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12. The belief concerning destiny and decree (Al-Qada' wa 'L-Qadar)

ash-Shaykh Abu Ja'far says¹, concerning the belief in Destiny and Decree, "Discussion of qadar is forbidden", and he narrates in support of this proposition an unauthentic tradition.

Ash-Shaykh Abu 'Abdillah al-Mufid, may Allah have mercy upon him, comments that Abu Ja'far relied in this on a shadhdh hadith – which can be interpreted in many reasonable ways. well-known to learned men, even if they established it as sound and authenticated.

Thus his proposition does not constitute a definitive description. It would have been better had he not indulged himself by discussing the matter without fully comprehending its meaning. Qada' is a well-defined term in Arabic usage, as may be proved by the evidence of the Qur'an. Qada' has four meanings:-

1. Khalq – 'creation', as is proved by the saying of Allah, the Exalted:

Then He ascended Himself to heaven . . . So He created them (qadahunna) seven heavens in two days" [41: 11-12],

that is, He created them – seven heavens – in two days.

2. Amr – 'command', as is proved by the saying of Allah, the Exalted:

And thy Lord has decreed (qada') that you worship none but Him [17:23],

that is, thy Lord has commanded.

3. I'lam – 'informing', as is proved by the saying of Allah, the Exalted:

And we made known (qadayna) to the Children of Israel [ibid.:4],

that is We have informed them and told them about what is going to happen before it comes into existence.

4. al-Fasl fi 'l-hukm – 'arbitration', as is proved by the saying of Allah, the Exalted:

Allah judges (yaqdi) with justice [40:20]

,that is, He will arbitrate between the two litigants. Also His saying:

And judgment (qudiya) shall be given between them with justice [39:75],

that is a judgment and arbitration will be given between them according to the right.

It has been said that qada' has a fifth meaning which signifies the completion of an affair (al-faragh mina 'l-amr), and called in evidence of this is the saying of Allah, reporting the speech of Joseph:

The matter on which you ask My opinion is decreed (qudiya) [12:41],

that is, has been accomplished. However, this fifth meaning is synonymous with that of creation.

Now, if the above-mentioned meanings of qada' are approved as the only correct ones, then the assumption of the Predestinarians that Allah ordained sin for mankind is invalid, because there are only four alternatives,

(i) either they mean that Allah has created sin in His creation; in that case they would have to say He created sin in His creation, and not that He had imposed sin upon them, since creation (by the rules of grammar) takes place in them (al-khalq fihim) and not upon them (la 'alayhim). Even if this were not so, yet the Almighty

Allah declared him a liar who alleges that Allah has created evil as He says:

Everything that He created He made well [32:7],

so He disclaims baseness in His creation and postulates its goodness, and disobedience is unanimously held to be base.

(ii) Nor can they allege that 'He decreed sin' has the meaning of 'He commanded it', since Allah declared him a liar who upholds this, and the Almighty says:

Verily Allah does not command indecency, do you say against Allah that which you do not know? [7:28].

(iii) It is equally absurd to conceive of qada' in the sense that Allah had informed men about it, since men do not know whether they will obey or rebel in the future, and they have no detailed knowledge of what their conduct will be in the future.

(iv) Similarly, it is absurd to denote by qada bi 'dh–dhunub that Allah has decreed sin for His creatures, since His decisions are all fair and right, and sin is from men alone; also this statement is unanimously admitted absurd.

Thus, it is self–evident that the assumption of those who attribute the creation of sin to Allah is vain. The argument given above, concerning qada' and qadar makes it easy to perceive the correct doctrine on this question.

We must admit that Allah holds – in some measure – destiny and decree over His creation and over their actions. It is evident that we must understand by this, that qada', in the context of their good actions, is that He commands them, and, in the context of their base actions, that He forbids them, and, in the context of men themselves, that He created them, and, in the context of what (they acquire by His deed), that He brought it into existence for them.

Similarly, by qudrah, in respect of the actions of the Almighty, its meaning should be understood as that He ordained it rightly and fittingly; and in respect of the actions of men that He commands good and forbids evil; and that He will reward or punish them. This is so because it is self–evident that whatever Allah has decreed is for the good of mankind and well–done; and far from frivolous. Thus, if Destiny and Decree, in speaking of the action of Allah, are interpreted as has been illustrated, then their obscurity will vanish and (what they mean) can be demonstrated, and the truth will become apparent to the intelligent and discussing them will not lead to corrupt doctrine and to deviation.

1. N reads: fima dhakara Abu Ja'far fi 'l–qada' wa 'l–qadr, qala rahimahu allah

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