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**THE RECONSTRUCTION OF ISLAMIC
THOUGHT IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY
AND BEDIUZZAMAN SAID NURSI**

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by Şükran Vahide

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The Ways to Knowledge of God in the Risale-i Nur

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Thousands of verses of the Wise Qur'an state the purpose of man's creation, for the Qur'an teaches us the way we should take on our journey in this world, and how we should follow that way. One such verse is verse 56 of Sura Dhariyat, which is generally stated as meaning: "*I created not jinn and mankind except that they might worship Me.*" This verse is also like the basis of The Supreme Sign (*Âyetü'l-Kübra*), one of the most striking parts of the Risale-i Nur. The Introduction to this work, which consists of "the observations of traveler questioning the universe about his Maker," starts with the above verse, and its continuation is like an explanation of it. It says:

"According to the meaning of this mighty verse, the purpose for the sending of man to this world and the wisdom implicit in it, consists of recognizing the Creator of all beings and believing in Him and worshipping Him. The primordial duty of man and the obligation incumbent upon him are to know God and believe in Him, to affirm His existence and unity in submission and perfect certainty."¹

A number of points are made in this short explanation which are not found in translations of the verse. For example, *li-ya'budün*, which is usually translated as *that they might worship Me*, is expounded as meaning "recognizing the Creator of all beings and believing in Him and worshipping Him." The next sentence corroborates this with the phrases "to know God" and "to affirm His existence and unity in submission and perfect certainty."

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J. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Şualar*, İstanbul, Çeltut Matbaası 1960, 84.

Essentially, this stress right at the beginning of The Supreme Sign reflects the main idea expressed in all parts of the Risale-i Nur. According to the Risale-i Nur, the duty of worship of and servitude to God (*ubudiyet*) taught by the above verse and very many others, is only realized by recognizing God and loving Him. Man was created with a nature that worships one who bestows bounties; and only to the degree that he understands that it is the Sustainer of All the Worlds Who bestows countless bounties on him, will man try to attract His love through worship. In brief, the basis and key of worship of God is knowledge of Him.

It is because of this that from beginning to end the Risale-i Nur speaks of "knowledge of God," for which the phrase "recognizing God" is also used. It shows us the ways that will take us to knowledge of God.

There are numerous "instructors" (*mu'arrif*) to guide man, so that he may carry out his duty of worship, which may be done in fitting manner only through knowledge of God. In the Risale-i Nur these instructors who make known to man his Sustainer, are gathered under four main headings: (1) the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), in whose person was brought together the "knowledge" of all the prophets; (2) the Qur'an, which is the supreme expression of the truth taught by all the revealed scriptures; (3) the universe, which includes all creatures; and (4) the conscience, as man's "conscious nature," which is like the centre of all his senses which have the capacity to recognize God. Despite their being numerous "instructors" acquainting man with his Sustainer in respect of worship, the true aim of the journey in this world, the four I shall mention here are "universal instructors."²

This study deals with these four universal instructors. But keeping in mind the limited time available, I have not attempted within this framework the question of these instructors proving each other and comprising each other. Only, the fact that, after beginning with the verse mentioned above, The Supreme Sign puts forward the evidence for knowledge of God furnished by the universe; moves on to the world of man within the universe, who has been given a conscience as part of his essential nature; points out Muhammad (PBUH) within the world of humanity; and shows the Qur'an he holds up; then describes him taking the Qur'an and embarking on a journey through the universe; thus demonstrating clearly how these "universal instructors" are studied as an inseparable totality in the Risale-i Nur.

Nevertheless it should again be stated that this study does not discuss how these instructors comprise each other or how they prove each other. Hoping that that will be the subject of another study, I shall suffice with a brief description of these four universal instructors, and offer a brief discussion of the universe as a way leading to knowledge of God.

After these introductory statements I want to discuss, in order, how these four universal instructors lead us to knowledge of God.

2. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Sözler*. Istanbul, Sözler Yayınevi 1980, 219 / *The Words* [Eng. trans.], Sözler Publications 1992, 243; *Mesnevi-yi Nûriye*. Istanbul, Sözler Yayınevi 1980, 224 ff.

1. Muhammad (PBUH)

The first of the universal instructors who describes our Sustainer to us and acquaints us with him is Muhammad (Upon whom be blessings and peace), the reason for the world's creation. It is Muhammad (PBUH) who provides convincing answers, acceptable to all uncorrupted minds, to the three awesome questions "What are you?" "Where do you come from?" "Where are you going?"³ which have always preoccupied thinking people and been the most asked questions, and may be asked about all beings. He is an "articulate proof."⁴ We should listen to him, for what he says solves the riddle of the universe and makes known to us our Sustainer. For he uncovered the perfections of the universe and set forth the purpose of the creation of beings. He was addressed by all things in a way appropriate to the aim of their creation, and he used them in accordance with this aim. It is he who found the mercy in creation and showed it to us. He proclaims that universal and absolute mercy with all his acts and states.⁵

If we listen to Muhammad's (PBUH) supplications, he makes known to us our Sustainer in them; he seeks eternal happiness, he seeks immortality. He turns one's face from the transitory world to the Eternal One, and everyone who listens to him, hears his entreaties to meet with Him. He wants Paradise, where he may be in the Eternal One's presence for ever. He sees beings as mirrors, mirrors in which are to be seen all the sacred Names of our Creator, and their true, everlasting beauty. He directs our supplications to our Sustainer, Who is described by the Names, and makes Him known to us through His Names.⁶ (In the Risale-i Nur, the Hadiths narrated from the Prophet (PBUH) are presented not only as means of supplication, at the same time as proofs describing our Creator and making us assent to His reality and existence.)⁷

Before everything, Muhammad (PBUH) is a *guide in belief*. Although the universe is adorned with ever-renewed inscriptions and embellished with beings all different to and more beautiful than the rest, it is imagined by some people to be a plaything tied to chance. Yet it was due to what he taught about it, that it was illumined and acquired value. Through the revolution that he brought about, the shape of the world was transformed, in which previously everything had appeared to be vanishing into nothingness and non-existence. Through his description, everything sprang to life before everyone's eyes; things ceased being wretched non-entities being cast into nothingness, and became travellers on the road to eternal life. Thanks to the light he brought, everything ceased being apparently hostile to everything else. On the contrary, all things were seen to be officials charged with the duty of making known their Creator, and to be friends

3. *Sözler*, 220 / *The Words*, 244; *Mesnevi-yi Nûriye*, 21; *İşârâtü'l-İ'caz*, İstanbul, Sözler Yayınevi 1978, 12; *Mektûbat*, İstanbul, Sözler Yayınevi 1981, 181 / *Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, Letters 1928-1932* [Eng. trans. Şükran Vahide], Sözler Publications 1994, 237.

4. *Sözler*, 219 / *The Words*, 243.

5. *Mesnevi-yi Nûriye*, 23.

6. *Sözler*, 223 / *The Words*, 247-8.

7. *Şualar*, 108.

and brothers hastening to assist each other. If it had not been for the light he brought, the beings which were employed in perfect mutual assistance, would have continued to be ownerless wretches without importance, apparently doomed to annihilation.⁸ (Just as those who do not look with his light see it to be.)

The Risale-i Nur teaches us to listen to Muhammad's (PBUH) words as words that deliver the universe from meaninglessness, gain importance for it, and impart existence and life to things, and illuminate them. Thus, God's Messenger becomes a teacher in men's eyes, a teacher of knowledge of God. At the heart of everything he teaches is the affirmation of Divine unity;⁹ there is recognition of the One Creator, which directs us to worship Him alone.

The duty of people of consciousness and intelligence in this world, everything of which our Sustainer created full of art and purpose, is to ponder over the His beauties reflected in the art and to proclaim them wonderingly. It was Muhammad (PBUH) who performed this duty, which is described in the Risale-i Nur as the basis of worship, most perfectly. In this respect, all the words and acts of Muhammad the Arabian (PBUH) are seen in the Risale-i Nur as words and acts making known our Sustainer; and he is announced as the chief of "the sphere of worship."¹⁰

II. The Conscience

The second instructor describing our Sustainer to us and making Him known, is man's conscience, known as "man's conscious nature," which has been deposited in his self as a trust.

Man's needs encompass the whole universe. They exceed it even. For man has intense need for life after death, and all his senses want immortality and eternity. However, on his own he does not have the power to meet any of these needs. And such power is not to be found in anything else, since everything is created like himself. Man has been decked out with extremely fine senses, and all the time feels the need to find a point of support in the face of his obvious impotence. He sees, in fact, that his life, youth, senses, the food which he enjoys eating, his clothes, in brief all the bounties bestowed on him, are day by day being lost to him, that they are leaving him. He can find no power in himself to prevent their departure. He longs for his youth not to depart, for those he loves not to abandon him, but he can do nothing apart from desiring these things. In the face of this helplessness, his conscience hopes for a point from which it can seek help, a support from which it can find strength.

The Risale-i Nur sees man's need for both a support and point of assistance as part of the order in the universe, and says that in this way two windows have been entrusted to the conscience. It says concerning the conscience that from these two windows, which it calls "the point of support and point of assistance," "perpetually manifest knowledge of the All-Glorious Maker in man's heart."

8. *Mesnevi-yi Nûriye*, 21-2.

9. *Mesnevi-yi Nûriye*, 20.

10. *Mesnevi-yi Nûriye*, 28-9.

“Even if the eyes of the mind are closed, those of the conscience are always open.”¹¹

Man has been decked out with truly fine senses. It is understood from the sensitive, perfect, universal senses and abilities given to man that he is the most perfect fruit of the universe. So for man to be despairing, hopeless, anxious, frightened, perpetually faced with the danger of death and extinction, like some powerless wretch living in a hellish state of mind that sears the soul, is contrary to the perfect order of the universe. One who does not believe in a Creator is compelled to ascribe beings to blind chance. The uncertainty posed by chance and coincidence is opposed to the nature of the conscience, which is in need of a point of support and a point of assistance. The conscience rejects such an understanding.¹²

The *Risale-i Nur*, in every part of which the truths of belief are elucidated and proved to the intellect, refers to the conscience so that man will perceive the reality of these truths in his own self as well. Man’s innate being and his conscience are a window to the mind.¹³ The conscience is used as a unit of measurement, and after making it confirm a truth, the heart, the centre of the emotions, finds satisfaction. For “the conscience does not forget the Maker; even if it denies its self, it sees Him (the Creator). It thinks of Him, and is turned to Him.”¹⁴

The conscience performs a function of great importance in making known our Sustainer. In the *Risale-i Nur*, it is described as a place of transit where the World of the Unseen and this Manifest World come together and where the thoughts and inspirations from those two worlds meet.¹⁵

The *Risale-i Nur* likens the conscience to the laws of nature. That is, “the essential nature of things does not lie.” When a handful of water freezes, the inclination to expand in its nature necessitates that it takes up more space. It expands even if it is in an iron container and it splits the iron. Strong iron cannot prevent what the water’s nature necessitates. Inclinations such as this are the appearances and manifestations of the commands related to creation which God has laid down with His will.¹⁶

This means no creature can prevent the realization of the attributes deposited in our essential natures. Nothing can make the essential nature lie. For example, man desires eternity, has been made to love the senses given to him, and does not want them to be taken from him and cast into nothingness; this desire in his conscience no creature can prevent. Illness, and death even, cannot prevent it. Man preserves this desire of his, and seeks One Who will answer it. One of the matters making the conscience a means to knowledge of God is this. Referring to Almighty God, the *Risale-i Nur* expresses this innate reality with the concise words: “If He hadn’t wanted to give, He would not have given wanting.”¹⁷

11. *Mesnevi-yi Nûriye*, 232.

12. *Mesnevi-yi Nûriye*, 232.

13. *Mesnevi-yi Nûriye*, 224.

14. *Mesnevi-yi Nûriye*, 231.

15. *Mesnevi-yi Nûriye*, 224.

16. *Mesnevi-yi Nûriye*, 231.

17. *Mektûbat*, 280 / *Letters*, 357.

Someone who denies the Creator sees that none of his irresistible innate needs is completely answered in this fleeting world. Yet since he cannot say: "Since I have been given these needs, there must be Someone to answer them," he lives his whole amid contradictions. On the one hand he has needs which embrace the whole universe and desires stretching to eternity, and on the other, neither can he answer these needs and desires himself, nor can he find anyone else to do so. Basically, this contradiction is a compassionate warning to him from his Creator, telling him that he is thinking in the wrong way.

By both making known the need, and being the source of suffering—that is, in both its positive and negative states—the conscience, which is a conscious law of creation, all the time recalls to man his need for a Creator possessing absolute power. Briefly, it makes known the Creator together with all His Names; "it broadcasts the rays of Divine unity."¹⁸

III. The Holy Qur'an

Since the Qur'an, which is another of the "universal instructors," all of which have great importance and are inseparable one from the other, tells us about the other instructors, as well as being "the guide" of the Risale-i Nur, it holds endless importance.

The Risale-i Nur's way may be summarized as "demonstrating the Qur'an's truth under the guidance of the Qur'an," and from this point of view its definition of the Qur'an is extremely meaningful:

The Qur'an, which comes from God's infinite knowledge, is a translation of the universe, which appears as a vast book. All the beings in the vast universe are signs of creation; the verses of the Qur'an read these signs of creation, translating them into a language the men can understand. They discover the treasures of the Creator's Most Beautiful Names hidden behind the web of causes, which are necessitated by the order of creation, and offers them for man's use. The Qur'an is a key to the truths which are the means of knowing the Creator and are concealed between the lines of the book of the universe, which is formed of the chains of events, strung in succession by Divine Determining. It is a favour of the Most Merciful One, a Divine condescension, proceeding from the World of the Unseen behind the veil of this Manifest World. It is an address, a speech, made to conscious beings in the name of the Creator of the heavens and earth.¹⁹ As an instructor, the Wise Qur'an mentions the universe with numerous of its verses in order to make known the Creator and His essence, attributes, and beautiful Names; that is, in order to explain the meanings of all beings and events, and make known their Creator. Thus, the Qur'an invites men who are conscious to look at beings not for themselves, but in order to make known their Creator, Who gives them existence.²⁰

While describing our Maker to us, the Qur'an puts forward proofs in two

18. *Mesnevi-yi Nâriye*, 224.

19. *Sözler*, 225, 339-40 / *The Words*, 250, 376-7.

20. *Sözler*, 226 / *The Words*, 251.

different ways. One of these is "the proof of wisdom and purpose" (*delil-i inayet ve gayet*). In brief, this proof is the fact that, as the perfect order of the universe shows, faultless art is exhibited in creation and wise purposes and benefits. This proves the Maker's intention and wisdom, and refutes definitively the notion that it was created by chance. For there can be no perfection and intention without will and choice.

Thus, all the Qur'anic verses which mention the benefits that things produce for men and other creatures are the subject of the proof called *delil-i inayet*. The phrases at the beginning of verses like: "Do they not know?", "Do they not reason?", "Have they never thought of...?", "Do you not think...?", "Take a lesson!" refer these benefits to the reason to be pondered over. They prompt the reason to consult with the conscience, and establish this proof in the mind.

The Qur'an's second proof is the proof called "*delil-i ihtira*." Unconscious, lifeless, simple causes could not be the creators of beings, all of which are miracles of power and wondrous works of art leaving everyone in amazement. Causes are themselves created, and cannot bring beings into existence anew and create them. God, the possessor of absolute power, gave all species of creatures beings appropriate to their innate capacities and particular to their species, thus making each a proof of Himself. In its verses that mention creation and the giving of existence, the Qur'an points out that the true effective agent is God alone and that causes have no true effect, and it establishes this proof in people's minds.²¹

Just as Muhammad the Arabian (PBUH) was a universal instructor who spoke with his life, making known to us our Sustainer, so the Wise Qur'an is another universal instructor speaking with all its verses to people who think, proclaiming over and over again "God, there is no god but He!"²²

IV. The Book of the Universe

The first, and most direct and shortest way, leading to knowledge of God, the highest point of perfection man can reach, is the way of the Qur'an.²³ In fact, the Qur'an teaches how we can address ourselves to the other three ways. For instance, with many of its verses, the Qur'an invites man to consider "*how beings are created*." It makes known the Creator of the heavens and earth and all they contain as an All-Glorious One possessing absolute knowledge, absolute power, and absolute will. It points out that nothing, not causes, nature, chance, or anything created under whatever name, can have a share in His creation; that nothing can be a partner to God.

The Risale-i Nur describes the universe as a vast book or a vast human being (macroanthropos). Each word of this book, and even each letter, is created so miraculously that infinite power sufficient to create the whole universe is necessary in order to create even the minutest particle in exactly the right place. All

21. *Mesnevi-yi Nûriye*, 230-1; *İşârâtü'l-I'caz*, 96-9.

22. *Mesnevi-yi Nûriye*, 228.

23. *Mesnevi-yi Nûriye*, 229.

natural causes, other than God, could not create even a letter of this book, even to suppose the impossible, they possessed the power and will. For a letter, especially if it is an animate being, is directly connected with all the words of the book of the universe. Life connects one thing with everything else. There is an order in the universe which embraces all beings and ties each single being to all the other beings as though weaving a web for each. It is a compounded impossibility to suppose that blind, simple, lifeless, natural causes which are themselves in need of being made and do not know where they are going and why, are the cause of this perfect order.

This means that "Everything is tied to everything else. Nothing can be made without everything else. The one who creates one thing, created everything. In which case, the one who makes everything has to be One, Single, Unique, and Eternally Besought by all things." All the letters of the book of the universe, and even the points, singly or in compounds—that is, as either words, sentences, or paragraphs—testify to the existence and unity of an All-Glorious One. Through the attributes given to them, they constantly recite and proclaim the verse *And there is nothing but it glorifies Him with praise.*²⁴

While presenting the universe as vast, universal evidence for Divine unity, the All-Wise Qur'an most frequently uses evidence that the mass of people will understand easily. Examples of this are the earth, sky, stars, moon, rain, water, clouds, the bee, the ant, and the wind. The Risale-i Nur has also adopted this method and style. In accordance with the Qur'anic approach, which may be summarized as "demonstrating Divine Oneness within Divine unity," it shows that all beings from minute particles to the stars are brilliant proofs of the existence of the Necessarily Existent One, Who possesses absolute power.²⁵

This way, which the Risale-i Nur has taken directly from the All-Wise Qur'an, is the shortest way taking man to knowledge of God. It neither submerges him in the veils of causes, nor opens the door to being forced to deny the universe. There is "a sense of the Divine Presence" on this Qur'anic way of the Risale-i Nur, and its result is "worship in the presence [of the One sought.]" But in order to gain this capacity, that is, for the believer to feel himself in God's presence at all times and in all places, he is not compelled to deny the creatures that exist, saying that the universe is imaginary or does not actually exist. That is to say, the Risale-i Nur found in the Qur'an a more general, safe, and short way, which surpassed the way of the followers of the Unity of Existence, in order to gain "a constant sense of the Divine presence." Similarly, the Risale-i Nur does not embark on a way contrary to the inborn nature of things in order to always be aware of the Divine presence, the way of the followers of the Unity of Witnessing, which was to cast the universe into absolute oblivion and to forget beings or suppose they do not exist. In short:

"The knowledge of God obtained from the All-Wise Qur'an, in addition to affording a constant sense of the Divine presence, neither condemns the universe to non-

24. *Mesnevi-yi Nâriye*, 224-8.

25. *Sözler*, 566 / *The Words*, 633.

existence, nor imprisons it in absolute oblivion. It rather releases it from its purposelessness, and employs it in Almighty God's name. Everything becomes a mirror yielding knowledge of God."²⁶

On the other hand, the *Risale-i Nur* does not employ in similar manner, the proofs of contingency and createdness which the scholars of *kalām* developed, although they observed the universe in order to explain the existence of the Necessarily Existent One; he further developed them.

A summary of what the scholars of *kalām* said about createdness was this: it is clear the world is in a state of change. If something is changing, it is also created in time. If something is created in time, it must have a creator; something which gave it existence. It is therefore a logical necessity that the universe has a Pre-Eternal Giver of Existence. The *Risale-i Nur* says the following about the method which the scholars of *kalām* developed and explains logically that the universe had to have something or someone to bring it into existence from nothing:

"The scholars of theology cut the chains of causes at the extremities of the world with the impossibility of causation and causal sequences, then with that they prove the existence of the Necessarily Existent One. They travel a long road." However, in the knowledge of God taken directly from the Qur'an, man may open a window onto knowledge of God in everything. Everything may be used to gain a constant sense of the Divine presence. The *Risale-i Nur* makes another important point here: to deduce logically that the universe must have a Creator and "to know God exists," is not to have a complete knowledge of God. One has "to know God" as well as knowing that He exists. For this, belief cannot remain as intellectual knowledge only. For man is not composed of intellect or reason alone. He has numerous subtle inner faculties, like spirit, heart, inner heart, and soul, that have to receive their share too. Then he may attain to a complete knowledge of God and constant sense of the Divine presence.²⁷

Man lives in the 'here and now.' He has innumerable senses and faculties, and before his eyes an incomparable world stretches out which addresses him through his senses like intelligence, heart, tongue and eyes. All the beings in this world are saying something to man through their beings. The universe is not unbiased; it is not a field that everyone can interpret as they wish. Man either hears what all the beings in the universe say through the tongues of their dispositions, or he attempts to interpret it according to his own delusions. This world of beings that he observes tells those who look at it and are able to see it that all beings were brought into existence from nothing, and informs them of the One Who brought them into being through the attributes that are visible on them. Thus, the Qur'anic way of the *Risale-i Nur* makes known the Creator through the manifestations of His infinite Names and attributes in the mirrors of the beings we observe; it renders us the addressees of those Names and attributes through our senses; and making us realize that we are in the presence of the Single One of Unity, it gains for us "a complete sense of the Divine presence."

26. *Mektûbat*, 306 / Letters, 389.

27. *Mektûbat*, 306-7 / Letters, 389-90.

If one considers it according to the principles of this way, one sees the question of createdness in the following context:

“And we say, yes, the universe is created. For we see that every century, indeed, every year and every season one universe, one world, goes, and another comes. This means that there is an All-Powerful One of Glory Who, creating the universe anew, creates a universe every year, indeed, every season, and every day, and shows it to the aware and conscious. Then He takes it back and puts another in its place. He attaches one universe after the other like the links of a chain, and hangs them on the string of time. For sure, the universes which appear from nothing and disappear before our eyes every spring, each a new universe the same as this world, are miracles of the power of the Omnipotent One Who creates them. The One Who continuously creates and changes the worlds within the world most definitely created the world too. And He made the world and the face of the earth a guest-house for those great visitors.”²⁸

Since that infinitely powerful One creates through “a command,” that is, without “touching” or “effort,” things come into existence with an infinite ease. The fact that both in the first creation of beings, and in their re-creation and their being returned to existence, their creation is with the very greatest art, wisdom, perfection, and with the greatest ease and speed, and without difficulty, shows that He does this merely with a command.²⁹

As for the proof of contingency which the scholars of *kalam* developed, the Risale-i Nur summarizes it as follows: contingency is equal in regard to both existence and non-existence. Therefore, someone who will prefer the existence of something to its non-existence is necessary; who will specify it, and create it out of nothing. For contingent beings cannot create each other in chains. Nor can one create the next, and that the next, and that the next, and so on. In which case, there is a Necessarily Existent One, whose existence is not contingent but necessary, who creates things which are essentially contingent. Thus it is shown with many proofs that contingency and causation are rationally impossible, and proved that the absolute existence of the Necessarily Existent One is necessary.

The scholars of the science of *kalām* presented the proof of contingency as follows: putting forward various sorts of proofs, they said that since everything is in essence contingent, there had to be something in the beginning to bring them into existence out of nothing, and they cut the chains of causes at the extremities of the world. In place of this, the Risale-i Nur points out in everything stamps, seals, signs, and evidences particular to the Creator of all things, which open up the way to knowledge of the Necessarily Existent One. It states that this way is easier and more certain, and closer to the Qur'an's style of explanation, and explains this method as follows:

The existence of all the things we see this moment around us is not essential, for it does not prevent the decline and passing of their existence. And the attributes visible in beings are not essential and do not spring from their essences, for they too do not prevent them from being lost and departing. That is to say, all the

28. *Sözler*, 638 / *The Words*, 716.

29. *Sözler*, 179, 181 / *The Words*, 212, 213; *Lem'alar*, 182 / *The Flashes Collection*, 250.

beings in the world have a contingent existence which is not essential and necessary. Every moment a being continues its existence, that existence is possible in an infinite number of ways, both in its existence, and in its attributes, that is, in all the characteristics visible in it, since it is contingent. Although this is the reality, we see that within all those possibilities its existence follows the most well-ordered way. All the attributes of all things are given them in a way particular to each. The attributes and states of each which continuously change every moment of its existence are given in a way particular to that thing alone. That is to say, the thing is driven on a wise, purposeful way among innumerable ways through the will of "a specifier" who specifies its attributes, through the choice of "a chooser," and through the creation from nothing of "one who creates with wisdom," and it is given well-ordered attributes and states.

Then the thing is not created on its own; it is the part of a body. Although it could have been in that body in thousands of different ways, it is made to perform functions in a way that gives rise to most beneficial, important results. Then the body is made part of another body. The possibilities increase even further. For although it could part of the greater body in infinite ways and there is no reason arising from its own essence, each is employed in the most purposeful, beneficial way. This question of being 'a part' can be expanded to being a meaningful part of the whole universe. As this progresses, it demonstrates more certainly the absolute existence of a Planner who creates everything knowingly and with wisdom.

Everything, both through its existence and its attributes, its particular existence amid innumerable possibilities, and its being given wise and beneficial attributes, testifies to a Necessarily Existent One. In exactly the same way, when it is employed as part of a body composed of parts, it demonstrates through the meaningful duties it performs within the network of relations as far as the greatest body, that its Maker, Who creates with purpose and wisdom, possesses will and choice. For one who places with wisdom one thing within all the other bodies to which it is tied through the network of relations, can only be the Creator of the compound which all those bodies form. That is to say, carrying out different meaningful duties one within the other in different positions, one single thing describes our Creator to us in thousands of different ways. In this way, from the point of view of contingency, ways leading to knowledge of God are opened up not to the number of beings in the universe, but to the number of attributes of beings and the networks of their relations resulting from their being parts of one another.³⁰

Conclusion

Man was created to know his Creator, the Sustainer of All the Worlds, and to worship Him alone. Although there are numerous "instructors" making known the Creator as the purpose of creation, four of these are known as "universal instructors" in the *Risale-i Nur*, because they include all the others.

30. *Sözler*, 639-40 / *The Words*, 716-18.

This paper was a sketch, based on the Risale-i Nur, of those four universal and general ways among all those taking man to knowledge of God. A detailed study of these four instructors should also be carried out. Another very important matter requiring further study, which was only alluded to here, is that of the four universal instructors comprising each other.

For now I have made do with presenting a general outline, and I have not attempted to elucidate it further by giving examples for every point. In any event, from beginning to end the Risale-i Nur itself is an example of it. But I have discussed the universe in somewhat more detail as the fourth universal instructor.

As is stated in the relevant section, the Risale-i Nur takes the Qur'an as its guide. Because the Risale-i Nur considers the universe according to the method the Qur'an teaches, it is compelled neither to consider the universe to be non-existent, like the followers of the Unity of Existence; nor to insist it is forgotten, like the followers of the Unity of Witnessing; nor to address the intellect alone when making known a necessarily existent Creator, like the scholars of *kalām*; nor to take man to the beginning of creation in his imagination, and there try to demonstrate to the intellect a Creator's existence.

The Risale-i Nur says that "everything has many aspects that give onto God like windows;"³¹ and discusses the universe as a window opening onto knowledge of God. Thus it explains to those it addresses how this window should be looked through and what may be seen from it *here* and *now*.

According to the Risale-i Nur, the reality of everything is based on numerous of the Divine Names. The art in things is a mirror to a Name. The true reality of things is the Divine Names. In one living being, even, the inscriptions of the manifestations of around twenty Names may be seen, only in its outer face.³²

It is possible to see behind people's investigations of the universe an endeavour to read these Names. But this natural desire may be led down false paths by Satan and the evil-commanding soul. Just as scientific research into the universe this century in particular has not achieved its true aim; it is half-done and deficient, and has even gone off course. For the universe is present in such studies, and a purposeful universe which is full of art and every part of which contains numerous instances of wisdom, but they are very recalcitrant in attributing this art to the Name of 'Maker,' and the wisdom to the Name of 'All-Wise.' Whereas all research will only fulfil its purpose by demonstrating the Divine Names and making known to man his Sustainer. The Risale-i Nur expresses this as follows:

"...All attainments and perfections, all learning, all progress, and all sciences, each have an elevated reality which is based on one of the Divine Names. On being based on the Name, which is concealed under numerous veils and has various manifestations and different spheres, the sciences and arts and attainments find their perfection and become reality. It is not some incomplete and deficient shadow."³³

31. *Sözler*, 586 / *The Words*, 655.

32. For example, see, *Sözler*, 586-90 / *The Words*, 655-60.

33. *Sözler*, 244 / *The Words*, 270.

For example, a true 'natural science' which reads the book of the universe is based on the Name of All-Wise, true wisdom on the Name of Healer, and geometry on the Name of Determiner. All sciences are based on the manifestation of a Divine Name, and they are perfected by attaining to the Name on which they are based.

"Each of the sciences is a luminous proof which, demonstrating the fruits of benefits which hang like bunches of grapes on the chains of beings and the uses concealed in the changes of circumstances, proclaims the intention and wisdom of the Maker."³⁴

One should mention at this point the conflict and dichotomy in modern minds between science and religion, and the universe and revelation. By saying that all the branches of science are based on a Divine Name and are perfected by attaining to it, the *Risale-i Nur* opposes this dichotomy. A clear proof of this is the above passage, which is based on "the teaching of the Divine Names" which the Qur'an teaches, and which it presents as an explanation of the relevant verse. Furthermore, an attempt is made throughout the *Risale-i Nur* to remove this dichotomy from people's minds; on the one hand, it is said that "the Qur'an reads the universe," and while proving this, on the other, the universe is studied as "an embodied dominical Qur'an." This totality, which is necessary in order to reach knowledge of God safely, is a question which absolutely must be made the subject of research. We have merely alluded to it in this study.

We live in an era which produces technology to adorn this fleeting worldly life and increase heedlessness. It is a binding duty on believers at this time to present to floundering man in such an age the way to read the book of the universe without forgetting its Author; indeed, in order to make Him known. As to how the book of the universe should be read, the *Risale-i Nur* summarizes as follows, in the manner of the Qur'an:

"Beware! In your progress, do not follow Satan and thus fall from the heavens of Divine wisdom into the misguidance of 'Nature.' Continuously raising your head and studying carefully My Most Beautiful Names, make your sciences and your progress steps by which to ascend to those heavens. Then you may rise to My dominical Names, which are the realities and sources of your sciences and attainments, and you may look to your Sustainer with your hearts through the telescope of the Names."³⁵

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34. *Sözler*, 244 / *The Words*, 270; *İşârâtü'l-l-'caz*, 96-7.

35. *Sözler*, 244 / *The Words*, 270.