

Chapter Eight

WHO IS GOD?

When I behold your heavens, the work of your fingers. The moon and stars which you set in place- What is man that you should be mindful of him, or the son of man that you should care for him?

[Psalm 8:4-5]

Next to God, man is totally insignificant. The Supreme Being is the creator, sustainer and ruler of the universe. This is the basic belief common to all monotheistic religions.

Who is this One common deity? Who is God?

The scriptures tell us that God is the omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent deity who controls all affairs and every atom in the universe. There is no room for any partners, human or otherwise. Realizing this clarifies why we must follow Jesus' teaching to devote ourselves completely to God.

PHILOSOPHICAL AND THEOLOGICAL DOUBTS

While our knowledge has increased through the ages, many of our best minds have turned away from religion because of the obvious contradictions given out as 'religious truth.' As a result, there is a general lack of knowledge concerning the true identity of God.

Even among religious and theological authorities, doubts abound concerning the description and characteristics of God. There seems to be a consensus that it is impossible to prove or disprove the existence of God, let alone His omnipotence and omniscience. The contemporary philosopher, Mortimer Adler, expressed this. In his book *HOW TO THINK ABOUT GOD* (Macmillan Publishing Co., New York, 1980, p. 16), Adler states:

In the three monotheistic religions of the West—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—the proposition that God exists is not an article of faith or religious belief. The first article of faith in all three religions is that God has revealed himself to us in Holy Writ or Sacred Scripture. This, of course, entails the affirmation that the God who has revealed himself exists.

Recently, some recognized religious leaders, both Jewish and Christian, have questioned God's omnipotence. Rabbi Harold S. Kushner wrote in his bestseller of the early eighties,

WHEN BAD THINGS HAPPEN TO GOOD PEOPLE (Avon Books, New York, 1981, Page 45):

If we have grown up, as Job and his friends did, believing in an all-wise, all-powerful, all-knowing God, it will be hard for us, as it was hard for them, to change our way of thinking about Him (as it was hard for us, when we were children, to realize that our parents were not all-powerful, that a broken toy had to be thrown out because they could not fix it, not because they did not want to). But if we can bring ourselves to acknowledge that there are some things God does not control, many good things become possible.

We will be able to turn to God for things He can do to help us, instead of holding on to unrealistic expectations of Him which will never come about. The Bible, after all, repeatedly speaks of God as the special protector of the poor, the widow, and the orphan, without raising the question of how it happened that they became poor, widowed, or orphaned in the first place.

Kushner's point of view is made even clearer later in his book. In his chapter entitled: "*God Can't Do Everything, But He Can Do Some Important Things.*" On page 148, he asks:

Are you capable of forgiving and loving God even when you have found out that He is not perfect, even when He has let you down and disappointed you by permitting bad luck and sickness and cruelty in His world, and permitting some of those things to happen to you? Can you learn to love and forgive Him despite His limitations...?

These words coming from a prominent Jewish religious figure are unexpected. Equally unexpected is that at its publication a prominent Christian—Norman Vincent Peale—called Kushner's book: "A book all humanity needs."

Between the philosophers who have resigned themselves to the notion that God's existence cannot be proven or disproven, and the religious leaders who deny God's omnipotence, it is clear that despite the knowledge explosion that has catapulted us into the space age, most of us are still in the dark ages as far as God is concerned.

SEARCH FOR PROOF

A few years ago, Mortimer Adler drew a distinction between 'faith' in God and 'knowing' that God exists. He went on to suggest that the word 'know' can be justified only for "mathematically demonstrated and empirically established truths." On Page 15 of his book *HOW TO THINK ABOUT GOD*, Adler writes:

If argument, reasoning, or inference leads us to affirm the existence of God because we have thereby found tenable reasons for doing so, should we say that we *know* that God exists or that we *believe* it? If the tenable reasons we have found fall short of the degree of certitude that justifies us in using the word "know" for *mathematically demonstrated and empirically established truths*, then we must have recourse to the word "believe," always remembering to add the qualification that the belief we have adopted differs from religious belief in that the truth thus affirmed is affirmed on the basis of reason alone. [Emphasis is mine.]

Adler's demand for empirically established truths is well justified. This is exactly what I hope you will find here, presented in the next few chapters.

The combined usage of scriptural material and established scientific facts has produced the first physical evidence not only that God exists, but also that He is indeed the omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent deity who created the universe. And that He continues to run and sustain it.

RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF GOD'S CREATIONS

One of the significant products of combining scripture and science is an emerging picture of God's identity. Before we can grasp this emerging picture, we need first to reflect on God's works—His creations. At this stage of human history, we have acquired a tremendous wealth of knowledge about ourselves and the universe we live in. The following established facts are readily available to the general public.

Our solar system spans distances of up to 8,000,000,000 miles. The sun is 93,000,000 miles away from our planet Earth, and its light reaches us in approximately eight minutes. From the border of our solar system, the planet Earth with its mean diameter of about 8,000 miles, is relatively minute.

Our sun is one of a billion trillion stars known to exist in our universe. The sun, however, is one of the 'dim' stars. A 'bright' star is one million times as bright as our sun. Yet, on a clear day, one can be overwhelmed (and well sunburned) by the amount of energy radiated by this 'dim' star.

Our sun is only one of perhaps two hundred billion stars within our galaxy, the Milky Way. The size of the Milky Way is awesome. It would take us 100,000 years at the speed of light to cross it from one end to the other. Bearing in mind that the sun's light travels 93,000,000 miles in eight minutes, we can get a sense of the vastness of the Milky Way—a hundred thousand light years across.

From the outer limit of our galaxy, how significant is the planet Earth? Without any self-emitted light, how visible is it from that spot? Even if we employed the most powerful telescope in existence today, we could not see the Earth from the outer limits of our own galaxy.

While we are still in our galaxy, our planet is already diminished to invisibility. If we reduced the size of our galaxy to the area of this page, the dot at the end of this sentence would be much larger than our whole solar system. Recalling that the solar system spans distances of 8,000,000,000 miles, the 8,000-mile wide planet Earth is somewhere within this dot.

Our 'next-door' neighbor galaxy, or the closest similar galaxy to our Milky Way, is 2,000,000 light years away. If we go to the center of this neighboring galaxy, can you visualize the planet Earth? How significant is it from *that* distance?

By moving from our galaxy to the nearest galaxy, we are already talking about incredible distances, millions of light years. Yet, our universe contains a vast number of galaxies.

Back in the 1950's, Donald Shane and Carl Wirtanen drew the first map of the universe and its galaxies. One thousand galaxies were surveyed then. Since the drawing of that first map, scientists have discovered one billion (1,000,000,000) galaxies, more than a million times what Shane and Wirtanen reported some forty years ago.

In our imaginary journey from one galaxy to the next, we have spanned distances of millions of light years. We are now talking about billions of light years within our universe; as many as 26,000,000,000 light years. Have you lost track of our planet Earth? How significant is it within the universe?

It is very important to keep the size and significance of our planet in perspective in order to appreciate the relative significance of tiny creatures who inhabited this planet for a brief period of time, but were exalted by others to the status of God.

When I behold your heavens, the work of your fingers. The moon and stars which you set in place—What is man that you should be mindful of him, or the son of man that you should care for him?

[Psalm 8:4-5]

SEVEN UNIVERSES!

Now, we receive a real shock; according to scriptural sources, our universe is the smallest and innermost of seven universes!

Multiple universes are frequently mentioned in the Bible:

Think! The heavens, even the highest heavens, the heavens of the heavens, belong to the Lord, your God, as well as the earth and everything on it.

[Deuteronomy 10:14]

Yet who is really able to build him a house, since the heavens and even the highest heavens cannot contain him?

[2 Chronicles 2:5]

You kingdoms of the earth, sing to God, chant praise to the Lord who rides on the heights of the ancient heavens. Behold his voice resounds, the voice of power: "Confess the power of God!"

[Psalm 68:33-35]

In the above verses from the Old Testament, we note that there are 'heavens' and 'heavens of heavens' or 'the highest heavens.' In the New Testament we find an interesting reference to the third heaven:

I know a man in Christ who, fourteen years ago, whether he was in or outside his body I cannot say, only God can say—a man who was snatched up to the third heaven. I know that this man—whether in or outside his body I do not know, God knows—was snatched up to Paradise...

[2 Corinthians 12:2-4]

The creation of seven universes is spelled out in the Quran. The picture drawn is that of seven universes in layers, one inside the other like seven elliptical balls:

God is the one who created seven universes, in layers. You will never see a flaw in the creation of the Most High. Keep looking! Do you see any flaw?

[Quran 67:3]

God is the one who created for you everything on earth, and He perfected in the sky seven universes. He is fully aware of all things.

[Quran 2:29]

THE GREATNESS OF GOD

The diameter of our universe, the smallest and innermost of the seven universes, encompasses distances of some 26,000,000,000 light years. This number equals 153 billion trillions of miles (153,000,000,000, 000,000 miles).

Within the circumference of our universe, there are a billion trillion stars (not even counting the uncountable decillions of other heavenly bodies). It would take us 32 billion years just to count one quintillion of these stars, at the rate of one star per second. This is simply counting them, not creating them!

Can you imagine the circumference of our universe? Can you envision a circumference surrounding distances of 26,000,000,000 light years? Considering our universe to be first, the second universe is necessarily larger than our universe. In view of the enormous vastness of our 'small' universe, the size of the third universe, which surrounds two universes is already incomprehensible. How about the fourth universe; or the fifth; or the sixth; or the seventh?

Now comes another shock; in order to give us an approximation of His profoundly awesome greatness, God tells us that He is holding the seven universes within the fist of His hand!

They never valued God as He should be valued. The whole Earth will be within His fist on the Day of Resurrection; in fact, all the universes are contained within His right hand. He is the Most Magnificent, the Most High; far above anything they idolize.

[Quran 39:67]

OTHER EXPRESSIONS OF HIS GREATNESS

The scriptures are full of verses expressing God's greatness, His infinite power and knowledge:

...Great is the Lord and highly to be praised; and awesome is he, beyond all gods. For all the gods of the nations are things of nought, but the Lord made the heavens. Splendor and majesty go before him; praise and joy are in his holy place. Give to the Lord, you families of nations, give to the Lord glory and praise; give to the Lord the glory due his name! Bring gifts, and enter his presence; worship the Lord in holy attire. Tremble before him, all the earth; he has made the world firm, not to be moved. Let the heavens be glad and the earth rejoice; let them say among the nations: The Lord is king.

[I Chronicles 16:25-31]

He stretches out the North over empty space, and suspends the earth over nothing at all; He binds up the waters in his clouds, yet the cloud is not rent by their weight; He holds back the appearance of the full moon by spreading his clouds before it. He has marked out a circle on the surface of the deep as the boundary of light and darkness. The pillars of the heavens tremble and are stunned at his thunderous rebuke.

[Job 26:7-11]

Lo, God is great beyond our knowledge; the number of his years is past searching out.

[Job 36:26]

By the word of the Lord the heavens were made; by the breath of his mouth all their host. He gathers the waters of the sea as in a flask; in cellars he confines the deep. Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all who dwell in the world revere him. For he spoke, and it was made; he commanded, and it stood forth.

[Psalm 33:6-9]

The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament proclaims his handiwork. Day pours out of the word to day, and the night to night imparts knowledge; Not a word nor a discourse whose voice is not heard; Through all the earth their voice resounds, and to the ends of the world, their message.

[Psalm 19:2-5]

At the outer limit of the largest, outermost universe, the planet Earth is reduced to an infinitesimally minute speck. If the Earth, or if the whole solar system and all its contents suddenly vanished, how much of a loss would that be in God's dominion?

GOD'S OMNIPOTENCE & OMNISCIENCE

The scriptures emphasize that the greatness of God is not merely in size, but in the fact that He is aware of and controls all of our affairs:

To him who rises without assurance of his life he gives safety and support. He sustains the mighty by his strength, and his eyes are on their ways.

[Job 24:22-23]

God reveals to us that He is fully aware of even the smallest detail in the universe. In the Gospel of Matthew, for example, Jesus tells us that "every hair of your head has been counted":

[Jesus said,] "Do not fear those who deprive the body of life but cannot destroy the soul. Rather, fear him who can destroy both body and soul in Gehenna. Are not two sparrows sold for next to nothing? Yet not a single sparrow falls to the ground without your Father's consent. As for you, every hair of your head has been counted; so do not be afraid of anything..."

[Matthew 10:28-31]

Jesus fixed his gaze on them and said, "For man it is impossible but not for God, with God all things are possible."

[Mark 10:27]

The idea of God's omniscience and omnipresence is also clear in the Book of Psalms:

From heaven the Lord looks down; he sees all mankind. From his fixed throne he beholds all who dwell on the earth. He who fashioned the heart of each, he who knows all their works.

[Psalm 33:13-15]

God's control of our "inmost thoughts" and of our affairs is described by Mary in the Gospel of Luke:

God who is mighty has done great things for me, holy is his name; His mercy is from age to age on those who fear him. He has shown might with his arm; he has confused the proud in their inmost thoughts. He has deposed the mighty from their thrones and raised the lowly to high places.

[Luke 1:49-52]

With Him are the keys to all secrets; none knows them except He. He knows everything on land and in the sea. Not a leaf falls without His knowledge. Nor is there a grain in the depths of the soil, be it wet or dry, that is not recorded in a profound record.

[Quran 6:59]

“Not a sparrow falls to the ground without God’s consent” and every hair is counted, every seed recorded. In fact, even the perpetual motion of the sub-atomic components of the very ink and paper you are looking at is controlled by God. This sub-atomic control is indirectly implied in the Bible, but specifically mentioned in the Quran:

Any condition you may be in, any scripture you may read, indeed, anything you do is never done without us being witnesses thereof, even as you begin to plan it. Not a single atom is hidden from your Lord, be it in the earth, or in the heavens; not even smaller than an atom, nor larger; everything is counted and recorded in a profound record.

[Quran 10:61]

Even happiness, that internal feeling of ecstasy, is exclusively controlled by God, regardless of extraneous circumstances. Furthermore, the scripture stipulates that happiness is only temporary for the evildoers, but genuine and everlasting for the righteous children of God. God is the sole controller of our happiness:

I bless the Lord who counsels me; even in the night my heart exhorts me. I set the Lord ever before me; with him at my right hand I shall not be disturbed. Therefore my heart is glad and my soul rejoices....

[Psalm 16:7-9]

Once, in my security, I said, “I shall never be disturbed.” O Lord, in your good will you had endowed me with majesty and strength; but when you hid your face I was terrified.

[Psalm 30:7-8]

God is the one who makes you happy or sad. ...He is the one who makes you rich or poor.

[Quran 53:43, 48]

CONCLUSION

We learn from the combining of science and the scripture how infinitesimal we are, and how great and infinitely powerful God is. We realize that our finite minds cannot possibly fathom God:

As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are My ways above your ways and My thoughts above your thoughts.

[Isaiah 55:9]

The Quran repeats this same theme:

No visions can ever encompass Him, while He encompasses all visions....

[Quran 6:103]

Our minds are overwhelmed at the vastness of our universe, let alone the 'infinite' size of the largest, outermost universe. How can we grasp God's greatness when something "held within His hand" is beyond our grasp?

Now we are in a better position to appreciate the following statements of His absolute Oneness:

High above all nations is the Lord; above the heavens is his glory. Who is like the Lord, our God, who is enthroned on high and looks upon the heavens and the earth below?

[Psalm 113:4-6]

His Oneness is not only in His glory, but also in the fact that He alone is eternally pre-existing:

Proclaim: "He is the only God, the eternal God; He never begets, nor was He begotten. There is none that is comparable to Him."

[Quran 112:1-4]

He alone should be worshiped:

I, the Lord, am your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, that place of slavery. You shall not have other gods besides me. You shall not carve idols for yourselves in the shape of anything in the sky above or on the earth below or in the waters beneath the earth; you shall not bow down before them or worship them. For I, the Lord, your God, am a jealous God....

[Exodus 20:2-5]

His greatness is beyond our comprehension:

He is the only God; there is no other god besides Him. He is the knower of all secrets, as well as all declarations. He is the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. He is the only God; there is no other god besides Him. He is the King, the Sacred, the Peace-giver, the Faithful, the Supreme, the Almighty, the Most Powerful, the Most High. God be glorified; He is much too Great to have any idols to rank with Him. He is the only God; there is no god besides Him. He is the Creator, the Initiator, the Designer. To Him belongs the most beautiful attributes. Everything in the heavens and the earth glorifies Him. He is the Almighty, the Most Wise.

[Quran 59:22-24]

Truly, this is the one whom we should worship with all our minds and all our souls and all our hearts!