

GOD IS NOT IMMANENT AND IS IMMATERIAL

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GOD IS NOT IMMANENT AND IS IMMATERIAL

GOD IS NOT IMMANENT

God is not immanent in the material universe.

For example,

وَمَا قَدَرُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ قَدْرِهِ ۗ وَالْأَرْضُ جَمِيعًا قَبْضَتُهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَالسَّمَاوَاتُ مَطْوِيَّاتٌ
بِيمِينِهِ ۗ سُبْحٰنَهُ ۗ وَتَعٰلٰى عَمَّا يُشْرِكُوْنَ ﴿٦٧﴾

*They made not a just estimate of Allah such as is due to Him. **And on the Day of Resurrection the whole of the earth will be grasped by His Hand and the heavens will be rolled up in His Right Hand.** Glorified is He and High is He above all that they associate as partners with Him!¹*

يَوْمَ نَطْوِي السَّمَاءَ كَطَيِّ السِّجِلِّ لِلْكُتُبِ ۗ كَمَا بَدَأْنَا أَوَّلَ خَلْقٍ نُعِيدُهُ ۗ وَعَدًّا عَلَيْنَا ۗ إِنَّا
كُنَّا فَاعِلِينَ ﴿١٤﴾

***And [remember] the Day when We shall roll up the heaven like a scroll rolled up for books.** As We began the first creation, We shall repeat it. [It is] a promise binding upon Us. Truly We shall do it.²*

On the Day of Resurrection, God will grasp the earth and roll up the heavens. Therefore, the universe cannot contain God Who must transcend the universe.

Therefore, God is not immanent.³

GOD CANNOT BE IMMANENT

God cannot be immanent, because He is screened from the material universe by a veil.

﴿ وَمَا كَانَ لِبَشَرٍ أَنْ يُكَلِّمَهُ اللَّهُ إِلَّا وَحْيًا أَوْ مِنْ وَرَآئِ حِجَابٍ أَوْ يُرْسِلَ رَسُولًا فَيُوحِيَ بآيَاتِهِ ۗ مَا
يَشَاءُ ۗ إِنَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٥١﴾ ﴾

***It is not given to any human being that Allah should speak to him unless by Revelation or from behind a veil** or He sends a Messenger to reveal what He wills by His Leave. Verily He is Most High, Most Wise.³*

¹ Surah Az-Zumar Chapter 39 Verse 67

² Surah Al-Anbiya' Chapter 21 Verse 104

³ Surah Ash-Shura Chapter 42 Verse 51

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وَلَمَّا جَاءَ مُوسَىٰ لِمِيقَاتِنَا وَكَلَّمَهُ رَبُّهُ قَالَ رَبِّ أَرِنِي أَنظُرَ إِلَيْكَ قَالَ لَن نَرِيكَ وَلَٰكِن نُنظِرُ
إِلَى الْجَبَلِ فَإِنِ اسْتَقَرَّ مَكَانَهُ فَسَوْفَ تَرَانِي فَلَمَّا تَجَلَّىٰ رَبُّهُ لِلْجَبَلِ جَعَلَهُ دَكًّا وَخَرَّ
مُوسَىٰ صَعِقًا فَلَمَّا أَفَاقَ قَالَ سُبْحٰنَكَ تُبْتُ إِلَيْكَ وَأَنَا أَوَّلُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٤٣﴾

And when Musa [Prophet Moses] came at the time and place appointed by Us and his Lord spoke to him, he said, "O my Lord! Show me [Yourself] that I may look upon You." Allah said 'You cannot see Me but look upon the mountain. If it stands still in its place then you shall see Me.' **So when his Lord appeared to the mountain He made it collapse to dust** and Moses fell down unconscious. Then when he recovered his senses he said, "Glory is to You, I turn to You in repentance and I am the first of the believers."⁴

Were God to unveil Himself, His Essence would consume the material universe as it did the mountain in the presence of Prophet Moses.

Therefore, God cannot be immanent.

GOD IS IMMATERIAL

Does the reference to God's Hands mean that His Hands are like His material creation, and, by implication, that God is material?

No, because as the Qur'an says,

فَاطِرُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ جَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِّنْ اَنْفُسِكُمْ اَزْوَاجًا وَمِنَ الْاَنْعٰمِ اَزْوَاجًا يَدْرُوكُمْ فِيْهِ
لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهٖ شَيْءٌ ۗ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيْرُ ﴿١١﴾

The Creator of the heavens and the earth. He has made for You mates from yourselves and for the cattle mates. By this means He creates you. **There is nothing like Him**, and He is the All-Hearer, the All-Seer.⁵

Therefore, the Hands of God, like His attributes of Hearing and Seeing, are unlike His creation.

Since all creation is material, and there is nothing like God, God must be immaterial.

⁴ Surah Al-A'raf Chapter 7 Verse 143

⁵ Surah Ash-Shura Chapter 42 Verse 11

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RATIONAL BELIEF IN GOD'S ATTRIBUTES

How then can God's Attributes be understood if they are unlike His creation?

يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ وَلَا يُحِيطُونَ بِهِ عِلْمًا ﴿١١٠﴾

He [Allah] knows what happens to them [His creatures] in this world and what will happen to them, **but they will never compass anything of His Knowledge.**⁶

It is not possible to know **how** the Hands of God are, because God is immaterial and, as material creatures, we can only affirm their existence.

أَمْ تَقُولُونَ إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَالْأَسْبَاطَ كَانُوا هُودًا أَوْ نَصَارَىٰ ۗ قُلْ ءَأَنْتُمْ أَعْلَمُ أَمِ اللَّهُ ۗ وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّن كَتَمَ شَهَادَةً عِنْدَهُ مِنَ اللَّهِ ۗ وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَفِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٤٠﴾

Or say you that Ibrahim [Prophet Abraham], Ishma'il [Prophet Ishmael], Ishaq [Prophet Isaac], Ya'qub [Prophet Jacob] and the offspring of the twelve sons of Ya'qub were Jews or Christians? **Say, "Do you know better or does Allah?"** And who is more unjust than he who conceals the testimony he has from Allah? And Allah is not unaware of what you do.⁷

God knows Himself better than anyone else.

فَلَا تَضْرِبُوا لِلَّهِ الْأَمْثَالَ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٦١﴾

So put not forward similarities for Allah. Truly Allah knows and you know not.⁸

God's attributes like His Hands must be affirmed without likening them to His creation, because God knows Himself and we do not.

Therefore, the rational course of action, according to the Qur'an, is to believe in God as He has described Himself without interpreting away His attributes from the apparent meaning which first springs to mind.

This agrees with our conclusion on timeless-causality:

- that only God can know how He causes, how He brought into existence and indeed how He interacts with the material time-contingent universe
- that the answer can only be found, if at all, in divine revelation
- that we will have reached at this point the limit of human knowledge, the boundary between reason and belief in the Unseen
- that, therefore, the answer from divine revelation has to be accepted as a matter of belief

⁶ Surah Ta Ha Chapter 20 Verse 110

⁷ Surah Al-Baqarah Chapter 2 Verse 140

⁸ Surah An-Nahl Chapter 16 Verse 74

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The attributes of God, like His Hands, therefore, have to be accepted as a matter of belief, and this is affirmed in the Qur'an.