

Fundamentals of Faith as Reflected in Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's *Risale-i Nur*

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Abstract:

Today, scientific development is in full swing, knowledge is being spread widely, unlikely, and there is no existence of the creation in these scientific developments. Materialism took the man away from belief. Although discovery of the universe is essential, people are moving further away from one another. In this scenario there is a dire need to solve these problems in the light of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's *Risale-i-Nur*. Nursi was a great Muslim thinker and theologian of the 20th century who inspired the spiritually dead society of Turkey and led the revivalism of Muslims during his life.

The human mind controls all the activities of a man. This is the centre of human body. These feelings are fundamentally based on some permanent strong thinking and concepts. These principles are called our belief, i.e., faith. This centre giving directions to practice a man, it also controls all the deeds of a man. The single motivation behind all our activities is our intention. "It is righteousness to believe in God and the Last Day and the Angels and the Book, and Messengers" (Qur'ān 2:177). The holy Prophet (S.A.W.) said "All the deeds are base on intentions. The Prophet (S.A.W.) clearly told five principles as basic beliefs i.e. Tauheed, Belief on Angels, His Prophets, Books and answerable on the Day of Judgment." *Risale-i-Nur* played a major role in keeping the Islamic faith alive. This discusses the Islamic fundamentals of faith reflected in Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's work *Risale-i Nur*.

1. Introduction

I have just one purpose. That is; as I get nearer to my grave, we hear the sounds of Bolshevik owls (supporters) in this country of Islam. These sounds damage the tenets of faith of the Islamic World. It captivates the public, particularly the youth, by making them faithless. Fighting against them with all my strength, I am inviting the youth and the Muslims to faith. I am struggling against these faithless masses. Allah willing, I wish to enter Allah's presence through this struggle of mine. This is all I do.

- Bediuzzaman Said Nursi

There are many who curse at the darkness in the world, but those who light a candle to disperse the darkness are few. The thinker, striver in the way of God, and renewer of religion Bediuzzaman Said Nursi was one of these rare people.

What makes you think this winter will last forever?

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Every winter is followed by springtime,
 And every night by daylight
 - Bediuzzaman Said Nursi.

The story of the decline and rebirth of Islam in Turkey is one of the most significant and underappreciated dramas in world history. It features a protagonist who, against all odds, preserves a precious seed of life in the midst of winter so it can bloom in the spring. The hero of this drama, Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, triumphed over that peculiarly Turkish species of Islamophobic fascism known as Kemalism. Bediuzzaman (the name means "marvel of the age") was born in 1876 and lived through the long winter of Turkish Islam. Roughly the first half his life was spent struggling to preserve Islam during the twilight of the Ottoman Empire, the second half coincided with the reign of the Islamophobic Kemalism.¹

This movement gripped Turkey following its defeat in World War I, and its last vestiges are becoming increasingly marginal features of Turkish national life today as Islam returns to the centre and stage. Bediuzzaman realized, more clearly than most modern revivalists of Islam, that something fundamental had changed in the modern world and that Islam was going to need to adapt. That fundamental change was the rise of mass literacy and the development of modern communications systems. The world's population is increasingly becoming an interlinked web of words and ideas.²

Given this ever more elaborate powerful web of words and ideas and the ever more wasteful horror of modern warfare, Bediuzzaman saw that the defence and propagation of Islam would, in the future, come to depend more and more on Muslims' ability to defend their faith in the realm of ideas.³

I am in the winds of belief, what blows against me in the winds of unbelief
 -Bediuzzaman Said Nursi.

Nursi's situation has many similarities with the situation that confronts every person of faith in the West. Nursi was confronted with an aggressive secularism. He wanted to affirm the achievements of science and democracy, as do we, and felt it important to challenge unbelief, as do we, Nursi is a mirror that continues to reflect the challenges of the world in which we all live.⁴

Nursi lived during a global crisis. Materialism was triumphant, communism was widespread, and Muslims were being urged to reject Islam. Shocked by the West's

¹ Prof. Dr. Kevin Barrett, *The Light The Methods of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*, (USA: Nur -The Light, Yeni Asya, 2011), p. 2 www.yeniasyausa.com (Accessed on 7 November 2014)

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ian S. Markham, *Engaging With Bediuzzaman Said Nursi: A Model Of Interfaith Dialogue* (USA: Virginia Theological Seminary, 2009), p. 5.

scientific and military victories and influenced by modern thought, Muslims were facing the challenge of losing any connection with their roots and sometimes their belief. Nursi, however, pointed people to the source of faith and inculcated in them a strong hope for an overall revival. His writings showed Islam's truth and opposed the growing deviation from it. Relying on God and his firm conviction in Islam's truth and driven by his powerful hope for the future of the Muslim world, he defended Islam and sought to raise a new generation that would represent Islam correctly.¹

Nursi worked for a people's revival, infusing them with modern and traditional education as well as spiritual training. Many contemporaries explicitly or tacitly acknowledged him as the most important thinker and writer of twentieth-century Turkey or even of the Muslim world. Despite his leadership of a new Islamic religious and intellectual revival, he remained a humble servant of God. His life exemplified his understanding of humanity and demonstrated that the desire for fame is the same as show and ostentation, a poisonous honey extinguishing the heart's spiritual vitality. He not only diagnosed the Muslim world's long-standing "diseases" but also offered the most effective cures for them. Basing his activity on the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* (the Prophet's sayings and acts) as well as the Islamic tradition and natural phenomena (considered signs of divine existence and unity), he concentrated on proving the pillars of Islam, the necessity of belief, worship, morality, and good conduct, including certain socio-economic issues facing contemporary Islam.⁶

This article presents Nursi's ideas on fundamentals of faith in Islam as articulated in *Risale-i-Nur*. The main focus here is to explore some of Nursi's opinions of Said Nursi on the fundamentals of faith. In other words this article will explore the fundamentals of faith in Islam with special reference to *Risale -i-Nur*.

2 The Concept of the Fundamentals of Faith

While beliefs (faith) are the principles, all the rest of the religion is practice. The practices are like the tree whereas beliefs are the seeds. Just as the existence of a tree without its seeds is not possible, so practice is not possible without beliefs. Therefore, unless beliefs exist, the rest of Islam cannot be formulated. The *Qur'an* says:

It is righteousness to believe in God and the Last Day and the Angels and the Book, and Messengers²

It is very hard to give up everything and only stick to one's path. It is very difficult task, unless we are convinced by some important creeds. Islam is just like this. It is very

¹ Bediüzzaman Said Nursi, *The Risale-i Nur Collection: The Gleams Reflections on Qur'anic Wisdom and Spirituality*, Trans. Hüseyin Akarsu, (New Jersey, USA: Tughra Books, 2008).

² Qur'an 2:177.

difficult to act in accordance with Islamic principles. Only those who have full faith in some basic creeds can practice Islam. This is called *iman* (faith). A Muslim cannot be a true Muslim unless he :

- believes in God and accepts the basic creed of Islam, *La Ilaha Illallah* (There is no God but Allah)
- accepts the Prophethood of Muhammad (S.A.W.) i.e., Muhammadur Rasullah
- accepts all those creeds which have been ordained by God and His Prophet, the divine Books revealed to the Prophets, the Angels, and fate.

Beliefs make a man active and steadfast in his endeavors and compel him to seek the pleasure of Allah (SWT). So, man's basic duty is belief and supplication. Unbelief makes man an extremely impotent animal.¹ Nursi maintains that belief is a light and through it man rises to the highest of the high and acquires a value worthy of paradise. And through the darkness of unbelief, he descends to the lowest of the low and falls to a position fit for Hell.²

3 Faith and Its Role in Islam

It is a well-known fact that Islam is a complete way of life. It guides people in all spheres of human life, temporal as well as spiritual. The concept of firm belief in Islam is an integral part of every Islamic society and Islamic state. It is not a religion in the sense that other religions are: it is not merely the faith of an individual and cannot be confined to any narrow sphere. Muslims believe that the entire earth, East and West, North and South, is the land of Allah and must be governed by the universal law of Allah. A true believer cannot accept the superiority of any man-made law over the divine law sent by the Almighty through his last Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.), and practising Islam means surrendering one's whole life to the will of Allah. But our present context does not seem to permit this.³

Nursi sees belief as the most important issue for humanity and unbelief that threatens eternal life as the greatest danger facing humanity. To him, gaining strong belief is more important than gaining dominion over the world dominion and saving one's belief is like saving an eternal world.⁴ He considers believers and unbeliever as winners and losers respectively. He writes:

¹ Al-Haj Maulana Fazlul Karim, *The Religion of Man* (Dacca: Islamic Mission Library, 1949).

² Said Nursi, *23rd The Word*, trans. Sukran Vahide (Ankara: Sozlar Publications, 2009).

³ Rashid, Shaz ed., *The Problem of Muslims In India, The Aligarh Magazine, Int.Print Press,1984.*

⁴ www.stuttgarter-stiftung.de/cover-text.pdf.

If they do not secure the document of belief they will lose. And this age, many are losing the case because of the plague of materialism. One of the divines of reality and investigators of truth observed in one place that out of forty people who died, only a few won, the others lost.¹

In his view, belief has the value of a diamond while politics and worldly affairs are only pieces of glass, and thus using religion for political gain is a great injustice and insult to religion. As a result, Nursi viewed service to faith that manifested itself as books in the *Risale-i-Nur* collection above all worldly politics. An individual's belief is the key to and light of an eternal property as wide as this world.²

4 What is *Risale-i-Nur*?

Imam Bediuzzaman authored the *Risale-i Nur* Collection in order to neutralize the negative effects of Western civilization in the Islamic world, to silence the atheists who were aggressively criticizing the religion, to refresh the loyalty of Muslims to the Qur'an and the Sunnah, and to revive the religious life of the people.³

As he describes on several occasions in *Risale-i-Nur*, the awful disease of his time was the spiritual sicknesses that emerged from atheistic materialism. In his works he employed very strong arguments to prove the basics of the faith, some of which are as follows:

- *the realities and the truth of the unity and the existence of God,*
- *the proof of life after death,*
- *the truth of Prophethood,*
- *the truth of the spirit and the angel,*

The role of moral values in the human endeavor for a just society in his approach of proving the truth of faith is based on the names and attributes of God manifested in the universe. Thus, he ingeniously transforms the universe into a vast book that helps us see and understand God. Then the universe becomes a book of creation to help us read the revealed heavenly book.⁴

¹ Nursi, *The Rays*, trans. Sukran Vahide (Ankara: Sozlar Publications, 2009).

² www.stuttgarter-stiftung.de/cover-text.pdf.

³ "Risale-i Nur: The Concept and How to Benefit from It," *Magazine Pen*, October-December 2013 Issue 19.

⁴ Abu Rabi Ibrahim, ed, *Spiritual Dimensions of Badiuzzaman Said Nursi's Risale-i Nur*, (USA: State University, n.d.), p.1.

5 The Approach of *Risale-i-Nur*: The Concept of Fundamentals of Faith

Just as the lamp of Sun enlightens the City of the Universe so does the Lamp of Qur'an enlighten the minds, hearts and spirits. Help us to enlighten our hearts, minds and spirits with the Lamp of Qur'an so that darkness, unbelief, sins, misguidance may not come closer!

- Bediuzzaman Said Nursi

The Qur'an, Nursi explains, provides us with a firm place to stand in an age of chaotic relativism. The master, the true authority is the Qur'an. *Risale-i-Nur* (Letters of light) emerged from the light of Qur'an as reflected by the polished mirror of the mind, heart and soul.¹

The Faith is both the divine light and the power. The Faith makes a man a human and may be sultan.

- Bediuzzaman Said Nursi

Belief or faith is the central theme of the *Risale-i-Nur*, and the renewal and strengthening of belief its purpose and primary function. Nursi sates this explicitly in many places in the work. For example, *Risale-i-Nur's* function is to strengthen and save belief. We are charged with serving belief. And with the assaults of science and philosophy and the contagions of materialism and nationalism spreading through humanity it is first and foremost our task to save belief in such a way as to silence philosophy and materialistic ideas. So Nursi attributes the present weak state of Islam first to the damage it has suffered over a thousand-year period from the infiltration of alien ideas and second to the intellectual assaults of the present and to those furthering the ends of such currents. The purpose of *Risale-i-Nur* is to repair that damage by "striving to cure with the medicines of the Qur'an and belief...the collective heart and generally held ideas ... and general consciences."²

In other words, it is to revitalize the faith of believers by offering certain proofs of the fundamentals of belief by means of a method derived from the Qur'an that are relevant for the present situation in a way that addresses the intellect, the heart, and the conscience.³

As a Qur'anic commentary whose chief aim is the renewal of faith, *Risale-i-Nur* interprets and elucidates the Qur'an's call to men to believe in the world's Maker, its central message. Indeed according to the Qur'an:

I created not jinn and mankind except that they might worship.
(Qur'an, 51:56)

¹ Ibid.

² Nursi, *The Rays*, 200.

³ *Spiritual Dimensions of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's Risale-i Nur*, p. 3.

Faith is the central issue of creation. In expounding this verse, Nursi points out that to recognize, believe in, and worship the creator of all things is "man's primordial duty" and is an innate requirement of man.

Thus, a theme running through Nursi's proofs of "the pillar of belief", around which most of the discussions in *Risale-i-Nur* revolve, is the necessity of faith; i.e., he not only marshals all the elements of his methodological proofs, reasoned arguments based on observation of the natural world, allegorical sources, and so on. To persuade his readers of the necessary truth of the creator's existence and unity and other truths of belief, he also shows that the universe itself, its beginnings, including man, and indeed the findings of science necessitate them. But this necessity becomes clear only when beings are observed in the manner of the *Qur'ān*. This crucial element of Nursi's method, called the "indicative viewpoint" or meaning of things is discussed in greater detail below. In addition, Nursi sets out to demonstrate the invalidity and impossibility of the ideas and concepts underlying unbelief. Another theme related to the pillars of belief is the interrelation and indivisibility of those pillars.¹ For Nursi,

Belief is a single truth ... cannot be separated into parts...in which case, an invalid idea that cannot shake all the pillars together with all their proofs, cannot in reality negate any one of the pillars or even a single of their truths, and cannot deny them²

This interrelation is pointed out and demonstrated in most of the discussions in *Risale-i-Nur*.

A matter to which great importance is attached in *Risale-i-Nur* is that since the true nature of man and the cosmos is fully disclosed by the divine revelation of the *Qur'ān* and is to be seen by the eye of faith, it is only in faith in this sense that human beings can find true happiness and fulfillment.³

QUR'AN is a revealed scripture resembling a sacred library which offers treatises suitable for all the various ways and different paths of all the saints and the veracious ones and the wise and the learned, which is appropriate for the illuminations of each way and enlightens it, and suitable for the course of each path and depicts it -*The Words* (377)

The emphasis in *Risale-i-Nur* is on the strengthening and renewal of faith and on inculcating Qur'ānic morals and teaching the basics of universal worship, yet it contains little discussion on "works" (*a'māl*) in the legal and formal sense. One can say that it deals with questions of faith to the exclusion of works. It allots minimal space to

¹ Ibid., p. 4.

² Nursi, *The Rays* (256).

³ For Nursi's refutation of nature and causality, see his "Treatise on Nature," in *The Flashes* (Istanbul, 2000), pp. 232-254.

the discussion of classic questions of debate such as the nature and relation of faith and works, though in reply to a question Nursi restates the orthodox position on the possible increase and decrease of faith.

But he does offer an illuminating discussion on “the degrees” of faith and certainty. It is probably fair to say that since Nursi was addressing all levels and classes of people at a time when the fundamentals of religion were under threat, he deemed it necessary to limit the discussions in *Risale-i-Nur* to questions directly related to its primary purpose.¹

6 The Fundamentals of Faith in Islam as reflected in *Risale-i-Nur*

6.1 Faith in Allah

As already noted, the modern world’s rejection of God is one of the most harmful aspects of “modernity.” This philosophy has become known as the existential approach to life, which denies and rejects the religious and spiritual side of ethics and moral values. In contrast, Nursi held that the basis of all knowledge and common welfare is faith in Allah. According to him:

Man comes to this world to be perfected by means of knowledge and supplication. In regard to his nature and abilities everything is tied to knowledge. And the foundation, source, light and spirit of all true knowledge is knowledge of God and its essence and basis is belief in God.

-The Word (324)

In the *Risale-i-Nur*, Nursi attempted, on the one hand, to reply to the challenges of modernity and, on the other, to offer a new understanding of divine revelation. He emphasized above all else the order, harmony, and beauty of the universe and in this way set out to demonstrate God’s existence together with all His most beautiful names.

In Nursi’s philosophy, as has been noted, this world is in essence a clean creation. The reasons for this may be reduced to two:

- *This world is the work of God, and it receives its existence from Him; it is also evidence of His existence.*
- *This world was given to men by God so that they might gain clean livelihoods from it.*²

¹ Ibid.

² Ian S. Markham, *An Introduction to Said Nursi: Life, Thought and Writings*, (England: Ashgate Publishing Limited) p. 115.

6.2. Faith in the Prophets

In the "Seeds of Reality" a collection of aphorisms, Nursi concisely states the need for Prophethood:

Pre-eternal power, which does not leave ants without a prince or bees without a queen, certainly does not leave mankind without prophet ...¹

The essential nature of life also looks to the pillar of belief in the Prophets and proves it indirectly. The universe was created for life and life is the greatest manifestation of the pre-eternal self-subsistent one, a perfect inscription of His most beautiful work of His art, and the eternal life shows itself through the sending of Prophets and revealing of scriptures. For if there were no Books or Prophets, that pre-eternal life would not be known. Just as we know someone is alive when we hear him speaking, so too it is prophets and the scriptures they bring that make known the words and speech of the one who speaks from beyond the world of the unseen, behind the veil of the universe, who commands and prohibits and utters His address. Then certainly the life in the universe testifies decisively to the necessary existence of the pre-eternal, Ever living one. It also looks to the pillars of belief, the "sending of prophets and revelation of scriptures which are the rays, manifestations, and communications of that pre-eternal life."²

6.3. Faith in the Divine Scriptures

The terms revelation and inspiration have specific meanings. Revelation is sent by God explicitly to Prophets through the angel Gabriel, the angel of revelation. Inspiration is considered to be a general communication of God with His creation. From dreams to scientific discoveries, wise acts to art works, any knowledge is understood to be rooted in divine inspiration. Mentioning the difference between "as elevated, universal and sacred" and inspiration as more specific to an individual and as very personal in significant in comparison to revelation.³

Among the themes the Qur'ān mentions are creation, revelation, the afterlife, the human soul, and society. As mentioned, four major topics could be noted as *tawhīd*: divine unity and belief in God and Prophethood signifying the special way of God's communication with His creation through revelation, the afterlife as reminder of

¹ *The Letters*, "Seeds of Reality," p. 530.

² Nursi, *The Flashes*, (Istanbul: Sozler Publications, 2002), p.434.

³ Markham, *An Introduction to Said Nursi: Life, Thought, and Writings*, (England: Ashgate Publishing Limited) p. 24.

accountability, and living a responsible life, justice and worship as a main purpose of creation of humankind and conscious beings. All beings are created in the wisest and most just state with an intended purpose. Part of conscious beings' responsibility is understood as being able to recognize the functions, in a way, the specific worship of every kind and offer them to the creator in the form of their prescribed worship. Said Nursi defines the Qur'ān as:

Both a book of wisdom and law and a Book of prayers and worship and a book of command and summons and a book of invocation a divine knowledge.

- *The Word* (377)

The miraculousness of the Qur'ān is often emphasized in the *Risale-i-Nur*. One of the early books of the collection on the signs of its miraculous nature is dedicated to "the inimitability of the Qur'ān's conciseness" as is the twenty-fourth word on the Miraculousness of the Qur'ān. It is "the treasury of miracles and supreme miracle." Nursi says that "proves the Prophethood of Muhammad (S.W. A.) together with divine unity. So decisively that it leaves no need for further proof."¹

6.4. Faith in Angels

- Then listen to the stars, listen to their harmonious address!
- See what wisdom has emblazoned on the decree of its light.
- Altogether, they start to speak with the tongue of truth,
- They address the majesty of the All-Powerful, All-Glorious One's sovereignty:
- We are each of us light-scattering proofs of the existence of our Maker,
- We are witnesses both to His Unity and His Power,
- We are subtle miracles gilding the face of the skies for the angels to gaze upon²

Because innumerable miracles of power are exhibited on the face of the earth, which is the seedbed and tillage for Paradise, the angels in the world of the heavens gaze on those miracles, those marvels. And similarly, the angels, the stars, like the eyes of the heavenly bodies, gaze on the finely fashioned creatures on the earth.³

The polytheists have two kind of objects of worship. One is those found in this phenomenal world, i.e., the sun, moon, fire, rivers, mountains, etc. The other includes

¹ Ibid.

² Nursi, *The Letters* / Fourth Letter - p.38.

³ Ibid.

things we cannot see: gods goddesses, ghosts, spirits, etc. The Prophet of God has said that none of these can share the authority of Allah. But he has also told us that God has made the angels we cannot see. These angels are employed in doing certain work. Some of the angles are charged with controlling the winds and some of them are engaged in sending rain. It is through the angles that the laws of nature work. They have no free will of their own but have to act according to the will of Allah. They can neither be born of any one nor can they benefit any one. They always pray to God and have to do whatever work they have been entrusted with.¹

6.5. Faith in the Resurrection and the Hereafter

Nursi uses the figure of spring as a metaphor for the resurrection:

In exactly the same way (God) creators the universe as easily as a city and raises to life the spring time as easily as a garden and raises it life the springtime as easily as a garden and raises to life all the dead at the resurrection as easily as creating the leaves, followers and fruits of the garden's trees in the spring²

God is the one who raises to life and in the spring makes numberless skeleton-like trees green that have been dead throughout the winter. Every tree depicts the resurrection.³

As is well explained in *Risale-i-Nur*, it is as definite and obvious that death will come to all of us as the night follows day and winter follows autumn. Just like this prison is a temporary guest house for those who continuously enter and leave it, so the the earth is a hostel on the road of the swiftly travelling caravans that stop for one night. Surely death, which has emptied all the cities into graveyards a hundred times over, has demands greater than file.⁴

Risale-i-Nur solved the riddle of this awesome truth and discovered its answer. Since death cannot be killed nor the door of the grave be closed, it is a matter of great anxiety as to whether one can be saved from the executioner at the appointed hour and the solitary confinement of the grave, for man is more important than anything. *Risale-*

¹ Muhammad Abdul Hai, *Teachings of Islam*, (Dehli: Maktaba Ahl-e-Sunnat, n.d.), p. 36.

² *The Rays*: "The Fifteenth Ray," p-627.

³ Ibrahim M. Abu-Rabi (ed.), *Theodicy And Justice In Modern Islamic Thought: The Case of Said Nursi*, (England: Gate Publishing Limited, n.d.).

⁴ Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *The Staff of Moses* from the Risale-i Nur Collection, Trans. from the Turkish '*Asâ-yı Mûsa*', Publications A.Ş.. Nuruosmaniye Cad.. Sorkun Han, No: 28/2, Cağaloğlu, Istanbul, Turkey.p.n. 16.

i-Nur has proved that there is a solution through the mystery of the Qur'ān. ¹

7 Nursi: Challenges about the Relationship between Faith and Morals

It is important therefore that both Muslims and non-Muslims engage with Nursi's thought. In a variety of different ways he is able to challenge conventional ways of thinking about the relationship between faith and morals. Nursi is a "both/and thinker rather than an "either/or" one. So his ethics is both firmly rooted in the Qur'ān and yet discernable to anyone willing to reason properly about the world. He accepts both the reality of pluralism and insists on the truth of Islam. He celebrates the achievements of modernity and is not afraid to question its coherence.²

For Nursi, the problem with atheism is that it does not marvel sufficiently at the world. The order in the world documented so well by modern science points to a creator. We live in a world that is intended. When we ask "*Why are things the way they are?*" *only one answer makes sense;*" things are because God intended them to be." The force of Nursi's argument does not disappear if one believes in evolution. Although Nursi does not believe in Darwinian evolution, those of us who do can still argue that evolution involves a process that requires explanation. Why does evolution occur? is still a proper question, and the theist will answer that "the process occurs because God intended the process to occur." Nursi repeatedly comes back to this point: this world requires an explanation. If we cannot see this, we lose all basis for morality.³

In addition to the atheist who questions the existence of God, Nursi has another audience in mind in this section of *The Words*. He is deeply concerned about the "theist" who believes in God but makes no explicit acknowledgement of God in terms of behavior. Recognizing that the world is intended and points to God is only stage one. Stage two is linked to this: Nursi sees this world as an arena of testing and growth. It is, to quote John Keats, a vale of soul-making. We should live our lives aware that we will be held accountable for our behavior.⁴

8 Conclusion

Everywhere we look today we see anger and the forces of destruction at work: crime and the gun culture, alcohol and drug abuse, human trafficking, injustice and

¹ Ibid., p. 28.

² Ian S. Markham, *Engaging with Beduizzaman Said Nursi A Model of Interfaith Dialogue*, op.cit., p. 22.

³ Ibid., p. 27.

⁴ *Islamic Spirituality in the Modern World: Spiritual Dimensions of Said Nursi's Risale-i-Nur*.

inequality, xenophobia, and bombs –smart bombs and not so smart ones, even human bombs.

As been noted by many religious scholars, Nursi was a reformer, an educator, a philosopher, a committed Muslim, and promoter of interreligious dialogue. He was a distinguished critic of materialism, atheism, and communism and struggled against secularism and nihilism. He was a true spiritual teacher.

In all, in contrast to the cheap stereotype tabloid image of Islam and Muslims, we see spiritual religious leaders and educators like Said Nursi providing a working model for dialogue for mutual understanding, benefit, and harmony. In this day and age, more than ever before, we need voices of our time that speak to people’s hearts. It has been important for me to choose these words that come from people who have not only expressed their faith in words but have actually lived what they thought and wrote and believed.

Faith is a divine light, a power. I am willing to burn in the flames of hell...if in going to see that the peoples, faith is secured because my soul will be in a bed of roses when my body burns in flames.

- Said Nursi

He continued with this holy duty even after his death through his *Risale-i-Nur*. That work still continues today.