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Divine Justice

Wilson: I know that the Holy Qur'an is clear on certain attributes of God such as The Merciful, The Wise, The Benevolent, the Ever-Living, the Creator of the universe, the One without a partner, associate, or son. But I would like to know if The "Just" is one of the attributes of God. I was told by some Muslims that it is one of His attributes, and by some others that it is not.

Chirri: No logical religion can afford to deny or doubt the justice of God and His fairness. To deny His justice is to undermine the religious concept entirely. No religious belief, not even the belief in the existence of the Supreme Being, would avail us without the belief in His justice.

An unfair ruler may reward the wrongdoer and penalize the good doer. If one obeys him, he will not necessarily secure his satisfaction. If one disobeys him, he will not be certain that he is out of his favor.

Furthermore, we believe in heavenly messages and God's messengers because we think that He is fair enough to tell His human servants what He wants from them. But an unfair God may not tell us anything or may tell us something He does not mean to tell. By this, the whole doctrine of prophethood will collapse.

Denial of the justice of God would also lead to denial of the Hereafter, because the Hereafter is the world of carrying out justice by rewarding the good doers and punishing the wrongdoers.

In short, the concept of justice of God, to us, is as important as the concept of His existence and His oneness; and the denial of it is as destructive to religion as the denial of the existence of God or of His oneness. Therefore, the concept of justice of God ought to be considered part of the foundation of religion without which no religion can logically be established.

Islam is entirely in accord with this sound and logical thinking. The Holy Qur'an states the justice of God as emphatically as it states the oneness of God and His existence. In scores of passages, injustice has been denounced. In many passages, God is described as just, or that He does not want to do injustice to His servants, or that He will not waste the deed of any doer, or that He will not cause anyone to lose one atom's weight of good.

"The Almighty bears witness that there is no god but He, and (so do) the angels and those possessed of knowledge, (He is) maintaining justice. There is no god but He, the Mighty, the Wise." 3:18

"So whoever does an atom's weight of good will see it (on the Day of Judgment), and whoever does an atom's weight of evil will see it." 99:7–8

Wilson: Your statement about the justice of God is one of the most reasonable statements I have ever heard. In fact, the importance of this religious doctrine cannot be exaggerated because the concept of God without His justice will not benefit us. We can neither trust nor please an unjust god. Judaism and Christianity share with Islam the same view, and no Christian or Jew doubts the justice of God and His fairness. The Doctrine of Justice of God, therefore, is Christian and Jewish as well as Islamic, and I do not see any difference among the three faiths in this respect.

Chirri: The difference between Islam and the other faiths in this respect is not about the concept of justice of God itself, but about the concepts which stem from this doctrine. Islam does not subscribe to any doctrine that contradicts the concept of the Divine Justice. Islam preaches and upholds all doctrines that may stem from the concept of the justice of God.

Wilson: Will you cite some of these doctrines which stem from the justice of God?

Chirri: I shall cite three of these principles which stem from the doctrine of Divine justice:

1. God does not ask His human creature to do what he cannot do. From the Holy Qur'an:

"God does not impose on a soul a duty but to the extent of its ability." 2:286

What is beyond your power is impossible for you. The Just God does not ask the impossible.

2. God does not hold any individual responsible but for his own deed which is under his control. No one is responsible for the deeds of others, even if they are his friends or relatives, as long as their action is not under his control. From the Holy Qur'an:

"Shall I seek a lord other than God while He is the Lord of everything, and no soul earns (evil) but against itself. Nor does a bearer of a burden bear the burden of another. Then to your Lord is your return, so He will inform you of that in which you differed." 6: 164

3. If this is true, the human race could not be burdened by the action of Adam and Eve. To say that the whole human race is burdened with the heredity of the improper action of Adam and Eve is to say that the thousands of human generations share with Adam and Eve the responsibility of their action, and that they are condemned by God for a mistake which occurred before the birth of any of those generations. This, of course, is inconsistent with God's justice.

A human judge does not condemn a son for the sin of his parents which he did not share. How can we conceive that the Just God places the iniquity of the parents on their children or their great–grandchildren?

Therefore, Islam emphatically denies the Doctrine of the Original Sin, and considers every human being pure at the time of his birth and free of any sin. Actually, Islam offers the human infant as a perfect example of a pure and sinless being. Every human being, according to the teachings of Islam, is born pure and free of any sin and continues to be pure until he commits a sin as an adult.

By sinning at the age of adulthood, the individual loses his purity, but a person can regain it through a sincere repentance. When a person genuinely changes his attitude and sincerely intends not to repeat his sin, and truly pledges obedience to God, the Most Merciful will forgive and erase the sin.

Wilson: Let me digress for a moment: Adam and Eve were individuals like us. Let us assume that they repented sincerely after they made a mistake. Does that mean that their mistake was erased?

Chirri: If you assume that Adam had repented after he did the improper, you will not be wrong. Nor will you be mistaken if you believe that Adam was forgiven by God upon his repentance. The Holy Qur'an informs us that the Most Merciful accepted the repentance of Adam, and by this, the action of Adam was forgiven:

"...and Adam received from his Lord words, and He relented towards him. Lo! He is the Relenting, the Merciful." 2:37

Wilson: If Adam was forgiven, why was he expelled from the paradise of God?

Chirri: The fall of Adam from paradise is not necessarily a punishment for a sin. It may be a necessary result of the change of his status. At the beginning, Adam was worthy of communicating with God at any time, and this was his bliss and paradise. By acting improperly, he became susceptible to slip again; that is, he had lost his immunity from impropriety. So unimmuned, he was no longer in such a high position that enables him to communicate with his Lord at any time. Now he is able to do so only at the time of his firm purity. His firm purity, of course, is no longer permanent as it was before he slipped, because he may slip once again.

Wilson: The Old Testament informs us that the sin of Adam was his eating from a tree, and that that tree was the tree of knowledge which God told him to avoid. What is the version of the Qur'an of this subject?

Chirri. The Holy Qur'an states that there was a prohibited tree and that the mistake of Adam was his eating from it. But the Qur'an is not specific on its kind. Knowing the logical spirit of Islam, I am sure that the tree was not a tree of knowledge because knowledge comes from learning and experience, and it does not grow on trees. There might have been no significance attached to the tree or its kind in the

whole issue. The significant matter could have been the prohibition itself which God decreed to test the will of His servants Adam and Eve. Furthermore, God, according to the Holy Qur'an, loves knowledge; how would He forbid it?

Wilson: Let us end our digression and go back to the subject.

I am now convinced that Islam stands on a solid ground in preaching the purity of the human race and that its teaching in this field is very sound and consistent. It has, so far, adhered to the principle of justice of God and upheld the principle of the individual's responsibility which is inseparable from the justice of God.

When the Christians preach the Doctrine of the Original Sin, they actually construct a base to another doctrine, namely: the Doctrine of Redemption. Mankind, they say, is sinful and condemned because of the original sin. In other words, by inheriting the sin of Adam and Eve, we became sinful; therefore, we need to be redeemed in some way. Someone should pay for our sin. Jesus paid for it by being crucified. Thus, Jesus became the redeemer and the saviour of mankind.

By the denial of the original sin, the Doctrine of Redemption is left without foundation. You have already spoken on the subject, but now it has become clear that the Doctrine of Redemption is one of the principles which are not in accord with the concept of the justice of God.

Chirri: The whole issue of the Original Sin is, as we advanced, entirely opposed to the justice of God. Even if we forget about its inconsistency with His justice, we cannot conceive that the Most Just makes one person, an innocent person, Jesus, pay for the sin of the whole human race. Again, how can we wash a small sin, such as eating any apple, by the most terrible sin, the murder of a holy person, such as Jesus. Sin may, conceivably, be washed by a good deed, not by murder. Furthermore, how can we conceive that God, the Most Wise, would demand the blood of His dear messenger as a price of forgiveness?

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