

Islamic Theology of the 21st Century

Enlightened Islam: The Paradigm of Said Nursi

Introduction II
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II.

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- The Basic Approach
- 1. Religion and Science
- 2. Philosophy and Mysticism
- 3. The most Urgent in Islam – Faith
- 4. In Favour of a New Self-Conception
- Koranic Dimension

Editor's introduction

The associations with Islam are very different. Certain regions draw attention by their more moderate appearances of Islam. There we can observe that the understanding of religion changes with the respective background culture. Among the shaping factors famous religious outstanding figures and personalities play the leading role. Thus, in this respect one comes about the moderate Islam picture of Turkey without fail to Said Nursi. Islam in Turkey is shaped by him and, in addition, his enlightened writings find more and more spreading and are established themselves as setting trends and pointing towards the future.

Said Nursi provides a picture of Koranic Islam which is based on faith, prayer and ethics. Political Islam has got no place with him. He once said, that his aim is to reconcile the Koran and the universe so that humankind recognizes its own worth and significant position and finds the way to God. The current of enlightenment that Nursi initiated has grasped millions of people. Nursi transforms people into philosophers by motivating them to philosophize and to contemplate God and the world. He opens closed, forgotten, and new accesses to men and women, showing them how to revalue and to experience their faith in God and their religion anew in light of today's time of science, technology, and of referring to reason and the demand for rational and apologetic founding, free from the incrustations of the previous centuries.

Nevertheless, sometimes it is somewhat laborious to decipher his core statements and understand them clearly. Everybody whether a so-called layman or expert, a sociologist or a theologian, an orientalist, journalist, or a Christian and Muslim representatives of the institutional interreligious dialog, winds up evaluating, categorising and interpreting the things based on their previous experiences and their respective individual backgrounds. Hence, this is the comparative basis when introducing the *Risale-i Nur*, Said Nursi's work, into the scientific international discourse. That means, because one is just getting to know Said Nursi, the source view of the scientists is only partly or not at all Said Nursi's measure of the religion which he represents, exposes and to which he leads.

According to Said Nursi balance is extremely important in religious matters, since exaggeration and understatement do no justice to a true faith. One must grasp the essence and the original purpose of religion. But only the intellect of the individual and its heart solely are able to reach the cognition. It requires merely small sparks and impulses to get going what slumbers in them. According to the Koranic address "See and comprehend"¹ Said Nursi analyzes himself and the world. Thus his conclusions are results of his intensive profound analyses. They also bear proof of the intensity and determination with which Nursi himself wrestled. It is in this manner that Nursi reveals manners of self-exploration to those who read his works. All subtle derivations from his observations result in only one aim: Come to faith and you will be part of the sublimity of the universe.

Close examinations of Nursi, the man—his method and his style—don't lead one to conclude that he ever suffered personal orientation crises, as some posit in the case of Abraham, for example, whose search for God under the stars² was his personal search, even though it was merely a lesson for his people. Said Nursi's identity exhibits continuity.

¹ Cf., e.g., Koran Sura 29:19; 16:79; 9:126; 51:21; 21:30 and many more.

² Koran 6:75-80.

The Basic Approach

1. Religion and Science

His treatises are distinguished by a certain pragmatism. Said Nursi describes a dead end out from there the light appears at the end of the tunnel. In contempt of materialist atheism – because it robs humans of the perspective of life and shrinks human on nothing - he uses adjectives in the unusual form of the superlative, which for themselves might look a bit exaggerated at first sight, but in the context at their conciseness don't miss their correctness.

Nursi's intention is simply to motivate people to think for themselves and understand the value of life in its diversification and its dynamism. Everything bears sense and beauty, because everything reflects the beauty of God and his names. Thus he draws attention to life's positivity. And in a multifaceted way his subtle observations and logical conclusions deliver a lively report of experience and knowledge about God's love, mercy and almightiness.

Starting from the holistic view of the world and the humans anchored in Islam, Said Nursi builds the bridge between the sciences. Indeed, the natural sciences and theology are not mutually exclusive. Further, they cannot replace one another. Rather, they complement and affirm one another.

By the reconciliation of the sciences, new dimensions are revealed to the human beings in their religiosity. The final goal is realization of an enlightened individual in whose complete conception of faith both sciences belong to it. This reciprocal connection and conditionality are made clear by the following often mentioned statements of Nursi which are typical for:³

"The science of religion is the light of the conscience. Civilisation's (natural) sciences are the light of the intellect. The truth becomes obvious through a union of the two, which inspires incentive (motivation) and initiative.

If [the two sciences] are separated, it gives rise to ignorance and fanaticism in religion and fallacies and scepticism in the science."

³ Said Nursi, *Risale-i Nur Külliyyatı*, Istanbul 1996 [henceforth referred to as *K*], 2 volume, *Münazarat*, 1956.

"Religion without science is a superstition. Science without religion has gone astray."

This approach by Said Nursi touches upon basic attitudes and is a wide area which extends from his proposals for solution to reform the traditional education system, the Madrasas, in order to counter the general educational crisis, as well as the concrete measures to realize like the establishing of universities, interdisciplinary, polyglot etc. accordingly modern teaching methods and the determined criteria.

A cancellation is given to the abuse of science for atheism. The scientists may not disregard religion and ethics, for it prevents them from succumbing completely to materialism. - and the theologians should enter into natural sciences to train and teach their mind and intellect, in order that they are familiar with these sciences and be capable of linking the spiritual disciplines with natural sciences.

In this context Said Nursi always demands their scientificness that the theologians have to explore with analyzing, to go to the depth, to find the roots and to free themselves from the influences and dyeing of the centuries and consider everything with logic.

It is a historical fact that on account of the many statements in the sources of Islam about the high value and importance of science, knowledge and learning, science has experienced an unprecedented period of bloom by Muslims. Nevertheless, in the course of time, people moved on to limit science only to theology and the jurisprudence derived from it and neglected over this the humanities and natural sciences. It is also such neglect that has made it necessary to reconcile religion with the natural sciences, the burgeoning modern age, and rapid technological progress.

From the point of the religion the human achievements, the progress in civilisation and technology ought be seen as positive. These are Islamic attributes and qualities. Religiously motivated aversions remained indefensible. Human fears and insecurity in the face of progress could be better laid to rest if religion were reconciled with science.

On the one hand, we witness people's alienation from civilisation on account of their alienation from Islamic religion, which led once to the neglect of science, research and technology and to the other to the neglect of the scientificness in religion.

On the other hand, we witness – as a disastrous development - the alienation of people from religion, ethics and moral values in the civilization, stemming from materialist science and exploitative economic practices.

Only through a synthesis of religion and the natural sciences, guided by reason, can these developments be transformed into positives. It shouldn't favour one over the other, nor should it be the result of subsuming one within the other. Neither religion can substitute nor abolish the natural sciences, and vice versa, natural sciences the religion, rather, as has previously been shown, the principle of complementariness exists and should be observed. Consequently, experience and wisdom flow in, resulting in a well-balanced judgment and alliance.

At the edge it should be noted: Since Islam's point of departure is distinct from, for example, the line of argument introduced by those advocating creationism in the USA, the question remains to what extent Said Nursi fits in with such controversies, as some have suggested he does.

Indeed, there are similarities to the analyses of Said Nursi, because, in Islam, God creates according to His laws in nature. However, the knowledge of science is not contradicted by the Koran. Nursi does question scientific attitudes that cast doubt on the faith in the creator in itself. He deconstructs such lack of faith using scientific arguments and by introducing logical proofs that provide evidence of the creator.

In the same way, Said Nursi challenges those naturalistic theses that leave no room for faith in the creator, since they are rooted in shallow scientificnesses. In the end, the overcoming of the apparent contradictoriness and the confirmation of the referentiality on reason and logic in faith serve to strengthen the truthfulness and certainty in faith, and help science in its entitled recognition and its rights.

Human beings should get from imitating belief to a deliberate and conscious belief (*taklidi iman* - *tahkiki iman*). When this is achieved, belief is internalised. Said Nursi observed the insufficiency that resulted when faith was only exterior, stuck, as it were, on outward appearances. For a conscious internalised belief it requires the satisfaction of heart and mind.

The application of the method of the Koran, the emphasis of the science and the scientificness as well as the addressing of the individual, furthermore by freeing oneself from the incrustation and dyeing of the previous centuries, by

demonstrating the original purpose and the original aim of the religion by means of clear and exceedingly differentiated commenting of the Koran verses, makes Said Nursi to the initiator of an enlightenment and educational movement.

2. Philosophy and Mysticism.

To draw the bow between philosophy and mysticism under evincing of new relationships Said Nursi likewise succeeds, while, as in the above example, he knows how to analyze philosophical expositions with rational arguments.

For this, one can take a brief example from the introduction to “Ayetül Kübra” when he elaborates meticulously on the assertion, that the negation, accepting non-existence, of something that is not particular and directed to any place, i.e. something that is not singular and bounded by time and place, cannot be proved.⁴

Another example of the religious-philosophical depths into which Said Nursi delves is his debate on nothingness (adem). He comes to the conclusion that if existence would flow into non-existence, if it would have an end in non-existence, this is more awful than hell. To go in nothingness is unacceptable. This would be the worst end.⁵

About nothingness (adem) he ponders in the chapter of "Welfare in illness"⁶ as follows:

"Ill brother, knows this! The basis of evil, misfortune even of sins is basically the emptiness, the nothingness. The emptiness or nothingness is an evil and darkness. Continuous comfort and stasis is almost nothingness, it dwindles in nothingness. The doubtfulness and indefiniteness in this nothingness gives rise to oppression. Motion, change has substance and builds up existence and being. This existence is worthwhile, it is clearness, definiteness - it's light itself. The opposite of nothingness is fullness (being good, blessing). Stasis promotes the disappearance, causes the evanescence and dying. Motion and change builds on something, so that something originates. ..."

⁴ K., *Yedinci Şua*, (*Ayetül Kübra*), p. 896.

⁵ Cf. e.g., K., *İsarat'ül-İ'caz*, p. 1189.

⁶ K., 25. *Lem'a*, 19. *Devâ*, p. 698.

Illness, a facet of life, possesses a dynamic capable of ennobling, reinforcing, and developing the value of life.

His executions produce summaries such as:

"Indeed, above the head of those who do not know God there hangs a world full of grief. The world of those who recognises God is full of mental happiness and light. According to the strength of their belief's degree they sense and feel it."⁷

Belief is not only the key to happiness for the hereafter, but also for the life on earth. Indeed belief holds the key to happiness in both worlds, as Said Nursi demonstrates in deductions like this:

"Faith points to unity. Unity points to devotion. Devotion leads to trust and patience. And this bears the happiness of the two worlds."⁸

True blessing is that which takes both life on earth and the hereafter into consideration, rather than remaining content with civilisation's achievements.

3. The most Urgent in Islam - Faith

Man is created to recognise God, to believe in Him and due to his prayers, according to Koran 51, 56. With this Said Nursi opens up what it means "to serve God ", this antiquated mode of expression, that the knowledge of God is followed by gratitude.

Nursi views science, freedom, sincerity, hope, work, and steadfastness as fundamental to human life and capable of giving it meaning. Consequently, according to Said Nursi, the secret to better coexistence also lies in recognising the purpose of creation and in understanding the principles of life. Keeping the material well-being of everyone in view, while maintaining a comprehensive consideration of the human being and starting from its natural disposition and its motivations – instinct, intellect, aggression – Said

⁷ K., 25. *Lem'a*, 8. *Dev'a*, p. 694.

⁸ K., *Sözler*, p. 132.

Nursi elaborates the basic ideals of human behaviour and ethics, which, presented in relation to their opposites, clearly become evident. In this manner, he explains what for every individual must be the straight way - the way of religion (*sirat-i mustakim*).⁹

Recognising, with enthusiasm and the deepest conviction, that the most urgent matters in Islam is faith and prayer that imply happiness in life on earth and in the hereafter, Said Nursi's whole corpus argues persistently with the terms of faith.

Colin Turner sums it up thusly:¹⁰

"Over the past 25 years (*now more than 35 years, Ed.) there has been much palaver about 'Islamic revival', about Islamic governments, about the reintroduction of Islamic laws. We have even seen one 'Islamic revolution' (Iranian). The words 'Moslem', 'Islam ' and 'Islamic' are everywhere. But hardly we hear words like 'God ' or 'faith '. And so the *Risale-i Nur* stands there so lonesome¹¹."

Consistent with this theme, Turner addresses the *Risale-i Nur* further:

"Because the *Risale-i Nur* is a commentary for our times about the treasures of the Koran. Indeed if we understand the Koran as a guide to the universe, the *Risale-i Nur* is a guide to the Koran. Correctly observing that the most awful illness besetting our age is unbelief, the author of the *Risale-i Nur* sets about to explain the central lessons of the Koran, founded on the criteria which are settled by the Koran itself (*tafsirul Koran bil-Koran*), and thus the author doesn't sate anything from himself. The main difference between the *Risale-i Nur* and other works of exegesis is that the *Risale-i Nur* gives precedence to the faith's question through research (*tahqiqi iman*) plus the fact that it speaks in terms which are relevant for the people of this century.

To the best of my knowledge, the *Risale-i Nur* is the only comprehensive body based on the teachings of the Koran in today's time which argues persistently with the problems of humans in terms of faith. An understanding of *iman* (faith), why it is necessary for us to nourish and

⁹ K., *Sinubat*, 2049; *İsarat'ül-İcaz*, 23 u.a.

¹⁰ Colin Turner, Dr., in his writing "Renewal in Islam", in 1993, to the 33-rd day of death of Said Nursi, *Islam und Aufklärung*, p. 115ff, Istanbul/Stuttgart 2004.

¹¹ 'Lonesome, singular' are also meanings of 'bediu' in the title of *Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*.

increase faith is essential for human to escape the threat of destruction: I believe that the *Risale-i Nur* gives us this understanding.

It demonstrates for non-believers the irrationality of atheistic unbelief. It shows the believers how they can revalue, reconfirm and increase their faith. This last point is of extreme importance, because the general decline of the Islamic world was caused not by some irreconcilableness with implications which were maintained by certain scientific progress as was partly the case with the Christianity. Rather the decline in the Islamic world is the result of the weakness of the Muslims, their deficiency. ...

It is a fact that the West could progress materially only because Christianity was pressed to the margins. But in the Islamic world the abandonment of religion caused only decline - a decline which is still be observed all around us and shows presently few signs to be to an end. ... "

4. In Favour of a New Self-Conception

Regarding their situation and constitution, Said Nursi gives the following explanation for the question, why Muslims had fallen behind in their development:¹²

1. Acting against the Sharia.

This implies, in the reason, all the other points.

To be heeded is the "Sharia definition" according to Nursi. He criticises ibidem among other things: "We have not understood sense and aim of the Sharia."¹³

All areas which concern the private life (faith, prayer, ethics), as well as in the social life (security, freedom, justice) have been neglected.

2. Lots of opportunists have interpreted the Sharia far from the religious way according to the wishes of the leaders for their solidification of power.

¹² K., *Divanı Harb-i Örfî*, p. 1934.

¹³ Cf. e.g.: "Through their yelling like parrots 'We want Sharia!' sense and aim are not understandable any more and so they have raped this venerable concept.", Said Nursi in his answers to the questions of the tribe leaders, K., *Münazarat*, p. 1946; or *Divanı Harb-i Örfî*, p. 1920

3. Due to fanatics, bearing the title "scholar (alim)," who get stuck on the dictionary's meaning of single words in the Koran and the Sunna, and don't comprehend the actual sense.

4. Since Europe's progress in civilisation is difficult to be copied, one has imitated the external appearance and simultaneously omitting its good, worthy of imitation, exemplary sides.

Summarised, Said Nursi sees the blame with "some leaders, counterfeit scholars and unqualified men of religion."¹⁴ Repeatedly, Said Nursi also points to these three causes which have thrown back the Muslims, or entitles them as their true enemies:

1. Ignorance (*cebalet*)
2. Poverty (*zaruret*)
3. Disagreement (*ibtılah*)

His early writings are to be emphasised in view of his criticism of society and his discussion with the problems of society in particular.

By name in *Münazarat* he gathered his relevant lectures and publications in newspaper articles and suchlike. But also in his other writings, e.g., in *Sünubat* and *Lema'lar* Said Nursi comes on these subjects and opens solutions on the way of self-criticism for a new self-conception. He simultaneously evinces hope and shows ways out of depression.

He says: "Time places conditions. Things, traditions which are no longer relevant to our times must be erased. We need sincerity, straightforwardness, honesty, reliability, unselfish action for God, loyalty, steadfastness, solidarity."¹⁵

Pessimism contradicts his whole basic attitude and is according to him without any basis. He offers hopeful perspectives, based on the acknowledgement of the creator, and because the future belongs to science, reason and technology, the Koranic wisdoms - since they are based on the arguments of reason - would surely attain validity.¹⁶

¹⁴ Ibid. footnote 12.

¹⁵ K., *Münazarat*, p. 1951.

¹⁶ Cf. e.g., Said Nursi's famous Damascus speech (K., *Hutbe-i Şâmiye*, p. 1961).

In every phase of his life, Said Nursi stood unequivocally opposed to the politicisation of religion. The politicisation of religion would contradict the nature of religion.

Nursi says: "Presented with 1000 political advantages I prefer one truth of religion."¹⁷

He pulls clear borders between political commitment and the engagement for religion.¹⁸

In the course of the social upheavals and to that what the future requires, Nursi sees the necessity of the separation of the offices concerning the religious and political leadership and he pleads for it.¹⁹

He always rejected the support of the uprisings for an Islamic state as well as the support of Islamic parties.

In the name of Islam he explains clearly: "Sharia, the way of religion, is 99% ethics, prayer, the hereafter and virtuousness. Only 1% is legal system. And this is incumbent upon the state."²⁰

Ethical social principles and the commandments of religion are frequently offered as a solution for everything, although everyone has his own illusion of the Sharia.²¹ Fight against grievances in society, and achieving material prosperity and social justice for everyone are complex matters. Through education and diligence of every single one by means of the motivation of religion one is rather able to solve such problems.

¹⁷ K., *Tarihce'i Hayat*, p. 2170; Şaban Döğen, *Özelli Sözler*, p. 162.

¹⁸ K., *Sünubat*, p. 2050.

¹⁹ K., *Münazarat*, p. 1945.

²⁰ K., *Dıvanı Harb-i Örfi*, p. 1922.

²¹ Cf. K., *Münazarat*, p.1940: Question: Many cause depravity although they think they act well.

How can depravity result from the will for the better? Answer: Demanding something which is divorced from reality is destructive. There is no state which would be absolutely perfect. Therefore, one looks whether the good works of a government outweigh compared with its mistakes. I view those people as anarchists. God forbid, if one of them lived 1000 years and all possible governments would come to power in this time, he will agree on account of his fantasy conceptions with no one. As a result of his illusions he always has an inclination to destruction . . . , because his occupation is always revolt and turmoil (*fesad*).

In accordance with Said Nursi and his universal understanding of freedom, religion is and remains an individual affair of conscience and therefore a private matter.²²

Freedom is a condition of faith in Islam. Nothing can prosper without freedom. Said Nursi postulates:

"I am against every form of oppression. Wherever I find it, I oppose it. For me the oppression of science and scholarship is the worst. I can live without bread - but not without freedom.

Only in liberty can everything prosper. The more faith develops, the more noble becomes freedom."²³

According to the fact that Islam and nationalism show an absolute contradiction, Said Nursi pillories nationalism and racism as an ancient evil of the conflicts among the people. The affiliation in Islam is, instead of nation and race, the religious bonds, home and social bonds. This lets originate brotherliness and peace, and contains no outward aggression.

Eventually, humanity will overcome the trends of aggressive nationalism, discriminating, despising, excluding, and looking down upon others. Sincere faith and responsible action for God are the true means to eliminate those conditions which burden people's lives and imperil their eternity.

Countering the ideological hostages and countering thoughts of conspiracy and plotting and with the Islamic principle "No burdened soul can bear another's load"²⁴ - there is only the individual responsibility, Said Nursi says:

"The time of national hatred and hostility is over. Two world wars have demonstrated what destruction, calamity and immense grief it causes; it obviously doesn't bear the slightest use. We should pay no mind to the machinations of hostile-minded individuals - so long as it doesn't mean any forcible violations. God's justice and God's wrath will be enough for them."²⁵

²² Cf. e.g., K., *Lemeât*, p. 322.

²³ K., *Emirdağ Lâhikası*, S. 1682.

²⁴ Koran 17:15.

²⁵ K., *Hutbe-i Şamiye*, p. 1968.

Another essential point ought to be emphasised here - Said Nursi's view of believers of other religions, which put him also 100 years ahead of his time. His vision was that of an alliance of believers regardless of their individual views. In order to serve belief and the welfare of humanity, it is necessary to put aside the topics of dispute with the other religions and work together and endeavour.

As a man of balance and religion, Said Nursi had an immense effect on his fellowmen. He rescued many human lives through his arbitrating and mediating role during the uprisings and conflicts in this unsettled times of his early years, when the situation still allowed him to be in public life.

If we look at the biography of Said Nursi further, it strikes that for more than three decades of his life Said Nursi had to suffer persecution, exile and prison.

For a today's reader, it is hardly to be understood, why such a person who has carried and represented such ideas and who has achieved enormous, was subjected to such intense state repressions. Even today, Nursi's public image has never been officially rehabilitation by the Turkish state.

Perhaps, this may be due to the shortcomings of those who have entered upon his inheritance and much of it what Said Nursi represented, yet haven't sufficiently themselves internalized.

Nevertheless, Said Nursi's precipitation in society and beyond is so great in the structure of the overall development to the better that big hope also exists with regard to his official acknowledgement.

Koranic Dimension

Contemporary interpretation of religion and religious practise is crucial for the social progress, for preservation of peace and the welfare of all. Indeed, the elementary statements of religion are timeless and are universal, but the religion must take into account the development of civilisation and of humanity and it must be attuned to modern cultures of understanding. This is all the more important in times like ours which have experienced huge upheavals and changes and in which huge changes take place.

Various Islamic scholars have stepped to the fore during the ending 19th and 20th century. Nevertheless, comprehensive and enduring answers to the

questions of time have given only few of them. Said Nursi is an exception, and there are weighty points that make him unique and that elevate and set him apart from all others.

For the depoliticization of religion he has unequivocally indicated the way and made clear what main matters in religion are and what religion stands for.

Already at the beginning of the last century, Nursi has seen the occurrences and developments in our fast-moving epoch, the massive problems of the people, looming on the horizon and the role of Islam and Muslims and has responded to these issues.

He stands as an Islamic scholar together with the Koran as an answer, counterpoint and bulwark against all anarchy and terror especially justified in the name of religion, against the abuse of religion for influence and power politics, and against the massive threat to peace, freedom and security.

The *Risale-i Nur* commences profoundly at the roots, releases new ways of thinking in order to make people human beings - on the axis of critical and conscious faith.

Through the centuries, Islamic scholars have neglected the basic questions of mankind like "Who am I? Where do I come from? Where am I going? What is my purpose in life and my task?" and have spent their time more on external and political matters.

Yet without answers to these basic questions and to questions about faith and its basis, turning to external things, only deepens the misery. The Islamic world would need more of spiritual projects than of a political project.

The solution to these problems was to transfer the aspects of the Koran on this century.

Mankind has grown spiritually in terms of civilisation, so that they would be theoretically better partners for receiving the last-valid revelation today than it was the case earlier. Humans have approached this through their development. Nevertheless, one must free oneself from the burdens of the past, in order to enable new impulses of understanding and empathy for mind and heart. In this way, it is up to us to view the Koran as a whole, with an enlightened eye, from the perspective of our age. Or put another way: We

must learn to evaluate matters through the lens of the Koran, ever mindful of the standards and criteria of our time.

The fact that such a required dynamic of renewal is actually own to Islam, can be gleaned from the Hadith which preannounces it.²⁶

The following illustrations which Colin Turner states when explaining this Mujaddid-Hadith, give us further information to the theme of renewal:

"... this Hadith wants to say that whenever necessity dictates, God inspires a person or several persons who, through their life and their work, display the realities of believe and of Islam to the people how they should be demonstrated properly and should be lived properly: in a way which corresponds to the true spirit of the revelation and the needs of the age.

Thus, the mujaddid accomplishes two extremely important things: He re-reveals the Koran to the people of his own time just as it should be revealed and as it has been revealed indeed, by the Prophet 1.400 years earlier; he acts in a way which is accessible to the level of the mind of the people in his own time, and thus he uncovers aspects of the Koran which were hidden to the people of Medina in 7th century."²⁷

Whoever gives serious thought to Said Nursi and his work, will find like Colin Turner and many thousands or even millions of others the stamp of the mujaddid on each of the sides of the *Risale-i Nur*.

The fact that Said Nursi was able to manage this extremely demanding task, presupposes immense knowledge and even much more. A brief look at the extraordinary of Said Nursi and his way of education delivers the confirmation to what extent these conditions were given.

Already in his apprenticeships and study time, Said Nursi aroused, as a youngster, big sensation due to his ingenuity of having learned and verified the enormous standard works in few days and of knowing them with his photographic memory by heart.

The whole knowledge, which could be ordinarily taught within 20 years and be acquired he had made himself own within few months.

²⁶ "At the beginning of every century God will appoint someone in this community who, in an enlightened manner, will visualise, contemporize and regenerate the religion." (Hadith by Ebu Davud)

²⁷ P. 111, footnote 10.

In the disputes, usually at that time among the scholars, there was no one who could hold a candle to him. What at this point should be pointed out just, is on the fact that Said Nursi had appropriated all knowledge of all relevant Islam books of the epochs up to then as well as the current status of knowledge in science and civilisation.

Commenting on his studies, Said Nursi claimed that the books he read represented rungs and steps with which to climb higher and higher, until he finally reached a place where the Koran was sufficient for him to ascend any further.²⁸

On this basis and with the help of the inspiration of God he penned the *Risale-i Nur*, meaning approximately "The Light of the Koran", this work of explanation, commentary on and affirmation of the Koran.

A few extracts to conclude this introduction:

"He who has grasped the core, the essentials, no longer preoccupies himself with outward appearances. But he who does not know the truth, loses himself in illusions.

He who does not know the absolute way, gets lost in exaggeration and understatement. He who has no measurement, deceives himself, let himself be deceived, and deceives others."²⁹

"The world is a book of the Eternal One. Hence, the words and letters do not testify to themselves, but to the essence and the attributes of their writer."³⁰

"The more the time passes, the more the Koran becomes younger. Its secrets become all the more evident."

In order to state an obvious example for this quote, matching also to the implementations "... and thus he uncovers aspects of the Koran, which were hidden to the people of Medina in the 7th century":

²⁸ Necmeddin Şahiner, *Bilinmeyen Taraflarıyla Bediüzzaman Said Nursi*, İstanbul 2004, p. 76.

²⁹ K., *Muakimat*, p. 1998.

³⁰ K., *Onbirinci Şua*, p. 955; *Yirmi İkinci Söz*, p. 128

The discovery of the potash-graphic miracle of the Koran is Said Nursi's merit. When rendering the Koran using the Suras al-Ihlas (112) and al-Kewser (108) as his per line verse measure, and designating 15 lines per page, something extraordinary appears obviously for all to see:

On every page the last line appears in full and ends with a period (full stop). Moreover the names of God mentioned on a page always appear below one another.³¹ Thereto a Protestant priest once remarked: "He who has eyes to see, sees."

The *Risale-i Nur* fascinates many people, gives them spiritual strength, and provides them with rational, heartfelt and emotional proof of faith.

Since the author of the *Risale-i Nur* distinguishes himself by the fact that in the *Risale-i Nur* he brings together and presents the quintessence of all the existing relevant works of Islam -as many professors and experts have already formulated it in this kind- the study of the *Risale-i Nur* must be also extremely efficient.

It is with good reason that Said Nursi appeals imploringly to the people they may read and study the *Risale-i Nur*, so they would attain in the shortest time profundities which would ordinarily claim many years of intensive study.

And not by chance he says: "He, who studies the *Risale-i Nur* for one year, becomes a scholar for his time."³²

The books are a key -as his admirers express it - that everyone can use to unlook treasures of belief for himself and his life situation - a key that unlooks insights, positive potentials, and releases the best in every individual.

In *Münazarat* Said Nursi states the following:³³

Those who looked upon my clothes took me for a merchant and asked me:

"Are you a merchant?"

"Yes, I am a merchant and a chemist."

"How so?"

³¹ The first handwritten manuscripts for printing such Koran-copies were delivered by Hüsref Altınbaşak and Hamit Aytaç. For the first time such Koran-copies were printed in Germany, namely in Berlin since the 1970s.

³² K., *Yirmi İkinci Lem'a*, p. 672.

³³ K., *Münazarat*, p. 1958.

"There are two materials which I merge together. And it originates a remedial drink and an electric light."

"Where can it be found?"

"In the market of virtues and civilisation, in a vessel which stands on two feet, on whose front 'human' stands, in whom a box like a black diamond sits with 'heart' written across it."

"How does one call this then?"

"Faith, love, reliability, striving (endeavouring) for the good (*iman, muhabbet, sadakat, hamiyet*)",

I answered.