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**THE RECONSTRUCTION OF ISLAMIC
THOUGHT IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY
AND BEDIUZZAMAN SAID NURSI**

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by Şükran Vahide

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Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's Proofs of the Resurrection of the Dead

Husayn 'Ashur

In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate.

So look to the signs of God's mercy, how He gives life to the earth after its death; indeed it is He who will raise to life the dead, for He is powerful over all things.¹

Ustad Bediuzzaman Nursi's incomparable, rich, yet at the same time, attractive, style is different to other styles. It shows clearly how reasonable, harmonious, and firm are the truths of Islam. Through the use of allusion, with this style, he at the same time brings abstract meanings close to the understanding by means of comparisons and stories which illustrate the truth.

There is no one who can reach Ustad Said Nursi in this matter. Just as there have been few people who have employed such a style in this field. For example, Mawlana Jalal al-Din Rumi used a style that was close to it, but he did so in the field of sufism. Bediuzzaman, however, utilized it while proving the truths of Islam, like the resurrection of the dead, the Last Judgement, prophethood, and Divine unity. He did this addressing the mind and heart simultaneously, and employing comparisons which persuade and nourish both of these. He achieved great advances in the science of *kalām* in this field, allowing it to conform with the spirit of the age. Bediuzzaman lived in the early period of modern science, when it was supposed it could take the place of religion, and was used to attack all religions and Islam in particular, both worldwide and locally. It also should

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Husayn 'Ashur is the general co-ordinator of the Egyptian newspaper and publishing concern *al-Mukhtār al-Islāmī*. Besides around 1000 books, it publishes the magazines, *al-Mukhtār al-Islāmī*, *Hajar* (for women), and *Zamzam* (for children). He has published numerous articles about Bediuzzaman the Risale-i Nur in *al-Mukhtār al-Islāmī*, and a book entitled *Said Nursi, The Leader of the Islamic Movement in Turkey*, together with Ahmad Bahjat.

1. Qur'an, 30:30.

not be forgotten that during that period, Islam suffered ferocious attacks, particularly in Turkey. In such a situation, Islam in Turkey could be defended only by employing a persuasive style based on reason and science that addressed both the mind and the conscience. Nothing else would have been effective. It was most probably this characteristic and others resembling it that have been the reason for the extraordinary effect Bediuzzaman's works have had, both in Turkey and in other places in the Islamic world.

On glancing at the subject of the resurrection of the dead and how Bediuzzaman proved it by means of comparisons that address the conscience and convince the reason, one can immediately see the originality of his style. This style comes close to the understanding of ordinary people with short stories, describing in the clearest manner the resurrection of the dead and hereafter and other Islamic teachings.

For example, Ustad Bediuzzaman takes us all by the hand and leads us to the past or future, and making us observe everywhere the vast variety of miracles. He shows us the perfect order in which wisdom works, the brilliant signs of justice, and how clear are the fruits of mercy. Those whose eyes of the heart are not blind believe certainly it is not possible to conceive of a wisdom more perfect than the wisdom of such a Monarch, or favours more bountiful, or more extensive a mercy, or more brilliant a justice. But since the country known as the world does not have the capacity to demonstrate fully the realities of that wisdom, favour, mercy, and justice, if there were no permanent palaces in the seat of His power, and splendid, constant abodes, and pleasant, eternal dwellings, and happy, undying people, one would have to deny the wisdom, favour, mercy, and justice that we see.

However, it would be utter stupidity to deny the signs and indications of the clear justice. It would recall the imbecility of denying the sun while observing its light at noon. To deny all these signs while they are spread before us necessitates saying that the One Who performs all these wise acts that we see, all these munificent purposes, the Owner of these beauties overflowing with mercy, performs—God forbid, a hundred thousand times—only futile, vain, and meaningless works. It would be the very reverse of the truth, which all people of reason other than the Sophists, who denied the existence of things and even of themselves, agree is impossible.

Since this is so, there must exist a realm other than the realm of this world in which is a supreme tribunal where elevated justice and munificence will be realized, and mercy, wisdom, favour, and justice be manifested in all their clarity and brilliance. This realm which is before our eyes, this world, is only an arena of trial and examination, and field of training and manoeuvres; it is the exhibition of that Monarch's wondrous arts, and a fleeting place of feasting. Do you not see that every day in succession one caravan comes and another departs? That is how this realm is. Every day it fills up and is emptied. Then a day will come when it will be emptied completely and will be transformed into an everlasting, permanent realm. All men will be transported there, and they will receive punishment or reward in accordance with their deeds.

While discussing the end of the world, as a principle, Bediuzzaman directs

our attention towards this truth: we know certainly that a village cannot be without a headman, a needle cannot exist without the one who made it, a letter cannot exist without the one who wrote it; so how can anyone claim that this orderly, regular country of the world is without ruler or monarch? Since it is certain to have a Ruler, there absolutely has to be a calling to account, punishment, a resurrection of the dead and Last Judgement. This is Ustad Bediuzzaman's method. He proves that the resurrection of the dead is a necessity, and that we and all things have need of it.

Reward and punishment are so little in this country called the world that they may be said to be nothing; there must therefore be a supreme tribunal in another realm. Is it not clear that the oppressor departs this world in dignity and strength, while the oppressed depart in abjection and oppression. It would not be fitting for that Just, Munificent Monarch not to reward the good and punish the bad, who mock his rule. Since not even a thousandth of this is brought about in this realm, it means it is left to a supreme tribunal.

The wonderful bounties scattered everywhere are nothing other than signs of a brilliant perfection and beauty. Doubtless, a faultless yet hidden perfection has to be proclaimed and proved in the view of all creatures. And the peerless hidden beauty wants to be seen and displayed. The migration to a permanent, everlasting realm must therefore be true.

Apart from the beauty and perfection, only hints of which we see in this world, prophets and Divine messengers entreat and supplicate beseechingly; they ask to be taken to the presence of that lofty Monarch in order to behold His endless beauty and perfection. Then either by means of a sort of private telephone, or by ascending to His Court, those same envoys have direct relations with the august Monarch, and bring us the news that He has prepared a splendid realm where He will reward the good, and ghastly dungeons where He will punish the evil.

Again using simple comparisons and allegories, Bediuzzaman likens the Preserved Tablet to a camera that records everything, even the smallest and least significant matters. Just as identity papers indicate the existence of a large register, and droplets of water the existence of a water source, so does man's faculty of memory indicate a large and precise act of preservation. Similarly, the seeds of trees and fruits comprise their identities and are each like small preserved tablets.

The tremendous revolutions and changes in the world, the setting up and destruction, the gathering together and dispersal, the constant flux and change, all tell of one purpose, they all show one aim; they are all the signs and indications of an awesome day which will witness a vast destruction and reconstruction. And that is the Last Day, the day of the resurrection of the dead. *"The day whereon neither wealth nor sons will avail, * But only he [will prosper] that brings to God a sound heart."*²

May God grant mercy to the great regenerator of religion and thinker, Ustad Bediuzzaman Said Nursi.

And our last prayer is, All praise be to God, the Sustainer of All the Worlds.

2. Qur'an, 26:89.