

(١٦٣) وَإِلَهُكُمْ إِلَهٌ وَاحِدٌ ۖ لَّا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ

(١٦٤) إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ وَالْفُلْكِ الَّتِي تَجْرِي فِي الْبَحْرِ بِمَا يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ وَمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مِنْ مَّاءٍ فَأَحْيَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا وَبَثَّ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ دَابَّةٍ وَتَصْرِيفِ الرِّيْحِ وَالسَّحَابِ الْمُسَخَّرِ بَيْنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَايَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ

(١٦٥) وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَتَّخِذُ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ أَنْدَادًا يُحِبُّونَهُمْ كَحُبِّ اللَّهِ وَالَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا أَشَدُّ حُبًّا لِلَّهِ وَلَوْ يَرَى الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا إِذْ يَرَوْنَ الْعَذَابَ أَنَّ الْقُوَّةَ لِلَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعَذَابِ

(١٦٦) إِذْ تَبَرَّأَ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوا مِنَ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوا وَرَأَوْا الْعَذَابَ وَتَقَطَّعَتْ بِهِمُ الْأَسْبَابُ

(١٦٧) قَالَ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوا لَوْ أَنَّا كُنَّا كُرَّةً ۖ فَنَتَّبِعُ اللَّهُ فَأَنَّا كُنَّا مِنْهَا ۚ كَذَٰلِكَ يُرِيهِمُ اللَّهُ أَعْمَالَهُمْ حَسَرَاتٍ عَلَيْهِمْ ۚ وَمَا هُمْ بِخَارِجِينَ مِنَ النَّارِ

Most surely in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of the night and the day, and the ships that run in the sea with that which profits men, and the water that Allah sends down from the cloud, then gives life with it to the earth after its death and spreads in it all (kinds of) animals, and the changing of the winds, and the clouds made subservient between the heaven and the earth, there are signs for a people who understand (164).

And there are some among men who take for them-selves equals to God besides Allah, whom they love as the love for Allah, and those who believe are stronger in (their) love for Allah, and O that those who are unjust could see, when they see the chastisement, that the power is wholly Allah's and that Allah is severe in chastisement (165).

When those who were followed shall renounce those who followed (them), and they see the chastisement and their ties are cut asunder (166).

And those who followed shall say: "O were there for us a return, then we would renounce them as they have renounced us." Thus will Allah show them their deeds to be intense regret to them, and they shall not come forth from the fire (167).

Commentary

These verses are connected together in one context, with a single theme. They remind the audience about the belief of mono-theism offering proofs to support it, and describe polytheism and its ultimate result.

Qur'an: *And your God is one God:* We have explained the meaning of *al-ilah* (الإله = god) in the Commentary of the first verse of the first chapter, the Opening. Oneness is a self-evident idea, which needs no explanation.

A thing is called one in view of one of its attributes, for example, one man, one scholar or one poet. These words show that the related attribute is indivisible, and not subject to plurality.

For example, the manhood of one man, Zayd, is not shared between him and someone else. It is in contrast with manhood of two men – Zayd and 'Amr, for exam-ple – which is shared by the two, and is therefore numerous.

Thus Zayd, in context of his attribute of manhood, is one and indivisible and not subject to plurality. But when he is looked at in this very context combined with his other attributes – like his knowledge, power, life, etc. – then he is not one; he is a multiple in reality.

Allah is One, in view of His attribute, like His divinity, which is not shared by anyone else. He is one in His divinity as well as in His knowledge, power and life. He has knowledge, unlike other knowledges, and power and life unlike others' powers and lives.

Also, He is one because His attributes are not multiple, they are not separate from one another except in their verbal meanings; His knowledge, His power and His life, all is one thing, all is His very person; none of them is separate from the other.

Allah knows by His power, and has power by His life, and is alive by His know-ledge. He is not like other things where attributes are multiple and numerous not only in meanings but in reality also.

Sometimes a thing possesses the characteristic of oneness in its personality, that is, by its very nature and essence, it cannot accept multiplication or division in its self; it cannot be divided into various parts or into its person and name etc.

This oneness is called oneness of person, and it is referred to with the word *al-ahad* (الأحد) = one); this word is never used except as a first construct of a genitive construction or in a negative, prohibitive or similar sentences, in the meaning of no one, any one, etc. For example, we say: No one came to me.

This sentence negates the personality itself, irrespective of its oneness or plurality, because this oneness is related to its nature and essence, and not to its attribute. This connotation will be lost if we were to say, one man did not come to me. This sentence does not imply that two or more men did not come; it is because “oneness” in this sentence is an attribute of the person, not of his person.

The reader should keep in mind this short explanation until we write about it in detail. Allah willing, under the verse:

Say: “He, Allah, is One.” (112:1)

The words, “And your God is one God,” imply that divinity, godhead, is exclusively reserved for Allah, and that His oneness in divinity is such as becomes His sublime status.

The word *al-wahid* (الواحد) = the one), as understood by the audience of the Qur'an, gives the idea of oneness, of a general type. That meaning may be applied to various kinds of oneness. But only a few of those connotations may be applied for Allah.

The word “one”, may show oneness of number, of species, or of genes, etc. And the people were bound to take it in the meaning best suited to their beliefs and ideas. That is why the Qur'an did not say: And Allah is one God. Because this sentence does not establish monotheism; even the polytheists say that He is one God, in the same way as each of their deities is one god.

Nor would have the sentence, And your God is one, established monotheism. Because it could be imagined that He is one in the species – of divinity. People say, when they enumerate the species of animals: Horse is one; mule is one – although horse and mule are manifold in number.

That is why the Qur'an said: “And your God is one God.” “One God” (in contrast to two or more gods) is made predicate of “Your God”. In this form the sentence clearly establishes the belief of monotheism, by

restricting the godhead to one of the gods in which they believed.

Qur'an: *there is no god but He*: It further emphasizes the clear declaration of the preceding sentence about monotheism and negates every possible misinterpretation or superstition.

The negative particle "la" (لا) = no) is used here to negate the genus; *ilah* (إله = god) denotes here real and actual God. The sentence has an implied predicate "existent", and the meaning will be as follows: There is no real and actual god existing "but He".

The pronoun "He", used in place of the proper name, Allah, is in nominative, not subjunctive case. Therefore, the word "but" is not used here as particle of exception; rather it is an adjective in the sense of "other than". The complete sentence, thus, means: There is no real god, other than Allah, existing.

The sentence therefore aims at repudiation of gods, other than Allah – the deities which had no real existence outside the imagination of their worshippers. It does not aim at refuting other deities and proving the existence of Allah, as many scholars have thought. Our explanation is supported by the fact that the sentence needs only a negative mode, and not a negative followed by affirmative.

Only repudiation of other imaginary deities is enough to confirm the Oneness of Allah in His godhead. More-over, the Qur'an treats the existence of Allah as a self-evident truth which needs no proof or argument. The Qur'an only cares to affirm and prove His attributes; for example, it only proves that Allah is One; that He is the Creator, the Knower, the Powerful and so on.

Question: You say that the sentence has an implied predicate existent (or some other word of the same meaning). If so, then it would only negate the actual existence of other deities – but not the "possibility" of their existence.

Reply:

1. It is meaningless to suppose that there could be a "possible" or transient being (having equal relation with existence and non-existence), which would be the ultimate cause of all the existing things and their affairs.
2. We could change the predicate to "true" or "actual"; then the meaning would be: There is no god in reality other than He.

Qur'an: *the Beneficent, the Merciful*: We have explained its meaning in the exegesis of the first verse of the first Chapter, the Opening. With these two names, the meaning of Allah's Lordship becomes complete. From Him emanates every general bounty – pursuant to His Beneficence – and every special favour, in the way of guidance and the next world's bliss – pursuant to His Mercy.

Qur'an: *Most surely in the creation of the heavens and the earth...*: As mentioned in the beginning, the verse aims at proving what the preceding verse has established: "And your God is one God: there is

no god but He; He is the Beneficent, the Merciful.”

The verse under discussion may be analyzed as follows: There is a god for each of these phenomena; there is only one God for all of them; and that one God is your God too; He is the Beneficent who bestows general bounties; and the Merciful, who leads to the ultimate happiness – the blessings of the next world.

These are the established facts; and in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of the night and the day, and all the phenomena mentioned in this verse, there are signs to prove these facts for a people who understand.

The verse offers arguments to prove that there is a god, and He is one – the God of this magnificent universe is One, and He Himself is the God of man. It is not the import of this verse to prove the existence of the God of man, or His oneness.

Otherwise, all the phenomena mentioned in it would have all together constituted only one sign – by showing that the management of all is inter-related and forms a single system. If so, then the preceding verse should have been restyled in this way: And your God is one, there is no god but He. The proofs in short run are as follows:

First Proof: These heavens, the canopy high above us with all these awe-inspiring luminous stars, constellations and galaxies shining therein; this earth, our shelter and refuge, with all its wonderful natural systems; all these regular changes and alter-nations occurring in this world – the alternation of the day and the night, the running ships and boats, the pouring rains, the changing winds, the suspended clouds – all these things need by their very nature, a Creator. There is, therefore, a Creator God for all of them.

Second Proof: Look at these heavenly bodies, varying in mass from the minutest to the largest. There is one so small that the scientists have found its volume to be equal to: 0.000000000 0000000000000033 cubic cm.; while there are others so huge as to be equal to millions of our earth – which in itself has a diameter of about 9,000 miles.

They have found the distance between some celestial bodies to be 3,000,000 light years. A light year is approximately 365 x 24 x 60 x 60 x 300,000 kilometres.¹

Ponder on these figures which boggle the mind and stupefy the brain. Then decide, as you wish to decide, about this unique and wonderful system. Keep in mind that each of these untold billions of the suns and planets act on, and react to,. the others, no matter where and how distant they are from each other.

This goes on by the law of gravity, which permeates the whole universe, and through light and heat. In this way, the established system continues without any impediment.

And it is an all-pervasive never stopping system, run according to an established law. Even the theory of relativity (which says that the directions of movements in the physical world are subject to deviations) affirms that that deviation itself is governed by another inviolable law.

This movement, this general rotation, appears in every part of the universe in a uniform way; look for example at the movement of the sun with its planets and satellites.

Now look nearer at hand at our own earth, with its own moon and various systems (the day and the night, the winds, the clouds and the rains). Reduce your circle of vision once more, to ponder on earthly matters and creatures – minerals, vegetables, animals and various other things.

Find out about countless species one after another; then go on reducing the circle until you come to the elements, then to the atoms; then the particles of the atoms; finally you shall come to what is today the last stage of the scientific discovery, that is, the electron and the proton.

Even there you will find a miniature solar system at work; a nucleus around which these smallest particles revolve, exactly like the movement of the planets around their suns, and the endless journey of the suns (with their families) towards an unknown destination.

Stop at any stage in this scientific journey and you will find an amazing system – a system whose wonders will never cease and whose marvels will never stop. There is no exception in its flow, not even one; nor is there any question of chance in its intricately-woven design, not even a rare one. Man cannot reach its shore, nor does he fully comprehend all the signs on this path.

Proceed from the smallest to the largest heavenly body. You will find it a single universe with one and unified system and inter-related arrangement. Look through the most powerful far-reaching telescope and use the most advanced observatory, you will find the same law governing all celestial bodies.

Now, reverse your journey, until you reach again to the smallest unit. Break it down to its parts, reaching to molecule. You will find in it a miniature universe, with the same design and the same inter-related arrangement – although the two vastly differ in their natures and identities.

In short, the universe is one, and its arrangement and management inter-related; all its parts – no matter how diverse and multiple they may be – are managed under a single system;

and the faces are humbled before the Living, the Self-subsistent God (20:111).

Therefore, the God of the universe, is one; He alone created and He alone manages it.

Third Proof: Man is an earthly creature. He lives on the earth and after his death returns to it. His existence and life needs nothing more than the above-mentioned system that governs the whole universe – a unified and inter-related system.

The heavenly bodies with the light and heat they generate, the earth with its alternated days and nights, the winds, the clouds and the rains, the beneficial goods it produces and which are transported from region to region – these are the things man requires for his physical needs, for his existence and continuation of life.

And Allah en-compasses them on every side (85:20).

It proves that the God who created the universe and manages its affairs is the same God who also created man and manages his affairs. God of the universe is the God of man.

Again, it is God who bestows on every thing what it needs for happiness of this world and for bliss of the next (if he is qualified for the bliss of the next life) – because the next world is the ultimate destination of this abode. How can anyone man-age the end of any affair other than he who manages the affair itself?

This is the proof given by the two names, ***The Beneficent, the Merciful***. And in this way is perfected the rational argument offered by this verse for the preceding one. This view is strengthened by the fact that this verse begins with the particle *inna* (إِنَّ) = surely) which is also used for offering arguments. And Allah knows better.

In short, the words, “Most surely in the creation of the heavens and the earth”, point to the heavens with all their luminary bodies, and the earth with all the wonderful creations and astounding products it contains; the forms which give each species its name, the matter which constitutes its body; their transformation from one form to the other, their recurring additions and subtractions, their joining together and breaking apart. As Allah says:

Do they not see that We come into the land curtailing it of its sides? (13:41);

Do not those who disbelieve see that the heavens and the earth were closed up, so We have opened them: and We have made of water every thing living.. ? (21:30)

Qur'an: and the alternation of the night and the day: It refers to the changes in durations of the nights and the days which are caused by a combination of two factors:

First is the daily rotation of the earth on its axis. This always keeps a little more than half of the earth's sphere facing towards the sun, which sends light and heat to the earth's surface – and that is called the day. The opposite side of the sphere is dark, throwing a conical shade in the space – and it is the night. The day and the night are continuously rotating on the face of the earth.

The second factor is the revolution of the earth on its orbit around the sun. The earth's axis does not form a right angle with the orbit; it has a tilt (of $23\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$ [*tr.*]); and because of that tilt the earth's north-south position *vis-à-vis* the sun changes at different times of the year; when the northern hemisphere is inclined to the sun, it is summer in the north and winter in the south; when the southern hemisphere is inclined to the sun, the north experiences winter and the south, summer.

Also, it is because of this tilt that the equator and the North and the South Poles always have days and nights of equal length: The two Poles have only one day and one night in a year – each night and each day being six months long.

When it is day on the North Pole, the South Pole has its night, and vice versa. As for the equator, it has about 365 days and 365 nights in a solar year – all of equal length. As for the other regions, the days and the nights differ – in number as well as in length, depending on their distance from the equator and the two Poles. Full description of this phenomenon may be found in the sciences concerned.

It is because of this difference that the sun's life-giving light and heat reach various regions of the earth with varying intensity. This in its turn creates diversity in various factors governing the earth and its environment. And man profits from that diversity in numerous ways.

Qur'an: *And the ships that run in the sea with that which profits men:* *al-Fulk* (الْفُلْكَ) is boat, ship; it is used for singular and plural both. *al-Fulk* and *al-fulkah* (الْفُلْكَاتُ) have the same meaning; as *at-tamr* and *at-tamrah* (التَّمْرُ، التَّمْرَةُ) = date) are synonymous.

“that which profits men”, refers to various types of cargoes and food items which are transported by ship from coast to coast, from region to region.

The verse counts the ships (which are made by man) side by side with those things and natural phenomena which are beyond human power, like the heavens, the earth and the alternation of the day and the night. It shows that ultimately the ships too, like those natural phenomena, are the handiwork of Allah.

On deep consideration, when we ascribe a work to a man, it has no more significance than ascribing it to a natural cause. Of course, man has a free will and power. But he is not a sufficient or total cause; nor does that freedom make him independent of Allah.

He is as much in need of Allah's will and permission as any other natural cause. A natural cause acts on, and reacts with, a matter and through a process of combination and break up gives it a form – let us say, turns it into a rock.

A man cuts, breaks up and joins some matters giving them a form – let us say, turn them into a boat. Is there any difference between the two makers? Both ultimately draw their strength and ability from Divine creation and invention; nothing is independent of Allah either in its person or in its activities.

Boat too, like all physical creations, depends on Allah in its existence, as well as in management of its affairs. Allah has pointed to this fact in the verse, where Ibrahim (a.s.) is quoted as telling his people about the idols which they worshipped as god:

And Allah has created you and what you make (37:96).

Admittedly, an idol is but a thing made by man, and Ibrahim (a.s.) ascribes its making to Allah. The same applies to the boats and ships.

Also, Allah says:

And His are the ships reared aloft in the sea like mountains (55:24).

According to this verse, the ships belong to Allah. Again, He says:

and He has made the ships subservient to you, that they might run their course in the sea by His command... (14:32).

This verse declares that also the ships' affairs is in Allah's hands.

Can Man-made Things be Attributed to Allah

How heedless are those who think that the things made and manufactured by man are exclusively his creation and can-not be attributed to Allah at all – just because they are made by man's will and choice!

First, in this group are the materialists who do not believe in a Creator. They say: The theists believed in a Creator because they found in the nature many things and happenings whose material cause they did not know. As they knew that nothing could happen without a cause, they had to admit that there was a cause for such things and happenings, which was not known to them yet.

In this way they came to believe that there was, for those things of unknown cause, a cause whose reality was hidden from them and which was beyond the natural world – and that cause was God.

According to the materialists, the belief in the existence of a Creator was a hypothesis which emanated from the ignorance of the primitive man: that man was surrounded by so many phenomena of unknown causes; for example, atmospheric changes and many happenings on the earth.

Likewise, there were many psychological factors (whose natural causes are unknown to the science even today). And this resulted in the belief in a super-natural Creator.

They say: Now the sciences have succeeded in unravelling many mysteries of natural phenomena, and in identifying their natural causes. Thus, one of the two pillars of the above-mentioned hypothesis has been pulled down – that is, the need of some natural phenomena for a super-natural cause. Now remains the other pillar – that is, the need of some psychological factors for an immaterial cause.

The recent advances in the field of the organic chemistry, give us hope that man will soon understand the mysteries of the soul; then he will be able to manufacture the life-giving cells and germs.

This will enable him to create any living being and bring about any psychological effect. Then the second pillar of this hypothesis will go down – and there will remain no basis for believing in a super-natural

Creator.

Man will create whatever he wishes of spiritual and psychological effects, as he is making today whatever he likes of the physical and material things – although just yesterday he was insisting that there was a hypothetical super-natural cause for these things. Now we know why he held that belief – it was just because he did not know the real cause of these phenomena.

Comments

First: If these fat-heads were to wake up from their conceit, they would see that the theists from the very beginning of their belief in a Creator (and there never was a beginning for it) affirmed that creative cause for the whole universe – those things having known physical causes as well as those having unknown causes. According to them this whole lot, in its entirety, needs a cause, separate from the universe. Clearly what the materialists reject is not what the theists believe in.

The theists – and the history and the research has not been able to pin-point a starting point for the belief in the Creator, in the history of humanity – have believed in the existence of one or more creators for the whole universe, although the Qur'an has shown that the religion of monotheism appeared before poly-theism; and the orientalist, Max Muller, the pioneer in the studies of Sanskrit, also has thrown light upon it.

Obviously, the theists, even the primitive man among them, used to see and recognize physical causes of many physical phenomena.

Yet, they affirmed that there was a God for the whole universe (not excluding those phenomena of known causes). Evidently, when they believed in the existence of the Creator, basing their argument on the all-pervasive system of cause-and-effect, it was not to solve the problem of some phenomena of which they could not find a cause.

After all, they did not say that some parts of the universe needed a Creator, while others (having some known causes) did not need that.

What they believed was this: The universe is made up of a series of natural causes and effects. This whole universe, taken as a composite unit, needs and requires a Cause, above all other causes; all actions and reactions, all causes and effects, interacting amongst its countless components, rely and depend on that Cause of the causes. The belief in that Supreme Cause does not negate the general law of causality which permeates all components of the universe.

In the same way, the existence of material causes for the material effects does not make this whole chain of the causes and effects independent of the Supreme Cause, who is out of this universe and separate from it.

(When we say 'out of this universe', we do not mean that the Supreme Cause is placed on the summit of the pyramid of the causes and effects. We mean that the Supreme Cause encompasses the whole universe with all its causes and effects, from every possible side.)

The materialists have fallen in an amusing contradiction. They believe that there is a general all-pervasive compulsion in all happenings in the world – including human actions. According to them, every action, every happening, is a compulsory, inescapable effect of various causes.

And at the same time they say that if a man created another man, it would not finally end at the Cause of the universe – if there is such a cause.

This fine and deep theme is always present in the subconscious mind of common people (even if a simple man is unable to express it in so many words). That is why they say that the whole universe – together with all its causes and effects – is the creation of a Creator God.

Second: When the theist philosophers furnish the rational proofs to prove the existence of the Creator, they do so after establishing that there is an all-pervasive system of causality in the world. Then they proceed to prove that all these “possible”, transient causes must end at an essential, self-existent cause.

This method has been used by them for thousands of years, from the earliest age of philosophy to this day. There was never any doubt in their minds that the effects – including the natural transient causes – need an essential Cause. In other words, when they attribute the effects to an essential cause, it is not done because they do not know some thing's natural cause.

Third: The Qur'an proves the oneness of the Creator. It does so by showing that all components of the universe are governed by the general law of causality; it accepts the attribution of each happening to its particular cause, and confirms what normal wisdom says about it.

It ascribes natural phenomena to their natural causes, and attributes to man the actions done by his own free will. There is no need to quote here numerous verses based on this theme.

And then it ascribes all these things and happenings – without any exception – to Allah. For example,

Allah is the Creator of every thing (39:62);

That is Allah, your Lord, the Creator of every thing; there is no god but He (40:62);

His is the creation and command (7:54);

His is what is in the heaven and what is in the earth and what is between them two and what is beneath the ground (20:6).

Whatever may be called a “thing”, it is created by Allah, and may be attributed to Him in a way befitting

His Majesty.

There are other verses which attribute an action to its doer and at the same time ascribe it to Allah. For example,

And Allah has created you and what you make (37:96).

The verse attributes the actions of men to them and then attributes their creation and that of their actions to Allah. Also, it says:

and you did not smite when you smote (the enemy), ***but it was Allah Who smote*** (8:17).

This verse admits that the act of throwing arrow was done by the Messenger of Allah, and then negates it, ascribing it to Allah Himself. There are other verses of the same connotation.

There are some other verses which combine the two attributions in a general way. For example,

... and Who created every thing, then ordained for it a measure (25:2);

Surely We have created every thing according to a measure... And every thing small and great is written down (54:49 – 53);

Allah indeed has made a measure for every thing (65:3);

And there is not a thing but with Us are the treasures of it, and We do not send it down but in a known measure (15:21).

Making or appointing a measure for every thing means that Allah has confined it within the limits of the material causes and the boundaries of time and space.

In short, it can never be doubted that the Qur'an proves the existence of the One and Only God basing its arguments on the system of causality found in all the components of the universe; and then it attributes the whole universe to Allah, Who created and made all of it. It is not that we ascribe some things to Allah and some others to their material causes – as the materialists allege.

Why could not the materialists understand this clear fact? They were misled by the Church in the medieval ages, whose pseudo-philosophers tackled this and similar problems in the manner quoted by the materialists; writers of other religions too rely on similar arguments.

The fact is that their discourses were distorted, and their arguments lacked precision. They wanted to explain their true claim (which, their reason told them in general terms, was correct).

They tried to go into details of that general idea. But their weak understanding and unripe reasoning led them away from the right method; consequently, they generalized their claim and misdirected their

argument.

It were they who attributed every thing or effect of unknown cause directly to Allah, and said that voluntary actions did not need any outside cause, and that consequently man's voluntary actions did not belong to Allah; man was independent of Allah in such actions.

We have written on this topic in detail under the verse:

but He does not cause to err by it (any) except the transgressors (2:26);

here something more has been added to complete the discourse.

Another group is that of some Muslim traditionalists and theologians (and some others) whose vision does not penetrate to the inner core of a subject. They did not understand how could the voluntary actions of man be attributed to Allah in a manner that would conform with His Sublime Majesty.

Consequently, they thought that man-made things could not be said to have been made by Allah, and especially those things which were made exclusively for sins, for example, liquor, and instruments of music and gambling etc.

Allah says:

... intoxicants and games of chance and (sacrificing to) stones set up and (dividing by) arrows are only an abomination of Satan's handiwork... (5:90).

And evidently what Allah counts as handiwork of Satan should not be ascribed to Allah Himself.

Comment: The discourse written earlier is enough to show the invalidity of this erroneous surmise– both from the Qur'an and traditions and the rational point of view. The fact is that man's voluntary actions may be attributed to Allah in a befitting manner, and likewise man-made things, being the result of those actions, may be attributed to Allah.

Moreover, “the stones”, mentioned in the verse 5:90 above, refers to the idols and images which are set for worship, and the verse 37:96 (***And Allah has created you and what you make***) says that those idols too are creation of Allah.

Obviously, an idol may be looked at from different perspectives. From one point of view it may be ascribed to Allah, for example, looking at the nature of its existence, disregarding the fact of its being used for sin of polytheism.

What is an idol? It is just a stone or metal with a particular shape; and as such there is no reason why it should not be attributed to the Creator of all things.

Of course, from another angle it is a thing that is worshipped besides Allah; and from this perspective it

cannot be attributed to Allah; it should rather be ascribed to the Satan or man. The same principle may be applied for other man-made things.

It clearly shows that man-made things may be attributed to Allah just like any other natural phenomenon, without any difference. Of course, it all depends on the degree of existence the said things enjoy. (Think on it.)

Qur'an: and the water that Allah sends down from the cloud, then gives you life with it to the earth after its death and spreads in it all (kinds of) ***animals***: What is rain? There are various elements mixed in the water of rivers and other water sources. Then it turns into steam, going up and carrying heat. The steam continues to ascend until it reaches extremely cold strata of the atmosphere.

Then the steam changes into water coming down as rain. Some times the steam is frozen into snow or hail. In what-ever form, it comes down to us, which drinks it in and becomes alive again. Also, the earth stores a major part of the rain, etc., above or below its surface, and that water comes out and flows as streams and rivers, etc., on the face of earth.

Water is the source of life for every living thing. The rain coming down from the clouds is a phenomenon of life, which takes place according to a well regulated and intricately laid down system – without any break down or exception. The genesis of vegetables and animals – of all types – depends on water.

The rain – being inter-woven with so many phenomena of the universe, horizontally and vertically – becomes an inseparable part of the universe. It needs a Creator to create it, a cause to bring it into existence. In other words, there is a God for it.

And man's genesis and life depend on the rain and water. Therefore, the same God who has created water and the intricate system of rain, is the God who has created man. The God of rain is the God of man.

Qur'an: and the changing of the wind: It refers to the changes in directions of the wind, because of various natural factors, the most important of them being the sun's rays. The sun raises the temperature of the air, making it lighter and less dense.

This lighter air is unable to carry the load of the surrounding air which is cooler and heavier. Therefore, the heavier air glides down, forcibly displacing the lighter one.

The lighter air travels in a direction opposite to that of the heavier one. And the resulting current is called wind. The wind helps in pollination of trees, shrubs and flowers, removes atmospheric pollutions, carries rain clouds from one place to another, besides rendering many other services. Blowing of wind is a most important factor in the genesis and life of vegetable, animal and man.

Wind, by itself, proves that there is a Creator God; by its inter-woven relation with other terrestrial and extra terrestrial phenomena, proves that there is only one Creator for the whole universe; and by being a

very important factor for the genesis and life of man, proves that the God of man and the God of the universe is one and the same.

Qur'an: and the clouds made subservient between the heaven and the earth: *as-Sahab* (السَّحَابُ) is condensed watery vapour floating in air at some distance; it is the source of rain.

As long as the steam remains on or near the earth, it is called *ad-dabab* (الضَّبَابُ) = fog; mist); when it leaves the earth and floats in the air at a distance, it is called *as-sahab*, *al-ghaym* (الغَيْمُ) and *al-ghamam* (الغَمَامُ), etc., all having the same meaning: cloud. *at-Taskhir* (التَّسْخِيرُ) = to subjugate a thing, to make it subservient in its activities).

The cloud is made subservient, in its flow and rain, to the winds and atmospheric temperature and other relevant factors, by the permission of Allah.

The cloud is a sign of Allah in the same way as other things mentioned with it.

The alternation of the day and the night, the rain coming down from the clouds, the blowing of wind and the subservient clouds are the main natural phenomena, which together make up the system of creation in the terrestrial world, like the vegetable, the animal and the man.

This verse may therefore be taken to be a detail of the general statement contained in the verse:

... and He blessed therein and made therein its foods, in four periods: alike for the seekers (41:10).

Qur'an: there are signs for a people who understand. *al-'Aql* (الْعَقْلُ) is *masdar* of *'aqala*, *ya'qilu* (عَقَلَ، يَعْقِلُ) = he understood, he understands). It denotes perfect comprehension and understanding.

al-'Aql is that by which man differentiates between good and bad, distinguishes fact from fiction, and discerns truth and falsehood. It is the self same man who perceives; it is not one of his faculties and characteristics which are like branches of the soul, for example, the memory, and the eye-sight, etc.

Qur'an: And there are some among men who take for them-selves equals (i.e., objects of worship) besides Allah: *an-Nidd* (النِّدُّ) is on the paradigm of *al-mithl* (الْمِثْلُ) and has the same meaning: equal, alike, etc. In some other verses Allah has used a slightly different phrase; for example,

therefore do not set up equals to Allah (2:22);

and they set up equals with Allah (14:30).

The style has been changed here to “besides Allah” because it is preceded by the exclusive statement: “And your God is one God! there is no god but He;...”

Thus anyone taking any object of worship besides Allah would violate that exclusiveness without any

justification; he would take as god something which, he is well aware, is not god; he would do so just in pursuit of his base desire, and in complete disregard to the decree of his reason.

That is why Allah has used the word “equals” as common noun, to show their degradation: “And there are some among men who take for themselves equals besides Allah.”

Qur'an: *Whom they love as the love for Allah, and those who believe are stronger in (their) love for Allah:* The word used is *yuhubbunahum* (يُحِبُّونَهُمْ) = they love them); the objective pronoun used here is reserved for rational beings. It means that the word “equals” does not refer to idols only, it includes also the angels and those men who were worshipped besides Allah.

Rather, it covers all those who were obeyed by people without any authority from Allah. This interpretation gets support from the verse following it:

When those who were followed shall renounce those who followed (them) (2:166).

Also, Allah says:

... ***and*** (that) ***some of us shall not take others for lords besides Allah*** (3:64);

They have taken their doctors of law and their monks for lords besides Allah (9:31).

The verse shows that love may be attributed to Allah in reality, contrary to the claims of those who say that love, being a branch of the faculty of desire, is related in reality to the body and the matters concerning the body only; and cannot be attributed as such to Allah.

According to them, love of God means obedience to Him, doing what He commands us to do and refraining from what He forbids; thus love may be attributed to Allah only in a metaphorical sense, as Allah says:

Say: “If you love Allah, then follow me, Allah will love you and forgive you your sins” (3:31).

But the verse under discussion goes against their claim. The phrase “stronger in (their) love for Allah”, shows that love of Allah may vary in intensity; it is stronger in the believers than in those who take others as equals to Allah. On the other hand, if love is taken to mean obedience, the meaning would be: “and those who believe are more obedient to Allah”.

Obviously, there could be no question here of any comparative degree of obedience, because the obedience of others is no obedience at all in the eyes of Allah. The—refore, “love” here has been used in its real, not metaphorical, sense.

It is supported also by the verse which says:

Say: “If your fathers and your sons and your brethren and your mates and your kinsfolk and

property which you have acquired, and the trade slackness of which you fear and dwellings which you like, are dearer to you than Allah and His Messenger and striving in His way... ” (9:24).

The word translated here as 'dearer' is *ahabb* (أَحَبُّ = more loved). Evidently the love ascribed to Allah, and that ascribed to His Messenger, and the love attributed to the fathers, the sons, and the property, etc., is all of the same quiddity, all of it has the same reality.

Otherwise, the phrase 'dearer to you' could not be used. The comparative degree signifies that both sides – the preferred one and the preferred against – share in the basic quality, although they differ in its degree, one being stronger, the other weaker.

The verse condemns those who take others as equals to Allah, saying: “whom they love as the love for Allah”; then it praises the believers, saying that they, “are stronger in (their) love for Allah.”

This comparison between the two groups apparently shows that the former has been condemned because they have divided their love between Allah and those whom they have taken as equals to Allah. There was possibility of a misunderstanding that if they had loved Allah more, they would not have been blamed.

But the next sentences leave no room for such erroneous surmises. “O that those who are unjust could see when they see the chastisement that the power is wholly Allah's... When those who were followed shall renounce those who followed (them), and they see the chastisement and their ties are cut asunder...

Thus will Allah show them their deeds to be intense regret to them...” These verses make it clear that they have been condemned not because of the love, *per se*, but because of its concomitant, that is, following. They followed false deities thinking that those deities had power which would help the followers to fulfil their desires or to ward off some undesirable situation.

Thus, they discarded the truth either wholly or in some aspects – and the one who follows Allah in some aspects only, is not a follower at all. Thus, there is no room for the above-mentioned misunderstanding. It is now clear that man should not take any partner for Allah in this love, otherwise, it will be polytheism.

However, when the love for Allah becomes stronger, the lover does not follow anyone other than Allah; he exclusively obeys the commands of Allah. That is why the believers have been praised that they “are stronger in (their) love for Allah”.

Now we know that the love has been praised and condemned because of its concomitant, that is, following and obedience. If a man loves someone other than Allah in obedience to the commands of Allah, when that someone calls to the obedience of Allah only, then such a love cannot be censured at all. As Allah says:

Say: "If your fathers and your sons... are dearer to you than Allah and His Messenger..." (9:24).

This verse assigns to the Messenger (S) a love as it assigns it to Allah Himself; it is so because love of the Messenger of Allah (S) is one with the love of Allah. Why? Because the effect of this love, that is, following of the Messenger (S) is exactly the obedience of Allah. Allah Himself calls to the obedience of His Messenger, as He says:

And We did not send any messenger but that he should be obeyed by Allah's permission (4:64);

Say: "If you love Allah, then follow me, Allah will love you" (3:31).

In the same category comes the love of any one whose obedience leads to the obedience of Allah, for example, a religious scholar who guides people by his knowledge, a sign that points to Allah, the Qur'an which brings the reciter nearer to Allah, and things like that. All these are loved because of the love of Allah, and by following them one obeys Allah and comes nearer to Him.

In short, whoever loves any one besides Allah, thinking that he has a power, and follows him in order to fulfil some of his needs, or obeys him in a matter which Allah has not allowed, then he has indeed taken other objects of worship besides Allah, and surely Allah will show them their deeds to be intense regret to them.

On the other hand, the believers are those who love nothing except Allah, do not seek power except from Allah, and do not follow except that which is from the commands and prohibitions of Allah. They are those who are sincere to Allah in religion.

Also, it is clear that the love of those whose love is Allah's love, and whose obedience Allah's obedience (like the Prophet and his progeny; the divine scholars, the Book of Allah and the traditions of His Prophet; in short, every thing that leads one to Allah's remembrance in a sincere way) is diametrically opposed to polytheism. Indeed, one proceeds nearer to Allah by loving and following the above-mentioned personalities and things.

To honour and respect them is a part of piety, and love and fear of Allah. As Allah says:

and whoever respects the signs of Allah, this surely is (the outcome) of the piety of hearts (22:32).

ash-Sha'a'ir (الشَّعَائِرُ) means the signs that lead or point to some-thing; the phrase, 'the signs of Allah' is general, not restricted to any particular thing like the Safa and the Marwah, etc.

It means that one must respect every sign of Allah, every divinely approved symbol which reminds one of Allah; because it is an outcome of piety, a reflection of the love and fear of Allah. And this principle applies to all the signs which lead one to piety.

Of course, it is clear as day that one should not think that those signs and symbols are in any way independent of Allah, or that they control for themselves or for others any harm or profit, or that they have any independent authority over their own or others' life, death or resurrection.

Evidently, if one had such a belief, then these things would not remain signs of Allah, they would become equals of Allah – and it would be *ash-shirk* (الشِّرْكُ) = ascribing partners to Allah); may He protect you from such polytheism.

Qur'an: *O that those who are unjust could see, when they see the chastisement, that the power is wholly Allah's and that Allah is severe in chastisement:* Apparently, “when they see the chastisement” is the object of the verb, “could see”; and “that the power is wholly Allah's and that Allah is severe in chastisement” are the explanatory phrases describing “the chastisement” (in the phrase “when they see the chastisement”).

(*Wa-law* وَلَوْ) = would that; O that; if only; I wish) is an optative particle, used to express wish. The verse therefore means: Would that those who are unjust could see in this world the day when they would see the chastisement; then they would see that the power belongs wholly to Allah, and that they had committed the greatest blunder when they ascribed some of that power to their false deities, and that Allah is severe in chastisement and in punishing those who are guilty of this unforgiveable sin.

As the next verses show, the chastisement would contain of their seeing their blunder in taking other objects of worship besides Allah, and in their wrong assumption that those objects had any power, and then seeing the punishment of their polytheism and misdeed.

The next two verses support this interpretation: “When those who were followed shall renounce those who followed (them).” The followers will not get any hoped-for benefit from their leaders; “and they see the chastisement and their ties are cut asunder”.

Nothing shall have any power or effect besides Allah. “And those who followed shall say: 'O were there for us a return:' ” they shall ardently wish to return to this world. “then we would renounce” these objects of worship whom we took as equals to Allah, and whom we followed, in this world, “as they have renounced us” in the next world.

“Thus will Allah show” those who were unjust and took others as equals to Allah, “their deeds” (i.e., their love and obedience to those leaders whom they took as equals to Allah) “to be intense regret to them, and they shall not come forth from the fire”.

Qur'an: *and they shall not come forth from the fire:* It is a proof against those who say that the chastisement of the fire shall one day come to an end.

Traditions

Shurayh ibn Hani said: “A Bedouin went on the day of the Camel to the Leader of the faithful (‘Ali, a.s.) and said: 'O Leader of the faithful! Do you say that Allah is one?' ” (Shurayh) said: “Then the people bore down on him and said:

'O Arab! Don't you see how preoccupied the Leader of the faithful is?' But the Leader of the faithful said: 'Let him be. Because what (this) Bedouin wants (i.e., gnosis of Allah) is the very thing which we want from these people (i.e., the enemies):

Then he (Ali, a.s.) said: 'O Arab! The sentence, "Allah is one", may be interpreted in four ways, two of them are not permissible for Allah and two are allowed.

The two meanings which are not permissible for Allah are:

(1) The saying of a sayer "one", when he uses it as a number: It is not permissible, because that which has no second (i.e., is unique) does not come within the domain of number. Do you not see that (Allah) has declared him an unbeliever who said that God was the third of the three?

(2) And the saying of a sayer that "He is one of the people", in the same sense as a species is one of (its) genes. This (also) is not allowed because it likens Allah (to other things), and our Lord is too great for, and far above of, this (likening).

And as for the two meanings which are applicable to Him, they are:

(1) The saying of a sayer, "He is one, there is nothing like unto Him"; such (indeed) is our Lord.

(2) And the saying of a sayer that, He, the Mighty, the Great, is unique in significance, that is, He is not divisible – neither in existence, nor in thought or imagination; such (indeed) is our Lord.' ” (*al-Khisal; at-Tawhid; Ma'ani 'l-akhbar*)

The author says: The two meanings confirmed by him ('Ali, a.s.) conform with what we have written in the explanation of the verse: ***And your God is one God...***

The lectures narrated from 'Ali (a.s.), ar-Rida (a.s.) and other Imams of the *Ahlu 'l-bayt (a.s.)* repeatedly say that 'He is one not by number'. It refers to His pristine person which does not accept counting.

There is in a prayer of *as-Sahifah as-Sajjadiyyah*, the sentence, "Thine is the oneness of number". It is interpreted as to refer to "ownership", that is, 'Thou art the owner of the oneness of number'; it does not mean that

'Thou art one in number', because reason as well as the Qur'an and the traditions firmly prove that His existence is Unique and pure, it is not duplicable nor can it be repeated – according to His person and reality.

Imam al-Baqir (a.s.) said in a tradition, *inter alia*, about the words of Allah, ***And there are some among men who take for them-selves equals besides Allah...***: "O Jabir! They are, by Allah!, the leaders of the unjust ones and their followers" (*al-Kafi; al-Ikhtisas; al-'Ayyashi*). In the last-named book the wording is: "O Jabir! By Allah! They are the leaders of the injustice and their followers."

The author says: Its meaning is clear in the light of the explanation given above. Why did the Imam refer to them as “the leaders of injustice”? It is because Allah has said: *O that those who are unjust could see...* Thus, the followers who took for themselves equals besides Allah were “unjust”; therefore, their leaders must be “the leaders of the unjust ones” and “the leaders of injustice”.

as-Sadiq (a.s.) said about the words of Allah, ***Thus will Allah show them their deeds to be intense regret to them:*** “He is a man who leaves (untouched) his wealth and because of avarice does not spend it in the obedience of Allah; then he dies and leaves it to someone who uses it in the obedience of Allah, or in His disobedience.

If he (the heir) used it in the obedience of Allah, (the legator) shall see it in the “balance” of another man, and he shall look at it in intense regret, as the wealth had (originally) belonged to him. And if he (the heir) used it in disobedience of Allah, then it was he (the legator) who strengthened him with that wealth so that he used it in the disobedience of Allah.” (*al-Kafi*)

The author says: This meaning has been narrated by al-'Ayyashi, as-Saduq, al-Mufid and at-Tabrasi, from al-Baqir and as-Sadiq (a.s.). It has used the word, equals, in a wider sense; and as we have explained earlier, this expanded meaning is with-out any doubt, quite in place.

A Philosophical Discourse on Love

Love is one of our emotional feelings; we apply it for the love of food, love of women, love of wealth, love of honour and love of knowledge. We have no doubt that we have these five loves.

Also, there is no doubt that when we use the word, love, in the above contexts, we intend the same meaning everywhere; and not only the word, but the meaning also is the same in all the five phrases. At the same time, we know that these contexts are different. The question is: Is this a difference of categories, or of some other type?

Let us look at the love of food. We love an edible thing, like a fruit, because it is related to the activity of our faculty of nutrition. If there were no such faculty, if there were not that nourishment which perfects our body, we would not have loved that fruit, and there would have been no such love.

Therefore, the love exists, in reality, between the faculty of nutrition and its activity, on one side, and the satisfaction which that faculty gets from that activity, on the other side. When we say, “satisfaction”, we do not mean the satisfying taste which one feels when eating – because the sense of taste is a functionary of the faculty of nutrition, and not the faculty itself. We actually mean that particular pleasure which the faculty gets from its activity.

Likewise, if we look at the love of women, we find that that love is related in reality and primarily to cohabitation, and only secondarily to the women, as its concomitant – in the same way as the love of food was related to a particular food just secondarily and only as a concomitant.

Cohabitation is the effect of a faculty given to animals, in the same way as eating food is the effect of a faculty given to them. Evidently, these two loves belong to the same root, that is, a subsistent relationship between these two faculties and their activities – in other words their active perfection.

At this stage, it might possibly be thought that love was an attachment exclusively reserved for the above two faculties, that it was not found in other contexts. But experiment (through various effects) removes this misunderstanding.

This attachment, known as love, has an effect on the lover. The lover moves towards the object of his/its love, and yearns for the loved action if he/it is separated from it, and does not like to leave it, after he/it has found it.

This particular effect of love is found in all our powers of conception and their actions. All our powers and faculties like eye–sight, hearing, memory and imagination – in short all our internal and external senses – have this very effect, this very attribute, no matter whether they are acting or reacting. Each of these faculties loves its activity and is attracted to it.

And it is only because its activity is its perfection, makes up its deficiency, and fulfils its natural need. In this way, we know the significance of the love of wealth, love of power and love of knowledge. Man seeks his perfection through his wealth, honour and knowledge.

It may be inferred from it that love is a special emotional attachment, a particular conscious attraction between man and his perfection. Detailed researches have shown that it is found in animals too.

And it is because the lover acts upon, and reacts to, his loved activity; then that love extends to the things related to that activity, as the love of eating was extended to that of fruit. This principle would apply also to other things besides animals, provided they could consciously seek or bestow perfection.

From another point of view, as love is a subsistent relation–ship between the lover and the loved, there exists a positive connection between them. Now, if an effect (which has the relation of love with its cause) is a conscious being and has got sense and feeling, it would find that love within its soul – if it has a soul and independent existence.

The above discourse leads us to the following conclusions:–

First: Love is a subsistent relationship, a special attraction between perfecting cause (or things like that) and perfection–seeking effect (or things like that). That is why we love our actions, because through them we seek perfection.

And as its extension, we love the things related to our activities; for example, food which we take, mate with whom we cohabit, wealth which we use, honour from which we gain benefit, a benefactor who bestows something on us, a teacher who teaches us, a leader who guides us, a helper who helps us, a student who learns from us, a servant who serves us, a follower who obeys and follows us. All these are

various manifestations of love, some of them are physical, some imaginary and some others intellectual.

Second: Love has different degrees of strength and weakness, because it is a subsistent attraction, an existing attachment – and there are such degrees even in existence itself. Obviously, the attachment between a sufficient cause and its effect cannot be like the one existing between an insufficient cause and its effect.

Also, the perfection (because of which the attachment of love comes into being) is itself of various categories, some of it essential, some others inessential, some of it material (like nourishment), others immaterial (like knowledge).

It shows the invalidity of the theory which says that love is exclusively reserved for material things. (Some of them said that love was basically related to food only, and other loves issued forth from it; some others gave that central place to the love of sexual intercourse; according to them all other loves branched out from it.)

Third: Allah deserves to be loved – from whatever angle you look at it. Allah is Self-subsistent, exists by Himself; His perfection is limitless while all other perfections are but limited. A limited thing attaches itself to the limitless one in existence.

This attachment, this love, is a part of existence, a part of personality; it can never diminish or go away. Moreover, Allah has created us, and bestows on us countless and limitless favours; that is why we love Him, as every bestower of bounties is loved for his favours.

Fourth: As mentioned in the beginning, love is subsistent and existing relationship. Such relations are not separate from the very existence of their subjects. It follows that every thing loves its own person. Also, it was mentioned that by its extension, we love the things related to the loved – therefore, every thing loves the effects of its own existence.

It is clear from the above that Allah loves His creation because of His love of His Own Self; and He loves His creation because they are recipients of His favours; and He loves His creation because they accept His guidance.

Fifth: We said earlier that sense, consciousness and know-ledge are concomitants of love. But it is necessary in practice only, Otherwise, the subsistent attachment – which is the reality of love – does not depend, *per se*, on these factors. It appears from this that even the natural powers and faculties – which have no sense or feeling – love their own actions and effects.

Sixth: It follows that love is a reality which permeates all the existing things.

Another Philosophical Discourse on Perpetuity of Punishment

The question arises: Will the chastisement of the Hell come to its end at some time, or will it continue endlessly? Both theories have their adherents and both groups support their views with intellectual reasoning and apparent meanings of the Qur'an and traditions.

As for the Qur'an, it unambiguously declares that many groups shall abide for ever – endlessly and perpetually – in the Hell. As Allah says:

and they shall not come forth from the fire (2:167).

And nearly *mutawatir* traditions narrated from the Imams of the *Ahlu 'l-bayt* (a.s.) clearly say the same thing. Of course, there are some traditions emanating from other sources which support the view that the chastisement will end. But these traditions must be rejected outright because they are against the clear declarations of the Qur'an.

Now, we come to intellectual reasons. As we said under the verse:

And be on your guard against the day when one soul shall not avail another... (2:48),

it is not possible to explain the details concerning the Resurrection and the Judgment with the help of intellectual deductions, because our reason lacks the premises necessary to lead to a conclusion.

The only way is to believe in what the Truthful Prophet (S) has brought to us through Divine Revelation – because his truth has been proved without any doubt.

As for the spiritual bliss and chastisement, they happen to the immaterial soul as it acquires good or bad characteristics and traits and is thus wrapped in beautiful or ugly conditions. We have mentioned there^{2*} that these conditions and characteristics appear to the psyche in their respective good or ugly shapes, and the psyche enjoys the beautiful and good shapes, if it is itself good; and is tormented by what is bad and ugly, whether it is itself good or bad.

If these resulting shapes are not deeply imprinted on the psyche, and are not agreeable to its person, they are bound to disappear sooner or later, because their appearance is a matter of constraint; and we know that constraint does not continue for ever.

Suppose there is a true believer who has committed some sins. This man is good and happy in his person, but his psyche has been polluted by, and wrapped in, ugly unhappy shapes. Obviously this ugly shape, not being deeply imprinted will certainly get removed.

But if these ugly shapes have been deeply imprinted on the psyche, then it reshapes the psyche in its own mould. The soul acquires a new shape and becomes almost a new species. Suppose there is a “niggard man”; now niggardliness gives a new form to his humanity, in the same way as “rationality”

gives a new form to “animality”, and “rational animal” (i.e., man) becomes a new species under the genes, “animal”. Likewise “niggard man” becomes a new species under the genes “man”.

This species has an eternal existence of its own. The man, before the characteristics of niggardliness were firmly ingrained in his psyche, did practise niggardliness under constraint and felt unhappy. But now he does it, by permission of Allah, naturally without any constraint. And as it is done by this new species without constraint, it is eternal, endless and perpetual – contrary to the former condition when it was done under constraint and could therefore be got rid of. This man gets punished because of the concomitants of his characteristics and traits.

We may compare his case with that of a man suffering from chronic melancholia or hallucination. His mind perceives frightening nightmares and he is always tortured by it – although it is he himself who produces these fantasies without any extraneous constraint or compulsion.

The pictures appearing in his mind are not agreeable to his sick psyche, and he is tortured by it, although it is he himself who has created them.

Yet, as we know, he suffers because of it. What is punishment? It is that from which man runs away (if not inflicted by it yet) and longs to extricate himself (if already suffering from it).

And this definition applies to the ugly shapes and frightening conditions which an “unhappy” man suffers in his next abode. It proves that the chastisement of the next world is perpetual and never-ending – for a man whose unhappiness has become an integral part of his personality.

Many objections have been raised against perpetuity of chastisement, all of them clearly without a leg to stand upon:

First Objection: Allah's mercy is limitless, all-encompassing. How can He, in His mercy, create someone whose destination would be a perpetual chastisement which no one could bear?

Second Objection: Punishment is punishment when it is not agreeable to the nature of the convicted person. In other words when it is a compulsion, a constraint. And perpetual constraint is unthinkable. Therefore, it is wrong to say that there would be perpetual punishment.

Third Objection: The man had committed sins which were not perpetual; they came to their end after a short or long duration. How can he be requited with a perpetual never-ending punishment?

Fourth Objection: Even the evil-doers serve the system of creation no less than the good-doers. If they were not there, the virtue of good people could not come about. This being the case, why should they be thrown into perpetual punishment?

Fifth Objection: It is a revenge to punish someone who disobeys the commandments of Allah. As a rule revenge is taken because the unjust and disobedient person makes the wronged party

suffer some loss; and that party, if powerful enough, avenges itself to make up that loss.

But this rule cannot apply to Allah, because He is Self-sufficient and nobody can inflict any harm or loss upon Him. In this background, how can He punish anyone – and especially with a perpetual punishment?

There are other similar objections against the perpetuity of punishment. If you ponder on what we have written earlier explaining the meaning of the perpetuity of punishment, you will realize that these objections are completely wide of mark:

General Reply: Perpetual punishment is the effect of the form of infelicity and unhappiness when it becomes an inseparable characteristic of the “unhappy” man. It happens after the man acquires full capability for it – through relevant conditions of the psyche – and exercises his free choice by choosing evil, instead of good.

That capability creates in the psyche the shape commensurate with it.

We do not ask why a man does human actions, once the matter has acquired the human form – because the human form itself is sufficient cause of human activities. Like-wise, we cannot ask why the effects of the inseparable unhappiness and infelicity (including perpetual punishment) are appearing, after the psyche has acquired the form of inseparable unhappiness and infelicity.

Because it is its inseparable characteristic and effect. This general reply sufficiently refutes all the objections. Now let us look at each objection separately: –

Reply to the First Objection: When we say “mercy of Allah” we do not refer to any softness of heart, mildness of temper or other such psychological effects, because such mercy presupposes material existence, and Allah is far above such insinuations.

Divine Mercy means bestowing on the recipient all things which he is fully qualified for. A fully qualified person longs for the things he is qualified for; and his qualification itself becomes a constant demand for it as if it had a tongue of its own. And Allah gives him what he thus demands and asks for.

His Mercy is of two kinds: general and particular. The general mercy gives whatever a person is qualified for in the framework of existence. The particular mercy bestows whatever a person is qualified for in the highway that leads towards monotheism and bliss of Allah's Nearness.

When Allah gives the form of inseparable “unhappiness” to a person who is fully qualified for it, it is not against the general mercy; it is rather a part of that mercy. And perpetual punishment is a compulsory result of that form. As for the particular mercy, it does not cover the person who is not proceeding on the highway of guidance.

Now let us look at the claim that perpetual punishment is against the Divine Mercy. If by “mercy” they

refer to the general mercy, then surely it is not against it – it is rather a part of the general mercy. And if they mean the particular mercy, then the claim is untenable, because this case is out of the jurisdiction of the particular mercy.

Moreover, this objection, if sustainable, could also be laid against intermittent punishment. Nay, it would invalidate punishments of this world too.

Reply to the Second Objection: First we should decide why a thing is disagreeable to the nature. A thing or condition may be disagreeable to a man because there is no common factor between the man and that thing or condition. This indeed is a constraint, and it happens because of compulsion by an extraneous agent; and goes away as soon as that constraint is removed.

There is, on the other hand, an action or condition which emanates from the very nature of the man, when that nature is thoroughly polluted, when it is moulded in ugly mould and acquires a shape other than the original one.

Man, in that existence, demands terrifying punishment; his transformed psyche, by its very nature, longs for chastisement – although at the same time he does not like it. We have earlier given the example of the man suffering from melancholia:

Doubtlessly, the terrifying pictures emanating from his mind are “agreeable” to his psyche, because they are the products of that distorted psyche itself, and such effects are surely agreeable to the related psyche or nature.

But at the same time they are indeed torture and punishment, because the definition of “punishment” applies thereto. In short, the eternal punishment is disagreeable from the viewpoint of sensitivity, and at the same time it is agreeable because it emanates from the psyche itself.

Reply to the Third Objection: The punishment is not the result of the sin and disobedience which were limited and came to an end. It is the effect of the perpetual ugly shape to which the man's psyche was moulded as a result of those limited and counted sins.

There is no question here of a limited cause bringing about an unlimited effect – which, of course, is impossible. As an example, look at the man himself; there were a lot of limited causes which ultimately moulded the matter into human form; now he acts and reacts as a human being, because of that human form.

And that humanity continues for ever, even after his death. We cannot ask about this man, as to how did a set of limited causes bring into being those unlimited and unending effects – because their efficient cause exists with them for ever. Likewise, it cannot be asked how can a set of limited sins bring about perpetual limitless chastisement.

Reply to the Fourth Objection: Service and worship, like mercy, is of two kinds: general and particular.

General service is to submit to the Source of existence, that is, God, in the affairs and conditions of existence.

Particular service is to submit to God and obey Him, in the path that leads to monotheism. Each type of service and obedience has a reward of its own, a mercy most suitable to it.

Obviously, the general service in the system of creation is rewarded by general mercy – and as explained earlier, eternal bliss and eternal chastisement both are parts of that mercy. And the particular service is rewarded by the particular mercy, that is, bounties of the Paradise.

Moreover, if this objection is recognized as valid, then it would also negate the limited chastisement of the Hell and even punishments of this world too.

Reply to the Fifth Objection: As you have seen, the perpetual chastisement is ascribed to the shape of unhappiness acquired by man; and to Allah in the sense in which every existing thing is attributed to Him. That punishment is not attributed to Him in the meaning of revenge and satisfaction of the feeling of rage and anger, because such thing is impossible for Allah.

Of course, one of the names used for Allah is “the Avenger”. But it is used in the sense that Allah requites severely His servant when he (the servant) transgresses the limits of servitude and crosses the boundary of obedience going into that of revolt and disobedience.

“Revenge” in this meaning is not impossible for Allah; and the perpetual punishment may be called “revenge” in this sense, without any difficulty.

Moreover, this objection, if tenable, may be laid against terminable punishment also; and even against the worldly punishments.

A Qur’anic Note on the Above Subject

It should be noted here that this method of argument, which we have used against the above-mentioned objections, has been used also in the Qur’an and traditions. Allah says:

Whoever desires this present life, We hasten to him therein what We please for whomsoever We desire, then We assign to him the hell; he shall enter it despised, driven away. And whoever desires the hereafter and strives for it as he ought to strive and he is a believer; (as for) these, their striving shall be thanked. All do we aid – these as well as those – out of the bounty of your Lord, and the bounty of your Lord is not confined (17:18–20).

As you see, the verses count both chastisement and good recompense as parts of the bounty and mercy of Allah; and it is made clear that whatever happens, it is related to the will, desire and striving of the servant himself.

It is this very method that we have used in explaining the main topic and replying to the objections. There are many other verses of this connotation; and we shall write on them in their proper places, Allah willing.

1. A light year is equal to 5,880,000 million miles. With tremendous advance in astronomy, it is now more usual to reckon distances in the parsec, which is equal to 3.258 light years, or 19,150,000 million miles. (tr.)

2. See al-Mizan (Eng. transl.), vol.1, pp.261-2. (tr.)

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