Al-Islam.org
Ahlul Bayt Digital Islamic Library Project
Published on *Al-Islam.org* (https://www.al-islam.org)

Part 1: Theologico-Philosophical Movements

Chapter 10: Mu'tazalism

Mu'tazilism by Mir Valiuddin, M.A Ph.D., Professor of Philosophy, Osmania University, Hyderabad Deccan (India)

The General Mu'tazilite Position

Subsequent to the times of the Companions of the Prophet of Islam, the Mu'tazilah creed made its appearance. It had its inception nearly two centuries after the migration (Hijrah) of the Holy Prophet to Madinah. The Mu'tazilites were thoroughgoing rationalists. They believed that the arbiter of whatever is revealed has to be theoretical reason.

Let us for a moment consider why the Mu'tazilites were so named. The story goes that one day Imam al-Hasan al-Basri was imparting instruction to his pupils in a mosque. Before the lessons were finished someone turned up and addressed him thus:

"Now, in our own times a sect[1] of people has made its appearance, the members of which regard the perpetrator of a grave sin as an unbeliever and consider him outside the fold of Islam. Yet another group of people have appeared[2] who give hope of salvation to the perpetrator of a grave sin. They lay down that such a sin can do no harm to a true believer. They do not in the least regard action as a part of faith and hold that as worship is of no use to one who is an unbeliever, so also sin can do no harm to one who is a believer in God. What, in your opinion, is the truth and what creed should we adopt?"

Imam al-Hasan al-Basri was on the point of giving a reply to this query when a long-necked pupil of his got up and said: "The perpetrator of grave sins is neither a complete unbeliever nor a perfect believer; he is placed midway between unbelief and faith-an intermediate state (*manzilah bain*

al–manzilatain)."

Having spoken he strode to another corner of the mosque and began to explain this belief of his to others.3 This man was Wasil ibn `Ata. The Imam shot a swift glance at him and said, *"I'tazala `anna,"* i. e.,"He has withdrawn from us." From that very day Wasil and his followers were called al–Mu'tazilah, the Withdrawers or Secessionists.

Ibn Munabbih says that the title of al–Mu'tazilah came into vogue after the death of al–Hasan al–Basri. According to his statement, when al–Hasan passed away, Qatadah succeeded him and continued his work. `Amr ibn `Ubaid and his followers avoided the company of Qatadah; therefore, they were given the name of al–Mu'tazilah.

In brief, the word *i'tizal* means to withdraw or secede, and the Mu'tazilites are the people who in some of their beliefs were diametrically opposed to the unanimous consent of the early theologians or the People of the Approved Way (*ahl al–sunnah*). The leader of all of them was Wasil b. `Ata who was born in 80/699 at Madinah and died in 131/748.

Muslims generally speak of Wasil's party as the Mu'tazilites, but the latter call themselves People of Unity and Justice (*ahl al–tawhid wal `adl*). By justice they imply that it is incumbent on God to requite the obedient for their good deeds and punish the sinners for their misdeeds. By unity they imply the denial of the divine attributes.

Undoubtedly, they admit that God is knowing, powerful, and seeing, but their intellect does not allow them to admit that these divine attributes are separate and different from the divine essence. The reason for this view of theirs is that if the attributes of God are not considered to be identical with the essence of God, "plurality of eternals" would necessarily result and the belief in unity would have to be given up. This, in their opinion, is clear unbelief (*kufr*). Unity and justice are the basic principles of the beliefs of the Mu'tazilites and this is the reason why they call themselves "People of Unity and Justice."

Now, from the basic beliefs of unity and justice a few more beliefs necessarily follow as corollaries:

1. God Almighty's justice necessitates that man should be the author of his own acts; then alone can he be said to be free and responsible for his deeds. The same was claimed by the Qadarites. The Mu'tazilites accepted totally the theory of indeterminism and became true successors of the Qadarites.

If man is not the author of his own acts and if these acts are the creation of God, how can he be held responsible for his acts and deserve punishment for his sins? Would it not be injustice on the part of God that, after creating a man helpless, He should call him to account for his sins and send him to hell?

Thus, all the Mu'tazilites agree in the matter of man's being the creator of his volitional acts. He creates some acts by way of *mubasharah* and some by way of *tawlid*. By the term *tawlid* is implied the necessary occurrence of another act from an act of the doer, e.g., the movement of Zaid's finger

necessitates the movement of his ring. Although he does not intend to move the ring, yet he alone will be regarded as the mover.

Of course, to perform this act the medium of another act is necessary. Man creates guidance or misguidance for himself by way of *mubasharah* and his success or failure resulting from this is created by way of *tawlid*. God is not in the least concerned in creating it, nor has God's will anything to do with it.

In other words, if a man is regarded as the author of his own acts, it would mean that it is in his power either to accept Islam and be obedient to God, or become an unbeliever and commit sins, and that God's will has nothing to do with these acts of his. God, on the other hand, wills that all created beings of His should embrace Islam and be obedient to Him. He orders the same to take place and prohibits people from committing sins.

Since man is the author of his own acts, it is necessary for God to reward him for his good deeds and this can be justly claimed by him. As al–Shahrastani puts it: "The Mu'tazilites unanimously maintain that man decides upon and creates his acts, both good and evil; that he deserves reward or punishment in the next world for what he does. In this way the Lord is safeguarded from association with any evil or wrong or any act of unbelief or transgression. For if He created the wrong, He would be wrong, and if He created justice, He would be just."[4]

It is the creed of most of the Mu'tazilites that one possesses "ability" before the accomplishment of the act, but some Mu'tazilites (e. g., Muhammad b. `Isa and Abu `Isa Warraq) like the Sunnites are of the view that one has ability to act besides the act.

2. The justice of God makes it incumbent upon Him not to do anything contrary to justice and equity. It is the unanimous verdict of the Mu'tazilites that the wise can only do what is salutary (*al–salah*) and good, and that God's wisdom always keeps in view what is salutary for His servants; therefore, He cannot be cruel to them. He cannot bring into effect evil deeds. He cannot renounce that which is salutary. He cannot ask His servants to do that which is impossible. Further, reason also suggests that God does not place a burden on any creature greater than it can bear.

According to the Mu'tazilites, things are not good or evil because God declares them to be so. No, God makes the distinction between good and evil on account of their being good and evil. Goodness or evil are innate in the essence of things themselves. This very goodness or evil of things is the cause of the commands and prohibitions of the Law.

The human intellect is capable of perceiving the goodness and evil of a few things and no laws are required to express their goodness and evil, e. g., it is commendable to speak the truth and despicable to commit oneself to untruth. This shows that the evil and goodness of things are obvious and require no proof from the Shari`ah. Shameful and unjust deeds are evil in themselves; therefore, God has banned indulgence in them. It does not imply that His putting a ban on them made them shameful and unjust deeds.

The thoroughgoing rationalism of the Mu'tazilites is thus expressed by al-Shahrastani in these words: "The adherents of justice say: All objects of knowledge fall under the supervision of reason and receive their obligatory power from rational insight. Consequently, obligatory gratitude for divine bounty precedes the orders given by (divine) Law; and beauty and ugliness are qualities belonging intrinsically to what is beautiful and ugly."[5]

From the second principle of the Mu'tazilites, the unity of God, the following beliefs necessarily result as corollaries:

1. Denial of the beatific vision. The Mu'tazilites hold that vision is not possible without place and direction. As God is exempt from place and direction, therefore, a vision of Him is possible neither in this world nor in the hereafter.

2. Belief that the Qur'an is a created speech of Allah. It was held by them that the Qur'an is an originated work of God and it came into existence together with the prophethood of the Prophet of Islam.

3. God's pleasure and anger, not attributes, but states. According to the Mu'tazilites, God's pleasure and anger should not be regarded as His attributes, because anger and pleasure are states and states are mutable, the essence of God is immutable. They should be taken as heaven and hell.

The following is the summary of some more beliefs of the Mu'tazilites:

1. Denial of punishment and reward meted out to the dead in the grave and the questioning by the angels *Munkar* and *Nakir*.

2. Denial of the indications of the Day of Judgment, of Gog and Magog (*Yajuj* and *Majuj*), and of the appearance of the Antichrist (*al-Dajjal*).

3. Some Mu'tazilites believe in the concrete reality of the Balance (*al-Mizan*) for weighing actions on the Day of Judgment. Some say that it is impossible for it to be a reality and think that the mention made in the Qur'an of weight and balance means only this much that full justice will be done on the Day of Judgment.

It is clearly impossible to elicit the meanings of the words weight and balance literally, for deeds, which have been said to be weighed, are accidents and it is not possible to weigh accidents. Theoretical reason is incapable of comprehending this. Substances alone can possess weight. Further, when nothing is hidden from God, what is the use of weighing the deeds? It has been mentioned in the Qur'an that the books of bad or good deeds will be handed over to us. This too is merely a metaphor. It means only our being gifted with knowledge.

4. The Mu'tazilites also deny the existence of the Recording Angels (*Kiraman Katibin*). The reason they give for this is that God is well aware of all the deeds done by His servants. The presence of the Recording Angels would have been indispensable if God were not acquainted directly with the doings of

His servants.

5. The Mu'tazilites also deny the physical existence of the “Tank” (*al–Hawd*), and the “Bridge” (*al–sirat*). Further, they do not admit that heaven and hell exist now, but believe that they will come into existence on the Day of Judgment.

6. They deny the Covenant (*al–Mithaq*). It is their firm belief that God neither spoke to any prophet, angel, or supporter of the Divine Throne, nor will He cast a glance towards them.

7. For the Mu'tazilites, deeds together with verification (*tasdiq*) are included in faith. They hold that a great sinner will always stay in hell.

8. They deny the miracles (*al–karamat*) of saints (*awliya'*), for, if admitted, they would be mixed up with the evidentiary miracles of the prophets and cause confusion. The same was the belief of the Jahmites too.

9. The Mu'tazilites also deny the Ascension (*al–Mi'raj*) of the Prophet of Islam, because its proof is based on the testimony of individual traditions, which necessitates neither act nor belief; but they do not deny the Holy Prophet's journey as far as Jerusalem.

10. According to them, the one who prays is alone entitled to reap the reward of a prayer; whatever its form, its benefit goes to no one else.

11. As the divine decree cannot be altered, prayers serve no purpose at all. One gains nothing by them, because if the object, for which prayers are offered, is in conformity with destiny, it is needless to ask for it, and if the object conflicts with destiny, it is impossible to secure it.

12. They generally lay down that the angels who are message–bearers of God to prophets are superior in rank to the human messengers of God to mankind, i. e., the prophets themselves.

13. According to them, reason demands that an Imam should necessarily be appointed over the *ummah* (Muslim community).

14. For them, the *mujtahid* (the authorized interpreter of the religious Law) can never be wrong in his view, as against the opinion of the Ash`arite scholastics that “the *mujtahid* sometimes errs and sometimes hits the mark.”

The Mu'tazilites and the Sunnites differ mostly from one another in five important matters:

(1) The problem of attributes.

(2) The problem of the beatific vision.

(3) The problem of promise and threat.

(4) The problem of creation of the actions of man.

(5) The problem of the will of God.

Ibn Hazm says in his *Milal wa'l–Nihal* that whosoever believes (1) that the Qur'an is uncreated, (2) that all the actions of man are due to divine decree, and (3) that man will be blessed with the vision of God on the Day of Judgment, and (4) admits the divine attributes mentioned in the Qur'an and the Tradition, and (5) does not regard the perpetrator of a grave sin as an unbeliever, will not be styled as one of the Mu'tazilites, though in all other matters he may agree with them.

This statement of Ibn Hazm shows that the Mu'tazilites were a group of rationalists who judged all Islamic beliefs by theoretical reason and renounced those that relate to all that lies beyond the reach of reason. They hardly realized the fact that reason, like any other faculty with which man is gifted, has its limitations and cannot be expected to comprehend reality in all its details. The point does not need elaboration. As Shakespeare puts it, "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy."

Some modern thinkers have recognized that there is a place for intuition in the field of comprehension and, as a corollary to this, have admitted the claim of revelation or *wahi* as a source of knowledge. That is why Iqbal exclaimed

"At the dawn of Life the Angel said to me

`Do not make thy heart a mere slave to reason.'"

And probably on a similar ground Iqbal's guide, Rumi, offered the following meaningful advice

"Surrender thy intellect to the Prophet!

God sufficeth. Say, He sufficeth.

Beware of wilful reasoning,

And boldly welcome madness!

He alone is mad who madness scoffs,

And heeds not the agent of Law!"

Some leading Mu'tazilites

In presenting a bird's–eye view of the beliefs of the Mu'tazilites in the above paragraphs, it has not been suggested that these views were in their totality shared by all the leading Mu'tazilites. There were differences of opinion within themselves. For instance, Abu al–Hudhail al–`Allaf differed from his

companions in respect of ten problems; Ibrahim ibn Sayyar al–Nazzam in thirteen; Bishr ibn al–Mu'tamir in six; Mu'ammar ibn Khayyat `Abbad al–Sulami in four; and `Amr ibn Bahr al–Jahiz, in five. Abu al–Husain and his followers are called the "Mu'tazilites of Baghdad" and Abu al–Jubba'i, his son Abu Hashim, and their followers were known as the "Mu'tazilites of Basrah." Below is given a brief account of the lives and ideas of some of the leading Mu'tazilites.

1. Wasil ibn ` Ata

Wasil was born at Madinah in 80/699 and was brought up in Basrah. "Suq–i Ghazzal," a bazaar in Basrah, used to be his familiar haunt and on that account people associated its name with him. He died in 131/748. Wasil had a very long neck. Amr ibn `Ubaid, who was a celebrated Mu'tazilite, on looking at him once remarked: "There will be no good in a man who has such a neck."[6] Wasil was *althagh*,[7] i.e., he could not pronounce the letter *r* correctly, but he was a very fluent and accomplished speaker and in his talk totally avoided this letter.

He never allowed it to escape his lips, despite the great difficulty in avoiding it in conversation. He compiled a voluminous treatise in which not a single *r* is to be found. He would often maintain silence which led people to believe that he was mute.

Wasil was a pupil of Abu Hashim `Abd Allah ibn Muhammad ibn al–Hanafiyyah, but in the matter of Imamate, as in some other matters, he opposed his master. Before becoming a Mu'tazilite he used to live in the company of Imam Hasan al–Basri.

His works are: *Kitab al–Manzilah bain al–Manzilatain, Kitab al–Futya*, and *Kitab al–Tawhid*. The first books on the science of al–Kalam were written by him. Ibn Khallikan has recounted a number of his works.

In his illustrious work *al–Milal wa'l–Nihal* [8], al–Shahrastani says that the essential teachings of Wasil consisted of the following: (1) Denial of the attributes of God. (2) Man's possession of free–will to choose good deeds. (3) The belief that one who commits a grave sin is neither a believer nor an unbeliever but occupies an intermediate position, and that one who commits a grave sin goes to hell. (4) The belief that out of the opposing parties that fought in the battle of the Camel and from among the assassinators of `Uthman and his allies one party was in error, though it cannot be established which.

(1) *Denial of Attributes* – Wasil denies that knowledge, power, will, and life belong to the essence of God. According to him, if any attribute is admitted as eternal, it would necessitate "plurality of eternals" and the belief in the unity of God will thus become false. But this idea of Wasil was not readily accepted. Generally, the Mu'tazilites first reduced all the divine attributes to two – knowledge and power – and called them the "essential attributes." Afterwards they reduced both of these to one attribute – unity.

(2) *Belief in Free–will* – In this problem Wasil adopted the creed of Ma'bad al–Juhani and Ghailan al–Dimashqi and said that since God is wise and just, evil and injustice cannot be attributed to him. How

is it justifiable for Him that He should will contrary to what He commands His servants to do?

Consequently, good and evil, belief and unbelief, obedience and sin are the acts of His servant himself, i.e, the servant alone is their author or creator and is to be rewarded or punished for his deeds. It is impossible that the servant may be ordered to "do" a thing which he is not able to do. Man is ordered to do an act because he has the power to do that act. Whosoever denies this power and authority rejects a self-evident datum of consciousness.

As ibn Hazm frankly said, the excellent work of the Mu'tazilites can be seen in the doctrine of free-will and that of promise and threat. If man were to be regarded as absolutely determined in his actions, the whole edifice of Shari'ah and ethics would tumble down.

(3) *Intermediary Position of the Grave Sinners* - On account of his belief that one who commits a grave sin is neither a believer nor an unbeliever but occupies an intermediate position, Wasil withdrew himself from the company of Imam Hasan al-Basri and earned the title Mu'tazilite. Wasil thought that the expression "true believer" is one which means praise.

The person who commits grave sins can never deserve praise; therefore, he cannot be called a true believer. Such a person has, nevertheless, belief in the Islamic faith and admits that God alone is worthy of being worshipped; therefore, he cannot be regarded as an unbeliever either. If such a person dies without penitence, he will ever stay in hell, but as he is right in his belief, the punishment meted out to him will be moderate.

As Imam al-Ghazali has pointed out in his *Ihya' `Ulum al-Din* misinterpretation of the following verses of the Qur'an was the cause of the Mu'tazilites' misunderstanding:

"By (the token of) Time (through the ages), verily mankind is in loss, except such as have faith and do righteous deeds and (join together) in the mutual teaching of truth, patience, and constancy."[9]

"For any that disobey God and His Apostle - for them is hell; they shall dwell therein forever:"[10]

In the light of these and similar other verses, the Mu'tazilites argue that all the perpetrators of grave sins will always stay in hell, but they do not think over the fact that God also says:

"But, without doubt, I am (also) He that forgiveth again and again those who repent, believe, and do right, who, in fine, are ready to receive true guidance:"[11]

"God forgiveth not that equals should be set up with Him; but He forgiveth anything else, to whom He pleaseth."[12]

The last quoted verse shows that in the case of all sins, except polytheism, God will act according to His pleasure. In support of this, the clear saying of the Holy Prophet of Islam can be cited, viz., "that person

too will finally come out of hell who has even an iota of faith in his heart."

Further, some words of God, e.g., ***"Verily We shall not suffer to perish the reward of anyone who does a (single) righteous deed,"***[13] and ***"Verily God will not suffer the reward of the righteous to perish,"***[14] clearly show that for the commission of one sin, He will not ignore a man's basic faith and deprive him of all the reward for his good deeds. Therefore, the general belief is that as the perpetrator of grave sins is by all means a true believer, even if he dies without repentance, after being punished for his sins in hell and thereby purified of them, he will eventually enter heaven.

(4) *Unestablished Errors* – Wasil had firm conviction that out of those who fought in "the battle of the Camel" and "the battle of Siffin" and the killers of `Uthman, the third Caliph, and his allies, one party was definitely in error, though it cannot be established which.[15]

2. Abu al-Hudhail `Allaf

`Allaf was born in 131/748 and died in c. 226/840. He received instruction from `Uthman bin Khalid Tawil, a pupil of Wasil. He was a fluent speaker and vigorous in his arguments. He often made use of dialectical arguments in his discussions. He had a keen insight in philosophy. He wrote about sixty books on the science of Kalam but all of them have long been extinct.

`Allaf was an accomplished dialectician. The story goes that by his dialectics three thousand persons embraced Islam at his hand. We shall here speak of two of his debates. In those days there lived a Magian Salih by name who believed that the ultimate principles of the universe are two realities, Light and Darkness, that both of these are opposed to each other, and that the universe is created by the mixture of these two.

This belief led to a discussion between Salih, the Magian, and Allaf. Allaf inquired of him whether the mixture was distinct and different from Light and Darkness or identical with them. Salih replied that it was one and the same thing. `Allaf then said, "How could two things mix together which are opposed to each other? There ought to be someone who got them mixed, and the mixer alone is the Necessary Existent or God."

On another occasion, while Salih was engaged in a discussion with `Allaf, the latter said, "What do you now desire?" Salih replied, "I asked a blessing of God and still stick to the belief that there are two Gods." `Allaf then asked, "Of which God did you ask a blessing ? The God of whom you asked for it would not have suggested the name of the other God (who is His rival)."

Wasil was not able to clarify the problem of divine attributes. In this respect his ideas were still crude. `Allaf is opposed to the view that the essence of God has no quality and is absolutely one and by no means plural. The divine qualities are none other than the divine essence and cannot be separated from it. `Allaf accepts such attribute as are one with the essence of God, or one may say, accepts such an essence as is identical with the attributes. He does not differentiate between the two, but regards both as

one.

When one says that God is the knower, one cannot mean that knowledge is found in the essence of God, but that *knowledge is His essence*. In brief, God is knowing, powerful, and living with such knowledge, power, and life as are His very essence (essential nature).

Al-Shahrastani has interpreted the identity of divine essence and attributes thus: God knows with His knowledge and knowledge is His very essence. In the same way, He is powerful with His power and power is His very essence; and lives with His life and life is His very essence. Another interpretation of divine knowledge is that God knows with His essence and not with His knowledge, i.e., He knows through His essence only and not through knowledge.

The difference in these two positions is that, in the latter, the attributes are denied altogether, while in the former, which `Allaf accepts, they are admitted but are identified with God's essence. This conforms to the statements of the philosophers who hold that the essence of God, without quality and quantity, is absolutely one, and by no means admits of plurality, and that the divine attributes are none other than the essence of God.

Whatever qualities of Him may be established, they are either "negation" or "essentials." Those things are termed "negation" which, without the relation of negation, cannot be attributed to God, as, for instance, body, substance, and accidents. When the relation of negation is turned towards them and its sign, i.e., the word of negation, is applied, these can become the attributes of God, e. g., it would be said that God is neither a body, nor a substance, nor an accident. What is meant by "essential" is that the existence of the Necessary Existent is Its very essence and thus Its unity is real.

`Allaf did not admit the attributes of God as separate from His essence in any sense. For he sensed the danger that, by doing so, attributes, too, like essence, would have to be taken as eternal, and by their plurality the "plurality of eternals" or "the plurality of the necessary existents" would become inevitable, and thus the doctrine of unity would be completely nullified. It was for this reason that the Christians who developed the theory of the Trinity of Godhead had to forsake the doctrine of unity.

Among the "heresies" of `Allaf was his view that after the discontinuation of the movement of the inmates of heaven and hell, a state of lethargy would supervene. During this period calm pleasure for the inmates of heaven and pain and misery for the inmates of hell will begin, and this is what is really meant by eternal pleasure and perpetual pain. Since the same was the religious belief of Jahm, according to whom heaven and hell would be annihilated, the Mu'tazilites used to call `Allaf a Jahmite in his belief in the hereafter.

Allaf has termed justice, unity, promise, threat, and the middle position as the "Five Principles" of the Mu'tazilites.

3. Al-Nazzam

Abu Ishaq Ibrahim ibn Sayyar, called al-Nazzam, was younger than `Allaf and it is generally known that he was `Allaf's pupil. He lived during the reign of Caliphs al-Mamun and al-Mu'tasim and died in 231/845. He was a peerless litterateur and poet. He studied Greek philosophy well and made full use of it in his works. His main ideas are as follows.

(1) *Denial of God's Power over Evil* – God has no power at all over sin and evil. Other Mu'tazilites do not deny the *power of* God over evil, but deny the *act of His* creating evil. In their opinion, God has power over evil, but He does not use it for the creation of evil. Al-Nazzam, in opposition to them, says that when evil or sin is the attribute or essence of a thing, then the possibility of the occurrence of evil or the power to create it will itself be evil.

Therefore, it cannot be attributed to God who is the doer of justice and good. Similarly, al-Nazzam holds that in the life hereafter too, God can neither mitigate nor add to the punishment and reward of the inmates of heaven and hell; nor indeed can He expel them from heaven or hell. As to the accusation that the denial of God's power over evil necessitates the affirmation that He is impotent against evil, al-Nazzam replies that this equally follows from the denial of divine action to create evil. He says: "You, too, deny Him the wrong act, so there is no fundamental difference between the two positions."[16]

God, who is Absolute Good and Absolute Justice, cannot be the author of evil. Besides, if God has power over evil, it will necessarily follow that He is ignorant and indigent. But this is impossible; therefore, its necessary consequence is also impossible. The sequence of the argument may be explained thus:

If God has power over evil, then the occurrence of evil is possible, and as the supposition of the occurrence of a possible thing entails no impossibility, let us suppose that evil did occur. Now, God might or might not have had knowledge of the evil which occurred. If we say that He did not have the knowledge of it, it would necessarily follow that He was ignorant; and if we say that He did have it, it would necessarily follow that He was in need of this evil; for had He not been in need of it, He would not have created it.

When a person is not in need of a thing and knows its inherent evils, he will have nothing to do with it, if he is wise. It is definitely true that God is all-wise; so when any evil is caused by Him, it necessarily follows that He needed it, otherwise He would have never produced it.

But since it is impossible to think that God needs evil, it is impossible to think that He creates it.

(2) *Denial of the Will of God* – Apart from the power of action and action, al-Nazzam does not admit that God has will, which has priority over both power and action. He holds that when we attribute will to God we only mean that God creates things according to His knowledge. His willing is identical with His acting, and when it is said that God wills the actions of men, what is meant is that He enjoins them to act in a

certain way.

Why does al–Nazzam deny the will of God? He does so, because, according to him, will implies want. He who wills lacks or needs the thing which he wills, and since God is altogether independent of His creatures, He does not lack or need anything. Consequently, will cannot be ascribed to Him. Therefore, the will of God really connotes His acts or His commands that are conveyed to man.[17]

(3) *Divisibility of Every Particle ad infinitum* – Al–Nazzam believes in the divisibility of every particle ad infinitum. By this he means that each body is composed of such particles as are divisible to an unlimited extent, i. e., every half of a half goes on becoming half of the other half. During the process of divisions, we never reach a limit after which we may be able to say that it cannot be further divided into halves.

Now, to traverse a distance, which is composed of infinite points, an infinite period of time would necessarily be required. Is, then, the traversing of a distance impossible? Does it not necessitate the denial of the existence of the movement itself? Among the Greek philosophers, Parmenides and Zeno had denied movement itself. They could not declare untrue the movement which is observable and is a fact, so they claimed that perception cannot reveal reality. They maintained that senses are not the instruments of real knowledge and are deceptive; and the phenomenal world is illusory; a mirage. The real world is the rational world, the knowledge of which is gained by reason alone in which there is neither plurality nor multiplicity, neither movement nor change. It is an immutable and immovable reality. But they could not explain how this illusory and deceptive world was born out of the real world. Thus their system of philosophy, in spite of their claiming it to be monism, ended in dualism.

Al–Nazzam did not accept the solution of these Greek philosophers, but to tide over this difficulty he offered the theory of *tafrah*. The word *tafrah* means to leap; it means that the moving thing traverses from one point of distance to another in such a manner that between these two points a number of points are traversed. Obviously, it happens when the moving thing does not cross all the points of a distance, but leaps over them. This indeed is an anticipation of the present–day doctrine of the "quantum jump."

(4) *Latency and Manifestation* (*Kumun wa Buruz*) – According to al–Nazzam, creation is to be regarded as a single act of God by which all things were brought into being simultaneously and kept in a state of latency (*kumun*). It was from their original state of latency that all existing things: minerals, plants, animals, and men, have evolved in the process of time. This also implies that the whole of mankind was potentially in Adam.

Whatever priority or posteriority there may be, it is not in birth but in appearance. All things came into existence at the same time, but were kept hidden till the time of their becoming operative arrived, and when it did arrive, they were brought from the state of latency to the state of manifestation. This doctrine stands in direct opposition to the Ash'arite view that God is creating things at all moments of time.[18]

(5) *Materialism of al–Nazzam* – For al–Nazzam, as for many before and after him, the real being of man

is the soul, and body is merely its instrument. But the soul is, according to him, a rarefied body permeating the physical body, the same way as fragrance permeates flowers, butter milk, or oil sesame.[19] Abu Mansur `Abd al–Qahir ibn Tahir, in his work *al–Farq bain al–Firaq*, has discussed this theory critically and has attempted to refute it.

Besides these philosophical ideas, there are what the orthodox called the “heresies” of al–Nazzam. For example, he did not believe in miracles, was not convinced of the inimitability of the Qur'an, considered a statute necessary for the determination of an Imam, and thought that the statute establishing the Imamate of `Ali was concealed by `Umar, that the *salat al–tarawih* was unauthorized, that the actual vision of the *jinn* was a physical impossibility, and that belated performance of missed prayers was unnecessary.

Among al–Nazzam's followers, the following are well known: Muhammad ibn Shabib, Abu Shumar, Yunus ibn 'Imran, Ahmad ibn Hayat, Bishr ibn Mu`tamir, and Thamamah ibn Ashras. Ahmad ibn Hayat who lived in the company of al–Nazzam held that there are two deities: one, the creator and eternal deity, and the other, the created one which is Jesus Christ son of Mary. He regarded Christ as the Son of God. On account of this belief he was considered to have renounced Islam. According to his faith, Christ in the hereafter will ask the created beings to account for their deeds in this world, and in support of his claim Ahmad ibn Hayat quoted the verse: ***“Will they wait until God comes to them in canopies of clouds?”***[20] There is a tradition that, looking towards the moon on the fourteenth day of the lunar month, the Holy Prophet of Islam said, “Ye will behold your Lord just as ye behold this moon.”[21] Ahmad ibn Hayat twisted the meaning of this tradition and said that the word Lord referred to Jesus Christ. He also believed in incarnation for, according to him, the spirit of God is incarnated into the bodies of the Imams.

Fadl al–Hadathi, who was another pupil of al–Nazzam, had faith similar to that of Ibn Hayat. He and his followers believed in transmigration. According to them, in another world God created animals mature and wise, bestowed on them innumerable blessings, and conferred on them many sciences too. God then desired to put them to a test and so commanded them to offer thanks to Him for His gifts. Some obeyed His command and some did not.

He rewarded His thankful creatures by giving them heaven and condemned the ungrateful ones to hell. There were some among them who had partly obeyed the divine command and partly not obeyed it. They were sent to the world, were given filthy bodies, and, according to the magnitude of their sins, sorrow and pain, joy and pleasure.

Those who had not sinned much and had obeyed most of God's commands were given lovely faces and mild punishment. But those who did only a few good deeds and committed a large number of sins were given ugly faces, and were subjected to severe tribulations. So long as an animal is not purified of all its sins, it will be always changing its forms.

4. Bishr ibn al-Mu'tamir

One of the celebrated personalities of al-Nazzam's circle is Bishr ibn al Mu'tamir. The exact date of his birth is not known, but his date of death is 210/825.

Bishr made the "Theory of Generated Acts" (*tawlid*) current among the Mu'tazilites. The Mu`tazilites believe in-free-will. They admit that man is the author of his voluntary actions. Some actions arise by way of *mubasharah*, i. e., they are created directly by man, but some actions arise by way of *tawlid*, i.e., they necessarily result from the acts done by way of *mubasharah*.

Throwing of a stone in water, for example, necessitates the appearance of ripples. Even if the movement of the ripples is not intended by the stone-thrower, yet he is rightly regarded as its agent. Similarly, man is the creator of his deeds and misdeeds by way of *mubasharah*, and all the consequential actions necessarily result by way of *tawlid*. Neither type of actions is due to divine activity.

Bishr regards the will of God as His grace and divides it into two attributes: the attribute of essence and the attribute of action. Through the attribute of essence He wills all His actions as well as men's good deeds. He is absolutely wise, and in consequence His will is necessarily concerned with that which is suitable and salutary. The attribute of action also is of two kinds. If actions are concerned with God, they would imply creation, and if concerned with men, they would mean command.

According to Bishr, God could have made a different world, better than the present one, in which all might have attained salvation. But in opposition to the common Mu'tazilite belief, Bishr held that God was not bound to create such a world. All that was necessary for God to do was that He should have bestowed upon man free-will and choice, and after that it was sufficient to bestow reason for his guidance to discover divine revelation and the laws of nature, and combining reason with choice, attain salvation.

Mu'tamir's pupil Abu Musa Isa bin Sabih, nicknamed Mizdar, was a very pious man and was given the title of the hermit of the Mu'tazilites. He held some very peculiar views. God, he thought, could act tyrannically and lie, and this would not make His lordship imperfect. The style of the Qur'an is not inimitable; a work like it or even better than it can be produced. A person who admits that God can be seen by the eye, though without form, is an unbeliever, and he who is doubtful about the unbelief of such a person is also an unbeliever.

5. Mu'ammar

Mu'ammar's full name was Mu'ammar ibn `Abbad al-Sulami. Neither the date of his birth nor that of his death can be determined precisely. According to some, he died in 228/842.

To a great extent Mu`ammar's ideas tally with those of the other Mu'tazilites, but he resorts to great exaggeration in the denial of the divine attributes and in the Theory of Predestination.

The following is the gist of his ideas.

(1) *Denial of Divine Knowledge* – Mu'ammar maintains that the essence of God is free from every aspect of plurality. He is of the view that if we believe in the attributes of God, then God's essence becomes plural; therefore, he denies all the attributes, and in this denial he is so vehement that he says that God knows neither Himself nor anyone else, for knowing (or knowledge) is something either within or without God.

In the first case, it necessarily follows that the knower and the known are one and the same, which is impossible, for it is necessary that the known should be other than and distinct from the knower. If knowledge is not something within God, and the known is separate from the knower, it means that God's essence is dual. Further, it follows also that God's knowledge is dependent on and is in need of an "other." Consequently, His absoluteness is entirely denied.

By Mu'ammar's times, more and more people were taking interest in philosophy and Neo–Platonism was gaining ground. In denying the attributes Mu'ammar was following in the footsteps of Plotinus. According to the basic assumptigns of Plotinus, the essence of God is one and absolute. God is so transcendent that whatever we say of Him merely limits Him. Hence we cannot attribute to Him beauty, goodness, thought, or will, for all such attributes are limitations and imperfections. We cannot say what He is, but only what He is not. As a poet has said, He is

"The One whom the reason does not know,

The Eternal, the Absolute whom neither senses know nor fancy.

He is such a One, who cannot be counted He is such a Pure Being!"

It is universally believed in Islam that human reason, understanding, senses, or fancy cannot fathom the essence of God or the reality of His attributes or His origin. Says `Attar:

"Why exert to probe the essence of God?

Why strain thyself by stretching thy limitations?

When thou canst not catch even the essence of an atom,

How canst thou claim to know the essence of God Himself?"

To reflect on the essence of God has been regarded as "illegitimate thinking." The Prophet of Islam is reported to have said: "We are all fools in the matter of the gnosis of the essence of God."[22] Therefore, he has warned the thinkers thus: "Don't indulge in speculating on the nature of God lest ye may be destroyed."[23] He has said about himself: "I have not known Thee to the extent that Thy knowledge demands !"[24]

Hafiz has expressed the same idea in his own words thus

“Take off thy net; thou canst not catch ‘*anqa*[25]

For that is like attempting to catch the air!”

(2) *Denial of Divine Will* – Mu'ammar says that, like knowledge, will too cannot be attributed to the essence of God. Nor can His will be regarded as eternal, because eternity expresses temporal priority and sequence and God transcends time. When we say that the will of God is eternal, we mean only that the aspects of the essence of God, like His essence, transcend time.

(3) *God as the Creator of Substances and not of Accidents* – According to Mu'ammar, God is the creator of the world, but He did not create anything except bodies. Accidents are the innovations of bodies created either (i) by nature, e. g., burning from fire, heat from the sun, or (ii) by free choice, such as the actions of men and animals. In brief, God creates matter and then keeps Himself aloof from it. Afterwards He is not concerned at all with the changes that are produced through matter, whether they may be natural or voluntary. God is the creator of bodies, not of accidents which flow out of the bodies as their effects.[26]

(4) Mu'ammar regards man as something other than the sensible body. Man is living, knowing, able to act, and possesses free–will. It is not man himself who moves or keeps quiet, or is coloured, or sees, or touches, or changes from place to place; nor does one place contain him to the exclusion of another, because he has neither length nor breadth, neither weight nor depth; in short, he is something other than the body.

6. Thamamah

Thamamah ibn Ashras al–Numayri lived during the reign of Caliphs Harun al–Rashid and al–Mamun. He was in those days the leader of the Qadarites. Harun al–Rashid imprisoned him on the charge of heresy, but he was in the good books of al–Mamun and was released by him. He died in 213/828. The following is the substance of his ideas.

(1) As good and evil are necessarily known through the intellect and God is good, the gnosis of God is an intellectual necessity. Had there been no Shari'ah, that is, had we not acquired the gnosis of God through the prophets, even then it would have been necessitated by the intellect.

(2) The world being necessitated by the nature of God, it has, like God, existed from eternity and will last till eternity. Following in the footsteps of Aristotle, he thinks that the world is eternal (*qadim*) and not originated (*hadith*) and regards God as creating things by the necessity of His nature and not by will and choice.

(3) Bishr ibn al–Mu'tamir, who had put into usage the theory of generated acts among the Mu'tazilites,

was wrong in thinking that men are not directly but only indirectly the authors of such acts. Neither God nor man is the author of generated acts; they just happen without any author. Man is not their author, for otherwise when a deed has been generated after a man's death, he, as a dead man, will have to be taken as its author. God cannot be regarded as the author of these acts, for some generated acts are evil and evil cannot be attributed to God.

(4) Christians, Jews, and Magians, after they are dead, will all become dust. They will neither go to heaven nor to hell. Lower animals and children also will be treated in the same manner. The unbeliever, who does not possess and is not keen to possess the gnosis of his Creator, is not under the obligation to know Him. He is quite helpless and resembles the lower animals.

7. Al-Jahiz

`Amr ibn Bahr al-Jahiz, a contemporary of Mu'ammar, was a pupil of al-Nazzam and was himself one of the Imams of the Mu'tazilites. Both the master and the disciple, it was held, were almost of one mind. Al-Jahiz had drunk deep of Greek philosophy. He had a keen sense of humour and was a good anecdotist. He usually lived in the company of the Caliphs of Baghdad. His permanent residence was the palace of Ibn Zayyat, the Prime Minister of the Caliph Mutawakkil.

When Ibn Zayyat was put to death by the orders of the Caliph, Jahiz too was imprisoned. He was released after some time. He was the ugliest of men; his eyes protruded out, and children were frightened at his very sight. In his last years he had a stroke of paralysis. He died in his ninetieth year at Basrah in 255/869. During his illness he would often recite the following couplets

“Dost thou hope in old age to look like what you were in youth?

Thy heart belieth thee: an old garment never turns into a new one.”

He was the author of a number of books out of which the following are noteworthy: *Kitab al-Bayan, Kitab al-Hayawan*, and *Kitab al-Ghilman*. He also wrote a book dealing with Muslim sects.

It was the belief of al-Jahiz that all knowledge comes by nature, and it is an activity of man in which he has no choice. He was a scientist-philosopher. In the introduction to his *Kitab al-Hayawan*, he writes that he is inspired by the philosophical spirit which consists in deriving knowledge from sense-experience and reason. It employs observation, comparison, and experiment as methods of investigation. He experimented on different species of animals, sometimes by cutting their organs, sometimes even by poisoning them, in order to see what effects were thus produced on animal organism.

In this respect he was the precursor of Bacon whom he anticipated seven and a half centuries earlier. Al-Jahiz did not, however, base knowledge on sense-experience alone. Since sense-experience is sometimes likely to give false reports, it needs the help of reason. In fact, in knowledge reason has to

play the decisive role. He Says, “You should not accept whatever your eyes tell you; follow the lead of reason. Every fact is determined by two factors: one apparent, and that is sensory; the other hidden, and that is reason; and in reality reason is the final determinant.”

According to al–Jahiz, the will is not an attribute of man, for attributes are continually subject to change, but the will is non–changing and non–temporal.

He holds that the sinners will not be condemned to hell permanently but will naturally turn into fire. God will not send anybody to hell, but the fire of hell by its very nature will draw the sinners towards itself. Al–Jahiz denies that God can commit a mistake or that an error can be imputed to Him. Al–Jahiz, also denies the vision of God.

8. Al–Jubba'i

Abu 'Ali al–Jubba'i was born in 235/849 at Jubba, a town in Khuzistan. His patronymic name is Abu `Ali and his descent is traced to Hamran, a slave of `Uthman. Al–Jubba'i belonged to the later Mu`tazilites. He was the teacher of Abu al–Hasan al–Ash`ari and a pupil of Abu Ya'qub bin `Abd Allah al Shahham who was the leader of the Mu'tazilites in Basrah.

Once there was a discussion between him and Imam al–Ash’ari in respect of the Theory of the Salutary to which reference has already been made in the foregoing pages. The story goes that one day he asked Imam al–Ash'ari: “What do you mean by obedience?” The Imam replied, “Assent to a command,” and then asked for al–Jubba’i’s own opinion in this matter.

Al–Jubba'i said, “The essence of obedience, according to me, is agreement to the will, and whoever fulfils the will of another obeys him.” The Imam answered, “According to this, one must conclude that God is obedient to His servant if He fulfils his will.” Al–Jubba'i granted this. The Imam said, “You differ from the community of Muslims and you blaspheme the Lord of the worlds. For if God is obedient to His servant, then He must be subject to him, but God is above this.”

Al–Jubba'i further claimed that the names of God are subject to the regular rules of grammar. He, therefore, considered it possible to derive a name for Him from every deed which He performs. On this Imam al–Ash`ari said that, according to this view, God should be named “the producer of pregnancy among women,” because he creates pregnancy in them. Al–Jubba'i could not escape this conclusion. The Imam added: “This heresy of yours is worse than that of the Christians in calling God the father of Jesus, although even they do not hold that He produced pregnancy in Mary.”[27] The following are other notable views of al–Jubba'i.

(1) Like other Mu'tazilites, he denies the divine attributes. He holds that the very essence of God is knowing; no attribute of knowledge can be attributed to Him so as to subsist besides His essence. Nor is there any “state” which enables Him to acquire the “state of knowing.” Unlike al–Jubba'i, his son abu Hashim did believe in “states.” To say that God is all–hearing and all–seeing really means that God is

alive and there is no defect of any kind in Him. The attributes of hearing and seeing in God originate at the time of the origination of what is seen and what is heard.

(2) Al–Jubba'i and the other Mu'tazilites regard the world as originated and the will of God as the cause of its being originated; they also think that the will of God too is something originated, for if the temporal will is regarded as subsisting in God, He will have to be regarded as the "locus of temporal events." This view he held against the Karramites who claimed that the will subsists in God Himself, is eternal and instrumental in creating the world which is originated, and, therefore, not eternal.

Against al–Jubba'i it has been held that independent subsistence of the will is entirely incomprehensible, for it tantamounts to saying that an attribute exists without its subject or an accident exists without some substance. Besides, it means that God who has the will is devoid of it, i.e., does not have it – a clear contradiction.

(3) For a1–Jubba'i the speech of God is compounded of letters and sound: and God creates it in somebody. The speaker is He Himself and not the body in which it subsists. Such speech will necessarily be a thing originated. Therefore, the speech of God is a thing originated and not eternal.

(4) Like other Mu'tazilities, al–Jubba'i denies the physical vision of God in the hereafter, for that, according to him, is impossible. It is impossible because whatever is not physical cannot fulfil the conditions of vision.

(5) He equally agrees with other Mu'tazilites regarding the gnosis of God, the knowledge of good and evil, and the destiny of those who commit grave sins. With them he holds that man is the author of his own actions and that it lies in his power to produce good or evil or commit sins and wrongs, and that it is compulsory for God to punish the sinner and reward the obedient.

(6) In the matter of Imamate, al–Jubba'i supports the belief of the Sunnites, viz., the appointment of an Imam is to be founded on catholic consent.

9. Abu Hashim

Al–Jubba'is son, Abu Hashim `Abd al–Salam, was born in Basrah in 247/861 and died in 321/933. In literature he eclipsed al–Jubba'i. Both of them undertook new researches in the problems of Kalam. In general, Abu Hashim agreed with his father, but in the matter of divine attributes he widely differed from him.

Many Muslim thinkers of the time believed that the attributes of God are eternal and inherent in His essence. Contrary to this belief, the Shi'ites and the followers of the Greek philosophers held that it is by virtue of His essence that God has knowledge. He does not know by virtue of His knowledge. The divine essence, which is without quality and quantity, is one and in no way does it admit of plurality.

According to the Mu'tazilites, attributes constitute the essence of God, i.e., God possesses knowledge due to the attribute of knowledge, but this attribute is identical with His essence. God knows by virtue of His knowledge and knowledge is His essence; similarly, He is omnipotent by virtue of His power, etc. Al–Jubba'is theory is that though God knows according to His essence, yet knowing is neither an attribute nor a state, owing to which God may be called a knower.

As a solution to this problem, Abu Hashim presents the conception of "state." He says that we know essence and know it in different states. The states go on changing, but the essence remains the same. These states are in themselves inconceivable; they are known through their relation to essence. They are different from the essence, but are not found apart from the essence. To quote his own words, "A state–in–itself is neither existent nor non–existent, neither unknown nor known, neither eternal nor contingent; it cannot be known separately, but only together with the essence."

Abu Hashim supports his conception of states by this argument: Reason evidently distinguishes between knowing a thing absolutely and knowing it together with some attribute. When we know an essence, we do not know, that it is knowing also. Similarly, when we know a substance, we do not know whether it is bounded or whether the accidents subsist in it. Certainly, man perceives the common qualities of things in one thing and the differentiating qualities in another, and necessarily gains knowledge of the fact that the quality which is common is different from the quauty which is not common.

These are rational propositions that no sane man would deny. Their locus is essence and not an accident, for otherwise it would necessarily follow that an accident subsists in another accident. In this way, states are necessarily determined. Therefore, to be a knower of the world refers to a state, which is an attribute besides the essence and has not the same sense as the essence. In like manner Abu Hashim proves the states for God; these states are not found apart but with the essence.

Al–Jubba'i and the other deniers of states refute this theory of Abu Hashim. Al–Jubba'i says that these states are really mental aspects that are not contained in the divine essence but are found in the percipient, i. e., in the perceiver of the essence. In other words, they are such generalizations or relations as do not–exist externally but are found only in the percipient's mind. Ibn Taimiyyah also denies states. In this respect one of his couplets has gained much fame

"Abu Hashim believes in State, al–Ash'ari in Acquisition and al–Nazzam in Leap. These three things have verbal and no real existence."[28]

After a little hesitation, Imam Baqilani supported Abu Hashim's views. Imam al–Ash'ari and the majority of his followers disputed them and Imam al–Haramain first supported but later opposed them.

The End

Besides the Mu'tazilites an account of whose views has been given above in some detail, there were

some others the details of whose beliefs are given in the *Milal wal–Nahal* of Shahrastani and *al–Farq bain al–Firaq* of al–Baghdadi.

They were `Amr ibn `Ubaid; abu 'Ali `Amr bin Qa'id Aswari who had almost the same position as al–Nazzam, but differed from him in the view that God has no power over what He knows He does not do, or what He says He would not do, and man has the power to do that; Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn `Abd Allah who shared al–Nazzam's views but believed that to God can be attributed the power to oppress children and madmen, but not those who are in their full senses; Jafar ibn Bishr and Jafar ibn Harb who held that among the corrupt of the Muslim community there were some who were worse than the Jews, Christians, and Magians, and that those who committed trivial sins would also be condemned to eternal hell; Hisham ibn `Amr al Fuwati who had very exaggerated views on the problem of predestination and did not ascribe any act to God; and Abu Qasim `Abd Allah ibn Ahmad ibn Mahmud al–Balkhi, a Mu'tazilite of Baghdad known as al–Ka'bi, who used to say that the deed of God is accomplished without His will.

When it is said that God wills deeds, it is implied that He is their creator and there is wisdom in His doing so; and when it is said that He of Himself wills the deeds of others, all that is meant is that He commands these deeds. Al–Ka'bi believed that God neither sees Himself nor others. His seeing and hearing mean nothing other than His knowledge. Al–Ka'bi wrote a commentary on the Qur'an which consisted of twelve volumes. No one till then had written such a voluminous commentary. He died in 309/921.

Bibliography

Abd al–Karim al–Shahrastani, *al–Milal wa'l–Nihal*, Bombay, 1314/1896.; Theodor Haarbrucker, *Religionsparthein and Philosophen–Schulen*, 2 Vols., Halle, 1850–51; the Arabic text edited by Cureton, London, 1846; al–Baghdadi, *al–Farq bain al Firaq*, tr. Kate Chambers Seelye, Part I, Columbia University Press, New York, 1920 ; Ibn Hazm, *al–Milal wa'l–Nihal*, partly translated by Prof. Friedlender in the JAOS, Vols. XXVIII and XXIX; Krehl, *Beitrage zur Characteristik der Lehre vom Glauben in Islam*, Leipzig, 1865; H. Ritter, *Uber UnesreKenntniss der Arabischen Philosophie*, Gottengen, 1844; I3. B. Macdonald, *Development of Muslim Theology, Jurisprudence and Constitutional Theory*, London & New York 1903; A. J. Wensinck, *The Muslim Creed*, Cambridge, 1932; T. J. de Boer, *The History of Philosophy in Islam*, tr. E. R. Jones, London, 1903; *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, prepared under the supervision of M, Th. Houtsma and others, 4 Vols. and Supplement Leiden, 1913–38; Muhammad Najm al–Ghani Khan, *Madhahib al– Islam*, Luknow, 1924; al– Ghazali, *Ihya' `Ulum al–Din*, tr. into Urdu: *Madhaq al–`Arifin* by Muhammad Ahsan, Lucknow, 1313/1895; Muhammad Rida Husain, *al–Kalam `ala Falasifat al–Islam*, Lucknow, 1905; Mubammad Imam 'Ali Khan, *Falsafah–i Islam* Lucknow, 1890; Abu Muzaffar al–Isfra'ini, *al–Tabsir fi al–Din*, Egypt, 1359/1941; Mahmud bin `Umar al–Zamakhshari, *al–Kashshaf.*

1. The name of this sect is ahl al-wa'id.
2. This group is called the Murji'ites. The same was the belief of Jahm bin Safwa also.
3. His companion, `Amr ibn `Ubaid, from the beginning, shared this view of his. The Khawarij too come under the same category.
4. Al-Shahrastani, Kitab al-Milal wa'l-Nihal, quoted by A. J. Wensinck in The Muslim Creed, Cambridge, 1932, p. 62.
5. Ibid., pp. 62, 63.
6. Siddiq Hasan, Kashf al- Ghummah `an Iftiraq al- Ummah, Matb'ah Lahjahani, Bhopal, India, 1304/1886, p. 19.
7. Ibid.
8. Cf. Urdu translation: Madhaq al-`Arifin, Newal Kishore Press, Luclmow, p. 135.
9. Qur'an, ciii, 1-3.
10. Ibid., lxxii, 23.
11. Ibid., xx, 82.
12. Ibid., iv, 48.
13. Ibid.; xviii, 30
14. Ibid., xi, 115.
15. Al-Shahrastani. op. cit., p. 21
16. Ibid., p. 24.
17. Ibid.
18. T. J. de Boer, "Muslim Philosophy," Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics.
19. Al-Shahrastani, op. cit., Chap Khaneh-i `Ilmi, Teheran, 1321/1903, p. 77.
20. Qur'an, ii, 120
21. The tradition: Innakum satarauna rabbakum kama tarauna hadh al-qamar.
22. The tradition: Kullu al-nas fi dhati Allahi humaqa'.
23. The tradition: La tufakkiru fi Allahi fatahlaku.
24. Ma 'arafnaka haqqa ma'rifatika.
25. 'Anqa' is a fabulous bird said to be known as to name but unknown as to body.
26. Al-Shahrastani has criticized this statement of Mu'ammar, op. cit., p. 29.
27. Al-Baghdadi, op. cit., pp. 188-89.
28. Muhammad Najm al-Ghani Khan, Madhahib al-Islam, Lucknow, 1924, p. 132.

Chapter 11: Ash'arism

Ash'arism by M. Abdul Hye, M.A, Ph.D, Professor of Philosophy, Government College, Rajshahi (Pakistan)

Al-Ashari's Life and Work

Asharism is the name of a philosophico-religious school of thought in Islam that developed during the fourth and fifth/tenth and eleventh centuries. This movement was "an attempt not only to purge Islam of all non-Islamic elements which had quietly crept into it but also to harmonize the religious consciousness with the religious thought of Islam."

It laid the foundation of an orthodox Islamic theology or orthodox *Kalam*, as opposed to the rationalist

Kalam of the Mu'tazilites; and in opposition to the extreme orthodox class, it made use of the dialectical method for the defence of the authority of divine revelation as applied to theological subjects.

The position at the end of the third/ninth century was such that the development of such a movement as orthodox Kalamwas inevitable. The rationalization of faith, which developed, at the beginning of the second century of the Hijrah as a systematic movement of thought, in the name of rationalism in Islam or Mu'tazilite movement, was, in its original stage, simply an attempt to put Islam and its basic principles on a rational foundation, by giving a consistent rational interpretation to the different dogmas and doctrines of Islam.

But when the Mu'tazilite rationalists began to study the Arabic translations of the works of Greek physicists and philosophers made available to them by the early 'Abbasid Caliphs, particularly by al–Mansur and al–Mamun, they began to apply the Greek philosophical methods and ideas to the interpretation of the basic principles of Islam as well.

Some of the early 'Abbasid Caliphs, particularly al–Mamun, began to patronize the rationalism of the Mu'tazilites in public. The Mu'tazilite speculation, in the hands of the later Mu'tazilites, those of the second and third generations, under the influence of Greek philosophy and with the active support and patronage of the Caliphs, tended to be purely speculative and "absolutely unfettered, and in some cases led to a merely negative attitude of thought."[1]

They made reason the sole basis of truth and reality and thus identified the sphere of philosophy with that of religion. They tried to interpret faith in terms of pure thought. They ignored the fact that the basic principles of religion are, by their very nature, incapable of logical demonstration or rational proof. The basic principles of Islam deal with supersensible realities and, as such, they must first be accepted on the authority of revelation.

The Mu'tazilites, in their zeal to judge everything by reason alone, destroyed the personality of God and reduced Him to a bare indefinable universality or to an abstract unity. This idea of an abstract, impersonal, absolute God could not appeal to the ordinary Muslims. The orthodox section of the people reacted strongly against the Mu'tazilite rationalism and began to consider the Mu'tazilites to be heretics.

The extreme rationalistic attitude of the later Mu'tazilites was followed by powerful reaction from the orthodox section of the people. This reaction was greatly aggravated by the unfortunate attempt of the Caliph al–Mamun to force Mu'tazilism (rationalist *Kalam*) on his subjects by introducing *mihnah* (a compulsory test of faith) in the Mu'tazilite doctrines, particularly in their doctrine of the createdness of the Qur'an. The whole of the third/ninth century was a time of reaction.

The orthodox Muslims (and among them were the Traditionists [the Muhaddithin]), the Zahirites (the followers of Dawud ibn `Ali), and the Muslim jurists (*fuqaha'*) adhered strictly to Tradition and literal interpretation of the Qur'an and the Sunnah,[2] and refused to admit any "innovation" (*bid'ah*) in the Shari'ah (the Islamic Code). Any theological discussion was considered an "innovation" and was as such

a cause of displeasure to them.[3] The reactionary influence of Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal and his Zahirite followers was very strong at that period and the orthodox Muslims kept themselves safely aloof from the Mu'tazilites and the philosophers.

The reaction against the rationalist *Kalam* went to such an extreme that even the anthropomorphic verses of the Qur'an were interpreted by them in a purely literal sense. Malik bin Anas said: "God's settling Himself firmly upon His Throne is known, the how of it is unknown; belief in it is obligatory; and questioning about it is an innovation."[4] Any speculation about sacred things was considered an innovation. Every dogma was to be believed in without raising the question how or why (*bila kaifa*).

But such an attitude of blind faith could not be maintained for any length of time. Islam, as a universal religion and as a living force, had to adapt itself to new thoughts and to new surroundings. So, as time went on, there arose gradually a party, from amongst the orthodox section of the Muslims, who realized the necessity of putting Islam on a solid ground by advancing "reasons" for the traditional beliefs, of defending these beliefs against all sorts of attacks internal and external, and thus purging their faith of all the non-Islamic elements that had crept into it.

They founded the orthodox theology of Islam by using *Kalam* or the philosophical method in order to meet the dialectical reasoning of the Mu'tazilites. These theologians who employed *Kalam* for the defence of their faith were, therefore, known as the Mutakallimun (orthodox theologians).[5]

But, although these thinkers used philosophical method in their discussions, they obtained the primary materials from revelation. They developed a rival science of reasoning to meet the Mu'tazilites on their own ground. In the beginning this new orthodox theological movement developed privately and secretly. It was at first a gradual unconscious drift. It could not come to the open for fear of public criticism.

Al-Junaid, for instance, had to discuss the unity of God behind closed doors. Al-Shafi'i held that some trained people might defend and purify the faith but that should not be done in public. Al-Muhasibi and other contemporaries of Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal incurred his displeasure for defending the faith with arguments or reason. But gradually the movement gathered strength and began to be openly preached almost at the same time in different places of the Muslim world-in Mesopotamia by Abu al-Hasan `Ali bin Isma`il al-Ashari (d. 330 or 334/941 or 945), in Egypt by al-Tahawi (d. 331/942), and in Samarqand by Abu Mansnr al-Maturidi (d. 333/ 944).

But of these three, al-Ash'ari became the most popular hero, before whom the Mu'tazilite system (the rationalist *Kalam*) went down, and he came to be known as the founder of the orthodox philosophical theology, and the school founded by him was named after him as Ash`arism.

Al-Ash'ari was born at Basrah. Regarding his date of birth there is difference of opinion. Ibn Khallikan, in his discussion of the life of al-Ash'ari, mentions that he was born in 260 or 270/873 or 883 and died at Baghdad in 330/941 or some time after that.[6]

According to Shibli Nu'mani and Ibn `Asakir (the author of *Tabyin Kidhb al–Muftari*, on the life and teachings of al–Ash'ari), he was born in 270/873 and died in 330/941.[7] He was buried between Karkh and Bab al–Basrah (the gate of Basrah). He was a descendant of Abu Musa al–Ash'ari, one, of the famous Companions of the Prophet.

Al–Ash'ari, in his early youth, came under the care of the great Mu'tazilite scholar of the Basrite school, Abu 'Ali Muhammad bin `Abd al–Wahhab al–Jubba'i, and, as a disciple of his, became an adherent of the Mu'tazilite school and continued to support its doctrines up to the age of forty. After that there happened a sudden change in his mind and one day he went to the Mosque of Basrah and declared: "He who knows me, knows who I am, and he who does not know me, let him know that I am Abu al–Hasan 'Ali al–Ash'ari, that I used to maintain that the Qur'an is created, that eyes of men shall not see God, and that the creatures create their actions. Lo! I repent that I have been a Mu'tazilite. I renounce these opinions and I take the engagement to refute the Mu'tazilites and expose their infamy and turpitude."

What brought about this sudden change in al–Aah'ari is not definitely known to us. Shibli in his *`Ilm al–Kalam* says that "the change came to him due to some directions which he had obtained in a dream...".[8] Ibn Khallikan mentions in this connection the story of a public discussion in which al–Ashari met his old Mu'tazilite teacher, al–Jubba'i, on the problem of *salah wa'l aslah*, i. e., the problem whether God's actions are to be based on rational consideration and whether He is bound to do what is best for His creatures.

Al–Ash'ari came to al–Jubba'i and presented the case of three brothers, one being God–fearing, another godless, and a third having died as a child, and asked him as to what would be their positions in the next world. Al–Jubba'i could not give a satisfactory and consistent reply to that question and, on his having failed to justify rationally the Mu'tazilite doctrine of *salah wa'l aslah*, al–Ash'ari abandoned the Mu'tazilite camp.[9]

But whatever might have been the cause of this change, when he changed he was terribly in earnest. After the change he wrote a number of books and Ibn Furak says that the number amounted to three hundred. Ibn `Asakir Dimashqi has given the titles of ninety–three of them, but only a few have been preserved and are enumerated by Brockelmann.

His work *al–Ibanah `an Usul al–Diyanah* was printed at Hyderabad, Deccan (India), in 1321/1903 and a small treatise *Risalah fi Istihsan al–Khaud fi al–Kalam* was printed in 1323/1905 and reprinted at Hyderabad in 1344/1925. Al–Ash'ari's other famous works are *al–Maqalat al Islamiyyin* (published in Istanbul in 1348/1929), *Kitab al–Sharh wal–Tafsil*, *al–Luma`*, *Mu'jaz*, *I'adah al–Burhan*, and *Tab'in*.

Of these books the *Maqalat al Islamiyyin wa Ikhtilaf al Musalliyyin* is the most authentic book on the views of different schools about religious dogmas and doctrines. *Al–Maqalat* was written much earlier than the other books on the same subject, such as Shahrastani's *Kitab al–Milal wal–Nihal,* or Ibn Hazm's

al–Fasl fi al–Milal wal–Ahwa' wal Nihal.

Ibn Taimiyyah said in his *Minhaj al–Sunnah* that the most comprehensive of the books he went through on the views of different people on the basic principles of Islam was al–Ash'ari's *al–Maqalat al–Islamiyyin* and that he (al–Ash'ari) discussed many of such views in details as were not even mentioned by others. Ibn al–Qayyim also spoke very highly of this work. In his *Hadi al–Arwah* and *Ijtima` al–Juyush al–Islamiyyah*, he said, "Shahrastani, `Abd al–Qahir Baghdadi, and other later writers on the subject simply copied from al–Ash'ari's book and did not discuss the views in details."

Al–Ash'ari's other famous book *al– Ibanah `an Usul al–Diyanah* seems to have been written by him just after his abandoning the Mu'tazilite views. In this book we find he is almost a Zahirite. The reaction against the Mu'tazilite speculation might have been very strong in his mind at that period. *Al–Maqalat* seems to be a later work. The *Risalah fi Istihsan al–Khaud* deals with the objections raised by the extremely orthodox against the use of *Kalam*, and the replies given by al–Ash'ari, justifying its use in matters of faith.

Al–Ash'ari's theology has been discussed mainly in these books. He had a good number of pupils who passed as famous theologians and who spread and developed his doctrines and dogmas. Some of those older Ash'arites were abu Sahl Saluqi, Abu Quffal, Abu Zaid Maruzi, Zahir bin Ahmad, Hafiz Abu Bakr Jurjani, Shaikh Abu Muhammad Tabari, and Abu al–Hasan Bahili. Some of the pupils of these older Ash'arites became still more famous and the best known among them are Qadi Abu Bakr Baqillani, Abu Bakr bin Furak, Abu al–Qasim al–Qushairi and abu Ishaq Isfra'ini and his pupil Abu al–Ma'ali al–Juwaini, known as Imam al–Haramain.[10]

Ash'arite Theology

Al–Ash'ari maintains an intermediary position between the two diametrically opposed schools of thought prevailing at the time. He had to fight against both the opposing parties. At the one extreme were the Mu'tazilites who made reason in preference to revelation the sole criterion of truth and reality and, thus, passed slowly into comparatively innocuous heretics. At the other extreme were the orthodox groups, particularly the Zahirites, the Mujassimites (anthropomorphists), the Muhaddithin (Traditionists), and the Jurists, all of which were wholly opposed to the use of reason or *Kalam* in defending or explaining religious dogmas and condemned any discussion about them as innovation. Al–Ash'ari wrote his *Istihsan al–Khaud* mainly to meet the objections raised by the orthodox school against the use of reason in matters of faith.

In that treatise he says: "A section of the people (i.e., the Zahirites and other orthodox people) made capital out of their own ignorance; discussions and rational thinking about matters of faith became a heavy burden for them, and, therefore, they became inclined to blind faith and blind following (*taqlid*). They condemned those who tried to rationalize the principles of religion as `innovators.'

They considered discussion about motion, rest, body, accident, colour, space, atom, the leaping of atoms, and attributes of God, to be an innovation and a sin. They said that had such discussions been the right thing, the Prophet and his Companions would have definitely done so; they further pointed out that the Prophet, before his death, discussed and fully explained all those matters which were necessary from the religious point of view, leaving none of them to be discussed by his followers; and since he did not discuss the problems mentioned above, it was evident that to discuss them must be regarded as an innovation."

They further contended that these so-called theological problems were either known to the Prophet and his Companions and yet they kept silent and did not discuss them or they were not known to them. If they knew them and yet did not discuss them, we are also to follow them in keeping silent, and if they could remain unaware of them we can also do so. In both cases discussion about them would be an "innovation." These were, in brief, their objections against the use of *Kalam* in matters of faith.

Al-Ash'ari, then, proceeds to justify theological discussions about matters of faith. He tries to meet these objections in three ways. First, by turning the objections of the orthodox against themselves by pointing out to them that the Prophet had not said that those who would discuss these problems were to be condemned and charged as innovators. Hence, their charging or condemning others as innovators was itself an innovation, for it amounted to discussion about matters which the Prophet did not discuss, and condemn the action of those whom the Prophet did not condemn.

Secondly, "the Prophet was not unaware of all these problems of body, accident, motion, rest, atoms, etc., though he did not discuss each of them separately. The general principles (*usul*) underlying these problems are present in general, not in details, in the Qur'an and the Sunnah." Al-Ash'ari then proceeds to prove his contention by citing verses from the Qur'an and the sayings of the Prophet, and thereby showing that the principles underlying the problems of *harakah*, *sukun*, *tawhid*, etc., are, as a matter of fact, present in the Qur'an and the Sunnah.[11]

Thirdly, "the Prophet was not unaware of these matters and knew them in detail, but as problems about them did not arise during his life-time, there was no question of his discussing or not discussing them." The Companions of the Prophet discussed and argued about many religious matters which appeared during their life-time, although there was no direct and explicit "saying" of the Prophet about them, and because of the absence of any explicit injunction from the Prophet they differed in their judgments about them.

Had the question, for instance, of the creation of the Qur'an, or of atoms or substance, been raised in so many words in the life of the Prophet, he would have definitely discussed and explained it as he did in the case of all those problems which were then raised. "There is no direct verdict (*nass*) from the Prophet, for instance, as to whether the Qur'an is created or uncreated. If to call the Qur'an created is an `innovation,' then, on the same ground, to call it uncreated must also be an `innovation."' Al-Ash'ari then concludes that Islam is not opposed to the use of reason; on the other hand, rationalization of faith is a

necessity in Islam.

Al-Ash'ari discussed the main theological problems in his *Maqalat al-Islamiyyin* and *al-Ibanah `an Usul al-Diyanah*. In these books al-Ash'ari selects a few principles which distinguish the Ash'arites from the Mu'tazilite school of thought. Later on al-Ghazali put them in a consolidated form in his *Ihya* 12 as the "Principles of Faith" or *Qawa'id al-`Aqa'id*, and Imam Fakhr al-Din al-Razi explained them more elaborately. The main problems about which the Ash'arites differed from the Mu'tazilites are:

(1) The conception of God and the nature of His attributes.

(2) Freedom of the human will.

(3) The criterion of truth and the standard of good and evil.

(4) The vision (*ru'yah*) of God.

(5) Createdness of the Qur'an.

(6) Possibility of burdening the creatures with impossible tasks.

(7) Promise of reward and threat of punishment.

(8) The rational or non-rational basis of God's actions.

(9) Whether God is bound to do what is best for His creatures. 13

The problems discussed by the Ash'arites in their system may be broadly classified into two categories: (i) theological, and (ii) metaphysical.

Fundamental Principles Of The Ash'arite Theology

1. Conception of God and the Nature of His Attributes

According to the Ash'arites, God is one, unique, eternal, existent Being; He is not a substance, not a body, not an accident, not limited to any direction, and not in any space. He possesses attributes such as knowledge, power, life, will; He is hearing and seeing and has speech.

About the nature of divine attributes two extreme views were held before the Ash'arites. On the one hand, there were the extreme Attributists (*Sifatis*), the Anthropomorphists (*Mujassimin*), and the Comparers (*Mushabbihin*), who maintained that God possesses all the attributes mentioned in the Qur'an and that all such attributes as God's having hands, legs, ears, eyes, and His sitting firmly (*istiwa*) on His Throne must be taken in their literal sense.

Such a view of the attributes of God is pure anthropomorphism, implying God's bodily existence. On the

other hand, there were the Mu'tazilites who held that God is one, eternal, unique, absolute Being, having no touch of dualism in Him. His essence is self–contained. He does not possess any attributes apart from His essence. His essence is, for instance, knowing, powerful, seeing, willing, etc. They denied the attributes of God as anything other than and addition to His essence.

The Ash'arites maintained a view which was, so to say, a reconciliation between the two extreme views. In agreement with the Sifatis and in opposition to the Mu'tazilites and the "philosophers" (those who were under Greek influence), the Ash'arites held that God possesses attributes in general. They classified the attributes of God into two main groups: (i) *sifat–i salbiyyah*, or negative attributes, and (ii) *sifat–i wujudiyyah* or existential or positive attributes. According to them, the *sifat–i wujudiyyah*, which they also called *sifat–i `aqliyyah* or rational attributes, were seven: knowledge, power, will, life, hearing, seeing, and speech.

The extreme Sifatis asserted that even those attributes of God which imply His bodily existence are also to be taken in their true literal sense. As against them, the Ash'arites maintained that God possesses the apparently anthropomorphic attributes no doubt, but these should be understood not in their literal sense. They are to be believed in *bila kaifa*, without asking "how," and *bila tashbih*, without drawing any comparison.[14]

The Ash'arites here introduced a principle that the attributes of God are unique and fundamentally different from those of the created beings and as such should not be compared to them. This is known as the doctrine of *mukhalafah*, or absolute difference. This doctrine signifies that if any quality or term is applied to God, it must be understood in a unique sense and never taken in the sense in which it is normally used when applied to created beings. Because of the doctrine of *mukhalafah*, the Ash'arites held that we are not allowed to ascribe any attribute to God unless it is expressly so applied in the Qur'an. God's attributes differ from those of the creatures, not in degree but in kind, i. e., in their whole nature.

The Ash'arites, as against the Mu'tazilites, held that "God has attributes which inhere eternally in Him and are in addition to His essence."[15] These attributes are eternal, but they are neither identical with His essence, nor are they quite different from or other than His essence. God is knowing, for instance, means that God possesses knowledge as an attribute, which is inherent in God, and although it is not exactly the same as His essence, yet it is not something quite different from and other than His essence. The Ash'arites, here, maintained a very difficult position. They were between the two horns of a dilemma. They could neither assert the eternal attributes of God to be identical with nor wholly different from the essence of God.

They could not agree to the Mu'tazilite view and assert the identity of the attributes with the essence of God, because that would be a virtual denial of the attributes. They could not also assert that these eternal attributes are something absolutely different, or other than and separate, from God, as that would lead to multiplicity of eternals, and go against divine unity.

They, therefore, maintained that these attributes are, in one sense, included in and, in another sense, excluded from, the essence of God.[16] It is common knowledge that the Asharites contended that essence (*mahiyyah*), and attributes (*sifat*) are two different things and they cannot be otherwise in the case of God, the Supreme Being.

The Ash'arites made a distinction between the meaning or connotation (*mafhum*) of a thing and its reality (*haqiqah*). So far as their meaning is concerned, the attributes and the essence of God are not the same and as such the attributes are in addition to the essence of God, i.e., they have different meanings. The meaning of *dhat* (essence) is different from the meanings of different attributes.

God's essence, for instance, is not knowing or powerful or wise, but so far as their ultimate *haqiqah* (reality or application) is concerned, the attributes are inherent in the divine essence, and hence are not something quite different from or other than the essence of God.[17]

In support of the above view of theirs, the Ash'arites advanced the following arguments:

The analogical argument of the Ash'arites of the older generation: God's actions prove that He is knowing, powerful, and willing; so they also prove that He possesses knowledge, power, will, etc., because the ground of inference cannot differ in different things. What is true in the case of a created being must also be true in the case of the Divine Being.[18] In the case of a human being, by “knowing” we mean one who possesses knowledge and even common sense and draws a line of demarcation between an essence and its attributes.

On the same analogy, distinction must be drawn between the essence of God and His attributes. The essence and the attributes should not be supposed to be blended in the Divine Being. Hence the attributes of God cannot be identical with His essence, as the Mu'tazilites held. But this analogical reasoning is very weak, for what is true of a finite being need not necessarily be true of an infinite being. But, according to the doctrine of *mukhalafah*, God's knowledge or power or will and, as a matter of fact, all His rational attributes signify quite different meanings when applied to created beings.

Secondly, they argued that if all the attributes of God are identical with His essence, the divine essence must be a homogeneous combination of contradictory qualities. For instance, God is merciful (*rahim*) and also revengeful (*qahhar*); both the contradictory attributes would constitute the essence of God, which is one, unique, and indivisible (*ahad*), and that is absurd.

Further, if the attributes are identical with God's essence, and if, for instance, His being knowing, powerful, and living is His essence itself, no useful purpose will be served by ascribing them to Him, for that would ultimately be the virtual application of His essence to itself, which is useless. Hence the divine attributes cannot be identical with the divine essence.

Thirdly, if the attributes of God are not distinct from His essence, the meanings of the different attributes will be exactly the same, for God's essence is a simple and indivisible unity. The meanings of knowing,

willing, and living, for instance, will be exactly the same, and thus knowledge will mean power, or power will mean life, and so on.[19]

This also is an absurdity. These different attributes imply different meanings and hence they cannot be identical with God's essence. His essence is one and He possesses many attributes which eternally inhere in Him and, though not identical with His essence, yet they are not absolutely different from His essence.

2. Free will

On the question of free-will or on the ability of man to choose and produce actions, the Ash'arites took up again an intermediary position between the libertarian and fatalistic views, held by the Mu'tazilites and the Jabrites respectively. The orthodox people and the Jabrites maintained a pure fatalistic view. They held that human actions are predetermined and predestined by God.

Man has no power to produce any action. "Everything," they contended, "is from God." God has absolute power over everything including human will and human actions. The Mu'tazilites and the Qadarites, on the other hand, held that man has full power to produce an action and has complete freedom in his choice, though the power was created in him by God.

The Ash'arites struck a middle path. They made a distinction between creation (*khalq*) and acquisition (*kasb*) of an action. God, according to the Ash'arites, is the creator (*khaliq*) of human actions and man is the acquisitor (*muktasib*). "Actions of human beings are created (*makhluq*) by God, the creatures are not capable of creating any action."[20] "There is no creator except God and the actions of man are, therefore, His creation."[21] Power (*qudrah*), according to them, is either (i) original (*qadamah*) or (ii) derived (*hadithah*). The original power alone is effective. Derived power can create nothing. The power possessed by man is given by God and as such it is derived.[22]

Al Ash'ari said, "The true meaning of acquisition is the occurrence of a thing or event due to derived power, and it is an acquisition for the person by whose derived power it takes place."[23] God is, thus, the creator of human actions and man is the acquisitor. Man cannot create anything; he cannot initiate work. God alone can create, because absolute creation is His prerogative. God creates in man the power and the ability to perform an act. He also creates in him the power to make a free choice (*ikhtiyar*) between two alternatives - between right and wrong.

This free choice of man is not effective in producing the action. It is the habit or nature of God to create the action corresponding to the choice and power created by Himself in man. Thus, the action of man is created by God, both as to initiative and as to production or completion. Man is free only in making the choice between alternatives and also in intending to do the particular action freely chosen: Man, in making this choice and intending to do the act, acquires (*iktisab*) either the merit of appreciation and reward from God if he makes the right choice, or the demerit of condemnation and punishment if he

makes the wrong choice.

The Ash`arites, thus, in order to avoid the fatalistic position, introduced the doctrine of acquisition by which, they thought, they could account for man's free-will and lay responsibility upon him. Man has no free-will in the Mu'tazilite sense; he has no real and effective power, but has some derived power by which he acquires a share in the production of the act: In the case of voluntary actions of human beings, there are, so to say, two causes.

The action is the combined effect of the real cause, God, and the choice and intention of man, the acquisitor, the possessor of ineffective power because of its being derived power. God creates in two ways: either with a locus (*mahall*) or without a locus. Human actions are His creation with a locus.24

"God creates, in man, the power, ability, choice, and will to perform an act, and man, endowed with this derived power, chooses freely one of the alternatives and intends or wills to do the action and, corresponding to this intention, God creates and completes the action."25

It is this intention on the part of man which makes him responsible for his deeds. Man cannot take the initiative in any matter, nor can he originate any action. But the completion of the act is partially due to his intention: He, thus, acquires the merit or demerit of the action because of his intending to do a good or bad action. Man's free choice is, so to say, an occasion for God's causing the action corresponding to that choice.

In this the Ash`arites come very close to the occasionalism of Malebranche which was expounded in Europe eight centuries and a half later. This correspondence and harmony between the choice of man and God's creation, according to the Ash'arites, is not due to a harmony established by God previously, but because of His habit or nature to create the harmony whenever human action is done.

This, in short, is the solution of the problem of free-will offered by the Ash'arites. The Ashh'arite view on this problem is not free from logical and ethical difficulties. It was really very difficult for them to reconcile the absolute determination of all events by God with man's accountability and responsibility for his deeds. Some, of the later Ash'arites, particularly Imam Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, discarded the veil of acquisition in order to escape the charge of fatalism, and advocated naked determinism.26

3. The Problem of Reason and Revelation and the Criterion of Good and Evil

The Ash`arites differ from the Mu'tazilites on the question whether reason or revelation should be the basis or source of truth and reality: Both the schools admit the necessity of reason for the rational understanding of faith, but they differ with regard to the question whether revelation or reason is more fundamental and, in case of a conflict, whether reason or revelation is to get preference.

The Mu'tazilites held that reason is more fundamental than revelation and is to be preferred to revelation. Revelation merely confirms what is accepted by reason and, if there be a conflict between the two,

reason is to be preferred and revelation must be so interpreted as to be in conformity with the dictates of reason.

The Ash`arites, on the other hand, held that revelation is more fundamental as the source of ultimate truth and reality, and reason should merely confirm what is given by revelation. The Ash`arites prefer revelation to reason in case of a conflict between the two. As a matter of fact, this is one of the fundamental principles in which the rational *Kalam* of the Mu'tazilites differs from the orthodox *Kalam* of the Ash'arites.

If pure reason is made the sole basis or source of truth and reality, including the truth and reality of the most fundamental principles or concepts on which Islam is based, it would be a pure speculative philosophy or at best a rational theology in general and not a doctrinal theology of a particular historic religion, i. e., that of Islam in particular. Islam is based on certain fundamental principles or concepts which, being suprasensible in nature, are incapable of rational proof. These principles, first, must be believed in on the basis of revelation.

Revelation, thus, is the real basis of the truth and reality of these basic doctrines of Islam. This faith, based on revelation, must be rationalized. Islam as a religion, no doubt, admits the necessity of rationalizing its faith. But to admit the necessity of rationalizing faith is not to admit pure reason or analytic thought to be the sole source or basis of Islam as a religion. Reason, no doubt, has the right to judge Islam and its basic principles, but what is to be judged is of such a nature that it cannot submit to the judgment of reason except on its own terms.

Reason must, therefore, be subordinated to revelation. Its function is to rationalize faith in the basic principles of Islam and not to question the validity or truth of the principles established on the basis of revelation as embodied in the Qur'an and the Sunnah. The problem of the criterion of good and evil follows as a corollary to the problem of reason and revelation. The problem of good and evil is one of the most controversial problems of Islamic theology.

The Mu'tazilites held that reason, and not revelation, is the criterion or standard of moral judgment, i.e., of the goodness and badness of an action. The truth and moral value of things and human actions must be determined by reason. They contended that moral qualities of good and evil are objective; they are inherent in the very nature of things or actions and as such can be known by reason and decided to be good or bad.

The Ash'arites, as against the Mu'tazilites, held that revelation and not reason is the real authority or criterion to determine what is good and what is bad. Goodness and badness of actions (*husn wa qubh*) are not qualities inhering in them; these are mere accidents (*a'rad*). Actions–in–themselves are neither good nor bad. Divine Law makes them good or bad.

In order to make the ground of controversy between the Mu'tazilites and the Ash'arites clearer, we may explain here the three different senses in which these two terms, good and evil, are used.[27]

(i) Good and evil are sometimes used in the sense of perfection and defect respectively. When we say that a certain thing or action is good or bad (for instance, knowledge is good and ignorance is bad), we mean that it is a quality which makes its possessor perfect or implies a defect in him.

(ii) These terms are also used in a utilitarian sense meaning gain and loss in worldly affairs. Whatever is useful or has utility in our experience is good, and the opposite of it is bad. So whatever is neither useful nor harmful is neither good nor bad.

Both the Ash'arites and the Mu'tazilites agree that in the two senses, mentioned above, reason is the criterion or standard of good and evil. There is no difference of opinion in the above two senses. But good and bad in the second sense may vary from time to time, from individual to individual, and from place to place.

In this sense there will be nothing permanently or universally good or bad; what is good to one may be bad to others and vice versa. This implies that good and evil are subjective and not objective and real. Hence actions are neither good nor bad, but experience or workability would make them so and, therefore, they can be known by reason without the help of revelation.

(iii) Good and evil are also used in a third sense of commendable and praiseworthy or condemnable in this world and rewardable or punishable, as the case may be, in the other world.

The Ash'arites maintained that good and evil in their third sense must be known through revelation, not by reason as the Mu'tazilites had held. According to the Ash'arites, revelation alone decides whether an action is good or bad. What is commanded by *Shar'* is good, and what is prohibited is bad. *Shar`* can convert previously declared good into bad and vice versa.

As actions by themselves are neither good nor bad, there is nothing in them which would make them rewardable (good) or punishable (bad). They are made rewardable or punishable by revelation or *Shar'*. As there is no quality of good or evil seated in the very nature of an act, there can be no question of knowing it by reason.

4. The Problem of the Eternity of the Qur'an

There was a great controversy over the question whether the Qur'an is created or uncreated and eternal. This question is bound up with another question whether speech is one of God's attributes or not. The orthodox section of the Muslims, including the Ash'arites, held that God has it as one of His seven rational attributes, and as His attributes are eternal, divine speech, i.e., the Qur'an, is also eternal.

As regards the eternity of the Qur'an, the Ash'arites adopted again an intermediary position between the extreme views of the Zahirites and the Mu'tazilites. The Hanbalites and other Zahirites (extreme orthodox schools) held that the speech of God, i. e., the Qur'an, is composed of letters, words, and sounds which inhere in the essence of God and is, therefore, eternal. Some of the Hanbalites went to the extreme and

asserted that even the cover and the binding of the Qur'an are eternal.[28]

The Mu'tazilites and a section of the Rafidites went to the other extreme and maintained that the Qur'an was created. They denied all attributes of God, including the attribute of speech, on the ground that if it be an eternal attribute of God, there would be multiplicity of eternals, to believe which is polytheism and contrary to the basic principles of Islam. They further argued that "the Qur'an is composed of parts, successively arranged parts, and whatever is composed of such parts must be temporal."[29]

Hence the Qur'an must be created. The Ash'arites maintained that the Qur'an is composed of words and sounds, but these do not inhere in the essence of God. They made a distinction between the outward and concrete expression of the Qur'an in language, and the real, self-subsistent meaning of it, and held that the Qur'an, as expressed in words and sounds, is, no doubt, temporal (*hadath*); but against the Mu'tazilites they asserted that the Qur'an in its meanings is uncreated and eternal.

The "self-subsisting meaning" eternally inheres in the essence of God. These meanings are expressed; their expression in language is temporal and created. It is so because the same meaning, while remaining the same, might be expressed differently at different times, in different places by different persons or nations. They further maintained that this meaning is an attribute other than knowledge and will and, as such, inheres eternally in the essence of God and is, therefore, eternal.[30]

In support of this contention the Ash`arites advanced the following arguments:[31]

(i) The Qur'an is "knowledge from God"; it is, therefore, inseparable from God's attribute of knowledge which is eternal and uncreated. Hence it is also eternal and uncreated.

(ii) God created everything by His word *kun* (be) and this word, which is in the Qur'an, could not have been a created one, otherwise a created word would be a creator, which is absurd. Hence God's word is uncreated, i. e.. eternal.

(iii) The Qur'an makes a distinction between creation (*khalq*) and command (*amr*) when it says, ***"Are not the creation and command His alone?"*** Hence God's Command, His word or *Kalam*, which is definitely something other than created things (*makhluq*), must be unereated and eternal.

(iv) Further, God says to Moses, ***"I have chosen thee over mankind with My apostolate and My word."*** This verse signifies that God has speech. Again, Moses is addressed by God with the words: ***"Lo, I am thy Lord."*** Now, if the word which addresses Moses is a created thing, it would mean that a created thing asserts that it is Moses Lord (God), which is absurd. God's word, therefore, must be eternal.

The Ash'arites further pointed out that all the different arguments advanced by the Mu'tazilites (and in ***Sharh-i Mawaqif*** as many as eight such arguments have been mentioned), in support of their view that the Qur'an is created, would apply only to the expressed Qur'an and not to the real Qur'an, the latter

being the “meanings of the Qur'an.”[32]

5. The Problem of the Beatific Vision

On the question of the beatific vision, the Ash`arites, true to their attitude of reconciliation, again tried to adopt a course lying midway between the extreme anthropomorphic view of the Zahirites and other orthodox Muslims on the one hand and the view of the Mu'tazilites and the “philosophers” on the other.

The extreme orthodox Muslims and the Zahirites, in particular, held that it is possible to see God and the righteous persons would actually have His vision as the chief reward for their good actions. They further held that God is settled firmly on His Throne, He exists in different directions, and is capable of being pointed out. The Mu'tazilites and the “philosophers” denied the possibility of seeing God with eyes, as that would imply His bodily existence, which is absurd.

The Ash'arites, as against the Mu'tazilites and the “philosophers,” and in agreement with the orthodox class, held that it is possible to see God;[33] but they could not agree to their view that God is extended and can be shown by pointing out. They accepted the philosophical principle that whatever is extended or spatial must be contingent and temporal, and God is not an extended and temporal being.

This admission landed them into a difficulty, for if God is not extended and only extended things can be seen, God cannot be seen;[34] but this conclusion conflicts with their position that beatific vision is possible. So, in order to get out of this difficulty, they asserted the possibility of seeing an object even if it is not present before the perceiver.[35] This was a very peculiar and untenable position, for it repudiated all the principles of optics.

It is possible to see God even though our sense of vision does not receive the corresponding “impression” of the object on it. Besides, it is possible for God to create in human beings the capacity to see Him without the necessary conditions of vision, such as the presence, in concrete form, of the object itself in space and time, normal condition of the appropriate sense-organ, absence of hindrance or obstruction to perception, and so on; and though God is unextended and does not exist in space and time, “yet He may make Himself visible to His creature like the full moon.”

They further contended that the vision of God is possible without any impression on our sense-organ for another reason. There is practically no difference between a “sensation” and an “after image” except that the sensation possesses an additional quality over and above the common qualities present in both, and this additional quality, i.e, impression on the sense-organ produced by the external object, does not make any difference in the perception of an object.

Hence, though this impression is missing in the case of seeing God, it may still be called “seeing.” The weakness of this argument is apparent to any student of psychology, because an after-image is possible only when it is preceded by an actual impression of the object on the sense-organ. The actual impression of the object is, therefore, a precondition of an after-image in the case of beatific vision too.

The Ash'arites were faced with another difficulty. The Mu'tazilites had pointed out that if seeing of God is possible, it must be possible under all circumstances and at all times, for this possibility is due either to His essence or to an inseparable attribute in Him. In either case, it should be possible at all times. And if it is possible at all times, it must be possible now; and if it is possible to see Him now, we must see Him now, for when all the conditions of "vision" are present, the actual seeing must take place. The Ash`arites met this objection in a very naive manner by saying, "We do not admit the necessity of actual seeing taking place, even when all its eight conditions are present."

The Ash'arites supported their views on the basis of revelation. According to the Qur'an, Moses asked of God, ***"O, my Lord, show Thyself to me so that I can see Thee."*** Had seeing been impossible, Moses would not have said so, for, otherwise, it must be assumed that either he knew its impossibility or did not, and both the alternatives are absurd, because an intelligent person like him could not have been ignorant of this impossibility and could not have asked for what he knew was impossible.

Again, according to the Qur'an, God said to Moses, ***"If the mountain remains fixed in its place, you can see Me,"*** and if the antecedent is possible the consequent must be possible. Here, evidently, the antecedent, fixity of the mountain, is in itself a possible thing. Therefore, the consequent, the vision of God, must also be possible. Some other verses also support the conclusion.[36]

There are a few more controversial problems of secondary importance, in which the Ash`arites differed from the Mu'tazilites. These are, for example, promise of reward and threat of punishment by God; whether God can make His creatures responsible for the actions for which they have no ability; whether God's actions are bound to be based on rational considerations and on purpose; whether He is bound to do what is best for His creatures; and whether the knowledge of God or recognition of His existence is based on reason or revelation.

These theological problems of secondary importance are more or less the corollaries of the main principles in which the Ash'arites and Mu'tazilites differed.

The Ash'arites held that God is the only real cause of everything; He alone possesses real and effective power and this power is unlimited; His will is absolutely free – not determined by anything. Whatever power human beings apparently possess is given by God. Man does not possess any real and effective power. God, being absolutely free in His action, is not bound to act on rational purpose. He does not act teleologically for, otherwise, His actions would be determined by something external to and other than Himself and He would not remain absolutely free. External purpose would put a limit to God's omnipotence.

Like Spinoza, al–Ash'ari held that there is no purpose in the mind of God which would determine His activity. From thus anti–teleological view it follows that as God's action is not teleological, He is not bound to do what is best for His creatures. He does whatever He wills. But as He is an absolutely intelligent and just being, His actions, as a matter of fact, are all full of wisdom.[37]

As against the Mu'tazilites, the Ash'arites held that God can make us responsible for the actions which we have no power to do. The Mu'tazilites held that God cannot do so, because that would be an irrational and unjust act on His part. It is admitted by all schools of thought in Islam that power or ability of men to do a thing is given by God. But opinions differ on the question whether this power or ability is really effective in producing any action. The Mu`tazilites and the Qadarites held that man's power is fully effective and can produce an action. But the Ash'arites maintained that, being derivative, it can have no effective force. Similar are their respective positions with regard to the ability to act.

This ability is no doubt given by God as an accident, but the Mu'tazilites, particularly Abu al-Hudhail `Allaf, held that this ability is given to man simultaneously with the performance of the act. But the Ash'arites maintained that it is given before the actual performance of the act;[38] but being a mere accident in man, it has only a momentary existence and is of no practical use to man in performing the act.

As a matter of fact, it ceases to exist when the actual action takes place. Man, therefore, does the act, practically without having the power and the ability to do so. He is held responsible for his actions because of his choosing freely one of the two alternative actions and intending to do the action so chosen. But neither his choice nor his intention can produce the action. It is God who creates the action and is thus its effective and real cause.[39]

There is an almost similar controversy over the question of God's promise of reward to the virtuous and His threat of punishment to the wrong-doer. This was one of the five main problems with which the Mu'tazilite movement started.[40]

The Mu'tazilites held that God is bound to fulfil His promises of reward and punishment. Every action, good or bad, must take its own course and be followed by its logical and normal consequence. A right action, therefore, must be followed by its reward and a wrong one by punishment. God has made promises in the Qur'an and He, being a just being, cannot do otherwise, i.e., He cannot punish the virtuous and forgive the wrong-doer.

On the other hand, the Ash'arites maintained that, being all-powerful and absolutely free in His will, God can punish His creatures even if they have not committed any sins or reward His creatures even though they have done no virtuous deeds. There is nothing binding on God; His will is not subject to teleological considerations.

It is by the inner necessity of His own nature that He fulfils His promises of reward to the virtuous and does not do otherwise. And it is in His infinite mercy that He may forgive any wrongdoer or vicious person, in spite of the threats of punishment for his vicious acts. This act of forgiveness will also be in accordance with His nature as the most generous and gracious being.

Ash’arite Metaphysics

Al–Ash'ari's interest was purely theological and his discussions did not contain much metaphysics.41 But the subsequent Ash'arites found it impossible to achieve their main object of defending the faith and harmonizing reason with revelation without making reference to the ultimate nature of reality.

Al–Ash'ari's theological system was, thus, considered to be incomplete without a support from metaphysics. The system was fully developed by the later Ash'arites, particularly by Qadi Abu Bakr Muhammad bin Tayyyib al–Baqillani who was one of the greatest among them. He was a Basrite, but he made Baghdad his permanent residence and died there in 403/1013. He was a great original thinker and wrote many valuable books on theology and various other subjects.

He made use of some purely metaphysical propositions in his theological investigations, such as substance is an individual unity, accident has only a momentary existence and cannot exist in quality, and perfect vacuum is possible, and thus gave the school a metaphysical foundation.

About him a Western scholar has remarked: “It is his glory to have contributed most important elements to, and put into fixed form what is, perhaps, the most daring metaphysical scheme, and almost certainly the most thorough theological scheme, ever thought out. On the one hand, the Lucretian atoms raining down through the empty void, the self–developing monads and pre–established harmony of Leibniz; and all the Kantian “things–in–themselves” are lame and impotent in their consistency beside the parallel Ash'arite doctrines; and, on the other, not even the rigours of Calvin; as developed in Dutch confessions, can compete with the unflinching exactitude of the Muslim conclusions”.42

The Ash'arites, being primarily interested in theological problems, kept their philosophical discussions mainly confined only to those questions which they thought had a direct or indirect bearing on these problems.43 Willingly or unwillingly, they had to philosophize “in order to meet the contemporary philosophers on their own ground.” But when they began philosophizing, they were very earnest and became great metaphysicians.

In dealing with the most important basic principles of Islam: (i) the existence of God, as the creator of the universe, and His unity and oneness, and (ii) the belief in the prophethood of Muhammad, they had to use certain proofs which necessitated some metaphysical and epistemological discussions. Hence they had to develop a theory of knowledge and a theory of reality, which were peculiarly their own. God, the ultimate principle, is, according to the Ash'arites, a necessary existent; His existence is identical with His essence.

In proving God's existence the Ash'arites used three arguments. Their argument from the contingent nature of motion is not of much importance to our discussion. The other two are:

(i) All bodies, they argued, are ultimately one in so far as their essence is concerned. But, in spite of this

basic unity, their characteristics are different. Hence there must be an ultimate cause for these divergent characteristic, and that ultimate cause is God.

(ii) The world is contingent. Every contingent thing must have a cause; therefore, the world must have a cause, and as no contingent thing can be the cause, that cause must be God. The major premise (i.e., every event must have a cause) does not require a proof. The minor premise – the world is contingent – they proved in the following manner: Everything that exists in the world is either a substance or a quality. The contingent character of a quality is evident, and the contingence of substance follows from the fact that no substance could exist apart from qualities. The contingence of quality necessitates the contingence of substance; otherwise, the eternity of substance would necessitate the eternity of quality.[44]

The Ash'arites believed in miracles which were considered to be the basis of the proof of prophethood and, in order to defend this view, they had to deny the laws of nature. They also denied causality in nature and made God the only cause of everything.

Now, in order to explain the full implication of the above arguments, it was necessary for them to develop a theory of knowledge and a metaphysics.

The world consists of things. Now, the question arises: What is meant by a thing, what is its nature, and how far do we know it?

Al–Baqillani defined knowledge as the cognition of a thing as it is in itself.[45] A thing is defined by the Ash'arites as "that which is existent." Everything is an existent and every existent is a thing.[46] So, according to the Ash'arites, existence, whether necessary or contingent, is the thing or the essence of the thing–in–itself and not a quality in addition to it, as the Mu'tazilites held.

Al–Jahiz, al–Jubba'i, and some other Mu'tazilites of the Basrite school defined a "thing" as that which is known,[47] and held that existence is a quality of it, added to its essence. The Ash'arites, as against these Mu'tazilites, contended that if existence is an additional quality, the essence–in–itself would be a non–existent and hence a non–entity and the subsequent–addition of the quality of "existence" to it would involve a clear contradiction in so far as it would make the non–existent existent.[48]

This is an absurdity. The thing–in–itself which is the object of knowledge according to the Ash'arites, is, therefore, an existent thing or a body. Everything that exists in the world has a contingent existence and is either substance or quality. In this sense God is not a thing.

The Aristotelian categories of thought were subjected by the Ash'arites to a searching criticism. Only two of those categories, substance and quality, were retained by them. The other categories, quality, place, time, etc., are nothing but relative characteristics (*i'tibarat*) that exist subjectively in the mind of the knower, having no corresponding objective reality.

Like Berkeley, the Irish philosopher, they also did not make any distinction between the primary and secondary qualities of objects. The world, therefore, consists of substance, on which the mind reflects, and qualities, which are not in the thing–in–itself but only in the mind of the knower. The qualities are mere accidents which are fleeting, transitory, and subjective relations, having only a momentary existence. A quality or accident cannot exist in another accident but only in a substance. No substance could ever exist apart from a quality. The substance, being inseparable from its accidents, must also be transitory, having only a moment's duration, just as the accidents are. Everything that exists, therefore, consists of mere transitory units (subjective), having only a moment's duration.

The Ash'arites, thus, rejected the Aristotelian view of matter as "a permanent potentiality (*hayula*) of suffering the impress of form (*surah*)," because a possibility is neither an entity nor a non–entity but purely a subjectivity. With inert matter, the active form and all causes must also go. They, too, are mere subjectivities. This led them straight to the atomists and, as a matter of fact, they did become atomists after their own fashion.

In this connection we may observe that the object of the Ash'arites was, like that of Kant, to fix the relation of knowledge to the thing–in–itself; and they showed here a great originality in their thought. On this question they not only anticipated Kant but, in reaching the thing–in–itself, they were much more thorough than Kant. "In his examination of human knowledge regarded as a product and not merely a process, Kant stopped at the idea of 'Ding an sich' [thing–in–itself], but the Ash'arite endeavoured to penetrate further, and maintained, against the contemporary Agnostic–Realism, that the so–called underlying essence existed only so far as it was brought in relation to the knowing subject."[49]

Ash'arite Atomism

The substances perceived by us are atoms which come into existence from vacuity and drop out of existence again. The world is made up of such atoms. The Ash'arite atoms are fundamentally different from those of Democritus and Lucretius. The Ash`arite atoms are not material; they are not permanent; they have only a momentary existence; they are not eternal but every moment brought into being, and then allowed to go out of existence by the Supreme Being, God, the only cause of everything in the universe. These atoms are not only of space but of time also. They are non–material or ideal in character. They resemble the monads of Leibniz.

But the Ash'arite monads differ from those of Leibniz in having no possibility of self–development along certain lines. Each monad has certain qualities but has extension neither in space nor in time. They have simply position, not bulk, and are isolated from and independent of one another. There is absolute void between any two monads. Space and time are subjective. All changes in the world are produced by their entering into existence and dropping out again, but not by any change in themselves.

The Ash'arite ontology necessitated the existence of God. Their monads must have a cause, without which they could not have come into being, nor could there be any harmony or connection between

them. This cause must be a *cause sui*; otherwise there would be an infinite regress of the causal nexus. The Ash'arites found this cause in the free-will of God. It creates and annihilates the atoms and their qualities and, thus, brings to pass all motion and change in the world.

The Ash'arites were, thus, thoroughgoing metaphysicians. Being was all important in their ontology. The will of that Being or God must, therefore, be the ground of all things. Hence they did not find any difficulty, as Leibniz did, in explaining the harmony and coherence among the isolated, windowless, and independent monads, constituting the one orderly world.

Leibniz had to bring in, in his monadology, a Monad of monads or God, and fall back upon the Theory of Pre-established Harmony to bring his monads into harmonious and orderly relations with one another, and this he could do only at the cost of his monadology, and by abandoning his pluralistic and individualistic metaphysics.

But the Ash'arites, consistently with their ontology, fell straight back upon God, and found in His will the ground of orderliness and harmony in the universe. They were, thus, more thorough and consistent than Leibniz in their theory of monads. The Ash'arite atomism approaches that of Lotze's, who in spite of his desire to save external reality, ended in its Complete reduction to ideality. But, like Lotze, they could not believe their atoms to be the inner working of the infinite Primal Being.

The necessary consequence of their analysis is a thorough going idealism like that of Berkeley. Their theory of knowledge reduced the universe to a mere show of ordered subjectivities which, as they maintained like Berkeley, found their ultimate explanation in the will of God. Their interest, as we have already pointed out, was mainly theological. Interest in pure monotheism was very strong with them. Their metaphysical and epistemological discussions were actuated by a pious desire to defend the idea of divine creations, to drive men back to God and His revelation and compel them to see in Him the one grand fact of the universe.

The Ash'arites are here more consistent than Berkeley. God, according to them, is the only cause in the true sense of the term. No created thing, having created power, could be the cause of anything.

The attitude of the Ash'arites towards the law of causation was sceptical. They denied objective validity of causality in nature. No created thing or being can be the cause of anything. Things or beings in nature do not possess any power or quality which could produce any effect. The so-called power which men and objects of nature seem to possess is not an effective power, for it is a derived power, not an original power which alone can produce effect.[50] Whatever power the creatures might possess must have been given by God, who alone possesses all real power. Being (God) is the only Ultimate Reality.

The things of the world are composed of indivisible units monads which, every moment, are created and annihilated; and it is God who creates and annihilates them and their qualities, thereby bringing about all the motion and change in the world. There is, thus, no such thing as a law of nature and the world is sustained by a constant, ever repeated activity of God.

There is no such thing as a secondary cause; when there is the appearance of such a cause, it is only illusionary. God produces the appearance of the effect as well as the effect. Things of the world do not possess any permanent nature. Fire, for instance, does not possess the nature or quality of burning; it does not burn. God creates in a substance “a being burned” when fire touches it.

The Ash'arites thus denied power in the cause as well as the necessary connection between the so-called cause and effect. Shibli mentions that the Ash'arites rejected the idea of causation with a view to defending the possibility of miracles on the manifestation of which, according to them, prophethood depended. The orthodox school believed in miracles as well as in the universal law of causation; but they also maintained that, at the time of manifesting a miracle, God suspends the operation of this law and thus brings about an exception.

Asha`ari, however, maintained that a cause must have always the same effect (i.e., the effect of one and the cause cause could not be different at different times). Having accepted this principle as formulated by their leader, the Ash'arites could not agree to the orthodox view and, therefore, to prove the possibility of miracles they rejected the law of causation altogether, According to them, there is no power in the antecedent to produce the consequent. “We know nothing but floating impressions, the phenomenal order of which is determined by God.”[51]

Objection might be raised against the Ash'arite metaphysics that it establishes in effect a relationship between God and the atoms, but relationships, according to the Ash'arites, are subjective illusions. In reply to this objection it may be pointed out that all relationship applies only to contingent beings or things perceived by the senses. It would not hold in the case of the Necessary Being, God, who is suprasensible. And according to their principle of *mukhalafah*, nothing which is applied to created things or beings can be applied to God in the same sense. God is not a natural cause but a free cause.

This is the Ash'arite system as completed by Qadi Abu Bakr al-Baqillani. It faced a strong opposition from the orthodox, particularly from the followers of Abmad bin Hanbal. Al-Ashari's opinions did not get much recognition outside the Shafi'ite group to which he belonged. The Hanafites preferred the doctrines of his contemporary al-Maturidi who differed from al-Ash'ari in certain minor controversial points. Shibli has mentioned nine such points.[52]

In Spain, Ibn Hazm (d. 456/1063) opposed the Ash'arite doctrines. The Saljuq Sultan Tughril Beg, who was an adherent of the Hanbalite school, treated the Ash'arites very badly, but his successor Sultan Alp Arsalan and especially his famous vizier, Nizam al-Mulk supported the Ash`arites and put an end to the persecution to which they had been exposed. Nizam al-Mulk founded the Nizamite Academy at Baghdad in 459/1066 for the defence of Ash'arite doctrines. It is under his patronage that Abu al-Ma'ali `Abd al-Malik al-Juwaini got the chance of preaching the Ash'arite doctrine freely.[53]

The Ash'arite system could not obtain widespread acceptance until it was popularized by a1-Juwaini and al-Ghazali in the East and by Ibn Tumart in the West. It was al-Juwaini who could legitimately

claim the credit of making the Ash'arites' doctrines popular. His vast learning and erudite scholarship brought him the title of Dia' al-Din (the light of religion).

Al-Juwaini received his early education from his father, Shaikh Abu Muhammad `Abd Allah, and after the death of his father, he got further education from his teacher, abu Ishaq al-Isfara'ini, a great Ash'arite scholar. Al-Juwaini, in course of time, was recognized by the scholars of the time to be Shaikh al-Islam (the chief leader of Islam) and Imam al Haramain (the religious leader of Makkah and Madinah). For thirty years, he continued teaching and preaching the Ash'arite doctrines.

Al-Juwaini was the teacher of al-Ghazali. He wrote many books on various subjects. Some of these are: *al-Shamil*, on the principles of religion; *al-Burhan*, on the principles of jurisprudence; *al-`Aqidat al-Nizamiyyah*; and *Irshad*, on theology. He was born in 419/1028 and died at Nishapur in 478/1085.53 Being the Shaikh al-Islam and the Imam of Makkah and Madinah, al-Juwaini's *Fatawa* (judgments on religious matters) used to be respected by people in general throughout the Muslim world; and for this reason, his writings got the widest circulation and, through these writings, Ash'arite doctrines became known everywhere.

One great theological result of the Ash'arite system was that it checked the growth of free thought which tended to dissolve the solidarity of the Islamic Shari'ah. The Ash`arite mode of thought had its intellectual results also.

It led to an independent criticism of Greek philosophy and prepared the ground for philosophies propounded by men like al-Ghazali and Fakhr al-Din al-Razi. Al-Ghazali is generally included among the Ash'arites and it is he who maybe said to have completed the Ash'arite metaphysics. It was he who, by giving a systematic refutation of Greek philosophy in his famous work, *Tahafut al-Falasifah*, completely annihilated the dread of intellectualism which had characterized the minds of the orthodox. It was chiefly through his influence that people began to study dogma and metaphysics together.54

Strictly speaking, al-Ghazali was not an Ash'arite, though he admitted that the Ash'arite mode of thought was excellent for the masses. “He held that the secret of faith could not be revealed to the masses; for this reason he encouraged exposition of the Ash`arite theology, and took care in persuading his disciples not to publish the results of his private reflection.”55

Al-Ghazali made the Ash'arite theology so popular that it became practically the theology of the Muslim community in general and has continued to remain so up to the present time.

Bibliography

Abu al-Hasan bin Isma'il al-Ashari, *Kitab al-Ibanah `an Usul al-Diyanah*, Hyderabad, Deccan, 1321/1903; *Risalah fi Istihsan al-Khaud*, Hyderabad, Deccan, 1323/1905, 1344/1926; *Maqalat a1-Islamiyyin wa Ikhtilaf al-Musalliyyi*n, 2 Vols., Istanbul, 1929; `Abd al-Karim al-Shahrastani, *Kitab*

al–Milal wal–Nihal, ed. Cureton; Shibli, *`Ilm al–Kalam*, 4th edition, Ma'arif Press, Azamgarh, 1341/1923; Qadi `Add and Sayyid Sharif, *Sharh al Mawaqif*; abu al–`Ala, *Sharh–i Mawaqif*, Newal Kishore, Lucknow; al– Ghazali, *Ihya' ` Ulum al–Din,* Newal Kishore, Lucknow;

Ibn Khallikan, *Wafayat al–A'yan*, 2 Vols; Shaikh Muhammad Iqbal, *The Development of Metaphysics in Persia*, Bazm–i Iqbal, Lahore; al–Mas'udi, *Muruj ad–Dhahab*; Dhahabi, *Mizan al–I`tidal*; Baihaqi, *Kitab al–Asma' w–al–Sifat;* D. B. Macdonald, *Development of Muslim Theology, Jurisprudence and Constitutional Theory*, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1926; Ahmad Amin, *Duha al–Islam*, 4th edition, Cairo, 1946; Taftazani, *Sharh `Aqa'id–i Nasafi*; Khayali, *Sharh–i `Aqa'id–i Nasafi*.

1. Iqbal, The Development of Metaphysics in Persia, p. 53.
2. Ahmad Amin, Duha al–Islam, p. 36.
3. Al–Ash'ari, Istihsan al–Khaud, p. 4.
4. Al–Shahrastani, al–Milal wal–Nihal, p. 50.
5. The subject originally was not called `Ilm al–Kalam. This name was given afterwards, during al–Mamun's time. See Shibli, `Ilm al–Kalam, p. 31.
6. Ibn Khallikan, Wafayat al–A'yan, p. 454.
7. Shibli, op. cit., p. 56.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibn Khallikan, op. cit., p. 55.
10. Shibli, op. cit., pp. 56. 57.
11. Al–Ash'ari, op. cit., pp. 4–9
12. Al–Ghazali, Ihya Ulum al–Din, p. 53.
13. Shibli, op. cit., p. 59.
14. Al–Ash'ari, al–Ibanah, p. 47.
15. Idem., al–Maqalat, p. 291.
16. Abu al–`Ala, Sharh–i Mawaqif, p. 571.
17. Ibid., .pp. 581–82.
18. Al–Shahrastani, op. cit., p. 51.
19. Al–Ash'ari, al–Maqalat, p. 484.
20. Ibid., .p. 291.
21. Al–Ash'ari, al–Ibanah, p. 9.
22. Idem, al–Maqalat,, pp. 539–54:
23. Ibid., p. 542.
24. Abu al–`Ala, op. cit., p. 625.
25. Al–Shahrastani, op. cit., p. 53.
26. Shibli, op. cit., p. 72.
27. Qadi 'Add and Sayyid Sharif, Mawaqif, vol. IV, p. 182; Musallam al–Thubut, p. 114.
28. Baihaqi, Kitab al–Asma' wal–Sifat, p. 198.
29. Qadi `Add and Sayyid Sharif, op. cit., p. 601.
30. Sharh–i Mawaqif, p. 602; al–Ibanah, pp.23–42.
31. Al–Maqalat, p. 292.
32. Dhahabi, Mizan al–I`tidal (Allahabad edition), pp. 179–93; al–Ash'ari, al –Maqalat, pp. 582–602.
33. Al–Ibanah, p. 9.
34. Shibli, op. cit., p. 63.
35. Sharh–i Mawaqif, pp. 610–24.
36. Al–Ibanah, pp. 13–20.

37. Al–Maqalat, p. 252; Shibli, `Ilm al–Kalam, p. 59.
38. Al Maqalat, p. 43.
39. Al–Shahrastani, op. cit., p. 53.
40. Mas'udi, Muruj al–Dhahab.
41. Shibli, op,.cit., p. 57; Iqbal, op. cit., p. 55.
42. Macdonald, Development of Muslim Theology, Jurisprudence and Constitutional Theory, pp. 200–201.
43. Sharh–i Mawaqif, p. 15.
44. Shibli, op. cit., pp. 87, 88.
45. Sharh–i Mawaqif, p. 15.
46. Ibid., p. 128.
47. Al–Maqamat, p. 520.
48. Sharh–i Mawaqif, p. 109.
49. Iqbal; op. cit., p. 57.
50. Sharh–i Mawaqif, p. 262; al–Maqalat, p. 539
51. Shibli, op. cit., p. 64.
52. Ibid.. p. 92.
53. Ibn Khallikan, vol. I, p. 312.
54. Iqbal, op. cit., p. 59.
55. Shibli, op. cit.,p 66.

Chapter 12: Tahawism

Tahawism by A.K.M Ayyub Ali, M.A, Ph.D, Principl Government Rajshahi Madrasah, Rajshahi (Pakistan)

Tahawi's Life and Works

Abu Ja'far Ahmad b. Muhammad b. Salamah al–Azdi, al–Hajri, al–Tahawi, was born at Taha, a village in Upper Egypt. His forefathers came from the Yemen to Egypt and settled there after it had come under the Muslim rule. There is a considerable difference of opinion as to the year of his birth. The years 229/843, 230/ 844, 238/852 and 239/853 are mentioned by different biographers. Al–Sam'ani asserts that he was born in 229/843 and this is correct. He died in Egypt in 321/933.1

Al–Tahawi was mainly interested in Hadith and Fiqh, and was regarded as one of the greatest *Muhaddithin* and *fuqaha'* of his time. According to Abu Ishaq al–Shirazi, he was the last leader of Hanafi Fiqh in Egypt.2

He began to study Shafi'i Law under his maternal uncle abu Ibrahim Ismail al–Muzani (d. 264/878), the most celebrated pupil of Imam al–Shafi'i, and then leaving his school he took up the study of Hanafi Law under al–Shaikh abu Jafar Ahmad b. abi ,`Imran (d. 285/898), who became the Chief Qadi of Egypt in 270/883. Different versions are given by his biographers of his conversion to Hanafi school, but the most probable reason seems to be that the system of Imam abu Hanifah appealed to his critical insight more

than that of Imam Shafi`i.

Al–Tahawi went to Syria in 268/882 for further studies in Hanafi Law and became a pupil of Qadi abu Khazim `Abd al–Hamid b. Ja'far, the then Chief Justice of Syria.[3] He learnt hadith from a large number of Shaikhs especially from those who visited Egypt at his time, and had also many pupils of distinction.[4]

He is a distinguished author of many important works of which the following may be mentioned here: 1. *Sharh Ma'ani al–Athar*, 2. *Mushkil al Athar*, 3. *Ahkam al–Qur'an*, 4. *Ikhtilaf al–Ulama'*, 5. *al–Nawadir al–Fiqhiyyah*, 6. *Kitab al–Shurut al–Kabir*, 7. *al–Shurut al–Ausat*, 8. *Sharh al–Jami` al–Saghir*, 9. *Sharh al–Jami' al–Kabir*, 10. *al–Mukhtasar*, 11. *Manaqib Abi Hanifah*, 12. *Tarikh al–Kabir*, 13. *al–Radd `ala Kitab al–Mudallisin*, 14. *al–Radd `ala Abi `Ubaid*, 15. *al–Radd `ala `Isa b. Abban*, 16. *Hukm `Aradi Makkah*, etc.

His original contribution to Hadith literature, so far as we can estimate is that he introduced a new system of collecting legal traditions, developed a new method of interpreting and harmonizing the conflicting traditions, and adopted a new criterion for criticizing them. His predecessors and contemporaries, the authors of *al–Sihah al–Sittah* (the Six Canonical Compilations) collecting traditions according to their own standards and principles, left out a large number of genuine traditions.

Al–Tahawi made a strenuous effort to collect all the genuine legal traditions of the Prophet, narrated by different authorities on a particular subject, together with the opinions of the Companions of the Prophet, their Successors and the distinguished jurisprudents. He then scrutinized traditions (*ahadith*) and showed by evidence which of them were authentic, strong, weak, unknown, or such as might be supposed to have been repealed.

Thus, his collection provided for the scholars an unprecedented opportunity to judge for themselves the merits or demerits of a particular tradition. The criterion for judging the genuineness of a tradition, according to the Traditionists in general, was the *isnad* (chain of the narrators), and so they paid greater attention to the scrutiny of the *isnad* than to the scrutiny of the text (*matn*) of a tradition. But al–Tahawi, while scrutinizing a tradition, took into consideration the *matn* as well as the *isnad* of the tradition. He also aimed at a harmonizing interpretation in case of conflicting traditions.

Al–Tahawi, like al–Maturidi, was a follower of Imam Abu Hanifah (d. 150/ 767) in jurisprudence as well as in theology. He wrote a little treatise on theology named *Bayan al–Sunnah w–al–Jama'ah*, generally known as *al`Aqidat al–Tahawiyyah*.[5]

In the introduction to this treatise he says he will give therein an account of the beliefs of the *Ahl al–sunnah w'al–jama'ah* according to the views of Imam Abu Hanifah, Abu Yusuf, and Muhammad al–Shaibani – the well–known jurisprudents of the community. So the importance of his creed lies in the fact that it corroborates the views of Imam Abu Hanifah, the founder of the school, that have come down to us from different sources. Al–Tahawi made no attempt to explain the views of the Imam or to solve the old theological problems by advancing any new arguments. His sole aim was to give a summary of

the views of the Imam and to show indirectly that they were in conformity with the traditional views of the orthodox school.

The difference between him and al–Maturidi the two celebrated authorities on the views of the Imam is quite evident. Al–Maturidi was a thorough dialectician and his main endeavour was to find out a philosophical basis for the views of the leader and to support these views by scholastic reasoning, and thereby bring them closer to the views of the rationalists.

Al–Tahawi, as a true traditionist, did not favour, as will be seen, any rational discussion or speculative thinking on the articles of faith, but preferred to believe and accept them without questioning. There is no reference in his creed to the critical examination of the method, sources, and means of knowledge, or the foundation on which his theological system is built. So his system may be termed as dogmatic, while that of al–Maturidi as critical. The critical method followed by al–Tahawi in Hadith is quite lacking in theology. Thus, though both of them belong to the same school and uphold faithfully the doctrines of their master, they differ from each other in temperament, attitude, and trends of thought.

In order to indicate the characteristics of the system of al–Tahawi and to make an estimate of his contributions to theology, we propose to give in the following pages an outline of the views of Imam Abu Hanifah along with the views of both al–Tahawi and al–Maturidi on some of the most important theological problems that arose in Muslim theology.

Imam Abu Hanifah directed his movement against the Kharijites, Qadarites, Mu'tazilites, Shiites, Jabrites, the extreme Murji'ites, and the Hashwiyyah, the last being a group of the orthodox people who under the influence of the converted Jews, Christians, and Magians fell into gross anthropomorphism, and ascribed to God all the characteristics of a created being.6

He was the first theologian among the *fuqaha'* who adopted the principles and method of reasoning and applied them to a critical examination of the articles of faith and the laws of the Shariah. That is why he and his followers were called by the Traditionists the People of Reason and Opinion (*ashab al–ra'i w–al–qiyas*). This rational spirit and philosophical attitude were more consistently maintained by al–Maturidi than by al–Tahawi. Their views on the nature of faith, attributes of God, beatific vision, divine decree, and human freedom may be mentioned here to indicate the distinctive features of their methods.

Nature of Faith

Faith, according to the well–known view of Imam Abu Hanifah, consists of three elements: knowledge, belief, and confession; knowledge alone or confession alone is not faith.7 Al–Maturidi holds the same view and lays emphasis on knowledge (*ma'rifah*) and belief (*tasdiq*). But, according to his explanation, knowledge is the basis of faith and confession is not in reality an integral part of faith but only an indication (`*alamah*) of faith, a condition for enforcement of Islamic laws and enjoyment of the rights and privileges of the Muslim community. So the belief based on the knowledge of God is the basis of faith.8

Al–Tahawi excludes knowledge from his definition of faith and holds that it consists in believing by heart and confessing by tongue.[9]

As regards the relation between faith and action Imam Abu Hanifah maintains that Islam demands from its followers two things: belief and practice, and both are essential for a perfect Muslim. The two are very closely related like back and belly, but they are not identical. Practice is distinct from faith and faith is distinct from practice, but both are essential elements of Islam. "Allah has ordained practice for the faithful, faith for the infidel, and sincerity for the hypocrite." The term *al–din* (religion) includes both faith and action.[10]

Faith, according to him, is a living conviction of the heart – an absolute and indelible entity having its own existence independent of action. From this definition of faith he arrived at the following conclusions: (a) Faith is not liable to increase or decrease.[11] (b) Faith is impaired by doubt.[12] (c) The faithful are equal in faith but different in degree of superiority regarding practice.[13] (d) No Muslim should be declared devoid of faith on account of any sin, if he does not declare it to be lawful. One may be a man of faith with bad behaviour, but not an infidel.[14] (e) A believer who dies unrepentant, even though guilty of mortal sins, will not remain in hell for ever. Allah may grant him forgiveness or punish him in accordance with his sins.[15]

Pointing out the differences between himself and the Murji'ites, Imam Abu Hanifah says: "We do not say that sins do not harm the faithful, nor do we say that he will not enter hell, nor do we say that he will remain there for ever, although he should be a man of evil practice (*fasiq*), after having departed from this world as a man of faith. And we do not say that our good actions are accepted and our sins are forgiven, as the Murji'ites say.

But we say that no one who performs a good action, fulfilling all its conditions and keeping it free of all defects, without nullifying it by infidelity, apostasy, or bad conduct during any part of his life, shall be neglected by God. God may punish in hell or grant complete forgiveness to a person who commits an evil deed (polytheism and infidelity excluded) and dies without repenting.[16]

The Kharijites and Mu'tazilites laid so much emphasis on the doctrine of threats (*wa`id*) that they led the believers to despair and take a depressing view of life; while the Murji'tes emphasized the doctrine of promise (*wa'd*) so much that they quite endangered the ethical basis of Islam. Imam Abu Hanifah endeavoured to strike a middle course between these two extremes.

Sins, according to him, are not without consequences; a sinner is always liable to blame or punishment, but to drive him out from the fold of Islam, to declare him an infidel, or to condemn him to eternal punishment is quite inconsistent with divine justice. His broad outlook and tolerant attitude were consistently continued by al–Maturidi and al–Tahawi. The latter has summarized the views of his master on these questions in the following words:

"We do not declare anyone of the people of *qiblah* an infidel on account of a sin, so long as he does not

deem it lawful. And we do not say that sin with faith does no harm to him who commits it. We entertain hope for the righteous among the faithful, but we have no certainty about them, and we do not certify that they will be in paradise. We ask forgiveness for their evil actions and we have fear for them, but we do not drive them into despair. Sense of security and despair both turn a man away from religion. The true way for the people of *qiblah* lies midway between these two. A faithful servant does not go out of the field of faith except by renouncing what had brought him into it."[17]

Al–Tahawi substituted the phrase *ahl al–qiblah* for *mu'min* and Muslim, evidently to avoid the theological controversies regarding their identification, and to make the circle of the believers wider and at the same tune to give the question a practical bias. He also avoided the theoretical definition of a Muslim or *mu'min*, and instead described how one could be regarded as such. He says: "We give those who follow our *qiblah* the name Muslim or *mu'min*, so long as they acknowledge what the Prophet brought with him and believe in what he said and what he narrated."[18]

Knowledge of God and belief in Him may save those who are guilty of mortal sins from eternal punishment, and they may entertain hope of deliverance from hell through divine mercy and the intercession of the righteous. "Those who are guilty of grievous sins will not remain eternally in hell, if they died as unitarians, even if they were not repentant. They are left to God's will and judgment; if He wills He will forgive them out of His kindness, as He has said: ***'Surely Allah will not forgive the setting up of other gods with Himself; other sins He may forgive if He pleases;'*** [19] and if He wills He will punish them in hell in proportion to their sins as demanded by His justice. Then He will bring them out of it through His mercy and the intercession of His obedient people, and finally He will send them to paradise. This is because Allah is the Lord of those who know Him well, and He has not destined them in either world to be like those who denied Him, went astray from His guidance, and did not obtain His help and favour."[20]

It may be noticed here that, although al–Tahawi did not include knowledge in his definition of faith, he was fully conscious of the cognitive aspect of it.

As regards intercession, Imam Abu Hanifah seems to restrict it to the prophets in general and particularly to Prophet Muhammad,[21] but al–Tahawi extends this privilege to the righteous and the pious among the faithful.

As regards the independent character of faith and equality of the faithful, al–Tahawi says: "Faith is one and the faithful are equal; their comparative eminence lies in fear[22] (of Allah), in righteousness, in disobeying lust, and in pursuing what is best. All the believers are friends of the Merciful. The most honourable among them before God are those who are the most obedient and the best followers of the Holy Qur'an."[23]

On the question whether it is obligatory for a man to know God before the advent of His messenger, and whether to follow precedence (*taqlid*)[24] is allowed in matters of faith, al–Tahawi does not express his

opinion explicitly, though his master was quite outspoken on these questions. These questions pertain to the Mu'tazilites doctrine of promise and threat (*al–wa'd w'al–wa'id*), which gave rise to the discussion of the nature and value of reason and revelation.

They held that as God has endowed men with reason and they can easily perceive by proper use of this faculty that the world has a creator, it is obligatory on their part to know God even if the call of the Prophet does not reach them. But they were divided as to whether knowledge of God is acquired and a posteriori (*kasabi*) or necessary and a priori (*daruri*).25

Imam Abu Hanifah agreed with the Mu'tazilites on the original question and maintained that "no one can have any excuse for ignorance about his creator, as he sees the creation of the heaven and the earth of his own as well as of others. So even if Allah should not have sent any messenger to the people, it was obligatory on them to know Him by means of their intellect."

God's Essence and Attributes

As to the relation between God's essence and attributes Imam Abu Hanifah is stated to have advised his pupils not to enter into discussion on this question, but to be content with ascribing to God the qualities which He Himself ascribed to Himself.26 He even once declined to discuss this problem with Jahm.27 In order to avoid the difficulties involved in affirming attributes, he simply declared that "they are neither He, nor other than He" (*la huwa wa la ghairuhu*).28 According to the explanation of al–Maturidi, this phrase means that the attributes of God are neither identical with nor separate from His essence.29

Al–Tahawi made no reference to the philosophical problem of the relation between God and His essence, nor did he make a clear distinction between the attributes of essence and those of actions. But he emphatically asserts the eternity of the attributes and says: "Allah has eternally been with His attributes before He created the world and nothing has been added to His qualities after the creation, and as He has been from eternity with His qualities, He will remain with these to eternity . . . ."30

Expressing his vigorous attitude against the Anthropomorphists he declared "Whosoever attributes to Allah any of the human senses (*ma'ani*), he becomes an infidel." The true path lies, he asserts, between *tashbih* and *ta'til*. "He who does not guard against denial (of attributes) and assimilation, slips and does not attain *tanzih*. Verily our Lord the High and Exalted has been attributed with the attribute of oneness and has been qualified with the quality of uniqueness. No one of the creation possesses His qualities. Allah is most high and praise be to Him. He is without limits, ends, elements, limbs, and instruments. The six directions do not encompass Him as they do the created things."31

It may be inferred from the above statement and the similar one in the `*Aqidah*, that al–Tahawi is against the literal interpretations of the anthropomorphic expressions of the Qur'an, such as the face of Allah, His eyes and hands, etc. But he does not indicate what these terms signify. Abu Hanifah clearly states that these terms denote His qualities. Even then he also is not in favour of giving any rational interpretation of

them, as he fears that this may lead to the denial of His qualities.

He says: “He has hand, face, and soul as mentioned in the Qur’an, and whatever Allah mentioned in the Qur'an as face, hand, or soul is unquestionably His quality. It should not be said with the Qadarites and the Mu'tazilites that by His hand is meant His power or His bounty, because this leads to the rejection of certain attributes. Nay, His hand is His attribute without description.”32

The Imam had also adopted the principle of leaving the judgment to God (*tafwid*)33 regarding the interpretation of the ambiguous verses of the Qur'an; al–Tahawi stuck to this principle very consistently.

He says: “The foot of Islam does not stand firm but on the back of submission and surrender. Who-soever wishes to attain that knowledge which was forbidden for him and whose intelligence does not remain content with submission, his desire certainly hinders him from access to pure concept of unity (*tawhid*), clear knowledge, and correct faith, and he then wavers between faith and infidelity, belief and disbelief, confession and denial as a sceptic, distracted, eccentric, and fugitive person without being a faithful believer or a faithless disbeliever.”34

The attitude of al–Maturidi on this question is more rational and liberal than that of al–Tahawi. According to the former, leaving judgment to God and passing an interpretative judgment for oneself are both allowed; and he is in favour of interpreting them in the light of explicit verses of the Qur'an.35

Throne of Allah

Regarding the Throne of Allah (‘*arsh*) as mentioned in the Qur'an,36 Abu Hanifah maintains that the expression should not be taken in the literal sense to mean a particular place. God being the creator of place cannot be thought of to be limited by place. He is where He has been before the creation of place. Abu Muti` al–Balkhi, one of the disciples of the Imam, asked him, “What will you say if anyone asks: `Where is Allah the Exalted?”' He replied: “He should be told that Allah has been existing while there was no place before He created the universe; He has been existing while there was no `where (*aina*), no created being, nor anything else. He is the creator of everything.”37

Refuting the idea of the Anthropomorphists that God is in a particular place, he declared: “ We confess that Allah has seated Himself on the Throne without any necessity on His part, and without being fixed on it. If He had been under any necessity, He would not have been able to create the world and would have governed it like the created beings; and if He should feel any necessity to sit down and remain seated, where then was He before the creation of the Throne? God is exalted and high far above such ideas.”38

It is evident that, according to Abu Hanifah, God, being eternal and incorporeal, cannot be conceived as being encompassed by direction and place. Al–Tahawi, as has been quoted above, firmly holds this view. “God is without limits, ends, elements, limbs, and instruments. The six directions do not encompass Him as they encompass the created things.”39 Referring to the Throne and the Chair, he

states: “The Throne and the Chair are realities as Allah described them in His honoured Book. But He is not in need of the Throne nor of what is besides the Throne. He encompasses everything and is above everything. 40

Al–Maturidi went a step further to allow rational interpretation of those verses, the apparent sense of which created an impression of His being in a place. He refuted the view of those who thought that the Throne was a particular place and God was on it, in it, or encompassed by it, as well as the views of those who thought that He was in every place.

According to him, God being eternal, infinite, and incorporeal is free of time and space which imply rest, change, motion, and movement. Explaining the verses41 which were interpreted to prove His being in a particular place or in every place by the champions of these views, he asserts that these verses refer to His creative function, controlling power, absolute authority, sovereignty, eternity, and infinitude and indirectly prove that He is above the limitations of time and space.42

Beatific Vision

This question was discussed with much fervour by the Companions of the Prophet. Besides their intense love of God and an ardent desire to enjoy the happiness of seeing their Lord in the next world, the accounts of Ascension (*mi'raj*), and the prayer of Moses to have a vision of his Lord as referred to in the Qur'an,43 aroused in them fervent zeal for a discussion of this topic. It seems quite certain that as a result of this discussion they arrived at the following conclusions: (a) God is invisible in this world; no human being saw Him or will ever see Him in this world44 except the Prophet Muhammad who, according to some of them, saw Him on the night of *mi'raj*; (b) God will be seen by the faithful in paradise.45

The eager inquiries of the Companions of the Prophet whether he saw his Lord46 or whether believers will see Him in the next world47 and the vehement opposition of a group of leading Companions, including `A'ishah, to the common belief that the Prophet saw his Lord,48 all clearly indicate that the Companions were fully conscious of the difficulties involved in answering these questions.

Their standpoint on this question, like that on the problem of essence and attributes was just to believe and refrain from a detailed discussion of such matters as cannot be comprehended by human reason. The seeing of God in paradise was regarded by them as the highest blessing and happiness for the believers and the summum bonum of their life. They believed in it without description (*wasf*) or rational explanation. (*ta'wil*).

The Anthropomorphists, in the subsequent period, found in this belief a strong basis for their gross and crude anthropomorphic conception of God. As God will be seen in paradise He must have body and form and may be seen in this world, nay, He may even assume the form of a beautiful man.49

It was Jahm who, in order to oppose *tashbih*, laid great emphasis on *tanzih* and quite consistently with

his idea of abstract God denied for the first time, according to our present information, the vision of God in paradise.50 The Mu'tazilites adopted this view and interpreted the beatific vision allegorically. Imam Abu Hanifah upheld the view of the Companions and discarded both anthropomorphic and allegorical interpretation of "seeing God."

God will be seen by the faithful in paradise, he maintains, with their bodily eyes, but without any idea of place, direction, distance, comparison, or modality and without any description.51 Al-Tahawi maintains the same position and emphasizes that beatific vision is an article of faith and it must be accepted without any doubt, without any rational interpretation, and without any idea of anthropomorphism. Any attempt to interpret it by reason will amount, according to him, to the denial of this tenet.52

Al-Maturidi also supported this orthodox view and opposed *tashbih* and *ta'wil* and showed by elaborate discussion that the verses of the Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet on this question do not allow any allegorical interpretation. His main argument, as we have already seen, is that the conditions of seeing a physical object in this world should not be applied to seeing God who has no body and no form and is not limited by time and space, and that too in the next world where nature of things and state of affairs would be quite different from what prevails here.53

Speech of God and the Qur'an

Speech (*kalam*), according to Abu Hanifah, is an attribute of God pertaining to His essence and is eternal like all other divine attributes, and God speaks by virtue of this eternal speech.54 As regards the relation between *kalam* of Allah and the Qur'an, he says: "We confess that the Qur'an is the uncreated speech of Allah; inspiration or revelation from Him is neither He nor other than He, but His quality in reality, written in the copies, recited by the tongues, and preserved in the breasts. The ink, the paper, the writing are created, for they are works of men.

The speech of Allah, on the other hand, is uncreated; the writings, the letters, the words, and the verses are signs (*dalalat*)55 of the Qur'an for the sake of human needs. The speech of Allah is self-existing and its meaning is understood by means of these symbols. Whosoever says that the speech of Allah is created, he is an infidel: His speech, though recited, written, and retained in the hearts, is yet never dissociated from Him."56

Abu Hanifah thus refutes the ideas of the Mu'tazilah who denied the attribute of speech being identical with divine essence and declared the Qur'an to have been created, as well as the ideas of those Mushabbihah and Hashwiyyah (extreme orthodox) who thought that divine speech, like human speech, consists of words and sounds and that the script in which the Qur'an was written was as eternal as the Qur'an itself.57

Kalam of Allah, according to him, is not identical with His Being, for this will make His Being complex and lead to the plurality of Godhead; nor can it be something other than Himself, for this will mean that

He acquired a new quality and became what He was not before. This also implies imperfection and change in the divine nature; hence absurd. Divine speech, therefore, must be eternal, and as the Qur'an is universally accepted to be the speech of Allah, it is necessarily uncreated.

Al–Tahawi treated this subject with great caution and condemned controversies about the Qur'an and practically declined to enter into a philosophical discussion on the nature of divine speech. He says: "Verily the Qur'an – the *kalam* of Allah – originated (*bada`*) from Him as words without description (*bila kaifiyyah*) and He sent it down to His Prophet as revelation; and the faithful believed it to be truly as such, and they knew for certain that it was in reality the *kalam* of Allah, the Exalted, not created like the speech of the created beings. So whoever supposes it to be human speech is an infidel."58

The main point of controversy, it may be mentioned here, between the Jahmiyyah and Mu'tazilah, on the one hand, and the orthodox, on the other, was on the nature of the divine word and its relation to the Qur'an, after they had all agreed that the Qur'an was the revealed book of Allah. So al–Tahawi, in fact, bypassed the main point at issue. He also made no reference to the relation of the speeches of created beings or that of Allah's word addressed to them such as to the Prophet Moses, as mentioned in the Qur'an, with the eternal speech–a problem, which evidently bewildered the minds of Ja'd, Jahm, and their followers. Abu Hanifah sought to remove this doubt with reference to the eternal divine attributes of knowing and creating. "Allah had indeed been speaking before He spoke to Moses, as Allah had indeed been creating from eternity before creating any creatures.

So, when He spoke to Moses, He spoke to him with His speech which is one of His eternal attributes." Similarly, "whatever Allah mentions in the Qur'an, quoting from Moses and other prophets and from Pharaoh and Iblis, is the eternal speech of Allah about them. The speech of Allah is uncreated, but the speech of Moses and other created beings is created. The Qur'an is the speech of Allah and not their speech; therefore, it is eternal."59

Divine Will and Human Freedom

The all–pervading will of God, His eternal decree (*qadar*) and infinite power, on the one hand, and freedom of the human will and action, on the other, are equally stressed in the Qur'an.60

According to the Qur'an, divine will, decree, and power are not inconsistent with human freedom. These problems were discussed by the Prophet and his Companions. Belief in *qadar* was declared by the Prophet as an article of faith, but at the same time he asserted that *qadar* does not deprive a man of his freedom in his limited sphere.

Thus, according to the Qur'an and the Tradition, God is the creator of all things including their nature, and nothing can go against this nature. He is the creator of the human soul and its nature and He has created in it freewill and bestowed upon it the faculty of knowing, thinking, and distinguishing and the power of judging, choosing, and selecting. God, being the omniscient creator, knows from eternity what

His creatures will do in future – this is the “writing of the destiny” and “the eternal divine decree.”[61]

That the Prophet laid stress both on *qadar* and human freedom and on the possibility of human action side by side with divine action, is also evident from his famous saying on natural religion (*din al–fitrah*): “Every child at birth is born in the *fitrah*, then it is his parents who make of him a Jew, a Christian, or a Magian.” This is testified by the Qur'anic verse, “The *fitrah* of Allah in which He hath created mankind, there is no change.”[62]

The sayings of the Prophet that divine decree comprises all human care and precautions for life, that prayer can change destiny,[63] and that God has provided remedy for every disease,[64] and similar other traditions also clearly indicate that the divine decree is not despotic or tyrannical in its nature and that it does not imply any compulsion, nor is it inconsistent with freedom and responsibility.

The Companions of the Prophet also believed both in *qadar* and human freedom and emphatically denied the idea of compulsion (*jabr*). Some prominent Companions explained *qadar* as foreknowledge. Abu Musa al–Ash`ari said: “God decreed as He knew.”[65] `Abd Allah b. `Amr (d. 63/682) used to say: “The Pen has dried up according to the knowledge of God.”[66]

`Ali (d. 40/661) gave a clear exposition of his view on the problem and said: “Perhaps you think that the judgment (*qada'*) is binding and the decree (*qadar*) is final. Had it been so, then reward and punishment would be meaningless and the promise and threat null and void, and no reproach then should have come from Allah against a sinner and no promise for a righteous person. This is the view of the brethren of Satan .... Verily Allah has enjoined discretion, issued prohibitions, and given warnings. He has not burdened (men) with compulsion, nor has He sent the prophets in vain . . . .”[67]

Imam Abu Hanifah made a bold attempt to harmonize the contradictory views of the self–determinists and the predeterminists by explaining the nature of divine power, will, and decree and enunciating the doctrines of natural religion (*din al–fitrah*), divine help, and guidance (*taufiq*), abandoning (*khadhlan*) and acquisition (*kasb*). God had knowledge concerning things before they existed from eternity, and His will, decree, decision, and writing on the Preserved Tablet are in accordance with this foreknowledge. So the eternal decree is of a descriptive nature and not of a decisive nature. God created men with natural dispositions (*fitrah*), endowed them with intellect, then addressed them and commanded them through His messenger to believe and abstain from unbelief.

Thereupon some people deviated from this natural religion, disavowed truth, and turned to unbelief. This unbelief is their own act, their own acquisition, preferred by their free–will, which God created in them, and is not due to any compulsion from Him, but due to His leaving them to themselves. Those who clung to their nature received divine help and guidance. “Allah did not compel any of His creatures to be infidel or faithful, and He did not create them either as faithful or infidel, but He created them as individuals, and faith and unbelief are acts of men .... All the acts of man, his moving as well as his resting, are truly his own acquisition, but Allah creates them and they are caused by His will, His knowledge, His decision,

and His decree." But while good actions are according to His desire, pleasure, judgment, command, and guidance, evil actions are not in accordance with these.68

Al–Maturidi, as we have already noticed, explained this view quite elaborately and laid emphasis on the freedom of acquisition and choice. Al–Tahawi discourages all speculative thought on the subtle and mysterious question of predestination (*taqdir*), because this may lead one to despair and disobedience.69 But he asserts that all human actions are creations in relation, to God and acquisition an relation to men, and God is never unjust to them so as to burden them beyond their power and capacity.70

Conclusion

It will be noticed from what has been said in the foregoing pages that al–Tahawi did not introduce any new doctrine or system in theology, but summarized faithfully and honestly the views of his master on important theological questions, in his own language. So "Tahawism," in fact, does sot imply a new school of thought in Islamic theology; it is only another version of Imam Abu Hanifah's theological system. The importance of al–Tahawi's creed, mainly consists in the fact that it makes the position of his master quite clear. Imam Abu Hanifah occupied so important a place in theology and law and his system exerted so much influence on the educated mind that the Mu'tazilites, the Murji'iites, and the orthodox equally claimed him for themselves. The Mu'tazilites for this reason even denied his authorship of any book in theology.71

Prominent pupils of Imam Abu Hanifah and his followers mainly engaged themselves in a close study of the problems of practical life, and generally it was they who occupied the posts of judges and legal advisers during the reign of the `Abbasids and even afterwards. By virtue of their work they could get little time for a detailed study of speculative theology.72

Their trends of mind also, it appears, were not in favour of pure speculation. Their time, energy, and genius were devoted to legal studies, and theological speculation was left for others. Thus, their contribution to theology is negligible in contrast to their contributions to law and jurisprudence. A few of them, like Hammad and Isma'il, the son and grandson of Abu Hanifah, Bishr al–Marisi, Hafs al–Fard, Bishr b. Walid, Muhammad b. Shuja', and others who took some interest in theology, could not quite consistently explain and expand the views of their leader.

During the reign of al–Mamun and his immediate successors, the Hanafi judges openly supported the Mu'tazilites' stand on some of the controversial questions and co–operated with the rulers in suppressing the views of the extreme orthodox. Besides the Mu'tazilites and the Murji'ites, the followers of Imam Abu Hanifah themselves were divided in interpreting his views.

Al–Tahawi, like al–Maturidi, rendered valuable services in removing the doubts and confusions and making the position of the Imam quite clear. The influence of al–Tahawi on theology can easily be

estimated from the numerous commentaries written on his creed. In short, al-Tahawi's credit lies in the fact that he very nicely and elegantly presented the summaries of the views of Imam Abu Hanifah, the first founder of the theological school of Ahl al-sunnah - summaries for which he must have relied, besides the latter's works, on other reliable sources which had already received recognition from a large number of orthodox people.

Bibliography

Al-Sam'ani, *al-Ansab*, Leiden, 1912; Ibn Qutlubugha, *Taj al-Tarajim*, 1862; Ibn al-Nadim, *al-Fihrist*, Cairo, 1348/1929; 'Abd al-Qadir al-Qarashi, *al-Jawahir at-Mud'iyyah*, Hyderabad, 1332/1913; Jalal al-Din Suyuti, *Husn al-Muhadarah*; Ibn Khallikan, *Wafayat al-A'yan*; al-Dhahabi, *Tadhkirat al-Huffaz*, Hyderabad, 1334/1915; 'Abd al-Hayy Lakhnawi, *al-Fawa'id al-Bahiyyah*, Cairo, 1324/1906; Muhammad Zahid al-Kauthari, *al-Hawi*, Cairo, 1368/1948; Sadr al-Din 'Ali b. Muhammad al-Adhra'yi, *Kitab Sharh al-Tahawiyyah fi al-'Aqidat al-Salafiyyah*. Mecca, 1349/1930;

Abu Hanifah, *al-'alim w-al-Muta'allim*, ed. Muhammad Zahid al-Kauthari; *al-Fiqh al-Akbar*, Hyderabad; al-Qari, *Sharh al-Fiqh al-Akbar*; *Sharh al-Wafiyyah*, Hyderabad; ibn 'Abd al-Barr, *al-Intiqa*. Cairo, 1350/1931; al-Ash'ari, *Maqalat*, Cairo, 1950; Maturidi, *Kitab al-Tauhid*, MS. Cambridge; *Sharh al-Tahawiyyah*, Mecca, 1349/ 1930; al-Taftazani, *Sharh al-'Aqa'id al-Nasafiyyah*, Cawnpore. 1347/1928; al-Tahawi, *Bayan al-Sunnah w-al-Jama'ah*, Halab, 1344/1925; al Biyadi, *Isharat*; al-Makki, *al-Manaqib*; Bukhari and Muslim, "Kitab al-Qadar"; Wali al-Din, *Mishkat al-Masabih*, Delhi; ibn Hajar, *Lisan al Mizan*; Yaqut, *Mu'jam*; Yafi'i, *Mir'at*; Haji Khalifah, *Kashf al-Zunun*; al-Murtada al-Zabidi, *al-Munyat w-al-'Amal*, Hyderabad; Tash Kubrazadah, *Miftah al-Sa'adah*, Hyderabad.

1. Al-Sam'ani, al-Ansab, Leiden, 1912, fol. 368; Ibn Qutlubugha, Taj al-Tarajim, ed. G. Flugel, Leipzig, 1862, p. 6; Ibn al-Nadim, al-Fihrist, Cairo, 1348/1929, p. 292; `Abd al-Qadir al-Qarashi, al-Jawahir al-Mud'iyyah, Hyderabad, 1332/1913, Vol. I, pp. 102-05; Jalal al-Din, al-Suynti, Husn al-Muhaddrah,Vol. I, p. 147; Ibn Khallikan, Wafayat al-A'yan,Vol. I, p. 19; al-Dhahabi, Tadhkirat al-Huffaz, Hyderabad, 1334/1915, Vol. III, p. 28; `Abd al-Hayy Lakhnawi, al-Fawa'id al-Bahiyyah, Cairo, 1324/1906, pp. 31-34.
2. Al-Dhahabi, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 28; al-Suyuti, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 147.
3. Cf. authorities cited above.
4. Muhammad Zahid al-Kauthari, al-Hawi, Cairo, 1368/ 1948, pp. 6-11; al-Qarashi, op. cit.; Lisan al-Mizan.
5. The `Aqidah was published in Halab in 1344/1925. Several commentaries were written on this creed (cf. Kashf al-Zunun, Istanbul, II, 1143) one of which named Kitab Sharh al-Tahawiyyah fi al-`Aqidat al-Salafiyyah was published at Makkah in 1349/1930, and was ascribed to Sadr al-Din 'Ali b. Muhammad al-Adhra'yi.
6. It was `Abd Allah ibn Saba, a convert from Judaism, who introduced and propagated anthropomorphic ideas among the Muslims during the caliphate of 'Ali. The foreign influence is traceable at the background of all sorts of ideas of tashbih, tajsim, and hulul (cf., al. Shahrastani, al-Baghdadi). The anthropomorphic expressions in the Qur'an were never understood by the Prophet or his Companions in the strict literal sense.
7. Abu Hanifah, Al-'alim w-al-Muta'allim, ed. Muhammad Zahid al-Kauthari, pp. 13, 29, idem, al-Wasiyyah, MS. Cairo, pp. 1, 2; al-Fiqh al-Akbar, Hyderabad, p. 11; al-Qari, Sharh Fiqh al-Akbar, pp. 76 et sqq.; Sharh Wasiyyah, Hyderabad, p. 75; ibn Abd al-Barr al-Intiqa, Cairo, 1350/1931, p. 168; al-Ash'ari, Maqalat, Cairo, 1950, Vol. I. p. 202.
8. Maturidi, Kitab al-Tauhid, MS. Cambridge, pp. 193 et sqq.; al-Makki, Manaqib Abi Hanifah, Vol. I, p. 148; Sharh al-Tahawiyyah, Makkah, 1349/1930, p. 261; al-Taftazani, Sharh al-`Aqa'id al-Nusafiyyah, Cawnpore, 1347/1928, p. 91.

9. Al-Tahawi, Bayan al-Sunnah w-al-Jama'ah, Halab, 1344/ 1925, p. 7.
10. Al-Fiqh al-Akbar, pp. 10-11; al-Wasiyyah, MS. Cairo, p. 2; Sharh al-Wasiyyah. p. 78 ; al-`Alim w-al Muta'allim, pp. 12 et sqq.; Risalat Abi Hanifah, ed. al-Kauthari, pp. 35 et sqq.
11. Al-Fiqh al-Akbar, p. 10; al-Wasiyyah, p. 2; al-`Alim w-al Muta'allim. pp. 14 et sqq.; Sharh al- Wasitiyyah, p. 76; al Qari, Sharh al-Fiqh al-Akbar, pp. 78 et sqq.; Abu al-Muntaha, Sharh al-Fiqh al-Akbar, Hyderabad, pp. 58 et sqq.
12. Al-Wasiyyah, p. 2; Sharh al-Wasiyyah, p. 77 ; al-Fiqh al-Absat ed. al-Kauthari, pp. 45 et sqq.; Musnad al-Imam al-A'zam, ed. Muhammad `Abid al-Sindhi, Lucknow, 1316/1898, p. 12.
13. Al-Fiqh al-Akbar, p. 10; al-`Alim w-al-Muta'allim, pp. 14, et sqq.; Sharh al-Wasiyyah, p. 76.
14. Al-Fiqh al-Akbar, p. 9; al-Fiqh al Absat, pp. 41 et sqq.; Risalat Abi Hanifah, p. 37; al-`Alim w-al-Muta'allim, pp. 25 et sqq.; al-Makki, op. cit.,Vol. I, pp. 78et a'qq.; Musnad al-Imam al A'zam, p. 10.
15. Musnad al-Imam al-A'zam. pp. 11 et sqq.
16. Abu Hanifah, al-Fiqh al-Akbar.
17. Al-Tahawi, al-'Aqidah, p. 7.
18. Ibid., p. 7 .
19. Qur'an, iv, 48.
20. Al-Tahawi, al-'Aqidah, p. 8.
21. Al-Fiqh al-Akbar, p. 11.
22. In the printed text the word is al-Haqiqah which most probably is al Khashiyyah, cf.Sharh al-Tahawiayah, p. 261.
23. Al-`Aqidah, pp. 7-8.
24. To act or believe on the authority of others.
25. Cf. the views of the Mu`tazilites, especially of `Allaf and al-Nazzam, in al-Badghadi's al-Farq and Usul al-Din, and al-Shahrastani's Milal. This question was discussed by the Mu'tazilites, by Ghailan al-Dimashqi (prosecuted by Hisham b. `Abd al-Malik [d. 125/743]),who taught that knowledge is of two kinds: natural or instinctive (fitri)and acquired (muktasab). Faith, according to him, is the rational knowledge, not the instinctive knowledge. (Milal,Vol. I, p. 274; al-Farq, p. 125; Maqalat,Vol. I, p. 200.)
26. Al-Biyadi, Isharat, p. 149.
27. Al-Makki, al-Manaqib, Vol. I, p. 145.
28. Al-Wasiyyah, p. 4; al-Biyadi, op. cit., p. 118.
29. Al-Isharat, p. 118; Sharh al-Fiqh al-Akbar, ascribed to al-Maturidi, Hyderabad, p. 19.
30. al-`Aqidah, p. 4.
31. Ibid., p. 5.
32. Al-Fiqh al-Akbar, p. 6.
33. Leaving the true meaning to the knowledge of Allah.
34. Al-`Aqidah, p. 4.
35. See the chapter on al-Maturidi.
36. Qur'an, vii, 54; xx, 5; xxx, 75; lix, 17, etc.
37. Al-Fiqh al-Absat, p. 57.
38. Al-Wasiyyah, pp. 3-4; Sharh al-Wasiyyah, p. 81; Isharat, p. 195.
39. al-`Aqidah, p. 5.
40. This translation is according to the text given in the Sharh al-Tahaiyyah, p. 213.
41. Such verses of the Qur'an as vii, 54; xx, 5; xliii, 84; lix,17; 1, 16; ivi, 58; lviii, 7.
42. Kitab al-Tawhid, pp. 32-37; Ta'wilat, Surah vii, 54; xx, 5.
43. Qur'an, vii, 143.
44. "None among you will ever see his Lord till he dies" is a saying of the Prophet, Isharat, p. 65.
45. Traditions on this point have been narrated by more or less thirty Companions: Sharh al-Tahawiyyah, p. 24; Isharat, p. 205.
46. Ibn Kathir, Tafsir, Vol. III, p. 9; al-Nawawi, Sharh Muslim, Cairo, 1929, Vol. III, p. 12.
47. Al-Nawawi, op. cit., Vol. III, pp. 17 et sqq.

48. Ibid., pp. 8, et sqq.; Isharat, p. 317; Ibn Kathir, Tafsir,Vol. II, pp. 161 et sqq.; Vol. IV, pp. 247 et sqq.
49. Al-Ash'ari, Maqalat, Vol. I, p. 263.
50. Shahrastani, Milal, Vol. I, p. 137
51. Al-Fiqh al-Akbar, p. 10; al-Wasiyyah, p. 7 ; Sharh al-Wasiyyah, p. 97 ; Isharat, p. 201.
52. Al-'Aqidah, p. 4.
53. Cf. the chapter on Maturidism.
54. Al-Fiqh al-Akbar, p. 5.
55. In one MS. the word. is alah. (instrument).
56. Al-W'asiyyah, p. 4; Sharh al-W'asiyyah, pp. 82-83.
57. Al-Ash'ari, Al-Irshad, pp. 128-29.
58. Al-`Aqidah, p. 3; cf. p. 7.
59. Abu Hanifah, al-Fiqh al-Akbar, pp. 5-6.
60. Qur'an, vi, 39, 125, 149; xxii, 14; lxxxv, 16; lxxxvi, 30; liv, 49 and other verses referring to the divine will and decree. And the verses: iv, 111; x, 44, 108; xi, 101; xiii, 11; xvii, 15-17; 84; xviii, 29; xli. 46: x1v. 15, and many others refer to freedom.
61. Cf. also verses of the Qur'an, 1, 4, 16.
62. Bukhari and Muslim, "Kitab al-Qadar"; also Qur'an, xxx, 30.
63. Tirmidhi, "Kitab al-Qadar."
64. Mishkat, "Kitab al-Tibb."
65. Al-Biyadi, op. cit., p. 33. This sentence has been chosen by Bukhari as the heading of a section of "Kitab al-Qadar" in his Sahih.
66. Wali al-Din, Mishkat al-Masabih, Delhi, Ch. "Qadar," p. 22.
67. Al-Murtada al-Zabidi, al-Munyat al-`Amal. Hyderabad, 1920, p. 7.
68. Al-Fiqh al-Akbar, pp. 7-8; al-Wasiyyah, pp. 3, 5-6; Sharh al-Wasiyyah, pp. 79-80, 84-85; cf. al-Makki, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 104; al Bazzazi, al-Manaqib, Vol. II, p. 84; ibn `Abd al-Barr, al-Insab, pp. 164-65.
69. Al-`Aqidah, p. 5.
70. Ibid., p. 11.
71. Al-Bazzazi, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 107; Tash Kubrazadah, Miftah al Sa'adah, Hyderabad, 1328/1910, Vol. II, p. 29.
72. Some books on theology were written by Muhammad al-Shaibani, al-Hasan b. Ziyad and Zufar b. Hudhail-all pupils of Abu Hanifah.

Chapter 13: Maturidism

Maturidism by A.K.M Ayyub Ali, M.A, Ph.D, Principal Government Rajshahi Madrasah, Rajshahi (Pakistan)

A detailed discussion of the fundamental principles of Islam led Muslim scholars in the second and third/eighth and ninth centuries of Hijrah to philosophical reasonings on the nature and attributes of God and His relation to man and the universe. As a result, a new science of Muslim scholasticism called *'Ilm al-Kalam* came into being.

As a matter of fact, it was the Mu'tazilites who laid the foundation of this new science and made lasting contributions for its development. They started their movement by adopting a rational attitude in respect of some theological questions, but when they reached the height of their power, they adopted an

aggressive attitude towards their opponents. The orthodox Muslims opposed the Mu'tazilite movement from the very beginning and tried to refute their doctrines by the traditional method. A section of the orthodox people took recourse even to violent methods.

Conflicting ideas and antagonistic attitudes created chaos and confusion in Muslim thought and shook the foundation of old ideas and traditional beliefs. The need for reconciliation and solving the crisis by adopting a middle course and a tolerant attitude was keenly felt. At this critical period of the history of Muslim theology there appeared, in three parts of the Muslim world, three eminent scholars: al–Maturidi in Central Asia, al–Ash'ari in Iraq, and al–Tahawi in Egypt.

They all endeavoured to reconcile conflicting ideas and settle the theological problems of the time by adopting a system that would satisfy reason and conform to the general tenets of the Qur'an and the Sunnah. They exercised profound and lasting influence on the subsequent development of Muslim philosophy and theology and were considered to be the fathers of the three schools of thoughts named after them.

Ash'arism and Tahawism have been dealt with in separate chapters; here we are concerned with Maturidism.

Life and Works of Maturidi

Abu Mansur Muhammad b. Muhammad b. Mahmud, al–Maturidi, al–Ansari, al–Hanafi, was born at Maturid,[1] a village or quarter in the neighbourhood of Samarqand, one of the great cities of Central Asia. According to some writers, he came of the renowned family of Abu Ayyub al–Ansari of Madinah.[2]

This statement is also corroborated by the fact that some other Arab families of Madinah also settled in Samarqand[3] and that al–Maturidi's daughter was married to al–Hasan al–Ash'ari, the father of Imam Abu al–Hasan `Ali al Ash'ari and a descendant of Abu Ayyub al Ansari of Madinah.[4]

Almost all the biographers who give only short sketches of al–Maturidi's life in their works agree that he died in the year 333/944, but none of them mentions the date of his birth. One of the teachers of al–Maturidi, namely, Muhammad b. Muqatil al–Razi is stated to have died in 248/862, which proves that al–Maturidi was born before that year and possibly about the year 238/853. According to this assumption, al–Maturidi was born during the reign of the 'Abbasid Caliph al–Mutawakkil (r. 232–247/847–861) who combated the Mu'tazilite doctrines and supported the traditional faith[5].

Al–Maturidi flourished under the powerful rule of the Samanids, who ruled practically the whole of Persia from 261/874 to 389/999 actively patronized science and literature, and gathered around their Court as number of renowned scholars.[6] He was brought up in the peaceful academic atmosphere and cultural environment of his native land and received good education in different Islamic sciences under four eminent scholars of his time: Shaikh Abu Bakr Ahmad b. Ishaq, Abu Nasr Ahmad b. al–`Abbas known

as al–Faqih al–Samarqandi, Nusair b. Yahya al–Balkhi (d. 268/881), and Muhammad b. Muqatil al–Razi (d. 248,/862), Qadi of Rayy. All of them were students of Imam Abu Hanifah (d. 150/767)[7]

In recognition of his scholarship and profound knowledge in theology (and his invaluable services to the cause of *Ahl al–sunnah w–al–jama'ah*) people conferred on him the title of *Imam al–Huda* and *Imam al–Mutakallimin*. Mahmud al–Kufawi mentioned him as "leader of guidance, the model of the Sunnite and the guided, the bearer of the standard of *Ahl al–sunnah w–al jama'ah*, the uprooter of misguidance arising from disorder and heresies, leader of the scholastics, and rectifier of the faith of the Muslims.[8]

Works – Al–Maturidi wrote a number of important books on *Tafsir*, *Kalam*, and *Usul*, a list of which is given below:

1. *Kitab Tawilat al–Qur'an* or *Tawilat Ahl al–Sunnah.*

2. *Kitab Ma'khadh al–Shari'ah*.

3. *Kitab al–Jadal*.

4. *Kitab al–Usul* (*Usul al–Din*).

5. *Kitab al–Maqalat*.

6. *Kitab al– Tauhid*.

7. *Kitab Bayan Wahm al–Mu'tazilah*.

8. *Kitab Radd Awa'il al–Adillah li al–Ka'bi*.

9. *Kitab Radd Tahdhib al–Jadal li al–Ka'bi*.

10. *Kitab Radd Wa'id al–Fussaq li al–Ka'bi.*

11. *Radd al Usul al–Khamsah li abi Muhammad al– Bahili*.

12. *Radd Kitab al–Imamah li ba'd al–Rawafid*.

13. *Kitab al–Radd `ala al–Qaramitah*[9]

Unfortunately, not a single work of al–Maturidi has so far been published. His *Tawilat al–Qur'an, Kitab al–Tauhid*, and *Kitab al–Maqalat* which are by far the most important and valuable of all his works, exist only in manuscripts. The *Tawilat al–Qur'an* is a commentary on the Qur'an in the scholastic method in which he endeavoured to establish the liberal orthodox theology, both traditionally and rationally, and to provide for it a sound basis.[10] Commenting on this momentous work, Sheikh `Abd al–Qadir al–Qarashi says, "A unique book with which no book of the earlier authors on this subject can have any comparison."[11]

In his *Kitab al-Tauhid*, al-Maturidi gave an elaborate exposition of his system and sought to harmonize the extreme views of both the traditionists and the rationalists. The book bears testimony to his broad outlook, deep insight, and intimate acquaintance with the philosophical systems of his time.

The evidence at our disposal at present shows that al-Maturidi was the first *Mutakalim* to introduce the doctrine of the sources of human knowledge in a book on theology such as *Kitab al-Tauhid* and thereby made a thorough attempt to build up his system on a sound philosophical basis. This method was followed by other theologians and the subject was later on elaborately treated by the Ash'arite scholars, al-Baqillani (d. 403/1013), and al-Baghdadi (d. 429/1037).

Al-Maturidi is one of the pioneers amongst the Hanafite scholars who wrote on the principles of jurisprudence and his two works *Ma'khadh al-Shari'ah* and *Kitab al-Jadal* are considered to be authoritative on the subject.[12]

It is evident from the list of works written by al-Maturidi that he took great care to refute the views and ideas of the Qarmatians, the Shiites, and especially those of the Mu'tazilites. His contemporary abu al-Qasim `Abd Allah al-Ka'bi (d. 317/929) was the leader of the Mu'tazilite school of Baghdad.[13] Al-Maturidi combated the doctrines of al-Ka'bi in his *Kitab al-Tauhid* and wrote three books on criticism of al-Ka'bi's three books. It may be observed here that while al-Maturidi in the East engaged himself in fighting the Mu'tazilites in general and particularly the Baghdad group, his contemporary al-Ash'ari in Iraq took a prominent part in resisting the Mu'tazilites of Basrah. But it appears to us that al-Maturidi began his movement long before al-Ash'ari appeared on the scene and most probably while the latter was still in the Mu'tazilite camp.[14]

Method

Al-Maturidi in his *Kitab al-Tauhid* gave a short critical account of the different views regarding the matter and sources of human knowledge and the best method to be followed in order to acquire knowledge. Means of acquiring knowledge, according to him, are three: (1) Sense-organs (*al-a'yan*); (2) Reports (*al-akhbar*); (3) Reason (*al-nazr*).

He severely criticized the conflicting views of different groups who thought that knowledge is not attainable at all, or that senses cannot supply true knowledge, or that reason alone is sufficient to give us all knowledge. Refuting the views of those who deny or doubt the possibility of knowledge altogether or the possibility of acquiring knowledge through sense-organs, al-Maturidi says that even animals perceive by their senses what may preserve or destroy them and what may be useful or harmful to them.

So theoretical arguments with those who pretend to deny the objective reality of things is useless. Yet he says, they may be humorously asked: “Do you know what you deny?” If they say “No,” their denial stands cancelled, but if they answer affirmatively, they admit the reality of their denial and thereby become opposers of their opposing. A more effective way than this is to make them subject to physical

torture so that they may be compelled to admit what they deny of the reality of sensuous knowledge.

Reports are the means of acquiring knowledge concerning genealogy, past occurrences, remote countries, useful and harmful things, foodstuffs, medicine, etc. These are of two kinds, historical reports (*khabr al–mutawatir*) and reports of the prophets (*khabr al–rusul*), possessing sure signs to prove their honesty. Though both kinds of reports are proved to be sources of knowledge, we should be very critical in accepting reports of the prophets, because they are handed down through chains of narrators who are not infallible and who may commit mistakes in reporting.

Those who reject report as a source of knowledge are, al–Maturidi asserts, like those who reject sensuous knowledge. In order to convince them, they should be physically tortured and if they complain of pain, they should be told: Your words of complaint are nothing but reports which cannot give us any real knowledge.[15]

Reason, according to al–Maturidi, is the most important of all other sources of knowledge, because without its assistance sense and report can give no real knowledge. Knowledge of metaphysical realities and moral principles is derived through this source. It is reason which distinguishes men from animals. Al–Maturidi has pointed out many cases where nothing but reason can reveal the truth. This is why the Qur'an repeatedly enjoins man to think, to ponder, and to judge by reason in order to find out the truth. Refuting the ideas of those who think that reason cannot give true knowledge, he says that they cannot prove their doctrine without employing reason.[16]

Reason, no doubt, occupies a very eminent place in the system of al–Maturidi, but it cannot give, he holds, true knowledge concerning everything that we require to know. Like senses, it has a limit beyond which it cannot go. Sometimes the true nature of the human intellect is obscured and influenced by internal and external factors such as desire, motive, habit, environment, and association, and, as a result, it even fails to give us true knowledge of things that are within its own sphere. Divergent views and conflicting ideas of the learned concerning many a problem are mentioned by al–Maturidi as one of the proofs in support of his statement.

Hence, reason often requires, he asserts, the service of a guide and helper who will protect it from straying, lead it to the right path, help it understand delicate and mysterious affairs, and know the truth. This guide, according to him, is the divine revelation received by a prophet. If anyone will deny the necessity of this divine guidance through revelation and claim that reason alone is capable of giving us all the knowledge we need, then he will certainly overburden his reason and oppress it quite unreasonably.[17]

The necessity of the divine revelation is not restricted, according to al–Maturidi, to religious affairs only, but its guidance is required in many worldly affairs too. The discovery of the different kinds of foodstuffs, medicine, invention of arts and crafts, etc., are the results of this divine guidance. Human intellect cannot give any knowledge in respect of many of these matters, and if man had to rely solely on individual

experience for the knowledge of all these things, then human civilization could not have made such rapid progress.[18]

Al–Maturidi refutes the idea of those who think that the individual mind is the basis of knowledge and criterion of truth. He also does not regard inspiration (*ilham*) as a source of knowledge. Inspiration, he argues, creates chaos and conflicts in the domain of knowledge, makes true knowledge impossible, and is ultimately liable to lead humanity to disintegration and destruction for want of a common standard of judgment and universal basis for agreement.[19]

It is evident from this brief account that reason and revelation both occupy a prominent place in the system of al–Maturidi. The articles of religious belief are derived, according to him, from revelation, and the function of reason is to understand them correctly. There can be no conflict between reason and revelation if the real purport of the latter be correctly understood. His method of interpreting the Scriptures may be outlined in the following words: The passages of the Holy Qur'an which appear to be ambiguous or the meanings of which are obscure or uncertain (*mubham* and *mushtabah*) must be taken in the light of the verses that are self–explaining and precise (*muhkam*).

Where the apparent sense of a verse contradicts what has been established by the "precise" (*muhkam*) verses, it must then be believed that the apparent sense was never intended, because there cannot be contradiction in the verses of the Holy Qur'an, as God has repeatedly declared. In such cases, it is permissible to interpret the particular verse in the light of the established truth (*tawil*) or to leave its true meaning to the knowledge of God (*tafwid*).[20]

The difference between the attitude of al–Maturidi and that of the Mu'tazilites in this respect is quite fundamental. The latter formulated certain doctrines on rational grounds and then tried to support their views by the verses of the Holy Qur'an, interpreting them in the light of their doctrines. As regards the traditions of the Prophet, their attitude was to accept those which supported their views and to reject those which opposed them.[21]

Criticism of the Mu'taziltes

Al–Maturidi always tried to adopt a middle course between the extreme Rationalists and the Traditionists. He would agree with the Mu'tazilites on many points, but would never accept the Aristotelian philosophy as a basis of religious doctrines. Similarly, he is in accord with the Traditionists on fundamentals, but is not ready to take the Qur'an and the Hadith always in their literal sense and thereby to fall into gross anthropomorphism.

He agrees with the Mu'tazilites that it is obligatory on the part of every rational being to acquire knowledge of the existence of God through his reason even if no messenger were sent by Aim for this purpose; that things are intrinsically good or bad and the *Shari'* (God) takes into consideration these values in His *amr* (command) and *nahi* (prohibition); that God has endowed man with reason through

which he can often distinguish right from wrong.

But, contrary to the Mu'tazilites, he maintains that reason cannot be the final authority for human obligation and religious law. The basis of religious obligation, according to him, is revelation, not reason.22 It seems that al–Maturidi's view on this question and on the authorship of human action, as will be seen, is mainly guided by the Qur'anic verses such as ***"To Him belong creation and command."***23

Al–Maturidi bitterly criticized the Mu'tazilite doctrine of divine justice and unity. Their interpretation of divine justice led them to deny the all–pervading will and power of God, His authorship of human action, and made Him quite helpless and subject to external compulsion. Divine grace and mercy find no place in their system as is evident from their view on grave sins. Their doctrine of *al–aslah* (salutary) cannot explain satisfactorily the existence of evil, natural calamities, and sufferings of innocent children and animals.

According to their doctrine, man enjoys more power and freedom than the Creator of the universe. They did not follow, al–Maturidi tried to prove, the explicit decisions of the Qur'an and the Sunnah, nor the dictates of sound reason.24 Their interpretation of *tauhid* reduced God to an unknown and unknowable non–entity (*ta'til*).25

Their view that Non–Being is a thing (*al–ma'dumu shai'un*) only supports the atheists' doctrine of the eternity of the world, makes an eternal partner with God, and thereby contradicts the Qur'anic doctrines of creation and *tauhid*. They made God quite imperfect and subject to changes by denying His eternally creative function.26

Maturidi's System

Al–Maturidi built up his own system mainly on two principles: freedom from similitude (*tanzih*) and divine wisdom (*hikmah*). On the principle of freedom from similitude he opposes similitude (*tashbih*) and anthropomorphism (*tajsim*) in all their forms, without denying divine attributes. The anthropomorphic expressions used in the Qur'an like the hands, the face, the eyes of God, and His sitting on the Throne should not be taken in their apparent sense, because the literal interpretation of these expressions contradicts the explicit verses of the Qur'an.

These passages, therefore, should be interpreted in the light of the clear passages of *tanzih* in a manner consistent with, the doctrine of *tauhid*, and permissible according to the usage and idiom of the Arabic language, or their true meanings should be left to the knowledge of God.27

On the principle of divine widom (*hikmah*) al–Maturidi tried to reconcile the conflicting views of the Determinists (Jabrites) and the Mu'tazilites and prove for man certain amount of freedom, without denying the all–pervading divine will, power, and decree. Wisdom means placing a thing in its own

place; so divine wisdom comprises both justice (*'adl*) and grace and kindness (*fadl*). God possesses absolute power and His absoluteness is not subject to any external laws but His own wisdom.[28]

Al–Maturidi applied this principle also to combat the Mu'tazilites' doctrine of *al–aslah* (best) on the one hand, and the orthodox view that God may overburden his servants (*taklif ma la yutaq*) on the other. It is inconsistent with divine wisdom, which includes both justice and kindness, to demand from man performance of an act which is beyond his power, such as to command a blind man: "See," or to command one who has no hands: "Stretch your hands."[29]

Similarly, it would be an act of injustice if God would punish the believers in hell for ever or reward the infidels in paradise for ever.[30] He agreed with the Mu'tazilites on these questions in opposition to the orthodox,[31] but he strongly opposed the former's doctrine that God must do what is best for man.

This Mu'tazilite doctrine, he argues, places God under compulsion to do a particular act at a fixed time for the benefit of an individual and denies His freedom of action. It only proves the right of a man on Him and not the intrinsic value and merit of an action which the divine wisdom keeps in view. Moreover, this doctrine cannot solve the problem of evil. Al–Maturidi, therefore, maintains that divine justice consists not in doing what is salutary to an individual, but in doing an action on its own merit and in giving a thing its own place.[32]

After this brief outline, we give below a somewhat detailed account of al–Maturidi's view on the most important theological problems of his time, viz., the relation between God and human action, divine attributes, and beatific vision.

Relation between God and Man

Al–Maturidi in his *Kitab al–Tauhid* and *Tawilat al–Qur'an* has dealt at length with different aspects of this broad problem, the will, the power, the eternal decree, and the creative function of God; His wisdom and existence of evil in this world; freedom of man; and the basis of religious obligation and responsibility, etc.

Al–Maturidi combated the views of the Jabrites and the Mu'tazilites on the above questions and he also disagreed with al–Ash'ari on certain points. Refuting the absolute determinism of the Jabrites, he says that the relation between God and man should not be considered to be the same as that between God and the physical world. God has endowed man with reason, with the power of distinguishing between right and wrong, and with the faculties of thinking, feeling, willing, and judging, and has sent messengers and revealed books for his guidance.

Man inclines and directs his mind towards something which he thinks may benefit him, restrains himself from what he thinks will harm him, chooses one of the alternative courses of action by the exercise of his own reason, and thinks himself responsible for the merits or demerits of his actions.

Now, while he thinks, desires, inclines, chooses, and acts, he always considers himself quite free, and never thinks or feels that any outside agency compels him to do any of his actions. This consciousness of freedom, al-Maturidi asserts, is a reality, the denial of which will lead to the denial of all human knowledge and sciences. Quoting passages from the Qur'an[33] he also shows that the actions enjoined or prohibited by God are ascribed to men, and that they will be accountable for their "own" actions.

All this clearly proves that God has granted men freedom of choice and necessary power to perform an action. The denial of this freedom will mean that God is wholly responsible for all human actions and is liable to blame or punishment for sins committed by men, yet on the Day of Judgment He will punish them for His own actions. This is quite absurd, as God has described Himself in the Qur'an as the Most wise, just, and compassionate.[34]

But how can human freedom be reconciled with the Qur'anic conception of the all-embracing divine will, power, eternal decree, and God's authorship of all human actions? Al-Maturidi's explanations may be summed up as follows.

Creation belongs to God alone and all human actions, good or bad, are willed, decreed, and created by Him. Creation means bringing forth of an action from non-existence into existence by one who possesses absolute power and complete knowledge in respect of that action. As man does not know all the circumstances, causes, conditions, or the results of his action, and does not possess within himself the requisite power for producing an action, he cannot be regarded as the creator (*khaliq*) of his action.

Now, when it is proved that God is the creator of all human actions, it will necessarily follow that He also wills these actions, because divine action must be preceded by divine will. So nothing can happen in the world against or without the will of God. But, though God wills and creates human actions, He is not liable to blame or accountable for their actions, because divine will is determined by divine knowledge and He creates the action when a man in the free exercise of his reason chooses and intends to perform an action.

Thus, God wills an action good or evil, which He knows a man will choose, and when ultimately he chooses and intends to acquire it God creates that act as a good or evil act for him. From this, it will be clear that God's willing or creating an evil action is not inconsistent with His wisdom and goodness.

Because, God wills the happening of the evil because He desires the individual to exercise free choice, but being wise and just He always prohibits the choice of evil. So, though sins are in accordance with His will, they are never in accordance with His command, pleasure, desire, or guidance. Sin, then, according to al-Maturidi, consists not in going against the divine will, but in violating the divine law, command, guidance, pleasure, or desire.

The basis of man's obligation and responsibility (*taklif*), al-Maturidi maintains, does not consist in his possessing the power to create an action, but it is the freedom to choose (*ikhtiyar*) and the freedom to acquire an action (*iktisab*), conferred on man as a rational being, which make him responsible and

accountable.35

As regards eternal divine decree (qada' and *qadar*) al–Maturidi holds that it is not inconsistent with human freedom, nor does it imply any compulsion on the part of man, because it is an eternal record based on foreknowledge. God decrees the act He knows from eternity that a man will choose and acquire freely.

Man cannot deny his own responsibilities on the ground of the divine decree, al–Maturidi adds; he cannot do so on account of time and space within which actions must be done. So, though man is not absolutely free, God has granted him necessary freedom consistent with his obligation and, therefore, the divine decree relating to human actions should not be regarded the same as in relation to the physical world.36

It may not be out of place to note here the points of difference between al–Maturidi and al–Ash'ari on this question. In order to make a man responsible for his action al–Maturidi laid great stress, as we have just noticed, on the freedom of choice (*ikhtiyar*) and freedom of acquisition (*iktisab*). Divine will, decree, and foreknowledge do not deprive a man of this freedom.

An action is a man's own action, though created by God, because it is the result of his own choice and it has been acquired by him without any compulsion. God provided for him all the means and facilities for acquiring an action, endowed him with the power of judgment and self–control, and granted him freedom to choose whatever means and course he prefers to adopt.

Al–Ash'ari also used the term acquisition (*kasb*)37 but interpreted it differently. It seems that he did not favour the idea of the freedom of choice. According to him, God being omnipotent, all objects of power fall under His power, as God being omniscient all objects of knowledge fall under His knowledge. So a man's will has no effect or influence at all on his action; it is always determined by the divine will. Even the desire and power of acquisition fall under divine power and are the creation of God.38 Acquisition then; according to al–Ash'ari, means only a general coincidence of the divine power anal human actions.

It is God who in reality creates as well as acquires the action through man. This view, as is evident, does not differ in essence from that of the Determinists and hence he was regarded by some writers as being one of them.39 Even most of the prominent Ash'arites like Qadi Abu Bakr al–Baqillani (d. 403/1013), Shaikh Abu Ishaq al–Isfara'ini, and Imam al–Haramain al–Juwaini (d. 478/ 1085) could not agree with him on this question and gave different interpretations of the term *kasb*.40

Divine Attributes

Human languages do not possess any term, al–Maturidi says, to explain the nature and attributes of God in a way that will not imply any idea of resemblance or comparison. Yet it is a necessity for human understanding to ascribe some names and attributes to the Creator of the world. Giving a critical account of the views of the philosophers, the pluralists, the dualists, and the atheists, al–Maturidi asserts that the

belief in one Supreme Power and Ultimate Reality is universal, but the people differ greatly from one another in giving names and attributing qualities to this Supreme Being. Among the people of *tauhid*, it is only the Mu'tazilites, he says, who by denying the divine attributes and their eternity endangered this universal belief in the existence of one God.

Refuting the views of the Mu'tazilites on this question, he says that it is agreed that God has beautiful names and it will be quite futile to apply these names to Him divested of the meanings and contents which they imply; for otherwise it will not be unreasonable to ascribe to Him any name whatsoever. So, when, for example, it is said that God is wise, it must mean that He possesses the quality of wisdom. The denial of the divine attributes (*ta'til*) only creates confusions, makes the knowledge of God impossible, and ultimately reduces Him to an unknown and unknowable Non Being. The denial of the eternity of the attributes makes God imperfect in the beginning and subject to changes, and, thus, it shakes the very basis of *tauhid*.

The idea of pluralism or anthropomorphism that may arise due to affirmation of the eternal attributes can easily be eradicated by firm belief in the absolute unity of God together with the idea of *tanzih* (denial of likeness and similitude) and *mukhlafah* (difference from the created being). Thus when we say that "God is knowing," we also add to this (as a safeguard against any blasphemous idea concerning Him), "but not like the learned, and His knowledge is not like our knowledge." The consequences of the denial of the divine attributes or their eternity are far more dangerous than those of their affirmation.

As regards the relation between divine essence and attributes, al-Maturidi says that the problem is so complicated that no human reason can hope to solve it satisfactorily. So we should believe that God is one, has attributes which He ascribes to Himself, without similitude, comparison, and asking how. We should not go further than asserting that "the attributes are not identical with nor separated from His essence" (*la huwa wa la ghairuhu*).[41]

Al-Maturidi also maintains that all the attributes of God whether belonging to His essence or action are eternal. The word *takwin* has been used to denote all the attributes pertaining to action such as creating, sustaining, etc. *Takwin*, according to al-Maturidi, is an eternal attribute distinct from power (*qudrah*).

So God is the creator before and after the creation. This does not indicate in any way the eternity of the world, because as knowledge and power are eternal attributes, though the objects of knowledge and power are created, *takwin* is an eternal attribute, though the object of *takwin* (*mukawwan*) is created. The non-existence of the world at the beginning does not imply God's inability, as He created it at the appropriate time in accordance with His eternal knowledge and will.[42]

Al-Ash'ari on this question is in agreement with the Mu'tazilites and holds that the attributes of action are originated.[43] It seems to us that he agreed with them in order to evade the Aristotelian argument which aims at proving the eternity of the world by the eternal, creative power of God. Al-Maturidi's main argument is that the idea of the createdness of any of the divine attributes is fundamentally opposed to

the conception of God as a perfect, self-subsistent, eternal Ultimate Reality and is, therefore, in conflict with the doctrine of *tauhid*.

As regards the Word of God (*Kalam Allah*), al-Maturidi maintains that like all other attributes His attribute of speaking as well as His speech is eternal without similitude and comparison. The exact nature of this eternal speech or the attribute of speaking is not known, but it is certain that the divine speech cannot be composed of sounds and letters like human speech, because sounds and letters are created.

So, in reality, he asserts, only the "meaning" of which the words are an expression can be termed as the *kalam* of Allah. This "meaning" which existed with God from eternity can be heard and understood only through the medium of created sound.

Accordingly, Moses did not hear the eternal speech, but God made him hear and understand the eternal speech through created words and sounds. Now, what is heard by or revealed to the prophets is called the *kalam* of Allah figuratively (*majazan*) for three reasons: (1) They heard (understood) the purport (*al-ma'na*) of the *kalam*, that is, divine command, prohibition, forbidding, sanctioning, etc., which belong to God alone. (2) God Himself composed it (*allafa wa nazama*); hence it was inimitable by any human being. (3) It explains the eternal speech and proves His attribute of speech.[44]

It is evident from the above account that al-Maturidi refutes the idea of the orthodox section who identified the revealed Qur'an with the eternal speech, and he agrees in principle with the Mu'tazilites who held it to be a creation of God. So the subject of contention between him and the Mu'tazilites is not whether the recited Qur'an is created, but whether God has eternal speech and the attribute of speaking.

Al-Ash'ari, like al-Maturidi, maintains that God has eternal speech and the attribute of speaking,[45] but it is not clear from his lengthy discourses in *Kitab al-Luma* and *al-Ibanah* what he exactly meant by *kalam* of Allah and what, according to him, was eternal in the Qur'an-words or meanings? He maintained that the eternal speech could be heard directly without the medium of created sound.[46]

This statement, together with general trends of his ideas and his mode of reasonings as reflected in his printed books, corroborates a statement according to which both words and meanings were regarded by him as eterna1.[47] But al-Shahrastani asserts that, according to al-Ash'ari, the words are created and the "mental" meaning (*al-ma'na al-nafsi*) is eternal;[48] this last is the view of all the eminent Ash'arites.[49] If so, there is not much difference on this question between the Mu'tazilites and the Ash'arites.

Beatific Vision

It has been noticed that al-Maturidi, like the Mu'tazilites, strongly opposed the anthropomorphic idea of God and interpreted metaphorically those passages of the Qur'an which appear to create such an impression. But on the question of seeing God in paradise by the believers, he is wholly in agreement

with the orthodox, and firmly holds that the passages of the Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet on this subject must be taken in their literal sense.

By scholastic reasonings he shows that the letter and spirit of these verses and traditions do not allow us to take them allegorically and to interpret seeing God as “seeing His signs and rewards or knowing Him by the heart.” This latter type of seeing is common for believers and nonbelievers in the next world and may even happen in this world. The texts must always be taken in their literal and real sense, he argues, except where that is impossible.

The vision of God in the next world is not impossible and it does not necessarily prove His corporeality, and hence if the literal sense were rejected, its consequences would be dangerous and it might ultimately lead to the denial of the existence of God. As God is knowing and doing; for example, without His being a body or accident or without His being limited by time and space, so will He be an object of vision in the next world. Some people were misled because, as they had no experience of seeing what is not a body or an accident, they compared the vision of God in paradise with the vision of a material object in this world.

Thus, the Corporealists (*Mujassimin*) erred in saying that God is a body, because He will be seen, and the Mu'tazilites erred in saying that He cannot be seen because He is not a body. Conditions of vision, al-Maturidi says, differ from stage to stage, person to person, and genus to genus. Many things exist, but we do not see them. Angels who are not corporeal beings see us, though we do not see them. Conditions of seeing: rays of light, darkness, and shadow, are not the same as those of seeing solid material objects.

So it is quite unreasonable to apply the conditions of seeing a physical object in this world to the seeing of the Being which is not a body in the next world, where conditions will be totally different from those in this world. Seeing God, therefore, may be impossible in this world, but not in the next world.

He also argues that vision may not happen sometimes for some reason or other, although the conditions of vision exist; in the same way, vision may happen in the absence of those conditions. Another argument of his is that, according to our sense-experience, only the knowledge of matter and accidents can be acquired by a man, yet we assert the possibility of acquiring knowledge of the realities beyond experience. This principle is also applicable to beatific vision.

In short, al-Maturidi asserts that the vision of God in paradise is the highest spiritual and intellectual delight and the most coveted reward of the believers; it is an article of faith based on the Qur'an and the Sunnah and supported by reason. So we must accept this as such, without going into details.[50]

Conclusion

The theological systems of al-Maturidi and al-Ash'ari have long since been accepted by the general

populace of the Muslim world. Though ascribed to them, neither al–Maturidi nor al–Ash`ari was, in fact, the author of his system, nor was either of them a pioneer in this field. Imam Abu Hanifah (d. 150/767) was the first renowned scholar among the Ahl al–sunnah wa'l Jama'ah, who studied theology for long before he had taken up the study of Fiqh, combated the heretical sects of his time, and founded the first orthodox school in theology.51

Al–Maturidi followed his system, explained it in the light of the philosophy of his time, tried to defend it by argument and reason, and this provided for it a firm foundation. Hence this school is ascribed to its founder as well as to its interpreter who fixed its ultimate form and brought victory to it.

The difference between the attitude of al–Maturidi and of al–Ash'ari may be judged from this: If al–Ash'ari's attempt during the later period was to strike a middle path between rationalism and traditionalism, al–Maturidi certainly took a position between what may be called Ash'arism and Mu'tazilism. The important points of difference between these two leaders of orthodox *Kalam*, more strictly, between the two schools, have been reckoned by some writers as fifty in number.52 (References have already been made in the foregoing pages to some of the most important of them and we need not enter here into a discussion of the rest.)

As a result of these differences, there was once a tendency of bitter rivalry between the followers of these two schools but happily in course of time this tendency subsided and both the schools were regarded as orthodox. But how profoundly the educated Muslims of today are influenced by the system of al–Maturidi may easily be realized from the fact that the *`Aqa'id* of al–Nasafi (d. 537/1142), which gives the substance of the former's *Kitab al–Tauhid*, has been recognized as an authority and prescribed as a text–book on theology in many educational institutions of the Muslim world.

A comparative study of the arguments employed by al–Maturidi and by the great Ash'arite scholars like `Abd al–Qahir al–Baghdadi (d. 429/1031) and Imam al–Haramain al–Juwaini (d. 478/1085) to prove the non–eternity of the world, the existence of God, His unity and attributes, the value of human reason, the necessity of the divine revelation, and the prophethood of Muhammad, will show how deep and enormous his influence was on the orthodox dialecticians who came after him, and what a lasting contribution he made towards the development of orthodox Kalam.

That Shaikh Muhammad `Abduh (d. 1323/1905), one of the leaders of the modern reform movement in Islam, in his endeavour to reconstruct Islamic theology, closely followed the system of al–Maturidi, is evident from his *Risalat al–Tauhid* and his observations on several controversial questions in his note on the *Sharh `Aqa'id al–`Adudiyyah*.

Bibliography

Al–Sam'ani, *al–Ansab*; Ibn al Athir, *al–Lubab*; Ahmad Amin, *Zuhr al–Islam*, vol. 1; al–Maturidi, *Kitab al–Tauhid*, MS., Cambridge, fol. 1; Sayyid Murtada, *Sharh Ihya'*, vol. II; `Abd al–Qadir al–Qarashi,

al–Jawahir al–Mud'iyyah, MS., Cairo; Mahmud al–Kafawi, *Kata'ib A`lam al–Akhyar*, MS., Cairo; Qasim b. Qutlubugha, *Taj al–Tarajim*, Leipzig, 1862; Tash Kubrazadah, *Miftah al–Sa'adah*, Hyderabad, 1928; `Abd al–Hayy Lakhnawi, *al–Fawa'id al–Bahiyyah*, Cairo, 1324/1906; Kamal al–Din al–Biyadi, *Isharat al–Maram*, Cairo, 1949;Hajji Khalifah, *Kash al. Zunun*, Istanbul, 1943; 'Ali al–Qari, *Sharh al–Fiqh al–Akbar,* Cairo, 1323/1905; Zuhdi Hasan, *Al–Mu'tazilah*, Cairo, 1947; al–Ash'ari, *Kitab al–Luma'*; Maqalat, Cairo; Imam, al–Haramain, *al–`Aqidat al–Nizamiyyah*; *Sharh al–`Aqa'id al–`Adudiyyah*; al–Baghhdadi, *al–Farq*;

Muhammad b. al–Murtada al–Yamani, *Ithar al–Haqq*; Ibn al–Nadim, *al–Fihrist*; al– Shahrastani, *Milal*; `Abd al–Rahim, *Nazm al–Fara'id*, Cairo; al–Makki and Bazzaz, *al–Manaqib*; `Abd Allah b. `Uthman, *Risalah fi al–Khilaf bain al–Ash'ariyyah' wa'l Maturidiyyah*, MS., Cairo; Goldziher, *Vorlesungen uber den Islam*, Heidelberg, 1910; *Islamische Philosophie des Mittelalters in Kultur des Gegenwart*; T. J. de Boor, *Geschichte der Philosophic im Islam*, Stuttgart, 1901; Maimonides, *La Guide des Egares*, ed. and tr. S. Munk, Paris, 1856–66; S. Harovitz, *Uber den Einfluss der griech. Philosophy auf die Entwicklung des Kalam*, Breslau, 1909; K. Lasswitz, *Geschichte der Atomistik*, Hamburg/Leipzig, 1890.

1. The word is also pronounced as Maturid and Maturit. Cf, al–Sam'ani, al–Ansab, fol. 498b; Ibn al–Athir, al–Lubab, vol. III, p. 76; Ahmad Amin, Zuhr al–Islam. vol. I, p. 365. It was wrongly transcribed by some writers as Matarid.
2. Al–Maturidi, Kitab al–Tauhid, MS. Cambridge, fol. 1, footnote al Sayyid Murtada, Sharh Ihya' of al–Ghazali, Cairo, 1893, V ol. II, p. 5.
3. Imam Abu Nasr al–'Ayadi, al–Samarqandi, one of al–Maturidi's teachers, was a descendant of Sa'd b. `Ubadah, vide 'Abd al–Hay Lakhnawi, al–Fawa'id al Bahiyyah, Cairo, 1324/1906, p. 23.
4. Al–Sam'ani, op. cit., fol. 498.
5. Abd al–Qadir al–Qarashi, al–Jawahir al–Mud'iyyah, MS. Cairo, p. 251 (it has been printed at Hyderabad); Mahmud al–Kufawi, Kata'ib A'lam al–Akhyar, MS. Cairo, pp. 129–30; Qasim b. Qutlubugha, Taj al–Tarajim, Leipzig, 1862, p. 44; Tash Kubrazadah, Miftah al–Sa'adah, Hyderabad, 1928, vol. II, p. 22; Sayyid Murtada, op. cit., vol. II, pp. 5–14; `Abd al–Hayy Lakhnami, op. cit., p. 195.
6. For Samanids see al–Maqdisi, Ahsan al–Taqasim, p. 294; Ahmad Amin, op. cit. vol. I, pp. 261 et sqq.
7. Kamal al–Din al–Biyadi, Zaharat at–Maram, Cairo, 1949, p. 23; Sharh Ihya' vol. II, p. 5, and books on Hanafi ,Tabaqat.
8. Kata'ib A'lam al–Akhyar, p. 129.
9. Three other works, viz., Sharh Fiqh al–Akbar of Imam Abu Hanifah, 'Aqidah abi Mansur and Sharh al–Ibanah of Imam al–Ash'ari are erroneously ascribed to him.
10. MSS. of this book are found at the Cairo, Istanbul, and Berlin Libraries. Sheikh 'Ala al–Din Abu Bakr Muhammad b. Ahmad al–Samarqandi wrote a commentary on this book in eight volumes, an incomplete copy of which can be found at the Patna Library.
11. Al–Jawahir al–Mud'iyyah, MS. Cairo, p. 251.
12. Kashf al–Zunan, Istanbul, 1943, vol. I, pp. 110–11.
13. For al–Ka'bi, see al–Shahrastani, Milal, al–Azhar ed., vol. I, pp. 116–17; al–Baghdadi, Kitab al–Fariq, Cairo, pp. 108–09.
14. Al–Ash'ari was born in 260/873 or 2701883 and remained in the Mu'tazilites' camp up to the fortieth year of his age, so he must have begun his movement after the end of the third century of Hijrah. Al–Maturidi was born before 248/862, and supposing that he spent about thirty years in acquiring knowledge, then his movement seems to have begun before the end of the third century A.H.
15. Al–Maturidi, op. cit., pp. 3, 13.
16. Ibid., pp. 4–5, 68–69.

17. Ibid., pp. 92–95; Tawilat, Surah vii, 54.
18. Ibid., pp– 91 et sqq.
19. Ibid., pp– 2–4.
20. Ibid., p. 116; Tawilat, MSS. Istanbul & Hyderabad, Preface; 'Ali al–Qari, Sharh al–Fiqh al–Akbar, Cairo, 1323/1905, p. 75.
21. Zuhdi Hasan, al–Mu'tazilah, Cairo, 1947, pp. 247–48; Ahmad Amin, Duha al–Ialam, Cairo, vol. III, p. 32.
22. Kitab al–Tauhid pp. 48–49, 91–92; Sharh al–`Aqa'id al–`Adudiyyah with commentaries of Sialkuti and Shaikh Muhammad `Abduh, Cairo, 1322/1904, p. 180, Nazm al–Fara'id Cairo, 1317/1899, pp. 32–37; al–Raudat al–Bahiyyah, Cairo, 1322/1904, pp. 34–39.
23. Qur'an, vii, 56.
24. Kitab al–Tauhid, pp. 41–42, 48, 144–69, 178; Tawilat, Surah vii, 10.
25. Kitab al–Tauhid, pp. 13, 21, 46.
26. Ibid., p. 59; Tawilat, Surah xxxix, 62.
27. Tawilat, Surah vii, 54; v, 64; iv, 27; xi, 37; Kitab al–Tauhid, pp. 12, 32.
28. Kitab al–Tauhid, pp. 46–47, 61–62.
29. Ibid., pp. 134–35; Tawilat, Surah ii, 286.
30. Ibid., pp. 186 et sqq.
31. For al–Ash'ari's views on these questions, see his Kitab al–Luma`, Cairo, 1955, pp. 113 et sqq.; al–Ibanah, Hyderabad, 1948, p. 59:
32. Kitab al–Tauhid, pp. 48, 61, 112.
33. Qur'an, ii, 77, 167; xxliii, 17; xli, 40; xcix, 7, etc.
34. Kitab al–Tauhid, pp. 115 et sqq., 165.
35. Ibid., pp. 117 et sqq.
36. Ibid., p. 161.
37. The evidence at our disposal does not clearly indicate when and by whom the doctrine of kasb was first formulated. But it is quite evident that neither al–Maturidi nor al–Ash'ari was the originator of this doctrine. The term kasb or iktisab had been used long before them by Imam Abu Hanifah and his contemporaries: Jahm b. Safwan (d. 128/745), Hafs, al–Fard, and Dirar b. `Amar. Cf. al–Ash'ari, al–Maqalat, Cairo, vol. I, pp. 110, 313; al–Baghdadi, op. cit., pp. 129 et sqq.; Muhammad b. al–Murtada al–Yamani, Ithar al–Haqq, pp. 312, 316.
38. al–Ash'ari, Kitab al–Luma`, Cairo, 1955, pp. 72 et sqq.
39. Ibn al–Nadim, al–Fihrist, chapter on the Jabrites; al–Shahrastani, Milal, vol. I, p. 134.
40. Al–Shahrastani, op. cit., vol. I, pp. 157 et sqq.; Imam al–Haramain, al–`Aqidat al–Nizamiyyah, p. 34; Shari'a al–`Aqa'id al–`Adudiyyah, p. 88; al–Biyadi; Isharat al–Maram, p. 255.
41. Kitab al–Tauhid, pp. 12, 21, 31, 44, 51; al–Biyadi, op. cit., p. 118; al–Subki, Sharh `Aqidah. MS. Madinah.
42. Kitab al–Tauhid, pp. 23 et sqq.; Tawilat, Surahs i, 3; ii, 117.
43. The three schools differ from one another in defining the attribute of an action. Cf. Ali al–Qari, Sharh Fiqh al–Akbar, Cairo, 1323/1905, p. 19.
44. Kitab al–Tauhid, pp.26–28; Tawilat, Surahs ix, 6; xlii, 51; vii, 143; iv, 164.
45. Kitab al–Luma`, pp. 33 et sqq.; al–Ibanah, pp. 19 et aqq.
46. Kitab al–Luma`, p. 63; also Ibn Humam al–Musayarah, Cairo, 1347/1928, p. 11; `Abd al–Rahim, Nazm al–Fara'id, Cairo, 1317/1899, pp. 15–18; Abu `Udhbah, al Raudat al–Bahiyyah, Hyderabad, pp. 44–45.
47. Sharh al–`Aqa'id al–`Adudiyyah, p. 188.
48. Nihayat al–Iqdam, p. 320.
49. Imam al–Haramain, al–Irshad, Cairo, 1950, pp. 102 et sqq.; al–Ghazali, al Iqtisad, Cairo, pp. 71–72.
50. Kitab al–Tauhid, pp. 37–41; Tawilat,Surahs vi. 103; vii, 143; x, 26; lxxv, 22–23.
51. Al–Baghdadi, op. cit., p. 220; Usul al–Din, vol. I, p. 308; al–Makki and Bazzaz, al–Manaqib; al–Biyadi, op. cit., pp. 19–23. There are five books on theology ascribed to Imam Abu Hanifah: al–Fiqh al–Akbar, al–Fiqh al–Absat, al–Risalah al–`Alim w–al–Muta'aalim and al– Wasiyyah. These books, we are convinced, represent the correct views of the Imam.

52. Al–Biyadi, op. cit., pp. 53–56; Shaikhzadah, Nazm al–Fara'id, Cairo, 1317/1899; Sayyid Murtada, op. cit., vol. I, pp. 8 et sqq.; Abu 'Udhbah, op. cit.; `Abd Allah b. `Uthman, Risalah fi al–Khilaf bain al Ash'ariyyah wa'l–Maturidiyyah. MS. Cairo.

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.2 Since this movement adopted some aspects of Greek philosophy, such as emanationism,3 its followers were considered by Sunni authors to be heretics and outside the pale of faith.4

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] Dawud[8] 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."[17] 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. Nykl[38] 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 Fiqh 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 Ibn 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 Umayyad 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 (*ra'i*) 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 [*Al–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 disdaine[61] 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[63] 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'l–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, 17 7 , 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.
37. 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.

38. 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; lvii, 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.

Chapter 15: Ikhwan al-Safa

Ikhwan al-Safa by Omar A. Farrukh, Ph.D, Member of the Arab Academy, Damascus (Syria)

Introduction

The name Ikhwan al–Safa was assumed by a group of *libres penseum* who cultivated science and philosophy not for the sake of science and philosophy, but in the hope of forming a kind of an ethico–spiritual community in which the elites of the heterogeneous Muslim Empire could find a refuge from the struggle that was raging among religious congregations, national societies, and Muslim sects themselves.

External evidence concerning the Ikhwan al-Safa is so scanty that no clear historical picture of them is in any way possible. Were it not for Abu Hayyan al-Tauhidi (d. after 400/1009), a famous author and a friend of some members of the group, no facts about them would have come down to us.

The group of the Ikhwan al-Safa originated in Basrah. In about 373/983, the group was already famous and its "Epistles," which contain its spiritual doctrines and philosophical system, were in wide circulation.[1]

The complete name of the group was *Ikhwan al-Safa wa Khullan al-Wafa wa Ahl al-Hamd wa Abna' al-Majd*[2] a name which was suggested to them by the chapter of the "Ring-Necked Dove" in *Kalilah wa Dimnah*, a book which they very highly esteemed.[3]

The Ikhwan al-Safa succeeded in keeping complete secrecy about their names. But when Abu Hayyan was asked in about 373/983, about them, he named, perhaps at random, five of them: Abu Sulaiman Muhammad b. Ma'shar ad-Busti, known as al-Muqaddisi, Abu al-Hasan 'Ali b. Harun al-Zanjani, Abu Ahmad Muhammad al-Mihrajani, a certain al-'Aufi, and the famous Zaid b. Rifa'ah.[4]

The Ikhwan al-Safa produced numerous works the most famous and important of which is the encyclopedic compilation entitled *Rasa'il Ikhwan al-Safa* (Epistles of the Ikhwan al-Safa), which will henceforth be referred to as *Rasa'il* or "Epistles." These "Epistles" are definitely the result of a collaboration of various writers many of whom may not have been members of the group.

The compilation must have dragged over a long period, but by 373/983 the "Epistles" must have been already complete in the first recension at least. It is, moreover, practically certain that the Ikhwan al-Safa embarked upon the compilation of the "Epistles" with the number fifty in their mind. The current edition, however, has fifty-three epistles.

Closely connected with the "Epistles" is *al-Risalat al-Jami'ah* (the Comprehensive Epistle) which was a summarium and summa of the original "Epistles." It was also intended for private circulation among the more advanced members of the group. The *Jami'ah* discards much of the scientific information originally the backbone of the "Epistles," and expounds more fully and frankly the ideas which the Ikhwan al-Safa intended to inoculate into their followers.[5]

The *Jami'ah* was further summarized in *Risalat al-Jami'at al-Jami'ah au al-Zubdah min Rasa'il Ikhwan al-Safa* (the Condensation of the Comprehensive Epistle or the Cream of the Epistles of Ikhwan al-Safa), called also *al-Risalat al-Jami'ah*.[6] The scientific information as well as chapters of the "Epistles" are eliminated, while the symbolic and esoteric interpretation of the verses of the Qur'an are brought out vigorously.

The Ikhwan al-Safa made arrangements for holding meetings everywhere they had followers. In these meetings, which were held once every twelve days and were restricted to the members and followers of the group, subjects of metaphysical and esoteric nature were discussed.[7] There were also occasional

meetings for the initiation of young people.[8]

Apparently, some of the followers were given, during these meetings, to singing, drinking, and other indulgences for which the Ikhwan al-Safa rebuked them indirectly.[9]

The Ikhwan al-Safa were a secret group. They were recruited through personal and confidential contacts. The emissaries were advised to work among the youth, as old people are usually rigid and unfit for any movement.[10]

The group had four grades in which its members were placed generally according to their age. The first and most inferior grade was that of those who had attained their fifteenth year; the second of those between thirty and forty years of age; the third of those between forty and-fifty. The fourth, last and highest grade, was that of those who were already fifty years of age.[11].

The Ikhwan al-Safa were Muslims. But they had a special interpretation of religion in general, and of Islam in particular. The Shi`ite colouring, which is very conspicuous in their missionary work, is only dramatic because it helped them to play cleverly upon the emotions of the masses.

In the strict historical sense, the Ikhwan al-Safa did not belong to any sect. In fact, they sought, with the aid of Islam and Greek philosophy, to work out a spiritual doctrine which would take the place of the historical religions and which would, at the same time, suit everyone and insult nobody.

As far as we can gather from the "Epistles," the Ikhwan al-Safa had no political programme. It seems, however, that some of their followers had pressed for political action to take the reins of government into their hands. The Ikhwan al-Safa themselves, the magnates among them, were not of this opinion; they reiterated in this connection that their sole aim was to uphold the faith and attain the bliss in the hereafter. In the meantime they tried to acquire knowledge and be versed in theoretical sciences.[12] They declared, further, that they intended to build up a spiritual city, a Utopia, which was not of this world, neither on the continent; nor on the high seas, nor in the air.[13]

The sections, in the "Epistles," referring to *daulatu ahl al-khairi and daulatu ahl al-sharri* (literally, the State of the people of good and the State of the people of evil) contain only a brief and general discussion on, the terms of governments or dynasties and on their succession.[14] The Ikhwan al-Safa referred once[15] to the coming of *daulatu ahl al-khairi*; but they meant simply "the time when the adherents to their group would form the bulk of the nation."

System and Theories

1. Classification of the Sciences

Sciences may be classified in different ways. The Ikhwan al-Safa mentioned a few classifications and adopted that which divided all branches of knowledge roughly into three major classes:[16] mathematics,

physics, and metaphysics, a classification which was current since Aristotle's days. Mathematics included, in the "Epistle," the theory of numbers, geometry, astronomy, geography, music, theoretical and practical arts, ethics, and logic.[17] Physics included matter, form, motion, time, space, the sky, generation, corruption, minerals, the essence of nature, plants, animals, the human body, the senses, life and death, microcosm, pleasure, pain, and language.[18]

Metaphysics was subdivided, as should be expected, into psycho–rationalism and theology. The first subdivision included psychics, rationalistics, being, macrocosm, mind, great years, love, resurrection, and causality.[19] Theology included the beliefs of the Ikhwan al–Safa, friendship, faith, divine Law, prophethood, call unto God, the incorporeals, polities, the structure of the world, and magic.[20]

2. Theory of Knowledge

The Ikhwan al–Safa were very much interested in epistemology or the theory of knowledge. General knowledge, they said; may be acquired in three ways:[21]

(1) The way of the five senses is the natural and the most common way of acquiring knowledge. But through our senses we acquire only the material changes immediately apprehended by us and occurring in space and time.[22]

(2) Man acquires knowledge also by means of primary reason, by pure or mere thinking. But reason, if unaided by sound senses, cannot acquire knowledge. Moreover, concepts having no connection with our senses, like those of God and the First Matter, cannot be acquired thus.[23] Akin to the two previous ways is the way of proof,[24] the way of the trained dialecticians.

(3) The way of acquiring knowledge which agrees best with the esoteric doctrine of the Ikhwan al–Safa is the way of initiation and authority, i.e., receiving knowledge personally from an authorized elder, a teacher in the broadest and deepest sense. This teacher receives his knowledge from the Imam (religious leader) who, in turn, receives it, through other Imams, from the Prophet whose ultimate source of knowledge is God.[25]

Philosophy, wisdom or philosophical wisdom, according to the Ikhwan al–Safa, is to behave Godlike as best as a human being can.[26] A more detailed definition would be "love for science added to knowledge of the essence of all beings, gained" as best as one can, together with profession and public behaviour in harmony with that."[27]

In the "Epistles" of the Ikhwan al–Safa metaphysics proper is quite meagre.

3. Metaphysics

If metaphysics did not include theology, it would have interested them very little.

Form and Matter

The views of the Ikhwan al-Safa regarding form and matter are Aristotelian: every body consists of matter and form which are insepararable, since pure forms are only concepts like the soul and the intellect.[28] Matter and form are both simple essences. The form is more important, since bodies are different because of their forms, their matter being in many cases the same; but matter is theoretically older.[29] In keeping with their disposition towards compilation, they show some leaning to Plato when they say[30] that the images, figures, frames, and characteristics which we see in the world of (sublunary) bodies and in the essences of the heavenly bodies are examples, likenesses, and colourings of those forms which are in the world of spirits.

Space and Time

As regards space and time, their view was that both are not realities; space is more objective, since it is related to bodies which have dimensions: it is the vessel which holds the contained.[31]

Time has no independent existence. It cannot be conceived of except in connection with moving bodies. Note, if space is the outer surface of the world and time is the reckoning of the rotations of the spheres, space and time would be unthinkable prior to the spheres themselves.[32] These views led some to think that they believed in the eternity of the world. They were aware of this accusation and tried to defend themselves against it.[33]

Motion

There are six general kinds of motion grouped in three pairs: generation and corruption, increase and decrease, change and displacement. The particular kinds are numerous. The continuous and perfect motion is spherical; the straight motion is also continuous but not perfect. The arrow when passing through the air forms, from the bowstring to its falling place, one continuous course.[34] Here they disagree, in the example of the arrow, with Zeno of Elea (d. 430 B.C.) who argued that if a line was made up of points, there must be always space among these points. And so, an arrow in any given moment of its flight must be at rest in some particular point.[35]

Causality

In the field of causality the Ikhwan al-Safa depended on Aristotle. *`Ilal* (pl. of *`illah*,, fem.) or major causes are four:[36]. the *hayulaniyyah* (material, the matter or substance of which a thing is made), *suriyyah* (formal, the form which is given to a certain substance to produce that thing), *fa'iliyyah* (active, the agent which gives that substance its form) and *tamamiyyah* (fulfilling, the end which that produced thing serves).

The answer to a question concerning any of the causes, and especially the fourth cause, is always difficult because it is a question about the essence of things. These four causes should act together,

otherwise the intended thing would not come into existence, and they should hold on, so that the produced thing might persist. It is needless to say that God is the ultimate cause of all beings.[37]

Number

Numbers are the vehicle of the doctrine of the Ikhwan al-Safa. The Pythagorean theory of numbers (their properties: proportion, progression, etc.) and their linking mystically to the life and after-life of man captured their imagination.

The Ikhwan al-Safa divided the numbers into two classes: a factor which is the "one" and a "series from two ad infinitum." The one is an absolute unity, indivisible, undiminishable, and unincreasable. All the numbers originate from the one: the two by the repetition of the "one" twice; the other numbers by adding the "one"; whence its character as a factor to every subsequent number.[38] This dexterous acrobatism was necessary to arrive at the following, half-theological and half-metaphysical statement: Just as "the one is of a different nature from the numbers which originate from it, so the One (God) is unlike all the beings emanating from Him."[39]

Being and Emanation

This leads us to Being and Emanation, the coming of the universe into existence, or its creation.

The universe is not eternal but created by God through emanation. Emanation was a compromise between the strict religious notion of creation and the Aristotelian view of the eternity of the world. Theoretically, creation was accomplished in two steps: first, God willed, in one thought, that the universe should come into existence *ex nihilo*; then, immediately emanation began and proceeded gradually, until the universe took its present shape.

The order and character of emanation were as follows:[40]

(i) *Al-Bari* (The Maker, Creator, or God). *Al-Bari* is the First and only Eternal Being, the One, Unique, and One in every respect. He has no partner and no peer. No anthropomorphic attribute or action should be ascribed to Him. Only the will to create pertains to Him.[41]

(ii) *Al-`Aql* (Intellect or Gr. Nous). *Al-`aql* was the first being to emanate from *al-Bari*. God created it directly, necessarily, without break, and with no need for movement or effort. From God's eternity it acquires its own eternity; and through His perpetuance it receives its continuity and perfection. It is one in number as God Himself is One. But since God does not condescend to deal with material bodies, He created in the intellect all the forms of subsequent beings and instituted in it the office of re-emanation: from it emanated the world-soul and the first matter. It is clear, then, that the office attributed usually to God belongs, in the opinion of the Ikhwan al-Safa, to the intellect, a counterpart, duplicate, or image of God.[42]

(iii) *Al-Nafs al-Kulliyyah* (The Absolute Soul, the World-Soul) - The world-soul is the soul of the whole

universe, a simple essence which emanated from the intellect. It receives its energy from the intellect. It manifests itself in the sun through which it animates the whole sublunary (material) world. What we call creation, in our world, pertains actually to the world–soul.[43]

(iv) *Al–Hayula* (Arabicized from Gr. *hyle*: substance, matter, stuff), First Matter – First matter is a simple and spiritual essence already substance without bulk, and yet without conceivable dimensions. Because the first matter was passive, having no proper energy; it could not emanate by itself. It was caused by the intellect to proceed from the world–soul which had to exert effort and show great care to facilitate for it to gush forth and become subsequently susceptible to accepting different forms."[44]

(v) *Al–Tabi'ah* (Nature) – Nature is one of the powers of the world–soul, the energy diffused throughout the sublunary world and effecting all bodies therein, organic and inorganic. It is the cause of motion, life, and change. It works wisely and uniformly. In this sense, it is the philosophical term for the religious concepts of divine will and Providence."[45]

Here, with nature, ceases the influence of the intellect, since all subsequent emanations will tend to be more and more material, defective, and, consequently, unworthy of its care.[46]

(vi) *Al–Jism al–Mutlaq* (The Absolute Body) – When the world–soul began, with the help of the intellect, to move the first matter in three directions, the first matter acquired the three dimensions (length, width, and depth) and became the absolute body or second matter. The second matter is no more a concept, an essence, or a quality denoting pure existence, as was the first matter, but a quantum, spherical in shape. This absolute body, or second matter, is the substance of which our world, as such, is made[47]

(vii) *The Spheres or the World of the Spheres* – In the seventh stage of emanation appeared the spheres which are not imaginary but spiritual, spherical, hollow, transparent, and concentric bodies. These spheres, which are eleven in number, vary in the thickness of their shells, in proportion to the magnitude of the planets with which they are inset. These spheres are: the spheres of the fixed stars, Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, the Sun, Venus, Mercury, and the Moon. All the heavenly bodies are made up of a fifth element, ether,[48] and are not liable to generation and corruption.[49]

(viii) *The Four Elements* – With the emanation of the four elements: fire, air, water, and earth, we come to the beings immediately under the sphere of the moon (within its orbit), to the sublunary world where the process of generation and corruption begins to take place.

Fire, air, water, and earth – supposed to be elements by the Ikhwan al–Safa like many Greek thinkers – exist, free in nature, in minor spheres about the centre of the earth. Further, they espoused the view of the Ionians, and Thales (d. c. 545 B.C.) in particular, as against the Eleatics, that the four "elements" change into one another, water becomes air and fire; fire becomes air, water, earth, etc.[50]

(ix) *The Three Kingdoms* – In the closing stage of emanation appeared the three kingdoms: mineral, plant, and animal, which originated from the absolute interchange and proportional intermixture of the

four elements.[51]

Macrocosm and Microcosm

The early Greek thinkers conceived of the universe as one living being in which the phenomena and powers are correlated and governed hierarchically by a single general law. Democritus of Abdera (d. c. 370 B.C.) developed from that concept the Theory of Macrocosm and Microcosm which treated of man as a reduced model of the universe, and of the universe as the enlarged copy of man.[52] His theory was accepted by the Ikhwan al-Safa.

The Individual Soul (al-Nafs al-Juz'iyyah) and Its Fall

As soon as the world-soul was called upon to care for individual beings, beginning with the spheres, its innumerable powers became distinct and independent but not detached, since detachability is a property of matter. In this sense individual souls, representing the infinite powers of the world-soul, began to form. During a very long time these souls filled the world of the spheres and constituted the angels who animated the heavenly bodies.

At first, they were aware of the grace which is bestowed by the intellect upon the world-soul, of which they are the powers. They contemplated the intellect and performed the worship due to God. By and by, some of these individual souls began to forget much about their origin and office.

This sin caused them to get farther and farther (though not in the sense of space and time) from God. The punishment was the fall of the sinful souls to our earth, to be tied to individual bodies in order to atone, by undergoing hardships, pain, and sorrow, for the sin they had committed in their heavenly abode. This was the metaphysical origin of life on earth.[53]

The fall was described and explained symbolically by the Ikhwan al-Safa. When God created the universe, He peopled it with spiritual incorporeal beings whose office was to praise and glorify God. These were cognitive beings; they could witness fully the corporeal and the absolute and could conceive of every form and thought anywhere in the universe. The period during which this condition prevailed, since the creation, was called *daur al-kashfi* or the period of exposition, as every being was exposed to every other being in every respect.[54]

Towards the end of this period, God willed that *daur al-sitri*, the period of concealment, should succeed and that the Absolute be hidden in a corporeal body which the faculties of the spiritual beings cannot penetrate. So, He created Adam in His own image and breathed in him the world-soul and settled him in His paradise. Then God enjoined that all the spiritual beings, save a few archangels, should prostrate before him, worship him, and be at his command in the management of the world.[55]

At the same time God warned Adam against eating from a certain tree. On the other hand, Satan (*Iblis*), one of the lesser leaders of the jinn who had aspired to be in place of Adam, was vexed by the honour

bestowed on Adam. He refused to prostrate before Adam and be subordinate to him.[56] Then he accosted God with the pretension: ***"I am better than he. Thou didst create me from fire and him from clay."***[57] Afterwards he turned to Adam to avenge himself on him.

Knowing Adam's reality and frailty, *Iblis* could convince him that eating from the forbidden tree would disclose to him the names and grades of the archangels who were exempted from prostrating before him, would give him knowledge of the hereafter, and would render him immortal.[58]

When Adam realized what he had become, he was filled with boastfulness. At times he overshot himself and disclosed a part of the secret with him to some of those who were around him but were unworthy of this secret before the time assigned for such disclosure. This was Adam's crime – curiosity and lust for power.[59]

Now, it was no more possible for Adam to stay with the angels who disavowed him because he showed a knowledge inconsistent with his physical appearance and which was even new and startling to them who, as spiritual beings, were supposed to know more than he. Even the animals and the other inhabitants of paradise were scared by his behaviour and abhorred him. Therefore, he was caused to fall to earth to lead on it the life of flesh, deprived of all the supernatural faculties accorded to him in the heavenly abode. With him also fell his wife and *Iblis*, so that the struggle may continue and be decided openly, and in a fair manner.[60]

The fall of Adam represents, in the metaphysical system of the Ikhwan al– Safa, the union of the individual souls with sublunary bodies. When an individual soul is caused to fall, it may be lucky enough to realize its mistake and repent readily. In this case its downward journey is interrupted and it is caused to turn back and regain its former place.[61]

The unlucky souls continue their fall towards the centre of the earth to be tied to an inorganic body, plant, beast, or man. We are concerned with the soul assigned to a man which is the least unlucky of all the falling souls.

When a soul falls, it enters the ovum which happens to be impregnated at the time of its fall. This soul in the ovum comes soon under the regimen of the planets. All planets, beginning with the farthest one, Saturn, influence the incubation of the soul turn by turn for a whole lunar month. After the completion of the third month the foetus comes under the influence of the sun, the king, of the planets, and life is breathed into it. The period of pregnancy is accepted by the Ikhwan al–Safa to be (at least) seven complete lunar months, the number of the spheres of the then known planets.[62]

The soul is prepared in this world through the medium of the body for the hereafter. Life in this world is only a means to an end: here the soul is enabled to attain perfection in order to be allowed to regain its former celestial life. The body is only the workshop of the soul, a temporary house, a shell, a mount necessary for a journey. Once the body is forsaken by the soul it becomes again a heap of solid matter akin to the constituent elements of the earth. But the body is as necessary for the soul as is the womb

for the development of the foetus.63

Death is welcome to the purified soul, since death means to it nothing more than that it has stopped using the body. With the death of the body the real life of the soul begins. Moreover, the soul cannot benefit by the knowledge acquired during its terrestial life except after the death of the body.64

Lesser and Greater Resurrections, Paradise and Hell

With the death of the body occurs the first or lesser resurrection of the soul. All human souls are immortal: those which have attained perfection during their earthly life would be able to enjoy again the absolute being and happiness; those which have remained imperfect would be barred from entering heaven and remain suspended between heaven and earth with the devils dragging them on every side until they are forced back to the hollows of gloomy-bodies and the bounds of physical nature.65

In leaving the body, the soul leaves simultaneously the lesser hell which is the transient life on earth subject to generation and corruption, change and putrefaction. Greater hell is the eternal condemnation of the wretched soul to roam in the underworld, burdened with the accumulated ignorance and fettered with depression and pain. Paradise, on the other hand, is the vast space of heaven, where the righteous souls float in an infinite spread of light in perpetuance and immortality, in a state of happiness and grace.66

When all the individual souls have left their bodies and are reunited with the world-soul, the world-soul would lose the reason for its independent existence: so it would return to God. The universe would cease, and there would remain one being: God. This is the greater resurrection: the closing of a manifestation of God.67

4. Nature and the Sciences

The Ikhwan al-Safa happened to compile in their "Epistles" the scientific materials available to them and, at the same time, support their esoteric doctrine. They tried to arrange these materials, the scientific legacy of Greece since the earliest Ionian thinker, Thales of Miletus, in independent chapters.

The picture which resulted was that of accumulation rather than of exposition, and never that of exhaustiveness and systematization. We do not know, however, what additions they made; but we are sure that they did give us a general account of the scientific life of the Muslims in the Middle Ages, with its bright and dark sides. Further, the "Epistles" supply us with a picture, though imperfect, of the ancient world of science.

(1) In arithmetic, the Ikhwan al-Safa depended in the main, as they say,68 on Pythagoras and Nicomachus. "Pythagoras" must mean the Pythagorean school; Nicomachus was a late neo-Pythagorean of Gerasa (present Jarash in Jordan) who flourished about the middle of the second Christian century.69

He elaborated the Pythagorean mathematics and wrote a book entitled *Arithmatike eisagoge* or "Introduction to Arithmetic," in which he maintained that "numbers had a pre-existence in the spirit of the Creator before the formation of the universe. He wrote another book which the Ikhwan al-Safa must have known and used: *Arithmatika theologoumena* or "Theology of Numbers,"[70] They also knew a book by Euclid on arithmetic called *al-Usul*.[71]

(2) Geometry has for its aim the training of the soul, by which it realizes promotion in knowledge from perception to conception, from the physical to the spiritual and from the concrete to the abstract. Geometry (Ar. *handasah*) is of two kinds: *hissiyyah*, tangible, sensible, or common plane and solid geometry which helps man to acquire skill in crafts; and *`aqliyyah*, intellectual or rational, namely: analytic and descriptive, which enables man to be versed in theoretical sciences.[72] The Ikhwan al-Safa knew Euclid and other writers on geometry[73] from whom they drew their information on the subject.

To geometry belong the mysterious or magical figures, the smallest of which is composed of nine squares in three rows. In these squares are inserted the numbers 1 to 9 in a manner that any row, horizontal, perpendicular, or diagonal, must give the uniform sum of 15.[74]

(3) The aim of the "Epistle" on music is to stimulate the souls, already instructed in mathematics, physics, psychics, and theology, to join the immortals in the vast space of heaven. Music itself is a spiritual art founded by wise men. It has a strong and varied effect on all souls. It is either soothing or exciting, gratifying or grieving. On this account, music is played to calm the sick and insane, to tranquillize a weeping child or to lull him to sleep. Even animals are subject to the effect of music. Music is also played in temples because of the touch of awe it possesses.[75]

Pythagoras was said to have heard the sound of the moving spheres and planets. Since the motions of these spheres have regularity and ratios to one another, their sounds must have tunes which are of highest perfection and harmony. These tunes are intended for the inhabitants of the heaven. Pythagoras discovered the scale and essentials of music as a result of hearing the sounds of the heavenly bodies.[76]

(4) The universe, say the Ikhwan al-Safa, is made up of all the bodies in existence. It is finite and spherical in shape. Being is one solid body; it stuffs the whole space: it is the universe. Outside the universe there is neither Being nor Non-Being, neither emptiness (vacuum) nor fullness, since the universe has no outside.[77]

On this they agree with the Eleatic Parmenides and his disciple Zeno;[78] but they disagree with them fully on the question of motion. Parmenides and Zeno presumed that since the universe is completely replete, the movement of individual bodies is impossible. The view of the Ikhwan al-Safa was: since the mass of the universe is not of the same density, the more dense may move through the less dense, as the fish swim in water and the birds fly in air.[79]

The earth stands in the centre of the world; then come seven concentric spheres in which revolve the planets: the moon, Mercury, Venus, the sun, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn. Finally comes the sphere of the

fixed stars. The number of the stars which were determined by astronomical observation, including the seven planets, was one thousand and twenty–nine. All the stars are luminous except the moon which receives its light from the sun.80

The movement of the planets was explained by the rotation of the outer sphere clockwise: from east to west above the earth, and from west to east under the earth, once every day. The outer sphere carries the other spheres along with it. From this it follows that these spheres with their planets too should complete a revolution around the earth in one day.81

But the ancients noted that the planets have complicated movements: sometimes they appear to overtake the sun and continue their courses ahead of it; and sometimes the sun appears to overtake them. With the planets nearer the earth – –the moon, Mercury, and Venus – this phenomenon was more conspicuous and gave rise to the theory of epicycles. This means that the orbits within the outer sphere are not homocentric with it, concentric or having one common centre, but eccentric, i. e., having independent centres.

Aristotle was in favour of homocentrieity; Claudius Ptolemy (d. 168 A.D), the Alexandrian astronomer, upheld the theory of epicycles. Unfortunately, the Ikhwan al–Safa sided with Ptolemy and rejected, at the same time, the view that the heavenly bodies revolve from west to east,82 a view which seems to have had some upholders among the Pythagoreans.83

Regarding the magnitudes of the stars, they showed some boldness. The earth, they said, is but a point in a large circle. The smallest planet has a size eighteen times that of the earth; the largest is one hundred and seven times.84

They maintained, further, that the celestial bodies are neither heavy nor light. If any body, they argue, is in its specially assigned place in the spheres, it does not exert weight. It acquires weight, on the contrary, when it comes into the neighbourhood of other strange bodies, not of the same material (water in water or air in air, for example, has no weight). Weight, they say, is nothing but the mutual attraction and mutual repulsion in the face of resistance.85

We are reminded in this case of the artificial satellites and of the fact that they lose all weight as soon as they leave the zone of the gravity of the earth. In the same spirit, they declared also that the sun and the stars are neither hot nor cold.86

The Ikhwan al–Safa accepted the solar year to be of 365 1/4 days. On this basis they computed the revolutions of the planets around the earth: Saturn completes a revolution of its orbits in 29 years, 5 months and 6 days; Jupiter in 11 years, 10 months and 26 days; Mars in about 23 months; Venus in 584 days, and Mercury in 124 days only.87

The Ikhwan al–Safa supplied us with data which enable us to construct formulae for the extension of the universe and for its volume which may be computed roughly at: 1,300,000,000 and

150,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 km., respectively or 13 x 108 and 15 x 1025. This is nothing to be compared with the real measurements, but it serves to give us an idea of the boldness of the Ikhwan al–Safa in their age.

(5) The earth, say the Ikhwan al–Safa is a sphere. Their proof is that any line on the surface of the earth or on the face of a river is an arch, and any portion of the sea is a part of the shell of a spherical body.88 George Sarton, the historian of science, holds that the idea of the sphericity of the earth is as old as Pythagoras; but he wonders how Pythagoras could arrive at a proof. He declares that Pythagoras must have postulated the sphericity of the earth out of wild boldness.89

They believe also that the earth stands in the centre of the universe, suspended in the midst of the air, because it is in its special place within a space free from the attraction and repulsion of every other heavenly body.90 Although the Ikhwan al–Safa were essentially Pythagorean, they rejected the Pythagorean view that the earth has two motions: a revolution around a central fire and a rotation on its axis.91 They believed, however, that it had a sway (forwards and backwards) on its axis, and that when it was created it was in motion; but afterwards it came to a standstill.92 It seems that they followed, in this view, Democritus who held that the earth had in the beginning a motion, but afterwards it came gradually to a standstill.93

The earth is not solid or massive, but it is full of cavities. The solid parts of its interior are also of different densities.94

Further, it has no bottom, in the common meaning of the word; its bottom is its centre. So, wherever a man stands on the earth, his head is always towards the sky (above the earth) and his feet are always towards the bottom or centre of the earth.95 In spite of all this genial explanation, they believed that we live on one side of the earth only.96

(6) In the two chapters on geography and meteorology, based principally on *Meteorologica*97 and other Greek works, the Ikhwan al–Safa speak of the equator, of the polar zones where the winter is a night of six continuous months and the summer is a day of six continuous months, of the four seasons of longitude and time, of the mountains and their nature as reservoirs of water, and cognate topics.98 Their explanation of the eclipses is noteworthy,99 but their interpretation of the ebb and flow of tides is false: they believed that the rays of the moon heat the waters of the sea and cause their rise.100

(7) In physics and chemistry the Ikhwan al–Safa held, with Aristotle, the Theory of the Four Elements and rejected the atomic theory.101 They maintained also with the Ionian physicists that the so–called four elements: fire, air, water, and earth, change into one another.

Furthermore, when those four elements undergo intense heat and strong pressure inside the earth, they change into mercury and sulphur. If aerial moisture mixes with earth, it becomes mercury, a masculine element; if oily moisture mixes with earth, it changes into sulphur, a feminine element. From the further intermixture of sulphur and mercury, in different proportions, are formed all the mineral bodies: clay,

glass, iron, copper, ruby, silver, gold, etc.

(8) The natural world is made up of three kingdoms: the mineral, plant, and animal kingdoms. Evolution rests on the view that every kingdom constitute the primary matter and nourishing material for the next higher kingdom. Accordingly, the mineral kingdom must have come into existence long before that of plants. The plants came into existence before the animals; sea animals before the animals on land; the less developed before the more developed; and all animals were in existence ages before man.[102] At the top of the animal kingdom appeared the *qird* (monkey, or ape) which bears so much resemblance to man in shape and behaviour.[103]

There is also a spiritual evolution by which the human soul evolves from the soul of a child to that of an angel. At the age of fifty, the wise and cultivated man may attain the degree which enables him to receive inspiration, to become a messenger between the Intellect and his fellow-men, to found doctrines, and to make laws. At this stage, he is a proxy of God on earth; he attains divinity and so worship is due to him.[104]

5. Psychology

(1) *The Soul* – The soul has three major faculties or powers, every one of which is called equally a soul.

(i) The vegetative or nutritive soul common to all living beings: plants, beast, and man alike. It is subdivided into three powers: that of nutritive proper, that of growth, and that of reproduction.[105]

(ii) The animal, beastly, or sensitive soul belongs to beasts and men only. It is subdivided into two powers: locomotion and sensation. Sensation falls in turn in two categories: perception (sight, touch, etc.) and emotion. Emotion is either primitive (laughter, anger, etc.) or evolved (good food, social and political prestige, etc.).[106]

(iii) The human (rational, thinking, or talkative) soul is restricted to man.

These three faculties, together with their powers, work together and are united in man and likened to a tree with three boughs, every bough of which has several branches, and every branch many-leaves and fruit. Comparison may also be made with a person who is a blacksmith, carpenter, and builder or who can read, write, and teach:[107] he is one man with three faculties.

(2) *The Brain, and the Heart* – The prevailing belief in ancient times was that the heart constituted the most important organ of the body: the centre of sensation, the seat of intelligence, and the house of life. Aristotle was also of this opinion. The Ikhwan al-Safa decided in favour of the brain and held that it is the brain where the processes of perception, emotion, and conception develop.[108]

(3) *The Process of Thinking* – It begins in the five senses and continues in the brain. Fine nerves extend from the sense-organs to different parts of the mass of the brain, where they form a net similar to a

spider's web. Whenever the senses come in touch with sensible bodies, their temperament undergoes a change which is communicated soon, together with the abstract forms of those sensible bodies, to the imaginative zone in the front part of the brain. Next, the imaginative faculty passes the traces which the abstract forms have left on it to the reflective faculty, in the middle part of the brain, to ponder upon them and verify their indications; then, the indications are transmitted in turn to the retentive faculty (or memory) in the back part of the brain to be stored there until a recollection of them is needed. At the right time the relevant data are referred to the expressive or talkative faculty by which they are abstracted, generalized, and given the form expressible by the tongue to be received intelligibly by the ear.[109]

6. Politics

(1) The Ikhwan al-Safa had no interest in the theory of State or in the forms of government. Nor could they be influenced, in this respect, by Greek writers. The two worlds were totally different: Plato and Aristotle lived in City-States; the Ikhwan al-Safa lived in the great cities of an empire. At any rate, the Ikhwan al-Safa believed that the State rests on two foundations: religion and kingship. A king is indispensable, though he may be a tyrant, if the State is to lead a secure and prosperous life. A group of wise men, however may do without a king.[110]

(2) The indifference of the Ikhwan al-Safa about the State was counterbalanced by their keen interest in *al-siyasat al-madaniyyah*, a blend of civics and domestic economy, which bears more on the personal and communal behaviour of man.

As a rule, the Ikhwan al-Safa preferred that their followers should practise celibacy. But since that was impracticable, marriage was enjoined to serve two purposes: first, that the race may continue - a reason which was given by Aristotle too; and second, because there are people who cannot remain celibate.[111]

A man of standing should be a kind of a ruler in his community. He should first exercise self-control in the different situations through which he passes, because he who can control himself may be able to control others.[112] Regarding his children and brothers, he should give them a fair, uniform but firm treatment from which he should allow no deviation except in circumstances not under his control.

People are governed easier and better if they have been accustomed to a certain way of government. As for other relatives of his servants, and dependants, he should be bounteous in their maintenance and meek in their treatment. But it is of no use to disclose to them any trouble or want of his. This would impair his authority in their eyes without helping him in the least. If he was ever short of means, and consequently obliged to lay a restriction on his favours to them, he should try, to make them believe that he has done so on purpose and not because he has yielded to a certain pressure.[113]

A man should choose his friends carefully and treat them with tact: know them well and betray none of his secrets to them. Further, he should appear always, before them, consistent in his opinion and

behaviour, because they are expected to share with him his doctrines and way of life (the ultimate aim of the Ikhwan al-Safa in making friends is to propagate their doctrines among these friends). It is very important that the relatives of a leading personality should follow his doctrines and adopt his views, otherwise his friends would lose their enthusiasm for him. He should disclaim publicly any relative who proves to be at variance with him in the matter of doctrine.[114]

7. Ethics

Muslims have always been more interested in morals and matters of conduct than in ethical theories, because Islam insists on good or righteous deeds as well as on good intentions. The Ikhwan al-Safa's interest in ethics was confined to its bearing on their doctrine: acquiring theoretical knowledge and doing good in this life so that their souls may enjoy eternity and happiness in the hereafter.

They start from the assertion that characters are either inborn or acquired. Inborn characters begin with the formation of the foetus in the womb, and they develop therein gradually under the influence of the planets. Innate characters, or virtues, are specialized aptitudes assigned to different organs. They enable the soul to act through every organ and produce the sensation, action, or craft particular to that organ without need for deliberation or choice.

At one place the Ikhwan al-Safa assume that inborn characters are uniformly good.[115] At another, they maintain that they are bad, and, consequently, all religions were revealed to resist the innate characters of man and to reform them if possible.[116]

After birth man begins to acquire virtues. He continues to do so until his death. There is in man an aptitude to do good, and with the same aptitude he can do evil. Character and behaviour are teachable.[117]

Anything which should be done, if done as it should, to the extent to which it should, in the place where it should, at the time when it should, and in view of the end for which it should, is called good. And he who does that thin deliberately and with choice is called a wise man, a philosopher, and a perfect man. Good, for the masses, is that which religion has enjoined, and evil, that which religion has prohibited.[118]

Acquired characters are determined and modified by the disposition of the body, climate of the land, and the contact of the children with their parents, tutors, comrades, and with the people in prominence. The different circumstances through which man usually passes are important factors in making people change from one character into another.[119]

The Ikhwan al-Safa urge their followers to be idealistic in their behaviour. The good they seek should be final and self-sufficient. One should do good not because one expects from doing it, or for doing it, a benefit, nor because one expects to avoid some loss.[120]

8. Education

As soon as a child is born, he comes under the influence of social factors for four complete years, during which he reaches a certain stage of intelligence and comprehension. After the fourth year the child begins to acquire his habits, knowledge, doctrines, crafts, and hobbies by imitation, as a result of his contact with those who happen to be around him. The masses copy the external behaviour of the dominant class.[121]

Children are apt to use an analogy characteristic of them. They believe that their parents are perfect and that the conditions prevailing in their own homes are models for all the conditions elsewhere. On the practical side, children are more apt to master the arts, sciences, and crafts of their parents than those of strangers.[122]

Knowledge is the abstraction of the knowable in the soul of the knower through the aid of a teacher. The aptitude to learn belongs to the soul alone. The end of teaching is to purify the souls of the taught and give them correct behaviour in order to prepare them for immortality and happiness in the hereafter. A science which does not lead to happiness in the hereafter is useless.[123]

Every soul is potentially learned; the parents and tutors polish its aptitude and help it to become learned in action. A teacher is absolutely necessary, especially to common people.[124]

The brain is able to store simultaneously all kinds of information, however diverse and contradictory they may be, since it stores their abstractions only. And in spite of the fact that the data stored in the brain fade gradually, and that some of them are sometimes totally forgotten, they do not annul one another.[125]

Essentially, knowledge is never spontaneous; it must be taught and learnt. A teacher is simply a guide for the soul to knowledge. Knowledge is handed down traditionally through religious leaders, the Imams, whose ultimate source of knowledge is the Prophet, who acquires his knowledge from God by inspiration.[126]

The Ikhwan al-Safa touch at a thorny problem in education. They believe that neither the pupil may benefit from the tutor, nor the tutor may benefit from the pupil, unless there is a kind of intimacy between them. We know for certain that some kind of a reserved friendship is very useful in this respect. But the Ikhwan al-Safa overshoot themselves and speak frankly of “the desire of grown-up men for boys” as an incentive for effecting real education. Furthermore, they mention explicitly that such manners belong only to nations which esteem science, art, literature, and mathematics, like the Persians, the peoples of Mesopotamia and Syria as well as the Greeks. Nomads, who as a rule have no interest in science, art, etc., lack this desire.[127]

The idea of Platonic love contaminated the Ikhwan al-Safa as a result of their readings in Greek history in general and in the philosophy of Plato in particular. Plato advocated it especially in his Symposium.

Sarton blames Plato and says of him: “Platonic love for him was the sublimation of paederasty; true love is called in the Symposium[128] the right method of boy-loving”.[129] The Ikhwan al-Safa condemn this desire, however, in all fields other than education.[130] Plato too seems to have condemned it in a later work of his, *Nomoi* (The Laws), at least twice.[131]

9. Religion

On the practical side of belief, the Ikhwan al-Safa speak of religion and laws. The word for religion in Arabic is *din*, i. e., custom or obedience to one acknowledged head.[132] Religion is a necessity as a social sanction for the government of the masses, for the purification of the soul, and also because all people are predisposed to religiousness and piety. In this sense, religion is one for all people and for all nations.[133]

By Law (Ar. *Shari'ah* or *namus*, from the Greek word: *nomos*, law) the Ikhwan al-Safa meant what we mean today by religion. Laws (religious) are different to suit different communities, groups, and even individuals. These laws are dictated by the wise men of every people for the benefit of their respective nations.[134]

On this basis the Ikhwan al-Safa declare that all metaphysical themes in the sacred books such as creation, Adam, Satan, the tree of knowledge, resurrection, the Day of Judgment, hell, and paradise should be taken as symbols and understood allegorically. Only the masses, who cannot think adequately for themselves, understand these themes in their literal and physical sense. Themes of a lesser magnitude, as ***“He sendeth down water from the sky,”***[135] should also be treated symbolically: water in this context being the Qur'an![136]

The Ikhwan al-Safa were not satisfied with any of the existing religions; they, nevertheless, urged everybody to select one of them. To have a defective religion is better than to be a disbeliever, since there is an element of truth in every religion. Everybody should be left free to embrace the religion he chooses; he may also change his religion, perhaps often too, though he is expected to look for the best religion in his time. He should refrain, however, from contradictory opinions and false doctrines: a wise man does not embrace two contradictory religions at the same time.[137]

There should be no compulsion in religion;[138] compulsion should be affected only through the laws. This is so because religion is a self-conviction felt in the heart. The laws of religions, on the contrary, are social orders, to abide by which is necessary for the maintenance of security and welfare of the community.[139]

The Ikhwan al-Safa formulated a definite attitude towards all existing religions, sects, and schools of theology.[140] We shall content ourselves with their attitude towards Islam.

Islam is considered by them to be the religion par excellence: the best and most perfect of all religions. The Qur'an overruled all earlier revealed books. It, being the last, confirmed in them that which

resembled its contents and abrogated that which was contrary to its precepts. Muhammad, peace be upon him, is the head of all the prophets and the last of them. He is the governor of all governors; in him has God united the elements of kingship and prophethood, so that his followers may enjoy the worldly as well as the spiritual glories.[141]

Final Note

The numbering of the verses of the Qur'an followed in this chapter is according to *Tafsir al–Jalalain*, Cairo, 1346/1927. There is sometimes in the long Surahs a slight difference in the numbering of verses (resulting from the division of a few long verses). In Rodwell (q.v.) this difference, when it occurs, varies from three to six; in Muhammad 'Ali and Pickthall (q.v.) the difference is only that of one.

Bibliography

Aristotle, *Introduction to Aristotle* (*Selections*), ed. Richard McKeon, The Modern Library, New York, 1947 ;

Adel Awa, *"L'Esprit critique des Mares de la Purete,"* Encyclopedistes arabea, du IVs/Xe sicele, Beirut, 1948;

T. J. de Boer, *The History of Philosophy in Islam*, tr. Edward R. Jones, London, 1933;

Omar A. Farrukh, *`Abqariyyat al–'Arabi fi at–`Ilm as–al–Falsafah*, 2nd ed., Beirut, 1371/1952; *The Arab Genius in Science and Philosophy*, tr. John B. Hardie, Washington, 1954;

Ikhwan al–Safa, 2nd ed., Beirut, 1372/1953; Abu Hayyan al–Tauhidi, *al–Imta` wa'l–Mu'anasah*, Vols. II and III, Cairo, 1942; *al–Risalat al–Jami'ah* (*li Rasa'il Ikhwan al–Safa*), Damascus, Vol. I, 1387/1948, Vol. II n.d.;

Jami'at al–Jami'ah, Risalah Jami'at al–Jami'ah au al–Zubdah min Rasa'il Ikhwan al–Safa wa Khullan al–Wafa (an ordinary transcription from a copy in the library of al–Amlr `Arif Tamir, Salsmiyyah, Southern Province of U.A.R.);

Muhammad 'Ali, The Holy Qur'an, Arabic Text, English Translation, and Commentary, revised edition, Lahore, 1951;

Marmaduke Pickthall, The Meaning of the Glorious Koran, an Explanatory Translation, London, 1952;

Rasa'il Ikhwan al– Safa wa Khullan al–Wafa, 4 Vols., Cairo, 1347/1928;

J. M. Rodwell, The Koran, English Translation, Everyman's Library, New York, 1950;

George Sarton, *A History of Science, Ancient Science through the Golden Age of Greece*, Cambridge,

U.S.A., 1952 ; *Introduction to the History of Science*, Vol. III, Baltimore, 1948;

Ueberweg, *Grundris der Geschichte der Philosophic*, Vol. I and Vol. II, Berlin, 1926, 1928., Vol. I and Vol. II, Berlin, 1926, 1928., Vol. I and Vol. II, Berlin, 1926, 1928.,

Vol. II, Berlin, 1926, 1928., Vol. I and Vol. II, Berlin, 1926, 1928.

1. Imta, ii, pp. 4ff
2. The true friends, the faithful comrades, the people deserving praise, and the sons of glory (cf. Jami'ah, i, p. 141).
3. Cf. Rasa'il, i, p. 310;. ii, pp. 166, 193, 207, etc.; iii, pp. 173–78; iv, pp. 87, 203; Jami'ah, i, pp. 128 ff.
4. Imta', ii, pp. 4ff.
5. Rasa'il, iv, p. 490; also of. p. 278;
6. Jami'ah, i, pp. 169f.; ii, pp. 36, 47.
7. Jami'at al–Jami'ah, Sec. vii. Rasa'il, iv, pp. 105, 237.
8. Ibid., iv; pp. 338f,
9. Ibid., iii, pp. 33f; cf. iv, pp. 138 f.
10. Ibid., iv, p. 114.
11. Ibid., pp. 119f.
12. Ibid., ii, p. 19; iv, pp. 235, 241 f.
13. Ibid., ii, p. 19; iv, pp. 215, 220–24; Jami'ah, i, pp. 160f., 162, 165, 166, 323f.
14. Rasa'il, i, p. 130f.; iv, pp. 198ff., pp. 234f.
15. Ibid., i, pp. 130f.; iv, pp. 234f,
16. Ibid., i, pp. 23, 49, 202ff.; Jami'ah, i, pp. 219f.
17. Rasa'il. i, pp. 23–362.
18. Ibid., ii, pp. 3–388; iii, pp. 3–181.
19. Ibid., iii, pp. 182–371.
20. Ibid.; iii, pp. 373–432; iv, 3–478.
21. Ibid., iii, p. 228; cf. ii, p. 351.
22. Ibid.. i, pp. 106, 211;,ii, pp. 334, 335–51; iii, pp. 38, 228, 384; cf. pp. 241, 292ff.
23. Ibid., iii, pp. 41f.
24. Ibid., i, p. 211; cf. .p. 106.; ii, p. 334; cf. p. 228.
25. Ibid., iii, pp. 42, 322.
26. Ibid., iii, pp. 48, 58, 152; Jami'ah, i, pp. 107, 123, 189, 288.
27. Rasa'il, i, p: 23; cf. Jami'ah, i, pp. 99, 107; cf. further pp. 10, 99–107; ii, pp 275f., 277f.. 280.
28. Rasa'il, i, p. 326; ii, pp. 4, 325; iii, p. 186; cf. Jami'ah, i, p. 298; ii, p. 74.
29. Rasa'il, p. 322; ii, pp. 4, 5f.; iii, pp. 186, 360.
30. Ibid., ii, p. 232.
31. Ibid., ii, pp. 9, 10, 336; iii, p. 361.
32. Ibid., ii, pp. 10, 13; iii, pp. 334f., 361.
33. Ibid., iii, p. 336.
34. Ibid., ii, pp. 10, 11, 13, 238–47; iii, p. 306; Jami'ah, ii, p. 237.
35. Ueberweg, Vol. I, p. 87; Sarton, History p. 276.

36. Rasa'il i, p. 201; ii, pp. 78, 132f.; iii, p. 233; Jami'ah, ii, p. 79; cf. Aristotle, pp. 122ff., 132f., 249ff

37. Rasa'il, i, pp. 201, 354; iii, pp. 185, 233, 325, 327; iv, pp. 8f., 178; Jami'ah, ii, pp. 79, 278.

38. Sarton, History, p. 217.

39. Rasa'il, i, pp. 24f., 28f., 31f.; cf. Jami'ah i, p. 43.

40. Rasa'il, i, pp. 28f.; iii, pp. 184f., 200ff.; Jami'ah, i, pp. 27ff.; ii, pp. 284ff.

41. Rasa'il, i, p. 189; ii, pp. 107, 108ff.; Jami'ah, i, p. 593; ii, p. 83.

42. Rasa'il, ii, pp. 4, 9, 83, 244, 293, 392; iii, pp. 187, 189, 197, 228f., 328, 332, 260f,; Jami'ah, ii, pp. 33, 36.

43. Rasa'il, p. 28; ii, pp. 55f., 112ff.; iii, pp. 19, 191, 192, 193, 203, 214f., 235, 361; Jami'ah, i, p. 529.

44. Rasa'il, iii, pp. 5, 187ff., 230; iv, pp. 4ff.; Jami'ah, ii, pp. 4ff., 37.

45. Rasa'il, i, p. 331; ii, pp. 55f., 112f.: iii, pp. 124ff.; Jami'ah, i, pp. 331ff.; ii, p. 36.

46. Rasa'il, ii, p. 36; iii, p. 198.

47. Ibid., ii, pp. 4, 5; iii, pp. 8, 189, 198, 203, 204; iv, p. 4; Jami'ah., i, p. 276; n, pp. 6, 37

48. Cf. infra viii.

49. Rasa'il, ii, pp. 2, 3, 22, 25ff., 29ff., 39–42, 123; iii, pp. 190, 219, 221, 361; Jami'ah, i, p. 306.

50. Rasa'il, ii, pp. 5, 22, 45–50, 7 7, 78, 200, 337, 403; iii, pp. 79, 183, 190; Jami'ah, i, pp. 306, 311; ii; 37, 362; iv, pp. 268ff., 313.

51. Rasa'il, i, pp. 311, 315, 331, 350f.; ii, pp. 45 50ff.; Jami'ah, ii, p. 37.

52. Rasa'il, i, p. 17; ii, pp. 20f., 25f., 243ff., 318, 320f.; iii, pp. 3ff. 9f., 12ff., 211–14; iv, p. 277; Jami'ah, i, pp. 240, 563–68, 581–95, 635; ii, pp. 24–38, 123; cf. Ueberweg, Vol. 1, pp. 51, 110; Sarton, History, pp. 177, 216, 421.

53. Rasa'il, i pp. 96, 98; ii, pp. 111 288; iii, pp. 25, 26, 28, 59, 102, 279, 332, 362; iv, pp. 29, 230, 231, 238; Jami'ah, i, pp. 383, 514, 515; ii, 28, 247, 298.

54. Rasa'il, i, pp. 155f. The definitions of the periods of "Exposition and Concealment" as used in the "Epistles" are different from those accepted by the Druzes and the Isma`ilis.

55. Rasa'il, ii, p. 227; Jami'ah, i, pp. Illf., 114, 145ff., 156f.; ii, p. 143.

56. Rasa'il, i, pp. Illff., 145ff., 157f.

57. Qur'an, vii, 11; xxxviii; 76 cf. Jami'ah, i, p. 126.

58. Jami'ah, i. pp. 113ff., 124–28. 146; ii, p. 144.

59. Ibid., i; pp. 111, 112, 115f., 155, 158, 163; ii, p. 144.

60. Rasa'il, i, p. 62; ii, p. 17; iii, p. 216; iv, p. 138; Jami'ah, i, pp. 116f., 129, 164, 295, 437, 439ff.; ii, pp. 145, 247, 298.

61. Rasa'il, iv, p. 232; Jami'ah, i, p. 382; ii, p. 298.

62. Rasa'il, i, pp. 169, 241; ii, pp. 250ff., 357ff.; iv, p. 413; Jami'ah, i, pp. 513f.,, 554, 559.

63. Rasa'il, i, p. 62; ii, pp. 17, 145, 247, 298, 323ff.; iii, pp. 25ff., 29, 51, 62, 73, 116; iv, p. 138; Jami'ah, i, pp. 116ff., 129, 164, 295, 437, 439ff., 498.

64. Rasa'il, i, pp. 169, 226, 255, 277, 337; ii, pp. 43, 277; iii, pp. 51, 56£, 59f.; iv, p. 82; Jami'ah, i, pp. 509, 663, 667; ii, pp. 28, 87.

65. Rasa'il, i, p. 260; iii, pp. 26f., 29, 36, 93f., 105f., 279 289.

66. Ibid., ii, p. 52; iii, pp. 64, 189, 279, 282, 284, 240, 243, 344, 346; iv, p. 82.

67. Ibid., iii, pp. 315f., 320.

68. Ibid., i, p. 35.

69. Ueberweg, Vol. I, p. 513. Sarton (History, pp. 205, 214, n.15) sets his flourishing in the second half of the first Christian century.

70. Ueberweg, Vol. I, pp. 514, 519; Sarton, Introduction to the History of Science, Vol. III, p. 1511; History, p. 214, n. 32.

71. "Principles" or "Essentials" (Rasa'il, i, pp. 44f.). Certainly, this is not the book of Euclid on geometry which was later called the Elements (Ibid., p. 280; cf. also pp. 171, 442).

72. Rasa'il, i, pp. 50ff., 63ff., 68–71; Jami'ah, i, pp. 175f.

73. Rasa'il, i, p. 68; cf. pp. 103.

74. Ibid., i, pp. 71 f.; cf. p. 69.

75. Ibid., i, pp. 132ff.. 134, 136, 154, 158. 175, 179f.; Jami'ah, pp. 185–88, 190ff

76. Rasa'il, i, pp. 152f., 158M, 168.
77. Rasa'il, ii, pp. 10, 24, 25; iii, pp. 374; Jami'ah, ii, p. 24.
78. Cf. Ueberweg, Vol. II, pp. 80 ff., 87, 38.
79. Rasa'il, ii, p.24.
80. Ibid., i, pp. 73ff., 86, 88; ii, pp. 21, 22, 25, 26f., 28, 37; iii, pp. 189f.; iv, p. 321.
81. Ibid., i, pp. 100, 244; ii, pp. 21, 74f.; iii, p. 314.
82. Ibid., ii, pp. 32ff.
83. Ibid., ii, p. 33, cf. pp. 29–37, 86ff.; cf. Sarton, History, p. 289, lines 30ff.
84. Rasa'il, i, p. 117; cf. pp. 27f.
85. Ibid, ii, pp. 40ff.
86. Ibid., ii, p. 42.
87. Ibid., i, pp. 84, 86–88; ii, p. 31; iii, pp. 255–57.
88. Ibid., i, p. 111; ii, pp. 22, 49, 57, 219; iii, pp. 210, 219, 310; iv, p. 312; Jami'ah, i, p. 149.
89. Sarton, History, p. 212, cf. p. 287.
90. Rasa'il, i, pp–. 111, 113; ii, pp. 22, 40, 49, 79, 118, 307, 310; Jami'ah, i, pp. 149f.
91. Ueberweg, Vol. I, p. 68 unten.
92. Rasa'il. iii, pp. 309f.
93. Ueberweg, Vol. I, p. 108.
94. Rasa'il, iii, pp. 309, 310.
95. Ibid., i, p. 112.
96. Ibid., iv, p. 436.
97. Ascribed to Aristotle; cf. Sarton, History, p. 517.
98. Rasa'il, i, pp. 110–31, cf. pp. 84ff.; pp. 54–75.
99. Ibid., i, pp. 79f., 88f.;–ii, p. 21.
100. Ibid., ii, p. 83.
101. Ibid., ii, p. 10; iv, p. 7.
102. Ibid., ii, pp. 123, 141ff., 152, 154f., 221f., 223, 318; iii, pp. 64, 138.
103. Rasa'il, iv, p. 317.
104. Ibid., I, pp. 224ff.; ii, p. 287 ; iii, p. 44; iv, pp. 101, 118, 143, 176, 178; Jami'ah, 344, 701.
105. Rasa'il, i, pp. 241f.; ii, pp. 325ff.; Jami'ah, ii, p. 164.
106. Rasa'il, i, pp. 241f.; ii, pp. 325ff.; Jami'ah, ii, pp. 164f.; cf. pp. 168–86.
107. Rasa'il, ii, pp. 325f., 347.
108. Ibid., ii, p. 162; iii, p. 23 bottom.
109. Ibid., ii, pp. 324, 328, 341, 347; ii:, pp. 17f., 29, 376ff., 386, 388, 392; Jami'ah, i, pp. 507, 602f., 60,5.
110. Rasa'il, ii, p. 308; iv, pp. 32f., 189.
111. Ibid., iii, p. 424.
112. Ibid., iv, p. 68.
113. Ibid., iv, pp. 297ff.
114. Ibid., iv, pp. 299ff.
115. Ibid., iv, p. 3 7 2.
116. Ibid., i, pp. 259, 260; of. iv, p. 144.
117. Ibid., iii, pp. 421 f.
118. Ibid., i, p. 247, of iv, p. 18 , Jami'ah, i, p. 94–96, 98.
119. Rasa'il, i, pp, 229–38, 246; ii, p. 372; iii, pp. 268L, 395; iv, pp. 109, 111, 141, 342; Jami'ah, i, p. 237.
120. Rasa'il, iv, pp. 118, 141 f., 297 f.
121. Ibid., i, pp. 153, 360f.; ii, pp. 129, 379ff.; iii, pp. 147f.
122. Ibid., i, pp. 153, 213, 225, 229, 360; iii, pp. 106, 107f.
123. Ibid., i, pp. 195, 198, 211, 225, 271, 273, 317; iii; p. 33.

124. Ibid., i, pp. 198, 211, 225, 317; ii, p. 352; iii, pp. 90, 426; iv, pp. 18, 127.
125. Ibid., iii, pp. 236ff.; iv, p. 114.
126. Ibid., i, pp. 211, 225, 317; iv, p. 18; Jami'ah, i, p. 413.
127. Rasa'il, iii, pp. 267ff.
128. 211B, quoted by Sarton, History, p. 425.
129. Ibid., p. 425; cf. pp. 423ff.
130. Rasa'il, iv, pp. 170ff.
131. 636c, 836c, cited in Sarton, History, p. 425.
132. Rasa'il, iii, p. 424; iv, p. 24.
133. Ibid., iv, pp. 24, 25f.
134. Ibid., i, pp. 135, 247; iii, pp. 48, 49, 241, 374; iv, pp. 24, 25f.,100,138,168, 186ff.
135. Qur'an, xiii,19 (cf. Muhammad 'Ali, p.487; Pickthall, p.250; Rodwell, p. 235).
136. Rasa'il, iv, p. 137.
137. Ibid., iii, pp. 86–90; iv, pp. 22, 3 7, 54–`65; Farrukh, Ikhwan al Safa, pp.108–13.
138. Rasa'il, iv, p. 476, in ref. to Qur'an, ii, 256 (Muhammad 'Ali, p. 111, Pickthall, p. 59, Rodwell, p. 367).
139. Rasa'il, iv, p. 476.
140. Farrukh, op. cit., pp. 108–13.
141. Rasa'il, ii, p. 201; iii, pp. 92, 353; iv, pp. 33, 59, 172, 242; Jami'ah, ii, p. 365.

Source URL:
https://www.al-islam.org/history-muslim-philosophy-volume-1-book-3/part-1-%C2%A0theologico-philosophical-movements#comment-0