

## The Attributes of God

Hitherto, some of the proofs of the existence of God were discussed. We shall now examine briefly the attributes of God, an issue which is one of the most important topics of theology, and which, if properly understood, can remove doubts of those who negate His existence and resolve their difficulties.

The attributes (sifat) of God are of two kinds: affirmative (*thubutiyyah*) and negative (*salbiyyah*). The former kind of attributes are posited for God, and the latter are those which are negated of Him.

Likewise, the affirmative attributes are of two kinds: attributes of Essence, and attributes of Divine Acts.

The attributes of Essence are those which are inherent in His Essence by Itself, without taking into consideration His relation to creation, and, therefore, always qualify It. For example, the attribute of power is an attribute of Divine Essence, because power is an inherent quality of God; it cannot be affirmed of Him at one time and negated at another.

However, the attributes of Acts are those which, with respect to the relation that exists between the Divine Essence and any one of God's creatures, are derived from that relation, and it is obvious that whenever one side of this relation—here, that particular creature undergoes a change, then the attribute applicable to the other side—in this case, God—also changes. For example the attribute represented by the epithet 'Provider' (*al Razzaq*) is derived from the relation between God, as the Provider, and His creatures, who are provided by Him.

Now, whenever a creature (which is one side of the relation) provided and maintained by Him dies, then that relation also ceases, and providence of God with regard to that creature comes to an end.

It should be remembered that although numerous attributes, affirmative and negative, are mentioned in revealed religion and in theological philosophy, they all are reducible to a single affirmative and a negative attribute. That single affirmative attribute is that God is complete perfection (i.e. every imaginable quality of perfection is attributable to Him); and the single negative attribute is that God is devoid of every imaginable defect or shortcoming.

Some of the affirmative attributes of God are as follows.

# Power

In defining power, it can be said that one is powerful if he can act whenever he wants to and refrain from action. whenever he doesn't. Therefore, 'powerful' is one who, firstly, has will (by virtue of this definition, power cannot be attributed to stones, plants, and, in short, all things devoid of will), and, secondly, the freedom to act or not to act, or both. Thirdly, his will only confirms either one of the two alternatives of action or inaction.

Therefore, the domain of will is more restricted than that of power. Fourthly, since will is always related to some action of which one who wills has some kind of knowledge, because one cannot will to do something which is unknown to him—it could, therefore, be said that knowledge and awareness precedes will.

Moreover, since will has been included in the definition of power, therefore, in accordance with this definition, every 'powerful' being, in relation to what it wills, possesses knowledge of it as well.

Now, let us see how we can demonstrate the attribute of power in relation to God. In the proof of the existence of the Necessary Being, it is shown that the chain of possibilities and causes originates from the First Cause. The existence of all phenomena is ultimately derived from the First Cause and, therefore, they have, in some way or other, a pre-existence in the First Cause. If the First Cause were totally devoid of them, that is, if It had no power over their creation, they could not have come into existence.

Therefore, the coming into existence of a thing is also a sign of the existence of the attribute of power in its creator. The more expansive the domain of creation is, the greater the power of the creator.

Accordingly, the proof of the First Cause includes the demonstration of the attribute of power in the First Cause. If the First Cause were devoid of power, no effect could result from It, and thereby It could not have been the First Cause.

On the other hand, it is clearly evident from the proof of order in the universe that the Creator of order must have power—in the sense as has already been mentioned; that is, power embracing knowledge and will. For, if He lacks knowledge, He cannot shape and arrange the ingredients of an orderly system in such a manner that a network of necessary relationships is established between the ingredients, and some kind of definite purpose is realized within that system.

Moreover, if His power is not accompanied by will (that is, inclination which arises from freedom) but, like the force of gravity, is exercised automatically without exercise of will, it necessitates that the system be eternal (*qadim*) and not created (*hadith*); because, the First Cause as the fountainhead of power—and, likewise, power itself, which is Its essential attribute—is eternal; therefore, the universe, as the order arising from the First Cause, must also be eternal and without beginning. However, we have proved that the entire animate and inanimate worlds are incessantly in the process of creation.

This was a brief discussion about the meaning of power and affirmation of the attribute of power with respect to God. Now let us consider its scope and extent. According to philosophical proofs, Quranic testimony, all revealed Scriptures, and also according to the traditions of the blessed Household (Ahl al Bayt) of the Prophet (S), the power of God is infinite and absolute. That is, God is omnipotent; for Him nothing is impossible. The following statement is recurrently made by the Holy Quran:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

***Indeed God has power over everything.***

The Quran also states:

إِنَّمَا أَمْرُهُ إِذَا أَرَادَ شَيْئًا أَنْ يَقُولَ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ

***His command, when He intends [to create] anything, is only to say to it, Be', and it is.*** (36:82)

Here, very often, this question is asked: Does God have the power over any and every thing imaginable? Can God, possibly, make two plus two equal to five, or insert a bigger body into a smaller one without the bigger body becoming small or the smaller one becoming larger? Certain philosophers, such as Descartes, have maintained that the meaning of Divine omnipotence is that God's power encompasses everything and that nothing is impossible for Him. Therefore, they say, God can ordain that 2+2 should equal 5 or 7, and so bring about things which to us appear impossible. Of course, in the present world, He deems not to do such things, but if He wills to do so, He can. In order to answer the above question, and to examine the view of Descartes, the meaning of 'impossible' in all its various senses must at first be examined; then it must be seen which of these meanings pertains to the power of God.

## **The Meaning of Impossibility**

The word 'impossible' is used in three different senses:

- (a) Inherent impossibility (*muhal dhati*),
- (b) Impossibility of occurrence (*muhal wuqu`i*),
- (c) Habitual impossibility (*muhal `adi*).

(a) ***Inherent Impossibility***: It applies to a statement which, if assumed to be true, would imply

self-contradiction. It refers to situations which are logically impossible. That is, it necessitates that something should be both existent and non-existent at the same time. It applies to statements like the above-mentioned example relating to insertion of a bigger body into a smaller one without the larger one becoming smaller or the smaller one larger; because, if true, it would lead to the conclusion that the bigger body in its state of largeness should not be large, since a larger body can be inserted into a smaller one only if it becomes smaller itself; that is, it should not be large, and this is a contradiction.

Similarly, the proposition  $2+2=5$  is necessarily self-contradictory, because if 2 books are added to 2 other books, and if instead of 4 we have 5 books, it means that  $2+2$  is and also is not  $2+2$ , because when  $2+2=5$ , it means it is not equal to 4. So 2 books plus 2 books makes at the same time 4 and not 4 books.

(b) **Impossibility of Occurrence:** The mere supposition of this kind of impossibility does not necessarily lead to contradiction as such, but if it occurs in reality, its occurrence necessarily leads to contradiction.

For example, if we know that some effect B must necessarily be an effect of cause A, and that existence of A is necessary for causing the existence of B, now if B comes into existence without A, we are confronted with a contradiction between what we know to be true and what we observe (namely existence of B without A).

However, there is no self-contradiction in the supposition itself that B can exist without A. But if A is known with certainty to be a necessary cause of B, emergence of B without the presence of A (the necessary cause of B) involves a contradiction. This kind of impossibility refers to situations involving necessary causation.

(c) **Habitual Impossibility:** Here, an effect B, as a rule, is observed as originating from a particular cause A, but, in fact, occasionally, it might possess another cause C, as well. A case that may be cited as an example is that of the healing of sick by means of miracles. Healing, customarily, has its specific cause like medicine; but when it is caused by a miracle, it is due to the special powers of saintly figures, granted to them by God on account of their piety. This kind of impossibility depends on habitual association between cause and effect.

From among these three kinds of impossibility, the first and second do not apply to Divine power; because the first kind, or inherent impossibility, is something the mere supposition of which involves a self-contradiction, and occurrence of anything involving a self-contradiction is also, of necessity, contradictory.

However, the second kind of impossibility, that is impossibility of occurrence, also necessarily involves contradiction like the first kind; since even if the supposition itself is not self-contradictory, but because if it is known with certainty that emergence of a particular effect B depends on a particular cause A, if B emerges without A, it implies a contradiction; because, the observation that A does not exist is inconsistent with the deduction that A exists (a deduction derived from the statement known to be true that A is always the cause of B). In these two cases (i.e., the first two kinds of impossibilities), there is no 'thing'

involved (with reference to the Quranic verse 36:82 quoted above) so that God may command it to be.

The third kind, habitual impossibility, is, strictly speaking, not an impossibility at all; rather it is our ignorance of the actual causes of an event that makes us think so. Therefore, events and effects in this class are subject to the power of God.

## Knowledge

Knowledge, like power, is another attribute of Divine Essence. On the basis of the proofs forwarded for demonstrating the existence of God, it can be said that God is omniscient. Moreover, it was stated in the discourse on power that it is deduced from the proof of order that God, who confers order and regularity on a system, must, of necessity, be aware of the characteristics of its components, their number, composition, and their connection with the system's purpose.

Creation of an orderly system of phenomena without knowledge of the components of which it consists is something irrational, which the Holy Quran rejects by this interrogative negation:

أَلَا يَعْلَمُ مَنْ خَلَقَ وَهُوَ اللَّطِيفُ الْخَبِيرُ

***Shall He not know, Who created, and He is All-subtle, All-aware?*** (67: 14)

The proof of the Necessary Being demonstrates that God is the First Cause of all creation, and in the discussion of the proof of contingent and necessary it was stated that an effect depends on and arises from a cause, or, in other words, the effect is present for the cause. Accordingly, it is impossible that the cause should be unaware of its effect, which itself depends on the cause.

Of course, God's knowledge is "knowledge by presence" (*'ilm huduri*) not acquired knowledge (*'ilm husulli*), since in the discussion on the difference between these two kinds of knowledge it was stated that the former kind is directly present for the knower without the need for any intermediary, whilst the latter kind is gained by means of the sense organs.

From an epistemological viewpoint, in 'knowledge by presence' (*'ilm huduri*) the known object is itself, in its entirety, present in the mind of the knower, not just the idea of its form. However, in acquired knowledge (*'ilm husuli*) only the form of the known thing is present in the mind of the knower, not its complete essence—like our knowledge of sensible objects in the external world acquired by means of the sense organs.

With this brief explanation, we come to know that knowledge possessed by God cannot be the acquired type of knowledge, but is 'knowledge by presence'; since the existence of every object and all effects caused by the First Cause depends on Him and is 'present' for Him, and this is the same as what we call

`knowledge by presence'.

Besides, acquired knowledge comes through sense organs, and since God is free of any kind of organs whatsoever, the idea of acquired knowledge is inapplicable to Him. Therefore, we may conclude on the basis of what has been said that God's knowledge is `knowledge by presence', not acquired knowledge.

Some other attributes such as hearing and vision are also related to the attributes of knowledge. When we say that God hears and sees, what is meant is that God is knowledgeable about things that can be heard and seen. He knows the attributes and qualities, perceived by creatures by means of hearing and seeing, by means of His `knowledge by presence'.

However, the knowledge of God encompasses all things—those which can be seen and heard, and all other things as well. The greater emphasis laid on the attributes of vision and hearing of God is apparently due to the fact that these two faculties are more manifest and perfect in creatures endowed with the power of perception; in addition, their relationship with the body and bodily members, like the other faculties, is not as evident and conspicuous.

On the other hand, faculties such as taste and touch and their relationship with the body is very intense and their imperfection is more conspicuous. Perhaps it is due to this that in theological parlance, from among the faculties pertaining to the senses, these two faculties of hearing and seeing—disregarding the fact of their being senses—are attributed to God, although God has absolute and unlimited knowledge by presence not only of the visible and the audible but also of taste, touch and all other characteristics possessed by things.

## **The Attribute of Free Will**

By free will is meant that a conscious and aware creature is able to select one way which is the most expedient from amongst all imaginable alternatives for accomplishing of something, and in reality the only thing that may compel him to do something is expediency. However, insofar as it pertains to God, the meaning of free will is that no agent outside His Essence can compel Him to do something, since there is no cause above the First Cause which may influence It and cause It to do something.

Hence, all the Acts of God originate from His free will, or, in other words, God is a free doer. As opposed to free will is compulsion and determinism. What it means is that an agency or impetus influences a creature having will, compelling it to do something without exercising its own free will or capacity of choice. In other words, such a creature is divested of the exercise of free will in its action.

## **Divine Unity**

One of the attributes of God is Unity, which is stressed by certain religions, especially Islam. Monotheism and belief in Oneness of God is one of the prominent characteristics of Islam, for which it has been

named the religion of monotheism. Theological philosophers have also always believed in monotheism, and have resorted to following arguments to prove the unity of God.

1. Necessity of existence leads us to conclude that there must not be more than one Necessary Being; because whenever we talk of two or more things, it is necessary that those two things should possess some points of similarity, on the one hand, and some points of difference, on the other.

For example, when we talk of two books, it is necessary that, firstly, they have something in common in that they are both 'books', and, secondly, differ in at least one respect; otherwise, if they are similar in colour, appearance, weight, size, author, paper, subject matter, time, place and all other peculiarities, they cannot be considered as two books and can only be one and the same book.

Therefore, every sort of plurality has certain points in common, on the one hand, and differences, on the other. Now if we suppose that two or more gods exist, then they must have at least one aspect in common and one or more aspects of difference. That is, each one of them must have one thing in common with the other and also have a point or points especial to itself.

Therefore, each one of them has a compounded being composed of at least two aspects or characteristics, and each compound would require its own components on whose existence its own existence depends. It is obvious that a being which is compound is dependent for its existence on its parts, and hence is not self-existing. This is contradictory to the definition of the Necessary Being. Accordingly, the assumption that there can be two or more Necessary Beings leads to a self-contradiction.

2. The orderly state of the universe, of necessity, shows that its creator cannot be more than one; because, if such were the case, there would have been a difference of essence and natures between creators. Moreover, two or more creators of differing essences and natures will necessarily produce different and divergent effects depending on the manner of relationship of these effects with the differing will of the creators.

Further, it is obvious that two or more different entities possessing differing wills would offer differing schemes for the order of the universe—an order which in reality is an interconnected, integrated unit. Also, their varying wills and plans for creation would necessarily cause disorder, leading to ultimate destruction. The Holy Quran states this point:

لَوْ كَانَ فِيهِمَا آلِهَةٌ إِلَّا اللَّهُ لَفَسَدَتَا فَسُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَرْشِ عَمَّا يَصِفُونَ

***If there had been in them (heavens and earth) any gods except Allah, they would both have certainly been in a state of disorder. (21:22)***

The late `Allamah Tabataba'i, in his commentary on this verse, writes:

*"In our commentary on Surat Hud, and also subsequently, we have made it clear that the controversy between the idolaters and the monotheists does not relate to the issue of unity or plurality of the Necessary Being; because, that the Necessary Being is one and without divine associates is not a matter of dispute; rather, the dispute concerns God as the deity worthy of worship.*

*Idolaters contend that administration of the world with its multiple affairs has been delegated to noble beings such as god of the heavens, god of the earth, and god of human beings, all of whom have nearness and access to God; they must be worshipped, so that they may intercede with God on behalf of their worshippers and thus bring them near to God. They are gods of beings inferior and subject to their authority, and Allah, the god of gods, is the creator of everything. As the Quran, in this regard, says: **"And if you ask them `who is the creator of the heavens and the earth, they will say `Allah',... and if you ask them who has created the heavens and earth they will say `the Powerful and the Wise has created them'."***

The verse under discussion negates these gods in this sense, not in the sense of their being creators or makers; for no one had insisted on a belief in plurality of creators.

However, the obvious import of the verse is that if there were more than one God, they would differ as to their essence and nature, and such difference would be tantamount to departure in their schemes, resulting in their mutual destruction and disorder throughout the system of the heavens and the earth. But the existing order of the universe is a unified one, whose parts and components are in coordination and harmony with one another and in conformity with its purposes. Therefore, there cannot be more than one God.

Another verse cited in relation to the proof of the Unity of God, is the following:

مَا اتَّخَذَ اللَّهُ مِنْ وَلَدٍ وَمَا كَانَ مَعَهُ مِنْ إِلَهٍ إِذَا لَذَهَبَ كُلُّ إِلَهٍ بِمَا خَلَقَ وَلَعَلَّ  
بَعْضُهُمْ عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ عَمَّا يُصِفُونَ

***God has not taken to Himself any son, nor is there any god besides Him; for then each god would have taken off that he created and some of them would have risen up over others; glory be to God, beyond that they ascribe [to Him]. (23:91)***

The purpose of this verse is apparently to state that if we suppose two gods as existing, some kind of difference between them is inevitable; for two distinctly separate beings entail that they differ at least in one respect. As stated in connection with the preceding verse, will is also one of the essential characteristics of these two beings. Accordingly, a universe subject to two differing wills, would inevitably



result in disorder and discord; because each one of the gods with a separate will of his own would act independently of the other and in accordance with his own will.

That is, the verse implies that if there were two gods, each one of them would have governed his creation according to his own will, and, consequently, no order whatsoever could be established in the universe, since the creation of each god would differ from that of the other, and, as a consequence, integration, order and coordination would not exist, or granting that some kind of order could be achieved, sooner or later it would come to naught and would not endure. This is the case if neither of the two or more gods is subordinate to another but each one of them administers a part of the universe independently.

But the observable order of the universe is the best witness of the fact that the universe is governed by a single hierarchy of laws; that is, though some sections of the universe are subject to some special laws (such as the plant kingdom and animal kingdom), they, in addition to their particular laws, are governed by the general laws of the universe (the law of gravitation, for example).

Now if we attribute each one of these kingdoms with their special, more general, and most general laws to each of the gods, each one of them would inevitably be subordinate to the superior god, and, as a matter of course, each would become a tool for realization of the actions and objectives of the superior god. However, such beings cannot be called 'gods', since they are effects among various effects. This is what is meant when the above verse states 'some of them would have risen over others.'

This proof of monotheism, which was obtained from the proof of order, demonstrates the Unity of Divine sovereignty (*tawhid rububi*); that is, by demonstrating that there is a single unitary order prevailing in the universe, it proves that the universe is administered by one Designer and Sovereign.

The unity of the Divine Sovereign, of necessity, leads to monotheism in worship; because worship is directed towards a Divine sovereign, and if He is one, then worship is addressed solely to Him—not to numerous sovereigns. Accordingly, unity of divinity, divinity being a necessary counterpart of sovereignty, and sovereign of the universe being the same as its god—is proved: the universe has one God and one Sovereign.

## **Monotheism and Human Nature**

In the discussion on the proof of the existence of God, it was said that one of the ways of knowing God is through natural instinct. It was pointed out that just as God is known by means of *'ilm huduri*, knowledge of Divine Unity is also obtained by the same means. Because when we, by means of our knowledge by presence, discover that our own existence is a relative one, dependent upon that of a Self-existing Being, by means of the same knowledge we also find that the Self-existing Being, who constitutes the other end of this relation, is one and unique.

If there were more than one self-existing beings, then by means of knowledge by presence we would have found them to be multiple, whereas the fact of the matter is that it is not so. In the verse 7:172 it was pointed out that God had obtained humanity's confession in regard to His sovereignty, in a world which preceded this world.

The reason for this was that there should be no valid excuses on behalf of polytheists on the Day of Judgment. Therefore, in this confession, God must have been experienced as the One Sovereign by every human individual through his knowledge by presence; otherwise the confession would not be valid.

## Divine Speech

We know that human speech derives from the vocal chords causing vibrations in the air and these vibrations are heard as meaningful sounds or 'speech'. However, 'speaking', in this sense, does not apply to God, because He has no corporeal form that He should have vocal chords to cause vibrations and sound. Therefore, we must find some other meaning for Divine speech.

Some contend that Divine speech is through creation of sound impressions in the hearer. This is true in the case of intelligent beings with a physical constitution which enables them to hear sounds. However, in the case of incorporeal beings such as angels or human spirits, the creation of sound is not feasible; that is, it is not possible to convey an audible message to the addressee, since he lacks the auditory equipment.

Besides, God has also spoken to inanimate things like the sky, the earth, fire, etc., and has commanded and prohibited them. Can such 'speech' be also said to be caused by the agency of sound? Obviously the answer is in the negative.

Therefore, it must be asserted that Divine speech, when addressed to man and other creatures, is in the sense of induction or creation of meaning resulting from speech. That is, the same meanings that human beings convey to one another by means of speech, God induces similar kind of meanings in the intellect of a human being without the need of a voice, larynx etc. Sometimes the speech of God with creatures is in the sense of an act of creation, as in the verse:

إِنَّمَا أَمْرُهُ إِذَا أَرَادَ شَيْئًا أَنْ يَقُولَ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ

***His command, when He intends anything, is only to say to it Be', and it is.*** (36:82)

Because saying 'Be' to something which does not exist, can only mean creation. Apart from the two meanings stated above, other cases of Divine speech are mentioned in the Quran, as God's

commanding the sky and the earth: "*Come*", to which they replied:

**"We come willingly."** (41:11)

## **Divine Wisdom**

ʿAllamah Tabatabaʿi—may God's mercy be upon him—in his exposition on Divine Wisdom says: 1

The various movements originating from us can be considered as our actions when they are related to and dependent upon our will in some way. Therefore, health, illness and other involuntary movements cannot be considered as our actions. It is obvious that we will an action only in the event of a preference; that is, when we see that it is better to do something than not to do it, and the benefits accruing thereof exceed the drawbacks, and would be a step towards perfection for us. Therefore, the advantage related to our intended action, which persuades us to prefer action to inaction, is the very good which is the cause of our activity.

That good is what is called the end of an action. and it has been demonstrated in philosophical discussions that an action, voluntary or involuntary, is not without purpose. This good proceeding from an action, is what is called the 'wisdom' of an action by society, and this 'wisdom', considered so by reason, is what causes the doer of that action to be depicted as 'wise'. If there were no wisdom in an act, it would be considered futile and vain.

It is obvious that the benefit or good which follows an action has no external existence prior to the act, and it is the idea of a benefit which compels or inspires the would-be doer to act, in the sense that each one of us has some idea of a benefit derived from our experience of the external order and the general laws governing it.

This order guides our actions to their perceived ends and objectives. Likewise, this idea of benefit is the result of our experience of interrelationships between things and, undoubtedly, this system of ideas is dependent upon and derived from the order prevailing in external reality.

It is characteristic of our voluntary actions that they are performed in accordance with our system of knowledge, and our will is dependent upon the good or benefit which we perceive in our actions. Now, if there is conformity or correspondence between an action, on the one hand, and perception and knowledge, on the other, then such an action is considered as judicious and wise and its doer is said to be 'judicious' or 'wise'. But if we default, whether due to some shortcoming or neglect, then the action is considered as futile and erroneous and the doer is considered unwise.

Therefore, wisdom is the quality of the doer of an act whose work conforms to his subjective understanding, which, in turn, corresponds to the order prevailing in external reality. The 'good' or 'wisdom' of an action is also its correspondence to subjective understanding that is derived from external reality. So 'wisdom' implies conformity to external reality, and is a characteristic of a doer whose acts,

through the agency of the mind, conform to the external reality. So; also, the objective or benefit of an action depends on correspondence of subjective knowledge to external reality.

However, this is true in the case of those actions in which conformity of subjective knowledge with the external reality is implied— like our voluntary actions. But an act of God is external reality itself, and stands in no need of correspondence to the order prevailing in the external world. Therefore, when it is said that the acts of God are based on an objective, it is meant that the `objective' of His act is derived from the act and not vice versa.<sup>2</sup>

In brief, one is said to be wise if he carefully examines the external reality, and from among the various options available, selects one which promises a maximum amount of benefit.

Then he so organizes his actions that he can attain the desired objective with minimum amount of effort. Wisdom is the conformity of an act with its objective or the desired benefit, which it is considered to yield. This interpretation of wisdom assumes the pre-existence of an external reality which guarantees the attainment of premeditated objectives on the basis of conformity of the actions of the doer with it. It is obvious that `wisdom' in this sense could only apply to one whose acts are performed against the background of external reality and which fit into its perspective.

However, in the case of God, whose acts are external reality itself, the attribute of wisdom is riot applicable in this sense, but solely implies that God never does anything futile, devoid of benefit or in vain. However, it does not mean that God has to conform His acts to the external reality in order to make them useful or purposeful. He does not do anything futile or useless, because He is a free actor with free will. We stated that free will is attributed to someone who selects one out of the many possible courses of action which would fulfill his objective better than others.

Now if this doer possessing free will is a creature other than God, its objectives are those which fulfill some of its needs or bring it some kind of advantage.

But if the free doer is God, who is free of every need and necessity, then, in His case, He cannot have an `objective' in this sense. Rather, He acts for the sake of an objective or purpose whose gain and benefit accrues to others. In other words, God acts solely out of beneficence and grace; not for achieving any good for Himself in order to satisfy some need of His own, nor in order to attain some advantage:

***I did not bring forth creation to profit by it,  
But to bestow My Beneficence upon My creatures.***

And this beneficence and grace are essential to Divine Essence, because He is absolute perfection. Without beneficence God would not be perfect.

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1. Allamah Sayyid Muhammad Husayn al-Tabataba'i, al-Mizan, vol. 8, pp. 335-6.

2. Ibid., vol. 16, see verses 21:16-33.

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