

**ONE OF THE LAST OTTOMAN ŞEYHÜLİSLÂMS,  
MUSTAFA SABRÎ EFENDÎ (1869-1954):  
HIS LIFE, WORKS AND  
INTELLECTUAL CONTRIBUTIONS**

by

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in partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
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## ABSTRACT

Author: Mehmet Kadri Karabela

Title: One of the Last Ottoman Şeyhülislâms, Mustafa Sabri Efendi  
(1869-1954): His Life, Works and Intellectual Contributions

Department: Institute of Islamic Studies

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The aim of this work is to make some contributions towards understanding the stagnation of Islamic theology and the intellectual life of Muslims by concentrating on the life and works of Mustafa Sabri Efendi, one of the last Ottoman *şeyhülislâms* (chief jurisconsult of the State and head of the Ottoman religious establishment). Sabri was a leading scholar and politically active figure of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the Ottoman State, and was appointed *şeyhülislâm* four times in the final years of the State. Due to his resistance to the Committee of Union and Progress and Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, he lived half of his life in exile in various countries, and died in Egypt.

The merit of Sabri's thought lies in its full reflection of influential theological and philosophical currents in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and in its recognition of the crucial importance of ontological and epistemological problems for contemporary Islam. Sabri emphasized that the epistemic structure of Islamic thought had collapsed, meaning that the first task of the Muslim psyche would have to consist in learning how to conceptualize and to formulate systematically its own positions on what "being" is (ontology) and what "knowledge" is (epistemology) in terms intelligible to others.

## RÉSUMÉ

Auteur: Mehmet Kadri Karabela

Titre: Mustafa Sabri Efendi, un des derniers *şeyhülislâms* Ottoman (1869-1954):  
Sa vie, ses oeuvres et ses contributions intellectuelles.

Département: Institut des Études Islamiques, Université McGill

Diplôme: Maîtrise ès Arts

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Ce travail a pour but de contribuer à une meilleure compréhension de la stagnation de la théologie islamique et de la vie intellectuelle des Musulmans, à travers l'étude de la vie et des œuvres de Mustafa Sabri Efendi, un des derniers *şeyhülislâms* Ottoman (chef du conseil juridique de l'État et chargé de l'établissement religieux Ottoman). Sabri était un érudit de premier plan et une personne politiquement active dans l'État Ottoman à la fin du dix-neuvième et au début du vingtième siècle. Il fut nommé au poste de *şeyhülislâm* à quatre reprises dans les dernières années de ce même État. En raison de sa résistance au Comité de l'Union et du Progrès ainsi qu'à Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, il passa la moitié de sa vie en exil dans plusieurs pays et mourut en Égypte.

Le mérite de la pensée de Sabri est que celle-ci constitue un reflet complet des courants théologiques et philosophiques influents du dix-neuvième et du début du vingtième siècle, et qu'elle reconnaît l'importance cruciale des problèmes ontologiques et épistémologiques de l'Islam contemporaine. Sabri mit l'emphasis sur le fait que la structure épistémique de la pensée musulmane s'était écroulée, ce qui signifiait que la première tâche du psyché musulman allait être d'apprendre comment conceptualiser et formuler systématiquement ses propres positions sur qu'est-ce que « L'être » (ontologie) et qu'est ce que « Le savoir » (épistémologie) en des termes intelligibles pour les autres.

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Last but by no means least, I owe a debt of gratitude to Steve Millier for having made the task easier in all the ways that a most patient editor can.

## ABBREVIATIONS

<i>EI</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>The Encyclopaedia of Islam</i> (new ed., 11 vols. Leiden, 1960-)
<i>Esmâ</i>	Bağdatlı İsmâ'il Paşa, <i>Hediyyet ül-Ârifin Esmâ ül-Müellifin ve Âsâr ül-Musannifin</i> (2 vols.; Istanbul, 1951-1955)
<i>GAL</i>	Carl Brockelman, <i>Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur</i> (2nd ed.; 2 vols.; Leiden, 1943-1949)
<i>İslâm</i>	<i>Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi</i> (25 vols. to date; Istanbul, 1988-)
<i>Keşf</i>	Katib Çelebi, <i>Keşf el-Zunûn</i> (2 vols.; Istanbul, 1943)
<i>Köprülü</i>	Ramazan Şeşen ve Arkadaşları, <i>Köprülü Kütüphanesi Yazmalar Kataloğu</i> (3 vols.; Istanbul, 1986)
<i>al-Shaykh</i>	Mufrah Sulaymân al-Qawsî, <i>al-Shaykh Muştafâ Şabrî wa-mawqifuh min al-fikr al-wâfid</i> (Riyadh, 1997)
<i>Zeyl</i>	Bağdadlı İsmâ'il Paşa, <i>Zeylu Keşfi'z Zunûn</i> (2 vols.; Istanbul 1945-47)
<i>al-A'lâm</i>	Khayr al-dîn Ziriklî, <i>al-A'lâm. Qāmūs tarājim</i> (8 vols.; Beirut, 1980)

## A NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

The Arabic transliteration system of the Institute of Islamic Studies was employed for names, titles and phrases written in an exclusively Arabic context. All Ottoman and Kazan Tatar in Arabic script and modern Turkish personal names and titles are given in the modern Turkish spelling or in their Ottoman Turkish form (e.g. Mustafa Sabri, not Muştafâ Şabrî; Rahmet-i İlâhiye Burhanları, not Rahmât-i İlahiyyâ Bürhanlarî). Family names introduced in 1934 are given in parentheses for clear identification (e.g. Hüseyin Câhid (Yalçın) and Mehmet Akif (Ersoy).

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

English Abstract.....	ii
Résumé.....	iii
Acknowledgements.....	iv
Abbreviations and A Note on Transliteration.....	v
Table of Contents.....	vi
Introduction.....	1
A. Into the Darkness: The Present Dilemma in Islamic Intellectual History	
a. A Theoretical Question Mark	
b. Historical Reasons	
B. Objective of this Research	
C. Review of the Literature	
D. Main Sources and Itinerary	
E. Methodology	
First Chapter:	
SCARS UPON THE ISLAMIC OUTLOOK:	
PROBLEMS OF NINETEENTH-CENTURY ISLAMIC THOUGHT.....	18
a. All Starting Points in Question and All the Stars are Falling.....	18
b. The Bipolarization of Civilizations, or, A Spectre in the Muslim Psyche...24	
c. Wanted: A New Methodology in Islamic Theology.....	31
Second Chapter	
THE LIFE OF MUSTAFA SABRÎ EFENDÎ (1869-1954).....	36
• Early Years.....	36
• Academic Positions and Professional Affiliations.....	37
• Political Career.....	41
• The Appointment to the Office of <i>Şeyhülislâm</i> .....	44
• Life in Exile (1922-1954).....	46
• Personal Observations and Comments on Sabri's Features.....	50

Third Chapter	
HIS WORKS.....	54
A. BOOKS	
a. Ottoman Turkish.....	54
b. Arabic.....	57
B. SELECTED ARTICLES	
a. Ottoman Turkish.....	60
b. Arabic.....	62
C. MANUSCRIPTS.....	62
D. TRANSLATIONS AND EDITIONS.....	63
E. SELECTED POEMS.....	64
Fourth Chapter	
HIS THOUGHT.....	65
• On the Fundamental Doctrines of Religion and the Qur'ān.....	65
• On Islamic Studies and Sufism.....	67
• Sources of Knowledge and the Significance of Reason.....	69
• On the Concept of the Unity of Existence ( <i>wahdat al-wujūd</i> ).....	70
• Disputes over Ibn al-'Arabī's Legacy.....	74
• On Music.....	78
• Re-examination of St. Anselm's Ontological Argument.....	86
• Can Prophecy be Acquired?.....	89
• On Poetry.....	93
• Evaluation of Sabri's Thought in Modern Scholarship.....	94
Conclusion.....	101
Appendixes.....	104
Bibliography.....	106



“A wise man of our own time was once asked what was the single greatest contribution of Greece to the world’s welfare.

He replied:

“The greatest invention of the Greeks was “*μὲν* and *δέ*.”

For *μὲν* means “on the one hand,”

and *δέ* means “on the other hand.”

Without these two balances, we cannot think.”

—Gilbert Highet, *Man’s Unconquerable Mind*, pp.19-20.

## INTRODUCTION

From the beginning of the eleventh century onward we notice a general stagnation in the intellectual life of the Muslims, and this is true of their literary life as well, so that it would be meaningless for us to look for any particular reason for the stagnation either in religious law or in theology.<sup>1</sup>

*Joseph Schacht*

### **A. Into the Darkness: The Present Dilemma in Islamic Intellectual History**

Among the many issues raised by contemporary scholars, there is relative consensus on one of them, i.e., that Islamic theology and the intellectual life of Muslims declined after a certain point in time. Montgomery Watt has remarked, as have many others, that Islamic theology and philosophy stagnated or left little or no space for rational renewal after Ghazālī (1058-1111), and especially after the Mongol invasion of Baghdad in 1258. From that time until at least the end of the nineteenth century, theological and philosophical thought increased in volume, but in quality certainly declined.<sup>2</sup>

#### **a. A Theoretical Question Mark**

The above analysis of Islamic thought is, however, problematic at best.

For short of counting the number of intellectual works produced prior to 1258

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph Schacht, "Theology and Law in Islam," in *Theology and Law in Islam*, ed. G. E. von Grunebaum (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1971), p. 22.

<sup>2</sup> Schacht, "Theology and Law in Islam," p. 21; W. Montgomery Watt, *Islamic Philosophy and Theology* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1962), p. 162; H. A. R. Gibb, *Modern Trends in Islam* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1947), pp. 1-38 and idem, *Mohammedanism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 146; Majid Fakhry, "The Classical Islamic Arguments for the Existence of God," *The Muslim World* 47 (1957): 133-145; Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Traditional Islam in the Modern World* (London and New York: Kegan Paul International, 1987), p. 184.

and after that date, there is still no quantitative evidence to support such a claim. The other problem is: Whose opinion is to be considered authoritative on the quality of the works written between the periods prior to and after 1258, or is it even possible to reach a general consensus among scholars regarding their respective values? It is very hard indeed to make an effective generalization—even for a given period, to say nothing of the whole course of Islamic history—regarding the quality of the work produced by ‘*ulamā*.’<sup>3</sup>

Indeed, the contrary can be (and has been) validly argued. For instance, Wael Hallaq has shown that the gate of *ijtihād*<sup>4</sup> did not close, either in theory or in practice.<sup>5</sup> In fact, the theoretical and functional interdependence of theology and law in Islam<sup>6</sup> requires that theological thinking and intellectual efforts at

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<sup>3</sup> “‘*Ulamā*’ (or *ulema*) refers to the scholars of the religious sciences where they are regarded as the guardians, transmitters and interpreters of religious knowledge, of Islamic doctrine and law;” see *EI*<sup>2</sup>, X, 801-810.

<sup>4</sup> “*Ijtihād* is the technical term in Islamic law, first, for the use of individual reasoning in general and later, in a restricted meaning, for the use of the method of reasoning by analogy (*qiyās*);” see *EI*<sup>2</sup>, III, 1026-27.

<sup>5</sup> Wael Hallaq, “Was the Gate of *Ijtihād* Closed?,” *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 16, 1 (1984): 3-41.

<sup>6</sup> “Certain fundamental elements that were appropriated from the field of theology (*kalām*) became an integral part of many, if not most, legal theories. Indeed, the prevailing epistemology in mainstream legal theory owes much to theology,” says Hallaq. For example, the Mutazilite idea of human rationality had an adverse effect on legal theory in terms of: Can human reason determine which act is good and which bad? Second issue was the limitation of the *ratio legis* (*takhṣīṣ al-‘illa*). Theology affected the notion of *takhṣīṣ* (the particularization of the ‘*illa*) and therefore affected *istiḥsān* (alternative methods of reasoning based on considerations of juristic preference) as advocated by the Hanafites; see Wael Hallaq, *A History of Islamic Legal Theories* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 134-143. On the function and relationship between law and theology in Islam, see J. Schacht, “Theology and Law in Islam,” pp. 3-25 and Fazlur Rahman, “Functional Interdependence of Law and Theology,” in *Theology and Law in Islam*, ed. G. E. von Grunebaum (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1971), pp. 89-99; Eric Chaumont, “Encore au sujet de l’Ash‘arisme d’abū Ishāq ash-Shīrāzī,” *Studia Islamica* 74 (1991): 167-77; Bernard Weiss, *The Search for God’s Law: Islamic Jurisprudence in the Writings of Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1992); M. Khalid Masud, *Islamic Legal Philosophy* (Islamabad: Islamic Research Institute, 1977) and Birgit

rearticulating the Muslim faith can never decline or cease, at least in theory. To accept the contrary would be to challenge Hallaq's well-supported thesis.

Fernand Braudel offers, furthermore, a historical analysis of this dilemma:

Islam's splendid apogee was between the 8<sup>th</sup> and the 12<sup>th</sup> centuries A. D. Everyone agrees about that. But when did its decadence begin? Its decisive decline is often said to have dated from the 13<sup>th</sup> century. That, however, confuses two very different things: the end of an ascendancy and the end of a civilization.<sup>7</sup>

Braudel says that every civilization has a past, a living present, and 'already' a future.<sup>8</sup> He further elaborates that civilizations and their foundations can almost be said to be immortal:

Mortal perhaps are their ephemeral blooms, the intricate and short-lived creations of an age, their economic triumphs and their social trials, in the short term. But their foundations remain. They are not indestructible, but they are many times more solid than one might imagine. They have withstood a thousand supposed deaths, their massive bulk unmoved by the monotonous pounding of the centuries.<sup>9</sup>

## **b. Historical Reasons**

Bearing in mind the tenacious character of Islamic civilization noted by Hallaq and Braudel, let us look at some of the reasons offered for the stagnation in the intellectual life of Muslims and Islamic theology. According to Watt, who regards the period, especially from 1500 onwards, as one not merely of

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Krawietz, "Zum Verhältnis von Sprache, Recht und Theologie in der islamischen Rechtstheorie von Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī," *Der Islam* 72 (1995): 137-147.

<sup>7</sup> Fernand Braudel, *A History of Civilizations*, trans. Richard Mayne (New York: Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, 1994), p. 69.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>9</sup> Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, trans. Sian Reynolds (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1966), II, pp. 775-776.

theological rigidity, but of general cultural decline and decadence, there are a number of theories that may account for the phenomenon:

One view is that the cause is to be looked for in the Mongol invasions and devastation they caused. This has certainly much to do with the relative cultural decline of some centers and regions – Baghdad, for example; but Egypt, on the other hand, was never invaded by the Mongols, and therefore the Mongols cannot be the sole cause. Another cause that has been suggested is Ottoman domination. For obvious reasons this tends to be a favorite with modern writers of Arab nationality. There may be some truth in this as regards the Arabic-speaking world, practically all of which came under Ottoman domination; but it is doubtful if even in these regions it can be the whole truth, since Persia and the eastern Islamic lands, where there once had been a high level of culture, never came under Ottoman sway. The further suggestion that the seeds of decay were present in the Islamic religion from the beginning seems to be an expression of anti-Islamic prejudice and not worthy of serious consideration.<sup>10</sup>

Another thesis, put forward by the Turkish scholar Sait Başer,<sup>11</sup> is that the decline was a symptom of the reaction to a new rationalist trend in Turkish civilization. As he explains it, the Turks adopted the school of *Māturīdī* in theology<sup>12</sup> and the *Ḥanafī* in jurisprudence, while at the same time integrating the *Yeseviye*<sup>13</sup> Sufi order's tolerant and rationalistic approach to religion. This

<sup>10</sup> Watt, *Islamic Philosophy and Theology*, pp. 150-151.

<sup>11</sup> This thesis was proposed by Sait Başer in Turkey some time ago. At the time of writing the thesis I did not have access to his unpublished thesis; however, his last book expounds the same ideas. See Sait Başer, *Yahyâ Kemal'de Türk Müslümanlığı* (Istanbul: Seyran, 1998), pp. 31-50.

<sup>12</sup> For al-Māturīdī, whose school was especially widespread in Central Asia and among Turks, see M. Said Yazıcıoğlu, *Le Kalâm et son rôle dans la société Turco-Ottomane, Aux XVe et XVIe Siècles* (Ankara: Ministère de la culture, 1990), pp. 105-116; W. Madelung, "The Spread of Māturīdism and the Turks," in *Actas do IV Congresso de Estudos Arabes e Islamicos Coimbra-Lisboa 1968* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1971), pp. 109-168; Robert Caspar, *A Historical Introduction to Islamic Theology* (Rome: P. I. S. A. I., 1998), pp. 234-242; *EI*<sup>2</sup>, VI, 846-848. For Māturīdī's theology, see J. Meric Pessagno, "Irāda, Ikhtiyār, Qudra, Kasb: The View of Abu Manşur al-Māturīdī," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 1 (1984): 177-191.

<sup>13</sup> "The Yasawiyya was a Sūfī brotherhood active in Transoxania, in Kharazm, in the Kazakh steppe and in the Tatar world in Eastern Turkestan, in Turkey, in China and even in India. Its

unification of tolerant Sufism with Māturīdī-Ḥanafī theology and law had a clear impact on Islamic thought at the time. In fact, this understanding of Islam contained within it a dichotomist worldview, according to which this world is as important as the next one. Thus, efforts spent in this world for material advancement are as legitimate as the time spent in prayer to or praise of God. This logic paved the way for a revolution in scientific studies. Research and progress increased in the pure and applied sciences (i.e. physics, algebra, medicine, astronomy), methodologies were developed and famous scientists and scholars emerged. This dichotomist worldview enabled the acceptance of rational thought as a legitimate method for interpreting primary sources in the fields of theology and jurisprudence according to changing world conditions. As a result, a more tolerant and rational Islamic understanding was being created. This reasonable and tolerance-oriented approach played a major role in the Ottoman Turks' success at building a strong, multiethnic and multi-religious empire, and the continuation of this cosmopolitan mosaic and superpower status for six centuries.

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eponymous founder was Aḥmad Yasawī (d. 1166-7). It had as its centre the town of Yasi in Turkistān, present-day Qazakhstān, where the mausoleum of the founder described as “the Ka‘ba of Turkistān” is situated. Aḥmad Yasawī was a disciple of Abū Yūsuf Hamadānī and was descended from ‘Alī Murtaḍā (‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib) and from Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafīyya. The representatives (*khalīfā*) of Aḥmad Yasawī, such as Zangī Atā, Uzūn Ḥasan Atā, Sayyid Atā, Ismā‘īl Atā, Ishāq Atā and Ṣadr Atā preached Islam in the region of the Volga, in Kharazm, in eastern Turkey, and as far as India. From the 13<sup>th</sup> century onwards, fleeing from the Mongols, the Yasawī *shaykhs* (Sufi masters) arrived in Anatolia and became involved with an order of *kalandars* known as the Ḥaydariyya, founded by Kuṭb al-Dīn Ḥaydar al-Zāwa‘ī (d. 1221);” see *EI*<sup>2</sup>, XI, 294-296.

However, the initial momentum of this worldview was not long-lived and the Ḥanafī-Māturīdī component of the paradigm declined. Başer argues that after Yavuz Selim I (1470-1520) defeated the Mamluks in 1517 he brought about two thousand legal scholars from the Arabian Peninsula, most of whom belonged to the Ash‘arī school, and they incrementally built up the Ash‘arī tradition in Istanbul. Their rigidity in theology triggered the first outbreak of *ulema* clashes between the Kadızâdeli and the Sivasîzâde movements.<sup>14</sup> According to this argument, starting from the 16<sup>th</sup> century the Ash‘arī understanding<sup>15</sup> gradually gained dominance in Istanbul, resulting in the diminishing of rational thought in the Islamic world due to its determinist views.

This reassertion of Ash‘arite theology, as Eric Ormsby points out, might well have spelled an end to any further developments in rational theology. Ormsby aptly poses a challenging question at this point:

Is not Ash‘arite theology the very embodiment of the “*Fatum Mahometanum*” against which Leibniz inveighed, comparing it to the “lazy sophism” of antiquity and stating that it is this belief that “causes the Turks not to shun places ravaged by plague?”<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> For the *ulema* clashes between Kadızâdeli and Sivasîzâde movements, see Madeline Zilfi, *The Politics of Piety: Ottoman Ulema in the Postclassical Age 1600-1800* (Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1988), pp. 129-181 and *İslâm*, XXIV, 100-102. On Islam and the Ottoman Empire, see Zilfi, *The Politics and Piety*, pp. 23-42.

<sup>15</sup> For the theology of Ash‘arites, see al-Ash‘arī, *The Theology of al-Asharī*, trans. Richard McCarthy (Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1953); W. Madelung, “Ash‘arī and the Ash‘arites in Islamic Religious History,” *Studia Islamica* 17 (1962): 37-80 and idem, “Ash‘ari and the Ash‘arites in Islamic Religious History,” *Studia Islamica* 18 (1963): 19-40 and Richard M. Frank, “Knowledge and *Taqīd*: The Foundations of Religious Belief in Classical Ash‘arism,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 109 (1989): 37-62.

<sup>16</sup> Eric Ormsby, *Theodicy in Islamic Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 25.

The late Joseph Schacht saw 1517 as significant not for theology but for legal theory. He contended that up until that date

[t]here were, of course, numerous individual writers and poets of merit, but creative invention was lacking, just as *ijtihād* (legal reasoning) was lacking in religious law; the classical models were imitated again and again, and the accepted judgments of value were not called into question. A further point, not of theology but of Islamic law, came in 1517, with the conquest of Egypt by the Ottomans, which made Istanbul the new center of the eastern-central part of the Islamic world and, in the field of Islamic law, led to a new serious effort to apply it in practice. This, too, gradually came to an end, and by the end of the nineteenth century it seemed as if the days of its application in practice were numbered.<sup>17</sup>

Another theory<sup>18</sup> maintains that, after al-Ghazālī's criticism of philosophers in his *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah* (The Incoherence of the Philosophers), and of theologians in his *Iljām al-'Awāmm 'an 'ilm al-Kalām* (Restraining the Common People from Islamic Theology), there was no further great interest in philosophical and theological questions in the Muslim east.<sup>19</sup> The fact, however, is that it is not clear to what extent the subsequent decline in these disciplines was due to al-Ghazālī's criticism or how much of it can be attributed to other causes.<sup>20</sup> For in Persia, the Turkish lands of the Ottoman world and the Indian subcontinent, philosophy, theology and gnostic wisdom continued to be pursued

<sup>17</sup> Schacht, "Theology and Law in Islam," p. 22.

<sup>18</sup> Watt, *Islamic Philosophy and Theology*, pp. 114-124.

<sup>19</sup> Al-Ghazālī's disparagement of applied jurisprudence (*'ilm al-furū'*) as opposed to *'uṣūl al-fiqh* received a bitter opposition from some quarters; see Ormsby, *Theodicy in Islamic Thought*, p. 99. For al-Ghazālī's relation to the Ash'arite school, see R. M. Frank, *Al-Ghazālī and the Ash'arite School* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1994).

<sup>20</sup> There were also other scholars (*fāqih*) who criticized *kalām* and theologians: For these critiques, see 'Abd Allāh ibn Muḥammad Anṣārī Harawī (1006-1089), *Dhamm al-Kalām wa-ahlih* and Ibn Qudāmah (1147-1223), *Tahrīm al-Nazar fī Kutub Ahl al-Kalām*.



to the same degree, and have done so even to the present day.<sup>21</sup> Their continuance in these regions and in Muslim Spain as well, where the *Tahāfut* and *Iljām* were also quite well known, suggests that other factors were responsible for their apparent decline elsewhere.

Braudel does not agree in the first place with the view that philosophy slowly fell out of favour as a result of al-Ghazālī's influence on Islamic thought:

So Muslim philosophy, despite what is sometimes said, did not die an immediate death under the powerful, desperate blows of al-Ghazali. In the end, however, it did die, together with Muslim science, before the end of the twelfth century. Then it was that the West took up the torch...

Was it caused, as used to be argued, by the passionate and all too effective onslaughts made by al-Ghazali against philosophy and free thought? No one can take that theory very seriously. Al-Ghazali was a product of his time—a symptom as much as a cause. Besides, philosophy had always had its detractors from its earliest days, as can be seen from the countless times when books were ordered to be burned—a proceeding unthinkable unless there was violent public hostility... there was also times when the *fiqh*, the Koranic science of law, reigned supreme and reduced any philosopher to silence.<sup>22</sup>

There are numerous aspects to the complex dilemma of the stagnation of Islamic theology and philosophy. However, the history of ideas and of theology is not the only key to explaining the fluctuation in Islam's flourishing or stagnation. Many of these aspects are to a large extent the concern of economic and political history. Intellectual considerations are not sufficient, in and of

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<sup>21</sup> Nasr, *Traditional Islam in the Modern World*, p. 184.

<sup>22</sup> Braudel, *A History of Civilizations*, pp. 84-85.

themselves, to explain this cultural change; important material advantages must be considered, as Braudel points out:

In the 13<sup>th</sup> century, Islam clearly lost its position of leadership. But its really dangerous decline began until the eighteenth century, which in the long life of civilizations is a very short time ago. It shared the fate of many nations that are now called 'under-developed' because they missed the Industrial Revolution—the first revolution whereby the world could advance at the dizzy speed of machines. This failure did not kill Islam as a civilization. All that happened was that Europe gained two centuries of rapid material progress, leaving Islam behind.<sup>23</sup>

However, in practice, the methodological and chronological study of the theological development can offer a different perspective and opens up new vistas that have not yet been explored in modern scholarship. A chronological study of the works of Ottoman period theologians shows that analyses of the history of Islamic thought on bases such are questionable. Scholars who specialize in Islamic theology, with few exceptions,<sup>24</sup> have never studied these thinkers.

Montgomery Watt seems to have perceived the inaccuracy of arguments stressing the decline of Islamic theology, for he gives brief data about thirteen theologians<sup>25</sup> who lived after the Mongol invasion of Baghdad (1258) to demonstrate to the reader that there is indeed a vast amount of material at which

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 69.

<sup>24</sup> On Islamic theology and theologians in the Ottoman period, see M. Said Yazıcıoğlu, *Le Kalâm et son rôle dans la société Turco-Ottomane, Aux XVe et XVIe Siècles* (Ankara: Ministère de la culture, 1990) and Said Özervarlı, *Kelâm'da Yenilik Arayışları* (Istanbul: ISAM, 1998).

<sup>25</sup> These theologians are: al-Baydāwī (d. 1286), Ḥāfiẓ al-Dīn Abū al-Barakāt al-Nasafī (d. 1301 or 1310), 'Aḍud al-Dīn al-Ijī (d. 1355), Sa'd al-Dīn Taftāzānī (1322-1389), al-Jurjānī (1340-1413), al-Sanūsī (d. 1490), al-Dawwānī (1427-1501), Birgivī (1522-1573), al-Laḳānī (d. 1631), al-Siyālkūtī (d. 1657), al-Faḍālī (d. 1821), al-Bājūrī (1783-1860).

few students of the history of Islamic theology have looked. This raises one of the most important questions to be addressed in this thesis: How can one be so sure about the validity of one's statements regarding the decline of Islamic thought without examining the literary or scholarly value of those texts produced between 1250-1900?

It would in fact be easy to add to Watt's list, as I propose to do here, citing only a few theologians from the Ottoman period (between 1250-1900)<sup>26</sup> responsible for numerous works: Şemsettin Mehmed Fenarî (1351-1431),<sup>27</sup> İbnü'l-Hümâm (1388-1457),<sup>28</sup> Hıdır Bey (1407-1459),<sup>29</sup> Hayâlî Ahmed Efendi (d.1470),<sup>30</sup> Molla Lütî (d.1495),<sup>31</sup> Muslihiddin Mustafa Kestelî (Kaşallânî, d.1496),<sup>32</sup> Kemalpaşazâde Şemseddin Ahmed (1468-1534),<sup>33</sup> İbrâhîm b. Muḥammad al-Ḥalabî (d. 1549),<sup>34</sup> İsmail Hakkı Bursevî (1653-1725),<sup>35</sup> Saçaklızâde Mehmed Marâşî (d.1737),<sup>36</sup> İsmâil Gelenbevî (al-Kalanbawî, d.

<sup>26</sup> Watt proposes a fixed date (1250-1900) regarding the stagnation of Islamic theology in the first edition of his book. The third edition, however, published 22 years later, provides an alternative date (1250-1850) without explanation of how these 50 years disappeared. Furthermore, in the first edition of his book, he uses "the sclerosis of philosophical theology: the period of darkness" as a chapter name but in the expanded edition he softens his language and employs "the stagnation of philosophical theology."

<sup>27</sup> For Fenarî and his works, see *Keşf*, II, 1180; *Esmâ*, II, 188; *EI* <sup>2</sup>, II, 879.

<sup>28</sup> For İbnü'l-Hümâm and his works, see *Keşf*, II, 1666; *Esmâ*, II, 201; *İslâm*, XXI, 87-90; Yazıcıoğlu, *Le Kalâm*, pp. 83-90.

<sup>29</sup> For Hıdır Bey and his works, see Yazıcıoğlu, *Le Kalâm et son rôle dans la société Turco-Ottomane*, pp. 71-79.

<sup>30</sup> For Ahmed Efendi and his works, see Yazıcıoğlu, *Le Kalâm*, pp. 79-83; *İslâm*, XVII, 3-5.

<sup>31</sup> For Molla Lütî and his works, see Yazıcıoğlu, *Le Kalâm*, pp. 102-104.

<sup>32</sup> For Kestelî and his works, see *EI* <sup>2</sup>, IV, 737; *İslâm*, XXV, 314; *Keşf*, I, 859, 871; *GAL*, I, 427.

<sup>33</sup> For Kemalpaşazâde and his works, see *Keşf*, I, 883; *Köprülü*, III, 335 and II, 223; *GAL*, II, 451; *EI* <sup>2</sup>, IV, 879-881; *İslâm*, XXV, 238-247; Yazıcıoğlu, *Le Kalâm*, pp. 90-96.

<sup>34</sup> For al-Ḥalabî and his works, see *Zeyl*, II, 23; *Esmâ*, I, 27.

<sup>35</sup> For Bursevî and his works, see Mehmed Ali Aynî, *İsmâil Hakkı: Philosophe Mystique* (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1933).

<sup>36</sup> For Marâşî and his works, see *Zeyl*, II, 647; *Esmâ*, II, 322.

1791),<sup>37</sup> al-Laknavī (d.1868).<sup>38</sup> I will also mention several other under-studied 19<sup>th</sup> century theologians and their works in the first chapter of this thesis. In the history of *kalām* (Islamic theology), clearly, the Ottoman period has not still been explored.

Why is this the case? The answer is that while much attention has been paid to the political and social history of Ottoman Empire,<sup>39</sup> there has been little detailed study of *kalām* and *fiqh* (Islamic law) in the Ottoman period in comparison to the field of political science.<sup>40</sup> Şerif Mardin pinpoints why Islamic studies did not develop in the formative years of Republican Turkey:

Islamic Studies did not flourish in Turkey in the early years of the Turkish Republic (est. 1923). The foundation myth of the republican regime, based as it was on the idea of a secular state, precluded such a flowering. The history of the first twenty years of the new Turkey, with its dramatic secularizing reforms, underlined these aspects of the myth. Between 1925 and 1950 the main source of information about the religious debates, which had engrossed Ottoman intellectuals in the first decades of the century, was dusty brochures dating from pre-Republican times.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> For Gelenbevî and his works, see *Köprülü*, III, 157; *Esmâ*, I, 222.

<sup>38</sup> For al-Laknavî and his works, see *Zeyl*, II, 252; *Esmâ*, II, 274.

<sup>39</sup> Professor Sidney Griffith of the Catholic University in Washington expressed his views in an interview: “Islam has been taught in the West only in faculties of political sciences. It has been approached as a political phenomenon. It has not been taught as a religion. This is where the main problem lies.” (*Zaman newspaper*, 11-12 April 1998). Quoted from *Advocate of Dialogue*, ed. Ali Ünal and Alphonse Williams (Fairfax: The Fountain, 2000), p. 288.

<sup>40</sup> In the preface of *Trends and Issues in Contemporary Arab Thought*, Issa J. Boullata has exposed same fact in Arab thought. Boullata says that “various aspects of the contemporary Arab world have been studied in a plethora of books recently published in the West, concentrating mostly on current political developments and economic matters relating to Western interests in the area.” “...And most of these emphasize the recent dramatic resurgence of Islam in the political arena. The false impression often left by these books is that the Arab world is seething with religious Islamic fervour and xenophobia.”

<sup>41</sup> Şerif Mardin, *Religion and Social Change in Modern Turkey: The Case of Bediüzzaman Said Nursi* (New York: State University of New York, 1989), p. 1.

For Haim Gerber the fact that the Ottoman period is generally neglected and the *muftīs* (juristconsults) of those times never mentioned except in passing in academic works is due to “a strong, though often implied, academic ideology”; indeed, “opinions passed on this period of Islamic law often seemed based on biased preconceptions rather than on documented findings.”<sup>42</sup>

## B. Objective of this Research

Having addressed the above dilemma in Islamic studies, the purpose of this work will be to show in concrete terms just how vital theological discourse was during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. To this purpose, the present study focuses on the life and thought of one of the last Ottoman *şeyhülislâms*,<sup>43</sup> Mustafa Sabri Efendi (1869-1954).<sup>44</sup>

Sabri is deserving of our particular attention for a number of reasons, four of which I will cite here: first, his works demonstrate a profound knowledge of the ontological and epistemological structure of Islamic theology and modern philosophy; second, historical sources indicate that he was a politically active *şeyhülislâm* and a leading intellectual in his time; third, he lived (in

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<sup>42</sup> Haim Gerber, *Islamic Law and Culture 1600-1840* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), pp. 1-22.

<sup>43</sup> *Şeyhülislâm*: The Shaykh al-Islām (the most senior of Islam) was the chief jurisconsult (Grand Müfti) of the State and head of the Ottoman religious establishment. From the middle of the sixteenth century the *şeyhülislâm* also controlled the entire *ilmiye* (the religious learned establishment) hierarchy, comprising *kadıs* (judge), *müderrises* (teacher, professor), and *müftis* (jurisconsult). The office existed until the end of the Ottoman Empire; see Gustav Bayerle, *Pashas, Begs and Efendis* (Istanbul, 1997), p. 141 and Zilfi, *The Politics of Piety* (Minneapolis, 1988), p. 243. For the office of *şeyhülislâm* and its function in the Ottoman Empire, see Richard Repp, *The Mufti of Istanbul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

<sup>44</sup> “*Efendi*: Post-nominal title for members of the *ulema* class (those possessing knowledge of the religious sciences; the learned) and bureaucracy, and for males of the imperial family;” see Zilfi, *Politics of Piety*, p. 239.

Montgomery Watt's words) through both the dark age of Islamic theology and a period of rapid change, when the Muslim world was reeling in the aftermath of World War I and confronting a time of theological transition in which new ideas were constantly coming to the fore; and fourth, there is a general dearth of academic studies of Sabri in English.

### C. Review of the Literature

There are very few works that focus particularly on Islamic theology or theologians' contributions to Islamic thought in the Ottoman period.<sup>45</sup> What is more, there are even fewer studies of Mustafa Sabri<sup>46</sup> and his theological ideas and no truly comprehensive study of his career, with the exception of Mufrah Sulaymān al-Qawsī's *al-Shaykh Muṣṭafā Ṣabrī wa-Mawqifuh min al-Fikr al-Wāfid*, written in Arabic. Al-Qawsī has provided a great service to the study of Mustafa Sabri,<sup>47</sup> in that he concentrates on the particular case of the debates between Sabri and Egyptian intellectuals on theological and political issues such as the concept of existence, miracles, prophecy, religion and government. However, al-Qawsī's work makes little reference to original sources in modern Turkish or no reference to secondary sources in European languages written on Islamic intellectual history. Several accounts of intellectual history, largely

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<sup>45</sup> See footnote 24.

<sup>46</sup> Muṣṭafā Ḥilmī, *al-Asrār al-Khafīyah warā' al-Ilghā' al-Khilāfa al-Uthmāniya* (Iskandariyya: Dār al-da'wah, 1405).

<sup>47</sup> Al-Qawsī compiled an almost complete bibliography of Sabri's work and a number of original documents that are important to the historian. He also conducted interviews with a number of people, such as Sabri's daughter Nezahet Hanım, and several of his students such as Ali Yakub, Emin Saraç and Ali Ulvi Kurucu.

written on late Ottoman intellectual trends, allocate a reasonable amount of attention to Sabri,<sup>48</sup> but there is no comprehensive study of Sabri's career in Turkish or a European language.

#### **D. Main Sources and Itinerary**

This study is, to a large extent, based on primary sources in Arabic and Ottoman Turkish. However, extensive secondary material including literary critiques, personal observations, biographical and historical accounts in both Ottoman and modern Turkish, Arabic, English, German and French are also examined.

This thesis is divided into four chapters. The first chapter looks at the effects of positivist, skeptical and rationalist schools of philosophy on Islamic thought and tries to identify Muslim intellectuals' weakest points in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This chapter is also helpful in explaining the reasons for Sabri's engagement with Islamic theology and philosophy.

The second chapter provides a sketch of significant events in Sabri's life. His own writings and the memoirs of his colleagues will, of course, be our primary and most reliable source for his biography.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> See the works by Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1964); Ahmet Kanlıdere, *Reform within Islam: The Tâjdid and Jadid Movements Among the Kazan Tatars (1809-1917) Conciliation or Conflict?* (Istanbul: Eren Yayıncılık, 1997) and Ahmet Şeyhun, *Sait Halim Pasha: Ottoman Statesman and Islamist Thinker* (Istanbul: The ISIS Press, 2003).

<sup>49</sup> Bibliographic material was assembled from Sabri's own works, memoirs and nine secondary sources: Abdülkadir Altunsu, *Osmanlı Şeyhülislâmları* (Ankara: Ayyıldız Matbaası, 1972), pp.

Chapter three offers a survey of Sabri's published and unpublished books and of several of his articles in Arabic and Ottoman Turkish, as well as his translations and poems.

The last chapter considers some aspects of his thought relevant to Islamic theology, philosophy and literature making critical comments where necessary. This chapter, it is hoped, will offer (through Sabri's thought) a different perspective on the field of Islamic studies in general and, in particular, on the reasons for the apparent stagnation of Islamic scholarship in his period. A small number of Sabri's articles, such as his article on music, another discussing the possibility of acquired prophecy and one more examining St. Anselm's ontological argument, have also been translated in order to show how Sabri articulated his analytical and critical ideas.<sup>50</sup>

The conclusion attempts to indicate Sabri's place in the development of twentieth century Islamic theology and to assess the value of his contribution to Islamic thought.

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254-59; İsmail Hâmi Danişmend, *İzâhlı Osmanlı Tarihi Kronolojisi*, 5 vols. (Istanbul: Türkiye Yayınevi, 1971), pp. 163-68; Ebü'l-Ulâ Mardin, *Huzûr Dersleri*, 3 vols. (Istanbul: İsmail Akgün Matbaası, 1966), pp. 350-51; Khayr al-Dîn Zirikfî, *al-A'lâm: Qāmûs Tarâjîm*, 7 vols. (Beirut: Dâr al-'ilm al-malâyin, 1980), p. 226; İbnülemin Mahmud Kemal (İnal), *Osmanlı Devrin'de Son Sadrazamlar*, 2 vols. (Istanbul: Maârif Matbaası, 1940), pp. 1945-2098 and idem, *Türk Şairleri*, 4 vols. (Istanbul: Maârif Matbaası, 1930), pp. 2183-185; İsmail Kara, *Türkiye'de İslamcılık Düşüncesi*, 2 vols. (Istanbul: Risale Yayınları, 1987), pp. 263-65; *al-Shaykh*, pp. 63-134; Sadık Albayrak, *Son Devir Osmanlı Ulemâsı: İlmiye Ricâlinin Terâcim-i Ahvâli*, 5 vols. (Istanbul: İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi Kültür İşleri Daire Başkanlığı Yayınları, 1996), pp. 116-17 and idem, *Son Devir İslam Akademisi: Dâr-ül Hikmeti'l-İslamiye* (Istanbul: Yeni Asya Yayınları, 1973), pp. 178-79.

<sup>50</sup> Sabri's article on music was translated by Muaz Özyiğit, and published in *Anadolu* (e-journal) in 1995. However, the translation in this thesis is mine. For Özyiğit's translation, see [http://www.wakeup.org/anadolu/05/4/mustafa\\_sabri\\_en.html](http://www.wakeup.org/anadolu/05/4/mustafa_sabri_en.html).



## E. Methodology

This study is essentially concerned with ideas and therefore will try to work out the complex set of relations between an individual and the products of his mental activity. It does not take, therefore, a historical approach. Nor is it a study of late Ottoman intellectual trends or of the history of Islamic theology. It is a study of what a particular individual has said and done in the past and how his ideas developed. Ideas, in a very broad sense, are obviously important in one's life; they are not mere words, as the intellectual historian Crane Brinton elaborates:

The word "ouch" uttered by a man who hits his finger with a hammer is probably not an idea at all. His statement "I hit my finger with a hammer" is a very simple proposition, and therefore an idea. A further statement, "My finger hurts because I hit it with a hammer," begins to involve more complicated ideas. Statements such as "My finger hurts because the hammer blow affected certain nerves which carried to my central nervous system a kind of stimulus we call pain" and "My finger hurts because God is punishing me for my sins" are both very complex propositions, taking us into two realms of human thought, the scientific and the theological.<sup>51</sup>

This study, therefore, will itself be a piece of intellectual history. The field of intellectual history or history of ideas is neither a clear-cut nor a simple one, as Brinton also indicates. The intellectual historian is interested in ideas wherever he or she may find them, in wild ideas as well as in sensible ones, in refined speculation and in common prejudices; but he or she is interested in how these products of human mental activity influence people and what they are

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<sup>51</sup> Crane Brinton, *Ideas and Men: The Story of Western Thought* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1963), p. 8.

influenced by. The intellectual historian makes an effort to piece together from scattered sources some notion of how ideas are generated and how they spread throughout the human population.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

## *Chapter 1*

### SCARS UPON THE ISLAMIC OUTLOOK:

#### PROBLEMS OF NINETEENTH-CENTURY ISLAMIC THOUGHT

Where is the Muslim of today, inescapably bound to this situation, to look for intellectual renewal? What is needed is a set of ideas which is both a development of traditional theological conceptions and also relevant to contemporary problems; and this relevance really implies that intellectual renewals and social reform must go hand in hand. Where is this set of ideas to be found? Who is to produce it? The *ulema* are unlikely to do so, because they are insufficiently familiar with European ideas and therefore unable to communicate easily with the modern-minded politicians who have the actual power. The modern intellectuals are likewise incapable of producing a suitable set of ideas; they tend to think in European conceptions (including Marxist), and, though they are able to speak to the politicians, they are unable to link up with the traditional categories of Islamic thinking, and thus cannot carry the religious leaders and the masses with them. The situation varies, of course, in the different countries.

...If the present attempts to revive Islamic theology in Turkey are successful, the results should be most important.<sup>53</sup>

*Montgomery Watt*

#### **a. All Starting Points in Question and All the Stars are Falling**

In Western philosophy, through the impact of Aristotle, it has long been generally accepted that the acquisition of knowledge (epistemology) is only possible by the use of reason and the five senses.<sup>54</sup> René Descartes (1596-1650), known as the founder of modern philosophy and the “father” of rationalism, acknowledged the superiority of reason in this equation. In order to grasp the truth, Descartes turned away from the outer world to the inner world and asked:

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<sup>53</sup> Watt, *Islamic Philosophy and Theology*, pp. 175-176.

<sup>54</sup> For the thought of Aristotle, see R. Bambrough, *The Philosophy of Aristotle* (New York: New American Library Mentor Classics, 1963).

“Can we be sure that the appearances we observe in the outer world are not a part of our dream?” This led him to assert that, even if this were so, there still had to be an observer that observed this dream, which is called the ego or the ‘I’. Starting from this firm premise, he built his own philosophy on the principles of pure reason, although in the process he created a dichotomy between mind and matter or knowledge and being.<sup>55</sup>

Among rationalist philosophers, Benedict de Spinoza (1632-1677) came closest to resolving this dichotomy by equating God with being and knowledge. But as he was bound by the limits of reason and could not see the whole picture, he could only conceive of God at the level of the material world.<sup>56</sup>

According to the agents of the Enlightenment,

[r]eason will enable us to discover human institutions and human relations that are “natural”; once we find such institutions, we shall conform to them and be happy. Reason will clear up the mess that superstition, revelation and faith (the devils of the rationalists) have piled up here on Earth...<sup>57</sup>

The favorite explanation among the intellectuals in the eighteenth century was that progress is due to the spread of reason, to the increasing enlightenment that enables men to control their environment better.<sup>58</sup>

The next generation, according to Crane Briton, saw no need to assign a role to God after Voltaire’s (1694-1778) famous statement: “If God did not

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<sup>55</sup> For Descartes’ writings, see Descartes, *Descartes: Philosophical Writings*, trans. and ed. Elizabeth Anscombe and Peter T. Geach (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons Ltd., 1954).

<sup>56</sup> For Spinoza’s views on God and human nature, see Benedict de Spinoza, *Chief Works*, trans. R. H. M. Elwes, 2 vols. (New York: Dover, 1951).

<sup>57</sup> Briton, *Ideas and Men*, p. 290.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 296.

exist, He would have to be invented.” Briton explains eighteenth century reasoning in this regard:

They were already familiar through mathematics with the concept of infinity. The world-machine had always existed and would always exist, at least as far as mere men could tell. How could anyone possibly know that a God as remote as that of the deists existed? If he was altogether outside the created universe, how could he be inside, even inside our mind as a conception? Clearly he was not necessary. Nature was enough—this great universe we should never have enough time to study in its entirety. Let us stop worrying about God, and make ours as a religion of reason, a system of ethics without all the nonsense of theology.<sup>59</sup>

Then along came Empiricism, championed by David Hume (1711-1776), who declared that, since all human knowledge is gained by experience, we can never achieve absolute universal truth by the sole use of our reason, which is influenced and even formed by our personal natures and tendencies. As the perfect representative of skepticism, Hume criticized the most fundamental feature of Descartes’ philosophical system, i.e., the concept of the self, and carried the Cartesian dilemma of thought and matter to a point at which skepticism definitely took over. Shortly afterwards, he became one of the most sophisticated questioners of revelation.<sup>60</sup>

Accusing Descartes of dogmatic rationalism and Hume of sophistical skepticism, Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) tried to find a middle way between these extremes. He discarded pure reason as a path to the perception of reality and concluded that the only gateway to knowledge lay in the bodily senses. He

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., pp. 299-300.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., pp. 313-314.

emphasized that the conceptual powers of human reason cannot grasp metaphysical realities. Étienne Gilson says:

Similarly, after proving in his *Critique of Pure Reason* [*Kritik der reinen Vernunft*] that the existence of God could not be demonstrated, Kant still insisted on keeping God as at least a unifying idea in [the] order of speculative reason and as [a] postulate in the moral order of practical reason. It may even appear to be true that, out of its own nature, the human mind is equally unable to prove the existence of God and “to escape its deep-seated instinct to personify its intellectual conceptions.”<sup>61</sup>

Soon after Kant put forward his ideas, there emerged a whole series of thinkers who questioned the capacity of reason:

[C]harles Darwin [1809-1882] taught that reflective reason is a relatively late emergent in the evolutionary process. Søren Kierkegaard [1813-1855] stressed the disjunction of the temporal and the eternal as being so radical that only a leap of naked faith could bridge it. Henri Bergson [1859-1941] maintained that conceptual reasoning imposed a false structure on reality, whose rationally incomprehensible dimensions must be grasped intuitively. Martin Heidegger [1889-1976] held that reality must be existentially experienced rather than conceptually grasped.<sup>62</sup>

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) insisted that the human being must understand that life is not governed by rational principles. Life is full of injustice, uncertainty and absurdity. There are no absolute standards of good and evil that can be demonstrated by human reason. According to Nietzsche, modern industrial and bourgeois society has rendered human beings depraved and vulnerable because it has made them victims of the excessive development of the rational faculties at the expense of human will and instinct. Thus, “it is no accident that Nietzsche’s phrase ‘God is dead’ was taken as the symbol of

<sup>61</sup> Étienne Gilson, *God and Philosophy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969), p. 117.

<sup>62</sup> Carl F. H. Henry, *Frontiers in Modern Theology* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1968), p. 81.

present-day secularism,” argues Langdon Gilkey, who sees a drawback in this approach:

But since for this mood existence also “is the absurd,” we should add that *all* the gods are dead—that is, all those structures of coherence, order and value in the wider environment of man’s life. Darwin and Nietzsche, not Marx and Kierkegaard, are the real fathers of the present mood.<sup>63</sup>

Gilkey captures this mood in his observation: “This developing modern mood has, of course, had increasing influence on the theology of the last two hundred years,” and he elaborates:

At first this was largely confined to (1) the acceptance of naturalistic causality and, by extension, the methods and results of science with regard to spatio-temporal facts; (2) the appropriation of the attitudes of historical inquiry, resulting in at least a qualified relativism with regard to both scriptural writings and doctrines; (3) the emphasis on religion as of value for *this* life and on ethics as having relevance only for one’s concern for his neighbor’s welfare. In the nineteenth century these and other elements of the modern mentality began to transform traditional theology completely.<sup>64</sup>

After the explosion of empiricism, Kantian criticism, Hegelian idealism, evolutionism, pragmatic naturalism, and now existentialism and positivism, “we are thus left with a kind of ‘raw’ or radical secularity in which no ultimate order or meaning appears,” says Gilkey:

This is expressed both by positivism and by secular existentialism, especially in the latter’s literary forms. However different these two points of view may be, each in its own way reflects a concentration solely on immediate knowledge or value, and asserts either the meaninglessness of ultimate metaphysical or religious questions (positivism), or the complete absence or irrelevance of ultimate answers (existentialism). Man is no longer felt to be set within an

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<sup>63</sup> Langdon Gilkey, “Secularism’s Impact on Contemporary Theology,” *Christianity and Crisis* 25 (April 5, 1965): 64.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 64-65.

ultimate order or context, from which he draws not only his being but the meanings, standards and values of his life; he is alone and alien in the flux of reality and quite autonomous with regard to meaning and value.<sup>65</sup>

In one way or another, the main features of eighteenth century and Western thought had a clear impact on contemporary Islamic thought and, particularly in its approaches to the sources of knowledge and the origin of the universe, nature, being and God. The most influential ideas were Auguste Comte's positivism, Claude Bernard's discoveries in physiology, Charles Darwin's theory of evolution, and Ludwig Büchner's biological materialism.<sup>66</sup> In this process of ontological and epistemological transformation, all starting points in the epistemic structure of Islamic thought were called into question. The atomism of the Enlightenment, the nationalism that arose as a result of Enlightenment ideals, the Victorian belief in the economic doctrines of *laissez-faire* as a compromise with pacifist traditions of the Enlightenment, the rebellious temper of socialism as a response to Victorian compromise, the emphasis on organic wholeness of the late nineteenth century, the belief in individualism, naturalism, neoclassicism and romanticism, positivist accusations of 'meaninglessness' and existentialist affirmations of the 'death of God'—all these foundations crossed *geographical frontiers* and found a point of entry into the Muslim psyche in the nineteenth century. The younger generation therefore

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 64.

<sup>66</sup> For the impacts of positivist and rationalist schools of philosophy on the structure of the Muslim mind, see Ekrem Işın, "Osmanlı Modernleşmesi ve Pozitivizm," and "Osmanlı Materyalizmi," in *Tanzimat'tan Cumhuriyet'e Türkiye Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1985), II, pp. 352-362 and pp. 363-370.



began to hearken to a new system of thought and, consequently, all the “stars” (the *as̄lāf*, or exemplary Muslim scholars) began to fall or lose their grip on authority. In general, the nineteenth century was a time of extraordinary diversity of thought and an age of perplexity, as Briton indicates:

Its extremes were great extremes, its tensions clearly marked—tradition against innovation, authority against liberty, faith in God against faith in the machine, loyalty to the nation against loyalty to humanity—this list could be very long indeed. Somehow the nineteenth century managed to keep these warring human aspirations, these basically conflicting ideals of the good life, in uneasy balance. Our century has seen this balance upset. Two great wars [World War I and II] and a great depression are the witnesses of this upset. We are now attempting, among ideals quite as conflicting as those of the nineteenth century—they are indeed essentially the same ideas—to establish a balance of our own.<sup>67</sup>

#### **b. The Bipolarization<sup>68</sup> of Civilizations, or, A Spectre in the Muslim Psyche**

We should not forget the benefits we have received from the (Western) missionaries, but let us not forget the political harm they have done. We are the real Christians. Our religion has not been mixed with politics. We are not responsible for what Western Christendom had done; our loyalty is to the East—we have always been faithful to the Sultan.

Farah Anṭūn (1874-1922)<sup>69</sup>

One Englishman, looking at the need for regenerating the Ottoman Empire in 1812, asked ‘Can the Koran stretch to this point?’<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Briton, *Ideas and Men*, pp. 381-82.

<sup>68</sup> “Bipolar is used to mean consisting of two opposite or two clearly extreme ideas. No middle ground exists between these two borders. A bipolar affective disorder is an abnormal fluctuation in moods, varying between marked *highs* (mania) and *lows* (depression) with periods of stability. “Bipolar” refers to the two poles of the continuum with mania being the higher pole and depression being the lower pole. “Affective” refers to one’s mood or emotions. The dramatic fluctuation in mood is sometimes referred to as an “episode” or as a “mood swing.” There are a number of factors that contribute to its onset. They include physiology, heredity and the environment in which one lives and works. Studies have confirmed that stress can precipitate manic and depressive episodes;” see *Bipolar Affective Disorder: A Guide to Recovery* (Calgary: OBAD, 2002).

<sup>69</sup> Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age (1798-1939)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), pp. 245-259.

<sup>70</sup> Alan Cunningham, “The Sick Man and the British Physician,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 17 (1981): 166.

Another main feature of intellectual trends from the nineteenth century up to the present was that they became polarized into “Eastern” and “Western” civilizations. Nietzsche saw that a civilization exists *fundamentally* in a geographical area that has been structured by men and history.<sup>71</sup> “That is why there are cultural frontiers and cultural zones of amazing permanence: all the cross-fertilization in the world will not alter them” says Fernand Braudel. He argues further:

What else can one conclude but that *the fundamental reality* of any civilization must be its geographical cradle. Geography dictates its vegetational growth and lays down often impassable frontiers...<sup>72</sup> A civilization cannot simply transplant itself, bag and baggage. By crossing a frontier, the individual becomes a foreigner. He or she ‘betrays’ his or her own civilization by leaving it behind.<sup>73</sup>

However, Braudel’s famous motto “civilizations are regions” does not provide any intelligible explanation of how the Jews handled this ‘geography problem,’ which is, according to Braudel, a very fundamental reality of any civilization.

The latest version of this generalization is perhaps Huntington’s famous “Clash of Civilizations” thesis, in which he argues that hatred for the West arises from the fact that Islamic values are fundamentally at odds with Western liberal values.<sup>74</sup> Bipolarization, namely East versus West as a consequence of

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<sup>71</sup> Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, p. 770.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., p. 773.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., p. 770.

<sup>74</sup> Samuel Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations,” *Foreign Affairs* 72 (Summer 1993): 22-49.

geographical and religious borderlines, has begun to be perceived in a mutually antagonistic light once again.

This term “bipolarization” is also a key for understanding controversies and conflicts that arose within Islamic civilization, such as that between the *ẓāhirīs* (exponents of exoteric, literal knowledge) and the *bāṭinīs* (those possessing esoteric knowledge),<sup>75</sup> spirit (*rūḥ*) versus body (*badan*), *fuqahā*’ (jurists) versus *mutaṣawwifūn* (Sufis), *uṣūl* (theoretical bases) versus *furū*’ (practical applications), ‘*aql* (reason) versus *waḥy* (revelation), *ḥaqīqah* (real meaning of religion) versus *sharī’a* (Islamic law), the *Kadızâdeli* movement versus the *Sivasîzâde*, or in the contemporary discourse, traditionalists versus modernists, reformists versus conservatives, and past model (*namūdhaj al-salaf*) versus reason.<sup>76</sup>

It can be argued that the origins of these conflicts lay in the inability to hold two opposing ideas in the mind at one and the same time and still retain the ability to function. Muslim thinkers must therefore confront the fact that, although the text (or the Book) is one, its meanings are many. Therefore,

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<sup>75</sup> “*Al-Ẓāhir wa’l-Bāṭin*, two terms of Arabic theological and philosophical discourse, the first, *ẓāhir*, meaning “outward, external, exoteric sense”, hence “apparent, manifest sense”, and the second, *bāṭin*, its antonym, meaning “hidden, inner, esoteric sense”. This pair of words resulted the emergence of well-known *al-Bāṭinīya* and *Ẓāhirī* schools. Jurist held the view that legal construction must, as a rule, be based on the *ẓāhir* (*al-binā’ ‘alā al-ẓāhir wājib*). However, Shī’a maintained that the Qur’an has both an outer (*ẓahr*) as well as an inner dimension (*batn*). To support their contention they report a tradition wherein the Prophet is stated to have said, “Not a verse of the Qur’an has come down [to me] but it has a *ẓahr* (a literal expression or an apparent meaning) and a *batn* (an interpretation or an inner meaning);” see *EI* <sup>2</sup>, XI, 389-390.

<sup>76</sup> For a number of contemporary Arab intellectuals’ approaches to Islamic thought, especially that of Ḥasan Ḥanafī and Muḥammad ‘Abid al-Jābirī, see Issa J. Boullata, *Trends and Issues in Contemporary Arab Thought* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1990), pp. 11-57.

nobody's opinion can be considered the whole 'truth.' For this reason, Sabri said: "Translation (*tarjama*) is more challenging and difficult than interpretation (*tafsīr*)."<sup>77</sup> Anyone can interpret the text according to his or her own understanding, but this is easy in comparison to translation. No one, therefore, is capable of translating the word of God, word by word, into human language consistent with God's true 'intentions.' In a sense, even translations are a kind of interpretation (*tafsīr*). It should not be forgotten that the process of interpreting the text is absolutely human; thus, interpretations diverge on many points.

The fact is, however, that everybody needs the liberty free to think in different ways, just as there may be some elements of truth in everyone's opinion. From this perspective, it can be argued that what Muslims have done to themselves in the past has been more decisive than what 'others'—the 'infidels'—have done to them or are doing even now. But since no one can predict the future, and in order to progress beyond present frontiers, one can only look at examples from the past.

This ongoing bipolarization or clash within Islamic history occurred repeatedly and even intensified during the late nineteenth century among intellectuals in the Muslim world. Growth of this vicious circle<sup>78</sup> led to a new episode of 'bipolar disorder,' resulting in a sharp discord between the "*alla franga*" group—that is, those who thought that the East, or the Islamic world,

<sup>77</sup> Mustafa Sabri, *Dini Mücedditler* (Istanbul: Evkâf-ı İslâmiye Matbaası, 1341/1922), p. 196.

<sup>78</sup> Cercle vicieux (*Dâire-i Fâside*) is an expression that was used to illustrate the political struggle between Islamist, materialist and Turkist tendencies in the late Ottoman period; see the issues of periodical *İctihâd* published in 1918.

would only enter the modern world by methods determined by outsiders (Europeans)<sup>79</sup>—and a considerable group of traditional intellectuals who sought to articulate their Islamic and cultural legacy.

This transition process has left deep scars upon the Islamic outlook. The unfortunate result has been an inevitable dualism, comprised of a modernist and a traditionalist side. One effect of this kind of dualistic approach can be seen in the thought of Sir Muḥammad Iqbāl (1877-1938), later an apostle of Pakistani independence. Iqbāl argued that the British Empire was “a civilizing factor” in the Islamic world:

England, in fact, is doing one of our own great duties, which unfavorable circumstances did not permit us to perform. It is not the number of Muhammadans which it protects, but the spirit of the British Empire that makes it the greatest Muhammadan Empire in the world.<sup>80</sup>

Iqbāl praised colonialism’s “civilizing” mission in 1909. A few years later, however, he emotionally warned Muslims against modernity:

But do not seek the glow of Love from the knowledge of today,  
Do not seek the nature of Truth from this infidel’s cup!  
Long have I been running to and fro,  
Learning the secrets of the New Knowledge:  
Its gardeners have put me to the trial  
And have made me intimate with their roses.  
Roses! Tulips, rather, that warn one not to smell them—  
Like paper roses, a mirage of perfume.  
Since this garden ceased to enthrall me

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<sup>79</sup> The best examples of this attitude can be seen in the thought of Hüseyin Cahid and Abdullah Cevdet, two prominent CUP figures. On the secular and materialist tendencies in late Ottoman State, see Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1964) and Şükrü Hanioğlu, *Preparation for a Revolution: The Young Turks, 1902-1908* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

<sup>80</sup> Charles Kurzman, ed. *Modernist Islam 1840-1940* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 7.

I have nested on the Paradisal tree.  
 Modern knowledge is the greatest blind—  
 Idol-worshipping, idol-selling, idol-making!<sup>81</sup>

Later in life, Iqbāl offered similarly contradictory opinions. On one hand, for example, he praised Turkey for its Westernizing reforms:

The truth is that among the Muslim nations of today, Turkey alone has shaken off its dogmatic slumber, and attained self-consciousness. She alone has claimed her right of intellectual freedom; she alone has passed from the ideal to the real—a transition which entails keen intellectual and moral struggle.<sup>82</sup>

On the other hand, Iqbāl chastised Turkey for Westernizing:

The Turk, torn from the self,  
 Enraptured by the West, drinks from her hand  
 A poison sweet; and since the antidote  
 He has renounced, what can I say except  
 God save him.<sup>83</sup>

Even Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā (1865-1935), one member of the triumvirates of Egyptian Islamic modernism, was guilty of inconsistency. Niyazi Berkes reminds us of Riḍā's demand that,

[i]nstead of translating the Qur'ān into Turkish, the Turkish government adopt Arabic as the official and compulsory language of their country to prove that Turks remained Muslims. Only four years later, however, we find Riḍā the most ardent supporter of Marmaduke Pickthall's English translation. When Pickthall went to Egypt to win the Azhar 'ulamā's approval, Riḍā was one of those who supplied him with evidence from *Ḥanafī* sources for the permissibility of such a translation.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., p. 8; Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1930), p. 162.

<sup>83</sup> Charles Kurzman, *Modernist Islam*, p. 8; *Pilgrimage of Eternity (Jāvidnāmah)*, trans. Shaikh Mahmud Ahmad (Lahore: Institute of Islamic Culture, 1961), p. 167.

<sup>84</sup> Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, pp. 488-89. For Riḍā's views on the issue of translating the Qur'an, see Rashīd Riḍā, *Tarjamāt al-Qur'ān wa-mā fīhā min mafāsīd wa munāfāt al-islām* (Cairo: Maṭba'ah al-Manār, 1344/1926). For Marmaduke Pickthall's efforts to

Riḍā's proposal led Berkes to declare that "Riḍā was a prominent Arab nationalist."<sup>85</sup> In fact, Riḍā was a product of his time—a symptom as much as a cause.

Another example comes from the life of Mustafa Sabri. Sabri collaborated with British officials in 1919 in putting a stop to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's (1881-1938) revolt against the British-backed Ottoman Sultan Mehmed VI Vahdettin (1861-1926). Sabri believed that the British would do him a favor by dealing with the problem of Atatürk.<sup>86</sup> However, in dealing with the 'Sick Man of Europe,' the British proved smarter than Sabri,<sup>87</sup> consequently, we find Sabri an opponent of British politics after 1923. At the same time, Sabri accused Atatürk many times over of being irreligious, but made no comment, as *şeyhülislâm*, on the religiosity of Damat Ferit Paşa (1853-1923), one of the last Grand Viziers of the Ottoman Empire and Sabri's own colleague. This was in spite of the fact that two male persons of sound mind witnessed Ferit Paşa drinking vodka and eating pork, which is unlawful in *sharī'ah*.<sup>88</sup>

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win the Azhar 'ulamā's approval in Egypt, see Marmaduke Pickthall, "Arabs and Non-Arabs, and the Question of Translating the Qur'an," *Islamic Culture* 5 (1931): 422-433.

<sup>85</sup> Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, p. 489.

<sup>86</sup> For Sabri's collaboration with British officials, see Bilal N. Şimşir, *İngiliz Belgelerinde Atatürk 1918-1938* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1973).

<sup>87</sup> The most important aim of British policy in post-war Turkey was the establishment at the Turkish Straits of a regime conducive to British interests. On the British policy in post-war Ottoman Empire and Turkey, see John D. Rose, "British Policy and the Turkish Question 1918-1923," M. A. Thesis, McGill University, 1973 and Stephen F. Evans, *The Slow Rapprochement: Britain and Turkey in the Age of Kemal Atatürk 1919-38* (Beverley: The Eothen Press, 1982).

<sup>88</sup> Two male witnesses are Rıza Tevfik and Refik Halid (Karay). See Rıza Tevfik, *Biraz da Ben Konuşayım*, ed. Abdullah Uçman (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1993) p. 45 and Refik Halid (Karay), *Minelbab İlelmihrab: 1918 Mütarekesi devrinde olan biten işlere ve gelip geçen insanlara dair bildiklerim* (İstanbul: İnkılâp Kitabevi, 1992), p. 112.

In all these cases we see a polemical motive at work—a sure sign that political conflict frequently compelled intellectuals’ attention at the expense of technical or scholarly considerations.

### c. Wanted: A New Methodology in Islamic Theology

In the nineteenth century, the various schools of philosophy mentioned above challenged and questioned religion and religious thought. Muslim scholars began to view the future of Islamic theology with increasing uncertainty. One of them, the Turkish theologian Ömer Nasuhî Bilmen (1884-1971), said:

Contemporary Muslim scholars should review the latest trends in philosophy that spread doubts and trouble into the minds of many people, and should prepare new works of *kalām* to respond to them.<sup>89</sup>

In India, Sir Ahmad Khan (1817-1898) called for the reconstruction of *‘ilm al-kalām*.<sup>90</sup>

Today, doctrines are established by natural experiments and they are demonstrated before our eyes. These are not problems of the kind that can be solved by analogical arguments or which can be contested by assertions and principles which the *‘ulamā’* of former times have established...<sup>91</sup> Today we are, as before, in need of a modern theology (*‘ilm al-kalām*), whereby we should either refute the doctrines of the modern sciences, or undermine their foundations, or show that they are in conformity with Islam.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Ömer Nasuhî Bilmen, *Muvazzah İlm-i Kelâm* (Istanbul: Ergin Kitabevi Yayınları, 1959), p. 21.

<sup>90</sup> For Sir Ahmad Khan and his thought, see Christian Troll, “The Contribution of Sayyid Ahmad Khan to a New Nineteenth Century *‘Ilm al-Kalām*,” Ph. D. diss., University of London, 1975. On intellectual trends in the sub-continent India, see Aziz Ahmad, *Islamic Modernism in India and Pakistan 1857-1964* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967).

<sup>91</sup> Sayyid Ahmad Khan, “Lecture on Islam” in *Sayyid Ahmad Khan*, tr. C. W. Troll (Karachi, 1979), p. 312.

<sup>92</sup> Quoted from Fazlur Rahman, *Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 217.



Shiblī Nu‘mānī (1857-1914) for his part stressed the need for a new *kalām* in order to respond to the challenges posed by atheism.<sup>93</sup> This appeal was answered in part by the new *kalām* movement in Egypt, led by Muḥammad ‘Abduh (1849-1905), Farīd Wajdī (1878-1954) and Muḥammad al-Ḥusaynī Zāwāhirī (d.1946).<sup>94</sup> Faḡl Allāh Zanjānī (1886-1954) of Iran also contributed to this discourse.<sup>95</sup>

Late Ottoman theologians in particular produced numerous works in the field of theology.<sup>96</sup> Abdūllatif Harputī (1842-1916),<sup>97</sup> in his *Tārīkh ‘ilm al-Kalām* (History of *Kalām*), proposed that just as early theologians responded to Aristotelian philosophy systematically, today’s theologians (*mutakallimūn*), in order to reconstruct a new theology, should study modern theories systematically and then select what is functional for and relevant to the Islamic creed. This approach, according to Harpūtī, would constitute a third wave in the history of Islamic theology, following the earlier (*mutaqaddimūn*) and later

<sup>93</sup> Shibli Numani, *‘Ilm al-Kalām* (Karachi: Mas‘ud Publishing House, 1964).

<sup>94</sup> Muḥammad al-Ḥusaynī Zāwāhirī, *al-Taḥqīq al-Tām fī ‘ilm al-Kalām* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahdah al-Misriyyah, 1939).

<sup>95</sup> Faḡl Allāh Zanjānī, *Tārīkh ‘ilm al-Kalām fī al-Islām* (Mashhad: al-Majma’, 1997).

<sup>96</sup> On the search for renewal in Islamic theology in the late Ottoman period and the Islamic world, see M. Sait Özervarlı, *Kelam’da Yenilik Arayışları* (Istanbul: ISAM, 1998) and idem, “Attempts to Revitalize Kalām in the Late 19 and Early 20 Centuries,” *The Muslim World* 89, 1 (January 1999): 89-105.

<sup>97</sup> Abdūllatif Harputī: Born in Harput in Turkey, Harputī studied at Fatih Medrese, was appointed as a member of Department of Advanced Islamic Legal Studies (*Meclis-i Tedkikât-ı Şer‘iyye*), as professor of Kalām in 1901, was honoured with *haremeyn* rank, was appointed as one of the respondents of the *Huzur Dersleri* in the same year, and died in Istanbul; see *İslām*, XVI, 235-37. For his works on *kalām*, see *Tanqīḥ al-Kalām fī ‘Aqā’id al-Islām* (Dersaadet: Necm-i İstikbāl Matbaası, 1911); *Tārīkh ‘ilm al-Kalām* (Istanbul: Necm-i İstikbāl Matbaası, 1913) and *İlm-i Heyet ile Kütüb-ü Mukaddese Arasındaki Zâhiri Hilâfın Tevciḥ ve Tefviki Hakkında Risâle* (Istanbul: Necm-i İstikbāl Matbaası, 1911).

(*mutaakkhkirūn*) theologians.<sup>98</sup> In his critical examination of Islamic theology, *Tanqīḥ al-Kalām* (Re-examination of Kalām), Harpūtī elaborates on this new methodology in *kalām*.

İzmirli İsmail Hakkı (1868-1946),<sup>99</sup> a later Ottoman theologian, pronounced the need for a new methodology in Islamic theology in his book *Yeni İlm-i Kelâm*, published in 1921. According to İsmail Hakkı, after the failure of Aristotelian philosophy—on which post-Ghazalian *kalām* depended—as well as due to the emergence of new problems confronting the Muslim mind, formulating a new *kalām* based on contemporary needs and current modes of thought has become a crucial necessity for Muslim theologians. He contends that Islamic classical theology has lost its scientific basis; therefore, it should be reconstructed *in conformity* with new philosophical theories and scientific findings.<sup>100</sup> İsmail Hakkı continued:

*Kalām* has its main topics (*masā'il*) and purposes (*maqāsid*), which are the unchangeable essentials based on revelation. In order to explain them, *kalām* also has means (*waṣā'il*) and preliminaries (*mabādī*), which are changeable according to the age and needs.<sup>101</sup>

<sup>98</sup> Harpūtī, *Tarīkh 'ilm al-Kalām* (Istanbul: Necm-i İstikbāl Matbaası, 1913), pp. 111-115.

<sup>99</sup> İzmirli İsmail Hakkı: Born in İzmir, Hakkı was appointed as professor at Dârülfünûn University in 1909, as professor of Islamic philosophy at Süleymaniye Medrese in 1915, a member of Dârü'l-Hikmeti'l-İslâmiye in 1919, Dean of the faculty of Theology in Dârülfünûn University in 1931. He knew Arabic, Persian, French, Russian, Greek, Latin and wrote over 35 books, covering theology, law, the Qur'anic and hadith sciences, philosophy, logic, history and historical criticism. He was one of Sabri's colleagues in Dârü'l-Hikmeti'l-İslâmiye; see *İslâm*, XXIII, 530-535. For Hakkı's works on *kalām*, see *Yeni İlm-i Kelâm* (Istanbul: Darülfünun İlâhiyat Fakültesi Neşriyâtı, 1914); *Muhassal ül-Kelam ve'l-Hikmet* (Istanbul: Evkâf-ı İslâmiye Matbaası, 1917) and *Mülâhhas İlm-i Tevhid* (Istanbul: Kanaat Matbaası, 1920).

<sup>100</sup> İsmail Hakkı, *Muhassal ül-Kelam ve'l-Hikmet*, p. 13; Özervarlı, "Attempts to Revitalize Kalām in the Late 19 and Early 20 Centuries," p. 95.

<sup>101</sup> Quoted from Özervarlı, "Attempts to Revitalize Kalām in the Late 19 and Early 20 Centuries," p. 96.

How was Sabri different, or, to put it differently, how does Sabri depart from his contemporaries? Sabri emphasized that the epistemic structure of Islamic thought had collapsed. As a result, the Muslim intellect would have to learn how to conceptualize and formulate systematically *its own positions* on what “being” (ontology) is and what “knowledge” (epistemology) is *in terms intelligible to others*, as this would enable them to present the Muslim faith as a living and comprehensible phenomenon in their own age. Consequently, Sabri mocked the approaches of moderate as well as modernist Muslim intellectuals and said, in effect: Sorry, this conceptualization and formulation of the epistemic structure of the Muslim psyche is neither *in conformity* with new philosophical theories, nor will prospective Muslim theologians be able to show that the doctrines of the modern sciences to be *in conformity* with Islam. This cannot be just anybody’s task. This is a long-term process in which the Muslim mind has to think again and again, struggle and undergo several severe trials for its sake.<sup>102</sup>

In addition to Mustafa Sabri, particularly in the field of Islamic theology, İshak Harpûtî (1801-1892),<sup>103</sup> Abdüllatif Subhî (1818-1886),<sup>104</sup> Sırrı Giridî

<sup>102</sup> Mustafa Sabri, *Mawqif al-'Aql wa-al-'ilm wa-al-'ālam min rabb al-'ālamîn wa-'ibādihi al-mursalîn*, 4 vols. (Cairo: Dār Ihya' al-Kutub al-'Arabî), I, pp. 9-36.

<sup>103</sup> İshak Harpûtî: Born in Harput in Turkey, he taught at Fatih Medrese, was appointed as professor at Dârülmaârif in 1855, a member of Meclis-i Maarif, judge (*kadi*) of Madina and Isparta, a respondent of *Huzur Dersleri* between 1853-1868, wrote extensively on Christian and Muslim theology, *Bektāshiyya* and *Ḥurūfî* trends, died in Istanbul; see *İslâm*, XXII, 531-32. For Harpûtî’s book on *kalām*, see *Zubdat al-'ilm al-Kalām* (Istanbul, 1866).

(1844-1895),<sup>105</sup> Babanzâde Mustafa Zihnî (1848-1929),<sup>106</sup> Manastırlı İsmail Hakkı (1846-1912),<sup>107</sup> and Bediüzzaman Said Nursî (1877-1960)<sup>108</sup> left a large quantity of textual material for the study of Islamic theology. To date, no major work has been done on these theologians' thought in English and therefore, further research is needed and required. An examination of their life and thought will help provide a better understanding of, and assist in evaluating objectively, the stagnation of Islamic thought.

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<sup>104</sup> Abdüllatif Subhî, *Haqāiq al-Kalām fî Tārīkh al-Islām* (Istanbul: Dar üt-Tibaa ul-Âmire, 1880).

<sup>105</sup> Sırrı Giridî, *Naqd al-Kalām fî 'Aqāid al-Islām* (Kostantiniye: Matbaa-i Ebü'z-Ziya, 1885).

<sup>106</sup> Mustafa Zihnî, *Şawāb al-Kalām fî 'Aqā'id al-Islām* (Istanbul: Mahmud Bey Matbaası, 1910).

<sup>107</sup> Manastırlı İsmail Hakkı, *Talkhîş al-Kalām fî Barāhîn al-'Aqā'id al-Islām* (Istanbul: Sırât-ı Müstakim Matbaası, 1913).

<sup>108</sup> Bediüzzaman Said Nursî: Born in Nurs, Bitlis in Turkey, a leading ulema in the late Ottoman State, wrote more than twenty books, his *Risâle-i Nur* (Treatise of Light) deals with the Qur'anic descriptions of Divine activity in the universe, and offers logical proofs and explanations of all Qur'anic truths. He played a significant role in the establishment of the *İttihâd-ı Muhammedî Cemiyeti* (Association for the Union of Muslims) with Mustafa Sabri and was Sabri's colleague in the *Dârü'l-Hikmeti'l-İslâmiye*.

## Chapter 2

### THE LIFE OF MUSTAFA SABRÎ EFENDÎ (1869-1954)

#### Early Years

Mustafa Sabri, the son of Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Qāzābādī was born in 1869 in Tokat, in north central Turkey.<sup>109</sup> He studied classical Islamic sciences<sup>110</sup> as a child in Tokat under Ahmed Efendi Zülbiyezâde, and succeeded in memorizing the Qur'ân at an early age (9), thereby earning the title of *Hâfiz*.<sup>111</sup> Afterwards, he convinced his parents to give him permission to go to Kayseri,<sup>112</sup> in central Turkey, which was one of the major centres for Islamic Studies in the State where he received further instruction from Damad Mehmed Emin Efendi (1821-1908).<sup>113</sup> Sabri owes a lot to Emin Efendi for his guidance in studying logic, disputation theories and literary criticism. After studying in Kayseri he went to Istanbul, the educational, cultural and political centre of the Empire where he studied Islamic creed ('*ilm al-'aqā'id*) and legal theories (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) from Şeyh Âtîf Bey and advanced Islamic studies from the man

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<sup>109</sup> Tokat was a city in the Sivas province in the Ottoman Empire; see, Ali Saib, *Coğrafyay-ı Mufasssal: Memâlik-i Devlet-i Osmâniyye* (Kostantiniyye: Matbaay-ı Ebûzziyâ, 1304).

<sup>110</sup> In Tokat, he studied Arabic language and literature, Qur'an recitation, Qur'an exegesis, Islamic theology, law and legal theories.

<sup>111</sup> Mustafa Sabri, *Mas'alat Tarjamat al-Qur'ân* (Cairo: al-Matba'at al-Salafiyya, 1351), p. 21.

<sup>112</sup> Sabri, *Mawqif al-'Aql*, I, p.1.

<sup>113</sup> (Divrikli) Damad Emin Efendi: Born in Kayseri, son of Divrikî Hafız Mustafa Efendi, studied rhetoric and logic in Tokat from Bozzâde Efendi, disputation theories (*uṣūl al-munâzara*) in Sivas in Gök Medrese from Hacı Salih Efendi. He gave certificate (*icâzet*) to over 500 students; see H. Mehmed Zeki Koçer, *Kayseri Ulemâsı* (A.H. 630-1392) (Istanbul: Ahmet Sait Matbaası, 1972), pp. 47-49 and Ahmed Nazîf, *Kayseriyye Meşâhiri* (Kayseri, 1991), pp. 99-101.

responsible for the *Huzûr Dersleri*,<sup>114</sup> Ahmed Âsım Efendi (1836-1911).<sup>115</sup> He married the latter's eldest daughter, Ulviye Hanım in 1892.<sup>116</sup>

### Academic Positions and Professional Affiliations

After obtaining the rank of *Ruûs-ı Tedris*<sup>117</sup> in 1890, he was appointed as a lecturer (*dersiâm*) in 1891 at Istanbul's Sultan Fatih Mehmed Institute, the chief centre for Islamic learning in the empire, where he granted certificates (*icâzet*) to over 50 students. He taught Qur'ân exegesis, ḥadīth<sup>118</sup>, Islamic legal theories and Taftāzānī's<sup>119</sup> work on Arabic rhetoric *al-Muṭawwal*. An eminent

<sup>114</sup> "*Huzûr Dersleri*: In 1758, Sultan Mustafa III (1757-74) institutionalized the practice of inviting representative *ulema* (scholars), during the sacred month of Ramadan, to discuss points of religion in his presence. Some one hundred *ulema* per year were designated by the *şeyhülislam* to take part in this series known as *Huzûr Dersleri* (Imperial Presence Lectures). As was the custom in matters affecting the Sultan, every detail of the sovereign's encounter with the religious scholar was carefully scripted. In addition to the sultan and his courtiers, the *şeyhülislam*, grand vizier and other officials were directed to attend;" see Zilfi, *Politics and Piety*, pp. 227-235. For a list of those who participated in the *Huzûr Dersleri* year by year, see Ebü'l-Ulâ Mardin, *Huzûr Dersleri*, 3 vols. (Istanbul: İsmail Akgün Matbaası, 1966).

<sup>115</sup> (Gümülcineli) Ahmed Asım Efendi, born in Gümülcine, Romania, went to Istanbul in 1846, was granted certificate (*icâzet*) by Karınabâdî Abdurrahman Efendi, began teaching in 1862 at the Fatih Mosque, was appointed first as respondents of Huzur Dersleri and then the responsible for the Huzur Dersleri in 1875, the chief military judge of Anatolia (*Anadolu Kazaskeri*) in 1892 and Rumeli (*Rumeli Kazaskeri*) 1894, died in Istanbul; see Mardin, *Huzur Dersleri*, 147-149; *İslâm*, II, pp. 44-45 and Albayrak, *Son Devir Osmanlı Uleması*, I, p. 172.

<sup>116</sup> Sabri had two daughters (Sabîha and Nezâhet) and a son (İbrahim) with Ulviye Hanım.

<sup>117</sup> "*Ruûs-ı Tedris*: Professorial diploma, prerequisite for a professorship;" see Zilfi, *Politics and Piety*, p. 243, .

<sup>118</sup> "Ḥadīth (narrative, talk) with the definite article (*al-ḥadīth*) is used for Tradition, being an account of what Prophet Muhammad said or did, or of his tacit approval of something said or done in his presence. The study of tradition is called '*ulūm al-ḥadīth* (the sciences of Tradition);" see *EI* <sup>2</sup>, III, pp. 23-28.

<sup>119</sup> "Sa'd al-Dīn Taftāzānī (1322-1389), born in Taftāzān, a village near Nasā in Khurāsān, renowned scholar and author on grammar, rhetoric, logic, theology, law and Qur'ân exegesis. Al-Taftāzānī's fame rests mainly on his commentaries on well-known works in various fields of learning, which came to be widely used in teaching at *madrasas* until modern times. In theology he sometimes upheld Māturīdī positions against Ash'arī criticism, but he also often endorsed Ash'arī doctrine. Altogether, he backed a broad, though anti-Mu'tazilī Sunnism, which was in accord with later concepts of Sunni orthodoxy;" see *EI* <sup>2</sup>, X, pp. 88-89.

Ḥadīth scholar Kamil Miras (1874-1957),<sup>120</sup> Palestinian scholar Muḥammad Sabrī ‘Ābidīn and Süleyman Sami Efendi (1858-1930) were among those to whom Sabri granted certificates.<sup>121</sup>

In 1896, he was appointed to the Beşiktaş Asariye Mosque as *İmam*, or prayer leader. In 1897, he was appointed as one of the respondents (*muhâtab*)<sup>122</sup> of the *Huzûr Dersleri*, a post that he occupied until 1913. In this period, Sabri got the attention of Sultan Abdülhamid II (1842-1918) with his treatise *Risālah al-Yamīn al-Ghamūs*<sup>123</sup> and consequently he was designated as one of the caretakers (*hafız-i küttâb*) of Sultan’s private library from 1900 to 1904. At this time, Sabri had the great opportunity to investigate very rare manuscripts in Abdulhamid II’s private library and to have a personal relationship with eminent scholars in *Huzur Dersleri* lectures. It was also during this period (1898) that

<sup>120</sup> Kamil Miras, Born in Afyonkarahisar in central West Turkey, co-commentator (with Babanzade Ahmet Naim) of well-known *ḥadīth* text Şaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī.

<sup>121</sup> *al-Shaykh*, pp. 67-68.

<sup>122</sup> *Muhâtab*: The respondents of *Huzûr Dersleri*. “In each evening presentation of *Huzûr Dersleri*, the disquisition began with the lecturer’s reading of a commentary on the Qur’ân or the Hadith. Each of the respondents (*muhâtabûn*) was expected to offer his own remarks on the reading or on his colleagues’ remarks;” see Zilfi, *Politics of Piety*, 228.

<sup>123</sup> In one of the royal presence lectures (*huzur dersleri*), in the presence of Sultan Abdulhamid II, the lecturer raised the issue of *al-yamīn al-ghamūs* (false oath) in Islamic law briefly before moving onto another issue. Sabri saw that this issue had not been discussed thoroughly in the lecture. He also saw that there were other details on the subject that they had not gone into. Because Sabri was the youngest among the scholars, he was embarrassed to correct them. When the lecture was over, he went home and finished writing his treatise; *Risalat al-yamin al-ghamus* (Treatise on the false oath in Islamic law). Afterwards, he went to the palace of Abdulhamid II to present his work. Sultan Abdulhamid II appreciated Sabri’s work and said: “This young scholar [Sabri] has distinction and intelligence that has to be encouraged.” Consequently, Abdulhamid II offered him a post as caretaker of Sultan’s private library; see *al-Shaykh*, pp. 69-70 and 652-53. On the issue of *al-yamīn al-ghamūs*, see the chapters *aymān* (oaths), in the works of *fiqh*; W. Atallah, “Un Rituel De Serment Chez Les Arabes Al-Yamīn Al-Gamūs” *Arabica*, XX (Leiden: Brill, 1973), pp. 63-74.

his influential articles appeared in the magazine *Tarîk* and *Malûmât*<sup>124</sup> when he was 29 years old.

He was re-appointed for the position of lecturer at the Fatih Sultan Institute in 1904, and he was honoured with the Ottoman medal (*Osmânî*) and Mecidiye order (*Mecidi Nişanı*) of the fourth rank. In 1905, he was elected to the academic committee of scholarly publications and research for Islamic studies (*Tedkikât ve Te'lifât-ı İslâmiye Hey'et-i İlmiyesi*).<sup>125</sup> This position allowed him to examine and evaluate contemporary scholars' works.

In August 1908, Sabri and a group of 112 Muslim scholars founded an intellectual society called the *Cemiyet-i İlmiye-i İslâmiye* (Society for Islamic Studies),<sup>126</sup> the society's journal, *Beyânü'l-Hak*,<sup>127</sup> was first published in September 1908. In the election, Sabri was unanimously voted to the position of president of the Society.<sup>128</sup> During this period he was also appointed as a lecturer of the Qur'ân exegesis at the preachers' school (*Medresetü'l-Vâizîn*).

<sup>124</sup> *Tarîk*, (Receb 6, 1316/November 1898); "Cür'etli Bir Dekâdân," *Malûmât* 163 (Şaban 1, 1316/December 1898): 863-865.

<sup>125</sup> *al-Shaykh*, p. 70.

<sup>126</sup> *Cemiyet-i İlmiye-i İslâmiye*: The Society for Islamic Studies was founded in the second constitutional period (*II. Meşrutiyet*), and is known for its impacts on religious, academic and political matters. In the second constitutional political atmosphere, the Society was vehemently attacking the absolutism of Abdulhamid II while supporting the Committee of Union and Progress. Şehrî Ahmet Efendi, Mehmet Fatin (Gökmen), Küçük Hamdi (known as Elmalılı Muhammed Hamdi Yazır), Mehmed Arif, Hüseyin Hazım, Ferid, Manastırlı İsmail Hakkı were among leading personalities in the Society. They played a significant role in the improvement of *medrese* system. The Society continued until 1912; see *İslâm*, VII, 332-33.

<sup>127</sup> It should be noted here is that *Beyânü'l-Hak* is not the journal of *Cemiyet-i İlmiye-i Osmâniye*. An inaccurate information has been provided by Palmira Brummett in *Image and Imperialism in the Ottoman Revolutionary Press 1908-1911* (see page 360), published by SUNY Press in 2000. *Cemiyet-i İlmiye-i Osmâniye* was founded in 1861, 47 years before *Cemiyet-i İlmiye-i İslâmiye*. *Cemiyet-i İlmiye-i Osmâniye*'s journal was *Mecmûa-i Fünûn*. For detailed information about periodicals between 1831-1923, see Hülya Baykal, *Türk Basın Tarihi 1831-1923* (Istanbul: Afa Matbaacılık, 1990).

<sup>128</sup> *al-Shaykh*, p. 71.



Faculty members of Faculty of Theology at the University of Istanbul (*Dârü'l-Fünûn*) also selected him as professor of the Qur'ân exegesis.

On 17 November 1918, he was appointed as a member of the Academy for Islamic Philosophy (*Dârü'l-Hikmeti'l-İslâmiye*),<sup>129</sup> a department which was founded within the office of the *şeyhülislam* for the purpose of modernizing the *kalâm*. Shortly thereafter, the Institution of Specialists (*Medresetü'l-Mütehassisîn*) was opened. The function of these was to cultivate a modern understanding of Islam.<sup>130</sup> In this period, he also taught *Şahîh al-Muslim* at the Institution of *Medresetü'l-Mütehassisîn*.

He was appointed as professor of Hâdîth at *Süleymâniye Dârülhadîs* College on 25 December 1918. This position was the highest professorship in the *ilmiye* hierarchy.<sup>131</sup> He also joined the society of *Cemiyet-i Müderrisîn* (Medrese Professors' Association), founded on 15 February 1919. A number of the leading *ulema* of the time, including Mustafa Safvet Efendi, Said Nursî and Mehmet Atıf Efendi (1876-1926), were involved in this association.

<sup>129</sup> *Ceride-i İlmiye*, 41 (1337/1918): 1197.

<sup>130</sup> Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, p. 416. The establishment of the *Dârü'l-Hikmeti'l-İslâmiye* Department was first proposed by Şemsettin Günaltay and Şeyh Saffet in 1918. It was composed of nine members, a principal, and several officers. All of them were prominent ulema of that time. Mehmed Akif was appointed as its first Secretary-General (*Baskatip*) and among his colleagues were Arapkirli Hüseyin Avni Efendi, Said Nursî, Mustafa Safvet, Ferid Kam, İzmirli İsmail Hakkı and Elmalılı Muhammed Hamdi (Yazir). The department was divided into three committees: Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), theology (*kalâm*), and ethics (*akhlâq*). The Ankara Government closed the Department in November 1922. For the function of the *Dârü'l-Hikmeti'l-İslâmiye* and its members, see Sadık Albayrak, *Son Devir İslâm Akademisi: Dâr-ül Hikmet-il İslâmiye Teşkilât ve Azaları* (İstanbul: Yeni Asya Yayınları, 1973) and *İslâm*, V, 123.

<sup>131</sup> *İlmiye*: The religious learned establishment; the educational and judicial organization of the *ulema*.

## Political Career

After the declaration of the Second Constitution (*II. Meşrûtiyet*), Sabri was elected to the Ottoman parliament (*Meclis-i Meb'ûsân*) from Tokat in October 1908. He continued lecturing at the Fatih Sultan Institute while he was a member of parliament. After a short time in office, he gave a speech to deputies (*meb'ûsân*) in the parliament on the concept of liberty in Islam. It is clear from these speeches that Sabri was one of the most influential politicians in the parliament at this time—even Christian deputies in the Ottoman parliament were impressed by Sabri's addresses and commented:

We did not think that it would be possible to find this type of theoretical knowledge and extraordinary intelligence underneath this turban [referring to Sabri's turban (*sarık*) and his traditionalist outer shell].<sup>132</sup>

Hüseyin Cahid (1874-1957), a prominent figure of the Committee of Union and Progress, in his memoirs, sarcastically criticizes the traditionalist structure of 1324/1908 Parliament and says that Sabri was the greatest master (*üstâd-ı a'zam*) of this traditional group.<sup>133</sup>

After joining the People's party (*Ahali Fırkası*) in 1910 and Liberty and Entente party (*Hürriyet ve İ'tilâf Fırkası*) in 1911, Sabri became a famous figure

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<sup>132</sup> *al-Shaykh*, p. 81.

<sup>133</sup> For example, Hüseyin Cahid describes the stance of a traditionalist religious person: "Zeynel Abidin Hoca...He was standing in the parliament like a frightful and dark crocodile with his bloody eyes, thick nape of neck which reminds of a bull and huge wrestler body;" see Hüseyin Cahid (Yalçın), *Tanıdıklarım* (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2001), pp. 169-173.

in the Liberty and Entente party<sup>134</sup> for his fierce opposition to the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP or *İttihâd ve Terakki Cemiyeti* in Turkish)<sup>135</sup> throughout the period of 1911-1913.<sup>136</sup> He was elected a deputy of the president and the spokesman for Liberty and Entente as a result of his power in public speaking. During this period, a heated debate took place in 1911 between Talat Paşa (1874-1921), the second major figure of the CUP triumvirate,<sup>137</sup> and Sabri in the parliament in this fashion:

Talat Paşa (deputy of Ankara) speaks: “The biggest fault of the Turks is their inability to unite. If the Turks were united...” (noisy quarrels).

Mustafa Sabri Efendi (deputy of Tokat) replies: “A gang that was united in the pseudo-name of union [referring to the CUP (*İttihâd ve Terakki*)] prevented this unity.” (more noisy quarrels)<sup>138</sup>

Following the *Bâb-ı Âlî* Raid in Istanbul that took place on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of January in 1913, the majority of the Liberty and Entente party members had to

<sup>134</sup> On the history and activities of *Hürriyet ve İtilâf* Party, see Ali Birinci, *Hürriyet ve İtilâf Fırkası: II. Meşrutiyet Devrinde İttihat ve Terakki'ye Karşı Çıkanlar* (Istanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 1990).

<sup>135</sup> The firm ground of nineteenth century common belief in the West remained the doctrine of progress (*terakki*) of Enlightenment. We clearly see the influence of Enlightenment even on the name of the Committee of Union and Progress. On the history and political activities of the Committee of Union and Progress, see Feroz Ahmad, *The Young Turks* (Oxford: At The Clarendon Press, 1969); Şükrü Hanioğlu, *Preparation for a Revolution: The Young Turks, 1902-1908* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) and Erik Jan Zürcher, *The Unionist Factor: The Role of the Committee of Union and Progress in the Turkish National Movement 1905-1926* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1984).

<sup>136</sup> On the politics of this period, see Aykut Kansu, *Politics in Post-Revolutionary Turkey, 1908-1913* (Leiden: Brill, 2000).

<sup>137</sup> The Freedom and Entente party members called the CUP triumvirate, Enver, Talat and Cemal Paşas, “*Ekânîm-i Selâse*” (*aqânîm al-thalātha*) referring to the Christian belief of the Trinity (Enver stands for the Father, Talat corresponds to the Son, and Cemal represents the Holy Ghost); see Başmabeyinci Lütü Bey (Simavi), *Osmanlı Sarayının Son Günleri* (Istanbul: Hürriyet Yayınları, 1973), p. 339.

<sup>138</sup> *Meclis-i Mebusân Zabıt Ceridesi*, 1. Devre, 4. Sene, 36. İçtima (11 January 1911), p. 776. Quoted from Celal Bayar, *Ben de Yazdım: Milli Mücadele'ye Giriş*, 7 vols. (Istanbul: Baha Matbaası, 1967), V, p. 459.

escape from Istanbul. Despite Sabri's self-imposed exile<sup>139</sup> first to Egypt and later Romania from 1913 to 1918, owing to his resistance to the CUP, he remained the most significant figure of anti-CUP group, gaining reputation in Damat Ferit Paşa's political circle.<sup>140</sup>

Sabri traveled to Paris and Vatican City for a short period and afterwards stayed in Bucharest as a political refugee until the CUP members brought him back to Turkey in 1918. In this period, one of the prominent CUP members, İbrahim Temo (1865-1939),<sup>141</sup> provided humane care and support to Sabri.<sup>142</sup> The CUP exiled him with his colleague Refik Halid (1888-1965)<sup>143</sup> to Bilecik, northwest Turkey until further notice.<sup>144</sup> Two months later Sabri was allowed to

<sup>139</sup> This is not officially exile, however when the Committee of Union and Progress came into power, they tried to arrest and imprison Sabri. For this reason he had to flee Istanbul. For information on how he fled from Istanbul to Egypt and Romania, see Altunsu, *Osmanlı Şeyhülislâmları*, p. 255.

<sup>140</sup> Damat Mehmed Ferit Paşa: Five times grand vizier of the last Ottoman Sultan Mehmed VI Vahdettin and a liberal politician, married a daughter of Sultan Abdülhamit II. In 1888, he was appointed to Council of State as member, entered the Senate in 1908, founder of *Hürriyet ve İtilâf Fırkası* (The Liberty and Entente Party) with Mustafa Sabri in 1911.

<sup>141</sup> "İbrahim Temo: Born in Ohrid, fled to Romania in 1895, returned to Istanbul after the revolution of 1908, but he had to return to Romania after he founded the *Demokrat Ahali Fırkası* (Democratic People's Party) and came into conflict with the C.U.P. In 1920 he was elected to the Romanian senate;" see Eric Jan Zürcher, *The Unionist Factor* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1984), p. 13.

<sup>142</sup> İbrahim Temo, *İttihâd ve Terakkî Cemiyetinin Teşekkülü ve Hidemât-ı Vataniye ve İnkilâb-ı Milliye Dair Hatıratım* (Mecidiye: Unknown publisher, 1939), p. 274.

<sup>143</sup> "Refik Halid (Karay), Turkish essayist, humorist and novelist. He was born in Istanbul, left Galatasaray Lycée before graduating (1900-6), Karay became a clerk in a department of the Ministry of Finance and at the same time attended the school of law until the second constitution in 1908; he then abandoned both job and study and became a journalist. His powerful satirical essays, mixed with subtle humour, were directed against the leaders of the CUP. Following the assassination of Grand Vizier Mahmud Şevket Paşa in June 1913, he was arrested together with several hundred opposition suspects and banished to Sinop. Talat Paşa included his name in the list of people "to be punished." He spent the following five years in exile. He was also Director-General of Posts and Telegraph during the collaborationist governments of Damat Ferit Paşa;" see *EI*<sup>2</sup>, IV, 635-36.

<sup>144</sup> Refik Halid Karay, *Minelbab İlelmihrab: 1918 Mütarekesi Devrinde Olan Biten İşlere ve Gelip Geçen İnsanlara Dair Bildiklerim* (Istanbul: İnkilâp Kitabevi, 1992), p. 42.

re-enter Istanbul. As soon as he arrived in Istanbul in January 1919, he and a group of his friends<sup>145</sup> founded the Liberty and Entente party a second time.

### The Appointment to the Office of Şeyhülislâm<sup>146</sup>

When I landed at Samsun on 19<sup>th</sup> May 1919, the situation was as follows: The group of powers, which included the Ottoman Empire, had been defeated in the Great War. The Ottoman Army had been crushed on all fronts and an armistice had been signed with harsh conditions. The people were tired and poor.

*Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk), 1919*

Istanbul politics at the present time are a disease like Spanish flu.<sup>147</sup> It generates hysterical ideas. We are not taking the lead on our own, more exactly we are motivated from outside. Europe puffs us up there and we are playing here. They instil hypnosis in us. We blindly do the outcome of this instillation for our destruction, and yet we dream that this motivation is emerging from ourselves.<sup>148</sup>

*Bediüzzamân Said Nursî, 1919*

<sup>145</sup> Among them there were Müşir Nuri Paşa, Vasfi Efendi, Ali Kemal, Rıza Tevfik and Refik Halid (Karay).

<sup>146</sup> Kemal Karpat in his latest work says that “...Mustafa Sabri efendi, *şeyhülislâm* for a while during the time of the Young Turks.”; see Kemal Karpat, *Politicization of Islam: reconstructing identity, state, faith and community in the late Ottoman State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 314. However, this is an inaccurate historical data about Sabri’s career since Sabri was appointed as *şeyhülislâm* four times during the time of Damat Ferit cabinet. Besides, Sabri was a diehard opponent of the Young Turks; see Mehmet Tevfik Bey (Biren), *Bir Devlet Adamının Mehmet Tevfik Bey’in (Biren) II. Abdülhamid, Meşrutiyet ve Mütareke Devri Hatıraları* (Istanbul: Arma Yayınları, 1993), II, p. 148.

<sup>147</sup> Known as “Spanish Flu” or “La Grippe” the influenza of 1918-1919 was a global disaster after World War I. This was the most devastating epidemic in recorded world history, as more people died of Spanish flu in a single year than in four-years of the Black Death Bubonic Plague from 1347 to 1351. However, it was not Spanish Flu at all that killed up to 50 million worldwide. This was the medical cover-up. The real killer was typhoid vaccine. In the United States it was a common expression during the 1914-18 War that “more soldiers were killed by vaccine shots than by shots by enemy guns.” Therefore, Nursi here refers to Istanbul politics, Ottomans were not dying from a disaster that came from outside rather, their health planning was not working efficiently. For Spanish Flu see, Gina Bari Kolata, *Flu: The Story of the Great Influenza Pandemic of 1918 and the search for the virus that caused it* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999) and Beatriz Echeverri Dávila, *La Gripe Española: La Pandemia de 1918-1919* (Madrid: Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas, 1993).

<sup>148</sup> Bediüzzaman Said Nursî, *Hakikat Çekirdekleri* (Istanbul, 1919) and idem, *Sünuhât* (Istanbul, 1922). The same expression was used in Abdullah Cevdet’s periodical *İctihâd* as well; see *İctihâd*, 26 December 1918.

The Ottoman State was reeling in the aftermath of World War I (1914-1918) and the occupation of Istanbul by the Allied powers.<sup>149</sup> In this very chaotic time in the history of the Empire, Sabri was elected to the Ottoman parliament a second time from Tokat in late 1919, as well as appointed for the first time as *şeyhülislâm* in the first Damat Ferit cabinet in March 1919.<sup>150</sup> While Sabri was holding the position of *şeyhülislâm*, he appointed one of the major Hanafi jurists, Muhammed Zahid Kevseri<sup>151</sup> as head of Academic Affairs (*ders vekili*) in the office of *şeyhülislâm*.<sup>152</sup>

In the first two terms of his *meşihat* (the chief juristconsult position), Sabri disagreed with Damat Ferit cabinet's policies and felt that Ferid was incompetent in the position of Grand Vizier. Sabri himself desired to be the Grand Vizier,<sup>153</sup> and this may have been a source of disagreement. Due to this conflict, he resigned from the position of *şeyhülislâm* in September 1919. Consequently, in June 1920, he founded the *Mu'tedil Hürriyet ve İtilâf Fırkası*

<sup>149</sup> On the history of Istanbul under foreign occupation, see Nur Bilge Crisis, *Istanbul Under Allied Occupation 1918-1923* (Leiden: Brill, 1999).

<sup>150</sup> His first appointment for the position of *şeyhülislâm* is on 4 March 1919; see *Takvîm-i Vekayi*, no. 3488, p. 1. He was subsequently reappointed to the position twice more that year, and then a fourth time and final time in July 1920. Second time (19 May 1919 until 20 July 1919) and Third time (21 July 1919 until 1 October 1919) Fourth time (31 July 1920 until 25 September 1920) For the official appointments for these positions, see *Takvîm-i Vekayi*, nos. 3553 and 3604.

<sup>151</sup> Zahid Kevseri (1879-1952): Born in Düzce in Turkey, a respected scholar in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century among learned circles in the Ottoman State and Egypt, he wrote over fifty books in Arabic, ranging from Islamic legal history, Islamic legal theories (*uşûl al-fiqh*), Qur'anic exegesis and Hādīth. He fled to Egypt in 1922, and died in Cairo; see *al-A'âm*, VI, p. 129.

<sup>152</sup> *Medrese* (*madrassa* in Arabic) is college or institute for the study of the religious sciences.

<sup>153</sup> Yahyâ Kemal, *Siyâsî ve Edebî Portreler* (Istanbul: Baha Matbaası, 1968) p. 91; Refik Halid Karay, *Minelbab İlelmihrab*, p. 256.

(The Moderate Liberty and Entente Party). His friends attempted to propose his name as a Grand Vizier as a replacement for Damat Ferit, but this failed.<sup>154</sup>

Afterwards, in order to pacify and, hopefully, silence Sabri, the Sultan Mehmed VI Vahdettin and the cabinet gave him several positions. For instance, in October 1919, he was appointed as a member of *A'yân* (Senate) for life. This was enough to appease him for a short time. After that, he was again appointed to the position of *şeyhülislâm* and made Head of the Council of the State (*Şûrâyı Devlet Reisi*) in July 1920. Later, he acted as Grand Vizier (*Sadâret Vekili*) in the Council of Ministries while Damat Ferit Paşa attended the treaty of Sevres in August 1920.<sup>155</sup> However, none of these tactical rewards fooled him. He did not reach an agreement with ministers on many issues and resigned from the position of *şeyhülislâm* on 25 September 1920. In sum, he held the position eight months and 21 days.

### Life in Exile

He had to escape to Alexandria with some of his colleagues<sup>156</sup> in November 1922 because of his opposition to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (1881-1938) and his new government in Turkey.<sup>157</sup> In January 1923, King Husayn of

<sup>154</sup> For the attempt to overthrow the Damat Ferit cabinet, see Kemal, *Siyâsî ve Edebî Portreler*, p. 91; Karay, *Minelbab İlelmihrab*, p. 256.

<sup>155</sup> The night that the treaty of Sevres was signed by Ottoman officials, Sabri's wife Ulviye Hanim came to his office crying and scolded him: "Did not you have any fear of God and feel ashamed of what you had done? How could you possibly consent İzmir to be given to Greek? You should have resigned or should not have signed!" Sabri said nothing to his wife; see Altunsu, *Osmanlı Şeyhülislâmları*, p. 257.

<sup>156</sup> For details of this flee, see Rıza Tevfik, *Biraz da Ben Konuşayım*, pp. 232-275.

<sup>157</sup> "İstanbul Firâripleri Arasında Kimler Var?" *Hâkimiyet-i Milliye*, 661 (15 Teşrîn-i Sâni 1338/1922).

Mecca (1853-1931) invited Sultan Vahdettin who was in Malta at that time to stay in Mecca. After corresponding with Sabri who was in Egypt at that moment, Vahdettin accepted the invitation of King Husayn. Sabri, a group of his friends and Sultan Vahdettin were welcomed in Hejaz by King Husayn. As a consequence of Sabri's loyalty to Vahdettin and his disagreement with King Husayn in Mecca he decided to leave the city after staying five months.<sup>158</sup>

When Sabri returned to Cairo, one of the prominent Egyptian poets, Aḥmad Shawqī (1868-1932), wrote a poem to praise Atatürk for leading the Turks to defeat European colonial powers, saying that "O! Khālīd<sup>159</sup> of the Turks, bring back the Khālīd of the Arabs."<sup>160</sup> Sabri replied to Shawqī with an article and a poem appeared in *al-Muqaṭṭam*.<sup>161</sup> Sabri's criticism of Shawqī in opposition to Atatürk was not well-received<sup>162</sup> and other writers soon showed aggression towards Sabri.<sup>163</sup> As a result, Sabri decided to leave Egypt for

<sup>158</sup> Sabri, *Yarın*, 25 (20 July 1928), pp. 1-4.

<sup>159</sup> Khālīd was a very close companion of the Prophet Muḥammad and known for his military victories. Shawqī also compared the battle of Sakarya to the battle of Badr. "However, Tāhā Ḥusayn considered Shawqī's comparison the victory of the Turks over the Greeks with the battle of Badr against the Meccans by the Prophet Muḥammad in bad taste;" see J. Brugman, *An Introduction to the History of Modern Arabic Literature in Egypt* (Leiden: Brill, 1984), pp. 42-43.

<sup>160</sup> *Al-Ahrām*, 24 October 1922.

<sup>161</sup> Mustafa Sabri, "Khitāb Maftūḥ li Amīr al-Shu'arā' Shawqī," *al-Muqaṭṭam* 10533 (27 October 1923): 1.

<sup>162</sup> On Atatürk and the Turkish reforms as reflected in the Egyptian Press from 1922 to 1938, see Richard Hattemer, *Atatürk und die türkische Reformpolitik im Spiegel der ägyptischen Presse* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 1997).

<sup>163</sup> The line of aggression that was showed towards Sabri constituted a sad contrast after a number of secular changes had been made in Turkey and thus, Shawqī wrote another poem to condemn Atatürk saying: "He [Atatürk] delivered a deceiving fatwa and misled / He allowed atheism to enter our land." When Sabri read Shawqī's new poem, he wrote amusingly referring to a verse in the Qur'an: "*Wa inna kitāballāh arafnā al-shu'arā' bi-annahum yaqūlūn mā lā yaf'alaūn, lakinnī wajadtū hadhā al-shā'ir min alladhīna yaqūlūna mā lā ya'lamūn*" "The Qur'an tells us that *poets say that which they do not* (26:226), but I found this poet [Shawqī] among one



Lebanon in January 1924. He stayed nine months in Lebanon and published his book *al-Nakīr ‘alā Munkirī* there after the abolition of the Caliphate in Turkey in February 1924. Afterwards, he moved to Romania for a second time. During this time, his articles were published in Egypt in *al-Akhbār*.<sup>164</sup>

After staying in Romania several years, Sabri found refuge in Komotene (Gümülcine), Western Thrace in Greece in 1927. He published the journals *Yarın* (Tomorrow) and *Peyâm-ı İslâm* (News of Islam) in Greece with his son İbrâhim Rüşdî (1897-1983).<sup>165</sup> During this period, he was divested of his Turkish citizenship along with 149 persons including his son in May 1927.<sup>166</sup> Sabri wasted no time in responding antagonistically to the revocation of his Turkish citizenship by writing his poem titled “*İstifâ Ediyorum*” (I am Resigning [from being Turk]).<sup>167</sup>

During Greek Prime Minister Venizelos’ (1864-1936) trip to Turkey he promised the removal of certain Muslim religious leaders who were seeking to restore the Caliphate and to influence the Muslim minority in Greece against the Ankara regime. In April 1931, the leader of the traditionalist element left Greece.<sup>168</sup> Even though some Christian priests and deputies made an effort to

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of those who does not even know what he writes; see Mustafa Sabri, *al-Nakīr ‘alā Munkirī*, pp.185-195.

<sup>164</sup> *al-Shaykh*, pp. 643-644.

<sup>165</sup> For İbrâhim Rüşdî’s biography, see İbnülemin Mahmud Kemal, *Türk Şairleri*, IV, 2178-182.

<sup>166</sup> *Türk Parlamento Tarihi: TBMM-II. Dönem (1923-1927)*, I, pp. 577-579; *Resmî Ceride* 608 (15 June 1927): 2632.

<sup>167</sup> Sabri “*İstifâ Ediyorum*,” *Yarın* 2 (29 July 1927), pp. 1-2.

<sup>168</sup> Alexis Alexandris, *The Greek Minority of Istanbul and Greek-Turkish Relations 1918-1974* (Athens: Centre for Asia Minor Studies, 1983), p. 187.

protect Sabri in Greece for a while the Greek government asked him to leave the country.

After several months, Sabri went to Egypt for the third and final time in January 1932, finding himself in intellectual debates and lively discussions. This time Egyptian intellectuals and writers such as the Dean of al-Azhar Shaykh Muṣṭafā al-Maraghī (1881-1945), Maḥmūd Shaltūt (1893-1963), Maḥmūd Ḥasan Ismāʿīl (1910-77), Muḥammad Saʿīd al-ʿAryān (1915-1964) and Yahyā Ḥaqqī (b.1905) showed great respect towards Sabri. King Faruq I of Egypt welcomed him to his country. Sabri's son and a number of Egyptian writers were gathering once a week at the house of an Egyptian litterateur, Maḥmūd Shākir, with famous writers.<sup>169</sup> Sabri's son İbrâhim Rüşdî was appointed as a professor of Near Eastern Languages in University of Alexandria. In this period, Sabri's articles were published in a number of Egyptian journals and newspapers.

After the decline of the Ottoman Empire, Sabri's inner life was dominated by a devastating sense of grief and sorrow at the crisis in the Muslim world. He voiced this feeling at the beginning of every paragraph in his preface of *Mawqif al-ʿAql* expressing that "We lost!"<sup>170</sup> His life in exile, far from his active political life, in Egypt, however, helped him to construct his masterpiece,

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<sup>169</sup> For more information regarding these writers' gatherings, see Ali Ulvi Kurucu, *Gecelerin Gündüzü: Nurlu Belde Medine'den Yazılar*, ed. M. Ertuğrul Düzdağ (Istanbul: Marifet Yayınları, 1990), pp. 225-231. For the life and works of Egyptian writers and poets of Sabri's contemporary, see J. Brugman, *An Introduction to the History of Modern Arabic Literature in Egypt* (Leiden: Brill, 1984).

<sup>170</sup> Sabri, *Mawqif al-ʿAql*, pp. 1-7.

*Mawqif al-'Aql*, a critique of current Islamic and European theological and philosophical trends.

Although Atatürk granted him a pardon in 1938, Sabri refused the pardon, saying, “he forgave me, but I do not forgive him.” Accordingly, he never returned to Turkey and died on 12 March 1954, in exile in Egypt.<sup>171</sup>

### **Personal Observations and Comments on Sabri's Features**

The memoirs of his contemporaries provide the most direct account of the life of Mustafa Sabri and the period in which he lived.<sup>172</sup> The observations of more than a few individuals who met or knew Sabri will be presented below in order to get a better picture of his character and qualities:

The impression Ahmet İzzet Paşa (1864-1937)<sup>173</sup> formed about Sabri during the two months they were colleagues in the Council of Ottoman State is expressed in his book entitled *Feryadım*:

Sabri was an intelligent scholar, decisive individual and pious person. He in no doubt loved his native country to this point; if he was convinced about a plan that was reasonable and necessary he sacrificed his political standpoint and beliefs for the sake of his country. He was more inclined to goodness than wickedness in his heart, but unfortunately he was also infected with the epidemic disease that invaded our nation's intelligentsia in these days; i.e., he was a narcissist and self-centred person because of his love of high-ranking positions.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> Altunsu, *Osmanlı Şeyhülislâmları*, p. 258.

<sup>172</sup> A number of memoirs written by individuals who knew or met Sabri can be found in the bibliography.

<sup>173</sup> “Ahmed İzzet Paşa, soldier, war minister, and grand vizier, was born in Manastir. He graduated from Harbiye in 1884, and after serving the years 1891-4 in Germany, where he worked with Liman von Sanders, he was appointed in 1908 chief of staff. After stints in Yemen (1910-11), and the Balkans (1912), he was replaced in 1914 by Enver Paşa and appointed Senator;” see Feroz Ahmad, *The Young Turks* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1969), p. 172.

<sup>174</sup> Ahmet İzzet Paşa, *Feryâdım* (Istanbul: Nehir Yayınları, 1993), pp. 63-64.

One of his other colleagues Refik Halid (Karay) comments on Sabri's significance among ministries in the Ottoman parliament:

If by chance there was a parliament, one of the 12 ministries would not be able to express themselves clearly and give a precise answer for inquires with respect to their ministries. There was only one minister: Şeyhülislâm Mustafa Sabri Efendi.<sup>175</sup>

The Minister of Finance of the first Damat Ferit cabinet Mehmet Tevfik Bey describes Sabri's skill in the language:

He was one of the few who could use the Turkish language perfectly among those who were educated in *medreses*.<sup>176</sup>

When Mehmet Akif (1873-1936)<sup>177</sup> read one of Sabri's poems he spoke of Sabri's talent: "Nobody was capable of writing a poem in this strength comparable to Sabri in Turkey"<sup>178</sup> A well-known historian and Turkish literary critic İbnülemin Mahmud Kemâl (1870-1957) also remarked on Sabri's skill at poetry in his book, *Türk Şairleri* (Turk Poets).<sup>179</sup>

Ali Ulvi Kurucu (1920-2002), one of Sabri's students in Egypt, illustrates his wide range of knowledge:

Sabri Efendi was familiar with all kinds of fine arts and had a profundity that satisfies and enlightens intellectuals. He takes you

<sup>175</sup> Karay, *Minelbab İlelmihrab*, p. 117.

<sup>176</sup> Mehmet Tevfik Bey, *Bir Devlet Adamının Mehmet Tevfik Bey'in (Biren) II. Abdülhamid, Meşrutiyet ve Mütareke Devri Hatıraları*, II, p. 145.

<sup>177</sup> "Mehmet Akif (Ersoy): Turkish poet, patriot, proponent of Pan-Islamism and chiefly known as writer of the words to the Turkish National Anthem. In 1918, he became Secretary-General of the *Dârül-Hikmeti'l-İslâmiye* attached to the *şeyhülislâm*'s office. In October 1923, he left Turkey for Egypt to stay with an old friend, the Egyptian Prince 'Abbās Ḥalīm (d. 1934), and in 1925 settled there. Akif returned to Turkey in 1935 and died in Istanbul in 1936;" see *E.I.*<sup>2</sup>, VI, 985-986.

<sup>178</sup> *al-Shaykh*, pp. 658-59.

<sup>179</sup> İbnülemin Mahmud Kemâl (İnal), *Türk Şairleri*, IV, p. 2184.

to the different universes in religious sciences, especially, logic, theology, legal theories, rhetoric and literature.<sup>180</sup>

Sabri critically examined the works of Egyptian,<sup>181</sup> Turkish,<sup>182</sup> Indian<sup>183</sup> and Kazan Tatar<sup>184</sup> intellectuals of the period, in addition to a large number of ancient, medieval, modern philosophers, theologians and scholars.<sup>185</sup> Fethullah Gülen (b. 1938)<sup>186</sup> indicates that Sabri was too critical, saying:

Mustafa Sabri is a good individual, but he is extremely critical. Thank God, he lived in our time. If he had lived in the time of Prophet Muḥammad, he probably would have criticized some of the companions of Muḥammad (*ṣaḥāba*) as well.<sup>187</sup>

<sup>180</sup> Kurucu, *Gecelerin Gündüzü*, p. 352.

<sup>181</sup> Among them figures like Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī (1838-1897), Muḥammad ‘Abduh (1849-1905), Farah Anṭūn (1874-1922), Qāsim Amīn (1863-1908), Rashīd Riḍā (1865-1935), Farīd Wajdī (1878-1954), ‘Alī ‘Abd al-Rāziq (1888-1966), Ṭāhā Husayn (1889-1973), Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal (1888-1956), ‘Abbās Maḥmūd al-‘Aqqād (1889-1964), Zakī Mubārak (1892-1952), Shaykh al-Maraghī (1881-1945), Aḥmad Amīn (1886-1954), Shaykh Maḥmūd Shaltūt (1893-1963), Muḥammad Muṣṭafa al-Raghī, Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Allāh ‘Inān, Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966), Muḥammad Khalafallāh, Muḥammad al-Ghamrāwī, Aḥmad al-Shāyib, Jamāl Zahāwī and Tawfiq al-Ḥakīm (b. 1902).

<sup>182</sup> Among them figures like Süleyman Nazīf (1869-1927), Cenap Şehâbeddîn (1870-1934), Tevfik Fikret (1867-1915), Hüseyin Cahid (Yalçın), Abdullah Cevdet (1869-1932), Ziya Gökalp (1876-1924), Ahmed Midhat Efendi (1844-1912), Mansûrîzâde Sa‘id (1864-1923), Hâşim Nâhîd (1880-1962), Mehmet Zihni Efendi (1845-1913) and Zâhid Kevserî (1879-1952).

<sup>183</sup> Sir Muḥammad Iqbāl (1877-1938) and Dr. Muḥammad Yusûf.

<sup>184</sup> Musa Cârullah Bigiyef (1875-1942), Ahmed Aghayef (1869-1939) and Yusuf Akçura (1876-1935).

<sup>185</sup> Among them figures like Aristotle, Plato, Plotinus, Sokrat, St. Anselm, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Augustine, Ghazālī, Ibn ‘Arabī, Ibn Rushd, Ibn Khaldūn, Dawwanī, Gelenbevi, Isaac Newton, Copernicus, Martin Luther, Francis Bacon, Rene Descartes, Spinoza, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Montesquieu, Gottfried Leibniz, Voltaire, George Berkeley, David Hume, Immanuel Kant, G. W. F. Hegel, Newton, Ludwig Büchner, Jean Jacques Rousseau, Johann G. Fichte, John Stuart Mill, Auguste Comte, Arthur Schopenhauer, Friedrich Schelling, Charles Darwin, Herbert Spencer, Henri L. Bergson, Emile Durkheim, Gustave Le Bon, Ignaz Goldziher and Theodor Nöldeke.

<sup>186</sup> Fethullah Gülen: One of the leading Turkish intellectuals in Asia and Europe, Gülen was born in Erzurum in eastern Turkey and studied classical Islamic sciences under Alvarlı Muhammed Lütfi Efendi (d. 1954). After graduation from *medrese* in 1958, he was appointed as a pracher. Gülen was an influential pracher (preaching post in the Presidency of Religious Affairs) until his retirement in 1990’s and has been an inspired thinker for young generation; see Berna Turam, “Between Islam and State: The Engagements between Gülen Community and the Secular Turkish State,” Ph. D. diss., McGill University, 2001.

<sup>187</sup> Fethullah Gülen, *Fasıldan Fasıla*, 4 vols. (Izmir: Nil Yayınları, 1996), I, p. 305.

I agree with Gülen; however, I would argue that Sabri was not hypercritical. Sabri examines every problematical theme with a critical eye. One should make a distinction between being too critical and examining an issue with a critical eye. Furthermore, Sabri's approach demonstrates sometimes how careful consideration of details can reveal possible groundbreaking elements in academic spheres.

In Sabri's words, critique should be formed directly to the ideas. Sabri is less concerned with certain individuals than with ideas, concept and theories.<sup>188</sup> It is clear from his life and the memoirs of his contemporaries that Sabri was an expressive and assertive intellectual. If one had differing ideas on the same subject one would find oneself in a never-ending argumentation with Sabri since he was surprisingly resourceful. His own competence made him the 'doubting Thomas' to others and he did not readily accept opinions from anybody without being totally convinced of their validity.<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>188</sup> Sabri, *Mawqif al-'Aql*, I, pp. 37-56.

<sup>189</sup> Sabri, *Yarın* (3 August 1928), pp. 1-4.

### *Chapter 3*

#### **HIS WORKS**

Mustafa Sabri started writing when he was nineteen years old and remained a productive writer until very late in his life when he published his four-volume magnum opus in 1950, just four years before his death. He wrote fourteen books, numerous articles both in Arabic and Ottoman Turkish, and translated a number of books and articles into Ottoman Turkish. One of the remarkable features in his writings is that in his precise introductions to almost every book he starts by stating his objective, approach and methodology, which is somewhat rare in his contemporaries. However, Sabri's style is difficult to digest unless one has sufficient knowledge of logic, Islamic theology and philosophy, Arabic literature and rhetoric, Islamic legal theories, medieval and modern philosophy.

#### **A. BOOKS**

##### **a) Ottoman Turkish**

1- *İslâm'da Münâkaşaya Hedef Olan Mes'eleler* (Controversial Issues in Islam), Istanbul, 1908-1912. 208 pages.

This work is compiled of a series of articles that appeared in *Beyânü'l-Hak*<sup>190</sup> from 1908 to 1911. The articles were edited and published in book form

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<sup>190</sup> Sabri's articles appeared in *Beyânü'l-Hak* under the title of "İslâm'da Hedef-i Münâkaşa Olmuş Mesâ'il" in 1908-1911 and later were edited by Osman Nuri Gürsoy (Istanbul: Sebil Yayinevi, 1984).

in 1987.<sup>191</sup> In this collection Sabri discusses matters such as the origins of Islamic classical sciences, polygamy, photographing, divorce, labour and capital in Islam, inheritance, almsgiving (*zakāt*), the role of music in Islam, insurance, gambling, veiling and alms given in lieu of ritual fasting (*fidya*).

2- *Yeni İslâm Müctehidlerinin Kıymet-i İlmiyyesi* (The Academic Values of the New Islamic Reformers), Istanbul, 1919. 164 pages.

In this work, Sabri criticizes the reformist approach of Musa Cârullah Bigiyef (1875-1942) to the eternity of Hell.<sup>192</sup> Classical Muslim scholars' views, in particular Ibn al-‘Arabî and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzîya, on the eternity of hell, punishment (*mas’alah al-khulūd*) and God’s universal mercy are examined.

3- *Dînî Mücedditler, yâhud, Türkiye İçin Necât ve İ’tilâ Yollarında Bir Rehber* (The Religious Reformers, or, A Guide for the Path of Salvation and Development for Turkey), Istanbul, 1922. 365 pages.

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<sup>191</sup> The editor of this book transliterated and translated Sabri’s articles according to his own understanding in order to make the texts simple for modern Turkish generations and hence, it has misleading ideas far from what Sabri meant in the original texts. Therefore, this edited version can never take the place of the original Ottoman Turkish in Arabic script, nor is it meant to do so. Serious researchers who wish to understand the accurate and broad meaning of Sabri’s articles are recommended to read the original versions of his articles that appeared in *Beyânü’l-Hak*.

<sup>192</sup> Musa Cârullah Bigiyef: Born in the city of Rostov-on-Don, Bigiyef studied in Kazan at Göl Boyu Madrasah, in Bukhara privately with several instructions, and in Egypt took private courses from Shaykh Bakhit, Dean of the University of al-Azhar at that time. He knew Russian, Persian, Arabic and Ottoman Turkish and wrote numerous books and published articles in Arabic, Ottoman and Kazan Turkish on issues such as Islamic law, thought, history and Qur’anic exegesis. In a short time, he became one of the leading intellectuals of the Jadid movement among Kazan Tatars in Russia. After running a foul of the Russian government, Bigiyef was sent into exile in 1930. During his exile, he travelled throughout the world, India, Iraq, Iran, Finland, Germany, Egypt, China, Japan, Java, and Turkey. He remained in exile until his death in 1949 in Egypt—ironically, a repeat of Sabri’s experience. For Bigiyef’s life and the Tajdid movement, see Ahmet Kanlıdere, *Reform within Islam: The Tajdid and Jadid Movements Among the Kazan Tatars (1809-1917)* (Istanbul: Eren Yayıncılık, 1997); Mehmet Görmez, *Musa Carullah Bigiyef* (Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları, 1994); Abdullah Battal-Taymas, *Kazanlı Türk Meşhurlarından: Musa Carullah Bigi* (Istanbul: M.Sıralar Matbaası, 1959).



This is a critique of Hâşim Nâhîd's (1880-1962)<sup>193</sup> book, *Türkiye İçin Necât ve İ'tilâ Yolları*,<sup>194</sup> it contains Sabri's views on the genesis of the Ottoman-Turk government, and the causes and results of this government's failures. In this context, Sabri discusses matters such as continuity and change in Islamic law, the gate of *ijtihād*, the doctrine of *maqāṣid al-sharī'a* (the goal or objective of law), the perception of dignity in Islamic ethics, the notion of conservatism, the origins of idleness in the Muslim world, the Islamic world's intellectual capacity in understanding Western civilization, the concept of individualism and family life in Muslim societies, equality of men and women, and fine distinctions between love and fear of God in Islamic theology. This book also includes a critical essay on nationalism.<sup>195</sup>

4- *İslâm'da İmâmet-i Kübrâ* (State and Government in Islam),<sup>196</sup> Greece, 1930. 265 pages.

In this book, Sabri criticizes Egyptian scholar 'Alî 'Abd al-Râziq's (1888-1966) views on caliphate and the structure of government in Islam. Sabri discusses the origins of caliphate and government in Islam, separation of

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<sup>193</sup> Hâşim Nâhîd (Erbil): Born in Erbil, Iraq, Nâhîd finished law school in Istanbul in 1911, knew Arabic, Persian and French, went to Paris as a correspondent for İkdâm newspaper in 1922, wrote articles for more than twenty magazines and journals, died in Ankara on 30 March 1962. He wrote about twenty books, among them are: *Üç Muamma: Garp Meselesi, Şark Meselesi, Türk Meselesi* (Istanbul: Kader Matbaası, 1921); *Les Symptômes de la Crise Turque et son Remède* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1931); *Avrupa Buhranının Ruhî Sebepleri* (Ankara: Necep Ulusoglu Basımevi, 1941); see Ali Birinci, "Türk Ocağından Simalar: Erbilli Hâşim Nahid'in Hikayesi," *Türk Yurdu* 20, 156, pp. 5-9.

<sup>194</sup> Hâşim Nahid, *Türkiye için Necat ve İtilâ Yolları* (İstanbul: Şems Matbaası, 1331).

<sup>195</sup> For Sabri's critique of nationalism, see *Dinî Mücedditler*, pp. 247-278.

<sup>196</sup> A series of articles appeared in *Yarın* and were later published by Sadık Albayrak in 1992. See *Hilâfet-i Muazzama-i İslâmiyye*, ed. Sadık Albayrak (İstanbul: Araştırma Yayınları, 1992).

religion (*dīn*) from state (*dawlah*), interior and international policy of the CUP as well as British policy towards the Ottoman Empire and Republican Turkey.

## b) Arabic

1- *al-Nakīr ‘alā Munkirī al-Ni‘mah min al-Dīn wa-al-Khilāfah wa-al-Ummah* (The Rejection of Those Who Criticize the Benefits of Religion, Caliphate and Islamic Community),<sup>197</sup> Beirut, 1924. 235 pages.

This is a criticism of the abolition of the caliphate, the office of *şeyhülislâm*, the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Foundations (*Şer‘iye ve Evkâf Vekâleti*) in Turkey and of Egyptian intellectuals’ position on the Turkish revolution.

2- *Mas’alah Tarjamat al-Qur’ân* (The Question of Translating the Qur’ân),<sup>198</sup> Cairo, 1932. 146 pages.

The positions of various Islamic theological and jurisprudential schools on translating the Qur’an and reciting the translated version of the Qur’an in ritual prayers are analyzed and the opinions of a number of earlier and contemporary scholars such as Abu Hanifa, al-Kāsānī, Farīd Wajdī and Shaykh al-Marāghī are criticized from legal, sociological and political perspectives.

3- *Mawqif al-Bashar taḥta Sulṭān al-Qadar* (The Position of Man under the Rule of Fate),<sup>199</sup> Cairo, 1933. 299 pages.

<sup>197</sup> Published by al-Maṭba‘a al-‘Abbāsīyah. For a Turkish translation of this book, see Oktay Yılmaz, *Hilafetin İlğasının Arka Planı* (Istanbul: İnsan Yayınları, 1996).

<sup>198</sup> Published by al-Maṭba‘a al-Salafīyah. For a Turkish translation of this book, see Süleyman Çelik, *Kur’an Tercümesi Meselesi* (Istanbul: Bedir Yayınevi, 1993).

This book is a comparative theological analysis of the opinions of various Islamic sects such as Mu'tazila, Ash'arī, Jabriya, Māturīdī, Shi'ite and earlier and some late scholars such as al-Bāqillānī, Abū Ishāq al-Isfarā'inī, Imam al-Ḥaramayn al-Juwaynī, Taftāzānī, Nasafī, Gelenbevī, Dawwānī, Ibn al-'Arabī, Alūsī, Muḥammad Buhayt, Muḥammad 'Abduh as well as several modern European theologians about fate, predestination and free will.

4- *Qawfī fī al-Mar'ah wa Muqāranatuhu bi-Aqwāl Muqallidah al-Gharb* (My Position on Women, and its Comparison with the Positions of Those Who Imitate the West),<sup>200</sup> Cairo, 1935. 92 pages.

In this work, Sabri presents his particular views on women, love and lust relationships, the origins of polygamy in Islam, gender equality, education of women, philosophy of veiling (*hijāb*) and feminism.

5- *al-Qawl al-Faṣl bayna alladhīna yu'minūn bi'l-Ghayb wa-alladhīna lā yu'minūn* (The Decisive Word between Those who Believe in the Unseen and Those Who Do Not),<sup>201</sup> Cairo, 1942. 244 pages.

This is criticism of the views of 'Abduh, Rashīd Riḍā, Farīd Wajdī, Zakī Mubārak, Muḥammad Ḥusayin Haykal on miracles, prophecy and resurrection (*ba'th*). In this work, Sabri also evaluates Maḥmud Shaltūt's position on the

<sup>199</sup> Published by al-Maṭba'a al-Salafīyah. For a Turkish translation of this book, see İsa Doğan, *İnsan ve Kader* (Istanbul: Kültür Basın Yayın Birliği, 1989).

<sup>200</sup> Published first by al-Maṭba'a al-Salafīyah, a second time by al-Maktaba al-'Arabīyah in Aleppo in 1971, a third time by al-Rāid al-'Arabī in Beirut in 1982 and a fourth time by Dār al-Qādirī in Beirut in 1993. For a Turkish translation of this book, see Mustafa Yılmaz, *Kadınla İlgili Görüşüm ve Bu Görüşün Batı Taklitçisi Sözlerle Karşılaştırılması* (Istanbul: Esra Yayınları, 1994).

<sup>201</sup> Published first time by al-Maṭba'a 'Isā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, a second time by al-Maṭba'a Dār al-Salām in Cairo in 1986.

crucifixion (*rafʿ ʾīsā*), the second coming of Jesus, the existence of Satan and Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal's work *Ḥayāt Muḥammad*.

6- *Mawqif al-ʿAql wa-al-ʿIlm wa-al-ʿĀlam*<sup>202</sup> *min Rabb al-ʿĀlamīn wa-ʿIbādihi al-Mursalīn* (The Position of Intellect, Knowledge and the World with Regard to the Lord of the Worlds and His Messengers),<sup>203</sup> Cairo, 1950. 4 volumes, 2018 pages.

This was his last work<sup>204</sup> in Islamic theology, law and modern philosophy which addresses mostly theological, epistemological and philosophical issues, such as the existence of God, the origins of the disputes between philosophers and theologians, comparison between Christian and Islamic theology, the concept of the unity of existence, contrast between religious and empirical beliefs, the problem of theodicy in Islamic theology, contradiction between reason and tradition, the nature and limits of reason and role of conscience in theological problems, re-evaluation of epistemological

<sup>202</sup> A number of scholars who wrote a sketch of Sabri's biography made a noticeable mistake in providing the name of this book. They introduced the title as *Mawqif al-ʿaql wa-al-ʿilm wa-al-ʿālim min rabb al-ʿālamīn* which means "The Position of Intellect, Knowledge and Scholars with regards to the Lord of the Worlds" in place of *Mawqif al-ʿAql wa-al-ʿilm wa-al-ʿālam min rabb al-ʿālamīn* which means "The Position of Intellect, Knowledge and Worlds with regards to the Lord of the Worlds." However, in order to clarify this confusion, Sabri himself mentioned this important nuance in his book (v. 3, p. 85) and said that the letter "lam" should be pronounced with the vowel "fatḥa, or a", standing for the noun 'ālam which means world. Therefore, the correct title of the book is underlined in the text above. For this inaccuracy see a number of works: Ebū'l-Ulā Mardin, *Huzūr Dersleri*, II-III, p. 352; Abdülkadir Altunsu, *Osmanlı Şeyhülislamları*, p. 259; Ahmet Akbulut, "Şeyhülislām Mustafa Sabri ve Görüşleri (1869-1954)," *İslâmî Araştırmalar* 6 (1992), p. 34; Osman Nuri Gürsoy, *Meseleler*, p. 14; İsa Doğan, *İnsan ve Kader*, p. 7.

<sup>203</sup> Published first time by Dār İhyā' al-Kutub al-ʿArabīyah, a second time by Dār İhyā' al-Turāth al-ʿArabī in Beirut in 1981.

<sup>204</sup> The literary critic Muḥammad Ḥusayn compares Sabri's *Mawqif al-ʿAql* to Shaikh Ṭaṭāwī Jawḥarī's work *al-Jawāhir fī Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-Karīm*; see Ḥusayn, *al-Ittijāhāt al-Waṭaniya fī al-Adab al-Muʿāṣir* (Beirut: Dār al-irtinād, 1389/1970), pp. 334-348.

structure of Western philosophy from Voltaire to Kant, the logical structure of Western theologians' arguments on the existence of God, the mind and the sources of knowledge, natural law, democracy and Islam, legal reforms in Islamic law, debates over the existence of *mujtahids* and the gate of *ijtihad*, religion and politics in Islam. Particular attention was given to the problems of the epistemological structure of modern Islamic theology from the nineteenth to the mid-20th century.

Sabri further examines, in this work, the response of Muslim intellectuals to the challenges posed by modern philosophical trends. He analyzed these intellectuals' attitudes by tracing the influence of modernity and the impacts of positivist and rationalist schools of philosophy on Islamic thought. Sabri tries to give an intelligible answer to the question of what Islamic theological thinking is today and what its relation is to other fields of Islamic studies. This book was banned in Turkey until late 1980's due to his critiques of Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk).<sup>205</sup>

## B. SELECTED ARTICLES

In addition to these books, Sabri produced numerous articles, both in Ottoman Turkish and Arabic, on a variety of subjects, such as Islamic legal theories and theology, Arabic literature and rhetoric. Many of his articles were published in several journals, magazines, and newspapers in the following; *Beyânü'l-Hak*, *Sebülürreşâd*, *Tarîk*, *İkdâm*, *Malûmât*, *Alemdâr*, *Meslek*, *Tesisât*,

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<sup>205</sup> Altunsu, *Osmanlı Şeyhülislamı*, p. 259.

*Peyâm-ı Sabâh, Millet, Yarın, Peyâm-ı İslâm, Yeni Gazete, al-Ahrâm, al-Akhbâr, Muqattam, al-Jâmi‘ah al-Zaytûniyah, Minbar al-Sharq, al-Fath* and *al-Hidâya al-Islâmiyah*.

**a) Ottoman Turkish**

1- “*Cevâbım: Kuvve-i Teşri‘iyye’ye Dâir*” (My Response: On the Term of Legislative Power [*al-Quwwah al-Tashrī‘iyah*] in Islamic Law).<sup>206</sup>

2- “*Raddī ‘alā mā fī al-Qawl al-Jayyid min al-radan*.” (This is a literary criticism of a jurist Mehmed Zihni Efendi’s (1846-1911) book on Arabic rhetoric “*al-Qawl al-Jayyid*”<sup>207</sup>)<sup>208</sup>

3- “*Huzûr-u Hümayûn Dersleri*” (Imperial Presence Lectures).<sup>209</sup>

4- “*Hemze-i Vasl Mes‘elesî*” (On the issue of *Hamza al-Waṣl*)<sup>210</sup>

5- “*Fukahânın Kıyası*” (On the Analogy [*Qiyās*] of Muslim Jurists).<sup>211</sup>

6- “*Din ve Milliyet*” (Religion and Nationality).<sup>212</sup>

7- “*Savm-ı Ramazân Risâlesi*” (Treatise on Fasting: A Legal Critique of the Issue of *Fidyah*)<sup>213</sup>

8- “*Meselet ül-Yemîn el-Kamûs*” (The Issue of False Oath [*al-Yamîn al-Ghamûs*] in Islamic Law) in *Peyâm-ı İslâm*, issue 1, Greece 1931.

<sup>206</sup> Sabri, *Beyânü’l-Hak* 17 (1908), pp.381-384 and 21 (1909), pp.476-479.

<sup>207</sup> Mehmed Zihni Efendi, *El-Kavl ül-Ceyyid* (Istanbul: Dârü’t-Tibaati’l-Amire, 1327).

<sup>208</sup> Sabri, *Beyânü’l-Hak*, Istanbul 1909/1911. (65 pages).

<sup>209</sup> Sabri, *Beyânü’l-Hak*, 2 (1908), pp. 3-6.

<sup>210</sup> Sabri, *Beyânü’l-Hak*, 124 (1911), pp. 2246-2250. In Arabic grammar, *hamza al-waṣl* is conjunctive *hamza* in post-pausal position, in which, when preceded by another word, is not pronounced. For *hamza*, see *EI* <sup>2</sup>, III, pp. 150-152.

<sup>211</sup> Sabri, *Yarın* 17 (Greece, 1928).

<sup>212</sup> Sabri, *Yarın* (Greece 1930).

<sup>213</sup> *Fidyah*: Alms given in lieu of ritual fasting. For Sabri’s articles on the issue of *fidyah*, see the issues of *Yarın*, 16,17,18,19,20,21,22 (1927-28, Greece).

## b) Arabic

1- “*Kalimah fī Mawqif al-Nisā’ ma’a al-Rijāl*” (A Remark on the Position of Women with Men).<sup>214</sup>

2- “*al-Mu’jizāt wa-al-Mutashābihāt*” (Miracles and the Ambiguous Verses of the Qur’an).<sup>215</sup>

3- “*al-Islām wa-al-Mushkilāt al-Ijtima’īyah*” (Islam and Social Problems).<sup>216</sup>

## C. MANUSCRIPTS

Sabri also has a number of unpublished works, both in Ottoman Turkish and Arabic, on several subjects, such as Islamic jurisprudence, Arabic poetry, politics and memoirs.

1- *Şayd al-Khāṭir* (Hunting the Memory)<sup>217</sup> Mecca, 1923 (80 pages). His memoirs.

2- *Hukm Lubs al-Qubba’ah wa-al-Burnayṭah* (Legal Judgement on Dressing French and European Fedora Hat)<sup>218</sup> Romania, 1925. This is a legal critique of the new Turkish dressing (European hat) code introduced in November 1925.<sup>219</sup>

<sup>214</sup> Appeared in *al-Fatḥ* in 1930; see *al-Shaykh*, p. 280.

<sup>215</sup> Appeared in *al-Ahrām* in August 1933; see *al-Shaykh*, pp. 280-81.

<sup>216</sup> Appeared in *al-Ahrām* in 1946; see *al-Shaykh*, pp. 282-83.

<sup>217</sup> *al-Shaykh*, pp. 219-20.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 220-22.

<sup>219</sup> For a number of new legal codes introduced in Turkey after 1923, see *Turkey in Transition: New Perspectives*, ed. Irvin C. Schick and Ertuğrul Ahmet Toprak (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

3- *Mukhtārāt min-al-Shi'r al-Arabī* (Anthology of Arabic Poetry)<sup>220</sup> This is a collection of selected Arabic poems. Among modern Arabic litterateurs, Sabri liked most the style of Muṣṭafā Ṣādiq al-Rāfi'ī (1880-1937), one of the most important representatives of neoclassicism in Egyptian prose.<sup>221</sup>

4- *Hāshiyah 'alā Kitāb Natā'ij al-Afkār* (Gloss on the book *Natā'ij al-Afkār*)<sup>222</sup> 125 leafs.

#### D. TRANSLATIONS AND EDITIONS

Sabri also translated some books and articles from Arabic into Ottoman Turkish.

1- *Mir'āt al-Uṣūl*, one of the major *Ḥanafī* legal theory books, into Ottoman Turkish.<sup>223</sup>

2- Shakib Arslan's (1869-1946) book *Li-mādhā ta'akhkhara al-Muslimūn wa-li-mādhā taqaddama Ghayruhum* (Why Did Muslims Stay Behind and Others Precede?) into Ottoman Turkish.<sup>224</sup>

3- Co-editor of *al-Mudāwī li-'ilal al-Jāmi' al-Ṣaghīr wa-Sharḥ al-Munāwī* with Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Ibn al-Ṣiddīq (1902-1960).

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<sup>220</sup> *al-Shaykh*, p. 266.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*, p.169.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 266-67.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 268-69.

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 269-70.



## E. SELECTED POEMS

### a. Ottoman Turkish

- 1- “*Ta’addüd-ü Zevcât: İki Kadın Arasında Muhâvere*” (Polygamy: A Conversation Between Two Women)<sup>225</sup> Istanbul, 1908.
- 2- “*Hakîkî Şi’irlerim*” (My Genuine Poems)<sup>226</sup> Istanbul, 1909.
- 3- “*Mahşer*” (The Day of Judgment)<sup>227</sup> Istanbul, 1912.
- 4- “*İhtiyarlığım*” (My Old Age)<sup>228</sup> Dobruca, Romania, 1914.
- 5- “*Menfî Du’â*” (An Antagonistic or Exiled Prayer)<sup>229</sup> Romania, 1916.
- 6- “*Yarın*” (Tomorrow)<sup>230</sup> Greece, 1927.

### b. Arabic

- 1- “*Qaṣīdah Nūnīyah*”<sup>231</sup> Cairo, 1923.
- 2- “*Qaṣīdah Dād*”<sup>232</sup> Cairo, 1923.

<sup>225</sup> Appeared in *Beyânü'l-Hak* 13 (1908), pp. 286-89.

<sup>226</sup> Appeared in *Beyânü'l-Hak* 26 (1909), pp. 611-13.

<sup>227</sup> Appeared in *Beyânü'l-Hak* 147 (1912), pp. 2629-30.

<sup>228</sup> For this poem, see İnal, *Türk Şairleri*, pp. 2184-2185.

<sup>229</sup> For this poem, see Sadık Albayrak, *Yürüyenler ve Sürünenler* (Istanbul: Şamil Yayınevi, 1984), pp. 23-24.

<sup>230</sup> Appeared in *Yarın, al-Shaykh*, pp. 297-98.

<sup>231</sup> Appeared in *al-Muqattaʿam* in 1923, see *al-Shaykh*, pp. 301-02.

<sup>232</sup> This poem pays a great deal of attention to Egypt and Egyptians. For full version of poem, see *al-Shaykh*, pp. 303-309.

## *Chapter 4*

### HIS THOUGHT

#### **On the Fundamental Doctrines of Religion and the Qur'ān**

According to Sabri, religion (*dīn*) is based on primary principles (*uṣūl*) and settled statement (*al-qawl al-thābit*) which cannot be changed or reformed by anyone. In this respect, Islam has constant factors and fundamental principles. The objective and claim of this program is to make people happy in two lives, i.e. this world and second life (*sa'ādah al-dārayn*).<sup>233</sup> Sabri saw the binary approach of many Muslim intellectuals regarding projects attempting to reform religion as problematic since religion has foundations (*usus*) and objectives (*maqāṣid*):

Islam has a program and an objective. Making a change to the substance of this program means ruining the objective of religion. People who accept Islam make a commitment to respect and adopt this program and not to attempt to change its substance. Just because liberalism entails a love for freedom and freethinking, it should not result in disrespect towards this commitment. This commitment to Islam, whether at the beginning or after one has already made it, is not obligatory: meaning that one who does not want to keep his/her commitment can leave and break their relation with Islam. What kind of freedom do liberals want more than that? In fact, they do not want freedom, on the contrary, perhaps they do not want to be seen as having left religion or as against Islam even though they have broken relation with it.<sup>234</sup>

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<sup>233</sup> Sabri, *Dini Mücedditler*, pp. 1-7.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid., pp. 7-8.

Sabri aptly differentiates belief (*īmān*) from action (*‘amal*) and consequently argues that Islam is a religion of belief rather than of action.<sup>235</sup>

Actions, for Sabri, can never be a part (*juz’*) of belief and therefore belief is the essence of Islam itself. Nevertheless, his thesis does not entail the idea of reducing Islam to a body of private beliefs without practical issue in social relations (*mu‘āmalāt*).<sup>236</sup>

Sabri isolated the Qur’ān from answerability to scientific and historical inquiry and said, “No, the Qur’ān is not a science book.” He did not see the Qur’ān as a historical document, however, he strongly opposed the idea that any historical data in the Qur’ān may not necessarily be true since the Qur’ān is not a history book. In Sabri’s view, any historical or scientific facts mentioned in the Qur’ān should be taken as truth. History, according to Sabri, cannot explain theological problems. He also maintained that the science of history could never provide the true data about the past since the definition of history and reliability of historians still remain in debate and people think of history only in terms of limited and restricted historical documents together with the personal observation of historians.<sup>237</sup>

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<sup>235</sup> This thesis is very much in opposition to J. Schacht’s thesis. Schacht argued that Islam is a religion of the Law; the sacred Law is the core and kernel of Islam itself. Therefore, he went on to argue that Islam is a religion of action rather than of belief; see Schacht, *Introduction to Islamic Law*, p. 1.

<sup>236</sup> Sabri, *Dini Mücedditler*, pp. 154-191.

<sup>237</sup> Sabri, *Beyânü’l-Hak* 6 (1908), pp. 106-110; 8 (1908), pp.154-158 and *Mawqif al-‘Aql*, I, p. 143.

### On Islamic Studies and Sufism (*taṣawwuf*)

In Sabri's thought, *taṣawwuf* entails being sincere, maintaining sincerity of heart in one's actions refining one's character, but it is not a science in its own right. Sufism, in his view, is the acquisition of taste (*dhawq*), in the course of a sense experience or state (*ḥāl*). Any form of *taṣawwuf* that opposes the concept of the Unity of God (*tawḥīd*), reason or logic, is considered false in Sabri's view.

By the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century in the West, the idea of scientific and intellectual progress had evolved into a general belief in the progress of human beings, relying on the rule of sound reason. The ideas of the Enlightenment in Europe, such as liberalism, positivism, skepticism, agnosticism, atheism and materialism also began to have an impact on Muslim intellectuals. As a result, Sabri says, *taṣawwuf* took on the part of a irrational and emotional reaction against the positivist and rationalist school of philosophies prevalent in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Sabri contended that the Europeans of the Middle Ages discounted the role of reason in favour of religious orthodoxy and that, unfortunately, the Muslims of his day were also following the same path by seeking refuge in a form of *taṣawwuf* that subjugated the role of reason to mystical and imaginary concepts. Thus Islam, under the guidance of al-Ghazālī and Ibn al-‘Arabī, became mystical faith rather than rational theology.<sup>238</sup>

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<sup>238</sup> Sabri, *Mawqif al-‘Aql*, I, 257-270; II, 102-113; III, 85-315.

In Sabri's view, the Islamic sciences are based on the *uṣūl al-dīn*, by which he meant *kalām* (Islamic theology). There cannot be any foundation to the Islamic sciences, such as law (*fiqh*), Qur'ān exegesis (*tafsīr*) or *ḥadīth* unless one first proves the existence of one God who sends Prophets, Books and revelation. The subsistence and survival of Islamic sciences are therefore completely dependent on the science of theology, making *kalām* the most essential of the Islamic sciences.<sup>239</sup>

The Egyptian intellectual Aḥmad Amīn (1886-1954) took up a position in favor of *taṣawwuf* in this debate:

*Kalām* only provides proofs for the believers. Proofs mean nothing for the unbelievers. We find no example of people converting to Islam through the use of *kalām* in history. Even if this did happen, it was a very rare case, since *kalām* is not successful in satisfying peoples' hearts.<sup>240</sup>

Amīn thought that it was better to invite people to Islam by way of *taṣawwuf*, rather than by logical and rational explanations. Sabri however disagreed with Amīn's enthusiasm for the Sufi path, and said:

Amīn doesn't examine this matter carefully. I wonder what the Sufis' methods of argument are against people who resist both religion and religious thought. Do they consider using *karāmah* (miracles granted to saints by God) in order to persuade people? If that's so, then is it permissible for Sufis (*ahl al-taṣawwuf*) to use *karāmah* as means of convincing people whenever they want? As a matter of fact, do you think that people who deny the miracles of the Prophets today will show consideration and respect for the miracles of saints?<sup>241</sup>

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<sup>239</sup> Ibid, I, pp. 201-203.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid., I, p. 244.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid., I, pp. 261-62.

### Sources of Knowledge and the Significance of Reason

In Sabri's thought, there are three sources of knowledge: the five (sound) senses (*al-ḥawāss al-salīma*), true narrative (*al-khabar al-ṣādiq*), i.e., the Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth, and reason (*aql*). *Ilhām* (inspiration), on the other hand, is definitely not one of the sources, either in his view or that of the *mutakallimūn* (theologians). He argued furthermore that the inspiration of Sufis could not be relied on to the same degree as the revelation of the Prophets, refusing to consider *ilhām* and *kashf*<sup>242</sup> as sources of knowledge, let alone of law.<sup>243</sup> In his critiques of al-Ghazali's statement "there is no accurate pathway to reach *yaqīn* (absolute certainty) other than *kashf*" Sabri poses a question:

What does Imam al-Ghazali say about this statement of 'Alī?:

"*Law kushif al-qhiṭā' mā azdaddtu yaqīnan.*"

If the covering [divine mysteries] unveiled my absolute certainty (*yaqīn*) wouldn't have become more intense."

The first faculty addressed (*mukhātab*) by God, Sabri says, is ('*aql*) reason. The legal responsibility that one acquires on reaching age of maturity ('*āqil wa bāligh* or one who possesses legal discretion) is incumbent on possessing a sound mind<sup>244</sup> since those who are not of sound mind (*junūn*) possesses no juridical status of responsibility—they are not *mukallaf* under Islamic law.

<sup>242</sup> "*Kashf* literally means "to take away the veil," but in technical terminology it means "to make appear in a complete and actual realisation the mysterious senses and the realities which are behind the veil;" see *EI*<sup>2</sup>, IV, pp. 696-698.

<sup>243</sup> Sabri, *Mawqif al-'Aql*, I, pp. 268-69.

<sup>244</sup> *Ibid.*, I, pp. 266-69.

Sabri illustrates the relationship between reason and experience in his critique of the article “Emergence of the New Era in Religious Sciences” written by Farīd Wajdī, an influential Egyptian intellectual of his day. Sabri says:

Experimental proofs can never be as solid and objective as rational proofs. Antitheses of things that are proven by rational evidence are impossible. On the contrary, things that are based on experimentation are determined by time. It is always possible that new experiments can disprove former ones.<sup>245</sup>

Reason (*‘aql*) alone interprets experiences (*tajriba*) and observations (*mushāhada*) and deduces a fact from them. They make no sense without reason. Experience without reason is deaf and sensation (*iḥsās*) without reason is blind. Deducing a fact from them [experience and observation] and subsequently identification and verification of a fact are the result of reason. Therefore, the possibility of error is higher in sensation and experience in comparison to reason.<sup>246</sup>

Deduction is a process of arriving at a fact or a conclusion by reasoning, based on the information that one has. Whatever one obtains through experiment or observation, in Sabri’s view, reason is finally playing the conclusive role in this process.<sup>247</sup>

### **On the Concept of the Unity of Existence (*waḥdat al-wujūd*)**

Sabri wrote an extensive chapter<sup>248</sup> in critique of the concept of *waḥdat al-wujūd*, the central belief of Sufis who believe in the unity of God and the world. He defines the concept of *waḥdat al-wujūd* in the context of four distinct

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<sup>245</sup> Ibid., I, p. 422.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid., I, pp. 235-36

<sup>247</sup> Ibid., I, p. 236.

<sup>248</sup> Ibid., III, pp. 85-315.

worldviews regarding the relationship between God and the universe. These are:

1. Those who accept both God and the world's existence, but the existence of God is necessary while the world's existence is not necessary.
2. Those who hold the idea that both God and the world do not exist.
3. Those who say the world exists, but God does not.
4. Those who believe in the existence of God, but say that the world ('*ālam*, *mawjūdāt*) does not. This is the teaching of the Wujūdīya school (existentialists) and the Ittiḥādīya school (unificationists).<sup>249</sup>

According to the *Wujūdīya* school, Sabri says:

*Lā ilāha illallāh* "There is no God, but Allah" is the declaration of the common Muslim (*tawḥīd al-‘awāmm*), *Lā mawjūda illallāh* "There is no existence, but God" is the declaration of the elite group (*tawḥīd al-khawāṣṣ*). God is the one whose *wujūd* (existence) exists in every *makhḷūq* (creature). Every *mawjūd* (existent thing) exists by God's *wujūd*, but not by his own *wujūd*. Therefore, *mawjūdāt* (existent things) do not have *wujūd*. Since God is the only *wujūd*, all of existence is one in reality; there is nothing alongside of it. If so, *mawjūd* is manifestation of *wujūd* (*mazḥar al-wujūd*) or the centre of manifestation (*maḥall zuḥūr al-Allāh*). Things that we call exterior objects (*a‘yān al-khārijah*) do not have *wujūd*, they are manifestations of God. The followers of the Wujūdīya school claim that when the fourth caliph ‘Alī heard this hadith: "*Kāna Allāh wa lā shay‘a ma‘ahu* (There was God and there was not a thing along with Him)" he said "*al-ān kamā kān* (He is now the same as He was)." ‘Alī meant that God's state was now no different than after the world's creation. Denying the existence of the world entails this: all *mawjūd* is nothing other than God's existence. Since there is no real existence other than God, the world does not have *wujūd*. However they don't deny the existence of creatures, on the contrary, they unite all existences in one *wujūd* that is God. This belief leads to belief in the unification of God and the world (*ittiḥād*).<sup>250</sup>

<sup>249</sup> Ibid., III, p. 87.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid., III, pp. 86-88.



Sabri raises several questions regarding *waḥdat al-wujūd*, such as: “Where did this conception come from? How did this notion penetrate the minds of Muslims? How can somebody be so committed to a notion that both reason and the Muslim intellect clearly reject?”

Sabri sees a profound affinity between philosophers and Sufis. He says that the latter are much indebted to the teachings of the philosophers. Sabri does not in fact acknowledge any clear-cut difference between Sufism and the philosophies of Plato, Benedict de Spinoza, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Friedrich von Schelling and Friedrich Hegel as they pertain to the issue of existence.<sup>251</sup>

The consequence of believing in the *waḥdat al-wujūd*, Sabri says, is conviction of the *waḥdat al-mawjūd* (unity of existent things). Clearly, supporters of the notion fail to understand the difference in meaning what they mean. Sabri especially wonders how followers of the doctrine could have identified *waḥdat al-mawjūd* as *waḥdat al-wujūd*.

Denial of the existence of *makhlūq* (creature) results in a lack of sharp differentiation in attributes and essence between God and the universe. This idea can lead to denial of the act of *khalq* (creation).

In the Wujūdīya School, the relationship between God and the world depends on the world having no separate existence, meaning that the world is God. In other words, God exists in the world. When one asks a follower of *waḥdat al-wujūd*, Sabri says, if they believe that God is in the world or united

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<sup>251</sup>Ibid., III, pp. 187-88.

with the world, they will say neither statement is right, because there is no different being; what we see is only God.<sup>252</sup>

As for the legal implications of the concept, Sabri asks: Who will ever be responsible for what one is doing, given that God and His creation are one and the same? Who is doing good and bad? Who will lay charges and who will be charged? The ambiguity of the concept produces problems in terms of legal responsibility, to say the least.<sup>253</sup>

Sabri also disagrees with the Sufis who say that this world is imagination (*khayāl*) or dream (*ru'yā*) from which people will awaken when they die. Sabri argues furthermore that if God is the world, and the world is not yet complete, and never will be complete because unending renewals (*tajallī*) happen everyday, then He is not yet complete (perfect, or *tamām*) in reality and never will be.<sup>254</sup>

In the debate over *waḥdat al-wujūd*, Sabri's criticism displays some parallels with the antimonistic discourse first articulated by Ibn Taymīyah. In his critique, Sabri sometimes used very harsh language against Ibn al-ʿArabī. He was especially extreme in defending certain points of the *Sunnī* law. However, through looking more closely at his critique of some Sufi concepts, one can understand that his criticism originated from a theological and legal perspective.

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<sup>252</sup> Ibid., III, p. 192.

<sup>253</sup> Ibid., III, pp. 195-96.

<sup>254</sup> Ibid., III, p. 194.

### Disputes over Ibn al-‘Arabī’s Legacy: A Debate on One of the Islamic Theological Controversies Concerning Eternal Punishment and God’s Universal Mercy

According to the divine and cosmic relationship in Ibn al-‘Arabī’s thought, according to which *wujūd* encompasses everything, there is no escape from the circle of mercy (*rahma*) that is its fundamental attribute. Ibn al-‘Arabī held therefore that God shows mercy toward Muslims as well as non-Muslims. His mercy embraces even the people of Hell; therefore, punishment will not be eternal.<sup>255</sup> At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Musa Cârullah Bigiyef, the leading intellectual of the *Tajdîd* movement among Kazan Tatars,<sup>256</sup> wrote his book *Rahmet-i İlâhiye Burhanları* [The Proofs of God’s Mercy], under the influence of Ibn al-‘Arabī’s school of thought, and, like Ibn al-‘Arabī, he proclaimed the all-inclusiveness of God’s mercy. Because of this idea, Bigiyef’s book provoked a storm of controversy among Kazan Tatars.

Mustafa Sabri in particular criticized Bigiyef, and more forcefully in his book *Yeni İslâm Müctehidlerinin Kıymet-i İlmiyyesi*. Sabri believed that Bigiyef exerted an intense influence on the Muslims of Russia by his publications refuting Muslim jurists, *mufasssirs*, and especially *kalām* scholars. Sabri says that in modernists’ eyes Bigiyef earned the title of “the Luther of Islam”. Sabri’s main purpose was to defend Muslim theologians and scholars who had

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<sup>255</sup> On Ibn al-‘Arabī’s concept of God’s mercy, see Ronald Nettler, “Ibn ‘Arabī’s Notion of Allah’s Mercy,” *Israel Oriental Studies* VIII (1978): 219-229.

<sup>256</sup> For the *Tajdid* movement, see Ahmet Kanlıdere, *Reform within Islam: The Tajdid and Jadid Movements Among the Kazan Tatars (1809-1917) Conciliation or Conflict?* (Istanbul: Eren Yayıncılık, 1997).

produced an enormous quantity of knowledge in the past. He claimed that *kalām* had served to protect the Muslim faith since Islam came into contact with Greek philosophy, more than a thousand years previously. However, Bigiyef, according to Sabri, wanted to destroy *kalām* completely and raise suspicions about Islamic sources such as Quranic exegesis (*tafsīr*) and Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*).<sup>257</sup>

One of Sabri's main objections was the justification of the truthfulness (*ṣawab* and *ḥaqq*) of all faiths and Bigiyef's notion that "The faith of developed European countries is superior to underdeveloped Muslim countries."<sup>258</sup> Arguing at length against this view, Sabri wrote:

I think that this attitude of approving all faiths as valid and not regarding someone as inferior because of his/her religion is likely a sign that Bigiyef, my opponent in this debate, has been puzzled by that fashion of freedom of speech and choice current in Europe...<sup>259</sup>

According to Murji'a School, sin does not harm if you have faith in God, meaning that faith is of the essence whatever one does. According to Bigiyef, action is more important than belief and consequently he argues that belief is not essential. Therefore, for him, the harm of unbelief (*kufī*) will not be eternal.<sup>260</sup>

"If so, then why did the *sharī'a* of Muḥammad supersede all others and was meant for all mankind?" Sabri asked. If one takes all faith as valid, Sabri

<sup>257</sup> Sabri, *Yeni İslâm Müctehidlerinin Kıymet-i İlmiyesi*, p. 7.

<sup>258</sup> Musa Bigiyef, *Rahmet-i İlâhiye Burhanları* (Orenburg: Vakt Matbaası, 1911), pp. 82-85.

<sup>259</sup> Sabri, *Yeni İslâm Müctehidlerinin Kıymet-i İlmiyesi*, pp. 85-86.

<sup>260</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

said, this would be to deny the existence of *kufr*, of God's mercy, and of Hell, without which there could be no Islamic law or theology.<sup>261</sup>

However, Sabri distinguished Bigiyef from other reformers whom he described as the "*alla franga*" group, that is, those who had borrowed their ideas from Europe and were also ignorant of religious issues. Sabri considered Bigiyef qualified to discuss Islamic matters, unlike these less knowledgeable intellectuals.<sup>262</sup> Sabri however believed that Bigiyef had misinterpreted the European idea of freedom of speech and choice (*hürriyet-i vicdâniye*), and claimed that Bigiyef suffered from a contagious disease that affected many Muslim thinkers—the psychological destruction caused to the Muslim psyche by European progress.<sup>263</sup>

Mustafa Sabri found many contradictions in Bigiyef's book. One of these contradictions was that, despite his confidence in Ibn al-‘Arabī's writings, *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* and *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīya*, Bigiyef appeared to distrust any source except the Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth. While Ibn Taymīya, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīya, and many modern writers (including Bigiyef) rejected any source other than the Qur'ān and Tradition, and especially the works of Sufi thinkers, Bigiyef contradicted himself by praising Sufis, and even "imitating" (*taqlīd*) their ideas. Sabri pointed out that it was very curious that a person like Bigiyef should turn into an uncritical admirer of Ibn al-‘Arabī, who had made many contradictory

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<sup>261</sup> Ibid., pp. 82-85.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>263</sup> Ibid., pp. 156-164.

statements concerning the Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth.<sup>264</sup> Sabri also didn't approve of Bigiyef's seeking protection in the Arab poet Abū 'Alā' al-Ma'arrī's thought, saying:

Bigiyef takes refuge behind the blind poet al-Ma'arrī who does not even know which road to take.<sup>265</sup>

A partial answer to these accusations lies in Bigiyef's statement:

In the matter of understanding the Qur'ān I was not satisfied with the explanations of scholars of *kalām* and *fiqh*, but I benefited a lot from the works of Sufis, such as Rūmī's *Mathnawī*, al-Qushayrī's *Risāla*, and Ibn al-'Arabī's *Futūḥāt*.<sup>266</sup>

Sabri brought up another inconsistency:

I noticed another characteristic in Bigiyef: Whenever some careless reformer claims something more modern than Bigiyef does, then Bigiyef turns into a conservative and becomes an opponent. I realized this while reading Bigiyef's *Büyük Mevzularda Ufak Fikirler* [Trivial Reflections on Important Subjects].<sup>267</sup>

At a later date Bediüzzaman Said Nursî, founder of the Nur movement and a friend of Sabri, expressed the view that both Bigiyef and Sabri had taken extreme positions. Nursî believed Mustafa Sabri to have a slight edge over Bigiyef, but was repelled by Sabri's denigration of Ibn al-'Arabī and said:

I do not have the time to weigh up the ideas of Mustafa Sabri and those of Musa Bigiyef. I shall only say this much, that the one was excessive, and the other, deficient. Sabri was right in relation to Bigiyef, but it is not right to denigrate someone like Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn al-'Arabī who was a miracle of the Islamic sciences.

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<sup>264</sup> Ibid., pp. 7-8.

<sup>265</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>266</sup> Bigiyef, *Rahmet-i İlâhiye Burhanları*, p. 16.

<sup>267</sup> Sabri, *Yeni İslâm Müctehidlerinin Kıymet-i İlmiyesi*, p. 10.

Ibn al-‘Arabi said: “Those who are not one of us and do not know our station should not read our books, for it may be damaging to them.” Yes, at this time it is harmful to read Ibn al-‘Arabi’s books, especially the matters about *waḥdat al-wujūd*.<sup>268</sup>

We do not know what Bigiyef thought of Sabri’s position or Nursî’s opinion; we only know that Sabri and Bigiyef met in Egypt in the 1940’s. What we learn from this meeting is that they both held each other in high regard and Sabri was very kind to Bigiyef. One of Sabri’s close students while he was in Egypt related that Sabri would repeatedly say: “Musa Bigiyef was the only scholar with whom I could dispute.”<sup>269</sup>

### **On Music**<sup>270</sup>

The mind must be open when Sabri says, “Music is a state of idleness.” Sabri does not simply say, “I do not see any good in music.” That is not his intention. But his intention only becomes clear when this statement is placed in its context. In other words, the argument “Music is a state of idleness,” becomes meaningful only when he argues at the end of his article “the value of music is by its particularity.” According to Sabri, music should be individual or one should make his/her individual music and therefore Sabri is less concerned with music than with how the singer or performer could transform music.

Below is translation of Sabri’s article on music:

<sup>268</sup> Said Nursî, *Lemalar*, pp. 285-86.

<sup>269</sup> Ahmet Kanlıdere, “Rusya Türklerinin Osmanlı Fikir Hayatındaki Etkileri: Dinî Islah Düşüncesi ve Türkiye’deki Yankıları,” in *Osmanlı* (Istanbul: Yeni Türkiye Yayınları, 1998), p. 516.

<sup>270</sup> Sabri, *Beyânü’l-Hak* 63 (1910), pp. 1258-1262.

*“Idhā kāna rabb al-dār bi-al-daff mūli‘an  
Fashīmat ahl al-dār kulluhum li-raqsīn”*

If the head of the family is in love with the tambourine,  
It is no wonder that the whole family dances!

Whether it is performed vocally or [by means of] musical instruments, and also depending on the kind or the different ways in which a song is delivered, music is known to be subject to various ordinances and opinions in Islamic law, which ranges from its being either forbidden or disapproved or even permitted. Nevertheless, it is also known that Islam avoids accepting music unreservedly or remaining indifferent towards it. What we will be discussing here is the purpose of this latter position, i.e., what is behind Islam’s policy of cautioning people by permitting music conditionally, or taking certain measures against it.

It would not be at all just to compare this cautious position on the part of Islam, which regards music as having a spiritual value in the eyes of sophisticated individuals, with that of rigid people who are unable to appreciate the mental effect of music. Perhaps Islam does not choose to remain completely indifferent towards music because it recognizes the value of how delightful music is to our nature and how soothing its effect on our nerves is. Islam has an exceptionally keen perspective when it comes to discovering the concealed dangers that exist in the sweetest and most pleasing things. This also demonstrates how distinct Islam is among other religions. Indeed, a revealed religion should lead to the truths that cannot be comprehended by reason, for it is one of the attributes of religions that they should provide appropriate guidance for attaining the Truth.

First of all, music is a state of idleness that takes the form of a profession in which one occupies oneself with inessential activity, as we will explain in another essay about gambling; in fact, Islam is aware of the pitfalls of any such idleness that is considered a profession.

Secondly, the benefit and pleasure derived from music usually involve a kind of slavery to deep passion.<sup>271</sup> Since Islam is opposed to idleness and slavery to deep passion, it [Islam] regards it as one of its

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<sup>271</sup> What Sabri means by “deep passion” here is a passionate desire for anything. This can be for wealth, power, sex or revenge.



important duties to search and look out for where their traces may be hidden.

Although it may be difficult for some to accept that music retains an element of idleness, sharp-eyed people will not hesitate to accept this fact, as it cannot be conceived that music may be of benefit in regard to the next world.<sup>272</sup> As for this world, it is of no use, since it fits the expression “no good for the stomach.”<sup>273</sup>

One should not ask hastily: “How can one dare to deny [its usefulness] when there are many singers and performers who are making a living or even a fortune thanks to music, for example, in Europe?” For making a living is no longer considered valid unless it is done in a way that does not offend against human dignity; otherwise, it cannot ensure a comfortable conscience.

One might think that we are wandering from one bizarre argument to another and ask: Where on earth is the defect to human dignity in this? Again, one should not make a hasty decision. Any kind of art where ultimate aim is purely to entertain people must be considered an insignificant art in the eyes of those with a sound mind. One should not take seriously the applause, respect and perhaps even the imploring, given to these artists, making them famous and powerful. It cannot be withdrawn from these respects and imploring since they are bent on taking away from the artist’s dignity and then concealing his/her loss by flattering his/her sense of pride. Likewise, some people demonstrate respectful behavior to some lady performers of whose chastity they want to take advantage.

From such a point of view, it is strange to see the mindset of some parents who seem so proud of having taught their daughters how to play an instrument and the attitudes of some men wishing to marry a girl who can play an instrument, all in an attempt to imitate European civilization, which, they think, assigns the utmost importance to the respect of women. Nor can one object to my argument on the grounds that the ability to play an instrument is not something shameful for a woman but rather something praiseworthy, in that it is her natural duty to acquire abilities that allow her to please her husband when in her

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<sup>272</sup> In Islamic theology, the concept of next world holds a high position in believer’s life. Therefore, if something is not of benefit in regard to the next world is regarded as an ephemeral benefit.

<sup>273</sup> Turkish idiom “*karın doyurmaz*” literally means ‘it does not satisfy your stomach’ and is used for professions that are no good to put food on the table.

company. Such an objection is not valid because the enjoyment of each other's company in a marriage is supposed to be mutual. If such were the case, one can imagine how bizarre and funny it would be to see a wife require her husband to play an instrument and regard him as unfit for marriage just because he lacked this ability!

Although composers, when compared to singers and instrument players, appear to some extent free from the hidden disgrace explained above, these arts [singing, playing and composing] may be supposed to share, more or less, in each other's pros and cons since they all depend on each other to remain in demand in the music market. There is also a perception that a sense of graciousness and dignity is part of the environment of an instructor when teaching knowledge; on the contrary, an atmosphere of loose frivolity radiates from classes given by composers. Of course, we all appreciate the meaning of "too late for me!"<sup>274</sup> That is why teaching a deputy how to sing a song (no matter how good it is) is deemed discreditable to his dignity, and to ask him to sing a song is considered a courageous act. However, is not teaching the social and applied sciences supposed to be considered a far of honor and prominence for all, whether young or senior?

If one claims that the composer need only concentrate on teaching music by using written [musical] notes –which has not yet been possible to apply to every kind of musical work- without having to place himself in a frivolous and disgraceful position by shouting or singing before students, this would, in fact, tend to prove our claim indirectly, rather than be an argument against it.

All the problems we have attempted to examine above relate to that group of people who make a living through music. As for those who play to entertain themselves, or prisoners, the pitfalls of idleness for both players and listeners are pretty clear, is there any need to try to examine them.

When listening to music, people are not doing anything for the good of humanity. They only help, instead, to transfer a lot of money out of countless pockets into one pocket [that of a singer]. And, in return for their money, what do these people get? Nothing! Think of this: Suppose a shoemaker sells you a shoe, and you wear it and, for instance, you go to your place of work. [This is useful.] Or suppose

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<sup>274</sup> "*Kırkıktan sonra saz çalmak*" is a Turkish idiom literally means 'playing an instrument after forty years old age.' It means that a person attempts to embark on demanding and unreasonable undertakings rather later in his life and acts like a teenager.

that: you sell books in your shop. You both make a profit and help knowledge and science spread in your country. In this way you initiate a chain of benefits in society by making other people benefit as well, such as the editor, publisher and author, the paper factory workers or the cotton farmers and on the other hand, there are the craftsmen who process leather for shoes and the farmers who raise animals to provide leather. When it comes to music [however], although music companies and players who perform for your auditory pleasure certainly benefit, this chain of benefits ceases with you!

Spending money to listen to music, moreover, cannot be compared to hiring a car to go on an excursion, because in this [latter] case you can be more productive at work which is a component part in the chain of human needs, both by benefiting your health and in addition by helping the car's driver [car company] to make a living. Besides, these cars can be used for transportation at other times, which would be a means of accommodating those others who want to go to work. In short, an excursion is one thing and listening to music is another. Of course, just as clean air is one of the most important necessities today (like eating and drinking), then to the same degree nothing can be said against music when it is a medical necessity for a patient. Nevertheless, despite the fact that music therapy has recently become a familiar term, there has not yet been a patient, to our knowledge, that has listened to music on a prescription basis.

Now, let us talk of what is meant by slavery to passion, which is a part of music: Under what kind of influence are the feelings of those who exposed to the stream of an intoxicating atmosphere, which is full of emotional temptations, satiated by musical vibration? The effects that were produced in this atmosphere are various: With music, a lonely person feels his loneliness more, an orphan feels more the loss of his parents, a patient feels more sorrowful about his present situation, and an elderly person feels sorrier that the most of his/her life has already gone. Sometimes, music also insinuates with ecstatic dance the happiness of a lucky person who is intoxicated with good fortune or a high-ranking position. In short, music intensifies the real colours of the incidents and mundane events more by increasing the sorrow of the sorrowful and the happiness of the happy. Therefore, the effect of music reminds one of that of alcohol in causing people to perceive the events happening [around them] without self-control, in a more stretched way than it really is. Beyond all these things mentioned above, music especially has a tremendous effect in provoking feelings of romance and love. Now, this aspect of music, i.e., rhetorical magic,

is consistent with the meaning of music. That is why a banquet with music, usually accompanied by the presence of pretty women and intoxicating beverages, is an inseparable requirement. Likewise, the most intimate secrets of love are exposed first by poems, and second, under the disguise of music, similar to the way in which some Muslim women make themselves more attractive under the disguise of the *hijāb* (veiling). Indeed the words of love that cannot normally be put together due to frantic affection by lovers can be uttered through the cooperation of music and poetry. That is why it is not considered insolence if a person who wanders in his mind [embarrassed to say] “I am dying for her, I cannot sleep until next morning because of love, I am burning, I am crazy for her” shouts the same words before others by music and poetry.

Furthermore, I wonder how parents who want to raise their daughters within the limits of reason, wisdom and foresight can allow them to sing the most intimate words of love, considering this a good quality in a girl at the age of marriage, despite the fact that it is shameful (in our society) for girls to utter publicly the word of marriage (though it is lawful in Islam). If the opinion of some philosophers of this century who say “if young ladies are not kept busy, they would think of some other things to do”, is to be accepted, then ladies who are busy playing instruments may already have found themselves irresistibly drawn to these kinds of thoughts.

However, is imagining love and romantic love a bad thing? What other [emotion] is like love in making human beings angelic and lending nobility and tenderness to one’s feelings? Love is so strong that it is not possible to remain indifferent to the proud moaning of lovers that rises from burning hearts, [just as it is] impossible to resist the flood of tears that is inextinguishable. Yes, this is quite true, but there is no other issue as delicate and esteemed as this that is so exposed to abuse. Indeed, it was not an exaggeration when Hoca Nasreddin was asked if he ever had a love affair, said: “Yes, I had just one, but a man rose up against us!”<sup>275</sup> Although love cannot be but mutual, it seems disgraceful for women in particular. And a man can only cherish a woman who loves him. Moreover, it cannot be given dignity and importance to a woman by others except her husband like

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<sup>275</sup> This is a famous tale attributed to the well-known Turkish folk figure Hoca Nasreddin. Nasreddin implies that love affairs can create complex situations very quickly no matter how elegantly they begin. One cannot always control his or her lover’s heart. For instance, one day someone who is more resourceful than the other person in terms of expressing his or her feelings may appear on the scene and finally he or she can steal the heart of another’s lover.

a woman would not excuse her husband being in love with other women.

Having expressed these considerations on music, it is easier for us to give an opinion about love odes (*ghazal*) that constitute the most elegant kind of poetry. As for eulogy or satire, these are not praiseworthy as the former is a kind of flattery for the most part and the latter is generally fault-finding. As for poetry that contains wisdom and moral values we have no objection. Islam's position on poetry can in any case be summarized as favouring good verse and rejecting the bad.

Although poetry is the best of the fine arts, the reason why Islam looks at poetry with a critical eye is because its disadvantage outweighs its advantage. In the period of his/her education, if a student gives himself/herself fully to poetry this is considered a sign of idleness, leaning towards laziness. Even in the civilization of the last era, it did not meet with everyone's satisfaction. Poets themselves confess what the capital of poetry consists of:

The stock of poets never runs out,  
Even though the world comes to an end lies are never-ending.<sup>276</sup>

At a time when poets never even came near to making such confessions (out of pride), their profession was criticized by a verse from the Holy Quran:

*And the poets –the perverse follow them; hast thou not seen  
how they wander in every valley and how they say that  
which they do not? [26:224-226]*

Nevertheless, poetry is far more important than music—in this respect, music is not even comparable to poetry—since poetry sharpens the mind and increases knowledge.

Before we finish with the topic of music, let us say that, if the effect of music on feelings is vital necessity for the soul, the recitation of the Qur'an serves that need in a much more noble way. This is also supported by the fact that melodious recitation of the Qur'an is recommended in Islam. However, the remarkable point here is that the melodic tunes accompanying the recitation are sometimes condemned from another perspective. In other words, melodious

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<sup>276</sup> “Sermâye-i şâ’irân tükenmez / Dünya tükenir yalan tükenmez” is a Turkish couplet.

recitation is recommended in some hadiths of the Prophet, while legal scholars are largely against any musical recitation of the Qur'an. This problem, i.e., the two seemingly conflicting opinions, can be solved by making a distinction between two concepts of music.

Application of music with its techniques to the recitation of the Qur'an would [seem to] violate the rules of *tajwīd*,<sup>277</sup> hence this kind of music with notes and rules is condemned in recitation. However, if a person recites the Qur'an, associated with the beauty of his natural voice, this is commendable. In this way one very logically avoids making musical tunes the essential purpose of the recitation or regarding the Qur'an as a material of performance. That is why a piece of music is listened to for appreciation of its pure musical value, without necessarily understanding lyrics perfectly. Although the lyrics in the case of *taksīm*<sup>278</sup> can be understood to some extent, the composers usually have to fill the gaps with "la la"s [musical notes like 'do do' or 're re'] to complete the piece of music. Obviously, application of this practice to Qur'anic recitation is out of the question.

Besides, nobody wants to listen to the music of a person with no talent and no good artistic taste. As for the talented individual, his/her natural voice is more pleasant and impressive than his/her musical skills acquired through musical training. Our claim should not seem strange. After all, the purity and sweetness of recitation of many famous Qur'an reciters did not remain after they increased their musical knowledge. Therefore, natural music should be more valuable than acquired musical skills, as the former is a mere extempore act while the latter goes no further than imitating (*taqlīd*) composed and known tunes. At this point we need to make one more claim: It is known that one nation may not enjoy the musical taste of another and that each is drawn to its own music. So it means that the effect of music is according to its particularity [The more music is individual, the more effective it is]. Therefore, the natural beauty of one's voice should even be superior to one's national music, as it has the value of being one's individual music.

<sup>277</sup> *Tajwīd* is the method of proper and authentic recitation of the Qur'ān.

<sup>278</sup> "*Taksīm* [or *taqsīm* in Arabic] is a term of urban art music in the eastern Arab countries and Turkey. It refers to the improvising presentation of a *maḳām*, played on a melody instrument," see *EI*<sup>2</sup>, X, 143-144.

### Re-examination of St. Anselm's Ontological Argument

Many Western Philosophers such as St. Thomas Aquinas, Immanuel Kant and David Hume have discussed St. Anselm's (1033-1109) famous ontological argument.

Basically, Anselm's argument is as follows:

God is a being than which no greater can be conceived. God exists at least in the mind. But it is possible to conceive of a being existing in reality, greater than a being existing in mind only. Therefore, God exists.<sup>279</sup>

Sabri criticized this ontological argument in his *Mawqif al-'Aql* in the following:

I admit that ultimate perfection cannot be conceived of without the existence of a perfect being. A perfect being can only be conceived in the mind combined with its existence, even with its existence outside the mind. In other words, it can only be conceived along with the conception of its existence outside the mind. This is so because the place in which this association [between the mental conception of a perfect being and its external existence] occurs is the conceptual faculty, which is capable of conceiving the existent, the non-existent, two concomitant existents and two concomitant non-existents. Nevertheless, the occurrence to the mind of a perfect being along with its external existence—the conception of the thing and its external existence being combined [in the mind] and inseparable—does not entail the actual existence of either of these outside the mind. Muslim logicians have maintained that there is no limit to what can be conceived [by the human mind]. The mind may feel compelled—by virtue of the fact that it conceives of God as a Perfect Being—to add to this conception [of God as a perfect being] the conception that this perfect being must exist in the external world, without, however, either of these conceptions, each of which gives rise to the other, having any effect on reality.

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<sup>279</sup> For St. Anselm's ontological argument, see Brian Davies, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 26-37.

There is no doubt about the truth and validity of the statement: “God comprises all perfect attributes.” However, those who have adopted this argument both before and after Descartes are unaware of the fact that [by adopting it] they are actually engaged in proving the existence of God. For the truth of this statement—that is, the judgement that God comprises all perfect attributes—must be granted, except insofar as its use as an argument in proving the existence of God. For this reason, it is valid to hold that God necessarily comprises all perfect attributes for anyone who admits His existence, whereas this is not entailed with respect to someone who does not admit His existence, since, for such a person, God neither exists nor does he comprise all perfection. Furthermore, one who is engaged in proving the existence of God must keep his or her mind free of the notion that God exists and that He is characterized by all perfection until such a time as the proof has been established. I, on the other hand, do not hesitate to attribute perfection to Him, since I have first admitted His existence through a proof other than the one that appeals to perfection (*ḍalīl al-kamāl*). Therefore, the affirmative proposition stating that He comprises all perfect attributes is valid with respect to me, due to the satisfaction of the condition of its validity as stipulated in classical logic, namely, the existence of the subject.

As for one who does not know the existence of God and seeks to know it on the basis of His comprising all perfection, or one who knows God’s existence and desires to prove it to one who does not know it by means of this same argument, he or she should know that the proposition “God is perfect,” if used in his or her proof, is an affirmative proposition whose validity is logically dependent upon the existence of a subject, which is precisely what he or she is attempting to establish. A person attempting to prove the existence of God through the argument of perfection must therefore revise his or her argument since it reduces to [mere] question begging (*muṣāḍarah*), the invalidity of which is well-known among Muslim logicians.

How precise is logical method in requiring that the subject exists in order for affirmative propositions [about it] to be valid, while this requirement does not hold for negative ones! For instance, the proposition: “the phoenix flies” is false, while the proposition: “the phoenix does not fly” is true. Since such a bird does not exist, anything affirmative said about it is false, while everything negative said about it is true. This is one of the subtle points of logic—that is, classical formal logic—regardless of those modernist intellectuals in Egypt who belittle it.



Indeed, the statement of the lexicologists: “the phoenix is a large bird that exists in name only with no physical reality” is true, and its truth is not vitiated by what I have mentioned regarding the principle of logic which stipulates that an affirmative proposition cannot be true in the absence of the existence of its subject. This is because the lexicologists’ statement is a verbal proposition akin to the explication of a word or of various substantives about which there is no contention. Logicians do not consider the explanatory statement a proposition. And if you insist on considering it a proposition that contains an affirmative judgement and has the possibility of being either true or false, as is the case with a proposition, and then you go on to hold that it is true despite the logical stipulation that its truth requires the existence of the subject, we would respond by saying that what is meant by the lexicologists’ statement: “The phoenix is a large bird, etc.” is the passing of a judgement that the word “phoenix” is a noun pertaining to a particular kind of bird. Now, there is no doubt about the existence of the *word* “phoenix” in the lexicon, even though it be a noun whose referent is non-existent. The judgement, therefore, is true and the condition of its being true is satisfied.

In sum, thanks to the subtlety and precision of logic, three points have emerged from this discussion:

1. The stipulation that the subject must exist as a condition for the truth of affirmative propositions, while the stipulation does not hold with respect the truth of negative propositions;
2. Lifting any limitation on what the mind can conceive above and beyond what can actually be affirmed as true; and
3. Considering the definitions they refer to as explanatory statements as being among those conceptions which are limitless as compared to that which can actually be affirmed as true, even if [these definitions] take the form of propositions.

The second point above is the one that has misled those who have erred in their reliance on the ontological argument, while the first point should serve to open their eyes [to the incorrectness of the ontological argument].<sup>280</sup>

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<sup>280</sup> Sabri, *Mawqif al-‘Aql*, II, pp. 225-28.

## Can Prophecy be Acquired?

The following is some passages from Sabri's *al-Qawl al-Faṣl* relevant to the debate on the possibility of acquired prophecy, that is, prophecy attained by human means as opposed to prophecy bestowed by the grace of God. In some instances Sabri replies to the arguments of Zakī Mubārak<sup>281</sup> and Farīd Wajdī<sup>282</sup> on the issue.

The prophet is a human being who has a special connection with God, [a connection that] supersedes the one that comes about for every rational being when gaining an intellectual understanding of God through the examination of natural proofs. The prophet receives revelations from God. This process of revelation lies above the inspiration of the higher sciences and is greater than the magnificent projects of geniuses. This level of humanity [prophethood] cannot be acquired; it is distinguished by the fact of being a grace from God, [bestowed upon] those whom He selects of His servants—a notion that Dr. Zakī Mubārak dislikes intensely. He is not the first one to have thought of this idea,<sup>283</sup> and by God's favor we will prove the pitfalls of holding prophecy to be acquired:

<sup>281</sup> "Zakī 'Abd al-Salām Mubārak (1892-1952), a well-known modern Egyptian writer, poet, educated at al-Azhar, often called *al-Dakātīra* for having earned three doctorates (the first one in literature from the Egyptian University, the second in literature from the Sorbonne, the last one in Sufism from Cairo University), wrote approximately thirty books and became well known for his literary feuds with Ṭāhā Ḥusayn and 'Aqqād;" see Arthur Goldschmidt, *Biographical Dictionary of Modern Egypt* (Cairo: The American University of Cairo Press, 2000), p. 133 and *al-A'īām*, III, pp. 47-48.

<sup>282</sup> "Farīd Wajdī (1878-1954), an Egyptian journalist, Islamic scholar, author of ten volume "*Dāirat al-Ma'ārif al-qarn al-īshrīn*", founder of a monthly magazine called *al-Ḥayāt*, publisher of al-Azhar's monthly journal between 1943-1952, writer on philosophy, poetry and metaphysics;" see Arthur Goldschmidt, *Biographical Dictionary of Modern Egypt*, p. 224 and *al-A'īām*, VI, p. 329.

<sup>283</sup> At this point in the text Sabri appends the following footnote, which may be translated thus: "I did not mean in saying this to agree with Dr. Mubārak's position that the mainstream of Muslims [*jumhūr al-muslimīn*] believe that prophecy cannot be acquired, for this implies that some Muslim disagree with the mainstream position [*jumhūr*] in support of acquired prophecy [*nubuwwat al-muktasaba*]. Indeed, to describe the opponents of acquired prophecy as the mainstream [*jumhūr*] indicates that they represent common run of Muslims [al-'āmm], whereas the opposing group are an elite. However, the notion of acquired prophecy can only be held by those who do not believe in true prophethood, as known in Islam, and in all other revealed religions. Indeed, after my arrival in Egypt, I heard that Jamāl ad-Dīn al-Afghānī was accused of holding this doctrine in Istanbul, and the accuracy of the acquisition has remained unknown to

**First point:** This assumption has as a consequence that the Prophet Muḥammad is not the seal of the prophets, despite the fact that he is specifically stated to be so in the Qur'ān. This is so because the door of acquisition must always remain open for any seeker [of such acquisition], whether from Muḥammad's community or from others. [By this reasoning] it must be possible, for instance, for Dr. Mubārak to consider himself among the candidates for prophethood and able to attain it in the same manner as he attained his doctoral degrees.

**Second point:** If the prophethood of Muḥammad had been acquired as they hold, i.e., if it were merely a product of his own genius or heroism, stripped of any metaphysical underpinnings—then the Prophet Muḥammad would have been untruthful in attributing the Qur'ān to God. And no matter how much the modern mind may conceive of lying as congruent with genius or heroism, in my view it compromises both, or at least compromises the perfection of both, in the same way as it serves to discredit prophecy.

**Third point:** The Muslim belief that prophecy cannot be acquired did not originate in the pagan mentality that Muslims inherited from their forefathers, as Dr. Mubārak claims. In fact, the Muslims did not take their prophet to be a god and never worshipped him at any point in time. The belief that prophethood is a level that surpasses the degree of philosophers and geniuses and that cannot be attained except by the grace of God's special selection, the sign of which is those extraordinary occurrences which God manifests by the hand of the prophet and which we call miracles—nothing in this belief or in the level [described] contains anything of paganism or of divinity on the part of the prophet. Rather, the prophet, by virtue of being on this level, is a special servant of God, and even if an angel comes from God to bring down the revelation, the prophet is still none other than one of His honored servants. The origin of the attempt to make prophethood attainable through acquisition lies in lack of faith in the true prophecy that we defined before and the over-liberal attribution of the prophetic level to human beings, to the point that they even replaced the notion of prophecy with a pagan one, just as their counterparts from among the ignorant members of the peoples of the

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me ever since I came to know of it. Does Dr. Mubārak have any knowledge about the position of Afghāni on this issue? If not, who is it, in Dr. Mubārak's opinion, that has deviated from the mainstream of Muslims by upholding [the notion of] acquired prophecy, a position which Dr. Mubārak himself seems to prefer over the mainstream view of prophecy?"

prophets went to the extent of saying: “*You are nothing but human, like us*” (the Qur’ān, 14:10). Advocates of acquired prophecy want to make prophethood a public property for diligent people to combine the qualities required to guide and lead man to goodness. Let it not be thought that their purpose in desiring that prophecy be acquirable is to attempt to open the way for ordinary people to achieve the level of prophecy; rather, their aim is to demote the prophets to the level of an average person by robbing them of miracles and other things which contravene the customary pattern of the universe.

**Fourth point:** How can the ardent seeker after prophethood know when he has attained his goal, and has become one of God’s prophets? How do others know, and how does he know before them? His prophecy enjoys no sign in which his soul finds assurance or which is apt to convince others, such as a miracle being shown by his hands, because the advocates of acquired prophecy do not like affairs that fall outside the laws of the universe. We already said that prophethood itself, in the sense in which we mean it, is a miracle that is beyond the laws of the universe, and for this reason is not pleasing to those not fond of miracles. In fact, the basis of conflict on the issue of prophecy and miracles may actually be deeper than this, i.e., that religion is based on secrets and unseen realities. As a result, God has made believing in the Unseen a primary characteristic of those rightly guided through the guidance of the Book. He says:

*Alif lām mīm. That is the Book, wherein is no doubt, a guidance to the god-fearing who believe in the Unseen, and perform the prayer, and expend of that We have provided them. (2:1)*

It is a disgraceful error to construe the unseen as opposite to reality [*wāqī*], as Professor Farīd Wajdī has done in one of his articles in the magazine *Majallat al-Azhar*. In fact, what is meant by “unseen” is precisely that which is hidden from the senses, like the angels, the jinn, revelations, and various matters pertaining to the hereafter, such as the resurrection, reckoning, reward and punishment—before they occur, and like the miracles with regard to their occurring independently of natural means. The greatest of the unseen is God the Sublime.

Prophecy is among the human being’s realities that fall outside the realm of nature. As John Stuart Mill (1806-1874) said:

Whoever does not believe that something exists beyond nature and that that thing interferes in the world's affairs, does not accept the extraordinary act of a human being as a miracle and interprets it under all circumstances in such a manner as to exclude it from being a miracle.

**Fifth point:** One of the more important differences between the one who has acquired prophecy and the one whose prophecy has been gifted to him is that the former is susceptible to making errors at times, while the latter never errs with respect to what he receives from God. In the event that he does make a judgment of error, God prevents him from remaining in error by drawing his attention to the mistake made. Dr. Mubārak makes a general claim and gives it no consideration by not distinguishing between differing circumstances, saying:

Muḥammad, deep down, was a human being, susceptible to committing errors, as is evidenced by the blame and reprimand directed towards him in the Qur'ān.

**Sixth point:** People are in need of an authentic prophet, infallible [in religious matters], and bolstered by revelation and by the miracles which are signs of his prophecy from God and of his distinguished status among human beings. People need [such a prophet] in order to be guided by him to the path that God wants them to pursue and to the [correct] manner in which to worship Him. It is not for anyone other than the prophet—no matter how knowledgeable [he may be] in science or philosophy—to specify with precision this Path [to God] and these forms [of worship]. Scientists and philosophers can establish for mankind ethical guidelines and intellectual principles, and can specify tasks for them vis-à-vis the Creator and the creation. However, none of these guidelines or principles constitutes religion. Religion comes exclusively from God and begins with the prophet, as the eminent scholar and translator of Paul Janet's (1823-1899) *Histoire de la philosophie*<sup>284</sup> has said:

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<sup>284</sup> Sabri writes in a footnote: "An illustrious book on the history of philosophy written by the French philosopher Paul Janet. The section on metaphysics was translated into Turkish by the great Turkish scholar, known as Küçük Hamdi [also known as Elmalılı Hamdi Yazır in Turkey, the author of the 8 volumes Qur'ān commentary, *Hak Dini, Kur'ān Dili*], a scholar the likes of whom can rarely be found in the Islamic world and of whose death I was surprised to learn several months ago. He (may God have mercy upon him) died unknown in his own country, which today no longer has any connection to individuals of his calibre among Islamic scholars. It is surprising and regrettable that Egypt habitually has no knowledge of distinguished scholars

There is no religion before a prophet is sent. There is no philosophical religion, even if there is philosophy of religion. When a prophet comes and declares the religion, no one is in a position to dismiss it; it is like the law of a state, universally obeyed by all sectors of society.<sup>285</sup>

## On Poetry

According to Sabri (specifically represented in his article on music), poetry is the best of the fine arts as it sharpens the mind and increases the knowledge. Sabri here elaborates on poetry and the evolution of language:

Simile or (explicit) comparison (*tashbīh*)<sup>286</sup> is applied to poetry in order to create beauty in the structure of a poem, that is to say, among two words that have similar qualities, a more powerful word is compared to a less powerful one to generate beauty in the expression. The more charming this compared word, the more delightful expression is, the stronger this compared word, the more influential the style becomes.

At this point, I would like to emphasize a very important point: the more *mushabbah bihi*<sup>287</sup> is abstract, the clearer and lighter expression is. It is meant here by abstract a series of words that

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from outside its territory, especially among Turks, and we have already quoted in our book significantly from that valuable book.”

<sup>285</sup> Mustafa Sabri, *al-Qawl al-Faṣl bayn alladhīna yu'minūn bi-al-Ghayb wa-alladhīna lā yu'minūn* (Cairo: Matba'a 'Isā al-Bābī, 1361/1942), pp. 123-126.

<sup>286</sup> “*Tashbīh* literally means the act of comparing, comparison. When describing objects, persons or events, classical poets are not content with “factual” description but feel compelled to produce similes, often in rapid succession and taken from disparate semantic fields. The importance of *tashbīh* is reflected in literary criticism and theory: it is called one of the four “pillars” (*arkān*) of poetry;” see *EI*<sup>2</sup>, X, p. 341.

<sup>287</sup> “In the school of *al-Sakkākī* and *al-Khaṭīb al-Qazwīnī*, *tashbih* forms part of ‘ilm al-bayān and is discussed from various angles: the *primum* and *secundum comparationis* (*al-mushabbah* and *al-mushabbah bihi*, respectively; they may be *ḥissī*, perceivable by sense perception, or *‘aqlī*, conceivable only by the intellect) and their relationship (*the wajh al-shabah*, classified in a number of ways), the syntactic form (the employ o the *adāt al-shabah*: particles like *ka*, *ka’anna*, *ka mā*, *mithl*, or genitive constructions) and the purpose or function (*gharaḍ*). In a normal simile such as “the caliph’s face is like the sun” the *mushabbah bihi* (here, the sun) usually possesses more clearly or to higher degree the quality implied by the comparison (here, some form of “brightness”). Exceptionally, this may be reversed with some effect (“The sun is bright like the caliph’s face);” see *EI*<sup>2</sup>, X, p. 341.

are symbolic of high concepts belonging to intangible visionary worlds.

Some lines of poetry are just inspirations that are not heightened by thinking. These inspirations that come from a spiritual universe appear at the poet's sky of inspiration. When they appear, they create massive suspense and deep tremor in the poet's soul. This is the prerequisite of poet's success. At this point, poet is like a translator between the visible and the concealed world. This mission of translation gains value in relation to the degree of meaning and content of poetry. This kind of poetry burns the reader since it is the expression of a burning heart.

Language only follows a path of natural evolution. In other words, language flows following this natural progress and becomes purer on its own without being forced, exactly as flowing of waters, blossoming of roses and singing of nightingales.<sup>288</sup>

### **Evaluation of Sabri's Thought in Modern Scholarship**

Sabri has been evaluated by a number of scholars, five of whom I will discuss here: Fazlur Rahman, Niyazi Berkes, Şerif Mardin, Hüseyin Atay and Muḥammad Ḥusayn, respectively. This discussion will help provide a better understanding of, and assist in, objectively evaluating Sabri's thought and reputation.

According to Fazlur Rahman,<sup>289</sup> Sabri was insistent about writing a multivolume work<sup>290</sup> in defence of Ash'arī predestinarianism.<sup>291</sup> In my opinion,

<sup>288</sup> Kurucu, *Gecelerin Gündüzü*, pp. 259-260.

<sup>289</sup> Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 70.

<sup>290</sup> Fazlur Rahman refers to Sabri's four volume work, *Mawqif al-'Aql*. However, it cannot be argued that Sabri wrote his *Mawqif al-'Aql* specifically to defend Ash'aris on free will and predestinarianism. Sabri wrote *Mawqif al-'Aql* (a multivolume work) to defend the science of *kalām* against anti-*kalām* trends; see *Mawqif al-'Aql*, I, pp. 9-56. Sabri wrote a single book (*Mawqif al-Bashar taḥta Sultān al-Qadar*) particularly to defend Ash'arite position on this issue.

although Sabri obviously agrees with the Ash‘arite position<sup>292</sup> on the issue of fate and free will, his view on predestination and free will, however, appears to lie somewhere between the *Mujbirah* (*jabrīyah* or determinist) view which holds that no action belongs to the creature at all and the *Mu‘tazilah* view which holds that a person creates his or her own actions.<sup>293</sup> After examining the positions of Islamic theological schools on predestination, fate and free will, Sabri concluded by saying that Māturīdī’s school leaves more space for free choice (*ikhtiyār*) than the Mu‘tazilah school does. He preferred the opinion of the Jabrīyah and Mu‘tazilah schools to Māturīdī.<sup>294</sup> Sabri’s views on determinism (*jabr*) and free choice (*ikhtiyār*) were forcefully criticized by the Hanafite jurist Zahid Kevseri.<sup>295</sup>

Muḥammad ‘Abduh and his pupils saw the Ash‘arite understanding of fate and human free will as the cause of the Muslim world’s decline. For this

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<sup>291</sup> Ormsby says: “The Ash‘arite school of theology returned decisively to the earlier emphasis on omnipotence and their insistence on divine omnipotence led to a rejection of belief in free will and causality. According to Ash‘arites, all things, from human acts to natural events in the world, were the direct result of divine decree; and this decree was to be accepted without question. Ash‘arite at the same time eschewed the severe predestinarianism of the Mujbirah. God alone created acts; man, however, “acquired” these acts and so could be deemed legally responsible for his deeds... Ash‘arism denied outright that good and evil had any objective basis. Rather, good and evil were determined by divine fiat... The frank ascription to God of evil as well as good, the strict reliance on the sovereign efficacy of the divine will, the belief that everything that occurs is the direct and inevitable result of the divine decree—these elements, which do represent a severe form of fatalism, are also, however, the very elements upon which a distinctive Islamic version of theodicy would be erected. “Fatalism,” after all, may itself be a response to the dilemma of theodicy;” see Ormsby, *Theodicy in Islamic Thought*, pp. 17-26.

<sup>292</sup> Sabri, *Mawqif al-Bashar*, p. 6.

<sup>293</sup> Sabri, *Mawqif al-‘Aql*, III, pp. 1-60.

<sup>294</sup> Sabri, *Mawqif al-Bashar*, pp. 56-58 and 160-167; *Dini Mücedditler*, pp. 119-153.

<sup>295</sup> Muḥammad Zāhid al-Kawtharī, *al-Istibṣār fī al-taḥadduth ‘an al-jabr wa-al-ikhtiyār* (Cairo: Dār al-Anwār 1370/1951).



reason, they leaned towards a Maturidite understanding of free will.<sup>296</sup> Thus, we can ask: was Sabri's position on free will formed directly in opposition to 'Abduh's rationalistic approach to religion in Egypt? No, because Sabri himself was a Maturidite until he adopted the Ash'arite position after a long investigation of the positions of *kalām* schools on free will and human actions.<sup>297</sup> Thus, his views were the natural outcome of the evolution of his thought, not a specific reaction against 'Abduh.

However, Sabri laughed at 'Abduh and reformist Muslim intellectuals for 'making brand-new Islamic theology out of modern European philosophy, particularly of Immanuel Kant, Friedrich Hegel and David Hume'. In the nineteenth century, the epistemic structure of Islamic thought fell under the spell of Kantian criticism and Hegelian idealism. For this reason, Sabri said, that contemporary Islamic thought had tumbled into a morass of theological confusion and thus reformist Muslim intellectuals introduced no ground-breaking ideas into the body of traditional Islamic thought.<sup>298</sup>

Niyazi Berkes<sup>299</sup> made an initial error in stating that one of Sabri's main objections was to Musa Cârullah Bigiyef's justification of freedom of

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<sup>296</sup> Abū Maṣṣūr al-Māturīdī al-Samarqandī, *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*, ed. Fathalla Kholeif (Beirut: Dar el-Machreq, 1970), p. 10.

<sup>297</sup> *al-Shaykh*, p. 612.

<sup>298</sup> For Sabri's critiques of modernist intellectuals, see *Mawqif al-'Aql*, I, pp. 304-306; II, pp. 124-141.

<sup>299</sup> Niyazi Berkes (1908-1988): Born in northern Cyprus, Berkes studied in Istanbul, got his B. A. in sociology and philosophy from Dârülfünun Faculty of Literature in 1931. He took philosophy courses at Dârülfünun from Hasan Âli (Yücel), Hilmi Ziya (Ülken) and the late Ottoman intellectuals such as Babanzâde Ahmed Naim, İsmail Hakkı (Baltacıoğlu), Mustafa Şekip (Tunç), Mehmet İzzet and İzmirli İsmail Hakkı; law courses from Ebül'Ulâ Mardin. He

conscience.<sup>300</sup> Şerif Mardin compounded the mistake by quoting Berkes without checking the original text. This misconception led Mardin to assert wrongly that for Sabri freedom of conscience had no Islamic basis.”<sup>301</sup>

Sabri uses the term “*hürriyet-i vicdân*”, a Turkish noun phrase—which after the nineteenth century—came to stand for what is meant by “freedom of conscience,”<sup>302</sup> but in the text itself he does not speak of freedom of conscience; rather, he speaks of a kind of freedom of expression. In order to clarify these seemingly contradictory statements, a translation of the original text that led Berkes and Mardin to misunderstand Sabri’s criticism of Bigiyef’s concept of freedom of speech and action is presented below:<sup>303</sup>

Sabri criticizes Bigiyef as follows:

I think that this attitude of approving all faiths as valid and not regarding someone as inferior because of his/her religion is likely a sign that Bigiyef, my opponent in this debate, has been puzzled by that fashion of freedom of speech and choice current in Europe. In countries where liberty has only recently been put into practice, some simple-minded people regard this [freedom of speech and action] as an abrogation of law and legal discretion, in the same way that Bigiyef misinterpreted this fashion of freedom of action and respect for opinion.

As a matter of fact, this freedom means not forcing or putting pressure on people and their opinions, and an equal treatment by the authorities of different modes of thought and beliefs. This

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got his Ph. D. in sociology from University of Chicago in 1939 and taught several years in Turkey. His teaching position was terminated in the 1950s in Turkey. Afterwards, he moved to Canada to teach at McGill’s Institute of Islamic Studies from 1952 until his retirement. He did not return to Turkey and died in 1988 in a small village in the United Kingdom.

<sup>300</sup> Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, p. 473, footnote 3.

<sup>301</sup> Mardin, *Religion and Social Change in Modern Turkey*, p. 173.

<sup>302</sup> Şemseddin Sâmî, *Kâmûs-u Türkî* (Beirut: Mektebe-i Lübnan, 1989), p. 1487.

<sup>303</sup> The original Ottoman text in the modern Turkish spelling is presented in the appendix. (See appendix A)

comity of law will be obeyed amongst the political, ethnic and intellectual classes that are normally in competition with each other. Not one of these classes will behave discourteously towards the others such as by disparaging the others' mode of thinking by material actions or by personally offending them.

However, if this rule (respect for another's opinion) prohibits refuting another's argument in the academic arena by examining and explaining its weakness, it would in fact be a disservice to science. Again, adoption of one element of this rule that is applied to everyone would be a clear theoretical mistake, i.e., respect for all others' opinions and thoughts in one's heart as well [undivided and whole-heartedly respect], or, in the words of Bigiyef, approving their school of thought and regarding them as having the same opinion as one's own.

Although, on the issue of freedom, one encounters 'respecting the opinions of others in your heart too' in other authors' works—with the exception of Bigiyef—however, this restriction of 'in your heart' is nothing but redundant. Thus if I do not criticize my opponent's opinion because it is contradictory to my personal opinion and conviction in my heart, the other person can no longer be my opponent. Otherwise I would be guilty of *cem'i ezdâd* (holding two opposing theses) instead of determined and certain belief. In accordance with the proverb "*Le mieux est l'ennemi du bien*" when there is a moral contradiction and mutual aversion even between very good and mediocre qualities, how can a heart regard two such opposing ideas and principles as valid? This phrase "respect for others' opinions in your heart too" is really a meaningless and ignorant saying, if not one of most deceptive courtesies of the recent era. As it is said [in the Qur'an]: "*God did not apportion two hearts to every person's chest.*"<sup>304</sup>

Berkes also strongly criticized the personality of Sabri. Berkes saw Sabri, in the context of development of secularism in Turkey, as the head of a group of religious fanatics (*başyobaz*), a superficial and ill-mannered person

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<sup>304</sup> Sabri, *Yeni İslâm Müctehidlerinin Kıymet-i İlmiyesi*, pp. 85-86

among Ottoman thinkers. Berkes refers to Sabri's tone of voice as a howl against secular tendencies in Turkey.<sup>305</sup>

Berkes and Sabri were brilliant scholars in their own times yet had two different world-views.<sup>306</sup> Interestingly enough, even though both wanted to live and work in their homeland, they were unable to settle in Turkey and died in a foreign country.<sup>307</sup> It is very clear why Sabri could no longer live in Turkey since he was strongly opposed to the secular regime, but there is still no intelligible explanation of why Berkes could not find a way to settle and work in Turkey. This question entails a re-examination of the intellectual tradition in the late Ottoman State and Republican Turkey.

On the other hand, Hüseyin Atay, Professor of Islamic Theology at Ankara University, argues that Sabri was the best of the Muslim theologians,<sup>308</sup> especially in examining the origins of the controversy between philosophers and *mutakallimūn* on the existence of God and His attributes.<sup>309</sup> Atay says, however, Sabri's views on theology and philosophy have been neglected.<sup>310</sup>

<sup>305</sup> For Berker's criticisms, see Niyazi Berkes, *Türk Düşününde Batı Sorunu* (Ankara: Bilgi Yayınevi, 1975) pp. 49-50, 81, 142.

<sup>306</sup> Sabri in his *Mawqif al-'Aql* (1950) claimed that Atatürk's secularization project was anti-religious (*la-dīnī*). Berkes in his *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* (1964) rejected this claim and argued that Atatürk's secularization project was not anti-religious.

<sup>307</sup> For Berkes' efforts to work in Turkey and his disagreements with bureaucrats, see Niyazi Berkes, *Unutulan Yıllar*, ed. Ruşen Sezer (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1997).

<sup>308</sup> Rıza Tevfik related that Sabri saw himself as *Taftazâni-i Sâni* (The Second Taftazâni); see Hilmi Yücebaş, *Filozof Rıza Tevfik Hayatı-Hatıraları-Şiirleri* (Istanbul: Gül Matbaası, 1978).

<sup>309</sup> For Sabri's fascinating examination of the origins of controversy between philosophers and *mutakallimūn*, see Sabri, *Mawqif al-'Aql*, III, pp.104-148.

<sup>310</sup> Hüseyin Atay, "Filozoflar ve Kelâmcılar Arasında İhtilafın Menşei," in *Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyât Fakültesi Dergisi*, vol. XX (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi Basımevi, 1975), p. 257. Halim Çalış also contributed to the study of Sabri with his article in which he examines Sabri's

Sabri has been approached as a political phenomenon from the viewpoint of Islamists and secularists in Turkey to date. In the eyes of many Islamists, Sabri was a hero since he severely criticized Atatürk and the secularization of Turkey.<sup>311</sup> From the viewpoint of secularists, Sabri was of course an outrageous traitor. These groups concentrated mostly on Sabri's particular political thought and activities, paying little or no attention to his works on theology, philosophy and literary criticism. The misleading impression often left by both of these groups is that Sabri was no more than an antagonistic politician.

It is clear from accounts of his contemporaries that Sabri was an incredibly observant, decidedly strong-minded individual, fiercely determined and firm about his views on various topics. Sabri took everything seriously and dug in heels to prove he was right. The modern Arabic literary critic Dr. Muḥammad Ḥusayn also notices the same nature in Sabri's writings.<sup>312</sup> Sabri insisted on being true to himself despite the disputation of his ideas. He was inclined to stubbornly resist compromising when his preferences were different.

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criticism of Kantian philosophy; see Halim Çalıř, "Mustafa Sabri Efendi ve Kant Felsefesine Yaptığı Eleştiriler," *Yeni Ümit* 54 (2001): 58-62.

<sup>311</sup> One of the well-known Islamists, Sadık Albayrak's publication contributed to this polarized discourse. The best example of this attitude can be seen in one of his book's cover page, where Albayrak reprinted Sabri's articles on the Kemalism, Caliphate and Government in Islam and put God's name in Arabic Allah and Atatürk's dead (mummified) picture on the cover page of the book. From this cover page, one can easily determine that his mindset sarcastically implies that Allah is still alive and versus Atatürk. (See appendix B).

<sup>312</sup> Ḥusayn, *al-Ittijāhāt al-Waṭaniyah fī al-Adab al-Mu'āşir*, p. 348.

## CONCLUSION

Taking the subject of Mustafa Sabri, as a case, it can be seen that Islam is never interpreted in a monolithic fashion even though it is a monotheistic religion; it contains a multiplicity of theological and jurisprudential schools, and it manifests a great diversity of trends. This diversity can be detected, to a greater or lesser extent, in the thought of every Muslim intellectual. To understand this diversity, however, an intellectual's views must be studied in connection with his life, character, environment and milieu, all of which inevitably determine the evolution of their thought.

If one lesson can be drawn from late nineteenth and early twentieth century experiences of Islamic thought, and especially from Sabri's career, it is that a bipolarized 'Islamist' and 'secularist' or traditionalist and reformist Islam discourse gains nothing from a 'reactionary approach', since reaction is an impulsive action or a kind of paralysis, therefore reactionary theology is unable to confront its problems with current modes of thought or the critical tools of the day, and always transmits fatal flaws to the next generation. Furthermore, political conflict frequently compels intellectuals' engagement on a more polemical than technical level.

On the contrary, it can be argued that there was also a positive side; the proliferation of positivist and materialist tendencies in the Muslim world led to a rebirth of theological investigation. In this perspective, it is probably premature

to make any conclusive assessment regarding Sabri's thought in the present work, preliminary as it is. However, his ideas did have a noticeable impact upon the religious and social milieus of late Ottoman and Islamic thought in the Middle East.

Sabri's particular ideas may be partially outdated, but his methodology is not. Although he employs a classical method of disputation and his attitude clearly discloses the general tendency of traditionalism, nevertheless, he was not an irrationalist. His approach to religion was a kind of scripturalist rationalism in which reason is in the service of revelation for the best possible effect.

Moreover, I argue that he is one of the few scholars, if not the only one, who produced a wealth of material in exploring the theoretical and functional interdependence between Islamic theology and law as well as the epistemological structure of Islamic law. Sabri emphasized the importance of Islamic law's epistemic dependence on theology. This comparative approach can be seen through careful examination of a number of his works such as *Mawqif al-'Aql* and *Dînî Mücedditler*.

Nevertheless, many questions still remain to be answered about this theologian, such as: are we justified in labeling him a conservative or the last word in orthodoxy? Or can we simply associate him with the 'dead *ulemas* society'? If so, then why did he put so much emphasis on the role of reason ('*aql*)? How, then, does scriptural rationalism differ from modernist concept of rationalism? Can he be considered a second Taftāzānī in terms of his

contribution to the field of Islamic theology? Is it possible to speak of a Sabrian theology? What role did his early years in studying logic, disputation theories and literary criticism or his later years in exile play in the evolution of Sabri's thought? Can we find any abiding or transient traits that mark Sabri out as primarily a theologian or a politician? For, in a broader sense, theology signifies statement of belief, and it is unchangeable, while politics represents human organization and is, by definition, erratic. What were his most original arguments in his critique of modern European philosophy? Does his critical thinking demonstrate originality in contributing to modern philosophical discourse? Prospective researchers interested in the study of Mustafa Sabri should consider these questions.

Last but not least, since the gate of reasoning is still open to everyone I will not allow myself to be one of the imitators of the often-articulated claim again and again "intellectual life of the Muslims was dead from the beginning of the eleventh century onward." Therefore, a comprehensive study from primary sources of scholars during the "dark age of Islamic thought" (1250-1900), in order to accurately assess the stagnation of Islamic thought after the Mongol invasion of Baghdad remains an urgent project.

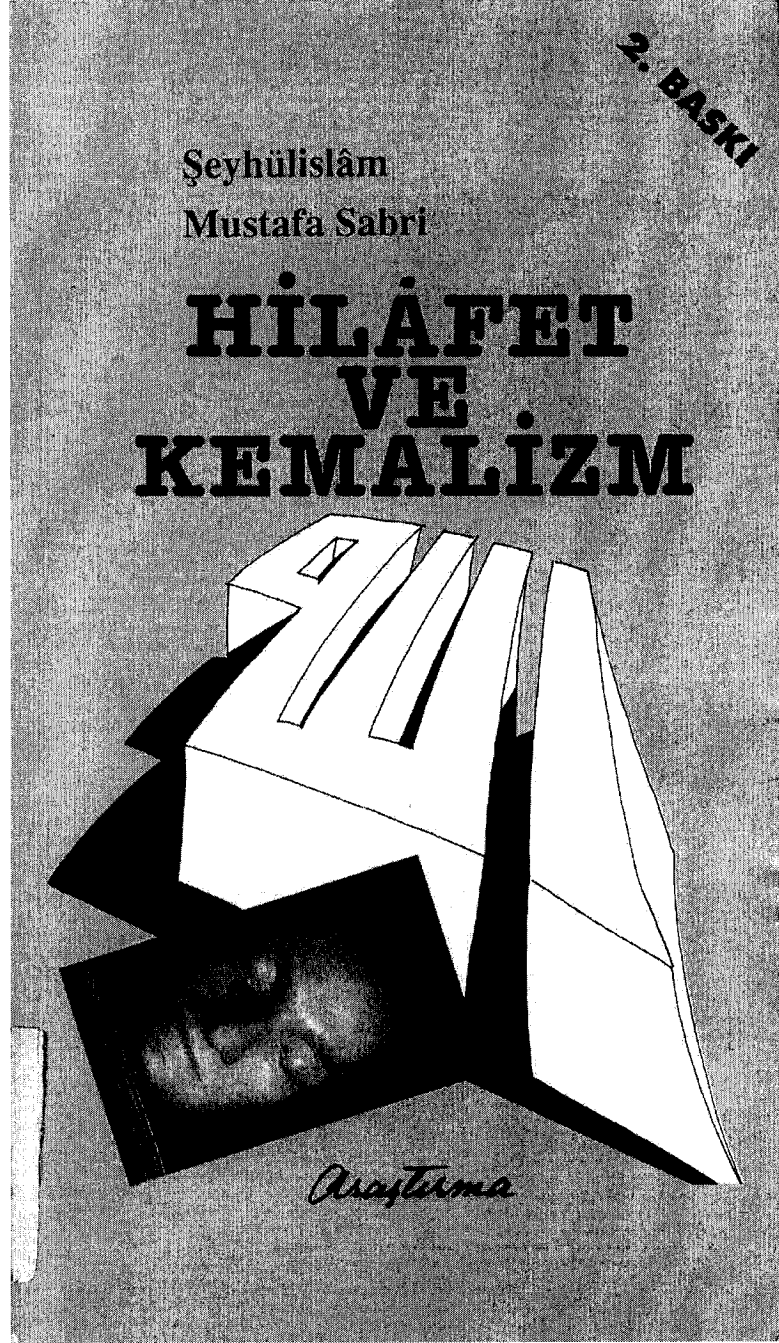


## APPENDIX - A

Her dînî, her i'tikâdı tasvîb ederek hiç bir kimseyi dininden dolayı tahkîr etmemek mesleğinde münâzırımı, son asırlarda Avrupa'da mevki-'i tervîce vaz' olunan (hürriyet-i vicdân) ta'birinin şaşırtmış olduğunu pek ziyâde ihtimâl dahilinde görüyorum. Hürriyetin yeni tedâvül ettiği memleketlerde sâde-dil ahâliden bazıları bunu kanunların, mükellefiyetlerin ref'i ve ilgası manasına telâkki ettikleri gibi Musa Efendi de hürriyet-i vicdân ve ictihâda hürmet modalarını su-i tefsîr etmiş olacaktır. Halbuki hürriyet, hükümetlerin vicdânlar ve ictihâdlar üzerinde cebr ve tazyik icrâ etmemesi ve muhtelif mesleklere, akîdelere karşı müsâ'id davranması manasınadır. Birbirlerine muhâlif olan siyâsî, millî ve ilmî fırkalar arasında da şu kânûn-u mücâmeleye ri'âyet edilecek ve her biri diğer tarafın meslek-i ictihâdını maddî kuvvetlerle söndürmek veyâhud şahsiyetlerini tahkîr etmemek gibi nezâket hâricinde hareketlere kalkışmayacaktır. Fakat, diğerlerin mesleğindeki hatalarını ilmî münâzâra ve mücâdelelerle teşrîh ve tavzîh ederek ilim sahasında hüsâmâyı ezmek hakkında (ictihâda hürmet) kanûnu ile men' edilecekse asıl bunda ilme hürmetsizlik olacağı gibi yine bu kanûnun içine herkes için muhâliflerinin fikir ve ictihâdına kalben de hürmet etmek, yani Mûsâ Efendi'nin ta'bîri ile, onların mezheplerini de tasvîb etmek ve kendi ictihâdı gibi doğru görmek usûlunun idhâli daha sarîh bir hatâ-ı ilmî olur. Mûsâ Efendi'den başkalarının lisânlarında, kalemlerinde de ictihâdâta (kalben hürmet) ta'bîrine, hürriyet mebhaslerinde ekseriyâ tesâdüf edilirse de bu ta'bîrlerdeki kalben kaydı yanlış bir haşvden başka bir şey değildir. Ben, bir meselede kendi fikir ve kanâ'atime muhâlif olan zâtın ictihâdını kalben de tahtie etmeyerek savâb görürsem artık o zât benim muhâlifim olamaz. Yahut ben, mu'ayyen ve mütekarrir bir 'akideye bedel, (cem-'i ezdâd) fikrinin sâhibi olmuş olurum. "Le mieux est l'ennemi du bien" darb-ı meseli mûcibince pek iyi ile 'alel'âde iyi arasında bile ma'nevî bir muğayeret ve münâferet mevcûd iken, bir kalb, yekdiğerine zıt olan iki fikri, iki mesleği birden nasıl tasvîb eder? Eğer bu ictihâdâta kalben hürmet ta'bîri son asırların yalancı nezâketlerinden değil ise pek manasız ve câhilâne bir şeydir. Qâl Allâh ta'âlâ: "Mâ ja'al allâh li-rajulin min qalbayn fi jawfih"

—Sabri, *Yeni İslâm Müctehidlerinin Kıymet-i İlmiyesi: Kazanlı Mûsa Bigiyef Efendinin Rahmet-i İlâhiye Bürhanları Nâmındaki Eseri Hakkında İntikadâtı Hâvidir*, (İstanbul: Evkâf-ı İslâmiye Matbaası, 1337/1919), pp. 85-86.

## APPENDIX - B



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b) Arabic:

*al-Ahrām, al-Akhbār, al-Jāmi'ah al-Zaytūniyya, al-Fath, al-Hidāya al-Islāmiyya, Minbar al-Sharq, Muqāṭṭam, al-Risalah.*

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