

CONCEPT OF PREDESTINATION IN ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY: SPECIAL REFERENCE TO AVERROES AND AQUINAS

by
Dr. Ismail Mohamad

Abstract

Predestination is a doctrine believed by Muslims and Christians, but there are some problems arise in understanding of it among them. This article tries to view the problems from Islamic and Christian weltanschauung as presented by the well-known scholars namely Averroes and Aquinas.

Introduction: Preliminary Problem

Predestination is a crucial problem not only in Islam but also in Christianity. There has been a long and continuing discussion by theologians on both sides.

The main question in predestination in Islamic theory is whether man has power to act or free will to choose his action. If he has no power or free will, it means that his action is caused by another power. If he has the power or free will, it means that God's omnipotence is challenged.

Averroes quotes many Quranic verses which show apparently whether man has power or not in doing something. The Quranic verses which show that man has free will and acquisition (kasb) in his action are, for example, "what ever affliction may visit you is for what your own hands have earned"¹ As for Thamud We guided them, but they preferred blindness above guidance"², and others. The Quranic verses which show that man is compelled in his action are, for example, "Surely We have created everything in measure,"³ and others. Even Averroes also refers to a tradition of the prophet Muhammad s. a.w. as he said", Every child is born according to nature (fitrah) and his parents make him a Jew or a Christian. This tradition of the Prophet Muhammad s.a.w. shows that man has power or free

¹ Qur'an, 42:30

² Qur'an, 41:17

³ Qur'an, 54:49

will in his action. There is, however, a tradition which shows that man has no power quoted by Averroes, "These were created for paradise and they do work for the people of paradise, and these were created for hell⁴ and they do work for people of hell. The first tradition shows that the cause of disbelief (kufr) is one's own environment, and the second points out that the wickedness and disbelief are both caused by God and that man is compelled to follow them.⁵

Controversy concerning rational proof raised by Averroes is if, on the one hand, we say that man is the creator of his own action it would be necessary to admit that there are things which are not done according to the will of God. So there would be another creator beside that man cannot act freely, we admit that he is compelled to do certain acts, and when a man is under compulsion in his acts, then moral obligation (taklif) belongs to the category of imposition beyond capacity to bear (ma la yutaq)⁶

For the phenomena mentioned above, Muslims according to Averroes, are divided into two major groups.⁷ Mu'tazilites who hold that man's acquisition is cause of wickedness and goodness. Thus he is responsible for his act, and consequently he cannot blame God if he will be punished. Another group is called Jabarites who hold that man is under compulsion in his act. In addition to these two groups there is another group called Ash'arites. Their view on predestination, according to Averroes, lies between the two extreme views Mu'tazilites and Jabarites. They say that man has a acquisition, but the deed (al-Muktasab) and the power of doing it (al-Kasb) are both created by God.⁸

In Christianity, as in Islam, there is also a controversy about the concept of predestination. Some verses of scripture mention that man is predestined by God. For example, "who can produce some one clean out of some unclean? There is no one"⁹ Besides, there are some verses which point out that man is not subject to the predestination of God. For example, "So that they may indeed see but not perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand."¹⁰ The example of these two

⁴ Averroes, *Manahij al-Adillah*, ed by Mahmud Qasim, Qahirah: Maktabah al-Anglo, 1964, p.224. Reference after this is as al-Kashf

⁵ al-Kashf, p. 224

⁶ al-Kashf, p. 225

⁷ al-Kashf, p. 224

⁸ al-Kashf, p. 224

⁹ Job, 14:4

¹⁰ Mark, 4:12

verses, however, may be differently, interpreted,¹¹ as the Quranic verses in relation to predestination are interpreted differently by different sects.

The controversy of predestination in Christianity can be seen also in the development of theological doctrine during mediaeval times. It was regarded as the most animated controversy of the ninth century.¹² St. Augustine, a great theologian in the ancient world and the most influential Christian Neoplatonist, had a great influence upon the history of dogma and upon religious thought in western Christendom. His teaching dominated Christian thought until the rise of Aristotelianism in the early part of the thirteenth century.¹³

General concept of Predestination held by Augustine is that man has free will and responsibility, in the sense that his acts are his own personal deeds, expressing his own nature in its response to the various situation in which he finds himself.¹⁴ Augustine's scope of Predestination is, "that all things before they happen, and that which we have done by our free will, everything that we feel and know would not happen without our volition."¹⁵

Some aspects of Augustine's doctrine of predestination, however, are opposed by some theologians such as Gottschalk (b. 805) who holds that "none of us is able to use free will to do good, but only to do evil"¹⁶ The controversy also occurred between Gottschalk and Hincmar (d. 882), and between Hincmar and Gregory IV (d. 844). We also find disputation about predestination between Augustinians who hold that we ought to believe both the grace of God and the free will of man,¹⁷ and the Pelagians who hold a theory of free choice of will which leaves little place for the grace of God.¹⁸

¹¹ R. Deeberg, *Text book of the History of Doctrines*, vol. 1 tr. By Charles E. Hay. (7th ed. Michigan, Backer Book House, 1966), p. 157

¹² J. Pelikan, *The Growth of Mediaeval, Theology*, vol 3, (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 81

¹³ A. Hayman & James J. Walsh, *Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing company, 1980), p.15

¹⁴ J. Hick, *Evil and the God of Love*, collins, 1979, p. 74

¹⁵ Augustine, *City of God*, Part I, Book V. Chapter 9, tr. By Henry Bettenson with an introduction by David Knowles, (Penguin Books, 1972).

¹⁶ J. Pilikan, p. 83

¹⁷ A. Hayman & James J. Walsh, *Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, p. 65

¹⁸ J. Pilikan, p. 82

In consequence of the controversy¹⁹ about predestination some conferences were held to solve it. For example, at the council of Mayence in 848 where Gottshalk's doctrine of predestination was condemned, and the council of Toucy in 860 there was an effort to harmonize Gregory's view and Hincmar's. The controversy, however, went on without any decision having been reached. The struggle between Augustine's concept of predestination and that of the semi plagians continued for long time.

To understand the concept of predestination of God we should discuss three of His attributes; the will, the power and the justice, and their relation to human free will.

God's Will and Power According To Averroes.

Averroes affirms that God has power and will since they are two of the attributes of God's perfection mentioned in the Quran. There are many verses to show this. For example, "Truly God is powerful over everything",²⁰ and God, performer of what He desired.²¹ In addition to the Quranic proof, Averroes provides a rational argument (dalil 'aqliy) to prove that God has power and will.²² We recognize that God has knowledge, consequently God must has power and will. Again, it is established that the world exists through the First Agent who preferred its existence to its non-existence, accordingly, it is necessary that this agent should be a willer (murid).²³ Similarly, Averroes says that God has power because He is the Pure Act and the Real Agent who brings potency into act.²⁴ Furthermore, God is as an agent of all causes, drawing forth the universe from a state of non-existence to existence and conserving it. This means that all existents are created by God who has absolute power.

Averroes explains the difference between God's will and human will. In human will, Averroes says, one, while whose will has reached its object, no longer

¹⁹ For further information about controversy of predestination see J. Pilikan, *The Growth of Medieval Theology*, vol. 3, pp. 81-98; R. Seeberg, *Text Book of the History of Doctrines*, vol. II, p. 30-33; Geoffrey W. Bromilley, *Historical Theology: An Introduction*, (Endinburgh: T.T. Clark, 1978), pp. 165-170.

²⁰ A-Qur'an, 2:109

²¹ al-Qur'an, 85:16

²² al-Kasf, p. 162

²³ Averroes, *Tahafut al-Tahafut*, ed. By Maurice Bouyges, Beyrouth, 1930, p. 438, Reference after this is as Tahafut al-Tahafut.

²⁴ Tahafut al-Tahafut, p. 153

will²⁵ the eternal will does not cease through the presence of the object willed.²⁶ Furthermore, one who wills, lacks the thing which he wills, while God does not lack anything He wills.²⁷ Averroes also says that will is a desire of an agent toward action which rouses movement to perfect its essence. Desire and movement are only found in an animate body.²⁸ Again, the empirical will is a faculty which possesses the possibility of doing equally one of two contraries.²⁹ So the will in this manner is passive and change. Thus Averroes concludes that all those kinds of will belong to human beings and cannot to be attributed to God, because the kind of will in human beings are imperfect, while God is absolutely perfect and transcendent. Averroes, however, states that God's will as well as His knowledge is spoken of an equivocal name³⁰ that is, will in human beings is a faculty to choose one or two contraries. For example, God chooses existence not non-existence. So in this case the will of God and ours is said to be spoken of an equivocal name. The concept and scope of these two wills are different. We cannot explain sufficiently, Averroes says, the will of God as do our own, because the manner of His will is inconceivable, and that because there is no counterpart to His will in the empirical world (al-Shahid).³¹

Likewise, Averroes distinguishes the power of God and human power. He divides agent into two kinds; natural agent (Fa'il bi al-tab') and voluntary agent (fa'il bi al-ikhtiyar).³² Natural agent, according to Averroes, acts without knowledge,³³ and its act is constant (da'im).³⁴ It performs action of only one kind, for example, warmth causes heat and coldness causes cold.³⁵ Voluntary agent acts through knowledge and deliberation and performs certain action at one time and another.³⁶ God as the First Agent and its opposite at the Pure Act is different from those two kinds of agent. In other words, God acts neither by nature nor by

²⁵ Tahafut al-Tahafut, p. 149

²⁶ Tahafut al-Tahafut, p. 9

²⁷ Tahafut al-Tahafut, p. 148

²⁸ Tahafut al-Tahafut, p. 426-427

²⁹ Tahafut al-Tahafut, p. 9

³⁰ Tahafut al-Tahafut, p. 38-39

³¹ Tahafut al-Tahafut, p. 149

³² Tahafut al-Tahafut, p. 157

³³ Tahafut al-Tahafut, p. 149

³⁴ Tahafut al-Tahafut, p. 158

³⁵ Tahafut al-Tahafut, p. 148

³⁶ Tahafut al-Tahafut, p. 148

election, because if He acts by nature it means that all existent are the same kind, and this is impossible by our experience.

God also does not act by election (ikhtiyar) because one who chooses, chooses for himself the better condition of two things, but God is not in need of a better condition.³⁷ When Averroes says that God does not act by election, this does not mean that He is forced by another power in His action, but it means that He does not act by will and election as human will and election. In fact, Averroes mentions that God performs one of the two contraries (mutaqabilayn) through choice,³⁸ but the manner of choice is not known by us.

God's Will and Power According to Aquinas.

Aquinas, like Averroes, confirms that God has will³⁹ and power.⁴⁰ Aquinas' confirmation of those two attributes of God is based on scripture and rational argument. There are many verses in scripture that show this. For example, "Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect".⁴¹ The verse which shows that God has power is, "I am God almighty"⁴²

Aquinas' argument to show that God has will is stated at length in his *Summa Contra Gentiles*. In short he says: God is intelligent, He must be endowed with will.⁴³

Though Aquinas' argument, as listed by R.L. Petterson, are eight in number,⁴⁴ their source is only one-God has knowledge. What is clear for us is that Averroes and Aquinas agree that there is one basis source, but Aquinas provides a more detailed argument than Averroes.

³⁷ Tahafut al-Tahafut, p. 148

³⁸ Tahafut al-Tahafut, p.450

³⁹ S.C.G. 1, 72; Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, vol. 1, q. 19, a.1, ed. By Thomas Gilby. London: Blackfriars, 1963. Reference after this is as Stla.

⁴⁰ S.C.G. 2, 7; Stla, q. 25, a.1.

⁴¹ Romans, 12:2

⁴² Genesis, 17:1

⁴³ Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, trns. By Anton C. Pegis, London: Notre Dame, 1975. Reference after this is as S.C.G.

⁴⁴ R.L. Petterson, *The Concept of God in the Philosophy of Aquinas*, (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd. 1933), p. 325

In our case, Aquinas says, the will is a desire to seek things not yet possessed and delighting in what is.⁴⁵ This is precisely the same with Averroes' statement in his discussion of human will. Aquinas adds God's will is only in the last sense, that is delighting in what is, because the principle of His will is His own essence.⁴⁶ If the principle object of devine will be other than the devine essence, it would follow that there is something higher than the devine will moving it, while as we have known God's essence is the highest good. Therefore the principle of object of His will is His own essence .

In discussing the power of God, Aquinas speaks of two kinds of power; active power and passive power. The first concerns power in relation to God,⁴⁷ and the second to human beings. Aquinas defines active power as, "a Principle of acting on another".⁴⁸ Moreover Aquinas explains that power in God should be conceived as a principle of thing made, not as a principle in action⁴⁹ as our own, because if we understand God's power as a source of action it means His activity depends on another. This is impossible, since God's power is identical with God's essence.⁵⁰

The scope of God's power as described by Aquinas is that God is omnipotent⁵¹ which means He can do what ever He wishes to do. The notion of omnipotence implies that there is no possible power lacking in God. Under the concept of omnipotence of God all activities in the world should be refered to God as their cause.⁵² His power is not limited to some particular effects, because if God's power were limited to some particular effects,⁵³ He would not be through Himself the cause of being as such, but of this particular being.⁵⁴ This is repugnant to God as the source of all beings. To show the scope of God's omnipotence Aquinas clarifies three characteristics of God's power: its universality, its uniqueness, and its absoluteness.⁵⁵ It is universal in that it extends to all things

⁴⁵ Stla. q. 19. a. 1

⁴⁶ S.C.G. 1, 74

⁴⁷ S.C.G. 2.7

⁴⁸ Stla. q. 25. a. 1

⁴⁹ S.C.G. 2.10

⁵⁰ S.C.G. 2,8

⁵¹ S.C.G. 2,22; Stla, q. 25. a. 3

⁵² S.C.G. 2,6

⁵³ S.C.G. 2, 22

⁵⁴ S.C.G. 2, 22

⁵⁵ Burton Z. Cooper. *The Idea of God*, (The Hague Martinus Nijhoff, 1974), p. 48

with which the notion of being is not incompatible.⁵⁶ It is unique in that it is creative; God alone has the power to create being as such out of nothing.⁵⁷ It is absolute in that no effect lies beyond God's power.⁵⁸ God is able to do everything whatsoever that lies within the potency of the created thing.⁵⁹

Human Power and Free Will According To Averroes.

From the foregoing discussion it can be seen that both Averroes and Aquinas recognize that God is omnipotent, His power is unlimited. There is no great difference in the way in which this matter is discussed by both.

In discussing the concept of predestination it is directly involved a problem of human power and free will. Averroes, in his discussion of this problem, criticizes Ash'arites who say that man has no power or acquisition (*kasb*) in his action. So Ash'arites statement, that acquisition and the deed done are both created by God, is meaningless,⁶⁰ because that statement still shows that man is under a compulsion in his action. For Averroes, if man is not free to choose what he wills, then the problem of human obligation (*taklif*) arises.

To avoid this problem Averroes says that man has power, the power is not created by himself, it is given by God.⁶¹ Man's power is not absolute, it is under the power of God. This power is limited, it depends on a condition supplied by God which enable it to act. Averroes gives two conditions⁶² where man can act by the power given by God. First, by our intention; second by the cause with which God has furnished us from without. If one of them is omitted, our power is not complete, our actions do not come actually into existence. The will in us, Averroes says, is the urge to do something from our imagination (*takhayyul*) or the judgement of the truth of something, and this judgement is not our choice, but is something which happens to us from events outside ourselves⁶³

Averroes' answer, however, still raises problems, because all Muslims are completely in agreement that there is no agent (*fa'il*) except Allah. To clarify the

⁵⁶ S.C.G. 2,22

⁵⁷ S.C.G. 2, 21

⁵⁸ S.C.G. 2, 22

⁵⁹ S.C.G. 2, 22

⁶⁰ al-Kashf, p. 224

⁶¹ al-Kashf, p. 226

⁶² al-Kashf, p. 226

⁶³ al-Kashf, p. 226

statement “ there is no agent except Allah” Averroes gives two answers. First, this statement can be taken to mean that there is no agent but Allah, and that causes other than Him cannot be called agent except only metaphorically.⁶⁴ This is because the existence of those causes depends on Him. The second answer is that Averroes distinguishes between two terms-creator and agent. All existents, according to him, consist of two elements; substances and essences and accidents.⁶⁵ The substances and essences are only created by God. The causes only have their effect on accidents, not on the substances or essences. For example, the sperm gains heat from woman, but the creation of the foetus and the soul, which is its life, is only from God alone.⁶⁶ In other words, man and woman are only the agents which can change what has already been created by God, while God is the real creator of the foetus and the life in it. Therefore, Averroes states that an agent in the empirical world (al-Shahid) does not create anything, but its action is only to change one quality into another, it does not change non-existence into existence.⁶⁷ For this reason Averroes says that there is no creator but God, because the real created things (makhluq) are substance.⁶⁸ Therefore, Averroes’ answer is not contradicted that which is held by all Muslims, namely there is no agent except Allah.

In discussing the difference between “creator” and “ agent “ Averroes reaches the conclusion that the name of creator (Khaliq) is more properly to be applied to God than the name of agent (fa’il), because the word “creator” is not shared by any creature, and the meaning of the creator is the inventor (mukhtari’) of the substance⁶⁹, as mentioned in the Quran, “God created you and that which you do”.⁷⁰

Human Power and Free Will According to Aquinas

In Christianity, as well as in Islam, the problem of human power and free will is not easily solved. It raises many controversial ideas among theologians. Since Augustine’s day theologians have faced this problem which Anselm himself calls a very famous question, that of the relation between human free will and divine

⁶⁴ al-Kashf, p. 229

⁶⁵ al-Kashf, p. 231

⁶⁶ al-Kashf, p. 231

⁶⁷ Tahafut al-Tahafut, p. 221

⁶⁸ al-Kashf, p. 231

⁶⁹ al-Kashf, p. 232

⁷⁰ al-Qur’an, 37:96

grace, foreknowledge and predestination. This, too, was to become a topic of renewed interest in the twelfth century.⁷¹

Augustine plainly says that man has will and free choice in his action.⁷² We are free or not to do something. So our will is ours and it is our will that affects all that we do by willing.⁷³ This means that whatever happens to man against his will is not really his will but the will of God who gives the power of realization. For Aquinas, as well as Augustine, recognizes that man is free to make decisions in his action.⁷⁴ If man was not free, councils, exhortation, precept, prohibition reward and punishment would be pointless.⁷⁵ Man's free will, however, is not beyond God's will. the will of every rational creature ought to be subject to the will of God. Thus, Aquinas says that creaturely freedom involves only the category of assent; the category of real choice or real alternative belongs within the mystery of God's eternity.⁷⁶

There is a linguistic difficulty in the freedom of choice. Philosophers in the mediaeval times discussed freedom and will under the "Librium arbitrium". Albert the Great regarded "Librium arbitrium" as a power distinct from reason and will which arbitrates between the dictates of reason and the aim of will in cases where there is a conflict of the two. Aquinas rejects Albert's view,⁷⁷ because free will, according to him, is the power by which man can judge freely.⁷⁸ Furthermore, Aquinas says that free will is the power of intelligence which makes man master of his own acts, and presupposes a providence of his own whereby he can provide for himself and for others.⁷⁹ To understand adequately the concept of human free will Aquinas' says that we should understand three terms together; choice, deliberation and reason or intellect. Choice is accomplish in a certain movement of the soul towards the good which is chosen. Every act of free choice is proceeded by a judgement of the reason, and the mind can regard any particular good under different aspects or from different points of view. In regard to the choice of

⁷¹ G.R. Evans, *Anselm and Talking About God*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), p. 197

⁷² Augustine, *City of God*, Part I, Book V, Chapter 10.

⁷³ *Ibid*

⁷⁴ S.C.G. 2, 48: StIa, q. 83, a.1

⁷⁵ STIa, q. a.1

⁷⁶ Burton, Z. Cooper, *op. cit.* P. 56

⁷⁷ Bernard J.F. Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom*, ed. By J. Patout Burn S.J. with an introduction by Frederick E. Crowe, S.J., (London: Darton Longman & Todd, 1971), p. 93.

⁷⁸ De Veritate, q. 24, a.6, cited by F.C. *Copleston in Aquinas*, (penguin Books, 1979), p. 195.

⁷⁹ S.C.G. 3, 112

particular goods the will is free.⁸⁰ The power of choice is essentially voluntary, and where is no choice there is no will. Thus Aquinas says that choice is the taking of one thing in preference to another.⁸¹ Deliberation brings us to a point where we observe that several means are capable of bringing us to the end toward which we are tending. In deliberation reason and understanding are required for judgement.

Though Aquinas distinguishes three terms in relation to free will, sometimes he says that free will is simply choice.⁸² Thus he says reasoning properly refers to our arriving at knowledge of one thing from knowledge of another. Willing indicates the simple appetite of something, since it is desire for its own sake. Choosing means to seek something for the sake of something else, hence it is used most strictly in relating means to an end. Clearly, then, will and free will are related in the way that understanding and reasoning are related. So willing and choosing pertain to the same power, but they are different acts; willing concerns to the goal, and choosing focuses on the means to obtain the goal.

Free will in man as understood by Aquinas does not mean that its decision should be put into effect, it is a power to choose one of several possibilities of obtaining a goal, because no free decision can reach the goal unless God initiates and helps it. This is the concept of human free will in Aquinas' thought.

When Aquinas says that a secondary agent can act, this does not mean that any action performed by a secondary agent happens independently of God's power. Rather it is still under the control of God.

Aquinas holds that man is free in choosing this or that particular good. The choice of some particular good may be necessary as a mean to the attainment of the final end, but when we know there theoretically that this is the case, it is not so evident to us that we are unable to regard them from another point of view. It may be objected, however, that our choice of this or that particular end is determined by our character, which in turn is determined by psychological factors.

Aquinas conceives of freedom as the harmony of will and act, and thereby seeks to reconcile to each other the idea of divine absolute power and human freedom. By conceiving the power of secondary cause as the power to effect, rather than create a new being, Aquinas has sought to affirm real creaturely power without compromising the absolute quality of God's power. Furthermore Aquinas

⁸⁰ F.C. Copleston, Aquinas.

⁸¹ ST Ia, 2 ac, q. 13, a. 2

⁸² ST Ia, q. 83, a. 1

adds that the power of God does not only serve to change or to move something. Changing or moving is a kind of quality proper to human beings.⁸³ This Aquinas' description parallels Averroes' statement that a secondary agent just changes a quality of existents.

Aquinas also discusses the concept of creation as Averroes does by saying that creation is an action proper to God, and that He alone can create.⁸⁴ Here there is no contradiction between the power of secondary agent and God's absolute power. This is clear because the right to create is only for God. The concept of creation, according to Aquinas, does not mean that God bring things, into being from pre-existing matter,⁸⁵ God but creates something without pre-existing matter which we call *ex-nihilo*. Thus once again we find a similarity between Averroes, who distinguishes the concept of "creator" and "agent", and Aquinas.

God's justice According to Mu'tazilites and Asha'rites

The Justice of God is a crucial controversy which has occurred in Islamic and Christian theology. In Islamic theology the controversy happened between Ash'arites and Mu'tazilites. Mu'tazilites who are well known as a party of justice (*ahl al-'adl*) say clearly that God is just and wise.⁸⁶ So God wills good and must enact what is advantageous to man, and therefore He does not will evil, for this would be harmful to man. If God wills evil, He is unjust. This contradicts to the Quranic verses "Thy Lord wrongs not His servants".⁸⁷

An important consequence of God's justice in action, as understood by Mu'tazilites, is that the rewards and punishments of man in the next life must be deserved by man, and this implies that man must be free in his present life to choose between right and wrong conduct. Mu'tazilites also agree that God does only what is right and good, and being wise, He must do what is good for man. This is Mu'tazilites theory of ethics which is called rationalistic objectivism.⁸⁸

Asha'rites says, according to Averroes, that we cannot describe God as just or unjust,⁸⁹ because He is not under obligation (*taklif*) which is placed on His

⁸³ S.C.G. 2, 16

⁸⁴ S.C.G. 2, 21

⁸⁵ S.C.G. 2, 16

⁸⁶ al-Shahrastani, 'Abd al-Karim, *al-Milal Wa al-Nihal*, vol. 1, ed. By Ahmad Fahmi Muhammad, (Cairo, Maktabah al-Husayn, al-Tijariyyat, 1948), p. 62

⁸⁷ al-Qur'an. 41:46

⁸⁸ George F. Hourani, *Islamic Rationalism*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), p. 10

⁸⁹ al-Kashf, p. 238

servants. And any action of someone who is not subject to this condition cannot be predicated as either just or unjust.⁹⁰ This view was strongly criticized by Averroes as being unreasonable, and it describes what is not described by the Quran. In fact Averroes criticizes both Mu'tazilites and Ash'ari in relation to God's justice, but his criticism is more to the Ash'arites than Mu'tazilites.

Averroes' Concept of God's Justice

Averroes firmly states that God is just⁹¹ as Mu'tazilites do. This is because God has described Himself as righteous and has denied that He is a wrongdoer as shown in many verses in the Quran. Averroes says that we cannot predicate injustice of God, because injustice is applied to those who conduct or administer something which does not belong to them. But God dominates the heavens and the earth and anything between them.⁹² Everything in this universe belongs to God, He can do whatever He wishes. If this is so, we cannot attribute injustice to God. On this point Averroes' view is similar to Mu'tazilites. If so in this context Averroes' ethics can be also described as rationalistic objectivism.

Averroes, however, reminds us not to confuse God's justice and human justice. Man acts justly, according to him, in order that he may gain some good by justice in itself which would not exist for himself if he were not to act justly. When we act justly we feel happiness and Satisfaction, since we have fulfilled a good by our act toward another. But God acts justly not because His essence is perfected by justice or He feels happiness or satisfaction, but because His perfection itself requires that He acts justly. If we assume that God's justice is the same kind as man's, it becomes necessary to admit that there is some defects in Him. This imperfection is impossible for God.

Though Averroes refers to many Quranic verses to prove that God is just, he also realizes that there some verses in the Quran itself which apparently show that God is unjust for example, God leads astray whomsoever He wills, and guides whom so ever He wills, and He is the All-Mighty, The All-wise,⁹³ and the like. The question arising from this verse is, is the misleading of a servant just or unjust? The apparent meaning of this verse is, of course, that God is unjust, because He brings man to error and then punishes him. But Averroes says that

⁹⁰ al-Kashf, p. 234

⁹¹ al-Kashf, p. 238

⁹² Mahmud Qasim, *al-Faylasuf al-Muqtara 'Alayh Ibn Russhd*, (Matba'ah Mukhaymar, (n.d), p. 154

⁹³ al-Qur'an, 14:4

such a verse cannot be understood in its literal meaning, it should be interpreted allegorically, for there are many other verses which contradict it.⁹⁴ For example He approves not unthankfulness in His servants?⁹⁵ This verse, Averroes says, show that since God would not approve the infidelity of His servant, He does not mislead them.⁹⁶

Averroes tries to reconcile the apparent contradictories in the Quranic verses by interpreting allegorically those verses that show God is the cause of error. Those verses, infact, according to him, refer to the pre arrange divine will (mashi'at) that some existents tend to err by their nature and are prompted to it by inner and external causes. Therefore , Averroes says that those verses are misleading for evil nature, in the same way that beneficial food can be harmful to sick bodies.⁹⁷ Any Quranic verse which apparently shows that God misleads man, according to Averroes, does not mean that God wills evil for him, rather it shows that God creates man, and he has ability to choose between good and evil.⁹⁸ The ability is guided by intellect in choosing good or bad conduct. The interpretation of the Quranic verses allegorically in this matter is necessary so as to avoid imputing a dualism in God.

Aquinas' Concept of God's Justice

Aquinas also insists that God is just.⁹⁹ He also shares with Averroes the idea that God's justice is different from man's justice and Aquinas speaks of two kinds of justice; commutative and distributive.¹⁰⁰ The former justice occurs in all activities of human being which cover the whole range of present property relations, and Aquinas gives an exhaustive list of such relation: buying, selling, trade, commerge and the like. This justice, according to Aquinas, cannot be attributed to God . The latter kind of justice, distributive justice, is the righteousness of a ruler, displayed in well-ordered community through its head and manifests itself in both natural and moral beings which set forth God's justice. This justice belongs to God for He gives to every creature according to its nature and dignity.

⁹⁴ al-Kashf, p. 235

⁹⁵ al-Qur'an, 39:7

⁹⁶ al-Kashf, p. 235

⁹⁷ al-Kashf, p. 236

⁹⁸ Mahmud Qasim, *op. cit.*, p. 156

⁹⁹ ST1a, q. a. 1

¹⁰⁰ ST1a, q. 21 a.4

Aquinas, like Averroes, faces the fact that contradictory ideas occur in scripture, and he too tries to reconcile them. There are some verses in scripture which attests the justice of God. For example, The Lord is just and loves justice,¹⁰¹ but there are also verses which show that God is unjust. For example, Go in to Pharaoh; for I have hardened his heart and the heart of his servants that I may show these signs of mine among them.¹⁰²

According to Aquinas the latter verse and other verses which is similar to it does not show that God is unjust, rather it should be understood as meaning that God does not grant to some people His help in avoiding sin while to the others He does grant it.¹⁰³ Aquinas stresses that we cannot say at all that God does lead man to sinful action. Men sin because they turn away from God who is their ultimate end.¹⁰⁴ This means that God does not direct men to do evil, but they themselves by their own nature turn from God who is their ultimate falcity. Aquinas' explanation of those texts which suggest that God is unjust parallels Averroes' in as such, both interpret those verses in relation to the idea that God is the highest good and He does not will evil.

Conclusion

From the above discussion seems to us that Christianity and Islam share the same problem. This problem can be traced in the Quran and the Bible. Many theologians of both religions disagree with one another in their understanding of the concept of predestination. This discussion focuses on three things; the will and power of God, God's justice, and the concept of predestination. Averroes and Aquinas agree that human beings are predestined by God, but the concept of predestination as understood by the both does not meant that men's actions had been fixed already in eternity. Their descriptions of predestination are the same, but the manner of their expressions are different. For Averroes, predestination is a system which God has established in both internal and external causes. For Aquinas, predestination is a plan which exists in God's mind and is arranged to an end.

¹⁰¹ Psalm. 10:7

¹⁰² Exodus. 10:1

¹⁰³ S.C.G. 3. 162

¹⁰⁴ S.C.G. 3. 162

