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Says the Shaykh Abu Ja'far: Our belief concerning this is the reply of (Imam Ja'far) as–Sadiq to Zurara when he was asked: What do you say, O my Leader, concerning destiny (*qada*) and decree (*qadar*)? He said: I say that when Allah will collect the slaves on the Day of Resurrection, He will ask them concerning what He had enjoined on them, and will not question them concerning what He had destined for them.2

Now discussion about (Allah's) decree is prohibited; for the Prince of Believers, when questioned about the decree replied: It is a deep sea, do not enter into it. Then the man asked him a second time and he replied: It is a dark path, do not traverse it. Then he asked him a third time and he said: It is a secret of Allah, do not speak about it.3

And the Prince of Believers, on whom be peace, said concerning the decree (*qadar*): Lo! Verily, *qadar* is a secret of Allah's secrets, and a veil of Allah's veils, and a guarded thing4 within Allah's guarded thing, being raised within the veil of Allah5 concealed from Allah's creatures and sealed by the seal of Allah.

Among the things within the knowledge of Allah, it has priority (over all others). Allah has exonerated His slave from its knowledge, and elevated it beyond the ambit of their perception and reason. They cannot attain to (a knowledge) of its divine nature, or its eternal power, or its refulgent greatness, or the glory of its oneness; for this (knowledge of *qadar*) is a raging sea, exclusive to Allah, the Mighty and Glorious.6

Its depth is the distance between the heavens and the earth; its width, the distance between the east and the west; it is dark as a starless night; full of snakes and fishes, which at one time come up to the surface, and at others go down into the bottom of the sea.

At the bottom (of that sea) there is a shining sun. It does not befit any one to seek knowledge of it (the sun), except the One, the Matchless, the Everlasting. He who tries to seek knowledge of it, contravenes Allah in His command, and disputes His sovereignty, and probes into His secret and His veil. 7 And (thereby)

"He shall incur the wrath of Allah: Hell shall be his abode and wretched the journey thither" (Qur'an 8:16).

And it is related that once upon a time the Prince of Believers, on whom be peace, avoided a slanting wall and went to the other side. He was asked: O Prince of Believers, do you run from the destiny (*qada*) of Allah? He replied: I run from the destiny (*qada*) of Allah to His decree (*qadar*).

And (Imam Ja'far) as–Sadiq was asked concerning charms (*ruqya*, plural *ruqan*), whether to some extent they avert Allah's decree (*qadar*). And he replied: They form part of (Allah's) decree.9

- 1. For gada' see EI, ii. 603 and for qadar, EI, ii. 605 (both by Macdonald). Also R. Levy, Sociology of Islam, ii. 45 –47.
- 2. Tawhid, 292. Sh. Mufid does not accept this as a properly authenticated report, Tas. (Mur. iii. 60–61). He explains that Ibn Bibawayhi has cited "rare" traditions. Qada' has four meanings أحدهما الخلق و الثاني الأمر و الثالث الاعلام و الرابع القضاء (p.60), and then he cited verses of the Qur'an in support. A further explanation will be found in Mur. iii. 283.
- <u>3.</u> Tawhid, 292. Adopting the reading of N تتكلف D has تتكلف which would mean "Do not trouble yourself about it, or do not attempt to unravel its mystery". Sh. Mufid explains that this prohibition has two applications: it applies to people who after discussion may lose the true faith and be confused; and it applies also to people who question the wisdom of Allah's creation, and its causes and effects, Tas. (Mur. iii. 282 283).
- سر من اسرار الله و ستر من استار الله.. الغ D has سرّ من سرّ الله و ستر من ستر الله و حرز من حرز الله 4. So N
- 5. Meaning that within the things which are God's secrets, it has an exalted rank.
- 6. The correct reading appears to be that of D: لا ينالونه بحقيقته الرَّبانيّة و لا بقدرته الصمدانية
- is correct قضی D, nor N یضیء neither تضیء
- 8. Tawhid, 306.
- 9. Tawhid, 294–295. It is significant that the whole of this chapter is based upon the fundamental dogma that the human mind is utterly incapable of comprehending the secrets of gada' and qadar. (There is also a clear distinction between qadr and qadar يفكر القدر الله من القضاء و بالفتح ما صدر مقدوراً عن فعل القادر MB, 31020). A useful discussion is by Levy (op. cit.); whether originally there was a distinction is extremely doubtful. Qada' appears to be "predestination" strictly, that is, God's will that a certain thing should happen; and qadar is the actual happening of the event in consequence of such predestination. To take an analogy from the law, something like judgement and execution. Some translators like Ivanow define it as chance: "Perhaps the best meaning would be -chance" FC, 70. This is diffuclt to justify. A full discussion of Sh. Saduq's views will be found in Tawhid, 291 sqq. Qadha 'and its ten meanings are discussed in Tawhid, 295 –297, but there is no clear distinction. See also MB, 72 for gada'; and 309 –311 for qadar (and qadr). The eight meanings of qadar are discussed in FC, no. 96. After a full discussion of the problem one fully appreciates the advice of Majlisi (l'tiqadat, 81,bot.): و ليس لك التفكر في شبه القضاء و القدر و الخوض فيها، فإن الأثمة قد نهونا عن التفكر فيها فإن فيها كثيرٌ من العلماء، فإياك و التفكر والنوك, Sh. Mufid also explains how God commands good acts and prohibits bad actions in terms of the doctrine of predestination, Tas. (Mur. iii.60–61).

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