UNITY OF MUSLIMS AS A PREREQUISITE FOR SUCCESSFUL
ISLAMIC CIVILISATION: RISALE-I NUR’S APPROACH

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Abstract
This paper is a study of Said Nursi’s thoughts on unity and solidarity of Muslims. As the papers observes, Nursi closely linked ineffectiveness of the contemporary Muslim world with widespread disunity among the diverse groups (nations) of the ummah, and, urged world-wide Muslims to re-establish unity in the way of re-attaining the previous glory and virtue of Islamic civilisation. It suggests that, for Nursi, unity of Muslims was the essence of Islam and the nature of a healthy society. Solely unity, harmony, accord and solidarity among its members make the society to function justly, and reinforce the ummah towards further progress; and vice versa, disunity, discord and antagonism lead to weakness, and, consequently, to the collapse of civilisations. Therefore, as the paper finds, Nursi considered the efforts of Muslims in the way of establishing unity as a religious obligation of his time. For him, the return to the true teachings of Islam was the only solution for the miserable situation prevailed in the Muslim world. The paper suggests that Nursi put an emphasis on personality transformation in the way of achieving unity and paid attention to reform the morale of Muslims through the light of the Qur’an, and to strengthen the Muslims’ self-confidence through psychological renewal. The paper also establishes that Nursi advocated not unity of Muslims alone, but the cooperation of all religious peoples of the world against the destructive forces of racism, nationalism, atheism and secularism. According to Nursi, such alliance was an important step towards global peace and reconciliation, of which all were in such need.

Keywords: unity of Muslims, ummah, Islamic civilisation, renewal and reform, social harmony

1. INTRODUCTION
The late nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries was a crucial time for the Muslim world. Except the territory of modern Turkey, all Muslim lands had been colonized by Western and Eastern European powers. European Imperialism did not threaten unity and oneness of the Muslim ummah alone, but also the Western way of life and its educational system started to undermine the traditional Muslim concepts and educational institutions. As a result, Western ideas such as nationalism, secularism and atheism began to spread among Muslim nations. Moreover, Orientalist scholars initiated an enormous attack on the very foundations of the Islamic belief. Many Muslim scholars realized the urgent need for finding solutions to these crucial problems. As a response to these challenges, Muslim scholars expended great efforts to prevent splitting of the Muslim ummah up, and devoted their entire lives to keep various Muslim ethnic groups within their common nationhood, Islam, and reinforce unity of Muslims. In this paper, we shall discuss the
ideas of Said Nursi on Islamic unity, and its importance for the development of righteous civilization.

2. UNITY AS A NATURE OF MUSLIM SOCIETY

Nursi saw the secret of strength of the Islamic ummah in unity and solidarity of its fellow members. He believed that solidarity among Muslims existed constantly throughout Islamic history, and asserted that unity was the essence of the religion of Islam and the nature of the Islamic way of life. In Letters, Nursi stated that the principle of the Islamic Sharī‘ah is mutual assistance, the mark of which is accord and solidarity (Nursi 2001, 548). When Nursi was comparing the underlying principles of Western and Islamic civilizations, he noticed that the civilization which the Sharī‘ah of Muhammad (P.B.U.H) comprises and commands will unfold after the disintegration of present-day civilization. It lays down positive principles in place of latter’s negative principles: its point of support is truth instead of force, which is manifest as justice and equity. Its aims are virtue and God’s pleasure in place of benefit and self-interest, which are manifest as love and friendly competition. Its means of unity are the bonds of religion, country, and class instead of racialism and nationalism, which are manifest as sincere brotherhood and reconciliation, and co-operation in only defending against outside aggression. The principle in life is that of mutual assistance and cooperation instead of conflict, which is manifest as unity and mutual support (Davutoglu).

Nursi very often condemned Muslims for criticizing other fellow Muslims since this possibly may cause enmity and disunity among them. He saw unity and accord among members as an essential factor for a healthy society. In The Flashes Collection, Nursi illustrated Muslims as members of a collective personality and compared this community with different organs of one body: “Each of his members completes the deficiencies of the others, veils their faults, assists their needs, and helps them out in their duties. Otherwise man’s life would be extinguished, his spirit flee, and his body be dispersed” (Nursi 2004a, 214). Nursi imagined Islamic society in the form of a factory containing many wheels and machines (Nursi 2002a, 43). He asserted that the components of machinery in a factory cannot compete with one another in rivalry, take precedence over each other, or dominate each other. They rather assist each other’s motions with all their capacity in order to achieve the common goal; they march towards the aim of their creation in true solidarity and unity. Should even the slightest aggression or desire to dominate interfere, it would throw the factory into confusion, causing it to be without product or result. Then, as Nursi asserted, the factory’s owner would demolish the factory entirely (Nursi 2004a, 214).

Thus, according to Nursi, unity was the essence of Islam, and also the nature of a healthy society. Solely unity, harmony, accord and solidarity among the members make their society able to function justly and further reinforce it toward progress; and, vice versa, disunity, discord and antagonism, according to the scholars, no doubt, lead to weakness and, consequently, to the collapse of civilizations. Thus the intellectual linked the present-day weakness of Islamic world with spread of disunity among Muslims, and, in order to re-attain its previous glory, emphasized on urgent need for unity.

Nursi considered Islamic unity to be essential forever for the happiness in this life and hereafter as he asserted: “We are truly intensely in need of this unity for the happiness of this world and the next, for we have no nationality other than Islam”
He also realized the most urgent need for strengthening of unity at his age, when the majority of Muslim lands were colonized by Western powers.

Said Nursi, in fact, considered the contemporary disunity among Muslims to be the main reason for their backwardness, and intellectual, military, political and economic colonization by European powers. There was only one remedy capable to recover Muslim nations from slavery and failure for Nursi, and that was regaining of unity and solidarity. In Emirdag Lahikasi, he declared: “Against these terrible forces of destruction, only and solely the Islamic Unity surrounding the truths of the Qur’an can endure. And it is the only way to save this land from the occupation of foreigners and this nation from falling into anarchy and the means to save the mankind from these dangers” (Berghout 2005, 10). Therefore, Nursi optimistically called upon his fellow Muslims to be united. The exact time for Islamic unity is beginning, proclaimed Nursi, and it necessitates not paying attention to one another’s personal faults (Nursi 2002a, 44). In Divan-i Harb-i Örfi, he considered regaining unity as the most important duty of his time (Davutoglu). The next section of the paper discusses the conception of Islamic unity in the thought of Nursi.

3. REASONS FOR DISUNITY

Despite the fact that Nursi considered Western imperialism to be responsible for disturbing Islamic unity, he believed that the main role in the loss of concord and harmony among Muslims was played by internal factors. He considered the failure of the Osmanli government to adhere to principles of religion in various areas as one of the main reasons for the decline of the unity in Islamic world. If one observes his works written before the abolishment of the caliphate, he may detect that he sharply criticized the government for abandoning the Islamic law. In 1909 Nursi remarked that the heart disease of the Osmanli nation was their weakness in religion (Nursi 2002a, 76). In his article entitled Long Live the Sharī’ah of Muḥammad, Nursi called upon the newly established CUP government that if they want success, they should conform to the Divine laws. Otherwise they would be unsuccessful. The intellectual furthermore stated that for the fact that all the known prophets appeared in the lands of Islam and the Ottomans is a sign of Divine Determining that the steam of the engine of the progress of this country’s people is religion. The flowers of these fields of Asia, Africa, and Rumelia will grow and flourish through the light of Islam (Nursi 2002a, 75).

Nursi blamed the community of Muslims for their heedlessness toward teachings of the Qur’ān. In Sünūhāt, Nursi stated that “the most important cause of the Islamic community displaying carelessness and negligence toward the precepts of religion” (Vahide 2005, 162). Besides the absence of true belief in the hearts of Muslims, Nursi in The Damascus Sermon detected another six sicknesses present among Muslims, what kept them disunited, backward and ignorant, and have arrested the development of the Islamic world. The sicknesses are as follows:

Firstly, the coming to life and rise of despair and hopelessness in social life. Secondly, the death of truthfulness in social and political life. Thirdly, love of enmity. Fourthly, not knowing the luminous bonds that bind the believers to one another. Fifthly, despotism, which spreads like various contagious diseases. And sixthly, restricting endeavour to what is personally beneficial (Nursi 2002a, 12-13).
Accordingly, Said Nursi believed that the main reason behind contemporary disunity of Muslims, and various number of calamities in their political, religious, moral-ethical and social spheres is related to internal factors, which are carelessness, irreligiousness and ignorance of the political and spiritual leadership, and the entire Muslim community.

4. FEATURES OF ISLAMIC UNITY

4.1 As a Religious Obligation

By establishing a direct link between belief, Islamic nationhood and unity, the Old Said considered working for Islamic brotherhood and unity to be a religious obligation. As Ahmet Davutoğlu remarked, this approach of Nursi affirms that Muslims should unite around a single identity and defines the theoretical basis of Islamic unity in the meaning of religious obligation:

The aspect of unity of the İtiḥād-i Muḥammadî (PBUH) (the Society for Muslim Unity), which is the reality of Islamic Unity, is the affirmation of Divine Unity. Its pledge and oath is belief. Its members are all believers. Its regulations the practices of the Prophet (PBUH). Its laws the commands and prohibitions of the Shari‘ah. This union is consists not of customs, but of worship. Concealing things and fear are sorts of hypocrisy, but there is no hypocrisy in performing the obligatory practices of religion. And at this time, the most important obligatory duty is Islamic Unity. (Davutoğlu)

In the Letters, Nursi considered disunity and enmity among Muslims to be shameful savagery and treason committed against Islam. He stated that to forget and abandon internal enmities when foreign enemies appear and attack is a demand of social welfare recognized and enacted even by the most primitive peoples. Subsequently he asked: “What then ails those who claim to be serving the Islamic community that at a time when numberless enemies are taking up positions to attack, one after the other, they fail to forget their petty enmities, and instead prepare the ground for the enemies’ attacks?” Accordingly, Nursi concluded that such kind of act is disgraceful savagery and treason committed against the social life of Islam (Nursi 2001, 318-319).

In The Twenty-Second Letter Nursi declared that dispute and discord among the believers, and partisanship, obstinacy and envy, leading to rancour and enmity among them, are repugnant and vile, are harmful and sinful (sic), by the combined testimony of wisdom and the supreme humanity that is Islam, for personal, social, and spiritual life. They are, in short, poison for the life of man. According to the intellectual, they are sinful in the view of truth and wisdom, for it is obvious that enmity and love are opposites, just like light and darkness; while maintaining their respective essences, they cannot be combined (Nursi 2001, 311-312).

If love is truly found in a heart, by virtue of the predomination of the causes that produce it, then enmity in that heart can only be metaphorical, and takes on the form of compassion. According to Nursi, the believer loves and should love his brother, and is pained by any evil he sees in him. It is for this reason that the Hadīth of the Prophet (PBUH) says, “No believer should be angered with another and cease speaking to him for more than three days.” (Bukhari, Adab 57, 62)

Nursi further continued that if the causes that produce enmity predominate, and true enmity takes up its seat in the heart, then the love in that heart will become
metaphorical, and take on the form of artifice and flattery. Then he induced Muslims accordingly:

“O unjust man! See now what a great sin is rancour and enmity toward a brother believer! If you were to say that ordinary small stones are more valuable than the Ka'ba and greater than Mount Uhud, it would be an ugly absurdity! So too, belief which has the value of the Ka'ba, and Islam which has the splendour of Mount Uhud, as well as other Islamic attributes, demand love and concord; but if you prefer to belief and Islam certain shortcomings which arouse hostility, but in reality are like the small stones you too will be engaging in great injustice, foolishness, and sin!” (Nursi 2001, 312-313)

It is safe to conclude that Nursi believed in religious and social obligation of maintaining unity of Muslims. But did he consider such unity to be a political one? And what is the position of non-Muslims within Islamic unity? These questions are discussed in the following pages.

4.2 Unity: Political or Spiritual?

In the previous pages it was mentioned that Said Nursi considered enmity and hostility toward fellow Muslims as a sinful deed. He strongly argued that the believer loves and should love his brother. Relations between Muslims should be based on love and concord. As a home of love is the heart, Nursi considered unity of Muslims to be the unity of belief, which necessitates the unity of hearts (Nursi 2001, 312-313).

If we examine works of Said Nursi written during the Old Said period such as The Damascus Sermon or a number of articles published in the Volkan newspaper in 1909, it seems that he desired to maintain the territorial union of the Ottoman Sultanate by propagating ideas of unity among its members. It is possible to assume that his ideas were closer to Osmanlılık rather than pan-Islamism. Or, in other words, his ideas were closer to the thoughts of Namık Kemal than of al-Afghanî, or even to Abdulhamid’s “official” pan-Islamism. For instance, in an open letter, sent to Sabahaddin Bey, a nephew of Sultan Abdulhamid, who saw the future of the empire as a federal system, Nursi pointed out that “Life lies in unity,” and although a federal system for the Ottoman Sultanate was theoretically acceptable, it was not practicable at that time as the level of development of the different religious and ethnic groups varied greatly (Vahide 2005, 59). According to the Old Said, unity had to be established within the various groups of the multi-ethnic, multi-religious sultanate; within the country itself; and on the level of Islam. Therefore, Şükran Vahide pointed out that, for Nursi, Islam and Islamic unity were integral parts of Osmanlılık or Ottomanism (Vahide 2005, 60). Exactly like Namık Kemal, Nursi called all ethnic nations of the empire to practice “love of the nation” (the concept of the hubb al-waṭan). Then, a question arises that, did Nursi promote Abdulhamidian pan-Islamism and use pan-Islamic sentiments in order to keep the sultanate as a whole territorial unit? Were ideas of Nursi on pan-Islamism politically motivated?

In fact, Nursi believed that the main reason for the decline of Islamic civilization and its backwardness was in the current leadership of the Ottoman sultanate, including despotism practised by Abdulhamid. When Nursi first time arrived in Istanbul, the Palace of Abdulhamid, he saw the hatred, which persons nourished against one another, made them all into “well-dressed savages.” He later noted that he understood that the reason for the disease was this hypocrisy (Mardin 1989, 82).
Nursi was the person, who delivered a welcoming speech, *Address to Freedom*, to the success of the Young Turks insurrection of 3rd of July 1908. In this speech, he stated that: “Freedom has exhumed us from the grave of desolation and despotism, and summoned us to the paradise of unity and love of nation” (Vahide 2005, 54).

Then, it would be inaccurate to consider Nursi to be an advocate of Abdulhamidian political ideas on unification of Muslim world. In reality, he in the Old Said period of his scholarly life was deeply influenced by Namik Kemal, who sought to reinstate Islam as the foundation and spirit of the state, and to find precedents in Islamic thought and practice for the liberal concepts associated with constitutionalism and representative government, which were derived from Western thought, and to unite them (Vahide 2005, 34). Yet it might be inaccurate to assume that Nursi was advocating ideas of unity among the Osmanli nations alone, while ignoring the necessity of a larger scale union, which includes entire Muslim nations. However, maintaining the already existed union among Arab, Turk and Kurd subjects of the Osmanli sultanate was the burning issue during the Second Constitutional Period since the vast country was threatened by the potential splitting up. Therefore, Nursi laid a great importance on strengthening harmony and brotherhood between these groups. While delivering a welcoming speech on Constitutionalism in 1908, Nursi emphasized on the importance of unity of hearts, rather than a political union. When he was describing “five doors” or five principles to which the nation should be bound so that a paradise might be attained, he called the first door by “the union of hearts.” This has been described as preserving the consciousness of the Osmanli Empire’s unity and integrity, especially in the face of the nationalist and separatist movements of the minorities (Vahide 2005, 54).

Furthermore, even during the Second Constitutional Period the attitude of Nursi towards politics was cautious as in *The Damascus Sermon* Nursi declared that: “The truth of Islam is above all politics. All politics may serve it, but no politics can make Islam a tool for itself” (Nursi 2002a, 43).

When the Democrats signed the Baghdad Pact in 1955 between Turkey and Iraq, which was subsequently joined by Pakistan, Iran and Britain, Nursi supported this agreement and estimated it as a first step toward re-establishing relations between Turkey and the Muslim world. He emphasized that Islamic unity of a non-political nature would be a source of strength for Turkey, particularly against communism and irreligion (Vahide 2005, 325). Thus, if the Old Said opted to reform the existing institution of caliphate, the New Said saw Islamic Unity as non-psychical unity. As Ahmet Davutoğlu observes, Nursi’s withdrawal from the political field did not reduce the importance he attached to this non-physical or spiritual unity. The reference he made to Islamic unity in his defense in Denizli Court illustrates this point:

“Yes, we are a society and we are a society that every century has three hundred and fifty million [now one and a half thousand million] members. Every day through the five obligatory prayers, they demonstrate with complete veneration their attachment to the principles of that sacred society. Through the sacred programme of Indeed the believers are brothers, they hasten to assist one another with their prayers and spiritual gains. We are members of that sacred, vast society, and our particular duty is to teach the believers in certain, verified fashion the Qur’anic truths of belief, and save them and ourselves from eternal extinction and everlasting solitary
confinement in the Intermediate Realm. We have absolutely no connection with any worldly, political, or intriguing society or clandestine group, or the baseless, meaningless secret societies concerning which we have been charged; we do not condescend to such things." (Davutoglu).

Hence Nursi stressed on necessity of unity of belief and heart, and he did not stipulate uniting Muslims into one political unit. Nursi rather called Muslims to be united around similar belief and the common goal.

4.3 Universality.
Said Nursi considered universality as one of the main characteristics of unity of Muslims. He affirmed that the Union of Muslims includes all the people of Islam; there is no one outside it (Nursi 2002a, 90). According to Nursi, foundations of the Islamic Union "stretch from east to west and from north to south" and "its centre are the holy places of Mecca and Medina" (Nursi 2002a, 84). In his article entitled "To Dispel Any Fears" Nursi identified territorial scope of the union accordingly: "What is meant when we say the Ittiḥād-i Muḥammadī, which is Islamic Unity, is the unity between all believers, whether potential or actual. It does not refer to the society in Istanbul and Anatolia. A single drop of water is still water. The word cannot be thought of as specific" (Nursi 2002a, 84).

Answering to an accusation of him in being attached to a secret society of Ittiḥād al-Muḥammadī, Nursi replied that the society is open to everyone: “The society of which I am a member is Islamic Unity. It is not the imaginary organization that critics have falsely described. The members of this religious association are together whether in the north, south, east or west” (Nursi 2002a, 88).

4.5 Equality
Said Nursi believed that interrelation among members of the Islamic Union should be based on equality. He described the principle of the union of Muslims as a true equality. He stated that, since the aim of the Union is unity and upholding the Word of Allah, all its activities and endeavours are a form of worship. In the mosque king and beggar are equal. Therefore, according to the intellectual, true equality is the principle of the Union; there is no privilege. The best is the one most fearing of Allah. And the one most fearing of Allah is the most humble (Nursi 2002a, 87).

4.6 Relations with Non-Muslims
As Nursi lived in a country, where Muslims constituted the majority of the population and the issue of the non-Muslim minority rights was a debatable subject among his contemporary elite circles in Turkey and the Armenian question arose, the main concern of the intellectual was explaining the stance of Islam toward peoples following other religions. He declared that minority rights and equality should be recognized, and asked the government to leave Armenians in peace and to recognize their freedom (Vahide, 2005: 89-91).

Nursi declared that the way of the Islamic Union is love; its enmity is only for ignorance, poverty, and strife. He asserted:

"Non-Muslims should feel sure that this Union attacks only those three facts. Our actions towards non-Muslims consist only of persuasion, for we know them to be civilized. And we suppose them to be fair-minded, so we should demonstrate that Islam is lovable and elevated. The lax and negligent should
know that they cannot ingratiate themselves with the Europeans by being irreligious, for they only show that they are unprincipled. And no one likes unprincipledness and anarchy. Those who join this Union after due investigation, will not leave it by blindly imitating such people.” (Nursi 2002a, 81).

In his article entitled “Reality,” Nursi once more pointed out that members of Islamic Union are devoted to love and they have no time for enmity (Nursi 2002a, 78). Once he was asked if there was a possibility for the Europeans to be perturbed by Union of Muslims? Nursi replied that: “It is not they who are our enemies; what has in reality brought us this low is opposition to the Sharī’ah, which is the result of ignorance, thus preventing us from upholding the Word of God; and poverty and its fruits of immorality and bad conduct; and conflict and its products of strife and hatred; the attacks of our Union are directed at these three enemies” (Nursi 2002a, 85). In the Middle Ages, according to Nursi, Islam was compelled to be bigoted and hostile in the face of Europeans’ savagery, but it nevertheless maintained its justice and moderation. But in this time of modern civilization, the Europeans are civilized and powerful, and harmful hostility and bigotry have therefore disappeared. For in respect of religion, the civilized are to be conquered through persuasion, not through force, and through showing by conforming to its commands in actions and conduct that Islam is elevated and lovable. Force and enmity are only to combat barbarity of savages (Nursi 2002a, 85). Hence, attitude of Muslims toward Europeans and nature of relations with them, according to Nursi, should be based on friendship and sympathy.

As Şükran Vahide noticed, Nursi always urged his students to act tolerantly and peaceably toward followers of other paths and to return any criticism or aggression with good will, and above all to not allow political differences to cause disunity and so aid irreligion (Vahide 2005, 241-242). Thus we may suggest that Nursi advocated not unity of Muslims alone, but called all religious peoples of the world for cooperation against atheism and secularism. For instance, he sent copies of Risale-i Nur to Pope in Rome; and, in response to this, he received a letter of thanks from the Vatican dated February 22, 1951. Moreover, during his stay in Istanbul in the spring and summer of 1953, Nursi visited Athenagoras, the Greek Orthodox patriarch of Istanbul (Vahide 2005, 317). This attitude of Nursi completely rejects the hypothesis of Western scholars that calling for unity of Muslims at the beginning of the 20th century or pan-Islamism was directed against the religion of Christianity and its values as well as Western civilization. Then, what were the aims of establishment of true unity for Nursi? Let us discuss this issue in the following section.

5. AIMS OF UNITY

Said Nursi placed a great importance on determining the correct objective of unity of Muslims. According to him, a common goal is the main element around which all religious groups and societies should be united (Nursi 2002a, 87). In an article entitled The Voice of Truth Nursi defined the goal of unity as follows: “The aim and goal of unity is to stir into life the long, many branched, far-reaching luminous chain which binds together the centres of Islam and their places of worship, to arouse those bounds to it, and through the wishes and promptings of their consciences drive them to the way of progress” (Nursi 2002a, 80-81). Then, unity of Muslims in the view of Nursi should aim at moral objectives, rather than political ones. When he was
describing the nature of the organization of Ittiḥādi Muḥammadī, which was thought to be the model for uniting world-wide Muslims, Nursi stated that ninety-nine percent of the endeavours of this blessed society are not political. They are rather turned towards good morals and moderation, which are the opposite of politics, and other lawful aims. For very few societies have adopted this as their function, although its value and importance are immense. Only one out of a hundred of its members will be connected with politics by way of offering guidance to politicians. Their swords are decisive proofs, declared Nursi. And just as their way is, so will they encourage the love included in the seed of the brotherhood between believers to grow, like a tree of Tuba (Nursi 2002a, 84-85).

Regarding immediate goals of unity at his time, in Divan-i Harb-i Örfi Nursi said: “Our aim now is to urge everyone toward the ka’ba of achievement and perfections on the way of progress with an eagerness and desire of the conscience through making that luminous chain vibrate. For at this time the most powerful means of upholding the World of God is through material progress” (Vahide 2005, 67). In the article, entitled To Dispel Any Fears, Nursi again noticed that: “What we want now is the awakening and attention of believers, for the effect of public attention is undeniable. The aim of the Union and its purpose is to uphold the Word of God, and its way is to wage the ‘greater jihād’ with one’s own soul, and to guide others” (Nursi 2002a, 84).

6. PROSPECTS OF ISLAMIC UNITY

Nursi had been optimistic about prospects of Islamic unity throughout his life. Even in the beginning of the twentieth century, during the most difficult time for Muslims, when sentiments of antagonism began spreading rapidly among the Arabs and the Turks, and when the greater parts of the Muslim lands became divided among the European powers, Nursi’s optimism did not diminish. The Turkish government under Mustafa Kemal and some other activists declared Islam to be responsible for backwardness and economic, political, and cultural crises prevailed in the Muslim societies. Yet, Nursi considered Islam to be the eternal power and the only force, capable to unite world-wide Muslims as well as entire mankind against the demolishing powers of nationalism, communism and secularism. Nursi believed that the failure to adhere to the principles of Islam in religious, political, economic, and moral spheres to be the main reason for the decline of unity of Muslims. Since the heart disease of the Muslim world was its weakness in religion, Nursi suggested that Islam is the proper remedy for every illness of human society, and the eternal power, through which Muslims can obtain forthcoming unity and progress. He believed that current disunity and division among Muslim nations was a temporary obstacle and Muslims shall re-attain their lost superiority again. For example, the reply Nursi gave to a Russian policeman during their conversation while he was returning to Van from Istanbul after the Constitutional Revolution indicates enthusiasm and fervent hope of the scholar for potential progress in the Muslim world. Nursi said:

“Three lights are beginning to be revealed one after the other in Asia and the word of Islam. While with you three layers of darkness will start to be peeled
back, one after the other. The veil of despotism shall be rent; it will shrink back and I shall come and built my madrasah here."

The policeman, being astonished that Nursi was entertaining such a hope, answered to him accordingly: “But the Islamic world is all broken up and fragmented.” Nursi replied:

“They have gone to study. It is like this: India is an able son of Islam; it is studying in the high school of the British. Egypt is a clever son of Islam; it is taking lessons in the British school for civil servants. Caucasia and Turkestan are two valiant sons of Islam; they are training in the Russian war academy. And so on. You see, after these noble sons of Islam have received their diplomas each will lead a continent, and waving the banner of Islam, their just and mighty father, on the horizons of perfection, they will proclaim the mystery of pre-eternal wisdom inherent in mankind in the view of pre-eternal divine determining and in the face of obstinate fate." (Vahide 2005, 83-84)

Nursi stated accordingly: “Yes, it is only through the truths of Islam that the Islam will prosper and flourish. Islamic society can function only through the Sharī’ah of Islam and its worldly happiness be achieved. Otherwise justice will disappear, public security be overturned, immorality and base qualities prevail, and everything be run by liars and sycophants” (Nursi 2002a, 67-68).

In his article entitled Reflections on Unity, Nursi pointed out that: “Mankind in this century has perceived that their greatest need is for moral and spiritual strength, comfort, and resolution” (Nursi 2002a, 57). Instead of benefiting from Islamic nationhood and unity, under the pretext of becoming westernized, to rely on misguidance, dissipation, and lying politics and diplomacy, which completely destroy and annihilate all moral strength, comport, and resolution, is, according to Nursi, an act far from all benefit and profit for mankind. And so, nothing, no science, no human progress can ensure moral strength in the face of the ghastly pains and fears that arise from the people of misguidance’s unbelief, nor give them comfort. Only the power of Islam and truths of belief are able to support and secure such moral strength, comfort and happiness for entire mankind (Nursi 2002a, 56-57).

In 1909 Nursi asserted that salvation from the vile tyranny of the evil-commanding soul is through reliance on Islam, by holding fast to that ‘rope most strong.’ He continued:

“Rulers of this land! If you want success, conform to the Divine laws! Otherwise you will be unsuccessful. For the fact that all the known prophets appeared in the lands of Islam and the Ottomans is a sign of Divine Determining that the steam of the engine of the progress of this country’s people is religion. The flowers of these fields of Asia, Africa, and Rumelia will grow and flourish through the light of Islam.” (Nursi, 1909)

Thus, in order to achieve actual unity and progress theoretically, Nursi urged to return to the teachings of Islam, the main foundation of Islamic civilization. Nursi suggested to start the process of attaining unity not from political and military reforms, but through the process of Muslims’ personality transformation. The personality transformation alone was believed to result in the potential prosperity in political and economic affairs of the Muslim world. The first and most vital step in that
transformation process, as Nursi believed, was the process of strengthening of *imān* (belief) of Muslims.

As Ahmed Davutoğlu observed, what Nursi emphasized most on the individual level was the Muslim’s self-confidence being reinforced through psychological renewal. By acknowledging the importance of psychological factor, in all his writings and speeches Nursi recommended hope in the face of despair. To prevent individuals losing their psychological resistance, he sometimes used fundamentals of belief, sometimes natural events, and sometimes predictions about the future (Davutoğlu). Nursi enthusiastically declared that “the future shall be Islam’s and Islam’s alone, and the truths of the Qur‘ān and belief shall be sovereign.”

He stated that “the truths of Islam possess a perfect capacity to progress both materially, and in moral and nonmaterial matters.” Then he asked his audience: “How is it that while there are such powerful and unshakable ways and means for the material and moral progress for the believers and people of Islam, and the road to future happiness has been opened up like a railway, you despair and fall into hopelessness in the face of the future and destroy the morale of the Islamic world? Since the inclination to seek perfection has been included in man’s essential nature, in the future truth and equity will show the way to a worldly happiness in the world of Islam, God willing, in which there will be atonement for the former errors of mankind. Just as every winter is followed by spring and every night by morning, mankind, also, shall have a morning and a spring, God willing. You may expect from divine mercy to see true civilization within universal peace brought about through the sun of the truth of Islam” (Nursi 2002a, 26-27). In addition, Nursi suggested six solutions in the process of personal transformation.

### 6.1 Six Remedies in Achieving Unity

Nursi in his *Damascus Sermon* determined six dire sicknesses present among Muslims, what kept them disunited, backward and ignorant, and arrested the development of the Islamic world: firstly, rise of despair and hopelessness in social life; secondly, the death of truthfulness in social and political life; thirdly, love of enmity; fourthly, not knowing the luminous bonds that bind the believers to one another; fifthly, despotism, and sixthly, restricting endeavour to what is personally beneficial (Nursi 2002a, 12-13).

Nursi identified these sicknesses as destroyers of Islamic unity. Only elimination of these sicknesses can reunite Muslims as Nursi hoped that “Insha Allah, once more the Arabs will give up despair and will stand together in true solidarity and concord with the Turks, who are the heroic army of Islam, and will unfurl the banner of the Qur‘ān in every part of the world” (Nursi 2002a, 33). He consequently offered six remedies to cure Muslims’ from these sicknesses in the form of six “Words” taken from “the pharmacy of the Qur‘ān.”

i. The first Word was “Hope,” or optimism concerning the future of the Islamic world.

ii. Under second Word Nursi illustrated some of the destructive results of despair, “a grievous sickness [that] has entered the heart of the world of Islam.” According to the intellectual, it had been despair that had destroyed the morale of Muslims so that the Europeans had been able to dominate them. Nursi called upon Arabs to give up despair and stand “together in true
solidarity and concord with the Turks" and “unfurl the banner of the Qur’ān in every part of the world” (Nursi 2002a, 33).

iii. The third Word was “truthfulness” or honesty. This, said Nursi, is the basis and foundation of Islam, and the fundamental principle of Islamic society. He stated that salvation is only to be found through truthfulness and honesty.

iv. The forth Word of Nursi was a call to love and brotherhood. He asserted that “the thing most worthy of love is love, and the quality most deserving of enmity is enmity.” While love guarantees the life of society and ensures happiness; sicknesses of enmity and hostility are ugly, damaging qualities, which have overturned man’s social life. In short, love, brotherhood, and affection are the temperament of Islam, they bond it (Nursi, 2002a: 39-40).

v. In the fifth Word, Nursi urged Arabs to take up their positions alongside the Turks as “sentries of the sacred citadel of Islamic nationhood.” Nursi explained why lawful freedom and lawful consultation was vital for the Islamic world. He urged his listeners that in the present age man’s actions, either good or bad, very often do not remain with the doer, but have widespread consequences. He therefore warned the Arabs against their laziness, for good deeds “may benefit millions of believers.” Accordingly, Nursi rejected egoism and called to work for others, and to be united.

vi. The sixth Word, or sixth constituent of the cure that Nursi was prescribing for the Islamic world, was mutual consultation. He described it as “the key to Muslims’ happiness in Islamic social life,” and stressed its importance as the basis of progress and scientific development, adding that one reason for Muslim world’s backwardness was the failure to practice consultation. Nursi explained that it was the sincerity and solidarity that result from consultation that make it the means of life and progress. “Thus, three men between whom there is true solidarity may benefit the nation as much as a hundred men. Many historical events inform us that as a result of true sincerity, solidarity, and consultation, ten men may perform the work of a thousand men” (Nursi, 2002a: 46-47).

In sum, Nursi sought to unite Muslims through moral and ethical reforms as was achieved in Islam fourteen centuries ago at the time of the Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H). The first five Words of Nursi are mainly concerned with belief and morality of Muslims. According to Nursi, the way of Muslim society is love for love and enmity towards enmity.

CONCLUSION
This paper, after discussing the ideas of Said Nursi on unity of Muslims, suggests that it is because of lack of local as well as universal unity and solidarity among Muslims, European states succeeded in enslaving Muslim countries one after another. Nursi therefore believed that the only efficient remedy for freeing Muslims from the European hegemony was re-attaining unity and concord among Muslim nations. He considered unity and accord as a strength, which empowered Muslims to establish a perfect righteous society, and led them to success and development throughout Islamic history. Unity for the scholar was not only an efficient tool in the struggle against Western Imperialism alone, but it also was the essence of Islam and the nature of a healthy society.
Nursi consequently considered Islamic Unity to be essential forever for the happiness in this life as well as hereafter. Nursi declared that the person who does not understand the true meaning of co-operation is more lifeless than a stone. Even the stones of domes stand shoulder to shoulder so as not to fall. Accordingly, he placed on Muslims the duty of achieving solidarity defining it to be the religious obligation. He stated that belief demands love and Islam demands brotherhood (Nursi 2002a, 125).

In the Flashes, by comparing the Muslim society with the components of machinery in a factory, the intellectual discovered that Muslims are surely in need of solidarity, obtained through gaining sincerity. Only sincere solidarity will grant Muslims with real unity, the only source of strength (Nursi 2004a, 214-215 & 218-219). Accordingly he stated that “three men between whom there is true solidarity may benefit the nation as much as a hundred men” (Nursi 2002a, 47).

In order to achieve unity, Nursi suggested starting urgent reforms on religious, moral, and social spheres. He optimistically believed in probability of Muslim unity, and, in order to accomplish it, invited his fellow Muslims to restructure their moral, religious, social, political and economic lives on both, personal as well as public levels. Yet, he considered religious and moral reforms to be the most important elements in the way of achieving unity. According to Nursi, returning to the fundamentals of Islam constituted a key for prosperity, success, and progress in the Muslim world.

REFERENCES

