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11. The Belief concerning Allah's Intention and Will (Al-Mashiah Wa 'l-Iradah)

Ash-Shaykh Abu Ja'far, may Allah have mercy upon him, says: "Allah wills (sha'a) and intends (arada), and He does not like (to be disobeyed) and He does not approve (of it); it is His will that nothing should take place except that of which He has knowledge, and His intention is the same."

Ash-Shaykh al-Mufid, may Allah have mercy upon him, comments that what has been mentioned by Abu Ja'far, may Allah have mercy upon him, in this respect is not clear and leads to error and confusion, because he relied on the apparent meaning of divergent traditions (ahadith mukhtalifah) and following the transmitters without critical insight.

The fact of the matter is that Allah wills only good acts and intends only those that are seemly (becoming), and He does not will base actions, and does not intend sins. Allah is exalted far above what the liars assert. Allah says:

And Allah wishes no injustice for His servants [40:31],

and He, the Sublime, says:

Allah desires ease for you and desires not hardship for you [2: 185];

and He, the Sublime, says:

Allah desires to make (things) clear to you, and to guide you in the ways of those who were before you [4:26].

He, the Sublime, says:

And Allah desires to turn to you (mercifully), and those who follow their lusts, desire that you should deviate (with great deviation) [ibid.27].

Also, He, the Sublime, says:

Allah desires to make your task light for you, for man is created weak [ibid 28].

Thus, He, the Praised, declares that He desires not hardship for His servants, instead He desires ease for them, and He intends to guide them, and He does not intend to delude them, and wills that their burdens should be light and He does not wish to overburden them.

So, if He wills that they should sin, then He would never have wished that they should be shown the way and that their burden should be made light and their path easy, whereas the Book of Allah bears witness to the opposite of what those in error assert falsely, that Allah is exalted above the assertion of the evildoers.

As for the saying of Allah: Whomsoever Allah desires to guide, He enlarges his breast to Islam;

"and whomsoever He desires to lead astray, He makes his breast narrow and constricted [6: 125]"

on which the Predestinarians are dependent in this matter, then there is no support for the advocates of predestination in this; since the meaning of the verse is that if Allah intends to bestow His grace and favor on man as the reward of his obedience, then He will enlarge his breast to Islam and endow him with His favors, by which he is enabled to continue in obedience.

Thus, hidayah (guidance) signifies here ni'mah (grace). Allah says in the Qur'an, relating the speech of the people of Paradise:

All praise is due to Allah, Who guided us to this [7:43],

which means, 'Praise be to Allah Who favoured us with His guidance and rewarded us for it'.

In the same manner, dalal (error) is equivalent to punishment in the saying of Allah:

Surely the sinners are in error and insanity! [54:47].

Thus Allah called His punishment error and His grace guidance, and this because basically 'error' is equivalent to 'destruction' and 'guidance' to 'salvation'. Allah, the Almighty, relating the speech of the Arab polytheists, says:

What, when we have gone astray in the earth, shall we indeed be (again) in a new creation? [32: 10],

which means, 'when we have been destroyed'.

Thus the meaning of the verse, 'If Allah wills to guide' and 'If Allah wills to lead him astray', is as

demonstrated above; as, also, the interpretation of the saying of Allah, 'makes his breast narrow and constricted', is that He will withhold His succor from him as punishment for his rebelliousness and deprive him of the favours He bestowed upon him in retribution for his evil doing.

Hence, the enlarging of the breast is the reward for obedience shown by men which itself came only by the succour of Allah, (sharhu 's-sadr: thawabu 't- ta'ah bi 't-tawfiq), whereas the narrowing. of the breast is the punishment of rebelliousness, which in itself results from the withholding of (Divine) succour, (tadyiqu 's-sadr: 'iqabu 'l- ma'siyah biman'i 't-tawfiq). Thus, there is no support in the verse given above for the opponents (i.e., opponents of free will), who allege that Allah, Almighty, turns men away from faith, and prevents them from accepting Islam, and that it is His intention they should not believe and His will that they should err.

As for Allah's saying:

And if thy Lord had willed, whoever is in the earth would have believed, all of them, all together [10:99],

it was only to stress His Omnipotence and that He is able if He wills – to constrain them to believe by coercion and compulsion, but it is His will that they should believe freely and by choice.

The rest of the verse makes this (i.e., what we have said) plain: Will you then constrain men to become believers? [ibid]. He is able to constrain them to believe if He wills, but He does not, even though it would be an easy task for Him if He willed. All the other verses which they adduce in support of their opinion are to be interpreted in the same way.

As for the Predestinarians (Mujabbirah) they avoid asserting that Allah wills that He should be disobeyed or denied and that His saints should be killed and His friends abused, by saying that everything should be in accordance with His fore-knowledge, and He intends that disobedience to Him should be a sin and absolutely forbidden.

In fact, they commit the very error which they eschewed and implicate themselves in what they abhor, because it was in the eternal knowledge of Allah that bad is bad, and what is in the eternal, universal knowledge of Allah should be, then what is the validity of their fleeing from a thing to its double, and taking refuge from one meaning in another that exactly reproduces it.

How can they deal like this with intelligent people? Is their assumption not like the assertion of one who says: "I do not abuse Zayd but I abuse Abu 'Amr, and they are one and the same." And, like the self-contradictory speech of the Jews who said: "We do not deny Muhammad (peace be upon him and his progeny) but we deny Ahmad." This is but foolishness and ignorance on their part, and futile and weak effort on the part of those who rely on it.

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