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ABSTRACT

This thesis is an examination of the present state of Nurculuk, an Islamic movement founded by Said Nursi (1873-1960) and currently the subject of heated controversy in Turkey. After tracing the origins of the movement in the context of the peculiar circumstances of Turkey, the study notes the way in which Nurcu teachings are promulgated and promoted by publications, meetings and other means. Next, the effect these teachings have on the lives and views of members (Nurcus) is examined through individual case studies. The thesis ends with an evaluation of the movement's present significance. The founder's life - including his changing relationships with state authorities - is reviewed in an appendix.

Said Nursi preached a distinctive approach to Islam. His followers regarded him as the müceddid (divinely appointed reformer of Islam) for the twentieth century and organised a secret network to distribute his writings in the face of official hostility in Atatürk's secular Republic. From this organisation grew the clandestine movement that later became known as Nurculuk. The main collections of Said Nursi's writings, the Risale-i Nur, give his exposition of the Koran and provide the main source of inspiration to Nurcus today. The nature of Nurcu beliefs and the way they are propagated have led to accusations that Nurculuk is a danger to the stability of the state.

A detailed study of Nurcu attitudes reveals a remarkable identity of views among members, who see themselves not as a threat to Turkish stability but as a bulwark against anarchy from within the country and communism from without, though they are still eager to see Turkey turn away from Atatürk's secularist vision and adopt Islamic ideals.

By providing a composite picture of Nurcu personality and activity, the study shows what being a Nurcu means in Turkey today and provides the factual basis for the objective assessment of the movement with which the thesis ends.

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ASPECTS OF RELIGIOUS IDENTITY:

THE NURCU MOVEMENT IN TURKEY TODAY

Ali Mermer

Thesis submitted for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

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University of Durham

School of Oriental Studies

Durham 1985

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PREFACE

Religion remains one of the most sensitive issues in today's secular Republic of Turkey. Religious expression is subject to state regulation intended to curb divisive influences in the nation. A wary eye is therefore kept on all religious activities, especially the activities of groups and movements that deviate from the established normsof Sunni orthodoxy in Turkey. The appearance of new Islamic movements is seen as a potential threat that arouses the suspicions of the Department of Religious Affairs as well as the hostility of ardent secularists. Faced with such opposition, these movements often become secretive, thereby further heightening the original suspicion and hostility - a process that may continue indefinitely - and, fuelled by polemical statements, may result in misunderstandings that could have serious consequences.

This study was originally intended to cover three religious groups in contemporary Turkey: the Nurcus, the Süleymancıs, and the Işıkçıs. However, it soon became apparent that it would not be possible to study all three groups adequately within the scope of a single thesis. The Işıkçi movement was found not to be sufficiently distinct to merit detailed study at present; as for the Süleymancis, it was impossible to find any member willing to be interviewed, and since any attempt to do this research without the acquiescence of a leading member would have been futile, I decided to abandon this idea and instead to concentrate solely on the Nurcus. Fortunately, this was to prove much more rewarding as I was able to establish good contacts with reliable, well-disposed and well-placed members of the Nurcu movement.

Nurculuk, as the Nurcu movement is known in Turkish, is the most influential and controversial religious movement to appear in Turkey in recent years, yet surprisingly little reliable information about it is generally available. Press treatment of the subject is usually determined by the political stance of the paper concerned. Politicians' attitudes towards it are influenced by what they gauge to be their own electoral interest. The public take sides in passionate but uninformed debate on the issue. In short, opinions are rife but facts are scarce. The present study seeks mainly to provide a background of knowledge essential to any scholarly consideration of the subject.

The questions I wished to answer in this thesis were many. I sought, among other things, to find out the real reasons why people attach themselves to a movement which is strictly illegal thereby risking imprisonment. The conditions under which such movements appear and the nature of their formation also interested me. What sort of people are attracted to Nurculuk, and how does the movement survive? How is it financed? What do members do, and how do they do it? How are they organised, and are their numbers growing, static or declining? What changes does membership produce upon individual members' attitudes to politics and social norms as a result of propagating their ideology and establishing a group identity? The last question, concerning identity, was of particular interest.

Relevance to Nurcu identity became the main consideration underlying the approach adopted throughout this thesis. Thus, detailed analyses in terms of historical, theological, ideological or sociological significance were eschewed. Instead, attention was concentrated upon relating to Nurcu members themselves the meaning of the particular topic of discussion, since this is crucial to an understanding of their identity.

After an introductory chapter which discusses the Nurcu movement against the social, political and economic background of modern Turkey, and notes some of the difficulties of the research, the study is organised into two main sections. In Chapters 2, 3 and 4, the development of Nurculuk is traced, and Nurcu institutions and publications together with the writings of the movement's founder, Said Nursi, are discussed. Chapters 5, 6 and 7 examine Nurcu meetings, focus on the personal experiences of Nurcus, particularly the processes of their religious conversion, and look at the views they hold on a wide range of political, social and religious questions. This information in these two sections is used as the factual basis of the assessment of the significance of Nurculuk with which the study concludes in Chapter 8.

I should like to express my deep and sincere gratitude to my supervisor, John D Norton of the School of Oriental Studies in the University of Durham without whom this work would certainly never have come to fruition. His intimate knowledge of Turkey and its language, his warm, friendly and unceasing encouragement and, above all, his painstaking assistance and the tremendous patience he has shown in what has at times been a difficult study, have all rendered my task that much easier. My thanks are also due to Dr Bill Williamson of the Department of Sociology and Social Policy for his valuable suggestions and generous assistance at various stages of the work. I am also indebted to Dr J A Beckford for the many insights I gained while following his course on the Sociology of Religion at Durham University at an early stage of my studies. I alone, however, am responsible for the statements and interpretations set forth in the thesis.

Much of the research in this study was made possible by a grant from the Religious Affairs Department in Ankara; I should like to express my thanks to Dr Lütfi Doğan, Minister of State at that time, who gave me the initial encouragement to study abroad. I am also immensely grateful to the Head of the Religious Affairs Department, Mr Tayyar Altıkulaç and his assistant, Mr Niyazi Baloğlu, both of whom have spent a great deal of time dealing with various administrative problems created by my prolonged study.

I am particularly grateful to the staff of the Oriental Section of Durham University Library for their assistance, and to Mrs K Stenhouse for her skilful typing.

Finally, this work would have not been possible without the kind co-operation of those interviewed during my fieldwork in Turkey, and I extend my warmest thanks and appreciation to all of them.

NOTES ON THE TRANSCRIPTION AND PRONUNCIATION OF TURKISH WORDS

Except for those with an established English form, like Pasha, hadith, hodja, lycée and Ramadan, Turkish words are given in the text in modern Turkish spelling.

The Turkish alphabet is phonetic and presents few problems, but readers unfamiliar with it should note particularly the pronunciation of the following letters:

c - is pronounced like the English j in jam

ç - is pronounced like the English ch in church

g - is always pronounced hard like the English g in gun

ğ - after e, i, ö or ü is pronounced like the y in English yes

after a, ı, o or u it is itself silent and serves only to lengthen the preceding vowel

i - is pronounced like the English i in fit

ı - is rather like the English i in fir. (The corners of the mouth should be pulled back when pronouncing ı.)

ö - is pronounced as it is in German

ş - is pronounced like the English sh in ship

ü - is pronounced with the lips forward and rounded as in the French tu

A circumflex over a vowel denotes a slight "y" sound between it and a preceding g, k, or l. Otherwise the circumflex serves to lengthen the vowel.

GLOSSARY OF TURKISH WORDS

ağabey : elder brother (used also, familiarly, as title of respect in addressing nonrelated persons). In Nurculuk: used to address a Nurcu of very long standing or one who has been personally taught by Said Nursi.

âlim : learned, wise; scholar.

cemaat : congregation, assembly; religious community. In Nurculuk: the word also refers to the Nurcu community - the entire group of the followers of Said Nursi.

cemiyet : society, association.

ders : lesson, class, lecture. In Nurculuk: study sessions, regular gatherings of Nurcus to read and study the Risale-i Nur together.

dershane : classroom, place of instruction. In Nurculuk: a place where Nurcus hold their derses.

dost : friend. In Nurculuk: one who seriously supports Nurculuk and disseminates the ideas put forward in the Risale-i Nur.

ehl-i hizmet : in Nurculuk: those who commit their lives to the cause of Nurculuk.

esnaf : trades, guilds; tradesman, artisan.

ezan : call to prayer.

fıkıh (fiqh) : Islamic canonical jurisprudence.

gurbet : being away from home.

hâfız : one who knows the whole Koran by heart.

hemşeri (hemşehri) : fellow countryman, fellow citizen.

hizmet : service. In Nurculuk: (Nurcu activity) - usually refers to being in the service of Nurculuk or making sacrifices in order to serve Nurculuk. Can be applied to anything that promotes Nurculuk.

iftar : breaking one's fast; the meal taken at sundown (during the fast of Ramadan).

imam : prayer leader; religious leader.

kardeş : brother or sister. In Nurculuk: a form of address Nurcus usually use to each other.

kardeşimiz : in Nurculuk: (literally "our brother") - the word used by Nurcus when referring to Nurcu sympathisers or very new members of Nurculuk.

keramet : miracle worked through the agency of a saint.

mahalle mektebi : local school.

medrese : Muslim theological school.

mescit : small mosque; place of worship, temple.

mevlüd (mevlit) : a religious meeting held in memory of a deceased person, in which the Mevlüd (poem written by Süleyman Çelebi depicting the birth of the Prophet Muhammad, sung only by special singers) is chanted.

millet : nation; people; religious community.

müezzin : one who calls Muslims to prayer.

mürşit : who guides to the right road; spiritual guide; head of a religious order.

namaz : ritual worship, prayer.

nefis (or nefs-i emmâre) : in Nurculuk: the head-strong, unregenerate soul.

nur talebesi : in Nurculuk: (literally "student of the light") - one who studies the collection of the Risale-i Nur and accepts its teachings and applies them in his life.

sünnet : practices and rules not laid down in the Koran but derived from the Prophet's own habits and words.

şeriat : (from Arabic Shariah) Islamic canonical law.

şeyh : head of a religious order.

şeyhulislam : dignitary responsible for all matters connected with the canon law, religious schools, etc., and coming next to the Grand Vizier in precedence.

tarikat : religious order, order of dervishes.

tarikatçı : member of a religious order, dervish.

teravih : the supererogatory night service of the month of Ramadan performed immediately after the prescribed night service of worship (consisting of twenty genuflexions with an interval for rest and breathing after each two or four acts).

tesbihat : ascriptions or litanies of praise to God. In Nurculuk: after every namaz to read a special set of tesbihat compiled by Said Nursi.

ulema : the body of acknowledged scholars of Islam.

ümmet : people, community.

Üstad : master; teacher. In Nurculuk: the word refers to Said Nursi.

vakıf : pious foundation. In Nurculuk: charitable institutions established by Nurcus to support the Nurcu cause financially; one who has devoted his life to the Nurcu activities only.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

THE NURCU MOVEMENT IN TURKEY: A CASE FOR RESEARCH

1. THE MOVEMENT

Nurculuk is a religious movement originating in Turkey. Its overall aim is to work '... for the re-establishment of a truly Islamic state, based on the Qur'ân and the sharī'a and ruled by a council of 'ulemā'.[1] The present study examines the development, structure and beliefs of the movement against the background of the modern secular Turkish state.

It is a movement about which relatively little is known. Although in almost every scholarly work on the recent history of Turkish religious life there is a mention of Nurculuk or Said Nursi, unfortunately none of them studies the movement in a comprehensive way or gives detailed information about it. For example, Feruz Ahmad describes Nurculuk as '... a movement whose aim is to bring together all Turkish Muslims in opposition to the doctrine of secularism in order to restore the Islamic state'.[2] Edward Mortimer talks of '... the clandestine revivalist Nurcu movement...'[3] Heyd says, 'The most widespread and extremist religious propaganda has since the 1950s been made by the Nurcus, the followers of a Kurdish shaykh by the name of Bedī'üzaman Sa'îd Nûrsi; called üstad, "the teacher"'.[4] For Landau, Nurculuk is one of the 'politically-minded Islamic groups ...' which '... claims to be not a

UNIV DUNDEE

tarikat, or dervish order, but a theoretical system, based on a spiritual idea of the need for a theocratic state to end "the 27-year period of irreligion"'.[5]

Binnaz Toprak saw Nurculuk as an order which '... became prominent during the 1950s. Their philosophy had been formulated in a book called the Risale-i Nur written by their leader, Saidi Nursi, and widely used in Nur classes [dershanes - as Nurcus call them] dispersed throughout the country'.[6] Metin Heper, too, mentions Nurculuk as an order: 'The most important of the orders that survived the 1950s is that [of the] Nurcus, or "disciples of Light"'.[7] Commenting on the three Islamist groups of the Meşrutiyet era (1908-1919), Niyazi Berkes rightly puts Said Nursi among the group which gathered around Sırat-ı Müstakim and says: 'The only long-time survivor of the group was Said Nursî (1867 [sic. 1873] - 1960), known as Bedi-uz-Zaman (the Wonder of the Times); even at his death, he was the leader of a political-religious order...'[8] Professor Mardin, who penned the only scholarly article on Said Nursi's early life,[9] writes: 'Another movement, more difficult to categorise, was the Nurcu sect made up of the followers of Said-i Nursi. ... After his death in 1961 [sic. 1960] his influence survived among a large group of followers. Said-i Nursi's message is primarily concerned with decrying the reforms of Atatürk.'[10] For Arnold Leder, Nurculuk was an '... uncontrolled popular religious group...'[11] For others, it was '... a modern religious brotherhood ...'[12] The distinguished Turkish professor, T.Z. Tunaya, sees Nurculuk as an "ekol" (school).[13] J.S. Trimingham mentions the movement in his authoritative book on sufi orders as 'A recent Naqshabandī group in eastern Turkey...'[14] Dr Muzaffer Sencer regards Nurculuk as a "symbol of anti-revolutionism"and says:

Gerçekten Cumhuriyet tarihinde, devrimlere karşı çıkan en önemli ve örgütlü hareket, Nurculuk olmuştur. Özellikle 1925'den sonra beliren bu akım çesitli islamcı direnişleri bir birlik içinde toplayarak karşı devrimciliğin bir sembolü haline gelmiştir.[15]

Indeed, Nurculuk has been the most important and organised movement against the reforms in the history of the Republic.

> Appearing on the scene [in Turkey] in 1925, Nurculuk has become a symbol of anti-revolutionism by uniting together various Islamist resistance groups.

Apart from the group's own publications, in which the adherents of Nurculuk describe their movement, Nurculuk has been studied and mentioned in books and articles in various languages.[16] Some are written in appreciation of Nurculuk,[17] while others criticise it. M.S. Abdullah gives a brief description of Nurcu activities in West Germany and in some other countries;[19] Anna Masala of Rome University has written a biography of Said Nursi which was published as part of the University's Turcology series.[20] An article by Yaşar Kutluay contains an interesting study of Said Nursi and Nurculuk from the point of view of the history of mezheps in Islam,[21] M.Y. Geyikdağı makes passing reference to the Nurcu movement saying Nurcus' 'main aim is to work against the secular system of government and return to the şeriat rule'.[22] It will become apparent in this thesis that Nurculuk can best be described as a special kind of religious movement.

It was founded in 1926 by Said Nursi (1873-1960), who was also known as Bediuzzaman. It is upon his personality and teachings that the whole movement is based. Since this thesis is concerned with the state of Nurculuk, some twenty years after the death of its founder, details of Said Nursi's life as portrayed by his followers are relegated to

Appendix III. However, the reader will find it helpful to note now the main outline of his career.

Said Nursi was born in Nurs, a village in Bitlis province. He first began his traditional education in Molla Mehmed Efendi's medrese in a nearby village in 1882. Later, he was taught by his elder brother, Molla Abdullah, until he went to another nearby village, Pirmis, and then to Hizan in order to receive full-time education from Seyyid Nur Mehmet Efendi. Before going to Bayezit in 1888 where he took a three-month full-time course and obtained his icazet (diploma) from the müderris (professor) Şeyh Mehmet Celâli he had also studied in Arvas and Bitlis.

Said Nursi gradually became well-known as 'Said-i Meşhur', travelling extensively throughout Eastern and South-Eastern Anatolia where his superiority in religious sciences was challenged by the learned men of the provinces in the region. When Said Nursi was in Mardin, his activities there displeased the Governor of the city who exiled him to Bitlis where the Governor provided him with a room in his own house. There Said Nursi extended his knowledge by studying numerous works, both in the Islamic and secular sciences. He also made use of the newspapers and books published in Istanbul which the Governor received.

In 1894, Said Nursi went to Van at the invitation of the governor of that city, and it was there that he concentrated his energies even more on secular sciences. Whilst in Van, he was given another title, that of 'Bediuzzaman' (Wonder of the Age), by the learned men who were astonished at his intelligence and capacity in spite of his youth. Believing in the necessity of the reformation of the existing medrese system, Said Nursi travelled to Istanbul in 1896 with his 'medreset-üz Zehra' project through which he sought to combine the modern sciences and the theological sciences and to teach them in three languages, Arabic, Turkish and Kurdish. His

first visit to the capital city of the Caliphate lasted a year and a half. However, although he was unable to approach the Sultan, he made the acquaintance of various religious and political leaders.

Just before the Young Turk Revolution, Said Nursi returned to Istanbul and succeeded in presenting the Sultan with his reform project on the medreses, but because of his bold criticism of the institutions which Sultan Abdulhamid had set up to gather information through secret agents, he was sent first for trial by military court and then to a lunatic asylum in Istanbul. He was soon released from the asylum but was kept for a while under gendarmerie surveillance. On the third day of the Revolution, Said Nursi delivered the first of a series of speeches in a public demonstration in Freedom Square, Salonika, organised by the Committee of Union and Progress, which he supported until 1912, working with the Islamist group within it. After the '31 March Revolt' (1909) Said Nursi was put on trial as a member of the İttihad-ı Muhammedî Cemiyeti (The Society for the Unity of Muhammedans) but was acquitted. From 1912 to 1922 he grew increasingly opposed to the Committee as the influence of the Islamists declined. From 1922 onwards he remained neutral and was, as he puts it, 'in silence' as far as his attitude towards the Committee was concerned.

On the eve of the Balkan War in 1912, Said Nursi was appointed commander of the militia forces brought from Eastern Anatolia and took part in front-line fighting. In World War I he served as the commander of a volunteer regiment on the Caucasian front and in Eastern Anatolia and when the Russian troops defeated the Ottoman army and entered Erzurum in 1916, Said Nursi and his volunteers participated in the Ottoman fight against Russia in Erzurum, Gevaş and Bitlis, where he was wounded and captured by the Russian forces and eventually sent to a prisoner-of-war camp in Kostroma, Northwestern Russia. After remaining in captivity for

more than two years, he managed to escape from the camp, and made his way via Petersburg (Leningrad), Berlin, Warsaw, Vienna and Sofia, to Istanbul, arriving there in 1918. Thereupon, Enver Pasha, the Minister of War, awarded him a campaign medal and a gratuity of fifty liras per month for three months. In the same year Said Nursi was appointed to the Dar ul-Hikmet al-İslamiya (the School of Islamic Philosophy) as a counsellor, retaining his post until the closure of the School in 1922.

After repeated invitations from the Assembly in Ankara, Said Nursi went to Ankara in late 1922 and delivered an address to the Grand National Assembly and gave a prayer of thanks-giving for the victory of the Turkish army. In spite of the warm welcome he received, he was disappointed with Ankara because he found that most of the deputies were neglecting their namaz. He left for Van in 1923. Soon after the Kurdish revolt in 1925 Said Nursi, together with the influential şeyhs and chieftains of Van and other provinces of Eastern Anatolia, was exiled to Western Anatolia. Said Nursi was first sent to Burdur and then to Barla-İsparta in 1926 where he began to write a series of treatises which he called the Risale-i Nur.[23] These writings through which the Nurcu movement came into being, were initially hand-copied by the villagers and then mimeographed and distributed secretly all over Turkey until 1956 when the state finally allowed them to be printed in the modern Turkish alphabet.

Said Nursi appeared in court several times on charges of founding a secret society, plotting against the regime, and trying to destroy the fundamental principles of the state. His first appearance was in 1935 in Eskişehir, and in 1943 in Denizli and then in 1948 in Afyon and finally in 1952 in Istanbul. Although Said Nursi was kept in prison for more than three years during the course of these trials, he was eventually acquitted of all the charges.

Said Nursi. One of his best known photographs, taken in June 1918 when he reached Germany after escaping from a prisoner-of-war camp in Russia.

Just four months before his death, while in exile in İsparta, Said Nursi made a 14,000 kilometre tour of Turkey at the end of which he died in a hotel room in Urfa on 23 March 1960. He was then eighty-seven years old; he had never married and left no heirs. On 12 July 1960, just under four months after his death, the military regime established in the May coup d'état exhumed Said Nursi's body from its burial place in Urfa and took it by military aircraft for re-burial in an unknown spot. According to some Nurcus, the corpse is buried in a village, Sav, in İsparta province.

Together with the Risale-i Nur, Nurculuk has spread to almost every city, finding support particularly from amongst the religiously inclined university students with rural backgrounds. Summarizing the development of the movement Landau says: 'Until the beginning of the multi-party era in 1945, Saidi cautiously kept out of the limelight. He was careful not to speak against secularism, but rather for Islam, to his steadily increasing number of admirers. In 1945, he came into the open as their Üstad, or Master of an order. During the 1950s, Saidi took advantage of the relatively favourable climate towards religion by travelling around the country ... The Nurcular continued their activity in the 1960s and appear to have increased their followings. The crackdown on the Nurcular by the authorities after the 1960 Revolution and repeated arrests did not appear to hurt their popularity. They continued preaching and practising their rites, in defiance of the law'.[24]

After the death of Said Nursi in 1960, the movement continued its activities under the leadership of a council which comprised Said Nursi's close students who are called by Nurcus ağabeys. From 1960 onwards, the Nurcus began to organise themselves by introducing consultative meetings among the adherents of each town, a move which served to consolidate the movement at a local level. Towards the end of the 1970s, Nurcu institutions were established and communication on a national level, under the control of the ağabeys was established between the groups in various towns, although no legal society was ever formed to organise and control the movement. The developments of the movement during this period are well summarised by Feroz Ahmad who said that Nurculuk '...

continued to grow in the fifties and by the early sixties it was organised throughout Turkey. It has even spread to Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, and in Europe it carries out propaganda among workers from the Islamic world, ... Its influence was not restricted to the illiterate and semi-literate masses and it enjoyed a following even in the universities and the bureaucracy. The bulk of its support came from the small towns of Anatolia'.[25]

Although it is very difficult to ascertain the total number of Nurcus in Turkey since there is no formal membership and registration as such in the movement, Cemal Kutay says in his study of Said Nursi that their number in 1980 was well over a million, or even close to two millions.[26] M.S. Abdullah claims in his book, Islam Und Westliche Welt, which was published in 1981, that there were around one and a half million Nurcus in sixty-one countries of the world.[27]

A. The Islamic Background of the Movement

Throughout Islamic history there have been many examples of revitalisation movements, sect developments and religious differentiation. The fact that, historically, there are many different reasons behind the emergence of these movements stems from the multiplicity of social, economic and political elements functioning in relation with each other.

In order to understand the nature of a religious movement we have to look at the main principles of the religion in the context of which this movement takes place.

Islam is a religious faith which makes fundamental claims that are universal and clearly stated in the Koran. These are basically: belief in the unity of God, in prophethood and in resurrection. The faith recognises only one community - umma - and one message for all mankind. Yet, within this, there have always been differences of tribe, nation and belief.

Islam, in its Great Tradition[28] form, which is formulated by the Ulema, is firstly based on the two main sources of Islamic legal speculation, the Koran and the Tradition, and then on analogy (kıyas, in Arabic qiyās), and consensus (icma, in Arabic ijmā'). Islam, as it became organised into a system, produced a clerical class known collectively as ulema. 'The formulation of an orthodox theology was the work, and excited the interest of only a comparatively small body of scholars; to the great mass of Muslims this dogmatic superstructure was, continued to be, and (one might almost add) still is a matter of general indifference.'[29] The movement of popular religion in Islam is not only closely connected with the history of Islamic asceticism and mysticism but also with the absence of a priesthood with spiritual functions, and the fact that it was used as a means of compromising with the exigencies of political life throughout Islamic history. On the other hand, the representatives of the Great Tradition, the ulema, as a class usually enjoyed an intimate working relationship with the state. The laws which the state was to enforce were the religious laws formulated by the ulema, who were in charge of their execution as state functionaries. Thus, in popular eyes, the ulema were necessarily allies of the state.[30]

Because of the lack of ulema and of a "Church" in modern Turkey on the lines of those found in the West, the Western forms of religious organisation and the classical definitions of a Muslim state and its institutions have little meaning in the context of modern Turkey. Some difficulties, therefore, will arise in explaining the nature of Nurculuk if we describe it as a "sect" which is to be contrasted with a "Church". In fact, it is questionable whether we are able at all to describe the religious institutions currently existing in Turkey as a "Church".

However, to discern the difference between the state-controlled religious institutions and popular religion in Turkey, we may temporarily look at Nurculuk in terms of Western forms of religious organisation, viz., church-sect distinction,[31] and see Nurculuk then as a "sect".

Yinger describes the "Church" as contrasted with the "sect" in the light of its reaction to social change as follows: 'The Church ... works within the structure of the established social order. What is often called secularisation today is the inevitable adjustment of the Church to dramatic changes in the world within which it works'.[32] The state-controlled religious institutions in Turkey, the most important of which is the Religious Affairs Department, are inevitably adjusting themselves to the dramatic changes caused by the secularisation policy of the Kemalist Republic. On the other hand, the popular religious movements have certain characteristics in common with "sects" in the West. Describing "sects", B. Wilson asserts that 'They arise within distinctly secular society, against which- rather than against a church - their protest may be directed',[33] and sees them as '... movements of religious protest ... They reject the authority of orthodox religious leaders, and often, also, of the secular government'.[34]

As a "sect", Nurculuk is a religious movement which can be seen as an 'abnormal indicator of abnormal social conditions', to use J.A. Beckford's descriptions of certain religious movements in the West. He explains further that '... the abnormality of religious movements can be accounted for in terms of their followers' experience of deprivation or frustration prior to joining them,'[35] which will be clearly noticed in the chapter which deals with the conversion process of the Nurcus interviewed for this study.

There does exist a concept of "sainthood" within Nurculuk in so far as its adherents regard Said Nursi, the founder of the movement, as a veli (saintly person)[36] but there is no notion of holy lineages. Gellner, describing religious orders in his book, Muslim Society, says: 'Religious orders are led by holy lineages, and in turn successful holy lineages may expand their following into a tariqa, an order'.[37] Within the limits of this description, Nurculuk cannot be described as an order since holy lineages never existed in Nurculuk; moreover, it is impossible to discern any of the universally accepted characteristics of an order, a tarikat, in Nurculuk such as, a şeyh, zikir (a praising God with recitation of litanies), halife (successor to the şeyh), etc.

However, Nurcus see themselves as different from all of the older Turkish Islamic orders. They see themselves as being above the tarikats, rather as a group answering the needs of the twentieth century, which the tarikats are unable to meet. Nevertheless, they do not denounce the tarikats, but simply believe that new forms of organisation are necessary. They see their task not simply in terms of self-purification but as an active defence and development of a faith under attack.[38] In this sense they view themselves as more of a movement than an order or sect. Thus, in this study, Nurculuk is not regarded as a religious order (tarikat) as is sometimes thought, but as a religious movement[39] which emerged amidst particular social and political conditions of the Republic as a substitute for the religious orders which had had a long lasting effect on the Turkish nation.[40]

In order to understand the importance of this 'substitute', we must look at the role played by the tarikats in the life of the Turkish nation as a Muslim community. Fazlur Rahman states concisely the importance of the tarikat from the very beginning of the conversion of Turks to

Islam: 'The Turkish tribesmen were converted to Islam not through the activity of the 'Ulemā', as had been the case with the spread of Islam in its first phase through Iraq, Persia and Egypt, but through the activity of the Sūfīs'.[41] From the beginning of their conversion to Islam, the people of Anatolia have always sought the protection of saintly personages or tarikats established by them. Dr Küçük illustrates this fact in his work on Tarikats and their effect on the Turks:

> ... onlar için herhangi bir tarikata bağlanmadan yaşamanın bir mânâ ve değeri yoktur.'[42]
>
> ... for [the people of Anatolia] living without connection to a tarikat has no worth or meaning.

Pointing to the importance of the tarikats during the Ottoman Empire, Mardin describes their function in Muslim communities: '... they provided many services for their members: conservatories, gymnasia, a second channel of upward mobility: if one can't make it at the Süleymaniye Mosque, one can go to a dervish order and learn over there: a second chance at success'.[43]

After becoming Muslims via the tarikats, the Turks have followed many different orders.[44] The most important of them was the Yeseviye which displaced the ancient religion of the Turks and contributed, thanks to individuals such as Yunus Emre, to the formation of the popular side of Islamic Turkish civilisation.[45] Another order which had an influence on the lives of the Turks was the Mevleviye which appeared in the thirteenth century during the Seljuk era.[46] The Naksibendiye order ensured the attachment of most Turkish peoples to the Sunni tradition.[47] The Bektashi order with its longstanding connection with the Janissaries acquired enormous prestige and soon spread throughout the Ottoman Empire.[48]

The Ottomans appreciated in particular the power that the şeyhs of the order wielded and consequently sought to control, regulate and conciliate them rather than suppress them. The rulers of the Empire were well aware of the popular base of the şeyhs and also of the potentiality of the latter for direct intervention in affairs of the state.[49] Throughout the history of the Empire, the people of Anatolia, tired of never-ending deprivation caused by continuous wars and internal insurrections, sought moral support by joining the orders. Most of the Sultans of the Empire saw no harm in the orders spreading over the Empire; rather they made capital out of them by canalising them into sources of moral satisfaction for their subjects. Some of them even regarded these orders as vehicles for the Islamisation of the people of newly conquered areas.[50]

The orders were not confined only to the boundaries of the Ottoman Empire; they were everywhere in the Muslim world. 'The seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries saw,' says Gibb, 'the apogee of the Sufî brotherhoods. The greater orders spread a network of congregations from end to end of the Islamic world. While smaller local orders and sub-orders grouped the members of different classes and occupations into compact communities.'[51] By the nineteenth century, these orders became the means for the recruitment and mobilisation of the reactionary powers in the forefront of the Muslim world against the expansion of colonialist powers.[52]

The twentieth century saw the apparent decline of the dervish orders in the face of severe and oppressive government action in Republican Turkey, but, as The Muslim World reported in 1960, '... observers of the Turkish scene have believed that dervishes, as "old soldiers", just faded away. Now there is reason to believe that, like many secret

groups, they merely "conformed" on the surface, while, with patience and care, they continued their existence'.[53]

The movement studied in this thesis is also an example of a popular Islamic tradition that has survived against considerable opposition in a specifically Turkish context. My aim has been to clarify the meaning of Nurculuk membership in the eyes of its followers, a meaning which must be understood against the background of Turkish history in general and the specific politico-religious conditions of Atatürk's secular and modernist state after 1923.

B. The Turkish Background of the Movement

Nurcus oppose the secular basis of the modern Turkish state and as a result have themselves been the object of political attack, frequently in the form of imprisonment. The very reaction of the Turkish authorities to the movement since its birth shortly after the foundation of the Republic explains much of its structure and activities. To understand both the development of the secular state and its attacks on religion, the Republic's Ottoman past has to be appreciated.

a) The Ottoman State

The Ottoman state was traditionally characterised by the combination of temporal and religious attributes implied in the words, Sultanate and Caliphate. 'In Turkish history, the concept of unity of state and religion (din-u-devlet) was applied through an imperial system which gave unity and order to a great multiplicity of religions, sects, professions, and social classes.'[54] The state was based on a peasant economy and settled peasant communities in which religion played the leading role in everyday life.

In 1826, the Janissaries, who were by then no longer capable of defending the Empire, were annihilated by Sultan Mahmud II (1808-1839),

a strong believer in modernisation. In 1831, the old feudal holdings, or tımars, were abolished and the Sultan '... placed the evkaf estates (property of the Muslim religious institutions) under the management of the government. These reforms were designed chiefly to weaken the power of the Sultan's main opponents, the landowners, and the ulema';[55] the latter being the main opposition to the Sultan's advance in reforming the Empire. 'The practical effect of this was to make the religious institutions economically dependent upon the government.'[56]

The political reforms from the time of Mahmud II onwards consisted of '... almost always modernisation, and modernisation was almost always Westernisation'[57] which ultimately replaced the Islamic content of the Turkish political ideology. In other words, these reforms took place simultaneously with the gradual shifting of the national political ideology from Ottomanism to nationalism and Turkism, and from Islamism to secularism.[58] The unity of state and religion (din-u-devlet) began to disintegrate when the ulema started opposing the modernist sultans who preferred the state (devlet) to religion (din).

The ulema continued to keep religious education under their control until the end of the Empire whereas the modern secular schools were supported by the sultans. These parallel and mutually antagonistic educational institutions, one religious and the other secular, revealed '... the profound intra-elite conflict between the military and bureaucratic contingent and the religious hierarchy'.[59] The conflict was, at the beginning of the modernisation drive, mainly between the sultans and the ulema; later on it was the military and bureaucratic contingent which opposed the ulema as, gradually, more and more students with secular military and bureaucratic educational backgrounds graduated and began to assume positions of power near to the sultans, who had consciously

created these secular educational institutions within the military establishment[60] in order to save the state (devlet). The rise to power of these individuals began as early as the promulgation of the Nizam-i Cedid by Selim III (1792-1807) and made soldiers '... Turkey's foremost modernisers'[61] for nearly two hundred years.

Although the sultans themselves were believers, they regarded with suspicion the classical religious educational institutions which trained the ulema who from time to time rose up in rebellion, and who occasionally caused the downfall of sultans.[62] Sultans therefore stood to gain from the development of secular educational institutions and the weakening of the religious ones. Professor Mardin goes so far as to conclude his book, The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought, with the claim: '... he [Abdulhamid II] also actively encouraged obscurantism in the medreses. He turned ... [them] into refuges for deserters, evaders of military service, and other riff raff... As to the ulema, they never recovered from the blow dealt them by the "defender of the faith", the sultan-caliph'.[63]

In the world at large, the Ottoman state itself constituted a powerful obstruction to Russian expansion into the Eastern Mediterranean. This explains some features of the nature of Atatürk's state and of Western policies towards it. This background must be kept in mind because an element of the Nurcu faith is that Turkey has a role to play in resisting Soviet expansionism, which they regard as inimical to all religious belief. This may explain why a distinctively Islamic movement in fact supports modern Turkey's Western political orientation, unlike many other Islamic movements which oppose the West.

b) The Kemalist Revolution

For reasons beyond the scope of this study - but including internal decay, the failure to modernise, political incompetence and the effect

of the First World War, - the Ottoman state collapsed after 1918. During the nineteenth century, attempts had, of course, been made to modernise the Empire. In addition to the Tanzimat, educational and military reforms were attempted. Successive sultans sought to profit from modern science and technology, but there was little cultural modernisation implemented throughout the Empire, the Anatolian heartlands being particularly neglected.

After the War of Independence, the Empire was replaced by Atatürk's secular state. Some features of the state are of special relevance to our study.

As Rustow comments, 'Kemalist Westernising reforms which confirmed the break with the past and laid the foundations for a secularist Turkey, are well known'.[64] Just before the establishment of the Grand National Assembly on 23 April 1920, the representative assembly in Ankara passed Article I of the Provisional Constitution which had been proposed on 20 January 1920. This article stated that sovereignty belonged without reservation to the millet. This struck at the very root of the Sultan-Caliph's claim to leadership of the Muslim community. On 1 November 1922, the Ankara regime abolished the Sultanate and the Assembly assumed power in the name of the millet. After the proclamation of the Republic, a series of laws was passed on 3 March 1924 which abolished the caliphate, made all education a monopoly of the state, and closed the medreses. Of the 479 medreses in existence in 1924, only the Süleymaniye in Istanbul survived in the form of a Theological Faculty at the University of Istanbul - and even then it was under the control of the secular Ministry of Education. Religious affairs and the administration of pious foundations were thereafter to be run by directorates attached to the office of the Prime Minister. All religious affairs thus came under government control

which meant the elimination of the ulema, a task which was more difficult than the abolition of the monarchy since Atatürk had '... realised that his only potentially serious opposition' was the ulema.[65] The Religious Affairs Department was ultimately restricted chiefly to issuing licences to preachers and supervising the content of their sermons, and to giving an occasional advisory opinion on canon law wherever it was still applicable. The law which required all men to wear hats, thus rendering the wearing of the fez a criminal offence, was passed by the Assembly on 25 November 1925. Earlier in 1925, Mustafa Kemal had crushed the Kurdish rebellion, which was led by dervish şeyhs, and subsequently he 'used the opportunity to suppress dervish orders throughout the country, closing their convents, disbanding their associations and banning their meetings and ceremonies.'[66] Mustafa Kemal did this simply because, it is often the case as Yinger puts it in a more general discussion of religion, 'religious requirements may contradict political requirements,'[67] as indeed they did in the Turkey of the 1920s. Article 677 which prohibits and abolishes the profession of tomb-keeping, the use of mystical titles, and provides for the closing of tekkes (dervish lodges), zaviyes (central dervish lodges), and tombs[68] came into force on 13 December 1925. In 1926, the Swiss Civil Code was adopted and the link between the Şeriat and criminal law was severed. In April 1928 the second article of the 1924 constitution which had begun with the words "The religion of the Turkish state is Islam," was abrogated. Thus '... the concept of a state religion was stricken from the constitution, although not from the minds of the people'.[69] On 3 November of the same year the Latin alphabet was introduced and public use of the Arabic alphabet after the end of the year was prohibited.

'Although many of the Kemalist reforms,' says Toprak,'... had little to do with accepted indices of modernisation, they were considered essential to the Kemalist program of reform because they gave momentum to the basic aim of the revolution, i.e., to transform Turkish society from an Islamic into a Western setting.'[70] Thus the construction of this "Western setting" '... required the adoption of a new ideology'.[71]

Several surveys demonstrate that the Kemalist reforms were successful in substituting national identity for a religious frame of reference[72] although according to some people these reforms '... affected only the towns and the urban classes and brought little change to the peasant majority: others felt that ... [they] produced too violent a break with the nation's religious and cultural traditions.'[73] For example, while studying the modernisation of Muslim countries, Gellner compares the cultural changes which took place in modern Turkey with the changes in Algerian society after 1962 and says that the current Algerian cultural revolution '... is a kind of mirror-image of Atatürk's shock therapy. The de-Islamisation of Anatolian peasantry goes against the grain, as does the de-gallicisation of an Algerian technocrat'.[74] 'Turkey modernises against Islam, Algeria with it. Turkey endeavours to bridge the gap between elite and mass by changing the faith of the latter, Algeria by changing the speech of the former.'[75] On the other hand, Uriel Heyd, for example, does not see the aim of Atatürk's reforms as "de-Islamisation" as such but as the disestablishment of Islam, i.e., '... to limit it to matters of personal belief and worship.'[76] Heyd clearly states that Atatürk's aim '... was not to destroy Islam...'[77] although he goes on to argue that the spiritual vacuum created by the elimination of Islam from the life of the elite was not completely filled by Turkish nationalism

and Western civilisation, the two main pillars of Atatürks's cultural orientation .[78]

In considering the Kemalist reforms, which were carried on after Atatürk's death by his closest lieutenant, İsmet İnönü, and by successive Republican governments, W.C. Smith asks: '... can a non-Christian nation be a member of Western civilisation?'[79] Smith seems inclined to answer himself in the affirmative since he considered that the Turkish nation in 1957 was ready to reform its Islam by adjusting it to the demands of Western civilisation. In 1968, U. Heyd asked almost the same question in the conclusion to his article, 'Will a non-Christian nation be able to integrate fully into modern Western civilisation without renouncing its historical self-identification and its basic cultural tradition?' Exercising caution in his answer, he said, 'The Turkish experience may give a significant reply'.[80]

The Kemalist revolution sought to isolate political opposition to the new state which was based on nationalism and modernisation. The state did not oppose religion as such; it did not seek to separate completely the religious sphere from the political but on the other hand did not intend to preserve the situation that had prevailed during Ottoman times when the two spheres were completely fused together. Seeing things differently, Atatürk sought to personalise religion[81] in order to secularise the state. This was not an easy task to complete. The major obstacle was the very nature of the religion of the Turkish nation. In Islam, as Berkes summarises it, 'It is believed that religion and state are attached to each other like Siamese twins'.[82] This means that Islam is '... on the one hand, a religious doctrine, and on the other, a political philosophy as well as a legal system'.[83] 'Because Islam is something more than a religious belief system, the problem of secularisation also becomes

something more than a formal separation'.[84] 'If [the] separation of Islam and politics seemed [to the Kemalists] difficult, then the former at least could be made subservient to the latter. Hence, religious institutions were linked to the state bureaucracy rather than encouraged to create an autonomous organisation'.[85]

Indeed, the modernising élites of the Republican era saw the Islamic religious establishment as the major obstacle to the progress of westernisation and were determined to sweep it away. Although secularisation in its Turkish context should by no means be equated with irreligiousness,[86] problems arose because the concept was little understood by the masses who were reluctant to abandon their cultural orientation for the particular version of modernity which the Westernised élites were trying to impose on them.[87]

One of the many consequences of the discord between the westernising élites and the masses was that many religious leaders were forced into opposition and obliged to use religion as a mode of political resistance to the new state. Atatürk allowed no other political parties. In this context religion became a source and vehicle of opposition. This was particularly true for peasant communities. Firstly, they had little power in a regime controlled by a modernising army officer class which imposed revolutionary change from above. Secondly, since the bulk of the population of the new state comprised the indigent peasants of Anatolia, there was a poor socio-cultural basis for secularism. Anatolia lacked schools, transport, communication and industry. The peasants, therefore, continued to lead their lives in a totally traditional framework. This framework was defined by religion, family obligations and by political and economic relations. Despite the developments of state capitalism (étatism)[88] the economic circumstances of the world economy during the

1920s, 1930s and 1940s hindered Turkish development. This meant, among other things, that peasants and small town artisans continued to lead very traditional lives in which religion played the most decisive role and which religious leaders continued to command respect.

Background conditions such as these explain why religious activists could generate support among substantial sections of the Turkish population. Cultural modernisation to this point had still not penetrated traditional peasant life, the literacy level in the country being staggeringly low. According to the results of the first census of population in 1927, only 10.5% of the whole population was literate.[89] This percentage was even lower in the rural areas.[90]

Thus we have seen the socio-cultural and political context in which Said Nursi's early activities in recruiting peasants to publicise and disseminate his religious views took place. It is to those early activities in Western Anatolia that we now turn.

Soon after the Kurdish revolt of February 1925 under the leadership of Şeyh Said of Palu, the "Law for the Maintenance of Order" was passed in March 1925 to deal with this rebellion, which was widely seen as '... a religious reaction against the secularising reforms'.[91] The government exiled the dervish leaders of the Kurdish provinces, who had emerged to replace the vanished derebeys and autonomous princes as the exponents of local particularism, to Western Anatolia. Atatürk's strategy was to reduce the power of the şeyhs to resist his reforms and he did this by sending them to a place where they had no followers. Said Nursi was residing in Van when the şeyhs and notables of Van were rounded up and transported first to Erzurum and then to Trabzon by horse-drawn sledges. Said Nursi was among them. Subsequently, they were sent from Trabzon to Istanbul by sea, guarded by gendarmes. After staying for a

while in Istanbul, Said Nursi, together with some of the other exiles, was sent to İzmir, then on to Antalya by sea and to Burdur where he stayed seven months. From Burdur he was sent to Barla (a small nahiye of İsparta) where he stayed as an exile for eight years and where he began to write his religious treatises which he called the Risale-i Nur (The Treatise of Light).

As an exile from Eastern Anatolia, where the learned men of religion and the şeyhs were influential as religious leaders whom the new government of Anakara regarded as dangerous for the regime, Said Nursi was held in esteem by the traditionally religious people of Barla and its surrounding villages. Despite the close gendarme watch over Said Nursi, the villagers smuggled his writings written in the "sacred" Arabic script and concerning matters of religion, out into the villages. Of the many peasants who regarded helping a "highly important şeyh of Eastern Anatolia" as a religious duty, only three were able to read and write in Ottoman script.[92] These three were the people to whom Said Nursi dictated his writings, which were copied by hand and secretly distributed among the people of Barla, who gathered in stables or in the houses[93] of those courageous enough to risk gendarmerie raids on their homes. These "religious scriptures" were copied on specially prepared rahles (small low reading desks), the tops of which were covered with glass through which light would shine, enabling the person, unable to read or write, to copy the page by tracing the letters underneath. These multiplied copies were again distributed with the utmost secrecy among the peasants of the neighbouring villages by specially organised Nur Postacıları (Postmen of the Light). Nurcus claim that by 1956, when the printing of the Risale-i Nur in modern Turkish alphabet was first allowed, 600,000 copies had been secretly produced by hand and distributed all over Turkey.

Against this background, and particularly the banning of the tarikats, Said Nursi was accepted readily by many of his followers as a şeyh. Said Nursi wrote most of his works - the collection of the Risale-i Nur - between 1926 and 1950, and his followers established a book-copying and distribution network throughout the country. It was again during this period that Nurculuk began to acquire a sense of group cohesiveness, an essential step in becoming a religious movement.

This cohesiveness was further reinforced by official attempts to suppress the movement. Said Nursi benefited from these attempts and encouraged his adherents to work secretly under any conditions, describing the Nurcu movement with the words of Imam Ali (the fourth Caliph) who, supposedly, hinted at the existence of the movement with the words sırran tenevvuran,[94] which the followers interpreted to mean that the movement (Nurculuk) diffuses its light secretly. This is, of course, a well-known general phenomenon recognised elsewhere. As Yinger explains: 'In general, it appears that pressure against a strong group makes it stronger; it increases the morale of its members and heightens their sense of identity'.[95] The suppression of religious activity in general, and Nurculuk in particular, helped the followers of the latter to heighten their sense of identity, although the group was not particularly strong during the one-party period (1923-1946). However, the individuals who did gather around Said Nursi were those who identified themselves with religion and opposed the Kemalist reforms, believing that the regime really wanted to destroy religion completely. The official pressures exerted on Said Nursi personally, the fact that he was in exile as a religious leader, his later imprisonment in Eskişehir in 1935, in Denizli in 1944 and in Afyon in 1948, the tight government control over the people who visited him, the ban on the publication of his writings, the threat of imprisonment

for those who distributed his works, and the raids upon gatherings assembled for collective study of his writings, all play a crucial part in how Nurcus now perceive themselves in historical perspective. They see Said Nursi during this time (1926-1950) as the only religious leader who challenged the Kemalist reforms. One small but highly symbolic aspect of this, for example, is that Said Nursi neither adopted Western dress nor abandoned the turban, even when he appeared before the court.

In the period after the Second World War, important changes took place in Turkey which directly affected Nurcu thinking and practice. Among those relevant to this study are the following:

i) Changes in foreign policy: In 1945, when Turkey refused the Soviet Union's territorial demands and declined to renew the 1925 Treaty of Friendship, she began to seek closer ties with the United States and succeeded in obtaining military and economic assistance. The Republican People's Party (hereafter RPP) had already decided to loosen the political and economic structure in order to accommodate internal social change. The reorientation in foreign policy was therefore also in line with the new domestic policy. For the Turkish government, only membership of NATO could provide a guarantee of security against Russian expansionist policy as full and as firm as those enjoyed by the European members of the alliance. The problem perceived by NATO planners was how to contain Soviet expansionism on NATO's south-eastern flank.[96]

Turkey's membership of NATO is particularly important for the Nurcus since they are in total agreement with the idea that the Soviet Union as a communist country is the most dangerous power threatening Turkey. The anti-communist stand of Nurcus is not a rejection of the Soviet Union on economic grounds but on religious ones. As is shown in the chapter on the Nurcu views, Nurcus are not against the idea of "economic justice"

but they do oppose atheism which they connect with anarchy. This theme came through strongly during the interviews carried out as part of this research. Nurcus blamed the state of anarchy which engulfed the country before the military intervention of September 1980, on the communists.

ii) Modernisation and economic growth: A series of general economic conditions related to capital formation and industrialisation favoured urbanisation and rural migration to cities and later, abroad. Because urbanisation in the third world is taking place without industrialisation, many of these countries appear overurbanised in relation to their size and resources, hence the terms urban peasants and peasantisation of cities are used to express this aspect of the problem.[97] It was by virtue of these processes that Nurcus were able to recruit followers in the cities, urging them to resist the religious decline that they saw resulting from modernisation.

iii) Religion and politics come together again: As early as 1945, some members of the ruling RPP demanded '... the relaxation of the state's tight control over the economy, greater incentives for private enterprise, increased rural development and a less hostile policy on the role of religion in public life'.[98] This new trend among the Turkish politicians, who sought greater government tolerance of religion in order to strengthen Turkish attitudes against communism during the Cold War period, is interpreted by some writers as an extension of '... certain post-war trends in Europe and America, such as the decline of secular positivism, as well as the spread of communism' which were 'bound to have repercussions in Turkey, situated as she is on the boundary between the Western and Soviet blocs'.[99] After Turkey officially became a member of NATO in 1952, she was regarded as a bastion against communism on NATO's south-eastern flank, and the political leaders considered the need to organise Islam

as a moral and social force with which to strengthen the community against external attack and internal disruption.[100] As Professor Mardin succinctly stated: 'Once in power, the Democrat Party did, indeed, soften the Jacobin secularism of its predecessor'.[101]

In a public speech in Adana in 1952, Menderes said that 'The Turkish people are Muslims and will remain Muslims. No one has the right in this country to violate the freedom of conscience ... It would not be in accord with our majority interpretation of the freedom of conscience to consider secularism as anti-religion or inimical to religion'.[102] 'Menderes laid down as a fundamental rule of his policy that he would defend "the reforms that had been adopted by the nation" (millete malolmuş inkilâplar), implying that those that had not been generally accepted might be reconsidered'.[103] Although the aim of the government, may have been to '... restore Islam to respectability but not to power',[104] this policy of reviewing reforms received strong and explicit Nurcu support. For example, prior to the 1954 elections, Said Nursi wrote a letter to be distributed among Nurcus, stating that they were to work for a Democrat Party (hereafter DP) victory in the interest of the Koran.[105] Throughout the 1960s and 1970s Nurcus saw the Justice Party (hereafter JP) as a continuation of the DP and supported it. Because of the open Nurcu support of the JP, 'İnönü made this particular issue the main theme of the 1966 campaign for the senate elections and he repeatedly invited Demirel to denounce any collaboration between the Justice Party and the Nurcus'.[106] Demirel's silence concerning this matter led İnönü to accuse the JP and its chairman and Prime Minister Demirel '... of collaborating with the Nurcus, claiming that "those who seek to benefit from the use of Saidi Nursi's sect as a vote-getting machine are obscurantists"'. This '... was reminiscent of his attack on

the Democrat Party during the 1950s'.[107] Although neither Menderes nor Demirel publicly denounced the Nurcus, in practice '... both the DP and JP governments have cracked down periodically on ... the Nurcular ...' as Weiker claims to keep their credit '... at least moderately good with the more secularist elements ...'[108]

iv) A suggestion of religious revival in Turkey after the 1950s: In 1947, Gibb said, '... the religious aspects of the modern Turkish ... revolution ... have not yet been adequately studied ...'[109] In 1974 G. Lewis also referred to '... the absence of an up-to-date study of popular religion in Turkey ...'[110] Indeed, although the literature does contain quite a number of references to religious aspects of modern Turkey,[111] recent developments in Turkish religious life still need to be adequately assessed. However, the available evidence suggests that, despite the secularisation in Turkey during the Republican era, popular religion has persisted, especially in the rural areas. This religious revival was not caused by the Nurcu movement but they have clearly benefited from the atmosphere it has created.

L.V. Thomas wrote in an article in 1952 that 'Mosque attendance has unquestionably increased in towns and cities and so has the construction of new mosques, frequently financed by private contributions. Religious literature rolls offthe presses in markedly increased volume. Some of it, especially in periodicals, ventures open criticism of the Republic's previous hostility toward religion'.[112] In 1957, H.A. Reed clearly stated, 'It is my opinion that there is now a definite resurgence of Islamic sentiment and insight in Turkey' and explained the nature of this resurgence saying: 'Searching, educated men and women who cherish Islam, are certainly apprehending it in many newer, more personal ways. They are recovering and reappraising their Islamic heritage'.[113] In 1968

U. Heyd marked the importance of these developments, saying: 'This survival and - if my interpretation is correct - revival of Islam in Turkey, the most secular of all Muslim countries, are obviously a fact of great significance for the future of Islam in the modern world'.[114]

F. Ahmad evaluates the political power of religion in Turkey between 1950 and 1975 and says, 'It is paradoxical that in Turkey, where there have been no organised Islamic pressure groups since the establishment of the Republic, religion has played such an influential role in the politics of the country during the last quarter century.'[115]

This religious revival can be seen in many different lights. In one way, it reflects the failure of secularism to become fully institutionalised in Turkey.[116] Nationalism did not replace religion as a framework to give significance and direction to people's lives.[117] Neither did the state-controlled religious institutions succeed in catering adequately for the religious demands of the people. Although some observers claim that '... more educated people now [in the 1970s] appeal to Islam than did in the past',[118] these religious developments are best explained within the historical context of the religious life of the Muslim communities by Gibb who says: 'The place of Sufi mysticism [which had been vacated by the Reformists] has, therefore, been taken either by new religious clubs and associations or by the cult of the Prophet Muhammad.'[119] L.V. Thomas stresses this fact particularly in the case of Turkey by saying: 'The contention that the country now [1952] is or soon will be in the grip of large-scale religious reaction is simply not true.

'Peasant Islam is a vital component in the lives of the backward majority of Turkey's citizens, but it is not therefore a danger to the Turkish Republic. It does not keep peasants from being taxpayers, patriots, soldiers, and voters'.[120]

The above comment is equally relevant when we observe the life of the Turkish nation in the 1980s. We can conclude the section again with Thomas's words marking the real nature of these religious developments: 'Recent developments in religion do not threaten to bring down in ruins the work of Atatürk and his generation. Instead, they tend to enhance that work with the deeply felt human values.'[121]

v) The military interventions of 1960, 1971 and 1980: Post-war Turkish politics have been unstable and the military have taken over three times. On each occasion, they have tried to solve the endemic economic and political problems of Turkey by re-asserting Kemalist philosophy. This has created an environment threatening to Nurcus, who did not support any of these military interventions. During these times, the growth of the Nurcu movement has been slowed down but not reversed.

2. METHOD OF RESEARCH

The political context in which the fieldwork for this research was carried out did not allow for the easy use of standard methods of social research. There are difficulties in any case in studying clandestine religious movements subject to official harassment. It is inevitable that Nurcus will treat those who seek to question them with suspicion, even assuming initial contact can be made, which is difficult enough in itself. The special conditions of a military takeover of government made the normal difficulties of research of this kind even more complex. It is important to discuss in detail what these difficulties are and what fieldwork methods were actually employed because this reveals much of the position and experience of Nurcus themselves. The detailed account of fieldwork is set out in Appendix I and is an integral part of the

description of Nurcu organisation and religious practice. The difficulties faced by researchers illustrate precisely the position of Nurcus in Turkish society.

There are few comprehensive studies of religious movements in Turkey and none that are recent.[122] When this research was first planned, the aim was to use some standard method of social research, particularly the administering of a questionnaire to sample population of Nurcu members. For both political and practical reasons, this turned out to be impossible. The political ones have been explained; the practical ones are those of establishing appropriate contact with religious organisations which are likely to be suspicious of outsiders. There were no models of research on religious movements in Turkey that could be followed directly. The method of this research, therefore, had to be adjusted to the setting in which it took place, and to the realities of Nurcu life and practice, and these precluded the use of a widely administered questionnaire if reliable results were to be obtained.

Three general methods of data collection were in fact used; each has its special value but also its peculiar weaknesses. The methods were: standard documentation of Nurculuk from previously published sources and collection of written documents distributed among the Nurcus themselves. Secondly, a variant of the anthropological method of participant observation was used; finally, life histories and detailed examinations of beliefs and practices of a small number (12) of Nurcus were collected. Data collected in this way werethen analysed alongside Nurcu writings themselves to clarify what Nurcu membership meant to those involved. This has been the general strategy of research for this study.

A. Collection of Written Sources

The Nurcu movement thrives on the circulation of their own religious publications and the works of Said Nursi. Part of the research involved collecting as many of these as possible and analysing their content. At the same time, the aim was to clarify what these writings mean to Nurcus themselves. An account of this is given in Chapters 4 and 7. Other Nurcu written materials were collected. These include Nurcu magazines, newspapers and publications and internally circulated letters (supplementary letters as they are called). These letters reveal much of the local organisations and work of Nurcus together with their countrywide plans for development.

Normally it would be impossible for non-Nurcus to acquire the circulated letters; they are confidential to the organisation and the few collected during this study were collected through close personal contact and can in no way be said to be representative of all the supplementary letters of Nurcus. The fact that the movement is not readily open to non-Nurcus made it important to supplement a study of their written work with direct personal contact and to participate as fully as possible in the life of Nurcus themselves.

B. Participant Observation

From the beginning of the research it was clear that it would be important to study Nurculuk from within. To make this possible, the first problem was to establish personal contact. How this was done is described in Appendix I. Again, the problems encountered in making contact reveal much of the character of the movement itself. The Nurcus were initially suspicious but once they agreed to the research, they showed themselves willing to help and also to be very well-organised and have easy communication with one another throughout Turkey.

As a method of data collection, participant observation has several weaknesses which, so far as possible, have to be overcome. Some of these weaknesses are as follows. The first is that of contact, i.e. how to meet members of the society or group being studied and how to introduce and justify the research to them. A full account of how this was achieved in this case is given in Appendix I. It is sufficient at this point to note that personal religious contacts were used initially and that this helped overcome Nurcu suspicion. This leads to the second problem, that of confidence, i.e. whether those being studied will feel relaxed and able to talk freely to the researcher. In the context of this research, there were no linguistic barriers or general cultural obstacles. Nor were there any religious obstacles: my own religious education and attachment to the Religious Affairs Department gave me an access to them which would almost certainly have been denied to non-practising Muslims and which encouraged them to trust me.

Nevertheless, there is still the further problem of selective data gathering and of selective observation. There are limits to how far an outsider can penetrate the movement. It may be possible to attend the ders but impossible, unless someone is a devoted Nurcu, to attend 'Consultative meetings' at any level in the organisation of the movement. So, although it is possible to gain their confidence, this still does not mean free access to the movement itself.

Nor does it mean that the information collected freely from members is entirely complete. The Nurcus, for instance, did not discuss problems of personal or political differences among themselves. This is to be expected; they would reveal to the observer that which they feel it is appropriate for non-Nurcus to hear. It may even be the case that they would stress those things that they felt the observer wished to hear or

see.[123] These are general problems of participant observation which have been extensively discussed by anthropologists.[124] There is no way in which these particular problems can be solved; researchers simply have to be aware of them.

C. Life Histories

A researcher can develop more confidence in his own data when it can be seen in the experience of particular individuals.[125] A major part of this study is based on a close discussion with a small number - twelve altogether - of Nurcus. How they were contacted is explained in Appendix I. The reason for relying heavily on the results of interviews with such a small group needs explanation. There were strategic problems, already mentioned; in contacting large numbers. But even taking this into account, there are good reasons for concentrating on just a few people in research of this kind. Among these are the following. Firstly, since Nurculuk is a relatively recent religious movement, most of its original members are still alive. Their experience of being Nurcu reflects directly the history of the movement. This history can be retrieved therefore very profitably from discussions with individuals.

Secondly, discussions with individuals help to clarify in detail the kinds of reasons which encouraged Nurcus to become members of the movement. The social and economic changes in Turkish society since Atatürk have already been mentioned, together with the state's attempt to build a secular political order. Since secularisation did not fully reach peasants and village people in Turkey, people from this background who migrated to cities experienced some of the tensions of Turkish society in a direct personal way.

In subsequent chapters, various aspects of Nurcu organisation, belief and practice are illustrated using the personal experiences of Nurcus.

This leads to the third reason for studying the experience of particular individuals, the opportunity such methods give of understanding subtle aspects of religious identity and personal change. Becoming a Nurcu does involve changes in personal identity. A general theme in the literature on religious conversion and on how new religious identities are consolidated concerns the role of group practices in supporting individuals. Secondly, this general literature points to the phenomenon of religious change as involving deep personal change. O'Dea, for instance, says conversion entails: 'personal reorganisation brought about by identification with the new group and its values'.[126] And Hans Mol states that: 'Conversion then is the adoption of a new orientation, a re-ordering of priorities and values'.[127]

By looking very specifically at the attitude and feeling of particular individuals who have experienced personal change through contact with religious movements, these complex issues can be vividly and sympathetically portrayed.

Related to the question of how identities change is that of how new identities are maintained. Again, a general theme in the literature is that the convert's identity is reinforced when he represents the movement to others and when he himself recruits new members. This is the process of witnessing the new faith with the new understanding. Shaffir has noted, for example, in his work on the Lubavitcher Chassidim: '... witnessing served to reinforce Lubavitcher's distinctive identity both at the individual and community levels.'[128] He further explains how witnessing consolidates the identity of the members:

'By teaching and becoming witness to their beliefs, and by urging them on others, they learn to think of themselves as Lubavitcher Chassidim'.[129]

Close study of how particular individuals acquire social recognition and identity in the new group and how they give witness to their new beliefs, is a very suitable method of casting light on these more general problems of personal and religious change.

These problems were explored in this research by collecting life histories of Nurcus. Such histories may indicate why some people rather than others feel inclined towards Nurculuk and can point to the kinds of needs Nurcu membership can meet. More impersonal methods of research, even if it had been possible to use them, would not have produced a close understanding of the experience of the importance of particular events, e.g. the move to the city, or of first contact with Nurculuk, which have been so profoundly important in the lives of the people studied. And this method also reveals the complete interdependence of the private experiences of individuals with changes in the wider setting of society.

Of course, research methods like these depend very much on the memory and honesty of individuals being interviewed and on the skills of the interviewer. Among the problems they entail are those connected with selective perception, those with interviewing itself and those practical difficulties of recording responses without the use of a tape recorder, which the Nurcus would not have agreed to.

The problem of selective perception is that respondants, especially those who have undergone a profound change in personal identity, are likely to review their past in the light of their new self-image. There

is no ultimate solution to this problem other than to be aware of it and always, therefore, to check what people say about themselves by using, if possible, other sources to verify what they are saying.

The problems of interviewing are those of distorted communication. When there is a lack of trust between the interviewer and interviewee, or a lack of mutual respect and understanding, then what is said may not really illustrate the problems the interviewer seeks to understand. Again, these difficulties can only be overcome if the researcher is aware of them. Throughout the fieldwork for this study, every effort was made to show respect for Nurcu views and values, to establish trust and friendly relations and to be as open as possible about the research itself.

The aim of this study is primarily a descriptive one. Given the absence of any well-documented study of Nurculuk, it is important to set out as much information about them as possible. Whenever appropriate, an attempt has been made to interpret the information in the light of more general questions concerning religious movements, but this has not been the main emphasis in the work. The project has not been an analytical or, for that matter, an historical one. There is an account of the history of the Nurcu movement in this study. But it is not of a sort that a historian would write. It is based on the views of Nurcus themselves and will to that extent be biased. Even the account which is given of Said Nursi's life is built from what his followers wrote. It is not, therefore, a strictly accurate biography, but one which says something about the significance of Said Nursi's life to his current followers and in this respect something which indicates how they see themselves. It is this that I have tried to describe Appendix III.

There are many theoretical issues in the study of religious movements that arise in and from studies of this kind. They include how religious

movements can be classified and explained.[130] They also include further issues connected with the nature of processes of religious conversion and of the maintenance of religious identities.[131] Then there are questions of the relationship between religious and political phenomena[132] which studies of movements like Nurculuk could clarify.

At the same time, however, there is such a limited amount of material describing the most basic features of Nurculuk in Turkey that it is important, too, that there should be descriptive studies of this movement available to those whose interests are mainly theoretical. One purpose of this work has been to provide just such a descriptive study.

NOTES

1. Uriel Heyd, Revival of Islam in Modern Turkey (Jerusalem, 1968), p. 19.

2. Feroz Ahmad, The Turkish Experiment in Democracy, 1950-1975 (London, 1977), p. 379.

3. Edward Mortimer, Faith and Power: the Politics of Islam (London, 1982), p. 154.

4. Heyd, p. 19.

5. Jacob M. Landau, Radical Politics in Modern Turkey (Leiden, 1974), pp. 291 and 185.

6. Binnaz Toprak, Islam and Political Development in Turkey (Leiden, 1981), p. 83.

7. Metin Heper, 'Islam, Polity and Society in Turkey: A Middle Eastern Perspective' (Unpublished paper presented at a conference of the British Society for Middle Eastern Studies held in London in 1980), p. 38.

8. Niyazi Berkes, The Development of Secularism in Turkey (Montreal, 1964), p. 341.

9. Şerif Mardin, "Bediüzzaman Said Nursi (1873-1960): The Shaping of a Vocation", Religious Organisation and Religious Experience, ed. J. Davis (London, 1982), pp. 65-79.

10. Şerif Mardin, "Religion in Modern Turkey", International Social Science Journal, XXIX, No. 2 (1977), 289.

11. Arnold Leder, Catalysts of Change: Marxist Versus Muslim in a Turkish Community, Middle East Monographs, No. 1 (Texas, 1976), p. 48.

12. See, for example, J.K., "Said Nursi", The Muslim World, L (1960), 339.

13. Tarık Z. Tunaya, İslamcılık Cereyanı: İkinci Meşrutiyetin Siyasî Hayatı Boyunca Gelişmesi ve Bugüne Bıraktığı Meseleler, (Istanbul, 1962), p. 238.

14. J. Spencer Trimingham, The Sufi Orders in Islam, (London, 1973), p. 254.

15. Muzaffer Sencer, Dinin Türk Toplumuna Etkileri (Istanbul, 1974), p. 254. For further information about Nurculuk given in this book, see pp. 254-260. Dr Çetin Özek shares the same view in his study of reactionary currents in Turkey, Türkiyede Gerici Akımlar ve Nurculuğun İçyüzü (Istanbul, 1964), p. 239.

16. Some other writers too mention Nurculuk en passant. Among these are the following: Geoffrey L. Lewis, "Islam in Politics, A Muslim World Symposium: Turkey", The Muslim World, LVI, (October 1966), 236; Annemarie Schimmel, "Islam in Turkey", Religion in the Middle East, ed. A-J. Arberry (Cambridge, 1969), II, 89; Abdülbaki Gölpınarlı, 100 Soruda Türkiye'de Mezhepler ve Tarikatlar (Istanbul, 1969), p.230; C.H. Dodd, Politics and Government in Turkey (Manchester, 1969), pp. xv and 307.

17. See, for example, Hasan Küçük, Osmanlı Devletini Tarih Sahnesine Çikaran Kuvvetlerden Biri: Tarikatlar ve Türkler Üzerindeki Müsbet Tesirleri (Istanbul, 1976), pp. 246-50; Hamid Algar, "Said Nursi and the Risale-i Nur: An Aspect of Islam in Contemporary Turkey", Islamic Perspectives: Studies in Honour of Sayyid Abul a'la Mawdudi, ed. Khurshid Ahmad and Zafar Ishaq Ansari (Leicester, 1979), pp. 313-33; Maryam Jameelah, A Great Islamic Movement in Turkey: Badee-u-Zaman Said Nursi (Lahore, 1976), passim.

18. See, for example, Faruk Güventürk, Din Işıgı Altında Nurculuğun İçyüzü, 2nd ed. (Istanbul, 1964), passim; Ali Gözütok, Müslümanlık ve Nurculuk (Ankara, 1971), passim; Neda Armaner, İslam Dininden Ayrılan Cereyanlar: Nurculuk, Ankara Universitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Yayınlarından, LX (Ankara, 1964), passim; Özek, pp. 239-95.

19. M.S. Abdullah, Islam und Westliche Welt: Geschichte Des Islams in Deutschland (Graz, 1981), pp. 103-8.

20. Anna Masala, Badî az-Zaman Sa'îd-i Nûrsî (Roma, 1978), passim. The Nurcus mention in one of their publications that Ursule Spuler has also studied Said Nursi's life as the subject of a doctoral thesis to be submitted to the University of Bonn, but, unfortunately, I have been unable to obtain access to it.

21. Yaşar Kutluay, "Mezhepler Tarihi Yönünden Said Nursī ve Nurculuk", İslam Tetkikleri Enstitüsü Dergisi, III, part 4 (1960), 211-26.

22. Mehmet Yaşar Geyikdagı, Political Parties in Turkey: The Role of Islam, (New York, 1984), p. 9.

23. According to Landau, Nurcus claim these treatises '... to be a twentieth-century interpretation of the Koran - most suitable for our times. All the answers to contemporary problems are in the Koran, and the Nurculuk (or doctrine of the Nurcular) brings them to believers' (pp. 184-5).

    On the other hand, Ş. Mardin described them as 'The dark, elliptic and allegorical Letters of Said-i Nursi' which had '... extended through Turkey ...' Mardin, International Social Science Journal, p. 289.

24. Landau, p. 184.

25. Ahmad, Turkish Experiment, p. 369; Feroz Ahmad sees Nurculuk as a reactionary force which emerged '... to challenge the new regime ...' (p. 222) and concludes by saying 'The Nurists may not have been a threat to the state but they were a divisive force in the country and they diverted attention away from the badly needed reforms'. (p. 379)

26. Cemal Kutay, Çağımızda Bir Asr-ı Saadet Müslümanı Bediuzzaman Said Nursî (Istanbul, 1980), p. 258. Kutay mentions on page 253 that a public prosecutor who brought a suit against some Nurcus in 1960 estimated their number as 600,000. He further said that in the same year the newspaper Cumhuriyet, recorded the number of the Nurcus, according to the reports of the M.I.T. (National Intelligence Service), as 700,000. In 1960, The Muslim World reported that the number was said to be over 500,000 followers. J.K., The Muslim World, L (1960), 341.

27. Abdullah, p. 107.

28. Ernest Gellner uses this term, "Great Tradition", to distinguish the urban and literate tradition, represented by the ulema, from the rural and folk tradition, which he calls the "Little Tradition", see his outstanding work, Muslim Society (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 80-81. Mardin uses the "Great Tradition" and the "Little Tradition" as followed by the élite and mass respectively, to describe the dichotomy between the élite and mass in the social structure of the Ottoman Empire. Şerif Mardin, "Opposition and Control in Turkey", Government and Opposition, I (May, 1966), 382ff.

29. H.A.R. Gibb, Islam: A Historical Survey, 2nd ed; (Oxford, 1978), p. 86.

30. Ibid., pp. 86-99. The difference in function between the Ulema, or doctors, and popular religion in Muslim countries and the effects of these two on society are best illustrated by E. Gellner in his article "Doctor and Saint". This article is the summary of his renowned book, Saints of the Atlas. For the article, see Islam in Tribal Societies: From the Atlas to the Indus, ed. Akbar S. Ahmed and David M. Hart (London, 1984), pp. 21-38. The function of the ulema is well studied in Gibb, pp. 60-72. There are many works which study the position of the ulema in the Ottoman Empire, see, for example, Richard Repp, "Some Observations on the Development of the Ottoman Learned Hierarchy", Scholars, Saints and Sufis: Muslim Religious Institutions Since 1500, ed. Nikki R. Keddie (Berkeley, 1978), passim, and Şerif Mardin, "Religion and Secularism in Turkey", Atatürk: Founder of a Modern State, ed. Ali Kazancigil and Ergün Özbudun (London, 1981), pp. 192-5.

31. Hans Mol, Identity and Sacred, a Sketch for a New Social-Scientific Theory of Religion (Oxford, 1976), p. 168.

32. J. Milton Yinger, Sociology Looks at Religion (London, 1969), pp. 71-2.

33. Bryan Wilson, Religious Sects: a Sociological Study (London, 1970), p. 36.

34. Ibid., p. 7.

35. James A. Beckford, "Explaining Religious Movements", International Social Science Journal, XXIX, No. 2 (1977), 236.

36. Landau, p. 184.

37. Gellner, Muslim Society, p. 160.

38. In describing their attitude towards the tarikats, Nurcus frequently repeat the expression "this age is not the age of tarikat but hakikat (truth)", as shown in the chapter which studies the Nurcu views. According to Nurcus, Said Nursi said that if Mevlana, the founder of the Mevlevi order, had lived in this century, he would have written the Risale-i Nur and not his famous work the Mesnevi, and if Said Nursi had lived in the time of Mevlana, the would have written the Mesnevi and not the Risale-i Nur. This is narrated by one of Said Nursi's students in Necmeddin Şahiner, Son Şahitler Bediuzzaman Said Nursî'yi Anlatıyor (Istanbul, 1978), I, 312.

39. Some foreign observers also noted that Nurculuk was not a tarikat, see for example, Ahmad, Turkish Experiment, p. 379.

40. With specific reference to Nurculuk, G.L. Lewis ("Islam in Politics, A Muslim World Symposium: Turkey", The Muslim World, LVI (October 1966), 236) comments accurately: 'It will be immediately apparent that such a movement could never have flourished in a healthy Islamic society'. Most of the religious movements in Muslim countries in the twentieth century are serving as substitutes for the sufi orders. For example, Trimingham describes the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt as a substitute for the orders and says: '... Ikhwân al-Muslimîn served as a substitute for the orders, both as a system of guidance for the individual and of service to the community, through its grouping of local associations', (p. 251). Dr Metin Heper sees the religious orders in Turkey as having had '... no such depth. When the principal leaders received even light prison terms, the orders quickly disappeared' (p. 16). On the other hand, after they were banned in 1925, that which emerged in Turkey in the 1970s should not be regarded '... as a real revival of tarika activity', says Professor Mardin and explains that the apparent recent increase in the activity of the officially-banned religious orders does not represent a real revival of the tarikats, 'A number of religious groups have arisen which have no links with pre-consisting tarika and better understood as "revitalization" movements'. Mardin, International Social Science Journal, p. 208.

41. Fazlur Rahman, Islam, 2nd ed. (Chicago, 1979), p. 6.

42. Küçük, p. 253.

43. Cited in Walter F. Weiker, The Modernization of Turkey: From Atatürk to the Present Day (New York, 1981), p. 106.

44. Among them the following tarikats have had a longstanding influence on the Turkish nation. Bairamiya, Bektashiya, Djarrâhiya, Kâdirîya, Khalwatiya, Mawlawiya, Nakshabendiya, Rifa'iya, Sha'baniya, Shadhiliya, Sünbüliya, Ushshakiya and Yasawiya. For brief information about these orders, see H.A.R. Gibb and J.H. Kramers, Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam (Luzak, 1953), pp. 575-7.

45. Trimingham, pp. 59-60; Gölpınarlı, pp. 199-200; Gibb, Islam, p. 108.

46. Trimingham, p. 61.

47. Ibid., p. 63.

48. Gibb, Islam, pp. 108-9. For a study on the contemporary situation of the Bektashis in Turkey and for a selected bibliography on the subject, see John D. Norton, "Bektashis in Turkey", Islam in the Modern World, ed. D. MacEoin and A.S. Al-Shahi (London, 1983), pp. 73-87.

49. Küçük, pp. 194-5; Trimingham, p. 239.

50. Küçük, pp. 65 and 193.

51. Gibb, Islam, p. 12.

52. Trimingham lists the more important of the leaders of these orders which confronted the colonialist powers: Dervish Mansur in Daghistan, the Tijani Tokolor, al-hajj 'Umar in West Sudan, the Sammani Muhammad Ahmad, the Mahdi of Nilotic Sudan, Sanusi in Libya, the Salihi-Idrisi Muhammad ibn 'Abdallah Hasan in Somalia, and the Fadili-Bakka'i-Qadiri Mâ'al-'Ainain and his son Ahmad al-Hiba in Morocco, (pp. 240-1).

53. J.K., The Muslim World, L (1960), 341.

54. Niyazi Berkes, The Development of Secularism in Turkey (Montreal, 1964), pp. 9-10.

55. Peter F. Sugar, "Turkey: Economic and Political Modernization", Political Modernization in Japan and Turkey, ed. Robert E. Ward and Dankward A. Rustow (Princeton, 1964), p. 156.

56. Richard L. Chambers, "Turkey: the Civil Bureaucracy", Political Modernization in Japan and Turkey, ed. Robert E. Ward and Dankward A. Rustow, (Princeton, 1964), pp. 317-8.

57. Roderic H. Davison, "Turkey: Environmental and Foreign Contributions", Political Modernization in Japan and Turkey, ed. Robert E. Ward and Dankward A. Rustow (Princeton, 1964), p. 94. For similar ideas of modernization in a Turkish context, also see Toprak, p. 58 and Richard I. Lawless, The Middle East in the Twentieth Century (London, 1980), p. 12.

58. Arif T. Payaslıoğlu, "Turkey: Political Leadership and Political Parties", Political Modernization in Japan and Turkey, ed. Robert E. Ward and Dankward A. Rustow (Princeton, 1964), p. 414.

59. Frederick W. Frey, "Turkey: Education", Political Modernization in Japan and Turkey, ed. Robert E. Ward and Dankward A. Rustow (Princeton, 1964), p. 212.

60. The first modern secular schools within the military establishment appeared in 1793-1795 after the promulgation of Nizam-i Cedid by Selim III (1792-1807). Prior to this in 1773, a naval engineering school had been established. Some of these early schools are: Military Engineering School (1793); the Medical School (1827) to train doctors for the army; the Imperial Music School (1831); and the School of Military Sciences (1834). For the educational system of the period of Abdullahamid II, see Bayram Kodaman, Adhülhamid Devri Eğitim Sistemi (Istanbul, 1980), passim.

61. Dankward A. Rustow, "Turkey: the Military", Political Modernization in Japan and Turkey, ed. Robert E. Ward and Dankward A. Rustow (Princeton, 1964), p. 352.

62. As a result of these rebellions, a number of sultans were deposed and one was killed, Berkes, p. 13. Ş. Mardin explains the attitude of Abdulhamid II towards the ulema as influenced by the fear that the ulema might attempt to dethrone him as they had his uncle, Abdülaziz, and concludes that 'It is clear that even though the Sultan himself was a believer, his religious policy showed a grasp of the instrumental use of Islam which had old Ottoman roots'. Mardin, International Social Science Journal, p. 285.

63. Şerif Mardin, The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought: a Study in the Modernization of Turkish Political Ideas (Princeton, 1962), p. 408.

64. Dankward A. Rustow, "Politics and Islam in Turkey 1920-1955", Islam and the West, ed. Richard N. Frye ('sGravenhage, 1957), p. 79. A summary of the reforms which took place from the beginning of the Republican regime up until the death of Atatürk in 1938 may be found in ibid., pp. 79-90. Atatürk's reforms and their impact on Turkish society is studied by Emile Marmorstein, "Religious Opposition to Nationalism in the Middle East", International Affairs, XXIII (July, 1952),pp. 344-59. For a comparatively detailed analysis of the reforms, see Geoffrey Lewis, Modern Turkey (London, 1974), pp. 100-28.

65. Sugar, p. 163. N.R. Keddie points out in the introduction of Scholars, Saints and Sufis that the governments in modern Turkey have not always been as successful in using and controlling the ulema as, for instance, the political leaders of modern Egypt. Scholars, Saints and Sufis: Muslim Religious Institutions since 1500, ed. Nikki R. Keddie (Berkeley, 1978), p. 13.

66. Lawless, p. 12.

67. J. Milton Yinger, Religion, Society and the Individual, 11th ed. (New York, 1957), p. 232.

68. The first clause of the article (677) reads: "All the tekkes (dervish lodges) and zaviyes (central dervish lodges) in the Turkish Republic, whether in the form of vakıf (religious foundations) or under the personal property right of its şeyh or established in any other way, are closed. The right of property and possession of their owners continue. Those used as mosques and mescits (small mosques) may be retained as such.

"All of the orders using descriptions such as şeyh, dervish, disciple, dede, çelebi, seyyit, baba, emir, nakip, halife (these are the titles given to the şeyhs of the various orders at different levels), fortune tellers, magicians, witch-doctors, writers of amulets for the recovery of lost property or the fulfilment of wishes, as well as the services, dues and costumes pertaining to these titles, and professions are prohibited. The tombs of the sultans, the tombs of the dervish orders are closed, and the profession of tomb-keeping is abolished. Those who open the closed tekkes or zaviyes or the tombs, and those

who re-establish them or those who give temporary places to the orders or people who are called by any of the mystical names mentioned above or those who serve them, will be sentenced to at least three months in prison and will be fined at least fifty Turkish liras". Partially translated in Bernard Lewis, The Emergence of Modern Turkey, 2nd ed. (London, 1968), p. 411. According to the amendment made in this law on 4 March 1950, the tombs which were built on the graves of the great Turks and those which have historic value were allowed to be opened to the public under the control of the Ministry of Education.

69. Sugar, p. 163.

70. Toprak, p. 39.

71. Frank Tachau, "The Search for National Identity Among the Turks", Welt des Islams, n.s. VIII, No. 3 (1963), 165.

72. A survey conducted in 1958 among the Turkish college students shows that 45% of the students were ready to make the greatest sacrifice for the welfare of the nation. Herbert H. Hyman, A. Payaslioglu and F.W. Frey, "The Values of Turkish College Youth", Public Opinion Quarterly, XXII (Autumn, 1958), 275-91. Exactly a decade later Professor Mardin conducted a survey of Turkish workers in Izmir which demonstrated that 50.3% of the workers saw themselves as 'Turks' whereas 37.5% regarded themselves as 'Muslims'. See Şerif Mardin, Din ve İdeoloji (Ankara, 1969), p. 132. Arnold Leder also concludes his study on the people of Saruhanlı saying that '... all of the residents of Saruhanli shared and continue to share a strong sense of identity as Turks and Sunni Muslims', (p. 13).

73. Lawless, p. 14.

74. Gellner, Muslim Society, p. 169.

75. Ibid., p. 172. In this comment, Gellner disregards the Kemalist language reform measures aimed at making the language of the élite more like that of the masses.

76. Heyd, p. 15.

77. Ibid.

78. Ibid. p. 25.

79. Wilfred Cantmell Smith, Islam in Modern History (Princeton, 1957), p. 204.

80. Heyd, p. 27.

81. Berkes, Development of Secularism, pp. 481-3; Kemal H. Karpat, Turkey's Politics: the Transition to a Multi-Party System (Princeton, 1959), p. 278.

82. Niyazi Berkes, "Historical Background of Turkish Secularism", Islam and the West, ed. Richard N. Frye ('sGravenhage, 1957), p. 44 and also pp. 41-8.

83. Toprak, p. 20. On page 22, Toprak briefly explains what this means at the individual level and says that '... each member of the Islamic community, at least in theory, is a religious, and a social, and a political man'. (Underlinings are in the original.)

84. Ibid.

85. Ibid., p. 33.

86. Weiker, p. 108.

87. Toprak, p. 58.

88. Cf. William Hale, "Ideology and Economic Development in Turkey 1930-1945", British Society for Middle Eastern Studies Bulletin, VII, no. 2 (1980), 100-17, and Feroz Ahmad, "The Political Economy of Kemalism", Atatürk: Founder of a Modern State, ed. Ali Kazancigil and Ergun Özbudun (London, 1981), pp. 151-6.

89. Thomas D. Robert et al., Area Handbook for the Republic of Turkey (Washington, 1970), p. 127.

90. In the same year, 1927, 75.7% of the Turkish population was living in rural areas, see ibid., p. 62.

91. Lewis, The Emergence of Modern Turkey, p. 410.

92. Necmeddin Şahiner, Bilinmiyen Taraflariyla Bediuzzaman Said Nursî (Kronolojik Hayatı), 6th ed. (Istanbul, 1979), p. 271.

93. These houses constituted the earliest Nurcu activity centres, at that time called 'medreses' and later on 'dershanes' by the Nurcus. In Chapter V they will be studied in detail.

94. This phrase is mentioned in the Risale-i Nur in many places, especially in Said Nursi's letters to Nurcus.

95. Yinger, Sociology Looks at Religion, p. 99.

96. For the foreign policy of Turkey between 1945 and 1952, see Ahmad, Turkish Experiment, pp. 389-98, and for the establishment of multi-party system in Turkey, see Karpat, Turkey's Politics, pp. 137-242.

97. Kemal H. Karpat, The Gecekondu: Rural Migration and Urbanization (London, 1976), pp. 20-3.

98. Lawless, p. 14.

99. Heyd, pp. 24-5.

100. Smith, pp. 186-7.

101. Mardin, Religious Organisation and Religious Experience, p. 66.

102. Quoted in Ahmad, Turkish Experiment, p. 369.

103. Heyd, p. 13.

104. A phrase used by Yinger, Religion, Society, p. 544 to describe the the situation of Islam in modern Middle Eastern states.

105. This letter was later published as part of the Risale-i Nur, see Bediüzzaman Said Nursi, Hayat-ı İçtimaiye-i Siyasiyeye Dair Bir Kısım Beyanat ve Tenvirler (Istanbul, 1976), p. 14. The Nurcu attitude towards the political parties and their own justification of this attitude can be seen in the following Nurcu publications: A. Vehbi, Vakkasoğlu, Bediüzzaman Saîd Nursî'den Siyasi Tesbitler (Istanbul, 1977), passim; Mehmed Kırkıncı, Siyasette Ölçü (Istanbul, 1977), passim; Süleyman Demirel, Anayasa ve Devlet İdaresi (Istanbul, 1977), passim; Safâ Mürsel, Bediuzzaman Said Nursî ve Devlet felsefesi (Istanbul, 1976), pp. 221-32, 308-33; Mustafa Sungur, Söz Bediüzzaman Said Nursî'nin! Anarşi, Sebep ve Çareleri, 4th ed. (Istanbul, 1978), pp. 294-307; Şahiner, Son Şahitler, I, 209-10, 243-4, 320-22, 411-3, 445 and 451; Şahiner, Bilinmiyen Taraflariyla, pp. 382 and 407; Necmeddin Şahiner, Son Şahitler Bediuzzaman Said Nursî'yi Anlatıyor, II, 56; Talaba-an-Noor, The Author of Risala-i Noor: Badee-uz-Zaman Said Noorsi of Turkey (Maryland, 1974), p. 65; Yeni Asya Research Center, Social Change in Muslim Societies (California, 1980), p. 23; Risale-i Nur Külliyatı Müellifi Bedüzzaman Said Nursî, Hayatı, Mesleki, Tercüme-i Hali (Istanbul, 1960), pp. 459 and 602; Nursi, Beyanat ve Tenvirler, pp. 14, 17, 20 and 23; Bediüzzaman Said Nursi, Şuâlar (Istanbul, 1960), p. 389. This subject is also referred to in Özek, p. 259; Armaner, p. 35; Landau, pp. 185 and 231; Mortimer, p. 155; Abdullah, p. 103.

106. Toprak, p. 94. For other examples of İnönü's accusations about the alleged cooperation between the JP and the Nurcus, see Ahmad, Turkish Experiment, p. 253.

107. Toprak, pp. 93-4. For examples of İnönü's attacks on Menderes and their repercussions in the national press, see Cumhuriyet, January 7,9,10 1960

108. Weiker, p. 110.

109. H.A.R. Gibb, Modern Trends in Islam (Chicago, 1947), p. 46.

110. G. Lewis, p. 100.

111. Some selected examples are: Bernard Lewis, "Islamic Revival in Turkey", International Affairs, XXVIII (January, 1952), 38-48; Lewis V. Thomas, "Recent Developments in Turkish Islam", The Middle East Journal, VI (Winter, 1952), 22-40; Howard A. Reed, "Revival of Islam in Secular Turkey", Middle East Journal, VIII (Summer, 1954), 267-82; Lewis V. Thomas, "Turkish Islam", The Muslim World, XLIV (July and October 1954), 181-5; Rustow, Islam and the West, pp. 69-107; A.L. Tibawi, "Islam and Secularism in Turkey Today", Quarterly Review, No. 609 (1956), pp. 325-37; Howard A. Reed, "The Religious Life of Modern Turkish Muslims", Islam and the West, ed. Richard N. Frye ('sGravenhage, 1957), pp. 108-48; Smith, pp. 161-205; Heyd, passim; Mardin, International Social Science Journal, pp. 279-297; Mardin, Atatürk: Founder of a Modern State, pp. 191-219. Paul Stirling, "Religious Change in Republican Turkey", Middle East Journal, XII (Autumn 1958), 395-408; Schimmel, Religion in the Middle East, II, 68-95, and G.L. Lewis, The Muslim World, pp. 235-9.

112. Thomas, The Middle East Journal, p. 23. For examples of appeal of the major parties of the time to religion during the general election in 1954, see Ahmad, Turkish Experiment, p. 370.

113. Reed, Islam and the West, p. 144.

114. Heyd, p. 24.

115. Ahmad, Turkish Experiment, p. 363. In 1977, Professor Mardin, too, emphasised the continuing intensity of religious belief among Turks during the same period, i.e., 1950 to 1977, see Mardin, International Social Science Journal, p. 279. The 1960s and 1970s witnessed a rapid increase in the evangelical movements in most of the liberal world; for an analytic explanation of this growth in the U.S.A., see Mol, Identity and the Sacred, p. 178ff. Yinger, too, points to this paradox - pervasive secularism amid mounting religiosity, the strengthening of the religious structure in spite of increasing secularisation in the world. He cites the American Institute of Public Opinion report, published in 1955, which states that 97% of Americans identify themselves with one of the major religious groups. Although eighty per cent of adult Americans say they believe the Bible to be the "revealed word of God", says Yinger, 'one must speak with caution in interpreting the present situation as one characterized by a "return to religion". The Bible may be acclaimed as the revealed word of God, but 53% of those who thus acclaimed it could not name even one of the first four books of the New Testament'. Yinger, Religion, Society, p. 279.

116. For example, The Muslim World reported in 1960 in the Notes of the Quarter written on the occasion of Said Nursi's death: '... it is a further illustration of the failure of the positivism of the Ataturk revolution to stamp out Islamic vitality in Turkey'. The Muslim World, L (1960), p. 341.

117. U. Heyd explains the reason why nationalism was incapable of replacing Islam: 'The remains of pre-Islamic Turkish civilisation are too scanty or, as in the case of the splendid Hittite antiquities excavated in Anatolia, too remote to serve as a major source of national pride, cultural inspiration and the feeling of historical continuity'. (p. 25)

118. Nikki R. Keddie, "Iran: Change in Islam; Islam and Change", International Journal of Middle East Studies, II (1980), 530.

119. Gibb, Modern Trends in Islam, p. 38.

120. Thomas, The Middle East Journal, p. 31.

121. Ibid., p. 37.

122. Among the most recent ones are the following: Mardin, Religious Organization, pp. 65-79; Norton, Islam in the Modern World, pp. 73-87; Algar, pp. 313-3.

123. E. Leach particularly stresses this point and says 'The observer must distinguish between what people actually do and what people say that they do; that is between normal custom as individually interpreted on the one hand, and normative rules on the other.' Edmund Leach, Social Anthropology (Glasgow, 1982), p. 130.

124. See, for example, J.M. Lewis, Social Anthropology in Perspective: The Relevance of Social Anthropology (1976), passim; John Beattie, Other Cultures: Aims, Methods and Achievements in Social Anthropology (London, 1964), passim.

125. For the life story methods used by the social scientists, see Biography and Society: the Life History Approach in the Social Sciences, ed. Daniel Bertaux (California, 1981), passim.

126. As cited in Mol, Identity and the Sacred, p. 52.

127. Ibid., p. 51.

128. William Shaffir, "Witnessing as Identity Consolidation: the Case of the Lubavitcher Chassidim", Identity and Religion, International Cross-Cultural Approaches, ed. Hans Mol (London, 1978), p. 51.

129. Ibid., p. 54.

130. See, for example, Beckford, International Social Science Journal, pp. 235-49; Patterns of Sectarianism: Organization and Ideology in Social and Religious Movements, ed. Bryan R. Wilson (London, 1967), passim; Yinger, Sociology Looks at Religion, passim; Louis Wirth, "The Problem of Minority Groups", Theories of Society: Foundations of Modern Sociological Theory, ed. Talcott Parsons et al. (New York, 1965), passim. Social and Political Movements in Western Europe, ed. M. Kolinsky and M.E. Paterson (London, 1976), passim; Religious Movements in Contemporary America, ed. Irving I. Zaretsky and Mark P. Leone (New Jersey, 1974), passim.

131. See, for example, James A. Beckford, "Accounting for Conversion"; The British Journal of Sociology, XXIX (June, 1978), 249-62; Mol, Identity and the Sacred, passim; Identity and Religion: International Cross-Cultural Approaches, ed. Hans Mol (London, 1978), passim; Anson D. Shupe, jr., "Towards a Structural Perspective of Modern Religious Movements", Sociological Focus, VI (Summer, 1973), passim.

132; See, for example, Robert E. Lane, Political Ideology: Why the American Man Believes What he Does (New York, 1962), passim; W. and B. Allinsmith, "Religious Affiliation and Politico-Economic Attitude", Public Opinion Quarterly, XXII (1948), 377-89.

CHAPTER II

DEVELOPMENT OF THE MOVEMENT

This chapter is concerned with the development of Nurculuk in several different parts of Turkey. The aim is to describe its development and at the same time suggest how that development can be explained. The material on which the chapter is based is drawn from interviews and observations and it is through these that the history of Nurculuk given here has been retrieved. The account, therefore, has certain obvious limitations but the personal records of the movement's development are nevertheless very rich and provide many clues about how Nurculuk actually functions in particular settings.

The criteria used in selecting the places to visit for the purposes of this research were firstly that they should present a representative picture of the diversity of Turkish society itself; secondly that they should be important centres of Nurcu activity. The diversity of settings in which Nurcu activity was examined allow some comments to be made on more general themes in the study of religious movements concerning how such movements are organised, how they develop and how they are maintained.

There is extensive literature on religious movements although not so much on movements in the Islamic world and hardly any at all on those in Turkey. In addition, there are no studies of an analytical kind of the sort which exist for western societies and which have used the kinds of concepts which are now so important to the study of religious movements.

Recent work on religious movements in the West and in some developing societies has stressed the importance of overcoming the weaknesses of approaches based on the church-sect distinction. Bryan R. Wilson has

stressed, for example, the need for a comparative framework of study of religious movements and has suggested a classification of them based on the way different groups respond to the world around them. He sees the notion of 'response to the world' as being a more useful sensitising concept than that, for instance, of mission, because it invites questions about how particular groups of people in particular settings actually behave.[1]

And against the traditional view that religious movements or sects are in some way a response to the felt deprivation of particular groups or individuals in a society or a church, some writers, for example Beckford, have suggested that movements have to be seen in the light of their own organisations and social networks and in terms of how they symbolically articulate the experience of their followers.[2]

In terms of the classification used by B.R. Wilson, Nurculuk can be seen as a conversionist sect.[3] This is a sect whose response to the world is the same as that described by Wilson:

> The world is corrupt because men are corrupt: if men can be changed then the world will be changed. Salvation is seen not as available through objective agencies but only by a profoundly felt, supernaturally wrought transformation of the self. The objective world will not change but the acquisition of a new subjective orientation to it will itself be salvation.[4]

To understand Nurcu beliefs and practices, it is essential to relate them to the development of a secular republic in Turkey. For it is the development of the secular state to which they are responding. It is not sufficient, however, to state this. The specific organisational practices of the movement have to be considered for it is these which in

large part define how Nurcus perceive the reality of Turkish society and the role of Islam in it.

The same point applies to the question of the significance of membership of the movement to individuals. How members perceive the world around them and how they understand their own religious experience is something inseparable from the routine practices of the movement itself. There are several features of Nurcu practice which, in Beckford's terms, organise a 'symbolic medi ation of experience'[5] for members of the group. The expectation, for instance, that they attend the local meetings (ders) regularly is one aspect of this. Another is that they should seek to convert others and that they should aim, through yet closer contact with the movement, to take greater responsibilities in and participate fully in the local consultative councils of the group.

Nurcu organisation has been effective also in offering practical help to new members in social areas such as providing accommodation and offering friendship of a practical and supportive kind. In various ways, therefore, the movement has met some very basic needs of people from a religious background who find themselves in what can be very disconcerting circumstances in the context of modern urban conditions in Turkey. In addition to personal feelings of loneliness, people from a religious background can often feel that there is much in modern urban life which is alien to traditional religious values. Involvement with Nurcu activities provides a solution to these problems: it offers the security of close personal contacts, confers respect and sustains a personal belief that a man is by his actions defending the faith. In this way members come gradually to a new image of themselves, a new personal identity rooted in the practices and ideas of the movement.

In what follows there is an illustration of the growth of Nurculuk in different parts of Turkey. This growth is explained in terms of the responses of religious people to secular trends in the society and particularly to various forms of opposition to religious practice. In discussing these responses it is important to relate them to the actions of individual members and to the local organisation of the movement and the specific problems which existed in particular places. It is an account which must necessarily rely on the personal testimony of involved individuals. There are no written records and since Nurculuk is an illegal organisation, its operations are inevitably clandestine. What follows, therefore, is not a definitive historical account of Nurculuk but a description of limited but theoretically important aspects of that history, particularly those concerned with how Nurcus perceive themselves, their faith and the society around them.

1. KONYA

Outline of the History of the Nurcu Movement in Konya

My first informant, Dursun, had known the Risale-i Nur in Diyarbakir. When he came back to his home city, Konya, in 1957 there were only six or seven Nurcus there. Until 1958 they went on disseminating the message from person to person amongst tradesmen, craftsmen and students, but the results were disappointing. Eventually, they decided to read out the Risale-i Nur in the main mosques of Konya before and after the daily ritual prayers. Some of the people who had gathered for the congregation in the mosque left, some remained to listen to the readings, and others hesitated, standing with their shoes in their hands, listening before deciding whether to go or stay. Later on, officials of the local authority several times sent private messengers asking the Nurcus

not to read the Risale-i Nur in the mosques (especially the main one which is called 'Kapu Camii'), but in their houses. They took no notice of these requests and once the officials locked them up inside the the mosque for a while and then took them to the police station to be interrogated. They were released but the police strongly warned them not to read the Risale-i Nur inside the mosques.

After a short interval, the Nurcus of Konya assembled and decided to resume reading the Risale-i Nur in the mosques, but this time everyone of them was to read it just before the congregation started for the Friday ritual prayers in different central mosques. They went on to practise this until the governor of Konya, on receiving a complaint, summoned Dursun to his office. When Dursun, dressed in his best suit and tie, entered the office saying selamun aleykum, the governor did not acknowledge the greeting and asked Dursun whether he had a certificate to preach in the mosque and whether he thought it would be reasonable for anyone who had a book to read it in the mosque. Dursun replied: 'No'. Dursun stated that much later the Nurcus realised that the DP administration did not want to harm them but the Nurcus were creating difficulties for them just as members of the National Salvation Party (hereafter NSP) did for later governments.

This experience persuaded the Nurcus of Konya to turn back to their conventional method of conveying their message from person to person. They were then a small community that did not need to have a dershane and they held their ders in their houses in turn.

When I asked Dursun how he proclaimed his message in this way, from person to person, he gave me his own method of spreading Nurculuk among the people. Since this appears to be the method generally used by Nurcus among ordinary people, I shall give his answer in full.

'We have special methods. First of all we make acquaintance with people and try to become familiar with their way of thinking and then infiltrate our message into their minds through what they enjoy. Thus when we have three or four interested people, we arrange a meeting to talk informally all together. In the course of the conversation we ask whether they have any questions (about religious subjects) or experience any difficulties in religious matters. We give answers based on the Risale-i Nur. If the gathering is in our own house, we read the relevant subject, which solves their problem, from the Risale-i Nur itself. Thus we let them see the books which are essentially full of truth. They inevitably become interested in the books and ask us for them. So we give them the sort of books they want. Whoever reads these, cannot fail to be impressed by the truths in them and eventually he also joins the 'Nur dairesi' (the Circle of Light) and conveys the message to his friends. Thus Nurculuk is spread further and further.

'In addition to this person to person method of attracting followers, we have supplementary publications which create an interest in the Risale-i Nur and lead those who read them to the Risale-i Nur proper. These are available everywhere.'

The military coup d'état in 1960 interrupted the hizmets. According to Dursun, 1960-65 was an era of stagnation for the Nurcu movement. Mustafa said only one dershane was operating in Konya when he first joined the movement in 1962. In the ordinary derses there used to be twenty-thirty Nurcus present. In 1966 when the dershane was raided by the police they arrested fourteen Nurcus.

It was in 1967 that Nurculuk started flourishing in Konya amongst the non-commissioned officers and, particularly, students, as well as

common people. They held the ders for students separately in Dursun's house once a week on Saturdays. Some eighty to ninety students would attend. To meet the need of this growing number of students, they had to rent a large house as Dursun's house was no longer big enough for the ders. Once the students from different secondary schools became Nurcus, they started bringing their friends every week to the dershane. Dursun said that the interest in the Risale-i Nur amongst students and non-commissioned officers at that time had not been anticipated. In 1970 the average number of regular attenders at this ders was a hundred to a hundred and fifty students.

The weekly magazine İttihat run by the Nurcus was very influential especially among the common people. During these years besides having derses three or four times a week for the common people in different houses, the Nurcus arranged separate weekly derses for non-commissioned officers and again separately for policemen. The daily newspaper Yeni Asya came out in 1971 and in the following years the Yeni Asya publication house gradually started publishing the 'supplementary books'. The Nurcus then opened a book shop as an agency of the Yeni Asya publication house in Konya. This was, and still is, well known amongst Nurcus and sympathisers as 'the bureau' (Yeni Asya bürosu). In addition to these developments, when a State Academy opened in Konya, it was necessary for the Nurcus to open another dershane to accommodate Nurcu students from this and other local higher education institutions. This opened in 1973.

In 1975, the Nurcus of Konya were able to build their first dershane. This was a large, detached, two-storey building. In the same year Konya Seljuk University opened and thereafter local Nurcus held special derses exclusively for university students. Seminars and occasionally

conferences were held for all the Nurcus of Konya and special derses for children under twelve were arranged for weekends and holidays. In this way Nurcu activities increased and new dershanes continued to be opened until the 12 September 1980 military intervention, by which time there were seven dershanes in which sixty university students stayed. But soon after the 12 September, they transferred the derses to houses in the outskirts of the city. They then split up into small groups of not more than about twenty instead of the large gatherings they had been holding. Three of the dershanes in which students were living were shut down by the Nurcus themselves, leaving only thirty students living in Nurcu dershanes.

Efforts and Achievements

When I asked them how they proclaimed their message, what success they had achieved and what was their reward for gaining converts, their answer for the last question was straightforward: 'We do not expect any earthly reward. Our biggest reward is simply to gain God's approval. Whatever we do we do for the love of God.'

My informants in Konya revealed that each of them took the Nurcu message only to people of his own social class and cultural level, and that they did this of their own free will without direction from any superior in the movement and that there was no organisation within the movement to co-ordinate such efforts.

Dursun said: 'I organise my work in the way which allows me to spread the message to other people because that is the aim of my life. I know that this message is the "seed" of everlasting life which I must sow here below. I have seen people who received this message from me practising it in their own lives and eager to pass it on to others. Subsequently they formed groups to do hizmet in their own circles. I

cannot give an exact figure for we do not record members or keep registration records, but I remember hundreds of them.'

The tradesman Hayati's method of propagating the message is to read the Risale-i Nur to people he knows, friends, neighbours or relatives or, when there is no suitable opportunity for this, he recommends them to read the Risale-i Nur themselves. Then, when he feels that they are ready, he takes them to derses or give them the books. As a result of his efforts, some of the people he approached had adopted a positive attitude towards the Nurcus, some of them had become dost (sympathisers) and began performing the namaz, whilst others carried on attending the derses by themselves. He says it is very difficult to give a number of them since he is not sure whether they became a 'Nurcu' because of his initiative or someone else's in the ders.

On the other hand, Mustafa, the craftsman, is very busy with his work. He supports the Nurculuk mostly by contributing money and distributing the Risale-i Nur and other Nurcu publications to his relatives and close friends. When he feels free, he brings his children and those who are 'suitable' to a ders. He says he does not think he has converted anybody by his own efforts alone, but he knows some of those he took to the ders or to whom he gave the books, consequently became Nurcus.

Relations with other Religious Groups and Opposition Encountered

All of my informants in Konya were very sensitive about saying anything against the following religious groups: Süleymancis, Tarikatçılar (the followers of any tarikat), the supporters of the NSP National Action Party (hereafter NAP). and the Their first immediate reply was: 'No, we do not criticise and feel any hostility towards them, we like them all. After all, we

are brethren in Islam.' Mustafa preferred those who worked with a group to those who practised their religion by themselves and did not join any group.

Although Nurcus do not want non-Nurcu groups to become involved with Nurcu affairs, they do co-operate with them to some extent, mainly in political activities. (But they are opposed to the NSP and do not co-operate with it.) They do not regard the NSP as a genuine religious group and say about the party: 'They claimed that they were a religious party but in reality they were just a party'. Dursun says: 'We do not have anything in common with the party because their points of view, their thoughts are completely different from ours, but the position of the individuals in the party is something else.' Hayati's view is 'The NSP did not oppose Üstad or the Risale-i Nur so far, their opposition is only to the students of the Risale-i Nur. The reason for this is that they could not use us as an instrument for their political purposes so they started accusing us of being an instrument of the freemasons.'

Dursun gave a specific example of their attitude towards the supporters of the NSP. One of the members of the National Order Party[6] came to the dershane while they were holding a ders in 1971 wearing the party badge on his collar. They did not allow him to go in before he took off the badge. Mustafa's example was about the relationship with the Süleymancis. Süleymancis, long ago, had invited the Nurcus to their camp pitched on the outskirts of Konya. Some Nurcus, including Mustafa, went there and joined their activities and listened to their sermons given to the youth there, and then the Süleymancis came to their dershane and listened to their derses and bought some books of the Risale-i Nur. Evidently that was years ago. The only recent instance of collaboration with the Süleymancis that Mustafa could recall was

during the last 1977 elections. Hayati provided another example of the Nurcu relationship with the NAP. During the last elections in Konya, the NAP supporters bought thousands of copies of a critical booklet published by the Nurcus which is called 'Islamic Movement and the NSP'. None of my informants complained about any opposition from the common people. They all agreed on that: 'We do not have any clashes or problems with the ordinary citizen at all'.

How Much the Movement has Spread

'Nurculuk is growing in both quantity and quality. Although malevolent forces have for years been trying to destroy law and order in Turkey, the Turkish nation has not been broken and has not become communist. In every election the JP has won the majority. This proves how effectively Nurculuk is acting in Turkey.' This was Dursun's interpretation of Turkey's recent history in an attempt to show the effectiveness of Nurculuk. About the area in which Nurculuk is strongest, Dursun says: 'It seems to me that Nurculuk is more widespread in the main cities than it is in the small ones and the rural areas. This is because there are more schools and students, and better opportunities there.'

Hayati gives the names of the cities in which Nurculuk has spread the most: Istanbul, Ankara, Erzurum, Kayseri, Gaziantep, İsparta, Adapazarı, Van and Dıyarbakir. 'In some of the cities more and in some less, but in every city we have dershanes. We have them in most of the sub-provinces too, but only in a very few villages do we have dershanes. In some places it is more widespread amongst the esnaf (small businessmen - guilds); but in those places where students are most numerous, it is students who form the majority of Nurcu support. For example in Konya, you cannot find one person who opposes the

Risale-i Nur amongst the esnaf (guilds). The sales of our books (the Risale-i Nur and the Yeni Asya publications) considerably exceed the number of our known followers and we cannot guess who has bought them. They read these books and grow fond of them.'

In Mustafa's opinion, Konya is the least developed city in terms of Nurcu activities because the divisions amongst the religious groups are much more intense here than in the other cities. Generally, the bigger the city, the more dershanes. According to Mustafa, the movement is growing for two reasons. First, there has been an atmosphere in Turkey that impels everyone to belong to a group. In this atmosphere if a man in one way or an other was made acquainted with Nurculuk, he is very likely in the course of time to become a Nurcu. The second reason is, in Mustafa's view, peculiar to the Risale-i Nur itself. Because generally at schools in Turkey the unbelief and atheistic ideas are being imposed upon the pupils, those who want to protect themselves or defend their belief against these ideas, look for the books which will support their views. Many of the students in this position get to hear of the Risale-i Nur. After reading them, they often join a Nurcu group, at least temporarily.

Dursun advances the human tendency to seek reality and the truth of the Risale-i Nur as main reasons for the progress of Nurculuk. 'Mankind is instinctively inclined to truth. Human beings have tried lots of material and worldly things, but could not attain satisfaction. They have found only the Koran appropriate to their nature. Since the Risale-i Nur is nothing but a message of the Koran, it attracts people. The growing number of students in the dershanes and the sales of the Risale-i Nur and other supplementary publications show that Nurculuk is growing.'

None of the informants mentioned any local peculiarities of the Nurcu movement in Konya and all regarded it as typical of the state of the movement in the rest of the country.

Changes and Differences between the Generations and the Age Structure in Local Membership

The most striking change in Konya after the 1970's was in the proportion of studentsand common people or esnaf. The student ratio is increasing. Nowadays, three-quarters of the people who attend the ders are students and the remaining quarter consists of esnaf and civil servants. The way in which the derses are being held has not changed very much since the sixties, but Hayati stated that whereas before the 1970's the majority attending were common folk who would just listen to the readings in the ders and leave, now young students ask questions in order to understand the subject under discussion clearly.

'In the past hizmet had been carried on with simple means, but now modern means are being used. Presentation as well as interpretation of the Risale-i Nur is continuously changing in the course of time' Dursun says, 'at first the Risale-i Nur was being written by hand, later by typewriter, then mimeographs and printing presses were used, and now the Risale-i Nur is being printed with the most advanced printing machines. As subsidiary hizmets, the newspapers, magazines and Yeni Asya publications of around two hundred and fifty different books are available. By these means the hizmet has been conveyed to the masses.' In addition to this general change in Nurcu activities which directly reflected on the local level as Mustafa says: 'In the past only the Risale-i Nur was being distributed, but now we give a new acquaintance one of the Yeni Asya publications at first and then

either take him to a ders or give him the Risale-i Nur as appropriate.

In Konya there are two newly introduced amateur works. First, they have recorded some passages from the Risale-i Nur on cassettes with a background of Old Turkish classic instrumental music and they sell these. Secondly, Dursun's children have made a film of the places where Said Nursi had lived and written most of the collections of the Risale-i Nur while he was in exile , Barla, Emirdağ, İsparta, with a brief biography of Said Nursi and religious music in the background. When I was in their house in the summer of 1981, they were working on some films made by Dursun's eldest son about the 'The Life of the Ants' and 'The Blossoming of the trees and flowers' which were quite skilfully done for an amateur. They have recorded on the films some related extracts taken from the Risale-i Nur and show the films in the dershanes where the students live.

Although there are people of every age-group who have attended the ders in Konya, the average age is between twenty and forty. According to my informants, this average is becoming younger. Dursun says that the twenty to twenty-five age-group is now the most numerous.

Difficulties Encountered

When discussing the difficulties they encountered in trying to spread the message, my informants made no complaint about people who were not affiliated to any group.

Mustafa listed the difficulties he encountered, starting from the prosecution, usually brought under Article 163 of the Turkish Penal Code, by those who have evil intentions against religion. Secondly, the members of tarikats who hide their ignorance by saying either that they do not have any doubt about the existence of God, so there is no need to think about Him, or that their way is the best. He finds it very difficult to communicate with them. Lastly, to deliver the message to

those who consider themselves knowledgeable and are consquently prejudiced is very hard, says Mustafa the craftsman, who has never received any official education.

Propaganda against Nurculuk and the lack of religious knowledge of people who are very easily misled are the main obstacles faced by the tradesman Hayati in disseminating the truth in Konya.

Dursun expressed his anger, saying, 'We have been suffering from misunderstanding and the wrong implementation of laicism. In my twenty-three year service to Nurculuk, the paramount difficulty has been the wrong implementation of secularism.'

2. ANKARA

Outline of the History of the Nurcu Movement in Ankara

Hayri, one of my informants from Ankara, first moved there in 1969. Bayram ağabey[7] was arranging and regulating the hizmets with the assistance of four or five devoted young Nurcus. Hayri, too, assisted Bayram ağabey in looking after the dershanes and other hizmets in whatever way Bayram suggested. There were only four dershanes at that time.

They held ders almost every day in a different dershane. Whoever could read the Risale-i Nur properly did so during the ders. If there was a question or a new guest, they added some related readings to the customary type of ders. For the guest they usually tried to perceive his interest or attitude towards religion in general, the Risale-i Nur in particular, and then read appropriate passages from the Risale-i Nur as if they had been chosen at random. In those days, if the ders went on for a long time, some of those present used to stay overnight in the dershane.

In the early 1970's, financial affairs did not play as important a part in the Nurcu activities as they do today. Their resources were very limited; only the rents paid by the students who lived in the dershanes and could afford it, and the donations which were regularly given by the Nurcu officials.

In the same years, some of the Nurcus left the group under the pretext of criticising the policy followed by the Yeni Asya newspaper. In Hayri's view, they were actually secret NSP sympathisers and they could not accept the newspaper's criticisms of the NSP. Bayram ağabey preferred to carry on the hizmet together with these people until 1974 when the consultative committee was formed and the hizmets were considerably expanded. After some trifling differences of opinion Bayram ağabey wanted to go to İsparta and actually did so at the end of 1975.

In these years, the numbers of the Nurcu students and dershanes continually increased. In 1978 the number of dershanes, where only university students lived, reached forty-five. Besides this quantitative growth, there was also a qualititative advance in Nurcu activities and the movement became more prominent in social affairs. In Hayri's opinion, the mainspring of this development was the Yeni Asya newspaper and its associated publications drawing their inspiration from the Risale-i Nur. First, they opened a bookshop in 1978 and then the 'Ankara Culture and Education Foundation' was established in 1979. Towards the end of the same year, the 'brothers' who were graduates of the Faculty of Medicine formed the 'Health Personnel Vakıf' (S.E.V., Sağlık Elemanları Vakfı).

Hayri was also encouraged by the success of the Nurcus' political activities. Some members obtained important posts in the administration

and their views were influential in some ministries. Exerting such influence was considered a hizmet for Nurcus, as was any behaviour contributing to this aim - even such simple things as wearing ties. The whole subject of hizmet therefore became so complicated that it was necessary to divide it into categories to be referred to the appropriate sub-division before passing it on to the Consultative Committee for a final decision.

From 1979 onwards, the increase in the number of new student members waned. The reason Hayri gave for this was that students who had previously come to the universities in Ankara from the surrounding cities, now preferred to stay in the new universities in their own cities because the cost of living was extremely high in Ankara and, on top of this, the chance of getting a place in these new universities was much greater.

On the other hand, during the same period, the number of civil servants becoming Nurcus increased, especially in Ankara, the administrative centre, as a result of Nurcu influence in the ministries. As an example Hayri cites the Ministry of Education as having one hundred and fifty brothers in different ranks, high and low. Now the hizmets in Ankara are being undertaken mostly by the civil servant brothers and in the derses it is plainly apparent that the number of officials is overtaking that of the students.

The Nurcus of Ankara expected that there would be a big flow of Nurcu officials into Ankara soon after the return to normal democratic life when the military-controlled government withdrew. They had already started planning to found a 'Housing and Consumers' Cooperative' in an attempt to meet the needs of these newcomers.

My second Ankara informant, Alper, considered that derses were the most important way of spreading Nurculuk, and other means such as seminars, conferences, newspapers and magazines were secondary. Alper regarded the behaviour of Nurcus as another important means of conveying the message. Hayri emphasised this point too, saying 'Those who have come to accept the truth of the Risale-i Nur have disseminated it by every means of which the Nurcus approve. As a matter of fact, it is almost impossible to find anyone who knows the Risale-i Nur and is not trying to spread it, especially in his first days of becoming acquainted with it.'

Efforts and Achievement

Not only does Alper learn the 'truths of the Koran' (Kuran hakikatları, the ideas taught in the Risale-i Nur) from all sorts of gatherings and readings, he also tries to propagate these amongst his friends and acquaintances, reading to them and explaining the Risale-i Nur and the Yeni Asya publications in their homes or just by reflecting the truth of the message in his own life and by being an example to be followed.

Like the others, Alper declined to give any figures of converts and said: 'We deliver our message and leave it at that. The outcome does not concern us. All the students of the Risale-i Nur's efforts should be considered as a whole. By no means can I say that I caused anyone to become a believer, but I might have been the apparent means by which hundreds of people became aware of the message.'

Relations with Other Groups and Opposition Encountered

Until 1975, Nurcus had no relationship with the other religious groups in Ankara. They did not know what the other groups thought and they themselves had no clear views about other groups. Hayri says:

'We used to talk about them with uncertainty.' The first initiative which came from the Nurcus was made just before the 1977 general election. This was an attempt to gain a clearer picture of the other groups and reach some sort of understanding with them concerning politics. Under the general principle derived from the Risale-i Nur, a mutual understanding was reached that each group should work in its own field without nurturing suspicions of the others. 'We appreciated the efforts of other groups', said Alper, 'because we were sure that they were striving for the hizmet with different methods and means.' To support this approach, Alper quoted from the Risale-i Nur:

> ... Dinî cemaatlar maksatta ittihad etmelidirler.
>
> Mesâlikte ve meşreplerde ittihad mümkün olmadığı gibi câiz de değildir. Zira taklid yolunu açar ve "Neme lâzım, baskası düşünsün" sözünü de söylettirir.[8]
>
> Religious communities should unite in common purpose.
>
> It is neither possible nor desirable for them to unite in ways and means because that leads to imitation and makes people indifferent or wanting others to think for them.

As a result of this Nurcu initiative, political support for the JP was given by the Nurcus, Süleymancıs, Işıkcıs, the followers of the Mücadele Birliği (The Society of the Combatants), and some of the right-wing newspapers which had not belonged to any particular group. After the 1977 general election, representatives of these groups, which had previously supported different parties like the NSP, the NAP and the Democratic Party (DP), held several unofficial meetings with the government where they stated the requests of their groups and obtained a positive response. Each group expressed its own particular concerns such as the appointment of their members to official posts, a benevolent

attitude from the government towards their activities, and so on. Despite the ban on political activities since 12 September 1980, attempts have been made to maintain relationships with the JP leaders at national and provincial level and Nurcus complain that the Işıkçıs appear to support the military regime.

Explaining why unity had not been achieved with either the NSP or the NAP, Alper said: 'Islam cannot be limited or confined. As Bediuzzaman says, no one should use this religion as an instrument for his political or other purpose.' Alper then related Said Nursi's two conditions for unity with other religious groups.

> Muhabbet-i din sâikiyle teşekkül eden cemaatlerin iki şart ile umumunu tebrik ve onlarla ittihad ederiz:
>
> Birinci şart: Hürriyet-i şer'iyyeyi ve asâyişi muhafaza etmektir.
>
> Ikinci şart: Muhabbet üzerinde hareket etmek, başka cemiyete leke sürmekle kendisine kıymet vermeğe çalışmamak.[9]

We extend good wishes to and agree under two conditions to unite with all communities whose motivation is religious affection.

The first condition: To protect public order and the freedom bestowed by the Şeriat.

The second condition: To act with brotherly love and not to seek one's own gain through besmirching other societies.

Hayri distinguishes between active and passive opposition to Nurculuk. Active opposition comes mostly from enemies of Islam whose inspiration is the hostile part of the West and the Marxists who are fundamentally against religion. Nurcus occasionally encounter active

opposition from the rightists too, because they find Nurcus an obstacle to their political aim. These opponents are members of the NSP and NAP whose publications are sometimes fiercely critical of the Nurcus, not the Risale-i Nur but the activities of the cemaat (the entire group of the followers of the Risale-i Nur) and, particularly, the policy of the Yeni Asya newspaper and the publications which greatly damage the political interests of these parties. These parties managed to persuade some people to leave the cemaat. Hayri said those people could not anyway understand the explanations of the Risale-i Nur concerning social problems. RPP members and supporters never had any sympathy for the Nurcus. Not all opponents of the Nurcus study the Risale-i Nur with sincere intentions; some just continue their antagonism towards it by using their official positions as judges, police chiefs, journalists and so on. As an example of this, Alper stated, 'On the radio or television, they give the news only about arrests of the Nurcus saying that "they were caught while they were holding an âyin (religious ceremony)", but they never mention their acquittal and release.'

On the matter of passive or hidden opposition, Hayri says, 'When we look more closely at those who persist in not reading the Risale-i Nur because of their ignorance and of their timidity or cowardice, we can see that they are also being an obstacle for the Risale-i Nur to spread.'

How Much the Movement is Spread

Alper cited two factors that helped Nurculuk to spread in Ankara. Firstly, since Ankara is a city of universities and bureaucracy, many of its inhabitants comprise comparatively intellectual people whom the Risale-i Nur can address much easier. Secondly, the social life in Ankara, according to Alper, contains fewer religious elements compared with other cities in Turkey. Those who seek a social life with a

religious atmosphere, soon find that the Nurcus are the only group there that caters for them.

In explaining the country-wide spread of the movement, Alper claimed that Nurculuk arose out of necessity in Turkey. The state had opposed any sort of religious activities amongst people. Consequently after a long period of deprivation, there was now a religious vacuum in the country. Attempts had been made, particularly in schools, to fill this vacuum with materialistic philosophies. It is natural that those who wish to avoid losing their faith would somehow find and read the Risale-i Nur which is capable of protecting them from this peril. Another reason for the spread of Nurculuk was the lack of qualified Muslim scholars in Turkey to meet the religious needs of the people. Moreover, it is now well-known among the Turkish people that Nurcus are serving Islam without expecting any material benefit out of it. This also gives those who seek religious knowledge confidence that they can obtain this knowledge by joining the cemaat. The last point Alper made was that the Nurcus, by publishing the newspaper, magazines and books, in an attempt to reach people from every stratum of society, are improving their means of conveying the message.

In Hayri's account of the spread of Nurculuk, the message is accepted by many university students and learned people and has pervaded Turkey starting from the big cities down as far as the small towns, though it has not become widely established at village level. According to Hayri, there is no city and ilçe (sub-province) where Risale-i Nur is not being read, and Nurculuk is therefore the most widespread religious group in Turkey, and its adherents are more numerous and more educated than those of any other Turkish religious movement. Improved levels of education in Turkey, says Hayri, help the Risale-i Nur to spread more easily and be more effective.

To support this view, he quotes Üstad's saying:

İlim ve fennin hükmettiği istikbalde bütün meselelerini akla dayandıran Kur'an hâkim olacaktur.[10]

The Koran, which bases all its claims on reason, will be dominant in the future when science and technology rule.

The Risale-i Nur does nothing but expound the teachings of the Koran which have particular relevance to our times. So, Hayri states, this pure truth, the Risale-i Nur, that answers all the questions puzzling people of our time, should be widely accepted and influential.

Change in the Group

Alper claims that as Nurculuk has grown in experience, the social status of its membership has risen. This change obliges the dedicated Nurcu (Risale-i Nur talebesi) to make greater efforts and encourages them to use a wider variety of means to spread Nurculuk since more educated people would not be attracted by a naive approach. Furthermore, as the level of culture has risen among the membership, so too has the standard of material prosperity.

When Hayri first came to Ankara, the proportion of Nurcu members who were students was high (unlike the situation then in other cities). But now, although the number of students and of officials seems to be in balance, if the students who at the same time have an official job are calculated as officials, of course the officials' number is actually larger. In this respect Ankara is different, as in other cities the proportion of students is growing. Most Nurcus in Ankara are now aged between 25 and 35, but Hayri reckons the predominant age to be 28-30.

Hayri mentions as a new practice in Ankara the introduction of libraries comprising books that the Nurcu students in dershanes need for

their university studies. This has been done in order to improve the Nurcu students' study atmosphere in dershanes.

Difficulties Encountered

Asked about the difficulties encountered in spreading the message, Alper gave as the first obstacle his own nefs (soul). By this he meant the mystical sense in which the nefs represented the baser side of one's nature that is subjugated and purified by religious practice. Besides this inner enemy, there are some external obstacles, for example, ambiguity in the law about freedom of religion and conscience allows those who are hostile to religion to misinterpret it, usually to support very wrongly applied laicism. Also, antagonistic propaganda made by the same people against Nurculuk tries to give the impression that Nurculuk is an outlawed movement. Lastly, Alper considers the bigoted attitude of members of other religious groups a major factor preventing the faster spread of Nurculuk.

When Hayri was asked about difficulties, he said, 'Many people I spoke to in an attempt to deliver the message, lacked the patience to listen to me. Beneath this impatience lie only ignorance and shallow thought. Such people could not understand the Risale-i Nur.' He added two other difficulties he faced: the hostile propaganda against Said Nursi alleging that he was a Kurdish nationalist, and objecting to the language of the Risale-i Nur on the grounds that it was too old-fashioned to understand, and therefore some people were reluctant to read it.

3. GAZİANTEP

In Gaziantep, Nurculuk commenced as a group movement in the very late 1950's in a room attached to a mosque. The Nurcus began holding gatherings of 3 or 4 men in adherents' houses reading the Risale-i Nur together. These men were craftsmen or esnaf who had been drawn to the movement by a student named Niyazi, a new enthusiast who had embraced Nurculuk after reading some of their publications. Their numbers swiftly grew and soon they were holding their meetings in the mosque and using the room for their other activities.

After the 1960 military coup, the Nurcus of Gaziantep suddenly changed their strategy and started reading the Risale-i Nur aloud to the people assembled in the mosque, especially at the time of morning prayers. This continued until 1961 when the first prosecution against the Nurcus in Gaziantep took place. The reason for this prosecution was rather peculiar. The Nurcus had decided to establish a Tasarruf ve Yardımlaşma Sandığı (Savings and Mutual Assistance Fund), and wanted to obtain official approval for it, as it had been well received by most of the members. However, they had had some receipts printed with the name of the Fund on them, before registering it with the authorities. On a search of the students in the Commercial College, the school administrators anyhow found these receipts on the pockets of some of them, and, deeming them to be evidence of a secret society, they sent these students to court where the public prosecutor got out of these young students the names and addresses of the people who contributed money to the Fund. Police searched the houses of those whose names were obtained and found the Risale-i Nur in some of them. Consequently, thirty-five people from various professions - students, teachers,

officials, esnaf, engineers - were put on trial on the grounds of founding a secret society, Nurculuk. Although some of them were not really Nurcus, the trial of such a large number caused consternation among the people of Gaziantep who were surprised to find this movement had gained so great a hold there that the state thought it necessary to try to suppress it. Surprisingly, says Niyazi, those - including himself - who defended the Risale-i Nur and admitted that they were followers of it were released, while the others who denied in court that they were Nurcus were detained in prison.

In 1962, the Nurcus rented a separate dershane for the members who were students. In the same year all the Nurcus in prison in Gaziantep were eventually found not guilty and discharged. By 1963, the common people and officials - other than students - were able to organise regular derses for themselves.

Hizmet grew so quickly that the Nurcus needed a better and larger dershane in 1965. This one, too, was intended to be used mainly by the students for their activities, but of course it was also available particularly when they organised large joint-derses on special occasions for 'esnaf derses' as well. This term 'esnaf derses' is used to distinguish the derses held only for the students from the others, and applies to the derses attended by independent businessmen, workers and officials of every rank. Officials only attended esnaf derses when there were no separate 'memur derses' for them to attend.

In relating the progress made by the Nurcus of Gaziantep, Niyazi quoted the following figures: only three or four people used to gather in a ders when the Nurcu movement was first launched in Gaziantep in 1959. The first proper dershane was rented in 1962, but now there are ten dershanes, one of which is a six-storey building owned by the Nurcus and used as a centre. The opening in Gaziantep of the Higher Education

Institute in 1972 and then of one of the department of the Middle East Technical University of Ankara accelerated the spread of Nurculuk amongst the students. Now, between fifty and a hundred students regularly attend an ordinary ders. Albeit, after the 12 September 1980 they stopped assembling in such large numbers.

Difficulties and Opposition encountered

There have been some twenty trials of Nurcus in various courts in Gaziantep, but none of these trials has lowered Nurcu morale, indeed, since each has ended in acquittal, the Nurcus claim the trials have officially demonstrated the innocence of their movement and have led to increased public confidence in Nurculuk. Nevertheless, although the Nurcus try in this way to look on the bright side and regard the outcome of the trials as favourable, they are clearly upset at being taken to court in the first place.

While Niyazi was speaking of the opposition to Nurculuk, he fumed with anger at those politicians who criticise Nurcus for not supporting them. According to Niyazi, such politicians generated so much doubt amongst the ordinary Muslims that they now ask the Nurcus, since they claim to be Islamists, why they sometimes support non-Muslim politicians against Muslim ones. Niyazi avoided mentioning openly the names or even the party - the NSP - of these politicians who, he said, are simply exploiting the simple faith of the people for their own political ends. 'Of course', he expounded, 'they do not realise that the main struggle is now between belief and non-belief. We devote ourselves to defending faith against atheism, we do not have anything to do with politics, we are ready to help whoever fights against the azam uş-şer (the greater evil)'.[11] 'The RPP', he claims, 'encourages küfr (renunciation of faith) and anarchy. In order to overcome the menace

of atheism and to strengthen belief, we should follow a policy that paves the way to the unification of all believers, no matter whether they are of the fırak-ı dalle (heterodox groups) or even followers of the other divine religions.'

4. ERZURUM

Nurculuk was started in Erzurum by a man called Sergil Ağabey who distributed the Risale-i Nur amongst the hodjas of the city in the mid 1950s. Hardly any of them showed any interest in the Risale-i Nur except Kırkıncı hojda who, after studying the books, soon realised their importance and began to read them and interest others in them. Ten years passed before the first dershane was set up. The number of dershanes had increased to eight by 1972 and the Nurcus of Erzurum were then able to hold the ders in a different dershane every day of the week. On Saturday evenings there used to be joint derses, but on Sundays they organised special derses chiefly to teach students Nurcu views on social and political subjects.

When Mahmud first came to Erzurum in 1975, the Nurcus held only one ders a day in one or other of the ten dershanes, and some fifteen to twenty people would attend. Since then, a dramatic increase in the number of students has taken place. Mahmud attributes this increase firstly to the sympathy and concern shown by Nurcu students to newcomers during the registration period. Encouraged by this friendly approach, the newcomers accepted invitations to the dershanes. Secondly, to the Nurcu abstention from anarchic activities; this attracted students who wanted to avoid political activism. And thirdly, to the realisation that the Nurcus had established a very warm brotherhood among themselves

just by reading these religious books. Thus, these newcomers were attracted by Nurcu students to Nurcu meetings and eventually to the truth of the Risale-i Nur itself.

As the number of the students has grown very large, the derses are now being organised separately into more specialised groups, e.g. all the Nurcu students from the same faculty have their own derses. So, now more than one ders is usually arranged every day. By 1979 non-student Nurcus were similarly sub-divided: Halk dersleri (derses for common people) were separate from those of memurs (civil servants). They now organise the joint ders in Erzurum only on Sundays, when three to four hundred people from every profession and age gather. They usually bring the new acquaintances first to the Sunday ders in order to impress them with the number and quality of the Nurcus, ranging from university lecturers and students, to common people, and let them fit themselves into the group which they find most congenial. Another reason for bringing newcomers to these joint Sunday meetings is that Kırkıncı hojda gives explanations of the passage read during this ders, and these explanations help newcomers to understand the Risale-i Nur. Free discussions amongst small groups after the ders gives the newcomers an opportunity to ask questions and the friendly conversations that follow often lead the newcomers to eventually become wholehearted regular participants.

There are now 40-50 dershanes in Erzurum (the figure changes according to whether it is vacation or term time as students usually leave the university for their home towns during the four-month summer vacation). Twenty of the dershanes are owned by the Nurcus, the rest are rented flats. A new student hostel owned by the Nurcus was nearing completion in August 1981. It was an eight-storey building - one of

the biggest of its type in Erzurum - and this, too, was to be used as a dershane. Two of the Nurcu-owned detached buildings are also large enough to accommodate forty students. The joint Sunday derses are held in one of these two buildings on the first floor which is entirely set aside for this purpose and is capable of holding three hundred people easily.

One of the two Nurcu institutions in Erzurum is the Erzurum Kültür ve Eğitim Vakfı (Erzurum Culture and Education Foundation) which is officially recognised as a charitable organisation. The hostels in fact are run under the name of this Foundation. The other Nurcu institution is the recently founded Basın ve Yayın Bürosu (The Bureau of Press and Publications). This bureau is first to be used mostly by the Nurcu lecturers of the university to train specialists who will eventually produce publications on a variety of subjects.

Changes

Soon after the university opened in Erzurum, Nurcus turned their attention to the students. It was in 1965 that a student from the Faculty of Science attended the ders and this student became very popular with the Nurcus of Erzurum because he was the only student participant and they were aware of Said Nursi's teaching that it was time for the Risale-i Nur to serve the young generation. In this connection, Mahmud quoted from Hizmet Rehberi (Guide for Service) the words of Said Nursi addressing youth:

> Su muasırlarım varsınlar beni dinlemesinler ... Zira ben biliyorum ki: Şu kitabım ... sizde tahakkuk edecektir.[12]
>
> Let my contemporaries not listen to me if they don't want to ... Since I know that this book of mine ... will take effect in you (i.e. your generation).

This was the first of the reasons given by Mahmud why Nurculuk was growing in Erzurum. He continued: 'The Risale-i Nur is such an excellent medicine for the ills of this age that when those who really seek to obtain the answers to the problems caused by these ills read the Risale-i Nur, they find their answers and become convinced of the worth of the Risale-i Nur. This is particularly true in the case of students as they are the people actually faced with these problems. Because Nurculuk is quite wide-spread amongst students, any student enquirer who wants to know anything about Nurculuk can easily learn. They can compare Nurculuk with other groups with which they might well have some experience, and find that Nurculuk is less dogmatic and narrow-minded than these.

Moreover, seeing that Nurcus discuss all sorts of opinions freely in an atmosphere of mutual respect, the students conclude there can be no harm in maintaining their connections with them.

Another way in which students become affiliated with Nurculuk is through using the dershanes as student hostels. This applies to almost every university city in Turkey. Some students, especially those who have no prejudice against religion, learn, either by being informed by Nurcus in their home-towns, or by knowing other fellow Nurcu students, that there are places available for them to stay. Once they enter the dershane, Mahmud boasts, they find fraternity, intimate friendship, and sincere self-sacrifice among the Nurcu brothers. In the course of time they realise that the main source of these virtues is the Risale-i Nur, therefore their interest eventually centres on it. The consequence of this is that they inevitably become 'Nurcus'.

Nevzat, the second person I interviewed in Erzurum, is more politically active than most Nurcus. He quoted the results of the two

general elections of 1973 and 1977 to show how Nurcu influence had affected political opinion in this constituency where the people were readily inclined towards religion. Since Nurculuk was introduced to them by their hodjas, they warmly welcomed it. Although most of the population did not take an active part in the movement, they did heed what Nurcus advised them, and accordingly voted for the JP. As proof of this claim, Nevzat gave the results of the last two general elections straight from his memory. In 1973, the NSP won three seats in the province, the RPP and the JP won two each. Then, during the period 1973-1977, Nurculuk flourished among the people and the number of dershanes grew rapidly, and, according to Nevzat, the NSP's votes shifted to the JP, as had been strongly recommended by the Nurcus. Even some of the RPP's votes shifted. The distribution of the total eight representatives amongst the parties after the 1977 election in Erzurum was: 1 for the NSP, two for the RPP (but this time the number of votes for the RPP dropped dramatically from 47,000 in the 1973 election to 29,000), one for the NAP and four for the JP. The JP's votes increased more than twice as much - from 43,000 to 107,000.

In further explanation of Nurculuk's growth in this part of Turkey, Nevzat said that both the Risale-i Nur and Nurcu activities were well known to the students and the lecturers of the university, and the Nurcus displayed a good example of being religious to the people and gained their sympathy. Thus, the movement took root in educated circles, but creating no opportunity for friction between the masses and the educated, as had occurred in most parts of the country for years. University lecturers have their own weekly derses. Students and members of the public have separate derses. Consequently, Nurcus are now regarded by the common people of Erzurum as people who are working for Islam without getting involved in anarchy and without seeking any worldly position or other sort of benefit.

Mahmud dealt with this question more broadly, trying to draw attention to the superiority of the Risale-i Nur. He said the people now understand more clearly that today's greatest disease, as diagnosed by the Risale-i Nur is the weakening of faith and the only way to heal this disease is to use reason and logic to draw people back to religion. The second reason he adduced for Nurculuk's growing popularity was the general realisation that the Risale-i Nur's prophecies concerning the perils of communism and atheism in Turkey had been proved correct. As an example of this prediction, he quoted the following extract from the Risale-i Nur:

> Şimdi Kur'an, İslamiyet ve bu vatan zararına uç cereyan var:
>
> Birincisi: Komünist dinsizlik cereyani. Bu cereyan yüzde otuz-kırk adama zarâr verebilir.
>
> İkincisi: Eskiden beri müstemlekâtların Türklerle alâkalarını kesmek için, Türkiye dairesinde dinsizliği neşretmek için, ifsat komitesi namında bir komite. Bu da yüzde on-yirmi adamı bozabilir.
>
> Üçüncüsü: Garplılaşmak ve Hiristiyanlara benzemek ... için çalışan ... bir kısım siyasîler hey'etidir. Bu cereyan yüzde, belki binde birisini, Kur'an ve İslamiyet aleyhine çevirebilir.[13]

There are now three currents harmful to the Koran, Islam and this country:

First: communism and atheism; these may harm thirty to forty per cent of the people.

Second: A committee, which may be described as a committee for subversion, that has for a very long time been trying to sever the ties between the Turks and their colonies and to disseminate atheism amongst Turks. This, too, can harm ten to twenty per cent of the population.

Third: A sort of political committee ... that works ... just to copy Westernisation and to look like Christians. This current can only turn a hundredth, or perhaps just a thousandth, of them against the Koran and Islam.

Mankind has begun to realise that material things alone cannot meet human needs. Most people seek a source of deeper satisfactions and when some of them come across the Risale-i Nur, they embrace it with enthusiasm because it convincingly explains mankind's need for religion and shows this to be the source they need. Mahmud also claimed that the behaviour of Nurcus from Said Nursi downwards gave such a perfect example of what was taught in the Risale-i Nur, and produced such a favourable impression that people desired to pattern themselves upon the Nurcus.

Speaking about the charitable works undertaken by the Nurcus of Erzurum, Mahmud stated that everybody who believed the importance of this hizmet helped it as much as his financial capacity allowed. Thus, a Printing and Publishing Bureau had been formed, some twenty dershanes had been bought and a Foundation established which has a library open to the public and a conference theatre. The financial support provided has made it possible to operate several student hostels as well as the dershanes, and to meet the essential expenses of some very needy students. Nevzat speaks of this sort of Nurcu activity as canalisation of the people's hamiyet (public involvement and support) into science and education through helping university students to enter these fields.

Relationships with other Groups

Both of my informants stressed the necessity of the unification of all religious groups, at least in taking a joint political position against the common enemy, communism. Although, said Mahmud, cemaat un-Nur is a self-sufficient group and does not need any outside help

as far as hizmet is concerned, but in political matters, the enemy of the enemy should be considered as a friend so long as he remains opposed to the common enemy. Citing a passage from the Risale-i Nur, Mahmud laid down this principle about the relationship of the Nurcus with other religious groups:

> ... karşımıza ... aldatılmış bazı dindarlar (hocalar, şeyhler .. - in the text) çikartılir. Bunlara karşı vahdetimizi, tesanüdümüzü muhafaza edip, onlar ile ... münakaşa etmemek gerekir. ... madem îmanı var, o noktada kardeşimizdir ... şimdi bu acip zamanda îmânı bulunan ve fırka-i dâlleden bile olsa onlarla uğraşmamak ... iktiza ediyor.[14]
>
> We may be put ... in confrontation with some deceived religious men (hodjas, şeyhs, etc. - in the text). We must preserve our unity and solidarity towards them ... and we must not quarrel with them ... since they have faith [in Allah] so they are our brothers in this respect ... in these troubled times, it is necessary for us not to clash with those who have faith even if they are heterodox.

Nevzat supported the idea of avoiding any hostile attitude towards the other religious groups and gave a more specific example. He said, for instance, there are some types of people we cannot approach but tarikatçılar (members of the sufi orders)can. So, why should there be a conflict between Nurcus and tarikatçis? To confirm this point, Nevzat tried to remember from which part of the Risale-i Nur the following passage came, but he failed and said, 'Any way, Üstad says: "For love of Islam, Muslims should welcome any benefit they receive no matter from whom or whence it comes."'

Opposition

On the subject of opposition to Nurculuk, both Nevzat and Mahmud complained that various political parties worked against Nurculuk. Nurcu support for the JP naturally aroused the hostility of other parties, particularly the NSP and the NAP which were themselves bidding for the religious vote. The racialist ideology of the NAP sharpened that party's distaste for Nurculuk which condemns racialism. Mahmud mentioned the opposition of communist groups that were seeking to spread atheism and regarded Nurculuk as a very firm obstacle in their path. Because of this, they did not want to let Nurcus speak where communists were strong. He said that another source of opposition was the RPP members, particularly those who were government officials. Under various pretexts they used their official powers to hinder Nurcu activities, and sometimes sent police forces to raid the dershanes.

Nevzat stressed two other sources of opposition: one of them was people who spread adverse propaganda trying to show Nurculuk as a clandestine political organisation conspiring against the government, but, he says, it is obvious to the authorities, who are observing Nurcus' uninterrupted positive activities towards the state, that this is only an unfounded suspicion spread by the antagonists of Nurculuk. The other was those who have never made the effort to study either Nurculuk or the Risale-i Nur but oppose them on principle; they are the enemies of what is beyond them.

Difficulties

Nevzat confessed he had found his youthfulness a problem when trying to spread the Nurcu message, as some people, considering age a sign of maturity, thought him too young to be taken seriously. He felt he still lacked the necessary experience to be able to adapt his

behaviour to suit the particular people he was speaking to or the circumstances in which he was trying to convey the message. Earlier, soon after his conversion to Nurculuk, Nevzat had suffered from not having enough knowledge of the Risale-i Nur and therefore being unable to give convincing answers to the questions of the people he was trying to convert.

Mahmud listed his answers on this subject as follows: a) The first difficulty comes from the widely-held but erroneous belief that Said Nursi was a Kûrtçü (Kurdish nationalist); b) The failure of Muslims in Turkey to appreciate the importance of learning the fundamental principles of belief (iman); c) the fear of prosecution which is still prevalent amongst ordinary people; d) the language problem faced by new participants when they find that some words used in the Risale-i Nur are quite difficult to understand; e) Various forms of anti-Nurcu propaganda causing misunderstanding of Nurculuk; f) Financial limitations preventing the message from being spread more efficiently.

5. TRABZON AND İSPARTA

Outline of the early history of Nurculuk in Trabzon

Nurculuk was introduced to the University in Trabzon (Karadeniz Teknik Universitesi) by Hakan when he went there as an undergraduate in 1969. Before that, although there were some Nurcus organising their derses among ordinary people, there was no dershane, and these people could not join in with the university students because the university was a long way from the city and the educational gap between these people and the students was so wide that they could not hope to convince university students.

Hakan succeeded in getting the University authorities to set aside a room where students could perform namaz. This room then became a mescit and at the same time a centre for Nurcu activities. Towards the end of Hakan's first term in 1969, the small group of Nurcu students at the University were able to establish close links with the Nurcus of the city. As soon as possible, an old dilapidated house was rented to be used as a dershane. This attracted the attention of Nurcus in Istanbul, who began visiting their brothers in Trabzon and organising social activities such as conferences, joint derses, etc, so much so that the expansion of the numbers of the students who attended the mescit attracted the attention of the most powerful student group, the Leftists. They started harassing the Nurcus, but this did not prevent the Nurcus from holding their Friday congregational prayer openly in a large theatre inside the campus. As a result of pressure from the people of the city, the university administration had to grant a request for a separate hall for the Friday congregation. This hall was soon converted into a mosque with its carpets, pulpit and mihrap (where the prayer leader stands) provided by the people of the city, who, then preferred the University Mosque (as it eventually became known among the people) to the mosques of the city as a place for Friday prayer.

The Nurcu students kept themselves as well as their friends well away from any anarchic movements provoked by other groups in the University. Thereby Nurcus were able to protect those who came from politically quiet subprovincial areas of Anatolia. The first proper student dershane was opened in 1970 and in every ensuing year, one or two more followed. By 1973, the number of the dershanes reached seven, one of them was bought as landed property, the others were rented flats.

Changes

According to Hakan, the Nurcu movement was becoming more scholarly. By this he meant that the number of well-educated Nurcus was growing. In the past, people became interested in Nurculuk mostly under emotional pressure or simply because they were 'pro' any sort of vaguely religious activity or, 'anti' any sort of irreligious activity (the latter being particularly true of Turks). Since Said Nursi was a Muslim scholar and was denouncing any anti-religious action taken by the authorities, traditionalist Muslims of Turkey found that more than sufficient reason to support Nurculuk. But now, Hakan asserts, Nurcu membership is changing character. The people specifically study the Risale-i Nur and realise the vitality of its ideas and then they become Nurcu and defend it scientifically, rather than supporting Nurculuk emotionally in a very general way just because it is a religious group.

The necessary consequence of this change - one that in Hakan's opinion may be the most important of all - is that a specialisation process in hizmet is taking place. He gave examples of these specialised areas: press and publication, improvement of financial facilities, centres for research in various subjects, managing political connections, etc. He added that eight or ten years ago there was nothing like that but now each of these aspects of hizmet is being carried out by the brothers according to their respective professions.

Spread of the Movement

Like other Nurcus, Hakan believes that the Risale-i Nur is filling the vacuum created by twentieth-century civilisation; the need of human beings for spiritual satisfaction. It fulfils this function as modern man requires, using the methods of positive sciences and logic. It addresses all classes of society, regardless of their cultural and

professional differences. What Hakan was impressed with was the fact that whoever reads the Risale-i Nur becomes a fervent believer and never abandons it. That is why the number of the Nurcus is growing so fast. This growth is all the more remarkable for taking place in the face of the trials, interrogations, imprisonments Nurcus have encountered, particularly in the early days of the movement. Moreover, as a result of these trials, the wrong ideas people had gained from adverse propaganda about the cemaat have been largely removed and through the investigations a lot of experts have found a chance to examine the Risale-i Nur carefully and have come down in favour of it.

Outline history of Nurculuk in İsparta

Hizmet is carried out in İsparta in the same general way as in any other ordinary Anatolian town, i.e. arranging derses almost daily, occasionally organising conferences, seminars, etc., personal initiatives to promulgate Nurculuk in family circles, in the neighbourhood or among work-mates, and distributing Nurcu publications, newspapers, magazines, books and so on.

The Nurcu movement originated in İsparta. In 1926 Said Nursi commenced writing his books here in exile in Barla, a small town (nahiye) in Eğridir, a sub-province (ilçe) of Isparta province. Actually, Said Nursi wrote three quarters of the Risale-i Nur collection here in eight and a half years. Of course, says Hakan, Said Nursi's presence in this area had a great influence on the characteristically docile and traditionally religiously minded people of the region. When they saw Said Nursi under a very close state control being ejected from his home and having no possessions, and when they heard of his great repute as a 'Wise Man of the East' (Şark âlimi) and that even the state was afraid of him, the inhabitants of İsparta were filled with compassion

for him. He soon became well-known amongst them as 'Hoca Efendi'. Hakan declared that his memory is still green there; the people tell each other about him, and so wherever a Nurcu goes in this district, no matter how small the village, as soon as the inhabitants realise that he is a student of Hoca Efendi, they take him to their heart.

Relationships with Other Religious Groups

Hakan, who settled in İsparta after 1978, said there was no actual cooperation between Nurcus and the other religious groups there. Every religious group in İsparta works in its own way without hindering other groups.

Difficulties

In Hakan's opinion, the main difficulty Nurculuk encounters is misunderstanding by statesmen and intellectuals. This misunderstanding is caused by adverse propaganda by the internal and external enemies of Turkey who do not want religion and morality to gain strength in Turkey. The second difficulty arises from the faulty application of Westernisation in Turkey. That is, Hakan explained, dissoluteness is seen by the common people as a sign of being westernised. The result of this degeneracy left such a distorted element in the human character that it is now usually incurable.

6. ISTANBUL

Outline history of Nurculuk in Istanbul

Istanbul has long been the cultural centre of Turkey. Almost every movement is to be found there; even those that did not originate in its fertile soil have at least some offshoots there. The Nurcu movement established a dershane in Istanbul as its very first branch (other than those which were used by Said Nursi's followers as places

to copy out by hand the works which Said Nursi himself had dictated to one of them).

My first informant in Istanbul, Mehmet, mentioned a dershane where he visited Nurcus in 1949, i.e. three years before Said Nursi himself first visited Istanbul in 1952 to spread Nurculuk and defend one of his books in court (though he had been there earlier for other purposes). One of the Risale-i Nur collections was printed with the printing machine in Istanbul for the first time in 1942.[15] Developments were slow and even in 1955 almost all the printing and distribution of the Risale-i Nur in Istanbul was undertaken by a single person - Mehmet himself.

Only after 1965 did the Nurcus of Istanbul turn their attention towards the education centres and particularly the university students. Metin, my second informant, believes that this new field could only be reaped in the early 1970s. When he first came to Istanbul in 1968, hizmets were not as flourishing as they subsequently became. Yet quite substantial progress has been taking place in almost every aspect of the hizmet, from the furnishing style of dershanes (from wooden cupboards to refrigerators) to the quaity of the adherents (from rank and file people to the students) and 'establishing meaningful dialogues with the governments'. The new components of the cemaat, the intellectuals, are now transmitting the message to the varied strata in society. This recent success has caused hizmet to gain esteem. That is why, claims Metin, some circles in the state hierarchy began to take Nurculuk seriously.

According to Metin, besides directing its attention more towards educated people and bureaucrats, Nurculuk is undergoing a fundamental change; from solely religious subjects into such themes as personal

and social problems of modern man, the nature of the positive sciences of every kind, and so on. Of course, these themes are being studied and given emphasis during derses in the light of the inspirations deduced from the Risale-i Nur.

To show the capacity of hizmet in Istanbul, Metin enumerated the following specific examples: a daily newspaper, a fortnightly children's magazine, a monthly political and cultural magazine, a publishing house that published two hundred books in five years, a research centre, a foundation which undertakes social and cultural activities, a private school which arranges preparatory courses for university candidates, a special student hostel for secondary school children whose families work abroad, around fifty dershanes, almost exclusively for students, scattered all over Istanbul and accommodating various numbers between five to ten people each. In addition, every day the Nurcus of Istanbul hold five to ten derses in different quarters. But, says Metin, with great sorrow, it could easily be said that these hizmets are not extensive or effective enough to meet the needs of the people of Turkey.

Asked what the inhabitants of Istanbul think of Nurculuk, Metin rightly suggested that it required detailed research to discover the motives and reasons behind the people's apparent attitudes to such a sensitive subject. Metin added that unless a man was a militant supporter of a materialist ideology, there would be no reason for him not to be in favour of Nurculuk.

Spread of the Movement

Metin said that especially during the Republican period, the state followed a policy of neglect towards religion instead of actively regulating the spiritual life and supplying what was needed to meet the

religious needs of the people, who were consequently obliged to seek help elsewhere. In this atmosphere, the writings of Said Nursi were offered to meet the nation's need for religious knowledge and for reassurance of their faith. As a matter of fact, the entire nation was in search of such religious encouragement so that any similar writings would have been equally welcome. Metin attributes the growth of Nurculuk in Turkey to the people's spiritual yearning that the state did not satisfy..

Mehmet looked at the matter from two opposite sides: from the giver's side, the Risale-i Nur itself, and from the receiver's side, the people of Turkey. Mehmet gave the following reasons in order to explain why the Risale-i Nur is being so effective: a) it has been compiled as a 'science of belief' in order to reinforce the faith in Islam; b) it thus provided modern man with what he actually needed; c) it deals with the religious problems faced by individuals and societies today; d) it addresses people of all levels of understanding.

As for why the Risale-i Nur finds a ready response, Mehmet says the materialist ideologies being propagated in schools oblige Muslims who want to defend their faith to seek books that give them scientific counter-arguments to these materialist ideologies. Since most of the religious books written so far are merely narratives and require the reader to believe whatever they say, they cannot meet this need. This is where the Risale-i Nur comes in. In this, students find the arguments they need. So it is natural for the Risale-i Nur to circulate amongst students and that is why everyday the movement is gaining more support from students.

Relationships with Other Religious Groups

Most probably because my informants here in Istanbul are influential Nurcus, accustomed to giving guidance to others throughout Turkey,

they expounded their views to me as if I had come to them to receive instruction.

Nurcus believe that all Muslims individually or as a group should carry out their hizmet in harmony with one another because that is vital for Islam. It becomes even more crucial when it is needed to protect the fundamental basis of Islam, in this case they must integrate their views and combine their strengths. To attain their common ultimate purpose they ought to agree upon what parties to support in state general elections and bye-elections. Metin claims some successful results have been achieved in this respect.

Mehmet divides other religious groups into two: positive ones and negative ones. With the positive ones, he wishes to organise any sort of talks, gatherings between them and Nurcus that would provide them all together with an opportunity to express over and over again the view that they were ultimately serving the same cause. And he also wants to use the opportunity to stress the following principle derived from the Risale-i Nur:

> Herkes maksatta ittifak etmeli, meslek ve meşrepte ittifak mümkin olmadığı gibi câiz de değildir, nemelâzımcılığı doğurur.[16]

> Everyone should be united in the common purpose, but it is neither possible nor desirable for everyone to be united in ways and means because that only brings forth an attitude of indifference.

As for the negative groups, Mehmet advises against taking any action that will hurt them. If a Nurcu did so, it would be wrong conduct. He refrained from specifying which religious groups he classified as

'negative', though he implied that they were the ones opposed to Nurculuk.

The account of Nurculuk in this chapter has focussed on how the movement developed in different parts of Turkey and how it related to local conditions including other religious groups. In the following chapter attention is focussed on the Nurcu institutions through which Nurcus convey their message to others.

NOTES

1. Bryan R. Wilson, Magic and the Millenium: A Sociological Study of Religious Movements of Protest Among Tribal and Third-World Peoples (London, 1973), pp. 18-30.

2. James A. Beckford, "Explaining Religious Movements", International Social Science Journal, XXIX, No. 2 (1977), 235-249.

3. Wilson's classification of sects include: conversionist, revolutionist, introversionist, manipulationist, thaumoturgical, reformist and utopian. See his Magic and the Millenium, pp. 22-27, and also see his "An Analysis of Sect Development", American Sociological Review, XXIV, No. 1 (1959), 3-15.

4. Wilson, Magic and the Millenium, p. 22.

5. Beckford, p. 245.

6. The National Order Party (NOP) was replaced by the National Salvation Party when the former was dissolved by the Constitutional Court on 20 May 1971. For a brief explanation on the connection between these two parties, see Feroz Ahmad, The Turkish Experiment in Democracy, 1950-1975, (London, 1977), p. 317.

7. Bayram Yüksel, one of Said Nursi's students who knew him in Afyon prison in 1948 and was thereafter with Said Nursi until the time of his death in 1960. Bayram is recognised by the Nurcus as one of their Ağabeys. For his relationship with Said Nursi and Nurculuk, see Necmeddin Şahiner, Son Şahitler Bediuzzaman Said Nursî'yi Anlatıyor (Istanbul, 1978), I, pp. 379-455.

8. Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, Hutbe-i Şâmiye (Istanbul, 1960), p. 88.

9. Ibid., p. 87-8.

10. This sentence is mentioned in meaning in ibid., p. 23.

11. The term usually used by the Nurcus for the Republican People's Party as opposed to the Justice Party, which is defined in these terms as the ehven-i şer (the lesser evil).

12. Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, Kur'an Şakirtlerinin Hizmet Rehberi (Istanbul, 1977), pp. 190-1.

13. Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, Emirdağ Lâhikasi (Istanbul, 1959), II, p. 177.

14. Nursi, Kur'an Şakirtlerinin Hizmet Rehberi, pp. 184-5.

15. For a photo-copy of a page of this first print, see Necmeddin Şahiner, Bilinmiyen Taraflariyla Bediuzzaman Said Nursi (Kronolojik Hayati), 6th ed., (Istanbul, 1979), p. 311.

16. Alper had quoted the exact wording of this phrase as it appeared in the Risale-i Nur, see note 8 above.

CHAPTER III

NURCU INSTITUTIONS

The main Nurcu institution is the dershane, which is the subject of Chapter V. Although the dershanes have been an inseparable part of Nurculuk since the movement came into existence in 1926 when Said Nursi was sent into internal exile in Western Anatolia, from the mid-1960s Nurcus have been establishing additional institutions. These have developed in number, size and quality as Nurculuk itself has grown and they serve to help Nurcus maintain their separate identity in face of the pressures of modern society.[1] The first step in this direction was taken by Mustafa Polat in Erzurum in 1964 when he set up a weekly newspaper Hareket (Action) as an out-and-out Nurcu publication.[2] Since then Nurcu publishing houses, printing houses, distribution centres and bookshops have proliferated even beyond the boundaries of Turkey. By 1975 the Nurcus had their own publishing house in the USA where they published translations of some of Said Nursi's works. In conjunction with these publishing ventures, 'vakıf' foundations, camps; research centres and a private school have been founded. These have played a part in recruiting and training Nurcus who could be employed in the various publishing and distribution activities and help to finance them.

In this section these Nurcu institutions will be examined within the limits of available information. As very little has been written about these institutions, the present study will be based mostly on information obtained in the course of personal research.

1. PUBLISHING HOUSES

The first Nurcu publishing house, Yeni Asya Yayınevi, was founded in 1971. Until that time Nurcus had had to rely upon sympathetic but non-Nurcu publishing houses to publish books and articles favourable to Nurculuk. These included books by Nurcus seeking to propagate Nurculuk directly, e.g. by writing on various aspects of Nurcu teaching, or indirectly. e.g. by novels and stories giving a favourable impression of Nurculuk.

Among the works produced then was Nurculuk published by the Çiçek Yayınevi, Ankara. This book comprised a compilation of articles written in various newspapers and magazines by prominent figures in Turkey between 1961 and 1968.[3] Other publications from various publishing houses included defences of Nurculuk and extracts from the writings of Said Nursi. Virtually all right-wing religious publications of that time, including the newspaper Yeni İstanbul, Bugün, Sabah, Yeni İstiklâl, Hür Söz, and the periodicals Hilâl, Millet, Tarih Sohbetleri, Büyükdoğu, Sebilürreşad, Hür Adam, Fetih, Yeni İstiklâl and Sedengeçti carried such articles.[4] Novels and stories designed to promote Nurculuk included Minyeli Abdullah, Maznun, both by Hekimoğlu İsmail, Demet, Damlalar both by Mümine Güneş, Su, by Ahmed Şahin, etc.

All of these books were published by the Yeni Asya Yayinevi in Istanbul.

When Nurcus came to feel the need for more works written to promote the movement, the decision was made to set up their own publishing house, though those who had previously published pro-Nurcu material still continued to do so.

A. Yeni Asya Yayınevi

Although the other religiously inclined publishing houses were ready to publish anything in favour of Nurculuk, the Nurcus were not totally

satisfied with being dependent on others, they wanted to publish their own books and periodicals under their own control and check every single word used in them with the teachings of the Risale-i Nur. The other religious publishing houses, however, were not ready to listen to the Nurcus on every matter. Especially when Necmettin Erbakan started his political campaign in the 1969 general elections as a religious opponent of first Süleyman Demirel personally and then of his whole party, the JP, most of the religious publishing houses did not agree with the Nurcus about making propaganda against Necmettin Erbakan and afterwards they ceased supporting the political stand of the Nurcus and even argued against it and caused some Nurcus to leave Nurculuk as well. That was a severe lesson for the Nurcus and they were stimulated by it to found their own publishing house, Yeni Asya Yayınevi, which came into being in 1971.

Through this publishing house, the Nurcus had by 1981 published over two hundred books as well as some leaflets, most of them reprinted more than once. These publications were on a variety of subjects and will be studied in Chapter IV. The Yeni Asya Yayınevi shares the same building as the Yeni Asya Research Centre in Cağaloglu, and the Yayınevi is legally owned on behalf of the Nurcus by Mehmet Emin Birinci who is one of Said Nursi's own students.[5] The publishing house employs some fifteen to twenty permanent staff.

B. Sözler Yayınevi

Because from the very beginning of the movement, the books of the Risale-i Nur attracted legal prosecution, sometimes quite severe, Nurcus first had to copy the Risale-i Nur by hand and distribute them secretly. The first actual printing of the Risale-i Nur was done in Ottoman script in 1926 in a printing house in Istanbul.[6] Only after 1956

were they printed on a large scale in Ankara, Samsun and Antalya using modern printing machines and modern Turkish script. This was done by Dr Tahsin Tola and two of his colleagues, all of whom were MPs for the DP. Said Nursi appealed to Adnan Menderes, the Prime Minister of the time, to allow the Risale-i Nur to be published by the state[7] and to have them taught in the schools of Turkey as a part of the curriculum.[8] This was not granted but the Nurcus received some unofficial help from the government to obtain paper easily, though it was then in short supply. The printing house most probably did not belong to the Nurcus but the typesetting was done by Nurcu workers and Said Nursi himself did the proof readings.[9]

After the 1960 military coup d'état, printing and distribution of the Risale-i Nur again went completely underground. The military regime and subsequent governments prosecuted Nurcus and people found in possession of the Risale-i Nur. Depending on the policy of the party in power, the pressure on the Nurcus was sometimes eased, sometimes increased until 1976 when almost all of the governmental pressure was lifted. The Nurcus took advantage of this and opened a publishing house, Sözler Yayınevi, in Cağaloğlu, Istanbul. Since then the Risale-i Nur has been published and distributed through this publishing house all over Turkey.

The publishing house is owned on behalf of the Nurcus by one of Said Nursi's most devoted students, Mustafa Sungur[10] whose name is mentioned in most parts of the Risale-i Nur. Although this publishing house publishes only the Risale-i Nur, it is not the only place where the Risale-i Nur is published. M. Said Özdemir,[11] another student of Said Nursi, personally publishes the Risale-i Nur in Ankara and distributes it. Said Nursi authorised some students,[12] including M. Said Özdemir, to publish his books after his death. As we shall see in the section

on printing houses, these publishers do not themselves undertake the work of printing.

C. Golden Horn Typesetting and Publishing House

In order to be able to spread their message to Muslims throughout the world without being subject to Turkish restrictions, The Nurcus set up the Golden Horn Typesetting and Publishing House in California in 1975. The previous year the Nurcus had published privately in El Cerrito, USA, a biography of Said Nursi (The Author of Risala-i Noor Badee-uz-Zaman Said Noorsi of Turkey) and a translation of a section of the Risale-i Nur (Nationalism in the View of Islam). Between 1975 and 1982 the Golden Horn Typesetting and Publishing Company published English translations of eight of the Risale-i Nur and a German translation of one of the Risale-i Nur as well as a periodical in a mixture of English, Turkish and German, based on the Risale-i Nur.

2. PRINTING HOUSES

Nurcus have three printing houses in three different countries, each of them with different purposes. Interestingly, none of them prints the Risale-i Nur. Nurcus apparently prefer to have this printed in other printing houses and then store the copies in secret places in case the police decide to raid.

A. Yeni Asya Gazetesi Matbaası

From the early 1970s, the Nurcus wanted to have their own printing house to print their own publications. So, they launched an appeal for funds in Turkey and also amongst Nurcu workers in West Germany to import a printing machine on which to print their newspaper, Yeni Asya, and other publications. This only became possible in 1980 when, with the new machine they opened the Yeni Asya newspaper printing house, a

two-storey building in Topkapi, Istanbul. Here, with a staff of about twenty people, the Nurcus now print their own newspaper (currently called "Tasvir"), magazines, books and other publications. As is usual with the Nurcus, they show one of their members as owner of this enterprise. In this case the official owner is Mehmet Kutlular. He succeeded to Mustafa Polat's position when the latter was killed in a traffic accident in 1972, and has also taken over from him as the one who determines the Nurcu stance on political issues.

B. Golden Horn Press

As noted above, the Golden Horn Typesetting and Publishing House was established in 1975. It prints its own publications, but to judge from its output it is a small concern with limited resources.

C. Ittihat Druck

Said Nursi himself instructed his students in Barla (İsparta) in 1926 to write a special Koran[13] with the words 'Allah' and 'Rab' in red, arranged in vertical lines in the text. This Koran is called, particularly by Nurcus, the Tevafuklu Kuran (The Concordant Koran). Nurcus were able to have this Koran written in 1974 by the most famous Turkish calligrapher Hamid al-Amidi Aytaç (1891-1982)[14] but could not print it in Turkey because the printing presses there were not up to the standard required. The Nurcus wanted to print the Koran in four different colours on high quality paper in order to make the "concordant" or "harmonious" aspects of the work clearly evident.

Nurcus collected most of the donations from the Nurcu Turkish workers in West Germany to buy a modern printing machine only to print this Koran. Instead of importing this machine into Turkey and having problems about obtaining quality paper, they preferred to establish a printing house in West Germany where they could support it financially.

This establishment, called 'Ittihat Druck', was set up in West Berlin in 1975.[15] It is owned and run on behalf of the Nurcus by Abdullah Yeğin[16] who is one of the Nurcus' ağabeys. The Ittihat Druck has printed this Koran in two different sizes and also produced a number of posters of Koranic texts or pictures of famous mosques of Istanbul. The Korans are distributed all over the Muslim world including Turkey as well as in Europe and the States.

The Ittihat Druck printing house is in a four-storey building in a district of Berlin densely inhabited by Turkish workers. The printing house employees stay in this building which is also used as a main dershane when the Nurcus of Berlin have their Saturday evening derses.

3. DISTRIBUTION CENTRES

Until very recently, Nurcus had been distributing the Risale-i Nur only from person to person secretly. When they could publish them under the name of a legal publishing house (Sözler Yayınevi) in 1976, they started offering the Risale-i Nur for sale to the public in their own bookshops. Nurcus have their daily newspaper and magazines distributed by the normal specialists firms but other Nurcu publications are distributed almost entirely through their own institutions. These are 'Bürolar' (Offices) inside Turkey and the Mihrab Werlags GmbH in West Germany.

A. 'Bürolar' (Offices)

In 1967 the Nurcus published their first weekly magazine, intended for nation-wide distribution. This was called İttihad and to distribute it throughout the regions starting from the big cities and gradually expanding over Anatolia, they opened İttihad Bürolar. These 'Bürolar' served Nurculuk not only by distributing the magazines but, in the

course of time, by being centres of Nurcu communication between Istanbul and Anatolian towns.[17]

When the Yeni Asya Publishing House opened in 1971, İttihad Bürolari were renamed Yeni Asya Bürolari and they stopped distributing newspapers and magazines but became more like ordinary bookshops instead, selling Yeni Asya publications. As the number of these Yeni Asya publications grew, so too did the number of offices; they are now to be found in nearly every Turkish city and in many towns. By 1976, Nurcus were able to distribute the books of the Risale-i Nur through these offices. In 1981 the military government closed down the Yeni Asya newspaper but Nurcus managed to continue publishing their daily newspaper by changing its name to Yeni Nesil. So the offices became Yeni Nesil Büroları. Especially after the 12 September 1980 military coup, Nurcus were very careful not to have many copies of the Risale-i Nur in these offices. They still store the Risale-i Nur in secret places and display only one or two of each of these books.

The ownership of the offices usually belongs in fact to the Nurcu community of the area who nominate one or two people in whose names it is registered, and the local consultative committee decides how to run the offices on behalf of the community. Normally, they appoint a Nurcu to do this. It is his duty to keep the office open in working hours, and he is paid a wage. In some of these offices, especially in small towns, the income from books and other publications may be supplemented by the sale of stationery.

B. Mihrab Verlags GmbH

The Nurcus set up the Mihrab Verlags GmbH in Cologne in 1975 to cater for the particular needs of Turkish workers in Germany. Most of these workers were originally from rural areas and, of course, at least

nominally Muslim. Research revealed that when they were working abroad they made special efforts to maintain their Turkish identity in their alien environment. As part of the expression of their Turkishness, they began to show renewed interest in things Islamic. Thus a demand was created for religious publications for the workers themselves and for their children, in whom they wished to instil their own traditional religious and national values. To obtain Turkish Islamic reading matter, the workers would contact any religious or nationalist institution in the area where they were living, regardless of its sectarian or political leanings. The Nurcus and the Süleymancıs were among the first to appreciate the importance of this source of interest and they made moves to satisfy the needs of the new market and attract support for themselves. The Nurcus did so by opening dershanes in the West German towns where Turkish workers were most heavily concentrated, and the Süleymancıs opened Koran courses.[18] The Nurcus began to import their Yeni Asya publications and the Risale-i Nur into West Germany in bulk to offer to the Turkish workers who were determined not to be assimilated by the gâvur (infidels). They established the Mihrab Werlags GmbH to distribute these publications through dershanes throughout Germany and other countries in Europe with sizeable numbers of Turkish workers (Austria, France, Belgium and Holland).

Mihrab Werlags GmbH occupies two storeys of a 4-storey building, one is used as a storehouse, the other as a dershane as well as a place to display the books and posters. The special Koran which is published in Berlin is distributed all over the world chiefly through this institution in Cologne. There are two people working full-time on the distribution business; other Nurcu workers and students who live in the dershane help them voluntarily.

4. RESEARCH CENTRES

One of the main claims of the Nurcus is that they are the only religious organisation in Turkey which regards the scientific and technological developments of the twentieth century as the common property of all mankind. Nurcus say that these scientific and technological developments result from studies of the work of the same Creator who revealed Islam as the final and complete religion, and therefore cannot be separated from religion. As Said Nursi puts it, they are not contradictory but complementary.[19]

It is because of this belief that Nurcus have since the beginning of the movement been proclaiming that they are not reactionaries and fanatics; on the contrary, as a religious group they have published books and pamphlets in English and quoted in their publications from books written in European languages by non-Muslims, mostly in scientific studies. Their first attempt in this direction was to establish an Institute in the United States and then a research centre in Istanbul.

A. Risale-i Nur Institute of America

This institute was founded in California in 1975 primarily to translate the Risale-i Nur into English and secondly to represent Nurculuk at the international level. The representatives of the institute have taken part in several conferences organised by international Muslim organisations in Europe and the United States and published the papers which they presented to these conferences in the form of small pamphlets. The common characteristic of these pamphlets[20] is the attempt to introduce Said Nursi and Nurculuk to the Muslim world.

The institute published a monthly magazine, The Light-Nur, starting from 1975, the year it was founded, until 1980. The content of the magazine consisted mostly of the articles of the Risale-i Nur which

had been translated into English but not previously published as books. In addition to these translations, selected international news about religion and religious activities and articles taken from the Risale-i Nur in their original language, Turkish, could be found in the magazine.

The institute is run mainly by the Turkish Nurcus who are either students or residents in the USA. The number of the books it has published so far is nine, one of them is in German and the rest in English. Until 1983, only two names have appeared on the translated books as the translators: Ümit Şimşek, the staff writer of the daily Yeni Asya, and Dr Hamid Algar, Professor Near Eastern Studies at the University of California. Evidently, the Risale-i Nur Institute of America and the Golden Horn Typesetting and Publishing House are working hand in hand.

B. Yeni Asya Research Centre

This centre was founded in Istanbul in 1978. It is worth noting that within the Turkish context it is particularly unusual for an outlawed religious organisation to have an institution in Turkey calling itself by an English name as well as its Turkish name Yeni Asya Araştırma Merkezi and, moreover, to publish books with religious purposes whose references are almost all written in European languages by totally non-Muslim authors. Apparently the aim of the research centre is to study religious subjects, mostly concerning akaid (tenets of faith), within the context of modern sciences and to testify to the truthfulness of these tenets by adducing the new scientific discoveries as proof. Of course, this reconciliation between science and religion is made under the light of Said Nursi's teachings. Although there is hardly any reference in these books to the Risale-i Nur, that is in fact deliberate policy.

By 1982, the Centre had published 18 books in its 'science and technology' series and 8 books in its 'social sciences' series apart from several small pamphlets. Most of these books are written by prominent Turkish scholars and edited by the Centre. Their titles never suggest any connection with religion at all. A representative sample includes: Yıldızların Esrarı (The Mysteries of the Stars); Hücreden İnsana (From Cell to Human Being); Beynimiz ve Sinirlerimiz (Our Brain and Nerves); Atom; Sibernatik (Cybernetics); Atomdan Hücreye (From Atom to Cell); Big Bang; Uzay ve Dünya (Space and the Earth). They are pocket-book size paperbacks. More detailed information will be given about them in Chapter IV.

The Centre has had considerable success in propagating religion among the new generation in Turkey, especially students whom the religious circles could not directly approach because of the cultural cleavage created by the secular education. In as short a period of time as four years, the Centre published eight editions of some of these books. According to the information which was available from the publisher, the following books were reprinted for the eighth time in the summer of 1981: Hücreden İnsana, Beynimiz ve Sinirlerimiz and Atom.

The Centre occupies the top floor of the old Yeni Asya Newspaper building in Cağaloğlu, Istanbul. It employs approximately five professional personnel, all of whom are expert on at least one European language. It is run by a retired noncommissioned officer but the moving spirit behind him is Ümit Şimşek who is the author of two of the Centre's books and the translator of some of the books of the Risale-i Nur into English.

C. Bediuzzaman Enstitüsü

When the general consultation council assembled in Istanbul in 1980, one of the decisions it took was to establish a Bediuzzaman Enstitüsü in in Turkey (Bediuzzaman Institute of Turkey) whose centre would be in Istanbul.[21] Since then there has been no news of it. Nurcus may have postponed the realisation of the project for sometime later in the future both because the political situation changed soon after this assembly and hindered Nurcu activities, and because the attitude of some Nurcu ağabeys towards this new political situation caused friction between the members of the Arbitration Committee which was entrusted by the assembly with the task of establishing the institute. This institute might have been another step for Nurcus towards setting up more public and legal institutions in place of the semi-secret dershanes beside the bookshops (Bürolar), the publishing house, vakıf foundations and research centre in Turkey. It seems likely that the Nurcus will begin to found these Bediuzzaman Institutes starting from big cities after democracy is restored.[22]

5. CAMPS, PRIVATE SCHOOL, STUDENT DORMITORIES

Since Nurculuk is a movement based on reading a particular set of books and is expanding mostly amongst students, it is very understandable that the Nurcus should organise summer camps for their student adherents to study these books, to open schools to facilitate them with extra education and to provide them with places to stay when they need them.

A. Camps

Schools and the universities in Turkey go on holiday for three months in the summer and most of the students do not have anything to do during this period. To make use of this opportunity, Nurcus organise

camps in different parts of Turkey for these students to study the Risale-i Nur together during the summer holidays. The students who come to these camps are mostly the children of devoted Nurcus and stay with their families but not in the dershanes. In these camps they are subjected to an intensive study of the Risale-i Nur under the control of senior Nurcus.

In 1975 Hikmet Çetinkaya, a journalist, wrote articles in the newspaper Cumhuriyet (8 August 1975) to inform the authorities of the Nurcu camps in Western Anatolia and on the following day the public prosecutor of Edremit-Balıkesir raided the camp which was set up on the Kaz mountains (near the small town of Yiğitler). In the raid the prosecutor seized three chests full of books of the Risale-i Nur, two tape recorders and a chest full of recording tape cassettes. Of 63 people arrested, fifty were young students whose ages ranged between twelve and fifteen, and the other thirteen were adults.[23] In his article (in Cumhuriyet, 12 August 1975) Cetinkaya complained that the public prosecutor of Kemalpaşa did not raid the Nurcu camp which was set up in Ören (a sub-town of Kemalpaşa) and claimed that a day later the camps were reopened on another mountain in Western Anatolia.[24]

In his series of articles, Çetinkaya reported that apart from the Yiğitler and Ören camps, Nurcus had camps in Sûtûren (a small town of Edremit) and Ahmetli (a small town of Turgutlu-Manisa). According to Çetinkaya's observations, these camps last three months; breakfast, lunch and dinner are served, and only on Fridays did the people in the camps have a day off. Çetinkaya reported that in July 1975 in a camp in Ören alone there were two hundred young people who were mostly students, and in Yiğitler and Ahmetli camps one hundred in each. The main organiser of these camps in the Aegean Region is Fethullah Gülen,

and some specially trained Nurcus from Istanbul, Ankara and Konya had been brought to these camps. These young people whose ages ranged from twelve to fifteen were carrying the Risale-i Nur in their hands and sometimes singing hymns[25] in groups. These camps were financially supported, according to Çetinkaya, by the local Nurcu businessmen.[26]

Because these camps are organised for a temporary period and in different places every year, usually in the mountains, and deep inside the forests, it is very difficult to guess even approximately the number and size of the camps organised in a year. Besides this, like other Nurcu activities, organising the camps is very much affected by the political situation of the country, so their number and size vary accordingly from year to year.

B. Istanbul ilim ve kültür dershanesi

For the Nurcus it is important to receive higher education in order both to be able to understand the teachings of the Risale-i Nur and, consequently, to promulgate them among the intelligentsia of the population which is deemed to have more to say about the future of the country. But there is intense competition to get a place in university in Turkey, and the students of the lycées in the small Anatolian towns, from where the Nurcus mostly recruit their young adherents, are at an disadvantage because the quality of education there is lower than in the main cities.

To help the Nurcu students or the children of Nurcus who have either just completed their lycée education and want to take the university entry tests or failed in previous tests but want to try again, the Nurcus of Istanbul opened in 1978 a private school where intensive courses are given to prepare these candidates for the tests.

The school is in a rented building in Beyazit near Istanbul University. The administrative body consists only of Nurcus. However, this is not always the case for the staff they employ, though these are at least sympathisers. Although the number of students varies from term to term, the average total is between fifty and seventy-five which is much lower than in other private establishments cramming university candidates. According to one of the administrators, this school has been opened as a pilot school for their original plan to found a private high school. In fact, the general consultative body appointed a number of Nurcus to study the private school project in 1978[27] but no such school has been established yet.

C. Student Dormitories

Although the dershanes are widely used by the Nurcu students as boarding houses, Nurcus have some places in the university cities for students who are not really Nurcus but merely sympathisers. These places do not necessarily belong to the Nurcus, they may be properties of city councils or even government properties (in which case they mostly belong to the General Directorate of Pious Foundations), but the administrators responsible for them are either Nurcus themselves or favourably disposed towards Nurculuk and give preference to Nurcu students. Most small Anatolian cities provide their own students with dormitory accommodation when they go to the main cities, such as Istanbul, Ankara and İzmir for university education. Like the political groups, Nurcus too may sometimes have an opportunity to seize the administration of some of these dormitories either by having a Nurcu administrator or by gaining the support of the majority of the residents; then they are able to use these places for their own activities.

A leaflet published by the Nurcus of Istanbul reveals that in 1981 they opened a special dormitory,which they own, in Istanbul for fifty

students they brought from Germany to have educated in Turkey.[28] In the same leaflet they explained why they have their own student dormitories: '... to protect youths who have come from Anatolia to Istanbul for higher education, to prevent them from falling into the traps of ill-intentioned groups'.

6. VAKIF FOUNDATIONS

As the Nurcu institutions grew, their need for financial support required independent organisations to receive charitable gifts and to allocate their resources amongst their various activities and new projects. So, despite the instructions of Said Nursi not to accept charity, and the early boasts of the movement that they did not receive any material support,[29] Nurcus started collecting contributions in the early 1970s, first only from dedicated Nurcus, to buy houses or flats to make into dershanes. Then, in the mid-1970s, they extended their activities to founding institutions that needed more finance (e.g. printing houses, and publishing ventures). Towards the end of the 1970s, Nurcus started accepting money not only from the dedicated Nurcus but from Nurcu sympathisers, especially from businessmen. At this time they established a big private enterprise (a factory in Isparta to produce units for prefabricated houses) whose share-holders were Nurcus and Nurcu sympathisers. A fixed percentage of the profit (20%) was to be allocated to *hizmets*. These developments made it necessary to direct the movement's financial affairs independently.

As far as the Turkish laws and tax system are concerned, the best way of avoiding direct government control and paying tax, while maintaining the recognition of the legal authorities, is to establish *vakifs*. Moreover, the word *vakif* still keeps its religious significance among the Turks as an institution to which Muslims historically give their

donations and may bequeath their properties. So, in 1978, the Nurcus decided to establish vakıf foundations in some cities independent of one another. Some of them were responsible for particular duties besides their general functions. For example; the Isparta vakıf was to look after some places which Said Nursi had asked his students to preserve,[30] e.g. the houses in Western Anatolia where Said Nursi stayed in his life and the gardens in the countryside where Said Nursi used to go out for a walk and sometimes dictate the Risale-i Nur to his scribes. This vakıf has bought some of the properties associated with Said Nursi.

By 1980, most cities had their own vakıf foundations, and even some big ilçe (small towns), where Nurculuk is quite influential, started establishing these vakıfs. The general consultation council, which assembled in that year, approved the proposal to found vakifs in thirteen cities and three small towns.[31]

The vakıfs are administered locally by Nurcus appointed by the local consultative council to the trustee board. After the establishment of Nurcu vakifs became widespread in Turkey, Nurcus began to vest legal ownership of some of their properties, such as dershanes, in the vakıfs themselves rather than in the name of selected individual members. (This followed the defection of some Nurcus who had been shown as Nurcu 'property owners' and the problems that this created.) The vakıfs finance all Nurcu activities in the area and some of them even give grants to needy Nurcu students.[32]

In the official rules of the Istanbul vakıf foundation that the Nurcus had to submit to the authorities when it was established, one aim of the vakıf was described as:

> to undertake every sort of activity which will contribute to the spread of knowledge and to scientific studies and to the

improvement of personality of individuals by educating them in accordance with national, ethical, religious and historical principles.[33]

The Istanbul ilim ve Kültür Vakfi (Science and culture vakıf foundation of Istanbul) which was established in 1979, published a leaflet in 1982 to give an account of what they had achieved in the previous year, namely 1981, and in this they announced to their adherents that the main aim of the vakıf was:

> ... to provide and equip our new rising generation that will be the assurance of our future, with knowledge, culture and belief appropriate to that of their ancestors, and to make every necessary effort to this end.[34]

In order to attain this aim, the vakıf spends the charitable gifts it receives on 'useful science and educating well-conducted (hayırlı) youth'.[35]

NOTES

1. This development is, of course, typical of any such group striving to resist the outside world and to consolidate themselves as a separate group. Cf. for example, the activities of the Jewish sect, Lubavitcher Chassidim in William Shaffir, "Witnessing as Identity Consolidation: The Case of the Lubavitcher Chassidim", Identity and Religion, International Cross-Cultural Approaches, ed. Hans Mol, Sage Studies in International Sociology, No. 16 (London, 1978), pp. 40-2.

2. Hamid Algar, "Said Nursi and the Risale-i Nur: An Aspect of Islam in Contemporary Turkey", Islamic Perspectives: Studies in Honour of Sayyid Abul a'la Mawdudi, ed. Khurshid Ahmad and Zafar Ishaq Ansari (Leicester, 1979), pp. 324-5.

3. Nurculuk (Ankara, 1968), passim.

4. Some of these newspapers and periodicals are mentioned as Nurcu publications in the following sources: Çetin Özek, Türkiyede Gerici Akımlar ve Nurculuğun İçyüzü (Istanbul, 1964), p. 288; Nurculuk, p. 1 and Algar, p. 324. Many of these periodicals no longer exist.

5. For his participation in Nurculuk, see Necmeddin Şahiner, Son Şahitler Bediuzzaman Said Nursî'yi Anlatıyor (Istanbul, 1978), I, pp. 247-93 and Necmeddin Şahiner, Bilinmiyen Taraflariyle Bediuzzaman Said Nursî (Kronolojik Hayatı), 6th ed. (Istanbul, 1979), p. 394, hereafter cited as Bilinmiyen.

6. Ibid., pp. 273 and 277.

7. Ibid., pp. 390-1.

8. Jacob M. Landau, Radical Politics in Modern Turkey (Leiden, 1974), p. 185.

9. Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 391.

10. For his opinion on Nurculuk, see Necmeddin Şahiner, Said Nursi ve Nurculuk Hakkında Aydınlar Konuşuyor, 2nd ed. (Istanbul, 1979), pp. 365-401.

11. For his position in Nurculuk, see Özek, pp. 288 and 290.

12. Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 391.

13. Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, Mektûbat, (Istanbul, 1977), pp. 379-82.

14. For his biography, see "Harflerin Betekâri Kendisini Anlatıyor", Köprü, No. 61 (April 1982), pp. 8-15.

15. M.S. Abdullah, Islam Und Westliche Welt: Geschichte des Islams in Deutschland (Graz, 1981), p. 108.

16. For his ideas on Nurculuk, see Şahiner, Son Şahitler Bediuzzaman Said Nursî'yi Anlatıyor, pp. 362-78.

17. Cf. Chapter V, p. 187.

18. For the Koran courses in Turkey, see Richard B. Scott, "Qur'an Courses in Turkey", The Muslim World, LVI (1971), 239-55.

19. Yeni Asya Research Center, "Bediuzzaman'ın Gözüyle Modern İlimler ve Din", Köprü, No. 36 (March 1980), pp. 7-15; Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, Münâzarat, (Istanbul, 1977), pp. 71-2 where he uses his sentence, which is well-known to Nurcus, 'Vicdanin ziyası, ulum-u dînîyedir. Aklın nuru, fünun-u medeniyedir. İkisinin imtizaciyla hakikat tecelli eder. İftirak ettikleri vakit; birincisinde taassup, ikincisinde hile, şüphe tevellüd eder'. (The sciences of religion are the light of the conscience. The arts of civilisation are the lustre of the intellect. Truth becomes manifest from the fusion of these two. When they are separated, fanaticism appears in the first, and cunning and scepticism are produced in the second.)

20. More information about these pamphlets and other Nurcu publications is given in Chapter IV below.

21. "17-18 Mayis 1980 Tarihinde İstanbul'da Yapılan Görüşmelerin Suretidir", report distributed among Nurcus, article 10; see also Burhan Bozgeyik, "Tarihçi Necmeddin Şahiner ile Mülâkat", Köprü, No. 36 (March 1980), p. 87.

22. Çetin Özek mentions an institute "Islamisch-Theologisches Risale-i Nur Institut" which was established in West Germany by Nurcus and published some of the translations of the Risale-i Nur, cards and calendars in German in the early 1960s (p. 256). This Institute must have ceased to exist or lost its importance because the new ones have superseded it in the course of time. Throughout my research, including that in Germany, none of the Nurcus I met in 1981 mentioned this Institute to me.

23. Hikmet Çetinkaya, Türkiye Gerçeği (Istanbul, 1976), pp. 88 and 89.

24. Ibid., pp. 92-3.

25. What Çetinkaya calls "hymns" (ilahi) were probably traditional Turkish marching songs and tunes to which the Nurcus have put new words. Necmeddin Şahiner has compiled and published a collection of these old songs so that young Nurcus can change the words to suit their own purposes.

26. Çetinkaya, pp. 71-87.

27. "30-31 Aralik 1978 Tarihlerinde Istanbul'da Yapılan Görüşmelerin Suretidir", report distributed among Nurcus, article 5.

28. Istanbul İlim ve Kültür Vakfi, Bir Yilda Neler Yaptık? (Istanbul, 1982), p. 15.

29. Risale-i Nur Külliyatı Müellifi Bediuzzaman Said Nursî, Hayatı, Mesleki, Tercüme-i Hali (Istanbul, 1960), pp. 47, 213 and 257.

30. "30-31 Aralik 1978 Tarihlerinde Istanbul'da Yapilan Görüşmelerin Suretidir", article 7.

31. "17-18 Mayis 1980 Tarihind Istanbul'da Yapılan Görüşmelerin Suretidir", article 4.

32. Istanbul İlim ve Kültür Vakfı, Bir Yilda Neler Yaptık?, p. 15.

33. Quoted in ibid., p. 5.

34. Ibid., p. 4.

35. Ibid.

CHAPTER IV

NURCU PUBLICATIONS

1. SAİD NURSİ'S WRITINGS

Said Nursi published his first book in 1910. From then onwards, he published one or two books almost every year until 1953. All of these books are on religious subjects. The ones he wrote during his 'Old Said' period dealt mainly with the political and social sides of religion, whereas the others, which made up the Risale-i Nur collections, written during the 'New Said' period contained theological arguments and religious exhortations. Most of the ideas in 'Old Said's' writings were incorporated into the Risale-i Nur, either as separate treatises somewhat revised, or in a considerably simplified form. The collected works constituting the Risale-i Nur can be regarded as the backbone of Nurculuk.

However, none of Said Nursi's writings was revised from the point of view of Turkish language. They all remained as they were originally written, although some early writings are now virtually incomprehensible to the new generation in Turkey due to the language reform which has resulted in a continuous change in Turkish vocabulary.[1]

Said Nursi's writings will be studied in this section in chronological order in the two categories mentioned.

A. Early Writings

When he was in Istanbul at different times, Said Nursi wrote in various newspapers on several topics.[2] His early writings mostly consisted of his ideas on subjects which were commonly discussed among the intellectuals of the time, or were compilations either of discussions he had had with intellectuals or of the public speeches he had made.

The first book Said Nursi published was called Nutuk (Speeches). It comprised the public speeches he had delivered between 1908-10, mostly in support of the new constitutional regime of the Union and Progress from an Islamist view point. Nutuk was printed in Istanbul in 1910.[3] In 1911, Said Nursi published two books: Muhakemat (Reasonings) and İki mekteb-i Musibetin Şehadetnamesi Veya Divan-i Harb-i Örfi ve Said-i Kurdî (The Diploma of the Two Schools of Misfortune or the Military Court and Said-i Kurdî). Muhakemat was written as an introduction to a tefsir (commentary on the Koran).[4] By giving some examples in this book, Said Nursi tries to establish the principles of tefsir and to demonstrate how the verses of the Koran should be understood.[5] Divan-i Harb-i Örfi is the compilation of his defence speeches in the Military Court set up just after the 31 March Incident and also several articles he had published in different newspapers to advocate the Islamist view and the constitutional regime.

After his acquittal by the Military Court, Said Nursi went to Eastern Anatolia and visited the tribes there. When he came back to Istanbul, he published the discussions he had had with the tribesmen in 1913 in the form of questions and answers under the title of Mûnazarat (The Debates). Mûnazarat reflects Said Nursi's ideas on the political and social matters of the time. The tribesmen asked questions revealing their worries about freedom, the constitutional regime, the Party of Union and Progress and the Caliph from the point of view of religion. Said Nursi interpreted freedom and constitutionalism Islamically as a learned man of religion and favoured the Islamist group in the Party which he interpreted as comprising all except those who had become Freemasons.[6] He rejected despotism because it was

non-Islamic and opposed Abdülhamid II as sultan but preserved his faith in the Caliphate as the only politically unifying factor amongst the Muslims of all nations.[7]

Said Nursi wrote his incomplete tefsir, İşarat'ul-I'câz (The Miraculous Signs [of the Koran]) while fighting the Russians on the Caucasian front in 1916.[8] He had it published first in 1918 when he returned to Istanbul from captivity.[9] Işarat'ül-l'câz is the only book of Said Nursi's to comment on the verses of the Koran in a systematic exegesis starting from the beginning until the thirty-second verse of the second sura.[10] It was originally written and published in Arabic and in 1955 was translated into Turkish by Abdülmecid Ünlûkul, Said Nursi's younger brother.[11]

After British troops invaded Istanbul on 16 March 1920, the religious authorities were asked to give answers to the six questions prepared by the Church of England. Said Nursi, as a member of the Dar-ul Hikmet al'İslamiye in the office of şeyhûlislam, was invited to give answers to the questions. He refused to give an official answer but wrote his personal answers in an insulting manner and published them in a small book while the troops were in Istanbul.[12] The booklet was called Hutuvat-i Sitte (The Six Steps - of Intriguers -) and was distributed secretly.[13] In its first edition, no place or date of publication were given[14]. By publishing this booklet he supported the National Independence Army in Anatolia against the invasion and encouraged people not to despair of success.[15]

In the same year, Said Nursi's nephew, Abdürrahman, compiled the wise sayings of Said Nursi which are regarded as 'inspirations that came to Said Nursi's heart'. The first fascicle of the compilation was published in Istanbul in 1920 under the title of Hakikat Çekirdekleri (The Seeds of Truth).[16] Its second fascicle was printed in 1923.

A selection from both fascicles was published in modern Turkish script at the end of Mektubat as an appendix.[17]

In 1921, Said Nursi published two books. One of them was called Nokta (Point), the other, Ta'lîkât (Annotations). In Nokta, Said Nursi tried to bring the most convincing logical evidence to prove the existence and unity of God.[18] Ta'lîkât was his first book on Logic - treated from the Islamic standpoint - and it was written in Arabic.[19]

When Said Nursi went to Damascus in 1911, he gave a sermon in the Omayyad mosque. This sermon was published in Damascus in Arabic twice. In 1922, Said Nursi published this sermon under the title of Hutbe-i Şamiye in Istanbul and later on he translated it into Turkish; ever since then the Turkish version has been in print.[20] The same year, in 1922, Said Nursi published his comments on some selected verses of the Koran. He did not follow any logical sequence in selecting the verses, so every verse is studied independently from the others. These are, in fact, as he writes in the very beginning of the book, notes he wrote down while he was pondering on the verses which concerned mostly the social and political life of the Muslims of the time. The book was called Sunûhat (Occurrences).[21] Sunûhat is now in print in modern Turkish script. In 1922 Said Nursi went to Ankara and published two books there: Zeyl-ûz-Zeyl (The Appendix of the Appendix) and Hubab (Goals), both of which were in Arabic.. In Zeyl-ûz-Zeyl, he tried to disprove atheism, which he felt was penetrating into the minds of Muslims. Hubab, which was published in early 1923, was on social and political subjects.[22]

Said Nursi had six of his books published in Istanbul in 1923. These were: a) Kızıl Icâz, Said Nursi's second book on Logic, written in Arabic;[23] b) Lemaât, the expansions of the very concise sayings

compiled in the Hakikat Çekirdekleri, written in a semi-verse form and now published at the end of Sözler as an appendix in modern Turkish script;[24] c) Şuaât (Rays), tries to prove that the Prophet Muhammad was the true and final prophet and includes some examples of the Prophet's miracles;[25] d) Tulûat;[26] e) Rumûz; and f) Işârât.[27] The last three of these books include Said Nursi's opinions on aspects of Islam concerned with social and political matters which were then commonly discussed by the ulema. Said Nursi wrote some parts of these books in an attempt to answer the criticisms of adversaries of Islam.

During the very beginning of his exile, in 1925, Said Nursi composed his first religious exhortations based on the Koranic themes without following any systematic form of the traditional exegesis of the Koran. He entitled the book Nurun İlk Kapisi (The First Gate of Light) and discussed in it fourteen different subjects, all of which he subsequently studied in detail in the Risale-i Nur proper.[28]

B. The Risale-i Nur Collection

While in exile in Western Anatolia, Said Nursi, starting from early 1926 until late 1949, devoted his life almost entirely to writing a series of treatises which comprised a collection that exceeded five thousand pages and was called the Risale-i Nur (Treatise of Light). For both Said Nursi and Nurcus, the Risale-i Nur 'has the effect of reflecting the Qur'anic luminosity through the prism of Said's expression'.[29] It is because of this nature of the Risale-i Nur that the whole collection was entitled Nur (Light) and its various sections as lem'a (Flashes) or şu'a (Rays). In other words, the Risale-i Nur was the reflection of the aspects of the Koran which look at the twentieth century. According to Zübeyir Gündüzalp,[30] everything needed by the people of this century is explained in the Risale-i Nur precisely to the required degree, no

more, no less.[31] Nurcus claim that the most prominent saints of Islam, such as Imam Ali - the fourth Caliph - and Abdulkadir Gîlânî, foretold that the Risale-i Nur would fulfil this important task of the Koran in the twentieth century.[32] Furthermore, since the Risale-i Nur is a true tefsir of the Koran giving illumination to the people of this century, the Most Wise Koran should refer to its servant, the Risale-i Nur.[33] Thus Said Nursi found thirty-three verses in the Koran pointing to the Risale-i Nur, even though not explicitly but in their implicit meaning.[34] Therefore, the Risale-i Nur, for its adherents, is a spiritual miracle of the Koran in this century,[35] whereas for its detractors, the Risale-i Nur is full of scientific errors[36] or is scattering the seeds of sedition.[37] For Hamid Algar, 'there is little of anything in the Risale-i Nur that is identifiably new or unprecedented in either Sufi writings or the literature of tafsir'.[38]

The main feature of the Risale-i Nur-which comprises more than 130 treatises - is that each treatise is based on certain Koranic verses. These verses are not directly translated into Turkish, nor are they interpreted as seen in any classical exegesis of the Koran. Rather, basing his argument on an allegory or on a question and answer form, Said Nursi tries to convey his message to the reader in the light of the relevant verse or verses with which the treatise starts. The subject of every treatise is independent of all the others and there seems to be no relation between them. On the whole, they are all, in one way or the other, related to one of the six pillars of the faith which are, according to Said Nursi, inseparable from each other.[39] Nearly every treatise tends to emphasise one pillar but also links it with the other pillars, though this is not done in a systematic sequence.

The Risale-i Nur is based on the orthodox beliefs of Islam; there are, however, very few criticisms of other mezheps and sects in Islam.

The Risale-i Nur does not, in fact, discuss the economic and administrative principles of Islam. For Said Nursi, in Islam they are insignificant compared with the subjects of faith concerning the hereafter. He says the Koran devotes no more than one per cent of its space to economic and administrative principles. Said Nursi said in the Risale-i Nur that 'only one percent of the Şeriat concerns politics'.[40] As a consequence of this understanding, the Risale-i Nur makes no direct recommendations for the practical implementation of the Şeriat in Turkey. Said Nursi ' ... deemed the first problem of the Turkish Muslim community to be the salvation of the very bases of faith itself.'[41] He called the reader to eliminate the secularist elements in his thought and his daily life, rather than calling for the abrogation of the secularist constitution of Turkey at the state level. Because of this feature of the Risale-i Nur, H. Algar found it more like a Sufi discourse than classical tefsir.[42] For him the influence of Sufism on Said Nursi was profound, and could be seen to have permeated all of his writings.[43] He further claimed that 'Most of his interpretations can be found in the great classics of esoteric tafsir, such as Isma'îl Hakki's Ruh al-Bayan.'[44]

Another aspect of the Risale-i Nur is that, apart from a treatise which is about the miracles of the Prophet, there is almost no specific reference to the hadith in the rest of the Risale-i Nur, although quite a lot of hadiths are used in the text without mentioning that they were hadiths.[45] It is unusual for Islamic apologetics not to claim the support of the hadith.

The language of the Risale-i Nur can be described as the Turkish used in the 1920s and 1930s in Turkey. Religious terminology is used

intensively in every part of the Risale-i Nur. Said Nursi used fewer Arabic and Persian words and conjunctions in the treatises which he wrote for laymen than he used in those which required some knowledge of religious sciences to understand. In his published letters, however, he used comparatively simple language and followed the Turkish language as it changed in the course of time.

The quality of the language of the Risale-i Nur was heavily criticised by its detractors. Dr Armaner said that 'Said Nursi's style of writing was an affected and broken Ottoman language which would be used by common people.'[46] Some others claimed that the language of the Risale-i Nur was 'full of grammatical mistakes'[47] and 'a very bad Turkish'.[48] Whereas for the Nurcus it is, of course, full of wisdom and nobody is allowed even to change a word of it. Therefore, no attempt has, so far, been made to update the language, and it seems to be almost impossible for Nurcus to think about doing so, at least for the present.

The main books of the Risale-i Nur that Said Nursi wrote in the years between 1926 and 1949 are Sözler (Words)(1926-1930), Mektubat (Letters)(1930-1934), Lem'alar (Flashes)(1934-1935), and Şualer (Rays) (1935-1949). They are divided into treatises, each of which is numbered and that number is made its title and used throughout the Risale-i Nur when it is referred to. Some of them, however, are given an additional title reflecting the subject studied in them, e.g. The Tenth Word, The Treatise on Resurrection.

Sözler comprises thirty-three treatises in 845 pages. To Said Nursi Sözler is so powerful a book that sometimes one single page has the effect of a whole book by ordinary commentators on the Koran. He stated that it was because 'Sözler ... is not a book of imitation

but of proof; ... it is not mystical but a book of truth; it is not an assertion, but the evidence that underlies the assertion.'[49]

The first nine treatises of Sözler are short articles written to urge readers to observe religious injunctions, especially namaz. The Tenth Word called Haşir Risalesi (its English translation is entitled 'Resurrection and the Hereafter') is the first treatise Said Nursi wrote in Barla in 1926 in the series of the Risale-i Nur. Said Nursi claimed that this treatise rationally proved the physical resurrection despite the fact that great scholars of Islam such as Ibn Sina (Avicenna) declared that it cannot be proven with rational evidence.[50]

The Eleventh Word is about man's worship in response to the manifestation of God's attributes in the universe. In the Twelfth and Thirteenth Words, a short comparison is made between the wisdom of philosophy and the wisdom of the Koran. The Fourteenth Word explains some Koranic verses which were, according to Said Nursi, found difficult to comprehend by the people of this age.

As an interpretation of the Koranic verse LXVII:5, Said Nursi tried to prove that there must be living creatures (angels and devils) in the heavens and, in the Fifteenth Word, to describe what kind of life they have.[51] In the addendum to this Word, he objected to others studying the Koran as if it were an ordinary book and not regarding it as true scripture.[52] The addendum was translated into English under the heading of 'A Proof of the Quran Against Satan and his Party: A Dispute With the Devil' and was published at the end of the English translation of the Twenty-Third Flash, pp. 51-68. Said Nursi explained in the text that what he meant by the Devil was 'the philosophers of Europe and the hypocrites of Asia whom the Devil trusted.'[53]

The Sixteenth Word comments on the verses, XXVI:82-83, in order to explain the Oneness of God and at the same time His Omnipresence.

The Seventeenth and Eighteenth Words deal with the transitoriness of life in this world and try to convince readers that they should not ignore the ephemerality of this world in their lives.

In the Nineteenth Word, the Prophethood of Muhammad is studied and He is shown as being one of the three main revealers of God to man.[54]

The Twentieth Word was written in reply to objections to the miracles of the Koran and Muhammad. The Twenty-first Word is divided into two sections, the first of which is on namaz and its virtue, the other is concerned with inward anxiety about worship. In the Twenty-second Word, Said Nursi tries to give evidence of the existence of God and then, using the form of a parable, he seeks to prove the Unity of God.

The Twenty-third Word was translated into English under the title of 'Belief or Unbelief: the Results of a Choice'. As can be understood from this title, it is about the importance of faith in man's life in this world and in the hereafter. The Twenty-fourth Word deals mainly with the manifestation of the Names of God in creation and how to preceive them. One section of this Word is, however, devoted to the interpretations of the hadiths foretelling the signs of the end of time.

In 1927, Said Nursi wrote the Mu'cizât-i Kur'âniye Risalesi (Treatise of the Miracles of the Koran) which is the Twenty-fifth Word of Sözler. This treatise is regarded as one of the most important sections of the Risale-i Nur. It studies the Koran as a revealer of God to man, from forty different aspects of its miraculousness.[55] Another highly praised treatise is the Twenty-sixth Word which is called Kader Risalesi (Treatise on Divine Destiny). It studies divine destiny and free will under the light of the verses XV:21 and XXXVI:12.

The Twenty-seventh Word is entitled İçtihad Risalesi (Treatise on the Islamic Jurisprudence). Said Nursi claims here that 'the gate of içtihad is open but there are several hindrances to entering it in this age.'[56] The Twenty-eighth Word is about Paradise and studies its reality and the type of life its inhabitants live.

In the Twenty-ninth Word, Said Nursi discusses in detail the eternity of the soul, angels and resurrection. Finding a common base for their existence, he shows that they are three different aspects of one divine reality, emir (command of God as found in the Koran, XVII:85), although they are given their own individual entity as they are being continuously created.

Said Nursi himself presents the Thirtieth Word as 'Discovering the talisman of creation by solving an important talisman of the Wise Koran'. He continues, saying, 'it is about an Elif (name of the first letter in the Arabic alphabet) and a nokta (point) consisting of 'Ene (English 'I') and Zerre (minute particles) respectively. It has two sections, the first of which deals with the essence and result of Ene and the second, the action and duty of zerre'.[57] He studies Ene under the heading of the verse, XXXIII:72 and zerre, XXXIV:3, in a way different from that of most traditional Muslim commentators.

The Thirty-first Word is on the Prophet Muhammad's ascent to heaven. The third revealer, the universe, which makes God known to mankind is the subject of the Thirty-second Word. The Thirty-third Word is called Otuzüç Pencere (Thirty-three windows) and divided into thirty-three separate short articles on different subjects.

At the end of Sözler a paper is added. This was a paper said to have been presented in a conference held at the 'faculty mescid in Ankara University in 1950.[58] The paper was prepared by a Student of

Light [Zübeyir Gündüzalp] in appreciation of Said Nursi and the Risale-i Nur.

Mektubat, the second book written in the series of the Risale-i Nur has 490 pages and comprises 26 treatises[59] each entitled Mektup (Letter) numbered in a sequence. Said Nursi compiled in this book his answers to the questions he received during the years 1930 and 1934,[60] and made them into treatises together with his answers to potential questions. A few treatises include his answers to potential questions only.

The first seventeen treatises are short answers to various questions. Their main subjects may be summarised as: the five different stages of life; death is a bounty; where Hell is located; people who serve religion should not accept alms and presents; the earth, God's ever-sailing ship; a tarikat should not be preferred to the Şeriat; the reason why the Prophet married more than once; the difference between love and compassion, and the superiority of compassion over love; should saintly miracles be revealed?; the difference between being muslim and mûmin (submitting one's self to Islam and having faith in it); where the resurrection will take place; the wisdom in Adam's expulsion from Paradise and the consignment of some people to Hell; the reason for the creation of Satan; the reason Said Nursi refrained from politics; the divine purpose in the turbulence in the time of the first four caliphs; Said Nursi's indifference to politics and not being a şeyh but a hodja; only the Koran and hadith should be regarded as the bases of Islam, not the Sufi ideas which were introduced later.

The Nineteenth Letter, which is called Mu'cizat-i Ahmediye (translated into English under the title of 'The Miracles of Muhammad') tells of the necessity of prophethood and narrates three hundred

miracles worked by Muhammad as evidence of his prophethood. In the Twentieth Letter, Said Nursi studies from various perspectives the existence and Unity of God and his power as they are manifested in creation. The Twenty-first Letter gives brief advice to the reader about the virtue of taking care of one's parents. The first section of the Twenty-second Letter was translated into English as 'Brotherhood', and deals with the importance of establishing brotherhood among Muslims. The second section tries to show how harmful enmity and greed are. The Twenty-third Letter comprises short answers to different questions and the verse XII:101 is interpreted here to explain the importance of having faith in the hereafter.

Said Nursi said that the Twenty-fourth Letter dealt with one of the three important subjects (the other two were the subjects of the Twenty-ninth and the Thirtieth Words).[61] In this treatise, Said Nursi tries to prove that the contradictions in creation are only apparent and ultimately good. This universe is nothing but the manifestation of God's Names. Because these Names are manifesting themselves continuously so the beings should continuously change and alter. That is the reason, Said Nursi explains, for the occurrence of undesirable and seeminly bad events. These events are, in fact, not evil but apparently, relatively evil; or, since they too are the manifestations of God's Names, so must be good. In this context, Said Nursi wrote in an appendix at the end of the treatise the meaning of 'prayers' as the real means of man's worshipping God.

The Twenty-sixth Letter is divided into ten sections, one of which is the reprint of a section in Sözler (pp. 190-200). Another section of the treatise studies Nationalism which was translated into English under the title of 'Nationalism in the View of Islam'. The rest of the sections comprise the answers by Said Nursi to various questions

asked by his students. They are too many and too varied to be summarised here. The Twenty-eighth Letter contains eight sections each of which discusses different subjects: dreams, their varieties and values explained according to the Koranic verses; interpretation of a controversial hadith about the event which took place between Moses and Azrael (the Angel of Death); advice to those who come to visit Said Nursi (he encouraged them to read and distribute the Risale-i Nur instead); ways of expressing thanks to God; some short answers to questions concerning various religious subjects asked by his students.

The Twenty-ninth Letter has nine long sections. Each section deals with a different theme which will be mentioned here only very briefly: the mysteries of the Koran are endless, everybody can discover some but not all of them; the divine purpose in a specific type of eloquence used in the Koran; an explanation of the letters which occur at the beginning of some suras of the Koran; the impossibility of translating the Koran exactly into another language; an interpretation of the Sura-i fatiha (the first sura of the Koran); the importance of the month of Ramadan and nine virtues of fasting; a miracle of the Koran manifested itself in a writing which was instructed by Said Nursi (this Koran was published by Nurcus later on)[62]; the meaning and the usage of the words of Koran and Rasul in the Koran; a study of the miraculous usage of the word, 'Allah' in the Koran 2806 times; an interpreation of the verse XXIV:35; six intrigues used by the enemies of Islam to discourage Muslims who have devoted their life to serve Islam: a) offering them high positions, b) frightening them by various means, c) encouraging their sense of greed, d) inciting their nationalist feelings, e) inflating their pride, f) causing them in various ways to

grow lazy; answers to seven different questions asked by his students concerning the social life of the Muslim community and, lastly, Said Nursi makes an analysis of Sufism, tarikat, sainthood and spiritual progress in sufi life.

Lem'alar has 426 pages and comprises 23 treatises[63] each called Lem'a (Flash) and numbered in sequence. The First to the Twenty-sixth Flashes were written in 1934[64] and the rest in 1935.[65]

The First Flash is about the story of the prophet Jonah, the Second is of the prophet Job, and they are studied as types of destitution and patience respectively. The Third Flash argues that man has been created with a sense of eternity. The Fourth Flash, called Minhac-ûs Sûnne Risalesi (Treatise on the Way of the Prophet), discusses the question of imamet between the Sunnis and Shiites. The Seventh studies the verses XLVIII:27, 28 and 29 to prove that the Koran rightly informed the believers of events which were to take place. In the Tenth Flash Said Nursi says that God admonishes those whom He likes with slaps (small punishments) in this world so that they may not deserve heavier punishments in the hereafter. The subject of the Eleventh Flash can be understood from its heading: Mirkat-ûs-Sûnne ve Tiryâku Maraz-il-Bid'a (Steps Upward in the Way of the Prophet and the Antidote to the Disease of Innovation - in Religious Matters).

Said Nursi explains in the first section of the Twelfth Flash that the sustenance of all creatures is directly provided by God, and in the second section, the meaning of the verse, LXV:12, which states that God has created seven heavens and, like them, the earth. The Thirteenth Flash is called Hikmet-ül-İstiâze Risalesi (the Treatise on the Wisdom in Seeking Refuge in God - from Satan) and deals with thirteen different themes. They are mainly: the divine purpose in the

creation of devils, Hell and Paradise; 'non-existence is mere evil but existence is mere good'; one who commits deadly sins can remain a believer (an answer to the Mutazilite philosophy which claims the opposite); the divine purpose in the defeat of the people of truth by Satanic forces; proof of the existence of the Devil; how an eternal punishment can be just for a person who, in his limited life on earth, denies the existence of God.

The first section of the Fourteenth Flash interprets the meaning of the hadith which stated that the earth was on an ox and a fish. The second section explains the meaning of bismillah, which is included in the content of the First Word as well. In the Sixteenth Flash, Said Nursi published his short answers to various questions asked by his students. The Seventeenth Flash contains revised translations of the small articles which Said Nursi had written in Arabic in the 1910s. This treatise is divided into fifteen sections each of which deals with different subjects. Some of them are about the ephemeral nature of this world, the real face of death and European civilisation; the others deal with universal pleasure and joy in creation, worship must be for the sake of God only. In one section Said Nursi interprets the verses XCIX:7 and 8 to study how every action in creation is recorded in order that it may be counted on the Day of Judgement.

The Nineteenth Flash, called İktisat Risalesi (the Treatise on Economy) discusses the necessity of being thrifty and contented with little, and of not being extravagant and profligate, under the light of various verses of the Koran. The Twentieth Flash is translated into English as a part of a book, 'Sincerity and Brotherhood' and indicates the importance of sincerity in one's actions. The Twenty-first Flash is the continuation of the subject of the previous treatise with the

addition of a list of principles of sincerity to be followed by the people who have committed their life to the service of religion. Said Nursi recommended the Students of Light to read this treatise at least once a fortnight. In the Twenty-second Flash, Said Nursi answers three questions asked by anonymous people concerning his personal life: why the government was interfering with him, why he was not participating in the worldly life and why he was avoiding compliance with the civil laws of Turkey.

The Twenty-third Flash is called Tabiat Risalesi (its English translation is entitled 'Nature: Cause or Effect?'), a subject which is discussed under the following three headings: a) Do causes create matter?, b) Does matter form itself?, and c) Is matter natural? Does Nature require it?. He denies each of these questions at the end of his argument and concludes that the path of Unity, attributing all creation to God, is the only truth acceptable to human reason. In the Twenty-fourth Flash Said Nursi strongly advises women to veil themselves. The Twenty-fifth Flash was translated into English under the heading of 'The Treatise for the Sick' and serialised in articles in the magazine Nur - The Light (July-August 1979 to November-December 1979). The Twenty-sixth Flash was also translated into English and serialised in articles in the same magazine under the title of 'The Treatise for the Aged' (September-October 1979 to November-December 1980).

Said Nursi wrote the following last three treatises of Lem'alar in prison in 1935 and 1936. The Twenty-eighth studies various subjects: sustenance, the meaning of the formula, salâtüsselâm (to call God's benediction on the Prophet); a refutation of Muhyiddin al-Arabî's idea on Vahdet-i vücud, etc. The Twenty-ninth Flash is in Arabic and concerns the meaning of Allahuekber (God is the Greatest), a phrase

commonly used by Muslims. The Thirtieth Flash explains in detail six names of God, Kuddûs, Adl, Hakem, ferd, Hay and Kayyum as they manifest themselves in creation. These Names were regarded by İmam Ali as the Greatest Names of God (İsm -i Azam).[66] For Said Nursi, every Name of God has a highest degree at which it manifests itself in creation and for the one who understands a Name at this highest degree of manifestation this Name will be the Greatest Name of God.[67] So the Greatest Name (İsm-i Azam) differs from person to person.[68]

At the end of Lem'alar, a reprint of a treatise called Münâcat is added. This treatise was originally written as a section of Şualar and was printed there too.

Şualar has 638 pages and comprises 14 treatises, each is called Şua (Ray) with a number which is not in sequence. They will be summarised here following the sequence in which they appear in the book.

Şualar starts with the Second Ray which was written in Eskişehir prison in 1935.[69] It explains Ehad as one of the Names of God, along the same lines as the six Greatest Names of God studied in the Thirtieth Flash. In the Third Ray, called Münacat Risalesi (Treatise on Supplicatory Prayer), Said Nursi sets forth at length the meaning of some parts of ninety-nine sections of the Jaushan al-Kabir and expresses praise to God, referring to His Signs in creation where He reveals Himself. The Fourth Ray is a long interpretation of the verse, III:173; the second half of the treatise is in Arabic. The Sixth Ray briefly explains the meaning of the prayer of tahiyat, which is a section in namaz.

The Seventh Ray, called Ayet-ül-Kûbra (its English translation is called 'The Supreme Sign') is one of the treatises of the Risale-i Nur

considered by Said Nursi and Nurcus to be particularly valuable.[70] Said Nursi wrote this treatise in 1936 when he was in Kastamonu. Ayet-ül-Kûbra is introduced to the reader as 'observations of a traveller questioning creation about his maker'. With the inspiration of the verse XVII:44, with which the treatise was headed, it studies every main element of the universe in order to prove that it cannot come into existence on its own, so it must have a creator. He thus tries to show the attributes of this creator that are to be seen in the universe.

The Ninth Ray is written as a supplement to the Tenth Word which is about resurrection and the hereafter.

The Eleventh Ray is called Meyve Risalesi (some parts of it were translated into English in a book entitled 'Fruits from the Tree of Light') and was written in Denizli Prison in 1943. It is presented as the summary of the Risale-i Nur,[71] i.e. it briefly explains in eleven sections the six pillars of belief (belief in God, His Angels, His Books, His prophets, the hereafter and divine determination) and the transience of the world. Some petitions sent by Said Nursi while in prison to the Denizli Criminal Court were published in the Twelfth Ray. The Thirteenth Ray is the compilation of some of Said Nursi's letters written to his students during his period of imprisonment (1935-1949) to console them for being subject to severe legal persecution and imprisonment. The Fourteenth Ray comprises some petitions sent by Said Nursi and his students to the Denizli and Afyon courts when they were in police custody and in prison, and their long defence speeches in these courts. This treatise also includes some letters Said Nursi had written to his students in various subjects concerning the events of

the time (1943-1949) and reprints some passages of the Risale-i Nur which were deemed to be relevant to these subjects.

The Fifth Ray is about the signs of the end of time, Deccal, Süfyan, Ye'cüc, Me'cüc and the interpretations of the stories about them in Islamic tradition. The Fifteenth Ray, called Elhüccetü'z-Zehra (The Luminous Proof), was written in Afyon Prison in 1948.[72] It is divided into two sections. The first section studies three different subjects: the first of these is an explanation of an Arabic phrase which is about God, the second is a brief comment on the first sura of the Koran (Al-fatiha) and the third is about the prophethood of Muhammad. The second section, having the verse XXIV:35 as a basis for its argument, studies some attributes of God, i.e. Knowledge, Will, Power, etc. Some parts of this second section are in Arabic.

In the First Ray, İşarat-i Kur'aniye Risalesi (Treatise on the Koranic Signs) Said Nursi interprets the implicit meaning of the thirty-three verses of the Koran as pointing to the Risale-i Nur. He mostly uses Cifr (Arithmomancy) in this treatise to find out the implicit meaning of the verses. The Eighth Ray, entitled Keramat-i Aleviyye (Saintly Miracles of İmam Ali) is a study of a book called Celcelutiye[73] which is attributed to İmam Ali, in order to prove that İmam Ali foretold the Risale-i Nur and indicated to its importance in this book.[74]

A section which was originally written in Arabic as a part of the Twenty-ninth Flash, was translated into Turkish and published at the end of Şualar. This section is about El'hamdülillah (Praise be to God - a phrase commonly used by Muslims).

Among the Risale-i Nur collections, there are some separate books published in addition to the four main books of the Risale-i Nur studied

above. Unlike the main books, these are not divided into sections and numbered in sequence.

Two of these separate books are mainly the selections of Said Nursi's writings in particular subjects, but were printed in various parts of the Risale-i Nur. One of these is the Sikke-i Tasdik-i Gaybî (The Signs of Hidden Confirmation), the treatise which comprises all sorts of letters and parts of the Risale-i Nur written in order to show the importance of the Risale-i Nur. These writings can be found in the three Lahikas, the First and the Eighth Rays which are about the confirmations of the Risale-i Nur by the Koran and İmam Ali. The whole of this treatise has also been printed elsewhere, except for the Eighth Flash which was actually left blank in the Lem'alar but in this work it studies one of Abdulkadir Gilani's works which was published in the first volume of the Mecmuat-ûl-Ahzâb, and interprets it in such a way as to suggest that Gilani approved the Risale-i Nur and its author, Said Nursi. Sikke-i Tasdik-i Gaybî has 220 pages and is definitely not recommended reading for new recruits to Nurculuk, though it is in circulation.

The other compilation of selected parts of the Risale-i Nur is the Asâ-yı Musa[75] which contains in its 269 pages the extracts written in an attempt to prove the six pillars of the faith. These extracts included in the Asâ-yı Musa are the Eleventh and Seventh Rays, the first section of the Thirty-second Word, the Twenty-third Flash, the second and third sections of the Thirtieth Flash, a section from the Tenth Word, the seventeenth section of the Thirty-third Word, the Third and Ninth Rays, the Twentieth Letter, the first section of the Twenty-second Word and few letters written by Nurcus in appreciation of the Risale-i Nur.

The Turkish version of the İsarât-ûl İ'caz[76] is also in circulation as a separate part of the Risale-i Nur collection and has 265 pages.

Also, Said Nursi, like other famous Muslim scholars, wrote his Mesnevi. Unlike theirs, Said Nursi's Mesnevi is not written as poetry composed in rhyming couplets, but in prose divided into eleven main sections with different titles. Each section is also divided into very short pieces, mostly no longer than half a page. Each piece starts with a phrase, 'My dear brother know that ...' and most aim at interpreting part of a Koranic verse concerning the six pillars of the faith. On the whole it may be regarded as a summary of the Risale-i Nur proper. Said Nursi originally wrote this Mesnevi in Arabic and later on his younger brother translated it into Turkish under the name of Mesnevî-i Nuriye. Now only the Turkish version, which has 244 pages, is in circulation in Turkey.

Starting from 1926 when Said Nursi began to write the Risale-i Nur until 1960 when he died, all the letters he wrote and most of the letters he received from his followers are compiled and published as parts of the Risale-i Nur Collections. His students wrote letters to Said Nursi either to ask questions concerning religious subjects and his opinion on matters related to hizmet (Nurcu activities), or to praise the Risale-i Nur and sometimes Said Nursi himself. The nature of the letters Said Nursi wrote to his students is of the same kind as those of his students. All of these letters were considered by his committed students to be useful, indeed essential, for guides to conduct in their lives and to the hizmets they should carry out after Said Nursi's death. These letters are, therefore, carefully preserved. Such is the devotion of these followers that they even keep his scribbled notes telling particular students to have his meal ready by the time he returned from a walk.[77]

The letters Said Nursi wrote and received in Barla, namely from 1926 to 1935, were compiled and published under the title of Barla Lahikası (Barla Supplementary Letters). This work has 210 pages and mostly consists of the letters written by Nurcus who expressed their ideas on the Risale-i Nur, and of Said Nursi's letters to them written in order to encourage them to carry on copying and disseminating the Risale-i Nur.

The letters Said Nursi wrote and received during his stay in Kastamonu between 1936 and 1943 were compiled and published under the title of Kastamonu Lahikası (Kastamonu Supplementary Letters). This book contains mostly the letters Said Nursi wrote to his students in Isparta to give them directions for their hizmet and it has 204 pages.

Said Nursi, after being released from Denizli Prison on 15 July 1944, went to Emirdağ and spent the rest of his life mostly there. From this date onwards, Said Nursi sent his letters from Emirdağ to his students in İsparta, Kastamonu, Istanbul, Ankara and other parts of Anatolia either to answer their questions or to direct the hizmets. These letters were compiled and published in two volumes under the name of Emirdağ Lahikası I and II (Emirdag Supplementary Letters). The first volume contains the letters written between 1944 and 1947 and runs to 228 pages, and the second, 219 pages long, has the 1947-1960 letters, most of which were written before 1953. Those he wrote while he was in prison in Eskişehir, Denizli and Afyon, were compiled and published in Şualar in its Thirteenth Ray and in some parts of the Fourteenth Ray.

Said Nursi compiled some sections of the Risale-i Nur to be published as a separate treatise under the title of Gençlik Rehberi (Guide for Youth). This treatise comprises the parts of the

Risale-i Nur which try to persuade young people to have faith in Islam and not to neglect their religious duties. The Gençlik Rehberi was published first in 1951 in the modern Turkish alphabet in paperback in Istanbul and has 237 pages.[78]

After the completion of the Risale-i Nur, Said Nursi wrote his last treatise on the Unity of God in 1953. This treatise was published under the name of Nur Aleminin Bir Anahtarı (A Key to the World of Light) and also includes a few letters written by Said Nursi concerning the importance of the topic. It is a small 56-page booklet.

Nurcus have compiled another book called Hizmet Rehberi (Guide to Hizmet - Nurcu Activities) comprising the pieces of the Risale-i Nur which establish the principles of the hizmet. The book is considered by Nurcus as a separate treatise and has 223 pages in paperback.

Well after Said Nursi's death, the Ağabeys selected mostly from among the Lahika Mektupları (Supplementary Letters) the letters of Said Nursi which cast light on his political stance especially after 1950. This book is called Beyanat ve Tenvirler (Declarations and Illuminations) and used by Nurcus as a 'political guide book'. It was published in paperback in 120 pages and is regarded as a separate treatise.

Lastly, we must mention Said Nursi's authorised biography, Risale-i Nur Külliyati Mûellifi Bediuzzaman Said Nursi: Hayatı, mesleki, Tercüme-i Hali, best known to Nurcus by the short title Tarihçe-i Hayat.[79] Although the writings of Said Nursi that it contains have all been published elsewhere, this work is the one most frequently consulted and referred to by Nurcus. It was written by his most committed students, who compiled the relevant letters and pieces of the Risale-i Nur to produce a work of 722 pages. It contains only the briefest of introductions by

the students themselves, the rest is all Said Nursi's words and so is considered by Nurcus as one of his own works, thus bringing the total number of treatises produced by him, including his early writings to 128.[80] The total pages in the Risale-i Nur Collections, excluding the early writings, is 5407.[81]

2. CURRENT PUBLICATIONS

During the first four decades of the Republic, religious and theological books formed a remarkably small proportion of the total number of publications in Turkey. Not until the early 1960s did religiously inclined publishing houses start emerging in Istanbul and some other main cities of Turkey, publishing religious books which were new in terms of their contents - not like the catechismal books, a number of which are still widely used by the devout traditionalist Muslim population - and ideological in nature. Their strong Islamic line was expressed through 'hard-sell' propaganda and they virulently condemned everything non-Islamic. The publications of Hilal Yayınları, Yağmur Yayınları, Bedir Yayınları are among the most well-known examples of this type of publication.

The situation of the religious and theological newspapers and periodicals published in this period was not very different from that of religious books. In the 1960s their number ranged from 13 (out of a total of 1653) in 1962, to 24 (out of a total of 1739) in 1964.[82] The increase of the religious and theological newspapers and magazines in the years between 1962 and 1964 was 84.61% whereas the total newspapers and periodicals published in Turkey increased 5.2%. But, as the number of the religious periodicals was so insignificant, this increase had little impact.[83, 84]

According to Landau's observations, in 1974: 'The dailies most closely identified with a pro-Islamic policy seemed to be Bugün ('Today'), Babı Ali'de Sabah ('Morning'), Yeni Asya ('New Asia') and Hakikat ('Truth'), all published in Istanbul.'[85] Amongst these newspapers, Yeni Asya was the one the Nurcus owned.

A. Periodicals

The Nurcus published many periodicals that daringly risked prosecution for contravening Article 163 of the Penal Code by attacking the secular foundation of the State and making propaganda for a religious group (Nurculuk). These periodicals appeared briefly in many different parts of the country but were swiftly closed down by the government authorities. Most of these survived for no more than about three issues and were confined to the area where they were published. The exceptions to this were İttihad (subsequently called Yeni Asya) and Köprü. Zafer another Nurcu periodical that has survived, is not concerned with politics.

i. Newspapers

During Said Nursi's lifetime in 1953, Nurcus in Samsun ventured to publish a newspaper Büyük Cihad (The Great Holy War). Because this contained articles by Said Nursi[86] the authorities instigated a prosecution of the paper, which consequently ceased to exist. After a long interval, a series of short-lived newspapers appeared in 1964 openly defending Nurculuk. These were eventually closed down by the state authorities. Among them were Nur (Light), İhlas (Sincerity - İhlas is the name of one of Said Nursi's books)[87], Bediuzzaman ('Wonder of the Age' - another well-known name of Said Nursi) which was published in Konya, and Zülfikar (title of an Arabic book by Said Nursi).[88]

These newspapers carried extracts from the Risale-i Nur and articles written in order to explain them as well as news of Turkey and the Muslim world. Some of them occasionally had fiery articles defending Nurculuk and criticising those authorities who took any action and writers wrote articles against Nurculuk. An outstanding example of these is a booklet entitled Tuhfet'ür Reddiye Adlı Sahte Vesika Uyduranlara ve Dağıtanlara Cevap! (Answer to Those who Made up and

Distributed a false Document named 'Tuhfet'ür Reddiye'). This is a compilation of two articles written by Mustafa Sungur and published in the Zülfikar newspaper in 1964. The articles are full of appreciation of the Risale-i Nur and the Nurcus, and refutation of a booklet which apparently criticised the Risale-i Nur and falsely gave the name of the last şeyhulislam of the Ottoman Empire, Mustafa Sabri Efendi as the author.[89]

The most serious of these newspapers was Hareket ('Action') published in Erzurum.[90] It lasted until its editor-in-chief, N. Mustafa Polat, moved to Istanbul to set up another weekly İttihat ('Union') on 24 October 1967.[91] In its first issue, İttihat declared that the Muslim world was beginning to awaken, faced as it was with the challenges of Western materialism and of the Northern (viz. Russian) sickness of atheism.[92] Landau describes the political stand that İttihad took:

'It has supported those domestic policies which have shown a favourable attitude towards Islam and has attacked those hostile to Islam - particularly communists, socialists and the Labour party of Turkey'.[93]

In February 1970, İttihad became a daily newspaper, printing thirty-five thousand copies a day. A year later, on 24 February 1971, the paper's name was changed to Yeni Asya, which remained the only Nurcu daily newspaper until 1981. According to the advertising manager it printed on average twenty thousand copies a day (compared with around half a million copies a day printed by the most popular Turkish newspaper Hürriyet, and over a quarter of a million each for three other leading dailies).

Yeni Asya was closed down by the military government of Turkey in 1981, most probably because of its severe criticism of the regime. Immediately after its closure, the Nurcus published the daily Yeni Nesil

which was exactly the same in content and political attitude towards the regime. Consequently, towards the end of 1982, Yeni Nesil, too, was banned from publication.

These closures could not stop the Nurcus publishing their newspapers. On the closure of Yeni Nesil, Nurcus bought a newspaper, Tasvir, which was about to go bankrupt. Tasvir now represents Nurculuk on the press scene and, as its predecessors did, it has been serving Nurculuk by attempting to mould the political opinions of its readers, who are almost exclusively Nurcus; it strives to unify Nurcus politically.

ii. Magazines

The Nurcus' first monthly magazine appeared in the USA in 1975. It was called Nur - the Light and was published first in English and Turkish together in one issue, later in two different issues, one was only in English and the other in Turkish and German was named the 'European edition'. The Risale-i Nur Institute of America owned and ran the magazine, which mostly carried the translations of the Risale-i Nur made by the Institute. In addition to the translations, the magazine included some articles taken from other religious books and periodicals whose views were similar to those expressed in the Risale-i Nur, as well as the news of the Muslim world. Nur - the Light ceased publication in December 1980, most probably owing to shortage of finances.

The second monthly magazine, Zafer-İlim Araştırma Dergisi ('Victory - Science - Research Magazine') has been published by Sakarya Eğitim Vakfı (Education vakıf Foundation of Sakarya) in Sakarya since January 1977. It mostly includes articles on various scientific subjects. The unique feature of these articles is the attempt to reconcile science with religion, which is common in Nurculuk. Extracts from the Risale-i Nur are scattered between these articles and a special effort has been made to show that

the subject studied in the article does not lead to a conclusion beyond what Said Nursi had said in that extract. (There is almost no sign in the magazine that would explicitly indicate that these extracts are taken from the Risale-i Nur.) Zafer includes hardly any articles on the social sciences and great care is taken not to mention anything about politics at all. That must be why it escaped prosecution and was still printed in spite of the severe censorship of the military regime.

The İstanbul Gençlik Teşkilatı (Istanbul Youth Organisation), a Nurcu controlled organisation, started publishing a magazine called Köprü (Bridge) four months after Zafer first appeared. When Köprü was accepted and supported by the Nurcus of Anatolia, then Yeni Asya Yayınevi took over the ownership and published it in Istanbul as the Nurcus' only nation-wide political magazine besides the Yeni Asya newspaper. The content of Köprü indicates that it deals mostly with the political subjects and social sciences. It gives room to the national and international news and events which indirectly support the political opinion of the Nurcus. Unlike Zafer, it does not quote just extracts from the Risale-i Nur but it usually includes articles which study topics from the point of view of the Risale-i Nur, and advocates its teaching as well as mentioning its name outright.

The military regime banned publication of Köprü in December 1982. The publishing house has been publishing small booklets instead, and is presumably waiting for a more favourable political atmosphere before bringing out Köprü again.

Nurcus also have a children's weekly magazine Can Kardeş which began publication in Istanbul at the beginning of 1981. At first glance Can Kardeş looks like other Turkish children's magazines, but its contents actually include a fair sprinkling of religious articles, and religious

terminology and ideas pervade its pages. Stories, cartoons, illustrated serialised novels, a children's encyclopedia, puzzles, children's games, general knowledge competitions, etc., are all included. In a typical issue, only one page (out of thirty-two) mentions religion fairly explicitly under the title of Dinimizi Öğrenelim (Let's Study our Religion). In this article too, the aim is religious indoctrination rather than religious instruction, in keeping with the normal Nurcu method. Though the ideas and the methods of the Risale-i Nur are employed in this children's magazine too, there is no mention of Nurculuk, Risale-i Nur or Said Nursi at all. Therefore, Can Kardeş may be classified as the only Nurcu publication that does not include any quotation from the Risale-i Nur either directly or in simplified language, or appreciation of Nurculuk.

B. Books

Since the Yeni Asya Yayınevi was established in 1971, Nurcus have been publishing their books only through this publishing house. By the end of 1982 they had published two hundred and eighty-six books on various subjects. Regardless of the type and topic of these books, their common feature is either to convey the teachings of the Risale-i Nur or to defend Nurculuk in one way or the other. Nurcus view these publications as introductory and secondary to the Risale-i Nur collection.

These books serve Nurcus in different ways: firstly, they are the second source of culture for the Nurcus and their children;[94] secondly, most of these books are intended to increase the readers' capacity to understand the Risale-i Nur better; and thirdly, depending on the profession and position of the person to whom Nurcus may want to introduce Nurculuk, when it is not suitable to give him the Risale-i Nur, then one

of these books may be used to arouse his interest in it. Through the references given to the Risale-i Nur in these books or abstracts taken from it, Nurcus aim at focusing the attention of the readers on the Risale-i Nur itself.

To give a brief idea about the nature of these books, it is convenient to group them into seven categories.

i. Science and Technology Series

The 'Science and Technology Series' published by the Yeni Asya Yayinevi and edited by the Yeni Asya Research Centre are the most ingenious of Nurcu attempts to use science in support of faith in God. From 1978 to 1983, the Research Centre edited 19 books for laymen on subjects ranging from astronomy to biology. By bringing the latest developments in almost every scientific subject to the attention of educated people, particularly students, the series managed to attract almost everybody who is interested in such subjects.

The books published in this series are pocket-size paperbacks and each of them has around one hundred pages. Most of the references cited in their bibliography are technological works in English. The following are the most famous authors contributing to this series: Professor Ayhan Songar, Professor Münip Yeğın, Professor Yilmaz Muslu, Dr Alparslan Özyazıcı, Taşkın Tuna and Ümit Şimşek.

In these books there is almost no mention of Nurculuk or Said Nursi, or even of Islam, although on the rare occasionswhen the topic allows there are references to relevant verses of the Koran.

The aim of the books is stated in the foreword of one of them as:

> ... what the works in this series have in common is that they study the fundamental meaning of the subjects discussed as much as their true nature ... The world of science has been

> trying to understand for centuries how the universe has been created. But more important than this is why the universe has been created.[95]

Throughout the pages of these books one can easily see the endeavour to prove that there is a Creator who acts with an infinite 'Will', 'Knowledge', 'Power', etc., behind all of these wonders of creation. Rather than attributing these qualities directly to 'Allah' and thus allowing the books to look like any other religious apologia, they are very cleverly arranged to show that the discussion of the subject is neutral and objective and at the same time showing that is both rational and inevitable to attribute all these miraculous events in creation to a Creator with infinite qualities.

The teachings of the Risale-i Nur are skilfully inserted between the lines of these books. While the author is reaching a conclusion of a section of a book, he may quote (and usually does) one or two related sentences from the Risale-i Nur either in its original words or in modern Turksih, but he almost never mentions the name of the source or gives a reference to it. (Out of the eighteen books only one of them gives reference to the Risale-i Nur on three occasions.)

ii. Theology Series

After the closure of the magazine Köprü, in 1983 the Yeni Asya Yayınevi began to publish books on religious subjects. It was announced in the introduction to the first book that the aim of this series was: 'to teach the reader who has found his Creator through modern sciences which were studied in the Science and Technology Series, the way of life his Creator prescribed for him'.[96] In these books, the Risale-i Nur was openly referred to and passages from it were frequently quoted.

Up to the end of 1983, eight books were published in this series. Some of the representative titles of these books are: İstişare (Consultation - its religious significance), İmtihan (Test - this world being a testing place), Tefekkür (Reflection - how to reflect upon creation), İbadet (Worship - various ways of worshipping God).

iii. Social Sciences Series

The books in the social sciences series are edited by the Yeni Asya Research Centre. By 1982, the Yeni Asya Yayınevi had published eight books in this series whose admitted intention was to study the subjects from the viewpoint of the Risale-i Nur. In these books the authors mention the Risale-i Nur and Nurculuk and openly uphold them.

The Social Sciences Series is not as successful as the Science and Technology Series as far as their appeal to the reading public is concerned. A few of them achieved a fourth reprint, but most have been printed only once. Because these books are less effective, they are not used by Nurcus to attract new recruits into Nurculuk. The most interesting and successful of them is Kader Nedir? by Mehmet Kırkıncı which studies 'destiny in Islam', largely depending on the explanations made in the Risale-i Nur.

These books too are pocket-size paperbacks and each has round about one hundred pages. The conspicuous names amongst the writers of this series are: Professor Servet Armağan, Dr İbrahim Canan and Safa Mürsel.

iv. Social Topics

Most of the Yeni Asya Yayinevi publications are on general social subjects. By 1982 there were 100 books in this category. They were originally classified by the publishing house into twenty-two sections, of which the following are among the most important: a) 'Moral and Social', twenty books, all of them contain religious and moral advice; b) 'Leading

Figures in Islam', seven books, mostly about Said Nursi! One of them is the one hundred and eighteenth book by Cemal Kutay, a prominent historian of the late Ottoman and modern Turkish period. He wrote this book mostly using the documents of the Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa (Secret Organisation - a name given to the intelligence service which was established first by the members of the Union and Progress Party to bring back the constitutional monarchy, then after the second constitution it became an official institution as a national intelligence service by the Sultan's decree in 1909.) These documents were left to the author by the last head of the Organisation after its closure with the proclamation of the Turkish Republic;[97] c) 'Biography', seven books, all written by Vehbi Vakkasoğlu. They are biographical studies of well-known Turks, such as Mehmet Akif, Yunus Emre and Ziya Gökalp - Ziya Gökalp is studied simply to denounce his ideology; d) 'Economics', five books, studies of Turkish economics from various perspectives by Ekrem Ceyhun and Professor Sabahattin Zaim; e) 'Law', twelve books, four of them by Bekir Berk, they are compilations of his speeches as a lawyer in courts to defend Nurcus, and collections of some court decrees acquitting Nurcus and giving back to the owners the books of the Risale-i Nur which had been seized by the police. Of the other eight books, five are criticisms of the practice of Turkish law by the courts against religious movements in Turkey, namely criticism of their understanding of secularism, and three are on the legal rights of women and children in Islam; f) 'Ideologies', fourteen books, almost all of them are works against socialism; g) 'Politics', eight books, one of which is a talk given by Süleyman Demirel in a conference in 1977 when he was the Prime Minister, and the rest consist of the studies of Turkish political life and of the political views of Said Nursi.

v. History

The books classified in this category are originally listed in six different sections and in all they number nineteen. Six of them published in the section 'History of Islam' are mostly about the life story of the Prophet Muhammad and of his companions. Ahmet Şahin, in his famous book Tarihin Şeref Levhaları, selects particular incidents in the lives of Muhammad's companions and portrays them as models of how to devote one's life to Islam. The seventeenth edition of this work came out in 1981. Also included in the 'History' category are Vehbi Vakkasoğlu's four books that take the history of modern Turkey as the basis for fictional treatment, enlivening the narrative with patriotic sentiment. By 1982, six books had been published on late Ottoman history, three of them by Cemal Kutay.

In these books, the authors mention historical events in order to arouse the readers' national feelings, not for the sake of nationalism but for the sake of religion. The general tendency of the writers of these books is to portray Turkish history right up to the Republican era merely as an aspect of the all-important history of Islam. This is, in fact, an attempt to integrate Turkish nationalism into religion.

vi. Literature

By 1982, the prolific Nurcu author Niyazi Birinci who sometimes uses Yavuz Bahadıroğlu as his pseudonym[98] had written thirty-five books which are categorised as novels and stories. There are, in fact, only six books in this category not written by him - two being the work of Hekimoğlu İsmail (pseudonym of Ömer Okçu)[99] who gained a reputation amongst religious men after he published his first novel Minyeli Abdullah which was reprinted for the eighteenth time in 1981. It is the moving life story of a man seeking to obtain religious guidance who eventually becomes a Nurcu in spite of social pressure and legal prosecution.

Most of the novels of Yavuz Bahadiroğlu are about historical events in the Ottoman Empire or in pre-Ottoman Turkish dynasties, and quite a number of them had been reprinted more than five times by 1981. His recent novels, Sel and Yolbaşı are set in the War of Independence and in the early years of the Republic. Rather than striving for high literary merit, the main aim of these books is to inspire the readers' religious feelings and to encourage them to be ready to make sacrifices for the sake of religion as their Turkish ancestors did, and to stand firm against any attempt to impede religion.

Of the works of Yavuz Bahadıroğlu mentioned here, fourteen are considered by the publishers as 'Children's Novels'. The exciting imaginary events in these children's novels are tinged with moral and religious advice, but he does not mention either Islam or the Risale-i Nur directly in these.

Apart from these works, Yeni Asya Yayinevi published eleven illustrated novels for children mostly by Vehip Sinan who is well-known as a political cartoonist and drew cartoons in various right-wing newspapers, mostly in Nurcu publications, in Turkey. Vehip Sinan tries to give children through these illustrated novels moral principles rather than straight religion, though their ultimate purpose is to promote the religious way of life. The Yeni Asya publishing house had brought out six books of essays in 1982. One of the writers in this category is Mümine Güneş who, as a woman writer, addresses mostly women in her essays and urges them to practise Islam in their own lives as well as teaching it to their children. She also encourages her readers to study and disseminate the Risale-i Nur.

Only three of the 'Literature' books are classified as 'Humour'. They are by three different authors and all satirise the political

practices or administration of the parties in the government which Nurcus have always opposed, namely the RPP and the NSP.

vii. Children's books

This category includes the booklets for children which are originally classified by the publishing house as 'Children's Books' (thirty booklets); 'Cheap Children's Books Series' (twenty booklets),'"I am learning about the Prophet" Series' (seventeen booklets) and '"Can Kardeş" Library' (six booklets). Niyazi Birinci wrote fifty-one of them, and Salih Suruç is the author of the '"I am learning about the Prophet" Series'.

All of these children's books are very thin and cheap. Apart from the '"I am learning about the Prophet" series', they mostly consist of simple children's stories aimed at teaching children good behaviour. Salih Suruç makes stories for children out of the Prophet Muhammad's life story and tries to introduce them to Islamic culture.

The children's books came out as a reaction against secular state education in the primary schools. Nurcus are more aware than any other religious group in Turkey of the lack of religious teachings in the Turkish education system. The purpose of these publications was to fill this gap but they never reached non-Nurcus, most probably because their quality was low; their authors were not recognised experts on their subjects, and their presentation was unattractive to ordinary children.

viii. Books in Foreign Languages

The Nurcu publications in foreign languages are mainly in Arabic and English, only two in an Indian language and one in German. They contain mostly the parts of the Risale-i Nur or the biography of Said Nursi himself. The ones which were available during the summer of 1981 will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

a. Arabic books: Said Nursi originally wrote some of his works in Arabic. Most of these Arabic books have been translated into Turkish and now they are available in both languages inside Turkey, and only the Arabic versions in Arab countries. There are: i) Al-Mathnawi al-'Arabi al-Nūriyye, printed in Turkey in 'Nur Matbaası' (Nur printing house) in 1958 with 365 pages in hard covers.[100] Its Turkish translation is called Mesnevi-i Nuriye. ii) Isharat al-I'caj fi Mazan al-Iyjaz, printed in the'Nur Mataası' in 1959, with 134 pages between hard covers. This is Said Nursi's incomplete attempt at a systematic commentary on the Koran. Its Turkish version is called İşarat'ul İ'caz. iii) Dū al-fiqar is translated from Turkish into Arabic by Abdulkarim al-Mardini. It is composed of two different works which are called in its Turkish version Mu'cizat-ı Kur'aniye and Mu'cizat-ı Ahmediye, the former is a part of Sözler and the latter is of Mektubat, both of which are the main books of the Risale-i Nur collection. Dū al-fiqar is published in Beirut by 'Talaba-i Rasail an-Nur' (The Students of the Risale-i Nur), a name Nurcus use as the publisher whenever they do not want to use their own name. This book came out in 1974 in paperback and has 413 pages. iv) Al-Saiqal al-Islami is the Arabic translation of four different books of Said Nursi, three of which were written originally in Turkish, mostly on social subjects. These four books are called in Turksih Muhakemât, Münazarât, Hutbe-i Şamiye and Hutuvat-ı Sitte, all of whose Turkish versions were also published previously as separate books. No name appears on the book as translator or as publisher, and it is again printed in the'Matbaa-yi Nur' in 1958. The books is a pocket-size paperback and has 269 pages. v) A 56-page compilation of three treatises: Hutbe -i Şamiye, Uhuvvet Risalesi (a section in one of the Said Nursi's books, Mektubât) and İhlas Risalesi (a section of another

of Said Nursi's books called Lem'alar). There is no date and no place of publication given in the book, though Muhammad Said Ramadam al-Buti is credited with the translation into Arabic. vi) The last of the available Arabic books published by Nurcus is mainly about Said Nursi's life. Its title is Muallifu Rasâil an-Nūr wa Muassis-u Jamâ'at an-Nūr Bedi'uzzaman Saīd an-Nursī-Nazrat-un Ammat-un 'an Hayatihi wa Asārihī (The author of the Risale-i Nur and the establisher of the Community of Light - Nurculuk - Bediuzzaman Said Nursi: A General View of his life and works). There is no date or place of publication shown in the book, there are instead the addresses of the Mihrab Werlags GmbH and the Risale-i Nur Institute of America to where the readers may send their orders. The book is obtainable in paperback and in hard cover, and has 248 pages, 219 of which are allotted to the life story of Said Nursi and the rest to the Arabic translation of İhlas Risalesi as an example of his works. The author of the book is Mustafa Zaki al-'Ashūr about whom no information was given.

b. English books: Before the Risale-i Nur Institute of America was established, Nurcus in the United States published two books in 1974, one of them about Said Nursi's life and the other a translation of part of the Risale-i Nur. The other English books were published and printed by the Institute in the United States from 1975 onwards, a total of nine books in English being published up to 1982, all of them pocket-size paperbacks. i) The first book Nurcus published in English (in Maryland, USA) was an introduction to Said Nursi for the English-speaking world. It is called The Author of Risala-i Noor: Badee-uz-Zaman Said Noorsi of Turkey and has 78 pages. The author of the book is shown as 'Talaba-an-Noor' (A Student of the Light) and there are two addresses given, one in West Germany and the other in the United States. Although it

is not explicitly stated, these addresses are doubtless given for correspondence with the publisher or for receiving orders from readers.[101]

ii) Nationalism in the View of Islam is a twenty-page booklet, a translation of part of Mektubāt. It is the first translation of Said Nursi's work into English and is published by 'Talabat-an-Nur' (A Student of the Light) in El Cerrito, USA. The translator's name is not given.[102]

iii) Fruits from the Tree of Light: An Anthology of Writings is the first of the series of translations of the Risale-i Nur printed and published by the Risale-i Nur Institute of America. Its original Turkish version is called 'Meyve Risalesi' which is a selection from Said Nursi's writings and is widely used by Nurcus as an introductory book to the Risale-i Nur for new recruits to Nurculuk. The book is translated by Hamid Algar, reprinted in 1983 and has 118 pages. iv) The second in the series of English translations is Nature: Cause or Effect? It is translated by Ümit Şimşek and reprinted in 1983. The original version of this is called 'Tabiat Risalesi', which is a section of Said Nursi's book called Lem'alar. At the end, a small section from another book of Said Nursi's Mektubat is added, bringing the total number of pages to 71. v) Belief or Unbelief: The Results of a Choice is the third in the series, translated by Ümit Şimşek and reprinted in 1983. The original Turkish version is called 'Yirmiüçüncü Söz' which is composed of the twenty-third section of Said Nursi's longest book, Sözler, and of some other articles from the Risale-i Nur related to the subject. The book has 71 pages.[103] vi) The fourth book in the series is Two Essentials for Believers: Sincerity and Brotherhood. The original version is İhlas ve Uhuvvet Risaleleri which consists of the twentieth section of Lem'alar (İhlas Risalesi) and the twenty-second section of Mektubat (Uhuvvet Risalesi) and of some small related articles selected from different parts of the

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Risale-i Nur. The book is translated by Hamid Algar, reprinted in 1983 and has 67 pages. vii) The Miracles of Muhammad: The Testimony of History is a translation by Ümit Şimşek from the original Turkish Mu'cizāt-i Ahmediye Risalesi, which is the nineteenth section of Mektubat, plus some other related articles at the end of the book which runs to 224 pages. It is fifth in the series and was published in 1978. viii) The Supreme Sign: Observations of a Traveller Questioning Creation Concerning His Maker is the treatise Said Nursi himself regarded as the most important of his works.[104] The original version of this book is Ayet'ül Kübrā which is a section in one of Said Nursi's books Şualar, and some related articles from the Risale-i Nur are included at the end. The Supreme Sign, which has 187 pages, is translated by Hamid Algar and was published in 1979. ix) The seventh in the series of translations of the Risale-i Nur is Resurrection and the Hereafter: A Decisive Proof of their Reality which came out in 1980 and has 174 pages. Its Turkish original version is called Haşir Risalesi or Onuncu Söz which is the tenth section of Sözler. Resurrection and the Hereafter is translated by Hamid Algar and is the last publication of the Risale-i Nur Institute of America up to 1983.

As is understood from the announcement made in the second printing of some of the Institute's publications, the Institute is continuing to translate the Risale-i Nur into English section by section.

c. German and Indian books: The Risale-i Nur Institute of America has published only one book in German. It is called Gott, Mensch und das Jenseits (God, Man and the Hereafter).[105] Its contents are similar to Belief or Unbelief. The Institute announced that it would publish another book in German entitled Früchte Des Lichtbaumes (Fruits of the Tree of Light) but it has not come out yet.

Two books have so far been published in an Indian language - Gujarati. One is about Said Nursi's life entitled Biography of Badiuzzaman Said Nursi,[106] and the other is the translation of the Nationalism in the View of Islam. Although Nurcus claim that some parts of the Risale-i Nur have been translated into Urdu and other Indian languages,[107] the two above mentioned books are the only ones in any Indian language that were available in Turkey during 1981 when the research was carried out .

C. Miscellaneous

Apart from the periodicals and books already mentioned, Yeni Asya Yayinevi published some leaflets, small pamphlets, inscriptions for use as wall decorations, and postcards.

The leaflets are usually to announce forthcoming books. The pamphlets may contain one or two previously published articles written about an important current topic (e.g. in 1978, the situation in Iran), that the people in the publishing house think worth collecting and offering for general distribution through the Yayınevi . In addition to these sorts of pamphlets, when Nurcus in Istanbul feel that it is necessary to guide the Nurcus of Anatolia with regard to some contemporary issues that might lead to differences of opinion among Nurcus, then they publish their own ideas and interpretations in the light of the Risale-i Nur in the form of newsletters which they distribute by post or by hand to other Nurcus.

Among the pamphlets, those written in English are noteworthy. They are the results of Nurcu endeavours to publicise Nurculuk at the international level. When the Seventh Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers was organised in Istanbul in 1976, Nurcus prepared a fifteen-

page pamphlet introducing Said Nursi and the Nurcu movement in Turkey to the delegates and distributed it in the conference. The pamphlet was written by Safa Mürsel[108] and published by the Yeni Asya Yayınevi under the title of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi: Islamic Union and Turkey. Another example of these pamphlets is the paper originally presented to the M.S.A. (Muslim Student Association of the United States and Canada) convention held in 1977. The pamphlet was prepared by S. Kurter and O. Birge. It is a small (9 x 19cm) thirty-seven page pamphlet, named The Model of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi. It briefly presents Said Nursi's biography and summarises his ideas on the Islamic renaissance.

Nurcus presented a paper to the conference on 'The Prophet and His Message' organised by the Islamic Council of Europe in London in 1980. This paper was prepared by the 'Yeni Asya Research Centre' and published by the 'Risale-i Nur Institute of America' in pamphlet form. It is called Fifteenth Century of the Prophetic Message: A Brief Review of the Responsibilities of Contemporary Muslims and has 27 pages (11 x 16cm).

Sharafath Ali wrote an article about Said Nursi in a magazine called Tarjumanul Quran, published in Pakistan in January 1963. In the same year Nurcus published this article in Ankara in a twenty-seven page (12 x 16cm) pamphlet called Bref(sic) Biography of Badee-uz-Zaman Said Noorsi of Turkey.

A pamphlet called Social Change in Muslim Societies was prepared by the 'Yeni Asya Research Centre' and published by the Risale-i Nur Institute of America in 1980. There is no explanation in it indicating on which occasion it was prepared. The pamphlet tries to prove that according to the rules of Islam, social change in Muslim societies must be evolutionary, not revolutionary. To support this idea, it brings

evidence from the teachings of Said Nursi and shows 'the fruits of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's service' in Turkey as proof of the correctness of this thesis. The pamphlet has 28 pages (11 x 16cm).

In 1980, the Risale-i Nur Institute of America published another twenty-eight page (11 x 15cm) pamphlet entitled Bediuzzaman Said Nursi on Contemporary Topics. There is again no mention of the occasion on which this pamphlet was published, nor is there any information about who prepared or wrote it. This is an introductory study of Said Nursi and the Risale-i Nur. The pamphlet begins with a brief presentation of Said Nursi's life and of the general principles he used in the Risale-i Nur and then it summarises Said Nursi's ideas about the following topics: belief, sciences, civilization, epochs in human history, classes, principles regulating social life, government, political systems, democracy, nationalism, freedom, human rights and equality.

It is a Nurcu practice to decorate their houses and dershanes with framed or unframed inscriptions of extracts from the Risale-i Nur against a background picture of natural scenery or old mosques of Istanbul. The pictures of the mosques started being used recently. These inscriptions are supplied again by the Yeni Asya Yayınevi.

The exchange of postcards between Muslims to send greetings on the occasion of bayrams (religious festivals) twice a year, is a tradition among Nurcus as well. But Nurcus prefer to make this an opportunity to quote something from the Risale-i Nur to one another. So the Yayınevi has prepared postcards with aphorisms from the Risale-i Nur of special significance to Nurcus printed on them.

The Yeni Asya Yayinevi distributes all publications of the Sözler Yayınevi which publishes only the Risale-i Nur. These are sixteen different kinds of bound books (some of them printed in two different

qualities of paper) and twenty-seven pocket-size paperbacks which are mostly the individual chapters of the Risale-i Nur printed in hard covers.

NOTES

1. About the language reform in Turkey, see Uriel Heyd, Language Reform in Modern Turkey (Jerusalem, 1954), passim.

2. For these newspapers, see Appendix III, note 134 below.

3. Necmeddin Şahiner, Bilinmiyen Taraflariyla Bediuzzaman Said Nursi (Kronolojik Hayatı), 6th ed. (Istanbul, 1979), p. 100, hereafter cited as Bilinmiyen. Cemal Kutay, Çağımızda Bir Asr-ı Saadet Müslümanı Bediuzzaman Said Nursi (Istanbul, 1980), pp. 169, 185. For a picture of the front cover of the first print of the Nutuk, see Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 125.

4. Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, Muhakemât (Istanbul, 1964), p. 153.

5. For a picture of the front cover of its first print, see Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 143.

6. Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, Münâzarat (Istanbul, 1977), pp. 33-6.

7. For a picture of the front cover of the first print, see Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 135.

8. Risale-i Nur Külliyati Müellifi Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, Hayatı, Mesleki, Tercüme-i Hali (Istanbul, 1960), p. 105, hereafter cited as Tarihçe.

9. Ibid., p. 249; Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 183.

10. For a picture of the front cover of its first print, see Necmeddin Şahiner, Son Şahitler Bediuzzaman Said Nursi'yi Anlatıyor (Istanbul, 1978), I, p. 88, hereafter cited as Şahitler, I.

11. Ibid., p. 313.

12. Tarihçe, pp. 131-2.

13. Şahiner, Şahitler, I, pp. 224-5.

14. Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, pp. 217-21.

15. Tarihçe, p. 132.

16. For a picture of the front cover, see Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 233.

17. Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, Mektubat (Istanbul, 1977), pp. 440-51.

18. For a picture of the front cover of the first print of the Nokta, see Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 226.

19. Ibid., p. 189. Sadık Albayrak, Son Devrin İslâm Akademisi, Dâr-ül Hikmet-i İslâmiye Teşkilât ve Azaları (Istanbul, 1973), p. 186.

20. Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 137.

21. For a picture of its front cover, see ibid., p. 207.

22. Ibid., p. 249.

23. Ibid., p. 226.

24. Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, Sözler (Istanbul, 1977), pp. 735-92. For a picture of the front cover of the first print, see Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 229.

25. For a picture of the front cover, see ibid., p. 231.

26. For a picture of the front cover, see ibid., p. 229.

27. For pictures of the last two books mentioned, see ibid., p. 211.

28. Ibid., p. 260. The book is at the present available in modern Turkish circulated as a separate treatise.

29. Hamid Algar, "Said Nursi and the Risale-i Nur: An Aspect of Islam in Contemporary Turkey", Islamic Perspectives: Studies in Honour of Sayyid Abul a'la Mawdudi, ed. Khurshid Ahmad and Zafar Ishaq Ansari (Leicester, 1979), p. 326.

30. See record of a conference where he explained his ideas on the Risale-i Nur, Nursi, Sözler, pp. 795-822.

31. Ibid., p. 821.

32. For the accounts and interpretations of their writings by Said Nursi, see his Sikke-i Tasdîk-i Gaybî (n.p., 1960), pp. 91-133, and Şualar (Istanbul, 1960), pp. 611-32.

33. Ibid., pp. 576-7.

34. For Said Nursi's interpretation of these verses, see ibid., pp. 572-610, and his Sikke-i Tasdîk-i Gaybî, pp. 45-90. Said Nursi explained apologetically in the appendix of the relevant treatise called Işârât-i Kuraniye (The Signs of the Koran) how he could interpret these thirty-three verses of the Koran when he was told by his students that some hodjas objected to the treatise. He quoted the verse, VI:59, "... naught of wet or dry but (it is noted) in a clear record (i.e. the Kuran)" and said: 'We are not claiming in that treatise that this was the explicit meaning of the verse, so that the hodjas would say "It is debatable". Nor do we claim that "this was the general implicit meaning of these verses". Rather we say that underneath the explicit meaning there are numerous layers, one of which is the implicit or implied meaning. This implied meaning is general but also has a particular meaning for every century. And the Risale-i Nur in this century is one component of the generalities of a layer of the implicit meaning. Since it was deduced, even proved with the principles of Cifr (Arithmomancy - divination by numbers) and mathematics, which have since olden days been common among

scholars, that this component [i.e. the Risale-i Nur] was deliberately referred to and that it will perform an important duty. So it never damages the verses of the Koran and their explicitness but renders service to their miraculousness and eloquence.

'No one should object to such indications to the hidden meaning [of the Koran]'. Ibid., pp. 55-6 and Nursi, Şualar, p. 574.

35. Çetin Özek too notes this Nurcu understanding of the Risale-i Nur in his book, Türkiyede Gerici Akımlar ve Nurculuğun İçyüzü (Istanbul, 1964), p. 281; see also Nursi, Sözler, p. 821.

36. Ali Gözütok, Müslümanlık ve Nurculuk (Ankara, 1971), p. 128.

37. Neda Armaner, İslam Dininden Ayrilan Cereyanlar: Nurculuk, Ankara Üniversitesi İlâhiyat Fakültesi Yayınlarından, LX (Ankara, 1964), p. 28.

38. Algar, p. 326.

39. Nursi, Şualar, p. 198; Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, Asâ-yı Mûsa (Istanbul, 1958), p. 51.

40. See his İki Mekteb-i Musîbetin Şehadetnâmesi Veya Divan-ı Harb-i Örfi (Istanbul, 1978), pp. 17-8 where he says 'only one percent of the Şeriat concerns politics' (p. 19).

41. Algar, p. 330.

42. Ibid., p. 325-6.

43. Ibid., p. 315.

44. Ibid., p. 326. Nurcus, believing in the freshness and originality of the Risale-i Nur, strongly rejected this claim and circulated a nine-page typed leaflet in refutation of Algar's claim to be given to those studying this topic. It was prepared by Mehmet Kırkıncı, the Nurcus' only hodja to have graduated from a medrese. On my vist to Erzurum during the fieldwork, I was presented with a copy of this leaflet so that I should not repeat the same mistake in my work. In the first three pages of the leaflet, a brief comparison was made between Ismail Hakkı and his tefsir Rûh al-Bayân, and Said Nursi and the Risale-i Nur. Ismail Hakkı was introduced as a Halveti şeyh and his work, Rûh al-Bayân, a tefsir full of legends and stories far removed from reason, whereas Said Nursi never submitted himself to any tarikat or şeyh and regarded tarikat as inappropriate to the needs of the Muslims of this century. The Risale-i Nur was defined as: 'an immense ocean of proof which will illuminate, satisfy and conquer the mind, heart, soul and senses of the people of this century and the coming ones'. Mehmet Kirkıncı, "Ismail Hakkı Bursevî ve Bediuzzaman" (a typed leaflet), p. 1. In the following six pages of the leaflet Koranic interpretations by Ismail Hakkı and Said Nursi were compared, citing their comments on nineteen verses as examples. It was argued that, apart from two of these nineteen verses, there was no similarity between these two works, and most of the verses were interpreted with

a completely different approach, and even in the two exceptions, the similarity of interpretation was far from complete and coincided at only a few points.

45. In fact, Said Nursi in his writings never gives reference to any book other than the relevant parts of the Risale-i Nur itself. On a few occasions he mentions the works of other prominent Muslim scholars by name only, i.e. Mektubât of Al Sirhindi, Kaside-i Celcelûtiye of İmam Ali.

46. Armaner, p. 3.

47. Gözütok, p. 5.

48. Özek, p. 242.

49. Tarihçe, p. 192; Nursi, Sikke-i Tasdîk-i Gaybî, p. 195.

50. Nursi, Sözler, p. 97. Referring to İbn Sina's work, Risala Adhawîya (Cairo, 1949), F. Rahman briefly mentions in his book, The Philosophy of Mullâ Sadrâ (Sadr al-Dîn al-Shirazî), Studies in Islamic Philosophy and Science (Albany, 1975), that Ibn Sina denied physical resurrection and says: 'However, since, for Ibn Sînâ, the term "soul" applies only to a relation and not to a substance, he thought that the body was extrinsic to the soul when considered as a substance (underlining is in its original). He, therefore, denied physical resurrection'. (p. 199 and also see p. 207) For Ibn Sina's denial of the bodily resurrection, see also Fazlur Rahman, Islam, 2nd ed. (Chicago, 1979), p. 119.

51. For a strong criticism of Said Nursi's interpretation of this verse, see Gözütok, pp. 129-35.

52. One Western scholar, W.C. Smith, mentions this kind of approach towards the Koran in his article that: 'The Qur'ân therefore was seen by the West as not truly scripture; and in effect, as not scripture at all. It was studied and treated not as scripture but as any other book'. Wilfred Cantwell Smith, "The True Meaning of Scripture: An Empirical Historian's Nonreductionist Interpretation of the Qur'an", International Journal for Middle East Studies, II (1980), 489.

53. Nursi, Sözler, p. 197.

54. The other two revealers are the Koran and the universe (ibid., p. 243) which are the subjects of the Twenty-fifth and the Thirty-second Words respectively.

55. Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 279.

56. Nursi, Sözler, p. 506.

57. Ibid., p. 567.

58. Ibid., p. 795. W. Armaner says that neither the administrators of the Faculty of Law where the conference was said to be held, nor the

staff would confirm that such a conference did actually occur in the Faculty. She concludes that it was an imaginary conference (p. 21).

59. In fact, the book is divided into 33 sections, each being a treatise but the 14th, 25th, 27th, 30th, 32nd and 33rd sections are left blank, with the explanation 'not yet written' or 'published in another book'.

60. Şahiner, Şahitler, I, pp. 41-2.

61. Nursi, Mektubat, p. 464.

62. For more information about this Koran, see p. 103 of this thesis.

63. Lem'alar, too, is divided into 33 sections, each being a treatise but the 5th, 6th, 8th, 9th, 15th, 18th, 27th, 31st 32nd and 33rd sections are left blank. Some of these have not been written at all, whereas the others are printed in other books of the Risale-i Nur.

64. Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 298.

65. Ibid., p. 299

66. Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, Lem'alar (Istanbul, 1959), p. 320.

67. Nursi, Sözler, p. 91.

68. Nursi, Lem'alar, p. 320.

69. Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, pp. 298-9.

70. Ibid., p. 309; Tarihçe, p. 317.

71. Ibid., p. 417; Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 325.

72. Ibid., p. 351; Şahiner, Şahitler, I, p. 381.

73. Said Nursi mentions "Celcelutiye" as a section in the Mecmuat-ül-Ahzab about which one of Said Nursi's students states that it is a three-volume book compiled by Gümüşhaneli Ahmet Ziyaeddin Efendi. See, Şahiner, Şahitler, I, p. 37.

74. The last two Rays of the Risale-i Nur were very severely criticised by the detractors of the Risale-i Nur. They say that Said Nursi was exploiting the Koran as well as İmam Ali for his own purpose. See, Gözütok, pp. 143-53; Armaner, p. 24.

75. Asâ-yi Musa was translated into English and published as articles throughout the issues of the Nurcu magazine Nur, the Light. The issue of September-October 1979 of the magazine announced that this book would be in print under the name of "The Staff of Moses".

76. See, p. 122 of this thesis.

77. Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, Barla Lahikasi (Istanbul, 1960), pp. 5-8.

78. Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 371.

79. See, pp. 475-7 in Appendix III.

80. Some of the early writings of Said Nursi were translated or transliterated into the modern Turkish alphabet and are now in circulation as separate treatises, e.g., Sunûhat, Münazarat, Hutbe-i Şamiye, whereas the others remained in Arabic or in Ottoman as they were written and are no longer in circulation but, as already pointed out in this chapter, their contents were studied in the Risale-i Nur proper.

81. This total includes the repetitions of some sections of the treatises in other books of the Risale-i Nur. Although these are pointed out in this study, they are not substracted from the total number because Nurcus do not regard them as repetitions but as a means to stress the importance of the subjects studied in them.

82. Jacob M. Landau, Radical Politics in Modern Turkey, (Leiden, 1974) p. 180.

83. Ibid.

84. Religious newspapers and periodicals were only 0.78% of the total in 1962 and became 1.43% in 1964. This classification into "religious" and "non-religious" publications represents some oversimplification of the situation and overlooks the amount of space given in the "non-religious" publications to articles on religion faith. In many newspapers and other periodicals, these were a regular and in some cases a sizeable feature.

85. Landau, p. 180.

86. Risale-i Nur Külliyati Müellifi Bediuzzaman Said Nursî, Hayatı, Mesleki, Tercüme-i Hali (Istanbul, 1960), pp. 655-6; Cemal Kutay, Çağımızda Bir Asr-ı Saadet Müslümani Bediuzzaman Said Nursi (Istanbul, 1980), p. 284; Necmeddin Şahiner, Bilinmiyen Taraflariyla Bediuzzaman Said Nursî (Kronolojik Hayatı), 6th ed. (Istanbul, 1979), pp. 377-8.

87. These two newspapers are mentioned in Çetin Özek, Türkiyede Gerici Akımlar ve Nurculuğun İçyüzü (Istanbul, 1964), p. 275.

88. Both are mentioned in Hamid Algar, "Said Nursi and the Risale-i Nur: An Aspect of Islam in Contemporary Turkey", Islamic Perspectives: Studies in Honour of Sayyid Abul a'la Mawdudi, ed. Khurshid Ahmad and Zafar Ishaq Ansari (Leicester, 1979), p. 325.

89. Bekir Berk mentions a report in his book, Türkiye'de Nurculuk Dâvasi (Istanbul, 1975), p. 725, given by the Religious Affairs Department, High Council of Religious Affairs. The report concludes that the document, Tuhfet'ür Reddiye, is impossible to have been written by Mustafa Sabri Efendi.

90. Algar, p. 324.

91. Ibid.; Landau, p. 181.

92. As cited in ibid.

93. Ibid.

94. Few Nurcus read books other than the Risale-i Nur and Nurcus' own publications - of course professional books are exempted from this generalisation. Algar, pointing to this practice among Nurcus, says: 'One feature that strikes any visitor to a circle of his [Said Nursi's] devotees is their channelling of all their enthusiasm and emotional loyalty into the study of the Risala-i Nur. They appear to read no other religious literature and to neglect the direct study even of the Qur'an itself' (p. 330).

95. Ümit Şimşek, Kâinatin Doğuşu: Big Bang, ilim ve Teknik Serisi, No. 11 (Istanbul, 1980), p. VI.

96. Ihsan Atasoy et al. İstikamet, İlâhiyat Serisi, No. 1 (Istanbul, 1983), pp. 5-6.

97. See, Kutay, preface, p. 36 and passim.

98. Necmeddin Şahiner, Said Nursi ve Nurculuk Hakkinda Aydinlar Konuşuyor, 2nd ed. (Istanbul, 1979), p. 55.

99. Ibid., p. 87.

100. Most probably there was no printing house in Turkey which was called "Nur Matbaası" when this book was actually printed and the publication date which appeared on it may also be false; this date (1958) is likely to be an earlier date than the actual printing date. Nurcus used to this quite frequently before the establishment of the "Sözler Yayinevi" in 1976 in order to avoid prosecution.

101. For a picture of the front cover of the book, see Kutay, p. 491.

102. For a picture of its front cover, see ibid., p. 73.

103. For a picture of the front page of the book, see ibid. p. 72.

104. Şahiner, Bilinmiyen Taraflariyla Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, p. 309.

105. For a picture of its front cover, see Kutay, p. 74.

106. For a picture of the front cover of the book, see ibid., p. 492.

107. Risale-i Nur Külliyati Müellifi Bediuzzaman Said Nursî, Hayatı, Mesleki, Tercüme-i Hali, p. 693; Şahiner, Said Nursi ve Nurculuk Hakkında Aydınlar Konuşuyor, p. 86.

108. For his views on Nurculuk, see ibid., pp. 68-74.

CHAPTER V

NURCU MEETINGS

Meetings are an essential part of Nurculuk; without them one would not be able to speak of Nurcus or Nurcu activities. Their meetings vary in frequency, some of them take place daily or weekly, others quarterly or yearly. Some meetings last two or three hours, some continue for three days. Some of the meetings are held in ordinary rooms, others in large conference halls. Some meetings are exclusively for Nurcus, some are open to the public. The one thing all these meetings have in common is that the Risale-i Nur is the only source to be read or used as an unquestionable reference by the adherents of Nurculuk. This is what makes these meetings Nurcu meetings. Usually everyone present is either a Nurcu or a Nurcu sympathiser. The proportion of sympathisers varies from one type of meeting to another.

Apart from conferences, most Nurcu meetings have a clandestine air. This is because they are not publicised and the authorities are not informed - and may indeed raid the meetings. Nurcu reluctance to inform the authorities about their meetings stems from their objection to registering themselves officially as an organisation, since such registration would imply that Nurculuk is a 'society' (cemiyet) or an organisation (teşkilât), whereas they insist that they are not. They claim they are simply good Muslims doing what Islam demands. They maintain that all Islamic activity should be free from the divisiveness associated with particular groups. In this respect they differ from usual Islamic orders that would like to be seen as distinctive religious organisations. Nurcus also differ from those Islamic groups like Jemaat-i Islamî and Ikhwan-i Muslimin that have sought official recognition in certain countries.[1] Even if Nurcus had no fundamental

objection to registering as a society, they would still be reluctant to apply for state recognition in Turkey since this would lead to state interference in their activities and would put them at the mercy of local government officials who might be irreligious or openly hostile. Thus, they see no reason to register and, not being a 'society', they do not notify the authorities of their meetings.

When Nurcus hold conferences, the public nature of these gatherings obliges them to inform the police, but then they are careful not to refer in any way to Nurculuk but to use the name of a registered institution such as a vakıf (which could actually be run by Nurcus).

The ordinary meetings usually considered by Nurcus as occasions to practise what Said Nursi has formalised with the motto of müfritâne irtibat (intensive communication) that should take place between the Nurcu brothers. Meetings of various types are the most common means of spreading Nurculuk, studying the Risale-i Nur and introducing it to new or potential converts. One of my informants, Hayati, claimed meetings fulfilled the latter function by arousing the enthusiasm of everyone present, and this proved a far more effective means of propagating the Nurcu message than simply handing out literature or discussing the subject with single individuals or just a few people.

Leading Nurcus occasionally use meetings - either special or ordinary - to control and direct the movement. These directions are usually introduced under the guise of normal Nurcu studies rather than expressed openly as instructions. Even meetings specially arranged for this purpose are described as being for 'a study of the environment in which hizmet takes place'. (This is not the only means, however, by which the leadership exercises firm control.)

Available information reveals nine different types of Nurcu meetings. These will be discussed in the following order: 1) ders; 2) local consultative meetings; 3) regional consultative meetings; 4) general consultative meetings; 5) arbitration committee meetings; 6) seminars; 7) conferences; 8) study circles; and 9) mevlit.

1. DERS

Said Nursi began writing the collection of the Risale-i Nur (Risale-i Nur Külliyatı) in 1926. He was then in exile and placed under police supervision in Barla. People from this small nahiye and nearby hamlets gathered around him and those among them who could write the Ottoman language helped him by making multiple copies by hand of the works he had previously dictated.[2] In the course of time, the demand for these works increased amongst the neighbouring villages and townsmen so that some of these people dedicated their lives to the duty of copying Said Nursi's writings.[3] Places such as a room in a house or in habitable stables were assigned for this purpose. These places are the very core of 'dershanes' where Nurcus originally used to gather and copy Said Nursi's works and study them together. Though most of the copying by hand ceased around the beginning of 1950, the Nurcus continued to gather to read and study the Risale-i Nur together. These gatherings are now called ders (literally 'lesson'; but 'study circle' would be a more apt description).

The ders is at the very heart of Nurculuk. It is the commonest and most important of Nurcu meetings and considered the most effective means of spreading the message. The numbers attending and the frequency

of these meetings vary from time to time and place to place. The ders is usually, though not always, held in a dershane. Since the dershane occupies an important place in Nurculuk, it is necessary to describe it in some detail.

Dershane

During the early period of Nurculuk, the followers of Said Nursi set aside, out of sight of the vigorously secularist authorities, some places where they could meet and copy out his works. In the period 1926-1950 the adherents of Said Nursi produced hundreds of thousands of copies of the Risale-i Nur by hand in these places.[4] Said Nursi called these people 'students of the Risale-i Nur', for to him they were not only copying the scriptures, but studying them too. Though in the Nurcus' eyes these places were 'schools', no one expected Said Nursi and his followers to call them okul because this word, as a Turkicised form of the French word 'l'école', was used to refer to the schools of the reformed secular education system that was designed to play a major role in the modernisation process. This was in the Nurcus' view a clear indication of unacceptable Westernisation.[5] Although Said Nursi himself had reservations about medreses as an alternative to okuls, he was keen to see them reformed, not dissolved.[6] Ever since 1907 he had been striving to establish a 'reformed medrese' in an Eastern Anatolian city.[7] Moreover, people like the early followers of Said Nursi, who probably learned to write by copying out the scriptures, would have been reluctant even to utter such a word as okul, so at first they termed their meeting places 'medrese'.[8]

The first half of the twentieth century was over before the Nurcus were able to start printing the Risale-i Nur which, by this time, was complete. The first of them was printed in 1951 in the new Turkish

alphabet in Istanbul.[9] Thus, dershanes were no longer places to copy out the Risale-i Nur and so these places became centres for general Nurcu activities. They were mainly used as meeting and reading places during the 1950s.[10] It was in this period that Nurcus called reading the Risale-i Nur together ders yapmak (to have a lesson). They then began to call the medreses where they had their derses dershane (class-room) as well.

Towards the end of the 1960's when the Nurcus could find adherents among the students, particularly university students,[11] they preferred dershane to medrese which by then had lost its appeal to the Turkish intellectuals. (The medreses of Ottoman days had been closed by the Republican parliament in 1924.)

After the 1970s, dershanes started fulfilling another function: as student hostels, particularly in the university cities. This was partly because of the scarcity of accommodation facilities for students which were provided by the state, and also because the Nurcus desired this. They wanted to prevent students who were attracted by the Nurcu Movement from being contaminated by the licentious atmosphere in the university accommodation centres. The demand became so great that more centres were opened to serve both as hostels and dershanes. A particular attraction of this arrangement is that students who live in dershanes can be constantly inculcated with the Nurcu message.

In the present time, especially in the big cities of Turkey, all the dershanes are used not only to hold derses but also to accommodate students. In small places where there is no school higher than lower secondary level (Orta Okul), no more than a single dershane was established. This shows clearly that Nurcus attach the greatest importance to using dershanes as student hostels so that young and

able people can be trained to carry the Nurcu message and thus serve the future of Nurculuk.

Dershanes have been established all over Turkey, primarily in the cities and proportionately fewer in less populated areas. Very few have been established in the villages. In Europe, in 1981, there were said to be 28 dershanes, mainly in the Federal Republic of Germany.[12] Most of these dershanes in the West European countries also serve as an accommodation facility for the single Turkish immigrant workers.

In big cities having more than ten dershanes, the dershanes are usually held, either owned or rented, by a legally approved charitable foundation called a vakıf. Where there is no such vakıf, dershanes are usually in the co-ownership of more than one Nurcu. They are furnished by the local Nurcus and made ready to be sublet, normally to students.

The costs of buying, renting and furnishing dershanes are met by the local Nurcus. Most of the dershanes which are let or sublet to students are more or less self-financing. Once a dershane is bought or rented, most of the committed Nurcus of the district share the cost of furnishing it. The dershane thus becomes available to let to students who are accepted as tenants by the local Nurcus. In big cities like Istanbul, Ankara and Erzurum, the business of buying, renting, furnishing and subletting dershanes is done by one or two Nurcus designated by the vakıf of that city.

Decoration of dershanes

Although there is no strict rule in Nurculuk how to decorate dershanes, a fairly standard way of furnishing and decorating them has been followed. The type of decoration has undergone changes along with the function of dershanes. The quality of the furniture also has

generally improved as numbers of the adherents have grown. There are some dershanes especially well furnished for particular purposes. Nevertheless, dershanes have a common feature which gives them an appearance different from any other ordinary student hostel or accommodation centre. What is unique for the dershanes, as well as for the houses of those who consider themselves Nurcus is that there are at least one or two framed inscriptions of extracts from the Risale-i Nur hanging on the walls somewhere inside the house. These passages are decorated with pictures of flowers or natural scenery. Some are printed and distributed among Nurcus and they are available in the shops where Nurcu publications are sold. Some of them are inscribed by hand and painted.

There is no special type of house or flat used for dershanes, but they are usually ordinary flats in apartment houses. In big cities Nurcus may have detached and multi-storey buildings. In these buildings too, they arrange every flat as a single dershane. Although Nurcus prefer to get a flat rather than a detached house to make into a dershane, in very small towns and villages, where it is not possible to get a flat in an apartment house, they are obliged to buy or rent detached houses, though they dislike being made conspicuous; in a large apartment block the comings and goings of Nurcus are not so obvious.

Internal decoration of dershanes

Since the beginning of the movement, internal decoration of dershanes has undergone changes as mentioned earlier. Until the late 1960s, they had no lounge suite or even chairs in the dershanes. Electrical household appliances were introduced into the dershanes when they began to be used as student hostels. The early dershanes had only an old carpet or rug on the floor of the lounge, and facilities to make and serve tea.

Such primitive dershanes can now only be seen in small and undeveloped towns.

Decoration of a typical present-day dershane

On the door bell Nurcus usually write the name of one of the residents, preferably one with a title such as 'assistant in the university of ...', 'doctor', 'engineer', 'teacher', etc. Inside, about two paces from the door, there is a narrow strip of wood laid on the floor marking the division between the bare floor at the entrance and the kilim-covered or carpeted area on which visitors are supposed not to step with their shoes on. Either on the right or on the left side of the entrance, usually just behind the door, there is a shelf which is capable of holding fifty to a hundred shoes. A little further along there are coat racks which can hold around twenty to thirty overcoats.

In a dershane, apart from the living room, there are usually three or more bedrooms. The living room is used by residents for namaz, which they perform together (cemaat) and by residents and non-residents for the ders gatherings, which are held mostly in the evenings. On Saturday afternoons, special ders are held there for those students who cannot attend at other times. Nurcus like the living room to be as big as possible so that it can accommodate the maximum number of people. For the same reason, there is little furniture - perhaps a couple of armchairs and a couch put along the walls just to make the room look reasonably normal. The floor in the room is completely covered with carpet. On the walls there may be one or two framed inscriptions with a verse from the Koran or a hadith written in Arabic characters and a number of others in various sizes with passages from the Risale-i Nur, written in the new Turkish alphabet. The latest fashion in the dershanes is to put up as wallpaper big posters of

natural scenery without any words written on them. This fashion, which first started in the big cities, is now spreading to other cities and towns.

Another common feature is the bookshelves in one corner of the living room. These book shelves are mainly used for the collection of the Risale-i Nur, a copy of the Koran and a religious fiqh (canon law) book which is very widely used in Turkey, Büyük İslâm İlmihali (cathechism) by Ömer Nasuhî Bilmen. In some student dershanes, the residents may put a few of their professional books among the Risale-i Nur to give visitors the impression that they do not read only the Risale-i Nur. It is noteworthy that there are hardly any religious publications apart from Nurcus' own on these shelves. This is simply because the Nurcus do not want to divert the attention of the residents or visitors from the Risale-i Nur as a all-sufficient source for religious studies.

Since the people who come to attend the ders sit on the floor, in some dershanes the lower part of the living room wall is covered by wood, against which people can lean.

A rahle (small low reading desk) is the last item of furniture in the living room of a dershane. If not many people are attending the ders, the person reading the Risale-i Nur prefers to do so at the rahle, kneeling and sitting back on his heels; if the room is crowded, however, he would read sitting on one of the arm-chairs.

The other rooms are used usually only by students as their private study-bedrooms. Those who come to the dershane just for the ders do not enter these rooms. There is a single bed in each room - if it is a very large room, there may be two single beds - and a desk with a chair, and a small book shelf. There are again framed inscriptions

hung on the walls of the room, but usually smaller than the ones in the living room. In addition, there may be small post-cards with the pictures of the town where the resident comes from. There are no television sets yet in dershanes and no radios for use in the public room; very few residents have battery radios for use in their own rooms.

There are no pictures of human beings or animals in dershanes, not even photographs of the residents or of Said Nursi, though photographs of Said Nursi are printed in his biography which is approved by himself.[13]

The students who live in the same dershane share the kitchen and other facilities of the dershane. Each of them cooks in turn for all of them and they have their breakfast and dinner together from just one large plate in the middle. They eat on a table cloth which is laid on the floor. They share all the expenses of the dershane such as heating, lighting and kitchen expenditures. (Usually they pay equal shares, but particularly impoverished students may be subsidised or exempted from rent, but not from the cost of food.)

Dershanes for special purposes

In major cities where Nurcus have ten or more dershanes, they set one aside for special purposes such as meetings with important non-Nurcus like politicians, big businessmen, high ranking officials, university lecturers, etc. whom they want to impress. They also accommodate important visiting Nurcus or non-Nurcus from whom favours have been received or may be expected. These places can hardly be called dershanes although they are described to the visitors as 'dershanes'. Usually no one lives there permanently, they are not used very often, and they

are not known to every rank and file Nurcu. Moreover, public derses are not held in these places.

To suit their special purpose, these places are very well furnished with high quality suites and have radios and sometimes even television. There is nothing special in these houses that would remind the visitor that it is a Nurcu place. They have one or two framed inscriptions which are very widely used in every traditional Muslim house such as besmele and kelime-i tevhid in Arabic script, and sometimes perhaps a couple more in the new Turkish alphabet.

Rural and small town dershanes

These dershanes are not usually lived in and so the furniture is used only to meet the need of 'ders'. The largest room is furnished simply with carpet or kilim, and on the wall the framed inscriptions peculiar to the dershanes. Generally there are cushions around or at least one cushion in a corner of the room with a rahle (low reading desk) just in front of it. The remaining rooms (these dershanes have at the most three rooms) are made ready for visitors who may appear at any time (any Nurcu from elsewhere is always welcome to stay). There may not be a bedstead provided, but at least there will be a number of mattresses and quilts piled up in a corner of the room. Although Nurcus of the local area invite the visitors to their houses for meals or bring the food to the dershane, in the kitchen there are enough pots and pans for the guests to cater for themselves.

'Semi-dershanes'

'Semi-dershanes' are to be found mostly in the big cities. They were established by Nurcus for the benefit of students who are Nurcus but nevertheless unwilling to accept the restrictions upon their life-style that are imposed upon those living in 'proper' dershanes. The

first of these restrictions is the virtual ban on residents smoking in the dershane, this is followed by not listening to radios, not watching television, not going out to the cinema or for any other entertainment. Although those who live in 'semi-dershanes' enjoy joining in and contributing to the movement, they prefer, at the same time, to have more freedom than those who live in 'proper' dershanes. They go out any time of the day or night, they join any group in the university and enjoy friendship with anyone they like. These students are more tolerant, hence they have more opportunity to approach their fellows, establish friendship with them and invite them to their house, or 'semi-dershane'. Because their houses are not really different from any other single students' houses, they are able to have a normal atmosphere to convey the message to their friends without causing any prejudice. They may arouse their friends' interest in Nurculuk by just speaking in favour of Nurculuk and advocating it. By this initiative these friends most probably will be ready to be taken to a ders in the course of time. That is why Nurcus do not want to lose this source of 'recruiting agents', in spite of their non-conformist behaviour. Nurcus do not see any harm in being in touch with these students. Indeed, they help them to rent houses and even to furnish them.

Moreover, by keeping these students somewhat away from the dershanes, while at the same time being on good terms with them, Nurcus believe that they are preserving those who live in dershanes from being contaminated by any sort of unregulated conduct. Since the Nurcus cannot discourage the genuine interest these people show in the Risale-i Nur and in the movement, the solution they have adopted is to exempt them from the general rules of dershanes by keeping them separate. To a very keen Nurcu such places could, at best, be regarded as 'semi-dershanes'.

The residents in them are likely to smoke and have a television set. They read almost any sort of book and have them on their bookshelves beside the Risale-i Nur. They may go to the cinema or theatre, attend or give parties for friends. Whereas if a student who lives in a 'proper' dershane insists on doing such things, his behaviour would be considered irresponsible by Nurcus, and could lead to his dismissal from the dershane.

The decoration in these 'semi-dershanes' differs considerably from that in proper ones. They are comparatively lavishly furnished but have no more than two framed Risale-i Nur inscriptions on the walls and a larger number of decorative pictures. Radios and televisions may be seen anywhere in the house. The book shelves are much larger than the ones in an ordinary dershane and are full of all types of books. Some games such as chess sets are also likely to be found there. The most striking differenceis in the people who live in these 'semi-dershanes'. They are more fashionably dressed than other Nurcus, they use modern Turkish quite freely (whereas Nurcus generally prefer Ottoman words to modern Turkish words where they think that their audience will understand them), and they do not spend as much time as most Nurcus in reading the Risale-i Nur among themselves and attending the derses. For the most part they are children of rich, well-educated, city dwellers.

They themselves do not represent Nurculuk but provide a very useful bridge for Nurcus to gain access to uncommitted students.

'Workshop dershanes'

Especially in the small towns and in the outer districts of cities, some of the Nurcus who run traditional small businesses such as one-man manufacturing enterprises or wholesale shops, set aside a small room or a corner of their office for Nurcu activities. They use these as

places where Nurcus can meet each other and also as somewhere to introduce a potential recruit to local Nurcus in apparently normal surroundings that are not entirely devoted to Nurculuk. They hope such places will not give an impression of clandestine activity that might deter potential recruits.

Almost every Nurcu who runs his own business willingly devotes a part of his premises to the movement. It is also true that every Nurcu in small traditional towns who goes to the town centre at any time of the day feels obliged to visit his brothers there in these 'workshop dershanes'. When the owner is not busy with his work, they read from the Risale-i Nur together if all of them are Nurcus, if not, it means that there is a new potential Nurcu among them, and in this case they discuss general matters but at the end they somehow bring the subject round to Nurculuk or to Said Nursi.

These 'workshop dershanes' contain as many small chairs as possible and a very small desk or table. On the walls the main decoration comprises framed inscriptions of various sizes. Booklets containing extracts from the Risale-i Nur are always ready to hand in these places. Special bookshops, which are called among the Nurcus Büro (office) and which sell the Risale-i Nur and the Nurcu publications, are also used by almost every Nurcu as 'workshop dershanes' to introduce new persons to Nurculuk. They first take these potential recruits to these book-shops and then encourage them to buy one or more of the collection of the Risale-i Nur or of any other Nurcu publications which are considered preparatory books to the Risale-i Nur.

These places also serve as local information centres where Nurcus can discover where and when derses are to be held and movements of visitors, etc.

Conduct Expected of Dershane Residents

There is no set list of rulesof conduct applicable to residents of all dershanes. The rules vary according to the type of dershane and which part of Turkey it is in. They have also been changing in line with the developing functions of dershanes since 1926. Therefore, in this section, only generally accepted current rules will be mentioned.

First of all, the residents are required to perform their namaz five times a day regularly. When they are in the dershane they are expected to perform namaz together with the other residents, i.e. with cemaat. There is no special way of performing namaz itself in a dershane but the wearing of a long robe and turban during the namaz and immediately after it the namaz tesbihatı (a formalised prayer which the Nurcus have adopted in a unique form for their own use) are strongly recommended. When the residents perform their namaz in a dershane with no non-Nurcus present, they say their namaz tesbihatı together and the imam will definitely wear the robe and turban, and others will probably do so.

Nurcus try to read a piece from the Risale-i Nur - no matter how short it is - after every namaz as recommended, and personally practised by Said Nursi himself. This is called by the Nurcus namaz dersi. In these namaz dersleri, usually one of them reads from the Risale-i Nur and the others listen to him. The widest custom among Nurcus, concerning the namaz dersi, is that they almost certainly read a part of the Risale-i Nur after morning namaz. For the other namazes it is optional, though advised. As far as the residents of a dershane are concerned, this custom is regarded as an essential part of dershane life. In other words, these readings make the most important difference between Nurcu dershanes and any other student hostel run by religious people. In Nurcu dershanes, after completing morning namaz and namaz tesbihatı, the

residents sit together and take up a book of the Risale-i Nur that they are studying and each person present will read aloud a couple of paragraphs from it and pass it on to the next person to do the same. The following morning they resume the reading from the point reached the previous day. This morning namaz dersi is considered so important that if it were not practised regularly in any dershane, the senior Nurcus would close down that dershane.

A new resident may be shown forebearance for the first week or so in the matter of attending the namaz dersi. If he still does not attend after this, one of the seniors in the dershane will invite him to join at least the morning namaz dersi as a listener.

Apart from namaz dersleri, the residents of dershanes are requested to attend the normal derses which may be arranged daily or more than once a week - depending on the area. The most important of them is the one which is held on Saturday evenings. Student residents are usually excused when they do not attend the derses held on week-days, but they must not ignore Saturday evening derses or joint derses. If they repeatedly fail to attend these derses without acceptable reason, they are quite likely to receive a warning which may, if disregarded, end in their dismissal from the dershane. For this reason, in big cities Nurcus accommodate those such as medical students who have to study particularly hard and continuously, in separate dershanes. By doing so they do not allow other students to see a 'bad example' in terms of participation in Nurcu activities.

Since dershanes are not only student hostels, Nurcus very much hope that the residents will study the Risale-i Nur to learn the message and pass it on to others. Nurcus constantly stress the importance of individual reading of the Risale-i Nur. The ones who read and study the

Risale-i Nur by themselves are all the time praised and honoured by being asked to read out a passage from the Risale-i Nur during derses. But provided a resident does join the morning namaz dersi and does his best to listen to the Risale-i Nur whenever it is read in the dershane on any occasion and also tries not to miss the Saturday evening derses, the Nurcus do not mind too much if he does not study the Risale-i Nur by himself.

Nurcus expect the residents to learn about Islam and to increase their religious knowledge only through the Risale-i Nur. They are not very happy if one of them reads or shows interest in any other religious book. Nor will they tolerate those who read books which Nurcus do not consider serious, like novels or books with indecent pictures. Similarly, newspapers and magazines of this kind are also banned from the dershanes. Of course students may have any sort of professional books of their own in the dershane and, indeed, are strongly advised to study them.

In addition, a resident of a dershane is not allowed to bring any girlfriend or any friend who is too free and easy to a dershane. In fact, the residents are expected not to have any relationship with such people at all.

Residents are forbidden to smoke inside a dershane. Outside, they are strongly discouraged but not completely banned from smoking and Nurcus will make allowances for a resident who smokes outside the dershane if he is trying to give up the habit.

Nurcus do not like the residents of dershanes to go out at nights (except for hizmet - any thing that has to do with Nurcu activities). They try to deter students from going to any sort of entertainment - including cinemas, theatres, coffee shops and so on. Residents may have a small radio inside their rooms but playing it loudly or using it in the common

room is unacceptable. Up to the present, televisions have not been allowed in dershanes.

All residents in dershanes are expected to help in the housework. Though it is not considered an offence not to participate in looking after the house-dershane, cooking, washing up, etc., if one of the residents does not pull his weight in this direction, he is likely to receive some mild admonishments from time to time.

Control of dershanes and supervision of residents

Dershane residents are subject to close, but informal supervision. In the big cities, where the dershanes are bought or rented by Nurcu vakıf foundations, the foundation appoints people to undertake all the administration of the dershane and to supervise its residents. These appointees are themselves called 'vakıf' by the Nurcus (this literally means, in this special way of using it, 'devoted', since these people have devoted their lives to the Nurcus cause). These people known as vakıfs do not have any job other than being a vakıf, committing their lives to organise the Nurcu activities in the region. The Vakıf Foundation employs them, though it does not pay them wages. There is no legal contract between the partners, nor is there any sort of employer-employee relationship between the vakıf foundation and vakıfs. If a Nurcu wishes to devote his life to Nurculuk, then the committed Nurcus of the region who actually run the Vakıf foundation may appoint him to be a vakıf. Most of these vakıf Nurcus live in dershanes and do not have any income, so they are exempted from paying rent and may be given a small amount of pocket money.

The vakıfs are the persons responsible for the dershanes. Besides the business of buying and renting dershanes, they furnish and maintain the dershanes at the Vakıf's expense. Each of them lives in one of the

dershanes permanently and watches to see that the residents observe proper conduct in the dershanes, not just in the dershane in which they live but in all the dershanes in the region. Unless there is a vakıf or at least a reliable 'senior Nurcu' who will live in and look after a dershane, Nurcus do not open a new one. This reliable senior Nurcu both watches the residents' conduct and tries to convey the message to them. They may warn those who commit minor violations of expected dershane conduct; in more serious cases, or when previous warnings are disregarded, one or two of the vakıfs may intervene to add weight to the senior Nurcu's admonitions, but this takes place only when the situation is serious. Refusal to heed the warnings of the vakıf may end with dismissal of the person in question from the dershane. Apparently this does not occur very often; usually those who do not feel like staying in the dershane any more leave of their own accord before there is a serious confrontation between themselves and the senior Nurcu. However, the vakıfs frequently remind the residents that they can leave the dershane any time they want and that there is no obligation at all for them to live in a dershane.

From time to time vakıfs visit dershanes of the area and observe both the relationship between residents and the senior Nurcu, and the residents' outlook on Nurculuk and the progress they have made in assimilating the message. The most effective part of the control mechanism takes place in the 'local consultation meeting' - which will be discussed in the next section - where the issues of the local hizmet are discussed. In this meeting the vakıfs, committed Nurcus and the 'seniors' decide inter alia who will live in which dershane, and, in cases of discord among the residents of a dershane, who will be transferred to where, or if a resident has seriously flouted the standards

of dershane conduct, whether he will be asked to leave the dershane or not.

In small districts where there are not many dershanes and the Nurcus are not in need of founding a Vakıf, the local committed Nurcus control the dershanes. There may be one or two vakıfs there too, but they are not appointed or assigned by the other Nurcus. They simply devote their lives to hizmet as vakifs and usually do no other work. They are most probably self-financed with a small income from various sources such as inherited property and the like. When there is such a self-appointed vakıf in an area, he takes care of the dershane business and watches over the residents. When there is no such person then the committed Nurcus of the area entrust some of themselves with this duty. Mostly these people do not live in dershanes but keep in very close touch with both dershanes and the residents. Usually, they informally select one of the residents as 'senior'.

Almost the same process of control works in these small districts as in big cities. Because the committed Nurcus supervise both the 'seniors' and the other residents of the dershanes, important decisions again are taken in the 'local consultation meetings'.

How a ders is conducted

Though there is no stereotyped formal way of holding a ders, there are certain features common to all of them. Derses are normally held in the evenings sometime after dinner and well before midnight, unless they are organised for a particular purpose, e.g., for young uppper-middle school students who cannot leave the house in the late evenings and therefore meet on Saturday afternoons.

There is no printed invitation or any kind of public announcement for any sort of ders. There are - as mentioned - student derses, memur

(civil servant) derses, esnaf (tradesmen) or halk (common people) derses, joint derses, and derses organised on special occasions, e.g. on the visit of an ağabey. A verbal invitation may be circulated among Nurcus though not in a formal way but rather to remind and encourage one another to attend the ders. When a Nurcu feels that, after a long preparation it is time to introduce a friend of his to Nurculuk, then he invites this new potential recruit to a ders; of course this invitation will not be for a 'ders' but for a 'gathering' between good Muslims to discuss the matters about their religion, Islam.

Normally the date and place of derses are arranged beforehand. All Nurcus of a district know where and on which days of the week the derses are held in their district. Derses are normally held in dershanes. The only exception to this is that in every part of Turkey, Nurcus prefer to hold one or two of their weekly derses in the Nurcus' own houses in turn.[14] When derses are not held in dershanes, the place is changed every week; in this case they announce the place for the next ders at the end of every ders they hold in a house. To make these arrangements better understood, an example of the widest practice may be given here. If there are five derses held in a town during a week, the first of them will be on Monday evening in an ordinary dershane, not in the central one. The second ders is held in turn in one of the Nurcus' houses on Wednesday. The third is held in another dershane on Thursday evening; if there is not another ordinary dershane, most probably it is held in a Nurcu's house again. The fourth is organised for the young students on Saturday afternoons in the central dershane; if there is another dershane which is more convenient for students to attend they prefer this one. The last ders of the week is the one which is called 'Saturday Evening Ders'. This is the ders with the highest

attendance and is usually organised for students and other people separately, but in small towns where not many people attend the ders, they mix students and others together. The Saturday Evening Ders is held in the central dershane; if it is held separately, the non-students' ders is held in another dershane.

The starting time for a ders varies according to the season; it is usually between eight and nine o'clock in the evening and the ders lasts until half past ten or at the latest eleven o'clock. In fact there is no definite time or rigid programme for a ders. There is no chairman or single person in charge. When it is thought that the majority of the expected people have arrived, this is mostly around the usual time, one of the senior or committed Nurcus (not necessarily the same person all the time) starts the ders by reading a passage from the Risale-i Nur. This first passage is usually one that is easy to understand and follow, because during the reading some more people may come. The reader normally positions himself in a corner of the room and the listeners sit on the floor, the first-comers usually with their backs against the wall, and later arrivals sitting in semi-circles in the middle of the room facing the reader.

This first reading lasts no more than fifteen minutes. After a very short break, the main study begins. This is a reading with explanations, commentaries and possibly questions and answers. It is usually conducted by the most senior, respected one there who is accepted as having the most profound understanding of the Risale-i Nur among those present. He tries to explain and comment on the passage he had selected from the Risale-i Nur. When he feels that an explanation is necessary he gives it, but in these explanations he is guided by the following principles: 1) not having recourse to other religious books; 2) wherever

possible basing his explanation on explanations given elsewhere in the Risale-i Nur and citing these references; 3) where no relevant explanation can be found within the Risale-i Nur, giving an explanation based upon the general concepts of the Risale-i Nur; 4) avoiding giving any reference which would contradict or cause doubts about the validity of the Risale-i Nur. These principles are observed in an attempt to show that the Risale-i Nur is self-sufficient as a source for religious knowledge. In addition, secular scientific explanations which can be used as evidence to confirm what is claimed in the Risale-i Nur are very largely used by the reader during the ders. This is deliberately and explicitly done in order to give the audience an impression that Nurculuk is not like traditional religious orders which have restricted themselves solely to the spiritual perfection of human beings without paying any attention to the realities of today's world, and try to prove the claim made by Said Nursi throughout his writings that science does not contradict Islam but confirms it.

At the end of this second section of the ders, the reader may ask the audience whether they have any questions to ask. This is especially done when there is a new person present to encourage him to participate in the discussion and make him feel that the derses are not just to instruct those attending in Said Nursi's teachings but also to provide an opportunity for free discussions.

Although it does not occur frequently, one of those present may interrupt the reader and request him to re-read a sentence or paragraph or to explain the piece he is reading if he thinks that an explanation should be given immediately, before the reading is completed. Other persons may also interrupt to offer appropriate comments or explanations, but such explanations must be brief and done by someone who is really

expert at explaining the Risale-i Nur by the Risale-i Nur, otherwise they are not approved.

This study takes about an hour and then a long break follows. Usually at the beginning of this break saucers for tea glasses are distributed. Then one of the residents of the dershane or the host enters the hall holding a large tray full of small tea glasses for everyone present. During this tea break almost everyone chats with the persons next to him. Thus small circles are set up. Special attention is given to the new recruits during this break. Those who have broughtthe new recruits try to introduce them to as many people as possible, preferably to those who are in the same faculty or studying the same subject if they are students, if they are not, then to those who have similar professions or interests. This break, which lasts around half an hour, plays the most effective role in assimilating the new participants.

Before a third reading begins, one of the Nurcus may ask everyone to introduce himself to the assembly. Each person in turn then, remaining sitting on the floor, states aloud his full name, profession, (or, if a student, his faculty) and home town. The Nurcu calling for these introductions will probably choose a member who is not sitting near any newcomer to start the process. In this way those unfamiliar with these proceedings have plenty of opportunity to learn what is expected of them before it is their turn. Such introductions usually take place at Saturday evening derses and at any joint ders when there are several new faces present. This introduction procedure serves a number of purposes. It allows the Nurcus to know who is present. It impresses newcomers with the high calibre of people who attend. (Sometimes if a distinguished person such as a university lecturer

does not mention his profession or state it clearly, a keen Nurcu may reveal his pride in having such a member by calling out loudly, 'I'm sorry, I did not hear what your profession was'.) It shows that there is no air of secrecy and that those who attend do not seek to hide their identities. It proves that contrary to claims that are frequently made, Nurculuk is not confined to a restricted class or region; it attracts Turks, Kurds and Arabs from many different parts and walks of life.

When the introductions are over, one of the senior Nurcus selects what he considers an appropriate passage from the Risale-i Nur and then asks a young Nurcu to read it aloud. The selected piece may be from Said Nursi's defence speeches in court, or one of the articles in praise of Said Nursi written by his admirers, or it may be from Said Nursi's letters to his disciples. All of these are included in the collection of the Risale-i Nur as Lâhikalar (Supplements). These pieces, which are thought to be suitable for the closing section in the late evening, are easy to understand and the language used in them is quite close to modern Turkish. The reading of the passage is given to a young Nurcu in order to train him or to encourage his interest in Nurcu activities.

At the end of the ders, one of the seniors asks the person who is considered best able to do so, to recite a passage from the Koran. This custom is slowly becoming confined to the derses which are held on week-days and which new potential recruits are unlikely to attend. If a ders is not to be closed with recitation from the Koran, then the last reader asks the people present to recite the Sure-i fatiha silently by themselves by saying lillahilfatihah at the end of his reading. This indicates that the ders has been completed and anyone who wishes may leave.

Nurcus have been trying to add to the number of their own book shops by opening new ones in the smaller districts since the authorities ceased to prevent the public sale of the Risale-i Nur. Where the Risale-i Nur is still not obtainable for the people who would like to purchase it openly, one of the local Nurcus displays the books after the ders is completed. The Nurcus take great care to keep the place where they store the books of the Risale-i Nur secret so as to avoid police raids and wide-scale confiscation. They choose the most trustworthy Nurcu to deal with the selling of the Risale-i Nur and he does this job voluntarily. Displaying books for sale after the ders is now in decline and practised only in villages and small towns.

2. CONSULTATIVE MEETINGS

Consultation is considered a very important aspect of Nurculuk. In practice it takes different forms at different levels and in different places. The levels concerned are local, regional and general, and each of these is discussed below. The application of the principle of consultation is constantly evolving. The situation here described is that which pertained in mid-1981 and is based on the information available to me at that time. Although I was allowed to join in ders, I could not take part in or personally observe consultation meetings.

A. Local consultative meetings

Said Nursi left local affairs of the movement to the local committed Nurcus and he constantly advised them to establish solidarity among themselves and consult one another in the issues of local hizmet. In the beginning of the movement it was easy for the Nurcus to consult closely with one another. Since the early 1950s, the movement has expanded greatly, mostly in urban centres, and by the late 1960s, the

large numbers involved made close communication and consultation almost impossible in the most populous provinces. Thus, the committed Nurcus felt that it was incumbent upon them to take upon themselves the decisions and business relating to local hizmet.

Accordingly, Nurcus formed local committees to conductthese affairs. By choosing dedicated senior Nurcus for these committees, they were able to exclude from the management of their affairs three classes; first,new recruits who were expected just to listen to what their seniors told them, second, those Nurcus who for any reason did not wish to take a particularly active role in Nurcu activities, and third, and most important, members of other religious or political groups who might try to divert or exploit Nurcu activities for their own ends. Nurcus were particularly anxious not to be exploited by politicians who had religious appeal.

When the numbers of committed Nurcus in a particular area has grown large, it becomes necessary to select a representative body to organise the group's activities. This selection process differs from town to town and is changing to take account of criteria other than seniority in the movement which had previously been the only factor. In other words, an election system is replacing the old seniority system. The first example of this highly interesting development occurred in Ankara in 1979. The process was described to me by Hayri in 1981, by which time he was himself the elected chairman of the local consultative committee. Eighty to ninety of the ehl-i hizmet (committed Nurcus) gather in a dershane for the election. Everybody present has the right to nominate and to be nominated for the committee. When nominations are complete, the election is conducted by secret ballot. This elected committee consists of eleven members. A number of reserves are also

elected. In 1981, of the eleven members, four were vakıfs and the remainder were in various forms of employment outside. Reserve members are elected to replace the civil servant members if they are appointed outside Ankara, which is quite likely to happen. Hayri said in favour of the election system: 'to obey the majority decision is the easiest way to settle disputes', and expressed his regret that the Nurcus of other cities had not yet adopted the election system to form their committees.

The frequency, place, duration and form of the local consultative meetings vary from city to city according to the course of hizmet. In these meetings the members discuss and decide every matter which directly or indirectly concerns the hizmet in the area. As reading a passage from the Risale-i Nur at every opportunity is a Nurcu practice, in these meetings too, a member first of all reads out a few pages of the Risale-i Nur and the others listen to him. Then after this reading the agenda for the meeting is agreed and discussion of the various items begins. Consultation is held to be the essential feature of these meetings. Consultation is interpreted as harmonious discussion. The only source of authority in these discussions is the Risale-i Nur collection.[15] In case of disagreement, everyone is expected to adduce support for his view from the Risale-i Nur, failure to do this is proof of the invalidity of his argument. No other authority is admissible.

The local consultative committee is not the primary policy making body. In their meetings, the members usually discuss how they can put into practice the decisions taken in the 'general consultative meetings', and in the 'arbitration committee meetings' in their own areas, though they do make decisions relating to their own locality. When there is a serious difference of opinion between the members of a local consultative

committee and if the subject of dispute goes beyond local affairs, and concerns Nurcu policy in general, then they bring the subject to a higher committee to be discussed and decided.

One of the Nurcus of Konya, explaining what was expected from local consultative committee meetings, stated that the place, time and agenda of the meetings are decided by the members themselves. They discuss how the Nurcu message can best be conveyed to the people of their area, taking into consideration special local conditions. He added that this is just an advisory committee whose powers do not extend beyond informing the local Nurcus about the committee's agreed views.

Nurcus of Erzurum and Konya have their local committee meetings once a month whereas those of Ankara have theirs every fortnight, and these meetings last approximately two hours. Although there is no fixed agenda for all meetings, a typical example may be worth mentioning here. According to Hayri, Ankara local consultative committee meets under a chairman who is elected to this post for about a year, and the agenda usually includes the following subjects: 1) how the political decisions taken by the general consultative and the arbitration committees can be put into practice in accordance with the changing parochial conditions; 2) arrangements related to any educational activity. This is always the largest section in the agenda (these activities are: seminars, conferences, special study circles and the preparation of articles to be published in the Nurcu newspaper and magazines);

3) organising the gatherings where hizmet duties will be allocated;

4) the business of buying, renting and furnishing the dershanes;

5) placing of students in suitable dershanes and reviewing their conduct, especially in the dershanes, and in the case of objectionable behaviour deciding what measures should be taken.

It is generally accepted by every committee that all the decisions are valid until rescinded by the same committee or overturned by a higher committee.

B. Regional Consultative Meetings

Nurcus have recently extended their local consultative meetings to the regional level to review local hizmets within the regional context. A region consists of a number of cities grouped around one of major importance to the Nurcus. For example, İsparta, Konya, Antalya, Burdur, Afyon and Denizli make the 'İsparta Region'.[16,17] The cities within each region are thought to have similar social, economic and political features so that the Nurcus of that region may benefit from each other's mode of hizmet as well as strengthening their morale by meeting other Nurcus from other cities and by hearing of the activities there.

Every local committee chooses its own representatives to attend the regional meetings; they are chosen before each meeting - there are no permanent representatives. The meetings usually take place once a month and last several hours and they are normally held in dershanes. They mostly gather in the largest city which is usually located in the centre of the region. When representatives return to their respective cities, they give their local committee an account of what they have discussed in the regional meeting.

Regional consultative meetings are set up in order to keep communication alive between the neighbouring cities and exchange views and experiences with each other. There seems to be no set programme for the meetings. Dursun, who frequently attended the Isparta Regional meeting, gave information about what they do in these meetings. First of all, they study the parts of the Risale-i Nur which one of the participants personally or any of the Nurcus in his city has found difficult to understand. Or the reverse may apply, he or any of his Nurcu brothers

in the city may call attention to an interesting message in the Risale-i Nur which they think might have been overlooked by the others. When there is no special demand for a subject to be studied, they study some pieces from the Risale-i Nur which are generally quite difficult for any reader to understand, not just because of the language but also because of the content. Then follows a free discussion which usually revolves around the current political issues. Dursun describes these discussions as studies and deliberations about how the Nurcus should act in order to preserve democracy, which political organisation should be supported, to what extent co-operation with this organisation should be extended and what sort of measures should be taken against any possible domination by a communist regime in Turkey. Lastly, they tell the assembly how the hizmet is getting on in their cities and give special emphasis to successful examples of conveying the message, particularly to the new potential recruits and new converts' statements said in praise of the Risale-i Nur. When they disperse to their respective cities, they pass on to the Nurcus of their city the stories they have heard about the new converts.

Nurcus do not make any decisions in the regional gatherings. Therefore, it is very unlikely that there will be a dispute or disagreement between the participants. Even so, since all of them are committed Nurcus, the Risale-i Nur will be the final authority.

C. General Consultative Meetings

General Consultative Meetings - known among the Nurcus as umumî meşveret or umumî şûra - are attended by ninety to one hundred and ten representatives of the local centres (that is, usually cities and the towns with large populations) all over Turkey. These representatives form the highest decision making council in Nurculuk. Although it has no permanent or even fixed period elected executive committee empowered

to implement its decisions, this council is the body which establishes sub-committees and appoints people to them. Most of the longest-serving and most devoted Nurcus, known as ağabeys and respected by all the Nurcu rank and file, are present at these meetings. In addition to them, every local centre sends its allocated number of representatives to the meetings. A general consultative meeting which was held in May 1980 left the selection of local representatives to the local community. According to this, the local consultative committee has the power to limit the number of people who represent them in the general consultative meeting, but it is up to all of the Nurcus of the area to decide whether they will nominate representatives from whom the committee may make appointments or whether they will let the committee make the nominations as well as the appointments.[18] It is not necessary, however, to be a member of the local committee to be selected for the general consultative meeting.

Under normal conditions, these general consultative meetings are held twice a year in Istanbul and they last two or three days. In 1980 the time for these meetings was fixed as April and October every year.[19] Every meeting begins with the election of the ad hoc chairman and committee to organise and chair the various sessions throughout the gathering.

The Nurcus of Istanbul appear to have assumed responsibility for the secretarial duties before and after the gathering. Working with these to summon the gathering is a committee of Istanbul ağabeys who are elected at the previous meeting. (The Nurcus from Eastern and especially South-Eastern Anatolia were unwilling to give the Istanbul ağabeys full executive powers and they limited their power to summoning meetings.)[20] Since there is no executive committee empowered to prepare the agenda

in advance, the agenda is drawn up by the representatives in the meeting under the direction of the ad hoc committee.

Any subject considered important may be proposed by any of the representatives present for inclusion in the agenda. The December 1978 general consultative council which was, as usual, held in Istanbul, published a two-page leaflet at the end of the meeting.[21] It is worth studying this document, which was produced for internal circulation among Nurcus only, in some detail in order to gain a comprehensive idea of the content of a typical agenda. Paragraph 1 begins: 'In the discussions, our attitude towards anarchic incidents, and racialist, separatist and sectarian (mezhep) movements was reviewed and it was considered, as stated below, that past experience confirmed that the principles clearly set forth in the Risale-i Nur constituted the most positive approach and the need was stated to observe these principles with the maximum sensitivity in future too.' After this, all the subjects discussed during the meeting are briefly summarised and usually the decisions are stated. Among them the following are noteworthy:

- The main duty of a Nurcu and purpose of his life is to read, to understand and to disseminate the Risale-i Nur in order to revive Islam, and to strive to progress in the infinite ranks of the secrets of marifetullah (recognition of God) and muhabbetullah (love of God), that are explained to perfection in these works. Since this is a matter closely bound up with reading the Risale-i Nur as much as possible, reading and discussing Nur lessons with 'excessive communication with each other' at every opportunity, trying to understand, and striving to disseminate the Risale-i Nur form the basis of our hizmet and the aim of all our endeavours.

- It is well known that those who create anarchy in Turkey want to drag our country into a civil war and are striving to involve in

anarchic incidents the Nurcus, who are the guardians of order. Whereas the students of light (the Nurcus) are charged with the duty of preserving the Community of Muhammed from danger. Our stand in this situation is always to help the institutions responsible for the preservation of the state and public order and to try to ensure peace and security by friendly gatherings and Nurcu derses.

- Under all circumstances, Nurcus are reminded to abide by the command of the Risale-i Nur: müsbet haraket et! (act positively!) and are cautioned not to react to external events in a negative manner.

Other paragraphs explain what the Nurcus' attitude towards racists and Alevis should be, and give guide-lines how to deal with new potential recruits and people with the capacity to render outstanding service. Decisions on establishing new sub-committees to deal with camps, courses, private schools, founding Vakıf Foundations in the provinces where Nurculuk is developing rapidly, collecting contributions from the districts for the printing machine fund, reallocating cities into new regions and reviewing the ownership of dershane buildings and other properties are also recorded in this leaflet. The most interesting paragraph deals with differences of opinion between the ağabeys. 'It has been observed that it is very harmful to the enthusiasm of the loyal followers when disagreements between the ağabeys become public'. It continues with advice for the ağabeys: '... therefore, differences of opinion between ağabeys should not reach the level that would hurt each other and should not be mentioned before the [Nurcu] brothers'.

The Nurcus published a 16-page report immediately after the May 1980 general consultative meeting. Most of it was allotted to the opening speech of Mehmed Kırkıncı (one of the Nurcus' most revered hodjas). This long speech was included in the report in response to

the general demand of the participants in the meeting. It is about the importance of consultation, the advantages of respecting one another's opinions, the necessity of complying with the resolutions of the consultation and calls for the Nurcu brothers to establish strong mutual solidarity. The rest of this report contains a revision of the Nurcus' political stand and the confirmation of their support of the JP and these subjects occupy considerably more space than they did in previous reports. While the RPP was accused of dragging the country into communism, the JP was mentioned as very tolerant and careful not to exploit the youth. The report recommends Nurcus to work together with the JP because that party has the potential to spread the ideas and positive activities of the 'students of light' (the Nurcus).

Although encouraging their followers to take part in political activities, the Nurcus, in the same report, instruct them: 1) not to cease to attend the derses; 2) to read the Risale-i Nur individually even more than anyone else; 3) not to neglect continuing to consult ağabeys. All of these instructions indicate the Nurcus' fear, born of experience, that involvement in political activities will lessen dedication to Nurculuk.

Furthermore, in this same report (produced at a time of growing unrest and anarchy in Turkey) the Nurcus state that, despite their previous decisions, they can no longer remain aloof from involvement in the political situation. They therefore decided to co-operate with the students who had not yet affiliated with any ideological groups and had not been involved in anarchic incidents. To this end they were advised at the end of the meeting to try to gain the support of the majority of students in educational establishments so that teaching might continue there and order be restored.

The report also records that in this meeting the representatives of the local Nurcus decided to set up an arbitration committee, which would meet when necessary and it appointed twenty-three members to this committee. Another committee was appointed to organise the mevlits.

The need to prevent further disputes among the ağabeys is implicit in another resolution that was accepted at this meeting; the ağabeys are even mentioned by name and called upon to act in harmony. The relevant article reads: 'Following a general discussion on the subject, the assembly resolved that Mehmet Kutlular, Mehmet Fırıncı, Mehmet Emin Birinci and Abdulvahit Mutkan shall act in harmony in every matter as had previously been the case and, if necessary, they shall heed the opinions of Orhan İnalöz.'

Another document circulated by the Nurcus of Istanbul in September 1982 on the occasion of Kurban Bayramı (the Feast of Sacrifice) and distributed only among Nurcus, warns them against some (Nurcu) brothers who favoured showing sympathy towards the present military regime of Turkey and it tells the Nurcus of Anatolia to abide by the principles of the Risale-i Nur alone. One of the concluding paragraphs gives the Risale-i Nur sole authority and says: 'Whoever confronts you and whatever idea he holds, you must of necessity ask him to bring evidence from the Risale-i Nur for his idea. There is no criterion for us other than our "Üstad" and the Risale-i Nur, and no-one else can be an exception to this rule.'[22] Of course this 'no-one' includes the ağabeys as well as the General Consultative Council. To make this point clear, the Nurcus of Istanbul who do the secretarial duties of the meeting, set out the limits of the General Consultative Council's powers before summoning a controversial meeting. They did so in order

to forestall any move among the representatives from Anatolia to oppose the well known policy of the Istanbul Nurcus against the present military government.[23] The relevant sentence reads: 'The General Consultative Council discusses and reaches decisions on every matter [related to Nurculuk] only in accordance with the principles of the Risale-i Nur; it does not dare to alter the criteria of the Risale-i Nur to suit the desires of some people [the opposition group].'[24] By mentioning its name deliberately, they included the Arbitration Committee within this limitation, since it seemed to be the source of the above mentioned opposition. The document expanded the inviolability of the principles of the Risale-i Nur to the extent that they are not even subject to being a matter of discussion. The text illustrates this with a sharp line: 'The clearly stated fundamentals of our hizmets, nevertheless, are beyond dispute and cannot be changed or altered by even the General Consultative Council, not to mention by the Arbitration Committee. The councils, at whatever level they are (local, regional, general or arbitrator level), are in the role not of modifiers of these fundamentals but of guardians of them.'[25]

So the General Consultative Council, as the highest decision making body, has the power only to guard the principles of the Risale-i Nur, not to revise or, at the worst, to change them. There is, however, no Nurcu institution vested with any sort of power which would give it a right to punish transgressors or deter people from interpreting the Risale-i Nur arbitrarily. If someone offers any revisionist interpretation, he may only meet with a denunciation by the fundamentalist Nurcus.

D. Arbitration Committee Meeting

No one is authorised to act on his own individual initiative on behalf of Nurculuk. Every single action related to Nurculuk has to be approved by the whole body through the system of representation and consultative committees at different levels depending on the importance of the matter. To deal with crises when the Nurcus cannot summon the general consultative council immediately and to keep hizmet affairs going, the Nurcus have found it necessary to set up a permanent elected committee. This was done at the May 1980 general consultative meeting.[26]

The article which announces the foundation of the arbitration committee does not refer to its duties, powers or qualifications. Nor does it state how long its members have been elected for; it simply says: 'the formation of a 23-man arbitration committee, whose names are mentioned below; was agreed. This committee will assemble at specific times and also as required.'[27] However, in the document published by the Nurcus of Istanbul two years later, an attempt was made to specify the duty and the power of the arbitration committee as well as the time when it should meet. Referring to the 1980 report, this 1982 document states that the arbitration committee has been entrusted with the preparation of the agenda for the general consultative meeting as well as being in charge of trying to settle disagreements among the local Nurcus. If the arbitration committee fails to find a solution for these local disagreements, then they will bring the dispute to the general consultative meeting. The relevant paragraph reads: 'As is well known, the Arbitration Committee was established at the general consultative meeting of 17-18 May 1980: 1) to draw up the agenda for the general

consultative meeting on the day before it meets; 2) to try to settle local disputes, and when they cannot, to bring them to the general consultative meeting.'[28]

It is evident that the Nurcus still find it impossible to grant any independent, fully-fledged committee powers to execute the decisions that have been taken by the committees at any level, or to act on behalf of the whole Nurcu community. There is evidence however to suggest that they are moving towards the establishment of such a system. For example, there is a growing feeling that local representatives sent to higher level meetings should be elected by simple majority, not just appointed and that they should be entitled to act and make decisions on behalf of the group that elected them. Although progress in this direction is slow, the adoption of such democratic procedures by a religious group in Turkey is, nevertheless, a significant development. Yet another sign that this democratisation process is gaining ground among the Nurcus is that those who oppose this process and try to retain the seniority or 'ağabeyhood' system are strongly rejected by the fundamentalist Nurcus who base their objections on several of Said Nursi's statements in the Risale-i Nur.

The fact that this move towards democracy within Nurculuk is not yet complete has caused uncertainty about the authority of the arbitration committee. The Nurcus of Istanbul seemed to be very determined not to accept any permanent body to decide the affairs of Nurculuk and act on its behalf. They hold that any governing body must be elected for a limited period and be accountable to the general body of members. Those who found it is inconceivable to doubt the sanctity of ağabeys or to hold them to account for their decisions and actions in the general consultative council are inclined to accept the superiority and immunity

of the arbitration committee. Once the arbitration committee was elected in 1980, it tended to take over the general consultative council's duty and started taking decisions about the matters concerning Nurculuk as a whole. This tendency is welcomed by the Nurcus of Eastern and South-Eastern Anatolia where democracy is relatively weak and submission to the _şeyhs_ of religious orders is still prevalent amongst the religious population of the area. The Nurcus of Istanbul became unhappy about this assumption of power by the arbitration committee and sought to circumscribe it. (Noticeably, in the text of their above-mentioned 13-page document, the Istanbul Nurcus maintain that the arbitration committee has no right to make any decisions other than settling disputes and in case of failure to settle the local disputes, since the final word does not remain in the arbitration committee's hands, its duty is to bring the dispute to the general consultative meetings.) In this document they openly complain about the excesses of some members of the arbitration committee and their attempt to replace the general consultative council.

The text openly criticises, perhaps for the first time in the history of Nurculuk, the behaviour of some members of the arbitration committee who are esteemed and respected as _ağabeys_: '... some people ... have tried to disseminate the idea that the arbitration committee is a competent authority to make decisions about every matter related to the Nurcu community ...

'As for the _ağabeys_ who take part in the arbitration committee ... it is impossible to find evidence in the Risale-i Nur for the high status which is sought for the _ağabeys_'.[30] It is noteworthy here that among those who published and distributed this document there are several _ağabeys_ who have also been elected to the arbitration committee.

Although the position of the arbitration committee is controversial, it has continued to meet. The committee gathers under the chairmanship of one of the members who is elected for each session. It is understood that the committee assembles when some of its members ask for a meeting; there is no fixed place and time for meetings. These meetings are held in an atmosphere of brotherhood and there is an agenda to be followed which is drawn up at the beginning of each meeting. Any time during the meeting another item may be added to the agenda if a member proposes it. There is no limited time for a meeting; it lasts until the agenda is completed.

Decisions, or more correctly suggestions, are made on the vote of the majority of the committee members present in the meeting. These decisions or suggestions, like those of other committees, only have the status of recommendations and are published as letters under the title of lâhika mektupları (supplementary letters) and distributed among the Nurcus for information. Decisions considered inadvisable to commit to writing (because they may allude to deeds or ideas that are deemed by the authorities to be illegal) are spread by word of mouth.

3. MEETINGS OPEN TO PUBLIC

Nurcus' efforts since the early 1970s to enlarge their circle and to make Nurculuk more open to the public led to different types of meetings for the public. Through these meetings Nurcus wanted to convey their message to those who were reluctant to attend a ders, which was liable to be raided by the police as an illegal Nurcu activity. These public meetings are: a) seminars; b) conferences.

A. Seminars

A seminar may be introduced by a Nurcu with specialist knowledge of a subject and the ability to interpret it in accordance with the teachings of the Risale-i Nur. The aim of his talk is, of course, to demonstrate to the unconvinced the importance of the Risale-i Nur. Although seminars are not publicly announced, they are held in various sorts of public places, often in an office of a society or of a vakif foundation. Sometimes Nurcu book shops are used for this purpose in small districts. Seminars are intended not for the public at large but for people already sympathetic towards Nurculuk. The Nurcus of the area bring their friends to seminars hoping that their interest will be sufficiently stimulated to make them want to come to derses.

The topic of a seminar is usually a secular science subject and preferably a popular one. Some topics of recent seminars held in more than one city which my informants mentioned were: Hûcreden insana (from cell to human being) - a study by a university lecturer of the development of a foetus from ovule to a child; 'Radio' - a seminar on the functions of airwaves; 'Ego' - a psychological study of human personality.

The Nurcus do not propagate Nurculuk or the Risale-i Nur explicitly in any of their meetings when they invite non-Nurcu people. (Interestingly enough they do not organise any public meetings on religious topics.) During the seminars, quite contrary to derses, the Nurcus do not have any copy of the Risale-i Nur with them and when the speakers quote from it they do not mention the author, Said Nursi, and they may not even mention the Risale-i Nur itself, but just allude to the particular book from which the quotation is taken. For example, a speaker may say 'as explained in Sözler (the name of a book by Said Nursi which is most probably not known to those who are unfamiliar with Nurculuk). By this

means the speaker hopes to avoid looking like a narrow-minded member of a sectarian group. During the seminar every opportunity is taken to reconcile the subject with religion and the ideas from the Risale-i Nur are used to achieve this.

Unlike a ders, a seminar is held in a rather formal atmosphere and the audience sits on chairs and the speaker stands up and, sometimes, a black-board or slides are used. At the end of the seminar some planted questions are asked to attract the audience's attention.

When a seminar proves popular, it may be given in more than one city, but normally seminars are organised by the local Nurcu community for their own town only. In most areas, two or three seminars are held each year. After the 12 September 1980 military take-over, as the Nurcus abandoned gathering in large numbers, they temporarily stopped having seminars too. A seminar usually lasts over an hour and the size of the audience varies very much in accordance with the size of the Nurcu community in the area.

B. Conferences

It was not until the 1970s that Nurcus began to organise conferences in big cities. When they organise a conference, they try to attract as many people as possible and they prefer to hold it in the biggest conference hall in the area. They attempt to convey their message to the public in the most general way, i.e. they seek to present the chosen topic in a widely acceptable manner by blending it with popular religious and nationalist views and by avoiding any reference to the Risale-i Nur and Nurculuk. Ordinary religious people are found amongst the audiences of such conferences. Compared with other conferences of this type in Turkey, the size of the audience is large. For instance, Hayri, the chairman of Ankara İlim ve Kültür Vakfı claimed that in the conference which was

organised by this vakif on the subject of Anarşi (Anarchy) in the form of an Açık Oturum (Symposium) in Ankara Selim Serrı Tarcan Kapalı Spor Salonu (the largest covered sports centre in Ankara) in 1979 the size of the audience exceeded ten thousand.[31]

Because Nurculuk is not established as an officially approved society, the conferences are organised under the name of 'vakıf' foundations in order to make it possible to obtain the necessary permission from the authorities.

The conferences are usually announced in the media, especially through the newspapers and magazines, and by sticking bills on the walls alongside the most used roads. They are addressed by people who either have an academic title, such as professor, or are popular and accepted at least by the religious masses as authorities on the topic. The people who speak at the conferences are carefully chosen by the Nurcus so as not to represent any idea which contradicts that of Nurcus on that particular subject (though they may hold differing views on other subjects) - they are sympathetic towards Nurculuk in varying degrees.

A fifteen-page report published by the 'Istanbul ilim ve Kültür Vakfı' in 1982 gives a good general idea of the sort of subjects chosen and typical occasions on which conferences are held. From January 1981 to 31 January 1982 this 'Vakıf' foundation organised seven conferences four of which were held in the form of symposia: 1) 3. İslam Zirvesi ve Bazı Düşünceler (Reflections on the Third Islamic Summit Meeting) In this conference, which was organised on the occasion of Turkey's joining the Islamic Summit Meeting at Prime Ministerial level for the first time, the speaker, Professor Servet Armağan, said, 'Turkey is a member of the European community, but this does not hinder us from establishing links with Islamic states with whom we have strong

historical and spiritual ties, since nearly all the nations of the world have to pursue a many-sided policy'. It is also claimed in the report that Bülent Ulusu; the Prime Minister, and some other ministers sent congratulatory telegrams to the conference (Istanbul ilim ve Kûltur Vakfı, Bir Yılda Neler Yaptık? Istanbul, 1982, p. 5);

2) Kûltûr ve Sanat Dûnyamız (Turkish Culture and Art); 3) 500. Vefat Yildönümünde fatih'i Anma (The 500th Anniversary of the Death of Sultan Mehmet II, the Conqueror of Istanbul); 4) Fetih Gecesi (The Night of the Conquest), on the occasion of the 528th anniversary of the conquest of Istanbul; 5) İslamda Temel Eğitim Esasları (Basic principles of Education in Islam); 6) Mehmet Akif Gecesi (Mehmet Akif Night), talks on Mehmet Akif (Mehmet Akif Ersoy - 1873-1936 - the poet who wrote the words of the Turkish national anthem) by several people on the occasion of the 45th anniversary of his death; 7) Gençlik ve Meseleleri (Youth and their Problems).[32]

4. STUDY CIRCLES

The General Consultative body which gathered on December 1978 drew the attention of Nurcus to the importance of forming small study circles. As the report of this meeting noted, 'The advantage of encouraging reading and studying the lessons of the Risale-i Nur more frequently, apart from the derses, by forming small groups of people who will mix well together was stated.'[33] As this paragraph from the report shows, the idea of forming study circles is quite new in Nurculuk. It is practised only in the big cities by students.

It is a prevalent Nurcu belief that the Risale-i Nur gives the Islamic interpretation of every scientific subject and embraces enough

knowledge to satisfy everyone from every profession. It is this idea that motivates Nurcus to form study circles amongst students from the same faculty or those who are studying the same subject regardless of what it is. Accordingly, these small groups of students study the Risale-i Nur together in detail from the point of view of their profession or read the books on their profession and criticise them in the light of the teachings of the Risale-i Nur.

Study circles are not yet very common but they have found quite strong encouragement from mature, non-student Nurcus (who do not actually take part themselves). Some of the young students who live in dershanes in big cities have taken up the idea and actually attend study circles. One of the reasons for settling students from the same faculty in the same dershane and encouraging them to have a common library for their professional books in the dershane is to promote the idea of establishing a study circle there. In the early 1970s, this type of dershane, based on common professional interests, became quite common in Istanbul, Ankara and Erzurum and students in these then started to form groups to study their own specialist interests (for which good library facilities were provided) together with the Risale-i Nur. Some of these studies are at a particularly advanced level. For example in Erzurum, as my informant Mahmut told me, the Nurcu students from the religious education institutions gather in a dershane every day and study Arabic language using the prominent tefsir (exegesis of the Koran) and fiqh (Islamic canon law) books as text books. This daily study lasts an hour and a half, of which twenty minutes is spent on studying Muhakemat , one of Said Nursi's works whose language is most difficult to understand for the new generation of Turkey.

A unique study circle is held by the Nurcus of Istanbul once a week in a large room of the Nurcus' newspaper publishing house. At other times this room is used mostly by the staff to perform their namaz together. On Sunday mornings starting at ten o'clock, all of the personnel including staff writers of the newspaper and also other Nurcus who are interested in the subject, study the Risale-i Nur from the point of view of politics for more than two hours. Around two hundred people attend (whereas in normal study circles the average attendance is about ten people).

Although study circles are not said to be private, in practice there is almost no chance for anyone to discover where and when a study circle meeting is to be held if one is not informed by a Nurcu because like seminars, study circles are not announced publicly; the Nurcu students of an area are encouraged by the senior Nurcus to join at least one existing group or to form a new one and invite their fellow students to it.

5. MEVLITS

The most public Nurcu activity is the mevlit . (The Turkish word Mevlit is from the Arabic 'Mawlud' (literally: birth, nativity), and is the name used for the chanting of the Mevlit written by Süleyman Çelebi in the 15th Century in celebration of the Prophet's birth.) It has lately become a Nurcu practice to organise three mevlits each year:

1) The Urfa Mevlidi, this is organised to commemorate the anniversary of the death of Said Nursi in Urfa where he died in 1960 on the 23rd of March which corresponded to the 25th of Ramadan.[34] Because the date appointed for the 'Urfa Mevlidi' is the 25th of Ramadan (based on the lunar calendar) the date according to the normal calendar is different every year. 2) İsparta Mevlidi, Nurcus hold a mevlit meeting usually

in the month of June each year in İsparta, though the exact date is subject to alteration. There are two reasons for this mevlit to be held in İsparta: firstly, the collection of the Risale-i Nur was written in and around İsparta, and secondly, Said Nursi spent most of his last 34 years there. In the Nurcus' eyes, İsparta is full of Said Nursi's memories. 3) The Van Mevlidi is held annually in Van, usually in August. Like İsparta, Van has special significance for Nurcus, largely because Said Nursi spent most of his youth there and it was also the city where he first began to teach Islam to his special students by opening his own small medrese.

In addition to their Nurcu associations, these cities offer a good geographical spread across Turkey (Van in the East; Urfa in the South, and İsparta in the West) for people who would like to attend a mevlit in their own area.

The exact dates of the mevlits are decided and announced either by the general consultative body or by the people it appoints to do so. Although the İsparta and Van mevlits are normally held sometime in June and August respectively, in 1980 the General Consultative Committee decided that the İsparta Mevlidi would be held in August and the Van Mevlidi on the 22nd of June for that year, i.e. 1980 only.[35] Thus it appears that the Urfa Mevlidi is the only one with a fixed date and the others may be changed. Before 1980 these Mevlits were organised personally by certain leading Nurcus. In 1980 a seven-man committee was appointed to organise the mevlits. They co-opt another person from the city where the mevlit is to be held.[36]

Mevlits are publicly announced through advertisements in the newspapers inviting everybody. In these advertisements the name of Said Nursi is openly mentioned but no reference is made to Nurculuk or to any

official Nurcu organising committee or vakif; the invitation is in the name of a local highly respected person, who is actually a Nurcu.

It is a long-established custom in Turkey for next of kin to organise mevlits in mosques on occasions such as on the fortieth day after the death of a person or on the anniversary of a death or when a child is circumcised. Nurcus too organise mevlits in the mosques but not for the same reason. They saw that mevlits provided an opportunity to have a public meeting that did not lay either the organisers or those attending open to prosecution for involvement in an illegal assembly. Holding a large meeting in a mosque and labelling it a mevlit was a convenient way round the law. That is why the Nurcus do not organise mevlits under the name of an institution, otherwise these would be meetings. Another advantage of organising mevlits is that Nurcus can use the name of Said Nursi publicly without fear of prosecution.

Nurcus from all over Turkey, but mostly from the neighbouring cities, start coming to the town on the day before the mevlit is held and they are hosted by the local Nurcus in their own houses or in the local dershanes. The mevlit usually starts just after the noon namaz and is held in the largest and most central mosque in the town. It is attended by local Nurcus and sympathisers as well as the visiting Nurcus.

Traditionally at a normal mevlit in Turkey, one or more hafızs (one who knows the Koran by heart) read a chapter from the Mevlit in turn and between every chapter one of the hafızs recites a passage from the Koran; at the end a long prayer is said as well. Nurcus add to this traditional type of mevlit some readings from the Risale-i Nur scattered between the chapters of the Mevlit and the prayer said at the end is chosen from the Nurcus' own prayer book, the jaushan al-kabir.[37]

For the Nurcus, of course, one of the main functions of the mevlit is not to read the Mevlit written by Süleyman Çelebi, but to read the Risale-i Nur openly to the public. For this reason Nurcus of the area bring the converts they have made that year to the mevlit hoping that it will help them to be assimilated into the Nurcu community in an atmosphere in which the Nurcus are acting openly without fear of prosecution and also to get to know Nurcus from other cities. They hope by this means to dispel any fears the new converts may have about participating in Nurcu activities.

6. EMOTIONAL IMPACT OF THE NURCU MEETINGS

A. Feelings

The Nurcus I interviewed in the summer of 1981 gave almost identical answers to the question: 'What feelings do you have during these meetings?' (See appendix IIfor the questionnaire) Indeed, although one must bear in mind the difficulty many people have in describing their own feelings, the degree of similarity in their responses was remarkable.

Mahmut, the lecturer in the Higher Islamic Institute gave a characteristic description of the feelings of the Nurcus concerning different stages of the meetings. He first related what he feels when he is on his way to a meeting; he thinks that he is going to satisfy the spiritual needs of his heart and mind just as in his everyday life he satisfies his bodily appetite by eating food. During the meetings he feels that with the knowledge he gains he is fortifying his faith against ideas which, though contrary to Islam, are prevalent in society. He likens his position to that of the companions of the Prophet who circled around Him asking questions in order to protect their faith.

Mahmut carefully listens to the speaker in the meeting remembering his life before he became a Nurcu and comparing what he used to think with what is taught there in order to be able to convey these truths to those who are really in need of them (as he himself was before he was converted). Therefore he tries to understand as much as possible, hoping that he will readily convince others and save them from evil ideas. That is why he enjoys learning everything taught during the meeting, not only for himself but for others as well, because he is prepared to convey this knowledge to them. It seems to him as if he is at a sacred meal when he is attending a Nurcu meeting. He relishes the genuine feeling of brotherhood formed in Nurculuk, with all the people who attend the meetings, especially the ders, sitting like brothers shoulder to shoulder as equals. At the end of the formal part of the meetings, those present break into small groups of two or three 'brothers' and chat among themselves with smiling faces. This pleases Mahmut very much as does the fact that, especially during the winter season, when everybody is going back to their houses or dershanes after the meeting is over in the late evenings they walk arm in arm and discuss the subject studied in the meeting.

Nevzat, my second informant in Erzurum, spoke of his pleasure in seeing people listening to and trying to understand a matter which he himself believes and enjoys discussing. During the meetings, he experiences a burning desire that everyone, regardless of whether he is a believer or not, should hear these truths.

When Metin, the lawyer attends a meeting, he sees himself as a part of the brotherhood and spiritual solidarity discernible in the atmosphere of the meeting. He also feels a sort of palpable joy in the meeting stemming from this pure sense of brotherhood. He perceives among those who are present in any Nurcu meeting an obvious self-assurance

which is the natural consequence of their participation in it without any expectation of material reward. Metin also describes his impression of meetings of the General Consultative Council that he himself usually attends and said that these meetings help him to discern what the members of the assembly think about the subjects which are discussed in its meetings, and as a result he can better appreciate the needs of the cemaat (the Nurcus) and how to meet them. Metin said every Nurcu meeting was a powerful factor in maintaining the unity and solidarity of the Nurcus; so every Nurcu must realise their importance and continue to organise them.

Hakan, my informant in İsparta , also emphasised the important role of meetings in strengthening brotherly love amongst the people who gather there. Since they share the same view and faith, it is quite natural that spiritual pleasure will be derived from the readings of the Risale-i Nur which essentially nourishes the Islamic brotherhood.

During his presence in a meeting, Alper, the engineer in Ankara finds his moral and spiritual senses are developing and his faith is being renewed. Being in a meeting of a cemaat to which he belongs makes him feel he is in the ranks of spiritual warriors against the nafs' (the unregenerate soul)'s natural inclinations.

If the listeners are pleased with the subject discussed in the meeting (or with the passage of the Risale-i Nur read in a ders), Tevfik, the secondary school teacher, enjoys it. He himself feels a sense of well-being just by listening to the discussions and readings in the meeting.

To be present in a meeting makes Dursun, the primary school teacher, forget the fatigue of the day and helps him to cast off the weight of worldly cares and enjoy spiritual ease. During the meetings he thinks

of the death that will inevitably come to him. He believes that everyone, on such occasions, should think of and ponder over what he would like to have in his mind at the moment of death. To attain this state of mind, one should free one's mind of all worldly considerations and feel serene while listening to the reader or speaker in the meeting.

One of my informants from Konya, Hayati, a tradesman, says he thanks God because he understands the realities of Islam completely and thoroughly through the meetings. For instance, because of the seminars he attended, he realised that every branch of science can be appropriately explained, and he is very pleased with the meetings. As for the derses, they imbue the people who attend with enthusiasm and, according to Hayati, that gives a person all the incentive he needs to practise Islam.

Mustafa, the craftsman in Konya, told me that he feels moved by the youngsters of today who attend the meetings entirely of their own free will and listen in a mature manner with total conviction to the Risale-i Nur or to the discussions on religion which take place in the course of the meetings. He is very happy with the behaviour of the people who come to the meetings, especially the young, who discuss all sorts of subjects but mostly religious, listen to each other and return to their own homes withouth being subject to the oppressive kind of control or discipline which may be needed in ordinary meetings. Mustafa is also thankful to be a member of this cemaat whose followers gather around the Risale-i Nur without expecting any worldly benefit but simply seeking God's approval. Even though they have their own mundane engagements, they prefer to participate in every Nurcu activity. Nevertheless, he found it difficult to explain the reason for this and said: 'I do not know which kind of feeling it is, but anyway, we want to go there, and we do go there (to the meetings).'

B. Most Popular Aspects of Meetings

One of the questions directed to my informants asked what appeals to them most about the meeting. Each of them was asked to cite only one aspect of the meeting which appealed to him most. Although the question was aimed at spotting the most popular aspect of meetings amongst the Nurcus, nearly all of my informants pointed out quite different features.

Metin, the lawyer in Istanbul, and Mustafa, the craftsman, picked almost the same point. . They saw the meetings as a driving force for the Nurcus. Metin said: 'Meetings serve to maintain the dynamism of the cemaat (group, i.e. the Nurcus). Everyone of those who attends the meetings most probably has the books (the Risale-i Nur), but the purpose of the meeting is not to read them; reading is just a means.' Mustafa's answer was: 'Meetings protect the cemaat ruhu (community spirit), hence, in order to keep this spirit alive every Nurcu must participate in the meetings regardless of circumstances.'

On the other hand, Dursun and Hayati, both in Konya, stressed the importance of reading the Risale-i Nur in the meetings so much that both of them told me that they would not have attended any meeting had the Risale-i Nur not been studied there. According to Dursun, the Risale-i Nur is a means to the salvation of mankind and it is significant that the Risale-i Nur is being continuously read in the meetings by hundreds of people who come there without receiving any special invitation or incentive. In Hayati's eyes, the Risale-i Nur is the most appropriate book to teach Islam, because it is nothing but the exegesis of the Koran. That is why the most important aspect of the meeting for Hayati is to see university students in the meeting listening to the Risale-i Nur receptively to learn their religion.

The sincere brotherly atmosphere of the meetings appealed to Tevfik and Nevzat most. Nevzat felt that when brothers who work together for the same cause gather together just to learn their religion and exchange ideas, they give a genuine example of brotherhood.

For Hayri and Alper, both Ankara Nurcus, the spiritual atmosphere of the meetings was what appealed to them most. Spiritual comfort, cheerfulness, pleasure and joy, according to Hayri, prevail while the people listen to the speaker, and he particularly liked the way everybody present enjoyed this and the friendly exchange of jokes and banter in an harmonious atmosphere. For Alper, however, the chief delight of the meetings is to see the rational and spiritual satisfaction on the faces of the people there, no matter whether they are regular attenders or new to these gatherings. He particularly notices the pleasure of a brother who has brought a new person to the meeting when this person feels convinced by the subject studied.

Mahmut pointed to a specific phase of the meeting as the most attractive aspect of it; giving satisfying answers to questions asked by the people of today and using the Risale-i Nur to provide rational and intelligible answers to these questions. Hakan regards the examples quoted from daily life in support of the teachings of the Risale-i Nur as the most effective and attractive feature of the meetings. These examples taken from the real world enable people present to practise their faith in their lives as well as to disseminate it to others around.

C. Least Popular Aspects of the Meetings

Since all of my informants are Nurcus, it was almost the most difficult question for them to answer since it might imply disrespect for a Nurcu activity. As soon as the question was directed to them, nearly all of them hesitated and replied with suspicion, saying: 'There is nothing in

our meetings that we do not like'. I had to give a further explanation of the question, which was 'What aspects of these meetings do you like least?', assuring them that I was not suggesting they disliked any part of the meetings, I was merely interested to know which aspect appealed to them least.

Metin and Mustafa had the same views about the most appealing aspect of the meetings and their answer to this question, too, showed that they found the same feature was the least likeable: irrelevant statements. Metin said explanations that were irrelevant to the subject discussed in the meeting, though the statements might be true, were a waste of time. Mustafa does not like it during the meeting if someone speaks in order to make unnecessary or irrelevant comments on what is read from the Risale-i Nur.

Needless introductions made by established Nurcus to the new participants, and especially embracing of two people who have just met one another in the meeting seem to Hayri pretentious. Dursun, too, dislikes the unnatural and insincere behaviour and conduct exhibited by some zealous people during the meeting.

Four of my informants regarded tea served during the break or after the meeting favourably but nevertheless rated this the least attractive aspect. Hayati said: '... we drink tea, that is something good, but if we did not, it would be all right too'. Mahmut, Alper and Hakan mentioned the displeasure they experience when tea is served at an unsuitable time, e.g. when reading is taking place in a ders.

Hakan also complained about the place when it is not large enough for the meeting and said: 'It is rather irksome for the people who are packed into a very small place and furthermore have to listen to a serious subject which naturally requires great concentration'.

Nevzat said he regretted the adjustments that were made when there is a new person present in the ders. He said, 'It may be better to discuss the subject at his level, but, on the other hand, this prevents the senior ones from learning anything new for them'.

D. Religious Experiences

None of the works of Said Nursi is intended to teach the practice of Islam. Theoretically, Said Nursi strongly believes that religious practices should not be studied from the point of view of what benefits they bestow though he devoted one of his works (Küçük Sözler) to explaining the wisdom of the obligations of Islam. According to Said Nursi, one should first recognise the ultimate purpose of creation and then the Creator. Practice, which means to Said Nursi obedience to the Creator and acting in harmony with the purpose of creation, comes last of all. Therefore, he argues, to spread faith, without which the practice of religion is completely in vain, must be every Muslim's primary object. This idea is constantly repeated throughout the whole of the Risale-i Nur.

The consequence of this teaching is plainly apparent in Nurcu meetings. It is almost impossible to see the Nurcus studying the practical obligations of Islam, e.g. they never spend time teaching people how to perform namaz or what are the obligations of namaz, or fasting in the month of Ramadan, etc. Nor do they discuss the material benefits to be derived from such practices. Everything is looked at entirely in terms of its contribution towards the strengthening of faith. That is to say that the Risale-i Nur and the Nurcu meetings have nothing to do with fiqh (Islamic canon law) which generally deals with regulating religious practices. For Nurcus gaining converts is more important than, for example, the punctilious performance of namaz.

Since the Risale-i Nur is the only guide and the purpose of the meetings is to convey the message of this guide to people, Nurcus in the meeting experience only theological discussions of Islam. Almost all of my informants answered the question 'What religious experiences have you had during these meetings?' by saying 'We are strengthening our faith', or 'We are learning our religion'。 They assume that once a person attains complete faith he himself will inevitably practise Islam; it is left to him on his own initiative to learn how to practise his faith thereafter.

Only Dursun gave a different answer to the question. He viewed the meetings as a means of understanding the people's main interests and problems through their questions, and their psychology through their behaviour in the meeting. The religious experience he gained from the meetings was one that helped him to practise his 'duty to disseminate Islam' as effectively as possible.

Their reply to the next question, which was about their religious experiences at other times, was also very similar. They all claimed that their religious experiences serve to strengthen their own faith regardless of circumstances. Their one aim is to deepen their own faith and to spread it to others. If they see that a brother is good at conveying this faith to others, they carefully observe his behaviour and method in order to be able to use it themselves in their own efforts.

Every Nucru claims that the Risale-i Nur and their own circle provide all the religious experiences they require and they have no need to go to any other source. Indeed, whenever two Nurcus meet each other, if the occasion is suitable, they read a passage from the Risale-i Nur; if it is not, they either discuss a subject from the Risale-i Nur or something to do with Nurcu activities; they talk about almost nothing

else. (This is one of the main distinctive characteristics of the Nurcus.)

Hayati exhibited a typical Nurcu attitude towards the established religious institutions in Turkey, such as official preachers and imams (prayer leaders) in mosques, and explained why Nurcus do not have any religious experience outside their own circle, '... the others are not satisfying us. We go to the mosque but other than the beautifully recited Koran, which is indeed moving, it adds nothing new to our religious experiences. You find a preacher speaking wonderfully eloquently but he is supporting a particular cause in his preaching; he is distorting the subject just to be able to support a political party which he himself is in favour of. It is distressing. Sometimes they exaggerate the subject about which they are preaching so much that it becomes absolutely unbearable. They are not presenting Islam properly at all. For example, they say: "Those who have not performed two rekat (a part of the namaz) will burn in Hell for eighty years." This is very discouraging for those who have not been performing their namaz for a long time. These preachers are harming Islam. Another example: the manager of the bank in our district used to come to our mosque to perform his Friday namaz. One day the preacher aggressively condemned banks, not the interest they charge. Thereafter, the manager never came to the mosque again.'

NOTES

1. Binnaz Toprak, Islam and Political Development in Turkey (Leiden, 1981), pp. 17-8.

2. Necmeddin Şahiner, Bilinmiyen Taraflariyla Bediuzzaman Said Nursi (Kronolojik Hayatı); 6th ed. (Istanbul, 1979); pp. 271-2, hereafter cited as Bilinmiyen. Necmeddin Şahiner, Son Şahitler Bediuzzaman Said Nursî'yi Anlatıyor (Istanbul, 1978), I, p. 418, hereafter cited as Şahitler, I.

3. Ibid., p. 310.

4. Nurcus claim that 600,000 treatises were copied out by hand during this period, see Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 310. Between 1944 and 1956 the books of the Risale-i Nur were mimeographed, see Şahiner, Şahitler, I, pp. 133, 146 and 304.

5. Nurcus make a distinction between "Westernisation" in the sense of adopting Western technology and "Westernisation" in the sense of "civilisation" which includes the religious and national heritage and covers the whole life of the nation; for them the former understanding of Westernisation is acceptable, whereas the latter must be rejected.

6. See, for example; his Münâzarat (Istanbul, 1977), pp. 75-6 and Muhakemât (Istanbul, 1964), p. 45. See also Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, pp. 91-4.

7. Ibid., p. 77; Nursi, Münâzarat, p. 71 where he suggests that this "reformed medrese" should be established in Bitlis with its branches in Van and Diyarbakır.

8. Said Nursi named this meeting place as "medrese-i Nuriye", see Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 267.

9. Ibid., p. 371; Risale-i Nur Külliyati Müellifi Bediuzzaman Said Nursî, Hayatı, Mesleki, Türcüme-i Hali (Istanbul, 1960); p. 633, hereafter cited as Tarihçe.

10. Ibid., p. 500. Said Nursi encouraged his followers to open as many dershanes as possible wherever they lived and no matter their size may be. See Şahiner, Şahitler, I, P. 417. Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, Gençlik Rehberi (Istanbul, 1980), p. 51; Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, Emirdağ Lâhikası (Istanbul, 1959), II, p. 101 and passim.

11. Professor Şerif Mardin noting this says: 'Between 1950 and 1960 his following increased markedly, although this can be followed only through indirect indices such as the appearance of Nurcu activity in large cities and on university campuses'. See his article, "Bediuzzaman Said Nursi (1873-1960): the Shaping of a Vocation',

Religious Organization and Religious Experience, ed. J. Davis, A.S.A. Monograph, No. 21 (London, 1982), p. 66. Hamid Algar tells his observations as follows: 'Readers of the Risale-i Nur are to be found among university students, government officials and lawyers-classes ... but probably the bulk of Said Nursi's followers have always been the traditionally pious and observant Muslims of the smaller towns of Anatolia'. See his article "Said Nursi and the Risala-i Nur: An Aspect of Islam in Contemporary Turkey", Islamic Perspectives: Studies in Honour of Sayyid Abul a'la Mawdudi, ed. Khurshid Ahmad and Zafar Ishaq Ansari (Leicester, 1979), p. 327.

12. M.S. Abdullah, Islam Und Westliche Welt: Geschichte Des Islams in Deutschland (Graz, 1981), p. 103.

13. See Tarihçe where several of his photographs appear. For Said Nursi's own approval of these photographs, see Şahiner, Şahitler, I, pp. 279-80.

14. Said Nursi advises his students that 'Every Nurcu's house is a dershane or should be a dershane', see his Emirdağ Lâhikasi, II, p. 101.

15. An untitled thirteen-page document distributed among Nurcus in September 1982, pp. 5 and 10.

16. "30-31 Aralık 1978 Tarihlerinde İstanbul'da Yapilan Görüşmelerin Suretidir", Report distributed among Nurcus, article 6.

17. The "East Black Sea Region" includes Giresun, Rize and Trabzon; the "West Black Sea Region" comprises Samsun, Ordu, Amasya and Tokat. See "17-18 Mayis 1980 Tarihinde İstanbul'da Yapılan Görüşmelerin Suretidir", Report distributed among Nurcus, article 9-a and b.

18. Ibid., article 6.

19. Ibid., article 13.

20. An untitled thirteen-page document, p. 10.

21. "30-31 Aralık 1978 Tarihlerinde İstanbul'da Yapılan Görüşmelerin Suretidir", passim.

22. An untitled 13-page document distributed among Nurcus in September 1982, p. 12.

23. "Aziz Kardeşlerimiz!" A two-page leaflet distributed by the opposition group in 1982, paragraph 2; an untitled thirteen-page document, pp. 5 and 10.

24. Ibid., p. 10.

25. Ibid., p. 6.

26. "17-18 Mayıs 1980 Tarihinde Istanbul'da Yapılan Görüşmelerin Suretidir", article 5.

27. "17-18 Mayis 1980 Tarihinde Istanbul'da Yapılan Görüşmelerin Suretidir", article 5.

28. An untitled thirteen-page document, p. 6.

29. Ibid., last paragraph in p. 6.

30. Ibid., p. 6.

31. The speeches made in this conference were published in a book form entitled Anarşi by the Yeni Asya Yayinevi.

32. Istanbul İlim ve Kültür Vakfı, Bir Yılda Neler Yaptik? (Istanbul, 1982), passim.

33. "30-31 Aralık 1978 Tarihlerinde İstanbul'da Yapılan Görüşmelerin Suretidir", article 1-b.

34. Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 418.

35. "17-18 Mayıs 1980 Tarihinde İstanbul'da Yapılan Görüşmelerin Suretidir", article 7.

36. Ibid., article 8.

37. The Jaushan al-Kabir is not Said Nursi's own compilation, it may be found in Koliyat-e Mafatih al Jenan which is compiled by Thaghat'al-Islam Hajj Sheikh Abbas Qami (Tehran, n.d.), pp. 184-213 and is a famous prayer book commonly used among the Shiite Muslims of Iran.

CHAPTER VI

PROCESS OF CONVERSION

Becoming a Nurcu is a process of a special kind which must be understood against the personal backgrounds of individual Nurcus themselves and the way in which Nurcu organisations actually work.

In this chapter an account is given of how the Nurcus studied became members of the movement. Their conversion was a conversion within Islam; they did not discover a new faith but claim their faith was profoundly strengthened. They describe the process themselves as "imanim kuvvetlendi", i.e. "my faith has been strengthened". In this sense their conversion is not a rapid shift in religious affiliation.[1] But is is a shift in their religious identity. It was not that they became Muslims - a status which in any case they already shared with most Turks - but Nurcus. They feel they have a special and comprehensive and higher level of understanding of the faith. This understanding affects not only their perception of the faith but also of themselves and their own past. How this comes about and what the new understanding is, is something which has to be uncovered in the personal experience of particular people. In what follows, there is a detailed account of how each of my respondents experienced becoming a Nurcu and what it meant for their understanding of their religion and themselves.

There are two broad aspects of the process of conversion which require discussion. The first concerns the social and religious background of converts and the second the experience and meaning of conversion itself.

Generalizing from the characteristics of the people in this study, the following pattern emerges. Nurcus are typically from a poor, rural

traditionally religious background. Eight out of twelve respondents came from a farming background and most described their family as being religious. Most had moved from a rural to an urban setting during the 1950s and 1960s when urbanization increased in Turkey. Most came from families where the mother was illiterate and where the father's literacy level was low. Most joined the movement, as previously mentioned, through personal contact when they were quite young, around 20 years of age. Most had not received any special religious education such as attending a Koran school (Kuran Kursu). Interestingly, most members are themselves quite well educated, some with university degrees, some with a lycée education. In this respect they have experienced social mobility. But, apart from going on the Pilgrimage (in this case four respondents), most had not been outside Turkey.

It can be hypothesised that becoming a Nurcu satisfies certain needs in some of those people who, migrating to the city, find themselves in a strange and hostile world. Becoming a Nurcu brings with it friendship, identity, security and respectability within the group.

At the same time, it must be realised that the account which the Nurcus give of their conversion is very close, indeed identical, to the view of conversion which is made available to them in their literature.[2] In reading what the Nurcus themselves say, this must be borne in mind. It is not sufficient, however, to understand which groups of people in Turkish society might be inclined to become Nurcus to see what factors have predisposed them in this direction.

For each of the individuals discussed in this research, an effort was, of course, made to gain information about their social and educational backgrounds. The problem, however, is to relate this background information to the ways in which individuals come to a new understanding of themselves, of their needs and of how they perceive the society around them.

Some writers in the field of the sociology of religion, following suggestions in the works of Berger[3] and, for instance, Bellah[4], have stressed the importance of taking the converts' view of themselves into account. Taylor, for instance, has underlined the need to discuss the experience of conversion and of how converts typically talk about that experience.[5] His view is that talking about conversion is one of the ways in which converts define their new understanding of themselves and sustain their new views of the world around them. Beckford, similarly, has insisted that too often sociologists '... fail to take seriously enough the need to discover the nature of individuals' personal experiences of conversion.'[6]

Beckford noted a feature of the conversion experience of Jehovah's Witnesses which has its parallels in Nurculuk. This what he describes as '... a striking congruence and correspondence between the symbols employed in their reports and many other features of the movement's ideology and organizational structure.'[7] Nurcus, as will be seen, discuss their conversion as a process of gradual change. Like Jehovah's Witnesses, they are suspicious of accounts of conversion which imply dramatic 'emotional upheavals'. Everything about the routine organization and practice (hizmet) of Nurculuk emphasises a gradual realization of a new awakening and understanding of the faith.

A further striking parallel between Nurcus and the Jehovah's Witnesses that Beckford studied is that Nurcus talk about conversion as something which they achieved and not something which simply happened to them. Beckford noted that Jehovah's Witnesses attach a great deal of importance to 'organization mindedness' and this explains why new members are brought quickly into the practical work of the group. Trying to convert his friends helps a neophyte Nurcu crystallise his self-identity

as a servant of God and cement the bonds with his fellow Nurcu brothers. The conversion, therefore, works through routine organizational work, through regular attendance at the ders and regular readings of the Risale-i Nur and through the expectation that new members should try to recruit others. This emphasis is on the practice of the group and not on independent changes in the convert.

A noteworthy feature of Nurculuk which illustrates this correspondence between group practice and individual experience and in the way they account for conversion is its emphasis on reading and intellectual understanding, i.e. something which develops through time. In contrast to the experience of people who join tarikats and who often report mystical religious experiences, Nurcus always stress a slower study-based realization of the truth. This is entirely consistent with the organizational practices and ideology of the movement.

Conversion in all the cases studied here was a gradual awakening based on personal contact, social support and guided study. Each case study shows how individuals are brought first into the movement through personal contacts of a socially supportive kind. Once made, contact develops through friendship and introduction to other Nurcus and their activities. Nurcu literature is introduced at this stage and new members are encouraged to read but almost always in the context of the ders. Through such activity new members are led to an understanding of the movement and its aims and also to a new understanding of themselves and their experience, particularly of being a Muslim. They come to see themselves as truly Muslim and to review their personal past as one which was not properly Muslim. They say: "Biz dinimizi bilmiyorduk", i.e., "We were ignorant of our religion". This conversion process is not a sudden and intensely emotional one. It deepens slowly through what they think of as a growing understanding of the faith through the writings of Said Nursi.[8]

SELECTED CASES

1. DURSUN

Dursun was born in 1933 in Ahmetler, a village near Ermenek, one of the poorest towns in the Konya area, on the northern slopes of the Taurus mountains. His father was a farmer with a small piece of land. As it was not large enough to provide for his family, he used to go to Akşehir (another town in Konya province, with extensive fertile land) in the winters to earn money as an imam leading prayers in the mosque. Although he was not a well-educated person (there were others in the village who had received a better religious training), his nickname was hodja. In 1937, Dursun's family moved to Akşehir completely, following the advice of Dursun's paternal uncle who had already settled there. Dursun's father opened a small grocery shop and also used to continue to serve as an unofficial imam. They stayed there only three years, as they could not stand gurbet, and returned to their village. Eventually, in 1950, because of their intolerable economic plight, they decided to leave Ahmetler and they moved to Konya, where Dursun's father became a pedlar.

Dursun's paternal grandfather was a well-educated man who bequeathed hundreds of Arabic religious books to Dursun's father. Dursun criticises his father for letting them go. Dursun is not sure how his father learned to read and write both the Ottoman script and the new Turkish alphabet, and does not know whether he had a primary school diploma or not.

Dursun's mother came from an undistinguished family in the same village. He did not like them because they did not strictly observe the rules of religion. However, Dursun's mother began to perform her namaz regularly after she joined a religious family when she married. She was illiterate, so could not read the Koran. She died in 1969,

aged sixty-three. Neither she nor her husband belonged to any tarikat, but neither were they opposed to tarikats on principle.

Dursun's father's family was well-known in the village for being opposed to the Republican People's Party (RPP). He used to support the Democrat Party (DP) and later voted for the Justice Party (JP). Dursun said, 'My father has a beard now, but he is very angry with anyone else who is bearded because he thinks that people who grow beards are supporters of the National Salvation Party (NSP).'

Dursun had four sisters and one elder brother. As their parents encouraged the children to go to school, all except his eldest sister received primary school education. Dursun himself could not attend any school until he was eleven years old, because he had been sent away to one of their relatives in another village with the possibility of being adopted by them. They were not interested in sending him to school. He started school when he returned to his own family in 1944. After completing primary school with a first grade, he took an entry test for the İvriz Village Institute in Ereğli (Konya) and passed it with sufficient marks to gain exemption from the preparatory class.

Dursun loved the school but not all of his teachers. When some of them used phrases like tabiat yarattı (nature created ...), he would protest openly in the class: 'the only creator is Allah'. Similarly, he would raise objections if any of them praised Russia. At school he joined the theatre group and became one of its leading actors, liked by almost all of his fellow-students, Dursun believes that because of his repute among students, the teachers, whom he opposed in class for expressing religious and political views contrary to his own, could not do anything against him, or show open disfavour.

As soon as he graduated from the school in 1955, he was appointed as a primary school teacher in Ekin, a Kurdish village of Dicle (Diyarbakır), where only three of the inhabitants knew Turkish. Dursun felt alienated at first in Ekin but he had idealised the teacher's profession and, as he says, 'I was full of enthusiasm for teaching children the "love of fatherland", "national unity" and "knowledge of God", but what they had tried to teach us at the Village Institute was just the opposite: atheism and communism. That had no effect on me.'

The school in Ekin had been closed for two years and was used as a stable because there was no teacher. At first he had to get the village authorities to compel the children to go to school, but later they came willingly because, Dursun claims, they liked him. Dursun taught for ten years in four different villages. Only one posting was his own choice, the others were all 'exile' (sürgün) by the government for propagating Nurculuk among the villagers and pupils. His first trial started in a small town near Konya in 1962 and dragged on for years. He was eventually given a year's imprisonment and dismissed from teaching in 1965.

After serving his sentence, he settled down in Konya and worked in a government department there as an official from 1967 until he was promoted to take charge of the Ministry of Culture's Konya office in 1979. He was taken into custody in 1980 for more than four months on the charge of misusing his position to propagate his religious beliefs. In the end he was acquitted but dismissed from his position again and appointed as a primary school teacher in Konya.

He married a secondary school graduate, the daughter of a primary school teacher in 1957. Their family used to live on the opposite side of the same street. The marriage might be called 'semi-arranged'.

First, both families had agreed on marriage and then correspondence started between Dursun in Ekin and this young woman. Her family was pious and, equally important, in favour of the DP. His mother-in-law had been on pilgrimage to Mecca.

They have four sons so far, and no daughters. The eldest son, a twenty-three year-old final year student in the Ankara Higher Technical Teacher School, fully supports his father's ways and stays in a dershane in Ankara. At first, the family had sent him to the İmam Hatip Okulu but after the fifth year they changed their minds and transferred him to the Sanat Okulu (Craft School).

The second son is only a primary school graduate and works as an assistant to a tailor. He is twenty-one years old and cannot be called more than a Nurcu sympathiser. Another son is sixteen and a student in the Sanat Okulu trying to disseminate Nuruculuk among his school-mates.

Dursun did not practise his namaz when he was at the Village Institute, but once in 1950 when official permission was granted for the first time since these schools were established to fast during the month of Ramadan, he was one of two hundred students out of six hundred who fasted and practised namaz, though he then gave up doing so until 1956.

During his teaching period in Ekin, he used to go to Diyarbakır to visit a person from the same part of Turkey as he was. This man invited Dursun to join a ders and they went together. At the end of the ders, Dursun was introduced to Mehmet Kayalar, one of Said Nursi's

own students and bought three of the Risale-i Nur, one of which was Gençlik Rehberi (A guide for youth), the others were Hanımlar Rehberi (A guide for women) and the Yirmiüçüncü Söz (The Twenty-third Word). Not long after he read them, he started performing his namaz and attending the mosque. A further important reaction was to take down the picture of Atatürk in his house.

He formed a high opinion of these books, finding them logical and so clear in their style of explanation that they were suitable for use with school children. He also saw them as adequate answers to the problems, questions and doubts about faith in Islam of the educated people of today.

In the 1957 summer holiday, he came to Konya, met the Nurcus there and visited Said Nursi in Emirdağ (Afyonkarahisar). He said of his visit: 'At first, they (Said Nursi's students) did not allow me to visit him but I insisted and told them that I was a teacher. Then they asked Üstad whether he would see me, and he agreed. When I entered the room, the first thing that struck me was that there was hardly anything spread on the floor, just a small, threadbare mat, a plain divan, and no more; no books or other things ... He was wearing a robe, and had a turban on his head; his hair, tinged with henna, was just a little long so that it was curling up under the lobes of his ears. He had no beard at all. He was quite old and ill. He spoke with difficulty. He said: 'I accept you as my student. In my opinion, two classes of society are the most precious: teachers and officers. Together with teachers we will maintain the religion which has been damaged by this education: as I see it, a teacher is valued as much as a hundred preachers. My brother, Menderes is one of us; do not worry, the backbone of unbelief has been broken.'

Dursun visited Said Nursi three more times in Isparta. During one of these visits, he witnessed Said Nursi's keramet. It was in 1958 when he entered Said Nursi's room to visit him, he stood up and said: 'Maşallah, come my brother, is there anyone molesting the Risale-i Nur?' Dursun intended to reply and tell the story of what had happened to him but could only say, 'No, my Üstad, but ...' Immediately after, Said Nursi continued: 'Yes, I know my brother, may Allah be with you in your struggle.' Dursun did not forget the keramet because not long before that visit, inspectors had come from the Ministry of Education to his village to investigate a complaint, but none of the villagers had given evidence that Dursun had ever read the Risale-i Nur in the mosque to them. In fact he had, but the investigation ended with no action taken against him.

Dursun has not been on pilgrimage, but would like to go at the first opportunity. He has never been abroad, he reads Yeni Nesil and Tercüman and does not listen to the radio, because there is no time to do so. He watches only the news and occasionally some foreign films on television. He wants to devote his leisure time, one way or another, to hizmet whenever it is necessary. For him, the most successful people in the world are those who have grasped the reality of the oneness of God.

2. HAYATİ

Hayati was born in a village in the province of Konya in 1939. His very poorly educated parents earned their living by farming their land which was sufficient for their modest needs until 1962 when the construction of a dam started. Hayati's family, together with their

fellow villagers had to evacuate the land, leave the village and move to the nearest city, Konya, with the compensation that they did not know how to use.

They settled down in a suburban area and did not return to the village, though it was re-established after the construction of the dam had been completed. The reason was so simple that Hayati laughed as he explained: 'What could we do there? There was no land left, it was all covered by the water.'

Hayati's paternal grandfather did not know how to read and write and showed no interest in the tarikats or hojda, but just kept saying his namaz all his life. On the other hand, his maternal grandfather was an educated person and ran a school (mahalle mektebi) where he taught the village children how to read the Koran, and also provided their food and clothing. He was greatly respected and revered by the other villagers. Hayati speaks more highly of his mother, who died in 1972 in her sixties, than he does of his father and says, 'she was a woman of intelligence. I am sure she inherited it from her family, but her father did not teach her how to read and write. I think in those days people did not consider it important to teach women.'

His father is sixty-nine and has been doing nothing since he left the village, apart from going to the mosque five times a day. He still lives with his son, Hayati.

His only brother, with whom Hayati shares the ownership of the shop, does not perform the namaz. His two sisters do perform it, but the daughter of the younger sister, who has just graduated from the Domestic Science Lycée for Girls does not do so.

Hayati completed his five-year primary school education in the village and was sent to Konya by his family to continue his study in the secondary

school. He passed his first year and liked it, but, even though he was staying with one of their distant relatives, the family could not afford the expense and did not send him back to school the following year. So, he attended a Koran Course in the village, then started memorising the Koran. He learned quite a bit of it by heart, besides helping his family on the farm. In 1959, he went to Siirt to do his military service. He remembers reading some books of religious instruction and performing namaz there. Soon after he completed his service, the whole family moved to Konya and Hayati opened a grocer's shop and got married in 1962. His wife's family had also emigrated to Konya from another nearby village. When she used to come and visit her relatives, who were Hayati's neighbours, they glimpsed one another and through their families' mediation the marriage was arranged. Even though their families visited each other, Hayati could not remember meeting his wife face to face before the wedding. Her family is almost the same as Hayati's. Her father lives on his own and can read and write only the new Turkish alphabet; her mother cannot do that but she can read the Koran because her parents were religious and had taught her. Hayati's wife has graduated from a primary school in Konya, but did not take any religious course. After Hayati started reading the Risale-i Nur, she became more pious by practising her namaz and veiling her head properly.

It is evident that Hayati was ready to lead a more pious life before he began to read the Risale-i Nur. He says: 'At that time, though the trend was towards the tarikats, they did not attract me, I do not know why. One day, in 1964, the owner of the next-door shop invited me to a Nurcu's house, saying only that they would have an evening meeting with some religious people. I did not know that he was a Nurcu.

That was my first ders. I did not object to anything they read because I already had an affection for religion. Indeed, I loved the ders. I said to myself, "I have found what I have been seeking" and since then I have been attending the derses without a break. In the same evening, after the ders readings, the owner of the house had given me a booklet entitled Küçük Sözler by Said Nursi. On the following day in my shop I read it twice with great delight. I could not understand some of it at first, particularly certain words, and in a few cases, meanings, nevertheless I enjoyed it and had a strong confidence that in time I would improve my understanding by reading more.'

'From the very first day that I became involved, I knew that this was Nurculuk, but what I and my family did not know was that Nurcus were subject to persecution. At first, my family raised no objection to me buying the Nurcu books or to my attending the ders in the evenings. But after 1966 when the dershane was raided by the police, they did not want me to go. For some reason I had not been able to attend the ders on the night of the raid, but the following day all of us who had not been arrested went to the dershane and performed namaz. Although this incident frightened us, we went on holding the ders as usual. As a matter of fact, I do not think that sort of police raid will make us give up this cause.'

Soon after becoming a Nurcu, he gave up smoking and this caused great pleasure among his family because long before the doctor had asked him to give it up for health reasons, but he had not done so, 'I gained a strong will power and I just gave it up, though none of my Nurcu brothers told me not to smoke,' Hayati explained.

When he read to his family and neighbours at his house the same passages from the Risale-i Nur to which he had previously listened

in the ders, they listened to him. His father was the only one to object to Hayati attending the ders and these objections were not on religious grounds but arose from the father's fears that there would be no-one to look after the family if Hayati was arrested. But Hayati was undeterred. Explaining his attitude, he remarked to me: 'This was a matter to do with Islam. I never shrank from attending the ders because I was going for the sake of Allah'.

His wife attends the hanimlar dersi (ders for women) regularly. At home, because they do not have any children, they read the Risale-i Nur to one another when both or one of them has not gone out to the ders. Hayati prefers attending derses rather than staying and reading at home: 'In the Nurculuk movement, derses have a special spiritual power. To be together with all the brothers around us, to show interest in one another, and also to listen to explanations of the Risale-i Nur from those who know it better is a great help to understanding.'

Hayati never misses any of his namaz any more, he reads the Risale-i Nur with his wife five hours a week, and each day he reads about ten pages from the Koran and twenty-five pages of the Jaushan al-kabir. For the hizmet, he says: 'When necessary, I leave the shop and spend all my time on hizmet, but as a regular practice, I visit two dershanes in a week to assist the student brothers who live there if they need any help, especially in looking after the dershane.'

In 1975, Hayati, in partnership with his brother, started up a wholesale shop which now normally holds a stock worth four to five million Turkish liras. His brother has a car. Hayati himself recently spent a lot of money on repairs and renovations to his father's house in which he too lives, and he is also planning to go on pilgrimage. He has previously not been abroad at all. Every day he reads Yeni Nesil,

and sometimes Tercüman, Konya Postası (a local newspaper) and the magazines Köprü, and Zafer. As for books, he reads the Yeni Asya publications in addition to the Risale-i Nur. He has not been a member of any society; does not go to the cinema or theatre; only once, long ago, on a friend's insistence, has he drunk alcohol; he very seldom listens to the news on the radio; and on the television he watches the news, Olayların İçinden (a current affairs programme) and, if there is any important news, Güne Bakış (a late news programme).

Hayati considers those who work equally for this world and the next to be the most successful people. As an example, he cites the name of a devoted Nurcu, saying: 'Look at him, brother, you can see faith and work combined in his life. He keeps his word, he is a very generous person, he himself donated a dershane.'

3. MUSTAFA

Mustafa's birth place is not distinguishable from hundreds of other villages around Konya. The infertility of the soil and the shortage of land forced many of the new generation to move to the nearby cities to earn their living. Thus, being uprooted from their traditional life was a common experience for people like Mustafa. When he was born in 1934, his father used to go to Aydın to earn money during winter. The family eventually decided to follow Mustafa's mother's uncle who had settled in Konya and they too moved there in 1951. Mustafa's father got a job there in a carpenter's shop. Both his father and mother could read the Koran but only the father was able to read the new alphabet, he had learnt it from a village hodja.

None of Mustafa's grandparents had any sort of distinction among their fellow-villagers; they were poor, illiterate, not very religious and, some of them, had been orphaned in childhood.

Although Mustafa's chief memories of his early childhood are of misery, he remembers his mother telling him the stories of 'Aşık Garip', 'Şah İsmail' and, later spending his long winter evenings reading with his friends such books as Siret-i Nebi and Battal Gazi written in rhyme and metre. He used to believe in and get excited by those exaggerated tales which were written as if they were true stories.

When Mustafa was seven years old, he went during the winter months to the hodja, as his father had done before him, to learn how to read the Koran as well as the new alphabet and arithmetic. This hodja taught in secret because he was not licensed. In the winters of the following two years Mustafa attended a mahalle hocası to further his readings of the Koran. The winter after that he rejoined his first hodja to brush up hiw knowledge of the new alphabet and arithmetic.

When he was only 11 years old, he commenced his apprenticeship to an ironmonger but he abandoned that. After two years without work he began to learn carpet-making with one of his relatives in the village. After completing his apprenticeship as a carpet-maker, his father borrowed a loom for him from a government co-operative to use at home. Thus Mustafa was able to make money and save some of it to buy books which he adored: Aşık Garip, Şah İsmail, Sürmeli Bey, Arzu ile Kamber and the like.

The first primary school opened in the village in 1948, but Mustafa did not go to school for he could read and write and did not need a diploma - after all he was a skilled craftsman. He really was very fond of reading, he still remembers the novels which he got from

a man who lived in a neighbouring village - because in his village those sorts of books were not available. After reading them, Dağları Bekleyen Kız, Allahaısmarladık, both by Esat Mahmut Karakurt, he was so influenced that he fell in love with a girl in the village and started writing poems.

The first teacher appointed to the school was a Village Institute graduate and his books had a great impact on Mustafa. They were the books used for the Village Institute syllabus. In the teacher's first year in the village, Mustafa and he used to read the books about the Prophet Muhammad's life and the history of Islam to the people gathered in the köy odası (village social room) in the winter evenings. In the following year, Mustafa kept reading novels and the Village Institute books (he still recalls most of their titles and authors) and the İvriz Village Institute Magazines which the teacher kept in the school library. 'In the Ramadan evenings I used to read them in my bedroom until my parents woke up to take the sahur meal before dawn, and I used to extinguish the kerosene lamp before one of them entered my room to wake me up, for I was sure they would get angry with me for having the lamp lit and using too much oil.'

Mustafa began to doubt the truth of the stories which he had read before in religious books and even the necessity of practising the namaz. Once he was sitting in the front yard of the mosque with some other villagers and then he was asked by an old man to read aloud the book Kesik Baş. He refused and said that they were made-up stories, the old man was so angry that he could only say to him: 'Be off!' Sen gâvur olmuşsun (You have become a heathen). Mustafa did not accept this accusation but he says: 'Those books and the magazines (which he had borrowed from the school library) on the one hand

improved my culture; on the other, they made me doubt my faith by explaining religion in terms of evolution, starting from the primitive stage, totemism, and proceeding to monotheism. I could not deny 'Allah' himself, because I thought that human beings were not able to stay alive, however strongly they might wish to do so, nor could they create a fly although they were making planes; so a Creator must exist. But I was not fully satisfied any more with the idea of eternal punishment in Hell and letting Satan mislead human beings.'

After the family moved to Konya, Mustafa and his father went to Aydin to work. He saw some books in his employer's house there and asked him to lend him any one of them. The employer gave him a book, İnsanliğin Vatani which is translated from a Western language. It was about the history of the states of the world. The chapter dealing with the Arab countries, portrayed Muhammad as an epileptic who, while trying to reform his people, became convinced he had received a revelation from angels. These opinions instilled doubt into his mind but he could neither accept nor deny them.

When they returned to Konya in the Spring of 1952, Mustafa opened a grocer's shop and, although he could not make enough money to buy books, he was not defeated by poverty: he borrowed books from a bookshop at ten piasters each.

In one of his journeys by train to seek work in Aydın, an officer in uniform came and sat next to him in a third class compartment. He had a book in his hand and Mustafa asked his permission to have a look at it. This book, Ebedî Risalet, relieved Mustafa of his fear of becoming an infidel. In its introduction, which Mustafa read all night, Ahmet Hamdi Akseki explained that when a man first believes, it is an imitative belief, later he begins to doubt its truth, and then starts to investigate the reality of it; that is the way which leads

people to attain certainty of belief in the faith of Islam. This gave Mustafa hope that if he continued in his study, his faith would become secure.

From Aydin he went to Istanbul. Besides working in a small weaving business there, he kept reading books, but this time different ones such Din ve Laiklik by Ali Fuat Başgil, and Gülüzâr-i Sofiyye by Abdullah Develioğlu. These were the ones that influenced him most.

'The first time I heard of laiklik was when I read the first of these. The second interested me because I intended to follow a tarikat in order to attain perfect faith,' Mustafa explains. 'I made use of these books but they did not help me solve my real problems.'

He went to Ağri in 1954 to start his military service. He very seldom performed the namaz there. He read books which he borrowed from the medical officer's private library. This was random reading. For example, after coming across a grammar book, he became enthused by the idea of learning English, but did not actually persist.

Since he still could not find a way to salvation, he decided to join a tarikat after his military service in 1957 and attended his first tarikat gathering in a Mevlevî tekke in Konya. He took pleasure in zikir and hoped to get rid of his doubts about some religious concepts but again he was disappointed. Not liking the şeyh's unorthodox answer to his question about where the spirits go after death, Mustafa decided to leave the tarikat. He kept on reading but he was never completely satisfied. All the books concluded explanations of some specific subjects with the words: Hikmetinden sual olunmaz (Heaven only knows why - its divine reason cannot be questioned). And the preachers in the mosques made similar statements. 'I did not hesitate to reject the preachers' unreasonable sermons', he stated.

Mustafa opened a weaver's shop in Konya in 1959, a year before he heard of Said Nursi. One of his neighbours told him that an âlim (scholar) called 'Bediuzzaman' had come to Konya and thereupon he went to the Selimiye Mosque next to the Mevlâna Museum in order to see 'the great âlim'. Said Nursi entered the Selimiye mosque and performed his namaz there, on his way to Mevlâna's tomb. Mustafa and others were waiting there to kiss an 'âlim's hand', but Said Nursi was just greeting the people crowded on the road by saying 'Asselamü aleykum', the police never allowed any of them to approach or speak to him.

Two more years passed before Mustafa bought the Risale-i Nur in 1962. Two customers came to his shop, one of them saw his books on the shelf and asked: 'What kind of books are they?' Mustafa replied: 'I am very fond of books of any sort'. The next day this man brought round a set of the collection of the Risale-i Nur and Mustafa bought all of them and started reading. 'As I kept reading them, I became more satisfied, I found the answers to my questions. It went beyond the obstacle of hikmetinden sual olunmaz to which the other writers very often resorted when they came across a subject which they could not explain. Every topic dealt with in the Risale-i Nur was explained by reasoned argument. My conviction was, and still is, that whoever reads the Risale-i Nur will be obliged to believe in the truthfulness of Islam.' The man who had sold him the books kept in touch and introduced Mustafa to other Nurcus.

It was not very long after Mustafa became acquainted with them that he allowed his own house to be used for a weekly ders, and he began to distribute the small pamphlets of the Risale-i Nur hoping that other people too might be saved.

Mustafa married an uneducated girl originally from a village very close to his own in 1958. Her parents cannot read and write the new alphabet but can only read the Koran, and live now in Konya. Mustafa has three daughters and three sons. The eldest daughter, a primary school graduate, is married now. The second daughter has an eye disease, can hardly see and is illiterate. The eldest son, a nineteen-year-old final year student in the İmam-Hatip Lycée, attends the ders with his father but does not read the Risale-i Nur as much as his father would like. The next son, who is also a final year student in the same school as his elder brother, his father is not sure about his opinion on the Risale-i Nur. The other two are under sixteen, the girl graduated from the primary school and then the Koran Course, and the youngest boy is still in primary school. Mustafa says: 'I do not put any pressure on my children about their study, though I always want them to read and study much more'.

Mustafa went on the pilgrimage in 1967. He joined and then chaired a small local charity society to help the construction of a mosque and of a public road in his quarter in 1971. In addition to that, in 1980 he became a registered member of the JP, though he had already been supporting it for a long time. He subscribes to the Yeni Nesil newspaper and Köprü magazine. In addition,to the Risale-i Nur, he reads books about Muslim canonical jurisprudence and commentaries on the Koran, and sometimes listens to the radio, but only for the news. Mustafa once bought a television set but three months later sold it, for he could not find any programmes on it which were worth watching. He used to go to the cinema, preferably, to see love stories.

Mustafa considers the students of the Risale-i Nur to be the most successful men of our time, because he says, 'They have achieved their

present position by working only for the sake of God, and by using reason have reconciled science with religious teaching.'

4. HAYRİ

Hayri was the first person from Yeşilhisar, (his birthplace - a township in Kayseri Province) to become a university graduate. Because there were no further education facilities in his small town when he finished his primary school in 1939, he had to wait for a year to go to a bigger neighbouring town, Develi, to receive secondary school education. His father earned just enough money to keep his family but by the following year Hayri's father felt that he could afford to send him to school in Develi and encouraged the parents of eight other children to do the same. After completing his three-year education there, Hayri again had to move to the city of Kayseri to attend high school, but this became possible only after the interval of another year. There were two reasons for that. First, on the instruction of his grandfather as head of the extended family, Hayri, who was then 17, had to marry the 20-year old widow of his youngest paternal uncle who had one son. The second and main reason was that his family did not then feel they could afford to support him at school in Kayseri (otherwise, since the real purpose of this marriage was to prevent any outsider marrying this young widow thereby upsetting relationships within the family and affecting the position of the son, Hayri could have left her at home while he went off to study).

Not until 1943 could Hayri enrol in the Business High School in Kayseri and during his three year course stayed there alone. Hayri faced the same financial problems when he had to move to Istanbul for

university level education. So there was another year's interval before he realised his dream in 1947 when he heard that the Society of Higher Education of Kayseri was ready to sponsor his study in the Istanbul Academy for Economics and Commerce.

Hayri did his military service between 1950-1952 in Kars as a cavalry reserve officer. Afterwards he got his first job in the Kayseri Workers' Social Insurance Association and settled down there with his wife. In 1953 he became an accountant in the same office and two years later acting-director pending the appointment of a new director. Then he left the Association for a new post in the same city, as head of the Sümerbank's commercial division. He worked for five years until he decided to go to Batman to join one of Turkey's best paying state enterprises, the Turkish Petroleum Company, as deputy-director of the financial department.

Less than a year passed before his position in the Company in Batman was reduced to that of head of the sales section. That was a big blow to his promotional prospects. According to him, the reason for this demotion was that he did not take his wife with him to the evening entertainments attended by high ranking colleagues.

It was at this time that the Nurcus approached him. When he first came to Batman, Hayri attended the Mosque for Friday Prayers only during the month of Ramadan, and then the Nurcus had given him a couple of books of Said Nursi. In fact Hayri was not a very religious man but neither was he an unbeliever. He always fasted during Ramadan and usually used to go to the mosque on Fridays until he joined the army.

Hayri went on to explain, 'I did not know why I had prayed and neither did I know why I gave up on joining the Army. Until 1963 I drank alcohol almost every night and gambled with my friends. When

I was arbitrarily demoted , I lost faith in my colleagues. I hated their company and sought more trustworthy friends. I think that the two Nurcus who had given me some of Said Nursi's booklets now must have noticed the change in my attitude towards my old friends. They tried to console me for what had happened. One day they came to me and said that they wanted to visit me at home with some other friends. I agreed because they were totally different from other people. First, they seemed to be more intelligent than the other workers. Secondly, they were Kurds, though they spoke Turkish fluently. I later realised that they learnt Turkish just by reading the Risale-i Nur, one of them learnt to write the new alphabet during his military service, the other by himself. Thirdly, they seemed very kind. They called on me at home one evening. While we were drinking tea together, one of them pulled out a note-book from his pocket and started reading it. It was hand-written and seemed quite interesting. I asked where he had got these notes. He said they were from the books which they had lent me previously. Theylent me some similar booklets which they had in their pockets. This time I read them carefully. Previously, I had not read them at all, but just kept them for a while and returned them to the one who had lent them to me.

'In ten days I became a Nurcu. I had not known anything about Nurculuk, not even the name, before that evening. I really enjoyed these publications very much. They seemed very convincing and made me think deeply about what was contained in them. I read some of them more than once. I kept meeting these new friends inside and outside the Company and I joined the ders in the evenings. At the end of this tenth day I gave up smoking, drinking alcohol and gambling, and started performing the namaz five times a day. One day we went to

visit some Nurcu brothers in Dıyarbakır. Also present were Fehim Adak (subsequently Minister of Works) and Recai Kutan (an MSP MP) who were sympathetic (dost) towards Nurculuk. We returned quite late at night. I performed my yatsı namazı (prayer at nightfall) quietly but my wife noticed. In the morning I performed namaz again. At first my wife did not say anything to me, but after a week or so she made it clear that she was very pleased by my performing the namaz, because she herself did so without fail. I well remember reading two hundred pages a day from Sözler (Words) when I first got it. It may also be worth mentioning that in 1964-66 there were hearings of Nurculuk cases in court and we used to go to listen to them in, for instance, Erzurum, Mersin, Bitlis, and especially in our neighbouring cities and towns. These hearings and the position of the defendants had a great effect on me. Because of them I personally became more attached to Nurculuk.'

When the government changed, the new administration appointed Hayri in 1968 to the post of Director of the Personnel Department. The same year the Nurcus built a mosque inside the Company's staff housing area. Next, they bought a house as a dershane and communication was established with ağabeys in Ankara and Istanbul. Hayri's conversion attracted the interest of his colleagues and the admiration particularly of his old gambling companions. Thus, Nurculuk took root amongst the workers in Batman. Hayri expressed his gratitude to this conversion:

'the Risale-i Nur delivered me from leading a foolish life in such a short space of time that everyone who knew me was surprised and quite a number of people became interested in the Risale-i Nur through observing the sudden change in me. Almost all of them knew that I had become a Nurcu. All my family circle too were astonished at the change in me because they had been trying to convince me that I should be a

good Muslim and not drink and gamble. Now they were all happy and became favourably disposed towards the Risale-i Nur.'

Hayri's eldest daughter passed the entry test for the Faculty of Medical Science in Ankara in 1969, and his wife moved to Ankara with the other children and settled down there. In the following year Hayri applied for a job in the General Headquarters of the Company to join his family in Ankara and he was granted an inspectorship. Before the military intervention of 12 March 1971, Hayri took a year's course at the Middle East Institute of Public Administration. The new administration set up after the military intervention cancelled his work contract together with that of thirty-two of his colleagues in the Company. The official reason for the cancellation was 'services no longer required'. In the succeeding years until 1975, when the National Front government appointed him as a member of the Board of Directors of the same company, he ran an independent business, mostly trade, and worked in the Yeni Asya office in Istanbul for eight months. This job on the board did not last long. The newly formed government dismissed Hayri from it in April 1978. He worked in another state company, the Turkish Aircraft Industry Ltd as an auditor for a year, then returned to his previous job on the board of the Petroleum Company. He recently retired from this job and now works as an advisor to a private company in Ankara.

Hayri describes his grandparents and parents as poor farmers, religious, and, apart from his father, badly educated. They were supporters of the DP since its foundation and subsequently supported its successor, the JP. Because new machines and irrigation systems were introduced to the farms of the region after 1950, the population of the township became comparatively wealthy and so did his family too.

Hayri's father was a hafız who succeeded his father-in-law as imam in 1944 when the latter died. Hayri's father was the only person in the family politically active and a follower of the Naqshbendi tarikat. With two other people from the town, he applied to the government in Ankara to convert their township (nahiye) into a town (İlçe) and they achieved that in 1948. Hayri's father was campaigning against the RPP and distributing the religious publications such as Büyük Doğu, Hür Adam and Sebilürreşad amongst the people. Eighty percent of the population of the township supported the DP in the 1946 election but the local polling officers changed the DP's votes to the RPP in order to assure the upgrading of their township. Another interesting state of affairs which Hayri remembers from his childhood is that while his father was teaching him and some other children from the town basic religious knowledge and how to read the Koran, the gendarmes took him several times to the station to prevent him from teaching.

Hayri's father wanted him to be a religious intellectual. He used to go to where Hayri was attending his secondary and lycée school to make sure that he performed his namaz, but Hayri was praying only when he was with his father. Once his father taught him to memorise the Koran partially, but later he forgot all he had memorised.

Hayri has four brothers and one sister. All of them are pious and can read the Koran. Apart from the eldest, they are primary school graduates. The youngest brother and his children have lately become NSP supporters and because of that Hayri occasionally argues with them. None of them is a Nurcu.

All of Hayri's children have received higher education. The eldest daughter is a medical specialist and married to a Nurcu; they both attend the ders. The eldest son has graduated from the Middle East Technical

University, is not a Nurcu and does not practise the namaz. The second son is a final year student in a Dentistry Faculty, is politically active, and in 1979 was elected for the administrative committee of the Youth Branch of the JP. He performs the namaz and can be counted as a sympathiser of the Nurcus. The youngest daughter is a Higher Girls' Technical School graduate, working in the Ministry of Education, does not practise the namaz and does not cover her head.

Hayri himself taught all of his four children basic religious knowledge and how to read the Koran at home. He went on pilgrimage to Mecca in 1975. Though he has taken only a three month Arabic language course, he can read and write Arabic script. Besides the Risale-i Nur he reads some historical books, all Yeni Asya publications, Yeni Nesil, and occasionally Tercüman newspaper and Köprü magazine. He very rarely listens to the radio but watches the news, some of the foreign and national productions of series and especially football programmes on television. The whole family support the Fenerbahçe football team. Since 1963 he has given up smoking, drinking, going to the cinema and theatre. He has been abroad on duty to Roumania, Russia, Libya and several times to West Germany (though only once to West Germany as a tourist). Hayri has not joined any other social, political or religious group, but he chairs the Ankara Culture and Science Foundation which is considered by himself as nothing but hizmet, a part of the Nurcu cause.

As for his opinion on the most successful people, Hayri thinks Süleyman Demirel leads the field of politics and administration; Sabanci and Koç are foremost in business, and the construction of the industrial plants; Korkut Özal the most impressive technocrat; and Mehmet Kırkıncı the best living Islamic scholar.

5. NİYAZİ

Niyazi's father belongs to a family which used to own a lot of land including Yukarı Yeni Köy village. They themselves used to live in a town near Urfa called Halfeti, on a long-established trade route. The father had attended the Rüşdiye secondary school in Halfeti, but could not manage to graduate. In 1938, five years before Niyazi was born, the family sold all the land they owned and left Halfeti for Gaziantep because the father had got an official job there as a prison guard. Later he changed it for other jobs and in the end retired from the tax office. Niyazi's mother was from the same family as his father, they were cousins. She did not receive any education but she can read the Koran. She is now sixty-eight years old and her husband is seventy-two. Although they do not belong to any tarikat or other such religious order, they lead a pious life.

Niyazi did not attend any Koran course but he still clearly remembers his parents' and grandparents' intoning the Koran, performing their namaz and praying at home, and the womenfolk being veiled outside the house. He went to primary school in his birth-place, Gaziantep. He started performing the namaz young, when he was still at primary school. His teachers liked Niyazi for not only was he a good religious boy, but he was a successful student too. He was very keen on reading history books and drawing pictures. In the picture exhibition corner in his secondary school, most of the pictures were his throughout his three-year course.

He first learnt about the Risale-i Nur through the abstracts of it in the magazine, Hür Adam, when he was a second-year student in the secondary school. He made great efforts to understand these abstracts

in order to explain them to the students whom he gathered in his house. At the end of the third year in his school all of his class-mates were performing the namaz as a result of his spreading religious ideas among them and making most of them subscribe to the religious publications.

In 1959 he came across some books of the Risale-i Nur in a religious bookshop in Gaziantep and bought them. Describing the impact these made upon him, Niyazi said, 'As I read the Risale-i Nur, I became more attracted by its style of expression and Said Nursi's defence speeches in court narrated in them, especially the article about Said Nursi written by Esref Edip, so that I memorised it.' Niyazi introduced the Risale-i Nur to his friends in the class, then the school administration tried in various ways to make him give up doing so.

It was in Gaziantep in 1960 that Niyazi first met a Nurcu who persuaded him to write a letter to Said Nursi himself. With this man, a reserve officer doing his military service in Gaziantep, Niyazi started organising ders amongst the common people, especially artisans and tradesmen as well as students. For more than a year, after the 27 May military coup d'état, these derses were held in the mosques. By 1962, new Nurcus emerged among them, who were ready to devote themselves to Nurculuk and the first dershane was opened in the room of a mosque where Niyazi lived after he left home.

Niyazi left school when he was a second year student in the lycée. Even though he was highly successful in his lessons, he decided to leave: 'As I devoted myself to hizmet, the lessons came to seem unnecessary and tedious; school did not satisfy me any more. The idea of leaving school started and gradually strengthened. Before then, I had travelled to some other cities to get copies of the Risale-i Nur for the Nurcus in Gaziantep and so I had made the acquaintance of

ağabeys. When I told the ağabeys that I proposed to leave school, they all strongly rejected the idea. So much so that the lawyer of the Nurcus of the time, Bekir Berk, came to Gaziantep and insisted that I should not leave the school. But in the end I decided to leave. The reason for this was that one night I dreamt of Üstad Said Nursi saying to me: "My brother, leave the school, devote yourself to the Risale-i Nur and serve it". I still recall this night that I had awakened with tears and awe. Later on the ağabeys again continously urged me to return to school, but, at last, only Zübeyr (Gündüzalp) ağabey supported and even encouraged me to carry on my hizmet, after realising that it was not a temporary youthful enthusiasm. He said: 'When Üstad received those brothers who were full of feeling of self-sacrifice, he used to say to them: "I consider self-sacrifice quite seriously, because there is a necessary power in self-sacrifice that attracts the hearts of others to itself." I am sure if our Üstad was here now, he would say the same to you.'

Niyazi came to Ankara in 1963 to start his military service. From the first days, kardeşler started visiting him and brought the Risale-i Nur and Jaushan. Their embraces drew some officers' attention. Then he was summoned before the lieutenant-colonel and for two hours he was interrogated about Nurculuk, their aims and so on. At the end, they thanked him for giving information but they kept a close eye on him and searched his belongings, books and correspondence so frequently that it became common gossip that he was 'Bediuzzaman's son'. Because of this, he was not able to keep any book with him. He wrote down on paper what he had memorised from the Risale-i Nur. He persisted in reading the Risale-i Nur and propagating them amongst his fellow-soldiers. Finally, he was sent to the military court in Mamak where those who conspire against the government are usually put on trial.

Niyazi tells the story: 'As soon as I appeared before the court, the judge asked me: "Why have you got involved in something that is beyond your capacity?", and without trying me ordered me to be kept in detention for four months. Talat Aydemir and his accomplices were in the cell which was next to mine. They were allowed to receive books, newspapers and their visitors. Two things which I could not forget: one was that they did not give me permission to have anything to read, even the Koran; the second was that they did not allow my visitors, even my lawyer, to speak to me, only once towards the end of my imprisonment did I meet my lawyer for four minutes. In the first hearing, after four months, my lawyer, Bekir Berk, defended me wonderfully. Without demanding that the court should set me free, I requested them to return the Risale-i Nur to me. After a couple of hearings, I was acquitted and the books were returned. In the subsequent period of my military service, they gave me a very confidential duty. From this I understand that even though they torture us, they still trust us.'

Niyazi has a brother who is a primary school graduate, a sympathiser of the Nurculuk and a sister who is the same as his brother in literacy, married and pious. His parents have backed him any time he was in need. They were a little bit hurt when he left the school, they knew that the reason for this was Nurcu activities to which Niyazi devoted himself. They opposed Nurculuk for a while and Niyazi had to leave home. In 1974 he married a daughter of a Nurcu family. She has not received any formal education but can read and write both the new Turkish alphabet and the Arabic script. Her family lives in a village of Malatya and her brothers and sisters all are devoted Nurcus of average means running a farm in the village. Niyazi and his wife have decided not to have any

children, but instead of this they accommodate fifteen to twenty Nurcu girl students. They have their own weekly meetings amongst women in different places in Gaziantep arranged by Niyazi's wife, and also they carry out any sort of Nurcu activities for women in their large house as if it were a dershane. He has never been on pilgrimage yet, nor has he travelled outside Turkey.

6. MAHMUD

Mahmud was born in Küçükköy (Korkuteli district), a village in a mountainous part of Antalya Province. Most of the people who live there breed livestock. The families of Mahmud's grandparents, on both sides, were comparatively well-off and both of his grandfathers had joined the army and fought in the Dardanelles. His paternal grandfather did not return at all; his mother's father came back to the village after nine years but died a few months later.

His mother and father grew up as orphans. His father was adopted by an uncle who was a hafız and quite religious. His father eventually married this uncle's daughter but she died while he was doing his military service. When he completed his service, he came back to the village and lay down to sleep in an attempt to seek God's guidance in a dream about his plan to kidnap another cousin. This was the girl who became Mahmud's mother. She was the eldest in the family and had to look after all of her sisters after their father's demise. She suffered so much that she kept beseeching God not to give her any daughters.

Mahmud's grandparents' families were not known as religious people. Only his father learnt how to read the Koran from his step-father, his uncle, he cannot write the new alphabet but reads it with

difficulty. The mother is completely illiterate. Both mother and father are punctilious in the performance of their namaz. Seven years after their marriage they succeeded in having a baby, then yet another, but because of repeated miscarriages, it was four years before they could have a third. Then the wife was told in her dream that this time she would give birth to a child and she did. This long-awaited boy was regarded as particularly blessed. They named him Mahmud, after the most religious man in the family, the hafiz step-father, in the hope that he would take after him and become a hafız.

When Mahmud was born in 1956, the family was no longer in comfortable financial circumstances. Although he needed his children's help, Mahmud's father kept saying: 'I am going to have this son of mine educated.' Mahmud says: 'From the very beginning of my primary education, these words constantly echoed in my ears. I worked very hard and I was first in the class throughout my schooling.' Mahmud's father taught him at home to read the Koran with some other children from the village where he was a primary school pupil. His father used to take him to the mosque and ask him to read the Koran aloud before the congregation.

Mahmud's father sent his eldest son to the İmam-Hatip Okulu in Antalya in the face of criticism from fellow-villagers. This lad was the first from the village to go there, but his study was not entirely successful, he twice had to repeat a year. In 1968, Mahmud was also sent to Antalya to study in the same school with his brother. They stayed there in a modest house, which their father bought for their use, with a friend from the same village who was studying in the Lycée. Mahmud's brother and the third person in the house were smoking, and

with their friends they used to gather in the house and have long political discussions in the evenings. In his first years, Mahmud did not interfere in their arguments, only after his fourth year in the school did he start smoking and became interested in the political disputes. He says: 'Although I considered myself a right-wing sympathiser, in the course of time leftist friends' arguments seemed to me to be more sound.'

To avoid thinking of home and forget his hard daily life, he used to go to the cinema twice a week and read poetry on the sea shore on Sundays. When he reached his final year in the school, he began to feel so conscience-stricken about his smoking and going to the cinema that he prayed to God to give him enough will-power to control his desires. It was in this period of his life, when he was living alone in the house with his left-wing friend after his brother had graduated and left, that he got a book entitled Huzur Sokağı (by Şule Yüksel Şenler) and read it with this friend, who used to make fun of Mahmud's namaz, saying that he knew some other ways of doing gymnastics, why didn't he practise them as well. Mahmud was very disappointed at not being able to give his friend convincing explanations of his belief and religious practices. This book caused his friend to abandon his left-wing views and eventually become a Nurcu. It contained some quotations from the Risale-i Nur without naming the source. These attracted their attention. They enjoyed reading them but they did not know anything about the Risale-i Nur or Nurculuk at that time.

In 1974-75 he supported the NSP because of its policy in favour of religion and attended party gatherings and took their karate training courses. His purpose was to be able to beat up anti-religious people and then escape. Towards the end of his school period in Antalya

he read quite a number of books; amongst them the mystical works Âbidler Yolu, Kirk Esas and Al-Mugiz u min ad-Dhalâl, all by Imam Al-Ghazali, had a great influence on him. 'For fifteen to twenty days', he says, 'I tried to lead an ascetic life and liked very much the Al-Ghazali's answers to rationalist philosophers. I enjoyed reading these books which I hoped would help me to get rid of my bad habits, such as smoking, going to the cinema and so on, but they had no permanent effect on me.' As Mahmud read them more and became aware that the life of people in Turkey was very different from that recommended in the books, he became full of zeal to bring the nation back to religion. Thus he expresses his feelings about that: 'In those days I believed that all communists should be killed and the education institutions should be rescued by Muslims and Islam should rule over the country. I think under these impressions that I had a sympathy for the NAP and their idea of expelling the Jews, who dominated the Turkish economy, from Turkey.'

Prompting Mahmud's interest in the Risale-i Nur were some questions in his mind, such as the problem of 'free will' and 'women's place in Islam'. Because he was not quite sure how to explain 'fatalism' in Islam, he was extremely afraid it might have been decreed that he was to be included in the list of sinners. Another question which puzzled him very much was how God could manage to command everything in the universe in which things happen simultaneously without causing any confusion since He was the sole One. Although he did not want to accept 'Naturalism', he was not able to criticise it.

As a result of the University entry test he was accepted by Atatürk University in Erzurum in 1976. An assistant lecturer of this university had come for the summer holiday to the village where he was

born. They did not know each other before, but Mahmud trusted him after learning that he practised his namaz and asked him to accompany him to Erzurum. On their way to Erzurum, the assistant read him some parts from a book. Later, Mahmud realised that this book was by Said Nursi. He had previously heard of Nurculuk as an unorthodox mezhep, but he thought that such a man as this assistant, a very sincere pious intellectual gentleman, would not follow Nurculuk, if it was something un-Islamic. In Erzurum, he settled down in a dershane on the advice of the assistant, where one of their hemşehris was living. He described his initial impressions as follows: 'The first thing to strike me was the length of the tesbihat which Nurcus read after performing the namaz. Also the students who stayed in the house did not go out very often; they just sat and read, mostly the Risale-i Nur. I went out frequently to smoke, no-one else smoked in the house. Another thing that puzzled me was why these very religious people did not support the NSP, but supported the JP instead, as that is not a religious party. I asked them why it was, but they did not give me a satisfying answer. However, I like the Nurcus in general. I started reading the Risale-i Nur. The first one I read was Asâ-yi Mûsa.'

After two weeks, Mahmud got a room in the university accommodation and left the dershane, but remained friendly with the Nurcus there. With these and other Nurcu friends from the university, he performed the namaz and attended the ders two or three times a week. One day, one of his left-wing friends asked a question: 'Why has God created some of us shorter than others? Is not that injustice?' The immediate reply to this came from a supporter of the NAP: 'Look here, friend, you can't ask that question'. This behaviour killed Mahmud's sympathy for the NAP. He had read an answer for such a question in the Risale-i Nur

and read it out to his friend who was satisfied. Mahmud then decided to become a Nurcu and work for this cause.

After completing his university education, he got a job in Erzurum and settled in a dershane in order to carry on his hizmet. He gives the relevant Nurcu view while he is teaching at the school where everybody knows him as a Nurcu and he is proud to be known as one. Especially in the holiday times, Mahmud usually joins the group of Nurcus going to neighbouring cities and towns to organise ders and spends most of his leisure time in 'The Centre for Press and Publication' which is run by the Nurcus. He has not yet done his military service, neither has he been outside Turkey at all.

Mahmud is single now, but looking forward to getting married as soon as possible. He knows Arabic and German quite well. Since he became a Nurcu he has given up smoking and going to the cinema and theatre, and now he rarely watches television. If there is any free time he listens to the radio for the news only. He has devoted almost his entire life to Nurculuk; apart from reading the Risale-i Nur to the others on every possible occasion, he reads it just for himself - twenty pages a day. He performs namaz fives times a day with the complete tesbihat. He does not perform any of the 'optional' namaz. Mahmud reads the books of Islamic canonical law and commentaries on the Koran concerning his teaching. He also reads all of the Yeni Asya publications, Köprü and Zafer magazines, Yeni Nesil and, on rare occasions, Tercüman newspapers.

According to Mahmud, the people who are most successful are those who, while maintaining constant improvement, keep worldly and other-worldly life in balance. As an example of this, he named Professor Servet Armağan.

Mahmud's family still lives in the village, earning their living by farming. None of the members of the family rejects Mahmud being a Nurcu. Although they cannot be called Nurcus themselves, they are sympathetic towards the movement. Notwithstanding their family's reputation as being supporters of the RPP, Mahmud's father turned towards the DP, then the JP, and now the NSP, and the mother, of course, just followed her husband. His eldest brother who runs his own farm in the same village, graduated from the primary school and does not perform the namaz. The second eldest brother, a Higher Islamic Institute graduate, is a teacher and quite pious. His two younger brothers both live with their father, and help with the farm. They did not continue their education after finishing their primary school. They usually perform the namaz.

7. NEVZAT

Nevzat was born in 1954 in Eğnelli, a village in Çamardı district of Niğde province in central Anatolia. His family were farmers leading a self-sufficient life there. His eighty-three year-old father is a religious man, has been on pilgrimage to Mecca and graduated from primary school. The mother was from the same village and, like her husband, came from a pious family, but she had been taught hardly anything, not even how to read the Koran. She died in 1964 and since then her husband has been living with his youngest son in the village. Both parents' families were pro-DP and then pro-JP and none of the members of the family belongs to any sort of religious order.

The most important figure in the family was Nevzat's paternal uncle who was an ideal person in Nevzat's mind. He had graduated from

medrese and was held in high regard as a Muslim scholar, âlim, by the inhabitants of the neighbouring villages, as well as their own village. He, himself, taught Nevzat to read the Koran when he was attending the primary school in the village, and gave him basic Islamic knowledge in a way which he could easily comprehend. Not only Nevzat, but Nevzat's father too, greatly admired him. Whenever the family discussed religion at home, they constantly referred to the views of Nevzat's uncle. Nevzat was so much influenced by his uncle's reputation that he vowed to become a man of learning and religious like him.

When Nevzat completed his primary school education, for he was a successful student, his teachers tried to persuade his father to send him to the secondary school, but his father wanted him to receive an education just like his elder brother had, and sent him to the İmam Hatip Okulu in Niğde. He stayed there in a student dormitory. As well as the required reading, he read historical and religious books, particularly about the lives of the four Caliphs. During his school years he gave sermons in mosques, personally encouraged by the Müfti of the city to do this. At the same time he took part in several debating competitions between the schools in Niğde, organised by the school administration.

In spite of his readings and efforts, he was aware that he was not able to answer all the questions about religion raised by students from other schools with whom he had made friends through these competitions. It was in his final year when they were arguing again, that one of his friends from the Lycée gave an answer to a question about a hadith that seemed to Nevzat to be more convincing than his own, even though this friend was not taking religious courses and Nevzat was.

Nevzat asked him where he had learnt this explanation of the meaning of the hadith which teaches that the world stands on an ox and a fish. This friend mentioned the name of a literature teacher who had told him of this interpretation. Nevzat became very interested in this teacher and asked his friend to introduce them. Starting from the first meeting he asked all the questions in his mind which he had been asked before. He became so close to him that Nevzat began to visit him twice a week in his house and discussed all of his questions. He was highly surprised at the answers and asked about the source of his knowledge. The reply was 'The Risale-i Nur'. A desire grew in Nevzat to read these books and he asked how he could obtain them. The teacher offered to read them with him in order to explain the meanings of the words in the book which could be difficult to understand. Because the teacher was single and the house was quite convenient, Nevzat accepted the offer. They first read Ayet ul-Kûbra (The Supreme Sign) and then Haşir Risalesi (The Treatise on the Resurrection).

Nevzat enjoyed the Risale-i Nur very much and wished his friends also to obtain these attractive books. After a while he suggested that the teacher rent a house as a dershane where they could live together in an attempt to disseminate the Risale-i Nur amongst his fellow-students. They did open a dershane but soon afterwards Nevzat graduated from the school with a first grade and got a place in Kayseri Higher Islamic Institute and at the same time, on the strength of results in the University entry test, was accepted by the Faculty of Science of Atatürk University in Erzurum. He preferred the university, expecting that the science education would strengthen his religious beliefs.

He came to Erzurum in 1972 and first stayed in a dershane and then moved into a dormitory that belonged to the university accommodation in

order to propagate Nurculuk amongst the wider student circle by spending most of his time with them. He gave sermons at the Friday prayers in a small mosque provided inside the university for the students and took advantage of this to spread 'the truth of the Risale-i Nur'. As an outcome of these endeavours, he caused quite a lot of students to become acquainted with the Nurcus and eventually to stay in dershanes. Nevzat gave some seminars organised by the Nurcus in the surrounding towns and cities of Erzurum until he got his first degree in 1977 and left Erzurum for Ankara where he taught biology in a lycée. In 1980 he resigned from teaching and returned to Erzurum to get another job as a director of a private student dormitory run by Nurcus.

Nevzat cites two events from his school days as his most lasting and effective memories of his youth. The first was of his left-wing friends from other secondary schools becoming activists after reading leftist books. He says: 'This urged me to be more conscious of my duty towards my own cause.' The other was that after a long argument with an atheist friend in the university canteen, this atheist friend admitted the superiority of his idea in front of hundreds of students. This event, according to Nevzat, justified his confidence in his ideas.

None of Nevzat's family members disapproves of his views. His primary-school-graduate sister is a housewife. His only brother, after graduating from the primary school, stayed in the village to look after the father and till the family's land. Both sister and brother are quite pious and, although they cannot be called even Nurcu sympathisers, they support him as a religious man.

Nevzat is a single man, has done his military service and has never travelled outside Turkey. As a part of his social life, he undertakes

the secretarial duties of the Turkish Temperance Society, the Green Crescent. He has never tasted alcohol or smoked a cigarette in his life. He listens to the radio only for the news and only watches television programmes related to his profession. He used to go to the cinema and theatre very occasionally. The last time was four months ago when he went to a historical play.

Nevzat is an entirely dedicated Nurcu. Everything he does is for the sake of Nurculuk. He likes reading historical books, especially the ones about Turkey since 1876 (when the first constitution was proclaimed), but apart from those he reads only the Risale-i Nur and what he calls 'the supplementary publications of the Risale-i Nur', Yeni Asya publications, Yeni Nesil newspaper, and Köprü and Zafer magazines.

According to Nevzat, Said Nursi and Süleyman Demirel may be considered the most successful persons and their success should be measured by paying close attention to the circumstances under which they worked for their purposes; for the former the purpose was to root out the atheistic ideology and for the latter to achieve the economic development which was crucially important to meet the people's need. Within the limits of their situation they each achieved as much as was possible in furtherance of these aims.

8. ALPER

Contrary to the general trend in Turkey, Alper's grandfather moved from Istanbul to Atkaracalar, a small township (nahiye) in Çankırı province. Alper was born there in 1949. His family was quite well off and there were ulema (learned men) among them, but in Alper's view the

family started declining materially and morally, when this paternal grandfather changed his ways for the worse, became a rake and consequently Alper's own father was not brought up religiously or given a good education (only primary school and learning how to read the Koran).

Alper's other grandfather showed similar disregard for religion though his wife came from a pious family. Alper's mother has not been taught to read and write the new alphabet but only to read the Koran in Arabic script. She is now a seventy year-old widow, quite religious living on her own in Atkaracalar and looking after her livestock.

His father and mother and their families support the RPP, though his brothers and sisters do not necessarily do so.

After completing his primary school education, Alper was sent off to Heybeliada, Istanbul, to extend his education. He graduated from the secondary school living with his uncle's family there. His uncle and aunt rarely performed their namaz and his great-uncle, who was staying with them, never did. Because he failed the entry examination for the Navy School and his father died in 1963, Alper returned to Atkaracalar and ran his father's grocery shop there for a year.

Alper had no religious experience at all until he stayed with comparatively devout eldest brother's family in Ankara in order to continue his study in Yapı Enstitüsü (The Building Institute). From his second year on in the Institute he became a boarder. He had a hafız friend in the boarding school who taught him to read the Koran. This friend provided him with some religious books and once took him to the house of one of his relatives where after performing their namaz, this man told them something interesting. It was from the Risale-i Nur but Alper did not then know where it came from. He just liked it.

There was another Nurcu friend in the school but they did not mention anything about Nurculuk to Alper. One evening, another school-mate was annoying this friend, taunting him with being a Nurcu. That was the first time Alper heard of Nurculuk. He defended his friend because he liked him, and so they became closer friends. Alper started regularly attending ders on Saturdays with these two Nurcu friends in the Cebeci district dershane, where medical students lived. In 1966 about thirty friends from the same school who performed the namaz became acquainted with Nurculuk. After a police raid on a dershane, some of the Nurcus were put in prison in 1967. Alper visited them in the prison several times and observed them still propagating Nurculuk there. He thought 'What brave men they are, even in prison they spread Nurculuk!'

In 1967, just before he completed his course at the Institute, he went to Varto for a while with his final year student friends to help rebuild houses wrecked by the earthquakes. After graduating from the Institute he got his first job in Konya as a construction supervisor. He did not stay there very long because in the following year he started his university education in a Higher Engineering School in Ankara, and transferred his job as well. On his brother's advice, for fear of being prosecuted, Alper spent his first year in a private student hostel. He used to take his friends from there to a dershane to which he subsequently moved. Thereafter he used to go to the hostel and tell the students there about the Risale-i Nur. Once, when he was arguing with his friends in the hostel and reading some passages of the Risale-i Nur to them in the canteen, one of the students informed the police that he was propagating Nurculuk amongst the students. The police came and took Alper to the station and after

discovering where he lived, they searched the dershane and found the books of the Risale-i Nur. Alper was then detained in prison for three months. This was in 1971.

Although he lost a year at the university because of this detention, Alper is not resentful and he speaks enthusiastically of those sorts of incidents that happened to him. 'I am very happy for two failures in my life; first the failure to get into the Navy School (otherwise I would be just another keen member of the RPP as my uncle's entire family was), and the other was being in prison. Some sixty or seventy of the one hundred and fifty prisoners in the section where I spend three months started performing the namaz. We used to gather five times a day and read the Risale-i Nur after the namaz. Now I have a lot of friends who became Nurcus, and perform hizmets for the Risale-i Nur. Moreover, prison taught me that this world was really transitory, so I decided to devote my entire life to the hizmet.'

After being released from prison, Alper resumed his work, but this time as a watchman. Alper was happy with this job too because it gave him a chance to read the Risale-i Nur more. When he got his first degree from the University in 1973, he resigned from his job and did not apply for another one. He has since been working on the staff of the Ankara Cultural and Education Foundation run by Nurcus to look after the dershanes. He did his military service in 1975, and in 1976 this temporarily administered a student hostel. Alper considered a good form of hizmet amongst the students who lived there. After the 12 September 1980 army takeover, he was kept in custody for 49 days together with twenty-nine fellow Nurcus who had gathered for a ders when the police and soldiers raided the dershane.

Alper has not travelled outside Turkey, even for the pilgrimage. He has joined only the Turkish Temperance Society, the Green Crescent,

as part of his social activity other than his services to the Nurculuk. He listens to the news on the radio and does not watch television because he has no time for it. He used to go to the cinema, though not frequently, but after knowing the Risale-i Nur he completely stopped going. The last film he saw was 'The Message'. He does not smoke or drink alcohol. Years ago with his friends in Heybeliada, he once tried a mouthful of wine and some Turkish raki, and a bottle of brandy. Whenever he finds free time, apart from dealing with hizmets, he reads, mainly the Risale-i Nur and the Yeni Asya publications, Köprü and Zafer magazines, Yeni Nesil newspaper, and occasionally he has a look at other newspapers.

Alper himself is single and has three brothers and three sisters. The eldest brother is forty-five years old, a religious man, and a primary school graduate. His grown-up children are Nurcus. The eldest sister has not received any education and does not perform her religious duties. His second eldest brother is also indifferent to religion, left the secondary school before graduating, and lives in Atkaracalar. The third eldest brother, who sometimes performs his namaz, runs a grocer's shop in Ankara. His other elder sister is a widow, very punctilious about her religious duties and can read the Koran properly, her children are religious as well. The youngest sister is married too, she and her husband perform the namaz from time to time. All of his brothers and sisters voted for the JP, except the eldest brother who supported the NSP.

9. TEVFİK

Tevfik is a son of a labourer living in Istanbul. His forebears migrated to Istanbul generations ago and became so mixed with other families through marriages that now the family does not know quite where it originated. The eighty-one year old primary school graduate father is a pensioner. Tevfik's mother, a housewife, also graduated from primary school. Both of them maintain rather tenuous links with religion; they cannot read the Koran, the father seldom goes to the mosque on Fridays and the mother recently started praying only when she stayed in Tevfik's house, otherwise she would not bother. Their political tendency was towards the DP and then to the JP.

There was no religious atmosphere in the family in which Tevfik spent his childhood; his father was not interested in religion and used to work very hard, coming home late in the evening. Tevfik cannot remember any religious matter being discussed among the family or visiting neighbours at all. Neither his two brothers, nor his sister observe the rules of Islam. Tevfik himself is the eldest in the family. The elder of his two brothers did not stay at school beyond primary level; he is a foreman in a factory in Istanbul. The youngest brother left school when he was attending the second year course in the lycée and became a workman. The only sister is a secondary school graduate and performs the namaz from time to time.

When Tevfik was at primary school, he went one summer holiday to a mahalle mektebi to learn how to read the Koran. Until his final year in the lycée, when he started fasting without anybody's encouragement and became concerned about religion, he had not practised his religion at all.

After he had graduated from the lycée in 1961, when he was twenty-one years old, he went to Erzurum to do military service as a reserve officer teacher. At the end of his service he decided not to return home but to stay in Erzurum and study the Arabic language and some religious subjects. This so annoyed his parents that they remained disgruntled with him for four years. While he was taking religious courses in an unofficial medrese, he got the diploma from an Imam-Hatip Okulu by taking examinations in lessons which are taught only in İmam-Hatip Okulu, without attending the classes, and thus he became officially qualified to preach in mosques. It was only after he was appointed as a preacher in one of the towns of Erzurum that his parents were satisfied with him and thought that he was not doing something nonsensical.

In 1966, in addition to his studies on religious subjects, especially commentary on the Koran, Tevfik resumed his formal education in the Faculty of Literature and Arts in Atatürk University. By the time he got his first degree from the University, he had received an icazet (certificate) from the medrese.[9] Tevfik stayed one more year in Erzurum to study Islamic philosophy privately and then left his preaching post and the city in 1971 for Nigde where he was appointed as a teacher of literature in the Lycée. In the same city, four years later, he became principal of the Yüksek Meslek Okulu (Professional High School) and then of the Institute of Education. Soon after the 12 September army take-over, he was transferred to Konya Atatürk Girls' Lycée as a literature teacher again. He is now also teaching Sociology and General Instruction Methods in the Higher Islamic Institute of Konya.

Tevfik first heard about Nurculuk in 1960. Just out of interest, and at a friend's suggestion, he went to a dershane in Istanbul, and they gave him some books of the Risale-i Nur such as Küçük Sözler

(The Small Book of Words) and Gençlik Rehberi (A Guide for Youth), but he did not study them very seriously. In 1963, when he started attending the medrese, one of his teachers used to take Tevfik and his friends to the ders. Until 1966, when he was enrolled for the university, he liked the Risale-i Nur but he was not really very much interested in them. In the course of his life in the university, the more he encountered questions about religion asked by fellow-students, the more he realised that he was not able to give any convincing answers to them with his religious knowledge which he had learnt in the medrese, and that the answers provided by the Risale-i Nur were very satisfying. By reading the Risale-i Nur more closely, he came to the conclusion that he should devote himself to the hizmet of the Risale-i Nur and he did so.

Tevfik found an opportunity to go on pilgrimage to Mecca in 1966 and that has been his only opportunity so far to travel outside Turkey. He knows Arabic and Persian quite well, and a little English. He watches the news and some good programmes such as 'The News Programme' on television, does not usually listen to the radio, sometimes may be for the news. Before 1960, he used to go to the cinema just to see foreign films, but he never went to the theatre as he does not like it. He has never smoked or drunk alcohol. He worked as a member of the executive committee of the Society of Religious Officials (Din Görevlileri Derneği) in Erzurum in 1968. That was his only involvement in such a society.

Tevfik is an official at the moment, but he would like to devote all his life to the cause of the Risale-i Nur. His passion is reading. He reads all sorts of books and novels which are related to his professional interest. In addition to these, he continually follows

the Yeni Asya publications, and Tercüman and Yeni Nesil daily newspapers.

There is no Nurcu amongst the family other than Tevfik's wife whom he married in 1980 on the recommendation of his Nurcu friends. She is a primary school graduate, and her very religious family lives in Soma, a town near Manisa. They have a four-month old daughter whom they are planning to bring up to become a Nurcu. Tevfik's parents can scarcely be called Nurcu sympathisers but now, after prolonged resistance, they consent to his being a Nurcu.

10. HAKAN

Hakan's family consist mostly of officers and well-educated people. His father's grandparents came from Caucasia and settled in Istanbul; his grandfather was a goldsmith. One of Hakan's uncles is a retired officer and the other is a lawyer. The entire family has been indifferent towards both religion and politics. Hakan's father has never cast a vote in any election.

Hakan's mother's family, too, moved from a town near Çanakkale to Istanbul. Her father was a high-ranking army staff officer and all of her brothers are now retired officers. She is sixty years old and compared with her husband and his family she is somewhat religious, reading the Koran and performing her religious duties such as the namaz and fasting during the month of Ramadan. Later she became even more pious under her son's influence. She now performs her namaz on a prayer-mat which he gave her as a present when he first became a Nurcu. Hakan's grandmother and mother inculcated in him the duty of loyalty to his parents, to be a good man, not to tell lies, and to fear God, but certainly never taught him to worship. His childhood memories of

religious observances are limited to his grandmother performing the namaz and his father, on one occasion only, sacrificing a sheep, when he was a major.

The father was enrolled in the Kuleli Military Lycée when he was only a third-year primary school boy and in 1931 graduated from Istanbul Military College. After taking part in the Dersim operation against the Kurds, he returned to Ankara as a personal guard of Atatürk and then became a first lieutenant in the presidential guard. As the commander of the Armoured Brigade at Etimesğut, Ankara, he was chiefly responsible for defeating the coup attempt made by Colonel Talat Aydemir on 21 May 1961.

At that time, Hakan was eleven years old, but he still well remembers a captain from the same brigade knocking on their door at midnight and his father giving orders to prevent the rebels who had seized Radyo Evi (Broadcasting House) in Ankara from broadcasting. This was done by stopping transmissions from the station in Etimesğut. Hakan tells: 'He put on his uniform with a civilian overcoat covering it. After asking all the family to forgive all that he may have unjustly done (helallaşti), he left the house with the captain in a civilian car. Half an hour later shooting started in the centre of Ankara, Kizilay.' Hakan and the other members of the family were very worried for their father's life until a few hours later news came from the radio announcing that the attempted coup had been suppressed. By the morning, senior staff officers reasserted control over every unit and placed them under the control of the commander in chief of the time, Parliament was surrounded by the tanks of Hakan's father's regiment. As a reward for his effort in 1962, Hakan's father was promoted to brigadier, but in 1965 he retired from the army at his own request.

When Hakan was 4-5 years old, he used to go with his friends to the tomb of a saint (whose identity he did not know) near their house and pray, and his parents did not criticise him for this. Though they used not to talk about religion in the house, during the month of Ramadan, he himself willingly wanted to fast but his teacher in the primary school made him break his fast because he was too young.

Hakan's father's mother used to live very close to the tomb of the saint, Hacı Bayram in Ankara. When they, with the mother and sisters, went to visit the grandmother, his mother used to ask her children to go to the tomb and pray to God asking Him to make them clever and successful (akıl açıklığı, zihin açıklığı versin ve büyük adam almanız için dua edin.) Hakan describes this grandmother as a person who was acquainted with God though not religious. She used to argue with Hakan's sister, who was pro-İnönü, about Menderes because she was fond of Menderes.

Hakan became very interested in music and started taking guitar lessons when he was attending secondary school in Ankara. During the summer holidays, all his family used to go to the armed forces' holiday camp in Istanbul and Hakan joined a dance group there. Towards the end of his third year in the secondary school, he wished he could perform the namaz, but whenever he attempted to practise it, his father prevented him from doing so. His father's fear was that if he practised the namaz and consequently became religious, he might neglect his studies. As he was the only son in the family, his father constantly reminded him that his study was most important.

The most diligent student in the class was Hakan's closest friend. He was the leader of the music group in the school and Hakan used to go to the theatre and the British Council to take English courses with

him. His father, too, was an officer - a military judge. When they were in the first year class in the Lycée, Hakan once noticed that this friend performed his namaz five times a day. Taking his friend as an example, he started performing his namaz too and, with the grandmother's support against the father's persistence, joined the Friday prayers in the mosque.

He was accepted by the Faculty of Law in Ankara on the results of the university entry tests but, because of his excessive interest in becoming an architect, Hakan went to a private college to study architecture. There was a mosque quite close to this college where Hakan met some university students and enjoyed listening to their conversations about religion. Meanwhile, he was preparing himself for the next university entry tests in order to be able to study his subject in one of the state colleges. He asked one of his friends whom he met in the mosque to give him a book about mathematics. He found a paper inside the book on which were some sentences with their author's name, 'Said Nursi', underneath. He became very anxious about this name and showed it to his old friend who had greatly influenced Hakan to become more religious during his days in the Lycée. As soon as he saw the name he burst out: 'I shall tell my father and ask him to put them in prison', but Hakan did not approve of this, saying: 'They look very nice men, religious and educated.' He asked his sister what her opinion was of these people, she strongly requested him not to go to the mosque again. Hakan was not quite aware of what all this fuss was about. Then, he decided to ask his father about Nurculuk without mentioning these friends. He told him that he did not know much about it except that the leader of it was called Said-i Kürdî and had wanted to establish a Kurdish state.

Henceforth, Hakan began to observe his friends sceptically but nothing appeared strange to him. While he was reading the collection of articles of Çetin Özek published in the Cumhuriyet newspaper which his father had given to him, Hakan had an invitation from one of his friends from the mosque to visit his house. He accepted the invitation though with hesitation. He felt very sorry for this friend when he saw hanging on the wall of the house framed quotations from Said Nursi. This surprised and saddened Hakan because this friend was not a Kurd and he was studying electronics in the Middle East Technical University so he 'should not have been an obscurantist or a reactionary'. Since he was a very nice person, Hakan asked him how he could be a 'Nurcu'. A long discussion started between them; this friend vigorously defended Said Nursi as a commentator who has interpreted the Koran in accordance with the level of understanding of the century and encouraged the young generation to study science. Hakan was not at ease but was inquisitive and could not reject his friend's offer to introduce him to his Nurcu friends.

On a later evening in 1968, his friend took Hakan to a dershane. When they first entered, five or six people were performing the evening prayer all together - with cemaat. The prayer leader and some others were wearing robes and turbans on their heads. Hakan was shocked by what he saw, but felt obliged to join in the prayer. He had previously thought that Nurcu congregations comprised some strangely dressed, aged men sitting in a circle, noisily chanting 'Hu!' He was expecting that the chanting would start after the namaz. Apart from the robes and turbans worn by some of the participants, the namaz seemed very like what he was used to, except that the people turned their palms downwards for a moment during the prayer which was said following the namaz,

though most of the time their hands were open with palms uppermost at chest level. After the namaz, the persons wearing robes and turbans took them off and all of them welcomed Hakan with a smile. The fact that they were mostly young students wearing clean and tidy clothes and welcomed him warmly helped to dispel his uneasiness. Some other people also came and sat on the floor silently and the man who led the namaz started reading a book, sometimes explaining it. The subject was about the hereafter, and some questions and answers on this subject seemed quite interesting to Hakan. Following the readings they served tea. In the meantime, Hakan's friend introduced him to those who had come later. They also took an interest in Hakan, some of them even embraced him. This was again quite strange to Hakan. Nevertheless, he took it as a sign of cordiality. Afterwards, Hakan learnt that this evening was one of a weekly ders for students and the man reading the book was a retired judge and the books were the Risale-i Nur.

Hakan decided to go to the ders and to read the writings of Said Nursi on the week-end evenings when his parents let him go to the cinema.

Some time later, when he began wearing a skullcap during the namaz, his family found this very odd. He tried to persuade his parents and sisters to accept that the Risale-i Nur were works of extraordinary worth. He well recalls that in one of his first days of reading the Risale-i Nur, he was so influenced by them that he took Tabiat Risalesi (The Treatise on Nature) which he had recently read, and started reading some paragraphs to his family, including the father who eventually shut him up saying, 'My son, you have converted this house into a medrese! What are these Ottoman words?'

Hakan went to Istanbul in the summer to attend a private preparatory course for the University entry tests. He had a friend on the course and they would have lunch and then go to the Blue Mosque to perform the noon namaz together. Sometime later this friend mentioned to Hakan that he had been reading the Risale-i Nur and found them very useful. He also said he had been attending the ders and he offered to introduce Hakan to the Nurcus in Istanbul. The same friend took Hakan to the headquarters of the Turkish National Student Union (MTTB) to introduce him to the students there. They were not Nurcus, but they all recommended him to read the Risale-i Nur to maintain his faith. During this period he stayed in the house of his uncle, a retired colonel, and tried to convince his cousins and some of their friends who were mostly children of army staff that they too should read the Risale-i Nur to attain perfection. His first disappointment on a religious issue came when he was introduced there to a very religious retired major who was criticising shaking hands between men and women.

When he returned to Ankara at the end of the course, he found most of the leading Nurcus gathered there to talk Mr Demirel out of his support for a Bill for the Protection of the Constitution. He thus came to know and like most of them. He was particularly favourably impressed by the lawyer Bekir Berk's courteous behaviour.

Hakan was accepted by the Karadeniz Technical University in Trabzon in 1969. His parents allowed him to leave the family and go there because they wanted him to be away from the atmosphere in which he had changed dramatically and also because his friend from the Lycée was there. Hakan's family liked him and his religious life-style, and wanted Hakan to be religious like him, but when Hakan went

to Trabzon, he found that this friend was no longer religious and had even become a left-wing supporter. Hakan did not stay with him. At first he rented a room in a hotel and started organising right-wing students in an attempt to ask the Dean of the University to provide them with a small mosque within the University. Their request was turned down because at that time leftists were in a majority at the University, but they themselves cleared out a room and furnished it like a small mosque. This room marked the commencement of Nurcu activities in Trabzon , as mentioned earlier.

After a while, Hakan moved into a newly opened university accommodation centre and then to a dershane in the city centre. He and his Nurcu friends started off a Nurcu propaganda campaign in Trabzon as well as in the nearby towns. It was after the 12 March 1971 military intervention that Hakan met some of his old neighbours and friends of the family who had now become martial law commanders and told them his own impressions about Nurculuk, and presented them with the book Nurculuk Davası as well. He was a fairly successful student in the college, and this helped to improve his relationship with his family. Then, for one year, he gave up his schooling in order to take care of the students whom they had newly received in the dershanes.

Hakan got his first degree in 1974 and waited for a year to become a lecturer in the university, but he could not achieve this ambition. In the following year he went on pilgrimage to Mecca with some other Nurcus; on their way they presented the Risale-i Nur and the Koran, which was printed with a specific design by the Nurcus, to some distinguished persons in several Arabian countries. In 1976 he joined the army to do military service in Yassiada, Istanbul, where at his

initiative, the first small mosque was opened inside the military barracks.

With a group of his friends, Hakan travelled on the Continent in 1977. They visited Nurcu brothers in Germany, Holland and Luxembourg. In the same year he went alone to Europe, this time to England as well. On his way back home, he broke his journey in Berlin and met some Nurcus there to discuss some affairs relating to the printing house. When he arrived home, there was an annual mevlit in Van organised on the anniversary of Said Nursi's birthday. He went to Van to discuss with the ağabeys gathered there his intention of marriage. They suggested a girl who was studying medical science at the Atatürk University in Erzurum. She and her comparatively well-off family were Nurcus as well. He came to Eğridir, a town of İsparta, to meet her family there and make his proposal. The mayor of the town was a dost and helped him with arrangements, at the end agreement was reached and Hakan applied for a lectureship at the İsparta Academy. But the problem had not been entirely solved. He liked her and her family, and her family agreed on the marriage, but what about his family? His parents and sisters definitely rejected the idea of getting married to a girl who covered her head. Hakan called two members of parliament, the owner of the Yeni Asya newspaper and a well-known hodja of the Eastern Anatolia, Kırkıncı Hodja, and brought them to his father's house in Ankara in order to convince the family. The result was positive, his father was fascinated, especially by the Kirkinci Hodja's view of Turkey's problems and the Nurcu response to them.

Hakan settled down in Isparta after his application for the job was approved by the Academy in 1978. The Academy sent him to England to specialise in his subject for two months in the same year. When

he returned to Turkey with some Nurcu friends, they started establishing a company to produce building materials in İsparta. As soon as his fiancée graduated from the college in 1979 they married. Now, she is working as a medical doctor in İsparta and trying to generate Nurculuk amongst women.

Hakan eventually gave up going to the cinema, opera and theatre but still enjoys listening to the radio most of the time, and watching the news and news programmes, sometimes documentary films on television. He does not smoke or drink alcohol, and never has. Apart from his occupation in the school he spends his time on hizmet. He reads the Yeni Asya publications as well as Hürriyet's weekly supplement 8.Gün İlâvesi, Yankı magazine - but he does not buy this -, Köprü and Can Kardeş as magazines, Yeni Nesil and Tercüman as newspapers.

The most successful persons, according to Hakan, are not those who have achieved some success only in worldly life but those who have also improved their spiritual virtues and those who have sought to help the nation rather than themselves alone. 'It may not be appropriate to mention a particular name here', he replied when asked to give an example.

11. MEHMET

Mehmet was born in 1913 in a village in Bursa province. His father was a Rüşdiye (secondary school) graduate and had attended medrese as well for a short time, but the First World War broke out and he had to leave it. After the war he chose to run his own business by opening a bakery shop in Istanbul rather than become a civil servant. He married the daughter of the ağa of the village where his family used to live. During the Second World War, the inhabitants of Istanbul were advised

by the government to go back to their places of origin, so Mehmet's family returned to their village in Bursa province. After the war the family and Mehmet came to Istanbul and have remained there.

Mehmet's mother has learnt how to read and write the new Turkish alphabet and to read the Koran in Arabic. She is now seventy-one years old, and lives a pious life. Her very religious husband died in 1968. Both of them have been supporters of the DP since 1945. Although Mehmet did not continue his studies after graduating from the village primary school, while he was working in his father's bakery, his father used to urge him to read some history magazines and particularly Büyük Doğu magazine.

Under the influence of his family and also a friend from his village who had come to Istanbul to take an advanced course in Koranic studies, Mehmet became very interested in religion. In the course of his readings he came across some religious problems to which he could not find any sound and reasonable explanation, such as the 'resurrection of the dead' and how to reconcile the statements 'for God no place or limit can be assigned' and, 'He is Omnipresent and All-Seeing'. When at that time he asked the müezzin of the Nuruosmaniye mosque about such problems, his response was, 'Would you like me to introduce you to the Nurcus?' Mehmet understood that he meant they would have the answers. In fact, he had read about Nurculuk in the magazines he took regularly. Mehmet accepted the offer and the müezzin sent him to a dershane quite close to the mosque with a man who apparently knew the place and the Nurcus who lived there.

It was a simple house, two young men received them smiling and the man made the introductions. Thus, Mehmet's first encounter with the Nurcus came in 1949 when he was eighteen years old. When Mehmet

arrived, the young men who had been reading some passages of the Risale-i Nur, after the introductions were over, went on reading. It was about the necessity for mutual love between Muslims. Then they tried to give some answers to his questions but these did not completely satisfy him. Only after he himself read the relevant sections in the Risale-i Nur did he properly understand the subject that had puzzled him. In general, he liked the friendly atmosphere and began to frequent the dershane. In those days the most serious problem was to secure the safety of the books of the Risale-i Nur from government raids and to make them available for everybody who wanted to read them. As a hizmet, he has played his part in this task ever since he became a Nurcu sympathiser.

Mehmet first met Said Nursi himself in 1952 when he came to Istanbul to defend in court the case brought against one of his books. Mehmet introduced his father to Said Nursi and he, too, liked Said Nursi very much. In 1953, Said Nursi came again to Istanbul, taking advantage of the new government's lax attitude to his being in exile in the İsparta region. Mehmet then invited him to his house to live. Said Nursi stayed in Mehmet's family's house in Istanbul for three months.[10] During this period Said Nursi was going out and sometimes with his students and sometimes by himself, wandering around Istanbul quite freely. But policemen waiting at each end of the street where Mehmet lived observed the people who came to visit Said Nursi and asked Mehmet the names of these visitors whenever they met him. At the end of these three months, Said Nursi went back to Emirdag with some of his students, amongst them there was Zübeyr Ağabey, who had recently resigned from his job in Ankara and devoted himself to the hizmet.

When the other ehl-i hizmet brothers left Istanbul for different cities in Anatolia because nobody else was left to undertake the duty of printing, publishing and distributing the collection of the Risale-i Nur, Mehmet gave up working in the bakery shop in 1955 in order to fulfil these hizmets.

Mehmet is, in 1983, fifty years old and still single. After he became a Nurcu, his five brothers and three sisters changed their attitudes towards religion as a result of his influence on them. Both they and their children perform their namaz regularly, though only a few of them became Nurcus as well, most remaining only 'sympathisers'. His own father and mother liked Nurculuk and used to ask Mehmet to read the Risale-i Nur to them. Mehmet hardly reads any other book now, but has uninterruptedly been following the daily publications. Somewhat exceptionally for a religious Turk in Turkey, he has not yet been on pilgrimage to Mecca, although he had travelled quite a few times to Europe, particularly to Berlin, to establish a printing house to print the Koran. He has been three times to the United States of America to have the Risale-i Nur translated into English and published there as well as to organise the distribution of the English versions all over the Muslim world.

12. METİN

Metin was born in the town of Tavas in Denizli province in 1949. His father was a shoemaker, who died in 1963 at the age of fifty-one and could read and write with the new alphabet and read the Koran in Arabic (though he could not write in Arabic). However, Metin's mother is illiterate although her grandparents included prominent ulema (men of religious knowledge) and traders. Both the

father and mother are typical of the traditional religious people of the town, the father possibly being rather more religious than most of his fellow townsmen had tried to read some religious instruction books to learn how to worship better.

Metin received the normal state education up to and including university. Growing up in a traditional religious family, from the age of eleven he was encouraged by his parents to attend the mahalle mektebi (local religious school) to learn how to read the Koran and to keep himself busy during the long summer holidays. He cannot remember exactly when he started performing his namaz, but this has been a regular feature of his daily life since childhood. With his family's encouragement, he graduated from secondary school and then moved to the city of Denizli to continue his studies there in the Lycée. He did not have any particular profession in mind while he was studying; his family kept saying that he should study at school, so he did. He was spending most of his free time in his father's shoemaking shop when he was in the secondary school in the town. Apparently, he was not very interested in studying and failed in his second year class at the Lycée. Throughout his education, he showed no interest in any political group activities: sometimes he said his prayers, sometimes he did not; he confined his associations just to fellow students from Tavas until he went with one of them to a Nurcu gathering.

After he encountered the Risale-i Nur, he realised the importance of education and began to think about his profession. When he graduated from the Lycée in 1968, he took university tests and the result gave him a place in the Law Faculty in Istanbul, although he wanted to become either a chemist or an economist. This unsought education ended in 1973 and Metin became a lawyer. Before he did his short term military

service in 1976, he had already opened a lawyer's office in Istanbul. A year after completing his military service he married. His wife came from a quite well-off family that had originated in Aydın, but had long ago settled in Istanbul. All of the members of her family, including herself, are Nurcus and support Nurculuk in various ways. She is a secondary school graduate and attends the ders for women. They have a four-year old boy and a six-month old daughter.

Metin has three sisters, two of them older and one younger than himself. All three are now housewives. One has graduated from a primary school. His only brother left school before completing Lycée and became a merchant. All his sisters and his brother are respectful towards religion and have sympathy for the Nurcus. None of them performs the namaz regularly. All the family, including his mother, live in Tavas.

The story of how Metin became interested in Nurculuk does not differ very much from that of other students, but his original motivation may be counted rather exceptional. In 1967 one of Metin's lycée friends from Tavas told him he had been taken to a Nurcu gathering in Denizli and spoke of what had happened there. Metin, under the influence of adverse propaganda and hoping to find out the faults the Nurcus had, in order to criticise and make fun of them, asked his friend to take him to a Nurcu meeting. The friend took him to a ders at which another student from their dormitory was present. Metin did not understand the ders at all, but decided to go again to find out what it was all about, though his friend went no more. It was this sheer curiosity and not a search for answers to puzzling questions or problems that led Metin to attend further derses. He said that, though he may have wanted spiritual satisfaction, he definitely was not expecting anything like that from Nurculuk.

For three months he attended ders without feeling any desire to become a Nurcu, but then an itinerant ağabey called at Denizli. This ağabey who was extremely well-versed in the Risale-i Nur opened Metin's eyes to the meaning of the Risale-i Nur and of Nurculuk by expounding some parts of the Risale-i Nur which Metin had been unable to understand. Metin learnt a lot of things from this ağabey. For example, that the Risale-i Nur was not only a religious book but it had its social functions too; the importance of hizmet; Nurculuk was not just a 'Said Nursi Movement' but a cemaat (community) movement and so forth. Comparing this ağabey very favourably with other Nurcus in Denizli, Metin then realised that through true understanding of the Risale-i Nur one could attract and convince others who had questions about Islam.

In the course of time, Metin got to know the Nurcus in the area and began to study the Risale-i Nur himself and discuss the religious subjects with his friends in the dormitory. He consequently convinced quite a number of his friends that the Risale-i Nur was not a book of sophistry but was logical, realistic and humanistic. Most of them started becoming interested in the Risale-i Nur and some of them became Nurcus. Metin said, 'For a student, the final year in the Lycée is a period of crystallising vague ideas into a definite form. I encountered the Risale-i Nur at this period of my life. Consequently, my ideas were formed with the Risale-i Nur as a yardstick. I had no need to discuss any of those subjects studied in the Risale-i Nur. I had not even thought of them, but later I realised that one could encounter them at any time and should therefore be prepared to discuss them.'

When he first started attending the ders in Denizli, his family was unhappy about this, fearing prosecution, but neither did they force

Metin not to go there. Now the family is no longer afraid, furthermore they are very happy with his being religious and helpful towards other people, especially the hemşehris. Most of the inhabitants of Metin's town like Metin and know that Metin has a connection with the Nurcus. It is a general belief amongst the townsmen that the Nurcus are the most pious and sincere Muslims. So, when they send their children to the university in Istanbul, they usually send them to Metin in order to make sure that their children will be with religious men and these men will take care of them.

Metin is a member of a barristers' society in addition to his membership of the Istanbul Bar Association. In fact he divides his working hours into two. Four days a week he devotes to hizmets, including writing articles for Yeni Nesil newspaper and Köprü magazine. Half of the suits he defends in the court are related to Nurculuk or Nurcus. Sometimes, when he is free from other business, he reads a specific subject in the Risale-i Nur. For non-professional reading he prefers political and ideological works. He reads Yeni Nesil, Tercüman and Milliyet daily, and the other newspapers too if there is an important article in them. As a weekly magazine he reads Yankı.

Metin has not got a television set in his house, he is very sorry that there is no programme on television worth watching. He listens to the news on the radio. He used to go to the cinema whenever there was a famous and popular film, but now only goes to very interesting films. He also goes to the theatre once in a while if there is a play of which he approves. Metin does not smoke or drink alcohol. He has never been abroad, neither does he seem to be interested in travelling outside Turkey.

My aim in this chapter has been to describe the processes involved in becoming a member of Nurculuk. The focus has been on how members account for their conversion and to show that there is a correspondence between this and the routine practice of the movement.

The content of what they come to believe is something examined in the next chapter. The practical business of giving witness to Nurcu beliefs becomes one of discussing a whole range of topics about politics, morality and social affairs which constitute the main framework of Nurcu views and ideology.

NOTES

1. Cf. David G. Bromley and Anson D. Shupe, Jr., "Just a few years seem like a Lifetime": A Role Theory Approach to Participation in Religious Movements", Research in Social Movements, Conflicts and Change, ed. Louis Kriesberg (Connecticut, 1979), II, 182.

2. Some examples of this literature are: Hekimoğlu İsmail [Ömer Okçu], Minyeli Abdullah (Istanbul, 1971); Yavuz Bahadıroğlu [Niyazi Birinci], Yol Başı (Istanbul, 1979).

3. Peter Berger, The Sacred Canopy (New York, 1967); Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, "Sociology of Religion and Sociology of Knowledge", Sociology and Social Research, XLVII, (1963), pp. 417-27.

4. R.N. Bellah, "Christianity and Symbolic Realism", Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, IX, No. 2 (Summer, 1970), pp. 89-96; R.N. Bellah, "Religious Evolution", American Sociological Review, XXIX, (1964), pp. 358-74.

5. Bryan Taylor, "Conversion and Cognition: An Area for Empirical Study in the Microsociology of Religion", Social Compass, XXIII, No. 1 (1967), p. 11.

6. James A. Beckford, "Accounting for Conversion", The British Journal of Sociology, XXIX, No.2 (June 1978), p. 249.

7. Ibid., p. 250.

8. Cf. Ibid., pp. 249-62.

9. The medrese's activities were, of course, contrary to Turkish laws; they had been closed by Atatürk in 1925.

10. This also is mentioned in Necmeddin Şahiner, Bilinmiyen Taraflariyle Bediuzzaman Said Nursi (Kronolojik Hayatı), 6th ed. (Istanbul, 1979) p. 381.

CHAPTER VII

NURCU VIEWS

The main aim of this chapter is to describe the Nurcu Weltanschauung in both its religious and political aspects. There is no systematic attempt to compare Nurcu views with other systems of thought. Indeed, it would be difficult to do so since Nurcu thought is not systematic and is not developed around a sustained critique of other bodies of thought. All the subjects Said Nursi dealt with were discussed in order to illuminate some aspect of faith. Nevertheless, as I have already explained in Chapter I, it is clear that Nurcu thinking must itself be understood against the background of social and political change in Turkey. Furthermore, comparison with other groups in Turkey is difficult because Nurcus in their treatment of other groups (except, perhaps, for the Iran of Ayatollah Khomeini) are careful to play down issues which might lead to conflict between themselves and others. Nurcus therefore do not seek to define themselves in opposition to others as is often the case in ideological conflict of a strictly political kind. A strong theme to emerge, therefore, in the interviews is that of tolerance for other Islamic religious groups. And since they see themselves as potential victims of harassment during times of political crisis, they are careful to maintain a low, non-oppositional political profile. This largely explains the pro-Western, liberal, open-minded, essentially modernist outlook that they project to outsiders.

As we have seen, Nurculuk is a movement which came into being together with the Risale-i Nur and was disseminated from it. Now hardly any Nurcu passes a day without reading a piece from the Risale-i Nur; so

this moulds his views. The views of Nurcus would be identical were it not for the difference in the understanding capacity of individual Nurcus. Nevertheless, such variations as do exist are negligible as far as the 'Nurcu identity' is concerned, because it is the ultimate aim of every Nurcu to be able to use even the most difficult terms in the Risale-i Nur whenever he discusses a religious subject with others.

During my interviews with twelve Nurcus in the summer of 1981, I asked each of them ninety questions to get a general picture of Nurcu views. It became obvious that the Risale-i Nur was the only point of reference for Nurcus. Almost all of my informants tried their best to answer my questions concerning their views on particular subjects exactly as they had studied them in the Risale-i Nur. Some of them consulted the Risale-i Nur even during the interview and read out the relevant passages from it. Some of them felt anxious that their answers should be in accordance with what was stated in the Risale-i Nur and immediately afterwards checked their answers with it. Some others, however, were so sure of their answers that they often wanted to prove that the same statement was mentioned in the Risale-i Nur.

In this chapter, unless they are very closely connected, questions will be studied individually but grouped into four main categories: a) on politics; b) on social matters; c) on matters of belief; and d) on Nurculuk itself.

Most of the time my informants gave identical answers to the same question. Only where an informant answered the question noticeably differently from the others will a special reference be given to his statement, otherwise all of the answers will be converted into a 'general Nurcu view' on the subject under discussion. The views set out below are, therefore, the Nurcu views, not necessarily this writer's views.

Besides these twelve informants' answers, the Nurcu sources also will be referred to when possible in order to extend the views to the group level. In case of differences between informants' statements and the sources, then that difference will be pointed out briefly in a footnote. Where there is no distinguishable variation between the informants' statements and the sources, the source reference will be recorded without further comment.

1. ON POLITICS

Freedom and Liberalism

Freedom is essential to a human being but must be restricted in accordance with the Şeriat. Because one should harm neither himself nor others and the only way for a human being to know what is harmful for himself is to listen to the Şeriat which was revealed by God to teach mankind what he does not know, what is good and what is bad for him. A human being cannot restrict his freedom on his own because in his nature his main powers such as appetite, passion and intellect are not limited. On the other hand, it is also God's command that the freedom of a person may be restricted according to the Şeriat only when this person freely accepts these restrictions being imposed on him, otherwise no-one is entitled to impose the Şeriat on a person who does not believe in it.

Freedom in social life means that apart from the laws of justice, no-one should dominate anyone. It is the necessary condition of living in a society that no-one should transgress the sphere of freedom of others, everybody's right should be preserved. Every person should enjoy a royal freedom in his harekât-ı meşrua (actions in accordance with the Şeriat).[1] Thus, the enjoyment of this freedom by the individuals will result in social freedom.

If freedom is not restricted, then it is called 'absolute freedom', the freedom of animals, which gives way to the 'despotism of Satan'.

Belief and freedom are directly proportional: the more one trusts in God, the more freedom he enjoys because he, as a believer in God, will not submit himself, his thought, his conscience to the domination of any creature. No believer claims freedom before the Will of God, he simply obeys it. So, belief frees the believer from the slavery of creatures and makes him like a sultan on earth. It is in this sense that freedom is regarded as a property of faith. Freedom is so important in Islam that the Muslim community proclaims its freedom every week by performing the Friday congregational namaz publicly.

Freedom should be granted to the minorities too in a Muslim society because, first of all, this was what the Şeriat ordained, and it is also important not to give any impression to the non-Muslims that Islam is a religion of despotism. Additionally, by giving freedom to the minorities, the Muslim society will secure the freedom of their fellow-Muslims who live in non-Muslim societies.

Liberalism basically is the result of the recognition of the individual's freedom. But in practice, it needs state intervention to regulate it. This proves that liberalist practice in Europe lacks at root some essential regulators which are, in fact, the rules of the Şeriat, although liberalism is the doctrine closest to Islam.[2]

Equality

Reason and nature confirm that there should be equality before the law, but absolute equality is impossible because the capacities and the needs of individual human beings are different. Every person will develop his capacity in one or two fields so that he will meet the needs of society in those fields like a cog in a machine.

Equality without competition results in equality in poverty. Competition, high aspirations and the possession of property must be encouraged so that a human being will develop his capacities and consequently the whole of society will benefit.

Those who want to achieve absolute equality prevent humanity from making progress. The principle of absolute equality can be applied only when the main reason in the creation of mankind, which is to make progress, is neglected. It is, indeed, against human nature to support absolute equality because the abilities and the senses of animals are limited and not really free to develop, but those of a human being are created in just the opposite way. Therefore, mankind is able to expand his endless capacities to unlimited degrees and thus to function as if they constitute thousands of species while they are one species. That is why every human being is regarded in Islam as the sultan of the living beings and God's vice-regent on earth.[3]

Although there is no equality in merit and status, there must be equality before the law; a king and a poor man are equal before the law. It is only in this sense that equality is the fundamental principle of Islam. There should be no privilege as such, for God says in the Koran, 'the noblest of you in the sight of God is the most righteous of you' (XLIX :13). Therefore, competition, which causes inequality and which is the essence and source of diversity in mankind, should be used in order to reach the most righteous degree of humanity. In practice, to have material power is not regarded as a virtue or as a privilege for a person. For this reason, interest was prohibited and alms-giving was prescribed in Islam.

Equality may also be defined as: 'under similar conditions, the people must be provided with the same opportunities'. That is to say,

equal values must be given equal worth. But, this is only valid between human beings themselves, not between a human being, as a creature, and God, as the Creator, because before God a human being has no value of his own, so he cannot claim anything from God. If God creates a man with only one ear, this man cannot complain about God saying he received unequal treatment because he was not created with two ears.

Human beings are equal before the laws of God in creation and all can benefit or suffer from them to the same degree. If a person cuts his finger, it will bleed regardless of whether he is a saint or a sinner; seed in the soil will grow as well for bad people as for good. The real equality is this: God treats everybody equally when they follow His laws in creation. Whether a person believes in God or not, insofar as his work is in accordance with the laws of creation, the reward will be the same. The reverse is true as well, whoever puts his finger in the fire, it burns regardless of his faith in God.

Because people have recourse to the laws of creation in different ways, so diversity naturally emerges among people in a society, such as, rich and poor, learned and less educated, doctor and farmer, ill and healthy, even believer and unbeliever or young and old can be listed here. But this does not mean that a rich person is more virtuous than a poor man, or a farmer is less honourable than a doctor. However, a believer will be more noble than an unbeliever in the sight of God, though not before the laws of God in creation.[4]

Democracy

Democracy is a system which allows everybody to enjoy his freedom with no fear of oppression and express his will free from any restriction. It is natural and necessary for every civilised man in a free atmosphere to be in favour of democracy.

Üstad, in the name of the Şeriat, has supported constitutionalism which has freedom and liberalism in it, and is against despotism and oppressive regimes. When democracy was in practice in Turkey, he encouraged people to participate in the system and approved it by taking part in the elections and casting his own vote.

Democracy is a regime where only the will of people prevails in its institutions. There is no way in an ideal form of democracy for a despot or a class to dominate the rest of the people in a country. It is in this sense that democracy may be liberal, socialist or Islamic, depending on the majority of people's choice. For example, in a country where the majority of the people are Muslims, the system will then be an Islamic democracy.

Democracy gives the ruled the opportunity to have their wishes reflected by the administration, but not to the extent that this would cause turmoil in society. Balance between the powers of the legislative, the judiciary and the executive must be kept at the levels of their natural capacity. For example, if we assume that if the spirit represents the state, the heart will then represent the legislative, i.e. parliament; as the abode of belief, conscience will be the judiciary, i.e. the courts of law; and reason will be the centre of the executive power. They all combine to form a perfect state under the presidency of the spirit, the institutions keeping within their naturally defined boundaries. Therefore, when the democratic institutions do not interfere in each other's spheres of responsibility, a healthy democratic system results and those who are in the ruling position will not use their authority as a means of oppression but a means of service to the people. Thus democracy appears to be the modern name in the twentieth century for republicanism, which is what Islam recommended to Muslims.

The advantages of democracy when compared with other systems are as follows: it recognises equality, human rights and individuals' freedom to possess property, freedom of religion and conscience; it gives everybody equal opportunity to elect and to be elected and to join the administrative body (in a democracy, every person's vote has equal effect regardless of the difference in their knowledge or virtue, the idea of which is accepted and practised by Islam as well); it provides free conditions to live, to proclaim one's faith and even disseminate it to others; it institutionalises consultation, which is one of the fundamentals of Islam, thus the society finds the remedy for its own problems; it does not allow any person or group to dominate others either in the name of religion or in the name of atheism, nor does it let the administrators ignore the people's demands; and it fits the primordial nature of human beings. As far as the hizmets are concerned, again, democracy is the best of all known systems. Hizmets in Turkey have been carried out without difficulty since the democratic regime was introduced in 1950, only when it was interrupted by military interventions were the hizmets also hindered or brought to a halt.

Had we lost democracy in Turkey, the only alternative to it would have been communism, because when a Muslim loses his faith in Islam, he never embraces any other religion but leaves religion completely and becomes a communist. Therefore, the only one way for the Turkish nation to save liberal democracy and avoid the trap of communism is to support the truths of the Koran and the faith. On a temporary basis the alternative to democracy in Turkey has always been the military coup d'états which equalled the RPP's despotism during the one-party system in the Republican period until 1950 and represents the view of a certain group in the military ranks who never regarded this nation to be worthy of democracy.

Although Turkey is ruled with a democratic system, in its application there are some practices that may be identified with the unjustifiable motto of 'for the benefit of the people in spite of the wishes of the people'. These are: limiting the freedom of religion; interference of the state in people's private lives[5]; unnecessary state control over society thereby irritating the citizens; giving opportunities to those who exploit democratic rights in order to destroy democracy; certain forms of despotism that still exist, e.g. some institutions that were established to limit the people's freedom against their desires, such as the Constitutional Courts, the Council of State, the High Court of Appeal and the State Radio and Television Organisation, even the preparation of the 1961 Constitution itself was not democratic - a group who held military power imposed all sorts of restrictions under the name of "principles"[6] upon the commissions appointed to prepare a draft for the constitution. Of course, if the constitution itself is prepared under pressure, the institutions it establishes cannot be expected to act democratically.

In Nurculuk the hizmets are conducted in accordance with democratic principles because every decision taken by the group at any level must be an outcome of consultation. There is no person or a group of people entitled to give orders to other brothers. Even the followers do not have to obey the decisions taken in any consultation meeting. The fundamental principle of Nurculuk is brotherhood, there is no şeyh-murid (master-disciple) or father-son relationship in Nurculuk. The more experienced brothers (ağabeys) may make suggestions to other brothers, but they never go beyond this, otherwise they would be in conflict with the principles Üstad put forward in the treatise on sincerity in Lem'alar.

Nurcus have always been in favour of legitimate liberal and open governments, and have never supported any individual or class dictatorship

whatever the name, whatever the purpose. Any method of government other than the liberal democratic system will not be accepted by this nation which has enjoyed the pleasure of freedom, as Üstad says:

> Eski hal muhal ... ya yeni hal veya izmihlâl[7]
>
> The old condition is impossible [to bring back] ...
>
> [one should accept] either the new condition or annihilation.

So, Nurcus too have to follow the principles of this age, which is the age of freedom, in their hizmets. Every Nurcu must be free to stay in the group or to leave it whenever he wishes. It is impossible to keep anybody by force who does not want to carry on his hizmets. In fact, it would be harmful to the group.[8]

Human Rights

Every human being is born equal and has equal rights from birth as well as in the course of his life. These rights are: the right to live, to be free, to think, to possess property, to inherit, to elect and to be elected, to be equal before the law, to travel, to choose a religion, (for women) to veil themselves, indeed humans must have the right to choose evil because this world is a testing place, since God created human beings with this ability, so man should not be deprived of this right.

No circumstances provide any reason to oppress human rights partially or totally, temporarily or permanently. Because mankind is happy to the extent that he enjoys his rights which he believes he should have, he serves society to the extent that he feels that it guarantees his rights. Therefore, these rights should receive every kind of protection and must be regarded as the most important of all duties of a society towards the individual.

In Islam, it is an established principle that an individual's right cannot be sacrificed even for the sake of the whole society. Üstad gave in the Risale-i Nur an example to explain this plainly. He said that if there were one innocent and nine guilty men in a ship, no-one would have the right to sink this ship to punish the guilty,[9] every individual's right must be preserved without any exception. Because of this understanding of 'right', Islam strictly prohibited punishing an individual for another's fault.[10]

There is virtually no difference between what Üstad defended as human rights and what was accepted by the International Organisation of Human Rights in 1948. When we say this, one may immediately be inclined to ask about slavery in Islam. Of course, it must be remembered that Islam did not introduce the institution of slavery but found it in a very primitive and wild condition and in order to make this institution disappear in the course of time, ameliorated its conditions. Indeed, human rights are established in Islam according to the rules laid down by the creator who knows best what the rights of His creatures are.[11]

Social Class

The history of humanity can be divided into five main epochs: a) primitiveness and savageness; b) slavery (where the slave is the permanent property of his owner; c) servitude (where there is some possibility of emancipation); d) wage-earning; and e) ownership and freedom. In the wage-earning epoch, human beings gained freedom but this freedom covered only a part of their lives, the other part was still subject to being sold to others. Against the unjust practices which took place during the wage-earning period, socialism emerged as an alternative to it. But the nature of socialism showed itself to be another reactionary system trying to deprive mankind of the rights he had acquired throughout history, e.g. the right to possess property. This is undoubtedly against human

nature and will not replace the wage-earning period. The only possibility for human beings who are now living in the wage-earning period is to pass to the 'ownership and freedom' period, because it is natural, progressive and constructive. Now men are experiencing the last two periods, the 'wage-earning' is the passage period and the 'ownership and freedom' is the one to come, and the latter will be the last period for them.

Nevertheless, in today's world, human beings inevitably become classified in different ways according to their natural abilities, aptitude and even physical capacity. In this century these variations give rise to the concept of 'social classes'.[12] To argue whether class differences exist in a society or not is useless. The important thing is the regulation of the relationship between these classes which emerge as a result of social life. Just as there must be different professions to meet the various needs of a society, so there must be different classes, but belonging to a particular social class should not confer superiority or inferiority. Everybody develops his ability in a different profession to a different level, thus he finds himself in a particular group of people within his profession. This fact defines his class in the society. Indeed, it is in this sense that social classes must exist in a society so that competition may develop human capacities and senses, rather than to cause conflict between the classes. In order to avoid class conflict, in civilised societies, the necessary measures have been taken by eroding the extreme elements in class structure which would otherwise encourage one class to dominate the others. This is what Islam did. Islam prescribed the principle of mutual assistance in society, for example the verse in the Koran V:2, and ordered zekat (almsgiving) and prohibited interest, therefore the conflict between the classes in a Muslim society never existed.[13]

Capitalism

Capitalism is an economic system which aimed at providing people with their material and spiritual needs in an atmosphere where the personal rights and freedom are acknowledged. In a capitalist system private enterprise, personal property and other economic rights are assured by the state authorities. In this respect, capitalism does not conflict with Islam. On the other hand, capitalism in practice legitimatised capital's domination of society and exploitation of human labour. Although it helped establish heavy industry by letting a small number of people accumulate capital in their hands, it is this aspect of capitalism that gave the economic, political and social opportunities to only a small group in society and thus created an unbridgeable gap between the classes.

Capitalists in a materialist society display the following two attitudes as they manipulate the existing political system in order to continue to widen their economic power even more: 1) 'What is it to me if others starve to death as long as I am well-fed'; and 2) 'You will work and I will eat'.[14] These cruel practices of capitalists invited another unjust system, socialism, to appear as an alternative to capitalism. To prevent itself from completely disappearing, capitalism gradually modified its unfair principles and began to establish 'Welfare States' without damaging fundamental human rights, i.e. private enterprise, freedom, the right to possess property, etc. With this change, capitalism came closer to Islam, though not completely.

In Islam the employers are expected to defend the rights of their workers just as they defend their own rights. For example, interest is prohibited and almsgiving is ordered by Islam so that the rich will be responsible for the poor and will not earn anything just because they

hold the capital in their hands. These two rules in Islam help particularly to generate mercy from rich to poor, and respect from poor to rich and thus constitute a bridge between these two main classes of society. Moreover, Islam regulates the individual's understanding of life so that he would spend only on what he really needs without exceeding the economic level of people around him, no matter how wealthy he may be. Therefore, in a Muslim community, it is virtually impossible to find profiteers or a group of employers spendthrift enough to arouse rebellious thoughts among their workers.[15]

Republicanism

A republic is a system of government where sovereignty belongs to the people only, the state is at the service of the people, not an institution to oppress them, for a republic means justice, consultation and limiting power to the law alone.[16] So, it is the system closest to human nature and matches the requirements of Islam. But one should not confuse a republic with the names of such states as Russia and Iran which call themselves 'republics'; in fact, their regimes are just 'absolute despotism'.

The main principles of republicanism are as follows: freedom and fundamental rights of individuals must be under state guarantee, free competition must be accepted, the law is supreme, the state is bound by the law, and there must be equality before the law. With these principles, which respect the human will and rights, a republican system is more

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acceptable than any other system.

The essence of a republic is democracy and, in this century, democracy is protecting the republican regime in Turkey and this ultimately means protecting Islam, because if we lose the republic in Turkey, we will lose Islam too. For the moment democracy is the only alternative to the totalitarian communist regimes and we hope that Turkey will develop into

a real republic both by making even more progress and by ridding itself of the faults caused by the malpractices of the politicians.[18]

The Caliphate

The Caliphate is a religious as well as an administrative[19] institution representing the unity of the Muslim world. The most important function of the caliphate is to establish solidarity and a common policy between the Muslim countries, to ensure that they will not be separated. But while the caliphate is uniting the Muslim countries under its leadership, it does not infringe upon their national existence.

When Muslim communities realise the importance of unity of the Muslim world, they can easily bring it about by gathering under the banner of the caliphate. Only after this can they make themselves felt in international politics and be an alternative to other super powers. This must be the purpose of every Muslim country despite the fact that the enemies of Islam have always believed that the Muslim world would be weaker if they could invalidate the caliphate system in Islam.

It is accepted by contemporary Muslim scholars that the caliphate in this century must be represented by councils which will be a substitute for the caliph as a person. Thus the institution of the caliphate will function even more effectively.[20] This council will also give an opportunity to those Muslim states which all now individually want to unite the Muslim World under their leadership to represent themselves in the Council. So rivalry and separatism will come to an end.

Had the Caliphate not been abolished by parliament in Turkey, we would have received more benefit than harm from it. As a matter of fact, we could have preserved 'our Caliph' just as the British kept their Queen - who has a similar position - to keep their Commonwealth going. After the abolition of the caliphate, Üstad advocated that the spiritual

personality of the parliament could, by proxy, assume the role of the caliphate.[21, 22]

Communism and Communists

Communism is a regime which usurps all kinds of human rights in the name of étatism, maintains only collective production, rejects all values other than material values, contradicts the primordial nature of human beings by accepting absolute equality and a classless society, tries to eradicate all sorts of religious beliefs, and breeds anarchy by supporting materialism and the denial of religion - thus encouraging oppression, bloodshed, hatred, disgust and the like. Because communism is based on the benefit of a very small minority, it can never please the people of the country where it is practised - in fact, no so-called communist country was able to practise it as it was theoretically conceived. The people who groan under the injustice of communism risk their lives to escape to the free world.

The communist regime does not defend the workers' rights as it claims but exploits them to the full. It treats the human as a robot, completely devoid of moral and spiritual matters, and takes him back from the 'wage-earning' to the 'servitude' epoch. Human beings will realise the real face of this atheistic and despotic regime which will definitely collapse very soon, because it does not recognise any legal protection for concepts like religion, family and personal property. Human nature can never stand this for a long period. According to Üstad's analyses, this regime will bring under its influence at the most forty percent of the world and then will begin to disintegrate and collapse.[23]

Communism arose as a reaction to the misuse and malpractice of capitalism and, at the moment, it seems to be an alternative to capitalism. But communism never became established in a country by the will of the

majority of the people. Whenever it entered in a country, it did so only by a small minority killing millions of the inhabitants. It is, of course, natural for communism to do so.

There is no relation whatsoever between the absolute equality which communism accepts and the social justice which is enjoined by Islam. This is a purposeful and forced interpretation of Islam by communists who, in fact, aim at spoiling the relationship between Christians and Muslims and, consequently, hope to impose communism on the Muslim world by severing it from its Christian allies.

Those countries in Europe, namely Scandinavian countries, which call themselves 'socialist' do not, in fact, accept political socialism; capitalism has converted itself into a Welfare State in these countries. Even Üstad approved of the application of socialism in Sweden.[24] Another type of this socialism, which is good, is seen in West Germany but it is difficult to prevent it from becoming transformed into Bolshevism when it is united with nationalism.[25]

Üstad argued that unequal distribution of wealth would bring trouble to Europe and said: 'the snake's nest is the home of inequality in living standards'.[26] This trouble can only be prevented when the restrictions Islam proposed on wealth distribution are implemented.

Üstad drew an important distinction between European and Muslim countries. He held that European countries would continue to succeed provided they could solve the problem of wealth distribution. He felt that if a European abandoned his Christian faith, his cultural and social background would still enable him to maintain his human virtues. In a Muslim country, however, there was no hope for a person who turned his back on Islam - such a person could not become a Christian or a Jew, he would inevitably become an anarchist and a communist. The European he

likened to yoghurt which when it goes off is still innocuous, whereas the Muslim is like butter which, when rancid, becomes poisonous.[27] So, if the free world wants to prevent a Muslim country from becoming communists, it should support Islam and the truths of the Koran. These truths are the real 'atomic bombs' against atheism and ultimately communism (because the Muslim who turns atheist will inevitably become communist). Thus support for Islam would be a more effective form of aid than material or military support. Imprisoning a few communists is not an effective way of combatting communism. The example of China clearly shows that the rapid spread of communism cannot be halted by the detention of say one per cent of communists. Applying this lesson to Turkey, it is plain that military intervention and rule and American-style anti-communist drives are not sufficient to stop the menace of communism.[28]

If we follow Islam in our lives, communism will never enter Turkey. In fact, Nurculuk is the only adequate opposition to communism at the intellectual level. Nurcus are saving the youth of the country from becoming atheist and consequently falling into the hands of the communists. Üstad was so conscious of the danger that he even interpreted the concept of Deccal (a legendary personage in Islamic eschatology who would come and destroy religion at the end of time) as communism itself, and renaming communism, he called upon all people of religion to fight 'Deccalism'.[29]

Freemasons

Freemasonry is an international organisation working under the patronage of the Jews to protect the interests of its members. With the help of, and alongside, this organisation, freemasons keep international trade under their control. The differences of race, colour, religion, language and the like between the members do not cause any divergence. The most important thing of all for this organisation is to obtain the

greatest benefit for its members, no matter whether this benefit is achieved through illicit means.

Freemasons should be divided into two categories. In the first, lower category, masons are unaware what free masonry really is. The Lions and Rotary Clubs are the organisations for the lower category of masonry and their function is to provide all the means to corrupt the spiritual values of middle class innocent men.[30] When this is achieved, they promote the corrupted ones to the second, higher category which is the secret and real masonry. At this level freemasons, by claiming that masonry is above all religion, aim at imposing atheism upon its members in order to serve Zionism which strives for the expansion of the state of Israel into the whole area traditionally claimed by Zionists. The signs, introductions and rites they use in their secret gatherings are all taken from the Talmud; these are Jewish traditions.

The goal of even the most innocent freemason is worldly benefit, there can be no virtue in this organisation whatsoever. There is no legitimate reason for a Muslim to become a freemason. Their activities in Turkey should be banned by the law because at the very least it is a society whose roots are abroad. Unfortunately, there is no way to stop them because most of the high class bureaucrats, even some ministers, are themselves freemasons.

Towards the end of the Ottoman Empire, this organisation, by destroying particularly the Islamic values of Muslims, tried hard to break the administrators' support for the unity of Muslim nations. After the Republic, this organisation, as an extension of the harmful group in the Party of Union and Progress, worked within the RPP to accomplish the same purpose. When Üstad urged the DP to state its position against communists and freemasons by taking its place in the Muslim world[31] his reference to freemasons meant those who are in the RPP.

But after the establishment of Israel, freemasons in Turkey began to play a hypocritical role towards Israel in order to develop their business with the Arab world. In addition to Israel, they had to be hypocritical towards Europe where they got the financial help from the money market which is again under the control of freemasons.

Üstad generally did not want to mention the enemies of Islam by name, he used general words to describe them.[32] For example, he used the term İfsat komitesi (committee for subversion)[33] referring to freemasons who are being harmful to Islam in Turkey by spoiling the faith of ten to twenty per cent of the population.[34,35]

Atheists and Anarchists

Atheism remained as a mere political thought during the ancient Hellenistic and Roman civilisations. It was first officially accepted at the state level in 1917 after the revolution in Russia.

Atheism cannot be scientifically proved because it does not have a scientific basis. It is an indifference or a renunciation, that is, it is non-acceptance which consists simply of not consenting to affirmation of God's existence or acceptance of non-being.[36] When a person accepts that there is a Creator, then he must also submit himself to His commands and restrictions. Therefore, atheism is the way of those who do not want to be bound by restrictions. But, by doing so, atheists transgress against the rights of all creation because every being bears witness to the attributes of the Creator. Thus, atheists commit a crime as big as the universe for this rejection of the witness of those creatures which proclaim God's glory. Living with this crime, the atheists' consciences become rotten, and, at the end, they start functioning as poison in society.

In this century, atheists and materialists are the most dangerous menace to a Muslim society. If a person after being brought up in an Islamic culture rejects religion, he cannot accept anything but become an anarchist because Islam itself is a religion of reason and it encourages people to use this reason, those who reject it do so not with their reason but just out of spite or hatred which are the sources of anarchy. Therefore, in Muslim societies, unlike Christian ones, activities of communists, freemasons and other irreligious groups bring forth nothing but anarchy.

The only way to save this country, Turkey, from anarchy is to uphold the truths of faith. Üstad's only goal was to fight atheism by strengthening faith in God, because he believed that to control thousands of people of faith was much easier than to control a handful of non-believers whose morals were spoiled.

Unfortunately, atheism was introduced into Turkey not only as a philosophical thought but then when the new generation had been demoralised and its human values spoiled, atheism became a way of life that this generation had to adopt. Of course, the ultimate result of atheism is anarchy. Üstad was very much aware of the threat of anarchy to public security, so he interpreted Ye'cuc and Me'cuc (Gog and Magog) as anarchists.[37]

Nationalism

Nationalism as an ideology has played an important role in destroying the kingdoms in the West and the empires of the East which had been established on a religious basis. Later on the West used this ideology particularly in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as a means to dominate the East. Moreover, the intelligentsia of the East who were educated under the influence of weltanschauung of the West has seen nationalism as an agency to help society break with its traditional

structure and has tried to establish a secular and rational system within the framework of nationalism.

However, there are two types of nationalism. The first is racialism which can be called 'negative nationalism'; it is a source of antagonism; it is ill-omened and dangerous. The second type of nationalism is a positive one, it is necessary for social existence, it is a source of mutual assistance, understanding and solidarity. This positive nationalism must be used only to serve Islam, it must be the armour and castle of Islam but it must not replace it. The Ottomans, for instance, by following Islam only, were able to overcome all sorts of racialist separatist elements and survive six hundred years. We can see how dangerous to our country the negative sort of nationalism is when we study the late period of the Ottomans.

Although the different nations of Europe had the same religion, of civilisation, system of government and even the same feeling/being European, racist propaganda in Europe caused the last two world wars. Because this kind of nationalism teaches that a nation can survive only by exploiting and exterminating other races, it generates conflict and antagonism rather than peace and agreement, and it is as dangerous as communism.

Üstad saw racialism as a frenk illeti (European disease) because it was introduced to us by the West, and naturally objected to Pan-Turanism saying that he preferred a bitter onion to an imaginary apple (Kızıl Elma - Turan).

Because the people who accept racialism despise other races, they imagine that God has been unjust in creating them with less value, and thus criticise the divine dispensation. Üstad extended this view to renunciating racism at the level of 'human racialism'. For him, the egoism

of the human race gives strength to the individual egoism by means of human racialism or national racialism. It was this egoism that makes discrimination between God's creatures by assuming that the human race is superior to other creatures, or by assuming that a particular race is superior to other races. This is the source of all evil which makes a human being contest the divine dispensation and even the commands of God, like Satan who rebelled against God when He created Adam and ever since has been disobeying God's commands.[38]

The reason for the creation of different races was simply to help the people in the same race to know each other and establish a social life between themselves for mutual assistance. For example, to divide an army into different units, such as regiments, battalions ..., or artillery, cavalry, etc. is to let every private know his duty. The various races which all have sprung from the prophet Adam are now like the different trees in an orchard: they are not to claim superiority over, or to fight each other but to give different fruits.

Our nationality is Islam. To us, religion and nation cannot be separated. Üstad said:

> Milletimiz bir vücuddur, ruhu İslamiyet, akli Kur'an ve imandır.[39]
>
> Our nationality is like a body in which the spirit is Islam and the intelligence is the Qur'an and Faith.

The continuation and perpetuation of our nation is in proportion to its being assimilated with Islam, because the nationality of Turks has been mixed with Islam. All Turks are Muslims, no matter where they are. In every part of the world their nationality has blended with Islam, it is inseparable. Turk means Muslim, those who left Islam are not Turks any more.[40] There is no need to follow European ideas of nationalism which are based on racialism only.

We do not accept those who abandon their Islamic nationality as Turks.[41] They are Europeans disguised as Turks. The Ottoman has approved that Islamic nationality was far more advantageous than racialism. Turks can continue their service to Islam which lasted six hundred years only preserving their Islamic nationality. If the Turks do not preserve their Islamic nationality and rather follow racialism, then the seventy per cent of the inhabitants of this country will take sides against Islam as well as the Turks, because the real Turks constitute only the thirty per cent of the population of Turkey.

Üstad proposed in his letter addressed to the President of the Republic and the Prime Minister[42] an Islamic university to be established in Asia as a necessary measure against ever-growing nationalist separatist ideas, so that nationalism would not corrupt the Muslim nations in Arabia, India, Iran, Caucasia, Turkistan, Kurdistan and the like.[43]

International Organisations: UNO, NATO and EEC

Üstad had two reasons to support international organisations. The first was that through these organisations the threat of racialism would be diminished; the second was that they would take measures against the ever-expansionist policy of communism at the international level. Üstad had always been in favour of the alliance between Muslims and truly religious Christians against aggressive atheism, and advised us that the enemy of our enemy was our friend as long as he maintained his enmity and that we should refrain from arguing the points of differences with him in order to combat our joint enemy.

As there has to be some kind of relationship between individuals who live in a civilised society, so too there has to be a relationship between the states of the modern age. After the Second World War, the nations of the world established the United Nations Organisation to find

solutions through diplomatic means for disagreements that might occur between states in order to avoid catastrophes such as those that befell mankind during the last world wars. Although it is obvious that UNO is not being as effective as was hoped when it was established, because of the sharp polarisation between the states, the sides - especially the small states - are able to defend themselves before world public opinion or to express their views on the problems of the world. This organisation must continue its function but also must re-organise itself to increase its effectiveness. However, because UNO aims to secure the world peace through humane and conciliatory means, everybody should support it.

The states that comprise the free world have to unite their defensive forces in order not to be caught in the web of communism and anarchy which brings forth nothing but despotism and oppression. Because it is impossible for the free world nations to defend their territories, independence and sovereignty individually, NATO is an indispensable safe-guard against the Warsaw Pact countries. Until now NATO has fulfilled this function quite satisfactorily at least as a deterrent force though it needs to be even more powerful. It is not easy for the liberal democratic states to protect themselves against the expansionist communist bloc while remaining outside NATO. Afghanistan is the freshest example of this. NATO and the Warsaw Pact are, in fact, more than representatives of two military alliances, because in olden days war used to take place between religions but now it is between people who are in favour of religion and those who are against religion; they represent religion and atheism respectively. When Ustad sent one of his students to Korea with the UN forces to fight the communists, he told him that it was necessary to go to oppose atheism. Therefore, until communism is wiped out completely from the earth, the existence of NATO is necessary and it is important for Turkey as for other member states.

The liberal democratic states of Europe wanted to have a socially, politically and culturally united Europe. Because they found from historical experience that economic relationships that were unsupported by other relationships caused wars with weapons between states, they founded the EEC in order to achieve political integration through common economic interests among themselves. Of course, states establish relations with other states on grounds of mutual interests, and Turkey, as a candidate member, must consider her economic interests. She cannot just reject such an international economic institution like the EEC or submit herself entirely to it. This relationship with the EEC will, because of the unprotected economic competition, force the national economy to use more advanced technology and, consequently, will increase gross domestic production. On the other hand, it may destroy the national economy completely if Turkey cannot compete with the already developed European countries. But there is no other alternative; the Turkish economy must develop too because no country can live alone. From the point of view of political interests, although Turkey is included in NATO which is a military pact, she needs to secure her place amongst the free world politicall y too, because of her important geo-political situation. If NATO disintegrates, Turkey will remain within the Western bloc rather than within the Third World, most of which is already captured by the Eastern bloc. Some political parties in Turkey that take religious considerations very seriously have become worried that when we join the EEC, Europe would implant Christian customs and thus Christianise the Turkish nation. This is an ungrounded anxiety, because the Christian culture has already been established in Turkey anyway. What may happen is that perhaps we may teach them Islam. As for the effect of Turkey's EEC entry upon the unity of Muslim states, we do not think it will

make any difference since all of the Muslim nations already have commercial relations with the EEC countries.[44]

The Muslim World

The Muslim world has lately been obliged to struggle for freedom. Most of it had fallen under the rule of foreign colonisers. As a consequence of this, it remained behind the developed world. Although after the Second World War almost all of the colonisers withdrew their military and administrative powers from the Muslim countries, their cultural and political influences remained. The most important of all these influences was the destruction of the institution of the Caliphate. Since the Caliphate lost its function through which the Muslim world was able to maintain its political solidarity, every segment of the Muslim world has appeared in the world arena of politics in a different character and with a divergent policy. The result of this is, of course, that they follow policies contrary to their common interests and are then broken into pieces.

Unfortunately, Muslim countries are not benefiting enough from the unifying and mutually supportive aspects of Islam that set forth conciliatory and humane principles to conduct religious and worldly life. In particular, the ruling classes and the intelligentsia of these countries are far from grasping the essential values of Islam. They will never find a realistic solution for the problems of their countries as long as they do not try to come closer to their own religion. Indeed, the vital need of the Muslim world is to turn to itself and to recognise its own values in material and spiritual matters.

In this century, in which international ideologies are dominating the world, the only salvation for Muslims is to unite, particularly against the insidious penetration of communism into the Muslim world. Against

this common enemy, not only Muslims but the whole liberal West should strive to unite the Muslim world,[45] not like the Americans who, by directly supporting Israel, force some Muslim states to ask for help from the Communist bloc and thus become socialist.

In fact, Muslim countries, if they unite, have the potential to constitute a bloc of their own and play a balancing role between the West and the Communist bloc. Thus, they could serve peace in the world by using the strengths they derive from their economies, from oil, and their large population, which is a source of labour and consumption. For this, they must first achieve unanimity of opinion among themselves by overcoming the most important obstacle: nationalism.

Ustad instructed us that one of the two fundamental aims of the Risale-i Nur was to prepare the minds of Muslims to work for an Islamic union and said that the most important farz (obligatory religious duty) of this age for the Muslims was to establish a united Muslim world. As a matter of fact, the Medreset-üz-Zehra which during his life he proposed to all Turkish governments to be established in Eastern Anatolia would work for this aim.[46]

The Arabs

The Arabs are the nation which introduced Islam to the world. They worked hard to spread Islam everywhere for centuries. But, under the strong influence of anti-Islamic ideologies, within as well as outside the Arab world, they deviated from the Islamic path after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and were carried away by nationalist ideas. Mainly because of foreign instigations, the Arabs were divided into artificial small states under the pretext of obtaining their political independence. As a result of this split, instead of working for Islamic unification and solidarity between themselves, every Arab state started

considering its own national interests. Eventually, Arab nationalism attracted their attention and each of the Arab countries strove to represent the Arab world individually. Of course, it is the Muslim world that now suffers from these false aims of the Arab states.

The colonisation of the Arab lands by some Western countries in recent history caused some of the Arab states to be resentful towards the West and to support the Communist bloc politically. Now Russia is finding its way through the vacuum created by nationalism, which is devoid of religion, to penetrate the Middle East ideologically under the name of 'Islamic socialism' or 'Arabic socialism'. Unfortunately, by claiming to follow Islamic socialism, Arab countries, like Iraq, Syria and Libya, are opposing the union of Muslims as well as the free world.

As peoples, but not as represented by their inconsistent and inept rulers, Arabs and Turks are brothers; they are the guardians of the castle of Islam. Arabs' nationalism has mixed with Islam as has that of the Turks; our real nationality is Islam. Üstad suggested that the Arab states must unite and declare a United Arab Republic like that of the Americans, and strive to unite Islam from its captivity and restore it to its glorious days. Arabs can achieve this aim and solve their problems by establishing a council among themselves. We see the Islamic summit conferences as the most promising start for the unification of the Arabs among themselves and with the rest of the Muslim countries.[47]

The United States of America

The USA, first of all, practises all kinds of human rights and particularly the freedom of religious and conscience in its own country and thus wishes to unite all Muslim and Christian countries which share the same conviction, as being liberal and democratic states, against

aggression of the totalitarian states, i.e. communists. Now, the USA is in a position to lead the free world because it is the most powerful country among them. It is fulfilling its function more or less perfectly by giving material and spiritual support to the free world and protecting them. Although from time to time there have been fluctuations in its administration, the last cabinet of the States seemed to be quite consistent in their belief that they are responsible for the protection of the strategically important regions of the free world. This also explains the nature of their economic and military aid. The main principle of the USA's foreign policy is to support the democratic ideals and countries.

Because of the heavy propaganda by the Greek and Jewish members of Congress, the USA recently failed to adjust its foreign policy towards the Muslim world and continued supporting Israel and Greece. Although this failure adversely affected the goodwill of the Muslim world towards the USA, both the Christian and the Muslim world still regard the USA as their mainstay. There is no administrative or other form of religious discrimination in their internal policy, and in their foreign policy they treat Muslims and Christians alike. This definitely helps the Christian world to coalesce with the Muslim world. Now, for example, the state puts no obstacle in the way of an American searching for the true religion. Furthermore, the USA has always been on the side of the Muslim states against communist invasion whenever a Muslim state has sought its support.

As far as Turkey is concerned, the USA had a great influence on the development of democracy in Turkey. When the Russians laid claim to Kars, President Truman took a stand on our side against Russia, announcing that the borders of the USA extended to Kars. Üstad, too, advised the

Democrats to be friends with a big state like the USA which was earnestly working in favour of religion. He further told them that this would only be possible by advocating faith and Islam in the country and opposing atheism. That is how we see the United States, and we do not say, like other fanatic Muslims do, that America and Russia are the same.[48]

The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

Russia has, since the time of the czars, followed an expansionist policy aimed at bringing all the world under its control. Now, as the first country where Marxism was put into practice, it is trying to achieve this aim by spreading revolutionary socialism everywhere in the world. In its internal policy the central government has absolute power and exercises it in an extremely authoritarian fashion. Human rights and freedom are not recognised and private enterprise is replaced by state companies. Because the internal policy of the USSR is completely totalitarian and closed to the outside world, at the international level its foreign policy attracts attention more than its internal policy.

As the leader of the Warsaw Pact, the USSR attempts every means, legitimate and illegitimate alike, in order to maintain the unity of the Socialist bloc. Since it has officially approved an expansionist policy, it supports terrorism and thus creates political and social unrest in other countries in order to annex them. The best example of this is the invasion of Afghanistan through which it revealed its true face to the world. Afghanistan is not the final goal but just a first step on its way to the warm sea. Therefore, this imperialist Russia proves to be the most bloodthirsty state that ever existed in history.

We cannot guess for how long this despotic and closed regime will continue to oppress Russians as well as eighty million Muslim Turks who

are groaning under the cruelty of communism. But it seems to be impossible for the USSR not to be affected by trends and thoughts of the modern world which strongly advocates freedom. We can expect the Soviet Union to develop into a free country soon. Üstad said, a nation could not live without religion and Soviet Russia could not remain irreligious, but as it would not be able to restore Christianity, it would have to make peace with Islam and announce freedom in the country. The signs of this are now to be seen, especially amongst the Eastern European countries, they are awakening and even challenging the Russians.

Russia has always been a threat to Turkey, because it regards Turkey as the guardian of the Straits, the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles, as an obstacle on the way to the warm sea. For its own benefits, the Soviet Union definitely desires to annex Turkey any time it can. It is almost certain that all of the terrorist groups in Turkey are supported and financed by Russia. As far as the economic relationships between the two countries are concerned, these are not so damaging because the most important thing is not to be affected by communist ideology, and public opinion in Turkey is quite alert and sensitive towards it. But this can only ensure its internal security. As to its external security, Turkey has to maintain its alliance with the Western world in order to be protected by the West.[49,50]

China

China is an important country not because of its system, which is communism, but because of its very large population. Although a third of the world population lives in China, it is not yet known to us what kind of role it will play for the future of humanity.

Until the death of Mao, communism was in practice in this country much tighter and more despotic than it was in Russia. China, too, was closed to the outside world. Under the name of the Cultural Revolution,

it rejected foreign technology and industry, and relied on human labour only. This policy condemned its people to live a primitive life. The Maoist system did not recognise anything sacred; it was essentially an anarchist regime and ruled the country contrary to the desires of its people.

By following the strict principles of the Maoist version of communism, China could not succeed in developing at all, and after the death of Mao, the new regime found it inevitable to open its gates to the West. Now, communism is receding and the country is making progress in technology and industry, and people are gaining freedom.

It is not obvious yet whether China will constitute a political bloc or power by finding some allies. Until now, the observers tell us that it is supporting the Western world on condition that they remain as opponents of the Soviet Union, which has, according to China, betrayed communism. The West is now tolerant of communism in China because it sees China as an alternative power against the Soviet Union. For us, too, China must be supported just because it is an enemy of our enemy, namely Russia, and it is not as strong as the United States of America. If China were strong enough to invade our country, then we would perhaps support Russia against China as long as they remain enemies of each other.

We can see that Maoist ideology has found some supporters outside China. That is because China, like Russia, wanted to spread the ideology, which is prevalent in its own country, to other parts of the world. For that reason, we see China, too, to have been involved in the anarchist movements in some Third World countries, particularly in Turkey.[51]

Britain, West Germany and Other Western European States

Since the great French Revolution, almost all of the European states have accepted democracy and developed a common culture. Alongside this

European culture, they continuously improved their political and social relations among themselves. Until recently, they all followed colonialist politics though in various degrees. Each of them now has a self-sufficient agriculture and industry. Under present day conditions, they all felt obliged to organise their economies and their national defence against the Warsaw Pact countries. The unity amongst the European countries needs to be extended even to the United States of America for the benefit of the whole free world.

We want to be friends and have good relations with all European states which are against communism and respect democracy and freedom of belief in their internal and foreign politics. Üstad told us that the Christian world would purify itself from superstitions and, by uniting with Islam, they together would overcome their common enemy, atheism. By Christian world, he meant Europe and the States, because, he said that there were quite a number of well-known scholars and societies in Sweden, Norway, Finland, England and the States searching for the true religion which is, of course, Islam. He also declared in as early as 1908 that Europe was pregnant with Islam and would give birth to it, and the Ottoman Empire was pregnant too but with Europe and would give birth to it.[52] Now, we witness that the Ottomans gave birth to a European state, Turkey, and Europe is getting nearer to the Muslim world than ever before. Whenever a Muslim country faces a communist attack, Christian European countries take their places always beside the Muslim country.

It is always advantageous for Turkey to have good relationships with Western Euope as long as mutual respect and interests are preserved. We do not have any enmity towards any of them. Even if there were some disagreements between Turkey and them, to come to an argument on the fundamental problems would always be possible. Greece, since she became an independent state, continued to be hostile towards the Turkish Republic

as she had been towards the Ottomans, but this caused neither Turkey nor Greece to break their relationship with the West. Both of them are members of the same Treaty Organisation (NATO).

Britain has, for centuries, been the centre of the development and formation of democratic conventions within Western culture. Although she principally accepted liberal democracy in her administrative system, Britain is a traditionalist country and is devoted to her own religious customs. For example, Britain still remains as a colonial power in order to maintain the well-being of her own nation.

Britain, together with France, followed a constant international policy against the Ottoman Empire since 1839 when the Tanzimat Reform period started in the Empire. She tried to break Islamic unity in the past but now the politics of the world have changed and it is even for her benefit to encourage the Muslim countries to unite against the common enemy. Britain is now, to us, a religious and liberal country and it is she who takes the most determined position among her allies against communism and Russia. In Europe, as a member of NATO, she has the strongest navy.

West Germany, too, is a liberal democratic country. She is one of the most reliable states in Europe. Historically, the Germans started attracting the attentions of other nations after being united by Bismarck and since then have nourished a distinct national pride. By bringing the rival states of Europe under their control, the Germans wanted to establish a world empire and caused the First and Second World Wars. They were defeated in both of them because of their uncontrolled eagerness to dominate the world. But, in spite of these two defeats, they recovered in a remarkably short time and regained their old position, particularly in world industry.

In recent history, the Germans did not fight the Ottomans, nor did they colonise any Muslim country; our positive relationship is still continuing. At present, neither the foreign nor the internal policy of West Germany aims at damaging Islam, they have always been against the communist bloc as well. Moreover, the great number of Turkish workers in Germany bind the two countries organically. All these factors contribute to the close friendly relationship between Germany and Turkey. Üstad, too, had sympathy for the German people and, because he hoped that they might embrace Islam some time in the future, showed a favourable attitude towards them by saying 'fortunate Germans'.[53]

Israel, Iran and Iraq

The state of Israel is a problem in the Middle East created by the Jews. Although it was originally a religious matter, later on it became an ideology of a nationalist movement which is known as Zionism. Throughout history, they struggled for the establishment of an independent state for the Jews and Israel is the result of this struggle. Now, Israel is trying exceedingly hard to guarantee and perpetuate her existence in the region. For this purpose, she is striving to gain the support of the Jews outside Israel as well as building up a warrior nation inside the country. In spite of the continuous war in and around the state of Israel, she is making noticeable progress in her civilisation and industry. Because of her own unlimited expansionsist desires, Israel has been an aggressive state continuously threatening peace in the region since the state was founded. In fact, the Jews caused the sympathy other nations had for them to turn into antipathy by establishing Israel on a land where the native inhabitants were forced to leave, and by following a hostile policy towards neighbouring countries.

We may approve only of Israeli foreign policy that is pro-United States and against the Soviet Union. But, on the other hand, this policy

caused most of the Arab states which are enemies of Israel to be against the United States and, ultimately fall in the hand of Russia which is more dangerous than Israel to the Middle East. Unless Israel tries to solve her problems with her neighbours through peaceful means as she did with Egypt, she will continue to be the most dangerous state in the world after communist Russia.[54]

Iran has a different religious life from the rest of the Muslim countries. Some of the practices and understanding of Islam by the people of Iran who are known as Shiites are contrary to the principles of Islam. Because of these diversities, they always caused problems to the other Muslim countries. Lately, during the Shah's regime, Iran wanted to be dominant state in the region and b ought the most sophisticated arms with her revenues. The country now is face to face with the problem of maintaining its own independence. After the revolution her agriculture and industry got even worse. With the conceit of overthrowing the Shah, who seemed to be very powerful, unexpectedly the new regime had to grant freedom to all groups in Iran which had opposed the Shah and his regime. This policy caused great confusion in the country. Under the pretext of maintaining law and order, the new revolutionary government killed so many people that the cruelty exceeded that of the Shah's regime. The reason for this was that the mullahs and especially Khomeini were inexperienced in politics. Unfortunately, these incredible crimes were attributed to Islam and those who did not know the real face of the events misunderstood Muslims and thought that they were all savages like some of the mullahs in Iran.

In Iran today, nothing other than the name of the state is Islamic. Arbitrary and irresponsible administration now is preparing the conditions for communists to take over the country. Oppression, economic inequality

and partisanship which were the subjects of complaint during the Shah's regime, are now aggravated. Of course, no one can approve of what the Shah did in the country, he was an oppressor too, he treated communists and the Muslim activists alike. But, at least, he was against communism and the Soviet Bloc.

We believe that service to Islam cannot be performed through revolution but through reformation which is summoning people one by one to Islam by saving them from the danger of materialism. Üstad clearly stated that he was against insurrection inside a country and his entire life proved this. Revolutions help only anarchist systems like communism. That is why in Iran after the Shah oppression did not end but simply changed hands.

Another neighbour of Turkey is Iraq which has almost nothing apart from petroleum. Her population comprises a considerable number of different minorities. From time to time people who belong to a different mezheps (religious sects) clash in the country. Although the large majority of the population of Iraq are Muslims, the only party in power, the Baath, is trying to impose socialism in the country under the name of 'Islamic socialism'. It is a ridiculous idea to try to reconcile socialism, authoritarianism and absolutism with Islam. The state mechanism is based on the ideology of the party which is supported by only a handful of bureaucrats. If the Baath party grows weak, we hope that these troubles will come to an end.

After his success in Iran, Khomeini wanted his supporters to take over the governments in other countries. Iraq, with her forty-five percent Shiite population, was the most appropriate to this purpose. When Khomeini's supporters began to stir up the Iraqi Shiites, Iraq announced the abrogation of the covenant she had signed with the Shah. Since the new revolutionary

government did not recognise the Shah and his agreements with other countries, Iraq annexed the area she had given to Iran during the Shah's reign, and thus the war broke out.

This war does not have any serious reason behind it and is harming unity in the Muslim world. In fact, this war is helping only Russia who wanted to use Iraq as a military base to attack and weaken Iran so that in the end Iran will be in the position of Afghanistan before the invasion. We hope that Iraq and Iran will make peace with one another and soon establish a pact with Turkey and Pakistan as before. That would be the only way to protect themselves from the danger of falling into Afghanistan's position.[55]

The Kurds

The Kurds have been part of the same history, culture and beliefs as the Turks and have been living together with them like other ethnic groups in the area for centuries. Now, within the Turkish Republic they have, like any other citizens, equal rights and freedom and are not subject to any special restriction or deprivation. They too have the opportunity to get higher posts in the administration. As a matter of fact, some of them already are holding important positions in the government. Therefore, it is an ungrounded allegation to say that the Kurds are looked down upon or are deprived of state facilities. It is simply propaganda of foreign origin aimed at causing insurrection in the country; it is invented by the communist militants to establish an independent Kurdish state under their own control and to use it as a base located between Turkey, Iran and Iraq for the benefit of the communist bloc.

We see very few Kurds with good intentions supporting this idea of an independent Kurdish state. The nationalist policy of the Turkish state caused other races inside the country to claim their own national

sovereignty. In fact, this is the primary reason for the Kurds seeking their own independent national state. The secondary reason is that sometimes governments followed a neglectful attitude towards the needs of Eastern Anatolia where the Kurds mostly live.

The Kurds themselves are innocent and pure Muslims and do not show any hostility towards the Turks. As long as they preserve their Islamic nationality, the communists will not be able to deceive them, and thus there will be no problems. In fact, it is now impossible to separate the Kurds from the Turks. They have no distinct characteristics as a nation in the area that would require the creation of their own administration. Moreover, they themselves have no wish for such a separate administration. It is communists who invented a Kurdish problem in order to divide the country and thus bring it under Russian domination.[56]

Against this communist agitation in Eastern Anatolia, religious education must be given prime importance, because it is only religion that unites all of the population of our country and makes us one nation. At the moment the most effective power against the Kurdish problem in Eastern Anatolia is, as everyone knows, the religious people and especially the Nurcu Kurds. For example, Üstad was born and brought up in Kurdistan and thus he was a Kurd, but he never favoured a Kurdish state. He told the Kurds that they were a power for the Turks, whereas the Turks were the intelligence of the Kurds; they had to benefit from each other and live together like brothers.[57, 58]

Armenians, Other Minorities and Foreigners in Turkey

We had been living with Armenians as friends on the same territory for centuries until the Ottoman Empire became weak during the First World War.[59] They had been called Millet-i Sadıka (Loyal Nation) for their allegiance to the Empire. During the war, they were carried away

by Russian instigators to strike the Ottoman from behind, thus causing clashes between them and the Ottoman army. Consequently, the Armenians were defeated and scattered everywhere. They can be found now in almost every country in the Near East and Asia.

At the moment there is no Armenian problem as far as Turkey is concerned. Those Armenians who stayed inside Turkey are happy with their life; they have an even higher living standard than that of the average Turk. All kinds of political, social and cultural rights are recognised equally to the Armenians and to the Turks. From time to time some Armenians who now live outside Turkey and are employed for the purpose of international communism, carry out attacks on Turkish diplomats. This is a minor problem for a state.

There are other minorities in Turkey like the Jews and Greeks. They have never been subject to any sort of suppression by any Turkish state throughout history.[60] As a matter of fact, our religion does not allow us to treat non-Muslim subjects harmfully. Ustad, too, defended the freedom of the minorities in the country during the constitutional period and said that it was necessary not to oppress them and to leave them to enjoy freedom in their way of life; he even gave a fetwa that they should be appointed as civil servants in the administration of a Muslim country.

The minorities have always lived with us in peace and are now the most prosperous and happy people in Turkey enjoying their rights to possess property, run businesses and have their own cultural and educational institutions. As long as they do not do anything which may damage our national integrity, there is no reason why we should not live together in the same country. They must enjoy living with us too, since no one is forcing them to stay in Turkey. They inhabit the most beautiful parts of Turkey free from fear under the protection of the state. Sometimes they have even more freedom of thought and of religion than the Turks do.

For example, they can perform their religious ceremonies of every sort and hold religious gatherings whereas Muslim citizens are subject to restrictions in this field.

In this century it is impossible for any state not to have any relationship with other states for technological, military and touristic purposes. Particularly if this state has allies, then it becomes necessary even to have relationships which will result in cultural exchanges. Turkey has an open foreign policy, so the technicians, military advisers, cultural delegations of other countries, even the foreign capital or ordinary tourists will come to Turkey as our citizens go to other countries. We have to offer our traditional hospitality to those who come to visit our country for commercial or political or touristic purposes.

But, these foreigners should never be allowed to engage in espionage against our country. For instance, the Russians went to Afghanistan as technicians but, in fact, they were there to invade the country politically. As to the tourists, we want them to come to visit our country provided that they should be respectful to our customs and moral values, and should not try to destroy them deliberately as they would not like us to spoil their traditions. Of course, there will be a normal mutual cultural influence out of these visits. They will bring and introduce their culture to us, so too will we present our culture and beliefs to them. This is a very practical means for us to convey our belief, Islam, which is not addressed to the people in Turkey alone but to all humanity.[61]

The Turkish Republic

The Turkish Republic inherited the ruins of the Ottoman Empire. The territory it occupies is strategically the most important part of the world. In terms of structure, disposition and essential nature, the

Republic is Asian but has been forced to be European for sixty-odd years by statesmen and politicians.

Although it was claimed that Turkey was a republican state, until 1950 the 'republic' existed in name and form only. Far from being a republic, the regime was of a kind personally imposed by Atatürk in a despotic fashion and was supported only by a certain group of people in Turkey. After the Independence War, all the activities of the central government were totalitarian and aimed at denying the very existence of the nation itself. The country was made subject to compulsory cultural change. Every action of the government was designed to destroy the old institutions inherited from the Ottomans. Vigorous efforts were made to make people forget all the social values which would unite and strengthen the nation. Everybody was at the mercy of intimidatory force; there was no opportunity to argue freely about any ideas. Moreover, scientific studies and social developments that the country needed were totally neglected. Deliberate attempts were made to sever the nation from its beliefs and customs. Turkish history was revised in order to distort the realities of the six hundred-year old Ottoman history. A new - far from scientific - history of Turkey was written just to praise the new administration.

When the multi-party system was introduced in Turkey in 1946, the new regime brought a partial freedom to the country, but democracy and the Republic in their real meaning were implemented only after 1950. Thereupon the people of Anatolia were able to receive remedies for their material and spiritual sufferings. Unfortunately, from 1950 onwards, the multi-party system was hindered by some political opportunists and so the necessary grounds were prepared for the military interventions which had adverse effects, particularly on the economic development of the country.

In Turkey, during the republican period, secularism has always been wrongly implemented and religious education has not been included in the school curriculum for a long time. Thus, the Muslim population were alienated from the state. The people's feelings of public involvement and support were discouraged. Although agricultural, industrial and commercial developments would have been possible, these were not achieved. Turkey was in a position to use the Arab world as her market, but now Europe is using Turkey as its market instead.

On the other hand, the Turkish Republic has many good characteristics: freedom and fundamental human rights, especially the right to possess property, are recognised, ninety per cent of its population are Muslims, there are religious charitable foundations, it has the best disciplined army among the Muslim states, compared with neighbouring countries its economy and technology are developing more steadily, and finally, Turkey is the advance outpost of the free world against the expansionist Soviet power.

The Turkish Republic is the continuation of the states founded by the Turkish people who have been serving Islam for a millenium. Whenever the Turks followed religion closely, they have been held in esteem by the other nations, but whenever they deviated from religion they fell from esteem. At the present time, Muslims in Turkey are more conscious of Islam than are the Muslims in other countries. That is the reason why Turkey has not surrendered to communism in spite of internal and external conspiracies against the state. We hope that the Turkish Republic will not only not become communist, but will, as Üstad prophesied, recognise the Şeriat and see it freely practised in the country.[62]

Turkish Armed Forces and Police

The principal duty of the armed forces is to protect the fatherland against the attack of any enemy from outside. When necessary it is also the duty of the armed forces to suppress anarchy and insurrection within the country but while fulfilling the latter duty the army must be totally under the command of the legitimate civil government and beside it, not independent of it. Our main worry is that the Turkish armed forces will become politicised and interfere with politics. From 1960 onwards the Turkish army intervened three times in the civilian governments. Even though the army staff acted with good intentions, none of these interventions gave good results. The 12 September military intervention was not to annul democracy in Turkey, rather to remove the obstacles before it. But the need for intervention was, in fact, the result of the army's negative attitude towards the call of the civilian government to support its struggle against anarchy. The military staff did not support the civilian government just because they did not want Demirel's cabinet to be successful.

The Turkish armed forces have a special role in the Turkish experiment in democracy. Whether the army should interfere in politics or not, and what its place in the political life should be have always been subjects of argument. In a successful democracy, it is unimaginable for an army to interfere in politics. It is the shortcomings of the Turkish experiment in democracy that invite the army into the arena of politics. Anyhow, the Turkish army should refrain from putting itself in the role of a referee in deciding the future of the Turkish political life. Its duties have been determined by the constitution and it should stop spending its resources, which were provided by the nation for the

army to be ready to defend the country against possible internal and external menace, on regulating the details of social life. As our experience of democracy progresses, we hope that the Turkish army will not need to exceed the limits of its duty.

Üstad too strongly advocated that the armed forces should never interfere in politics.

Unfortunately, in the military colleges, a certain political conviction has always been upheld and there is no serious religious and moral education. Whereas an army needs moral strength most of all. When people do not trust the army because of the lack of morality within it, they withdraw their support.

Üstad said in the Risale-i Nur that the Turkish army would render great services to Islam. We appreciate the sensitivity the Turkish army has so far showed towards communism. But, though instances of this are exceptional, there are some military staff who support communism and attack religion under the pretext of Kemalism. It is these officers who cause the Turkish army to fall into disfavour before the Turkish nation.

The army should not deal with small events which often occur in a liberal country such as ours. We think it is necessary to have a police organisation which will replace the armed forces in dealing with the police matters. While policemen are performing their duty, they should never forget that they are acting as officials of the state. They should, by no means, let their personal political or other ideas influence them in their duties; they should treat people with respect without deciding whether they are guilty or not. More importantly, the police should comply with the ethical values of the society.

What we expect from the Turkish police is to be on the side of the state and public order, not to be partisan or show favour to any particular group, and they should refrain from exploiting their position for their personal benefit.

To Üstad, the police organisation can only be a material power to ensure law and order in Turkey, whereas the Students of the Light are the spiritual power to help the police in their duty. Whenever Üstad met policemen, he treated them with kindness and told them that Nurcus and the policemen were brothers serving the public security together. Thus we understand that he approved of the Turkish police.[63]

Atatürk and his Reforms

Through his outstanding success as a commander in the Ottoman army in Tripoli and the Dardanelles, Atatürk attracted the attention of statesmen of the time. Sultan Mehmet Vahideddin trusted him and when Istanbul was occupied by the foreign forces, sent him to Anatolia to mobilise the people there against the foreign occupation.[64] It was after his arrival in Samsun in 1919 that Atatürk started playing an important role affecting the fate of the Turkish nation. Atatürk played his part, next to the other commanders like Kazım Karabekir, Rauf Orbay, Fevzi Çakmak and İsmet Paşa, in organising the people of Anatolia who were already ready to resist and fight the enemy. For the people it was impossible to accept the occupation; they were resolute in their determination to save their honour and religion from being humiliated by the enemies. Thus Atatürk found behind him a nation full of faith and ready to die for the sake of God. The prime aim of the war was to save the Caliphate and the Sultanate by expelling the enemy from Anatolia. They drove the enemy out of the fatherland and won the Independence War with the help of the strong faith of the nation.

When, as a continuation of the freedom and constitution movement which had been started the previous century, the time came in 1923 to proclaim the Republic, Atatürk did this without facing any opposition either from the people or from the learned men of religion in the National Assembly. However, Atatürk was very careful not to upset the religious feelings and understandings of the Muslim population during the Independence War and the foundation of the Republic. He always secured the support of the people by being together with the learned men of religion and by announcing on every occasion that his aim was religious.

But, later on, while giving the regime its actual shape, Atatürk succeeded in appropriating to himself all the successes achieved by the nation and took the state under his own control. The Republican regime turned into a dictatorship ruled by the personal authority of Atatürk, and after him, by his followers. Under the pretext of raising Turkey to the level of contemporary civilisation, he eliminated our historical Islamic culture and thus destroyed religion in the country. The result of this is that, although Atatürk personally was against communism, now those who have communist ideals are using Atatürk's reforms in order to attain their communist goals.

At first, his efforts to serve the fatherland and Republic were received favourably by the nation. Eventually, however, his activities, especially the reforms which were imposed on people in spite of their open objection, caused the nation to decline both materially and spiritually. These reforms did not accord with the customs and religious beliefs of the Turkish nation.[65] At the first opportunity, in 1950, the majority of the people actually rejected these reforms by making a white revolution and started practising Islam even more exuberantly as a reaction to the previous authoritarian regime.

Üstad had suggested to Atatürk when they met in Ankara that the foundation stones of this great revolution, the proclamation of the Republic, had to be solid, the illness of this nation was weakness in religious matters, real progress could only be possible by reviving religion, reforms could be carried only by not damaging religion, otherwise in fifty years' time there would be a terrible decadence of morality in society and that would yield the fruits of anarchy. But Atatürk never followed in his political life what Üstad had suggested to him.

After the establishment of the new Turkish state, very fundamental reforms followed one another which were critical for social life. The most important of all was the acceptance of the principle of secularism. Rather than understanding this as a separation of state affairs from those of religion, it was understood as being atheism used by the state authorities to oppress religion and religious people. So much so that to perform one's religious duties became impossible. Under the law of 'unification of education', all religious education institutions were closed down. Until 1949, there was no such institution operating nor were students who wanted to study religion allowed to do so.

The language reforms, too, were deliberately forced upon the people to destroy the Ottoman legacy and to sever the culture of the nation from its Islamic past. Under the pretext of purging the Turkish language of foreign words, they obliterated the Arabic words which were the vessels of religious culture. This caused a change in the field of thought, because together with the forgotten words, the culture expressed with these words was also forgotten. It is as the result of the language reform that our nation is now alienated from Islam and the Muslim world. There is no other state in the world that has an institution like the Turkish Language Society which invents meaningless words and spoils rather than preserves the language.

Another Atatürk reform was the Turkish alphabet which had a drastic effect on the nation. Suddenly, the whole population became illiterate and we could not fill the gaps left by this reform in fifty years. By replacing the Ottoman alphabet with the Latin alphabet, hundreds of thousands of books were left in the libraries, no one from the new generation can read them now. Because of this reform, once even the printing of the Koran was prohibited. We can see no acceptable logic in leaving one's thousand-year-old culture behind and trying to accept a totally foreign culture instead. Although we do not approve of the reform, since it is possible to convey our message by the new Turkish alphabet to the Turkish nation, we too use it. Now it is unnecessary to struggle to turn back to the old alphabet.[66]

The other reforms too were all against our civilisation and went so far that, for instance, some people were sentenced to death for contravening the Hat Law. None of Atatürk's reforms was accepted by the people willingly, all were imposed on them by force.[67, 68]

Westernisation, Modernisation, Industrialisation

The Turkish intelligentsia could not determine what should be understood by westernisation although they have been arguing about it since the Ottoman period. For Üstad, the West has two sides which contradict each other. The first side serves the social life of mankind by following the scientific and technological works, justice and veracity, all of which have been inspired by the true Christianity, and it produces useful arts. This side has brought felicity to humanity. The second side, which is depraved, by wrongly accepting the evil side of civilisation as good under the influence of the darkness of the Naturalist philosophy, impels mankind to lead a life of dissipation and error. Üstad rejected the second side of the West and hated those who have gone astray by

imitating the foreign devil blindly. On the other hand, he approved of the first side of the West and said: 'We will gladly adopt from foreigners the means of progress in civilisation, as in scientific and technological matters'.[69] These scientific and technological matters are profitable for the development of our country. Furthermore, there is no clash or contradiction between Islam and these matters. For us, science is something the Muslims have lost. They must take it wherever they can find it.[70] This is the only way to fill the technological gap between the West and ourselves.

Ustad also suggested that in acquiring Western civilisation we had to follow the Japanese example; they have adopted only the good side of the Western civilisation and preserved their own national traditions.[71] This course is essential for every nation that wants to perpetuate its existence. For us, it is essential to preserve our Muslim heritage because the fundamentals of the Şeriat that have regulated the social life of Muslims for fourteen centuries formed the basis of Turkish culture. To beg for civilisation from Europe was an insult to Islam.

The principles of Islamic civilisation, when practised in a society, yield results in the material and spiritual progress of the people and in their attainment of happiness both in this world and in the hereafter. Ustad contrasted these Islamic principles to the principles of the Western civilisation: power in Islam rests in justice, not in force; the aim of every action should be to attain God's pleasure, not to further self-centred interests; relationships between individuals should be conducted on the basis of co-operation, not of struggle; the relationship binding the masses together should be religious and patriotic brotherhood, not racial factors; lofty feelings should be encouraged and satisfied, and illicit desires of the soul inhibited.[72]

We believe that in this country the advancement of Islam depends on material development through industrialisation. There is no harm in adopting Western industry, because it is the result of developments in science and technology which are, in fact, the property of all mankind, not only of Westerners.[73] It is now our duty to bring industry into the country from every part of the world and we are happy to see that Turkey is becoming more industrialised every day.[74]

2. ON SOCIAL MATTERS

The Importance of Literacy and Education

The first word of the Koran, which was sent to educate humanity, is "Read". To acquire knowledge is a religious obligation for every Muslim. Üstad said that one of the three factors which caused a nation to fall back was "ignorance",[75] and that the first attempt a nation should make, in order to progress, was to spread literacy in the country. Therefore, Islam teaches us that literacy is the first door through which an individual must pass to become a full human being and to live as a member of society. If a person is not involved in acquiring knowledge, there will be no way for him to develop his human potentialities. That means he will not act in accordance with the purpose of his creation, because everything by its essence and disposition requires knowledge. Man has been created to perfect his faculties through learning in order to be able to recognise his Creator.[76]

Education must aim at satisfying the real nature and all inner sense of mankind. Since man is not only a material being but also has intellect, heart and other senses, he must be taught science and religion too to satisfy all his needs. Otherwise, as is the case in Turkey, teaching only scientific subjects at state schools and only religious ones at home

can result in having two opposite groups of people. Those who receive only religious education become fanatics and those who receive education only in science become irreligious. Consequently, society splits into two opposite groups which are impossible to reconcile.

Üstad advocated that religious and natural sciences must be taught together in the medreses.[77] When he first came to Istanbul, he suggested to Sultan Abdulhamid that he had to give education institutions prime importance in his policy. According to Üstad, instead of establishing new military regiments (known as Hamidiye Alayları), the Sultan ought to convert those barracks which already existed into schools, and the treasures of Yıldız Palace ought to be spent on education rather than on secret agents.

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, all the educational institutions which were introduced in the country have been adopted from the West. They have failed to educate the people our country needed. The education system we have in Turkey must now be totally changed and then adjusted to the requirements of the nature of our nation. In particular, anti-religious ideas should never be taught at school.[78]

Natural Sciences

Science solves the unknown mysteries of matter and tells us what its real nature is. When man learns the realities of matter, he understands that he is not alone in the universe and communicates with it through the help of science. Science even links man to God by showing him the order and wisdom of God in creation. Since beings are the manifestation of the Names of God, every science which studies them tells us about God in its own special language.

We believe that with the advancement of sciences, humanity will come closer to God and that the truth of the principles of Islam will

become more manifest to mankind.[79] No conflict or adversity has been witnessed between science and religion throughout the history of Islam. In this respect, Üstad said, 'Islam is the master and guide of sciences, and is the leader of all true knowledge'.[80]

The Koran, by citing the miracles of prophets, told mankind that the examples of these miracles will be produced in the future by means of technological progress,[81] and thus invited everybody to work for this progress. Whoever follows the laws of creation and works to benefit from them will receive success from God.

Creation is like a book every page of which is the subject of a certain branch of science. The role of science is to find out the laws of creation written on this page and use them for two purposes. The first is to utilise these laws in the development of technology for the material betterment of humanity. The second purpose is to recognise the qualities of the Creator through these laws and thus attain eternal felicity by worshipping Him.[82]

Religious Training in Schools and Universities - İmam-Hatip Okulları and Other Religious Schools

It is an established fact that no one can be without any religion. Being religious should not mean just accepting a religion without having any knowledge of it. Religion is a science and needs to be taught like any other science under the supervision of a teacher. Therefore, every student should receive religious training in his course in order to learn the theories and practices of his religion, at least to meet the requirements of his daily life. Religious training should not be confined to the professional religious schools. At every level of education, religious training should be included in the curriculum to teach students the

foundations of their religious beliefs at the level of their understanding. Religious training also will help students to understand the real meanings of modern sciences. When students realise the importance of modern sciences, they will love them and study them willingly, not only to pass their examinations. Hence, every student will reach an advanced state by completing his knowledge in both religion and modern sciences. This will result in building a perfectly balanced and peaceful society whose material and spiritual needs are equally satisfied.

Religious education in Turkey has been deliberately neglected for years. To meet this essential need of the society, people themselves had to found religious education institutions relying on their own resources. Thus, the importance of this need was proved by the wonderful effort Turkish people made during the last thirty years. In today's conditions in Turkey, there is no realistic alternative to state control and finance of religious education establishments, but when it does so it can also enlist further financial and moral support from the people, so state and people will together provide religious education.

In this century, specialists are required in every subject, including religious subjects. It is necessary for religious functionaries to be qualified in their field. For this reason, they must start their specialisation in religious subjects as soon as they complete their primary school education. But they should also be taught modern sciences in order to avoid fanaticism.

The existing religious schools, namely İmam-Hatip (prayer leader and preacher) schools, Faculty of Divinity, Higher Institute of Islam,[83] etc., are little better than nothing. In particular, the curriculum of the

İmam-Hatip schools is inadequate for the purpose of educating qualified religious functionaries. This curriculum includes only sufficient religious subjects for a student to learn his religion for himself, not to become a religious functionary. Indeed, that much religious training should be given in ordinary lycées. Amongst the higher religious institutions, the Faculty of Islamic Sciences at Erzurum University is the most satisfactory of all, for it has qualified teaching staff and provides students with facilities to specialise in a large variety of subjects.

Religious schools must aim at teaching religion to students at an appropriate level, teaching staff must be qualified for their profession and they should not bring their own political views into school. Otherwise these institutions will always be mere tools to be used by politicians. Nevertheless, Üstad regarded it as good when Imam-Hatip Schools were reintroduced in Turkey in 1951 and congratulated Menderes when he announced that more religious schools would be opened. We hope that the quality of religious teaching in these schools will be improved and that their numbers will increase.[84]

The Religious Affairs Department

The secularist state authorities in Turkey could not dare allow the Religious Affairs Department to be an independent institution. This alone is enough evidence to prove that religion is under state control in Turkey. Since the beginning of the Republic, every constitution has carefully stated that the status of the Religious Affairs Department should remain as an ordinary administrative unit. Moreover, every effort was made to limit its power to promote religion. Thus, the Department has never been in a position to answer the religious needs of people.

It has always been content with simply administering the offices and the duties of the religious functionaries but never worked to awaken people to their religious consciousness. Whereas, an institution like the Religious Affairs Department, whose duty should be to direct the religious affairs, ought to render services to improve the religious and spiritual life of people. Officials who are attached to this department have always abstained from being involved in such activities. Nevertheless, they are respected and loved by ordinary religious people, though they are held in contempt by the semi-enlightened so-called intellectuals of Turkey.

Religion is a common property of its followers and cannot be monopolised. In order to fulfil its function properly, the Department must be autonomous, at least, as much as are the universities, though it could still be state-financed.[85] If its personnel were elected by the people from amongst the learned men of religion and they did not issue wrong fetwas for fear of their position or any other mundane considera-tion, then this Department would have been able to perform one of the functions of the Caliphate as the religious representative of the Muslim community.

Under present conditions, the Religious Affairs Department's freedom from political pressure should be guaranteed by the constitution and the Department should be attached to the Presidency of the Republic as a non-political autonomous institution.

In its present situation, the Religious Affairs Department is not free from the point of view of Islam and thus it cannot be accepted as

the office issuing fetwas in the name of Islam. Though the Department is employed by the state to be a mediator between the state and people, we still hope that the Department may perform some valuable services for Islam. For example; Üstad believed that it was a duty of the Religious Affairs Department to publish and distribute the Risale-i Nur in Turkey.[86]

Turkish Radio and Television

Radio and television are the most effective means of inculcating opinions and beliefs. In a democratic country these means should be employed in broadcasting programmes which are in tune with the will of the nation and are respectful towards the national and moral customs of the people. By making known to the people what is going on in the world and by keeping them informed of technological and scientific developments, these programmes should help the country to progress materially as well as morally. However, in our country the programmes broadcast by the TRT are totally opposed to the religious and moral values of the nation; they aim at destroying our national customs and historical Islamic culture. The TRT always criticises, sometimes even insults, both our historical and our present day national life style. Through the continuous brain-washing of these programmes, the TRT took part in making the whole population of the country mere imitators of alien culture. It presents completely subjective and partisan ideas as if they were the only truths. It is supposed to preserve its impartiality as a representative of the whole nation, but, in reality, it defends only Kemalist ideology uncompromisingly on every occasion.

The TRT has played the largest part in spoiling the Turkish language. Turkish television should not broadcast foreign programmes

because these portray a mentality and way of life entirely different from ours; they do not respect our notion of the family. These programmes are affecting the youth adversely. But some films from Europe, such as the one on the life of animals, do no harm.

Only a negligible amount of programme time is devoted to religion and ethics on radio and television. Even in these programmes the TRT does not hesitate to discourage the religious and moral feelings of the nation.

Ustad regarded the radio as a divine blessing and said that we should thank God for this so that this blessing would be even more beneficial. We could offer thanks to God only by allotting four programmes in every five to the religious, ethical and national subjects. Thus the duty of the TRT would be to broadcast the truths of the religion of this nation, ninety-nine percent of whose population are Muslims. This ultimately would help the nation to make progress in its material and spiritual life. Nevertheless, a fifth of the programmes, according to Ustad, could be allotted to satisfying the people's mundane whims.[87]

Turkish Justice

The fact is that the judiciary in Turkey is used by a certain group of people to limit the political power of ruling parties. As some of the state authorities declared on several occasions, the High Courts, like the Constitutional Court and the Council of State, have given rulings which were damaging to the impartiality of Turkish justice. In particular, because of the ambiguity in the definition of secularism, the most innocent exercise of one's freedom of religion was assumed to be a crime. People were unjustly put behind bars for their religious and moral convictions.

The system of law courts in Turkey is used from time to time as an instrument to further the selfish interests of some people or the political partnership. The most obvious example of this is the way Üstad was treated. Using the books he wrote as an excuse, he was brought to court for trial continuously for twenty-eight years in spite of hundreds of acquittals. Because of the weakness of religious responsibility, it is not easy to bring this kind of injustice under control. It might be possible to prevent this happening if only the laws were sound or the lawyers were afraid of God's justice, but both are deficient in Turkey.

We want Turkish justice to be on the side of the state and legitimate governments, not to interpret impartiality as neutrality in the face of the enemies of the fatherland. We want it to fulfil its duties without claiming superiority to the legislative bodies and without conflicting with them. In Turkey now we witness the sovereignty not of the laws but of ideologies, or more correctly, sovereignty of the judges and prosecutors because they are issuing decisions according to their own ideological convictions. This, of course, amounts to injustice.[88]

The Role of Women in Turkey, Divorce, Polygamy and Birth Control

Woman has lost her ideal position in society by blindly imitating Europe. Since she started dressing immodestly - which is against her true nature - she has caused man to be disrespectful to her. She should not have left her home, because this brought about nothing but immorality. To leave woman to herself, to connive at whatever life she leads, to abandon social control over her, are not ways to acknowledge her rights and freedom. On the contrary, such conduct is the biggest harm that

can be done to woman. She is held in esteem in so far as she watches over herself, controls her behaviour and lives with a sense of responsibility. In this respect, woman has a special status in Islam.

Now in Turkey indecency is leading woman to being misused in society. A certain group of people are continuously trying to draw woman into social life simply in order to exploit her and to satisfy the whims of their evil nature. Some others want woman to enter the labour market for economic purposes. This is not an acceptable policy, for it aims at exploiting woman as a source of cheap labour. We must protect woman from falling into this position. Though Islam does not prohibit women from working, in Turkey, where most of the men are unemployed, it would be better if she stayed at home and considered seriously her duty to her children, instead of going out to work.

The most developed innate characteristic of woman is the loving tenderness necessary to bring up children. Although she is created with this special ability, Islam did not make it compulsory for woman to look after children. For instance, according to Islam, no one can force a woman to suckle her children when she does not wish to do so. Thus, to claim that Islam treats woman as a slave is not true; it is Islam that gave woman the most respected position in society.

Divorce is canonically lawful but most undesirable. Unless it is absolutely necessary, one should never seek divorce. It is certainly not something anyone who wishes can have recourse to as the whim takes him. Islam has laid down that partners in marriage should be of similar social status, and observance of this rule should obviate the need for divorce. As a matter of fact, the incidence of divorce in Muslim societies is low. Only after Islamic ethics have been corrupted and faith weakened in Muslim countries does their rate of divorce increase.

Because the sanctity which religion gives marriage was lost sight of, the marriage contract came to be considered by the couple as simply a means to satisfy their temporary desires based on personal interests.

If any of his students asked his permission, Üstad never allowed them to divorce their wives on the ground that their wives were causing problems which damaged the hizmets. He told them that they should be content with their lot. It is also a fact that divorce very rarely takes place among our Nurcu brothers.[89]

Polygamy is not encouraged or desired in Islam but it is a precaution taken against falling into a worse position. Under normal conditions monogamy is the principle. The prime purpose of marriage is to reproduce new generations to perpetuate mankind. Marriage is not for satisfaction of sexual desires. If it were for pleasure, polygamy would be necessary again. Moreover, Islam did not increase the number of wives one could marry, but reduced it from eight or nine to four. In addition, Islam has imposed such conditions upon a man who wants to marry more than one wife, that when he complies with them, polygamy does not harm anybody. Those who did not accept polygamy in this century had to officially accept the existence of many brothels. If polygamy were permitted to those who complied with the conditions laid down by the Şeriat, that would provide an outlet which suited the true nature of mankind. Nevertheless, in the Muslim world, polygamy is not practised widely.[90]

Birth control was originally accepted in Europe where the people are concerned only with the material world and do not have any affection for children. They favour birth control under the pretext of economic necessity, but in fact they regard children as depriving them of their own comfort and ease. But everyone knows that Europeans do not have any problem feeding and bringing up children since they constitute the most

luxurious consumer society. To us they advocate birth control to halt our population increase only because their own population is not increasing. It has now become a political matter.

However, in Islam it is accepted that a family may prefer to prevent conception by natural means if this will help the family to give their children a better education. But abortion is, of course, forbidden by religion unless it is crucially necessary for the health of the mother. If someone has an abortion after the spirit is delivered to the foetus,[91] then it is nothing less than a murder.[92]

Theatre and Cinema

Theatre and cinema are means of cultural communication which help society progress. They address the eye, ear and senses of the audience at the same time, and have the power either to better or to corrupt society. In Islam, all branches of art which yield useful fruits are encouraged; they can be used to educate society by performing religious, moral and historical subjects besides offering entertaining films and plays. The theatre and cinema could actually be used by religious people to convey their ideas to the masses.[93]

Theatre and cinema in Turkey had an enormous effect on the nation in general, and on the new generation in particular, but it is hard to say that this effect was favourable. They have been used by traitors who aimed at destroying our national heritage undermining our religion. At present, the situation has not changed; apart from only a few films, all of the plays and films propagate either socialist or communist ideas.

Üstad went to the theatre during his 'Old Said' period, but at that time theatres were used to put across a moral message. Üstad also mentioned in the Risale-i Nur that he used to go to the cinema to draw

lessons from the films shown there. By mentioning this, Üstad wanted to teach us that one may go to the cinema only for this purpose.[94]

Religious and Secular Music

God has created the universe with an endless variety of beauties. In a human being, He has deposited inclinations towards these beauties so that he will be attracted by them. Some people develop their inclinations towards spectacular views in creation and become fond of natural scenery and the countryside, some may develop their inclination towards sound and become interested in music. For example, for Üstad, the universe is a divine music department.

There are, however, two kinds of secular music. The first incites sensual pleasures and expresses the despair of souls separated from their spiritual source and lacking all hope of ever returning to it. This kind of music is forbidden by religion. The other kind inspires humans with divine love and the awareness that their separation from their spiritual source is only temporary and their eternal destiny is to be reunited with it; in this way it promotes within them an ardent desire for paradise. This kind of music is canonically lawful. Music which cannot be readily placed in either of these two categories is considered helal or haram according to its effect on man's spirit and conscience, and this differs from person to person.

All kinds of religious music exalt the spirit to sublimities and meet the human need for music. These may be hymns, religious odes and Mevlit (the Nativity Poem of the Prophet) or may be marches which express national feelings.

One may listen to or play the traditional musical instruments, such as kanun (a musical instrument with 72 strings), kaval (a reed pipe), tambourine, ney (a reed flute played especially in Mevlevi music) and the

like. The great Muslim saints of old played these instruments. Western classical music too may be welcomed, because it does not incite the sensual pleasures of the evil soul. But so-called modern music, used in low-class entertainment, cannot be approved and it is not music anyway.[95]

3. ON MATTERS OF BELIEF

Prayer and Supplication

Mankind has been created in a state of absolute impotence and poverty. On the other hand, his needs, desires and wishes are infinite. Thus a man is bound to beg and to pray to the one whose power, compassion and benevolence is enough to satisfy all of his needs. Moreover, it is necessary for this man to express his thanks by praising and offering supplication to God who has subjugated all creation to Him. In this context, in a broad sense, it will be right to say that man has been created for prayer.

There are, however, four kinds of prayer, each of which represents a different kind of creation: 1) Prayer offered through the tongue of natural disposition, for example, seeds and grains pray to God to grow into a plant with their natural disposition. 2) Prayer offered by the tongue of natural needs. The example of this can be seen in the mutual assistance between creatures. God sends water to the assistance of plants as an answer to their prayer through their tongue of natural needs. In the same way, plants are sent to the assistance of animals, and some animals to other animals, and so on. 3) Prayer offered through the tongue of exigency. This must be a sincere prayer offered in case of emergency. These three kinds of prayer are generally accepted by God to manifest His Justice in creation. By the very nature of creation, every

being, animate or inanimate, all plants and animals, as well as human beings, pray in these three ways. 4) This prayer is peculiar to human beings and is of two types. The first type is the prayer expressed through man's actions. For example, using the laws of creation to achieve a desired effect is this type of prayer. When a farmer tills land to obtain crops, his actions amount to prayer of this sort. Thus, all scientific discoveries are the outcome of prayer in this category. That is to say, it is one of the rules and practices of the divine will that man can make discoveries only by following the laws of creation. The second type is man's verbal supplication.

A human being has to recognise his impotence and has to express this verbally. This will be the proclamation of his devotion to God. For example, after performing his prayer by action, the farmer should also pray to God verbally and announce that he is only a servant who cannot create crops to feed himself, but it is God who creates them and provides him with sustenance. This does not mean that every verbal prayer - supplication - will necessarily be accepted by God. It is the duty of the servants to pray to God, but God may or may not accept their prayers. Supplication is the spirit of worship and an indication of sincere faith in God, not the means of acquiring what one needs.

One of the most sincere prayers is to ask God to forgive us for our transgressions. Nurcu brothers commonly pray to God to pardon not only their sins but also those of other Nurcu brothers, even of those brothers who are dead. This means that millions of people are praying to God for each other for forgiveness at the same time.[96]

Four Pillars of Islam: Namaz, Fasting, Pilgrimage and Almsgiving

After belief comes the most important pillar of Islam, namaz. It is the most esteemed worship before God. By means of namaz, the worshipper

expresses his thanks, appreciation and awe; it is the shortest communication bridge between the worshipper and the one who is worshipped. Namaz is the most comprehensive type of worship. Every man is himself God's substitute on earth and can represent all of the creatures. Therefore, the one who performs namaz is able to offer all creatures' worship to God on behalf of them. If a person claims to be a believer, his first religious duty is to perform namaz, though failure in doing so does not make him an unbeliever.

God has created man in such a way that his innate powers, such as the power of appetite, compassion and intellect, are not limited. In order to be able to use them within the limits instructed by the Şeriat, and to keep them functioning in this limited moderate way, a Muslim needs to discipline these powers. The most effective means of discipline is hunger because it curbs man's unruly desires and restrains his aggressive powers from transgressing their religiously lawful bounds. Fasting fulfils this function by disciplining and purifying his unregenerate soul (nafs)[97] which desires only evil.

Among the other objects of fasting are to improve the health of body and to make the person who fasts realise the condition of poor and needy people so that he will be prompted to help them. Nevertheless, these are examples of Divine Wisdom deposited by God in religious injunctions but a believer obeys the commands of God and practises them in his life for the sake of worship itself, not for the sake of any advantages. By fasting, one abandons self-assertion and self-confidence, and submits to God, who is the real Creator, Sustainer and Provider of the needs of men.

Pilgrimage is like a congress held once a year. Every pilgrim is like a delegate representing his country and joins this gathering in the most sacred place where Islam first emerged. Pilgrimage provides Muslims

with the best opportunity to exchange their thoughts and cultures, to introduce their technological and scientific developments or their needs to one another. On the spiritual level, pilgrimage demonstrates the best picture of the day of the last judgement: millions of people take off all marks of distinction and class and all dress in the simplest way in garments resembling shrouds. Everybody is alike, more educated ones and less educated ones, workers and bosses all in the same line, there is no difference between them. It reminds us that the worldly qualities we have here will have no value at the last judgement.

God tests everybody in a different way. He gives some people wealth and asks them to give alms to the poor from this wealth. Wealth is a trial for them.

Almsgiving establishes a bridge between the rich and the poor to balance social life. Not only property is subject to almsgiving, Muslims should give 'alms' from the knowledge, art and abilities they have to the other people who need them. Because almsgiving is not reciprocated, it makes the one who receives it grateful and thankful to the rich. Thus it promotes social assistance and mutual respect between the classes in a society, not conflict as communists would like to see. In fact, the sources of social unrest in a society are the failure to practise almsgiving and allowing usury.[98]

Sin and Sevap

Sin is to do what God prohibited and not to do what God prescribed for us. The nature of sin is disobedience and rebellion of the soul and sentiment of a person against his reason and conscience. When a man commits sin, it means that he could not educate his will properly, so his faith is not fulfilling its function. The more the faith of a believer increases, the more sensitive he becomes about sinning, inasmuch

as he trembles with fear of God. Unless the sinner seeks God's pardon and ceases to sin, then that sin will extinguish the light of faith because within each sin there is a path leading to unbelief.

Sevap means to do good works, pious deeds within the limits of God's commands. In fact, sevap is worship; indeed, if a man believes in God he must obey His commands. As an indication of his belief, the believer must express his gratitude to God for His favour and benevolence. This is the essence of sevap. The best way for a Muslim to make all of his actions sevap is to follow the Prophet's way of life.

We, unlike the other religious groups, do not encourage our brothers as well as other Muslims to do sevap by pointing out their worldly or other worldly benefits. In doing sevap, the goal must be only to attain God's pleasure. Otherwise, sevap will not be worship but an action done for the benefit of its doer.[99]

Angels, Satan and Demons

We deduce from His creation that God creates nothing in vain. So this immense universe should be in use, it cannot be empty. Although we do not see them with our eyes, this universe must be full of spiritual beings such as angels and djinns.

Angels are spiritual, immaterial beings; they are made of light. They do not have a soul but they do have consciousness. They carry out the commands of God, which are the manifestations of His Names, and represent their functioning in the Creation. Angels supervise every event which takes place in creation from a drop of rain to stars and galaxies. They are divinely appointed officials with a two-sided duty; while they are transmitting the Divine message to man through the manifestations of God's Names in creation, at the same time they consciously present the glorifications which are unconsciously made by all creation to God.

Everything in creation is good either by itself or by its result. This world is a world of trial; God has mixed good and evil in creation for this purpose. God has created hawks to attack sparrows so that sparrows have to develop their potentialities to protect themselves from the attack of hawks. So, too, was Satan created with the ability to seduce mankind into evil. Because of the existence of Satan, mankind has to develop his intellect and other abilities deposited in him by God in order not to be seduced by him. Therefore, to obey Satan is evil, but the existence of Satan is good for he causes mankind to progress.

Demons are evil spirits different from Satan. The evil spirits are the spirits of non-believers that may be djinns or men. Djinns also can be believers or non-believers like men. Demons are created out of evil actions. A man who follows only Satan will produce only evil actions, so his spirit may be considered as an evil spirit, that is, a demon. If we say a non-believer djinn is an incorporeal demon, than a man who acts like a Satan to seduce people into evil will be a corporeal demon.[100]

The Evil Eye

We witness that when some people look at other people or animals or plants with envious eyes, they cause various ilnesses or discomfort. This is because when they look at a beautiful thing, they do not see it as created by God, they attribute the beauty in that thing to the thing itself, not to its Creator. That is why we should not envy the beauty and good qualities we see in things and should say maşallah, meaning that it is created beautifully as God willed.

God created everything beautifully and with good qualities in order to be recognised as they are His works. If we envy good qualities and do not say maşallah, it will mean those good qualities are not met with an appropriate appreciation. Then, God withdraws those good qualities

and replaces them with bad ones. When they are replaced with bad qualities, the one who envied them realises that those good qualities were not created by the thing on which they were displayed but by God.

Putting blue beads on children and hanging up horseshoes on the outside walls of houses are simply means to avert the evil eye, because they attract the eye first so that the person who looks at them will not envy the children or the house. One should not expect any help from these blue beads or horseshoes themselves.

Ustad, too, said that he was afflicted with the evil eye. Because during his life he was annoyed by some people who stared at him, he did not allow anybody to gaze upon him.[101]

Predestination

Predestination is the knowledge of God. That is to say, God knows with His all-encompassing knowledge what is going to happen before it happens. Because this world is a testing-place for human beings, they are created with free will to choose between good and evil. For human beings to have free will is again within the programme of predestination. Because God's knowledge is beyond time, He knows how a person is going to use his free will before he uses it, thus God preordains his destiny accordingly.

God's knowledge does not make a person act according to it. We all know that we are free in choosing between the given alternatives. Since predestination is the programme of events and every event takes place according to this programme, God's prescience will not have any effect on the human free will to choose what God already knew. In fact, human beings do not act according to God's foreknowledge, God simply knows beforehand how human beings will act. For example, we can know when an eclipse is going to take place before it happens; of course, we cannot

say that it happened because we knew it would happen precisely when it did.

As for the 'creation' of human actions, we do not accept what the Mu'tazilites said.[102] Human beings can only acquire, but God creates accordingly, because God's absolute Will follows the human's free will. This is how God wished man to be responsible for his acquisition. If this was not the case, then we would deny mankind his free will and, consequently, mankind would not be accountable for his actions, that is to say, God would not be just when He sends a person to hell or paradise.

To believe in predestination is essential for a Muslim and it is one of the pillars of the faith. When we believe in predestination properly, we cannot be proud of our good deeds because we will understand that it is God who creates our action. But at the same time, we will feel responsible for our bad deeds because we required them to be created.[103]

Saints and Visiting Tombs and Graves

Saints are men of God. By spending all their lives within the limits of God's approval, they attain His commendation. They are upright servants of God; they have drawn near to God by obeying His commands with absolute submission and trust. It is a necessary consequence of His divine mercy that God should have private communication with these esteemed persons in a manner peculiar to their capacities and should honour them with His bounties. Amongst these bounties are the saintly miracles worked by these men of God. We think highly of these miracles and we hold them in esteem, but miracles or intuitions attributed to saints cannot be regarded as a source of authoritative canonical law.[104]

There are, however, three kinds of sainthood: 1) the highest level of sainthood is like that of the companions of the Prophet. This saint-hood is attained by having one's intellect and 'heart' functioning

harmoniously without following any tarikat. 2) The middle level of sainthood is attained by those who join a tarikat and thus let their 'heart' rule over their other inner faculties. 3) The lowest level of sainthood is the kind attained by the great scholars of the science of theology and by their followers. This categorisation is theoretical; in practice, the three grades usually overlap one another.[105]

Since the spirit is eternal, it must be somehow connected with the person even after he is dead. So, it is good to visit the tombs of the prophets and saints or graves of our acquaintances and read some parts of the Koran and pray to God for their spirits for forgiveness. But this visit should not exceed the limits of the Islamic principles, for example, expecting any benefit from the dead person is religiously unlawful. Every person can present his want to God directly in every place. No one is allowed to intervene between God and His servants. The aim of visiting graves is only to draw lessons from them. They remind us that a day will come when we too will die, so it will help us to remember the Day of Judgement and act accordingly. That is why in olden days, cemeteries were in places where everyone could see them.

Although when he was alive, Üstad visited the tombs of Mevlana and Mehmed II, the Conqueror, because people in Turkey commonly misunderstand the true purpose of visiting graves, he willed that his grave should remain unknown and asked his students not to tell anybody where his grave was.[106]

Paradise and Hell

The most important duty of mankind in this world is to do sincerely what God prescribed for him and to refrain from doing what God proscribed for him. Those who live in this world with perfect faith in, and obedience to, God will be rewarded with paradise by the grace of God.

Paradise is the place where the Names of God are reflected in a much more luminous fashion than they are here. It is a place of felicity where God will present His favours, which look like the ones we have here but infinitely better, to His servants who are deemed worthy by Him. Since God sent us here with soul and body and we are being tested spiritually and bodily in this life, the pleasure in paradise must be both spiritual and physical too.

The Prophet said that we would die as we lived and we would be resurrected as we died. If we perform our religious duties only in order to attain paradise, we cannot deserve it anyway, but we must perform them seeking God's grace because paradise can be attained only through the grace of God. Hope for paradise and fear of hell can only be incentives, the real reason for a believer to obey God must be to seek His grace. Thus we cannot rely on our worship of God nor can we despair of His grace, a believer should always be in a state between fear and hope.

According to Üstad, this age is like an interregnum. Children of the followers of the monotheist religions and those who believe in one God will go to paradise even though they did not confirm the prophethood of Muhammad.

Those who did not obey the commands of God and rebelled against God will go to hell to be punished with torment. There will be two groups of people in hell. The first group are the people who believed in God but did not obey his commands properly. These people will get their deserts and then will be transferred to paradise. The second group are those who died as non-believers and they will remain in hell for ever, because they transgressed against innumerable rights of witnesses in creation which proclaim the existence of God.[107] For those who did

not believe in God and believed that death is annihilation, hell is still a favour because to live even in hell is better than annihilation, just as commuting a man's capital punishment to a life sentence is a favour for him. This is a reward for their good deeds in the world. The life in paradise and hell will be eternal but those who stay in hell eternally will become familiar with the torment after suffering for their deeds.[108]

The Şeriat: Should it be Enforced Today?

God has two Şeriats. The first is the Koran which is the manifestation of God's attribute, 'Speech', and is sent to organise the actions and status of mankind who is the microcosm. The second Şeriat comprises the laws of creation which are the 'Will' of God manifested to govern the universe which is the macrocosm.

The fundamental source of the Şeriat which concerns human actions is the Koran. The laws of the Koran are not restricted to a particular nation nor to a limited time. Their effect will prevail until the end of time. The fundamental principles of the Koran never change but those concerning secondary matters may change in the course of time without contradicting the fundamental principles. The learned men of religion can interpret the principles of the Şeriat which are concerned with the secondary matters by analogy and adjust them to the needs of any society at any time.

Ninety-nine percent of the Şeriat is concerned with the individual: ethics, worship and the hereafter; only one percent is concerned with administration. In Turkey, today, the one percent of the Şeriat is not in practice but whoever believes in Islam can practise in his life the ninety-nine percent. When sixty to seventy percent of the population of a country practise this ninety-nine percent in their lives, then the

other one percent can be enforced in that country. In fact, it is inevitable that this will happen by the desire of the majority of the nation. Otherwise, to try to enforce a belief and religious rules upon people who are not ready to accept and practise them in their personal lives is contrary to the principles of Islam. In Islam, no one is allowed to have recourse to oppression or despotism even if it is for the sake of Islam.

Now our essential duty is to strengthen the weakened faith of the fellow Muslims. We, too, wish that the Şeriat applied in Turkey but we know that it is not for us to enforce it. When society is ready to embrace the Şeriat, its real owner, God, will create a means to enforce His divine system.[109]

Holy War

There are two kinds of holy war: the great warfare and the lesser warfare. The great warfare is the duty of everybody to struggle against his unregenerate soul in his own world. This is the great warfare because one may or may not gain eternal life in paradise according to his success or failure in this warfare.

The lesser warfare is fighting an enemy by physical means. The status of this kind of warfare varies according to whether the war is a civil war or whether it is against external enemies. When the attack comes from outside the country, Muslims usually confront it with their material power. But this confrontation must be avoided as much as possible by having recourse to all reconciliatory means. If peace cannot be achieved or maintained in this way, then the Muslims will defend their country. But we have to defend ourselves as effectively as possible without attacking the enemy. The emigration of Prophet Muhammad from Mecca to Medina was the best example of this sort of defence. Yet, in this century,

external enemies do not attack just with material weapons, but with moral weapons, causing spiritual destruction among Muslims. So defence against this moral attack must employ the same kind of weapons. To overcome civilised countries is only possible by showing them the truths of the Koran, which are our moral weapons, and by convincing them of these truths rather than by using material weapons against them.

When the lesser warfare takes place inside a country, Muslims are prohibited from using material weapons unless they totally lose their freedom and sacred things, as recently happened in Afghanistan. The duty of a holy war inside a Muslim society is principally a moral one which is to be conducted by means of enlightenment and reformation. Ustad always mentioned the moral warfare against the moral destruction caused by the enemies of Islam within the country. For him, this moral warfare in this century is a religious duty applicable to all Muslims.

Now, in Turkey, opposite ideologies are clashing. It is the duty of every individual Muslim to take part in this ideological war and introduce Islam in a positive way to the new generation. But, unfortunately, some of the Muslims are trying to convey their message to people by rivalling the political parties in power. This is, of course, wrong because our main duty is to convey the message by awakening and enlightening people, not to seize the administration of the country.[110]

<u>The Koran: Is It All Absolutely, Literally True? The Books other than the Koran to be Studied to learn the Will of God</u>

Throughout the history of mankind, God has sent books from time to time to guide people to the right path by laying down the principles of conduct at the level of their capacity. The Koran is the last divine revelation to mankind in this series of books. Because the Koran is the last book of God, it is under God's protection; no part of the Koran has

been changed so far and no one will be able to change even one of its letters from now until Doomsday.

The Koran, in both letter and spirit, is a revelation from God; it is a miracle from forty different aspects in word and sense, and is the word of God in its entirety. Because the Koran explains everything to us from the very beginning of the creation of this word to the end of it without revealing any contradiction, it can only be the word of a being who knows the past, the present and the future at the same time. That being is God. One of the unique miralces of the Koran is that it has had a wonderful effect on human life since it was revealed. Another miracle of the Koran is its eloquence. Although it has been challenging all unbelievers by inviting them to produce ten verses like that of the Koran, the unbelievers have never been able to fight the Koran with words, they fought its believers with swords instead.

The Koran is the eternal word of God which was sent to meet the need of mankind until the end of time. In every century the Koran answered the need of men through a different exegesis, each one of which expounded an aspect of the Koran to people who lived in its particular century. Thus, human beings can learn the will of God by studying the exegesis which explains the Koran according to the guidelines of the prophetic traditions. In this century, it is the Risale-i Nur that fulfils this duty. The Risale-i Nur was inspired by the Koran to elucidate that aspect of itself which looks at the twentieth century and illuminates the minds of the poeple of this century.[111]

Islamic Theological and Legal Schools

In Islam, ninety percent of religious injunctions are indisputable; they are not subject to interpretations under any circumstances. The other ten percent are left nonspecific so that they could be interpreted

in order to answer to the religious problems of secondary importance which may occur in the course of time. For example, while the Prophet was performing the religious duties, he deliberately chose different ways of performing those duties in order to teach us that we could perform them in different ways. From the very beginning, the expounders of Islamic laws and theology tried to institutionlise those imprecise matters using different criteria. Most of them did not mean to establish a legal or theological school, but people who followed them eventually constituted different schools.

There is a Divine Wisdom in the fact that different schools exist in Islam. Because people's dispositions and capacities are different, they cannot be treated as if they were the same, but they can be canalised into groups by following the middle way between them. Moreover, a truth can have different effects under different conditions. For example water; when it is very cold it becomes ice, when it is very hot, it turns into steam. The rules of religion have also different effects according to different conditions in time and space. Thus, the nature of religious commands may change from time to time and from country to country. It is the Divine Wisdom in Schools (mezheps) that makes it easy for their followers to practise religious commands in their lives.

In our century, too, people could not all reach the same level; the style of social life between different communities still varies substantially. Therefore, to try to reconcile the Islamic theological and legal schools in this century is against the Divine Wisdom in the existence of schools. When the majority of people reach the same level in culture and live in the same style of social life, then these schools will be united.

Ustad did not follow any particular theological school in the Risale-i Nur but we understand that he followed the Ash'ari and Maturidî

schools in most cases. The legal school he followed was the Shafiî school. However, all four of the legal schools are acceptable to us, these are: the Hanefî, Shafiî, Malikî and Hanbalî schools. In theology we accept the Ash'ari and Maturidî schools which are the main Sunnite schools; the Mu'tazila and Jabriyya are regarded as unorthodox.[112]

Sufism and Sufi Orders in Islam

Sufism is the way followed by those who do not have any doubt about matters related to the fundamentals of the faith. Through sufism, a person may improve his inner faculties related to his 'heart' and thus satisfy his spiritual senses by attaining knowledge of God. Because in olden times error in faith was not widespread among Muslims, people tried to live Islam by following any one of the sufi orders by developing their 'heart' rather than their 'intellect'. But in this century, error in faith is prevalent everywhere and is generated by science and philosophy. That is why Ustad regarded the structure of the sufi orders as innappropriate to the needs of the present age without denouncing the ones on the right path, and said: 'This age is not the age of tarikat (sufi orders) but hakikat (truth), i.e. not zikir (recitation of the attributes of God) but fikir (using one's intellect)'. For instance, people used to attain the truth in forty years by following the path of a sufi order, whereas now they attain it in forty days by reading and understanding the Risale-i Nur. It is impossible to go to paradise without belief but there are many who went to paradise without following any sufi order. If Sufism is fruit, then the truths of Islam are food. One can survive without fruit but not without food.

Muhyiddin al-Arabî said that to have certainty in the knowledge of God's Himself was different from simply knowing of His existence. We understand from what Muhyiddin al-Arabî said that sufism is a way which

helps us to see by intuition and penetrate into the details of the true nature of what we already know. Thus, Ahmad Sirhindi concluded that the ultimate aim of all sufi orders was to improve a person's understanding of the truths of faith and to attain the level of certainty of them.

The Ottomans, especially, gave Turkish society tranquillity, virtuous ideals and mutual respect by providing a widespread network of dervish lodges for the common people who did not have the facilities to improve their faith through scientific studies. Moreover, people found it easy to follow the sufi orders because they only needed to imitate a şeyh and repeat what he said.

Üstad had once joined the most important sufi orders, the Kadiriya and Naqshbandiya orders, but he soon realised that sufism was not sufficient to resist the attacks of erroneous ideas of this century.[113,114]

The Wahhabis

The Wahhabis are the Muslims who live now in Saudi Arabia. Their main characteristic is that they went to extremes in opposing Imam Ali (the fourth Caliph), so far as to deny the whole concept of sainthood and Islamic jurisprudence. They focused their attention on the Koran and hadith so much that they ignored the other two of the four fundamentals of canonical law, namely consensus of the learned (icma') and analogy (kıyas). Hence, they detached themselves from the works and ideas of great Muslim scholars and saints who were, in fact, the fruits of the Koran and hadith.

The extremists among the Wahhabis even abandoned following the prophetic traditions and destroyed the graves of the companions of the Prophet, instead of teaching people how the graves should be visited.

Üstad criticised their extremist behaviour and said that they unjustly opposed Imam Ali under the pretension of supporting the Sunnites

and caused conflict between the Shiites and the Sunnites. He told us that his teacher in the truths of faith was Imam Ali and sincere Nurcus should never be tempted towards Wahhabism. According to Üstad, the Wahhabi sect emerged within the Muslim world, it has its roots in Islam and eventually will take the form of real Islam. Because they are in a minority in the Muslim world, they are bound to dissolve and mix with the rest of the majority of the Muslim world. So, there is no need to take Wahhabism very seriously. Indeed, they have now started claiming that they follow the Hanbali school which means they are not stubborn any more in rejecting icma' and kıyas.[115]

The Shiites and the Alevis

There are two kinds of Shiism. The first is political shiism which is formed by those who believed that Imam Ali was more worthy to be elected as the first caliph than the other three caliphs. Because of their partisan attitudes, they took sides against the first three caliphs. But, in fact, the real reason for this was the conquest of Iran by the Caliph Omar. Under the strong influence of shattered national pride caused by the conquest, the Iranians confused their love for Ali with their hatred for Omar and thought that without hating Omar, Ali could not be loved properly.

The second kind of Shiism is religious Shiism, about which there is no conflict between the Shiites and Sunnites because we all hold the Prophet's family in esteem. Imam Ali was the Prophet's son-in-law and only through him did the descendants of the Prophet continue. He was the head of the glorious chain of sainthood in Islam. All those who served Islam through this chain continuously pray to God for Imam Ali and his descendants.

There is no difference between the Shiites and Alevis as far as their origin is concerned; they both followed Ca'fer-i Sadik (sixth of the twelve Imams of the Shias). We call them Alevis in Turkey, in Iran they are called Shiites. But Alevis in Turkey do not observe the principles of the Ca'ferî sect and do not really believe in it either. They do not have anything other than their very ignorant dedes who give nothing to them but only prevent them from learning the truths of their own sect.

Ustad mentioned in his works only the points of agreement between the Shiites or Alevis and the Sunnites and called them not to go to extremes in their love for Imam Ali as Christians did for Jesus. He advised us that we should forget about the points of dispute, especially between us and the Alevis in Turkey and unite against our irreligious enemies. He warned the Alevis that if they continued to be enemies of the Sunnites in Turkey, communists would use this enmity for their own purpose and when they achieved their own aim, then they would fight the Alevis.[116, 117]

Other Major Religions

In Islam, other religions are put into two categories. The first category includes the religions which had their origins in divine inspiration and are considered as heavenly religions. Although the holy scriptures other than the Koran are now altered, we still regard the people who believe in one God and accept that these scriptures are God's revelations to their own prophets, as people of the book. These are Muslims, Christians, Jews and Zoroastrians. All the other religions constitute a second category and we do not have anything to do with them.

All the heavenly religions unite in the fundamentals of beliefs though their understanding of them may differ from one another. They

all teach their followers to believe in one God, prophets, the hereafter, God's revelations, etc. Among the people of the book, especially between Christians and Muslims, there are more points in common than points of dispute. In order to ally themselves against the atheistic system of the communists, Christian and Muslim scholars must organise scientific conferences among themselves to find out even more common points.

The most evident difference between Christians and Muslims is that Christians follow the clergy and thus abandon their own intellects. History proved that when they stopped imitating the clergy blindly, they became free from fanaticism and by using their own intelligence were able to create the Renaissance. Islam, as the last religion of God, encourages its believers to use their brains. Now, we want Christians to complete their religion with Islam by using their intellects. What they need is to believe in all the prophets and the holy scriptures including Muhammad and the Koran as we believe all of them. Christianity is now unable to satisfy its followers because it did not complete itself with the religion God sent to the people of this age. However, we believe that Christianity will be transformed into Islam by purifying itself from falsified ideas. This is the real meaning of the *hadith* which says, 'At the end of time, Jesus will descend from heaven and by acting in accordance with Islamic Şeriat will be one of my ümmet (a member of the Muslim community)'.[118]

4. ON NURCULUK ITSELF

Why the Risale-i Nur is Important

The Risale-i Nur is important because it effectively fills the moral vacuum of this materialist age by satisfying the spiritual need of a person's heart and intellect. It expounds the truths of the Koran to

the people of this age without taking their spirits and minds back to the previous centuries. It opens a window in every single being in order to show the existence of God through it. The Risale-i Nur gives examples from every part of creation at every level in accordance with the requirements of the principles of science and logic and thus satisfies people from all walks of life and makes them embrace belief. When it explains a matter it follows the way in which the Koran explained it and gives the matter exactly as much importance as the Koran gave it.

In olden days, faith was strong, people used to believe in whatever the learned men of religion told them without any proof or evidence. But now science and philosophy are attacking faith so the confrontation must be on equal terms by using scientific and philosophical methods. This is what the Risale-i Nur is doing; it is building up a barrier against the attacks of materialism.

The most important duty of human beings is to recognise God and by worshipping Him to attain eternal felicity. The Risale-i Nur teaches everybody from every profession at every level, not only those who receive religious education, how to attain this eternal felicity. Because it benefits from both religious and modern sciences, it helps people to attain the truth by combining their heart with their intellect. Thus, it opens the way of religion to those who kept themselves away from religion for they were misguided by the wrong idea that religion and science conflict.

Differences between the Risale-i Nur and other Islamic Books

The Risale-i Nur differs from other Islamic books in many ways. We can list the main ones as follows:

a) The Risale-i Nur is written with a knowledge bestowed by God, not with an acquired knowledge.

b) While the author was writing the Risale-i Nur, he did not have any book with him other than the Koran to consult. Thus its source is the Koran alone.

c) The Risale-i Nur managed to expound the most subtle aspects of the truths of faith even to illiterate people by uncovering the realities of the great Names of God and of the greatest degree in manifestation of each Name. It, thus, was able to deal with such subjects as belief in Divine determination, in the hereafter, and in angels which other Muslim scholars found it dangerous to mention in detail to common people.

d) The Risale-i Nur lets everybody who reads it taste the pleasure in truths of faith, whereas other Islamic books try to make people first reach the level of sainthood and then taste that pleasure.

e) One of the main principles of the Risale-i Nur was that it was written to convince primarily its author and then the other readers. Henceforth, it is so convincing that so far its opponents could never criticise any of the subjects it explained and proved to be true.

f) All branches of the faith which are mentioned in the Koran are studied and their truthfulness is proved in the Risale-i Nur by bringing evidence from creation, unlike the other Islamic books which bring evidence from the religious sources alone.

g) It teaches the truths in parables and argues them by analogy in order to make them easily comprehensible.

h) It discusses even more in detail the parts of the Koran which are misinterpreted and now deemed to be against the nature of civilised humanity.

i) Although other Islamic books may sometimes study the same subjects, Üstad's style of writing and the method he uses to explain them are completely different. In this case too, the Risale-i Nur is

original and does not imitate any other work. Without narrating what was said on a subject by other scholars and quoting from them, it directly discusses the truths of religion; it does not mention even the relevant verses of the Koran and hadiths. Whereas, the other books cover the truths of the subjects they discuss with narrations and quotations.

j) The Risale-i Nur is a commentary on the Koran which explains, elucidates and proves the truths of the Koran pertaining to belief unlike the other commentaries which translate the meaning of the words of the Koran word for word.

k) It does not tell us how to perform our prayers in the best way like most of the other religious books do, but gives reasons why we should perform them.

l) Without describing in detail what is false, it defends what is right by establishing it on the firm basis of Islamic theology and thus gives an Islamic answer to all false ideologies of our century.

m) In spite of the restrictions placed by the state authorities on the printing of the Risale-i Nur, many thousands of copies were made by hand and distributed all over the country. This fact is also unique to the Risale-i Nur.

n) One may read a religious book at the most twice or three times, whereas all the Students of Light read the Risale-i Nur continuously but none of them gets tired of it. Even Said Nursi himself, who wrote the Risale-i Nur, read and reread it continuously throughout his life.[119]

The Way the Risale-i Nur Followed to Reach its Ultimate Aim

The ultimate aim of the Risale-i Nur is the same as the ultimate aim of the creation of mankind, that is, to recognise his Creator and act as a servant feeling His presence throughout his life. The Risale-i Nur works in the cause of faith; it aims at educating people who sincerely

want to be true servants of God. It fulfils this cause by saving people from being carried away in the currents of godless ideologies and by supplying them with the truths of the faith. Thus, it helps people to obtain peace of mind in this world and eternal felicity in the hereafter.

The main principle of the Risale-ı Nur is to improve individuals' faith by convincing their heart and intellect. This is the method the companions of the Prophet followed: to satisfy the heart and then bring all the sense of a man under the leadership of intellect, unlike the sufi orders which satisfy only the heart. It points out to those who have fallen into dissipated ways the pain caused by every religiously unlawful action and the pleasure in performance of one's religious duties and thus it leads them to live an honest life. Because it follows the way of the Koran, it always chooses the simplest way to explain complicated subjects and thus easily convince the common people who constitute the majority. Through improving the individual's life, the Risale-i Nur aims at the improvement of social life by following an evolutionary way.

Another principle used in the Risale-i Nur is that it lets the readers have an empirical knowledge in their attainment of belief in the unity of God by taking examples from creation as signs that point to the Creator. In the social subjects, it supports peace and encourages the readers to act positively by following the rules of 'choose always the lesser evil when there is no good' and 'do not cause any rebellion that may disturb law and order within the country'.

The Risale-i Nur achieved its goal at social levels by building a barrier against moral destruction caused by irreligious propaganda and thus saved the country from falling into the traps of communism.[120]

The Most Important Sections of the Risale-i Nur

The Risale-i Nur is like a body every limb of which is the most important for its own function. Every treatise has its prominence in its subject. Because the Risale-i Nur is a commentary on the Koran, it studies the main topics of the Koran at length. These are the unity of God, prophethood, resurrection and worship. The most important of these is the unity of God.

It is rather difficult to say which sections of the Risale-i Nur are the most important. Sometimes a section may seem to be essential for us to understand and we read it so much that we may learn it by heart. At another time, another section seems to be even more important and then we start memorising that section. Perhaps it changes in the course of time according to our psychological situation or to the problems we encounter.

Nevertheless, we can list the most important sections of the Risale-i Nur as follows:

a) The treatise on 'Nature' (the twenty-third Flash) which is a very logical criticism of materialism.

b) The Thirtieth Flash which is about the greatest Names of God.

c) The Eleventh Word which studies the relationship between the three truths: man, the universe and namaz, that is, the explanation of the mysteries of the sphere of worship (mankind - as the worshippers) and the sphere of Lordship (God - as the One who is worshipped).

d) The Twenty-first Word which, by proving that the past and the future are non-existent, says that one should concentrate only on the moment one is living and fulfil one's duty of worship without thinking of the past and the future and seeing it as an unending duty.

e) The treatise on Supplicatory prayer (the Third Ray).

f) The treatise called Meyve Risalesi (the Eleventh Ray).

g) The subjects concerning social life which are studied in various parts of the Risale-i Nur, such as freedom, equality, reform and revolution.[121]

The Most Important Elements of the Nurcu message

The most important element of the Nurcu message is to make people attain the realities of the fundamentals of the faith, in particular, believing in the unity of God. Once a person received the Nurcu message properly, his faith rises to such a high level that he feels that he is always in the presence of God and His bounties, and thinks of them by going beyond the veil of familiarity. When people become Nurcus, they do not consider anything in their actions other than God's approval, because they realise that this world is ephemeral whereas the next world is eternal.

Because the Nurcu message has a consistent concept of the inseparability of religion and science, it logically proves that every matter of religion is acceptable to reason by bringing evidence from creation.

The Nurcu message generates peace among the religious groups by preventing its adherents from paying attention to the points of dispute and encouraging them to unite with other Muslims remembering the numerous points of concord among themselves. Another important element of the message is that it gives an impetus to all who receive it to start conveying it to others spontaneously.

The Most Important Ways in which Nurculuk Differs from Other Muslim Groups

In Nurculuk, there is no şeyh-mürid (master-disciple) relationship, which is mostly the case in other Muslim groups, nor is there any leader. All Nurcus are brothers and there is no rank or grade differences between

them. In principle, we follow the decisions taken by the consultation committees. This is an outlook the companions of the prophet adopted. Nurcus solve their problems according to the principles laid down in the Risale-i Nur and all of them are agreed that the Risale-i Nur is the main source for them.

We believe that if a thing is not obtained totally, it should not be forsaken totally either. Thus, we prefer the 'lesser evil' when obtaining the 'absolute good' is impossible for us. Our support of the United States against communist Russia is based on this understanding which is quite unique to Nurcus in Turkey.

Nurcus do not involve themselves in anarchy. We believe that inside the country we should approach people without attacking them. By establishing a personal relationship with individuals, we simply try to point to the truths in the Risale-i Nur and connect them with the books and the ideas in them, rather than with their own personalities. We aim at ameliorating society through improving the individuals, unlike those Muslim groups who follow revolutionary methods to apply Islam in society.

We usually convey the message to the more educated people in the country. We cannot base our argument on narrations and ask these educated people to follow us blindly. We believe that people can resist atheist ideologies, such as communism, only by having a faith proved within the rules of positive sciences. Whereas, most of the Muslim groups are now trying to convey Islam to the new generation by teaching them the rules of fiqh (Muslim canonical jurisprudence). Another of our main principles is that we perform our duty, which is to convey the message to others, and leave the result to God, while the followers of other religious groups aim at achieving the results, which is making people accept what they want.

Nurculuk is distinguished among other Muslim groups as a community which does not have any society, club or organisation operating legally.[122]

The Main Rules of Nurculuk

We may generally mention some rules in Nurculuk but these rules are not imposed on Nurcus. When they fail to comply with them, there is no question that they will be dismissed from Nurculuk or punished in one way or another. The rules have no effect beyond being recommendations.

Although in every part of the Risale-i Nur one may find numerous principles of conduct, we can list here the most important of them for Nurcus to follow.

a) The main purpose of our life must be only to obtain God's pleasure. In our hizmets sincerity must be observed at the maximum level. We have to be constant in our devotion to the Risale-i Nur and expect nothing of worldly or other worldly benefits as a result of our hizmets.

b) We should never consider our nefs (unregenerate soul) pure.

c) We should ignore our nefs when it seeks personal ambition and reward, but think of it when there is a hizmet and when we remember death.

d) We should realise that real perfection is in being aware of our own imperfection, real power is recognising our impotence, and real wealth is admitting our absolute poverty before God.

e) We should forsake egoism and understand the fact that our nefs is nothing but a place of manifestation of the Names of its Creator.

f) We should always seek solidarity between our brothers and should never criticise them in their hizmets. We should prefer our brothers' wishes to those of our own nefs and be proud of our brothers' merits.

g) We should act positively, that is, out of love for our own outlook, avoiding enmity for other people's outlooks and not criticising their beliefs and ideas.

h) While we are conveying the message, we should not give anybody preference only because of the difference in their rank, class or social status. We should bear in mind that everybody can be convinced in one way or another.

i) We should not involve ourselves in politics for the sake of it, but we may help those politicians who support religion.

j) We have to read the Risale-i Nur painstakingly and continuously and make a habit of attending derses especially the ones held in dershanes.

k) In our social life, we should not behave as if we are independent and simple individuals; we have to keep in mind that we are representing a community whose duty is the most sacred.[123]

Grades in Nurculuk

There is no 'rank' or 'grade' structure in Nurculuk. Everybody in the hizmet (Nurcu activity) is kardeş (brother), including Üstad himself. The relationship between ourselves is not based on şeyh-mürid (master-disciple) or peder-veled (father-son) relationships. Üstad said that everybody in our community is kardeş, only an üstadlık (mastership) may enter in this circle of 'brothers'.

Though these were not ranks, Üstad addressed people with three different titles according to their devotion to hizmet. He used dost (friend) for some and described them as those who seriously support our hizmet in disseminating the ideas put forward in the Risale-i Nur and try to learn them, on condition that they should not support heresy and error from the heart. He called the second group kardeş (brothers). These are

people who seriously work for the dissemination of the Risale-i Nur, perform their namaz five times a day without any failure, and do not commit deadly sins. The third group is talebe (Student of the Light). This group includes those who own the Risale-i Nur as if it is their own property and know that the most important duty in their lives is to disseminate it.

Üstad asked us not to dismiss people for their faults and let them join our enemies, unless they themselves so wish. He said that we should not compare everybody with those who really commit their lives to hizmet, because there are different grades in Nurculuk like concentric circles. These are from the centre to the periphery: Erkan (great men), sahip (those who protect Nurculuk as though it is their own property), has (pure ones), nâşir (those who disseminate Nurculuk). If someone does not have the quality of, for example, has, he may be a talebe provided he does not join our enemies. Even those who do religiously unlawful actions in their lives, as long as they do not consent to them from the heart, may remain among us as dosts.[124]

Ağabeys

As a brother calls his elder brother ağabey, so, too, we call our great brothers in Nurculuk ağabeys. These persons are, in fact, Üstad's close students who lived with him, received special education from him and served him during his 'Third Said' period. Üstad named them as Erkan. There are some ten of them and they were not appointed successors to Üstad.[125] These ağabeys are simply the people who understand Üstad's ideas perfectly, therefore Üstad chose them to be in charge of hizmets after his death and legally authorised them to publish the Risale-i Nur.

The most distinguished qualities of these ağabeys are as follows: they have reached the level of certainty in their faith; they have committed

their entire lives to hizmets with a complete devotion; each of them has a distinct ability in directing an aspect of hizmet and thus all together they direct hizmet under any circumstances at any time; they usually teach us how to do hizmet through their behaviour without going beyond our brotherly relationships; they never command other brothers nor do they quarrel with them, they simply tell us whatever they want by way of exchange of views. However, there is no compulsory rule in Nurculuk that we should obey ağabeys in all circumstances. If they said anything against the established principles of the Risale-i Nur, we would not accept it. As a matter of fact, when they start suggesting things to us which are opposed to the principles of the Risale-i Nur, we do not regard them as ağabeys any more.[126]

Said Nursi

Said Nursi is the greatest learned man of religion, who has knowledge bestowed by God, a spiritual guid, a müctehid (expounder of Islamic laws) and a müceddit (the reformer of Islam) in our century. Throughout his life he aimed at nothing but serving faith and the Koran. No one could make him give up his cause which he believed was true and which he strove for until his last breath. In spite of twenty-eight years imprisonment and exile, and all kinds of deprivations, he continued upholding his Koranic cause even when nobody else could do so.

Said Nursi is the only person in this century who sacrificed all that he had in this world, material or spiritual, in order to lead humanity, in general, and Muslims, in particular, to a life of real happiness and prosperity. He is a philosopher, a psychologist, a pedagogue and a sociologist; he is a commentator on the Koran who perfectly expounded its philosophy to the people of the twentieth century at their level of comprehension. He is a man who can be understood only by reading his

writings. Through his presentation of Islamic philosophy following the most perfect principles of logic, he caused millions of people to save their beliefs.

Said Nursi combined in his life piety and active service to Islam. That was the sacred outlook of the companions of the Prophet. Thus, he deserved to be called 'a Muslim of the era of the Prophet', although he lived in this age.

Said Nursi cannot be described by our words. To describe him properly one should read the entire collection of the Risale-i Nur.[127]

NOTES

1. Most of my informants cited this understanding of freedom given by Said Nursi, claiming that this was the best definition of freedom they ever knew. This sentence was mentioned in his book Münâzarat (Istanbul, 1977), p. 17. It is worth quoting here an example to underline the difference of this definition from the one offered by one of Said Nursi's contemporary Muslim scholars, Muhammad al-Ghazali. R.P. Mitchell stated in his book, The Society of the Muslim Brothers (London, 1969), that Muhammad al-Ghazali, one of the ~~most~~ Society's (The Society of the Muslim Brothers) famous writers, said: 'Islam gave the ruler power "to interfere" in some of the behaviour permitted to a Muslim by the Qur'an and Prophetic Tradition if behind the interference was a "sound purpose", i.e. in accordance with the general welfare'. Whereas, it is important to notice that Said Nursi never tolerated any interference in the individual's behaviour as long as it is permitted by the Koran and the Prophetic Tradition. Otherwise it would be adalet-i izafî (relative justice) which, according to him, is zulüm (oppression), see his Mektûbat (Istanbul, 1977), p. 50. So, for example, Nurcus are taught to respect the property of non-believers, whereas some Muslim groups would feel the "sound purpose" would justify them in making free with or damaging non-believers' possessions.

2. Freedom and liberalism are referred to several times in the Risale-i Nur at various lengths. For Said Nursi's own words on these subjects see his following works: Münâzarat, pp. 15-23; Hutbe-i Şâmiye (Istanbul, 1960), pp. 87-8; İki Mekteb-i Musîbetin Şehâdetnâmesi Veya Divan-ı Harb-i Örfî (Istanbul, 1978), pp. 60-3, hereafter cited as İki Mekteb... Said Nursi says his famous phrase: 'I can live without food but not without freedom', in his Emirdağ Lâhikası (Istanbul, 1959), I, p. 18. See also Risale-i Nur Külliyati Müellifi Bediuzzaman Said Nursî, Hayatı, Mesleki, Tercüme-i Hali (Istanbul, 1960), pp. 62, 54-5, hereafter cited as Tarihçe. For some of the Nurcu sources referring to freedom and liberalism, see Bediuzzaman Said Nursi on Contemporary Topics (California, 1980), pp. 5, 22-3, hereafter cited as Topics. Mustafa Sungur, Söz Bediuzzaman Said Nursî'nin! Anarşi, Sebep ve Çareleri, 4th ed. (Istanbul, 1978), p. 65, hereafter cited as Söz. Safa Mürsel, Bediuzzaman Said Nursi ve Devlet Felsefesi (Istanbul, 1976), pp. 334-56, hereafter cited as Devlet Felsefesi. İbrahim Kapaklıkaya, "İslamda Fikir Açıklama Hürriyeti", Köprü, No. 68 (November 1982), pp. 22-6.

3. Musavat-ı mutlaka (absolute equality) was strongly rejected by Said Nursi and he set out his argument in his book Lem'alar (Istanbul, 1959), p. 160, to which almost all of my informants referred in their answers.

4. The subject is mentioned in some parts of the Risale-i Nur, see, for example, Nursi Münâzarat, p. 25; Nursi, Lem'alar, pp. 160-3; Nursi, Hutbe-i Şâmiye, p. 89. In the Nurcu sources, Topics, pp. 24-6;

Mürsel, Devlet Felsefesi, pp. 500-9; here equality is studied in detail in the light of the Risale-i Nur.

5. This is particularly mentioned here to claim that the police raids on the dershanes or on the houses where Nurcus have their derses are not democratic.

6. Referring to the Atatürk ilkeleri (the principles of Kemalism).

7. Nursi, Münâzarat, p. 14. Almost all Nurcus know this phrase by heart. Referring to the belief in returning to the old condition among the Muslims, Gellner says: 'Those who advocate a return to some absolute status quo ante, corresponding to the pre-Modern solution, may well speak in good faith, but I fear they may be pursuing an illusory hope', see his Muslim Society (Cambridge, 1981), p. 98. For Namik Kemal, too, 'progress was irreversible; like the hands of a clock, it could not be turned back'. Serif Mardin, The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought: A study in the Modernization of Turkish Political Ideas (Princeton, 1962), p. 320.

8. Nursi, Hutbe-i Şâmiye, pp. 52-4; Nursi, İki Mekteb ..., pp. 57-9; Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, Hayat-ı İçtimaiye-i Siyasiyeye Dair Bir Kısım Beyanat ve Tenvirler (Istanbul, 1976), p. 49, hereafter cited as Beyanat. In the Nurcu sources: Mürsel, Devlet Felsefesi, pp. 191, 265-7; "Demokrasinin Neresindeyiz?", Köprü, No. 67 (October, 1982) pp. 8-14; "Demokrasi: İnsanca Yaşayış", Köprü, No. 48 (March 1981), pp. 6-9; Topics, p. 21; Necmeddin Şahiner, Bilinmiyen Taraflariyla Bediuzzaman Said Nursi (Kronolojik Hayatı), 6th ed. (Istanbul, 1979), p. 197, hereafter cited as Bilinmiyen.

9. This example was mentioned in Nursi, Mektûbat, pp. 242-3.

10. This phrase is the meaning of the Koranic verse, VI:165, (each soul earneth only on its own account, nor doth any laden bear another's load ...) which is very frequently used and is widely applied by Nurcus (see, for example, Nursi, Beyanat, pp. 16, 39, 41, 53, 62, 75, 79, 86, 97, 106, 107, 108 and 120). Nearly every subject related to human rights is viewed with the principle of this verse in mind. For example, according to Said Nursi, if a man has a good element in his character, even if he is a non-believer, this good element cannot be criticised (Nursi, Mektûbat, p. 243). Said Nursi argued that if an Armenian is a good watch repairer, a Muslim can have his watch repaired by him (Nursi, Münâzarat, pp. 16, 26-7, 32). Another example may be cited here for the wide applicability of the verse: Nurcus strongly opposed the Iranian revolution of 1978 and the revolutionary government set up afterwards, claiming that they were acting against the rule of this verse, see Burhan Bozgeyik, Bütün Cepheleriyle İran Meselesi (Istanbul, 1981), p. 228.

11. Some relevant passages of the Risale-i Nur may be found in the following pages: Nursi, Mektûbat, pp. 50, 242-3; Nursi, Emirdağ Lâhikası, I, p. 38; Nursi, Münâzarat, pp. 16, 26-7, 32. The subject is studied in these two Nurcu works: Topics, pp. 24-6 and Mürsel, Devlet Felsefesi, pp. 128-9.

12. My Nurcu informants used terms like 'class' and 'profession' inconsistently and sometimes interchangeably.

13. Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, İşârât-ül İ'caz (Tükçe Tercümesi), trans. Abdülmecid Nursi (Istanbul, 1978), pp. 48-9; Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, Sünûhat (Istanbul, 1977), p. 42; Nursi, Lem'alar, p. 160; Tarihçe, p. 173. Some of the Nurcu sources where the subject was studied: Topics, pp. 12-8; Sungur, Söz, pp. 198-207; Cemal Kutay, Çağımızda Bir Asr-ı Saadet Müslümanı Bediuzzaman Said Nursi (Istanbul, 1980), pp. 354-6; Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, pp. 196, 384; Mürsel, pp. 122-6, 156-65, 545-8.

14. These phrases are used by Said Nursi in various places in the Risale-i Nur, see, for example, Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, Sözler (Istanbul, 1977), p. 429 and Nursi, İşârât-ül İ'caz, p. 48, and are well-known to all Nurcus.

15. See, Nursi, Sünûhat, p. 43; Nursi, Sözler, pp. 429, 794; Nursi, İşârât-ül İ'caz, pp; 48-9; Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 384; Topics, p. 19; Mürsel, Devlet Felsefesi, pp. 243-6, 546.

16. This was the definition Said Nursi offered for the constitutional regime in one of his articles published in 1909. Later on, he republished this article in his book Hutbe-i Şâmiye, pp. 78-9 and replaced the word meşrutiyet (constitutional regime) with Cumhuriyet (republic) and said in a footnote: 'that time it was for Meşrutiyet but not it is for Cumhuriyet' (p. 79).

17. Almost all of my informants spoke in favour of a republic as an Islamically approved government system. Although as B. Toprak puts it in her book Islam and Political Development in Turkey (Leiden 1981), p. 38, 'The concept of a Republic based on the sovereignty of the nation is contrary to Islam', Nurcus, not taking notice of the secular characteristics of Republicanism as it is practised in Turkey now, assume that the nation on whose sovereignty the republic is based, is Muslim (see, Nursi, Hutbe-i Şamiye, p. 83). When the discussion came to its practice in Turkey, they all complained that those who ruled the country did so against the desires of the Muslim inhabitants, especially during the one-party period. Said Nursi himself described this practice as: 'By giving the name "Republic" to an absolute despotism, they are destroying the nation, the motherland and the sovereignty of Islam for the benefit of enemies', Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, Şualar (Istanbul, 1960), p. 242. It will be clear from these views that though Nurcus are often described as 'anti-republican' (see, for example, G.L. Lewis, "Islam in Politics, A Muslim World Symposium: Turkey", The Muslim World, LVI (October, 1966), 236), they actually favour republicanism as a system of government but object to certain aspects of the way it has been implemented in Turkey. They would like to see an Islamic republic.

18. Nursi, İki Mekteb ..., pp. 53, 67; Nursi, Şualar, p. 304; Nursi, Hutbe-i Şâmiye, pp. 52, 71, 79, 83, 104; Nursi, Lem'alar, p. 162; Tarihçe, p. 40; Kutay, pp. 309-12; Topics, p. 2; Mürsel, Devlet Felsefesi, pp. 263-7; Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 307; İbrahim Canan, "Hz. Peygamberin Sünnetinde İstişarenin Safhaları", Köprü, No. 54 (September, 1981), pp. 21-6; Safa Mürsel, "Cumhuriyet Düşmanları", Köprü, No. 31 (October, 1979), pp. 3-4.

19. My informants were careful to distinguish 'administrative' (idarî) from 'political' (siyasî), and saw the state and the caliphate very much as 'idarî' institutions rather than 'siyasî'.

20. Throughout his life, Said Nursi advocated the idea of representing the caliphate by a council rather than an individual. He explained his reasoning in his book, Münâzarat, which he published first in 1911, 'Now the rule is public opinion not individuals, so (the people) want a spiritual personality like the public opinion itself, which will represent the caliphate' (p. 33). In another book, he suggested that the caliphate '... must be a spiritual personality which is made up of a sublime council of scholars' (Sünûhat, p. 38). Said Nursi was not alone in his idea, some twentieth-century Muslim scholars too argued that the caliph can be elected democratically and undertake the Muslim community's mandate together with an also democratically elected assembly. This opinion was best reflected in Fazlur Rahman's book, Islam, where he said, 'The Caliph was nothing more than the chief executive officer who undertook to execute the Community's will, i.e. the Sharī'a ... This free Community, by its free will, also elects an assembly. This is also Islamically correct and democratically sound; there is absolutely no reason to believe otherwise' (Islam, 2nd ed. (Chicago, 1979), p. 260).

21. In the declaration he distributed among the first session deputies to the Republican parliament in 1923, Said Nursi argued that parliament should undertake the task of the caliphate as well, and said 'Now is the time of community. The spiritual personality of the community is firmer than that of an individual and is more capable of executing the statutes of the Sacred Law (the Şeriat). The individual bearing the title of Caliph may perform his duties only if he is to act for this spiritual personality' (Tarihçe, p. 136). In fact, this opinion was quite prevalent when the Kemalists used it as a reason to abolish the caliphate to prevent possible controversy. As B. Toprak puts it: 'Article I of the law [Law No. 431, date: 3 March 1340(1924)] which abolished the Caliphate stated that this institution was, in fact, inherent in the concept and understanding of the Republican regime and hence was redundant... The wording of Article I left the impression that the new regime was not against the Caliphate per se but rather incorporated its spirit with the Republican framework' (p. 44).

22. Nursi, İki Mekteb..., pp. 14, 67; Nursi, Şualar, p. 304; Nursi, Sünûhat, pp. 36-40; Nursi, Münâzarat, p. 33; Tarihçe, pp. 62, 136; Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 308; Mürsel, Devlet Felsefesi, pp. 190-2, 267-73; Kutay, p. 190.

23. This is an interpretation of Said Nursi's letter in which he said 'Communism may damage thirty-forty percent of people'. For the letter, see Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, Emirdağ Lâhikası, (Istanbul, 1959), II, p. 177.

24. This point, however, is not known to Nurcus. I could not see in Nurcu sources any written proof of this statement of Said Nursi. My informant in Istanbul, Mehmet, one of the Nurcu ağabeys, told me that he had heard this statement from Said Nursi himself. None of my other informants had any sympathy for socialism even in its Welfare State form, they all used 'socialism' and 'communism' inconsistently and interchangeably.

25. This idea too belongs to Mehmet only.

26. Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, Muhakemât (Istanbul, 1964), p. 38.

27. This example was given by Said Nursi himself in his writings to explain how dangerous, according to him, it will be when a person becomes irreligious, see his Lem'alar, p. 75.

28. My informants supported every statement along these lines by direct quotations from and close reference to the Risale-i Nur.

29. Nursi, Beyanat, pp. 21, 30-6; Nursi, Emirdağ Lâhikası, II, p. 177; Nursi, Emirdağ Lâhikası, I, p. 156; Nursi, Münâzarat, p. 22; Nursi, Şualar, pp. 404, 419, 494; Nursi, Lem'alar, p. 160; Mürsel, Devlet Felsefesi, pp. 246-51; Sungur, Söz, pp. 117-31; Topics, pp. 19-20; Noor, p. 69; Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, pp. 210, 387; Necmeddin Şahiner, Son Şahitler Bediuzzaman Said Nursî'yi Anlatıyor (Istanbul, 1978), I, p. 456, hereafter cited as Şahitler, I; Safâ Mürsel, "Komünist Emperyalizmin Esaret Halkalari Çözülecek", Köprü, No. 24 (March 1979), p. 1.

30. Hayati was alone among my informants in his conviction that those who join the Lions and Rotary Clubs are also fellow Muslims. He told me that he never witnessed any of his colleagues who were masons propagating irreligious ideas.

31. For his letter sent to the DP leaders, see Nursi, Beyanat, p. 21.

32. It must be for this reason that Nurcus did not mention freemasons openly in their publications. Indeed, there is almost no material in the Nurcu publications that studies or discusses freemasonry by name. When they refer to opponents of Islam in their writings, they usually have in mind freemasons as well as atheistic and communist groups.

33. See, for example, Nursi, Emirdağ Lâhikası, II, p. 177, and Nursi, Lem'alar, p. 79.

34. Only Mahmut, my informant from Erzurum, did not understand the 'committee for subversion' as freemasons. According to him, freemasons are those to whom Said Nursi referred as the atheist ones amongst the freemasons who were trying to prevent the Risale-i Nur from being freely distributed (as mentioned in Nursi, Emirdağ Lâhikası, II, p. 18). Mahmut claimed that Said Nursi categorised freemasons as the third group among the people who harmed Islam by spoiling the faith of a hundredth or a thousandth of the population of Turkey. (For this categorisation of the enemies of Islam in Turkey by Said Nursi, see ibid., p. 177).

35. Ibid., pp. 18, 25, 177; Nursi, Lem'alar, p. 79; Nursi, Beyanat, pp. 16, 21; Tarihçe, pp. 409 and 414.

36. Nurcus regard agnosticism as tantamount to atheism.

37. Nursi, Şualar, p. 494; Nursi, Lem'alar, p. 112; Nursi, Hutbe-i Şâmiye, p. 69; Nursi, Beyanat, pp. 21, 30, 32; Sungur, Söz, passim; "Anarşi

Bitti mi?", Köprü, No. 63 (June 1982), pp. 8-15; Safâ Mürsel, "Yılların Dili Olsa", Köprü, No. 60 (March 1982), pp. 6-8.

38. For this understanding of racialism by Said Nursi, see his book Sözler, p. 570.

39. Almost every Nurcu refers the theme of nationalism to this phrase as a short definition of their view on the subject. Here the phrase is translated as it appeared on the front cover of the book Nationalism in the View of Islam, trans. Talabat-an Nur (El-Cerrito, n.d.), compiled by Nurcus from Said Nursi's writings.

40. B. Lewis described the same attitude as still prevalent in modern Turkey and said: '... despite secularism and nationalism, the older idea that Muslim equals Turk and non-Muslim equals non-Turk persisted ... and the designation Turk was in common usage restricted to Muslims, the rest were known as Turkish citizens, but never as Turks'. See his The Emergence of Modern Turkey, 2nd ed. (London, 1968), pp. 356-7. Identifying Islam with the Turkish nation is not unique to Said Nursi or to Nurcus, as noted by J.M. Landau, almost all of pro-Islamic literature adopted this approach. He said: '... recent pro-Islamic literature in Turkey has identified Islam with the Turkish nation, an approach not merely restricted to the orthodox, but apparently quite prevalent among many Turks. This literature has also been prone to identify the non-religious, and particularly the anti-religious, with the communists and other groups which are vehemently opposed'. His Radical Politics in Modern Turkey (Leiden, 1974), p. 179.

41. Professor Mardin stated in his book, The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought, that some of the Young Ottomans, particularly Hayreddin Pasa, used the word 'nation' with the connotation of 'religious group' (p. 388). Said Nursi used the term 'nation' with exactly the same connotation but sometimes he stressed the religious side of it and used the surer term İslamiyet Milliyeti (Islamic nationality) to mark the distinction between its traditional connotation and the modern meaning (see, for example, Mektûbat, pp. 302 and 309). He thus rejected the usage of the word millet (nation) as understood by his contemporaries with its modern sense of nation. For example, Gökalp used the term ümmet to refer to the international Islamic community and thus was '... opposed to the traditional conception of Islam that all Muslims form one millet', Uriel Heyd, Foundations of Turkish Nationalism: The Life and Teachings of Ziya Gökalp (London, 1950), p. 62.

42. Namely, Celâl Bayar and Adnan Menderes. This letter was written by Said Nursi to congratulate the government on the occasion of the signing of the Baghdad Pact in 1955. For the letter as published in the Risale-i Nur, see Nursi, Emirdağ Lâhikası, II, pp. 194-7, and also Nursi, Beyanat, pp. 67-73.

43. Ibid., pp. 14, 25, 68, 70; Nursi, Mektûbat, pp. 297-303, 393-6, 410-11; Nursi, Emirdağ Lâhikası, II, pp. 132-3, 194, 197; Nursi, Hutbe-i Şâmiye, pp. 19, 56-60, 83; Nursi, İki Mekteb..., pp. 9-10; Nursi, Sözler, pp. 139, 570; Tarihçe, pp. 100-4; Ahmed Şahin, Muslüman Milliyetçilik Anlayışı (Istanbul, 1978), passim; Sungur, Söz, pp. 208-29, 316;

Mürsel, Devlet Felsefesi, pp. 284-307; Topics, pp. 21-2; Kutay, p. 295. For a Nurcu work on Ziya Gökalp, see A. Vehbi Vakkasoğlu, Tarih Aynasında Ziya Gökalp (Istanbul, 1980).

44. Nursi, Mektûbat, p. 446; Nursi, Lem'alar, p. 141; Nursi, Emirdağ Lâhikası, I, p. 58; Nursi, Emirdağ Lâhikası, II, pp. 194-7; Mürsel, Devlet Felsefesi, pp. 416-20; Safâ Mürsel, "Yeni Şartlarda NATO ve Türkiye", Köprü, No. 47 (February 1981), pp. 4-5; Ali Toker, "Dünya Sulhünün En Büyük Askerî Teminatı NATO'ya Nasıl Girdik?"; Köprü, No. 47 (February 1981), pp. 6-9; Sahiner, Sahitler, I, pp. 385-6; Necmeddin Şahiner, Son Şahitler Bediuzzaman Said Nursî'yi Anlatıyor (Istanbul, 1981), II, pp. 74, 76-9, hereafter cited as Şahitler, II. Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, pp. 365, 387.

45. Said Nursi repeated his ideas in his letters to the DP government that the Democrats, Europe, particularly England and France, the United States of America and the Christian world would favour a united Muslim world. In olden days, such unification of the Muslim world was against their interests, but now communism, freemasonry and atheism are threatening them all. To save the Muslim world from being captured by the communists, they should help them united. (See, for example, his Beyanat, pp. 21, 30.)

46. Nursi, Emirdağ Lâhikası, II, pp. 24-5, 56, 194; Nursi, Emirdağ Lâhikası, I, p. 259; Nursi, Münâzarat, pp. 21, 60; Nursi, Hutbe-i Şâmiye, pp. 80, 87, 88, 99; Nursi, İki Mekteb..., p. 51; Nursi, Mektûbat, p. 440; Nursi, Beyanat, pp. 21, 30, 49; Tarihçe, p. 504; Mürsel, Devlet Felsefesi, pp. 421-33.

47. Nursi, Hutbe-i Şâmiye, pp. 39, 47, 49; Nursi, Beyanat, p. 68; Nursi, Mektûbat, p. 299; Tarihçe, pp. 97, 504, 601; Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 140.

48. Nursi, Emirdağ Lâhikası, II, p. 178; Nursi, Hutbe-i Şâmiye, pp. 20, 27; Nursi, Beyanat, pp. 18, 21, 23, 45, 73; Mürsel, Devlet Felsefesi, p. 415.

49. It is worth noticing that Nurcus never regarded the Soviet Union as an possible alternative ally, even on a temporary basis, whereas in other Muslim countries some of the religious groups that considered the Soviet camp to be as great a threat to Islam as was the West, nevertheless thought that the fear generated by the Soviet Union might be used to counteract the Western exploitation of the Muslim countries. For example, R.P. Mitchell reported Seyyid Qutb, a prominent writer of the Muslim Brothers, to have said: 'We are in temporary need of the communist power', (p. 271).

50. Nursi, Emirdağ Lâhikası, II, p. 71; Nursi, Beyanat, pp. 13, 35, 36; Mürsel, Devlet Felsefesi, p. 415; Mustafa Sungur, "Rusya da Dinsiz Kalamaz Geri Dönüp Hiristiyan da Olamaz", Köprü, No. 27 (June 1979), pp. 8-12.

51. Cemal Uşak, "Çin Halk Cumhuriyetinde İslam", Köprü, No. 67 (October 1982), pp. 4-7.

52. This phrase is mentioned in various books of the Risale-i Nur. See, for example, Tarihçe, p. 53; Nursi, Hutbe-i Şâmiye, p. 27; Nursi, Emirdağ Lâhikası, II, p. 108.

53. Ibid., pp. 31, 32, 108, 115-6; Tarihçe, pp. 53, 150, 561; Nursi, Münâzarat, pp. 26-7; Nursi, Sözler, pp. 160-1; Nursi, Mektûbat, pp. 53-4; Nursi, Hutbe-i Şâmiye, pp. 20, 26-7; Nursi, Beyanat, pp. 21, 32, 46, 51; Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, pp. 106, 238; Mürsel, Devlet Felsefesi, pp. 406-16.

54. Said Nursi explained in the Risale-i Nur why the Jews were successful in establishing a state in Palestine though it was told in the Koran '... and humiliation and wretchedness were stamped upon them (the Children of Israel)...' (II:61). He said: 'Because the Jewish nation has been excessively greedy in worldly life, they were humiliated by the divine determination throughout centuries. But, this time, to found a state in Palestine was not for the purpose of worldly life, rather with the national and religious feelings that they wanted to have a state in a place where the prophets of the Children of Israel who were the descendants of their nation, and the other prophets were buried. So, God is not punishing them in this case, otherwise such a small group of people in that large Arabian peninsula would not last and would soon be wretched' (see his Şualar, p. 427). Only Alper, my informant from Ankara, referred to this passage of the Risale-i Nur and added that it was understandable to him why God was not helping socialist Palestinian resistance powers: obviously they were not fighting for religious purposes.

55. Nursi, Şualar, p. 427; Nursu, Sözler, pp. 421-2; Nursi, Beyanat, p. 67; Bozgeyik, Bütün Cepheleriyle İran Meselesi, pp. 3-8; see also a pamphlet entitled İran Olaylarında İpler Kimin Elinde? (Istanbul, 1978), passim. This pamphlet is a collection of articles written by Nurcus in various Nurcu publications in 1978. Kasım Baydemir, "Korsanlıgı Devlet Politikası Haline Getiren Ülke: İsrail", Köprü, No. 52 (July 1981), pp. 4-5; Burhan Bozgeyik, "Türkiye'deki Şuurlu Müslümanlar İran Örneğine Müsaade Etmezler", Köprü, No. 24 (March 1979), pp. 3-8. This article is an interview with Dr Servet Armağan.

56. Only Tevfik, my informant from Konya, opposed the policy of the Turkish government which tried to prevent Kurdish nationalism from growing by claiming the Turkishness of the Kurds. He said it was an unrealistic attempt and impossible for anybody to accept.

57. Although some writers claimed that Said Nursi called himself Said Kurdi only before the foundation of the Republic and that he '... opposed Kurdish nationalism as contrary to Islamic brotherhood: he proclaimed that the welfare of the Kurds depended on that of the Turks...' See, Hamid Algar, "Said Nursi and the Risale-i Nur: An Aspect of Islam in Contemporary Turkey", Islamic Perspectives: Studies in Honour of Sayyid Abul a'la Mawdudi, ed. Khurshid Ahmad and Zafar Ishaq Ansari (Leicester, 1979), p. 329. Some others maintained that Said Nursi continued to call himself Said Kurdi after the foundation of the Republic and saw him as 'the only person who dared to bear such a name' (see, Edward Mortimer, Faith and Power: the Politics of Islam (London, 1982), p. 152).

58. Nursi, Münâzarat, pp. 71-3; Nursi, Beyanat, p. 72; Tarihçe, pp. 137, 215, 217; Necmeddin Şahiner, Said Nursi ve Nurculuk Hakkında Aydınlar Konuşuyor, 2nd ed. (Istanbul, 1979), pp. 165-7, 181; Sahiner, Bilinmiyen, pp. 89, 215-6, 253, 357-8; Şahiner, Şahitler, I, pp. 220, 306; Necmeddin Şahiner, Nurs Yolu (Istanbul, 1977), p. 152; Şahiner, Şahitler, II, p. 179; Kutay, p. 294; Mürsel, Devlet Felsefesi, pp. 301-3.

59. None of my interviewees made any mention of the Armenian problem in the time of Abdul Hamid II.

60. None of my interviewees mentioned the exchange of populations with the Greeks, or the Varlık Vergisi that was levied on minorities in the Second World War; they would regard the Varlık tax as an approved Islamic practice.

61. Nursi, Münâzarat, pp. 20, 25-7, 29, 32; Nursi, Hutbe-i Şâmiye, p. 83; Nursi, Şualar, p. 315; Nursi, Emirdağ Lâhikası, I, p. 276; Tarihçe, p. 587; Mürsel, Devlet Felsefesi, pp. 506-9; Sungur, Söz, pp. 234-40.

62. Tarihçe, pp. 229 and 240.

63. Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, Mesnevî-i Nuriye (Türkçe Tercümesi), trans. Abdulmecid Nursi (Istanbul, 1977), pp. 204-5; Nursi, İki Mekteb..., p. 24; Nursi, Şualar, p. 501; Nursi, Münâzarat, p. 30; Nursi, Hutbe-i Şâmiye, pp. 93, 96; Nursi, Lem'alar, p. 247; Nursi, Beyanat, p. 44; Mürsel, Devlet Felsefesi, pp. 434-42; Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, pp. 244, 387, 404; Şahiner, Şahitler, I, pp. 186-7 and 435.

64. The generally accepted view is that Mustafa Kemal was sent to Anatolia to supervise the disbanding of Turkish forces there. See, for example, Geoffrey L. Lewis, Modern Turkey (London, 1974) p. 69. The view expressed by the Nurcus has recently gained ground with religious people and is put forward by Kadir Mısıroğlu in Osmanoğullarının Dramı (Istanbul, 1974), pp. 82-4.

65. Said Nursi's own attitude towards Atatürk and his reforms is well summarised from the Risale-i Nur by Çetin Özek in his book Türkiyede Gerici Akımlar ve Nurculuğun İçyüzü (Istanbul, 1964), p. 262.

66. There are still a few Turks - their numbers are now negligible - who would like Turkey to revert to the use of the Ottoman script because they feel this is the Koranic alphabet. Among this small minority are a few Nurcus who still copy out the Risale-i Nur in the old script. They are known as 'Yazıcı Nurcus'.

67. Though one may see religious persons wearing hats in Turkey, Nurcus never wear them. It is a prevalent Nurcu belief that a 'hat' is a 'sign of infidelity'. For reference to the works where the importance of the hat in Western culture as a means to disclose one's identity is studied, see, R. Kenneth Jones, "Paradigm Shifts and Identity Theory: Alternation as a form of Identity Management", Identity and Religion, International Cross-Cultural Approaches, ed. Hans Mol (London, 1978), pp. 59-60.

68. Tarihçe, pp. 136-7, 139, 141, 208, 223, 228, 651; Nursi, Şualar, p. 324; Nursi, Mektûbat, pp. 406-10; Nursi, Beyanat, p. 72; Nursi, Emirdağ Lâhikası, I, p. 81; Nursi, Emirdağ Lâhikası, II, p. 32, Laiklik Nedir, ne Değildir? (Istanbul, 1981), passim. This is a compilation of articles published in the several issues of Yeni Asya newspaper and the magazine Köprü between December 1980 and June 1981. Safa Mürsel, Laikliğin Neresindeyiz? (Istanbul, 1982), passim; Başörtüsü ve Vicdan Hürriyeti (Istanbul, 1981), passim. This small booklet comprises articles published in the several issues of the newspaper Yeni Nesil between 1 March 1980 and 20 April 1981. Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, pp. 109, 323; Kutay, pp. 229-33; Şahiner, Şahitler, I, p. 407.

69. This phrase is mentioned in Nursi, İki Mekteb..., p. 61 and it was translated into English in Topics, p. 12 from where this translation is taken.

70. The hadith: 'İlim müminin yitik malıdır nerede bulursa alır' is frequently quoted by religious Turks.

71. Among Said Nursi's contemporaries, Musa Kâzim too believed the way in which the Japanese adopted the Western science and industry was the best. In his article published in 1908, he said, 'We have to adopt only the science (ilim) and the industry (fen) of Europe, in the manner of the Japanese' (Sırat-ı Müstakim, No. 7 (1908), quoted in Niyazi Berkes, The Development of Secularim in Turkey (Montreal, 1964), p. 359.

72. This comparison between Islamic and Western civilisation was made in various parts of the Risale-i Nur. The following places were cited by my informants: Nursi, Sözler, pp. 139, 428-9; Nursi, Sünuhat, p. 44 and Tarihçe, pp. 125-6.

73. Uriel Heyd explained in his book on Ziya Gökalp that Gökalp categorised scientific methods, the natural sciences and technical processes as "civilisation" and accepted that they should be adopted from Europe, because these were by nature international. Gökalp maintained, however, that "culture" should not be borrowed from other nations but should be taken from Turkey's own religious and national heritage, see his Foundation of Turkish Nationalism, p. 80. Although Nurcus never favoured Gökalp, they apparently share his attitude towards Westernisation.

74. Nursi, Sünûhat, pp. 44-6; Nursi, Lem'alar, pp. 106-7, 111; Nursi, Iki Mekteb ..., pp. 50, 61-2; Nursi, Hutbe-i Şâmiye, pp. 28, 29, 31, 109, 134, 136; Nursi, Sözler, pp. 139, 428-9, 759; Nursi, Beyanat, p. 63; Tarihçe, pp. 125-7; Nursi, Muhakemât, p. 8; Mürsel, Devlet Felsefesi, pp. 212-7; Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, pp. 102-3, 198, 383, 384; Kutay, pp. 173, 256; Topics, pp. 11-2; Sungur, Söz, pp. 42-6, 59-67; Şahiner, Şahitler, I, p. 152.

75. The other two are want and disunity among the nation. 'Against these enemies', Said Nursi proposed, 'to fight with the weapons of industry and unity is the duty of the Muslim community'. (See his İki Mekteb..., p. 14.)

76. Nurcus, like some of the Muslim apologists of the Tanzimat period, believe that '... the more education and enlightenment spread among the Muslims, the more their faith will become strong ...' For a discussion on the ideas of such writers, see Berkes, pp. 354-5.

77. This idea was earlier introduced in the Ottoman Empire by the Encümen-i Daniş (Society of the Learned) which was established in 1851. Niyazi Berkes says '... the Encümen decided to establish an institution of higher learning in which the natural and moral sciences, or more correctly, the traditional sciences ('ilm) and modern sciences (fen) would be assembled. This never materialised during the lifetime of the Encümen'. (Ibid., p. 178)

78. Nursi, İki Mekteb..., pp. 68-9; Nursi, Münâzarat, pp. 71, 74-6; Nursi, Beyanat, pp. 69, 70; Nursi, Emirdağ Lâhikası, II, p. 195; Mürsel, Devlet Felsefesi, pp. 195-211, 376-96; Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, pp. 93-4; Safa Mürsel, "Eğitim: Tek Sesli Koro", Köprü, No. 57 (January 1982), pp. 22-4; Nedim Gürbüz, "Eğitim: İnsana Yatırım", Köprü, No. 54 (September 1981), pp. 12-3; Mustafa Canelli, "Eğitimde Nereye Geldik?", Köprü, No. 51 (June 1981), pp. 18-20; Safâ Mürsel "Eğitimde Maksat ve Tercihler", Köprü, No. 55 (October 1981), pp. 5-6; A. Vehbi Vakkasoğlu, "Eğitimimizin Çıkmazları", Köprü, No. 55 (October 1981), p. 12; "Eğitim: Gidiş Nereye?", Köprü, No. 55 (October 1981), pp. 7-11.

79. Similar ideas were prevalent among the early twentieth-century Muslim writers. The following quotation from an article by Babânzade Mustafa, published in Sebil-ür Reşad in 1912, well illustrates this belief: 'What we need is to prove by comparing the shining truths of our religion with the lights of science, that these lights were born of these truths'. As cited in Berkes, p. 363.

80. The understanding of religion as being in harmony with science is not a new one, as J.M. Yinger states: 'The view that religion and science are fundamentally harmonious, that they are dual roads to truth, or indeed an identical road, is an ancient one. To St Thomas there could be no contradiction between religion and science, if men knew enough, because both stem from God'. See his Religion, Society and the Individual, 11th ed. (New York, 1957), pp. 34-5.

81. One of the sections of the Risale-i Nur was completely devoted to proving this by interpreting some verses of the Koran about the stories of the ancient prophets, see Nursi Sözler, pp. 262-78. There are numerous Muslim scholars who claim that the Koran and technological sciences confirm each other. The latest example of this claim can be seen in Maurice Bucaille, The Bible, the Qur'an and Science, trans. Alastair D. Pannell and the author (Indianapolis,1978). On the other hand, some Muslim scholars believed in the absolute separation of religious matters from scientific ones. The nature of these two approaches of the Muslim scholars towards the Koran and science is well summarised in Clifford Geertz, Islam Observed: Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia (Chicago, 1971), p. 105.

82. Nursi, Münâzarat, pp. 71, 72, 77; Mürsel, Devlet Felsefesi, pp. 179-94, 374-6; Topics, pp. 8-11; Yeni Asya Araştırma Merkezi, "Bediuzzaman'ın Gözüyle: Modern İlimler ve Din", Köprü, No. 36 (March 1980), pp. 7-15; Ziyaüddin Serdar, "Islam İlmine Dönüş", Köprü, No. 64 (July, 1982), pp. 18-20; Ziyaüddin Serdar, "İslam İlminin Temel Esasları", Köprü, No. 65 (August, 1982), pp. 21-3; "İlimde İslama Dönüş", Köprü, No. 47 (February, 1981), pp. 10-14.

83. For the Imam-Hatip schools in Turkey, see Nahit Dinçer, 1913 ten Bugüne İmam Hatip Okulları Meselesi (Istanbul, 1974), passim; H.A. Reed, "Turkey's New Imam-Hatip Schools", Welt des Islam, n.s., IV (1955) 150-63; Landau, p. 176; Frederick W. Frey, "Turkey: Education", Political Modernization in Japan and Turkey, ed. Robert E. Ward and Dankward A. Rustow (Princeton, 1964), pp. 217-8, 222-3; Ahmet N. Yücekök, Türkiye'de Örgütlenmiş Dinin Sosyo-Ekonomik Tabanı (1946-1968), Ankara Üniversitesi Siyasal Bilgiler Facültesi Yayınları, No. 323 (Ankara, 1971), pp. 142-7. For the Faculty of Divinity, see Howard A. Reed, "The Faculty of Divinity at Ankara", The Muslim World, XLVI (October 1956), 295-312, XLVII (January 1957), 22-35; Berkes, 490-5. For Higher Institute of Islam, see OECD Education and Development Country Reports, The Mediterranean Regional Project: Turkey (Paris, 1965), p. 92; Toprak, p. 50.

84. Nursi, Emirdağ Lâhikası, II, pp. 101, 170-1; "Din Eğitimi İhtiyacı Karşılamıyor", Köprü, No. 51 (June 1981), p. 19; Şahiner, Şahitler, I, pp. 65, 312-3.

85. Amongst all my interviewees, only Hayri, a retired official, suggested that the Religious Affairs Department should be combined with the General Directorate of the Pious Foundation in order to be financially independent. His reference to the autonomy of the universities applied to the situation before 1980.

86. Nursi, Şualar, pp. 431-2; Nursi, Emirdağ Lâhikası, II, pp. 10-11; Nursi, Mektûbat, p. 65.

87. Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, Nur Aleminin Bir Anahtarı (Istanbul, 1977), pp. 18-9; Nursi, Emirdağ Lâhikası, II, pp. 66-7; Nursi, Beyanat, pp. 64-5; Burhan Bozgeyik, "TRT Üzerine TRT Eski Genel Müdürü Prof. Dr. Şaban Karataş ile Mülâkat", Köprü, No. 33 (December 1979), pp. 14-6.

88. Nursi, Hutbe-i Şamiye, pp. 111 and 131.

89. None of my interviewees touched on the right of divorce, which according to Islam belongs to men only.

90. Especially among the twentieth-century Muslim scholars, the general trend is to see monogamy as the moral law of the Koran for long term achievement, whereas polygamy is permitted in Islam only as a legal solution of the situation. See, for example, Rahman, pp. 28-9. Even Said Nursi, who defended polygamy as being in accordance with nature, reason and wisdom, said: 'Even if polygamy is evil, in some respects it is a 'lesser evil'. And 'lesser evil' is relative justice', see his Münâzarat, p. 69. None of my informants mentioned this point to me during the interview.

91. For some of my interviewees, the spirit is delivered to the foetus on the fortieth day after conception, for the others it is at the end of the fourth month.

92. Nursi, Lem'alar, pp. 184-92; Nursi, Sözler, pp. 430, 772; Nursi, Münâzarat, pp. 68-9; Nursi, İşârât-ül İ'caz, pp. 164, 167; Nursi, Mektûbat, p. 449; Nursi, Emirdağ Lâhikası, II, pp. 49-50, 112; Mürsel, Devlet Felsefesi, pp. 151-9, 135-46, 484-6; Jeanne M. McNette, "İslam Kadını Baskı Altında mı?", Köprü, No. 64 (July 1982), pp. 24-5; Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, pp. 232-3.

93. Only Hayri, who watches television more frequently than the average among Nurcus, said that he did not think one could serve Islam through theatre and cinema, because they were cultural means foreign to Islam.

94. Nursi, Lem'alar, p. 223; Nursi, Sözler, p. 431.

95. Nursi, İşârât-ül İ'caz, pp. 77-8; Nursi, Sözler, p. 432; Şahiner, Nurs Yolu, pp. 150-1; Ceyhun Savaşan, "Taklit, Mûsikîmizi Çoraklaştırıyor", Köprü, No. 62 (May, 1982), pp. 27-8. This is an interview with Yıldırım Gürses.

96. Nursi, Sözler, pp. 330-2; Nursi, Mektubat, pp. 276-80.

97. The Turkish nefis or nefs-i emmâre, Arabic an-nafs al-ammâra - the head-strong, unregenerate soul. See J. Spencer Trimingham, The Sufi Orders in Islam (London, 1973), pp. 155-6.

98. Almost in every section of the Risale-i Nur there is a mention of namaz encouraging readers to perform it, apart from the various treatises devoted to only namaz. See also Nursi, Mektûbat, pp. 372-82; Nursi, Sünûhat, p. 54; Nursi, Hutbe-i Şâmiye, p. 107; Nursi, Beyanat, p. 64; Nursi, Sözler, pp. 429-30; Nursi, İşârât-ül İ'caz, pp. 48-9; Şahiner, Aydınlar Konuşuyor, p. 334.

99. Nursi, Lem'alar, pp. 6-7, 65; Mehmet Dikmen, "Günah Psikolojisi", Köprü, No. 66 (September 1982), pp. 22-5.

100. Nursi, Sözler, pp. 183-9, 533-45; Nursi, Lem'alar, pp. 64-82.

101. Nursi, Şualar, pp. 271-2.

102. For the Mu'tazilites' understanding of predestination, see W. Montgomery Watt, The Formative Period of Islamic Thought (Edinburgh, 1973), p. 234. For the Ash'arites' answer to it, see H.A.R. Gibb, Islam: A Historical Survey, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1978), pp. 79-80.

103. Nursi, Sözler, pp. 488-504; Nursi, İşârât-ül İ'caz, pp. 79-84; Mehmed Kırkıncı, Kader Nedir?, 3rd ed. (Istanbul, 1980), passim.

104. The general trend among the Muslim scholars is not to accept the authority of the mystic intuitions. This may be authoritative only for the person who experiences it. For a few examples of opinions of some Muslim scholars on the subject, see Rahman, pp. 141, 147. H.A.R. Gibb notes in his book, Modern Trends in Islam (Chicago, 1947), that

'... Shaikh Muhammad Abduh himself maintained only that Muslims are not required to believe in the miracles attributed to saints or in their powers of intercession' (p. 34).

105. For a study of the practical use of 'sainthood', see Ernest Gellner, Saints of the Atlas (London, 1969).

106. Nursi, Mektûbat, pp. 20, 29, 47, 318-9, 416-22 and in its Ottoman script version see pp. 564-5; Nursi, Emirdağ Lâhikası, II, pp. 172-3; Şahiner, Şahitler, I, pp. 420-1.

107. Believing that the punishment in hell will be eternal is quite common among Muslims. They use different ways to explain why life in hell will be eternal. For example, Fazlur Rahman explains his view on the subject as follows: 'While the potentialities of man are immense, equally immense, therefore, are the penalties which man must face as a result of his failure' (Rahman, p. 36).

108. Nursi, Sözler, pp. 525-32; Nursi, İşârât-ül İ'caz, pp. 88-90; Nursi, Lem'alar, p. 262.

109. Nursi, Hutbe-i Şâmiye, pp. 67, 76, 103, 119; Nursi, İki Mekteb..., pp. 11, 18-9; Nursi, Beyanat, p. 24; Nursi, Sünûhat, p. 50; Mürsel, Devlet Felsefesi, pp. 462-6; Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, pp. 121, 254-9; Şahiner, Aydınlar Konuşuyar, p. 335.

110. Nursi, Emirdağ Lâhikası, II, pp. 213-9; Nursi, Hutbe-i Şâmiye, pp. 75, 78, 130; Nursi, Beyanat, pp. 80, 86; Tarihçe, p. 57; Mürsel, Devlet Felsefesi, pp. 443-51; Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, pp. 151, 255, 406-7; Şahiner, Şahitler, I, p. 444; Şahiner, Şahitler, II, p. 31; Yeni Asya Research Center, Social Change in Muslim Societies (California, 1980), p. 24.

111. Nursi, Sözler, pp. 382-487; Nursi, Şualar, pp. 112-6.

112. Nursi, Sözler, pp. 288, 512-3, 764; Nursi, Mektûbat, p. 407; Nursi, Sünûhat, p. 34; Sungur, Söz, pp. 230-3.

113. Although in his writings Said Nursi quoted from some great sufi şeyhs such as Gîlânî and Al-Arabî, he did not hesitate to discourage his followers from joining sufi orders or reading the works of the sufi şeyhs. There is almost no Nurcu who follows a sufi order nor is it common among Nurcus to read any books of the sufi şeyhs if they ever read anything other than the Risale-i Nur and the Nurcu publications. As Trimingham points out, this was the common attitude of the ulemâ towards sufism in the Islamic world. He said: '... mysticism as a system of thought was marginal to Islam, as is shown by the fact that the 'ulemâ' feel no sense of loss at its disappearance' (p. 249).

114. Nursi, Mektûbat, pp. 20-21, 306-7, 308-10, 415-28; Nursi, Sözler, pp. 521-4; Tarihçe, pp. 212, 254 and 458.

115. Nursi, Mektûbat, pp. 563-5 in the Ottoman script version; Nursi, Emirdağ Lâhikası, I, pp. 200-1; Tarihçe, pp. 483-4; Nursi, Lem'alar, p. 23.

116. Dr Yaşar Kutluay found some similarities between Said Nursi and the Shia imams and studied them in his article, "Mezhepler Tarihi Yönünden Said Nursî ve Nurculuk", İslam Tetkikleri Enstitüsü Dergisi, III, part 4 (1960), 220-4.

117. Nursi, Mektûbat, pp. 97-8; Nursi, Lem'alar, pp. 17-23, 87; Nursi, Emirdağ Lâhikası, I, pp. 77-8, 201-3, 237-8; Tarihçe, pp. 483-6; Bozgeyik, Bütün Cepheleriyle İran Meselesi, passim; Şahiner, Şahitler, I, p. 414.

118. Nursi, Mektûbat, p. 442; Tarihçe, p. 299; Şahiner, Şahitler, I, pp. 239-40; Sungur, Söz, pp. 47-53.

119. Tarihçe, pp. 586, 668; Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, Kastamonu Lâhikası, (n.p., 1960), p. 10; Şahiner, Şahitler, I, p. 397.

120. Tarihçe, pp. 149, 219; S. Kurter and O. Birge, The Model of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi (California, 1977), pp. 22-35; Topics, pp.1, 2, 4, 26-7; Yeni Asya Research Center, Social Change in Muslim Societies, p. 19; Şahiner, Şahitler, I, p. 316; Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, pp. 400-1.

121. Mustafa Zakî Al-'Ashurî, Muallif Rasâil an-Nûr wa Muassis Jamâ'at an Nûr Badî'uzzaman Sa'îd an-Nursî: Nazrat 'Âmmat 'an Hayâtih wa Âsârih (n.p., n.d.), pp. 186-7.

122. Tarihçe, Appendix pp. xxi-xxiii where a comparison between Nurcus and the Muslim Brotherhood is made.

123. Nursi, Lem'alar, pp. 149-57; Nursi, Sözler, pp. 502-5.

124. Nursi, Mektûbat, pp. 319-20; Nursi, Lem'alar, p. 152, Nursi, Kastamonu Lâhikası, p. 188.

125. Professor T.Z. Tunaya and Dr Ç. Özek both agreed that Nurculuk is directed by a group of people as a committee and that there is no single leader appointed as the successor of Said Nursi. Tunaya even gave some names of the members of this committee. These are: Zübeyr Gündüzalp, Tahir Mutlu, Sait Özdemir and Mehmet Kayalar. See, Tarık Z. Tunaya, İslâmcılık Cereyanı: İkinci Meşrutiyetin Siyasî Hayatı Boyunca Gelişmesi ve Bugüne Bıraktığı Meseleler (Istanbul, 1962), p. 238 and Çetin Özek, Türkiyede Gerici Akımlar ve Nurculuğun İçyüzü (Istanbul, 1964), p. 257. According to the information I could collect during my field work, Zübeyr Gündüzalp and Tahir Mutlu are now dead. Mehmet Kayalar is now not regarded as ağabey by most of the Nurcus. (I was told that only a few Nurcus in Diyarbakır, where Mehmet Kayalar resided, regard him as an ağabey. My informants did not reveal to me the reason wny he was not regarded as an ağabey.) As far as I could collect them in 1981, the names of ağabeys were as follows: Mustafa Sungur, Mehmet Fırıncı, Mehmet Birinci, Sait Özdemir, Mehmet Kutlular, Bayram Yüksel, Abdullah Yeğin, Hulusi Yahyagil, Bekir Berk and Abdulvahit Mutkan.

126. Şahiner, Şahitler, I, pp. 408, 448-9.

127. Tarihçe, pp. 592-4; Kutay, pp. 123-8; Sahiner, Aydınlar Konuşuyor, passim; Mürsel, Devlet Felsefesi, pp. 31-45; "Bediuzzaman'ı Anlamak", Köprü, No. 52 (July 1981), pp. 2-3; "Risale-i Nur Olayı", Köprü, No. 52 (July 1981), pp. 8-13.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSIONS

Our study of Nurculuk permits us now to reach certain conclusions about the movement which we shall summarise under the headings of general conclusions about the nature and current state of the Nurculuk and its members, conclusions regarding its position within Islam, conclusions about the political position of Nurculuk, especially in relation to Kemalism, and conclusions concerning its social function. In addition we shall venture some tentative conclusions concerning the approach of the state authorities to Nurculuk. We shall then mention the methodological lessons learned from the study. Finally, we shall indicate areas for future research and note the contribution the present study makes to the advancement of knowledge of this subject.

The Nurcu Movement

Our study has shown that Nurculuk, the movement inspired by Said Nursi and his writings, came into being as a defensive response among certain groups in Turkish society who felt alienated by the secularist policies adopted by the government of the Republic and were therefore sympathetic to Said Nursi's stance even though their understanding of his actual teachings may have been hazy. The movement was proselytized energetically, gaining most of its recruits from the ranks of small businessmen, bureaucrats and university students with a background of rural piety and aspirations and active determination to rise in the world through education and hard work. No membership figures exist but there are undoubtedly many thousands of followers who meet regularly

to study the Risale-i Nur and regard themselves as committed Nurcus. In addition there are hundreds of thousands of other people who may lack the dedication and education of the fully committed Nurcus but are nevertheless sympathetic to the movement and willing to support it within limits.

The central Nurcu activity is the ders - group study of the Risale-i Nur. No women ever attend ders with men. Women in some areas reportedly conduct ders of their own in private houses but the part women play in Nurculuk is entirely subordinate and they have no means of exerting direct influence on Nurcu policies.

Recruits are usually gained by means of a personal approach to young men followed by invitation to dershanes (most of which in the 1970s also became Nurcu student hostels) and attendance at ders. A prolific publishing programme ensures an adequate supply of Nurcu literature to support the recruiting effort and to give instruction in Nurcu beliefs.

The membership is drawn from Turkish Muslims either in Turkey or working abroad. (In this context "Turkish Muslims" should be understood as also including both Kurds and Arabs who are Turkish citizens.) Nurculuk has not attracted converts from outside Islam or from outside Turkish communities. (The chief purpose served by the translation of Nurcu works into other languages has been to impress Nurcus themselves with a sense of the movement's importance; there is no evidence that any foreigners have been converted thereby.)

Nurcus are sober, earnest individuals who conform closely to a pattern of thought and behaviour approved by the group. In appearance they are clean and tidy. Significantly, in a country where a certain style of beard is an acknowledged symbol of Muslim piety, Nurcus do not wear beards. This is indicative of their desire to portray themselves

as tolerant, go-ahead people. Similarly, they do not initially reveal themselves to others as Nurcus but simply as sincere Muslims. Only after they have gained the sympathy of the potential convert do they readily admit to being Nurcus.

Since its foundation the movement has continued to grow. In the 1970s more people were joining, more dershanes were opened and the number of Nurcu publications increased.

The Nurcus' Position Within Islam

Nurculuk exists within Islam and, in the nature of such movements, claims to have a unique insight which gives it the purest vision of the faith. Nurculuk is not a tarikat - its members regard typical tarikat activities as being no longer appropriate in the twentieth century. It is significant that no member of what might be thought of as the "ulema" - the learned religious leaders - gives credence to Nurcu claims or even regards the Risale-i Nur as worthy of serious consideration. Nurculuk is essentially a movement not of professionals in religion but of enthusiastic amateurs. It has made considerable headway with students of technical and scientific subjects but virtually none with theology students. Said Nursi's teachings would appear to lose much of their appeal when studied not exclusively but alongside those of other Islamic authorities.

Nurculuk's unique position within Islam is due to the importance its members attach to the Risale-i Nur, which they hold to be an inspired interpretation of the Koran by the person divinely appointed for this task in the twentieth century. Although the books of the Risale-i Nur purport to interpret and explain the Koran, they are themselves so opaque that Nurcus spend all their time studying the Risale-i Nur

rather than the Koran itself. This situation has implications for the position of both Said Nursi and the Risale-i Nur. It is fundamental to orthodox Islam that Muhammad is the Seal of the Prophets and that the Koran is the full and final revelation of God's message. The role Nurcus claim for Said Nursi, that of müceddid, is therefore suspect. He is not the first to have made such a claim or to argue its authority, but traditional support for the concept of müceddid is negligible. Unless Said Nursi's claim to be the müceddid is accepted, there are no grounds for conferring special status upon the Risale-i Nur. Even if his claim were accepted, it could still be argued that the Nurcu concentration upon the Risale-i Nur constitutes an unhealthy distraction from study of the Koran itself.

Indeed, to a mainstream Muslim, Nurculuk has a number of objectionable features. In addition to virtually identifying Islam with one man, Said Nursi, and narrowing the understanding of the faith to what is contained in his writings and studying only those writings, Nurcus have established a distinct group activity and adopted a secretive approach inimical to the best interests of Islam. (This secrecy is, as mentioned on p. 25, deliberately fostered in accordance with Said Nursi's teachings.) Furthermore, non-Nurcus are distressed by what they regard as Said Nursi's distorted interpretations to support his own claims that thirty-three verses of the Koran refer to the Risale-i Nur. Similarly, non-Nurcu Muslims regret the Nurcu refusal to admit any other interpretation as equal to that of the Risale-i Nur. Thus, they tend to see Nurculuk as a bigoted movement causing division and dissension rather than strengthening the unity of believers.

Nurculuk is therefore rejected by the religious establishment and it has had no profound influence on mainstream Islamic theology or

practice. Said Nursi's impact on Muslim thought has been negligible compared with that of, say, Muhammad Abduh, Reshid Riza or Al-Afghani. Although Nurcus reject Hamid Algar's claim that their movement contains nothing new, they cannot point to any contribution they have made to enrich the faith of ordinary believers.

Nevertheless, as a religious revival movement intended to maintain faith in Islam in the face of the Kemalists' secularist attacks, Nurculuk has had a limited measure of success, though its goal of Islamic rule in Turkey seems as far off as ever. It has not sought to change the basic tenets of Islam but it has made a conscious effort to grapple with the problems of reconciling Islamic beliefs with scientific discovery. It welcomes scientific and technological advance, but it wants this advance to be guided by religious values. It has turned attention towards issues on which the religious establishment had kept silent. Indeed, by occupying with their publications what had been the vacant ground in an area of kelam (Koranic theological study) they have advanced more easily than would have been the case had they contested the much fought over territory of fıkıh (Islamic canonical jurisprudence). They have won sympathy and support in the religious community by giving the impression that they are devout and learned Muslims with a message to match the needs of the modern world. Devout they are, but their learning is confined to the works of their founder, and their reputation for intellectual superiority which they derive from this study of the Risale-i Nur proves on examination to lack substance, and the message - dependent as it is upon Said Nursi's personal claims - is found to comprise assertions unsubstantiated by rigorous proof.

Political Position

Nurculuk is a reaction to secularism, so by its very nature it is inevitably involved in politics. It is vehemently opposed to Kemalism and yearns for Islamic rule in Turkey but it rejects the idea of using force to transform the state and society, instead it seeks to achieve its aims by peaceful persuasion. In a state whose constitution enshrines Kemalist principles* and forbids the exploitation of religion for political ends,** the movement has to tread warily. It has not sought to establish a political party of its own but preferred to lend support to politicians it thought genuinely anti-secularist and pro-Islamic. In practice, this led them to favour the Democrat Party in the 1950s and subsequently the Justice Party, as they considered these likely to prove the most effective counter to the secularist Republican People's Party, which they detested. It also opposed the National Salvation Party which it regarded as insincere. Naturally, it is unremittingly opposed to communism. As a consequence, it welcomes Turkey's pro-western stance. Since for Nurcus any religion is better than no religion, they support alliance with Christian countries against the atheism of the eastern bloc.

Nevertheless, within Turkey, Nurculuk is usually seen as a divisive influence, its members stubbornly refusing to rally round the banner of Kemalism which the country's military guardians have clutched desperately and held aloft in an attempt to unify the Republic that was being torn apart by internecine strife.

Social Function

Nurculuk's chief successes have been achieved with devout people who have some intellectual pretensions and have moved from a rural to an

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* Article 2 *et al*.

** Article 24

urban environment. The movement has been particularly helpful to university students in this category. Such young men - and it is almost exclusively men who are directly recruited, women and children are usually brought into the movement by their male relatives - are discomfited when they come to university and find no facilities for religious observance in the ordinary student hostels. Distressed by their inability to perform namaz as they have been accustomed to do at home, they are overjoyed to discover that Nurcu hostels make good this deficiency and moreover provide a library of textbooks and a congenial atmosphere for their university studies. They are thus helped to settle successfully into university. The long-term penalty they pay is growing isolation from the wider Muslim community and from society at large. The same is most likely true of the effect of Nurcu activities among Turkish workers abroad: an individual may find it easier to settle and establish himself within a religious and friendly Nurcu environment than he otherwise would in a strange land where he had few acquaintances. But, again, Nurcu allegiance will make it more difficult for him in the long run to feel at home in the wider community. In essence, Nurculuk appeals to outsiders by welcoming them in. But though this lessens their individual isolation, it leaves them stuck in a group that is itself alienated from the wider world. Nevertheless, within the movement members can breathe easily, enjoy mutual support and have the satisfaction of knowing that their Nurcu activities will gain the respect of fellow members. In an environment where urbanization and industrialization subject the faith of believers to extraordinary strains, Nurcus offer understanding and social and religious support. They nurture the convert's religious identity and give him a sense of belonging.

The State's Treatment of Nurculuk

It is a truism that state attempts to suppress religion turn religion into a vehicle for political opposition to the state. It was state action that led to the creation of Nurculuk and state over-reaction to what it perceived as the threat of Nurculuk that boosted the strength of the movement. In the circumstances of the time, with Şeyh Said of Palu's revolution threatening the very existence of the Turkish state, it is understandable that the authorities should wish to remove from the troubled eastern regions anyone who might prove a focus for discontent. But by taking Said Nursi from Van they endowed him with an importance that he otherwise would never have been likely to achieve; he would probably have remained a rather eccentric nonentity remote from power and influence. Again, the much-publicised trials of Nurcus can be understood as vigorous attempts to implement the Kemalist reforms and prevent a return to obscurantism. But they, too, misfired. They served chiefly to give the impression to people who knew no better that Nurcus were valiant upholders of the faith against authorities that were in league with the Devil. The heavy-handed attempts to denigrate Nurculuk merely served to give the movement credibility. Indeed, Nurcus rejoiced that the trials obliged many lawyers and other people to study the Risale-i Nur. It is arguable that a more tolerant approach would have proved more effective in counter-acting the spread of Nurculuk.

While the authorities may be criticised for trying too hard to suppress Nurculuk, they may also be accused of not trying hard enough to meet the needs the people felt for religion, and by this failure they left the vacuum that Nurculuk proceeded to fill. Without this opportunity Nurculuk would not have come into existence. If the Religious Affairs Department could provide a convincing lead to Turkish Muslims, Nurculuk

would lose its support. But the Department is suspect in the eyes of the conservative religious masses, so a climate is created in which aberrant movements like Nurculuk can flourish. If the Department could provide acceptable religious publications on the problems of belief that beset modern man, then the Nurcu position would be weakened because Nurcus would no longer have a virtual monopoly in this field. Of course, it is easy to make these value judgements in retrospect, but at the time answers to the practical problems of dealing day by day with a potentially explosive situation are not always so obvious, especially when some people are looking nervously over their shoulders at neighbouring Iran. Nevertheless, our study has shown that Nurculuk is nothing like so dangerous as the authorities had imagined. It was never remotely possible that it could overthrow the state. It was, admittedly, resentful of Kemalist reforms but it has never contemplated armed revolution. Indeed, it never even supported politicians who had any leanings towards revolution. The fears expressed by some of the the Turkish left in the 1970s that Nurcus and fascists plotted together to seize power by force betrayed an ignorance of the reality of Nurculuk, which actually sought to gain influence not by arms but by skilful persuasion. With a truer understanding of the movement's nature and weaknesses, the state could have dealt with it more appropriately. It could have found more effective means than legal sanctions to combat what it regarded as the undesirable attractions of Nurculuk. A more sensitive approach to the religious demands of the masses would have lessened the widespread resentments on which Nurculuk fed. It is arguable that a more ample provision of facilities for religious expression would have helped the sort of people who are drawn into Nurculuk to become more happily integrated into a modern society wider, more tolerant and progressive than Nurculuk can

ever be. There are gratifying signs that these lessons may have been learned. Recent developments with regard to religious expression in Turkey go some way to meet popular demand. A decline in Nurculuk can be anticipated as a consequence of these developments.

Methodological Matters

It may be useful to future researchers if we summarise here the points that proved to be of most importance in the present research and the pitfalls to avoid.

The main conclusion in this area is perhaps the need for a flexible and pragmatic approach that takes full cognizance of the social, historical and political circumstances of the phenomenon under inspection. Any attempt to study Nurculuk in too strict an accordance with a preconceived pattern for the study of religious movements in general would have proved abortive. The method has to be adapted to the movement. The researcher needs a good grounding in standard methods of relevant fieldwork, but must be prepared to tailor his approach to fit the specific nature of his own study. For example, as we have seen, it would be fruitless to attempt a large-scale survey of Nurculuk through the questionnaire method. Therefore, the fieldwork for the present study chiefly comprised in-depth interviews with selected respondents plus participant observation of Nurcu activities. Full details of the questions asked in the interviews and the information sought through participant observation are given in Appendix II.

The plans for fieldwork must therefore be prepared carefully in advance in the light of as much information as it is possible to obtain from other sources. The researcher must be sufficiently aware of the group's beliefs and practices to know how to avoid giving unwitting

offence and to be able to spot the significance of even apparently minor details that might otherwise be missed. The researcher must put out feelers to arrange suitable contacts in the target group. He must then establish his credentials with the group and attempt to win their willing acceptance of his plans. In order to achieve this he must be prepared to make certain sacrifices. For example, the group may not wish the researcher to use a tape recorder or camera and may not allow him as much freedom as he would like in the selection of his respondents. Disappointing and inconvenient though this may be, the group's wishes must be respected; without their co-operation the fieldwork would in any case be impossible. It is particularly important not to upset the group at the outset of the fieldwork. If the researcher is accommodating at the beginning, the group may conceivably relax some of their conditions for allowing his research once he has gained their confidence more fully as work proceeds. The nature of this type of research demands that the researcher establishes cordial relations with his respondents, otherwise they will not be sufficiently forthcoming with reliable information. He must be sensitive to his respondents as individuals and be careful not to display antipathy towards the group. As long as respondents can regard him as a possible recruit, they are likely to help him. If he reveals that his mind is irrevocably closed to their blandishments, they are likely to lose interest and give,at best, only perfunctory support to his research. If, on the other hand, he goes so far as to accept or appear to accept membership of the group, then respondents may feel that the researcher would thereafter be better employed in developing his faith and his commitment to the movement than in continuing an academic study of it! The course likely to elicit maximum co-operation is to maintain the impression that the researcher's conversion to their ranks is a <u>future</u> possibility.

Whatever his actual feelings towards the movement he is investigating, the researcher requires sufficient empathy to discover the true feelings of members and what membership means to them. At the same time he must be able to take a detached view when he comes to record his impressions and make his assessments. He must therefore cast aside his own preconceptions and prejudices and also try not to be influenced by popular assumptions and attitudes.

Once the researcher has begun his fieldwork, he must be quick to absorb the atmosphere of the group, to understand and use its special vocabulary, and recognise significant symbols. He must also, however reluctantly, accept that there may be barriers he will not be permitted to cross. For example, in a study of Nurculuk, no male researcher will be allowed access to meetings of female Nurcus, and no non-Nurcu will be permitted to attend or eavesdrop on the deliberations of the higher consultative bodies. A non-Nurcu male researcher is obliged to build up his information on these matters indirectly.

Despite these unavoidable limitations, it is possible to gain an enormous amount of relevant information through patient and painstaking interviews and participant observation, and this certainly would appear the most promising way of pursuing a study of Nurculuk. Of course, this method demands of the researcher an ability to participate. He must therefore know how to take part in the activities of the group. To give but one example; when with a Nurcu group he must perform namaz with it, not stand aloof. Otherwise he will not be accepted. With this method, to ensure the reliability of the records made, it is essential to write down every possible piece of information as soon as possible afterwards, while the details are still fresh in the mind.

Even when it is proposed to employ other methods of fieldwork, participant observation would seem a sensible preliminary. By this means subsequent research goals and methods can be decided in the light of practical knowledge. In the present study, for example, the number of respondents was limited and their geographical distribution was not comprehensive but coverage was wide enough to reveal that simply adding to the number of respondents would not have yielded a proportionate increase in the amount and value of the information obtained.

Further Research

Though the Nurcu leadership is unlikely to allow any non-Nurcu more opportunities for research than they gave for the present study, there are still areas on which more information would be welcome. We have noted the paucity of knowledge about women Nurcus; this is a topic that only a woman could tackle. Also, if a deeper penetration of Nurcu organizations could be achieved, attention could usefuly be turned to the decision-making processes within the movement. Further research in other regions of Turkey, and among Kurdish and Arabic speaking communities in Turkey would reveal the extent of regional or ethnic variations within Nurculuk.

Further light could be shed upon the movement by more detailed studies of its position in society and its relations with the state. Public attitudes towards the movement could be surveyed, and a detailed history of the state's response to Nurculuk could be written, paying particular attention to court cases.

There is also scope for comparative studies. Viewing Nurculuk alongside other religious groups, both in Turkey and elsewhere, might yield further valuable insights in the movement, particularly with

regard to its beliefs and its recruitment catchement areas and methods.

The Contribution of the Present Study

This has not been a theoretical study but a detailed portrayal of a particular religious movement as it is now - the first such study to have been made of this movement. At the same time, the data yielded by the research should contribute significantly to the work of other researchers seeking factual evidence to test their hypotheses and theories relating to religious movements. Particular theories may be at the mercy of the winds of fashion, but reliable data have a permanent value regardless of the use to which they may be put. It is my hope that this thesis contains just such useful data.

APPENDIX I

FIELDWORK

The study of a secretive religious movement in the conditions prevailing in modern Turkey is difficult. It is important therefore to highlight the difficulties of doing research of this kind as an integral part of the problem of explaining Nurculuk itself. It is not just a matter of selecting a method and rigigly applying it to the case in accordance with the normal requirements of that method, rather the researcher has to adjust his method to the setting in which the research takes place.

The following account of the fieldwork which was carried out between June and November, 1981, is detailed because it is intended to help the reader appreciate that a completely standard method of social research could not be used in this work. The account of the problems faced should also serve to illustrate further the position and experience of Nurcus themselves.

After deciding to study clandestine religious activities in Turkey, I tried to keep in touch with a number of people who were involved with these movements to a greater or lesser degree. Although it is not difficult to contact the members of these groups, if the enquirer does not appear sympathetic and likely to join them, they sever their connections with him.

After I began serious research into Nurculuk, I found it useful to continue to write to Hasan, one of the Nurcus whom I knew as long ago as 1975, and explained to him my intention to work on Nurculuk. Soon after I arrived in Istanbul to do the fieldwork on 15 June 1981, I

surveyed my task and found that Hasan seemed the contact most likely to prove useful to me at the outset. On my first visit to him, I had a long discussion with him on what I was going to do, why I was studying this subject and how he could help me. He was, of course, already familiar with the general outline of my proposed study, since we had corresponded on the subject, but he did not know precisely what I wanted to learn during my interviews.

In later meetings we worked through my list of questions in the 'Personal Profile' together. I told him what it was all about and why I wanted to ask questions which were sometimes embarrassingly personal or so politically sensitive that the respondent might not have been able to answer frankly without laying himself open to charges of breaking the law on religious activity. I eventually managed to convince him that my research was solely for academic purposes and had no ulterior aim and I would not divulge the name of any informants anywhere without their consent. He then agreed to pass on my request to certain highly respected Nurcus.

When trying to persuade Hasan to put me in touch with these people I took every opportunity to remind him that I was a graduate of the Higher Islamic Institute and that we were all Muslims. I found this to be a useful approach throughout the whole of my fieldwork, but of even more importance was the fact that I regularly performed namaz with the Nurcus.

On 22 June 1981 we went to the publishing house of the newspaper Yeni Nesil in Cağaloğlu, a very old district of Istanbul famous as the publishing centre of Turkey. On our way there Hasan told me he had mentioned me to his "brother" İhsan, who worked on the newspaper, and he had been delighted to learn that, like him, I was a graduate of the Higher Islamic Institute, and he was eager to meet me.

We went up to the third floor of the building and entered a room with "Yazı İşleri" (Correspondents' Room) written on the door. In this large room four or five people sat around a long table in the middle. The papers, books, magazines and newspapers strewn over the table gave the place an untidy appearance. Except for Said Nursi's picture stuck on a column between two shelves, the office was much like that of any other religious newspaper; there were quite a lot of religious books, mostly in Arabic or Turkish, on the shelves around the room. The people here seemed too busy to welcome us, except for one man in his thirties who stood up to greet us smiling behind his small table in a corner. Without any hesitation Hasan walked towards him and I followed, adopting Hasan's respectful manner towards him. "Esselamu aleykum İhsan kardeş" (Peace be upon you brother İhsan), Hasan greeted him. After shaking hands with us, İhsan bade us sit down on ordinary chairs. He started the conversation by asking how we were, how I found Turkey this time, how long I had been in England and so on. I understood from his questions that Hasan had told him quite a lot about me before we met. A quarter of an hour later we had our tea and turned to the subject in hand. "Brother Hasan has told me that you have been in England studying religious movements in Turkey. Of course, everyone can study whatsoever he likes, but one thing puzzles me: why are you doing it abroad? Why not in Turkey?" inquired İhsan. Having anticipated this question, I replied, "You are right. I wish I could do it in Turkey, but I have a government grant to study in England, so I felt it would be a good idea to study religious movements that were not established legally, as I would not have felt so free to do this in Turkey. Of course, you also appreciate that one should not feel under any pressure, whether direct or indirect, when carrying out impartial academic research. I do not feel any such

pressure in England, so I am based there but have now come here to collect my material."

Ihsan then asked a few more questions in a friendly way, trying to hide his suspicions. He wanted to know whether I had proposed my research topic to the university in England, or whether they had proposed it to me. Had I ever read the Risale-i Nur? How did I find them in general? And so on. In reply I made it quite clear that I had applied for a place in any British university to study underground religious movements in Turkey. Our conversation continued along these lines for a little over an hour. Hasan did not join in much but he supported me by nodding while I was speaking. İhsan wanted to close the conversation by thanking Hasan for introducing me to him and saying that he would try to make an appointment with Mehmet Kutlular, the owner of Yeni Nesil and some other people it would be useful for me to meet to discuss what I wanted to do.

We were just about to leave the room when İhsan suggested I should buy some books written about Said Nursi, Nurculuk and studies related to Nurculuk from the bookshop in the basement of the same building. I did so. (On principle Nurcus do not normally give away their publications. This is in noticeable contrast to the practice of certain other religious groups.)

I asked Hasan if he would take me to a meeting next time if it was possible. He agreed straightaway and added, "Anyone can come to our meetings. There is no need to ask permission". But I did not know where or when the meeting was to be held. I resisted the temptation to ask how the meetings could be called open when no-one but Nurcus knew when or where they were held. Before we parted, we arranged where and when we should see each other next.

I considered this first meeting to have been very successful and encouraging. In preparation for future meetings I decided to read the very latest Nurcu publications I could find.

On Saturday evening 27 June 1981 I met Hasan in the "Koska", a famous tea-house in Beyazit Square, Istanbul, at 8 p.m., as agreed. After a quick glass of tea, I followed Hasan to the meeting place, which was quite close. During the meeting, when we had a break for more tea, several people approached us and welcomed us. At the end of the meeting some other people came up to make my acquaintance. It was a very congenial atmosphere for making friends with as many people as I wished there. The meeting-place, the people attending and the nature of the proceedings were as described in Chapter V, but at this point it should perhaps be noted that when people asked about my occupation, Hasan replied somewhat uneasily, "Kardeşimiz (our brother) is studying in England". When they asked exactly what I was doing, my research topic and so on, he simply tried to silence them. I concluded that he did not want the others to know why I had come there, or at least not before permission from the ağabeys had been given for me to carry out my work among them. The meeting actually ended at about half past ten, but I remained talking to the people around me. When Hasan suggested we should leave, some people had already gone. It was eleven o'clock.

This was my first experience of an actual Nurcu gathering. I tried to evaluate every single thing which I noticed and to remember everything that was said.

On 29 June I went to visit İhsan in the Yeni Nesil building. This time I was alone. In an attempt to gain more ready acceptance I did my best to use the words and phrases that Nurcus themselves constantly use. For example, kardeş, kardeşimiz, ağabey, Üstad, Nur talebesi, cemaat,

hizmet, ders and dershane (the meaning of which are given in the glossary).

I spoke briefly with İhsan, mainly about my impression of the ders I had attended two days before. He was clearly delighted to hear my appreciative remarks about this occasion. He then took me to the fifth floor where several people were reading books, encyclopaedias, magazines and newspapers, most of which were in English but a few were in French. "Here is our Research Centre", said İhsan proudly as we entered. Again, this was a large room with a long table in the middle, almost the same as in the Correspondents' Office, untidy, scrap-paper lying around and all the walls lined with bookshelves. At first glance it was the books in English on various subjects that distinguished this room from the other one. A samovar, constantly boiling, reminded me that despite the foreign books I was still in Turkey. İhsan greeted them, "Selamun aleykum". Only one of them replied, "aleykum selam! Buyurun!" (Come in.) İhsan introduced me to him: "Ali Bey, the director of this office." Ali Bey was a cheerful man, a retired army officer, and about a quarter of what he said was in English. İhsan gave a brief explanation of why I was there and then left.

After learning one another's backgrounds, we turned to the subject of the position of Islam in Turkey. Ali Bey insisted on the need to reconcile Islam with science in order to achieve an Islamic revival in Turkey and in the world outside Turkey. He explained that was why they were working on science subjects and publishing books with this aim in their Research Centre. They had so far published twelve books in their Bilim ve Teknik serisi (Science and Technology Series). (These books were dealt with in detail in Chapter IV on Nurcu publications.)

Ali Bey seemed to feel no misgivings about my study, indeed he even appeared to encourage it. "We do not have anything to hide from the Europeans," he said, and added, "Üstad himself supported the idea of an alliance with the Christians against communism". It did not surprise me that Ali Bey adopted this attitude at first. He was a man of wide experience and would therefore be unlikely to reveal all his feelings immediately. He had been to the United States and knew that such studies had been done for years by westerners. However, after a while he did show some curiosity, though this was not as strong as I had expected. He asked who had sent me to England, why I had chosen this particular title and so on, but the questions were put in a roundabout way under the pretext of introducing me to one of his colleagues.

The people working in this office all seemed very intelligent and were very kind and hospitable to me, offering me tea every half hour. Before we were summoned to noon prayers by a muezzin from inside the building, I found time to look through some issues of the magazine Köprü, which is partly prepared in this centre. We all went out to pray in the mescit on the same storey. There were about forty people present. I learned later that most of them were staff. When I asked their permission to leave and pay for seventeen copies of Köprü that I had chosen they would not allow me to pay.*

After these initial experiences, it became clear that I would have to review the list of questions that I had prepared. I found some superfluous as the answers could be obtained by observation and I thought it advisable to remove others that might arouse the suspicions of the aǧabeys if they asked to see the list of questions I proposed to put to selected informants.

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* Because of rapid inflation, the face value of these old copies had become negligible. I offered to pay the current value but my hosts insisted on giving them free. Normally, as noted earlier (p. 433) Nurcus do not give away their publications.

Five or six days after we had been to the ders, Hasan brought me the exciting nexs that I had been invited to an iftar party in a dershane in Fatih on 4 July with some Nurcus. Mehmet Kutlular and Mehmet Fırıncı would be among them. I asked Hasan to tell these two ağabeys I would like to discuss my work with them.

When I heard that they had agreed, I knew that the evening of Saturday 4 July would be a time of great importance for me. With a list of questions in my brief case, I stepped into the dershane a quarter of an hour before the iftar was due to begin. Four people were seated in armchairs, everyone else was sitting on the floor in groups of two or three, chatting. After we had greeted everybody the only person to show any interest in us was a man in his fifties. He welcomed us warmly and Hasan introduced him to me, saying, "Fırıncı ağabey, this is Ali bey". Thereupon Fırıncı ağabey took me over to the armchair where Mehmet Kutlular was sitting and said, "Look Mehmet bey, Ali bey kardeşimiz has honoured us by visiting". Mehmet Kutlular did not smile at all as Fırıncı had. Coldly he said, "Hoş geldiniz, Ali bey" (Welcome). Mehmet Fırıncı offered me his seat as there were no others empty, but I preferred to sit on the floor.

It was a modest meal which almost twenty of us shared. Half of those present were young and looked like university students, the others were probably over forty-five and looked prosperous and were well dressed. We had our meal on the floor of this dershane with the older group. The young Nurcus who served us joined a corner of the circle of guests when the time came for us to start our iftar meal.

Soon after the meal we performed our evening namaz together, but the teshibat which is said afterwards was somewhat longer than is usual in Turkey. We finished our prayers, but the people seemed to be waiting for something else to complete their accustomed routine. They were now

sitting in no particular or regular order around the hall. A man then stood up, took a book from a small shelf and offered it to another person who took it and, starting with besmele, began to read aloud. The others just listened. The book was one of Said Nursi's.

After we had been served tea, most of the guests left us. It was nearly time for the teravih prayer. Some of us went out to perform our ablutions, then a young man started the call to prayer in the entrance of the flat. We finished the longest prayer, teravih, special to Ramadan, and again a long tesbihat.

I then heard a voice addressing me. "What is it that you want? Come into this room and tell us!" These were the words of Mehmet Kutlular who continued, "Gentlemen, please get this room ready for us, and don't forget us when you are serving tea! Come on Cemal, and call Fırıncı ağabey too". We entered a small room with a divan that also served as a bed. Fırıncı and Kutlular sat on this while Cemal, Hasan and I sat on the carpeted floor.

Without doubt everything I had so far said to the Nurcus was known to Fırıncı ağabey and Kutlular ağabey. I will describe both of them later, but at this stage I should mention that at our first meeting I did not find Kutlular friendly. He was a cold man who betrayed no emotion. On the other hand, Fırıncı ağabey, who had been one of Said Nursi's own devoted students, was very sympathetic and forthcoming.

I told them almost everything about my study, taking Necmeddin Şahiner's book, Son Şahitler, as a convenient example of what I intended to do. I explained that I would adapt the form to suit the requirements of a study of Nurcus. I told them who I was, when I had first begun this study, why I chose this particular subject, why I had been working on it in England up to then and what I wanted to do in Turkey and how they

could help me. My most important task was to persuade them to help me. Although they already knew most of my story, I explained everything to them as if I was unaware of how much they knew. Kutlular listened impassively, but Fırıncı smiled encouragingly. They both appeared to consider my request thoughtfully.

Kutlular asked me what sort of help I was seeking from them. To make a convincing case I said, "If you want me to study true Nurculuk I must speak to real Nurcus not to pseudo-Nurcus. I will write down everything they tell me. I will not make tape-recordings or get the interviewees to write out statements for me. I do not know the Nurcus in the cities I want to visit, nor do I know how to contact them. If you do not give me introductions to them, I will just go and try to find people who claim to be Nurcus, so, in that case some strange views might be attributed to the Nurcus in my study". Kutlular then asked me with a look of self-satisfaction to show him my list of questions. Naturally I did not ask him how he knew I had a list but simply took it from my briefcase and handed it to him. As he looked through it his face was sometimes serious, sometimes anxious.

"My word! I doubt if you will find anyone with time to answer so many questions! Any one of them could take hours to answer," he declared loudly when he reached the last page of my list. Nevertheless, he indicated that he would allow me to proceed. In reply I emphasised that I was engaged upon a serious academic study that would take not hours but years to complete, and pointed out that Necmeddin Şahiner must have spent a very long time on his books. "I will do my best to find people who have time to speak to me. All I ask of you is that you should agree to this and give me your support," I pleaded.

While Fırıncı looked through the list, Cemal joined in the conversation, asking in a friendly manner, "Kardeş, where do you want to do your research?"

"Wherever I can find a Nur talebesi who will agree to speak to me. If possible one city in each region of Turkey," I replied. My friend Hasan who accompanied me said nothing during this interview.

The questions on my list seemed to arouse no concern, but exception was taken to certain words used in connection with the movement, such as "group", "member" and "membership subscription". I was told that Nurculuk was not a group or a society, so there could be no membership or subscription. I explained that the terminology could easily be changed to suit the actual situation.

I had realised from the start of our meeting that they had previously discussed my request and now it became clear to me that they had already decided to let me conduct my interviews. I put forward my request for the last time, saying they could help me by giving at the very least a dershane address in each of the cities I proposed to visit and also a letter of introduction to the kardeş from whom I should seek help in finding a suitable person to interview. The request was granted by Kutlular. "Let us write a letter saying that this gentleman wants to produce a work like Necmeddin's and we should like them to help collect material for him. Cemal, you give one address in every city that Ali bey wants to visit."

Cemal fetched white paper which bore the following printed heading in Arabic: "In His Name, Be He glorified. Peace be with you and may God's compassion and His Blessings be upon you eternally and perpetually." During my subsequent research I learned that Said Nursi himself used these expressions in letters to his students and I noticed some of the

prominent Nurcus used writing paper with the same heading which is similarly used on pamphlets circulated among Nurcus.

Cemal handed it to me. Fırıncı politely asked me to write down what he said:

"Our respected brother,

We send thousands of regards and pray for you and request your prayers.

The bearer of this letter, our brother Ali Bey, is working to produce a book similar to that of Necmeddin Şahiner. We request you to help him by answering his questions and collecting information from others when he comes to you.

With thousands of regards".

When the dictation was complete, both Mehmet Kutlular and Mehmed Fırıncı signed the letter.

Thus I had become accepted as almost a fellow Nurcu. I thanked all of them for trusting me. As Kutlular was about to leave, he said, "We should be very pleased to hear from you what conclusions you have reached when you have finished your study". He and Fırıncı then left.

Cemal, a pleasant fellow, the same age as myself, was a journalist working for the Yeni Nesil. He displayed a warm friendship and within half an hour he had given me one address for a city in each of the following provinces: Ankara, Gaziantep, Erzurum and İsparta.

By the end of the meeting midnight had struck. As I accepted one more glass of tea, I felt confident and much happier. I was appreciative of Hasan's help in getting me into this favourable position.

I left Istanbul the following day for my home town, Konya, on 16 July and I started to seek interviews with Nurcus.

Konya's population is generally among the most pious in Turkey. I conducted four interviews there. The first was with a primary school teacher, Ðursun, who had previously been an official in the Konya office of the Religious Affairs Department where he was known to all his colleagues as a Nurcu. We had known each other since I became an official at the headquarters of the Religious Affairs Department in Ankara. As I knew Dursun defended Nurculuk openly at every opportunity, I thought he would be an appropriate person with whom to start my interviews since he would not be afraid of being questioned about Nurculuk. Moreover, he knew me as a previous colleague.

I called on Dursun and chatted with him about my visit to dershanes and ağabeys in Istanbul and then said I would like to interview him. He hesitated a little and asked me whether I had asked the ağabeys in Istanbul about this and what their reaction had been. When I showed him the letter of introduction from the ağabeys he appeared to treat this as an order and started to show an interest in the content of the interview. I told him the rough outline of my proposed questions and stressed that the interview was not to be like an examination and that he would simply be asked to give, in the course of our conversation, some details about himself, his normal daily life, his opinions on certain subjects to do with the country, our religion, and so on. He seemed particularly relieved when I said that he would not have to answer every question if he did not want to do so. We agreed to meet the following day, again at his house.

Dursun lives in a detached house on the outskirts of Konya. No more than three months had passed since his release from detention in the military barracks. In November 1980 he had been arrested on a charge of exploiting his official position to propagate his own religious ideas. He was detained for four and a half months and removed from his post

in the Directorate of Public Education, Konya. On this occasion, he explained, the charge was not Nurculuk, "Although they knew I was a Nurcu they could not find any evidence when they searched my house because I had removed all the books of Risale-i Nur."

In 1963, when he was teaching at a primary school, he had been sentenced to a year's imprisonment for making Nurcu propaganda in the classroom. (More detailed information about the people I interviewed and the cities where the interviews were conducted was given in Chapters VI and II respectively.)

The following day, as we were having a quick look at the list, Dursun raised his first question. "You are not going to use a tape recorder, are you?" Of course, I understood his fear. He told me during the course of the interview that some of my questions looked like the ones 'they' had asked him when they were interrogating him.

We started the interview that day in his home, a typical civil servant's house in Konya. The only rooms I entered were the one in which we worked together and the sitting room, which was plainly furnished with a divan and carpeted. The pictures hanging on the walls were landscapes with texts from the Risale-i Nur below or beside them. The fact that most of his pictures of photographs could be found in almost every dershane and in every Nurcu's home or shop clearly indicated that this place belonged to a Nurcu. (I have never seen the Nurcus display any picture of a living creature. Further information on their pictures was given in Chapter V.)

Because the schools were closed for the summer holidays, Dursun's sons were at home. They served the iftar dinner and a various other things. His wife never did.

When we were speaking about his family background, education and personal life, Dursun was very relaxed and just answered from memory. As I was writing down everything he said, Dursun was able to speak slowly and correctly while feeling at ease. Furthermore, having been a teacher, he was able to express himself clearly.

I did not ask the questions in the same sequence as on the list but during the course of our conversation, I put the ones that seemed appropriate at any particular moment. At first he seemed somewhat alarmed when the subject got round to the Nurcu movement and its membership, so I deferred probing into this topic until later. I think he was truthful and forthcoming in his answers but he possibly took particular care to choose his words carefully on certain sensitive subjects. Even on these subjects, however, his trust in me helped him to be frank. When I asked him his opinions he became serious and before answering he tried to recall what he had learned about those subjects from the Risale-i Nur. He did not consult the actual books at all during the interview; he just quoted what he had committed to memory.

(All through my fieldwork some of my informants wanted to consult the Risale-i Nur and quote extracts. I let them read the relevant passage to me if they wanted to, but if they asked me whether they could get the Risale-i Nur to quote, I said I preferred to listen to their own words rather than readings. A few informants did not refer to Risale-i Nur, but they were, of course, still answering as disciples of Said Nursi. Their ideas were based first on the Risale-i Nur and secondly, if there was no explicit reference to the topic in them, they would give what they felt Said Nursi's Risale-i Nur implied on that matter.)

My first interview with Dursun took us eight consecutive days with an average of approximately six hours a day. On the first day, we

could not exceed five hours, but gradually we extended the time to seven hours a day. Apparently he enjoyed being asked about some serious problems of Turkey and not having his answers rejected. Although I was trying to conduct the interview in as natural a manner as possible, taking notes and most of the time writing down whatever he said, Dursun was clearly pleased to be made to feel he was an important person whose opinions mattered. I think that at the end of the interviews, he looked pleased with his statements.

I asked Dursun to help me contact some less educated and, if there were any, illiterate people amongst Nurcus in Konya. I decided to choose less educated Nurcus from Konya to interview. My reasons for this were, first of all, I could approach and communicate with these sorts of people much more easily in my home town Konya than I could in any other city, because local customs, dialects, sense of humour, etc., all have a much greater effect upon their behaviour than they do on educated people. Having come from the same city would give the opportunity to distinguish their own indigenous culture from the culture which had been gained by being Nurcu. For an interviewer, the importance of being able to use the same accent as an uneducated interviewee and adapt himself to his manner and customs is also obvious.

Dursun suggested several people to me; none was illiterate. I chose only two of them. One was a craftsman, the other a tradesman engaged in buying and selling towels and shawls. We visited them in their places of work on the following day. Dursun told both of them about me and the work, especially about the approval of the ağabeys in Istanbul. Mustafa, the craftsman, said that he would be too busy with his work to spare time before the feast of Ramadan, but afterwards he could make himself available.

Hayati, the tradesman, works together with his brother, who is joint-owner of their shop. He agreed to have the interview on the second floor of their shop, which is used only to store the goods, just in case his brother might need to call for his help. We worked there four days before and three days after the Feast. Though he had only graduated from five-year primary school, he gave me quite interesting answers to the questions concerning political concepts as well as international affairs. He did not show any reserve, nor did he hesitate while he was talking to me. He gave me the impression that he was proud of being a Nurcu. He was, I suppose, aware of having a slightly superior culture to that of his merchant colleagues and he though that this was because he read the Risale-i Nur.

Mustafa, a very hard-working man, has his own workshop in the backyard of his house in a remote district of Konya and owns a number of carpet looms. Members of his family work at some of the looms and the others were to be given to other families to have hand-made carpets woven by paying them in return.

On the fourth day after the feast, I telephoned Mustafa. He invited me to his house the next morning. He has a small self-contained flat in in his large house for guests. We began our interview in this flat while other members of the family were working either at looms or in the carpet cleaning workshop. When his wife knocked on the door, it was a sign of a ready service tray waiting behind it. He never allowed me to go out for lunch during the interview period of six days.

I was astonished when he said that he had never attended any formal school at all. He learned the new Turkish alphabet from a village hodja while he was learning how to read the Koran when he was a seven year-old boy. Though this is not unusual in Turkey, what surprised me was that

there was a very large library in this flat, larger than is usual in Konya. The library mostly consisted of religious books. Mustafa used to be very fond of reading any kind of book until being introduced to the Nurcus, then he became interested in only the Risale-i Nur and other religious books.

As soon as I completed my third interview, I went back to Ankara where I would meet my supervisor and make an analysis of the work done so far. I had two addresses to meet Nurcus in Ankara, one a dershane and the other was Yeni Nesil newspaper's office. They sometimes prefer to bring newly acquainted persons of high rank there rather than to the dershanes. After having a discussion about my study and work I had done in Konya, the director of the office asked me to come the next day.

On the next day, I was introduced to a very well-educated retired civil servant, Hayri, who received me very politely. Showing great interest in my method of study, he encouraged me to stay in a dershane at least for a few days. He gladly agreed to give an interview to me at the Yeni Nesil office. He was working, apparently part-time, in a company as a consultant. Our interview, held in one of the small rooms of the office, took us almost ten days. Hayri showed an intellectual interest in all my questions. He gave his ideas freely, sometimes not sticking to the Risale-i Nur but neither did he give answers at variance with its teaching. He made no particular effort to remember exactly what Said Nursi said on the issue, though in Hayri's view, Said Nursi was the only mürşit of the time.

Having been recognised as a researcher by the Nurcus in Ankara, I requested them to inform the Nurcus in Gaziantep that I would come and have some interviews with them, where my next stop would be, so that I should not have to spend much time introducing myself and, more importantly, the nature of my study. My request was granted by making a telephone call,

so, before completing my work-plan in Ankara, I hurried to Gaziantep in south-eastern Turkey. Gaziantep is comparatively religious and traditionalist, culturally somewhat deprived, but economically reasonably developed particularly in comparison with its neighbouring towns. I obtained the opportunity to speak to Niyazi, who had been one of the first lycée students to express admiration for Said Nursi. He was actually the first such student to send a letter to Said Nursi declaring his loyalty to him, and promising complete devotion to the cause of the Risale-i Nur in 1960. The importance of this letter was, as Niyazi asserted, that it was both the first letter which Said Nursi received from a lycée student (although Said Nursi had prophesised that lycée students and graduates would constitute the bulk of his followers) and it was also the last letter which Said Nursi received before he died. He told his close students that he had accepted Niyazi as his spiritually adopted child.

My interview with Niyazi, which continued continuously for seven days, took place in a Nurcurs shop in the town centre of Gaziantep. He hardly ever spoke to me without referring to the collection of the Risale-i Nur. He could well be called a hâfız of the Risale-i Nur, that is one who knows the Risale-i Nur by heart.

On my way from Gaziantep to Erzurum, Niyazi accompanied me as far as Elâzığ, where we stopped a second time (the first was in Malatya, to visit Nurcus there). This journey was a part of his pattern of frequent regional tours. Nurcus of the same region visit each other at least every other month to discuss the hizmets and to obey what Niyazi regards as one of the Üstad's vital principles, 'extremely close contact between the Nurcu brothers'.

After careful consideration of what I had learned so far, I revised the questionnaire, changing the order of questions, omitting some that now seemed unnecessary because the answers were already apparent to me from my observations or previous interviews, and modifying some of the wording to use terms that would be more familiar to Nurcus and so put them at their ease. (The revised questionnaire may be found in Appendix II.)

Nearly three months after I had begun my work in Turkey, I was now, for the first time, staying as a guest doing research in a dershane in Erzurum. The dershane in which I spent well over two weeks had three floors: the ground floor contained accommodation for resident Nurcu students, the first floor was made into an enormously large hall to hold the daily meetings, as well as a few student rooms, while the second floor was for resident students. Because it was the university's registration time, candidates with Nurcu connections from all over Turkey, particularly from the eastern part, were streaming into the dershane to get help from the Erzurum Nurcu brothers. Most of them were asking to make sure of accommodation in a dershane when they returned for the university opening. During my time in Erzurum there was a ders, meeting, every evening. The attendance at these varied, because registration dates differed from one institute or faculty to another.

My first informant in Erzurum, Mahmud, was a lecturer in an Institute of Higher Islamic Education. He, himself, resides in another dershane in Erzurum and instructs the students there in the Risale-i Nur. Because of his knowledge of Arabic and his professional training, Mahmud was able to compare the Risale-i Nur with other religious books and he was extremely proud of this ability. When he arrived in my room early each morning, his first action was to recite one or two rhetorical sentences

from the Risale-i Nur by heart, and followed this recitation with a mumbled attempted explanation of his quotations while rocking his head to and fro giving the impression that he was the only one around who could absorb the profound meaning of Said Nursi's teachings. In fact, he really did nothing but quote from the Risale-i Nur, which he must have studied very hard.

Nevzat, the second person who gave me an interview, is a biologist but he is not working on his subject any more. He is an ehl-i hizmet who has devoted himself to the cause of Nurculuk, busying himself with the organisation of the students, allocating them to an appropriate dershane, trying to ensure that they would get on well with the other students in the dershane and, more importantly, that they would grow in their knowledge of Nurculuk. In fact, Nevzat is one of several people engaged in similar duties. He is also rather more actively involved in local politics than the others usually are. During our interview he frequently had to answer the telephone and receive some of the dignitaries of Erzurum when they visited the dershane. Apart from those who live in Istanbul, Nevzat was the most experienced of my informants in interpreting the political views of Said Nursi.

I left Erzurum soon after I had completed my work there. During my second visit to Ankara, I stayed in a dershane during the daytime as previously advised by Hayri. There I became acquainted with more Nurcus from the higher ranks of the civil service.

This time I had an interview with a civil engineer, Alper, employed by the 'Ankara Cultural and Education Foundation' which is run by Nurcus. Alper was spending all his evenings and weekends attending derses held in different quarters of Ankara. We met each other every morning for seven days in the dershane which is very close to the district of Cebeci,

where the Ankara University campuses are surrounded by about ten dershanes. Alper, in effect, was somewhat reluctant to spend his days with me because he was eager to be with new students coming to the university from towns in the main Ankara University catchment area. He actually took quite a lot of time off from our interview to speak to the eighteen-twenty year-old new university students who had been given in their home towns the addresses of dershanes in Ankara.

I left Ankara for Konya to complete my work there on my way to a western Anatolian city, İsparta, in and around which Said Nursi had been ordered to reside for more than twenty years intermittently from 1926 onwards.

Tevfik, my last informant in Konya, is a Turkish literature teacher in the Girls' High School. As the feast day was coming closer, he invited me to his house in order to avoid spending time on anything other than the interview. We worked very hard for five days and finished the interview just before the Feast of Sacrifice. Nothing struck me as different from other Nurcu houses; the atmosphere, life style, the family relationship, etc. Perhaps the only exception was Tevfik's way of performing his prayers. Surprisingly enough, he omitted most of the sünnet parts of the namaz and the litanies which are supposed to be said by every Nurcu after the namazes.

İsparta is a city in which almost all the inhabitants have heard tales of the keramets (saintly miracles) of Said Nursi who was known to his contemporaries there as 'Hoca Efendi'. The followers of Said Nursi have recently bought the house where he had stayed as a tenant while he was in İsparta and, I was told, that they were going to restore it to make a 'Said Nursi Museum'. The largest Nurcu investment is to be found here in İsparta, it is a factory to produce the prefabricated house

construction elements. It had not as yet, though it was almost ready, started to manufacture but it was going to be the first in its production field in Turkey. I obtained an interview with Hakan, who had quite a distinct family background, in the office of this factory in the town centre. Neither he nor any members of his family had previously had anything to do with religion but Hakan is now a modern devoted Nurcu. When he joined them in 1968, the Nurcus gave him a particularly warm welcome, mainly because his father was an important person. (A retired high-ranking army officer who had served for a while in Atatürk's body-guard after graduating from the Military Cadet School of Istanbul.)

Hakan and his wife work in the same place, the İsparta Academy of Architecture and Engineering, where the former is a lecturer and the latter is a medical doctor. She covered her hair with a headscarf arranged fashionably around her face, not in the traditional peasant woman's style, and joined us when Hakan and I went to the Ordu Evi (Officers' Mess) for lunch on weekdays during the week I spent in İsparta interviewing Hakan.

On 21 October I returned to Istanbul again to do the last of my field work in Turkey. By this time it was clear to me that all the important decisions of the Nurcus, whether religious, political, economic, or indeed on any subject, were being made in Istanbul. It was also apparent that these decisions were mostly taken - or largely influenced by - the ağabeys living in Istanbul. In reaching their decisions they would take into consideration the writings of Said Nursi (the Risale-i Nur), the private instructions some of them had received from him or the actions they had seen him take.

So, my interviews in Istanbul were of particular importance. The first of these, on this occasion, was with Mehmet Fırıncı whom I had

met five months before at the outset of my fieldwork and who had given his approval for me to do this research among the Nurcus. I conducted an in-depth interview with him from 22-28 October.

Mehmet Fırıncı commented on the Risale-i Nur with great self-assurance and explained that he is particularly keen to give up-to-date explanations of Said Nursi's political teachings as many of the words used by Said Nursi in these writings no longer convey the same sense that he intended. For example, meşrutiyet may be thought of as 'constitution' and in the pre-World War I period was so used, but many of the connotations of that term were later transferred to the word cumhuriyet (republic), so where appropriate Mehmet Fırıncı would favour a clear explanation to Nurcus that where Said Nursi writes in support of meşrutiyet, this should be understood today as a statement in support of the Republic. Mehmet Fırıncı claims that Said Nursi himself had given these same interpretations verbally in his presence between 1950 (when the writing of the last of the Risale-i Nur was completed) and 1960 (when Said Nursi died). Mehmet Fırıncı is therefore not giving his own interpretations, he is merely repeating what he has heard Said Nursi say, but he does so with complete confidence because of the long time he spent in Said Nursi's presence. Such interpretations by Mehmet Fırıncı and other ağabeys have a great influence on the way Nurcus and Nurcu sympathisers vote. The second person I interviewed in Istanbul was Metin, a lawyer and occasional contributor to the daily newspaper, Yeni Nesil. Every moment of the five days we spent together was put to good use as he is a well-educated man who knows the precise meanings of the words he uses (so one can be sure that when he mentions 'democracy' or 'liberalism', for example, he is using these words in the generally accepted sense), he was easy to get on with and he gave his opinions as a Nurcu without having to check first what the Risale-i Nur said in answer to every question.

I attempted to interview the owner of the Yeni Nesil (formerly Yeni Asya) newspaper and chief policy-maker of Nurcus, Mehmet Kutlular. He agreed to do so, but in the event he was too busy to see me while I was in Istanbul. However, one evening, he was present with Mr Firinci in the dershane where Mr Fırıncı lives when I called to thank them for their help and give a brief report of the progress of my fieldwork. He then gave his views on the current political situation in Turkey and the Nurcu response to the 12 September army takeover.

Before I left Istanbul on 9 November 1981, I went to see Hamdi, who is a book designer working for the Yeni Asya Publishing House, and together we checked on the total number and size of printings of Nurcu publications including their daily newspaper, weekly and monthly periodicals and over 200 books on various subjects. We then went together to the 'Sözler Yayınevi' where only Said Nursi's books have been sold openly since 1976 and to a modern printing house owned and run by the Nurcus.

APPENDIX II

GROUP AND PERSONAL PROFILES

Before I left England to conduct my fieldwork in Turkey, two long lists were drawn up detailing the items of information that I would seek to obtain in order to be able to depict a typical Nurcu individual and a typical Nurcu group accurately and comprehensively. These lists were designed as lists that might be appropriate to the study of any distinctive Islamic movement in Turkey; they took Turkish conditions into account but, since I did not at this stage have any practical experience of Nurculuk, it was accepted that many of the questions might in the event prove inappropriate to Nurculuk, and I was to make any modifications I felt necessary in the light of my contacts with Nurcus and experience in the field.

As it may be instructive for the reader to see what modifications were made, the original and final forms of the first list, the Personal Profile form, are given below. The fact that some of the changes were necessary casts further light upon the nature of Nurculuk. The Group Profile form, also given below, was found to be suitable with scarcely any modification.

The desired information was to be obtained by a mixture of direct and indirect questioning, observation and participation in Nurcu activities. The lists were not intended to be used like formal questionnaires with the sequence rigidly adhered to. Rather, they were intended to act as a "aide-memoire" to prevent significant matters from being overlooked during the interviews or other contacts with the movement. Nor were the lists to be used to define the boundaries of

discussion with respondents. If they volunteered additional material that seemed relevant, due note was to be made of it.

This was, indeed, the way the research was conducted. During the in-depth interviews every effort was made to create a relaxed and informal atmosphere in which as much as possible of the information required could be gained in the course of friendly conversation, during which I would jot down notes. An indirect approach very often proved to be more productive than direct questioning.

Nevertheless, even with this flexible approach, it was possible to develop a fairly standard pattern for most of the interviews. In outline, our discussions usually began with the interviewee's family background, childhood influences, education, marriage and children (if applicable), religious experience, introduction to Nurculuk and further progress within the movement and the nature of his commitment to Nurculuk, the effect of his membership upon his personal relations with his family, community and the state, additional details of Nurculuk locally, then his opinions on a wide range of political, social and religious topics.

The information gained is incorporated throughout the thesis, but particularly in Chapters II, III, V, VI and VII.

PERSONAL PROFILE - ORIGINAL FORM

Particulars

1. Name
2. Age
3. Place of birth
4. Previous places of residence
5. Have you moved from a rural to an urban area?
6. Father's particulars
   - Name
   - Age
   - Place of birth
   - Present address
   - Occupation
   - Educational level
   - Literary level
   - Religious history:
     - Record of membership of religious groups
     - Record of religious observance
7. Mother's particulars (same details as for father)
8. Informant's marital status
9. If married, date of present marriage and any previous ones
10. Spouse's particulars (same as for father)
11. Informant's educational record:
    - Names of schools, colleges, universities attended
    - Qualifications obtained
12. Describe the dress of this informant
13. Describe the appearance of this informant:
    - beard, moustache, hairstyle, etc.
14. State the forms of greeting used by this informant to other members of his religious group and to non-members
15. Describe the manner of this informant:
    - friendly, hostile; secretive, forthcoming; extrovert, introvert; optimistic, pessimistic; cheerful, gloomy; open-minded, bigoted
16. Occupational and earnings record
17. Record of membership of religious groups
18. Record of religious observance
19. Present religious affiliation
20. Position within the present religious group:
    - leader or ordinary member
21. If not an ordinary member, when was this informant 'promoted'?

Joining the movement

22. When did you join your present religious group?
23. Who persuaded you to join?
24. Why did you join?
25. What did you have to do to join the group?
26. Was there a formal initiation ceremony?

Membership

27. Has membership given you the benefits you anticipated?
28. What are the benefits?
    Spiritual
    Social
    Financial
    Employment - (Does the group help members to find jobs either where they live or when they move to another area?)
    Other
29. What relatives of yours belong to the same religious group as yourself?
30. What has been the atttitude of your family towards your membership?
31. How has membership of the group changed the attitudes of other people towards you?
32. Has membership of the group made it easier or harder to get on with people who are not members?
33. How has membership of the group changed your way of thinking?
34. How has membership of the group changed your behaviour?
35. Have you had to give up anything to belong to the group? If so, what?
36. In what ways have you been helped by other members?

Rules

37. What are the rules of the group?
38. Which are the most important of these rules?
39. What rules did you have to accept on joining the group?
40. What penalties are imposed for breaking the rules?
41. Have you ever been punished for breaking the rules? Give details.
42. Do you know of anyone who has been punished? Give details.
43. What are the grounds for expulsion from the group?
44. Do you know of anyone who has been expelled? Give details.
45. What are the rules concerning members' behaviour towards people who have been expelled from the group?
46. What are the rules concerning members who have voluntarily left the group?
47. What in practice is the usual behaviour of members towards those who have left the group for any reason?

Meetings

48. What meetings do you attend?
49. How often are these meetings held?
50. How long do these meetings last?
51. What do you do during these meetings?
52. What feelings do you have during these meetings?
53. What religious experiences have you had during these meetings?
54. What religious experiences have you had at other times?
55. What appeals to you most about the meetings?
56. What aspects of these meetings do you like least?
57. Is money collected at these meetings?
58. Where are the meetings held?
59. Are meetings open to the general public or only to members?
60. Who conducts the meetings?
61. Who else takes a leading part in the meetings?
62. To what extent do ordinary members participate in the meetings?
63. How are the meeting places equipped, decorated and guarded?

64. Is there any music, singing, reading, zikir? Describe it.
65. Is literature distributed at the meetings, Give details.
66. What teaching is given at meetings?
67. What writings are used?
68. What texts are given special emphasis?
69. Does this emphasis change according to the situation?
70. What has been the main theme of recent sermons and teachings?
71. Are there any meetings you do not attend?
72. Are any special meetings held at particular times of the year?
73. Are any special meetings held at irregular intervals?
74. Who owns the premises the meetings are held in?
75. Are efforts made to make the meeting places comfortable and attractive?

Finances

76. How much money do you contribute to the group?
77. What is this money used for?
78. What are the sources of income of your branch of the group?
79. Does the group as a whole have any other type of income? Give details.
80. What is your estimate of the worth of the total assets of your branch?
81. What is your estimate of the total assets of the group as a whole?
82. How much are members expected to contribute?
83. What are the main expenses of your branch?
84. What are the main expenses of the group as a whole?
85. Where does the group invest or deposit its funds?
86. Does the group impose any restrictions on financial transactions? (e.g. refusing funds from certain quarters, refusing interest)

Other details of the group

87. Outline the history of your group
88. What is the state of relations between your group and other groups? Give specific examples where possible.
89. Does the group encounter much opposition? Give details.
90. How is information spread throughout the group?
91. How are orders conveyed throughout the group?
92. Are there any distinguishing forms of dress or appearance by which you can recognise other members?
93. Are there any secret signs by which you can recognise other members?
94. Are there any ways in which members openly proclaim their allegiance to the group?
95. Do you try to conceal your membership from non-members?
96. What aspects of the group and its activities are kept secret?
97. What is the most important element of your group's message?
98. How is this message proclaimed?
99. What efforts have you made to proclaim this message?
100. What success have you had in proclaiming the message?
101. What difficulties have you encountered in trying to spread the message?
102. What is your reward for gaining converts?
103. What efforts are made to encourage members to reamin in the group?
104. What incentives are given to encourage members to work for the group?
105. What grades of membership are there?
106. How does one progress from one grade to another?
107. Is there a separate 'rank' structure in the group, or does higher 'grade' also mean higher 'rank'?

108. How is 'promotion' obtained?
109. In your opinion, do the best people gain promotion in the group?
110. In your opinion, are the people in positions of responsibility in your group the ones who are best fitted for it?
111. Are you ever frustrated because you are not given enough responsibility in the group?
112. How widespread is your movement?
113. Where is your movement strongest?
114. Do you think your movement flourishes better in rural or in urban areas?
115. Are there any marked class differences within your group?
116. Are there any marked political differences within your group?
117. Are you required or encouraged to support any particular political party or politicians?
118. What is the age structure of your local membership?
119. Do differences arise between the generations in your group? Give details.
120. In what ways has the group changed since you joined?
121. Is membership of your local branch growing? Static? Declining? Give reasons.
122. Is membership of the group as a whole growing? Static? Declining? Give reasons.
123. What are the rules of the group concerning the way children should be brought up?
124. Are any special arrangements made to give children the teachings of the group?
125. Are members' children discouraged from mixing freely with the children of non-members?

Personal and group attitudes

What is (a) your attitude
(b) your group's attitude (if different from your own)
towards the following:

126. Education
127. The importance of literacy
128. The role of women in Turkey
129. The role of women in the group
130. Divorce
131. Polygamy
132. Birth control
133. Namaz
134. Prayer and supplication
135. Alms-giving
136. Pilgrimage
137. Fasting
138. Religious music
139. Secular music
140. Dancing
141. Smoking
142. Alcohol
143. Theatre
144. Cinema
145. The opposite sex
146. Mezheps

147. Wahhabis
148. Islamic legal schools
149. Tarikats
150. Shia
151. Other major religions
152. Atheists
153. Communists
154. Freemasons
155. Democracy
156. Capitalism
157. Liberalism
158. Atatürk
159. The Turkish Republic
160. The Caliphate
161. The Religious Affairs Department
162. Religious training in schools and universities
163. İmam Hatip Okulları
164. Turkish language reform
165. Turkish alphabet reform
166. Other Atatürk reforms
167. Armed Forces
168. Police
169. Turkish justice
170. TRT
171. Westernization/Modernization/Industrialization
172. Kurds
173. Armenians
174. Other minorities in Turkey
175. Foreigners
176. NATO
177. EEC
178. UNO
179. The Islamic world
180. USSR
181. China
182. USA
183. Britain
184. Germany
185. Other European states
186. Arabs
187. Israel, Iran, Iraq
188. War

Beliefs

State your beliefs on the following subjects:

189. The Koran: is it all absolutely, literally true?
190. Paradise: what is it like and who qualifies to go there and how confident are you that you will go there?
191. Hell: what is it like, who goes there and for how long?
192. Angels
193. Iblis
194. Demons
195. Predestination

196. Saints
197. Ziyaret
198. Evil Eye
199. Sin
200. Sevap
201. Sharia: is it the law of God? Should it be enforced today?
202. Tasavvuf
203. The founder of your group
204. The leader(s) of your group

Other particulars

205. How much time do you devote to the group's activities?
206. How much time do you devote to private study and worship encouraged by the group?
207. Have you been on pilgrimage to Mecca?
208. If not, do you want to?
209. Do you approve of pilgrimage to places other than Mecca? Give details.
210. How often do you perform the namaz?
211. Do you fast during Ramadan?
212. Do you fast at other times too?
213. Do you give alms regularly?
214. Do you consider any books other than the Koran should be studied to learn the will of God? If so, which?
215. Do you know Arabic?
216. Can you read the Koran in the Arabic script?
217. Have you attended a Koran course?
218. Are there any special tasks you would like to undertake for the group?
219. Do you wish to proceed to a higher grade or rank in the group?
220. Have you ever travelled outside Turkey?
221. Have you ever worked outside Turkey?
222. Have you ever attended meetings of the group outside Turkey?
223. Have you ever met or stayed with members of the group outside Turkey?
224. Does your group have any special ceremonies to mark birth, marriage, death or other milestones in human life? Give details.
225. What other groups do you belong to?
    Religious
    Social
    Political
    Other
226. What newspapers do you read?
227. What other reading do you do regularly?
228. What radio programmes do you listen to regularly?
229. What sort of films do you like?
230. How often do you watch TV?
231. What TV programmes do you watch most?
232. How often do you go to the cinema?
233. How often do you go to the theatre?
234. When did you last go to the theatre?
235. How much do you smoke?
236. How much alcohol do you drink? Have you ever drunk alcohol?
237. Which companions of your school days do you think have since been most successful? Why do you consider them to be successful?
238. Who do you consider to be the most successful people in Turkey? Why do you consider them to be successful? How do you account for their success?

239. Does your group undertake any charitable works for members?
240. Does your group undertake any charitable works for non-members?
241. Does your group make use of charitable works as an aid to recruitment? Give details of the works and the success achieved.
242. What do you consider to be the most important ways in which your group differs from other Muslim groups?
243. What do you consider to be the most serious problem facing Turkey today?
244. What remedy would you recommend for this problem?
245. Is kirvelik practised in the group?
246. Are any other forms of similar relationship recognised within the group.
247. Is there any form of mürşitlik within the group? Give details.
248. Is there any rule of marriage to be arranged only from among Nurcus?

PERSONAL PROFILE - FINAL FORM

1. Life history (autobiography): request leisurely narrative starting with grandparents.
2. Return to salient features systematically: childhood in the home, secondary school, high school, work history, social life, recreation, family life, military service.
3. Major problems as child, how lived childhood over?
4. Images of parents: good points and bad points, etc.
5. Early memories of religious discussions in the home.
6. Early religious feelings: 'good guys' and 'bad guys' in religious and patriotic feelings.
7. When you were a child, did your parents have any special ideas about what you ought to do when you grew up?
8. As a teenager, who were regarded as 'our kind of people', any tendencies towards rebellion, 'strange ideas', etc.?
9. Age, place of birth, moved from rural to an urban area or not.
10. What would you say the most important lessons of life have been for you?
11. What was the most important event in your life?
12. Educational records: names of schools attended, qualifications obtained, extracurriculum debating, special teacher, reading? Attended a Koran school or not?
13. Father's particulars: age, place of birth, occupation, educational level, literacy level, religious history, membership of religious groups and observances.
14. Mother's particulars: (same details as for father).
15. Marital status: (if married) date of marriage and any previous ones? Form of marriage?
16. Spouse's particulars: (same as for father).
17. Does your wife follow your path? What does she believe? How do you feel about this?
18. Children (if any): their ages, educational levels, do they follow their parents' path or not, religious attitudes.
19. What kind of people would you like your children to be when they grow up?
20. Would you like your children to be followers of the Risale-i Nur when they grow up? What do you think is the best way to teach a child how to follow your belief?
21. Do you discourage your children from mixing freely with the children of non-students of the Risale-i Nur?
22. Records of previous membership of religious groups.
    Record of previous and present religious observance and experience.
23. What other societies do you belong to? Religious, social, political and others.
24. Have you been on pilgrimage to Mecca? If not, do you want to?
25. Do you fast at times other than Ramadan?
26. Do you give alms regularly every year?
27. Do you know Arabic? Other foreign languages?
28. Can you read the Koran in the Arabic script?
29. Have you ever travelled outside Turkey?
30. Have you ever worked outside Turkey?
31. Have you ever attended meetings of the Risale-i Nur outside Turkey?

32. Have you ever met or stayed with students of the Risale-i Nur outside Turkey?
33. What radio programmes do you listen to regularly?
34. Do you go to the cinema? What sort of films do you like? If not, formerly?
35. How often do you watch TV? What TV programmes do you watch most?
36. Do you go to the theatre? When did you last go to the theatre?
37. Do you smoke? If yes, how much?
38. Have you ever drunk alcohol?
39. When and how did you know the Risale-i Nur? When and how did your joining the cemaat (group) happen?
    (a) which subject aroused your interest most?
    (b) which peculiarity of the cemaat drew your attention first?
40. Would you describe the person who caused you to know the Risale-i Nur?
41. What were the reasons for you to join the cemaat of the Risale-i Nur? Which motives played the greatest roles?
42. Has your participation in this cemaat given you the benefits you anticipated? a) spiritual, b) social, c) financial, d) employment, e) others?
43. What has been the attitude of your family and your parents (if alive) towards your participation in this cemaat and reading the Risale-i Nur, and how do you think that they consider you now?
44. Are there any students of the Risale-i Nur from your relatives?
45. Has your participation in the cemaat of the Risale-i Nur now changed the attitude of other people towards you?
46. Has your becoming a student of the Risale-i Nur made it easier or harder to get on with other people?
47. Do you have any friends among non-students of the Risale-i Nur as well? What is the proportion of them to students of the Risale-i Nur?
48. How has your knowing the Risale-i Nur and joining the cemaat changed your way of thinking?
49. Has joining the Nur cemaat affected your behaviour? In which direction?
50. How much time do you devote to the hizmet of the Risale-i Nur?
51. How much time do you devote to reading the Risale-i Nur and private worship encouraged by the cemaat?
52. Which kind of books do you read other than the Risale-i Nur? What other reading do you do regularly?
53. What newspapers do you read?
54. What meetings do you attend?
55. How often are these meetings held?
56. Do the meetings cause you to make friendships; and do you meet them other times as well?
57. What feelings do you have during these meetings?
58. What religious experiences have you had during these meetings?
59. What religious experiences have you had while you were with the students of the Risale-i Nur at other times? What is the source of your religious experiences other than the cemaat of the Risale-i Nur?
60. What appeals to you most about the meetings?
61. What aspects of these meetings do you like least?
62. What in practice is the usual behaviour of the Students of Light towards those who have left the cemaat for any reason?

1. Outline the history of the hizmets of the Risale-i Nur in this city?
2. Do differences arise between the generations in the students of the Risale-i Nur in this city? Give details.
3. In what ways has the cemaat of the Risale-i Nur changed since you joined?
4. Are the hizmets of the Risale-i Nur in your city growing? Static? Declining? Give reasons.
5. Are the hizmets of the Risale-i Nur as a whole growing? Static? Declining? Give reasons.
6. Do the Students of Light undertake any charitable works, (in this city), and for what object?
7. How is the financial need of the hizmets met? For instance, do you contribute any money to the hizmets?
8. What is this money used for?
9. What is your estimate of the worth of the total assets of this hizmets in this city?
10. What is the state of relationship between the cemaat of the Risale-i Nur and the other religious cemaats? Give special examples of it where it is possible.
11. How is this message proclaimed?
12. What efforts have you made to proclaim this message?
13. What success have you had in proclaiming the message?
14. What difficulties have you encountered in trying to spread the message?
15. Does the hizmet of the Risale-i Nur encounter much opposition? Give details.
16. What do you think about the reflection of the people of this city on the Risale-i Nur?
17. Are there any aspects of the cemaat of the Risale-i Nur and its activities to be kept secret?
18. (If there is not any) Why should it not work as a legally-formed association?
19. Are there any marked political differences within the cemaat of the Risale-i Nur?
20. In your opinion, what are the reasons for the cemaat of the Risale-i Nur in supporting a political party? What kinds of advantages are contemplated?
21. Who do you consider to be the most successful people in Turkey? Why do you consider them to be successful? How do you account for their success?

What is (a) your attitude, (b) the cemaat's attitude (if different from your own) towards the following:

1. Freedom and Liberalism.
2. Equality;
3. Democracy:
   a) What are the advantages of democracy compared to some other systems?
   b) What would happen if we lost our democracy?
   c) What kinds of things would you consider undemocratic? Why?
   d) About the hizmets in Nurculuk, are they democratically run? How do you mean?
   e) What do you think the future of democracy will be in Turkey?
4. Human rights.
5. Social class.
6. Capitalism.
7. Republicanism.
8. The Caliphate.
9. Communism and communists.
10. Freemasons.
11. Atheists and anarchists.
12. Nationalism.
13. UNO.
14. NATO
15. EEC.
16. The Muslim world.
17. The Arabs.
18. The United States of America.
19. The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
20. China.
21. Britain.
22. West Germany.
23. Other Western European states.
24. Israel, Iran, Iraq.
25. The Kurds.
26. Armenians.
27. Other minorities in Turkey.
28. Foreigners in Turkey.
29. The Turkish Republic.
30. Turkish armed forces.
31. Turkish police.
32. Atatürk.
33. Turkish language reform.
34. Turkish alphabet reform.
35. Secularism and other Atatürk reforms.
36. Westernization, modernization, industrialization.
37. The importance of literacy.
38. Education.
39. Natural sciences.
40. Religious training in schools and universities.
41. İmam Hatip Okulları and other religious schools.
42. The Religious Affairs Department.
43. TRT.
44. Turkish justice.
45. The role of women in Turkey.
46. Divorce.

47. Polygamy.
48. Birth control.
49. Theatre.
50. Cinema;
51. Religious music.
52. Secular music.
53. Prayer and supplication.
54. Namaz.
55. Fasting.
56. Pilgrimage.
57. Almsgiving.
58. Sin
59. Sevap.
60. Angels.
61. Satan.
62. Demons.
63. The Evil Eye.
64. Predestination.
65. Saints.
66. Ziyaret (visiting tombs and graves).
67. Paradise: what is it like and who qualifies to go there, and how confident are you that you will go there?
68. Hell: what is it like, who goes there and for how long?
69. The Seriat: should it be enforced in Turkey?
70. Cihad (holy war).
71. The Koran: is it absolutely, literally true?
72. Do you consider any books other than the Koran should be studied to learn the will of God? If so, which?
73. Mezheps (Islamic theological schools).
74. Islamic legal schools.
75. Tasavvuf (Sufism).
76. Tarikats (Sufi orders in Islam).
77. The Wahhabis.
78. The Shiites and Alevis.
79. Other major religions.
80. In your opinion, why is the Risale-i Nur important?
81. What kind of differences do you consider there are between the Risale-i Nur and other Islamic religious books?
82. In your opinion, what is the method of the Risale-i Nur?
83. In your opinion, what is the ultimate aim of the Risale-i Nur?
84. The most important sections of the Risale-i Nur.
85. What are the most important elements of the Nurcu message?
86. The most important ways in which Nurculuk differs from other Muslim groups. What do you consider to be the most important among them?
87. The main rules of Nurculuk: what do you consider to be the most important of them?
88. Grades in Nurculuk.
89. Your opinion about ağabeys (the students Said Nursi personally taught).
90. Your opinion about Said Nursi.

Notes on the changes

e.g. not, 'What do you think of your leaders?', but 'What do you think about ağabeys?' It was necessary to phrase the question in this way as Nurcus do not acknowledge that they have leaders.

Some questions were omitted because, after an outline picture of Nurculuk had been built up from early contacts, the answers were obvious and to have asked them would have been offensive or show such complete ignorance of the nature of Nuruculuk that respondents might be antagonised. For example, it soon became apparent that questions on dancing fell into this category.

As mentioned above, not all the information was obtained by asking questions. For example, when attending meetings, it was possible to discover by observation whether or not money was collected then, so it would have been superfluous to ask, 'Is money collected at the meetings?'

GROUP PROFILE FORM

Foundation

1. When?
2. Where?
3. By whom?
4. Why?
5. How?
6. What were its connections with pre-existing groups?
7. How does it differ from other Muslim groups?

Developments

8. What have been the main developments since foundation?
9. When did these occur?
10. Where did these occur?
11. Who led these developments?
12. How?

Current State

13. Total membership.
14. Male/Female ratio.
15. Age profile.
16. Class profile.
17. Occupation profile.
18. Membership details of ..... branch.
19. How many people work as full-time paid employees of the group?
20. How many people work as part-time paid employees of the group?
21. How many people work voluntarily for the group?
22. What is the nature of the work done by the group's employees?
23. What is the nature of the work done by the group's voluntary helpers?
24. How many branches are there?
25. Where is the headquarters?
26. Where are branches located?
27. Is membership rising, static or falling?
28. What are the aims of the group?

Recruitment

29. How is the group's message spread?
30. Who is it aimed at?
31. Who is attracted and how?
32. Who attracts new members?
33. Who enrols them?
34. Are there particular groups or individuals who would be refused admission?
35. Why do people join?
36. What proportion of new members are relatives of existing members?
37. What is the method of induction for new members?
38. What is the teaching regarding attitudes to ex-members?

Finances

39. What are the group's total assets worth?
40. What are ..... branch's total assets worth?
41. What do these assets comprise?
42. What is the source of funds?
43. How much are members expected to contribute?
44. Where is money invested or deposited?
45. What are the main items of expenditure?
46. Does the group impose any restrictions on financial transactions, e.g. refusing funds from certain quarters, refusing interest?

Property

47. What property is owned?
48. Where is it?
49. What use is made of it?
50. What property is rented?
51. Where is it?
52. What use is made of it?

Meetings

53. What regular meetings are held?
54. What special meetings are held?
55. Where are they held?
56. Are meetings open only to members or to general public?
57. Who owns the premises the meetings are held in?
58. How are meeting places equipped, decorated and guarded?
59. What form do meetings take?
60. What teaching is given at meetings?
61. What writings are used?
62. What texts are given special emphasis?
63. Does this emphasis change according to the situation?
64. Who conducts the meetings?
65. Who else takes a leading part in the meetings?
66. To what extent do other members actively participate?
67. Is there any music, singing, reading, zikir? Describe it.
68. What is the main theme of recent sermons? Is this new?
69. Is money collected at meetings?
70. Is literature distributed at meetings?

Rules

71. Are there written rules for members?
72. Are there unwritten rules for members?
73. What obligations are imposed upon members and what prohibitions?
74. What punishments are awarded for infringement of rules?
75. Who awards these punishments?
76. Who ensures punishments are carried out?
77. What are the conditions for membership?
78. What are the grounds for expulsion?
79. How many people are expelled?
80. How often are disciplinary measures necessary?
81. What disagreements have arisen between members, when, why?

82. How are differences between members resolved?
83. What rules are there to encourage obedience to leadership?
84. What are the most important rules?

Publications

85. What publications are produced regularly?
86. What publications have been produced up to now?
87. Where are the publications produced?
88. Who produces them?
89. Who distributes them?
90. To whom are they sold/given?
91. What are the proceeds used for?

Leadership

92. Who is leader of the whole group?
93. Who is leader of ..... group?
94. How did (a) achieve his position?
95. How did (b) achieve his position?
96. When did these leaders join the group?
97. What grades have they passed through?
98. What authority does their position give them?
99. What is the nature of their relationship with those under them?
100. How old are leaders?
101. Are there distinct differences in attitudes towards leaders according to the age of the members concerned?
102. What is the educational, social, cultural, political, financial background of the leadership?

Miscellaneous

103. How is the group organised?
104. What is the rank structure?
105. What is the group's response to social problems?
106. What effect has rapid urbanization in Turkey had on the group?
107. What other social changes in Turkey have had a marked impact on the group?
108. Is the movement stronger in towns or in rural areas?
109. What difficulties do members experience in society?
110. What are the advantages of membership: social, spiritual, financial, occupational?
111. How does membership change a person: job, habits, moral attitudes, moral practices, relationships with other people, attitude to secular authority, political parties?
112. What does the group consider the most important problems facing individuals in Turkey today?
113. What does the group consider the most important problems facing the Turkish nation today?
114. What is the group's attitude towards Kurds and other minorities?
115. What are the most important ways in which the groups differ from other Muslims?
116. Does the group have any distinguishing signs by which they may recognise one another: dress, beard, moustache, secret signs?
117. What training is given to members' children?

118. Are members' children discouraged from mixing freely with children of non-members?
119. Are any charitable works undertaken? If so, for whom?
120. Is support given to any particular political party or politician?
121. What is the communications network of the group?
122. What special ceremonies does the group have to mark important stages of life?
123. What beliefs are there concerning the founder and present leaders of the group?

Note

In practice 14. (Male/Female ratio) was impossible to establish because 'membership' in any case is imprecise and women do not attend meetings with men.

33. was irrelevant to Nurculuk as there is no formal enrolment.

APPENDIX III

SAID NURSI'S LIFE (1873-1960)

No full, objective biography of Said Nursi has yet been written. Several attempts have been made to write the story of his life, mostly by admirers. His opponents have given brief accounts of his life but they rely chiefly on the information in books by Said Nursi's followers and use this largely to ridicule the events there described on the grounds that they are naturally impossible. There is scarcely any common ground between the supporters and critics of Said Nursi in their treatment of his life. To his followers, Said Nursi is the müceddid (the reformer of Islam) divinely appointed for the twentieth century as Mevlâna Halid was for the nineteenth century,[1] and as such he is the inheritor of the Prophet Muhammad foretold by the prophet himself when he informed his umma that one müceddid would follow him in each succeeding century. On the other hand, Said Nursi's detractors claim he is a hypocrite and liar,[2] has gone astray,[3] is 'a Kurd who served Communists',[4] 'a peasant Kurd shaikh',[5] and his works are 'full of nonsense and irreligious words'[6] and 'lead [people] to anarchy'.[7] Between these two extremes stands the social scientist. The distinguished Turkish sociologist, Professor Şerif Mardin, acknowledges Said Nursi's importance, saying he was 'one of the most persistent bogeys of the Turkish Republic'.[8]

Since this thesis is concerned with the contemporary state of the Nurcu movement itself, rather than an objective study of Said Nursi's life, the account given here will be drawn mainly from accounts of his life currently given by Nurcus themselves, since these are what help to mould the minds of adherents.

The earliest source for the life story of Said Nursi was an eight page pamphlet[9] written by one of his own students called Hamza in 1918. It is entitled as Bediuzzaman'ın Tarihçe-i Hayatından Bir Hülâsadır.[10] A year after this, his nephew, Abdurrahman Nursi (1903-1918)[11] wrote his uncle's life story entitled Bediuzzaman'ın Tarihçe-i Hayatı.[12] This book has fifty-five pages and was printed in Necm-i İstikbal Matbaası, Istanbul in 1919. The first book written about Said Nursi's life in Modern Turkish script was by Eşref Edip Fergan. It is called Risale-i Nur Müellifi Said Nur and was printed by Çelik Cilt Matbaası, Istanbul, in 1952.[13]

In 1958 a group of Nurcus who called themselves 'servants and students of Said Nursi', later regarded by Nurcus as Ağabeys after the death of Said Nursi, wrote Said Nursi's life story mostly based on the letters written by Said Nursi himself, defence speeches in courts given again by Said Nursi or his students, and letters, eulogies and poems written by his admirers.[14] Said Nursi himself authorised these students to publish the book[15] which was intended to be the main source of reference for his future biographers.[16] The full title of the book is Risale-i Nur Külliyatı Müellifi Bediuzzaman Said Nursî: Hayatı, Mesleki, Tercüme-i Hali (The Author of the Risale-i Nur Collections Bediuzzaman Said Nursi: His Life, Outlook and Biography). It was first printed by Doğus Ltd. Şirketi Matbaası, Ankara, in 1958. Its 1960 reprint has 722 pages. It bears no author's name, and instead of a name at the end of the introduction the one word hazırlayanlar (compilers) is given.[17] In this introduction the aim of this book is explained as:

> Bu Tarihçe-i Hayat okuyucuların nazarını - bu zamanda - Kur'an'ın hikmet nurları olan Risâle-i Nur'a çevirip, ondan istifadeyi gösterecektir.[18]

This biography will draw the attention of its readers to the Risale-i Nur which comprises rays of light of wisdom of the Koran - in this age - and will show them how to benefit from it.

On another occasion the students and servants of Said Nursi explain why they mentioned in this book the extraordinary events that happened to Said Nursi:

> Risale-i Nurun ... hizmetini belirtmek için Kur'an'ın bir şakirdi ve Hazreti Peygamberin bir ummeti ve Allah'in bir abdi olarak nail olduğu ikramları zikrediyoruz. Din düsmanlarının bahanelerle taarruzunu ve insafsız hücumlarını red ve bir masumun masumiyetini beyan ediyoruz.[19]
>
> We state, in order to make clear the service of Risale-i Nur, the blessings he [Said Nursi] received as a pupil of the Koran, an ümmet of the Prophet and a servant of God. We repudiate the hostility of enemies of religion under various pretexts and their outrageous attacks and declare the innocence of an innocent.

Said Nursi sent a message to those who were writing his biography when he heard that this book was being prepared by them, saying 'Tafsilâta lüzum yok. Yalnız Risale-i Nur Hizmetine dair bahisler yazılsın'.[20] (There is no need to give any detailed explanation. Let only the subjects concerning the service of the Risale-i Nur be mentioned.) Nevertheless, the book does include a great deal of information about Said Nursi's own personality. Professor Mardin comments that:

> The picture of Said Nursi one gets from this book is that of a person embattled from the earliest days of his life ... A closer reading of the same source, however, reveals how motivations are incorporated into the impinging institutional framework. A third

reading enables us to place the formation of Said's vocation within an even wider circle which one might name the '"World System" of his time ...[21]

Following this authorised biography of Said Nursi, an English pamphlet was published about Said Nursi's life in 1963,[22] and then in 1974 Nurcus in the United States published a book[23] which summarises the authorised biography.

The first comparatively serious attempt at a chronological biography of Said Nursi was made by a young Nurcu Turkologist,[24] Necmeddin Şahiner, who said in one of his books about Nurculuk that he was working on the subject 'as a son of the Republic'.[25] His book is called Bilinmeyen Taraflariyle Bediuzzaman Said Nursi - Kronolojik Hayatı (Bediuzzaman Said Nursi - the chronology of his life and unknown facts about him). It was first published by Yeni Asya Yayıneviin 1974. In this thesis the chronology of Said Nursi's life will be taken chiefly from the sixth edition of this work.

In 1976, Maryam Jameelah wrote a sixteen-page book in English entitled A Great Islamic Movement in Turkey: Badee-u-Zaman Said Nursi. It was printed in Lahore and gives a very brief account of Said Nursi's life.

In 1977 Necmeddin Şahiner published more details of Said Nursi's life after visiting all the places in Turkey where Said Nursi had lived and interviewing numerous people who had seen Said Nursi, visited him or lived with him. The first fruit of these travels was a book published in February 1977 called Nurs Yolu (The Road to Nurs)(Yeni Asya publications).[26] In the following year he published a more substantial work entitled Son Şahitler Bediuzzaman Said Nursi'yi Anlatıyor (The Last Witnesses' Account of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi) which includes author's

interviews with the people. The second volume of the book came out in 1981.[27]

An Italian biography of Said Nursi, entitled Badi' az-Zaman Sa'îd-i Nûrsî,[28] by Anna Masala, was published in Rome in 1978. It was based mainly on Nurcu publications in Turkish. There is also an Arabic book published by the Nurcus about Said Nursi's life which is based entirely on Nurcu sources.[29]

The last of the books about Said Nursi's life is by Cemal Kutay.[30] This was published in 1980 as a Yeni Asya publication and was entitled Çağımızda Bir Asr -ı Saadet Müslûmanı: Bediuzzaman Said Nursi (A Muslim of the Era of the Prophet in Our Time: Bediuzzaman Said Nursi). Necmeddin Şahiner wrote a foreword for the book, and he and Cemal Uşak - both of whom work for the Yeni Asya Yayinevi and have published several books through this publishing house - provided some of its explanations and footnotes, did the proof-readings[31] and modernised the language.[32]

All of these books, apart from the first two which were written during Said Nursi's very early life in 1918 and 1919, divide his life into three periods. Said Nursi himself named these periods: Eski Said (Old Said), Yeni Said (New Said) and Üçûncu Said (Third Said).[33] In this thesis, this division will be followed with a small difference which simply subdivides the 'Old Said' period into two. Thus, from his birth until 1926 when he started writing the Risale-i Nur - he was then 53 years' old - is the 'Old Said' period. In this period Said Nursi was very much involved in social life and believed that service to religion can be done only through politics. The last eight years of this period, that is from 25 June 1918 when he returned to Istanbul from his captivity in Russia until February 1926 when he was sent to internal

exile to Barla, is the 'Transition Period from the "Old Said" to the "New Said"'.[34]

From 1926 to the end of 1949 is the 'New Said' period. During these 23 years, Said Nursi wrote the Risale-i Nur Collections[35] which are regarded by his followers as inspired works, and educated his 'Students of Light' who are, as Said Nursi called them, the Nesl-i Cedid (the New Generation).[36] Throughout this period, Turkey underwent a profound change. In the eyes of Nurcus the Republic attacked the fundamentals of Islam 'under the domination of an atheistic philosophy, faithlessness and corruption',[37] and 'The medreses were closed [3 March 1924], the call to prayer was banned',[38] - in fact it was not banned but had to be made in Turkish, not Arabic (18 July 1932).[39] Moreover, 'the religious needs of the society were totally neglected, leaving this field completely empty'.[40] As a result 'whatever exists in the name of religion,' says Şahiner, 'was banned, and politics became the handmaiden of atheism'.[41]

When the 'Third Said' period started in late 1949, Said Nursi was 76 years old. It continued until his death on 23 March 1960.[42] In this period 'Said Nursi combined the "Old" and "New" Saids, synthesising the two into the form of a mürşid' (guide)[43] in which capacity 'he promulgated and expounded his message' (i.e. the message he had previously proclaimed in the Risale-i Nur),[44] and 'by guiding the politicians and showing them the right path, he strove to make them serve religion.'[45] One of the students closes to Said Nursi, Bayram Yüksel, says 'In 1953, when he became his full-time devotee, Our Üstad was entering into a new period and changing his customs, such as letting his students stay in the same house with him, performing sunset namaz together with his students in his house, conducting "morning derses" with his students soon after morning namaz and explaining the Risale-i Nur to them,

encourgaging his students to write and distribute the Risale-i Nur in Modern Turkish and reading the religious right-wing magazines ... none of which he did during his "New Said" period.'[46]

Throughout his 'New Said' period, Said Nursi used to stay alone in his house from before sunset until nine o'clock in the morning and never used to accept anybody in his house during this time of the day,[47] and also it was with the starting of this period that he stopped smoking cigarettes, reading newspapers and listening to the radio.[48] Only after 1955 he began again to read all newspapers, regardless of their political stand and also asked his students to do so.[49]

Said Nursi used, as the conditions of time and place required, various names and signatures in different phases of his eighty-seven year life. Each of these titles represents separate stages in his life. Sahiner lists these titles as follows: Said, İbn-i Mirza (Son of Mirza), Meşhur Molla Said (famous Molla Said), Said- ul-Meşhur (famous Said), Ehu'l-acâib (Brother of Wonders), İbnü ammi'l-garāîb (Cousin of Curiosities), Ebû Lâ-şey (Father of Nothing), Cerîde-i seyyâre (Itinerant Newspaper), Bediuzzaman-i Kürdî (Kurd Bediuzzaman - 'Bediuzzaman' is translated by Nurcus as 'Wonder of the Age', Professor Mardin translated it as 'Nonpareil of the Times'), Mirzazâde Bediuzzaman Said Nursî (Son of Mirza Bediuzzaman Said Nursi - Said Nursi started using 'Nursî' as his surname relating to his birth-place, Nurs, after the Surnames Law was introduced in Turkey in 1934), Said Okur (only used in the proceedings of Afyon Court when Said Nursi went on trial in 1948[50]), and Bediuzzaman Said Nursi.[51]

Before starting studying the chronology of his life, one aspect of Said Nursi, his being müceddid (reformer of Islam), as claimed by his followers, should be mentioned in order to give a brief picture of the

historical background to this claim. One of the books on Said Nursi's life introduces Said Nursi to readers in its first paragraph as follows: '... assuredly Badee-uz-Zaman Said Noorsi was presented by Allah to the Muslims during the reign of evil of the past fifty years.'[52] The evidence which led Nurcus to believe that Said Nursi was the müceddid is this: 'Said Nursi's predecessor, Şeyh Halid, the man who had brought a new Naksibendi doctrine to Kurdistan and whose lieutenants (Halifa) had riddled the sub-province of Hizan with their school ...'[53] had left his gown to Said Nursi as his successor for the twentieth century. Said Nursi himself mentions this gown in one of his books and says: 'I am satisfied with some signs that Mevlâna Halid who lived a hundred years ago sent me his own gown, in a special way, to wear. I wear this blessed hundred-year-old gown and thank God Almighty.'[54] In fact, according to Said Nursi himself, when he was fourteen years old, he deserved to be vested by the Master with the gown which would have been the symbol of his diploma but, owing to his youth, he thought that it would not be fitting for him to wear a gown which the great doctor was wearing.[55] 'In 1940 (or 1939) Said Nursi as the imam (müceddid) of the century[56] received the gown of the nineteenth-century müceddid Mevlâna Halid'[57] through one of the Mevlâna Halid's Turkish mürid (disciples), Küçük Aşık. Thus Said Nursi received the gown of which he was previously deprived. The story about Said Nursi's receiving this gown can be summarised as follows: the grandson of Küçük Aşık, Bahaddin Efendi, kept this gown with special care to be given to 'its true owner'. Bahaddin Efendi's daughter, Asiye Mûlazımoğlu, came to Kastamonu with her husband, Tahir Bey, and they both found Said Nursi to be the one who was described by her great grandfather as the 'true owner of the gown' and gave it to Said Nursi when he was in Kastamonu.[58] For Nurcus this was the reason why Said Nursi had not been

vested with the gown when he deserved it fifty-three years before. 'The acceptance of the gown by Üstad now is a sign that vazife-i teceddüd-ü dîn (the task of reforming the religion) is transferred to Said Nursi himself ... And this right must be his too.'[59] Mevlâna Halid was born in 1776, Ustad was born in 1876. Thus, one of the conditions mentioned in the relevant hadith was obviously met.[60] Şeyh Halid's full name was Abu'l-Baha Ohia al-Din Khalid al-Shahrizuri. He was known to his followers as Mevlâna Halid. He was born at Qaradagh in the district of Shahrizur in Kurdistan at some time between 1776-7 and 1780,[61] his death occurred around 1827,[62] so Mevlâna Halid died 54 years before Said Nursi was born. Mevlâna Halid is therefore the forerunner of the religious revitalisation movements in Kurdistan, Turkey, Sulaimaniya, Damascus, India and Baghdad by spreading the Naqshbandi order.[63]

In fact Said Nursi 'never submitted formally to the guidance of any şeyh, and regarded the structure and concern of the tarikat as inappropriate to the circumstances of the age ...'[64] Although Hamid Algar maintained in his article that 'the influence of Sufism upon him [Said Nursi] was profound and can be seen to have permeated the entirety of his writings'[65] neither Nurcus nor Said Nursi himself ever accepted that Said Nursi actually followed any şeyh or order. They only claimed that 'what Mevlâna Halid did in his time is the same as what the Risale-i Nur is doing in this century as far as the nature of their service and the reformation and reinforcement of religion is concerned.[66]

1. THE "OLD SAID"

1873 - Childhood

Said Nursi was born in 1873 in Nurs, which is a small village of İsparit, in the administrative subdivision of Hizan.[67] Hizan is a

subprovince of Bitlis, 'in an area of Turkey then described in Ottoman atlases as Kurdistan. He [Said Nursi] was a native Kurdish speaker.'[68, 69] His father, Mirza, was a village molla with a smallholding of land and seven children. His mother's name was Nuriye.[70]

When Said Nursi was a child, theological subjects were the most popular topic for discussion among Muslim learned men, and even in his home village Said listened to such discussions during the long winter evenings.[71] In 1882, when he was nine years old, Said went to another nearby village, Tağ, to attend Molla Mehmed Emin Efendi's medrese, but soon afterwards he had to leave the school because he had a quarrel with one of his fellow students.[72] He returned to his own village. Because Nurs was a very small village and it had no medrese, Said had to be content with the personal instruction of his elder brother, Molla Abdullah, who was studying elsewhere and used to come to the village once a week. A year later, having been dissatisfied with his education which was only one day a week, Said, in order to receive full-time education, left home again for another nearby village, Pirmis, and then went to the highland property belonging to the Şeyh of Hizan, Seyyid Nur Mehmet Efendi.[73] Said stayed there until he quarrelled with his brother Molla Abdullah and left the same night for the village of Nursin and then to his own village Nurs.[74] He spent the winter in his parents' house. As a result of a dream, he again felt the urge to study and went to Arvas and then to Bitlis in 1888 when he was fifteen years old to study in Şeyh Emin Efendi's medrese. One of the Şeyh's students was teaching Said, but he wanted to received instruction directly from the Şeyh. When the Şeyh refused to accept Said as one of his own students, Said left the medrese and went to Bayezit, a small town in Erzurum province where he received a three-month full-time course from Şeyh Mehmet Celali

himself. During this three-month period, Said studied all the books taught in the medrese, but only in general, not in detail. When his master Mehmet Celali Efendi asked him why he was doing so, he replied: 'First I want to know what subjects these books mention and then I will study only those which match my character.' According to Şahiner, Said's purpose was to emphasise the idea of reform - which was part of his natural disposition - and to apply it to the classical methods used in the medreses.[75]

At the end of this three-month period, Said acquired his icazet (diploma) from the Bayezit Medrese's müderris (professor) Şeyh Mehmet Celal Efendi in 1888 and became 'Molla Said'.[76] Molla Said then wanted to go to Baghdad to see the great learned men of Islam there. On his way to Baghdad he stopped at Bitlis and then at Sirvan to see his elder brother Molla Abdullah. After he had proved his authority in religious sciences before Molla Abdullah, he went to Siirt where he was examined by the famous molla of the district, Molla Fethullah. Molla Fethullah was astonished to see such a high level of intelligence and memory combined in one person. Said then became well known as 'Said-i Meşhur'.[77] Molla Said did not continue his journey to Baghdad but carried on travelling from place to place. From Siirt he came back to Bitlis and then went to Tillo where he confined himself in a tomb and memorised the 'Kamus-u Okyanus' up to the section 'Sin' (fourteenth letter of the Arabic alphabet). From Tillo he went to Cizre (a small town in Mardin province) where he silenced by argument all the learned men of the area, then he went on to Mardin itself.[78]

1892: Molla Said in Mardin - aged 19

'According to a statement in his authorised biography, Mardin was the place where he started on his "first political life". The

expression is possibly related to a widening of his intellectual horizons which resulted from meeting two students of theology who were passing through Mardin. One of these students was a follower of Cemaleddin (Djemaleddin) al Afgani (1839-97)... The second traveller from which Said received information about the world of Islam outside the Ottoman Empire was a member of the Sanusi order.'[79]

Here in Mardin, Molla Said carried on inviting the learned men of the city to public debate. At the end of each of these he was always triumphant. He thus proved his superiority in theological sciences over the other learned men, and to mark his distinction, Hüseyin Çelebi Paşa offered him a lot of presents but he did not accept any of them apart from a rifle.[80]

Molla Said's activities in Mardin did not please the Governor of the city, Nadir Bey, and he was sent into exile to Bitlis under armed guard. On the way Molla Said asked the guards to take his handcuffs off in order to let him perform his namaz but the guards did not permit this. Thereupon Molla Said got out of his handcuffs as easily as if they had been a handkerchief and performed his namaz. The story quickly spread among the people of Mardin. Later on, when Said Nursi was asked how he could manage to undo the handcuffs, he said: 'it can only be the miracle of namaz.'[81]

The Governor of Bitlis, Omer Paşa, assigned a room in his house for Molla Said. 'Here he extended his knowledge by reading a whole series of Islamic classics. He also took up the study of the secular sciences of geography, chemistry and mathematics, the newly prestigious subjects about which the graduates of secular schools boasted. Newspapers and books published in Istanbul which were received by the governor were another source of new ideas and information.'[82] During two years in Bitlis, Molla Said is said to have memorised eighty books about Islamic

classics and modern secular sciences.[83] 'It appears that he began to sense the growing need for a fresh exposition and defence of the Qur'anic message in the face of modern materialism'.[84] He received his last education in Islamic classics from Şeyh Muhammed Küfrevi who was at the same time a Naqshbandi şeyh and that was in Bitlis too.[85]

The Governor of Van, Hasan Paşa, invited him to Van in 1894 where he lived fifteen years with frequent intervals. Here Molla Said stayed first under the auspices of Hasan Paşa and then of Tahir Paşa. When Tahir Pasa was appointed governor to the city, Molla Said stayed in Tahir Paşa's official residence. In Van he concentrated his studies even more on secular sciences.[86] He told one of his most devoted students, Mustafa Sungur, about these studies and the conclusion he reached: 'I used to repeat eighty-ninety books which I had memorised. They then became steps for me to climb up to the truths of the Koran; at the end I reached these truths and then realised that every verse of the Koran encompasses the whole universe. I was no longer in need of any other thing [book]. The Koran alone was sufficient for me.'[87]

It was during these years that Said-i Meshur was given another title, 'Bediuzzaman' (Wonder of the Age), by the learned men who were astounded by the sharpness of Molla Said's intelligence and capacity in spite of his youth. Molla Said thereafter started using this title as his signature. Questionned why he used this title since it implied self-praise, he published an article in the Volkan on 15 April 1909 saying: 'It is not for self-praise. By using this title I display proof that I apologise for my faults, because 'Bedi' means strange. It is strange, it is contradictory just as are my character and features, my style of writing and dress. In using this title I am asking my readers not to apply to my style and reasoning the same criteria by which such subjects are currently judged.'[88]

Bediuzzaman mentions in Mektubat, one of the main books of the Risale-i Nur, a vivid dream he had had long before the First World War - when he was in Van. The dream and its interpretation by Bediuzzaman are an important guide to the understanding of his subsequent life.

> I was on the foot of Agri Mountain which is called Mount Ararat. Suddenly, a terrifying explosion blew this mountain apart. It scattered huge pieces all over the world. In a state of terror I looked and found that my late mother was beside me. I said to her "Mother, do not be afraid! It is the will of Almighty God. He is Compassionate and All Wise." While still in the same state, I became aware of an important person addressing me in a commanding tone: "Explain the miraculousness of the Koran!"
>
> I woke up and I understood that there would be a big explosion, and after this explosion and revolution the walls protecting the Koran would be destroyed, and then the Koran alone would directly defend itself. And the Koran would be attacked but its miraculousness would be its impregnable armour. A man like me - although it would be beyond my normal ability - would be designated to explain an aspect of this miraculousness in this age and I understood that I was so designated.[89]

1896: Bediuzzaman on his way to Istanbul - aged 23

To his dying day, Said Nursi always firmly believed that a university should be opened in Eastern Anatolia. That was the project that he called the Medreset-üz Zehra which was to be patterned after Al-Azhar University in Cairo.[90] The centre of this university would be either in Van or in Diyarbakır. The neighbouring cities also would have faculties.[91] In this projected Medreset-üz Zehra, the languages of instruction were to be 'lisan-i Arabî vacib, Kurdî câiz, Turki

lazim ...'[92](... Arabic language as 'necessary', Kurdish 'permitted' and Turkish 'requisite' ...). (He himself wrote and spoke all three of these languages.)

Through this project, Said Nursi hoped to implement his ideas on reforming the medrese system by synthesising 'the old and new learning, a wish that had inspired also his attempts at formulating a new kalam'.[93] This was stated by Said Nursi as: 'Funun-u cedideyi, ulûm-u medaris ile mezc ...'[94](Combining the modern sciences and the theological sciences). (The ulûm-u-medaris were so called because the medreses taught nothing but the theological sciences) He said that the curriculum of the secular schools should include theological sciences. By this means 'students of secular schools would be saved from becoming atheists and students of medreses from becoming fanatics'.[95] The consequence of this, as hoped by Bediuzzaman, 'was to aid in the reconciliation and fusion of three antagonistic groups: the adherents of modern learning (ehl-i mektep), the students of the traditional sciences (ehl-i medrese) and the followers of the Sufi tarikats (ehl-i tekke).'[96]

Having strongly believed the necessity of the establishment of the medreset-ûz-Zehra Bediuzzaman journeyed to the capital city of the Empire, Istanbul, in 1896 in the hope that the Sultan would give help for this project. On his way, Bediuzzaman met Yahya Nuzhet Pasha (one of Sultan Abdulhamid's advisers[97]) in Erzincan. Yahya Nuzhet Pashagave him a letter addressed to the Imperial bird-keeper, Mustafa Bey, giving information about Bediuzzaman.[98] 'The Sultan had been gathering a number of leaders of religious orders from all parts of the Islamic world in an attempt to use Islam as a political formula to instil a feeling of collective identity among his Muslim subjects. Said joined these Islamic experts in residence in Istanbul and was placed with the Imperial bird-keeper,

Mustafa bey in a house inside Yıldız Palace.'[99] Bediuzzaman stayed here a year and a half and made the acquaintance of '... the various religious and political leaders of the Muslim right ...'[100] among whom Esref Bey[101] was the most important as far as Said Nursi's collaboration with the Secret Organisation in his later life is concerned.[102]

Apparently, Bediuzzaman could not approach the Sultan and eventually had to go back to Van empty-handed. Here in Van he continued his private teaching in his small medrese known as Horhor medresesi which was named after a spring in the ancient castle of Van.[103]

In November 1907, Bediuzzaman came for the second time to Istanbul where the political life was then very active, just before the Young Turk Revolution. Bediuzzaman especially attracted the attention of the religious and political leaders because of his public debates with learned men in Istanbul. These debates were so challenging that even on the door of his room in Şekerci Hanı, Bediuzzaman hung a plate on which the following sentence was written, 'Here every question is answered, every problem is solved, but no question is asked.'[104] Hasan Fehmi Başağlu, at present a member of the Consultation Council of the Religious Affairs Department, said that he had been surprised when he had heard about this plate and as a distinguished medrese student he had prepared several puzzling questions to ask Bediuzzaman in his room. He was astonished with the answers Bediuzzaman gave. After the questions were answered, Bediuzzaman told him that he had come to Istanbul to explain to the authorities the inadequacy of governing Eastern Anatolia with the Hamidiye regiments (military units set up by Sultan Abdulhamid to be used in the administration of the remote lands of the Empire) and the necessity of developing Eastern Anatolia in education, art and science.[105]

Said Nursi himself explained later on why he preferred the public debate method:

> The reason for this is that I came to Istanbul and saw that medreses had not made as much progress as other departments had. The cause of this was that developing students' skills in solving problems by referring to books had replaced their capacity to learn by reasoning, and also the lack of debate among students and lack of learning by reasoning created states such as dullness, incapacity and idleness among them.[106]

Bediuzzaman was attracting attention through his mode of dress, too, which was the Eastern Anatolian costume and was not the dress learned religious men then wore. A.B. Gölpinarli described Bediuzzaman's appearance in Istanbul as:

> This person [Said Nursi] with a thin curling moustache was wearing a tall fez, on and around which were wound light silk turbans whose fringes hung down, and a waistcoat embroidered with silver gilt thread, and a pair of baggy trousers, while round his waist a dagger and a pistol were suspended from a cummerbund with hanging fringes. This was the first time Istanbul had seen a learned man of religion thus attired.[107]

Said Nursi again explained the reason for his peculiar dress:

> This protest dress is to announce my lack of interest in wordly ambitions, to showing opposition to the customs of the country, and to those of the general public by the naturalness of my own humanity both inwardly and outwardly, and also to display my love for my homedistrict ... And also by this action [with this dress] to encourage the local industries through personal

example. Furthermore, I thus indicate this is a time of renewal and I show the tendency to reform is a part of my natural disposition.[108]

While in Istanbul in 1907, Bediuzzaman was to present the Sultan with a reform project.[109] The newspaper report of this said that Bediuzzaman started his petition, which was signed Molla Said-i Meshur, as follows: 'Although the condition of the Easterners who are an important element in the Ottoman nation is known to the state, I ask permission to present some wishes and requests relating to service to scholarship that is sacred', and then summarised the rest of the petition:

> Some schools have been set up in Eastern Anatolia, but only those who know Turkish are benefiting from the subjects which are taught there. On the other hand, those who do not know Turkish are content with the subjects taught in <u>medreses</u> for progress and improvement. The children of this region are deprived of instruction and education because the teachers in these schools do not know the local language. The situation gives rise to great confusion and backwardness.'

As a solution, Bediuzzaman suggested the Sultan should set up 'a university on the shores of Lake Van where the local Kurdish-speaking population would be given the means to become assimilated into Ottoman culture and where the religious learning of the resident sages of the region would be elevated by training in the positive sciences.'[110]

On receiving this petition, the Sultan summoned Bediuzzaman who then told Sultan Abdulhamid personally:

> The post of Caliphate is not confined solely to the sublime ceremony on the occasion of Friday <u>namaz</u>. The Caliph should

> have material power as well as moral, so that it will be the surety and guarantor of all the affairs of the Umma of Muhammad from all over the world.[111]

He is also reported to have said to the Sultan:

> There is no despotism in Islam. To give a ruling on a person is a right which can only be enjoyed by canonical courts whose proceedings are open to the public. These rulings cannot be given in camera and cannot be based on secret reports that conceal the intrigues of people whose true character is unknown ...[112]

Şeyhulislam Cemaleddin Efendi who was present in the meeting told his son Muhtar Bey that he had never seen anybody who presented his opinions so bravely before the Sultan.[113] After this meeting, because of this bold criticism of institutions Sultan Abdulhamid had set up to gather information through secret agents, Bediuzzaman was sent for trial by military court.

In the Yıldız military court, Bediuzzaman's reply to the question 'To which Kurdish tribe do you belong?' was 'I am an Ottoman. My Kurdishness arises from the name given to the people of the region where I was born and brought up.' Bediuzzaman repeated in the court all that he had said to the Sultan. The public prosecutor, Sürûrî Efendi, asked him how he could use insulting words about His Imperial Majesty the Sultan. Bediuzzaman replied that he had used these to the Caliph himself, and if the prosecutor did not believe him he should ask the Caliph himself. On receiving this answer, the court wanted to get rid of Bediuzzaman, and did so by obtaining a report from a health committee stating that he was mad and so they sent him to the Topkapi lunatic asylum.

In the following year, 1908, Bediuzzaman published a book called Divan-ı Harb-i Örfî (Military Court) and explained there that the real reason he was sent to the lunatic asylum was, apart from his strange dress and method of argument, his ideas about the unification of education which was held in medrese (religious school), mektep (secular school) and tekke (dervish lodge), and his ideas about the position of the preachers. Bediuzzaman had said to the Sultan that preachers spoke to the people as if they were taking them back to the remoteness of olden times. Their sermons were so full of exaggerations that none could believe them except those who submitted themselves to religion and who were ready to follow the religious leaders blindly. In an age when everybody looked for proof and wanted to be convinced with evidence, it was not enough to ornament bold claims with bright words. He added that the preachers had to verify what they said and be accurate so that the balance of religion would not be destroyed.[114]

The Nurcu view is that Said Nursi was put away by the Court because 'the despotic pasha who regarded people as slaves could not find any way for their own rest and comfort other than sending him [Said Nursi] to the lunatic asylum, thinking that to behave with that degree of courage could not be the action of an intelligent person.[115]

When doctors failed to find any grounds to certify him insane, Bediuzzaman was released from the lunatic asylum, but was kept for a while under gendarmerie surveillance. During this time he was offered some money as a gift from the Sultan and a salary of thirty liras a month on condition that he would go back to his own home district in Eastern Anatolia. Bediuzzaman rejected this offer, saying: 'I am not a beggar asking for a salary ... I have not come here for myself but for my country. This bribe you have offered me is hush-money ...'[116]

At the first opportunity Bediuzzaman went to Salonika to get acquainted with the ruling members of the Committee of Union and Progress. Eşref Sencer Kuşçubaşı, the President of the Secret Organisation, is reported to have said that Bediuzzaman drew attention to himself in a short time in Salonika because of his dress and open support for the Committee.[117]

1908: Bediuzzaman and the Committee of Union and Progress - aged 35

On 25 July 1908, the third day of the Second Constitutional period, Bediuzzaman in his capacity as a learned man of religion, delivered the first speech in Hürriyet Meydani (Freedom Square) in Salonika in a public demonstration organised by the Committee of Union and Progress.[118]

In his long speech, Bediuzzaman suggested five principles for the new regime: 1) unity of hearts; 2) love of compatriots for one another; 3) education; 4) respect for labour; 5) an end to unwise expenditure, and said

> Through despotism and ignorance we were rotting in the grave. Now, through the Constitution which we gained by unifying the hearts of the nation we are being reborn and will grow strong. Inspired by the miracles of the Prophet, in pursuit of his aim which is the source of strength of our faith, we shall travel with the speed of a train along the way from the sort of civilisation in which we were stuck for centuries towards democracy - which is the proper means of consultation. Thus we will go together with the civilised nations shoulder to shoulder.[119]

He also warned the audience, saying:

> O compatriots! Do not take freedom in the wrong sense allowing it to run away from us or strangle us by taking the form of the rotten and putrified old despotism. Freedom can be made real and flourish only by its own rules, by the principles of the Şeriat (the laws of

Islam) and by good moral qualities ... Otherwise, to use freedom to do whatever the baser instincts desire and thus accept transgressions and extravagance will under the pretext of salvation from a Sultan's despotism lead us into all sorts of slavery and degradation unworthy of freedom.[120]

Bediuzzaman's relationship with the Committee passed through three phases:

a) from 1908 to 1912, Bediuzzaman supported the Committee, working with the Islamist group in it.[121] When years later, in 1936, Said Nursi was discussing this time with his followers, he said he had had little choice but to support the Committee for those four years, although it was contrary to his temperament.

b) from 1912 to 1922, Bediuzzaman was in opposition to the Committee as the Islamists lost their power on it.

c) From 1922 onwards, Bediuzzaman had his own way and was, as he puts it, 'in silence' as far as his attitude towards the Committee is concerned.

During the first years of his support, Bediuzzaman publicly criticised the non-Islamist members of the Committee and approved the Constitution in the form of Meşrûtiyeti-i Meşrû'a (Constitution in accordance with the Laws of Islam) as accepted by the Islamist wing of the Committee.[122] Bediuzzaman explained his disagreement with the non-Islamists in the Committee in an article written in answer to a question asked by the public why he had left the Committee though he had previously been allied with it. He said:

> I did not leave the Committee. Some of them left it. I am still in alliance with people like Niyazi Bey, and Enver Bey. But some left us, turned aside and became bogged down, though I

have no doubt about their ardour ...

I am always with religious and public-spirited people ... I am still following the way that I had announced in the speech I delivered in Freedom Square in Salonika. I am trying to perpetuate within the limitation of the Şeriat, the meşrûtiyet-i meşrû'a (Constitution of the Islamic laws) which is the means of upholding God's word and the grandeur of Islam.[123]

As for his being silent about the Committee after 1922, Said Nursi explained in his book Sünuhat, which was first published in 1922, that he did not attack the Committee then because their enemies were attacking them severely, to destroy their firm resolution and constancy, which were in fact virtues. He remained silent to avoid aiding these enemies. He felt, for example, that if he attacked the Committee he would thereby be attacking Enver Pasha who was under attack from the Armenians whom Said Nursi certainly did not wish to assist, and if he attacked Said Halim[124] he would find himself in alliance with Venizelos (the Prime Minister of Greece of the time).[125]

During the first years of the Constitutional period, Bediuzzaman took part in different political and intellectual activities as a strong advocate of the Islamist group. In the following paragraphs, some of these will be mentioned, primarily because they are well-known to and much talked about by the Nurcus.

When Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın, the editor-in-chief of Tanin newspaper and an ardent supporter of the Committee, started a campaign in 1908 to reform the medreses under the influence of secularism, Bediuzzaman informed him in public letters of the danger of introducing secularism into Muslim countries.[126]

The owner and editor-in-chief of the newspaper Mizan, Murat Bey, took part in a conference in the then famous 'Ferah Tiyatrosu'. The comparison he drew between the Roman Empire and the administration of the Committee of Union and Progress while in power so displeased the supporters of the Committee present, that they forced him to stop his speech and thus caused disorder in the hall. Bediuzzaman, in a fine strong voice, shouted to the audience, 'for a nation that has recently proclaimed freedom and a constitution, it is shameful to interrupt a speaker. The religion of Islam too decrees that we should respect the opinions of others.' He also recited some relevant verses from the Koran. At this the people calmed down and then Murat Bey was able to continue his contribution to the conference.[127]

On 10 October 1908, the people of Istanbul put a boycott on the shops which were selling goods from Austria and the porters, joining with the people, refused to handle these goods. Bediuzzaman saw this as a threat to public order and went to the Aşiret Hani where the boycotting porters, who were mostly Kurds from Eastern Anatolia, had assembled, and spoke to them with the result that the boycott soon ended.[128]

The nephew of Sultan Abdulhamid, Prince Sabahaddin, an intellectual who achieved a reputation as a sociologist, tried to introduce his 'decentralisation and personal initiative' ideas to the Ottoman intelligentsia. This caused uproar amongst them and consequently he was sentenced to death but managed to flee the country. While in Europe, he continued his campaign by means of publications. Bediuzzaman published a long open letter headed Prens Sabahaddin Bey'in Güzel fikrine Cevab (An answer to the Fine Idea of Prince Sabahaddin Bey) expounding his opinions on the subject. In conclusion Bediuzzaman said: 'this is in fact, a very fine idea and is approved by reason but unfortunately we cannot implement it with our present capacity of intellect and thinking'.[129]

On 5 April 1909, Süheyl Pasha, Mehmet Sadik, Ferik Rıza Pasha, Derviş Vahdet and his friends set up a society called İttihad-i Muhammadî Cemiyeti (The Society for the Unity of Muhammadans) in Istanbul. The Society first started its activities in the office of the then famous newspaper with a religious tone, called Volkan.[130] Bediuzzaman, too, was present at the inauguration ceremony of the Society and delivered a speech[131] in support of the Society.[132] But Bediuzzaman wrote a postscript at the end of his article Lemean-i Hakikat ve İzale-i Şübehat (Removing Doubts under the Lights of Truths) which was published in Volkan on 12 April 1909. This addressed Derviş Vahdeti himself because of his extremely provocative writings in his newspaper Volkan. In the course of it Bediuzzaman said, 'Writers must be well-mannered ... And also it has become clear that İttihad-i Muhammadî (the Society for the Unity of Muhammadans) embraced all soldiers and all Muslims. No-one was excluded.'[133] Bediuzzaman described Derviş Vahdeti as 'sensitive in religion, imperfect in rational reasoning'.[134]

Bediuzzaman himself explained his views on 'the Society for the Unity of Muhammadans' in his book which was published in 1909:

> This name belongs to the whole nation. It does not accept any limitation and impropriation. Just as I belong to seven societies because I saw that their aim was the same, likewise, I joined the one with that blessed name too [ittihad-i Muhammedî] ... Those who belong to this 'unity' ... are the entire Muslim community ... Their club and councils are the mosques, other places of worship, religious schools and dervish lodges. Its centre is the sacred cities [Mecca and Medina], ... its president is the Glory of the World [the Prophet] ... Its code of laws is the orders and

prohibitions of the Şeriat. And its swords are decisive and logical proofs; it is possible to overcome those who are civilised only by convincing them, not by using force on them ...

Ninety-nine percent of the Şeriat is concerned with morals, worship, the hereafter and virtue, only one percent with politics. Let our rulers think about that one percent ...

Now, I am one of the members of this 'Unity'. And I am one of those who attempted to form this 'Unity'. I am not a member of any party or group that promotes disunity ...

I outwardly attempted this for two important purposes: The first: to save that name [İttihad-i Muhammedî] from limitations and impropriation and to announce that it comprises all Muslims so that there would not be any disunity nor would there be any room for suspicion.

The second: to make unity a barrier against the disunity of the groups which caused that last great calamity.[135]

Ahmed Bedevi Kuran claimed that Bediuzzaman was even openly criticising the rebellious officers risen from the ranks [Alaylı] during the revolt and reported that Bediuzzaman had said, 'O Muslim soldiers! I am telling you in the name of the Şeriat the material power of Islam is the army. The spirit and ideal of the army are the officers graduated from military schools [mektepli]. To object to them is a crime committed against the life of the nation ... In this age inborn bravery is not enough. Because foreigners overcome us with the art of war'.[136]

During the '31 March Revolt', Bediuzzaman also published articles in Volkan and called upon the rebellious officers to obey. For example, in his article Asâkîre Hitab! (Address to the Soldiers!), published in

Volkan on the sixth day of the rebellion, Bediuzzaman said: '... Your officers may wrong themselves with a sin but you, with this disobedience, are wronging the three hundred million Muslims, because with this disobedience you jeopardise the Islamic brotherhood ...'[137] Two days later, while the rebellion was continuing, Bediuzzaman published another article, Kahraman Askerlerimize (To Our Brave Soldiers), in Volkan and said: '... It is established with the Şeriat and with the Koran and hadith, with wisdom and experience that to obey sound, religious and just rulers is a religious duty. Your officers are your rulers, your masters.'[138]

At the end of the '31 March Revolt',[139] which took place six days after the official announcement of the formation of the Party of İttihad-i Muhammedî by Dervis Vahdeti on 8 April 1909,[140] Bediuzzaman too was detained and tried by the military court which was set up soon after the Hareket Ordusu (Action Army) from Salonika arrived in Istanbul on 24 April 1909 and sentenced most of the leading members of the Party of İttihad-i Muhammedî to death and immediately after executed them. Bediuzzaman at the end of his trial was acquitted and released from detention.[141]

In the Military Court, the Chief Judge Hurşid Pasha asked Bediuzzaman 'Did you also want the Şeriat [to be implemented]? Look, those who wanted the Şeriat are hanged like this.' Bediuzzaman replied: 'If I were endowed with a thousand lives, I would be ready to sacrifice them all to one truth of the Şeriat, for the Şeriat is a source of happiness, pure justice and virtue. I want this too, but not in the same way that the revolutionaries want it ...'

Hurşid Pasha asked Bediuzzaman another question: 'Are you a member of the İttihad-i Muhammedî?' Bediuzzaman replied: 'With pride! I am

one of the humblest of them. But I belong to the Unity in the way I defined it, and who, apart from heathens is not a member of that Unity? Show me!'[142] Then Bediuzzaman started his long defence speech.

In his defence speech[143] in the Court, Bediuzzaman said:

> I am prepared for the hereafter, indeed I yearn for it. I am ready to go there together with these executed people ...[144]
>
> This mischievous government in the time of despotism used to be hostile to intellect. Now, however, it is hostile to life. If the government is like this, long live madness! Long live death! Long live Hell for the tyrants! I, in fact, wanted to have an opportunity like this so I would explain my ideas. Here, this Military Court has presented a very good opportunity to me.[145]
>
> If the Constitutional regime consists of the despotism of one party and intends to act against the Şeriat, let the whole world, djinn and men be witness that I am a reactionary ...'[146]

1910: Bediuzzaman back in Eastern Anatolia - aged 37

After his acquittal, Bediuzzaman left Istanbul for Van. In and around Van, he visited tribes and explained to them that the freedom movement was not contrary to Islam and that all kinds of despotism were rejected by the Şeriat. Later he collected these speeches into a book entitled Munazarat (Debates) and in 1913 published it in Ottoman Turkish in Istanbul.[147] During these visits, Bediuzzaman went to Diyarbakir, Urfa and then, in the winter of 1911, to Damascus, where he gave a sermon at the Umayyad Mosque. This sermon was published twice in that same year in Arabic with the title of Hutbe-i Şamiye and then in 1922 in Istanbul by the Evkaf-ı İslamiye printing house.[148]

In his sermon Bediuzzaman diagnosed the six illnesses that hindered the Muslim world in its material development and caused it to remain in

the Middle Ages in contrast to the rapid advancement of Europeans:

1) the prevalence of despair;

2) the lack of honesty in social and political matters;

3) love of enmity;

4) disunity among the Muslims;

5) the growth of totalitarian tyranny; and

6) egotism.[149]

He prescribed six requirements taken from the Koran as the medicine for these illnesses and explained them at length:

1) hopefulness;

2) abandonment of despair;

3) honesty;

4) love of love;

5) freedom as described in the Şeriat; and

6) consultation as described in the Şeriat.[150]

Bediuzzaman also expounded his ideas on 'how the Muslim world could progress in civilisation' and he said,

> In this age to uphold God's word is dependent on material development ... to uphold God's word is possible only by entering the true civilisation ...
>
> In the olden days the development of Islam, to break the fanaticism and obstinacy of the enemy and to repulse their attacks were possible with the power of gun and sword. In the future, instead of guns and swords, the spiritual power of the true civilisation, material development, truth and veracity will defeat the enemies.[151]

As every winter is followed by a spring, every night by a morning, God willing, there will be a spring, a morning for

mankind too. You can expect from God's mercy, with the lights of the truths of Islam, to see true civilisation in the context of general peace.[152]

Bediuzzaman continued on his journey from Damascus to Istanbul via Beirut and İzmir. When Sultan Reshad made an official three-week visit to Rumelia, Bediuzzaman too accompanied him as the representative of the Eastern province of the Empire. The convoy arrived in Skopje, the capital city of Kosova province, on 11 June 1911. It was during this visit that the Sultan attempted to lay the foundation of a big university in Kosova. Bediuzzaman proposed to both the Sultan and the high ranking Unionist government officials in the convoy that such a university was even more urgently needed in the Eastern provinces, which were, according to Bediuzzaman, the centre of the Muslim world.[153]

Soon after, this visit ended in Istanbul on 26 June 1911, the Balkan War broke out and the Kosova university project together with the nineteen thousand golden liras which had been assigned to it were transferred to an East Anatolian university project.[154] Bediuzzaman then went to Van and laid the foundation of the university in Artemit (Edremit) on the shore of Lake Van.[155]

1912: Bediuzzaman and the 'Secret Organisation' - aged 39

As we have seen, when Bediuzzaman first came to Istanbul in 1896, he stayed with Mustafa Bey, the Imperial Birdkeeper, whose son Eşref Bey (Eşref Sencer Kusçubaşı) was to become head of the 'Secret Organisation' (Teşkilât-ı Mahsusa). This organisation was founded in Mecca in 1897 to work for Islamic unity and support pan-Islamic policy by acting as a secret intelligence agency. It was originally secret because its members wanted to restore the 1876 Constitution and they condemned Sultan Abdulhamid's despotism as being non-Islamic, though they approved of

his pan-Islamic goal. This organisation worked with the Islamist group in the Committee of Union and Progress. After the dethronement of Abdulhamid in 1909, Sultan Reshad made this an official, though independent, organisation under the wing of the Minister of War, Enver Pasha.[156] Bediuzzaman's links with the Islamist group enabled him to work with this secret organisation to further his religious purposes and enhance his own influence and prestige. The rulers welcomed Bediuzzaman's support as through him they sought to gain wide support in Eastern Anatolia.[157]

Bediuzzaman was a very active member of the Secret Organisation and worked for it until 1922 when he left Istanbul for Ankara. He made numerous important contributions to the activities of the Organisation.

On the eve of the Balkan War in 1912, for example, Bediuzzaman was appointed commander of the militia forces brought from Eastern Anatolia and took part in the front-line fighting.[158]

In the days that preceded the First World War, those in the Secret Organisation who believed in the power of the Caliphate and wanted to mobilise the Muslim world around the Caliphate prepared a fetwa (a decision given by the Şeyhulislam) which was then known as Cihad fetvası calling all the Muslim population of the world to join the war in support of the Caliph, the Ottoman Sultan, against Russia, England, France and their allies.[159] The fetwa was signed by 1) Şeyhulislam Hayri Efendi; 2) Şeyh Sünûsî; 3) Mahmud Esad Efendi; 4) Hamdi Yazir; and 5) Bediuzzaman Said Nursi. The Secret Organisation undertook the task of distributing this amongst the Muslim countries occupied by foreign forces. Bediuzzaman accompanied the group of twenty members including Eşref Sencer Kusçubaşı, the head of the Organisation, to distribute the fetwa in Tripoli (Libya) and other North African Muslim countries. The group went to Tripoli from Antalya, on the south coast

of Anatolia, in a German submarine in April 1915 and met Şeyh Salih Şerif Tunusî and Şeyh Sünûsî, and then visited the Tijanî and Sunusî dervish lodges in the area. There they tried to mobilise the resistance under the command of the grandson of Sultan Murad, Prince Osman Fuad.[160]

When the news arrived in Tripoli that the Russian troops were advancing even further into Eastern Anatolia, Bediuzzaman returned to Istanbul and met Enver Pasha[161] who is claimed to have kissed his hands as a sign of his gratitude.[162] Immediately after his meeting with Enver Pasha, Bediuzzaman left for Van to mobilise a volunteer regiment on the Caucasian front. At first Bediuzzaman started training his students in Van, using his medrese which was known as Horhor medresesi[163] like a military barracks and also informed them of the approaching calamity, the Russian attack upon Eastern Anatolia.[164]

Having been disappointed with the unlawful actions of some generals, Şeyh Selim decided to revolt in Bitlis against the constitutional regime and also asked Bediuzzaman to join the revolt in Van. Bediuzzaman rejected the proposal and told him: 'their evil actions and lack of faith concern them only. We cannot lay the blame on the whole army. In this Ottoman army there are perhaps one hundred thousand saints. I do not draw the sword against this army and I do not join you.' Bediuzzaman himself later on narrated the event in one of his books and told his followers about his reply and its importance.[165]

In World War I, Bediuzzaman served as the commander of a volunteer regiment on the Caucasian front and in Eastern Anatolia.[166] Sinan Omur, the owner of the newspaper Hür Adam told Şahiner that he first saw Bediuzzaman in August 1915 on the mountain Subhan, commanding the militia forces that Enver Pasha had asked Bediuzzaman to mobilise. The effective strength of the regiment was four to five thousand men.[167]

The Russian troops defeated the Ottoman army on the Caucasian front and entered Erzurum on 16 February 1916.[168] Bediuzzaman and his volunteers participated in the Ottoman fight against Russia[169] and during this period he was reported to have dictated his incomplete Arabic commentary on the Koran, İşârât'ul-İ'câz (The Miraculous Signs [of the Koran]) to his students on the front line.[170] Then, when the Russians advanced further south and captured the city of Van, Bediuzzaman and his regiment withdrew with the Ottoman forces to defend Gevaş against the Russian and Armenian attacks.[171]

From Gevaş, Bediuzzaman went with his regiment to Bitlis and started making speeches to raise peeple's spirits and organise guerrilla warfare against the invading Russian troops in the town. In one of these battles, on 19 February 1916, Bediuzzaman was wounded and captured by the Russian forces and eventually sent to a prisoner-of-war camp in Kostroma, Northwestern Russia.[172]

Taking advantage of the disorder caused by the communist revolution in Russia, Bediuzzaman managed to escape from the camp in Kostroma and came to Petersburg (Leningrad). About this city Said Nursi said in one of his books: 'When I was in captivity in Russia there was a place where the sun did not set for a week during the summer and people used to come to watch the "white nights"'.[173]

From Petersburg he came to Berlin and stayed there in the Adlon hotel for two months, and then came via Warsaw, Vienna and Sofia, where he was given his Vatana Avdet (Returning to Homeland) certificate, to Istanbul on 25 June 1918.[174] The newspaper Tanin of the same day announced his arrival in Istanbul:

> Arrival.
>
> Bediuzzaman Said Kurdi Efendi, one of the ulema of Kurdistan, who had taken part in the war on the Caucasian front with his

Said Nursi (on the right) with a nephew in 1918 in Istanbul after appointment as Counsellor to the Dar ul-Hikmet al-Islamiye (Department of Islamic Philosophy).

students and been captured by the Russians, finally arrived in our city [Istanbul].[175]

Bediuzzaman's captivity had lasted altogether two years, four months and four days, starting from Bitlis and ending up in Istanbul.[176]

Soon after his arrival in Istanbul, Enver Pasha invited Bediuzzaman to his Ministry of War and introduced him to the staff officers there saying: 'Do you see this hodja? It was this hodja who resisted the Russian forces during the war in Eastern Anatolia'.[177] Bediuzzaman was rewarded by the Ministry of War with a campaign medal and a gratuity of fifty liras per month for three months.[178]

Transition Period from the 'Old Said' to the 'New Said'

The years 1918 to 1926 were a period of profound change and turmoil for the Turkish people and also for Bediuzzaman himself. The Ottoman Empire could not survive the defeat of World War One, but the Turkish victors in the War of Independence succeeded in founding the Turkish Republic which then turned its back upon Turkey's Islamic past and forced through many anti-religious measures. These changes affected Bediuzzaman's position, activities and attitudes. External factors obliged him to adapt to the changed circumstances. He recognised the importance of this period as one that transformed him from the 'Old Said' to the 'New Said'.

1918: Bediuzzaman returns to Istanbul

Enver Pasha, as the Minister of War and the Deputy Commander-in-Chief of the Ottoman Army, offered Bediuzzaman several jobs but he refused them all. However, at the instigation of the Army, he was appointed to the Dar ul-Hikmet al-İslamiye[179] on 13 August 1918.

The harsh treatment in the prisoner-of-war camp in Kostroma had left Bediuzzaman weary in mind and body and, for this reason, on 19 April

1919 he obtained six months leave from his office.[180] Bediuzzaman retained his post as counsellor in the Dar ul-Hikmet al-İslamiye until it was closed in 1922.

In 1920, on the recommendation of the Şeyhulislam, Musa Kazım Efendi, Bediuzzaman was given an honorary title of Mahreç[181] by Sultan Vahdeddin.[182]

While still in the Dar ul-Hikmet al-İslamiye, Bediuzzaman, as one of the founder members participated in establishing the Yeşilay (Green Crescent - Turkish Temperance Society) in 1920 together with the Şeyhulislam of the time, Haydarîzade İbrahim Efendi, who was then elected as honorary chairman of the society.[183]

After British troops invaded Istanbul on 16 March 1920, some of Bediuzzaman's fellow-countrymen, seeking to benefit from his personal influence on the Kurdish population of Eastern Anatolia, proposed to him that they should set up an independent Kurdish state. They thought that since the Empire had dissolved and an Armenian state was about to be formed, the Kurds should also set up their own state. Bediuzzaman reportedly replied: 'Rather than setting up a Kurdish state, let us revive the Ottoman Empire. If you agree with this, I am ready to sacrifice my life for the cause'.[184] About the same time, Bediuzzaman also rejected Abdulkadir's idea of setting up a Kurdish state (Abdulkadir was the President of the Kürt Teâli Cemiyeti (The Society for the Advancement of the Kurd[185]). Bediuzzaman's response to this proposal was :

> Almighty God said in the Koran: "I will send a nation that loves God and whom God loves." I pondered in the light of this divine revelation and came to realise that this nation is the Turkish nation which has been the vanguard of the Muslim

world for a thousand years. I will not cease to serve this brave nation to follow a few foolish chauvinsts at the expense of four hundred and fifty million true Muslim brothers.[186]

In January 1921, some of the distinguished university professors established a society called Müderrisûn Cemiyeti (University Professors' Association). Its stated aims were: 'To satisfy the souls of Muslims with the sublimity of Islamic education in a systematic fashion, and to work tenaciously and constantly to maintain Islamic customs and sacred observances.'[187] Bediuzzaman, too, joined the Association and was elected to the executive committee.[188]

Şeyhulislam Durrizade Abdullah Efendi issued on 11 April 1920 five fetwas against the Kuva-yı Milliye (the National Independence Army) and the War of Independence.[189] On 5 May, the Mufti of Ankara issued a counter-fetwa to make the former ineffective, endorsed by seventy-six muftis, thirty-six learned men of religion and eleven members of parliament declaring that a fetwa issued under foreign duress was invalid and called on the Muslims to liberate their Caliph from captivity.[190] Bediuzzaman too opposed the Şeyhulislam's fetwa:[191]

'A fetwa issued in an occupied country by a government office or by the office of the Şeyhulislam which is under the pressure and rule of British troops, is invalid and cannot be valid. Those who resist the invasion of the enemy are not rebels, the fetwa must be withdrawn.'[192]

Bediuzzaman wrote in his book, Tulûat that when he had been asked what he thought about the fetwa issued by the Şeyhulislam against the National Independence Army in Anatolia, he had answered:

> ... a fetwa cannot be binding; it is only a proclamation and a statement of a canonical decree. That is to say, if

the person about whom a fetwa was issued does not act according to the requirements of this fetwa he will by no means be forced to do so. On the other hand, if it was not a fetwa but a judicial decision, it would then be binding ... Since this fetwa contains a judicial decision, then before it was issued both parties should have been heard. The voice of Anatolia and the National Independence Army should have been heard, and only then could a valid judicial decision have been issued.[193]

1922: Bediuzzaman invited to Ankara - aged 49

The leader of the Ankara government, Mustafa Kemal Pasha (Atatürk) invited Bediuzzaman to Ankara. At first he replied: 'I want to fight in the dangerous part of the battle-field. I do not want to serve behind the front. To me, this place [Istanbul] is in greater danger than Anatolia.' Later on, Fevzi Pasha (Çakmak), as the chairman of the Grand National Assembly, and the former governor of Van, deputy Tahsin Bey, repeated this invitation.[194] At last, Bediuzzaman went to Ankara by train on 3 July 1922 and was received by people and some deputies gathered at the station.[195]

On 9 November 1922 a motion proposed by seven deputies (three of them for Bitlis, two for Muş, one for Siirt and one for Ergani) welcomed Bediuzzaman to the Assembly. Bediuzzaman was presented to the Assembly as 'One of the famous learned men of religion of the Eastern provinces ... Bediuzzaman Molla Said Efendi Hazretleri ...' At the request of Rasih Efendi (deputy for Antalya) Bediuzzaman delivered an address to the Assembly and prayed for the victory of the Turkish army.[196]

In spite of this warm welcome, Bediuzzaman was disappointed with Ankara because he found most of the deputies were not performing their namaz.[197]

This disappointment led Bediuzzaman to issue a declaration on 19 January 1923 to the deputies, as an outcome of which, Nurcus claim, fifty to sixty more of the deputies began to pray regularly.[198] In his statement, Bediuzzaman said:

> God's favour bestowed upon you with this victory [in the War of Independence] requires thankfulness so that it may continue and increase, because divine favours cease if they are not received with gratitude. Since you have, by God's grace rescued the Koran from the onslaught of the enemy, you must also adhere to the most explicit and definite orders of the Koran, such as those concerning the five daily prayers ...
>
> [With this victory] you have delighted the Muslim world and won its love and goodwill. But the permanence of this love and goodwill depends on your adherence to the tenets of Islam, for Muslims love you because of Islam.
>
> The Muslim communities desire their leaders to be pious, even when they themselves neglect prayers, or disregard religious rules.
>
> Once there was an uproar amid the tribes of Beytüssebab. I went there to inquire about its cause. They said, 'Our governor ignores his prayers. How could we be expected to obey such infidels?' However, those who were saying this were themselves neglectful of their prayers - and they were bandits!
>
> ... an indication of the Pre-eternal Design is that what will arouse the East is religion and emotion, rather than reason and philosophy. Now that you have awakened the East, so inspire it, too, with a movement that is compatible with its nature.
>
> Although the world of unbelief has been attacking the Muslim world with every means at its disposal and with all the power of

its civilisation, its science and philosophy, and its missionaries, which have given it physical superiority for a long time, it has not been able to defeat the Muslim world in matters of religion ... Indeed, any substantial attempt at reform in the Muslim world can succeed only through adherence to the principles of Islam. Otherwise it will fail ...

Those who love you and appreciate your service and victory are the masses of believers, especially the ordinary people who are devout Muslims ... It is of necessity for the good of Islam that you too should join with them by following the command of the Koran and you should draw your strength from them. If instead, you take a stand contrary to the interests of Islam by preferring to the ordinary Muslim people those unfortunate imitators of Europe who are separated from Islam, unattached to the nation, and enraptured by Europe, the Muslim world will turn its attention elsewhere to ask for assistance.

The moral authority of this Assembly, by virtue of the power it possesses, embraces the function of the Sultanate. If the Assembly fails to represent also the true meaning of Caliphate by setting an example in observing Islamic tenets, and if it does not satisfy the religious needs of this nation, whose nature has not been spoiled, whose spiritual demands have not been repressed by the distractions of modern life ... then, the force of the nation's feelings, if not shared by parliament and not exercised through the authority of parliament, will result in discord.

You know that your eternal enemies, your opponents and adversaries have been attempting to destroy the tenets of Islam, which makes it your inescapable duty to reassert and protect

these tenets. Otherwise, you will be unconsciously aiding the conscious enemy. Neglect of religious tenets is an indication of national weakness. And weakness never captures the enemy, but encourages him.[199]

After Bediuzzaman had distributed this declaration, Mustafa Kemal was displeased with Bediuzzaman's activites in Ankara,[200] but nevertheless he offered Bediuzzaman the opportunity to be either a representative for the Muş constituency or an area preacher in the Eastern province. Bediuzzaman, however, did not accept either of these offers.[201]

Bediuzzaman himself mentioned his life in Ankara and his disappointment with the new regime in his book Lemalar which was written during the years between 1926 and 1934.

> When I went to Ankara in 1922, I observed that awesome atheism spreading surreptitiously, penetrating, spoiling and poisoning the healthy minds of the believers who were then experiencing the joys of the recent victory of the Muslim army over the Greeks. 'O God', I said, 'this monster is going to harm the fundamentals of faith'... I wrote down in an Arabic treatise (Zeyl-üz-Zeyl) evidence from the wise Koran so indisputable that it had the strength to break the heads of the unbelievers to pieces, and I had this printed ... However, because those who knew the Arabic language were few and those who paid attention to the matter were rare, that sound and succinct evidence had little effect. Sadly, atheism became widespread and gained strength (p. 167).

Mostly because of his disillusionment with politics and politicians, Bediuzzaman decided to remain, in his own words, 'face to face with the Koran',[202] and thus work for the revitalisation of Islam by

rekindling faith in the hearts of average Muslims.[203] After spending eight months in Ankara, Bediuzzaman left on 3 May 1923 for Van where he stayed for two years away from all political concern.[204] The train ticket with which Said Nursi travelled from Ankara to Van became afterwards famous among the Nurcus as 'the ticket of the train which carried the 'Old Said' to the 'New Said'.[205]

1923: Bediuzzaman retiring into seclusion in Eastern Anatolia - aged 50

The 'Old Said' retreating from the area of disputation and disengaging himself from political activity, settled in a dilapidated monastery on Erek mountain, out of sight of the city of Van.[206] During the cold winter he stayed in Van, either in Nurşin mosque or in his brother Abdulmecid's house.[207]

According to the account given by Molla Hamid and Ali Çavuş (Aras), both of whom were his students in the monastery, one day Kor Huseyin Pasha, one of the Hamidiye Pashas and the chieftain of a Kurdish tribe, came to Erek mountain, and took out a purse full of gold and offered it to Bediuzzaman, saying that it was the zekat (alms) of his property - so he should accept it without any obligation to spend for his students and guests. Then he added: 'My soldiers, horses, weapons and ammunition all are ready waiting for your order'. Bediuzzaman asked him whom he was going to fight. 'Mustafa Kemal', said Kör Hüseyin Pasha. Bediuzzaman asked again: 'Who are Mustafa Kemal's soldiers?' And added: 'The soldiers are the children of this country, your and my relatives. Think, whom are you going to kill?' Thus he rejected the offer of zekat and asked Kör Hüseyin Pasha to go back to his tribe.[208]

Şeyh Said of Palu, before starting off his revolt,[209] wrote to Bediuzzaman asking for help as he had strong influence over people in

the eastern provinces. Bediuzzaman refused this request and even attempted to dissuade the rebels from shedding the blood of the soldiers who were, after all, fellow Muslims.[210] He was also reported to have written a letter to Şeyh Said saying: 'The sword is to be used against an external foe; it is not to be used against enemies within ... Give up your attempt for it is doomed to failure and may result in the annihilation of thousands of innocent men and women because of a few criminals.'[211]

Another example of Bediuzzaman's attitude towards the Kurdish revolt was reported by his student Ali Çavuş (Aras). In the beginning of 1925 Bediuzzaman came down as usual from the monastery to the Nurşin mosque in the city on a Friday to preach. Some of the chieftains of tribes around Van gathered there that Friday and, after namaz had been performed, invited Bediuzzaman to a house next to the mosque. When they made clear their intention to revolt, Bediuzzaman angrily asked: 'I ask you, is it the Şeriat that you want? To act in this way is, in fact, against the Şeriat. Such action can only serve to provoke foreign intervention. The rules of the Şeriat should not be broken by using it on the pretext of wanting the Şeriat.[212] Kinyas Kartal, sometime speaker of the National Assembly, claimed it was Bediuzzaman's warnings that deterred Van from joining the Kurdish Revolt.[213]

Soon after the Kurdish revolt broke out, the influential şeyhs and chieftains of Van, like those of other provinces of Eastern Anatolia, were exiled in a number of groups to different towns of Western Anatolia on suspicion of fomenting the revolt. On 25 February 1925, Bediuzzaman, too, was exiled from Van to Burdur. Together with the others in his group, he was brought to Erzurum by horse-drawn sledges and then taken on to Trabzon, from where they travelled by sea, guarded by gendarmes to

Istanbul. Bediuzzaman remained in Istanbul for twenty days and then was taken to Burdur via İzmir and Antalya again by boat.[214]

He spent seven months in Burdur staying in a small mosque, and during this time wrote a book called Nur'un İlk Kapısı (The First Gate of Light) which was copied by hand and distributed from person to person. He offered the book to readers as 'lessons to the "New Said" taken directly from the verses of the Koran at the level of 'vision of certainty'.[215]

Bediuzzaman himself briefly mentioned his life in Burdur and Isparta in his book, Lem'alar: 'I had retired into seclusion in a cave-like place on Erek mountain but without any reason they exiled me to Burdur during the Şeyh Said incident [the Kurdish revolt] ... At that time the exiled people were carefully watched and were obliged to appear in person before the local authority every evening. I and my sincere students remained exempted from this obligation. I never went to appear in person before the authority. I did not recognise the government. The local governor [of Burdur] complained about me to Fevzi Pasha (Çakmak) when he came there but Fevzi Pasha said to him: 'Do not interfere with him. Rather, you should respect him ...' Then I was sent to İsparta. Here again I carried on my service to religion in the leading position. But twenty days later some cowardly people told me that the authorities would not like this and I should consider carefully how to proceed. So I started considering my own comfort and said people should not come to visit me. [As a punishment from God because of my self-concern] I was sent into a third exile in Barla [which was a much more deprived area].'[216]

In February 1926, Bediuzzaman was sent to Eğridir (ilçe - a subtown of İsparta), then to Barla (nahiye - a subtown of Eğridir).

Şevket Demiray, who as a gendarme took Bediuzzaman to Barla, told N. Şahiner about the journey:

> One day I was summoned to the town hall where the governor [of Eğridir], the commander of the gendarmerie, some members of the local council and a man who was in his forties with an awe-inspiring look, wearing a turban and robe, were present. The commander told me that I would take that hodja efendi to Barla. On the way I said to the hodja: "My hodja! You are my father, forgive me but what I have to do is my duty." When we came to the quay [on the coast of Eğridir Lake] we hired a rowing boat. Bediuzzaman paid for it. Then he gave me ten piasters and asked me to buy some raisins with it. As his personal effects he had in one hand, a basket containing a prayer rug, a tea-pot, and several tea cups; in the other hand the Koran ... His clothes were made of a very costly material, he also had a silver ring with a precious stone. When it was time for afternoon namaz, he asked us to turn the boat towards kıble [Mecca] and performed his namaz on board ... His behaviour did not seem like that of any other hodja ... He was a very elegant gentleman.'[217]

2. THE "NEW SAID"

1926: Bediuzzaman writing the Risale-i Nur in exile in a hamlet of Western Anatolia - aged 53

Bediuzzaman was given a two-roomed house in Barla where he stayed eight and a half years. He named this house as his first medrese-i Nuriye (Medrese of the Light).[218] A plane-tree stood in front of this house, and Bediuzzaman had a small shed built in the middle of its branches where he used to go and meditate upon creation and recite his

supplicatory prayers. Throughout his life in Barla, he pursued with uninterrupted dedication the writing of the Risale-i Nur. He wrote three quarters of the whole collection, which altogether exceeds five thousand pages, either by hand or by dictating to scribes among whom Hafiz Halid, Muallim Galip Bey and Şamlı Hafız Tevfik[219] were well-known to the Nurcus. First his called his writings Sözler (Words), then he changed their name to the Risale-i Nur (Treatise of Light)[220], explaining 'I named these treatises as a whole Risale-i Nur. Indeed, the name arose from my own conscience because these writings are dependent upon the light of the Koran. I am absolutely convinced that this is a divine inspiration.'[221]

During his stay in Barla, Bediuzzaman obtained through his writings a widespread following which he had never enjoyed in the days of his polemical and political activities.[222] Until 1944 in Barla and almost all of its neighbouring villages, most importantly in Bedre, İlema, Kuleönü, İslamköy, Sav and Atabey, the people who knew how to write were copying the Risale-i Nur section by section as Said Nursi wrote, so much so that approximately six hundred thousand copies of the collection were produced by hand. The distribution of these manuscripts was organised privately by the villagers. Those in charge were called Nur Postacıları (Postmen of the Light).[223] Nurcus continued copying the Risale-i Nur by hand for eighteen years and, then at last in 1944 they could start using mimeographs in Inebolu.[224]

An example narrated by N. Şahiner explains well how the relationship between Bediuzzaman and the villagers was established throughout his life in exile. One day Bediuzzaman left the village to go up the mountain as usual. It rained a lot and, not being able to find a shelter, he got really wet. On his way back home along the muddy roads of Barla, he was

carrying his galoshes, which were ripped and useless, and walking in the mud in his stockinged feet. A man called Süleyman saw the destitute, desolate and heart-rending situation of Hodja Efendi and started following him. When Bediuzzaman noticed, he stopped and called, 'Come my brother!' Süleyman ran towards him, took the galoshes from his hands and washed them in a public fountain nearby. Both of them walked together to Bediuzzaman's house and starting from that day this Süleyman served him uninterruptedly and most devotedly for eight years.[225]

During the first four years of his life in Barla, Bediuzzaman was looked after by Muhacir Hafız Ahmet and his family.[226] Every day his young daughters, who were also hâfız (one who knows the whole Koran by heart), used to bring food to Bediuzzaman and he used to pay for it daily. During the last four and a half years Abdullah Çavus took over this service to Bediuzzaman.[227]

At nights when he was in Barla, it is narrated that Bediuzzaman used to read the Jaushan al-kabir (a supplicatory prayer book) and the prayer books of some saints such as Abdulkadir Gilani, Naqshbandi and the like. As soon as he completed his nightly invocations he used to busy himself with the Risale-i Nur, usually with proof-reading it. During the day too, he used to spend his time mostly on studying and again proof-reading.

Bediuzzaman used to go to Çamdağı (the Pine Mountain) and stay there on his own for days during the summer.[228] He liked Barla, its countryside and the Pine Mountain so much that he said, 'I would not exchange these places for the Yıldız Palace!'[229]

Bediuzzaman had a small house repaired to be used as a small mosque where he was the imam for a few villagers who came to perform their namaz. One day after, 18 July 1932, when the use of Arabic for the ezan was banned, the mosque was raided by the local authorities and Şem'i

Güneş[230] the müezzin who had given the call to prayer in Arabic was taken into custody in Eğridir. During his interrogation by the prosecutor he was asked whether Bediuzzaman had any arms, ammunition or other military supplies.[231]

In Barla, Bediuzzaman, in addition to the Risale-i Nur books, also wrote letters, called Lâhika Mektupları (Supplementary Letters), to his students and friends.[232] Those that he wrote when he was in Barla were published later under the title of Barla Lahikası. These letters were to establish the plan and the programme for Bediuzzaman's service to faith and the Koran. One of the main characteristics of these letters was that they all started with Bismihi Subhanehu, Ve in min şey'in illa yusebbihu bihamdihi (In His name, be He glorified; There is not a thing but glorifies Him with praise) in Arabic script.[233]

In the summer of 1934, Bediuzzaman was taken from Barla to Isparta in a horse-drawn vehicle. By then the writings of some of the main books of the Risale-i Nur - Sözler and Mektubat - had been completed, bringing the total number of the Risale-i Nur collection at that time to 119. While he was in İsparta Bediuzzaman finished writing his third longest book, Lem'alar.[234]

1935: Period of imprisonment starts - aged 62

The first court action taken against Bediuzzaman and his followers[235] was on 25 April 1935. One hundred and twenty Students of Light were arrested in different places and two days later this was followed by Bediuzzaman's arrest. The charges were: founding a secret society, plotting against the regime, and trying to destroy the fundamental principles of the state. Thereupon the Minister of Internal Affairs, Şukrü Kaya[236] and the commander-in-chief of the gendarmerie came to İsparta with a special detachment and put road blocks around the city.

Under military custody, Bediuzzaman and one hundred and twenty Students of Light were handcuffed and sent to Eskisehir in lorries. They were put on trial at Eskişehir Criminal Court and kept under custody in Eskisehir prison for eleven months. During this time Bediuzzaman wrote five treatises on different subjects. The court sentenced Bediuzzaman to eleven months and fifteen of the Students of Light to six months' imprisonment, the rest were acquitted. Bediuzzaman protested against the decree saying that this sentence can only be given to a thief or to an abductor. Thus he said he ought to be either sentenced to death or acquitted.[237]

It is narrated in his authorised biography that during his imprisonment in Eskişehir, one day the public prosecutor of Eskişehir saw Bediuzzaman in the market and, in a flurry of alarm, found the prison governor and rebuked him for being negligent, saying, 'Why have you allowed Bediuzzaman to go out of the prison, I have just seen him in the market?' The governor replied: 'No sir, he is in the prison, even in in an isolation cell. If you do not believe me, go and check.' When they checked they were surprised to find him in his isolation cell![238]

During the hearings Bediuzzaman made long defence speeches which were later on published in his authorised biography.[239]

Bediuzzaman was released in the spring of 1936 but this time, again escorted by gendarmerie, was sent into exile in another city, Kastamonu. There he spent the first three months at a police station, then was transferred to a house just opposite the police station. The ground floor of the house was being used by the policemen in the station as a woodshed. He was staying on the first floor which had two rooms.[240] Bediuzzaman stayed inthis house for seven years (1936-43) and his address was 'c/o The Market Place Police Station, Kastamonu'.

The letters Bediuzzaman sent to the Students of Light in and around İsparta while he was in Kastamonu, were published under the title of Kastamonu Lahikası. In Kastamonu he wrote his famous treatise Ayet ül-Kübra (The Supreme Sign) which was printed on a machine in Istanbul in 1942 immediately after it was written.[241] He also wrote there three other treatises which were published as sections in his book Şualar.[242]

Here in Kastamonu, too, he used to go out frequently for a walk in the countryside and climb up the mountains (Karadağ and Hacı İbrahim Mountains) around Kastamonu, as well as up to Kastamonu castle.

Abdullah Yeğin, who became one of Bediuzzaman's devoted students and a Nurcu ağabey, related in his memoirs that when he was a student in Kastamonu lycée he saw Bediuzzaman from the school playground in a phaeton. A gendarme sergeant and several policemen were with him. The phaeton stopped and they all got out. People had gathered to watch Bediuzzaman. They were taking him to another place. Bediuzzaman was carrying a basket, a ewer and a tea-pot, and wearing tall, black conical headgear and a long black robe. In those days to walk around dressed like that, especially in front of the police, was, according to Abdullah Yeğin, impossible.[243]

On 31 August 1943, police and some gendarmes raided Bediuzzaman's house, but after searching everywhere they could find only a few books of the Risale-i Nur. The raid was repeated on 18 September 1943. This time, in addition to the Risale-i Nur, some letters which Bediuzzaman had received from Students of Light in other parts of the country were found. Two days later Bediuzzaman was detained and sent to Ankara via Çankırı in police custody.

In Ankara Bediuzzaman was summoned to the office of the governor, Nevzat Tandoğan, who insisted that he should wear a hat. Bediuzzaman strongly objected and said, 'I represent your ancestors. I am living in seclusion. The Dress Law cannot be applied to recluses.[244] I do not go out. You made me go out by force.'[245]

Zübeyr Gündüzalp reported in his personal records that Bediuzzaman, pointing to his own head, had said to the governor, Nevzat Tandoğan, 'This turban can be taken off only with this head!'[246]

Bediuzzaman was taken directly from the office of the governor to the railway station to get on the train to Isparta and then to Denizli to be put in prison there. Some Students of Light, also, were arrested in İsparta, Kastamonu and other places and in all 126 persons were collected together in Denizli prison to be tried in the Denizli Criminal Court. When the court appointed a committee of experts from among the local officials to examine the books of the Risale-i Nur and the letters seized by the police, Bediuzzaman objected, saying to the court: 'These ignorant "experts" cannot examine the Risale-i Nur. A high committee of well-educated experts should be constituted in Ankara, philosophers from Europe should be brought [to participate in the committee] and then if they find an offence against the law [in the Risale-i Nur] I will not object to the heaviest penalty.[247]

Upon this request the Court had the Risale-i Nur collection and the letters examined by a committee of experts in Ankara. The experts were Professor Yusuf Ziya Yörükhan, a member of the Advisory Board for the President of Religious Affairs; Necati Lügal, the director of the Middle East Institute for the Faculty of Language, History and Geography; and Yusuf Aykut, a member of the council for collecting Islamic books in the Turkish Historical Society. At the end of the examination the

experts stated that they could find nothing in the writings of Said Nursi which would seem to violate any law and these writings were of a purely religious nature and furnished no basis for prosecution.[248]

In prison Bediuzzaman wrote Meyve Risalesi (an English version of this treatise is calle 'Fruits from the Tree of Light') which was first circulated among the Nurcu prisoners secretly, sometimes in matchboxes.[249] Later the administrators of the prison allowed them to copy and distribute it among the prisoners. This the Nurcu prisoners did, but then the deputy prosecutor telegraphed the Minister of Justice: 'Bediuzzaman and his students have turned the prison into a school'.[250]

Bediuzzaman and the Students of Light were detained for nine months during which time two of the Students of Light died in prison.[251] The trial finally ended on 15 July 1944 with acquittal which was unanimously given and also unanimously approved by the Supreme Court on 30 December 1944.[252]

After his release, Bediuzzaman stayed in the Şahin Hotel in Denizli for two months until an order came from Ankara in August 1944 asking the local authorities to send him to Emirdağ (a subtown of Afyon), and this they did.[253]

Dr Tahir Barçın[254] received Bediuzzaman, and as the head of the Housing Department and doctor in charge of the local Health Department, registered him in the registry office as an inhabitant of Emirdağ.[255] Throughout Bediuzzaman's stay in Emirdağ, the authorities kept a watchman posted in front of his house all the time. When Bediuzzaman, as was his custom, went out for a walk on his own in the countryside during the spring and summer a watchman used constantly to follow him.

It is claimed that Bediuzzaman was poisoned before and after his imprisonment in Denizli, but after the painful days of sufferings with

Said Nursi on trial in Afyon in 1948.

the grace of God he recovered.[256] Bediuzzaman himself mentioned it in one of his letters to the Students of Light: 'The doctor confirmed that on the day before Ramadan, because of the poison which was given me - most likely by my secret heretic enemies - my temperature reached forty degrees'.[257]

On 23 January 1948 Bediuzzaman and fifteen Students of Light were taken from their houses or workshops by the police in Afyon. These students, together with some other Students of Light from İsparta, Denizli, Aydin, Kastamonu and İnebolu were interrogated by the public prosecutor and fifty-four of them were then detained and sent to Afyon prison.[258] The charges were again almost identical: founding a secret poltical society, diffusing ideas against the regime and pursuing a political purpose.[259]

N. Şahiner reported that during this twenty-month imprisonment, 'Bediuzzaman was subjected to unlawful treatments. Despite the severity of winter he was isolated in a very large wretched ward without any heat. As if it were not enough to leave him to die alone, he was poisoned as well. When he was suffering from the effect of the poison, some of his students who dared approach him were bastinadoed and were beaten until the soles of their feet burst open.'[260] In this perilous position Bediuzzaman told one of his young students in prison, Mustafa Sungur, who was then a teacher, 'Perhaps I will not be able to survive. Let my whole being be sacrificed to the fatherland, nation, youth and the Muslim world and also for the sake of eternal well-being and the felicity of mankind. If I die, let my friends not seek any vengeance for me.'[261]

Despite these grave conditions Bediuzzaman was still writing his treatises. For example, though there was no proper paper available, he wrote El-Hüccet-uz-Zehra in prison on paper bags and on small pieces of used paper.[262]

On 6 December 1948, the Afyon Criminal Court, however, sentenced Bediuzzaman to twenty months' imprisonment, one of his students to eighteen months and twenty of them to six months. The rest were released. The offence attributed by the court to these twenty students of Light was aiding the secret society set up by Bediuzzaman.[263] The sentence given by the court was annulled by the Supreme Court on the grounds that Bediuzzaman had been acquitted by Denizli Criminal Court on the same charges. The Afyon Criminal Court started the hearings again, however, and took its time in deciding whether to withdraw the sentence or not, and, after Bediuzzaman and his students had spent in prison the terms specified in the annulled convictions, the court finally decided that they should be released from prison, but did not acquit them of the charges.[264] On 20 September 1949, contrary to normal practice, Bediuzzaman and his students were set free from prison at dawn in order not to let people gather in front of the prison for any demonstration.[265] Bediuzzaman stayed in a house in Afyon for two months with two policemen waiting in front of the door, and then on 20 November 1949 he was sent again to Emirdağ.[266]

From this period onwards, Bediuzzaman's keen supporters numbered not only simple villagers who copied the Risale-i Nur by hand and regarded him as a saintly şeyh, the mimeographed copies of the Risale-i Nur circulated on a much larger scale and introduced Bediuzzaman to many students and civil servants who took up his ideas and accepted him as their Üstad leader in their religious as well as political and social life.[267]

3. THE "THIRD SAID"

1950: Üstad and the Democrat Party - aged 77

On 14 May 1950 the Democrat Party won the elections and thus a real multi-party democratic system started in the Turkish Republic for the first time since its establishment. Soon after Celal Bayar was elected as the President of the Republic, Üstad sent him a congratulatory telegram which read:

> Celal Bayar - President of the Republic
>
> We congratulate your Excellency. May Almighty God give you success in your service to Islam, the fatherland and nation.
>
> One of the Students of Light and on behalf of them, Said Nursi.[268]

Üstad asked his student Zübeyr Gündüzalp, whom he had sent to the post office to send the telegram, 'Why did I send this telegram?' Gündüzalp remained silent. Üstad explained to him:

> Now the populists [supporters of the Republican People's Party] deceive the Democrats by saying "Said is neither one of you, nor is he one of us. He has his own aim and purpose. He is after a completely different goal", and they get the power of the state misused against the religious people and the Students of Light. The Democrats who received this telegram will say to them, "Said is our friend", and will not misuse state power against the religious people.[269]

Later on Celal Bayar returned Üstad's telegram:

> Bediuzzaman Said Nursi - Emirdağ,
>
> I am deeply moved by your sincere telegram. Thank you very much.
>
> Celal Bayar.[270]

Üstad did not support the Democrat Party in words alone, he also urged the Nurcus to act in support of the Democrat Party policies, especially when these clashed with those of the Republican People's Party. An example of this, narrated by his most devoted students was that in September 1950, when the Menderes cabinet, despite the Republican People's Party's Opposition, decided to take part in the war in Korea in support of the United Nations forces against the Russians. Bayram Yüksel, one of his closest students, had received his call-up papers from the army ordering him to do his military service in Korea with the UN Forces. When he told Üstad the news, Üstad said, 'Good, my brother, as a matter of fact I myself wanted to send a Student of Light to Korea ... It is necessary to go against atheism. When you get into trouble there remember me. Carry the Jaushan al-kabir with you always ... I will give you a set of the Risale-i Nur collections, take them to the commander-in-chief of the Japanese Army and give my regards to him.' With the blessing of his Üstad, Bayram Yüksel went to Korea in September 1950 and took part in the war. At the end of the war he was sent to Tokyo. Of course, Bayram took with him the set of books he had faithfully carried throughout the war, but the commander-in-chief was away so Bayram presented the books to the Tokyo National Library.[271]

Üstad tried other means too to disseminate the Risale-i Nur abroad after 1950. Salahaddin Çelebi, who was in prison with Üstad in Denizli and Afyon, and his father had mimeographed a thousand copies from each of the treatises of the Risale-i Nur. Nurcus sent some of these mimeographed copies to different centres in the world, amongst which was the office of the Pope in the Vatican in 1951. The Vatican sent back a letter of thanks stating that the Pope expressed his gratitude.[272]

In September 1951 Üstad left Emirdağ, where he had been sent into internal exile two years before, for Eskişehir and stayed there in the

Said Nursi defending himself in court in Istanbul in 1952 on charges relating to his book Gençlik Rehberi (A Guide for Youth).

Yıldız Hotel for a month and a half. During this period groups of ordinary people, students and particularly non-commissioned officers from the Air Force units stationed there visited Üstad. He was continually advising them to read the Risale-i Nur and instructing them in theological subjects.[273] Then Üstad went to İsparta. While in İsparta a Nurcu, Muhsin Alev, who was a student in Istanbul University[274] had published one of the treatises of Said Nursi called Gençlik Rehberi (Guide for Youth) in the modern Turkish script in Istanbul and the public prosecutor brought a suit against Üstad again in Istanbul because the book allegedly infringed Article 163 of the Penal Code. Üstad was summoned to Istanbul for the hearing but this time he was not arrested or placed under police custody.[275] Üstad came to Istanbul in January 1952 and stayed in an hotel (the Akşehir Palace Hotel in Sirkeci). That was the first time in twenty-seven years that Üstad had been to Istanbul. Every day hundreds of people visited Üstad there in that hotel and subsequently in the Reşadiye Hotel in Fatih to which he moved after a few weeks.[276]

The first hearing was on 22 January 1952. From the early morning people started gathering in front of the court to be able to see Üstad. Üstad, who was then seventy-nine years old, as usual wearing his black robe and his turban, arrived at the court supported on each arm by young university Nurcu students.[277] In his defence speech Üstad asserted that he had not been interested in politics, nor had he had anything to do with worldly and antagonistic movements, that the only thing he had engaged in was the truths of faith and service to the Koran and that he had spent all of his energy on the cause of saving belief. In support of this claim he cited the way he had spent the last thirty-five years. He also mentioned acquittals and the return of the books of the Risale-i Nur to their owners previously decided by the courts.[2

In the second hearing which took place on 19 February 1952[279] the court room was so crowded that the court could not continue the hearing. The chief judge, Nef'î Demirlioğlu, addressing the crowd said 'If you love Hodja Efendi, give the court the opportunity to continue'. Then the crowd left the court-room.[280] While the hearing was in progress, the time of the afternoon prayer (ikindi namazı) was becoming overdue. Üstad asked the court to give him permission to perform his afternoon namaz. The chief judge accepted the request and the hearing thus was adjourned for a decision.[281] At the end of the final hearing on 5 March the court unanimously decided to acquit Üstad of the charge.[282]

Soon after the acquittal, Üstad went back to Emirdağ. Once, when he had gone out as usual for a walk on his own in the countryside around Emirdağ, a sergeant-major with three gendarmes came to him and reminded him that he should wear a hat. He refused, of course, and they summoned him to the police station. Consequently, Üstad penned a petition and sent it to the Ministries of Justice and Internal Affairs, with a copy to the Nurcus in Ankara asking them to inform the authorities of the event. The Nurcus in Ankara sent a copy of the letter to the newspaper Büyük Cihad published in Samsun, and the newspaper published the letter under the heading of'En Büyük İsbat' (The Greatest Proof). The court in Samsun brought a suit against Üstad, and issued a summons. Üstad was too old and ill to make the journey from Emirdağ to Samsun and obtained a doctor's report stating that he could not travel that long distance, but the court insisted that he had to be present for the hearing. Üstad gave in to the court's insistence and travelled as far as Istanbul, where he obtained a report from a committee of doctors that his illness was aggravated and sent it to the Samsun Court. The

court accepted the report and decided to receive his statement in one of the Istanbul courts by proxy. At the end on 24 June 1953 the court found nothing against the law in the article and decided to acquit Üstad.[283]

When Üstad arrived in Istanbul he first stayed in the Marmara Palace Hotel in Bayezit and on the following six days in the houses of two different friends, for three days in each, and then in Fırıncı Mehmet Güleç's house for three months.[284] The celebrations for the five hundredth anniversary of the conquest of Istanbul were being held in the city and Üstad attended these.[285]

He left Istanbul in late 1953 and came to Isparta, for which he had a great affection. He wanted to spend the remaining years of his life away from the big cities and in his will said he wished to be buried in either Barla or in Sav (a village of Barla-İsparta). After staying for a week in a hotel owned by a Nurcu, he rented a house and stayed there with his most devoted students, Tahiri Mutlu, Zübeyir Günüzalp, Bayram Yüksel, Mustafa Sungur and Ceylan Çalışkan, whose names are often mentioned in the Risale-i Nur.[286]

When the Baghdad Pact, the forerunner of the Central Treaty Organisation (CENTO) was signed between Turkey and Iraq on 24 February 1955 in Baghdad, Üstad wrote a letter addressing Celal Bayar, the President of the Republic, and Adnan Menderes, the Prime Minister. In this letter he stressed the importance of being allied with the Muslim world against communism. He also said that as a result of this alliance, Christian and followers of other religions who also earnestly desired peace and tranquillity would be pleased and would maintain their friendship with the people of Turkey.[287]

While in İsparta in 1956, Üstad received the decision of the Afyon Criminal Court stating that there was nothing in the Risale-i Nur against

the law, so they could be published freely.[288] Following this court decision the first publication offer came from Dr Tahsin Tola, a DP deputy for the İsparta constituency. He wished to print the Risale-i Nur in fixed type on proper printing presses in modern Turkish. After obtaining Üstad's consent, Tahsin Tola and two of his colleagues had a meeting with Adnan Menderes and asked him to allow the Risale-i Nur to be published by the state. Adnan Menderes gave them some hope but this was never realised. The only help they actually received from the Prime Minister was in obtaining paper.[289] Almost all of the Risale-i Nur collections were printed in modern Turkish in large numbers by Tahsin Tola and some other Nurcus in Ankara, Istanbul and later in Samsun and Antalya.[290]

To demonstrate his popularity in İsparta, Nurcus often mention that on 12 April 1957, at the invitation of officers of the 3rd Training Brigade, Üstad took part in the ceremony of laying a foundation for the Brigade's mosque in İsparta; he laid the first foundation stone and recited prayers.[291]

Üstad made his political stance clear on 27 October 1957 when together with Zübeyr Gündüzalp, he went to the Bey Mosque, where the polling-booth was, and openly cast his vote for the Democrat Party in the 1957 General Elections.[292]

1959: Üstad in the last four months of his life - 14,000 kilometre tour of Turkey - aged 86

Just four months before his death, Üstad began to make a sensational tour of Turkey despite the fact that he was in 'technical' exile in İsparta.[293] The first of these trips was his one-day visit to Ankara on 2 December 1959. Üstad spent a night in the Beyrut Palace Hotel there and on the following morning left for Emirdağ.[294]

His second trip was to Konya on 18 December to visit the tomb of Mevlana. During this visit, thousands of people were reported to have gathered alongside the main road to the tomb as well as around it to see Üstad. He was surrounded by the police and by his own devoted students. As he arrived at the front court-yard, he took his shoes off in respect to Mevlana and visited his tomb in bare feet. On the same day he went to Ankara and stayed in the Beyrut Palace Hotel again.[295] On the following day, before dawn, he came back to Konya and visited his brother, Abdülmecid (Ünlükul) and left again early the same morning.[296]

At the invitation of three Democrat Party members of Parliament, Üstad went to Ankara on 30 December and did not permit anybody other than members of Parliament[297] and devoted Nurcus to visit him. Üstad told a journalist that he had come to Ankara to remove the suspicion and groundless fear of the administrative authorities caused by the calumnies of anti-religious people against the Risale-i Nur which had been cleared by different courts.[298]

On 1 January 1960 Üstad left Ankara for his final visit to Istanbul, where he stayed in the Piyer Loti Hotel for two days.[299] Üstad came back to Ankara at midnight of 3 January and stayed as usual in the Beyrut Palace Hotel.[300] While he was in Ankara it was reported that the Ankara correpondent for Time had a long interview with Üstad on 5 January.[301]

On 6 January 1960, Üstad left for Konya where he visited his brother again in his house and on the same day, in a private car that had by then become famous, departed towards İsparta.[302] His journeys started attracting attention of the political opposition who protested against his trips. In particular, İsmet İnönü, the head of the RPP, hinted that the whole activity of Said Nursi had Democrat Party backing. Two

days later, on 9 January, 'Menderes hurried forth to answer İnönü's charges, denying any support for Said Nursi, and proclaiming his party's loyalty to secularism and the principles of the Atatürk Revolution.'[303]

While Üstad was in Emirdağ, a Nurcu group from Ankara came to invite him to visit the capital, and he set off the same day with them in a convoy. Before they reached Ankara, the state radio announced that the Menderes cabinet 'advised' Üstad to 'rest' in Emirdağ because his journeys were causing difficulties. Accordingly, the police stopped the convoy at Çiftlik, on the outskirts of Ankara, and Üstad, together with the Nurcus in his car, returned to Emirdağ. Three other Nurcus from the convoy were arrested.[304] From Emirdağ, Üstad sent an open letter to the press explaining that his journeys did not have any political purpose but that he bore no resentment for being advised by the government to stay in Emirdağ.[305]

Üstad stayed in Emirdağ without going anywhere else until 20 January 1960 when he went to İsparta and settled in a house he had rented. He stayed there for some time and went to Afyon where he spent only a night and then returned to Emirdağ again.

While staying in Emirdağ on 18 March 1960, Üstad fell ill with pneumonia. They gave him serum and injections, then he fell asleep. After a while he woke up with a smiling face and told Zübeyir Gündüzalp, Hamza Emek and Doctor Tahir Barçın who were waiting in attendance: 'My brothers! The Risale-i Nur is prevailing in this country, and Freemasons and communists are crippled by it. You will suffer a little bit of annoyance, but at the end everything will be perfect,' and then went to sleep again. In the morning he woke up as if he did not have any illness, performed his namaz and called other Nurcus around him, embraced each

of them, and said, 'Allahaısmarladık' (Good-bye). Together with three of his students, Hüsnü Bayram (the driver), Zübeyir Gündüzalp and Bayram Yüksel, Üstad left İsparta on 20 March 1960, via Konya[306] and arrived in Urfa on 21 March.[307]

The Nurcus in Urfa received Üstad and took him to the İpek Palace Hotel. Soon afterwards, the local security authorities came and told the Nurcus waiting in attendance upon Üstad in front of his door in the hotel that Üstad had to leave Urfa that very moment because this was an order from the Minister himself (the Minister of Internal Affairs). The people who heard that the authorities wanted to send Üstad away from Urfa gathered in the street outside the hotel and some of them queued in front of Üstad's room to visit him and to kiss his hands. His students were surprised to see that Üstad was receiving everybody who wanted to visit him, as this was completely contrary to his normal custom.

In spite of all pressures from Ankara, the local authorities could not send Üstad and his students out of Urfa. On his third day in Urfa on the early morning of 23 March 1960 at 03.00, Üstad died in the İpek Palace Hotel at the age of 87.[308]

The Probate officials recorded Üstad's personal effects: a pocket watch, a robe, a turban and twenty Turkish liras, and decided to give them to his brother. Üstad had never been married, so his brother was his only heir.[309]

Thousands of Nurcus from all over Turkey assembled in Urfa for his funeral on 24 March 1960 and buried him after performing the cenaze namazi (the funeral namaz) in a nearby tomb called Dergâh.[310] On the burial day, gendarme forces blockaded the main roads to Urfa with tanks,[311] and within the city police took intensified security measures.[312]

After the 27 May 1960 coup d'état, on 11 July 1960, General Kemal Tural and Üstad's brother, Abdülmecid Ünlükul, came to Urfa in a military

aircraft and on the night of 12 July 1960 the body of Üstad was exhumed - 112 days after his death.[313] The corpse was put in a coffin, and, together with Abdülmecid Ünlükul, taken in another military aircraft to Afyon military airport,[314] then by military vehicle to Dinar, Baladız and then to somewhere in İsparta province. The coffin was buried in an unknown place there.[315] Again, the same night, Abdülmecid Ünlükul, this time at his own request, was taken to Konya, where he lived.[316]

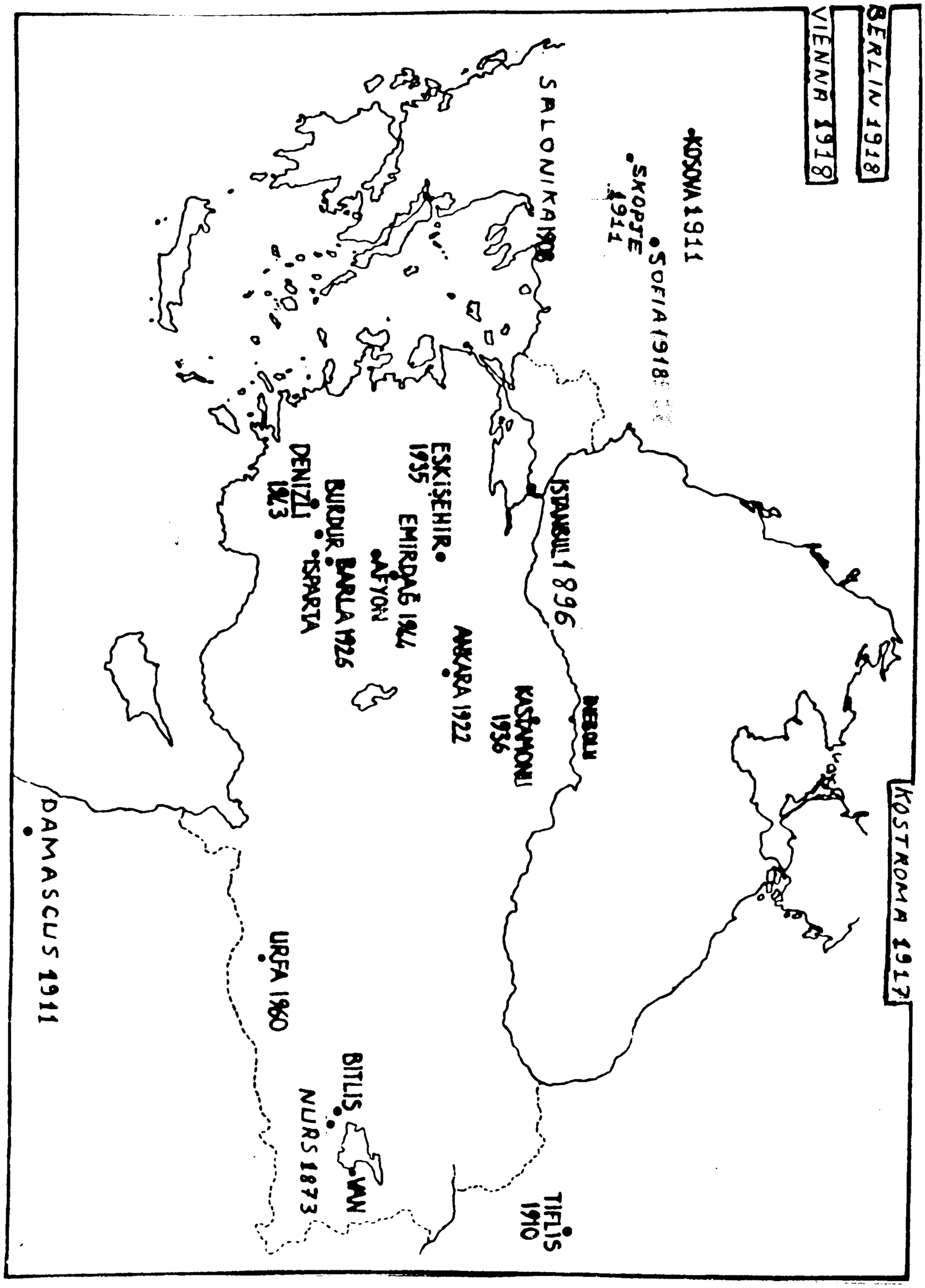
According to a rumour still circulating among Nurcus, some of the ağabeys know where Üstad was finally buried.[317] The reason for Nurcus keeping it secret is found in the will Üstad dictated to certain ağabeys. Üstad also mentioned in one of his letters to Nurcus that he did not want his grave to be publicly known; only a very few of his students should know of it.[318] Bayram Yüksel, who wrote the will together with Ceylan Calişkan as Üstad dictated it to them, stated that after the dictation Üstad carried on explaining: 'As Imam Ali's grave remained unknown, my grave too must be in a place no-one knows. This is an order for you. This is my last will'.[319]

It is also claimed by Nurcu sources that Üstad foretold his date of death and that his grave would be destroyed in his treatise, Lemaat, first published in 1923, thirty-seven years before his own death. It is a couplet of the Lemaat which reads:

Yıkılmış bir mezarım ki, yığılmıştır içinde,
Said'den yetmiş dokuz emvât(2) bâ-âsam alâma.

(A grave of mine which has been destroyed, has piled up in it
Seventy-nine deaths of Said(2) with his sins and suffering.)

In his footnote (2), written when he was seventy-nine years old (i.e. in 1952), Said Nursi appeared to explain that his reference in this verse to seventy-nine did not refer to his age but to the date. The AH year of his death was 1379, so Nurcus claim his prophecy was fulfilled.[320]



Where Said Nursi spent his life

NOTES

1. Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, Sikke-i Tasdîk-i Gaybî (1960); pp. 14-6; for a critical analysis of this claim, see Ali Gözütok, Müslumanlık ve Nurculuk (Ankara, 1971), pp. 73-6; Şerif Mardin, "Bediüzzaman Said Nursi (1873-1960): the Shaping of a Vocation", Religious Organization and Religious Experience, ed. J. Davis (London, 1982), p. 75 (hereafter cited as Religious). For the original version of the hadith as mentioned in the Risale-i Nur and Nurcus' interpretation of it, see Risale-i Nur Külliyati Müellifi Bediuzzaman Said Nursî, Hayatı, Mesleki, Tercüme-i Hali (Istanbul, 1960), p. 314, (hereafter cited as Tarihçe). Necmeddin Şahiner, Son Şahitler Bediuzzaman Said Nursî'yi Anlatiyor (Istanbul, 1978), I, 228, (hereafter cited as Şahitler I. Necmeddin Şahiner, Nursu Yolu (Istanbul, 1977), p. 111.

2. Gözütok, pp. 10 and 113.

3. Ibid., p. 9; Faruk Güventürk, Din Işığı Altında Nurculuğun İçyüzü, 2nd ed. (Istanbul, 1964), p. 107 and passim.

4. Ibid., p. 108.

5. Editorial comment by Prof. Z.V. Togan in Yaşar Kutluay, "Mezhepler Tarihi Yönünden Said Nursî ve Nurculuk", İslam Tetkikleri Enstitüsü Dergisi, III, part 4 (1960), 225.

6. Ibid., p. 220.

7. Neda Armaner, İslam Dininden Ayrılan Cereyanlar: Nurculuk, Ankara Üniversitesi İlâhiyat Fakültesi Yayınlarından, LX (Ankara, 1964), p. 38.

8. Mardin, p. 65.

9. Necmeddin Şahiner, Bilinmiyen Taraflariyla Bediuzzaman Said Nursî (Kronolojik Hayatı), 6th ed. (Istanbul, 1979); p. 32, (hereafter cited as Bilinmiyen.

10. Ibid., p. 445.

11. For his photograph see ibid., facing p. 192, and for his life p. 190.

12. Ibid., p. 32, for the picture of the front cover of the book, see p. 194.

13. Ibid., p. 447.

14. Ibid., p. 32.

15. Mardin, p. 66; Şahiner, Şahitler, I, 279-80; Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 7.

16. Tarihçe, p. 30.

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid., pp. 28-9.

19. Ibid., p. 437.

20. Ibid., p. 21.

21. Mardin, p. 66.

22. The book was entitled: Bref (sic.) Biography of Badee-u-Zaman Said Noorsi of Turkey (Ankara, 1953(sic) 1963) and no author was given.

23. The book was prepared by Talaba-an-Noor (a Student of the Light) and entitled: The Author of Risala-i Noor: Badee-u-Zaman Said Noorsi of Turkey (Maryland, 1974).

24. Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 7.

25. Necmeddin Şahiner, Said Nursi ve Nurculuk Hakkında Aydınlar Konuşuyor, 2nd ed. (Istanbul, 1979), p. 24.

26. Şahiner, Nursu Yolu, passim.

27. Necmeddin Şahiner, Son Şahitler Bediuzzaman Said Nursî'yi Anlatıyor (Istanbul, 1981), II, passim, (hereafter cited as Şahitler, II).

28. Anna Masala, Badî' az-Zamân Sa'îd-i Nûrsî (Roma, 1978), passim.

29. Mustafa Zakî Al-'Ashurî, Muallif Rasâil an-Nûr wa muassis Jama'at an-Nûr Badî'uzzaman Sa'îd an-Nursî: Nazrat 'Ammat 'an Hayâtihî (n.p., n.d.), passim.

30. For a brief information about Cemal Kutay mentioned in this thesis, see p. 154.

31. Cemal Kutay, Cağımızda Bir Asr-ı Saadet Müslümanı Bediuzzaman Said Nursî (Istanbul, 1980), p. 10, (hereafter cited as Bediuzzaman).

32. Ibid., p. 25.

33. Tarihçe, pp. 27 and 595; Kutay, Bediuzzaman, p. 134; Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 355.

34. Ibid.

35. Tarihçe, p. 27.

36. Şahiner, Bilinmiyen p. 356.

37. Noor, p. 14; Tarihçe, p. 28.

38. Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 356.

39. For Said Nursi's view on ezan in Turkish, see Şahiner, Şahitler, I, p. 190; for a summary of the Turkish media expressing the feeling of the nation when the DP lifted up the ban on the recital of the ezan in Arabic in their first month of rule on a Friday during Ramadan in 1950, see Binnaz Toprak, Islam and Political Development in Turkey (Leiden, 1981), pp. 79-80 and 85.

40. Kutluay, p. 220.

41. Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 356.

42. Ibid., p. 418; Tarihçe, p. 595.

43. Kutay, Bediuzzaman, p. 135.

44. Ibid.

45. Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 355.

46. Narrated in Şahiner, Şahitler, I, p. 391-2.

47. Ibid., p. 391.

48. Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, Mektûbat (Istanbul, 1977), p. 58; Tarihçe, p. 505.

49. Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 389; Said Nursi's students narrated that he had advised them to read newspapers, see Şahiner, Şahitler, I, p. 450.

50. Bekir Berk, Türkiye'de Nurculuk Dâvası (Istanbul, 1975), p. 259.

51. Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, pp. 356-7; Kutay, Bediuzzaman, pp. 132-3.

52. Noor, p. 13.

53. Mardin, p. 75.

54. Nursi, Sikke-i Tasdîk-i Gaybî, pp. 134-5.

55. Ibid., p. 134; Mardin, p. 68; Tarihçe, p. 36.

56. Müceddid for the thirteenth-century Hejira.

57. Şahiner, Nurs Yolu, p. 111.

58. For the details of the story as narrated by Asiye Mülazımoğlu, see Şahiner, Şahitler, I, p. 228-9; Şahiner, Şahitler, II, p. 162.

59. Tarihçe, p. 314.

60. For the comparison made between Said Nursi and Mevlana Halid by one of Said Nursi's admirers, Şamlı Hafız Tevfik, see Nursi, Sikke-i Tasdîk-i Gaybî, pp. 14-6.

61. For his life and order, see Albert Hourani, "Shaikh Khalid and the Naqshbandi Order", Islamic Philosophy and the Classical Tradition: Essays Presented to R. Walzer, ed. S.M. Stern, Albert Hourani and Vivian Brown (Columbia, 1973), pp. 89-103.

62. Hourani, "Shaikh Khalid and the Naqshbandi Order", Islamic Philosophy and the Classical Tradition: Essays Presented to R. Walzer, ed. S.M. Stern, Albert Hourani and Vivian Brown, (Columbia, 1973), pp. 98.

63. Ibid., pp. 95-7.

64. Hamid Algar, "Said Nursi and the Risala-i Nur: An Aspect of Islam in Contemporary Turkey", Islamic Perspectives: Studies in Honour of Sayyid Abul a'la Mawdudi, ed. Khurshid Ahmad and Zafar Ishaq Ansari (Leicester, 1979), p. 315.

65. Ibid.

66. See the footnote in Nursi, Sikke-i Tasdîk-i Gaybî, p. 15.

67. Although sources give two different dates of birth, 1873 is accepted here, since it is used in the two main studies of Said Nursi's life, Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 41 and Tarihçe, p. 31 - which is Said Nursi's authorised biography - and also see Abdülbâki Gölpınarlı, 100 Soruda Türkiye'de Mezhepler ve Tarikatlar (Istanbul, 1969), p. 226. The following sources mention 1876 as Said Nursi's birth year: Hamza, Bediuzzaman Said Kurdî'nin Tercüme-i Halinden Bir Hülasadır, p. 3; Abdurrahman, Bediuzzaman'in Tarihçe-i Hayatı, p. 3; Esref Edip, Risale-i Nur Müellifi Said Nur, p. 20; these three sources are cited in Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 41; Nursi, Sikke-i Tasdîk-i Gaybî, p. 82 and Sadik Albayrak, Son Devrin İslâm Akademisi, Dâr-ül Hikmet-il İslâmiye: Teşkilat ve Azaları, 2nd ed. (Istanbul, 1973), p. 185.

68. Mardin, p. 67.

69. Bitlis has five ilçes (subprovinces), Hizan has two nahiyes (the subdivision of an ilçe) and thirty villages, see Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 36. For a brief account of Bitlis and its surroundings in the 1890s, see Mardin, pp. 74-7. Cemal Kutay describes Bitlis as one of the centres where the Turkish-Persian cultures were mixed, see his book, Bediuzzaman, pp. 136 and 182.

70. Tarihçe, p. 31; Mardin, p. 67.

71. Kutay, Bediuzzaman, p. 136; Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 47.

72. Ibid.; Tarihçe, p. 31.

73. Said Nursi's Naqshbandî master, Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 270. Algar claims that Seyyid Nur was a 'Qadirî shaikh', (p. 315).

74. Tarihçe, p. 32; Sahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 50.

75. Ibid., pp. 53-4; Tarihçe, pp. 33-4; Şahiner, Şahitler, II, p. 51. It is most probably for this reason that Gölpınarlı states that Said Nursi 'did not receive a disciplined education', (p. 226).

76. Noor, p. 17; Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 55.

77. Ibid., pp. 56-8; Tarihçe, pp. 36-7.

78. Tarihçe, pp. 38-48; Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, pp. 58-63.

79. Mardin, pp. 69-70; see also Tarihçe, p. 44.

80. Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 64.

81. Ibid., pp. 64-5; Tarihçe, p. 44; Şahiner, Şahitler, II, p. 42; Mardin, p. 69.

82. Ibid., p. 70.

83. Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 67.

84. Algar, p. 315.

85. Ibid.; Tarihçe, p. 46; Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 67.

86. Ibid.; Noor, p. 18; Tarihçe, p. 46.

87. Mustafa Sungur, "Bediuzzaman Said Nursi", Hilal Mecmuası (April-May, 1960) as cited in Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 70.

88. Cemal Kutay, Tarih Sohbetleri, I, p. 202, as cited in Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, pp. 68-9; see also Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, Hutbe-i Şâmiye (Istanbul, 1960), p. 90 and Şahiner, Nurs Yolu, pp. 12-4. For the picture of the article, see Kutay, Bediuzzaman, p. 162.

89. Nursi, Mektûbat, p. 343; Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 73.

90. Noor, pp. 18-9; Algar, p. 317; Gölpınarlı, p. 227; Kutay, Bediuzzaman, p. 63. For more information about al-Azhar, see A.L. Tibawi, Islamic Education (London, 1972), pp. 47 and 30 where the author says al-Azhar had '3000 students in 1798 about a third of whom came from other Muslim lands'.

91. Tarihçe, p. 51; Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 75.

92. Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, Münâzarat (Istanbul, 1977), p. 71; Tarık Zafer Tunaya, İslâmcılık Cereyanı: İkinci Meşrutiyetin Siyasî Hayatı Boyunca Gelişmesi ve Bugüne Bıraktığı Meseleler (Istanbul, 1962), p. 236; Algar, p. 329.

93. Ibid., p. 327.

94. Nursi, Münâzarat, p. 71.

95. Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, İki Mekteb-i Musîbetin Şehâdetnâmesi Veya Divan-ı Harb-i Örfî (Istanbul, 1978); p. 69; Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 77.

96. Algar, p. 315; Nursi, İki Mekteb..., p. 68.

97. Mardin, p. 71. For brief information about Yahya Nüzhet Pasha's life, see Kutay, Bediuzzaman, p. 152.

98. Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 76.

99. Mardin, p. 71. For Mustafa Bey, see Kutay, Bediuzzaman, p. 152.

100. J.K., "Said Nursi", The Muslim World, L (1960), 339; Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 76.

101. Eşref Sencer Kuşçubaşi (1870-1964), the son of Mustafa Bey, who was later to become one of two establishers of the Teşkilât-ı Mahsusa (The Secret Organisation). For the Organisation, see note 156 below.

102. Şahiner, Nurs Yolu, pp. 136-40; Kutay, Bediuzzaman, pp. 138-41.

103. For this Medrese, see Şahiner, Şahitler, I, pp. 77 and 94; Şahiner Bilinmiyen, p. 157.

104. Ibid., p. 80; Tarihçe, p. 51. Şekerci Hanı is still preserved and is in Fatih district of Istanbul. It has 100 rooms every one of which used to be shared by single persons who were not permanently settled in Istanbul but living there quite a long time. The famous literati, scientists and other scholars of Istanbul used to stay there (for example, Mehmet Akif Ersoy stayed there for some time) and it used to be used by the distinguished people of Istanbul as a meeting place. For a picture of this building see Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 81.

105. Narrated in ibid., p. 82.

106. Ibid., p. 91.

107. Gölpınarlı, p. 227. For a picture of Said Nursi in this dress, see Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, facing p. 192.

108. Ibid., p. 91. This must be one of the reasons for the D.P. government during the 1950s to regard Said Nursi as "The Ghandi" of Turkey, see Tunaya, İslamcilık Cereyanı, p. 238. For his own justification of this dress, see the footnote in Nursi, İki Mekteb..., p. 15.

109. Mardin, p. 71; J.K., The Muslim World, L (1960), 339. For the picture of the petition as published in the Şark ve Kürdistan Gazetesi (East and Kurdistan Newspaper), see Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 86.

110. Mardin, p. 71; Şark ve Kürdistan Gazetesi, No. 1, November 19, 1908 as cited in Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 85.

111. Cemal Kutay, Tarih Sohbetleri, V, 203 as quoted in Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 87; Kutay, Bediuzzaman, p. 234.

112. Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 88; Kutay, Bediuzzaman, pp. 263-4.

113. Cemal Kutay, Tarih Sohbetleri, IV, 214 as quoted in Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 88; Kutay, Bediuzzaman, pp. 69 and 263.

114. Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, pp. 89-94; Nursi, İki Mekteb..., pp. 69-70.

115. Esref Edip, "İslam Düşmanlarının Tertiplerini Ortaya Çıkarmak Vazifemizdir", Yeni İstiklâl, No; 241 (March, 23, 1960) as quoted in Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, pp. 97-8.

116. Ibid., p. 95.

117. Cemal Kutay, Tarih Sohbetleri, I, p. 203 as quoted in Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, pp. 98-9; Kutay, Bediuzzaman, p. 163.

118. Ibid., p. 164; Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 100. According to C. Kutay, this public demonstration took place on 10 July 1908, see his Bediuzzaman, p. 111 and 137; how Said Nursi was elected by the Committee leaders as the first person who would speak in the demonstration, see Ibid., p. 260. Said Nursi published this speech in 1910 under the heading of Hürriyete Hitap (Address to Freedom) in his book called Nutuk. For the first page of this speech as published in the Nutuk, see Kutay, Bediuzzaman, p. 228.

119. Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, pp. 100-1; Nursi, İki Mekteb..., pp. 57-9; Kutay, Bediuzzaman, p. 168 and for the photo-copies of the original pages see pp. 232 and 235. Said Nursi, all through his life, proposed a type of government reform and civilisation similar to what his predecessors like Namık Kemal and Ziya Pasha hadput forward. They all '... objected to arbitrary government and mechanical reforms that imitated Europe instead of adapting European ideas to Ottoman and Islamic institutions', C.H. Dodd, Politics and Government in Turkey (Manchester, 1969), p. 13.

120. Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, pp. 101-2; Nursi, İki Mekteb..., p. 60; Noor, p. 20.

121. The term 'Islamist' is adopted as the translation of 'İslamcılar' used by Professor Tunaya in his book İslamcılik Cereyanı, passim.

122. Ibid., p. 53. For a summary of the Islamists' view of the Constitution, see ibid., pp. 59-60. In recent years, Turkish Islamic circles who regarded the reign of Sultan Abdulhamid as a period of Islamic ascendancy have expressed great surprise that Said Nursi was in the ranks of the Sultan's opponents. According to them, the 1908 rebellion against the Sultan that resulted in the reestablishment of the Ottoman constitution may be regarded as the first in the chain of events that led ultimately to the destruction of the Caliphate with all the attendant damage to Islam, see Algar, pp. 315-6. Among the leading proponents of this view was the famous writer Necip Fazıl Kısakürek, author of Ulu Hakan Abdülhamid Han which was published in 1970. This group failed to grasp that Said Nursi's opposition to Abdülhamid sprang from devotion to Islam and membership of the Islamist group.

123. Volkan, No. 105, April 15, 1909, as quoted in Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, pp. 106-7; Algar, p. 317. Said Nursi explained why he supported the Committee between 1908 and 1912 in his book, Kastamonu Lâhikası (n.p. 1960), p. 47. To publicise this idea of 'meşrutiyet-i meşrû'a' Said Nursi published a series of articles in different newspapers, for a selection of these see his book İki Mekteb..., pp. 47-53.

The First Islamists to favour constitutionalism and accept its essential compatability with Islam were the ulema in Iran during the constitutional revolution period in the early twentieth century. Nazim al-Islâm Kirmânî in his book, Târîkhi Bîdârî-yi Irânîân, new ed. (Tehran, 1953), p. 214, said 'mashrû'îyat and mashrûtîyat are one and the same: government according to the law of Islam, justice and equality, or according to science and civilisation', as cited in Scholars, Saints and Sufis: Muslim Religious Institutions Since 1500, ed. Nikki R. Keddie (Berkeley, 1978), p. 237. Said Nursi, too, believed that the essence of meşrutiyet-i meşrûa was in the spirit of the Şeriat, in his own words, 'meşrû meşrûtiyetin aslı şeriatın ruhunda vardır', see Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 108. See also Niyazi Berkes, The Development of Secularism in Turkey (Montreal, 1964), pp. 341-2 for those who supported the same idea in the newspaper, Sırat-i Müstakım. To These writers, constitutional regime, as Berkes summarised it, 'meant government by şura or meşveret (consultation)'. Ibid., p. 342.

124. Prince Mehmed Said Halim Pasha, the Prime Minister of the Constitutional government, a prominent Islamist philosopher of the Committee. For his ideas, see Kutay, Bediuzzaman, pp. 12, 55-64.

125. Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, Sünûhat (Istanbul, 1977), p. 51; Şahiner Bilinmiyen, pp. 107-8. For a larger study of this article, see Cemal Kutay, "Kapalı Perdeler Aralandıkça: Hakikat Pırlantıları", Köprü, No. 36 (March, 1980), pp. 33-7.

126. For the open letters exchanged between them, see Kutay, Bediuzzaman, pp. 229-33; Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, PP; 108-110.

127. Narrated by Münir Süleyman Çapanoğlu in his book, Türkiye'de Sosyalizm Hareketleri ve Sosyalist Hilmi (Istanbul, 1964). For the reprint of the related section, see Berk, pp. 731-4; see also Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 110.

128. Ibid., p. 111. This speech was published in one of Said Nursi's books in 1910, Nutuk, p. 19-20, for the photo-copy of the relevant page, see Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 112. Some extracts from the speech are reprinted in Nursi, İki Mekteb..., p. 14.

129. For the first page of the photo-copy of the original letter, see Kutay, Bediuzzaman, p. 203; for a study of the whole letter, see Ibid., pp. 200-11 and Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, pp. 114-5.

130. Volkan came out for the first time on 10 November 1908 under the editorship of Dervis Vahdeti, see Tunaya, İslamcılik Cereyanı, p. 119. For a front cover of Volkan, see Kutay, Bediuzzaman, p. 157. For the life of Dervis Vahdeti, see Mustafa Baydar, 31 Mart Vak'ası (Istanbul, 1955), pp. 11-8. J.K. in The Muslim World, L (1960), 339, says that the editor of the Volkan was Said Nursi and that it was a Kurdish nationalist magazine, this claim appears to be unsound.

131. For a summary of this speech, see Nursi, İki Mekteb..., p. 15; Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 117.

132. Ibid., p. 116; Tunaya, İslamcılık Cereyanı, p. 121. T.Z. Tunaya giving reference to his other book, Türkiyede Siyasi Partiler (1859-1952) (Istanbul, 1952), pp. 261-2, says that Bediuzzaman Said Kurdî was amongst the founders of the İttihad-i Muhammedî Fırkası (The Party for the Unity of Muhammadans), see his İslamcılık Cereyanı, p. 232. For a detailed information about the Party, see Tunaya, Türkiyede Siyasi Partiler, pp. 261-75. This view was shared by Gölpinarli (p. 227) and Çetin Özek, see his Türkiyede Gerici Akımlar ve Nurculuğun İçyüzü (Istanbul, 1964), p. 244. In Noor, p. 20, Bediuzzaman was presented as the initiator and organiser of the Party.

133. For the photo-copy of this postscript as published in Volkan, see Kutay, Bediuzzaman, p. 201 where the date of the newspaper is given as 14 April 1909; Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 118.

134. Ibid., p. 119. When Said Nursi was in Istanbul, he used to write articles for various newspapers of the time, regardless of their political stand. His articles were to be found in Volkan, Tanin, İkdam, Serbestî, Mizan, Misbah and Şark ve Kürdistan, see ibid., p. 118.

135. 'The great calamity' is the incident of 13 April 1909 which is well-known as the '31 March Revolt'. Nursi, İki Mekteb..., pp. 17-20; Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, pp. 120-1.

136. Ahmed Bedevi Kuran, Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda ve Türkiye Cumhuriyetinde İnkilâb Hareketleri, p. 512 as quoted in Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, pp. 125-6.

T.Z. Tunaya in his Türkiyede Siyasi Partiler, p. 262 in a footnote, answering to a letter, says that he has not claimed that Said Kurdi played a provocative role in the revolt but only mentioned his founder membership of the İttihad-i Muhammedî Fırkası.

137. Volkan, No. 107, April 18, 1909, as cited in Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, pp. 126-7; Nursi, İki Mekteb..., p. 23.

138. Volkan, No. 110, April 20, 1909 as cited in Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 126; Nursi, İki Mekteb..., p. 24.

139. For a summary of the events which started on 13 April 1909 and continued for eleven days, and for the studies of 'the Revolt' in Turkish literature, see Tunaya, İslâmcılık Cereyanı, pp. 129-45.

140. Ibid., p. 118.

141. C. Kutay, Tarih Sohbetleri, III, as cited in Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 131; Sina Akşın, 31 Mart Olayı (Ankara, 1970), pp. 129 and 253, reprint of the relevant pages see Berk, p. 735; Tunaya, Türkiyede Siyasi Partiler, p. 262; see also Kutay, Bediuzzaman, pp. 156 and 158.

142. Nursi, İki Mekteb..., p. 11; Maryam Jameelah, A Great Islamic Movement in Turkey: Badee-u-Zaman Said Nursi (Lahore, 1976), pp. 7-8; Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 129.

143. Said Nursi published this defence speech together with his discussions with the doctor in the lunatic asylum in 1911 in his book İki Mekteb ..., passim. For the picture of the first print of this book, see Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 130.

144. Most of the bodies of the people sentenced to death by the Court were exposed to the public view in the main quarters of Istanbul, see Tunaya, İslamcılık Cereyanı, p. 136. The Court sat in the Ministry of War in Beyazit (at present this place is used as Istanbul University's main building) and through the window of the courtroom the bodies hanging in Beyazit Square were to be seen. Said Nursi pointed to these bodies while he was speaking, see Şahiner, Şahitler, I, p. 215 and Şahiner, Bilimiyen, p. 129.

145. Nursi, İki Mekteb ..., p. 10; Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, pp. 127-8.

146. Nursi, İki Mekteb ..., p. 30. Said Nursi has been described by some writers as a ringleader of the 31 March Revolt. (See, for example, Geoffrey Lewis, "Islam in Politics, A Muslim World Symposium: Turkey", The Muslim World, LVI (October 1966, 236) but Nurcus reject this view and claim that far from provoking the rebellious troops, he actually tried to calm them. In support they cite the references from his book İki mekteb ..., quoted above (see notes 137 and 138).

147. Ibid., pp. 134-5; S. Kurter and O. Birge, The Model of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi (California, 1977), p. 10.

148. Ibid., Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, pp. 134-6.

149. Nursi, Hutbe-i Şâmiye, pp. 16-7; Jameelah, p. 8; Noor, p. 27; Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 138.

150. Nursi, Hutbe-i Şâmiye, pp. 17-52.

151. Ibid., p. 30.

152. Ibid., p. 32.

153. This view was repeated by Said Nursi in 1923 , see Tarihçe, p. 137.

154. Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, pp. 142-3; Noor, p. 29; Algar, p. 317.

155. But the construction was not completed because the World War soon broke out and the project was to remain unfulfilled, see ibid.; Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 145; Kurter and Birge, p. 11; Şahiner, Şahitler, I, p. 86; Tarihçe, p. 104.

156. C. Kutay, Tarih Sohbetleri, II, p. 205, as cited in Şahiner, Bilinmiyen pp. 146-8; Kutay, Bediuzzaman, pp. 36, 183-4, 237-9; Şahiner, Nurs Yolu pp. 136-40.

157. Professor Mardin notes the persistence and importance of Bediuzzaman's collaboration with the authorities: 'Said Nursi's incorporation into Sultan Abdulhamid's Panislamic Şeyhli "advisory board" was his first step into a stance in which he collaborated with those who used Islam for the mobilisation of the Islamic population of the Ottoman empire and also the populatuion of the wider reaches of the Muslim world. The Young Turks, who dethroned Sultan Abdulhamid, continued his experiment and Said Nursi also collaborated with them'. Mardin, p. 78.

158. Kutay, Bediuzzaman, pp. 116, 139, 296; Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 145. For a picture of Said Nursi as the militia commander in Istanbul, see ibid., p. 144.

159. For the text of the fetwa see ibid., pp. 154-6;

160. C. Kutay, Tarih Sohbetleri, II, p. 205; C. Kutay, Bilinmiyen Tarihimiz, No.2, pp. 459-60; Ceride-i İlmiye, I, pp. 434-40 (these three references are cited in Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, pp. 147-54); Kutay, Bediuzzaman, pp. 82-3, 237, 245-51; Şahiner, Nurs Yolu, pp. 136-40.

161. Enver Pasha (1881-1922) was the Minister of War between 1914 and 1918. In 1918 he left the country and went to Germany and then to Turkistan to fight the Bolsheviks and organised an army to protect the independence of Bukhara Turks and eventually was killed in 1922 by the Russians, see Kutay, Bediuzzaman, pp. 405-6.

162. Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 154.

163. See note 103 above.

164. Tarihçe, pp. 104, 587; Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, pp. 156-8.

165. Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, Şualar (Istanbul, 1960), p. 302; Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 152.

166. Kurter and Birge, p. 12.

167. Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, pp. 158-9.

168. Ibid., p. 160.

169. J.K., The Muslim World, L (1960), 339; Şahiner, Şahitler, II, p. 21.

170. Ibid., p. 22; Noor, p. 30; Kurter and Birge, p. 11; Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 160.

171. Ibid., p. 161; Şahiner, Şahitler, I, p. 77. A detailed report about Said Nursi at the front has been given in Document sur les Atrocités Armeno-Russes. A photo-copy of the relevant pages, which are 22-3, is given in Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 166, where the author says that a copy of this book is available in the foreign books section of Istanbul Municipal Library.

172. Hulûsî-i Bitlisi, "Bediuzzaman", Ehl-i Sünnet, II, no. 47 (1948), 21, as cited in Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 168; Tarihçe, p. 111; Kurter and Birge, p. 11. For more information about Said Nursi's life during the war and in the camp where he stayed over two years, as well as some eye-witness accounts as compiled by Necmeddin Şahiner, see his Bilinmiyen, pp. 167-83, his Şahitler, I, pp. 75, 184-5 and his Şahitler, II, pp. 23-4.

173. Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, Sözler, (Istanbul, 1977), p. 359.

174. Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 180; M.S. Abdullah, Islam Und Westliche Welt: Geschichte Des Islams in Deutschland (Graz, 1981), p. 104.

175. For a photo-copy of the relevant page of the Tanin, see Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 179 and for a photo-copy of the Vatana Avdet certificate see ibid., pp. 177-8.

176. Hamza, Bediuzzaman Said Kürdî'nin Tercüme-i Hâlinden Bir Hülâsadır, p. 6, as cited in Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 182.

177. Muzaffer Arslan, Bediüzzaman Said Nursî ve Din Düşmanları (Maraş, 1960), p. 67, as cited in Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 183.

178. Albayrak, Son Devrin İslâm Akademisi, p. 186; Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 183.

179. Ibid.; Tarihçe, p. 115; Abdullah, p. 104. Dar ul-Hikmet al-İslamiye (School of Islamic Philosophy) was officially founded in accordance with Law No. 413 which was passed in both Houses on 25 August 1918 during the reign of Sultan Reshad when the Şeyhulislam was Musa Kazim Efendi. It was a department of the Office of the Şeyhulislam and had three commissions: Fiqh, ethics and theology. It consisted of a chairman and nine counsellors among whom was Said Nursi. Niyazi Berkes states that this department was founded 'to modernize the kalâm ... (its) function ... was to have been not to censor or prosecute but to cultivate a modern understanding of Islam'. See his Development of Secularism, p. 416. It published the magazine Ceride-i İlmiye. Dar ul-Hikmet al-İslamiye gradually dissolved because the constitutional government in Istanbul did not pay attention to such institutions. See Albayrak, Son Devrin İslâm Akademisi, pp. 7, 8, 129 and passim.

180. Ibid., p. 185, and for the original copy of the petition, see addendum 12 in ibid.

181. Mahreç, in Ottoman history, was the name of the lowest order of judges with the right of promotion in the Turkish hierarchy. In the civil administration it meant a pasha who governed a province; in military rank (here it is used in this sense because Said Nursi was given this title for his voluntary service as a commander in the defence of the Eastern provinces of the Empire against Russian invasion in 1915 and 1916), it was the rank of lieutenant colonel.

182. For the original statement of reasons as prepared by the Şeyhulislam see Albayrak, addendum 21, in modern Turkish, see pp. 188-9. For a photo-copy of the original decree as signed both by the Sultan and the Şeyhulislam, see ibid., addendum 9 and Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 187.

183. The event was later on published in the Society's magazine, Yeşilay, No; 392 (1966), as cited in Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, pp. 213 and 214.

184. Mustafa Nezihi Polat, Mülâkat (Erzurum, 1964), pp. 31-4, as quoted in Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, pp. 214-6.

185. Kürt Teâli Cemiyeti was founded in Istanbul in 1919 by Seyyit Abdulkadir Efendi, Dr Şükrü Mehmed, Emin ve Muhiddin Nami. For the activities and the members of the Society, see Tunaya, Türkiyede Siyasi Partiler, pp. 429-31.

186. Mustafa Nezihi Polat, Mülâkat (Erzurum, 1964), p. 37, as quoted in Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 216.

187. Ibid., p. 228, quoting Article 2, paragraph 3 of the Constitution of the Association.

188. Sadık Albayrak, Türkiyede Din Kavgası (Istanbul, 1973), p. 146.

189. Abdulkadir Altınsu, Osmanlı Şeyhulislamları (Ankara, 1972), p. 260; Bernard Lewis, The Emergence of Modern Turkey, 2nd ed. (London, 1968), p. 252.

190. Ibid., Kadir Mısıroğlu, Sarıklı Mücâhidler (Istanbul, 1972), p. 300.

191. Özek, pp. 244-5.

192. Eşref Edip, Risale-i Nur Muarızları Yazarların İsnatları Hakkında İlmi Bir tahlil (Istanbul, 1965), p. 71, as cited in Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 237-8.

193. Nursi, Tulüat, p. 15, as cited in Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 238. For a photo-copy of the relevant page, see ibid., p. 237.

194. Tarihçe, p. 133; Mehmet Süleyman Teymuroğlu, "Muhterem Said Nursi'nin Doldurduğu Boşluk", Hilâl, No. 13 (February, 1969), as quoted in Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 239.

195. Ibid., p. 240. For an interview with Hüseyin Aksu, a member in the first session of the Assembly, see Şahiner, Şahitler, I, pp. 233-7.

196. The text of these remarks was recorded in Büyük Millet Meclisi Zabıt Ceridesi, XXIV, p. 457. For the photo-copies of the original pages of the Zabıt Ceridesi in both languages, Ottoman Turkish and Modern Turkish, see Kutay, Bediuzzaman, pp. 277-8, and Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, pp. 244-5. See also Algar, p. 319; Gölpınarlı, p. 277; Özek, p. 263. Gölpınarlı and Özek claim that in the records there is no such speech made by Said Nursi.

197. Noor, p. 37; Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 242. In his book, Modern Turkey (London, 1974), G.L. Lewis, referring to the attitude of the deputies in the first session of the Assembly towards namaz, says: '... a number of deputies, including some of the Second group [who numbered about forty, half of them belonging to the ulema, and firmly against Mustafa Kemal], occupied a dormitory in a school opposite the Assembly building. Two notices were hung on the dormitory wall. One read: "The playing of backgammon, etc. is prohibited"; the other: "Prayers are compulsory". Those who did not choose to pray, resented having their sleep regularly broken by the call to prayer, which was recited right inside the dormitory: they complained to Kemal and the practice was discontinued. None of the Second Group stood at the 1923 elections'. (pp. 88-9).

198. Jameelah, p. 11; Kurter and Birge, p. 13; Noor, p. 37.

199. This declaration is summarised here from the following sources: Tarihçe, pp. 133-5; Kutay, Bediuzzaman, pp. 271-6; Noor, pp. 37-40; Yeni Asya Research Center, Social Change in Muslim Societies (California, 1980), pp. 9-16; Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, pp. 242-8. For

a picture of the original declaration in the Ottoman language, see ibid., p. 247, and Kutay, Bediuzzaman, p. 272.

200. The following references mention that Said Nursi had a quarrel with Mustafa Kemal: Şahiner, Şahitler, I, p. 227; Jameelah, p. 11; Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 249; Whereas Ç. Özek mentions only their meeting without qualifying it (p. 245).

201. Şahiner, Şahitler, II, p. 28; Tarihçe, p. 141; Kutay, Bediuzzaman, pp. 413, 476; Noor, p. 42.

202. Cited in Algar, p. 321.

203. Mardin, p. 78.

204. Tarihçe, p. 141; Kutay, Bediuzzaman, p. 281.

205. For a picture of the ticket, see Tarihçe, p. 142 and Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 251.

206. For his life in the monastery, see Şahiner, Şahitler, I, pp. 196-7.

207. Ibid., pp. 61, 193; Şahiner, Şahitler, II, p. 26.

208. As narrated in Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, pp. 253-4.

209. The Kurdish Revolt began in February 1925 in the Eastern provinces and ended on 29 June 1925 with the execution of the rebel leader, Seyh Said, and forty-six of his followers by the Independence Tribunal at Diyarbakir, which also ordered the dervish lodges of the Eastern provinces to be closed. See, B. Lewis, pp. 266, 410 and G.L. Lewis, Modern Turkey, p. 99.

210. Algar, pp. 319 and 329.

211. For the letter as reported in the personal records of Zübeyr Güldüzalp who had been his closest student for ten years, see Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, pp. 254-5. Gündüzalp was the most esteemed ağabey of the Nurcus until his death in 1971. See also Tarihçe, p. 143; Kurter and Birge, pp. 13-4; Noor, p. 42. J.K., the writer of the notes of the quarter, "Religious Freedom in Turkey", in The Muslim World, L (1960), 232, claims that Said Nursi was linked with Pan-Kurdish nationalistic groups in Paris.

212. Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, pp. 255-6.

213. Kinyas Kartal interviewed by N. Şahiner when he was a Justice Party Member of Parliament in 1977, see Şahiner, Şahitler, II, p. 17; Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 257.

214. Ibid., pp. 257-60; Şahiner, Aydınlar Konuşuyor, p. 167; Algar, p. 319; Şahiner, Nurs Yolu, pp. 133-5; Şahiner, Şahitler, II, p. 29. For the memoirs of his companions on the journey, see ibid., pp. 16-19, and Şahiner, Şahitler, I, pp. 91, 99-102.

215. Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, Nur'un İlk Kapısı (Istanbul, 1977), p. 6. Said Nursi subsequently used the expression, "directly from the verses of the Koran", for all of his writings entitled Risale-i Nur (The Treatise of Light). He did so because, firstly, from his first day in exile for the rest of his life, he had no reference book with him other than the Koran, and, secondly, he had decided after reading the Mektûbat of Ahmad Sirhindi that he must have only one şeyh to follow, so this şeyh, as Said Nursi interpreted it, could only be the Koran. It was after his decision that Said Nursi stopped paying any attention to the other books. 'The Koran', he says, 'was enough for me'. See, Nursi, Mektubat, pp. 330, 331; Tarihçe, pp. 129,130 ; Algar, pp. 318, 321. M.S. Abdullah likened this to that of Muhammad Abduh whose principle was to solve the problems of the Muslim one should resort to the Koran only (p. 104).

216. Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, Lem'alar (Istanbul, 1959), p. 37.

217. N. Sahiner made this interview in 1972 with Sevket Demiray who was since then known as "jandarma Şevket who brought Bediuzzaman to Barla", see Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, pp. 262-4.

218. For a picture of this house, see Köprü, No. 36 (March, 1980), p. 3.

219. For a brief description of Said Nursi dictating the Risale-i Nur to the scribes as narrated by Hafiz Tevfik, one of his scribes, see Şahiner, Şahitler, I, pp. 418-9.

220. Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 270; Bediuzzaman Said Nursi on Contemporary Topics (California, 1980), p. 2; Noor, p. 45.

221. Nursi, Şualar, p. 418; Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 270.

222. Algar, p. 270.

223. Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, pp. 272, 310; Tarihçe,p. 270. For an interview with one of the Nur Postacis, see Şahiner, Şahitler, I, pp. 68-9.

224. Ibid., pp. 133, 146; Tarihçe, p. 155.

225. Said Nursi was, and still is, known among the people of the Isparta region by the name, "Hodja Efendi", though he is not referred to elsewhere by this title. For the Süleyman's story, see Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 278; for Süleyman's brief life story, see Şahiner, Şahitler, II, pp. 103-4. Süleyman was mentioned in the Risale-i Nur by name, see Nursi, Sözler, p. 530.

226. For his brief life story, see Şahiner, Şahitler, II, pp. 101-2.

227. For his brief life story, see ibid., pp. 110-1.

228. Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, pp. 282-3.

229. Tarihçe, p. 160.

230. Şahiner, Şahitler, II, p. 117.

231. Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, pp. 289, 291-2.

232. Şahiner, Şahitler, I, pp. 287 and 436.

233. Ibid., p. 406; Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 285.

234. Ibid., p. 279.

235. By this time, the name Risale-i Nur Talebesi, or its short form Nur Talebesi, came into use by the public. So, in this study, the term "The Student of Light" will be used when referring to Said Nursi's followers from this point onwards in his career until late 1949 when a new term was introduced: 'Nurcu'. This was accepted by the general public and Nurcus alike, see Şahiner, Şahitler, II, p. 164. Even Said Nursi himself started using the term Nurcu in his letters quite frequently from 1950 onwards, see, for example, Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, Emirdağ Lâhikası, II, p. 18 and passim.

236. For brief information about him, see Kutay, Bediuzzaman, p. 443.

237. Tarihçe, pp. 203-4; Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, pp. 298-9.

238. Tarihçe, p. 205.

239. Ibid., pp. 206-23.

240. For a picture of this house, see Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 308.

241. Şahiner, Şahitler, II, p. 95.

242. Tarihçe, pp. 269-70; Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, pp. 308-11.

243. For his memoirs, see Şahiner, Şahitler, I, pp. 362-78, and Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 318.

244. The dress law was passed in parliament on 28 October 1925, and required all men to wear hats and made the wearing of a fez a criminal offence. For an analysis of the significance of the law, see B. Lewis, pp. 267-70. Concerning the impact of the law on the people of Turkey in 1925, G.L. Lewis states, 'So grave were the disorders in the northeast, that a cruiser was ordered to Rize, on the Black Sea, and the Independence Tribunals went into action... The Tribunals did their work with ruthless efficiency. The reforms continued' (p. 104). It is worth noting that despite the 'ruthless efficiency' with which G. Lewis notes the reforms were pursued, Said Nursi never put a hat on his head, and never abandoned covering his head with some sort of turban, even in the criminal courts while being on charges of unlawful religious activities, see, Tarihçe, p. 402. Amazingly, he managed to save his head, despite the 'Independence Tribunals'. This was remarked upon in The Muslim World by the writer known as 'J.K.' who said in his news article on Said Nursi: 'While reform and severe governmental restriction almost completely destroyed any vestige of the old religious leadership in Turkey, Said Nursi by patience and supreme political ability, succeeded in surviving the Ataturk reforms ...' The Muslim World, L (1960), p. 339.

245. Narrated by an eye-witness in Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 323.

246. Nursi, Emirdağ Lâhikası, II, p. 19.

247. Tarihçe, p. 381. For the whole of the defence speeches of Said Nursi in the hearings of the Denizli Criminal Court, see ibid., pp. 383-402.

248. Algar, p. 322. Tarihçe, pp. 381, 382. For the reprint of the report of the committee, see Berk, pp. 1 3. The writer of the news article on Said Nursi in The Muslim World, L (1960) comments on the verdict and says, 'After this verdict, the Nurculars intensified their activity and Said Nursi became, at over 90 [sic.] years of age, the personal symbol of the Islamic aspirations of a large segment of the radical and reactionary Muslim press in Turkey. His influence pervaded Turkey' (p. 340).

249. Tarihçe, pp. 38 2 and 417.

250. Şahiner, Şahitler, II, p. 163.

251. For their lives in prison as narrated by the prisoners, see Şahiner, Şahitler, I, pp. 174, 178-83.

252. Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, pp. 330-1. Tarihçe, p. 382; Kurter and Birge, p. 18; Berk, p. 833.

253. Tarihçe, p. 441.

254. For an interview with him, see Şahiner, Şahitler, I, pp. 121-34.

255. Ibid., p. 126.

256. Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 332.

257. Tarihçe, p. 403. In Nurcu sources, it is frequently repeated that Bediuzzaman was poisoned seventeen times throughout his life in exile. See, for example, Şahiner, Şahitler, I, pp. 40, 108, 109, 448; Nursi, Emirdağ Lâhikası, II, p. 14; Tarihçe, p. 444. When he was in prison allegedly they poisoned him under the pretext of vaccination, see Şahiner, Şahitler, I, p. 31; Nursi, Şualar, p. 407. Dr Tahir Barçin was reported to have said that Bediuzzaman had been poisoned in Eskisehir prison under the pretext of vaccinating him against typhoid fever. He had seen a hard area under the skin on the left of his chest. The body had isolated the poison. Almight God had protected him, otherwise everything under the skin would normally mix with blood. Narrated in Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 341. For a critical analysis of this alleged poisoning, see, Kutluay, p. 222.

258. Tarihçe, p. 526.

259. Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 347.

260. Ibid., p. 349.

261. Narrated in Tarihçe, p. 536. For some memoirs of the Students of Light in Afyon prison, see Şahiner, Şahitler, I, pp.138, 381-3.

262. For the copying and distribution of this treatise by the Students of Light in prison, see ibid., p. 381.

263. For the defence speeches given by Said Nursi during the hearings as compiled by his students, see Tarihçe, pp. 540-68.

264. The file was waiting in the court for a ruling on it when the Democrat Party came into power and announced an amnesty. The case of Said Nursi and his students was covered by the amnesty. So they were freed without any pronouncement by the court as to their guilt or innocence. See, ibid., p. 597. Eventually, eight years later, a court decision was given. On 11 September 1956, the court announced, basing its views on the experts' report of the Advisory Board for the President of Religious Affairs which was given on 25 May 1956, that the books of the Risale-i Nur which had been confiscated in 1948 were simply religious books that were not in any way illegal, so these books were returned to their owners. See Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 390. For the file number and date of the verdict, see Berk, p. 833.

265. Tarihçe, p. 530.

266. Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 358.

267. Ibid., pp. 358-9.

268. Nursi, Emirdağ Lâhikasi, II, p. 16.

269. Narrated in Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 364.

270. Nursi, Emirdağ Lâhikası, II, p. 17. This gave Said Nursi the opportunity to establish friendly relations between the new government and the Nurcus. Indeed, he enjoyed more religious freedom in the Menderes era and 'succeeded in becoming one of the most powerful religious figures in modern Turkey'. See, J.K., The Muslim World, L (1960), 339. But this relationship never secured special treatment in favour of Said Nursi from the Menderes government nor from the succeeding Turkish governments. Actually, Said Nursi's main aim was not to receive "special favour" rather it was obtain the removal of "special restrictions" that would hinder his progress. In fact, however, he and his followers never became totally free from state pressure, for the gap between Said Nursi's ideology and that of the governments of modern Turkey was unbridgeably wide and deep. Noting this apparent contradiction, Professor Mardin says, '... it is remarkable that even though the followers of Bediuzzaman supported the new government, they never could elicit its unambiguous support. In 1952 and 1953, Said Nursi was still accounting for his publications to the Public Prosecutor', Mardin, p. 66.

271. For his own accounts on the event, see Şahiner, Şahitler, I, pp. 385-89 and the other Nurcu Ağabeys' accounts, see Şahiner, Şahitler, II, pp. 76-80.

272. For the reprint of the letter, see Nursi, Emirdağ Lâhikası, II, p. 62.

273. Tarihçe, p. 449.

274. For an interview with him, see Şahiner, Şahitler, I, p. 214.

275. Some religious circles interpreted this event as evidence that 'Menderes' appeals to Islamic sentiment were largely opportunistic, and no real changes took place in the attitude of the state to Islam, beyond a few symbolic gestures'. Algar, p. 323. Algar also states that '... in 1952 he [Said Nursi] was arrested and brought to trial ...' (p. 323). In fact, Said Nursi was never arrested during the Democrat Party period nor was he forced to stay in a particular place as an exile, he was only brought to trial once.

276. For some memoirs of people who visited Said Nursi, see Şahiner, Şahitler, I, pp. 219-20; Şahiner, Şahitler, II, p. 45.

277. Şahiner, Şahitler, I, p. 252. Tarihçe, p. 633.

278. Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 373. For the whole defence speech of Said Nursi, see Tarihçe, pp. 636-9.

279. Ibid., p. 634.

280. Some people who were present in the hearing narrated that the crowd left the court-room not at the request of the chief judge, but only after Said Nursi turned back to the crowd and gave a sign with his head. These reports appear in Şahiner, Şahitler, I, p. 252 and Şahiner, Şahitler, II, pp. 45-6.

281. Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, pp. 373-4.

282. Tarihçe, p. 646. For the number and the date of the decree, see Berk, p. 833.

283. Tarihçe, pp. 649-50. For the date and number of the judicial decision, see Berk, p. 833. By April 1971, Nurcus had obtained 721 acquittals from different courts in Turkey. A list of these decrees, chronologically arranged, including the date and the number of these decrees and the names of the courts is given by a barrister, Bekir Berk, who served Nurcus - as well as Said Nursi himself for two years - for fifteen years between 1958 and 1973 during which time he attended more than a thousand hearings, in his book Türkiye'de Nurculuk Davası, pp. 833-51. Distribution of these acquittals by cities on a map is added at the end of this thesis, see Appendix III. For Bekir Berk's ideas on Said Nursi and Nurculuk, as penned by himself, see Sahiner, Aydınlar Konuşuyar, pp. 221-66. However, Bekir Berk compiled only the decrees which were given in favour of Nurcus or the books of the Risale-i Nur. Unfortunately, there is no published comprehensive study which would present us with documentation of all court decisions, regardless of their nature. So it is not possible here to give for any period even the total number of court decisions resulting in penalties imposed on Nurcus. In Noor, p. 15, the total

number of acquittals is given as 835. The date for this number is 1974.

Tekin Erer in the newspaper Adalet, June 17, 1966, documented the cases brought against Nurcus from 1943 to 1966. According to this, in 106 different towns, 412 cases were tried and 772 judges took part in these trials. He claimed that all of them resulted in either acquittal or the case being dropped. For the reprint of the article, see Berk, pp. 612-3.

284. Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 381.

285. Şahiner, Şahitler, I, p. 216.

286. Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 386.

287. For a reprint of the letter, see ibid., pp. 388-9.

288. Mardin, p. 66.

289. For Tahsin Tola's own account, see Şahiner, Şahitler, I, pp. 150-7.

290. Ibid., pp. 260, 397-8; Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, pp. 390-1. Algar reports that even in 1970 'certain parts of the Risale-i Nur are still circulating in mimeographed form, notably those written in the Arabic scripts, to which the followers of Said Nursi refer as the "Qur'anic alphabet"', Algar, p. 332 in note 37. Algar is incorrect in saying that parts of the Risale-i Nur are still circulating in mimeographed form in the Arabic scripts. Although the actual Risale-i Nur was first written in and, until 1956, circulated in the Ottoman script, it was subsequently transliterated into the modern Turkish alphabet, checked by Said Nursi himself (Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 391) and since 1956 has been printed and circulated in the modern alphabet only. Nurcus do revere old script as the 'Qur'anic alphabet', but realise that they must use the new script if they are to succeed in disseminating their message in Turkey. What may have confused Algar are old copies of the Risale-i Nur still held by some people, or the writings of the "Old Said" which were written not only in the Arabic script but some of them also in the Arabic language. Some of these are still in existence but it is misleading to say they are 'circulating'. The important parts of these have been incorporated into the Risale-i Nur proper and are therefore in circulation now in the modern Turkish alphabet (e.g. the pages between 104 and 128 of Lem'alar; 735 and 792 of Sözler, 440 and 451 of Mektubat, and the whole of Hutbe-i Şâmiye were originally written in the Arabic script). Some of the "Old Said"'s writings have not been reprinted in modern form but these are no longer in circulation anyway. Some of these contain ideas that are dealt with in a more straightforward manner in the Risale-i Nur (e.g. Kızıl İ'câz, Tâlikat, Nokta, Zeyl-üz-Zeyl and Hubab, all of which contain dense reasoning subsequently expressed more simply in the Risale-i Nur).

There are some of "New Said"'s writings, too, which have not been reprinted in modern form. This is because they express strong criticism of Wahhabism and Shiism, and Said Nursi may have felt

this would hinder the spread of Nurculuk in areas where those beliefs were strongly entrenched. For example, a comparison of the original Mektubat in Ottoman script with the modernised version reveals that references to Wahhabism and Shiism have been omitted (Mektubat - in Ottoman script - pp. 563-5). There may well be other examples of such omissions.

Finally, it should be noted that the Risale-i Nur has been translated and printed in Arabic for use in Arabic lands, but this is another matter.

291. Şahiner, Şahitler, I, pp. 67, 434-5. For a picture of the event, see Tarihçe, pp. 658, 659 and Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, pp. 393 and 394.

292. Şahiner, Şahitler, I, pp. 412-3. For his open support of the DP, see ibid., p. 243. For the relationship between Adnan Menderes and Nurcus, see Tunaya, İslamcilık Cereyanı, p. 233. The Muslim World reported in 1960 in a news article that 'He [Said Nursi] was accused of being a tool of the Democratic Party during the 1956 [sic] elections. (The Muslim World, L (1960), 340) In 1961, another news article in The Muslim World reported that '... the Government [the provisional government formed just after the 27 May 1960 revolution] investigations of the various officials of the deposed Democratic Party have discovered that several members of the Menderes government were members of the Nurculars and actively supported him', (The Muslim World, LI (1961), 73).

293. Ibid., pp. 73-4.

294. Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 397.

295. Cumhuriyet, December 19, 1959, p. 1.

296. Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 399.

297. Five members of Parliament from the DP for the constituencies of Yozgat, Konya and Erzurum,visited Said Nursi as a group once, and the former M.P. Dr Tahsin Tola visited him several times. It was also reported that a sizeable number of Air Force NCOs were conspicuous among the people gathered in front of the hotel hoping to be received by Said Nursi. See, Cumhuriyet, December 31, 1959, pp. 1 and 5.

298. Milliyet, December 31, 1959; Cumhuriyet, December 30, 1959, p. 1 and Cumhuriyet, December 31, 1959, p. 1; Şahiner Bilinmiyen, p. 400.

299. Cumhuriyet, January 2, 1960, pp. 1 and 5; Cumhuriyet, January 3, 1960, pp. 1 and 5. For the journey and the statements of people who were with Said Nursi, see Sahiner, Sahitler, I, pp. 289-90 and Şahiner, Şahitler, II, pp. 273-5.

300. Cumhuriyet, January 4, 1960.

301. Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 402; Şahiner, Şahitler, I, pp. 239-40.

302. Cumhuriyet, January 6, 1960.

303. J.K., The Muslim World, L (1960), 232-3. For the statements of the two leaders about Said Nursi, see Cumhuriyet, January 7-11, 1960.

Perhaps the best assessment of Said Nursi's journeys was made in The Muslim World in an article on Said Nursi by J.K. who said: 'If Said Nursi bided his time for almost 30 years, while the secular and anticlerical forces reigned in Turkey, he made up for lost time during the latter years of his life. Displaying the dramatic sense of timing and his ability to exploit every opportunity, he made his last play just before the end of 1959. With dramatic daring, he began a 14,000 kilometer tour of Turkey. Everywhere he went, he drew huge crowds. The liberal press was horrified at the sight, and covered his tour with more space than they had given any religious event in Turkey...' (The Muslim World, L (1960), 340).

304. Cumhuriyet, January 11, 1960, pp. 1 and 5 and other national dailies of the same date. For the whole story of the journey told by one of the Nurcus in the convoy, see Şahiner, Şahitler, II, pp. 230-8.

305. For the complete leter, see Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, pp. 405-6.

306. Cumhuriyet, March 23, 1960, p. 1.

307. Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, pp. 409-13. For the details of this journey as narrated by Bayram Yüksel, see Şahiner, Şahitler, I, pp. 420-31.

308. Ibid., pp. 366-70; Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, pp. 414-8; Cumhuriyet, March 24, 1960, pp. 1 and 5.

The Muslim World L (1960) reported the news as follows: 'The colorful career of Said Nursi, 20th-century Turkish mystic and religious leader, came to an end on March 23 in a hotel room in Urfa, Turkey. Said Nursi was 93 years old [sic.]. Ill for some time, he was stricken in Urfa while on a tour of Turkey visiting his disciples' (p.338).

Said Nursi was reported to have told Abdullah Yegin, one of his closest students, just one day before his death that Urfa would play an important role in uniting the Muslim brothers like the Turks, Kurds and Arabs, see Şahiner, Şahitler, I, p. 367. Indeed, in this province of Turkey, these three peoples live together. It may be this feature of Urfa that attracted Said Nursi because he believed that Turks, Kurds and Arabs should be united under the banner of Muslim brotherhood and he strove for this end, see Tarihçe, p. 77 and Nursi, Münazarat, p. 71.

309. Şahiner, Şahitler, I, p. 431; Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 419. Said Nursi did not have any heir nor did he designate any spiritual or other successor to himself. Individuals mentioned by some people as the possible successor were merely prominent companions of the "New Said" (see Algar, p. 325) who are mentioned in this study as ağabeys.

310. Cumhuriyet, March 25, 1960, pp. 1, 5; Şahiner, Şahitler, I, p. 370.

311. Ibid., p. 434.

312. Cumhuriyet, March 25, 1960.

313. Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 429; Kutay, Bediuzzaman, p. 155.

314. Cumhuriyet, July 14, 1960, pp. 1 and 5.

315. In Cumhuriyet, July 17, 1960, pp. 1 and 5, it is stated that the governor of Isparta confirmed that the corpse was buried somewhere inside Isparta province.

316. For the whole story, see Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, pp. 429-31. Abdülmecid's own memoirs are narrated in ibid., pp. 434-6. According to Algar, this exhumation of the body of Said Nursi '... was done presumably in the belief that Said Nursi had founded a cult centred on his own person, and that if only the location of his tomb were unknown, his following could not fail to disperse after his death' (p. 324).

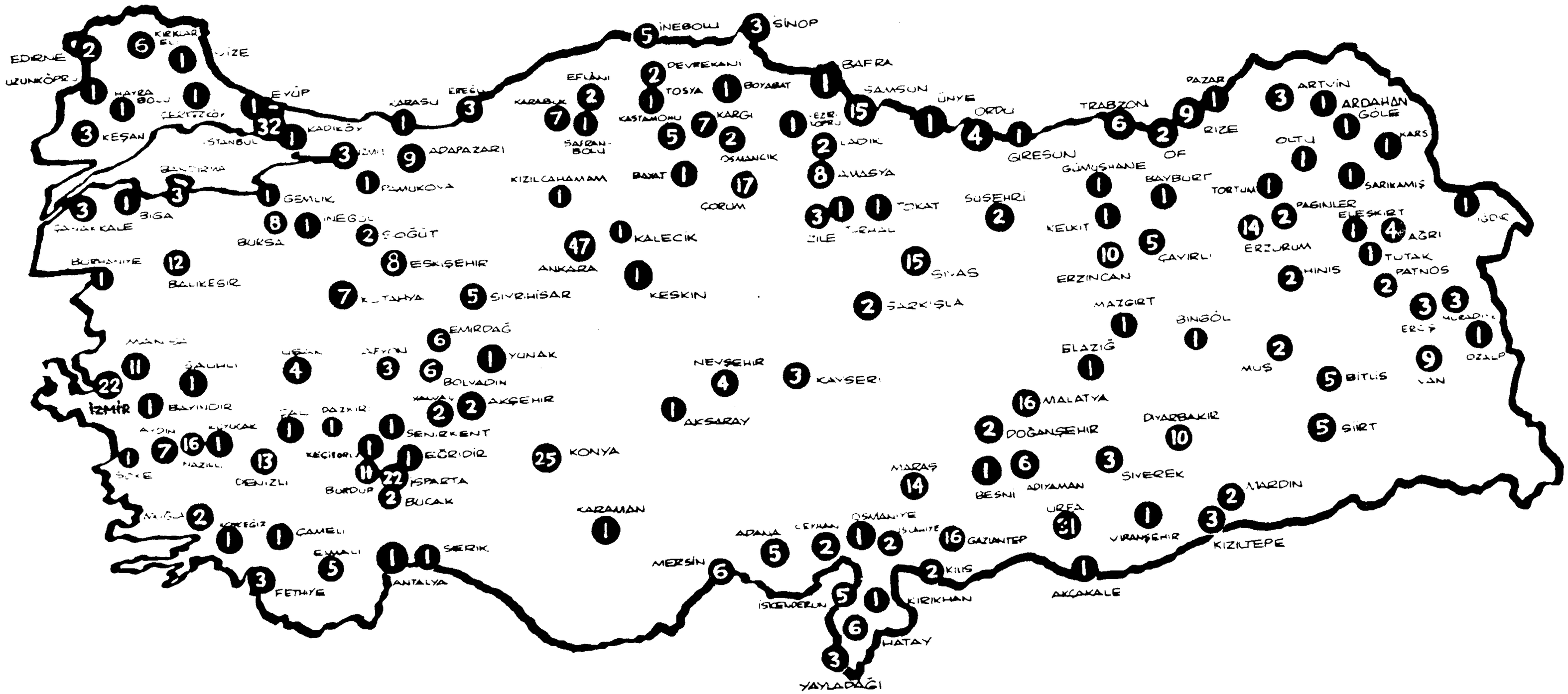
317. When I went to İsparta while doing the fieldwork, I heard that the grave was in Sav, a village of Isparta, but the informant was very reluctant to take me to the person who knew where the grave was. Nevertheless, he sounded confident that it was known to Nurcus. Whether or not his confidence was justified, it is significant that Nurcus seem to believe in the truth of the claim.

318. Şahiner, Şahitler, I, pp. 371-2, 421. The will is published in Nursi, Emirdağ Lâhikası, II, p. 173 and the reason why he did not want his grave known is also explained in the will.

319. Narrated in Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 439.

320. AH 1379 is AD1960. The couplet is published in Nursi, Sözler, p. 737 and reprinted in Şahiner, Bilinmiyen, p. 440.

Appendix IV. The Number of Court Actions against Nurcus ending in Acquittals up to 11 April 1971



This map, reproduced from Bekir Berk, Türkiye'de Nurculuk Dâvası, demonstrates that Nurculuk activity was spread throughout the whole of Turkey and that the places where it was most in conflict with the authorities appear to be Ankara, Istanbul, Urfa, Konya, Izmir and Isparta, though it does not show the number of cases where charges against Nurcus were upheld nor, of course, can it indicate the number of instances the authorities turned a blind eye.

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