

## **KNOWING GOD IN THE TIME OF CORONA**

**By: Faten Sabri**

### **There is no refuge from God except to Him!**

The Qur'anic verse "There is no refuge from God except to Him" have always been on my mind growing up. But I did not fully understand it until a funny situation occurred with my son around 20 years ago. He was playing in the kitchen and wanted to touch the stove, while it was hot. He was very stubborn, and I had to hit his hand to prevent him from trying to touch it again. He cried and started to wander around from one place to another, not knowing where to go. His father tried to calm him down and cheer him up, but the surprise was that he ran directly back to me and cried on my lap. His father laughed and said: Glory be to God.

As for me I remembered the words of God Almighty "There is no refuge from God except to Him", and now that I understood the verse. I said to myself that God Almighty reminds us when we are subjected to some difficulties, to always return to Him whenever we find ourselves far away from Him. I felt great joy after this incident.

### **Corona virus and the wisdom of God:**

The catastrophes that occur in Earth that affect humans, such as diseases, volcanoes, earthquakes and floods, are manifestations of the names and attributes of the divine majesty.

These catastrophes are at the same time a trial and test for person; if the person assists and helps in these situations, that person will be rewarded. If the person gets directly affected by these situations and shows patience, the person will know the majesty of his Lord through this affliction, just as he recognizes Gods attributes through the good that God provides to him. Seeing Gods attributes in the good and in the bad situations gives you clearer understanding of Gods attributes, and in that they say that if a person only knew the attributes of divine beauty, it is as if he did not know God Almighty.

One atheist asked me one day about those who had been plagued by disasters, diseases and similar disasters, so I simply said to him:

The worldly life is only a moment if you compare it with eternal life, and that is, a dip in heaven can make them forget any pain or distress, as said by prophet Muhmmmed.

The presence of calamities, evil and pain was the reason for the atheism of many contemporary materialistic philosophers.

In 2007, Sir Anthony Flew, arguably the most influential atheistic philosopher of the twentieth century, published a book stating: "There is a God." Flew stated that "the most impressive arguments for God's existence are those that are supported by recent scientific discoveries.

Then he said:

The presence of evil and pain in human life does not negate the existence of God, but it prompts us to reconsider the divine attributes of Him. Anthony Flew considers that these disasters have their silver lining.

The existence of evil and pain has been credited with building human civilizations throughout history, and he said that no matter how many claims there are regarding the interpretation of this dilemma, the religious interpretation remains the most acceptable and most consistent with the nature of life.

Therefore, the worldly life is the beginning of an eternal journey that a person resumes after death, and Islam considers that our existence in this world is for a supreme goal and purpose which is the knowledge of God Almighty and to worship Him by praying to Him directly.

Any misfortunes that happens God knows it and have allowed it. God has absolute wisdom and absolute wisdom is related to absolute good, and there is no absolute evil in existence.

Any person who looks at events of life in a shallow sense, will not be able to see the other side of a bad situation. Corona Virus (COVID-19) has taken lives, affected over a million individuals and have impacted the life of everyone across the globe.

However, this should be seen as a wake-up call to humanity for several aspects of life, that have been neglected by us for so many years, we will be able to adjust our

standard of living from this point onwards. Including, government preparations for an epidemic, general hygiene, care for the environment and even some of our style of living.

Pollution in this period fell to its lowest levels all over the world due to the suspension of air and vehicle traffic, which in turn led to reducing emissions from these engines polluting the environment. As if the globe and the environment entered a recovery phase during the period of the spread of Corona disease. A person must reflect and reconsider his life affairs.

This situation caused families to reunite inside their homes, as it reminded them of God's blessings on them, and their shortcomings in praise and thanks to the Lord of the Worlds. A person does not feel the grace except when he loses it.

People also began to realize the importance of hygiene more than ever, and were aware of the need to adopt serious methods of prevention and the use of disinfectants excessively, and wash hands with soap and water at all time. Who would have expected all this?

There is no doubt that this great event re-arranged the priorities of life, as it showed the extent of human weakness and fragility, and the lack of preparation for such an event.

In matter of a week, the whole world was standstill, against this virus. We have heard and been dealing with fears of wars, or destruction between countries, but we have never expected that the next outbreak would be microbial.

This event broke the pride of many who thought that humans had reached the highest levels of material knowledge, and they became more like deities and thought that they were thus dispensing with religion and the Creator.

Corona disease kills the small and large, weak and strong, poor and rich, simple man and king, and does not differentiate anyone. We have heard about many wealthy people who have fled to isolated shelters or palaces in an attempt to escape the oppression of this disease. These same people were indifferent to most epidemics and diseases, because they thought they could eliminate them by spending on treatment. The problem now is for the wealthy that money exists while treatment does not exist. As if the virus came to establish equality between humans, it does not differentiate between strong and weak and does not differentiate between rich and poor.

It is strange to see that the whole of humanity united for the first time in history to confront this microbe.

## **If there is no God, then from where do we get all this good?**

Atheists who question why evil exists also reveal numerous fault lines in their worldview.

Questioning the existence of good is the far worthier question, for only after identifying the dominant principle can the exceptions to that principle be understood. People would forever see the extraordinary laws of physics, chemistry, and biology as incoherent, if they were to begin studying these sciences with the rare exceptions that deviate from these laws. Likewise, atheists can never overcome the “hurdle of evil” until they find the humility to concede that evil is the exception in a world of innumerable phenomena that are good, orderly, and beautifully.

Consider the periods of sickness versus health over the average lifetime, or those impaired versus functional across the human race, or the moments when arteries flow versus clog throughout our lives, or the decades of prosperity versus ruin for the average civilization, or the centuries of dormancy versus eruption of volcanoes, or the millennia of non-collision between planets. Where does all this prevalent good come from?

Energy and matter swimming in a world of chaos and coincidence could never produce a world where the default is good. Ironically, scientific empiricism attests to this: the second law of thermodynamics states that the total entropy (degree of disorder or randomness) in an isolated system with no external influence will always increase and that this process is irreversible.

In other words, organized things will always break down and dissipate unless something from the outside pulls them together. As such, blind thermodynamic forces could never have produced anything good on their own, nor made good as widespread as it is, without the Creator organizing these seemingly random, chaotic phenomena which appear into the marvelous things like: beauty, wisdom, joy, and love. Only after establishing that the norm is good, can we hope to grasp the exception of evil.

Ibn al-Qayyim says:

Evil and pain: Either benevolence and mercy, or justice and wisdom, or reform and preparation for good that happens after it, or to prevent more difficult evil than it.

In my dialogue with a Russian atheist, he asked many questions, including the troubles and pains that people suffer from. I told him:

Our view of evil and pain depends on our view of the reality of this worldly life, and the purpose of human existence in it, which differs between religious people and materialists. I told him: The materialistic perspective considers that this life has no purpose behind it. If a person dies that's it, it becomes nil. With this kind of prospective people will feel the urge to obtain the maximum level of pleasure. Therefore, when that person experiences any sort of pain, he cannot comprehend it, because they are unable to look at a bigger picture of what good could come out of a bad situation. This person with a limited prospective will be living in life with a shallow look, and will not be able to understand the "random" situations that life puts him in. Therefore, the saying "Existence of a God is full of mercy" will not make sense to them.

### **Knowing God :**

**“And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me.” (Qur’an 51:56)**

Islamic Revelation provides us with many reasons for why God has allowed evil and suffering to exist. The problem of evil is not presented in Islam as a problem, but rather as an instrument in the actualization of God's plan, which is intertwined with human experiences in this world as an experience that it is necessary for man's spiritual development. As we mentioned that God has attributes and the key to happiness in this life and in the Hereafter, is to know His attributes very well. Actually, we have to teach our children the names of God and His attributes.

### **The attributes of Majesty:**

The Possessor, The All Mighty, The Compeller, The Restorer, The Ever-Dominating, The Magnificent, The Supreme, The All-Strong, The Capable, The Powerful, etc.

### **The attributes of Beauty:**

The Most Gracious, The Most Generous, The Source of Goodness, The Compassionate, The Most Kind, The Pardoner, etc.

Our mission in this life is to know our Creator, so when we know only His attributes of beauty, then we don't know Him very well.

Having hardship and suffering enables us to realize and know God's attributes such as The Protector and The Healer for example, without the pain of illness, we would not appreciate the attribute of God being the Healer or the One who gives us health.

Knowing God in the Islamic teachings is a greater good, and worth the experience of suffering or pain as it will ensure the fulfillment of our primary purpose, which ultimately leads to Paradise.

**“Indeed, We have made that which is on the earth adornment for it that We may test them [as to] which of them is best in deed.” (Qur’an 18:7)**

### **The original concept of God:**

In my dialogue with an atheist woman, she told me that she was a believer, but when she lost her daughter, she became an atheist, and she doesn't want to believe in God anymore.

She claims that He took her daughter from her. She said that I prayed to Him and told Him: “if you keep my daughter alive and protect her from cancer and cure her, I will believe in you, but if you take my daughter, I will stop believing in you.”

In fact, this lady doesn't know who her Creator is. She doesn't know his mercy. She doesn't know that in any case, it must be noted that God did not make this world permanent. This world is temporary and everything in this life is limited by time, when its time finishes, it dies or it ends.

Neither are the good things of this world everlasting, nor are the bad things eternal. We are here for a short time and we are being tested. Those who pass this test will find an eternal world that is perfect and permanent, and those who fail this test shall see there are consequences for their sins and corruption.

I told her that, according to mathematics, any number compared to infinity is zero. So, this life is zero, we live in the zero, because if I lived 100 or 90 or 200 years, eventually, I will leave this life. So actually, compared to the eternal life with the Creator, we are actually here in the zero.

I told her that you have to understand the wisdom behind the natural disasters and suffering, that the natural disasters and suffering bring out the best in some people in terms of the display of elevated human values and charity. Suffering of the righteous comes with promises of a great reward and blessings from God.

Let us say you knew God and believed in his existence; you realized that he is more merciful than your parents, and you acknowledged the fact that God Almighty has a paradise that displays the heavens and the earth. Do you prefer losing faith in Him, His mercy, and his everlasting paradise over this worldly life? Would you prefer zero over infinity?

I told her: It is not logical to judge a play without continuing it to the end, or to reject a book because you did not like the first page.

I received many questions about the protection from atheism. How can we protect our children from atheism? And as you notice that I always insist on saying that The Original Concept of God is the key to protect our children from atheism. Our children have to understand and realize the attributes of their Creator, that the Creator is more merciful than their mothers with them.

For I say and repeat that the solution is to know the true concept of God, because whoever knows God, knows everything, because of course we did not realize the wisdom of our fathers and mothers when we were young in many behaviors, and we always wondered why the parents behave in this way, does my father really love me? Why did he agree to go on this trip?

Do you love me, mom? If you love me, why do you pressure me to study and get high marks? Why do you force me to do my daily homework? Why does my mom send me to sleep every day early?

When we grew up and had children, we understood the wisdom of the behavior of our fathers. And our understanding is that there is no one on earth who loves the best for us.

Deep knowledge of God helps us find explanations for many matters. When our awareness and knowledge widens, we are able to guide ourselves to solve many problems.

**“No disaster strikes except by permission of Allah. And whoever believes in Allah - He will guide his heart. And Allah is Knowing of all things.” (Qur’an 64:11)**

Often hear about the increase in atheism due to human-caused wars and natural disasters, there is no doubt that God's appreciation of these matters to take place is only a test of their faith. These tests bring out the truth in people, whether they have full faith in God or are hesitant in their belief.

Should I worship God or only mention Him in prosperity?

**“And of the people is he who worships Allah on an edge. If he is touched by good, he is reassured by it; but if he is struck by trial, he turns on his face [to the other direction]. He has lost [this] world and the Hereafter. That is what is the manifest loss.” (Qur’an 22:11)**

### **The Mercy of the Creator:**

In a dialogue with an atheist, I told him that It's enough to understand or to believe that the Creator is waiting for us to judge us, and that He is very merciful with us. To make this idea very clear or very close to our minds, we just need to imagine that our mothers will be the one to judge us. How happy will we be? We will be so happy, relaxed, and relieved. For us, it's enough for us to get reassurance in this life that our mothers are waiting to judge us on the day of judgement. So, there's no need to be scared.

I gave him a simple example of the importance of knowing God. I told him: If they told you that Faten Sabri is a lion tamer for example, and that she has a strong and unforgiving personality. When you come to meet her of course you will be careful to talk to her because you don't know anything about her except that she has a tough personality. But the people who know her will laugh at this claim and will be surprised because everyone knows very well that Faten is afraid of cats.

During the visit of a priest from the Vatican and his colleague to our center, I took him to show him the mosque. While we were discussing the concept of monotheism, I was telling them that God the Almighty, is the Creator, according to our faith. Allah the One and the Only, who does not come to earth in any animal form or human form, Who is very merciful, He has no son, no partner, He created us to have mercy on us, and he sent one message through many prophets to all nations. He sent this message with Prophet Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Jesus Christ, and more. Jesus Christ for us is a human messenger who was created without a father, without a male, as well as Prophet Adam, who was created without a father or a mother. We pray to God, we worship Him like Prophet Jesus did, and like Mary, the mother of Jesus, like Prophet Muhammad, but we don't pray to Mary or to Jesus or to Muhammed. We pray like them.

So, he told me that we don't pray to Mary, but we use Mary as an intermediary to let our supplication reach the Creator. As you know, in most families, when the children want something from their father, they prefer to speak to the mother. The mother, first of all, she's very merciful and she has a very soft heart, and she loves her children very much. So, she can take their requests and speak with her father. So that's why we speak to Mary first, to let our supplication reach the Creator.

I told him: Yes, you are right, but this is in case the children don't know the real nature of their father. They don't know that he's very merciful, more than their mothers, and he loves them more. And maybe he doesn't show this love.

He said: No, no,.. let me explain more about this point. Mary for us is like a tray. When you serve your guests, you put the juice or the water on a tray to give the visitor. So, Mary is like a tray. We put our supplication on this tray to give it to the Creator.

I told him: Okay, so who was Mary's tray? Mary prayed directly to God; she didn't use anyone for her supplication to reach her Creator. She prayed directly to Him. So, who was Mary's tray?

This story was for me the starting point for spreading the true concept of God and was the reason for writing my book: The Original Concept of God, in which I wanted to explain to the world that the true concept of God is the missing point now.

Not knowing the Lord of the Worlds leads to misconceptions about God, such as being embodied in three hypostases or represented in the flesh of a human being.

Distorting the true concept of God in the Old Testament not only confused people's minds and put them at a loss, but also caused them to resort to atheism and distract them from religion altogether.

The Torah, which God Almighty revealed to Moses, peace be upon him, stated that God, is the One and the Only. The One who is Eternal, Merciful, and Exalted is the Creator of every defect or deficiency, but we find in the Old Testament (the distorted Torah) that they claim certain attributes that do not fit God's Majesty (Forgetting, Lack of Knowledge, Fear, Tiredness), Glory be to Him.

In my childhood I always wondered why God Almighty mentioned in the Holy Qur'an that he created the heavens without getting tired and I was very surprised by the need to mention this point, as it is known that God Almighty does not get tired, until I started my conversations with non-Muslims, when I knew that the Christian believes that God When He created the heavens and the earth, He rested on Sunday. And they always ask me why Muslims do not consider Sunday to be a holy day and I say simply because God does not get tired to rest. Surprisingly, they laugh and say: yes, you are right.

### **Monotheism is the way of salvation:**

It is very wrong to introduce Islam by saying: Islam means to believe in one God, and just stop there. We have to explain, to give more depth. Islam means to believe in One God and to have a direct connection with God who is the Creator. Nothing is like Him. He does not come to earth in any animal form or human form, He has no image known to humans. Our minds can only imagine objects, people and situations based on past experiences and memories. God is beyond our perception and cannot be comprehended.

Whenever we sin, we repent to Him directly. When we have a problem, we ask Him to solve the problem directly. When we feel blessed, we have to thank Him directly, because the faith in One God already exists in many religions.

In fact, it was even the faith of the disbelievers of Quraish (the tribe of Prophet Muhammad). The disbelievers of Quraish believed in One God, because when they were asked about worshiping the idols, they said they worship idols to make them closer to Allah. So, their problem was not with Tawheed Al Rububeyya, which is to believe in One God. Their problem was with Tawheed Al Ebada, which is to have a direct connection with the Creator.

The differences between religions are represented in the means used to communicate with the Creator, directly or through the taking of mediators (saints, priests, idols or prophets).

If all religions left calling to mediators and went directly to the Creator, humanity would be united and their hearts upright, and be guided to the truth. Just as everyone agrees in praying towards the Creator directly without a partner or mediator when calamities or adversities occur, so it was necessary to invite everyone in good and bad times to worship the Lord of the Worlds. As the Holy Qur'an stated:

**“Say, ‘O People of the Scripture, come to a word that is equitable between us and you - that we will not worship except Allah and not associate anything with Him and not take one another as lords instead of Allah.’ But if they turn away, then say, ‘Bear witness that we are Muslims [submitting to Him].’” (Qur’an 3: 64)**

### **Conclusion:**

Therefore, the worldly life is the beginning of an eternal journey that a person resumes after death, and Islam considers that our existence in this world is for a supreme goal and purpose which is the knowledge of God Almighty and to worship Him by praying to Him directly.

Any misfortunes that happens, God knows it, and have allowed it. God has absolute wisdom, and absolute wisdom is related to absolute good, and there is no absolute evil in existence.