

From the Risale-i Nur Collection

THIRTY-THREE WINDOWS

From Creation to Creator

Bediüzzaman
Said Nursi

Translated by
Colin Turner

From the Risale-i Nur Collection,
The Thirty-Third Word of *The Words*

THIRTY-THREE WINDOWS: From Creation to Creator

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From Creation to Creator

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About the Book

Said Nursi's *Thirty-Three Windows*, also known as the *Thirty-Third Word* or the *Thirty-Third Letter* was written to provide a concise explanation of how the universe in general, as the macrocosm, and humankind in particular, as the microcosm, display and indicate the existence and unity of God, while at the same time demonstrating the functions of Divine lordship (*rubūbiyya*) and the ever-changing manifestations of the Divine attributes.

As such it affords the reader a close-up view, through thirty-three 'windows', of how Said Nursi sees the cosmos as a vast 'book of creation' that demands to be read and interpreted. Moreover, it shows that the only way in which this 'book of creation' can be seen to truly make sense is if it is read and interpreted in the name of the One who has authored it.

Colin Turner
Durham, April 2021

The Thirty-Third Word

This treatise is known as both *The Thirty-Third Word* and *The Thirty-Third Letter*

It consists of thirty-three 'windows'

In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate

*We shall show them Our signs in the furthest horizons and in themselves, so that it will become clear to them that this [Quran] is indeed the Truth. Is it not enough that your Sustainer witnesses all things?*¹

Question: We would welcome a concise explanation of the ways in which humankind and the cosmos – that is, the microcosm and the macrocosm – exhibit the necessary existence and unity of God, while demonstrating the attributes and functions of His lordship, as the comprehensive verses above denote. For the unbelievers have gone too far; they are now saying, "For how long will we have to say *And He is powerful over all things* and have to raise our hands in prayer?"

Answer: The thirty-three *Words* that have been written here are thirty-three drops from the ocean of this verse, and from the seas of truth which flow from it. You will find your answer in these *Words*. What we are explaining at present concerns merely a single drop from that ocean.

For example, if some genius has it in his head to build a palace, he first of all designs the foundations in a wise and regular fashion, planning them so that they are appropriate for what is to be constructed upon

¹ Quran, 41:53

them. He proceeds by dividing the palace skilfully into different storeys and wings. He then arranges the various apartments and state rooms, decorating them all with tapestries and various other furnishings, and then illuminates them all with electric lights.

Then, to show the extent of his ingenuity and talent in that magnificent, beautifully-decorated palace, he employs different methods and produces fresh and innovative architectural forms on every storey. He then connects every room in the palace to his own dwelling by telephone and ensures that all rooms have windows from which his abode can be seen.

Similarly – *And God's is the highest similitude* ² – the peerless Creator has also constructed a palace. Yes, the One Who has a thousand and one sacred names – names such as All-Glorious Maker, All-Wise Sovereign and All-Just Arbiter - has willed the creation of the palace that is the universe, which forms the macrocosm. He laid the foundations of the palace – this vast tree of being – in six days, in accordance with the principles of His own wisdom and the laws of His pre-eternal knowledge. He then divided it into layers and branches, both sublime and lowly, while detailing and describing it with the principles of Divine Decree and determining. Then He organised every group and layer of creatures with the utmost care and craftsmanship. Next He decorated everything, each realm, each world, in an appropriate way, decking out the heavens with stars and the earth with flowers. He then manifested and made radiant His Names, within the framework of those universal laws and general principles. And then in an act of special solicitude, He sent His names 'Most Merciful' and 'All-Compassionate' to the assistance of

2 Quran, 16:60

those individuals who were pained by the constraint of the universal laws. That is to say, as part of those universal and general principles He has particular favours, particular expressions of succour and particular ways of manifesting, so that everything may seek help from Him individually and look to Him at all times when in need.

Then, in every apartment, every level, every world, every realm of existence, in every individual and in every single created being, He opened up 'windows' through which He shows Himself. In other words, He makes known His existence and unity through the 'telephone' that He has placed in every heart.

At present it is beyond the scope of this work to discuss those innumerable windows. Referring them to the all-encompassing knowledge of God, here we shall discuss only thirty-three of them – a number which aligns nicely with the blessed number of *tasbīhāt* (glorifications of God) recited after the prescribed daily prayers. This current treatise, which forms both the *Thirty-Third Letter* and the *Thirty-Third Word*, and consists of flashes from the verses of the Quran, covers subjects which have been unpacked in greater detail in other parts of the *Risale-i Nur*, and in the rest of the *Words* in particular.

The First Window

If we look carefully, we see that all things – living creatures in particular – have numerous different wants and needs. And those wants and needs are answered at the appropriate time and in ways often most unexpected. Furthermore, succour comes to creatures from places they themselves do not know and to which they themselves have no access. Indeed, the power of those needy beings is not enough to bring

about even the most insignificant of their endless requirements. Consider your own needs, particularly those pertaining to your external and inner senses, and see how many there are which your hands cannot reach for themselves. Then compare all living creatures with yourself. You will see that just as they testify individually to the Necessary Existent One and point to His unity, they also demonstrate collectively the existence of a Necessarily Existent One behind the veil of the unseen. And they do so in the same way that the sunlight bears witness to the sun. Together, they point to a Single One of Unity (*wāḥid-i aḥad*), possessing titles such as Most Generous, All-Compassionate, Nurturer and Disposer.

So to those ignorant, heedless and corrupt unbelievers, I say this: how do you explain this wise, percipient and compassionate activity? By attributing it to deaf nature? Blind force? Unconscious chance? Impotent, lifeless causes?

The Second Window

At any given moment of time, the possible directions that a thing may take, and the possible characteristics it may eventually assume, are more numerous than one could imagine. But just as the thing in question is hovering between hesitation and bewilderment, as it were, wondering what its fate will be, it is suddenly transported towards what will later turn out to be the wisest and most appropriate outcome possible, and where a form and set of characteristics will be conferred on it that are totally and utterly unique.

Let us apply this principle to the facial characteristics of human beings. Every single human being on earth has a face that is totally unique, enabling him or her to be differentiated from all of his or her other fellow humans. The uniqueness of each human individual

shows clearly that every human being carries on his or her face a brilliant seal of Divine unicity (*aḥadiyya*), or uniqueness. And just as each human face testifies to the existence of an All-Wise Maker, the seal that lies upon the totality of human faces demonstrates to the mind's eye that all things are a seal of the Divine. To those who deny the existence of God, I ask this: if these seals and stamps of uniqueness do not belong to God Almighty, Whom we know as *al-Ṣamad*, then to which artist or which workshop do they belong?!

The Third Window

The various species of animals and plants on the face of the earth are like an army with more than a million divisions. Indeed, the members of some of those groups are even more numerous than the sum total of all human beings from the era of Adam until the end of time. Furthermore they are managed, sustained and nurtured with perfect order and balance, even though their sustenance, weapons, uniforms, instructions, drills and demob papers are all different. Yes, they are tended to with absolute perfection, with none of them being misidentified or overlooked. This shows clearly that, in their totality, they bear the stamp of a Single One of Unity – a stamp as brilliant as the sun which can in no way be doubted. The administration of this army is almost inconceivably wondrous. Who, then, apart from someone with boundless power, all-encompassing knowledge and infinite wisdom, could be responsible for this administration? For if someone incapable of this were to interfere in these processes in any way, the whole lot would be thrown into disorder. For these different divisions are all interspersed, even though they are sustained and nurtured together. Only one with absolute ability to carry out this superhuman task would be able to accomplish it without error or

oversight. As the Quran says, *So turn your vision again, do you see any flaw?*³ Look at what happens each spring and see whether you can find even the slightest trace of confusion. Put simply, this means that not so much as a single finger can interfere.

The Fourth Window

This window concerns the acceptability of the supplications offered, through the tongue of latent ability, by all seeds; the supplications offered through the tongue of innate need by all animals; and the supplications offered through the tongue of urgent need by all who are desperate. We see that all of these countless supplications are accepted and responded to. And from this we conclude that, in their entirety, they point to the existence of an All-Compassionate and Generous Creator, the Answerer of Prayer (*al-Mujib*).

The Fifth Window

We see that some things – living things in particular – come into existence instantaneously. Yet while one would expect things that appear suddenly out of a simple substance to be simple, formless and lacking in artistic complexity, they are in fact created with an artistry and beauty that require tremendous skill. We see that they are decorated with intricate patterns, which, one would think, require a considerable length of time to perfect. And we see that the artistry they reflect is of the kind that calls for the careful use of many sensitive tools and instruments. Thus just as each of these instantaneous constructions and works of art indicates the necessary existence of an All-Wise Creator and the unity of His lordship, in their

³ Quran, 67:3

totality they also show in the most brilliant manner a Necessarily Existent One who is absolutely Powerful and absolutely Wise.

How can those stupefied deniers explain this? Who or what is responsible? Is 'nature' responsible – nature, which is as unconscious, impotent and ignorant as they are? Or would they rather commit the unpardonable error of calling that All-Holy Maker 'nature' and, on the pretext of naming Him that, attribute the miracles of His power to it?

The Sixth Window

*In the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of night and day and the boats which travel through the seas for the benefit of humankind, and in what God sends down from the sky as rain and with which He raises to life the earth after its death and raises in it every sort of living being, and in the circulating of the winds and the clouds subjugated between the heavens and the earth, are signs for a people who thinks.*⁴

While this verse indicates the existence and unity of God, it also forms a truly vast window that displays one of the Greatest Names. The gist of the verse is as follows:

All of the realms in the higher and lower levels of the universe speak, with their different tongues, of the same thing, namely the lordship of a single All-Wise Maker. The extremely regular movements of celestial bodies in the heavens, together with their extremely extensive outcomes, point to the existence, unity and perfect lordship of an All-Powerful One of Glory. Similarly, there are orderly movements and

⁴ Quran, 2:164

transformations taking place on earth – the changing of the seasons being a prime example – which also produce extensive benefits, and which show the existence, unity and perfect lordliness of the same All-Powerful One of Glory. Astronomers and geographers attest to the regularity and significance of these phenomena, and among them are those who also attest to their Divine source.

Furthermore, all of the animals on the land and in the sea are given their sustenance with perfect mercy. They are clothed in different forms with perfect wisdom, and kitted out with all sorts of senses by a perfect lordliness. Since this is so, each of them testifies individually to the existence of the All-Powerful One of Glory, thus indicating His unity. And in their totality they show on a vast scale the awesomeness of His Godhead and the perfection of His lordliness.

As for the vegetable kingdom, consider the systematically structured plants that we see in gardens everywhere. Consider the finely decorated flowers which they display. Consider their well-proportioned fruits – should they have fruits – and the beautifully embellished embroideries which their fruits show to the world. Each of these plants testifies individually to the existence of the All-Wise Maker and points to His unity, while all plants as a totality testify together in a most brilliant fashion to the beauty of His mercy and the perfection of His lordliness.

Consider, too, the drops of rain that fall from the clouds in the sky, charged as they are with duties pertaining to certain wise aims and outcomes. The rain demonstrates with every drop the necessary existence, unity and perfect lordliness of the All-Wise Maker. All of the mountains on earth testify in similar

fashion. Yes, through their storing up of various minerals with all their different properties, designed to bring about numerous different results, the mountains demonstrate with rock-hard robustness the existence and unity of the All-Wise Maker, together with His perfect lordliness.

Look across the plains to the hills, and from there to the mountains, and see how they are adorned with harmoniously formed flowers. Each of them testifies to the necessary existence and unity of an All-Wise Maker, while together they show the majesty of His sovereignty and the perfection of His lordliness. Similarly, consider the great variety of well-ordered shapes that one sees in the leaves of the grasses and the trees. Consider, too, their different states and stages of growth, and their ecstatic yet highly balanced movements. Again, all of these show the necessary existence, unity and perfect lordliness of the All-Wise Maker in as many ways as there are leaves.

Consider the bodies of all animate beings and how they are developed over time. Consider how each of them is equipped with all sorts of organs and members, and how they are all directed consciously towards the production of numerous different results and fruits. Again, each of them testifies individually to the necessary existence and unity of the All-Wise Maker, while testifying on a truly vast scale as a totality to His all-encompassing power and all-embracing wisdom, the beauty of His artistry and the absolute perfection of His lordliness. Similarly, consider the souls and spirits within the bodies of all animate beings and how they are equipped in the wisest and most orderly way with numerous kinds of faculties and systems. Consider, too, how with perfect order they are tasked with numerous different duties and errands. All of these beings testify,

individually and collectively, and with proofs as numerous as their faculties, to the necessary existence and unity of the All-Wise Maker. Furthermore, they demonstrate most brilliantly the beauty of His mercy and the perfection of His lordliness.

Just as inspiration from the Unseen discloses knowledge and truth to the human heart and teaches animals how to secure their needs, it also makes known the existence and lordliness of an All-Compassionate Sustainer. Similarly, all of our inner and external senses, which are like the rays from our eyes, gathering immaterial flowers from the garden of the universe and resembling keys that are designed to unlock different worlds. As such, they too demonstrate as clearly as daylight the necessary existence, unity (*waḥda*), oneness (*aḥadiyya*) and perfect lordliness of the All-Wise Maker, the All-Knowing and Most Compassionate Creator, and the All-Generous Provider.

Each of the twelve aspects mentioned here is a window, and from these twelve windows one vast window opens up, displaying through a light of twelve colours the oneness, unity and perfect lordliness of God Almighty.

To all of those unhappy deniers I say this: With what do you aim to block up a window that is as wide as the earth is itself? How are you going to extinguish a source of light that shines like the sun itself? And behind which veil of heedlessness and negligence do you plan to hide it?

Seventh Window

The works scattered across the face of the universe exhibit perfect order, proportion and balance. The way that they have been decorated is perfect, as is the

ease with which they have been created. All of their perfections, together with the fact that they resemble each other as though their natures have been cut from precisely the same cloth, demonstrate on a vast scale the necessary existence, unity and perfect power of an All-Wise Maker.

The creation of innumerable well-ordered and complex beings, all of them similar and yet each of them unique, from simple, inert elements, testifies with proofs as numerous as those beings themselves the necessary existence and unity of an All-Wise Maker. As a collective, those beings display in truly brilliant fashion His unity and the perfection of His power.

Furthermore, as beings are being brought into existence, they are subjected to complex processes of composition, assembly, disintegration and renewal. These processes take place with the utmost care and precision, even though the circumstances are often difficult, to say the least. For example, consider the development of a handful of seeds belonging to different flower species. In the dark depths of the soil, the seeds begin to germinate, sending roots and shoots hither and thither, all interspersed and intertwined. And yet whatever is nurturing and sustaining them is able to distinguish and differentiate between them perfectly, without the slightest error or oversight. Similarly, the nutrients absorbed by the roots of a tree are all mixed up together in the soil, and yet each part of the tree – the leaves, the flowers, the fruits – receives the particular nutrient which suits it best, in a manner that is orderly and precise. The human body, too, takes in nutrients which congregate first in the stomach, all intermingled in the stomach's digestive fluids, whereupon each of the parts of the body is given exactly the kind of nourishment appropriate to it. The

nutrients then coarse through the blood, reaching their different destinations in the various cells of the body with order, precision, balance and wisdom. All of this demonstrates most clearly the necessary existence, unity and perfect power of the One Who has absolute wisdom, absolute knowledge and absolute power.

Also, the subatomic world – the realm of minute particles – is made to resemble a boundless arable field in which, at every instant, fresh crops of different worlds and realms are sown in it and harvested from it. Consider how those impotent, inanimate, ignorant particles are made to perform countless orderly duties consciously, wisely and ably and you will conclude that this points to the necessary existence and unity of the All-Powerful One of Glory, the Maker of Perfection. You will see, too, that it points to His perfect power, the grandeur of His Sovereignty and the perfection of His lordliness.

Thus in these four ways a large window is opened out onto the infinite knowledge of God. Addressing human reason, it displays on a vast scale the names and attributes of the All-Wise Maker.

To the unhappy heedless ones, then, I would say this: if you do not want to see and learn of Him in this way, cast your intellect aside. Become an animal and then see whether or not that can save you.

Eighth Window

The prophets (PBWT) are the ones among humankind who possess truly luminous spirits, while the saints with their luminous spirits are the spiritual ‘poles’ of humanity. The clear and evident miracles of the prophets, and the illuminations and wonder-working of the saints, testify to the necessary existence, unity

and perfect lordliness of the Single One of Unity, Who exists necessarily and Who is the Creator of all things. To this we should add the testimony of all of the purified scholars, together with the results of their research and their verifications. The prophets, the saints and the purified scholars together form a truly vast, light-filled window which opens onto this truth. Furthermore, it highlights continuously that station of Divine lordliness.

Those who deny this are most unfortunate, it must be said. For in whom do they place their trust if not in the prophets, saints and scholars? Or do they imagine that their closing their eyes in broad daylight plunges the whole world into darkness?

Ninth Window

The universal worship evident in the cosmos demonstrates clearly the existence of an Absolute Object of Worship. The fact that there are angels and spirits who worship with pure obedience has been established beyond doubt by those who, penetrating the spirit world and the inner dimension of things, have met with such beings. The worship performed by these beings, together with the fact that all animate and inanimate beings carry out their duties worshipfully and with perfect order, demonstrates the necessary existence and unity of a True Object of Worship.

The existence of that Object of Worship is demonstrated also by the true knowledge of those who know – with the strength of consensus – together with the fruitful thanks of those who show gratitude. It is demonstrated also by the radiant glorifications of those who recite God's beautiful names, and by the bounty-increasing exaltations of those who sing God's praises. It is shown through the demonstrative proofs

and descriptions of Divine unity given by those who acknowledge that unity, and through the true love and passion of those who love God. And it is evidenced by the true will and desire of those who seek God, and by the earnest searching of those who turn to Him in repentance. All of these demonstrate the necessary existence, unity and perfect lordliness of that Pre-Eternal One Whom all beings worship. All of them point to the One (*al-Wāḥid*) Who is Known (*Ma'rūf*), Mentioned (*Madhkūr*), Thanked (*Mashkūr*), Praised (*Maḥmūd*), Loved (*Maḥbūb*), Desired (*Marghūb*) and Sought (*Maqṣūd*).

Furthermore, the worship accepted from perfected human beings, together with the spiritual radiance and supplications, visions and illuminations resulting from that worship, demonstrate the necessary existence, unity and perfect lordliness of that Eternal and Enduring Object of Worship. Thus these three objects form a broad, light-giving window that is open onto Divine Unity.

Tenth Window

And He sends down water from the sky and brings forth with it fruits for your sustenance; and He has made subject to you the ships, that they sail through the sea by His command; and He has made the rivers subject to you; and He has made subject to you the sun and the moon, both diligently pursuing their courses; and He has made subject to you the night and the day. And He gives you of all that you ask Him. But if you count God's bounties, you will never be able to number them...⁵

The mutual assistance, co-operation and reciprocity of beings in the universe show that they are all raised by

⁵ Quran, 14:32-34

a single Nurturer and organised by a single Director; they show that all beings are under the jurisdiction of a single Disposer, and that they are the servants of a single Lord. For in accordance with an all-embracing law of mutual assistance, the sun, the moon and all of the elements work together under the guidance and command of a Single One of Unity. At God's command, the sun cooks the necessities needed by the lives of animate beings on earth, while the moon acts as their calendar. Light, air, water and sustenance all hasten, at God's command, to the assistance of all living creatures. Plants hasten to the assistance of animals, while animals hasten to the existence of humans. The members of the human body hasten to help one another, while particles of food, even, hasten to the assistance of the cells of the body. Wise and generous mutual assistance is thus visible everywhere, with beings supporting and strengthening each other, and responding to each other's needs, in accordance with the laws of generosity, compassion and mercy. This shows clearly and self-evidently that all beings are created as servants and officials of a sole, unique Creator. It shows, too, that He is One Whom all things need, but Who Himself is in need of nothing (*al-Ṣamad*). And it shows that He, the Necessarily Existent One, is Absolutely Powerful, Absolutely Knowing, Absolutely Compassionate and Absolutely Generous.

What do those who follow the bankrupt philosophies of unbelief have to say in the face of this mighty window? Is it possible that your friend 'chance' could play any part in this?

Eleventh Window

For indeed in the remembrance of God do hearts find

*tranquillity.*⁶

Hearts and spirits are delivered from the distress and confusion of misguidance by knowing a single Creator; it is through acknowledging His unity that they are able to free themselves of the pain caused by that distress. It is by attributing all beings to a single Maker that they are saved. And it through the remembrance of a single God that they are able to find assurance. For as is proven decisively in the *Twenty-Second Word*, if all beings are not attributed to a single Being, it becomes necessary to attribute a single thing to innumerable causes. And if that is the case, the existence of a single being becomes as problematic as the existence of all beings.

This is because if things are attributed to God, innumerable beings are ascribed to a single Being; if they are not attributed to Him, it becomes necessary to attribute everything to innumerable causes. And then it becomes as difficult to create a single fruit as it is to create the whole universe. In fact it becomes more difficult. If the management of a single soldier is given to a hundred different officers, a hundred different difficulties arise. However, if a hundred soldiers are placed under the direction of a single officer, they become as easy to manage as just one soldier. The problems caused by the interference of different causes in the creation of a single thing are as many as the causes themselves. However, it is as easy for a single being to create a hundred beings as it is to create a single being.

Intrinsic to all human beings is the desire to seek the truth. And it is only through knowledge of God and recognition of His unity that this desire for truth can

⁶ Quran, 13:28

be truly fulfilled. It is only through knowing that God exists, and that He is One, that the human soul can escape the distress of unfulfilled desire for truth. Since there are endless pains and difficulties involved in unbelief and associationism, it is clear that both denial of the truth and ascribing partners to God are paths to nowhere.

It is as easy to affirm Divine unity, on the other hand, as it is for God to fill the universe with artistically created beings. This offers us further proof of how true this path is, and how necessary.

Thus to those miserable, misguided people I would say this: just look and see how dark and painful the path of misguidance actually is. What is it that makes you take this path? Now look and see how easy and pleasant the path of belief and affirmation of Divine unity is. And then take that path, so that you achieve salvation.

Twelfth Window

Glorify the Name of your Sustainer, the All-Highest, Who has created, and given order and proportion, and Who has determined [the nature of all things] and guided [them towards their fulfilment].⁷

According to the meaning of this verse, all things – living creatures especially – have been formed and proportioned with such wisdom that when they come into existence, it seems almost as though they are emerging from moulds. Among their precisely measured proportions are intricately designed extremities with various important uses and benefits. As for the immaterial, well-ordered forms and proportions in which they are clothed, and which

⁷ Quran, 87:1-3

change as their lives progress, these comprise their different life events, pre-appointed in accordance with wise purpose. This shows clearly that those innumerable creatures, whose forms have been planned in the realm of Divine Determining by an All-Powerful One of Glory, point to His existence and testify to His unity. It shows that those creatures, who have been given forms fashioned in the workshop of Divine power, point to the necessary existence of an All-Wise One of Perfection, and testify to His unity and perfect power with innumerable tongues. Look at your own body and its members and consider the fruits of its intricate and complex features. Look and you will see perfect power within perfect wisdom!

Thirteenth Window

*And there is nothing that does not extol His limitless glory and praise*⁸

According to the meaning of this verse, everything recalls its Creator and declares His holiness with its own particular tongue. Yes, the glorifications uttered by beings, both audibly and through the mute eloquence of their natures, demonstrate the existence of a single Most Holy Being. Indeed, the testimony provided by the innate disposition of beings cannot be dismissed out of hand. It cannot be doubted, especially if the evidence comes from all sides. Through the tongue of disposition, the well-ordered structures of things offer compelling evidence in innumerable ways, all looking to a single centre as though they were concentric circles. The ways in which they are proportioned and assembled are also tongues which testify. And their perfect lives, too, are tongues. Thus, as is proven in the *Twenty-Fourth Word*, the fact that all beings glorify,

⁸ Quran, 17:44

extol and testify with all these tongues to a single Most Holy Being points to the existence of a Necessarily Existent One, and to the perfection of His Divinity (*ulūhiyya*), as clearly as daylight points to the sun.

Fourteenth Window

*Say: who is it in whose hands is the governance of all things?*⁹ *And there is nothing but its treasures are with Us.*¹⁰ *There is not a moving creature but He has grasp of its forelock.*¹¹ *Indeed my Sustainer watches over and records all things.*¹²

According to the meaning of these verses, all things are in need of a single All-Glorious Creator at all times and in all matters and circumstances. If we look at the beings in the universe, we see absolute weakness contrasted with manifestations of an absolute force; we see absolute impotence alongside traces of an absolute power. For example, look at the wonderful states and stages that plants undergo and display when the life force awakens in their seeds and roots. We also see the manifestation of an absolute wealth within absolute poverty and barrenness – like the poverty of trees and the soil in winter and their glittering wealth and riches in the spring. The traces of absolute life are also apparent within absolute lifelessness, like the transformation of inert elements into living matter. Furthermore, there is the manifestation of an all-encompassing consciousness within an absolute ignorance; this we witness when we see that everything, from atoms to stars, acts consciously and conforms to the order of the universe, the demands of

9 Quran, 23:88

10 Quran, 15:21

11 Quran, 11:56

12 Quran, 11:57

wisdom and the requirements of life.

We see, then, power within impotence, strength within weakness, wealth and riches within poverty, and life and consciousness within lifelessness and ignorance. All of this, self-evidently and necessarily, opens up windows on every side onto the necessary existence and unity of a Possessor of Absolute Power and Absolute Strength. It opens windows onto One Who possesses absolute riches, and One Who is Absolutely Knowing, All-Living and Self-Sufficient. And in their totality they point on a vast scale to a brilliantly luminous highway.

So to those who have fallen into the swamp of naturalism I say this: if you do not quit your worship of nature and recognise Divine power, you will have to admit that in everything – in every atom, even – there is an infinite force and power, a boundless wisdom and skill, an absolute ability to see, know and administer most other beings.

Fifteenth Window

*Who has created everything in the best way.*¹³

According to the meaning of the verse above, everything is cut out according to its innate abilities with perfect measure and order. And everything is put together with the finest artistry, in the best and shortest way, in the most subtle manner and in the most appropriate form and shape.

Look at the clothes of the birds, for instance. See the ease with which they ruffle their feathers and make use of them continuously. They, along with everything else, show that things are clothed in bodies and forms

13 Quran, 32:7

in a wise and purposeful manner, with nothing wasted or used in vain. All of this testifies – with as many proofs as there are beings – to the existence of an All-Wise Maker with absolute knowledge and absolute power.

Sixteenth Window

The order and measure in the creation and wise disposal of creatures, which are renewed season after season on the earth, demonstrate clearly the existence of a truly universal wisdom. Since an attribute cannot exist without the one it qualifies, this universal wisdom shows necessarily that there is an All-Wise One. The wonderful decorating that occurs beneath the veil of wisdom shows that there is a perfect generosity at play, and this perfect generosity points necessarily to the existence of a gracious, All-Generous Creator. The all-encompassing benevolence and acts of bestowal which take place within the veil of generosity reveal self-evidently an all-embracing mercy, which in turn shows necessarily an All-Merciful, All-Compassionate One.

The foods and sustenance of all living creatures above the veil of mercy, all perfectly in keeping with their needs, point clearly to a sustaining providence and a compassionate lordliness. And this sustaining and administering point necessarily to the existence of an All-Generous Provider.

Yes, all of the creatures on the face of the earth, raised as they are with perfect wisdom, decorated as they are with perfect beneficence, bestowed upon as they are with perfect mercy, and nurtured as they are with perfect compassion, testify to the necessary existence and unity of an All-Wise, Generous, Compassionate and Providing Maker.

And now consider the universal wisdom which is apparent on the face of the earth as a whole. See how in its totality it shows clear purpose and will. See how the perfect generosity that embraces all creatures demonstrates wisdom. See how the all-encompassing mercy, which comprises both the mercy and the wisdom, includes all of the beings on earth. And see how this most generous sustaining and nurturing, which comprises mercy, wisdom and beneficence, embraces all living creatures. Just as the seven colours comprise light, and light, which illuminates the face of the earth, shows the existence of the sun, see too how generosity within wisdom, mercy within generosity, and sustaining and nurturing within mercy show, on a vast scale and at the highest degree, the necessary existence, unity and perfect lordliness of an utterly Wise, Generous and Compassionate Provider.

And so to those stupefied, heedless deniers I would say this: how can you explain this wise, generous, compassionate and providential sustaining? How on earth can you explain this strange and wondrous affair which unfolds continuously before your eyes? Will you attribute it all to chance and coincidence, which are as aimless as you are? Will you attribute it all to 'forces', which are as blind as your heart? Or will you ascribe everything to nature, which is deaf, dumb, blind, contingent, impotent and, like you, utterly wretched? Do you really want to attribute to nature everything which in fact can be attributed only to God? Do you really want to take the All-Glorious One, Who is utterly pure, holy, exalted and free from all defect, and call Him 'nature'? Do you really intend to attribute everything to causes when in reality it befits only the One Who is absolutely Powerful, Knowing, Hearing and Seeing? Is that the kind of terrifyingly infinite error you wish to

perpetrate? With what force can you put out the light of truth, which is as brilliant as the sun? Under which veil of heedlessness can you hide it?

Seventeenth Window

*Indeed in the heavens and the earth are signs for those who believe.*¹⁴

If we observe the face of the earth in the summer, we see an absolute generosity and an unlimited liberality at play. And we see, too, that instead of generating confusion and disorder, which is what one might expect as a result of those attributes, we see total harmony and order everywhere. Just look at all the plants which decorate the face of the earth!

We also see the utter rapidity with which things are brought into existence. And yet instead of bringing about imbalance and disequilibrium, which one might expect, one sees nothing but perfect equilibrium. Just look at all the fruits which beautify the face of the earth!

We also see a vast profusion of creatures being brought into being, which might suggest that some of them are unimportant, or ugly, even. And yet one sees nothing but perfect beauty wherever one looks. Just look at the flowers which adorn the face of the earth!

We also see that things are created with absolute ease. Yet instead of mediocrity and simplicity, which one might expect from things which are produced easily, one sees perfect artistry, skill and attention to detail. Just look at the seeds of any plant, those tiny containers in which the programme and full future life-history of the plant has been deposited!

¹⁴ Quran, 45:3

We also see that members of the same species are created at great distances from one another, but that instead of being totally at odds with one another, they exhibit so many similarities that it is clear their creator is one. Just look at the varieties of grain and cereal that are sown in all four corners of the earth!

We also see that beings are interspersed and intermingled. Yet instead of chaos and confusion, which one might expect when things are mixed with one another, we see that things are administered by one who is clearly able to differentiate and particularise. Consider how a handful of different flower seeds will germinate beneath the soil with perfect order and precision, despite being all mixed in together, and despite the fact that they all resemble each other. Clearly the power that is enabling them to grow is able to differentiate between these various, near-similar beings. Furthermore, the various substances which enter the roots of the tree are conveyed to precisely those parts of the tree they are designed for: the leaves, the flowers and the fruits all receive their different shares with the utmost precision and wisdom. Similarly, the foods which enter our stomachs are all mixed together, and yet nutrients needed by different parts of the body, and different cells, even, are able to reach their various destinations with no problem, and without confusion or misidentification. Just ponder the perfect power against the backdrop of perfect wisdom!

Abundance and profusion may in certain circumstances indicate insignificance, or even worthlessness, but as far as the abundance and profusion of beings on the face of the earth are concerned, we see nothing but extremely valuable artistry everywhere. From among all of the innumerable works of art, consider

only the humble mulberry, of which two hundred species are known to exist. Consider this confection of Divine power, placed by the All-Merciful One on that banqueting table that is the face of the earth. Consider these varied species and marvel at the perfect mercy that is contained within that perfect artistry.

So consider the utter profusion of things together with their great value. Consider the fact that things are densely intermingled within that profusion, and yet never cause confusion or lead to misidentification. And against the backdrop of this lack of confusion or misidentification, consider how similar things emerge into being with vast distances between them, and yet resemble and conform with one another as though they had been created in the same place. Against the backdrop of their similarity and mutual conformity, consider the infinite facility with which all things are created, and the utmost care which is lavished on them all. Consider the absolute rapidity with which things are made, together with the balance, equilibrium and parsimony that their creation exhibits. And against the backdrop of that utter parsimony, consider the sheer abundance and multiplicity of created beings, and how they all manifest the highest degree of artistry and beauty. And consider, within that degree of beauty, the utmost generosity and order with which these things are created. All of these testify to the necessary existence, unity and oneness of an All-Powerful One of Glory. They bear witness to the perfect power and beautiful lordliness of an All-Wise One of Perfection, an All-Compassionate and Beauteous Maker. They also demonstrate the meaning of the verse, *His are the Most Beautiful Names*.¹⁵

15 Quran, 20:8; 59:24

So to those ignorant, heedless and obstinate wretches who still deny His existence, I would say this: how are you to interpret this mighty truth? How will you explain this infinitely miraculous and wonderful state of affairs? To what will you attribute these truly extraordinary arts? What veil of heedlessness do you plan to draw across this window on the truth? For it is a window as broad as the earth itself. Where are your friends 'chance' and 'coincidence'? Where is that unconscious companion, that friend and support in misguidance of yours on whom you rely, and which you call 'nature'? You must admit that it is totally impossible for chance and coincidence to interfere in these matters, must you not? For to attribute to 'nature' one thousandth of the works we have mentioned is impossible a thousand times over, is it not?

Or does lifeless, impotent nature have immaterial printing presses and other such machines, which it has deposited within every single thing?

Eighteenth Window

*Do they not consider the government of the heavens and the earth?*¹⁶

Consider the analogy which is explained in the *Twenty-Second Word*. A finely crafted, well-planned work such as the construction of a palace points self-evidently to the existence of a well-planned act. In other words, the existence of a building indicates the act of construction. And a fine, well-planned act points necessarily to the existence of a proficient agent – in this case a skilful master builder. And the title 'master builder' points self-evidently to a perfect attribute, that is, a faculty for the craft of construction. That perfect attribute,

16 Quran, 7:185

that perfect faculty for the craft, points in turn to the existence of a perfect innate ability. And that perfect innate ability indicates the existence of a lofty spirit and a sublime essence.

Similarly, the works that fill the face of the earth – indeed, the universe – and which are being renewed constantly, show clearly a range of acts that are utterly perfect. Those acts, which are encompassed by total order and wisdom, point clearly to the existence of an agent whose names and titles are perfect. For it is obvious that wise, well-planned acts cannot happen without an actor, an agent, to perform them. And titles of the utmost perfection point necessarily to the utterly perfect attributes possessed by that agent. According to the rules of Arabic grammar, the active participle is formed from the infinitive, which means that it is essentially an adjective related closely in meaning to the verb. And so the source and roots of all nouns, names and titles in Arabic are attributes. Attributes at the utmost degree of perfection point without a doubt to essential qualities that are also utterly perfect. And those essential qualities – which in the case of God are indescribable – point most certainly to an essence which is at the utmost peak of perfection.

In every part of the world we see created beings and artefacts that are all perfect works. Each of these works testifies to an act, and that act testifies to a name. The name in turn testifies to an attribute, and the attribute bears witness to a quality. Finally, the quality testifies to the existence of the Divine Essence. Thus each being testifies singly to the necessary existence and oneness of the All-Glorious Maker, with proofs as numerous as those beings themselves. As a united whole, they form a kind of ascension in Divine knowledge as strong as the chain of beings itself. Together, they form a proof

of reality in continuous sequence which no doubt can pierce or penetrate.

And so to those wretches who, despite all of these proofs, still dissent and deny, I say this: with what can you smash a proof that is as powerful as the chain of beings that make up the universe? This latticed window onto the truth has innumerable panes through which the rays of truth, as numerous as the creatures themselves, shine through brilliantly. With what do you propose to close or seal up this window? Behind which veil of heedlessness do you plan to hide it?

Nineteenth Window

The seven heavens and the earth and all within them extol His limitless glory, and there is nothing that does not extol His limitless glory and praise.¹⁷

According to the meaning of the above verse, the All-Glorious Maker has attached countless meanings and instances of wisdom to the heavenly bodies. It is as though He has decorated the heavens with words in the form of suns, moons and stars, in order to express the extent of His beauty and glory. To the beings in the earth's atmosphere He has attached various meanings, aims and instances of wisdom, so that thunder, lightning and rain all act as words that speak to all onlookers of the perfection of His wisdom and the beauty of His mercy.

He causes the earth, which resembles a human head, to speak through the meaningful words which call animals and plants. Indeed, it is as though He has created them solely in order to make them display the perfections of His art to the universe. He makes the

¹⁷ Quran, 17:44

plants and the trees speak through the words of their leaves, flowers and fruits, proclaiming the perfection of His art and the beauty of His mercy. He makes their flowers and fruits speak, too, through words which we call seeds. To those who are conscious and aware, the seeds give instruction in the subtleties of His art and the perfection of His lordliness.

And so, out of all of these words of glorification, let us listen to a single shoot and a single flower as they express their testimony. Yes, all plants and all trees describe their Maker with numerous tongues, leaving those who study them amazed. "Glory be to God! How wonderfully they bear witness to Him," they declare.

The glorifications uttered by plants when their flowers open, or when they produce new shoots, and whenever they offer their smile-wreathed words to the world, is truly as clear and as beautiful as they themselves. For through the delicate mouth of each flower, and through the tongues of its orderly shoots and the words of its precisely measured seeds, the order one witnesses in them demonstrates wisdom, together with a balance which clearly demonstrates knowledge. The balance they exhibit comes within a pattern of art which obviously demonstrates skill and craftsmanship. And the artistic patterns come within a decoration which self-evidently displays favour and generosity. The beautification of the flower with various subtle scents is also clear evidence of bestowment and mercy. One within the other, these qualities form together a tongue of testimony that is undeniable in its veracity. For it both describes the All-Beauteous Maker through His names and it portrays Him through His attributes. And it expounds the manifestation of His names, expressing the fact that He makes Himself loved and known.

If you hear such a testimony from a single flower, what will happen to your doubts and suspicions when you hear all of the flowers in the lordly gardens on the face of the earth bearing witness with one voice? What will happen when, with the elevated strength that comes from consensus, they proclaim the necessary existence and unity of the All-Glorious Maker? Will your doubts persist? And if they do, will people still be able to say that you are human?

Come and look carefully at this tree here. See the delicate mouth apparent in the orderly emergence of its leaves in spring. Watch the blossoms as they open in a regular and well-ordered manner. Gaze upon the fruits as they swell with wisdom and mercy, dancing in the hands of the branches like innocent children as the spring breeze blows by. See the just balance within the wise order, expressed by the tongue of the leaves as a generous hand is turning them green. Watch as it is expressed by the flowers as they smile with joy on account of the favour they have received, and by the words of the fruits as they laugh through the manifestation of mercy. See all the precise arts and patterns that exist within this balance, demonstrating perfect justice. And see the mercy within those skilful patterns and decorations, within those various sweet tastes and delightful scents, all of which indicate mercy and bestowment. And consider the seeds, each of which is a miracle of power underlying those agreeable tastes. All of these point with undoubtable clarity to the necessary existence and unity of an All-Wise, Generous, Compassionate, Beneficent, Bountiful Maker; to a Bestower of Beauty and Favour, and to the beauty of His mercy and the perfection of His lordliness. If you were able to listen to the tongues of disposition of all of the trees on earth simultaneously, you would

be able to see and understand what exquisite jewels are to be found in the treasury of the verse, *All that is in the heavens and on the earth extols God's limitless glory*.¹⁸

So to those unhappy heedless ones whose ingratitude gives them the impression that they are free, I would say this: the All-Generous One of Beauty makes Himself known to you, and loved by you, through these innumerable tongues. Now, if He had not wanted you to know Him, He would have silenced those tongues. Since they cannot be silenced, you should listen to them and heed what they are saying. Stopping up your ears will not help. For the universe will not fall silent just because you refuse to listen! The countless witnesses to Divine unity will not hold their tongues! And what is more, they will condemn you, too!

Twentieth Window¹⁹

18 62:1; 64:1

19 The true meaning of this Twentieth Window was imparted to my heart in Arabic. The English translation is as follows: The sparkling of the light occurs through Your illuminating and making it visible; the procession of the ages occurs through Your despatching and employing them; the glory is all Yours, for how mighty is Your sovereignty! The flowing forth of rivers occurs through Your storing them up and subjugating them; the decorations on all stones come from Your designing and fashioning them; the glory is all Yours, for how sublime is Your wisdom! The smiles on the faces of the flowers come from Your decorating and beautifying them; the embellishment of all fruits happens through Your bestowment and generosity; the glory is all Yours, for how beautiful is Your artistry! The singing of the birds occurs through Your power to make them speak; the singing of the rain occurs through Your causing it to fall and Your bestowment; the glory is all Yours, for how vast is Your mercy! The movement of the moons occurs through Your determining and planning, through Your rotating and illuminating them; the glory is all Yours, for how brilliant are

So glory be to Him in Whose hands is the dominion of all things.²⁰ And there is nothing but its treasures are with Us; but We only send it down in a measure defined. And We send forth the winds to fertilize [the plants], and We send down rain from the skies providing you with water therewith, and you are not the keepers of its stores.²¹

The perfect wisdom and beauty of art are apparent in particulars, and in details and outcomes. Similarly, the universal elements and large creatures in the universe take up their positions in accordance with wisdom and the necessities of art, despite their being intermingled and interspersed apparently by chance and without order. Thus as its other wise duties show, light shines in order to proclaim and make known all of the Divine creations on the face of the earth, albeit with the permission of its Sustainer. This means that light is employed by a most Wise Maker. And by means of that light, He makes manifest His precious works of art in the exhibition hall that is the universe.

And now consider the winds. According to the testimony given by the other wise, generous duties that they carry out, and the benefits that they provide, the winds are involved continuously in the performance of countless important tasks, to which they constantly hasten. This means that in their wave-like movements they are being employed, despatched and utilised by an All-Wise Maker; they are working expeditiously to carry out with great speed the commands issued by their Sustainer.

Consider the rivers, streams and springs! Their emergence from out of the ground and from sources

Your proofs, how dazzling is Your sovereignty!

20 Quran, 36:83

21 Quran, 15:21-22

high in the mountains does not occur by chance. For their benefits and fruits, which are the products of Divine mercy, bear witness to the fact that they are subjugated and stored up by an all-wise Sustainer. And the fact that they are stored up in mountains in a wise manner that is proportionate to our need for them attests to the same reality, while the way in which they flow forth shows that they conform with enthusiastic joy to His command.

And consider all of the varieties of stones, minerals and gems in the world. The ways in which they are decorated, the wise and beneficial properties connected with them, and the fact that they are prepared in a manner appropriate to both human and animal needs all show that they are created thus through the decorating, arranging, planning and forming of an All-Wise Maker.

Then consider all of the flowers and the fruits that exist. Their scents and tastes are like invitations to the table of a Most Munificent Maker. The exquisite beauties of their decorations and embellishments are like smiles which tempt us to the banquet of an All-Compassionate Bestower of Bounties. They are like menus and invitations to each species of beings through their different colours, scents and tastes.

Consider, too, the birds. See how through their cooing and chirruping they express their feelings for one another – a clear indication, if any were needed, that their sounds represent an All-Wise Maker's impelling them to speak and state their intentions.

And what about the clouds? Definite proof that the pitter-patter of the rain and the crashing of the thunder are not just futile sounds can be seen from the fact that those strange beings are created in empty space.

Drops of rain are milked from the clouds, suckling the living creatures on earth who are so desperate to quench their thirst. These facts show that the sounds of the rain and the thunder are replete with wisdom and meaning. For at the command of a Most Generous Sustainer, the rain calls out to those who are longing for it, "Good news, for we are on our way!"

Now look at the sky. Out of all of the innumerable bodies up there, fix your attention solely on the moon. The fact that the motion of the moon is at the command of an All-Powerful, All-Wise One is shown by the important instances of wisdom connected to both the moon itself and to its relationship with the earth. Since we have explained this elsewhere in the *Risale-i Nur*, there is no need to go into detail here.

Thus the universal elements that we have enumerated, from light to the moon, comprise a vast and extensive window that opens onto the truth. For they proclaim and demonstrate the unity of a Necessarily Existent One, together with the perfection of His power and the grandeur of His sovereignty.

And so to the heedless, I will say this: if you are able to silence this thunderous voice and extinguish this brilliant light, then go ahead: forget God! Otherwise, you had better come to your senses. Say, "All Glory be unto You!" And, *the seven heavens and the earth and all within them extol His limitless glory!*"²²

Twenty-First Window

*And the sun runs its course to a place appointed, that is the determining of the Almighty, the All-Knowing.*²³

22 Quran, 17:44

23 Quran, 36:38

The lamp of the universe, which we call the sun, forms by itself a window onto the existence and unity of the universe's Maker that is as brilliant and luminous as the sun itself. Despite their great differences with regard to size, position and velocity, the twelve planets – including our earth – which comprise the solar system move and revolve with perfect order, wisdom and equilibrium. They move with perfect balance and without a second's confusion, bound as they are to the sun through a Divine law known as gravity. In other words, they follow their leader as though in prayer. This shows on a grand scale the awesomeness of Divine power and the unity of their Sustainer. Those vast, unconscious, inert masses are rotated, moved and employed with the utmost order, wisdom and equilibrium. They are carried along over tremendous distances and with various orbits, movements and motions, proving as they proceed precisely how much power and wisdom are involved.

Just think about it for a moment. If chance were to interfere for even a millisecond in this vast and complex process, absolute chaos would ensue and the universe would implode. If chance were to arrest the motion of just one of these celestial bodies for just an instant, it would be forced to leave its orbit, pushing it most likely into the path of another body and risking a monumental collision. You can imagine the kind of explosion that would occur if two such huge bodies, thousands of times bigger than the earth, were to smash into one another.

We shall now refer the wonders of the solar system to God's knowledge and, from among the twelve planets which are the sun's followers and fruits, we shall consider only our own home, the earth. We see that our planet is made to journey around the sun –

its most important duty – by a lordly command. As is described in the *Third Letter*, the earth is made to travel in a way that demonstrates quite clearly the awesomeness of Divine majesty and lordliness, together with the sublimity of Divine sovereignty and perfection of Divine wisdom and mercy. The earth is nothing less than a lordly ship, filled with the wonders of Divine artistry. It resembles a traveling dwelling, an exhibition centre for God's conscious servants to gaze upon. And the moon has been attached to it with precise order and measure so that it might function as, among other things, a celestial timepiece, telling us the time as it moves through the various mansions of its monthly path.

Thus these features of our blessed planet prove the necessary existence and unity of a Possessor of Absolute Power with a testimony as powerful as the globe of the earth itself. You can extrapolate from this to the rest of the solar system if you wish.

Furthermore, the sun is made to turn on its own axis like a spinning-wheel, in order to wind into a ball the invisible threads which make up gravity, thus tying the planets in with it and setting them in order. And so, together with its planets, the sun is impelled to move at phenomenally high speeds towards the constellation of Hercules, or towards the Sun of Suns. All of this occurs most certainly through the power and at the command of the All-Glorious One, the Monarch of Pre-Eternity and Post-Eternity. It is as though He makes the solar system perform these manoeuvres like a military platoon under orders, thus demonstrating the majesty of His lordliness.

So to doubting astronomers I would say this: how can chance play any part in this? Which causes have

the ability to interfere in any of these matters? Which forces can even come close to playing a role? Do you really think that an All-Glorious Monarch would display impotence and allow others to play a part in His sovereignty? Would He delegate creation to others – and in particular the creation of living beings, which are the universe’s choicest fruit, outcome and essence? Would He allow others to interfere? Humankind is the most comprehensive of the universe’s fruits and the most perfect of its results. Would He leave humanity – God’s representative on earth – to its own devices? Would He leave the creation of humankind, God’s mirror-like guest on earth, to nature and chance, thus reducing the majesty of His sovereignty to nothing, and making a mockery of His perfect wisdom?

Twenty-Second Window

Have We not made the earth a cradle, and the mountains as pegs, and created you as pairs? ²⁴ So behold the signs of God’s Mercy, how He raises to life the earth after its death.²⁵

The earth is like a head with a hundred thousand mouths, and in each of these mouths there are a hundred thousand tongues. Each of these tongues bears a hundred thousand proofs, with each proof testifying in numerous ways to the necessary existence, unity, sacred attributes and Most Beautiful Names of One All-Glorious.

When we consider how the earth was first fashioned, we see that rock was created from matter that was in a fluid state, and that soil was created out of rock. If that substance had remained fluid, the earth would

24 Quran, 78:6-8

25 Quran, 30:50

have been uninhabitable. Similarly, if, after becoming rock, that rock had become as hard as iron, it would have been totally unsuitable for us. Clearly, then, what gave the earth its state was the wisdom of an All-Wise Maker Who appreciated perfectly the needs of the earth's inhabitants.

Afterwards, a layer of soil was deposited over the peg-like mountains so that earthquakes arising on account of internal upheavals would be able to 'breathe' through the mountain's surface, thus preventing the earth from being swerved away from its trajectory and the performance of its duties. It also helped the mountains to protect the land from the encroachment of the sea, as well as allowing them to act as storehouses, filled with things needed for the continuation of human life. The soil cover would also help to rid the air of noxious gases, thus allowing living beings to breathe. It would also help the mountains to better accumulate and hold water, while contributing to their being a source of rocks and minerals needed by living creatures.

All of this testifies most clearly and compellingly to the necessary existence and unity of a Possessor of Absolute Power Who is All-Wise and Compassionate.

How do geographers and geologists explain this? Do unbelievers among them attribute these processes to chance? What kind of chance is it that could make this Divine ship, full of these wonderful creatures, into a travelling exhibition of marvels, spinning it at incredible speeds and preventing everything from being flung into space as it pursues its orbit?

Consider the strange artistry that we see on the face of the earth itself. How wisely the elements are employed in their making! How well they attend to the needs of the Most Merciful One's guests on earth, and how

perfectly they obey the All-Wise and Powerful One when He commands them to hasten to their service.

Look closer at the wondrous expressions of artistry on the face of the earth and focus on these ornate, multi-coloured lines, all drawn with such mysterious wisdom. See how the brooks and the streams, the rivers and the seas, the hills and mountains have all been made into dwellings and means of transport that are perfectly suited to His various creatures and servants. See how, with perfect wisdom and order, He has filled them with millions of varieties of plants and animals. See how he has given them life and caused them to rejoice! See how, minute by minute and with perfect order and regularity, He sends death, enabling creatures to vacate their dwellings and be discharged from their duties. And see how, through countless mini-resurrections, He refills them all again! All of this testifies with countless millions of tongues to the necessary existence and unity of an All-Powerful One of Glory, an All-Wise One of Perfection.

In short: The face of the earth is an exhibition gallery, filled with marvels of art and wonders of creation. It is a place of passage for successive caravans of beings; it is a mosque and dwelling place for the ranks of worshippers. As such, the earth is the heart of the universe itself. And, as such, it displays the light of Divine unity in the same way, and to the same degree, that the universe does.

How are geographers to explain this? If the earth is a head with a hundred thousand mouths, each with a hundred thousand tongues professing the existence of God – if the earth is speaking like this and they are still unable to recognise Him, then what is there to be done? If they are unable, or unwilling, to believe in

Him, preferring instead to plunge their heads into the swamp of naturalism, then all they can do is ponder over the enormity of their own misguidance. For in committing such a grievous error, they are setting themselves up for a most grievous punishment. Say, *"I believe in God in Whose hand is the sovereignty of all things!"*

Twenty-Third Window

Who creates death and life ²⁶

Life is the most luminous, and the most beautiful, of the miracles of Divine lordliness. It is the most powerful and most brilliant of the proofs of Divine unity. It is the most comprehensive and most luminous of those mirrors that show God as *al-Ṣamad*, namely, as One Who is eternally self-sufficient and in need of nothing or no-one, while all beings are eternally insufficient and absolutely in need of Him.

Yes, on its own, life makes known one Who is Living and Self-Subsistent, together with all of His names, attributes and acts. Just as seven colours are combined in light, life is a reality comprising numerous different attributes. Some of the attributes in this reality expand by means of the senses, which differentiate them and help them to unfold. However, most of them make themselves felt in the form of the emotions; they make themselves known by welling up and overflowing from life itself.

Furthermore, life also comprises attributes such as provision, mercy, grace and wisdom, all of which are dominant in the regulation and administration of the universe. It is as if life ties them on behind it and

²⁶ Quran, 67:2

draws them with it wherever it goes and into whatever it enters. When life enters a body, for example, the name All-Wise is also made manifest. For wherever life enters, it makes its home orderly, regulating it with wisdom. The name All-Generous is also manifested in the same way, organising and decorating its dwelling in accordance with its needs. At the same time, the name All-Compassionate appears, bestowing all kinds of bounties for the continuance and perfection of life. And the name Provider is made manifest at the same time, producing the sustenance – both material and immaterial – needed for the unfolding and perpetuation of life, storing them up to an extent within its body. In other words, life is the focal point around which various attributes congregate and become one and the same. It is as though life in its entirety is knowledge, power, wisdom and mercy simultaneously.

And so with regard to this comprehensive essence, life is a mirror of the One Who is *al-Ṣamad*, reflecting the essential attributes of lordliness. It is on account of this mystery that the Necessarily Existent One, Who is Ever-Living and Self-Subsistent, creates life in great abundance, scattering it far and wide through the universe. And as life is scattered far and wide, everything is gathered round life and impelled to serve it. For life's duty is a great duty indeed. Yes, it is not easy to be mirror of *al-Ṣamad*; it is not a duty to be taken lightly.

Thus before our eyes we see this instantaneous and continuous coming into existence, from nothing, of countless lives, together with the spirits which are their origins and essences. This demonstrates as clearly as daylight the necessary existence, the sacred attributes and the most beautiful Names of One Who is Necessarily Existent, Ever-Living and Self-Subsistent.

It points to this as clearly as sunbeams point to the sun. Now, if there is someone who does not recognise and accept the existence of the sun, that individual will as a result be compelled to deny the existence of daylight. Similarly, those who do not recognise the Sun of Divine Oneness, Who is Ever-Living, Self-Subsistent and the Giver of Life and Death, will be compelled to deny the existence of the countless living creatures that fill the earth today. Furthermore they will have to deny the existence of all the creatures that filled the earth in the past, and all of those who will fill the earth in the future. In other words, they will have to embrace absolute lunacy. They will have to fall a hundred times lower than an animal, descending from the level of life to the level of something utterly senseless and lifeless.

Twenty-Fourth Window

*There is no god but He, everything will perish save His countenance. His is the command and to Him shall you return.*²⁷

Death is as much a proof of Divine lordliness as life is. And it is a most powerful proof of Divine unity, too.

Consider the verse *Who creates death and life* ²⁸and you will see that death is not non-existence, non-being, annihilation or some kind of authorless extinction. Rather, as we have shown in the *First Letter*, death signifies a discharge from service, sanctioned by an All-Wise Author. It is a change of residence; a rest from duty; a change of bodies, as it were. It signifies liberation from the prison of corporeality, and as such it is a purposeful and orderly work of wisdom. Indeed, just as the living face of the earth, together with all of the

²⁷ Quran, 28:88

²⁸ Quran, 67:2

living and well-fashioned creatures upon it, testify to the necessary existence and unity of an All-Wise Maker with their lives, they also testify to Him with their deaths. Yes, in dying, creatures testify to the eternal existence and unity of an Ever-Living, Self-Subsistent One. It has been proven clearly in the *Twenty-Second Word* that death is an extremely compelling proof of both Divine unity and eternity. Interested readers may refer to that; here we shall suffice by exploring only one aspect of the matter.

Living beings point to the existence of a Necessarily Existent One with their own existences. And with their deaths they point to the eternal existence and unity of an Ever-Living, Eternal One.

For example, consider the face of the earth, which in reality resembles an individual, living creature. It alludes to its Maker with the orderly states and circumstances of its living, and it points to Him too with its dying. When winter conceals the earth's face with its white shroud, it turns the gazes of human beings away from itself and sets them towards a much broader vista. It reminds them of the past, and how every departing winter was the herald for a coming spring. It makes them realise that each of the earth's past springs was a miracle of power, and in so doing it reassures them that another spring will come again, with new, living creatures, just as springs came in the past. And since all of these springs – these living earths – testify to the existence of those future wonders of Divine power, they also testify brilliantly and compellingly, and on a vast scale, to the necessary existence, unity, everlastingness and eternity of an All-Glorious Maker. Yes, they testify to the existence an All-Powerful One of Perfection Who is Ever-Living and Eternal. They demonstrate this with such brilliant

proofs that whether one wants to or not, one is moved to declare, "I believe in God, the One, the Unique!"

In short, according to the meaning of the verse, *And gives life to the earth after its death*,²⁹ just as this living earth testifies to its Maker with the spring, with its death it turns humankind's collective gaze to the miracles of Divine power that are lined up on the two wings of time: the past and the future. It shows a thousand springs instead of a single spring, and in so doing it alludes to thousands of miracles of power rather than just one miracle. And each of those springs now past testifies with much greater certainty than this present spring. This is because those that have departed into the past have gone, together with their apparent causes, and after them others have come in their place. This shows that those apparent causes are actually nothing at all. It shows that an All-Powerful One of Glory creates those springs and, tying them to causes with His wisdom, demonstrates that He is the One Who has sent them. As for the faces of the earth lined up in the future, they testify to this truth with even greater brilliance. For they will be made anew, from nothing, and they will be sent to earth where they will be made to do their duty before being sent away again.

And so to those poor heedless ones who have deviated and are now drowning in the swamp of naturalism, I say this: how can something which possesses hands neither wise nor powerful enough to reach both the past and the future play any kind of role in the creation of life on earth? Can chance and nature, which, like you, are non-entities, actually play any part in this? If you want to be saved, at least say that nature is a reflection

29 Quran, 30:19

of Divine power, and that chance is a veil drawn over Divine wisdom in order to conceal our ignorance. Say this and at least you will have begun to approach the truth.

Twenty-Fifth Window

Someone with bruises all over his face is evidence that something or someone has struck him. A finely executed work of art is evidence of the existence of the artist who has painted it. The existence of a child is evidence for the existence of the child's parents. And if something has an under surface, it must also have an upper surface. Each of these examples describes a relative or relational state, namely the 'state of having been acted upon'.

Contingency, which permeates every particular in the cosmos, as well as the cosmos in its entirety, is a similar state. And wherever contingency is found, one can be sure that it points to necessity. The 'state of being acted upon', which is to be seen in all things, points to an act. Furthermore, the createdness apparent in all things points to creativity. And the multiplicity and compositeness seen in all things demand unity.

As for necessity, it demands the existence of one who is not contingent. An act requires one who is not acted upon. Creativity requires one who is not created, while unity requires one who is not composite. All of these things require one who bears the attributes of being necessary, being an agent, being a creator and being one. Since this is the case, all contingency, all states of being acted upon, all createdness, compositeness and multiplicity testify to the existence of One Who exists necessarily; One Who acts as He wills; One Who is the Creator of all things; and One Who has Unity and Oneness.

In short: Necessity is apparent from contingency. An act is apparent from the state of being acted upon, whatever that act may be. And unity is apparent from multiplicity. Since this is so, qualities such as createdness and having all of one's needs provided for – which are to be seen in all things – point with absolute clarity to the existence of attributes such as Making and Providing. And these attributes in turn point self-evidently and necessarily to the existence of an All-Compassionate Maker Who is both a Creator and a Provider. In other words, with the tongues of the hundreds of attributes like this which they bear, every single being in creation testifies to hundreds of Beautiful Names possessed by the Necessarily Existent One. If we deny this, we shall have to deny the existence of all of the attributes of this sort that are exhibited by beings.

Twenty-Sixth Window³⁰

The every-renewed instances of beauty and loveliness which pass over the faces of the beings in the universe show clearly that they are but shadows of the manifestations of One Who is Beautiful and Eternal. Look at a river and how bubbles sparkle on its surface before disappearing – and then how other bubbles come after, sparkling exactly the same as those which went before. These caravans of bubbles show that they are mirrors reflecting the rays of a perpetual sun. In the same way, the flashes of beauty which sparkle on those beings who are carried down the river of flowing time point clearly to the existence of an Eternal, Beauteous One, and are signs of Him.

Also, the ecstatic love in the heart of the universe points

30 This 'window' addresses in particular those lovers of God who approach him with the heart.

to the existence of an Undying Beloved (*Ma'shūq-i lāyazāl*). As shown by the fact that what is not found in the tree will never be present in its authentic form in the tree's fruit, the ardent love for God that is present in humankind – the responsive fruit of the tree of being – shows that true love, real passion, is to be found in all of the universe, albeit in other forms. In which case, this love that exists in the heart of the universe points to a Pre-Eternal Beloved. Furthermore, all of the magnetic forces and attractions which appear in numerous different forms in the heart of the cosmos demonstrate – at least to hearts that have awareness – that they are reflections of the attraction that the truth has for all things, and which draws all things towards it.

Also, according to the consensus of the saints and those who uncover the mysteries of creation, who are, with their illuminations and witnessings, the most sensitive and luminous of all creatures, they have received the manifestation of a Beauteous One of Glory. And through their illuminations they have perceived that the All-Glorious one of Beauty is making Himself known to them and loved by them. The fact that they are unanimous in relaying this truth testifies with certainty to the existence of a Necessarily Existent and Beauteous One of Glory, and to His self-revelation to humankind.

Also, there is a Divine pen which decorates and beautifies the face of the universe and all beings in it. The existence of this pen indicates clearly the existence of the beauty of the Names possessed by the pen's Owner. The beauty on the face of the universe, the love that it has in its heart, the attraction in its breast, and the uncovering and witnessing in its eye all join together to open up a truly sublime and luminous

window onto the truth. It displays to aware hearts and minds a Beauteous One of Glory, an undying Beloved who is Eternally Worshipped, and all of Whose names are beautiful.

Those heedless ones who are still floundering and suffocating in the dark swamp of materialism and the obscurity of delusion should come to their senses. They should rise to a state worthy of humanity before it is too late. They should look through these four openings, see the beauty of true faith, attain perfect belief and become true human beings.

Twenty-Seventh Window

*God is the Creator of all things, and of all things He is the Guardian and Disposer*³¹

We look at things which appear to be causes and effects in the universe, and we conclude that even the loftiest of causes possesses insufficient power to bring about even the most ordinary effect. This shows us that causes are a veil, and that something else brings about the effects. As just one example out of potentially thousands, consider the faculty of human memory, which takes up a space in the human brain no bigger than a mustard seed. And yet there are whole libraries of knowledge stored within it, including the entire story of a person's life, written completely without confusion or omission.

What cause could possibly be responsible for this miracle of power? The grey matter of the brain itself? The simple, unconscious cells? The winds of chance and coincidence? No, such a miracle of artistry can only be the work of an All-Wise Maker, Who, in order to

³¹ Quran, 39:62

inform humankind that all of the actions that humans perform are recorded and will be played back when the time of accountability arrives, inscribes a small ledger from the vast collection of man's deeds that will be published at the resurrection and places it in his mind. Compare the human faculty of memory with eggs, seeds and grains, for in a sense it resembles all of them. And then compare other effects to these small but comprehensive miracles. For whichever work of art you look at, you will see artistry far too miraculous to be attributed to the cause to which it is commonly ascribed. In fact, even if all causes were to gather together, they would not have enough power to bring into being even the simplest, most mediocre effect. Even the most insignificant of effects is a marvel of artistry so wondrous that however many causes were to collaborate, they would have to admit their utter inability to create even so much as an atom. Their collective impotence would be obvious.

Take an apparent cause as large as the sun, for example, and imagine that it possesses will and consciousness. If it were asked, "Are you able to create a fly?", it would of course reply, "Thanks to the generosity of my Creator, there is plenty of light, heat and colours on my stall, but things such as the ears, eyes and life of a fly I do not possess, I'm afraid. And nor would it be in my power if I did!"

Furthermore, the wonderful artistry and decoration one sees in effects dismiss the possibility of causal involvement straightaway. In accordance with the verse, *And to Him goes back every affair*,³² these qualities indicate the existence of a Necessarily Existent One, the Causer of Causes, and hand matters

32 Quran, 11:123

in their entirety over to Him. Similarly, the results, purposes and benefits pertaining to effects show self-evidently that they are the works of an All-Generous, All-Wise and Compassionate Sustainer behind the veil of causality. For unconscious causes cannot envision some aim and then work towards it. And yet we see that every creature that comes into existence follows not one aim but many; every being that comes into the world has not one benefit, or instance of wisdom, but numerous benefits and instances of wisdom. This means that these things are being created and sent by a Sustainer Who is All-Wise and Generous: He is the One Who makes those benefits the aim of their existence.

Take rain, for example. It is obvious that the causes which appear to result in rain are not such that they actually feel pity and compassion for those creatures in need of water. It is clear, then, that rain is sent to their assistance through the wisdom of a Compassionate Creator Who creates all creatures and guarantees their sustenance. And it is not without reason that rain is called 'mercy', for the solicitous way in which it brings benefit has impelled people to think of it as embodied mercy, released as drops of water over the heads of those in need.

Furthermore, all of the finely decorated plants which smile at everyone and everything, together with all of the artistry and embellishment we see in animals, point self-evidently to the necessary existence of an All-Glorious One behind the veil of the Unseen. They point to One Who wants to make Himself known and loved through these fine and beautifully decorated arts. This decoration, artistry and embellishment indicate without doubt the attributes of One Who wishes to make Himself known and loved. And these attributes in turn testify self-evidently to the necessary existence

and unity of an All-Powerful Maker who is Loving and Known.

In short: since causes are common, impotent things, it is clear that they are not responsible for the effects that have been attributed to them. For those effects are extremely valuable and replete with artistry of the most sublime kind: how, then, could apparent causes have anything to do with them? The aims and benefits pertaining to effects also belie the involvement of ignorant, lifeless causes, and refer them instead to an All-Wise Maker. And the ornate decoration on the faces of effects also indicate the skill and artistry of a Wise Maker Who wants to demonstrate His power to conscious beings and make Himself loved.

And so how are those wretched worshippers of causes to explain these important truths? Why do they deceive themselves so? If they have any sense they should tear down the veil of causality and declare, "He is One, He has no partners!" They should try to save themselves from these countless delusions of theirs.

Twenty-Eighth Window

*And among His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth and the variations in your tongues and in your colours; verily in that are signs for those who know.*³³

We look at the universe and we see that wisdom and order embrace everything, from the cells of the human body to the totality of the cosmos.

We look at the cells of the body and we see that there is considerable management and administration going on within those miniscule cells. On the one hand there is a sort of storing up of sustenance in progress

33 Quran, 30:22

in the stomach, where fat is accumulated for later use in times of need; and on the other hand there is much regulative activity to be seen in the tiny cells themselves, including the deposition of micro-nutrients. It is clear that this management and administration are taking place at the command of One Who knows what is best for the body, and in strict accordance with His laws.

We look at plants and we discern an extremely wise system of planning and nurturing is in place.

We look at animals and we see rearing and nurturing which are generous to the utmost degree.

We look at the mighty elements of the universe and we are witness to a scene of majestic governance and illumination, with momentous aims being pursued.

We look at the universe as a whole and we see perfect order and equilibrium in place, following exalted aims and instances of wisdom, as though the universe were a country, a city or a palace.

In the First Stopping Place of the *Thirty-Second Word*, it was proven that, be it in the creation of atoms or of stars, there is not the tiniest opportunity for the interference of those 'partners' which are often associated with God. All beings are in effect so interrelated and interdependent that one who is unable to subjugate all of the stars and hold them in his hand, as it were, is by default unable to subjugate so much as a single particle. For in order to lay claim to ownership over a single particle, one has to be able to lay claim to the ownership of the whole world.

Furthermore, in the Second Stopping Place of the *Thirty-Second Word*, we described and proved how one who is incapable of creating and arranging the

heavens is unable – again by default – to create and arrange the individual features of a human face. In other words, one who is not the Sustainer of all of the heavens will not be able to fashion the distinguishing characteristics on a single human face. This constitutes a window onto the truth as large as the universe itself. And if we look through that window, the following verses will also appear in the mind's eye, written on the pages of the universe in vast letters:

*God is the Creator of all things, and of all things He is the Guardian and Disposer. His are the keys of the heavens and the earth.*³⁴

Those who do not see them through that window have neither mind nor heart. Either that or they are animals in human form.

Twenty-Ninth Window

*And there is nothing that does not extol His limitless glory and praise.*³⁵

One spring, a stranger to my surroundings, I set out on a journey, deep in contemplation. As I skirted a hill a brilliantly yellow buttercup caught my eye. Immediately I thought of the similar kinds of buttercups that I used to see all the time in my own province, and, indeed, in other countries. What this showed me was as follows: this flower is someone's stamp, someone's seal. It is someone's impress; it is in a sense their signature. Now, whomsoever this stamp, this seal, belongs to, it is clear that all of those other stamps and seals – all of those other golden buttercups – belong to him too. The owner of this single buttercup before me is the

34 Quran, 39:62-3

35 Quran, 17:44

owner of all other buttercups, wherever they may be.

Later, a similar thought occurred to me: just as the seal stamped on a letter denotes the letter's author, in the same way, this flower is a seal that signifies the existence of the Most Merciful One. This hillock, too, upon which the impress of these species has been inscribed with the lines of these plants so full of meaning, is a letter written by the Maker of the flower. The mountain behind, too, is a stamp; it is a seal. The plateau and the plain, too, have taken on the form of letters written to us by the Most Merciful One.

After this, the following thought also came to mind: like a seal, everything ascribes all things to its own Creator: it proves that each thing is the letter written by its own Scribe. Thus, all things are windows that open onto Divine unity in such a way that each ascribes all things to a Single One of Unity (*Wāḥid-i Aḥad*). That is to say, in each thing there is an impress so wonderful and an artistry so miraculous that it can be the work of Him and Him alone. In each thing, and especially in each living being, there is a stamp and a seal so wondrous, that the one who makes it, and inscribes it so meaningfully, is the one who can make all things. And the one who can make all things is He and He alone. In other words, one who is unable to make all things is also unable to make a single thing.

So I invite the heedless to look at the face of the universe. See the pages of beings, one within the other, like letters written by the One Whom all things need but Who Himself needs nothing at all (*al-Ṣamad*)! See how each letter has been stamped with innumerable seals of Divine unity! Who can deny the testimony provided by all of these seals? Whose power will silence them? Whichever of them you listen to with your heart's ear,

you will hear it declaring, "I testify that there is no god but God!"

Thirtieth Window

If there were in the heavens and the earth other gods besides God, there surely would have been confusion in both.³⁶ Everything will perish save His countenance; His is the command, and to Him shall you return.³⁷

This is the Window of the scholars of theology (*kalām*), constructed around the principles of contingency and createdness, with which they endeavour to prove the existence and unity of the Necessarily Existent One. For those interested in theological detail, you may refer to great works such as *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif* and *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid*. Here we shall simply demonstrate one or two of the rays which fall on the spirt from the radiance of the Quran as seen through this Window.

Generally speaking, those in positions of leadership do not accept sharing their role as leader with rivals or partners, and look unfavourably on any kind of interference from outside. The existence of two headsmen in a village, for example, would be dysfunctional to the order and tranquillity of that village. The same would apply if there were two chief officials in a district, or two governors in a province: disorder would ensue. Rival kings in the same country would cause similar chaos. If weak and needy human beings are averse to the interference of rivals, opponents or partners, one can imagine how averse to the interference of rivals an absolute monarch will be. If one extrapolates from this and thinks of the absolute sovereignty and dominion of the One Who

36 Quran, 21:22

37 Quran, 28:88

possesses absolute power, one can well understand why, at that level, rejection of interference on all levels is absolutely paramount. That is to say, a constant and most definite requirement of Godhead and Divine lordliness is unity (*waḥda*) and singularity (*infirād*). Clear and certain proof of this can be seen in the perfect order and beautiful harmony visible in the universe. From the wing of a fly to the lamps that light up the heavens, order pervades throughout the cosmos to such an extent that the intellect bows down before it in wonder and appreciation. "Glory be to God", it says. "What wonders God has willed, and how great are His blessings!" Had there been any possibility of 'partners' interfering in the creation and administration of the universe, chaos would have ensued, as the Quranic verse asserts:

*If there were in the heavens and the earth other gods besides God, there would have been confusion in both.*³⁸

As the verse says, had other 'gods' played a part in the running of cosmic affairs, the equilibrium which we see would have been disturbed and signs of disorder would have soon become discernible. However, as the following verses show, however hard people try to find cracks in the cosmic edifice, they are unable to find a single fault:

*So turn your vision again: do you see any flaw? Then turn your vision a second time; your vision will come back to you in a state dazzled and truly defeated.*³⁹

Unable to detect any flaw, the searching gaze returns to its worn-out eye and says to the nit-picking mind that sent it, "I have worn myself out for nothing; there are

38 Quran, 21:22

39 Quran, 67:3-4

no faults to be found anywhere.” This shows that the order and regularity we see in the cosmos are perfect and totally without flaw. And as such, that order is a definitive witness to the existence of Divine unity.

Let us now turn our attention to the createdness of the world. The scholars of theology say, “The world is subject to change. And everything that is subject to change must have been created. Every created thing has a creator, a maker. And it follows on from this that the universe has a pre-eternal creator.”

Yes, it is clear that the universe is created. For we see that every century, indeed, every year and every season, even, one world goes and another comes in its place. This means that there is an All-Powerful One of Glory who creates a universe every year, indeed, every season, and every day, even. And this Creator creates the universe anew continuously, from moment to moment. He creates the universe afresh and shows it to those who have awareness. Then He takes it back and puts another in its place. He produces one universe after the other, like the links on a chain, and hangs them on the thread of time. The universes which appear from nothing and disappear before our eyes every spring – each a new universe the same as this one – are miracles of power performed by the Omnipotent One who creates them. The One who continuously creates and changes the worlds which exist within the world clearly created the world too. And He made the world, and the face of the earth in particular, a guesthouse for those great visitors and guests.

From createdness we move now to contingency. The theologians say, “Contingency is equal with regard to both existence and non-existence.” This means that if the existence and non-existence of a thing are equally

possible, it will need one who is able to specify, to prefer and to create in order to bring it into existence. For contingent beings cannot create each other in uninterrupted, never-ending chains of cause and effect. And since causation is impossible, there must be One Who creates them. The theologians rejected the notion of a never-ending causal regress with their famous twelve categorical proofs known as the 'ladder argument', demonstrating causality to be impossible. And so they cut the causal chain and proved the existence of the Necessarily Existent One.

To which we add: it is easier, and more conducive to certainty, to prove that everything in the universe bears a unique seal indicating the Creator of all things than it is to cut the causal chain with philosophical proofs refuting causality. Through the radiance of the Quran, all the Windows and all the *Words* are based on this principle.

Nevertheless, there is tremendous scope to the argument from contingency. It demonstrates the existence of the Necessarily Existent One in many ways and from many perspectives. But the argument of contingency is not the monopoly of the theologians. This cutting of the causal chain is in truth an extremely broad highway, opening up the path to knowledge of the Necessarily Existent One in numerous ways. For example:

When a thing comes into being, as far as the nature of its attributes and the direction of its life trajectory are concerned, the possibilities are – in theory – innumerable. However, the attributes that it acquires are clearly not given arbitrarily: it is clear that whoever or whatever is responsible has given that being its attributes in a particular way and for particular

reasons. The life trajectory that it follows will also be a particular trajectory, with wisely calculated directions and objectives. In other words, out of all the countless different attributes that it might have received, a particular set of attributes – and no other – has been given to it. And out of all the life trajectories that it might have pursued, a particular trajectory has been determined for it. All of the attributes and states that the being experiences throughout its life are specified in the same way. This means that it is impelled along just one, wise way - among innumerable possible ways – through the will of one who specifies, through the choice of one who chooses, and through the wise creation of one who creates wisely. That creator clothes the being with well-planned attributes and states.

If the being in question is taken out of isolation, as it were, and made part of a compound body, the number of its possible futures increases. However, from among numerous possibilities it is given one particular state rather than another, from where it proceeds to carry out various important functions, with various important outcomes and benefits.

Then that body is made the component of another body, whereupon the possibilities for its future increase yet again. And yet out of the countless paths it might have followed, only one path is specified for it. And on that path it performs yet more important functions, and so on. All of this demonstrates the necessary existence of an All-Wise Planner. It shows that the created being in question is being impelled by the orders of an All-Knowing Commander. Atom within particle, particle within cell, cell within body – each has a function, an orderly duty, in all of the compounds which, one within the other, themselves become components of larger compounds. The first being in our example has

relationships with all of the larger bodies of which it has become a component, in the same way that a soldier has a function and a well-regulated duty in his squad, his company, his battalion, his regiment, his division and in the army as a whole. A cell from the pupil of your eye has both a duty in your eye and a relationship with it. It also has wise functions and duties in your head as a whole, and also a relationship with it. If it were to confuse these two even for an instant, the health and organisation of the body would suffer. That particular state which has been specified for it has been given to it, from among thousands of possibilities, through the wisdom of an All-Wise Maker.

Similarly, each of the creatures in the universe bears witness to the Necessarily Existent One through the particular being, the particular wise form, and the particular beneficial attributes that have been given to it, all from among numerous possibilities. And so when these creatures become part of larger creatures, they proclaim their Maker with a different tongue in each creature or compound. As they rise through the ranks of compounds, as it were, with each step they testify through their different relations, functions and duties, to the necessary existence, will and choice of their All-Wise Maker. Because the one who situates a thing in all of the different compounds - while preserving the particular kind of relationship it has with each one - must of course be the Creator of all of the compounds. In other words, it is as though one thing is testifying to Him with thousands of tongues.

Thus from the point of view of contingency, the proofs of the existence of the Necessarily Existent One are as numerous not as the number of beings in the universe but as the number of attributes that beings have and the number of composite beings that they form.

So to the heedless ones I would say this: those who do not hear this testimony, these voices which ring out through the universe, must be dead inside and completely senseless. Is that not so?

Thirty-First Window

We have created man in the best of forms.⁴⁰ And in the earth there are signs for those who are certain. And in your own selves: will you not then see?⁴¹

This Window is the Window of humankind and is concerned with the human soul. For more detailed discussions of the subject, interested readers may refer to the works of the thousands of learned saints. Here we shall simply point out a few principles that have become clear to us thanks to the radiance of the Quran.

As is explained in the *Eleventh Word*, "Humankind is a letter so comprehensive that God Almighty makes known to the human soul all of His most beautiful names." Again, more detail can be found in the other *Words* ; for now, it will suffice to explain just three points here.

First Point

The human being mirrors the Divine Names in three ways.

First Way

Light is made visible only through the existence of darkness. Similarly, it is through human weakness and impotence, through human poverty and need, and through human defect and deficiency that the

⁴⁰ Quran, 95:4

⁴¹ Quran, 51:20-1

power, strength, mercy and riches of an All-Powerful and Glorious God may be known. The human being mirrors numerous Divine attributes in this way. Even when humans are at their lowest, finding themselves utterly weak and impotent in the face of innumerable enemies, the human conscience looks perpetually to the Necessarily Existent One for a point of support. And since utter poverty and endless need drives human beings to seek some source of assistance in the face of their innumerable aims, the human conscience depends continually on the court of an All-Compassionate One of Riches, and lifts up its hands, as it were, in supplication to Him. In other words, with regard to this point of support and this source of assistance, two small windows are opened onto the Court of Mercy of the All-Compassionate One, which may at any time be looked through.

Second Way

Each human being finds in himself or herself particulars such as knowledge, power, the senses of sight and hearing, and a sense of ownership and personal sovereignty. However, these are all 'samples', partial and limited in nature, which have been deposited in humankind in order that they may act as mirrors to the knowledge, power, sight, hearing and lordly sovereignty of the Master of the Universe. It is through these 'samples' that human beings are able to understand the absolute attributes of their Creator and make them known. It is on this account that every human being is able to say, "Just as I have the knowledge and ability to make this house, and just as I am able to see it, own it and administer it, the palace that is the universe also has a Maker – a Maker Who knows it, sees it, owns it and administers it." Further comparisons can also be made with regard to other

attributes.

Third Way

Human beings act as mirrors to the Divine names, the imprints of which are to be found in them and on them. Indeed, there are the impresses of more than seventy Divine names in a human being's comprehensive nature. These have been described to an extent at the beginning of the Third Stopping Place in the *Thirty-Second Word*. For example, through being created, humans show the names 'Maker' and 'Creator', while through being created in accordance with the 'most excellent of patterns', the names 'Most Merciful' and 'All-Compassionate' are manifested. Through the fine way in which humans are nurtured and raised by God, the names 'All-Generous' and 'Granter of Favours' can be seen. And so on. Humans show the different impresses of different Divine names through all their members, organs and faculties, through all their limbs and senses, feelings and emotions. And just as among the Names there is a 'Greatest Name', so too among the impresses or manifestations of those names, there is a greatest impress, a greatest manifestation. And that is humankind itself.

So to those who consider themselves to be truly human, I urge you to read yourselves! For if you do not, you risk slipping down the ladder and becoming animal-like – or inanimate, even!

Second Point

This pertains to an important mystery of Divine oneness (*aḥadiyya*). It is as follows:

The relationship between the human spirit and the human body is such that it causes all of the organs,

members and limbs to assist one another. The spirit is a subtle, lordly faculty and one of the commanding laws pertaining to creation; indeed, it is a manifestation of Divine will that has been clothed in external existence. As the parts of the body are administered by the spirit, it never confuses their different, immaterial voices; nor does it misidentify their different needs, or mistake one for another. Furthermore, the different parts of the body never form obstacles for each other; nor do they cause confusion for the spirit, even though its distance from all of them is exactly the same. Near and far are the same for the spirit, and as the different parts are being administered, no part ever veils or obstructs another part. If the spirit wishes, it can bring the most of the different parts of the body to the aid of just one single part. If it wishes, it can know, perceive and administer all parts of the body. And if it acquires particularly great luminosity, it may see and hear through all the different parts at once.

If the spirit, which is a commanding law of Almighty God, is able to exhibit such wondrous displays of ability in the body of the human being, which is the microcosm, then surely the all-embracing will and absolute power of the Necessarily Existent One will have absolutely no problem at all in exhibiting infinitely greater displays of ability in the universe as a whole, which is the macrocosm. The innumerable voices of creatures with their endless supplications will neither occupy the All-Glorious Creator nor confuse Him. Nor will the countless lordly acts performed in the continuous creation and maintenance of the cosmos tax Him in any sense. No matter, however vast and complex, will form an obstacle to any other matter. For He sees all creatures simultaneously and hears all voices simultaneously. Near and far are the same

for Him. If He wishes, He sends all to the assistance of one. He can see everything through everything; He can hear everything through everything; and He knows everything through everything, and so on.

Third Point

Life has a most important nature and a most significant function, but since this has been discussed in detail in the Twenty-Third Window, as well as in the Eighth Phrase of the *Twentieth Letter*, a brief reminder here will suffice.

The marks and impressions that life leaves on the human soul intermingle and boil up as emotions. As they make themselves known, they also point to the existence of numerous Divine names and essential Divine qualities. They act as mirrors reflecting the essential qualities of the Ever-Living and Self-Subsistent One in the most brilliant way. However, this is not the time to explain this mystery to those who neither recognise God nor yet fully affirm His existence. For that reason, we must close this door and move on.

Thirty-Second Window

It is He Who has sent His Messenger with Guidance and the Religion of Truth to make it prevail over all religion, and God is sufficient as witness.⁴² Say: O men! I am sent unto you all as the Messenger of God, to Whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth; there is no god but He; it is He Who gives life and death.⁴³

This Window is the Window of the Prophet Muhammad (PBWH), the Sun of the skies of messengership, or, indeed, the Sun of Suns. It has been proven in the

⁴² Quran, 48:28

⁴³ Quran, 7:158

Thirty-First Word (Treatise on Ascension), in the *Nineteenth Word* (Treatise on the Prophethood of Muhammad), and in Nineteen Signs of the *Nineteenth Letter* precisely how luminous and evident this most brilliant, broad and light-giving window is. Interested readers may refer to those works; for now we shall suffice with the following:

Muhammad (PBWH) was the living, articulate proof of Divine unity. Throughout his life, he demonstrated and proclaimed Divine unity with his two wings of messengership and sainthood. That is, he proved Divine unity with a power that comprised both the consensus of all of the prophets who had preceded him and the unanimity of all the saints and purified scholars who came after him. He opened up a window onto the knowledge of God as broad and brilliant and luminous as the world of Islam itself. Millions of purified, veracious scholars such as Imam Ghazālī, Imam-i Rabbānī, Ibn al-‘Arabī and ‘Abd al-Qādir Gaylānī would later look through that window and show it also to others. Is there any veil that can obscure a Window such as this? Are those who refuse to look through this Window not totally devoid of reason?

Thirty-Third Window

*Praise be to God, Who has revealed to His servant the Book, and has allowed no crookedness therein.*⁴⁴ *Alif. Lām. Rā. A Book which We have revealed to you, in order that you might lead mankind out of darkness into light.*⁴⁵

Think of all the Windows we have mentioned so far as being just a few drops from the ocean that is the Quran. Think of them as such and you will be able to

⁴⁴ Quran, 18:1

⁴⁵ Quran, 14:1

compare how many lights of Divine unity - each like the water of life itself - are to be found in its verses. It is true that the Quran is indeed the source, origin and wellspring of all those Windows. Yet even if we expend on it the most cursory of views, it would still appear to us as a most brilliant, luminous and comprehensive Window. To understand exactly how certain, shining and luminous the Window known as the Quran truly is, one should read the *Twenty-Fifth Word*, which is a treatise on the miraculousness of the Quran, as well as the Eighteenth Sign of the *Nineteenth Letter*.

Beseeching the Merciful Throne of the All-Glorious One Who sent us the Quran, we say:

O our Sustainer! Do not take us to task if we forget or unwittingly do wrong.⁴⁶ O our Sustainer! Let not our hearts deviate now after You have guided us! ⁴⁷ O our Sustainer! Accept this from us: indeed, You are the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing.⁴⁸ And turn unto us; for You are the Oft-Returning, Most Compassionate.⁴⁹

An Important Reminder

God willing, this *Thirty-Third Letter* of Thirty-Three Windows will bring belief to those who have none, and will strengthen the belief of those whose belief is weak. God willing, it will make certain the belief of those whose belief is strong but imitative, and it will give greater breadth to the belief of those whose belief is certain. God willing, this treatise will increase the God-knowledge – which is the basis and means of all true perfection – of all of those whose belief has

⁴⁶ Quran, 2:285

⁴⁷ Quran, 3:8

⁴⁸ Quran, 2:127

⁴⁹ Quran, 2:128

breadth. And it will open up more brilliant vistas for them. Thus you cannot say, "One window is enough for me", because even though your intellect be satisfied, your heart will want its share as well. And so will your spirit. Your imagination will also want its share of the light. And so the other Windows are also necessary, for each of them contains different benefits.

In the Treatise on the Ascension of the Prophet Muhammad (PBWH), it was primarily the believer who was addressed, while the atheist was in the position of listener. In this treatise, however, it is primarily the denier who is being addressed: this time, the believer is in the position of listener. Readers should bear this in mind.

Unfortunately, important matters meant that this treatise was written at great speed. It is also in first-draft form. Consequently there are bound to be irregularities and defects in the way the subjects have been expressed, and the fault is all mine. I request from my brothers that they look upon it with tolerance, correcting it where possible and praying for my forgiveness.

Peace be with those who follow Guidance, and may those who follow their own desires be censured.

*Glory be unto You. We have no knowledge save that which You have taught us: indeed, You are All-Knowing, All-Wise.*⁵⁰

O God, grant blessings and peace to the one whom You sent as a Mercy to All the Worlds, and to his Family and Companions, and grant them peace. Amen.

⁵⁰ Quran, 2:32

**The Life and Thought of
BEDIUZZAMAN SAID NURSI**

The Life and Thought of BEDIUZZAMAN SAID NURSI

Said Nursi (1878-1960) is a contemporary scholar and thinker who is best known for his monumental work, the *Risale-i Nur (Epistles of Light)*, a six-thousand page thematic commentary on the Quran. Born in Nurs, a tiny village in the province of Bitlis in eastern Turkey, Nursi spent his early and adolescent years studying the classical Islamic curriculum in various traditional madrasas in the area. He was an exceptionally gifted student who excelled in his studies to the extent that he was able to receive his 'finishing diploma' in 1892 at the tender age of fourteen. Later when he went to Van, a province in eastern Turkey, he also studied the natural sciences in the library of Tahir Pasha, governor of the province. By this point, Nursi was so renowned for his intellectual and academic acumen that he had been given the epithet 'Bediuzzaman' (Wonder of the Age).

Nursi realized that one of the shortcomings of the traditional madrasa education was its omission of the modern sciences, which meant that madrasa students were not able to establish harmony between these new sciences and the traditional disciplines. And so it became his ambition, even at this very young age, to establish a university where the modern sciences could be studied alongside the traditional, Islamic disciplines. When the Ottoman Empire collapsed and the Turkish Republic was established in 1923, Nursi was invited to Ankara, where a role in the new government was offered to him. However, he realised that given the turbulent circumstances there, it would not be possible to carry out his original plan. He decided at this

point to withdraw from all engagement with politics. He returned to Van in the spring of 1923, referring to himself now as the 'New Said'.

Nursi found that his life was being shaken at this time by the fast-growing current of aggressive secularism that was sweeping the county, and so during this period of his life, Nursi spent most of his time with his students quietly on Mount Ereğ, where he passed all of his private time in prayer and contemplation. In February 1925, however, his pastoral idyll was shaken by the Kurdish revolt – an insurrection which Nursi had warned everyone not to join and not to support. Despite his warnings, however, Nursi was implicated as a participant in the revolt and he was sent into exile as a result. This exile set an unfortunate precedent, for most of the rest of Bediuzzaman's life would be spent either in exile or in prison.

Following his exile to Burdur, Nursi was exiled to Barla, a village in the province of Isparta, where he lived under house arrest from March 1927 until July 1934. Most of the treatises that comprise the *Risale-i Nur* were written during these comparatively peaceful years in Barla. Along with his students, Nursi was brought to Eskişehir to stand trial, a process which began in May 1935 and lasted almost a year. The standard charge levelled against Nursi and his students, and indeed against anyone who read and defended the Qur'an at this time, was that of "violating secularism". Prison conditions at that time were horrendous, and Nursi tried to encourage his students to think of their incarceration as a kind of school, one which he called 'The School of Joseph' (*Medrese-i Yûsufiye*), in memory of the Prophet Joseph, who had also been imprisoned unjustly, and who taught his fellow prisoners, leading them to belief in God. When Nursi was released he was sent to Kastamonu, where he was detained under

house arrest from March 1936 until September 1943.

A significant change took place in May 1950 when the newly formed Democratic Party came to power. The new government was sympathetic towards religion and so Bediuzzaman was able to enjoy a certain amount of freedom, albeit still with a number of restrictions. The last ten years of his life was referred to by Nursi himself as the period of the 'Third Said' (September 1949–23 March 1960). The general amnesty of 14 July 1950 brought with it a relative freedom and so he decided to settle in Isparta, where he kept with him a small number of young students to assist him and to be trained. He referred to these years as the 'Third Said' years, when he continued to devote much of his time to issues related to the *Risale-i Nur*. He instituted the practice of communal reading (*ders*) of the *Risale-i Nur* that would later become the central activity of the Nur community, and each day would hold readings with the students who resided with him. But by the turn of the decade his health was failing. On 20th March 1960 he set off with three of his students for Urfa in south-east Turkey, where on the 23rd March he died.

Nursi was a passionate advocate of personal rights and freedoms, as exemplified by his saying "I can live without bread, but not without freedom." He objected to any association of Islam with oppression and tyranny, stating that Islam came to this world to end injustice and despotism. He defined despotism as "... the basis of tyranny. It annihilates humanity. It is despotism which reduces man to the most abject valleys of abasement, causing the Islamic world to sink into abjection and degradation, arousing animosity and malice, poisoning Islam... and causing endless conflict among Muslims."

Unlike many of his contemporaries who associated Islam with politics, Nursi abstained from mixing religion with politics and remained distant from the notion of 'political Islam.' Instead, he focused on personal dimension of belief and religion, stating that saving the faith of even a single person is of the utmost importance. Despite all the injustices and harassment to which he was subjected, he lived by the principle of 'positive action' always, never advocating violence. He stressed repeatedly that Muslims must now in this age of enlightenment and civilization fight wars with the pen and not the sword. Moreover, he viewed aggressive atheism as the greatest threat to humanity, stating that Muslims and pious Christians must join forces to overcome this threat, which endangers the eternal life of the whole of humanity.

The hallmark of Nursi's teachings is his emphasis on belief – belief in God and belief in the hereafter, which are tenets shared by all of the Abrahamic faiths. After the formation of the new Turkish Republic in the 1920s and the imposition of aggressive secular policies, Nursi devoted himself to saving and strengthening belief in God and the other principles of faith that were at that time coming under attack. He argues that death is a new beginning and is "... not execution, or nothingness, or annihilation; it is not cessation, or extinction; it is not eternal separation, or non-existence, or a random event, or an authorless obliteration. Rather, it is a discharge from duty given by the One Who is All-Wise and All-Compassionate; it is a change of locations. It is a dispatch to eternal bliss, to your true home." For Nursi, attaining strong belief is like gaining an eternal world. Therefore, these two articles of faith are the foundation of human identity that gives humankind a responsibility in this world to be God's vicegerent on Earth in order to preserve order and

prevent corruption (see the Qur'an, 2: 30f).

Nursi points out that human beings have desires and hopes that stretch to eternity, thoughts and imaginings that embrace the whole universe, together with an earnest desire for everlasting happiness and Paradise, and various innate capacities and abilities on which no limit has been placed. People are exposed to attacks from innumerable enemies and to blows from innumerable calamities, despite their countless needs, their weakness and their impotence. Under the constant threat of death, they live out their brief and turbulent lives in mostly wretched circumstances. Nursi believed that the main mission of humankind is "to progress through the acquisition of knowledge", that is, "to aim at reaching perfection via knowledge". But the highest aim of knowledge, and the thing which makes it valuable, is the knowledge of God (*ma'rifat-ullah*).

No matter what we say about scholars it is always best for them to speak for themselves. We thus leave you with this short work here and ask that you judge the tree by its fruit. For further reading we can recommend the following works about Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's life and ideas: Colin Turner, *The Qur'an Revealed: A Critical Analysis of Said Nursi's Epistles of Light*, Berlin: Gerlach Press, 2013; Şükran Vahide and Ibrahim M Abu-Rabi'. *Islam in Modern Turkey: An Intellectual Biography of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008.

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Bediüzzaman Said Nursi