

A CONVERSION NARRATIVE AND ITS POLITICAL AND SOCIAL DIMENSIONS: ABDU'L AHAD DAWUD¹

RESEARCH ARTICLE

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Gönderim Tarihi: 25.12.2020 Kabul Tarihi: 21.04.2021

Alıntı: SEFİLOĞLU, M. S. (2021). A Conversation Narrative and Its Political and Social Dimensions: Abdu'l Ahad Dawud. *AHBV Akdeniz Havzası ve Afrika Medeniyetleri Dergisi*, 3(1),53-64.

ABSTRACT: During the fall of the Ottoman Empire, Iranian-born, David Benjamin converted into Islam under the name of Abdu'l Ahad Dawud. After the 1908 Revolution, he wrote many newspaper articles and a book, *İncil ve Salib*. All of his writings embody in many ways the continuation of Islamic polemical literature. Dawud claims that Christianity was corrupted by Saint Paul and Constantine and the name of Muhammad was included in Bible beforehand. Moreover, in his writings, Dawud supported the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) and illustrated comments about that period such as the dethronement of Abdülhamid II, Imperialism and Zionism. Based on Dawud's books and articles, I will question the purpose of his works and try to fragment the perception of a converted Muslim in that period and the Muslim identity at the end of the 19th century. In this way, I will argue that polemical writings are not only produced for religious purposes but that they also reflect the common mentality of the era in which they were written, as a political instrument. I will try to contextualize Abdu'l Ahad Dawud within the historical framework of his period as a person who witnessed the last years of the Ottoman Empire. During this period, almost all Islamic countries were colonized under Christian powers, therefore Dawud's efforts to prove the superiority of Islam were significant.

Keywords: Islamic polemical literature, Committee of Union and Progress, Abdu'l Ahad Dawud, conversion

Son Dönem Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Gerçekleşen Bir İhtida ve Sosyal ve Politik Boyutları

ÖZ: Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun son yıllarında, İran asıllı Keldani bir Hıristiyan olan David Benjamin, Abdülehad Davud adıyla Müslüman oldu. 1908 Devrimi'nin ardından ise pek çok makaleye ek olarak Hıristiyan karşıtı reddiye geleneğinin örneklerinden biri olan *İncil ve Salib* adlı eseri kaleme aldı. Bu yazılarda, kendisini önceleyen İslam reddiye geleneğini devam ettirmesine ek olarak, döneminin toplumsal ve politik olayları hakkında açıklamalarda bulundu. İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti'nin ülke yönetimini ele almasını destekledi, Abdülhamid'in tahttan indirilmesi, Siyonizm ve İslam dünyasında faaliyet gösteren misyonerler hakkında açıklamalarda bulundu. Bu makalede, görünüşte dinsel niteliğe sahip olan bu yazıların esas yazılış amacını sorgulayacak ve eserlerin içerisindeki politik atmosferi göstermeye çalışacağım. Bu şekilde, dönemin Müslüman düşünce dünyasını ve Abdülehad Davud'un Hıristiyan karşıtı yazılarını son dönem Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun bağlamı içerisinde anlamaya çalışacağım. Neredeyse tüm İslam ülkelerinin sömürge olarak Hıristiyan devletlerin egemenliği altına girdiği bu dönemde, Davud'un İslam'ın üstünlüğünü ispat etme çabası anlamlıdır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İslam reddiye geleneği, İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti, Abdülehad Davud, ihtida.

Introduction

The anti-Christian polemical writings that constitute the subject of this article initiated from the early years of Islam and continued to be valid during the Ottoman Empire. These books, which have been widespread since the early years of the religion of Islam, are important in terms of showing the sincerity of new entrants towards this religion as well as conveying the author's ideas about his/her old and new religion. Although the main topics of anti-Christian polemic writings are falsification of the Bible, heralding of the Prophet Muhammad, Paul, etc.; these books also include the problems of the era in which they have been written. This article focuses on the anti-Christian polemical writings of Dawud at the end of the nineteenth century.

In the Ottoman Empire, religious and national identities were intertwined with each other, and each person was a part of the community in which they shared the same religion. Within this empire, where religion had a very strong effect on determining social life, people lived in congregation according to

¹ This article is the revised version of my dissertation; Sefiloğlu, M.S. (2020). "Son Dönem Osmanlı'sında bir Mühtedi: Abdülehad Davud" (M.A. diss. Ibn Haldun University).

their religious identity (Kenanoğlu, 2004). The rulers of the Ottoman Empire, who considered themselves as the protectors of the religion of Islam, supported converts and treated them as the basic elements of their legitimacy. For this reason, the expansion of the Empire, which had grown in both the time of Suleiman the Magnificent and of Mehmet IV, has manifested itself in the conversions as political propaganda as well. Ultimately, when we consider the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, it was not surprise that people converted into Islam when Islam developed in every aspect. In such an environment, it seems very profitable for these people to be Muslims. At the same time, the Ottoman Empire, “the protector of Islam”, was able to benefit from the prestige of bringing new people into religion (Baer 2008; Krstic, 2011). Nevertheless, we should not go too far in this judgment. Ultimately, the Ottoman Empire did not have an aim to forcefully change the religion of its subjects, as long as they paid taxes and maintained minimum social cohesion (Barkey, 2008).

However, military defeats of the Ottoman Empire after the eighteenth century brought the questioning of Islam in a sense (Lewis, 2002). Islam, which had always won for the fifteenth century and gives the image that will take over the world soon, is under the direct threat of colonial forces, especially after the nineteenth century (Lewis, 1961). For this reason, more emphasis placed on social issues to show that the truth of Islam continues in anti-Christian polemical books, especially since the nineteenth century (Daniel, 1987). Dawud, who converted to Islam during the fall of the Ottoman Empire, tried to highlight three issues in his works. Firstly, he took over the anti-Christian polemical literature to a large extent and tried to show that Christianity is not a reasonable religion because it contains the Trinity faith. Secondly, he emphasized that Islam still retains all its legitimacy. Thirdly, he proposed opinions that would redefine the identity of the Empire, which had been defeated by devastating wars.

His Life and Importance in Anti-Christian Polemical Literature

Although Dawud was a very productive writer, he was quite discreet about his own life story. However, his life story was so turbulent that it started in Urmiye in 1866, continued with important positions in many places such as Rome, London, Istanbul and it ended up in a retirement home in New York in 1950.

We have the most detailed information about Dawud through an unnamed biography published in *The Islamic Review* (*The Islamic Review*, 1929). He received his primary education at the American College in this region. In 1892, he was sent by Cardinal Vaughan to Rome to study at the Pontificio Collegio Urbano to develop himself in philosophy and theology. According to Dawud's biography in *The Islamic Review*, this fragmented state of Christianity led him to some questions about the Christian religion. After a long period of doubt, he resigned from all his positions in the church. Then he worked for three years, first in the Postal Administration and then as a teacher and interpreter for Crown Prince of Iran and went to England.

England was an important turning point for Dawud's life, as he adopted Unitarianism here. During his voyage to Iran, he met with Şeyhülislam Cemaleddin Efendi and converted into Islam in İstanbul. Following his conversion in 1904, Dawud was granted an Ottoman citizenship and between 1905 and 1906 he worked as a teacher in Darüşşafaka. He also wrote articles in various newspapers until 1920. After the WWI he moved to the USA and he died in 1950 at a retirement home in New York (Bakır, 2019).

According to the information provided in secondary sources, having interacted with different cultures and languages for a long period of his life, Dawud knew English, French, Italian, Persian, Turkish, and Arabic, including ancient languages such as Latin, Ancient Greek, Hebrew, and Syriac (Harman, 1988). However, this is open to debate like other aspects of Dawud's life, and we do not have precise information on how many languages he knows.

Having served in important positions of the church, completed his education in Western countries, Dawud was more knowledgeable in many respects than the contemporary Ottoman Muslim readers on the knowledge of Christianity. This brings his writings to a much more respectable position in front of the Ottoman society and the readership.

Even today, if the Western Europe is to be excluded, the apostasy of a person makes it necessary to make sharp changes in his social and private life. At the end of the nineteenth century, this process probably should have been even more severe. For this reason, it was not an easy process for Dawud to leave his religion, which he believed in for many years. However, this must have been even more

difficult for Dawud, because his journey to change his religion started with Unitarianism and ultimately resulted in Islam. The transition to Unitarianism was perhaps the most important part of the author's life because it was at a separate point among all Christian denominations about the nature of God, and it also provided a suitable basis for the author's subsequent transition to Islam. In contrast to the Trinity, this Christian belief, which advocated the unity of God, was ultimately closest to Islam.

In addition to the psychological fluctuations aroused by this conversion through various stages in the author's spiritual world, this conversion also had social dimensions. His separation from his old religion, which was connected by nationality, kinship, and family ties, had forced Dawud to leave them behind as well. The author stated in his book, *İncil ve Salib*, that he had many financial and spiritual difficulties in the period following his conversion, and as far as we know from the secondary literature written about his life, he was excluded by his relatives in the last period of his life in America and his life ended in a retirement home (Davud, 1999, p.16; Harman, 1988).

Dawud has an important place in Islamic Anti-Christian polemical literature. During a period of economic and social crisis, especially in the military interventions of the Western world, Dawud converted into Islam and tried to emphasize in his works and newspaper articles that the legitimacy and the truth of Islam still existed. This period, when Islam was threatened more than ever, was among the reasons that prompted Dawud to write these books and newspaper articles. All the books and newspaper articles written by Dawud after his conversion to Islam can be considered as examples of anti-Christian polemical writing. In these works, Dawud claims that Trinity contradicts reason, Bible was falsified by Constantine and Prophet Muhammad was heralded in the Bible.

His Ideas About Christianity

According to the Islamic faith, all religions are connected to the revelation of Allah and this ends with Prophet Muhammad. Although there are certain changes in religion from Adam to Prophet Muhammad as a result of Allah's will, this belief remains the same and naturally holds an important place in the chain of prophethood. According to Islam, Jesus also preached the faith of one God throughout his life. Hence, Muslims have interpreted the wide difference of interpretation between Islam and Christianity within the Christian religion as the falsification of Christianity (Hoover, 2009).

One of the most prominent issues in the works of Dawud is undoubtedly his negative attitude towards the Christian religion. According to him, Christianity has suffered a massive defacement due to the political and military forces that the church faced in the first period. Dawud argued that more than one factor played a role in the destruction of the Christian faith. However, according to him, some factors, in particular, have played a much more dominant role and Christianity has reached us as it is today.

Dawud thinks that the Roman Empire is the biggest culprit in the falsification of Christianity. According to Dawud, although Christianity suffered hundreds of years of persecution in the Roman Empire, the greatest destruction suffered by Christianity occurred after the Council of Nicea in 325. In this council, the defenders of monotheism were suppressed and these people, especially Arius, were killed by Emperor Constantine, although no historical facts lie beneath this claim. As a result, the trinity that Athanasios advocated has entered into the Christian religion by state coercion (Davud 1999, p. 33; 1988, p. 21).

Dawud is not the only one who regard the Roman Empire as the culprit in the falsification of Christianity in the Islamic polemical literature. It is common in these writings that Emperor Constantine is seen as the chief responsible for the falsification of Christianity. Abd al-Jabbar, Mutazili theologian (d.1025), is the most influential of the views that Christianity has changed as a result of oppression by the Roman Empire. According to him, Constantine removes many of the essential features of the Christian religion, such as the belief in monotheism, in the Council of Nicaea (Stern, 1967; Reynolds 2004; Kadi Abdülcebbar, 2017).

Another reason for the falsification of Christian faith is that this religion is heavily influenced by Greco-Roman tradition and philosophy. According to him, although Christianity is revealed as the continuation of the Jewish religious tradition based on the belief of monotheism, it was influenced by the polytheist beliefs, especially Greek philosophy, and eventually became a human-production rather than a book of God (Davud, 1999, p. 81). As a result of centuries of having interactions with pagan beliefs, just as the pagans did to their gods, Christianity used definitions such as father and son to describe God (Davud,

1988, p. 16). According to Dawud, a careful examination would eventually reveal that they were written under the influence of Greek and Roman culture.

Another important theme in the tradition of Islamic polemical literature is that the Bible did not survive in its original language and was largely distorted during its translation process into Latin and Greek. According to this opinion, the parts of the Bible that announce the future of Islam were deliberately removed from the text (Davud, 1999, pp. 49, 59). Dawud mentioned in different parts of his works that the Holy Scriptures should not be translated into another language. According to him, no matter how well the translation is done, it reaches us in a way that does not fully express the main idea that is intended to be described in the source text (Davud, 1988, p. 176). Dawud, therefore, states that we will never have the true content of the Gospels, which the authors of the Gospels have translated or abridged and presented to us. According to Dawud, as a result of the additions and distortions carried out over the years, Christian faith has contained irrational ideas.

Although Dawud largely repeats and maintains the anti-Christian polemical tradition, he also expresses quite different thoughts at some points. The most important example is that God did not give Jesus any book, this idea is a definite distinction with Islamic tradition, God transmitted only oral statements to Jesus. These oral statements contain only the knowledge of a prophet named Muhammad in the future (Davud, 1999, pp.185, 224; 1988, p. 174). The book called today as the Bible has nothing to do with Jesus, because this book was later changed by the church fathers, including Constantine, for political and financial reasons. According to him, there are many verses in the Bible that support the Qur'an and Muhammad even in this current condition and these chapters are the ones that reveal the true essence of the Bible (Davud, 1999, pp. 157, 189). Although Dawud and other polemical book writers question the authority of the Bible, they often cite the Bible to prove the claims of the Islamic faith. According to David Thomas, it was common practice to quote the Bible, especially during the early period of Islamic civilization (Thomas, 1996). The purpose of the quotations from the Bible encountered in polemical books is to provide the basis for the Qur'anic claim that Prophet Muhammad was heralded in the Torah and the Bible. For example, Tabari (d.861[?]) states that the Bible has been corrupted only in the interpretative sense, it is reasonable for him to refer to the Bible in his anti-Christian polemic book, and it does not seem inconsistent (Gaudeul, 1984; Kildoo, 2018). However, this situation takes on a different dimension in the example of Ibn Hazm (d.1064), who frequently states in his works that the Bible has no religious value. Although Ibn Hazm claims that the Bible has no religious value, he uses it to prove Muhammad's prophecy in most of his works (Ibn Hazm, 2017, pp. 96-99). But the most interesting one among these people is Dawud himself, because he denied the sacred status of Bible and humiliated the contemporary form as a book written in the interests of priests but he also quoted the book which he found wrong to prove his own claims. If the Bible has never been given to Jesus in a written form, and moreover, it is completely fabricated, how could he use the Bible as a criterion of truth to prove his religious claims?

Another issue addressed in the anti-Christian polemical books is Saint Paul. In these books, Paul is accused of corrupting the Christian religion by combining it with Greco-Roman philosophy. One of the first examples of that tradition was Abd al-Jabbar. Abd al-Jabbar accuses Paul of his ambition for glory and money and presents him in his book as a Jew who rejects the true Islamic teaching of Jesus. In Abd al-Jabbar's narrative, Paul is shown as the root cause of all the differences and conflicts that took place, and his writings even take on an anti-Semitic character. He narrates that after Christ's death, there were many differences of opinion between Christians and Jews, and they realized that they could not defeat Christians by force, they sent one of them and tried to change their religion in this way (Kadı Abdülcebbar, 2017, p. 314; Reynolds, 2004, pp. 163-170). Thus, the way Paul is introduced to the Muslim reader is in the form of a fraudulent and ambitious person.

Ibrahim Müteferrika (d.1747) also continues this fiction in almost at the same way, although there is a time difference between Abd al-Jabbar and Ibrahim Muteferrika, almost about eight centuries, he conveys the same thoughts in general. He uses an anti-Semitic discourse, just like Abd al-Jabbar, and refers to Jewish people as "slaves" of Islam (Müteferrika, 2012, p.100). In this story, which Ibrahim Müteferrika fictionalized, Paul ultimately succeeds in his mission, divides Christians into many sects, and adds many new faiths to the Christian religion (Müteferrika, 2012, pp. 74-78. Among the anti-Christian polemic writers, Ibn Hazm gives perhaps the sharpest comments about Paul. He describes Paul's

books as “full of disgrace and blasphemy”, which he asserts is a cursed person who “leads the believers to delusion” (Ibn Hazm, 2017, p. 772).

Dawud's views on Paul are interesting. In contrast to the belief that Paul was the main factor in the deterioration of the Christian faith in the Islamic polemical literature, Dawud claims that he could not be held responsible for this falsification. He claims that Paul's views were also changed and deteriorated by church officials and Constantine and commemorates him with respect by saying as prophet “Rasul”. However, in different parts of his works he makes some negative statements about Paul, also (Davud, 1999, p.171).

His Thoughts About Social and Political Life

At the end of the nineteenth century while Abdülhamid II was ruling the Ottoman Empire, Dawud became Muslim. However, the publication of his works was dated after the takeover of government by the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP). During this period, both in the World and in the Ottoman Empire, the desire for constitutionalism gradually increased, and there was a great nostalgia for the past achievements in Islamic civilization.

As Tunaya stated, he had the opportunity to publish his writings in an environment with press freedom in the period following the declaration of the constitutional monarchy. In such an environment where ideas were discussed enthusiastically, three views were very popular in the Empire; Ottomanism, Turkism, Islamism. These three views are completely inseparable and have transitions between each other and provide an explanation of how the Empire could be saved (Tunaya, 2016).

The first approach was Islamism claiming that in an environment where the Islamic world is exploited by the imperialist states, they must be united with their religious brother and that these attacks directed by the Christian-Western states can only be answered based on the unification of the Islamic peoples and to some extent through modernization. The effort to reconcile Islamism with contemporary science is their common characteristic. The second approach was the Westernism movement, which includes many variations from moderate to radical, which sees the liberation of the state by adopting Western values. The third approach influenced by the European nationalism was Turkism. This has been developed and matured with the studies in language, literature, and history since the beginning of Tanzimat.

When the writings of Dawud are examined, it can be seen that he is not an ordinary religious person. In addition to his efforts to prove the legitimacy of Islam, which dominated all of his writings, he has supported the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) in his works and constantly defended constitutional monarchy and caliphate. In addition to these, Dawud was very positive about the British Empire and praised the Jews as opposed to his writings on Christianity.

Christian Missionaries in Ottoman Empire: One of the most prominent subjects in the Dawud's works is undoubtedly the Christian religion and his open hatred to the Christian culture (Davud, 1919b; 1919c; 1919d; 1919e). The writer's comments on the Christian religion are so sharp that it can be pathetic enough to claim that the First World War was caused because of the Christian religion. Moreover, the writer claimed that Christianity caused bad behaviors such as prostitution and gambling in Europe without giving any tangible evidence.

Dawud continues his speculations and shares a conspiracy theory that we are familiar with even today. He claims that the main purpose of the United Nations was to reduce the differences between the Christian states and to strengthen them to intervene more strongly in Islamic countries. According to his hypothesis, these states, who are sure to see a possible war again in the future, are in policy to unite the churches to preserve the current status quo, they will get stronger in this way and they will take the Islamic countries around them under their sovereignty (Davud, 1919a).

According to Dawud, the most dangerous aspect of the Christian religion is its missionaries. In the terms quoted by Dawud, these people have surrounded and taken over the world like “grasshoppers” and pose a serious threat to the political and moral structure of the society in places they go in the Islamic geography (Davud, 1909c). It is stated that these missionary groups create a separation between peoples, and establish schools, hospitals, and libraries to influence people (Davud, 1914a). The most important way for these missionaries to attract people to Christianity is to use their money and power (Davud, 1909a). According to the author, the number of Catholic Jesuit missionaries has reached almost

two hundred thousand all over the world. The main purpose of this greatly exaggerated number is undoubtedly to warn the Muslim reader that Islam is under serious threat from Christians and that the people who rule the country and people should be more conscious. One of the most destructive activities of the missionaries in the political field is that they constantly try to make anti-Islamic propaganda in the political arena of the British Empire and the United States (Davud, 1914a). Faced with discontent among the ruling elite and the Muslim population, the missionaries were only able to continue these activities under the protection of major states; British Empire, France, the United States, Germany (Kieser, 2018).

Pan-Islamism: According to Dawud, Muslim people are in love and curiosity about the Ottoman-Turkish people, with a sincere expectation for the unification of the Islamic world (Davud, 1910g). The aim of the writer to create such a discourse that has no counterpart on the world stage is to increase the importance of the Ottoman Empire in the world and to show that Islamism should be a defining perspective in the Empire. In this way he implies that the Ottoman Empire, which had a largely Muslim population especially after the Balkan Wars, should be governed within the framework of Islamism. The Balkan wars are in an important position at this point, because after this war, a great demographic change occurred as a result of the Empire losing most of its territory in Europe. Interestingly, although many non-Muslims, especially Armenian and Greek, lived in the Empire even during this period, Dawud does not mention them and claims that if all Islamic countries were united, the European colonial countries could not stand against them.

Another thought in the Ottoman Empire, in which Dawud was involved, was that Far Eastern countries such as Japan would enter Islam in the very near future (Davud, 1999: 82). During this period, interest in Far East Asia was at a high level in the Ottoman Empire. In particular, the heavy defeat of Russia by the Japanese in 1905 was an important factor in this, after this period, both in the Ottoman Empire and in the Caucasus, there was an interest in Japan. For example, Abdurreshid Ibrahim visited Asian countries, including Japan, and said that if the mission activities were well done, the people of the region would soon become Muslims (Abdürreşid İbrahim, 2003). According to these Islamic oriented people, if rapidly developing countries like Japan became Muslim, Islam could be more effective in fighting Western Christian states. I think they are aware that they are not able to fight against Christian countries economically, socially, and militarily, and they believe that Islam will be more vigorous if non-Muslim but powerful states become Muslims (Akiba, 2015). Just like these writers, Dawud expects that the people of Japan and Britain will soon become Muslims. For this reason, Dawud claims that they should produce Islamist policies both in the Empire and abroad instead of the rapidly spreading nationalist movements within Islamic countries.

Abdülhamid's Dethronement and the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP): Although the emphasis on the caliphate and Islamic Union occupied an important place in the author's works (Davud, 1909a; 1909b; 1910k), the situation of the world was undoubtedly a too far way to mention the Islamic Union. The caliphate was essentially an extravagant institution that had been inflated for years to ensure the reputation and security of the Empire and eventually disappeared into the darkness of history (Karpata, 2019). Even the author often criticizes Ottoman foreign policies, he finds the Ottoman government's efforts in this regard insufficient and states that Ottoman rulers must come up with policies to protect the Muslim people living in a wide area from Sumatra to Morocco, otherwise the Muslim Ottoman people will ask the rulers to account for this to protect their religious brothers (Davud, 1910l).

Although Dawud is a caliphate supporter, he does not mention Caliphate Abdulhamid positively in his writings. Dawud commemorates Abdülhamid II with abuse and corruption and expresses his satisfaction about the dethronement Abdülhamid II (Davud, 1910n). The sections in which the author explains his views on the Abdulhamid II, constitutionalism, and the CUP are in parallel with each other. He often expresses his positive ideas about the CUP and did not doubt that the CUP would move the Ottoman Empire further. The importance of Dawud's support for the CUP is that there was discontent within the Islamic ulema towards the CUP during this period (Bein, 2009). In this way, Dawud softens the discontent towards these people within the religious community and provides them with legitimacy. He reminds the Union and Progress administrators that the general policy of the Empire would be the Islamic union, including the peoples of Iran, Afghanistan, and Turani, under the leadership of the Ottoman Empire (Davud, 1910n).

The Islamic World from an Educational Perspective: Another important feature of Dawud's books and newspaper articles is his thoughts on the sciences and scientific methodology. Dawud frequently

expresses the importance of science and complains that ignorance of sciences in the Islamic world has badly affected society and their state. Dawud lists the examples of the importance given to science and philosophy of the Islamic world in the eighth and eleven centuries and states that after this period, there was not enough attention given to the sciences within the Islamic world. He says without hesitation that if Muslim people continue in this way, they will deserve to be exploited under the rule of the Western powers. Dawud threatens the Ottoman reader with imperialism. According to him, there is a direct relationship between the science and development in a society. States and societies develop if the importance of the sciences is well understood. Otherwise, in his opinion, they will be exploited by European countries in the coming years.

The author does not doubt that the sciences in the Islamic world should return to their glorious days as they did in the period between the ninth and eleventh centuries. But as he states in many newspaper articles, Dawud is against the positivist understanding of science. According to Dawud, the scientific method should not be taken directly from Europe, because that only means being subjected to the mental hegemony of the West. At this point, Dawud gives us an explanation about the need to look at the sciences through "our spirituality" (Davud, 1909c). But the author doesn't give any explanation of how we should focus on the sciences with "our spirituality". The reason why Dawud devotes an important place to this subject in his works is undoubtedly that positivist thought, which was widely accepted in European countries especially after the nineteenth century, began to be accepted in the Ottoman Empire as well (Doğan, 2003). Dawud, who lived in the same period as the people living in Ottoman society such as Huseyin Cahit and Abdullah Cevdet who dreamed of a more secular state, must have probably tried to emphasize that Islam is still valid and social structure and the universe can be explained by the religion of Islam (Demir, 2004, pp. 326-340). According to his claim, a new method can be developed in sciences with the help of Islamic understanding and tradition. But the fact that he does not provide any explanation for this view makes his claims baseless and romantic.

I have shown Dawud's thoughts on positivism in the previous paragraph. Although Dawud has negative views on positivism, he makes some explanations about biological evolution in some parts of his works. In these chapters, Dawud's views on evolution are not clear, as a Muslim writer he does not explain whether evolution exists or not. But his views on social evolution are clear: if a civilization wants to survive, it must struggle and give due importance to the sciences. Moreover, in his book titled *İncil ve Salib*, Dawud explains that religion also went through an evolutionary process. According to Dawud, religions such as Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, and Confucianism also contain parts of religious truth, but they are at an early stage of religious development. Judaism and Christianity, which constitute the second stage, lost their validity with the advent of Islam (Davud, 1999, p. 80). Although the idea of religious development I have quoted so far bears similarities in the Islamic tradition, I think it was greatly influenced by the nineteenth century evolutionary thought. Dawud tries to convey his account here with nationalism and shows similarities between the development of nationalism and the development of religion. Dawud's thoughts on evolution remain even more meaningful, especially within the positivist and Darwinist ideas of the Committee of Union and Progress, in which he belongs and sees its protection.

British Empire and Imperialism: Dawud's praiseworthy remarks about Britain and British politics may surprise the reader, considering the anti-Ottoman British political line of the period. Dawud often honors the British in his writings as intelligent, close to liberty and a constitutional monarchy, presents them as the guardians of universal rights, frequently repeats his confidence in the British state (Davud, 1910k; 1910l). Dawud presents British people as the guardians of universal rights, defender of universal human rights and frequently repeats his confidence in the British state. As the world's largest imperial power, Britain is in an important position to shape the author's views on imperialism. Imperialism in the Dawud's writings is an approvable development if it is to be a springboard for the coming of constitutional monarchy. Dawud's support of imperialism is the best observed in his approach to the events that took place after the constitutional monarchy in Iran (Davud, 1910g; 1910h; 1910i; 1910j; 1910k). After making lengthy statements about what happened during the proclamation of constitutionalism in Iran, he respectfully commemorates Britain's interventions in favor of constitutional rule. Dawud asserts that imperialism can be applied in such situations, citing the fact that the administration and religious circles, who were uncomfortable with the proclamation of constitutional rule in Iran, have stepped back as a result of

Britain's intervention. In this way, he finds imperialism right for big states to pressure other states on certain issues (Davud, 1910h).

The Jews and the Status of Jerusalem: Jews' settlements in the Jerusalem is the most difficult issue for Dawud to interpret. Because Dawud's views on the subject are uncertain. The reason for this maybe that the region was considered sacred by Muslims and was a part of the Ottoman Empire. For this reason, Dawud expresses his views as clearly as possible in some places, while in some places uses an uncertain language on the subject. What he tries to do here is a policy to win both segments, Ottoman Empire and Jewish people. As I mentioned earlier, Dawud wrote many articles in various parts of the world over many years. Although some of his views have changed in different years, the issue that Jews should return to their homeland does not change in his writings. Ignoring Jerusalem to be sacred to Muslim people, he affirms the abandonment of this region to the Jews. But there is also uncertainty in his writings on this issue (Davud, 1999, pp. 157-162).

Although Dawud states in some of his writings that Jews should be freed from the persecution of Christians and returned to their homeland without going into detail, in some of his writings he also puts some conditions on this issue. He says that a Jewish state can be established under the protection of the Ottoman Empire if they remain loyal to the Caliph, read the adhan five times a day, and accept the Koran. They may continue to accept the Old Testament as their sacred book or celebrate the Sabbath for religious purposes in this situation. The question we have to ask here is it possible to interpret Islam based on the syncretism of the two religions? According to Dawud, only this way, after the two thousand years of exile, the entire Palestinian region will become a homeland again for Jewish people. This solution is the only way out for Jews, because Christians are their greatest enemies, and staying with them may result in their mass destruction in the future (Davud, 1920). Interestingly, although these views vary at a certain rate, they are similar to the solution proposed by the CUP to the Jews during the First World War (Dündar, 2019, p. 395).

Conclusions

Polemical texts written against different religions are common form of Islamic literature from the very beginning. These texts are appropriate type of literature in terms of showing the new entrant's sincerity towards this religion, and therefore kept up to date during the Ottoman Empire. In this article, I studied the anti-Christian works of Dawud, who converted to Islam in the last years of the Empire, and tried to question his agenda in writing these texts. In my article, I tried to show the aspects in which Dawud is similar to and differs from the Islamic polemical literature that prioritized him. At the same time, I tried to explain the perspectives of a converted Muslim to the problems of the Empire by examining the author's newspaper articles. I will also suggest some conclusions about the importance and position of these texts. As far as I can observe, Dawud's purpose in writing these anti-Christian polemical works was based on political reasons rather than religious. Through these articles, Dawud tried to establish the religious legitimacy of the CUP movement in which he was involved, and at the same time, he tried to create a positive picture for the future of the Muslim Ottoman people who had a hard time in every respect.

Tijana Krstic claims that during the Ottoman period, converted Muslims found themselves forced to justify their religious preferences (Krstic, 2015, pp. 82-116). Krstic states that the anti-Christian polemical authors, who largely followed the general polemical literature, applied some basic motifs belonging to the Ottoman and Turkish world to these texts. They chose a way to romanticize some of his works to make their perception even stronger by interfering with these contents.

Dawud is fundamentally in great agreement with the polemical literature in the fact that these works reached a classical form approximately after the eleventh century. Tabari, who was the first converted Muslim writing the anti-Christian refutation, seems to have played a special role in this systematization. Although Tabari was not personally cited by the later polemic authors, he was the one who provided the main source of the refutation literature in a contextual sense. Ibn Hazm also has a special place in reaching the basic final form of this manuscript with his work *al-Fasl*. Thus, in a sense, in the tradition of Islamic polemical literature as of the twelfth century we now have a type of text in which certain subjects are constantly repeated and a standard narrative prevails (Hackenburg, 2015, p. 273). After this period, when the formation of Islamic culture and civilization was completed, the polemic writers and, among

them, Dawud went to copy these books to match their own lives and experiences and conveyed them to their readers with a different interpretation.

In this case, why did Dawud feel the need to write this book, even though he brought little innovation? As I mentioned above, the way the author handles his polemics reminds us of its predecessors in many ways. So why was it necessary for this book to be written and published, and why did material opportunities be provided for it? Why were the books of Ibn Hazm, Ibrahim Müteferrika and other polemic authors, whom the Ottoman reader knows much, not reprinted, but the books of Abdülehad Dawud, whom the Ottoman reader never knew, were written down and published?

To answer these questions, I think we need to explain the political conjuncture in which these books and newspaper articles were written. We will need to question the dethronement of Abdülhamid II and take-over of the Union and Progress Party, what the caliphate meant at the beginning of the twentieth century and the status of Jerusalem, missionary activities, the World War I. All these problems affecting the world history and, more importantly, the Ottoman Empire locally, have found a place in the books and newspaper articles of Dawud.

As I have seen in studying these works, the main factor in the writing of the polemic books is not only that people who believe in any religion demonstrate the superiority of their religion over a different religion. Most importantly, I don't think any polemic writer thought that because of these books they wrote, there would be a great wave of conversion to their religion. As I have seen in the example of Dawud, these works were written by their writers in Arabic, Ottoman, Persian, or languages used by Muslim peoples for their Muslim readers. If they wanted different people to become Muslims, they would write them in Western languages. Other polemical authors also wrote polemics during a time when their society was undergoing great change and transformation. Although social and political issues had no direct or indirect relationship with the polemic literature, polemic writers commented on the social or political problems of the states they were in and offered possible solutions to their societies. In a sense, what Dawud did in his writings is similar.

First, the question we have to ask is why Dawud wrote his works not in the period following his conversion in 1904, but almost four years later, just after the Union and Progress Party took over the administration. The timing of Dawud's writing is therefore very important in terms of this social and political situation. First of all, Dawud became a Muslim at a time when both the Ottoman Empire and the Islamic world were experiencing a political and social depression. Although Dawud converted to Islam during the reign of Abdülhamid, all the books and newspaper articles he wrote took place in the period following Abdülhamid's departure from the throne. And while Abdülhamid was taken negatively in these articles, The Committee Union and Progress, which took over the new administration, were treated positively in the books and journal articles of Abdülehad Dawud. The author's book *İncil ve Salib* was carried out under the patronage of Sayyid Abdulkadir Efendi, a member of the Committee of Union and Progress.

In this way, Dawud gains the possibility of providing the legitimacy of the CUP, which he took the advantage of their patronage. Therefore, the CUP which has a very low popularity especially between the ulema and the religious community, has the opportunity to defend and promote itself in this way, through a religious book. Through this book he wrote against the Christian religion, Dawud gets the opportunity to explain that Abdülhamid was not a proper administrator, that he was not inclined to the problems of the Islamic Ummah; and that the Committee of Union and Progress took over the administration was a completely justified development. Moreover, he shows that the Committee of Union and Progress is composed of people who work not only for the Ottoman Empire but also for the whole of the Islamic world, producing solutions to problems.

Secondly, the struggle between the Islamic world and the Christian-West, which has continued for centuries, but has increased sharply in the nineteenth century -especially, Balkan wars that have just taken place and left bitter memories in Muslim memory results in a discourse that encourages the Islamic world to be in unity against Christianity in the writings of Dawud. During this period, when the Islamic world as a whole was under the colonial rule of the Western powers, mass massacres of Muslims and Christians took place in Anatolia and the Balkan geography, and the ethnic composition of the region underwent an intense change (Kévorkian, 2015; McCarthy, 1995). At a time when violence was becoming so commonplace, it is evident that the content of the author's works was presented in the form of religious wars between Christian and Muslim people. In the writings of Dawud, there is no distinction

between Christian and Western states, and Christianity itself is shown as the root cause of all the suffering and brutality that took place during both the Balkan wars and the First World War. I believe that Dawud aimed to show his reader the meaninglessness of the Ottomanism (an ideal thought assuming that all religious and ethnic groups can live together under the Ottoman identity) policy, which has been tried to be implemented in the Ottoman Empire for centuries and that the Empire should develop new policies for its Muslim subjects. As a result of the Balkan Wars, the majority of the Christian population of the Empire was now citizens of the new nation states and the Ottoman Empire was shaped towards a Muslim population consisting mostly of Turks, Arabs and Kurds. For Dawud, the policy of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) in the new era is to make a common policy with the Islamic peoples, such as Iran, Indonesia and other Islamic countries.

Thirdly, utilizing this anti-Christian polemic book, Dawud has the opportunity to explain all the social and political problems in the society he joined with his new religion. As we have seen, Dawud informs the Ottoman reader about the missionary activities and warns the state and society that they should be more aware of these groups. Not only these things, he criticizes the educational systems in Islamic societies and shares with them his ideas about how this education system should be. For this reason, although Dawud explained his purpose in writing his refutations as showing the extent to which Christianity had been falsified; he is declaring his own political, ideological perspective throughout his works.

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