

**THIRD INTERNATIONAL
SYMPOSIUM ON
BEDIUZZAMAN
SAID NURSI**

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

**24th-26th September, 1995
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by Şükran Vahide

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Bediuzzaman's Method

Dr. Hasan 'Abbas Zaki

Man is the most noble of the creatures on the earth, and is God's vicegerent. And the most noble of men is the one whose heart is filled with belief, illuminating with its light the mind, and bringing to guidance and obedience to God thought and the emotions. The chief duty of the mind and reason is thought, the basis of progress and civilization. A result of thought is sound education, which develops the ability to achieve new advances which will gain for society happiness in this world and the next.

Nations and peoples advance under the guidance of individuals who believe in God. For they follow well-founded methods, they have dedicated their lives to investigating the general characteristics of society and ways of its development; they observe what people do in connection with this world and the hereafter. They direct their hearts and minds to this elevated goal.

At the present, the Islamic world is passing through a perilous stage which demands tremendous efforts. In order to extricate ourselves from these straits, we have to co-operate and assist one another in solving all our social problems

Dr. HASAN 'ABBAS ZAKI

Dr. Hasan 'Abbas Zaki was born in 1917 in Port Said. In 1938 he graduated from Faculty of Commerce in Cairo University. He received his Doctorate from the American University in Washington in 1953, and has subsequently held some twenty official posts. Among these are:

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2. Member of Parliament (1957-1970).
3. In the Ministry of the Treasury, Development and Economics (1958-1962).
4. In the Ministry of Economics and Foreign Trade (1965-1972).
5. Chairman of the International Association of Muslim Youth.
6. Director of the Centre of Islamic Resources and Education.

Dr. Hasan Zaki has received a number of awards at home and abroad, and has participated in numerous conferences and symposia. Among his published works are: (in Arabic) *Towards a Developed Arab Society*; *Idle Arab Property Abroad*; *Setting up Means of Islamic Guarantees*; *The Way To Tomorrow*.

and return to the sound educational principles of our religion. This is what we are doing in this Symposium. The solutions the scholars and academics have found and their ways of thought will light up the way before us; they are a beacon for our thought. I therefore congratulate those who have organized this gathering and those like it, and those who share this idea. Conferences of this sort have the greatest importance, since they provide the opportunity of getting to know Islamic thinkers like Said Nursi.

Bediuzzaman's movement is an all-encompassing Islamic movement, a fine example which Muslims in other countries may follow in the questions of development and renewal. For Bediuzzaman was a model in his faithfully following the Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) practices and, benefiting from his Light, strenuously opposing materialist civilization and Western currents, and those trying to halt the Islamic revival. Without doubt, such a movement should be further studied and researched. For it has important experience, ideas and views for bettering the conditions of Muslims and saving them from the difficulties in which they now find themselves. It is necessary therefore to start by speaking of Bediuzzaman's life. He represented the moral qualities of a true Muslim, and feared no one other than God. He said that in order to be saved from the web of materialist civilization which overlays everything, we should disregard the games of the Western governments, adhere closely to Islam, be alert, learn the modern sciences that are appropriate, and offer guidance to people in the questions of the Qur'an and belief, and in fighting ignorance. He had deep belief in 'the weapon of the word,' which emerges from one heart and reaches out to others, in teaching Muslims the truths of belief at this time, and teaching them to form an attachment to God, and to rely on Him having had recourse to all means of knowledge and learning. For the heart is the centre of belief. If such belief is attained, an individual becomes an Umma, and an Umma becomes a rushing torrent, a brilliant light, which nothing can halt.

Taking all I have said so far, we may say that everyone who reads the *Risale-i Nur* with attention may feel the same things. It was for this reason that Bediuzzaman did not want the rulers of that time to prevent the dissemination of these works, for they had poured forth from the effulgence of the Qur'an. He said the same things time and time again in various courts in order to defend himself. But as a result, he was sent from one prison to another. Although every session he awaited the decision for his execution, God preserved him through His grace, and most of the trials ended in acquittals. However, Satan's lackeys among men meted out every sort of injustice to him in order to ingratiate themselves to those in high position, even opening his grave and reintering his remains in an unknown spot.

Frequently when explaining the reasons the people of truth are defeated by the people of misguidance, Bediuzzaman said that the most important of these were discord among Muslims, their not uniting, and their not adhering to Islam in conscious fashion. This was because worldly interests dominated their lives, and they had come to worship wealth, rank, and fame instead of being servants of

God, the All-Compelling One of Unity. We see the same situation today. It is regrettable that animal lusts and personal desires rule people and this side of us keeps away from the straight path.

Now let us think together: the wealth owned by Muslims today amounts to approximately 800 trillion dollars. The greater part of this lies in the banks of the West. The Muslims are impotent even when it comes to using their money, which is the strongest support of the Western economic system. If we had taken advantage of only the profits and income of this money, only a small proportion of the revenues would have been sufficient for the industrial development of the whole Islamic world and all its agricultural needs. This with its own resources and employing Western technology in the best way.

Let us together take a look at the state of the Islamic world: although the financial resources which some of them possess are hundreds, perhaps even thousands, of times superfluous to need, the work force at their disposal is as nothing. Some of them have a work force of millions which lies idle, but the countries' financial resources are not at a sufficiently high level to secure economic growth and development. Some countries have plentiful agricultural, industrial, and touristic resources, but they do not have the management resources to use them productively. Islamic societies of this sort stretch from East to West. It is as though God Almighty put Muslims in this position of needing each other because He implicitly wanted us to unite, complement each other, and co-operate so as to augment each other's strength. If we are able to realize this unity and solidarity among ourselves, we would be at least as powerful as the European countries. And it may be achieved by our adhering more closely to our religion, giving up frivolity, vice, and moral deviance, which were the cause of the decline of former societies, and taking from Western civilization the necessary science and technology. Indeed, both the Holy Qur'an and the Sunna of the Prophet (PBUH) offer us the best examples for this and show us the best way. If we display no weakness on this way, follow these examples to the letter and make them parts of ourselves, there is no reason at all why we should not be successful.

We may turn here to the call of Bediuzzaman and listen to what he told his brothers: Say to the atheists and people of misguidance when they attack you in order to make you give up your sacred 'jihad of the word:' we are the party of the Qur'an. We seek refuge in the stronghold of its protection.

Racialism, which was sown among the Muslims by the Western world in order to cause division has indeed been the cause of conflict between them. For this reason Bediuzzaman severely criticized atheistic materialist philosophy. This philosophy aimed to extinguish the light in Muslims' spirits.

Let us take a look at the press and media in the Islamic world: it is full of the very worst sides of Western culture; dance, jazz, pop music, cinema, and books about these. The method Bediuzzaman followed under these conditions necessitates that the Islamic countries avoid conflict between themselves, that we treat each other well, and that we cast off the cloak of division and conflict that the

West has cut out for us. Bediuzzaman's method did not emerge for any one society or country in particular; it is applicable in all societies and countries. It is a Qur'anic method based on rules to be found in God's Book, the Sunna of the Prophet (PBUH), and actions of his Companions.

When comparing Western civilization and Islamic civilization, Bediuzzaman mentioned the following points: Western civilization believes not in truth but in force, while Islam calls to the truth, which rises above force. Western civilization believes in self-interest; its economic understanding is based on this. Islamic civilization believes in following the best interests of all. Western civilization pretty well worships money and believes it to be the indispensable basis of life. According to Islam, God is the true owner of wealth and property; man merely makes use of them in beneficial fashion as part of his function of being God's vicegerent on earth. If he acts in a way contrary to this, this duty of his is annulled. Religion and its way of acting calls on people to utilize money and property for the good of all mankind. It requires them to carry out their obligations like the payment of *zakat* and giving of charity. Western civilization believes in struggle and strife, while Islam summons people to assist one another. Western civilization believes in an unlimited type of freedom and democracy, while Islam puts God's commands first, and believes in a freedom defined by Islamic principles and limited according to the Shari'a.

Islam rises through the heart, the seat of belief, and belief illumines the mind with its light. It turns man to the method of God Almighty with all his members and emotions, causing him to obey God. Bediuzzaman saw the scientific side of Western civilization in the light of the duty Islam lays on Muslims, which is to gain a thorough knowledge of the physical world and the laws of life and to utilize these to the maximum degree. For man is God's vicegerent on earth. He was created in order to worship God, affirm Him, sow seeds of good, and achieve progress. Bediuzzaman therefore called on Muslims to obtain the means of scientific and industrial development and of the building of civilization. For this is necessary for the building of a strong society, which is of paramount importance for the Islamic world, so it may progress and spread Islam and its message throughout the world.

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