

Primordial Knowledge of God: Plantinga's Reformed Epistemology and the Islamic Primordial Covenant

Abstract

This analysis explores the idea of an **innate knowledge of God** across two traditions: the philosophical perspective of Alvin Plantinga and the theological perspective of the Qur'an. It first examines Plantinga's views – notably his **Reformed Epistemology** – which hold that belief in God can be “properly basic” (justified without inferential evidence) by virtue of an inborn *sensus divinitatis* (sense of the divine). It then provides a scholarly commentary on Qur'an 7:172, the verse of the **primordial covenant (al-mithāq)** in which all human souls testified to God's lordship before birth. Classical Islamic exegeses (Ibn Kathīr, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, al-Qurṭubī) and modern interpretations are surveyed to explain how this verse establishes an innate, pre-temporal acknowledgment of God (*fiṭra* or natural disposition). Finally, Plantinga's account of innate knowledge of God is compared with the Islamic concept of the primordial covenant – highlighting both convergences (e.g. the notion of a natural awareness of God and explanations for unbelief) and divergences (e.g. philosophical vs. scriptural frameworks) – and the implications for cross-tradition understanding of belief in God are discussed.

Alvin Plantinga's View: Reformed Epistemology and Innate Knowledge of God

Alvin Plantinga (b. 1932) is a prominent analytic philosopher of religion known for defending the rationality of theistic belief without recourse to formal evidence. Central to Plantinga's view is the idea that **belief in God can be “properly basic.”** In epistemology, a *properly basic belief* is one that is justified (or warranted) without being inferred from other beliefs. Plantinga argues that belief in God can be like our basic belief in the reality of the past or the existence of other minds – beliefs we hold naturally and rationally *even in the absence of proof* ¹ ² . In an interview, Plantinga analogized the question “Why do you believe in God?” to “Why do you believe there are other people?” – suggesting that, for him, the conviction of God's existence arises spontaneously and immediately, not through logical argumentation ¹ . Traditional theistic proofs (cosmological, teleological, etc.) may have some force, but Plantinga does not consider them necessary for rational faith. Rather, **the human mind is equipped with an innate disposition to form belief in God**, so that under the right circumstances one “just finds oneself convinced that there is such a person as God” ³ .

Plantinga's model appeals to a concept derived from John Calvin: the *sensus divinitatis*, or “sense of divinity.” This refers to a natural, God-given faculty in human cognition that produces belief in God in a basic way ⁴ . When functioning properly, the *sensus divinitatis* is triggered by various experiences of the world – the beauty of nature, feelings of gratitude, moral experiences, etc. – and *immediately yields the belief* “God exists” or “God is creator” without any need for intermediate reasoning ⁴ . Plantinga describes this in terms of a cognitive mechanism analogous to perception or memory: just as we have **sense perception**

that directly leads us to believe in external objects, or **memory** that leads us to believe in past events, humans have a divinely implanted sense that leads us to perceive God's reality ⁴ . In his words, "*we find ourselves with [theistic beliefs], just as we find ourselves with perceptual and memory beliefs*" ⁵ . If God designed our cognitive faculties, it stands to reason (Plantinga argues) that He would include a faculty for awareness of Himself ⁶ . Thus, under what Plantinga calls the *Aquinas/Calvin model*, knowledge of God is widely and naturally available through this innate faculty ² .

Under Reformed Epistemology, **belief in God is rationally acceptable as a basic belief**, grounded in the proper functioning of the *sensus divinitatis*. Plantinga challenges the Enlightenment-era evidentialist slogan that one must have evidence or arguments to believe in God rationally ⁷ ⁸ . Just as we do not require a proof to know the external world exists, a person can be within their epistemic rights to believe in God upon experiencing the divine impact through conscience, the majesty of nature, or worship – experiences which are taken as **basic evidence** in themselves ⁹ . In academic terms, Plantinga's theory fits into a **foundationalist** epistemology (one allowing basic beliefs that ground others) combined with an externalist notion of warrant (a belief is warranted if produced by cognitive faculties functioning properly in an appropriate environment, according to a design plan aimed at truth) ² . If theism is true and humans are designed by God, then the cognitive faculty producing belief in God is truth-aimed and operating as intended; in that case, such belief would not only be rational but could even qualify as knowledge (*warranted true belief*) if all conditions are met (this is the thrust of Plantinga's argument in *Warranted Christian Belief*).

Plantinga bolsters his view by addressing the reality of **non-belief** or disbelief. He acknowledges that not everyone finds belief in God arising spontaneously. His explanation invokes the "**noetic effects of sin**": human cognitive faculties, including the *sensus divinitatis*, have been impaired or impeded by sin and wrongdoing ¹⁰ . In a fallen world, this divine sense might malfunction or be "diseased" in some individuals ¹¹ . In one discussion, Plantinga suggests that *the natural human condition is to believe in God wholeheartedly*, but due to the distortion of sin, some people's ability to sense God is compromised ¹² . He even labels persistent unbelief as a kind of **cognitive dysfunction**: "*not believing in God is [a] cognitive deficiency*," comparable to a form of blindness in one's faculty for the divine ¹² . This theme parallels his response to the problem of **divine hiddenness** – the question of why God isn't obvious to everyone. Plantinga's answer is that God **is** widely revealed (through nature, conscience, etc.) and most of humanity in fact does believe in some kind of divine, but to the extent God is "hidden," it could be for a good reason (preserving free will or genuine faith), or due to human failing rather than God's absence ¹³ ¹⁴ . Notably, he points out that atheism is historically the exception, not the rule: "*the vast majority of the world's people do believe in God or something like God*" ¹³ – a fact he takes as congruent with the existence of a built-in *sensus divinitatis*.

In summary, Plantinga's position (representative of Reformed Epistemology) is that **belief in God is an innate, properly basic conviction** warranted by an intrinsic faculty. It does not depend on evidentiary arguments to be rational. This view re-frames the debate on God's existence: instead of demanding proof for God, Plantinga shifts the burden to critics – unless there is some defeater or strong objection, the **prima facie** deliverances of our natural "sense of God" can be trusted just as we trust our eyes or memory ⁷ ¹⁵ . By defending the epistemic legitimacy of an immediate awareness of the divine, Plantinga provides a philosophical account of **innate knowledge of God** that we will now juxtapose with an Islamic account of innate God-consciousness.

Qur'an 7:172 and the Primordial Covenant – Islamic Exegesis and Commentary

Qur'an 7:172 is a key verse in Islamic thought regarding humanity's primordial relationship with God. It describes a moment *before* earthly life when God drew forth all the future descendants of Adam and made them bear witness to His lordship: *"And [mention] when your Lord took from the children of Adam – from their loins – their descendants and made them testify about themselves [saying to them]: 'Am I not your Lord?' They said: 'Yes, we testify' – [this] lest you should say on the Day of Resurrection, 'Indeed, we were unaware of this'."* This event is often referred to as the **Day of Alast** (from the Arabic *alastu bi rabbikum*, "Am I not your Lord?") or the **Primordial Covenant (al-mithāq)** between God and humanity. It is foundational in Islamic theology for explaining human nature (*fiṭra*), moral responsibility, and the universality of belief in God.

Classical Muslim scholars treated this verse with great importance. A wealth of **tafsīr** (exegesis) literature preserves explanations of how this covenant took place and what it means. The verse is understood to mean that *recognition of the One God is ingrained in the human soul* – so much so that no person can plead total ignorance of God's existence or lordship. The early exegetes took the verse to indicate that **all human beings acknowledged God's reality in a direct encounter** before their earthly life, thereby affirming an innate awareness of God.

According to *Ibn Kathīr* (14th c. C.E.), for example, this verse shows that humanity was created upon the **fiṭrat Allāh** – the natural, predisposed religion of God's oneness ¹⁶. In his commentary, Ibn Kathīr writes that when God brought forth Adam's progeny and made them testify to His lordship, *"Allah created them on this fiṭra (disposition)"* of recognizing Him ¹⁶. He then cites another Quranic verse, *"So set your face toward the religion as a ḥanīf [monotheist] – the fiṭra of Allah upon which He has created mankind"* (Qur'an 30:30), to underscore that *tawḥīd* (knowledge of the One God) is the default imprint on human nature ¹⁷. Supporting this, Ibn Kathīr quotes the famous hadith: *"Every child is born upon the fiṭra; it is his parents who [later] make him a Jew, Christian, or Zoroastrian"* ¹⁸. In other words, every human being is born with a pure innate faith (sometimes glossed as an inclination to Islam or generic monotheism), and deviations from that original faith are due to external influences after birth. Another hadith quoted by Ibn Kathīr has God saying: *"I created My servants ḥunafā' (i.e. as pure monotheists), but the devils came to them and distracted them from their religion..."* ¹⁹. This strikingly parallels Plantinga's notion that non-belief results from some dysfunction: here we see the Islamic version – humanity was created believing in God, but demonic temptations and worldly influences lead people astray from this inherent belief ¹⁹. The classical exegete *al-Qurṭubī* similarly mentions that God's taking of this covenant means He instilled in human souls the instinct (*gharīza*) of His lordship – an intuitive knowledge such that, as a result, **"everyone knows deep down that Allah is their Lord,"** even if they later cover or ignore this knowledge. The purpose is that on Judgment Day no soul can justifiably claim *"we were unaware"* that God is Lord ²⁰ ²¹.

Most classical scholars understood the verse **realistically** – that is, as referring to a real event in pre-temporal existence. They often recount prophetic *ḥadīth* to flesh out the narrative. One such *ḥadīth* (attributed to the Prophet's companion Ubayy ibn Ka'b) describes that God drew forth all of Adam's descendants at once, gave them human form and the faculty of speech, and addressed them directly; He made them testify to His Oneness, warned them not to fall into shirk (idolatry), and informed them that prophets and scriptures would be sent to remind them of this moment and covenant ²² ²³. The souls responded acknowledging God's lordship. God then had even the heavens and the earth bear witness to this testimony ²⁴. This dramatic *assembly of souls* is said to have taken place in Na'mān (identified with the

plain of 'Arafāt). Some reports add vivid details: the multitude of souls stood like tiny ants covering the plain ²⁵ ; they were split into groups of believers and disbelievers (foretelling their earthly choices), etc. While the **literal historicity** of this covenant is part of mainstream Sunni creed, it is also laden with symbolic significance: it signifies that humanity's relationship with God precedes and underpins earthly life.

Interestingly, **not all scholars took the narrative literally**. Some interpreted Qur'an 7:172 in a more *allegorical or metaphorical* way to convey the idea of **innate knowledge** without positing a pre-birth gathering. Fakhr al-Dīn *al-Rāzī* (12th c.), a towering theologian, noted that this verse is among the "difficult" ones and discussed both literal and figurative interpretations. One figurative interpretation is that God "made them testify concerning themselves" by endowing humans with reason and signs in creation, such that our very nature and the world around us bear witness to God's lordship ²⁶ . This view holds that *every human, by virtue of intellect and fitra, carries an implicit testimony of God*. The phrase "*He made them testify against themselves*" can thus be understood as "*God set up proofs of His Lordship for them and implanted in them the faculty of reason*", leading their own souls to acknowledge Him ²⁷ (this is essentially the interpretation given by the Tafsīr al-Jalālayn ²⁷). In modern terms, we might call this the **natural theology** reading: the covenant is not a one-time cosmic mass-transit event, but an ongoing reality of the human condition – that our minds and the cosmos inherently point to God. **Modernist commentators** and philosophers (such as Muhammad Asad and Dr. Shabbir Akhtar) often favor this understanding, emphasizing *fitra* as an innate consciousness or "**proto-revelation**" within each person, rather than a literal pre-existent memory. They argue that 7:172 teaches that human beings are "hard-wired" to recognize God, which is why across history and cultures we find a pervasive concept of the divine. On this view, the *covenant* is inscribed on the human soul rather than remembered by the human brain.

Nonetheless, the traditional majority opinion, as reflected by scholars like *Ibn Kathīr* and *al-Qurṭubī*, maintains that the verse refers to a **real primordial event** and not mere allegory ²⁸ . They point out that the Qur'an introduces it with "When your Lord took... and made them testify," phrased as a narrative event, and that the Prophet Muhammad and his companions apparently understood it as an actual occurrence (since hadith reports describe it). Moreover, the verse itself states the purpose: "lest you say on the Day of Resurrection *'We were unaware of this'*." This purpose would be undermined, they argue, if the covenant were only metaphorical – the solemn language implies it will literally be used as evidence against deniers in the hereafter ²⁹ . Thus, many hold that "*there remains no ground whatsoever to interpret the event as mere allegory*" ²⁹ . From an orthodox view, *the primordial covenant truly happened* outside of time as we know it. All souls, before being attached to bodies, affirmed God's sole lordship (*rubūbiyya*) and agreed to worship Him alone. Forgetfulness of this covenant is part of the human test, but God, through prophets and scriptures, continually reminds mankind of that original pledge ³⁰ ³¹ . This ties into the Islamic doctrine that prophets do not introduce belief in God so much as **remind** people of something deeply familiar and imprinted on their hearts.

To synthesize the Islamic perspective: Qur'an 7:172 establishes that **knowledge of God's lordship is innate and universal** in humanity. Classical exegesis often literalizes this as a pre-temporal covenant, while also relating it to the concept of *fitra* (the innate disposition toward faith). Thus, even if individuals don't consciously remember a pre-birth event, they are born with a **subconscious imprint of tawhīd**. This Quranic concept has profound theological implications. It offers an explanation for the near-universality of religious belief and holds individuals morally accountable for impiety: since a tacit awareness of God exists within, rejecting God is seen as a willful suppression of one's own *fitra*. It also demonstrates God's justice – He would not punish people for failing to know Him if He had not already made Himself known to them in

some primordial fashion ³² . In Islamic theology, then, every human soul has already confirmed “*Allah is my Lord*”, and life is a test of whether we live in accordance with that truth or bury it under earthly distractions.

Plantinga’s Sensus Divinitatis and the Islamic Primordial Covenant: Complementarity and Contrast

The parallels between Plantinga’s philosophical account of **sensus divinitatis** and the Islamic doctrine of an innate **fiṭra** (anchored in the primordial covenant) are striking. Both frameworks, despite arising in very different traditions, posit that *belief in God is “built in” to human nature*. At the same time, there are important differences in emphasis and context. Below is an analysis of how Plantinga’s account of innate knowledge of God complements or contrasts with the Islamic concept of the primordial covenant:

- **Universality of Innate God-Knowledge:** Both Plantinga and the Islamic tradition affirm that knowledge of God is universally accessible because it is part of our natural endowment. Plantinga’s *sensus divinitatis* is supposed to operate in all normal human minds, producing an immediate awareness of God ⁴ . Likewise, Qur’an 7:172 implies *every* human soul has already acknowledged God’s lordship, and commentators say all are born upon the natural monotheistic *fiṭra* ¹⁶ ¹⁸ . In essence, *knowing God is a human birthright* in both views – it does not require special training or evidence, as it is “programmed” within our consciousness or very spirit.
- **No Need for Inferential Proof:** Because of that innate sense, both perspectives hold that explicit arguments or evidence are not strictly necessary for a rational belief in God. Plantinga argues that **belief in God is properly basic** – one can be justified in believing without arguments, just as one trusts memory or perception ¹ ² . In Islamic thought, one could say that the *strongest “proof” of God is already present inside us*. Classic scholars like Ibn Taymiyya wrote of “*ma’rifat Allāh fi’l-fiṭra*” (knowledge of God by innate disposition) as more immediate and indubitable even than rational inference. Thus, a complementary insight is that **both traditions resist overly rationalistic demands for proof**: belief in God is portrayed not as a leap in the dark nor as a mere conclusion from premises, but as *a foundational perception or memory* planted by God in the soul ⁴ ²⁷ .
- **The Role of Experiences as Triggers:** Plantinga’s model suggests that various life experiences (seeing a starry sky, feeling guilt, etc.) *trigger* the *sensus divinitatis* to produce belief about God ³³ ³⁴ . This is intriguingly similar to descriptions in Islamic sources that certain experiences stir the heart’s innate knowledge. Qur’an 30:30 (often cited alongside 7:172) urges contemplation of the natural world as aligning with the *fiṭra*. Al-Rāzī, even when describing the covenant metaphorically, said God set signs of His lordship in creation and human reason so that one’s **own soul would testify** that God is real ²⁶ . Thus, in both views the **natural world and human consciousness are suffused with pointers to God** which awaken an intrinsic awareness.
- **Explaining Atheism or Disbelief:** Perhaps the most notable complementarity is how each explains the phenomenon of non-belief. Plantinga attributes persistent atheism to some malfunction or suppression of the *sensus divinitatis*, caused by sin or cognitive dysfunction ¹⁰ ¹¹ . The Islamic tradition, as noted, has a very similar concept: everyone is born God-conscious (*hunafā*), but external corrupting factors – whether *shayṭān* (Satanic temptation), societal influence, or personal whims – can veil or distort this innate faith ¹⁹ ¹⁸ . The hadith “the devils misled them...” ¹⁹ virtually mirrors Plantinga’s statement that not believing in God is a result of “cognitive deficiencies” in a fallen world

¹² . Both frameworks therefore **do not view atheism as a neutral, purely rational choice**, but as a deviation from an intrinsic human orientation. This is an important point of **theological psychology** in both: the “default setting” is belief, and non-belief requires an explanation (such as misuse of free will, pride, or spiritual damage). The **consequence** is that both Plantinga and Islamic theology *place the onus on atheism to justify itself*, rather than on theism to justify itself from scratch – since if we start from the innate baseline, *theism is the natural position* and atheism a departure from it ³⁵ ²⁹ .

- **Epistemological vs. Covenantal Context:** Despite these parallels, there is a fundamental difference in *context and purpose*. Plantinga's account is framed in **epistemology** – it is about what counts as a justified belief and the sources of knowledge. The *sensus divinitatis* is proposed as a *faculty producing warranted belief* (when functioning properly), and his aim is to show that theistic belief need not be irrational or unsupported ⁷ ³⁵ . In contrast, Qur'an 7:172 operates in a **covenantal and moral framework** – it is about a pledge or bond between God and human souls, establishing God's rights over us (to be worshipped alone) and our accountability. The language is that of testimony and covenant, rather than cognition and warrant. So while Islam absolutely recognizes an innate knowledge of God (*fiṭra*), the *Quranic idiom* casts it in relational and ethical terms: God is *owed* worship because we acknowledged His lordship, and idolaters or atheists are essentially breaking a promise or denying a truth they are born with ³⁶ ²⁸ . Plantinga's model doesn't carry this covenantal weight – it is not about a pre-birth promise, but about how belief is grounded in the individual's cognitive architecture. In short, Plantinga speaks as a philosopher concerned with rationality, whereas the Qur'an speaks as scripture concerned with **allegiance to God** and the innate duty of worship. The Islamic concept of *al-mithāq* thus complements Plantinga by adding a **theological dimension of commitment**: the *sensus divinitatis* tells us *that* God is, the covenant adds *so obey Him*.

- **Historical Event vs. Innate Faculty:** Another key difference is the emphasis on a **one-time event** in Islam. The Qur'anic primordial covenant is described as having occurred at a particular “time” (albeit a mythical/pre-temporal time) and place, involving a dialogue between God and souls. This concrete depiction is absent in Plantinga's theory, which does not require any such event. Plantinga's *sensus* is simply part of the human makeup, presumably developing as we mature (like other faculties). Some Muslim thinkers might even subsume Plantinga's *sensus* into the *fiṭra* concept – i.e. the *sensus divinitatis* *is* the *fiṭra* functioning. But classical scholars were content to say an actual **pre-earthly assembly** took place and thereafter each soul carries the imprint. One might ask: *If we all testified to God, why don't we explicitly remember it?* Islamic scholars answered that while we do not recall the event consciously (just as we don't recall our infancy), its effect persists as a **natural intuitive knowledge** deep in the soul. So, Islam's primordial covenant narrative goes beyond Plantinga by providing a **mythopoeic narrative** of *when* and *how* God imbued us with this knowledge. It adds a layer of collective memory (at the level of the soul) that Plantinga's more individualistic epistemology doesn't address.

- **Revelation and “Reminders”:** In Plantinga's framework, special revelation (scriptures, prophetic testimony) is not strictly necessary for basic knowledge of God – though it might provide more specific knowledge about God's character or will. In Islam, *revelation and prophets are crucial as reminders of the fiṭra*. The Ubayy b. Ka'b report explicitly has God say He will send messengers and books “to remind you of this covenant” ²³ . This implies that while innate God-consciousness is real, humans benefit from reminders to *awaken* and direct that consciousness correctly (since it can be obscured by heedlessness). Plantinga too would agree that revelation or arguments can buttress

faith and correct it, but his emphasis is that even someone with no access to scriptures could have a kind of natural knowledge of God. Islam would add that God in His mercy made sure to reinforce the innate knowledge by sending prophets to *nudge* our memory of the primordial deal. This is a nuance: **Plantinga's *sensus divinitatis* operates spontaneously**, whereas **Islam's *fiṭra* often needs prompting** (through life events or prophets) to fully manifest. But again, these are more differences in framing than fundamental disagreement; one could say Plantinga focuses on the *means* (faculty) whereas the Qur'an emphasizes the *origin and accountability* (covenant).

In summary, **Plantinga's account and the Islamic concept of al-mithāq/ḥuqūq strongly complement each other on the notion that belief in God is natural, innate, and discoverable from within**. Each provides a solution to the question of why humans tend toward belief: either because our minds are designed that way, or because our souls remember a pledge to our Creator (or both). The concepts even agree on explaining unbelief as an aberration due to some failure in the person (moral or cognitive). The differences lie in genre and emphasis: Plantinga delivers a *philosophical epistemology of divine knowledge*, whereas the Qur'an delivers a *theological anthropology and moral narrative*. One interesting cross-implication is that a Muslim theologian could happily employ Plantinga's epistemology to explain *how* ḥuqūq yields knowledge (i.e. via a *sensus divinitatis* faculty), and a philosopher could look at the Islamic narrative as a dramatic illustration of the innate knowledge idea that Plantinga is defending on rational grounds. Both approaches reinforce the idea that **knowing God is in a profound sense part of what it means to be human**.

Epilogue: Primordial Faith Across Traditions

Across the philosophical musings of a contemporary Christian thinker and the time-honored teachings of the Qur'an, we find a convergent theme: that the knowledge of God lies *at the very root of our being*. This convergence is remarkable given the different idioms – one speaks of *proper function* and cognitive faculties, the other of *covenants* and pre-existent souls – yet both envision humans as endowed with an original orientation toward the Divine. Such an idea carries rich implications. It suggests that debates about God's existence need not always start from a position of blank skepticism; instead, they can start from a shared human intuition, however suppressed or unarticulated, that there is something beyond the material, a supreme reality to whom we are connected. Plantinga's work vindicates the rationality of this intuition in modern philosophical terms, while the Qur'anic doctrine grounds it in a sacred history of the soul. Each tradition also issues a gentle rebuke: if one finds oneself distant from belief in God, perhaps one has "*forgotten*" something fundamental – be it the voice of one's *fiṭra* or the promptings of one's *sensus divinitatis*.

In literature of Islamic spirituality, the primordial covenant is sometimes alluded to as a "**memory trace**" in the heart, an echo of the day all souls stood before their Lord. Believers are those who respond to that echo with recognition. Similarly, Plantinga's philosophy implies that coming to believe in God is less about acquiring exotic new information than about "**coming to one's senses**" – literally activating a sense one already has. In both views, faith is in a way *coming home*: it is the soul's natural resting state, whereas denial of God is a dislocation. This shared insight fosters a profound respect for faith as something not irrational or naive, but as deeply anchored in our very constitution as human beings ³⁷ ¹⁶. It also engenders a sense of commonality between peoples of different religions – *why is it that virtually every culture worships something divine?* Because, as the Qur'an says, when God spread out the children of Adam, He spoke to all of them, and as Plantinga might add, He crafted their minds to hear His voice.

Yet, acknowledging an innate knowledge of God also raises challenges that both traditions grapple with: the reality of doubt, the diversity of religions, and the need for verification. If a sense of the divine is built-in, why do humans conceive of God so differently? Why do some resist belief so strongly? Here one might find that each tradition's differences can constructively inform the other. Plantinga's emphasis on noetic sin highlights the role of personal and moral factors in unbelief – pride, pain, or injustice that can deaden one's *sensus* – which resonates with the Islamic view of arrogance (*takabbur*) or desires veiling the heart (*ghafla*) as spiritual diseases. The Islamic emphasis on prophetic reminders underscores that the innate sense alone can be insufficient without guidance – a point that invites those in the Reformed Epistemology camp to appreciate the role of communal revelation and religious practice in nourishing the basic belief so it doesn't wither. Thus, the epistemologist and the theologian can learn from one another: innate godliness thrives in a milieu that nurtures it (through scripture, community, moral effort), and is threatened in one that continually suppresses it.

In the end, the idea of *primordial knowledge of God* serves as a bridge between the **philosophy of religion** and **theology proper**. It reminds us that however sophisticated our arguments become, they may be chasing something our ancient ancestors already knew in their hearts. It prompts a reflection that perhaps **the seed of faith is planted in every soul**, and the real journey – regardless of religious tradition – is to let that seed flourish amidst the trials and tribulations of life. The Qur'an 7:172 assures that no soul is born a blank slate in matters of the divine; Plantinga assures that trusting this innate inclination is not intellectual folly. Both assure, in their own way, that belief in God is not a quirk or error in human thinking, but rather the fulfillment of our truest nature. And if that is so, then the quest to know God is less about *discovering a stranger* and more about *remembering an ever-present friend* – the One whom we, on some level, have known all along ¹⁶ ¹ .

Sources:

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- Qur'an 7:172 with classical exegesis by Ibn Kathīr, et al. ¹⁶ ¹⁹ ; Qur'an 30:30 referenced in context ¹⁷ ; Hadith reports on *fiṭra* and the primordial covenant ¹⁸ ¹⁹ .
- Mawdūdī's *Tafhīm al-Qur'ān* commentary on 7:172 explaining the covenant's reality vs. allegory ²⁸ and Ubayy ibn Ka'b's narration ³⁹ .
- Tafsīr al-Jalālayn on 7:172 (trans.) highlighting the role of reason as testimony ²⁶ .
- Yaqeen Institute publication on human nature and the primordial covenant ⁴⁰ ⁴¹ (Perspectives on Human Nature in the Qur'an).

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