

**ISLAMIC CORRESPONDENCE
COURSE**

ADVANCED

BOOK ONE

Author:

**HUJJATUL ISLAM WAL MUSLIMEEN
AL-HAJ SAYYID MUHAMMAD RIZVI**

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P.O. BOX 20033
DAR ES SALAAM - TANZANIA
TEL: 2120111 / 2112420 FAX: 2116550
EMAIL: bilal@cats-net.com / bilal@raha.com
WEB: bilaltz.org**

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LESSON 1

WHY RELIGION?

1. Why Study Religion?

Why should we investigate about religion and study about God? What provokes us to consider religion? There are three reasons:

(A) LOVE OF KNOWLEDGE:

We all want to know the truth about the world in which we live: Did the heaven with its beautiful stars, the earth with its glorious landscapes, the beautiful birds, the colourful fish, the blue oceans and the high mountains—did all these come into being by themselves or are they the product of an All-Knowing and Powerful Creator?

Besides all this, the first question that comes to mind for all of us is the origin of ourselves: Where did we come from? Why are we in this world? Where are we heading to? The love of knowledge and the searching spirit within us dictates that we must not rest until we find the answers to these questions.

Thus the first reason that compels us to inquire into religion is our thirst and love for knowledge.

(B) THE SENSE OF THANKFULNESS

The world around us and the world within ourselves is full of marvelous things. The sun and moon, the plants and trees, the mines and minerals hidden deep in the heart of the earth; all of them are of great benefit to mankind.

Within ourselves, we have the digestive system, the respiratory apparatus, the heart and other organs of the body; but the greatest of all, however, is the intellectual ability of man himself through which he can make a mighty mountain crumble into pieces, and create from water and iron enormous power and the most delicate objects.

Now this question poses itself: Should we not engage ourselves in research and inquiry until, if there is a benefactor, we acknowledge that benefactor, to fulfill our duty and offer him our thanks?

This is the second reason why we should inquire into religion.

(c) PREVENTING POSSIBLE DANGER

If a child were to come and tell you that he saw a poisonous snake go into the room you were in, you would immediately jump up from your chair and undertake a thorough search of every nook and cranny until you found it, or until you were satisfied that it was not there.

Similarly, while traveling by night in a dangerous country, if you learnt that bandits were waiting on the road ahead to ambush you—you would without any doubt wait until the way ahead was clear of danger, and would not take a single step forward until then.

In these two examples, we have made clear that reason compels us to investigate conceivable dangers. It is possible that some of the harmful things may turn out to be nothing at all, and that other people may not pay any attention to them; but if an inquiry carries the price of a human soul, then it cannot be ignored.

In the history of mankind, we learn of people who were famous for telling the truth and who lived an honest life. They claimed that they were messengers of God, and they called people towards God and to act in certain ways. As a result of the efforts and the constant sufferings of these special people in all corners of the world, many groups believed in them. Thus the birth of Jesus became the beginning of the Christian calendar and the migration of the Prophet Muhammad was taken by the Muslims as the beginning of their calendar.

Now, we see that these messengers attracted men to religion and to follow particular rules, caused them to fear punishment of their bad deeds and convinced them that they would be tried in the Great Court of Justice before the Righteous and Wise Judge. They

trembled at the hardships and perils of Resurrection and the harshness of the punishment there, and warned men of the dire consequences of evil deeds.

The question is: Do the warnings of these people make us realize the possibility of harm and danger in the same way as did the warning of the small child in the example mentioned above? Is it right to ignore the words of the messengers of God who, after all, were men of high moral standards and who made greatest sacrifices for their cause?

Clearly, the words of the messengers —if they do not make a man certain— at least provoke him to think: perhaps what they say is true. If what they say is true, then what is our duty? What answer will we have in the Court of the Great Judge?

Common sense reckons the necessity of preventing this "possible harm". What is more, these messengers and prophets call man to a healthy and civilized life, and they also say that after death an extensive new world and everlasting blessings await one who has performed his

duty. Does reason allow us to ignore this important message?

* * *

There is a similar argument known as the "Pascal's Bet," named so after the famous French mathematician, Pascal (d. 1662 CE). Pascal proved the importance of inquiring about religion in the following way: If you believe in the life-hereafter, you will gain everything if it really exists; and you lose nothing if it does not exist. Therefore, it is better to bet that it does exist.

The theme of this argument was presented by the Shi'a Imams long before Pascal. We also know that Pascal had read Abu Hamid al Ghazali's works. It, therefore, seems quite possible that Pascal might have read this argument from Imam 'Ali (a.s.), the first Shi'a Imam, as quoted in *Mizdnu 'l-A^mal* of al-Ghazali. Imam 'All said:

The astrologer and the physician both say, The dead will never be resurrected.

I say: 'Keep your counsel. If your idea is correct, I will come to no harm; but if my belief is correct, then you will surely lose.'

2. Some Necessary Qualities of Religion

The religion which can fulfill the needs of mankind must have the following qualities:

(a) It must satisfy the intelligence and intellect of human beings.

Islam gives foremost importance to human intelligence. Islam emphasizes that you must understand the faith and then believe in it. Belief follows understanding, and not vice versa.

(b) It must teach and demonstrate dignity of human beings. Islam places human beings over and above all other creations of God; it promotes equality among human beings. Islam does not allow human beings to lose their dignity by bowing down in worship to a fellow man, animal or an inanimate object.

(c) It must be a complete guide to develop the body, mind and spirit of humans as a whole.

Islam does not only develop the soul at the expense of the body; nor does it promote the care of the body at the expense of the soul. It promotes development of all aspects of human life in a balanced way. Islam not only talks in general terms about the code of life; it gives specific details and also provides examples in the lives of the prophets and imams.

(d) It must conform with human nature.

The teachings of Islam takes the human nature into consideration. It does not promote, for example, celibacy which is completely against human nature.

(e) It should not be a tool in the hands of oppressors to suppress the masses.

Islam promotes social justice and rejects the theory of predestination. The oppression of a tyrant ruler is not predestined by God. This leaves no room for the tyrant rulers and oppressors to

say that the masses have been predestined for serving the ruling class.

This lesson is based on:
Syed Saeed Akhtar Rizvi.. *Need of Religion*, Tanzania 1970.
Dar Rah-e Haq. *The Roots of Religion*, Qum 1982.
Nasir Makarim Shirazi, *Principles of Islamic Ideology*, Tehran 1985.
It has been compiled & edited for this course by S.M. Rizvi.

Question Paper on Lesson 1
WHY RELIGION?

Name: _____

Student No. _____

Question 1:

[20 points]

Tick the appropriate box:

TRUE FALSE

- (a) Study of religion involves a sincere inquiry into the possible existence of a supreme creator.
 - (b) Our rational thinking provokes us to reflect upon this infinite universe and a possible creator.
 - (c) Religion is a set of rituals.
 - (d) The birth of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) was taken by Muslims as the beginning of their calendar.
 - (e) Religious investigation can be thought of as an investment which might generate profit in the life hereafter but guaranteed to produce no loss.
 - (f) Islam condones the theory of predestination.
 - (g) Our sense of gratitude dictates that we should offer our thanks to our creator if He exists.
 - (h) Islam promotes the suppression of legitimate desires.
 - (i) Faith has no rational basis.
- The truth is what one believes in.
- (j) Prophets were pious people who preached good things and forbade people from doing evil things.

Question 2:

[20 points]

From the statements given below, give a number (in order of preference) to the ones that best describe the essential qualities of an effective religion. If you think that a statement is completely disqualified as a quality of an effective religion, then do not assign any number to it.

- (a) Preaches unity of creator and creatures.
- (b) Promotes faith based on understanding.
- (c) Preserves human dignity.
- (d) Preaches division of society into various classes to create order, discipline and cohesion.
- (e) Promotes and practically implements equality, fairness and justice.
- (f) Conforms to human nature.
- (g) Promotes abandonment of the material luxuries of life to elevate the soul.
- (h) Promotes celibacy as a means of spiritual upliftment.
- (i) Provides a complete and comprehensive code of life,
- (j) Promotes suppression of natural desires to achieve closeness to God.

Question 3:

[10 points]

Describe three reasons of your own (other than those discussed in this lesson) that might provoke humans to contemplate on religious matters.

LESSON 2

WAYS OF KNOWING GOD

From time immemorial, man has found different ways of knowing God. Human beings of various intellectual levels have found their own ways to God. Common people have found simple ways; whereas thinkers and philosophers reached the same conclusion on a higher plane of thought. The two most common ways of knowing the Creator are:

- the inner way (which is also the closest way).
- the outer way (which is also the clearest way).

First Method: The Inner Way

God has created the inner light in each and every human being. If we go deep within ourselves and touch our souls, we hear the message of God. History and anthropology has shown that if man is left alone and is not indoctrinated by any school of thought—then, sooner or later, his inner voice will lead him to believe in a power as the Creator and Maintainer of this world.

However, at times this natural feeling is subdued by external means. But it re-emerges when that person finds himself in difficulties—he naturally prays to a Power whom he believes to be above all powers. This is very well portrayed in the talk which Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.), the sixth Imam of the Shi'a Muslims, had with an atheist.

Knowing that the atheist had gone on sea voyages several times, the Imam asked:

"Have you ever been caught in a fierce storm in the middle of nowhere, your rudder gone, your sails torn away, trying desperately to keep your boat afloat?" The Atheist: "Yes."

The Imam: "And sometimes perhaps even that leaking boat went down leaving you exhausted and helpless at the mercy of the raging waves?" The Atheist: "Yes."

The Imam: "Was not there, in all that despair, a glimmer of hope in your heart that some unnamed and unknown power could still save you?"

When the atheist agreed, the Imam said, "That power is God." That atheist was intelligent. He knew the truth when he saw it.

The "inner way," in spite of being the natural and closest way of knowing God, is also a very personal way. It is only sufficient for the person who has seen the light within himself.

Second Method: Experiment Beyond Sensation:

The second way of knowing God is by studying the signs of His presence and power in the world within us and around us. The Qur'an has mentioned both these signs as follows: *"We shall show to them Our signs upon the horizons (i.e., space) and in their own selves so that it may become manifest to them that He is the Truth."* (41:53) This method of knowing God is based on the principle of "cause" and "effect". The signs of nature are the effects of which the ultimate cause is God.

Now, let us try to understand the nature and scope of this method more clearly.

NATURE & SCOPE OF THIS METHOD:

Whenever we see a beautiful building of great splendour and design, we can easily understand that its architect was an expert in his own craft. Similarly, by looking at a car, an airplane, a computer or any other well-designed product or artifact, we are invariably guided to well-informed and knowledgeable inventors, designers and manufacturers, and we are also made aware of their skill and learning.

In none of these instances is it necessary to actually see the builder, the manufacturer or the designer of such an artifact with our own eyes to testify to his existence.

Moreover, when observing all these things, it is not with any of our external senses that we perceive the knowledge and skill of the

builders and manufacturers. But, nevertheless, we believe in his expertise and knowledge. Why? Because the design and order which we perceived in the artifacts forces us to recognize the knowledge of their builders. And from this we reach the conclusion that it is not necessary that something whose existence we wish to believe in should be visible or tangible.

There are many things which are not perceptible to our external senses, but we become aware of them through their effects. For every wise person understands that there can be no effect without a cause, nothing orderly without a wise and knowledgeable designer.

Based on the above, we can divide the things of this world into two categories:

1. Things which are evident to one or more of the five senses; we observe visible things with the eyes, we hear sounds with the ears, we become aware of pleasant and unpleasant smells with our nose, we know bitter and sweet tastes with our tongue, and we feel hot and cold or rough and smooth with the skin of our body.
2. Things which are not perceived by any of the five senses, but whose existence we can deduce by considering their effects. These facts are not all of one kind, some are material and some are non-material. We shall mention a few of them here.

Electricity: By merely looking at two wires, one of which is electrified, we can never determine which of them has an electric current. We can only discover the existence of this current from the effect of electricity, e.g., a lamp being lit. So electricity is something which exists although our eyes cannot directly see it.

Gravity: If you let go of the book which you now have in your hand, it will fall to the ground, i.e., the ground will pull the book towards itself. This power is something which we do not directly perceive through our senses. Gravitation is again one of those things which is not visible, but we come to know its existence by observing its effect: the falling of bodies to the ground.

Magnetism: When we place a magnet beside a piece of iron, we do not see anything except the two objects. But when the iron is pulled towards the magnet, we discover that magnetism exists around the magnet.

Invisible Radiation: If we shine white sunlight through a prism we see on the other side of the crystal six colours (the spectrum) which are: red, orange, yellow, green, blue and violet. No more colours are to be seen on both extremes of the spectrum. However, scientists have discovered that in the place where the eyes see no more light, further 'colours' exist which have heating and chemical properties. These lights' are called infra-red and ultra-violet.

Intelligence & Mental Image: All of us are aware of ourselves, i.e., we perceive that we exist; and we also arrive at concepts in a gradual manner concerning matters outside ourselves which we explain by this kind of statement: "I solved the most difficult mathematical problem." Also, man is aware of his own knowledge: he knows that he knows. Intelligence is not something visible or audible in the sense that man can see it with his eyes or hear it with his ears; but everyone finds it in himself. Others cannot learn about my intelligence through the five senses, but they can deduce its presence from the effect it produces. For example, when a scientist is expounding on a problem, it becomes clear that he has understood it.

People can construct in their own minds any form that they wish, e.g., a tower similar to the Eiffel Tower whose construction in the external world required many years, a thousand sorts of different building materials and substances, and hundreds of workers; this can be built in the mind in an instant. It is clear that others cannot be informed directly of the creations of our minds, because they are not visible and audible, but they can discover their existence from our speech.

Life: A beautiful chicken, moving towards the water, falls into a pond, and, before we can rescue it, it dies. At this very moment, what change has taken place in the chicken; and what difference has occurred that it no longer moves, plays or eats?

There surely was something in the live chicken but which does not exist in the dead—life itself. Life is not an object of the senses. We only perceive the effects of life: movement, feeding, etc., and from these effects we discover its existence.

The facts mentioned above make it thoroughly clear that over and above the beings that we perceive with our sensory organs, there are also things which we do not directly perceive, but we know about them only through the effects they produce.

Thus we draw the conclusion that it is not right for us to reject something which we do not see only because it is not visible, because invisibility is different from non-existence. Moreover, the way of discovering something is not confined to the eyes or other external senses. The human mind can discover something by means of the effects of those things, as we saw in the examples mentioned above.

We do not wish to say that God is similar to the scientific examples mentioned above, because God is a reality above those things, nothing is equal or comparable to Him. Our intention, however, is to say that in the same way as we discover the existence of those things through their effects, we can also discover the existence of God through His signs.

Discovering the existence of God through His signs is the "outer way" of knowing Him.

Thus, those who deny the existence of God just because they cannot see Him with their eyes, are blind as far as their eyes of wisdom and contemplation is concerned—since we know that His existence can be demonstrated through the precise design and order of creation. To these people we say, with the poet:

Open thy heart's eye for your soul to see, And what is invisible will be manifest to thee.

This lesson is based on the followings:

Dar Rah-e Haq Board, *The Roots of Religion*, Qum 1982.
Nasir Makarim Shirazi, *Principles of Islamic Ideology*, Tehran
1985.
Syed Saeed Akhtar Rizvi, *Need of Religion*, Tanzania 1970.
It has been compiled & edited for this course lay S.M. Rizvi.

Question Paper on Lesson 2
WAYS OF KNOWING GOD

Name: _____

Student No. _____

Question 1:

[10 points]

Tick the appropriate box:

TRUE FALSE

- (a) Anything that has order or design implies a creator
- (b) Invisibility implies non-existence.
- (c) The inner way is the clearest way of knowing God.
- (d) We can perceive things by observing their effects.
- (e) Science and reasoning cannot measure everything that exists in this universe.

Question 2:

[20 points]

Name at least three things (besides the examples described in this lesson) that cannot be detected by our five common senses, i.e., vision, hearing, smell, taste, and touch.

Question 3:

[20 points]

Lesson 2 states that there are two most common ways of knowing the Creator, namely (1) the inner way and (2) the outer way. Explain this idea using somewhat different terminology from that used in this lesson.

LESSON 3

DESIGN IN THE UNIVERSE

In this universe, from the smallest atom to the largest celestial body, in everything we see, we are reminded of its perfect orderliness and exact regulation, so much so that great scientists have been provoked to amazement. One look at the world around us makes it clear that all things in it are in full coordination with one another. The nourishment of living creatures, for example, depends on the coordination between the sun, clouds, rain, earth and its resources. All this points to the existence of one coordinated system in the universe.

There is so much orderliness in nature that the scientists, by using the immutable laws of nature, can explain the course any phenomenon will take before it occurs. For this reason, scientists endeavour to discover these laws. For if these laws did not hold would not every kind of effort in this field be fruitless?

So let us look at some examples of the order and design in the universe:

The **earth** in which we live, with respect to its size, its distance from the sun, the speed of its orbital movement, etc., is so arranged that it is able to act as the support for life. If the smallest change were to take place in its condition, losses of unacceptable dimensions would occur.

"The earth rotates on its axis at one thousand miles an hour; if it turned at one hundred miles an hour, our days and nights would be ten times as long as now, and the hot sun would then burn up our vegetation during each long day while in the long night any surviving sprout would freeze.

"Again, the sun, the source of our life, has a surface temperature of 12,000 degrees Fahrenheit, and our earth is just far enough away so that this "eternal fire"¹ warms us just enough and not too much! If the sun gave off only one-half of its present radiation, we would freeze, and if it gave half as much more, we would roast.

"The slant of the earth, tilted at an angle of 23 degrees, gives us our seasons; if it had not been so tilted, vapours from the ocean would move north and south, piling up for us continents of ice. If our moon was, say, only 50 thousand miles away instead of its actual distance, our tides would be so enormous that twice a day all continents would be submerged; even the mountains would soon be eroded away. If the crust of the earth had been only ten feet thicker, there would be no oxygen without which animal life must die. Had the ocean been a few feet deeper, carbon dioxide and oxygen would have been absorbed and no vegetable life could exist."¹

The **atmosphere**, most of whose constituent elements are life-giving gases, is sufficiently viscous that it can, like a shield or armour, protect the earth from the deadly attack of 200 million meteors every day, which approach the earth with a speed of 50 km per second. The responsibility for regulating the temperature of the earth's surface within limits which maintain life also belongs to the atmosphere, and if it did not exist, inhabited land, like the dry deserts, would become incapable of supporting life. "Because of these, and a host of other examples, there is not one chance in millions that life on our planet is an accident."²

But why are we taking the long way round in explaining these things?

Nearer than anything else is our own **body**. The mysteries of man's existence are without number, so much so that the world's scientists, after years of research and study, have not yet been able to fathom all the wonders of it. After many years of study, Dr. Alexis Carel wrote a book called *L 'homme, cet inconnue (Man, the Unknown)*. He confessed that biology and other sciences were

¹ A. C. Morrison quoted in S. Saeed Akhtar Rizvi, *God of Islam*, Tanzania 1969, p. 31.

² *Ibid.*

still unable to discover the facts about the working of the human body, and that many problems remained to be unraveled.

Now let us examine some of the marvels of our own existence.

THE CELLS OF THE BODY: A human body is like a building. It is composed of small building blocks called cells, each of which is itself a living entity. In the structure of the cells most metals such as iron, copper and calcium are used as are other elements like oxygen, hydrogen, nitrogen and sulphur.

The number of cells in the body of man is about 10^6 which is equivalent to ten thousand, million, million.

Each one of these living cells works in perfect cooperation with the next, and all of them follow the same aim. They are very quick to suffer, having low tolerance levels, and nourishment must be correctly supplied for their needs.

The blood, with the help of the heart, performs this duty very well. The structure of the heart is well-designed and has perfect dimensions, so that it can supply blood to the whole body through the agency of the blood vessels and the capillaries.

The blood, after it has delivered nourishment to the cells, absorbs poisonous substances which have accumulated there and returns to the heart with a dull colour. The heart delivers this to the lungs, a filtering apparatus for the blood, whereupon it is resupplied to the whole body with a bright colour and greater freshness. While passing through the kidneys, another part of these poisonous matters are removed, so that no kind of disturbance arises in the general working of the body.

Do we not see in the precise combination and quantity of the metals and elements from which the cell is formed, and also the amazing structure of the heart and its way of working, a plan of perfect and superior design? And if we see in the human body, a mysterious whole and at the same time a design, are we exaggerating?

Without doubt, no.

* * *

In the same way we must confess that the world of existence firmly rests on the foundation of perfect orderliness, and undoubtedly every orderliness and design is the creation and accomplishment of a wise and powerful maker.

The same argument demonstrates that design and orderliness must have originated from a source of knowledge and power, and that chance cannot be the origin of marvels having design and orderliness simply because everything produces a particular effect: it is incorrect to suppose that design and order should come from chance or mere accident. The scientific "law of probability" makes it impossible to explain the coordination in this world on the basis of chance. According to the law of probability, for example, an illiterate person can never write an essay by randomly hitting the keys of a typewriter. Similarly, the present system in our universe could never have come to exist on the basis of chance or accident.

It therefore follows that the wonderful design and order that is observed in the human body and in the universe around us constitutes complete evidence and living proof that the universe has a wise and powerful designer and creator. The more we learn about the system of creation, the more aware we become of the greatness of its Creator.

Even the things produced by human beings themselves reflect the knowledge and intelligence of the Creator, because it is not possible for someone who has no understanding and intelligence to give to His creations such understanding and intelligence.

This lesson is based on the followings:
Dar Rah-e Haq Board, *The Roots of Religion*, Qum 1982.
Few details have been added from S. Saeed Akhtar Rizvi, *God of Islam*, Tanzania, 1969 and Nasir Makarim Shirazi, *Principles of Islamic Ideology*, Tehran 1985.
It has been compiled & edited for this course by S.M. Rizvi.

Question Paper on Lesson 3
DESIGN IN THE UNIVERSE

Name: _____

Student No. _____

Question 1: [15 points]

Fill in the blanks:

- (a) Intelligent creations are possible only by an _____ creator.
- (b) The more we come to know about the universe, the more we *realize* how _____ we know.
- (c) The number of cells in human body is _____.
- (d) Organization and discipline in this universe indicates a _____ and powerful _____.
- (e) Dr. Alexis Carel wrote a book called "_____ the _____".

Question 2: [20 points]

This lesson gives some examples of design and orderliness in the universe. Give three examples of your own observation of design and orderliness in this universe.

Question 3: [15 points]

- (a) The physical meaning of the fraction $\frac{1}{2}$ is "one part out of two parts". What is the physical meaning of the fraction $\frac{1}{0}$?
- (b) Think about your answer in part (a). Is it possible? Relate your answer to the material you learnt in this lesson and then write one sentence that describes the essence of this lesson.

LESSON 4

MORE ABOUT GOD

1. The Eternal Need for God

Examine the following examples, and then you will realize the extent to which the creatures of this world show the presence of a Creator.

1. How do those who construct airplanes work together to produce a plane? These specialized engineers assemble the body sections in a specific manner according to exact equations so that the plane may fly, carrying passengers and cargo. Of course, the work of the construction engineers is to assemble the basic material according to their plans, in such a way that when their work is finished their activity ends. As for the engines, the electronic control systems, the interior setting and decor, etc., these do not depend upon the body constructors.
2. If we want to build a house and we are in possession of all the raw materials, is that sufficient? Surely, we need a builder and his workmen, not in order to produce the raw materials, but so as to put them together according to their craft. It is clear that we do not need the workmen for producing the materials used in the building, but that we need them only in so far as the use of these materials is concerned. In this way a house can be built from these materials.
3. A person who has never seen the Eiffel Tower can nevertheless construct it in his imagination in no time at all, merely from having heard about it. He can even construct it higher than it is, and imagine people climbing it.

The existence of the Tower in the imagination is, as the previous two examples suggest, the work of the one who has imagined it. The basic materials of the plan and the house were not produced by their constructors, but all the materials for the imagined Tower were made by the one who imagined it, not obtained from some place or another. That is why their size is

not dependent on the quality of raw material available, and it can be made larger according to the wish of the one who imagines it. We can see that imaginary forms derive their existence from ourselves. They remain in our minds as long as we want them to, and when we forget about them they become nothing again, and have no further existence in our imagination.

From this last example, we can conclude that anything whose existence depends on the existence of something else can not be independent, and at every moment has need of the other.

Now we can understand the condition of the created things of this world which have come into existence from nothing and which are the creation of God.

Are these created things, at every moment, in need of their creator? Some people may think that the created things of this world, after their creation, do not stand in need of their creator for their continued existence. However, this is a completely erroneous concept, because the things in the world are the effects and creations of God and are identical with the imagined forms which we ourselves can construct in our imaginations, in that at every moment they need the One who created them in order to continue existing.

In order to understand this better, imagine a human figure, speaking, walking and working according to his will. Does this figure have any independence? Clearly his existence is due to you, for if you cease to want him to exist, he will be annihilated and returned to nothingness.

This is the condition of the entire universe of creation which is completely from God, created by Him, and in no way independent. It is always in need of God. Also, if God ceased to will its existence, it would return to nothingness. The Qur'an says: *O men, you are the ones that need God; He is the All-sufficient, the All-laudable. If He will, He can put you away and bring a new creation.* (35:15-16)

This is a subject to which Islam directs the attention of its followers. For example, it is instructed that in daily prayer when one rises one should say "*bi hawli 'l-lahi wa quwwatihi aqumu wa aq'ud* — with the power of Allah do I stand up and sit down."

2. God Occupies No Space

The world we see with our eyes is a material world composed of atoms. Every object has a special place and special properties, which vary from situation to situation. Distance plays a role in the action of these properties and the nearer the cause is to the effect the stronger the effect is; the further away it is, the weaker the effect, until a distance is reached where the cause has no action at all. To elucidate this point we shall give one or two examples.

- (a) The power of a magnet is not the same at all distances: the nearer the metal is to the magnet, the stronger the power of attraction. If a nail is placed at a distance of two centimeters from a magnet, the attraction will be stronger than if it is placed at a distance of ten centimeters.
- (b) The light of a lamp may reach a hundred meters, but within this distance the intensity is not uniform. The nearer to the lamp we are, the greater the intensity of its light.

These two examples show that all things which are situated in a certain place do not have an equal effect at all distance, the nearer we are to the center of something, the greater its effect will be, and vice versa.

Does God Have a Center?

Some people may possibly think that like the sun and other material things, God has a place and that He has a seat from which He exerts His influence over His creation. However, this is not the case, because His influence on creation, which is His own work, is the same in every place, from the depths of the oceans to the furthest parts of outer space. There is no place to which His influence does not reach in sufficiency. This influence is not such as has a center, such that the further we go from it the weaker it becomes, until we reach a point where there is no trace of his

influence and chaos reigns. For if God had a place like other material things, His influence would vary throughout the universe. Therefore we can deduce from this that the Creator of this world has no location and no center. Indeed, God is the Creator of "place" and it is impossible that the Creator should be dependent on what He has created.

God cannot be compared with an inventor, because, as we explained previously, an inventor is not a creator. His only genius is that he understands the properties of things and is successful in bringing together certain elements to make something which, in some cases, he is himself in need of. But God, who is the Creator of all creation, is not in need of what He has created.

3. Is God Visible?

Now, since we have seen that God has no place, it is clear that he has no body either, because a body needs a place, and there can be no body which has no place. Since God has no body, he cannot be seen, because our eyes can see only bodies.

4. God is in Need of Nothing

Since God is the Creator of nourishment and other necessities of life and all things, we must agree that He has no need of any of these things. God, therefore, is the entire Truth who is in need of nothing. Unlike human beings, He does not need shelter, nourishment, and the other necessities of life, rather all people and things are in need of Him.

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Maybe you will now ask: "If God has no body, occupies no space and cannot be seen, then what is He and how can we say that He exists?"

To understand this, take the following example. We can say that electricity is neither solid, nor liquid, nor gas. These negations do not deny the existence of electricity, and it could never be true to say that because electricity is none of these things, therefore it

does not exist. We have to admit that electricity is a fact which is not describable by any of the aforementioned conditions.

Now, when we say that God, the Self-Sufficient, has neither body, nor place, nor can He be seen, nor is He in need of anything, we mean that none of these imperfections can be found in the perfect, unlimited Being of God, who is the source of all existence. Here there can only be Perfection and Self-Sufficiency.

These properties distinguish His Being from other beings, and this is the God in Whom we must believe. Intelligence and human nature can accept such a God. No wise and honest person can deny His existence. The supremacy and glory of Islam can be seen when we compare this concept with the belief that God is on a level with man, having a body, children and other such attributes and appendages.

In fact, we might say that many materialists reject God because the true God has not been made known to them, and what they have considered is not the real God.

5. God's Omniscience

The grandeur and mystery of creation cannot be compared to a man-made machine. The infinite details seen in living beings and inanimate objects indicate the unlimited knowledge of God. Let us examine the following:

- (a) Newton said that a study of the components of the ear and the eye would lead us to understand that the maker of the ear was thoroughly acquainted with the laws of acoustics, and that the maker of the eye was thoroughly acquainted with the laws of light and vision; a study of the heavenly bodies, he said, would lead us to understand the Truth which governs the universe.
- (b) The physiology of the bat is full of amazing things. In order to be able to find its way in the dark without flying into obstacles, the animal sends out ultrasonic waves in front of itself rather like radar. If there is an obstacle in the way, the sound waves reach it and are reflected back, and thus the bat can steer clear of the obstacle.

- (c) Although insects are very small, they are very delicate and wonderful in their structure. For example, some of them, instead of eyes with one lens, have compound eyes made up of individual visual units called ommatids, every one of which has three parts: a cornea, a lens and a retina. The number of ommatids varies between insects. Glow-worms have about 2,500, but in others there can be between 10,000 and 28,000. Because insects cannot rotate their heads, they can be permitted, by these compound eyes, to see things which happen beside them or behind them

Now we must ask if God knows all the things after He has created them. And the answer is, yes, of course He does. God knows about things, whatever their place and whenever they happen. He is aware of the shining of the furthest star in the highest heaven, of the tempestuousness of the foaming blue waves breaking on the furthest shores of the ocean, of the most mysterious hollows of the most remote valleys in the folds of the mountains, of the rustling of even one leaf in the gentle breeze, of the doleful coo of the owl in the deepest silence of the forest, of the flicker of the glow-worm among the leaves, of the innumerable fish with their infinite colours and variety in all the waters of the world, of the birth of the fawn of the honey-coloured gazelle in the depths of the forest, of the falling of the clear, pearly dew-drop from the petal of the half-opened rosebud in the recess of the rocks. He knows the height of the mountains, the covering of the sky, the expanse of the lands and the seas and the treasures of the mines, the hidden depths of the caves and of all and everything.

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THE BASIS OF GOD'S KNOWLEDGE

He who creates and gives existence is aware of His creation and always attends to it, in the same way as we are not unaware of the forms we create in our own imaginations. As long as we wish them to exist, they remain in our minds, but when we turn our attention away from them, they cease to exist. If you imagine a person, you are necessarily aware of all his movements and his

resting, and his actions are never hidden from your mind, because this imaginary person is your creation, that is, he did not exist before you thought of him, and you brought him into existence by your imagination.

God, who created the world and all of creation, whose existence comes from Him, oversees it all and is never unmindful of it. Of course, the difference between us, who imagine various forms in our minds, and God, who created the universe, is that we ourselves depend on God for our existence and that our existence comes from Him. However, God is independent of all things and has given existence to all things. It is for this reason that we call only Him the real Creator.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CREATOR & MAKER

The maker of a computer is not its creator and did not give it its existence; his only skill was that he gave a new' form to what was already in existence. He was not aware of the computations and the information that will be stored in it in the future. Similarly, other inventors, discoverers and artisans are not informed of all the minutiae of the movements and stillness of what they have made, because they have not given existence to them, they have not brought them from non-existence into existence. The raw materials were already in existence in the world. Only, by analysing and constructing, have they changed their form. Take the case of the airplane, which is made from raw materials in mines which were extracted, smelted and forged and made into the finished products.

Clearly, then, the makers did not create what they made; they only changed the form of the materials. For this reason, they are not permanently aware of their artifacts, and one cannot, therefore, properly call them creators. If, in some cases they have to be called creators, they have only been called so figuratively, not literally.

But God, Who has given existence to all things, is always aware and knowledgeable of their actions, because He is the real

