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SECOND QUESTION

The State of Man after Death

The state of man after death is not a new state, only his condition in this life is made manifest more clearly in the next life. Whatever is the true condition of a person with respect to his beliefs and actions, righteous or otherwise, in this life, remains hidden inside him and its antidote or its poison affects his being covertly. In the life after death it will not be so; everything will manifest itself openly. One experiences a specimen of it in a dream. The prevailing condition of the body of the sleeper makes itself manifest in his dream. When he is heading towards high fever he is apt to see fire and flames in his dream, and if he is sickening due to influenza or a severe cold he is apt to find himself floating about in water. Thus, whatever the body is heading for becomes visible in a dream. So one can understand that the same is the way of God with regard to the afterlife. As a dream transmutes our spiritual condition into a physical form, the same will happen in the next life. Our actions and their consequences will be manifested physically in the next life, and whatever we

carry hidden within us from this life will all be displayed openly on our countenances in the next life. As a person observes diverse types of manifestations in his dreams but is not conscious that they are only manifestations, and deems them as realities, the same will happen in the next life. Through such manifestations, God will display a new power, a power which is perfect, complete and absolute as He is All Powerful. If we were not to call the conditions of the next life manifestations and were to say that they would be a new creation by Divine power, that would be perfectly correct.

God has said:

فَلَا تَعْلَمُ نَفْسٌ مَّا أُخْفِيَ لَهُمْ مِّن قُرَّةِ أَعْيُنٍ ¹⁸⁵ ۞

That is, no virtuous one knows what bliss is kept hidden from him, as a reward for that which he used to do. Thus God has described all those bounties as hidden, the like of which is not to be found in this world. It is obvious that the bounties of this world are not hidden from us and we are familiar with milk, pomegranates and grapes etc. which we eat here. This shows that the bounties of the next life are something else and have nothing in common with the bounties of this life, except the name. He who conceives of the conditions of paradise in the terms of the conditions of

185. And no soul knows what joy of the eyes is kept hidden for them, (The Holy Quran, as-Sajdah 32:18)

this life has not the least understanding of the Holy Quran.

In interpreting the verse that we have just cited, our lord and master, the Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, has said that heaven and its bounties are such as no eye has seen, nor has any ear heard, nor have they been conceived by the mind of man; whereas we see the bounties of this world and hear of them and their thought also passes through our minds. Now when God and His Messenger describe them as something strange, we would depart altogether from the Holy Quran if we were to imagine that in heaven we shall be given the same milk which is obtained in this life from cows and buffaloes, as if herds of milch cattle would be kept in heaven and there will be numerous beehives in the trees of heaven from which angels will procure honey and pour it into streams. Have these concepts any relationship with the teaching that says that those bounties have never been witnessed in this world, and that they illumine the souls and foster our understanding of God and provide spiritual nourishment? They are described in physical terms but we are told that their source is the soul and its righteousness.

Let no one imagine that the verse of the Holy Quran cited below indicates that the dwellers of paradise, on

observing these bounties, will recognise them that they had been bestowed these bounties aforetime also, as Allah, the Glorious has said:

وَبَشِّرِ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ أَنَّ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا
الْأَنْهَارُ كُلَّمَا رُزِقُوا مِنْهَا مِنْ ثَمَرَةٍ رِزْقًا قَالُوا هَذَا الَّذِي رُزِقْنَا
مِنْ قَبْلُ وَأَنْتَابَهُ مُتَشَابِهًا¹⁸⁶

That is, give glad tidings to those who believe and work perfect righteousness that they will inherit Gardens beneath which rivers flow. When in the next world they are provided with fruits from the trees which they will have already tasted in the life of the world, they will exclaim: This is what we were given before, because they will find that those fruits resemble the fruits which they have already tasted. It is not to be supposed from the wording of this verse that on beholding the bounties of paradise the dwellers of paradise will discover that they are the same bounties which had been bestowed upon them in their previous life. This would be a great mistake and would be contrary to the true meaning of the verse. What God Almighty has said here is that those who believe and work righteousness, build a

186. And give glad tidings to those who believe and do good works, that for them are Gardens beneath which flow streams. Whenever they are given a portion of fruit therefrom, they will say: 'This is what was given us before,' and gifts mutually resembling shall be brought to them. (The Holy Quran, al-Baqarah 2:26)

paradise with their own hands, the trees of which are their faith and the streams of which are their righteous actions. In the Hereafter also they will eat of the fruits of this paradise, only those fruits will be sweeter and more manifest. As they will have eaten those fruits spiritually in this world, they will recognize them in the other world and will exclaim: These appear to be the same fruits that we have already eaten; and they will find that those fruits resemble the fruits that they had eaten before in this world. This verse clearly proclaims that those people who were nurtured in this life on the love of God will be given the same nurture in physical shape in the Hereafter. As they will have tasted the delight of love already in this life and would be aware of it, their souls would recall the time when they used to remember their True Beloved in corners, in solitude and in the darkness of night and used to experience its delight.

In short, there is no mention in this verse of material food. If it should strike anyone that as the righteous would have been given this spiritual nourishment in their life in this world it could not be said that it was a bounty that no one had seen or heard of in the world, nor had it been conceived by the mind of man; the answer would be that there is no contradiction here, as this verse does not mean that the dwellers of paradise would be bestowed the bounties of this world.

Whatever they are bestowed by way of comprehension of the Divine are the bounties of the Hereafter, a specimen of which is given to them in advance to stimulate their eagerness.

It should be remembered that a godly person does not belong to the world, that is why the world hates him. He belongs to heaven and is bestowed heavenly bounties. A man of the world is given worldly bounties, and a man of heaven is bestowed heavenly bounties. Thus it is true that those bounties are hidden from the ears and hearts and eyes of the worldly; but he whose worldly life suffers death and who is given a drink of the spiritual cup which he will drink in a physical form in the Hereafter, will then recall having partaken of it in his previous life. It is true, however, that he will consider the eyes and ears of the world as unaware of it. As he was in the world, though he was not of the world, he will also testify that the bounties of heaven are not of the world and that he did not see such a bounty in the world nor did his ear hear of it, nor did his mind conceive it. He saw a specimen of those bounties of the Hereafter which were not of this world. They were a presage of the world to come to which he was related and had no connection with the life of this world.

Three Quranic Insights Concerning the Hereafter

It should be kept in mind that the Holy Quran has set forth three insights with regard to the conditions of the life after death, which we now proceed to expound in turn.

First Insight

The Holy Quran has repeatedly affirmed that the life after death is not a new phenomenon and all its manifestations are reflections of this life. For instance, it is said:

وَ كُلِّ اِنْسَانٍ اَلزَّمْنَةُ طَيْرُهُ فِي عُنُقِهِ ۗ وَ نُخْرِجُ لَهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ
كِتَابًا يَلْقَاهُ مَنشُورًا ۝¹⁸⁷

That is, every person's deeds have We fastened firmly to his neck; and on the Day of Judgement We shall make them manifest and shall place them before him in the form of a book which he will find wide open. In this verse the expression "bird" has been metaphorically employed for actions, because every action, good or bad, flies away like a bird as soon as it is performed and its labour or enjoyment comes to an end;

187. And every man's works have We fastened to his neck, and on the Day of Resurrection We shall bring out for him a book which he will find wide open. (The Holy Quran, Banī Isrā'īl 17:14)

only its heavy or light impress is left on the heart.

The Quran sets forth the principle that every human action leaves its hidden impress upon its author and attracts an appropriate Divine reaction which preserves the evil or the virtue of that action. Its impress is inscribed on the heart and face and eyes and ears and hands and feet of its performer. This is the hidden record which will become manifest in the Hereafter.

Concerning the dwellers of heaven, it is said:

يَوْمَ تَرَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ يَسْعَى نُورُهُمْ بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَ
بِأَيْمَانِهِمْ 188

That is, on that day thou wilt see the light of the believing men and the believing women, which is hidden in this world, running before them and on their right hands manifestly.

At another place addressing the wrongdoers it is said:

أَلْهَكُمُ الشَّكَاوَةُ حَتَّىٰ زُرْتُمُ الْمَقَابِرَ ۚ كَلَّا سَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ ۚ
تُمْ كَلَّا سَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ ۚ كَلَّا لَوْ تَعْلَمُونَ عِلْمَ الْيَقِينِ لَ تَرَوُنَّ
الْجَحِيمَ ۚ ثُمَّ لَ تَرَوُنَّهَا عَيْنَ الْيَقِينِ ۚ ثُمَّ لَنَسْأَلَنَّ يَوْمَئِذٍ عَنِ
النَّعِيمِ 189

188. And *think* of the day when you will see the believing men and the believing women, their light running before them and on their right hands, (The Holy Quran, al-Ḥadid 57:13)

That is, the desire of increase in worldly possessions beguiles you till you reach the graves. Do not set your hearts upon the world. You will soon come to know the vanity of your pursuits; I say again, you will soon come to know how mistaken you are in pursuing the world. If you had possessed the certainty of knowledge you would surely see hell in this very life. But you will see it with the certainty of sight in your middle state (*Barzakh*), then you shall be called to account on the Day of Judgement and the torment will be imposed on you and you will know hell through your experience.

Three Types of Knowledge

In these verses God Almighty has clearly set forth that for the wicked the life of hell begins in a covert way in this very world, and if they would reflect they would observe hell in this very life. Here God Almighty has indicated three types of knowledge, namely knowledge by certainty of reason, knowledge by certainty of sight,

189. Mutual rivalry in *seeking worldly* increase diverts you *from God*. Till you reach the graves. Nay! you will soon come to know. Nay again! you will soon come to know. Nay! if you only knew with certain knowledge, You will surely see Hell *in this very life*. Aye, you will surely see it with the eye of certainty. Then, on that day you shall be called to account about the *worldly* favours. (The Holy Quran, at-Takāthur 102:2-9)

and knowledge by certainty of experience. This might be illustrated thus. When a person perceives smoke from a distance his mind conceives that smoke and fire are inseparable, and therefore where there is smoke there must be fire also. This would be knowledge by the certainty of reason. Then on a nearer approach he sees the flames of the fire and that is knowledge by the certainty of sight. Should he enter into the fire, that would be knowledge by the certainty of experience. In these verses God Almighty says that knowledge of the existence of hell as a certainty can be acquired in this life through reason, its knowledge through the certainty of sight will be acquired in *Barzakh*, the intermediate state between death and judgement, and on the Day of Judgement that knowledge would become a certainty by experience.

Three Conditions

It might be explained at this stage that according to the Holy Quran there are three states of existence.

The *first* is the world, which is called the first creation and is the state of effort. In this world man works good or evil. After resurrection the virtuous will continue their advance in goodness but that would be by the sheer grace of God and would not be the result of any effort of man.

The **second** is the intermediate state which is called *Barzakh*. In Arabic idiom *Barzakh* is something which is situated between two other things. As that state will be between the first creation and the resurrection it is called *Barzakh*. This expression has always been employed for the intermediate state. Thus it comprehends a great hidden testimony in support of the existence of the intermediate state. I have established in my book *Minanur-Rahmān* that the words of Arabic have issued from the mouth of God and that this is the only language which is the language of the Most Holy God and is the most ancient tongue, and is the fountainhead of all types of knowledge, and is the mother of all languages, and is the first and last throne of Divine revelation. It is the first throne of Divine revelation because Arabic was the language of God that was with God since the beginning. Then that language came down to the world and people converted it into their respective languages. It is the last throne of Divine revelation, inasmuch as the last book of God, which is the Holy Quran, was revealed in Arabic.

Barzakh is an Arabic word which is compounded of *Barra* and *Zakheba*, which means that the manner of earning through action has ended and has fallen into a hidden state. *Barzakh* is a state in which the mortal condition of man is dissolved and the soul and the body are separated. The body is buried in a pit and the soul

also falls into a sort of pit which is indicated by the expression *Zakhhka*, because it is no longer able to earn good or evil which it could only do through its relationship with the body. It is obvious that the health of the soul is dependent upon the health of the body. An injury inflicted upon one part of a person's brain causes loss of memory, and an injury occasioned to another part destroys the faculty of reflection and brings about unconsciousness. Similarly a convulsion of the brain muscle, or a swelling or a haemorrhage or morbidity may, by causing obstruction, lead to insensibility, epilepsy, or cerebral apoplexy. Thus our experience teaches us definitely that the soul, divorced from the body, is utterly useless. It is entirely vain to imagine that our soul, without its body, can enjoy any kind of bliss. We might entertain such a fancy but reason lends it no support. We cannot conceive that our soul which is rendered helpless by minor upsets of the body could continue in a perfect condition when its relationship with the body comes to an end altogether. Does not our daily experience teach us that the health of the body is essential for the health of the soul? When one of us reaches extreme old age his soul also falls into dotage. Its store of knowledge is stolen by old age as is said by God, the Glorious, that

لَكَيْلًا يَعْلَمُونَ مِنْ بَعْدِ عِلْمٍ سُوءًا 190

190. That they know nothing after *having had* knowledge. (The Holy Quran, al-Hajj 22:6)

That is, in old age a person arrives at a stage in which, after having acquired much knowledge, he loses it all. All this observation of ours is proof enough that the soul without the body amounts to nothing. This is reinforced by the thought that if the soul without the body had amounted to anything, it would have been without purpose for God Almighty to set up a relationship between it and a mortal body. Further, it is worthy of note, that God Almighty has created man for limitless progress. Then if the soul is not able to achieve the progress possible in this brief life without the companionship of the body, how can we expect that it would be able, by itself, without the companionship of the body, achieve limitless progress in the Hereafter.

All this shows that according to Islamic principles, for the soul to act perfectly, it is necessary for it to enjoy the companionship of a body at all times. On death the soul departs from this mortal body, but in the intermediate state every soul is invested with a body in order to enable it to react to the conditions of that state. That body is not like this physical body, but is prepared from light or from darkness, according to the quality of the person's actions in this life, as if a man's actions serve as a body for the soul in that state. In the Word of God it is repeatedly mentioned that some bodies will be bright and some will be dark. They will be prepared

from the light or from the darkness of human actions. This is a fine mystery but is not opposed to reason. A perfect human being can enjoy an illumined body in this very life and there are many instances of this which are experienced in a state of vision. This may be difficult of comprehension by a person of average intelligence, but those who have some experience of the state of vision will not regard such a body as is prepared from human actions as a matter of surprise and improbability, but will duly appreciate this phenomenon.

In short, this body which is acquired according to the condition of one's actions, becomes a source of the recompense of good and evil in the intermediate state. I have experience of this. I have often had experience in a complete state of wakefulness of meeting some persons who had died, and I saw that the bodies of some evil-doers and misguided ones were so dark as if they had been made of smoke. In short, I am personally acquainted with these matters and I affirm emphatically that, as God Almighty has said, every one is invested with a body after death which is either bright or dark. It would be a mistake on the part of man to seek to establish these fine insights through the mere exercise of reason. It should be realised that as the eye cannot discover the taste of something sweet, nor can the tongue behold anything, in the same way the knowledge

of the life after death, which can only be acquired through holy visions, cannot be explained fully on the basis of reason. God Almighty has appointed diverse means for acquiring knowledge in this world of that which is unknown. Therefore, it is necessary to seek everything through its proper means. It is only then that it can be discovered.

Another matter that must be kept in mind is that in His Word God has described as dead those people who are involved in vice and error and has declared the virtuous as alive. The reason for this is that the functions of the lives of those who die in a state of neglect of God, for instance, eating and drinking and indulgence of their passions are cut off, and they have no share of spiritual sustenance. They are truly dead and will be revived only for punishment. As God, the Glorious, has said:

مَنْ يَأْتِ رَبَّهُ مُجْرِمًا فَإِنَّ لَهُ جَهَنَّمَ لَا يَمُوتُ فِيهَا وَلَا
يَحْيَىٰ ۝¹⁹¹

That is, the portion of him who comes to his Lord a sinner is hell; he shall neither die therein nor live. But those whom God loves do not die with their physical death, for their sustenance is with them.

After *Barzakh* there is the *third* state, of resurrection (*‘Ālam-e-ba‘th*). In that state every soul, good or bad,

191. Verily, he who comes to his Lord a sinner—for him is Hell; he shall neither die therein nor live. (The Holy Quran, Ṭā ḥā 20:75)

righteous or disobedient, will be bestowed a visible body. That day has been appointed for the perfect manifestations of God, when every person will get to know the Being of his Lord fully, and everyone will arrive at the climax of his recompense. This should not be a matter for surprise for God has every power and does whatever He wills, as He has said:

أَوَلَمْ يَرَ الْإِنْسَانَ أَنَّا خَلَقْنَاهُ مِنْ نُطْفَةٍ فَإِذَا هُوَ خَصِيمٌ مُبِينٌ
 وَضَرَبَ لَنَا مَثَلًا وَنَسِيَ خَلْقَهُ ۗ قَالَ مَنْ يُحْيِي الْعِظَامَ وَهِيَ
 رَمِيمٌ ۗ قُلْ يُحْيِيهَا الَّذِي أَنْشَأَهَا أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ ۗ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ خَلْقٍ
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أَوَلَيْسَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ بِقَدِيرٍ عَلَىٰ أَنْ يَخْلُقَ
 مِثْلَهُمْ ۚ بَلَىٰ ۗ وَهُوَ الْخَلَّاقُ الْعَلِيمُ ۝ إِنَّمَا أَمْرُهُ إِذَا أَرَادَ شَيْئًا أَنْ
 يَقُولَ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ ۝ فَسُبْحَانَ الَّذِي بِيَدِهِ مَلَكُوتُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَإِلَيْهِ
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192. Does not man see that We have created him from a *mere* sperm-drop? Yet lo! he is an open quarreller! And he coins similitudes for Us and forgets his own creation. He says, 'Who can quicken the bones when they are decayed?' Say, 'He, Who created them the first time, will quicken them; and He knows every *kind* of creation full well, (The Holy Quran, Yā Sīn 36:78-80)

193. 'Has not He Who created the heavens and the earth the power to create the like of them?' Yea, and He is indeed the Supreme Creator, the All-Knowing. Verily His command, when He intends a thing, is *only* that He says to it, 'Be!' and it is. So Holy is He, in Whose hand is the kingdom of all things. And to Him will you *all* be brought back. (The Holy Quran, Yā Sīn 36:82-84)

That is, does not man know that We have created him from a mere sperm-drop injected into the womb? Then he becomes a persistent disputer. He forgets the process of his own creation but has a lot to say concerning Us. He asks: How shall a person be revived when even his bones have decayed? Who has the power to revive him? Tell them: He Who created them the first time, will revive them. He knows well every type of creation. His power is such that when He determines upon a thing He says concerning it: Be; and it is. Thus Holy is He, in Whose hand is the kingdom over all things. To Him will you all be brought back.

In these verses God, the Glorious, has set forth that nothing is beyond His power. Has He Who created man from a lowly drop not the power to create him a second time?

An ignorant person might object that as the third state, which is the state of resurrection, would arrive after a long period, the state of *Barzakh* would only be a sort of lock-up for the good and the bad and this would be purposeless. The answer is that this is a misunderstanding which is due to lack of knowledge. In the Book of God there are two states mentioned for the recompense of the good and the bad, one of which is the state of *Barzakh* in which everyone will receive his recompense in a covert manner. The wicked would enter hell immediately on death and the virtuous will

find comfort in heaven immediately after death. There are several verses in the Holy Quran to the effect that every person will, immediately on his death, encounter the recompense of his actions. For instance, it is said concerning a righteous one:

194 قِيلَ ادْخُلِ الْجَنَّةَ

That is, his Lord said to him: Enter thou into paradise; and concerning a wicked one it is said:

195 فَرَأَاهُ فِي سَوَاءِ الْجَحِيمِ

This has reference to two friends one of whom was admitted to heaven and the other was condemned to hell. The one who was admitted to heaven was anxious to find out where his friend was. He was shown that his friend was in the midst of hell. Thus reward and punishment start immediately and those condemned to hell go to hell, and those who are to be admitted to heaven go to heaven. But thereafter there is a day of grand manifestation which has been appointed out of the great wisdom of God. He created man so that He should be recognized through His power of creation. Then He will destroy everything so that He might be recognized through His Supremacy over everything, and then He will gather everyone after bestowing perfect life on them so that He might be recognized through His Power.

194. It was said *to him*, 'Enter Paradise.' (The Holy Quran, Yā Sīn 36:27)

195. Then he will look and see him in the midst of the Fire. (The Holy Quran, aṣ-Ṣāffāt 37:56)