

Faith in God

Faith in God means faith in a Being who is at once Creator, Master and Sustainer of all creation. Everything has been made by Him and Him alone, and receives eternal sustenance from Him. There is nothing which can exist without Him. Consciousness of this and faith in God go hand in hand. As a consequence, a man of faith begins to look upon himself as a servant of God. In each and every thing he witnesses the glory of God, and every blessing he receives strikes him as a gift from God; hymns to the deity and remembrance of God spring from his heart like fountains. He lives, not—in forgetfulness, but in a state of acute awareness, all events being reminders to him of God. When he

awakens from a deep and refreshing sleep, he begins involuntarily

Discovering God means, moreover, acceptance of the fact that God has not created man, or the universe at large in vain.

to thank his Lord for having blessed man with sleep, without which he would be in such a perpetual state of exhaustion that life, brief as it is, would become hellish for him and drive him to madness. When

the sun rises high in the sky and

sends its light to the world, dispelling the darkness of the night, his heart cries out in ecstasy, 'Glory be to God who created light. Had there been no light, the whole world would be a fearful ocean of darkness.' When, driven by hunger and thirst, he eats and drinks, his entire being is filled with heartfelt gratitude and, bewildered and amazed, he asks himself: 'What would become of men if there were no God to send us food and drink?' When in need, or if he is hurt, he looks towards God, calling upon Him for succour. When he encounters adversity, he accepts it as part of God's design, and if he is fortunate enough to earn profits or, in some other way, finds himself at an advantage, he

is reminded of God's blessings and his heart is filled with gratitude. His achievements do not, however, fill him with conceit, nor do his failures crush him or even make him impatient. In all such matters, whether of loss or gain, his adoration of God is never impaired, nor does anyone or anything other than God ever become its object. No expediency ever makes him forget his Lord.

The Discovery of God

The discovery of the power of gravity on earth and on other bodies, or of radiation in the universe with the help of sophisticated instruments, is an achievement of an academic nature with no overtones of religious compulsion. But the discovery of God is an entirely different phenomenon. It is the direct apprehension of a Being who is all-seeing and all-hearing, and who is the repository of all wisdom and might. That a magnificent universe should stand mute, without its true significance ever being understood and appreciated, is inconceivable when its Creator and Sustainer is an all-knowing God.

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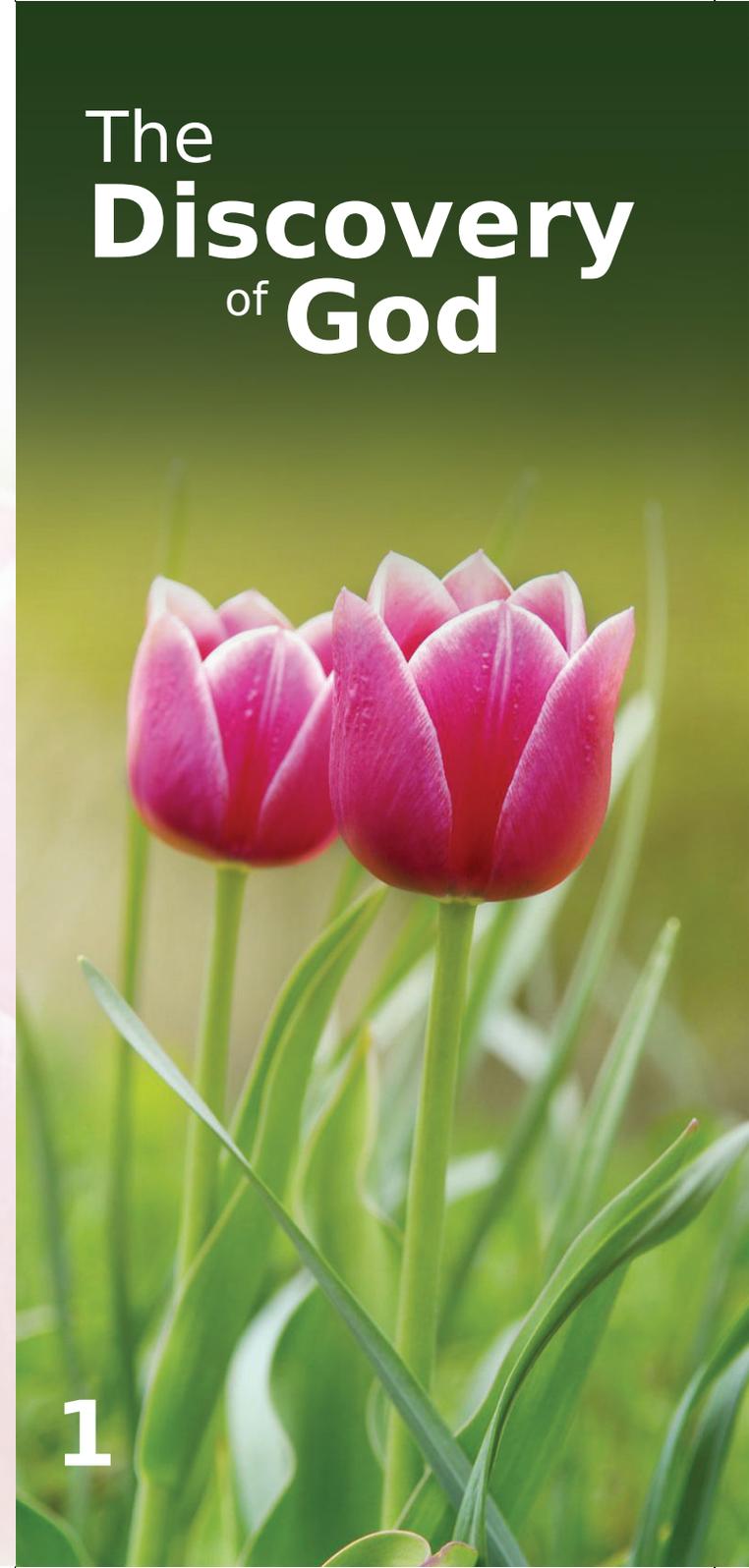
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The Discovery of God



The Five Pillars of Islam

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ has said, “Islam has been built on five pillars: testifying that there is no god but God, and that Muhammad ﷺ is the Messenger of God; saying prayers; paying the prescribed charity (*zakat*); making the pilgrimage to the House of God in Makkah and fasting in the month of Ramadan.”

Although a building is composed of many parts, what really holds up the entire structure is its pillars. If they are strong, the whole structure will be sound. But should they be weak, the entire edifice will crumble. Those which support the edifice of Islam are of immense strength, but they must first of all be raised up by its adherents if they are to support its structure.

Man's life is like a piece of land on which he must build a house to God's liking. His first step must be to set up these five sturdy pillars, without which Islam cannot raise itself up either at the individual or at the community level. These five pillars—faith, prayers, fasting, charity and pilgrimage—are meant to engender in man a lifelong piety and devotion to God.

Faith (*iman*) means belief in divine truths. Prayer, in essence, means bowing before the glories of God, so that any sense of superiority a man may have will be dispelled. Fasting (*sawm*), with its emphasis on abstinence, builds up patience and fortitude. Charity (*zakat*) entails the recognition of other's needs, so that what has been given to mankind by God may be equitably shared. Pilgrimage (*hajj*) is a great rallying of God's servants around Him. These are not mere

empty rituals, but the exercise of positive virtues, the quintessence, in fact, of those qualities which our Lord wishes to be inculcated in us. If we can cultivate them, we shall be deemed to possess the divine characteristics so cherished by Islam. Thus it is true to say that faith, humility, fortitude, recognition of the rights of others and unity are the pillars on which rests the entire edifice of Islam.

Acceptance of God as one's Lord is like making a covenant to place Him at the central point in one's life, so that He may become the pivot of one's thoughts and emotions. It means entrusting oneself to Him entirely, and focussing upon Him all one's hopes and aspirations, fears and entreaties. Then, instead of living for worldly things, one will live for one's Sustainer. He will thus become all in all in one's life.

Man all too often live for worldly things which come to dominate his thoughts and emotions. Some live for their household and family; some for business and the money it brings; some for political activity and party leadership, and some for honour and authority. Every man, big or small, lives for something or the other which is material in this everyday world of ours. But this is to live in ignorance—trying to build one's nest on branches that do not exist.

A truly worthy life is that which is lived for one's Lord, with no support other than Him. Man should live in remembrance of God. His name should be on his lips as he awakens and as he sleeps. As he halts or proceeds on his way, he should live in trust of God, and when he speaks or remains silent, it should be for the pleasure of his Lord.

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The Essence of Faith

Faith in God is like the electric current which illuminates the whole environment and sets all machines in motion. When a man finds the link of faith to connect him to God, he experiences just such an illumination from within sudden and all-embracing. His latent spirit is then awakened and his heart is warmed by his new-found faith. A new kind of fire is kindled within him. Man, born of the womb of his mother, has his second birth from the womb of faith. He now experiences what is meant by union with God. A lover, emotionally, is one with his beloved, even when he is physically separated from the object of his love. In this state, he sees in everything the image of the loved one. One who is inspired by his faith in God is just like this

earthly lover. He sees the glories of God in heaven's blue vaults, and His might and grandeur in the fury of tempests. The birds, with their twittering, seem to warble hymns to God. The rising sun is the radiant hand of God extending towards him. Every leaf of every plant and tree is a verdant page on which he reads the story of divine creation. Zephyrs fanning his cheeks are harbingers of his unity with God. A true believer in God is like a diver in the divine ocean. Every plunge that he makes serves to unite him in his experience more and more inextricably with his Maker, so that he belongs to God as God belongs to him.

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