

## Said Nursi's Understanding of Islam and Iman: An Analysis of the Risale-i Nur

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### Abstract

*Muhammad (sm) is our ideal model (Ushwae Hasanah). As a true follower of Allah and His Messenger, Bediuzzaman Said Nursi (1876-1960) was an Islamic scholar, leader, philosopher, and great religious teacher in Turkey. Said Nursi, as a well-known scholar in the modern age, lived through an unstable period, witnessing the collapse of the Ottoman Empire after two world wars and the challenges imposed by European modernity on traditional Muslim societies and Islam. Nursi chose a unique theological method by renewing faith in people through Risale-i Nur. In this paper, I would like to present a critical evaluation of Nursi's writings about Allah and his contributions to the Islamic understanding of tawhīd as the central doctrine of Islam. The author believes that the concepts of 'faith-based education' and 'faith-based integration' are very significant for the Muslim world. This paper is a conceptual study mainly based on Nursi's magnum opus, 'Risale Nur', as well as books and studies on him. Nursi's concern with knowledge based on belief in Allah and knowledge produced from belief in Him is very admirable. This interrelationship between knowledge, love, and belief forms the basis of Nursi's view of education. For this reason, Said Nursi was given the famous title 'Bediuzzaman' by the people.*

**Keywords:** Said Nursi, Iman, Islam, Model, Risale-i Nur

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### 1.0 Introduction

Said Bediuzzaman was the great Mujaddid of the 20th century. He was an authority in all of the Islamic disciplines of knowledge. He also led

an active, brave life, enduring hardship, and was determined to make Islam a way of life for himself and everybody, based on zuhd and taqwa. Reason is tied to faith and vice versa. Reason provides the path through which faith is analyzed. Both reason and faith also provide the foundation for the practice of Islam. So, theology is a rational attempt to understand everything about God from within a faith tradition and its scriptures and in response to problems posed by the conditions of a particular time and place. Islamic theology, in particular, has been a reactive discipline. Bediuzzaman Said Nursi (1876-1960), as a prominent scholar in the modern era, lived through a turbulent period, witnessing the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the emergence of secular nation-states for the

first time in Muslim history, two world wars, and the challenges imposed by European modernity on traditional Muslim societies and Islam. Unlike other revivalist leaders, in dealing with the difficult circumstances and the social and political restrictions around him, Nursi took a theological revival method through which he attempted to revive Islam by renewing faith in people through his *Risale-i Nur*. By loading so much significance and so many revivalist objectives onto theology, Nursi formed an original and fresh expression of Islamic theology based on the Qur'an and Sunnah.

## **2.0 Literature Review**

Scholarly studies on Bediuzzaman Said Nursi have generally focused on his intellectual biography, theological contributions, interpretation of the Qur'an, educational philosophy, ethical thought, and response to modernity. These studies demonstrate that Nursi occupies an important position in modern Islamic thought because he attempted to strengthen Islamic faith through rational, spiritual, and Qur'anic arguments during a period of intense political and intellectual transformation in Turkey.

Vahide (2005) provides a detailed intellectual biography of Said Nursi and explains the historical circumstances that shaped his life and thought. Her study discusses Nursi's early education, intellectual development, political experiences, periods of exile and imprisonment, and the gradual formation of the *Risale-i Nur* movement. The work is particularly important for understanding how the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the emergence of the secular Turkish Republic, and the restrictions imposed on religious education influenced Nursi's theological and educational mission. However, Vahide's work is mainly biographical and historical in its orientation.

Aslan (2006) presents Said Nursi as one of the influential Muslim thinkers of modern Turkey. His discussion highlights Nursi's intellectual importance and his contribution to the social and religious development of Turkish Islam. Aslan's work helps establish Nursi's place within the broader history of Islamic philosophy and modern Muslim scholarship. Nevertheless, the discussion remains brief and does not extensively examine the relationship between Nursi's understanding of Islam, iman, education, ethics, and spiritual reform.

Mardin (1989) examines Said Nursi within the context of religion and social change in modern Turkey. He emphasizes the social significance of Nursi's movement and the role of the *Risale-i Nur* in preserving religious consciousness under a strongly secular political system. Mardin also draws attention to Nursi's concern with the moral and spiritual damage caused by materialism. His study is particularly valuable for understanding Nursi's influence on collective religious

identity and social transformation. However, its main concern is sociological rather than a detailed theological analysis of Nursi's conception of faith.

Yıldırım (2009) discusses the position of the Risale-i Nur within Qur'anic interpretation. He shows that the Risale-i Nur differs from a conventional verse-by-verse commentary because it concentrates on the fundamental truths of faith and responds to the intellectual problems of the modern age. This approach explains why Nursi frequently addressed questions concerning tawhīd, prophethood, resurrection, Divine wisdom, morality, and the relationship between revelation and reason. Yıldırım's study therefore contributes to understanding the interpretative character of the Risale-i Nur, although it does not present Nursi primarily as a comprehensive model of Islamic belief and practice.

Nadwi (1979) discusses the challenges posed by Western civilization to Muslim societies and identifies different Muslim intellectual responses to modernity. His analysis provides a useful framework for understanding Nursi's moderate position. Nursi neither rejected modern science completely nor accepted Western civilization without criticism. Instead, he distinguished beneficial scientific knowledge from materialistic and irreligious philosophies. This distinction became central to his educational thought, particularly his proposal to combine religious sciences with modern scientific knowledge.

Nursi's own writings constitute the primary foundation of scholarship on his thought. In *The Words, The Letters, The Flashes, The Rays, Muhakemat, and Tarihce-i Hayat*, he discusses the relationship between faith, submission, reason, science, patience, ethics, education, and social responsibility. His writings repeatedly emphasize that genuine iman should not remain a theoretical conviction but should influence worship, conduct, moral character, and social life. The Risale-i Nur also attempts to answer doubts generated by materialism, positivism, secularism, and philosophical skepticism through Qur'anic reasoning and spiritual reflection.

Existing scholarship has therefore examined important individual dimensions of Nursi's life and thought. Biographical studies have explained his personal and historical development, sociological studies have investigated his role in religious and social change, and theological studies have explored the Qur'anic and faith-based character of the Risale-i Nur. However, comparatively limited attention has been given to an integrated examination of Said Nursi as a model who combines Islam as submission and practice with iman as conviction and spiritual certainty. The present study addresses this gap by examining Nursi's understanding of faith, reason, science, patience, education, ethics, social reform, and adherence to Allah and His Messenger. In doing so, it evaluates how his life and writings may provide a model of Islam and Iman for contemporary Muslim society.

### **3.0 Who Was Said Nursi?**

Said Nursi was also a great modern Muslim scholar of the twentieth century. He may be considered the most influential scholar in the social and intellectual development of Islam in modern Turkey (Adnan Aslan, 2006). Said Nursi was born in Nurs (from which his surname was derived), a Turkish village in the Bitlis province of the Ottoman Empire in eastern Anatolia, in 1878 (Vahide, Sükran, 2005). Said Nursi was an Islamic scholar, leader, and founder of a religious movement in Turkey. He studied under the tutorship of distinguished contemporary scholars in the surrounding areas in the absence of formal institutional education. For his brilliance, intelligence, and performance in knowledge, he was well known by the title “Bediuzzaman,” which means “the wonder of the time.” We can realize his thirst for knowledge when he was invited by the governor of Van to his residence to gain scientific knowledge from his library. Therefore, he proposed opening a model university combining scientific and religious education to help reduce backwardness in the eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire. His religious inclination, however, was enough to justify the regime’s edict to exile him to the remote area of Barla, Isparta, in the early 1920s (Vahide, Sükran, 2005). However, that only gave the people in the area an opportunity to learn more about Islam and gave him an opportunity to expand his religious writings and teachings. At one time, Said Nursi was sent to a mental institution because he was assumed to be a ‘mad’ man, as he was speaking beyond the capacity of local officials to understand. However, according to the psychiatrist who interviewed him, “If this man is mad, then there is no sound man in this world.”

#### **3.1 Historical Background of Risale-i Nur**

Risale-i Nur is mainly a commentary that expounds the meanings of the Holy Qur’an and the doctrine of faith. He attempted to strengthen belief against the unceasing attacks of positivistic and materialistic science by reconstructing Islam from its foundation of belief (Bediüzzaman Said Nursi, 2007). It contains no political or sectarian motives, although Bediuzzaman Said Nursi was charged several times by the authorities. However, the appeal of the Islamic message to the intellect of readers was enough to unsettle the nerves of the authorities, whose secular outlook took an indirect bashing.

Risale-i Nur was compiled during Said Nursi’s eight years of exile in Barla, Isparta, beginning in 1926. In spite of the suppression of all religious articles by the government, Said Nursi’s supporters were capable of devising an extraordinary method of sharing through networking among his students. Somehow, it led to his arrest along with 120 students, who were charged with founding a secret organization to cause the collapse of the regime. However,

even in prison, production of the treatises never ceased, and side by side, the treatises were distributed more effectively. Wherever he was exiled or imprisoned, there were always capable people who would join him, and communication with others in distant places continued (Suat Yıldırım, January 2009).

The Risale-i Nur treatises are composed of four main books, which are (1) The Words, (2) The Letters, (3) The Flashes, and (4) The Rays. These four books together contain 130 chapters on different themes, which are called Risalas (treatises or letters). Some of these treatises are only 2 or 3 pages long; others contain 80-90 pages. Risale-i Nur is also called ‘bedi’ (an object formed without a sample and model) because of its unique and original style, which does not resemble any previous Islamic books. In Nursi's own opinion, it is a spiritual electricity, neither a light borrowed from the disciplines of knowledge of the East nor a product transferred from the philosophy and science of the West. Maybe we could say that it has been taken from the lofty, highest heaven of the celestial Qur’an, which is superior to both East and West (Sikka-I Tasdik-I Ghaybi, First Ray). The enemies of Islam applied all techniques to curtail the Islamic works of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, but every other way always worked toward the spread of Risale-i Nur through Divine Guidance. Throughout his teenage years, Said Nursi never enjoyed even a decade of absolute freedom, through no fault of his except that of promoting and expounding the message of the Qur’an. Several times, he was poisoned, but by Allah’s love, he always managed to survive.

### **3.2 Real Situation of Islam in Turkey at the Time of Nursi**

When the Ottoman Caliphate came crashing down with the advent of the anti-Islamic, militantly secular republic, the traditional spiritual and cultural symbols of religion that had so deeply permeated Ottoman public life were replaced by symbols of European civilization. In 1926, the sacred that had held sway in Ottoman lands for six hundred years was replaced by the Swiss civil code and the Italian penal code. Traditional religious clothing and the turban were banned, and martyrs such as the traditional scholar Isklipli Atif Hoca were killed for their refusal to abide by the new laws. The tekkes and institutional Sufism were banned, and the medrese colleges were closed and replaced by forms of education imported from the West, based on positivist and scientific methodologies. The Western calendar was adopted, as were Western-style surnames; the Islamic holiday of Friday was replaced by Sunday; and the Qur’anic Arabic script in which Ottoman Turkish had been written was replaced by the Latin script. Arabic and Persian roots were, as far as possible, extracted from Turkish and replaced by invented pure Turkish words. Not content with effecting these radical and traumatic changes, champions of the new anti-

religious secularism would regularly enter schools in order to indoctrinate schoolchildren with their atheistic propaganda (From the preface of the translation of *Risale-i Nur*).

### **3.3 Differences Between Islam and Iman (Belief) According to Nursi**

Most of the scholars in Said Nursi's time said that Islam and faith are the same, while others said that they are not the same but that one cannot have one without the other (Nursi, Letters, 2010). However, Imam Nursi tried to clarify the differences between Islam and faith when he said that Islam is a preference, while belief is a conviction. To put it another way, Islam is submission, and faith is acceptance of or assent to the truth (Nursi, Letters, 2010). Nursi gave some examples to fortify his arguments by saying that long ago, he saw certain irreligious people who ardently supported the injunctions of the Qur'an. That was to say, by taking the side of truth, such people were, in one respect, Muslim and were called "irreligious Muslims." He warned certain believers who did not evince support for the injunctions of the Qur'an or take their side, and they earned the epithet "non-Muslim believers" (Nursi, Letters, 2010). However, the question here is: can belief without Islam be a means of salvation? In answering this question, Nursi affirms that neither can Islam without belief be a means of salvation, nor can belief without Islam be a means. Using his method of analyzing questions of faith, he solves mysteries of religion throughout the Qur'an. *Risale-i Nur* has shown the fruits of the religion of Islam and the results of the Qur'anic truths in such a way that even if someone without religion does not understand them, he cannot be unsympathetic toward them, and it has demonstrated proofs of belief and Islam in such a powerful fashion that if even a non-Muslim understands them, surely he will agree with them.<sup>25</sup> Yes, *The Words* shows that the fruits of belief and Islam are as delectable as the fruits of the Tuba tree of Paradise and that their results are as agreeable as the pleasures of happiness in this world and the next. If the whole world were given to him, he would not sacrifice a single truth of belief. It causes him extreme distress to imagine the reverse of a single truth, even for a minute. Were the whole world given to him, his soul would renounce it without hesitation for the existence of a single truth of belief. He felt an infinite strength of belief when he said, "We believe in what you have sent through the Prophet, and we believe in what you have revealed through the Book, and we assent to it. I consider the opposite of any of the truths of belief to be rationally impossible, and I look at the people of misguidance as infinitely foolish and crazy."

### **3.4 Sources of Faith**

According to Nursi, faith is not created only through knowledge, but the subtle faculties also have their share of it. When food enters the stomach, it is

disseminated in various ways to various parts of the body. Similarly, after matters of faith that come through knowledge are absorbed by the spirit, heart, inner heart, soul, and other subtle faculties, each receives its share according to its degree. If they do not receive their share, faith is incomplete (Maududi, Towards Understanding Islam). Nursi explains that the main reason for this is that, to convince civilized people, persuasion is the only thing required, not compulsion.

### 3.5 Interrelation of Islam, Reason and Science

Looking at the connection between Islam and true scientific advancement, one can hardly see any contradiction because the former is for positive development and prosperity. In this respect, Nursi shows that Islam is the house and guide of knowledge and the father of all true sciences (Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, Muhakemat). Here, true reason is meant for the development of man and not for his destruction. It therefore gives hope and human happiness. In this light, Nursi once requested that the Turkish people and all Muslims never lose their hope in life.

*“And you are making a grievous error if you suppose, in despair and hopelessness, that the world is the world of progress for everyone and the Europeans, but the world of decline is only for the unhappy people of Islam” (Tarihce-I Hayat).*

According to Nursi, Muslims should be optimistic, considering the changes that happen progressively in human history, because time does not run in a straight line but moves in a circle, like the motion of the earth, which comes with different seasons such as spring and winter. So, we should remember that every winter is followed by spring and every night by morning; mankind shall also have a morning and spring. Allah (swt) said:

﴿وَتِلْكَ الْأَيَّامُ نُدَاوِلُهَا بَيْنَ النَّاسِ﴾

*“The days (good and not so good) We give to men by turns” (Al-Qur’an, Al-Imran, 140).*

### 3.6 Classification of Believers

According to the Islamic point of view, people are classified into groups (Maududi, Towards Understanding Islam). The first group comprises people who have firm faith that makes them submit wholeheartedly to Allah. They follow the way of Allah and dedicate their lives to seeking His pleasure by doing all that He likes and avoiding all that He dislikes. They are more concerned with their devotion than with seeking wealth and glory. Absolutely, they are the true Muslims. The second group comprises those who have faith in Allah, His law, and the Day of Resurrection, but whose faith is not deep and strong enough to make them submit to Allah fully. They are therefore below the rank of true

Muslims. The next group comprises those who do not possess faith at all. These people are rebels who have refused to acknowledge the sovereignty of Allah over everything.

### 3.7 Significance of Reason and Proof in Islam

In Risale-i Nur, Nursi stated that he knew from experience that man always seeks renewal and that Islam allows it, as it is founded on reality and proof, which are in conformity with reason and wisdom (Nursi, Muhakemat, 1977). Nursi affirms that Muslims deem everything through reason and thought by saying:

*We are Muslims who are students of the Qur'an, following the proof. We approach the truth of belief through reason ... And we do not abandon proof for blind imitation of the clergy, like some followers of other religions. Thus, in the future, when reason, science, and technology prevail, the Qur'an will surely rule (Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, Tarichce-I Hayati, 1960).*

Nursi was aware of the importance of reason, especially the value of science in human activities, not only in the present but also in the future. This can be noticed when he says:

*For sure, at the end of time, mankind will pour into science and technology; it will obtain all its power from science. Power and dominion will pass into the hands of science (Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, Sozler).*

Therefore, Nursi gave special value to reason and science, considering that, in the future, truth and not force, proof instead of sophistry, and reason instead of nature will be the focus (Nursi, Bediuzzaman Said, Muhakemat). He also predicted that, no doubt, there would be positive changes in the world (Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, Tarihce-I Hayat).

### 3.8 Patience as a Pillar of Faith

*In interpreting the verse, ﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ﴾, “Allah is with those who patiently persevere” (Al-Qur'an, Al-Baqara: 194).*

Nursi said that Almighty Allah's grace and favour are with the patient and that the question of patience is threefold:

The first is to patiently persevere in abstaining from sinful activities. This patience is *taqwa* and manifests the meaning of the verse,

*﴿وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الْمُتَّقِينَ﴾*

*“Fear Allah and know that Allah is with those who restrain themselves” (Al-Qur'an, Al-Baqara: 194).*

The second is patience in the face of disaster. This is to place one's trust in Allah and to present oneself to Him. It is to be honoured by the manifestation of the verses:

﴿وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الصَّابِرِينَ﴾

*“Allah loves those who are firm and steadfast” (Al-Quran, Al-Imran, 146).*

﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَوَكِّلِينَ﴾

*“Allah loves those who put their trust in Him” (Al-Quran, Al-Imran, 159).*

Impatience amounts to complaining about Allah and criticizing His actions, accusing His mercy, and doubting His wisdom. For sure, man is weak and powerless and weeps complainingly at the blows of misfortune, but his complaint must be to Him, not about Him. It should resemble Yaqub's (peace be upon him) words:

﴿قَالَ إِنَّمَا أَشْكُو بَثِّي وَخُزْنِي إِلَى اللَّهِ وَأَعْلَمُ مِنَ اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ﴾

*He said: I only complain of my distraction and anguish to Allah (Al-Quran, Sura Yusuf, 12:86).*

That is to say, he should complain to Allah, not lament, saying, “What have I done that this should have happened to me?” as though complaining to other human beings about Allah (Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, Letters, 2010).

The third type of patience is persistence in worship, which raises a person to the station of being beloved by Allah. It urges him toward faultless worship of Allah and servitude to Him, which is the most devoted station. According to Nursi, it is important to understand this world and man's spirit within the world, the nature and value of religion within man, how the world is a prison if there is no true religion, and how, without religion, man becomes the most miserable of creatures.

### 3.9 Educational Concept of Said Nursi

In modern times, Muslim thinkers were, and still are, engaged in presenting their views on the issues of modern science and its compatibility with religion. Here, we get three types of significant methods and approaches.

The first one is that of rejection of and opposition to Western civilization in toto and the complete refusal to enquire into the positive and negative aspects of this powerful civilization.

The second approach is a neutral one, which neither supports nor opposes the above civilization.

The third method is the moderate one, in which one delves deeply, enquires, and fully explores the foundations of this civilization (Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, 1979).

The first two approaches are by far negative in every sense, as they can only lead the Muslim world toward further backwardness and remoteness. So, what is needed is to implement the third approach to have far-reaching consequences and to solve the problems that the Muslim world is currently experiencing.

In the 20th century, repeated attacks came upon the foundations of faith from materialists in the name of science and advancement in Turkey. Nursi responded to these attacks by devoting all his hard work to saving and strengthening belief, which he viewed as the most important matter for a better humanity. He clearly declares that there is no enmity between science and faith, but that they are allies. "What makes a human being human," claims Nursi, "is indeed faith." As he firmly states, the happiness of humanity in this world and the next world depends on their faith: "Faith necessitates affirmation of Divine harmony, which in turn necessitates complete submission to God alone, which in turn necessitates dependence on God, which in turn necessarily leads to happiness in this world and the hereafter" (The Words, 23, pp. 322-323).

- i. Risale-i Nur is a work of tafsir, but not a usual tafsir. Actually, tafsir is a discovery, declaration, and manifestation of the secret meanings of the Qur'an. Said Nursi did not start his work with Surah al-Fateha and end with Surah an-Nas. Imam Bediuzzaman first solved the current problems through the interpretation of the Qur'an.
- ii. Education based on faith was the central point of Nursi's philosophy. He believed that the conscience is illuminated by the religious sciences, the mind is illuminated by the science of civilization, and wisdom arises from the combination of these two. He clearly declares that there is no enmity between science and faith, but that they are allies.
- iii. Said Nursi included people of all ages, from seven to seventy, in his teaching mission.
- iv. Said Nursi established '*Madrasatu'z Zehra*' for the reconciliation of religious sciences and secular knowledge.
- v. In Risale-i Nur, Imam Nursi demonstrated all the truths of belief by means of powerful proofs, using logical proofs and reasoned arguments and frequently comparing Qur'anic teachings and civilization with those of philosophy. He specifically answered the questions and doubts raised by philosophy and the skepticism it causes.

- vi. Said Nursi established '*Madrasatu'z Zahra*' for the reconciliation of religious sciences and secular knowledge.
- vii. Said Nursi suggested that, for the social change of the Muslim Ummah, a methodology should be adopted as a possible model for such an environment where the political system may have been obstructed due to internal or external factors.
- viii. Bediuzzaman formed a devoted group of students because, while he lived in Kastamonu for seven years, he continuously wrote and distributed Risale-i Nur. He and his students were deprived of almost all kinds of freedom; therefore, they formed their own postal organization called the "Nur postmen." Through the "Nur postmen," 600,000 copies of the treatises were multiplied by hand.
- ix. Nursian concern with knowledge based on belief in God is very worthy of consideration. This interrelationship between knowledge, love, and belief forms the basis of the Nursian view of education.

### 3.10 Political Thought of Nursi

Paradoxically, Muslims all over the world are being labelled as "terrorists" and "aggressive," despite being the epitome of peace and non-violence. It is fair enough for Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) of India to deserve the international honorific title as a symbol of non-violence. However, in a not-too-distant place and time, there was a Muslim scholar named Said Nursi (1878-1960) who put up a non-violent struggle against an equally severe regime, if not one more severe than that faced by Gandhi. To his peers, Said Nursi was given the honorific title "Bediuzzaman," which means "the wonder of the time," for his cleverness and brilliance in mastering the religion of Islam, even at an early age. Exiled, jailed several times, and poisoned in solitary confinement under the country's secular regime, Said Nursi was intent only on peace advocacy, writing commentaries and translations of the Holy Qur'an, and teaching the youth to abide by the Divine message of peace and submission to the Supreme Being.

He also tried to organize his people to keep away from the un-Islamic influence of the secularist and communist regimes. For that, he was jailed several times. At one time, he was sentenced to be hanged by the commanding general of the Russian colonial forces of occupation for refusing to acknowledge the general's presence and authority. However, after performing his 'last prayer' as requested, the general begged his pardon and released him, acknowledging his saintly character.

In comparison, while Gandhi was facing only the British occupation government in his native India, Said Nursi had to face both the Russian colonial and local secularist regimes in his native land of Turkey. As a force aiming to

impose its alien culture upon the indigenous people, the British can be considered submissive compared with the Russian Communist and secularist regimes of that time. In recognition of Gandhi's legacy, the United Nations declared October 2, his birthday, as the "International Day of Non-Violence."

In the face of a series of attacks on his life and disposition by the authorities, Bediuzzaman Said Nursi never entertained any idea of taking revenge or forming an organization to cause the fall of the anti-Islamic government. His efforts were mainly toward the dissemination of the Qur'anic message so that people could become aware of their responsibilities to Allah (swt) under any circumstances. His strong faith in Allah, coupled with honesty, patience, and perseverance, won him not only the admiration of the masses among his compatriots but also many legal battles against his archenemy and challenger. However, even now, the United Nations does not recognize him because of his true Muslim personality.

### 3.11 Nursi, the Restorer (Mujaddid) of the 20th Century

Lexically, *tajdid* means 'restoration.' The word is used to mean fighting against corruption and degenerated ideas and behaviours and restoring an Islamic society in the light of authentic sources when departures from the Qur'an and Sunnah arise due to the emergence of sin, *bid'ah*, and irreligion within Islamic communities after the age of bliss. The word *Mujaddid* means renewer/restorer and is used to describe a knowledgeable person who is a sincere follower of the Qur'an and Sunnah, has a high degree of knowledge of Islamic disciplines, and revives the community by struggling against *bid'ah* and irreligion (The Letters, Altinbasakpub). In this regard, our Prophet (sm) said:

" (إن الله يبعث على رأس كل قرن من يجدد لهذه الأمة أمر دينها ) "

*"Allah (swt) sends a mujaddid who will restore His religion at the beginning of every one hundred years" (Sunan Abu Daud, Kitabul Malahim, Bab 1, H. no. 429).*

Allah (swt) sent a restorer (*Mujaddid*) in every century. Nursi states clearly that *Risale-i Nur* is a *Mujaddid* of the modern age. "Before the First World War, I saw in a true dream that I was at the bottom of the famous Mount Ararat. All of a sudden, that mountain blew up, and the mountain-like particles were spread all around the world. I was in shock, and I saw my mother beside me. I said, 'Don't be afraid, mother! This is absolutely the order of Allah.' In that situation, I clearly realized that an important person was ordering me in a commanding tone: 'Declare the miraculousness of the Qur'an.' I woke up and understood that there would be a huge explosion" (The Letters, Altinbasakpub).

In this regard, Imam Bediuzzaman was a person who proved to be a mujaddid of this age through his success in the battle against bid'ah and irreligion, which were spread by the materialistic West, affecting the Muslim community in the 20th century.

### 3.12 Said Nursi, the True Follower of Allah and His Messenger

At the end of the 19th century, Said Nursi faced some vital issues that had been brought by anti-Islamists to criticize Islam and Muslim laws, such as body covering (hijab), inheritance law, polygamy, Miraj, and the creation of evil and devils. The Imam silenced the enemies and defended Islam by providing satisfactory explanations of those questions. He also gave diplomatic answers about Sufism, politics, nationalism, materialism, capitalism, socialism, liberalism, secularism, Wahhabism, anti-madhabism, etc. In every aspect, he proved the superiority of Islamic civilization over Western civilization by comparing the differences between them. He was always striving to make Islam a way of life for himself and everybody, based on zuhud (asceticism) and taqwa (meticulousness for the pleasure of Allah), by leading an active and brave life in spite of continuing hardship. We can find him as a true follower of Allah, as he said:

*“I, as your true follower and poor brother, who is really nothing, can't claim that I am the person who will come and carry out the duty, since it is a thousand times beyond my capacity and I in no way deserve it. However, I suppose that I am a servant of that exceptional one and a rearguard of that great commander” (Barala Addendum).*

### 3.13 Determination of Iman in the Face of Obstinate Fate

When a Russian soldier asked him about the backwardness and disunity of the Islamic world, he replied, “I am astonished at your lack of understanding! Do you think it possible that this winter will continue? Every winter is followed by spring, and every night by day.”

The soldier further asked him why the Islamic world was all broken up and fragmented. Nursi replied:

*“They have gone to study. It is like this: India is an able son of Islam; it is studying in the high school of the British. Egypt is a clever son of Islam; it is taking lessons in the British school for civil servants. Caucasia and Turkistan are two valiant sons of Islam; they are training in the Russian war academy. And so on.”*

*“You see, after receiving the diplomas of the noble sons of Islam, each will lead a continent and, waving the banner of Islam, their just and mighty father, on the horizons of perfection, they will proclaim the mystery of pre-*

*eternal wisdom inherent in mankind in the view of pre-eternal divine determination and in the face of obstinate fate.”*

### 3.14 True Follower of Ethics

In his discussion, Nursi's greatest concern was materialism's “moral and spiritual damage” to both the individual and society. According to Mardin, “Of all the themes Said Nursi presented in Risale-i Nur, he was most adamant about the necessity of revitalizing Islamic ethics” (Mardin, S., 1989).

Man has lost his appetite for being one of the flock and has become selfish and egotistical. In the era of “...ism,” ideologies such as materialism, post-modernism, feminism, capitalism, communism, and individualism are widespread, but there is no society-ism or morality-ism. For this reason, he endeavoured to re-establish the moral charters of Islamic ethics in social life. Nursi set up, or more correctly, reinvented some of the values and limitations of Islamic teachings for collectivities to enlighten people and re-establish the old-time legacy of the good society, balancing man's worldly appetites with otherworldly morals and ethics. To control the dangerous appetites of man, he replaced the Holy Qur'an. As he put it, “The aims of the Qur'an are to provide a barrier against the appetites of man (Hevesat-i Nefsaniye), thus encouraging him to engage in higher pursuits, giving satisfaction to his higher aspirations, and directing him toward the achievement of human perfection.” To achieve the ultimate aim of creating the good society, Nursi produced some values and principles to reform society in the light of the Qur'an. Nursi thought, “This nation's heart disease is weakness in religion; it will regain its health through strengthening it” (The Sane Society, 1963).

### 4.0 Conclusion

Muslims today have much to learn from the legacy of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi: his humble beginning, his diligence and zeal for religious education, his peaceful approach to problems created by his detractors, and, above all, his love of God and Islam. In order to avoid trouble for himself and his followers with the authorities, he urged the people to keep themselves as far away as possible from un-Islamic influence and to adhere faithfully to the teachings of Islam as a religion and way of life. Wary of his influence upon the masses against secularism and wishing to get rid of him, the authorities always provoked him to break the law or to take some form of retaliation that would justify his annihilation or indefinite incarceration. However, imbued with Divine Guidance and the policy of non-violence and peaceful coexistence, Said Nursi always managed to evade all the diabolical traps laid out by his enemies. The Nursian model provides an alternative that meets the demands of modern times but does not neglect the

much-needed values that education should imbibe to face the challenges in the wake of the onslaught of atheism and materialism in the name of development, modernization, and progress.

### ***Authors' Declaration***

*We declare that the submitted manuscript is our original work and has not been published, nor is it under consideration for publication elsewhere. All sources have been appropriately cited, and the work is free from plagiarism, falsification, and fabrication. Any use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools in preparing this manuscript has been transparently disclosed, and full responsibility for the content rests with the authors.*

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