

His Excellency, Āyatullāh Jawādī Āmulī's Message to the  
8<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the Muslim Congress of America

*I seek refuge from the accursed Shayṭān.  
In the Name of Allah, the All-beneficent, the All-merciful.*

All praise belongs to God, Lord of all the worlds. Blessings be upon all the prophets and messengers, and the guiding and guided Imams—especially the Seal of the prophets and the Seal of the trustees (may manifold praises and salutations be upon them). We associate ourselves to them and disclaim their enemies in God's presence!

We would like to extend our felicitations on the occasion of the birth anniversary of the Remnant of Allah [Imam Mahdī] (may our souls be sacrificed for him) to him and to all the devotees of the Qur'ān and the Family, and as well to you honourable brothers and sisters attending this esteemed symposium. We ask God most-Holy to acquaint one and all with the divine sciences and to make the pure prayers of his Eminence the lot of you all, especially the founders and the conveners of this esteemed scientific symposium!

The issue of 'Divine justice' forms one of the most fundamental and key bases for law, ethics, jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and legislation. You are aware that issues pertaining to jurisprudence, ethics, law and legislation have three stages: The executive stage—that is the legal, ethical, and juridical precepts themselves which present themselves as secondary problems and questions at hand. These juridical precepts (*mawād*) or legislative, legal, or ethical precepts are derived from bases (*mabānī*). These bases [which compose the second stage] are ideas such as independence, freedom, security, safety, keeping promises, justice, fulfilling promises, and so on. These are the primary bases for deriving legal precepts, juridical precepts, legislative precepts, ethical precepts and their like. The third stage is that these bases must be drawn from sources (*manābi'* or *arḥāi*).

For instance in the meaning of 'justice'—which is something clear and evident, ostensibly 'putting everything in its own place'—the place of things and the place of persons must be objectively determined from the sources. 'Justice' is one of the key bases of law, jurisprudence, ethics, and legislation. The meaning of 'justice' is very clear and evident, for 'justice' means to 'put every-thing in its own place.' But what is this 'place' of things? What is the 'place' of persons? The creator of things and the creator of people, that is, God almighty, must specify this 'place' and 'position'. He specifies the place of things and the place of persons by way of Revelation.

The foregoing discussion implies that the only researcher who has validity and who can make claims of knowing legislation, jurisprudence, and the law, is the one who derives legal, juridical, legislative and ethical precepts, or their like, from the aforementioned bases; and draws these bases from the sources, which is revelation—viz. the Book and the Tradition of the Immaculates ('a).

But those who have no connection with revelatory sources are left empty handed vis-à-vis the legislative process. This is because such persons do not know the place of things, nor the

place of people in any objective or substantive way. For if someone does not properly appraise the idea of ‘justice’ in the legislative process—by rooting it in its authentic sources—he can never successfully produce legal, legislative, juridical precepts or their like.

We saw that a human legislator must go through these three stages of juridico-ethical precepts, bases, and sources, but it is different in the divine case. If God were to justly create the world, or justly manage the world, or to justly pass judgement on the world, this would not mean that He would do so according to a law pre-written by others or based on the prejudice of others; rather what it means is that He, by virtue of His pre-eternal knowledge and will, objectively knows the ‘place’ of things and the ‘place’ of persons, and it is according to this that He justly creates the world, justly maintains it, and justly legislates with respect to it.

Hence it is clear that ultimately the ‘Legislator’ is God and none else. Man, no matter how high his level, can eventually only be someone who knows the law well, but he cannot be a legislator *per se*. This is because man is not the creator of subjects or of predicates, nor of the relation between subjects and predicates so as to be able to set laws. It is evident that God created subjects. God created predicates. God created the relation between subjects and predicates. And God created the effects and the actions of all things.

The human intellect can only be a good knower of legislation, a good knower of jurisprudence, a good knower of ethics, or a good knower of law; for that which man has called ‘intellect’ is like a lamp that can shed light [on existing roads]. But that which God created is called the ‘Path’. Figuratively speaking, God designed the Way and put a lamp and a light in our hands so that under the auspices of Revelation we could take assistance from the luminosity of Intellect, and seek help from the light of Tradition, thereby recognizing the Way [not creating it]. So if we humans want to know the law, then we have [to depend on] the above mentioned three stages. But if God wants to know the law, he is utterly independent in both the knowledge of the law and in the creative act of legislation itself; for, to repeat, He knows the place of things and the relationships between them by virtue of His pre-eternal knowledge and will—according to which He makes laws.

An important point with regards to God is the following: God almighty does justice and does not do any injustice whatsoever. The Noble Qur’ān has affirmed this principle as so:

وَلَا يَظْلِمُ رَبُّكَ أَحَدًا

... and your Lord does not wrong anyone. (18:49)

God does not oppress anyone in the least. What must be noted is that this statement does not imply an adherence to a legal code that has been written by other-than-God. For the consequence of such a case is clear. If it were so, God would be “obligated” to make His acts, [including] His creation and generation, to accord with that previously written human law—implying that a man-made law would override the divine will !? This is not how it is. Rather the acts of God are justice itself. This is because God creates every thing in its own place.

الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ

The truth is from your Lord. (2:147)

God almighty creates justly and definitely acts justly. It is impossible for injustice to issue from God.

When it is said that God “definitely acts justly” or God “necessarily acts justly,” what is meant is that His acts are based on “what is necessary for Him” (*yajibu ‘anhu*) not “what is made necessary upon Him” (*yajibu ‘alayhi*).<sup>1</sup> It is quintessential to note that nothing can override or rule God so as to be obligatory upon Him. This is because anything whatsoever in the world that can be posited is nothing but a creation of God. Hence God is not over-ruled by any law or regulation. Rather it is the case of “necessary for Him” not “necessary upon him”. Hence, God definitely acts justly [inherently and by His nature], not that ‘God **must** definitely act justly’ [*ab extra* and perforce].

In conclusion, definitely God’s acts are justice [itself] as He acts in conformity with Wisdom—He knows the place of all things and the identity of all things. Because the identity of things is with God, He knows their essential attributes as well as their accidental attributes. He puts every thing in its own proper place, no higher, no lower.

While God’s acts are just and He definitely acts justly out of it being “necessary for Him” [as per His perfection and inherent nature]; and while it is not definitely a “necessity imposed upon Him”<sup>2</sup>, [all this does not preclude temporal precedence and hierarchy of principles]. To explain, on the level of particularities, it is possible that you see that an act of God is preceded by another act or by some other principle that the Qur’ān itself has expounded. But this does not in any way mean that there is a previously written law and that God, in His foreknowledge of this man-made law, would, for instance, take as a criterion for divine action. Hence, God’s justice is necessary and God acts justly, but this ‘justice’ comes from God, necessarily, and is not [a necessity] imposed upon God.

One last point: these truths are based on the principle of “rational good and evil” (*ḥusn wa qubbh ‘aqli*). This principle states that the intellect inherently understands that justice is ‘good’ and that injustice is ‘evil.’<sup>3</sup> The intellect also perceives the corollaries of this principle. This is contrary to the thought of Ashari, who denied the possibility of perceiving good and evil by way of reason.

So what the intellect knows to be *good* is ‘just’, and what it knows to be *evil* is ‘unjust’. Hence that which is [objectively] just, definitely issues from God, and that which is unjust or oppressive, definitely does not come from God.

But [subjectively] discerning the just and discerning the unjust—knowing where there is justice and where there is oppression—is like knowing the crux of things and is something

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<sup>1</sup> In the former it is the necessity of His perfection that ontologically does not “allow” Him to be imperfect, while in the latter the necessity would be an obligation placed upon Him from the outside, so to speak, *ad absurdum*. [Tr.]

<sup>2</sup> As is imagined by some Mu’tazilites vis-à-vis God being subjected to an [extraneous] law—because we cannot have in the existential realm a law that is anything other than an act of God, such that the law would overrule the acts of God.

<sup>3</sup> The Spirit-Intellect in man is theomorphic in essence and hence has in principle access to the Principle and the Source of all objectivity and of all knowledge. Cf. Qur’ān 2:147 with 15:29 or 38:72 [Tr.]

that is not possible for reason. When it comes to these things, discursive reason cannot know their present place, their past, nor their future [in an essential and exhaustive manner].

According to what the Qur'an has said, 'man cannot take on the ultimate role of a judge and pass judgement because his knowledge is limited,' if not for any other reason than the actuality that man is not able to discern justice from injustice in many cases. The Qur'an says:

وَعَسَىٰ أَنْ تَكْرَهُوا شَيْئًا وَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ وَعَسَىٰ أَنْ تُحِبُّوا شَيْئًا وَهُوَ شَرٌّ لَّكُمْ

... it may be that you dislike something while it is good for you, and it may be that you love something while it is bad for you." (2:216)

Or if he is able, he misses the mark by not knowing the real place of things and, God-forbid, thinks that there is injustice where there is none. For instance in the case of the distribution of inheritance, after explaining the differing amounts for men and women, God goes on to state the portion of a daughter and that of a son and then says,

لَا تَدْرُونَ أَيُّهُمُ أَقْرَبُ لَكُمْ نَفْعًا

... you do not know which of them is likelier to be beneficial for you. (4:11)

He seems to be saying, "You do not know the future. Do not tamper with these portions. Do not say, 'Why is a woman's share less and a man's share more?' Because you do not know the past, do not know the future, do not know the reality of a woman or a man, do not know the reality of these shares and portions, ..."

Hence, justice is true and injustice is error; this much the intellect knows [objectively], and definitely what comes from God is justice. This is contrary to what the Asharis say, "the intellect does not know that justice is good and injustice is evil." And [instead of saying] definitely God does act justly, as this is "necessary for Him" they rather say, 'whatever God does is good'.<sup>4</sup> It is along these same lines then that the difference between Shia thought and that of the Mutazalites, as well as the discrepancy between Shia thought and Asharite thinking becomes apparent.

At this juncture, I hope and pray that God almighty will make all of us, all of you, and all the devotees of the Qur'an and the Family in general, better aware of the divine sciences—allowing us to believe them, practice them, and communicate them to society at large. I also pray that He lead and guide everyone by recourse to the Quran and the Family and that He, immaculate is He, include us all in the luminous graces of the blessed Master of the Age (may our souls be sacrificed for him),

May your festivity and your Eid—with the blessings of the prayers of his Eminence—be accompanied with more and brighter light, and with divine benediction, mercy and grace.

May Allah forgive us and you. Peace be upon you and the Mercy of Allah and His Graces.

‘Abdullāh Jawādī Āmulī

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. voluntarism with intellectualism in theology. [Tr.]