

# Finding God in Light of the Writings of the Promised Messiah

By

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Most religions describe God as an infinite reality, which is not bounded by time and space, and thus outside the grasp of human mind. A great chasm separates human mind and God. Can this gap be bridged and if so, how? Science is taking tiny steps forward but new scientific discoveries only confirm the depth and breadth of human ignorance. Since the development of modern science in the late 1600s, scientists and philosophers have attacked the idea of a God. They hold religion responsible for the oppression of humanity and want to replace religion with science as the supreme authority on human affairs. The idea that God does not exist became prevalent in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which Nietzsche articulated in his famous phrase: “God is dead.”

In such context, Allah sent the Promised Messiah (as), who relied on *Surah Al-Takathur* to identify three tools that grant us certainty in the existence of Allah. These three tools are:

1. **Knowledge by way of inference:**
2. **Knowledge by way of sight**
3. **Knowledge by way of experience**

The degree of certainty these three tools provide varies. Knowledge by way of experience provides the highest degree of certainty in the existence of Allah followed by knowledge by way of sight. Knowledge by way of inference is the inferior of three forms of knowledge.

## **Knowledge by way of inference:**

The Promised Messiah (as) says that knowledge of God by way of inference is knowledge based on reason and information.<sup>1</sup> When we see smoke from a distance, we infer the existence of fire. In a similar manner, when we see creation, we infer that there must be a creator. The sight of a sublime glacier melting into rivers, which snake their way into the ocean, and then vaporize to form clouds and then falls back on earth in the form of rain or snow is one of many marvelous phenomena in the universe. To a curious mind, a natural question comes to mind. Who created this beautiful machinery of nature in such an artistic manner? Such breathtaking beauty helps us to infer that a supreme being exists who created the universe and the life in it. The challenge is to find this creator. How do we know where He is, and how do we know His attributes? Holy Scriptures and prophets point to the fact that the creator of the universe communicates with His creation. Muslims believe that the final scripture revealed to humanity is the Holy Quran. The teachings of this scripture were demonstrated by the Holy Prophet in

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<sup>1</sup> Ahmad, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam, “*Sources of Divine Knowledge*”, Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam, Islam International Publications Ltd, 1993, p. 99

practice. The Holy Quran and the life of the Prophet Muhammad, may peace be on him, offer indirect proof that Allah exists. Can we gain an even better knowledge of Allah? Yes. To understand Allah better, we need to rely on Allah's Grace. We have to seek His help to develop knowledge about Him without any intermediary.

The Holy Quran states:

***Eyes** cannot reach Him but He reaches the **eyes**. And He is the Incomprehensible, the All-Aware. (6:104)*

### **Knowledge by way of sight**

We can say that we see God with our own eyes when God reveals Himself to us. No longer do we depend on logic and information to infer the existence of Allah. At this stage of knowledge, we do not see only the smoke but also the fire.<sup>2</sup>

However, sometimes revelation is not a testimony of our righteousness, but is a motivation for us to become righteous. It is like when our parents show us a beautiful toy and take it back until we finish our homework. In a similar manner, God grants us revelation and shows Himself to us but he stops His revelations if we do not respond with improved level of righteousness. In other words, if someone is blessed with revelation, it does not mean that the spiritual destination has arrived. It is more likely that God has given us a glimpse of our destination so that we start traveling faster on the spiritual path.<sup>3</sup>

What is true revelation? The Promised Messiah (as) first explains what revelation is not. Any brilliant idea of a scientist or philosopher cannot be termed as revelation. Otherwise, a thief who comes up with brilliant ideas of robbery will also be considered a recipient of revelation.<sup>4</sup>

The Promised Messiah (as) describes true revelation as something that is not a product of our mind but a meaningful back-and-forth dialogue between Allah and his servant.<sup>5</sup> Those who are blessed with revelation are few because most of us choose worldly things over spiritual bounties. But once we have acquired the taste of genuine revelation, all worldly things become meaningless.<sup>6</sup>

### **Knowledge by way of experience**

According to the Promised Messiah (as), revelation is open to us all, however we can only become worthy of it by becoming righteous. If revelation inspires righteousness in you then you become worthy of further revelations. Revelation and righteous actions reinforce each other and give us the highest level of certainty in the existence of Allah. At this stage of certainty, we feel the warmth of God in our hearts. It is as if we have become certain of fire by inserting our hand into the fire.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 103

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 105

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, 104

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 105

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 106

Since righteousness is a prerequisite for attaining certainty in the existence of God, we should know the meaning of righteousness. Righteousness, among other things, also means showing steadfastness in the face of misfortune. When great calamities enter the house of a righteous person, he does not “lose heart but says: Surely to Allah we belong and to Him shall we return. It is these on whom are blessings from their Lord and mercy, and it is these who are rightly and perfectly guided (2:156-158).”<sup>7</sup>

Observing steadfastness during extreme hardships allows man to arrive at the absolute certainty of the existence of Allah.

The Promised Messiah (as) explains that when people show steadfastness and do not lose heart in the face of fear, hunger, suffering and loss of wealth, it is they who are blessed from God and are perfectly guided. Steadfastness in the face of trials imprints divine attributes on their soul. At this stage, the knowledge is perfected through experience and moral qualities such as forbearance, become part of our personality.<sup>8</sup>

Why is steadfastness, in the face of suffering, necessary to gain absolute certainty in the existence of God? Steadfastness in bleak times proves that we love and worship Allah and not our desires.

The Promised Messiah (as) calls steadfastness a moral quality when “*one suffers a loss one should consider it as rendering back to God that which He had bestowed, and should utter no complaint about it*”.<sup>9</sup> In other words, steadfastness is “*reconciliation with the divine will*”.<sup>10</sup>

If we want to be filled with divine light, we must be ready to show steadfastness.<sup>11</sup>

## Conclusion

It is in our nature to seek. Some try to find happiness in money and possessions. Some try to find happiness in knowledge. Others seek satisfaction in relationships and friendships. Then there are those who find happiness in self-denial and self-mortification. According to the Holy Quran, true happiness comes when our souls are at peace. And our souls are at peace when the reality of Allah has penetrated into our soul, body and mind.<sup>12</sup> You do not find God in physics laboratories or in mathematical formulas. You will find God in logic, historical knowledge and revelation. But, the absolute certain knowledge of God comes when we are righteous and hence show steadfastness in the face of suffering. Steadfastness is one of the important keys that unlocks the door of our hearts and opens us up into the presence of Allah. It is interesting that scientists find logic to be the ultimate tool of knowledge. In Islam, steadfastness is an important tool that grants us

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 109-110

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 109-110

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 40

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 41

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 111

<sup>12</sup> Al Quran 13:28-30.

knowledge of the infinite reality. Steadfastness and knowledge of God's existence are strongly intertwined in Islam.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Al Quran 41:27-33.