A History of Muslim Philosophy

Chapter XII

TAHAWISM

A

TAHAWI'S LIFE AND WORKS

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

Al-Tāhāwī was mainly interested in Ḥadīth and Fiqh, and was regarded as one of the greatest Muḥaddithūn and mujahid of his time. According to Abu l-Bakr al-Shirzānī, he was the last leader of Ḥanāfi Fiqh in Egypt.2 He began to study Shafi‘i Law under his maternal uncle Abu Ibrāhīm Ḥasan b. Mutznani (d. 264/878), the most celebrated pupil of Imām al-Shafi‘i, and then leaving his school he took up the study of Ḥanafī Law under al-Shaikh al-Ḥasan b. Ja'far Ahmad b. ʿAbd al-Ḥamid.3 He then became the Chief Qādis of Egypt in 270/883. Different versions are given by his biographers of his conversion to Ḥanafi school, but the most probable reason seems to be that the system of Imām al-Ḥanbalī appealed to his critical insight more than that of Imām Shafi‘i.4

Al-Tahawī went to Syria in 268/882 for further studies in Ḥanafī Law and became a pupil of ʿAbd al-Ḥamid b. Ja'far, the then Chief Justice of Syria.5 He learnt Ḥadīth from a large number of shaikhs especially from those who visited Egypt at his time, and had also many pupils of distinction. He is a distinguished author of many important works of which the following may be mentioned here: 1. Sharḥ Ma‘ānī al-ʿĀthir, 2. Muhājilat al-ʿĀthir, 3. Aḥkām al-Qur’ān, 4. Iḥṣā‘ī ‘al-ʿUlama’, 5. Al-Nawzūr al-Fiqhiyyah, 6. Kitiḥ al-Shafi‘ī al-Kabir, 7. Al-Shafi‘ī al-Awsat, 8. Sharḥ al-Jāmi‘ al-Saghīr.


3 Cf. authorities cited above.


5 Cf. authorities cited above.

6 Muhammad Zāhid al-Kauhū, al-Ḥāwi, Cairo, 1368/1948, pp. 8-11; al-Qaraqish, op. cit.; Lisiān al-Maqām.


His original contribution to Ḥadīth literature, so far as we can estimate, is that he introduced a new system of collecting legal traditions, developed a new method of interpreting and harmonizing the conflicting traditions, and adopted a new criterion for criticizing them. His predecessors and contemporaries, the authors of al-Sīḥā al-Sittah (the Six Canonical Compilations) collecting traditions according to their own standards and principles, left out a large number of genuine traditions. Al-Tahawī made a strenuous effort to collect all the genuine legal traditions of the Prophet, narrated by different authorities on a particular subject, together with the opinions of the Companions of the Prophet, their Successors and the distinguished jurists. He then scrutinized traditions (ahādīth) and showed by evidence which of them were authentic, strong, weak, unknown, or such as might be supposed to have been repealed. Thus, his collection provided for the scholars an unprecedented opportunity to judge for themselves the merits or demerits of a particular tradition. The criterion for judging the genuineness of a tradition, according to the Ṣaḥḥāt in general, was the isnād (chain of the narrators), and so they paid greater attention to the scrutiny of the isnād than to the scrutiny of the text (matn) of a tradition. But al-Tahawī, while scrutinizing a tradition, took into consideration the matn as well as the isnād of the tradition. He also aimed at a harmonizing interpretation in case of conflicting traditions.

Al-Tahawī, like al-Māturīdī, was a follower of Imām Abī Ḥanīfah (d. 150/767) in jurisprudence as well as in theology. He wrote a little treatise on theology named Bayān al-Sunnah wa-al-Jamā‘ah, generally known as al-Aṣnad wa-al-Tahawīyyah.6 In the introduction to this treatise he says he will give therein an account of the beliefs of the al-Sunnah wa-al-Jamā‘ah according to the views of Imām Abī Ḥanīfah, Abī ʿUbayd, and Muhammad al-Shāhānī— the well-known jurists of the community. So the importance of his creed lies in the fact that it corroborates the views of Imām Abī Ḥanīfah, the founder of the school, that have come down to us from different sources. Al-Tahawī made no attempt to explain the views of the Imām or to solve the old theological problems by advancing any new arguments. His sole aim was to give a summary of the views of the Imām and to show indirectly that they were in conformity with the traditional views of the orthodox school.

The difference between him and al-Māturīdī—the two celebrated authorities on the views of the Imām—is quite evident. Al-Māturīdī was a thorough
dialectician and his main endeavour was to find out a philosophical basis for the views of the leader and to support these views by scholastic reasoning, and thereby bring them closer to the views of the rationalists. Al-Ṭahāwī, as a true traditionist, did not favour, as will be seen, any rational discussion or speculative thinking on the articles of faith, but preferred to believe and accept them without questioning. There is no reference in his creed to the critical examination of the method, sources, and means of knowledge, or the foundation on which his theological system is built. So his system may be termed as dogmatic, while that of al-Māturīdī is critical. The critical method followed by al-Ṭahāwī in Ḥadīth is quite lacking in theology. Thus, though both of them belong to the same school and uphold faithfully the doctrines of their master, they differ from each other in temperament, attitude, and trends of thought.

In order to indicate the characteristics of the system of al-Ṭahāwī and to make an estimate of his contributions to theology, we propose to give in the following pages an outline of the views of Imām abu Ḥanifah along with the views of both al-Ṭahāwī and al-Māturīdī on some of the most important theological problems that arose in Muslim theology.

Imām abu Ḥanifah directed his movement against the Khārijites, Qadrites, Muʿtazilites, Shīʿites, Jabrites, the extreme Murjiʿites, and the Ḥashwiyah, the last being a group of the orthodox people who under the influence of the converted Jews, Christians, and Magians fell into gross anthropomorphism, and ascribed to God all the characteristics of a created being. He was the first theologian among the fuqahāʾ who adopted the principles and method of reasoning and applied them to a critical examination of the articles of faith and the laws of the ṣhāfīʾi. That is why he and his followers were called by the Traditionists the People of Reason and Opinion (aṣḥāb al-rāʾi w-al-qiyās). This rational spirit and philosophical attitude were more consistently maintained by al-Māturīdī than by al-Ṭahāwī. Their views on the nature of faith, attributes of God, beatific vision, divine decree, and human freedom may be mentioned here to indicate the distinctive features of their methods.

**B**

**NATURE OF FAITH**

Faith, according to the well-known view of Imām abu Ḥanifah, consists of three elements: knowledge, belief, and confession; knowledge alone or confession alone is not faith. Al-Māturīdī holds the same view and lays emphasis on knowledge (maʿrūfah) and belief (tauqīq). But, according to his explanation, knowledge is the basis of faith and confession is not in reality an integral part of faith but only an indication (al-ʿalāmah) of faith, a condition for enforcement of Islamic laws and enjoyment of the rights and privileges of the Muslim community. So the belief based on the knowledge of God is the basis of faith. Al-Ṭahāwī excludes knowledge from his definition of faith and holds that it consists in believing by heart and confessing by tongue.

As regards the relation between faith and action Imām abu Ḥanifah maintains that Islam demands from its followers two things: belief and practice, and both are essential for a perfect Muslim. The two are very closely related like back and belly, but they are not identical. Practice is distinct from faith and faith is distinct from practice, but both are essential elements of Islam. “Allah has ordained practice for the faithful, faith for the infidel, and sincerity for the hypocrite.” The term al-dīn (religion) includes both faith and action. Faith, according to him, is a living conviction of the heart—an absolute and indebted entity having its own existence independent of action. From this definition of faith he arrived at the following conclusions: (a) Faith is not liable to increase or decrease. (b) Faith is impaired by doubt. (c) The faithful are equal in faith but different in degree of superiority regarding practice. (d) No Muslim should be declared devoid of faith on account of any sin, if he does not declare it to be lawful. One may be a man of faith with bad behaviour, but not an infidel. A believer who dies unrepentant, even though

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guilty of mortal sins, will not remain in hell for ever. Allah may grant him forgiveness or punish him in accordance with his sins.\footnote{Ibid., p. 7.}

Pointing out the differences between himself and the Murji’ites, Imam Abu Hanifah says: “We do not say that sins do not harm the faithful, nor do we say that he will not enter hell, nor do we say that he will remain there for ever, although he should be a man of evil practice (fabiq), after having departed from this world as a man of faith. And we do not say that our good actions are accepted and our sins are forgiven, as the Murji’ites say. But we say that no one who performs a good action, fulfilling all its conditions and keeping it free of all defects, without nullifying it by infidelity, apostasy, or bad conduct during any part of his life, shall be neglected by God. God may punish in hell or grant complete forgiveness to a person who commits an evil deed (polytheism and infidelity excluded) and dies without repenting.\footnote{Abu Hanifah, \textit{Al-Fiqh al-Akbar}.}

The Kharijites and Mu’tazilites laid so much emphasis on the doctrine of threats (wa’id) that they led the believers to despair and take a depressing view of life; while the Murji’ites emphasized the doctrine of promise (wa’id) so much that they quite endangered the ethical basis of Islam. Imam Abu Hanifah endeavoured to strike a middle course between these two extremes. Sins, according to him, are not without consequences; a sinner is always liable to blame or punishment, but to drive him out from the fold of Islam, to declare him an infidel, or to condemn him to eternal punishment is quite inconsistent with divine justice. His broad outlook and tolerant attitude were consistently continued by al-Maturidi and al-Tahawi. The latter has summarized the views of his master on these questions in the following words: “We do not declare anyone of the people of gibal an infidel on account of a sin, so long as he does not deem it lawful. And we do not say that sin with faith does no harm to him who commits it. We entertain hope for the righteous among the faithful, but we have no certainty about them, and we do not certify that they will be in paradise. We ask forgiveness for their evil actions and we have fear for them, but we do not drive them into despair. Sense of security and despair both turn a man away from religion. The true way for the people of gibal lies midway between these two. A faithful servant does not go out of the field of faith except by renouncing what had brought him into it.”\footnote{Al-Tahawi, \textit{Al-Afdalah}, p. 7.}

Al-Tahawi substituted the phrase \textit{ahl al-gibal} for \textit{mu’min} and Muslim, evidently to avoid the theological controversies regarding their identification, and to make the circle of the believers wider and at the same time to give the question a practical bias. He also avoided the theoretical definition of a Muslim or \textit{mu’min}, and instead described how one could be regarded as such. He says: “We give those who follow our gibal the name Muslim or \textit{mu’min}, so long as they acknowledge what the Prophet brought with him and believe in what he said and what he narrated.”\footnote{\textit{Al-Afdalah}, pp. 7-8.}

Knowledge of God and belief in Him may save those who are guilty of mortal sins from eternal punishment, and they may entertain hope of deliverance from hell through divine mercy and the intercession of the righteous. “Those who are guilty of grievous sins will not remain eternally in hell, if they died as unitarians, even if they were not repentant. They are left to God’s will and judgment; if He wills He will forgive them out of His kindness, as He has said: ‘Surely Allah will not forgive the setting up of other gods with Himself; other sins He may forgive if He pleases;’\footnote{\textit{Al-Afdalah}, p. 11.} and if He wills He will punish them in hell in proportion to their sins as demanded by His justice. Then He will bring them out of it through His mercy and the intercession of His obedient people, and finally He will send them to paradise. This is because Allah is the Lord of those who know Him well, and He has not destined them in either world to be like those who denied Him, went astray from His guidance, and did not obtain His help and favour.”\footnote{Al-Maturidi, \textit{Al-Tahawiyah}, p. 261.}

It may be noticed here that, although al-Tahawi did not include knowledge in his definition of faith, he was fully conscious of the cognitive aspect of it. As regards intercession, Imam Abu Hanifah seems to restrict it to the prophets in general and particularly to Prophet Muhammad,\footnote{\textit{Al-Tahawi, \textit{Al-Afdalah}, p. 8.}} but al-Tahawi extends this privilege to the righteous and the pious among the faithful.

As regards the independent character of faith and equality of the faithful, al-Tahawi says: “Faith is one and the faithful are equal; their comparative eminence lies in fear\footnote{\textit{Al-Maturidi, \textit{Al-Tahawiyah}, p. 211.}} (of Allah), in righteousness, in disobeying him, and in pursuing what is best. All the believers are friends of the Merciful. The most honourable among them before God are those who are the most obedient and the best followers of the Holy Qur’an.”\footnote{\textit{Al-Maturidi, \textit{Al-Tahawiyah}, p. 211.}}

On the question whether it is obligatory for a man to know God before the advent of His messenger, and whether to follow precedence (taqdis)\footnote{In the printed text the word is \textit{al-Haqiqah} which most probably is \textit{al-Khadijyyah}; cf. \textit{Shahr al-Tahawiyah}, p. 261.} is allowed in matters of faith, al-Tahawi does not express his opinion explicitly, though his master was quite outspoken on these questions. These questions pertain to the Mu’tazilites’ doctrine of promise and threat \textit{(al-wa’id wa-al-wa’id)} which gave rise to the discussion of the nature and value of reason and revelation. They held that as God has endowed men with reason and they can easily perceive by proper use of this faculty that the world has a creator, it is obligatory on their part to know God even if the call of the Prophet does
not reach them. But they were divided as to whether knowledge of God is acquired and a posteriori (kasabi) or necessary and a priori (faruri). Imâm Abu Hanîfah agreed with the Mu'tazilites on the original question and maintained that "no one can have any excuse for ignorance about his creator, as he sees the creation of the heaven and the earth of his own as well as of others. So even if Allah should not have sent any messenger to the people, it was obligatory on them to know Him by means of their intellect."

C

GOD'S ESSENCE AND ATTRIBUTES

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

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

Expressing his vigorous attitude against the Anthropomorphists he declared: "Whoseover attributes to Allah any of the human senses (ma'ânî), he becomes an infidel." The true path lies, he asserts, between tâshûh and ta'âl. "He who does not guard against denial (of attributes) and assimilation slips and does not attain tânîh. Verily our Lord the High and Exalted has been attribute-

ed with the attribute of oneness and has been qualified with the quality of uniqueness. No one of the creation possesses His qualities. Allah is most high and praise be to Him. He is without limits, ends, elements, limbs, and instruments. The six directions do not encompass Him as they do the created things."

It may be inferred from the above statement and the similar one in the 'Aqidah, that al-Tâhâwî is against the literal interpretations of the anthropomorphic expressions of the Qur'an, such as the face of Allah, His eyes and hands, etc. But he does not indicate what these terms signify. Abu Hanîfah clearly states that these terms denote His qualities. Even then he also is not in favour of giving any rational interpretation of them, as he fears that this may lead to the denial of His qualities. He says: "He has hand, face, and soul as mentioned in the Qur'an, and whatever Allah mentioned in the Qur'an as face, hand, or soul is unquestionably His quality. It should not be said with the Qadarites and the Mu'tazilites that by His hand is meant His power or His bounty, because this leads to the rejection of certain attributes. Nay, His hand is His attribute without description."

The Imâm had also adopted the principle of leaving the judgment to God (taqâdûd) regarding the interpretation of the ambiguous verses of the Qur'an; al-Tâhâwî stuck to this principle very consistently. He says: "The foot of Islam does not stand firm but on the back of submission and surrender. Whoever wishes to attain that knowledge which was forbidden for him and whose intelligence does not remain content with submission, his desire certainly hinders him from access to pure concept of unity (tâshûh), clear knowledge, and correct faith, and he then wanders between faith and infidelity, belief and disbelief, confession and denial as a sceptical, distracted, eccentric, and fugitive person without being a faithful believer or a faithless disbeliever."

The attitude of al-Mâturîdî on this question is more rational and liberal than that of al-Tâhâwî. According to the former, leaving judgment to God and passing an interpretative judgment for oneself are both allowed; and he is in favour of interpreting them in the light of explicit verses of the Qur'an. Throne of Allah.—Regarding the Throne of Allah ('urûd) as mentioned in the Qur'an, Abu Hanîfah maintains that the expression should not be taken in the literal sense to mean a particular place. God being the creator of place cannot be thought of to be limited by place. He is where He has been before the creation of place. Abu Mu'în al-Balhâqi, one of the disciples of the Imâm, asked him, "What will you say if anyone asks: 'Where is Allah the Exalted?'" He replied: "He should be told that Allah has been existing while there was no place before He created the universe; He has been existing while there was

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24 Cf. the views of the Mu'tazilites, especially of 'Allâf and al-Nâṣîhîn, in al-Badghâdi's al-Fârî and Ustul ad-Din and al-Shârâbînî's Mîlah.
25 This question was discussed by the Mu'tazilites, by Challân al-Dimâshqî (prosecuted by Hîshâm b. 'Abd al-Malik [d. 125/743]), who taught that knowledge of action is of two kinds: natural or instinctive (fiṣrî) and acquired (mukassarûh). Faith, according to him, is the rational knowledge, not the instinctive knowledge. (Mîlah, Vol. I, p. 274; al-Farîq, p. 125; Mâburîdî, Vol. I, p. 200.)
26 Al-Biyâdî, Iqûrûh, p. 149.
28 Al-Wâfiqîyyah, p. 4; al-Biyyâdî, op. cit., p. 118.
29 Al-Ishârât, p. 118; Tâshûh al-Fâqîh al-Akbar, ascribed to al-Mâturîdî, Hyderabad, p. 18.
30 Al-'Aqîdah, p. 4.
31 Ibid., p. 5.
32 Al-Fâqîh al-Akbar, p. 6.
33 Leaving the true meaning to the knowledge of Allah.
34 Al-'Aqîdah, p. 4.
35 See the chapter on al-Mâturîdî.
36 Qur'an, vii, 5: 5; xxx, 75; lix, 17, etc.
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no 'where (ašma), no created being, nor anything else. He is the creator of everything.' Refuting the idea of the Anthropomorphists that God is in a particular place, he declared: "We confess that Allah has seated himself on the Throne without any necessity on His part, and without being fixed on it. If He had been under any necessity, He would not have been able to create the world and would have governed it like the created beings; and if He should feel any necessity to sit down and remain seated, where then was He before the creation of the Throne? God is exalted and high far above such ideas." It is evident that, according to abu Ḥanīfah, God, being eternal and incorporeal, cannot be conceived as being encompassed by direction and place. Al-Ṭahāwī, as has been quoted above, firmly holds this view. "God is without limits, ends, elements, limbs, and instruments. The six directions do not encompass Him as they encompass the created things." Referring to the Throne and the Chair, he states: "The Throne and the Chair are realities as Allah described them in His honoured Book. But He is not in need of the Throne nor of what is besides the Throne. He encompasses everything and is above everything." Al-Māturidi went a step further to allow rational interpretation of those verses, the apparent sense of which created an impression of His being in a place. He refuted the view of those who thought that the Throne was a particular place and God was on it, in it, or encompassed by it, as well as the views of those who thought that He was in every place. According to him, God being eternal, infinite, and incorporeal is free of time and space which imply rest, change, motion, and movement. Explaining the verses which were interpreted to prove His being in a particular place or in every place by the champions of these views, he asserts that these verses refer to His creative function, controlling power, absolute authority, sovereignty, eternity, and infinitude and indirectly prove that He is above the limitations of time and space.

**Beastic Vision.**—This question was discussed with much fervour by the Companions of the Prophet. Besides their intense love of God and an ardent desire to enjoy the happiness of seeing their Lord in the next world, the accounts of Ascension (mi'rāj), and the prayer of Moses to have a vision of his Lord as referred to in the Qur'ān, aroused in them fervent zeal for a discussion of this topic. It seems quite certain that as a result of this discussion they arrived at the following conclusions: (a) God is invisible in this world; no human being saw Him or will ever see Him in this world except the Prophet Muhammad who, according to some of them, saw Him on the night of mi'rāj; (b) God will be seen by the faithful in paradise. The eager inquiries of the Companions of the Prophet whether he saw his Lord or whether believers will see Him in the next world and the vehement opposition of a group of leading Companions, including ʿAbd Allāh, the common belief that the Prophet saw his Lord, all clearly indicate that the Companions were fully conscious of the difficulties involved in answering these questions. Their standpoint on this question, like that on the problem of essence and attributes was just to believe and refrain from a detailed discussion of such matters as cannot be comprehended by human reason. The seeing of God in paradise was regarded by them as the highest blessing and happiness for the believers and the *sumum bonum* of their life. They believed in it without description (wasiūf) or rational explanation (tāʿwīl).

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

It was Jahm who, in order to oppose *tasbīḥ*, laid great emphasis on *tanṣīh* and quite consistently with his idea of abstract God denied for the first time, according to our present information, the vision of God in paradise. The Muʿtazilites adopted this view and interpreted the beastic vision allegorically. Imām abu Ḥanīfah upheld the view of the Companions and discarded both anthropomorphic and allegorical interpretation of "seeing God." God will be seen by the faithful in paradise, he maintains, with their bodily eyes, but without any idea of place, direction, distance, comparison, or modality and without any description. Al-Ṭahāwī maintains the same position and emphasizes that beastic vision is an article of faith and it must be accepted without any doubt, without any rational interpretation, and without any idea of anthropomorphism. Any attempt to interpret it by reason will amount, according to him, to the denial of this tenet. Al-Māturidi also supported

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44 "None among you will ever see his Lord till he dies” is a saying of the Prophet, *Ibādah*, p. 65.
45 Traditions on this point have been narrated by more or less thirty Companions: *Sharḥ al-Tahāwīyayn*, p. 24; *Ibādah*, p. 205.
51 Al-Fīqih al-Abūn, p. 10; al-Wṣayyīn, p. 7; *Sharḥ al-Wṣayyīn*, p. 97; *Ibādah*, p. 201.
52 Al-ʿAḏīdah, p. 4.
this orthodox view and opposed taṣbīḥ and tā'wīl and showed by elaborate discussion that the verses of the Qur'ān and the traditions of the Prophet on this question do not allow any allegorical interpretation. His main argument, as we have already seen, is that the conditions of seeing a physical object in this world should not be applied to seeing God who has no body and no form and is not limited by time and space, and that too in the next world where nature of things and state of affairs would be quite different from what prevails here.\(^{35}\)

_Speech of God and the Qur'ān._—Speech (_kalām_), according to Abu Ḥanīfah, is an attribute of God pertaining to His essence and is eternal like all other divine attributes, and God speaks by virtue of this eternal speech.\(^{34}\) As regards the relation between _kalām_ of Allah and the Qur'ān, he says: “We confess that the Qur'ān is the uncreated speech of Allah; inspiration or revelation from Him is neither He nor other than He, but His quality in reality, written in the copies, recited by the tongues, and preserved in the breasts. The ink, the paper, the writing are created, for they are works of men. The speech of Allah, on the other hand, is uncreated; the writings, the letters, the words, and the verses are signs (_dalālāt_\(^{36}\)) of the Qur'ān for the sake of human needs. The speech of Allah is self-existing and its meaning is understood by means of these symbols. Whosoever says that the speech of Allah is created, he is an infidel: His speech, though recited, written, and retained in the hearts, is yet never dissociated from Him.”\(^{15}\)

Abu Ḥanīfah thus refutes the ideas of the Mu'tazilah who denied the attribute of speech identical with divine essence and declared the Qur'ān to have been created, as well as the ideas of those Mushababilah and Ḥāghwiyah (extreme orthodox) who thought that divine speech, like human speech, consists of words and sounds and that the script in which the Qur'ān was written was as eternal as the Qur'ān itself.\(^{37}\) _Kalām_ of Allah, according to him, is not identical with His Being, for this will make His Being complex and lead to the plurality of Godhead; nor can it be something other than Himself, for this will mean that He acquired a new quality and became what He was not before. This also implies imperfection and change in the divine nature; hence absurd. Divine speech, therefore, must be eternal, and as the Qur'ān is universally accepted to be the speech of Allah, it is necessarily uncreated.

Al-Ṭahāwī treated this subject with great caution and condemned controversies about the Qur’ān and practically declined to enter into a philosophical discussion on the nature of divine speech. He says: “Verily the Qur’ān—the _kalām_ of Allah—originated (bada') from Him as words without description (_bila kunfiyya_) and He sent it down to His Prophet as revelation; and the faithful believed it to be truly as such, and they knew for certain that it was in reality the _kalām_ of Allah, the Exalted, not created like the speech of the created beings. So whoever supposes it to be human speech is an infidel.”\(^{58}\)

The main point of controversy, it may be mentioned here, between the Jahmiyyah and Mu'tazilah, on the one hand, and the orthodox, on the other, was on the nature of the divine word and its relation to the Qur’ān, after they had all agreed that the Qur’ān was the revealed book of Allah. So al-Ṭahāwī, in fact, bypassed the main point at issue. He also made no reference to the relation of the speech of created beings or that of Allah’s word addressed to them such as to the Prophet Moses, as mentioned in the Qur’ān, with the eternal speech—a problem, which evidently bewildered the minds of Ja’d, Jahm, and their followers. Abu Ḥanīfah sought to remove this doubt with reference to the eternal divine attributes of knowing and creating. “Allah had indeed been speaking before He spoke to Moses, as Allah had indeed been creating from eternity before creating any creatures. So, when He spoke to Moses, He spoke to him with His speech which is one of His eternal attributes.” Similarly, “whatever Allah mentions in the Qur’ān, quoting from Moses and other prophets and from Pharaoh and Iblīs, is the eternal speech of Allah about them. The speech of Allah is uncreated, but the speech of Moses and other created beings is created. The Qur’ān is the speech of Allah and not their speech; therefore, it is eternal.”\(^{59}\)

_Divine Will and Human Freedom._—The all-pervading will of God, His eternal decree (_qadar_) and infinite power, on the one hand, and freedom of the human will and action, on the other, are equally stressed in the Qur’ān.\(^{60}\) According to the Qur’ān, divine will, decree, and power are not inconsistent with human freedom. These problems were discussed by the Prophet and his Companions. Belief in _qadar_ was declared by the Prophet as an article of faith, but at the same time he asserted that _qadar_ does not deprive a man of his freedom in his limited sphere.

Thus, according to the Qur’ān and the Tradition, God is the creator of all things including their nature, and nothing can go against this nature. He is the creator of the human soul and its nature and He has created it in free-will and bestowed upon it the faculty of knowing, thinking, and distinguishing and the power of judging, choosing, and selecting. God, being the omniscient creator, knows from eternity what His creatures will do in future—this is the “writing of the destiny” and “the eternal divine decree.”\(^{61}\)

That the Prophet laid stress both on _qadar_ and human freedom and on the

\(^{35}\) Cf. the chapter on Māturīdīsm.

\(^{36}\) _Al-Fiqh al-Akbar_, p. 5.

\(^{37}\) In one MS. the word is _alāh_ (instrument).

\(^{38}\) _Al-Waṣīyyah_, p. 4; _Sharh al-Waṣīyyah_, pp. 82-83.

\(^{39}\) _Al-Aqīdah_, _Al-Iṣrāb_, pp. 128-29.

\(^{58}\) _Al-Aqīdah_, p. 3; cf. p. 7.

\(^{59}\) Abu Hanīfah, _Al-Fiqh al-Akbar_, pp. 5-6.

\(^{60}\) _Qur’ān_, vi, 39, 125, 149; xxii, 14; lxxvii, 16; lxxxvi, 30; liv, 49 and other verses referring to the divine will and decree. And the verses: iv, 111; x, 44, 108; xi, 101; xii, 11; xvii, 15-17. 184; xviii, 29; xli, 46: xlv, 15, and many others refer to freedom.

\(^{61}\) Cf. also verses of the Qur’ān, 1, 4, 16.
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possibility of human action side by side with divine action, is also evident from his famous saying on natural religion (Rukn al-fitrāh): “Every child at birth is born in the fitrāh, then it is his parents who make him a Jew, a Christian, or a Magian.” This is testified by the Qur’ānic verse, “The fitrāh of Allah in which He hath created mankind, there is no change.” The sayings of the Prophet that divine decree comprises all human care and precautions for life, that prayer can change destiny, and that God has provided remedy for every disease, and similar other traditions also clearly indicate that the divine decree is not despotic or tyrannical in its nature and that it does not imply any compulsion, nor is it inconsistent with freedom and responsibility. The Companions of the Prophet also believed both in qadar and human freedom and emphatically denied the idea of compulsion (jibr). Some prominent Companions explained qadar as foreknowledge. Abu Mūsā al-Āsh’arī said: “God decreed as He knew.” Al-ʿĀme b. ʿAmr (d. 63/682) used to say: “The Pen has dried up according to the knowledge of God.” Ali (d. 40/661) gave a clear exposition of his view on the problem and said: “Perhaps you think that the judgment (qadar) is binding and the decree (qadar) is final. Had it been so, then reward and punishment would be meaningless and the promise and threat null and void, and no reproach then should have come from Allah against a sinner and no promise for a righteous person. This is the view of the brethren of Satan. Verily Allah has enjoined discretion, issued prohibitions, and given warnings. He has not burdened (men) with compulsion, nor has He sent the prophets in vain.”

Imām al-Ḥanafī made a bold attempt to harmonize the contradictory views of the self-determinists and the determinists by explaining the nature of divine power, will, and decree and enunciating the doctrines of natural religion (Rukn al-fitrāh), divine help, and guidance (aujāf), abandoning (kalāḥān) and acquisition (kashf). God had knowledge concerning things before they existed from eternity, and His will, decree, decision, and writing on the Preserved Tablet are in accordance with this foreknowledge. So the eternal decree is of a descriptive nature and not of a decisive nature. God created men with natural dispositions (fitrāh), endowed them with intellect, then addressed them and commanded them through His messenger to believe and abstain from unbelief. Thereupon some people deviated from this natural religion, disavowed truth, and turned to unbelief. This unbelief is their own act, their own acquisition, preferred by their free-will, which God created in them, and is not due to any compulsion from Him, but due to His leaving them to them-

92 Bukhārī and Muslim, “Kitāb al-Qadar”; also Qur’ān, xxx, 30.
93 Tirmīdī, “Kitāb al-Qadar.”
94 Miskhāt, “Kitāb al-Ṭibb.”
95 Al-Bayāḥi, op. cit., p. 33. This sentence has been chosen by Bukhārī as the heading of a section of “Kitāb al-Qadar” in his Sahih.
96 Wali al-Dīn, Mīṣkāt al-Masābīḥ, Delhi, Ch. “Qadar,” p. 22.

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selves. Those who clung to their nature received divine help and guidance. “Allah did not compel any of His creatures to be infidel or faithful, and He did not create them either as faithful or infidel, but He created them as individuals, and faith and unbelief are acts of men. . . . All the acts of man, his moving as well as his resting, are truly his own acquisition, but Allah creates them and they are caused by His will, His knowledge, His decision, and His decree.” But while good actions are according to His desire, pleasure, judgment, command, and guidance, evil actions are not in accordance with these.

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

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CONCLUSION

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

Prominent pupils of Imām al-Ḥanafī and his followers mainly engaged themselves in a close study of the problems of practical life, and generally it was they who occupied the posts of judges and legal advisers during the reign of the ‘Abbāsid caliphs and even afterwards. By virtue of their work they could get little time for a detailed study of speculative theology.

95 Al-ʿAqīdah, p. 5.
96 Ibid., p. 11.
98 Some books on theology were written by Muhammad al-Shābīnī, al-Ḥasan b. Ziyād and Zufar b. Hudhayl—all pupils of al-Ḥanafī.
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Their trends of mind also, it appears, were not in favour of pure speculation. Their time, energy, and genius were devoted to legal studies, and theological speculation was left for others. Thus, their contribution to theology is negligible in contrast to their contributions to law and jurisprudence. A few of them, like Hammâd and Ismâ‘îl, the son and grandson of Abu Ḥanîfah, Bihîr al-Marîsî, Ḥâfiz al-Fârdî, Bihîr b. Walîkî, Muhammâd b. Shâhîjâ, and others who took some interest in theology, could not quite consistently explain and expand the views of their leader. During the reign of al-Mâmûn and his immediate successors, the Ḥanîfî judges openly supported the Mu‘tazîlites’ stand on some of the controversial questions and co-operated with the rulers in suppressing the views of the extreme orthodox. Besides the Mu‘tazîlites and the Murîjîtes, the followers of Imâm Abu Ḥanîfah themselves were divided in interpreting his views. Al-Ṭâhâwî, like al-Mâturîdî, rendered valuable services in removing the doubts and confusions and making the position of the Imâm quite clear. The influence of al-Ṭâhâwî on theology can easily be estimated from the numerous commentaries written on his creed. In short, al-Ṭâhâwî’s credit lies in the fact that he very nicely and elegantly presented the summaries of the views of Imâm Abu Ḥanîfah, the first founder of the theological school of ahl al-sunnah—summaries for which he must have relied, besides the latter’s works, on other reliable sources which had already received recognition from a large number of orthodox people.

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Chapter XIII

MÂTURÎDÎ

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

As a matter of fact, it was the Mu‘tazîlîtes who laid the foundation of this new science and made lasting contributions for its development. They started their movement by adopting a rational attitude in respect of some theological questions, but when they reached the height of their power, they adopted an aggressive attitude towards their opponents. The orthodox Muslims opposed the Mu‘tazîlite movement from the very beginning and tried to refute their doctrines by the traditional method. A section of the orthodox people took recourse even to violent methods.

Conflicting ideas and antagonistic attitudes created chaos and confusion in Muslim thought and shook the foundation of old ideas and traditional beliefs. The need for reconciliation and solving the crisis by adopting a middle course and a tolerant attitude was keenly felt. At this critical period of the history of Muslim theology there appeared, in three parts of the Muslim world, three eminent scholars: al-Mâturîdî in Central Asia, al-Ashâ‘îrî in Iraq, and al-Ṭâhâwî in Egypt. They all endeavoured to reconcile conflicting ideas and settle the theological problems of the time by adopting a system that would satisfy reason and conform to the general tenets of the Qur’an and the Sunnah. They exercised profound and lasting influence on the subsequent development of Muslim philosophy and theology and were considered to be the fathers of the three schools of thoughts named after them.

Ashâ‘îrism and Ṭâhâwism have been dealt with in separate chapters; here we are concerned with Mâturîdî.

LIFE AND WORKS OF MÂTURÎDÎ

Abu Manṣûr Muhammad b. Muhammad b. Mahmûd, al-Mâturîdî, al-Ånâ‘îrî, al-Ḥanâfî, was born at Mâturîdî,1 a village or quarter in the neighbourhood of Samarqand, one of the great cities of Central Asia. According to some writers, he was the illegitimate son of Abu Ayyûb al-Ånâ‘îrî of Madinah.2

1 The word is also pronounced as Mâtûrîdî and Mâturîdî. Cf. al-Sâmînî, al-Andalûsî, fol. 498b; ibn al-Åţhir, al-Lubûb, Vol. III, p. 76; Ahmad Annî, Šâhî al-İslâm, Vol. I, p. 356. It was wrongly transcribed by some writers as Mâturîdî.