

Published on Al-Islam.org (https://www.al-islam.org)

<u>Home</u> > <u>A History of Muslim Philosophy Volume 1, Book 3</u> > <u>Part 1: Theologico-Philosophical</u> Movements > Chapter 14: Zahirism > Bibliography

# Chapter 14: Zahirism

Zaharism by Omar A. Farrukh, Ph.D, Member of the Arab Academy, Damascus (Syria)

### **Background**

Since the second/eighth century, an interminable dispute dragged on between those who upheld the authority of Tradition (*ahl al\_hadith*) in all matters of theology and jurisprudence, and those who advocated opinion (*ashab al\_ra'i*).

It was expected, as pointed out by Ibn Khaldun in his Muqaddimah (p. 805) that the people of the Hijaz, particularly those of Madinah, should be versed in the science of Tradition (the sayings and doings of the Prophet Muhammad). With the rise of the `Abbasid Caliphate and the shifting of the political power and the religious leadership completely to Iraq, where the people had had less access to the sayings of the Prophet, and where the aspects of life, the agrarian problems, for instance, were more diverse and complicated through the intermingling of the successive civilizations since times immemorial, a new school, that of opinion, made its inevitable appearance.

The upholders of opinion, however, did not neglect Tradition, but they found it necessary to supplement Tradition with additions drawn from older codes and prevalent usages or framed by considerations of the actual situation in their new environment. At the same time an esoteric movement also began among the Shiites under a variety of names, the most current of which was the Batiniyyah1 (seekers after the inner or spiritual interpretation of revelation). The forming of this sect is attributed to a certain Maimun of whose descent we are completely in the dark.

The Batiniyyah movement took its name from the belief of its followers that every *zahir* (apparent state of things) has a *batin* (an inner, allegorical. hidden, or secret meaning), especially in connection with revelation. Since this movement adopted some aspects of Greek philosophy, such as emanationism, its followers were considered by Sunni authors to be heretics and outside the pale of faith.

During the Caliphate of al\_Mamun (198/813\_281/833) the Batiniyyah movement was quite strong;5

some half a century later it was widely spread in Iraq, Persia, Sind (western India), and Oman (south\_east Arabia), as well as in North Africa, but it did not enjoy an enduring influence. 6 It is to be remarked, however, that while a number of individuals in Muslim Spain had shared ideas with the Batiniyyah, no sectarian or heretical doctrine ever struck roots or succeeded in winning over communities of any dimensions there.

So, the second/eighth century had witnessed a heavy atmosphere of esotericism weighing on some fundamentals of Islam such as the essence of God, the understanding of the Qur'an, and the attitude towards the Caliphate. Added to this there was a trend of upholding opinion as a valid source of jurisprudence at the same level with the Qur'an and the sayings of the Prophet. At the same time there was also the Mu'tazilite school which assumed reason as a more deciding factor than revelation in all matters of religion.

Since all these movements had chosen Iraq as their principal battle\_field, another school, contrary to all of them and as extremist as any of them appeared in Iraq itself and insisted on the verbal understanding of the Qur'an and of the sayings of the Prophet Mubammad as the sole guiding line to their real meanings clothed in the words of God and of His Apostle. This school was founded by a jurist Dawud ibn 'Ali, and it received its name the Literalists' (*Zahiriyyah*) school from the clinging of its followers to the wording of the revelation and not to the interpretation of it.

### Dawid ibn 'Ali, His Doctrine and His School

The family of Dawud ibn 'Ali belonged to Kashan, a town in the neighbourhood of Isfahan. His father was a secretary (*katib*) to `Abd Allah ibn Khalid, judge of Isfahan, in the days of the Caliph al\_Mamun. 7 Dawud8 himself was born in Kufah in 202/817. His family moved later to Baghdad where he was brought up, educated, and afterwards laid the foundation of his school of jurisprudence which bore his name *al\_madhhab al\_Dawudi*, 9 but which was better known as the Zahirite school (*al\_madhhab al\_zahiri*).

In Baghdad, Dawud ibn 'Ali attended the lectures of many eminent jurists, the most prominent of whom was Abu Thaur (d. 246/860); a friend and follower of Shafi'i. The trend of education he received from them made him shift from the Hanafite rite to that to which his father belonged, 10 the Shafi'ite, apparently because most of his professors (*shuyukh*) were more inclined to the Traditionists (*ahl al\_hadith*) school to which Shafi'is belonged than to the school of the upholders of opinion (*ashab al\_ra'i*) who were the followers of Abu Hanifah *par excellence*. Dawud perfected his education by an academic trip to Nishapur to meet Ishaq ibn Rahawaih (d. 237/851 or 238/852),11 who also was a friend and follower of Shafi'i. Afterwards, he returned to Baghdad where he wrote his books.

Perhaps it is not very strange that a close and profound study of the Shafi'ite school of jurisprudence led Dawud ibn 'Ali finally to be dissatisfied with it. He forsook it and founded a new school, the Zahirite school, which recognized the Qur'an and the Hadith as the only sources of jurisprudence. He accepted, at any rate, consensus (*ijma*) of the Companions of the Prophet, but he rejected analogy (*qiyas*),

opinion (*ra'i*), personal approval (*istihsan*), and decisions on the authority of older generations (*taqlid*) altogether. 12

Dawud ibn 'Ali was accomplished, trustworthy, learned, God\_fearing, pious, and ascetic; he was also versed in logic and proficient in the art of disputation. 13 It was said that he believed that the Qur'an was created and not eternal, but it seems that this was only an accusation. 14 He died in 270/884 in Baghdad.

Dawud ibn 'Ali was a prolific writer. Ibn al\_Nadim enumerates about one hundred and fifty titles from him. 15 It seems that many of these titles were only chapters of some of his books. But there are also titles which represent bulky works of two thousand, three thousand, and even four thousand folios 16 each. A few of these books touched the fundamentals of religion, e. g., "On the Usul," "On the Caliphate," "Consensus and the Refutation of Qiyas," and "On the Refutation of Taqlid." Most of his other books treated of branches (furu`) or minor aspects of Fiqh concerning worship and legal transactions Unfortunately no book has reached us from him. Ibn Hazm, nevertheless refers to him frequently. Muhammad al\_Shatti (d. Damascus 1307/1889) made a collection of Dawud's Fiqh gleaned from the various works of his followers. '18

It was related that Dawud ibn 'Ali admitted analogy where the cases in question were obvious, 19 but it is more probable that he rejected analogy wholly, whether the cases were ambiguous or obvious. 20 As for consensus (*ijma'*), his position was totally different: he admitted the *ijma*` of the Companions of the Prophet only, 21 on the ground that these Companions were in constant contact with the Prophet and fully aware of his intentions.

In his theology in particular he maintains, for example, that God is hearing, seeing, etc. But he says: "I do not say that He is seeing with the agency of sight ..."22

Dawud ibn 'Ali re\_examined all aspects of *Fiqh* on the basis of his Zahirite attitude. The following are three examples illustrating his trend of thought and argumentation in this respect.

1. *Prayer on a Journey* \_ God has said in the Qur'an: "And when you journey in the earth, there is no blame on you if you shorten the prayer."23

This led the Muslims to reduce prayer on a journey from four *rak`ahs* to only two.24 Muslim jurists generally assert that this verse envisages cutting the prayer short on a journey of some duration.25 Dawud, on the other hand, maintained that since there is no mention of the duration of the journey in the Qur'an,26 prayer should be cut short on any journey whatever, even though it is a journey from one encampment to another.

2. Fasting on a Journey – Muslims fast in Ramadan, the ninth month of the lunar year. In this connection we read in the Qur'an: "But he among you who shall be sick, or on a journey, shall (not observe the days on which he travels but he shall) fast the same number of other days (when he returns home)." 27 It is agreed upon by all Sunni jurists that a Muslim may not observe Ramadan fasts on a journey which

involves certain hardship, either on account of its long duration or its difficult nature, on hot days for example.28

Dawud and his followers assert that a Muslim should not observe fasts on a journey because the wording of the verse does not stipulate any condition. If a Muslim, according to Dawud, did observe fasts for some days on a journey, even then he should keep fast for the same number of days when he returns home, for his fasting while journeying was not valid.29

3. The Question of Usury (Riba) – Usury is forbidden in Islam. 30 But a difficulty arose from a tradition concerning it. It is related that the Prophet Muhammad said: "(You may barter) gold for gold, silver for silver, wheat for wheat, barley for barley, dates for dates, and salt for salt, only in equivalent quantities and on the spot. In all other commodities you may deal as you like, provided (the barter is transacted) on the spot."31

Early Muslim jurists concluded from this tradition that a quantity of any commodity should not be bartered for a larger quantity of the same commodity; otherwise, the surplus taken would be usury (*riba*). But if, for instance, a quantity of wrought gold was bartered for a larger quantity of unwrought gold, the surplus would be a gain or, better, a wage for craftsmanship.

Furthermore, they considered the six commodities named by the Prophet to be examples only; thus bartering copper, coffee, leather, apples, or wool for a larger quantity of these commodities respectively is also regarded \_ by analogy \_ as a form of usury.

Dawud ibn `Ali, on the other hand, believed that the Prophet Muhammad had named these commodities on purpose. Had he intended to prolong the list, nothing would have prevented him from doing so. Accordingly, if a man bartered a quantity, say of iron, maize, apples, or pepper for a larger quantity of the same commodity, the surplus would not be usury but gain.

The jurists contemporary with Dawud ibn 'Ali took a very critical attitude regarding him and his school.32 The Shafi'ites in general criticized him severely and considered the Zahirite school to be worthless. Al\_Isfara'ini (d. 418/1027) maintained that no account should be taken of the Zahirites. Since they rejected analogy (*qiyas*), he asserted, they could not have been able to exercise judgment and, therefore, no one of them should be elevated to the position of a judge.

Some others presumed that Dawud ibn `Ali was ignorant; others considered him to be a disbeliever. Abmad ibn Hanbal (d. 241/855), the famous founder of the Hanbalite school, did not hold him in estimation. 33 Abu `Abd Allah Muhammad ibn Zaid al\_Wasiti (d. 306/918\_919), an eminent Mu'tazilite of Baghdad, looked down upon the Zahirite school as ridiculous. 34 The followers of Dawud ibn `Ali, nevertheless, were not only numerous but some of them were also prominent. 35

Dawud ibn `Ali was succeeded, as the head of the Zahirite school, by his son, Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Dawud (c. 255/869\_297/910). But the latter was more of a poet, litterateur, and historian than an

enthusiastic scholar of jurisprudence. 36 At any rate, he propagated the tenets of his father's school and bestowed on it so much prestige that the Zahirite rite was in his own days the fourth of the four rites prevailing in the East, the other three being the Shafi'i, Maliki, and Hanafi rites. Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Dawud owes his real fame, however, to an anthology of love\_poetry known as Kitab al\_Zahrah37 The first and only extant half of this anthology was edited by A.R. Nykl38 and Ibrahim Tukan. Abu Bakr Mubammad ibn Dawud had some inclination towards philosophy, but philosophy did not constitute a component part of Zahirism before Ibn Hazm.

In the fourth/tenth century the Zahirite school had enjoyed its widest expansion and the climax of its prestige. The `Abbasid poet Ibn al\_Rumi (d. 283/896) praised Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Dawud in a poem which opens with the words: "O son of Dawud! O jurist of Iraq!"39

The famous historian, Tabari (d. 310/923), though not a Zahirite, paid close attention to Zahiri jurisprudence and studied it with Dawud ibn `Ali himself.40 The foremost jurist of the Zahirite school in the fourth/tenth century was Abd Allah ibn Ahmad ibn al\_Mughallis (d. 324/936), through whom the Figh of Dawud ibn `Ali became popular in the Muslim world.41

In the following century the Zahirite school was already losing ground in the East; and before the middle of the century, in the days of the Hanbalite judge Abu Ya'la (d. 459,/1066), the Hanbalite rite took its place. 42 The Zahirite school, at any rate, continued to enjoy in Syria some prestige until 788/1386. 43 In Egypt the school lived longer and had deeper roots. Al\_Maqrizi (d. 845/ 1442), the famous historian of the Mamluk age in Egypt, was not a follower of the Zahirite school, but he had a favourable attitude towards Zahirism. 44

## The Zahirite School in Muslim Spain

#### 1. Al-Balluti

The first representative of Zahirism in Spain was Mudhir ibn Said al\_Balluti who was born at al\_Nashsharin, a suburb of Cordova, in 273/886. After completing his studies at Cordova, he travelled to Egypt and the Hijaz for a little over three years.

On his return, he was appointed as judge (*Qadi*) in the city of Merida, then transferred to the Northern Frontiers and finally made the Chief Justice of Cordova, which post he held until his death towards the end of 355/965. He upheld Dawud's doctrines and defended his views, though, in practice, he administered justice according to the established law of the country based on the Malikite school of jurisprudence. He was also a man of letters, poet, theologian, physiographer, and eloquent speaker. In fact, he was the real forerunner of lbn Hazm.

#### 2. Ibn Hazm

#### **Life and Works**

Ibn Hazm was the real founder of the Zahirite school in Muslim Spain and the most famous and prominent of the Zahiri jurists. With him the school reached its zenith, and with his death it died away. In reality, the Zahirite rite never recruited a community in Muslim Spain. It came on the stage as a philosophy supported by a single man who failed to use his genius in the right way.

Ibn Hazm was the descendant of a non\_Arab, an Iberian in all probability, but he preferred to link his genealogy with a Persian freedman of Yazid ibn Sufyan, a brother of Mu'awiyah, the founder of the Umavvad Caliphate in the East.

The family did not attain any fame before Ahmad ibn Said, the father of Ibn Hazm, who became a minister to the Hajib al\_Mansur ibn Abi Amir,45 the Prime Minister of Hisham II, in 381/991. Ibn Hazm, who was born in 384/994 during the long ministerial term of his father, was brought up in a luxurious environment. He was fortunate enough to have been given a good education. The teacher who had the greatest influence on him was Ibn Muflit (d.426/1035), a Zahirite and a follower of Dawud ibn 'Ali; he chose to be eclectic in matters of worship and jurisprudence and did not agree that one should confine oneself to a particular school.

Ibn Hazm did not continue to enjoy prosperity and peace for long. With the outburst of the disturbances in 400/1009 and the death of his father only two years later, misfortunes began to overcome him and his family; and when he preferred, on this account, to withdraw from public life, his life became very obscure. A few years later, however, he decided to enter public life again. As a result, he experienced all ups and downs of life, from forming the cabinet to frequent imprisonments.

Six years after the fall of the Umayyad Caliphate in Cordova (422/1031) and the assassination of the fugitive Hisham III, life became unbearable for Ibn Hazm in the whole peninsula, not only because he was a client and partisan of the falling dynasty, but because he entertained also a religious doctrine which the rulers and the ruled in the peninsula did not share.

The only respite which Ibn Hazm had was during his stay on the island of Majorca, from 430/1039 to 440/1049. The local Governor of Majorca was Abu al\_`Abbas Ahmad ibn Rashiq, an able statesman and a man of letters. For reasons inexplicable, he invited Ibn Hazm for a sojourn on the island. Ibn Hazm took refuge there and began, as soon as he could breathe freely, to propagate Zahirism.

Since he was supported by the Governor, some Majorcans followed him perhaps out of conviction, perhaps out of political tact \_ but it seems certain that the majority of the islanders were not in favour of the intruding doctrine. In 439/1047, the famous Maliki jurist, Abu al\_Walid al Baji (403/1013–474/1081) returned from a journey in the East.

He held debates with Ibn Hazm and caused his disgrace. In the following year, Ibn Hazm was obliged to leave the island and go back on the mainland, but he was chased out of every town and village in which he tried to secure a footing. Finally, after fifteen years of complete oblivion, he found asylum on the estate of his own family in Manta Lisham where he passed away in 456/1063.

Ibn Hazm was a very prolific writer on different subjects ranging from genealogical tables to epistemology. It is believed that his books were four hundred comprising 80,000 folios of some twenty million words. The most important of these books are *Tauq al\_Hamamah* (the Dove's Neck\_Ring \_ on confidence and confidents), *Al\_Milal wa'l\_Nihal* (Religions and Sects), *Al\_Ihkam fi Usul al\_Ahkam* (Precision Concerning the Principles of Religious Matters) and *Al\_Muhalla bi al\_Athar* (the Gilded or Ornamented with Revelation and Tradition). This last is a comprehensive book on the aspects of worship and jurisprudence in Islam. Ibn Hazm was also a man of letters, poet, and statesman, but he is more famous as a rationalist and theologian.

#### Ibn Hazm's Rationalism

In his book *Al–Milal wa'l–Nihal*, ibn Hazm appears to be a rationalist. The problems of *a priori*, of time and space which confronted Kant (d. 1804) so often in his Critique of Pure Reason, had busied Ibn Hazm in the same way. It is really astonishing that the Muslim theologian had tackled these problems in the same spirit of objectivity seven and a half centuries before the German philosopher. Let us take up the theory of knowledge as discussed by Ibn Hazm. Knowledge arises, according to him, from the following

- (a) Sensory perception (*shahadat al\_hawas*), that is, observation or sensory evidence.
- (b) Primary reason (badihat al\_`aql or awwal al\_`aql), that is, a priori reason without the use of the five senses.
- (c) Proof (*burhan*), which goes back, either closely or remotely, to the evidence of the senses or to primary reason.

Ibn Hazm holds definitely that man has six senses, and that the soul grasps perceptible objects (material objects) by the five senses; thus a pleasant odour is accepted by reason... thus also the soul is aware that red is different from green, yellow, etc., or that there is a distinction between rough and smooth, hot and cold, etc.

The sixth sense, ibn Hazm holds, is the soul's knowledge of primary things; that is, there are some things which man can know through his reason as being axiomatic, without requiring any proof for them. "Such is the soul's knowledge that the part is less than the whole; thus the young child, who is only just able to discriminate, cries when he is given only two dates, but is satisfied when you give him another.

This is because the whole is greater than a part, even though the child cannot define the limits of his

knowledge .... The same sense gives the child the knowledge that two things cannot occupy the same spot; you will see him fight for a place where he wants to sit, knowing that that place is not big enough for another person, and that so long as another person occupies the place there is no room for him also ...

"This is a form of primary intelligence which is common to all except those whose reason is distorted ... or whose bodies are diseased or impotent in certain respects .... These truths of primary reason are truly axiomatic; they are beyond doubt and stand in no need of proof except to a madman . . . or to a scornful sophist."

Ibn Hazm's argument for the view that these things require no proof is this: "To demand proof of anything requires time; primary reason cannot possibly avoid that fact .... Yet between the soul's first learning to discriminate phenomena and its knowing the complete truth of all that we have mentioned, there is not a single minute, nor can there be."

But Ibn Hazm did not deny absolutely the necessity of proof to these things; rather, he held that such proof is a matter for personal acquisition which one may achieve, while another may not, and that it may carry weight only for such as have reached a high level of intellectual training.

Other means of acquiring knowledge, according to Ibn Hazm, are God's naming of things and men's convention as represented by the languages of the different nations. These two means, however, belong to theology and are discussed under that topic.

#### **Philosophy and Science**

Like all Muslim thinkers prior to his days, Ibn Hazm had no access to Greek originals. He had a predisposition towards argumentation, and was versed in the science of dialectics (*Kalam*). He claimed to have read (evidently through translations) the works of the Milesian and Eleatic schools, of Euclid and Ptolemy, of Plato and Aristotle, and of Alexander of Aphrodisias, and to have had a general knowledge of astronomy, astrology, and medicine. He also stated that he was well versed in mathematics in general and geometry in particular.

Ibn Hazm does not agree with Heraclitus that the world is in constant flow nor with the Eleatics that motion is non\_existent. On Being and NonBeing, he agrees with the Eleatics: Non\_Being is not. In keeping with his general trend of thought, he affirms that space and time are limited and that they are, like all other things, created by God. In the same way he maintains that atoms are divisible because it is in the power of God to do everything, and to this power of His, infinite divisibility of an atom is no exception.

In physiography, he holds that the world is limited and the earth is spherical and that the sun is larger than the earth, but he agrees with Anaximenes that the sky is like a vault over the earth. He disagrees, however, with Pythagoras that there is a sister earth which helps the earth keep itself in the correct position.46 The world, at any rate, is created, but it has existed for a very long time.

In ethics, he touches lightly on Greek philosophy and maintains with Prodicus of Ceos that death has no pain and that it should not be feared. He also holds with Epicurus and his contemporaries that the desire for pleasure and the repulsion from care are the criteria of happiness. But building up and improvement of character cannot be achieved by philosophy alone; the help of the prophets is necessary.

In his theory of knowledge, Ibn Hazm emphasizes, in addition to sensory perception and primary reason, three means of acquiring religious knowledge which are particularly fundamental in Islam. These are: the literal sense of the Qur'an, the sayings and doings of the Prophet Mubammad, and consensus (*ijma'*).

The first and foremost source of knowledge is the literal sense of the text of the Qur'an. This must follow from the context of the fifty\_ninth verse of the fourth Surah, "O ye who believe! obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those of you who are in authority, and if ye have a dispute concerning any matter refer it to Allah and to the Messenger . . . ."

The text of the Qur'an must be understood literally unless the words in question are used metaphorically and in a way current among the early Arabs. No divergence is allowed from the text of the Qur'an except where one verse is modified or abrogated by another. 47 A total dependence on the Qur'an is made possible by the fact that every aspect of life and every need of men, material or spiritual, is treated in the Qur'an or provided for in it. God says, "We have neglected nothing in the Book." (6:38) This implicit meaning was reiterated explicitly in this verse: "This day have I perfected for you your religion and completed My favour to you and chosen for you Islam as a religion." (5:3)

The second source of knowledge is the Tradition, the sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad. Ibn Hazm accepts the true hadith or the Sunnah when related in a sure way and by reliable men in a connected chain which reaches the Prophet Muhammad. The Prophet is certainly trustworthy, and Ibn Hazm quotes in this connection from the Qur'an: "Nor does he speak out of desire. It is naught but revelation that is revealed." (53:3-4) 48

Ibn Hazm accepts, as a third source of knowledge, consensus (*ijma*`) or general agreement of the Companions of the Prophet but on a further condition that all of them should have been aware of the matter agreed upon and that no one of them should have shown any disagreement or hesitation about it.

In contradistinction to the other schools of jurisprudence in Islam, the Hanafite school in particular, ibn Hazm rejects all other sources of jurisprudence such as intuition (*ilham*), hearsay (*khabar*), interpretation (*ta'wil*), deduction (*istinbat*), personal approval (*istihsan*), refraining from the unseemly (*ihtiyat*), legitimating a matter passed over in silence (*dalil alkhitab*), looking for a reason in matters other than, mentioned in the Qur'an (*ta'lil*), and holding a belief on the ground that it has been held by one's predecessors or some prominent contemporaries (*taqlid*).

Only the Prophet Muhammad must be taken as a model in all matters of belief and behaviour. He

equally rejected, and more forcibly, analogy (*qiyas*) and opinion (*ra¹i*) or that which a man conceives as true but without a proof, or that which a man chooses out of mere desire. The Muslims should not abide by the beliefs and laws preached by prophets prior to Muhammad unless they are accepted by Islam as well.

Ibn Hazm's views about God, His essence and His attributes, are: God is one and unique; He is incorporeal; so nothing resembles Him nor does He take the shape of anything He has created. He is the creator of everything, of time, of space, and even of His own Throne. He is eternal, all\_powerful and all\_knowing. His power and knowledge as well as all His other names are eternal.

God cannot be conceived of as ruled by space and time, since He existed before there was space and time, for these were also created by Him. The verses in which God says of Himself: "The God of mercy sitteth on His Throne" 49 and "Then He directed Himself to the heaven," 50, Ibn Hazm affirms with the Ash'arites that God's sitting or settling Himself on the Throne is known; but how it is done is unknown.

God has no attributes which modify His essence: His qualities are names and not adjectives, nor are they derived from adjectives. He says of Himself: "God's are the fairest names. Invoke Him by them."51

Thus, only these names, ninety\_nine in number, by which God has named Himself, may be said to be His; we are not allowed to call Him by names which He has not mentioned as His, for example, the happy, the healthy, the beloved, the noble, or the brave, although these titles are, in themselves, true of Him and cherished by us. We are also not allowed to call Him by names, derived from the verbs with which He predicated Himself. God says: "And when they (the disbelievers) meet the faithful they say, "We believe"; but when they are apart with their satans (comrades), they say, "Verily we hold with you and at them we only mock." God shall mock at them." 52

God says further: "And they (the Jews) plotted, and God plotted: but of those who plot, God is the best." 53 He also says: "And the heaven – with our hands have We built it up." 54 In spite of all that, says Ibn Hazm, we cannot call God the mocker, plotter, or builder, simply because He did not call Himself by these name. Moreover, we do not interpret His names to know how or why He is called thus: He called Himself, for instance, the hearer, the One who sees, but we cannot say that He has the sense of hearing or of sight.

Furthermore, God speaks in the Qur'an of His (one) hand, of His two hands, and of His hands; so we may ascribe to Him one hand, two hands, or many hands. In the Qur'an He speaks also of His eye and of His eyes, but not of two eyes of His. According to Ibn Hazm, we may ascribe to God either one eye or ascribe to Him eyes, but not two eyes. When we speak of God's eye, hand, or face, we do not mean, at any rate, that He has members similar to ours. On the contrary, the words: face, eye, and hand are used as free metaphors to mean simply God.

And though God is incorporeal, Ibn Hazm asserts that the Muslims would see Him on the Day of

Judgment. 55 They cannot see Him, for certain, with the power of sight in their eyes but perhaps with the power which is called by some thinkers "the sixth sense."

Regarding our knowledge of God, Ibn Hazm says, we do not maintain that we come to know Him by primary reason, for we do not want to run the risk of being refuted by somebody asserting that his primary reason does not lead him to the knowledge of God. Nor may we allow that the knowledge of God can be acquired by the art of reasoning, by argumentation or proof; since the masses are not capable of such dialecticism.

Failing to attain knowledge of God through these channels, some come to the conclusion that He does not exist. Nor may we allow authority or hearsay to be the criteria of the knowledge of God, because these cannot lead to real conviction. We know God only through revelation to the Prophet who is trustworthy and whose word should be accepted on its face value.

Ibn Hazm does not believe in the absolute free\_will of man. Predestination, according to him, is nothing but the command of God that a thing should follow a definite course. Allah has created in man aptitudes, and every man behaves in compliance with his aptitudes. Accordingly, we may say that all actions of men, good and bad, are ultimately created by God.

Ibn Hazm was a polemicist by nature, and often right in his contentions. As Hitti says, "In this work [A/-Milal wa'l-Nihal] he pointed out difficulties in the biblical narratives which disturbed no other minds till the rise of higher criticism in the sixteenth century." Yet he is to blame for the harsh language he used in his attacks on all religions and sects indiscriminately. On some occasions he attacked even some of those who shared with him the same doctrine.

Faith and Islam, says Ibn Hazm, are one and the same thing. Islam had abrogated all anterior religions. Therefore, no religion precedent to Islam should be followed, because every religion except Islam is obsolete and, consequently, annulled. Muhammad is the Prophet to all nations; he preached religion according to the prescription of God to him; and when he died revelation ceased. Islam was made complete; it is impossible either to add anything to it, or deduct anything from it, or make any change in it in any way.

The best people are the messengers of God; next are the prophets not entrusted with any mission to any people. After them are the Companions of the Prophet Muhammad. These last differ in their prestige in accordance with their efforts in the service of Islam and their personal character and behaviour, determined by the truth and ideals established by the Qur'an and the sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad.

# Zahirism after Ibn Hazm

For a certain period Zahirism constituted in the East a school of jurisprudence, but in Muslim Spain it

never grew beyond a persecuted philosophy. Even as a philosophy it began to decline there after the death of Ibn Hazm. It is true that Ibn Hazm built a Zahirite system of dogma and revised Muslim law from that standpoint, but his views enjoyed only a restricted acceptance in the Muslim West. In the East they found practically no echo. This is due to the uncompromising attitude he had taken in all matters of creed, worship, and legal transactions as well as to the harsh language he used while speaking of all those who did not share with him the views he entertained.

The Zahirites in the East, and the Hanbalites too, have always preferred to follow Dawud ibn 'Ali, though very little Fiqh has reached us from him. The few attempts to introduce Zahirism into North Africa were due largely to political considerations. On the Andalusian soil Zahirism found support or acceptance with individuals here and there. Ibn `Abd al\_Barr (368\_463/978\_1071), the famous traditionist and biographer, had some leaning towards it.

A young contemporary of Ibn Hazm and of Ibn `Abd al\_Barr, al\_Humaidi was a historian and biographer of established fame. He was a declared Zahirite. When the persecution of the followers of the Zahirite school reached a high pitch in Muslim Spain, he left his native land, went to the East, and settled down in Baghdad where he died forty years later. Al\_Humaidi was the first man to introduce Ibn Hazm's works into the East, but there they made no impression.

One would expect, despite all persecution, that Zahirism should have had numerous followers for a certain period at least, as has been the case with most other movements. Ibn al\_Athir says:56

There was in the Muslim West a multitude of them (of the Zahirites) called the Hazmiyyah or followers of Ibn Hazm." Asin Palacios tried to draw a complete list of them. 57 Some of these were, to be sure, Zahirites or with Zahirite leanings. But a number of those who were considered by him to be such were certainly not. That al\_Ghazali was antagnostic to the Batinites 58 and was one who advocated a strict religious behaviour and showed a dislike for all innovations, as we see clearly in all his works, does not make him a Zahirite, and less so a follower of Ibn Hazm, as Asin Palacios tried to show.59

Nor can we agree with Asin Palacios that Ibn Rushd (Averroes) wars a Zahirite on the mere fact that he quoted Ibn Hazm three times 60 in his *Tahafut al\_Tahafut*. Ibn Rushd mentioned also the Zahirites once with disdaine61 and twice with indifference.62

Moreover, his theme in his two small but worthy epistles, *Fasl al\_Maqal* and *Manahij al-Adillah*, is that the masses cannot rise or be raised above the literal meaning of the Law, while the thinkers are called upon to ponder on the intentions of religion.

With the advance of the sixth/twelfth century, Zahirism became a problem in the Muslim West, in Spain, and in North Africa: while the masses behaved on the narrowest Zahirite lines, Zahirism itself was being fought on every side. Philosophy was equally combated. The rationalist thinker Ibn Tufail<u>63</u> furnishes us with a very clear picture of the situation there; a few enlightened individuals were living in the midst of a multitude of common people unwilling and incapable of thinking for themselves.

### **Bibliography**

Ibn Hazm, *Al-Muhalla*, Vols. I and II, Cairo, 1348/1929; *Ibtal al\_Qiyas* (extract in Goldziher, *Die Zahiriten*); *Al-Ihkam al\_Ahkam*, 8 Parts, Cairo, 13451348/1926\_1929; *Al-Milal wa'l\_Nihal* (Religions and Sects), 5 Vols., Cairo, 13171327/1899\_1909; *al\_Nubadh fi Usul al\_Fiqh al\_Zahiri* (Hints to the Fundamentals of Zahiri Jurisprudence), with an Introduction by Muhammad Zahid al\_Kauthari, Cairo, 1360/1940; *Tauq al\_Hamamah*, Damascus; *Kitab al\_Akhlaq wa'l\_Siyar* (Book of Ethics and Behaviour); Cairo, n. d.; *Rasa'il Ibn Hazm*, 1st series, Cairo & Baghdad, n.d.; Said al\_Afghani, *Ibn Hazm wa Risalat al\_Mufadalati bain al\_Sahabah* (Ibn Hazm and His "Epistle on the Classification of the Companons of the Prophet"), Damascus 1359/1940; Roger Arlandez, *Grammare et theologie chez Ibn Hazm de Cordoue*, Paris, 1956;

Asin Palaeios, *Abenhazam de Cordoba y su historia critica de las ideas religioses,* 5 Vols., Madrid, 1927; Charles M. Bakewell *Source Book in Ancient Philosophy,* New York, 1907; Ibn Bashkuwal, *Kitab al\_Silah*, Cairo, 1374/1955; T. J. de Boer, *The History of Philosophy in Islam*, London, 1933; 'Abd Allah Muhammad al\_Humaidi, *Jadhwat alMuqtabis*..., Cairo, 1372/1952; *Encyclopaedia of Islam*; Ibn al\_Faradi, *Tarikh al\_'Ulama'*... *bi al\_Andalus*, 2 Vols., Cairo, 1373/1954; 'Abd al\_Qahir al\_Baghdadi, *al\_Farq bain al\_Firaq* (on Muslim Sects), Cairo, 1328/1910; Ibn al\_Nadim, *Kitab al\_Fihrist*, Leipzig, 1871\_1872; von Carl Broekelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur*, 2 Vols., Leiden, 1898, 1902; *Supplementbande*, 3 Vols., Leiden, 1937, 1938, 1939\_1942;

I. Goldziher, *Le livre du Mohammed Ibn Toumert*, Introduction par I, Algiers, 1903; *Die ,Zahiriten*, Leipzig, 1884; Philip K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, London, 1949; Ibn al\_Athir, *Tarikh al-Kami*l, Leiden, 1851\_1871: Muhammad Abu Zahrah, *Ibn Hazm*, Cairo, 1373/1953; Ibn Khallikan, *Wafayat al\_A'yan*..., 3 Vols., Gotha, 1835\_1850; Ibn Tufail, *Qisaatu Hayy Ibn Yaqzan*, Damascus, 1354/1935; second ed., 1359/1940; Ibn Tumart, *Ta'aliq Muhammad Ibn Tumart*, ed. I. Goldziher, 1903; Ibn 'Idhari, *al\_Maghrib fi Akhbar al\_Maghrib* (History of the Muslim West), Leiden, 1948, 1951; W. Ivanow, *Alleged Founder of Isma'ilism*, Bombay, 1946; al\_Firuzabadi, *al\_Qamus al\_Muhit*, 4 Vols., Cairo, 1344; D. B. Macdonald, *Development of Muslim Theology, Jurisprudence and Constitutional Theory*, London, 1903;

Subbi Mahmassani. *Falsafat al\_Tashri' fi al\_Islam* (The Philosophy of Jurisprudence in Islam), 1st ed., Beirut, 1365/1946; translated into Urdu *Falsafah\_i Shari'at\_i Islam*, Lahore, 1955; Malik ibn Anas, *al\_Muwatta'* (A collection of the Traditions of the Prophet Muhammad.), ed. Fu'ad 'Abd al\_Baqi, Cairo, 1370/1951; 'Abd al\_Wahid al\_Murrakushi, *al\_Mu'jib fi Akhbar al\_Maghrib* (History of North Africa), Cairo, 1368/1949; al\_Ghazali, *al\_Munqidh min al\_Dalal*, Damascus, 1352/1934; Ibn Khaldun, *Muqaddimah*, Beirut, 1956; al\_Maqqari, *Nafh al\_Tib* (History of Muslim Spain), Leiden, 1885\_1889; Abu al\_Hasan al\_Nubati, *Kitab al\_Marqabat al\_'Ulya'*..., ed. Levi\_Provencal under the title: *Tarikh Qudat al\_Andalus* (History of the Judges of Muslim Spain), Cairo, 1948; A. R. Nykl, *Hispano-Arabic Poetry*, Baltimore, 1946;

Simon Ockley, *The Improvement of Human Reason Exhibited in the Life of Hayy Ibn Yakdhan*, London, 1708; Marmaduke Pickthall, *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran*, London, 1952; Revue de l'academie arabe de Damas (*Majallat al\_Majma al\_'Ilm al\_'Arabi* [in Arabic]), vol. XXII, No. 2 (Apr. 1948), pp. 201\_18; al\_Sam'ani, *Kitab al\_Ansab* (extract in Goldziher, *Die Zahiriten*); Shahrastani, *Al\_Milal wa'I\_Nihal* (Religions and Sects); Shams al\_Din al\_Dhahabi, *Siyar al\_Nubala'* (biography of Ibn Hazm), an extract, Damascus, 1360/1941; A. J. Arberry, *Sufism*, London, 1950; Taj al\_Din al\_Subki, *Tabaqat al\_Shafi'yyatt al\_Kubra*, 6 Vols., Cairo, 1323\_1324/19051906; 'Abd al\_Rahman al\_Sulami, *Tabaqat al\_Sufiyyah*, Cairo, 1373/1953; Sayyid al\_Murtada al\_Zabidi, *Taj al\_'Arus min Jawahir al\_Qamus*, Cairo; Ibn Rushd, *Tahafut al\_ Tahafut*, Beirut, 1930; von Friedrich Ueberweg, *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie*, 11th ed., Berlin, 1928.

- 1. Shahrastani, vol. II, p. 29; cf. p. 5.
- 2. Ibid., p. 29, cf. pp. 31 f.
- 3. Ibid., pp. 29f.
- 4. Farq, pp. 14, 142; cf. pp. 152, 169, 177, 182, 216; cf. Shahrastani, vol. II, pp. 31 f.
- 5. Nubadh, Introd., p. 4.
- 6. GAL, I, p. 194; Suppl., I, p. 312.
- 7. Sam'ani, p. 226.
- 8. His full name was Abu Sulaiman Dawud ibn 'Ali ibn Khalaf.
- 9. Sam'ani, pp. 224, 255ff.
- 10. Goldziher, p. 28 n.
- 11. Tarikh Baghdad, vol. VIII, p. 369.
- 12. Fihrist, p. 216; Subki, vol. II, pp. 46; cf. p. 44.
- 13. Fihrist, p. 216; Subki, vol. II, pp. 42; 44, 46.
- 14. Subki, vol. II, pp. 43 f.
- 15. Fihrist, pp. 38, 216f.
- 16. A folio comprises about twenty lines (cf. Fihrist, p. 159).
- 17. Fihrist, pp. 216, 217; Sub ki, vol. II, p. 46.
- 18. Risalah fi Masa'il al\_Imam Dawud al\_Zahiri, an epistle containing the questions decided by Dawud the Zahirite (publ. Damascus 1330/1912), erroneously thought by Brockelmann (GAL, Suppl., I, p. 312) to be by Dawud ibn 'Ali himself. He states the date of its publication as 1930 which is also a mistake, perhaps a misprint for 1330 A.H.
- 19. Subki, vol. II, p. 46, line 1; vgl. Goldziher, p. 36.
- 20. Subki, vol. II, p. 46, line 7.
- 21. Al-Ihkam, vol. IV, p. 147.
- 22. Al-Milal, vol. II, p. 140.
- 23. Qur'an, ii, 184, 185.
- 24. Muslims perform five prayers per day: one of two rak'ahs (units of movements), one of three rak'ahs and three of four rak'ahs each. To cut, a prayer short is to reduce a prayer of four rak'ahs to only two.
- 25. Cf. Malik, pp. 146\_48, etc.
- 26. Mafatih, vol. III, p. 444, quoted by Goldziher, p. 47; cf. Shatli, p. 12.
- 27. Qur'an, iv, 101.
- 28. Cf. Malik, p. 294 (No. 22).
- 29. Shatti, p. 13 bottom.
- 30. Qur'an, ii, 275, 276, 278; iii, 130; iv, 159; xxx, 39.
- 31. Sahih Muslim, Cairo, 1331;1912, vol. V, p. 44, lines 8ff., cf. 44ff.
- 32. Subki, vol. II, pp. 43, 46.

- 33. Ibid., cf. p. 43. Cf. ibn Khallikan, Cairo, Bulaq, 1299 A.H., vol. I, p. 4; GAL, Suppl., I, 66f; Nubadh, Introd., p. 4.
- 34. Fihrist, p. 172.
- 35. Sam'ani, pp. 224\_26.
- 36. Fihrist, p. 216.
- <u>37.</u> Kitab al\_Zahrah (The Book of the Flower), the first half (published by the University of Chicago Press, Chicago, Illinois), printed at the Catholic Press, Beirut, 1932.
- <u>38.</u> An Arabist Orientalist, born in Bohemia 13133/1885 whose academic activities since 1340/1921 belong to his sojourn in the United States. He is versed in very many languages, old and new, eastern and western. He is the representative of the Arabic theory in the rise of troubadour poetry in southern France.
- 39. Ibn Khallikan, vol. II, pp. 140\_41.
- 40. Fihrist, p. 234.
- 41. Sam'ani, p. 227.
- 42. Nubadh, loc. Cit.
- 43. Fihrist, p. 217.
- 44. Goldziher, pp. 194\_96.
- 45. Al\_Mansur ibn Abi `Amir was Prime Minister to Hisham II who was a weakling. He usurped the power and ruled Muslim Spain virtually for fifty years and as Prime Minister for twenty\_six years. He died in 392/1002.
- 46. See Al-Milal, vol. V, p. 58; cf. Ueberweg, vol. I, p. 68 line 34
- 47. Al-Muhalla, vol. I, p. 52; Ihkam, vol. IV, p. 107, of.. pp. 59ff.; Nubadh, p. 28.
- 48. Al-Ihkam, vol. IV, p. 147
- 49. Qur'an, vii, 53; x, 3; xiii, 2; xxv, 59; xxxii, 4; Ivii, 4.
- 50. Ibid., x1i, 11.
- 51. Ibid., vii, 180
- 52. Ibid., ii, 15.
- 53. Ibid., iii, 54.
- 54. Ibid., li, 47.
- 55. Ibid., lxxv, 23
- 56. Ibn al\_Athir, vol. XII, p. 61; cf. Taj, vol. VIII, p. 245: cf. Asin. p. 280.
- 57. Asin, pp. 280\_329.
- 58. Al\_Munqidh min al\_Dalal, Damascus. Ist ed., 1352/1934, pp. 5, 16, 44\_47.
- 59. Asin, p. 299; cf. pp. 297\_300.
- 60. Ibid., pp. 208, 542, 580.
- 61. Tahafut al\_Tahafut, pp. 3111 f.
- 62. Ibid., pp. 12, 429.
- 63. Ibn Tufail, .pp. 126f., 136ff. (second ed., pp. 178f., 188ff.) Translation by Ockley, pp. 101 (157f.), 116\_19 (171\_76). See also Ibn Tufail and His Philosophical Romance (1st ed.), pp. 58f., 77\_83 (second ed.), pp. 37f., 57\_61.

#### Source URL:

https://www.al-islam.org/history-muslim-philosophy-volume-1-book-3/chapter-14-zahirism#comment-0