason for Muslim backwardness.<sup>32</sup> According to Vahide, the heart of Nursi's proposal lay in reconciling the three main branches of education system—the *Madrassa*, the *Maktab* and the *Sofi Tekkes* and the disciplines they represented.<sup>33</sup> Nursi believed that three enemies are chiefly responsible for the downfall of the Muslims: ignorance, poverty and conflict and he stressed to wage a jihad against them with the weapons of industry, learning and unity.<sup>34</sup> By order (unity), Nursi meant, not only the Divine unity,<sup>35</sup> or socio-political

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<sup>28</sup> Markham & Pirim, *An Introduction to Said Nursi*, 11-12.

<sup>29</sup> Serif Mardin, *Religion and Social Change in Modern Turkey* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1989), 79.

<sup>30</sup> Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey*, 33.

<sup>31</sup> Markham & Pirim, *An Introduction to Said Nursi*, 11.

<sup>32</sup> Ramazan Balci, *Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, Wonder of the Age* (New Jersey, Tughra Books, 2013), 40.

<sup>33</sup> Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey*, 45.

<sup>34</sup> Balci, *Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*, 88.

<sup>35</sup> Nursi has been elaborative in explaining Divine Unity in 'The Words': See first to seven words, Twenty-Second Word, Thirty-Second and Thirty-Third Words in *The Words*, See also the Second chapter of The Seventh Ray in *The Rays*, 170.

unity of the Ottoman Empire, but he also meant significant deficiencies in the internal structure of the *Madrasas*. He found that the *Madrasa* education was producing only "one dimensional men",<sup>36</sup> hence were fast becoming irrelevant. Nursi, like Mawdoodi, criticized the *Madrasas* for being unable to provide and produce people suitable to the needs of the time.

He was in favour of democratization and diversification of the *Madrasa* education so that the rule of division of labour could be applied.<sup>37</sup> He insisted to transform *Madrasas* on University lines whereby they will not only develop specialization but will also grow in cooperation and coordination. By progress, he meant scientific advancement in both methodology as well as the content. He viewed stagnation of *Madrasas* as the root cause of the misery and downfall of the Muslim world. He criticized the ages old syllabus taught in the *Madrasas*, which, he believed had no relevance. He criticized *Madrasas* for lacking dynamism and for want of producing the desired results.<sup>38</sup> He also criticized *Madrasa* education for lack of professional training.<sup>39</sup> Once in the *medrasa* of Seyh Mehmed Celali Nursi approached the course through his own methodology.<sup>40</sup> Said's aim, writes Vahide, in opting for his own method was to point out the need for reform in *Madrasa* education.<sup>41</sup> Serif Mardin states that Nursi was finding the entire long-drawn curriculum to cumbersome so he decided to approach

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<sup>36</sup> A Phrase used by Herbert Marcuse

<sup>37</sup> Vahide *Islam in Modern Turkey*, 44-45. See also Markham, *An Introduction to Said Nursi*, 45.

<sup>38</sup> Ibrahim Cannan, "The Chief Questions Facing the Islamic World and their Solutions according to Bediuzzaman", *International Symposium* (Istanbul, 1992), 82, 83.

<sup>39</sup> Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey*, 44-45. See also Markham, *An Introduction to Said Nursi* 45.

<sup>40</sup> Nursi while staying in the *Madrasa* of Sheikh Mohammad Celali in Bayezit developed his unique approach to the course. He completed the entire course then prevalent in *madrasas* in just three months. Vahide writes that such course, with the methodology it was taught then 'took the average student under normal conditions ten to fifteen years. The works studied under traditional method "were heavily annotated with commentaries, commentaries on commentaries, and even commentaries on those commentaries." Nursi ignored all these commentaries and concentrated on only the most important sections in each work. (Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey*, 10).

<sup>41</sup> Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey*, 10.

the course through his own methodology. His new method, Mardin states, was indeed modern.<sup>42</sup>

In the heart of Nursi's educational reforms, was the integration of secular and the sacred branches of education and the embodiment of this rapprochement was to be the Medresetu'z-Zehra. The thought of uniting religious education with the modern education developed during the course of fifteen years of Nursi's stay in Van, where he interacted with government officials who were trained in modern sciences and were raising different doubts about Islamic theology.<sup>43</sup> He also realized that the traditional form of Islamic theology was incapable of answering these doubts and criticisms.<sup>44</sup> For Turkish modernists it was Islam and the Islamic culture that was regarded as the major cause for centuries of backwardness and the lack of development in science and technology, so, for them, there was only one solution: Islam had to be removed from social, public and political structures. Nursi, therefore, took the challenge to show that Islam and modernity, Islam and scientific progress, are not incompatible, rather, go hand in hand.<sup>45</sup> The conditions presented a golden chance to Nursi to develop his discourse and aim to reconstruct the society on the foundations of true belief in the Quran. So, he came to the conclusion that religious courses should be taught in the modern schools and the modern sciences should be taught in the traditional schools. He believed that his method was fruitful in the way that it will save the *maktab* students from irreligiosity and the *madrasa* students from bigotry and ossified ideas.<sup>46</sup> Nursi himself studied secular sciences and became familiar with the subjects like history, geography, mathematics, geology, physics, chemistry and astronomy.<sup>47</sup> For him secular sciences not only will not only keep the pace of material progress alive but Said Nursi, was also convinced that the truths of Islam should be taught to the students

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<sup>42</sup> Mardin, *Religion and Social Change in Modern Turkey*, 69.

<sup>43</sup> Balci, *Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*, 28-31.

<sup>44</sup> Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey*, 44-45. See also Markham, *An Introduction to Said Nursi*, 27.

<sup>45</sup> Turner & Horkuc, *Said Nursi*, 52.

<sup>46</sup> Balci, *Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*, 36.

<sup>47</sup> Mardin, *Religion and Social Change in Modern Turkey*, 75.

in the manner most appropriate to the understanding of the times.<sup>48</sup>

While presenting his proposal for establishing Medresetu'z-Zehra, he believed that the institution will not only serve as the basis for education but will also provide stability and development for the nation.<sup>49</sup> Education to Nursi was not only an enlightening force but also a source of political and economic stability. He looked on religious education as a uniting force, which makes people easy to govern. To him neglect of religious education leads to anarchism.<sup>50</sup> Hakkan Gok believes that Nursi's idea 'would arguably have been the solution to the Kurdish problem that remains to this day'.<sup>51</sup>

#### **4. Upholding the Word of God**

Nursi believed that three enemies: ignorance, poverty and conflict were responsible for the downfall of Muslims, especially the Ottoman Empire. He regarded ignorance as the chief of all evils and stressed to wage jihad against the three enemies with weapons of industry, learning and unity.<sup>52</sup> He firmly believed that the remedy of ignorance was to be found in the sciences and to him; it was only through scientific advancement that the word of God can be held. He regarded material progress as a religious obligation for all Muslims. In his words, "*all believers are charged with upholding the word of God, and at this time, its greatest cause is to progress materially.*"<sup>53</sup> Nursi regarded the three (ignorance, poverty and conflict) the worst enemies of upholding the word of God.<sup>54</sup> Nursi did not see any incompatibility in Islam and science, instead, he believed that scientific discoveries uncover the working of the cosmos, hence is an excellent guide to understand the signs of Allah. For him, science is a genuine effort to reach for the truth and truth is the word of God, so inching towards the truth is simply marching towards Islam. Making science and search for truth as his basis he

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<sup>48</sup> Mardin, *Religion and Social Change in Modern Turkey*, 77

<sup>49</sup> Turner & Horkuc, *Said Nursi*, 37.

<sup>50</sup> Adem Tatli, "Bediuzzaman's Educational Method", *International Symposium*, 1992, 102.

<sup>51</sup> Gok, *Selected Readings from Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's Risale-i-Nur*, 40.

<sup>52</sup> Balci, *Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*, 88.

<sup>53</sup> Quoted in Colin Turner and Husan Horkuc, *Said Nursi*, 109.

<sup>54</sup> Balci, *Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*, 88.

predicted Islamic revivalism not only in the East but also in the West. But his revivalism is reasoned, self motivated, based firmly in belief in the truth.<sup>55</sup> Nursi believed that Islam was the religion of present and the future because it relies on reason and reasoned proof; it does not teach abandonment of proof in favour of blind obedience, so in the age of science Islam stands authenticated.<sup>56</sup> In *Muhkema* Nursi writes that 'Truth will grow and flourish' in present age of reason (*aql*). He believed that reason, truth and wisdom produce the steam of scientific truths and stated loudly that truth would prevail over force, proof over sophistry, reason over instinct and thought over emotions.<sup>57</sup> Nursi concludes that the future belongs to Islam and only Islam alone.<sup>58</sup> Nursi also states that modern education should be filtered so as to purify it from its negative impacts before it is accepted and taught. He entrusts this duty of unification to Islamic scholars.<sup>59</sup>

### Conclusion

Said Nursi is not concerned about the nature of the state, neither does he try to bring compatibility between the ideology of the state and the purpose of the education. He seems more concerned about faith of the individual rather than the nature of the state. He undertook to renew the belief of Muslim individuals rather than re-establishing the political structure of the Islamic world. It is here that one sees a fundamental difference between Said Nursi and his contemporaries including Mawdoodi, Sayyed Qutub. Said Nursi did not favour any uprising or revolution in the name of Islam neither did he favor politicization of Islam. His policy of education shows that one can be faithful even in a secular state. Nursi's greatest contribution lies in explaining to the Muslims that modernization is not an enemy of Islam rather, ignorance is. Similarly, his views on science and technology are highly relevant to the Muslim world at present. His integration model of education can be highly beneficial for Muslims of south Asia (especially Pakistan, Bangladesh and India). South Asian Madrasas have been

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<sup>55</sup> Balci, *Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*, 38, 39.

<sup>56</sup> Balci, *Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*, 14-34.

<sup>57</sup> Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey*, 44-45. See also Markham, *An Introduction to Said Nursi*, 93.

<sup>58</sup> Balci, *Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*, 29.

<sup>59</sup> Balci, *Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*, 92.

at the centre of concern for promoting extremism, fundamentalism, religious intolerance and militancy or terrorism. Under such conditions, Nursian model of education provide guiding principles for Madrasa reform in South Asia. His model of education is sure to breed tolerance, expand horizons for the students and the teachers alike, bring progress (of inner and outer worlds) and above all satisfies human psyche.

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