Allah Originating the Creation

With my chain of authorities reaching up to the august shaykh, the Pillar of Islam, Muhammad ibn Ya'qub al-Kulayni (R) from several of our Companions, from Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Khalid, from Ibn Mahbub and Ali ibn al-Hakam, from Mu'awiyah ibn Wahab, who said: I heard Abu 'Abd Allah (A) say: "Verily, among that which God had revealed to Moses (A) and sent it down to him in the Torah was this passage: Verily I am Allah, and there is no god except I. I originated the creation, and I created everything that is good, bringing it about by the hands of those that I love. So happy is he by whose hands I cause it to happen. And I am Allah, there is no god except I. I created the creation and I created everything that is evil, and I bring it about [by the hands of those that I will, so woe to him by whose hand I cause it to happen."[1

Exposition

As to the word ilah, [whose related derivatives are] alaha (with fathah on the hamzah and lam, meaning 'he worshiped') and ilahatan, it is in the sense of 'abada, 'ibadatan, and ilah, vowelized as fi'al, is in the sense of the object (maf'ul [that is, the object of worship]), like imam, which mean someone who is followed (man yu'tammu bih), ilah is the original root of 'Allah,' and after the addition of alif and lam [i.e. al-making it al-ilah), the hamzah has been deleted for the sake of ease of pronunciation, and some have opined that the alif and lam substitute for the hamzah. Each of these two opinions has grammatical justifications[2] whose mention is not necessary

In the terminology of the Divine sages (ahl Allah, i.e. the urafa), ilahiyyat and uluhiyyat are mostly applied to the station of tajalli at the plane of Act and the station of the Sacred Effusion (fayd-e muqaddas). 'Allah' is the Name of the Glorious One, applied mostly to the station of the Essence as encompassing all the Attributes.

At other times, the usage is reversed. In this noble tradition, it is probable that it is used in its common lexical sense-meaning, 'I am the Worshipped One, and there is no object of worship except Me.' And if this should be what is meant, the limitation of worship either implies that no other being is worthy of worship [besides God], though it should be worshipped mistakenly as a result of the error of men, or that-on the basis of the belief of the people of heart and the 'urafa - worship of every manifestation is the worship of the Absolutely Perfect Being and that man is a seeker of absolute beauty in accordance with his God-given fitrat (innate nature): (It is) the

nature (framed) of Allah in which He hath created man. (30:30)

And this remains true despite man's alienation from this fitrah and his imagining himself to be attached to finitude and things finite. Or, perhaps, the meaning intended for ilah is the station of Divinity itself, in accordance with the last part of the tradition wherein He attributes good and evil to Himself. On this basis, this would be a reference to Divine Unity at the plane of Act (tawhid-e af'ali), which has been expressed on the tongue of the great sages by their saying:

No one is effective in the realm of existence except God.

Further reference to this matter will be made later on, God willing. As to al-khayr, the authority of the traditionists, Majlisi (M) states in his commentary under this tradition: Good and evil are applied to obedience and disobedience and to their causes and motives, and applied as well to the beneficial creatures, such as grains and fruits and the edible animals, and to the harmful creatures, such as poisons, serpents and scorpions, and to blessings and scourges. The Ash'arites say that all of these are the works of God. The Mu'tazilah and the Imamiyyah contradict them in relation to the works of men and they have reinterpreted the texts which state that God, the Exalted, is the Creator of good and evil as applying to things other than the deeds of the people."

After that, he says: As to the philosophers, most of then say "Nothing except God has efficiency in the realm of being (لا مُؤَثِّرَ فِي الوُجُودِ إِلا اللهُ.), and that the will of the creatures is the preparatory cause for God, the Exalted, to create the deeds at their hands." This is in accordance with the creed of the philosophers and the Ash'arites. And these traditions can also be ascribed possibly to taqiyyah.[3] (Here end his comments, may God elevate his station.)

The Reality Of Good And Evil

The attributes 'good' and 'evil' are applied, in all instances, to perfection and deficiency [respectively] in the essence or attributes of things or to their existence and perfections of existence. All that is essentially good derives from the Reality of Being, and when ascribed to other thugs it is in consideration of their mode of existence. Also, that which is essentially evil (sharr bi al-dhat), derives from non-being ('adam-e wujud) or from the absence of the perfection of existence. Its application to other thugs, such as harmful animals and troublesome insects, is accidental. This, on consideration of all the sides, should be considered as self-evident, though there are also strong arguments in its favor.

Let us rake up the statement [of Majlisi that the position of the Imamiyyah and the Mu'tazilah concerning the creation of the deeds of people being opposed to that of the Ash'arites, and his

explaining away the verses and traditions that attribute good and evil to God. As to the said opposition to the Ash'arite viewpoint-who subscribe to a creed based on jabr (compulsion), which is contrary to reason, philosophical proofs and intuition-that is correct. But the verses and traditions do not affirm the creed of the Mu'tazilites, who believe in tafwid (delegation) and their creed is more invalid, disgraceful, and scandalous than the creed of the Ash'arites.

As to the Imamiyyah (R) they have adopted the true creed in the light of the guidance of the great Imams of the Prophet's family and with the blessings of the Household of Revelation and infallibility (A). It is also in agreement with the noble verses and sound metaphysical proofs, in addition to being in consonance with the creed of the illustrious 'urafa-' and the gnosis of the people of the heart. Hence they have no need to do ta'wil of the many traditions and verses which cannot be interpreted in the sense understood by the said traditionist (M). In fact, the Imamiyyah and their Imams do not consider the will of God to be inoperative in any of the deeds of the creatures and they do not consider the matter of any thing as having been delegated (mufawwad) to the creatures.

As to his statement in the latter part of his remarks, that most philosophers believe that and that this (لا مُؤَثِّرَ فِي الوُجُودِ إِلا اللهُ) "."Nothing except God has efficiency in the realm of being belief is in consonance with their own creed as well as that of the Ash'arites, [that is partly true and partly false]. As to the statement that the words "Nothing except God has efficiency in the realm of' being" constitute the creed of most of the philosophers and the people of gnosis, that is true. In fact, they say that should any philosopher fail to affirm this matter, it means that the light of wisdom has not entered his Heart and gnosis has not touched his inner being.

But it does not imply that the creature's will is a preparatory cause for the creation of God, as is clear to those who are in the know of the matter. That this statement is consonant with the creed of the Ash'arites is also invalid, and what is more amazing is his putting the Ash'arite creed in the same basket as that of the philosophers! This, despite the great distance that exists between them, and there has rarely been a genuine philosopher who has not opposed the creed of the Ash'arites and considered it as invalid.

As to his statement that these traditions might possibly be ascribed to taqiyyah, firstly there is no justifications for such an ascription, because the literal import of these traditions is in consonance with the true creed and in agreement with metaphysical proof. Secondly, these traditions are in agreement with many of the verses of the noble scripture.

Therefore, there is no sense in ascribing taqiyyah to the verses and likewise to the traditions that are in consonance with them. Thirdly, these traditions are not contradicted by others so that one might be led by the contradiction to ascribe them to taqiyyah, which is one of the

grounds for preferring one group of traditions to another, and they can be reconciled with those which indicate that man is the doer of good and evil.

Fourthly; according to his own statements, these traditions agree with the creed of the Ash'arites which, apparently, was not the prevailing creed in that period, and in such a circumstance there are no grounds for ascribing then to taqiyyah. Fifthly, this topic and the like of it relate to issues of doctrine, which are not subject to the rules of preference applicable to contradictory traditions (in the area of ahkam), as is evident.

As to the word tuba, Jawhiri says, "Tuba, vowelized as fu'la, is derived from tayyib and its ya has been changed to waw due to the dammah on the previous letter (i.e. ta)." According to the Majma', "tuba lahum" means 'there is good (tayyib) life for them.' And it has been said that tuba means summum bonum and the ultimate [object of] desire; and some have said that tuba is the name of a tree in Paradise. It has also been said that tuba also means 'paradise' in the language of the Indians. And tuba laka and tubaka are used as phrases involving genitive construction (idafah). It is mentioned in a tradition of the Noblest Messenger (S) that "Tuba is a tree in Paradise. Its trunk (asl) is in my house and its branch is the house of 'Ali."[4]

As to the expression "waylun," Jawhari says, "Wayh is an expression of mercy and ''wayl'' expresses disapproval, and Yazidi states that they have the same meaning. Waylun li zaydin wa wayhun li zaydin can be pronounced with raf on the assumption that wayl and wayh form subjects of a nominative sentence, and also with nasb, on the supposition of an elliptical verb, assuming the underlying form: Alzamahu Allahu al-wayl. And some say that wayl is a valley in hell [so intensely hot] that if a mountain were cast into it will melt due to the intensity of its [heat.[5] And some say that it is the name of a pit in hell.[6

The Relation Of Good And Evil To Creation And The Occurrence Of Evil In The Divine Ordainments (Qada)

It should be known that it has clearly been established in the higher sciences that the order of being possesses the highest degree of perfection and goodness and the ultimate degree of beauty This is demonstrable, summarily, in accordance with one kind of argument that infers the effect from the cause as well in accordance with a detailed exposition, although the knowledge of its detail is exclusive to the Being of its Originator, hallowed be His Names, or available through revelation and Divine teaching.

That which is appropriate for these pages at this stage, as mentioned earlier, is that all that which belongs to the categories of perfection, beauty and goodness does not derive except from the Reality of Existence, because there is nothing that has reality except It and, obviously;

that which stands in opposition to the Reality of Existence is either note-existence or essence (mahiyyah), which are in themselves nothing and have no value, being sheer vacuity or pure fancy, and basically they have no subsistence until they are illumined with the light of Being or are manifested through its manifestation, neither a subsistence in respect of essence (dhat) nor in respect of attributes and effects.

Each of them (i.e. essences) come to possess manifestation, properties and effects only in the shadow of existence and only when they are touched by the hand of expansive mercy Hence all perfections are rays of the beauty of Absolute Beauty and reflections of the sacred light of the Absolutely Perfect One. Other existents are nothing in themselves, being steer poverty and absolute nothingness. Hence all perfections derive from Min and belong to Him.[7]

Also, it is established in its own place that that which emanates from that Sacred Being is the real substance of being and the sheer content of existence without its being limited by limits pertaining to non-being and essence, because non-being and essence do not derive from the Source of Being and limitation in grace (fayd) derives from the limitations of the receiver of grace. Anyone who understands the character of the effusion and grace as explained the people of gnosis will affirm that no kind of limitation or restriction is conceivable in the Divine effusion of grace.

Hence in the same way that the Sacred Divine Essence (dhat) is to be considered free from deficiency, contingency; and limitation, so also His Sacred Effusion (fayd-e muqaddas) must be considered to be devoid and free from all limits of contingency; as well as contingent aspects that derive from essence and the limitations that derive from finitude and deficiency. Hence the effusion of His grace, which is the reflection of the Absolutely Beautiful One, is absolute and complete beauty and perfection. Hence He is Beautiful ill His Essence (dhat), Attributes, and Acts, and nothing except that which is sheer being pertains to His making and creation.[8]

Also it is established ii its own place that all the evils, catastrophes, death, disease and destructive events and troublesome creatures and other such things which are in this world of nature and this narrow pit of darkness arise from the interferences and conflicts between existents, not from the aspects pertaining to Being but on account of the deficiency of their ambiance and the narrowness of their abode. And these derive from limitations and deficiencies which are totally outside the ambit of the light of creation and are in reality below making (ja'l). The true reality is the Light which is quit of all evil, defect and deficiency

However, these defects and evils and harmful and troublesome things, in respect of their defectiveness and harmfulness, are not essential objects of creation, but they arc accidental

objects of creation in accordance with the metaphysical viewpoint. Because, if the world of nature itself were not to exist and were it not to possess the existential aspects relating to creation [its defects and evils would have been nonexistent] and similarly its benefit and good would not have been realized in it, because they do not belong to the category of absolute non-existence but are relative non-existences which have an accidental existence sub-ordinate to the dispositions [of things]. The proposition that is derived therefrom is a modified proposition (qadiyyah ma'dulah) or an affirmative proposition with a negative predicate (mujibah salibat al-mahmul), not a negative existential proposition (salibah muhasslah).[9]

In conclusion, that which essentially derives from creation and the Divine making is good and excellence, and the presence of evil, harm, and other things in relation to Divine providence leas the position of something that is subordinate and a by-product. To the first position refers God's statement in the noble verse: Whatever of good befalleth thee (O man), it is from Allah, and whatever or ill befalleth thee it is from thyself. (4: 79)

And the second position is referred to in the noble verse: Say (O Muhammad): Everything is from God. (4:78)

And to these two considerations, there are many references in the traditions of the Infallible Ahl al-Bayt (A) including the sacred tradition cited here which states that good and evil both derive from God's creation.

God's Carrying Out Good And Evil Acts At The Hands Of The Servants

Reflection on the points mentioned leads one to understand the character of God's carrying out good and evil acts at the hands of creatures without its leading to the dangers of compulsion (jabr). To investigate this matter in such a way as to make it clear and to remove the doubts requires a detailed study of various theological creeds with its multifarious preliminaries whose mention is not possible in these pages. However, a brief reference, to the extent appropriate for this discussion, is unavoidable.

It should be known that it is not possible for any existent to be independent in any of its actions, unless the agent or the cause can block all the ways to non-existence facing an effect, so that if there were a hundred conditions for an existent to come into being and the cause blocks ninety-nine ways to non-existence facing the effect and one of the conditions remains un fulfilled, it is not possible for the cause to be independent in bringing about its effect. Hence independence in causality depends on the ability of the cause to block all the possible ways to non-being facing the effect so that it may reach the frontiers of necessity and brought into existence.

It is known, on the basis of logical necessity that all beings of the contingent realms, from the beings of the highest jabarut and the highest malakut to the inmates of the world of nature and mulk, with all their outer and inner powers, lack such a station. For the very first non-being facing an effect is the non-being arising from the absence of the efficient cause, and there is no existent in the realm of being which can overcome the non-being facing the effect in this respect, for that would imply a transformation of that which is contingent by essence into that which is necessary by essence and the departure of the contingent from the limits of the realm of contingency and this is impossible on the basis of rational self-evidence.

Hence it is known that independence in causality requires independence in existence and this is absent among contingents. This explanation reveals that the delegation of creation to any existence in any of the respects pertaining to existence is impossible. This is not limited to those who are religiously responsible for their actions (mukallaf) and their deeds, though such a limitation may be suggested by the usual statements of the theologians (mutakallimim).

However the generality of the issue at debate can be understood from a variety of topics. But due to the importance of the discussion concerning the acts of the mukallafs the debate is confined to this context in the discussions of the theologians. In any case, the debates of the theologians are of no concern to us and our purpose is to seek and establish the truth, and the impossibility of tafwid to and, of the creatures in any matter whatsoever is obvious and known.

The Refutation Of Compulsion (Jabr)

The invalidity, of the creed of jabr becomes also known on study. It consists of the belief that none of the ontological intermediaries have a role in the creation of existents although one imagines them to possess such a role. [It means], for instance, that fire has no role in producing heat and it has been a habit of God to create heat following the creation of the form of fire without the form of fire possessing any role in producing heat. Had the habit of God been to create cold following the creation of fire it would not have had a form different from the present one in which it occurs.

In summary, [they claim that] the Sacred Essence is the direct agent of the acts of all mukallafs without the intervention of any intermediate means.[10] In their own fancy they have adopted this creed for the sake of Hallowing God by negating limitations in respect to Him and so as not to consider His hands as tied. ‘Tied be their hands’ (5:70) and cursed be they for this kind of hallowing, which implies deficiency and resemblance to creatures (tashbih) from the viewpoint of metaphysics and the creed of gnosis.

As indicated in the preceding section, God, the Exalted, is absolute perfection and sheer

existence, and limits and deficiency arc inconceivable in His Essence and Attributes. That which derives from Divine creation and making is absolute being and the absoluteness of the Sacred Effusion, and it is not possible that a deficient and limited existent should emanate from that Sacred Essence. There is no kind of deficiency whatsoever in creation, as imagined by the theologians, and all limitations and deficiencies derive from the deficiency of the receiver of Divine effusion and the effect, and this stands proved in its own place.[11]

Hence, that which relates directly to the Sacred Essence of God, the Exalted, is absolute being and sheer existence, and that is either the Sacred Effusion according to the way of the gnostics, or the First Immaterial Intellect and the First Noble Light, according to the creed of the metaphysicians.

To explain this in other words, there is no doubt that the existents are different in their receptivity to existence. There are some existents, which receive existence directly and independently; such as substances, for example, and some existents do not receive existence without the existence of something else and without subordination to another existent, such as accidents and things possessing a weak existence.

For instance, the speech of Zayd is something which in order to exist does not receive existence except in subordination [to the existence of Zayd], and accidents and attributes can have no existence without the existence of substances and the objects of which they are attributes, and they cannot exist without them. This deficiency is essential to these existents and their existential inadequacy; it is not due to deficiency in the agency and creativity of God, Exalted is His station. Hence it is known that jabr and negation of existential intermediaries in the realm of being are impossible.

Among firm arguments pertaining to this topic is that the essences (mahiyyat) are in themselves devoid of the capacity to produce or receive efficiency, and creation does nor relate to them by essence (bil-dhat), as it is the Reality of Being which is the source of efficiency by essence and the negation of efficiency in relation to It implies that a thing should not be what it is. Hence, the creation of the planes of existence devoid of efficiency and effect is absolutely impossible and implies the negation of a thing's identity with itself.

In conclusion, it is known that both tafwid and jabr are invalid and impossible on the basis of metaphysical reasoning and rational criteria. 'The creed of the middle position' (amr bayn al-amrayn) is one which is affirmed by the way of the people of gnosis as well as by transcendental philosophy. However, there is a great divergence of opinion among the ulama (R) concerning its meaning.

That which is the soundest of views and most secure from controversy and more in

consonance with the religion of tawhid is the creed of the illustrious gnostics and the people of the heart. However, this creed, on every topic pertaining to the Divine teachings, stands in the category of ‘simple and impossible’ (sahl wa mumtani) whose understanding is not possible through metaphysical argument and study and is unattainable without complete piety of the heart as well as Divine succor.

Accordingly, we shall leave it for those who are worthy of it, that is, the awliya’ of God, and enter this valley through the road of the pursuers of rational thought. And that is to reject both tafwid-which means the independence of existents in efficiency-and jabr-which is the negation of their efficiency-and to affirm the middle position (manzilah bayn al-manzilatyn), which consists of affirming their efficiency and negating their independence and asserting that the position of the creation is like Being and the attributes of Being.

In the same way that the existents exist, without being independent in their existence, and have attributes, which are posited of them without their being independent, they have actions. and effects which are posited of them and which emanate from them but they are not independent in their existence and they arc agents and creative causes that are non-independent in their efficiency and creativity

And it should be known-as reflection on points mentioned in the preceding section will revealed-that good and evil are attributable both to God and the creatures and that both these attributions are correct, and it is for the same reason that it has been stated in this tradition that it is God who brigs about good and evil through the hands of His servants. Nevertheless, all that is good is relates to Good essentially (bi al-dhat) while its relation to the servants and the creatures is accidental (bi al-’arad.) The evils, on the contrary; arc related to other existents essentially and their relation to God, the Exalted, is accidental. And to this matter refers the hadith qudsi which declares.

O son of Adam! I am more worthy of your virtues than yourself and you are more worthy of your vices than Me.[12]

Reference was made to this tradition earlier and here we will refrain from repeating that which has already been mentioned.

.And Praise is God’s, in the beginning and the end

Notes:

[1] Al-Kulayni, Usul al-Kafı, i. 154, “kitab al-tawhid,” “bab al-khayr wa al-sharr,” hadith 1.

[2] For the first opinion sec al-Majlisi, Biha’r al-anwar, iv, 187, “abwab asma’ihi ta’ala wa haqa’iqiha wa sifatiha wa m’aniha,” bab 3. For the second one see al-Tabrisi, Majma’ al-bayan ,

commentary on bismillah al-rahman ar-rahim (from the Surat al-Hamd.)

[3] Al-Majlisi, Mir'at al-Uqul, ii, 171-172, "kitab al-tawhid," "bab al-khayr wa al-sharr," hadith 1.

[4] Majma al-bayan, commentary on verse 29 of the Sura al-Ra'd. The text of the tradition is as follows:

[5] See Majma al-bahrayn and Lisan al-Arab, wide w.y.h.

[6] The Qamus al-muhit cites this Prophetic tradition under w.y.l (It (i.e. Wayl) is a valley in hell through which the infidel's fall will take forty years before he reaches its bottom.)

[7] Al-asfar al-arba'ah, ii, 292ff-.see also ibid., i, the discussion on the fundamentality of existence (asalat al-wujud).

[8] Al-asfar al-arba'ah, ii, 292, fasl 25-29.

[9] Al-asfar al-arba'ah, vii, 58-62, safar 3, muqif 8, fasl 2.

[10] Kashfal-murad, 239-240; Fi 'ilm al-kalam, ii, 62, 78, 79.

[11] Al-Asfar al-arba'ah, ii, 127ff., safar 2, maqalah 6, the discussion on cause and effect ('illat wa ma'lul), fasl 2, 13, 14, 25, 26, 26, 29. See also vi, 320 ff, safar 3, muqif 4, fasl 3.

[12] Al-Jawahir al-saniyyah, p. 279. The text of the tradition is as follows: From al-Rida (A)… He said, "God said: O son of Adam! I am more worthy of your virtues than yourself and you are more worthy of your vices than Me".