

Theological Matters Discussed by Imam al-Baqir(A.S.)

Ima`m Abu` Ja'far (al-Ba`qir) researched many theological matters during his lectures. He was asked about the most complicated matters in this science. He answered them. Worth mentioning, the time of the Ima`m was the most sensitive of all the times. That is because the Islamic conquer included most areas of the world and the peoples of the earth. That moved a wave of spite in the souls of the enemies of Islam, from the helpless peoples and other than them. Thus, they launched a propagating campaign against the Islamic thought. They proclaimed doubts and imaginations among the children of the Moslems.

Meanwhile the Umayyad governments encouraged anti-Islam thoughts. No one has mentioned that the Umayyad rulers resisted these thoughts and prevented them from spreading among the Moslems. In the meantime nobody was ready to save the Moslems from these thoughts except Ima`m Abu` Ja'far (al-Ba`qir), peace be on him, who refuted them with strong proofs. We will mention that in detail when we talk about the time of the Ima`m.

However, the following are some of the theological researches which the Ima`m did:

Monotheism

Ima`m Abu` Ja'far (al-Ba`qir), peace be on him, studied the most important matters of monotheism. He uncovered them. He refuted the doubts and imaginations which were raised about them. Among what he studied are:

1. Allah is not attained through Reason

The unquestionable thing is that man is unable to know with all his intellectual the reality of Allah, for reason has limited imaginations. Al-Sha`fi'i said: "Indeed reason has a limited end as the eye has.

All things which man senses are found at a certain place and time. Reason cannot imagine beings without a place or things without time. Thus, reason is unable to attain the reality of Allah, for neither time nor place can encompass it. In other words, Allah created the time and the place. Besides reason is unable to understand the reality of many things in the universe. Among them is the unseen reality which reason has not understood yet.

The conceptualization of the heart, though it has vast imagination, is unable to attain the essence of Allah. The eye is unable to attain it, too. Ima`m Abu` Ja'far (al-Ba`qir), peace be on him, stated that when he was asked about these words of Allah, the Exalted: "The eyes attain Him not, but He attains the eyes.

([The Holy Qur'an, al-An'am, 203](#))

He, peace be on him: "The conceptualization of hearts are keener and sharper than the perceptions of the eyes. Through the conceptualization of the heart you can perceive countries like Sind, Hind (India) and other cities which you have never visited, although you have not seen them with your eyes. How can your eyes see Him when the conceptualization of your heart cannot attain Him?

Indeed the eye shall come back confused and fatigued when it tries to perceive the essence of Allah, the Most High, the Creator of the cosmos, and giver of life. Ibn Abi al-Haddid said:

O Miracle of the cosmos, thinking has become unsound concerning You.

Whenever my thinking moves toward You a span of the hand, it escapes for a mile.

You have perplexed men of understanding and confused intellect. ([Sharh Nahjul-Balagha, vol. 13, p. 51](#))

There is nothing remoter than attaining the essence of Allah, the Exalted, for reason is unable to attain it. Thus, 'Abd al-Rahma`n b. Abi al-Najra`n asked Abu` Ja'far (al-Ba`qir), peace be on him, about Allah, the Most High. He said:

"Should I think of anything (to understand Allah)?" The Ima`m, peace be on him, replied:

"Yes, but you have to imagine a thing which the mind cannot contain and which is without limit. He is unlike whatever comes into your mind. Nothing resembles Him nor can any thought reach Him. How can He be perceived when He is totally different from whatever is conceived and is the reverse of whatever is imagined. (Because Allah cannot be limited through the limitations of the mind or the senses.) Certainly, the thing which cannot be encompassed by the mind and which is without limits is that which should be imagined. ([Usul al-Kafi, vol. 1, p. 82](#))

The Eternity of the Necessary Being

As for the Eternity of the Necessary Being, it is among the keenest theological and philosophical studies. A man asked Ima`m Abu` Ja'far (al-Ba`qir), peace be on him: "Tell me

from when your Lord has been in existence?"The Ima`m replied: "Woe unto You! The question when and how long arises only in respect of things that (previously) were non-existent. Verily, my lord, the Blessed and Exalted, has always been Ever-living, without time or modality.

Coming into existence does not apply to Him Who exists eternally nor does 'how He exists' apply to His existence nor does 'where He exists' apply to him, for He is neither in a thing nor on a thing. He did not invent a place for His location, nor was there any enhancement in His might after He had created the universe, nor had He been weak before its creation, nor was He alone before His act of creation, nor does He resemble anything that can be remembered, nor was He without dominion before creating the universe, nor will He be bereft of dominion after the universe passes away.

He is Ever-living, Self-subsisting, the Almighty Lord without the category of life. He was the Almighty Lord before creating things, and He is the Absolute Lord after the creation of the universe. None of the categories of 'how' or 'where' or 'when' or 'how much' nor any 'limit' apply to his existence. He is not recognized by resemblance with anything nor does He become decrepit due to His endless existence. Nothing can strike awe in Him.

Rather, all things are awe-struck by fearing Him. He was in existence before the appearance of life as such. Neither is He in existence such as can be described, nor can it be confined to any state and condition. He does not rest anywhere nor does He abide at a place that is in the neighborhood of another place. However, He is known as Living, the Lord whose might and dominion will never end. He has created of His own will whatever and whenever He desired. He can neither be confined, nor fractioned, nor can He be destroyed. He is the First without any modality and the Last without any space.'And all things are perishable except His face.'His are the creation and the command. Blessed be Allah, the Lord of all beings.

O Questioner, woe unto you! Surely, my Lord can never be encompassed by the imagination. Doubts cannot descend upon him. Nor can He be affected (by anything). Nor is He anybody's neighbor. Nor can events happen to Him. He can neither be questioned about anything nor is He ashamed of anything. 'Slumber seize Him not, neither sleep.'To Him belong all that is in the heavens and the earth and all that is between them, and all that is underneath the soil.

(Usul al-Kafi, vol. 1, p. 88-89)

This wonderful paragraph of the speech of the great Ima`m has encompassed the eternity of the Necessary Being and His Unity. It has deemed Him far above comparison with His creatures which genus and species limit, and which are in need of the cause in their existence and non-existence.

Moreover, they are in need of time and place. Allah is far above all that, for He is the first and the last, outward and inward, and He knows all things. A researcher asked the Ima`m: "Who is Allah?" He replied: "The One and Only." It was said to him: "How is He?" He answered: "He is a Powerful King." It was said to him: "Where is He?" He replied: "He is watching." So, the researcher said: "I am not asking you about this." He said: "These are the attributes of Allah. Other than them are the attributes of creatures.

They wanted to know the essence of Allah through their senses and reason. They did not know that He was far above what reason attains and what conceptualization perceives. There is no god but He, the Ever living, the Self-subsisting.

However, in this speech, the Ima`m, peace be on him, discussed the most important theological matters which no one of the Moslem theologians and philosopher had discussed before him except his grandfather Ima`m 'Ali, the Commander of the Faithful, peace be on him. As for encompassing and explaining the speech of the Ima`m, peace be on him, it needs a detailed study. The Moslem philosophers have taken care of the points which the Ima`m has mentioned in his speech. They have produced evidence in support of them.

3. Talking about the Essence of Allah is forbidden

Ima`m Abu` Ja'far (al-Ba`qir), peace be on him, prevented Moslems from talking about the essence of Allah, the Most High. That is because that depends on a deep philosophy which the reason of the simple people is unable to understand. In other words they have little knowledge. Thus, they fall into the tricks of the Satan. Then they go out of belief and come into polytheism. In this connection the Ima`m, peace be on him, said: "Talk about all things, but do not talk about the essence of Allah.(Usul al-Kafi, vol. 1, p. 29)

He, peace be on him, said: "Talk about the creation of Allah, but do not talk about Allah Himself, for that increases the owner of the talk nothing except perplexity.(Usul al-Kafi, vol. 1, p. 29)

Indeed talking about the essence of Allah increases man nothing except perplexity and throwing destructive manners and doubts. As for thinking of the creation of Allah and

considering carefully the universe, they will lead man to belief in Allah. That is because the creation of all creature indicates the Great Creator. Darwin said: "It seems that all the creatures that live in the earth belong to one eternal shape. The Creator has breathed life into them.

([Al-Nishu' wa al-Irtiqā', p. 47](#))

It is false to say that chance has created all these worlds. It is impossible for chance to find a well-woven regulation that depends on knowledge. Why does chance not create the plane and modern sets which thinking and science have found?

4. The Knowledge of Allah

The knowledge of Allah has encompassed all things. The knowledge of Allah is the same before and after the creation of things. That is because He has created them. He knows what souls and hearts have. Mohammed b. Moslem reported on the authority of Abu` Ja'far (al-Ba`qir), peace be on him, who said: "Allah, the Great and Almighty, was there when nothing else existed. He has been eternally knowing whatever come into being. And His knowledge of a thing before it comes into being is exactly the same as it is after its being.

([Usul al-Kafi, vol. 1, p. 107](#))

5. The Essence of Monotheism

Ja`bir b. Yazid al-Ju'fi asked Ima`m Abu` Ja'far (al-Ba`qir), peace be on him, to teach him something of monotheism. So, he, peace be on him, said: Indeed Allah, whose names are blessed and Who is Exalted in the transcendence of His Essence, is the One (the only One). He is unique in Oneness, and He attributed Oneness to Himself when He was alone. Then, He made His Unity evidently known to His creatures. Thus, Allah is One, Unique, Self-dependent, and All-holy. All things worship Him and turn to Him in repentance. And His knowledge embraces all things.([Usul al-Kafi, vol. 1, p. 123](#))

6. The Attributes of Allah

Surely, the attributes of the Wise Creator are exactly the same as His Essence. There is no number among them, as it has been proved in theology. Some Iraqis deviated from the right path. So, they proclaimed that Allah, the Most High, heard with other than with He saw, and saw with other than with He heard. In that He is similar to His creatures. Mohammed b. Moslem told Ima`m Abu` Ja'far (al-Ba`qir), peace be on, about that. So, the Ima`m said:

"They have told lies, become atheists, and likened (Allah to His creatures). Far is Allah above that. Indeed He is All-Hearing, All-Seeing. He hears with what He sees, and sees with what He hears. Then Mohammed b. Sa`lim said:

"They claim that He sees according to what they think."So, the Ima`m, peace be on him, refuted their claims, saying: "Be Allah Exalted, the one who has the attribute of the creature perceive, but Allah is not such.([Usul al-Kafi, vol. 1, p. 123](#))

7. Doubt and Unbelief

Surely, the doubt and unbelief in Allah, the Creator of the skies and the earth, have bad final results. Among them is that no deed is accepted from the one who doubts Allah and the one who disbelieves in Him. Their deeds will not avail them on the Day of Judgment. For this reason, the Ima`m, peace be on him, said: "The deed with doubt and unbelief is useless.

([Jami'al-Sa'adat, vol. 1, p. 117](#))