

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 Ḥammād and Ismā'il, the son and grandson of abu Ḥanīfah, Bishr al-Marisi, Ḥafṣ al-Fard, Bishr b. Walid, Muḥammad b. Shujā', 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-Mamūn and his immediate successors, the Ḥanafi judges openly supported the Mu'tazilites' stand on some of the controversial questions and co-operated with the rulers in suppressing the views of the extreme orthodox. Besides the Mu'tazilites and the Murji'ites, the followers of Imām abu Ḥanīfah themselves were divided in interpreting his views. Al-Ṭahāwī, like al-Māturīdī, rendered valuable services in removing the doubts and confusions and making the position of the Imām quite clear. The influence of al-Ṭahāwī on theology can easily be estimated from the numerous commentaries written on his creed. In short, al-Ṭahāwī's credit lies in the fact that he very nicely and elegantly presented the summaries of the views of Imām abu Ḥanīfah, the first founder of the theological school of *aḥl 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

MATURIDISM

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-Kalām* came into being.

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

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

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

A

LIFE AND WORKS OF MĀTURIDĪ

Abu Maṣṣūr Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Maḥmūd, al-Māturīdī, al-Anṣārī, al-Ḥanafi, was born at Māturīd,¹ a village or quarter in the neighbourhood of Samarqand, one of the great cities of Central Asia. According to some writers, he came of the renowned family of abu Ayyūb al-Anṣārī of Madīnah.²

¹ The word is also pronounced as Mātūrīd and Mātūrīt. Cf. al-Sam'āni, *al-Ansāb*, fol. 498b; ibn al-Athīr, *al-Lubāb*, Vol. III, p. 76; Aḥmad Amin, *Zuhr al-Islām*, Vol. I, p. 365. It was wrongly transcribed by some writers as Mātārīd.

² Al-Māturīdī, *Kitāb al-Tauḥīd*, MS. Cambridge, fol. 1, footnote. al-Sayyid Murṭaḍa, *Sharḥ Ihya'* of al-Ghazālī, Cairo, 1893, Vol. II, p. 5.

This statement is also corroborated by the fact that some other Arab families of Madinah also settled in Samarqand³ and that al-Māturidī's daughter was married to al-Ḥasan al-Ash'ari, the father of Imām abu al-Ḥasan 'Alī al-Ash'ari and a descendant of abu Ayyūb al-Anṣārī of Madinah.⁴

Almost all the biographers who give only short sketches of al-Māturidī's life in their works⁵ agree that he died in the year 333/944, but none of them mentions the date of his birth. One of the teachers of al-Māturidī, namely, Muḥammad b. Muqātil al-Rāzī is stated to have died in 248/862, which proves that al-Māturidī was born before that year and possibly about the year 238/853. According to this assumption, al-Māturidī was born during the reign of the 'Abbāsīd Caliph al-Mutawakkil (r. 232–247/847–861) who combated the Mu'tazilite doctrines and supported the traditional faith.

Al-Māturidī flourished under the powerful rule of the Samānids, who ruled practically the whole of Persia from 261/874 to 389/999 actively patronized science and literature, and gathered around their Court a number of renowned scholars.⁶ He was brought up in the peaceful academic atmosphere and cultural environment of his native land and received good education in different Islamic sciences under four eminent scholars of his time: *Shaiḥ* abu Bakr Aḥmad b. Ishāq, abu Naṣr Aḥmad b. al-'Abbās known as al-Faqīh al-Samarqandī, Nuṣair b. Yahya al-Balkhī (d. 268/881), and Muḥammad b. Muqātil al-Rāzī (d. 248/862), Qāḍī of Rayy. All of them were students of Imām abu Ḥanīfah (d. 150/767).⁷

In recognition of his scholarship and profound knowledge in theology (and his invaluable services to the cause of *ahl al-sunnah w-al-jamā'ah*) people conferred on him the title of *Imām al-Huda* and *Imām al-Mutakallimīn*. Maḥmūd al-Kūfawī mentioned him as "leader of guidance, the model of the Sunnite and the guided, the bearer of the standard of *ahl al-sunnah w-al-jamā'ah*, the uprooter of misguidance arising from disorder and heresies, leader of the scholastics, and rectifier of the faith of the Muslims."⁸

Works.—Al-Māturidī wrote a number of important books on *Tafsīr*, *Kalām*, and *Uṣūl*, a list of which is given below:

³ Imām abu Naṣr al-'Ayādī, al-Samarqandī, one of al-Māturidī's teachers, was a descendant of Sa'd b. 'Ubādah, vide 'Abd al-Ḥayy Lakhnawī, *al-Fawā'id al-Bāhiyyah*, Cairo, 1324/1906, p. 23.

⁴ Al-Sam'ānī, *op. cit.*, fol. 498.

⁵ 'Abd al-Qādir al-Qarashī, *al-Jawāhir al-Muḍ'īyyah*, MS. Cairo, p. 251 (it has been printed at Hyderabad); Maḥmūd al-Kūfawī, *Katā'ib A'lām al-Akhyār*, MS. Cairo, pp. 129–30; Qāsim b. Quṭlūbugha, *Tāj al-Tarājim*, Leipzig, 1862, p. 44; Tāsh Kubrāzādah, *Miftāḥ al-Sa'ādah*, Hyderabad, 1928, Vol. II, p. 22; Sayyid Murtaḍa, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 5–14; 'Abd al-Ḥayy Lakhnawī, *op. cit.*, p. 195.

⁶ For Samānids see al-Maqdisī, *Aḥsan al-Taqāsīm*, p. 294; Aḥmad Amin, *op. cit.* Vol. I, pp. 261 et seq.

⁷ Kamāl al-Dīn al-Biyāḍī, *Ishārāt al-Marām*, Cairo, 1949, p. 23; *Sharḥ Ihya'* Vol. II, p. 5, and books on Ḥanafī *Tabaqāt*.

⁸ *Katā'ib A'lām al-Akhyār*, p. 129.

1. *Kitāb Tāwīlāt al-Qur'ān* or *Tāwīlāt Ahl al-Sunnah*.
2. *Kitāb Mā'khadh al-Sharī'ah*.
3. *Kitāb al-Jadal*.
4. *Kitāb al-Uṣūl* (*Uṣūl al-Dīn*).
5. *Kitāb al-Maqālāt*.
6. *Kitāb al-Tauḥīd*.
7. *Kitāb Bayān Wahm al-Mu'tazilah*.
8. *Kitāb Radd Awā'il al-Adillah li al-Ka'bi*.
9. *Kitāb Radd Tahdhib al-Jadal li al-Ka'bi*.
10. *Kitāb Radd Wa'id al-Fussāq li al-Ka'bi*.
11. *Radd al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah li abi Muḥammad al-Bāhili*.
12. *Radd Kitāb al-Imāmah li ba'd al-Rawāfiḍ*.
13. *Kitāb al-Radd 'ala al-Qarāmiṭah*.⁹

Unfortunately, not a single work of al-Māturidī has so far been published. His *Tāwīlāt al-Qur'ān*, *Kitāb al-Tauḥīd*, and *Kitāb al-Maqālāt* which are by far the most important and valuable of all his works, exist only in manuscripts. The *Tāwīlāt al-Qur'ān* is a commentary on the Qur'ān in the scholastic method in which he endeavoured to establish the liberal orthodox theology, both traditionally and rationally, and to provide for it a sound basis.¹⁰ Commenting on this momentous work, *Shaiḥ* 'Abd al-Qādir al-Qarashī says, "A unique book with which no book of the earlier authors on this subject can have any comparison."¹¹

In his *Kitāb al-Tauḥīd*, al-Māturidī gave an elaborate exposition of his system and sought to harmonize the extreme views of both the traditionists and the rationalists. The book bears testimony to his broad outlook, deep insight, and intimate acquaintance with the philosophical systems of his time. The evidence at our disposal at present shows that al-Māturidī was the first *Mutakallim* to introduce the doctrine of the sources of human knowledge in a book on theology such as *Kitāb al-Tauḥīd* and thereby made a thorough attempt to build up his system on a sound philosophical basis. This method was followed by other theologians and the subject was later on elaborately treated by the Ash'arite scholars, al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1013), and al-Baghdādī (d. 429/1037).

Al-Māturidī is one of the pioneers amongst the Ḥanafite scholars who wrote on the principles of jurisprudence and his two works *Mā'khadh al-Sharī'ah* and *Kitāb al-Jadal* are considered to be authoritative on the subject.¹²

⁹ Three other works, viz., *Sharḥ Fiḥ al-Akbar* of Imām abu Ḥanīfah, *'Aqīdah abi Mansūr* and *Sharḥ al-Idānah* of Imām al-Ash'ari are erroneously ascribed to him.

¹⁰ MSS. of this book are found at the Cairo, Istanbul, and Berlin Libraries. *Shaiḥ* 'Alā' al-Dīn abu Bakr Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Samarqandī wrote a commentary on this book in eight volumes, an incomplete copy of which can be found at the Patna Library.

¹¹ *Al-Jawāhir al-Muḍ'īyyah*, MS. Cairo, p. 251.

¹² *Kashf al-Zunān*, Istanbul, 1943, Vol. I, pp. 110–11.

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

B

METHOD

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

He severely criticized the conflicting views of different groups who thought that knowledge is not attainable at all, or that senses cannot supply true knowledge, or that reason alone is sufficient to give us all knowledge. Refuting the views of those who deny or doubt the possibility of knowledge altogether or the possibility of acquiring knowledge through sense-organs, al-Māturīdī says that even animals perceive by their senses what may preserve or destroy them and what may be useful or harmful to them. So theoretical arguments with those who pretend to deny the objective reality of things is useless. Yet he says, they may be humorously asked: "Do you know what you deny?" If they say "No," their denial stands cancelled, but if they answer affirmatively, they admit the reality of their denial and thereby become opposers of their opposing. A more effective way than this is to make them subject to physical torture so that they may be compelled to admit what they deny of the reality of sensuous knowledge.

Reports are the means of acquiring knowledge concerning genealogy, past occurrences, remote countries, useful and harmful things, foodstuffs, medicine,

¹³ For al-Ka'bi, see al-Shahrastāni, *Milāl*, al-Azhar ed., Vol. I, pp. 116-17; al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb al-Farq*, Cairo, pp. 108-09.

¹⁴ Al-Ash'ari was born in 260/873 or 270/883 and remained in the Mu'tazilites' camp up to the fortieth year of his age, so he must have begun his movement after the end of the third century of Hijrah. Al-Māturīdī was born before 248/862, and supposing that he spent about thirty years in acquiring knowledge, then his movement seems to have begun before the end of the third century A.H.

etc. These are of two kinds, historical reports (*khābr al-mutawātīr*) and reports of the prophets (*khābr al-rusul*), possessing sure signs to prove their honesty. Though both kinds of reports are proved to be sources of knowledge, we should be very critical in accepting reports of the prophets, because they are handed down through chains of narrators who are not infallible and who may commit mistakes in reporting. Those who reject report as a source of knowledge are, al-Māturīdī asserts, like those who reject sensuous knowledge. In order to convince them, they should be physically tortured and if they complain of pain, they should be told: Your words of complaint are nothing but reports which cannot give us any real knowledge.¹⁵

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

Reason, no doubt, occupies a very eminent place in the system of al-Māturīdī, but it cannot give, he holds, true knowledge concerning everything that we require to know. Like senses, it has a limit beyond which it cannot go. Sometimes the true nature of the human intellect is obscured and influenced by internal and external factors such as desire, motive, habit, environment, and association, and, as a result, it even fails to give us true knowledge of things that are within its own sphere. Divergent views and conflicting ideas of the learned concerning many a problem are mentioned by al-Māturīdī as one of the proofs in support of his statement. Hence, reason often requires, he asserts, the service of a guide and helper who will protect it from straying, lead it to the right path, help it understand delicate and mysterious affairs, and know the truth. This guide, according to him, is the divine revelation received by a prophet. If anyone will deny the necessity of this divine guidance through revelation and claim that reason alone is capable of giving us all the knowledge we need, then he will certainly overburden his reason and oppress it quite unreasonably.¹⁷

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

¹⁵ Al-Māturīdī, *op. cit.*, pp. 3, 13.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5, 68-69.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 92-95; *Tāwīlāt*, Sūrah vii, 54.

if man had to rely solely on individual experience for the knowledge of all these things, then human civilization could not have made such rapid progress.¹⁸

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

It is evident from this brief account that reason and revelation both occupy a prominent place in the system of al-Māturīdī. The articles of religious belief are derived, according to him, from revelation, and the function of reason is to understand them correctly. There can be no conflict between reason and revelation if the real purport of the latter be correctly understood. His method of interpreting the Scriptures may be outlined in the following words: The passages of the Holy Qur'ān which appear to be ambiguous or the meanings of which are obscure or uncertain (*mubham* and *mushṭabāh*) must be taken in the light of the verses that are self-explaining and precise (*muḥkam*). Where the apparent sense of a verse contradicts what has been established by the "precise" (*muḥkam*) verses, it must then be believed that the apparent sense was never intended, because there cannot be contradiction in the verses of the Holy Qur'ān, as God has repeatedly declared. In such cases, it is permissible to interpret the particular verse in the light of the established truth (*tāwīl*) or to leave its true meaning to the knowledge of God (*tafwīd*).²⁰

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

C

CRITICISM OF THE MU'TAZILITES

Al-Māturīdī always tried to adopt a middle course between the extreme Rationalists and the Traditionists. He would agree with the Mu'tazilites on many points, but would never accept the Aristotelian philosophy as a basis

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 91 et seqq.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 2-4.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 116; *Tāwīlāt*, MSS. Istanbul & Hyderabad, Preface; 'Alī al-Qārī, *Sharḥ al-Fiqh al-Akbar*, Cairo, 1323/1905, p. 75.

²¹ Zuhdi Ḥasan, *al-Mu'tazilah*, Cairo, 1947, pp. 247-48; Aḥmad Amīn, *Ḍuḥā al-Islām*, Cairo, Vol. III, p. 32.

Māturīdism

of religious doctrines. Similarly, he is in accord with the Traditionists on fundamentals, but is not ready to take the Qur'ān and the Hadīth always in their literal sense and thereby to fall into gross anthropomorphism. He agrees with the Mu'tazilites that it is obligatory on the part of every rational being to acquire knowledge of the existence of God through his reason even if no messenger were sent by Him for this purpose; that things are intrinsically good or bad and the *Shāri'* (God) takes into consideration these values in His *amr* (command) and *nahī* (prohibition); that God has endowed man with reason through which he can often distinguish right from wrong. But, contrary to the Mu'tazilites, he maintains that reason cannot be the final authority for human obligation and religious law. The basis of religious obligation, according to him, is revelation, not reason.²² It seems that al-Māturīdī's view on this question and on the authorship of human action, as will be seen, is mainly guided by the Qur'ānic verses such as "To Him belong creation and command."²³

Al-Māturīdī bitterly criticized the Mu'tazilite doctrine of divine justice and unity. Their interpretation of divine justice led them to deny the all-pervading will and power of God, His authorship of human action, and made Him quite helpless and subject to external compulsion. Divine grace and mercy find no place in their system as is evident from their view on grave sins. Their doctrine of *al-aṣḥāḥ* (salutary) cannot explain satisfactorily the existence of evil, natural calamities, and sufferings of innocent children and animals. According to their doctrine, man enjoys more power and freedom than the Creator of the universe. They did not follow, al-Māturīdī tried to prove, the explicit decisions of the Qur'ān and the Sunnah, nor the dictates of sound reason.²⁴ Their interpretation of *taḥīd* reduced God to an unknown and unknowable non-entity (*ta'īl*).²⁵

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

D

MĀTURĪDĪ'S SYSTEM

Al-Māturīdī built up his own system mainly on two principles: freedom from similitude (*tanẓīh*) and divine wisdom (*ḥikmah*). On the principle of freedom from similitude he opposes similitude (*tashbīh*) and anthropo-

²² *Kitāb al-Tauḥīd*, pp. 48-49, 91-92; *Sharḥ al-'Aqā'id al-'Aḍudiyyah* with commentaries of Siālkūti and Shaikh Muḥammad 'Abduh, Cairo, 1322/1904, p. 180; *Nazm al-Farā'id*, Cairo, 1317/1899, pp. 32-37; *al-Rawḍat al-Bāhiyyah*, Cairo, 1322/1904, pp. 34-39.

²³ Qur'ān, vii, 56.

²⁴ *Kitāb al-Tauḥīd*, pp. 41-42, 48, 144-69, 178; *Tāwīlāt*, Sūrah vii, 10.

²⁵ *Kitāb al-Tauḥīd*, pp. 13, 21, 46.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 59; *Tāwīlāt*, Sūrah xxxix, 62.

morphism (*tajsim*) in all their forms, without denying divine attributes. The anthropomorphic expressions used in the Qur'an like the hands, the face, the eyes of God, and His sitting on the Throne should not be taken in their apparent sense, because the literal interpretation of these expressions contradicts the explicit verses of the Qur'an. These passages, therefore, should be interpreted in the light of the clear passages of *tanzih* in a manner consistent with the doctrine of *tauḥīd*, and permissible according to the usage and idiom of the Arabic language, or their true meanings should be left to the knowledge of God.²⁷

On the principle of divine wisdom (*ḥikmah*) al-Māturīdī tried to reconcile the conflicting views of the Determinists (Jabrites) and the Mu'tazilites and prove for man certain amount of freedom, without denying the all-pervading divine will, power, and decree. Wisdom means placing a thing in its own place; so divine wisdom comprises both justice (*ʿadl*) and grace and kindness (*faḍl*). God possesses absolute power and His absoluteness is not subject to any external laws but His own wisdom.²⁸ Al-Māturīdī applied this principle also to combat the Mu'tazilites' doctrine of *al-aṣṭaḥ* (best) on the one hand, and the orthodox view that God may overburden his servants (*taklīf ma la yuṭāq*) on the other. It is inconsistent with divine wisdom, which includes both justice and kindness, to demand from man performance of an act which is beyond his power, such as to command a blind man: "See," or to command one who has no hands: "Stretch your hands."²⁹

Similarly, it would be an act of injustice if God would punish the believers in hell for ever or reward the infidels in paradise for ever.³⁰ He agreed with the Mu'tazilites on these questions in opposition to the orthodox,³¹ but he strongly opposed the former's doctrine that God must do what is best for man. This Mu'tazilite doctrine, he argues, places God under compulsion to do a particular act at a fixed time for the benefit of an individual and denies His freedom of action. It only proves the right of a man on Him and not the intrinsic value and merit of an action which the divine wisdom keeps in view. Moreover, this doctrine cannot solve the problem of evil. Al-Māturīdī, therefore, maintains that divine justice consists not in doing what is salutary to an individual, but in doing an action on its own merit and in giving a thing its own place.³²

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

²⁷ *Tawīlāt*, Sūrah vii, 54; v, 64; iv, 27; xi, 37; *Kitāb al-Tauḥīd*, pp. 12, 32.

²⁸ *Kitāb al-Tauḥīd*, pp. 46-47, 61-62.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 134-35; *Tawīlāt*, Sūrah ii, 286.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 186 et seq.

³¹ For al-Ash'ari's views on these questions, see his *Kitāb al-Luma'*, Cairo, 1955, pp. 113 et seq.; *al-Idānah*, Hyderabad, 1948, p. 59.

³² *Kitāb al-Tauḥīd*, pp. 48, 61, 112.

Relation between God and Man.—Al-Māturīdī in his *Kitāb al-Tauḥīd* and *Tawīlāt al-Qur'ān* has dealt at length with different aspects of this broad problem—the will, the power, the eternal decree, and the creative function of God; His wisdom and existence of evil in this world; freedom of man; and the basis of religious obligation and responsibility, etc.

Al-Māturīdī combated the views of the Jabrites and the Mu'tazilites on the above questions and he also disagreed with al-Ash'ari on certain points. Refuting the absolute determinism of the Jabrites, he says that the relation between God and man should not be considered to be the same as that between God and the physical world. God has endowed man with reason, with the power of distinguishing between right and wrong, and with the faculties of thinking, feeling, willing, and judging, and has sent messengers and revealed books for his guidance. Man inclines and directs his mind towards something which he thinks may benefit him, restrains himself from what he thinks will harm him, chooses one of the alternative courses of action by the exercise of his own reason, and thinks himself responsible for the merits or demerits of his actions. Now, while he thinks, desires, inclines, chooses, and acts, he always considers himself quite free, and never thinks or feels that any outside agency compels him to do any of his actions. This consciousness of freedom, al-Māturīdī asserts, is a reality, the denial of which will lead to the denial of all human knowledge and sciences. Quoting passages from the Qur'an³³ he also shows that the actions enjoined or prohibited by God are ascribed to men, and that they will be accountable for their "own" actions. All this clearly proves that God has granted men freedom of choice and necessary power to perform an action. The denial of this freedom will mean that God is wholly responsible for all human actions and is liable to blame or punishment for sins committed by men, yet on the Day of Judgment He will punish them for His own actions. This is quite absurd, as God has described Himself in the Qur'an as the most wise, just, and compassionate.³⁴

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

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

³³ Qur'an, ii, 77, 167; xxxiii, 17; xli, 40; xcix, 7, etc.

³⁴ *Kitāb al-Tauḥīd*, pp. 115 et seq., 165.

God is the creator of all human actions, it will necessarily follow that He also wills these actions, because divine action must be preceded by divine will. So nothing can happen in the world against or without the will of God. But, though God wills and creates human actions, He is not liable to blame or accountable for their actions, because divine will is determined by divine knowledge and He *creates* the action when a man in the free exercise of his reason chooses and *intends* to perform an action. Thus, God wills an action good or evil, which He knows a man will choose, and when ultimately he chooses and intends to acquire it God creates that act as a good or evil act for him. From this, it will be clear that God's willing or creating an evil action is not inconsistent with His wisdom and goodness. Because, God wills the happening of the evil because He desires the individual to exercise free choice, but being wise and just He always prohibits the choice of evil. So, though sins are in accordance with His will, they are never in accordance with His command, pleasure, desire, or guidance. Sin, then, according to al-Māturīdī, consists not in going against the divine will, but in violating the divine law, command, guidance, pleasure, or desire.

The basis of man's obligation and responsibility (*taklīf*), al-Māturīdī maintains, does not consist in his possessing the power to create an action, but it is the freedom to choose (*ikhtiyār*) and the freedom to acquire an action (*iktisāb*), conferred on man as a rational being, which make him responsible and accountable.³⁵

As regards eternal divine decree (*qaḍā'* and *qadar*) al-Māturīdī holds that it is not inconsistent with human freedom, nor does it imply any compulsion on the part of man, because it is an eternal record based on foreknowledge. God decrees the act He knows from eternity that a man will choose and acquire freely. Man cannot deny his own responsibilities on the ground of the divine decree, al-Māturīdī adds; he cannot do so on account of time and space within which actions must be done. So, though man is not absolutely free, God has granted him necessary freedom consistent with his obligation and, therefore, the divine decree relating to human actions should not be regarded the same as in relation to the physical world.³⁶

It may not be out of place to note here the points of difference between al-Māturīdī and al-Ash'ari on this question. In order to make a man responsible for his action al-Māturīdī laid great stress, as we have just noticed, on the freedom of choice (*ikhtiyār*) and freedom of acquisition (*iktisāb*). Divine will, decree, and foreknowledge do not deprive a man of this freedom. An action is a man's own action, though created by God, because it is the result of his own choice and it has been acquired by him without any compulsion. God provided for him all the means and facilities for acquiring an action, endowed him with the power of judgment and self-control, and granted him

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 117 *et seq.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 161.

freedom to choose whatever means and course he prefers to adopt. Al-Ash'ari also used the term acquisition (*kasb*)³⁷ but interpreted it differently. It seems that he did not favour the idea of the freedom of choice. According to him, God being omnipotent, all objects of power fall under His power, as God being omniscient all objects of knowledge fall under His knowledge. So a man's will has no effect or influence at all on his action; it is always determined by the divine will. Even the desire and power of acquisition fall under divine power and are the creation of God.³⁸ Acquisition then, according to al-Ash'ari, means only a general coincidence of the divine power and human actions. It is God who in reality creates as well as acquires the action through man. This view, as is evident, does not differ in essence from that of the Determinists and hence he was regarded by some writers as being one of them.³⁹ Even most of the prominent Ash'arites like Qāḍī abu Bakr al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1013), Shaikh abu Ishāq al-Isfara'īnī, and Imām al-Haramain al-Juwainī (d. 478/1085) could not agree with him on this question and gave different interpretations of the term *kasb*.⁴⁰

Divine Attributes.—Human languages do not possess any term, al-Māturīdī says, to explain the nature and attributes of God in a way that will not imply any idea of resemblance or comparison. Yet it is a necessity for human understanding to ascribe some names and attributes to the Creator of the world. Giving a critical account of the views of the philosophers, the pluralists, the dualists, and the atheists, al-Māturīdī asserts that the belief in one Supreme Power and Ultimate Reality is universal, but the people differ greatly from one another in giving names and attributing qualities to this Supreme Being. Among the people of *tauḥīd*, it is only the Mu'tazilites, he says, who by denying the divine attributes and their eternity endangered this universal belief in the existence of one God. Refuting the views of the Mu'tazilites on this question, he says that it is agreed that God has beautiful names and it will be quite futile to apply these names to Him divested of the meanings and contents which they imply; for otherwise it will not be unreasonable to ascribe to Him any name whatsoever. So, when, for example, it is said that God is wise, it must mean that He possesses the quality of wisdom. The denial of the divine

³⁷ The evidence at our disposal does not clearly indicate when and by whom the doctrine of *kasb* was first formulated. But it is quite evident that neither al-Māturīdī nor al-Ash'ari was the originator of this doctrine. The term *kasb* or *iktisāb* had been used long before them by Imām abu Ḥanīfah and his contemporaries: Jahm b. Ṣafwān (d. 128/745), Ḥafṣ, al-Fard, and Dirār b. 'Amar. Cf. al-Ash'ari, *al-Maḳālāt*, Cairo, Vol. I, pp. 110, 313; al-Baghdādī, *op. cit.*, pp. 129 *et seq.*; Muḥammad b. al-Murṭaḍā al-Yamānī, *Ithār al-Ḥaqq*, pp. 312, 316.

³⁸ Al-Ash'ari, *Kitāb al-Luma'*, Cairo, 1955, pp. 72 *et seq.*

³⁹ Ibn al-Nadīm, *al-Fihrist*, chapter on the Jabrites; al-Shahrastānī, *Milal*, Vol. I, p. 134.

⁴⁰ Al-Shahrastānī, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 157 *et seq.*; Imām al-Haramain, *al-'Aqīdat al-Niẓāmiyyah*, p. 34; *Sharḥ al-'Aqā'id al-'Aḍudiyyah*, p. 88; al-Biyāḍī, *Ishārāt al-Marām*, p. 255.

attributes (*ta'fīl*) only creates confusions, makes the knowledge of God impossible, and ultimately reduces Him to an unknown and unknowable Non-Being. The denial of the eternity of the attributes makes God imperfect in the beginning and subject to changes, and, thus, it shakes the very basis of *tauḥīd*. The idea of pluralism or anthropomorphism that may arise due to affirmation of the eternal attributes can easily be eradicated by firm belief in the absolute unity of God together with the idea of *tanzīh* (denial of likeness and similitude) and *mukhālafah* (difference from the created being). Thus when we say that "God is knowing," we also add to this (as a safeguard against any blasphemous idea concerning Him), "but not like the learned, and His knowledge is not like our knowledge." The consequences of the denial of the divine attributes or their eternity are far more dangerous than those of their affirmation.

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

Al-Māturīdī also maintains that all the attributes of God whether belonging to His essence or action are eternal. The word *takwīn* has been used to denote all the attributes pertaining to action such as creating, sustaining, etc. *Takwīn*, according to al-Māturīdī, is an eternal attribute distinct from power (*qudrah*). So God is the creator before and after the creation. This does not indicate in any way the eternity of the world, because as knowledge and power are eternal attributes, though the objects of knowledge and power are created, *takwīn* is an eternal attribute, though the object of *takwīn* (*mukawwan*) is created. The non-existence of the world at the beginning does not imply God's inability, as He created it at the appropriate time in accordance with His eternal knowledge and will.⁴²

Al-Ash'ari on this question is in agreement with the Mu'tazilites and holds that the attributes of action are originated.⁴³ It seems to us that he agreed with them in order to evade the Aristotelian argument which aims at proving the eternity of the world by the eternal, creative power of God. Al-Māturīdī's main argument is that the idea of the createdness of any of the divine attributes is fundamentally opposed to the conception of God as a perfect, self-subsistent, eternal Ultimate Reality and is, therefore, in conflict with the doctrine of *tauḥīd*.

As regards the Word of God (*Kalām Allah*), al-Māturīdī maintains that like all other attributes His attribute of speaking as well as His speech is

⁴¹ *Kitāb al-Tauḥīd*, pp. 12, 21, 31, 44, 51; al-Biyāḍī, *op. cit.*, p. 118; al-Subkī, *Sharḥ 'Aqīdah*, MS. Madinah.

⁴² *Kitāb al-Tauḥīd*, pp. 22 *et seq.*; *Tāwīlāt*, Sūrah i, 3; ii, 117.

⁴³ The three schools differ from one another in defining the attribute of an action. Cf. abi al-Qāri, *Sharḥ Fiqh al-Akbar*, Cairo, 1323/1905, p. 19.

eternal without similitude and comparison. The exact nature of this eternal speech or the attribute of speaking is not known, but it is certain that the divine speech cannot be composed of sounds and letters like human speech, because sounds and letters are created. So, in reality, he asserts, only the "meaning" of which the words are an expression can be termed as the *kalām* of Allah. This "meaning" which existed with God from eternity can be heard and understood only through the medium of created sound. Accordingly, Moses did not hear the eternal speech, but God made him hear and understand the eternal speech through created words and sounds. Now, what is heard by or revealed to the prophets is called the *kalām* of Allah figuratively (*majāzan*) for three reasons: (1) They heard (understood) the purport (*al-ma'na*) of the *kalām*, that is, divine command, prohibition, forbidding, sanctioning, etc., which belong to God alone. (2) God Himself composed it (*allaḥa wa naẓama*); hence it was inimitable by any human being. (3) It explains the eternal speech and proves His attribute of speech.⁴⁴

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

Al-Ash'ari, like al-Māturīdī, maintains that God has eternal speech and the attribute of speaking,⁴⁵ but it is not clear from his lengthy discourses in *Kitāb al-Lum'* and *al-Idānah* what he exactly meant by *kalām* of Allah and what, according to him, was eternal in the Qur'ān—words or meanings? He maintained that the eternal speech could be heard directly without the medium of created sound.⁴⁶ This statement, together with general trends of his ideas and his mode of reasonings as reflected in his printed books, corroborates a statement according to which both words and meanings were regarded by him as eternal.⁴⁷ But al-Shahrastānī asserts that, according to al-Ash'ari, the words are created and the "mental" meaning (*al-ma'na al-naḥsi*) is eternal;⁴⁸ this last is the view of all the eminent Ash'arites.⁴⁹ If so, there is not much difference on this question between the Mu'tazilites and the Ash'arites.

Beatific Vision.—It has been noticed that al-Māturīdī, like the Mu'tazilites, strongly opposed the anthropomorphic idea of God and interpreted metaphorically those passages of the Qur'ān which appear to create such an impres-

⁴⁴ *Kitāb al-Tauḥīd*, pp. 26–28; *Tāwīlāt*, Sūrah ix, 6; xlii, 51; vii, 143; iv, 164.

⁴⁵ *Kitāb al-Lum'*, pp. 33 *et seq.*; *al-Idānah*, pp. 19 *et seq.*

⁴⁶ *Kitāb al-Lum'*, p. 63; also ibn Humām al-Musāyarah, Cairo, 1347/1928, p. 11; 'Abd al-Raḥīm, *Naẓm al-Farā'id*, Cairo, 1317/1899, pp. 15–18; abu 'Udhbah, *al-Raudat al-Bāhiyyah*, Hyderabad, pp. 44–45.

⁴⁷ *Sharḥ al-Aqā'id al-Aḥudiyyah*, p. 188.

⁴⁸ *Nihāyat al-Iqdām*, p. 320.

⁴⁹ Imām al-Ḥaramain, *al-Irshād*, Cairo, 1950, pp. 102 *et seq.*; al-Ghazālī, *al-Iqtisād*, Cairo, pp. 71–72.

sion. But on the question of seeing God in paradise by the believers, he is wholly in agreement with the orthodox, and firmly holds that the passages of the Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet on this subject must be taken in their literal sense. By scholastic reasonings he shows that the letter and spirit of these verses and traditions do not allow us to take them allegorically and to interpret seeing God as "seeing His signs and rewards or knowing Him by the heart." This latter type of seeing is common for believers and non-believers in the next world and may even happen in this world. The texts must always be taken in their literal and real sense, he argues, except where that is impossible. The vision of God in the next world is not impossible and it does not necessarily prove His corporeality, and hence if the literal sense were rejected, its consequences would be dangerous and it might ultimately lead to the denial of the existence of God. As God is knowing and doing, for example, without His being a body or accident or without His being limited by time and space, so will He be an object of vision in the next world. Some people were misled because, as they had no experience of seeing what is not a body nor an accident, they compared the vision of God in paradise with the vision of a material object in this world. Thus, the Corporealists (Mujassimīn) erred in saying that God is a body, because He will be seen, and the Mu'tazilites erred in saying that He cannot be seen because He is not a body. Conditions of vision, al-Māturīdī says, differ from stage to stage, person to person, and genus to genus. Many things exist, but we do not see them. Angels who are not corporeal beings see us, though we do not see them. Conditions of seeing: rays of light, darkness, and shadow, are not the same as those of seeing solid material objects. So it is quite unreasonable to apply the conditions of seeing a physical object in this world to the seeing of the Being which is not a body in the next world, where conditions will be totally different from those in this world. Seeing God, therefore, may be impossible in this world, but not in the next world. He also argues that vision may not happen sometimes for some reason or other, although the conditions of vision exist; in the same way, vision may happen in the absence of those conditions. Another argument of his is that, according to our sense-experience, only the knowledge of matter and accidents can be acquired by a man, yet we assert the possibility of acquiring knowledge of the realities beyond experience. This principle is also applicable to beatific vision.

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

Conclusion.—The theological systems of al-Māturīdī and al-Ash'arī have long since been accepted by the general populace of the Muslim world. Though ascribed to them, neither al-Māturīdī nor al-Ash'arī was, in fact, the author

⁵⁰ *Kitāb al-Tauḥīd*, pp. 37–41; *Tāwīlāt*, Sūrah vi. 103; vii, 143; x, 26; lxxv, 22–23

of his system, nor was either of them a pioneer in this field. Imām abu Ḥanīfah (d. 150/767) was the first renowned scholar among the *ahl al-sunnah w-al-jamā'ah*, who studied theology for long before he had taken up the study of *Fiqh*, combated the heretical sects of his time, and founded the first orthodox school in theology.⁵¹ Al-Māturīdī followed his system, explained it in the light of the philosophy of his time, tried to defend it by argument and reason, and this provided for it a firm foundation. Hence this school is ascribed to its founder as well as to its interpreter who fixed its ultimate form and brought victory to it.

The difference between the attitude of al-Māturīdī and of al-Ash'arī may be judged from this: If al-Ash'arī's attempt during the later period was to strike a middle path between rationalism and traditionalism, al-Māturīdī certainly took a position between what may be called Ash'arism and Mu'tazilism. The important points of difference between these two leaders of orthodox *Kalām*, more strictly, between the two schools, have been reckoned by some writers as fifty in number.⁵² (References have already been made in the foregoing pages to some of the most important of them and we need not enter here into a discussion of the rest.) As a result of these differences, there was once a tendency of bitter rivalry between the followers of these two schools but happily in course of time this tendency subsided and both the schools were regarded as orthodox. But how profoundly the educated Muslims of today are influenced by the system of al-Māturīdī may easily be realized from the fact that the *'Aqā'id* of al-Nasafī (d. 537/1142), which gives the substance of the former's *Kitāb al-Tauḥīd*, has been recognized as an authority and prescribed as a text-book on theology in many educational institutions of the Muslim world.

A comparative study of the arguments employed by al-Māturīdī and by the great Ash'arite scholars like 'Abd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī (d. 429/1031) and Imām al-Ḥaramain al-Juwainī (d. 478/1085) to prove the non-eternity of the world, the existence of God, His unity and attributes, the value of human reason, the necessity of the divine revelation, and the prophethood of Muḥammad, will show how deep and enormous his influence was on the orthodox dialecticians who came after him, and what a lasting contribution he made towards the development of orthodox *Kalām*. That *Shāikh* Muḥammad 'Abduh (d. 1323/1905), one of the leaders of the modern reform movement in Islam, in his endeavour to reconstruct Islamic theology, closely followed the system

⁵¹ Al-Baghdādī, *op. cit.*, p. 220; *Uṣūl al-Dīn*, Vol. I, p. 308; al-Makki and Bazzāz, *al-Manāqib*; al-Biyāḍī, *op. cit.*, pp. 19–23. There are five books on theology ascribed to Imām abu Ḥanīfah: *al-Fiqh al-Akbar*, *al-Fiqh al-Absaṭ*, *al-Risālah*, *al-'Ālim w-al-Muta'allim* and *al-Waṣīyyah*. These books, we are convinced, represent the correct views of the Imām.

⁵² Al-Biyāḍī, *op. cit.*, pp. 53–56; *Shāikhzādah*, *Naẓm al-Farā'id*, Cairo, 1317/1899; Sayyid Murtaḍa, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 8 *et seq.*; abu 'Udhbah, *op. cit.*; 'Abd Allah b. 'Uthmān, *Risālah fī al-Khilāf bain al-Ash'ariyyah w-al-Maturidiyyah*. MS. Cairo.

of al-Māturīdī, is evident from his *Risālāt al-Tauḥīd* and his observations on several controversial questions in his note on the *Sharḥ 'Aqā'id al-'Aḍudiyyah*.

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Chapter XIV

ZĀHIRISM

A

BACKGROUND

Since the second/eighth century, an interminable dispute dragged on for a long time between those who upheld the authority of Tradition (*ahl al-ḥadīth*) in all matters of theology and jurisprudence, and those who advocated opinion (*aṣḥāb al-rā'i*).

It was expected, as pointed out by ibn Khaldūn in his *Muqaddimah* (p. 805), that the people of the Hijāz, particularly those of Madīnah, should be versed in the science of Tradition (the sayings and doings of the Prophet Muḥammad). With the rise of the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate and the shifting of the political power and the religious leadership completely to Iraq, where the people had had less access to the sayings of the Prophet, and where the aspects of life, the agrarian problems, for instance, were more diverse and complicated through the intermingling of the successive civilizations since times immemorial, a new school.

that of *opinion*, made its inevitable appearance. The upholders of opinion, however, did not neglect Tradition, but they found it necessary to supplement Tradition with additions drawn from older codes and prevalent usages or framed by considerations of the actual situation in their new environment.

At the same time an esoteric movement also began among the Shī'ites under a variety of names, the most current of which was the Bāṭiniyyah¹ (seekers after the inner or spiritual interpretation of revelation). The forming of this sect is attributed to a certain Maimūn of whose descent we are completely in the dark.

The Bāṭiniyyah movement took its name from the belief of its followers that every *zāhir* (apparent state of things) has a *bāṭin* (an inner, allegorical, hidden, or secret meaning), especially in connection with revelation.² Since this movement adopted some aspects of Greek philosophy, such as emanationism,³ its followers were considered by Sunni authors to be heretics and outside the pale of faith.⁴ During the Caliphate of al-Māmūn (198/813-218/833) the Bāṭiniyyah movement was quite strong;⁵ some half a century later it was widely spread in Iraq, Persia, Sind (western India), and Oman (south-east Arabia), as well as in North Africa, but it did not enjoy an enduring influence.⁶ It is to be remarked, however, that while a number of individuals in Muslim Spain had shared ideas with the Bāṭiniyyah, no sectarian or heretical doctrine ever struck roots or succeeded in winning over communities of any dimensions there.

So, the second/eighth century had witnessed a heavy atmosphere of esoterism weighing on some fundamentals of Islam such as the essence of God, the understanding of the Qur'ān, and the attitude towards the Caliphate. Added to this, there was a trend of upholding *opinion* as a valid source of jurisprudence at the same level with the Qur'ān and the sayings of the Prophet. At the same time there was also the Mu'tazilite school which assumed reason as a more deciding factor than revelation in all matters of religion.

Since all these movements had chosen Iraq as their principal battle-field, another school—contrary to all of them and as extremist as any of them—appeared in Iraq itself and insisted on the verbal understanding of the Qur'ān and of the sayings of the Prophet Muḥammad as the sole guiding line to their real meanings clothed in the words of God and of His Apostle. This school was founded by a jurist Dāwūd ibn 'Alī, and it received its name the Literalists' (Zāhiriyyah) school from the clinging of its followers to the wording of the revelation and not to the interpretation of it.

¹ Shahrastānī, Vol. II, p. 29; cf. p. 5.

² *Ibid.*, p. 29, cf. pp. 31f.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 29f.

⁴ *Farq*, pp. 14, 142; cf. pp. 152, 169, 177, 182, 216; cf. Shahrastānī, Vol. II, pp. 31f.

⁵ *Nubadh*, Introd., p. 4.

⁶ *GAL*, I, p. 194; *Suppl.*, I, p. 312.