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THE RELIGIOUS VALUES OF TURKISH YOUTH : FROM THE 1940'S TO THE PRESENT DATE *

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I would like to talk briefly about Turkish youth's religious attitude over the past half century. During this period the religious values of Turkish youth, that is those in the community between the ages of 14-25 have showed a distinct and important change. Those factors playing an important role in this change are as follows : in 1946, entering into a multi-party political system, the changes in the political administration with the elections of 1950, the developing trends of thought together with literary-artistic movements during this period, rapid development from the 1950's in the field of industry, the politico-military coups d'états in 1960, the rapid increase in migration from the villages into the towns especially after the 60's and the disintegration of old values, the quest of the younger generation and their ideological activities etc.

In the 1940's when I myself was an adolescent, secular education viewed religion with decided suspicion. There was a sensitivity towards the resurgence of regression and it was accepted that religion had no place in modern life. In this position, the illiterate or poorly educated parents generally lived a traditional and conservative religious life. They did not have much influence, as regards religious values, over children and young people. However it was impossible not to notice the accumulation of negative feeling towards the administration among the parents. I believe this was generally so in the Sunni Muslim environment throughout the whole of Turkey. In the Alawi community environment the attitude towards the administration was positive. This was because they (the Alawis) thought the struggle between the

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Sunnis and Alawis, which had lasted in the land throughout the centuries, had finally come to an end, and they were freed from the Sunni restraint. The Alawi children continued to grow up particularly with the traditional oral culture. Their religious values did not clash with the secular education. Furthermore, this humanistic secular inclination was adopted by this youth.

Toward the middle of the 1940's the manifestation of the negative feelings towards the political-administrative ruling body was evident by the underground Marxists together with religious villagers and the section of the workers and tradesmen in the cities. Young people attending high schools and universities inclining, with an ardent desire, towards democracy, and multiparty political system and freedom of expression showed their antigovernment attitude especially in political gatherings and demonstrations. In the 1940's one can see some Marxist and religious publications in the traditional framework along with the secular-humanistic centred publication (*Hakka Doğru*, Ömer Rıza Doğrul's *Selamet*, *Sebilürreşat* and the like). Although the publications of the Ministry of Education showed, in general, a humanistic-secular outlook religious of high standard were also produced. While young people received a secular-humanist orientated education in schools, there was not enough human element which would influence them as much as the publications of the above mentioned Ministry. The contents of this type of secular humanistic publication were within the framework of the values which could be obtained through exchange of ideas by the searching youth. During these years, I believe a small number of young people's quest for reading and thinking was more than those of youth, the majority of youth, who considered this education a way for attaining important jobs, marrying girls that they wanted or living the life they wanted. Translations from writers such as Gide, Sartre, Camus, Stendhal, Dostoyevski, Oscar Wilde, Nietzsche, Voltaire, Goethe etc were very popular among the reading youth. Ancient Greek classics were mostly translated into Turkish. These translations influenced a small number of young people who were searching for the right path in Islam. In the 1940's, a literary-religious-political journal is noteworthy of mention, because it had started to be more influential than the traditional ones. This Journal was "*Büyük Doğu*" (The Great East) produced by the poet and playwright Necip Fazıl Kısakürek. It should also be mentioned that from the 1940's up to today, there have been two great poets who influenced the youth in Turkey most of all : namely Necip Fazıl and Nazım Hikmet. One religious and the other Marxist. It could be said that a section of religious youth has been indirectly influenced by Nazım Hikmet, since the 1970's, through the actions and activities of his supporters.

1950 saw a bloodless people's insurgence ; this was a democratic revolution in which Turkish youth played a major role. However, this was an insurgence without knowing the true meaning of democracy. The lack of understanding of democracy was more obvious after 1950, because of this those who took part in the realization of this insurgence while struggling to carry out their varied interests drew the country into a political revolution.

In the 1950's Marxist and socialist values quickly started becoming popular, in one respect, in some youth centres and associations ; so that even some of the previously humanistic and secular youth joined them. While "*Büyük Doğu*" was repeating itself, the ideas of Bediüzzaman Said Nursî, which were positive towards the political ruling party, started gaining popularity among a section of Turkish youth. Moderate, open to suggestion, aiming to save belief, an appearance unique to itself-these were Nursi's thoughts. However, this trend which started to gain popularity among youth was strongly opposed by the humanistic and secular youth and middle-aged people who supported the political opposition. At the same time, it was interpreted negatively by some of the educated leading members of the ruling party. Especially towards the end of the 1950's the majority of university students who had humanistic-socialist, Marxist-socialist and traditional-secular leanings though not of any great depth, took the opposite side against the ruling party. Religious thought, disseminated by *Büyük Doğu*, gradually losing its literary content, became popular among the youth with its religious political character. The political inclination in this group was with the government. Young people, who had become known as "Nurcus" also started to grow in number and supported the government. Nevertheless, in the military-political coup d'état of 27 May 1960, the youth who had appeared to be humanistic-secular and especially Marxist-socialist, played an important role.

At the end of 1950's, the students of Süleyman Tunahan, later to be known popularly as "Süleymancılar", started regular Quranic courses which were well-liked by the people.

Educated or uneducated people from various backgrounds always criticized the Ankara University Faculty of Divinity and its education, established by the government in 1949 during the single party era. Some claimed that İnönü's government opened this Faculty in order to undermine Islamic religion. Others criticized, because in this Faculty, philosophy and other religions were taught. Some others looked for faults in the lecturers of this Faculty or criticized because they had foreign teaching

staff. In one respect, the students of this Faculty, in a secular atmosphere studied religions and acquired knowledge about Islam. However, the students were influenced the religious trends and ideologies outside the Faculty but, in general, they did not show any fanaticism. Most of them worked with the knowledge gained from the Imam-Hatip Schools opened in 1952, and from the Faculty, and even with the reinforcement of this knowledge from self-improvement. Moreover, the Imam-Hatip Schools where these teachers taught were suspected like the Faculty of Divinity. The students of Süleyman Efendi, who through their Quranic courses, started to become popular among the populace, contributed towards this suspicion. The propaganda put around by Süleyman Efendi was, in fact, not true but carried out in order to gain popularity.

It could be said that the negative attitude towards the Faculty of Theology played an important role in the foundation of the High Islamic Institute in Istanbul in 1959 in order to teach Islamic theology. However, imam-hatip school graduates were accepted to the Institute. The number of Institutes later reached eight and the students were taught in an atmosphere where the representatives of traditional religious values also gave lectures.

Turkey and some European countries witnessed student uprisings in the 1960's. Young people's uprising in Turkey, as mentioned above, had either religious-political or socialist reasons.

The first sign of student dissension which had religious and political implications started in the 1960's in the Faculty of Divinity of Ankara University. When a female student covered her head in 1967 the deanship opposed her and because of this the students of the Faculty boycotted. The incidents, acquiring a religious colour got bigger and were supported by some political circles and others outside the Faculty. Making this an excuse occasionally there were religious-political student dissension in the universities in the shape of sit-ins or boycotts until 1988.

From 1960's onwards we do not see only emotional or indigenous ideas and political interests influencing the religious values of Turkish Youth but at the same time the ideas and trends from other Islamic countries started gaining more weight. Among these, the influence of "Hizbut- Tahrir" on university students become evident at one time. However, the Muslim Brothers in Egypt and their publications, especially Seyyid Kutub and his followers started to have more influence on the univer-

sity students and the youth who gradually become more interested in religion. Almost all of Seyyid Kutub's works and his commentary on the Quran were translated into Turkish and this trend of thought has been gaining ground. Today an important section of university students and imam-hatip pupils are either reading Seyyid Kutub's books or, are influenced by those who have read and accepted their contents. The "Cihad" concept coming from Seyyid Kutub's ideas, here and there, among today's Turkish youth joins with the effect of Khumayni's revolution. Even the young people with traditional religious education, carry deep marks of this concept of "cihad". The religious publications since 1960's have taken this direction and showed their influence. An important section of the lecturers who are engaged in tertiary-level scientific education are also influenced by this trend.

One can see the influence and support of a political party on the movements of young people in the 1970's.

After the intervention of 12 September 1980 which put an end to political disorder, some young people turned to religious values. They were involved in political agitation and had nothing to do with religion, even being Marxist-socialists.

However, it must be added that religious and political influences, originating from Iran, Khumayni's revolution, can be seen among Turkish youth in the 1980's especially among those who have been previously involved in religious, political trends. These influences will change, and the years alone will show us how exactly they will change. How will they get along with the Saudi origin Wahhabi religious trends and influences? At this moment we can not say.

As I see it, important issues of Islamic theology do not preoccupy today's Turkish youth, who are connected with religion. They are involved rather more with religious-political problems.

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