

10. Predestination and Free Will (Al-Jabr wa 't-tafwid)

Ash-Shaykh Abu Ja'far, may Allah have mercy upon him, says: "There is neither (complete) compulsion (or constraint) (on human beings), nor (complete) delegation (or freedom), but the matter is midway between the two [extremes] (amrun bayna amrayn)." Then he adduces, to support this definition, a mursal tradition. He was asked to define what was meant by 'an affair midway between the two'.

He said: "For instance, you see a man intent upon a crime and you forbid him to do it, but he does not desist, and you leave him; then he commits the crime. Now, because he did not accept (your advice) and you left him, this does not mean that you are the person who commanded him to commit the crime."

Ash-Shaykh al-Mufid, may Allah have mercy upon him, comments that jabr is compulsion in respect of an act, and constraint by reason of coercion or overpowering; this involves the creation of an act in a living being without his having the power to reject or avoid it. It may convey, also, an action which, although within human capacity, a man might perform under compulsion or out of fear or constraint by reason of coercion.

Nevertheless, it originally conveys the meaning of the performance of an act without having the power to avoid it, as has been demonstrated above. Thus, if the above-mentioned definition of jabr (compulsion) is approved, then it represents precisely the doctrine of the advocates of the belief that actions are created by Allah.

This is because they hold that Allah has created the capacity in human beings, and that it is valid for one single action, and not for both the action and its opposite. And they maintain that Allah has created evil in human beings. So, they are, in fact Predestinarians (Mujabbirah) and uphold predestination unquestioningly.

As for delegation (tafwid)¹, this means the lifting of the restrictions religion imposes on human beings – together with absolute freedom and licence in their actions – and this is the doctrine of the dualists and nihilist (az-Zanadiqah wa ashabu 'l-ibahat)².

(We believe) that the correct doctrine is a middle course between these two extremes. Hence, although Allah has enabled man to act by virtue of the capacity with which He has endowed him, nevertheless, He has imposed with these restrictions, has delineated man's course of action, and has admonished him against abominable acts, through intimidation, and by His promises and threats; by thus enabling them, He does not constrain them to particular actions.

On the other hand, as He forbids many actions to men, and places limitations on them and commands them to do good and admonishes them against evil, (this shows that) He does not delegate the performance of their actions to them completely. This is the distinction between Compulsion and Delegation, as we have made it clear above.

[1.](#) See p.89.

[2.](#) 11 Prof. Nicholson gives the following explanation for the word zaddiq: "Zaddiq is an Aramaic word meaning 'righteous'. Its etymological equivalent in Arabic is siddiq, which has a different meaning, namely 'veracious'. Zaddiq passed into Persian in the form zandik, which was used by the Persians before Islam, and zindiq is the Arabised form of the latter word". See A Literary History of the Arabs, p.375. Also, cf., Prof. Browne's A Literary History of Persia, (vol. 1, pp. 159–60).

This interpretation, however, is not accepted by some scholars like Prof. Massignon, L., see E.I, vo1.4, put out a new and non-orthodox explanation (zand) of the Avesta, and which p. 1228. "Under the Sasanids, originally, this name branded anyone who dared was then applied to Manicheans and Mazdakites in particular". See Brockelman, C., History of the Islamic Peoples, Eng. Transl., p. 113. "In Islam, it denotes", says Prof, Tritton, "a Manichee, any Dualist, a Buddhist Monk and, later on, any free-thinker". See Islam, Belief and Practices, The Glossary, p. 190.

The movement during the second part of the second century of the hijrah represented both a religious and political danger to Islam, which compelled Islam to combatit, politically by practical measures carried out by the government itself, and theologically, in the form of an intellectual revolt against dualist ideas in religion; this was left for the Mu'tazilah who represented – as the late Michelangelo Guidi observed, "The militant wing of the orthodoxy against the dualist heresies". See Gibb, H.A.R., Studies on the Civilization of Islam, article no.4, 'The Social Significance of the Shuubiya', p.67. For a similar opinion, see al-Khayyat, Kitabu 'l-Intisar, the Introduction by the Editor, Nyberg, H.S.

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