

# Realpolitik Please: Ottoman Religious Policy on the Eve of World War One in a Letter from the Kadi of Bagdad to the Sheikhulislam

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*Zülf-i Yar: Bağdat Kadısı Ali Vehbi Efendi'nin Şeyhülislam Mustafa Hayri Efendi'ye Yazdığı Bir Mektup ve Düşündürdükleri*

Öz ■ Zamanın Bağdat Kadısı Ali Vehbi Efendi'nin şeyhülislamlığa yeni tayin olan Mustafa Hayri Efendi'ye yazdığı 2 Nisan 1914 tarihli bir mektup, hayret verici samimiyetteki üslubu ve son yılların Osmanlı Tarihi hakkında ifşa ettiği malumat bakımından dikkate değerdir. Mektubun özü, dinin Osmanlı-Arap ilişkilerindeki merkezi rolü ile – Arap vilayetlerinde ortalığı karıştıran bazı yayınların gösterdiği üzere – hükümetin İmparatorluk merkezinde yaygın olan dinsizlik akımlarına karşı takındığı lâkayt tavrın bu ilişkilere verdiği zarardır. Mektup, (ulema da dâhil olmak üzere) zamanın Osmanlı Türk ricalinin Araplara tepeden bakan tavrına güzel bir örnek teşkil ederek din hakkındaki her türlü histen arınmış ve neredeyse Makyavelci yaklaşımlarını gözler önüne sererken tarihin nevi şahsına münhasır tefsiri de bu yazarın şahsında hem maddi bilgilerinin kalitesini hem de entelektüel seviyelerini ortaya koymaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Şeyhülislam Mustafa Hayri Efendi, Bağdat Kadısı Ali Vehbi Efendi, 1909-1922 Osmanlı Tarihi, İkinci Meşrutiyet, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda din ve dinsizlik, Arap-Türk ilişkileri

Mustafa Hayri Efendi (1867-1922) was one of the most important members of the Committee of Union and Progress (*İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti*) that dominated the Second Constitutional Period (1909-1922) in Ottoman Turkey. He served, amongst other things, as minister of pious foundations (*evkaf*) and Sheikh-ul-Islam. Soon after the Armistice of Mudros (30<sup>th</sup> October 1918) he was

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arrested in Istanbul, interrogated, and on 28<sup>th</sup> May 1919, deported to Malta with a number of other Unionists, where he spent a year and a half in prison. He returned to Turkey after his release in late 1920 and was invited by Mustafa Kemal Paşa [Atatürk] to join the new government. He declined, citing health reasons and his Unionist past, and died the next year in his hometown Ürgüp.

In Turkey he is especially famous as a very efficient and reform-minded minister of pious foundations, a reformer of the *medreses* and the Sheikh-ul-Islam who issued the fatwa that gave the religious sanction needed for Turkey's participation in the war effort on the German side.

In contrast to most other Ottoman politicians of his time, he kept diaries, which are almost exclusively political in character, and his diaries and other papers survived in bulk, if not in their entirety. I edited his diaries within the framework of a PhD thesis and found among his papers a letter from the then *kadı* of Bagdad Vehbi Efendi. The contents of this letter I found interesting enough to discuss it here. The text of the letter, written in a calligraphic *rika* hand, has been deciphered almost completely, with the exception of a few words which do not affect the message of the text. The Turkish text of the letter in transcription appears at the end of this paper together with an English translation and a facsimile reproduction of the material.

The author of the letter, Tirnovalı Ali Vehbi Efendi (1852-?), was the son of Hasan Efendi, a member of the *ulema*. He graduated from the *Mekteb-i Nüvvab* (School for Substitute Judges) on 7<sup>th</sup> May 1884. He then served as *naib* (substitute judge) of the *sancak* of Biga (9<sup>th</sup> October 1885-18<sup>th</sup> September 1887), Cebel-i Bereket (3<sup>rd</sup> March 1889-11<sup>th</sup> March 1891), Fezzan (7<sup>th</sup> September 1892-14<sup>th</sup> January 1895, 15<sup>th</sup> July 1897-25<sup>th</sup> October 1900) and Misurata (3<sup>rd</sup> May 1901-19<sup>th</sup> June 1902), where he was in forced residence after his dismissal on 19<sup>th</sup> June 1902 until the July Revolution, and after the July Revolution, of Hama (31<sup>st</sup> August 1908-14<sup>th</sup> December 1909), Basra (25<sup>th</sup> January 1910-?), Beirut (28<sup>th</sup> January 1913-6<sup>th</sup> May 1913) and Bagdad (17<sup>th</sup> May 1913-28<sup>th</sup> May 1914). He was dismissed on 21<sup>st</sup> November 1914. He had received a 4. grade *mecidi* order on account of his services in the draining of a swamp and the transportation of soldiers in Biga on 23<sup>rd</sup> October 1886. Appointed *ibtida-i haric Bursa müderris* (26<sup>th</sup> March 1886), *müderris of fiqh* history at the *medrese* of Süleymaniye by imperial decree, he was nevertheless dismissed on account of being a pensioner by the decision of the council of education on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1924. He was the author of a booklet titled *Medeniyet-i İslamiye* (Islamic Civilisation) to counter the attacks on Islam (published 1308

AJ/1892-1893 after having appeared in serial form in the newspaper *Bursa*) and another called *Reddii'n-Nasara* (Refutation of Christianity) which is not known to have been published.<sup>1</sup> His date and place of death are unknown.

The letter was written in a week, the main part on 28<sup>th</sup> March 1914 and the addendum and the attachment on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 1914, two weeks after the nomination of the addressee as Sheikh-ul-Islam (16<sup>th</sup> March 1914), and a newspaper cut-out containing a laudatory description of the author's efforts as a preacher in Bagdad that appeared in an Arabic newspaper was enclosed (which I have not treated in this paper further as its contents do not pertain to the text of the letter that is our subject, nor does it contain anything of great importance). I found no trace on the brief or elsewhere in the papers of Mustafa Hayri Efendi of any indication of a reply that was sent or any other comment, nor is there any mention of a *Bağdad Kadısı Vehbi* or of any such letter in the surviving volumes of his diaries.

The leitmotif of the letter is the central role of religion in general and the caliphate in particular in the relations between the centre and the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire and the possible negative outcomes of an eventual severance of that bond that ignoring the former and failing to emphasise the latter might result in.

In the opening paragraph of the letter the author briefly mentions his Turkish origin, his long stay in the Arab provinces, his thorough familiarity with the state of mind of the Arab population from Tunis to Basra and his impression that the Arabs care more about the caliphate than about the sultanate.

He then describes briefly his years-long struggle against the deposed sultan Abdulhamid II, which is interesting in view of the fact that his name does in fact appear in two lists of Sultan Abdulhamid's spies, one already published<sup>2</sup> and the other found amongst the papers of Mustafa Hayri Efendi and currently being prepared for publication, where he is mentioned as having reported that Receb Paşa, formerly Governor of Tripoli (October 1904-August 1908), later War Minister

1 Albayrak, Sadık. *Son Devir Osmanlı Uleması*. Medrese Yayınevi, İstanbul 1980. (vols 1-2); Millî Gazete yayınları, İstanbul 1981 (vols. 3-5).

2 In *İbret* (vol. 2 p. 312) by Major Asaf [Tugay], who was a member of the Yıldız Investigation Commission that examined the *journals* (spy reports) of the Hamidian spy network that were found at Yıldız Palace after the 31<sup>st</sup> March Incident. The entry on Ali Vehbi (*İbret*, vol. 2, p. 312) reads *Sabık Misrata kazası naib-i sabıkı* (former substitute judge of the *kaza* (district) of Misrata [Misurata in Libya]) with no details as to his *journals*.

(7<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> August 1908) was involved in the formation of a society.<sup>3</sup> One wonders what Mustafa Hayri Efendi's reaction to his self-aggrandisement was like!

This is followed by a frank mention of his former conviction of the necessity of the abolition both of the caliphate and of the sultanate and the foundation of a republic, and his joy at the excessive limitation of the power of the sultan and the near total avoidance of even the mention of the title of caliph of the sultan in the Chamber of Deputies in the aftermath of the July Revolution of 1908. His term in Beirut following the revolution lead to a change of heart, though, as he came to realise as a result of his contacts with the population there that the only bond between the Ottoman government and the Arabs was the caliphate. According to him, the Arabs did not regard the then current government as an Islamic one and had neither any sympathy with it, nor any trust in it or any hope in its future. The author then warns that a government that has lost the popular opinion to this extent is exposed to the danger of a revolution or a downfall, and that there were to sets of measures that could be taken to avoid this fate, the one being material and the other spiritual. The material measures consist of reforms that would give the populace hope in the future of the government. It appears to have downed on the government as well that material reforms are a necessity if the constant declarations of the government to this effect in the press be any guide. That no actions follow these words and that consequently they are regarded as empty promises by the population is of course regrettable, though.

The spiritual measures, on the other hand, consist, in the opinion of the author, of the resuscitation of the title of caliph in the media and a more careful attitude in matters religious. Here the author mentions the effects of two publications, one a pamphlet called *Kavm-ı Cedid* (The New Nation) and the other another (unnamed) book or article by a certain Celal Nuri in which he must have used inappropriate language about God Almighty and the Prophet Muhammad. He admits not having read these writings himself, but the furore they caused in the periodical *Sebilürreşad*.

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3 This is an alphabetical list of Hamidian spies in two volumes given to Mustafa Hayri Efendi by one Mülazım Şaban Efendi in late 1910-early 1911, about a year after the completion of the investigations and the destruction of the *journals* (Mülazım Şaban Efendi was one of the members of the same Commission and he is mentioned in name by Türkmen (2000)). The entry No. 60 under the letter 'ayn reads *Ali Vehbi Sabık Misrata kazası naibi (Receb Paşá'nın cemiyet teşkilini yazıyor)* (Ali Vehbi. Former *naib* (substitute judge) of the *kaza* (district) of Misrata (reports the establishment of a society by Receb Pasha)).

These authors and publications deserve our attention here even if the references the author gives concerning those of Celal Nuri are too vague to allow an exact identification of the publication concerned. The pamphlet called *Kavm-i Cedid* (The New Nation) was published in Istanbul in 1913 and contained the sermons of one Ubeydullah Efgani, originally an Afghan. Efgani had also given a sermon at Haghia Sophia on roughly the same subject. The main message of his book runs along these lines: A nation that did not help a war effort for legitimate self-defence (*cihad*) and still prayed and fasted is not welcome in the eyes of God; and that He would send a new nation (*kavm-i cedid*) and bestow upon it this high value. And this new nation is the Turkish nation that came to the aid of the population during the Balkan War. This book was praised to the skies in the periodical *İctihad* and condemned in turn, together with the authors at *İctihad* who had praised it, in issue 280 of *Sebil-ür-Reşad* in an article dated 9<sup>th</sup> Kânun-i Sani 1329 AJ/10<sup>th</sup> January 1914 titled “Ubeydullah Efgani Müdafii M. C. Efendi’ye!” signed by İsmail Hakkı [İzmirli].

The second author, Celal Nuri, is Celal Nuri [İleri], (1882-1936? 1877-1938?),<sup>4</sup> who was a Turkish politician, thinker, author and journalist of the Second Constitutional and Republican periods. He graduated from the Faculty of Law before the July Revolution (1908). He was the author of numerous articles in the periodicals *İctihad*, *Hürriyet-i Fikriye*, *Atı*, *İleri*, and books, including *Tarih-i Tedenniyat-ı Osmaniye-Mukadderat-ı Tarihiye* (Istanbul 1331/1915-1916), *İctihad-ı İslam* (Istanbul 1331/1915-1916), *Kadınlarımız* (Istanbul 1331/1915-1916), *Hatemül’l-Enbiya* (Istanbul 1332 AH/1913), *İlel-i Ahlakiyemiz* (Istanbul 1332/1916-1917), *Tarih-i İstikbal*. (in three volumes that appeared separately, Istanbul 1331-1332/1915-1917), *Müslümanlara, Türklere Hakaret, Düşmanlara Riayet ve Muhabbet* (Istanbul 1332/1916-1917), *Harpten Sonra Türkleri Yükseltelim* (Istanbul 1917), *İştirak Etmediğimiz Harekât* (Istanbul 1917), *Kara Tehlike* (Istanbul 1334/1918), amongst others. He was known for his unorthodox, modernist, reformist approach to religion which was roundly condemned in conservative circles.

Celal Nuri was also one of the authors at *İctihad* and thus a supporter of Efgani’s book, but I prefer not to undertake here a thorough attempt at establishing just which one of his writings the author is talking about in view of the extremely vague references he gives and the fact that he admits not to having read it (them?)

4 His dates of birth and death are given as 1877-1938 in Orhan Koloğlu’s entry on him in *Yaşamları ve Yapıtlarıyla Osmanlılar Ansiklopedisi* (vol. 1, pp. 646-647) and as 1882-1936 in Recep Duymaz’s entry on the same subject in *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (vol 7, pp. 242-245).

himself, anyway. He *may* be referring to the *Hatemü'l-Enbiya* (The Seal of the Prophets), of which the preface bears the date of 10<sup>th</sup> Zilhicce 1331 AH/10<sup>th</sup> November 1913 (which more or less fits the vague references concerning the dates of the publications in question, see text of the letter), in which the author attempts to write a biography of the Prophet Muhammad, which would be both a refutation of the Orientalists like R. Dozy, E. Renan and A. Sprenger and a criticism of the traditional *sirah* writers of the Islamic world, who had made a superhuman figure out of Muhammad. His refutation of the former earned him little sympathy in conservative Muslim circles when he dared criticise the latter. At any rate most of Celal Nuri's output, in the form of books as well as articles, abound in statements concerning religion and the Prophet Muhammad that would be considered blasphemous by any conservative Muslim. Moreover, he had left *İctihad* over a quarrel with Abdullah Cevdet early in 1914, i.e. at about the same date as this letter (exact date unknown) and started writing in the periodical *Hürriyet-i Fikriye*, which further complicates matters of attribution.

This is followed by a comparison of the French Revolution with the Ottoman one, where the author (to put it mildly) takes certain liberties with historical facts, citing Professor [John William] Draper, he asserts that the French Revolution was against both the state and the religion, as the intellectuals had secretly been reading the writings of the medieval Arab philosopher Ibn Rushd, passed the gist of his philosophy on to the people, who thereupon realised that what they had internalised as religion until then was not in fact a divine revelation at all but merely a fabrication consisting of superstitions and heresies, and consequently saw no difference between the tyrannical monarchs and the senseless laws they laid down and the clergy and the senseless religion they laid down, and saw salvation in the abolition of both.

There are a few problems here both with the reference and the conclusions the author draws from his source that need to be addressed: Professor John William Draper (5<sup>th</sup> May 1811 – 4<sup>th</sup> January 1882), was an English-born American scientist, philosopher, physician, chemist, historian and photographer. His anti-Catholic *History of the Conflict between Religion and Science*, New York 1875, was translated into several languages including French under the title *Les Conflits de la science et de la religion* (translator not indicated in the French edition) in 1888 and then, from this French translation, into Turkish, under the title *Niza-ı İlm ü Din* in 1895-1900 by the famous Ahmed Midhat Efendi and had quite an impact on Ottoman intellectuals. Like in most of his other translations, Ahmed Midhat Efendi interlarded this one with his own comments, which amount to a

whole new book called *İslam ve Ulum*, where the translation of the original text is distinguished from the commentary by font size. It is in Chapter V of this work (titled *Conflict Respecting the Nature of the Soul. Doctrine of Emanation and Absorption*, pp. 119-151 in the English original, *Conflit touchant la nature de l'âme. Doctrine de l'émanation et de l'absorption*, pp. 85-108 in the French translation and *Rub hakkında niza. İntişar ve irtica akidesi*, vol. 2, pp. 79-235 in the Turkish translation) that the said references to Ibn Rushd (referred to as Averroes) occur. Since the reference of the author is probably to this translation and not the French version, still less the English original, a comparison of all three versions would be useful:

The Dominicans, armed with the weapons of the Inquisition, terrified Christian Europe with their unrelenting persecutions. They imputed all the infidelity of the times to the Arabian philosopher. But he was not without support. In Paris and in the cities of Northern Italy the Franciscans sustained his views, and all Christendom was agitated with these disputes. [p. 150]

Les Dominicains, armés de moyens terribles de l'Inquisition, épouvantaient l'Europe chrétienne par leurs persécutions. Ils imputèrent toute l'impiété du siècle au philosophe arabe. Cependant, il ne laissa pas que d'avoir ses partisans, puissants aussi. A Paris, et dans les villes du nord de l'Italie, les Franciscains soutinrent ses idées et toute la chrétienté fut agitée par ces disputes. [p. 108]

Engizisyonun işkenceleriyle Dominikenler bütün Avrupa'yı titrettiler. Asrın dince mübalatsızlığını kâmilten bu Arap feylesofuna isnad eyliyorlardı. Maheza İbn Rüşd'ün hâlâ muktedir taraftarları vardı. İtalya'nın şimal tarafları ile Paris'te Fransiskanlar onun esas hikmetini muhafaza eylediklerinden bu mübahaseler ile bütün nasraniyet âlemi sarsılıyordu. [vol. 2, p. 229]

As can be seen above, neither the English original nor the two translations – which are quite true to it – contain any reference to a direct link between the dissemination of Ibn Rushd's ideas and the French Revolution. The lengthy commentary that follows this passage by Ahmed Midhat, however, goes a step further in that direction:

Bizce asıl şayan-ı ehemmiyet olan nokta İbn Rüşd'ün hikmetindeki tesir ile onun İslam nazarında suret-i telakkisidir. Bu tesirin neden ibaret olduğu da Draper'in tafsilatından anlaşıla [vol. 2, p. 230] biliyor. Yani o zaman beynennasara efkâr-ı münevvere ashabı Hazret-i İsa ala Nebina ve Aleyhisselam Efendimize isnad olunan nasraniyet-i sahihenin nasıl aslına benzemeyecek derecelerde duçar-ı tahrif

edildiğine ve İseviyet-i sahihenin dahi İslamiyet'te dâhil bulunduğuna vâkıf olarak Nasraniyet'i heman terk derecesinde gevşetmişler de Dominikenlerde ve onların muharriki olan Papalık taraftarlarında bu gayret onun üzerine hâsıl olmuş. Sözün biraz daha açığı şimdiki Avrupa'nın ahval-ı nasraniyesi o zamanlar peyda olmağa başlamış. [vol. 2, p. 231]

The point that is really important as far as we are concerned is the influence of the wisdom of Ibn Rushd and its reception in Islam. And it can be understood from the explanations of Draper what this influence consisted of. That is, the enlightened intellectuals amongst the Christians realised how the real Christianity attributed to Our Prophet Jesus Christ (pbuh) had been subject to distortion to such an extent that it had little resemblance left to its original form and that the real Christianity was contained in Islam; and had thus slackened Christianity almost to the point of abandoning it; and it was because of this that this zeal on the part of the Dominicans and their instigators the Papacy came into being. To put it in plainer English, the current state of Christianity of Europe began to emerge then.

As can be seen from the above, the notion that the French Revolution has its ultimate roots in Ibn Rushd's philosophy develops gradually: Draper notes the agitations this philosophy caused in Christendom, Ahmed Midhat adds to it that as a result of its dissemination it downed on the European intellectuals that 1) Christianity had been corrupted beyond recognition, and 2) real Christianity was contained in Islam, and that consequently their Christian identity slackened to the point of disappearance and that contemporary Christianity in Europe began to emerge then. That the French Revolution was caused by the dissemination of Ibn Rushd's ideas, though, is the invention of our author. To be fair, one must point out that the logical conclusion to be drawn from Draper's passage is indeed that Ibn Rushd's philosophy had a decisive influence on the development of European Christianity, just as that to be drawn from Ahmed Midhat's commentary is indeed that Ibn Rushd's ideas were a factor in the French Revolution (the assertion that Europeans realised that real Christianity was contained in Islam is entirely Ahmed Midhat's addition with no trace of anything like it in Draper), but this assertion in black on white is strictly to be ascribed to our author rather than to Ahmed Midhat, still less to Draper. In other words, Ali Vehbi put words into Ahmed Midhat's mouth who had in turn put words into Draper's.

To this end, the author goes on, after the rebellion the intellectuals put pen to paper to enlighten the people and wrote all they could to discredit both Christianity and the monarchy (where the author commits the grievous factual error



of asserting that the most important of these was the famous Voltaire: Voltaire was indeed an enemy of religion and especially of the clergy, and was a source of inspiration for the leaders of the rebellion, but he had died in 1778, eleven years before the French Revolution took place). The author then goes on to say that the clergy had abused its power over both the possessions of the people as well as over their dignity by fabricated wisdom not founded in religion and the institution of the confession of sins, and that it was a human duty to liberate the population from this assault, and that for this reason these philosophers, especially Voltaire, were above criticism.

This exposé is followed by a refutation of the argument that the Ottoman Revolution was comparable to the French Revolution in this respect. According to the author the Ottoman Revolution was carried out rather to save the caliphate from the autocracy of Sultan Abdulhamid II, and it was the religious fervour that motivated the people. Not only does the author distort history here by allowing several key facts to escape his memory, but he also contradicts himself by apparently forgetting that he had just written a few lines earlier that he was – like, as he does not fail to point out, many of the reformists who were his contemporaries – an advocate of the abolition of the caliphate (which he by his own account took to be no more than an empty title) and the sultanate and their replacement by a republic. The key facts that escape his memory are the following:

1) The revolution was largely carried out not by the common people but by some Young Turks and the military (which in many cases meant the same thing) who were not exactly known for their religious zeal,

2) The counterrevolution that took place in 1909 against the July Revolution of 1908 to restore the sultan's – and by extension the conservative circles' – power was instigated by the religious circles,

3) The sultan who was deposed in the wake of the counterrevolution was the only one in recent Ottoman history who had followed a policy of Pan-Islamism – also making use of his title of caliph – and

4) The Unionist regime that replaced him had precious little to show by way of an Islamist policy up to the time of the writing of his letter.

This is followed by a description of Arab attitudes towards religion. It is obvious that the author does not think much of the Arabs in this respect: according to him, the Arabs are ostensibly much given to excessive negative reaction to publications disrespectful of religion as the above-mentioned ones, but this

should in no way be taken to mean that they are any more religious than the Turks. Quite the contrary, the contemporary Arabs have become monsters, says the author: everything is permissible for them as long as it can be given the appearance of respectability. A very frank list of Arab excesses follows: false testimony, oath-breaking, illegal appropriation of goods of persons, children and pious foundations, circumscribing the law to dispossess daughters, lies and treachery. A particularly repulsive custom, namely that of rendering ill-gotten (*haram*) gains well-gotten (*helal*) through pilgrimage, emanating from the false interpretation of one of the *hadith* found in Bukhari by “some ignorant commentators” (whom I have not ventured to identify) who extended this precept to cases where the rights of the slaves of God (i. e., one’s fellow men) are concerned and therefore paved the way for its interpretation as an expiation for all sins, including those committed against other people, is given special treatment. The *hadith* in question is the following:

Abu Hurairah (May Allah be pleased with him) reported: The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) said, “Whoever performs Hajj (pilgrimage) and does not have sexual relations (with his wife), nor commits sin, nor disputes unjustly (during Hajj), then he returns from Hajj as pure and free from sins as on the day on which his mother gave birth to him.” In the Arabic original (*Sahih-al-Bukhari* 1521, In-book-reference: Book 25, Hadith 9):

حَدَّثَنَا آدَمُ، حَدَّثَنَا شُعْبَةُ، حَدَّثَنَا سَيَّارُ أَبُو الْحَكَمِ، قَالَ سَمِعْتُ أَبَا حَازِمٍ، قَالَ سَمِعْتُ  
 أَبَا هُرَيْرَةَ . رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ . قَالَ سَمِعْتُ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَقُولُ ” مَنْ حَجَّ لِلَّهِ فَلَمْ  
 يَرْفُثْ وَلَمْ يَفْسُقْ رَجَعَ كَيَوْمِ وَلَدَتْهُ أُمُّهُ “ .

The author underlines here that this precept was not to be extended to the rights of the slaves (of God, i. e. our fellow men), but that those ignorant commentators failed to mention that, which resulted in its adoption by the Arabs as a convenient tool to get around the law.

According to the author, the Arab accepts the laws of religion as long as these do not interfere with his personal interests. The Arab knows neither religion nor sect wherever his personal interests are at stake. Amongst the Arabs of today, it is perfectly alright to misuse all the values of Islam as instruments of deception and the oath is there to fool people. Yet they give themselves airs as the proprietors and keepers of religion on account of their role in its emergence and dissemination.

They show an excessive and artificial displeasure of and reaction to words and deeds that openly contradict Islamic dogma.

Therefore, the author cautions, the negative effects of such writings are more palpable in the Arab provinces than in Turkish ones. Should for instance some speaker at some mosque in Egypt draw the attention of the congregation to the publication of such writings in the seat of government of the state, which is ostensibly the protector of religion, through the approval of its government, and thus put the legitimacy of the Ottoman Caliphate into question, the bond between the Caliphate and the Arabs would be cut right there and then. Therefore the author had repeatedly urged the office of the Sheikh-ul-Islam to take appropriate measures, but to no avail. These measures consist in his letter mainly of counter-declarations on the part of the office of the Sheikh-ul-Islam and the establishment in the office of the Sheikh-ul-Islam of a bilingual (Turkish and Arabic) purely religious newspaper to counter such currents. The author goes on to warn the addressee to act urgently as “the treatment of a wound would serve nothing after it has gone gangrenous”.

In the appendix the author discusses the importance of religion in the affairs of the state. According to him, after the French Revolution a war on religion was declared and this had extended all the way to Russia. The European states and philosophers later understood, though, that the common folk could be kept under control only through religion and consequently a return to former policies concerning religion gradually took place. The author makes by way of example a reference (vague again) to the famous *Hunnenrede* of Kaiser Wilhelm II, where the Kaiser refers to the Christian religion of Europe.

Here we encounter yet another problem in our author's references: The *Hunnenrede* was a speech delivered by Kaiser Wilhelm II on 27<sup>th</sup> July 1900 in Bremerhaven on the occasion of the dispatch of the East Asian Expeditionary Corps of the German Army to crush the Boxer Rebellion in China. The speech, called the *Hunnenrede* (Hun speech), on account of a reference made to the Huns at its beginning, exists in several versions, as the Kaiser is reported to have improvised during its delivery and as a manuscript version is not extant. A recording of the speech that surfaced in 2012 could not be proven conclusively to be authentic. The version that appeared in the *Nordwestdeutsche Zeitung* on 28<sup>th</sup> July 1900 contains at the end of the text the following lines: “*Und Gottes Segen möge an Eure Fahnen sich heften und dieser Krieg den Segen bringen, daß das Christentum in jenem Lande seinen Einzug hält, damit solch' traurige Fälle nicht mehr vorkommen!*”

(And may God's blessing be fastened onto your flags and may this war bring the blessing that Christianity continues its march in that land, so that such sad incidents do not recur!)"<sup>5</sup>. This passage does not appear in the official<sup>5</sup> and unofficial, abridged<sup>6</sup> versions that appeared in print. In view of these problems concerning its textual history, the author's assertions here must be treated with caution.

After having established the state of affairs that obtains in this fashion, the author then goes on to discuss the policy concerning religion to be adopted. According to him the Ottoman government should take into account the sensitivities of both the Europeans and the Ottoman Christians on the one hand and that of the Muslims on the other, and follow a policy with two faces or two colours, the one being the purely political face free from religion, and the other the purely religious. *Otherwise the government would not be able to send the Mehmedciks to war.* The delicacy of the issue is obvious and makes it imperative that the August Office of the Sheikh-ul-Islam take the scales of politics in its hands and create a balance between its two pans.

The gist of the letter is clear: the Ottoman government should follow a policy that takes into account the religious sensitivities of the Arabs, otherwise it would run the risk of losing the Arab provinces. It is the following aspects of the letter that deserve our particular attention:

1. The style of the letter is shockingly frank. The introduction consists merely of the salutatory formula reserved for Sheikh-ul-Islams (*fetvapenah*) and then the author gets straight to the point without for instance even congratulating the addressee, who had just been nominated Sheikh-ul-Islam only two weeks ago, and wishing him the best of success.

2. The author admits openly that he took the caliphate for an empty title prior to the July Revolution, and that he – like so many others – favoured the abolition of both the caliphate and the sultanate and the establishment of a republic.

3. The author does obviously not think much of the Arabs: one cannot help noticing a barely disguised lack of respect for them and the overall tone of his writing reminds one more of a colonial officer of some European power in Africa or in South-Southeast Asia in the late 19<sup>th</sup>-early 20<sup>th</sup> century (i. e. a contemporary, in fact) than anything else. One would rather have expected to read something

5 *Die Reden Kaiser Wilhelms II.*, ed. Johannes Penzler. Vol. 2: 1896-1900. Leipzig, no date, pp. 209-212.

6 Manfred Görtemaker, *Deutschland im 19. Jahrhundert*. Entwicklungslinien. Opladen 1996. (Schriftenreihe der Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, Vol. 274), p. 357.).

in this tone from the pen of a typical irreligious Young Turk than in a letter of a high-ranking religious official addressed to the highest-ranking religious official of the Ottoman Empire, the seat of the caliphate!

4. The author resorts to Western sources to underline his argument, but the sources he refers to and the manner he uses them are a bit unusual. Briefly, he talks about sources he has not read himself, and those he has he uses uncritically and cites inaccurately, obviously neglecting to verify his references, with the result that in his letter facts cannot be separated from factoids without independent research on the part of the reader, features that are unfortunately not unique to him in Turkish academic and political literature.

5. Anyone experienced in discussions with “defenders of Islam” concerning the triumph of the West in the last few centuries will immediately have noticed two subtexts in the author’s peculiar interpretation of European history that have not been particularly subtly treated in the text, the first containing in turn two subtexts on its own: The first of these is the implication that the French Revolution is ultimately to be attributed to the dissemination of Ibn Rushd’s ideas in Europe. The first subtext of this subtext is that all European development has its ultimate roots in Islam, i. e. those infidels could not have done anything on their own were it not for the Islamic influence they were exposed to. This is a frequently used consoling device in the face of two centuries of uninterrupted humiliation at the hands of the once inferior and always despised infidel. The second is that the French Revolution (and in fact all aspects of European progress) can be emulated by the Muslims without a qualm as its intellectual foundations are ultimately the brainchild of a Muslim. If one problem with this approach is that it conveniently glosses over the fact that Ibn Rushd’s philosophy was fiercely condemned in the Islamic world and had almost no impact on Islamic thinking (in fact even manuscripts of his work were not numerous in the Ottoman Empire), the other is that it completely ignores the effects of the momentous events in European history such as the Renaissance, the invention of the printing press, the discovery of the New World, the Reformation and the Scientific Revolution on European thought, to name but a few.

The second subtext is the author’s insistence that that revolution was carried out against the version of religion that was distorted by the corrupt clergy and the oppressive monarchy, implying, but not stating openly, that the revolution had *not* taken place against religion *per se*, which we know to fly in the face of the facts. Moreover, he himself flip-flops over this issue, stating at the beginning of

the letter that the French Revolution was indeed against the monarchy and the religion and that the Ottoman Revolution was not comparable to it as it was carried out to rid the caliphate from Sultan Abdulhamid II, and several pages later in the appendix that the French Revolution was indeed against religion in the beginning, but adopted a more religion-friendly position in time as its indispensability in ruling the common people became evident (i. e. for practical reasons and not as a matter of principle), preferring to leave the question (that inevitably comes to one's mind but that he himself avoids asking) of any possible parallels in the Ottoman case unanswered. Throw in the odd factual mistake (like the one with Voltaire pointed out above) and you have an account of European history that is more like a story than actual history.

6. The interpretation of the history of the July Revolution is also peculiar in much the same sense: Not only does he make a laughingstock of himself with his glib attempts to ascribe it to the religious fervour of the common people in view of the fact that the exact opposite had always been public knowledge, but he also appears to fail to notice that he is contradicting himself when he is citing religion in this context as he openly reveals himself – like many others, as he hastens to add – an advocate of the replacement of the caliphate and sultanate by a republic just a few lines earlier!

7. The absence of any attempt at defending Islam *per se* in the arguments of the author is striking. One cannot escape the conclusion that he regarded the difficulties caused by the said publications first and foremost as an administrative problem, and an administrative problem exclusively *within the context of the Arab provinces of the empire*. Any possible reaction on the part of the other Muslim peoples of the empire such as the Turks, the Kurds and others, and of other Muslim peoples in other countries does not even find mention.

8. The author urges the Sheikh-ul-Islam very openly to adopt a policy *with two faces or two colours*. The expression he used in Turkish for this is *iki yüzlü veyahud iki renkli bir siyaset*, and it cannot have escaped the attention either of the author, or of the addressee, who were both native speakers of Turkish, that *iki yüzlü* means, in addition to “double-faced” also “hypocrite, deceitful” in Turkish!

By all accounts the author takes the main argument of his letter, namely that religion is there first and foremost as a useful and important administrative tool to preserve the Ottoman Empire, for granted and expects the same from his addressee. In this sense this letter is a fine example of a document that shows us how matter-of-factly the attitude towards religion of even the highest-ranking

religious officials was in the final years of the Empire and consequently how close Turkey really was to full secularisation: It is obvious that organised religion in the traditional sense was seen by the educated elite of the Ottoman Empire as a burden to be gotten rid of but for its role in keeping the Arab provinces in Turkish hands, and once these were gone, not because of the irreligious policies of the central government but because of the Arab Revolt that started about two years after this letter was written, there was neither any obstacle left in the way of full secularisation nor, more importantly, any point left in pursuing an Islamist policy anymore. In other words, with the loss of the Arab provinces, political Islam was out of a job in the new Turkey. In such an environment there really was no feasible alternative to full secularisation and Mustafa Kemal in fact put into practice an idea that had long been part and parcel of the intellectual makeup of the elite and the cadres the fledgling Turkish Republic had inherited from the defunct Ottoman Empire rather than introducing a novel concept the people of the new state were wholly unfamiliar with.

*Realpolitik Please: Ottoman Religious Policy on the Eve of World War One in a Letter from the Kadi of Bagdad to the SheikhuIslam*

**Abstract** ■ A letter dated 2<sup>nd</sup> April 1914 from the then *kadı* of Bagdad Ali Vehbi Efendi to the newly-appointed Sheikh-ul-Islam Mustafa Hayri Efendi is striking both in its shockingly frank style and its revelations concerning Ottoman history of the last decade. The gist of the letter is the central role of religion in Arab-Ottoman relations and the damage done to them by the indifferent attitude of the government towards the irreligious currents prevalent in the centre of the Empire as demonstrated by several publications that caused quite a stir in the Arab provinces. The letter is a fine example of the toffee-nosed attitude of the Ottoman Turkish elite of the time (including the *ulema*) toward the Arabs and a brilliant exposé of their matter-of-fact and quasi-Machiavellian approach concerning religion, and the peculiar treatment of history shows both the quality of their factual knowledge and their intellectual rigour as represented by the author.

**Keywords:** Şeyhülislam Mustafa Hayri Efendi, Bağdat Kadısı Ali Vehbi Efendi, Ottoman history 1909-1922, Second Constitutional Period, Religion and Irreligion in late Ottoman Empire, Arab-Turkish Relations

## APPENDIX

.hü

maḥremānedir

uzunca ise de lütfen kıra'at buyurunuz

Fetvāpenāh!

Dā'ileri Türk oğlu Türk olduğum hâlde yirmi iki seneden beri 'Arabistân kıt'alarında dolaşmaktayım. Tūnus ḥudūdundan Başra'ya kadar şu vāsi' kıt'a-i arāzide meskūn olan aqvām-ı 'arabiyyenin aḥvāl-ı rūḥiyyelerine tamāmiyle vākıf ve muḥtalı'im. Bu ādamlar Zāt-ı Ḥāzret-i Pādişāhī'nin ḥā'iz buldukları ḥilāfet ve salṭanat şıfatlarından yalnız ḥilāfet şıfatına ziyāde ehemmiyyet verirler. Ve salṭanat şıfatına ise hiç ehemmiyyet vermezler.

Dā'ileri devr-i istibdādda Sulṭān 'Abdülḥamīd ile pek çok pençeleştim. Ve biddefā'āt mābeyne götürülüp istinṭāk ve ḥabsolundum. Ḥattā bir defasında Kabasakal Mehmed vāsiyasıyla vapur-u maḥşūş ile Bursa'dan celbolundum. Bu şüretle pençeleşme mes'elesi tām on üç sene imtidād etti. Bunun yedi senesi taht-ı ta'ḳībde bulunmak ve altı sene iki ayı doğrudan doğruya iḳāmete me'mūr olmak şüretiyle güzerān eyledi. İḳāmete me'mūriyyetimin bir senesi Trāblusğarb'da ve beş sene iki ayı Beyrūt'ta geçti. Sulṭān 'Abdülḥamīd ḥilāfet şıfatının nüfūzunu ne yolda su'isti'māl ettiğini ve dīn perdesi arkasında ne roller oynadığını re'yül'ayn müşāhede ettiğim cihetle zāten ḥaḳıḳat-ı hâlde kuru bir nāmdan başka bir şey olmadığını bildiğim şu 'unvān-ı ḥilāfetin ilgāsıyla bir cumhūriyyet te'sisinin şiddetle tarafdārı idim. [01]

2.

Müceddidin meyānında bu fikirde bulunan bu faḳīr gibi daha pek çok kim-seler bulunmuş olmalıdır ki: i'lān-ı meşrūtiyyet 'aḳibinde ḥilāfet resmen ilgā olunmadı ve salṭanat da Cumhūriyyet'e taḥvīl kılınmadı ise de: Pādişāh'ın nüfūzu ifrāt derecede taḥdīd olduğu gibi ḥilāfet 'unvānı da aşlā ḳaāle alınmaz oldu. Ḥattā Meclis-i Meb'ūsān'da (Ḥilāfet bir yādīgār-ı ta'rīḥīdir) sözünü ağzından kaçırınlar bile oldu.

Dā'ileri devr-i istibdādda ḥāşıl etmiş olduğum sālifül'arz fikre binā'en bu ḥāllerden aşlā müte'essir olmaz ve bil'akis memnūn olur idim. İ'lān-ı meşrūtiyyet 'aḳibinde İstanbul'a mūrāca'at etmeğe lüzüm kalmaksızın bitelgraf Sūriyye vilāyetinden Ḥamā sancağına ta'yin olunmuş idim. Ondan sonra Başra ve Beyrūt



gibi memleketlerde dahî birer müddet bulunduktan sonra elyevm Bağdâd'da bulunuyorum. Beyrûr'da iken: Kudüs ve Hâlîlürrahmân'da bir takım mevâdd-ı şer'iyenin tahkîkine me'mûr olduğum cihetle oralara gittim ve bu vesîle ile o havâlîde bulunan ahâlî ile pek yakından temâsta bulundum. İşte bu müşâhedât ve tecârib vâsıtasıyla muṭṭalî' oldum ki: Hükümet-i 'Osmâniyye ile 'Arablar bey-ninde yegâne râbıta hilâfet imiş. İşbu hilâfet 'unvânı meskût 'anh kaldıktan sonra bu râbıta hemânda kâmil münkaṭı' olmuş ve çözülmüş gibidir. Hâl-i hâzırda 'Arablar bu hükümete bir hükümet-i İslâmiyye nazariyle bakmazlar. İşte bu hâli müşâhede edince evvelki fikrimde pek fâhiş bir ḥaṭâ etmiş olduğumu anladım. 'Arablarda elyevm üç nev'i 'akîde ve ahvâl-ı rûhiyye vardır. Bunlardan [02]

## 3.

birincisi: hiç bir ferдин bu hükümete muḥabbeti yoktur. İkincisi: hiç bir ferдин bu hükümete i'timâdı yoktur, üçüncüsü hiç bir ferдин bu hükümetin beḳâsından ümmîdi yoktur. Biz erbâb-ı hükümet ve millet-i ḥâkime eğer bunu böylece bilmez isek ve hilâfeti i'tizâd edersek; kendi kendimizi aldatmaktan başka hiç bir şey yapmış olmayız. İşte bu ḥaḳîkat bu şüretle ma'lûm olduktan sonra şurası da ma'lûmdur ki: bil'umûm ahâlîsinin veyâḥûd bunlardan bir kısm-ı a'zamının muḥabbet ve i'timâdını zâyi' etmiş olan bir hükümet her vaḳit yâ bir inḳılâb veyâḥûd bir inḳırâz tehlikesine ma'rûzdur. Ve ḥattâ maḥkûmdur bile. O hâlde bunu henüz fırsat bilkülliyye kuvvet etmeden bir çâre tedâriki taḥt-ı vücûbda olduğunu söylemeğe bile ḥâcet yoktur zannederim. Dâ'îlerinin 'aḳl-ı ḳaşîrince tedârik olunacak çâre iki nev'idir: Bunlardan birincisi mâddî, ikincisi ma'nevîdir. Mâddî çâre: işlâḥât icrâsıyla hükümetin beḳâsına ahâlîde bir i'timâd ve ümmîd ḥâşıl etmektir. Bu lüzümü şu sırada hükümetimiz de idrâk ve i'tirâf etmiştir. Ḥattâ icrâsına 'azm ve cezmettiğini de maṭbû'ât vâsıtasıyla her gün i'lân ediyor. Ḥayfâ ki: bu i'lânât, bu te'mînât hiç bir kimsenin kulağına bile girmiyor bil'akis işlâḥâttan baḫşolundukça: (esma' u ca'ca'ten velâ erâ ṭiḥnen) mişli dermeyân ile istihzâ ediyorlar. İşte bu da bir ḥaḳîkattir ki: biz bunu dahî inkâr eder isek: [03]

## 4.

yine kendimizi aldatmış oluruz. Ma'ette'essüf me'mûrîn-i kirâm rüfeḳâmızın bugüne ḳadar ta'ḳîb etikleri meslek bu âdamları ḥöşnûd edecek ve kendilerine ümmîd baḫşeyecek bir tarzda olmayıp bil'akis nefret ve ḡazablarını tezyîd edecek bir tarzdadır. Daha ḡarîbi de bu ḥarekât-ı nâlâyıḳanın yevmenfeyevm tenâḳuş yerine tezâyüd etmesidir. Bunun def'ine çâre nedir? Bu yolsuzluğun önü ne şüretle alınabilir? Artık dâ'îlerinin oralara ḳadar 'aḳlım ermez.

Ma'nevî çareye gelince: bu da hilâfet 'unvânının tekrâr sâha-i maṭbû'âta i'âdesiyle berâber i'lân-ı meşrûtiyyetten beri ba'zı gençlerde müşâhede olunan dince mübâlâtsizliği bertaraf etmekten 'ibârettir. Ma'ette'essüf bu noktanın da gözetilmediği her gün müşâhade olunmaktadır. Dîn bâbındaki mübâlâtsizlik siyâset-i dâhiliyyemize o kadar su'ite'sîr ediyor ki: bu te'sîrât bu gibi merkez ba'id ve güşe bucak memleketlerde ecnebî misyoner ve propogandacılarının [پروپوغاندا جیلرینک] yazılmış te'sîrâtından daha çok ziyâdedir. [Bu] tarihîten bir kaç ay evvel buraya Kavm-ı Cedîd nâmında Türkçe bir risâle geldi. O kadar güftgüya mücib oldu ki: çârşî ve pâzârda herkesin ağzında bu risâle deverân ediyordu. İşin daha fenâ ciheti de bu risâlenin hükümet-i hâzıranın ârzusuyla neşredilmiş olduğu 'akîdesinin mevcûd olmasıdır. Henüz bundan hâşıl olan güftgüların arkası alınmadan Celâl Nûrî nâmında birisi bilmem nasıl bir kitâb te'lîf etmiş. Veyâhüd maḳâle yazmış. Bunda Cenâb-ı Rabbânî [04]

## 5.

Ta'âlâ Hazretleriyle Hazret-i Peygamber hakkında nâlâyık ta'bîrler kullanmış. Dâ'ileri keşret-i meşgûliyyetim hasebiyle bu maḳâleleri mü'tâlâ'aya vâkıit bulamadım ise de: Sebülürreşâd Cerîdesi'nde yazılan reddiyyelerin ba'zı pârçalarını mü'tâlâ'a edebildim. Haḳîqaten bu çılgın gençlerin birden bire: güyâ her cihetten tekâmül edilmiş de hiç bahşedecek bir şey kalmamış gibi tenkîdâta bu noktadan başlamaları pek mühlik ve muḫâtaralı bir şeydir. Filḫaḳîka bin yedi yüz seksen dokuz ta'rîḫ-i milâdisinde Onaltıncı Lui'nin zamânında Fransa'da ahâlî tarafından vuḳû'bulan kıyâm hem krallık, hem diyânet 'aleyhinde idi. Erbâb-ı kıyâm hem hükümdâra hem papaslara karşı i'lân-ı 'işyân etmiş idi. Bu gençler, 'Osmanlı İnkilâbını Fransa İnkilâbına benzetmek ve Diyânet-i İslâmiyyeyi Hristiyanlığa kıyâs etmek istiyorlar: bunda pek fâhiş bir ḫaṭâda bulunuyorlar. Çünkü Profesör (Draper)'in dediği gibi Fransa'da bir takım erbâb-ı ğayret (İbn Rüşd'ün) ḫikmet ve felsefesini gizliden gizliye ahâlîye telkîn etmiş ve ahâlî de dîn diye temessül ettikleri şeyin ḫaḳîkat-ı hâlde vaz'-ı ilâhîyle mü'esses bir şey olmayıp papaslar tarafından uydurulmuş bir takım bid' ve ḫurefâtan 'ibâret olduğuna ḳanâ'at-ı kâmile hâşıl etmişlerdi. Binâ'en'aleyh: 'indlerinde müstebid krallar ve bunların vaz'ettiği ğayr-ı ma'ḳûl ḳanunlar ile rü'esâyı rûḫâniyye ve bunların vaz' ettikleri ğayr-ı ma'ḳûl dîn beyninde bir fark bulmamıştı. Ahâlînin nazarında kral ile papasların ve kralın vaz'ettiği [05]

## 6.

ḳânûn ile papasların vaz'ettiği dîn beyninde hiç bir fark yok idi. Her ikisine birden mütehevvirâne bir buğz ve 'adâvet besliyorlardı. Vuḳû'bulan kıyâm da her ikisi 'aleyhine birden vuḳû'buldu. Çünkü sa'âdet-i beşeriyyenin te'mîni için

her ikisinin birden izâlesine lüzüm-ı hâkîki olduğu 'indlerinde taħakkuķ etmiş-  
di. Binâ'en'aleyh: her ikisi 'aleyhinde bir hücum vuķū'bulmakla berâber inķilâb  
'aķibinde 'avâm takımının tenvîr-i efkârı için erbâb-ı efkâr diyânet-i Hristiyâniyye  
'aleyhinde ķaleme sarıldılar. Bu bâbda gerek diyânet-i Hristiyâniyyeyi çürütmek,  
gerekse rü'esâ-yı rûhâniyyeyi halkın nazarından düşürmek için neler yazmadı-  
lar. Bu huşuşda en ziyâde icâle-i aķlâm eden herkesin bildiđi Őu ma'hüd (Volter)  
dir. Bu âdamlar, bu hareketleriyle hâķikâten kavimlerine hidmet ettiler. Çünkü  
Hristiyânlık mezhebinde rü'esâ-yı rûhâniyyenin vaz'etmiş olduğu bid'atler; ahâliyi  
o derece taziyik etmiş idi ki: âdetâ kemiklerini kırıyordu. Rü'esâ-yı rûhâniyyeye  
karşı her bir Hristiyân hürriyyet-i fikriyyesine mâlik olamadıđı gibi 'ırzına ve  
mâlına da mâlik değildi. Rü'esâ-yı rûhâniyye dinde aşıl ve esâsı olmayan birçok  
uydurma hikmetlerle ahâlinin mâlını selbettikleri gibi i'tirâf-ı zünüb vesilesiyle  
'ırzlarında da istedikleri gibi tasarruf ediyorlardı. Binâ'en'aleyh ahâlinin bu müdhîş  
tasalluttan tahlişi lâzım idi. Bu muharrirler de, bu vazife-i insâniyyetkâraneyi ifâ  
ediyorlar idi. Bunları Őu noķta-i [06]

## 7.

nazardan hiç bir şâhib-i inşâf şâyân-ı mu'âheze göremez. Lâkin: Fetvâpenâh!  
İslâmiyyette hâl böyle midir? Bu gençler İslâmiyyeti Hristiyânlık ve 'Osmanlı  
İnķilâbını Fransa İnķilâbına kıyas ediyorlarsa: pek fâhiş bir haķâ ediyorlar.  
Filhâķika Sultân 'Abdülhamîd otuz üç sene devâm eden o müdhîş istibdâdiyle  
'umûm-ı teba'ayı ve bitahşîş müslümânları bîzâr etmiş idi. Bunun izâle-i vücûdu  
vücûbunda bütün Müslümânlar müttefik ve müttehidülefkâr idiler. Lâkin:  
Fransa'da olduğu gibi bunun izâle-i vücûdiyle berâber, Hîlâfet-i İslâmiyyenin de  
izâle-i vücûdu ahâleden bir kimsenin hâtır ve hayâlinde geçiyor muydu? Hâşâ  
ve kellâ! Bil'akis bütün 'âlem-i İslâmiyyetin ümmîdgâhı olan kürsî-yi hîlâfeti  
Sultân 'Abdülhamîd gibi bir muhribin işğâl etmesi İslâmiyyet için pek tehlikeli  
görülüyor idi. İşte bundan dolayı 'Abdülhamîd'in izâle-i vücûdu ârzüsuna efkâr-ı  
'umûmiyyeyi sevkedene yine gayret-i dîniyye idi. Őu hâlde hükümet-i Osmaniyye  
inķilâbını Fransa inķilâbına benzetip de inķilâb 'aķibinde dîn 'aleyhine ķaleme sa-  
rılmak hükümet-i Osmaniyye ve millet-i İslâmiyye için hiç de hayırlı bir hidmet  
deđil bil'akis büyük bir felâket ve tehlikedir. Bu gibi neşriyyâtın su'ite'sîri Türk  
memleketlerinden ziyâde 'Arab memleketlerinde zâhir oluyor. 'Arablar bu gibi  
huşuşattan [07]

## 8.

müte'essir olmak huşuşunda pek haşşâştırlar. Bu hâli gerek Süriyye ve gerek  
'Irâķ'da biddefât müşâhede eyledim. Zannolunmasın ki: 'Arablar Türklere

daha ziyâde dîndârdır. Hâyr! Emr ber 'akisdir. Fî zamâninâ mevcûd olan 'Arablar âdetâ umacı [اماجى yazılmış] kesilmişlerdir. Bu âadamların nezdinde elyevm haram yoktur. Yalan şehâdeti, yemîn-i kâzib, eklü emvâlinnâs bilbâfıl, eklü emvâlilevķâf, eklü emvâlileytâm, kizb, hîle ve hüd'a: hepsi bunların nezdinde bugünkü günde mubâhtır. 'Arabların dîni menfa'at-ı şahşiyyesidir. 'Arab dîninin aħkâmını velev cüz'i olsun maşrafı mücib olmamak ve menfa'at-ı şahşiyyesine dokunmamak şartıyla kabûl eder. Ammâ menfa'at-i şahşiyyesine dokunan mevâdde 'Arab ne dîni tanır, ne mezhebi tanır. Her şeyi bu menfa'ate fedâ eder. 'Arablar fî zamâninâ bu huşuşda o kadar ileri gitmişlerdir ki: bir muħarrir bu bâbda cildler dolusu kitâb yazsa: yine bu haķıķati haķķıyla ta'rif ve izâh etmiş olmaz. 'Arablar nezdinde bugünkü günde (dîn tesettür, ve yemîn igfâl içündür) düsturu hûkümfermâdır. 'Arablar 'indinde fî zamâninâ Qur'an Hâdis fıķıh, aħkâm-ı şer'iyye, Haccü Beytullâhülharâm gibi muķaddesât, kâffesi: âlet-i setr ve tezvîr ittiħâz olunmuştur. 'Arab maħkeme-i şer'iyyeye gelir, "Mâlımı livechillâh vaķfettim." der ve tescil ettirir. Hâlbuki: maķşadı ecr ve \* [\*okunamıyor]dır, [08]

## 9.

kız evlâdlarıyla sevmediği vereseden veyâhüd dâyinlerden mâl kaçırmaktır. Buna da âlet, Şer'-i Şerif 'Arab Hacc'a gider. Maķşadı haramdan kesbetmiş olduğu mâlı Cenâb-ı Haķķ'a helâl ettirmektedir. Çünkü Buħârî-i Şerif'de Hacc bahşinde (Hacc-ı Beytullâhülharâm kâffe-i zünûba kefarete olur) me'âlinde bir Hâdis-i Şerif vardır.<sup>1</sup> Ba'zı câhil şerrâh bu 'afvın huķûķ-ı 'ibâda de şümülü olduğunu söylemek gibi bir haķâda bulunmuşlardır. 'Arabların ekşerisi, bu hâdis ile mezkûr şerrâhın aķvâline vâķıfdırlar. Binâ'enaleyh edâ ettikleri Hacc iktisâb ettikleri haram mâli helâl etmek için Cenâb-ı Rabbâni Hâzretleri'ne karşı ittiħâz [اتحاد yazılmış] olunmuş bir hüd'adır. İşte bu âadamların İslâmiyyet'e temessük ve intisâbları bu kabildendir. Bu cümle ile berâber dîn bunlar vâsıtasıyla intişâr ettiği için bunlar kendilerini dînin şâhib ve hâmisî 'add ve i'tibâr ederler. 'Aķâ'id-i İslâmiyyeye 'alenen muħâlif görülen ef'âl ve aķvâle karşı ca'li olarak fevķel'âde bir te'essür ve heyecân izhâr ederler. Dâ'ileri bu aħvâle tafşilâtiyle muţţalı' olduğum için Kavm-ı Cedîd risâlesinin intişârında bunun Mısır ve Süriyye ve Hind gazetelerine 'aksetmesinden pek ziyâde havf ve endişe etmiş ve hemân ķaleme sarılarak maķâm-ı mu'allâ-yı fetvâpenâhileri tarafından risâle-i mezkûrenin merdûdiyyeti i'lân olun-

1 حَدَّثَنَا آدَمُ، قَالَ حَدَّثَنَا شُعْبَةُ، حَدَّثَنَا سَيَّارُ أَبُو الْحَكَمِ، قَالَ سَمِعْتُ أَبَا حَازِمٍ، قَالَ سَمِعْتُ أَبَا هُرَيْرَةَ . رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ . قَالَ سَمِعْتُ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَقُولُ " مَنْ حَجَّ لِلَّهِ فَلَمْ يَرْثْ وَ لَمْ يَفْسُقْ رَجَعَ كَيَوْمِ وُلِدَتْهُ أُمُّهُ " . Bukhari, *Al-Kutub al- Sitta wa Shuruhuha: Sahib al-Bukhari 1-3*, ed. Bedreddin Çetiner, vol. 1, book 2, Kitab al-Hajj (Book 25). Dar al-Sahnun, Tunis, Çağrı Yayınları, İstanbul 1992. s. 141.

ması lüzümünü şifre ile 'arz etmişdim. Maḳām bu redde bilmem ne maḥzūr gördü ki: bunu yapmadı. Yalnız şifreye (kitābın mü'ellifi ḥaḳḳında ta'ḳibāt-ı ḳānūniyye icrā olunmakta olduğunu) cevāben beyān etmekle iktifā edildi. [09]

## 10.

Mahāzā faḳīr bu cevāba yine Bāb-ı Fetvā'ca bir red süsü vererek maḥallī gazetelerile i'lān ettim. Aradan çok geçmeden ve (zādenī eṭṭin ve belleten uḥrā) ḳabīlinden olarak sālifül'arz Celāl Nūrī nāmında birinin maḳāleleri güftgüsü meydān aldı.

Fetvāpenāh! Müslümānlar üzerinde ḫilāfet 'unvānının te'şirinin top ve tü-fengden daha ziyāde olduğunu bālāda 'arz etmişdim. Yine tekrār ederim ki: ḫükümetimizden bu ḫilāfet şıfatı nez' edilecek olursa Pādişāhımızın 'Acem Şāhiyla Fās ve Masḳaṭ Emīrlerinden ḫiç bir farkı kalmayacaktır. Ḥālbukı: bugünkü günde Ḥükümet-i 'Osmāniyye ve bāḫuşuş idāre-i ḫāzıra 'aleyhinde her yerde propaganda-cıların پروپوغانداچیلرینک [yazılmış] vücūdu da eksik deḡildir. Bunlardan biri bugünkü günde bir eline Ḳavm-ı Cedid diđer eline de Celāl Nūrī'nin kitābını alıp da Mışır'da bir kürsī üzerine çıkararak (Ey Müslümānlar bakınız – şū kitāblardaki küfr ve ilḫādın derecesine! Ḥalīfe ḫāmī-i dīn-i mübīn olmak lāzımdır. Ḥālbukı bizim ḫilāfetine i'tikād ettiğimiz zātın maḳarr-ı salṭanatında ḫükümetinin inzimām-ı reyile bu gibi mülḫidāne kitāblar neşr ve 'ibādullah bunların mazmūnunu i'tikāda da'vet olunuyor. Şu ḫâlde bu zātın ḫilāfeti şaḫiḫ midir?) diyecek olursa işte o daḳıkadā i'tibāren 'Arablarla Ḥükümet-i 'Osmāniyye beynindeki reşte-i ḫilāfet münḳaṭı' olmuş bulunacaktır. Böyle bir şey Müslümānlardan kimsenin ḫatırına gelmese bile bunu İngiliz Ḥükümeti er geç yaptıracaktır. Bu naşıl oluyor da ḫükümetçe nazar-ı diḳḳattan dūr tutuluyor. Buralarına bir dürlü 'aḳlım ermiyor. [10]

## 11.

Fetvāpenāh! Hep biliriz ki: Meşrūṭiyyette efkār ḫür ve maṭbū'āt sansüre tābi' deḡildir. Lākin: Ḳānūn-ı Esāsī mücebince edyān ta'arruzdan maşūn deḡil midir? Bu kitābların mü'elliflerinin sözleri 'alenen İslāmiyyet'e ta'arruz deḡil midir? Bilcümle edyān Ḳānūn-ı Esāsī mücebince ta'arruzdan maşūn olduđu ḫâlde ḫükümetin dīn-i resmīsi olan İslāmiyyet bu maşūniyyetten müsteşnā mıdır? Naşıl olur da Ḳānūn-ı Esāsī aḫḳāmına muḡāyir olarak bu ta'arruzdan iḡmāz-ı 'ayn ediyorlar. İşte herkes yekdiđerine şū su'ālī irād etmektedir. Buna karşı verilecek cevāb ne olacağını bilemiyorum. Efkār-ı ḳaşıre-i dā'iyānemce bu gibi kitāblar mazmūnlarının İslāmiyyetçe ḳaṭ'iyen merdūd olduđu daḳıḳa fevtettirilmeksizin Maḳām-ı Mu'allā-yı Fetvāpenāhilerinden i'lān olunması lāzım ve lābūd olduđu gibi bir ān evvel bir ṭarafı 'Arabca diđer ṭarafı Türkçe olarak Bāb-ı Fetvā'da şırf dīnī bir gazete te'sīs edilip onun vāsıtasıyla bu gibi neşriyyāta muḳābele edilmelidir.

Bunda da ne kadar isti'câl gösterilirse: o kadar nâfi' ve hayırlıdır; zîra bir cerîha kangran\* [\*قانغان yazılmış] olduktansonra اولدقدنصنرد [اولدقدنصنرد] tedâvisinden hîç bir fâ'ide hâşıl olmaz. Dâ'ileri hırş ve tama' ve menfa'at-ı şahşiyeye ne olduğunu bilmem. 'Ömrümün en kıymetdâr zamanlarını menfâlarda, zindânlarda geçirmekliğim de bu iddi'âmın şihhatine bir delil-i kâfidir. Elhâleti hâzâ ise: sinnim altmış ikiye bâliğ olmuş ve artık dünyâ ile pek az 'alâkam kalmıştır. Bu ma'rûzât ile ser-i vâlâlarını taşdî' etmekten ma'şşad-ı dâ'iyânem, mücerred dînime ve bunun zîmnında devlet ve hükûmetime hizmet etmektir. Şâyân-ı kabûl görülürse feni'me'Imat'lüb. Eğer görülmez ise bir güşe-i nişyâna atıverir ve mündericâtından kimseye de bahşetmezsiniz. İşte bu kadar. Bâkî tevfiğ ve hüve ni'am errefiğ. Fî 15 Mart Sene 330 Bağdâd Kâdîsı

Ed-dâ'î

Vehbî [imza] [11]

“

Lâhika

Bâlâda 'arz olduğu vechile Fransa İnçılâbı 'akîbinde erbâb-ı kalem tarafından diyânet 'aleyhinde i'lân-ı harb edilmiş ve bu hâl Rusya'dan mâ'adâ bütün Avrupa memâlikine sirâyet etmiş ve uzun bir müddet devâm etmişidi. Lâkin: muahharan ahâlînin ayak takımını râbîta-i diyânetten başka hîç bir şey zabt ü rabt edemeyeceği Avrupa hükûmâtıyla feylesofları tarafından dahî gereği gibi idrâk edilmiş olmakla yine yavaş, yavaş eski diyânet siyâsetine rücû'a başlanılmıştır. Almanya İmparatoru Çin yağmasına donanma gönderdiği sırada irâd ettiği bir nuçukda (İncil'in ahkâmını Aşkâ-yı Şark'da icrâ edeceğim) demişidi. Kezâlik i'lân-ı meşrûtiyyet 'akîbinde Tanîn gazetesi: Avusturya İmparatoru'nun Naşrâniyyetçe eyyâm-ı mübârekeden 'addolunan bir günde iki elinde iki büyük kilisa mumu olduğu hâlde papasların arkası sıra üç sâ'at memleket sökâklarında dolaştığını yazmışidi. Bu kadar uzaklara gitmeğe ne hâcet? Geçen sene düvel-i müttefiğe tarafından 'aleyhimize i'lân olunan harb, harb-ı şalibden başka bir şey miydi? Bu harb eşnâsında: Tayms, Figaro, Tan, Naye Faye Prese → Times, Figaro, Temps, Neue Freie Presse [نایه فرایه پرسه، تان، فیگارو، تایمس، Tayms, Figaro, Tan, Naye Faye Prese yazılmış] gazeteleri gibi en meşhûr gazetelerle bunların tâbi' buldukları hükûmetlerin [12] ta'kîb ettikleri siyâset de 'alenen siyâset-i şalibiyye değil miydi? İşte bu hakîkat bu şüretle gözümüzün önünde dururken: bizim bir takım hõppa beylerin tâ Cenâb-ı Bârî-i Ta'âlâ Hazretleriyle Hazret-i Peygamber'den tenkîdâta başlamalarını millet hõş görebilir mi? Ve bunu hazmedebilir mi? Bu hareket ken-

di eliyle kendi kuyusunu kazmaktan başka ne olabilir? ‘Arablar; (Kelbâhiş ‘an hatfihî bizîlfihî) diyorlar. Siyâset-i dîniyye ta‘kîbi huşûşunda hükümetimiz pek müşkil bir mevki’de bulunmaktadır. Evliyâ-yı umûr bunu aşlâ nazardan dür tutmamalıdır. Şöyle ki: biz eğer hükümetimiz hükümet-i dîniyyedir. diyecek ve İslâmiyyet hesâbına hareket edecek olur isek: buna ecnebîlerle aramızda bulunan Hristiyanlar râzî olmazlar. Yok eğer hükümetimiz dâinden tecerrüd etmiş sırf siyâsî bir hükümettir. diyecek olur isek buna da Müslümânlar râzî olmazlar. Sonra Mehmedcikleri harbe sevk edemeyiz. Yâ ne yapmalıdır? İki yüzlü veyâhüd iki renkli bir siyâset tutmalıyız. Bunun biri diyânetten tecerrüd etmiş sırf siyâsî yüzü diğeri ise: sırf dînî yüzü olmak lâzım gelir. Müslümânlara karşı sırf dînî olan yüzü veyâhüd rengi göstermek lâzım gelir. Elhâk bundaki nezâket ve şu‘ûbet cây-ı tereddüd [13] ve inkâr değildir. Böyle nâzik bir siyâseti idâre edecek siyâsilerimiz mevcûd mudur ‘acabâ? İşte bu da cây-ı su’âldir. Şimdiye kadar görülen ifrâţ ve tefrîtlere nazaran bu da yok demektir. Meşelâ vâlinin birisi merkez vilâyetinde bulunan bir câmî’-i şerîfin va‘az kürsîsine çıkıp orada İslâmiyyet’in mehâsininden ve ittihâd-ı islâmdan bahşediyor. Va‘az kürsîsinde irâd ettiğî sözleri ertesi gün cerâid-i mahalliyye neşrediyor veyâhüd ettiriyor. Bunu gören ve işiten ecânible teba‘a-i gayr-ı müslime (bakınız bu âdamlar hâlâ “fanatik” siyâsetinden kurtulamamışlar, bunlar âdam olmazlar) diyor. Diğeri bir vâlîyi Mevlûd-i Şerîf cemâ‘atine da‘vet ediyorlar. O da gelen da‘vetçiye (Mevlûd ne imiş siz hâlâ bu kafâda mısınız) cevâbını veriyor. Bunu işiden Müslümânlar da (bakınız şu hâle böyle mülhîdlerden millete ne hayır gelir) diyorlar. İşte bu ifrâţ ve tefrîtin hadd-ı vasa‘îsini bulacak ve diyânetle siyâset beyninde bir muvâzenet hâşıl edecek bir maqâm var ise: o da Bâb-ı Fetvâdır. Bâb-ı Mu‘allâ-yı Fetvâpenâhî diyânet ve siyâset mîzânını ele alıp iki kefeteyninden birine diyâneti ve diğeri siyâseti vaz‘ ederek bunlar beyninde bir muvâzene hâşıl etmelidir. Eğer bunu yapamaz ise: her hâlde bu kefenin [14] biri ağır basar, diğeri kefeyi devirir. Ma‘ette‘essüf şimdiye kadar bu mîzân, kefeteyni beyninde tevâzun hâşıl ettirebilecek bir ehl-i başîretin yedine teslim olunmamıştır. İşte bu def‘a millet buna Zâat-ı Vâlâ-yı Fetvâpenâhîlerinden intizâr ediyor. Ümmîdi yine boşa çıkarsa ne yapalım? Elhükümü lillâh.

Fî 20 Mart Sene 330

Vehbî

(Zeyl)

Fetvâpenâh

Bağdâd’da çıkan Zuhûr gazetesinin leffen taqdim olunan maqţû‘u müţâlâ‘asından müstebân buyurulacağı üzere Bağdâd’a vürûd-u dâ‘iyânemden beri kürsî-yi vazîfe üzerinde mehdîyâne ‘adâletle cevâmî’-i meşhûrede menâbir

üzerinde âteşin nuţuklar ve huţbeler irâdiyle ve olanca kuvvetimle ahâlîdeki su'itefehhümleri izâleye ve hükûmete ısındırmağa çalışıyorum. Başra'da iken de böyle yapmışıdim. Hayfâ ki siyâset-i millet ve aqvâmdan bihâber olan bir takım gençlerimizin harekâtı bu sa'y ve güştleri semeresiz bırakıyor. Ma'hâzâ (mâ lâ yüdreğ külluhu lâ yütreg külluhu) kı'idesine tevfiқан 'âcizleri yine ğayretime fütür getirmeyerek çalışıyorum. Bu huşûşa Zât-ı Valâ-yı Fetvâpenâhileri'nin dađi nazar-ı diğğatlerini 'âcizâne celb ve da'vet ediyorum. Çünkü bu gibi ahvâlden ne gibi su'ite'sirler, ne gibi cereyânlar hâşıl olduğunu re'yül'ayn müşâhede edip duyuyorum. Bâkı fermân

Fî 20 M"

Vehbî [15]



Hu

Confidential

Please read even if it is a bit long

Fetvapenah!<sup>1</sup>

Although yours truly am a Turk I have been wandering in Arab lands for the past twenty-two years. I am perfectly familiar with the state of mind of the Arab peoples dwelling in the vast stretch of land from the borders of Tunisia to Basra. These men regard only the title of caliph of His Majesty the Sultan and totally disregard his title of sultan.

Yours truly fought extensively against Sultan Abdulhamid in the era of tyranny and was taken to the *mabeyn* numerous times, interrogated and incarcerated. In fact, at one point I was taken from Bursa by Kabasakal Mehmed<sup>2</sup> by special steamship. This struggling in this fashion lasted for a full thirteen years. Seven years of this passed under surveillance and six years and two days directly under forced residence. One year of my forced residence was in Tripoli and five years and two months in Beirut. As I saw with my own eyes in which manner Sultan Abdulhamid misused the title of caliph and what roles he played under the guise of religion, I was strongly in favour of the abolition of the caliphate – which I knew to be nothing more than an empty title in reality in any case – and the establishment of a republic. [01]

2.

There must have been a number of other persons amongst the reformists who were of the same opinion as can be seen from the fact that although the caliphate was indeed not abolished officially in the wake of the declaration of constitutional government and the sultanate was not transformed into a republic, the influence of the sultan was excessively restricted and the title of caliph was never even mentioned. In fact, there have even been persons in the Chamber of Deputies who let the phrase “The Caliphate is a relic of history” slip from their tongues.

On account of the above-mentioned idea I had acquired during the era of oppression yours truly was in no way distressed by such instances, on the contrary, I was quite happy. In the wake of the declaration of constitutional government

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1 Title of the Sheikh-ul-Islam, used when addressing him.

2 One of the most infamous members of Sultan Abdulhamid's secret police.

I was assigned by telegraph from the province of Suriye to the *sancak* of Hama without having to refer to Istanbul. After that I was in the provinces of Basra and Beirut for some time and today I am in Bagdad. When I was at Beirut I visited Jerusalem and Khalil-el-Rahman [Hebron] as I was given the task of investigating some matters pertaining to the Sharia and thus had very close contact with the people in that region. It is through such observations and experiences that I came to realise that the only bond between the Ottoman government and the Arabs is the caliphate. As soon as that title of caliph were to be passed over in silence that bond would be virtually totally cut and undone. At present the Arabs do not regard this government as an Islamic one. When I observed this state of affairs it downed on me that I had made a big mistake in my previous opinion. The Arabs today have three convictions and three states of mind. Of these [02]

## 3.

the first is that no one has any sympathy for this government; the second, that no one has any confidence in this government; and the third, no one has any hope in the continued existence of this government. Should we as the people of government and the dominant nation not know this for a fact and lean upon the caliphate, we would only be fooling ourselves. Now that this fact has been thus established, it is also to be known for a fact that a government that has lost the affection and confidence of the totality or a great majority of its population would be subject to, and indeed destined to, the danger of a revolution or a downfall at any moment. Thus it goes without saying in my opinion that it is imperative that some sort of a measure be taken against this latency before it totally turns into a reality. There are two measures to be resorted to according to yours truly, the first being material and the second spiritual. The material measures consist in generating some confidence and hope in the population in the continued existence of the government by way of implementing reforms. Our government has also realised and admitted this necessity at this juncture. In fact, it keeps declaring through the press its resolve and determination to its implementation day after day. Alas, the declarations and assurances leave no trace in anyone's ears, on the contrary, whenever there is talk of reforms they make fun of it with the words *asma'ū ja'jatan wa lā arā ṭiḥnan*<sup>3</sup>. This too is a fact, and we would only be fooling ourselves [03]

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3 An Arabic expression that translates as “*I hear the pounding but do not see the flour*”, roughly equivalent to “actions speak louder than words”, implying “deeds, not words”.

## 4.

if we were to deny it. Unfortunately the course our august official colleagues have been following up to now is not one that would please these men and give them hope, on the contrary, it is one that would augment their hatred and wrath. Stranger still, these unsuitable actions increase rather than decrease day by day. How can this be warded off? How can this impropriety be prevented? That is beyond the grasp of yours truly.

As for the spiritual measures: this consists in the reintroduction of the title of caliph in the press and the redress of the tactlessness observed in some young men since the declaration of constitutional government. It is unfortunately seen every day that this point is not heeded. The negative effect of the tactlessness in matters religious on our internal politics is such that it is greater than that of the foreign missionaries and propaganda in such remote provinces far from the centre. A few months ago there arrived a pamphlet in Turkish with the title *Kavm-i Cedid* (The New Nation).<sup>4</sup> It caused such a stir that it was the talk of the town. What is worse is the conviction present that this pamphlet was published at the request of the present government. The stir this had caused was not yet dealt with when some Celal Nuri apparently compiled some book or wrote some article, in which he [04]

## 5.

apparently used inappropriate expressions for The Almighty and The Prophet Muhammad.<sup>5</sup> Yours truly have not been able to find the time to read these articles as I was very busy, but I have been able to read some portions of the refutations published in the periodical *Sebilürreşad*. It really is extremely dangerous and risky that these mad youth start criticism from this point as if perfection had already been reached in every aspect and there were nothing else left to discuss. It is true that the popular rebellion that took place in France against Louis XVI in 1789 AD was against both the monarchy and the religion. The rebels had declared rebellion against both the ruler and the priests. These youths are committing a grave error if they wish to liken the Ottoman Revolution to the French Revolution and compare Islam to Christianity. For as Professor Draper<sup>6</sup> had stated, some

4 Ubeydullah Efgani, *Kavm-i Cedid: Kitabül-Mevazi*. İkbal Kütüphanesi. Şems Matbaası, İstanbul 1913. For a thorough discussion, see body of the article.

5 See body of the article for further discussion.

6 Draper, John William. *History of the Conflict between Religion and Science*. The International Scientific Series, D. Appleton and Company, New York 1875. French

industrious people in France had secretly insinuated the philosophy of Ibn Rushd to the populace and the populace had become totally convinced that what they had had internalised as religion was in reality not something divinely appointed but just some heresies and superstitions fabricated by the priests. Therefore there was no difference in their minds between the tyrannical kings and the illogical laws they laid down and the religious leaders and the illogical religion they laid down. There was no difference whatsoever in the eyes of the people between the king and the priests and the laws that the king laid down [05]

6.

and the religion the priests laid down. They were harbouring a furious rancour and enmity for both. And the rebellion that took place erupted against both. For it had become clear in their minds that there was a real need to eliminate both to secure the felicity of humanity. Therefore an attack on both took place and in the aftermath of the rebellion the intellectuals put pen to paper against the Christian religion. What didn't they write in this context to disparage the Christian religion and to discredit the spiritual leaders in the eyes of the people? The one person who wrote most on this subject is the famous Voltaire whom everybody knows about. These people rendered a real service to their nations with these actions of theirs, because the inventions put in place in the Christian religion by the spiritual leaders were oppressing the populace to such an extent that they were virtually breaking their bones. No Christian was in possession either of his freedom of thought or of his honour and property before the spiritual leaders. The spiritual leaders were appropriating the possessions of the people with numerous pieces of wisdom that have no origin or basis in religion and they were also making use of their honour as they pleased through the institution of the confession of sins. Therefore the population had to be freed from this terrible assault. And these authors were fulfilling this humane duty. No-one with a sense of fairness [06]

7.

can see these as worthy of criticism from this point of view. But, Fetvapenah! Is this the case in Islam? These youths are making a grave mistake if they are comparing Christianity to Islam and the Ottoman Revolution to the French

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translation: Draper, John William. *Les Conflits de la science et de la religion* (translator not indicated). Bibliothèque Scientifique Internationale, Librairie Germer Baillière, Paris 1888, Turkish translation (from the French translation) : Ahmed Midhat Efendi, *Niza-i Ulum ü Din-İslam ve Ulum*, Tercüman-ı Hakikat Matbaası, İstanbul 1313/1895. See body of the article for further discussion.

Revolution. In fact Sultan Abdulhamid had depressed the general public and especially the Muslims with his terrible tyranny that lasted for thirty three years. All the Muslims were united and unanimous in accepting the necessity of his elimination. But had it crossed anyone's mind to eliminate the Islamic Caliphate together with him, as was the case in France? No way! On the contrary, it was seen as very dangerous for Islam that a destroyer like Sultan Abdulhamid occupy the seat of caliphate where the whole Islamic World places its hopes. Therefore it was again the religious zeal that moved public opinion to the desire to eliminate Sultan Abdulhamid. This being the case, it is in no way a beneficial service to liken the Revolution of the Ottoman government to the French Revolution and take pen and paper against religion in its wake, on the contrary, it is a great disaster and danger. The negative effects of such publications are more visible in Arab lands than in Turkish ones. The Arabs are very sensitive [07]

## 8.

to such things. I observed this numerous times both in Syria and in Iraq. This is not to mean that the Arabs are any more religious than Turks. No! The case is rather the reverse. The Arabs of our time have virtually turned into ogres. These men know no *haram*. False testimony, perjury, misappropriation of the goods of people and of the pious foundations, of orphans, lies, deception and trickery: all are fair today in their eyes. The Arabs' religion is their personal interest. The Arab accepts the tenets of religion on the condition that they do not cause any expense, even a small one, and touch his personal interests. But in articles that touch his personal interests the Arab knows neither religion nor sect. He sacrifices everything to this interest. In our time the Arabs have taken this to such heights that even if an author were to write volumes on this he would still not be able to describe and explain this truth to the extent that it deserves. Amongst the Arabs today the slogan "Religion is there for cover-up and oath for deception" has currency. In our time amongst the Arabs the Qur'an, the Hadith, Islamic jurisprudence, the tenets of the Sharia, holy things like pilgrimage to the House of God, all of these are taken to be instruments of cover-up and deceit. The Arab comes to the Sharia court and says "I have endowed my property for the sake of God" and has this recorded. His aim, though, is remuneration and ...\* [\*illegible] [08]

## 9.

to deprive his daughters, inheritors he does not like and his creditors of his property. And it is the Holy Sharia that is used to this end! The Arab goes on pilgrimage. His aim is to make ill-gotten (*haram*) gains well-gotten (*helal*). For

there is a Hadith in Bukhari that means “Pilgrimage to the House of God is an atonement for all sins”.<sup>7</sup> Some ignorant commentators committed the error of stating that this was to be extended to the rights of the servants [of God] as well. Most Arabs are familiar with this hadith and the words of the said commentators. Therefore the pilgrimage they are performing is a deception they employ to make the goods they acquired through sinful means lawful in the eyes of the Lord. This is the nature of the attachment to and claims of Islam of these men. Nonetheless, as religion disseminated through them they see themselves as the proprietors and protectors of religion. They affect an extraordinary sadness and excitement against words and deed openly against the creeds of Islam. Since I am thoroughly familiar with this state of affairs I had great fear and anxiety when the pamphlet *Kavm-ı Cedid* was published that this would find a reflection in Egyptian, Syrian and Indian newspapers and immediately put pen to paper and related in a ciphered communication the necessity of the declaration by the Exalted Office of the Sheikh ul Islam of the refutation of the said pamphlet. The office saw I do not know what reason to refute this and did not do this. It merely contented itself with the declaration by way of a reply to the cipher that “legal procedures concerning the author of the book are being conducted”. [09]

## 10.

But yours truly relayed this reply to the local newspapers by giving it the appearance of a refutation on the part of the Office of the Sheikh ul Islam. Not long after there appeared rumours concerning the articles of one said Celal Nuri like the proverbial fuel added to the fire.

Fetvapenah! I had stated above that the influence of the title of caliph upon Muslims is greater than that of cannons and guns. I repeat: If this title of caliph were to be excised from our government there would be no distinction left between our Sultan and the Shah of Iran and the Emirs of Morocco and Muscat. But today there is no shortage of propagandists everywhere against the Ottoman government and especially the present government. If one of them were to ascend to a pulpit somewhere in Egypt with a copy of *Kavm-ı Cedid* in one hand and one of Celal Nuri's book in the other and to say “O Muslims, look at the degree

7 حَدَّثَنَا آدَمُ، قَالَ حَدَّثَنَا شُعْبَةُ، حَدَّثَنَا سَيَّارُ أَبُو الْحَكَمِ، قَالَ سَمِعْتُ أَبَا حَازِمٍ، قَالَ سَمِعْتُ أَبَا هُرَيْرَةَ . رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ . قَالَ سَمِعْتُ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَقُولُ ” مَنْ حَجَّ لِلَّهِ فَلَمْ يَرُوثْ وَلَمْ يَفْسُقْ رَجَعَ كَيَوْمٍ وَلَدَتْهُ أُمُّهُ “ Bukhari, *Al-Kutub al-Sitta wa Shūruhūha: Sahih al-Bukhari 1-3*, ed. Bedreddin Çetiner, vol. 1, book 2, Kitab al-Hajj (Book 25). Dar al-Sahnun, Tunis, Çağrı Yayınları, İstanbul 1992. p. 141. See body of the article for further discussion.

of irreligion and blasphemy contained in these books! The caliph has to be the protector of the revealed religion. But such blasphemous books are being published in the seat of authority of the person whose caliphate we believe in with the consent of his government and the servants of God are being invited to believe in their contents. Is then the caliphate of this person sound?" it would be the moment when the bond of caliphate between the Arabs and the Ottoman government would be severed. Even if this were not to occur to any one of the Muslims the British government would cause it to happen sooner or later. How come that this is being disregarded by the government? This I simply cannot grasp. [10]

11.

Fetvapenah! We all know that under constitutional government opinion is free and press is not subject to censorship. But are religions not immune to attacks according to the Constitution? Are the words of these authors not an open attack against Islam? Is Islam, which is the official religion of the government, excluded from immunity from attack when all religions are enjoying it? How come they are turning a blind eye to this attack? This is the question that everyone is asking one another. I do not know what reply to give to it. In my humble opinion it imperative that it be announced without delay by The Exalted Office of the Sheikh ul Islam that the contents of such books are totally rejected by Islam, as is the establishment at the Office of the Sheikh ul Islam of a purely religious bilingual newspaper in Arabic and Turkish to counter such publications. The sooner the better, for it would be of no use to treat a wound once it has gone gangrenous. Yours truly does not know what ambition and greed and personal interests are. The fact that I have spent the most valuable years of my life in exile and prisons is enough proof of the soundness of this assertion of mine. I have now reached the age of sixty-two and have very little connection left to the world. My humble aim in disturbing the mind of Your Excellency with this petition is merely to serve my religion and by implication my state and government. If it were to be deemed worthy of acceptance, then fine. If not, then you can cast it away to a corner of oblivion and not say a word of its contents to anyone. That is it. I wish you much success and what a wonderful companion He is!

On the 15<sup>th</sup> of March 330 AJ/28<sup>th</sup> March 1914

Yours truly,

Vehbi

Kadi of Bagdad

[Signature]

[11]

“

## Appendix

As stated above, a war had been declared against religion in the wake of the Revolution by the authors and this condition had spread to all European countries except Russia and had lasted for a long while. But as it then duly downed on the governments and philosophers of Europe as well that the common folk of the population could not be kept in check by anything other than the bond of religion, slowly a return to the former policy of religion began. The German Emperor had said “I shall implement the decrees of the Bible in the Far East” when sending troops to the plunder of China.<sup>1</sup> Again, the newspaper *Tanin* had written in the wake of the declaration of constitutional government that the Austrian Emperor had walked for three hours behind priests with two large church candles in his hand on one of the days Christianity deems holy. Why go that far? Was the war declared against us last year by the allied states anything other than a crusade? Was not the policy that the most famous newspapers like *The Times*, *Le Figaro*, *Neue Freie Presse* and the governments they are subordinate to [12] anything other than a policy of crusade? Can then the nation tolerate the criticisms of some dandy gentlemen of ours that begin from The Lord Almighty and The Prophet? And digest it? What can this action be other than digging one’s own grave? The Arabs say *ka’lbāhis ‘an ḥatfīhi bizilfīhi*.<sup>2</sup> Our government finds itself at a very precarious position concerning the pursuit of a religious policy. Those who are in charge of affairs should never lose sight of that. For if we were to say that our government is a religious one and act for the benefit of Islam, the foreigners and the Christians amongst us would not agree to that. If on the other hand we were to say that our government is a purely political one disassociated from religion, then the Muslims would not agree to that. We cannot send the *Mehmedciks* to war then. What, then, is to be done? We have to adopt a policy with two faces or two colours. One face of this should be its purely political face divorced from religion and the other its purely religious face. To Muslims the purely religious face should be shown. Verily

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1 See body of the article for further discussion.

2 An Arabic expression meaning to bring about one’s own destruction, dig one’s own grave.



the delicacy and difficulty of this can neither be doubted nor [13] denied. Do we have politicians who can steer such a delicate policy? This is also questionable. It also appears to be absent if the excesses either way are to be any guide. For instance a governor ascends to the pulpit of a mosque in the centre of his province and talks about the merits of Islam and about Pan-Islamism. The words he utters at the pulpit then get published by the local newspapers or he lets them be published. The foreigners and the non-Muslim subjects who see that then say “Look, these people have still not been able to rid themselves of the policy of fanaticism, they are good for nothing”. Another governor gets invited to a celebration of the Birth of the Prophet (*mevlud*), and he replies to the person who brings the invitation “What is this celebration of the Birth of the Prophet (*mevlud*), do you still harbour this mentality?” And the Muslims who hear that say “Look at this state of affairs, what good can come out of such blasphemers?” if then there is an office that could find the middle ground of these two excesses and create a balance between politics and religion, it is the Office of the Sheikh-ul-Islam (*Bab-ı Fetva*). The Exalted Office of the Sheikh-ul-Islam should take the scales of politics and religion and put religion in its one pan and politics in the other and create a balance between them. If it cannot do that at any rate one pan of [14] these scales would sink and topple the other pan. Unfortunately these scales have up to now not been entrusted to a far-sighted person capable of creating a balance between its two pans. This time, then it is from the Exalted Person of the Sheikh-ul-Islam that the nation is expecting that from. What if this turns out to be a vain hope again? Judgement is to God.

On the 20<sup>th</sup> March 330

Vehbi

(Addendum)

Fetvapenah

I have been trying to eliminate the misunderstandings and create sympathy for the government amongst the population by dispensing *Mahdi*-like justice on the seat of duty and delivering fiery sermons and speeches on the pulpits of famous mosques and with all my power as can be seen from the attached cut-out of the newspaper *Zuhur* that appears in Bagdad. I had done so in Basra, too. Alas, the actions of some of our youngsters ignorant of national and ethnic politics frustrate these efforts. Still, I do not allow my efforts to slacken as per the saying

(*ma la yüdreğ külluhu la yütreğ külluhu*).<sup>3</sup> May I humbly draw the attention of Your Excellency to this point, for I keep seeing with my own eyes the negative effects and currents this state of affairs causes. Your obedient servant.

On 20<sup>th</sup> M.

Vehbi [15]

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3 Arabic phrase meaning something that cannot be obtained entirely should not be abandoned entirely, also used as a legal principle.

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