

FREE WILL AND PREDESTINARIAN VERSES IN THE QURÄN

According to the QurÄnic concept of human life, the creation of man was neither a privilege of man nor an obligation or compulsion to Almighty; nor has he been placed on earth as punishment. Life of man is nothing but Grace. The physical, psychological, spiritual and whatnot capabilities of life, and the earth, the heavens and whatever between them, are divine bestowment to be utilised by man. Divine Guidance enlightens the right course in the utilisation of this bestowment. Man has been placed on earth to see whether he chooses to utilise divine bestowment at his disposal in accordance with divine guidance or he chooses to follow his desires. Faith is a declaration to acknowledge the Prophet(p.b.u.h.) as upholder of Divine Guidance and to acknowledge him as certified standard of excellence, as human being, to be followed in one's life. Mere claim to faith is not considered enough, QurÄn enjoins to join faith with righteous deed. Man is to be held accountable for what course he chooses at present in the utilisation of divine bestowment, and this very present is going to change into *Future* (i.e., afterlife). QurÄn, thus, holds freedom of will as a trust. This is the gist of the teachings of Islamic faith as enunciated in the QurÄn. It leaves no scope for anything in the QurÄn (be it Divine Power or Divine Knowledge or anything else) to be contrary to the idea of freedom of will. But it is very strange that the Muslims, from the early centuries of Islam indulged into discussions concerning whether man was free or he was determined. Hence, there arose, sects known

as the Predestinarians, and the Libertarians. According to the former 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.¹ According to the later, 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 Libertarians²) to be directly created by Allah; the later actions are taken by them to be performed by man's free will. Conflicting sects formulated arguments, mostly in the form of antinomies, to confront each other with difficulties.

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• **Notes:**

1) The translation of the verses quoted in the article has mostly been taken from Marmaduke Pickthall's explanatory translation *Meaning of the Glorious Qur'an* but whenever I have quoted from some other translation finding it more near to my understanding I have given its reference.

2) Since the discussions in this article revolve around the Qur'anic concept of God, I have preferred to use the word 'Allah' to stress this fact.

3) Verses of chapter 111 of the Qur'an also contain condemnation of *Abu Lahb's* wife but only *Abu Lahb* is alluded to by name. Since in the dilemma reference is made only to *Abu Lahb* by name so I have also not made any reference to *Abu Lahb's* wife. It is evident, however, that whatever has been said of *Abu Lahb* stands true of his wife.

• **References:**

¹ Harry Austryn Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalam*, Harvard University Press, 1976, p. 734

² Cf., *Ibid.*, p. 613. These two were Nazzam and Mu'ammār who believed in laws of nature and secondary causes. For details see *Ibid.*, p.559.

H. A. Wolfson, presents five of these antinomies in his *The Philosophy of the Kalam*³ with reference to Ashari's *Ibana...*, & *Makalat*, Bagdadi's *Fark*, and Shahrastani's *Milal*, and other sources. In this article we intend to examine only the first of these antinomies. Instead of highlighting the socio-political conditions instrumental to these theological conflicts, or tracing the external influence, if any, I have preferred to directly examine, in the vast perspective of Quränic teachings, the concepts on which the dilemma is based to show that, among other things, it were the unwarranted formulations of certain key concepts which gave rise to these disagreements. With these deliberations, let us examine the dilemma:

The Qurän contains, as Wolfson observes, condemnation of two sinners; one, *Abu Lahb*, who's name is explicitly mentioned at 111:1-5, and the other, Walid b. Mughira, who is only alluded to at 74:11-26. Moreover, at the conclusion of the predestined condemnation of Walid for his predestined sin there is the verse, ...*Thus Allah leads astray whom He pleases and guides whom He pleases*, which as Wolfson observes, is a direct

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 660 & 663. Other four antinomies relate to the problem of free will and the appointed term (*Ajal Mussamma*), the problem of free will and Allah's Fore-Knowledge, the problem of free will and Allah's Power, and the problem of free will and preordained sustenance. Antinomies concerning the Appointed Term, and concerning the Provision of Sustenance have been stated by al-Asha'ri in his *Ibana*. Ref. Walter C. Klein, tr. & nn., *The Elucidation of Islam's Foundation*, (trans. of *al-Ibana an Usula ad Diyanah*, by al-Ash'ari) New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1940, pp.115-119. Wolfson cites as footnote that he states the antinomy in question with reference to discussions in *Kitab Makälät al-Islämiyin* of al-Ash'ari, *Fark bain al-Firak* of Bafhdädi, and *Milal* of Shahrastani.

denial of man's freedom in both his doing of evil and doing of good. Now the antinomy involved in the statement of these events is that:

“With the belief in a pre-existent Qurän, even in a pre-existent created Qurän, 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 Qurän and even pre-existent created Qurän, and is obliged to believe that the Qurän 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., Qurän) as created?”⁴

Let us examine this dilemma:

The verses referred to at 74:11-26 does not contain the name of any particular person towards whom the condemnation contained in these verses can be said to be definitely directed. It may be a general condemnation of a person, in whatever period, in whom the qualities stated in these verses are found to exist. The view that condemnation contained in these verses is only alluded to a particular person, named Walid bin Mughira, is without proof and may or may not be true. It is only a conjecture of some commentators of the Qurän which cannot be substantiated from within the Qurän itself, so it is not wise to make a hypothetical proposition the ground of such a serious discussion of utmost religious significance. However, it is true that the Qurän contains the condemnation of a

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 656

sinner, *Abu Lahb*, explicitly mentioned by name at 111:1-5. (This chapter of the Qurän consists of these 5 verses only.) It is certainly wise to focus our attention on these verses to see do they really present a case which can legitimately allow a predestinarian, or anyone on his behalf, to formulate an antinomy, like the one mentioned above.

Wolfson has also stated another part of a verse (*i.e.*, “...*Thus Allah leads astray whom He pleases and guides whom He pleases.*” 74:31)⁵ which occurs, as Wolfson observes, as a conclusion at the end of the verses which contain the so-called predestined condemnation of Walid bin Mughira for his so-called predestined sin. Wolfson interprets it to mean the direct denial of man’s freedom in both his doing of good and his doing of evil. Since I have shown that it is not wise to relate the condemnation contained in these verses to any particular person, so I don’t think that the part of the verse, referred to above, can be taken as the conclusion of this so-called predestined condemnation of a particular person. This part of the verse does not merely occur at this one place in the Qurän. It occurs at 14:04 in exactly similar words, and with a very slight variation in expression but almost in same meaning at 13:27, 16:93, 35:08, 6:39 and with some more variation in

⁵ It seems as if Wolfson translates the verses himself for he has not given reference of any standard English translation of the Qurän. Marmaduke Pickthall translates this part of the verse in following words: *Thus Allah sendeth astray whom He will, and whom He will He guideth.*(74:31) Marmaduke Pickthall (tr.), *Meaning of the Glorious Qurän: Text & Explanatory Translation*, Karachi: Taj Company, 1984, (reprint ed.), p. 593. Pickthall’s translation is better than one made by Wolfson for Wolfson does not distinguish between ‘pleasure of Allah’ and ‘the will of Allah’. Allah does not please to lead anyone astray, rather it is in accordance with His Will that He let Him led astray who shows persistence in following his low desires.

expression but with similar meaning at many other places. This fact further proves our point. This part of the verse and others with similar meanings, as we shall see later, state a Divine Law to let a person led astray or to be guided aright. With these clarifications, let us examine the dilemma:

Belief in the pre-existence/createdness of the Qurān is among those highly debatable problems which gave rise to very heated discussions among the Muslim theologians in the early centuries of Islam. The Ash‘arites believed that the Qurān, prior to its being revealed, existed in a pre-existent form on the Preserved Tablet (*Lawh im Mahfuz*). Some of them believed that this pre-existent Qurān was created on the Preserved Tablet prior to the creation of the universe. The M‘utazilites believed that the Qurān was created at the time of its descent. Wolfson in his book *The Philosophy of Kalam* states that “in the Qurān, the Qurān presents itself as having existed prior to its revelation and even prior to the creation of the world. By this pre-existence of the Qurān, it can be shown, was meant in the Qurān itself and by the earliest followers of the Qurān, a pre-existent created Qurān.”⁶ However, in the later centuries the arising of the belief that the terms predicated of Allah were real eternal attributes, gave rise to a belief that Qurān existed in the Being of Allah as a real eternal Divine attribute of Speech (*Kalām*) from all eternity; and on the creation of the universe it was created or placed on the Preserved

⁶ Harry Austryn Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalam*, p.723

Tablet whence it was revealed to the Prophet(Peace be upon him) at the time of its descent.⁷

If one believed in the pre-existent Qurän, even in the pre-existent created Qurän, as a necessary implication, one had to believe that a sinner named *Abu Lahb* was predestined from all eternity, or at least from the creation of the universe to be a sinner. Now such a belief presented a moral fatalism which was quite contrary to the spirit of Islamic Faith. Belief in Resurrection and man's accountability for his deeds on the Day of Judgment is one of the basic components of Islamic Faith. But the above mentioned (*i.e.*, the predestined condemnation of *Abu Lahb*...) was a necessary corollary of the belief about the pre-existent nature of the Qurän. Now a Libertarian, among the Muslim theologians, could not accept this view. So he could not accept a belief in the pre-existence of the Qurän. Therefore the Libertarians, *i.e.*, the M'utazilites refused to accept the pre-existence, in whatever sense, of the Qurän. But with their belief that Qurän was created at the time of its descent, they had to face the objection of declaring Word of Allah as created which was equally unacceptable.

As we see, the dilemma is based on the supposition that a) the *Qurän* is either pre-existent, or b) it is created (on the creation of the universe or at the time of its descent). The dilemma presents that either of the beliefs makes its upholder to confront an implication which, in one way or the other, is equally unacceptable. It is a fact that the two major theological sects in the early centuries of Islam, the *Ash'arites* and the M'utazilites,

⁷ Cf., *ibid.* p. 724

held one or the other of the view regarding the nature of the Qurän. So it seems necessary to examine this supposition first. Let us see this supposition in the light of the Qurän.

i. Allah is the originator of everything. Qurän divides the whole originated order of being, in two categories: *Khalq*(Creation) and *Amr* (Command). It is Allah to Whom belongs the creation (*Khalq*) of every thing, and it is He, according to Whose Command (*Amr*) everything is active in its sphere.*Surely His is the Creation (Khalq) and the Command(Amr).....* (07:54)⁸

ii. The heavens and the earth, and whatever therein is, belongs to the category of *Khalq*(Creation). Even the phenomenon of life and the phenomenon of death fall in the same category. *Allah is He Who created the heavens and the earth and what is between them ...* (32:04)⁹ *He Who created death and life ...* (67:2)¹⁰

⁸ Hazrat Fazal Shah & Mohammad Ashraf Fazli, *Tafseer-e-Fazli*, 7 vols. 2nd ed. (Lahore: Fazli Foundation, 1982-98), 2 (1996) : 224. *Tafseer-e-Fazli* is Exegesis of the Qurän written in Urdu; rendering into English is mine. The translation given above in the text from *Tafsire-e-Fazli* is not substantially different from that of Pickthall. Pickthall's translation of this part of the verse is as follows: *His verily is all creation and commandment...* Marmaduke Pickthall (tr.), *The Glorious Qurän: Explanatory Translation*, p. 593.

⁹ Ibid., *Tafsir-e-Fazli*, 5 (1996) : 217.

¹⁰ Ibid., 7 (1998) : 231. Pickthall when translating this verse changes the sequence of "death" and "life" (as stated in this verse) which is not correct. If Allah has mentioned "death" before He mentions "life", it is because of His absolute Knowledge. Pickthall(tr.), *Meaning of the Glorious Qurän*, p. 574. For further reference to the matter under discussion in the body text see the following verses: *And Allah hath given you, of that which He hath created, shelter from the sun, and hath given you places of refuge in the mountains, and has given for you coats...* (16:81);

iii. Allah has not created the heavens and the earth without a purpose. The purpose of what Allah creates, stands prior to His creating. ,... *Allah created not the heavens and the earth and that which is between them save with the truth,*... (30:08)¹¹

iv. It is Allah's *Amr*(Command) which makes what is to be created(*Khalq*) active in a well-defined course of action and subservient in its area of operation. *Surely your Lord is Allah, Who created the heavens and the earth in six days, and He established on the throne of Power. He makes the night cover the day, which it pursues incessantly. And the Sun and the Moon and the Stars are made subservient by His Command (Amr). Surely His is the Creation (Khalq) and the Command (Amr)...* (7:54)¹²

v. Though *Amr*(Command) is determined or prescribed prior to creating yet it is expressed or issued in the present; for *Amr*(Command) is issued when the thing or

Who [i.e., Allah] created the heavens and earth and all that is between them... (25:59) Ibid., pp. 258, 353.

¹¹ Marmaduke Pickthall(tr.), *Meaning of the Glorious Qurän*, p. 396. For further references see the following verses: *And We created not the heaven and the earth and what is between them in vain... (38:27); And We created not the heavens and the earth and all that is between them, in play.(44:38) Ibid., pp. 451, 497.*

¹² Hazrat Fazal Shah & Mohammad Ashraf Fazli, *Tafseer-e-Fazli*, 2 (1996) : 224.

the person (to be created or created) is capable of receiving it. *He said: Our Lord is He Who gave to everything its nature, then guided it aright.*(20:50)¹³

vi. (a) Qurän belongs to the category of *Amr* (Command) and not to the category of *Khalq* (Creation). *That [Qurän] is the Commandment [Amr] of Allah, which He revealeth unto you... (65:05)*¹⁴ (b) It is the source of knowing *Shari'a* (divine course); and *Shari'a* is Allah's *Amr*(Command) and not His creation. *And now We have set thee on a clear road[Shari'a] of (Our)Commandment[Amr], so follow it, and follow not the whims of those who know not. (45:18)*¹⁵ (c) *Amr*(Command) is always descended or revealed and not created. *Allah is He Who created seven heavens, and of the earth the like thereof. The Command (Amr) descends among them, that you may know that Allah is Possessor of Power over all things, and that Allah encompasses all things in (His) Knowledge.*(65:12)¹⁶

Conclusion:

1. It was wrong on the part of the theologians, in the early centuries of Islam (as well as in all the times to come) to have talked of the Qurän in terms of its createdness / uncreatedness. The principle that what does not come under the category of creation is uncreated, and what is uncreated must be eternal, is false. To describe Qurän as 'pre-

¹³ Marmaduke Pickthall(tr.), *Meaning of the Glorious Qurän*, p. 301.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 570.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 500.

¹⁶ Hazrat Fazal Shah & Mohammad Ashraf Fazli, *Tafseer-e-Fazli*, 7 (1998): 222.

existent created Qurän' is also false and unjustified. Qurän is neither created nor uncreated (*i.e.*, eternal); it is neither 'pre-existent created Qurän' nor 'pre-existent uncreated Qurän'; it is Allah's *Amr* (Command) which He descended to His Prophet Mohammed (p.b.u.h.). The same is true regarding the Scriptures which had been descended before the Qurän on other prophets.(4:46; 5:13)

2. To state Qurän uncreated and pre-existent in the sense of real, incorporeal Divine Attribute of Speech (*Kaläm*) is more false and unjustified for it makes the Divine Attribute of Speech (*Kaläm*) incarnated in the Qurän. There is no concept of incarnation in Islam. Qurän states such a thing as making associates for Allah (*i.e.*, *Shirk*) and the people who commit this sin as associators (*Mushrikün*). To state Qurän uncreated and pre-existent in the sense of real, incorporeal Divine Attribute of Speech (*Kaläm*) is to make Qurän eternal or rather coeternal with God. The Ash'arite distinction of *Kaläm e Nafsi* and of *Kaläm e Lafzi* meant the same thing.¹⁷ By *Kaläm e Nafsi* (Immanent Speech) Ash'ari meant the ideas in the mind of a person before he had expressed them. After being expressed in words it becomes *Kaläm e Lafzi* (Verbal Speech). This view is based on the view of Divine Attributes as real, incorporeal entities seated in the being of Allah. Such a view in the fold of Islam could not have arisen except under the influence of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity which is ultimately traceable to Philo's rational reconstruction of Jewish

¹⁷ Dr. Abdul Khaliq, and Yousaf Shadai, *Muslim Falsfa*, (Urdu), Lahore Pakistan: Aziz Publishers, 1988, pp. 61-62.

theology on the basis of intradeical interpretation of Platonic Ideas.¹⁸ What wrong actually the muslims did under the above influence was that they translated the Qurānic concept of Divine Names into the un-Qurānic concept of Divine Attributes without attending to the fact that ‘the logic of names’ was utterly different from ‘the logic of attributes’¹⁹. Then they identified these attributes with Platonic Ideas.

¹⁸ H. A. Wolfson, “Extradeical and Intradeical Interpretation of Platonic Ideas”, *Religious Philosophy: A Group of Essays*, Harvard University Press, 1961, p.49; and *Philosophy of the Kalam* chapter 2. Wolfson writes that among the things which Plato somehow left un-explained about his Theory of Ideas is the question: How are these ideas related to God? Sometimes he uses language which lends itself to the interpretation that the Ideas have an existence external to God, either ungenerated and coeternal with God or produced or made by God. They are thus *extradeical*. Sometimes, however, he uses language which lends itself to the interpretation that the Ideas are the thoughts of God. They are *intradeical*. This interpretation identifies Plato’s God with mind. Philo adopted the second interpretation. The Christians, following Philo adopted the same view in their theology and doctrine of trinity was its outcome. Muslims, being impressed with this view, identified divine attributes with platonic ideas. Wolfson seems to have successfully shown that this view “could not have originated in Islam spontaneously but it could have originated under Christian influence in the course of debates between Muslims and Christians shortly after the conquest of Syria in the VII century. Majid Fakhri also seems to endorse the same point of view when he says “Scholastic theology ... gave the Muslims, as it had given the Christians of Egypt and Syria centuries earlier, the incentive to pursue the study of Greek Philosophy.”, or when he says, “The beginning of the Islamic Philosophical school coincides with the first translations of the works of the Greek masters into Arabic from Syriac or Greek.” Majid Fakhry, “Introduction,” to *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, 2nd edition (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), pp. xviii, xix.

¹⁹ Abdul Hameed Kamali, “Maqoola-e-Sifāt aur Haqiqat-e-Asmā”(Urdu), *Iqbal Review*, 6: 2, (July 1965), Lahore Pakistan: Iqbal Academy: 1-32.

3. That Allah is able to speak, if He please, or address His Word to any of His servants, in this world and in the hereafter, is manifest from the following verses of the Qurän: 2:174; 2:253; 3:77; 4:164; 7:143; 7:144; 42:51; 4:164. The Qurän states itself, and the other sacred Books revealed before, as Allah's Speech (*Kaläm Allah*) at 2:75; 9:6; 48:15. Speech (*Kaläm*) is Allah's Attribute as to create is 'Allah's Attribute. The creation and origination of the heavens and the earth and of all things between them is the expression or manifestation of Divine Attributes to create (*Khalq*), to originate (*Ibda*) and Others. The Qurän is the expression of Allah's Attribute of Speech (*Kaläm*) and to Command (*Hukm & Amr*) and others. This is also true of other revealed Books and of the Speech which Allah made to any of His servants or creatures.²⁰

4. It is not the case that Allah has created what He pleased, once for all. He creates in the present.(....*He multiplieth in creation what He will...35:01; If He will, He can be rid of you and bring (instead of you) a new creation.* (35:16) Similarly it is not the case that Allah had made His Speech 'once for all times', which He placed on the Preserved Tablet, and He revealed it to any of His Prophets or creatures therefrom when needed. He is able to address His Word or to speak to any of His servants or creatures, if He please, at any present: ... *And Allah spake directly to Moses.* (04:164)²¹

²⁰ al-Qurän 8:144; 42:51; 2:75; 9:6; 48:15. 65:5; 6:114.

²¹ Marmaduke Pickthall(tr.), *Meaning of the Glorious Quran*, p. 97. For further reference see the following verses: *These be the messengers ... There are those among them to whom God [Allah] has spoken... (02:253); And when Moses came according to Our appointed place and His Lord spoke to him... (07:143); He said: O Moses, surely I have chosen thee above the people with My*

5 (a) As Word of Allah, Qurän consists of two kinds of verses: the Imperative (*Muhkamat*) and the Allegorical (*Mutashabihat*). The Imperative (*Muhkamat*) are those verses which are directly in the form of Commandments. The Allegorical (*Mutashabihat*) are the verses which, on reading or listening, render an obligation on the reader or the listener in accordance with that statement.

It is not the whole of the Qurän, but only the Imperitival verses (*Muhkamat*) which are called the “Mother of the Book” (*Umm ul Kitab*). They are the standard in any decision. These are the foundation of the Book. Whatever is inferred from the Allegorical (*Mutashabihat*) verses by way of interpretation is necessarily to cohere with the Imperitival verses (*Muhkamat*); if otherwise, the interpretation is false. It is also necessary to have faith that the whole of the Book is revealed by Allah.(03:07) *It is He, Who has sent down this Book on you. Some verses thereof are Imperative [Muhkamat]. These be the Mother of the Book [Umm ul Kitab i.e., foundation of the Book]. And others are Allegorical [Mutashabihat]. Then those in whose hearts is perversity follow the part of it which is allegorical, seeking to mislead and seeking to give it interpretation. And none knows its interpretation save Allah. And those firmly rooted in knowledge say: We believe in it, it is all from our Lord...(03:07)*²²

messages and with My Speech...(07:144) Al-haj Hafiz Ghulam Sarwar, *Translation of The Holy Qur-an*, National Book Foundation Karachi, 1973, pp, 24, 95.

²² Hazrat Fazal Shah & Mohammad Ashraf Fazli, *Tafsir e Fazli*, 1 (2nd ed. 2nd reprint, 1997): 175.

As Allah's Command (*Amr*) Qurän entertains the status of Authority (*Hukm*) from Allah, and it is in Arabic. (13:37) Qurän is (contained) in the *Umm ul Kitab* (Mother of the Book) (43:4); It is the Imperitival verses (*Muhkamat*) that are the *Umm ul Kitab*(03:07); Thus the Qurän is founded in the *Muhkamat*. (43:4)²³

(b) Qurän also states *Umm-ul-Kitab* to be the standard or authority on the base of which *Allah effaces and establishes what He please* (13:39); hence (*Umm-ul-Kitab*) refers to the Divine Laws which He 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. Qurän also states *Umm-ul-Kitab* to be with Allah (13:39; 43:1-4). It means that the exact knowledge of these Divine Laws regulating human destiny is with Allah and it is with His authority that they are enforced.

(c) The identification between the Mother of the Book(*Umm ul Kitab*) and the Imperitival verses(*Muhkmät*) implies that the Imperitival verses of the Qurän contain Divine Guidance in accordance with the Divine Laws which regulate the destiny of a person or a people. This identification further implies that the Imperitival Verses of the Qurän, at least with reference to their essence, existed prior to the revelation of the Qurän, from the time best known to Allah. But this is not true regarding the Allegorical Verses (*Mutashabihat*) of the Qurän, for they are not the *Umm ul Kitab*. In the light of the

²³ *Ha Mim. By the Book that makes manifest! Surely We have made [Jaalna] it an Arabic Qurän that you may understand. And it is in the Mother of the Book [Umm-ul-Kitab] with Us, truly elevated, full of wisdom.* (al-Qurän 43:1-4) Ibid., 6 (1997) : 245-46.

discussion made above we infer that all those verses that are not Imperitival, whether they are concerned with the past, present or future events of human history or eschatological events (as descriptions, statements, judgments, predictions, allegories, analogies, gladdening, warnings, condemnation and the like) did not necessarily exist prior to the time of their being revealed.

6. The last of the following three verses (56:77-78-79) that: *Most certainly this is an honorable Qurän; In a book well protected [Kitab-im-Maknoom]. None touches it except the pure*, clearly shows that the second verse is about the revealed Arabic Qurän, and Allah has taken upon Him to keep its text intact from all attempts at distortion and transposition. The same fact is further corroborated when Qurän says: *Surely We have descended the Reminder, and surely We shall guard it.*(15:9)²⁴

Ghulam Ahmed Pervez, a muslim scholar, identifies *Loh im Mahfooz* (Preserved Tablet) with the *Kitab im Maknoom* (Well-Protected Book) as one and the same entity and identifies it with the revealed Qurän, I shall examine this view while discussing the concept of the Preserved Tablet below.²⁵

7. The dilemma as presented & formulated by Wolfson is based, among other things, on a false concept of the Preserved Tablet (*Loh im Mahfooz*). This concept is false because it is contrary to the Quränic concept of such a Book, as well as it contradicts

²⁴ Ibid., 7 (1998) : 134, & 3 (1993) : 262

²⁵ Ghulam Ahmed Pervaiz, *Lughat ul Qurän (Urdu)* vols. 4 (in single binding), Lahore, Pakistan: Idara Tal'u e Islam, 1984, p. 1512.

basic components of Islamic Faith.²⁶ Let us reconstruct the Quränic concept of the Preserved Tablet (*Lawh im Mahfuz*).

(a) According to Qurän, the concept of *Lawh im Mahfuz* is distinct from the Revealed Books. The validity of such a concept of Preserved Tablet as distinct from Qurän is proved when we read in the Qurän: *He (Pharaoh) said: What then is the state of the former generations? He (Moses) said: The knowledge thereof is with my Lord in a Book; my Lord errs not, nor does He forget.(20:51-52)*²⁷ *Know you not that Allah knows what is in the heaven and the earth? Surely this is in Book. That is surely easy to Allah.(22:70)*²⁸

(b) The concept of the Preserved Tablet (*Loh Mahfooz*) as a Book with the Lord containing i) the knowledge of former generations with reference to their destiny, and ii) the knowledge of what is in the heaven and the earth, and iii) containing Mother of the Books (*Umm ul Kitab 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.

²⁶ Wolfson mentions some traditions in the name of the Holy Prophet of Islam in this regard. He also tries to corroborate this concept of the Preserved Tablet with the Judaic concept for the same. But no tradition, which states a concept contradicting to basic components of Islamic Faith can be the saying of the Holy Prophet (p.b.u.h), nor can such interpretation of a tradition be valid.

²⁷ Hafiz Ghulam Sarwar, *Translation of the Holy Qur-an*, p. 180.

²⁸ Hazrat Fazal Shah & Mohammad Ashraf Fazli, *Tafseer-e-Fazli*, 4 (1995) : 291.

The concept of a Book which contains the knowledge of former generations implies that it must contain the knowledge of all the former generations. The generations which are yet to come are not the former generations. Thus Qurän does not certify that the Preserved Tablet contains the knowledge of the generations yet to come (not to talk of its containing knowledge of the generations yet to come with reference to which of them would be condemned or blessed),²⁹ 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 *Abu Lahb* or the knowledge of any sin on his part prior to *Abu Lahb's* being born and having committed it. From what is mentioned in the above paragraph it is inferred that this Book could not contain any of the above mentioned three kinds of knowledge from eternity. It must not contain this knowledge before the time of the creation of the heavens & the earth. There is no concept in the Qurän 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 being³⁰ simultaneously with the world. It itself must belong to the category of Creation or to the category of Command.

²⁹ The question of Pharaoh about the former generations was with reference to the destiny of these people *i.e.*, whether they were condemned or blessed.

³⁰ Created if Preserved Tablet belonged to the category of Creation (*Khalq*), or brought into being if it belonged to the category of Command (*Amr*) as discussed above.

(c) Mother of the Book (*Umm-ul-Kitab*), which is the foundation of the Qurän as we have shown, refers to the Divine Laws which He 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. Since the Preserved Tablet (*Lawh i Mahfuz*) contains what is in the heavens & earth, it must contain *Umm ul Kitab* from the time when it was placed by Almighty on the Preserved Tablet. We have also shown that Preserved Tablet could never contain the condemnation of *Abu Lahb* nor the knowledge of any sin on his part prior to *Abu Lahb's* being born and having committed it. It means that *Lawh im Mahfuz* could never contain the verses of the chapter 111 of the Qurän. It is also true of other such verses which had reference to any act of moral significance of a particular person or a people in a particular spacio-temporal reference.

(d) But the Qurän says: *Nay, it is a glorious Qurän, in a Preserved Tablet (85:22);*³¹ does it not contradict with our interpretation above? No, it does not. The Preserved Tablet contained Mother of the Book (Imperitival verses) prior to the revelation of the Qurän from the time best known to Allah Almighty (but never from eternity), and it contained the Allegorical verses from the period of their being descended on the Prophet(p.b.u.h). It is in this sense that the Preserved Tablet contains the whole of the Qurän.

³¹ Hazrat Fazal Shah & Mohammad Ashraf Fazli, *Tafseer-e-Fazli*, 7 (1998) : 407.

8. The verses at 111:1-5 referred to above by Wolfson concerning *Abu Lahb* belong to the category of Allegorical Verses (*Mutashabihat*). These does not belong to the category of the verses which are said to be the *Umm ul Kitab*. The verses of the Chapter 111 simply state *Abu Lahb's* inability and undeservedness 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 (*fasiqoon*), 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.³² *Abu Lahb* preferred to be a staunch enemy of the Prophet, hence a transgressor, by his own free choice. It is after *Abu Lahb's* being proved himself a transgressor in the superlative degree (*fasiq*) that the judgment contained in these verses was passed by Allah and the same were revealed to the Prophet (p.b.u.h.). These verses, containing *Abu Lahb's* condemnation, certified his being a transgressor. It is absolutely wrong to state these verses to contain pre-destined condemnation of *Abu Lahb* on his pre-destined sin. The dilemma does never present a case for incoherence of some verses of the Qurän (*i.e.*, the predestinarian verses so-called) with certain other verses (*i.e.*, the libertarian verses so-called) that assert freedom of will for man. The dilemma also 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.

³²Al-Qurän, 2:26; 9:80.