



“Were It Not For You, I Would Not Have Created Creation.”

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In his dictionary of hadith forgeries, Mullā ‘Alī al-Qārī catalogues a report where the Prophet, peace be upon him, allegedly says that Allah said of him: “Were it not for you, I would not have created the universe - *law lāka lamā kbalaqtu l-aflāka*.”¹

In his gloss to the hadith, al-Qārī remarks: “Al-Ṣaghānī said: ‘It is forged (*mawḍū‘*);’ such is also stated in *al-Kbulāṣab*. However, its meaning is sound.”² This end assertion of al-Qārī, that the hadith postulates a sound meaning, has caused a fair amount of consternation in some Muslim minds and certain Muslim quarters. It is felt that the claim amounts to exaggeration about the Prophet, peace be upon him; or *gbulūw*, as it is known in the Quranic vocabulary. And surely, as some have been quick to point out, it runs counter to the Quranic passage which announces to us in no uncertain terms: *I created the jinn and humankind only that they may worship Me*.³

A NORMATIVE READING

A browse through classical scholarly attitudes, though, reveals al-Qārī’s claim to be a rather normative reading of the issue, with traditional Islamic scholarship being more than comfortable with the assertion. For instance, Ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī reverently observes: “Muhammad, peace be upon him, is the actual purpose (*al-maqṣūd*) behind creating humanity: he is its essence (*‘aynubū*), quintessence (*kbulāṣatubū*), and actual core (*wāsiṭa ‘aqdibī*).”⁴ Two centuries earlier the jurist-theologian, Ibn al-Jawzī, wrote: “The Saints and the Righteous are the very purpose of creation - *al-awliyā’ wa l-sāliḥīn humū l-maqṣūd min al-kawn*.”⁵ Of course, it hardly needs stating that our Prophet, upon whom be peace, is at the head of this purpose.

Yet for those who are resistant to the *law lāka* notion, and are hypersensitive with respect to what constitutes exaggeration about the Prophet’s status, upon whom be peace, the aforementioned citations will probably have done little to abate their incredulity.

The Arabs say, “*idba ‘arafu sabab, baṭala ‘ajab*: when the reason is understood, the astonishment departs.” The remainder of the article shall, therefore, be taken-up with demonstrating how this notion - even if all the hadiths on the topic are inauthentic, as per their chains of transmission - is sound in its basic premise. For this we will turn to the words of the highly critical legalist and hadith master, the eighth century Syrian scholar, Ibn Taymiyyah.

IBN TAYMIYYAH’S ELUCIDATION

Ibn Taymiyyah’s writings about venerating the Prophet tend to be eclipsed by his more controversial thoughts and *responsūm*. His exploration of the *law lāka* theme, therefore, helps to shed light on another aspect of his character often ignored or overlooked by his admirers and detractors alike.

In the eleventh volume of his Compendium of Legal Responses he writes:

“The superiority of our Prophet over the Angels was demonstrated on the Night of the Ascension (*laylat al-mi‘rāḥ*) when he arrived at a level where he could hear the ‘scratching of the pens’. He was now at a station higher than that of the Angels. Allah, Exalted is He, displays some of His tremendous power and amazing wisdom through righteous human beings, vis-a-via the Prophets and Saints, in ways which He does not do so

through even the Angels. For He assembled in the former qualities that are dispersed throughout the other types of creation. So Allah created man's body of the earth, but his spirit (*rūḥ*) was created from the Highest Assembly (*al-malā' al-a'lā*). This is why it is said: 'Man is a microcosm, but contains the macrocosm'.

Now Muhammad, peace be upon him, is the master of humanity, the best of creation and the noblest of them in Allah's sight. This is why it has been said that, 'Allah created the universe because of him'. Or 'Were it not for him, He would not have created the Throne, the Pedestal, the heaven, earth, sun or moon'. But this is not a hadith of the Prophet, peace be upon him: neither authentic nor weak. It was not related by any of those versed in the Hadith discipline on the authority of the Prophet, peace be upon him. Nor is it known to have come from any of the Companions. In fact, it is not known who actually uttered it.

It is possible, though, to explain it from a correct perspective, such as by Allah's saying: *He has subjected to you whatever is in the heavens and the earth.*⁶ And by His words: *He subjected the ships to you that they may run upon the sea at His command, and He subjected the rivers to you. He subjected to you the sun and the moon, constant in their courses, and subjected to you the night and the day. And gave you of all you ask Him; and if you count the favours of Allah, you shall never number them.*⁷

There are other passages similar to these, all of which clarify that Allah created creation for humanity's sake: even though it is known that Allah, in doing so, had in mind an immense wisdom besides this and far greater than this. Here, though, He explains to humanity the benefits creation contains for them, and how they are immersed in Divine favours.

Thus when it is said, 'He did such and such [for this or that reason]' it does not exclude the possibility of there being other wisdoms for the act. Similarly, the statement: 'Were it not for so and so, such and such would not have been created', does not negate the possibility of their being another higher wisdom behind the act. Instead it implies that since the most pious of humanity is Muhammad, creating him was a desirable end of deep-seated wisdom moreso than for creating anyone

else, and that the completion of creation and the crown of its very perfection only occurred with Muhammad, peace be upon him ...

Now since man is the the seal of creation; the last of creation and its microcosm, then the best of them will also be the best of all creation in the absolute sense. Since Muhammad is the essence of humanity, the axis of creation and the distributor of the collective, he is, as it were, the ultimate purpose behind creation. So an objection cannot be raised against the saying, 'For him all was created', or 'Were it not for him creation would not have been created'. Thus, if these or similar words are explained according to what the Book or Sunnah indicate, they should be accepted."⁸

CONCLUSION

In summary: since creation was created for the benefit of humanity, and since humanity was created to know and worship Allah, and since perfection of this knowledge, worship and servitude was made manifest in the Prophet, peace be upon him, it can rightly be said that he is the ultimate purpose for creation being brought into existence. This, then, is the classical appreciation of the *law lāka* tradition, despite recent protestations to the contrary. O Allah, shower abundant blessings of peace upon our master, Muhammad; the paragon of human perfection, the best of all creation.



END NOTES

1. *Al-Asrār al-Marfū'ab fi'l-Akbbār al-Mawḍū'ab* (Beirut: Maktabah al-Islāmi, 1986), no.385. Similar verdicts of forgery and fabrication have been issued by other hadith masters and specialists, including: Ibn al-Jawzī, *Kitāb al-Maḍū'āt* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, 1995), 1:214; al-Ṣuyūṭī, *al-La'ālī' al-Maṣnū'ab* (Cairo: al-Maktabah al-Tijāriyyah, 1964), 1:272; al-Albānī, *Silsilat al-Aḥādīth al-Ḍa'īfab wa'l-Mawḍū'ab*, (Riyadh: Maktabah al-Islāmi, 1992), no.282.
2. *Al-Asrār al-Marfū'ab*, 288.
3. Qur'an 51:56.
4. Ibn Rajab, *Laṭā'if al-Ma'ārif* (Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Rayyān, 1996), 89.
5. Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣifat al-Safwa* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, 1989), 1:13.
6. Qur'an 45:13.
7. Qur'an 14:32-34.
8. Ibn Taymiyyah, *Majmū' Fatāwā* (Riyadh: Dār al-'Ālam al-Kutub, 1991), 11:96-98.