

Regarding the Source of Creation (mabda')

Says the Shaykh Abu Ja'far: The Jews believe that Allah, Who is Blessed and Exalted above all, has (after creating the universe) relinquished the affair (of creation). But we say that He, Who is Exalted above all,

“Every day He exerciseth (universal) power” (Qur'an 55:29).

One particular affair does not distract Him from another. [1](#) He quickens and kills, He creates and sustains and acts as He wills. We say:

“Allah effaceth what He will, and establisheth (what He will), and with Him is the Mother of the Book (ummul-kitab)[2](#) “ (Qur'an 13:39).

He destroys only that which exists and he creates only that which does not exist. This is not the (sort of) creation in which the Jews and those that follow them believe. The Jews ascribe to us this doctrine of creation^{[3](#)} and the different schismatics who oppose us follow them in this matter. Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq said: Allah never sent a prophet (*nabi*) until He obtained from him the covenant for restricting his worship to Him alone, and for rejecting (His) equals (*nidd*, plural *andad*).

And He, the most Exalted, retards what He wills, and advances what He wills.^{[4](#)} An instance of this is that He abrogated (previous) faiths and commands by the faith of our Prophet and his ordinances. Another instance (of *bad'*) is the supersession of the Books by the Qur'an.

And as-Sadiq says: He who asserts that Allah the Mighty and Glorious does something new which He did not know before – from him I dissociate myself. And he said: He who asserts that Allah, after doing something, repents concerning it – then he, in our opinion, is a denier of Allah the Great.^{[5](#)}

And as for the saying of Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq, peace be on him, that nothing appeared to Allah concerning any matter, as it appeared to Him as regards my son Isma'il – verily he (Imam Ja'far) says: Nothing manifested (itself) from (the will of) Allah, Glory be to Him, concerning any affair, as that which appeared regarding my son Isma'il, when He cut him off by death before me^{[6](#)}, so that it may be known that he was not the Imam after me.^{[7](#)}

[1.](#) Tawhid, 271.

[2.](#) Or "source of ordinance" (Pickthall); or of "revelation" (Palmer). By أم الكتاب MB understands: يعني في أصل الكتاب، يريد اللوح المحفوظ.

[3.](#) N فنمينا (نمانا؟) اليهود لعنهم الله في ذلك الى القول بالبداء الخ; D فنسبنا في ذلك الى القول بالبداء الخ.

[4.](#) Tawhid, 269.

[5.](#) Tawhid, 271.

[6.](#) N اذا اختارمه الخ; D اذا اختاره.

[7.](#) Tawhid, 268–272; MC, 75 sqq., 188 sqq., 193, 210, 228 sqq.; BHA, nos.66–82;FC, nos.19–22; Affifi, 10 sqq., 28–29.

Creation its cause, result and true meaning, has always been a moot point with the mutakallimun. The whole position is summarized in a masterly fashion by Wensickk (MC, particularly, 75–78,228–229). The logical Aristotelian view, that if God was creating the world from eternity, the world itself is eternal, was denied by the formula "Allah was Creator before He created". MC, 193; Fiqh Akabar II, art. 16.

The Ithna `Ashari view is clear, that God is continually creating and nothing else can claim eternity. The Isma'ili view differs widely. See FC, nos. 19–22. Ibda', creatio ex nihilo, is something quite different from khalq or bad'. The creator is the intermediary, not the Unknownable Absolute, mubdi`. This intermediary is the `aqlu 'l-awwal. Ibnu 'l-`Arabi derived much from the Ismi'ili concepts, Affifi, 186.

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