

INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ISLAMIC THOUGHT AND
CIVILIZATION (ISTAC)

POLITICAL THOUGHT OF BEDİÜZZAMAN SAİD NURSİ

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ISLAMIC THOUGHT AND
CIVILIZATION (ISTAC)
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

BY
MIKAIL TASDEMİR

KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA
MARCH, 1999



الجامعة الإسلامية العالمية ماليزيا
INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA
مَدِينَةُ بَنْدَرِ بَيْتِيْنِ اِسْلَامِيَّةٍ اَبْنَاءُ اِرْبَابِنَا وَوَلَدِيْنَا

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Dedicated to my late father, Nuri Taşdemir and my mother, Hafife:

For their love and all their sacrifices.

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[Note: In this study I used al-Shajarah's transliteration table as guide for transliteration of Arabic and Turkish/Ottoman words.]

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INTRODUCTION

Bediüzzaman Said Nursi is a prominent thinker of our age whose ideas have inspired many intellectuals in Turkey. However, his thought has not been properly studied yet. There have been several attempts to interpret Nursi's thought but as yet are still insufficient. More importantly, his ideas on political thought are either understood wrongly or are miss-interpreted. Therefore, the main objective of this study is to fully understand and present his ideas in an ordered manner.

Nursi was born in eastern Turkey in 1873¹ and died in 1960 at the age of 87 after a life of exemplary struggle and self-sacrifice for the cause of Islâm. He was a scholar of the highest standing having studied not only all the traditional religious sciences but also modern sciences, and earned the name "*Bediüzzaman*" (Wonder of the Age) in his young age as a result of his outstanding ability and learning.

The village of Nürs where Bediüzzaman was born, is a small town in the province of Bitlis in eastern Turkey. He began his education at the age of nine in the city of Hizan. After the completion of his basic education he visited a couple of religious schools (*madâris*) in the region and finally settled in Bitlis in order to study. Later he moved to the city of Van where he hoped to establish an Islâmic University, which he named *madrasat al-zahrah*, in order to actualize his educational projects. After the eruption of the First World War, the city of Van was occupied by Russian forces. Nursi joined the war against Russian insurgents. After some time, he was captured and sent to a Siberian concentration camp where he

stayed for two years. Then, he escaped and came back to Istanbul where he was involved in intellectual debates with other scholars primarily discussing the social and political problems facing Muslims of his time. In this way he engaged himself in a life-long struggle to find solutions to the problems faced by contemporary Muslims. These problems varied from unity of the Ummah to problems of education and technology.

Nursi himself divides his life into three main distinct periods. These are mentioned by Nursi as the period of the 'Old Said'² (1873-1913) the 'New Said'³ (1926-1950) and the 'Third Said'⁴ (1950-1960).

The period of the 'Old Said' starts from his birth until the year 1913. The 'Old Said' was characterized by his zeal in involving himself in public affairs and trying to bring about some solutions. His primary education of this period is influenced by Sufi teachings; as a result of this influence, Nursi was consequently inclined to the teachings of the *Naqshibandī* Order (*tariqah*). Referring to this, Mardin says, "Said Nursi was a product of *naqshibandī* activism in Anatolia."⁵ But Mardin also admits that although Nursi's thinking was in line with that of the *naqshibandī* trend, yet all of his thought cannot be simply reduced to the level of the *naqshibandī* tradition.⁶

¹ Several accounts were given for the birth year of Nursi, but in most of the sources it is given as 1293 Rûmî. 1873 A.D.

² Bediüzzaman Said Nursi, *Mektûbat* (İstanbul: Sözler Yayınevi, 1981), 330. Hereafter cited as *Mektûbat*. [Eng. trans.: Şükran Vahide], *The Letters* (İstanbul: Sözler Publications, 1994), 272. Hereafter cited as *The Letters*.

³ *Mektûbat*, 331.

⁴ Bediüzzaman Said Nursi, *Şuâlar* (İstanbul: Çeltut Matbaası, 1960), 446. Henceforth cited as *Şuâlar*.

⁵ Şerif Mardin, *Religion and Social Change in Turkey; the case of Bediüzzaman Said Nursi* (Newyork: State University of Newyork Press, 1989), 230. Hereinafter cited as *Mardin*.

⁶ *Mardin*, 68.

The writings he produced during this period characterize his approach to the ailing situation of Muslims and their civilization. This approach emphasizes more social and civilizational problems and their solutions. Because of the nature of these problems he was inevitably drawn into politics. Hence, this period is also relevant to our study as he tries to offer his views on certain political issues facing Muslims. We must point out that periodization in Nursi's life does not imply a change of ideas in his thought. As he himself indicates clearly, only his approaches to these issues change during these periods of his life. That is why when later in his life he edited the general corpus of his writings he also included his early works in the collection which he named *Rasā'il al-Nūr* (The Treatises of Light). For this reason when we deal with his political thought in general we can safely use his earlier writings in order to incorporate them with his later writings.

In this period, Nursi was more practical than theoretical. He tried to solve the existing problems not only by writing but also by active involvement, such as, his support to several well-established societies. He gave as much importance to social issues as he did to purely intellectual ones. In general, he was actively involved in solving the problems of Muslims of the world in general, and Ottoman Muslims in particular. Therefore, he was concerned with the problems of the Islāmic World. For instance, development, progress, rapid Westernization and modernization are very much discussed in his writings of this period. His main political ideas in the period of 'Old Said' are reflected in his major writings before and after the Declaration of Constitutionalism. We can observe Nursi's attitude to political issues during this period very clearly in his defense speech in the Military

Court (*Divân-i Harb-i Örfî*), The Testimonial of Two Schools of Misfortune (*İki Mekteb-i Musibetin Şahadetnâmesi*) in the Court of Justice after the 31st March incident, in his conversations in 1911 with the tribes of eastern Anatolia comprised under the title *Münâzarat* (The Debates), his Damascus Sermon (*Hutbe-i Şâmiye*) and in *Sünûhat*, written after his return from captivity and when he was a member of the *Dâr al-Ḥikmat al-Islâmiyyah*⁷. Among the chief problems which relate to this period, are the problems of Westernization, the impact of western ideology on Islâmic civilization, the question of nationalism and identity, and the state and its relevant institutions all of which will be discussed in Chapter II.

In 1908 Nursi was accused of conspiracy and rebellion, which was actually instigated by a *shaikh* who was a leader of a Sufi *tariqah* known as *İttihâd al-Muḥammad*. Later, however, he was acquitted with the implementation of a reform package by the Society of Union and Progress (*İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti*). Meanwhile he supported the proposed constitutional reforms against the administration of the Ottoman Sultan for the betterment of Muslims at that time.

⁷ *Dâr al-Ḥikmat al-Islâmiyyah* was an institution in the Ottoman State, which mainly aimed at answering various issues ranging from Islâmic legal issues to social, political and cultural ones. It was established after the defeat of the Ottoman State in the World War I. Its members composed of learned Ottoman scholars and intellectuals who tried to strive to bring about solutions to social and religious problems facing Muslims in a scholarly manner against the attacks by non-Muslims. It was also aimed at serving Muslim people of Turkey, answering questions, informing them concerning internal and external dangers, and generally meeting their religious needs with various publications. The members, all of whom were, prominent 'ulamâ' was divided into three committees: jurisprudence (*fiqh*), ethics (*akḥlaq*), and theology (*kalâm*). Nursi remained as a member of the committee for the four years of its short existence. It was closed down in November 1922 when the Sultanate was abolished by the Ankara Government under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal. See, Sadık Albayrak. *Son Devrin İslam Akademisi: Dar-ül Hikmet-il İslamiye* (Istanbul: n.p., 1973), 7-9.

Until the years following the First World War, Bediüzzaman's struggles for the cause of Islâm had been active primarily in the public domain. He taught many students and was engaged in debates and discussions with leading scholars from all over the Muslim world. His activities ranged from administrative activities to participation in battles. However, the years that saw the transition from Ottoman State to Turkish Republic also saw the transition from the 'Old Said' to the 'Transitional Said' and subsequently to the 'New Said'. The period of 'transitional Said' was between 1918-1926. This period was characterized by a drastic transition in Turkish politics from Sultanate to Republic. Within his eight years of wonder, Bediüzzaman was of the opinion that the state was still a vital instrument for the education of people, and in reviving the vanishing religious Islâmic consciousness among them.

The 'New Said' period is the most crucial period in Said Nursi's life which begins after 1925 with the writing of his masterpiece *Rasâ'il al-Nûr*. These writings continued, while he was in exile in Barla, where he was under strict and rigid control of the authorities. Between 1925 until 1933, within these eight years of his exile in Barla, he was busy preparing the foundation of the *Rasâ'il al-Nûr*. His frequent trials, court hearings and exile were not able to stop him from writing his treatises which were basically an interpretation of the Holy Qur'ân geared to reviving the traditional Islâmic ideas of the past in a way they would be more relevant to the mind of contemporary Muslims. In this way for the next twenty-five years, and to a lesser extent for the last ten years of his life, he struggled with all his power to write and disseminate the teachings of *Rasâ'il al-Nûr* throughout Turkey. In brief, the 'New Said' was characterized by his withdrawal from public life and

concentration on study, prayer and thought, for what was required now was a struggle of a different sort. This period as opposed to the 'Old Said' concentrated on the theoretical approach because he thought that strengthening people's belief and religious consciousness must be given priority before anything else. This period was also a response to the period of 'Old Said' which discussed major problems of the Ummah, whereby the 'New Said' brought forward a number of solutions in the *Rasā'il al-Nūr*.

We may interpret this period in the life of Nursi in connection with al-Ghazālī's withdrawal from teaching and giving himself up to meditation and solitude. It is important to notice that Nursi never withdrew from social life completely; his solitude was blended with his public activism, for he always found time for both. We can observe this clearly even in the 'New Said' period. While he withdrew to the mountains of Barla for contemplation and worship, he continued writing his books and reading them in public with his students and other participants in order to explain the ideas in his works. He encouraged his students to read these books, re-write them and print them in order to make them available for a wider audience in order to enlighten them. Therefore, as we have pointed out, the only difference between the 'Old Said' and the 'New Said' is in the approach to the problems but not in the ideas. In this sense, we still face the same activist thinker, but now with a different approach.

After establishing a base for himself, and with the emergence of a political party which declared that Islâmic consciousness should be at the core of Turkish politics, a new period in the life of Nursi emerged, the 'Third Said' (1950-1960).

The 'Third Said', which emerged with the transition to a multi-party democracy in Turkey, gave a green light once more to politics with the hope that the Muslims might regain their consciousness through the process of political parties. Hence, he gave full support to the newly established Democratic Party (*Adalet Partisi*) of Adnan Menderes. This was because, with the changing political situation Muslims had another chance to revert to the Islâmic way of education which would make it possible for Nursi to implement his informal Islâmic education of the public at a formal level. His intention was not active politics, rather he wanted his supporters to choose a political party that was committed to basic human rights and freedom of thought which would allow them to educate the Muslim youth in accordance with Islâmic ideals. It was for this reason that he himself voted in elections and encouraged Muslims to do the same. This is especially clear in his letters to the democratic politicians, in which he asks for their help to legalize Islâmic teaching at public schools and make the *Rasâ'il al-Nûr* readily available for the public.

His support for Adnan Menderes' Democratic Party, which was in power, did not stop him from criticizing the party. From time to time he criticized and accused the party of un-Islâmic policies. In 1952, he wrote 'A Guide for Youth' in which he discussed the Islâmic dress code for women and men. This writing was widely

criticized by the authorities of the time due to its Islâmic content. The guide also rejected the government's policy of Westernization and secularization of Turkey. Because of this, and similar attitudes of Nursi against the government, he faced more court hearings and charges by the government of Menderes as similar to what happened during the period of one party rule. .⁸

In Urfa, on March 23rd 1960, his entire physical and spiritual struggle came to an end. After a military coup d'état, in 1960, the authorities of army feared that his tomb might become a place of political importance, and secretly removed the remains of his body from Urfa to an unknown location⁹. In order to construct his thought in a systematic way, we should examine the fundamental principles of Bediüzzaman's understanding of an Islâmic political system, which he discusses rather haphazardly in his writings. The first section of the following chapter will examine, *tawhîd*, justice, Shari'ah, equality and *shûrâ* as the principles of an Islâmic political system, whilst the second section of the chapter will concentrate on basic Islâmic political institutions, examining the state and the caliphate as primary institutions. Their nature and establishment will be discussed in detail in accordance with the views of Nursi.

My main thesis in this research is that, according to Nursi, any political system or form of government (no matter what name it assumes) is legitimate and

⁸ For a detailed information about the life of Nursi see Bediüzzaman Said Nursi, *Tarihçe-i Hayat* (Istanbul: n.p., 1960). Hereafter cited as *Tarihçe-i Hayat. Mardin*, 42-102; *A Brief Biography of Said Nursi* (Istanbul: Sözler Publications, 1988); Necmettin Şahiner, *Resimlerle Bediüzzaman Said Nursi* (Istanbul: Timaş Yayınları, 1996). Şükran Vahide, *Bediüzzaman Said Nursi; the author of the Risâle-i Nur* (Istanbul: Sözler Publications, 1992).

should be supported as long as it is in line with Islâmic injunctions. In other words, any political system, either adapted or developed by Muslims, which is consistent with the general *'ilm* of the Qur'ânic doctrines and of the Prophetic traditions, may be considered Islâmic. To Nursi, those systems which have common elements with the Islâmic system, should not be rejected fully. Therefore, this thesis will suggest that he was not a revolutionary, but rather an educator in the sense that he looked for Islâmic principles in the existing system and adopted them, then rejected the improper ones.

Chapter I will mainly dwell upon the problems of theoretical and conceptual frameworks for state and caliphate. Our discussion here takes the general outlines of an Islâmic political system as utilized by Nursi. It is, I believe, this general theoretical framework within which Nursi developed his other political ideas and evaluated political issues of his time. Therefore, in the second chapter, I shall utilize this framework in order to evaluate major political problems that faced the Muslim world. It is his evaluation of these issues that actually shaped his political thought. I shall bring in this connection primarily the problems of nationalism, Western influence, anarchism and republicanism into focus. This way I hope to prepare my discussion in order to evaluate his solutions of the political problems which he deems crucial for the Muslims. Hence, Chapter III will examine Nursi's solutions for the political problems of Muslims in Turkey and in other Muslim countries.

^v For a detailed information see, Necmettin Şahiner. *Belgelerle Bediüzzaman'ın Kabir Olayı* (İstanbul: Timaş Yayınları, 1996).

CHAPTER I

ISLĀMIC POLITICAL SYSTEM AS A GENERAL OUTLINE OF NURSI'S POLITICAL THOUGHT

There have been various views about the nature of an Islāmic political system throughout Islāmic history. These differences were sometimes due to differing perception and understanding of Muslim scholars. Besides, the influence of some other cultures (such as Greek philosophy, pre-Islāmic Persian and Western culture) on Islāmic culture have contributed to this situation, and this debate is still ongoing. One of the Muslim scholars who wrote about this issue, no doubt, Nursi himself, whose political ideas will be discussed in this thesis.

This chapter will be divided into two main sections: the first is the essential principles of the Islāmic political system where the fundamental Islāmic principles pertaining to political thought and practice will be discussed. In the second section I will discuss basic Islāmic political institutions highlighting the state and the caliphate according to the views of Bediüzzaman. This chapter will also provide the basic framework of his political system, before a discussion in Chapter II on major issues shaping his political thought followed by principle elements of an Islāmic political system as envisaged by Nursi in Chapter III.

A. Essential Principles of the Islāmic Political System

There is a need to discuss the essential principles of Nursi's political system. It is true that these essential principles such as *tawhīd*, Sharī'ah, justice and *shūrā* are accepted by all Muslims and they are more or less common to all formulations

of the Islāmic political system. However, these are primarily general principles, and there are significant differences and problems in their application. For example, can the principle of *shūrā* be a basis for parliamentary democracy based on Islāmic values? Secondly, among the different formulations of Islāmic political system; sometimes there is a problem of emphasis, as some scholars emphasize justice and equality, while some others give priority to freedom and *shūrā*. We shall try to adopt a less controversial approach by not laying an emphasis on a concept over others, in order just to adequately present what Nursi himself thinks on these concepts as related to a possible political system.

1. Tawhīd

The *fuqaha* of Islām set the essential principles of the Islāmic political system in the following manner and it is primarily this ideal approach which is mirrored by Nursi. In brief, the first of its kind is *tawhīd* (the Unity of Allah or the absolute Oneness of Allah, and His absolute Command over others). It is also defined as “the indivisible inalienable divinity of Allah”¹⁰. There are numerous verses¹¹ in the Qur’ān, which explain the nature of the principle of *tawhīd* or the Divine Unity. Its root is from the word *wahhada*, which means to declare to be one, or, in terminological usage, the action of declaring Allah to be One. This Oneness includes the principle of *tanzih* which refers to the purity of Allah from all defects. Nursi in this respect defends the view that Allah puts everything from the smallest

¹⁰ Rashid Moten, *Political Science: An Islamic Perspective* (London: Macmillan, 1995), 87.

¹¹ Like, *Sūrat al-Fātihah* (1): 2; *Āl ‘Imrān* (3): 154; *al-Mā’idah* (5): 38-40; *al-An’ām* (6): 102, 164; *al-A’rāf* (7): 3, 54; *Yūnus* (10): 31; *Yūsuf* (12): 40; *al-Ra’d* (13): 37; *al-Hijr* (15): 36; *al-Shūrā* (42): 10; *al-Fath* (48): 4; *al-Hadīd* (57): 2-3; *al-Iklās* (112): 1-4. A. Yūsuf Ali, *The Holy Qur’ān*, text, translation and commentary (USA: Amana Corp. 1983). Hereafter all the Qur’ānic translation and commentary are given from this version.

unit of the universe to the largest parts of it in systematic order. Therefore, this whole system with all its parts should be a subject matter of research in order to deduce the best social and political system for human beings without the violation of the Will of Allah.¹² From the above statement we can infer that since the state also needs a system of approach, we should take into consideration the principle of *tawhîd* in order to establish a well organized and systematized state that does not violate the order and the system of Allah. He also discussed Divine Unity, and that there are twelve proofs referring to it comprising evidences, which are rational, particular, and universal and that these are merely a drop from the ocean of Divine Unity.¹³ Again in the thirty-third Word he sets out indications of and evidences for these, in order to strengthen belief.¹⁴ In the *Letters*¹⁵, he examines the Divine Unity, and the importance of belief in Allah, knowledge and love of Allah, in a way that addresses man's inborn nature and so is acceptable by him.¹⁶ *Tawhîd* in this sense is related to all aspects of human life. It is not, as Nursi argues, a purely abstract concept devoid of meaning for human life. In fact, *tawhîd* in the divine sense means *tawhîd* in the social and political sense. That is why Nursi maintains that it is a key concept for the Islâmic political theory, and as such it has significant implications for the political system Muslims may develop.

¹² Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *Sözler* (İstanbul: Sözler Yayınevi, 1980), 645-6. Hereafter cited as *Sözler*. [Eng. Trans. Şükran Vahide] *The Words* (İstanbul: Sözler Publications, 1992), 698-699. Hereafter cited as *The Words*.

¹³ *Sözler*, 260 / *The Words*, 287 ff.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 609 / *Ibid.*, 683ff.

¹⁵ *Mektûbat*, 211 / *The Letters*, 272.

¹⁶ *Şûalar*, 14.

2. Shari'ah

The second principle that is considered as a key Islāmic concept for the political life of Muslims, as Bediüzzaman calls it, is the Illustrious Shari'ah. It is Islāmic jurisprudence based on the Qur'ān and Sunnah of the Prophet (pbuh). This concept is also mentioned in the Qur'ān on several occasions.¹⁷ This principle occupies a considerable place in Bediüzzaman's writings and thought that he always feels proud to be the servant of Shari'ah. He defines it as "a combination of voluntary actions of human beings in order to put an order and regularity in their life in relation to the laws of the Divine."¹⁸ This also suggests that there must be an order in the affairs of the state whose laws and rules must be derived primarily from revealed sources, hence the Shari'ah. So in the language of politics, the Shari'ah is an entity which does not recognize a separation between religion and the state, it consists of a body of ethical and political elements.

Nursi argues that although the Shari'ah is based primarily on divine proofs, it also includes rational proofs. There is no contradiction between the Shari'ah and human rationality. The Shari'ah is also related to all social sciences. The following sciences are included in Shari'ah, which has indeed an intimate connection with them: *tadhhīb al-rūh* (Purifying of the Soul), *riyādat al-qalb* (Training of the Heart), *tarbiyat al-wijdān* (Training of Self), *tadbīr al-jasad* (Government of the Body), *tadwīr al-manzil* (Management of the Household), *siyāsāt al-madaniyyah* (Political Science), *niẓām al-'ālam* (Cosmological Sciences), *ḥuqūq* (Jurisprudence),

¹⁷ Some of the verses are, for instance, *al-Jasiyah* (45): 18; *al-Shūrā* (42): 13; *al-'A'rāf* (7): 163; *al-Mā'idah* (5): 48.

mu'amalât (Sciences of Etiquette), and *âdâb ijtimâ'iyah* (Societal Ethics).¹⁹ Since the Shari'ah includes these sciences, it can respond to all kinds of problems and ailing conditions. Therefore, the Shari'ah is a pool of all the rules and regulations that exist in the life span of human beings and in the universe. In order to exercise and apply the rules and conducts of the Shari'ah there must be a complete liberty out of which the said principles can be applied fully at the political level in general, and at the level of the individual in particular.

3. Liberty (*hurriyah*)

Liberty, for Bediüzzaman, is of utmost importance, for his famous statement, "I can live without bread but I cannot live without freedom"²⁰ exemplifies this in his life and thought. The Qur'anic verses²¹ also clearly and explicitly talk about its importance for Muslims.

One of the aspects of liberty is freedom of thought. In order to achieve this, in Nursi's view, people must not wait for somebody to give them the right of freedom of thought and expression. People must work for it and must know that those, whose vested interests will be endangered as a result, will fight back when a just system is established²². He was very definite on the issue of liberty that he never worried to give definite statements to those people who view liberty as a tool of

¹⁸ Bediüzzaman Said Nursi, *İşârâtü'l- İ'câz* (Istanbul: Sözlür Neşriyat, 1959), 92. Hereafter cited as *İşârâtü'l- İ'câz*.

¹⁹ Ibid., 116.

²⁰ Bediüzzaman Said Nursi, *Emirdağ Lâhikası* (Istanbul: Sinan Matbaası, 1960), 18. Hereafter cited as *Emirdağ Lâhikası*.

²¹ For example, *Sûrat al-Baqarah* (2): 286; *al-Nisâ* (4): 80; *Yûnus* (10): 99; *al-Kahf* (18): 29; *al-Muddassir* (74): 39, 56; *al-Insân* (76): 29; *al-Takwîr* (81): 28.

fulfilling selfish desires. For this reason even he did not hesitate to give very stern statements criticizing those people who did not acknowledge liberty for the whole community but for their selfish interests and gains. With reference to this, he gives the example of Constitutionalism: After its proclamation, those who had vested interests in the old system strongly rejected constitutionalism and tried to abolish it using whatever means were available to them. Nursi describes their characteristics as people possessed by an undeveloped notion of liberty and justice in their minds, obstinate, oppressive, denying the rights of others, despots and opportunist who reject free and just society. The following quotation, exemplifies this:

A group from the nation of mankind which, under the leadership of Ignorance *Ağa*, obstinacy *Efendi*, Enmity *Bey*, Vengeance *Paşa*, the Reverend *Shaikh's* blind imitation, Monsieur Chatterbox, injures the consultation which is the source of our happiness.²³

Nursi clearly indicates that these kinds of people would consistently object the notion of full liberty in favor of their selfish interests and worldly gains. Hence, in order to achieve liberty in real sense, society, for its own sake, and for the sake of liberty, should discard these types of people.

4. Justice (*'adālah*)

Justice (*'adālah*) is another principle on which Nursi's political thought rests. But since this concept by itself is not related, as a philosophical problem, to the subject of this study, we shall not go into their elaborate details. We shall concentrate on its meaning, relevant to Nursi's political thought. In this sense, according to Nursi, justice means to act unconditionally in accordance with the

²² Safa Mürsel, *Siyasi Düşünce Tarihi Işığında Bediüzzaman Said Nursi* (İstanbul: Yeni Asya Yayınları, 1989), 101. Hereafter cited as *Siyasi Düşünce*.

²³ Bediüzzaman Said Nursi, *Münâzarat* (İstanbul: Sözler Yayınevi, 1977), 10. Hereafter cited as *Münâzarat*.

Commands of Allah. It is to establish justice for all 'even as against yourself, or your parents or your kin, whether it be against the rich or poor.'²⁴ Allah, in the Qur'ân²⁵, and the Prophet of Islâm frequently mentions the importance of justice in all the affairs of humanity, even if it means to rebel against their animal nature and physical bodies. The concept of justice in Nursi's thought plays a pivotal role without which all human conduct and affairs will be meaningless and worthless. Nursi states that the fundamental themes which the Qur'ân speaks of can be categorized four very significant elements; *tawhîd*, prophethood, *hâshr* (Hereafter) and justice.²⁶ Hence, it is clear that the Qur'ân lays the utmost importance, according to Nursi, on the concept of justice. In this sense, according to him one quarter of the Qur'ân is devoted for justice.

Be that as it may, Nursi accepts that in so far as the implementation of justice is concerned we are able to distinguish two senses of this concept: first of all, in the practical sense, there may be what we term "absolute justice" (*'adâlah al-mahḍah*) which is applying justice in the absolute sense without omitting anyone's right no matter how small they may be or how insignificant or impracticable they may seem; secondly, there is "relative justice" (*'adâlah idâfiyyah*) which pays attention mostly to the practical application of the issues, thus omitting insignificant 'rights of the individual' with their consent. Regarding the former, Nursi expresses that real felicity can be achieved in this world by exercising *'adâlah al-mahḍah*. This

²⁴ *Sûrat al-Nisâ'* (4): 55, 135.

²⁵ *Sûrat al-Nisâ'* (4): 58, 135; *al-Mâ'idah* (5): 3, 9, 45; *al-'A'raf* (7): 29; *al-Nahl* (16): 90, 152; *al-Shûrah* (42): 15; *al-Rahmân* (55): 9.

²⁶ *İşârâtü'l-İ'câz*, 11; *Emirdağ Lâhikası*, 92.

can only be realized by following the injunctions of the Qur'ân.²⁷ It is also a singular fact that all the prophets of Allah demonstrated that power is not in the hands of those who rule, rather, it is within the absolute capacity of Allah, the All Mighty. This principle acts as a preventive for injustices and provides a basis for justice to be exercised fully. In the real sense of the term 'justice', the oppressor will be punished and the oppressed will be given his share commensurate to what ever damages was inflicted upon him. In this regard, Nursi states that "the right of an orphan cannot be suppressed for the good of the entire society, similarly, an individual cannot be sacrificed for the security of a nation. There is no question of weak and strong as far as justice is concerned. The weak cannot be overlooked in favor of the strong."²⁸

The second type, '*adâlah idâfiyyah*', suggests that some may be sacrificed for the total if the total has the some's full consent. Similarly, an individual's rights can sometimes be denied for the betterment of the society. However, if this is done by force it will be regarded as an injustice.²⁹ It also implies that at any case the feeling of justice and its protection is highly required by the individual members of the society, and formal and informal institutions of the society.

There are two main conditions without which justice cannot be applied in its proper sense; that it must have a close relationship with religion, and; it must recognize the concept of equality in all its facets. Hence, Nursi argues, if a system

²⁷ Bediüzzaman Said Nursi, *Hutbe-i Şâmiye* (İstanbul: Sözler Yayınevi, 1960), 75-76. Hereafter cited as *Hutbe-i Şâmiye*.

²⁸ *Mektûbat*, 55-56.

does not depend on revealed sources there is always inconsistency and problems arising in the exercise of justice. If this is the case, (i.e. if a system does not depend on revealed sources) and it prevails in the system, then, in Nursi's words, it is like "giving weapons to anarchists"³⁰. This strongly encourages people to base their judicial system on the revealed sources, and in the case of Islām, on the Holy Qur'ān. Nursi moreover argues that the reason why people should base their judicial system on revealed sources is that belief (*īmān*) is always 'a protector of the heart and mind against unlawful behaviors of a person. It also encourages a person to do good things and also encourages him to refrain from bad things.'³¹ According to Nursi, a person's *īmān* always reminds the heart and mind to behave in accordance with the law and the regulations. The mind and the heart of the faithful are filled with *īmān*, which is always with a person whatever he does. Therefore, (i.e. *īmān*, hearth and mind) the said factors act all the time as regulators of actions of a person.

The second condition is that justice should be closely connected to the term equality without which justice cannot be exercised at all. The root word of justice is 'adl' which also means equality. Equality should be understood as everybody being equal in the eyes of the law. Nobody should be treated differently because of his or her race, color, ethnicity or generation. Nursi cited the period of 'aṣrī ṣā'ādah (The Age of Bliss) as an example wherein even caliphs were judged with non-Muslims in the court.

²⁹ Ibid., 56.

³⁰ *Hutbe-i Şâmiye*, 68-69.

³¹ Ibid., 68.