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Comparison of the Tashihu 'l I'Tiqad with the I'Tiqadatu 'l-Imamiyyah

The final point I wish to mention is that the comparison of Tashihu 'l-i'tiqad by al-Mufid with I'tiqadatu 'l-Imamiyyah by as-Saduq only reveals to us what the Imamiyyah Traditionist and theological schools shared, and what they differed in, and no more, during the period up to the fifth/eleventh century. However, to conclude this comparison by saying that the difference, which we find on al-Mufid's side, can be traced back to the influence of the Mu'tazilah is an inference, which is refuted by many facts resting on correct deduction based on truthful and comprehensive study.

The Imamiyyah, from the beginning, contained these two schools of thought. We have stated that while they were different in style and form of demonstration, they were not adversarial opponents, as we have found them to be among the non-Imami. I have elsewhere written a continuous history of Imami theologians, in which I trace them up to the period of Shaykhu't-Taifah at-Tusi, and I have mentioned the books of theology that are cited as theirs; it will be published, Allah willing, as a preface to the English translation of "Kitabu 't-Tawhid" of Usul al-Kafi.

However, the books which I have cited there have mostly perished, and only a trifling amount has reached us; nevertheless, they have titles, and what these titles suggest demonstrates that Imami theology is a continuous, uninterrupted chain, which thrived and was maintained up to the time of the Shaykh al-Mufid. Where we do not have actual examples, the least we can do is study their titles and what little remains of their contents.

Our study is, therefore, fragmented and incomplete, and it is not correct for us to judge that what we see as a distinctive feature of al-Mufid is something he picked up from the Mu'tazilah. Rather, there are proofs, which demonstrate that this distinctive feature was something that had been passed down to him from previous Imami theologians, in the same way as their doctrine, which he inherited with its special characteristics.

I have already presented some of the discussion surround- ing the methodological division between

Traditionist and theological styles. It is apparent from this that these strong judgements, which have been stated both in the past and at the present, concerning the influence of the Mu'tazilah on the Imamiyyah, are unfounded. I have made it clear that they were not influenced by the Mu'tazilah in their beliefs; this was my intention in this introduction, and as for the study of other aspects, I leave that task to another time.

However, I would like to put forward here a single example of these biting judgements, being the least weighty of examples, and the least outrageous and arbitrary in its connection with as-Saduq and al-Mufid. M. McDermott mentions that the Kitabu 't-Tawhid by as-Saduq was composed later than his two other books, al-'Itiqadatu 'l-Imamiyyah and al-Hidayah, and that as-Saduq was therein closer to the thinking of the Mu'tazilah than he was in the other two, since after as-Saduq had emigrated to Rayy, he lived in the Buyid court there. Perhaps this difference was due to 'the pressure of the vizier as-Sahib ibn 'Abbad¹ or the influence of Mu'tazilite arguments may well have changed his thinking.'²

But there is more weighty evidence from an earlier period. Al-Kulayni, the Shaykh Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn Ya'qub ar-Razi, then al-Baghdadi (d. 329/941), was a Traditionist shaykh of the Imamiyyah who lived in Rayy and then moved to Baghdad at the end of his life and died there.³ Al-Kulayni gave a chapter in the section on tawhid in al-Kafi the title Ta'wilu 's-samad (the interpretation of samad), and quoted there two hadith which explained samad as His eternal mastery over everything, great or small,⁴ and then went on to state:

This is the correct interpretation of as-samad, not what anthropomorphism holds about it: that the interpretation of as-samad is a solid, which has no void within it. That interpretation is nothing more than an attribute of bodies, and Allah, glory be to His name, is above this; . . . if the interpretation of as-samad as an attribute of Allah were solidity, then it would contradict His words:

There is nothing like Him (ash-Shura, 42: 11),

because solidity is an attribute of solid bodies which have no voids, like stone, or iron, or other solid objects . . . And as for what is stated in Tradition concerning this matter, the knower (i.e., the infallible Imam), peace be upon him, is more knowledgeable by what he said.

He then goes on to demonstrate the correctness of this explanation with a linguistic argument;⁵ in this way he anticipated the Shaykhu't-Tusi, the student of al-Mufid, by many centuries. At-Tusi said:

Whoever interprets as-samad to mean 'solid' is ignorant of Allah, because solidity is the compression of parts, and that, which has no voids; this is anthropomorphism and unbelief in Allah.⁶

Those Traditions which al-Kulayni indicates but does not quote and which explain as-samad as that which has no voids, as-Saduq cites and does not miss out in his Kitabu't-Tawhid, in which, according to McDermott, he was more influenced by the Mu'tazilah than in his Risalah, or his Hidayah,⁷ and he combines it with the meaning which al-Kulayni adopted as explaining as-samad, and takes on both of

them. He interprets as–samad in a way, which does not lend itself to corporealism;⁸ from this it appears that al–Kulayni was more of a Mu‘tazilah than as–Saduq!

It may be that the reverential support given to these judgements which have been expounded about the Imamiyyah both ancient and modern, and which opine that they were dependant on the Mu‘tazilah who provided them with their views and arguments will lead some to claim that another Mu‘tazili circle existed or came into existence, and that al–Kulayni lived within it, and that another Mu‘tazili vizier put pressure upon him.

I do not, in any way, deny that an Imami scholar can be influenced by a teacher of his who differs from him in belief, or by the atmosphere of adversity around him, but what I do not accept is what McDermott's opinion is inspired by, being that as–Saduq renounced some of his ideas, or covered up aspects of them in deference to his followers or to the Mu‘tazilah, and this continued reverence for these judgements which state that any modification of Imami opinion occurred as a result of Mu‘tazili influence upon them. In the view of as–Saduq, as–Sahib ibn‘Abbad was not that Mu‘tazili whom the Mu‘tazili sources suppose him to be. Rather he was a Twelver Imami who eulogized the Imams, particularly ar–Rida, peace be upon him, in many qasidas, in which he explicitly refers to their Imamate. As–Saduq wrote his ‘Uyun akhbari ‘r–Rida, ‘Alay–hi’s–salam for him, and explicitly mentions him in the beginning of the book. Moreover, he quotes the poems of as–Sahib therein.⁹

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In issues of theology, it is necessary to distinguish between those which touch directly upon belief, and those, which do not, such as those issues, which come under the heading of the latif (refinements) of kalam. Our Shaykh al–Mufid cites many of these kinds of elaborations at the end of his Awailu ‘l–maqalat.¹⁰ My goal in this introduction is limited to stating that the Imamiyyah did not take their beliefs from the Mu‘tazilah, and that anthropomorphism and corporealism did not reign over them for a single day prior to their contact with the Mu‘tazilah.

As for being influenced in issues like these, or being influenced in the type of demonstration used in issues connected with them, I do not rule it out; rather, there is much evidence for its occurrence, but there was a two–way influence. What is most distressing is the ignorance of the influence Hisham ibn al–Hakam had on the two Mu‘tazili scholars, an–Nazzam and Abu Tayyib, for example, and the importance given to al–Mufid's being influenced by the Mu‘tazilah.

As for the extent of the Mu‘tazili influence on al–Mufid, in particular, in matters of the latifu ‘l–kalam in questions which did not touch directly upon doctrine, and especially al–Mufid's pursuance of the ideas of al–Ka‘bi al–Balkhi, which McDermott uses freely in his book The Theology of ash–Shaikh al–Mufid, I shall not discuss anything he states, since I have discussed the principles which he relies upon and given my opinion of them; as for the details, a discussion of them would form another article.

It should also be pointed out that taking from a non–Imami theologian does not necessarily mean that a

student follows his teacher's opinions, especially as far as doctrinal differences he has with him are concerned. The non-Imami theologians of the earlier time were Mu'tazili, and following the period of the Shaykhu't-Taifah at-Tusi, were mostly Ash'ari; a group of our Imami theologians were involved with them. In addition, and in contrast to this, there is the recorded involvement of non-Imami with Imami theologians, such as the students of Nasiru'd-Din at-Tusi, the famous theologian and philosopher. This is only the acquisition of information from a non-Imami shaykh; how many non-Imami shaykhs of hadith there were from whom al-Mufid, al-Murtada, at-Tusi, and al-Karajiki learnt, not to mention those who preceded them, like as-Saduq, and those who succeeded them, like the 'Allamah al-Hilli. These men weighed the hadith they heard with the scales they held to be correct; in their view, it was a necessity for them to reveal the soundness or otherwise of a hadith. The result of this is that the Imami Traditionist sought the assistance of what he heard from his non-Imami shaykh in substantiating what he believed about the Imamate, and the qualifications of the Imams, peace be upon them, or in the refutation of arguments of adversaries.

This is the case as well in the sciences of theology, Qur'anic commentary, positive law, and jurisprudence. This sort of involvement was beneficial, in the first instance, in learning the usefulness of what the two sides agreed upon, and secondly, in making use of the teacher's knowledge in defense of what the student believed to be true.

- [1.](#) Vizier to the Buyids (326/938–385/995).
- [2.](#) The Theology of ash-Shaikh al-Mufid, pp.323, 341–9.
- [3.](#) For his biography see the forward to the English translation of "Kitabu 'l-'Aql wa 'l-Jahl" from al-Kafi.
- [4.](#) al-Kafi, vol. 1, pp. 123–4, nos.323/324.
- [5.](#) al-Kafi, vol. 1, p. 124.
- [6.](#) at-Tibyan, vol. 10, p.431.
- [7.](#) at-Tawhid, pp.93, 140, 171.
- [8.](#) Ibid., p. 197.
- [9.](#) 'Uyunu 'l-akhbar, vol. 1, pp.3–7.
- [10.](#) p.72 ff.

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