

ISLAMIC VIEW OF OMNISCIENCE AND HUMAN FREEDOM

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Abstract. It has been commonly understood that divine knowledge, even though eternal and inclusive of foreknowledge of free human actions, does not restrict human freedom. However, the philosophers and theologians both in Muslim as well as in Jewish and Christian traditions have pointed out that apparently the doctrine of Omniscience of God does not cohere with the doctrine of *free will* of man. On this problem the Muslims became divided into Libertarians and Predestinarians. The Mu'tazilites were libertarian whereas the Ash'arites were predestinarian. The present research is an attempt to examine different formulations of the problem as well as solutions offered by Muslim theologians. It has been observed that Muslims' approach to interpret omniscience in an absolutist manner makes it incoherent with the concept of human freedom. The fact is that such approach has no basis in the Qur'ān. The Muslims have accepted it from Christianity. This article is an attempt to reconstruct the doctrine of Omniscience in the perspective of Qur'ānic teachings. The correct formulation of the concept of omniscience must include an indeterminate aspect concerning free choice of a human action.

The problems discussed in the history of Muslim theology and philosophy are generally of three types. Some of them are purely religious; some are purely philosophical; some are

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Note.—(i) The translation of verses has been quoted from Pickthall, Marmaduke (tr.) (1952), *The Glorious Qur'ān* (Bangalore: The Islamic Literature Publishing House) and shown in *italicised* format. Wherever only the import of a verse(s) is given, it is not italicised and abbreviation 'cf.' precedes the reference. (ii) I have preferred to use the word 'Allah' rather than 'God' where it has been used to depict specifically Qur'ānic concept of God.

problems of religion treated in terms of philosophy. The writer firmly believes that not only the problems of purely philosophical nature, but also at least some of the problems of purely religious nature, along with almost all of the problems of religion treated in terms of philosophy, have their origin either in Plato or in Aristotle. Many of these problems even could not have arisen, had the Muslims not accepted Greek philosophers views passed on to them through Christianity or through Judaism.¹ The present problem, *i.e.* the problem of the compatibility of Divine Omniscience and Human Freedom is no exception. The basic assumptions underlying traditional Christian approach to the understanding of the concept of Omniscience were not reconcilable with Qur'ānic concept of Omniscience. These were even not reconcilable with Biblical concept of God. The Christians and through them the Muslims accepted these assumptions unnoticed and it created problems with reference to its compatibility with Human Freedom. An attempt has been made in this article to uncover these assumptions and reconstruct the concept of Omniscience in Islamic Perspective.

Islam, Christianity and Judaism, in the present world, are the religions that claim their origin in revelation. They claim many attributes for God. They all share their belief in the Omniscience of God as well as man's free will. It has been pointed out by philosophers and theologians in Muslim as well as in Jewish and Christian traditions that apparently the doctrine of Omniscience of God does not cohere with the doctrine of man's free will. They have made attempts to formulate the problem as well as to give solution. The present research is an attempt to examine the problems as well as the solutions offered in this regard only with reference to Muslim tradition.

The problem of determinism or predestination in Islam has been identified both by the Orientalists as well as the Muslims. However, it mostly has been identified with reference to Divine Power or Omnipotence rather than Divine Knowledge or Omniscience. To cite few examples, W. Montgomery Watt, in his *Freewill and Predestination in Early Islam*, nowhere touches the problem of human free will with reference to its compatibility

with Divine Omniscience. In this book he does not even identify the problem from this point of view. In his *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, he identifies the problem but does not make it a subject of any elaborate analysis or discussion.² The writings of Harry Austryn Wolfson (1887-1974)³ on the problems of Muslim theology reflect vastness of his learning. Wolfson has good command on different languages including Arabic and basis his research on original sources. He, in his *The Philosophy of the Kalam*, mostly discusses the problem of Freedom and Predestination with reference to Divine Power. He cites in great detail the views of the Muslim theologians and their formulations of the theories of acquisition. He, however, does not miss to identify aspects of the problem of Predestination other than those based on the concept of Divine Power. He states these problems in the form of antinomies. Among these he also very clearly identifies the problems that arise for human free will from different interpretations of the concept of Omniscience, however, it fails to attract his philosophical acumen which he demonstrates in the analysis of other problems. He states this problem very briefly. He neither formulates it into an antinomy nor does he give any elaborate discussion or analysis. He neither traces the history nor finds views of other orientalist, Martin Schreiner, Ignacz Goldziher, R. Nicholson or others to cite on this problem.⁴ Franz Rosenthal, in his *Knowledge Triumphant: The Concept of Knowledge in Medieval Islam*, discusses different definitions of knowledge including views of Muslim theologians about God's Knowledge. Dilating upon the implications of the view that takes God's Knowledge to be eternal he, no doubt, identifies the problem of the incompatibility of Omniscience with human freedom but it is only in few lines that he gives his comments. He makes no detailed analysis or discussion nor does he develop the problem any further.⁵ Allama Mohammad Iqbal (1877-1938), who is an eminent Muslim thinker of the modern era discusses the concept of Omniscience only with reference to its implications for Freedom of God and develops his own philosophical concept of Omniscience.⁶ He does not discuss the bearings of any concept of Omniscience for actions of human free will. Syed Abul A'la Moududi (1903-1979)⁷ identifies the

problems that arise for human free will with reference to its compatibility with Omniscience, Omnipotence, and Eternal Will but observes that the Qur'ān does not discuss these problems in their metaphysical aspect because of man's inability to understand them.⁸ Dr. Abdul Khaliq,⁹ in his *Problems of Muslim Theology* while discussing the problem of Determinism and Human Freedom, mostly concentrates on the implications of the concept of Divine All-Powerfulness on free human actions and does not address to the problem that arises for Human Free will from any interpretation of the concept of Omniscience.¹⁰ The same is the case with Professor M. Saeed Sheikh (d. 2003).¹¹ His ultimate focus in his article, Freedom and fatalism in Islam,¹² is to examine and explain the following three Arabic terms: 'Qadar', 'Taqdir', and 'Hādith'. This essay is primarily an analysis of some of the statements of the renowned Western scholars with regard to freedom and fatalism in Islam. However, he nowhere finds an occasion even to identify the problem under discussion. Dr. Hanifi Ozcan is an exception. Ozcan, in his article "The Relationship ... Problem" discusses the problem in great detail, though the scope of his research is limited. He studies the problem only in context of the statement that "Knowledge ('ilm) depends upon the known (*ma'lūm*)."¹³

These examples have been quoted to show that the problem under discussion has received little attention from theologians and research scholars both from Muslims as well as Orientalists. However, it does not show that the problem is in any way less important. Rather the opposite is the case. It is hoped that analysis made in this article would help remove much confusion from the intellectual circles on Islamic position on this problem. The approach in the analysis of this problem is in accordance with standard Islamist move that asserts the absolute primacy and sufficiency of the Qur'ān. The writer believes that the Qur'ān is authoritative, it is perspicuous and internally self-consistent, and wishes to show that such position on the Qur'ān is the only way to resolve the difficulties that the classical Kalam tradition and philosophical theology had with the problem of free will and predestination. Holy Qur'ān supports this position. It is stated in the Qur'ān that the Qur'ān is *the truth (al-Haqq)* from your Lord.

(2:147; 3:60; 18:29; etc.) *The truth* means the standard of truth. What *the truth* certifies is truth. If anything is contrary to what is taught in the Qur'ān, is untruth (*bāṭil*) and cannot help but produce confusion and incoherence with other concepts. The objective of the article is to show that Muslims absolutist interpretation of the Divine attribute of Omniscience¹⁴ was un-Qur'ānic, therefore incorrect, and it is suggest instead that a logical approach would be commendable. Had the Muslims not fallen into the pitfall of viewing Omniscience in this way and also had not accepted some other attributes as Divine under the influence of Greeks and Christians, they would have been saved from being led to predestinarianism. Their very perspective to talk on Divine Knowledge would have been different. In this article an attempt has been made to reconstruct the Omniscience and other related religious concepts in accordance with Qur'ānic teachings.

According to the Qur'ānic concept of human life, man has not been sent to the earth as a punishment, but with the purpose to see whether divine bestowment is being utilized in his life according to Divine Guidance.¹⁵ Utilization of provisions granted by Allah determines the direction. Man is to be rewarded for the direction he takes. The Qur'ān lays ultimate stress to join faith with righteous deed;¹⁶ but it is not the action that is important, it is the direction (which one takes) that makes an action righteous or wrong-doing. A claim not certified by the accordant actions does not prove to be true, is the principle enunciated in the Qur'ānic teachings.¹⁷ Resurrection and man's accountability before God is among the basic articles of Muslim Faith.¹⁸ The concept of Afterlife as presented in the Qur'ān is based on the idea that this very present (*Dār al-'Amal* — دارالعمل) is going to change into Future *i.e.*, afterlife (*Dār al-Jazā'* — دارالجزا').¹⁹ All these teachings presuppose freedom of will, on the part of man, to choose the right or a wrong course; and one can well imagine the life of the people and the texture of the society which was brought into being by these teachings. However, the orientalist are generally inclined towards the opinion that the original teachings of Islam were predestinarian in nature and it was under some external influence that the libertarian views could enter into

Islam. Wolfson, for example, states that (1) predestinarian views comprise the original teaching of Islam and (2) that libertarian views could enter into Islam under the influence of Christianity.²⁰ In order to support his first contention, he categorizes the statements occurring in the Qur'ān about the Power of God into three markedly distinct kinds: statements about God's Power over what happens in the world; statements about God's Power over what happens to human beings; and the statements about God's Power over the actions performed by human beings. With regard to statements falling under first two categories Wolfson mentions such general statements as the following: *His is the Sovereignty of the heavens and the earth; He quickeneth and He giveth death; and He is able to do all things.* (al-Qur'ān, 57:2-3; and also cf. 6:2, 11:8). As regards God's Power over human actions, Wolfson says that there are contradictory statements: (i) there are some statements which affirm absolute predestination as for instance 10:100; 7:29-30; 6:125; 2:6; 63:11; (ii) whereas there are some verses which affirm complete freedom, for example 18:28; 20:84; 6:106; 2:24; 40:37.²¹ In order to support his second contention, Wolfson refers to three kinds of material: (a) he quotes some traditions in the name of the Prophet Mohammad (Peace and blessing of Allah be upon him) and then compares these traditions with certain similar rabbinic traditions to show that "in rabbinic lore a distinction is made between 'what happens to man' and 'what man does'; and while the former is predestined, the latter is left to man's free choice whereas no such distinction is made in the Muslim traditions; human action is as predestined as the events of human life;"²² (b) a statement of the doctrine of predestination by Jahm b. Safwān (d. 746); (c) narration of a fictitious disputation between a Christian and a Muslim by John of Damascus. (d. ca. 748).²³

As to the question of why 'early Muslims' (?)²⁴ preferred to choose predestinarian passages in the Qur'ān instead of the libertarian ones, Wolfson sees its origin in two things: (i) in the fact that Power (which includes God's Power over human action) is stated as the chief Attribute of the Qur'ānic God. As a proof to this, he says that a contrast has so often been made in the Qur'ān between the powerfulness of God of Islam and the powerlessness

of the false pre-Islamic gods that the Muslims were naturally led to give preference to the predestinarian passages than the libertarian passages of the Qur'ān and were led to take the predestinarian passages as establishing the standard of true belief.²⁵ But it is absolutely wrong to say that Power is stated as the chief Attribute of the Qur'ānic God. The Qur'ān nowhere supports it. The Qur'ān states many Attributive Names of Allah, e.g., Powerful, Hearer, Knower, Seer, Wise, Beneficent, Merciful, Loving Friend, Protector, and so on; and it says: *Allah! There is no God save Him. His are the most beautiful Names* (20:8); *He is Allah, the Creator, the Shaper out of naught, the Fashioner. His are the Most Beautiful Names. All that is in the heavens and the earth glorifieth Him, and He is the Mighty, the Wise* (59:24). (For further references, see 7:180; 17:110). Wolfson quotes Schreiner, Goldziher and Watt's views on the same question who agree with Wolfson as to his contention that the Qur'ān contains contradictory statements (or that its teachings are predestinarian in nature) but differ with him as to the alleged reason for the preference given by 'early Muslims' to the predestinarian passages over the libertarian ones.²⁶ Dr. Abdul Khaliq too thinks that the generality of the 'early Muslims' was convinced of the fact that God determined and controlled the department of human activity as He determined and controlled the destinies of the objects of the universe. In order to substantiate his contention he mentions "not a leaf could move without His decree" as a belief of the 'early Muslims'.²⁷

It is misleading to divide the verses or passages of the Qur'ān into 'predestinarian' and 'libertarian' ones. No book, which is consistent, would allow such a categorization of its text into irreconcilable contradictories. The case of the Qur'ān is even more strong. It claims to be a Book, it claims to be Word of Allah, and it claims to be consistent and intact. *This (i.e., the Qur'ān) is the Scripture whereof there is no doubt.* (2:2) Allah certifies the Qur'ān to be a consistent book *par excellence* when He says: *Praise be to Allah Who hath revealed the Scripture unto His slave, and hath not placed therein any crookedness.* (al-Qur'ān, 18:01) also, *Allah has revealed the fairest of statements, a Scripture consistent* [Ahsan-al-Hadith Kitāb احسن الحديث كتاب]

..., (Qur'ān, 39:23); (*It is the Qur'ān in Arabic, containing no crookedness [i.e., inconsistency] ...* (Al-Qur'ān, 39:28) Similarly the phrase 'early Muslims', as used above, is quite vague. The Qur'ān classifies the early Muslims into three categories: those on the right hand (*Ashāb-ul-Yameen*); those on the left hand (*Ashāb-ush-Shimāl*); and the foremost in the race (*as-Sābiqūn-al-Awwalūn* — السابِقون الماولون). (al-Qur'ān, cf. 56:7-10, 09:100) There are three possible behaviours in all times: Those who are righteousness-oriented. They are on the right hand. Then are those who follow their desires. People on the left hand are desire-oriented. Then come those who love the *Shāhid* (شاهد — the Prophet). 'First and foremost in the race' and 'those who sincerely followed them' (cf. 09:100)²⁸ are *Shāhid-oriented*. The 'foremost in the race' are those for whom there is perfectly good sense in referring to them as an authority. There is absolutely no sense in using the term 'early Muslims' undifferentiatedly.²⁹ The 'foremost in the race' very clearly knew what these three categories of men are going to get would be only as "reward of what they would do." (Al-Qur'ān, cf. 56:24, also cf. Chapter 56) The 'early Muslim' could never believe in any statement of the type "not a leaf could move without Allah's decree" or 'even a particle does not move without Allah's decree' (Lā tataharraku zarratun illā bi-idhni Llah — لا تتحرك ذرة الا باذن الله).³⁰ Any such statement is absolutely contrary to the Qur'ānic teachings. It destroys all distinction between the righteous and the evil actions. The Qur'ānic teaching in this regard is that '*even a leaf would not fall, but He (Allah) knows it.*' (Al-Qur'ān, 6:59) There is essential difference between the two statements. As to what were the original teachings of Islam in this regard, they will be made clear as we proceed.³¹ However, it can be said at this juncture that predestinarianism had never been the teachings of Islam. There was never any confusion in the companions of the Prophet who have been called 'the foremost in the race' and 'those who followed them with sincerity'. These companions of the Prophet (pbuh) believed in freedom of will and man's accountability before God, and emphatically denied the idea of compulsion (*jabr*).³² How could they believe in any statement of Allah's sovereignty or Omniscience that amounted to compulsionism in

face of the following teachings of the Qur'ān: *Whoso doth an ill-deed, he will be repaid the like thereof, while whoso doth right, whether male or female, and is a believer, all such will enter the Garden, where they will be nourished without stint* (40:40); and also cf. 2:281; 3:25; 16:11.³³ As an example the case of 'Abd Allah b. 'Umar, who died in 73/692, is worth mentioning. He believed that "God's knowing what actions a human being chooses, is only a result of the realization of the human's choice there."³⁴ The unspecified and vague use of the term 'early Muslim' has been misleading and a cause of great confusion. It is the third category whose opinion is to be accepted as the standard at all times. The Qur'ān calls them 'sound in instruction' or 'firm in knowledge'. (cf. 3:7; 4:162) The certified one's (*Shāhidīn*), those whom the Prophet (pbuh) declared the dwellers of Paradise while they were still alive — *al-'Ashra-tul-Mubashira* العشرة المبشرة — (and then those whom these people certified) are the highest in rank among them.³⁵ Without any doubt they were *the first* among the 'foremost in race' (*as-Sābiqūn-al-Awwalūn*). Wolfson says that the term *al-Salaf* (the predecessors) in Muslim tradition is used for the companions of the Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) and for those who came after the companions. Wolfson identifies *al-Salaf* (السلف) with 'early Muslims' and calls them 'the followers of early Islam' or 'orthodox Muslims'. What these *al-Salaf* agreed upon is taken to constitute that which may be called the good old-time religion of Islam.³⁶ Using this word in an undifferentiated manner is not correct on another count. The Qur'ān says: *We raise by grades whom We will – and over every lord of knowledge [ze-Ilm] there is one more knowing.*³⁷ (Al-Qur'ān, 12:76). Not each one of the *al-Salaf* (السلف) could be equally knowledgeable. To believe them equally knowledgeable would be against experience, reason, and teachings of the Qur'ān. Most of all, use of the word *al-Salaf* (السلف) to refer to 'the foremost in the race' (*as-Sābiqoon-al-Awwalūn* السابِقون الأَولون) does not have its roots in the Qur'ān.

The sense of freedom and then accountability before God was the most emphatic and forceful idea which would drive the life of these faithful Muslims, and they would believe in Allah's possessing Power over all things in the sense that no one could

save oneself from Allah if one would disobey Allah. The orthodox were the people who preferred revelation over hair splitting in the name of rational thinking but the reason behind this attitude was their concept of knowledge that 'knowledge is post-experience', *i.e.* knowledge comes only after one puts into practice ('*amal*) Allah's injunctions, without this it would be to speak on the base of 'precept' (*qawl*) alone, which practice Allah hates most.³⁸ The all-pervading Will of God, Infinite Power and Omniscience on the one hand, and freedom of the human will and action, on the other, are equally stressed in the Qur'ān. No orthodox who believed in requital in the Heaven or Hell can ever be supposed to hold predestinarian or fatalistic views. The *foremost in the race* were neither *Qadrites* nor *Jabrites*.

The Qur'ān is a Scripture, which is absolutely intact as to its text³⁹ and is absolutely free from any inconsistency *viz a viz.* its content.⁴⁰ Wolfson is mistaken when he says that with regard to God's Power over human actions it contains contradictory statements. What appeared to Wolfson as contradictory statements was the outcome of a particular interpretation which to me is a defective interpretation. Actually they are not contradictory statements, and are reconcilable through a particular interpretation that I am going to propose. For instance, Wolfson mentions: *A party hath He [Allah] led aright, while error hath just hold over (another) party, for lo! they choose the devils for protecting friends instead of Allah and deem that they are rightly guided.* (7:30); *And whomsoever it is Allah's Will to guide, He expandeth his bosom unto the Surrender, and whomsoever it is His Will to send astray, He maketh his bosom close and narrow Thus Allah layeth ignominy upon those who [choose to] believe not [kafaru – كَفَرُوا],* (6:125) as verses which affirm absolute predestination, but parts of the verses underscored above falsify Wolfson's claim. As for the following verses, *As for the disbelievers [i.e., those who have chosen to disbelieve], whether thou warn them or thou warn them not it is all one for them; they believe not* (02:06), and the verse, *It is not for any soul to believe save by the permission of Allah* (10:100) are concerned, it is beyond one's ability to understand how these affirm absolute predestination. One who denies the

truth (*al-Haqq*) and chooses to side with untruth (*bātil*) becomes firm in disbelief. And one who persists in opposing the bearer of truth does not come to the Faith whether you warn him, or you warn him not. Similarly, one who worships his desires goes astray. (cf. 45:23) One who hears only what appeals to his desires, one whose observation obeys his desires, is unable to see the truth. One, who spends what God has given him entirely for the satisfaction of his desires, worships his desires. He is a person who does not see purposefulness in life. Such a person is least bothered about knowing what is the best model to spend a purposeful life? He does not follow the Prophet. Allah does not Please to permit such a person to come to believe. Allah sets a seal on their hearts and on their hearing and a cover on their eyes. (al-Qur'ān, cf. 02:07) Allah only permits those to come to believe who have firm faith in the purposefulness of life, who use their reason and choose the Prophet as a role model and obey him (pbuh) (*laqad kana lakum fi rasoolillah uswatun hasana; اسوة حسنة* الله لقد كان لكم في رسول الله cf. 33:21). As far as the traditions are concerned, the fundamental and final touchstone of declaring any tradition a saying of the Prophet of Islam, is the Qur'ān. No saying of the Prophet (pbuh) can ever contradict or be inconsistent, even to the slightest degree, to the articles of Faith enunciated in the Qur'ān.⁴¹

The question then is how did the controversy regarding the freedom and determinism could arise in Islam? The conscious emergence of the controversy with all the desperate implications was officially occasioned during the Ummayyed rule (661-750) in Islam and it clearly was based on their political interests.⁴² On the brutal murder of Hazrat Hussein (61/680) and other members of his family, Umayyads had to face the curse and condemnation from all over the Muslim world. They were in dire need of some sort of a doctrine that could work as defence for them. None could initiate and promote this controversy if it did not suit them. Predestinarianism only suited Umayyads. They alone could be the ultimate beneficiary of this doctrine.

After these preliminary remarks let us see the difference between the Predestinarians and Libertarians. In Muslims,

Ash'arites were predestinarian as against the Mu'tazilites⁴³ who were libertarian. According to the predestinarians, "there is no distinction between the actions that occur in the world including the actions which occur to man, and the actions which are performed by man."⁴⁴ According to the libertarians, "there is a distinction between actions that occur in the world (including actions which occur to man) — and actions performed by man. The former actions admitted by all but two of the libertarians⁴⁵ to be directly created by Allah; the latter actions are taken by them to be performed by man's free will."⁴⁶ Their assertion of free will, made the libertarian confront two difficulties: First, how would he explain those verses in the Qur'ān which directly or indirectly ascribe Allah's control over human action? Second, how would he reconcile the description of Allah in the Qur'ān as All-Knowing with his (*i.e.*, libertarian's) conception of man's free will?⁴⁷ The predestinarians formulated arguments to prove the views of the libertarians to be self-inconsistent. The antinomies, which arose from these difficulties, have been presented by Wolfson under five headings which include: (i) The antinomy of free will and Allah's Foreknowledge; (ii) The antinomy of free will and the predestinarian verses in the Qur'ān; (iii) The antinomy of free will and the appointed term (*ajal mussammā*); (iv) The antinomy of free will and Allah's Power; and (v) The antinomy of free will and preordained sustenance.⁴⁸ We shall examine the antinomy of free will and Allah's Fore-Knowledge in this article. We shall examine this dilemma neither on behalf of the libertarians (*i.e.*, the *Mu'tazilites*) nor on behalf of any other of the Muslim theologians, but from the point of view of the original teachings of Islam. Predestinarian views had never been coherent with the original teachings of Islam as prescribed in the Qur'ān. In order to substantiate this assertion it was but necessary to reconstruct the Qur'ānic concepts of 'Omniscience, 'Freedom of will', 'Will of Allah and Pleasure of Allah' 'Divine Decree', 'Concept of the Categories of Men', 'Ontological status of the verses of the Qur'ān', 'Preserved Tablet', 'Mother of the Book', 'Human Life' and 'Life Hereafter'. Significance of the understanding of the concept of God's knowledge on human level is central for deciding whether there can be some degree of

freedom for human action or whether rigid predestination is to prevail. If God were to know what human beings were going to do and if God's Knowledge (*i.e.*, omniscience) were to mean the knowledge of everything particular and universal, if it was eternal and immutable, man's fate was of necessity determined in all its details.⁴⁹

Before we examine the dilemma and the solutions offered by the libertarians in this respect, let us study different positions taken by scholars who accepted the view of omniscience as 'knowledge of everything particular and universal' and as 'eternal knowledge being the characteristic of God'.

The following views were presented by the theologians: (i) God's knowledge is eternal and as such incompatible with human freedom. (ii) God's knowledge is not eternal, *i.e.* it is originated (*hadith*) or it takes place simultaneously with or after the occurrence of the object of knowledge and as such does not hinder human freedom; therefore, it is compatible with human freedom. (iii) God's knowledge is eternal but not incompatible with human freedom.⁵⁰

First of these is presented by *fatalists* (*Jabriyyah*). Such conception of God's 'eternal knowledge' leads either to "necessity" or to impossibility of free choice. It denies human freedom. The second view makes God's knowledge 'originated' (*hādith*) which is incompatible with the conception of God as Creator. It implies that God creates and then has knowledge of what He created. The third view belongs to Hishām b. al-Hakam (d. 199/814) and Abū al-Husayn al-Basrī (d. 436/1040). "According to them, God knows the essence and nature of things (*i.e.*, *universals*) eternally, but knowing particulars become possible only when they occur So God's knowledge depends upon the occurrence of the known." This view identifies two aspects in God's Knowledge: 'knowledge of *universals* which is eternal; and, *indeterminate* knowledge which depends upon the occurrence of the particular.' This view, apparently a midway between two extremes, was not accepted by those who thought that being eternal was the only characteristic of God's Knowledge.⁵¹ The Ash'arite and the Maturidite held 'being

eternal' as essential character of God's knowledge and observed that it never hindered human beings freedom of will and choice. They held that "God's foreknowing of actions of human beings is on account of their coming into existence through human being's choice. On the contrary, the occurring of those actions is not due to God's foreknowing them."⁵² Hasan al-Basri (21/642-110/728), making a distinction between *descriptive* and *determinative* functions of God's eternal knowledge asserts that God's knowledge is *descriptive*, but not *determinative*. This means that God knows what a human being will do depending on his own choice."⁵³ They argued that just as God's Knowledge of His Own actions was not a hindrance in His own freedom so as it was not a hindrance to man's free choice. This argument does not validly apply to human situation. Until one is not free to do otherwise of what God foreknows, he is not a *free agent* in reality; and given God's Knowledge as eternal (therefore immutable and infallible), it is not possible for anyone to do otherwise of what God foreknows. Dr. Hanifi Ozcan commenting on this argument observes "even if it is thought that God's knowledge about His Own actions will not be an obstacle to His Choice, ... it can not be said that His foreknowledge concerning human actions will not prevent the human choice. In the case of God's knowledge and choice, both "knower" and "referrer" is God Himself; His knowledge and choice are eternal. But both the choices and actions of human beings are created, and it is necessary for them to occur in the way they are known by God eternally." He further observes that "it does not seem correct to suggest that God's foreknowing the actions of human beings is not a reason for their occurrence Without accepting "change" in eternal knowledge, it is necessary for the human being to choose in the way which is suitable to what is known eternally"⁵⁴ Jalāl al-Dīn Dawwānī (d. 908/1502) holds that God's knowledge precedes the objects of His knowledge for God is the ultimate cause of all existents; He knows them due to being the cause of them.⁵⁵ [God is not cause but the Causer of causes — *Musabbib al-asbāb* مسبب الأسباب]⁵⁶ Dawwānī's view of Divine Knowledge, if extended to include free human choices, would render God as Causer of human moral actions then it would not be possible to hold man responsible for

these actions. ‘Abd Allah b. ‘Umar (d.73/692), on the other hand, believed that “God’s knowing what action a human being chooses is only a result of the realization of the human’s choice there.”⁵⁷

Interpreting this view Dr. Hanifi Ozcan observes that “this means that God knows the doing of an action or the not doing of it in the way that is appropriate to the choice of man at that time.”⁵⁸ The knowledge of God cannot be contrary to human choice. Ibn Rushd (520/1126-595/1198) feels that if it is held that “God’s knowledge depends on the known at the present”, it will lead to the conclusion that God is not able to know the existents before they come into being; and if it is thought that “God’s knowledge depends on the known in eternity” it will lead to the idea of eternity of the universe, at least, in the form of thought (*i.e.*, in the form of a project). As far as first part of Ibn Rushd’s view is concerned, Dr. Hanifi Ozcan’s observation that “this means that God knows of the doing of an action or the not doing of it in the way which is appropriate to the **choice of man** at that time,” is the right interpretation and carries more weight than of Ibn Rushd. As far as the second part of Ibn Rushd’s comments is concerned, Dr. Hanifi Ozcan perceives that if one tries to attribute freedom to human beings “by saying that this eternal knowledge, which is in the state of a project, is a neutral knowledge, that is, it does not necessitate any object to exist and does not prevent some body acting in accordance with his or her choice, then it will not yet be a complete freedom, for it is not possible to act contrary to the frame of this project because the content of eternal knowledge will not change.” Dr. Hanifi further observes that “if one ascribes freedom to man in the frame of eternal knowledge he can not completely inhibit change in the eternal knowledge.” Dr. Hanifi Ozcan is right to say that on the view of God’s eternal knowledge “it is almost impossible to explain the relationship between God’s knowledge and man’s actions in the way that attribute to the human beings an unconditional freedom”⁵⁹ What Hanifi Ozcan fails to understand is that *‘being eternal’* as the characteristic of God’s Knowledge (of the universe and specifically of human moral action) is a false concept. It has no basis in the Qur’ān. We shall study Qur’ānic teachings and develop the right concept of God’s Knowledge in this respect when we analyse the dilemma

but it can safely be pointed out at this place that 'eternity', 'infinity' and 'immutability' which have been formulated as Divine attributes by Christian theologians are not Divine Attributes according to Qur'ānic teachings. There is no Good Name of God in the Qur'ān which exactly corresponds to the epithet 'eternity'.⁶⁰ Let us now examine the dilemma of human free will and Allah's foreknowledge presented by predestinarians to refute the view of libertarians.

THE ANTINOMY OF FREE WILL AND ALLAH'S FOREKNOWLEDGE

The antinomy involved in this case is that: If Allah knows all things, He must know the things yet to happen. And if He knows things yet to happen, He must know the actions of human beings yet to come about. And if He foreknows human actions, how can a man go against Allah's foreknowledge regarding a particular action. If man cannot go against Allah's foreknowledge of that action, his actions are pre-determined. If man's actions are pre-determined, how can he be a free agent?⁶¹

When the Libertarians began to speculate on the bearing that Allah's foreknowledge may possibly have upon man's free action, they came up with two views: (a) One view restricted Allah's foreknowledge to five kinds of things which are mentioned in the Qur'ān (cf. 31:34), thus denying it of all other things, or at least of human actions. (b) Some Libertarians, instead of denying Allah's foreknowledge of human action, denied only its causative function.⁶² In order to examine the dilemma and the solutions offered by the libertarians, let us study the verses 57:3; 63:11; 31:34 as mentioned above and also some other verses to formulate the Qur'ānic concept of Allah's Omniscience.

1. *His is the Sovereignty of the heavens and the earth. He quickeneth and He giveth death; and He is Able to do all things. He is the First and the Last, and the Outward and the Inward; and He is the Knower of all things. (57:2-3)*

Lo! Allah! With Him is knowledge of the Hour. He sendeth down the rain, and knoweth that which is in the

wombs. No soul knoweth what it will earn tomorrow, and no soul knoweth in what land it will die. Lo! Allah is Knower [*Alīm*], Aware [*Khabīr*]. (31:34)

And with Him are the keys of the invisible. None but He knoweth them. And He knoweth what is in the land and the sea. **Not a leaf falleth but He knoweth it, not a grain amid the darkness of the earth, not of wet or dry, but (it is noted) in a clear Record.** (6:59)

2. Allah knows what every soul earns of righteousness or of evil: cf. 2:197; 3:166; 6:60; 13:42; 48:30 Allah is Aware of what ye do. (63:11)
3. No one will enter the Garden until Allah has not known him whether he strives hard and whether he is a steadfast believer: cf. 3:141; Allah is Knower (*Alīm*) and Aware (*Baseer*).

Sometimes what befalls upon the believers is that He might know the believers, and that He may know the hypocrites; cf. 3:165-166.

Allah knows him who makes mischief from him who sets aright: cf. 2:220.

Conclusions

- (1) From the verses of section 1 and especially from the verse: *And there falls not a leaf but He knows it* (6:59), it is clear that Allah's Knowledge encompasses everything. Nothing, however insignificant or small, escapes His Knowledge.
- (2) So far as free human action is concerned, it is clear from the verses of section 2 that there are always two courses open to man: a right course (*i.e.*, the way of the righteous), and a wrong course (the way of the evil-doers). It is the privilege of man to choose which course to adopt for the utilization of provisions and abilities granted to him. It is further clear from these verses that Allah knows whatever a soul earns of the righteousness or of evil.

- (3) Since Allah is the Knower of everything and their natures, beyond any doubt He knows the consequences, which are to follow in case man chooses the 'right course' and in case man chooses the 'wrong course'. All range of possibilities concerning these consequences, even if they are infinite and innumerable from human point of view, are absolutely known to Allah at any point of time. It is in this sense that Allah knows the future of a possible human action. However, the choice certainly belongs to man, the moral agent. Allah does not interfere in what is exclusively man's privilege but up to an extent for respite is not unlimited.
- (4) A human action that is yet to happen, is always related to the course man adopts. Such human action can only be known to Allah if the course he is to adopt is preordained by Him. With reference to this fact the Qur'ān categorizes men into three groups:⁶³
- (i) Those who are yet to be differentiated by Allah as righteous or the wrongdoer. From the verses quoted at section 3 above it is clear that it is contrary to the privilege of free choice given to man that Allah should know which course such a man is to adopt in acts yet to happen. As a testimony the event of the Children of Israel from 5:20-26 of the Qur'ān can be quoted when Moses said to his people:
- (a) that they should enter the Holy Land and turn not their backs;
- (b) that if they acted upon it, Allah had preordained the Holy Land for them;
- (c) that if they turned their backs Allah had ordained that they would be losers.

Now they were free to act according to what the prophet Moses (a.s.) had asked them. They would surely have conquered the Holy Land for Allah had ordained it for them if they submitted to Moses (a.s.). What they were going to choose was in no way determined. For if it

would have been determined in Allah's Knowledge that they were not going to submit to what Allah had asked them to do, it had never been possible for them to go against Allah's Knowledge. It was, beyond any doubt, in all respects within the power of these people to act upon what had been asked to them by the prophet (a.s.) for: *Allah imposes not upon any soul a duty beyond its capacity.* (al-Qur'ān, 2:286) They did not choose to submit to Moses (a.s.). They chose to be losers and Allah forbade the Holy Land for them for forty years.

- (ii) Those whom Allah has declared as 'the righteous'. Allah knows that the Sincere ones (*Mukhlasīn*) will always freely exercise their choice in favour of what is the right course: *He [the devil] said: My Lord, because Thou has sent me astray, I verily shall adorn the path of error for them in the earth, and shall mislead them every one, save such of them as are thy perfectly devoted slaves [Mukhlasīn]* 15:39-40. Whatever be the possibilities of performing an act, it is known to Allah that *Mukhlas* will never deviate from what is the right course except for oversight that Allah has promised to pardon. Allah protects him. Sincere ones (*Mukhlasīn*) are of two types: Those who are sent as such and those who are raised from the common folk. The first are prophets and messengers while the others are what the Qur'ān calls the truthful ones, the martyrs, and the righteous.⁶⁴ All *Shāhidīn* are *Mukhlasīn* but not all *Mukhlasīn* or *Shāhidīn*.
- (iii) (a) Those who because of their persistence in 'evil-doing', 'transgression', 'hypocrisy', or 'disbelief' have caused themselves to enter the category of *Zālimūn*, *Fāsiqūn*", *Munāfiqūn* or *Kāfirūn* regarding whom Allah says: *For the disbelievers [those who have chosen the course of disbelief], whether thou warn them or thou warn not, it is all one for them; Allah hath sealed their hearing and their hearts and on their eyes there is a covering.* (al-Qur'ān, 2:6-7)

Allah knows that such a person will never exercise his freedom in favour of right-course.⁶⁵

(b) A time may come on such people when respite given to them comes to an end and Allah seizes them. They think they are freely doing things which they don't. For example when the prophet Moses (pbuh) took the children of Israel with him, Pharaoh and his people chased them with the intention to torture them, force them surrender and take them back. They thought that they were doing things freely and on their own but Allah says that He drove them out of their gardens and springs and caused the pursuers draw near the sea and caused them to drown.⁶⁶

(5) It is usually thought that in the Qur'ān, while Omniscience is ascribed to Allah explicitly in such statements as "*He knows all things*" (57:03) and "*He is fully cognizant of what you do*" (63:11), Allah's Prescience is mentioned only with reference to five things at 31:34 (mentioned above), and of these five things none is a human action.⁶⁷ It must be noted that there is no word in the Qur'ān that can be rendered into 'Prescience' of Allah Almighty as distinguished from Omniscience. The concept of prescience or foreknowledge is included in the concept of Omniscience.

Hence, the first solution offered by the Libertarians is wrong. The dilemma is based on un-Qur'ānic concept of Allah's Omniscience and of Human Freedom. It falsely attributes eternal knowledge to Allah that includes knowledge of future free human actions. It also commits a fallacy by not differentiating among the categories of men as stated in the Qur'ān.

FREE WILL AND PREDESTINARIAN VERSES IN THE QUR'ĀN

It is another antinomy formulated by Muslim predestinarians to prove that to assert freedom for man entangles one into contradictions with respect to some other doctrines of faith.

Though it is formulated in the perspective of the controversy among Muslims about the createdness and uncreatedness of the Qur'ān, yet it has a definite bearing on the problem under discussion, this is why giving a brief account of the dilemma has been considered appropriate.⁶⁸

The Qur'ān contains the condemnation of two sinners, Abū Lahab (whose name is explicitly mentioned) and his wife (mentioned only with reference to her husband) at 111:1-5:

“With the belief in a pre-existent Qur'ān, even in a pre-existent created Qur'ān, it means that these sinners were condemned long before they were born, with the inevitable implication that they were predestined to be sinners. And if the Libertarian refuses to believe the sin of these sinners and the condemnation in this regard to be predestined, he is bound to abandon his belief in the pre-existent Qur'ān and even pre-existent created Qur'ān, and is obliged to believe that the Qur'ān was created at the time of its descent. And this confronts the Libertarian to face the antinomy of considering the “Word of Allah” (*i.e.*, the Qur'ān) as created?”⁶⁹

Examining the dilemma in the light of the teachings of the Qur'ān it is found that the dilemma divides whatever there is, into two categories, *i.e.* created and uncreated, and presupposes that ‘what is uncreated is eternal.’ Of course the Qur'ān divides everything into two ontological categories, but the above mentioned categorization is false. Everything, which Allah has brought into being, is either Creation (*Khalq*), or it is Command (*‘Amr*).⁷⁰ To draw the conclusion that ‘what is not created/creation’ is eternal, is wrong for it may belong to the category of Command. The writer draws the conclusion that the Qur'ān belongs to this category of Command. The dilemma is based on a false concept of the Preserved Tablet (*al-lawh al-mahfūz*). This concept is false because it is contrary to the Qur'ānic concept of such a Book, as well as it contradicts basic components of Islamic Faith. The Preserved Tablet as given in the Qur'ān is a Book with the Lord which contains (*i*) the knowledge of former generations with reference to their destiny, (*ii*) the knowledge of what is in the

heavens and the earth, and (iii) Mother of the Book (*Umm al-Kitāb*, i.e. Divine Laws regulating human destiny), is neither inconsistent with the view of the freedom of will for man nor with any other component of Islamic Faith. The Book which contains the knowledge of only former generations must not contain the knowledge of the generations yet-to-come. Thus, the Qur'ān does not certify that the Preserved Tablet contains the knowledge of the generations yet-to-come with reference to their destiny (i.e., which of them would be condemned or blessed),⁷¹ and it is against the basic teachings of Islamic Faith that it should contain such knowledge. So this Book could never contain the condemnation of Abū Lahab or the knowledge of any sin on his part prior to Abū Lahab's being born and having committed it. From what is mentioned above it is inferred that this Book could not contain any of the three kinds of knowledge, mentioned above, from eternity (from the creation of the Universe or prior to it). There is no concept in the Qur'ān of anything pre-existent and co-eternal with God may it be Preserved Tablet or anything else for that matter. It is to be admitted then that such a Book was brought into being simultaneously with the world.

Mother of the Book (*Umm al-Kitāb*), which is the foundation of the Qur'ān, refers to the Divine Laws which Allah in His Omniscience and Absolute Wisdom prescribed for man prior to the revelation of the Books, from the time best known to Allah Almighty; and according to which He decides the destiny of a person or a people.⁷² Preserved Tablet could never contain the condemnation of Abū Lahab or the knowledge of any sin on his part prior to Abū Lahab's being born and having committed it.

Thus, Abū Lahab's condemnation was not determined in God's Knowledge prior to Abū Lahab and his wife's being born and included in the category of wrongdoers by having persistently followed the path of the wrong-doers. The verses of *Surah* 111 simply state Abū Lahab's inability and undeservingness regarding Divine Guidance. It is quite in accordance with the laws of Divine Guidance that when a person or a people pass a certain limit in the enmity of the prophet and in the disobedience of Allah's injunctions, they are declared to be transgressors (*fāsiqūn*), who

have closed the door of Guidance on them. Allah never guides such a people. Allah leaves them to advance in their transgression because of their persistence in ungratefulness.⁷³ Abū Lahab preferred to be a staunch enemy of the Prophet, with his wife a partner to him, hence transgressors by their own free choice. It is after Abū Lahab and his wife's having proved themselves transgressors in the superlative degree (*fāsiq*) that the judgment contained in these verses was passed by Allah and the same was revealed to the Prophet (pbuh). These verses, containing Abū Lahab and his wife's condemnation, certified they're being transgressors. It is absolutely wrong to state these verses to contain pre-destined condemnation of Abū Lahab or of his wife on their pre-destined sins. The dilemma does not present a case of incoherence of Allah's Knowledge and Human Freedom, for none of the human beings Allah ever create is determined as sinner in His Knowledge from all eternity or prior to his birth.

Let us cast a brief look at Christian philosophers' views on the problem at hand. The Christian philosophers have identified three main problems concerning the coherence of this Divine Attribute. First problem relates to the compatibility of Divine Omniscience with Immutability.⁷⁴ The second problem relates to the compatibility of Divine Omniscience with human freedom? The third problem concerns the compatibility of Divine Omniscience with Eternity.⁷⁵ In the history of Christian thought, St. Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225-1274) formulates the first and the second problem,⁷⁶ whereas the third problem is formulated by Boethius (c.480-524).⁷⁷ St. Thomas Aquinas, in his *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, 14, 13, 3 states the second problem in two versions. First version shows that if man is supposed to be free, God cannot be considered to be Omniscient. The purpose of the second version is to show that if God is supposed to be Omniscient, man cannot be proved to be free. Hence: incompatibility of Omniscience and human freedom.⁷⁸ Saint Aquinas analyses the difficulties involved in these problems and tries to solve them. In this attempt he also formulates his doctrine of Omniscience which is known as traditional doctrine of

Omniscience. It gives a propositional view of omniscience. According to this doctrine omniscience means that God justifiably believes all true propositions. St. Anselm (1033-1109) gave this traditional Christian doctrine a deep philosophical tinge when he said that 'God is essentially omniscient' *i.e.*, He simply could not be mistaken about anything, He has infallible knowledge. Luis de Molina, Spanish Jesuit, one of the most accomplished and learned figures in the sixteenth-century revivalist movement (1535-1600)⁷⁹ reformulates Thomistic doctrine.⁸⁰ According to Aquinas a future free action is known by God by virtue of His decree for it cannot come into existence unless God decrees its existence. Molina considers this doctrine a subversion of human free will and tries to find a means within the framework of traditional Christian doctrine of Omniscience whereby God knows a future free act before and independent of Divine decree. Richard Swinburne argues that there is essential incompatibility between God's Omniscience and free will, if the traditional Christian doctrine of Omniscience is accepted. According to Swinburne this incompatibility has two aspects:

- (i) that there is an incompatibility between God's Omniscience and human free will, and
- (ii) that there is an incompatibility between God's Omniscience and His Own free will.⁸¹

Swinburne does not suggest to outright rejecting this doctrine but recommends a better formulation. He recommends a limited doctrine of omniscience in place of a doctrine that asserts God's foreknowledge of free human actions in absolute sense. He argues that God is Omniscient in the attenuated sense, and this of course has resulted from His Own choice. Swinburne feels that Bible, or at any rate the Old Testament, implicitly approves this view. The God thus postulated brings about all things which exist (or permits them to exist) and in so doing knows what He brings about and knows what that will lead to, so long as He has brought about things which physically necessitate certain effects. Yet to maintain His freedom, He limits His knowledge of His own future choice.⁸²

We have seen that Muslim and Christian theologians/philosophers' formulation of the problem does not essentially differ from each other. Their understanding of Divine Omniscience also does not essentially differ from each other. Traditional approaches in Muslim as well as Christian theologians have been almost the same. Analysis of the solutions offered by the Muslims shows that as opposed to the predestinarians who believed that God's Knowledge is eternal and as such incompatible with human freedom, libertarians held that though God's Knowledge is eternal (or in the past of man) and though God knows everything (including human actions yet to happen) it is not incompatible with human freedom. Libertarians instead of denying Allah's foreknowledge of human action, try to prove that Divine Knowledge does not, in any way, function so as to determine its object. Denial of causative or determining function for Divine Knowledge, in one way or the other, is the most common feature of traditional solutions offered by the libertarians. This is not a right approach towards the solution. These are mostly mere verbal quibbling. Divine Knowledge even if not causative still does not vouchsafe human free action. It is quite intelligible that it is not knowledge of anything that causes or determines a thing. Foreknowledge always presupposes certain principles or factors or causes that tend to physically necessitate an action or event yet to happen, say for example an eclipse. Its prediction is possible with great precision only because there are certain laws of nature that physically determine its happening. If God knows that certain principles or factors are going to necessitate a future free human action, that action is necessarily determined though not because of God's Knowledge. Similarly, if God decides about something to happen in future, He foreknows that it will happen, He may set in motion certain laws to physically necessitate that event. Even if God knows that He will bring about a miracle, it is not the Knowledge that is supposed to set it about but His Will (*mashī'ah*) behind the Knowledge. It will not be possible for anyone to go against Divine Knowledge, if there is any, about an action or event or a miracle yet to happen.

Analysing and critically appreciating these views we come to the conclusion that Omniscience in the sense in which libertarians

have traditionally been trying to prove it compatible with human freedom is not a right formulation. The traditional Christian doctrine of Omniscience as formulated by St. Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225-1274) is the most renowned example of such formulation.⁸³ This doctrine asserts God's foreknowledge of free human actions, in the absolute sense. There is essential incompatibility between God's Omniscience and human free will, if this doctrine of Omniscience is accepted.⁸⁴ The conclusion we have reached in this article is that the correct formulation of Omniscience must not include the foreknowledge of free human actions up to a certain limit for respite is not unlimited. Omniscience must include an indeterminate aspect that should be dependent on the realization of a free choice. Such a doctrine would deny Allah's Omniscience to free human actions yet to be chosen, not because of any lack of Power on the part of Allah but because of His unfathomable Wisdom, and because of His own free Choice.

Certain objections may be raised to such a concept of omniscience. It may be said that to attribute indeterminate aspect in Divine Knowledge would make His Knowledge incremental, which is against Divine perfection? These objections are based on certain false concepts, held as Attributes of God. No Good-Name of God in Muslim tradition amounts to the concept of 'eternity', 'timelessness', 'immutability' or 'perfection' as they are understood and presupposed in discussions on Divine Knowledge by Muslim theologians of medieval centuries. Muslims borrowed these un-Qur'ānic concepts from Greeks either directly or through Christians.⁸⁵ Actually the Christian as well as Muslim theological thought in the early and medieval centuries is highly impressed by Greeks. A most significant feature of Greek culture and philosophy was that they observed 'change' or 'dynamicity' as a negative attribute. Aristotle said: the concept of God is the concept of an Absolutely Perfect Being. He even denied the attribute of Will for God (which is very much a Divine Attribute of God in the Qur'ān) on the ground that Volition implies change, and change implies imperfection, therefore, it is not worthy of

God. The theologians accepted the idea of Divine immutability as excellence in perfection from Aristotle. The doctrine of immutability implied two things: that God does not change in character; that God does not change at all. The former meaning is quite in accordance with the scriptural teachings. Though the concept of change is not applicable to God in any human sense, yet the later meaning is quite contrary to the concept of God given in the Scriptures for it would make God absolutely inactive. An absolutely inactive God cannot be the Creator and the Commander. The doctrine of Eternity also had similar implications. The Christian theological tradition has identified at least two senses of the notion of God's Eternity. First, that God is eternal is to say that the life of God has unending duration. Limits cannot be defined for the life of God. This is 'everlastingness'. Second, to say that God is eternal is to say that God is 'timeless'. The both of these alternatives have implications of their own. For example, if God is 'everlasting' the doctrine of divine omniscience implies determinism. If God is 'timeless', he cannot be omniscient at all. For, according to this doctrine, God is not only 'out there' and apart from the world of temporal objects and happenings, God is 'out there' and removed from *time* altogether.⁸⁶ Actually the doctrine of 'timelessness' was formulated for providing backing to the doctrine of divine immutability.⁸⁷ Concepts of perfection, eternity, immutability and timelessness maintained God's Omniscience in a sense that was incompatible with Human Freedom and from here arose the problem. Allah is *Al-Ahad* (Supremely Singular, Unique, and Alone). *Ahadiyyah* transcends all determinations. The spatio-temporal, numerical and logical concepts of infinity are but originated out of Him. Eternity in none of the sense mentioned above, befit Him. He is *Al-Samad*: All beseech Him; He is *Al-Ghani*: He transcends need, want, compulsion, longing, yearning, aspiration or any inner compulsion and created the universe absolutely out of His Free Will.⁸⁸ He is the Absolute Originator (*Al-Badi'*) of everything. Even the determinants *i.e.*, abstract ideas, forms or archetypes of His Knowledge on whose pattern He created the universe were brought into being by Him. Allah is the Beginner of His creation (*Al-Mubdi'*). He is prior to any

beginning, He is *Al-Awwal* (the First). Every beginning with it has its termination. Allah is there after the termination of anything, He is *Al-Ākhir* (the Last). Allah is the Restorer of His creation (*Al-Mu'īd*) after its termination. He is the External; the Manifest (*Al-Zahir*), none is more manifest than Allah is by his portents. He is the Internal, the Hidden (*Al-Bātin*); none is more hidden than Allah is as the Determiner of the purpose of created beings.⁸⁹ Allah is *Al-Wāhid*, i.e. the Alone, the Unique. None is to be worshiped except Him Alone.

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- 3 Harry Austryn Wolfson was the first and full time scholar of Judaica to the faculty completely devoted to Jewish Studies established in Harvard University America. He was the first Nathan Littauer Professor of Hebrew Literature and Philosophy, a wide read scholar, a prolific and creative writer in the history of philosophy. He retired from this post in 1958. Professor Wolfson's trail-blazing study of Jewish thinkers from Philo of Alexandria to Benedict Spinoza, and his systematic integration of the study of Jewish, Islamic, and Christian philosophy, attracted wide

international attention. His many well-known and celebrated volumes are as follows: Wolfson, H. A. (a) (1929) *Crescas' Critique of Aristotle: Problems of Aristotle's Physics in Jewish and Arabic Philosophy*; (b) (1934) *The Philosophy of Spinoza: Unfolding the Latent Processes of His Reasoning*. 2 volumes; (c) (1947) *Philo: Foundations of Religious Philosophy in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*. 2 volumes; (d) (1956) *The Philosophy of Church Fathers: Faith, Trinity, Incarnation*; (e) (1976) *The Philosophy of the Kalam*; and (f) (1979) *Kalam Repercussions in Jewish Philosophy*. In addition to these, there are three book-length collections of papers and articles: (g) (1961) *Religious Philosophy: A Group of Essays*; and (h) Volume 1 (1973) and Volume 2 (1977) *Studies in the History of Philosophy and Religion*. Harvard University has established Wolfson Chair in his memory, in its Center for Jewish Studies.

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- 5 Rosenthal, Franz (1970), *Knowledge Triumphant: The Concept of Knowledge in Medieval Islam* (Leiden, E. J. Brill), 124-125.
- 6 Cf. Iqbal, Allama Muhammad (reprint 1986), *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* edited and annotated by M. Saeed Sheikh (Pakistan, Institute of Islamic Culture), chapters 3-4; see also, Fāzli, Abdul Hafeez (2005), Iqbal's view of Omniscience and human freedom. *The Muslim World*, 95(1), 125-145.
- 7 Founder and *Amir* of Jama't-e-Islami India and then *Amir* of Jama't-e-Islami Pakistan after 1947.
- 8 Moududi, Syed Abul Ala (20th edition), *Mas'la-e-Jabro Qadr* (Urdu) (Lahore: Islamic Publications), 111.
- 9 Chairman retired of the Department of Philosophy University of the Punjab, Lahore (Pakistan) and renowned scholar of Muslim Philosophy.
- 10 Khaliq, Abdul (1991), *Problems of Muslim Theology* (Lahore: Izharsons), 69-70.
- 11 Professor and Chairman, Department of Philosophy, Government College, Lahore; retired as Director, Institute of Islamic Culture, Lahore (Pakistan); renowned scholar of Muslim Philosophy.
- 12 Sheikh, M. Saeed (1965), Freedom and fatalism in Islam. In Dr. C. A. Qadir (ed.), *The World of Philosophy* (Lahore: The Sharif Presentation Volume Committee).
- 13 Ozcan, Hanifi (1997), The relationship between God's Knowledge and human freedom: A new approach to the problem. *Hamdard Islamicus*, 3, 63-70.

- 14 The view that God's Knowledge means knowledge of everything universal and particular including free human actions, that it is eternal and immutable, and that it is absolutely infallible.
- 15 Cf. *Al-Qur'ān*, 56:24; also cf. chapter 56, and 40:40, 2:281, 3:25, 16:11.
- 16 Cf. *Ibid*, 2:25, 62, 82, 277; 5:69; 40:40 and many more.
- 17 *Ibid*. O ye who believe! Why say ye that which ye do not? It is most hateful in the sight of Allah that ye say that ye do not (61:2-3).
- 18 Cf. *Ibid*, 7:147; 16:93; 17:36; 20:15; 27:90; 29:4,7; 37:39; 52:16,19; 66:7; 83:36 etc.
- 19 Cf. *Ibid*, 31:15; 18:28.
- 20 Cf. Wolfson, *Ibid*, 61, 603, 734.
- 21 Cf. *Ibid*, 601-602. These verses will be stated while examining and analysing the problem.
- 22 *Ibid*, 605.
- 23 Cf. *Ibid*, 606-608.
- 24 *Ibid*. Wolfson uses this phrase, *i.e. early Muslims*, at p. 610, which is quite ambiguous.
- 25 Cf. *Ibid*, 611.
- 26 Cf. *Ibid*, 609. These orientalist see the following factors responsible for Muslims preference of predestinarian passages of the Qur'ān: (i) fatalistic belief of the pre-Islamic Arabs; (ii) influence of the Persian fatalism; (iii) pre-Islamic belief in an impersonal Fate which can be shown on the base of the personification of the time in pre-Islamic poetry. It is clear from the statement of the orientalist that predestinarian views were never the original teachings of Islam. It was only under un-Islamic influences that predestinarian views could enter into Muslims.
- 27 Khaliq, Abdul, *Problems of Muslim Theology*, 69-70.
- 28 The Qur'ān says that Allah is Well-Pleased with 'the first and foremost of the muhājirīn and the anṣār (the fugitives from Madīna and those who welcomed and helped them in Mecca) and they are well-pleased with Him. The Qur'ān also states that same is true for those who followed them in sincerity.
- 29 The Qur'ān states that most of 'the foremost in the race' will consist of the followers of the Prophet (pbuh) at his own times and a few of the of the followers of the Prophet (pbuh) in later times will also belong to this category (*al-Qur'ān*, 56:13-14). In what lies their merit? Conversion is always of two types: individual or collective. Only individual conversion is a true conversion. Collective conversions are always due to social

requirement. The foremost in race, were real converts. Having denounced pre-Islamic beliefs of their forefathers and having affirmed faith in the truthfulness and veracity of the Prophet (pbuh) they practically proved themselves upright and steadfast in severe most tests. Could they ever show even a slightest inclination towards anything un-Islamic whether Arabian or non-Arabian? Never!

- 30 This is not a verse of the Qur'ān. Even the word *tataharraka* does not exist in the Holy Qur'ān. This is only a statement commonly used and referred to among Muslim illiterate folk but which is contrary to the Qur'ānic teachings.
- 31 For the view of the writer about Qur'ānic concept of Allah's Power, see Hafeez, Abdul (2002), Allah's Omnipotence and freedom of will for man. *Hamdard Islamicus*, 1, 31-40.
- 32 Cf. Ayyub Ali, A. K. M. (1963), Tahawism. M. M. Sharif (ed.), *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, 2 volumes, reprint 1983 (Karachi: Royal Book Company), 1:256.
- 33 For further reference, see *al-Qur'ān*, 10:44; 16:118; 73:76; 11:101; 2:62; 5:69; 16:98; 41:46; 45:15 and many other verses.
- 34 Ozcan, Hanifi. *Ibid*, 70.
- 35 The Qur'ān calls them 'Sincere Slaves of Allah' ('*Ibād ullahil Mukhlasīn*) to whom the devil cannot lead astray (cf. 15:40).
- 36 Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalam*, 3.
- 37 Pickthal translates it in this way: *We raise by grades [of mercy] whom We will* The writer would prefer 'knowledge' to 'mercy' here.
- 38 As implied in the verse: O ye who believe! Why say ye that which ye do not? It is most hateful in the sight of Allah that ye say that which ye do not (*al-Qur'ān*, 61:2-3).
- 39 Allah says that it is He Who has revealed this Reminder (*i.e.*, the Qur'ān) and it is He, Who is to protect it (cf. *Ibid*, 15:9). For historical authenticity of this belief, see Hameed Ullah, M. (1401 Hijra), *Tarikh e Qurān Majeed*. In: *Khutbat e Bahawalpur* (Urdu), (Pakistan, Islamia University, Bahawalpur), 15-16. Dr. M. Hameed Ullah (died a few years before), who worked for years for the National Center of Scientific Research at France, and then devoted himself for research on topics relating to Islam, states that an institution 'Institution of Research for the Authenticity of Qur'ān' had been created under the auspices of the University of Munich at Germany before World War II. Until 1933, when Dr. Perakshal, the third director of this institution, meets Dr. M. Hameed Ullah at Paris, this institution had collected 42000 photocopies of the Qur'ān from all around the world and was making a comparative examination of their text. In Second World War, an American bomb

destroyed the library of this institution. However just before the advent of the world war, this institution had published an elementary report of its findings in which it established that it had been unable to find any discrepancy *vis-à-vis* the text of the Qur'ān.

- 40 Cf. *Al-Qur'ān*, 39:23; 39:28.
- 41 The Qur'ān certifies that 'the Prophet (pbuh) does not speak of his own desire.' (cf. 53:3); The Qur'ān further certifies that the whole life of the Prophet is exemplary role model for the believers to be followed in their own life. (cf. 33:21) Then it is certified by Allah that if anyone follows the Prophet, Allah will love him and will forgive his sins. (cf. 3: 31) So it stands as an article of faith of a Muslim that no saying of the Prophet can ever contradict with the Qur'ān, even in the slightest degree. And if there is such a tradition that does not cohere with the Qur'ān, it can never be a saying of the Prophet irrespective of the fact that in whose reference it has been stated and whatever methods of scrutinization it has stood through. However in practice, Muslims had followed the opposite. Every tradition which they came across in the 'books of tradition' at least some sect accepted it as true and then bent upon interpreting the Qur'ān in the light of that tradition giving it priority over the Qur'ān. This created many problems, which became one of the main causes of sectarianism in Islam. For details, see Hafeez, Abdul (1999), Free will and predestinarian verses in the Qur'ān. *Hamdard Islamicus*, 4, 97-105.
- 42 Khaliq, Abdul (1991), *Problems of Muslim Theology*, 85; Cf. Shibli Numani, Allama (reprint 1979), *Ilm ul Kalam Aor al-Kalm* (Urdu), (Karachi: Nafees Academy), 25-26. Cf. Fakhry, Majid (2nd edition 1983), *A History of Islamic Philosophy* (New York: Columbia Press), 37, 42.
- 43 Mu'tazilah creed in Islam made its appearance nearly two centuries after migration (*Higrah*) of the Prophet (pbuh) to Madina. They were thorough going rationalists. They made reason the sole basis of truth and reality in religion. They accepted totally the theory of indeterminism and were true successors of the Qadarites (Libertarians). Ash'arism was a philosophico-religious school of thought in Islam that developed during the 4th, 10th and 11th centuries. They would give revelation priority over reason and tried to maintain an intermediary position between extremes. The same was there position on problem of free will.
- 44 Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalam*, 734.
- 45 *Ibid*, 613. These two were Nazzām (d. 231/845) and Mu'ammar (d. 228/842) who believed in laws of nature and secondary causes. For details, see *Ibid*, 559.
- 46 *Ibid*, 734.
- 47 Cf. *Ibid*, 655.

- 48 *Ibid*, 660, 663. For in depth study of the 2nd, 3rd and 4th of these please see the following articles in the corresponding issues of *Hamdard Islamicus*, Karachi, Pakistan: Hafeez, Abdul (1999), Free will and predestinarian verses in the Qur'ān. 4, 97-105; (2000) The antinomy of free will and the appointed term (*Ajal Mussamma*). 4, 63-68; (2002) Allah's Omnipotence and freedom of will for man. 1, 31-40.
- 49 Rosenthal, Franz, *Knowledge Triumphant: The Concept of Knowledge in Medieval Islam*, 124-125.
- 50 Ozcan. *Ibid*, 68.
- 51 *Ibid*, 69. Dr. Hanifi Ozcan attributes the non-acceptance of this view to Sunnites, who wanted to save the characteristic of God's Knowledge 'being eternal' interpreted in a way to become compatible with freedom of man. But this is not a sound reason. The sound reason for not to accept this view is that it amounts to declaring 'the essence and nature of things (i.e., universals)' as eternal/uncreated which is contrary to the Qur'ānic teachings.
- 52 *Ibid*, 70.
- 53 *Ibid*, 70; quoted from Watt, W. M., *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, 103. Ozcan presents him as a quasi-predestinarian, but Majid Fakhri tells us with reference to Ibn Qutaybah's *Kitāb al-Ma'ārif* and Watt's *Free Will and predestination in Early Islam* that some ancient authorities attribute to him belief in free will and in this respect a story is attributed to him. Fakhary, Majid, *History of Islamic Philosophy*, 42^f.
- 54 *Ibid*, 70.
- 55 *Ibid*.
- 56 Allah is Glorious (*Al-Hamid*). His Command ('*amr*') transcends and excels causation. Causes function and accommodate according to His Command ('*amr*'). The angels give glad tiding of a son Ishāq (Isaac) and after him his son Y'aqoob (Jacob) to the wife of Hazrat Ibrāhīm (Abraham – pbuh) when both the husband and wife were very old. When the woman (a.s.) expressed her reservations, the angels said "do yo deem it strange that God should decree what He Wills!" Al-Qur'ān (11:73) Allah has Power (*Qudrah*) over all things (cf. 65:12). System of causation is under his Power, and not the vice versa. Similarly: Glory be to Him in Whose hand is the dominion over all things! (*Ibid*, 36:83).
- 57 Ozcan. *Ibid*, 70.
- 58 *Ibid*.
- 59 *Ibid*, 72.
- 60 There is only one Good Name of God, i.e. *Al-Qayyūm* (He is Self-Subsisting, and as Creator of all determinations, His Self-Subsistence is

beyond all determinations. Allah is Singularly Unique (*Aḥad*). The world eternity can be used to denote the time of the beginning of Creation of the Universe or it can be used to refer to 'prior to the creation of the Universe' but it will be beyond human understanding. If it is to be used for Allah then it should be used in the sense of 'Beyond Determinations' as a translation of Allah's (*Aḥdiya*).

- 61 Cf. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalam*, 559-662.
- 62 *Ibid*, 662.
- 63 For details, see Hafeez, The antinomy of free will and the appointed term (*Ajal Mussamma*), 63-68.
- 64 *Al-Qur'ān*, contains glad-tiding of Masih Isa ibn Maryum (pbuh) and Yahya (pbuh); and Ishāq and Y'aqoob (pbuh) before their birth at 3:45-51, 3:39, and 11:71; *Al-Qur'ān* also contains glad-tiding of a righteous son to righteous parents who were not prophets at 18:81.
- 65 For only Allah knows when it is most appropriate to change anyone's direction from darkness towards light or the vice versa. Cf. 2:213; 3:73; 16:93.
- 66 Cf. *Al-Qur'ān* (26:52-66).
- 67 Wolfson, *Ibid*, 661.
- 68 For details, see Hafeez, Abdul, Free Will and Predestinarian Verses in the *Qur'ān*.
- 69 Wolfson, *Ibid*, 656.
- 70 Cf. *al-Qur'ān* (07:54).
- 71 The question of Pharaoh about the former generations was with reference to the destiny of these people (Cf. *al-Qur'ān*, 20:51-52). For details, see Hafeez, Abdul, Free Will and Predestinarian Verses in the *Qur'ān*, 102.
- 72 For detailed study, see Hafeez, Abdul, Free Will and Predestinarian Verses in the *Qur'ān*, 97-105.
- 73 Cf. *Al-Qur'ān* (2:26; 9:80).
- 74 Kretzmann, Norman (1966), Omniscience and immutability. In Baruch A. Brody (ed.) (1974), *Readings in the Philosophy of Religion: An Analytic Approach* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall), 366. (Norman Kretzmann is Susan Linn Sage Professor Emeritus of Philosophy, Cornell University.)
- 75 Eternity, as Immutability has been considered to be the necessary characteristic of the Omniscient being in Christianity.

- 76 Brody, Baruch A. (ed.) (1974), *Readings in the Philosophy of Religion: An Analytic Approach* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall), 335. Brody in his introduction to Part III states that one version of this problem is found in St. Augustine but is clearly fallacious. Aquinas reformulates this problem which is presented as 2nd version of his formulation in this article.
- 77 Boethius (c. 480-524) wrote his *De Consolatione Philosophiae* when he was in the prison waiting for the execution of his death sentence. It consists of five books. It is in the fifth, i.e. last book that Boethius discusses the Problem of man's free will and God's foreknowledge and attempts to show that the doctrines are not inconsistent. Minio-Paluello, Lorenzo (ed) s. v. (1962), Boethius, Anicius Manlius Severinus. In *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.
- 78 Anthony Kenny, Divine foreknowledge and human freedom, in Brody, (ed.), 405. (Article is actually a revised version of a paper read at Liverpool in 1960 and afterwards published in Anthony Kenny (1969), *Aquinas: A Collection of Critical Essays*. New York: Double Day. Reference given in this para from *Summa Theologiae*, actually reads "Ia, 14, 3, 3" which is not correct. The correct reference is *Summa Theologiae*, "Ia, 14, 13, 3". Cf. Anderson, James F. tr. (1963), *Treatise on God* (translation of some selected parts of Part I from *Summa Theologiae* by St. Thomas Aquinas), (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall), 93.
- 79 *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, ed. (1908), s. v. "Molina".
- 80 He published a doctrine on predestination, grace, free will etc. The basis of this doctrine is what is called his concept of scientia media. The general consensus is that "scientia media" was a phrase not simply used, but coined by Molina. Scientia media is the way by which God explores and knows with absolute certainty what the human 'free will' will infallibly do by its own innate liberty if it be placed in such or such circumstances.
- 81 The argument purporting to show an incompatibility between divine Omniscience and human freedom runs as follows: If God is Omniscient then he foreknows all future human actions. If God foreknows anything, then it will necessarily come to pass. If a human action will necessarily come to pass, then it cannot be free.
- 82 Swinburne, Richard (1977), *The Coherence of Theism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press), 175. The writer has made a detailed study of Christian philosophers views on this problem in his article "Christian theologians/philosophers Views on Omniscience and Human Freedom". This article is yet to be published.
- 83 This doctrine asserts that: Omniscience means that God justifiably believes all true propositions. Saint Thomas Aquinas is the first to

- formulate this doctrine. Anderson, James F. (tr.) (1963), *Treatise on God*, 93-4. St. Anselm (1033-1109) gave this traditional Christian doctrine a deep philosophical tinge by asserting that 'God is essentially omniscient'. But 'if God is essentially omniscient', He simply could not be mistaken about anything, *i.e.* He has infallible knowledge. Kvanvig, Jonathan L. (1986), *The Possibility of an All-Knowing God* (England, Macmillan Press), 33.
- 84 On the other hand, Iqbal formulates the doctrine of omniscience in such a way that absolutely denies divine foreknowledge of free human actions. Cf. Fāzli, Abdul Hafeez (2005), Iqbal's view of Omniscience and human freedom. *The Muslim World*, 95(1), 125-145.
- 85 So far as Christians are concerned it has been admitted even by them that there is no evidence of these concepts being Divine Attributes in Christianity before Augustine (354-430), nor is there any evidence in the Old Testament for it. Swinburne, Richard (1977), *The Coherence of Theism* (Oxford, Clarendon Press), 217.
- 86 Pike, Nelson (1970), *God and Timelessness* (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul), ix-x.
- 87 Swinburne, Richard. *Ibid*, 217.
- 88 Cf. *Al-Qur'ān*, Allah, the eternally Besought of all! (112:02) ... Lo! Allah is Independent of all creatures (3:97); And Moses said: Though ye and all who are in the earth prove thankless, lo! Allah verily is Absolute Owner of Praise (14:8); And whosoever striveth, striveth only for himself, for lo! Allah is altogether Independent of (His) creatures (29:6).
- 89 Al-Mubdi' and Al-Mu'īd do not occur in the Qur'ān but the idea frequently, *e.g.*, See they not how Allah produced creation, then reproduced it? Lo! for Allah that is easy. Say (O Muhammad): Travel in the land and see how He originated creation (29:19-20); He began the creation of man from clay (32:07); The Day when We shall roll up the heavens as a recorder rolleth up a written scroll. As We began the first creation, We shall repeat it (21:104); Lo! He it is Who produceth, then reproduceth (85:13).