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28. Concerning Paradise and Hell (Al –Jannah wa 'N-nar)

*Abu Ja'far says: "Our belief concerning Paradise is that it is the abode of eternity (daru 'l-baqa')*1.ash—Shaykh al-Mufid, may Allah have mercy upon him, comments: Paradise is the abode of grace where weariness shall not touch its inmates, nor fatigue distress them; Allah, the Exalted, set it up for those who knew and worshipped Him. Its grace is perpetual and shall never cease. The dwellers therein are of different ranks.

Those who were perfectly devoted to Allah, the Almighty, they will enter immune from the punishment of Allah. And those who mingled good actions with base ones, and put off repentance continually, death shall cut them off before they achieve it, and then certain punishment will overtake them in their lifetime or after, or in this life alone; then they will dwell in Paradise after being forgiven by Allah or punished.

And among them there would be those who will receive the grace of Allah by no previous action of their own in [this] world, these are the immortal youths (al-wildanu 'l- mukhalladun) whom Allah, the Sublime, appointed for the service of the dwellers in Paradise to requite them for their good actions. They suffer neither hardship nor trouble in their service, since they are designed by nature to perform the demands of the believers.

The reward of the dwellers in Paradise is to enjoy the delights of eating, drinking, pleasant scenes and marriage, and every pleasure of the senses to which their natural inclination leads them with which they will achieve their desires. Hence, in Paradise there is no human being who enjoys pleasure without eating, drinking, or gratification of the senses. The claim of him who alleges that in Paradise there are some who find pleasure in exalting and glorifying Allah without enjoying food or drink is, in fact, foreign to the religion of Islam.

It is an imitation of the Christians who allege that those who obey God in their lifetime will be transformed into angels who neither drink, nor eat, nor are married. Allah, the Exalted, declares this assertion a lie in His Book, when He promises to those who do good eating, drinking, and marriage, and the Almighty says:

Its produce is eternal, and its shade. That is, the requital of the godfearing [13:35].

And He, the Almighty, says:

Therein are rivers of sweet water [47:15].

And He, the Exalted, says:

Houris, cloistered in pavilions [55:72].

And He, the Sublime, says:

And wide-eyed houris [56:22].

And He, the Exalted, says:

And We shall espouse them to wide-eyed houris [44:54].

And He, the Almighty, says:

And with the maidens of equal age restraining their glances [38:52].

And He, the Sublime, says:

Verily, the inmates of Paradise shall on that day be busy rejoicing, they and their spouses [36:55-56].

And He, the Exalted says: . . .

that they shall be given in perfect semblance; and there for them shall be spouses purified; therein they shall dwell forever [2:25].

How, then, do some hold it permissible to maintain that in Paradise there is a group of human beings who do not eat or drink, and that they take delight in what is an affliction to (the rest of) humanity, whereas the Book of Allah disclaims this; and the consensus of opinion is against it, whether it is in imitation of some whom it is relying on spurious traditions .not permissible to imitate, or As for Hell, it is the abode of those who have not known Allah, the Exalted.

Some of those who acknowledge Allah may enter Hell because of their disobedience; but they will not abide therein eternally; rather, they will come out and enter perpetual grace, since none but the polytheists will reside therein forever. Allah, the Sublime, says:

Now I have warned you of a Fire that flames, to which none but the most wretched shall be exposed [92: 14–15].

Here, 'shall be exposed to the Fire' means 'the eternal abiding therein'. Allah, the Sublime says:

Surely those who disbelieve Our signs, We shall certainly expose them to a Fire [4:56].

And He, the Almighty, says:

Verily, those who disbelieve even if they had what is in the earth, all of it with it, that they might ransom themselves with it from the punishment of the Day of Resurrection, it shall not be accepted from them . . . [5:36].

Thus, every verse which implies the meaning of eternal abiding in the Fire, concerns only the polytheists rather than those who acknowledge the existence of Allah, the Almighty, according to the proofs of reason, and as supported (by the use) of the Book and the accepted traditions and the consensus of opinion, and the precedent current before the innovators amongst the followers of the doctrine of "threat"2.

- 1. * * Not found in N.
- 2. This is one of the five principal tenets of the Mu'tazilah. See al-Khayyat,al Intisar, p. 126; al-Ash'ari, op. cit., vol.l, p.278.

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