

Contemporary Islamic theology remains a neglected area in studies on Islam. This work is dedicated to the thought and ideas of Said Nursi (1876–1960), one of the most prominent Muslim theologians of the twentieth century. Nursi inspired a faith movement—the Nur community—that originated in Turkey. It continues to play a key role in the revival of Islam and now numbers several millions of followers worldwide. His legacy and impact deserve therefore to be examined more closely.

This volume is the most substantial overview in English of the inspiration of Said Nursi and his masterpiece the *Risale-i Nur*. In the beginning, the essays provide the reader with Nursi's historical context and biography. Then Nursi's theological views, his understanding of society, and ideas on politics are placed under the spotlight.

Over the last twenty years, more and more comparative religion specialists in the West have become acquainted with Said Nursi. Nursi studies is now an established discipline and this volume is a celebration of that reality. As it reveals, Muslims and Christians are grappling with the wisdom of this remarkable, rich thinker.

"Markham and Sayilgan present a remarkably comprehensive set of studies of the life and thought of Said Nursi. They bring together works by an international group of scholars showing the many dimensions—intellectual, social, political—of one of the largest movements in the Muslim world. This is not just a volume for those interested in Turkish history; it should be read by anyone who needs to know about the development of modern Islamic thought and movements."

-JOHN O. VOLL, Professor Emeritus of Islamic History, Georgetown University

"Said Nursi is not yet sufficiently recognized in the English-speaking world, despite worthy pioneering studies, most of whose authors also contributed to this volume. The editors, each of them a pillar of Nursi studies, have gathered significant colleagues, both from within the Nur movement and without, resulting in a comprehensive guide to the life and thought of this influential Turkish spiritual leader and reformer. Like Colin Turner's *The Qur'an Revealed*, this volume is a milestone in the advance of Nursi scholarship."

-MICHAEL BIRKEL, Professor of Christian Spirituality, Earlham School of Religion

Ian S. Markham is the Dean and President of Virginia Theological Seminary and Professor of Theology and Ethics. He has published three books on Nursi.

Zeyneb Sayilgan is Visiting Assistant Professor of Islamic Theology and Religious Pluralism at Virginia Theological Seminary.

Religion/Islam

COVER DESIGN: Mike Surber

<u>PICKWICK Publications</u>
An imprint of Wipf and Stock Publishers



www.wipfandstock.com

The Companion to Said Nursi Studies

Edited by
IAN S. MARKHAM
& ZEYNEB SAYILGAN

THE COMPANION TO SAID NURSI STUDIES

Copyright © 2017 Wipf and Stock Publishers. All rights reserved. Except for brief quotations in critical publications or reviews, no part of this book may be reproduced in any manner without prior written permission from the publisher. Write: Permissions, Wipf and Stock Publishers, 199 W. 8th Ave., Suite 3, Eugene, OR 97401.

Pickwick Publications An Imprint of Wipf and Stock Publishers 199 W. 8th Ave., Suite 3 Eugene, OR 97401

www.wipfandstock.com

PAPERBACK ISBN: 978-1-4982-9222-1 HARDCOVER ISBN: 978-2-4982-9224-5 EBOOK ISBN: 978-1-4982-9223-8

Cataloguing-in-Publication data:

Names: Markham, Ian S. | Sayılgan, Zeyneb

Title: The companion to Said Nursi studies / edited by Ian S. Markham and Zeyneb Sayılgan.

Description: Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2017 | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: ISBN 978-1-4982-9222-1 (paperback) | ISBN 978-2-4982-9224-5 (hardcover) | ISBN 978-1-4982-9223-8 (ebook)

Subjects: LCSH: Nursi, Said, 1873–1960 | Nurculuk | Islam—20th century | Islam—Turkey | Islam—doctrines | Islamic sociology | Islam and politics | Islam and science | Islam—Relations—Christianity

Classification: BP253.Z8 M36 2017 (paperback) | BP253.Z8 (ebook)

Manufactured in the U.S.A.

08/16/17

Contents

Acknowledgements ix	
Introduction xi	
Contributors xiii	
Section Ones History and Diagraphy	
Section One: History and Biography	
 Late Ottoman Intellectual History and Nursi 3 —M. Sait Özervarlı 	
2 Said Nursi from the Ottoman to the Republican Periods: A Short Biography 2 —ŞÜKRAN VAHİDE	3
3 My Meeting with Said Nursi 41	
-Fred A. Reed	
Section Two: Theology	
4 Said Nursi's Qur'anic Hermeneutics 51 —Yamina Mermer & İsra Yazıcıoğlu	
5 Concept of God in the Risale-i-Nur: God through His Creative Activity 69 —YAMINA MERMER	
6 The Significance of Resurrection and the Afterlife in the Writings of Bediüzzaman Said Nursi 87 —CÜNEYT ŞİMŞEK	
7 The Problem of Evil in the Writings of Bediüzzaman Said Nursi 105 —CÜNEYT ŞİMŞEK	
8 A Graceful Reconciliation: Said Nursi on Free Will and Destiny 129 —Ümeyye İsra Yazıcıoğlu	
9 Supplication as Agent and Fruit of Transformation for Bediüzzaman Said Nursi 146 —Lucinda Allen Mosher	
10 The Moral World of Said Nursi 161	

—M. Salih Sayılgan

11 Morality and Ethics in the Risale-i Nur 178 —Suendam Birinci Pirim, Harun Pirim
12 The Importance of the Sunna in Islamic Spirituality: Said Nursi's Approach 192 —M. Salih Sayilgan
13 The Prophetic Virtue of Compassion as a Core Principle of the Risale-i Nur 205 —ZEYNEB SAYILGAN
Section Three: Nursi and Society
14 An Outline of the Social Theology of Said Nursi 223 —SYED FARID ALATAS
15 The Risale-i Nur as an Epistemological Ground for the Framework of a Sociology of Science 243 —ALPARSLAN AÇIKGENÇ
16 Said Nursi's View on Materialism, Positivism, and Sciences 264 —Yunus Çengel
17 The Medresetü'z-Zehrâ—Explorations into Its Nature and Significance 286 —Zeyneb Sayılgan
18 Spiritual and Moral Reform of Muslim Inmates: The Model of Said Nursi 305 —Benaouda Bensaid
19 The Dissemination of the Risale-i Nur in Europe and the United States 322 —ZEYNEB SAYLIGAN
20 Christian–Muslim Engagement 340 —Thomas Michel
21 Roman Catholic Theological Engagement with Said Nursi 356 —Leo D. Lefebure
Section Four: Nursi and Politics
22 Said Nursi's Positive Action as a Method of Serving Belief and Peace 379 —Анмет Yildiz
23 Religious Struggle in Modern Turkey: Said Nursi's Interpretation of Jihad 392 —ŞÜKRAN VAHIDE
24 The Nation State and Nationalism in the Thought of Said Nursi 412 —Elmira Akhmetova
25 The Future of Nursi Studies 426

—Ian S. Markham

Index | 431

Contributors

Alparslan Açıkgenç, currently Chairman of the Department of Philosophy at Yıldız Technical University, Istanbul, has extensive teaching and administrative experience in different world universities. His main interest is research in the history of the scientific traditions of diverse civilizations, primarily Islamic and Western.

Elmira Akhmetova is Assistant Professor in History and Civilization at International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). She is the author of *Islam in Russia: Historical Facts and Current Developments* (Kuala Lumpur: IAIS Malaysia, 2013) and of various papers about Islam in Russia, the ideas of Said Nursi, and Islamic history.

Syed Farid Alatas is Associate Professor of Sociology at the National University of Singapore. He lectured at the University of Malaya in the Department of Southeast Asian Studies prior to joining NUS. His areas of interest are historical sociology, the sociology of social science, the sociology of religion, and inter-religious dialogue.

Benaouda Bensaid earned his Bachelor Degree (Hons.) in Islamic Studies from Algeria, Masters Degree from International Islamic University Malaysia, and PhD from the Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University, Canada. Bensaid is currently associated with the College of Art and Science, Effat University Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

Suendam Birinci Pirim is a PhD candidate through Hartford Seminary's joint doctoral program with the University of Exeter in England. Her area of study is comparative theologies with a focus on Christianity and Islam. She is the book-review editor of the Muslim World and has published in Reviews in Religion and Theology. She has co-authored An Introduction to Said Nursi: Life, Thought, and Writings.

Yunus A Çengel is the Dean of Engineering at Adnan Menderes University in Turkey and Professor Emeritus at the University of Nevada, Reno, USA. He received his degrees from Istanbul Technical University and North Carolina State University. He has written several books on Engineering and has presented many papers on Said Nursi.

Bilal Kuşpınar is Chair of the Department of Philosophy and Director of the International Rumi Centre for the Study of Civilization at the Necmettin Erbakan University.

24

The Nation State and Nationalism in the Thought of Said Nursi

ELMIRA AKHMETOVA

SAID NURSI LIVED DURING the time when, on the one hand, the idea of nationalism had become one of the principal ideologies in the modern world and begun successfully spreading across Muslim lands, through Europe's growing imperial reach, as an alternative to the traditional ummah identity. This consequently led to the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923 as the first nation state in the Muslim world. On the other hand, the ghastly events of two World Wars once more demonstrated how devastating the consequences of the ideology of nationalism could be. Nursi's ideas on nationalism and the ummah identity, therefore, comprise one of the main aspects of his sociopolitical thought. Before discussing Nursi's interpretation of nationalism, it is worth recalling one or two points about the concept generally.

The term nationalism (nationalismus) was coined by a German

philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803) in the late 1770s. Since then, the concept of nationalism, underlying motives behind its appearance, and its influence on sociopolitical spheres of the modern world, particularly the Muslim world, were interpreted differently. In Western scholarship, the idea of nationalism has been seen as a distinguishing mark of modern times since the Middle Ages and an inevitable stage in political ideological development.

It consequently was applauded for enabling Muslim nations from an "insignificant corner" to enter the age of "social progress" and "middle-class capitalism." For instance, Hans Kohn, a Hungarianborn journalist, who became "the father" of later writers on the development of

1. On widely accepted definitions of nationalism, see Carter, Russian Nationalism, 3-5; Kausar, Islam and Nationalism, 34-43; Kedourie, Nationalism,; Kohn, Nationalism and Imperialism; and Smith, Theories of Nationalism.