

# THE THEOLOGICAL DEBATE IN BAGHDAD IN THE 5TH/11TH CENTURY

## The Imāmīs, the Mu'tazila and the Ash'arīs

The purpose of this paper will be to place the Imāmī theology of the Essence and Attributes of God in the context of the overall debate among the major interlocutors, the Imāmīs, the Mu'tazila and the Ash'arīs. The main focus will be on two levels of dispute: issues of total divergence, like the imāmate, and issues of partial concurrence – where the essential concept is a matter of agreement, while the details are subject to significant doctrinal difference.

As the 5th/11th century was ushered in, theologians of all movements enjoyed some excellent opportunities to propagate and defend their doctrines in the midst of a well balanced distribution of sponsorship, which had hardly been in place before. Despite the aforementioned “Qādirī Creed” that condemned anyone who strayed from its teachings as an unbeliever whose blood was to be shed with impunity, the actual practice towards such dissent was less threatening, thanks to Būyid tolerance, or perhaps indifference, and patronage. Mu'tazilī theology had just reached a state of completion with the efforts of Qāḍī 'Abd al-Jabbār and his students, in spite of the decline in 'Abd al-Jabbār's own fortunes after the death of his admiring patron, al-ṣāhib b. 'Abbād, in 385/995.<sup>(1)</sup> What has

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been termed the “Sunnī revival”<sup>(2)</sup> was already underway in the form of Ḥanbalī teachings benefiting from the Caliph’s political support as well as the popular sentiments of the residents of Baghdād, the majority of whom were Ḥanbalīs. In addition, the Ash‘arī School was burgeoning through the work of Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1013). Then there was the Imāmī theology, the new structure of which was at an advanced stage of its development in the hands of al-Shaykh al-Mufīd (d. 413/1022).

Unlike the violent sectarian rivalry in Baghdad at the time, the theological debate involved no physical clashes. The customary methods were either debates in teaching circles and the courts of rulers, or the writing of books and treatises addressing the opponent’s theological arguments. Occasionally, certain scholars anticipated the objections of their rivals and prepared their own pre-emptive responses. This method became one of the distinctive characteristics of the work of al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā whose treatises were often written in response to

a hypothetical challenger, starting with the phrase, “If someone asks... We say...”

### ALLĀH AND HIS ATTRIBUTES

The question of tawḥīd is a point of agreement among all Muslims. It is the first pillar of belief without which a person cannot be considered a Muslim. Al-Ash‘arī’s concept of tawḥīd follows the declaration of what he called Aṣḥāb al-Ḥadīth wa Ahl al-Sunnah. Allāh, according to them, is one and unique, there is no other, and He is on His throne; He possesses hands, without resembling those of

man; a pair of eyes and a face. Additionally, He has knowledge, sight, hearing, and power. He can be seen on the Day of Judgment by the believers only.<sup>(3)</sup> All of this was simply based on Qur’ānic verses affirming, in their outward meaning, such concepts. Since the

Qur’ān contains verses such as “His hands are spread out” (Q. 5:64) and “I created with My own hands” (Q. 38:75), then Allāh is believed to possess hands, but the Ash‘arīs say these

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hands are unlike any other hands because Allāh is unlike any created being.

Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1013) makes a rational argument to prove the oneness of Allāh, bringing the Ash'arī concept of *tawḥīd* closer to the Imāmī and Mu'tazilī concept. It is perhaps this method that made al-Shaykh al-Mufīd say, "[they] agreed on the words and disagreed on [the] meaning" of the concepts concerning the doctrine of *tawḥīd*.<sup>(4)</sup> Al-Bāqillānī states:

"It is not possible [to claim] that the world has two or more creators. The evidence for this is that any two [entities] can disagree so that one of them creates something opposite to the will of the other. Suppose that one of them wanted to keep a body alive but the other wanted it to die. Either both are going to suffer subjection or one of them does...but subjection is a characteristic of created beings, not attributable to Allāh, the Eternal."<sup>(5)</sup>

Imām al-Ḥaramayn al-Juwaynī (d. 478-1085) affirms the same doctrines in *Kitāb al-Ḥirshād* and follows the same rational method. But he disagrees with his Ash'arī predecessors

on some of the essentials. For instance, he takes an Imāmī–Mu'tazilī interpretive approach to what the Ash'arī School held concerning Allāh's supposed possession of a hand, a sight, a hearing and a face. He says:

"Some of our imāms [i.e. al-Ash'arī and his students] believed that the hands, the eyes and the face are permanent attributes (*ṣifāt thābitah*) of the Lord, the Exalted, and that the way to prove them is tradition rather than reason. What we see to be right is to interpret the hands to mean potency (*al-qudrah*) and the eyes to mean vision and the face to mean existence."<sup>(6)</sup>

This is the same argument advanced by al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā in the beginning of the same century. He argued that the meaning of the verse, "everything will perish except His face" (Q. 28:88) is that "everything will perish except for Him." Al-Murtaḍā concludes his argument by asking rhetorically, "How can these anthropomorphists interpret this verse and the one before it according to the outward meaning of the text? Does not this [interpretation] necessitate that He, the Exalted, will perish and [only] His face will

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continue to exist? This surely is blasphemy and ignorance on the part of those who say such things.”<sup>(7)</sup>

Al-Juwaynī also rejects al-Ash‘arī’s literal adherence to the ḥadīth according to which the Prophet said, “Allāh the Exalted descends to the lower heaven and says: ‘Is there any a seeker of forgiveness?’”<sup>(8)</sup> He classifies this kind of ḥadīth as “a single-sourced ḥadīth, which does not necessitate any knowledge.”<sup>(9)</sup> As to this particular ḥadīth, al-Juwaynī deals with it only because it was recorded in the authoritative books of ḥadīth (al-ṣiḥāḥ). He says: “There is no good reason to interpret the descending in the sense of relocation, or vacating a place and occupying another, because this is a characteristic of bodies.”<sup>(10)</sup>

As for the Mu‘tazila, tawḥīd is the first of their five pillars of faith. ‘Abd al-Jabbār quotes Abū Hāshim al-Jubbā‘ī’s (d. 321/933) definition of tawḥīd as “viewing the One as being one.”<sup>(11)</sup> There are two meanings for the concept of Allāh’s being one: first, it means that Allāh cannot be divided; and second, He cannot be described by any characteristic

possessed by created beings. Abū Hāshim’s father, Abū ‘Ali al-Jubbā‘ī (d. 303/916), provided a third meaning for the word one: Allāh is one in His eternity and there is no second.<sup>(12)</sup> Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī presents the Mu‘tazilī consensus on the concept of tawḥīd in the following passage, which is worthy of being quoted in full:

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“The Mu‘tazila unanimously agreed that Allāh is one. There is nothing like Him, and He is the One that hears and sees. He is neither a body, a phantom, a

form, a mass of flesh, a quantity of blood, a person, a substance (jawhar) nor an accident (‘araḍ). He has neither color, taste, smell, pulse, heat, coldness, moisture, dryness, length, breadth, depth, combination (ijtimā‘) nor severance (iftirāq). He neither moves, nor pauses, and He is indivisible. He has no limbs or organs. He possesses no directions, nor right, left, front, behind, above or below. There is no space surrounding Him, nor there is a time passing by Him. He does not come in contact with spaces, nor does He withdraw from them, nor does He occupy them. He cannot be characterized with the attributes

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of created beings which are indicative of their createdness (ḥudūthihim). He may not be described as finite, nor moving in directions. He is unlimited. He is neither a begetter, nor begotten. Measures cannot comprehend Him and veils cannot hide Him. He cannot be comprehended by the senses or compared to people, for He does not resemble created beings in any sense. Deformations cannot befall Him and diseases cannot occur to Him. Nothing that comes to mind or the imagination reaches resembles Him. He is the First, ever prior to created beings, Existent before them and He is ever knowing, powerful, and alive, and He is always so. Eyes cannot see him and sight cannot perceive Him. Imagination cannot comprehend Him and ears cannot hear Him. He is a thing (shay') unlike all things; knowing, powerful and alive, but unlike other knowing, powerful and alive beings. He alone is Eternal and there is none eternal but Him; and there is no deity other than Him. He has no partner in His domain and no minister in His sovereignty. He had no assistant in building what He built and creating what He created. He did not create people

according to any pre-existing model and the creation of any given thing is not harder or easier for Him than the creation of another. He obtains no benefits and sustains no losses. He experiences no pleasures, delight, harm or pain. He has no limit to be finite and He is not subject to annihilation. He does not possess any flaws or inability. He is above being in contact with women or taking for Himself a wife or begetting children.”<sup>(13)</sup>

Al-Ash'arī says this doctrine is shared by the Khawārij, groups of the Murji'a, and groups of the Shī'a. This claim was confirmed by al-Shaykh al-Mufīd, who attributed the same doctrine to “all of the people of tawḥīd, with the exception of the anthropomorphists (ahl al-tashbīh), who agreed on the words and disagreed on their meaning.” Al-Mufīd singled out al-Ash'arī as the first to say that Allāh possesses eternal attributes “which are neither Him, nor other than Him... and he

claimed that Allāh the Exalted possesses an eternal face, an eternal hearing, an eternal sight, and two eternal hands.”<sup>(14)</sup>

As the Mu'tazilī-Imāmī agreement on many theological

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doctrines will continue to appear before us, it is important to address now an important point concerning the two schools: the claim that Imāmī theology has Mu'tazilī origins. For instance, Adam Mez writes: "Theologically, the Shī'a are the heirs of the Mu'tazilī whose lack of tradition-mindedness was particularly helpful to them."<sup>(15)</sup> Following on this path, Wilferd

Madelung traces the Imāmī adoption of kalām to the second half of the 3rd/9th century, when a group of Mu'tazilī theologians "joined the Imāmiyya by adopting their basic doctrine of the imamate while retaining Mu'tazilī theology."<sup>(16)</sup> The two names he put forward were members of the Banū Nawbakht family: Abū Sahl Ismā'īl al-Nawbakhtī (d. 311/923) and his nephew, al-Ḥasan b. Mūsā (d. betw. 300 and 310/912 and 922). In addition to the necessity of accommodating certain Imāmī beliefs, Madelung points out that their "introduction of Mu'tazilī doctrine in Imamism was hampered...[by] the opposition of the Imamite traditionalists, who, much like their Sunnite counterparts, rejected on

principle all forms of kalām and its extensive use of reason in religion and insisted on relying on the ḥadīths of the Prophet and the

Imams."<sup>(17)</sup> The major adversary in this respect was Muḥammad b. 'Alī b. Bābawayh al-Qummī, known as al-Shaykh al-ṣadūq (d. 381/991).

This argument runs against what the Imāmiyya themselves stated about the origins of their kalām. Shaykh

al-Ṭā'ifāh al-Ṭūsī (460/1068) presented a short biography for 'Alī b. Ismā'īl b. Maytham al-Tammār, the grandson of a close associate of Imām 'Alī. About this man, al-Ṭūsī says that he was "the first to engage in kalām (takallama) along the lines of the Imāmī school. He wrote a book about the imamate and titled it "al-Kāmil"..."<sup>(18)</sup> This account establishes the beginning of Imāmī kalām in the first half of the 2nd/8th century. It is also worthwhile to point out the view of al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā (d. 436/1044):

"Let it be known to you that the origins of Unity (al-tawḥīd) and Justice (al-'adl) are taken from the speeches of the Commander of the Faithful, ['Alī b. Abī Ṭālib,] peace be upon him.

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They contain, about this subject, what cannot be added to or improved upon. Whoever contemplates what has been transmitted from his words about this subject, will realize that all the elaboration of the theologians (mutakallimūn), their compilations and books, are mere elaborations of these sentences and explanations of these doctrines. These uses attributed to his progeny, the Imams, peace be upon them, what cannot be enumerated, because of its abundance. All of this is available for those who seek such details in reference books. They can retrieve that which can cure ill hearts and barren minds.”<sup>(19)</sup>

Al-Murtaḍā is not alone in this claim. His Muʿtazilī contemporary, Qādī ʿAbd al-Jabbār (d. 415/1024), includes ʿAli b. Abi Ṭālib in the first generation (Ṭabaqah) of the Muʿtazila. His second generation of the Muʿtazila is made up exclusively of the sons and associates of Imām ʿAli.<sup>(20)</sup> Both scholars quote the same statements to support their claims. Considering the theology of Imām ʿAli and his descendants and associates, it is obvious that

they do not fit the definition of the Muʿtazila. Neither Imām ʿAli, nor any of his sons or close associates believed in the intermediate position of the grave sinner between belief and unbelief (al-manzilatu bayna-l-manzilatayn) or the certainty of fulfillment of God’s threat (al-waʿīd).<sup>(21)</sup> These doctrines represent two of the cardinal – and distinct – beliefs on which all of the Muʿtazila agreed. Moreover, the leading Muʿtazilī scholars had no consensus

concerning Imām ʿAli and his opponents; a majority agreed on two equal scenarios with the possibility of ʿAli’s being either right or wrong, while the chief Muʿtazilī theologian, Abū Bakr al-Aṣamm, claimed that ʿAli was not an imām because there was no consensus

on his imāmate, unlike Muʿāwiyah who enjoyed such a consensus, and was therefore imām.<sup>(22)</sup>

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just like considering the Imāmiyya to be theologically dependent on the Mu'tazila. It is my argument that this misunderstanding originates in political circumstances; namely, the patronage received by the Mu'tazila from the 'Abbāsīd caliphs in the 3rd/9th century. Had the Imāmiyya received similar patronage, the relation would have been reversed. The conventional wisdom concerning the dependency of Imāmī theology on the Mu'tazila can only be sustained if we were to believe that the Imāmiyya ceased to exist intellectually from the time of Imām 'Ali to the time of al-Mufīd, or that they took another belief and returned to Imām 'Ali's theology in the late 4th/10th century. Neither statement can be substantiated. Indeed, the Shī'ī theology is the continuing legacy of Imām 'Ali, while many Mu'tazilī leaders did not even admit their intellectual debt to him.

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Now let us turn to Imām 'Ali's doctrines that were either taken verbatim or paraphrased by the Mu'tazila. The doctrine of tawhīd which Qāḍī 'Abd al-Jabbār attributed to Abū 'Ali al-Jubbā'ī and his son, Abū Hāshim, is that tawhīd means that Allāh cannot be divided; that He cannot be described by any characteristic

possessed by created beings; and that Allāh is one in His eternity and there is no second.

Here is what Imām 'Ali says about Allāh: "The First – nothing is before Him – and the last – nothing will be after Him. Imaginations cannot capture an attribute for Him nor can hearts comprehend Him. He cannot be divided, nor does He possess any components. Hearts and sight cannot encompass Him."<sup>(23)</sup> And he says in another sermon that Allāh is "the First before any first and the Last after any last."<sup>(24)</sup> This same concept is found in several other sermons with variation in language, as in his statement that Allāh's "being is prior to times; His existence is prior to nonexistence and his eternity is prior to the creation

[of the world]...He cannot be surrounded by limits or counted by numbers."<sup>(25)</sup> Additionally, a cursory glance at al-Ash'arī's summation of Mu'tazilī

concept of tawhīd and the attributes (quoted above), will reveal that all the main concepts are taken – in form and in content – from Imām 'Ali's sermons.<sup>(26)</sup>

The question of the attributes attracted further debate and caused deeper fissures among Muslim theologians. This debate



starts with some common ground regarding the two classifications of attributes: the first is the distinction between the negative attributes (al-šifāt al-salbiyyah), which are not to be appropriately attributed to Allāh in any way, and the positive attributes (al-šifāt al-thubūtiyyah); and the second is the distinction between the two types of positive attributes and classifying them as the attributes of the Essence (šifāt al-dhāt) or the attributes of the acts (šifāt al-af'āl).

The negative attributes derive from the agreement of all Muslim schools that Allāh is neither a body, a substance, nor is He an accident. He has neither color, taste, nor smell. Other examples of this type of negative attributes are listed in al-Ash'arī's statement quoted above. Between this category and the category of positive attributes, the Imāmī theologian Abū al-Fatḥ al-Karājīkī (d. 449/1057) inserts another type, which he called "metaphorical attributes" (al-šifāt al-majāziyyah). They are attributes that may be appropriately ascribed to Allāh but only in a metaphorical way, distinct from the literal meaning of such attributes when they are used to describe created beings. Under this

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class al-Karājīkī lists attributes such as willing, hating, angry, pleased, hearing, seeing and comprehending. The reason we use these attributes, he notes, is that they came to us by way of authentic tradition, and we must realize that they occurred in the tradition according to the figurative style and flexibility

of the Arabic language, not their literal meanings.<sup>(27)</sup> With this original contribution,<sup>(28)</sup> al-Karājīkī struck a compromise between the theologians who refused to consider

them attributes – like al-Murtaḍā and some Bašran Mu'tazila – and the Ash'arīs who considered them positive ones.

The positive attributes are either directly connected to the Essence or indirectly related to it through the acts. Al-Mufīd says that the attributes of the Essence are eternal, while the attributes of the acts are contingent upon the performance of those acts:

"Allāh's attributes are two kinds. The first pertains to the Essence, hence they are called šifāt al-dhāt, and the second kind pertains to the acts and they are attributes of those acts. What is meant by the attributes of the Essence is that they are intrinsically deserved by the

very Essence and not by, or for, something else. Whereas the meaning of the attributes of acts is that they become essential only after the presence of the act and not before its presence.”<sup>(29)</sup>

Allāh has always been and will always be living, knowing, and omnipotent. The attributes of the acts, on the other hand, are appropriately ascribed to Allāh only after He performs the acts. It is not appropriate, al-Mufīd argues, to call Allāh a creator (khāliq) before He created anything. One reason for this distinction is to avoid the interpretation of the eternity of the world, which might be inferred from the assertion that Allāh has always been a creator. Another difference he presents between the two categories of divine attributes pertains to the possibility of suspending the application of certain attributes at a given time. The first category cannot be suspended at any time or be substituted by its opposite. One cannot say at any time that Allāh is not knowing or not living, because these are the attributes of the Essence. But one can say that Allāh is not giving at a certain moment when the giving

is not happening at that moment, and it is appropriate to say that Allāh is not causing the death of certain person before He does so.<sup>(30)</sup>

It is the first group of attributes (šifāt al-dhāt) that caused the major dispute between the Ash‘arīs and their opponents, at one level, and between the Imāmiyya and and some groups from the Mu‘tazila at a different level. The genesis of this dispute relates to the Ash‘arī claim that the attributes of the

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Essence are eternal and they are distinct from the Essence. Al-Juwaynī says, “the doctrine of the guided people [i.e. his fellow Ash‘arī theologians] is that the Exalted Creator is alive, knowing and powerful;

possessing eternal life, eternal knowledge, eternal power and eternal will.”<sup>(31)</sup> The Ash‘arī argument had already been stated by Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī as follows:

“If someone says, ‘Why did you say that the Eternal, Exalted is He, has a life, knowledge, power, hearing, sight, speech and will?’ We say that a living, knowing and powerful [person] from among us can only be described as alive, knowing, powerful, speaking and willing because he has a life, knowledge,

power, hearing, sight and will; and this is the benefit of calling him alive, knowing, powerful and willing.”<sup>(32)</sup>

However, this position was rejected by later Ash‘arī theologians. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1209) was quoted as mocking his Ash‘arī predecessors for their criticism of Christians for claiming three eternal while they claimed nine – referring to the Essence and eight other eternal attributes.<sup>(33)</sup>

On the other side of the debate, there was the doctrine of the Imāmiyya and the Mu‘tazila who said that Allāh is alive by Himself – not by a separate life – and the same is true of the rest of the attributes of the Essence.<sup>(34)</sup> This consensus was disturbed by Abū Hāshim al-Jubbā‘ī and his followers from among the Baṣran Mu‘tazila, who introduced the concept of aḥwāl (sing. ḥāl: states) instead of attributes. Abū Hāshim argued against the Ash‘arī doctrine of distinct attributes and the Imāmī–Mu‘tazilī doctrine which states that the Essence and the attributes are one. The theory of aḥwāl that was associated with him states that Allāh is powerful because He possesses a ḥāl that occurs to the Essence and this ḥāl is not the Essence. The ḥāl, according

to Abū Hāshim, is neither existent, nor non-existent; neither eternal, nor created; and neither known, nor unknown. It can only be known with the Essence.<sup>(35)</sup> The reason for this statement was that Abū Hāshim considered the unknown and the non-existent to be things (ashyā‘). Saying that a given ḥāl is existent or non-existent would force him to side either with the Ash‘arīs or with their opponents, because a given thing has to be either distinct

from the Essence (Ash‘arī doctrine) or not separate (Imāmī–Mu‘tazilī doctrine). As to the statement that a ḥāl is neither eternal, nor created, the purpose of which was to avoid the choice between affirming another eternal being and asserting that Allāh may acquire accidents (a‘rād). One of the main exponents of this theory was, oddly, the chief Ash‘arī theologian al-Juwaynī, who devoted a chapter in his book, al-Irshād, under the title: Affirming the aḥwāl and refuting those who denied them.<sup>(36)</sup>

Among the main controversies stemming from the different concepts of Allāh’s attributes was the vision of Allāh (al-ru‘yah). The Ash‘arī affirmation that He can be seen

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by the believers only was rejected by the Imāmiyya and the Mu'tazila, who deny the possibility of such vision. The Ash'arī belief is based on the outward meaning of several Qur'ānic verses such as, "On that day, certain faces are resplendent; looking toward their Lord" (Q. 75:22-23). And, unlike the Imāmiyya and the Mu'tazila, who make proximity and position of the object conditions for vision, the Ash'arīs claim that existence of the object is the only condition for it.<sup>(37)</sup>

The opponents of the Ash'arī doctrine, including the Imāmiyya, base their belief on the verses that appear to deny the vision like, "[Men's] eyes cannot comprehend Him" (Q. 6:103) and His response to Mūsā, "You will not see Me" (Q. 7:143). As to the verse cited by the Ash'arīs, the Imāmiyya and the Mu'tazila interpret it as figurative speech. Al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā refutes the Ash'arī reading of Q. 75:22-23 and says that there is an implied word in the verse which would read as "On that day, certain faces are resplendent; looking toward the reward of their Lord." He also suggests another possibility, which would

make the word "ilā" a noun – in a position of direct object – rather than a preposition. "Ilā" in this case would mean "bounty".<sup>(38)</sup>

The justice of Allāh (al-'adl) is another important example of basic agreement which is nonetheless hampered by serious differences in interpretation. While all schools agree that Allāh is just ('ādil), they disagree on what this statement means. For the Ash'arīs, Allāh's performing of any act constitutes the genesis of justice in this act; in other words, whatever Allāh does is, by definition, a just act.<sup>(39)</sup> By contrast the Imāmiyya and the Mu'tazila interpret the statement that Allāh is just in the sense that He only does what is inherently a

just act. At the roots of this dispute is the difference between the proponents of the two approaches concerning the concept of rational good and rational bad (al-ḥusn wa al-qubḥ al-'aqliyyān). There are three bases for considering something good or bad: first, in relation to its being perfect or defective, as the former is considered good and the latter bad; second, in relation to a subsequent benefit or harm; and third, in relation to a subsequent

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praise and reward or blame and punishment in accordance with the religious law. The role of reason in the last category was the subject of dispute among Muslim theologians.

The Ash'arīs denied that the good and the bad can be reached by reason, especially in matters relevant to religious obligation. Al-Juwaynī says that “the considerations of goodness and badness are derived from the sources of religious law (al-shar‘) and revelation (al-sam‘), and the basis for this statement is that a given thing cannot be inherently good because of itself, its kind or its enduring attributes; and the same goes for its being bad.” For al-Juwaynī, the definition of what is good is merely an act “whose doer was praised in the religious law,” while what is bad is any act “whose doer was blamed in the religious law.”<sup>(40)</sup> The Mu'tazila and the Imāmiyya, on the other hand, believe that reason is the judge of goodness and badness in the acts and the law confirms reason's judgment. Their argument is that acts such as telling the truth and being kind to others are judged to be good by reason, whether the divine law says anything on them or not. That is why they are considered good by those who

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deny religion and those who have no knowledge about religious rulings on such acts. The same goes for the badness of the opposite acts.

The late Mu'tazila and the Imāmiyya, however, had their own differences on certain matters of detail. For the early Mu'tazila and the Imāmiyya, the goodness or badness of an act are derived from the act itself, not from a separate characteristic pertaining to the act. But the late Mu'tazila considered goodness and badness as a function of a characteristic of the act which makes it good or bad – such as a moral characteristic. Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Bašrī (d. 436/1044) argued that only the bad possesses such a characteristic, whereas a good act is such because of its lack of a characteristic associated with a bad act. He also placed conditions on considering an act a bad act, such as the ability, choice and knowledge. An act carried out by a person who is coerced or who is acting without knowledge of the badness of the act is considered neither good nor bad. Other late Mu'tazila, like al-Jubbā'ī, denied such characteristics, but attached the goodness and badness to the consequences of the act. Slapping an orphan, says al-Jubbā'ī, can be good if it is for the sake

of discipline and it can be bad if it is an act of cruelty.<sup>(41)</sup>

The Imāmiyya and the Mu‘tazila agreed that Allāh is capable of justice and injustice, but He elects to do justice only. The only dissent is the position of al-Nazzām (d. 223/837) and his circle who believed that Allāh is unable to act contrary to justice.<sup>(42)</sup> From the justice of Allāh, the Mu‘tazila derive their belief that doing what is most beneficial (al-ašlah) for the people and showing kindness (luṭf) by facilitating their obedience and discouraging disobedience are incumbent upon Him. If He elects to do otherwise He would be unjust (žālim).<sup>(43)</sup> Although the Imāmiyya presented a different reasoning, they did agree with the Mu‘tazila on the principle of the incumbency of luṭf and al-ašlah. They say these are incumbent upon Allāh as part of His liberality and generosity, but if He were not to offer them He would not be unjust. Late Mu‘tazilī theologians, however, believed that, in accordance with Allāh’s justice, only what is good and beneficial are incumbent upon Him, but not what is most good and most beneficial. As to the

Imāmiyya, the luṭf can only be complete if it involves what is most good and most beneficial. The Imāmī theologian Abū al-Faṭḥ al-Karājikī (d. 449/1057) attributes this Mu‘tazilī belief to both Jubbā’īs and most of his own contemporaries. Al-Karājikī excepts from it Abū al-Qāsim al-Balkhī (d. 319/931) and his school, al-Ka‘biyya, who are in agreement with the Imāmiyya:

“What is believed by [Abū ‘Ali] al-Jubbā’ī and his son ‘Abd al-Salām and their followers, who constitute most of today’s Mu‘tazila, is that even though Allāh, the Exalted, is just and generous, He does not provide what is most good for His creation, and does not provide for them what is most beneficial. Instead, He only provides for them [a level] of goodness and benefits less than the most beneficial, in spite of their need for what He denies them.”<sup>(44)</sup>

Another corollary of the debate on Allāh’s justice is the question of predestination (al-jabr), free will (al-tafwīd) and the genesis of human acts. The Mu‘tazila said that the will of human beings is entirely free and that man is able to do what he pleases or

**The Imāmiyya and the Mu‘tazila agreed that Allāh is capable of justice and injustice, but He elects to do justice only. The only dissent is the position of al-Nazzām (d. 223/837) and his circle who believed that Allāh is unable to act contrary to justice**

refrain from whatever he chooses not to do. The purpose of this argument was to exculpate Allāh from all kinds of evil and injustice and to affirm the rationale for religious obligation and the purpose of reward and punishment.<sup>(45)</sup> Furthermore, they divided human acts into voluntary and involuntary; and into direct and indirect acts. Voluntary acts are performed with human knowledge and free will, and they are the acts that fall within the realm of religious obligation. Involuntary acts are the ones that occur without human free will, such as the burning of fire. These, according to the Mu'tazila, are attributed to human beings figuratively (*majāzan*).<sup>(46)</sup> Direct acts are those acts which are performed for an intended purpose and according to human will; while indirect acts are unintended, but they occur as consequence of a direct act. As Abū Ja'far al-Iskāfi (d. 240/854) explains it: "every act that occurs by mistake and is not intended and without the will for it [to occur] is an indirect act; and every act which cannot occur without intention, so that each part in it needs a renewal of the will and purpose, is excluded

from the realm of indirect acts, and is a direct act."<sup>(47)</sup>

The purpose of this classification of acts was to assign the responsibility for every act and determine the party to praise or to blame. This concern was present in the work of 'Abd al-Jabbār (d. 415/1024), who is a faithful follower of his predecessors in adopting the same classification of acts. Answering an objection of some unidentified opponents, he wrote the following:

"The [opponents] say, 'Your belief in indirect acts leads to the possibility of someone's deserving blame or praise for an act after his death – and deserving reward or punishment in this case – which is known to be false because he would not deserve it if he acted while inattentive, much less when he is dead[...]' The answer is that, in our doctrine,

it is not unfeasible to deserve blame or praise – as well as punishment and reward – for an indirect act because we consider it similar to direct acts in this concern if one acts while knowing, or being able to know, about his condition [...]. As to

**The Mu'tazila said that the will of human beings is entirely free and that man is able to do what he pleases or refrain from whatever he chooses not to do. The purpose of this argument was to exculpate Allāh from all kinds of evil and injustice and to affirm the rationale for religious obligation and the purpose of reward and punishment**



our judgment on the inattentive doer, that he deserves no blame or praise for his acts, it is because he cannot guard against acting while being inattentive. This is not the case with an indirect act because the doer can guard against doing what leads to it if he knows, or suspects, that it will follow. But if this does not occur to him, then he would be judged like the inattentive person.”<sup>(48)</sup>

There is, however, a difference among the Mu‘tazila on the assignment of blame. Al-Jubbā‘īs considered an indirect act, whose doer is inattentive, to be neither good, nor bad; hence, no blame or praise can be deserved. But Abū Abdillāh al-Bašrī (d. 369/979) considered this act as a kind of injustice (ẓulm), which is bad, but the doer does not deserve blame for it because he could not guard against it.<sup>(49)</sup>

The Imāmī doctrine is derived from a ḥadīth attributed to the sixth Imām, Ja‘far al-ṣādiq, who said, *lā jabra wa lā tafwīḍ bal amrun bayna amrayn* (there is neither predestination, nor free will; but [there is] a position between these two positions). Al-Shaykh al-Mufīd elaborates on this concept by defining predestination as “coercion to do the

act by force and domination, and the real meaning of this is creating the act in human beings without the existence of a power in them to stop it or refuse to accept it.” As to free will, he defines it as “lifting any ban on people to act and giving them the license to do whatever they please.”<sup>(50)</sup> The Shī‘ī alternative is an intermediary position between the two extremes of the Ash‘arī complete predestination and the Mu‘tazilī complete free will:

“Allāh, the Exalted, enabled humans to do their acts and made possible for them their deeds, and drew up for them in this respect the rules and regulations. He prohibited them from evil acts by strict rebuke, inducing fear, promise and threat. Therefore, by enabling them to do certain deeds He was neither forcing them to do those deeds, nor giving them license to [choose] to do those deeds; because He prohibited them from most of the deeds and He established the rules for them

regarding them. He also ordered them to do the good ones and prohibited them from doing the bad ones.”<sup>(51)</sup>

At the heart of this question is a conflict between the partisans

**One of the main requirements of justice is to refrain from unjust acts, which means among other things placing a limit on what Allāh does. While consistent with justice, this limit contravenes the concept of Allāh’s omnipotence**

of Allāh's justice (al-'adl) and the partisans of His omnipotence (al-qudrah). One of the main requirements of justice is to refrain from unjust acts, which means among other things placing a limit on what Allāh does. While consistent with justice, this limit contravenes the concept of Allāh's omnipotence. Muslim theologians followed three different ways of solving this contradiction. The Imāmiyya and a group of the Mu'tazila believe that Allāh is capable of the acts that would be considered injustice if He performed them, but He does not perform them.<sup>(52)</sup> Shaykh al-Ṭā'ifah al-Ṭūsī explained the reason for this abstention from doing bad deeds by the absence of causes for such deeds. He argued that "a person may not carry out bad acts unless he is either ignorant of their badness or is in need to act in such manner. And since Allāh has full knowledge of the badness of bad acts just as He has full knowledge that He does not need to perform such acts, therefore He does not do them."<sup>(53)</sup> Al-Ṭūsī provides the example of someone who has the choice between telling the truth and lying when both choices get him what he wants. Knowing the badness of lying and the equality in consequences

from both choices, al-Ṭūsī says that this person would undoubtedly choose telling the truth, as rational people would agree.

Other Mu'tazila believed that Allāh is unable to carry out bad deeds. Qāḍī 'Abd al-Jabbār attributed this position to al-Nazzām, his student Abū 'Ali al-Aswārī and al-Jāhiz. He also accused of holding it most of the believers in predestination, the Ḥashwiyya, the Murji'a and the "Rawāfiḍ."<sup>(54)</sup> It is clear that the Imāmiyya are not to be included in 'Abd al-Jabbār's Rawāfiḍ, for al-Shaykh al-Mufīd reports a consensus on the Imāmiyya position – that Allāh is capable of both justice

**it seems that 'Abd al-Jabbār was engaged in some form of hyperbole rather than an accurate representation of what his opponents actually believed**

and injustice although He does not act unjustly – including all the Mu'tazila (excluding al-Nazzām), some of the Murji'a, and the traditionists (Aṣḥāb al-Ḥadīth). From this

and the use of a pejorative term, it seems that 'Abd al-Jabbār was engaged in some form of hyperbole rather than an accurate representation of what his opponents actually believed.

The essential difference between the Mu'tazila and the Imāmiyya rests in a subtle, but important, detail concerning the belief

that Allāh is above carrying out bad deeds. The Mu'tazila view this as an obligatory prerequisite of justice and argue that were He not above performing evil deeds, this would in itself be proof of oppression on the part of Allāh. By contrast, the Imāmiyya view it as a voluntary abstention emanating from Allāh's grace and magnificence.

Al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā takes this argument a step further to declare that good deeds emanate from Allāh by means of His orders and incentives, while bad deeds are the responsibility of the people, and they emanate from Satan by means of his encouragement and seduction. With this understanding regarding the origin of human acts, al-Murtaḍā continues with a dramatic depiction of the corollary from the beliefs of his opponents:

“Some claim that [Allāh] includes in punishment and torment small children who are blameless of any guilt or crime. Others do not rule out that Allāh, the exalted, would order his servants – with their current capacity and physique – to fly in the sky and catch the stars and move mountains and fold the skies

like a scroll. But if they fail to do it because of their natural inaptitude, He would torment them in eternal Hellfire.”<sup>(55)</sup>

This is hardly an exaggeration of the Ash'arī position on such questions. Indeed, Ash'arī scholars are vocal about affirming these positions as essential parts of their theology.

For instance, Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī himself declares that “the fate of children is left for Allāh; He may torment them or do what He pleases with them.”<sup>(56)</sup>

As to the obligation to move mountains and

fly in the skies like birds do, al-Ījī says “this is part of what we allow, even though it has not occurred in the real world.”<sup>(57)</sup> And in a chapter on Allāh's mandating that humans carry out what they cannot do, the chief Ash'arī theologian in the 5th/11th century, Imām al-Ḥaramayn al-Juwaynī, writes:

“There are many forms of mandating what is not within human capacity (taklīf mā lā yuṭāq), such as combining the two opposites and performing what is out of the realm of possibilities. The truth, in our doctrine, is that such thing is allowed rationally and it is not impossible.”<sup>(58)</sup>

**The essential difference between the Mu'tazila and the Imāmiyya rests in a subtle, but important, detail concerning the belief that Allāh is above carrying out bad deeds**

## ALLĀH'S WORD

There is a consensus that the attribute “mutakallim” (speaker) is one of Allāh’s positive attributes. Yet this consensus was marred by the injurious debate over the nature of His speech: eternal (azalī) or created in time (muḥdath). At the peak of this debate, the Mu’tazila made use of the support of the Abbāsīd caliphs al-Ma’mūn, al-Mu’tašim and al-Wāthiq (209/824 – 232/847) to wage a coercive campaign against the opponents of their doctrine concerning the createdness of the Qur’ān. What began as a scholarly dispute was later instituted as a wave of violent practice of intolerance by the Mu’tazila, who are often referred to as the “free thinkers of Islam.” This period of persecution was known as the miḥnah (the ordeal). Judges had to agree with them on this particular doctrine – those who believed in the eternity of the Qur’ān were purged and replaced by supporters of the Mu’tazilī view. At some point, even Muslim prisoners of war were not ransomed if they did not attest that the Qur’ān was created, not eternal. Among the famous figures to be persecuted was Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, who spent eighteen months under torture, but remained

**Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash’arī himself declares that “the fate of children is left for Allāh; He may torment them or do what He pleases with them**

firm in his belief in the uncreatedness of the Qur’ān. The miḥnah was over when a new Abbāsīd caliph, al-Mutawakkil, came to power in 232/847. He turned against the Mu’tazila two years later and commanded that no one should claim that the Qur’ān was created.

The 5th/11th century thus witnessed a reversal of fortunes. The Ḥanbalīs came to power with a vengeance, targeting the Mu’tazila and the Shī’a on many doctrinal points, but the emphasis on the createdness of the Qur’ān was the lead doctrine. In 420/1029, the Caliph al-Qādir endorsed a decree considering those who believed in the createdness of the Qur’ān in a state of fisq, and the same was done a few months later in the same year – all prominent scholars were summoned to the Caliph’s palace and were coerced to

sign their names on the document without regard to their theological affiliation.<sup>(59)</sup> The Qādirī Creed, which was made an official state theology during the reign of al-Qā’im, adds the characterization of kufr to the fisq; it reads in part:

“The speech (kalam) of Allāh is uncreated. He spoke it and sent it down to His Messenger

peace be upon him through the agency of Gabriel, who heard it from Him and then recited it to Muḥammad, peace be upon him, and Muḥammad recited it to his companions, who recited it to the community. It did not

**At some point, even Muslim prisoners of war were not ransomed if they did not attest that the Qurʾān was created, not eternal**

become created when created people recited it, because it is the same speech which Allah spoke; therefore – whether it is being recited, memorized, written or heard – it is uncreated. Anyone who says that it is created, in any sense, is kāfir and his blood can be shed after being asked to repent [and failing to do so.]”<sup>(60)</sup>

At the core of this dispute is the Ashʿarī belief that speech is an attribute of Allāh and that all His attributes are eternal. However, they separate this “eternal” speech from the letters, sounds and words to be found in the Qurʾān and the other books. These, they say, are means to express the speech, but not the speech itself. Therefore, they can change according to time, place and language – while the actual speech remains unchanged. The letters, sounds and words are, according to the Ashʿarīs, created in the prophets, the angels

and the tree that became a means of divine communication with Mūsā.<sup>(61)</sup> This is also the belief of the traditionists (ahl al-ḥadīth) with the only exception being the Ḥanbalīs who believe that the speech of Allāh is identical with the letters and sounds and it is eternal. Some of them are said to have gone as far as claiming that the cover of the Book (the Qurʾān) is eternal.<sup>(62)</sup>

The Muʿtazila, on the other hand, also believe that the speech of Allāh is the same as the letters and sounds that convey it, but they adopted the opposite doctrine. The speech of Allāh consists of the letters and sounds which Allāh created in the minds of the prophets, the angels and the tree that became a means for communication with Mūsā. Nothing outside these books, according to the Muʿtazila, can be called the speech of Allāh. Hence, the speech is an attribute like all other attributes.<sup>(63)</sup>

The Ashʿarīs objected that the Muʿtazilī belief in the createdness of the Qurʾān, which contains “Allāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm,” necessitates that Allāh is created, for they

**In 420/1029, the Caliph al-Qādir endorsed a decree considering those who believed in the createdness of the Qurʾān in a state of fisq**

believe that the name Allāh is coterminous with the Essence.<sup>(64)</sup> ‘Abd al-Jabbār responded by saying that by the same logic then we have to believe that the horses, mules and donkeys are eternal, because they are also mentioned in the text of the Qur’ān.<sup>(65)</sup>

The Imāmī position as articulated by al-Ḥillī concurs with the Mu’tazilī in the sense that the speech of Allāh occurs in time, like that of all created beings. ‘Allāmah al-Ḥillī says that “there is no doubt about Allāh’s being a speaker (mutakallim), meaning that He brought into being (awjada) certain letters and audible sounds which reside in the bodies, as He spoke to Mūsā through the agency of the tree when He placed in it the sounds and letters.” Then al-Ḥillī attacks the Ash’arīs saying that they “negated their own intellects and the intellects of the rest of humanity when they claimed for Him (the Exalted) a speech neither they, nor anyone else understands what it is.” Al-Ḥillī finally says that both reason and tradition agree that Allāh’s speech is not eternal, “because it is

made of letters and sounds. And since it is not possible to combine two letters in time, then one of them must come before the other, and anything which is preceded by something else must be created.”<sup>(66)</sup>

There is, however, a separate dispute on the terminology used to refer to the createdness of the Qur’ān. The Mu’tazila defend the use of the word makhlūq to mean created in time. Qāḍī ‘Abd al-Jabbār presents a lengthy argument justifying the use of the word makhlūq and rejecting all objections.

<sup>(67)</sup> The Shī’a disagree with this use and prefer

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the word muḥdath, because the Qur’ān is not described in its text or by the Prophet as makhlūq, whereas the word muḥdath is present in two different Qur’ānic verses (Q. 21:2 and 26:5). Al-Mufīd writes, “I say that the Qur’ān is the speech of Allāh and His inspiration (waḥy) and it is created (muḥdath), as described by Allāh

the Exalted, but I forbid the use of the word makhlūq.”<sup>(68)</sup> The reason for this preference pertains to the customary use of the word

makhlūq in Arabic. As al-Shaykh al-Ṭūsī articulates it:

“As to describing [Allāh’s] speech as makhlūq, it is inappropriate according to our doctrine because custom and convention describe speech as makhlūq only when it is either false or falsely attributed to other than its speaker.”<sup>(69)</sup>

The other controversy concerning the Qur’ān taking place at the time pertained to the claims that it had been, or might have been, altered at some point during its official compilation. Al-Mufīd gives a full account of the Imāmī position on this question, acknowledging the existence of many reports on such alterations. However, he looks at three primary concerns: order of the text, loss of some text and addition of some text. First he cites what he called the evident change in the arrangement of the chapters in the Qur’ān, which is not consistent with the chronological order of their revelation.

As to the loss of some text, al-Mufīd says that reason does not consider such a happening impossible. However, he does not claim having any evidence that such loss actually

occurred. As to the change by the addition of text, al-Mufīd speaks of two hypothetical cases. It is impossible, he says, that someone should have added a chapter without being detected by the learned. What is possible, says al-Mufīd, is that a word or two may have been added here or there, not amounting to a whole phrase. He does not claim such changes actually occurred and in fact believes that they did not occur. He says that a ḥadīth from Imām Ja’far al-ṣādiq supports his position that the Qur’ān was never changed in this manner, although Banū Nawbakht – from the Imāmī side – claimed otherwise.<sup>(70)</sup>

The same position was presented by al-Murtaḍā and al-Ṭūsī, the latter saying in the introduction to his authoritative commentary on the Qur’ān that it is the consensus among

Muslims that no addition was made to the text. As to any loss of text, he says that the general sense in all Muslim schools of thought is that no such loss has

occurred. He goes on to report accounts in circulation that are contrary to this consensus, saying that these are single-sourced reports which neither yield knowledge, nor necessitate practice. It is best to ignore them.<sup>(71)</sup>

**The Mu’tazila held the belief in the unconditional fulfillment of Allāh’s promise (al-wa’d) and threat (al-wa’id) as one of their five pillars of theology (al-uṣūl al-khamsah)**



## ALLĀH'S PROMISES AND THREATS

The Mu'tazila held the belief in the unconditional fulfillment of Allāh's promise (al-wa'd) and threat (al-wa'id) as one of their five pillars of theology (al-ušūl al-khamsah). Their conviction was based on the Mu'tazilī principle that Allāh does not do what is improper (qabīh). If He states that sinners will be punished and does otherwise in the hereafter, His statement would be a lie. But lying is qabīh, hence He must punish the sinners who do not repent. While some late Bašrans, like 'Abd al-Jabbār, allowed for the forgiveness of sinners, the Baghdādī Mu'tazila insisted on the original belief, considering it obligatory (wājib) on Allāh to fulfill both His promise and threat.<sup>(72)</sup> Indeed, for the Mu'tazila of Baghdād, the fulfillment of Allāh's threat is even more likely than the fulfillment of His promise, because the former is wājib, while the latter, according to them, is contingent on Allāh's magnanimity.<sup>(73)</sup>

As for the Ash'arīs, their belief is based on the principle of Allāh's justice which considers any act He performs to be just. Therefore, He judges as He wills on the Day of Judgment. Whether He fulfills His

promise and threat or not, He will be acting in His own domain and there is no higher authority to judge or revoke His acts. He may even reverse the fulfillment of the promise and threat by punishing for the good and rewarding the evil. Imām al-Ḥaramayn says:

“The reward, according to the people of true belief, is not a preordained right, or a confirmed compensation. Rather, it is generosity from Allāh. And punishment is not obligatory either; if it occurs, then it is justice from Allāh.”<sup>(74)</sup>

The basis of this Ash'arī argument is that any worship and obedience performed by the human is an act of gratitude for the countless bounties he already received. As such, worship and obedience represent an incomplete form of the compensation due to Allāh and they earn the doer no deserved reward. Therefore, no one is owed anything in the hereafter.<sup>(75)</sup>

The Imāmī position affirms that it is incumbent upon Allāh to fulfill His promise, but not His threat. Al-Shaykh al-Mufīd rejects the Mu'tazilī position that Allāh would be breaking His word if He did not fulfill his threat. He says:

If Arabs and non-Arabs agree that forgiveness after a threat is considered good,

**The Imāmī position affirms that it is incumbent upon Allāh to fulfill His promise, but not His threat**

and that the person who practices it deserves no blame, then forgiveness after a threat from Him, the Exalted, cannot be improper (qabīḥ).<sup>(76)</sup>

The Mu'tazila framed their theological arguments concerning the wa'īd according to the concept of iḥbāṭ, which stipulates that a person who commits a sinful act would cause his previous good deeds and obedience to Allāh to be nullified. However, some Mu'tazila – like Abū Hāshim al-Jubbā'ī and his followers – believe in the balancing of good deeds against bad deeds to determine the outcome of a person's fate.<sup>(77)</sup> The Imāmiyya, except Banū Nawbakht, rejected this concept.<sup>(78)</sup> The only deed they would consider as causing iḥbāṭ would be associating other deities with Allāh, which is a matter of consensus among all Muslims.

As the discussion has revealed so far, there has been a reformation in the Ash'arī doctrines in the course of the 5th/11th century, as seen in the work of Imām al-Ḥaramayn and some of the writings of Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī before him. By the end of the century, Ash'arī theologians have already dissociated themselves from many of the interpretations

that al-Ash'arī himself had put forward, such as the affirmation of Allāh's possession of a hand, a face and other attributes that might border on anthropomorphism. Instead, the new Ash'arī theology took an interpretive approach close to the Imāmī and Mu'tazilī methods of ta'wīl, considering the verses about such attributes as figurative

speech. However, in spite of this reformation, Ash'arī doctrines remained at a great distance from both their Imāmī and Mu'tazilī counterparts.

In their turn, the Mu'tazila and the Imāmiyya continued to distinguish themselves from one another. As seen in the debate on al-wa'd and al-wa'īd, the two schools maintained their differences concerning the subtleties of almost every debated subject. Three of the five Mu'tazilī theological pillars (al-uṣūl al-khamsah) remained in dispute or total rejection by the Shī'a. The other two – namely, 'ādī and tawḥīd – were also nuanced by slight, yet very significant, differences. However, the main point of difference that separated the two groups was the doctrine of the imamate, which is out of this paper's scope.

**By the end of the century, Ash'arī theologians have already dissociated themselves from many of the interpretations that al-Ash'arī himself had put forward, such as the affirmation of Allāh's possession of a hand, a face and other attributes that might border on anthropomorphism**

## Kufa Review: The Theological Debate in Baghdad in the 5th/11th Century

### Notes

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- 1 For an analysis of 'Abd al-Jabbār's downfall, see Gabriel Said Reynolds, "The Rise and Fall of Qadi 'Abd al-Jabbar," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, volume 37 No. 1 (2005), pp. 3-18.
  - 2 See George Makdisi, "The Sunnī Revival," in *Islamic Civilisation 950-1150*. ed. D. H. Richards. Oxford 1973.
  - 3 Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī, *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn*, vol. 1, pp. 320-25.
  - 4 Al-Shaykh al-Mufīd, *Awā'il al-Maqālāt*, p. 56.
  - 5 Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī, *al-Tamhīd*, p. 46.
  - 6 Al-Juwaynī, *Kitāb al-Irshād*, pp. 155 ff.
  - 7 Al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, *al-Ghurar wa al-Durar*, vol. 1, p. 592.
  - 8 See al-Ash'arī, *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn*, vol. 1, p. 323. Al-Juwaynī narrates the ḥadīth in a different form: "Allāh the Exalted descends to the lower heaven every Friday night and says: 'Is there any repentant so that I accept his repentance? Is there a seeker of forgiveness so that I forgive him? Is there anyone with a plea for me to grant?'" (Italics are mine - indicating additions in al-Juwaynī's version.)
  - 9 Al-Juwaynī, *Kitāb al-Irshād*, pp. 161 ff.
  - 10 Ibid.
  - 11 Qādī 'Abd al-Jabbār, *al-Mughnī*, vol. 4, p. 241.
  - 12 Ibid.
  - 13 Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī, *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn*, vol. 1, pp. 216-17.
  - 14 Al-Shaykh al-Mufīd, *Awā'il al-Maqālāt*, p. 56.
  - 15 Adam Mez, *The Renaissance of Islam*, p. 62.
  - 16 W. Madelung, "Imamism and Mu'tazilite Theology," in *Religious Schools and Sects in Medieval Islam*, Chapter VII, p. 14.
  - 17 Ibid., pp. 16-17
  - 18 Al-Ṭūsī, *Abu Ja'far, al-Fihrist*, p. 117 and Ibn al-Nadīm, *al-Fihrist*, p. 307.
  - 19 Al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, *Amālī al-Murtaḍā*, volume 1, p. 148.
  - 20 Qādī 'Abd al-Jabbār, *Firaq wa Ṭabaqāt al-Mu'tazila*, pp. 23-31.
  - 21 See al-Mufīd, *Awā'il al-Maqālāt*, (p. 45): "Whoever agrees with the Mu'tazila in their belief of the intermediary position [of grave sinners] (al-manzila bayn al-manzilatayn) is a Mu'tazilī, in reality, even if he were to add to that an agreement with doctrines from other sects."
  - 22 See al-Ash'arī, *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn*, pp. 128-134 and al-Nawbakhtī, *Firaq al-Shī'a*, p. 16.
  - 23 Imām 'Ali, *Nahj al-Balāghah*, p. 167.
  - 24 Ibid., p. 22.
  - 25 Ibid., p. 378.
  - 26 Ibid., see pp. 34-39; 120; 134-38; 176; 222; 304; 360-61; 363-67; and 378-83.
  - 27 Abū al-Faṭḥ al-Karājīkī, *Kanz al-Fawā'id*, vol. 1, pp. 73-78.
  - 28 A less developed consideration of such a category was attempted by al-Shaykh al-Mufīd in *Awā'il al-Maqālāt*, p.

- 59-60.
- 29 Al-Shaykh al-Mufīd, *Taṣḥīḥ al-l'ṭiqād*, pp. 185-86.
- 30 Ibid.
- 31 Al-Juwaynī, *Kitāb al-Irshād*, p. 79.
- 32 Al-Bāqillānī, *al-Tamhīd*, pp. 152.
- 33 Quoted by al-'Allāmah al-Ḥillī, *Nahj al-Ḥaqq wa Kashf al-ṣīd*, p. 65.
- 34 Al-Shaykh al-Mufīd in *Awā'il al-Maqālāt*, p. 57.
- 35 Al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa al-Niḥal*, pp. 69-70.
- 36 Al-Juwaynī, *Kitāb al-Irshād*, pp. 80-84.
- 37 Al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa al-Niḥal*, p. 87.
- 38 Al-Murtaḍā, *al-Ghurur wa al-Durar*, vol. 1, p. 36-37.
- 39 Ibid., p. 273.
- 40 Ibid., p. 258.
- 41 Al-Ījī, *Kitāb al-Mawāqif*, vol. 3, pp. 270-71.
- 42 Al-Mufīd, *Awā'il al-Maqālāt*, p. 62 and *al-Baghdādī*, *al-Farq bayn al-Firaq*, p. 131.
- 43 Ibid., pp. 64-65.
- 44 Abū al-Faṭḥ al-Karājikī, *Kanz al-Fawā'id*, vol. 1, p. 127.
- 45 See Mullā ṣadrā, *Risālah fi Taḥqīq Khalq al-A' māl*, p. 2.
- 46 Qāḍī Abd al-Jabbār, *al-Mughnī*, vol. 9, pp. 10-13.
- 47 Al-Ash'arī, *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn*, vol. 2, pp. 84-85.
- 48 Qāḍī Abd al-Jabbār, *al-Mughnī*, vol. 9, pp. 66-67.
- 49 Ibid., p. 67.
- 50 Al-Mufīd, *Taṣḥīḥ al-l'ṭiād*, p. 189.
- 51 Ibid., p. 190.
- 52 Al-Mufīd, *Awā'il al-Maqālāt*, p. 62; Qāḍī 'Abd al-Jabbār, *al-Mughnī*, vol. 6, p. 127ff.
- 53 Al-Ṭūsī, *Tamhīd al-Uṣūl fi 'Ilm al-Kalām*, p. 110.
- 54 Qāḍī Abd al-Jabbār, *al-Mughnī*, vol. 6, p. 127.
- 55 Al-Murtaḍā, "Inqādh al-Bashar min al-Jabr wa al-Qadar," in *Rasā'il al-Murtaḍā*, vol. 2, pp. 190-91. In another treatise, al-Murtaḍā attributed this to the late Ash'arī, saying that their predecessors used to forbid making such statements, *Masā'il al-Murtaḍā*, p. 162.
- 56 Al-Ash'arī, *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn*, vol. 2, p. 324.
- 57 Al-Ījī, *Kitāb al-Mawāqif*, vol. 3, p. 291.
- 58 Al-Juwaynī, *Kitāb al-Irshād*, p. 226.
- 59 Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 9, pp. 223-24.
- 60 Ibid., pp. 304-05.
- 61 Al-Ījī, *Kitāb al-Mawāqif*, vol. 3, pp. 129-42.
- 62 Ibid., p. 128. Al-Ījī does not provide the names of those he accuses of such belief, and I have not been able to find any authentic Ḥanbalī source to agree with his assertion.
- 63 Ibid., p. 129.
- 64 Ibid., p. 301.
- 65 Qāḍī 'Abd al-Jabbār, *al-Mughnī*, vol. 7, p. 165.
- 66 'Allāmah al-Ḥillī, *Kashf al-Ḥaqq wa Nahj al-ṣīd*, pp. 18-19.
- 67 Qāḍī 'Abd al-Jabbār, *al-Mughnī*, vol. 7, pp. 208-244.
- 68 Al-Mufīd, *Awā'il al-Maqālāt*, pp. 57-58.
- 69 Al-Shaykh al-Ṭūsī, *Tamhīd al-Uṣūl*, p. 126.
- 70 Al-Mufīd, *Awā'il al-Maqālāt*, pp. 93-94.
- 71 Abū Ja'far al-Ṭūsī, *al-Tibyān fi Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, p. 3.
- 72 Qāḍī 'Abd al-Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah*, pp. 643-44.
- 73 Ibid., pp. 136-37. The Mu'tazila of Baṣra consider the fulfillment of the promise to be wājib on Allāh.
- 74 Al-Juwaynī, *Kitāb al-Irshād*, p. 381.
- 75 Ibid., p. 382.
- 76 Al-Mufīd, *al-Fuṣūl al-Mukhtārah*, pp. 68-70.
- 77 Al-Juwaynī, *Kitāb al-Irshād*, p. 389-90.
- 78 Al-Mufīd, *al-Fuṣūl al-Mukhtārah*, pp. 96.