

ALI 588: The World of Pre-Existence

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Outline

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Review of Session One

- The verse of ‘alast’ highlights three important points:
 - Direct witnessing of reality by every human being.
 - Awareness of that reality by every human being.
 - Responsibility towards that reality for every human being.
- The first interpretation explains this verse in light of ‘alam of dharr.
 - This reality is explained in Shia and Sunni narrations of hadith.
 - Scholars have pointed out scriptural and theological concerns with this interpretation.

The Second Interpretation

- The verse is employing symbolic language to describe Fitrah.

Every human being is created in a manner that he witnesses his own servitude and the Creator's Lordship.

- Content and Style supported by Quran and hadith.

and He said to it and to the earth, "Come! Willingly or unwillingly!" They said, "We come heartily." (Q 41:11)

By Your desire they follow Your command without Your word and by Your will they obey Your bans without Your prohibition. (*al-Sahifah al-Sajjadiyyah*, Dua No. 7)

Critique of the Second Interpretation

- Necessitates symbolic interpretation of the verse.
- Necessitates fictional descriptions in the Qur'an.
- Not congruent with the apparent meaning of the verse.
- Not congruent with meaning of some of the ahadith.

The 3rd and 4th Interpretation in Brief

- An explanation of the reality of aql (intellect) and wahy (revelation)
 - Opinion of Ayatullah Jawadi Amuli.
 - Allah (S)'s argument is only completed by revelation.
- The covenant was taken from man's malakuti reality (spiritual/imaginative)
 - Opinion of Allamah Tabatabai
 - The precedence is not in time but in station or level.

Āyatullāh Jawādi's Comment on 'Allāmah

A Memory: All or most of these objections were presented to Allamah (r). However he did not consider these objections to be valid, and he remained committed to the same view that he has penned in his commentary [*al-Mizān*]. The honored teacher, along with the friends of Allah have escaped from the constrains of the world of mulk, and have arrived at the world of malakut or even greater than that. Whatever they acquired is the truth, because the truth was clear for them, and it is us who have remained within the narrow confines of the world of nature.

Qur'an and Fitrat, pg. 137

A Glance at Narrations of Alam al-Dharr

- Categories of Narrations:
 - Covenant from all humans
 - Prophet (s) preceded all in responding positively
 - Covenant of tawhid and wilayah
 - Direct witnessing of Allah (S)

Ibn Maskan asked Imam al-Sadiq (a), “Was this through **direct witnessing?**”

The Imam (a) stated, “ Yes. **The awareness was established, the place of covenant was forgotten,** and they will soon remember it. Had it not been the case, **no one would have known his creator and his provider.**”

Amongst them were those who confessed with through their speech in the world of Dharr but did not submit to it with their heart. Hence Allah (S) has stated, ‘but they would not believe something they had denied before.’” (Q10:74)

Tafsir of Ali ibn Ibrahim al-Qummi.

Treatment by Scholars Past and Recent

- Acceptance of the prima facie meaning of the narrations.
- Question the authenticity and prevalence of the narrations.
 - The early Shi'a theologians did not form theological positions by these narrations.
- Interpret the narrations in a metaphorical manner.
 - Recognize that many of the narrations make reference to fitrah.
- The focus of the Ahl al-Bayt (a) on the subsequent realm is greater than the preceding realm.