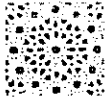


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Said Nursi

Zeki Saritoprak

Introduction

Bediüzzaman Said Nursi (b. 1876–d. 1960) is considered by both his admirers and his opponents as one of the most influential figures of the 20th-century Muslim world. He lived, arguably, in one of the most hectic and bloodiest periods in human history. He participated in World War I and felt the pains of World War II that caused the suffering of millions of innocents such as children and women. Nursi divided his life into two periods, "Old Said" and "New Said." While "Old Said" was more politically oriented, in the hope that politics would serve Islam, "New Said" devoted himself to the "truth of faith." He remained a prominent Islamic figure of nonviolent opposition in Turkey until his death on 23 March 1960. He was given the title "Bediüzzaman," or "peerless of time," or "marvelous of time" by his teachers as a confirmation of his extraordinary photographic memory and his great analytic abilities. According to his biographers, what other students would accomplish in nine years, Nursi accomplished in three months. Nursi would ask his teachers to teach him the beginning part of each text book of the curriculum. He would learn the rest by himself. In the first decade of the twentieth century, Nursi became much more aware of the importance of education. He viewed the establishment of al-Zahra University (Medresetuzzehra), in the city of Van, eastern Anatolia, as the greatest goal of his life, which he was unable to accomplish. Nursi participated in World War I, where he was wounded and then captured. He subsequently managed to escape during the 1917 Russian Revolution and made his way to Istanbul. There, he led a nonviolent struggle against the British occupation of the city through his writings. The leaders of the newly established Republic of Turkey honored Nursi for his defense of Istanbul through his powerful writings against the British occupation by inviting him to Ankara to give a speech at the parliament. After his famous speech at the parliament, a debate started between Nursi and Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (b. 1881–d. 1938), the founder and first president of modern Turkey, who abolished many religious institutions that were inherited from the Ottoman state over the content of his speech, specifically regarding the importance of faith and prayer. Nursi disagreed with Atatürk and left the capital for eastern Anatolia, his hometown. He thereafter faced an unprecedented amount of persecution by the ultrasecular Turkish government of the time. Nursi spent the final thirty-four years of his life in and out of prison (which he called the "School of Joseph") until his death on 23 March 1960. In an obituary of 24 March 1960, the *New York Times* claimed that Nursi's students numbered one million.

General Overviews

Ibrahim Abu Rabi and Colin Turner are scholars who have studied Nursi over decades and approached his writings in a more academic way. Abu Rabi 2003 and Turner and Horguc 2009 are among the most recent works on Nursi. The two references are prepared in a way that can benefit both academics and general readers. The diversity of essays in Abu Rabi's work, in particular, has enriched the quality of the book and provides readers with a wide variety of information about Nursi.

Abu Rabi, Ibrahim M., ed. *Islam at the Crossroads: On the Life and Thought of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*. SUNY Series in Near Eastern Studies. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003.

This book is an excellent source composed of twenty essays on various aspects of the life and thought of Nursi, including a brief biography as well as various aspects of his thought, such as the concept of the human being, revelation, jihad, public space, supplication, the problem of theodicy, environment, renewal of Islamic thought, and the hereafter.

Turner, Colin, and Hasan Horguc. *Said Nursi. Makers of Islamic Civilization*. London: I. B. Taurus, 2009.

A well-written and good introductory book that deals with the life, works, and thoughts of Nursi, particularly on culture and politics for beginners. The book has a good bibliography on Nursi (pp. 125–132).

Biographies

According to the current available data, one of the earliest biographies of Nursi was penned by the well-known Turkish author and journalist Eşred Edip (Edip 1952). The second biography, *Bediuzzaman Said Nursi'nin Tarihçe-i Hayatı*, is by Nursi's own students. This biography, written anonymously, is believed to be among the most reliable sources, since it was reviewed and edited by Nursi himself. These two biographies are in Turkish. The largest English biography of Nursi is Vahide and Abu-Rabi' 2005. The first biography of Nursi in Arabic was by Ihsan Qasim al-Salihi (al-Salihi 1999), who successfully translated virtually all works of Nursi into Arabic. Two other later Turkish biographies are Şahiner 1994 and Badilli 1990. Şahiner 1994 is based on available sources from newspapers, and some living witnesses, while Badilli 1990 is based on the author's own interaction with Nursi, since he was among the biographers who met with Nursi personally. Şahiner 2005–2007, the author's second voluminous work on Nursi, is highly valuable, since it is thoroughly based on living witnesses who interacted with Nursi. Saritoprak 2008 can serve as a concise intellectual biography of Nursi. There were also some critics of Nursi and his movement. Armaner 1964 is a very short book (thirty-eight pages); the author is opposed to Nursi and his movement, accusing them of breaking away from Islam.

Anonymous. *Bediuzzaman Said Nursi'nin Tarihçe-i Hayatı*. Istanbul: Sözlür, 1976.

(The biography of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi.) This book is the most often recommended as a reliable reference on Nursi's life; it was probably written by Nursi's students. The book starts with the early life of Nursi and proceeds to discuss his life spent in various cities, such as the first period of his life, Barla, Eskişehir, Kastamonu, Emirdağ, Afyon, and Isparta, including some of his court defenses in these cities. A good section at the end of this biography titled "Risale-i Nur and Outside Countries," on the spread of Nursi's writings outside Turkey, has enriched the the content of the book.

Armaner, Neda. *İslam Dininden Ayrılan Cereyanlar: Nurculuk*. Ankara, Turkey: Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi, 1964.

(Nurculuk: A current breaking away from Islam.) The book criticizes Nursi's writings, especially some of his comments on the Qur'anic verses and also objects to the gathering of people around Nursi. Some believe that the author was commissioned by the government of the time to write this book.

Badilli, Abdulkadir. *Bediuzzaman Said Nursi: Mufassal Tarihçe-i Hayatı*. 3 vols. Istanbul: Timaş Yayınları, 1990.

(Bediuzzaman Said Nursi: A detailed account of his life.) This Turkish work is considered one of the most comprehensive biographic sources on Nursi. Having met personally with Nursi, Badilli presents various accounts of his conversations with Nursi as well.

Edip, Eşref. *Risale-i Nur Müellifi Said Nursi, Hayatı, Eserleri, Mesleği*. Istanbul: Asarı İlmiye Kütüphanesi, 1952.

(The author of *Risale-i Nur*. His life, works, and his school of thought.) Being one of the earliest biographies while Nursi was still alive gives more credibility to this small book. Nursi approved and was pleased with Eşref Edip's work.

Al-Salihi, Ihsan Qasim. *Bediuzzaman Said Nursi: Nazratun Ammah an Hayatihu wa Atharihi*. Al-Dar al-Baydha, UAE: Matbaah al-Najah al-Jadidah, 1999.

(Bediuzzaman Said Nursi: An overview of his life and works.) This Arabic reference is one of the first of its kind on the life and works of Nursi written for the Arab-speaking world; originally published in the early 1980s, and reviewed and republished several times since.

Şahiner, Necmeddin. *Bilinmeyen Tarafıyla Bediüzzaman Sadi Nursi*. Istanbul: Yeni Asya Yayınları, 1994.

(Bediuzzaman Said Nursi: Unknown aspects.) This Turkish biography, originally published in 1979, provides a chronological account of Nursi's life, based on witnesses, newspaper articles, as well as Nursi's own writings and many other official documents that the author obtained from various sources.

Şahiner, Necmeddin. *Son Şahitler Bediüzzaman Said Nursi'yi Anlatıyor.* 6 vols. Istanbul: Nesil Yayınları, 2005–2007.

(Last witnesses narrating Bediüzzaman Said Nursi.) This large Turkish source presents a variety of accounts on Nursi based on interviews with living witnesses who either met or interacted with Nursi, including his students, prison guards, attorneys, judges, military personnel, etc. This source is especially helpful for any in-depth study on Nursi, since all accounts mentioned in these volumes are unique and based on personal experiences.

Saritoprak, Zeki. "Bediüzzaman Said Nursi." In *The Islamic World*. Edited by Andrew Rippin, 396–403. London: Routledge, 2008.

This article provides a concise analysis of Nursi's life and thought and contains a discussion of Nursi's spiritual and intellectual influence.

Vahide, Sukran, and Ibrahim M. Abu-Rabi'. *Islam in Modern Turkey: An Intellectual Biography of Bediüzzaman Said Nursi.* Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005.

This reference is a good source on the life and the works of Nursi. The book is edited and enriched with an introduction by Ibrahim Abu Rabi. It is more comprehensive than Sukran's previous work on Nursi published in 1992.

Reference Works

Information on Nursi's life, works, and legacy can be found in a variety of forms. Some of these focus on one aspect of Nursi's life or thought; some focus on controversial issues on which Nursi wrote, such as *ijtihad* (independent reasoning in Islamic law); and some are more concerned with the social and religious milieu in which Nursi lived. Mardin 1989 is particularly useful for its bibliography from a sociological perspective, while the online *Risale-i Nur* provides an extensive bibliography of books written on Nursi. This site is particularly notable for its impressive search function, which can search through all of Nursi's works. Many of Nursi's writings are available on Nursi Studies and Said Nur.

Mardin, Şerif. *Religion and Social Change in Modern Turkey: The Case of Bediüzzaman Said Nursi.* SUNY Series in Near Eastern Studies. Albany: State University of New York, 1989.

This is one of the earliest academic works on Nursi. The book is very useful, particularly for any study on the milieu in which Nursi grew up. Also, the bibliography of the book (pp. 233–253) is considerably valuable. This particular source deals with the topic from a sociological perspective.

Nursi Studies.

Provides PDF and word versions of many of Nursi's writings. Particularly useful for its inclusion of multiple-language sources. Also includes collections of pictures of Nursi and his students. This website is more frequently updated and provides information on new works on Nursi as well. It seems that the goal of the website is to provide sources on Nursi for academics, rather than general readership.

Risale-i Nur.

One of the unique aspects of this website is the word-based search it offers of the entire body of Nursi's works. For those who know Turkish, this website is invaluable. It provides links to all Nursi's books in Turkish, including a dictionary of terminology used by Nursi. The website also contains an online version of the entire collection of Nursi's books in Turkish.

Said Nur.

A helpful web source with regard to literature, symposiums, current events, and news on Nursi. Includes online PDF and Word versions of Nursi's life and his major writings in various languages, including English, Arabic, Turkish, and German. Also includes collections of pictures of Nursi and his students.

Primary Works

Any study on Nursi inevitably requires a thorough examination of Nursi's writings. Nursi wrote most of his books in Turkish, while some, particularly his earliest books, are in Arabic (during the Ottoman period, writing in Arabic was not uncommon). Some of Nursi's books contain poems in the Persian language, although we do not have any reference that he wrote a separate book in Persian. He also wrote, in the early period of his life, a few articles in Kurdish for the newspapers. Nursi's magnum opus, *The Risale-i Nur* (The treatise of light) was written in Turkish.

"NEW SAID" PERIOD WRITINGS

The major work *New Said* can be divided into three categories. The first category, to which Nursi gives the greatest emphasis, is *Hakaik-i İmaniyye* (The truths of faith). Under this category Nursi's four greatest books are included: Nursi 1992 (*The Words*), Nursi 1994 (*The Letters*), Nursi 1995 (*The Flashes*), and Nursi 1998 (*The Rays*). The topics that Nursi elaborates on in these major works are various. For example, Nursi 1992 begins with the meaning and importance of *basma*, the formula found at the beginning of each chapter of the Qur'an, and which means "In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful." Nursi continues to speak of the importance of prayer, particularly the reason why daily prayers are prescribed to be fulfilled in certain times, as well as the existence of the resurrection and the afterlife and its importance. The second category of his writings is *Mudafaat* (The court defenses; Nursi 1959), which contains his court defenses of his movement and his writings. While Nursi was in exile and in and out of prison, he would correspond with his students, readers, admirers, and even administrators in the government. These letters make up the third category: appendices composed of his correspondences with his students, and named after the city in which Nursi lived at the time. Nursi 1996a contains Nursi's letters while he was in exile in Barla, and Nursi 1996b contains his letters from time spent in Kastamonu. Nursi 1996c contains his important "farewell" letter. While partially translated into Arabic, unfortunately none of these three appendixes has been translated into English.

Nursi, Said. *Sualar*. Istanbul: Çeltüt Matbaası, 1959.

(Court defenses.) Nursi's writings drew the attention of both the public and the government. People wanted to obtain and read them, and the government wanted to ban them. Nursi faced many accusations on the premise that his movement and his writings were a threat to the secular government. Nursi's court defenses are recorded and mainly published here. In particular the *Twelfth Ray*, *Thirteenth Ray*, and *Fourteenth Ray* are mainly dedicated to Nursi's court defenses.

Nursi, Said. *The Words: On the Nature and Purposes of Man, Life, and All Things*. Translated by Sukran Vahide. Risale-i Nur Collection 1. Istanbul: Sözler, 1992.

Translation of Nursi's major work titled *Sözler*. It discusses thirty-three words. Focuses on the importance of prayer, the hereafter, miracles of prophets such as Abraham, Moses, David, Solomon, the nature of human being, the miraculous nature of the Qur'an, free will, *ijtihad* (independent reasoning in Islamic law), the concept of spirit, egoism, the night journey of the Prophet, and more. Most topics are headed by a verse from the Qur'an. Most of Nursi's commentaries are unique, and not found in the premodern commentaries.

Nursi, Said. *The Letters (1928–1932)*. Translated by Sukran Vahide. Risale-i Nur Collection 2. Istanbul: Sözler, 1994.

Translation of Nursi's work *Mektubat*; also includes thirty-three letters. This book came out as a result of a question asked by one of Nursi's students, Hulusi Yahyagil, who was a military officer. Includes discussion of various questions on topics such as the life of Jesus,

Sufism, some ambiguous terms in the Qur'an such as "clear book," the creation of evil creatures such as devils, as well as longer topics such as the miracles of Prophet Muhammad.

Nursi, Said. *The Flashes Collection*. Translated by Sukran Vahide. Risale-i Nur Collection 3. Istanbul: Sözlür, 1995.

This is the translation of Nursi's famous work titled *Lem'alar*. It is composed of thirty-three flashes, each dedicated to a certain topic, including the story of Jonah, story of Job (with a focus on theodicy), the way of the Prophet of Islam, issues between Sunnites and Shi'ites, frugality, sincerity, the realm of nature as a divine art, and answers to various questions.

Nursi, Said. *Barla Lahikası*. Risale-i Nur Kulliyati. Istanbul: Yeni Asya Yayinlari, 1996a.

This "Barla appendix" is composed of Nursi's individual letters during his exile in the small town of Barla in the providence of Isparta. Sent to his students, they were concerned with the events, situations, and the ways to be followed in the "service of faith and the Qur'an."

Nursi, Said. *Kastamonu Lahikası*. Risale-i Nur Kulliyati. Istanbul: Yeni Asya Yayinlari, 1996b.

This "Kastamonu appendix" again consists of Nursi's letters to his students when he was in the city of Kastamonu. They are particularly important since they were written during World War II, bringing to life Nursi's comments and pains as he witnessed the suffering of the innocent children, women, and noncombatant civilians as a result of war atrocities.

Nursi, Said. *Emirdağ Lahikası*. Risale-i Nur Kulliyati. Istanbul: Yeni Asya Yayinlari, 1996c.

This two-volume work, the "Emirdağ appendix," is the largest and the latest in the appendix genre. It contains Nursi's letters to his students, politicians, and administrators, including the then president and prime minister of Turkey. Contains the letter that is called Nursi's "farewell letter," which has a great deal of emphasis on nonviolence.

Nursi, Said. *The Rays*. Risale-i Nur Collection 4. Istanbul: Sözlür, 1998.

This book is the translation of Nursi's work *Sualar*. It is composed of fifteen "rays." Each ray relates to a certain topic, such as divine unity; supplication; immortality; comments on portents of the end of time; "the supreme sign," which is described as "the observations of a traveler who searches for his Creator throughout the universe"; importance of belief in resurrection and hereafter; fruits of belief; and a large array of Nursi's court defenses.

Pocket Books

These books are compiled from Nursi's major writings to serve various segments of society in a more concise way. For example, Nursi 1991 is compiled from various letters and writings of Nursi to lead young people in the right direction. The book became one of the most read books among the young. Nursi 2002 is a translation of Nursi's "Tenth Word" from his famous work *The Words*. Nursi 1993b is again made up of various parts of Nursi's works on human beings and the importance of belief in the life of human beings. Nursi 2004a is one of the most read books of Nursi. It is about the existence of God through a search in the universe. Nursi 2007 speaks of the benefits of faith in the life of people. The two short treatises in Nursi 1990 were put together for quick reading. It contains extracts from two major works of Nursi, *The Flashes* and *The Letters*. Nursi 1993a contains Nursi's approach to nature. Nursi views nature as a divine book. The book strongly states that nature is not the creator. Nursi 2004a contains his answers to some questions by female readers on their dress and various marriage-related issues. Nursi 2004b, a separate publication of Nursi's work called *The Nineteenth Letter*, contains accounts of various miracles performed by Muhammad.

Nursi, Said. *Nature: Cause or Effect?* Translated by Sukran Vahide. Risale-i Nur Collection. Istanbul: Sözlür, 1989.

Originally published as the *Twenty-Third Flash* in *The Flashes*. The book is composed of two chapters and responds to the challenges of the materialistic philosophy that considers the realm of nature either as the creator or a creation by chance. The book starts with a verse from the Qur'an ". . . their messengers said: Is there doubt concerning God?" (Qur'an, 14:10).

Nursi, Said. *Sincerity and Brotherhood: Two Essentials for Believers*. Translated by Hamid Algar. Risale-i Nur Collection. Istanbul: Sözlür, 1990.

This is composed of the two treaties by Nursi originally found in *The Flashes* and *The Letters*. Due to its important as a guide for service, Nursi suggests that *Sincerity and Brotherhood* should be reread every two weeks.

Nursi, Said. *A Guide for Youth*. Rev. ed. Translated by Sukran Vahide. Risale-i Nur Collection. Istanbul: Sözlür, 1991.

Speaks of the true pleasures of youth and its transience. There is special emphasis on guidance for those who were imprisoned for certain crimes. A section in this book discusses how molecules of air work perfectly in the process of radio broadcasting. The last section discusses the manifestation of the divine name al-Rahim, the Most Merciful.

Nursi, Said. *Belief and Man*. Translated by Sukran Vahide. Risale-i Nur Collection. Istanbul: Sözlür, 1993a.

This small pocket book is considered a unique interpretation by Nursi of the Qur'anic verse "We indeed created Man in the fairest stature; then We restored him the lowest of the low, save those who believe, and do righteous deeds. . . ." (95:4–6). The book in its two chapters speaks of the importance of belief in the life of every of human being.

Nursi, Said. *The Supreme Sign: Observations of a Traveller Questioning Creation Concerning His Maker*. Rev. ed. Translated by Hamid Algar. Risale-i Nur Collection. Istanbul: Sözlür, 1993b.

This significant treatise is described as "observations of a traveler searching for his Creator throughout the universe," including the sun, the stars, and more. Nursi notes that not everyone will be able to understand all the matters discussed in this book at the first reading due to the elevated level of the content.

Nursi, Said. *Resurrection and the Hereafter*. Translated by Hamid Algar. Risale-i Nur Collection. Rutherford, NJ: The Light, 2002.

The goal of this book is to prove the validity of the idea that human bodies are resurrected in the afterlife, by drawing examples from the world of nature. "It is decisive proof of the reality of the afterlife," according to Nursi. The book is a unique commentary on the Qur'anic verse: "So behold the marks of God's mercy, how He quickens the earth after it was dead; surely He is the quickener of the dead, and He is powerful over everything" (Qur'an 30:50).

Nursi, Said. *A Guide for Women*. Translated by Sukran Vahide. Risale-i Nur Collection. Istanbul: Sözlür, 2004a.

This book praises women and presents them as the heroines of compassion and mercy and curses those would like to deceive them. It also gives some instructions about their dress and marriage.

Nursi, Said. *The Miracles of Muhammad*. Translated by Sukran Vahide. Istanbul: Sözlür, 2004b.

This book is the Nineteenth Letter from Nursi's *The Letters*. It speaks of various miracles of the Prophet, which include his foreseeing of future events; the increase of food; the listening by trees, stones, and animals to his request; and healing of the sick through his prayer. About three hundred miracles, including the splitting of the moon and his ascension are presented.

Nursi, Said. *The Fruits of Belief*. Translated by Surkan Vahide. Risale-i Nur Collection. Istanbul: Sözlür, 2007.

This book is a translation of *The Eleventh Ray*, in Nursi's major work *The Rays*. Various topics are discussed in this treatise, including sciences such as chemistry, electrical, medicine and how they speak about the Divine names and benefits of faith for the believers.

"OLD SAID" PERIOD WRITINGS

A separate group of Nursi's works was written before his exile experience in 1926. Most of these works were originally written in Arabic and later translated into Turkish and other languages. *Mesnevi-i Nuriye*, or *al-Mathnawi* (Nursi 1999), is among his early works and consists of ten treatises. Each treatise is composed of short and concise paragraphs. Most start with "Know, o dear!" As for *Isaratu'l-'caz*, or *Isahart al-I'jaz* (Nursi 2004), it has been viewed as a model commentary on the Qur'an. The book was written in the time of World War I, while Nursi was at the front. He was able to comment on only the first chapter of the Qur'an and sixteen verses from the second chapter. The book also showcases Nursi's rich knowledge of classical commentaries on the Qur'an. The small book titled *Munazarat* (Nursi 1996b) is a good source on Nursi's understanding of democracy, pluralism, and, in particular, about non-Muslims who live in Islamic states. He particularly encourages understanding between Armenians and Turks. *Hutbe-i Samiye*, or *Damascus Sermon* (Nursi 1996a), is a remarkable source on Nursi's view of the moral problems of the Islamic world, "diseases" such as hopelessness and the lack of truthfulness.

Nursi, Said. *The Damascus Sermon (Hutbe-i Şamiye)*. 2d ed. Risale-i Nur Collection. Istanbul: Sözlür, 1996a.

This is Nursi's famous sermon delivered in Arabic at the Umayyad mosque in Damascus in 1911, in which Nursi diagnoses the social diseases of the Islamic community and provides remedies for them. Interestingly, in such a time of hatred and heightened tensions, Nursi advocates Muslim-Christian cooperation. He himself reviewed the book and translated it from Arabic to Turkish in 1952.

Nursi, Said. *Munazarat*. Istanbul: Yeni Asya Nesriyat, 1996b.

This small book, the title of which translates into English as "Dialogues," contains the conversations Nursi had with tribal leaders of eastern Anatolia when he traveled to convince them about the importance of freedom, democracy, and constitutionalism and its compatibility with Islamic law. Partially translated in Zeki Saritoprak's "Said Nursi's Teachings on the People of the Book: A Case Study of Islamic Social Policy in the Early Twentieth Century," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 11.3 (October 2000): 321–332, which is available online to subscribers.

Nursi, Said. *Epitomes of Light: The Essentials of Risale-i Nur*. Izmir, Turkey: Kaynak Yayınları, 1999.

The book is divided into ten treatises, or chapters. Nursi would refer to this book as "the seed of *Risale-i Nur*," which he named after Rumi's *Mathnawi* because he greatly respected the poet. He would say, "If Rumi were in my time he would write *Risale-i Nur*, if I were in his time I would write the *Mathnawi*." Translated from Arabic to Turkish by his younger brother Abdülmecid Nursi. Original text *Al-Mathnawi al-Arabi al-Nuri* edited by Ihsan Kasim al-Salihi (Istanbul: Sözlür Yayınevi, 1999).

Nursi, Said. *Signs of Miraculousness: The Inimitability of the Qur'an's Conciseness*. Translated by Sukran Vahide. Istanbul: Sözlür, 2004.

Nursi's original plan was to make a sixty-volume commentary on the Qur'an. *Isharat al-I'jaz* is Nursi's commentary on the first chapter of the Qur'an and sixteen verses of the second chapter. Nursi considered this to be a model for future commentaries on the Qur'an. The original text, titled *Isharat al-I'jaz*, was published by Sözlür Publications. The book was also translated into Turkish by his brother Abdülmecid Nursi. The book is also edited by Ihsan Kasim al-Salihi and published in Arabic by Sözlür Yayınevi in 1999.

THREE MAJOR THEMES OF THEOLOGY

Generally speaking, Islamic theology contains three major themes: Divinity, Prophethood, and Afterlife. On these three themes Nursi has written extensively.

Divinity

On divinity, Nursi wrote many treatises that deal with the existence of God and God's oneness. His famous treatise, "The Supreme Sign," is in Nursi 1992. Nursi's treatise on nature, translated as *Nature: Cause or Effect?* (Nursi 1989, cited under Pocket Books), relates to the concept of nature and claims that Nature is an art of God but not God The Artist. Nursi here strongly criticizes the materialistic philosophy of nature held by so many. The treatise known as *Twenty-Second Word* is all about the existence of God, which is accepted by reason and logic. The treatise called the *Twenty-Fourth Word* is about the divine names, as well as Nursi's methodology of evaluating the sayings of the Prophet, especially the ambiguous ones. The treatise *Thirty-Three Windows* consists of thirty-three short sections. Each section is a short interpretation of a verse from the Qur'an. Major topics briefly discussed here are God, humans, and the universe.

Nursi, Said. *The Words: On the Nature and Purposes of Man, Life, and All Things*. Translated by Sukran Vahide. Risale-i Nur Collection 1. Istanbul: Sözlür, 1992.

Many parts of this book are dedicated to the concept of God and God's unity. About nine treatises or chapters speak directly of various aspects of divine unity (*tawhid*) and divine names. *The Thirty-Third Word*, also known as *Thirty-Three Windows* on the divine *tawhid*, speaks on a variety of topics, especially the reflection of the divine names in the universe and in the realm of humanity. *The Thirtieth Flash*, from *The Flashes*, is considered a good reference on the divine names as well.

Prophethood

Nursi has written three prominent works on the Prophet and the Qur'an. Nursi 1992 focuses on the Qur'an; here Nursi chooses a variety of verses from the Qur'an to discuss, particularly verses that are contested by modern critics. For miracles of Muhammad, Nursi 2004 develops a methodology of how to evaluate the miracles of the Prophet. Miracles mentioned include inexplicable increases of food and water, animals speaking, information about future events, and more. As for the treatise of *The Nineteenth Word* in Nursi 1993, it speaks of the changes that the Prophet made during a short period of time and considers this as an extraordinary character of the Prophet who was beloved by his companions.

Nursi, Said. *The Miracles of the Qur'an, or The Twenty Fifth Word in The Words*. Istanbul: Sözlür, 1992.

This treatise contains Nursi's interpretation of various Qur'anic verses that are generally contested by nonbelievers or criticized by scientists. It shows that what they see as deficient are, in fact, the flashes of miraculousness. At the beginning of this treatise, Nursi has a considerably long contextual definition of the Qur'an.

Nursi, Said. *The Nineteenth Word in The Words*. Istanbul: Sözlür, 1993.

This small treatise speaks of the Prophet of Islam as one of three proofs of God's existence, along with the realm of universe and the holy Qur'an. Nursi himself describes this treatise: "Yes, this treatise is beautiful, but what makes it beautiful is the characteristics of the Prophet, the beautiful of the beautifuls" (p. 243).

Nursi, Said. *The Miracles of Muhammad*. Translated by Sukran Vahide. Istanbul: Sözlür, 2004.

This book is the Nineteenth Letter from Nursi's *The Letters*. In this treatise, Nursi speaks of three hundred miracles of the Prophet, including various aspects of his life, as well as references to the Prophet in some pre-Islamic revelations. One section in particular is dedicated to the miracle of the Prophet with regard to the split of the moon. Here also the Qur'an is presented as one of his miracles.

Afterlife

Nursi 1992 very confidently proves the possibility and future occurrence of resurrection in a logical way. He draws attention to the realm of creation: as all trees and grass are dying in winter and rising in spring before our eyes, there will be a day when all humanity will die and be resurrected to be accountable for their actions in this world.

Nursi, Said. *The Treatise of Resurrection and Hereafter, or The Tenth Word*. Istanbul: Sözlür, 1992.

Here, Nursi discusses proofs of both the possibility and the logic of belief in the resurrection of all human beings and their judgment in the afterlife. He considers the entire treatise as a commentary of the Qur'anic verse, "Look at the works of God how He revives the earth after its death; surely the one who does this is going to resurrect the dead. He is Powerful over everything" (Qur'an 30:50).

Secondary Works

This section consists of works that are written on Nursi by scholars and commentators. To cite all of these works is beyond the scope of this bibliography. Therefore, it is limited to Politics, Nonviolence and Jihad, Sufism, Interfaith Dialogue and Pluralism, *Tajdid* (Renewal), and Science.

POLITICS

Nursi did not devote a particular treatise on politics; however, through his letters, his conversations, and court defenses, his political views become clear. One of his earliest books, *Munazarat* (Nursi 1996a, cited under "Old Said" Period Writings), offers some important lessons on democracy and its compatibility with Islam. Many scholars have written on Nursi's views on politics. Kuru 2008, a well-documented work, discusses Nursi's understanding of Islam and how it differs considerably from modern, politically oriented approaches to Islam. Sarıtoprak 2008 is a good study on Nursi's approach to politics, with a comparison between Nursi's old and new periods. It addresses Nursi's famous statement, "I take refuge in God from Satan and politics." Davutoğlu 1997 is more dedicated to overall Islamic thought and Nursi's place in the renewal and reconstruction of Islamic thought. Nereid 2000 discusses the concept of nationalism, particularly Turkish nationalism in Nursi's teachings.

Davutoğlu, Ahmed. "Bediuzzaman and the Politics of the Islamic World in the 20th Century." In *The Reconstruction of Islamic Thought in the Twentieth Century and Bediuzzaman Said Nursi: International Symposium, Istanbul, 27–29 September 1992*. Translated by Sukran Vahide, 286–311. Istanbul: Sözlür, 1997.

The article presents a good account and academic approach to Nursi's ideas of politics, and Nursi's responses to the four stages of the Islamic world. Available online.

Kuru, Zeynep Akbulut, and Ahmet T. Kuru. "Apolitical Interpretation of Islam: Said Nursi's Faith-Based Activism in Comparison with Political Islamism and Sufism." *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 19.1 (January 2008): 99–111.

Suggests that Nursi preferred an ascetic lifestyle. It also examines the theological and structural bases of Nursi's apolitical interpretation of Islam.

Nereid, Camilla, T. *In the Light of Said Nursi: Turkish Nationalism and the Religious Alternative*. Bergen Studies on the Middle East and Africa 4. London: Hurst, 2000.

The book speaks of the Nursi movement's reaction to nationalism—particularly Turkish nationalism, which continued to be the foundation of the modern republic after its establishment.

Saritoprak, Zeki. "Islam and Politics in the Light of Said Nursi's Writings." *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 19.1 (January 2008): 113–126.

This article elaborates on Nursi's view on politics. It claims that one of the particular reasons that Nursi avoided politics was his concern about people's need for truth—due to political partisanship people may avoid accepting the truth only because it is espoused by a member of the opposition party. For this reason he did not join any political party so that members of all parties would be able to read his writings, "the Truths of the Qur'an."

NONVIOLENCE AND JIHAD

Protecting the rights of innocent children and women that are mostly ignored during outbreaks of violence was a lifelong principle for Nursi. For this reason and for the sake of protecting societal harmony, he did not respond to aggression against him by the government of the time. Although it is most evident that he did oppose war, it is likely that, in the case of an external attack, he would grant citizens of the victim country the right to defend themselves. He called his movement a "movement of positive action." Although Nursi did not write a book about nonviolence, scholarly research has found a tremendous amount of materials on Nursi's view on this subject. Ozdemir and Markham 2005 elaborates on various aspects of Nursi's thought with considerably rich chapters on Nursi's ideas on nonviolence and dialogue. Turner 2007 presents Nursi's view of jihad, particularly his understanding of *jihad-i ma'nevi*, which Turner translates as "metaphorical jihad"; it can also be translated as "spiritual jihad." Saritoprak 2005 elaborates on Nursi's ideas on nonviolence and peace on the basis of the modern contexts relevant to the principles of nonviolence.

Özdemir, Ibrahim, and Ian S. Markham. *Globalization, Ethics, and Islam: The Case of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005.

Fifteen essays on various topics, including peace, nonviolence, dialogue, globalization, civilization, and modernity in light of Nursi's writings.

Saritoprak, Zeki. "An Islamic Approach to Peace and Nonviolence: A Turkish Experience." *Muslim World* 95.3 (July 2005): 413–427.

The author elaborates on the teachings of Nursi with regard to positive action and nonviolence in the face of atrocities. Nursi's famous "farewell letter" to his students is particularly emphasized.

Turner, Colin. "Reconsidering Jihad: The Perspective of Bediüzzaman Said Nursi." *Nove Religio* 11.2 (2007): 94–111.

This article, after locating Nursi's place in the matrix of Islamic scholarship, deals with his views on jihad. The author particularly emphasizes Nursi's understanding of what he calls "metaphorical jihad."

SUFISM

In response to the then government's accusation that he was a Sufi and a threat to the secular government, Nursi clearly indicated that he was not a Sufi but a scholar and a teacher. In fact, he did not belong to any *tariqa* or Sufi order; however, he would recite *awrad* daily, from various masters of Sufi orders. He himself put together some of those *awrads* and printed them to be distributed among his students daily. One of the *awrads* that Nursi praises is the famous *Jawshan*. This was originally well known only to Shi'ite Muslims, but Nursi made it popular among Sunnis as well. *Telvihat* (Nursi 1994) speaks of the essence of Sufism as well as its dangers. It is a guide for Sufis in their journey, and for non-Sufis an explanation of both sides of Sufism—its spiritual benefits as well as its potential spiritual dangers that may lead one astray while believing to be on the right path. Godlas 2008, which discusses this particular work, views it as a good and methodological analysis. Abu Rabi 2008 contains many articles on different aspects of Sufism by authors from different backgrounds. Nursi himself did not attach himself to any *tariqah*; he praised the works of the mystics but did not follow any specific *tariqah*. He would call his movement as "the way of the companion of the Prophet." He would say that the time is not the time of *tariqah* but of *haqiqah* (the truth).

Abu Rabi, Ibrahim M., ed. *Spiritual Dimensions of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's Risale-i-Nur*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008.

Nineteen essays written by various scholars on the spiritual aspects of Nursi's thought, including spiritual maturation, sincerity, the threat to spirituality, as well as Nursi's view of the unity of being, and renewal or *tajdid*.

Godtas, Alan. "A Religiological Analysis of Nursi's View of Sufism Expressed in the 'Nine Allusions' (*Telvihât-ı Tis'a*) of the *Risale-i Nur*." *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 19.1 (2008): 39–52.

The author examines Nursi's view of Sufism and the points of agreement and disagreement with Sufis, by using what he calls "religiology" to analyze Nursi's perspectives.

Nursi, Said. *Telvihât-ı Tis'a or Nine Allusions of the Twenty Ninth Letter*. In *The Letters (1928–1932)*. By Said Nursi. Risale-i Nur Collection 2. Istanbul: Sözlük, 1994.

This treatise directly relates to Sufism. Here Nursi speaks of the beauty of Sufism, but also of the dangers or pitfalls that some mystics might encounter while on their spiritual journey. He cautions Sufis to be careful to avoid them.

INTERFAITH DIALOGUE AND PLURALISM

Nursi's approach to Muslim-Christian relations sets a model for his understanding of interfaith dialogue. In his earlier writings, as early as 1912, Nursi was hopeful about the future of Muslim-Christian cooperation. In recent years, some articles came out to examine this aspect of Nursi's teaching. Saritoprak 2008, which focuses on Nursi and Muslim-Christian relations, provides useful information on his understanding of Muslim-Christian cooperation. Specific references are made to Nursi's own writings, such as his *Damascus Sermon* and letters to his students. Griffith 2008 compares Nursi with another important personality from Christian tradition, Louis Massignon. Markham 2009 is another recent reference that deals with Nursi's approach to interfaith dialogue as well as pluralism, politics, and faith. Similarly, Horkuc 2002 discusses in great detail Nursi's approach toward pluralism and diversity as a new Muslim discourse. Michel 1999 focuses both on Nursi's personality as well as his understanding of cooperation between Muslims and Christians.

Griffith, Sydney. "Bediüzzaman Said Nursi and Louis Massignon in Pursuit of God's Word: A Muslim and a Christian on the Straight Path." *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 19.1 (2008): 5–16.

A good comparison between Nursi and Massignon that elaborates on some striking parallels between their personal journeys. The article also compares their leading ideas as well as their impact on their respective communities.

Horkuc, Hasan. "New Muslim Discourses on Pluralism in the Post-Modern Age: Nursi on Religious Pluralism and Tolerance." *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 19.2 (2002): 68–86.

This essay presents Nursi's view on pluralism and tolerance by analyzing his writings, in particular his major works. The author searches for an answer from Nursi to the question of how Nursi views others who believe and worship differently. Available online.

Markham, Ian S. *Engaging with Bediuzzaman Said Nursi: A Model of Interfaith Dialogue*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009.

This book consists of two parts: The first part contains Nursi's life and thought about contemporary issues while the second concerns religious diversity and interfaith dialogue. The book also includes topics such as faith and politics, what Christians can learn from Nursi, globalization, spirituality, and the religious basis of ethics.

Saritoprak, Zeki. "Said Nursi on Muslim-Christian Relations Leading to World Peace." *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 19.1 (January 2008): 25–37.

This article examines Nursi's opinions on interfaith dialogue in general and Muslim-Christian relations in particular. Some materials found in Nursi's appendixes and used in this essay are made available in English for the first time.

Thomas, Michel, S. J. "Muslim-Christian Dialogue and Cooperation in the Thought of Bediüzzaman Said Nursi." In *Special Issue: Said Nursi and the Turkish Experience. Muslim World* 89.3–4 (July–October 1999): 325–336.

This article presents Nursi as one of the first Muslim thinkers to propose and promote Muslim-Christian dialogue.

TAJDID (RENEWAL)

Nursi is known by his students and many others as one of the renewers (*mujaddid*) of our time. The tradition of renewal is mentioned in one of the sayings of the Prophet, that at the beginning of every century God sends someone to renew the religion of Islam. Algar 2001, on Nursi as a centennial renewer, is among the best articles written on the subject. Voll 1999 also discusses renewal movements and then religion and renewal in the late period of Nursi's life.

Algar, Hamid. "The Centennial Renewer: Bediüzzaman Said Nursi and the Tradition of Tajdid." *Journal of Islamic Studies* 12.3 (2001): 291–311.

This article analyzes whether the *Risale-i Nur* is fulfilling the function of centennial renewal and whether Nursi is one of the renewers or *mujaddids* mentioned in the famous hadith, "Certainly God sends to the community of Islam at the beginning of every century someone to renew for the community its religion."

Voll, John O. "Renewal and Reformation in the Mid-Twentieth Century: Bediüzzaman Said Nursi and Religion in the 1950s." *Muslim World* 89.3–4 (July–October 1999): 245–259.

The author considers the 1950s as the era of religious resurgence, though different from the classical renewal eras. This article emphasizes the impact that Nursi had in this era.

SCIENCE

Both in his "Old Said" period and "New Said" period writings, Nursi strongly advocated the importance of modern sciences and was fascinated by the tremendous developments in the relevant fields. He would have reinterpreted Qur'anic verses and sayings of the prophet he saw as compatible with science. He did not see a contradiction between science and religion. On the contrary, he found that cooperation between them was necessary. In his famous al-Zahra university project, he strongly emphasized that both religious sciences and modern sciences were to be taught together and he considered both as two necessary wings for the success of students. He never thought of science as sacrilegious. When a group of students visited him in the city of Kastamonu during his exile, they complained that their teachers did not speak of God. Nursi said that they should listen to the sciences they were learning—they are all speaking about God. He gives examples from chemistry, medicine, electricity, and more. Tatli 1993 is a good assessment of Nursi's view of modern sciences and how they are compatible with the teaching of Islam. Mermer 1999 discusses a hermeneutical approach to modern sciences. Hijazi 2000 focuses on the realm of nature and the importance of the inclusive Qur'anic address. In this way, the author emphasizes the links between the "recited universe"—the Qur'an—and "the observed universe"—the realm of nature. Acikgenc 1997 discusses the Qur'anic understanding of science and its praise for the people of science and knowledge. After this introductory information, he refers to Nursi's view on the importance of cooperation between contemporary sciences, which are the light of the mind, and religious sciences, which are the light of the heart. Since the term *knowledge* is more encompassing, he includes sciences as well when he refers to some Qur'anic verses that mention knowledge.

Acikgenc, Alparslan. "An Evaluation of the *Risale-i Nur* from the Point of View of Knowledge and the Categorization of Knowledge." In *The Reconstruction of Islamic Thought in the Twentieth Century and Bediuzzaman Said Nursi: International Symposium, Istanbul, 27–29 September 1992*. Translated by Sukran Vahide, 286–311. Istanbul: Sözlür, 1997.

The author speaks of the categorization of sciences referring to the Qur'an, the sayings of the Prophet, and the writings of Nursi—in general, Nursi's commentary on certain Qur'anic verses including the story of prophets such as Solomon and David. Available online.

Hijazi, Sami 'Afifi. "Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's Ideas on the Qur'an and the Book of the Universe." In *Fourth International Symposium on Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, 20th–22nd September 1998, Istanbul: A Contemporary Approach to Understanding the Qur'an; The Example of the Risale-i nur*. Translated by Şükran Vahide, 439–453. Istanbul: Sözlür, 2000.

The author writes about the importance of nature in the thoughts of Nursi and how the Qur'an addresses this concept and then connects the recited universe, which is the Qur'an, with the observed universe, based on the teachings of Nursi. Nursi clearly indicates that the Qur'an and the universe, or the religion of Islam and the modern sciences, are in total cooperation. Available online.

Mermer, Yamine B. "The Hermeneutical Dimension of Science: A Critical Analysis Based on Said Nursi's *Risale-i Nur*." *Muslim World* 89.3–4 (July–October 1999): 270–296.

The author criticizes the positivist view derived from social sciences and applied to modern sciences. She elaborates on two logics that Nursi uses in his assessment of the elements of the universe: Harfi logic, which assumes that every element of the universe is dependent, and Ismi logic, which assumes that every element of the universe is independent. Available online to subscribers.

Tatli, Adem. "Bediuzzaman Said Nursi: The Representative of Contemporary Islamic Thinkers: His Approach to the Questions of Science and Technology." In *The Ideas of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi in the Thirtieth Year since His Death and Their Place in Islamic Thought*. Edited by Şerif Mardin, et al. Translated by Şükran Vahide. Istanbul: Sözlür, 1993.

In this article, the author discusses the originality of Nursi's thought and criticizes the idea of using science for ideological thought. The author also examines Nursi's interpretation of the creation of the world in six days. Available online.

Nursi's Legacy

Nursi did not appoint any successor. His students continued their works and activities after his death. They faced certain persecution after each military coup, but never gave up and never responded with violence. Many people and groups have benefited from Nursi's writings and method of service. Some beneficiaries of Nursi's legacy include a group that takes its name from the newspaper *Nesil*. The group is also connected with Sözlür Publications, one of the major publishers of Nursi's work. Another group takes its name from the publication *Med-Zehra*, and another one takes its name from another newspaper, *Yeni Asya*. All three groups claim that they are following the pristine teachings of Nursi. Today, the largest beneficiary of Nursi's teachings is arguably Fethullah Gülen and his movement. Although Gülen benefits from many Islamic sources, including the era of the companions of the Prophet as well as many early and contemporary mystics, Nursi is among the most prominent ones. Gülen is considered one of the most prominent influential Islamic personalities of our time. Information about him is available at his official website. See also the separate entry on Muhammed Fethullah Gülen.

Fethullah Gülen.

This website is considered the official website of Gülen; there are many other websites on him. Frequently updated and new publications mostly added. It also has references to Gülen's works as well.

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BACK TO TOP

