

in different parts of the world, all of them will be equally Islamic. And instead of there being any nationalistic conflicts among them, they will extend fraternal support and co-operation to one another. Not only that, there is every possibility of their joining together in a world confederation of their own.

(vi) The real spirit of this State lies in subordinating politics to morality and conducting affairs conscientiously and God-fearingly. Honour and eminence must come through moral excellence alone. Paramount importance should be given to character besides ability in selecting men of authority. Honesty, fairness, and justice are to prevail in every sphere of domestic administration. And the whole foreign policy is to devolve upon truth, faithfulness, love of peace, fair dealing, and international justice.

(vii) Policing is not the only function of this State. It does not come into existence merely to maintain law and order and to defend its territory against external attacks. It is a State with a purpose and a mission. It must positively strive for the achievement of social justice, promotion of good, and eradication of evil.

(viii) Equality of rights, status and opportunities, supremacy of Law, co-operation in virtue and non-co-operation in vice, sense of accountability to God Almighty, sense of duties more than that of rights, unity of purpose between the individuals, society, and the State, guarantee of the basic necessities of life to everyone in need, are the fundamental values of this State.

(ix) The relations between State and individual are so balanced in this system that neither the State has been vested with absolute authority reducing individuals to virtual slavery, nor has individual freedom been allowed to turn itself into licence threatening the interest of society. On the one hand, by guaranteeing fundamental rights to its citizens and by making the State authority subject to the Supreme Law of God and the democratic process of *shūra*, it provides ample opportunities for the development of individual personality and protection from undue interference by others. And, on the other hand, it binds the individual to a definite code of morality, makes it obligatory for him faithfully to obey the orders of the State working in accordance with the Law of God, to co-operate wholeheartedly with it in the cause of virtue, to avoid disturbing its tranquillity, and to sacrifice even his life and property in its defence.

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## BOOK THREE

### EARLY CENTURIES

(From the First/Seventh Century to the Fall of Baghdād)

#### Part 1. Theologico-Philosophical Movements

##### Chapter X

#### MU'TAZILISM

##### A

#### THE GENERAL MU'TAZILITE POSITION

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

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

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

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

<sup>1</sup> The name of this sect is *ahl al-wa'id*.

<sup>2</sup> This group is called the Murji'ites. The same was the belief of Jahm bin Ṣafwān also.

*al-manzilatain*).” Having spoken he strode to another corner of the mosque and began to explain this belief of his to others.<sup>3</sup> This man was Wāṣil ibn ‘Aṭa. The Imām shot a swift glance at him and said, “*‘Iṭazala ‘anna*,” i. e., “He has withdrawn from us.” From that very day Wāṣil and his followers were called al-Mu‘tazilah, the Withdrawers or Secessionists.

Ibn Munabbih says that the title of al-Mu‘tazilah came into vogue after the death of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī. According to his statement, when al-Ḥasan passed away, Qatādah succeeded him and continued his work. ‘Amr ibn ‘Ubaid and his followers avoided the company of Qatādah; therefore, they were given the name of al-Mu‘tazilah. In brief, the word *‘iṭzāl* means to withdraw or secede, and the Mu‘tazilites are the people who in some of their beliefs were diametrically opposed to the unanimous consent of the early theologians or the People of the Approved Way (*ahl al-sunnah*). The leader of all of them was Wāṣil b. ‘Aṭa who was born in 80/699 at Madinah and died in 131/748.

Muslims generally speak of Wāṣil’s party as the Mu‘tazilites, but the latter call themselves People of Unity and Justice (*ahl al-tauḥīd w-al-‘adl*). By justice they imply that it is incumbent on God to requite the obedient for their good deeds and punish the sinners for their misdeeds. By unity they imply the denial of the divine attributes. Undoubtedly, they admit that God is knowing, powerful, and seeing, but their intellect does not allow them to admit that these divine attributes are separate and different from the divine essence. The reason for this view of theirs is that if the attributes of God are not considered to be identical with the essence of God, “plurality of eternals” would necessarily result and the belief in unity would have to be given up. This, in their opinion, is clear unbelief (*kufr*). Unity and justice are the basic principles of the beliefs of the Mu‘tazilites and this is the reason why they call themselves “People of Unity and Justice.”

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

1. God Almighty’s justice necessitates that man should be the author of his own acts; then alone can he be said to be free and responsible for his deeds. The same was claimed by the Qadarites. The Mu‘tazilites accepted totally the theory of indeterminism and became true successors of the Qadarites. If man is not the author of his own acts and if these acts are the creation of God, how can he be held responsible for his acts and deserve punishment for his sins? Would it not be injustice on the part of God that, after creating a man helpless, He should call him to account for his sins and send him to hell? Thus, all the Mu‘tazilites agree in the matter of man’s being the creator of his volitional acts. He creates some acts by way of *mubāsharah* and some by way of *taulīd*. By the term *taulīd* is implied the necessary occurrence of another act from an act of the doer, e. g., the movement of Zaid’s finger necessi-

<sup>3</sup> His companion, ‘Amr ibn ‘Ubaid, from the beginning, shared this view of his. The Khawārij too come under the same category.

tates the movement of his ring. Although he does not intend to move the ring, yet he alone will be regarded as the mover. Of course, to perform this act the medium of another act is necessary. Man creates guidance or misguidance for himself by way of *mubāsharah* and his success or failure resulting from this is created by way of *taulīd*. God is not in the least concerned in creating it, nor has God’s will anything to do with it. In other words, if a man is regarded as the author of his own acts, it would mean that it is in his power either to accept Islam and be obedient to God, or become an unbeliever and commit sins, and that God’s will has nothing to do with these acts of his. God, on the other hand, wills that all created beings of His should embrace Islam and be obedient to Him. He orders the same to take place and prohibits people from committing sins.

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

It is the creed of most of the Mu‘tazilites that one possesses “ability” before the accomplishment of the act, but some Mu‘tazilites (e. g., Muḥammad b. ‘Isa and abu ‘Isa Warrāq) like the Sunnites are of the view that one has ability to act besides the act.

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

According to the Mu‘tazilites, things are not good or evil because God declares them to be so. No, God makes the distinction between good and evil on account of their being good and evil. Goodness or evil are innate in the essence of things themselves. This very goodness or evil of things is the cause of the commands and prohibitions of the Law. The human intellect is capable of perceiving the goodness and evil of a few things and no laws are required to express their goodness and evil, e. g., it is commendable to speak the truth and despicable to commit oneself to untruth. This shows that the evil and goodness of things are obvious and require no proof from the *Shari‘ah*. Shame-

<sup>4</sup> Al-Shahrastānī, *Kitāb al-Milāl w-al-Niḥāl*, quoted by A. J. Wensinck in *The Muslim Creed*, Cambridge, 1932, p. 62.

ful and unjust deeds are evil-in-themselves; therefore, God has banned indulgence in them. It does not imply that His putting a ban on them made them shameful and unjust deeds. The thoroughgoing rationalism of the Mu'tazilites is thus expressed by al-Shahrastāni in these words: "The adherents of justice say: All objects of knowledge fall under the supervision of reason and receive their obligatory power from rational insight. Consequently, obligatory gratitude for divine bounty precedes the orders given by (divine) Law; and beauty and ugliness are qualities belonging intrinsically to what is beautiful and ugly."<sup>5</sup>

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

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

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

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

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

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

2. Denial of the indications of the Day of Judgment, of Gog and Magog (*Yājūj* and *Mājūj*), and of the appearance of the Antichrist (*al-Dajjāl*).

3. Some Mu'tazilites believe in the concrete reality of the Balance (*al-Mizān*) for weighing actions on the Day of Judgment. Some say that it is impossible for it to be a reality and think that the mention made in the Qur'ān of *weight* and *balance* means only this much that full justice will be done on the Day of Judgment. It is clearly impossible to elicit the meanings of the words *weight* and *balance* literally, for deeds, which have been said to be weighed, are accidents and it is not possible to weigh accidents. Theoretical reason is incapable of comprehending this. Substances alone can possess weight. Further, when nothing is hidden from God, what is the use of weighing the deeds? It has been mentioned in the Qur'ān that the books of bad or good deeds will be handed over to us. This too is merely a metaphor. It means only our being gifted with knowledge.

4. The Mu'tazilites also deny the existence of the Recording Angels (*Kirāman Kātibīn*). The reason they give for this is that God is well aware of all the deeds done by His servants. The presence of the Recording Angels would

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 62, 63.

have been indispensable if God were not acquainted directly with the doings of His servants.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- (1) The problem of attributes.
- (2) The problem of the beatific vision.
- (3) The problem of promise and threat.
- (4) The problem of creation of the actions of man.
- (5) The problem of the will of God.

Ibn Ḥazm says in his *Milāl w-al-Nihāl* that whosoever believes (1) that the Qur'ān is uncreated, (2) that all the actions of man are due to divine decree, and (3) that man will be blessed with the vision of God on the Day of Judgment, and (4) admits the divine attributes mentioned in the Qur'ān and the Tradition, and (5) does not regard the perpetrator of a grave sin as an

unbeliever, will not be styled as one of the Mu'tazilites, though in all other matters he may agree with them.

This statement of ibn Ḥazm shows that the Mu'tazilites were a group of rationalists who judged all Islamic beliefs by theoretical reason and renounced those that relate to all that lies beyond the reach of reason. They hardly realized the fact that reason, like any other faculty with which man is gifted, has its limitations and cannot be expected to comprehend reality in all its details. The point does not need elaboration. As Shakespeare puts it, "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy." Some modern thinkers have recognized that there is a place for intuition in the field of comprehension and, as a corollary to this, have admitted the claim of revelation or *waḥi* as a source of knowledge. That is why Iqbāl exclaimed:

"At the dawn of Life the Angel said to me:  
 'Do not make thy heart a mere slave to reason.'"

And probably on a similar ground Iqbāl's guide, Rūmī, offered the following meaningful advice:

"Surrender thy intellect to the Prophet!  
 God sufficeth. Say, He sufficeth.  
 Beware of wilful reasoning,  
 And boldly welcome madness!  
 He alone is mad who madness scoffs,  
 And heeds not the agent of Law!"

## B

### SOME LEADING MU'TAZILITES

In presenting a bird's-eye view of the beliefs of the Mu'tazilites in the above paragraphs, it has not been suggested that these views were in their totality shared by all the leading Mu'tazilites. There were differences of opinion within themselves. For instance, abu al-Hudḥail al-'Allāf differed from his companions in respect of ten problems; Ibrāhīm ibn Sayyār al-Nazzām in thirteen; Bishr ibn al-Mu'tamir in six; Mu'ammār ibn Khayyāt 'Abbād al-Sulami in four; and 'Amr ibn Baḥr al-Jāḥiẓ in five. Abu al-Ḥusain and his followers are called the "Mu'tazilites of Baghdād" and abu al-Jubbā'i, his son abu Hāshim, and their followers were known as the "Mu'tazilites of Baṣrah." Below is given a brief account of the lives and ideas of some of the leading Mu'tazilites.

#### 1. Wāṣil ibn 'Aṭa

Wāṣil was born at Madīnah in 80/699 and was brought up in Baṣrah. "Sūq-i Ghazzāl," a bazaar in Baṣrah, used to be his familiar haunt and on that account people associated its name with him. He died in 131/748. Wāṣil had a very

long neck. Amr ibn 'Ubaid, who was a celebrated Mu'tazilite, on looking at him once remarked: "There will be no good in a man who has such a neck."<sup>6</sup> Wāṣil was *al-thagh*,<sup>7</sup> i.e., he could not pronounce the letter *r* correctly, but he was a very fluent and accomplished speaker and in his talk totally avoided this letter. He never allowed it to escape his lips, despite the great difficulty in avoiding it in conversation. He compiled a voluminous treatise in which not a single *r* is to be found. He would often maintain silence which led people to believe that he was mute.

Wāṣil was a pupil of abu Hāshim 'Abd Allah ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafīyah, but in the matter of Imāmate, as in some other matters, he opposed his master. Before becoming a Mu'tazilite he used to live in the company of Imām Ḥasan al-Baṣri.

His works are: *Kitāb al-Manzilah bain al-Manzilatain*, *Kitāb al-Futya*, and *Kitāb al-Tauḥīd*. The first books on the science of *al-Kalām* were written by him. Ibn Khallikān has recounted a number of his works.

In his illustrious work *al-Mīlāl w-al-Niḥāl*, al-Shahrastānī says that the essential teachings of Wāṣil consisted of the following: (1) Denial of the attributes of God. (2) Man's possession of free-will to choose good deeds. (3) The belief that one who commits a grave sin is neither a believer nor an unbeliever but occupies an intermediate position, and that one who commits a grave sin goes to hell. (4) The belief that out of the opposing parties that fought in the battle of the Camel and from among the assassins of 'Uthmān and his allies one party was in error, though it cannot be established which.

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

(2) *Belief in Free-will*.—In this problem Wāṣil adopted the creed of Ma'bad al-Juhani and Ghailān al-Dimashqī and said that since God is wise and just, evil and injustice cannot be attributed to him. How is it justifiable for Him that He should will contrary to what He commands His servants to do? Consequently, good and evil, belief and unbelief, obedience and sin are the acts of His servant himself, i.e., the servant alone is their author or creator and is to be rewarded or punished for his deeds. It is impossible that the servant may be ordered to "do" a thing which he is not able to do. Man is ordered to do an act because he has the power to do that act. Whosoever denies this power and authority rejects a self-evident datum of consciousness.

<sup>6</sup> Siddiq Hasan, *Kashf al-Ghummah 'an Iftirāq al-Ummah*, Maṭb'ah Shāhjahānī, Bhopal, India, 1304/1886, p. 19.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

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

(3) *Intermediary Position of the Grave Sinners.*—On account of his belief that one who commits a grave sin is neither a believer nor an unbeliever but occupies an intermediate position, Wāṣil withdrew himself from the company of Imām Ḥasan al-Baṣri and earned the title Mu'tazilite. Wāṣil thought that the expression "true believer" is one which means praise. The person who commits grave sins can never deserve praise; therefore, he cannot be called a true believer. Such a person has, nevertheless, belief in the Islamic faith and admits that God alone is worthy of being worshipped; therefore, he cannot be regarded as an unbeliever either. If such a person dies without penitence, he will ever stay in hell, but as he is right in his belief, the punishment meted out to him will be moderate.

As Imām al-Ghazālī has pointed out in his *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*,<sup>8</sup> misinterpretation of the following verses of the Qur'ān was the cause of the Mu'tazilites' misunderstanding:

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

"For any that disobey God and His Apostle—for them is hell; they shall dwell therein for ever."<sup>10</sup>

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

"But, without doubt, I am (also) He that forgiveth again and again those who repent, believe, and do right, who, in fine, are ready to receive true guidance."<sup>11</sup>

"God forgiveth not that equals should be set up with Him; but He forgiveth anything else, to whom He pleaseth."<sup>12</sup>

The last quoted verse shows that in the case of all sins, except polytheism, God will act according to His pleasure. In support of this the clear saying of the Holy Prophet of Islam can be cited, viz., "that person too will finally come out of hell who has even an iota of faith in his heart." Further, some words of God, e.g., "Verily We shall not suffer to perish the reward of anyone who does a (single) righteous deed,"<sup>13</sup> and "Verily God will not suffer the reward

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Urdu translation: *Maḍhāq al-Ārifīn*, Newal Kishore Press, Lucknow, p. 135.

<sup>9</sup> Qur'ān, ciii, 1-3.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, lxxii, 23.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, xx, 82.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, iv, 48.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, xviii, 30

of the righteous to perish,"<sup>14</sup> clearly show that for the commission of one sin, He will not ignore a man's basic faith and deprive him of all the reward for his good deeds. Therefore, the general belief is that as the perpetrator of grave sins is by all means a true believer, even if he dies without repentance, after being punished for his sins in hell and thereby purified of them, he will eventually enter heaven.

(4) *Unestablished Errors.*—Wāṣil had firm conviction that out of those who fought in "the battle of the Camel" and "the battle of Siffin" and the killers of 'Uthmān, the third Caliph, and his allies, one party was definitely in error, though it cannot be established which.<sup>15</sup>

## 2. Abu al-Hudhail 'Allāf

'Allāf was born in 131/748 and died in c. 226/840. He received instruction from 'Uthmān bin Khālid Ṭawīl, a pupil of Wāṣil. He was a fluent speaker and vigorous in his arguments. He often made use of dialectical arguments in his discussions. He had a keen insight in philosophy. He wrote about sixty books on the science of *Kalām* but all of them have long been extinct.

'Allāf was an accomplished dialectician. The story goes that by his dialectics three thousand persons embraced Islam at his hand. We shall here speak of two of his debates. In those days there lived a Magian Ṣāliḥ by name who believed that the ultimate principles of the universe are two realities, Light and Darkness, that both of these are opposed to each other, and that the universe is created by the mixture of these two. This belief led to a discussion between Ṣāliḥ, the Magian, and 'Allāf. Allāf inquired of him whether the mixture was distinct and different from Light and Darkness or identical with them. Ṣāliḥ replied that it was one and the same thing. 'Allāf then said, "How could two things mix together which are opposed to each other? There ought to be someone who got them mixed, and the mixer alone is the Necessary Existent or God." On another occasion, while Ṣāliḥ was engaged in a discussion with 'Allāf, the latter said, "What do you now desire?" Ṣāliḥ replied, "I asked a blessing of God and still stick to the belief that there are two Gods." 'Allāf then asked, "Of which God did you ask a blessing? The God of whom you asked for it would not have suggested the name of the other God (who is His rival)."

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

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, xi, 115.

<sup>15</sup> Al-Shahrastānī, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

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

Al-Shahraṣṭānī has interpreted the identity of divine essence and attributes thus: God knows with His knowledge and knowledge is His very essence. In the same way, He is powerful with His power and power is His very essence; and lives with His life and life is His very essence. Another interpretation of divine knowledge is that God knows with His essence and not with His *knowledge*, i.e., He knows through His essence only and not through knowledge. The difference in these two positions is that, in the latter, the attributes are denied altogether, while in the former, which 'Allāf accepts, they are admitted but are identified with God's essence. This conforms to the statements of the philosophers who hold that the essence of God, without quality and quantity, is absolutely one, and by no means admits of plurality, and that the divine attributes are none other than the essence of God. Whatever qualities of Him may be established, they are either "negation" or "essentials." Those things are termed "negation" which, without the relation of negation, cannot be attributed to God, as, for instance, body, substance, and accidents. When the relation of negation is turned towards them and its sign, i.e., the word of negation, is applied, these can become the attributes of God, e.g., it would be said that God is neither a body, nor a substance, nor an accident. What is meant by "essential" is that the existence of the Necessary Existent is Its very essence and thus Its unity is real.

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

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

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

### 3. Al-Nazzām

Abu Ishāq Ibrāhīm ibn Sayyār, called al-Nazzām, was younger than 'Allāf and it is generally known that he was 'Allāf's pupil. He lived during the reign

of Caliphs al-Māmūn and al-Mu'taṣim and died in 231/845. He was a peerless *littérateur* and poet. He studied Greek philosophy well and made full use of it in his works. His main ideas are as follows.

(1) *Denial of God's Power over Evil*.—God has no power at all over sin and evil. Other Mu'tazilites do not deny the *power* of God over evil, but deny the *act* of His creating evil. In their opinion, God has power over evil, but He does not use it for the creation of evil. Al-Nazzām, in opposition to them, says that when evil or sin is the attribute or essence of a thing, then the possibility of the occurrence of evil or the *power to create it will itself be evil*. Therefore, it cannot be attributed to God who is the doer of justice and good. Similarly, al-Nazzām holds that in the life hereafter too, God can neither mitigate nor add to the punishment and reward of the inmates of heaven and hell; nor indeed can He expel them from heaven or hell. As to the accusation that the denial of God's *power* over evil necessitates the affirmation that He is impotent against evil, al-Nazzām replies that this equally follows from the denial of divine *action* to create evil. He says: "You, too, deny Him the wrong act, so there is no fundamental difference between the two positions."<sup>16</sup>

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

If God has power over evil, then the occurrence of evil is possible, and as the supposition of the occurrence of a possible thing entails no impossibility, let us suppose that evil did occur. Now, God might or might not have had knowledge of the evil which occurred. If we say that He did not have the knowledge of it, it would necessarily follow that He was ignorant; and if we say that He did have it, it would necessarily follow that He was in need of this evil; for had He not been in need of it, He would not have created it. When a person is not in need of a thing and knows its inherent evils, he will have nothing to do with it, if he is wise.

It is definitely true that God is all-wise; so when any evil is caused by Him, it necessarily follows that He needed it, otherwise He would have never produced it.

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

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

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

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

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

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

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

(4) *Latency and Manifestation (Kumūn wa Burūz)*.—According to al-Nazzām, creation is to be regarded as a single act of God by which all things were brought into being simultaneously and kept in a state of latency (*kumūn*). It was from their original state of latency that all existing things: minerals, plants, animals, and men, have evolved in the process of time. This also implies that the whole of mankind was potentially in Adam. Whatever priority or posteriority there may be, it is not in *birth* but in *appearance*. All things came into existence at the same time, but were kept hidden till the time of their becoming operative arrived, and when it did arrive, they were brought from

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

the state of latency to the state of manifestation. This doctrine stands in direct opposition to the Ash'arite view that God is creating things at all moments of time.<sup>18</sup>

(5) *Materialism of al-Nazzām*.—For al-Nazzām, as for many before and after him, the real being of man is the soul, and body is merely its instrument. But the soul is, according to him, a rarefied body permeating the physical body, the same way as fragrance permeates flowers, butter milk, or oil sesame.<sup>19</sup> Abu Mansūr 'Abd al-Qāhir ibn Ṭāhir, in his work *al-Farq bain al-Firaq*, has discussed this theory critically and has attempted to refute it.

Besides these philosophical ideas, there are what the orthodox called the "heresies" of al-Nazzām. For example, he did not believe in miracles, was not convinced of the inimitability of the Qur'ān, considered a statute necessary for the determination of an Imām, and thought that the statute establishing the Imāmate of 'Ali was concealed by 'Umar, that the *ṣalāt al-tarāwīḥ* was unauthorized, that the actual vision of the *jinn* was a physical impossibility, and that belated performance of missed prayers was unnecessary.

Among al-Nazzām's followers, the following are well known: Muḥammad ibn Shabīb, abu Shūmar, Yūnus ibn 'Imrān, Aḥmad ibn Ḥayāt, Bishr ibn Mu'tamir, and Ṭhamāmah ibn Ashras. Aḥmad ibn Ḥayāt who lived in the company of al-Nazzām held that there are two deities: one, the creator and eternal deity, and the other, the created one which is Jesus Christ son of Mary. He regarded Christ as the Son of God. On account of this belief he was considered to have renounced Islam. According to his faith, Christ in the hereafter will ask the created beings to account for their deeds in this world, and in support of his claim Aḥmad ibn Ḥayāt quoted the verse: "Will they wait until God comes to them in canopies of clouds?"<sup>20</sup> There is a tradition that, looking towards the moon on the fourteenth day of the lunar month, the Holy Prophet of Islam said, "Ye will behold your Lord just as ye behold this moon."<sup>21</sup> Aḥmad ibn Ḥayāt twisted the meaning of this tradition and said that the word Lord referred to Jesus Christ. He also believed in incarnation for, according to him, the spirit of God is incarnated into the bodies of the Imāms.

Faḍl al-Ḥadāthi, who was another pupil of al-Nazzām, had faith similar to that of ibn Ḥayāt. He and his followers believed in transmigration. According to them, in another world God created animals mature and wise, bestowed on them innumerable blessings, and conferred on them many sciences too. God then desired to put them to a test and so commanded them to offer thanks to Him for His gifts. Some obeyed His command and some did not. He rewarded His thankful creatures by giving them heaven and condemned the ungrateful ones to hell. There were some among them who had partly

<sup>18</sup> T. J. de Boer, "Muslim Philosophy," *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*.

<sup>19</sup> Al-Shahrastani, *op. cit.*, *Chāp Khāneh-i 'Ilmi*, Teheran, 1321/1903, p. 77.

<sup>20</sup> Qur'ān, ii, 210.

<sup>21</sup> The tradition: *Innakum satarauṇa rabbakum kama tarauna hādih al-qamar*.

obeyed the divine command and partly not obeyed it. They were sent to the world, were given filthy bodies, and, according to the magnitude of their sins, sorrow and pain, joy and pleasure. Those who had not sinned much and had obeyed most of God's commands were given lovely faces and mild punishment. But those who did only a few good deeds and committed a large number of sins were given ugly faces, and were subjected to severe tribulations. So long as an animal is not purified of all its sins, it will be always changing its forms.

#### 4. Bishr ibn al-Mu'tamir

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

Bishr made the "Theory of Generated Acts" (*taulid*) current among the Mu'tazilites. The Mu'tazilites believe in free-will. They admit that man is the author of his voluntary actions. Some actions arise by way of *mubāsharah*, i.e., they are created directly by man, but some actions arise by way of *taulid*, i.e., they necessarily result from the acts done by way of *mubāsharah*. Throwing of a stone in water, for example, necessitates the appearance of ripples. Even if the movement of the ripples is not intended by the stone-thrower, yet he is rightly regarded as its agent. Similarly, man is the creator of his deeds and misdeeds by way of *mubāsharah*, and all the consequential actions necessarily result by way of *taulid*. Neither type of actions is due to divine activity.

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

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

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

unbeliever, and he who is doubtful about the unbelief of such a person is also an unbeliever.

#### 5. Mu'ammār

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

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

The following is the gist of his ideas.

(1) *Denial of Divine Knowledge*.—Mu'ammār maintains that the essence of God is free from every aspect of plurality. He is of the view that if we believe in the attributes of God, then God's essence becomes plural; therefore, he denies all the attributes, and in this denial he is so vehement that he says that God knows neither Himself nor anyone else, for knowing (or knowledge) is something either within or without God. In the first case, it necessarily follows that the knower and the known are one and the same, which is impossible, for it is necessary that the known should be other than and distinct from the knower. If knowledge is not something within God, and the known is separate from the knower, it means that God's essence is dual. Further, it follows also that God's knowledge is dependent on and is in need of an "other." Consequently, His absoluteness is entirely denied.

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

"The One whom the reason does not know,  
The Eternal, the Absolute whom neither senses know nor fancy.  
He is such a One, who cannot be counted  
He is such a Pure Being!"

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

"Why exert to probe the essence of God?  
Why strain thyself by stretching thy limitations?  
When thou canst not catch even the essence of an atom,  
How canst thou claim to know the essence of God Himself?"

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

"Take off thy net; thou canst not catch 'anqā'<sup>25</sup>  
For that is like attempting to catch the air!"

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

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

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

## 6. Thamāmāh

Thamāmāh ibn Ashras al-Numairi lived during the reign of Caliphs Hārūn al-Rashīd and al-Māmūn. He was in those days the leader of the Qadarites. Hārūn al-Rashīd imprisoned him on the charge of heresy, but he was in the good books of al-Māmūn and was released by him. He died in 213/828. The following is the substance of his ideas.

<sup>22</sup> The tradition: *Kullu al-nāsi fi dhātī Allāhi ḥumaqā'*.

<sup>23</sup> The tradition: *La tufakkirū fi Allāhi fatahlaku.*

<sup>24</sup> *Ma 'araḥnāka ḥaqqā ma'rifaṭika.*

<sup>25</sup> 'Anqā' is a fabulous bird said to be known as to name but unknown as to body.

<sup>26</sup> Al-Shahrastāni has criticized this statement of Mu'ammār, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

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

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

(3) Bishr ibn al-Mu'tamir, who had put into usage the theory of generated acts among the Mu'tazilites, was wrong in thinking that men are not directly but only indirectly the authors of such acts. Neither God nor man is the author of generated acts; they just happen without any author. Man is not their author, for otherwise when a deed has been generated after a man's death, he, as a dead man, will have to be taken as its author. God cannot be regarded as the author of these acts, for some generated acts are evil and evil cannot be attributed to God.

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

## 7. Al-Jāhīz

'Amr ibn Baḥr al-Jāhīz, a contemporary of Mu'ammār, was a pupil of al-Nazzām and was himself one of the Imāms of the Mu'tazilites. Both the master and the disciple, it was held, were almost of one mind. Al-Jāhīz had drunk deep of Greek philosophy. He had a keen sense of humour and was a good anecdotist. He usually lived in the company of the Caliphs of Baghdād. His permanent residence was the palace of ibn Zayyāt, the Prime Minister of the Caliph Mutawakkil. When ibn Zayyāt was put to death by the orders of the Caliph, Jāhīz too was imprisoned. He was released after some time. He was the ugliest of men; his eyes protruded out, and children were frightened at his very sight. In his last years he had a stroke of paralysis. He died in his ninetyeth year at Baṣrah in 255/869. During his illness he would often recite the following couplets:

"Dost thou hope in old age  
To look like what you were in youth?  
Thy heart beliest thee: an old garment never  
turns into a new one."

He was the author of a number of books out of which the following are noteworthy: *Kitāb al-Bayān*, *Kitāb al-Ḥayawān*, and *Kitāb al-Ghilmān*. He also wrote a book dealing with Muslim sects.

It was the belief of al-Jāhīz that all knowledge comes by nature, and it is an activity of man in which he has no choice. He was a scientist-philosopher. In the introduction to his *Kitāb al-Ḥayawān*, he writes that he is inspired by the philosophical spirit which consists in deriving knowledge from sense-experience and reason. It employs observation, comparison, and experiment as methods of investigation. He experimented on different species of animals, sometimes by cutting their organs, sometimes even by poisoning them, in order to see what effects were thus produced on animal organism. In this respect he was the precursor of Bacon whom he anticipated seven and a half centuries earlier. Al-Jāhīz did not, however, base knowledge on sense-experience alone. Since sense-experience is sometimes likely to give false reports, it needs the help of reason. In fact, in knowledge reason has to play the decisive role. He says, "You should not accept whatever your eyes tell you; follow the lead of reason. Every fact is determined by two factors: one apparent, and that is sensory; the other hidden, and that is reason; and in reality reason is the final determinant."

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

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

#### 8. Al-Jubbā'i

Abu 'Ali al-Jubbā'i was born in 235/849 at Jubba, a town in Khuzistān. His patronymic name is abu 'Ali and his descent is traced to Ḥamrān, a slave of 'Uthmān. Al-Jubbā'i belonged to the later Mu'tazilites. He was the teacher of abu al-Ḥasan al-Ash'ari and a pupil of abu Ya'qūb bin 'Abd Allah al-Shāhḥām who was the leader of the Mu'tazilites in Baṣrah.

Once there was a discussion between him and Imām al-Ash'ari in respect of the Theory of the Salutory to which reference has already been made in the foregoing pages. The story goes that one day he asked Imām al-Ash'ari: "What do you mean by obedience?" The Imām replied, "Assent to a command," and then asked for al-Jubbā'i's own opinion in this matter. Al-Jubbā'i said, "The essence of obedience, according to me, is agreement to the will, and whoever fulfils the will of another obeys him." The Imām answered, "According to this, one must conclude that God is obedient to His servant if He fulfils his will." Al-Jubbā'i granted this. The Imām said, "You differ from the community of Muslims and you blaspheme the Lord of the worlds. For if God is obedient to His servant, then He must be subject to him, but God is above this."

Al-Jubbā'i further claimed that the names of God are subject to the regular

rules of grammar. He, therefore, considered it possible to derive a name for Him from every deed which He performs. On this Imām al-Ash'ari said that, according to this view, God should be named "the producer of pregnancy among women," because he creates pregnancy in them. Al-Jubbā'i could not escape this conclusion. The Imām added: "This heresy of yours is worse than that of the Christians in calling God the father of Jesus, although even they do not hold that He produced pregnancy in Mary."<sup>27</sup> The following are other notable views of al-Jubbā'i.

(1) Like other Mu'tazilites, he denies the divine attributes. He holds that the very essence of God is knowing; no attribute of knowledge can be attributed to Him so as to subsist besides His essence. Nor is there any "state" which enables Him to acquire the "state of knowing." Unlike al-Jubbā'i, his son abu Ḥāshim did believe in "states." To say that God is all-hearing and all-seeing really means that God is alive and there is no defect of any kind in Him. The attributes of hearing and seeing in God originate at the time of the origination of what is seen and what is heard.

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

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

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

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

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

(6) In the matter of Imāmate, al-Jubbā'i supports the belief of the Sunnites, viz., the appointment of an Imām is to be founded on catholic consent.

<sup>27</sup> Al-Baghdādī, *op. cit.*, pp. 188-89.

## 9. Abu Hāshim

Al-Jubbā'i's son, abu Hāshim 'Abd al-Salām, was born in Baṣrah in 247/861 and died in 321/933. In literature he eclipsed al-Jubbā'i. Both of them undertook new researches in the problems of *Kalām*. In general, abu Hāshim agreed with his father, but in the matter of divine attributes he widely differed from him. Many Muslim thinkers of the time believed that the attributes of God are eternal and inherent in His essence. Contrary to this belief, the Shī'ites and the followers of the Greek philosophers held that it is by virtue of His essence that God has knowledge. He does not know by virtue of His knowledge. The divine essence, which is without quality and quantity, is one and in no way does it admit of plurality. According to the Mu'tazilites, attributes constitute the essence of God, i.e., God possesses knowledge due to the attribute of knowledge, but this attribute is identical with His essence. God knows by virtue of His knowledge and knowledge is His essence; similarly, He is omnipotent by virtue of His power, etc. Al-Jubbā'i's theory is that though God knows according to His essence, yet knowing is neither an attribute nor a state, owing to which God may be called a knower.

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

Abu Hāshim supports his conception of states by this argument: Reason evidently distinguishes between knowing a thing absolutely and knowing it together with some attribute. When we know an essence, we do not know that it is knowing also. Similarly, when we know a substance, we do not know whether it is bounded or whether the accidents subsist in it. Certainly, man perceives the common qualities of things in one thing and the differentiating qualities in another, and necessarily gains knowledge of the fact that the quality which is common is different from the quality which is not common. These are rational propositions that no sane man would deny. Their locus is essence and not an accident, for otherwise it would necessarily follow that an accident subsists in another accident. In this way, states are necessarily determined. Therefore, to be a knower of the world refers to a state, which is an attribute besides the essence and has not the same sense as the essence. In like manner abu Hāshim proves the states for God; these states are not found apart but with the essence.

Al-Jubbā'i and the other deniers of states refute this theory of abu Hāshim. Al-Jubbā'i says that these states are really mental aspects that are not contained in the divine essence but are found in the percipient, i.e., in the per-

ceiver of the essence. In other words, they are such generalizations or relations as do not-exist externally but are found only in the percipient's mind. Ibn Taimiyyah also denies states. In this respect one of his couplets has gained much fame:

"Abu Hāshim believes in State, al-Ash'ari in  
Acquisition and al-Nazzām in Leap.  
These three things have verbal and no  
real existence."<sup>28</sup>

After a little hesitation, Imām Bāqilāni supported abu Hāshim's views. Imām al-Ash'ari and the majority of his followers disputed them and Imām al-Ḥaramain first supported but later opposed them.

## C

## THE END

Besides the Mu'tazilites an account of whose views has been given above in some detail, there were some others the details of whose beliefs are given in the *Milal w-al-Niḥal* of Shahrastāni and *al-Farq bain al-Firaq* of al-Baghdādi. They were 'Amr ibn 'Ubad; abu 'Ali 'Amr bin Qā'id Aswāri who had almost the same position as al-Nazzām, but differed from him in the view that God has no power over what He knows He does not do, or what He says He would not do, and man has the power to do that; abu Ja'far Muḥammad ibn 'Abd Allah who shared al-Nazzām's views but believed that to God can be attributed the power to oppress children and madmen, but not those who are in their full senses; Ja'far ibn Bishr and Ja'far ibn Ḥarb who held that among the corrupt of the Muslim community there were some who were worse than the Jews, Christians, and Magians, and that those who committed trivial sins would also be condemned to eternal hell; Hishām ibn 'Amr al-Fuwaṭi who had very exaggerated views on the problem of predestination and did not ascribe any act to God; and abu Qāsim 'Abd Allah ibn Ahmad ibn Maḥmūd al-Balkhi, a Mu'tazilite of Baghdād known as al-Ka'bi, who used to say that the deed of God is accomplished without His will. When it is said that God wills deeds, it is implied that He is their creator and there is wisdom in His doing so; and when it is said that He of Himself wills the deeds of others, all that is meant is that He commands these deeds. Al-Ka'bi believed that God neither sees Himself nor others. His seeing and hearing mean nothing other than His knowledge. Al-Ka'bi wrote a commentary on the Qur'ān which consisted of twelve volumes. No one till then had written such a voluminous commentary. He died in 309/921.

<sup>28</sup> Muḥammad Najm al-Ghani Khān, *Madhāhib al-Islām*, Lucknow, 1924, p. 132.

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## Chapter XI

## ASH'ARISM

## A

## AL-ASH'ARI'S LIFE AND WORKS

Ash'arism is the name of a philosophico-religious school of thought in Islam that developed during the fourth and fifth/tenth and eleventh centuries. This movement was "an attempt not only to purge Islam of all non-Islamic elements which had quietly crept into it but also to harmonize the religious consciousness with the religious thought of Islam." It laid the foundation of an orthodox Islamic theology or orthodox *Kalām*, as opposed to the rationalist *Kalām* of the Mu'tazilites; and in opposition to the extreme orthodox class, it made use of the dialectical method for the defence of the authority of divine revelation as applied to theological subjects.

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

lations of the works of Greek physicists and philosophers, made available to them by the early 'Abbasid Caliphs, particularly by al-Manṣūr and al-Māmūn, they began to apply the Greek philosophical methods and ideas to the interpretation of the basic principles of Islam as well.

Some of the early 'Abbasid Caliphs, particularly al-Māmūn, began to patronize the rationalism of the Mu'tazilites in public. The Mu'tazilite speculation, in the hands of the later Mu'tazilites, those of the second and third generations, under the influence of Greek philosophy and with the active support and patronage of the Caliphs, tended to be purely speculative and "absolutely unfettered, and in some cases led to a merely negative attitude of thought."<sup>1</sup> They made reason the sole basis of truth and reality and thus identified the sphere of philosophy with that of religion. They tried to interpret faith in terms of pure thought. They ignored the fact that the basic principles of religion are, by their very nature, incapable of logical demonstration or rational proof. The basic principles of Islam deal with supersensible realities and, as such, they must first be accepted on the authority of revelation. The Mu'tazilites, in their zeal to judge everything by reason alone, destroyed the personality of God and reduced Him to a bare indefinable universality or to an abstract unity. This idea of an abstract, impersonal, absolute God could not appeal to the ordinary Muslims. The orthodox section of the people reacted strongly against the Mu'tazilite rationalism and began to consider the Mu'tazilites to be heretics.

The extreme rationalistic attitude of the later Mu'tazilites was followed by powerful reaction from the orthodox section of the people. This reaction was greatly aggravated by the unfortunate attempt of the Caliph al-Māmūn to force Mu'tazilism (rationalist *Kalām*) on his subjects by introducing *miḥnah* (a compulsory test of faith) in the Mu'tazilite doctrines, particularly in their doctrine of the createdness of the Qur'ān. The whole of the third/ninth century was a time of reaction. The orthodox Muslims (and among them were the Traditionists [the Muḥaddithīn]), the Zāhirites (the followers of Dāwūd ibn 'Alī), and the Muslim jurists (*fuqahā'*) adhered strictly to Tradition and literal interpretation of the Qur'ān and the Sunnah,<sup>2</sup> and refused to admit any "innovation" (*bid'ah*) in the *Sharī'ah* (the Islamic Code). Any theological discussion was considered an "innovation" and was as such a cause of displeasure to them.<sup>3</sup> The reactionary influence of Imām Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal and his Zāhirite followers was very strong at that period and the orthodox Muslims kept themselves safely aloof from the Mu'tazilites and the philosophers. The reaction against the rationalist *Kalām* went to such an extreme that even the anthropomorphic verses of the Qur'ān were interpreted by them in a purely literal sense. Mālik bin Anas said: "God's settling Himself firmly upon His Throne is known, the how of it is unknown; belief in it is obligatory;

<sup>1</sup> Iqbāl, *The Development of Metaphysics in Persia*, p. 53.

<sup>2</sup> Aḥmad Amin, *Duḥā al-Islām*, p. 36.

<sup>3</sup> Al-Ash'ari, *Istīḥṣān al-Khauḍ*, p. 4.