

THE PLACE OF REASON IN THE
THEOLOGY OF AL-MĀTURĪDĪ AND AL-ASH'ARĪ

BY

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this thesis is the study of the theological methods and the analysis of the teachings of two Muslim scholars namely Abū-Mansūr Muhammad b. Muhammad b. Mahmūd al-Māturīdī (d.333/944) and Abū-l-Hasan 'Alī b. Ismā'īl al-Ash'arī (260/873 - 324/935), who made a great impact on Islamic thought, played a major role in the development of Islamic theology and later became eponyms of two rival or parallel schools of thought, that is the Māturīdite and the Ash'arite schools.

The study is based on the original works of these two scholars and it aims to clarify the points of agreement and differences which were assumed to exist between these two scholars or their respective schools. Thus the thesis has been divided into two parts, one of which deals with the theological methodology of al-Māturīdī and al-Ash'arī, and the other part deals with their doctrines and teachings.

In part one which consists of two chapters, an attempt is made to analyse the methods used by al-Māturīdī and al-Ash'arī. It has been concluded that though these two scholars used similar methods based on traditional evidences and rational arguments in their works, it seems that al-Māturīdī is more inclined to the use of reasoning than his fellow contemporary al-Ash'arī.

Part two of the thesis comprises six chapters, from chapter three to chapter eight. Each two chapters deal with one problem, where an attempt is made to discuss and elucidate the views of al-Māturīdī and al-Ash'arī regarding the particular problem.

Thus chapters three and four discuss the views of al-Māturīdī and al-Ash'arī on the problem of God's existence and His attributes. Chapters five and six deal with their views regarding the problem of Qadar, while chapters seven and eight treat their views on the doctrine of Īmān. At the end of each two chapters dealing with a particular problem, the disagreements and agreements between the views of al-Māturīdī and al-Ash'arī are pointed out.

ABBREVIATIONS

- b. Ibn.
- E.I. (1), E.I. (2) The Encyclopaedia of Islam, first edition, Leiden 1913-42; second edition, Leiden and London 1960, continuing.
- E.I. (s) The Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam, Leiden 1955.
- Ibāna. Abū-l-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī, Kitāb al-Ibāna ‘an Usūl ad-Diyāna.
- Intisār. Al-Khayyāt, Abū-l-Ḥusayn, Kitāb al-Intisār wa-r-Radd ‘ala Ibn-ar-Rāwandī al-Mulhid.
- Iqdām. Ash-Shahrastānī, Nihāyat al-Iqdām fi-‘Ilm al-Kalām.
- I.Q. Islamic Quarterly.
- J.A.O.S. Journal of the American Oriental Society.
- J.R.A.S. Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society.
- Kashshāf. Az-Zamakhsharī, al-Kashshāf ‘an Ḥaqā’iq at-Tanzīl.
- Luma’ Abū-l-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī, Kitāb al-Luma’ fi-l-Radd ‘ala ahl az-Zaigh wal-Bida’. References are to the pages of the Arabic text in (R.J. McCarthy) Muslim Theology, pp.5-83.
- Maqālāt. Abū-l-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī, Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn wa-Ikhtilāf al-Musalliyīn.
- Milal. Ash-Shahrastānī, Al-Milal wal-Nihal.
- M.C. Wensinck, The Muslim Creed.
- M.W. The Muslim World.

- Q. The Qur'ān. For translation I have used A.J. Arberry's The Koran Interpreted, and M.M. Pickthall's The Meaning of the Glorious Koran, yet with some amendments whenever it is necessary.
- Risāla I. Abū-l-Hasan al-Ash'arī, Risālat istihsān al-Khawd fī 'Ilm al-Kalām. References are to the pages in the Arabic texts in (R.J. McCarthy) Muslim Theology, pp.87-97.
- Risāla II. Abū-l-Hasan al-Ash'arī, Risāla Kataba biha ila ahl ath-Thaḡhr bi-bāb al-Abwāb.
- R.S.O. Rivista degli studi orientali.
- S.I. Studia Islamica.
- Tawhid. Abū-Mansūr al-Māturīdī, Kitāb at-Tawhīd.
- Ta'wīlāt. Abū-Mansūr al-Māturīdī, Kitāb Ta'wīlāt al-Qur'ān, references are made to suras and verses.

INTRODUCTION

This thesis is concerned with the study of the theological thought and methodology of two Muslim scholars, namely al-Māturīdī (d.333/944) and al-Ash‘arī (260/873 - 324/935).

Al-Māturīdī was Abū-Mansūr Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Maḥmūd al-Māturīdī as-Samarqandī. He belonged to the Ḥanafite school of thought and was called al-Māturīdī after his place of birth Māturīd or Māturīt, a region or village near Samarqand. There is no detailed information about al-Māturīdī's life and development of thought available and even the date of his birth is the subject of guessing work and assumptions.

Al-Ash‘arī, Abū-l-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. Ismā‘īl was born at Baṣra, where he was educated in accordance with the Mu‘tazilite teachings. Thus he became a zealous advocate of their doctrines until the age of forty when he disagreed with them and in particular with his master and step-father Abū-‘Alī al-Jubbā‘ī. After a period of agony and intellectual crises he deserted the Mu‘tazilites' circle, repudiated their doctrines and disassociated himself from them. Then he moved to Baghdād where he declared his endorsement of the Sunnite dogma in its Ḥanbalite form and devoted himself to the rational defence of this doctrine.

Though these two scholars lived in two districts which were considerably far apart and definitely had no contact with each other, their names came to be linked together in the history of Islamic theology. They were considered eponyms of two parallel or rival schools of thoughts, namely the Māturīdite and the

Ash'arite schools, and the disagreements and agreements between their views and doctrines were widely stated. This, however, was not done on the basis of a genuine and serious study and analysis of the works of al-Ash'arī and al-Māturīdī, thus many of the views expressed in this respect become open to much doubt and confusion. It has been felt that a serious study of the works of these two scholars is necessary in order to evaluate their role in the development of Islamic theology. Such a study, however, became possible only recently after the discoveries and publication of some of the important works of al-Māturīdī. It facilitated to a greater extent the comparison between the original views of these two scholars. It is hoped that by analysing these works, the relationship between the thoughts of al-Māturīdī and al-Ash'arī could be established.

Notes about the Sources

This study is based mainly on the works of al-Māturīdī and al-Ash'arī. Therefore, a few words about the authenticity and chronological order of these works must be said.

The Sources for al-Ash'arī's thought: Some of al-Ash'arī's works have been known for a considerably long period, and have been the subject of study and critical analysis. However, they did cause a lot of controversies concerning their authenticity, their chronology and their place in the development of al-Ash'arī's thought. It might be sufficient to refer in this respect to the work of Michel Allard, Le probleme des attributs divins dans la doctrine d' al-Ash'arī et de ses premiers grands disciples, where he extensively investigated the authenticity

and chronological order of al-Ash'arī's surviving works.

Allard's conclusions are mainly as follows:

Following R.J. McCarthy, The Theology of al-Ash'arī, pp.xxv-xxvi, Allard maintained that the Luma' was an authentic work of al-Ash'arī, and saw no reason for doubting the authenticity of the Risālat Istihsān al-Khawd fī 'Ilm al-Kalām. He also accepted the Risālat ahl ath-Thaghr to be written by al-Ash'arī. Allard also admitted the authenticity of the Ibāna, but he pointed out that this work underwent some revisions, which were made by al-Ash'arī himself, in order to receive the approval of the Hanbalites in Baghdād. Similarly, Allard asserted the authenticity of al-Ash'arī's Maqālāt. To him, it consists of three works originally distinct: (a) The Maqālāt proper, which was intended to give an objective statement of the doctrine of Islamic sects, and this work comprises the first volume in Hellmut Ritter's edition. (b) The book entitled "The Fine Point of Kalām" (kalām an-Nās fī-ad-daqīq), which deals with points arising from Kalām, but not strictly theological, and including the views of Christians, philosophers and other non-Muslims. (c) A book on "The names and the attributes" (Kitāb al-asma' wal-sifāt), where objective statements of views are followed by brief but trenchant criticisms. Allard regards the first two parts as initially composed during al-Ash'arī's Mu'tazilite period and later slightly modified after his conversion. (Allard, pp.48-72. cf. Watt, Formative Period, pp.306-7.)

Allard's findings and conclusions concerning the authenticity of al-Ash'arī's works are sufficiently documented and are based on interior analysis of the texts along with historical

evaluation, so they must be accepted until new materials become available. The analysis of al-Ash'arī's views, carried out in the present thesis, confirms the views of Allard and shows that although al-Ash'arī's works differ slightly in their emphasis on certain points, and varied in their methodology, they mainly agreed on the major principles and the general teachings which he propagated.

The Sources for al-Māturīdī's thought: Regarding the sources for al-Māturīdī's thought, some works on tafsīr, principles of jurisprudence, theology and the sects, were attributed to al-Māturīdī himself, but only three of these works are believed to have survived: Kitāb al-Maqālāt, Kitāb at-Tawhīd and Ta'wīlāt al-Qur'ān. It is said that a copy of Kitāb al-Maqālāt is to be found in a manuscript in Turkey (Köprülü, Ms.No. 856). Consultation of this manuscript reveals that this work is not that of al-Māturīdī, rather that it is an elucidation of some of al-Ash'arī's views made by an unknown Ash'arīte writer.

Reference to Kitāb at-Tawhīd, was made as early as 1953 by Joseph Schacht, who gave a brief outline of its contents and made an unfulfilled promise to publish the book from a unique manuscript in Cambridge University Library. (J. Schacht, "New Sources for the History of Muḥammadan Theology" S.I. vol.1 (1953), pp.41-42). It was not, however, until a few years ago, 1970, that the book was published from the above mentioned manuscript, in an excellent edition by Fathalla Kholeif. Both Schacht, in his above mentioned article, and Kholeif in his introduction to the edited text, expressed their viewpoint about the authenticity of the work and that it was the work of al-Māturīdī. So far,

there is no reason to doubt their statements in this respect.

As for Ta'wīlāt al-Qur'ān or Ta'wīlāt ahl as-Sunna, it has survived in numerous Mss. In his article, "Māturīdī und sein Kitab Ta'wīlāt al-Qur'ān", Der Islam, vol.41 (1965) pp.27-70, the German scholar, von Manfred Gotz surveyed the surviving Mss. of this work and made an analysis of the theological problems discussed in this commentary. M. Muṣṭafiz ar-Rahmān edited the first two chapters (suras) of Ta'wīlāt for his Ph.D. thesis in 1970. The Supreme Council of Religious Affairs in Cairo is publishing the Ta'wīlāt, and the first volume was published in 1971 under the title Tafsīr al-Māturīdī al-musamma Ta'wīlāt ahl as-Sunna, edited by I. 'Awadain and S. 'Awadain.

Regarding the authenticity of Ta'wīlāt, many of the Hanafite biographical sources attributed this work to al-Māturīdī. Ibn-Qutlubugha in his Tāj at-Tarājim, p.59, mentioned Ta'wīlāt as being among al-Māturīdī's work and so did the author of al-Jawāhir al-Mudī'a, who highly praised the work and considered it as a unique book with which none of the work of earlier authors, on this subject, can have any comparison. (Ibn-Abī-l-Wafā', al-Jawāhir, vol.2, p.130). Al-Pazdawī, the Hanafite scholar, mentioned in his Usūl ad-Dīn that he studied Ta'wīlāt al-Qur'ān and Kitāb at-Tawhīd with his father, who studied them with his grandfather, who received them directly from al-Māturīdī himself. He complained about the abstruseness of Kitāb at-Tawhīd and said that the book was difficult in style and confused in its arrangement, but made no comment about Ta'wīlāt (Usūl, p.3).

Though none of these scholars doubted or questioned the

authenticity of Ta'wīlāt, a statement of a Hanafite scholar called 'Alā ad-Dīn Abū Bakr Muhammad b. Aḥmad as-Samarqandī (died 540/1145), who is believed to have made a commentary on al-Māturīdī's Ta'wīlāt, raised a new problem concerning this work. According to as-Samarqandī, "The Kitāb al-Ta'wīlāt", which is ascribed to al-Māturīdī, is a very valuable document and is of immense benefit for the exposition of the Sunnite school of thought and its relation to Usūl ad-dīn (theology), and the school of Abū-Hanīfa and his pupils in fiqh and principles of Jurisprudence, in a way that is compatible with the Qur'ān. This work, however, was not compiled by al-Māturīdī himself like Kitāb at-Tawhīd, and Kitāb al-Maqālāt, but it was written down from his lectures by his distinguished pupils. Due to this fact, Ta'wīlāt is simpler and easier in style than those works compiled by al-Māturīdī himself. In spite of this, however, Ta'wīlāt is not entirely free from abstruseness in style, confusion and difficulty of meaning, so much so that it needs a wide knowledge and established background in theology and principles of jurisprudence in order to be properly understood. (Quotation from as-Samarqandī's commentary in Ta'wīlāt, vol.1. Introduction, pp.18-19).

As-Samarqandī's statement raised the point that Ta'wīlāt was not written by al-Māturīdī himself but by his pupils, therefore, although it might represent al-Māturīdī's views, it is quite possible that it is not in his own words. In other words, al-Māturīdī in Ta'wīlāt, is not directly presenting his views as he is doing in Tawhīd, but his views are coming to us through a mediator who may be liable to misrepresent and misinterpret

them. Therefore, any doubt or caution regarding the authenticity of the Ta'wīlāt is justified, since those pupils of al-Māturīdī might have introduced their own views or interpolated them with those of al-Māturīdī. Such doubts could be removed or confirmed if a method could be established which would enable us to make sure that the views expressed in Ta'wīlāt are, or are not, of al-Māturīdī.

So far, it seems that the only possible method we can use is to compare the contents of this work with al-Māturīdī's other works, and find out to what extent Ta'wīlāt agree or disagree with them. Unfortunately, we have no work other than Kitāb at-Tawhīd, whose authenticity has not been questioned so far, so that it might be taken as a basis by which we can judge whether Ta'wīlāt represents al-Māturīdī's views or not. It is true that Kitāb at-Tawhīd is concerned only with theological problems, therefore only the theological points in Ta'wīlāt should be considered in this respect. If a conclusion is reached according to the comparison of these theological points, the same conclusion might logically be applied to the whole work. In other words, if the comparison between the theological points in the two works proves that Ta'wīlāt is a genuine work of al-Māturīdī, and unless there is stronger evidence to suggest the contrary, there is no reason to doubt the authenticity of the remainder.

By going through Kitāb at-Tawhīd and al-Ta'wīlāt, it can be found that the following features are held common by the two works.

1. It is noticeable that there are certain expressions and

terms which are often used in Kitāb at-Tawhīd. Al-Māturīdī more often ended his paragraphs and arguments by one of the expressions: walā hawl^a walā-quwwat illā-bil-lāh, or wa -billāhi at-tawfīq, or wa Allāhu al-muwaffiq. The same expressions are often used in Ta'wīlāt. In both works expressions such as: wa-l-aslu fī hādihā, al-aslu 'indanā, wa-'alā dhālik al-ma'ānā wa-ma'a mā, are prevalent. Also theological terms such as: mā'iyya (quiddity) histiyya (existence) shay'iyya (nature of thing) and non-theological words such as qasr (compulsion), mihna (test) and kulfa (responsibility) are frequently used. Judging from this similarity of style, it might be assumed that these two works are produced by one author.

2. Both works contain arguments with various Muslim and non-Muslim sects and their viewpoints, but the refutation of the Mu'tazilites' views and doctrines occupies the prominent place in both the works. This might possibly indicate that the author of the two works is one person, whose interests were mainly directed against the Mu'tazilites. And if it is remembered that many works against the Mu'tazilite sect were ascribed to al-Māturīdī, it is quite possible that he might have written both Kitāb at-Tawhīd and the Ta'wīlāt.

3. It is noticeable that in both works, when al-Māturīdī quotes the Qur'ān to support his views or arguments, he never gives the whole verse, he sometimes referred^s only to its meaning, and frequently gave^s only two or three words of it.

As far as the theological contents of Ta'wīlāt and Kitāb at-Tawhīd are concerned, it can be found that they are not only free from contradictions, but sometimes the two works are almost

identical; not in arguments and expressions but in words and construction of sentences. We find, for instance, that those views concerning the concept of Imām and the problems related to it, mentioned in Ta'wīlāt, are similar to those found in Tawhīd. The same definitions and arguments for God's attributes in Tawhīd are more or less found in Ta'wīlāt. The definitions and arguments for the doctrines of God's will, the creation of man's actions and the concept of free will and predestination are almost alike in the two works.

This similarity is more evident in al-Māturīdī's exposition of the doctrine of God's sitting on the throne, where we find that five pages of Kitāb at-Tawhīd (pp.70-74) are reproduced in Ta'wīlāt (20:5), with only one exception that a Tradition, of not much importance as far as the exposition of the problem is concerned, and four lines of poetry, are mentioned in Tawhīd and missing in Ta'wīlāt, and which might possibly be regarded as interpolation in Tawhīd, since al-Māturīdī had no tendency towards quoting poems in either Ta'wīlāt or in Tawhīd. Al-Māturīdī's views on the problem of the vision of God are almost identical in the two works, the same arguments, the same vocabulary, the same sentences are used, and both works ended with the conclusion that, "The vision of God is possible without qualification (bi-lā-kayf), for quality is proper to what has form, while He is seen without qualities such as: being standing or sitting, leaning or hanging, contiguous or detached, advancing or receding, short or tall, dark or light, moving or still, touching or not touching, in or out; He has no quality which imagination can grasp, or the intellect comprehend being above

all this, (Tawhīd, p.85, 15-19; Ta'wīlāt, 7:143).

These few examples can be multiplied, and all indicate the similarity between Ta'wīlāt and Tawhīd. In spite of this agreement, it is noticeable that in places where the two texts are not identical, the formulation of the doctrines and the arrangements of arguments in Tawhīd, are more systematically arranged and more precise compared to those of the Ta'wīlāt. This might be attributed to the differences between a written work compared to that which is believed to be dictated, or to the differences of their subjects, one being mainly on theology so it is expected to be systematic, and precise, compared to the other which deals with various topics of the Qur'ān. It might also be assumed that Kitāb at-Tawhīd was written later than Ta'wīlāt so it is more refined and well arranged.

This last assumption has no conclusive evidence to support it, but it is worth mentioning that while al-Māturīdī was discussing the problem of God's sitting on the throne in Ta'wīlāt, he said that he had mentioned before various possibilities for allegorical interpretation of the terms istiwā' and 'arsh, but that he is now going to introduce a new attitude towards this problem. His new attitude was simply that this doctrine cannot possibly be comprehended by reason or conceived by intellect, so one should rely only on sam' (revelation) and accept it without any allegorical interpretation (Ta'wīlāt 32:4). This attitude, which seems to represent the last development of al-Māturīdī's thought in Ta'wīlāt, is taken for granted in Tawhīd, where he said, "We must accept this verse, "The Beneficent One, who is established on the Throne" (20:5) as it

stands in the Qur'ān, and refrain from making a definite interpretation of it, as it may have another meaning; we believe in whatever God meant by it. In discussing this and similar expressions found in the Qur'ān, such as those about the vision, etc., it is also necessary to deny tashbih and to believe in whatever God meant without attempting to reach any definite interpretation (Tawhīd, p.74,4-10). Though this statement is not strong evidence for assuming that the Kitāb at-Tawhīd was compiled later than the Ta'wīlāt, it is worthy of consideration.

The Plan of the Thesis

This thesis has been constructed in the following way: it has been divided into two parts; one of which deals with the theological methodology of al-Māturīdī and al-Ash'arī, and the other which deals with their doctrines and teachings.

Part One consists of two chapters: one devoted to the analysis of al-Māturīdī's method in his Kitāb at-Tawhīd and Ta'wīlāt al-Qur'ān, here a section is concerned with the investigation of al-Māturīdī's conception and theory of knowledge, while another section deals with his method of argument, and a third with his method of Qur'ānic interpretation. Chapter II deals with al-Ash'arī's theological method. Due to the noticeable differences in al-Ash'arī's works, this chapter has to consist of four sections, each one dealing with the method followed in one of his major four works; his methods in the Luma', Risālat Istihsān al-Khawd fī-'Ilm al-Kalām (referred to as Risala I); Risālat ahl ath-Thagr (referred to as Risāla II) and the Ibāna. In conclusion to this part, the main

differences and agreements between al-Ash'arī and al-Māturīdī are pointed out.

Part Two of the thesis deals with the doctrines of al-Māturīdī and al-Ash'arī. It comprises ~~of~~ six chapters from chapter III to chapter VIII, each two chapters are devoted to one problem, and the respective views of al-Māturīdī and al-Ash'arī on this particular problem are discussed and elucidated. Thus chapters III and IV are devoted to the views of al-Māturīdī and al-Ash'arī on the problem of God's existence and His attributes. Here their views on different aspects of this problem are explored, and the methods they used in their arguments are pointed out. Similarly in chapters V and VI their views on the doctrine of Qadar, and their arguments in this respect, are treated. Their doctrine of Īmān and the problem related to it occupy chapters VII and VIII. After each two chapters a conclusion is drawn out where the points of agreement and disagreement between al-Māturīdī and al-Ash'arī are outlined.

PART ONE

THE THEOLOGICAL METHOD OF AL-MĀTURĪDĪ AND AL-ASH'ARĪ

INTRODUCTION

In tackling metaphysical problems the Muslim theologians formulated their own method which was distinct from the methods of the sufis and the philosophers. Though the theologians depended on the Qur'an and Traditions for the formulation of their doctrines and dogmas, they did not share the Traditionists' attitude who deplored speculation and opposed rational arguments in respect of theological matters. Scripture, the theologians said, is quite satisfactory for those who believe in its doctrines, but to demonstrate the validity of these doctrines to others and to refute contrary opinions, reasoning and rational arguments are needed.

The theologians similarly did not agree with the sufis' method which is drawn mainly from personal immediate experience and depends entirely on ecstasy and intuition. They pointed out the difficulties of such a method, its inadequacy in solving theological problems, its liability to deception and confusion and distortion of facts with no criterion of judgement for right and wrong. (1)

Though it might be said, with some reservation, that the theologians shared the philosophers' views regarding reasoning on metaphysical problems, the basic approach of the two parties

(1) Tāshkübrü Zada, Miftāh as-Sa'āda vol.1, pp.64-65.

Ghazālī, Ihyā' vol.3, p.17.

differs considerably. While the philosophers allowed themselves an absolute freedom in investigating and reaching their own conclusions on physical and metaphysical problems, the theologians accepted beforehand the revealed doctrines and beliefs concerning these matters, and confined their role to the justification and rational formulation of these dogmas. So the philosophers, as Ibn-Khaldūn said, "Study bodies in so far as they move or are stationary, the theologians, on the other hand, study them in so far as they serve as an argument for the Maker, in the same way, the philosophers' study of metaphysics studies existence as such and what it requires for its essence, the theologians' study of metaphysics on the other hand is concerned with the existentia, in so far as they serve as argument for Him who causes existence. In general, to the theologians, the subject of theology is to establish how the articles of faith, which the religious law has laid down as correct, may be proved with the help of logical arguments, so that heretical innovation may be refuted and doubts and confusions concerning the articles of faith be removed."⁽¹⁾ So while the main interest of the philosophers was to pursue knowledge and truth and to accept whatever their logical procedures proved to be correct, the theologians on the other hand were mainly concerned with the exposition of the articles of faith and the defence of the revealed dogmas by rational arguments. As a result of such an attitude, theology was characteristically distinguished by its apologetic outlook and the theologians engaged mainly in negative refutation of their adversaries, rather than in positive deduction

(1) Ibn-Khaldūn, Muqaddima, p.391.

and logical formulation of their doctrines.⁽¹⁾ So, though the theologians, as al-Ghazālī said, "Successfully preserved orthodoxy, defended the creed received from the prophetic source, and rectified heretical innovations; nevertheless in so doing they based their arguments on premisses which they took from their opponents and which they were compelled to admit as axiomatics, or through the consensus of the community, or bare acceptance of Qur'ān and Traditions. For the most their efforts were devoted to making explicit the contradictions of their opponents and criticizing them in respect of the logical consequences of what they admitted."⁽²⁾

Al-Māturīdī and al-Ash'arī both made considerable contributions to the establishment and formulation of the theological movements and methods. Each of them laid down his own method upon which a school was founded, and which occupies the following two chapters.

- (1) Van Ess, Josef, "The Logical Structure of Islamic Theology" in Logic in Classical Islamic Culture. Ed. G.E. von Grunebaum. pp.24-26.
- (2) Ghazālī, Munqidh, p.16. trans. Watt. Faith and Practice of al-Ghazālī, p.28.

CHAPTER I

THE THEOLOGICAL METHOD OF AL-MĀTURĪDĪ

1. Al-Māturīdī's Theory of Knowledge

In the early formative period of Islamic theology the main divisions concerning theological methods developed.⁽¹⁾ The Mu'tazilite theologians dealt with various aspects of human knowledge, its sources and its relation to religious truth. They acknowledged the importance of sense-organs in attaining sensual knowledge, and stated in detail how the senses conceive things;⁽²⁾ they emphasized the role of reason as a source of knowledge, its function in the field of religion, and went to the extent of maintaining that reflection is incumbent upon man even before the coming of revelation.⁽³⁾ Moreover, many works which deal with epistemology were attributed to the Mu'tazilites, but since none of these works is extant we are unable to investigate the methods used. Al-Māturīdī has generally been accepted as the first theologian to preface a theological work with a discussion of epistemological problems,⁽⁴⁾ if only because his Kitāb at-Tawhīd, which begins with a refutation of taqlīd, and a definition of the sources of knowledge, is the earliest work of this type to survive.

(1) Maqālāt. pp.50-53. Where different views on epistemology were attributed to the Shī'ites and the Mu'tazilites.

(2) Ibid, pp.382-387.

(3) Iqdām, pp.460-61.

(4) J. Schacht, "New Sources for the History of Muhammadan Theology" S.I. vol.1 (1953) p.41.

The Sources of Knowledge

According to al-Māturīdī, the means for attaining the knowledge of the realities of things are three: (a) sense-perceptions ('iyān), (b) reports (akhbār) and (c) reflection or reasoning (nazar aw istidlāl).⁽¹⁾

(a) The sense perception ('iyān)

Al-Māturīdī used the term 'iyān as an equivalent for the term hawāss which is the term generally used by the theologians and the philosophers. Al-Māturīdī maintained that 'iyān are the cause of all sensual knowledge and all that which comes under the perception of the organs of the senses. Such a knowledge is the origin of true knowledge and there should not be any doubt about its validity. To al-Māturīdī, anyone who denies the validity of such knowledge is obstinate or self-willed and is baser than an animal, since all animals know through their sense organs what preserves and destroys them, and what causes them pleasure and pain, while he denies this. To al-Māturīdī, argument with a man who holds such views is useless, but he may be jokingly asked (yumāzah) "Do you know that you deny?", if he says, "No" his denial stands cancelled, but if he answers affirmatively, he admits the reality of his denial and thereby he defeats his own argument. A more suitable way to deal with such a person is to cause him some violent pain such as cutting his limbs until he deserts his obstinacy and admits the reality of sensual knowledge.⁽²⁾

This attitude towards sensual knowledge was ascribed by

(1) Tawhīd, p.7,2-3.

(2) Ibid., p.7,3-13.

the later theologians to the Sceptics.⁽¹⁾ Al-Māturīdī attributed to them the absolute denial of the possibility of knowledge. Though al-Māturīdī suggested that the best method to silence a person holding such an attitude is to be subjected to physical torture, he nevertheless put forward the objections raised against the validity of sensual knowledge, and tried to refute them by theoretical arguments. He accused those who held such views as being misled by the devil. To him, they denied sensual knowledge because to them sense-perceptions might sometimes err as in the case of the squint-eyed who see one to be two, and of the bilious who finds honey bitter. They also maintained that it is observable that the object which the sense organs yield might sometimes give a different account from what one gets by reflection (ta'ammul), the defective sight conceives things differently, and a man in his dreams sees things which have no real existence or which are different from the existing things. Moreover, things seen at distance are different when one sees them closely. Finally, there are certain things which are so tiny that senses do not perceive them.⁽²⁾ So the appearance of things is deceptive and therefore sense organs cannot be trusted as a means for attaining knowledge.

Al-Māturīdī refuted the views of the Sceptics by stating that the very arguments they used are sufficient proofs for the

(1) Baghdādī, Usūl, pp.6-7. Taftāzānī, 'Aqā'id, pp.20-21.

Rāzī, Muḥaṣṣal, pp.6-13. cf. Watt, "The Theological Basis of Early Kalam" I.Q. vol.vi (1961) pp.5-6.

(2) Tawhīd, pp.25-26.

affirmation and validity of the knowledge coming through the senses, because unless they did have knowledge of the sense-objects (maḥsūsāt) they would not have been able to distinguish between them in different circumstances. As for the case of defective sight, state of sleep, long distance, and the thinness of things, al-Māturīdī maintains that these are obstacles; it is true that one does not get true knowledge in such cases, but when these obstacles ^{are} ~~were~~ removed, the true nature of the thing can be obtained. Thus these āfāt or defects are temporary disturbances and should not entail mistrust of the senses themselves, nor the denial of the sense-objects altogether.⁽¹⁾ Al-Māturīdī emphasized this point repeatedly and stated unequivocally that the knowledge of the things perceived by the senses differs according to the different states of the senses, in the case of defects one knows what defect he has and knows that this defect is an obstacle which might lead to the distortion of the real knowledge of things, or even to the occlusion of the object altogether according to the varying conditions of the senses.⁽²⁾

Moreover, when a man perceives an object he does so from a certain direction (jiha), and to this direction there corresponds a certain aspect (jiha) of the object perceived. When an obstacle partly obstructs the sense-organ, or veils it altogether, the same applies to the object perceived. Thus it cannot be perceived in the case of complete defects, while in the state of perfect condition it can be fully perceived, and according to the

(1) Tawhīd, p.26, 6-10.

(2) Ibid, p.154, 8-14.

proportion of defects the perception of it varies. All this is well known by one's own sensual experiences; so, according to al-Māturīdī, there may be no argument regarding the knowledge attained through the perception of the senses.⁽¹⁾

(b) Reports (akhbār)

The second source for the attainment of knowledge is reports which, according to al-Māturīdī, are our means for knowing our names, genealogies, the names of things, remote countries, past events, foods, medicines, what is harmful and what is useful, and all that which our lives do not enable us to witness for ourselves. Reports, however, are of two kinds: 1 - general reports, and 2 - the reports of the prophet. Al-Māturīdī argued against those who denied the validity of the general reports as a source of knowledge,⁽²⁾ and accused them of being in no better position than those who denied the validity of the knowledge via the senses; similarly they are stubborn and obstinate since they are denying necessary knowledge. According to al-Māturīdī, he who denies reports is actually refuting his attitude with his own denial, because his denial is nothing but a report. Furthermore, the denial of reports renders a man ignorant of his genealogy, his name, his essence and the names of all things and leads to complete ignorance and inability to give information about anything

(1) Tawhīd, p.155, 3-10.

(2) Ibid. p.7, 14-18. The denial of knowledge depending upon reports were attributed to the Barāhima and the Sumaniyya. Baghdādī, Usūl, p.11. It is also ascribed to the Barāhima the refutation of prophecy altogether. Fazlur-Rahman, art. "Barāhima", E.I.² vol.1, p.1031.

witnessed, not to mention the unseen (ghā'ib).⁽¹⁾ To al-Māturīdī the argument that reports are liable to fabrication even after they become widespread does not necessarily entail the invalidity of all reports, since fabrication is a defect motivated by a certain weakness on the part of the fabricator; so it must be considered as a temporary and not a permanent defect and no cause for the denial of the validity of knowledge attained by reports. Moreover, there are so many reports whose authenticity has been established so why should we not consider them as basis for argument and ignore the others.⁽²⁾ Argument with one who holds the attitude that all reports should be denied, al-Māturīdī said, is useless but he might be jokingly asked when he denies reports, "what do you say?" If he repeats what he has said, then he ipso facto affirms reports, if he did not repeat what he has said then you have been protected from his stupidity.⁽³⁾ A more effective method to deal with such a person is to subject him to physical pain and if he complains of pain, he should be told that his words are nothing but reports which cannot convey any real knowledge, and he should be treated thus until he finally admits the validity of reports.⁽⁴⁾

For the other kind of reports, i.e. the Prophets' reports, al-Māturīdī holds that if reason makes it necessary for everyone to accept the validity of the general reports, then the reports of

(1) Tawhīd, p.7, 14-18.

(2) Ibid, pp.26,14-21; 27,1-2.

(3) Ibid, p.8,5-8.

(4) Ibid, pp.8,9-12; 27,3-4.

the Prophets should necessarily be accepted, since there are no reports the truth of which is more evident than theirs, because of the signs they have, which demonstrate their truth, and that there is no report in which the heart has confidence more evidently truthful than the report of the Prophets. So whoever denies this deserves most to be judged obdurate and stubborn.⁽¹⁾ These reports coming from the Prophet, however, are handed down through chains of narrators who are liable to lie and to be mistaken, because they have no proofs showing their absolute truthfulness and immunity from mistakes. So these reports must be scrutinized; if their authenticity has been established beyond doubt, and their transmitters are the sort of people who never commit fabrication, such reports are called mutwātir (widely transmitted statements).⁽²⁾ Other kinds of report are of lesser degree of authenticity than the mutwātir, and do not reach its standard in necessitating knowledge. This kind of report should be subjected to scrutiny of its contents and examination of its narrators, to see whether its transmitters can be trusted or not, and to what extent its contents are in line with the Scripture (sam') i.e. the Qur'ān and other authentic Traditions; and it necessitates action according to the outcome of this test.⁽³⁾

So according to al-Māturīdī, reports in general must be accepted as a source of knowledge, since there is no ground to reject their validity. The Traditions of the Prophet are worthier

(1) Tawhīd, p.14-18.

(2) Ibid, pp.8,18-20; 9,1-8.

(3) Ibid, p.9, 15.

of acceptance, they, however, fall under two categories:

mutwātir, whose authenticity is beyond doubt and must be accepted and acted upon accordingly; ghayr-mutwātir, which is of a lesser degree of authenticity than the mutwātir, and this should be subject to test of isnād and matn, and accepted or rejected according to the result of the test.

Al-Māturīdī's defence of worthy transmitted Traditions seems to have been directed against some of the Mu'tazilites, who were thought to have denied the value of tawātur as an evidence for establishing religious doctrines. They said that it is quite possible that one of these people who transmitted such a Tradition might be lying, thus it follows that they all might agree to lie.⁽¹⁾ His defence of general reports might have been directed against those who denied prophecy and refuted the validity of reports as a method for establishing it. Among those al-Māturīdī mentioned al-Warrāq who, on the one hand, considered the reports of the Prophet as reports of single individual, therefore they are not valid, while on the other hand he refuted the validity of tawātur, by using certain arguments similar to those of the Mu'tazilites.⁽²⁾

Having been aware of the consequences of such a criticism, al-Māturīdī introduced the above mentioned arguments. He also pointed out that the refutation of reports leads to the refutation of revelation and history, and entails the negation of all knowledge whether related to this life or to the life to come. He argued

(1) These views were attributed to an-Nazzām and those who followed him. Baghdādī, Usūl, p.20. Ījī, Mawāqif, vol.8.p.380.

(2) Tawhīd, p.196, 14-17.

that reports usually spread according to the events they carry. So if a king died, the news of his death would be known in spite of the energetic attempts to suppress them. Reports about the appearance of a prophet are of the same kind, thus it would be wrong to assume that they are transmitted by a single individual.⁽¹⁾

(c) Reason or Reflection (nazar)

The third means for attaining knowledge in al-Māturīdī's system is reason. Al-Māturīdī used the terms nazar (reflection), istidlāl (deduction) and 'aql to convey the meaning of intellectual activity and rational argument. He gave reason prominent place in his methodology and set out to establish the validity of reason as a means of acquiring sound knowledge, and argued against those who denied its validity. Thus, to establish the importance of reasoning and reflection, al-Māturīdī introduced the following arguments:

1. He stated that reflection is a requisite as a criterion for knowledge attained by the senses and for knowledge based on reports, especially in cases where the senses or the object seen have some defects or where the reports were liable to fabrication; in such cases, reason is required to decide where the truth lies. Reflection is also indispensable for distinguishing between the true signs of the messengers of God and pretence of sorcerers.⁽²⁾
2. The validity of nazar has also been established by the Qur'ānic texts where man has been commanded to reflect upon God's signs on the earth and in the sky and in all creatures. Many

(1) Tawhīd, pp. 197-98.

(2) Ibid, p. 9, 16-19.

Qur'ānic verses enjoin man to ponder and consider what is around him. "We shall show them our signs in the skies and in themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth";⁽¹⁾ "What, do they not consider how camels were created, how heaven was lifted up, how the mountains were raised, how the earth was outstretched";⁽²⁾ "Behold in the creation of the heavens and the earth, in the alternation of the night and the day ... indeed are signs for a people that are wise."⁽³⁾ In these and other similar verses, al-Māturīdī said, God requires man to consider, He makes it necessary for him to reflect and commands him to think and ponder, and tells us that these are the means leading to the attainment of truth.⁽⁴⁾

3. Those who repudiate reason must perforce repudiate it rationally, thus by their very refutation of reason they prove the necessity of reasoning.⁽⁵⁾

4. The exercise of reasoning and reflection is necessary for attaining to the knowledge of the wisdom in the creation of the world which is a necessary method for establishing knowledge of God.

5. Mankind has been endowed with a power to control other creatures and through trial he has to acquire what benefits him, and to avoid what harms him, and the only way of knowing this is

(1) Q. 41:53.

(2) Q. 88:17.

(3) Q. 2:164

(4) Tawhīd, p.10, 1-6.

(5) Ibid, 7-8.

by using reason and by reflection upon things.

6. Everyone afflicted by vicissitudes or being confronted by puzzling situations, seeks refuge in reason and reflection, this indicates that reason leads to truth and that facts can be attained by using it. This is similar to the resort to sight in confusion of colours, and to hearing in the case of confusion of sounds.

7. Reason and reflection are the only means for attaining the ultimate knowledge of the goodness and evilness of things after good and evil have been perceived by the senses or known through reports, and this illustrates the importance of reason in this respect. (1)

8. Mankind has been created with a natural disposition (ṭabʿ) and reason, and what is recommended by reason might not be desired by natural disposition, and what is disapproved by reason might not be disliked by disposition, so they might be mostly in conflict, therefore reflection on and investigation of every individual case (amr) is necessary in order to know of what nature and kind it is. (2)

Thus it becomes clear that the validity of reason and reflection is well established by scriptural evidences and rational proofs, which necessitate the using of reason for attaining the benefits of this world and salvation in the world to come. Then, al-Māturīdī proceeds to refute the views of those who reject and deny the validity of reflection. He stated that some people refrain from using their intellectual power on the presumption that (a) there is no certainty that reasoning and reflection will lead to

(1) Tawhīd, p.10,8-20.

(2) Ibid. pp.10,20; 11,1-3.

true knowledge; (b) by reasoning one will lay himself open to the possibility of being blamed for his conclusions if they were objectionable, because he trusted his reason and carried his own responsibility, while by refraining from reflection he will avoid all these risks; (c) the matters related to the sphere of God, i.e. His prohibitions and commands, and those matters instigated by the devils are too confused to be distinguished by reason, so by avoiding reflection one will be safe from indulging in such matters. (1)

Al-Māturīdī did not ascribe these views to any particular group or sect, he, however, set out to refute them by stating clearly that reflection and reasoning are necessary for attaining and explaining truth, and that the abandonment of reflection leads to the destruction of man ('atabuhu). (2) He pointed out that by his own inquisitive nature, and through his intellectual capacity man is bound to reflect and to think. Moreover, if we consider the position of man in relation to the affairs of this world, we find that he is naturally made up of longing for survival and fear of destruction; his intellect holds him from indulging in the sensual pleasure which leads to his destruction. Therefore, he must look for what is suitable for him, and acquire what benefits him and avoid what causes him harm. This might be achieved either by looking for a trustworthy guide and following his opinions, which needs the use of reason to know whether the person meant is trustworthy or not, or by his own exertions in the examination of

(1) Tawhīd, p.135,7-12.

(2) Ibid, 12-13.

things. Both ways necessitate reflection and thinking. If the psychological composition were examined, it would be found that man's ignorance of the desires which he is naturally disposed to follow, and that which his own self tempts him to commit, though it might cause him harm and grave pain, must compel him to think and reflect upon his own state. He may ask himself such questions as: how have I come into such a state? have I eternally been like this? and what are the forces behind my being in that condition? So man is never free from such ideas which prevent him from the abandoning of reflection about himself, because he wishes to know the principles of his composition and the causes of his construction. Therefore, according to al-Māturīdī, man's position in the world and his psychological composition obliges him to reflect and to use his intellect in order to attain what benefits him and to avoid what causes him harm, and to get a better understanding of himself. (1)

Al-Māturīdī believes that what leads to the abandonment of reasoning and reflection is the devil, in order to turn man away from the advantages of reasoning and to make man prisoner of his desires and lusts, which eventually lead to his destruction. To illustrate this point al-Māturīdī uses the following arguments: He pointed out that reflection and thinking on the nature of things to discover their elements and outcome ^{al-}(mabādi' wal-nihāyāt) and to demonstrate their origination and the existence of their originator, pre-occupies man and distracts him from what would destroy him. (2) Moreover, since it is not wise of man to neglect

(1) Tawhīd, pp.135,14-21; 136,1-8.

(2) Ibid. p.136,9-13.

his senses, or hinder them from performing their natural task, then reason deserves all the more not to be neglected or distracted from its duty.⁽¹⁾ Furthermore, al-Māturīdī said, reasoning and reflection lead man either: (a) to know that he is created and that he has a creator who rewards him for performing good deeds, and punishes him for committing evil acts, in which case he will avoid what displeases Him and devote himself to what pleases Him, and thus he will attain to happiness in this world and salvation in the hereafter; (b) or to an opposite conclusion, therefore he will enjoy the pleasures of this life and be punished in the world to come; (c) or to the conclusion that true knowledge of such matters is incomprehensible, and thus he will be satisfied and stop worrying and bothering himself about such thoughts and ideas. So, according to al-Māturīdī, a man gains whatever may be the outcome of his reflection and thinking.⁽²⁾

(d) al-Māturīdī's rejection of taqlīd, ilhām and ta'līm:

In accordance with his conception of knowledge and its sources al-Māturīdī rejected taqlīd (blind imitation), ilhām (inspiration) and ta'līm (authoritative instruction) as means for attaining knowledge. He begins his Kitāb at-Tawhīd by the statement that, "we have found that people are of different opinions and of different sects regarding religion. In spite of these differences, however, it is found that each one of them holds that what he believes in is the truth, while what others follow is false; and

(1) Tawhīd, p.136, 13-16.

(2) Ibid, 16-22.

that all of them had predecessors whom they followed unquestionably (yugallad). This showed that taqlīd provides nothing in which one should seek refuge to support his views because another muqallid, may on the same process reach an opposite conclusion. (1) So taqlīd is invalid and cannot be rationally accepted because it is not more than accumulation of blind followers and it produces no convincing arguments for the correctness of what is followed. It, however, might be valid if two conditions have been realized: if the muqallad is one of those who originate teachings and has a rational argument by which the correctness of what he claims may be known, and a proof which convinces the judicious that he has attained the truth. The second condition is that the muqallid should know the truth of what his authority professes. It seems that al-Māturīdī is referring by the religious authority to the prophet, who introduces original teachings, along with the proofs of their correctness, and thereby practically renders other views futile. To al-Māturīdī, such an authority should be followed with awareness and understanding on the muqallid's part (2), and here it might be asked, if these conditions have been realized, will the term taqlīd be appropriately applicable?

Regarding ilhām, al-Māturīdī stated that people hold different views regarding the methods by which right behaviour, truth, good deeds and their opposites might be known. Some hold that man's heart is the source of such knowledge and therefore he should follow and stick to whatever his heart tells him to be true and right. Others maintain that man is not capable of knowing the

(1) Tawhīd, p.3,7-11.

(2) Ibid., pp.3,11-14; 4,1-4.

causes of things, so he must follow what has been inspired in him by God who knows better about all the affairs of this world.⁽¹⁾

The first attitude seems to be identical with that of the Sceptics who asserted that the realities of things follow from what one happens to believe, so if one happens to believe a thing is right, it is right, but if wrong it is wrong.⁽²⁾ The other view is that of the Sufis who maintained that their knowledge is attained through inspiration from God who casts the truth into their purified hearts, and thus their knowledge comes through ilhām and not by reflection and reasoning.⁽³⁾

Al-Māturīdī rejected and criticized the Sceptic's views in his Kitāb at-Tawhīd⁽⁴⁾, so by mentioning them in connection with the Sufi's attitude, he is presumably implying that the two attitudes have something in common. Since both hold that the heart or what one believes, is the source of knowledge; and ~~that~~ ^{of} both introduce no proofs or arguments for what they hold, al-Māturīdī rejected the two views as being sources of knowledge. According to him, it is unlikely that the two methods could lead to knowledge because mutual contradiction and contrast among religions and doctrines is quite evident, and the follower of every religion assumes that truth is on his side, but it is inconceivable that all these contradictory views are correct and are attained on the basis of ilhām from God, otherwise such a god

(1) Tawhīd, p.6,4-7.

(2) Watt, "The Theological Basis of Early Kalam", pp.5-6.

(3) Ghazālī, Ihyā', vol.3, p.16.

(4) Tawhīd, pp.153-154.

could not be trusted since he is presenting truth as false and vice versa. Moreover, every follower of a doctrine holds his doctrine on the basis of his own inspiration, and by the same criterion considers the others' doctrines as wrong, none, however, has proofs which the others have not. Such a situation and attitude cannot lead to truth and reconciliation between the contending groups. (1)

Al-Māturīdī also rejected the Bāṭinite view that knowledge is attainable only from the infallible Imam, who it is said has charge of the truth and receives instruction from the prophet, and not acquired by reflection and reasoning. Commenting on the Qur'ānic verse, 36:78, al-Māturīdī said this verse refutes the Bāṭinite claim that knowledge results from the instructions of the infallible Imam. If such a view were correct, then the verses, 36:78 and 30:8, which encourage reflection and thinking, will be rendered meaningless. Contrary to the Bāṭinite view, these verses show that knowledge of religious matters is attainable by reflection and reasoning as well as by the reports from the prophet whose truthfulness has been established; man, therefore, must abide by what is given by these two sources, and not by what he assumed to come from other sources. (2)

2. Reason and Revelation

Though al-Māturīdī emphasized the importance of reason and allowed it a prominent place in his methodology, he was well

(1) Tawhīd, p.6,8-16.

(2) Ta'wīlāt, 36:78.

aware of its shortcomings and defects, and that there are certain limits beyond which it should not venture. He stated that rational knowledge is based either on data provided by the senses or arguments and proofs; such a knowledge, however, is unable to grasp the essence of things. Its role is limited to distinguishing between things through the qualities which make them different or compounds (mukhtalifāt wa-mu'talifāt). In other words, through reason, knowledge of the causes of things as well as the proofs of demonstration can be obtained, but the real essence of things cannot be comprehended.⁽¹⁾ Its role is similar to that of a road which leads to different districts of town, but it does not give the exact picture of the town itself.⁽²⁾ With regard to metaphysical problems, reason falls short of comprehending the essence of God, which is beyond the reach of human intellect. Due to this fact, revelation is needed to provide man with such knowledge.

Al-Māturīdī devoted a special section to show on one hand how unaided reason is unable to fulfil man's desire for knowledge and, on the other hand, to demonstrate the importance and validity of revelation. He argued that:

1. To sustain their life people need nourishment and cures for illness; but there are different kinds of foodstuffs and medicine, some of which are deadly poisons, hence, reason which has no valid method of attaining this knowledge, recommends that not everyone should try to see for himself what is of benefit to him,

(1) Tawhīd, p.267,8-10.

(2) Ta'wīlāt, 7:54.

because such a trial might lead to one's destruction; thus reason shows the need for a man to whom God has revealed this information. (1)

2. From the beginning reason has had no methods of knowing agricultural affairs, medical sciences, different crafts and professions, trade and business, various languages, and the methods of procreation and education of children, thus men depend on each other for the knowledge of such matters. This proves that the principles of these sciences are known by instruction and education and not by deduction of reason. Also people resort to each other in time of difficulties seeking the help of those who are wiser, they also educate themselves by studying with learned men, all of which indicates that human intellect is insufficient for attaining all that man needs, and so it is necessary to resort to a reliable advisor (nāsīh sadūq). (2)

3. Reason acknowledges the necessity of the knowledge of God, and that man should thank Him for His numerous graces, but it cannot decide how this task should be accomplished. Also the physical and mental composition of man indicates that he is created in order to worship God, but reason has no authority to tell how this worship should be performed, so revelation is needed in these two aspects to define and stipulate the methods and ways of thanks and worship. (3)

4. Disagreements and disputes among people as to who is the

(1) Tawhīd, p.179,13-18.

(2) Ibid., pp.179,19-20; 180,1-22.

(3) Ibid., p.181,1-21.

possessor of the real truth are evident, along with their unanimous agreement that there is no authority among them to whom they may resort for deciding with whom the truth might be. Since reason considers disagreement as the origin of all decay and an antecedent to destruction, it deems it necessary that assistance is needed to help reason and guide it to harmony. But no authority has a better knowledge of the nature of reasons than God, therefore a messenger from Him is needed for the guidance of man.

5. Scholars vary in their knowledge regarding what benefits them in this life and in the hereafter, some possess knowledge while the others do not. Since God, who is the most knowing, must possess knowledge which no man possesses, a messenger from Him is needed to deliver that knowledge. (1)

6. Sometimes the true nature of human intellect is obscured and influenced by internal and external factors; such as desires, motives, habits, environments and associations, and as a result it even fails to give us true knowledge of things that are within its own sphere. So revelation is needed to guide human intellect to the truth. (2)

7. All things, apart from the tangible ones, are perceived either by (i) their deduction from the tangibles with which they have some connection such as: the smoke with the fire, light with the sun, effect with its agent etc., or (ii) by the reports which tell us about the events and happenings which we do not witness.

(1) Tawhīd, p.182,1-12.

(2) Ibid., pp.182,20-21; 183,1-3; 185,7-10.

Through reports also (and here are the reports of the prophet), we know God's commands and His prohibitions, His promises and threats, what is permitted and what is prohibited. Since all these facts are known only by reports, a prophet is needed to instruct man in these aspects.⁽¹⁾

To establish the importance of revelation, al-Māturīdī began by showing how religion is necessary to man. He clearly stated that mankind needs religion as a source of unity, and as a source in which he could seek refuge. Such a fact could be proved by sam' and reasoning. According to al-Māturīdī, the investigation of man's history discloses the fact that he cannot live without having some sort of belief. Even those who hold sceptical views, believe and defend something. Also all kings and rulers have certain policies and systems according to which they attempt to rule and unite their subjects. Similarly, messengers and reformers introduce certain beliefs and methods of life and conduct to unite people around them. So a close examination of man's history shows that he has always been in association with certain kinds of religions or doctrines.⁽²⁾

Reason also supports man's need of religion; it is unwise to assume that the world is created in vain and for the purpose of destruction, and therefore it must have been created for the purpose of the continuation of life for a certain time. The world, however, consists of different natures and contradictory elements, and in particular of man who is of various inclinations, numerous natures and compelling desires. If he is left to

(1) Tawhīd, pp.183,13-20, 184,1-2.

(2) Ibid., p.4,6-13.

behave according to his natural dispositions, he would be in constant struggle to attain his personal aims and desires which would lead to fighting and to the final destruction and corruption of life. Therefore, there must be someone who can lead man towards unity and save him from fighting and destruction. Moreover, it is impossible that God, who is wise and all-knowing, would leave mankind without providing them with someone to guide them in this life, and direct them to what benefits them in the life to come. Such a person, however, must be provided with proofs and signs to show his selection as a guide for mankind. So according to al-Māturīdī, the evidences of both sam' and reason, prove that man needs a religion and suggest that there must be messengers from God to guide mankind.⁽¹⁾ Al-Māturīdī assigns such an important place to the messenger that according to him, a society cannot be founded without a revealed law (sharī'a) to govern its conduct and provide the basis for its life.⁽²⁾

These views concerning religion and revelation were challenged by various groups, some of whom were atheists and others who believe in the existence of God but saw no necessity for revelation assuming that human reason is sufficient to determine the knowledge of God and the distinction between good and evil. Thus they rejected outright the concept of revelation and the role of the prophet as a mediator between man and God. They argued that if the prophet's teachings agree with the judgement of reason then they would be superfluous and meaningless. If their

(1) Tawhīd, pp.4-6.

(2) Ibid., p.186,7.

messages, however, disagreed with reason, it would be impossible to believe them and thus there would be no point in sending them. They maintained that there is an obvious contradiction between reason and revelation where the prophets allowed and commanded certain things which reason considers as evil, such as the slaughter of harmless animals. Since it is impossible that God, who is wise, would command what is forbidden by reason, it follows that those so-called prophets were not sent by God. (1)

This attitude towards prophecy and revelation was generally attributed to the Barāhima, (2) and to those who were influenced by them such as Muhammad b. Zakriyya ar-Rāzī (d.925 or 932) (3), Abū-'Īsa al-Warrāq, (4) and Ibn-ar-Rāwandī. (5) Al-Māturīdī, however, made reference only to the Barāhima and al-Warrāq, while to him Ibn-ar-Rāwandī seems to be the vigorous opponent

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(1) Tawhīd, pp.200,3-16; 201,1-4.

(2) E.I. (2) vol.i, art. "Barāhima" (Fazlur-Rahman), p.1031.

(3) Badawī, Min Ta'rīkh al-Ilhād fi-l-Islam, pp.201-6.

(4) Abū-'Īsa al-Warrāq (d.247/861) was a Mu'tazilite, then became heretic and was accused of Manichean sympathies, E.I. (2), S.M. Stern, art. "Abū-'Īsa al-Warrāk" vol.i, p.130.

(5) Abū-l-Ḥusain Ahmad b.Yahya b.Ishāq born at the beginning of the 3rd century A.H. He was a Mu'tazilite, then became a Shī'ite and later under the influence of his master al-Warrāq, adopted irreligious views and became zandīq. E.I. (2) vol.iii, art. "Ibn-ar-Rāwandī", (P. Kraus, G. Vajda), pp.905-6.

to al-Warrāq. (1)

To refute these arguments, al-Māturīdī begins by emphasizing the point that there is no contradiction between reason and revelation. To illustrate this point he said that in relation to their being good or evil, things are of two kinds: some of which are intrinsically good or ugly irrespective of their change of circumstances, while others might sometimes be good and sometimes be evil according to certain situations. This second kind is not easily recognisable, thus it requires someone with a comprehensive knowledge of all situations, i.e., a prophet from God. The slaughtering of harmless animals is of this second type and thus cannot possibly be intrinsically evil otherwise it would have never been allowed in certain circumstances. In fact, killing might sometimes be recommended by reason in cases of self-defence and protection of the community.

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(1) According to al-Māturīdī, Ibn-ar-Rāwandī accused al-Warrāq of following the Magians and of denying the Traditions of the prophets (Tawhīd, p.199,17-20). He also rejected his objections against the validity of the widely transmitted Traditions (mutwātir) (Tawhīd, pp.196,18-19; 197,1-4), and objected to his arguments against the validity of the prophet's miracles. (Ibid., pp.187,9ff; 200,17ff.) Since it is affirmed that Ibn-ar-Rāwandī himself adopted the same views and arguments of al-Warrāq (P. Kraus, "Beitrage zur Islamischen Ketzergeschichte Das Kitāb az-Zumurrud des Ibn-ar-Rāwandī" R.S.O.vol.14 (1934) pp.97-99), it seems that al-Māturīdī is quoting some of Ibn-ar-Rāwandī's earlier works, i.e. those compiled before his falling under the influence of al-Warrāq and adopting his views.

So, according to al-Māturīdī, if reason considers a thing to be intrinsically good it can never be evil, likewise if it considers something as evil it would never be good. This judgement of reason is contrary to the judgement of natural disposition (ṭabʿ), where judgement differs according to differences in its natures and according to what extent it is accustomed to the act (ʿāda). Thus, since killing is sometimes allowed, it means that it is not intrinsically evil, but its evilness is related to the judgement of natural disposition. This proves that revelation does not judge something, which reason considers evil, to be good. It might, however, disagree with ṭabʿ and judge something as good, while ṭabʿ considers it as evil. (1)

Thus al-Māturīdī clearly differentiates between the judgement of reason and ṭabʿ regarding good and evil. To him, what is evil according to the judgement of reason, becomes more evil whenever one thinks about it, while what is evil according to nature could become good when one becomes familiar with it. He gave the example of wild animals, such as birds and beasts, which by their nature are untamed and difficult to control, but change by nature when they are tamed. Thus what was naturally repugnant to the animals becomes pleasing to them. This proves that the judgement of natural disposition is liable to change and reverse, but this can never happen in the case of the judgement of reason. (2)

Due to this essential difference between reason and natural disposition, God makes reason and not ṭabʿ prerequisite for man's

(1) Tawhīd, pp.201-4.

(2) Ibid., pp.218,20-23; 219,1-4. cf. also p.243.

responsibility. Man shares with other animals in having natural inclinations and desires, but has been commanded to follow the judgement of his reason and not that of his ṭab'. (1)

These differences between the judgements of reason and ṭab' are results of the differences in their essential composition. Thus while natural dispositions are inclined to immediate pleasures and invite man to attain them and encourage him to avoid what causes him pain and harm, reason discloses to man the real nature of things and whether they are good or evil irrespective of their immediate pleasure or pain; ṭab' cannot give such a judgement, because it is only concerned with the present moment, while reason is concerned and takes into consideration the present and the future, thus it is more capable than ṭab' to disclose the ultimate result of an action and its result. Good and evil in things should not be judged according to natural disposition, but by reason which is more qualified to make right decisions in this respect because of the essential differences between the two forms of judgement. (2)

Thus al-Māturīdī sees no contradictions between reason and revelation regarding good and evil. To him the apparent contradictions in this respect are the result of our view being derived not from reason but from ṭab', which should not be considered as judge in such matters because of the instability and relativity of its decisions.

The fact that reason is superior to ṭab' as a criterion of

(1) Tawhīd, p.224,1-4.

(2) Ibid., pp.223,10-13; 224,12-15.

good and evil, does not mean that it is an absolute and a sufficient judgement in this respect; because, as has already been mentioned, reason has its shortcomings and limits. It might be misled by outside influences from conceiving the intrinsic values of things, and thus revelation is needed. According to al-Māturīdī, if reason were left alone without outside influences, there would be no need for a messenger to inform people about what is commendable and what is objectionable, and what is good and what is evil; but since reason does not intuitively comprehend the value of things, but comprehends by reflection and pondering, obstacles might interfere and prevent it from performing its task; because of all these reasons, revelation is needed in order to help reason and point out what is good and what is evil.⁽¹⁾ Moreover, al-Māturīdī said, though it is true that reason might reach the same decision of revelation in those matters which are absolutely forbidden or obligatory, in the cases where no clear-cut decision can be applied, revelation is the only judge. According to him, "Conditions of things are such that they are either forbidden, or obligatory or something in between (wāsit aw mumkin), i.e., which can be forbidden or obligatory. What reason considers as obligatory or forbidden, revelation cannot judge differently. Concerning that which is liable to either of the two possibilities, reason cannot give a true judgement, therefore revelation or a prophet is required to explain which alternative is most probable, i.e., whether it is prohibited or obligatory, good or evil."⁽²⁾

(1) Ta'wīlāt, 7:157.

(2) Tawhīd, p.184,3-7.

In the course of his defence of revelation al-Māturīdī criticized the views of those who attacked prophecy by denying the validity of the prophet's miracles.⁽¹⁾ In this context he mentioned in particular al-Warrāq, who is said to have maintained that the prophets' miracles cannot be accepted as proofs for his prophecy, because their miraculous nature ^{were} tested and made ^{its} their appeal to certain people only. They in fact might just be a sort of magic or trick. People were not able to challenge them, because they had no knowledge about the nature of the production of such actions.⁽²⁾

To defend prophecy against such attacks, al-Māturīdī pointed out that the perfection of the characters of the prophets made it impossible for anyone to accuse them of being liars. Moreover, there is no doubt that people were unable to challenge the miracles presented by the prophets. If it is assumed that one could attain the ability to perform miracles on the basis of his learning and experience, then it may be said that the prophet performed them without any learning or prior experience. This is a strong evidence in support of the fact that the miracles were provided by God in order to support the prophets' claims to prophethood.⁽³⁾ Furthermore, al-Māturīdī said, the nature of magic and miracles is completely different, therefore it would be wrong to make any comparison between them. Miracle is a reality which remains as long as the message of the prophet lasts, while the act of magic is something which deceives the

(1) Tawhīd, p.176,10-11.

(2) Ibid., p.186,10-11.

(3) Ibid, p.189,5-8.

eyes for a while then vanishes. Also magic is a kind of craft which can be learned and performed by anyone who has acquired its secrets, while miracles are claimed and performed only by the prophets. The magicians' main intention is to gain worldly benefit, while the prophets aim is to purify the human soul from greed and lust, and prevent it from indulging in worldly affairs. So the aims of the prophets and magicians are totally different. Moreover, the prophets undergo suffering and hardship in order to deliver their message and to provide a good example for human moral perfection, so it is inconceivable that they are similar to the magicians. (1)

Al-Warrāq attacked particularly the miracles of the prophet Muḥammad and maintained that the miraculous nature of the Qur'ān is untenable. He claimed that the inability of the Arabs to imitate it is not a proof for its miraculous nature, nor for the prophethood of Muḥammad. He said that the Arabs were unequal in their literary attainments, so that it is quite possible that the Qur'ān was the composition of one of the best of them. The Arabs were not concerned with the intellectual activity and knowledge. It is also quite possible that their engagement in war distracted them from challenging the Qur'ān. To al-Warrāq, if one excelled others in certain matters, it does not mean that he is a prophet. (2)

To refute these views, al-Māturīdī said that it cannot be denied that the Arabs were very intelligent and passionate people;

(1) Tawhīd, pp.189-190.

(2) Ibid., pp.191,16-19; 192,1-2.

there were many distinguished poets and eloquent men of letters among them. They were challenged to imitate the Qur'ān and were given ample time to do so, but they failed to meet that challenge. Instead they resorted to fighting which is more difficult and involved sacrifice of their selves. If they were able to imitate the Qur'ān, they certainly would not have chosen war. So the inability of the Arabs to meet the challenge to imitate the Qur'ān is a strong proof for the miraculous nature of the Qur'ān. That challenge, however, was not limited to the Arabs, but was issued to non-Arabs as well as jinn, "Say: verily though mankind and the jinn should assemble to produce the like of this Qur'ān, they could not produce the like thereof though they were helpers one of another."⁽¹⁾ The Qur'ān has spread all over the world and no-one has stepped forward to meet this challenge. As for the assumption that the excellenc^e of someone in certain matters does not entail that he is a prophet, al-Māturīdī replied that the excellenc^e of the prophet in certain matters, which is his miracles, is a kind of support given to him by God to prove his claim to prophethood. If he were an impostor, God would not give him such a support.⁽²⁾

Then al-Māturīdī proceeds to explain the aspects of the miraculous nature of the Qur'ān. From his treatment of this point, it seems that he considers that the miraculous nature of the Qur'ān lies in its literary perfection and in its prophecy of future events and its containing all the principles of

(1) Q. 17:88.

(2) Tawhīd, pp.192-3.

knowledge. The literary perfection of the Qur'ān is evident in its eloquence, arrangement (nazm), and in the beauty of its style and diction to such an extent that the Arabs, who exceeded in this art, failed to match it.⁽¹⁾ Even though it was revealed over a period of twenty years or more, this did not cause any discrepancy in its contents or differences in its style, for every part of it is consistent with the others.⁽²⁾ The wondrous nature of the Qur'ān is shown from the fact that it contains an explanation of all matters which were proclaimed by previous religions, although the prophet had no access to such materials, nor had he previously been able to read and write. The Qur'ān also contains prophecies such as the spreading of Islam and the victory of the Muslims, which were made at a time when all circumstances appeared to be unfavourable to these happenings. It also contains all the principles of knowledge and sciences related to this life and the hereafter, which must prove that it was revealed by him who has comprehensive knowledge. The contents of the Qur'ān are in agreement with the contents of the previous sacred books. This implies on one hand the unity in origin of all these books, and on the other hand that the Qur'ān came from the same source of revelation.⁽³⁾ Moreover, although the Qur'ān was revealed during the period of ignorance and dominance of polytheism, it had contained all the proofs and arguments for the oneness of God in an imitable manner.⁽⁴⁾

(1) Tawhīd, p.194,1-4.

(2) Ibid., p.195,9-11.

(3) Ibid., p.194,7-20.

(4) Ibid., p.195,4-8.

Al-Māturīdī devoted a special section to the establishment of the validity of prophecy in general and the prophethood of Muhammad in particular. To him, prophethood is based on three principles: (1) the character of the prophet, (2) the tangible and deductive evidences for his prophethood, (3) the suitability of circumstances for his message.

As for the prophethood of Muhammad, al-Māturīdī quoted in detail many proofs which disclose the physical perfection and moral integrity of the prophet's character.⁽¹⁾ He also enumerates many of the miracles which were performed by him.⁽²⁾ He considered the Qur'ān to be the most convincing miracle and proof for his mission. All the circumstances were suitable for the appearance of his message.⁽³⁾ The people were at a loss and in dire need of someone to guide them to belief and moral conduct. The teachings of the previous religions were corrupted and badly misinterpreted. God had promised that in such a time He would send a prophet to guide people in the right direction. (35:24; 23:44).⁽⁴⁾ Then al-Māturīdī referred to some of the rational evidences and historical circumstances of the prophet's life, which disclose the validity of his mission and the necessity for it.⁽⁵⁾

(1) Tawhīd, pp.202,11-21; 203,1-12.

(2) Ibid., pp.203,13-17; 204,1-11.

(3) Ibid., p.204,12-16.

(4) Ibid., p.205.

(5) Ibid., pp.205-9.

3. Reason and Religious Knowledge

Though one might understand from the above-mentioned account that al-Māturīdī regards revelation as the only method of conveying religious truth, it is reason, however, which plays the role of establishing these religious truths by rational arguments. Thus within the frame of religion, reason has a considerable role to play. He considers reason to be the pre-condition for the imposition of religious responsibility (taklīf), and if one is unable to understand God's orders, in spite of his efforts and attempts to do so, he is exempted from that order, because all God's commandments are made to be understood, if one fails to comprehend them, then he is no longer included among those to whom they were addressed. Reason also, necessitates the knowledge of God, and through his intellect alone, man must come to know God, by reflecting upon His creation and the phenomenon of creation all over the world which eventually leads to the establishment of God's existence and His power. According to al-Māturīdī, the knowledge of God and His commands, is only attained by deduction, ('arad lā-yudrak illā bil-istidlāl). Since man has been endowed with means of understanding such as rational and imaginative faculties, and has been warned by various methods to reflect upon himself and what surrounds him, he is necessarily compelled to reflect and come to the knowledge of God.⁽¹⁾ If he fails to reach such a knowledge, he will be eternally punished. Even if God did not send a messenger to instruct man, he has no excuse for not knowing his creator,

(1) Tawhīd, p.137,14-19.

because he has been endowed with the intellect and the power to think. (1)

But God has clearly stated that He is sending "Apostles who give good news as well as warning, that mankind after the coming of the apostles should have no plea (hujja) against God" (2), and that He does not punish a nation before sending a messenger to warn them and the punishment comes after a clear defiance of His commandments. (3) On the basis of these verses, the Ash'arite theologians maintain that reason alone necessitates neither belief in God nor the knowledge of Him; man is not punished for not achieving such a knowledge. (4)

Al-Maturīdī defended his views by saying that it is possible that the real meaning of plea intended in the above mentioned verse is that it applies only to religious duties and laws ('ibādāt wal-sharā'i') which are known only by revelation and not by reason, but faith (dīn) is necessitated by reason, because they have been endowed with intellects and in the instruction of every man there are signs which, if seriously considered, will demonstrate the existence of God, His oneness and His Lordship (rubūbiyya). (5) As regards the statement that God promises that He will not destroy a nation before the sending of a

(1) Shaykh Zāda, Nazm al-Farā'id wa-Jam' al-Fawā'id, pp.46-9.

(2) Q. 4:166.

(3) Q. 17:15-16.

(4) Ījī, Mawāqif, vol.1, p.271.

(5) Ta'wīlāt, 4:166.

messenger, al-Māturīdī said that God did not destroy them because people are of various categories regarding their intellectual capacity: (1) there are those who can comprehend things spontaneously (bil-badīha) and of this category are the scholars and judicious men. (2) There are others who need the assistance of revelation in order to understand and perceive the realities of religious truth. (3) The third category are those who do not understand either by revelation or by reason, so they need a tangible warning which affects them and their life in order to understand and realize the reality of God's existence and His commands. So, in order that no-one of the above categories may plead against Him, God sends messengers, though He might punish those who are able to reflect for not pondering and using their intellect. (1)

4. Al-Māturīdī's Method of Argument

According to his theory of knowledge which is based on sense-perception, reports and reason, al-Māturīdī used two kinds of proofs to support his doctrines and to refute those of his opponents. One kind of his proof is based on traditional evidences and the other on rational inferences and deduction.

Traditional Evidences:

Al-Māturīdī used the term khābar (report) and sam' to describe this kind of proof. Sam' literally means what has been heard of or what has been received by hearsay or what is established

(1) Ta'wīlāt, 7:94.

by normal practice, but technically it is used for traditional evidences. Al-Māturīdī used the term to cover both meanings. Thus to establish the necessity of religion, he stated that this fact can be established by both sam' and reason, and what sam' meant to him are the evidences based on historical data or general observation. (1) Similarly, he used the term report in establishing the temporality of substances (a'yān), to refer to both the Qur'ānic verses and some evidences based on data derived from investigation. (2) In the same manner, he stated that God's attributes can be established by sam' and reason. With regard to the evidences of the sam', he simply indicated that the Qur'ān and all the other Scriptures have ascribed certain attributes to God. The prophets and all other creatures applied the same names and attributes to Him. (3) These few examples are sufficient to show that al-Māturīdī used the term sam' and report in a wider sense to cover all proofs derived from traditional evidences whether revealed or not. The traditional evidences quoted by al-Māturīdī consist of many Qur'ānic verses and some of the Traditions and in order to establish his point of view he employed ijmā'.

The Qur'ān:

The Qur'ān represents to al-Māturīdī as well as to all the Muslim theologians, the unquestionable authority for the establishment of religious doctrines. Al-Māturīdī wrote a whole

(1) Tawhīd, p.4,9-13.

(2) Ibid., p.11.

(3) Ibid., p.44.



commentary on the Qur'ānic text and a detailed study of the method he used in this commentary will follow later. In his Kitāb at-Tawhīd he widely utilized the Qur'ānic verses in order to prove his theological point of view and to refute those of his adversaries. However, he not only quoted the verses of the Qur'ān, but also constructed his rational arguments on the basis of those verses. Thus from the Qur'ānic verses 21:22, 17:43, 23:91, 13:16 he developed various rational arguments to demonstrate the oneness of God.⁽¹⁾ This method of constructing arguments on Qur'ānic texts is more evident in al-Māturīdī's section on the visibility of God, where he depended mainly on Scripture to establish his point of view.⁽²⁾ He followed the same methodology in his proofs of God's will,⁽³⁾ His speech,⁽⁴⁾ the doctrine of Qadar⁽⁵⁾, and the problem of Īmān.⁽⁶⁾ Al-Māturīdī also interpreted the Qur'ānic verses which were quoted by his opponents in order to show that they had misinterpreted them and hence that they had in no way proved their point of view.⁽⁷⁾

The degree of the usage of Qur'ānic verses by al-Māturīdī differs according to the nature and treatment of the subject. But, on the whole, the arguments based on Qur'ānic reasoning appear to be less in proportion when compared to those based on rational

(1) Tawhīd, pp.20-21.

(2) Ibid, pp.77-80.

(3) Ibid, pp.287-91.

(4) Ibid, p.57.

(5) Ibid, pp.225-26, 254-55, 257-58.

(6) Ibid, pp.325-6, 332-4, 373-77.

(7) Ibid, pp.247-9, 297-99. 300-302, 378-9, 386-7.

arguments.

Hadīth:

Traditions have not been widely used by the speculative theologians and one can hardly trace more than half a dozen Traditions in al-Māturīdī's Kitāb at-Tawhīd. To establish the doctrine of intercession, al-Māturīdī merely said that the Qur'ān and reports (akhbār) of the prophet support this doctrine, without quoting any Traditions.⁽¹⁾ Yet he quoted a Tradition as a proof for his view on God's visibility⁽²⁾, and two Traditions on the problem of the relation between Iman and Islam.⁽³⁾ Apart from these authentic Traditions, al-Māturīdī quoted three Traditions which could not be traced in the sources of hadīth. One on the concept of irjā', which seems to have a Shī'ite origin⁽⁴⁾, another on the creation of Iman⁽⁵⁾ and the third is the commonly used Tradition concerning the Qadarites, "The Qadarites are the Magians of the Muslim's community".⁽⁶⁾ All this indicates that al-Māturīdī was not concerned with the material available in the form of hadīth in the course of his theological arguments.

Ijmā':

In all the instances in which al-Māturīdī employs arguments based on ijmā', one observes that he utilizes it when he has

(1) Tawhīd, p.305,18-19.

(2) Ibid., pp.79-80.

(3) Ibid., pp.397-99.

(4) Ibid., p.384.

(5) Ibid., p.387.

(6) Ibid., p.314.

already exhausted all the arguments based either on Qur'ān or Traditions. Thus ijmā' seems to have been of less significance to him. It was used for instance as a proof that the grave sinner is a mu'min; al-Māturīdī said the community agreed (ittafaqat) that, the grave sinner must be called either mushrik, kāfir or a Muslim, one who refuses to apply to him one of these names is thereby acting contrary to what has been unanimously agreed upon (mā ujmi'a 'alā-l-qawl bi-h).⁽¹⁾ Ijmā' is also used to establish that only the outward performance of the mu'min should be considered.⁽²⁾ It has also been employed to prove that the evidences of the prophet's mission were widely transmitted.⁽³⁾ It is also used in the sense of the consensus of the theologians (ijmā' ahl al-Kalām) to repudiate the Mu'tazilites.⁽⁴⁾

His Rational Method:

To formulate his rational arguments, al-Māturīdī made use of the scientific material and logical methods which were advanced and developed by the early theologians, particularly the Mu'tazilites. This is quite evident throughout kitāb at-Tawhīd where the terminologies and the concepts, as well as the form of the arguments used, reflect the rational tendency of al-Māturīdī, and disclose his indebtedness to the Mu'tazilites and other theologians of similar attitudes.

He stated that knowledge of things which are not sense-objects

(1) Tawhīd, p.337,1-3.

(2) Ibid., p.300,9-10.

(3) Ibid., p.198.

(4) Ibid., p.314.

is attained either by reports or inference based on observation of the relationship between things, such as the relationship between smoke and fire; the sun and its light; things and their effects; writing and writer; building and builder.⁽¹⁾ This operation is called istidlāl, and it proceeds from an already stored knowledge about things. So our knowledge about man, fire or similar things is derived from a deduction based on our previous knowledge of similar entities. This method leads to such a knowledge, otherwise one can neither trust nor deal with anyone, since he would have no sign to guide him in this respect.⁽²⁾

According to this, al-Māturīdī used the terms: reasoning ('aql), speculation (nazar), inference (istidlāl), sign (dalāla), and analogy (qiyās) in a sense which implies one form or another of intellectual activity or speculation leading to a new result. The arguments he used did not follow exactly the form of the Aristotelian logic, but benefited, as did all the theological arguments, from the concepts and rational arguments of that system. Some of his arguments are particularly identical with the Aristotelian syllogism in its categorical and hypothetical forms, while others are merely of a political and dialectical nature. At the same time, he widely used the method of the analogy of the present to the absent (qiyās al-ghā'ib 'ala-l-shāhid).

1. Syllogism: Of the various forms of syllogism, al-Māturīdī used the categorical proposition which consists of subject,

(1) Tawhīd, p.183,14-16.

(2) Ibid., p.27,14-17.

predicate and the judicial relation between them. Thus to establish the attributes of speech, he argued that the inability of every knowing and powerful person who does not speak must be due to some defect such as impotence or some hindrances. Since God is above all such defects, then He must be able to speak.⁽¹⁾ Again, to demonstrate that God's actions take place according to His will, he used a similar argument. "According to the rule of wisdom, he who does a thing while willing by it another thing or willing it to be different from what it normally is, would be either ignorant of the outcome of his actions, or he is fooling around by his acts. Since these two characteristics are impossible for God, then His actions must be according to His will."⁽²⁾ Sometimes the arguments do not follow a formal system but are based on premises and conclusions, as in the following arguments: power is an accident which does not endure, thus it must be concomitant with the action.⁽³⁾ The general procedure in these arguments is that the first premise is considered as valid, and it is sometimes verified, as in the argument which al-Māturīdī used to demonstrate the necessity of religion to man: it is not wise to assume that the world is created in vain and for destruction, but it consists of contradictory elements which lead to destruction, therefore there must be someone who guides man and saves the world from destruction. Al-Māturīdī took each part of this proposition and

(1) Tawhīd, p.57,16-17.

(2) Ibid., p.292,16-18.

(3) Ibid., p.260,18-22.

demonstrated its validity.⁽¹⁾

As for the hypothetical syllogism, al-Māturīdī used this proposition in its conditional form. This method of argument is known among the theologians and jurists, as the method of enumeration and division (as-sabr wal-taqsīm)⁽²⁾. It is based on mutual exclusion of two or more contradictory statements. It implies the division of an object into two or more possibilities, then demonstrating the falsity of all of them except one.⁽³⁾ Al-Māturīdī widely used this method of argument and demonstration. Thus, to demonstrate the temporality of the world, he said that the world is either eternal with all its contradictory elements, or it is originated by a principle which is devoid of these contradictory elements, or that these contradictory characters were introduced into it later. Then he demonstrates the falsity of the first and the last assumptions and thus proves the validity of the second proposition.⁽⁴⁾ Also, to prove the existence of God, he argued that if the world were created by itself, it would either be created after its being existent or before its coming into existence, both assumptions are impossible, this proves that it is not created by itself but by God.⁽⁵⁾ Similar arguments were used to demonstrate the oneness of God⁽⁶⁾,

(1) Tawhīd, pp.4-6.

(2) Ghazālī, Mi'yār al-'Ilm, p.89.

(3) Bāqillānī, Tamhīd, p.11.

(4) Tawhīd, pp.12-13.

(5) Ibid., p.16,8-10.

(6) Ibid., p.21,7-14.

the reality of the attributes of takwīn,⁽¹⁾ and to refute the views of the dualists on the existence of light and darkness,⁽²⁾ and the anthropomorphists on God's locality.⁽³⁾

2. Qiyās al-ghā'ib 'ala-l-shāhid: (Analogy of the hidden to the present).

This kind of analogy is one of the methods used by the theologians of different schools, as well as by the jurists.⁽⁴⁾ As far as the theologians are concerned, it is said that al-Khayyāt, the Mu'tazilite, devoted a whole book to explain qiyās, and that Abū-'Alī al-Jubbā'ī and his son Abū-Hāshim made a considerable contribution to the establishment of this method.⁽⁵⁾ Qadī 'Abd-al-Jabbār defines qiyās as, "The deduction of the hidden from what is known, if it cannot be known but by inference from the present."⁽⁶⁾ Though the jurists and the theologians used this method, the former consider that the causal link (jāmi') between asl the major premise, and the far', the minor premise, or between the present and the hidden, is 'illa, ratio legis; the theologians, however, added: definition (hadd), condition (shart), and inference or proof (dalīl), as other links between the present and the hidden.⁽⁷⁾ The Ash'arite theologian, al-Bāqillānī, considers 'illa as one of the deductive methods and

(1) Tawhīd, p.46,16-18.

(2) Ibid., pp.35-36; 122-23.

(3) Ibid., p.70,1-11.

(4) An-Nashshār, Manāhij al-Baḥth 'ind Mufakkirī-l-Islam, p129 ff.

(5) 'Abd-al-Jabbār, al-Muḥīt bi-l-Taklīf, p.186.

(6) Ibid.

(7) Iqdām, p.182 ff. Juwaynī, Irshād, p.49.

explains it by saying: "If a hukm or a quality is attributed to a certain thing in the present for a certain 'illa, the same 'illa should be the cause of attributing the same hukm or quality to the thing in the hidden." To illustrate this he gives the example of the body and knowledge in the present and the hidden. In the present, Bāqillānī said, body is called body because of its being compound (mu'allaf), and the 'ālim is called so because of his possession of knowledge. So, if one has been described as 'ālim in the hidden, the attribute of knowledge should be ascribed to him, and if something has been called body in the hidden, it would necessarily be compound and composed of parts (mu'allaf wa-murakkab).⁽¹⁾

Those who affirm God's attributes depended largely on this method to establish their views.⁽²⁾ The Mu'tazilites used this method of analogy to establish many of their doctrines especially those related to God's justice ('adl).⁽³⁾ The abuse of this method, however, led to many errors; the anthropomorphists, for instance, considered God as a body, because they could not perceive any thing in the present without its being a body;⁽⁴⁾ and the Mu'tazilites denied the vision of God because they compared it with the vision of things in the present world and applied the same conditions of the latter to the former, and thus ended by denying the vision of God altogether.⁽⁵⁾

(1) Bāqillānī, Tamhīd, pp.27-8.

(2) Iqdām, p.182.

(3) 'Abd-al-Jabbār, op.cit., pp.165-66.

(4) Tawhīd, pp.85,7-8; 120,16-17.

(5) Ibid., pp.82-3. Ghazālī, Iqtisād, p.30 ff.

Al-Māturīdī as a theologian and a jurist adopted this method but he pointed out the dangers of its random application. According to him, there are two views regarding the relationship between the present and the hidden; some held that the present indicates a hidden similar to it, and others believed that it indicates a hidden either similar to it or in contrast to it. The former view led to the belief that the world is eternal, since according to them, the world is the origin of the hidden, and the hidden is similar to it.⁽¹⁾ Al-Māturīdī rejected this view and strongly criticized it and adopted the latter view. He believed that the indication of contrast between the hidden and the present is more evident. To him, the very example of the world proves this; because every thing in the world indicates its being originated or its being eternal, both of which are different from the things themselves. They also show that they either have a creator or were created by themselves, and these ^{two concepts} are different from the things of this world. So the present might indicate something different from the hidden; it does not necessarily indicate that it is similar, otherwise everyone witnessing himself might imagine that all the world is similar to himself, which is absurd.⁽²⁾

So, as far as the relationship between the present and the hidden is concerned, al-Māturīdī differentiates between two spheres, that of God in which the present indicates a hidden either similar or in contrast to it, and the other is that of

(1) Tawhīd, pp.27,21; 28,1-3.

(2) Ibid., p.28,6-11.

the world, the sphere in which the present indicates something similar to it.

According to this conception of analogy, al-Māturīdī used this method to establish the knowledge of God. He emphasized the point that, there is no way of attaining any knowledge of God save through proceeding from the present world, since such a knowledge cannot be attained through the senses or by traditional evidence (shahādat as-sam'⁽¹⁾). Thus, it is necessary to use the law which is valid in this world in order to establish the existence of God, without implying any resemblance or similarity between God and the world. The nature of analogy itself does not suggest such a resemblance. To illustrate this point, al-Māturīdī said that writing indicates the existence of a writer, but it does not reveal the nature of the writer, since he might be either an angel, or a human being, or a jinn. Similarly, in the case of God, the world indicates the existence of an originator, but it does not imply his nature or quiddity (kayfiyya aw-mā'iyya). Thus to establish the existence of the maker of the world, analogy has to be used, and one should begin from the world then proceed to the knowledge of God, but this does not lead to the knowledge of His nature or His quiddity as stated above.⁽²⁾ Al-Māturīdī used the same analogy to establish the attributes of God. He argued that there is nothing in the present which is powerful and at the same time has no power of action, and there is none who is able to speak yet who does not possess

(1) Tawhīd, p.129,21-3. cf.p.175,14-15.

(2) Ibid., p.29,4-15.

the power of speech. Since the present is an indication of the hidden and since God has the power to act, He must also possess the faculty of speech.⁽¹⁾ Again, this analogy between God and the world does not imply any resemblance between the attributes of God and the same concepts used in this world; God is high above human terminologies and concepts, but because of the limitations of human intellect, these terms and concepts were used to describe the absolute reality, in order to bring it within the grasp of human intellect.⁽²⁾ However, the situation is different regarding the things of the present world, where the relationship between things is established on the basis of similarity. So if the qualities of a particular thing were known, and the same qualities were attributed to an object not present, it would be realized that the object which is absent is similar to the present one (mushāhad). Thus, if the qualities of a body or a fire were known to someone, he would recognize those qualities on their being described to him without actually having to see them.⁽³⁾ So our knowledge of things like a man or a fire which are matters of the present world are attained by deduction (istidlāl), based on a previous knowledge of similar things. To al-Māturīdī, the denial of this deductive method leads to the denial of knowledge itself; since all knowledge is based on this method. It would also make it difficult for people to communicate with each other, since everyone would have

(1) Tawhīd, p.46.

(2) Ibid., p.93.

(3) Ibid., p.28,12-16.

his own concepts and expectations.⁽¹⁾

3. Polemical Arguments

Not all the theological arguments were in the form of syllogism and analogy. Some of them were of a polemical nature, such as the arguments which are generally known as ilzām and mu'ārada, and are intended to reduce the adversary's view either to absurdity or to an untenable position. Such arguments were much used by the Muslim theologians especially of later generations,⁽²⁾ and examples of them can be found in al-Māturīdī's discussions, but to lesser degree than in those of other theologians. Thus, while he was refuting the view of those who denied God's attributes, al-Māturīdī argued that if the people were asked about God, they would either use some terms and expressions to make the reality of Him understandable to human intellect, or avoid the use of human languages and concepts altogether and, in this case, they would refute their own views regarding the Divine reality.⁽³⁾ Similar arguments were used against the Bāṭinite view that God has no essential names and attributes.⁽⁴⁾

Some of the polemical arguments were in the form of a dialogue consisting of questions and answers between the theologians and their adversaries, in order to develop a certain thesis or to prove certain points.⁽⁵⁾ Al-Māturīdī also used this

(1) Tawhīd, p.27, 14-17.

(2) Van Ess, "The Logical Structure of Islamic Theology", pp.23-26.

(3) Tawhīd, p.25, 11-15.

(4) Ibid., p.95, 13-15.

(5) Van Ess, op.cit., p.23.

method of argument, and we find in his discussions such phrases as fa in qāl ... yuqāl lahu⁽¹⁾ (if somebody says ... we answer); fa in qīl ... qīla⁽²⁾ (if it is said ... it would be answered). Al-Māturīdī used many of these arguments in his disputes with al-Warrāq, Ibn-ar-Rāwandī⁽³⁾ and al-Ka'bi.⁽⁴⁾

5. Al-Māturīdī's Method for the Interpretation of the Qur'ān

(a) His Conceptions of tafsīr and ta'wīl

The title of al-Māturīdī's commentary on the Qur'ān: Ta'wīlāt al-Qur'ān or Ta'wīlāt ahl as-Sunna, indicates that he is among the first commentators to use the term ta'wīl instead of tafsīr, for the exposition of the Qur'ān, and this has some significance. Originally, the terms tafsīr and ta'wīl were used interchangeably for the exposition of the Qur'ān; in the course of time, however, various differentiations between the two terms were introduced, and tafsīr was mainly used for external philological exegesis, while ta'wīl was used for the exposition of the subject matter of the Qur'ān.⁽⁵⁾ Al-Māturīdī's definition of the two terms is unique and to some extent discloses his method of interpretation.

(1) Tawhīd, p.31.

(2) Ibid., pp.39-40; 47; 50.

(3) Ibid., p.186 ff.

(4) Ibid., p.236.

(5) For the philological definitions of the terms tafsīr and ta'wīl see Ibn-Manzūr, Lisān al-'Arab, vols.6.p.361 and 13,p.34. For the various definitions of these two terms see Itqān, vol.4, pp.167-69. Tahānawī, Kashshāf, vol.2. pp.1116-17.

To al-Māturīdī, tafsīr means the giving of a definite meaning to the verse, and the only people suited to such a task are the companions of the prophet, because they were contemporaries of the prophet and witnessed all the events and circumstances in which the Qur'ān was revealed. They also had knowledge of the prophet's commentary and explanation of the verses and were well conversant with the occasions of the revelation (asbāb an-nuzūl). Those companions, however, did not give their opinions on the verses of the Qur'ān, because tafsīr is not subject to various opinions, but they conveyed what they had witnessed and received from the prophet. In the light of this concept of tafsīr, al-Māturīdī said, the saying of the prophet, "Whoever interprets the Qur'ān according to his personal opinion, will take his place in the fire", becomes clear. (1)

The meaning of ta'wīl, however, is to give all the possible meanings implied in the verse; therefore it is not limited to the companions of the prophet as tafsīr, but is open to all qualified scholars. There is no restriction on ta'wīl, because unlike tafsīr, ta'wīl does not state that God meant a certain meaning by a certain verse, but it is simply an attempt to discover the meaning which might possibly be implied in the verse; its utmost achievement is to point out that the meaning of a verse might be so or so. To illustrate his views on this point, al-Māturīdī said if we take the verse, "Praise be to God". (al-hamdu lil-lāhi), some said that it means that God has praised

(1) See al-Māturīdī's Introduction to his Ta'wīlāt.

himself, and others said that God has ordered us to praise Him. Both views are based upon Traditions, and whoever holds one of them is a mufassir. The same verse might be interpreted (tu'awwal) as that ḥamd means eulogy to God, that He should be praised and that man must be thankful to Him. So tafsīr is to adopt one of the meanings based upon authority, while ta'wīl is to introduce several meanings extracted from the verse. (1)

(b) The Sources of His Commentary

1. Of the above mentioned terms, al-Māturīdī chose the term ta'wīl and applied it to his commentary, presumably implying that he is going to give his own opinion and interpretation of the Qur'ān. At the same time, however, al-Māturīdī made it clear that the Qur'ān should be interpreted by the Qur'ān itself if it is possible. To him, the Qur'ān does not contradict itself and, to reach an appropriate understanding of its meaning, all the verses concerning a point of discussion should be considered. In many instances, we find that a point is briefly referred to in a verse, and is elucidated in other verses; so by consulting all the verses related to the point, the exact meaning of the verse might be attained. Al-Māturīdī applied this method throughout his Ta'wīlāt al-Qur'ān, and widely used it in his k.at-Tawhīd, especially in those sections dealing with man's actions, God's will, free will and predestination, and Imān. Thus, according to al-Māturīdī, the Qur'ān itself is an important source for the understanding of its meaning.

(1) Al-Māturīdī's Introduction to his Ta'wīlāt.

2. The second source for the interpretation of the Qur'ān is the Traditions of the prophet. In many works of hadīth, Traditions and reports which give exposition to the verses of the Qur'ān were attributed to the prophet.⁽¹⁾ Though al-Māturīdī quoted many Traditions throughout his commentary, as evidences for his interpretation, he was very cautious and critical about the authenticity of these Traditions; thus he came to accept those Traditions whose authenticity had been established, and to reject any reports which seemed to be contrary to the necessity of reason or what had been rationally established. Commenting on the verse, "Upon the day We shall say unto Gehenna, Art thou filled? and it shall say, Are there any more to come?", al-Māturīdī said that some commentators maintained that Gehenna will be asking for more until the Merciful put His feet into it so it will be filled, and there will not be room for a single person. To support such a view, the commentators quoted a Tradition believed to be narrated by Abū-Hurayra.⁽²⁾ Al-Māturīdī refuted this view as being absurd and rejected the Tradition as unauthentic. To him, such views led to the resemblance of God to a human being and contradicted God's saying, "I shall assuredly fill Gehenna with Jinn and men all together" (Q. 11:119), while in this imaginative view it will not be filled until God put his foot into it, which is sheer nonsense. The Tradition is

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(1) In some works on Traditions, a special section on tafsīr is recorded: Bukhārī, Muslim and at-Tirmidhī. See Wensick,ⁿ
A Handbook of Early Muhammadan Tradition. See also As-Suyutī, Itqān, vol.4, pp.214-259.

(2) See Bukhārī, Sahīh, vol.3, pp.336-37.

contrary to all rational proofs which reject tashbīh, and since any Tradition which contradicts rational proofs should be rejected, this Tradition should be rejected.

Commenting on the Qur'ānic verse, "God commands you to sacrifice a cow, they said, ~~Do~~ thou take us in mockery?", al-Māturīdī said that some commentators inferred from these verses that God's order was general when it was first addressed to the Israelites, because God ordered them to sacrifice a cow without giving specific descriptions, but after their investigation and questioning, He particularized the cow. The commentators quoted, as support for their view, the report attributed to the prophet which says, "If they (i.e. the Israelites) sacrificed any cow it would have sufficed them, but by their questions they brought difficulties upon themselves, and thus God made it hard for them."⁽²⁾ Al-Māturīdī rejected this report and considered the issue based upon it as completely wrong; because it implies that something occurred in God's order and made Him change His decision, a notion no Muslim should hold, not to mention the prophet, because it amounts to unbelief.⁽³⁾

Thus it becomes obvious that though al-Māturīdī depended on Traditions as a source of interpretation of the Qur'ān, he did not accept all that had been transmitted, he judged them instead by the Qur'ān and reason, and if they contradicted the Qur'ān or

(1) Ta'wīlāt, 50:30.

(2) Zamakhsharī, Kashshāf, vol.1, pp.61-62; Rāzī, Tafsīr, vol.1, pp.374-76; Qurtubī, Al-Jāmi' li Ahkām al-Qur'ān, vol.1, pp.454-55.

(3) Ta'wīlāt, 2:66.

if they were unreasonable, he simply rejected them.

3. The third source upon which al-Māturīdī depended in his Ta'wīlāt is the interpretations given to the Qur'ān by previous commentators. Al-Māturīdī quoted names such as: Ibn-'Abbās, al-Ḥasan al-Basrī, Muqātil ibn-Sulaymān, Abū-Zaid al-Balkhī Abū-'Awsaja, al-Kalbī, Abū-Bakr al-Aṣamm, Ja'far ibn-Ḥarb, and Abū-'Alī al-Jubbā'ī; but he did not accept their views without question. Al-Māturīdī subjected the views of those commentators to his critical opinion, and whenever they seem to him to be contradicting reason or to be disagreeing with philological usage, he did not hesitate to reject and refute them. Thus al-Māturīdī rejected the idea attributed to Ibn-'Abbās, that the meaning of the verse, "The likeness of them is as the likeness of a man who kindled a fire ... etc.", is concealed and beyond the attainment of human intellect. To al-Māturīdī, such views cannot be accepted because all the parables mentioned in the Qur'ān are meant to be understood, and to make it easy for the intellect to understand what is difficult; if Ibn-'Abbās's view is accepted, then the meaning of the verse will be obscured, which is unlikely.⁽¹⁾ In a more vigorous tone, al-Māturīdī rejected the reasons introduced by the commentators as an explanation for the names of 'Arafāt and Mina.⁽²⁾

Even in matters upon which there is a general agreement,

(1) Ta'wīlāt, 2:17, vol.1, p.54.

(2) Ta'wīlāt, 2:129, vol.1, p.304. 'Arafāt, a name of a mountain and adjacent plain located four hours distance east of Mecca, where the Mecca pilgrims spend the 9th day of Dhulhijja. Mina, the valley of Mina near Mecca.

al-Māturīdī did not hesitate to question the views of the commentators and to point out the weakness of their arguments. Commenting on the verse, "And when Moses said to his people, 'My people, you have done wrong against yourselves by your choosing of the calf (for worship), now turn to your Creator and slay one another'," al-Māturīdī said, if all the commentators did not agree to interpret the slaying as meaning the real killing of themselves, it would not have been necessary to explain it in the real sense, because actual killing is a punishment for the act of disbelief, and in this verse the Israelites were ordered to kill themselves after they had repented and submitted to God, so the slaying here is unlikely to mean the actual killing. It is possible that they were merely ordered to exert themselves in worship, and that they should suffer hardships for their negligence and disobedience to God; qatl, is commonly used in this sense, and if it is said that so and so kills himself in such and such a matter, it does not mean that he actually killed himself, but simply that he exerted himself and exhausted himself by hardship. So, to al-Māturīdī, slaying in this verse should be explained in this sense and not in the sense of the actual killing of themselves. (1)

(1) Ta'wīlāt, 2:54, vol.1, pp.155-56. Rāzī, who asserted the actual killing, refuted al-Māturīdī's argument by saying that punishment differs according to the differences of the revealed laws (sharī'a) so it is possible that in the law of Moses repentance was conditioned by the killing of one's self. Tafsīr, vol.1, p.356. Qurtubī attributed al-Māturīdī's views to the Sufis (ahl-l-khawātir) who interpret the killing as humiliating the self by extensive worship and keeping away from lust and desires. Al-Jāmi' vol.1, p.401.

All the commentators maintained that the days referred to in the verse, "And they say, The fire shall not touch us save a number of days", are those days in which the Israelites worshipped the calf.⁽¹⁾ To al-Māturīdī this is nonsense for two reasons: (i) Those Israelites, to whom the verse was addressed, did not worship the calf, but their fathers did, so it is nonsense to assume that the days mentioned in the verse are a reference to the time of their worship of the calf. (ii) Even if the verse was addressed to the Israelites who worshipped the calf, it is not possible to explain the days, by the days of their worship of the calf, because they had already repented of that wrongdoing and it is meaningless to be punished and chastised for something they had already repented of. So to al-Māturīdī these days referred to a period in which the Israelites disobeyed God and did not repent.⁽²⁾

From what has been said, it becomes clear that al-Māturīdī depended upon three sources for his interpretation of the Qur'ān; (i) the Qur'ān itself, (ii) the Traditions, (iii) the commentaries of his predecessors. The Qur'ān stands unchallenged and unquestionable; however, al-Māturīdī did not accept all of the other two sources, he distinguished between the authentic and the false, adopted what can reasonably be justified and refuted all that contradicted reason and common sense.

- (1) See Kashshāf, vol.1, p.64. Rāzī believes that such matters should be referred only to sam' and nothing should be ascertained on opinion. Tafsīr, vol.1, pp.390-91.
- (2) Ta'wīlāt, 2:80, vol.1, p.204.

(c) Al-Māturīdī's attitude towards the Qur'ānic Stories

The Qur'ān, like the previous Scriptures, is full of stories referring to events and happenings in the past and telling the fate of certain ancient nations, in particular of the Israelites and their prophets. These stories, however, were referred to briefly in the Qur'ān and no details of them were given because the Qur'ān mainly meant them to be a straightforward admonition. But human curiosity, as Ibn-Khaldūn said, incited the early Muslims, who were mainly Arabs of the desert, to seek more details of these stories. The only sources available to them at that time were the Christians and Jews of Arabia who, because of their nomadic life, were not better equipped to provide authentic information; but because of their religious status, their interpretation had been accepted and passed from that time onwards to the commentary on the Qur'ān.⁽¹⁾ Because of the commentators' attitude towards these stories and their attempts to provide full details from the ancient Scriptures and legendary sources for the Qur'ānic stories, their commentaries become filled with material drawn mainly from these sources.⁽²⁾

Unlike most of the commentators, al-Māturīdī's attitude towards these stories was very strict. He rejected all the details introduced by the commentators and objected to all the interpretations based upon the ancient Scriptures. To al-

(1) Ibn-Khaldūn, Muqaddima, p.368.

(2) It seems that all the commentators joined in this activity in one way or another. See Ramzī Na'nā'a, Al-Isrā'īliyyāt wa-Atharahā fi Kutub at-Tafsīr, pp.214-367.

Māturīdī, the only authority for such details is the prophet. If there is no authentic tradition explaining a story, then the story must be accepted as it is mentioned, with the addition of no details to its contents. To him, these stories, apart from their admonitory purpose, are proof of the validity of the message of the prophet and conclusive evidence of his prophethood, since at the time of the prophet, none of the Jews or the Christians had challenged the authenticity of the version of these stories stated in the Qur'ān and explained by the prophet. This testifies to the authenticity of these stories and the truthfulness of the prophet. So, to add unauthorized details to these stories would jeopardize their authenticity and might lead to their distortion. Moreover, no benefit is to be expected from knowing the details of these stories so that no-one should occupy himself with such a useless task. (1)

Al-Māturīdī applies this attitude to all the stories of the Qur'ān and thus, commenting on the verse, "And question them concerning the township which was bordering the sea ...", al-Māturīdī mentioned the various names given to the town by the commentators (2) and rejected them all saying, "We do not know what that town is and we do not need to know it, and if there were to be any benefit resulting from such knowledge God would have provided us with it." (3) For the verse, "And recite to them the tiding of whom we gave our signs, but he cast them off", al-

(1) Ta'wīlāt, 7:73.

(2) See Kashshāf, vol.1, p.356.

(3) Ta'wīlāt, 7:163.

Māturīdī mentioned the attempts made by the commentators to discover who was meant by this verse, and ended by stating that "we do not know to whom the verse refers, but its contents apply to any one who belies God's signs, and it should not be specifically limited to a certain person."⁽¹⁾

By using the same criterion, al-Māturīdī rejected all the details concerning Thamūd, their prophet Ṣāliḥ and his miraculous she-camel. To him, what is said about the she-camel: that it came out of a certain rock, it used to produce such and such an amount of milk, and that when it was killed the faces of the killers took different shapes and colours for three days and that the chastisement came on the fourth day; all this, to al-Māturīdī, is groundless and no-one can affirm or deny it, so that one should stick to what has been stated in the Qur'ān.⁽²⁾ The same applies to the story of Joseph. Al-Māturīdī considers the commentators' speculation about who said "Do not kill Joseph" and the price for which he was bought, as useless efforts because such things are known only by authentic reports and there is nothing of the sort; their stories about the relation between Joseph and the governor's wife are nothing but a sort of fairy tale, and to him such details should not be given without authority.⁽³⁾ Similarly, al-Māturīdī treated the stories of Moses and the Israelites, and suspected all the details concerning their history and destruction.⁽⁴⁾ He also refuted the speculations

(1) Ta'wīlāt, 7:175.

(2) Ibid., 6:64. For the story of Ṣāliḥ see Kashshāf vol.1, pp.334-35.

(3) Ta'wīlāt 12:24.

(4) Ibid., 17:4-5.

regarding the Cave and the inscription (ar-raqīm)⁽¹⁾ by saying we do not need to know what the cave and raqīm are, or where they were, because these names are not of our language; besides, our attention should be concentrated on the men themselves and not on the cave and raqīm. The commentators' reports that these men of the cave were so and so and their numbers and names were such and such, and their dog was of such description is groundless; such things are known only by revelation and authentic Tradition. The prophet himself has been asked not to ask anyone about them, so the commentators have no justification for their speculation.⁽²⁾

Al-Māturīdī's attitude and suspicions concerning the details of these stories, extended to those reports which the commentators introduced as an explanation of certain events believed to have occurred at the time of the prophet, such as the legendary stories concerning the mi'rāj⁽³⁾ and the gharānīq. Al-Māturīdī doubted the whole story of the prophet's ascent to Heaven and said, "concerning the reports that the prophet had ascended to heaven, where he met other prophets, we say what Abū-Bakr had said, 'If he (i.e. the prophet) says so I do believe him', otherwise we should confine ourselves to what the Qur'ān stated and that is that the prophet was carried by night from the holy Mosque to the further Mosque", and no more should be added because all the reports concerning this event are transmitted on the authority of a single individual (shādīth āhād), and such a chain of isnād

(1) See Kashshāf, vol.1, p.564; Razī, vol.6, pp.456-57, Tafsīr.

(2) Ta'wīlāt, 18:9-11.

(3) See Tabarī, Tafsīr, vol.15, pp.1-13.

is unreliable in such matters. (1)

Commenting on the verse, "Indeed they were near to seducing thee from what We revealed to thee, that thou might forge against Us another, and then they would surely have taken thee as a friend: and had We not confirmed thee, surely thou wert near to inclining unto them a very little ..." (2), al-Māturīdī said that this verse indicates that the unbelievers tried to seduce and misguide the prophet, but he was protected from all the temptations they offered him. At the same time, he rejected those stories introduced by the commentators as occasions for the revelation of the verse, such as: the story that some Qurashites tried to make a compromise with the prophet and he almost submitted to their demands but he was protected from doing so by God's instructions. To him, those stories are lies and the production of a vicious imagination (khayāl fāsīd). Al-Māturīdī argued that the last part of this verse, "And had We not confirmed thee, surely thou mightest almost have inclined unto them a very little" shows how these commentators are mistaken in their assumption, because God tells that He had confirmed his prophet so he did not incline to them, secondly, the inclination the prophet intended to make has been described as being very little and what these stories tell is quite serious; thirdly, the word almost (kāda) does not imply that he actually had

(1) Ta'wīlāt, 17:1. Rāzī also rejected all the legendary traditions about mi'rāj because they include unacceptable tales, Tafsīr, vol.5, p.366.

(2) Qur'ān, 17:73-74.

inclined to them, so what the commentators claim is wrong and cannot be accepted.⁽¹⁾

The story of the gharānīq is originally linked with the verse, "We never sent any messenger or prophet before thee, but when he framed a desire Satan casts some vanity into his desire, but God annuls what Satan casts, then God confirms His signs - surely God is All-Knowing, All-Wise."⁽²⁾ It is said that when the prophet saw that the Meccans gave no heed to his message, he desired that something to make them accept it would be revealed to him. At that moment, while he was sitting in the Ka'ba with numbers of the Meccans, the Sura of an-Najm was revealed to him and he recited it until he came to the verse, "Have you considered El-Lāt and El-'Uzzā, and Manāt the third the other."⁽³⁾ Satan put upon his tongue, "these are the exalted females (al-gharānīq al-'ulā) whose intercession is to be sought." On hearing this, the Meccans were delighted and even prostrated themselves with the prophet, but later Gabriel blamed the prophet for reciting this statement, and the above mentioned verses were revealed.⁽⁴⁾ Al-Māturīdī doubted the authenticity of this story, and to him if it were true, which is unlikely, it might be explained as a slip of the tongue; it is quite possible that one, whose convictions

(1) Ta'wīlāt, 17:73-74

(2) Qur'ān, 22:52.

(3) Ibid., 53:19-20.

(4) Ṭabarī, Tafsīr, vol.17, pp.119-121. Rāzī rejects the story of al-gharānīq as being mere fabrication, and introduces rational proofs and traditional evidences to show its fallacy. See Rāzī, Tafsīr, vol.6, pp.165-169.

and beliefs are well known, might make verbal mistakes contradicting his own convictions, and he will not be blamed for that because everyone realizes that they do not represent his real views. It is much more likely that this verse refers to the fact that when the prophet recited the Qur'ān to the unbelievers in order to convince them, Satan casts into their hearts doubts and arguments against the Qur'ān and the prophet, as is mentioned in the verse, "The Satans inspire their friends to dispute with you, if you obey them, you are idolaters." (6:121)⁽¹⁾

Concerning the verse, "And do not say regarding any thing, "I am going to do that tomorrow," but only, "If God will", it is said that the prophet was asked by the Jews or the Meccans about certain things and he told them that he would give his answers the following day without saying, "If God will." But instead of giving them the answers, he waited for fifteen days without receiving revelation, so the prophet got worried, and after that Gabriel descended with the Sura of the Cave, including this verse by which he was admonished for not saying, If God will.⁽²⁾ Al-Māturīdī rejected the whole story as being nonsense and produced by the imagination of the commentators. To him, it is impossible for the prophet to say that he is going to give his reply the next day without having orders from God; it is also not possible that for not saying "If God will", God withheld from him revelation and demonstrated his lie to the unbelievers. To

(1) Ta'wīlāt, 22:52.

(2) Ṭabarī, Tafsīr, vol.15, pp.140-41; Kashshāf, vol.1, p.568.

Rāzī, Tafsīr, vol.5, p.472. Suyūṭī, Asbāb an-Nuzūl, vol.2, pp.14-15.

al-Māturīdī, God cannot choose and select His messenger and then forsake and belie him; so what the commentators said is groundless. (1)

From what has been said it becomes clear that al-Māturīdī rejected all the legendary tales quoted by the Qur'ān commentators from foreign sources, in order to explain the stories referred to in the Qur'ān. He emphasized the point that regarding these Qur'ānic stories one should stick to what is mentioned in the Qur'ān itself and been explained by authentic Traditions.

(d) Al-Māturīdī's attitude towards the ambiguous verses of the Qur'ān:

The ambiguous verses of the Qur'ān, (al-mutashābihāt), are one of the problems which caused many discussions and disputations among the theologians, the commentators, and the philosophers. The problem originated from the Qur'ānic verse:

"It is He who revealed the book to you. It contains unambiguous verses that are the mother of the book, and other verses that are ambiguous. Those who are inclined in their hearts toward deviation follow that which is ambiguous in the Qur'ān, because they desire trouble, and they desire to interpret it. But only God knows how to interpret it. Those who are firmly rooted in knowledge say, "We believe in it. It is all from our Lord, only those who have a heart remember." (2)

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(1) Ta'wīlāt, 18:23.

(2) Qur'ān, 3:7.

Different readings of this verse led to different attitudes towards the interpretation of the ambiguous verses; those who considered the part of the verse, "Those who are firmly rooted in knowledge say, 'We believe in it, it is from our Lord'," as forming a new statement, refrained from indulging in ta'wīl; so to them only God knew the interpretation of the ambiguous verses. While those who advocated ta'wīl coupled this statement with the preceding one and maintained that it means that only God knows how to interpret them, and so do those who are firmly rooted in knowledge.⁽¹⁾ Among those who hold the latter views are the theologians, the philosophers, and other extremist groups who saw in ta'wīl a means by which the text of the Qur'ānic revelation could be brought into agreement with their own tenets.⁽²⁾

Though al-Māturīdī advocates the interpretation of the ambiguous verses, he maintains that these verses are of two kinds: (i) there are those, the meaning of which could be known and explained, (ii) and those which are known only to God. The reason for revealing the first kind is either to denote the merits of those who possess knowledge, or to indicate the necessity of reflection as a means for attaining knowledge. The other kind of verses are revealed as a test for men; they are not to indulge in interpreting their meanings.⁽³⁾

Allegorical interpretation of the ambiguous verses led to the rise of sects in Islam, and contributed to the development of

(1) Ghazālī, Ihyā' vol.1, p.92.

(2) E.I.^(s) art. "Tafsīr", pp.558-9.

(3) Tawhīd, p.222, 5-16.

theological schools with the result that each group or sect maintained that it alone held the true interpretation and accused the others of heresy or unbelief.⁽¹⁾ All this confusion, according to al-Māturīdī, resulted from the wrong methods used by these sects in their ta'wīl; these sects used the Qur'ān to serve their own ends and desires and, instead of drawing their doctrines and concepts from the Qur'ān, they used the Qur'ān to justify their preformulated beliefs and concepts.⁽²⁾ To al-Māturīdī, such sectarian interpretation should not be accepted unless rational proofs and arguments to justify it are produced.⁽³⁾ However, this restriction on ta'wīl should not entail the acceptance of the other extreme view which rejects interpretation altogether and advocates the acceptance of the verses at face value. To al-Māturīdī, if such views were accepted the Qur'ān would be contradictory because we find in one verse, "Those who believe in God and the Last Day ask not leave ^{of} thee"⁽⁴⁾, and in another verse, "Surely those who ask thy leave - those are they that believe in God and His messenger."⁽⁵⁾ So, judging by the verbal appearances of these two verses, there is obvious contradiction. Also, we find that one verse concerning divorce says, "If he divorces her (finally), she shall not be lawful to him after that,

- (1) Ta'wīlāt, 3:1; Ibn_Rushd, Faṣl al-Maqāl., p.36.
- (2) Ghazālī attacks both the Bāṭinites and the Ṣufis for twisting the meanings of the Qur'ān to serve their heretical views.
Ihya', vol.1, p.33.
- (3) Ta'wīlāt, 4:1.
- (4) Qur'ān, 9:44.
- (5) Ibid., 24:62.

until she marries another husband,"⁽¹⁾ and another verse states, "If he divorces her, then it is not fault in them to return to each other, if they suppose that they will maintain God's bounds."⁽²⁾ In the first verse there is prohibition and in the other there is permission, and judging by verbal appearances they contradict each other. So a proper understanding of the Qur'ān is attained not by considering its verbal appearance, but by reflecting and pondering upon its contents.⁽³⁾

So, to al-Māturīdī, negligence of the use of reasoning as well as the excess of its use, were the main causes behind the confusion concerning the ambiguous verses. The muḥkam becomes concealed for certain reasons: on one hand there is man's inclination to what pleases him, his following of what he is accustomed to, his blind imitation, and the lack of investigation. On the other hand there is his excessive reliance on his intellect and his attempts to judge revelation according to the dictate of his own reason. Man, to al-Māturīdī, is imprisoned by his natural disposition, and chained by his desires, so he is inclined to what he is accustomed to, and it is difficult for him to accept the judgement of reason, or exercise his effort to look for truth.⁽⁴⁾ On the other hand, his excessive admiration and reliance on reason prevents man from attaining the proper meaning of revelation. So, prudent intellect or

(1) Qur'ān, 2:230.

(2) Ibid.

(3) Ta'wīlāt, 4:82.

(4) Tawhīd, p.223,4-7.

modest reasoning is the best method for interpreting the ambiguous verses; and this is the duty of wise men, scholars and men of insight (ahl al-basar), and the duty of the others is to follow them. (1)

(e) Al-Maturidī's Ta'wilāt and theological problems:

The Qur'ān is the major factor which directed the thought of the Muslim thinkers, especially the theologians; it was a source of inspiration for many theological theories and, from its verses, solutions for theological problems were introduced. So it is not surprising to find that al-Maturidī's commentary on the Qur'ān is a mine of information for his theological views, and that throughout his Ta'wilāt, al-Maturidī endeavoured to formulate his theological doctrines and to produce his arguments for them.

From his commentary on the verse, "There is nothing like unto Him" (2), al-Maturidī formulated his principle of tanzīh and the rule that none of God's acts or attributes should be measured by man's acts or attributes; accordingly, he argued and refuted the attitude of the Mushabbiha which is based on some Qur'ānic verses that suggest resemblance between God and man. To al-Maturidī, the rule for dealing with such verses is, that after the establishment of tanzīh, they should either be applied to God without interpretation or be allegorically interpreted in a sense suited to the highness and the majesty of God. Al-Maturidī

(1) Ta'wilāt, 4:82.

(2) Ibid., 42:11.

himself, as will be seen later, inclined towards the second method, and thus he explained away all the verses which attributed to God hands, eyes, face, etc., which is contradictory to the principle of tanzīh. Similarly, al-Māturīdī argued from the verses 16:40 and 41:10 for his views on the attribute of tawkīn and God's act of creation. The verse 1:4 proves to him the eternity of God's attributes, the attribute of essence and actions. The verse, "Thee only we serve" proves that Iman is affirmative and one should not say, "I am [^]believer if God wills." Also from the verse, "We have divided between them their livelihood in the present life ...", al-Māturīdī produces arguments for the establishment of God's creation of man's actions, and for the defence of his theory of acquisition (Kasb). More details of these doctrines and concepts are to be found later in this thesis; these few examples, however, show that al-Māturīdī, like the other theologians, used the Qur'ān as a basis for the formulation of his doctrines and the defence of his views.

Apart from this, however, al-Māturīdī's Ta'wīlāt discloses his vast knowledge and acquaintance with the views of the Muslim sects as well as other schools of thought; it shows that he was well conversant with the cultural heritage of his time. Throughout his Ta'wīlāt, al-Māturīdī argued and disputed the views of various schools and sects; he discussed and refuted the Karrāmīte views on Īmān; (1) attacked those whom he called the Hashwites, Mushabbiha, and Ashāb al-Ḥadīth, and criticized their views on the attributes of God. (2) Al-Māturīdī also discussed and refuted

(1) Ta'wīlāt, 2:8, vol.1, p.44; 49:14.

(2) Ibid., 7:86; 50:38; 60:1.

the Bātinītes' views on the annihilation of the bodies (fanā' al-ajsām) and their views on the last day.⁽¹⁾ Al-Māturīdī also rejected the Bātinītes' interpretation of the Qur'ānic verse, "He is the first, and the last, the outward and the inward, He has knowledge of everything." The Bātinītes explained the first as referring to the first originator, and the last to the second originator, the outward is the prophet, an-nātiq, and the inward is their infallible Imām, who has the knowledge and authority for interpreting the Qur'ān.⁽²⁾ Al-Māturīdī also disputed many of the views of the Jews, Christians, the Materialists (dahriyya), the dualists, Zoroastrians and the philosophers. Al-Māturīdī devoted most effort towards refuting the view of the Mu'tazilites. In his Ta'wīlāt, he took every opportunity to demonstrate the inconsistency of the Mu'tazilites' views, and the invalidity of their arguments and the erroneousness of their doctrines. Among the common expressions in al-Māturīdī's commentary are, "The Mu'tazilites said so and so ... and its interpretation to us is so and so ..."; "This verse refutes the Mu'tazilites' views ..."; "The Mu'tazilites have no arguments from this verse to support their doctrines" ; and the names of Ja'far b. Ḥarb, Abū-Bakr al-Aṣamm, al-Jubbā'ī, an-Nazzām, and Abū-l-'Abbās an-Nāshī', are frequently mentioned.

From what has been said it might be concluded that al-Māturīdī was among the first theologians to deal elaborately with epistemological problems, and to introduce a systematic

(1) Ta'wīlāt, 73:5.

(2) Ibid., 57:3.

theory of knowledge based on sense perceptions, reports and reason as the only sources for attaining knowledge. As far as religion is concerned, al-Māturīdī gave priority to revelation especially in defining religious dogmas, at the same time, however, he assigned to reason a prominent place and considered it as a precondition of religious responsibility, and as a means for establishing and defending on rational grounds these dogmas and doctrines. Al-Māturīdī's commentary on the Qur'ān discloses his emphasis on the role of reason in religion and, though he depended on the Qur'ān and authentic Traditions as sources for his ta'wīl, al-Māturīdī freely used his personal opinion to reach his own views and conclusions.

CHAPTER II

THE THEOLOGICAL METHOD OF AL-ASH'ARĪ

Introduction

Al-Ash'arī's methodology differs from one work to another according to the nature and scope of the work. The aim of the Luma', for instance, was to elucidate and defend the Sunnite doctrine against the views of the Mu'tazilites. Therefore, it lays more emphasis on the major Mu'tazilite tenets, and it also employs the same method of argument used by the Mu'tazilites, which is based on rational argument and extensive use of analogy. Risālat Istihsān al-Khawḍ fi-'Ilm al-Kalām (Risāla I) is intended to justify the use of Kalām as a method, in opposition to the Ḥanbalites. Thus it agrees with the Luma' in placing more emphasis on the rational aspects of al-Ash'arī's thoughts.

The Risālat ahl ath-Thaḡhr (Risāla II), however, was meant to defend the traditional methodology and to refute the excessive use of rational speculation in theology, while the Ibāna was designed mainly to appeal to the sentiment of the Traditionalists and to win their favour. Thus, it selected the points discussed by these groups and made use of the type of arguments which were familiar to them. It agrees with Risāla II in that it places more emphasis on this traditional aspect. In spite of these differences, however, the general views and the conclusions expressed in these works were those of al-Ash'arī.

1. His Methodology in the Luma'

(a) Al-Ash'arī's defence of reasoning:

In his Luma', al-Ash'arī not only used rational arguments to prove his views, but he openly defended the use of reasoning and deductive method in theology. He regarded the arguments of the Qur'an on the possibility of restoration of creatures, as clear evidences for the justification of reasoning in theology. In the Qur'anic verses, 36:78-79, God made the first creation a proof of the possibility of the last creation, because the same concept is present in both of them. In another verse, 36:80, He made the appearance of fire from the green tree a proof of the possibility of His creating life in decayed and crumbling bones and of His power to create its like. So by using the method of reasoning and analogy, the Qur'an proves the possibility of the restoration of creatures; and by the same method theological concepts and problems might be formulated and solved. According to al-Ash'arī, "God applied the same judgement to things of similar nature, and compared them in the same way, because He has said, "God originates creation then brings it back again." Q.30:11, and said, "And it is He who originates creation, then brings it back again, and it is very easy for Him" Q.30:27. Thus He likened the initial creation to the restoration, and since such a method was used and adopted in the Qur'an, then there should be no objection to its application to theological problems. (1)

Al-Ash'arī derived another proof of the validity of

(1) Luma', pp.8-9.

reasoning and deductive methods from the story of Abraham's search for God, expressed in the Qur'ānic verses. It has been recorded that when Abraham saw the star he said, "This is my Lord." But when it set he said, "I love not the setters." When he saw the moon rising, he said, "This is my Lord", but when it set he said, "If my Lord does not guide me I shall surely be of the people gone astray."⁽¹⁾ By observing the star and the moon, Abraham noticed that both set and inferred that neither of them could be God, and according to al-Ash'arī, Abraham combined the moon and the star in issuing his judgement that neither of them could possibly be God since setting is common to both "and this is the method of reasoning and inference which some people unjustifiably repudiated and eschewed."⁽²⁾

(b) His method of argument:

Al-Ash'arī made use of rational arguments and deductive methods to formulate his views and to refute those of his opponents. In the processes of his arguments he employed qiyās in its different forms, introduced polemical arguments and quoted the Qur'ānic verses to support his conclusions and to justify his point of view.

Qiyās (analogy)

Analogy is one of the methods used by al-Ash'arī to defend his views and demonstrate the validity of his doctrines. Thus in the Luma', expressions such as dalīl (proof)⁽³⁾, min bāb

(1) Qur'an, 6:76-77.

(2) Luma', p.8.

(3) Ibid., pp.6, 8, 11.

al-qiyās (from the standpoint of analogy),⁽¹⁾ dalīl min al-qiyās (analogical proof)⁽²⁾, are commonly used. Al-Ash'arī, however, used qiyās as a general term covering every form of intellectual activity and speculation leading to a new result. Thus qiyās, to him, includes qiyās al-ghā'ib 'ala-l-shāhid, Aristotelian syllogism, as well as demonstrative method or rational argumentation based on general observation and common sense.

Concerning qiyās al-ghā'ib 'ala-l-shāhid, al-Ash'arī used this kind of analogy to establish the attributes of God, and to prove that God is knowing, powerful, and that He is eternally hearing and seeing.⁽³⁾ He also drew comparisons between the things of the present world and those related to the sphere of God. So to prove that God has knowledge by which He knows, al-Ash'arī drew a comparison between man's works and those of God, and since the former proved that we are knowing and that we have knowledge, the latter must also prove that God is also knowing and that also He has a knowledge. According to al-Ash'arī, "The works of wisdom (as-sana'i' al-hikmiyya) do not proceed from one of us unless he possesses knowledge, the analogy between this and the works of God proves that He also knows and possesses a knowledge."⁽⁴⁾

In his Luma', al-Ash'arī systematically formulated his arguments according to the Aristotelian syllogism, and many of

(1) Luma', p.32.

(2) Ibid., pp. 17, 38, 42, 67.

(3) Ibid., pp.10-13.

(4) Ibid., p.12.

these arguments can easily be identified with one form or another of this qiyās. To defend the eternity of God's speech al-Ash'arī systematically argued, "Had God ever been not-speaking, He would have been qualified by one of the contraries of speech, that contrary of speech would have been eternal. And if that contrary of speech had been eternal, it would have been impossible for it to cease to exist and for the creator to speak, for the eternal cannot cease to exist, just as it cannot begin to exist. So the creator would have had to be not-speaking, not-commanding, and not-prohibiting in any way whatever; but it is agreed that this is false. So if this be false, it is true and certain that the creator has ever been speaking and saying."⁽¹⁾

Also arguing for the possibility of the vision of God, al-Ash'arī introduced the following syllogism: What cannot be predicated of God and cannot be true of Him is of such a nature that allowing it would involve the affirmation of His origination or the origination of a quality in Him or the likening of Him to creatures, or classing Him under a genus, etc. But the affirmation of the vision involves none of these which cannot be predicated of God. Therefore, the vision is not impossible.⁽²⁾

Al-Ash'arī, like al-Māturīdī, used the hypothetical form of syllogism, which normally assumes the form of dividing the answer into many alternatives, and then demonstrating the falsity of them all or some of them and thus proving the assumed suggestion. Thus to demonstrate the eternity of God's speech, al-Ash'arī

(1) Luma', p.17.

(2) Ibid., pp.32-33.

argued that God's speech must either be eternal or temporal. The second alternative allows for three suggestions: (i) that God produces it by Himself, (ii) or it is self-subsistent, (iii) or that he produces it in another substrate. Then he proved the impossibility of these three alternatives and concluded that God's speech must be eternal.⁽¹⁾ The same method is used to establish the oneness of God, by demonstrating the falsity of all the suggestions resulting from assuming that more than one God exists, he was able to prove His oneness.⁽²⁾ Similar methods or argument were used to establish the point that power exists simultaneously with the act.⁽³⁾

Many of al-Ash'arī's rational arguments were based on general observation and common sense, and to prove his point of view, he often drew examples from the common things as happened around him. So to defend his views that capacity exists with the act, al-Ash'arī said the rational proof for the existence of capacity with the acts is that, if we were to see a man actually praying, we should not know precisely when his capacity had begun to exist for him, however, we should know from the act itself that his capacity was evidently for the act i.e. the prayer which he was performing.⁽⁴⁾ Arguing also for the creation of man's act, al-Ash'arī said, "The rational proof of the creation of man's acts is our experience that unbelief is bad and false

(1) Luma', p.22,5-17.

(2) Ibid., p.8.

(3) Ibid., pp.54,19-20; 55,1-3.

(4) Ibid., p.27,13-18.

whereas faith is good, toilsome and painful. The unbeliever exerts himself to make unbelief good and right, and the believer wishes that faith would not be toilsome and painful. Their wishes, however, do not change the character of belief and unbelief. On the other hand, we know that an act does not come into existence as it really is unless someone produces it as such. Since the believer and unbeliever wish their convictions to be otherwise, and still they come contrary to their wishes, then they cannot be the real producers of their doctrines, and the intentional producers of them must be God.⁽¹⁾

In addition to these rational arguments, al-Ash'arī used many polemical arguments. He used the method of ilzām to refute his opponents. The Mu'tazilites assumed that the fact that God's will has not been fulfilled does not mean that He is weak, since He is able to force man to action (i.e. to believe), should He wish. To refute this assumption, al-Ash'arī referred to the Mu'tazilites' own view that a forced belief does not merit reward, so God cannot force men to believe. In another argument, he said that since the Qadarites believe that man is forced to believe or not to believe, they are bound to hold that in this case God would not be able to perform the lutf (grace) through which the disbelievers would have inevitably been believers.⁽²⁾

(c) The Qur'an and the Method of its Interpretation.

Though reasoning and rational method are the common features

(1) Luma', p.67.

(2) Ibid., p.38.

of the Luma', the role of reason is limited to prove and to demonstrate the validity of the dogmas and doctrines which have already been laid down by revelation. So, in spite of the prevalence of rational arguments in the Luma', the Qur'ānic verses are frequently quoted. The use of the Qur'ānic verses, however, differs slightly from their usage in the Ibāna, in that in Luma', al-Ash'arī did not simply gather the verses and let them speak for themselves, which he often did in the Ibāna. The general features of his arguments in the Luma' were that he introduced rational arguments to establish his views, then he quoted Qur'ānic verses to give strength to his arguments. Sometimes, however, al-Ash'arī used the verse as basis upon which he built rational arguments, followed it up with proofs from analogy and reasoning.

Al-Ash'arī's method for interpreting the Qur'ān remained similar to that of the Ibāna, an aspect which will be discussed in detail later. He emphasized the point that the Qur'ān does not contradict itself, and thus all the verses concerning a certain point should be taken into account, so that the proper meaning of each verse might be attained. Commenting on the Qur'ānic verse, "I created Jinn and men only that they might adore me",⁽¹⁾ al-Ash'arī said, "By these words God meant some of the Jinn and men i.e. those of them who do adore Him," for He said in another verse, "And We have created for hell many Jinn and men."⁽²⁾ Since the Qur'ān does not contradict itself, ■

(1) Qur'ān, 51:56.

(2) Ibid., 7:179.

God must have created many for hell, because of the verse we have just cited, and he must have created some of them to adore Him, because of His word, "I have created Jinn and men only so that they might adore Me". And those whom He has created to adore Him and those whom He has willed should adore Him, and who end by adoring Him."⁽¹⁾ So by collecting together all the verses concerning the point, al-Ash'arī succeeded in rendering his opponent's arguments, on the above-mentioned verse, futile.

He also pointed out that the literal meaning of the verse should be preserved unless there is a convincing reason or proof for the acceptance of another interpretation. Therefore, al-Ash'arī refuted the Mu'tazilite interpretation of the verse, "Looking at their Lord" as meaning "Looking at the reward of their Lord" and said, the reward of God is something distinct from Him, and one may not turn from the literal to the figurative meaning of speech without a convincing reason or proof.⁽²⁾ And through his section on the particular and universal (al-'āmm wal-khāṣ), al-Ash'arī argued that only positive proofs decide whether particular or universal meaning is meant by a verse. Though al-Ash'arī said that these proofs might be the language in which the Qur'ān is revealed, or the reliable authority, yet he said that if there is any slight indication that language might convey a meaning different from that held by authority, that of the authority should be followed, and the grammarians, according to him, could not be cited as authority in this respect when compared with the companions of the prophet and his followers.⁽³⁾

(1) Luma', pp.67-8.

(2) Ibid., p.35.

(3) Ibid., pp.61-2.

2. Al-Ash'arī's Method in his Risālat Istihsān al-Khawd fi-'Ilm al-Kalām (Risāla I)

(a) Al-Ash'arī's Vindication of Kalām

Al-Ash'arī's treatise Risālat Istihsān al-Khawd fi-'Ilm al-Kalām, is mainly devoted to the justification of speculative theology, the establishment of the validity of rational arguments, and at the same time to the refutation of the attitude of the traditionalists, who raised many objections against the contents and method of Kalām (rational theology). In this treatise, al-Ash'arī described his opponents as being ignorant, unable to rationalise or inquire into religious matters, and more inclined to taqlīd and blind imitation of authority. The same group held the doctrine of the Uncreatedness of the Qur'an⁽¹⁾ and followed Ibn-Hanbal in this respect.⁽²⁾ Those traditionalists accused the Mutakallimūn of being deviationists and innovators, and raised the following objections against Kalām:

1. They claimed that engagement in discussion of matters such as motion and rest, body and accident, accidental modes and states, the atom and the leap, and the attributes of God, is innovation and deviation, otherwise if it were a matter of guidance the prophet and his companions would have discussed it.
2. Before his death, the prophet had discussed and clearly explained all needful religious matters; and since no reports concerning the concepts and terminologies

(1) Risāla I, p.87.

(2) Ibid., p.93.

of Kalām related to him, it is obvious that Kalām is an innovation and engagement in it is a deviation.

3. The absence of reports from the prophet and his companions on Kalām might be explained in two ways:

(a) Either they knew Kalām, but they intentionally abstained from discussing it. So we might follow their steps and refrain from plunging into it, since it is not a part of religion, otherwise the prophet and his companions would not have been silent about it.

(b) Or they were ignorant of it, and in this case it is permissible for us to be ignorant of it, for if Kalām were a part of religion, they would not have been ignorant of it. So according to both explanations Kalām is an innovation and plunging into it is a deviation. (1)

Al-Ash'arī's Risāla I was an attempt to refute these accusations and claims. Thus, his main interest was to demonstrate that: (1) Kalām is not an innovation. (2) That its basic principles are laid down in the Qur'ān and Traditions so it is not a deviation and (3) That the prophet and his companions were not ignorant of Kalām.

1. Al-Ash'arī strongly rejected the traditionalists' claims, that Kalām is an innovation; and by using their own argument al-Ash'arī said, the prophet had never stated that one should consider a person as a deviating innovator, merely on the basis of the fact that he indulges in discussions related to Kalām, so by asserting such accusations, the traditionalists were constrained

(1) Risāla I, p. 88

to regard themselves as innovators since they had discussed something which the prophet did not discuss, and accused of deviation one whom the prophet did not so accuse.⁽¹⁾ This also applies to the traditionalists' doctrine on the creation of the Qur'ān, their suspension of judgement on it, and their accusation of unbelief against him who says "the Qur'ān is created; because the prophet had not stated that if this question should arise after his death, that one should suspend his judgement on it, and say nothing about it, nor did he say that one should regard a person as deviating and unbelieving when he affirms that, or when he denies that it is created."⁽²⁾ So by passing any judgement such as this, the traditionalists were innovators. However, the traditionalists' logic constrained them to consider Mālik, ath-Thawrī, Shāfi'ī, and Abū-Hanīfa as deviating innovators since they discussed and compiled books on matters neither discussed nor referred to by the prophet.⁽³⁾ So what al-Ash'arī was trying to emphasize was that the mere absence of reports from the prophet or statement from his companions on a matter, does not render its discussion an innovation,⁽⁴⁾ and so the traditionalists' attitude based on such a concept is totally wrong and invalid. The last argument, however, implies that al-Ash'arī held the

(1) Risāla I, p.88

(2) Ibid., p.95.

(3) Ibid., p.97

(4) Al-Ash'arī seems to have intentionally overlooked all the Traditions condemning discussions of theological problems, See Wensinck, A Handbook of Early Mohammadan Tradition, p.54.

view that discussion on Kalām is of equal legitimacy with argument on fiqh; he seems to have considered that there is no difference between fiqh and Kalām as far as validity of subjects is concerned. Therefore, if discussion and argument of Kalām were an innovation, then discussion of problems relating to fiqh would be an innovation as well; a notion which his adversaries would not accept. (1)

2. The second point which al-Ash'arī tried hard to establish was that, the basic principles of both the object and methods of Kalām were implicitly contained in the Qur'ān and Traditions, so that they were not excluded from the religious matters as the traditionalists claimed. He explained how the principles of motion and rest are implied in the Qur'ānic story of Abraham's search for God. (6:76/77). The theologians' argument for the oneness of God goes back to the Qur'ānic verses, and the detailed treatment of the questions deriving from the basic dogma of God's oneness and His justice is simply taken from the Qur'ān. (2) The possibility and impossibility of the resurrection are based upon the Qur'ānic arguments, which are designed to confirm, from the point of reason the possibility of resurrection after death. (3) The principle that the series of things which begins to exist has a beginning, and the refutation of the Materialists' views that there is no motion which is not preceded by a motion, and no day which is not preceded by a day, and the rejection of the views that there is no atom which cannot be halved ad infinitum;

(1) Ibn-Rushd uses the same argument to justify the philosophical method; Ibn-Rushd, Fasl al-Ma'āl, pp.7-8.

(2) Risāla I, p.89.

(3) Ibid., pp.90-91.

the basis of all these concepts and arguments, according to al-Ash'arī, are to be found in the Sunna of the prophet. He quoted the Tradition concerning the man who when his wife bore a black child was suspicious of her, but was convinced of the child's legitimacy by the prophet, who drew to him example from the camels who often have offsprings of a different colour from themselves. Al-Ash'arī pointed out that this method of argument used by the prophet is of a revealed source, and it is based on the principle of referring things to their similar kinds and comparing them to those related to them. He concluded that this method of proof should be the basis in our judgement regarding the things which are similar or alike (ash-shabīh wal-nazīr).⁽¹⁾

The Qur'ān and Traditions also contain many of the theological methods, and thus the basis of the rational refutation of the adversary (al-munāqada 'ala-l-khasm) is derived from the way in which the prophet argued with the fat rabbi, and with those who claimed that God had enjoined upon them, that they should not believe an apostle until he should come to them with a sacrifice which fire would consume, (3:183).⁽²⁾ The basis for the method of correcting the sophistry of the adversary, (istidrāk mughālatāt al-khusūm) is also taken from both the Qur'ānic verse, "You and what you worship, apart from God, will be fuel to Gehenna, you shall go down to it.", and the argument developed upon it between the prophet and 'Abdallah b.al-Ziba'ra.⁽³⁾

(1) Risāla I, pp.91-92.

(2) Ibid., p.93.

(3) Ibid., pp.93-94. See also Suyūṭī, Asbāb an-Nuzūl, vol.2,p.20.

After quoting many verses and Traditions, to support his assumption that the Qur'ān and the Sunna included many of the subjects and methods of theology, al-Ash'arī concluded by saying, "All the verses we have mentioned, as well as many which we have not mentioned, are the basis and argument for us in our discussion of what we have mentioned in detail. It is true that no question was particularized in the Qur'ān and the Sunna, but that was because the particularisation of questions involving rational principles did not take place in the days of the prophet. However, he and his companions did engage in Kalām of the sort which is mentioned."⁽¹⁾ So, to al-Ash'arī, the Qur'ān and Traditions contained the seeds of theological methods and problems. The prophet and his companions dealt with them in the terms and methods suited to the needs and necessities of their period, and it is legitimate for us to deal with these problems in the light of the new development of terms and methods.

3. This leads us to the third point which al-Ash'arī discussed and emphasized; that the prophet was not ignorant of the theological concepts and terms such as: body, and accident, motion and leap etc. It is true that he did not discuss every one of these points specifically, but this was not because he had no knowledge of them, but because the need to use them did not arise in his time in such specific form, so that he may have or may not have discussed them, even though their basic principles were present in the Qur'ān and the Sunna.⁽²⁾ So, if Kalām on the creation of the Qur'ān and on the atom and the leap, in these precise terms, had originated in the prophet's time, he would have

(1) Risāla I, p.94.

(2) Ibid.

discussed and explained them, just as he explained and discussed all the specific questions which did originate in his time. (1)

(b) Al-Ash'arī's Differentiation between Fiqh and Kalām.

Though al-Ash'arī, in his defence of Kalām, used the arguments used by the jurists in their justification of qiyās in fiqh; nevertheless he pointed out the differences between fiqh and Kalām both in method and in contents. The two systems belong to religion, (2) but each one of them has its own field and principles. Al-Ash'arī held that the Qur'ān and the prophet have recourse to reason in settling disputes with their opponents; the Qur'ānic arguments with those who denied resurrection, were designed to confirm, from the point of view of reason, the possibility of life after death, and the prophet's disputes with his opponents were based on rational arguments. (3) On the other hand, the companions and the early generation of lawyers discussed many religious questions related to law, such as the problems of inheritance, divorce, and punishments, (ḥudūd) and in the absence of explicit instructions on such matters, they referred and linked them (raddūhā wa qāsūhā) to something which had been determined explicitly by the Qur'ān and Traditions and their own ijtihād. So there are two systems of thought, fiqh, which is concerned

(1) Risāla I, p.95.

(2) Ibid., pp.89-94. Where al-Ash'arī tried to establish that the problems and methods of Kalām are to be found adumbrated in the Qur'ān and Traditions.

(3) Ibid., pp.90; 92.

with furū' and depends mainly on revelation, and Kalām which is concerned with theological problems and depends on reason. According to al-Ash'arī, "the fiqh questions, which involved judgements on unprecedented secondary cases were traced back, by the jurists, to the rules of the Shari'a, or revealed law, which consist of particulars and whose rules can be formulated only with reference to revelation (sam') and the prophet's teachings. But as regards those questions concerning universal principles (usūl) i.e., theological problems, every rational Muslim ought to retrace them to the set of principles which have been unanimously upheld through reason, sense-experience, and evident truth etc. This is because the treatment of the questions of Shari'a, which belong to the sphere of Tradition is to reduce these to the principles of the Shari'a, which also belong to the sphere of Traditions; while the treatment of the questions arising from reason and sense-experience is that these should be retraced to their own proper sphere (i.e. of reason and sense-experience). Rational and traditional questions (al-'aqliyyāt wal-sam'iyāt) must never be mixed up."⁽¹⁾ So reason, sense-experience and evident truth are the means of formulating theological problems, while fiqh questions should be retraced only to revelation.

(c) Reason and Religious Knowledge

So far we have seen how al-Ash'arī used rational arguments to formulate and defend his views, and that he exerted his utmost

(1) Risāla I, p.95.

efforts to justify reasoning in theology and to establish the legitimacy of Kalām. In spite of this, however, he did not allow reason absolute freedom in all fields of religious knowledge, but he emphasized the shortcomings of this intellectual faculty, and the limits beyond which it should not venture. To him, reason is a means of knowing God, and by his intellect man is able to attain such knowledge. At the same time, however, he pointed out that reason alone does not make this knowledge incumbent upon man, it is only revelation that imposes the knowledge of God. Thus, as ash-Shahrastānī said, "al-Ash'arī distinguished between the attainment of knowledge of God through reason, and its necessarily coming that way. All knowledge comes by reason, said he, but revelation makes it incumbent upon men."⁽¹⁾

Al-Ash'arī emphasized the point that reason is only an instrument for perception and it does not impose religious duties. To him, reason proves the origin of the world, the oneness of its maker, His power and eternal attributes ... etc., but the imposition of religious duties is only known by revelation (shar'). If God orders the doing of a thing it becomes duty (wājib), and if He prohibits a thing it becomes unlawful, (haram), before revelation, however, nothing is said to be obligatory or unlawful.⁽²⁾ The other point which al-Ash'arī emphasizes is that there is no reward or punishment for deeds before the sending of a messenger. Therefore, if one, through his intellect alone, reached a perfect knowledge of God, he would be a believer though he would

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(1) Iqdām, p.371.

(2) Baghdādī, Usūl, p.24.

not deserve any reward; on the other hand if his intellect led him to atheism he would suffer no punishment; because reward and punishment are only for obedience and disobedience which are conceived when there is command, and without revelation there will be no command. (1)

3. Al-Ash'arī's Method in his Risālat ahl-al-Thaghr (Risāla II)

The aim of this treatise is to answer some of the questions raised by the scholars and jurists of the frontier (thaghr) of Bāb al-Abwāb, (2) concerning the agreed methods and principles of religion. Al-Ash'arī said that he was going to explain the doctrines of the fathers (salaf), along with their rational arguments and proofs, to justify the method which they followed, i.e., the method of revelation; and to expose the errors of the methods of the philosophers (turuq al-falāsifa). (3) Accordingly, al-Ash'arī divided his treatise into two parts, one dealt with the methods of the Qur'ān and Traditions and contained criticisms of the other methods followed by the philosophers and similar groups. The other part dealt with the exposition of the doctrines upheld by the fathers.

To al-Ash'arī, there were two methods which were diametrically opposed, the method based on revelation (tarīqat ash-shar') and

(1) Baghdādī, Uṣūl, p.25.

(2) Bāb al-Abwāb is the Arab designationⁿ of a pass and fortress at the Eastern end of the Caucasus in Persian Darband.

D.M. Dunlop, art. "Bab al-Abwab" E.I.², vol.i, pp.835-36.

(3) Risāla II, p.81.

the method of the philosophers. And while the former method is based on the Qur'ān and Traditions, the latter is based on rational deduction and some principles which are alien to revelation. To illustrate the Qur'ānic method, al-Ash'arī gave examples from the Qur'ān and the prophet's teachings which deal with theological problems. The Qur'ān contains rational arguments for the existence of God, His oneness, and the possibility of resurrection, it also contains rational arguments against the Arab pagans, those who denied the necessity of prophecy, and the Jews and Christians who denied the prophethood of Muhammad. (1)

The Qur'ānic verse, "We created man of an extraction of clay then We set him a drop in a receptacle secure, then We created of the drop a clot, then We created of the clot a tissue, then We created of the tissue bones, then We garmented the bones in flesh, thereafter We produced him another creature, so blessed be God, the fairest of Creators." (2), proves the origination of man, and the existence of his originator. This Qur'ānic argument about the phenomenon of change in the states of man might be formalized by the following syllogisms: man changes from one state to another, changeable things cannot be eternal, but originated, therefore man is originated, and since originated things need an originator, man must have an originator who is powerful and wise. In accordance with this verse, al-Ash'arī gave many examples which reveal the perfection and intention in the creation of man, and the wisdom of his creator. (3) The Qur'ānic verse, "Surely

(1) Risāla II, pp.82-86.

(2) Qur'ān, 23:11.

(3) Risāla II, pp.82-83.

in the creation of heaven and earth, and in the alternation of night and day, there are signs for men possessed of mind"⁽¹⁾, confirms such concepts, and indicates that many things in this world, including the alternation of night and day, were meant for the benefit of man, and to meet his demands.⁽²⁾

The main objective of the prophet, was to call to the attention of people of diverse opinions, the fact of their origination, the oneness of the originator, and to explain to them the methods and proofs for knowing God, which are mainly derived from the signs in His creation. The prophet has clearly explained all these principles and doctrines as well as the method for proving them. Because of this fact, the companions did not indulge in discussions regarding such matters; they simply accepted what the prophet said without questioning or adding to it.⁽³⁾ Thus, to al-Ash'arī, religious doctrines and dogmas were firmly established by revelation, hence the companions had no need to discuss or argue about them. Yet, they discussed and investigated those problems which are related to fiqh, and which concerned judgement upon unprecedented cases. When such cases occurred, the companions referred them to the principles laid down by revelation, and gave their solution in accordance with these principles. The different methods of ijtihād (personal effort) were an outcome of this attitude towards fiqh's problems. Thus, the early Muslim generations did not follow the steps of

(1) Qur'ān, 3:190.

(2) Risāla II, pp.83-84.

(3) Ibid.

each other, but they exercised their own opinions since they had been ordered to think and reflect upon such matters. As for those matters related to dogmas such as the knowledge of God, His attributes, justice and wisdom, the companions were well instructed on them by the prophet so they did not need to compose arguments about them. Later generations had no excuse to attempt to find any method other than that transmitted to them, or to recommence new proofs or arguments other than those stated by revelation, because it is impossible for anyone to introduce a method or argument better than that of the prophet, or to attain knowledge of something unknown to him. (1)

From what has been said, it seems that al-Ash'arī differentiated between the method of dealing with questions of fiqh and treatment of theological problems, and while one is free, as the companions were, to discuss, infer and dispute law problems, according to the principles laid down for arguments on such subjects, one does not need to engage in arguments on dogmatic matters, since these matters were well established, in both method and doctrines, by revelation. But does this mean that al-Ash'arī imposed restrictions on reasoning and investigation of theological problems and thereby forsook the notion which he vigorously defended in his other treatise, the Risāla I? Or is it that he was simply trying to construct his methods and theological doctrines about revelation? We have already seen in the Risāla I how al-Ash'arī exerted his utmost efforts to justify speculative theology and to establish the validity of

(1) Risāla II, p.88.

rational arguments, and strongly emphasized that the basic principles of both objects and method of kalām, were implicitly contained in the Qur'ān and Traditions.⁽¹⁾ In the present treatise, al-Ash'arī clearly stated that revelation has its own method in dealing with theological problems, and that no-one should exceed the bounds which are laid down by the Qur'ān and Traditions in this respect; he also demonstrated how rational proofs and arguments can be extracted from the Scriptural texts. So in both treatises, al-Ash'arī was trying to lay down the bases of theological methods and proofs according to revelation, but in the Risāla I he was arguing with those who opposed any sort of speculation in theology, so he laid more emphasis on the importance of reasoning in theology and that the basis for theological methods and proofs are to be found in Scriptural sources. In Risālat ahl al-Thaḡhr, however, al-Ash'arī was defending the Qur'ānic method against the excesses of the philosophers and the extremist theologians, who used methods and arguments, contrary or different in some respects, to that of the Qur'ān, so he laid more emphasis on the importance of following the method of revelation, and argued against all attempts to deviate from it.

So, though the points of emphasis differed from one treatise to the other, the central theme of both treatises remained the same, i.e., that revelation contained the method and object of theology. In other words, revelation laid down the framework for theological method upon which reason might work. Thus, al-Ash'arī

(1) See Supra, pp. 97-102.

does not reject reasoning or rational proofs in theology, but he gave revelation priority in establishing method and doctrines of the faith, so that reasoning and rational arguments for them might follow. And this is what al-Ash'arī has done in the second part of his present treatise. In that part of his Risāla II, which deals with the doctrines of the fathers, al-Ash'arī did not only enumerate the articles of their belief as he did in his creeds of the Ibāna and the Maqālāt, but he introduced arguments and rational proofs for them. Thus, to establish the doctrine that there is nothing like God, al-Ash'arī quoted the Qur'ānic verses which supported this doctrine, and upon these verses he built the following arguments: If God were similar to His creatures, it would be that either He is originated like them, or that they are eternal, both premises have been proven to be wrong, so God is not similar to His creatures.⁽¹⁾ By using the same rational method, al-Ash'arī argued for the eternity of God's attributes and that they do not necessitate a similarity between Him and His creatures, and that they are neither God nor other than He.⁽²⁾ To explain that the coming (majī') of God, mentioned in the Qur'ānic verses, did not imply movement, al-Ash'arī said, "The coming means movement, if the comer is body or substance, but God is neither body nor substance. Therefore His coming does not imply movement."⁽³⁾

From these examples it seems that al-Ash'arī did not reject

(1) Risāla II, p.93.

(2) Ibid., pp.93-94.

(3) Ibid., p.97.

reasoning or rational proofs in theology, but he was simply trying to establish that the method used by revelation is more valid than that used by the philosophers. He made this point quite clear throughout his present treatise, and according to him, since the truthfulness of the prophet has been firmly established, all his authentic reports must be the only method for knowing all that we do not perceive by our senses. The prophet's reports, in this respect, are more convincing, and as evidences they are clearer than those methods used by the philosophers; because there are many objections raised against the method of the philosophers, and unless these objections are answered, this method must not be accepted as a valid method for solving theological problems. (1)

Al-Ash'arī identified the argument for the existence of God based on the concepts of accidents and substance, which were mainly used by the theologians, as that of the philosophers and severely criticized it. To him, the very existence of these accidents needed to be established, and the advocates of this method had to show the falsity of the objections raised against their existence. It has also to be proved that these accidents were different from substances; that they were not self-subsistent; that they did not endure; that they were of different kinds etc; and above all that the judgement of their being originated should be carried over to whatever is inseparable from them. Satisfactory answers to these objections were preconditions for the use of this method; such answers, however, were unlikely because

(1) Risāla II, p.89.

on every point mentioned, there were sects disagreeing with the philosophers and introducing lengthy arguments refuting their views.⁽¹⁾ Regarding the method of revelation, we find that there is no need to involve ourselves with such puzzling points and difficult questions. So compared to the method of the philosophers, the method of revelation is much easier and more convincing, while the former is difficult and beyond the reach of the comprehension of the masses.⁽²⁾

4. Al-Ash'arī's Theological Method in the Ibāna.

Introduction

In his Ibāna, al-Ash'arī clearly stated the authority upon which he formed his theological views. He said, "The belief we hold and the religion we follow are holding fast to the book of our Lord, the Sunna of our prophet, and to the Traditions related on the authority of the companions and the successors, and the Imams of the hadīth, to that we hold firmly, professing what Abū-'Abd-Allah Ahmad b. Muhammad b. Hanbal professed, and avoiding him who dissents from his belief."⁽³⁾ Again, al-Ash'arī said, "We accept all the Traditions for which the traditionalists vouch ... we rely, in that wherein we differ, upon our Lord's book, and the Sunna of our prophet, and the unanimous consent of the Muslim community, ijmā', and what it signifies; and we do not introduce into God's religion, innovation that God does not

(1) Risāla II, p.89.

(2) Ibid., pp.89-90.

(3) Ibāna, pp.8-9.

allow, nor do we believe of God what we do not know." (1)

Superficial reading of these statements suggests that al-Ash'arī is one of the traditionalist followers of Ibn-Hanbal to whom he claimed allegiance, but a close study and scrutiny of the contents of the Ibāna might give a somewhat different view of al-Ash'arī's position and attitude. It is true that the Ibāna, especially that part called the Sunnite creed, almost represents the views of Ibn-Hanbal. It is also true, that quotations from the Qur'ān and Traditions are widely used in the Ibāna, and that ijmā' is often used to silence opponents; but the reading of the Ibāna shows that there is a considerable difference between al-Ash'arī and the Hanbalite traditionalists in their way of using these sources. (2) From these statements, it seems that to al-Ash'arī, the valid sources for religious knowledge are the Qur'ān, Traditions and ijmā'.

(a) The Qur'ān and the Method for its Interpretation (3)

Al-Ash'arī considered the Qur'ān as the main source for establishing religious doctrines and the basis for their proofs. So we find him quoting many Qur'ānic verses and sometimes leaving them to speak for themselves. In spite of this, however, he often built a very considerable structure of rational arguments

(1) Ibāna, pp.11-12.

(2) Watt, Formative Period, p.307.

(3) Al-Ash'arī is said to have written a work on tafsīr which is mainly devoted to the refutation of the views of al-Jubbā'aī and al-Balkhī, Ibn-'Asākir, Tabyyīn, pp.136-39.

upon these verses. So al-Ash'arī did not simply quote verses, but he showed how these verses, on which he relied, supported his doctrines and how those quoted by his adversaries did not prove what they wished them to prove.⁽¹⁾ This point might be better illustrated by al-Ash'arī's rational arguments for the vision of God based on the verse, "Faces that day are bright, looking to their Lord" (75:22-23) and his refutation of the Mu'tazilites' denial of the vision based on the verse, "The eyes comprehend Him not, but He comprehends the eyes" (6:103). While al-Ash'arī rejected all other interpretations of the first verse, other than the seeing of God by the eyes,⁽²⁾ he strongly contended against the Mu'tazilites attempt to interpret the second verse in a way which curtails the vision of God.⁽³⁾

Since the Qur'ān was the source which all the contending theological groups quoted as an authority to validate and support their views, it has been subjected to different interpretations, to serve the particular interests of this or that party. So to avoid this, al-Ash'arī tried to set rules for the interpretation of the Qur'ān; he accused the Mu'tazilites, the Qadarites and other deviators, of being misled by their straying desires which inclined them to the blind acceptance of the principles (taqlīd) of their leaders and their departed forebears so that they interpreted the Qur'ān according to their opinions with an interpretation for which God had neither revealed authority

(1) Watt, Free Will, p.139; Watt, Formative Period, p.307.

(2) Ibāna, pp.13-14.

(3) Ibid., pp.18-19.

nor shown proof, and which they had not derived from the prophet or from the ancients of the past.⁽¹⁾ To al-Ash'arī, many of the Mu'tazilites' wrong views were the outcome of their attitudes and their misinterpretation of the Qur'ān; so to avoid this al-Ash'arī introduced the following principles as rules for the interpretation of the Qur'ān:

1. In various parts of the Ibāna al-Ash'arī emphasized the point that the Qur'ān does not contradict itself, on the contrary, every part of it tallies with every other.⁽²⁾ And of those verses which seem to be contradictory, he ingeniously extracted arguments to support his views and to refute those of his opponents. To affirm his views on the vision of God, al-Ash'arī said, "God's book agrees part with part, and so since He says in one verse, 'On that day shall faces beam with light, looking towards their Lord' and in another verse, 'Their eyes do not reach Him', we know that He means only the eyes of the infidels do not reach Him or that human sight does not attain God in this world".⁽³⁾ The Mu'tazilites argued that God gives guidance to every one being faithful or infidel, and introduced as support for this view the verse, "The month of Ramadan in which the Qur'ān was sent down as guidance to men." which implies that the Qur'ān is guidance for all men whether they are infidels or the faithful. To al-Ash'arī, this verse had a particular meaning because God had explained in another verse that He guides those

(1) Ibāna, p.7. Ibn-'Asākir, Tabyyīn, p.138.

(2) Ibāna, p. 64.

(3) Ibid., p.16.

who fear Him, and told us that He does not guide the infidels. Since the Qur'ān does not contradict itself, it becomes necessary that God's words, "Guidance to men" refer only to the faithful and not to the infidels.⁽¹⁾ So the only safe method for interpreting the Qur'ān and understanding the exact meaning of a verse is by taking into consideration the other verses which tally or seem to convey a different meaning. It is only by employing such methods that the real meaning of a verse might be attained.⁽²⁾

2. The second principle for interpreting the Qur'ān is that it should be explained in the light of the Arabic language.

According to al-Ash'arī, God addressed the Arabs in their classical language and so there is no other way but to recourse to what is found, understood and comprehended in that language, and to explain the Qur'ān according to it.⁽³⁾ On the problem of error and whether God causes the wicked to err, al-Ash'arī argued with those who held that "error, in regard to God, means that He called them erring and not that He causes them to err". Al-Ash'arī rejected this interpretation, and argued from the linguistic meaning of the term, by saying, "To those it should be said, "Does not God address the Arabs in their classical language, and has He not said therefore, "In the clear Arabic tongue" (Q.26:195) and "We have not sent any apostle save (to

(1) Ibāna, pp.63-64.

(2) See al-Ash'arī's argument with the Mu'tazilites on the concept of guidance (hidāya). Ibāna, pp.64-65.

(3) Ibāna, p.15.

teach) in the language of his own people" (Q.14:4) they will certainly answer "yes" therefore, it may be said to them, 'then if God revealed the Qur'ān in the Arabic tongue, where do you find in the classical Arabic language that one may say "So and so misled so and so" meaning "He called him erring". Al-Ash'arī concluded that, since it is not correct according to the Arabs to say "So and so misled so and so, when he calls him erring, their interpretation is false because it is contrary to the Arabic tongue."⁽¹⁾ With such arguments and clever use of language, al-Ash'arī silenced his opponents and was able to build thereon many of his arguments and to refute the views of his adversaries.⁽²⁾

3. The third principle for understanding the Qur'ān is that its literal meaning should be accepted unless there is a strong proof or a convincing argument suggesting other meaning, then this should be followed. The revealed book should not be subjected to the interpretation of human beings, otherwise such personal interpretation might lead to the distortion of its real meanings. According to al-Ash'arī, "the Qur'ān is to be understood literally and it is not for us to understand it in any other way except by proof."⁽³⁾ What al-Ash'arī means by proof here, is the ijmā' or the agreement of the Muslim community to give a certain meaning to a certain verse or to define whether the verse is universal in its meaning ('amma) or not; if the use of the expression is universal, it is universal in its real

(1) Ibāna, p.62.

(2) Ibid., pp.38-39.

(3) Ibid., p.14.

meaning, and we may not remove it from this meaning without argument or proof ... we give a particular meaning to the Qur'ān by ijmā' and by proof. (1)

Thus, he argued against the Mu'tazilites, who denied that God has two hands on the pretext that if two hands were ascribed to Him, then more than two might be ascribed to Him as well, since God said, "from what our hands have made" (Q.36:71) in the plural. Al-Ash'arī said, it is unanimously agreed that the belief of those who hold that God has a number of hands is false, therefore God must indeed have spoken of a number of hands, but really have meant to assert the existence of only two hands. Against the Mu'tazilites' strong argument, al-Ash'arī only finds ijmā' to refute it; time and again he stressed the point that the Qur'ān is to be interpreted literally, and we do not depart from its literal meaning except by proof and so, in the present example, we find a proof by which we transferred the reference to hands from its primary literal meaning to another literal meaning; and the latter literal meaning must rest on a truth from which there is no departure except by proof. (2)

Though al-Ash'arī applied these principles to his treatment of the Qur'ānic verses in the Ibāna, and considerably succeeded in proving the validity of his views and the weakness of those of his opponents, his enthusiastic efforts to prove his points of view and his emphasis on the literal interpretation of the Qur'ān, led him sometimes to hold absurd views. His many

(1) Ibāna, p.21.

(2) Ibid., p.40.

arguments for the uncreatedness of the Qur'ān (based on the premises that God's names are mentioned in the Qur'ān; and if the Qur'ān is created, these names will be created and so God's knowledge, power and will etc.), disclose the disputatious nature of some of al-Ash'arī's arguments.⁽¹⁾ Of the same nature is his attempt to identify God's witness mentioned in the verse, "God bears witness that there is no God but He ..." (Q.3:18), with a verbal pronunciation, and his conclusion that God undoubtedly hears this witness and hears it from Himself, so it is eternal and so is God's speech.⁽²⁾

Arguing also for the eternity of the speech of God, al-Ash'arī introduced the argument based upon the verse, "And My curse shall be on thee till the day of judgement." (Q.38:78) and said if God's speech is created and created things come to end, then His speech and His curse on Iblis will come to end, and to hold such views is to forsake the religion of Islam, therefore God's speech must be eternal.⁽³⁾ It is obvious that neither the contents of the verse nor the premises of the arguments lead to the conclusion which al-Ash'arī came to. Stating his views on the utterance of the Qur'ān, al-Ash'arī rejected the application of the term lafz to the Qur'ān, on the pretext that the Arabs use this term for casting off things so it should not be applied to the Qur'ān. According to al-Ash'arī, when an Arab says, "I have uttered the morsel from my mouth" (lafaztu bil-luqmati min

(1) Ibāna, p.24.

(2) Ibid., p.24.

(3) Ibid., p.26.

famī) his meaning is, "I have cast it forth" and so the word of God is not said to be uttered, but only to be read, recited, written and memorized.⁽¹⁾ The weakness of this argument is quite obvious, and al-Ash'arī's opponents might well argue on the same linguistic ground and say that the Arabs use the word lafz in respect of speech, to mean its pronouncing or saying, the meaning which al-Ash'arī intentionally suppressed, in the course of his argument, in order to justify his conclusion.

(b) The Traditions

The second authority upon which al-Ash'arī depended, in forming his theological views, is the reports and Traditions of the prophet which he accepted and based arguments upon without questioning their authenticity. In his Ibāna, al-Ash'arī said, "We accept all the Traditions for which the traditionists vouch: the descent into the lower heavens, and the Lord's saying 'is there any who has a request? is there any who ask forgiveness?' and the other things they relate and vouch for."⁽²⁾ To prove his views, al-Ash'arī simply recorded reports and Traditions and let them speak for themselves. He quoted many Traditions, to support his views on the vision of God,⁽³⁾ to demonstrate the eternity of the Qur'ān,⁽⁴⁾ to affirm God's sitting on the Throne,⁽⁵⁾

(1) Ibāna, p.32.

(2) Ibid., p.11.

(3) Ibid., p.16.

(4) Ibid., pp.28-31.

(5) Ibid., pp.36-37.

to establish the doctrine of Qadar⁽¹⁾ and many eschatological doctrines.⁽²⁾

(c) Ijmā'

Al-Ash'arī considered the consensus of the Muslim community, (ijmā'), as one of the sources of religious knowledge; reference has already been made to the importance of ijmā' in interpreting the Qur'ān, and for deciding what is the meaning of a verse.⁽³⁾ Al-Ash'arī clearly stated that, after the Qur'ān and Traditions, he depended on ijmā' to establish his theological views; and to demonstrate the validity of his doctrines. Thus he uses this authority as an auxiliary or ancillary proof for the establishment of God's vision⁽⁴⁾, and to affirm God sitting on the throne.⁽⁵⁾ Al-Ash'arī also used ijmā' to refute the views that God is knowing but has no knowledge and attacked its holders as being self-contradicting and deserters of the Muslim community. To al-Ash'arī, the Muslims unanimously agreed that God had eternal knowledge and they said that God's knowledge is eternal because it precedes created things; that he who denies that God has knowledge dissents from the Muslims and is guilty of a departure from their agreement.⁽⁶⁾ Al-Ash'arī also used ijmā' to establish

(1) Ibāna, pp.65-68.

(2) Ibid., p.70.

(3) Ibid., pp.4-5.

(4) Ibid., p.17.

(5) Ibid., pp.35-36.

(6) Ibid., p.42.

the validity of the intercession,⁽¹⁾ and the validity of the caliphate of Abū-Bakr.⁽²⁾

(d) Reason

In his Ibāna, al-Ash‘arī never mentioned reason as a source for attaining religious knowledge, or as a method for establishing the validity of the dogma; he even excluded reason from being able to interpret the Qur‘ān.⁽³⁾ In spite of this however, he made use of rational arguments in order to establish his views and to refute those of his adversaries, and thus we find proofs based on arguments derived from common sense and general observation proportionally occupy a prominent place in the Ibāna. On the question of God's vision, for instance, out of the eight proofs presented, three were based on rational arguments. According to al-Ash‘arī, one of the things that proves the visibility of God to sight is the fact that nothing exists that God cannot show us, and it is only the non-existent that He cannot show us; wherefore, since God certainly exists, it is not impossible that He should show us Himself.⁽⁴⁾ So by using the principle of existence, al-Ash‘arī is rationally arguing to prove the possibility of God's vision; but it has to be noticed that he had recourse to these rational proofs after he had introduced sufficient Scriptural proofs and argued from them.

(1) Ibāna, p.69.

(2) Ibid., p.72.

(3) Ibid., p.38.

(4) Ibid., p.17.

He also made use of the analogy between man and God to establish the attributes of God against the Mu'tazilite denial of them. He said that the Mu'tazilites cannot deny that one can be willing except by a will, therefore the Mu'tazilites had no justification for denying that the knower knows only by a knowledge, and that God has a knowledge just as He has a will. (1)

Many of the Ibāna's arguments are of a polemical nature, which were meant to embarrass the opponents and to demonstrate the absurdity of their views. Thus to refute the Mu'tazilite view regarding God's sitting on the throne, al-Ash'arī said if God's sitting (istiwā') on His throne means He has power over it (isti'lā), then it would have to be said that He is seated on all created things, including the throne, for instance on gardens, wastelands and similar things, but no Muslim holds such an absurd belief. (2) He used the same method to refute the Mu'tazilite conception of abandonment (khidhlān). He said if the Mu'tazilites define 'abandonment' in the sense of leaving men free to disbelieve, they would equally have to say that God abandons the believers, leaving them free to disbelieve too, which is heresy. (3)

Throughout the Ibāna, the proportion between rational and Scriptural proofs varies, according to the point under discussion; and thus while al-Ash'arī depended mainly on the Qur'ān to establish all the eschatological problems, the doctrine of God

(1) Ibāna, p.42,19-22.

(2) Ibid.

(3) Ibid., p.60.

sitting on the throne, and the uncreatedness of the Qur'ān, he rationally argued against the Wāqifiyya, who said neither that the Qur'ān was created nor that it was uncreated.⁽¹⁾ He also refuted the Jahmites' denial of God's knowledge, power and other attributes mainly on rational ground.⁽²⁾ Out of the twenty-two proofs which al-Ash'arī introduced to establish God's will, nineteen of them were based on general observation and derived from common sense.⁽³⁾

So, al-Ash'arī gave reason an important place in his Ibāna, but it never became a rival to the role of revelation. He did not consider reason as a source of doctrines or dogmas, but he used it to demonstrate or to prove dogmas which were already established and derived and verified from the Qur'ān and Traditions, or to refute the views of his adversaries.⁽⁴⁾

(1) Ibāna, pp.31-33.

(2) Ibid., pp.42-46.

(3) Ibid., pp.46-52.

(4) Watt, Free Will, p.140. cf. W. Thomson, "Al-Ash'arī and his Ibāna", M.W. vol.32 (1942) p.244.

CONCLUSION TO PART ONE

In the light of this exposition, we may now compare the theological methods of al-Māturīdī and al-Ash'arī. To begin with it might be said that it is clear that while al-Māturīdī seems to be systematic and consistent in the way he deals with theological problems in his two works, the Ta'wīlāt and Kitāb at-Tawhīd, al-Ash'arī's methodology differs from one work to another according to the nature and scope of the work. Thus, while the Luma' and Risāla I of al-Ash'arī represent a rational trend similar to that of the Mu'tazilites in using Kalām (reasoned theology) and defending its methodology, the Risāla II and the Ibāna tend more towards Ḥanbalite views; that they defend the traditional method and concepts related to the Ḥanbalites. It has, however, been demonstrated that even in these latter works, al-Ash'arī did not entirely follow the traditionalist method, rather he used rational arguments and evidences to support his views.

It has also been shown that unlike al-Ash'arī, al-Māturīdī devoted a special section of his Kitāb at-Tawhīd to deal with the theory of knowledge. Due to the fact that this is the earliest extant theological work of its kind to be prefaced with a treatment of the theory of knowledge and epistemological problems, al-Māturīdī has been recognized as one of the first, if not the first Muslim to deal with such considerations. In his treatment of this point, al-Māturīdī criticized the views of opposing groups; those who thought that knowledge is not attainable at all, or that senses cannot supply true knowledge, or doubted the validity of reason as a means of knowledge as well

as those who emphasized the importance of reason in this respect even above revelation. Similarly, he refuted the idea that individual mind can be the basis of knowledge, and did not accept inspiration, blind imitation or ta'lim as a means of providing sound knowledge. In the face of opposition from both sides, al-Maturidī defended the validity of the knowledge attained by the sense organs, reports (including revelation) and reason. He pointed out that though reason is an important means of knowledge it has its shortcomings and limits, so it cannot give true knowledge about everything that needs to be known. Thus, it requires the help of revelation, not only in religious affairs but also in many worldly affairs. He emphasized the point that there is no contradiction between the judgement of revelation and reason.

Discussion of such points ^{is} ~~are~~ absent from the extant works of al-Ash'arī, which has some significance. This indicates on the one hand the rational approach of al-Maturidī in this field compared with that of al-Ash'arī. On the other hand, this difference of approach indicates basic differences even between al-Maturidī's Kitāb at-Tawhīd and al-Ash'arī's Luma' for instance, which are works of the same type. It seems that while al-Ash'arī in his Luma' was concerned with one purpose (presumably to refute Mu'tazilite doctrines) al-Maturidī in his Tawhīd seems to be more concerned with setting up a theological system and with the arguments for its validity, also bringing into consideration general intellectual background of his period, and the contending views of his opponents.

Apart from these two points of difference, however, it has

been found that in the course of their arguments, both al-Māturīdī and al-Ash'arī used Traditional proofs and rational arguments in order to support their points of view and to refute those of their adversaries. As for the traditional evidences, they both considered the Qur'ān and authentic Traditions as the only sources for religious doctrines; they introduced similar methods for the interpretation of the Qur'ān, but they differed regarding the role of reason in this respect. Though al-Ash'arī's commentary on the Qur'ān has not survived, it appears from his interpretation of certain verses of the Qur'ān in his extant works that the valid method for its interpretation should be based on traditional evidences (including the Qur'ān itself), linguistic justification and the authority of ijmā'. Thus, he disapproved of any allegorical interpretation of the Qur'ānic verses based on rational justification. Al-Māturīdī adopted the same rules and employed them in his Ta'wīlāt and Kitāb at-Tawhīd. For him, however, only the Qur'ān remains an unquestionable authority in this respect. Thus he questions many of the Traditions quoted in support of certain interpretations of the Qur'ān, and he expressed his disagreement with many of the early commentators. His liking for the rational approach expresses itself into two points: in his attitude towards the legendary tales developed and quoted by the Qur'ān-Commentators in order to explain the stories referred to briefly in the Qur'ān, and also in his attitude towards the ambiguous verses of the Qur'ān. Concerning the first point, we have seen that al-Māturīdī adopted a strict method and clearly stated that one should stick to the limit bounded by the Qur'ān itself and authentic Traditions, and that

there is no point in indulging in quotations from foreign sources. In respect of the ambiguous verses of the Qur'ān, al-Māturīdī stated that these verses must be interpreted according to the self-explaining and precise (muhkam) verses; if the apparent sense of a verse contradicts what has been established by the precise verses, it must be realized that the apparent sense was not intended because, as God has repeatedly declared, there can be no contradiction in the verses of the Qur'ān.

Both al-Māturīdī and al-Ash'arī used the material available in hadīth to a limited extent in the course of their arguments. However, as has been demonstrated, al-Ash'arī seems to have given more weight to this material especially in his Ibāna, while al-Māturīdī does not seem to be keen on quoting Traditions in the course of his theological arguments. It has also been observed that while al-Ash'arī often used ijmā' to silence his opponents, al-Māturīdī hardly used this authority in this respect; in the instances where al-Māturīdī quoted it, it is clear that he was only employing such a method after he had exhausted all the arguments based on the Qur'ānic reasoning and rational arguments.

Both al-Māturīdī and al-Ash'arī allowed reason a place in their theological systems, but they differed regarding its importance and its role. Thus al-Māturīdī considered reason a precondition for the imposition of religious responsibility (taklīf). Also, for him, reason requires that man as a rational being should acquire the knowledge of God's existence, even if no messengers had been sent by Him for this purpose. He stated that through his intellect, man must seek to know his Creator by reflecting on his creation and the phenomena of creation in

general. If man fails to attain such knowledge, he will be eternally punished. To al-Māturīdī, things and actions have intrinsic values; they are intrinsically good or evil. Revelation takes these values into consideration in the command and prohibitions which it reveals; and reason is capable of comprehending these values and of distinguishing between right and wrong, but it cannot be the final authority for human obligation and religious laws. The basis of obligation and religious laws is revelation and not reason. On these points we have seen that al-Ash'arī held somewhat different views from those of al-Māturīdī. To al-Ash'arī, reason was a means of knowing God, but it did not make such a knowledge incumbent upon man, and it necessitated neither belief in God nor knowledge of Him. So man would not be punished for not achieving such knowledge; rewards and punishment are only connected with the sending of messengers. Also, al-Ash'arī maintained that things do not possess intrinsic values of good and evil, it is only religious law which makes them good or evil. So what is commanded by revelation is good, and what is prohibited is bad; revelation can convert previously-declared good into bad and vice versa.

As for the rational method, both al-Māturīdī and al-Ash'arī defended Kalām (reasoned arguments) and used rational arguments based on some form or another of the Aristotelian syllogism. They also made use of the theological method of argument based on the principle of the analogy of the absent to the present (qiyās al-ghā'ib 'ala-l-shāhid), and involved themselves to some extent in polemical, weakly supported arguments. Judging from the proportion and variety of arguments used by these two scholars,

it might be said that al-Māturīdī appears to be more inclined to the use of rational methodology. The concepts he used and the terminologies he employed, which are usually derived from philosophical sources, confirms this statement.

PART TWO

THE THEOLOGICAL DOCTRINES OF AL-MĀTURĪDĪ

AND AL-ASH'ARĪ

CHAPTER III

THE ARGUMENTS OF AL-MĀTURĪDĪ FOR GOD'S EXISTENCE

AND HIS ATTRIBUTES

The early Muslim theologians, especially the Mu'tazilites, were occupied for some time with the problem of God's existence and His attributes because Islamic conquests, which spread over vast areas, brought the early theologians into contact with the Hellenic culture and its concept of God, which differed considerably from that of Islam. The Sabians, the dualists, the Dahriyya and the followers of Greek philosophy in its Hellenic form, all lived within the new frontiers of the Islamic Empire.⁽¹⁾ The Mu'tazilites played an important role in meeting the challenge presented by these groups.⁽²⁾ Their arguments and counter-arguments, concerning this problem, were handed down to the next generation of theologians, who continued to develop them; so it is not surprising to find that almost the same problems occupy a prominent place in the works of al-Māturīdī and al-Ash'arī.

1. Al-Māturīdī on the Existence of God

One of al-Māturīdī's arguments for the existence of God is the well-known theological argument based on the premise that the

(1) De Lacy O'Leary, Arabic Thought and its Place in History, chapter 1, pp.1-55. Watt, Formative Period, pp.183-186.

(2) See Intisār, p.21; an-Nazzām's arguments with the dualists, (pp.30-31) and the Dahriyya (p.33).

world is temporal, so it needs an originator who is God. Thus he devoted a considerable part of his Kitāb at-Tawhīd in establishing that the world is temporal, and in refuting the views of those who hold that it is eternal.

(a) His Refutation of the Eternity of the World

Al-Māturīdī's treatment of this subject suggests that he was well aware of many of the ideas concerning the eternity of the world, current in his time, such as those of the various groups of the Dahriyya, the dualists, etc. According to al-Māturīdī, there are three reasons behind the confusion regarding the origin of the world: (i) Some hold its eternity as a result of blind imitation, (taqlīd); they followed what they are used to, and find it hard to think otherwise; to engage in argument with such people, al-Māturīdī said, is useless and no attention should be paid to them.⁽¹⁾ (ii) The changing states of things, and the linking of things with other things through cause and effect, led some to believe that it is impossible that something should come out of nothing; everything, they said, arises from another thing preceding it, and that the world is eternally like this.⁽²⁾ They argued that to ascribe an origin to the world different from the existing things is false, since such a concept cannot be perceived by the senses or comprehended by the intellect.⁽³⁾ This materialistic view was held by the various groups of the Dahriyya, who shared the doctrine of the eternity of the world.

(1) Tawhīd, p.111,13-18.

(2) Ibid., p.30,111-12. Ta'wīlāt, 74:36. cf. Ghazālī, Munqidh,p.19.

(3) Tawhīd, pp.30, 112. cf. Ibn-Hazm, Fisal, vol.1,p.10.

(iii) By observing the existence of good and evil, pleasures and pains in the world, the dualists held that there must be two originators of the world, one from whom all good things arise, and the other who is the origin of all evils. Because one who does good is usually commended and he who does evil is blamed, thus it is impossible for God, who is wise and merciful, to do evil or harm. (1)

Al-Māturīdī refuted the materialistic views by first refuting the idea that nothing comes into being except from a thing; he argued that our experience shows that things cannot be latent (mustajin) in another thing, thus man could not possibly come into being simply from semen, or the tree from seed alone; for the form of man and the colours and the size of fully-grown trees are non-existent in the semen and the seeds respectively. They cannot arise from the food intake, since we observe that in the case of the human body, for example, no amount of food can cause it to exceed certain limits of growth; and while some grow fat on food, others spend their lives eating and yet remain thin. And, furthermore, we find that different effects may be produced by one and the same food. (2)

For the fact that the originator cannot be perceived by the senses nor comprehended by the intellect, al-Māturīdī argued that this does not mean that He does not exist, since there are many things the reality of which is imperceptible through the senses and incomprehensible to the intellect, yet no-one denies

(1) Tawhīd, pp.113, 116, 37. Ta'wīlāt, 74:30.

(2) Tawhīd, pp.13,31-32. Pazdawī, Uṣūl, pp.16-17.

their existence. It is true that neither reason nor the senses are able to grasp the real essence of God, this, however, does not mean that He is non-existent, but it simply discloses that the reality of God is beyond the limits of these instruments. Thus the use of reason or the senses in this respect is unjustified, as is the use of sight for attaining sounds, or hearing for distinguishing between colours. So, just as it is impossible to perceive the objects of sense perception by another organ than that used for it, it is in the same way improbable that we should perceive or comprehend by the sense organs or the intellect an object which lies beyond the reach of those instruments. (1)

Al-Māturīdī used the word *Dahriyya* in a wide sense to include those who believe in the eternity of the world, depending on the doctrine of causation, (*'illiyya*); the naturalists, who believe in the eternity of the four elements; the *Ashāb al-hayūla*, who believe in the eternity of the matter; the *Ashāb an-nujūm*, who maintain that the eternal movement of the stars is the origin of all actions in the world; as well as the various groups of the dualists. In his *Kitāb at-Tawhīd*, al-Māturīdī explained the doctrine of all these groups, and meticulously refuted them. Thus consideration of his arguments in this respect might help in promoting our understanding of his rationalism, and the contribution he made in the field of speculative theology.

According to al-Māturīdī, those who advocate the doctrine of causation, maintain that the world arises from the creator, yet hold that it is eternal. They identify God with the perfect agent or cause, and consider the world as his necessary effect.

(1) *Tawhīd*, p.32; *Ta'wīlāt* 6:103; cf. Ibn-Ḥazm, *Fisal*, vol.1, p.11.

They said that it is impossible for a cause to be without an effect; and since the world is an effect whose cause is eternal, it must be eternal. The creator must be existent, generous and powerful, these attributes are eternal otherwise he would be impotent, so the world must be eternal and that God from eternity bestowed (afāda) his generosity upon it.⁽¹⁾ Al-Māturīdī attributed these views to the Bāṭinites,⁽²⁾ but it is obvious that they are a summary of the contents of the first argument introduced by Proclus concerning the eternity of the world, which is said to have been translated into Arabic along with another eight of his arguments by Ishāq b. Hunayn (d.268/911)⁽³⁾; and upon which the theory of emanation, advocated by the Muslim philosophers, was based.⁽⁴⁾

Al-Māturīdī rejected the idea of the doctrine of causation ('illiyya) and argued that if it is thus meant that the world was necessarily (bi-t-tab') made by the creator, this would be impossible. For in this case, the creator would be compelled, and the creator's nature is such that he cannot be compelled. Moreover, the world is originated and is made up of different elements and he who produces a thing by nature must be dhū-naw'; the nature of the world itself is that it is not subject to cause and effect and it has not therefore arisen in this way, with God as the necessary cause. If they meant, however, that

(1) Tawhīd, pp.30,9-12; 112,7-13.

(2) Ibid., pp.94-5.

(3) Badawī, al-Aflatuniyya al-Muhdatha 'ind al-'Arab, pp.34-42.

(4) Al-Alousi, the Problem of Creation in Islamic Thought, pp.239-41.

God originates (yuhdith) the world out of free choice then to call Him cause is improper (fāsid).⁽¹⁾

The naturalists or Ashāb at-ṭabā'i', believe that the world is a production of four elements, fire, earth, air and water. All generation and decay, as well as the different qualities of things, are the result of the mixing and unmixing of these four elements. All being is simply composition and decomposition. Some of the naturalists, however, consider only one of these four elements as the principle of all existence.⁽²⁾ Al-Māturīdī argued against the naturalists by saying that: (i) These elements are naturally determined, (maṭbū'), and the maṭbū' is constrained to do only whatever it is naturally determined to do. Moreover, everything other than the maṭbū' itself can increase or retard its effect and even render it ineffectual, so these elements cannot be the sole cause of the world, they must be under the control of something not compelled or restrained.⁽³⁾ (ii) The maṭbū' would have no effect on other things unless those things were naturally the recipient of that effect, as for example things which are not liable to be harmed would not be harmed by something which causes harm to other things. Since it is not for the maṭbū' to make things subject to its effect, there must be an external force which originates and combines the naturally determined and which accepts its effect (dhū-l-ṭab' wal-maṭbū').⁽⁴⁾

(1) Tawhīd, p.33,5-9.

(2) Tawhīd, pp.112,6-13; 141-43. Instead of the word, rutūba, commonly used, al-Māturīdī used the word, nuduwwa, which has virtually the same meaning.

(3) Ibid., pp.116,23-24; 117,1-2.

(4) Ibid., p.117,3-7.

(iii) If the dyestuff is left to stain by itself, it would produce bad colours, so the dyes must be produced by wise and experienced people who mix them in certain proportions to produce perfect colours. This also applies to the elements, since by their natures these four elements are opposed to each other, the harmony and the order in them proves that they have been forced to combine and have been restrained from combining by an external force.⁽¹⁾ (iv) These elements oppose each other and are mutually discordant, and this leads naturally to separation and disintegration. Things cannot be naturally produced by such opposing elements, so there must be an external force which represses their mutual repulsion, prevents them from scattering, and compels them to come together.⁽²⁾ (v) It is noticeable that continuous movements produce heat in the subject which moves, and complete rest produces moisture; so what seems to be more likely is that these elements originated from the changing states of the world, and not that the world originated from them.⁽³⁾

As for Ashāb al-hayūla, they maintain that the principle of the world is prime matter, (hayūla or tīna)⁽⁴⁾, which is formless

(1) Tawhīd, p.117,8-14.

(2) Ibid., p.143,3-6. The same argument has been attributed to an-Nazzām. See Intisār, pp.41-2.

(3) Tawhīd, p.145,7-10.

(4) Al-Māturīdī used the hayūla and tīna to denote prime matter, and he made no distinction between the two terms. The same attitude has been adopted by al-Kindī and al-Bāqillānī. See respectively, al-Kindī, Rasā'il, vol.1.p.166, note 2, al-Bāqillānī, Tamhīd, p.33.

and characterless, indeterminate in quality and unlimited in quantity; all substances and accidents as well as the change in the world are caused by a latent power (quwwa) arising from causes within the nature of prime matter.⁽¹⁾ Al-Māturīdī pointed out the contradictions of the advocates of this doctrine in their assertion that the prime matter is formless and characterless, yet accidents occur in it. Moreover, according to their own views, the world would not be eternal because they held that the world is produced through the change caused by the latent power in the prime matter; as a result of that change prime matter would no longer be existent, but would be replaced by the world which consists of temporal qualities and substances.⁽²⁾ According to their views, the latent power changes prime matter by its nature, so it should not be separate from it at any time, thus it might be asked why the latent power did not cause that change in eternity? In other words, by producing the world at a certain time even in eternity, implies that the latent power is not naturally determined, but it must have some sort of free choice. Those qualities which are said to have been originated in prime matter, if they were latent in the hayūla then it would be necessary but ridiculous to say that it was characterless but with co-occurring qualities; or if it was said that the hayūla was devoid of these qualities in this case they would be produced neither by the hayūla nor by the latent power, since

(1) Tawhīd, p.147,4-9. Al-Māturīdī attributed this doctrine to Aristotle. See Tawhīd, p.147, 12ff.

(2) Ibid., p.148,4-12.

both these have the same qualities and characteristics. So there must be an outside force which brought these qualities into existence in the first place.⁽¹⁾

Al-Māturīdī argued that if this prime matter is of the same nature as the substances of this world, then it would be impotent and temporal just as the world is; if it does not belong to this world, but the world was produced by it, the processes of its origination would be either: (i) as a result of the occurring of qualities in the prime matter which change its substance from that postulated characterless concepts into the form of this world with all its defects and liability to change and alteration. In this case, the prime matter no longer exists and what exists instead is this world which is supposed to have been originated by something else.⁽²⁾ (ii) Or that the world was latent in the prime matter which brings it to actual existence. Al-Māturīdī rejected the idea of kumūn, and added that this prime matter is an ignorant power, and it is impossible for such power to have control over the affairs of the world and bring it into existence.⁽³⁾ If he who holds that prime matter exists, believed that it brings the world from non-existence into existence by his own action and bringing it into existence (takwīn) according to his free will, then there would be no disagreement between them and the Muslims apart from the fact that the former applied to God names which were not applied by

(1) Tawhīd, p.149,9-14.

(2) Ibid., pp.62,23; 63,1-8.

(3) Ibid., p.63,9-14.

the latter. (1)

As for Ashāb an-nujūm, who hold that eternal movements of the stars cause all the changes in the world, al-Māturīdī rejected such a view and introduced many arguments to refute the notion of eternal movements; and to demonstrate that every movement has a beginning and an end, and it is finite at the end and the beginning. According to him, every movement is an end of a movement previous to it, so it is impossible for a movement to end without having a beginning. (2) Arguing for the views that heaven is created and will come to end, Jahm b. Safwān is said to have used the same argument and said that, "It is impossible to conceive of movements which have no end, just as it is impossible to conceive of movements without a beginning." (3) Al-Māturīdī introduced another argument based on the finiteness of objects and said, we observe that objects are different in extent and the only possible explanation for this difference is the fact that there is a finite quantity which when multiplied becomes larger, that finite quantity however cannot possibly be produced by a quantity preceding it, but it must have come into being ex-nihilo. This proves that objects are finite in quantity and time; the same applies to movement, therefore the first movement must be originated in a finite time and has a beginning. (4)

(1) Tawhīd, p.65,1-4.

(2) Ibid., p.144,2-5.

(3) Milal, vol.1, p.87.

(4) Tawhīd, p.144,6-11. The text is very difficult and rather confused; if my reading of it is correct, similarity between al-Māturīdī's argument and one mentioned by al-Kindī is to be found. See Rasā'il, vol.2, p.202 ff.

Another argument is that if the movement which is supposed to be circular, were made straight so that each one follows the track of the other, the beginning of one movement entails the end of another (as in billiards); following the assertion that they are eternal, they would be eternally existent and non-existent which is contradictory. So the movement must have a beginning. (1)

Moreover, if two things are said to be moving on a straight line and one is found to be ahead of the other, this might be explained either in that one started before the other, or that they were moving at different speeds; if it is assumed that they were of equal speed, the only alternative would be that they started from different points, and this proves that movement has a beginning. (2)

Al-Māturīdī argued that the continuous movements of the stars indicates that they are subjected to such movement by an external force, otherwise they would have chosen an easier way to control the world than this tiring process; and such a determinate force cannot possibly be the origin of all these different qualities and entities of the world. (3) What is more likely, according to al-Māturīdī, is that the motion of the celestial spheres and the movement of the stars were caused by the change in the terrestrial globe and not the other way round. (4)

The dualists hold that the wise cannot do harm or evil,

(1) Tawhīd, p.144,11-15.

(2) Ibid., p.144,15-19. Similar argument is attributed to an-Nazzām, see Intisār, pp.33-34.

(3) Tawhīd, pp.145,15-20; 146,1-3.

(4) Ibid., p.145,10-14.

therefore, to explain the existence of injustice and evil in the world, they attributed good to god or light and evil to darkness or the devil. To refute these views, al-Māturīdī said that the dualists were led to such absurd views through misconception and ill definition of the meaning of wisdom, and their relying on intellect alone for understanding the wisdom in all creation. To al-Māturīdī, wisdom simply means the assigning of things to their proper place, and giving everyone the share he deserves without disregard or negligence. Concerning the misfortunes and injustices of the world, al-Māturīdī said that the human intellect, as a created instrument, has its shortcomings and limits, and so many things are beyond its comprehension, and sometimes it is misled by outside influences from conceiving the real wisdom behind creation, not to mention that of God's action and His works. For al-Māturīdī, reason alone is unable to explain the existence of evil or apparent hardship which occur in this world; and this refuted the whole dualist argument.⁽¹⁾ In detailed arguments, al-Māturīdī discussed the views of various groups of dualists: the Manichaens, Dayṣānites, Marcionites and the Mazdakites, and pointed out the weakness of their arguments regarding the causes of the mingling of light and darkness, and how one becomes free of the other.⁽²⁾ Though it might be out of the scope of the present study to go into details of al-Māturīdī's arguments with the dualists, general observations concerning his arguments with all those who hold the eternity of the world may

(1) Tawhīd, pp.37,15-19; 113,7-18; 116,3-12.

(2) Ibid., pp.157-176.

not be out of place.

(i) Al-Māturīdī's summary of the various sectarian views and his arguments with his opponents disclose his indebtedness to the Mu'tazilite thinkers and heresiographers. In relation to the sects, al-Māturīdī's main source of information seems to be one Muhammed b. Shabīb, who has been quoted by him in many instances. He mainly depended upon Ibn-Shabīb's works for the views of the materialistic Dahriyya, the Sceptics, the dualists as well as the Magians.⁽¹⁾ Al-Māturīdī also made use of the disputes between the Mu'tazilites and other sects, thus he quoted some of Ibn-Shabīb's arguments against the dualists and represented them as advocating the very views which he himself held.⁽²⁾ He also accepted his argument with Ashāb al-hayūla.⁽³⁾ But when he is not satisfied with the Mu'tazilite's arguments, al-Māturīdī did not hesitate to express his disapproval of them, and to demonstrate their weaknesses. Al-Māturīdī dealt similarly with one of Ibn-Shabīb's arguments with the dualists,⁽⁴⁾ and with his disputation with the Sceptics which al-Māturīdī described as being nonsense and useless;⁽⁵⁾ he also criticized Ibn-Shabīb's method in demonstrating the origination of bodies, and described it as being lengthy and futile.⁽⁶⁾ Apart from Ibn-Shabīb, al-

(1) Tawhīd, pp.141-49; 153 ff. 171 ff.

(2) Ibid., pp.123-25.

(3) Ibid., pp.150-151.

(4) Ibid., pp.126-127.

(5) Ibid., pp.153-156.

(6) Ibid., pp.137-139.

Māturīdī quoted some of Ibn-Harb's arguments with the dualists and expressed his approval of them.⁽¹⁾ He mentioned also with approval, one of an-Nazzām's arguments with Aṣḥāb al-hayūla,⁽²⁾ at the same time, however, he criticized his argument with the Sumaniyya as being weak.⁽³⁾ In spite of this, however, full realization of al-Māturīdī's relation to the Mu'tazilite thought requires more thorough investigation.

(ii) The other point which deserves consideration is al-Māturīdī's inclination to rationalism which is evident in the form of his arguments and the vocabulary he used. In the course of his argument, al-Māturīdī did not use Qur'ānic proofs or argument based on revelation, but he introduced arguments based on experience and proofs derived from general observation and natural science as well as proofs based on dialectical method. The vocabulary he used tends to be abstract and more philosophical, and terms such as latent power, substance, quiddity, (mā'iyya), generation, (tawallud), naturally determined (maṭbū'), universal, and latent, (mustajin), are frequently used in the course of his arguments.

(b) Al-Māturīdī's Arguments for the Temporality of the World

To prove the temporality of the world, al-Māturīdī uses evidences derived from traditional accounts (akhbār) as well as

(1) Tawhīd, p.169.

(2) Ibid., p.150.

(3) Ibid., p.152.

rational arguments.

Traditional Accounts: Al-Māturīdī uses the term akhbār not only in the sense of a revealed text (samʿ), but also in its wider significance of what might be called "historical evidences". Thus, as a proof for the temporality of the world, he referred to the Qur'ānic verses which state that God is the creator of everything, ⁽¹⁾ that He is the originator of the heavens and of the earth, ⁽²⁾ and that He is the ruler of all that is in them. ⁽³⁾ At the same time, however, al-Māturīdī argued that no living being claims to be eternal or produces evidence of his eternity, otherwise he would be ridiculed since his origin and the process of his development are evident. Therefore, living beings must be generated, and this applies to inanimate objects as well. ⁽⁴⁾

Reasoned Arguments: Al-Māturīdī's rational arguments are based on the premises well known among theologians, that substances or bodies are never devoid of temporal qualities or characteristics and must, therefore, be temporal. Therefore, the world (which consists of these substances) must also be temporal. Though al-Māturīdī tackled many of the questions regarding this proposition, he did not present it in the concise and developed form as found in later theological writings such as those of al-Bāqillānī and al-Juwaynī. ⁽⁵⁾ To demonstrate the existence of characteristics

(1) Qur'ān, 39:62.

(2) Ibid., 2:117; 6:101.

(3) Ibid., 3:189; 5:18; 40; 120.

(4) Tawhīd, p.11,10-13.

(5) See Bāqillānī, Tamhīd, pp.22-23. Juwaynī, Irshād, pp.11-12.

or qualities (sifāt) as he preferred to call them,⁽¹⁾ al-Māturīdī said that movement and rest in a body, as well as its combination and separation, endurance and annihilation, are states different from the body itself, because we can observe that motion follows rest, separation follows combination, and the coming into existence of a body follows its non-existence. These states cannot be a part of the body's own essence, for were this the case, the body would not be capable of assuming the respective opposite quality. This proves that these states are different from body.⁽²⁾ The temporality of these accidents, said al-Māturīdī, is well recognized by the senses and by reason. Because two opposites cannot be reconciled, thus succession (ta'āqub) is established and temporality is thereby implied.⁽³⁾

Al-Māturīdī divided his rational arguments into two categories: (i) those which are derived through the senses, (ii) and those based on rational deduction.

The Senses: Al-Māturīdī argued that our senses show to us that substances are not self-sufficient because they depend for their

(1) Al-Māturīdī used both terms and said that the term sifa is more suitable from Islamic point of view because in the Qur'ānic verses (8:67; 9:42) 'arad is used to denote the substances of things and not their changing states, so for these states the word sifa is more suitable, Tawhīd, pp.16-17. From the same verses al-Bāqillānī argued for the opposite and defined the state as that which is changeable, and in these verses the word 'arad is conveying this sense. Tamhīd, p.18.

(2) Tawhīd, p.16,1-6.

(3) Ibid., p.13,4-7.

existence on objects other than themselves. Substances of such nature are temporal, because eternity (qidam) implies self-sufficiency, since the eternal by reason of its eternity is independent of anything else.⁽¹⁾ Another argument is that, our senses inform us that substances are incapable of restoring themselves even those with perfect qualities and that they need an external force to restore what deteriorates in them.⁽²⁾ These substances are also of opposing parts and contradictory natures, so they require an external force to compel their contradictory natures to combine, and to reconcile their opposing parts. To al-Māturīdī, substances of such nature cannot be self-sufficient and they must be temporal.⁽³⁾ Al-Māturīdī also used the argument concerning the finiteness of objects, as a proof of the temporality of the world and said that the world consists of parts and objects, it is well known that these objects came into existence from non-existence, so they are finite in time; their growth, extension and their bulk demonstrate their finiteness. This means that the whole world must be finite otherwise it would consist of finite and infinite objects which is impossible.⁽⁴⁾

Reason: One of al-Māturīdī's rational arguments for the temporality of the world is based on the concept of motion and rest as temporal characteristics. He said that no body is devoid

- (1) Tawhīd, p.11,14-16.
- (2) Ibid., pp.11,16-18; 12,1-2.
- (3) Ibid. p.12,3-4.
- (4) Ibid., p.12,5-7.

of motion and rest which are irreconcilable, and both of them cannot be external. Therefore one of them must be temporal, and this entails the temporality of the other. This proves that both motion and rest are temporal, and what is not free from them is itself temporal, so all bodies must be temporal. Moreover, no body is free from continuous movement or continuous rest, or both of them alternately. These states are not due to the essence of the body, but to an external force which subjugates the body to such states for the benefit of other beings and any state of such nature must be temporal. Since all the substances of the world are subject to these states, they must be temporal. (1)

Another argument of al-Māturīdī is that concerning the nature of the world there are three hypotheses which might be introduced: (i) It could either be said that the world is eternal in spite of the qualities of movement and rest, combination and separation, goodness and evil, beauty or ugliness, excess and lack, which it has. But these qualities have been recognized as temporal by the senses and by reason, as stated above. Therefore, the whole world must accordingly be temporal, since it is not free from temporal things, and whatever is not free from temporal things is itself temporal. So in this case the world cannot be said to be eternal. (ii) The second proposition is that the world is originated by a principle which is devoid of these temporal qualities. In this case there could be no argument regarding its origination. (iii) The third suggestion is that the origin of the world was free from these

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(1) Tawhīd, pp.12,15-23; 13,1-2.

qualities at first, but later somehow came to possess them.

Within the range of this proposition lay the views of those who asserted the eternity of matter, those who advocated the doctrine of latency (kumūn) and generation (tawallud).⁽¹⁾

Reference has already been made to al-Māturīdī's refutation of these views, and to his arguments that beside the fact that they are absurd, do not entail the eternity of the world.⁽²⁾

From the evident connection between causes and effects in the perceptible world, al-Māturīdī argued that just as the effect must have a cause from which it follows, so also must the world have a maker from whose power it has followed and received its origin. Quoting his own words, al-Māturīdī said, "We know no writing without a writer, no division without a cause of division, and likewise combination, rest and movement, and this must also apply to the whole world for it is composite and yet divided. Indeed, the remarkable thing is that the composition of the world is more sublime, and therefore its combination or division is more likely to have been the result of a force other than itself. Since everything in the perceptible world which is combined or written is more recent than its maker, likewise the whole world, since what I have said is applicable to it."⁽³⁾

(c) Al-Māturīdī's Arguments for the Existence of God

To prove the existence of God, al-Māturīdī not only argued

(1) Tawhīd, p.13,3-19.

(2) See Supra., pp.137-40.

(3) Tawhīd, p.15,15-19. The same argument is used by al-Bāqillānī as a proof for the existence of God. See Tamhīd, p.23.

from the temporality of the world, but he introduced arguments derived from the observed change in the world, as well as the evident design and purpose in its creation.

(i) The Argument from the Temporality of the World

Having established the temporality of the world as premiss, al-Māturīdī proceeded to prove that the world being temporal must have a creator. In this respect he used almost the same arguments as those he used for the temporality of the world; thus al-Māturīdī argued that, "None of the objects of the perceived world can combine or separate by itself. Nor are these objects capable of restoring what has deteriorated in them, even when they are in a state of perfection. So if contradictory incompatible natures cannot combine by themselves, then there must be an external force which compels them to combine against their natures, and this force must be God, the Knowing, the Wise".⁽¹⁾ This argument of al-Māturīdī is almost the same as that of an-Nazzām mentioned in al-Intisār, where he said, "I found that heat is opposite to cold, and I found that two opposites cannot be reconciled in one object by their natures, and since I have found them reconciled, I know that they must have been reconciled by another force, and that they have been compelled to join against their very natures".⁽²⁾ These striking similarities between the two arguments disclose, as Kholeif said, the great influences which the Mu'tazilite dispute had on later theologians.⁽³⁾

(1) Tawhīd, p.17,6-8.

(2) Intisār, p.40.

(3) Tawhīd, Introduction, p.33.

Another argument, which has already been mentioned, is that the substances of the world are never devoid of qualities, and qualities are always dependent on substances, thus none of these can be self-existing or is able to produce another. Therefore, there must be an external force which brought them into existence.⁽¹⁾

Al-Māturīdī introduced a new argument based on what came to be known among later theologians as the principle of determination, (dalīl al-imkān aw at-takhsīs). According to al-Māturīdī, if the world were created by itself, there would be no determinate time for its creation, nor would there be determination of attributes or characteristics; so the fact that it is determined in time and in qualities proves the existence of a determinant (mukhassīs) which brought it into existence at a certain time and gave it this or that quality.⁽²⁾ Thus, in formulating this argument, al-Māturīdī seems to have preceded both al-Bāqillānī and al-Juwaynī to whom its formulation is ascribed.⁽³⁾

From the proposition that "a thing cannot be the cause of itself", al-Māturīdī argued that the world cannot be created by itself, for if it were created by itself, it would either be originated after its existence, and thus it cannot be said that it created itself since it already existed, or it would be non-existent yet it created itself, which is impossible because something non-existent cannot possibly be an agent.⁽⁴⁾ A more

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(1) Tawhīd, p.17,17-20.

(2) Ibid., p.17,9-11.

(3) Fakhry, "The Classical Islamic Arguments for the Existence of God." M.W.47(1957) p.139. Bāqillānī, Tamhīd, pp.23-4.
Juwaynī, Irshād, pp.16-17.

(4) Tawhīd, p.18,8-10.

philosophical statement of this argument is to be found in al-Kindī, (1) from whom al-Māturīdī might possibly have derived his argument; or perhaps they both drew from the same sources.

On the concept of the existence of evil in the world, al-Māturīdī argued that a world of such a nature could not have possibly created itself, but must have a creator. According to him, if the world had come into being of its own accord without a maker, evil would not have existed, for that which comes into being of its own accord will be satisfied only with the best of conditions and the best of qualities for itself. (2) None of the philosophers or the theologians who preceded al-Māturīdī used the concept of evil as a proof for the existence of God. (3) So the only possible source of such argument might be in the dualists views on evil. It seems that while the dualists took the existence of evil in the world as an argument for the existence of two gods, al-Māturīdī used the same concepts and derived from it his argument for origination of the world and the existence of its maker.

(ii) The Argument from Change (dalīl at-taghayyur)

From the phenomena of change in the world, al-Māturīdī argued for the existence of God. According to him, the world suffers a constant change of qualities; a living being dies; what is separate combines, children grow up, evil becomes good, thus it is continually altering as the result of the changes which

(1) Rasā'il, pp.77-79.

(2) Tawhīd, p.17,11-13. Ta'wīlāt, 3:186.

(3) Tawhīd, Introduction, pp.34-35.

occur in it. It is not possible for things to change by themselves, if it were, the colour of a dress would change by itself without being dyed and the ship would become what it is by itself, and as this is not so, there must be one who knows how to build it, and this applies to all the changes in the world.⁽¹⁾ Though this argument is derived from the observation of continuous change in the world and is based on rational deduction, its conclusion was of Qur'ānic inspiration since it directed the attention of man towards thinking about his creation and the phases of changes in the process of his life.⁽²⁾

(iii) The Argument from Design and Purpose (Teleological Argument)

From the evident order in the world and its being suitable for the living beings, al-Māturīdī argued for the existence of God. According to him, everything in this world displays remarkable and impressive order, and also it indicates the wisdom behind its creation. The whole world is organised in such a way that no-one - even the wisest of men - can comprehend or grasp its real structure. Thus the structure of every object and living being discloses the wisdom and proves the existence of its creator.⁽³⁾ Moreover, all the substances of the world are organized in certain ways to serve certain ends, and for the benefit of mankind. Everything is subject to certain patterns of movement and rest to serve certain purposes, all this points to the existence of God who controls the affairs of the whole world.⁽⁴⁾

(1) Tawhīd, pp.18,18-21; 19,1-2.

(2) Qur'ān, 23:12-14; 40:67.

(3) Tawhīd, p.18,13-16; Ta'wīlāt, 3:185.

(4) Tawhīd, p.62,10-14.

To al-Māturīdī, the regular revolution of the sun and the moon, and the continuous interchange of days and nights resulting from their revolution, and their following of certain patterns without change or disproportion, proves that they have been designed in this certain way by a supreme being who has eternal knowledge and full control over the affairs of this world.⁽¹⁾ Men are naturally dependent on each other for their existence and sustenance, and their affairs are arranged in such a way as to make it impossible for each one to be self-sufficient. All this, according to al-Māturīdī, indicates that there is an external force behind this arrangement which has full control over the whole world and that is God, the all knowing the wise and the powerful.⁽²⁾

The basis of this argument is deeply rooted in the Qur'ān whose proofs for the existence of God depended mainly on reminding man of the wonders of his creation as well as the creation of the world. Time and again man is enjoined to think and ponder on his creation as well as the creation of heavens, the earth and the mountains, as well as the regular movements of the stars, the sun and the moon. This Qur'ānic method was followed up by al-Jāhiz (and possibly by other Mu'tazilites), whose work, ad-Dalā'il wal-I'tibār, is aimed at demonstrating the natural evidences for the existence and unity of the creator, from the order visible in the terrestrial and celestial phenomena, the perfection in growth and instinct and adaptation to their environment of

(1) Ta'wīlāt, 10:67.

(2) Tawhīd, p.62, 15-17.

animals, vegetables and minerals.⁽¹⁾ Later on, Ibn-Rushd, who criticized the other methods and arguments of the theologians, considered the Qur'ānic method as suitable for people of distinction as well as for the masses.⁽²⁾

2. Al-Māturīdī on the Attributes of God

All the problems concerning the nature of God might claim the support of the Qur'ān. The Qur'ān emphasizes the transcendence and absolute uniqueness of God and "Like Him there is naught." Yet it ascribes to God hands, eyes, face and states that He sits on His throne and can be seen, which might imply His resemblance to His creatures. Different readings of the Qur'ānic verses, and emphasis on one of these Qur'ānic conceptions of God at the expense of others, led to the appearance and development of what is known in the terminology of Islamic theology as the doctrines of tashbīh (anthropomorphism or likening God to creatures) ta'tīl (divesting God of all attributes) and tanzīh (keeping God pure against tashbīh).⁽³⁾

In dealing with the problem of God's essence, al-Māturīdī strongly advocated the doctrine of tanzīh, and tries to preserve the conception of God from whatever might affect His absolute

(1) Gibb, "The Argument from Design, A Mu'tazilite Treatise Attributed to al-Jāhiz", in Ignace Goldziher Memorial Volume, part 1, pp.150-62. Quotation from p.151.

(2) Ibn-Rushd, Manāhij al-Adilla, p.153.

(3) E.I.⁽¹⁾ art. "Tashbīh", R. (Strothmann). Watt, "Some Muslim Discussion of Anthropomorphism", pp.1-10.

perfection or might suggest resemblance between Him and His creatures. Thus he used mystical language to describe God saying, "He is, but is not, since He is more mysterious than the expression "He"; the tongue is incapable of His description, explanation explains Him not, ideas fall short behind Him, and the intellects are bewildered by Him." So to al-Māturīdī, God transcended even the comprehension of human intellect, and he held that an intimate essential knowledge of Him is impossible. He preferred to interpret the Qur'ānic verse, "He knows what is before them and behind them, and they comprehend Him not in knowledge."⁽²⁾, according to such a conception of God, namely in the sense that God's creatures do not have comprehensive knowledge of Him; the knowledge about Him, which is possible, is limited and derived from reflection on the observable signs of His creation. Comprehensive knowledge (idrāk) is only possible in respect of things which are perceived by the senses, but comprehensive knowledge of what is known only through reflection and deduction is not possible.⁽³⁾

Similarly, al-Māturīdī explained the famous pseudo-hadīth, "He who knows about himself knows about His Lord"⁽⁴⁾ in a sense which confirmed his doctrine of tanzīh. According to al-Māturīdī

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- (1) Tawhīd, p.43,10-15.
- (2) Qur'an, 20:110. For different reading and interpretation of the verse see F. Rosenthal, Knowledge Triumphant, pp.130-34.
- (3) Ta'wīlāt, 20:110; 39:67.
- (4) For discussion about this pseudo-hadīth, see Rosenthal, op.cit., pp.137-39.

if one knows the true nature of himself, with all its defects, needs, liability to change and shortcomings, one would realize that the nature of his creator is absolutely different from that of himself, and that He does not resemble His creatures in any respect.⁽¹⁾ Having such conception of God in mind, al-Māturīdī dealt with the problems of the oneness of God, tashbīh, the vision of God, and whether He has locality.

(a) Al-Māturīdī's Proofs for the Oneness of God

According to al-Māturīdī, the concept of God's oneness denotes not only that God is one, but also implies the negation of any similarity between Him and His creations; so God is one in His essence as well as in His attributes and His actions.⁽²⁾ Al-Māturīdī's arguments in this respect were, however, mainly directed against the dualists, and based on evidences derived from general or traditional accounts, reason, and on the observable precision in the world's creation, (dalālat al-'ālam bil-khilqa).

(i) Sam'

As has already been mentioned,⁽³⁾ sam' is used by al-Māturīdī, not only in the sense of traditional accounts, but also to include the evidence of historical events, common observation as well as arguments based on these two sources. In line with this concept of sam', al-Māturīdī introduced the following arguments

(1) Tawhīd, pp.102-3.

(2) Ibid., pp.23,8-10; 119,7-9.

(3) See Supra. pp.50-51.

to prove and defend the oneness of God: (a) From the concept of finitude, which he often used, al-Māturīdī argued that, "If God were not one, the world would not be finite, since if there were more than one God, it would be possible for us to presume the existence of an infinite number of gods, and if each of them created one single thing, the world would then cease to be finite since its creators are infinite. Also if there were more than one god, their numbers could be multiplied incessantly, because numbers themselves are infinite, and thus there would be no logical reason for limiting the number to two or three etc. ..."(1)

(b) Depending on general reports and historical evidences, al-Māturīdī argued that since no god besides God claims the divinity or introduces signs or proofs for his lordship, or sends a messenger with compelling proofs for his deity, it must be deduced that any assertions that there is more than one God are an outcome of deluded imagination and wicked thought. Al-Māturīdī believed that the signs brought by the prophets demonstrate God's oneness since, if God had a partner, he would have prevented the prophets from manifesting their signs, because such a manifestation would constitute a denial of his partnership and his divinity.(2)

(ii) Reasoned Arguments

Al-Māturīdī's rational arguments are basically derived from the Qur'ānic arguments for the oneness of God. Thus from the Qur'ānic verse (21:22) which states that if more than one God exists,

(1) Tawhīd, p.19,8-17.

(2) Ibid., p.20,1-10.

heaven and earth would disintegrate and their good order would be ruined, al-Māturīdī argued that if there were more than one god, the existence of the world would be impossible. Because these gods would be in constant conflict and mutual opposition, and if one intended to affirm certain things, the other would oppose him; and if one of them desired the existence of something, the other might render it non-existent. Thus if one of them wanted the existence of the world, the other might not, so the fact that the world exists demonstrates the oneness of its creator.⁽¹⁾ This argument has been criticized by both Ibn-Rushd and at-Taftāzānī on the pretext that the plurality of gods does not necessitate the disintegration of the world, for it is possible that these gods might come to an agreement on the present order of the world, which is something that gods would be likely to do.⁽²⁾ Al-Māturīdī seems to have anticipated this objection and he pointed out that such mutual agreement (istilāh) is a sign of weakness and impotency rather than of power, and it is not, therefore, appropriate for the conception of God.⁽³⁾ Moreover, if these gods were similar in all aspects of godship and absolute perfection, there would be no distinction between them in qualities, thus they would be only one essence. If they were different in qualities, he in whom absolute perfection was realized would be the only true god.⁽⁴⁾

(1) Tawhīd, p.20,11-15; Ta'wīlāt, 21:22; 3:185.

(2) Ibn-Rushd, Manāhij al-Adilla, p.157. cf. Taftāzānī, 'Aqā'id, p.57.

(3) Tawhīd, pp.20,11-15; 21,4-5.

(4) Ibid., pp.22-23. cf. Ghazālī, Iqīsād, p.36.

The Qur'ānic verse (17:43) states that if there are claimants to the throne, there will arise conflict between them; so the existence of order in the universe indicates that its ruler must be one. From this verse, al-Māturīdī argued that it is ^a common phenomenon among the rulers of this present world that each one tries to subdue his rival and to prevent him from executing his plans; so if there were more than one god the same would apply to them, and thus everyone of them would try to subdue and overcome the other and in this case everything in the world would be in chaos; if one of them had succeeded in subduing the other, then he would be the only god. The order in the world however proves that its originator is one without rival. (1)

From the Qur'ānic verses (23:91; 13:16), al-Māturīdī argued that if there existed another god besides God, he would demonstrate his power and wisdom and make his acts distinct from those of God, and all this would entail confusion and destruction in the world; but nothing of the sort has happened; thus it becomes clear that there is only one God. (2) Furthermore, al-Māturīdī introduced a dialectical argument based on the theological argument of mutual hindrance (dalīl al-tamānu'). According to him, if there were more than one god, they would either be able to hide their secrets from each other or they would not; or only one of them would be able to hide his secrets, while the other would not. If it were the first alternative, then each of them would render the other ignorant (since none of them would have

(1) Tawhīd, p.20,16-20; Ta'wīlāt, 17:43.

(2) Tawhīd, pp.20,21; 21,1-3; Ta'wīlāt, 23:91; 13:16.

knowledge of the other's doings). If it were the second alternative, then both of them would be impotent and impotency nullifies their lordship, and if it were the third alternative, then only he who was able to hide his secrets from the other would be God. (1)

(iii) The Arguments from the Precision in the Making of the World

Al-Māturīdī's arguments in this respect also have a Qur'ānic basis and inspiration, and they seem to be no more than an elaboration of his previously mentioned "rational arguments". According to al-Māturīdī, if there had been more than one god, there would have been disharmony in their control of the world, and disagreement between them about the calculation of heaven and earth, the direction of the sun, moon and stars, and the calculation of night, days and hours. Since all this proceeds in harmony, it proves that all of creation has a wise, knowing controller whose control is not disputed, nor his calculation opposed. (2) This precision is also evident in the creation of man and his development from sperm to clot then embryo, then flesh and bones, and completeness in his body which is made in such a way that tasks can be efficiently performed. This precision in the making of all things in the world is an evident proof of the oneness of God. (3) From a consideration of the natures of the created things of the world, al-Māturīdī argued for the oneness of God and said that things by their natures are neither absolutely

(1) Tawhīd, p.21,7-14.

(2) Tawhīd, pp.21,15-22; 22,1-8; Ta'wīlāt, 10:6; 67:3; 21:22.

(3) Ta'wīlāt, 51:21.

beneficent and good, nor absolutely harmful and bad; for what is good for someone might be bad for another and vice versa. This proves that these things are under the control of one God who knows their natures and those of the people, and thus produces from one thing different aspects to suit different people. (1) Also the objects of the world are of opposing natures and they are liable to separation and disintegration if they were left alone to work according to their natures. So, their being combined in harmony indicates that they are under the control of one God who combined them and restrained the evil of each one of them by His power and wisdom. If they were under the control of more than one god, then chaos would prevail and the world would be ruined. (2)

(b) The Denial of Anthropomorphism

Al-Māturīdī made his doctrine of tanzīh clearer by criticizing and refuting the views of those who held that God has a "body", and by rejecting all the reports which imply tashbīh, and finally by interpreting all the verses which attribute to God face, hands, eyes, etc. allegorically.

The term jism (body) was applied to God in two senses:

(i) The sense of physical entity, (ii) and in the meaning of "existent", "thing" and "self-subsistent" (mawjūd, shay', qā'im bi-nafsihī). While the former sense was a result of a naive understanding of the Qur'ānic verses which attributed to God

(1) Tawhīd, p.22,9-15.

(2) Ibid, 16-21.

hands, eyes, etc., the latter meaning has philosophical connotation, and the propounder of this interpretation argued that the existence of an entity without its being body is inconceivable; so to affirm God's existence, the term jism must be applied to Him.⁽¹⁾ It seems that al-Māturīdī was well aware of these two interpretations, so in his refutation of the application of the term "body" to God, he started by defining the meaning of the term. According to him, "The term 'body' is that which has directions, limits and three dimensions, i.e., length, breadth and height. In this sense the term 'body' should not be applied to God since it implies that He is finite and has location and these are signs of temporality and createdness. Moreover, its application in this sense entails similarity between God and other bodies which contradicts God's Qur'ānic dictum, "Like Him there is naught."⁽²⁾ (Q. 42:11)

According to al-Māturīdī, reason has nothing to say in respect of whether the term jism was applied with or without these meanings, and only revelation can provide the answer. According to revelation (sam'), jism is not one of God's names, so to ascribe it to Him is not permitted. Al-Māturīdī argued that, if it were permissible to invent names without the evidences of the senses or revelation or of reason, it would be permissible to say that He is a body (jasad) or a person (shakhs). But this is objectionable because it would then be permissible to ascribe to Him all appellations that are commonly applied to

(1) Maqālāt, pp.31-34. cf. Watt, Formative Period, pp.247-48.

(2) Tawhīd, p.38,3-8.

created things which would be objectionable according to revelation. For those who identify the term 'body' as a necessity for existence, al-Māturīdī said such a view might be acceptable except that no-one uses the term 'body' as a term for existence, since pure characteristics and attributes cannot be included in this term, although it cannot be denied that they exist. Therefore, to maintain that being 'body' is the condition for a thing's existence is wrong. So there is no justification for applying the word 'body' to God. (1)

Concerning the verses which attribute hands, face and eyes to God, and which described Him as seated on His throne, and coming and going, etc., al-Māturīdī held that such expressions should not be taken in their literal sense, since they contradict the explicit verses of the Qur'ān which emphasize tanzīh. So it must be believed that the prima facie of these expressions was never intended; and in such cases the particular verse should either (i) be accepted as it stands without allegorical interpretation, and its true meaning should be left to the knowledge of God, or (ii) it should be interpreted in the light of the verses which clearly speak of tanzīh, in a manner consistent with the doctrine of tawhīd and according to the normal use of language. (2)

Al-Māturīdī introduced various allegorical interpretations for these expressions; and said, concerning God's hand, the literal meaning hand should not be understood from this expression,

(1) Tawhīd, p.38,9-17.

(2) Ta'wīlāt, 2:29.

because 'hand' has been ascribed to the Qur'ān (41:42) and to rain (7:57) and no-one understands it in its literal sense, thus 'hand' in relation to God might be explained in the sense of His grace as in the verses (5:64; 18:57) or His power as in the verse (38:45).⁽¹⁾ Nor do the 'eyes of God' in the verse (11:38) literally mean eyes, but might be explained by saying that 'with our eyes' means either, (i) under God's protection and care, or (ii) by His instructions; since without God's instructions Noah would have had no idea how to build the ark.⁽²⁾ In sura 55 the following lines occur: "All that dwells upon the earth is perishing yet abides the face of thy Lord majestic, splendid." God's face, which is mentioned here, might possibly mean his dominion, power or lordship and indicates that God's sovereignty and power is different in nature from that of His creatures; so the destruction or annihilation of those creatures does not decrease or belittle that sovereignty or power.⁽³⁾ Similarly, the coming (majī'), which has been ascribed to God should not be understood literally in the sense applied to bodies and qualities, because in this sense it implies change of locality (intiḡāl), therefore it must be interpreted in a sense appropriate to God.⁽⁴⁾

Though al-Māturīdī gave these expressions allegorical interpretation, it seems that he was not quite convinced that

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(1) Ta'wīlāt, 5:64; 18:57; 38:45; 7:57.

(2) Ibid., 11:37.

(3) Ibid., 55:27.

(4) Tawhīd, pp.53,15-16; 77,2-6. Ta'wīlāt, 50:16; 69:9; 2:187.

this was the best method of treating these verses. . He expressed this dissatisfaction in his commentary on the verse (38:75), where he said, the theologians undertook a painful task in their attempt to find suitable interpretation of the word 'hand' in relation to God. Their efforts in this respect are futile, for 'hand' can be ascribed to something which has no organs or limbs (as the Qur'ān,) and no-one understands that it means a real hand. Therefore, since it is acknowledged that God transcends all comparisons, there is no need to seek allegorical interpretation for the word 'hand'.⁽¹⁾ Concerning the coming of God, al-Māturīdī said one should refrain from giving a definite meaning, for majī' if ascribed to body would give a meaning different from that for quality and since God is neither body nor quality another meaning must be intended.⁽²⁾ So it seems that al-Māturīdī became more inclined to the acceptance of these verses without allegorical interpretation, but at the same time holding fast to the principle of tanzīh.

Closely connected with the doctrine of tanzīh, are the concepts of God having locality, and being visible; the Mushabbiha and similar groups found no difficulty in ascribing locality to God and in affirming that he is visible. The Mu'tazilites, in accordance with their doctrine of tanzīh, denied that God can be seen and that He has locality. Al-Māturīdī, who emphasized the doctrine of tanzīh, denied God's locality but at the same time affirmed His visibility.

(1) Ta'wīlāt, 38:75.

(2) Ibid., 89:22.

(c) The Problem of God's Locality

Al-Māturīdī, in his section on this problem, gave a summary of the various views regarding God's locality. According to him, (i) there are those who say that God is in a particular place, that is on His throne, which is similar to a bed surrounded by the angels. They quoted as support for such views, those verses which speak of God being on His throne above the sky; they also argued that people by their natural disposition (fitra) raise their hands to the direction of the sky when they implore God for mercy, and this indicates that He is on His throne above the skies. (ii) There are those who assert that God is omnipresent (bikulli makān) and quote, as support for their views, the Qur'ānic verses which speak of God being in heaven and on earth; that He is nearer to man than the jugular vein, etc. They also argue that ascribing a particular place to God entails that He is finite and is dependent on that place, which cannot be said of God who is dependent on nothing.⁽¹⁾ (iii) There are those, however, who deny that God has locality or that He is omnipresent, and interpret the fact that a place is ascribed to him by saying that He is in control and has full knowledge of all places.⁽²⁾ These are the views of the Mu'tazilites who interpreted the verses which mention God as sitting on His throne allegorically.⁽³⁾

Al-Māturīdī rejected and refuted these three views; he saw no difference between the first two views since both ascribe

(1) Tawhīd, pp.67,11-15; 68,1-10.

(2) Ibid., pp.68,11-12; 75,3-6.

(3) 'Abd-al-Jabbār, Usūl, pp.226-7.

locality to God, thus he refuted them both by saying, (i) God exists in eternity without place or places, and it is possible for Him to endure without place or places; and He is free from change and transitoriness. Since His being in a place or places necessitates change and movement which are signs of occurrence in time and temporality, it must be denied that He is in a place or places. (ii) It is impossible to assert that God has locality since this entails that He is in need of such a locality.⁽¹⁾ (iii) The same assertion also entails that He is part of the world which is a sign of temporality; and thus it is inappropriate for God.⁽²⁾ (iv) To say that God is in a place means either that the place encompasses Him or it is bigger or smaller than Him, and all these suggestions detract His essence and imply that He is finite.⁽³⁾ (v) Al-Māturīdī argued that the raising of the hands upwards is not an argument for God being in that direction, otherwise the fact that the people place their foreheads on the ground or that they face East or West in prayer, must be taken as proof of God being in this or that direction which is as absurd as the first suggestion.⁽⁴⁾

Concerning those verses which have been quoted in support of the view that God is in place or places, al-Māturīdī said that in many self-explanatory verses, (muḥkam), the similarity between God and His creatures has been denied; so it must be held that

(1) Tawhīd, p.69,6-15.

(2) Ibid., p.69,18-20.

(3) Ibid., p.70,1-11.

(4) Ibid., pp.75,23; 76,1-4.

God is beyond similarity with His creatures, and those verses should therefore be explained in a sense appropriate to God. So His nearness (qurb) and His being with men (ma'iyya) should be explained in the sense that they mean His omniscience and benevolent care for His creatures, and not His personal approach or His accompanying of them.⁽¹⁾ His 'uluw and 'azama, mentioned in the verse (42:4) should be interpreted in the same way. God being above (fawq) mentioned in the verse (16:50), should also be interpreted as referring to His absolute power and will, and His omniscience.⁽²⁾

As for those verses which refer to God sitting on His throne, al-Māturīdī said that these verses do not necessarily mean that God is in a place, i.e. His throne, since being in a place does not give the occupant merit or extra honour. So these verses do not mean that God is actually sitting on His throne.⁽³⁾ After giving various allegorical interpretations of the words: throne and sitting ('arsh and istiwā')⁽⁴⁾ which are mainly Mu'tazilites' explanations of these terms, al-Māturīdī shows his dissatisfaction with such interpretations and goes on to say that, "The meaning of this doctrine cannot possibly be comprehended by reason or conceived by the intellect; so assuming a firm belief in the transcendence of God, one should rely on tanzīl (revelation) and accept it without allegorical interpretation. According to al-

(1) Tawhīd, pp.76-77. Ta'wīlāt, 2:186; 50:16.

(2) Ta'wīlāt, 16:50.

(3) Tawhīd, p.70,12-14. Ta'wīlāt, 16:50.

(4) Tawhīd, pp.72-74. Ta'wīlāt, 13:2; 20:5; 41:11.

Māturīdī, "We must believe and accept the Qur'ānic verse, 'The All Compassionate sat Himself upon the throne.' as it stands, and refrain from attempting definite interpretation as it may have another meaning; we should believe in whatever God meant by it." In discussing this and similar expressions found in the Qur'ān, such as those about His visibility etc., he states that it is necessary to deny tashbīh and to believe in whatever God meant without attempting to reach any definite interpretation. (1)

To make his doctrine of tanzīh more clear, al-Māturīdī introduced the following rule for explaining the relations between God and things ascribed to Him. According to al-Māturīdī, if the things related to God are universal such as: "To Him belongs the kingdom of heaven and earth."; "Lord of the heaven and earth"; "The Lord of all creation"; "The Lord of all beings" etc., they should be explained in a sense which reveals God's exaltation and glorification. If these things are particulars such as: "God is with those who are godfearing"; "The places of worship belong to God"; "The she-camel of God"; and "The Lord of this house" etc., they should be explained in the sense that these particulars have been honoured and given special preference over their kind. The relation of the throne to God is of the latter kind and thus should be explained in its being honoured and preferred above other things. (2)

- (1) Tawhīd, p.74,6-10. Ta'wīlāt, 57:4. Al-Māturīdī's views in this respect are close to those of the balkafiyya (See Infra Ch.IV, p.248 ff). They are also in line with the views of his predecessors, the Ḥanafites. See Fiḥ Akbar II, art.2. M.C.p.19
- (2) Tawhīd, pp.68-69; 70-71. Ta'wīlāt, 3:55; 7:206; 96:1; 38:75.

(d) The Problem of God's Visibility

Though al-Māturīdī denied that God is a "body" and that He has locality, he affirmed God's visibility in the hereafter. To him, God's visibility is possible without comprehension or qualification (bilā-idrāk w-lā-tafsīr).⁽¹⁾ To establish the vision of God, al-Māturīdī depended mainly on scriptural proofs and introduced the following arguments:

1. He used the verse which the Mu'tazilites used for the denial of God's visibility, "The eyes comprehend Him not, but He comprehends the eyes". Al-Māturīdī asserted that while God cannot be comprehended, this does mean that He cannot be seen; so the denial of idrāk still allows the possibility of God's visibility.⁽²⁾
2. The utterance of Moses, "Oh my Lord show me that I may behold Thee." is another proof for the possibility of God's vision, for if this were impossible, Moses would have been ignorant of God, and thus would not have been a prophet. Moreover, God did not forbid him to ask about His visibility, nor did He deprive him of the hope of its fulfillment, which implies its possibility.⁽³⁾
3. The third proof is the Qur'ānic verse, "Faces, that day, are bright, looking (nāzira) to their Lord." According to al-Māturīdī, 'Looking to' cannot mean expectation (intizār) as the Mu'tazilites assumed, for the following four reasons: (i) The

(1) Tawhīd, p.77,14-15. Ta'wīlāt, 75:23.

(2) Tawhīd, p.77,16-18. Ta'wīlāt, 6:103.

(3) Tawhīd, p.78,1-4.

hereafter is a place for reward and bliss, not for expectation.

(ii) The first part of the verse "Faces that day are bright" refers to the pleasures which the believers will be enjoying in Paradise, therefore the only possible meaning for "looking to" is the seeing of God. (iii) According to Arabic normal use of language, when the word 'to' is connected with the verb 'look' it means simply the seeing of a thing by the eyes and not expectation. (iv) Expectation has a negative aspect which is inconsistent with the bliss of Paradise. Moreover, the allegorical interpretation of the verse gives no assurance that it is what God meant; so the verse must be understood in the sense of affirming God's vision and the denial of all aspects of tashbīh.⁽¹⁾

4. Another proof for the possibility of God's vision is the verse, "To the good-doers is the reward most fair and surplus". (Q. 10:26). The surplus has been interpreted by authentic Traditions as meaning the vision of God.⁽²⁾

5. In many Traditions, the prophet clearly stated that "You shall see your Lord as you see the moon on the night when it is full, and you shall not suffer from His visibility". These scriptural proofs, al-Māturīdī said, are strong evidences for the possibility of God's visibility.⁽³⁾

Though al-Māturīdī depended on revelation for the proof of God's visibility, he argued rationally against the Mu'tazilites in their attempt to explain God's visibility as a mere intellectual

(1) Tawhīd, p.79,1-13. Ta'wīlāt, 75:23.

(2) Tawhīd, p.79,15-17.

(3) Ibid., pp.79,19; 80,1-ff.

knowledge of God in the hereafter. To the Mu'tazilites, the vision needs certain conditions to be realized, i.e., that the object seen must be before the beholder, in a certain direction and at a certain distance etc., if these conditions were applied to God, they would entail His being a body.⁽¹⁾ Moreover, the Mu'tazilites saw no difference between idrāk and ru'ya, and since God clearly stated that "the eyes attain Him not", this means that His visibility to the eyes is impossible.⁽²⁾

Al-Māturīdī argued against the Mu'tazilites and in particular al-Ka'bī,⁽³⁾ by first differentiating between comprehension (idrāk) and vision (ru'ya). To al-Māturīdī, comprehension means full grasp of a definite thing, while vision did not necessitate comprehension. Since God is not finite His reality cannot be comprehended, yet He can be seen. Al-Māturīdī pointed out the fact that we do see the shade, light and darkness, yet we do not claim that we comprehend their realities before we get knowledge of the definition of their natures (ḥudūd). Because of this obvious difference between idrāk and ru'ya, the prophet likened God's visibility to that of the moon in that though we see the moon, we do not comprehend its reality or understand the limits of its nature.⁽⁴⁾

(1) 'Abd-al-Jabbār, Usūl, p.233ff.

(2) Tawhīd, p.82,6-9. 'Abd-al-Jabbār, op.cit., p.248ff.

(3) Abū-l-Qāsim 'Abd Allah b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Balkhī al-Ka'bī (d.317/929) was the leader of the Mu'tazilite school of Baghdad at the period just before al-Māturīdī. Ibn-al-Murtadā, Ṭabaqāt al-Mu'tazila, pp.88-9.

(4) Tawhīd, pp.81,15-22, 82,1. Ta'wīlāt, 6:103.

Al-Māturīdī did not deny that there were requirements for vision in this world, but he emphasized the point that these requirements were not necessary in every case and for every entity; requirements of vision differ from genus to genus, person to person, and stage to stage, so the conditions of seeing shadows, darkness and rays of light are not the same as those of seeing solid material objects. To al-Māturīdī, al-Ka'bī had mistakenly considered his own essence, without taking into account the fact that other essences do exist in this world, which are either invisible as the angels and jinn, or are not seen by the naked eye in spite of the fulfilling of the requirements of their visibility, such as tiny germs. So the application of these conditions, even in the present world, would lead to the denial of many things. (1) The Mu'tazilites' assertion, that absent (ghā'ib) is analogous to present (shāhid), is invalid as far as the vision is concerned. Because our knowledge in the present is limited only to what is body or accident, while in the absent we know God who is neither body nor accident. So if vision in the present has requirements for its realization, these conditions might not be necessary for the vision of things in the absent. Thus it would be quite absurd 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. (2)

Moreover, though the above mentioned conditions might be

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(1) Tawhīd, p.82,10-16.

(2) Ibid., 18-22.

fulfilled, for one reason or another, vision may not be realized. So it is easily possible that vision can be realized without the fulfillment of these conditions.⁽¹⁾ Al-Māturīdī went on to say that al-Ka'bī and his fellow Mu'tazilites had experiences of the vision of bodies and qualities, and had no idea how the vision of immaterial things occurred, therefore, they had no justification for making the conditions for the vision of material things necessary for seeing immaterial things.⁽²⁾ Finally, al-Māturīdī said, vision is one of the subjects related to the hereafter, whose conditions differ from those of this world, so the conditions applicable to the vision in this world are not necessary for the vision in the hereafter.⁽³⁾

If these conditions of vision stipulated by the Mu'tazilites are not necessary for the vision of God, of what nature would His vision be? Al-Māturīdī refrained from qualifying this in any way and said, "We only follow what the scriptures said concerning the vision of God. Having first denied any similarities between God and created things, we believe that vision of God is possible without qualification, for qualities are appropriate to what has form, while God is seen without qualities such as being standing or sitting, leaning or hanging, connected or separated, advancing or receding, short or tall, dark or light, moving or still, touching or not touching, in or out. He has no quality which the imagination can grasp or the intellect comprehend, and is above

(1) Tawhīd, p.83,3-6.

(2) Ibid., 9-16.

(3) Ibid., 18-19.

all this."(1)

So the vision of God will occur without conditions or qualifications. This, however, does not mean that it is an intellectual knowledge of God as the Mu'tazilites hold; for such knowledge, according to al-Māturīdī, will be shared by the unbelievers and the believers in the hereafter.(2) The unbelievers will have no doubt about the existence of God, they will realize this fact after the removal of the covering from their hearts as the Qur'ān said, "Thou wast heedless of this, therefore we have now removed from thee thy covering, and so thy sight today is piercing." (Q.50:22). In spite of this knowledge, however, the unbelievers would be veiled from seeing God as the Qur'ān stated, "No indeed, but upon that day they (i.e. the unbelievers) shall be veiled from their Lord".(3) From this, al-Māturīdī said, it is clear that the vision of God is something more than intellectual comprehension, its nature however cannot be defined by reason, so one should rely upon scripture for its justification, and leave its nature for God's knowledge.(4)

(1) Tawhīd, p.85,15-19. Ta'wīlāt, 7:143.

(2) Tawhīd, pp.80,16-21; 81,1-2. Ta'wīlāt, 75:23.

(3) Qur'ān, 83:15. According to 'Abd-al-Jabbār, the verse refers to the fact that the unbelievers will be veiled from God and not from seeing Him, so it should not be cited in this context. See Usūl, p.267.

(4) Ta'wīlāt, 75:23.

3. Al-Māturīdī on the Essential and Active Attributes of God

Various aspects of this problem occupied the Muslim theologians from early times and remained as central points of discussions for quite a long time.⁽¹⁾ In the Qur'ān, God has been described as being knowing, powerful, living, the Provider etc., and the Qur'ān also speaks of God's knowledge and His power. On the basis of these Qur'ānic statements many questions arose: it has been asked whether these terms ascribed to God in the Qur'ān imply the existence in God of substantive attributes, or whether they are only expressions in human terms of the relation which exists between God and temporal things. Another question that came into prominence was that of the meanings which these terms convey when applied to God and man: is it the same or not? In other words, when we say that God is "knowing", does this expression convey the same sense of "knowing" when related to human beings? And if the existence of these eternal attributes has then been established, what would be the relation between them and their temporal effects? This question led eventually to the distinction between the essential and the active attributes of God.

The main issue underlying all these questions is the significance of the words of the human language when used to denote God. Are these words capable of describing the transcendent nature of God or not? The various views on God's attributes ascribed to individuals and sects, in the heresiographical works such as al-Ash'arī's Māqalāt, might be understood in the light of the above-mentioned questions. Al-Māturīdī's efforts in this

(1) E.I.⁽²⁾, L. Gardet, art. "Allah", vol.1, pp.410ff.

respect might also be viewed as an attempt to solve these questions, with due consideration to his intellectual environment. A general survey of his section on this problem discloses his attempts on the one hand to affirm the transcendent nature of God and the validity of the revelation, and on the other hand to refute the views of the philosophers, the Bātinītes, the Mu'tazilītes (especially al-Ka'bi and Ibn-Shabīb), the Jahmites, and the anthropomorphists. Thus the main points which al-Māturīdī discussed can be classified as follows: (a) The affirmation of the reality of God's attributes. (b) That this affirmation implies no resemblance between God and His creatures. (c) Both the essential and the active attributes of God are eternal. The framework of al-Māturīdī's treatment of the point involved polemical arguments which were meant to refute the opponent's arguments and to support his own point of view. This method makes the arguments more confused and somewhat difficult. Yet, in spite of these difficulties in the process of analysing the views of al-Māturīdī, it is possible to give a general picture of them.

(a) The reality of the names and the attributes of God

In his dealing with the reality of the names and the attributes of God, al-Māturīdī starts by setting out the methodology of his arguments. He clearly stated that, "The description of God as knowing, powerful, living, generous and beneficent, and calling Him by these names, is well affirmed by both revelation and reason."⁽¹⁾ In another statement he said, "Predicating

(1) Tawhīd, p.44,3-4.

speech of God (kalām) has been affirmed by the proofs of revelation and reason."⁽¹⁾ To substantiate his first statement, al-Māturīdī does not give particular quotations from the Qur'ān or from the Traditions to affirm the reality of God's attributes, rather he points out the fact that the Qur'ān and all the other scriptures have ascribed certain attributes to Him and called Him by certain names. Moreover, the prophets and all creatures (khalā'iq) applied to Him the same names and attributes. Thus, according to al-Māturīdī, "God is called by the names He applied to Himself, and is described by the descriptions He used for Himself."⁽²⁾ To establish the reality of God's speech, however, al-Māturīdī cites the following verses of the Qur'ān: the verse (4:164) which states that God spoke directly to Moses; and the verse (2:75) which speaks about those (sc. the Jews) who heard God's Word, and then tampered with it. From the verse (2:118) "And they that know not say, Why does not God speak to us?", al-Māturīdī argued that in it God did not deny that He has speech, but reprimanded the infidels by pointing out their stubbornness, arrogance and their ignorance of themselves. To these evidences based on the Qur'ān, al-Māturīdī added the consensus of the Muslims (ittifāq), that God is speaking, that He has speech in reality, yet their opinions differ regarding the nature (mā'iyya) of this speech.⁽³⁾

As for his rational arguments, al-Māturīdī stated that

(1) Tawhīd, p.57,10-11.

(2) Ibid., p.44,4-5, 9.

(3) Ibid., p.57,11-15.

reason necessitates these attributes, then he introduced arguments to prove God's freedom of choice (ikhtiyār), His power, will, knowledge and speech. He spent proportionately much more effort in establishing that God acts according to an absolute freedom of choice; and without any compulsion or necessity. Al-Māturīdī's emphasis on this point is quite understandable especially when we recall the effort he spends in his Kitāb at-Tawhīd in refuting the doctrines of the naturalists and those who advocate the principle of causation ('illīyya), as the origin of the world.⁽¹⁾ His arguments, in this respect, proceed from the proposition that, since it is affirmed that God is the originator of all things with all their different substances and qualities, this proves that His action is not like the act of the naturally determined, but that it results from absolute freedom of choice.⁽²⁾ Also, the systematic order of regular acts, without any sort of corruption (fasād) or disorder, proves that such results are produced out of free choice on the part of the agent (fā'il), and that creation is truly by His action (bi-fi'lihī haqīqatan).⁽³⁾ We shall see, as we proceed, that al-Māturīdī considers ikhtiyār as one of the conditions for an actual act. Another argument which proves God's freedom of choice is that God originated many things⁽⁴⁾ and some He caused

(1) See Supra, pp. 132-44.

(2) Tawhīd, p.44,10-11.

(3) Ibid., 12-14.

(4) The original text reads ansha'a ghayr shay', but Kholeif amends it to ansha'a shay', which is grammatically incorrect. What al-Māturīdī seems to have intended to say and which agrees with the text is that God creates many things, and not one thing as Kholeif's amendment suggests. See p.44,15.

to perish and some He kept in a state of change such as night and day. This proves that He acts according to freedom of choice; furthermore, through His acts He made good what was corrupted, restored what had perished, and brought into existence what had non-existence and vice-versa; such an action can only be realized through freedom of choice, because he whose actions are naturally determined is unable to annihilate what is existent or to bring into existence what he destroyed. (1)

Another argument is that the world is originated out of nothing (min lā-shay'), and such an act can only be by one who has an absolute freedom of choice, for what is naturally determined must be necessarily producing, and it is impossible that one who is able to originate things out of nothing can be naturally determined or act under any compulsion. Moreover, the naturally determined cause is normally under the control of another agent, thus it would have no choice, which is a sign of weakness and impermanence, and this is impossible for God the absolute perfection. (2)

After these arguments which have philosophical connotations, al-Māturīdī introduced another argument of a different kind, and said that if God has no freedom of choice then there would be no point in invoking his help or assistance, because in this case He would be unable to fulfil our requests. So the fact that people do invoke God's help, and that He answers some and refuses others, proves that all things of the world run according

(1) Tawhīd, p.44,15-18.

(2) Ibid., p.45,1-5.

to His freedom of choice, for such things cannot be expected from one who acts under necessity. (1)

The affirmation of God's freedom of choice postulates the affirmation of His omnipotence, will and knowledge. Al-Māturīdī's arguments in this respect, are mainly based on the analogy of the absent to the present. According to him, "since it has been established that God has freedom of choice, He must have the power to create, and to make His creation according to His will, because he who has no power his actions will be discordant and inconsistent, and he will not be able to create and destroy, to do the thing and its opposite (yamlik ash-shay' wa-didahu) This affirms that all God's actions originated from His power and freedom of choice, and these are the real characteristics of the action in the present world which is the basis of our understanding of the absent (al-ladhī huwa asl al-'ilm bi-l-ghā'ib). (2) The same principle of analogy is used to establish the attribute of takwīn; according to al-Māturīdī, "We do not find in the present one who is powerful and unobstructed, who is prevented from performing action, nor one who has the ability to speak yet has no speech, and the present is the evidence of the absent (ash-shāhid huwa dalīl al-ghā'ib), so what is true of the present is true in relation to the absent. (3) The rest of al-Māturīdī's arguments for takwīn will be dealt with later for they involve different aspects of his concepts of God's act

(1) Tawhīd, p.45,6-9.

(2) Ibid., 10-13.

(3) Ibid., p.46,9-10.

of creation.

On the same line of thought, al-Māturīdī argued for God's knowledge and pointed out that the order and perfection in the actions of God prove that His acts were done according to His knowledge. Also the fact that everything in the world has its proper place and function, and that everything has what it needs for its existence and continuation, all this bears witness to the wisdom and knowledge of its originator. Another argument is that God created the creatures in such a way as to prove their temporal nature and their dependence on an originator who is unique, so had God no power over, or knowledge of, these creatures it would not be possible for Him to create them in such a way. (1)

In his Ta'wīlāt, al-Māturīdī introduced arguments based on the Qur'ānic verses which speak of the wonders and marvels in God's creation and of His creatures. Thus commenting on the Qur'ānic verses (16:66-69), al-Māturīdī says: this verse contains the strongest proof of God's power to create things out of nothing, and of His knowledge and control over things. It affirms the ability of God to produce from substances something which is different from their genus and essence, (jins and jawhar). This is strikingly evident in both plant and animal species: thus from the fruits of the palm and the grapes, different kinds of food and intoxicating drink are made, and from animals, milk is produced which is completely different in essence from the grass the animals eat; and from the bees comes honey which differs

(1) Tawhīd, p.45,14-21.

in constitution from the flowers and the fruits from which the bees gathered it. So the fact that these substances produce something different from their original genus and essence, proves that this process has been brought about by one who has the knowledge and power to create things out of nothing and without any immediate cause. (1) Similar arguments are derived from the Qur'ānic verse (36:37) which refers to the systematic order in the solar system, and thus indicates the knowledge and power of its controller. (2)

As for the rational arguments for God's speech, al-Māturīdī uses the same method of analogy of the absent to the present; he said that every wise and powerful person who does not speak, then his inability to speak must be due to some defect such as impotence or some hindrance, and since God is above all sorts of defects, He must be able to speak. In the visible world, "non-speaking" means "to be dumb", "non-hearing and non-seeing" mean deafness and blindness respectively. Since God is far removed from these defects, He also deserves to be free from being dumb, because speech is an attribute of perfection in the present world, and it distinguished human beings from animals. (3)

It is clear from these statements that al-Māturīdī is drawing an analogy between speech as an attribute of perfection in the present world and in the world of absence, and that he sees no difference between these two worlds in this respect.

(1) Ta'wīlāt, 16:66-69.

(2) Ibid., 36:37.

(3) Tawhīd, pp.57,16-19; 58,1-2.

Thus he inferred that since speech is a necessary part of respect, and that non-speaking is a sign of defect, then God the absolute perfection must have speech. But will al-Māturīdī carry his analogy a step further and apply it as well to the nature of speech in both worlds? This does not seem to be the case, and as we will see later, al-Māturīdī emphasizes the difference between the two worlds as far as the nature of speech is concerned.

As for God's will, al-Māturīdī devoted a special section to it; he pointed out that this problem is closely connected with the question of man's acts and the relation they have with the acts of God, so it should be treated in such a context. But following the traditional method of the theologians, al-Māturīdī treated it in a separate section.⁽¹⁾ His main concern was to establish the reality of the "will" as a substantive eternal attribute of God, and that it differs from God's command, His desire and His good pleasure; and that its affirmation does not entail the determination of man's actions.

Al-Māturīdī defines God's will as the faculty which determines the things by certain time, and particularizes them by this or that quality.⁽²⁾ In the normal use of language, will (mashī'a) is used in the following senses: (i) It is sometimes used to denote the sense of wish (tamannī), which is improper for God. (ii) Sometimes it is used in the meaning suggesting commandment or invitation. (iii) or that one is satisfied or well-pleased with something. Both these two meanings are

(1) Tawhīd, p.286,9-16.

(2) Ibid., p.60,10-11.

appropriate to God only in matters related to good acts.

(iv) Will is also used to denote the negation of compulsion in one's acts and that the acts run according to the will of that who will and according to his design. This meaning of will is in line with God's perfection, since He creates out of free choice and does not act under compulsion or necessity.⁽¹⁾

To establish the reality of God's will, al-Māturīdī used evidences from the Qur'ān as well as rational arguments. He quoted the Qur'ānic verse, "Whomsoever God desires to guide, He expands his breast to Islam; whomsoever He desires to lead astray He makes his breast narrow, tight as if he were climbing to heaven."⁽²⁾ This verse tells us that God wills the guidance of some people and that He wills to lead others astray. Another verse says, "Whomsoever God wills, He leads astray, and whomsoever He wills, He sets him on a straight path."⁽³⁾ This verse distinguished between two kinds of people, to each of whom God had decreed a certain fate. Both this verse and the verse mentioned before it, suggest that God wills for each group of people certain actions according to His previous knowledge of what they are going to perform; they also prove that God's will is neither command nor good pleasure (riḍā).⁽⁴⁾ Al-Māturīdī also quoted the Qur'ānic verse (32:13) "If we had so willed, We could have given every soul its guidance", as well as the verses

(1) Tawhīd, p.294,4-10.

(2) Qur'ān, 6:125.

(3) Ibid., 6:39.

(4) Tawhīd, p.287,2-7.

(5:48, 6:149). He stated that "will" in these verses cannot possibly mean God's command or His satisfaction of something which had already taken place, but it simply referred to the quality through which God determines all events and happenings. He refuted the Mu'tazilite concept of "compelling will of God" (mashī'at qasr). According to this concept, the Mu'tazilites hold that had God willed, He would make all people believers, or one nation. To al-Māturīdī, such an explanation of these verses is improbable for the following reasons: (i) God has instructed men how to attain guidance, and informed them of the nature of His religion and how it can be fulfilled, so it is improper to compel them after such instruction. (ii) The method of knowing the oneness of God and the belief in Him and His messenger is attained through intellectual effort and deduction and not on the basis of compulsion. (iii) The act of belief is a kind of voluntary obedience and carrying out orders, but compulsion implies the denial of such concepts. (iv) Man in the state of compulsion and subjection has no actual act, and thus his belief in this case would belong to the natural religious disposition which he shares with all kinds of creation. So 'will' in these verses must mean more than this concept of natural belief on man's part. (1)

Al-Māturīdī also quoted the verse, (11:107) "Surely thy Lord accomplishes what He desires." He stated that in this verse God praises Himself as that He does what He wills, so His will must be related to all actions and happenings. (2) The verse,

(1) Tawhīd, pp.287,7-16; 288,1-10.

(2) Ibid., p.289,3ff.

(17:16) "And when we desire to destroy a city, We command its men who live at ease, and they commit ungodliness therein, then the word is realized against it, and We destroy it utterly", also tells us that God wills in advance the destruction of certain people or cities because of their wrongdoings, which He must have willed also, for had He not willed their wrongdoings according to His knowledge, then their destruction without doing wrong would be injustice on His part.⁽¹⁾ Then al-Māturīdī quoted several Qur'ānic verses to the effect that God has a will, and refuted the Mu'tazilite interpretation of them.⁽²⁾ He also pointed out that the Qur'ānic verse (11:119) "I shall assuredly fill Gehenna with jinn and men together", is against the Mu'tazilites, because according to it, God certainly would like to fulfil his promise stipulated there, but fulfilling of such a promise, while the people are believing in Him, would be injustice on his part. So it must be admitted that He wills their disobedience which implies that His will encompasses all things.⁽³⁾ Speaking about the unbelievers, God says, "God desires not to appoint for them a portion in the world to come."⁽⁴⁾ and He addresses the believers saying that, "God desires to lighten things for you".⁽⁵⁾ According to these verses, God wills for the unbelievers something and for the believers another thing;

(1) Tawhīd, p.289,13-16.

(2) Ibid., pp.289,16-20; 290,1-7.

(3) Ibid., p.290,7-14.

(4) Qur'ān, 3:176.

(5) Ibid., 4:28.

and since it is inconceivable that He wills such fate for the unbelievers while they are in a state of obedience, He must have willed their disobedience of Him beforehand.⁽¹⁾ Also God says, "But will you shall not, unless God wills", since, according to this verse, they cannot will unless God wills, then it would be impossible that if God wills, they will not, and vice versa, otherwise it would be a sign of a lie on God's part, which is impossible.⁽²⁾

Then al-Māturīdī introduced rational arguments to demonstrate the reality of God's will. He argued that reason confirms the existence of such an attribute, because everyone of us knows that our actions do not always occur according to our will. We often will them to be good, pleasant and enjoyable, yet they become bad, painful and displeasing, which proves that an external force with a will must have influenced these acts and made them to be in that way.⁽³⁾ Moreover, the assigning of certain acts to man means the bringing about of some acts in God's domain without His will, which would imply His impotence and weakness, and one of such characteristics cannot possibly be God.⁽⁴⁾ Another argument is that if God wills the act of disbelief to be something different from what He knows it to be and from what He tells us that it is going to be, He would be intending to demonstrate his foolishness and his being a liar, and one of

(1) Tawhīd, pp.290,15-16; 291,1-3.

(2) Ibid., p.291,5-7.

(3) Ibid., p.292,6-9.

(4) Ibid., p.292,10-12.

such intention cannot be God.⁽¹⁾ Also, according to the rule of wisdom, he who does a thing while willing by it another thing or willing it to be different from what it normally is, would be either ignorant of the outcome of his actions, or that he is fooling around by his acts, which is inappropriate for God; because he who intends to do something knowing that it is not going to come about, he would be 'abith, and if his act resulted in something completely different from his intention, he would be ignorant of the act.⁽²⁾ Moreover, error in actions, according to the visible world, is of two kinds; one is that the coming about of one's act contrary to what one intended it to be, and the second is its coming about in a time different from what one estimates, so if God willed a thing and it does not come about according to His will, then His act would be wrong, which is impossible for God.⁽³⁾

Al-Māturīdī argued that will is a prerequisite for him who acts freely, while he who acts under compulsion would have no will. So if God were not willing man's act, then He would be compelled and not free in His actions and creation. But it has already been established that He is far from any compulsion or to be acting under necessity.⁽⁴⁾

These are all the arguments used by al-Māturīdī to affirm the attributes and names of God. It is noticeable that he

(1) Tawhīd, p.292,13-15.

(2) Ibid., 16-19.

(3) Ibid., 19-22.

(4) Ibid., p.293,4-6.

introduced no arguments or evidence to establish the attributes of hearing, seeing, and actual living. An explanation of this might be found if we look at the lists he gave of God's names and His attributes. One of the statements he had listed is this: "God is eternally knowing, powerful, doing, (fā'il), and beneficent (jawād)";⁽¹⁾ the second statement is this: "God is powerful, knowing, living, generous and beneficent";⁽²⁾ and the third statement contains such names as: the One, God, the Merciful, the existing, the eternal, and the worshipped.⁽³⁾ From these statements, it might be assumed that al-Māturīdī does not seem to be interested in the problem of the extension of the vocabulary used to describe God. This might possibly explain on the one hand the fact that his Kitāb at-Tawhīd contains no exhaustive lists, neither of God's essential attributes, nor of His active ones; and on the other hand this might account for the absence of full treatment and arguments about such attributes as hearing, seeing, and living. Another point which these lists seem to suggest, is al-Māturīdī's insistence on making no distinction between the essential and the active attributes of God, as far as their eternal aspect is concerned.

In spite of the absence of exhaustive enumeration or lists of God's names and His attributes, al-Māturīdī clearly stated that the application of names and attributes to God must be based on both revelation and reason. Reference has already been

(1) Tawhīd, p.33,17-18.

(2) Ibid., p.44,3-4.

(3) Ibid., p.65,19-20.

made to his statement that God's names must be invented only according to revelation and the evidence of reason and the senses. (1) In his justification of the application of the term thing (shay') to God, he argued from reason and revelation together. (2) Again, to justify the necessity of ascribing attributes to God, al-Māturīdī concluded that, "These rules only concern those attributes which reason and revelation postulate to their application. As for those attributes which are neither mentioned by revelation nor can possibly be justified by reason, their application to God is indeed bold, (jura' 'azīma)." (3) From these statements it might be concluded that al-Māturīdī allowed the application to God of all those names and attributes which have been mentioned by revelation as well as those whose meanings are implied and can be rationally justified. Of the latter kind are names and attributes such as: the beneficent, the existing, the eternal and the worshipped one, which have not been categorically stated in the Qur'ān nor in Traditions, but their meanings can certainly be deduced from these sources. In this connection the term shay', and its application to God, is significant.

The denial of the application of the term thing (shay') to God is mainly attributed to Jahm b. Ṣafwān, who defined the term shay' as something created and has similar, (4) and said that "I will not say that God is a thing, since this would be to make Him

(1) See Supra, pp.178-9.

(2) See Infra, pp.193 ff.

(3) Tawhīd, p.42,20-21.

(4) Maqālāt, pp.181,2-3; 518,5-6.

similar to other things."⁽¹⁾ Al-Māturīdī refuted this view and defended the application of the term on the basis of reason and revelation. He quoted the verse (42:11) which states that, "There is nothing anything like Him", and said that if God were not a thing, then the nature of things (shay'iyya) would not be denied Him. The Qur'ānic verse (6:19) "Say: what thing is greatest in testimony? say: God is a witness between me and you", also supports the application of this term to God, for if it were not permitted to be applied to Him, then He would not be included among the other things in this verse.⁽²⁾

He argued on rational grounds that according to the normal use of language ('urf), shay'iyya stands for the affirmation of existence and conveys no other meaning. So when we say that God is a thing, we simply affirm His existence and there is nothing objectionable in this use of the term. But if the term tends to give a different meaning to some people, then it should not be applied to God, and the term 'existence' (histiyya) should be used instead.⁽³⁾ Moreover, the expression 'nothing' (lā-shay') is used for the denial of an entity altogether or for showing its insignificance; so its opposite 'thing' must be used for affirming the existence of an entity or for showing its significance, and God, the absolute perfection, is worthy of such a meaning.⁽⁴⁾ Furthermore, in the normal use of language, one does not under-

(1) Maqālāt, p.280,2-3.

(2) Tawhīd, p.41,10-14.

(3) Ibid., 15-19.

(4) Ibid., p.42,1-2.

stand from the term 'thing', nor from the terms 'knowing' and 'powerful', the nature or the essential characteristics of the entity, but one understands from the first term the existence of the thing (wujūd wa-histiyya), and from the other terms that one is described by these attributes. So these terms do not illustrate the nature of the thing. When the term jism is used, however, it implies that the object by which it is described has some dimension and direction, is finite and is recipient of qualities. (1)

As for Jahm's view that the application of this term to God would entail similarity between God and other things, al-Māturīdī said that if the term shay' were considered as a name, it would not entail similarity because, as will be shown below, mere agreement in name would not entail similarity between things. (2) It might be argued, however, that the term 'thing' is not a name, because every name has a particularity when it is mentioned, it would disclose the nature of the object to which it is applied, as when we say: what is the body? The answer would be that it is that which has three dimensions. Also what is a human being? We would reply with its well-known definition: what is liable to live, articulate and die; and thus every substance has certain inherent characteristics disclosed by its particular name. In the case of the term 'thing', however, there is no such definition of the nature of the object to which it is applied. Similarly, the terms 'knowing' and 'powerful' do not give any definitions

(1) Tawhīd, p.42,7-10.

(2) See Infra pp. 209-13.

of the essence, or inform us of the objects to which they are applied; they simply indicate the denial of the object's ignorance of things, and establish its power over things, without reference to the nature of its essence (mā'iyat adh-dhāt).⁽¹⁾

So there should be no objection to the application of these terms to God since they do not suggest similarity respecting essence.

What al-Māturīdī is trying to establish by these rational arguments is that the application of the term 'thing' would not entail resemblance between God and other things as suggested by Jahm. What concerned us here, however, is that al-Māturīdī is using rational arguments as well as arguments derived from the Qur'ān to ascribe to God a term which is not corroborated by revelation.

As for the meanings of the divine names and attributes, al-Māturīdī vehemently argues against their explanation in a negative sense. He quoted Ibn-Shabīb who admitted that God is eternally knowing, hearing and seeing, yet he explained these terms as meaning the negation of their opposites; so the eternal quality of hearing means the negation of dumbness, and in the same manner he explained 'knowing' and 'seeing'.⁽²⁾

Al-Māturīdī refuted such negative explanations of these terms, and said that if the statement 'He is eternally hearing, seeing and knowing' means that He is neither ignorant nor blind nor dumb, then to state these meanings in the latter expressions is better because in this case they would only convey the meaning

(1) Tawhīd, p.43,1-9.

(2) Ibid., p.128,16-18.

intended (i.e. the negation of these defects).⁽¹⁾ Moreover, a thing might be described as being not ignorant, nor dumb nor impotent, yet this would not mean that it is powerful, knowing hearing and seeing; if these expressions only mean the negation of their opposites, then to express them in those negative terms would be much nearer to the sense intended than those terms (eternally knowing etc.) which convey a useless meaning.⁽²⁾ If only the negation of the opposites of these expressions was meant, then it implies that we can say that He is healthy, free from evil and disease (salīm mu'āfā), as connoting only the negation of their opposites, but these latter expressions are not allowed to be applied to God, which proves that it is not only the negation of the opposites which is meant by God's attributes, but also their positive aspects.⁽³⁾ Moreover, the occurrence of actions in a systematic and well-arranged order indicates the knowledge and power of their originator and not only that He is neither ignorant nor impotent; for one can be described by these negative qualities without having active qualities at all, or having any order or system in one's action.⁽⁴⁾ Furthermore, these expressions are names derived from attributes (knowing from knowledge); if the attributes were rendered void of meaning, these names would be nicknames (asmā' alqāb), and in this case it would be useless to say that He is eternally so and

(1) Tawhīd, p.128,20-21.

(2) Ibid., p.129,1-3.

(3) Ibid., 3-5.

(4) Ibid., 7-9.

so, because nicknames cannot be eternal. (1)

Al-Māturīdī attributed to al-Ka'bī the view that God has no attributes in reality (fi-l-haqīqa), but it (the attribute) is the description given by the describer and the naming made by the namer (wasf al-wāṣif wa-tasmiyat al-musammī). (2) Al-Ka'bī defines the attributes as the description by saying or writing, so God's attributes are our sayings by which we describe Him and His sayings and writing about Himself (i.e. what He reveals). (3) Thus, he refuses to say that mercy (rahma) is an attribute of God because it is not a saying of His, but His action; so He should not be described by it, His real attribute here is His saying 'the merciful' (rahīm). (4) Also al-Ka'bī refuses to say that when God creates redness in a dress He gives the dress an attribute. If redness were the attribute of the dress then it might be said that when God created it He described the dress by it, and the same thing might be said about movement and rest; likewise in the case of one who describes his height, it might be said that he describes it only by dint of his having written it. (5) Al-Ka'bī stated that we do not deny that it is possible to say that redness is the attribute of the red, and that mercy is an attribute of an act, figuratively speaking, but in reality the attribute is the saying or writing. But when he was faced with

(1) Tawhīd, p.129,10-12.

(2) Ibid., p.50,10-11.

(3) Ibid., p.55,12-13.

(4) Ibid., p.56,1-4.

(5) Ibid., p.56,17-20.

the question of whether the attribute has an attribute, he affirmed this in the sense that it might be described, but only at the moment of describing a particular thing, and after finishing the description of it then it ceases to be an attribute. (1)

Al-Māturīdī rejected al-Ka'bī's definition of the attribute and said that if attributes in reality were only the description given by the describer, then the proposition that creation consists of substances and qualities, would be invalid, and al-Ka'bī's view concerning combination and separation, movement and rest, from which substances are never free and which proves their temporality, would also not be valid. Since these qualities are free from the description of the describer, this affirms that they are attributes inseparable from their substances. (2) As for God's attributes, al-Māturīdī had pointed out that both the attribute (sifa) and the description (wasf) are fulfilled when knowledge, power and action are attributed to God, and this is a matter of common agreement. Then He is definitely called in reality (fi-l-haqīqa), knowing, creator, and powerful, and there is no justification for explaining these expressions from the point of view of wasf only, for their true sense belongs to what is agreed upon. (3) What al-Māturīdī is trying to say is that when we ascribe an attribute, such as knowledge, to God, we are referring to the

(1) Tawhīd, p.57,1-5.

(2) Ibid., p.56,7-11.

(3) Ibid., p.50,11-14.

existence of the substantive attribute and to the verbal description of God as knowing, so when we call Him knowing, this should convey simultaneously that He is knowing and that He has the attribute of knowledge, and there is no proof for limiting its meaning to a verbal pronunciation as al-Ka'bi's view suggests.

Al-Maturīdī makes his view about the reality of God's attributes clearer in the section devoted to the classification of God's names. He clearly stated that in the normal use of language God's names can be classified into three categories:

(i) The first category are those names which are mainly attributed to our calling Him by them, such as the omniscient ('ālim) and omnipotent. And to this category belongs all the ninety-nine names of God referred to in the Traditions. These names are eternal, for God, for instance, is eternally merciful, otherwise he would be merciful only when he bestows his mercy upon His creations. (1)

(ii) The second category are those names related to God's essence of which no knowledge is possible but through these names. Yet God transcends all human conceptions of these names. Of this category are names such as: Allah, the Merciful, the Existing, the Eternal, and the Worshipped One. (2)

(iii) The third category, which concerns us in this context, are those names which are derived from attributes such as: knowing and powerful (from knowledge and power); these names are not separate from God's essence, otherwise they would entail change

(1) Tawhīd, p.65,8-15.

(2) Ibid., 17-20.

or alteration (tabdīl) in Him. If these names do not convey the meaning understood from them in the normal use of language, then it would be possible to call God by whatever names apply to other people, since what one normally understands from the name is not meant here. (1) What al-Māturīdī means by this statement seems to be that God's names which are derived from the attributes convey the sense which these attributes convey in the normal use of language, so 'knowing' means that He has knowledge, but the real nature of God's knowledge is different from that of man. It might be appropriate at this conjunction to mention al-Māturīdī's views on God's speech where the difference between its nature and that of man's is strongly emphasised.

We have already seen that al-Māturīdī affirmed the attribute of speech to God because it is an attribute of perfection. (2) As for the nature of God's speech, al-Māturīdī rejected the definition adopted by both the Hanbalites and the Mu'tazilites. These two groups maintain that God's speech is of the same nature as the speech of man, i.e., it consists of utterance and letters and it is identical with the Qur'ān. But while the Mu'tazilites hold that God's speech, including the Qur'ān, is created, the Hanbalites hold that both God's speech and the Qur'ān are eternal. (3) Al-Māturīdī maintained that the speech of God is an eternal attribute which subsists in His essence and that it is not of the genus of sound and letters. What we mean when we say

(1) Tawhīd, pp.65,21; 66,1-2.

(2) See Supra, pp.184-5.

(3) Ta'wīlāt, 17:86.

that God is speaking is that He has this eternal attribute. Al-Maturīdī rejected any suggestion of resemblance between God's and man's speech. According to him, God's speech would either be considered as similar to the speech of other creatures or it would not, but it should be remembered that the first suggestion would entail similarity between God and His creation. But such similarity has been refuted by the Qur'ānic verses 42:11; 13:16, which deny any resemblance between man and God in essence and actions; therefore, as it is established that God's essence is different from that of other creatures, His speech must also be different in nature from that of all other creatures.⁽¹⁾ Moreover, no-one has examined the kinds of speech of various creatures because speech is attributed to ants, birds, and it is even said that the mountains praise God, such speech is inexpressible in letters and sounds, nor can human kind understand its contents. So, since there are different kinds of speech whose nature cannot be understood, there is no justification in considering man's speech as the standard criteria of all speech, and thus whoever attempts to measure God's speech by that of man is heedless (mughaffal).⁽²⁾ This difference between God's speech and that of man entails the denial of the temporality of the former. It would also deny the similarity of all the characteristics of man's speech to that of God's.⁽³⁾

(1) Tawhīd, p.58,3-7.

(2) Ibid., 7-11.

(3) Ibid, 12-14.

As for the speech which consists of sounds and letters, it is not the real speech of God but an expression in human terms of his eternal speech. It is allowable for it to be called metaphorically the speech of God; just as it is said in the case of messages, poems and speeches that they are the sayings of so and so metaphorically; because as a matter of fact, the real speech of a person can never be heard, what is heard are sounds expressing that speech. These expressions, therefore, are not the real speech of God because they are created, and when we read the Qur'ān, for example, God is only speaking indirectly to us. (1)

As to the question - how can the eternal speech of God be expressed in human terms - al-Māturīdī finds no difficulty in that. According to him, it is possible for God to make us hear His speech through something quite different from His speech as He makes each of us hear another's speech by letters and sounds which are not exactly that real speech, and as He makes us know His power, knowledge and divinity (rubūbiyya) through His creation which is something different from these attributes. (2)

The true nature of the speech cannot be heard through speech itself, but through sounds and letters, because hearing is related only to sound and what is not of the genus of sounds and letters cannot be heard directly but it can be heard through sounds created by God. According to this conception of God's speech, al-Māturīdī interpreted all the verses which seem to

(1) Tawhīd, pp.58,18-19; 59,1.

(2) Ibid., p.59,3-5.

suggest otherwise. Thus, commenting on the Qur'ānic verse 4:164, which suggests that Moses heard the speech of God, al-Māturīdī said that this does not mean that Moses heard the true nature of God's speech, but what he heard was God's speech expressed in sounds and letters created by God, thus he heard what is uncreated by created means.⁽¹⁾ Similarly, he interpreted the verse 9:6 "Until he hears the word of God" as meaning that "Until he understands the word of God", because the eternal word of God cannot be heard but only understood.⁽²⁾

Abū-'Udhba considered the point, as to whether God's eternal speech can be heard or not, as one of the points on which al-Ash'arī and al-Māturīdī hold deep-rooted differences; he ascribed to al-Māturīdī a statement suggesting the possibility of hearing what is not sound. According to Abū-'Udhba, al-Māturīdī refers in his Kitāb at-Tawhīd, at the opening of his section on the attributes, to the possibility of hearing what is beyond sound. He says, "The knowledge of sound and the secret thought is the definition of speech in the present world". Thus, he considered it as possible to hear what is not sound.⁽³⁾ So far I have not been able to trace this statement in al-Māturīdī's Kitāb at-Tawhīd, where Abū-'Udhba assumed that it is mentioned. This statement, however, does not suggest what Abū-'Udhba concluded from it. What al-Māturīdī clearly expressed in his Kitāb at-Tawhīd, is the view that, "Whatever does not consist of sound

(1) Tawhīd, p.59,7-9. Ta'wīlāt, 4:164.

(2) Ta'wīlāt, 9:6.

(3) Ar-Rawḍā al-Bahīyya, p.44,4-6.

cannot be heard, though a knowledge of it might be obtained by other means."⁽¹⁾ This goes in line with his view concerning the nature of God's speech which has already been mentioned, and it agrees with the other statements ascribed to al-Māturīdī by Abū-'Udhba himself. According to Abū-'Udhba, "al-Māturīdī said in another statement that God's speech cannot be heard in any respect because it is impossible for anyone to hear what is not of the genus of letters and sounds, because hearing in the present world is related only to sound. It is impossible to say about something which is not sound that it can be heard, thus the hearing of what is not sound is inconceivable."⁽²⁾ As to whether al-Ash'arī made any distinction between God's eternal speech and the expressions which represent that speech, this will be dealt with in the following chapter.

Al-Māturīdī's general view on the problem of God's speech resembles in some way the views of Ibn-Kullāb, who maintained that God's speech is an attribute or an idea (ma'nā) which exists in God's essence. It is neither letters nor sounds, neither divisible nor can it be changed; he holds that what is uttered by the reciter of the Qur'ān is both an expression of the speech of God and its meaning, but not the speech itself. According to him, the utterance is created and produced by the reciter and is the acquisition of man.⁽³⁾ The similarity between these views of Ibn-Kullāb and those of al-Māturīdī is quite evident.

(1) Tawhīd, p.51,5.

(2) Ar-Rawdā al-Bahiyva, p.44,14-19.

(3) Maqālāt, pp.584-85; 601-2.

Concerning the point as to whether the Qur'ān is created or uncreated, al-Māturīdī gave no positive statement, but from his arguments with al-Ka'bī we might be able to find out his real stand on this most controversial problem. Al-Ka'bī, following the general view of the Mu'tazilites, maintained that the speech of God and the Qur'ān are identical and both are created. As an argument for such a view, he quoted the Qur'ānic verse, 15:9, which states that the Qur'ān is guarded (from corruption) by God. He also argued that the Qur'ān was subject to abrogation, and that it consists of chapters and verses, and all this indicates that it is created and originated.⁽¹⁾ In his answer to al-Ka'bī, al-Māturīdī pointed out that what we call the speech of God is a metaphorical expression denoting God's speech which is His attribute; and of this kind is the Qur'ān, and from this point of view God is not described by the Qur'ān. Thus it seems that al-Māturīdī is distinguishing between the meaning of the Qur'ān which is God's eternal attribute and the expression of that meaning which is created; therefore as he criticized the Mu'tazilite view, he similarly refuted the views of the Hanbalites.⁽²⁾ According to him, the Hashwites made no distinction between the Qur'ān and the eternal speech of God, and they considered them both to be eternal. At the same time, however, they said that the same eternal Qur'ān is in the Books (masāhif), and in the minds of the people. This, to al-Māturīdī, is an obvious contradiction, for it is difficult to be established

(1) Tawhīd, p.54,1-7.

(2) Ta'wīlāt, 17:86.

that the Qur'ān, which is the eternal attribute of God and which is neither He nor other than He, be the very same thing that exists in the masāhif and the minds of men. The error of this group, al-Māturīdī said, is that they confused God's speech and the Qur'ān, and failed to realize that the first is eternal and subsists in God's essence, while the other, i.e., what is in the masāhif, is an expression of that eternal speech in human terms that could be understood by men. (1)

At the end of his section on God's speech, al-Māturīdī made a brief reference to the problem of abstaining from passing judgement (waqf) concerning the createdness or uncreatedness of the Qur'ān. He gave various aspects of this problem which seem to have developed generally at that period. (2) His general treatment of the point, however, suggests that it no longer seems to occupy an important place in the discussion on the Qur'ān.

As for the point as to whether these divine attributes are identical with or separate from His essence, al-Māturīdī seems to have adopted the solution already advocated by Ahl-al-Ithbāt and similar theologians, that these attributes are neither God nor are they other than Him. This statement has occurred twice in Kitāb at-Tawhīd. In the course of his argument with al-Ka'bī, al-Māturīdī quoted him as saying, "What I mean by the attributes is not to affirm an entity separate from God (ghayr), at the same time I do not want to say that they are identical with His essence (annahā dhātu). After reproaching al-Ka'bī for being

(1) Ta'wilāt, 17:86.

(2) Tawhīd, p.59,10-22.

confused in his thinking, al-Māturīdī concluded by saying that if he (sc. al-Ka'abī) wants the attributes to be neither He nor other than Him, then does not he know that this is the doctrine of Ahl al-Ithbāt?⁽¹⁾ Again, in his treatment of the problem of God's speech, al-Māturīdī pointed out that waqf, in relation to this problem, has two aspects one of which is that: it (sc. God's speech) is neither God nor other than Him, and in this case it (i.e. waqf) is abstinence based on knowledge and understanding, and it is a right decision, and in the same way it is applied to the knowledge and power of God.⁽²⁾ So from this last statement it seems that al-Māturīdī has advocated the solution adopted by Ahl al-Ithbāt.⁽³⁾

(b) The Attributes and Transcendence

We have already seen that al-Māturīdī affirmed the reality of God's attributes and names, and refuted the negative explanation of their meanings; he also emphasized the point that these terms contain and convey the sense that is normally understood from language. Thinking on such lines leads eventually to the question that when we describe God and man by similar terms,

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(1) Tawhīd, p.55,11-16.

(2) Ibid., p.59,10-11.

(3) The phrase Ahl al-Ithbāt was used by al-Ash'arī to refer to those who affirm the doctrine of Qadar in opposition to the Mu'tazilites. Watt, Formative Period, pp.117-118. Al-Māturīdī, however, used the term to refer to those who affirm God's attributes. So as Watt suggested, the phrase seems to have been used differently at different periods. Watt, op. cit., p.341, note 122 and the references mentioned there.

would this imply a similarity between God and man? Both those who adopted the doctrine of tashbīh, and those who advocated the denial of these attributes, answered this question affirmatively. But while the former insist on applying to God all terms and expressions mentioned in revelation, in their human sense, the latter emphasized the transcendence of God and went to the extent of divesting Him of all names and attributes.

Kitāb at-Tawhīd reveals to us that al-Māturīdī was conscious of this problem, and well aware of those groups who emphasized one aspect or the other for its solution. Thus he discussed the views of these groups and introduced his own solution to the question. The anthropomorphists (mushabbiha), al-Māturīdī said, maintain that God has similarities to His creatures in respect of bodily characteristics such as finiteness, limitation, movement and rest. Thus they ascribed to Him the same characteristics which can demonstrate the temporality of the world, disregarding the fact that God transcends such conceptions.⁽¹⁾ Throughout his Kitāb at-Tawhīd, al-Māturīdī strongly rejected the anthropomorphists' view; reference has already been made to his view concerning the expressions which suggest similarity between God and man.⁽²⁾ Again, in his treatment of God's Oneness, al-Māturīdī emphasized the point that God's Oneness means the denial of any similarity or resemblance between Him and His creation, and since this concept of Unity has been established, then it would be futile to understand the relation of creatures to God

(1) Tawhīd, p.120,16-18.

(2) See Supra, pp.162-66.

or the attributes by which He is described, in the sense understood from these concepts when applied to the creation.⁽¹⁾ To al-Māturīdī, similarity between things in all aspects is impossible, for in such a case they would be one entity, but it may be realized in one aspect or another. So if God is said to be similar to something else in one aspect, He would be one of the created being because of this similarity.⁽²⁾ From these statements we might understand the reason behind al-Māturīdī's vigorous attack on and refutation of tashbīh.

As for those who denied God's names and His attributes, al-Māturīdī said that "some people denied to God an essential attribute by which He is described, and an essential name by which He is to be known." They thought that affirmation of names and attributes entails similarity, for He would then join with others in having the same name. They said that it is inconceivable for God to resemble in any way any of the creation and if the names which are applied to every thing are also applied to Him, there would then be resemblance; because of such assumption they denied that God is a thing (shay'), knowing and powerful. They gave the example of the assertion to Him of a place which entails similarity and finiteness; thus to say that He is in all places would entail the same conception, for the places have finiteness as well, so to ascribe to Him a place or places would be the same.⁽³⁾ After a statement, affirming the reality of God's names,

(1) Tawhīd, p.23,18-20.

(2) Ibid., p.24,14-16.

(3) Ibid., p.93,3-9.

al-Māturīdī said, "but some people dismissed these names, because they assumed that the attribution of a name to God would imply resemblance between Him and whoever is called by a name (musamma).⁽¹⁾

As he rejected the views of the anthropomorphists, al-Māturīdī rejected the views of those who denied God all names and attributes. To do this, he demonstrated that, (i) Common agreement on having names does not imply similarity between God and man. (ii) God's divine attributes are not like men's attributes. (iii) And finally, using attributes and names is the only possible way for human intellect to attain any knowledge about God.

To prove the first point, al-Māturīdī argued from the proposition that similarity between things is due not to their having names but to their actual agreement in their essential characteristics. Thus they would be said to be similar or alike because of their being identical or for having some resemblance in certain qualities, and not because of their being possessed of names and attributes. According to al-Māturīdī, "The similarity which our thoughts (awhām) assume between entities or between acts, for instance, is not based on the verbal description of them ('an qawl al-lisān), but it is based on what we actually know about the similarity in nature or essence between these entities or acts. And it is on this real meaning that our thoughts depend when applying names. Such fact, however, can be realized or attained even though these entities have no names by which they are known, or descriptions by which they are

(1) Tawhīd, p.44,5-7.

described. Since we firmly realized, and believe that God is unique and does not resemble any of those to whom the name "one" is applied, then we are under no obligation to assume that there is a resemblance between Him and another, just because He agrees with him in having name. (1)

Another argument is that, agreement in names does not imply similarity, because the name might be used sometimes to denote the disagreement in nature or abstract quality (ma'nā) between entities. Al-Māturīdī gave the example of the name "one" when it is used to denote the prominence of a person when it is said "he is the unique one of his time, or the unequalled one among his people" in the sense that it denies him any similarity to others in certain aspects. So, though the term "one" is commonly shared by all people, it is used here to distinguish a certain person by certain qualities. This proves that mere agreement in names or descriptions does not necessarily entail resemblance between entities. To al-Māturīdī, if agreement in having names entails similarity, then it would not be possible in the present case to use the same name to denote disagreement. In the same manner, we find the words "belief" and "disbelief" both belong to the category of name and both are verbal utterances, but their meanings are contradictory. (2)

Al-Māturīdī made the last point quite clear in another passage which argues from the fact that under the category "name" we find contradictory meanings which make the realization of

(1) Tawhīd, p.25,3-7.

(2) Ibid., p.41,2-8.

similarity impossible. "To us, it is inconceivable that the general application of name entails similarity, for we find all opposite concepts in the present shared in having names such as life and death, light and darkness, good and evil, belief and disbelief, and each one of these is a "name". If their being in common under the category "name" implies similarity (i.e. in the real meaning), then we would not know the contradictions indicated by these terms. This proves that these names are expressions meant to stand for the agreement and disagreement between the nature of the entities which can be known, even though there are no names."⁽¹⁾

He also argued that if the attribution of names to God implies similarity between Him and whoever is called by a name (musamma), the denial of Him names (ta'tīl), would likewise entail similarity between Him and whoever is not qualified by a name, that is the non-existent (lays).⁽²⁾

It seems that what al-Māturīdī was trying to establish were two points: on the one hand he tried to prove that mere agreement in having names does not entail similarities between

(1) Tawhīd, p.96,4-9. Kholeif amended the text by adding lā and thus it reads (which cannot be known) (lā yu'lam haqiqat dhālika), but this does not seem to be correct as far as the argument is concerned.

(2) Ibid., p.44,6-8. Kholeif also amended the text here by adding (kadhālika) meaning "which is not so". But this does not fit in the general argument, al-Māturīdī is simply explaining that the non-qualified by a name is non-existent, and that by using the term lays, which is used in the same sense by al-Kindī, see Rasā'il, vol.1,p.132, also notes 1-3 on the same page.

entities, because the name itself might differ such as:- life and death and so its meaning also differs. On the other hand, he pointed out that even if entities have in common similar names, ("knowing" for God and for man, for example), this does not imply a common meaning. Thus to him it seems that there is no identification between names and meaning, names are merely used as labels to denote a fact already known to us.

To prove the second point that God's attributes are not like man's attributes, al-Māturīdī based his argument on the fact which has already been established, i.e., that God's nature differs from that of man. God is one in His essence (dhāt), in the sense that He has no similarity in nature. Similarly, He is one in His attributes in the sense that He is so exalted that no-one can possibly share with Him in the realities of the attributes of knowledge, power, and bringing into existence (takwīn), etc. Al-Māturīdī pointed out that the main distinction between God's attributes and those of man is that the former are eternal while the latter are originated after they were non-existent, thus it would be impossible to assume that the originated is similar to what is eternal. (1)

In spite of the brevity of this statement, al-Māturīdī's thought is quite clear; he is simply pointing out that the realities of the attributes when used for God are completely different when they are used for man. So a name like "knowing" which is common to God and man, conveys different meanings in both cases. Al-Māturīdī, however, did not go further to explain the essential

(1) Tawhīd, p.119,6-9.

nature of God's attributes, because the nature of God's attributes, like the nature of His essence, is beyond the grasp of our human understanding. In a passage on the question concerning God's 'manner' (kayfiyya), al-Māturīdī said, "This question (i.e., asking how God is?) permits of two interpretations; first, it might be a question of finding a similar god among the things of the world, which is impossible, since God is unique and far beyond any similarities. It might also be a question of what is His quality? (i.e., what is the nature of His quality), and the answer might be the same as the preceding one:- that His attributes have no qualification (kayf). Again this question implies finding something similar to Him. God, however, is exalted beyond any resemblances in nature or in any attributes. (1)

What might be gathered from these brief statements is that al-Māturīdī is making attempts to point out that God's attributes are different in their realities from those of man. Thus it would be possible to apply to God and man attributes which are alike without being accused of tashbīh, because God and man differ in their essence and in the nature of their attributes.

To establish the third point, that the affirmation of names and attributes is the only possible way for human intellect to attain any knowledge about God, al-Māturīdī said that there is no way of knowing God except through evidences derived from the present world, for it is impossible to know Him through the senses or by the evidences of sam'. The present world, however, testifies to His reality from the aspect of His attributes and not from

(1) Tawhīd, p.107,12-15.

that of His essence⁽¹⁾... in the visible world there is nothing which indicates the existence of an essence divested of all attributes, thus it would be inconceivable to affirm the reality of an essence without ascribing attributes to it.⁽²⁾ What al-Māturīdī is trying to establish is that any knowledge about God is attained only through evidences derived from the present world. In the present world no reality can said to be existing without ascribing attributes to it, so according to such an analogy, God must have attributes, otherwise His reality cannot be established. Al-Māturīdī made this point quite clear in another statement where he said, "We affirm the names because it is inconceivable to know God or to describe His essence in a manner suitable to the nature of the godhead, other than through this way. And also because there is no way of attaining knowledge of the absent except by the evidences of the present."⁽³⁾

Al-Māturīdī, however, acknowledged the shortcomings of the human language as a means for describing the reality of God. He pointed out that it is extremely difficult to find in human languages words or expressions adequate to describe the transcendent reality. God, thus, cannot be known as He really is, or be described by any fitting attributes, because all the expressions used for His description are borrowed from our inadequate language. In spite of this, however, we have to use these words and expressions, because this is the only language which human

(1) Tawhīd, p.129,21-24.

(2) Ibid., p.130,4-5.

(3) Ibid., p.24,18-20.

intellect can understand. He made this point quite clear in his Kitāb at-Tawhīd, where he said, "God has essential names by which he is called, such as the Merciful, and essential attributes by which He is described, such as the knowledge of things and having power over them. But our description and naming of Him must be taken as expressions in human terms of what we simply conceive Him to be, within the limits of our intellect and our language. And also because the method which we can possibly follow in this respect is based on the deduction from what is known in the present world (and then to be applied to God). Such a method would certainly entail similarity in expressions (commonly used in both worlds): but we have been granted such allowance on the condition that we deny God all concepts understood from the present world, in order to negate any similarity between Him and the world. If our intellectual ability considered it possible to call Him by names different from those applied to others, we should do so. But this does not seem possible; because the present world is the evidence for His existence, and is the only way which gives us knowledge about Him. Thus, from the shāhid, we derived names for God to make His essence or conception nearer to human understanding, though in reality He is far from having any resemblance or likeness to us. So you find that the expressions "knowing" and "powerful" by which we call God, differ according to different languages without implying any difference in the reality of His knowledge or power. This proves that these names by which we call Him are expressions (‘ibārāt), denoting what can be understood by man's intellect, and are not really God's actual names. So to avoid understanding them in an improper

sense, they have to be accompanied by a negative statement (i.e. knowing not like the knowers "learned"). And thus tawhīd (uniqueness of God) would be realized by affirmation of essence with the implication of negation (sc. of similarity), and negation with the implication of affirmation (ithbāt dhāt fi-dimn nafy wa-nafy fī dimn ithbāt).⁽¹⁾

Thus, to attain any knowledge about God, one is impelled by necessity to start by using human concepts and terms which might imply tashbīh, but one has to proceed from that to the transcendent conception of God; because the normal procedure of knowledge, in our present world, is to take what is comprehensible as evidence for what is incomprehensible by human intellect. As we conceive the rewards and punishments in the hereafter by inference from the pleasures and pains in this world, so to establish any knowledge about God, He has to be described by some conceptions and expressions understood to human intellect, such as "knowing" and "powerful" etc. Because, to refrain from using such terms would be ta'tīl (divesting God of any concept), and to take these expressions in their literal human sense would entail tashbīh (anthropomorphism). So to avoid the last conception, these expressions have to be accompanied by negation (knowing not like the knowers "learned").⁽²⁾

From these statements, it might be inferred that al-Māturīdī realized the dangers of both tashbīh and ta'tīl; but to him the danger of tashbīh can be avoided by emphasizing the point that

(1) Tawhīd, pp.93,10-19; 94,1-3.

(2) Ibid., p.42,14-20.

none of the attributes and names is to be taken at its face value, and that one should not understand them in relation to God, in the same sense as when in relation to man. The danger of ta'tīl, however, is much more serious, because it might lead us eventually to designate God as an abstract or empty conception devoid of all content. This might account for al-Māturīdī's detailed criticism and refutation of those who advocate the doctrine of ta'tīl.

Both the philosophers and the Bāṭinites agreed in their denial of God's names and His attributes. The philosophers maintain that their affirmation entails plurality in God's essence so they explained the attributes in terms of negation and relation (salb wa-idāfa).⁽¹⁾ The Bāṭinites, however, hold that the

(1) Ghazālī, Tahāfut al-Falāsifa, p.151ff. According to al-Ghazālī the philosophers agree exactly as do the Mu'tazilites that it is impossible to ascribe to the First Principle knowledge, power and will. (Ghazālī, Tahāfut al-Falāsifa, p.158). Al-Kindī, in his Rasā'il, clearly stated that God is transcendent and can be qualified only by negative attributes. "He has no matter, no form, no quality, no quantity, no relation, nor is He qualified by any of the remaining categories (maqūlāt). He has no genus, no differentia, no species ... He is, therefore, absolute oneness, nothing but oneness (wahda). Everything else is multiple." Al-Kindī, Rasā'il, p.160. cf. El-Ehwāny, art."al-Kindī" pp.428-9. Ibn-Sīnā holds a similar view concerning God's attributes and, according to him, all the attributes are either relational or negative. The Deity is therefore absolutely simple. Ibn-Sīnā, Kitāb an-Najāt, pp.250-51. cf. Fazlu-ar-Rahman, art. "Ibn Sīnā", pp.501-2.

ascription of names and attributes to God would imply similarity between Him and man, therefore they denied God all names and attributes. (1)

Al-Māturīdī made no account of the philosophers' views, and the only reference to them in this respect was made while he was discussing the point that agreement in name does not entail any likeness between entities. Al-Māturīdī said that "those who denied the names and attributes among the philosophers did not advocate ta'tīl, and those who affirmed the attributes meant to reject ta'tīl, so though both groups seem to agree in denying ta'tīl, their actual views in this respect are completely different; likewise though names might suggest similarity, their real meaning is different. (2)

The passage which immediately follows this statement contains an argument against those who denied the attributes of God. Al-Māturīdī said, "If they did not affirm (i.e. the attributes of God), what would they say if it is said to them: whom are you worshipping? To what (God or religion) are you inviting people? What religion are you professing? Who ordered you as to what you are doing and from what refrain? Who creates the higher and the lower spheres? and who originates the first principles of things? To answer these questions they would either use some terms and expressions to make the reality of God understandable to human intellect, or avoid the use of human language and concepts altogether; and in this case they would be on a par with

(1) Tawhīd, p.95,5.

(2) Ibid., p.25,9-10.

those who deny the origination of the world, and they would refute their views concerning the "First" that is the intellect or the preceding Principle, or the First Divine, or whatever else they said in this connection."⁽¹⁾

The vocabulary used here suggests that the argument is mainly directed against the Bāṭinites. The absence of full initial treatment of the philosophers' view on this point might be explained by assuming that al-Māturīdī considered their views as identical with those of the Bāṭinites, so the refutation of the latter's view implies refutation of the former's. It also might be assumed that he considered the Bāṭinites and not the philosophers to be the real threat to the Islamic faith by their disruptive political activity and their energetic attempts to convert people to their doctrine.⁽²⁾ Al-Māturīdī's account of the Bāṭinite views on this problem seems to be accurate especially if it is read in the light of the works of later writers such as al-Ghazālī.⁽³⁾ He seems to have realized the identification of the views of the Bāṭinites with those of the philosophers, with a slight difference in vocabulary used by the two groups. Unlike the philosophers, the Bāṭinites made use of some Qur'ānic terms such as "The First and the Last", and the "Tablet and the Pen" to serve their conception of God and their theory of Creation.⁽⁴⁾

(1) Tawhīd, p.25, 11-15.

(2) For the activity of the Bāṭinites in Transoxania at the time of al-Māturīdī, see E.I.^S art. "Karmatians", pp.218-223.

(3) See in particular Fadā'ih al-Bāṭiniyya, pp.38-40.

(4) Ta'wīlāt, 57:22. cf. al-Ghazālī, op.cit., pp.38-40.

In his Kitāb at-Tawhīd, al-Māturīdī said that, "the Bāṭinites explained the above mentioned names (i.e. God's names) as referring to the First and the Second originator (mubdi'), or the "Intellect" and the "Soul" (nafs); they maintained that the whole world is emerging (mabrūz) from the "Intellect" which gives impetus to the soul which in turn provides the prime matter. They also said that the "Intellect" came into being by origination (ibdā') and this ibdā' is its cause ('illatuhu); and every thing emerges from this "Intellect". So, according to this view, creation occurs as if from he who was naturally determined (dhū-tab') without him being aware of having knowledge of, or power over it. Thus God would be, according to such views, divested of all content (fi ḥadd at-ta'tīl), and there would be no proof for his existence, and thus belief in Him would be through blind following (taqlīd), which is impossible."⁽¹⁾

Al-Māturīdī refuted the Bāṭinite views by pointing out that it is impossible that the "Intellect" could be originated by one who has neither knowledge of what is going to emerge, nor power nor will to make it emerge. Moreover, the Bāṭinites may be asked: is the name "Allah" God's name or is it a name of another being. According to their view it is the name of the "Intellect" and the "Merciful" is the name of the soul. So though they refused to apply names to God to avoid tashbīh, they in fact made his concept consist of numerable entities, and called him God, the merciful and the compassionate to represent these entities.⁽²⁾ The Bāṭinites might also be asked - what do you

(1) Tawhīd, p.94,19-20; 95,1-7.

(2) Ibid., p.95,8-10.

mean by saying that God has no essential name nor essential attribute? They would have no other way but to express themselves and explain their statement, and to do so they have to use some terms, and thus they would have nullified their statement because they would be bound to use some terms and expressions. (1)

The Bāṭinites assumed that God has a name derived from His relation to created things, and it is applied to Him by others, such as the originator (mubdi'). Al-Māturīdī argued that the name "the originator" in this case would either be applied to Him without His actually being an originator, and in this case it would be used in a metaphorical sense, without implying reality of action. On the other hand, if it is said that He is really an originator, the ibdā' would be temporal and so would be His name, but this is impossible because in this case ibdā' would be in need of another ibdā' and this cannot go on ad infinitum. Thus His origination must belong to His essence (dhāt), and in this respect He would be eternally an originator, which implies the necessity of affirming His essential name." (2) These arguments against the Bāṭinites disclose that al-Māturīdī was familiar with the views and doctrines of this group. This fact is more evident in the Ta'wīlāt where al-Māturīdī discussed the Bāṭinites' free usage of numbers and letters in their philosophical system (3), and how they used the method of ta'wīl regarding the Qur'ānic verses in order to justify and find support for their views. (4)

(1) Tawhīd, p.95,13-15.

(2) Ibid., pp.95,15-23; 96,1-3.

(3) Ta'wīlāt, 74:30.

(4) Ibid., 73:5.

(c) The Eternity of God's Attributes

All the discussions regarding the eternity of God's attributes might be considered as attempts to find a solution to the problem of how the temporal can possibly be related to the eternal without imputing change to the eternal or assuming the eternity of what is temporal. To God have been ascribed attributes such as knowledge, power, creation and giving of sustenance which have temporal effects or associations. So if it is assumed that these attributes are eternal, would this imply the eternity of their objects (muta'alliqāt)? Similarly, if these effects were supposed to be temporal, would not this imply the temporality of the attributes; otherwise how can God, for instance, be considered to be eternally creating before the existence of the objects created?

To solve this problem, both Hishām b. al-Hakam and Jahm b. Saḫwān are said to have denied the eternity of God's attributes. Hishām is said to have maintained that it is impossible for God to be eternally knowing for, if He were eternally knowing, then the object known would be eternal, because there is no eternal knowing without the similarly eternal existence of the objects of His knowledge.⁽¹⁾ Jahm holds that God's knowledge is temporal in the sense that it comes into being together with the objects known, otherwise if God's knowledge of the things were eternal, then the things themselves would be eternal.⁽²⁾ The Mu'tazilite theologians, however, distinguished between those attributes

(1) Maqālāt, pp.493-94.

(2) Ibid., pp.280; 494. Tawhīd, p.103,11.

related to the essence of God (sifāt adh-dhāt), and those related to His actions (sifāt fi'l); and while they agreed on the eternity of the former, they differed regarding the definition as well as the eternity of the latter.⁽¹⁾ The Mu'tazilites, for instance, defined the essential attributes as those whose opposites should not be ascribed to God, nor performed by Him, such as knowledge; the opposite of "knowledge" is "ignorance" and God cannot be said to be ignorant nor is He able to be ignorant. The active attributes are those whose opposites can possibly be ascribed to God and of which can be said that He is able to perform them, such as "will" and "speech". Of the active attributes also are all those attributes derived from His actions such as the Beneficent one, the Creator, the Sustainer and the Just one etc. The active attributes also include any names applied to God and which are derived from the acts of others such as the worshipped and the invoked one (mad'uw).⁽²⁾ While the Mu'tazilites considered the essential attributes to be eternal, they maintained the temporality of the active attributes. They realized that these latter attributes are connected to temporal things, so if they were eternal their objects must also be eternal, and this means in a sense the acceptance of the eternity of the world. Therefore, they denied the eternity of the active attributes and said that God can only be a creator when He is creating things, the attribute of creation here being a temporal attribute, for

(1) Maqālāt, pp.508-9.

(2) Maqālāt, pp.508,11-15; 509,1-8.

it would otherwise entail the eternity of the things created.⁽¹⁾

From al-Māturīdī's treatment of this problem, it seems that he has accepted the Mu'tazilite distinction between the essential and the active attributes of God; yet he disagrees with them on the definition of these two kinds of attributes, and specially in considering speech and will as active attributes. More important, however, is that al-Māturīdī, unlike the Mu'tazilites, maintains that all God's attributes, whether being essential or active, are eternal; and thus to him God is eternally knowing, powerful, providing and creating. Al-Ka'bī was a leading Mu'tazilite of that period just before al-Māturīdī, thus to al-Māturīdī he represents the main opponent, and thus to refute his view is, in a way, a refutation of the whole Mu'tazilite theory concerning God's attributes. This is why al-Māturīdī devoted a considerable effort to show the weakness of al-Ka'bī's views.

According to al-Māturīdī, al-Ka'bī defined the essential and active attributes of God as follows: (i) The active attribute is that which is subject to different circumstances such as mercy, giving sustenance and speech, because it might be said that God sustains someone and does not sustain another, He bestows mercy in certain circumstances and not in others, and He spoke to somebody and did not speak to another. The essential attributes are not subject to such change as: power, knowledge and life. (ii) Another definition is that: whatever is under the control of God's power is an active attribute such as mercy and speech, and

(1) For the Mu'tazilites' different views on the point see Maqālāt, pp.186-87; 179-80; 505.

that which cannot be said to be under His power such as His knowledge, is an essential attribute. (iii) Al-Ka'bi gave another definition of the attributes and said that the essential attribute is that by which God cannot be described by its opposite, and the active is that which He can be described by its opposite. (1)

Al-Maturidi rejected these definitions of God's attributes introduced by al-Ka'bi. To refute the first definition he put forward the following arguments: He said that knowledge and hearing are subject to differences between persons and circumstances, yet this does not entail the denial of their being essential attributes; it might be said that God heard the invocation of somebody and did not hear it from another, and a man might say, "God did not know this about me, or He knew about me at this time and not at another time." This does not imply that these attributes are not essential ones, so speech and mercy cannot be said to be active because of this. (2)

God's speech is not a sound, and what is not a sound cannot be said to be heard, though it might be said that it is known. This, however, does not entail change in the character of the speech nor in God's essence, so the fact that God spoke to someone and did not speak to another does not necessitate change in the character of the speech. (3) Moreover, it might be said to him (i.e. to al-Ka'bi), why did you consider this as the only

(1) Tawhid, p.50.1-9.

(2) Ibid., 15-18.

(3) Ibid., p.51,5-8.

distinction between the active and the essential attributes, though you knew that the essential attributes differ in their positive application, and that in some cases it might be said that He knows certain things over which He cannot be said to have power, and that He has power over things which He cannot be said to hear and that He sees things which He cannot necessarily be said to bestow favour upon? All these differences do not imply that these attributes are active and originated; but He is described by them eternally, so to al-Ka'bi - why did you not apply this to that by which He is described? since God is far from change and alteration and corruption which are signs of origination and coming into existence after non-existence. (1)

Al-Maturidi rejected al-Ka'bi's second definition of God's attributes, namely that what is under God's power is not an essential attribute and vice versa. He said that according to al-Ka'bi's opponents (among whom were presumably al-Maturidi himself), God cannot be described as having power over His own attributes except in a metaphorical way, i.e., as referring to the object of the attributes. So there is no justification for saying that He has power over His speech or mercy. (2) He argued that according to al-Ka'bi's doctrine, God was not eternally creator nor merciful, but then He became able to make Himself creator and merciful. Since it is allowable to say that we worship the creator and the merciful, and according to al-Ka'bi these attributes (i.e. of the creator and the merciful) were under

(1) Tawhid, p.52,10-16.

(2) Ibid., 20-22.

God's power, thus al-Ka'bi's view would lead to the opinion that God was able to make a worshipped being for His creatures (in other words, another god) which is absurd, for this other god would be originated since he is under God's power. (1)

As for al-Ka'bi's third definition of God's attributes, al-Maturidi said that God cannot be described by the opposite of justice ('adl), but that al-Ka'bi does not hold that 'adl is an essential attribute, and this proves that his criterion for what is an essential or active attribute is weak and inaccurate. (2)

The polemical nature of these arguments is quite evident and often tends to misrepresent the opponent's view and blurred the point which al-Maturidi is trying to make. Though al-Maturidi introduces no positive criterion for distinguishing between the active and the essential attributes, his vigorous refutation of al-Ka'bi's is quite understandable, for all the definitions of al-Ka'bi imply the temporality of the active attributes, the notion to which al-Maturidi strongly objected.

Al-Maturidi found no difficulty in defending the eternity of the essential attributes; he maintained that since the main purpose of ascribing attributes to God is to establish His transcendence and absolute perfection, we have to assert the eternity of all His attributes. Had any of these attributes been temporal, this would entail that God was not perfect in His essence before the coming into being of these temporal qualities.

(1) Tawhid, p.53,3-7.

(2) Ibid., p.51,8-9.

Those who assumed the temporality of these attributes and hold that God is not eternally knowing, might be asked - how was He before the creation, had God any knowledge of His essence and His actions or not? Also, did He know Himself as a "thing" or not? If they said that He did not know, then He would be ignorant until He created a knowledge by which He becomes knowing. If, however, He knew, then would He be knowing His essence or not? Since we assume that He knows His essence, we have to apply this name to Him eternally.⁽¹⁾ If God were not eternally knowing and powerful, it would mean that He was ignorant and impotent, and then became knowing and powerful, which is improper for God and leads to the discrediting of His oneness since it implies change in His essence. But how can knowledge, for example, be created without power or power be created without knowledge? If it is said that they were created by another force, then God would be in need of that force and He would no longer be the one God.⁽²⁾ So, to maintain the absolute perfection of God, these attributes must be eternally ascribed to Him.

As for the active attributes, al-Māturīdī considered them to be as eternal as the essential attributes, and he made no distinction between them as far as their eternal aspect is concerned. Thus he says, "we say that God is eternally knowing, powerful, acting and beneficent in the sense that is rationally justified, and which indicates that the order in creation proceeds from these attributes."⁽³⁾ In another statement, al-

(1) Tawhīd, p.66,4-9.

(2) Ibid., 13-19.

(3) Ibid. p.33,17-18.

Māturīdī says, "The description of the maker as eternally powerful and beneficent is necessary, and to us it is also necessary to describe Him as eternally making (sun').⁽¹⁾ He used the term takwīn to denote creation, sustenance, origination, and all those concepts which are related to God's actions, and defined takwīn as an eternal attribute of God through which He brings the non-existent from the state of non-existence into existence. The term itself is derived from the Qur'ānic verses, "And when He decrees a thing, He only says to it "Be" and it is."⁽²⁾, where the form of the verb (kun) is mentioned. A long time before al-Māturīdī,⁽³⁾ the term takwīn had been used by the theologians in a sense identical with "creation" or "bringing from non-existence into existence". Those theologians, however, held widely different views regarding the issue as to whether this term referred simply to the thing created, or whether it conveyed a different meaning. Most of them maintained that creating or bringing into existence (khalq or takwīn) is identical with the thing created or brought into existence. Thus when the Creator creates a thing, there is nothing in this action but the creator and the thing created. The idea denoted by such terms as "creating" and "bringing into existence" is an expression of that which takes place in the mind, and it refers to the relation between the Creator and the thing created, and cannot be established as distinctly different from the thing created in the

(1) Tawhīd, p.118,5.

(2) Qur'ān, 2:117; 3:47.

(3) See Maqālāt, pp.363,10-11, 365,8-9.

world of reality. Thus to those theologians there is no attribute of takwīn, but the act of creation is simply achieved by God's power and will. Even those who asserted the difference between takwīn and the mukawwan did not hold that the former is an eternal attribute as al-Māturīdī⁽¹⁾ did, and among this latter group, the Karrāmites introduced their own theory of creation based on the view that takwīn or ihdāth, as they preferred to call it, is not eternal but is originated in God's essence.⁽²⁾

It is in the light of these views that al-Māturīdī seems to have worked out his concept of God's creation of things based on takwīn as an eternal attribute of God. Thus he had to establish not only the eternity of takwīn against the Karrāmites' assumption of its origination, but he also had to prove the very existence of this attribute. Commenting on the Qur'ānic verse, "And when He decrees a thing, He only says to it "Be" and it is." (Q. 2:117), al-Māturīdī said that this verse refutes the view that the creation of the thing is identical with the thing itself; because God mentioned "decree" and a "thing" which are different, and He mentioned "Be" as referring to the act of creation or takwīn which precedes the existence of the thing, and "it is" as referring to the thing created (mukawwan). Al-Māturīdī argued that if these terms were identical, then God would not have mentioned "Be" as referring to takwīn and "it is"

(1) Maqālāt, pp.363-66.

(2) See my unpublished M.Litt. Thesis, The History and Doctrine of the Karrāmiyya Sect with Special Reference to ar-Rāzī's Criticism, p.111.

as referring to the mukawwan. This, however, does not mean that creation occurs by God's utterance of the word "Be", but that this expression simply refers in precise and concise terms to the effectiveness of God's order and the fact that the act of creation is so easy for Him. (1)

Al-Māturīdī also argued from the point of view that the ascription of this attribute is necessary for the establishment of God's perfection and His transcendence because no-one disputes that God is eternally acting; and al-Māturīdī here refers to the evidence of the analogy of the absent to the present. But some of God's creation might be described as wicked, evil, ugly and unfortunate. So if such a creation were directly produced from God's essence, then He would be described by these qualities, and would be called wicked, an evil doer, causer of ugliness and misfortune. But to relate such descriptions to God denotes unbelief. So it must be assumed that these actions should not be ascribed to God's essence, but to something different: that is to an attribute through which God causes these things to exist. The same thing might be said about pregnancy, obedience, disobedience and acquisition; for if God were really the direct cause of things, He would be called procreator, disbeliever, believer and an acquirer which is improper for God. (2) According to al-Māturīdī, he who acquires something is called an acquirer and he who does evil is called an evil-doer etc., so if all creation follows directly from God, then He would be called

(1) Ta'wīlāt, 2:117; 3:47.

(2) Tawhīd, p.46,9-15.

accordingly, moving, motionless, wicked, etc. So if God is far from such qualities and at the same time we find Him called the causer of death and life, the mover etc., then we have to assume that God's action is different from its effect (i.e., His creation is different from the created thing.)⁽¹⁾

Another argument is the fact that God does not create an action in eternity but that He creates it at a certain time. The non-existence of the act originally cannot be due to God's essence, because His essence is unchangeable, and in this case the act would never have been realized. So this must be due to something else, that is His attribute of takwīn, which brings the action from non-existence into existence.⁽²⁾

Against the Karrāmīte view that takwīn is originated, al-Māturīdī strongly emphasized the eternity of this attribute. He maintained that God is eternally creator and originator, as He is eternally knowing and powerful, and what is originated and created is produced at a certain time by eternal takwīn, and not by originated takwīn which occurs at the time of creation and origination as the Karrāmītes assumed. He argued that if takwīn were originated, there would be two alternatives; it would either be created by itself and, if this is possible, then it would be possible for everything to be created without cause which is absurd, or it would be created by another creation and so on, ad-infinitum, which is impossible.⁽³⁾

(1) Ta'wīlāt, 16:40.

(2) Tawhīd, p.46,16-18.

(3) Ta'wīlāt, 2:117.

Two main objections were raised against al-Māturīdī's theory of creation. The first is that the assumption of an eternal attribute of takwīn would entail that the mukawwan is eternal as well and this would lead to the eternity of the world, because it is inconceivable for takwīn, in such a concept, to exist without its effect. The second objection is that if it is assumed that takwīn can exist without the mukawwan, this would imply the impotence of God, for in this case He would not be able to bring something into existence although He has the attribute of takwīn.

To answer the first objection, al-Māturīdī pointed out that there is no causative connection between God's action and its effect or connection, i.e., between takwīn and the mukawwan. So God is eternally creating (mukawwin) before the existence of the created thing, and to ascribe this attribute to Him, it is not necessary that there be any actual creation, because He has the potential power to create. According to al-Māturīdī, as God's power is not dependent on things He has power over, and His will is not conditioned by things willed, and His knowledge is not dependent for its existence on things known, but all these attributes are eternal though their effects were originated, then likewise takwīn is eternal though the mukawwan is originated.⁽¹⁾ Commenting on the Qur'ānic verse, (1:4), al-Māturīdī said that this verse proves the possibility of describing God as the master of something which does not exist at the moment, that is, the day of judgement; this affirms that whatever He is

(1) Tawhīd, p.47,1-5.

described by, it belongs and is related to Himself not to these attributes or to their effects. Therefore we say that He is eternally creating, merciful, beneficent and hearing, though the objects of these attributes are absent. God's action is not preconditioned or related to a certain period in time. Thus, as He is eternally knowing and powerful, so He is eternally creating and originating in the sense that He has the potential power to do all these things. Time, however, is only mentioned when reference is made to the subject of these attributes.⁽¹⁾

So, according to al-Māturīdī, "Basically, when a description is ascribed to God, and He has been described by such qualities as action, knowledge, etc., this description must be eternal. If we mention at the same time the object of the quality ascribed to Him, such as what is known, what is subject to His power, what is willed and what is made to be (mukawwan), the time of (the action of the attributes on) these things must also be specified, so that it should not be supposed that these things are eternal."⁽²⁾ Al-Māturīdī argued for this view by saying that God has been eternally described by these attributes, and He said that He is the creator and sustainer even before the existence of the things created and sustained; so the eternity of these attributes must be affirmed. But if the object of these attributes is mentioned, its time must be specified, otherwise its eternity might be implied, or that He is unable to bring it into existence before that time.⁽³⁾

(1) Ta'wilāt, 1:4.

(2) Tawhīd, p.47,6-9.

(3) Ibid., 10-11.

As for the second objection, i.e., that the assertion of takwīn without mukawwan would entail the impotence of God, al-Māturīdī said that this would be true if takwīn was connected with the bringing of its objects into existence at a definite time and if it then fails, then God would be certainly impotent, as He would be ignorant and devoid of free will if His knowledge and will were connected with objects at certain times and then failed to be realized. But in fact, takwīn is connected with the mukawwan, i.e., bringing something into existence at a certain prescribed time, so its being non-existent before or after that does not entail the impotence of God. It is the same thing as when we say that God is eternally hearing, seeing, generous and beneficent, we mean that He is described eternally by these attributes, though what is heard, seen etc., is originated.⁽¹⁾

After refuting these two objections, al-Māturīdī introduced more arguments to support his view concerning takwīn; he pointed out that the affirmation of this attribute is an affirmation of God's perfection and His absolute uniqueness, because he whose actions are limited by time is impotent compared to he whose actions are unlimited by time. Also he who is able to produce things and their opposites is more powerful than he who is able to produce only one thing, and he whose action is limited by the confines of space (hayyiz) is inferior to him whose actions can be throughout space. Takwīn is simply the absolute potential power of God which is neither limited by space, nor finite in time, and the affirmation of such an attribute is necessary for estab-

(1) Tawhīd, p.47,19-24.

lishing the absolute perfection (tamām) of God.⁽¹⁾ To al-Māturīdī, those who denied takwīn were led to such a view by mistakenly drawing a comparison between God's actions and the actions of man. They thought that God's actions are subject to the same conditions as man's, including the actions occurring at a certain period of time, and they had forgotten that time is a human concept by which distinction between the past, present and the future is made. Thus, while the actions of man are inconceivable without time, God's actions are not subject to this human concept.⁽²⁾ Moreover, if we consider man's actions, we find that in his generated actions such as shooting and killing, there is a time gap between the act and its effect. So in the case of an archer, when he shoots an arrow and kills somebody, there would be a gap between the actual shooting and the killing, yet there is no immediate connection between the act and its effect. God's actions are not generated, but this might be applied to them, and thus though they are eternal, their effect may be originated.⁽³⁾

To al-Māturīdī, those who deny the existence of the eternal attribute of takwīn cannot deny that they are at the present time in possession of the message of the prophet which was delivered a long time ago. So they have no justification for denying that what is originated and comes into existence at the present, was caused by the eternal attribute of takwīn and the

(1) Tawhīd, p.48,1-5.

(2) Ibid.,5-8. cf. Ibn-Rushd, Manāhij al-Adilla, Introduction, p.50.

(3) Tawhīd, p.48,10-14.

eternal action of God.⁽¹⁾

(1) Tawhīd, p.49,1-5.

CHAPTER IV

AL-ASH'ARĪ ON THE EXISTENCE OF GOD AND HIS ATTRIBUTES

1. His Arguments for God's Existence

(a) The argument based on the temporality of the world

From the extant works of al-Ash'arī it seems that he did not use the argument based on the temporality of the world to prove the existence of God, but he derived his arguments in this respect from the observed change in the world and from the perfection in its creation. Thus, unlike al-Māturīdī, al-Ash'arī made no attempts to prove the temporality of the world or to refute, in detail, the views of those who asserted its eternity. From the same works, however, it is quite evident that al-Ash'arī was not only aware of the contents of that argument, but he also used many of its concepts and terminologies in his disputations. For instance, al-Ash'arī asserted that all visible things consist of substances and accidents;⁽¹⁾ that each body is finite and has limit and that the atom cannot be divided ad-infinitum.⁽²⁾ Accordingly, he refuted the views that there is no atom which can be halved ad infinitum.⁽³⁾ He stated that it is impossible for a quality to subsist in a quality, or for an accident to carry an accident, nor is it possible for an accident to subsist in itself.⁽⁴⁾ He also affirmed that accidents do not endure for more

(1) Luma', p.36,14-15.

(2) Risāla I, p.92,19.

(3) Ibid., p.91,17ff.

(4) Luma', pp.55,7-9; 22,8.

than one instant,⁽¹⁾ that two contradictories do not combine in one substrate or direction or in what exists already in the substrate.⁽²⁾ Because he is convinced beyond doubt that God is the real agent of everything, al-Ash'arī denies the idea of latency (kumūn) and natural causality. To him bodies have no effect on things distinct from themselves.⁽³⁾ He also rejected the eternity of bodies,⁽⁴⁾ and the eternity of the world,⁽⁵⁾ and refused the Materialists' view concerning the eternity of movement.⁽⁶⁾ It is said that al-Ash'arī wrote several works refuting the views of the philosophers, the materialists, the naturalists and all those who maintained the eternity of the world, as well as the dualists and the magians.⁽⁷⁾

From this account it seems that there is no doubt that al-Ash'arī was well aware of the contents of the arguments based on the temporality of the world and all the questions involved in it. But the question remains whether or not he employed the argument as a proof for God's existence. The immediate followers of al-Ash'arī depended on this particular argument rather than the others,⁽⁸⁾ and some of them ascribed the same argument to

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(1) Luma', p.55,4-9. Ibāna, p.28.

(2) Risāla I, p.91,7-9. Luma', pp.8,7-9; p.60,18-19.

(3) Luma', p.39,8-9.

(4) Ibid., p.7,8-12.

(5) Risāla I, p.91,3-14.

(6) Ibid., pp.91,15-19; 92,1-3.

(7) Ibn-'Asākir, Tabvyīn, p.128ff.

(8) Al-Bāqillānī, Tamhīd, pp.22-24.

al-Ash'arī himself. Thus in his Nihāyat al-Iqdām, ash-Shahrastānī, distinguished between two arguments both based on the temporality of the world used by the theologians to establish the existence of God. One is positive and aims to prove the temporality of the world, the other is negative based on the refutation of its eternity. According to ash-Shahrastānī, al-Ash'arī chose the latter method and said, "If we assume the pre-eternity of atoms they must have been combined or separate, or neither combined nor separate, or some combined and others separate. In short, they are not free from the actual combination or separation, or the possibility of separation and combination, and as their relation to each other has changed and they cannot change their own essence because essence is unchangeable, there must be an external force which combines and separates them. So it follows that whatever does not precede atoms, which are thus proved temporal, is itself temporal."⁽¹⁾

As has already been mentioned, al-Ash'arī expressed his disapproval of such arguments and pointed out their weaknesses as well as the faults in their premisses.⁽²⁾ We might explain this inconsistency by supposing that al-Ash'arī might have used this type of argument before abandoning Mu'tazilism, and these arguments might have appeared in his works of that time, from which ash-Shahrastānī perhaps quoted; then later he would have realized the weakness of these arguments and the seriousness of the objections raised against their validity, and he therefore

(1) Iqdām, p.12.

(2) See Supra, Chapter II, pp.111-12.

joined those who doubted their validity and avoided mentioning them in those of his works which survive, but he nevertheless made use of some of the premisses of the old arguments in the course of his disputations.

(b) The Argument based on Change and Causation

Al-Ash'arī constructed an argument for the existence of God based on the observed change in the visible world; since things do not and cannot cause change, therefore, there must be an external force causing it. He gave the example of the change of man from one state to another and said, "The completely mature man was originally sperm, then a clot, then embryo, then flesh and bone and blood. Now we know very well that he did not transform himself from one state to another because at the peak of his physical and mental perfection he is unable to produce extra organs or hearing and sight or to create another limb for himself, and he is even more incapable of doing that when he is weak and imperfect. ... Man also cannot transform himself from youth to old age and decrepitude and although he strains to rid himself of old age and decrepitude and to restore himself to his youthful condition, he is not able to do so. All this proves that it is not he who transforms himself through these states, but that he has a transformer who transforms him from state to state, who governs his every state: for his transformation from one state to another without a transformer or governor is impossible."⁽¹⁾

This principle of change and the necessity of its causation

(1) Luma', p.6,5-16; cf. Milal, vol.I, p.94. Iqdām, p.12.

is applied to all things of the world; thus cotton for instance cannot change into spun thread and woven material by itself, there must be a spinner and a weaver to cause that change. One who takes a pile of raw cotton, al-Ash'arī said, and waits for it to become spun thread, then woven material, without a spinner or a weaver, is out of his senses or ignorant. Similarly, one who goes into a desert in which he finds no castle built, and waits for the mud to be fired into bricks, and be piled up on top of each other without a firer or a builder is ignorant.⁽¹⁾

As has already been mentioned, the source of this argument is basically Qur'ānic;⁽²⁾ thus al-Ash'arī derived his above-mentioned rational argument from the Qur'ānic verses which speak of the stages in the creation of man,⁽³⁾ and his inability to cause any change in himself or in other things.⁽⁴⁾ From the same verses, al-Ash'arī argued that man changes from one state to another, it is a known fact that changeable things cannot be eternal, for their change necessitates their departure from their previous states to new ones, and in the case of their being eternal, such change would not occur. So the occurring of change in man and in other things implies an origination and refutes their being eternal; and the originated things need an originator who is God.⁽⁵⁾

(1) Luma', p.6,17-21.

(2) See Supra, Chapter III, pp.152-53.

(3) Qur'ān, 23:12-14.

(4) Ibid., 56:58-9.

(5) Risāla II, p.82.

(c) The Argument based on Design and Purpose (the Teleological Argument)

Reference has already been made to the origin of this argument and how it was developed out of the Qur'ānic arguments for the existence of God.⁽¹⁾ Al-Ash'arī used the same arguments as al-Māturīdī, and said that the gradual and systematic development in the stages of man's creation, mentioned in the Qur'ānic verses 23:12-14, discloses the existence of a wise creator behind it, who intended these processes to be in that way; for such systematic development cannot be the production of chance or mere accident without prior intention or arrangement. The extraction of clay (sulāla) from which man is developed, is liable to accept various forms, and to be produced at different times, so its gradual development at certain times discloses the design and purpose behind the creation of man. Moreover, design and purpose is quite evident in the function of man's senses and the suitability of his organs for their particular tasks.⁽²⁾ Purpose and design is also evident in the alternation of night and day mentioned in the verse 3:190, "Surely in the creation of heaven and earth and in the alternation of night and day there are signs for men possessed of mind." According to al-Ash'arī this alternation is specifically for the benefit of mankind so that he should work during the day and rest at night; if the world were in complete darkness, men would not be able to do their work or execute their affairs, if day were continuous

(1) See Supra, Chapter III, p. 154.

(2) Risāla II, pp.82-3.

they would enjoy no rest or tranquillity.⁽¹⁾

From what has been said it becomes clear that though al-Ash'arī made use of the argument based on the temporality of the world, the later Ash'arite arguments based on the theory of the atom,⁽²⁾ and the principle of determination⁽³⁾ are not his. Unlike his followers, al-Ash'arī laid more emphasis on those arguments based on the observable phenomena of changes and the evidences of design and purpose in the world's creation, so the criticism levelled against the Ash'arites method by such men as Ibn-Rushd,⁽⁴⁾ is not applicable to al-Ash'arī, at least as far as his extant theological works are concerned.

2. Al-Ash'arī on the Attributes of God

Unlike al-Māturīdī whose main concern, as has already been mentioned, was to deny tashbīh, that is similarity between God and His creatures, al-Ash'arī seems to have been mainly interested in refuting the extreme views of the Mu'tazilites and their method of ta'wīl, i.e., allegorical interpretation. Thus he strongly advocated the doctrine of bi-lā-kayf, and affirmed that God sits on His throne and is visible in the hereafter.

(1) Risāla II, pp.83-4.

(2) Bāqillānī, Tamhīd, pp.15-23. Cf. Macdonald, Development of Muslim Theology, pp.200-203.

(3) Juwaynī, Irshād, pp.16-17. cf. Iqdām, p.12.

(4) Ibn-Rushd, Manāhij al-Adilla, pp.135-48.

(a) His Arguments for Establishing God's Oneness

To prove God's oneness, al-Ash'arī used only the argument based on mutual hindrance, (dalīl at-tamānu'), to which reference has already been made.⁽¹⁾ Thus al-Ash'arī argued from the Qur'ānic verse, 21:22, that if there were two gods, their government and control over the world would be neither harmonious nor consistently effective, and one or both of them would be impotent; for if one of them willed that a man should live and the other willed his death, one of three things would have to ensue: either the will of both together would be accomplished, or the will of neither would be accomplished, or the will of only one would be accomplished. It is impossible that the will of both together would be accomplished, for the body cannot be simultaneously living and dead and, accordingly, the impotence of both must be concluded, and that which is impotent can be neither God nor eternal. And if the will of only one be accomplished, impotence necessarily attaches to the one whose will is not accomplished and the impotent can neither be God nor eternal. So what has been said proves that the Maker of the world must be one.⁽²⁾

This argument of al-Ash'arī is identical with that of al-Maturīdī and it was used by almost all the later theologians of different schools.⁽³⁾ It is noticeable, however, that this is the

(1) Supra, pp.160-61.

(2) Luma', p.8,3-11. Risāla II, p.84.

(3) Bāqillānī, Tamhīd, p.25; Ghazālī, Iqtisād, pp.36-38;

'Abd-al-Jabbār, Usūl, pp.279-82.

only rational argument introduced by al-Ash'arī in comparison with the many such arguments of al-Māturīdī; this might be explained in the light of what has already been mentioned, that al-Ash'arī's main concern was to combat the Mu'tazilite views, therefore he paid no attention to other groups and did not need to introduce other than this argument. Al-Māturīdī's main concern, however, was to defend the conception of God and His oneness, so he had to take into account the views of various groups on such matters and had to introduce many rational arguments based on sam' in its wider significance, reason, as well as arguments derived from the observable precision in the making of the world.

The dalīl at-tamānu' was severely criticized by Ibn-Rushd who pointed out the weaknesses of the theologians' arguments based on it, and that it is neither rationally convincing nor is it in agreement with what the verse intends to convey. To him, the theologians divided the subject into three parts for which there is no textual basis, for the text merely stated that, were there to be two gods, the universe would collapse in ruins at the time of its first existence, but since it has obviously not collapsed, there must be only one God.⁽¹⁾ This criticism might be valid as far as al-Ash'arī and his Ash'arite followers are concerned. For al-Māturīdī, however, such a criticism seems to be unjustified, because his argument based on this verse, which has already been discussed,⁽²⁾ proceeds in the same manner as approved by Ibn-Rushd.

(1) Ibn-Rushd, Manāhij al-Adilla, pp.155-59.

(2) Supra., pp.160-61.

(b) Al-Ash'arī and the Doctrine of bi-lā-kayf

It is a well known fact that the doctrine of bi-lā-kayf was fully formulated long before al-Ash'arī's time, and even before the time of Ibn-Hanbal with whose name the doctrine has been connected.⁽¹⁾ The balkafiyya asserted their firm belief in those Qur'anic expressions which ascribe to God hands, eyes, face, etc., without giving them definite interpretation, as a reaction to the extreme views of both the Mu'tazilites who used ta'wīl or allegorical interpretation as a method of explaining away these Qur'anic expressions, and the corporealists and anthropomorphists who naively accepted those expressions in their literal sense. They also emphasized God's separateness and His uniqueness and maintained that He cannot be compared to anything of this world.

On abandoning Mu'tazilism, al-Ash'arī sought refuge with the balkafiyya; in his Ibāna he expressed his allegiance to Ibn-Hanbal,⁽²⁾ and advocated the doctrine of bi-lā-kayf, by affirming as realities all the physical attributes ascribed to God in the Qur'ān such as: eyes, hands and face etc. Thus, according to al-Ash'arī, God has a face as He has said, "Yet still abides the face of thy Lord, Majestic, Splendid". He has two hands (bi-lā-kayf) as He has said, "Nay, but His hands are outspread". "That I created with my own hands". He has eyes as He said, "Running before our eyes". All these, however, should be accepted without

(1) Watt, "Some Muslim Discussions of Anthropomorphism", pp.1-4.

E.I.² art. "Ahmad Ibn-Hanbal" (H. Laoust), p.275. M.C.P. 88ff.

(2) Ibāna, p.9,2-3.

qualification or definition.⁽¹⁾ Similarly, al-Ash'arī accepted all the Traditions which affirmed that God descends to the lowest heaven, and all the verses which speak of God's coming on the day of resurrection, and His being nearer to His servants than the jugular vein, all this without allowing for allegorical interpretation of their meaning.⁽²⁾

It is clear from these statements that al-Ash'arī is using the language of Ibn-Hanbal and his followers. In the same way, al-Ash'arī stood firm against all the Mu'tazilite attempts to use ta'wīl and substitute other meanings for those difficult expressions in the Qur'ān and the Traditions. In spite of this similarity of language between al-Ash'arī and the Hanbalites, they differed in their methods; and while the Hanbalites envisaged the doctrine of bi-lā-kayf as a passive acceptance of all Qur'ānic expressions, even if they seemed to imply self-contradictory conceptions, al-Ash'arī attempted to explain away the contradictions of these expressions, not only by means of Scriptural arguments, but also by using purely rational arguments. On this point lies the difference between the Hanbalites and al-Ash'arī: while the latter used Kalām to defend the doctrine of bi-lā-kayf, the former condemned this method and refused to accept al-Ash'arī within their ranks.⁽³⁾

The Mu'tazilites used ta'wīl in the metaphorical interpretation of those difficult Qur'ānic expressions such as God's

(1) Ibāna, pp.9,12-14; 37-38.

(2) Ibid., pp.11-12.

(3) Watt, "Some Muslim Discussion." pp.5-6; Formative Period p.295.

hands, face, etc., and said that God's hand simply means His grace (ni'ma), and pointed out that the Arabic word for hand also has the meaning of grace.⁽¹⁾ Al-Ash'arī opposed the whole method of ta'wīl and, with a similar linguistic argument, he said that in literary or conversational usage one may not say, "I have done thus and thus with my two hands" meaning "with my grace". Similarly, the Mu'tazilites cannot claim the support of ijmā' and analogy for such interpretation, for there is no unanimous agreement among the Muslims about such interpretation, and analogy is not the proper method for judging in this case. So the assertion that God's "hands" had no meaning but "grace" could not be convincingly proved by analogy.⁽²⁾

Al-Ash'arī rejected the assumption based on the analogy of the absent to the present, that since yad in the present is either a member or a grace, then the yad in the absent, i.e., God's hand must either be a member or grace; he questioned the validity of the principle of analogy and its application for God in all cases. To him, random application of this principle would lead to absurd views because we do not find in the present a living being unless it has a body consisting of flesh and blood, and we do not find a ruler who is not human, yet we presumed that God, who is living and who rules, transcends these conceptions. Thus it would not be illogical to deny that the "two hands" ascribed to God are neither grace nor members, nor like our normal hands.⁽³⁾

(1) See 'Abd-al-Jabbār, Usūl, pp.227-28.

(2) Ibāna, p.38,5-16.

(3) Ibid., p.40,11-19.

Al-Ash'arī also rejected the interpretation of God's hands as meaning His power, and pointed out that the ayd referred to in the verse, 51:47, is not the plural of yad, because the plural of yad meaning grace is ayadin, and according to this the meaning of God's words (with my two hands) cannot possibly be the same as that of His words, "And the heaven - with our hands We have built it up." Q.51:47. Moreover, if power is meant, then God would have two powers according to His words, "With my two hands" Q.38:75, but the Mu'tazilites deny Him one power not to mention two; so according to the Mu'tazilites own views, the yadain in this verse cannot mean two powers. Another argument is that if God meant "His two powers" by "two hands", then Adam would have no superiority over Iblis, since all things including Iblis are created by God's power and His will. So to show His preference for Adam over Iblis, God stated that He created Adam with His two hands, and this proves that the "two hands" mentioned in the verse do not simply mean God's power. (1)

Concerning the arguments that if "two hands" were ascribed to God because it is mentioned in the verse 38:75, then equally one hand or more than two hands should be ascribed to Him according to the verses 48:10 and 36:71 respectively. Al-Ash'arī emphasized the principle, already mentioned, that the literal meaning of the Qur'ān should be accepted unless there is strong

(1) Ibāna, p.39,1-14. The same arguments were used by al-Bāqillānī, Tamhīd, pp.258-60. Later Ash'arites, however, adopted the principle of ta'wīl and thus metaphorically interpreted these Qur'ānic verses. See Juwaynī, Irshād, p.88 ff. Ghazālī, Iqtisād, pp.28-29.

proof suggesting another meaning which should then be followed.⁽¹⁾
In the present case, he found the proof of ijmā' to be convincing:
by ijmā' the literal meaning of the verses referring to one hand
and the plural of hands, is transferred from its primary literal
meaning in order to agree with the verse which refers to God's
"two hands".⁽²⁾

By using the same principle of exegesis, al-Ash'arī refuted
the whole Mu'tazilite attempts to establish metaphorical inter-
pretation of the term "hand", and he stated categorically that
the prescriptions of the Qur'ān should be interpreted literally
and obviously unless there is a proof suggesting otherwise.
Therefore, "two hands" must be interpreted literally and no meta-
phorical meaning should be ascribed to them except by proofs;
for if Qur'ānic interpretation were uncontrolled and unrestricted,
one might for instance maintain, without proof, that what has
universal significance in its literal interpretation is partic-
ular and vice versa.⁽³⁾ Al-Ash'arī seems to have realised the
dangers of the metaphorical method of interpretation and the
possibility that it might eventually lead to the debasement of
the Scripture altogether. He therefore strongly opposed its
application to the Qur'ān and tried to demonstrate its invalidity.

From what has been said, it is clear that al-Ash'arī's
method of argument concerning these disputed Qur'ānic verses
proceeds from an assumption of analogy between God and His creatures,

(1) See Supra, pp.117-18.

(2) Ibāna, pp.40,20-25; 41,1-4.

(3) Ibid., p.41,5-17.

but this assumption is not the assumption of resemblance between God and His creatures of the anthropomorphists and the corpor-ealists as has sometimes been assumed. (1) So the accusation that he was closer to these groups than to any other Muslim sect is unjustified. It is true that he strongly defended the attribution of hands, eyes, etc. to God, and opposed any allegorical interpretation of these terms; at the same time, however, he was careful not to fall into the trap of tashbīh by emphasizing the doctrine of bi-lā-kayf, and by advocating the principle of tanzīh. Thus, in his Ibāna, al-Ash'arī clearly stated that God's hands are neither organs nor limbs nor power nor grace; the Qur'ānic verse is an assertion of the existence of two hands that are not two members and not two powers and not two graces, and are unqualified except insofar as the two hands are not like ordinary hands. (2)

In his Risāla II, al-Ash'arī pointed out that God's coming and descent do not imply movement or wandering about, for movement and motion are applicable to the comer who is body or substance, but God is neither body nor substance, therefore coming in this sense of movement does not apply to Him; as it does not apply to fever when it is said that ja'at Zaid al-humma (Zaid has been attacked by fever). This does not mean that the fever came or walked to Zaid, but it simply means that it afflicted him. God's descent also does not imply moving about (nuqla) because this is a bodily characteristic and, as the descent of

(1) Ibn-Rushd, Manāhij al-Adilla, Introduction, pp.77ff.

(2) Ibāna, p.39,14-23.

revelation Q.17:105, does not imply such a concept, nor does the descent of God. (1)

Al-Ash'arī placed more emphasis on the doctrine of tanzīh in his al-Luma' where he refuted all similarities between God and His creatures, and opposed the application of the term "body" to God. He argued that if God were similar to His creatures He would be temporal like them. For, if He were similar to them, He would have to be like them either in all respects or in some respects. If He were like them in all respects, He would be temporal as they are in all respects. And if He were similar to them in some respects, He would be temporal in that respect in which He was like them. But it is impossible for that which is temporal to have existed eternally. (2) In his Risāla II, al-Ash'arī introduced the same argument and added that if God were similar to His creatures it would either entail that He was temporal like them, or that they were eternal; both premisses are wrong as God does not resemble any of His creatures in any respect. According to al-Ash'arī, the denial of similarity between God and His creatures does not entail the negation of His existence, as some anthropomorphists and corporealists claim: the method for establishing God's existence is not in making comparison between Him and His creatures, for His existence is proved through intellect and by reflection upon the signs of creation in the whole world. (3)

(1) Risāla II, p.97

(2) Luma', p.7,14-18. Risāla I, p.92,11-18.

(3) Risala II, p.93.

Al-Ash'arī also refuted the application of the term "body" to God, whether in the sense of being long, deep and constructed of parts (murakkab), or not having these qualities.⁽¹⁾ He argued that the term jism in the sense connoted by these anthropomorphic qualities cannot possibly be applied to God, because what is composed is not one thing, but it consists at least of two things joined together, and since the oneness of God has been established beyond doubt, it would be false to say that He is composed. Nor can the term jism be applied without giving it these qualities, for it is not for us, al-Ash'arī said, to assign names to God; and it is not permissible to apply to Him names which He did not apply to Himself, or have not been applied by His apostle or about whose meaning there is no consensus of the Muslims (ijmā').⁽²⁾

(c) The Problem of God's Locality

Al-Ash'arī formulated his views on God's locality, by applying the doctrine of bi-lā-kayf, and refuting any metaphorical interpretation of the Qur'ānic verses. The section devoted to the problem in the Ibāna is more or less a reiteration of the views and the arguments of Ibn-Hanbal and his Hanbalite followers, such as ad-Dārimī.⁽³⁾ Thus, in the manner of the Hanbalites, al-Ash'arī affirmed the doctrine of God being seated

(1) See Supra, pp.162-3.

(2) Luma' pp.9,18-19; 10,1-8.

(3) Cf. Ibn-Hanbal ar-Radd p.323. cf. Seale Muslim Theology, pp.117-19, Ad-Dārimī, Radd, pp.8-9.

on a throne with arguments based directly on the Qur'ān and the Traditions. He quoted many of the verses which speak of God being seated on His throne, Q.20:5, that He is in heaven, Q.67:16, that angels and spirits ascend to Him, Q.70:4, that God took Jesus up to Himself Q.3:55; 4:158, etc.⁽¹⁾ He also quoted different versions of the Tradition of God's nightly descent to the lower heaven, and the Tradition which tells that the Prophet considered the black slave girl, who said that God is in heaven, a believer. All these evidences, al-Ash'arī said, prove that God is sitting on His throne, which is above heavens.⁽²⁾

Al-Ash'arī also based an argument on the fact that the Muslims are naturally disposed to raise their hands, when they invoke God's mercy, towards the heavens, which proves that He is seated on His throne above the heavens; otherwise if God were not upon the throne, they would not raise their hands towards the throne, and they do not lower them to the earth when they pray.⁽³⁾ This argument of al-Ash'arī is almost a repetition of ad-Dārimī's⁽⁴⁾; reference has already been made to al-Māturīdī's refutation and criticism of it;⁽⁵⁾ it has to be mentioned,

- (1) Ibāna, pp.33-35. Cf. Ibn-Hanbal op.cit., p.323. Ad-Dārimī, Radd, pp.16-17.
- (2) Ibāna, pp.34-35. Al-Ghazālī explained these Traditions in a way which gives conclusions different from those of al-Ash'arī, see Iqtisād, pp.24; 26-27.
- (3) Ibāna, p.34,1-4.
- (4) Ad-Dārimī, op.cit., p.16.
- (5) See Supra, p.168

however, that al-Ash'arī's followers who abandoned the doctrine of bi-lā-kayf, demonstrated the weakness of this argument and showed that it does not necessarily entail that God is on the throne above the heavens. (1)

It is noticeable that, in his section on God's locality, al-Ash'arī quoted some Qur'ānic verses and introduced arguments from them which have nothing to do with the problem he is dealing with and concluded, from these irrelevant quotations and arguments, that they prove that God is not in His creation, and His creation is not in Him, and that He is seated upon His throne. (2)

Al-Ash'arī attacked the Mu'tazilites, Jahmites and the Harūriyya for attempting metaphorical interpretation of God's enthronement (istiwā'). He also attacked these three groups for denying that God was seated on His throne in the literal sense, and for asserting the doctrine of His omnipresence (bikullimakān).. The existence of the throne itself was not questioned since this is referred to in the Qur'ān. Al-Ash'arī rejected the metaphorical interpretation of istiwā' by saying that, if istiwā' means God's power or His having mastery (isti'lā'), then there would be no difference between the throne and the earth, since God has mastery and power over everything including these two. So if God's sitting (istiwā') on His throne, means His having power over it (isti'lā'), then it would have to be said that He is seated (mustawī) on all created things, including the throne,

(1) Ghazālī, Iqtisād, pp.23-24; Rāzī, Asās at-Taqdīs, pp.153-58.

(2) Ibāna, p.36, 1-13.

such as gardens, wasteland and on each separate thing, since He has mastery and power over them. But no Muslim holds such an absurd belief, thus it follows that istiwā', in relation to the throne, does not mean God's having mastery or power over it which is common to all things, but it must necessarily mean an istiwā' that belongs particularly to the throne, and not to all things. (1) We find similar arguments introduced by ad-Dārimī. (2) Al-Bāqillānī, who followed al-Ash'arī in refuting the metaphorical interpretation of istiwā', also argued in a similar way. (3) Later Ash'arites, however, seem to have disagreed with al-Ash'arī's method of interpretation, and they adopted the metaphorical interpretation of istiwā', as propounded by the Mu'tazilites. (4)

Al-Ash'arī stressed God's otherness and separateness, as did Ibn-Hanbal, and pointed out that the doctrine of God's omnipresence leads eventually to pantheistic conceptions and as a corollary to it, the propounders of this doctrine would have to admit that God is in the womb of Mary, and present in the gardens and in the wasteland and in all despicable places, since they hold that He is in every place. But such views are contrary to religion and have been refuted by many Qur'ānic verses which affirm that God is separate from His creatures, and prove that He is not in His creation and His creation not in

(1) Ibāna, p.34,5-15.

(2) Ad-Dārimī, op.cit., p.14.

(3) Tamhīd, p.262.

(4) Juwaynī, Irshād, p.24. Ghazālī, Iqtisād, p.28.

Him, that He is seated upon His throne.⁽¹⁾ Al-Ash'arī argued that if God were not seated on His throne and were omnipotent, He would be under the earth over which the heaven is; and if He were under the earth and the earth above Him and the heaven above the earth, then it would have to be said that created things are above God; and if this is true He must be under that above which He is and also above that under which He is, and this is impossible and self-contradictory.⁽²⁾

In his Luma', al-Ash'arī made no reference to the doctrine of God's sitting on His throne; but it does not seem likely from this that he had views on this problem different from those mentioned in the Ibāna. It is most likely that in the Ibāna, which is of Hanbalite tendencies, al-Ash'arī placed great emphasis on the points which occupied the Hanbalites, such as the problem of God's locality and the creation of the Qur'ān, and he adopted almost the same Hanbalite views. While in the Luma', which is addressed mainly to the Mu'tazilites, al-Ash'arī paid more attention to the major points upon which he disagrees with the Mu'tazilites. Therefore he made no reference to such minor points as God's locality.

(d) The Problem of God's Visibility

As in all theological problems, the differences between various contending groups over the possibility of God's visibility arose firstly from differing interpretations of Qur'ānic texts.

(1) Ibāna, p.34,5-15. cf. Ad-Dārimī, op.cit.,p.14; Bāqillānī, Tamhīd, p.260

(2) Ibāna, p.34,18-23.

Thus, al-Ash'arī used his already mentioned principles of Qur'ānic exegesis to assert that it was possible to see God, and to refute the arguments and counter-arguments of his opponents. However, unlike al-Māturīdī, who confined himself to the textual evidences, al-Ash'arī took his arguments further and introduced rational arguments to demonstrate the possibility of God's vision.

Traditional Evidences

1. Al-Ash'arī found one of his proofs for the possibility of God's vision in the verses, 75:22-23, "Faces that day are bright, looking to their Lord", which has commonly been used as a proof for the possibility of God's vision. The Mu'tazilites, who denied the possibility of His literal visibility (by the eyes), interpreted these verses metaphorically and tried to explain away their literal meanings by saying that, "Looking to (nāzira ilā)" might possibly mean "considering" or "reflecting", or "expecting" or "looking with sympathy" or that "it refers to the believers waiting for the reward of their Lord", and the vision of the Lord is not implied.⁽¹⁾ Al-Ash'arī rejected all these alternatives and, basing his argument on common sense and normal use of language, he said that "looking to" in this verse cannot possibly mean "considering" or "reflecting" since the hereafter is not a place for reflection and consideration. It cannot also mean "expecting" since expectation has a negative aspect which is inconsistent with the bliss of paradise, it is also inappropriate from the normal use of language because where faces are mentioned,

(1) Ibāna, p.13; Luma', p.34. cf. 'Abd-al-Jabbār, Usūl, pp.242-48.

as in this verse, the normal meaning is that they are looking at something, and not that they are expecting something. If nāzira were used in the sense of "expectation", it would not be linked with the article "to" (ilā), as mentioned in the verses 36:49; 27:35, and in one of Imru' al-Qays' poems, in all these examples when "expectation" is meant, "ilā" is not used. Nor can "looking to" mean "looking with sympathy" since it is not appropriate for man to feel sympathy for God. It cannot mean "waiting the reward of their Lord" because the reward of God is something other than Himself, and the verse clearly states that they are "looking to their Lord" and not towards something else. Al-Ash'arī pointed out that it is not for us to give metaphorical interpretation of the literal meaning of the verse without a proof, otherwise allowing for such an interpretation would lead others to absurd conclusions not acceptable to the advocates of such a method (i.e. the Mu'tazilites). According to al-Ash'arī therefore, all interpretations of these verses are unjustified and invalid except the one that "looking to" means "the seeing of God by eyes in the hereafter".⁽¹⁾

2. The second proof is the utterance of Moses, "Oh my Lord, show me, that I may behold Thee"⁽²⁾ which implies the possibility of the vision of God; otherwise if it were impossible, Moses would be proved ignorant in what he sought, which is unbelievable in a prophet.⁽³⁾

(1) Ibāna, pp.13-14; Luma', pp.34-35.

(2) Qur'an, 7:143.

(3) Ibāna, pp.14-15.

3. The third proof is the Qur'ānic verse, 7:143, in which God has connected the realization of His vision with something possible, that is, the staying of the mountain: "Thou shalt not see Me, but behold the mountain - if it stays fast in its place, then thou shalt see Me". This proves the possibility of God's vision, otherwise He would have connected it with something impossible. Against the Mu'tazilites' objection to this conclusion and their assertion that God might have possibly intended by this verse to show the impossibility of His vision, al-Ash'arī fell back on linguistic argument and quoted one of al-Khansā's poems in which she connected her speech with something impossible, when she intended to show that she could not be at peace with one who was a foe to her brother. Al-Ash'arī said that a careful consideration of the use of language of the Qur'an is essential for an understanding of that Book's meaning; and thus since God connected His visibility with something within His power and possibility, we know that the visibility of God is also possible and not absurd. (1)

4. The fourth proof is the verse, 10:26, "To the good-doers the reward most fair and a surplus" where the surplus (ziyāda) has been interpreted as meaning the vision of God. (2)

5. The fifth proof is the Tradition, "You shall see your Lord as you see the moon on the night when it is full, and you shall not suffer from His visibility", which has been widely transmitted from various sources on the prophet's authority. Since the

(1) Ibāna, p.15.

(2) Ibid., p.15,18-19.

vision is mentioned here without qualifications and compared to that of the eyes, its meaning can be none other than ocular vision. Against the Mu'tazilites' criticism of this Tradition⁽¹⁾, al-Ash'arī said that the numbers of its narrators exceed the number of those who narrate the Tradition concerning rajm (stoning), the prophet's saying "No testament for an heir"; the Tradition concerning the wiping of the sandals; and the Tradition that, "the woman shall not be married to the same man as her paternal or maternal aunt". So if the Mu'tazilites had accepted these Traditions as authentic, the Tradition concerning the vision of God has a better claim to be authentic since it has been handed down from generation to generation.⁽²⁾

The Mu'tazilites based their argument that God cannot be seen either in this world or the next, on the Tradition which states that the prophet, when asked "Have you seen your Lord?" replied "He is light how can I see Him?". In another version which the Mu'tazilites preferred, the prophet is reported to have asked a question expecting a negative answer: "Is He light? How can I see Him?"⁽³⁾ Al-Ash'arī preferred the first version and refuted the Mu'tazilite argument that the vision of God is impossible with the assertion that the prophet was merely denying the possibility of the vision of God in this world, for eyes in the present world cannot see light from eternity, even less God

(1) 'Abd-al-Jabbār, Usūl, pp.268-270, where the text and chains of this Tradition were criticized.

(2) Ibāna, p.16,14-23.

(3) 'Abd-al-Jabbār, Usūl, pp.269-270.

Himself. So though the possibility of God's visibility in the present world is disputed, His visibility in the hereafter has been strongly affirmed by ijmā'.⁽¹⁾

As we have seen, al-Ash'arī based his proofs on the Traditional evidences, that is the Qur'ān and the Traditions, nor did he merely extract quotations from these sources, but he also looked carefully at the use of language in them, upon which he built rational arguments. Another definable type of argument which al-Ash'arī used was the reasoned argument.

His Reasoned Arguments

To prove the possibility of God's visibility, al-Ash'arī introduced the following rational arguments:

1. From the assumption that every thing existing can be seen, al-Ash'arī reasoned that one of the things that proves the visibility of God is the fact that nothing exists that God cannot show us, and it is only the non-existent that He cannot show us, therefore since God certainly exists, it is not impossible that He should show us Himself.⁽²⁾ Though this argument has been accepted by many of the later theologians, it met with severe criticism of its validity even from the followers of al-Ash'arī himself.⁽³⁾
2. The second rational argument of al-Ash'arī bears a resemblance to the above mentioned one, but it is less convincing.

(1) Ibāna, pp.16,23-25; 17,1-9.

(2) Ibid., p.17,13-15.

(3) See Rāzī, Arba'īn, pp.191-98.

According to al-Ash'arī, "One of the proofs for the possibility of God's visibility is the fact that God sees things and so He must see Himself, for he who does not see himself does not see things, and if He sees Himself, He must be able to show us Himself."⁽¹⁾ It is evident that the premisses of this proposition do not necessarily lead to al-Ash'arī's conclusion, and if the proposition is stated in a syllogistic form it would certainly give us a conclusion different from al-Ash'arī's.

3. The third rational argument is derived from the general belief of the Muslims that the life of Paradise is perfect bliss and perpetual delight, accordingly al-Ash'arī maintained that since the greatest delight is the vision of God, He will not withhold it from His prophets, angels and the faithful believers.⁽²⁾

4. The core of al-Ash'arī's fourth rational argument for the vision of God has been briefly mentioned in the Ibāna, where it is said that the vision does not affect the object seen (mar'ī), but only the seeing subject (for the vision of the seeing remains in him); since this is so and the vision does not affect the object seen, it does not necessitate tashbīh, or essential alteration in the mar'ī, therefore, it is not impossible for God to show Himself to His faithful servants.⁽³⁾ In his Luma', al-Ash'arī prefaced his section on the vision of God with an expanded version of this argument and put it in the following logical form: That which cannot be ascribed to God and cannot be true

(1) Ibāna, p.17,18-20.

(2) Ibid., p.18,6-13. cf. Watt, Formative Period, p.308.

(3) Ibāna, p.18,13-16.

of Him is that which if allowed would entail that He is temporal, or that He has temporal qualities, or that He resembles His creatures, or that He is classifiable with other creatures, or that He is unjust and oppressive, or that He would become altered by this ascription. But the affirmation of God's being seen entails none of these factors, therefore God's visibility is not impossible, and if it is not impossible, it is possible to predicate it to God. (1)

'Abd-al-Jabbār, the Mu'tazilite, who is said to have written a refutation of al-Ash'arī's Luma',⁽²⁾ criticized this argument and said that it originated from al-Jubbā'ī who used it in a context completely different from that of al-Ash'arī. According to 'Abd-al-Jabbār, al-Jubbā'ī said in his book, Man Yakfur Waman Lā-Yakfur, that the affirmation of God's vision, according to the principles of those who assert it, does not amount to unbelief, since its affirmation does not entail the origination of God, or a generation of a quality in Him etc. Al-Ash'arī, however, mistakenly used this proposition as an argument for the affirmation of God's vision.⁽³⁾ It is noticeable that though al-Ash'arī prefaced his section on vision in the Luma' with this rational argument, he made no reference to the other rational arguments mentioned in the Ibāna, this might be due to the brevity of the Luma', since al-Ash'arī also omitted all Traditional and the Qur'ānic proofs except one, or perhaps left them out because he

(1) Luma', pp.32,3-16; 33,1-6.

(2) Ibn-al-Murtadā, Ṭabaqāt al-Mu'tazila, p.113,11.

(3) 'Abd-al-Jabbār, Usūl, pp.275-77.

realized their weaknesses.

The Mu'tazilites objected to the vision of God by quoting the Qur'ānic verse, 4:153, "The people of the book will ask thee to bring down upon them a book from heaven, and they asked Moses for greater than that, for they said, "show us God openly". They said that in this verse God scorned those who requested His vision and this indicates its impossibility. As a reply to this, al-Ash'arī said that the people of the book were not scorned for asking the prophet to bring down a book, nor were the Isra'ilites scorned for asking for the vision of God, but they both were reprimanded for making the granting of their requests the pre-condition for belief in their prophet, although in fact neither the bringing down of a book nor the vision of God are impossible. (1)

Another Mu'tazilite argument for the denial of God's visibility was based on the Qur'ānic verse, 6:103. They asserted that the meaning of the last part of the verse, "but He comprehends the eyes", has a universal meaning, i.e., applied to this world and the world to come; so the first part "the eyes comprehend Him not" must also be universal, since the two parts are connected together. And this implies the impossibility of God's vision in this world and in the hereafter. (2)

Al-Ash'arī refuted the Mu'tazilite understanding of this verse and argued that if the meaning of the verse is universal, it would necessarily follow that God could neither be comprehended by the sight of the eyes nor by the sight of the heart, since the

(1) Ibāna, p.16,5-13.

(2) Ibid., pp.18; 19,1-6.

meaning of basar includes the two senses. The Mu'tazilites could not accept this for their main article of doctrine was that God was visible to the intellect or the heart (qalb).⁽¹⁾ Having successfully disposed of the universalist interpretation for this verse, al-Ash'arī put forward his own more literal explanation. He suggested that the line of the verse, "the eyes do not comprehend Him", might possibly mean that eyes do not see God in this world or that the eyes of the infidels do not see Him. He quoted from other verses such as 75:22-23, which clearly affirms God's visibility, and states that since the Qur'ān does not contradict itself, "the eyes do not comprehend Him" can only be explained in the sense of the eyes of the infidels.⁽²⁾ Finally he distinguished between comprehension (idrāk) and vision (ru'ya) and said that the denial of the former does not necessarily mean the latter also is denied.⁽³⁾

Less easily refutable arguments against the possibility of the vision were mentioned in the Luma'. The authors of these arguments had attacked in rational form al-Ash'arī's basic assumption that the possibility of the vision did not imply tashbīh or the origination of God. They said, if God can be seen even though He is not visible like ordinary visible things, then He may be touched, smelled and tasted without having the qualities of the other things which are touched, smelled and tasted. Using the definition of these processes as stated by his colleagues, al-

(1) Ibāna, p.19,7-10.

(2) Ibid., pp.15-16; Luma', p.35.

(3) Ibāna, p.19,19-25.

Ash'arī pointed out the differences between vision and these other processes, and maintained that while the realization of the visual process does not entail origination of qualities in the object seen, the other processes do, because they imply a sort of physical contact between them and the subjects performing the actions sensed. Their assertion that God could be smelled, tasted and touched would thus imply qualities and accidents in His essence, while His visibility would not. (1)

Objection was also raised against the vision of God on the grounds that what is seen in the present world is either substance or accident which is limited, or adhering to something limited, so if God is to be seen, one of these attributes must be applied to Him, and they applied analogous conditions to the unseen world (ghā'ib). According to al-Ash'arī, this objection is not valid, because what is visible in the present world is not seen as a result of the qualities of substance or accidents, existence being the only condition necessary for an object to be seen, nor should this judgement be applied to the unseen world. (2)

3. The Essential and Active Attributes of God

Concerning this problem, al-Ash'arī seems to have dealt with almost the same points as al-Māturīdī. They both affirmed and defended the reality of the attributes, discussed their relation to God's essence as well as their eternity; but al-Ash'arī's general treatment of the subject differs from al-Māturīdī's in

(1) Luma', p.36,7-12.

(2) Ibid., p.36,14-19.

the emphasis given to particular points.

(a) The Reality of God's Attributes

In the course of his argument against the application of the term "body" to God, which has already been mentioned, al-Ash'arī clearly stated his method for applying names and attributes to God. He said, "It is not for us to assign names to God, nor is it for us to call Him by names which He has not applied to Himself, nor is it for us to call Him by names which the prophet has not applied to Him, nor is it for us to call Him by names concerning which there is no consensus among the Muslims".⁽¹⁾

In his Risāla II, he says that, "They (i.e. the ancestors) agreed that He is eternally existent, living, powerful, knowing, willing, speaking, hearing and seeing, on the basis of the fact that He has described and called Himself by these attributes in His book, or they were stated by His prophet, or they can be inferred from His actions".⁽²⁾ In another statement, and after quoting Qur'ānic verses to demonstrate God's knowledge and His power, al-Ash'arī said that, "the fact that these attributes are based on the argument of reason, language and consensus, does not entail their temporality".⁽³⁾ From these brief statements it might be gathered that, according to al-Ash'arī, God's attributes could be affirmed by revelation, or by the consensus of the Muslims which is based on rational and linguistic justifications.

(1) Luma', p.10,7-8.

(2) Risāla II, p.93,23-24.

(3) Ibid., p.95,18-19.

Al-Ash'arī's main interest, however, was not only to establish these names and attributes of God, but also to affirm the existence of substantive attributes. This is the central theme in his Luma', Risāla II and the Ibāna.

In his Luma', al-Ash'arī begins the section on the problem by introducing an argument to prove that God is knowing, powerful, and that He hears and sees. His argument in this respect is essentially based on the principle of the analogy of the present and the absent. Thus from the proposition that the works of wisdom in the present world indicate that he who performs them is knowing (a proposition deduced from the fact that it is not expected that birds, for instance, might be able to weave, or that an unskilled man might execute fine points of craftsmanship), al-Ash'arī proceeds to the sphere of God's acts and points out that the perfection and completeness in man's creation and the systematic organization in the cosmos prove that their maker could not have made them without knowing their mode and essence. If such a work could be produced by one who is not knowing, it might be assumed that all the perfect actions of the living beings proceed from them while they are ignorant of them, which is absurd.⁽¹⁾ By using the same principle of analogy, al-Ash'arī argued that God has power that He is living, and that He hears and sees. He said that a living being normally hears and sees when he is free of defects, so God, who is without defects, must be hearing and seeing.⁽²⁾ (This method of analogy has been

(1) Luma', p.10,10-19.

(2) Ibid., pp.10,20-21; 11,1-6.

generally accepted by the theologians with the exception of 'Abbād b. Sulaymān, who is said to have rejected it, because it admits the taking from this world and applying it to God).⁽¹⁾ Then al-Ash'arī proceeds to establish the eternity of these descriptions of God, an aspect which will be taken up and discussed later.

Following this, al-Ash'arī argues about the main problem upon which he was in disagreement with the Mu'tazilites, that is, whether God has substantive attributes such as knowledge, power, etc., or not. The Mu'tazilites did not deny God the adjectival descriptions such as knowing, powerful, which occur in the Qur'an, but they did not accept the eternal existence of substantive attributes, because they said the assertion of such attributes would entail the existence of something eternal together with God. Thus they tried to solve the problem by either denying these attributes altogether or by making no distinction between them and the essence of God and that by saying for example, that God is knowing by Himself or by knowledge which is Himself.⁽²⁾

Al-Ash'arī rejected the Mu'tazilite views and introduced many arguments to demonstrate the reality of God's attributes. His arguments in this respect are also mainly based on the principle of the analogy of the absent with the present. He said, "As the works of wisdom in the visible prove that their producer is knowing, they also prove that he has knowledge; similarly in the case of God they also prove that He is knowing and

(1) Maqālāt, p.499,10-11.

(2) Ibid., pp.483ff.

has knowledge. Every knowing being knows through knowledge that God is a knowing agent, therefore, he knows things through a knowledge."⁽¹⁾ Al-Ash'arī pointed out that the meaning of knowing is simply that one has knowledge, and it is inconceivable to assume knowing without the possession of knowledge and vice versa.⁽²⁾ This, however, does not mean that the act of knowing per se is something distinct and separable from the knower. To al-Ash'arī, this might be true in the case of the knower whose knowledge is created and temporal, but for God, the Eternal, His act of knowledge would be inseparable and eternal. Because separation (mughāyara) between two things means the possibility of each of them being separated from the other, and in the case of God this is inapplicable, since He and His attributes are eternal and it is inconceivable that any one of them would be separable from the other.⁽³⁾

The Mu'tazilites argued that the works of wisdom prove the knowledge of the knower, because the knower is liable to accidents such as death and ignorance, since God is not subject to such accidents His works of wisdom do not necessarily prove the existence of a knowledge which is distinct from His essence. Al-Ash'arī, in reply to the above assertion of the Mu'tazilites, says that if such an argument is valid then it might be assumed that the works of wisdom prove that the knowing knows because he is liable to accidents, which is incorrect. To al-Ash'arī, these

(1) Luma', p.12,4-10.

(2) Ibid., p.12,11-17.

(3) Ibid., pp.12,18-21; 13,1-6.

works of wisdom prove that the knower is knowing because he has knowledge, and that he has knowledge because he knows, they do not, however, prove that his knowledge is separate from the knower nor that it is an accident, because ghayriyya and hudūth have nothing to do with the definition of knowledge and he who knows. (1)

After these rational arguments, al-Ash'arī proceeds to substantiate his argument with citations from the Qur'ān. He quoted the Qur'ānic verses 4:166 and 35:11 which refer to God's knowledge, and the verse 41:15 which refers to His power, (2) and he implied that if the Mu'tazilites claimed to have depended on the Qur'ān for establishing that God is knowing and powerful, they also had to admit that He has knowledge and power according to these verses, otherwise it might be said that they in fact intended to deny God's attributes and all His names.

At the end of his section on the attributes, al-Ash'arī refuted the view that God is knowing by Himself (bi-nafsihī), which is attributed to an-Nazzām who is believed to have denied God's knowledge, power, life, hearing, seeing and the other essential attributes of God, while also asserting that He is continuously knowing, living, powerful, hearing and eternal by virtue of Himself (bi-nafsihī), but not by virtue of a knowledge, power, life, hearing, seeing and eternity, and so is his view with regard to the other essential attributes. (3) Al-Ash'arī

(1) Luma', p.13,7-17.

(2) Ibid., p.14,1-3.

(3) Maqālāt, p.486,10-13.

refuted this view by saying that if God were knowing by Himself, then He himself would be knowledge, but it is impossible for a knowledge to be knower or a knower to be knowledge or for God to be an attribute, so it must be said that God is knowing by a knowledge which cannot possibly be Himself.⁽¹⁾ Al-Ash'arī also refuted the view that God is knowing neither by Himself, nor by a quality (ma'nā) which could not be part of His essence. He said that if such a view were correct it might be assumed that "knowing" is not pertaining to Himself nor to a quality (ma'nā) which is not part of His essence and in this case we would affirm neither God's Himself nor a quality which is not part of His essence, but this is absurd and so must be the above assertion.⁽²⁾

In his Risāla II, al-Ash'arī commenced the section on the divine attributes with two lists of adjectival descriptions used to qualify God: "He has always been One, knowing, powerful, willing, speaking, hearing and seeing; the most beautiful names and the most sublime attributes are for Him."⁽³⁾ The second list differs only at the beginning from the first: "He has always been existing, living ..."⁽⁴⁾ Later on, al-Ash'arī gave another list of the substantive attributes corresponding to these descriptions; "God has a life, a knowledge, a power, a word, a will, a hearing and sight."⁽⁵⁾ In his extensive study of this problem,

- (1) Luma', p.14,7-12.
- (2) Ibid., p.14,13-17.
- (3) Risāla II, p.93,12-13.
- (4) Ibid., p.93,23-24.
- (5) Ibid., p.94,10-12.

Allard points out the difference between the two first lists, and remarked that the comparison of the last list with the two preceding lists shows that it is different again since we do not find in it the two substantive attributes corresponding to the descriptions "existing" (mawjūd) and "unique" (wāhid). Thus Allard concluded that, "Al-Ash'arī does not want to give exhaustive lists but only to enumerate the general categories of the language which are used to describe God."⁽¹⁾ Allard's conclusion is quite valid as far as the first list is concerned since al-Ash'arī listed some of God's qualifications at random as an introduction to his section. In the paragraph immediately following, he dealt with the question of God's uniqueness so he did not need to repeat it again in the second list. The absence of the substantive corresponding to the participle "existing" (mawjūd) from the third list can be explained as Frank said,⁽²⁾ from the fact that God's existence for al-Ash'arī is not grounded in an act of existence that is distinct from His essence. So al-Ash'arī needs not to mention existence as a substantive attribute.

As we can see from the third list mentioned above, al-Ash'arī was much concerned to establish that God really has substantive attributes corresponding to these adjectival descriptions. The full text of this reads as follows: "The ancients agreed in the assertion that God has a life by which He is eternally living, a knowledge by which He is eternally knowing,

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(1) Allard, Le Probleme des attributs divins, p.192.

(2) Frank, "The Kalām, an art of Contradiction-making or Theological Science?" p.301.

a power by which He is eternally powerful, word by which He is eternally speaking, a will by which He is eternally willing, hearing and sight by which He is eternally hearing and seeing."⁽¹⁾ They argued that if God did not have these substantive attributes, then He could not be described by the appropriate participles (i.e. if He has no knowledge he would not be called knowing). To illustrate this point, al-Ash'arī said, "for he who has no action would not be doer in reality, and he who bestows no benevolence would not be benevolent, and he who has no speech would not be speaking in reality, and he who has no will would not be in reality willing." So if one is called by one of these descriptions without really having the attributes which entail them, then he would not have these descriptions in reality and he would be described with them in a figurative way or in a false way (majāz aw kadhib). This is why the will to collapse when ascribed to the wall was explained away figuratively because the wall has no real will. He justified his argument on the grounds that "these descriptions are derived from the most distinctive names of these attributes, and they indicate the meaning of these attributes (awsāf mushtaqqā min akhass asma' hādhihi s-sifāt wa-dālla 'alayhā). If these substantive attributes were not realized in that one who has been depicted by these descriptions, then his depiction by them would be nicknaming or the application of false names. Since God, however, is qualified by these descriptions in reality, then those substantive attributes corresponding to them must be affirmed to Him, otherwise His description

(1) Risāla II, p.94,10-12.

by them would be in a figurative way as in the case of will ascribed to the wall.⁽¹⁾

It is clear from these arguments that al-Ash'arī used the principle of the analogy between God and the world in order to establish the reality of God's attributes. Thus to him the words of the human language retain their significance when they are used to speak of God because of this analogy between God and the world. These words, however, can be used in a figurative way for man and things, but God's names and His attributes must be taken in their proper meanings. In emphasizing this point, al-Ash'arī said, "The descriptions of man as being willing, dishonest, and unjust are derived from the substantive attributes of will, theft and injustice respectively, similarly a man's description as being black is derived from blackness. If a person does not have the meaning of these appellations in reality, yet he has been depicted by them, such descriptions would be mere nicknames; and in this case they would convey no real meanings; this is why the Arabs used to call their children by such nicknames without intending to insult them. In the case of God, however, the matter is rather different, for His names and attributes convey real meaning, thus if His descriptions as being living, powerful, knowing, speaking, willing, hearing and seeing are real and are neither figurative nor nicknames, then we must affirm to Him the substantive attributes from whose distinctive names these descriptions were derived."⁽²⁾

(1) Risāla II, pp.94,18-19; 95,1-9.

(2) Ibid., p.95,9-16.

After these rational and linguistic arguments for the establishment of the reality of God's attributes, al-Ash'arī quoted those Qur'ānic verses 4:166 and 2:255, which mention God's knowledge, and 51:58 which mentions His power, to substantiate his arguments. (1)

The section of the Ibāna devoted to the problem of the attributes is mainly intended to refute those who denied the attributes of God, therefore the main problem dealt with is the problem of the affirmation of the reality of them. Unlike the Luma' and the Risāla II, the section of the Ibāna begins by a number of quotations from the Qur'ān which prove that God has a power and a knowledge. (2) However, in spite of all these quotations which are in line with the generally traditional approach of the Ibāna, al-Ash'arī used rational arguments here against the Mu'tazilites and other groups who denied God's attributes. His arguments in this respect are almost a repetition in a briefer and sometimes considerably more lucid form of the above mentioned arguments of the Luma' and the Risāla II.

Al-Ash'arī attacked a group he called Jahmites (probably means the Mu'tazilites) for their view that God has no substantive attributes such as power, knowledge, life, etc., and said that their ultimate aim was to deny that God is knower, powerful, etc., but they were restrained by fear of declaring it openly. He also criticized the Mu'tazilites for holding a similar view and saying that God is spoken of as knowing, powerful, seeing and hearing,

(1) Risāla II, p.95,16-18.

(2) Ibāna, p.41,19-23.

without it being asserted that He has real knowledge, power, hearing and sight.⁽¹⁾ He levelled the same accusations at the Mu'tazilites in the Maqālāt with the only difference that in the Ibāna he attributed their views to the Zanādiqa, while in Maqālāt, he traced their views back to the philosophers.⁽²⁾ He also rejected the views attributed to Abū-l-Hudhayl, the Mu'tazilite, that God's knowledge is God.⁽³⁾ In his Maqālāt, al-Ash'arī recorded those views in detail and accused Abū-l-Hudhayl of borrowing them from Aristotle and of distorting their meaning.⁽⁴⁾ He pointed out that such a view would lead eventually to the negation of all the substantive attributes of God, because Abū-l-Hudhayl affirms their existence in God, only to add that they designate God Himself. According to al-Ash'arī, Abū-l-Hudhayl denied the existence of the divine knowledge though he thought he was affirming it, and this because he only affirmed the Creator's existence.⁽⁵⁾ So it seems that al-Ash'arī saw no difference between saying that God is knowing by Himself or that He is knowing by a knowledge which is Himself, for both views imply the denial of the essential attributes of God. By holding such a view, al-Ash'arī considered that Abū-l-Hudhayl, in fact, is making God into a knowledge but when he was asked to say, O knowledge of God forgive me and have mercy on me (on the assumption

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(1) Ibāna, pp.41,23-26; 42,1-4.

(2) Maqālāt, p.483,3-14.

(3) Ibāna, p.42,5-10.

(4) Maqālāt, pp.484-85,7-10.

(5) Ibid., p.486,1-2.

that knowledge is God and God is knowledge), he refused to say this and thus he fell into contradiction. To al-Ash'arī, however, affirming a "knower" without "knowledge" or "knowledge" without a "knower" is contradicting himself.⁽¹⁾ Here, al-Ash'arī is repeating those views which he had already expressed concerning the strong relation between the description and the attribute representing it.

Then he argued from the principle of ijmā' to establish the reality of the attributes; he said that he who supposes that God is one who discourses and speaks without the medium of word, eternal without the quality of eternity, and who commands and prohibits without the quality of commandment and prohibition is contradicting himself, and an apostate from the Muslim Community.⁽²⁾

He argued against the Mu'tazilites by pointing out that they cannot deny that God is willing by a will, for a willer cannot be willing except by a will, therefore the Mu'tazilites had no justification for denying that the knower knows only by a knowledge, and that God has a knowledge just as He has a will.⁽³⁾

The Mu'tazilites differentiated between God's speech and His knowledge on the grounds that the first is particular and the second is universal and they therefore affirmed the first and denied the second, and they concluded that God has speech but not knowledge. To al-Ash'arī, if such a distinction were valid then they had to deny God as a knower for His being a knower is

(1) Ibāna, p.42,6-8.

(2) Ibid., p.42,11-18.

(3) Ibid., p.42,19-22.

universal comparable to His being a speaker according to their own criteria. (1)

Then al-Ash'arī questioned the basis upon which the Mu'tazilites attributed descriptions such as "knowing" to God, and argued that if this basis is the Revelation, we find that the Qur'ān ascribed to God the attributes of knowledge and power so they would have to admit these substantive attributes of His, if the basis, however, were the signs of wisdom in the creation of the world, the same signs prove that God has attributes, because such works come into being only by the influence of the possessor of knowledge, just as they appear only by the influence of a knower, likewise they come into being by the influence of the possessor of power, just as they appear only by the influence of a wielder of power. (2)

Al-Ash'arī uses these two proofs (i.e. the Qur'ān and the signs in the creation of the world) to establish the reality of God's attributes. Reference has already been made to his numerous quotations from the Qur'ān in support of his views. He also argued that the denial of God's knowledge amounts to the discredit of the Qur'ān, because the Qur'ān clearly states the reality of His attributes. Moreover, if the verse, 6:59, "He knows everything and not a leaf falls but He knows it" made it true that He is "knowing" and that He knows all about all created things, there is no reason for denying that the above mentioned verses make it also necessarily true that God has

(1) Ibāna, pp.42,23-26; 43,1-7.

(2) Ibid., p.43,14-21.

knowledge of created things.⁽¹⁾

As for the second proof, al-Ash'arī repeated almost the same argument mentioned in the Luma', he said that as acts of wisdom are possible only on the part of a powerful knower who is living, likewise the same acts are possible only on the part of a possessor of knowledge, power and life; and so if their appearance apart from a possessor of knowledge is possible, then it would also be possible for them to come from one who is neither knowing nor powerful nor living, which is absurd.⁽²⁾ The basic principle underlying this argument is the analogy between God and man.

Al-Ash'arī also confirmed the point which he had discussed at length in his Risāla II, that the language used to describe God is non-metaphorical (haqīqa) and contains the full meaning understood from its normal usage. He stated that, "We find that the terminations "knower" is derived from knowledge, "powerful" is from power, "living one" is from life, "hearing one" and "seeing one" are from hearing and sight respectively. As for God's names, they would either simply be derived from such predicates, or they would be used to indicate His true nature or they would be as nicknames, this last alternative is inappropriate to God since He cannot be given a name which does not indicate His nature and is not derived from a predicate describing Him. For instance, His names knower and powerful are not proper names such as Zaid and 'Amr, and they are either derived from the

(1) Ibāna, p.44,18-24.

(2) Ibid., p.45,13-18.

predicates "knowledge" and "power" and in this case we have to affirm these of His attributes, or they are used to indicate His nature and in this case their meanings would not be different from the meaning understood from the normal usage of the language. Since the meaning of "knower" is he who has knowledge, then every knower (including God) must be a possessor of knowledge; or as the term "existent" means the assertion of an existence, an existence must also be affirmed to God since He is existent. (1)

Apart from these arguments which are to be found in al-Ash'arī's other works, he introduced new arguments in his Ibāna, which tend to be essentially polemic. He said that God's knowledge is mentioned in the Qur'ān, so to deny it implies the denial of all God's names that are mentioned in the Qur'ān. (2) Another argument of the same kind is that God taught His prophet all matters related to Shari'a, but God could not have taught the prophet that of which God does not possess knowledge, therefore God knows everything connected with the Shari'a. Al-Ash'arī continued: since God's cursing of the infidels has special significance different from that of the prophet's curse against them, then there should be no justification for denying that in the example of knowledge, God has knowledge different from that of the prophet. Moreover, when we assert that He is wrathful towards the infidels, the existence of wrath is undoubtedly asserted; and likewise since we assert that He is pleased with the faithful, the existence of pleasure is undoubtedly asserted;

(1) Ibāna, p.44,8-17.

(2) Ibid., p.43,22-24.

likewise, since we assert that He is living, hearing, seeing the existence of life, hearing and sight is undoubtedly established. (1)

The theme underlying all these arguments is the principle of the analogy between God and man, so as the prophet has knowledge God also has knowledge. The principle of analogy is more evident in those arguments of al-Ash'arī which emphasize God's transcendence. Al-Ash'arī argued that God has knowledge of the distinction between His friends and His enemies, otherwise He would be less in rank than His creatures who know such a distinction and who would then be above Him, which is impossible. (2) Moreover, since the creature who has knowledge is more worthy of exalted dignity than he who does not have knowledge, so to deny God knowledge is in fact an admittance that the creatures are higher in rank than their creator, which is also impossible. (3) Furthermore, lack of knowledge implies ignorance and defects in the present world, but God is free from all defects, so knowledge must be attributed to Him. (4)

As for the point as to whether these attributes are identical with or separate from God's essence, al-Ash'arī seems to have adopted the same type of solution as that introduced by men like Ibn-Kullāb (5) and Hishām b. al-Hakam (6), and which was

(1) Ibāna, pp.43,25-26; 44,1-7.

(2) Ibid., pp.44,25-26; 45,1-4.

(3) Ibid., p.45,4-6.

(4) Ibid., p.45,7-12.

(5) Maqālāt, p.169,12-13.

(6) Ibid., pp.37-38; 494.

also adopted by al-Maturīdī. In his Luma', he refuted the suggestion that God's attributes are identical with His essence as well as the suggestion that His essence is separate from His attributes. In his Risāla II, he openly advocated these views and stated that God's attributes are neither separate from His essence nor identical with it. They are inseparable from Him because the mughāyara between two things means the possibility of each of them being separated from the other in one aspect or another; but God's attributes cannot possibly be separated from Him, for such separation leads eventually to His being temporal and finally to the denial of His divinity. He would be like body, accident and substance and these are susceptible to change. However, the supposition that these attributes are inseparable from God's essence does not mean that they are identical with Himself (nafsihī), because it is impossible for Him to be a life, knowledge or power, otherwise He could not possibly produce actions, because actions proceed from one who is living, powerful, knowing and not from life, knowledge and power. (1)

(b) The Attributes and Transcendence

From what has been said above, it becomes clear that al-Ash'arī affirmed and defended the reality of God's attributes in all his works. His arguments in this respect are mainly based on the principle of the analogy between man and God. Speaking about God in such terms might possibly lead to the suggestion of similarity between God and man. Al-Ash'arī shows no concern for

(1) Risāla II, pp.95-96.

such a problem neither in his Luma' nor in his Ibāna; it is true that in a passage in the Luma', al-Ash'arī affirmed the transcendence of God and refuted any suggestion of similarities between Him and His creation, but his discussion of the point here is not directly connected with the affirmation of names and attributes to God.⁽¹⁾ However, al-Ash'arī shows an awareness of the problem and discussed it fully in the Risāla II, where he stated that the qualification of God by such and such attributes and names, which are common to Him and to man, does not imply any similarity between them. The absence of discussions of the question of similarity from the Ibāna and the Luma' and its occurrence in the Risāla II could possibly be explained from the fact that the first two works were mainly addressed to the Mu'tazilites among whom the question did not arise, so al-Ash'arī finds no need to deal with it, while the Risāla II is meant to meet not only the Mu'tazilite challenge, but also that of other groups such as the Jahmites and the Bātinites for instance, to whom the question of similarity was of great importance.

In his Risāla II, al-Ash'arī clearly stated that "The early Muslims agreed to assert that God does not look like anything in this world."⁽²⁾ To demonstrate this commonly accepted view, al-Ash'arī used the following argument: If we suppose that the proposition "God is like the world" is true then we have to choose between two propositions which are both inconceivable: either God is like the world and therefore a created being, or the

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(1) Luma', p.7. Supra, p.254.

(2) Risāla II, p.93,16.

world is like God and therefore eternal like Him.⁽¹⁾ Thus, to al-Ash'arī, the non-similarity between God and the world is firmly established and would not be impaired by the affirmation of names and attributes commonly used for human beings. To demonstrate the validity of this statement, al-Ash'arī used two stages: (i) He starts by demonstrating that the affirmation of these names and attributes to God does not lead to the affirmation of similarity between Him and His creatures. (ii) Then he establishes that the divine attributes are not like human attributes.

To prove the first stage of his demonstration, al-Ash'arī gave a brief statement to the effect that if two things are said to be similar then their similarity cannot be asserted on the basis of something which is not a part of either, nor on the basis of the coincidence of names, but it must be asserted on the basis of something belonging to their essence or nature (anfus).⁽²⁾ So al-Ash'arī is making a distinction between essence or nature of entities and the names and attributes with which we designate them, and if beings or entities are different in essence, the ascription to them of similar names and attributes does not necessarily lead to the conclusion that they are similar. Since God and the world are different in their essences or their souls, we can attribute similar qualities to them without being accused of tashbīh.⁽³⁾ To clarify this point further, al-Ash'arī pointed

(1) Risāla II, p.93,18-20.

(2) Ibid., pp.93,25; 94,1.

(3) Ibid., p.94,1-4.

to the fact that both God and man have been described as existing, such a description does not, however, entail resemblance between them though they both share the reality of existence. If such an agreement necessitates similarity, then blackness and whiteness would be similar for they are both existing, but since this is false, it is established that ascription of similar names such as living, knowing and powerful to man and God does not entail similarity between them, though they both possess the reality of these descriptions. (1)

To prove the second point, al-Ash'arī pointed to the major difference between God's attributes and those of man: that God's attributes are eternal while man's are temporal. God possesses these attributes from eternity while man possesses them when God creates him along with these attributes. Al-Ash'arī argued that if God's attributes were originated, then God would be qualified by their opposites (did) before their coming into being, and would be no longer a Divine being, but would be like temporal things liable to defects and praiseworthy and blameworthy attributes, which is impossible for God who must be eternally qualified by the attributes of perfection. (2)

(c) The Eternity of God's Attributes

Like al-Māturīdī, al-Ash'arī accepted the Mu'tazilites' distinction between the essential and the active attributes of God. Following the Mu'tazilites also, he affirmed the eternity

(1) Risāla II, p.94,4-9.

(2) Ibid., p.94,12-14.

of the essential attributes and considered the active ones to be temporal. Yet he disagreed with them on the classification of God's will and speech, and whether they are eternal or temporal.

To establish a proof for the eternity of God's names and His attributes, al-Ash'arī used the principle of the negation of the contradiction: God's attributes of essence, such as knowledge, power, have contradictory attributes such as ignorance and impotence correlated to them, and the negation of one of them necessarily entails the affirmation of its opposite. The negation of knowledge, for instance, entails the affirmation of its opposite such as ignorance or doubt, so if God were not eternally knowing, He would be eternally qualified by one of these opposites, and in this case He would never be knowing (for what is eternal is unchangeable), but if He were eternally ignorant He would not have been able to produce works of wisdom.⁽¹⁾ The same method can be used to prove the eternity of the other divine attributes such as God's power and His ability to hear and to see.⁽²⁾

The Mu'tazilites hold that God's will and His speech are temporal, and are closely linked with His actions, "Most of the Mu'tazilites asserted that God's speech is His action, God has speech that He done it (fa'al) and it is impossible for God to have not ceased to be speaking."⁽³⁾ All the Mu'tazilites affirm that the description of God as "willing" belongs to the class of the attributes of acts.⁽⁴⁾

(1) Luma', p.11,8-17.

(2) Ibid., pp.11,18-21; 12,1-2.

(3) Maqālāt, p.516.

(4) Ibid., p.509.

In his Luma', al-Ash'arī devoted a special section to the treatment of these two attributes. According to Allard, al-Ash'arī was prompted to juxtapose these two questions by the Qur'ānic text 16:40, which he quoted at the beginning of the section, and which refers to the two divine attributes of "will" and "speech". (1) But, Frank's explanation of al-Ash'arī's underlying intention seems to be more detailed. "Al-Ash'arī" Frank says, "has chosen this particular text because it conjoins the two attributes of God's word and will in such a way as to imply a number of notions upon which he would insist, viz., that God's will and His word are the determinant source of the being of all creatures; that He creates by His word what He wills, that His word is the articulate creative ground through which God orders and causes the being of all beings." (2) Thus it seems that al-Ash'arī devoted this special section of his Luma' to the discussion of the divine attributes of will and speech in order better to refute the Mu'tazilite views concerning them, and because of their importance in his doctrine of creation.

In this section, al-Ash'arī, in countering the Mu'tazilite ideas, introduced arguments based on revelation and reason to establish the eternity of God's will and His speech, and to refute the idea that they could be related to His actions. He quoted the Qur'ānic verse: "The only words We say to a thing, when We will it, is that We say to it "Be" and "it is", (3) and argued

(1) Allard, Le problème des attributs divins, p.234.

(2) Frank, "The Kalām an art of Contradiction-making or Theological Science?", p.306.

(3) Qur'an, 16:40.

that if God's word or the Qur'ān were created, His utterance "Be" would also be created, and it would require another creative utterance. However, this could not go on ad infinitum, so God's word "Be" must be eternal and uncreated, and the same thing must apply to His will.⁽¹⁾ Thus, for al-Ash'arī, God's will and His creative word which carries the will into effect cannot be temporal.

The Mu'tazilites tried to explain God's utterance "Be" and the concept of His will as meaning only His actual creation of things. They hold that the phrase "We say to it "Be" and it is", means that "We create it and it is" without God giving utterance to anything; again, to say that God willed a thing simply means that "He has done it". They explained the Qur'ānic verse, 18:77, which ascribes "will to collapse" to a wall in a metaphorical sense meaning "it is about to collapse" without actually having will. They explained the verse 16:40, which ascribes will to God in the same way and concluded that to say that God wills a thing means that "He does it" and nothing else.⁽²⁾

Al-Ash'arī refuted this Mu'tazilite view by pointing out that such a method of explanation of God's will and His utterance "Be" would eventually lead to the denial not only of these two essential qualities of God but also to the denial of His knowledge.⁽³⁾ To al-Ash'arī, the Mu'tazilites' correlation of the verses 16:40 and 18:77 was wrong, because the second verse refers to an inert

(1) Luma', p.15,3-11.

(2) Ibid., pp.15,12-19; 16,1-9.

(3) Luma', p.15,14-17.

thing (wall) which truly cannot will as long as it retains its inertness, whereas the first verse refers to God for whom it is not impossible to will something or to speak.⁽¹⁾ Moreover, if God's willing of a thing means only that "He does it", and that His willing the movement of a thing means that He moves it, then it might be assumed that an inert object wills its movement in the sense that it is moving; and in this case God would be equal to inert things and would have no merit over that person or object whose act takes place without him willing it.⁽²⁾

Al-Ash'arī then introduced two rational arguments to demonstrate the eternity of God's speech and His will. The first argument is based on the principle of the negation of contradictions: speech as an essential attribute has an opposite that is silence or various infirmities of speech (i.e. defects) and its negation necessarily entails the affirmation of its opposite; so "had God ever been not speaking, He would eternally be characterized by one of the opposites of speech such as silence or some ailments; and if the opposite of the speech is eternal, it would have been impossible for it to cease to exist, and for the creator to speak, and in this case the creator would have had to be not-speaking, not-commanding and prohibiting in no way whatsoever, which is impossible for God."⁽³⁾ To prove the proposition that one who is not-speaking would be characterized by the contrary of speech, al-Ash'arī made use of the principle of the analogy between the

(1) Luma', p.16,9-16.

(2) Ibid., pp.16,17-18; 17,1-3.

(3) Ibid., p.17,6-13.

absent and the present worlds, and he said, "Among us one who is living is always such either speaking or non-speaking, and there is sound proof that the concealed world contains any one who is living and at the same time devoid both of speech and of its contraries, just as there is no sound proof that any one lives who is devoid both of knowledge and of its contraries such as that he could be described as neither knowing nor unknowing."⁽¹⁾ The same method of argument is used to establish the eternity of God's will.

The Mu'tazilites objected to al-Ash'arī's proposition that the negation of speech and will entails the affirmation of their opposites; they argued that if the negation of the eternity of God's speech and His will entails the ascribing to Him of their contraries, then it must be admitted that if He is eternally non-acting He must be characterized by the contrary of acting, and then he must be eternally non-acting or omitting to act (tārik),⁽²⁾ (according to this argument al-Ash'arī must admit that God is eternally acting otherwise He would be qualified by the contrary of acting.)

Al-Ash'arī replied to these assertions by distinguishing between the essential attributes such as power and speech and the active attributes such as creating, acting etc. The former have contrary attributes correlated to them and if God is not described by them He would be described by their opposites; the latter, however, have no contraries, and if they were not ascribed to God

(1) Luma', p.17,14-19.

(2) Ibid., p.19,1-4.

it does not mean that He is described by their contraries. So if God is not eternally acting it does not mean that He is powerless because 'ajz is not the contrary of acting but of power. God's speech and His will are not active attributes as the Mu'tazilites assumed but essential attributes, so the negation of them necessitates the affirmation of their contradictories.⁽¹⁾ To support this argument al-Ash'arī made use of the principle of the analogy between the concealed and the visible; he said that "If one who is living be not-speaking and not-willing, he must be qualified by some contrary of willing and speech; but if he be not-acting, it is not necessary to affirm a contrary quality which is powerless or neglecting to act, since the man's powerlessness is not the contrary of his acting. So the denial that God has been ever-acting does not necessitate the affirmation of a quality of neglecting to act or a quality of powerlessness, in the same way that the denial of His having been ever speaking and willing necessitates the affirmation of their contraries."⁽²⁾

On the basis of the distinction between the essential and active attributes, al-Ash'arī refuted the Mu'tazilites' assertion that the denial of acts such as movement, generosity and justice necessitates the affirmation of their contradictories, such as rest, miserliness and injustice respectively. He pointed out that the notions of movement and rest are inappropriate to God so they should not be considered.⁽³⁾ Miserliness is not the

(1) Luma', p.19,4-11.

(2) Ibid., p.20,4-8.

(3) Ibid., p.20,9-12.

opposite of generosity, because generosity means something which the generous are free to exercise or not, while miserliness is a refutation of a claim which ought to be acknowledged, so they are not opposites.⁽¹⁾ The denial of eternal justice does not necessitate the affirmation of powerlessness which is not opposite of justice, nor does it necessitate the affirmation of injustice (jawr), because injustice is not the opposite of justice. To demonstrate this proposition, al-Ash'arī indirectly made use of al-Jubbā'ī's principle of double negation concerning the point whether it should be said that God is eternally just; al-Jubbā'ī said that, "God is eternally not-just at the same time He is not unjust (ghayr 'ādil wa-lā-jā'ir)".⁽²⁾ In accordance with such a concept, al-Ash'arī held that the denial of justice does not necessitate the affirmation of injustice, because a man may be not-just, when no justice proceeds from him, and yet not be unjust. So the denial of justice does not necessitate a contrary which is injustice with the same necessity that is present in the case of speech and will. The opposites, justice and injustice, are of the same class and the relation between them is that of contraries and not of contradictories. So we may deny the existence of both terms, or we may deny one of them but we do not thereby necessarily affirm the other one.⁽³⁾

The Mu'tazilites did not agree with al-Ash'arī's definition

(1) Luma', p.20,13-15.

(2) Maqālāt, pp.179, 187. cf. Allard, Le problème des attributs divins, pp.237-8.

(3) Luma', pp.20,16-20; 21,1-8. cf. Allard, op.cit., p.238.

of the contradictories: that the negation of one of them necessitated the affirmation of the other. They said that this definition is inapplicable in the case of speech where it is found that one who has the power to speak may be devoid both of speech and its contraries while he has the power to speak.⁽¹⁾

Al-Ash'arī did not accept such a view and responded by saying that "One who has the power to speak, at the very moment he has this power is speaking (mutakallim) without doubt."⁽²⁾ As Allard noticed, al-Ash'arī's answer to this objection is very interesting, since it laid the foundations of the later doctrine of the kalām an-nafsi. According to Allard, the active participle mutakallim is thus taken here in a more extensive sense than its usual meaning, it designates not a passing action, but a permanent ability. Allard went on to say that by using the Aristotelian distinction between act and power, we could say that, for al-Ash'arī, God is mutakallim not only when He is really speaking, but also when His word is potential as well.⁽³⁾ Though al-Ash'arī might have thought on lines similar to these lines suggested by Allard, this particular opinion concerning the kalām an-nafsi, which al-Ash'arī's later followers attributed to him, does not seem to be his.⁽⁴⁾

Al-Ash'arī's second rational argument for the eternity of God's speech and His will is based on the principle of the reduction to the absurd which proceeds from a demonstration of the

(1) Luma', p.21,19-20.

(2) Ibid., p.21,20-21.

(3) Allard, op.cit., p.239.

(4) See for instance Iqdām, p.320.

falsity of all the alternatives which suggest the temporality of God's speech thus proving its eternity. According to al-Ash'arī, God's speech must either be eternal or temporal, the second alternative allows for three suggestions: (i) that God produces it in Himself, (ii) or it is self-subsistent, (iii) or He produces it in another substrate. All these three alternatives are impossible: God cannot produce it (i.e. speech) in Himself, because He is not a substrate or a recipient of temporal things or accidents (this is contrary to the Karrāmites view which allows God to be a substrate of temporal things). Al-Ash'arī refuted this view because, to him, the proof of the origination of substance and body is that they take on temporal accidents, so if God were to be a substrate of originated things, He would Himself be originated which is inadmissible; also He cannot produce self-subsistent speech because speech is an attribute, and an attribute cannot subsist in itself. As for the third assertion held by the Mu'tazilites, that God produces His speech in another object, al-Ash'arī introduced the following rational arguments: If He (God) were to produce it (speech) in another body, the body in which the speech subsisted would necessarily acquire some of the most distinctive qualities of the speech, a name for itself and a name for the whole to which the substrate of the speech belongs. So if the most distinctive quality of the speech were its being "speech" that body would have to be speaking (mutakallim); and if its most distinctive quality were its being "command", that body would have to be "commanding" ... so since another cannot speak by God's speech ..., God cannot produce speech in another in such a way that He himself would be speaking thereby. (1)

(1) Luma', p.22,5-17.

In spite of the difficulty of al-Ash'arī's argument it seems that he is trying on the one hand to emphasize the close connection between the speaker (mutakallim), and the speech (kalam); to him it is only he from whom speech proceeds who can be called speaker. And on the other hand he pointed out that the description mutakallim is derived from the substantive attribute kalam. (1)

The Mu'tazilites objected to al-Ash'arī's view that if God created speech in another body this body could be characterized as speaking God's speech rather than that it was purely the channel for the speech of God. They argued that when God produces an act in another subject such as sending down a favour, a bounty, a benefit or "daily bread", the other subject would not be called mun'im or mutafaddil, but God alone would be the doer, generous, bountiful and sustaining. Similarly in the case of God's speech, He would be speaking by the speech which He creates in another subject. (2)

Al-Ash'arī replied by pointing out the fault in the Mu'tazilites' comparison of God's speech to those of His actions, since God's speech is one of His essential attributes such as His knowledge and His power, and the Mu'tazilites would certainly not ever suggest that God's power and knowledge could ever be created in another subject. (3) Moreover, al-Ash'arī asserted that when God sends down His favour to another body, the body would be character-

(1) Allard, op.cit., pp.240-42.

(2) Luma', pp.22,18-19; 23,1.

(3) Ibid., 1-3,8-18.

ized with the most distinctive qualities of these actions, and if these qualities could be essential qualities, i.e., power and knowledge, the other subject would be "knowing" and "powerful". Similarly, when God creates speech in another subject, that other subject would be qualified by the most distinctive qualities of the speech that is "speaking".⁽¹⁾

In his Ibāna, al-Ash'arī devoted a special section to affirm the uncreatedness of the Qur'ān. In his extensive study of this section, W.M. Watt discussed the closeness of al-Ash'arī's thought to that of the Hanbalites and the Traditionalists.⁽²⁾ Al-Ash'arī's main interest was to establish the eternity of the Qur'ān and to disprove the view that it is created. To demonstrate this, he made use of both traditional and rational arguments. As we will see later his arguments, on the whole, are partly a repetition, yet in a refined form of some of the Hanbalites' and Traditionalists' arguments, and partly a brief version of some of the arguments he used in his Luma' and Risāla II.

As for the traditionalists arguments which he used, al-Ash'arī following Ibn-Hanbal,⁽³⁾ emphasized the distinction between God's creation and His command referred to in the Qur'ān, 7:54; and in accordance with this verse he identified God's command with His word (speech), and he argued that according to the clear meaning of the verse, God's command is distinct from the general creation which implies its uncreatedness. His

(1) Luma' p.23,3-8.

(2) Watt, "Early Discussions about the Qur'ān" M.W. vol.40 (1950) pp.99ff.

(3) Ibn-Hanbal, Radd, p.317.

opponents maintained that the distinction in this verse did not imply the exclusion of the command from the general creation. They quoted the Qur'ānic verse, 2:98, which referred to the angels in general and mentioned at the same time Gabriel and Michael in particular, and no-one is led to understand that these two are therefore different from the rest of the angels; so if this verse and the verse dealing with God's command are essentially the same, then the command would be a part of the creation, just as Michael and Gabriel are angels. Al-Ash'arī replied to the Mu'tazilite objection by saying that, "We give particular meaning to the Qur'ān by reason of ijmā' and proof."⁽¹⁾ In explanation of this point, he emphasized that the nature of the two verses are different, but he did not make that difference quite clear as Ibn-Hanbal did. Also following Ibn-Hanbal, al-Ash'arī explained the Qur'ānic verse, "The command is God's first and last" as meaning that His command is eternal and everlasting.⁽²⁾ This argument of al-Ash'arī is absent from the Luma', but there is a reference to it in Risāla II, and this indicates the polemic nature of these two works compared to the Luma'.

Another proof of al-Ash'arī for the uncreatedness of the Qur'ān is the Qur'ānic verse 16:40, which describes God as creating something by saying to it "Be" and it is.⁽³⁾ Reference has already been made to this argument in the Luma'⁽⁴⁾; the Ibāna

(1) Ibāna, pp.20-21.

(2) Ibid., p.21. Ibn-Hanbal, Radd,p.317.

(3) Ibāna, p.21.

(4) See Supra, pp. 291-93.

repeats the main points almost exactly. The origin of the argument, however, is essentially Hanbalite, and already Yūsuf b. Yahya al-Buwaitī (d.232) used it in his disputation before the court of the mihna.⁽¹⁾

Al-Ash'arī also introduced another argument which had previously been used by the traditionalist ad-Dārimī (d.282). This argument is based on the Qur'ānic verse 18:109, which states that God's word never ceases. Al-Ash'arī argued that he whose speech ceases becomes silent, which is impossible for God.⁽²⁾

Besides these arguments based on Qur'ānic verses, al-Ash'arī quoted several traditions which assert the uncreatedness of the Qur'ān, he also gave a list of some traditionalist theologians such as: Ibn-Hanbal, Wakī', Ibn-al-Mubārak and Hammād b. Sulaymān, who were of the same opinion.⁽³⁾ This section is a prototype of the Hanbalite way of thinking, and its contents can easily be traced in the traditionalist works such as that of ad-Dārimī.

His rational arguments are mainly aimed at the refutation of the Mu'tazilite view that God's speech is created and that His speech to Moses was created in a bush. Al-Ash'arī pointed to the strong relationship which exists between the speech and the speaker, he made it clear that one cannot speak with speech created in another subject. We have already seen al-Ash'arī's explanation of this point in his Luma'.⁽⁴⁾ In the Ibāna, however,

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(1) Patton, Ahmed Ibn-Hanbal and the Mihna, pp.119-20.

(2) Ibāna, p.22. Ad-Dārimī, Radd, p.73.

(3) Ibāna, pp.28-31.

(4) See Supra, pp. 297-99.

he did not use the sophisticated arguments of the Luma', but he utilized an argument already used by Muhammad b. Aslam,⁽¹⁾ that if the word of God were created in a bush, then it would be the "bush", or creating thing which said to Moses "I am God" and that, of course, is blasphemy.⁽²⁾ He refers to two accounts in which a poisoned joint of meat said to the prophet, "eat me not, for I am poisoned", and a wolf is said to have spoken so eloquently to an unbeliever that he became a Muslim. Al-Ash'arī argued that in both these two cases, the words spoken are created by God, yet they are not His words nor His speech; so what He creates He does not speak. On the assumption that the speech here is created, there is no essential difference between these cases and that of the bush of Moses and, therefore, on the same assumption there is no reason to assert that the speech from the "bush" is God's speech and not that of the bush. We know, however, that the speech is not the speech of the bush, and consequently the assumption that it is created is to be rejected.⁽³⁾

Opponents of al-Ash'arī tried to differentiate between the two cases of the speaking wolf and the speaking joint of meat and the case of the "bush" by pointing out that the bush is inanimate which could not be speaking. Al-Ash'arī refuted this by saying that if it is impossible for an inanimate thing to be a speaker, then it is also impossible for it to be a recipient

(1) Patton, op.cit., pp.36-41.

(2) Ibāna, p.22.

(3) Ibid., pp.25-6. cf. Watt, "Early Discussions about the Qur'an," p.100.

of speech.⁽¹⁾ Furthermore, the Mu'tazilites' assertion that it is impossible for an inanimate thing to be a speaker is untenable, since there is a Qur'ānic verse which ascribed this quality of speaking to the heavens and the earth, Q.41:11.⁽²⁾

Another argument of al-Ash'arī for the eternity of God's speech is that based on a comparison between God's will and His speech, both of which he considered eternal attributes which cannot be created in another subject. He said, "Just as God cannot create His will in a creature so He cannot create His words in a created thing. If God were to create His will in a created thing, then it would be the created thing which was willing, and that is impossible. Likewise it is impossible for God to create His word in a creature, for then it would be the creature who was speaking, and the speech of God would have become the speech of the created thing."⁽³⁾

In all these arguments, al-Ash'arī is emphasizing the point that speech is the expression of the personality of an intelligent being, therefore it has a strong connection with its speaker.⁽⁴⁾ In accordance with this conception of speech, al-Ash'arī used the Qur'ānic verse, 42:51, which emphasizes a distinction between the prophet to whom God speaks directly through revelation, and the ordinary man to whom God's words are transmitted by the prophet; he argued that if God's word was created, this distinction

(1) Ibāna, p.26. cf. Watt, op.cit., p.100.

(2) Ibāna, p.26. cf. Watt, op.cit., pp.100-101.

(3) Ibāna, pp.22-23.

(4) Watt, op.cit., p.101.

would disappear, and thus the prophet Moses would be of lower rank than most ordinary men, since this allegedly created word comes to him from a bush, while for the ordinary men it comes from the prophet. (1)

Al-Ash'arī introduced another argument based on the principle of the negation of the contradictory which he widely used in the Luma', he argued that if God's speech were created, then God would not be "speaking" or "saying" and in this case He would be eternally characterized by the opposite of speech such as silence and deficiency which is inadmissible. (2) In this argument al-Ash'arī drew a comparison between God's speech and His knowledge which reminds us of Ibn-Hanbal's notion that the Qur'ān is equal or inseparable from the knowledge of God, so if this knowledge is uncreated, then the Qur'ān also must be uncreated. (3)

He also introduced arguments based on an assumed connection between the name and the reality it designates; and since the names of God are in the Qur'ān and are uncreated, the Qur'ān itself cannot be created. Al-Ash'arī said, "Another proof is God's statement, 'Say; He is God alone, God the eternal; He begetteth not, and He is not Begotten, and there is none like unto Him", Q.112:1-4, then how can the Qur'ān be created, when God's name is in the Qur'ān. This confirms that God's names are created, and if His names are created, His oneness would be

(1) Ibāna, pp.24-25.

(2) Ibid., p.22.

(3) Patton, op.cit., p.90.

created and likewise His knowledge and power."⁽¹⁾ In another argument he said, "That which proves that the opinion of the Jahmites is wrong and that the Qur'ān is God's word and is uncreated, is that God's names are part of the Qur'ān, and God said, "Praise the name of thy Lord, the most high, who has created and balanced" Q.87:1-2, and the statement, "the name ..." cannot be created, just as "the Majesty of our Lord" cannot be created; for God has said in 72:3 "May the Majesty of our Lord be exalted", and just as His Majesty cannot be created, so His word cannot be created."⁽²⁾ Commenting on the Qur'ānic verse, 38:78, al-Ash'arī declared that, "If God's speech is created and all creatures were to vanish, it has to be admitted that if God made all things vanish, the curse on Satan would disappear, and Satan would not be cursed."⁽³⁾

In spite of the naivety of these arguments,⁽⁴⁾ they are, however, as Allard noticed, in accordance with al-Ash'arī's doctrine of the attributes, since they underline the strong relationship between the name and the reality it designates. In the first two texts the nouns which designate God and His attributes should be considered eternal as is God and all His attributes. In the last text, the connection between the formulation of God's curse against Satan, and the curse itself is close.⁽⁵⁾ These arguments, however,

(1) Ibāna, p.24.

(2) Ibid., p.24.

(3) Ibid., p.26.

(4) Watt, "Early Discussion about the Qur'ān," p.101.

(5) Allard, Le problème des attributs divins, pp.282-3.

are not original, they had already been used by Ibn-Hanbal in his defence of the uncreatedness of the Qur'ān.⁽¹⁾

Another argument of al-Ash'arī is based on the comparison of God's eternal will, in respect of moral distinction, with His word. He said that God eternally wills that His friends and His enemies be separated, if His will in this respect were not eternal, He would be imperfect, but there is no fundamental difference between His word and His will.⁽²⁾

At the end of this section, al-Ash'arī dealt briefly with two points, the first of which is concerned with the refutation of the view of those who reserved judgement on the question of the createdness or uncreatedness of the Qur'ān, because there is no statement supporting either point of view in the Qur'ān or the Traditions of the prophet, nor is there consensus on this matter among the Muslim community.⁽³⁾ Al-Ash'arī rejected such a view and pointed out that there is likewise nothing about suspending judgement in the Qur'ān or the Traditions or consensus of the community; on the contrary, it is possible to derive proofs from the Qur'ān that the word of God is not created.⁽⁴⁾

The other point with which al-Ash'arī dealt is that concerning whether or not the utterance (lafz) of the Qur'ān is created or uncreated. Using quotations from the Qur'ān, al-Ash'arī affirmed that the Qur'ān is written on the preserved tablet (in heaven) and that it can be remembered, recited and heard,⁽⁵⁾ but he

(1) Patton, op.cit., p.92.

(2) Ibāna, p.27.

(3) Ibid., p.31.

(4) Ibid., pp.31-32.

(5) Ibid., p.32.

refused to admit that it can be uttered. "Because", al-Ash'arī said, "one may not say that the Qur'ān is an uttered word, for when an Arab says lafaztu al-luqma min famī (I have uttered the morsel from my mouth) his meaning is "I have cast it forth" and the word of God cannot be said to be cast forth (in this way) but only to be read, recited, written and memorized.⁽¹⁾ So, to al-Ash'arī, the word "uttered" is not an appropriate word to be used for the Qur'ān, and considered that those who used this term only wanted to assert the createdness of the Qur'ān, but they dared not openly profess such a view.⁽²⁾ As W.M. Watt rightly remarked, this point of al-Ash'arī is very weak, for many who hold firmly that the Qur'ān was uncreated were ready to say that man "uttered" it, and that his utterance of it is created.⁽³⁾ Reference has already been made to the weakness of al-Ash'arī's linguistic argument upon which he depends here.⁽⁴⁾

Thus, al-Ash'arī even went beyond Ibn-Hanbal in attempting to deny the validity of the common theological phrase, lafz al-Qur'ān, because of its inappropriateness to an uncreated entity such as the Qur'ān. He clearly stated "It may not be said that a part of the Qur'ān is created because the Qur'ān in its entirety is uncreated."⁽⁵⁾ Such a statement makes it very difficult to accept as al-Ash'arī's, some of the views attributed

(1) Ibāna, p.32.

(2) Ibid., p.32.

(3) Watt, op.cit., p.102.

(4) See supra, Chapter II, p.119-20.

(5) Ibāna, p.32.

to him by his followers.

Conclusion to Chapters III and IV

From the general account of the views of al-Māturīdī and al-Ash'arī on tawhīd, which has been given in the last two chapters, it might be said that though they both ~~have~~ agreed on many theological doctrines and adopted similar solutions, there is still genuine disagreement between them, especially in those matters related to their methodology and their treatment of the subjects. Thus in dealing with the problem of God's existence, we have noticed that al-Māturīdī spent considerable efforts discussing the views of the materialists, Dahriyya, the dualists and similar groups who denied God's existence or asserted the eternity of the world. In the course of his arguments, he adopted the same rational method ^{as} ~~of~~ his adversaries and his disputations are dominated by such concepts and terminologies as: causation, emanation, prime matter, and similar philosophical terms. However, discussions of such nature are completely absent from the extant works of al-Ash'arī. It is true that some lost works dealing with such matters were attributed to al-Ash'arī, but it is doubtful whether al-Ash'arī had treated these questions with the same intensity shown by al-Māturīdī. The absence of any reference to these points in al-Ash'arī's Luma', which might be expected to be of the same nature as al-Maturidi's Tawhīd, supports such a doubt.

As far as the arguments for God's existence are concerned, both al-Ash'arī and al-Māturīdī used similar arguments based on the observable change in the world and the purpose in its design. They were fully aware of the argument based on the temporality of

the world; but while al-Ash'arī seems to doubt its validity, al-Māturīdī adopted the argument and produced various versions of it. Moreover, he introduced an argument based on the existence of evil in the world as a proof for the existence of God which is unique in the field of Islamic theology.

Concerning the oneness of God, both al-Māturīdī and al-Ash'arī used the argument based on the concept of mutual hindrance (dalīl at-tamānu') to prove this doctrine. From their treatment of the point, it seems that al-Māturīdī was more concerned to establish and prove God's oneness; therefore he introduced arguments based on sam' in its wider significance as well as various rational arguments. In the course of his arguments, al-Māturīdī used some philosophical conceptions such as: the infinity of space and time to prove his point of view, and his treatment of the subject in general discloses rational tendencies. This might be due to the fact that al-Māturīdī was mainly directing his arguments to such rationally minded groups as the dualists, so he had to employ their own method and logic of arguments.

Both al-Māturīdī and al-Ash'arī advocated the transcendence of God and refuted all arguments for anthropomorphism and corporeality, and emphasized that only revealed names should be applied to God. However, they differed regarding the expressions of the Qur'ān which ascribed hands, eyes, face, etc., to God. While al-Ash'arī affirmed these expressions and attacked all attempts to state the precise manner of their existence on the basis of the doctrine of bi-lā-kayf, he also refuted any metaphorical interpretation of them. Al-Māturīdī, however, asserted that these expressions should not be interpreted literally and

he suggested that their literal sense was never intended. They therefore might either be interpreted metaphorically in the light of the verses of tanzīh, or their meaning should be left to the knowledge of God. Al-Māturīdī did not adopt a clearly definable method of argument, for while he introduced various metaphorical interpretations for these expressions, he also openly expressed his dissatisfaction with them and showed his inclination to leaving their meanings to the knowledge of God.

As for the doctrine of God's sitting on His throne, al-Ash'arī consistently applied the doctrine of bi-lā-kayf, and refrained from metaphorical interpretation of these verses, asserting this doctrine in its literal sense as expressed in the Qur'ān, and he rejected any allegorical interpretation of the word sitting (istiwā') and throne ('arsh). Al-Māturīdī, however, though not convinced by the Mu'tazilites' metaphorical interpretation of these terms, did not affirm this doctrine and tried to prove that God has no need of a place or places; he introduced a general principle for explaining the relation, expressed in the Qur'ān, between God and created things (including the throne). He concluded by stating that these verses, which speak of God's sitting on His throne, must be accepted without giving them any precise or definite interpretation.

Regarding God's visibility, al-Ash'arī and al-Māturīdī affirmed that God could be seen in the hereafter, and based arguments to justify the possibility of the vision on similar Qur'ānic verses. But while al-Māturīdī confined himself to the Scriptural proofs, al-Ash'arī introduced rational arguments.

One of the basic differences between al-Māturīdī and al-Ash'arī

is that concerning the essential and active attributes of God. Thus, while al-Māturīdī considered all God's attributes to be eternal, ⁽¹⁾ al-Ash'arī indirectly implied the temporality of the active attributes. Connected with this point are their theories of God's act of creation, al-Māturīdī maintained that God creates things through the eternal attribute of takwīn, al-Ash'arī held that creation occurs through God's eternal will and His word "Be". They also differ regarding the speech of God, al-Māturīdī clearly distinguished between the eternal speech of God which is His attribute and the expressions in human language of that speech, and he considered the former to be eternal and the latter as created. Al-Ash'arī's views on the point seem to suggest that, to him, God's speech and the expressions which are identical with it are both eternal and uncreated.

Both al-Māturīdī and al-Ash'arī asserted that the attribution of names and qualities to God, which are commonly used for man, does not entail similarity between man and God, they both pointed out that mere agreement in names does not entail similarity and that God's and man's qualities are essentially different. In spite of this, however, al-Māturīdī seems to be more concerned with this problem than al-Ash'arī and, as a matter of fact, we find no reference to this problem in al-Ash'arī's major work al-Luma'. Al-Māturīdī was not only anxious to refute the Mushabbiha, but he was more concerned to refute the Bātinītes and the Philosophers who took the excuse of the possibility of

(1) This is a Hanafi position; cf. Fiqh Akbar II, article 2, M.C. p.188.

such a similarity and denied God's attributes altogether.

Moreover, al-Maturīdī acknowledges the shortcoming of human language as a means for describing the reality of God, but he emphasized that the using of this language is the only feasible method of knowing anything about God, so it must be used with caution guarding from the danger of tashbīh.

CHAPTER V

AL MĀTURĪDĪ ON THE DOCTRINE OF QADAR

Introduction

The doctrine of Qadar was for a long time one of the most controversial problems in the history of Islamic thought. Basically it aimed at harmonizing God's omnipotence and His absolute will with man's responsibility and freedom of action. The basis of this controversy is based on the Qur'ān itself, where we find that some verses laid great emphasis on the absolute "power" and "will" of God and attribute to Him the creation, as well as the full control over the created world including man and his action. Other verses, however, describe man as a competent agent who acts freely, and can be held accountable and rewarded and punished for his acts. The Qur'ānic statements concerning this problem of the conflict between God's omnipotence and man's freedom and responsibility, seem to adopt a middle between these two aspects.⁽¹⁾

Political motivations were behind many of the schools of thought which sprang up in the Muslim community in the second and third centuries A.H., and which produced widely variant interpretations of the Qur'ānic texts. At one extreme were the Jabrites or the predeterminists who denied man any real freedom, while the Qadarites at the other extreme asserted that man is free and has responsibility. The moderates between these two

(1) Watt, Formative Period, pp.90-94.

extremes remained faithful to the middle course of the Qur'ān.⁽¹⁾

The Jabrites supported their opinion with those Qur'ānic verses which emphasize the absoluteness of the will of God, and they ignored those verses which refer to human freedom and responsibility. Similarly, the Qadarites based their views narrowly on those verses which refer to man's responsibility and freedom of actions while they overlooked those which speak of the absolute power and will of God.

The Qadarites' assertions were superseded and absorbed into the doctrines of the Mu'tazilite school. The Mu'tazilites made use of the philosophical material available at that time and they were thus able to introduce new ideas concerning this problem. They raised many new questions relating to God's justice and man's responsibility. They discussed the nature of man's power in detail and attempted to find some means by which they could avoid to attribute evil to God.

In response to this extreme Mu'tazilite view, the group called Ahl al-Ithbāt (i.e. who affirm the doctrine of Qadar)⁽²⁾ emerged. Using the same concepts and jargon of the Mu'tazilites, the Ahl al-Ithbāt attempted to harmonize man's freedom of action with the effective power of God, while preserving limited freedom of action to man.

Thus the intellectual scene before the appearance of al-Maturīdī and al-Ash'arī was dominated by conflicting doctrines of these two groups. The influence of these two scholars on their

(1) For the significance of the terms "Jabrites" and "Qadarites" and the sects named after them, see Ibid., pp.116-118.

(2) For the implications of this term Ahl al-Ithbāt, see Ibid., pp.117-118, also p.341, note 122.

intellectual background, concerning this problem, will occupy the following two chapters.

From Kitāb at-Tawhīd and Ta'wīlāt al-Qur'ān it seems that al-Māturīdī dealt with almost all the questions on Qadar discussed by the Mu'tazilites and Ahl al-Ithbāt, covering such points as: the nature of man's actions, the doctrine of God's justice and similar relating matters. He also refuted the Mu'tazilite views, especially al-Ka'bī's, and made use of many of the solutions to the problem introduced by Ahl al-Ithbāt.

1. The Analysis of Man's Actions

To formulate his views on the problem of man's actions, al-Māturīdī started by explaining and refuting the views of both the Jabrites and the Mu'tazilites. According to him, the Jabrites have denied man any real action, they maintained that actions are only ascribed to man in a figurative sense, but in reality they belong to God.⁽¹⁾ They argued that in various Qur'ānic verses these actions, which are said to be man's, were attributed to God. It has also been clearly stated that God is the creator of all things. This must be understood in its real sense, because God is the real agent and the most powerful, and any figurative interpretation of this statement would imply the diminishing of that power.⁽²⁾ Moreover, many of those actions which are apparently attributed to man such as: causing death and life, being short or tall, moving and resting, causing things

(1) Tawhīd, p.225,2-3.

(2) Ibid., p.225,4-6.

to combine or to separate, no doubt belong in reality to God and are under His power.⁽¹⁾ To answer the question why God then punishes man for these actions if they are not his, the Jabrites simply said that the whole creation and command belong to God, so it is to Him to do whatever He likes as any owner has the unrestricted right to do whatever he wants in his domain.⁽²⁾ They hold that the attribution of real actions to man would imply resemblance between man's actions and God's, a notion which has been refuted by the Qur'ān, 13:16. Also, if creation in the sense of bringing something from non-existence into existence were attributed to man, he would then deserve to be called "creator" which no one can admit it to him.⁽³⁾

Al-Maturīdī attributed these views to the group whom he called Ahl al-Jabr. The term Jabr and its derivatives Mujbira and Jabriyya were mentioned about six times in Kitāb at-Tawhīd. By examining the instances where the term mentioned is used, it is hoped that it will be possible to shed light on some of the problems regarding the origin and the significance of its usage in the field of Islamic theology. Before discussing this point it is worth mentioning that W. Montgomery Watt has already traced the origin and followed the development of the term up to the time of al-Ash'arī. He doubted the existence of a sect called Jabriyya, and pointed out that Jabriyya and Mujbira were nicknames applied by the Mu'tazilites and the like to their adversaries,

(1) Tawhīd, p.225,6-9.

(2) Ibid., p.225,9-11.

(3) Ibid., p.225,11-16.

who must have included not only the pure and moderate Jabriyya of ash-Shahrastānī's classification, but also those who held the doctrine of acquisition. As a result of a later development, the advocates of acquisition disassociated themselves from the Jabriyya, and claimed to be holding a mediatory position between the Qadarites and the Jabrites, thus the term "jabr" became heretical. (1)

Al-Māturīdī's usage of the term jabr confirms in many ways the conclusions of Watt and gives evidence to his final findings. In one of his statements al-Māturīdī said, "The Qadarites who were nicknamed by i'tizāl attributed the name Jabr to us though we have acquitted ourselves of it in saying and conviction ('aqd wa-qawl). They are lying in applying this name to us as they lied in calling us Qadariyya. ... They applied the name Jabr to us because we denied that the power for the action is prior to the action." (2) In another statement al-Māturīdī said, "The Mu'tazilites called the Husayniyya, (3) Mujbira because the Husayniyya maintained that man has power only for the action that he is doing. He has no power for its opposite neither at the time of the action nor before that time." (4) These two statements clearly consolidate the conclusion that the terms Jabr and Mujbira were nicknames given by the Mu'tazilites to their

(1) Watt, Formative Period, p.118.

(2) Tawhīd, p.320,14-16.

(3) Followers of al-Husayn an-Najjār, Maqālāt, p.283,2-3. They are also called an-Najjāriyya, Maqālāt, p.137,1. Baghdādī, Usūl, p.126.

(4) Tawhīd, p.321,17-18.

opponents who were the middle of the road Sunnites.⁽¹⁾ The last statement of al-Māturīdī very well fits al-Khayyāt's identification of the Mujbira as those who, in opposition to Abū-l-Hudhail, maintained that a man has power over a single act only, and not over both unbelief and faith.⁽²⁾

In one of his statements, al-Māturīdī defines the Jabriyya by saying that "The Jabriyya, who are known to us, get this name from Jabr; they denied man any power for his action, attributing all actions to God, without asserting to man any action in reality."⁽³⁾ It is clear that such definition very well fits the first group of the Jabrites in ash-Shahrastānī's classification (i.e. the pure Jabrites). In two other statements, however, al-Māturīdī attributed similar views to the Murji'ites. He said that "The Murji'ites attributed (arja'), the actions of man to God and did not attribute them to man, while the Qadarites affirmed these actions to man in the sense that he creates them, and denied God any control over them."⁽⁴⁾ In another similar statement he said, "The Murji'ites attributed the reality of man's actions to God and the Qadarites denied God any control over them, attributing their control to man."⁽⁵⁾ Though al-Māturīdī is identifying the Murji'ites views with the Jabrites', this does not mean that he is accusing all the Murji'ites of holding the doctrine of Jabr.

(1) Watt, op.cit., p.118.

(2) Intisār, pp.17-18.

(3) Tawhīd, pp.319,18-19; 320,1.

(4) Ibid., pp.228,21; 229,1-3. Ta'wīlāt, 2:32-34.

(5) Tawhīd, p.318,13-15.

For in other places of Kitāb at-Tawhīd he analysed the concept of irjā', which is mainly connected with faith, and implied that even Abū-Hanīfa, who is definitely not a Jabrite in al-Māturīdī's view, seems to have sympathy with some of the Murji'ite doctrines in this respect.⁽¹⁾ So what might be inferred from these statements is that the Jabrites represent, to al-Māturīdī, a group among the Murji'ites, and such classification is quite applicable to men like Jahm b. Ṣafwān who is believed to be a Jabrite, yet was considered as a Murji'ite by al-Ash'arī.⁽²⁾

Other statements of al-Māturīdī suggest that he has anticipated al-Baghdādī and later theologians in emphasizing the point that his doctrine is a mean or a middle path between Jabr and Qadar. Following a criticism of both the Qadarites and the Jabrites, al-Māturīdī said that, "Justice is the mean between them"⁽³⁾, (i.e. the Jabrites and the Qadarites.) In another statement he said that, "justice is to harmonize both of these views"⁽⁴⁾ (i.e. Jabr and Qadar).

In contrast to the deterministic view of the Jabrites, al-Māturīdī said, the Mu'tazilites went to the other extreme by affirming real action to man, and denying God any interference or influential power over these actions. They based their views

(1) Tawhīd, pp.381-85.

(2) Maqālāt, pp.132, 279-280. For the Jahm's views and his role in the History of the Development of Islamic thought, see Watt, Formative Period, pp.143 ff.

(3) Tawhīd, p.318,17-18.

(4) Ibid., p.229,3.

on the fact that in many Qur'ānic verses man has been considered a responsible agent, and according to such a conception certain commands and prohibitions were addressed to him, and promised reward and punishment according to his performance. They interpreted those verses which emphasize the role of God in man's actions in metaphorical sense. They said that these actions of men were attributed to God possibly because of the fact that he is the source of the motives behind them, that is to say, He is their instigator, because he commands man to do what is good and abandon him when he commits evil. Alternatively, it might be said that these acts were attributed to God figuratively on the ground that He is the origin of the judgement (mihna) based on them, though not their real agent. Just as has been attributed to the Qur'an that it increases the believers in faith, others in abomination, 9:124-5, and the warning increases the unbelievers in aversion 35:42, all being in a figurative sense.⁽¹⁾

Al-Māturīdī rejected the views of both the determinists and the Mu'tazilites, and tried to find a solution to this problem by emphasizing the point that God's justice and His wisdom make it necessary that certain actions must be attributed to man. At the same time he did not go with the Mu'tazilites in denying God any role in man's actions. On the contrary, al-Māturīdī strongly defended the absolute power of God and His will which influence and embrace all man's actions.

Thus against the Jabrite views al-Māturīdī devoted a special section in which he attempted to establish the reality of man's

(1) Tawhīd, p.227,13-19.

actions. His arguments in this respect are mainly based on the premisses that man is a responsible agent who has been created for judgement (mihna), and has been provided with the means by which he can distinguish between things thus being able to carry out his responsibility. Therefore, he must have real action and must have some freedom to perform these actions.⁽¹⁾ To establish this proposition, al-Māturīdī argued from both reason and revelation. He said that in many Qur'ānic verses man has been commanded to do certain works or to refrain from others, 41:40; 22:77. Other verses such as 2:167; 56:24; 99:7-8, promised him reward or punishment for his actions. In all these verses what men do is called their actions, and men were given the name of the doers of their works.⁽²⁾ Al-Māturīdī argued that the attribution of these actions to God in certain verses would not deny such a fact. Such attribution can possibly be explained as that these actions belong to both man and God, yet from a different aspect. They belong to God in the sense that He created them and brought them into existence, and belong to man in the sense that he acquired and did them ('alā mā kasabūha wa-fa'alūha).⁽³⁾

As for the rational arguments, al-Māturīdī said that it is a fact that God has given certain commandments and prohibitions to man, and it is impossible that to whomever these commandments and prohibitions were given, would have no real actions. If such an assumption is possible, then the door would be open for

(1) Tawhīd, pp.221-24.

(2) Ibid., pp.225,17-20; 226,1-3.

(3) Ibid., p.226,3-5.

considering as many absurd things as possible.⁽¹⁾ Man's actions have certain characteristics such as: obedience, disobedience, sin, being objectionable, etc., and man has been described as being commanded and prohibited, compensated and rewarded. It is rationally repulsive (qabīh) to attribute these aspects of man's actions to God, so from these aspects they must be man's.⁽²⁾

Moreover, God has promised rewards and punishment for those who obey and disobey Him respectively. If these actions (i.e. obey and disobey) belong to Him, then He would be the one who is rewarded and punished which is inappropriate. If the reward and punishment belong to man in reality, then his submission to commandments and prohibitions must also be truly his. Also, God has attributed certain characteristics to those who obey and disobey His commandments, therefore, if these actions really belong to Him, these characteristics would be applied to Him which is admissible neither to reason nor to revelation.⁽³⁾

Another argument is that everyone knows from his own experience that he is free to choose (mukhtār) regarding his actions, and that he is doer and acquirer (fā'il kāsib), and such a fact cannot be denied, thus refuting the Jabrite deterministic views.⁽⁴⁾

Though al-Māturīdī strongly refuted the Jabrite views, he did not accept the Mu'tazilite doctrines either. Rather he

(1) Tawhīd, p.226,5-8.

(2) Ibid., p.226,8-10.

(3) Ibid., p.226,12-19.

(4) Ibid.,pp.226,20; 227,1-2.

associated himself with those who seem to have taken a middle road between Jabr and Qadar, and tried to harmonize both these views. According to al-Māturīdī, "Some people attributed actions to man from those aspects according to which they become obedient and disobedient, and attributed these actions to God in the sense that He creates them. To these people, one act has different aspects, being related to God from certain aspects and to man from others. Thus it belongs to God from the aspect of creation (khalq), and to man from the aspect of acquisition (kasb). They argued from the fact that there is a difference between the reality of the action of man and God. God's action, in reality, is His act of creation and origination, while one understands the action of man only in the sense that he did it and acquired it (fa'ala wa-kasaba).⁽¹⁾ Though al-Māturīdī attributed these views to no particular groups, he clearly showed his favour to them. Thus he emphasized the point that the right thing to be done in order to solve this problem, is to harmonize the extreme views of both the Jabrites and the Mu'tazilites. By doing this, we would also be able to harmonise the verse 6:102, which states that God is the creator of all things, the verse 6:17 which emphasizes His absolute power, and those verses 41:46; 4:83 which refer to His justice and unmerited grace.⁽²⁾

To support such a view, al-Māturīdī introduced various rational arguments to the effect that man has neither knowledge nor capability to do all the things related to his actions, and that in opposition to the Mu'tazilites, God's power and His will

(1) Tawhīd, p.228,7-13.

(2) Ibid., p.229,3-6.

have an influential role in all man's acts. He said that, "The proof of the necessity of holding such an opinion ... is the existence of states in the actions of man which their imaginations cannot conceive nor their reasons understand, and other states which they can understand and which their reasons can imagine. Thus it is clear that the actions of the first group are not theirs, while the actions of the second group are theirs. The first group consists of such actions as imagining how things came from non-existence into being, and the time, place and limits in relation to the actions. The second consists of such actions as movement and rest according to what is forbidden and what is commended. It is clear that those actions of men which belong to the first group are not theirs, and those which belong to the second group are theirs."⁽¹⁾

Another argument is that man's actions are of the nature of good and bad. Man, however, has no knowledge of how and why they become so, which proves that these actions in such states do not belong to him. It is also found that these actions cause harm, pains and hardship to man, though he intended to gain joy and pleasure from them, which proves that these actions from this aspect do not belong to man.⁽²⁾ The underlying strength of these two arguments is that if it is assumed that somebody is able to create a thing without having knowledge of it as it is or without willing it to be such, anything in the world might have come about in such a way. Thus the existence of the creator could not

(1) Tawhīd, p.229,7-12.

(2) Ibid., p.230,1-3.

be established.

Al-Māturīdī argued that it is a well established conviction that there is no creator but God and no Lord but He. If we assume that the creation of man's actions and their bringing into existence ... is caused by man, man in this case would deserve the title of "creator" which implies the existence of another creator besides God which is inadmissible. (1)

This argument seems to imply that the Mu'tazilites made no difference between the act of creation when attributed to man and God. In another statement he levelled this accusation openly against them, and said that, "the meaning of God's act is His origination of things (ibda') and the bringing of the thing into being. The Mu'tazilites gave the same sense to man's act. Furthermore, they attributed to man a power for acquisition, while denying God such a power. Thus, according to their view, man would have more influential power than God since his power would be related to creation and acquisition and that of God is related only to creation. In this case man would be free to choose, while God would not, which is inadmissible to reason and to revelation. (2)

Al-Māturīdī also argued that if God has no power over man's action, his power would be defective as the power of man. Also, if some actions escape God's power, no one would trust His promise or fear His threat. (3) Moreover, God is the possessor

(1) Tawhīd, p.230,14-18.

(2) Ibid., p.235,10-18.

(3) Ibid., p.232,5-12.

of every thing, because He creates them all. If it is assumed that man is the creator of his actions, then God's kingdom would be defective.⁽¹⁾ It is clear that the implication of these arguments is that God's power is so overwhelming that nothing could escape it, and any suggestion which implies man's independence of this power would imply defect and weakness in God's sovereignty.

Al-Māturīdī substantiated these rational arguments by quoting various Qur'ānic verses and argued from them to the effect that man's actions were created by God. He quoted the verses, 67:13-14, "Be secret in your speech, or proclaim it, He knows the thoughts within the breast. Shall He not know, who created? And He is the All-subtle, the All-aware", and said that if God were not the creator of what is hidden and proclaimed, He would not claim knowledge of it.⁽²⁾ Here again al-Māturīdī is taking the detailed knowledge of an object as the necessary condition for any claim to creation. He also quoted the verses, 10:22 and 34:18, which declare that it is God who enables man to travel and it is He who appointed certain measures in their journeys. The verses 30:21-23 state that love and mercy between husband and wife, as well as the sleep of man and his seeking after God's bounty, are among His signs. It is impossible that such signs could be produced by another agent but God.⁽³⁾ Also the verses 57:27; 58:22; 16:80; and 5:13 clearly speak of the influence of God's

(1) Tawhīd, pp.232,20-21; 233,1-3.

(2) Ibid., p.254,13-17.

(3) Ibid., pp.254,17-20; 255,1-2.

power over man's actions. On the whole, al-Māturīdī said, God says that, "He accomplishes what He desires", and certainly many of man's actions are included among those which He wills. God also promises that He does what He wills, and rebuked those who wanted to be praised for what they did not do: all this affirms that all actions belong to Him. (1)

Al-Māturīdī concluded his arguments by pointing out that were it not for the fact that man is held responsible and has been addressed by certain commandments and prohibitions, reason would not have considered it as conceivable that any thing can be out of the range of God's power, or that any actions could be ascribed to other agents. (2)

2. Al-Māturīdī's Conception of Kasb

From what has been said, it becomes clear that al-Māturīdī is trying to hold the balance or mediating position between the Jabrites and the Mu'tazilites. Thus he asserted that God is the creator of all things including man's actions. At the same time, however, he pointed out that God created in man the power of choice and acquisition to distinguish and choose between different things. Because of this freedom of choice man is accountable for his actions and is a responsible agent.

Al-Māturīdī used the terms Kasb (acquisition) and choice (ikhtiyār), and their derivatives, as referring to the part played by man in executing his actions. The significance and

(1) Tawhīd, p.225,2-7.

(2) Ibid., p.225,17-20.

development of these terms up to the time of al-Ash'arī, have been fully studied by W. Montgomery Watt, who discloses that the term kasb, which is associated with al-Ash'arī and his school, played a significant role among the theologians of Ahl al-Ithbāt a long time before al-Ash'arī. Watt also points out that the term choice (ikhtiyār) could be rightly associated with Hishām b. al-Hakam, who preferred it to the term kasb.⁽¹⁾ Having in mind that the school connected with al-Māturīdī seems to prefer the term choice,⁽²⁾ it might be interesting to examine the use of these terms by al-Māturīdī himself and try to disclose the significance he ascribed to them.

The term kasb and its derivatives occurred in both Kitāb at-Tawhīd and Ta'wīlāt. It occurs in Kitāb at-Tawhīd about six times. In two of these instances kasb was referred to in connection with the Mu'tazilites' views. According to al-Māturīdī, "The meaning of God's act is the origination and bringing of things into existence, the Mu'tazilites gave the same meaning to the action of man. Moreover, they ascribed to man a power for acquisition."⁽³⁾ In another statement al-Māturīdī said that, "According to the Mu'tazilite doctrine, a man has power over his action from a certain aspect which is kasb, and God has power over it from another aspect which is origination (ījād); God has no power over that aspect which belongs to man, and man has no power over that of God."⁽⁴⁾ It is not clear from these two statements whether al-Māturīdī is using the Mu'tazilites own words or he is simply

(1) Watt, "The Origin of the Islamic Doctrine of Acquisition"

JRAS (1943) pp.234-47. cf. Watt, Formative Period, pp.191-95.

(2) M.C. p.214.

(3) Tawhīd, p.235,10-14.

(4) Ibid., p.91,6-8.

using his own terms to describe the Mu'tazilite view. The latter assumption seems to be more likely since the Mu'tazilites had no affection for using this term. In al-Māturīdī's other statements where kasb and ikhtiyār were used, we notice that the term kasb is sometimes used as an equivalent to ikhtiyār, and sometimes ikhtiyār is used to describe kasb. In both cases, however, kasb stands for the part played by man in his actions as parallel to the role of God. Thus in an argument against the Jabrites, al-Māturīdī said that, "Everyone knows from his own experience that he is free to choose (mukhtār), and that he is a doer and an acquirer (fā'il, kātib).⁽¹⁾ It is clear that the terms "doer", "acquirer" and "free to choose" are synonymous in this context. In another statement, while defending his view that man's action has two aspects, one of which belongs to God and the other to man, al-Māturīdī concluded his argument by saying that, "Thus it is established that the action belongs to man from the aspect of acquisition (kasb), and to God from the aspect of creation."⁽²⁾ Immediately following this statement, he repeated that God's actions in reality is His creation, and it is understood only in the meaning of origination, while man's action is understood only in the sense of his doing and acquisition of it (fi'luhu wa-kasbuhu).⁽³⁾ Here again, kasb and fi'l from man represent man's contribution to his action as opposed to the act of creation from God. In reply to the Mu'tazilite objection

(1) Tawhīd, p.226,20.

(2) Ibid., p.228,15-16.

(3) Ibid., p.228,16-18.

that the attribution of man's actions to God would entail man's compulsion, al-Māturīdī said that, "everyone knows from his experience that he is free to choose (mukhtār)."⁽¹⁾ He then proceeded to say that, "the act of man is compulsion (idtirār) in respect of creation, and man has no part in it, from this aspect. From the aspect of acquisition, however, it is his choice (ikhtiyār), ... the fact that the act is created by God does not deprive man of his choice because the power for the act has already been created. This power is the basis for his being free to choose and not compelled."⁽¹⁾ In this statement kasb and ikhtiyār were used conjointly to describe the activity of man in relation to his action, but kasb stands in contrast to creation from God, while ikhtiyār is opposite to idtirār. One might notice a similarity between this statement and a statement attributed to Hishām b.al-Hakam. According to al-Ash'arī, "Hishām b.al-Hakam held that human actions are created by God. Ja'far b.Harb relates that Hishām b.al-Hakam said that the acts of a man are his choice (ikhtiyār lahu) in one respect, and compulsion (idtirār) in another; his choice in that he wills them (arāda) and acquires them (iktasaba), and compulsion in that they do not come from him save when there arises the cause which incites them."⁽²⁾

It is clear that al-Māturīdī is using conceptions and terminologies similar to those used by Hishām b.al-Hakam, which

(1) Tawhīd, p.239,8-18.

(2) Maqālāt, pp.40-41, cf. Watt, "The Origin of the Islamic Doctrine of Acquisition", p.238. Formative Period, p.193.

might suggest that al-Māturīdī is building his views or, in a sense, he is developing the basic ideas of Hishām. It has to be said, however, that while Hishām made no use of the term kasb, al-Māturīdī seems to have given this term some significance.

In the Ta'wīlāt, the derivatives of the term kasb such as: iktisāb, aksāb and yaktasib, were mentioned several times, only in the sense of acquiring, gaining, earning money, or collecting wealth.⁽¹⁾ The only instance, as far as I could find, where the term is used in its technical sense, is in al-Māturīdī's commentary on the verse 67:14. He said that in spite of their disagreement, all people agreed that the natural compulsory actions of man are created by God, but they hold different views regarding those acts which are by man's acquisition (kasb al-'abd). Some people, namely Ahl al-Huda, asserted their creation by God, while others denied this. It is clear that kasb here is used in its technical sense. Al-Māturīdī then proceeded and gave a very interesting statement to the effect that even in his acquired actions, man is restricted by certain limits. For instance, he can only use his hand in the work which is linked to the nature of the hand, and if he tried to see or hear with it, he would not be able to do so. He only has the power to use his hand in holding, giving and taking because the hand is naturally prepared for such a task. This is applicable to all other senses, a fact which discloses that God's creative power has influence on whatever man performs.⁽²⁾

(1) See for instance, 16:40; 42:12; 43:32; 65:7.

(2) Ta'wīlāt, 67:14.

These are the only instances where kasb is used, which I have been able to trace in Kitāb at-Tawhīd and the Ta'wīlāt. From these statements it might be assumed that al-Māturīdī does not seem to be interested in the terminology, but his main concern seems to be about ideas, namely to establish man's choice in his actions as well as his responsibility, and to affirm, at the same time, God's power and will in those acts. Both "acquisition" and "choice" were used by al-Māturīdī to stand for the part played by man in his actions, yet one feels that kasb has a wider sense which includes choice (ikhtiyār), intention (hirs), inclination (mayl) and preference (īthār), as well as the power provided according to these mental actions. Thus kasb seems to represent the whole operation which begins from man's intention and choice, culminating in the power to perform the act. Choice has a great significance in this operation because, on one hand, power is provided according to man's choice: "power in stable men occurred consecutively according to their intention, choice and inclination."⁽¹⁾ On the other hand, man's salvation and eternal damnation depended on his choice. According to al-Māturīdī, "God has created man knowing that he will disobey and be hostile to Him. However, He provides him with the power to choose and to have performances, which lead him either to destruction or salvation. If he chooses what would save him, he would attain salvation, and if he chooses what will destroy him, he would be in eternal damnation. Therefore man's fate is based on his own choice."⁽²⁾ Thus, it is on the basis of this intention

(1) Tawhīd, pp.266,15-17; 270,8-11.

(2) Ta'wīlāt, 15:32-40.

or choice that man is held responsible and is rewarded and punished for his actions.

3. The Nature of Man's Power

Choice and intention are the first steps, but to bring an action into being, man needs power (qudra or istitā'a). What is the nature of this power? Is it the adequacy of means or the physical fitness to perform the act or does it mean something else, and to what extent is man free to use this power? In other words, is he free to use it for more than one act, or for the act and its opposite, or is it only related to one act? All these questions, and similar points, were widely discussed by the Mu'tazilites and their opponents.

The Mu'tazilites who advocated the freedom of man in his actions, differed regarding the nature of man's power whether it meant soundness and freedom from defects, or whether it was an accident which was something other than physical fitness.⁽¹⁾ In consistence with their general doctrine, the Mu'tazilites held that power is before and over the act and its opposite, yet it does not make the act necessary, and ultimately they denied that God imposes on man something for which he is not able.⁽²⁾ Among the opponents of the Mu'tazilites, an-Najjār defined "power" in the sense of help ('awn) from God, which originated at the time of the act, not before it, and that every single act has its own power.⁽³⁾ While to Hishām b. al-Hakam, an act presupposed

(1) See Maqālāt, p.229,11-16.

(2) Ibid., p.230,12-14.

(3) Ibid., p.283,6-9.

five elements: (i) soundness, (ii) freedom of condition, (iii) adequate space of time, (iv) instruments, and (v) the cause; but the essential element, the one which necessitates the act, is what he calls the cause (sabab), which apparently exists at the time (hāl) of the act. (1)

From Kitāb at-Tawhīd, it seems that al-Māturīdī had discussed all these points, taking into consideration the solutions of the Mu'tazilites and their opponents, as well as his predecessors, the Hanafite theologians. Thus, in his discussions about the nature of man's power, al-Māturīdī begins by distinguishing between two kinds of powers: one is primary power related to physical fitness and material means; the other is a power which is connected with bringing the action into being. He says, "in our opinion what is called power is of two kinds: one is the adequacy of means and soundness of organs, and precedes the actions; in its essence, it is not brought about for the sake of the actions, although the actions cannot be performed without it. Such a power is a blessing from God which He generously bestows on whomsoever He pleases. ... The second is concept (ma'nā), the definition of which can only be reached by saying that it exists only for the action, and it may only exist when an action happens by means of it, and then it exists contemporaneously with this action." (2)

Then al-Māturīdī quoted some verses where "power" in the first sense is mentioned. He quoted the verse, 58:4, which

(1) Maqālāt, pp.42-43. Watt, Formative Period, p.235.

(2) Tawhīd, p.256,8-17.

suggests an alternative for those who are unable to fast two successive months as atonement for committing zihār (to say to his wife: be as my mother's back) to feed sixty poor persons. He also quoted the verse, 9:42, which tells of the hypocrites who tried to find an excuse for not going to war with the prophet, claiming that they had no ability (i.e. no adequate means). By analysing these two verses, al-Māturīdī tried to show that "power", in these cases, only means the adequacy of means and soundness. It also conveys the same meaning in such verses as 4:25 and 3:97.⁽¹⁾ He pointed out that it is a matter of agreement that without this kind of power no duty would be imposed on man, and if he is deprived of such power, man would not be blamed for not performing an act, nor would he be asked to perform it. Therefore, such verses as 2:286 and 2:233, which state that God does not charge a soul save to its capacity, must be interpreted as referring to this kind of power. Thus it would be impossible to ask a man to perform an act which he has no means for, or which he has no power to perform, such as: to command the blind man "see", or to command a man who has no hand: "stretch your hands".⁽²⁾

As for the second kind of power, al-Māturīdī referred to the verses 11:20; 18:67,75 and 82, where according to him, though the power in the sense of condition (ahwāl) (i.e. adequacy of means) has been realized, it is stated that man has no power of the second kind, (i.e. the power for the action) because the

(1) Tawhīd, p.257,1-18.

(2) Ibid., p.258,1-9.

actions are not in existence. (1) He then said that imposition of duty on man could be made without the realization of this kind of power. To establish this statement, al-Māturīdī argued from both reason and revelation. As for the sam', he referred to the above-mentioned verses where power is denied, yet men were in sound condition, and in spite of this lack of power, have been commanded, prohibited, and blamed for their actions. What might explain this point yet better, al-Māturīdī said, is the verse 3:97, "It is the duty of all men towards God to come to the House of a pilgrim, if he is able to make his way there." It is clear that this can be done only by means of provisions and a mount (zād wa-rāhila). This is the primary power, but if it (i.e. pilgrimage) were not incumbent without the realization of the power for the action, then no-one would be bound to perform it, because the power for the act is contemporaneous with the action itself. Therefore, if the pilgrimage were not incumbent until it was realized, and it was not realized before the accomplishment of the journey, then one might find an excuse for staying away and not performing hajj. The case is similar for all other religious duties such as: jihād, fasting, prayer and zakāt, which proves that the imposition of these duties is not based on the realization of the power for the action, but on the realization of the power which is related to condition (i.e. the adequacy of means). If man is lacking the means for performing these duties, they would not be incumbent on him in the first place. However, sometimes these means might be realized, such as in the case of zakāt, where one might have enough money, yet

(1) Tawhīd, p.258,10-14. Ta'wīlāt, 11:20.

one would not pay it for some reason or another.⁽¹⁾ Thus, to al-Māturīdī, there are two kinds of powers: one is prior to the actions and consists of adequacy of means and soundness of organs; and the imposition of any religious duties is conditional upon the realization of this kind of power. The other kind of power, however, is realized contemporaneously with the actions and religious duties might be imposed regardless of its realization. It is on the concept of this latter power that al-Māturīdī is in real disagreement with the Mu'tazilites.

The Mu'tazilites maintained that man's power must be before the action, in order to choose, otherwise he would be compelled in his action.⁽²⁾ They thought that it is inconsistent to hold that power is contemporaneous with the action and, at the same time, that man is a free agent.

Though al-Māturīdī agreed to some extent with the Mu'tazilites in ascribing to man some freedom in his actions, he viewed this problem from different angles, and argued to the effect that the assertion of a power before the act would imply man's independence of God, which is morally dangerous and religiously wrong. He charged the Mu'tazilites of supporting in a way the dualists in their assertion of two gods, because the Mu'tazilites' view virtually gave man a role similar to that of God.⁽³⁾ He argued that all people sometimes express the view that they cannot do a certain thing because they are busy doing another thing or the

(1) Tawhīd, p.259,1-5. Ta'wīlāt, 2:286.

(2) Maqālāt, p.230,12-13.

(3) Tawhīd, pp.259,21-3; 260,1-12.

work is burdensome. They all know, however, that they possess the power in the sense of condition and adequacy of means (asbāb wa-ahwāl), which proves the existence of a power contemporaneous with the act.⁽¹⁾ Another argument is that power is an accident which does not endure, i.e. it must be in continuous change, and as the act cannot be realized by prior causes which are not present at the time of its existence, similarly it cannot be said that the power for its realization is prior to it.⁽²⁾ The power also is for the sake of the action: if it precedes it and inability occurs, which is quite possible, then the power would be for the sake of an action that man is not able to perform, which is a contradiction and wrong.⁽³⁾

Al-Māturīdī then based an argument on the moral danger which the Mu'tazilites' view would imply. He said that if the power for the action is for the sake of future actions, then by such power man would be in no need of God in all his actions, which clearly defies the Qur'ānic statement that all people are dependant on Him.⁽⁴⁾ Also power is not known by its essence, nor

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(1) Tawhīd, p.260,13-16.

(2) Ibid., p.260,18-22.

(3) Ibid., p.261,1-2.

(4) Ibid., p.261,4-6. The same argument is to be found in Wasiyya of Abū-Hanīfa, art.15, where it is said: For if it (power) originated before the act, man when wanting anything would not want Allah, and this is in opposition to what the scripture says, "And Allah is He who is rich, whereas you are poor", M.C.p. 128.

is there a definition which explains its nature other than the fact that it exists contemporaneously with the action. However, the act is not existent beforehand, but exists by this power, which proves that the act at the time of its existence discloses simultaneously the reality of power.⁽¹⁾ He argued that there is a strong connection between the power and its action, so the absence of any of them implies the absence of the other. Thus we find no powerful person who is not acting at all, nor do we find an impotent person who is acting, so the existence of power with the absence of the action, cannot be assumed. Similarly, one cannot assume the existence of impotence along with the action.⁽²⁾ It is also noticeable that causes in the present (shāhid) are connected with their effects - beating with pain, enjoyment with joy etc. Similarly, the relation between the power and the act is of the same kind, so we should not assume the existence of choice without the power to choose.⁽³⁾

The Qadarites (i.e. the Mu'tazilites) used the Qur'ānic verse 7:145 as an argument that power precedes the action, since Moses was ordered to take God's message by his pre-existent power. The commentators explained "power" in the verse as meaning adequacy of means or soundness of organs. The Mu'tazilites, therefore, should not consider this verse as an argument to their favour. In disagreement with the commentators, al-Māturīdī insists that "power" here means the power for the action, yet

(1) Tawhīd, p.261,9-11.

(2) Ibid., p.261,12-14.

(3) Ibid., p.261,18-21.

the Mu'tazilites have no proof that it is prior to the action. In the same manner, he refuted the Mu'tazilite arguments from the verses 27:39 and 28:26. (1)

Related to these discussions is the point as to whether the power is sufficient only for one act or it is appropriate for the act and its opposite. According to al-Maturīdī, the theologians hold different views regarding this point. Some of them, including Abū-Hanīfa himself, hold that one power is sufficient for two actions, of disbelief and belief. The same view is also held by the Mu'tazilites, and it is due to such a view, they assumed that power precedes the action. (2) To al-Maturīdī, there are two bases for holding such a view: one is that the relation of power to its action is like the relation of the cause to its effect. If the instrument of speech, for instance, is appropriate for saying truth and its opposite lies, then power should also be appropriate for the act and its opposite. If the power is not useful for the two possibilities, then a man would have no power to perform the opposite of what he had performed, but since he is commanded to do and prohibited not to do that opposite, the power must be for the act and its opposite. The commandments and prohibitions would therefore be addressed to man according to his ability and power (wus' wa-quwwa). (3) The other basis is that anything found to be appropriate for a thing and not for its opposite, what it performs

(1) Tawhīd, p.319,3-15. cf. Ta'wīlāt, 2:63.

(2) Tawhīd, p.263,3-6.

(3) Ibid., p.263,7-10.

would be a result of natural disposition (ṭabʿ) and not of choice (ikhtiyār). So if a power is not appropriate for them (i.e. the two alternatives), then what it performs would be a result of ṭabʿ and not of ikhtiyār.⁽¹⁾

Other theologians, including an-Najjār, hold that one power is not sufficient for the performance of two acts. They maintained that the power for obedience is not the power for disobedience, the power of obedience is succour and guidance (tawfiq, ʿawn) and the power of disobedience is abandonment and leaving one to choose for oneself (khidhlān, tark).⁽²⁾ They argued from the fact that everyone asks God to help and protect him, and to save him from abandonment and deviation. Unless there is a power given to each kind of these acts, there would be no differences between those who ask and those who did not.⁽³⁾ Moreover, no-one can claim that the unbeliever is given succour to believe, or he is protected from unbelief, as the believer is helped and protected, which proves that there is a different power for each act of belief and disbelief.⁽⁴⁾ Furthermore, the power does not endure for two minutes so that two actions could be performed by it, and at the same time, the two opposite actions are contrary to each other. They cannot be performed at one time, which proves that a power is only for one of them.⁽⁵⁾

(1) Tawhīd, p.263,11-13.

(2) Ibid., p.263,14-16.

(3) Ibid., pp.263,17-19; 264,1-3.

(4) Ibid., p.264,3-5.

(5) Ibid., p.264,5-7.

Immediately following these arguments, there is a passage which is quite puzzling. One expects it to be a continuation of an-Najjār's argument, but its contents are rather confused, and do not seem to support an-Najjār's view. After some amendment in the texts, it seems to be al-Māturīdī's own argument. If my reading of the texts is correct, the argument seems to imply that the power for the action cannot be but based on choice. It is not like fire and ice whose burning and cooling respectively, are produced out of natural disposition and compulsion, power thus being for two possibilities and alternatives.⁽¹⁾

Then al-Māturīdī took up some of al-Ka'bī's views regarding the problem of whether God does impose duties on a man though he is not able to perform (taklīf mā lā-yutāq). Reference has already been made to al-Māturīdī's view that such imposition of duty is not possible if the power meant is the primary power, but it is quite possible in the absence of the power for the action.⁽²⁾ To al-Ka'bī and, as a matter of fact, to all the Mu'tazilites, such imposition of duty is not possible and it is against God's justice.⁽³⁾ Thus al-Ka'bī said that, "it is self evident that the imposition of what man has no power to perform is rationally repulsive." Al-Māturīdī did not accept this statement and pointed out that this is the judge of reason which understands power only in the sense of apparent power (i.e. physical

(1) Tawhīd, p.264,9-11.

(2) Supra, pp.336-7.

(3) Maqālāt, p.230,13-14.

strength)⁽¹⁾, but for the other kind of power, that is the "facilitating power", the matter is not so. Rather, God has imposed on the associate of Moses a duty of which He knows that he would not be able to perform (verses 18:67,75,82).⁽²⁾ He pointed out that it is true that the imposition of duty on one who has been deprived of capability (tāqa) is wrong, according to reason, but it is quite right to impose duties on a person who deliberately wasted his power. Imposition of duties would otherwise be only on him who is certainly going to obey, but this is not the stipulation of judgement (miḥna).⁽³⁾ Al-Māturīdī went on to say that, "to us the power, in a healthy and sound man, occurs successively according to his intention and his inclination. However, in the case where it has not been given to man, the only reason for that would be his negligence, that he preferred alternative action, and that he chose an action which drove him away from the first alternative."⁽⁴⁾

4. The Relation of God to Human Actions

So far we have seen that al-Māturīdī is trying, on the one hand to affirm man's freedom of choice and acquisition in his action, and on the other hand, to emphasize the point that these actions of man are created, willed and, moreover, predetermined

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(1) In fact the Mu'tazilites hold the same view as far as the power is concerned. See Maqālāt, pp.243, 267.

(2) Tawhīd, p.266,3-6.

(3) Ibid., p.266,12-14.

(4) Ibid., p.266,15-17.

by God. He clearly pointed out that the fact that God creates, wills and decrees these actions does not in any way deprive man of his choice.

The Mu'tazilites who find it difficult to hold such a balance, maintained that this reconciliatory view is untenable. They thought that man's freedom of actions and his responsibility cannot possibly be reconciled with the notion that his actions are created, willed and decreed by God, without belittling man's role in his actions, or impairing the conception of God's justice. They argued that in many Qur'ānic verses man has been commanded to do and prohibited not to do certain things. If these actions do not belong to him, but to God, then God would be the commanded and the prohibited, which is absurd.⁽¹⁾

Al-Māturīdī, who uses the same verses against the Jabrites, did not accept the Mu'tazilites' inference and pointed out the difference between the "creation" of an act and "its doing". In these verses, man is not commanded to create or not to create the action, but only to do or not to do it. Therefore, there would be no justification for the Mu'tazilites to equate the command and prohibition to do or not to do an act, with its creation.⁽²⁾

According to al-Māturīdī, the Mu'tazilites' denial of these actions to God might possibly be based on one of three assumptions: either that these actions cannot possibly be created by God, or that there is no proof for such a view, or that such a view would entail the denial of man's free choice and affirm his compulsion,

(1) Tawhīd, p.227,9-12.

(2) Ibid., pp.236,20-21; 237,1-6.

which contradict his being responsible for his actions.⁽¹⁾

He proceeded to demonstrate the falsity of these assumptions. He pointed out that the first assumption is based on the propositions that God's actions are similar to man's, that one action cannot possibly be done by two agents, otherwise a co-operation between man and God necessarily follows. To show the weakness of these propositions, al-Māturīdī said that God's act is different from that of man, for God's act is simply his creation while man's act is his doing a thing (maf'ūluhu).⁽²⁾ Moreover, unlike God's action, man's act is limited and finite, therefore he cannot exercise any influence on another man's action, neither is he able to create his own action, nor can he perform an action out-with its limited space. Therefore, any attempt to measure God's action against man's is wrong.⁽³⁾ Al-Māturīdī sees no impossibility in finding two agents sharing one action. He pointed to the examples of two persons who are holding a rope, or moving something, or carrying some load. Although the contribution of these agents might differ according to the differences in their strength, nevertheless, the act is actually belonging to them both. This is similar in the case of man's act and God's,⁽⁴⁾ i.e., man's action is of different aspects and could be attributed to man from some aspects and to God from others. As for the proposition that the attribution of man's action to God and man

(1) Tawhīd, p.237,22-25.

(2) Ibid., p.238,1-3.

(3) Ibid., p.238,8-16.

(4) Ibid., p.238,3-7.

entails co-operation between them, al-Ka'bi maintained that it is impossible that an act could belong, in reality, to man and at the same time be created by God. To him, such a notion would entail co-operation (shirka) between God and man, because it is impossible that each one of them would do some part of the action. Al-Maturidi did not accept al-Ka'bi's assertion, and said that the attribution of an act to God and man does not necessarily entail co-operation between them because of the different aspects of the act. He argued that according to the Mu'tazilites own view, an act might be possessed by God and man without implying co-operation between them. Similarly, we find that actions such as: feeding, clothing and providing with daily bread, are attributed to God and man and no-one assumes that such an attribution implies co-operation between God and man. (1)

If it is assumed that there are no proofs to support the view that God creates man's actions, al-Maturidi said that reference has already been made to these proofs and need not repeat them in this context. (2)

As for the assumption that the attribution of these actions to God would entail the compulsion of man, al-Maturidi said that such a notion is absurd because it is quite evident that everyone knows from his own experience that he is free to choose (mukhtar). ... If it is said that the denial of compulsion implies that there would be no outside force which has control over man's act, it might be said that the act from the respect of creation is

(1) Tawhid, p.240,5-22.

(2) Ibid., p.239,4-7.

compulsion (idtirār); from this respect man has no role in it, and would not be called by it, but from the respect that man acquires the act, it is his choice. (ikhtiyār).⁽¹⁾

Al-Ka'bi, following the general view of the Mu'tazilites, introduced various objections to the effect that man's actions cannot possibly be attributed to both man and God. He argued that one act cannot possibly be performed by two agents, just as it is not possible that one "saying" is pronounced by two persons, or one report is told by two reporters. Al-Maturīdī replied by pointing out the weakness of al-Ka'bi's argument in comparing "act" to "saying" and "report", since the latter actions can possibly be performed by more than one agent. It might be said that this is the saying of a group of people, that is, the saying of so and so, and in the case of the worthy transmitted tradition, we find that one report is attributed to a large number of reporters. According to this analogy, al-Ka'bi must admit that one act might possibly be performed by more than one agent.⁽²⁾

Then al-Ka'bi objected to the view that an act is attributed to man as its doer and to God as its creator, by pointing out that in the case of an act of disobedience (ma'siya), God should be blamed for creating the act since there is no justification in blaming the doer of the ma'siya and not its creator.⁽³⁾ Al-Maturīdī replied by emphasizing the point that the action has different aspects, such as its being a thing, movement, an

(1) Tawhīd, p.239,7-12.

(2) Ibid., p.241,12-15.

(3) Ibid., p.242,17.

originated object, and its being an accident. The moral judgment for its performance is not related to all these aspects, but it is only related to certain aspects, otherwise it might be assumed that a man would be blamed for performing good action, such as belief. In the case of disobedience, God is connected with the act from the aspect that He creates it, thus should not be blamed from this respect, while man is to be blamed because he performs the act of disobedience. Moreover, God's act in this respect is wisdom, because He judges the act of disobedience to be in reality ugly, foolish, unjust and blameworthy. From this aspect His act is true and wise, while from the aspect of man the same act is foolish and unjust, and from this aspect it is ugliness and disobedience. (1)

Al-Ka'bi introduced another argument to the effect that God is not the creator of the evil actions of man. He said, it is true that to God has been attributed the creation of all things including man's actions, and certainly there is no glorification in attributing to Him the evil actions of man, such as: the curse of God, disbelief in Him, and killing his prophets. Moreover, He denounced disbelief and warned of punishment for it, therefore, it cannot be His action. Thus these evil deeds of man should not be included in God's creation. (2)

Al-Maturidi replied by emphasizing that the exclusion of any actions from God's influence is more dangerous than attributing to Him the creation of evil acts, because such a notion would

(1) Tawhid, pp.242,18-22; 243,1-2.

(2) Ibid., p.243,19-22.

eventually lead to the diminishing of God's lordship. He argued that though it has been established that God is the Lord of everything, the God of everything, and the creator of everything, this should not be said of evil, dirt and impurities in particular.⁽¹⁾

As for God's will, we have already seen that the Mu'tazilites maintained that God's will means only his actual creation. Al-Ka'bī, however, added that will simply means that God is not forced or compelled in His actions. He identifies God's will of man's actions with His commandment of them and His being pleased with their performance. This might possibly account for the fact that his arguments, which were recorded by al-Māturīdī, are mainly intended to demonstrate that God does not will evil or the wicked actions of man, otherwise He would be wicked and an evil doer.

To substantiate this notion, al-Ka'bī argued from both reason and revelation. He quoted the verse, "God desires ease for you, and desires not hardship for you."⁽²⁾ as a proof that God does not will disbelief, because it is the most difficult of all things.⁽³⁾ Al-Māturīdī rejected al-Ka'bī's inference and pointed out that this verse has nothing to do with faith or disbelief, but it simply refers to the allowance which is given to the Muslim not to fast if he is sick or on a journey. If it is assumed, however, that the verse speaks about faith and disbelief, it is of no support of al-Ka'bī's view, since it would be referring to those who believed in God, and thus they got what God wills for them, which

(1) Tawhīd, p.244 ff.

(2) Qur'an, 2:185.

(3) Tawhīd, p.297,14-15.

is ease and not hardship. (1)

Al-Ka'bi also quoted the verse, "God desires not wrong for His servants". (2) He said that since God does not will injustice, so it could not be said that He wills the actions of man and then punishes him for these acts. Al-Maturidi replied by saying that we do agree that God does not will injustice, but there is a difference between "willing injustice" and "willing an unjust action to be injustice". He who wills the hatred of another person to be an enmity, and his doing injustice to be repulsive and abominable, would not be willing injustice to them, but would be willing them just. Al-Maturidi argued that God said, "We have not created heaven and earth, and that between them, for vanity" (3), and said in another verse, "falsehood (bātil), comes not to it from before it nor from behind it." (4) so God called it (i.e. some of His creation) falsehood, but this does not mean that He created it in falsehood. Similarly, His will that the act of disbelief is false and unjust from the believers, does not mean that He wills injustice for His servants. (5) It is clear that al-Maturidi's argument in this respect is along the line of those arguments which were first explored by men like Burghuth. They all point to the fact that the relation of God to what He creates is quite different from the relation of man to his acts

(1) Tawhīd, p.297,15-18.

(2) Qur'an, 40:31.

(3) Ibid., 38:27.

(4) Ibid., 41:42.

(5) Tawhīd, p.298,5-10. Ta'wilāt, 41:46.

and that consequently God is not necessarily to be described by the terms applicable to a human agent.⁽¹⁾ Al-Māturīdī pointed out that sometimes something might be willed not for its own sake but for the sake of the benefit of another, such as in the case of the son of Adam who wished his brother to kill him, "Even if you try to kill me, I am not going to kill you, for fear of God, I will that you should take the blame and be an inmate in Hell." Q.5:28-9, which establishes the fact that one might will an act which is disobedience, though not intending to commit disobedience. This explains that the will of an act which is disobedience in relation to its doer, is not like the willing of disobedience. Similarly, when God wills the act of the unbeliever to be an act of disobedience from him, or that his act is of insult and disgust, is not like willing insult and disobedience.⁽²⁾

From the verse 6:148, "The idolaters will say, Had God willed, we would not have been idolaters, nor our fathers", al-Ka'bi argued that disbelief is not willed by God, because in this verse God denied the claim of the infidels that He wills their unbelief. Al-Māturīdī did not accept al-Ka'bi's interpretation of the verse and introduced the following alternatives: he said that the verse might be explained in that it means that these infidels claimed that God commands them to be unbelievers. Therefore God denied them such a claim, as he denied the claim of those who said that God commands us to do indecency, 7:28. This

(1) Watt, Free Will, p.144.

(2) Tawhīd, pp.298,16-19; 299,1-5.

also includes the Jews who falsified the scripture, claiming that it is from God, 3:78. Other possible explanation is that those infidels when they were warned of God's punishment which was postponed, thought that the prophet was lying, and that God was pleased with their doing, otherwise He would have immediately punished them. The verse might also be explained that it refers to the lack of seriousness in the claim of the infidels, who were only joking and making fun of the belief that everything occurs according to God's will. This verse does not, therefore, support al-Ka'bi's argument. (1)

Al-Ka'bi's rational arguments are based on two assumptions: one is built on an alleged analogy between "willing a thing" and "the commandment to do it". The second assumption is derived from an assumed attachment between "willing" a thing and "being pleased with its doing". Thus, depending on the first assumption, al-Ka'bi said, "If it is assumed that the commanding of disobedience is repulsive, why should its willing of them not be repulsive too. (2)

Al-Maturidi saw no association between "will" and "command", thus he introduced several arguments to show the differences between them: he pointed out the essential contradiction which exists between disobedience and command, making it impossible to command an act of disobedience, because in this case it would be obedience and thus disobedience would lose its significance. Such a contradiction, however, does not exist in the case of "will".

(1) Tawhid, p.302,1-10.

(2) Ibid., p.304,3.

Moreover, every doer realizes that he wills his acts, and it is impossible to say that he commands himself to do an act, which establishes the essential difference between these two concepts. Also, we say that God wills his actions and it is impossible to assume that he is commanded to do them, which proves that "will" and "command" are different. Furthermore, God wills the death of the prophets, the honest people, and the survival of His enemies and the evil doers, who may well live in luxury, but He does not command this, on the contrary He commanded us to invoke the destruction of the latter and the survival of the former.

The advantage of command is that it discloses the distinction and loftiness of the commander since he subdues the other and demonstrates his merits and bounty upon which he deserves to be honoured, while will only implies the free choice and the denial of his compulsion. Therefore, there is an essential difference between these two concepts. To clarify this point, al-Māturīdī referred to the incident of Abraham and his son, where God commanded Abraham to slaughter his son, then He substituted the boy for a ram, Q.37:102ff. It is not possible that God willed that the boy should be killed then He prevented the killing by this ransom, because such an act implies a change of mind (budā) on the part of God, which is a sign of ignorance. Thus, the fact must be that the command was for something that God did not really will. (1)

Al-Māturīdī also saw no association between God's "will" and His "approval". He said that in the Qur'ān we find ample proofs for the distinction between "approval" and "will": that His

(1) Tawhīd, p.304,4-21. Ta'wīlāt, 4:26.

approval is only related to good deeds, while His will is connected with all actions. For God's approval it says, "Yet He approves not unthankfulness in His servants", Q.39:7, and "God loves not corruption" Q.2:205, "God loves those who repent" Q.2:222, and "God loves not the aggressors", Q.2:195; while for His will it says, "Whomsoever God wills, He leads astray, and whomsoever He wills, He sets him on a straight path" Q.6:38. Thus these Qur'ānic verses make it clear that God's will is related to all actions, while His "approval" and His "good pleasure" must be particularised to good actions only. "Will", therefore, is different from "approval". The principle is that "pleasure" and "displeasure" are two concepts related to man's actions, while "will" has no such relation because there is nothing (ma'na) in the actions of men which necessitate "will", unless it is meant to indicate wishful thinking (tamannī) or approval. Moreover, in the visible world, a man might do what he does not approve of or like, but it is impossible to be really acting without having will. (1)

Another aspect of God's relation to man's actions is that He decrees and predetermines them. Since it is established that God creates man's actions according to His will, it follows that these actions come into being according to God's decree and made as they are according to His predetermination. (2) The terms Qadā' and Qadar have been used in various senses, not all of them appropriate to God. Therefore, al-Māturīdī began his section on

(1) Tawhīd, pp.296,22; 297,1-11.

(2) Ibid., p.305.

this problem by enlisting the different usages of the terms in the Qur'ān, and explaining which of them might rightly be attributed to God.

According to al-Māturīdī, Qadā' in its real meaning is the judging of a thing and deciding it as it should be fixed. However, it is sometimes used in the sense of creating things as they should really be, according to God's knowledge and His wisdom, as in the verse 41:12. According to this meaning, Qadā' might be attributed to God and said that He decrees man's actions, i.e. He creates them.⁽¹⁾ The term is also used sometimes in the sense of judging (hukm), as in the verses 20:72; 3:47. In this sense it is also related to man's actions. Thus it might be said that God judges that so and so does such and such at a certain time, so acting accordingly and doing the certain action at the prescribed time. Such judgement, however, is meted according to God's prior knowledge of what is going to be and according to this expected action, will also judge whether a man should be punished, or rewarded, blamed or praised.⁽²⁾ Qadā' is also used in the sense of "to inform" as in the verse, 17:4, and there is no objection for attributing Qadā' in this sense to God. It is also used in the sense of commanding (amr) as in the verses 17:23; 33:36. In this sense Qadā' is attributed to God only in the case of good actions (khayrāt). Sometimes it might be used in the sense of finishing or completing an action (faragha) as in the verse 28:29, and in this sense it should not

(1) Tawhīd, p.306,1-6.

(2) Ibid., p.306,6-11.

be attributed to God because it implies that He is occupied doing or finishing something. Yet it might be used figuratively to indicate that He has completed His creation. (1)

Qadar, however, is of two aspects: one is the measure (hadd) according to which the thing is made, that is the formation of everything as it is whether good or evil, beautiful or ugly, wise or foolish. This is what is meant by the verse 54:49, "Surely We have created everything in measure". The second meaning is that the determination of a thing by a certain time or place, be it true or false, deserves punishment or reward. Qadar, in both senses, is connected with man's actions. From the first aspect it is becoming good and ugly in a way that is not conceived or measured by human intellect. The second aspect is that they cannot determine the action by certain time or place, which in both cases must be by God's determination. (2)

Thus Qadā' and Qadar, according to al-Māturīdī, are related to man's actions from those aspects upon which man has no control. Therefore, no-one should use them as an excuse for his wrongdoings or sins. To clarify this point al-Māturīdī said that Qadā' , Qadar, creation and will of man's actions, are no excuse for him for the following reasons:

1. God decrees and creates (certain actions of man) according to His prior knowledge that such actions will be chosen and preferred by man. According to God's will, creation and decree, man attained the actions which he preferred. Therefore, he should

(1) Tawhīd, pp.306,12-18; 307,1.

(2) Ibid., p.307,3-14.

not argue on the basis of Qadā' and Qadar, since these actions are the best stimulus to him.⁽¹⁾ What al-Māturīdī seems to be driving at, is that these processes do not compel man, or force him to do this or that action, because these actions are oriented to agree with man's choice which is already known to God.

2. Al-Māturīdī openly stated that Qadā' and Qadar and will do not force man or compel him to do his action, but as a matter of fact he would still have done the same action, if there were no such processes. Moreover, man has been provided with the power to do the opposite of these actions, which proves that these processes did not compel him, nor turn him away from the reality of the act. Everyone, al-Māturīdī said, knows from his own experience that he has choice, preference, that he is acting according to these feelings and is able not to do the act. So there is a difference between the creation of man's actions and the creation of substances, accidents, and the times and places of the actions. Man has freedom of choice and a role to play in his actions, but not in these processes.⁽²⁾

3. A third reason is that no-one feels while he is performing an act that he is incited by God's will or His decree, so any argument, or basing an excuse on these processes, is false, otherwise he could find excuses in so many things which are not related or have no influence on his actions.⁽³⁾ Al-Māturīdī concluded that, "the fundamental fact is that everyone knows from

(1) Tawhīd, p.309.1-5. Ta'wīlāt, 33:36.

(2) Tawhīd, p.309,6-12. Ta'wīlāt, 42:46.

(3) Tawhīd, p.309,13-16.ff.

his own experience that he is doer, and has power over his action, that he prefers this particular action and chose it from among other actions, that so much so, if he were prevented from performing it, he would be distressed, and no-one can deny such a fact. At the same time, however, one finds that his actions do not always occur according to his estimation and his intention of them to be of certain qualities and at a certain place and time. This proves that his actions from these later aspects do not belong to him, so whoever tried to attribute the acts from these aspects or deny them to man from the preceding ones, is self-willed and obstinate."⁽¹⁾

Though the Mu'tazilites did not deny the doctrine of Qadar, they did not accept the notion that man's actions, and in particular the evil ones, are predetermined by God. Thus, al-Ka'bī, as a leading member of the sect, maintained that God does not decree unbelief, and argued that unbelief is imperfection and falsehood, while what God decrees is true and right. He quoted the tradition in which God says, "he who does not approve of My decree and is not patient with the misfortune with which I afflicted him, should look for a god other than Me." He said that since no-one approved of disbelief, it should not be included in what God decrees.⁽²⁾ He explained the verse, 54:49, in the same sense, as that which is measured or decreed is that which is desired and approved; certainly unbelief is neither approved nor desired.⁽³⁾

(1) Tawhīd, p.310,3-11.

(2) Ibid., pp.307,16-18; 308,1-2.

(3) Ibid., p.308,15-16.

Al-Māturīdī rebuked al-Ka'bī for his failure to understand the simple principle of Kalām (i.e. the rational method of argument), and pointed out that the judgement of what is false is false, and what is imperfect is imperfect, is just and right. The judgement that the act of benevolence, as benevolence, is not false or imperfect, so God's judgement that disbelief is false is not false. (1) The Tradition which al-Ka'bī quoted, fully supports this statement and should be understood in the sense that the approval (ridā') of what God decrees in relation to kufr, is to know that unbelief is dwindling (mudmahill), is ugly, and that it is evil, corrupt and leads to the destruction and punishment of him who holds it. Whoever does not approve of such a fact is an unbeliever, and in this sense the meaning of the report applies to him. The act of unbelief and evil is the action of man, and it is impossible to say that it is God's decree. (2) Al-Māturīdī pointed out that this Tradition is concerned with illness and misfortune, and according to the Mu'tazilite doctrine such acts are not decreed to one who commits no sin unless God gives him indemnity ('iwad), thus, in a way, they are not approving of God's decree till they are given indemnity, and thus this Tradition fully fits them. (3)

Al-Māturīdī made it quite clear that there is a difference between the decreeing of the existence of evil and sin, the pre-determination of them, and the committing of sin and evil. While

(1) Tawhīd, p.307,18-21.

(2) Ibid., p.308,3-7.

(3) Ibid., p.308,8-12.

the decreeing, creation and predetermination of them are the work of God, their committing is the work of man, by means of his capacity, choice and intention. He pointed out that what is attributed to God is either being his command, or indicates reverence of Him. In the attribution of sin, neither of these would be realized. "Strictly speaking," al-Maturīdī said, "even though God is the Lord of everything, the God of everything, and the creator of everything, and everything is His, this is not said of dungs, impurities, and the devil. ... Thus to say that unbelief and sins exist by reason of God's decree, predetermination, and will is reprehensible ... similarly people do not say: O creator of impurities and dirt, and other such expressions, even though He is in fact the creator of everything. The reason for this is that it is permissible to attribute to God everything which constitutes glorification, gratitude, the mention of His blessings or commands; anything other than this should not be attributed to Him, even if in fact it is created by Him."⁽¹⁾

Related to these discussions is the problem of whether or not God bestows certain favours to some people and withholds it from others. In the Qur'ān many verses indicate that God bestows His guidance on some people and leads others astray, that He supports some and abandons others. The Mu'tazilites tried to explain such verses in a manner to suit their principle of "justice". Thus, they said that the expression, "God led men astray" does not mean that He leads them into unbelief or causes them not to believe. According to al-Ash'arī, "Many of the Mu'tazilites

(1) Tawhīd, p.312,5-21. Ta'wīlāt 27:88.

explained that "lead astray" (adalla), when attributed to God in the Qur'ān, means, "He judges them to be astray or erring or He said that about them that they are erring, and called them so."⁽¹⁾ Similar views were attributed to the Mu'tazilites by al-Māturīdī who said that, "The Qadarites (probably he means the Mu'tazilites) explained the concepts of leading astray (adalla), causing to deviate (izāgha) and turning away their hearts (saraf) in the sense that God tried and abandoned men (mihna wa-takhliyya) in their doing evil actions, and He helped them and commanded them to do good deeds. They also explained "leading astray" in the sense that God calls them "strayers".⁽²⁾

Though al-Māturīdī emphasized the doctrine of God's justice, he made similar emphasis on God's favour; and pointed out that all actions of God are based on His justice and favour. Thus he rejected the Mu'tazilites' interpretation of these concepts. He refuted the explanation of idlāl in the sense of calling them astray, by referring to the fact that anyone who calls another "strayer" would not be said he led him astray. Moreover, there is no merit or wisdom attributed to God, when He calls someone by this term. Al-Māturīdī pointed out that God is described by His action, which means His creation of everything in the manner appropriate to it. In His action, God is either doing justice or bestowing favour, therefore, his actions are never free from one of these concepts, which refutes the Mu'tazilite denial of God's favour.⁽³⁾

(1) Maqālāt, pp.261-62.

(2) Tawhīd, p.313,5-7, 15.

(3) Ibid., p.313,7-13, 16-17, 19-20.

Al-Ka'bi, following the Mu'tazilite general view, explained the verse 6:125, "Whomsoever God desires to guide, He expands his breast to Islam; whomsoever He desires to lead astray, He makes his breast narrow tight as if he were climbing to heaven", as referring to the period which follows belief and disbelief, asserting that God's will did not precede, or cause either of them. To al-Ka'bi, the verse means that God gives him, who obeys, some of His favour (lata'if), calls him by honourable names, and awards him the best, in order to strengthen his desire to obey Him more. Reference to this sense has been made in the verses: "but those who are guided aright, them He increases in guidance",⁽¹⁾ and the verse, "and thereby He leads none astray save the ungodly".⁽²⁾ According to al-Ka'bi, guidance and leading astray is not possible beforehand, without one deserving God's enmity or friendship, for two reasons: One is that God has no favour and He is not compliant. Secondly, he who discriminates between his servants according to the mode of his circumstances would have no right to blame them for their actions, since they in fact have no choice or full freedom in their actions.⁽³⁾

Al-Maturidi did not accept al-Ka'bi's explanation of this verse, and pointed out his fault in interpreting the verse as referring to the state of man before he commits himself to faith or unbelief. He said that the verse clearly states that "whomsoever God desires to guide, He expands his breast to Islam", thus

(1) Qur'an, 47:17.

(2) Ibid., 2:26.

(3) Tawhid, pp.300,14-19; 301,1-2.

he becomes muslim when God expands his breast to it, and not that he expands his breast after he becomes a muslim."⁽¹⁾ It might be asked whether the acts of faith and disbelief are accompanied or not with the expansion of the breast and its tightening up respectively, or whether they are of the same condition in respect of expansion and tightening up of the breast. It cannot be said that they are of the same condition, so it must be admitted that God has a favour which He bestows on one who becomes faithful and withholds it from another who becomes an unbeliever.⁽²⁾ It might also be asked of him (i.e. al-Ka'bi) whether that which has been increased after faith, helps and facilitates in respect of religion or not. Al-Ka'bi has to answer affirmatively and has to admit, according to his own doctrine of the "best", that God bestows something which is best for man in respect of religion.⁽³⁾

In his Ta'wīlāt, al-Māturīdī widely discussed these concepts, and took every opportunity to refute the Mu'tazilite view. He emphasized the point that God bestows guidance to some people and withholds it from others without impairing his justice, as the Mu'tazilites thought. For such a favour is connected with God's prior knowledge of what man is going to choose and how he is going to perform his actions. Thus, commenting on the verse 5:41, "Those are they whose hearts God desires not to purify", al-Māturīdī said, this verse means that God does not will their

(1) Tawhīd, p.301,4-6.

(2) Ibid., p.301,10-14.

(3) Ibid., p.301,15-18.

hearts to be purified. He knew prior that they would choose, what they had chosen, and willed it, therefore he wrote what he had already known that they would will and choose. The verse, therefore, refutes the Mu'tazilites' assertion that God does not will the purification of the hearts of some people.⁽¹⁾ Also the verse 12:33, which states that Joseph invoked God's help and His protection from the cunning of the women, proves to al-Maturīdī that God has a favour which He did not bestow on Joseph. Had He bestowed it on him, then the women's wicked deeds would have been turned from Joseph. The verse refutes the Mu'tazilites' assertion that God has given everyone power to perform obedience and to refrain from evil.⁽²⁾

The Mu'tazilites explained guidance (huda) in the sense of making something clear (bayān), saying that in this sense God gives guidance to all mankind and those who forfeit it do so willingly. Al-Maturīdī did not accept this view, and argued from the verse 28:56, "You guide not whom you like, but God guides whom He wills", that if "guidance" is only an explanation, the prophet would have certainly explained to them, this proves that there is a guidance other than explanation, which is bestowed on man, and which would make him a believer. "Guidance" in this sense of succour (tawfiq), protection ('isma) and right direction (sadād), is beyond the control of the prophet and only God can provide it.⁽³⁾ Also the verse 35:22, "God makes to hear

(1) Ta'wilāt, 5:41.

(2) Ibid., 12:33.

(3) Ibid., 28:56.

whomsoever He wills, thou canst not make these in their tombs to hear", proves that God has favour and something which He does not bestow on them. Had He done so, they would all have been guided and become believers. (1)

Many verses, al-Māturīdī said, refute the Mu'tazilites' claim, and confirm that God gives guidance to some people and He leads others astray. Thus the verse, 2:26, "Thereby He leads many astray, and thereby He guides many, and thereby He leads none astray save the ungodly", clearly states that by striking a similitude, God intends to guide some people, and to lead others astray, but all this is based on His prior knowledge of what they are going to choose and prefer. (2)

The Mu'tazilites interpreted the terms khatm and tab', (sealing and imprinting in relation to the heart), which occur in the Qur'ān, in a manner consistent with their general view that they imply no prior prevention of man from belief or getting guidance. (3) According to al-Māturīdī, the Mu'tazilites interpreted the verse 2:7, "God has set a seal on their hearts and on their hearing, and on their eyes is a covering", in the sense that God makes a sign on their hearts showing that they are not going to believe, similar to the sign of the title of a book or a message. Al-Māturīdī did not accept this understanding of the verse and said that khatm means that God creates the darkness of disbelief in their hearts, but that was a result of their negligence.

(1) Ta'wīlāt, 35:22.

(2) Ibid., 2:26.

(3) Maqālāt, p.259.

Therefore, God sets seal on their hearts when they abandon pondering and reflection, sets seals on their hearing when they refrain from listening to the truth, and covers their eyes when they stop looking at themselves and the world around them, in order to infer that they are temporal and He who creates them is eternal. (1)

5. The Actions of God

The Mu'tazilite doctrine of "justice" led them to believe that God's actions are destined for a certain purpose: that is what is best for man in his religion. According to ash-Shahrastānī, "The Mu'tazilites unanimously declare that the wise can only do what is best and good, and that His wisdom keeps in view what is best for His servants." (2)

In both Kitāb at-Tawhīd and the Ta'wīlāt, al-Māturīdī shows his disapproval of the Mu'tazilite doctrine of the "best", disclosing the weakness of their arguments for such a view, and how their whole concept is related to the dualists. He said that, "some people assumed that whoever acts without intending to benefit others by his actions is not wise, and whoever acts without aiming by his actions towards a certain purpose is fooling around ('ābith)." They hold that it is not possible that God would do harm to anyone without deserving such a harm, considering it as obligatory to God to do what is best for others in matters concerning religion, and do for them whatever is good

(1) Ta'wīlāt, 2:7.

(2) Milal, vol.1, p.45.

in the outcome. Thus they limited God's actions, in the sense that they must be intended either to cause benefit for others, or protect them from harm. They measured God's acts to those of the wise men in that His actions must be in agreement with the principle of wisdom. They conceded, however, that God differs from the wise men among men, in that His doing or not doing an action would neither elevate nor debase Him, His actions neither bring Him benefit nor defend Him against harm. The wisdom in His actions is basically that they cause benefits and protect others from harm, otherwise they would just be useless ('abath).⁽¹⁾ The Mu'tazilites gave different explanations to the apparent existence of harm in the world. Some denied its existence altogether, and others held that it exists but God must indemnify those who have been afflicted in order that His acts be in accordance with wisdom.⁽²⁾

Al-Maturīdī agreed with the Mu'tazilites that God's actions cannot be against the principle of wisdom, but he did not accept their view regarding the definition of wisdom and its relation to observable good and evil in the world. He defines wisdom as placing a thing in its proper place, which is contrary to foolishness.⁽³⁾ He said that he who knows God very well, that He is self-sufficient, all powerful and that to Him belong creation and command, would necessarily know that His acts cannot be against wisdom, because He is the wise by virtue of

(1) Tawhīd, pp.215,6-19; 216,1-2.

(2) Ibid., p.216,11-12.

(3) Ibid., p.114,10-11.

Himself, all-sufficient and all-knowing. What leads one to act against wisdom is either ignorance or being in need. Both of these concepts are inappropriate for God. Thus we know that His actions cannot possibly be against wisdom.⁽¹⁾ To al-Māturīdī, injustice and foolishness are repulsive, while justice and wisdom are good in general (fi-l-jumla), but when it comes to particular things, we find that they are relative concepts. One thing might be wisdom, foolishness, justice and injustice according to its difference circumstances. Since, in general, wisdom and justice are good and injustice and foolishness are bad, we must affirm that all God's actions are according to wisdom, justice or unmerited grace (fadl) and beneficence (ihsān), because He is the most beneficent, self-sufficient and all-knowing, and it would be inappropriate to ascribe injustice or foolishness to him who has such characteristics.⁽²⁾

Since things in relation to justice and injustice, foolishness or wisdom, differ according to the differences of circumstances, it is quite possible that their real nature might be concealed from reason. Therefore, it would be very difficult for human reason to judge God's actions or His law as being wise or foolish, just or unjust. This discloses the falsity of both the dualists and the Mu'tazilites in their attempts to subjugate God's actions to the criterion laid down by human intellect.⁽³⁾ Reason, to al-Māturīdī, is a created instrument, which has its

(1) Tawhīd, p.216,16-20.

(2) Ibid., p.217,13-21.

(3) Ibid., pp.217,21-23; 218,1-9.

shortcomings and limitations. Its judgements are largely influenced by its own circumstances, so it might be afflicted by something which prevents it from distinguishing between wisdom and foolishness. Therefore, we must assume that wisdom exists in all God's actions whether we are able to conceive it by our intellect or not.⁽¹⁾ Moreover, an act is foolish in the visible world if it involves trespassing on another's property, or disobeying a commander: both cases are not applicable to God.⁽²⁾ According to al-Māturīdī, the ascription of injustice and foolishness and similar concepts to anyone would be wrong in two cases: (i) If these concepts are repulsive according to the judgement of intuition and reason, so that whenever one thinks about them, one realizes their repulsive nature and discovers that they are very abhorrent. Concepts of such a nature are different from those which natural disposition, (tab'), judges as repulsive, such as slaying of animals, which is not so bad after one becomes used to it. What is thought as repulsive among God's actions is not of the nature of the first kind, otherwise no-one can trust His promise or fear His threat, nor hope for His grace, or feel secure from his deeds.⁽³⁾ What al-Māturīdī seems to be trying to establish is, that what seems to us as repulsive among God's actions is not intrinsically so, but their unacceptable nature is due to misunderstanding on our part. If we thought carefully about them we might discover the goodness in them. (ii) The other

(1) Tawhīd, p.116,9-12.

(2) Ibid., p.218,10-13.

(3) Ibid., pp.218,20-23; 219,4-7.

case is that if one is induced to such actions as a result of need or ignorance, from which God is free. (1)

Al-Māturīdī criticized the Mu'tazilite methodology, which is based on judging God's actions according to the actions of the wise men. He said that since God possesses the qualities of essential knowledge, power, might and life, none of which wise men possess, there is no justification in comparing His actions to the actions of the wise men. Moreover, there is none of the wise men, in the present, who is not liable to foolishness, similarly the self-sufficient and powerful among them is liable to possess the opposite of these qualities. In fact the wise men were possessors of these opposite qualities, then they were given self-sufficiency and power. However, they do not possess these qualities in their absolute natures, but in the limited sense, according to their experience and previous learning. In judging a certain case they have to depend on their stored knowledge and previous experience. Thus, for a man, regardless of his wisdom, to claim judgement on God's actions would be presumptuous. This can be explained further by the fact that every wise man knows that he is ignorant of so many things, that he is incapable and in need regarding various matters; he also knows very well his foolishness in respect of so many things. A man of such characteristics would be foolish and ignorant to indulge in judgement on God's actions. (2)

In his Ta'wīlāt, al-Māturīdī widely discussed the Mu'tazilite

(1) Tawhīd, pp.219,23; 200, 1 ff.

(2) Ibid., p.220,5-15.

doctrine of the "best", and made reference in many verses to the weakness of their arguments. (1)

Two questions were closely connected with the doctrine of the "best": one is concerned with the cause behind God's creation of the world, and the other is how the existence of evil in the world could be explained and be harmonized with God's wisdom. To the first question, al-Māturīdī devoted a special section in Kitāb at-Tawhīd, where he introduced different answers of various groups. (2) What interests us here are the answers introduced by some of the Mu'tazilites and that introduced by an-Najjār. According to al-Māturīdī, some of the Mu'tazilites answer this question saying that God considered such a creation as the best, so He did it, and He is not subject to question regarding His doing the best. (3) Al-Māturīdī questioned the validity of this answer, saying that if the Mu'tazilites meant by the "best", the wisdom, then their view would be similar to the view of those who hold that God's actions cannot be against wisdom. If they meant something else by the term aslah, they have to explain their view more precisely. They should, however, be ashamed of using such a term (i.e. the best) for God. The Mu'tazilite view of the "best" implies that God would have no alternative but to do what He has done, and according to this He would not be bestowing any favours in His actions, which is an extremely blameworthy attribute. Al-Māturīdī argued

(1) See Ta'wīlāt, 13:11; 6:58; 24:32; 28:5; 36:47.

(2) Tawhīd, pp.96-99.

(3) Ibid., p.97,8-9.

that if it is not open to God to do better than what He has done, then He would be taking advantage of His creations, thus being in need of it, which is impossible for God. (1)

An-Najjār answers this question by saying that God created the world for many reasons, some of the world is created as signs and proofs, admonition or warning, grace and mercy, nourishment and sustenance. Some objects have been created to be under the control of other objects, or to be fortune or misfortune for them. To an-Najjār therefore, all creation is according to God's wisdom which is the placing of everything in its proper place. (2)

Al-Māturīdī openly showed his approval of what an-Najjār said in this respect, saying that, besides what an-Najjār has sufficiently explained, it might be added that the reason behind the creation is the fulfillment of God's commandments and His prohibitions, and the realization of attraction and intimidation (targhīb wa-tarhīb). To explain this point, al-Māturīdī said that God created His creature and provided him with all the means of attaining knowledge, and bestowed on him many favours and graces. Therefore, it is most likely that man should be accountable for his actions, thus would be punished and rewarded according to his conformity with God's commandments and prohibitions. Thus, to al-Māturīdī, the main purpose behind the creation is the kulfa or mihna, that is, the judgement of man in the hereafter. (3)

(1) Tawhīd, pp.99,19-21; 100,1-2.

(2) Ibid., p.99,7-14.

(3) Ibid., pp.100-101.

As for the second question, that is the existence of evil in the world, al-Māturīdī said that there is a wisdom behind the creation of evil things such as: snakes and harmful substances, though our intellect might not be capable enough to grasp the divine wisdom in that, or fail to know the nature of the wisdom in them. He pointed out that these evil things should be considered in relation to the good ones, in order to attain reasonable explanation for their creation. Then he introduced the following explanations for the creation of evil. He said that evil things might have been created along with the good things in order to demonstrate the kind of rewards for obedience and punishment for disobedience, because human beings are created with a natural propensity for finding purpose in their actions. To satisfy such a nature, an example from the present is made to indicate the nature of the things man has been promised, thus it would become easier for him to realize the outcome of his works.⁽¹⁾ Another explanation is that these evil things were created to be a tangible example for man, and to teach him how to be careful in dealing with his enemies, and warn him from committing bad deeds. Man can attain such knowledge through his intellect, but not all people are able to do so, therefore, these evils are created to warn those who are intellectually incapable of distinguishing between what benefits them and what causes them harm.⁽²⁾ It might also be said that things were created in such a contradictory nature, of good and evil, to prove

(1) Tawhīd, p.108,15-20.

(2) Ibid., pp.108,22-23; 109,1 ff.

the existence of their controller who is all-knowing and one, and to demonstrate His wisdom in combining them in such a way.⁽¹⁾ Another explanation for the creation of evil things is that they have been created in order to humiliate the tyrants and kings, and to disclose their weaknesses, so that they would not dare to boast of their strength and power.⁽²⁾ Finally, al-Māturīdī said, every element which seems to be harmful contains some benefits which man might or might not be able to comprehend. If we take, for example, fire we find that it burns, but at the same time it is very useful for other purposes such as cooking. Similarly, we find water can be a source of life or death for all creatures; poisonous stuff has some medical benefits for curing certain diseases. So every element does have some benefits and contains harms, so much so, that to say that some substances are absolutely evil and harmful, or absolutely beneficial and good, is wrong.⁽³⁾

(1) Tawhīd, p.109,8-10.

(2) Ibid., p.109,13-15.

(3) Ibid., pp.109,18-20; 110,1-3.

CHAPTER VI

AL-ASH'ARĪ ON THE DOCTRINE OF QADAR

In the Luma', Risāla II and the Ibāna, al-Ash'arī dealt with different aspects of the problem of Qadar. He also expressed some of his views regarding this problem in his descriptive work, the Maqālāt. As we have already noted, these works seem to differ in the emphasis they place on roughly similar views.

1. The Analysis of Man's Actions

In the Luma', al-Ash'arī introduced the section on Qadar with an argument based on some Qur'ānic verses to the effect that man's actions were created by God. He quoted the verses 37:96, "God created you and what you do", and the verse, "As a recompense for that they have been doing".⁽¹⁾ Here al-Ash'arī pointed out that, as the reward in the latter verse is given for an action, the creation in the first verse must be related also to the action, and thus the verse establishes that the actions of man are created by God.⁽²⁾

The Mu'tazilites, who refuted such a doctrine, referred to the verse, 37:95, preceding the above mentioned verse 37:96, which reads, "Do you worship what you carve?" They argued that this verse refers to the idols of the pagan Arabs. So the verse following it, 37:96, must also refer to them, and thus it proves

(1) Qur'ān, 32:17; 46:14.

(2) Luma', p.37,3-6. In the Ibāna al-Ash'arī quoted these verses, but he did not introduce this detailed discussion. See Ibāna, p.68.

that ta'malūn refers only to the idols, not to men's acts. Al-Ash'arī refuted this argument by stating that they really carved the idols, but did not make the wood, so ta'malūn cannot refer to idols. (1) In the same way, the Mu'tazilites quoted the verse, 7:117, "It forthwith swallowed up their lying invention", which refers to the story of Moses whose staff turned into a serpent and swallowed the serpents which the Magicians had "invented" from their staffs. What they invented, the Mu'tazilites argued, was not the act of invention (ifk), but its result, that is, they made what seemed to be serpents; likewise, "what you do" in the verse 37:96 did not, for the Mu'tazilites, mean "your actions" but the idols.

Al-Ash'arī rejected this Mu'tazilite conclusion. While admitting the truth of the assertion that what they "deceptively invented" refers to the likeness of the serpents, he maintained that, in the case of the idolaters, they did not really make the wood. He, moreover, pointed out that it is not valid to compare such verses in this way, otherwise it might be argued that if what they "deceptively invented" was not the action of deception (but its result), then "as recompense for that they have been doing" does not mean a recompense for their actions (but only for their results). With this demonstration of the fruitlessness of such a manner of arguments in this case, al-Ash'arī showed that a comparison between the Qur'ānic words, "What they deceptively invented" and "God creates you and what you make" to be inappropriate. (2)

(1) Luma', p.37,7-11.

(2) Ibid., pp.37,12-17; 38,1-8.

Then al-Ash'arī introduced rational arguments to support his view that man's actions are created by God. One of his arguments to this effect is based on the proposition that an act cannot be said to be created by somebody unless he has full knowledge of it as it is, and that he wills it to be such. From what we observe in man's actions, al-Ash'arī said, we find that he has neither full knowledge of them nor do they come about according to his will. The unbelievers, for example, exert themselves to justify their convictions (which are bad and false), but they fail in this, and their convictions become contrary to their intention. Thus they cannot be the creator of their acts of disbelief. The creator of such an act must be another being who intentionally produces it as unbelief (which is bad and false), and that is God, who is the creator of all man's actions whether innate or compulsory, or acquired. (1)

Another argument demonstrating divine creation of all man's actions follows: it states that it is established beyond doubt that compulsory acts are created by God, but there is no reason to differentiate between these acts and the acquired ones, since both types of action are temporal and in need of time and place. So, as the compulsory acts are created by God, the acquired actions must also be created by Him. (2)

To the objection that if the two actions are so similar, then they must be both compulsory or acquired actions, al-Ash'arī's answer seems to suggest that in spite of this similarity between

(1) Luma', pp.38-39. Ibāna, p.69,2-6.

(2) Luma', p.41,1-7.

them, in that they are both created by God, there is difference between them in their relation to man. He pointed out that in the case of compulsory acts a man finds himself constrained, compelled and forced in his actions, as in the case of one who is shaking from palsy or shivering from fever. Every one, al-Ash'arī said, realized that one who goes and comes, and approaches and retires, is quite different from one who shakes from palsy or shivers from fever; and every one knows very well how to distinguish between the two states in himself and in others by a necessary knowledge which leaves no room for doubt.⁽¹⁾ It is upon this very differentiation between the acquired and compulsory actions that al-Ash'arī seems to have formulated his conception of kasb (acquisition).

2. His Conception of Kasb and Man's Power

In the Luma' and the Maqālāt, al-Ash'arī defines kasb in the same terms: "The true meaning of acquisition is that the thing proceeds from its acquirer by virtue of a created power"⁽²⁾ "The truth in my view is that the meaning of acquisition (iktisāb) is that the thing occurs by means of an originated power, that it is an acquisition of the person through whose power it occurs."⁽³⁾ Thus al-Ash'arī differentiates between the acquired actions of man and his compulsory actions by means of this originated power, yet they are both created by God as are all things. In this

(1) Luma', pp.41,8-20; 42,1-5.

(2) Ibid., p.42,1-2.

(3) Maqālāt, p.542,8-9.

sense, man does not create his actions, rather he acquires them. He himself chooses to acquire the action, and at this moment God creates a power for him to do so. Thus the action is in fact created by God through this power originated in the man, which is a necessary condition for the action to exist. Thus man has no positive role in his acquired actions apart from his being conscious of them. It is God alone who creates or even acquires these actions, for He is the only true efficient agent of all acts and events.⁽¹⁾ Al-Ash'arī carefully distinguished between "acquiring" and "doing" and refrained from using the latter term for man's action, because this would be to dispense with the true agent, that is God, who is essential as the originator of the act. While the act can exist without its acquirer, God cannot cause man to acquire, because acquisition occurs through a temporal power which is impossible for God, yet the agent of kasb is not man but God, because man cannot actually be true agent of anything, not even for his acquisition.⁽²⁾ Thus it seems that al-Ash'arī assigned a rather passive role to the muktasib (that is man).

Al-Ash'arī's views on kasb have been strengthened by his emphasis on the point that man does not have the power to perform the action before he performs it, and that this power is specific for the act and not effective for its opposite. Against an-Nazzām's and al-Aswārī's definition of power,⁽³⁾ al-Ash'arī

(1) Luma', p.39,10-14. cf. Ghorāba, "Al-Ash'arī's Theory of Acquisition", I.Q.2 (1955), pp.3-8.

(2) Luma', pp.39,15-20; 40,1-17.

(3) Maqālāt, pp.229,3-4.

stated that man is capable of acting by virtue of a power which is distinct from him, because man sometimes performs an action and sometimes is impotent, just as he knows at one time and does not know at another, and now moves and again does not move.⁽¹⁾

Then he proceeds to establish that such a power does not precede the action, but it exists simultaneously with the realization of the act. To prove this point, al-Ash'arī argued that the act must either be simultaneous with the realization of the power or that it must follow it. If the act comes into existence after the power, and if it is established that power does not endure, it would be necessary to postulate that the act comes into existence by means of a non-existing power, and if this is possible, then it would also be possible to assume that burning results from a non-existing fire, and cutting from a non-existing sword, and the cutting could be done by a non-existing limb, but since all these are impossible, it must be established that these acts exist simultaneously with the power.⁽²⁾

Since man's power exists simultaneously with the act, it logically follows that such a power exists only in relation to one act and that its effect does not extend to the act and its opposite. To establish this point, al-Ash'arī clearly stated that the existence of the originated power is preconditioned by

(1) Luma', p.54,3-9.

(2) Ibid., pp.54,10-20; 55,1-3. One might understand from the examples given by al-Ash'arī in this respect, that the relations of man's power to his action is to a greater extent similar to the relation of these causes to their effects.

the simultaneous existence of its object (maqḍūr).⁽¹⁾ In order to elaborate this point, he drew a contrast between God's power and man's. He pointed out that God's power transcends all beings, and can have no temporal relation to the existence of its object, so that its realization does not necessitate the simultaneous existence of its object. Man's power is strongly connected with the realization of its object and can exist only in an immediate and simultaneous temporal correlation to its object. Thus it would be impossible to assume that it is related to more than one act since this would mean that they were all in existence.⁽²⁾ He denies the possibility that one power can be related to more than one object, and said that the power is not only for that which exists simultaneously in time with it, but also for what exists with it in its locus (mahal). So if it were a power for more than one effect, these effects would have to exist simultaneously with it, which would entail the simultaneous existence of contradictory effects in one locality, and this would mean that one of them would be an effect which does not exist with its immediate cause, which is impossible.⁽³⁾

Then al-Ash'arī argued from another aspect, to the effect that man's power for action is simultaneous with the act. He said that he for whom God does not create a power cannot acquire anything. Hence, since he cannot acquire the act if there is no capacity, it is certain that the acquisition exists only

(1) Luma', p.55,10-11.

(2) Ibid., pp.55,12-18; 56,1-5.

(3) Ibid., p.56,6-16.

because the capacity exists. Equally, this is an affirmation that the capacity exists with the act and for the act.⁽¹⁾

Then al-Ash'arī proceeds to explain the nature of man's power. It has already been mentioned that some of the Mu'tazilites maintained that power consists of the strength and physical well-being of the body and with the non-existence of this power, there would be no action.⁽²⁾ To al-Ash'arī, however, power is pertaining to something more than the physical organs. In many instances, he differentiated between ability in the sense of means and physical strength, and ability of the body (badan) whose existence entails the existence of its object.⁽³⁾

On the basis of such a conception of power, al-Ash'arī rejected the assumption that the non-existence of limbs (jāriha) entails an inability to acquire (kasb). He pointed out that it is true that the non-existence of jāriha leads to the non-existence of power which results in the non-existence of acquisition (iktisāb). So, acquisition becomes impossible, not because of the absence of limbs, but because of the non-existence of the power, which is the immediate ground for the acquisition of the act. Al-Ash'arī argued that since the limbs can exist together with impotence, and since when power is inexistent there is no acquisition, that the acquisition does not take place because of the non-existence of the capacity and the limbs.⁽⁴⁾

(1) Luma', p.56,17-20.

(2) See supra, Chapter V, p.334.

(3) Luma', pp.62,15-16; 63,4-5; 9-10.

(4) Ibid., p.57,1-7.

To the assumption that the non-existence of life entails the non-existence of acquisition, which necessitates the admission that the non-existence of limbs entails the non-existence of acquisition as well, al-Ash'arī replied that these cases are not the same, because with the non-existence of life there would be no power. Hence the acquisition becomes non-existence as a result of the non-existence of life. For life might exist accompanied by impotence and in this case man would not be muktasib. Similarly, to the proposition that the non-existence of knowledge of the act entails the non-existence of the act, al-Ash'arī replied that the realization or non-realization of the act depends on the existence or non-existence of power, and not on the existence or non-existence of knowledge. Such a knowledge, however, might be realized without the necessary realization of the action, whereas the realization of power is necessarily accompanied by simultaneous realization of the action.⁽¹⁾ He stated that there are two preconditions for the possibility of the realization of any action; that there should be an absence of any internal or external constraint or impediment to the freedom of action, and that the physical organism (binya) should be suitable to be the locality of both the power and the act resulting from it.⁽²⁾

Then al-Ash'arī proceeds to substantiate these rational arguments with quotations from the Qur'an as proofs for the theses that the power for the act and its realization exist simultaneously. To this end, he quoted the verses 18:67, 11:20 and

(1) Luma', p.57,8-18.

(2) Ibid., pp.57,19; 58,1-5.

18:101. (1) Commenting on al-Ash'arī's method in dealing with this problem, R.M. Frank remarked that al-Ash'arī had deliberately left those quotations to the end of his treatment of the point, because he was well aware of their weaknesses as a support for his thesis, in that they all involve negative statements. (2) It is clear that the form of these verses is negative, but at the same time it must be remembered that such an arrangement of evidences and proofs is the normal procedure adopted by al-Ash'arī throughout the Luma'. The best example of this might be found in his treatment of the problems of God's visibility and the affirmation of God's attributes.

Then al-Ash'arī dealt with the problem of whether it is possible for God to impose upon man duties which he is not able to perform. He said that the above-mentioned verses, 18:67, 11:20 and 18:101, fully confirmed such a doctrine. Those people referred to in the verses 11:20 and 18:101, neither accepted the truth nor listened to it, though they have been commended to, because they were unable to do so; their inability to do so, however, was not as a result of 'ajz (absolute incapability), but as a result of their refusing to accept or listen. (3)

Al-Ash'arī's views on this point were based on his conceptions of the terms qudra, 'ajz and tark. It has already been seen that qudra not only means physical soundness, but also means what

(1) Luma', p.58,6-11.

(2) R.M. Frank, "The Structure of Created Causality according to al-Ash'arī." S.I. vol.25-26 (1966-67), p.62.

(3) Luma', p.58, 12-16.

he designated as the power of the "body", which is for the act and with which the act simultaneously exists. The non-existence of power has two aspects: absolute incapability ('ajz) and omitting to perform the act (tark). He considered 'ajz as an opposite of power and defined it as the absolute incapability to perform the act nor its opposite; the imposition of duties with such an incapability is inconceivable; tark, however, is to leave an action unperformed, and to wilfully perform the opposite; imposition of duties under such circumstances is quite possible. (1)

According to such conceptions, al-Ash'arī answered the question of whether the unbeliever is able to believe, by saying no. By performing the act of unbelief he has been occupied in performing a contrary belief. When he is asked to believe, nothing outwith his capability is imposed on him, because he is not in a state of 'ajz, but he has simply left the performance of the act of belief. In the case of 'ajz, he would not be able to perform the act of unbelief itself. (2)

Al-Ash'arī's opponents argued that if 'ajz has two objects, namely the action and its contrary, then by analogy, human power also has these two objects. (3) Al-Ash'arī rejected this, stating that if it were so then one would have to argue that divine help ('awn) for a thing is equalled by divine help for its contrary. Moreover, 'ajz entails the simultaneous non-existence of two or more mutually contrary objects, none of which man acquires. If

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(1) Luma', p.20,1-3.

(2) Ibid., pp.58,17-18; 59,1-5.

(3) Ibid., p.59,6-7.

human power were analogous to it, it would entail the simultaneous existence of contraries, all of which man would acquire, which is absurd (because the object of power is co-existent with the power, and the objects of impotence are concomitant with impotence). (1)

He made his views on this point quite clear by stating that where there was 'ajz in the form of limblessness in man ('adam al-jāriha), God would not impose anything on him, because that command would necessarily presuppose the possibility of its acceptance or rejection. Similarly, in the case of 'ajz which is an absolute incapability, neither the action nor its contrary can be realized. (2)

Al-Ash'arī then distinguished between the non-existence of power (in the sense of means, jāriha etc.) and the non-existence of all power which is equivalent to 'ajz, and while God can command in the first instance, He cannot in the second. He compared that situation with the case of the presupposition of knowledge, and he said that if the command where ability is absent entails the possibility of the command where all ability is absent, then the command with the lack of certain knowledge (that is the knowledge of God and the knowledge that He is commanding), would entail that God might command a man devoid of all knowledge. (3) What al-Ash'arī was trying to say, as M. Schwarz remarked, is that God cannot make an injunction upon one who had no knowledge

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(1) Luma', p.59,7-18.

(2) Ibid., pp.59,19-20; 60,1-3.

(3) Ibid., p.60,3-5.

at all, He would not command one who has no power at all to do a certain act, but this does not exclude the command in the case of the absence of particular power, or in the case of the absence of certain knowledge. (1)

In agreement with these definitions, al-Ash'arī pointed out that the man who has no wealth should be exempted from paying Zakāt because he has no means of performing this duty. So the non-existence of the means is equivalent to 'ajz or 'adam al-jāriha. (2) In another argument he confirmed his definition of gudra as that which comes into existence simultaneously with the realization of the act. Al-Ash'arī dealt with an argument against this definition which was expressed in the question of whether a man when he divorces his wife, or manumits his slave, can be said to be capable of divorcing his wife, who at the moment of the divorce is not his wife, or manumitting the slave who at the moment of his manumission is not his slave. In replying to this tortuous argument, al-Ash'arī simply expressed his view more emphatically and said that such a man is capable of so doing because the power in both cases is co-existent with the act. (3)

After explaining his view regarding the nature of man's power, al-Ash'arī proceeds to deal with a number of Qur'ānic verses, some of which the Mu'tazilites had used to substantiate their doctrine that power precedes the action, and that God may

(1) Schwarz, M. Theodicy in the Early Scholastic Theology of Islam up to al-Ghazālī, p.129.

(2) Luma', p.60,8-11.

(3) Ibid., p.61,2-10.

not impose a duty on one who has no power to perform it. Al-Ash'arī's main intention, in quoting these verses, was to demonstrate that these verses do not prove what the Mu'tazilites had used them to prove. He also quoted other verses to support his own views and doctrines.

The Mu'tazilites used the verse, 2:184, "And for those who are able to fast a redemption by feeding a poor man", as a proof for their view that the power precedes the act, on the basis that the verse refers to the capability of fasting at the time when the subject is not actually fasting, and that it states that those who are able to fast may nevertheless adopt another alternative, that is feeding a poor man. Al-Ash'arī did not accept the Mu'tazilites' interpretation of the verse. He said that the verse might be referring to those who are not able to fast, yet they are able to feed a poor man, and proposed for them the alternative to offer a ransom if they are going to fast. He did not consider the Mu'tazilites' interpretation of this verse to be totally wrong, but rather that the principle upon which they based their interpretation was inadmissible. He pointed out that the Mu'tazilites' interpretation is based on the view that the objective pronominal suffix it (hu) refers to a previously mentioned antecedent, that is the fast. The weakness of this is that it depends on grammatical arguments, while al-Ash'arī's explanation is based on traditional authorities; and, to him, the grammatical arguments cannot take precedence over the evidences of the companions of the prophet and those generations immediately after them. He added, however, that many grammarians do allow that the suffix "it" does not always refer to an ante-

cedent already mentioned. He also quoted some Qur'ānic verses where the Mu'tazilites seem to interpret the pronominal suffix as referring to a word that does not precede it.⁽¹⁾

The Mu'tazilites also quoted the verse, 27:39, "I will bring it to you before you rise from your place; I have strength for it and I am trusty" in which a Jinn is claiming he has the power to bring the throne of the Queen of Sheba to Solomon. They argued that had the demon lied in his claim, then God would not let such a lie be transmitted without exposing its falsity. They therefore claimed that the verse shows that the power precedes the act.⁽²⁾

Al-Ash'arī did not accept the principles upon which the Mu'tazilites based their interpretation of the verse, nor the conclusion they derived from it. In his interpretation, the demon must have meant either "I will bring it to you if I can" or "if God wills", otherwise Solomon would have refuted him.⁽³⁾ Following these arguments, al-Ash'arī introduced four Qur'ānic verses, 18:97; 12:42; 18:23-24 and 10:88, to support his analysis and to confirm his view that nothing could possibly take place without God's will.⁽⁴⁾

He next referred to the Qur'ānic verse, 28:26, which al-Jubbā'ī took as a proof for the doctrine that the power precedes the act. He claimed that since the daughter of Shu'ayb declared

(1) Luma', pp.61,12-17; 62,1-12.

(2) Ibid., p.65,1-7.

(3) Ibid., p.65,8-13.

(4) Ibid., pp.65-66.

that Moses was strong enough for the work which her father required, it implies that capacity is prior to the action. Al-Ash'arī pointed out that his master was mistaken in his understanding of the verse and in his conclusion, because the girl simply intended to refer to the strength of Moses and his trustworthiness which she had already witnessed, and she did not mean that he was strong enough for further work as al-Jubbā'ī understood. To prove this point, al-Ash'arī related the story which tells that the father accepted his daughter's statement regarding Moses' strength, but he indignantly asked her how she knew that he was trustworthy, and she had to explain this by referring to his chaste behaviour towards her on their way home. Thus, al-Ash'arī proved the contrary of al-Jubbā'ī's conclusion, and demonstrated again that capacity is simultaneous with the realization of the act. (1)

Then al-Ash'arī referred to the case of the man who is in a state of prayer, we know that he is capable of such an act only when we see him praying, even though we do not know the exact moment at which the power is realized in him. (2)

The Mu'tazilites quoted the verse, 3:97, as a proof for their doctrine that man is not commanded to do an act which he has no power to perform. Al-Ash'arī replied by saying that "capability" mentioned in this verse means "having adequate property to furnish oneself with provisions and a riding camel (zād wa-rāhila)" and not "the capability of the body" which comes

(1) Luma', pp.66,17-18; 67,1-13.

(2) Ibid., p.67,14-17.

about simultaneously with its object (maqdūr).⁽¹⁾ The Mu'tazilites quoted the verse, 9:42, which states that the hypocrites did not come to aid the prophet in his struggle against the infidels, although they had the capacity for it. Al-Ash'arī rejected this argument by pointing out that the commentators and transmitters of Traditions interpreted "capacity" here in the sense of "wealth and mounts" and not in the sense of the "capability of the body", and thus while taklīf is possible where the latter is not yet existent, it is impossible where the former is absent.⁽²⁾

They also understood the verse, 64:16, "Fear God in so far as you are able", in the sense that man must have power before the imposition of duties upon him, otherwise the "fearing of God" would not have been conditioned on the realization of capability. Al-Ash'arī replied that the meaning of the verse is that they are obliged to fear Him when they are able to do so, but also that they are obliged to fear Him when they are incapable of fearing Him (but not when they are incapable of both, i.e., in the case of 'ajz.⁽³⁾ So, al-Ash'arī is basing his argument here upon his previously mentioned distinction between tark and 'ajz, and also on the fact that the imposition of duties is impossible in the case of 'ajz, but it is not in the case of tark (omitting to act). Another possible interpretation of the verse is that: fear God to the best of your ability.⁽⁴⁾ In the same manner,

(1) Luma', p.62,14-17.

(2) Ibid., p.63,2-10.

(3) Ibid., p.63,12-15.

(4) Ibid., p.63,15-16.

al-Ash'arī interpreted the verse, 58:4, which the Mu'tazilites used as an argument in this context, on the basis of the analogy between power and 'ajz: with the absence of power there would be no imposition of a commandment such as fasting in this verse.

Al-Ash'arī insisted on his distinction between 'ajz and tark and pointed out that in the case of 'ajz, as in this verse, there would be no imposition of command.⁽¹⁾ Likewise, he interpreted the verse 65:7, in the sense that God only enjoins the spending of what has been given, so that it also refers to ability in the sense of means and provision.⁽²⁾

Then al-Ash'arī interpreted the verse, 2:286, "God imposes no obligation upon a soul save according to its capacity", in a sense which supported his general doctrine that God cannot impose duties in the case of tark (omitting to do), but cannot burden a man in the case of 'ajz. He said that God does not burden the soul because of evil thoughts as long as they are not carried out and a disobedient act committed. He maintained that God's commandments are not unbearable for man and that they are not impotent to fulfil them (although they may lack the power to fulfil them). Finally he attributed to some of his colleagues the view that this verse means that God does not impose on man anything unlawful.⁽³⁾

In his Risāla II, al-Ash'arī dealt with some questions regarding the nature of man's power which he had already dealt

(1) Luma', p.63,18-20.

(2) Ibid., p.64,1-4.

(3) Ibid., p.64,5-12.

with in the Luma', but the methodology used in the two works is quite different. His views in the Risāla II merely stated in the form of a creed, but there is some discussion regarding taklīf mā lā-yuṭāq, as will be seen later. He stated that, "they (i.e. the ancestors) unanimously agreed that the power to believe is different from the power of unbelief, because the power to believe provides guidance and direction, while the power to disbelieve gives misguidance and abandonment ... the powers of men differ according to the differences of their actions."⁽¹⁾ He also states that there is only one power for every action and thus man is unable to carry out two actions with one power, in the same way as he is unable to know two things with one piece of information. Every action has its own power which exists at the time of its existence. It is only with this power that man's actions can exist; if it is possible for these actions to exist without this power, then the action would dispense with the power, which is impossible.⁽²⁾

As for the nature of man's power, al-Ash'arī stated that man's power is of two kinds: one kind is the soundness of the body and the perfection of its instruments, and the other is the power without which the action would not be realized. He affirmed this last kind of power by saying that, "to acquire an action (kasb) man needs a special power which differs from the power not to do the action, and also from the action itself and from the physical strength with which it is done." Though

(1) Risāla II, p.100,17-20.

(2) Ibid., p.101,20-23.

al-Ash'arī used the term kasb in its technical sense, he introduced no definition of it in this work. According to this conception of man's power, which is identical with his view of the problem in Luma', al-Ash'arī proceeds to discuss the point of whether it is possible for God to impose upon man duties which he is not able to perform. Here he repeated the same view as he had already expressed in the Luma', which is based on his conception of 'ajz and tark. He drew a comparison between power and knowledge, and pointed out that the imposition of duty with the absence of power, in the sense of the well-being of the body and the perfection of the instrument, is as impossible as it is where there is no soundness of reason, and when there is no existence of the powers of understanding (ṣiḥhat al-'aql wa-ālāt at-tamiyyiz). He argued that, although a special knowledge was required to know every particular thing, the imposition of action was impossible in the absence of all forms of knowledge. For, in such a case, one would no longer be in a state of sanity, and thus no longer responsible. Yet, it is not impossible for God to ask a man to believe in spite of His knowledge and pre-determination that this man is not going to believe, since he is physically fit and possesses the necessary instrument for performing such an action, and he is neither impotent nor is hindered from making the act of belief. In this case he would be unable to perform the act of belief simply because he is reluctant to do it and has occupied himself with performing its opposite which he prefers to perform. So if he happened to hate unbelief and wished to be a believer, he would have been able to do so. Al-Ash'arī clearly stated that there is a difference

between this case and the case of the absence of all powers ('adam jamī' al-qudar), because the absence of all powers means impotence and corruption of the body and its instruments without which no action is possible. In this case imposition of duty is impossible as in the case of the absence of all kinds of knowledge ('adam jamī' al-'ulūm).⁽¹⁾

The Ibāna also confirms al-Ash'arī's views regarding the nature of man's power expressed in Luma' and Risāla II. The Ibāna made no reference to kasb in its technical sense, yet it clearly states the differences of man's power. It also states that the power to believe is not the same as the power not to believe.⁽²⁾ It strongly refutes the Mu'tazilites' assumption that the power is both for the thing and its opposite, and states that man's power to believe is a gift (ni'ma), favour (fadl), and the grace of God and so is a form of direction and guidance (tafwīd wa-tasdīd). The power to believe is a favour from God and not a right of man which He may withhold.⁽³⁾

Al-Ash'arī quoted the same verses of the Qur'an, 11:20; 18:101 and 68:42, which he quoted in Luma', and which established that God can impose on man what he is not able to do, but he made no distinction between the ability in the sense of physical soundness, and the ability which exists simultaneously with the act.⁽⁴⁾

(1) Risāla II, pp.102,1-21; cf.p.101,7-19.

(2) Ibāna, p.53,16-19.

(3) Ibid., p.53,20-25.

(4) Ibid., p.55,18-25.

3. The Relation of God to Human Actions

In an argument against the Mu'tazilite conception of "justice", al-Ash'arī emphasized the point that God wills, creates and decrees all the created things of the world including man's actions. In his Luma', he devoted a special section to the demonstration of the fact that God's will embraces all temporal things. He argued that since God's will is one of His essential attributes, it must, as all the other essential attributes, embrace everything which can truly be willed.⁽¹⁾ Then al-Ash'arī proceeds to expound the view that if something which God had not willed were to exist, this would imply that He is weak and impotent. Starting from the premise that all temporal actions are created by God, al-Ash'arī reasoned that if something were to exist without His will, He would be averse to it, and then He would refuse (ya'ba) its existence. This would necessitate the conclusion that sins exist whether God wills them or not, even if He refuses them. This is the one who is weak and compelled against his will, which is inappropriate to God.⁽²⁾

Some of al-Ash'arī's adversaries did not accept this conclusion and they refuted it by taking as an example a case of a king who is insulted by a blind cripple, yet this does not necessarily mean that he is weak. Thus, in the case of God, if man does what God has not willed, His omnipotence is not affected or impaired by such an insignificant action. Al-Ash'arī answers this objection by affirming that, in this example, it would

(1) Luma', p.24,3-5.

(2) Ibid., pp.24-25.

entail weakness on the part of the king if he were insulted by the cripple and if the insult took place in spite of the king's will. (1)

By citing examples from normal life, al-Ash'arī said that among us men, he whose will is realized is more powerful than he whose will is not. Therefore, we must ascribe to God who is powerful above all, a universal and an effectual will. (2) The Mu'tazilites refuted such an analogy between God's and man's will. They asserted that if God's will is not fulfilled, it does not mean that He is weak or impotent, because although man may disbelieve in Him and disobey Him in spite of His will, He is yet able to force them to believe in Him and obey Him had He so wished. Al-Ash'arī did not accept the Mu'tazilite argument and pointed out that according to the Mu'tazilites' own view, a forced belief does not merit reward, and that God willed man to believe voluntarily so as to deserve reward. Thus, if He forced them, they would neither be of the obedient ones nor would they be rewarded. So, as the existence of what He does not will would necessitate weakness on His part, He would also be weak if He forced them to believe, since His will would be fulfilled by a means not in accordance with the normal exercise of His will. (3) Al-Ash'arī added that since the Qadarites believe that man is free to believe or not to believe, they are bound to hold that, in this case, God would not be able to perform the grace (lutf)

(1) Luma', p.26,1-7.

(2) Ibid., p.26,8-10.

(3) Ibid., p.27,5-12.

through which the disbelievers would have inevitably been believers.⁽¹⁾ Moreover, if man could perform an act unwilled by God, entailing no weakness in Him because He could have forced man to do it, then God could Himself perform an act without willing it, because in both cases He is the universal creator of all actions. If this is false, however, and if the existence of an unwilled act of God necessitates His weakness, then the same must be true regarding the acts of His creatures.⁽²⁾

The Mu'tazilites argued that, if it is not weakness on the part of God when what He commands is not done, why should it be considered as weakness when His will is not done? Al-Ash'arī replied by saying that, if God's own actions come to be without His command and this is not a sign of weakness, it is similarly not a sign of weakness when actions of others come about without His command. Furthermore, the existence of man's forbidden action is not a sign of weakness in God, since He willed them to exist.⁽³⁾

The Mu'tazilites did not accept al-Ash'arī's conception of the universal will of God. Thus they refuted his view that He wills disbelief and disobedience by pointing out that whoever wills evil is necessarily evil himself, and he who wills folly is foolish. Since it is impossible for God to be foolish, it is impossible for God to will folly and evil. Al-Ash'arī, in rejecting this Mu'tazilite argument, stressed the difference

(1) Luma', p.27,13-15.

(2) Ibid., pp.27,17-18; 28,1-4.

(3) Ibid., p.31,15-19.

between man and God in this respect. He denied that God is foolish when He wills folly. A man, for instance, who is opposed to fornication is foolish if he does not prevent his man-servants and his maid-servants from fornicating with one another, although he could prevent them; but God who does not prevent His servants from fornicating with one another is not therefore foolish. Again, a man who resolves to obey God is thereby obedient, but if God wills obedience on others He is not thereby obedient, just as He is not foolish when He wills folly, although when men do so they are foolish. (1)

Then al-Ash'arī quoted several verses of the Qur'ān, 76:30; 10:99; 32:13; 6:112 and 2:253, to the effect that God's will embraces all created things. The Mu'tazilites argued that the verse, 2:253, means "if God had wished He could have prevented the fighting, so it is a proof of His universal power but not His universal will." Al-Ash'arī did not accept this and said that it means, "if God had not willed the fighting to take place it would not have taken place." (2)

He also discussed some of the verses which the Mu'tazilites quoted to support their arguments that God does not will evil. The verse, 51:56, states that God's purpose in creating men was only that they should serve Him and be rewarded and, thus, according to the Mu'tazilites, He did not will the disbelief and disobedience of the disbelievers. Al-Ash'arī said in reply that in this verse God speaks only of the unbelievers, because elsewhere

(1) Luma', p.30,7-20.

(2) Ibid., p.31,1-9.

in the Qur'ān, 7:179, He said that He has created many for Hell, and the general principle is that the Qur'ān does not contradict itself.⁽¹⁾ The Mu'tazilites also quoted verses 40:31 and 3:108 to support their view that God does not will wrong or evil. Al-Ash'arī considered that these verses merely mean that He does not will to wrong them, although He has willed that they should wrong one another.⁽²⁾ Concerning the verse, 6:148, which the Mu'tazilites quoted as a proof that unbelief is not willed by God, al-Ash'arī said that the unbelievers in this verse were just making jokes and were not serious in their views, and God here demonstrates their lying.⁽³⁾ The verse, 2:185, is also quoted by the Mu'tazilites to support their contention that God does not will unbelief, because He does not wrong His creatures; nor does He impose on them what they are not capable of doing, and then make them responsible for their disobedience. Al-Ash'arī, like al-Māturīdī, rejected the Mu'tazilite interpretation of the verse, and pointed out that the verse simply refers to the fact that God allows the Muslims not to fast while they are travelling or ill.⁽⁴⁾

Reference has already been made to the Mu'tazilite conception of the equivalence of God's "will" and His "command".⁽⁵⁾ Like al-Māturīdī, al-Ash'arī did not accept this, and he argued that if

(1) Luma', pp.67,19; 68,1-6.

(2) Ibid., pp.68,17; 69,1-2.

(3) Ibid., p.69,3-8.

(4) Ibid., p.69,9-11.

(5) See Chapter V, supra. p.353.

it is assumed that God's will regarding man's actions is His command, it would follow that when He does not command an action He is displeased with it, and hence that He is displeased with the actions of children and insane people. Since God is displeased with the disbelievers only, it follows that the supposition that His will is His command is wrong.⁽¹⁾ Furthermore, if His command and His will were the same, He would be displeased with whatever He did not command. If so, there would be no status of allowed actions (mubāh), but everything would be either an act of obedience or disobedience (i.e. commanded or forbidden). He also does not agree with al-Jubbā'ī's view that the fact that God has not willed something entails His displeasure with it.⁽²⁾

The Mu'tazilites held that man creates evil rather than God. They quoted some Qur'ānic verse to substantiate their views and introduced some arguments to support their doctrine. Al-Ash'arī affirmed that God creates all things, whether evil or good, and strongly rejected this doctrine of the Mu'tazilites, and tried to show the weakness of their arguments and how they had misinterpreted the Qur'ānic verses to serve their own ends.

The Mu'tazilites quoted the Qur'ānic verse, 3:78, in which the Jews are blamed for tampering with their Scripture by falsifying and distorting some of its passages. They said that the verse indicates that an evil action, such as the falsification of the Scripture, is not from God. Al-Ash'arī rejected this interpretation and said that the verse means that they had distorted

(1) Luma', p.29,7-12.

(2) Ibid., pp.29,16-19; 30,1-5.

the description of the prophet, while the passage, "it is not from God" means that the passages which they falsified were not revealed by God.⁽¹⁾ They quoted the verse, 67:3, to the same effect. By analysing the whole context, al-Ash'arī demonstrated that this verse refers to the harmony in creation of the seven heavens, so it provides no proof for the Mu'tazilites' assumption that the evil actions and disbelief were not created by God.⁽²⁾ The Mu'tazilites also argued that the verse, 32:7 implies that God creates only the good things. To al-Ash'arī, however, the verse suggests that God is proficient in creating, and it simply declares that He knows how to create things.⁽³⁾ They also quoted the verse, 38:27, to support their doctrine that God has created nothing evil. They understood the verse to mean that "We have created nothing false in heaven, in earth, or between them". To al-Ash'arī, however, the verse must be understood in conjunction with that which follows, so what God meant to say, according to al-Ash'arī, is that He did not create the world in vain; God's purpose in creating the world was to be able to reward in the hereafter those who have obeyed Him, and to punish those who have disobeyed Him. The verse is intended to refute the lies of the idolaters, and their assertions that there would be neither resurrection nor reward and punishment in the hereafter. Following this, al-Ash'arī gave an alternative explanation of the meaning of the verse. For him, the verse perhaps means that not all of

(1) Luma', pp.47,18-19; 48,1-4.

(2) Ibid., p.48,5-13.

(3) Ibid., p.48,15-17.

creation is false or vain, since what is vain is only a part of it. Alternatively, it may mean that God did not create what is vain or evil when He created heaven and earth, for He created it later. (1)

The Mu'tazilites tried to find support for their doctrine, that God does not create the unbelief of the unbelievers, in the verse 9:3. Al-Ash'arī rejects this and points out that the verse refers to the treaty that was made between the prophet Muḥammad and the non-believers, and declares that the prophet is not bound by such agreements. Moreover, the Qur'ān explicitly states, "quit of the polytheists", not "quit of their polytheism", and if these two statements were the same, then the statement, "patron of the believers" would mean that God had created their belief. (2)

Apart from these arguments, which are based on the interpretation of some Qur'ānic verses, the Mu'tazilites introduced the following twisted arguments. They asked their opponents, including al-Ash'arī, who is good, the one who is good, or the one from whom good proceeds? If the answer had been that the one from whom good comes is better than the one who is good, then their opponents had to admit that a similar argument would prove that God is worse than evil. Al-Ash'arī carefully avoided this pitfall by saying that if good came from a person through the bestowal of favour, then this person is better than the good itself. Thus the person from whom evil proceeds is worse than the evil, if he is unjust to men through it, but God is not

(1) Luma', p.49,1-15.

(2) Luma', pp.51,5-18; 52,1-3.

unjust, rather by creating the injustice of men, he is being just.⁽¹⁾

Thus, in al-Ash'arī's view, evil comes from God in the sense that He creates it, but this evil is manifested through the actions of another (that is man), and not through the action of Himself.⁽²⁾

Al-Ash'arī stated that his solution to this problem was different from that of his colleague, who stated in general terms that it was possible to attribute everything to God, but that it was not possible to attribute specific things, such as a wife and child, to Him.⁽³⁾

In order to justify their doctrine of the divine justice, the Mu'tazilites denied that God decreed evil or disobedience because otherwise He would be responsible for the existence of evil in the world. Al-Ash'arī did not accept this Mu'tazilite view and pointed out that Qadā' and Qadar had various meanings; they could mean creation, determination, report or command. Thus it would be possible to say that God decrees evil in the sense of creating, or reporting it, but not in the sense of commanding (amr) it.⁽⁴⁾ So one has to distinguish between these different meanings. It must also be borne in mind that the word "decreed" is sometimes used to refer to God's decision and announcement of this decision, and sometimes to refer to the content of the decree, i.e. to the thing decreed. Al-Ash'arī's opponents tried

(1) Luma', p.47,7-9.

(2) Ibid., p.47,15-16.

(3) Ibid., p.47,11-14.

(4) Ibid., p.45,11-15.

to confuse these two meanings and asked if the decree of God was right? Al-Ash'arī replied that, the decree in the first sense is absolutely right, but that in the second sense, some of it is right and some of it is wrong. For instance, obedience is right and unbelief is wrong. To avoid this trap, some of his colleagues refrained from saying that Qadā' is wrong at all, they merely stated that unbelief and disobedience were wrong without connecting them in any way with Qadā'.⁽¹⁾

With regard to the question of whether one should be content with God's determination of disbelief, al-Ash'arī also distinguished between the general approval of God's decree, and the approval of specific case of the unbelief of an unbeliever. He said that one should be content with God's decree in the general sense but that one should not approve of the decree in the second sense, i.e. the disbelief of a particular person. He attributed this view to some of his colleagues, and pointed out that other conservative colleagues refrained from indulging in such a distinction and expressed their approval of God's decree whatever might be under consideration.⁽²⁾

The differences between al-Ash'arī and the Mu'tazilites on the principle of justice seem to be a result of their different conception of "good" and "evil". The Mu'tazilites defined "good" as that which is beneficent and useful to man in achieving reward in the hereafter, and evil as that which leads to chastisement and punishment. Thus God cannot decree, create or will evil to

(1) Luma', pp.45,16-18; 46,3-5.

(2) Ibid., pp.46,14-19; 47,1-5.

man because it would be contrary to justice.⁽¹⁾ Al-Ash'arī, however, defined "good" and "evil" as that which God declares to be evil and that which he declares to be good. He is free to act as He pleases, and good and evil are exclusively decided by the divine commandment and prohibitions.⁽²⁾

Thus to answer the long disputed question of whether God could inflict pain on an infant in the hereafter without impairing His justice, al-Ash'arī affirmed that God is free to do so and would be just in doing it. He is just in inflicting punishment on an infant for a future sin, in subordinating some beings to others, in being gracious to some and not to others, and in creating men knowing that they will disbelieve, similarly it would not be evil on His part to create beings who were perpetually punished. Nor would it be evil on His part to punish the believers and to introduce the unbelievers into heaven. This will not occur because God said that He would punish the disbelievers, and it is impossible that He should lie.⁽³⁾ So to al-Ash'arī, all God's actions are just and good whatever they may be, because He is free to do as He pleases. He is the supreme and has absolute power; something is evil on our part because in doing it we transgress the limits and bounds set for us, but God is subject to no-one, and bound by no commands, so nothing on His part can be evil.⁽⁴⁾

(1) Tawhīd, pp.215; 218,5-6.

(2) Luma', p.71,13-19. Risāla II, pp.98,25; 99,1.

(3) Luma', p.71,6-12.

(4) Ibid., p.71,13-17.

The Mu'tazilites challenged al-Ash'arī's view that nothing is evil until God declares it to be so, by asking whether such a view suggests that lying would not be evil if God had not declared it to be so. Al-Ash'arī's answers affirmed this, and stated that if God declared lying to be good it would be so, and that if He commanded us to lie, no-one would have the right to question such an order. (1)

The Mu'tazilites argued that if it was possible for God to command us to lie, then it was possible to consider that He would lie. Al-Ash'arī strongly rejected this inference and stated that it is impossible for God to lie, just as it is impossible for Him to be ignorant. The fact that it was possible for Him to command us to lie does not entail that it would be possible that He should lie. Similarly, He commanded us to worship Him, but this does not mean that it is possible for Him to worship. (2) He strongly defended the validity of this comparison in the face of the Mu'tazilite's attempts to challenge it. (3)

The Risāla II agrees with the Luma' as far as the doctrine of God's justice is concerned. It contains almost all the principles which have been discussed in Luma', but in brief, precise statements. It emphasizes that God's will is absolute and is not subject to human conception of justice. Thus God guides whomsoever He wills and leads astray whomsoever He wills. His actions are not subject to certain causes or destined for certain

(1) Luma', p.71,18-19.

(2) Ibid., pp.71,20; 72,1-4.

(3) Ibid., pp.72-74.

purposes. He is the possessor who is neither possessed nor subject to commandments and prohibitions, and thus He does whatever He wills.⁽¹⁾ It also deals with the doctrine of Qadar, but in a more traditional manner. Thus it states that God has predetermined all the actions, terms and sustenances of His creatures, and that He has written down in the preserved tablet all that is going to happen to them until the day of resurrection. Al-Ash'arī quoted the verses, 54:52-53; 54:48-49, to support this doctrine.⁽²⁾ He also stated that God had divided men into two groups, one of which He creates for paradise and another for Hell. To support this view, he quoted the verses, 7:179; 21:101, and referred to some Traditions, the texts of which are mentioned in the Ibāna.⁽³⁾ He also emphasizes that God is the sole creator of all temporal beings;⁽⁴⁾ He is not in any way subject to human conceptions of justice and measures of injustice, because He is free to do as He pleases. Therefore, He is just in all His actions and decrees, whether they please or harm man. He is just in asking men to obey His orders though He knew that they would not do so. He is also just in creating some of them with the knowledge that they are going to reject His commands, and even in giving them the power to disbelieve: similarly, He is just in postponing the term of the believers to a time when they become disbelievers and apostates and to punish them for this, even though He knew that

(1) Risāla II, p.98,19-24.

(2) Ibid., pp.99,7-11; 102-103.

(3) Ibid., p.99,12-20. cf. Ibāna, pp.65-7.

(4) Risāla II, p.100,11-16.

this would happen. God is not unjust in doing this because He has absolute power.⁽¹⁾ He has the power to create all people for Paradise out of His grace, since He has no need for their worship. Similarly, He has the power to create them all for Hell, and is just in doing so, because the power to create and to command is His and no-one is able to question His actions.⁽²⁾

In the Risāla II, al-Ash'arī referred to the conceptions of guidance (huda) and leading astray (idlāl). He affirmed that God bestows His favour on some men by guiding, directing them towards the true path, endearing belief to them, opening their hearts to it and by making unbelief ungodliness and detestable to them, 6:125; 49:7.⁽³⁾ Contrary to the view of an-Nazzām, he affirmed that God's favours are infinite.⁽⁴⁾ He also stated that the granting of favours is not incumbent upon Him so He does so out of His grace. At the same time He grants no favour to other men but leads them astray, Q.6:125; 7:155.⁽⁵⁾ It is not incumbent upon Him to equate His favours between men and He is free to give them to some and to withhold them from others, as is stated in the verses, 5:54; 5:41.⁽⁶⁾

Like the Luma' and the Risāla II, the Ibāna dealt with almost all the questions related to the conceptions of divine justice.

(1) Risāla II, p.100,1-10.

(2) Ibid., p.103,17-20.

(3) Ibid., p.103,4-8.

(4) Maqālāt, p.576,5-6.

(5) Risāla II, p.103,9-14.

(6) Ibid. p.103,21-23.

Many of the Luma''s arguments and the refutation of the Mu'tazilite views are to be found in the Ibāna. Moreover, the Ibāna contains new interesting rational arguments as well as a section putting forward traditional views in support of Qadar, and it discusses in detail the conceptions of guidance (huda), leading astray (dalāl) and other subjects which are not discussed in the Luma'.

In the Ibāna, al-Ash'arī also emphasized his view that God's will embraces all things, and that nothing could possibly take place without it.⁽¹⁾ He pointed out that the Mu'tazilites view that God does not will disbelief and disobedience, entails the refutation of the view unanimously agreed upon, that everything exists according to God's will.⁽²⁾ It would also imply that Iblis, who presumably wills evil, is of higher rank than God since, according to their view, evil in the world has prevailed over good.⁽³⁾ Al-Ash'arī also argued that the denial of the universality of God's will would imply the weakness of His power. He repeated the argument of the Luma', where he equates the "unwilling" of a thing with disapproval of it (kurh) and its prohibition. He argued that if acts of disobedience exist without God's will, it means that they would exist whether He wished or forbade them, which is a sign of weakness. He added that if men do something about which God is angry (ghādib), they will arouse God's anger. On the basis of analogy, if men were able to do

(1) Ibāna, p.46.

(2) Ibid., p.46,21-26.

(3) Ibid., p.47,1-5.

something of which God disapproved and with which He is displeased, they would certainly thereby have defeated and overpowered Him. (1) The Ibāna also repeated the Luma''s arguments that the existence of anything unwilled by God would imply His weakness and His inadequacy to put into effect what He wills. (2) He introduced the same arguments of the Luma', against the Mu'tazilite view that God does not will the wicked acts of men otherwise He would be wicked, i.e., by saying that a foolish act is not necessarily committed by a fool. (3) In the Ibāna, al-Ash'arī tried to show that in certain cases even men are not foolish when they will folly. He quoted the verses, 5:28-29, in which one son of Adam says to the other, "If you stretch out your hand to kill me, I am not going to stretch out my hand to kill you ... I will that you should have the guilt of my sin and your sin, and that you so become an inmate of Hell". He pointed out that though the first brother willed his brother's act of murder, which is folly, but was not foolish because of it. So, if God wills the folly of men, it would not necessarily follow that He is foolish. Similarly, in the verse, 12:33, Joseph wills his enemy to imprison him which is a sin on their part, but he is not in any sense sinful because of that. From this, al-Ash'arī concluded that the fact that God wills the folly of men does not imply that He is foolish. (4)

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(1) Ibāna, pp.47,24-5; 48,1-3.

(2) Ibid., pp.49-50.

(3) Ibid., p.50.

(4) Ibid., pp.49,21-6; 50,1-8.

He also repeated the same argument concerning the divine punishment of children, expressed in the Luma'. He said that since God afflicts children in this world with illnesses like leprosy, and He is just in doing this, He must also be just in chastising them in the Hereafter. Taking the Mu'tazilite assumption that children are made to suffer in this world as a warning to their parents, al-Ash'arī said it might be said that if the torture of the children is just in this world because of this, it is also just for God to chastise them in the Hereafter in order to enrage or distress their fathers. A Tradition tells us that, on the day of resurrection, God will kindle a fire for the children (of the infidels) and He will say to them, "jump into it". Those who jump will be allowed to enter paradise and those who refuse will be sent to Hell.⁽¹⁾ It is appropriate at this point to mention that in the section of the Maqālāt, on the sunnite creed, al-Ash'arī said, concerning this problem, "the question of children is at God's disposal, if He wills, He will chastise them, and if He wills, He will do with them whatever He wishes."⁽²⁾

In the Ibāna, al-Ash'arī introduced a passage similar to that of the Luma' to justify his view that God may will folly without being foolish, and said, "One of us is foolish when he wishes folly, only because this has been forbidden to him, and because he is subject to the law of Him who is above him, who sets bounds and prescribes rules for him. Therefore, he is

(1) Ibāna, p.56,1-8.

(2) Maqālāt, p.296,13.

foolish since he commits what has been forbidden to him. God, however, is not subject to any law. There is no-one above Him to prescribe rules for Him. Nor is there anyone above Him to permit, forbid, command or rebuke Him, therefore it is not necessary that He should be considered foolish when He wills this (i.e. folly) to exist as evil. (1)

Unlike the Luma', the Ibāna deals in detail with the concept of "guidance", "leading astray" and "sealing up men's hearts". Its arguments in this respect are mainly directed against the Mu'tazilites, who explained these concepts in a manner to suit their principle of justice. Thus, against the Mu'tazilite view that God has given guidance to everybody, al-Ash'arī quoted the verse, 2:6, which speaks about those whose hearts God seals up, and the verse 6:125, which states that "Whomsoever God desires to guide, He expands his breast to Islam; whomsoever He desires to lead astray, He makes his breast narrow tight as if he were climbing to heaven." He said, it is clear that those whose hearts God has sealed up cannot be the same whom He has guided and expanded their breast to Islam; otherwise belief and disbelief, which are contraries, would have existed together in the heart, which is impossible. Similarly, "guidance" and "leading astray" cannot exist together. This proves that God has not guided the unbelievers towards belief, as the Mu'tazilites assumed. Al-Ash'arī found a good illustration of God's absolute freedom to guide men or lead them astray in the verse, 10:89, which tells how God granted Moses' request to harden the hearts of his

(1) Ibāna, p.50,13-18.

people. (1)

The Mu'tazilites held that abandonment (khidhlān), in relation to God, does not mean that He leads men astray, because He has given guidance to everyone. Al-Ash'arī argued that if God had directed the unbelievers, He would have rendered them immune to disbelief, but we cannot say so since they are still disbelievers. If the Mu'tazilites define "abandonment" in the sense of leaving men free to disbelieve, they would equally have to say that God abandons the believers, leaving them free to disbelieve too, which is heresy. Thus the Mu'tazilites have no alternative but to admit that God abandons the unbelievers to their disbelief which He creates in them, and to give up their doctrine of Qadar. (2)

The Mu'tazilites maintained that the term adalla does not mean that God leads men into unbelief or causes them to disbelieve, but it might be explained in the sense that God judged them to be of those who err or that He called them so. Al-Ash'arī argued that leading disbelievers astray cannot possibly be explained as leading them away from nothing, otherwise guidance of the believers would be towards nothing which is absurd. Since no-one can argue that the disbelievers were led astray from disbelief because they are disbelievers, the Mu'tazilites must admit that leading astray is meant to be from belief. (3) Alternative Mu'tazilite explanations of the term "adalla" have been strongly refuted by al-Ash'arī. (4)

(1) Ibāna, pp.57,18-26; 58,1-4.

(2) Ibid., p.60,4-13.

(3) Ibid., p.62,5-10.

(4) Ibid., pp.62ff. Supra, Chapter II, pp.116-17.

The Mu'tazilites also explained the term "guidance" in the sense of God's elucidation (bayān) of religious truth, which is a favour He bestows on everybody. Al-Ash'arī did not accept this Mu'tazilite view. He quoted the Qur'ānic verse, 2:26, "Thereby He leads many astray, and thereby He guides many", and argued that surely the verse does not mean that He leads all people astray, otherwise He would have said so. Therefore, the Mu'tazilites cannot assert that "thereby He guides many" means that God guides all mankind, so He only guides some of them.⁽¹⁾ The Mu'tazilites quoted the verse, 41:17, which states that God guides the tribes of Thamūd, although they were infidels. This proves that guidance is not limited to the believers. Al-Ash'arī rejected this Mu'tazilite explanation by offering two possible alternatives. One is that the tribe of Thamūd comprised two groups, one of which was faithful and God-guided, while the other contained unbelievers, who preferred blindness. Al-Ash'arī was working from the assumption that the Qur'ān does not contradict itself, so that if in one place it states that it does not guide the unbelievers, and in another place that it guides Thamūd, we know that it was there referring to the believers of Thamūd, to the exclusion of the unbelievers among them. According to this interpretation, the word "they" in the verse does not refer to the same group, which is the object of "We have guided". Rather it refers to another group, that is, the infidels. For al-Ash'arī, this explanation is grammatically in conformity with the language of the Qur'ān, since in the verses, 8:33-34, the word

(1) Ibāna, p.61,15-20.

hum (they) is repeated consecutively, but in its second occurrence it refers to another group of people. Al-Ash'arī's other possible alternative, is that God was referring to some of the Thamūd who were believers, and it was then that God guided them. Then they apostasised and preferred blindness and disbelief. (1)

In the same manner, al-Ash'arī refuted the Mu'tazilite assertion that the Qur'ān was revealed to guide all people. He quoted the verses 2:1-2 which state that the Qur'ān is a guidance for those who fear God, and the verse 41:44, which states that it is a blindness for the infidels, which clearly refutes the Mu'tazilite assumption that it is guidance for all people. (2) He also refuted their interpretation of the verse, 2:185, "The month of Ramadan in which the Qur'ān was sent down as guidance to men", which the Mu'tazilites took as a proof that the Qur'ān is a guidance for all men whether they are infidels or believers. To al-Ash'arī, this verse has a particular, not a general signification, because God has explained in another verse that He guides who fear Him and He tells us that He does not guide the infidels, since the Qur'ān does not contradict itself, it follows that God's words "guidance for men" refers only to the faithful and not to the infidels. (3)

The Mu'tazilites drew an analogy between "guidance" and "warning", to the effect that both these concepts are universal. Thus they concluded that God's guidance is not restricted to the

(1) Ibāna, pp.64,19-26; 65,1-12. cf. Schwarz, op.cit., pp.443-45.

(2) Ibāna, p.61,2-7.

(3) Ibid., pp.63,25-6; 64,1-3.

unbelievers. They pointed out that God says to the prophet, "you only warn him who follows the remembrance", Q.36:11, "You are only the warner of him who fears it" Q.79:45, (i.e. the hour or the day of resurrection), yet the prophet did not warn only the followers of the remembrance and the fearers of the hour, but also those who neither followed nor feared; likewise when the verse 2:1, refers to the Qur'ān as "a guidance to those who fear God", this must mean that it is guidance to everybody. Al-Ash'arī did not accept this view and argued that there are other verses such as: 2:6; 26:214; 41:13, which prove that the prophet was told to warn the infidels too, therefore the Mu'tazilites have no justification in drawing analogy between "warning" and "guidance". The Qur'ān tells us in some verses that the prophet warns the infidels, just as it tells in other verses that he warns those who fear and follow the remembrance. So it follows that God warns both the faithful and the infidels. As for guidance, however, God tells us that the Qur'ān is a guidance to those who fear God and blindness to the infidels, and that He does not guide the infidels, it follows that the Qur'ān is guidance vouchsafed to the faithful and not to the infidels.⁽¹⁾

In another passage, al-Ash'arī pointed out that the summons to believe in God and to obey Him is addressed to all mankind, but guidance is related to those whom God has chosen to be believers. If guidance were for all, both those who accept it and those who reject it, as the Mu'tazilites maintain, then one could argue that the devil's summons "leads astray" both those

(1) Ibāna, p.64,4-18.

who accept it and those who reject it. On the other hand, if it is maintained that the devil's summons leads astray the unbelievers only, why should not God's summons to belief be a guidance for the believers only.⁽¹⁾ The verse, 10:25, "And God summons to the abode of peace, and He guides whomsoever He wills to a straight path", shows that the summons to believe and worship is universal ('āmm) to all mankind, but guidance is restricted to the believers only. Al-Ash'arī took the following verses as proof that God does not guide the unbelievers, just as He does not lead the believers astray, 18:17; 3:86; 2:266; 26:56; 32:13.⁽²⁾

The Mu'tazilites denied the view that God bestows His favour (fadl) only on the believers. Al-Ash'arī, who held this view, quoted the verses: 4:84; 24:21; 37:55 and 37:56-7, in support of it, and he argued that the favour referred to in these verses must be bestowed on the believers only. Had it been bestowed also on the unbelievers, God could not have sent these statements down. Al-Ash'arī took a Qur'ānic verse, "If it had not been for the grace (fadl) of God and His mercy you would have followed Satan except a few of you," to show that from the beginning God bestows on the believers such favours as He does not bestow on the disbelievers.⁽³⁾ Moreover, al-Ash'arī said, God strengthened the prophet in his confrontation with the infidels, and gave support to Joseph to resist the seduction of the Pharaoh's wife, and the

(1) Ibāna, p.61,9-14.

(2) Ibid., p.63,1-12. cf. Schwarz, op.cit., p.443.

(3) Ibāna, pp.52,19; 53,1-8.

Mu'tazilites cannot assume that God gave the infidels similar strengthening (tathbīt), for if so, they would have been believers.⁽¹⁾

The Mu'tazilites hold various views regarding the matter of whether God is able to bestow lutf (grace) on the unbelievers as a result of which they would have all turned believers. Al-Ash'arī ascribed such power to God and quoted the verses, 42:27 and 43:33, to support his ascription. He pointed out that the Mu'tazilites cannot deny that God has the power to give the believers grace which were he to give it to them, they would certainly all believe, just as He has the power to do to them a thing of such a character as a result of which they would all disbelieve.⁽²⁾ He argued against the Mu'tazilite statements to the effect that God has not the power of directions (tawfiq) of the unbelievers towards belief. He said, if the Mu'tazilites affirmed this statement, they would assert thereby God's impotence. Were they to admit that God has such a power, then they would abandon their misguided doctrine and adopt the truth.⁽³⁾

(1) Ibāna, p.58,11-18. cf. Schwarz, op.cit., pp.441-42.

(2) Ibāna, p.52,12-18.

(3) Ibid., pp.53,26; 54,1-3.

CONCLUSION TO CHAPTERS V AND VI

To conclude these two chapters, it might be said that although it is believed that al-Māturīdī and al-Ash'arī were both trying to hold an intermediate position between the Mu'tazilites and the Jabrites by using the term kasb, it is obvious that their conceptions of this term and the conclusions they reached, are quite different. Thus it has been shown that al-Māturīdī laid great emphasis on man's freedom of choice and freedom of acquisition, and pointed out the fact that though God decrees, creates and wills man's action, this does not deprive man of this freedom of choice. He made it quite clear that though man's actions are created and decreed by God, they belong to him, because they are a result of his own choice and have been acquired by him without any compulsion. Al-Ash'arī, however, does not seem to be in favour of the idea of man's freedom of choice. Instead, he emphasized God's omnipotence and power, and stated that all man's actions fall under the power of God. He held that man has power and will, but in his view they have no effect or influence at all on his actions, which are always determined by God. He even went to the extent of disallowing the ascription of acquisition in reality to man. This is why al-Ash'arī was considered in certain circles as a Jabrite, and also explains why he made no criticism or reference to the Jabrite views, while al-Māturīdī considered them to be no less dangerous than those of the Mu'tazilites.

Concerning the nature of man's power, they both distinguished between the primary or physical power and the completed power which exists simultaneously with the act. Al-Ash'arī, in

consistence with his rather deterministic view, held that the power is only for one act and not for its opposite, while al-Māturīdī maintained that in order to establish man's freedom of choice and God's justice, man's power must be for the act and its opposite. However, he gave no solution to the problem of how this power can be for the act and its opposite and at the same time be simultaneous with the act.

Their conception of guidance, leading astray and tab', were mainly directed against the Mu'tazilites. Yet, while al-Ash'arī only insisted on stating the absolute power of God, al-Māturīdī tried to find a rational justification. He said that God gives guidance to man or leads him astray, according to His prior knowledge that man is going to choose and prefer this course of action and adopt certain situations, therefore he creates and decrees for him what he is going to choose.

CHAPTER VII

AL-MĀTURĪDĪ ON THE DOCTRINE OF ĪMĀN

Introduction

The question of Īmān and the ensuing discussions may be considered as the basis of all theological thinking among early Muslims.⁽¹⁾ The term Īmān has been mentioned many times in the Qur'ān, but no specific definition of it is given.⁽²⁾ Similarly, the Traditions do not give exact definition of Īmān but enumerate its objects.⁽³⁾

The rise of the Khārijites in the period which followed the assassination of the third Caliph 'Uthmān (d.36/656) gave the questions "who is a mu'min?" and later "What is Īmān?" a new importance. Motivated by their "puritanical" concept of the Muslim community, the Khārijites began to question everyone's faith and to draw a sharp demarcation between those who fully believed and practised religion, and those, who though believers, committed some sins. Only the first were considered to be members of the community by the Khārijites, the second group was depicted by them as infidels devoid of faith. They conceived the Muslim community to be one whose membership was restricted to those who reached certain standards of moral attainment.⁽⁴⁾

- (1) Izutsu, The Concept of Belief in Islamic Theology, p.11.
- (2) Qur'ān, 49:7; 49:14; 49:17; 30:56; 58:22 and 59:9-10.
- (3) Wensinck, A Handbook of Early Muhammadan Tradition, pp.69-70.
- (4) Maqālāt, pp.86ff. Watt, "The Concept of Īmān in Islamic Theology", Der Islam, vol.43 (1967), also Watt, Formative Period, p.35.

Therefore, they strongly emphasised the importance of work as a condition which qualified a person for membership of the community. As a result, the Khārijites came to believe that there can be no Īmān without work, and that whoever commits a grave sin is Kāfir, excluded from the community and will perish for ever in Hell. (1)

These Khārijite views were later adopted to some extent by the Mu'tazilites, who held the doctrine that the sinner is neither a Kāfir nor a mu'min, but in an intermediate position (manzila bayn al-manzilatayn). (2) In spite of the slightly different views held by various groups of the Mu'tazilites regarding the definition of Īmān, (3) they have in common, identified Īmān and works whether supererogatory or obligatory; or Īmān and the avoidance of grave sin. (4)

The so-called Murji'ites, however, held views opposite to those of the Khārijites and the Mu'tazilites with regard to the definition of Īmān and the destiny of the sinners. From the views of the twelve Murji'ite sub-sects mentioned by al-Ash'arī, (5) it appears that all the Murji'ites agreed on the point of excluding works from the definition of Īmān. In contrast to the

- (1) Watt, "The Concept of Īmān in Islamic Theology", pp.1-2, M.C. p.47. E.I.^(s) art. "Khārijites" p.248. Maqālāt, p.124.
- (2) Maqālāt, pp.269-70.
- (3) Maqālāt, pp.266-69. Rāzī, Tafsīr, vol.1, p.164. Tahānawī, Kashshāf, vol.1, p.95.
- (4) Ibn-al-Murtadā, Ṭabaqāt al-Mu'tazila, p.8. M.C.p.133.
- (5) Maqālāt, pp.132-141.

Khārijites' views that whoever committed a grave sin is a Kāfir, the Murji'ites asserted that such a decision could not be taken by man but must be left to the judgement of God on the last day. In their definition of īmān, the Murji'ites gave precedence to knowledge⁽¹⁾ but at the same time they attached considerable importance to the verbal acknowledgement or confession by the tongue and totally omitted work. Moreover, īmān was considered to be an entity of its own; grave sin could not impair it, nor could good works increase it. All these views were based on the Murji'ites' conception of the Muslim community and were aimed at avoiding the exclusion of a man from the community because he had sinned.⁽²⁾

The controversies existing between the Murji'ites on one hand and the Khārijites, Mu'tazilites on the other, led to the investigation of various aspects of this problem. The literature accumulated from these controversies was fully assimilated by al-Māturīdī and al-Ash'arī, whose theoretical contribution in this respect will occupy the following two chapters.

Al-Māturīdī's views on the problem of īmān was in line with the views of his predecessors the Hanafites, and disagreed with that of the Khārijites, the Mu'tazilites, and to some extent with that of the Traditionists. He discussed the destiny of the grave sinners, the concept of īmān, its relation to Islam and similar points which were the theme of theoretical argumentations. He made considerable effort to refute the views of the Khārijites

(1) M.C. p.132.

(2) Watt, Islamic Philosophy and Theology, p.34.

and the Mu'tazilites, in particular al-Ka'bi.

1. The Grave Sinner and His Fate

All the disputations about Imān seem to have started from this point, to which al-Māturīdī devoted a large proportion of his work to discuss. He recorded the views and arguments of the Khārijites, the Mu'tazilites and those of al-Ḥasan al-Basrī in this respect; then he demonstrated their weaknesses and following his predecessors, the Ḥanafites, he openly indicated his support for the views attributed to the Murji'ites, that the grave sinner is a believer or should be treated so, and that he will not be punished eternally in Hell. (1)

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1. In spite of his advocacy of these views, which will be shown later, al-Māturīdī did not associate himself with the Murji'ites; possibly because he was fully aware of some of the heretical views attributed to the so-called Murji'ites. Al-Māturīdī himself, identified some of the Murji'ite doctrines with those of the Jabrites, in that they attributed all man's actions to God, and deprived man of any role in them. It is because of this view the Murji'ites were cursed along with the Qadarites in the pseudo-Tradition which was attributed to the prophet, for both being extremists. (Tawhīd, pp.229,1-3; 318). It has to be mentioned, however, that al-Māturīdī seems to have doubted the authenticity of this Tradition (Tawhīd, p.384,11 ff.)

Al-Māturīdī, however, must have been aware of the fact that Abū-Ḥanīfa himself had been considered as a Murji'ite (Maqālāt, pp.138-9). This explains why al-Māturīdī devoted a

special section of his Kitab at-Tawhīd to the definition of the term irjā', and why the Murji'ites were called by such a name. He stated that from a linguistic point of view, it is agreeable that irjā' means postponing or putting off. This sense is used in the verses 7:111 and 9:106. Different sects, however, used the term with different meanings: for instance, the Hashwites said that the Murji'ites were known by this name because they postponed works to Īmān, and did not include them in its definitions. To al-Māturīdī, this Hashwite usage of the term was contrary to the normal use of language and it is rationally untenable. (Tawhīd, pp.381,13-18; 382,1-16).

The Mu'tazilites defined the Murji'ites as those who postponed making decision about the grave sinner, and refrained from deciding whether he was condemned to Hell or not. To al-Māturīdī, this sense of the word irjā' was true, and Abū-Hanīfa answered the question of the origin of irjā', in accordance with this definition, by saying that the origin of irjā' goes back to the angels, in that when God said to them, "Inform Me of the names of these, if ye are truthful" (2:31). Having no knowledge of these names, the angels entrusted their knowledge to God. This is also true in the case of the grave sinners. Since they have performed so many good things, it is unlikely that they would be eternally in Hell. Thus their fate should be left to the decision of God, who might forgive them according to His mercy, or He might punish them according to His justice (Tawhīd, pp.382-383. Ta'wīlāt, 2:23).

Al-Māturīdī said that some people (presumably he means the Khārijites) described the Murji'ites as those who postponed making /decision

decision about 'Alī and his opponents. To al-Māturīdī, postponement of decision in this respect is commendable if it means refraining from indulgence in the whole matter, but if it implies criticism of 'Alī or blaming him, then it would be wrong. Then al-Māturīdī emphasised the merits of 'Alī and quoted a Tradition in which the prophet is believed to have said that, "If the Muslims appointed Abū-Bakr as a Caliph, they will find him weak in his physical strength but strong in his belief (dīn), if they appointed 'Umar, they will find him strong in both his religion and his body, but if they appointed 'Alī, he will prove to be the best guide and would lead them to the path of guidance." Furthermore, al-Māturīdī said, 'Umar chose 'Alī as a member of the committee set up to elect the Caliph after his assassination, and many of the companions considered appointing him as a Caliph. All this demonstrates 'Alī's merits and indicates the ignorance of whoever tries to criticise or blame him. (Tawhīd, p.384,1-18). This emphasis of the merits of 'Alī seems to be directed against the Khārijites, who criticised both the Caliphs 'Uthmān and 'Alī and considered them both as sinners.

From this account, it might be concluded that according to al-Māturīdī there were two groups who were called Murji'ites: those who held heretical doctrine regarding Qadar and advocated determinism, but there were also the Murji'ites who were called so because they postponed decision regarding the grave sinner, and refrained from indulgence in making judgement regarding the affairs of the caliphates of 'Uthmān and 'Alī.

With reference to the Khārijites, al-Māturīdī said that some people did not differentiate between grave and minor sins and considered that they both removed the one who commits them from Īmān. To support such a view, they quoted the verses, 4:14 and 33:36, where the sinner was regarded as disobedient and promised eternal punishment in Hell.⁽¹⁾ They called such a man as an unbeliever (kāfir) and introduced the following two arguments: They said that the verse, 99:8 establishes that the sinner is punished for even small sins, while the verse 34:17 tells that it is only the unbelievers who are to be punished, and the verses, 92:15-16 state that fire is only for the wretched who lie and turn away from belief. From these verses, the Khārijites concluded that the sinner is an unbeliever and will be punished eternally in Hell.⁽²⁾ They also argued that the real meaning of Īmān is that one should not disobey God, so he who disobeys Him is not fulfilling the conditions of Īmān and thereby deserves the name kāfir,⁽³⁾ because by performing these acts of disobedience, he is in fact following and obeying the devil's commands, and is, in a sense, worshipping the devil, and he who worships the devil is an unbeliever.⁽⁴⁾

The Khārijites also quoted the verses, 12:87 and 15:56, which promised the sinner that punishment which applies only to the unbelievers. The sinner is disobeying the law of God and so,

- (1) Tawhīd, p.323,16-19.
- (2) Ibid., p.324,6-11.
- (3) Ibid., pp.324,13-14; 325,1-2.
- (4) Ibid., p.325,3-5.

according to the verse, 5:44, he must be an unbeliever. Moreover, he has been designated by the names evil-doer (fāsiq), disobedient (fājir), and unjust (zālim), all of which are the characteristics of the unbeliever. Furthermore, God has divided people into two categories, believers and unbelievers, with regard to this life and the life to come, and has called the evil doer kāfir, thus the sinner who is promised punishment in Hell must be called Kāfir.⁽¹⁾ Some of the Kharijites, however, called the grave sinner polytheist (mushrik) and not Kāfir.⁽²⁾

There are also those who called the grave sinner a hypocrite (munāfiq). This view was attributed to al-Hasan al-Basrī (21/642 - 110/728).⁽³⁾ According to al-Māturīdī, the holders of these views based their judgement in this respect on the fact that the sinner's actual conduct does not agree with his verbal confession of īmān. They quoted the verses, 29:11 and 1-2, to justify the application of such a name. They also referred to the prophet's Tradition: there are three traits of character which make anyone having them a downright hypocrite. When he speaks, he lies; when he makes a compact with someone, he betrays the agreement, and when he is trusted, he violates the trust. All these characteristics, they said, are to be found in those who commit grave sins.⁽⁴⁾

(1) Tawhīd, pp.329,19-20; 330,1-12.

(2) Ibid., p.325,6-7.

(3) Watt, Formative Period, pp.80-81. E.I.⁽²⁾ art. "Hasan al-Basrī" (H. Ritter) vol.iii, pp.247-48.

(4) Tawhīd, p.331,12-18.

Al-Māturīdī gave greater attention to the views of the Mu'tazilites on this subject. He recorded their views and then proceeded to refute their arguments. According to him, the Mu'tazilites held that the grave sinner should be called neither believer nor unbeliever, because such a man has been given bad names such as fāsiq, and īmān is one of the good names, and so it should not be applied to him, and that unlike the believer, who will be rewarded, the sinner is threatened with punishment. Nor should he be called Kāfir, because this name has not been used to describe him. Therefore, the grave sinner must be designated by the name, which everyone has agreed belongs to him: that is he should be called wicked, unjust and sinner (fāsiq, fājir, zālim). (1)

Al-Māturīdī refuted the views of both the Khārijites and the Mu'tazilites. To him, the grave sinner should not be called Kāfir or mushrik for the following reasons: God has commanded the prophet to ask God's forgiveness for his sins and for those of the believers. At the same time, however, the prophet has been forbidden to ask forgiveness for the unbelievers (9:113) and the hypocrites (63:6). This proves that those for whom forgiveness was asked, were believers. Such a forgiveness, however, would not be asked for if those believers had committed sins, and those sins had been forgiven. This establishes that, contrary to the view of the Khārijites, a man is not rendered a non-believer by his sins. It also establishes that there are certain sins which require repentance in order to be forgiven. (2)

(1) Tawhīd, pp.331,19-21; 332,1-5.

(2) Ibid., pp.325,17-18; 326,1-14.

In the verses, 24:31 and 66:8, God calls the sinners believers, and commands them to repent in order to attain His forgiveness. As well as refuting the Khārijites' assertion that grave sinners are unbelievers and polytheists,⁽¹⁾ this also refutes the Mu'tazilites' view that they are not believers. If the term Kāfir is used in this respect, it must be understood in a metaphorical sense as meaning one being unthankful to God (Kufr ni'ma).⁽²⁾ Also the verses, 99:7; 4:110; 8:38; 25:70, clearly state that God rewards man for whatever good he might have done. These verses also indicate that through repentance He forgives man's sins. Thus they refute the views of both the Khārijites and the Mu'tazilites in this respect.⁽³⁾ The fact that the prophets and the friends of Allah commit small sins must refute the Khārijite notion that these sins lead to unbelief, otherwise the prophets and the awliyā' would be unbelievers which is inconceivable. Similarly, the fact that the prophets and the friends of God asked for God's forgiveness for their mistakes, proves that the small sins are forgiveable if grave sins were avoided.⁽⁴⁾ He pointed out that the Khārijite view that small sins lead to disbelief and eternal punishment implies the denial of God's mercy, His forgiveness and His generosity.⁽⁵⁾

He also rejected the Mu'tazilite view of the intermediate

(1) Tawhīd, pp.326,16-18; 327,1-3.

(2) Ibid., p.327,4-8.

(3) Ibid., p.327,9-15.

(4) Ibid., p.228,3-14.

(5) Ibid., p.228, 15ff.

position. He said that the Mu'tazilites should be asked: is the grave sinner not called believer or unbeliever because he deserves neither of these terms, or because he deserves one of them but it cannot be specified. If they assumed that he deserves neither of these terms, they should be asked whether he performs all the constituents of īmān or some of them, or if he performs nothing. If they said that he performs all of them, they should be asked why they are depriving him of the name mu'min. If they said he performs some of them, then they should call him kāfir because God says such a man is truly kāfir (Q. 4: 150-51). If they said he performs nothing, then he most likely deserves to be called kāfir. By this argument, al-Māturīdī showed that the Mu'tazilites had no justification for their doctrine of the intermediate position.⁽¹⁾ He added that God has divided people into two categories, believers and unbelievers; by suggesting a third category, the Mu'tazilites had simply deviated from God's prescribed ordinances. Also, īmān is removed from a man through his being an unbeliever and not through the possibility of him being so, thus by holding such a doctrine the Mu'tazilites had also defied the unanimous agreement of the Muslim community (ijmā'), which stated that a man is either an unbeliever or a believer.⁽²⁾

Al-Māturīdī openly defended the Murjī'ite view which opposed those of the Mu'tazilites, the Khārijites, as well as those of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī. He said that though these groups had different

(1) Tawhīd, p.336,5-15.

(2) Ibid., pp.336,15-21; 337,1-4.

views regarding the grave sinner, they all held that the threat of punishment (wa'īd) was not directed at the believers, but only at those sinners who committed sins which removed them from īmān. The Murji'ites agreed that the sins which remove the sinner from īmān deserve the declared punishment; but they postponed a decision concerning the grave sinner. They said that he should not be considered as an unbeliever nor should he be eternally condemned to Hell. (1)

Al-Māturīdī took great pains to defend the views that grave sin does not deprive the sinner of his belief. He pointed out that the Qur'ān, ijmā', and the normal use of language, established that īmān is assent (tasdīq). According to this concept of īmān, all the judicial decisions of the Qur'ān were laid down and become binding on the members of the Muslim community. A person who commits grave sins does not lose his status as a member of the Muslim community, nor is he deprived of his belief. (2)

In many verses the term believer is applied to the grave sinner, along with a warning of a punishment for his sins. The verse 61:2, states that God hates those who say something which they are not actually doing. These people were termed believers, even though God's hate of them must have been for serious reasons. Those parties who were fighting each other were called believers in the verse, 49:9, in spite of the fact that they were erring against each other and that the other believers were ordered to mediate between them. The verse, 2:178, which speaks of retaliation

(1) Tawhīd, p.332,6-13.

(2) Ibid., p.332,14-21.

in the case of one who kills another, considers that both the killer and his victim are believers, and considers the application of God's judgement in this case as an alleviation and mercy from Him. If this sin were to remove man from *īmān*, such term would not be applied to him. Al-Māturīdī analysed the verses, 8:72 and 4:97 in the same way and concluded that grave sins do not deprive a man of his belief.⁽¹⁾ The verses 66:8 and 24:31, tell that those who commit sins which are forgivable by repentance are believers, and this supports the view of those who hold that the committing of grave sins do not remove a man from the state of belief.⁽²⁾

īmān is the necessary basis by which God enjoins religious obligations and acts of worship. Since those who commit evil deeds (af'āl al-fisq) participate in the performance of these actions, it has to be admitted that their grave sins do not deprive them of *īmān*.⁽³⁾

Al-Māturīdī then referred to the doctrine of intercession as a proof of his view that the grave sinner is a believer. He pointed out that the intercession, whose validity has been established by the Qur'ān and Traditions, must be for those sins which entail God's wrath and punishment. It cannot be for small sins, because these sins entail no punishment, nor can it be for the act of unbelief since such an act is not pardoned. Therefore, the grave sinner might be pardoned through the intercession of

(1) Tawhīd, p.333,1-15.

(2) Ibid., p.334,1-5.

(3) Ibid., p.334,6-8.

the prophet and those with whom God is pleased (ahl ar-ridā'). He refuted the Mu'tazilite interpretation of the intercession as that it only increases the rewards of the believers and did not forgive grave sinners. He said that some of the Mu'tazilites explained intercession in two ways: They said that intercession was either man asking God for elevation or lasting rewards, or it was man asking God for forgiveness and quoted the verses 40:7-9 and 21:28 to support their views. Al-Māturīdī pointed out that intercession in the first sense is inconceivable for two reasons: one is that it implies ignorance on the part of God which is impossible. Secondly, all man's actions are recorded and this is quite adequate for deciding his fate. Intercession in the sense of asking forgiveness is only possible if it is for grave sins. The acts of obedience entail rewards and not punishment, and asking forgiveness for them is unsightly, because it implies asking God not to be unjust or foolish. (1)

Al-Māturīdī said that a very sound proof of this was the fact that generation after generation of the Muslim community took it for granted that prayers should be performed over the body of every one of the people of the qibla (member of the community). (2)

Al-Māturīdī then refuted the Mu'tazilite view that the grave sinner is not a kāfir, though he should have no hope in God's mercy. To al-Māturīdī, such a view is contradictory, since the verse 12:87 connects despair of God's mercy with unbelief, and so

(1) Tawhīd, pp.366,5-18; 367,1-9.

(2) Ibid., p.334,10-12.

he who affirms one must affirm the other. The grave sinner is not Kāfir because the normal use of the word suggests denying of God, and because he is a believer he hopes for God's forgiveness and fears His punishment and therefore not denying God (mukadhdhib). To consider him as to be denied God's mercy (yā'is) is misleading and shows an ignorance about God. Moreover, Kufr in reality is a term used for covering up (sitr), or concealing; the grave sinner does not conceal God's grace, nor does he deny His right (haqq). So it would be wrong to call him a Kāfir. Similarly, Īmān, according to the normal use of language and Scripture, means assent and it is known that the sinner denies nothing of God, which proves that he is a believer. (1)

Before committing sins, a man is designated as mu'min by the Qur'ān (2:136, 2:285 and 4:94), by the Traditions, which define the constituents of Īmān, and by the consensus of the Muslim community. The act of disobediences and the committing of evil deeds do not remove him from Īmān, because these concepts are not contrary to the concepts of Īmān. Disobedience (fisq) is a deviation of a command which might be a guidance, obligation or a conviction. Likewise, injustice simply means the placing of a thing in its improper place, while disobedience refers only to disagreement. So whoever regards these as conveying similar meanings, with the intention of removing Īmān from he who commits them, is doing an injustice to himself, and is in obvious disagreement with the definitions made by God and the prophet of these concepts. (2)

(1) Tawhīd, p.334,13-21.

(2) Ibid., pp.342,17-20; 243,1-11.

Al-Māturīdī stated that the differences between the Khārijites and Mu'tazilites on one hand and the Murji'ites on the other hand, is based on their differing views as to whether the verses which promise reward and those which threaten punishment are general or particular. They cannot both be general since a contradiction would ensue, in the case of a man who did good actions and at the same time committed some sins. The Khārijites and the Mu'tazilites held that the verses which threatened punishment must be general in order to achieve admonition and warning, while the Murji'ites maintained that the verses which promise reward should be general in order to ascertain God's characteristics of mercy, forgiveness and granting pardons. (1)

Al-Māturīdī introduced rational arguments to prove that committing grave sins does not lead a man to eternal punishment in hell. His arguments in this respect are based on the difference in nature between unbelief and grave sin. He said that when the grave sinner commits a sin, he is in a state of fear of God's punishment, is terrified of His hatred, and hoping for His mercy and generosity. All these states are acts of obedience and certainly outweigh the grave sin he committed as a result of desire, compulsion or anger. Thus, it would be contrary to reason to deprive such a man of the benefits of His good deeds and make him suffer eternal punishment, since this would be contrary to God's generosity and bounty. The unbelievers and polytheists, however, have nothing which might be called good deeds, since they have no belief in God and deny His commandments and

(1) Tawhīd, p.342,5-8.

prohibitions. Thus they would have no hope, therefore, perpetual punishment of them would not be contrary to God's generosity and His beneficence. (1)

Another argument is that God promised that he who commits sins would be punished in accordance with his sin, but for unbelief was prescribed as punishment the abode forever in Hell. If grave sins were to be awarded the same punishment, it would be an excessive punishment, which is an injustice and, therefore, inappropriate to God. (2) The penalties (hudūd) in this life are prescribed as atonement for sins: if it were not so, and sins were punished by eternal hell, this punishment would be greater than the punishment for Kufr, which is impossible. (3) Furthermore, al-Māturīdī said, unbelief is a doctrine which one adheres to (yu'qad), and doctrines are normally upheld permanently, and so its rewards and punishment must be permanent. The grave sins, however, are only mistakes committed at certain times, when one, for instance, is overcome by desires, so its punishment must only be for a short time. (4) Moreover, unbelief is ugly in itself (bi-dhātihī), and cannot be otherwise, so its punishment should be permanent and without forgiveness. While all other sins might possibly become lawful, so its punishment must be temporal and measured according to its gravity. (5) Thus, the differences

(1) Tawhīd, p.360,10-24.

(2) Ibid., p.361,1-6.

(3) Ibid., p.361,7-9.

(4) Ibid., p.362,1-3.

(5) Ibid., p.362,4-6.

between the nature of sins and unbelief, and the intention and attitude of the grave sinner and the unbeliever, indicate that their punishments cannot be the same, and thus it must be concluded that grave sins would not be punished eternally in Hell. (1)

Al-Māturīdī devoted a large proportion of his treatment of the problem of Īmān, to the refutation of al-Ka'bi's view regarding this problem. (2) From this section it is clear that most of al-Ka'bi's arguments are based on quotations of the Qur'an, which he interpreted himself, and from which he drew his own conclusions. He also contended the interpretation given to certain verses by the opponents of the Mu'tazilites. Al-Māturīdī meticulously followed al-Ka'bi's arguments and tried to demonstrate their weaknesses. Reference has already been made to some of al-Ka'bi's views and his arguments, and it is needless to mention his views in detail since they are more or less the same as those of the general Mu'tazilite movement. There is one point, however, which is worth mentioning and that is that in the course of his argument, al-Māturīdī made reference to a certain book of al-Ka'bi from which he said he is quoting his views on this problem. (3) It is quite possible that this book is al-Ka'bi's missing work called Wa'īd al-Fussāq. Al-Māturīdī also mentioned that he devoted a special work refuting al-Ka'bi's arguments based on his interpretation of the Qur'an. This book might conceivably be al-Māturīdī's work entitled Radd Wa'īd al-

(1) Tawhīd, p.362,11ff.

(2) Ibid., pp.343-360.

(3) Ibid., p.344,17.

Fussāq. Thus it seems that Kitāb at-Tawhīd has reserved most, if not all, the material of al-Ka'bi's book and that of his own book which is a refutation of that of al-Ka'bi.

2. Al-Maturīdī's Conception of Īmān

Different definitions of Īmān followed as a result of the various opinions regarding the destiny of the sinners. In accordance with their views, the Khārijites and the Mu'tazilites gave great importance to the acts of obedience, good works in their conception of Īmān,⁽¹⁾ while the Murji'ites laid strong emphasis on the importance of knowledge and verbal acknowledgement or confession by the tongue. They regarded work of secondary importance in order to establish their view that Īmān is unaffected by sins, even grave sins.⁽²⁾ Individual thinkers in the Murji'ite movement held different views regarding the emphasis to be laid on knowledge or verbal confession, in their conception of Īmān.

Abū-Hanīfa's view, which foretold the opinions of his school and of the Maturīdītes later on, seems to have asserted the importance of both knowledge or assent, and verbal confession. According to al-Ash'arī, Abū-Hanīfa held that, "Īmān was the Knowledge of God together with the acknowledgement of Him and the knowledge of the messenger (Muhammad) and the acknowledgement of the revelation he brought, and this was to be in general and without interpretation."⁽³⁾ Both the Wasiyya and the Fiqh Akbar II

(1) Maqālāt, p.266 ff.

(2) Ibid., p.132 ff.

(3) Ibid., p.138,12-14.

attributed to him the view that *īmān* consisted of confession with the tongue and assent with the heart.⁽¹⁾ It is noticeable that Abū-Ḥanīfa also excluded work from the definition of *īmān*.⁽²⁾

Al-Māturīdī's treatment of this problem represents more or less the general views of the Ḥanafītes-Murji'ites, in that it excludes works from the definition of *īmān*. Nevertheless, he advocated the definition of *īmān* as assent rather than knowledge, and in contrast to the extreme views of the Karrāmites he minimised the importance of verbal confession. Criticism of the Karrāmite view dominates all of al-Māturīdī's section on the definition of *īmān*. He began this section by saying that, "some people claimed that *īmān* is confession by the tongue (*iqrār*) alone, and that there is nothing in the heart."⁽³⁾ Refuting such a view, he emphasized the point that *īmān* is assent by the heart, thus the most appropriate place for it, according to both reason and revelation, is the heart (i.e. not the tongue).⁽⁴⁾ He then proceeds to prove his point by numerous quotations from the Qur'ān, to the effect that *īmān* is not only a verbal confession. He referred to the verses 5:41 and 49:14, which respectively deny the claim of the hypocrites and of the bedouins to be believers, even though they made verbal confession.⁽⁵⁾ Also

(1) Wasiyya, art.1. M.C. p.125. Fiqh Akbar II, art.18.

M.C. p.194.

(2) Abū-Ḥanīfa, al-'Ālim wal-Muta'allim, p.12.

(3) Tawhīd, p.373,8.

(4) Ibid., p.373,9-10.

(5) Ibid., p.373,10-16.

the verses 60:10, 9:56 and 4:56 and 4:25 imply that only God knows whether one is a believer or not, which must prove that *Īmān* is the work of the heart.⁽¹⁾ Moreover, whilst God promises a reward to the believers, he says that the hypocrites would be in the lower part of hell. If verbal confession is belief, then they would have been promised reward and not eternal punishment. Besides, God considers their act of belief as mere deception (2:9), so whoever assumes that this verbal confession is true belief would be making a severe mistake and disclosing his ignorance of God. Furthermore, God tells us that the hypocrites are unbelievers, 63:6, 9:54, and states that they are liars (63:1) which makes it clear that verbal confession, with the denial of the heart is an act of lying, so that whoever considers the hypocrites' confession as *Īmān*, is giving them a contradictory name which is wrong.⁽²⁾ In the verse 16:106, God does not consider those who under compulsion confessed unbelief, as unbelievers, which proves that the heart is the locus of *Īmān*.⁽³⁾

The Karrāmites quoted the Tradition, "I have been ordered to fight people until they say there is no god but Allah", to support their view that *Īmān* is verbal confession only. To al-Māturīdī, however, this Tradition does not prove that verbal confession only is true *Īmān*, nor that *Īmān* is not assent by the heart. It simply discloses that such a confession is a sign and

(1) Tawhīd, p.374,1-9.

(2) Ibid., p.374,10-17.

(3) Ibid., p.375,14-16.

an expression of Īmān. Judgement, as to whether one is a believer or unbeliever, would be passed in accordance with this verbal confession, since there is no other way of testing one's Īmān. The normal procedures of passing judgement on a thing is consideration of the outward aspects, although its reality might be different. We distinguish between the believers and the unbelievers according to certain information gained through our association with them, which differ from the concepts of belief and disbelief. Similarly, we judge one to be a believer, or not, according to his verbal confession which is also different from the concepts of belief and disbelief. Therefore, if someone was to be compelled to express disbelief, he would not be Kāfir, since in his heart he is mu'min. Likewise, those who express their belief in verbal form only would be considered as mu'min and would be treated so regarding all matters related to religious duties and observations. This does not mean that Īmān is verbal confession only, otherwise those who only confess verbally would not be deprived of forgiveness and the rewards for Īmān.⁽¹⁾

Al-Māturīdī argued that in the verses, 9:123, 9:36 and 9:5, fighting is declared against the unbelievers and the polytheists for verbally confessing these convictions. However, this does not deny that the place of disbelief and polytheism is the heart. Thus it is not unlikely that the prophets were ordered to fight people until they verbally confessed their belief, though the place of Īmān is the heart. The wording of the quoted Tradition supports this point and indicates that the repetition of the

(1) Tawhīd, p.376,1-18.

shahāda (verbal confession) is only the reason for not fighting the infidels, and not the reality of īmān.⁽¹⁾

Then al-Māturīdī introduced rational arguments to the effect that īmān is assent by the heart only. He said that īmān is a religion, and religions and all doctrines (madhāhib) are based on a conviction which is attained by the heart.⁽²⁾ Also īmān, according to the normal use of language, is an assent and the essence of this reality, which is not liable to compulsion and enforcement, is the conviction of the heart over which no-one can have power. According to al-Māturīdī, a man might not have a tongue to express himself, yet no-one would deny him his religion, or his belief in God and His prophet, which establishes that belief is only by the assent of the heart.⁽³⁾ Furthermore, reason is a pre-requisite for imposing the duty to believe on man, and the proofs leading to īmān are based on reflection and speculation which are the acts of the man, therefore īmān must be the same, that is to say, it must be the act of the heart (i.e. mind); for the tongue is only an instrument⁽⁴⁾ used like any other instrument for speech and the giving of reports.⁽⁵⁾ Another proof is that God says, "There is no compulsion in religion", yet sometimes one might be forced to express disbelief, which proves that

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(1) Tawhīd, p.377,1-8.

(2) Ibid., p.377,10-11.

(3) Ibid., p.377,11-14.

(4) The text should be read as ālāt (instruments) instead of āyāt (signs).

(5) Tawhīd, p.378,4-6.

the essence of *Īmān* is in the heart.⁽¹⁾ In many verses the Muslims were called believers, and although they are not giving a verbal confession at that time, there is no doubt of their belief. This establishes that the essence of *Īmān*, according to which they were called believers, was present in them at the time they were addressed and the only possible place for such a conviction is the heart.⁽²⁾

Some of the Mu'tazilites, particularly al-Ka'bī, held that the totality of acts of obedience are part of *Īmān*, and quoted the verse 3:85 to support such a view. In order to refute this, al-Māturīdī tried to disclose the weaknesses of the argument derived from the above-mentioned verse. He said that it is true that acts of worship would not be accepted from someone who performs them without believing in Islam. This, however, does not mean that these acts constitute a fundamental element of the concept of *Īmān*. It only implies that *Īmān* is a name for an act of worship, and that it is a condition for the acceptance of all other acts of obedience. However, this does not mean that these acts are *Īmān*, since connection with something does not necessarily imply being a part of it.⁽³⁾ Al-Māturīdī quoted the verses, 61:2; 61:4; 9:38; 4:75 and 57:16, where the believers are reprimanded for committing acts of disobedience and are not deprived of the name believers, which proves that actions do not constitute a fundamental element in the concept of *Īmān*.⁽⁴⁾

(1) Tawhīd, p.378,6-7.

(2) Ibid., p.378,12-16.

(3) Ibid., p.345,8-15.

(4) Ibid., pp.378,17-18; 279,1-12.

Certain people held that only knowledge took place in the heart of a believer,⁽¹⁾ and to refute this al-Māturīdī pointed out that in Arabic language, īmān means assent (tasdīq), and drew attention to the fact that the concept of īmān stands in opposition to the concept of kufr, while knowledge is the opposite of ignorance. So if īmān is to be equated with knowledge, kufr would have to be equated with ignorance. In reality, kufr does not mean ignorance, but giving the lie (takdhīb), or covering up the truth (taghtiya), and a kāfir is a man who denies the truth of something. For this reason a man who does not know the truth is never called a mukadhdhib, but simply an ignorant (jāhil). This proves that in reality īmān is not knowledge. This does not mean, however, that knowledge has nothing to do with assent. A causal relation exists between these two concepts, so knowledge is a cause of assent, just as ignorance is often a cause of takdhīb. According to al-Māturīdī, "īmān with the heart is strictly speaking not knowledge, but knowledge can induce assent, just as ignorance, in many cases, can induce the attribute of "giving the lie".⁽²⁾ It is not right to describe everybody who does not know something as a mukadhdhib, nor is it possible to describe everybody who knows something as an assenter to it. īmān is often called knowledge because knowledge frequently causes assent, just as ignorance often causes denial. This, obviously, does not mean that "knowledge" is really īmān

(1) This view was attributed to Jahm Ibn-Safwān and some groups among the Murji'ites, see Maqālāt, pp.132 ff.

(2) Tawhīd, p.380,1-10. Ta'wīlāt, 5:41.

itself. (1)

According to such a conception of assent and knowledge, one might say, "I believe in all the messengers", but not "I have knowledge by heart of them all." The Qur'ānic verse 16:106, "whoso disbelieve in God after having believed in Him, except those who are forced thereto, their hearts being happily content with īmān, but who so is happy with kufr, upon them will be wrath from God", can be explained similarly. If only knowledge were in the heart, kufr would be unable to remove and eliminate it. Therefore, the condition mentioned here (of their hearts being happily content with īmān) would be completely pointless. In fact, it frequently happens that a man, in order to protect himself from wrongfully suffering treatment, adopts something which is quite different to what he knows to be the truth. He does so only for self-protection. In such a case "the happy contentment of the heart" is his condition (i.e. is the evidence that he will keep his īmān intact.)

Thus, according to al-Māturīdī, knowledge might be the cause of īmān, but it is not its essence. īmān is assent and is such that the man who has it feels in himself a profound contentment (tuma'nīyna) arising from this unshakable conviction. (2)

3. The Creation of īmān

The question of whether īmān is created or not was hotly debated by the theologians, and later considered as one of the

(1) Tawhīd, p.380,11-17.

(2) Ibid., pp.380,18-21; 281,1.

genuine disagreements between the Ash'arītes and the Māturīdītes. It is even said that the Māturīdīte school was divided on this question.⁽¹⁾ It will be shown later that the whole dispute seems to have resulted from the confusion regarding what is meant by Īmān. Those who considered Īmān to be uncreated, linked the question with the problem of the creation of the Qur'ān, while those who considered it to be created were merely concerned with Īmān as a human phenomenon.

Al-Māturīdī, who held the latter view, devoted a special section to this question, and pointed out that his main opponents in this respect (who held that Īmān is uncreated) were some of the Hashwites.⁽²⁾ In opposing them he argued that, as a concept, Īmān must either be a known or an unknown object. If it were unknown, it would be pointless to say that it is created or uncreated. According to him, the only thing which is unknown is creation in general which God did not give us a lead (dalīl) to. Īmān, however, cannot be an unknown concept because man has been ordered to perform it, religious obligations and laws are based on its realization, it has been considered as the basis of responsibility and judgement (mihna), and the Muslims unanimously testify to its creation. All of which points that Īmān is a known concept.⁽³⁾

He pointed out that Īmān must be a human phenomenon because it is a man who is commanded to perform it and who is promised a reward for its performance and threatened with punishment for its negligence. Also, the Qur'ān states this connection between man and his Īmān, and designates he who performs it as a mu'min.

(1) Abū-'Udhba, ar-Rawda al-Bahiyya, pp.71-2. cf. Ayyūb 'Alī

al-'Aqida al-Maturīdiyya, pp.323-24.

- (2) The word "Ḥashwiyya, Ḥashawiyya or Ahl al-Ḥashw" is a contemptuous term used by different groups to repudiate their opponents. But it is mainly used in reference to a certain group among the Ahl al-Ḥadīth, who accepted the anthropomorphic expressions mentioned in the Traditions, in their literal sense. (E.I.⁽²⁾ art. "Ḥashwiyya" vol.iii,p.269. A.S. Halkin, art. "The Ḥashwiyya" JAOS 54 (1934) pp.1-28).

Al-Maturīdī used the term Ḥashwiyya several times in his Kitāb at-Tawhīd. He attributed to al-Ka'bi the views that the Ḥashwiyya were those who supported the Umayyad rulers in their political attitude, and blindly adhered to the doctrine of predetermination. (Tawhīd, p.318,3-7). Al-Maturīdī admitted that these views belong to a certain group among the Ḥashwites. (Ibid. p.318,19-20).

To al-Maturīdī, however, the main views of the Ḥashwites were concerned with the problem of Īmān. In this respect they hold some views which are different from those of the Hanafites. Thus they maintained that Īmān is uncreated. (Tawhīd, pp.385-88), that the acts of obediences are constituent parts of Īmān (Ibid. pp.331,5-7; 378,7. Ta'wīlāt, 60:1). They also advocated the doctrine of the conditional profession of Īmān (istithnā') Tawhīd, p.382,4-15.

- (3) Tawhīd, pp.385,12-21; 386,1-3.

Finally, al-Māturīdī pointed out that it is man who testifies to the oneness of God, and believes in His messengers, which proves that Īmān is the action of man. Therefore, Īmān cannot be uncreated, for it is impossible for it to exist before the existence of man. (1)

According to al-Māturīdī, the creation of something is known either by revelation or by reason, both of which testify to the creation of Īmān. With regard to revelation, the Qur'ān clearly stated that God is the creator of all things, and since in the view of al-Māturīdī, every thing apart from God is created, Īmān must also be created. To support this he refers to specific verses, 37:96, where Īmān is included in what one does, and to 67:13-14, where Īmān is considered as something either proclaimed or hidden, and to 25:59, in which Īmān is included within the things that rest between the heaven and earth. (2)

Al-Māturīdī said that rational evidences could easily be found by looking for all the symptoms of creation within Īmān; since Īmān occurs in the believers and what has thus occurred is logically created. (3) Another argument is that Īmān is a method of conduct which one follows, a religion which one believes in, a doctrine which one chooses, and a creed which one adheres to. Therefore, since these concepts are created, it must also be created. (4) Al-Māturīdī then quoted some Traditions to support

(1) Tawhīd, p.386,3-19.

(2) Ibid., pp.386,20-23; 387,1-7.

(3) Ibid., p.387,8-11.

(4) Ibid., p.387,18-19.

his theory on the creation of Īmān.⁽¹⁾

4. The Conditional Profession of Īmān (istithnā')

The problem of istithnā', namely saying, "I am a believer if God wills", was one of the disputed questions among the Ḥanafites-Māturīdītes on one hand, and the Ḥanbalites-Ash'arītes on the other hand. Basing their view on the conception of Īmān as something determined by God, the Ḥanbalites-Ash'arītes affirmed the necessity of this conditional phrase, because they said, though a man might be sincere in his belief, there might be imperfection in his assent, of which he is not aware.⁽²⁾ The Ḥanafites, who rejected such an istithnā', drew a positive line between Īmān and kufr. This found expression in Abū-Ḥanīfa's statement that the believer is really a believer and the unbeliever is really an unbeliever, therefore, it is pointless as well as illogical for a believer to express any doubt in his belief.⁽³⁾

Al-Māturīdī emphasized this Ḥanafite view and laid down arguments to support it. He said that it is a fundamental necessity to openly declare the certainty of our belief, without introducing any exceptions, because to raise doubts about any conception (ma'na), which is a necessary requisite for the

(1) Tawhīd, p.387,15-18.

(2) Ibn-Baṭṭa, Kitāb ash-Sharḥ wa-l-Ibāna, pp.48-49. Baghdādī, Usūl, p.235.

(3) Abū-Ḥanīfa, Wasiyya in the Rasā'il as-Sab'a fi-l-'Aqā'id p.77. cf. Izutsu, op.cit. pp.194-5. Watt, Formative Period, pp.138-39.

accomplishment of Īmān, invalidates it, and raises doubts about our Īmān itself.⁽¹⁾ He argued that in ordinary social life, the istithnā' would invalidate testimony, contracts, promises, etc., and so it would do the same to Īmān.⁽²⁾ Again, istithnā' is normally used in cases of doubts and suspicions. The believer, however, should have no doubt in his belief (Q. 49:15), it is only the hypocrites who are subject to such doubts.⁽³⁾ Moreover, Īmān is one of the graces and bounties which God has bestowed upon man.

Al-Māturīdī argued that he who professes "exception" about his belief, would either be sincere and have acknowledged God's favour, or he would have openly denied such a favour. In the latter case, istithnā' is pointless since it only increases man's state of doubt and suspicion, while in the first case it indicates man's denial of God's favour and that he covers up such a favour which is also wrong.⁽⁴⁾ The istithnā' is usually uttered when one is embarrassed (when asked to do something) but this embarrassment would not be applicable because, if one did not believe in God, one would be reckoned with and punished.⁽⁵⁾

Those who affirmed the necessity of istithnā' pointed out that, by uttering this conditional phrase, they did not necessarily mean that they doubted their assent. This is because God

(1) Tawhīd, p.388,12-14.

(2) Ibid., p.388,17-18.

(3) Ibid., p.389,15-17. Ta'wīlāt, 1:5.

(4) Tawhīd, pp.389,15-17; 390,1-6.

(5) Ibid., p.390,8-11.

mentioned the istithnā' in the Qur'ān and did not imply anything doubtful in connection with it. God said, "You shall enter the secure sacred mosque if God wills", Q.48:27. Muhammed did enter the sacred mosque, and that was certain, although the istithnā' was mentioned by God.⁽¹⁾ In reply to such a suggestion, al-Māturīdī says, this argument is not sound because God mentioned the words "may be", "perhaps" and "would it be", when He meant to speak about things with certainty. Furthermore, God may have taught the prophet to say the istithnā' when he was making a promise. God said: "Do not say of anything, 'I will do it tomorrow' without adding, 'if God wills, I will do it'." The same thing is meant in the case of "You shall enter".⁽²⁾

5. The Relation between Īmān and Islam

Attempts to state the relationship between Islam and Īmān go back to the time of the prophet and are to be found in the Traditions in which the constructions of Īmān and Islam are laid down. Later on, theoretical formulation of these concepts were developed, thus raising the question of whether these terms are identical, or whether they are relevant to certain aspects of belief. Controversies over this question were accentuated by the fact that the Qur'ān seems to have used these terms interchangeably, and it certainly gives no ground for the view that Īmān is either higher or lower than Islam. In the last section of Kitāb at-Tawhīd, which is devoted to the discussion of this problem,

(1) Tawhīd, p.391,3-7.

(2) Ibid., pp.391,8-19; 392,1-3.

al-Māturīdī tried to refute the views of those who attempted to make certain distinctions between these two concepts and concluded that they are identical.⁽¹⁾

According to al-Māturīdī, those who defined Īmān in a way which included all acts of obedience, distinguished between Islam and Īmān on the basis of the Qur'ānic verse, "The nomads say āmānā (we have believed). Say: you have not believed, but say, aslamnā (we have professed Islam), seeing that Īmān has not yet entered your hearts", Q.49:14. To them, this verse suggested that Īmān is on a higher level than Islam, thus God permits the nomads to tell of their Islam but not of their Īmān, since they had not yet fulfilled the condition of Īmān. They also referred to the Tradition in which the prophet defined Īmān to consist of belief in God, His angels, His book, His messengers, the final resurrection and that all Qadar, whether good or bad, is from God, and in which he defined Islam as serving God without associating anything with Him, performing the ordered ṣalāt, paying over the obligatory zakāt, fasting Ramadān, and visiting the House of God for pilgrimage. They argued that there must be

(1) Al-Māturīdī's views in this respect are in line with those of his predecessors, the Hanafite theologians. In the Fiqh Akbar II, art.18, it is stated that from the language point of view, there is a difference between Īmān and Islam as Īmān means al-iqrār wal-tasdīq, and Islam means al-inqiyād wal-taslīm. But one is not possible without the other, i.e., Īmān without Islam, and Islam without Īmān. The two words are synonymous. M.C. p.194.

a difference between the two since both the Qur'ān and the Traditions distinguished between them.⁽¹⁾ A similar argument, based on the Qur'ān and the Traditions, was used by some of those who defined Īmān as assent and held that Islam is a term which stands for all pious acts (qurab).⁽²⁾

In al-Māturīdī's view, although the terms Islam and Īmān are linguistically different, they are similar in their meanings, because they convey the same religious concepts. Thus Īmān is a term used to refer to the belief based on the intellect and the Traditions, that God is one, to Him belong the command and creation, and that He has no associate in this respect. Islam, however, means the entire submission of one's self and all one's affairs to God; this is fulfilled through humble veneration and devoted worship. So the outcome of Islam and Īmān is the same, though each one represents different aspects.⁽³⁾

Some people said that Islam is submission to God and resignation to His will and they interpreted accordingly the verse, 49:14, which was mentioned previously.

Al-Māturīdī agreed that Islam means submission to God, but he did not believe that this verse referred to this kind of submission: the fact that this verse simply tells of the bedouins' surrender to the believers, and not to God, is shown in the verses, 59:13, "you arouse greater fear in their hearts than God", and "they think every cry is against them", 63:4, Islam which is the

(1) Tawhīd, p.393,4-19. Ta'wīlāt, 49:14.

(2) Tawhīd, p.394,1-6.

(3) Ibid., p.394,11-20.

result of fear of man is not the true Islam. In reality, Islam is voluntary submission and resignation to God, and thus it is synonymous with Īmān. The bedouins were denied this sense of Islam. (1)

He went on to say that, if the reality of Īmān and Islam is such, it would be wrong for anyone to assume the existence of one of them in the true sense without the existence of the other (lays). (2) They are considered as one concept although they have different names, because of their close relationship, in the same way that the terms, human being, man, and someone, which are used in differing expressions, refer to one entity, a human being. Thus, Islam and Īmān are similar in their real essence, and the existence of one of them necessarily entails the existence of the other. (3)

Moreover, it is unlikely that anyone would comply with the essentials of Islam without being, at the same time, a believer (muslim) and without being a mu'min. This proves that, in their essence, Īmān and Islam are one and that they can be applied interchangeably, for religions differ according to difference of convictions and not because of differences in their ritual works. Thus, with the existence of belief, one might be called by any of these two terms. God says, "The Religion with Allah

(1) Tawhīd, p.395,5-14.

(2) The text should be read, wa-l-ākhar lays (the other is not in existence) thus the amendment of Kholeif of the text does not seem to be necessary.

(3) Tawhīd, p.395,15-20.

is the surrender (to His will and guidance)"⁽¹⁾ and, "And he who seeketh as religion other than the surrender (to Allah) it will not be accepted from him and he will be a loser in the hereafter."⁽²⁾ Therefore, the believer in the real sense would either be in possession of Islam, which is the religion of God or possessing some of it, or be seeking something other than God's religion. He would only be called a muslim in the first case, this argument proves that Islam is the complete form of religion.⁽³⁾

As for the Tradition which has been quoted as proof for the differentiation between Islam and *Īmān*, al-Māturīdī said that there is another version of this Tradition. This version was related on the authority of Ibn-'Umar and according to it, the prophet is said to have been asked about *Īmān* and the codes of Islam, and not about the concept of Islam, as the other version states.⁽⁴⁾

Then al-Māturīdī introduced an argument based on the Qur'ān, and rational evidences, to the effect that the terms Islam and *Īmān* are identical. He referred to the verses, 2:136; 10:84; 49:17 and 51:35-6, where the two terms were used interchangeably.⁽⁵⁾ He also quoted two versions of a Tradition in which the terms were used interchangeably.⁽⁶⁾ He argued that there is no

(1) Qur'ān, 3:19.

(2) Ibid., 3:85.

(3) Tawhīd, p.396,1-14.

(4) Ibid., pp.396,15-22; 397,1-7.

(5) Ibid., p.397,8-17.

(6) Ibid., p.397,17-19.

contradiction in calling the Muslim a mu'min and vice versa. Also, all Muslim schools agreed that if a man is removed from Islam, he is also removed from Īmān and vice versa, and in the hereafter, the abode of the Muslims would be the same as that of the mu'min. All of which proves that these two terms are identical. (1) He pointed out that neither of these terms applied any judgement in relation to this world or to the world to come, which was not applied by the other, which proves that they must be similar. (2)

(1) Tawhīd, p.398,1-11.

(2) Ibid., p.398,12-16.

CHAPTER VIII

AL-ASH'ARĪ ON THE DOCTRINE OF ĪMĀN

From his extant works, al-Ash'arī does not appear to have been as concerned with this problem as al-Māturīdī was, and he therefore introduced no systematic treatment and gave no detailed account of the various aspects of this problem. However, references to certain aspects of the problem are to be found in his writings. His main concern in his Luma' seems to be the refutation of the Mu'tazilites doctrine of the intermediate position; while the Risāla II and the Ibāna mentioned briefly some of the views which are of Hanbalite or traditionalist origin.

1. The Fate of the Grave Sinner

It has already been mentioned that the Mu'tazilites consider the sinner as neither a believer nor an unbeliever, but as being in an intermediate position, and that unless he repented he would be punished eternally in Hell.⁽¹⁾ In opposing this Mu'tazilite view, al-Ash'arī emphasised the point that sin does not remove the sinner from his belief and that, therefore, he would not be eternally punished in Hell. In his Luma', he clearly stated that a man may be a believer with respect to his Īmān but that, at the same time, he may be a sinner, so that by committing a sin a man is not removed from his state of belief, as the Mu'tazilites claimed. He pointed out that the names

(1) See Supra, p.431.

believer and sinner belong to a man because of certain acts performed by him, and since they are not contradictory terms, they can both exist in one man. From a linguistic point of view, a man is qualified by his action, for instance, if he strikes he would be called a striker. Similarly, the man who commits a sin and at the same time professes his belief, must be called a believer and a sinner.⁽¹⁾ To consider him as neither a believer nor an unbeliever, as the Mu'tazilites did, would imply that he possessed neither of these concepts, which is impossible; this obviously demonstrates the falsity of the Mu'tazilite doctrine of the intermediate position. Moreover, this Mu'tazilite doctrine is contrary to the unanimous agreement of the Muslim community, which divided the disobedient ones into two categories: believer, in the case of committing grave sins, and unbelievers, in the case of committing the sin of polytheism.⁽²⁾

Al-Ash'arī expressed the same view in his Risāla II, where he stated that no sin but kufr could remove a man from his īmān. He argued that the sinners, among the Muslims, were called believers, and were under the jurisdiction of the laws and ordinances of Islam. This is demonstrated by the verse, 5:6, which orders the believers to perform ritual ablutions when they intend to pray, and by the verse, 62:9 which commands them to attend the Friday prayers. If sins remove man from his state of belief, then the sinner would not be asked to perform the ritual ablution and the verse would only be addressed to the believers who have

(1) Luma', p.75,10-14.

(2) Ibid., p.76,3-9.

committed no sins and there are no indications that the verse is only directed for the obedient and not for the disobedients. (1) Similar views were also stated in the creeds of the Maqālāt, (2) and the Ibāna, where it is said that, "It is our opinion that we ought not to declare a single one of the people of the qibla as infidels for the committing of a sin, such as fornication or theft or the drinking of wine, as the Khārijites believe, being of the opinion that such people are infidels; but rather we believe that he who commits any of these mortal sins, such as fornication or theft or the like, presumptuously declaring it to be lawful (mustahill) and does not acknowledge that it is forbidden, is an infidel. (3)

The Mu'tazilites maintained that, as had already been mentioned, unless the sinner repents, he will be punished for ever in Hell. They based their views on those Qur'ānic verses which threatened the sinners with the punishment of fire. Al-Ash'arī, who disagreed with the Mu'tazilites on this point, tried to refute their arguments in his Luma'. and to show that reading of these Qur'ānic verses, which their arguments depended on, did not necessarily lead to their views.

According to al-Ash'arī, the Mu'tazilites quoted the verses 82:14; 4:30 and 4:10, which threatened the profligates, those who act unjustly and wrongfully, and those who wrongfully consume the wealth of orphans, with the punishment of fire. They argued that

(1) Risāla II, p.105,3-10.

(2) Maqālāt, p.293,2-3.

(3) Ibāna, p.10,17-20.

these verses are of a universal nature to prove that whoever commits such a crime would be punished in Hell.⁽¹⁾ Al-Ash'arī contended the basic Mu'tazilite assumption of the universality of the threat in these verses, and stated that there is no proof for such a claim. He pointed out that the word "whomsoever" in the verse, 4:30, "But whomsoever does that in transgression and wrongfully", might be applying to all those who do that, or to some of them, because in the Arabic language the word man (whomsoever) is used in both senses, therefore it cannot be affirmed that it has a universal or a particular application without solid proof.⁽²⁾ Similarly, it is not possible to be certain if the verses, 82:14 and 4:10, refer to "some" or to "all" without proof.⁽³⁾ Then al-Ash'arī quoted two verses of Arabic poetry and several phrases, where words might be of a universal or a particular meaning, and concluded that since such expressions sometimes occur universally and sometimes particularly, it is not possible to assert either of these concepts without some sort of positive indication.⁽⁴⁾ If the punishment of whoever committed one of these sins is to be concluded from these verses, then it must also be concluded from the ostensible meaning of the verse, 27:89, that every one who professed God's unity would be in heaven, and from the verse, 3:169, that whoever is killed while fighting will go to paradise, and from the verse, 39:53, that all

(1) Luma', p.77,3-6.

(2) Ibid., p.77,6-10.

(3) Ibid., p.77,11-16.

(4) Ibid., pp.77,18; 78,1-8.

sins except unbelief and polytheism would be forgiven by God. He concluded that one has no more right to say that the verses which threaten are universal, and that the others, such as those just mentioned, are particular, than one who reverses the statement and says that the threatening verses are particular and the others are universal. (1)

Moreover, if one had to conclude from the ostensible meanings of the verses that every profligate man and everyone who wrongfully consumes the wealth of an orphan will be condemned to Hell, then one could conclude from the verses, 67:8-9, that only the unbelievers enter fire, and from the verses, 92:14-16, that whoever enters it is impious and belies, and from the verse 5:47, that only the polytheists refrain from judging according to what God has sent down. Al-Ash'arī concluded that, "since these verses do not compel one to conclude that only the unbelievers enter the fire, the previously cited verses do not compel one to conclude that those who committed these sins will be condemned to the fire. (2)

According to al-Ash'arī, the verse, 4:30, which the Mu'tazilites quoted to prove their view that every sinner will be in Hell, might be interpreted as meaning those who committed sin whilst declaring it licit (mustahill), or possibly as meaning everyone who commits grave sins. Similarly, the other threatening verses have these two alternative interpretations. (3) By demonstrating the weaknesses of the Mu'tazilites arguments,

(1) Luma', pp.78,9-17; 79,1-2.

(2) Ibid., p.79,3-13.

(3) Ibid., p.79,15-18.

al-Ash'arī is trying to say that although the grave sinner will be punished in the fire for his sin, he will ultimately come forth and enter paradise. He expressed this opinion in his Risāla II, where he stated that the fathers (salaf) unanimously agreed that God will bring out of fire the person in whose heart there is something of īmān, after he is punished for his sin.⁽¹⁾ This would be achieved through the intercession of the prophet (shafā'a) which has already been referred to.⁽²⁾

Al-Ash'arī made no reference to the doctrine of the shafā'a in his Luma', but he did mention it in both the Ibāna and the Risāla II. In his creed of the Ibāna, he said, "We believe that God, through the intercession of Muhammad, God's apostle, will bring forth people from hell after they have been burned to ashes, in accordance with what we are told in the Traditions which are attributed to the authority of God's apostle."⁽³⁾ In his Risāla II, he specified that intercession is for those Muslims who have committed grave sins.⁽⁴⁾ Al-Ash'arī thus tried to refute the Mu'tazilite views on this problem. The Mu'tazilites maintained that intercession is only for the believers and interpreted it in the sense that it gives them more of God's bounty and beneficence. To him, intercession could not possibly be for such believers, because it would be useless since those believers had already been promised rewards and bounty and it did not require intercession

(1) Risāla II, p.106,7.

(2) See Supra, p.434-5.

(3) Ibāna, p.11,3-4.

(4) Risāla II, p.106,8-10, also Maqālāt, p.293,10-11.

for this to be realized. He concluded that, "the intercession in question is only for those who deserve punishment, in order that their punishment may be removed from them, and for those to whom He has not promised a thing in order that He may bestow it upon them, and so, since there is a preceeding promise of bestowal for the believers, there is no reason why intercession should be for them."⁽¹⁾

2. Al-Ash'arī's Conception of Īmān

As T. Izutsu rightly remarked, al-Ash'arī does not seem to be greatly interested in discussing the problem of the essential conceptual constitutions of Īmān.⁽²⁾ Thus he touched only slightly on this problem in his surviving works, and gave no satisfactory information concerning his own views. Yet his followers, the later Ash'arītes, attributed to him different doctrines and thus further confused his whole treatment of the subject.

In his Luma', al-Ash'arī defines Īmān as assent (tasdīq) or belief in God. He based this definition on linguistic grounds, saying that the Qur'ān is revealed in the Arabic language, so the terms it uses must be understood in the sense given by this language. According to al-Ash'arī, "In the Arabic language, Īmān means tasdīq. It is used in this sense in the Qur'ānic verse, 12:17, "But you do not have faith in us, though we are truthful", meaning that you do not believe us (bi-musaddiq).

(1) Ibāna, p.69,8-22.

(2) Izutsu, op.cit., p.147.

Also in the normal use of the language it is said, "so and so has faith in the punishment of the grave and intercession", meaning that he believes in them (yusaddiq). Accordingly, īmān must mean tasdīq.⁽¹⁾ Al-Ash'arī mentioned neither "saying" nor "work" as part of īmān. In the Ibāna, this definition of īmān was reversed. Here, al-Ash'arī does not mention tasdīq, but said that "we believe that faith consists of words and deeds".⁽²⁾ Does this mean that al-Ash'arī held two different concepts of īmān or that he is only laying emphasis on one aspect in each one of his works? By defining īmān in terms of words and deeds in the Ibāna, al-Ash'arī does not seem to have meant to indicate that tasdīq is insignificant, but simply to emphasize the importance of works and confession in the Hanbalite fashion. Thus, in order to represent the Hanbalite view, al-Ash'arī laid more emphasis on these terms, as if he was suggesting that tasdīq is so important and essential that it should not require to be mentioned explicitly. The importance of tasdīq is shown in al-Ash'arī's Luma' where only tasdīq is mentioned and strongly argued for.

However, these brief statements of al-Ash'arī are insufficient to give us a clear picture of his thoughts on īmān. Therefore, by considering the views attributed to him by his followers, a better understanding might be obtained. Al-Baghdādī, the Ash'arite theologian and heresiographer, tells us that al-Ash'arī said that: īmān is tasdīq to God and to His messengers, but that tasdīq is not sound unless accompanied by a "knowledge" of God.

(1) Luma', p.75,3-9.

(2) Ibāna, p.11,7-8.

Kufr, in his view, is nothing other than "giving the lie" (takdhīb).⁽¹⁾ This view agrees with the Luma''s definition of Īmān as tasdīq, and adds that in al-Ash'arī's conception, knowledge is the very basis of tasdīq. Ash-Shahrastānī's statement that al-Ash'arī sometimes defines it (i.e. tasdīq) as the knowledge of the Divinity, pre-existence and attributes of the creator, and sometimes he defined it in the sense of a mental speech (qawl fi-nafs), which contained the knowledge of God. When this mental speech is uttered, it becomes confession with the tongue. This verbal confession is also called tasdīq. The performance of the fundamental duties is also a kind of tasdīq in the sense that it is an outward indication of tasdīq, just as the verbal confession is tasdīq in that it is an outward indication of the mental assent.⁽²⁾

From these opinions, ash-Shahrastānī drew the conclusion that, in al-Ash'arī's view, the idea subsisting in the heart is the root of which "verbal confession" and "work" are only outward indications. In his Milal, ash-Shahrastānī attributed to al-Ash'arī the view that Īmān is assent by the heart. Confession by the tongue and works are only its branches. So if a person asserted by his heart and believed in the oneness of God, His messengers and the messages they brought down from Him, he would be a mu'min, and if he died instantly without confessing or performing an act, he would be saved.⁽³⁾

(1) Baghdādī, Usūl, p.248,14-16.

(2) Iqdām, p.472.

(3) Milal, vol.1, p.101.

Al-Ash'arī, following the Hanbalite conception of Īmān, declares that Īmān is subject to increases and decreases; it increases through the acts of obedience and decreases through the acts of disobedience. However, this decreasing of Īmān neither implies doubt about what a Muslim believes in, nor ignorance of it, since otherwise it would be unbelief. By decrease is meant decreasing in understanding and full information on the man's part. From this respect, Īmān is of various degrees, and differs from one person to another, just as our acts of obedience differ from those performed by a prophet, although we all are performing similar obligations.⁽¹⁾ As far as the relationship between Islam and Īmān is concerned, al-Ash'arī declared that Islam is more general than Īmān, and that not every Islam is Īmān. Thus the application of the term Islam is wider and could in fact be applied to anyone who calls himself a Muslim, whereas Īmān is limited in its application.⁽²⁾

3. The Creation of Īmān

In his creed of the Maqālāt, al-Ash'arī stated that the Sunnites refrained from judging whether Īmān was created or uncreated.⁽³⁾ Yet a short treatise entitled Mas'ala fi-l-Īmān is said to have been devoted by al-Ash'arī to the discussion of this problem. This treatise is believed to have been an answer to the question of whether or not Īmān is created, and intended

(1) Risāla II, pp.104,21-22; 105,1-2.

(2) Ibāna, p.10,21.

(3) Maqālāt, p.293,14-15.

to give the views of the Sunnite theologians regarding this question.

In his reply to these questions, al-Ash'arī held that *īmān* is uncreated and explained the differences occurring among his colleagues regarding this problem. He pointed out that some of the speculative theologians (ahl an-nazar) among his colleagues maintained that *īmān* is created. These include men such as: *Ḥārith al-Muhāsibī*, *Ja'far b. Harb*, *'Abd Allah b. Kullāb* and *'Abd al-'Azīz al-Makkī*. They based their views on a rather simple argument that, by carefully observing the existing things, they found that everything was created except God and His attributes. *īmān*, which is obviously a human property and a human act, cannot be an attribute of God, and therefore it must be among the "created things". (1)

Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal and other Traditionalists hold the opposite view, and maintained that *īmān* is uncreated. (2) Al-Ash'arī openly declared his favouring of this view and expressed his adherence to it, and even tried to find rational basis and logical arguments for its justification. In doing this, he began by considering the exact meaning of the word "created" which, to him, means what has come into being after having been non-existent. He pointed out that creation, in this sense, cannot possibly be applied to *īmān* because, if we are to say that *īmān* is created, that would imply that *īmān* had been non-existent before it was created. This would imply that before *īmān* was created, there was

(1) Al-Ash'arī, Kitāb al-īmān, p.139,13-17.

(2) Ibid., p.138,17-18.

a state in which there was neither Īmān nor tawhīd (i.e. acknowledgment of God's oneness). In reality, however, according to al-Ash'arī, there was never a state in which there was no Īmān and tawhīd, neither before nor after the creation of Īmān.⁽¹⁾

It is obvious that here al-Ash'arī is referring to Īmān, not as a human phenomenon, but as a cosmic event and an abstract concept which is not related to any individual being. He made this quite clear in his answer to the objection that such a conception of Īmān would imply that Īmān might exist without there being a believer.⁽²⁾ He affirmed this, and went even further and connected Īmān with God Himself. He said that in this concept, Īmān is identical with tasdīq and tawhīd (confession of the oneness of God). So, as tawhīd needs muwahhid, Īmān calls for a mu'min. Before the creation of mankind, God had declared His oneness, glorified Himself, and testified His truthfulness (muṣaddiq). This means that Īmān, which is tawhīd and tasdīq, is eternal and uncreated. Support for such a view is to be found in the Qur'ān, where God says, "Verily I am God, there is no god but I"⁽³⁾ (which is nothing other than tawhīd), and declares Himself to be truthful (which is nothing other than tasdīq). So even if there was no man to practise tawhīd and tasdīq, these concepts would exist. That is to say that Īmān existed before the creation of man.⁽⁴⁾ Al-Ash'arī said that all this suggested

(1) Al-Ash'arī, Kitāb al-Īmān, pp.138,20-24; 139,1-5.

(2) Ibid., p.139,5-7.

(3) Qur'ān, 20:14.

(4) Al-Ash'arī, Kitāb al-Īmān, p.139,7-17.

that when Īmān was used in an abstract sense and was not connected with something created, it was one of the Divine attributes of God and thus it was uncreated. He quoted the verse, "He is allah; there is no god but He. He is the supreme Lord, the All-Holy, the All-Peaceable (mu'min)" Q.59:23, where God called Himself a mu'min and included this among the names which He applied to Himself, to prove that Īmān is an uncreated concept. (1)

"It is quite evident", as T. Izutsu remarked, "that in this argument, al-Ash'arī is only paying attention to the outer form of the word mu'min, because the meaning of the word when related to man in normal use of language refers to one who believes. Whilst in the verse quoted by al-Ash'arī, it is related to God and conveys quite a different meaning, although derived from the same root. Here it means one who makes somebody feel safe, "one who sets the mind of somebody at rest", one who ensures and safeguards." (2)

Al-Ash'arī criticized the speculative theologians among his colleagues for using false reasoning, and for deriving the wrong conclusion from this view of the creation of Īmān: They have examined all the created beings, the conditions and properties of which they have observed, and they have found them all to be created. Furthermore, they have ascertained that Īmān is one of the attributes peculiar to the creatures, and from this they have concluded that Īmān is created. This is certainly a mistaken conclusion, based on their failure to understand that Īmān is

(1) Al-Ash'arī, Kitab al-Īmān, p.139.17-24.

(2) Izutsu, op.cit., p.208-9.

essentially related to God. It is similar to all God's attributes shared by man and God, such as: knowledge and speech, in that when they are related to God, they would be neither created nor temporal. (1)

According to this identification between *Īmān* and God's essential attributes, al-Ash'arī refuted the objection that the assertion of the uncreatedness of *Īmān* would entail the existence of eternal beings besides God. He pointed out that as this is not applicable in the case of God's essential attributes, such as speech and knowledge, it would not be valid in the case of *Īmān*. (2)

Finally, al-Ash'arī stated the reasons which led him to emphasise the uncreatedness of tawhīd, i.e. *Īmān*. He pointed out that the assertion of its creation leads eventually to the assumption of the creation of the Qur'ān. He explained this by saying that in the Qur'ān, God has declared His unity by saying, "verily I am God; there is no god but I". If it were possible to say that tawhīd is created, then it would be possible to assume that these words of the Qur'ān by which God had declared His oneness are also created, and this inevitably entails that the Qur'ān is created, which is downright kufr. Thus it has to be established that tawhīd is neither created nor temporal. (3)

(1) Al-Ash'arī, Kitāb al-Īmān, pp.139,24;140,1-4.

(2) Ibid., p.140,6-11.

(3) Ibid., p.140,11-16.

CONCLUSION TO CHAPTERS VII AND VIII

From the above-mentioned account of the views of al-Māturīdī and al-Ash'arī on the problem of Īmān, it might be concluded that al-Ash'arī does not seem to be concerned as al-Māturīdī, with this problem. This is quite evident from the elaborate analysis and discussions of al-Māturīdī, compared with the brief statements and references found in al-Ash'arī's works.

Both al-Māturīdī and al-Ash'arī tackled the problem of the destiny of the grave sinner, and hold almost similar views that the grave sinner is a believer and thus should not be punished eternally in Hell. However, what al-Ash'arī seems to be concerned with is the refutation of the Mu'tazilite doctrine of the intermediate position (al-manzila bayn al-manzilatayn). While al-Māturīdī had in mind this doctrine of the Mu'tazilites as well as the doctrines of other sects and individuals such as the Khārijites and al-Hasan al-Basrī. Al-Māturīdī elaborately argued from both revelation and reason to establish his point of view and to refute those of his adversaries.

Concerning the conception of Īmān, al-Māturīdī defines Īmān as assent by the heart (tasdīq bil-qalb). Al-Ash'arī, however, had the same definition in his Luma', while in the Ibāna he followed the Hanbalites and thus defined Īmān as words and works. And while al-Ash'arī's brief statement indicates his uninterest in this problem, al-Māturīdī's treatment of the point showed his concern to refute the views of the Karrāmites that Īmān is verbal confession, as well as the view that Īmān is only knowledge. He also rejected the inclusion of works into the definition of Īmān.

The problem of istithnā' is absent from al-Ash'arī's work, while al-Māturīdī adopted the Hanafite views in opposition to the Hanbalites. Thus he emphasized the point that such istithnā' is a kind of doubt and it is pointless and illogical for a believer to express any doubt in his belief.

Regarding the relation between Īmān and Islam, it is found that the only statement of al-Ash'arī in this respect, that Islam is ^{more} general than Īmān, is of a Hanbalite origin. Al-Māturīdī, however, quoted many Qur'ānic verses and argued to support the Hanafite view that Īmān and Islam are identical terms and convey the same conceptions. This is in spite of their differences from a linguistic point of view.

Al-Māturīdī and al-Ash'arī also differ regarding the point whether Īmān is created or it is uncreated. Arguing from the fact that Īmān is man's action, al-Māturīdī concluded that it is created. Al-Ash'arī, however, thought of Īmān as an abstract concept which is related to God from eternity, therefore, he held that it is uncreated.

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