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AL-BUKHARI'S CHAPTER ON PREDESTINATION: A CRITICAL EVALUATION

(A RESEARCH PROJECT SPONSORED BY RESEARCH MANAGEMENT CENTRE, IIUM)

*Israr Ahmad Khan**

ABSTRACT

One of the chapters in the Sahih of al-Bukhari (d.256 A.H.) is "Kitab al-Qadar" (Chapter on Predestination). It contains twenty seven (27) traditions. The message conveyed through these reports is that the human life is preordained in all its detail. A critical examination of all these Ahadith shows that despite their authenticity from the angle of the chain (sanad), their text (matn) may not withstand principled scrutiny. The interpretation of these traditions advanced by several commentators of al-Bukhari's Hadith works, such as al-Tibi (d.743 A.H.), al-Kirmani (d.786 A.H.), Ibn Hajar (d.852 A.H.), al-'Ayni (d.855 A.H.), al-Qastalani (d.923 A.H.), al-Sindi (d.1138 A.H.) etc., is essentially chain-focused and not text-focused. At times, these scholars do pay attention to some of the said traditions from the angle of the text (Matn) but remain short of applying universal principles of Hadith interpretation. Scholars of Hadith Studies have set five criteria to interpret the text of Hadith: (1) the Qur'an, (2) the highly authentic Ahadith, (3) the sound reason, (4) the established history, and (5) the moderation. In the present research these principles have been applied to check and interpret the text of all the twenty seven traditions of al-Bukhari's chapter on predestination.

INTRODUCTION

Muhammad ibn Isma'il al-Bukhari (d.256 A.H.) is one of the most respected *Hadith* scholars. His work "*Al-Jami' al-Sahih*" is perceived by Muslims as the most authentic book after the Qur'an. It has exerted great influence on the Muslim mind. It is widely read and referred to throughout the Muslim world as a source of Islamic law. Generally, its recorded traditions are considered unquestionable. One of the chapters in this work is "Predestination" (*Kitab al-Qadar*), which comprises twenty seven (27) traditions. This chapter sends an obvious message to the believers that the human life with all its details including the end result is preordained even before its advent into the world. Muslim *Ummah*, right from the first Islamic century, has been embroiled in the debate over the fore-written destiny of man. The main arguments advanced in favor of the predestination theory are based on certain *Qur'anic Ayat* and certain traditions particularly those recorded by al-Bukhari in the above mentioned

* Lecturer at Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences, International Islamic University Malaysia.