Trajectories in the Development of Islamic Theological Thought: the Synthesis of *Kalām*

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Abstract

The field of Islamic theology (*kalām*) is not merely a receptacle for the presentation of the creedal statements and doctrinal catechisms of Islam; it derives its *raison d'être* not only from the articulation and elucidation of the doctrines of faith, but also by means of its rational and painstaking explication of dogma. While many of the dogmatic statements expressed in Islamic theology naturally emanate from a traditional substratum, countless more are the result of dialectical discussions as theologians expounded upon abstract constructs of religious dogma. Recent academic research is exploring the history, trends and conceptual achievements behind the Islamic experiment with theology, providing insights into the tradition's ability to integrate, refine and expand theological constructs. Scholars are also concerned with issues such as origins, authenticity and ascription, although such matters are not deflecting attention from the rich stock of resources and materials *kalām* has to offer.

Defining Kalām

Despite the somewhat pervasive background of the term *kalām* in the classical Islamic tradition, it is in the realm of religious dogma that the term, which literally denotes speech, acquired formal significance, serving as a generic name for the Muslim discipline of theology. The theology associated with *kalām* was not simply a catechism of religious creeds as sourced to scriptural dicta, but it also embodied the rational explication of theological doctrines. It was under the aegis of the *kalām* umbrella that a rich and diverse stock of literature was developed. This included treatises that expounded upon creeds; polemical tracts and epistles; historical surveys of religious movements and sects within the Islamic tradition; and even apologetic treatises dealing with Judaism, Christianity and Zoroastrianism. In the same way that jurisprudence (*fiqh*), Qurʾanic exegesis (*tafsīr*), prophetic traditions (*ḥadīth*), history (*sīra*), grammar and the study of language (*ʿarabiyya*) emerged as autonomous disciplines within the classical Islamic tradition, *ʿilm al-kalām* (the science of dialectics) carved out its own smaller niche among the Islamic traditional sciences. *Kalām* had acquired two inter-related senses: first, in its wider generic sense *kalām* provided a platform for the rational synthesis of the

panoply of religious dogmas and was viewed as being a form of scholastic theology, which was also defined under the rubric *uṣūl al-dīn* (the roots of faith); while, in a more confined sense, it was used to connote a sophisticated dialectical technique based on a form of dialogue that was employed by scholars engaged in theological discussions. Despite the early historical roots of this technique within the Islamic tradition, the broader meaning of the term prevailed with *kalām* becoming synonymous with the discipline of theology. Recent academic research is exploring the history, trends and theoretical achievements behind the Islamic experiment with theology, providing insights into the tradition's ability to integrate, refine and expand theological constructs. Issues such as origins, influences, tensions between traditionalist and rationalist approach to the formulation of dogma, and the consolidation of religious orthodoxy within the Islamic tradition have featured prominently in academic treatments of the subject. Furthermore, the contribution to the synthesis of theological thought made by sects and religious movements outside the traditional confines of orthodoxy is increasingly attracting the attention of researchers, confirming the rich stock of resources and materials the discipline of *kalām* has to offer.

The Early Sources: Authenticity and Ascription

Attempts to examine the historical development of the religious institutions and features of the early Islamic tradition are ultimately beset by meth-odological arguments regarding the authenticity of the earliest available materials. The problem is not restricted to the field of theology but extends across the gamut of the early Islamic sciences. Modern scholarship tends to take the view that while the classical sources reveal much that is pertinent to an understanding of the history of Islam, the tradition's portrayal of its past is not necessarily furnishing historical fact but rather projecting an idealistic impression of its own emergence. Two broad approaches to the sources have been recently summarised by Herbert Berg: notwithstanding a continuum in the compass of approaches, the first of these tends to argue that it is possible using a distinct measure of critical analysis to discern conclusive historical facts in the corpus of early material and use these to present a fairly accurate depiction of the early Islamic tradition.[1] Conversely, a second camp takes the view that the vast corpus of material purported to represent the scholarship and religious ideals of the first two centuries of the Islamic tradition is the insidious product of salvation history and projection; the sources were a subjective quest for the religious import of Islam by early Muslim scholars inspired yet separated from the emergence of this faith by decades of history.[2] This view postulates that the finely developed practices and doctrines that are attributed to the founding fathers of the Islamic tradition are essentially the conscious creation of later generations of faithful adherents.

It is not difficult to appreciate the extent to which such methodological differences and approaches impinge upon attempts to unravel the history

and development of *kalām*. A large number of the texts and treatises that are attributed to luminaries from the early Islamic tradition are usually recovered and quoted in sources from subsequent chronological periods. Many of the earliest texts are assumed to be pseudepigraphic in origin. Indeed, in general as far as the first two centuries of the tradition are concerned, there seldom exists full and original manuscript evidence from the actual period in which the writer of a text is believed to have lived.[3] This does not necessarily prove that purportedly early texts were the products of fabrication, but it underlines some of the problems faced when dating these materials and the originality of the ideas they comprise. The modes of oral and written transmission perfected by classical Muslim scholarship are rather sophisticated; and scholars from within the tradition were clearly aware of accepted conventions and the variety of safeguards applied in the transmission of texts.[4] Nevertheless, the fact that projection and ascription might be used to furnish theological ideas with historical depth and aspect explains why 'sceptical' academic scholarship adopts a rather negative attitude towards attempts to reconstruct the early history of theology and many of the other traditions of Islam.

Early Theological Constructs

Among the developed theological themes particular salient in early Islamic thought are the topics of postponement (*irjāʾ*) and predestination (*qadar*). Classical Arabic sources intimate that the theoretical discourse that developed around these issues ultimately has its origin in the political disputes concerning the issue of leadership of the community. The concept of *irjāʾ* was developed as a result of polemical discussions on the subject of the status of sinners in Islam. Following the civil war of Ṣiffīn (35/657 CE) between the fourth caliph ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (d. 40/661 CE) and his rival Muʿāwiya ibn Abī Sufyān (d. 60/680 CE), disagreements arose regarding ʿAlī's decision to accept arbitration. It was viewed by some as being an act of apostasy, rendering him a grave sinner.[5] The formulation of the concept of *irjāʾ* was one way of attenuating the theological sensitivities of the debate for it stressed that judgement on such issues should be deferred to God. Advocates of this concept were referred to as Murjiʾites; while those who equated grave sins with disbelief and apostasy earned notoriety as the Khārijites, a radical movement that developed doctrines commensurate with its puritanical outlook. A political nexus is also identified in the theoretical debates surrounding the doctrine of predestination. At stake was the religious legitimacy of Umayyad rule, which was established by Muʿāwiya in 41/661 CE in the aftermath of the events at Ṣiffīn. However, issues such as free will, responsibility and the theodicy were later woven into the texture of arguments on the subject.[6] Individuals who defended the ideas of free will and responsibility were referred to as Qadarites or *ahl al-qadar*; many of them were political opponents of the Umayyads.[7] Modern scholarship tends to

see the Qadarites as being precursors to the rational theological movement of the second/seventh century CE, whose adherents were known as Muʿtazilites. They placed reason at the heart of their interpretation of religious dogma, and played a significant role in the development of speculative *kalām*.

An eminent academic authority on Islamic theology, Joseph van Ess, produced a number of critical editions of theological texts, which, despite being ascribed to luminaries of the early Islamic tradition, were actually collated from sources of a much later provenance. These included treatises on the doctrines of postponement (*irjāʾ*) and predestination (*qadar*). Van Ess was seeking to explore the historical development of *kalām* together with the ideas and movements that contributed to this discipline. He also wanted to probe the origin of the dialectical technique employed by Muslim theologians. According to van Ess, the technique centred on a presupposed dialogue with an opponent in which a defined question is presented in order to flesh out a particular doctrine or idea. The attendant response to this hypothetical question would then prompt a further series of questions and answers until an opponent 'is forced to admit a consequence which contradicts his own thesis', ultimately reducing him to silence; later *kalām* literature is replete with examples of this discourse.[8] Van Ess was convinced that Christian influences had exercised a key role in the inception of *kalām* and that converts from Christianity had served as conduits for the transmission of dialectical methods. Previous research by Carl Heinrich Becker had claimed that intense religious disputation among Christians and Muslims had provided a pivotal locus for the infusion of the *kalām* technique, with the latter having to master this vital polemical instrument. Becker additionally argued that Christian polemics had an impact upon Islamic theological thought.[9]

One of the early tracts examined by van Ess was ascribed to al-Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafiyya (d. 100/718 CE). It was preserved in the writings of al-Hādī ilaʾl-Ḥaqq Yaḥyā ibn al-Ḥusayn (d. 298/911 CE), a prominent Zaydite luminary. The Zaydites are traditionally viewed as representing a moderate Shīʿite movement. The Shīʿites were supporters of the third caliph ʿAlī. They contended that leadership of the community was a divinely conferred right that belonged to ʿAlī and a specified number of his direct descendants; it became an important tenet of Shīʿism. Among these Shīʿite groups those who recognised the authority and succession of twelve leaders (*imāms*) were called twelvers; while those who acknowledged seven designated *imāms* were subsequently identified as the Ismāʿīlīs.[10] The text ascribed to al-Ḥasan dealt with questions against the Qadarites.[11] Based on his review of these texts, van Ess drew a number of broad conclusions about the development of Islamic theology. Among these was the view that nascent theological ideas were often predisposed to later perceptions of orthodoxy and that a familiarity with the dialectical technique of *kalām* was evident in these early tracts.[12] Van Ess was convinced that there did exist

written literature in the first century of Islam. Most significantly, van Ess dismissed the idea that the first systematic and rational theologians of Islam, the Muʿtazilites, had actually pioneered this dialectical technique. He was likewise surprised to find that the Ḥijāzī milieu, the geographical homeland of the Islamic tradition, which was traditionally seen as a bastion of orthodoxy and traditionalism, had provided the setting in which the innovative methods of dialectical discourse were developed. Previously, cosmopolitan centres in Iraq and Syria were seen as strategic *loci* for the diffusion of Judeo–Christian thought into the Islamic tradition. Van Ess remarked that the concept of *irjāʾ*, as explored in al-Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafiyya's text, was aimed at reining in radical Shīʿite movements.[13] He added that it also gave birth to the quietist religious movement of the Murjiʾites.[14]

Van Ess's analysis of these early *kalām* sources was the subject of two separate studies by Michael Cook. In a brief but incisive article, Cook disputed van Ess's dating of the so-called tract against the *qadariyya*, suggesting that the *kalām* technique, which was primitively employed in al-Ḥasan's text, may well have been based on Syriac prototypes.[15] Cook was making the point that attempts to resolve the issue of the origins and development of *kalām* required a much more extensive corpus of primary sources than hitherto available. Cook returned to the issue of dating these theological works in a separate in-depth critical monograph.[16] The treatises and tracts upon which van Ess had relied were believed by Cook to be pseudepigraphic in origin. He argued that these texts should have been sourced to the late Umayyad period (*ca*. 133/750 CE). Van Ess's dating of the texts implied that there existed an acute perception of critical theological issues at early stages within the Islamic tradition; accordingly, an awareness of notions germane to those discussed in these tracts must have naturally predated the texts in question, implying a greater historical depth to the whole Islamic theological tradition.[17] However, if one were to subscribe to the view that these tracts were the products of deliberate projection then the historical value of such texts is somewhat compromised.

The impact of arguments regarding ascription and the so-called pseudepi-graphic origin of materials is evident in discussions regarding the authenticity of a theological epistle ascribed to the mystic and luminary al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728 CE). He is said have to have composed this epistle, entitled *al-Risāla fiʾl-qadar*, in response to a question from the Umayyad caliph ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Marwān (d. 86/705 CE).[18] Al-Ḥasan offered an intrepid refutation of predestination, using verses from the Qurʾan to place distance between God and the existence of evil. He concluded that man is a free agent responsible for his deeds, a theological position adopted among Qadarites and later Muʿtazilites. Consequently, it led to the supposition that such deeds were not subject to God's sovereign will. Orthodoxy felt that from a conceptual perspective this interpretation of free will undermined the reality of God's omnipotence.[19] Verses of the Qurʾan could be adduced

to support both deterministic and libertarian positions. By implication, the thoughts expressed in this epistle suggest that its author, al–Ḥasan al–Baṣrī, was actually a Qadarite, a view contested by Sunnī theologians. The Sunnites or *ahl-al-Sunna* represent the principal religious denomination within the Islamic tradition and are divided along theological lines into several camps: the staunch traditionists (*ahl-al-ḥadīth*); the Ashʿarites and the Māturīdites.[20] The doctrine of predestination was endorsed as one of the standards of Sunnī orthodoxy. A number of key figures mentioned in the sources as having espoused libertarian doctrines are linked with al–Ḥasan: these include Maʿbad al–Juhanī (d. 80/699 CE) and Ghaylān al–Dimashqī (d. 125/743 CE), both of whom were executed for insurrection by the Umayyads. Classical Arabic biographical literature does mention that al–Ḥasan had been a Qadarite, although he is said to have relinquished this conviction. The author of the doxography of religious sects and movements al–Shahrastānī (d. 548/1153 CE) maintained that given the epistle's contents, it was inconceivable that al–Ḥasan could have been its author. Muʿtazilite literature accentuated al–Ḥasan's links with this epistle as they claimed him as one of their founding fathers.

The *Risālā fī'l-qadar*, like Ibn al–Ḥanafiyya's tracts was quoted from a later source, namely, a biographical dictionary extolling the virtues of the Muʿtazilites (*Faḍl al-Iʿtizāl wa Ṭabaqāt al-Muʿtazila*) by the fourth/tenth century Muʿtazilite theologian ʿAbd al–Jabbār (d. 415/1024 CE). It was also cited in a number of versions in the *Ḥilyat al-awliyāʾ*, a biographical dictionary of Sufi luminaries composed by Abū Nuʿaym al–Iṣfahānī (d. 430/1038 CE). Van Ess accepted the authenticity of this text, circumscribing it to the following periods 75–80/694–699 CE, although he later conceded that a slightly later date for the text was possible. He reasoned that the noticeable absence of references to prophetic traditions (*ḥadīth*), which were frequently adduced in later literature to endorse the doctrine of predestination, confirmed the early provenance of this epistle. The reasoning is that these traditions were fabricated much later by orthodox scholars keen to defend the doctrine of predestination. It is claimed that at the time of al–Ḥasan such traditions were not yet in circulation; otherwise, the epistle would have taken the opportunity to refute them.[21] Scholars such as Helmut Ritter, Julian Obermann and Michael Schwarz all accepted the text's authenticity and spoke of the originality of its ideas.[22] John Wansbrough concluded that the text emanated from the late second (eighth) century. He reasoned that the conspicuous absence of prophetic traditions was due to the text being prefigured to address the debate within Islam about the authority of sources: *uṣūl*. The epistle was essentially about accentuating the independent authority of the Qurʾan to the exclusion of the prophetic traditions; in Wansbrough's estimation, by design, the epistle would not have comprised prophetic traditions and therefore their absence should not be used to buttress arguments for the text's early origins.

An examination of the epistle was included in Cook's monograph.[23] In his opinion the text was pseudepigraphic in origin: it belonged to the late Umayyad period. More recently the epistle's authenticity has been the subject of an extended study by Suleiman Mourad. This study raises once more the historical value of the early Islamic sources and the materials they comprise.[24] Mourad claimed that the style, language and composition of the epistle betrayed its late provenance. He believed that the text reflected theological debates of the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries CE, floating the idea that the aforementioned Mu'tazilite theologian, 'Abd al-Jabbār, might have been responsible for forging its authorship.[25]

The contrasting conclusions reached by scholars studying the same stock of materials, but using dissimilar methods and approaches, illustrated to Cook 'the indefinite tolerance of the source-material for radically different historical interpretations'.[26] Indeed, resolving the issue of the origins and early nature of *kalām* remains a seemingly elusive endeavour. Van Ess's contributions to this academic endeavour have been immense: his critical editions and commentaries of early materials serve as indispensable resources for researchers in the field.[27] Through his studies our historical appreciation of the early and classical religious movements has certainly been enhanced. And, they have also provoked further debate: Cook suggested qualifying van Ess's quietist classification of the early Murji'ites. Indeed, a further review by Khalil Athamina has proposed that the movement had both radical as well as quietist elements. Interestingly, the use of projection is a theme explored in Stephen Judd's study of Ghaylān al-Dimashqī, who was legendary for his support of libertarian doctrines in these early periods; such studies paradoxically confirm that the early debates about *qadar* do have a historical reality.[28] Other scholars have questioned van Ess's views on the political and religious implications of the doctrine of *qadar*.[29] Of course, for the historian of *kalām* the question is whether the polarisation of sects and religious movements had really materialised at such early junctures in the tradition; or, is it the case that classical accounts of this period are contrived to present a somewhat rarefied view of the past. Nevertheless, while it would be an amplification to state that methodological concerns about origins are driving debates in the field of *kalām*, they continue to impinge upon discussions germane to the early development of theology and also retain their currency in later contexts of its history.

TOWARDS THE CONSOLIDATION OF ISLAMIC THEOLOGY: LATER STAGES IN THE HISTORY OF *KALĀM*

An examination of the contents of typical theological *summae* from the formative periods of the Islamic tradition shows that the thematic compass of *kalām* had considerably expanded. Along with the synthesis of earlier topics such as the status of sinners, leadership of the community, it is the case that subjects such as atomism, causality, occasionalism, the inimitability of the Qur'an, the theodicy, intercession, prophetic miracles, and moral

obligation were also being fleshed out in these works. The account of the theological doctrines of the sects and movements of early Islam, entitled *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn*, which was composed by the eponym of Ashʿarism, Abū'l-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī (260–324/873–935 CE) confirms that theological discourse had reached impressive levels of sophistication. Later works such as the *Kitāb al-Tamhīd* (*the Book of Preliminaries*) by the Ashʿarite theologian al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1013 CE) broached many of the theological questions in a dialectical framework with the arguments and theoretical postulates of adversaries being subjected to criticism and review. The synergy of ideas and perspectives sustained theological discourse over ensuing centuries with early works being the subject of commentaries, expositions, and even refutations.[30]

The contribution made by Muʿtazilite theologians to the synthesis of speculative theological thought has featured prominently in academic treatments of *kalām*. Van Ess once remarked that the history of Islamic theology during the second and third centuries (eighth and nineth centuries CE) is essentially a history of Muʿtazilism.[31] The Muʿtazilites labelled themselves the upholders of 'divine unity and justice': the former related to their understanding of the concept of God's absolute transcendence, while the latter was linked to their trenchant rejection of orthodoxy's rigid doctrine of predestination. There has been a tendency among researchers to restrict the religious and political ascendancy of the Muʿtazilites to the early years of ʿAbbāsid rule (133–236/750–850 CE). However, more recently, Daniel Gimaret has shown that the movement's influence was chronologically more widespread.[32] He stressed the point that the feature of this early period is the existence of an 'extreme diversity of people and doctrines'.[33] Thus, one notes that Ḍirār ibn ʿAmr (d. 200/815 CE), the author of a work on the Aristotelian concept of accidents and substances, advocated the view that human acts were created by God, an idea fervently rejected among Muʿtazilite theologians.[34] An accomplished proponent of early Muʿtazilite *kalām*, al-Naẓẓām (d. 220/835 or 230/845 CE), rejected the theory of atomism elaborated by figures such as Abū'l-Hudhayl (d. 226/840–841 CE); this latter figure's concept of *al-aṣlaḥ* (the idea that God was compelled to do his best for man) was contested by Bishr ibn al-Muʿtamir (d. 210/825 CE or 226/840 CE).[35]

One recent study of the historical roots of Muʿtazilism by Sarah Stroumsa has challenged classical as well as modern views of this movement's emergence. Traditional sources posit the rise of theology within the vector of politically inspired phenomena; and modern scholarship had tended to concur with that appraisal.[36] However, Stroumsa described modern scholarship's portrayal of early Muʿtazilite history as being 'speculative reconstructions' due to the tendentious nature of the original sources. Referring to the semantic significance of the term Muʿtazila, she noted that the word originally conjured up connotations of religious asceticism and isolation, a point previously made by Ignaz Goldziher.[37] Stroumsa accepted

that Wāṣil ibn ʿAṭāʾ (80–131/699–749 CE) was the founder of Muʿtazilite *kalām*, and that he was a prolific writer who engaged in disputations with members of other faiths, a point readily recorded in the classical doxographies.[38] It is in this context that another scholar, Shlomo Pines, spoke of the role of itinerant *mutakallimūn* (lit. those who engage in discourse) sent by Wāṣil as missionaries to various parts of the regions over which Islam had gained political hegemony.[39] These individuals engaged in disputations with Buddhist and Brahmin adversaries, employing 'intuitive and discursive' reasoning in their debates.[40] Pines felt that their role as propagandists for the state was paramount and that they were often in competition with traditional scholars such as jurists and traditionists.[41] Stroumsa reasoned that such individuals were also grappling with theological arguments presented by Jewish, Christian, Manichean and Zoroastrian adversaries. It was through this interaction and contact that *kalām* flourished as the movement 'propagated its theological ideas'.[42] Stroumsa concluded that the tendency to view the emergence of the Muʿtazilites in purely political terms was erroneous.[43] Studies of this nature demonstrate the extent to which sensitivities towards the design of classical sources continue to impact upon debates concerning the early development of *kalām*, although the sum and substance of theological thought lies in its elaboration of a rational schema for the defence of religious doctrines.

The impact of Greek philosophical abstraction upon the modes of argumentation developed by Muʿtazilite theologians is assumed to be axiomatic in many of the academic treatments of this movement.[44] Van Ess made the point that key thinkers and contributors to Muʿtazilite thought such as al-Naẓẓām actually refined their ideas when most Greek texts were not yet available in Arabic, although van Ess sees the infiltration of thought being exercised via secondary channels such as Iranian influences.[45] The tendency among researchers to look for exterior sources in the development of *kalām* relates not only to issues such as the origin of the dialectical technique and early theological constructs, but also to later doctrinal discussions. Harry Wolfson's key study of *kalām* identifies Christian theological discussions at the heart of some of the principal debates in Islamic theological thought.[46] He suggested that discussions initiated by theologians on the nature of the divine attributes plainly had a Christian nexus and were prefigured by deliberations between Muslim and Christians on the doctrine of Trinity. Shlomo Pines also spoke of the influence of Christian theology, particularly the philosophy of John Philoponus (d. 500 CE), who was the author of a work refuting the Aristotelian concept of the world's eternity.[47] The subject of external influences has proved to be a useful means of explaining the conceptual complexity of the ideas explored in Muslim theological thought, although like the issues of origins, authenticity and ascription, it can seemingly deflect attention from the intrinsic value of the constructs and ideas expounded upon in the sources.

The theological thought of ʿAbd al-Jabbār has formed the focus of a number of major studies. Through his literary legacy, scholars are now gaining a greater awareness of the early stages of Muʿtazilite thought and theoretical trends in later expressions of Muʿtazilism. This is mainly due to the fact that his extant works provided researchers with a wealth of original Muʿtazilite sources. Studies on ʿAbd al-Jabbār range from George Hourani's work on his approach to ethics, to J. R. Peters' influential examination of his articulation of the concept of God's created speech. More recently ʿAbd al-Jabbār's theological treatment of suffering and divine justice has been reviewed in a monograph by Margaretha Heemskerk.[48] The thought of other prominent Muʿtazilite thinkers has also been the focus of a number of studies. Abūʾl-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī (d. 436/1044), a pivotal figure from the classical period, has been the subject of a recent work by Wilferd Madelung and Sabine Schmidtke assessing the influence of his thought among the Karaites.[49] Schmidtke, along with David Sklare, recently founded the Muʿtazilite Manuscripts Project Group. Among the profusion of recent research endeavours on associated aspects of Muʿtazilite theological thought is the important review of the relationship between Muʿtazilism and Sufism by Florian Sobieroj; Sabine Schmidtke's study of the influential Shīʿite theologian, al-ʿAllāma al-Ḥillī (d. 726/1325) and the links between Muʿtazilism and Shīʿism; Dhanani Noor's monograph on atoms and space in Muʿtazilite thought; and, Peter Adamson's examination of the impact of Muʿtazilite ideas on the philosopher al-Kindī (d. 256/870).[50]

From a wider perspective the works of scholars such as Montgomery Watt, Wilferd Madelung, Richard Frank, Etan Kohlberg, Hans Daiber, Majid Fakhry, Michel Allard, Louis Gardet, Georges Anawati, Heinz Hälm and Daniel Gimaret among many others, continue to serve as important contributions to the academic study of the many strands of thought within the early and classical Islamic tradition of theology.[51] Such endeavours have been supplemented by recent works, including Tilman Nagel's historical survey of Islamic theology; Patricia Crone and Franz Zimmerman's critical edition and translation of the manuscript ascribed to the Khārijite Sālim ibn Dhakwān; Andrew Newman's examination of the formative period of Twelver Shīʿism; Cornelia Schöck's inspired study of the conceptual intersection linking Peripatetic logic, *kalām* and Qurʾanic exegesis; and, Asma Afsaruddin's in-depth work on the theological dynamics of leadership in the early Islamic community.[52] Ismāʿīlī theological thought has been the focus of a number of significant studies, including Farhad Daftary's historical survey of this movement and Paul Walker's monographs on the thought of a number of its influential luminaries.[53] The Māturīdite school of theology together with its eponym, Abūʾl-Manṣūr al-Māturīdī (d. 333/944 CE), has yet to attract the sort of sustained attention that their rich theological heritage merits.[54] It is worth noting that the polemical debates and discussions between Muslim and Christian theologians together with their impact upon the features of Christian theological discourse have recently been the subject of

a number of discerning studies, including David Thomas's *Early Muslim Polemic against Christianity*.[55] Such works underline the extensive coverage and conceptual range of the discipline of *kalām*.

While academic surveys of early theological thought can often be overwhelmed by arguments germane to authenticity and ascription, it is interesting to note that even in instances when such concerns do not arise, sharp disagreements regarding issues of interpretation can often surface. The historical episode of the *miḥna* (inquistion) is an excellent case in point. The *miḥna* was imposed by the ʿAbbāsid caliph al-Maʾmūn (ruled 198–218/813–833 CE) in 198/833 CE on the advice of leading Muʿtazilite theologians, who wanted the doctrine of a created Qurʾan imposed upon the class of learned scholars. The reason for the imposition of this doctrine has divided academic judgements. The orthodox champion of the *miḥna* was the Sunnite scholar Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (164–241/780–855 CE). He along with a number of scholars refused to subscribe to the doctrine of the Qurʾan's createdness, arguing that there was nothing in the scriptural sources to substantiate this doctrine. On the instructions of the caliph al-Maʾmūn, Ibn Ḥanbal was imprisoned and eventually flogged. Despite the death of al-Maʾmūn, the *miḥna* was continued during the successive caliphates of al-Muʿtaṣim (ruled 218–227/833–842 CE) and al-Wāthiq (ruled 227–232/842–847 CE), before being rescinded by al-Mutawakkil in 232/847 CE.

Madelung produced a compelling study of the doctrine of a created Qurʾan. He argued that the idea was advocated in order to uphold the rationalist concept of God's transcendence. The Muʿtazilite reasoning was that if the Qurʾan were construed as being the literal speech of God, it would imply that God possessed a physical organ with which he articulated words. By speaking of the Qurʾan as a created document such an understanding was obviated.[56] Madelung stated that the caliph was not the main instigator of this policy, but rather jurists at his court were behind its inception. On the other hand, Montgomery Watt reasoned that al-Maʾmūn's motive was essentially political.[57] He remarked that by supporting the view that the Qurʾan was created, the text's legal power was somewhat diminished, giving greater authority to the caliph. One could argue that there is no evidence to suggest that any of the policies or legislation pursued by Maʾmūn were in need of such a doctrine; ultimately, in Watt's view, Sunnism emerged triumphant as a result of the failure of the *miḥna*. Martin Hinds concluded that the *miḥna* was simply about the authority of the caliphate and the role of caliphs as interpreters of the faith, suggesting that Muʿtazilite interests coincided with those of the state.[58] In Hinds' estimation the episode of the *miḥna* was important because the caliphate lost the religious authority it had aspired to hold. Michael Cooperson turned his attention to the importance of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal throughout this affair. He made the case that classical Arabic biography was later used to enhance the religious profile and status

of this figure. Van Ess had argued that Ibn Ḥanbal capitulated under torture; Ibn Ḥanbal was released from jail while other scholars remained incarcerated until the reign of al–Mutawakkil in 233/847 CE.[59] Intriguingly, Cooperson has recently acknowledged that it is also plausible that Aḥmad was released without capitulating. Nimrod Hurvitz described the *miḥna* as an act of self-defence on the part of the rational theologians (*mutakallimūn*).[60] He rejected Sunnī accounts of this affair, arguing they were manipulated to promote the standing of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal. Hurvitz presented the view that the *miḥna* was about the *mutakallimūn* responding to years of intimidation directed at them by the traditionists (*ahl-al-ḥadīth*).[61] Patricia Crone has expressed the view that the imposition of this doctrine should not be construed as an attempt to impose Muʿtazilite theology.[62] Some of these earlier treatments of the *miḥna* have been reviewed in John Nawas's study of this episode.[63]

The striking feature of academic studies of the *miḥna* is that they have not only stimulated debates about the historical consolidation of Sunnī orthodoxy within the early Islamic tradition, they have also brought into relief the question of political and religious authority within the ʿAbbāsid caliphate. Among academics the event of the *miḥna* has served as an analogue for establishing trends towards homogeneity and standardisation within the Islamic tradition. One scholar has even described it as a landmark in the triumph of traditionalism over rationalism.[64] Nonetheless, it is also true that the failure of the policy of the *miḥna* by no means presaged the waning of Muʿtazilite thought. It is becoming evident to researchers that Muʿtazilism provoked a far greater sense of purpose in orthodoxy's formulation of theological constructs to counter its philosophy; yet, ironically, this was achieved by espousing the rational methodology devised by orthodoxy's opponents. Whatever the nature of the disagreements about the design of the *miḥna*, it has to be viewed as an important milestone in the history of *kalām*. The sharp differences in academic opinion on the subject would seem to substantiate Michael Cook's comments, which were cited earlier, regarding 'the indefinite tolerance of the source–material for radically different historical interpretations'.[65] They are likewise common in related studies of the Muslim experiment with scholastic theology: namely, the advent of the Ashʿarite theologians and modern scholarship's appreciation of their role in its refinement.

ASHʿARISM AND ORTHODOX *KALĀM*

The brand of scholastic theology cultivated by the Ashʿarite theologians represents an important chapter in the flourishing of *kalām*. The school's eponym, Abūʾl-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī, had originally been famed for his association with the Muʿtazilites. He had been a student of one of their leading luminaries, Abū ʿAlī al-Jubbāʾī (d. 303/915 CE). Yet, at some point in his life, al–Ashʿarī renounced Muʿtazilism, dissipating considerable intellectual energies in refuting the theological theses of this school.[66] One prominent

academic who was particularly interested in attitudes towards rational theology within orthodox Islam, George Makdisi, passionately argued that the seemingly close association between orthodoxy and Ashʿarism was unduly accentuated in the history of Islamic theology. Makdisi emphasised that the brand of scholastic *kalām* championed by Ashʿarism was never fully accepted within classical Sunni orthodoxy.[67] He claimed that opposition to Ashʿarism's rational methodology was vented among individuals of a stern religiosity who questioned the efficacy of the science of *kalām*, viewing it as being an abject exercise in casuistry. Classical Sunnī schools of jurisprudence including the Shāfiʿites, the Mālikites and the Ḥanafites were nominally affiliated to theological schools of thought. A number of prominent Shāfiʿite and Mālikite jurists were linked with Ashʿarism; while Ḥanafites were predominantly Māturīdite.

The Ḥanbalites remained staunch traditionists who generally opposed the rational methods associated with the discipline of *kalām*.[68] They and indeed the *ahl al-ḥadīth* promoted the championing of more popular forms of orthodoxy. These were deemed to be rid of the sophistic tendencies of the rational theologians; many of them encouraged the formulation of creedal statements as a vehicle for the expression of dogma.[69] Makdisi asserted that al–Ashʿarī was no advocate of the variety of theology that later prevailed within the school, alleging that his students and their disciples were the true authors of this brand of scholastic thought. Ḥanbalite and indeed traditionist scholars considered Ashʿarism to be a form of Muʿtazilism masquerading as orthodoxy. Makdisi's mentor was the scholar Henri Laoust, who was the author of several discerning studies of classical Ḥanbalite thought.

Makdisi's thesis was criticised by a respected academic authority on Ashʿarism and classical Islamic theology, Richard Frank.[70] He contended that the extant works authored by al–Ashʿarī display theological leanings that were generally commensurate with the doctrinal positions taken by later theologians of the school. Makdisi had alleged that several of the works ascribed to al–Ashʿarī were products of the preconversion period and reflected a predisposition to Muʿtazilite inspired precepts; the issue seemingly turned on the question of ascription. Frank retorted that there existed texts which were composed by Ashʿarī after his 'conversion' reflecting the same rational outlook. Certainly, the works of early luminaries of the Ashʿarite school such as the *Mujarrad Maqālāt al-shaykh Abīʾl-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī* (the *Essential Theological Doctrines of Abūʾl-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī*), composed by Ibn Fūrak (348–406/941–1015 CE), were predicated on their epitomising the irrefutable theological teachings of al-Ashʿarī.[71] The fascinating aspect of the arguments about the position of Ashʿarism within the citadel of Sunnism is that the perceived theological antithesis with the Ḥanbalites was not solely based on the latter's ambivalence towards the methodology of scholastic and dialectical theology. The Ḥanbalites rejected the basic doctrines and theses that this rational schema of thought engendered. Although, as Frank argued, Ashʿarī had condemned aggressive and contentious dialectic debate based on the

assumption that human reason is the original and primary source of theological knowledge and arbiter of truth, he did allow formal *kalām* to play a role in the defence of orthodoxy.[72] Makdisi's arguments about Ashʿarism are important because he identified links between scholastic theological literature and juridical works that expounded upon the roots of Islamic law; the Ashʿarite contribution to both these genres is immense. It is worth mentioning that in a related research effort, Frank provoked debate for his suggestion that the accepted commitment of Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 555/1111) to Ashʿarite theology was 'tenuous in the extreme'.[73] He identified doctrinal inconsistencies found in al-Ghazālī's works such as his position on causality, occasionalism, and the metaphysics of resurrection, claiming that obfuscation and vagueness marked al-Ghazālī's relationship with the Ashʿarite school.[74] Frank speculated that there existed a higher level of theological understanding that defined Ghazālī's position.[75] Referring to arguments outlined by Frank, Michael Marmura and Toby Mayer both produced studies that demonstrated that al-Ghazālī's commitment to Ashʿarism was unquestionable, refuting Frank's interpretation of the sources.[76] Conflicting conclusions of this nature confirm the conceptual complexity and sophistication of the original sources. They also reveal the wide range of approaches, methodologies and interests applied in their interpretation, confirming the extent to which disagreements relating to ascription, projection and interpretation have combined to affect studies of this school's importance. However, debates of this nature are important for gauging tensions between traditionalist and rationalist approaches to the synthesis of dogma.

The rich legacy of *kalām* spans across a wide stretch of Islamic history. Contributions to its discourse were made from a diverse range of perspectives and outlooks. Some indication of the fecundity of its thought is reflected in the observation that theological discourse of the post-sixth/twelveth centuries CE is finer in its conceptual sophistication and theoretical dexterity than the preceding periods of its history.[77] The theoretical discussions that pervade the works of scholars such as Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1209), Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī (d. 630/1233), Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328), al-ʿAllāma al-Ḥillī (d. 726/1325), and al-Taftāzānī (722–791/1322–1389) could be highlighted to substantiate such remarks. Current scholarship is therefore only beginning to tap into *kalām*'s rich reservoir of materials. Van Ess once remarked in 1973 that Islamic studies 'are one century behind Latin medieval studies'.[78] In what is quite clearly a moderate estimate, he added that there exists around two million Arabic or Persian manuscripts in the world; and that there were 'some 500,000 in Istanbul alone'. He stated that only a very small portion of these has been printed. Western academic studies in fields such as Islamic theology have naturally progressed since these remarks were made. Of course, one must bear in mind that the recent academic endeavour of the Arabic and Islamic world in the field of theology and the related Islamic sciences is immense: notwithstanding the numerous critical editions of theological

manuscripts, there exists a profusion of texts, theses and dissertations devoted to all aspects of theology. Yet, such sources are hardly given the Western academic attention they clearly warrant. Despite the many academic achievements made in the study of *kalām*, the quest to comprehend, encompass and appreciate the Muslim experiment with theology still remains quite a challenging endeavour.

Short Biography

Mustafa Shah is a lecturer in the Near and Middle East Department at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), London University, where he completed both his BA and PhD degrees in the field of Arabic linguistics and Islamic Studies respectively. He is also an affiliate of the Centre of Islamic Studies (SOAS), which has been host to number of major conferences on the Qurʾan and the classical Islamic tradition. His principal research and teaching interests include early Arabic linguistic thought; classical Islamic theology and jurisprudence; and Qurʾanic hermeneutics and exegesis. He has published articles on these subjects including: 'The Early Arabic Grammarians' Contributions to the Collection and Authentication of Qurʾanic Readings: The Prelude to Ibn Mujāhid's *Kitāb al-Sabʿa*', *Journal of Qurʾanic Studies* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004); and 'The Quest for the Origins of the Qurrāʾ in the Classical Islamic Tradition', *Journal of Qurʾanic Studies* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005). More recently, as well as contributing to various projects such as *The Islamic World* (ed.), Andrew Rippin. (Routledge); and the *Encyclopaedia of Arabic Language and Linguistics* (ed.), Kees Versteegh, vol. IV (Leiden: E. J. Brill). He is also working on a number of monographs including, *Religious Dogma and the Synthesis of Early Arabic Linguistic Thought*, Library of Arabic Linguistics Series (London: Kegan Paul International, 2008) and *Classical Interpretations of the Qurʾan* (London: I. B. Taurus, 2008). And he will also be editing the recently commissioned IB Taurus Biographical Dictionary of Islamic Civilization and Cultures.

Notes

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[1] Herbert Berg. (ed.), *Method and Theory in the Study of Islamic Origins* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2003), p. 261, footnote 4.
[2] Herbert Berg. (ed.), *Method and Theory*, pp. 260–2.
[3] See Ella Landau-Tasseron, 'On the Reconstruction of Lost Sources', *Al-Qanṭara* (2004:25), pp. 45–91 and Lawrence Conrad, 'Recovering Lost Texts: Some Methodological Issues', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* (1993:113:2), pp. 258–63. And, Herbert Berg, (ed.), *Method and Theory*, pp. 284–6.
[4] See Gregor Schoeler. *The Oral and the Written in Early Islam*. Translated by Uwe Vagelpohl, edited by James E. Montgomery. Routledge Studies in Middle Eastern Literatures (London: Routledge, 2006).

[5] ʿAlī led an army into Syria and clashed with the latter's supporters at a place called Ṣiffīn near Raqqa in 657 CE.

[6] The issue of arbitration was never satisfactorily resolved. Despite being succeeded by his son al-Ḥasan for a short interval, the balance of power shifted towards Muʿāwiya, ushering in the period of Umayyad rule (661–750 CE). He later nominated his son Yazīd as his successor. His son's rule was marked by a set of catastrophic events: the murder of ʿAlī's son al-Ḥusayn, who challenged Yazīd's political authority; the sacking of Medina; the *de facto* establishment of an anticaliphate led by ʿAbd Allāh ibn Zubayr in the geographical region known as al-Ḥijāz; and the siege of the Meccan sanctuary. Events of this nature served as the backdrop for an applied theological discourse as the religious movements and sects that emerged from the imbroglio attempted to defend, define and elucidate their positions.

[7] Proponents of free will were referred to as *ahl al-qadar* or Qadarites, although they are not, as the designation literally implies, 'proponents of predestination'. Indeed, those assigned this label protested that it was unsuitable, given their position on this doctrine; the term *qadar* connotes power.

[8] Joseph Van Ess. 'The Early Development of *Kalām*', in *Studies on the First Century of Islamic Society* (ed.), G. H. A. Juynboll (Carbondale and Edwardsville, 1982), pp. 109–23. See also pp. 110–1; Van Ess cited further evidence of the presence of the *kalām* technique in Khārijite sources which he dated to the first Islamic century. Joseph Van Ess, 1970, 'The Logical Structure of Islamic Theology', in GE Grunebaum (ed.), *Logic in Classical Islamic Culture*, pp. 21–50, Giorgio Levi Vida Biennial Conference; 1977, *Anfänge muslimischer Theologie. Zwei antiqadaritische Trakate – aus dem ersten Jahrhundert der Higra* (Beiruter Texte und Studien, 14), Franz Steiner (Beirut-Wiesbaden); 1990.

[9] C. H. Becker, 'Christliche Polemik und islamische Dogmenbildung' *Zeitschrift fụr Assyriologie und verwandte, Gebiete* (1912:26), p. 190.

[10] The idea that these '*imāms*' were infallible soon became a sacrosanct article of faith within Shīʿism. This led to debates about the legitimacy of the reign of previous caliphs such as Abū Bakr (d. 11/634 CE), ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (d. 23/644 CE), and ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān (d. 35/655). See also Khalil Athamina, 'The Pre-Islamic Roots of the Early Muslim Caliphate: the Emergence of Abū Bakr', *Der Islam* (1999:76), pp. 1–32.

[11] His father was the caliph ʿAlī's son from a second marriage, and had been nominally linked with a radical Shīʿite movement in Iraq, which was known as the *tawwābūn* (penitents). It was established in his name to avenge the murder of ʿAlī's son al-Ḥusayn and led by an individual by the name of Mukhtār ibn ʿUmar al-Thaqafī. The movement was suppressed by supporters of the anticaliph ʿAbd Allāh ibn al-Zubayr. Despite having a vested interest in the political affairs of the day, Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafiyya eventually retired to Medina, pledging his allegiance to the Umayyad caliph ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Marwān. He was also the putative author of a second text on the subject of postponement (*irjāʾ*). The text is preserved in a number of late sources and was the subject of a study by van Ess.

[12] Joseph Van Ess. 'The Early Development of *Kalām*', p. 98. Cf. Joseph Van Ess. 'The Beginnings of Islamic Theology', *The Cultural Context of Medieval Learning*. Proceedings of the First International Colloquium on Philosophy, Science, and Theology in the Middle Ages. (Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1973), pp. 87–111. See also his *The Flowering of Muslim Theology*, translated by Jane Marie Todd (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

[13] Joseph Van Ess. 'Early Development of *Kalām*' pp. 110–1. Keith Lewinstein. 'The Azāriqa in Islamic Heresiography', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* (1991:54), pp. 251–68.

[14] Heinz Hälm. *Shīʿism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), pp. 16–19.

[15] Michael Cook. 'The Origins of *Kalām*', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* (1980), pp. 32–43. Reproduced in Michael, Cook. *Studies in the Origins of Early Islamic Culture and Tradition* (Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 2004).

[16] Michael Cook. *Early Muslim Dogma* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

[17] Cook said that the 'raw materials' of Islamic culture are 'for the most part old and familiar', adding that it 'is in the *reshaping* of these materials that the distinctiveness and interest of the phenomenon resides'. 'The Origins of *Kalām*', p. 43.

[18] Reference is made to its being sent to ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, the Umayyad caliph. See Suleiman Ali Mourad. *Early Islam between Myth and History: Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110H/728CE)*

and the Formation of his Legacy in Classical Islamic Scholarship (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2006), p. 90 and pp. 121–29.

[19] Cf. John Wansbrough's review of *Anfänge muslimischer Theologie: zwie antiqadaritische Traktate aus dem ersten Jahrhundert der Higra* (Beiruter Texte und Studien, Bd. 14) Beirut: in Kommission bei Franz Steiner Verlag, Wiesbaden, 1977, in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* (1980:43.2), pp. 361–3. Joseph Van Ess, 'ʿUmar and his Epistle Against the Qadariyya', *Abr-Nahrain* (1971–2:12), pp. 19–26. See also John Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies: Sources and Methods of Scriptural Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 91 and pp. 160–3.

[20] Within Sunnism a movement known as the Ẓāhirites was renowned for their literalist approach to the interpretation of law; yet their theological stances were not a strict reflection of this literalism.

[21] See Montgomery Watt. *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 1998), pp. 101–5. Especially p. 104.

[22] Helmut Ritter. 'Studien zur Geschichte der islamischen Frommigkeit: I. Ḥasan al-Baṣrī', *Der Islam* (1933:21); Julian Obermann. 'Political Theology in Early Islam: Ḥasan al-Baṣrī's Treatise on *Qadar*', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* (1935:55), pp. 138–62; Michael Schwarz, 'The Letter of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī', *Oriens* (1967:20), pp. 15–30.

[23] Michael Cook. *Early Muslim Dogma*, pp. 117–23. Especially p. 20.

[24] Suleiman Ali Mourad. *Early Islam between Myth and History*, pp. 176–8.

[25] Suleiman Ali Mourad. *Early Islam between Myth and History*, p. 238. G. H. A. Juynboll hinted at an early date for the text, although he was not of the view that al-Ḥasan was its author. Mourad infers that Juynboll's views on the text were formulated on the basis of the absence of *ḥadīths* in the text; yet, this is not clear from Juynboll's remarks as he was principally dismissing Wansbrough's treatment of the text's design. Gautier Juynboll, *Muslim Tradition: Studies in Chronology, Provenance and Authorship of Early ḥadīth*, Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilisation (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 50–1.

[26] Michael Cook. *Early Muslim Dogma*, p. 156. Van Ess placed some theoretical distance between the early Qadarites and the emergent Muʿtazilites, see 'Early Development of *Kalām*', pp. 114–5.

[27] Joseph Van Ess. *Theologie und Gesellschaft im 2. 3. jahrhundert Hidschra: eine Geschichte des religiösen Denkens im frühen Islam* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1991–1995), 5 vols.

[28] Steven C. Judd. 'Ghaylān al-Dimashqī: The Isolation of a Heretic in Islamic Historiography', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (1999:31), pp. 161–84. Judd argues that Ghaylān was a victim of incremental isolation in the historical sources; having been labelled a deviant by his Umayyad opponents, his heretical status was systematically magnified in the subsequent sources despite his close links with figures who were viewed as being paragons of orthodoxy.

[29] Khalil Athamina. 'The Early Murjiʾa: Some Notes', *Journal of Semitic Studies* (1990:35:1), pp. 109–30. Steven C. Judd, 'Ghaylān al-Dimashqī: The Isolation of a Heretic in Islamic Historiography', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (1999:31), pp. 161–84. See Hasan Qasim Murad, '*Jabr* and *qadar* in Early Islam: A Reappraisal of their Political and Religious Implications', in *Islamic Studies Presented to Charles J. Adams*, ed. by Wael Hallaq and Donald Little (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1991), pp. 117–32. cf. Patricia Crone, *Medieval Islamic Political Thought* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), p. 35.

[30] See Paul Walker. *A Guide to Conclusive Proofs for the Principles of Belief* [A translation of al-Juwaynī's (438–496/1028–1085), *Kitāb al-Irshād ilā qawāṭiʿ al-adilla fī uṣūl al-iʿtiqād*] (Reading: Garnet Publishing, 2000). Richard McCarthy. *The Theology of al-Ashʿarī*, The Arabic texts of al-Ashʿarī's *Kitāb al-Lumaʿ and Risālat Istiḥsān al-Khawḍ fī ʿilm al-kalām* with briefly annotated translations, and appendices containing material pertinent to the study of al-Ashʿarī (Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1953).

[31] Joseph Van Ess. 'Wrongdoing and Divine Omnipotence in the Theology of Abū Isḥāq an-Naẓẓām', in T. Rudavsky (ed.), *Divine Omniscience and Omnipotence in Medieval Philosophy* (Dordrecht: 1985), pp. 53–67, p. 53.

[32] See his entry in the Gimaret, 'Muʿtazila', in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill), 2nd edn, pp. 783–93.

[33] 'Muʿtazila', p. 784.

[34] Montgomery Watt. *Islamic Philosophy and Theology* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1987), pp. 42–5.

[35] Gimaret, 'Muʿtazila', *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, p. 784.

[36] Sarah Stroumsa, 'The Beginnings of the Muʿtazila Reconsidered', *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* (1990:13), pp. 265–93. A phenomenological approach to the sources may well provide insights into attitudes and perceptions within the tradition, but one criticism against it is that it does not necessarily relate incontrovertibly neutral facts. Cf. Joseph Van Ess. 'Political Ideas in Early Islamic Religious Thought', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* (2001:28), pp. 151–64.

[37] Ignaz Goldziher. 'Arabische Synonymik der Askese', *Der Islam* (1917:8). The inference seems logical given that al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī's ascetic credentials are renowned and Wāṣil was his student.

[38] Sarah Stroumsa, 'The Beginnings', p. 291.

[39] Shlomo Pines. 'A Note on an Early Meaning of the Term *Mutakallim*', *Israel Oriental Studies* (1971:1) pp. 224–40. pp. 236–7.

[40] Shlomo Pines, 'A Study of the Impact of Indian, Mainly Buddhist, Thought on Some Aspects of *Kalām* Doctrines', *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* (1994:17), pp. 182–203. Cf. Joseph Van Ess, 'Muʿtazila', *Encyclopedia of Religion* (New York: Macmillan Press, 1987). pp. 220–29, especially p. 221.

[41] Shlomo Pines, 'A Note on an Early Meaning', p. 232. See also 'Islamic Philosophy', in *The Collected Works of Shlomo Pines*, vol. III. Edited by Sarah Stroumsa (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1996), pp. 3–46, especially pp. 10–6.

[42] Sarah Stroumsa, 'The Beginnings', p. 292. Susan Stroumsa. *Freethinkers of Medieval Islam: Ibn al-Rawandi, Abū Bakr al-Rāzī and their Impact on Islamic Thought* (Leiden, Boston: E. J. Brill, 1999).

[43] Nyberg had argued that the movement had political objectives, providing propaganda for the ʿAbbāsids. See his article in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (1st edn), 787f. Cf. Tilman Nagel. *The History of Islamic Theology: from Muhammad to the Present*, (translated from the German: *Geschichte der islamischen Theologie* by Thomas Thornton). (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener; Hadleigh: BRAD, 2000).

[44] Watt spoke of the influence of Greek philosophy as far as theologians were able to use the ideas to develop their arguments; Montgomery Watt. *Islamic Philosophy and Theology* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1987), pp. 37–45; Van Ess 'Muʿtazilia', p. 228. As Oliver Leaman remarks it is important to bear in mind the theoretical opposition between philosophy and *kalām*. This has its roots in the subject matter and methodological premises used by the respective disciplines: the former employed philosophical tenets to evaluate rationally general religious truths; while the latter is concerned with a rational defence of dogma and faith. Oliver Leaman. *Introduction to Classical Islamic Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 11–2 and pp. 215–6.

[45] See van Ess, 'Muʿtazila', p. 228. Cf. Dimitri Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture: The Graeco–Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early ʿAbbāsid Society (2nd–4th/8th–10th Centuries)* (London & New York: Routledge, 1998).

[46] Harry Austryn Wolfson. *The Philosophy of the Kalām* (Cambridge, Mass., London: Harvard Uuniversity Press, 1976). He initially discusses Maimonides' review of *kalām* and its sources on pp. 43–58; and also includes the view of early Orientalist scholars on the subject: pp. 59–70; this is followed by his own views on p. 112 and p. 132. He discussed the Muʿtazilite denial of the reality of attributes on pp. 132–43. See p. 139 and p. 234. He stated that arguments about the eternal status of the Qurʾan may have originated in an internal Qurʾanic substrate, but they were soon linked to discussions about attributes, p. 241. A summary is set out on pp. 720–39.

[47] Shlomo Pines, 'A Note on an Early Meaning', see p. 225 and pp. 229–34. Cf. 'Some Traits of Christian Theological Writing in Relation to Moslem *Kalām* and to Jewish Thought', in *The Collected Works of Shlomo Pines*, vol. III, Edited by Sarah Stroumsa (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1996), pp. 79–119. Indeed, even topics such as Christian influences upon the theology of the Zaydite al-Qāsim ibn Ibrāhīm (d. 246/860) have been recently returned to in Madelung's 'Al-Qāsim Ibn Ibrāhīm and Christian Theology', *ARAM* (1991:3.1 and 2), pp. 35–44.

[48] Peters, J. R., *God's Created Speech: a Study in the Speculative Theology of the Muʿtazilī Qāḍī al-Quḍāt Abūʾl-Ḥasan ʿAbd al-Jabbār ibn Aḥmad al-Hamadānī* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976). Margaretha Heemskerk. *Suffering in the Muʿtazilite Theology: ʿAbd al-Jabbār's Teaching on Pain and Divine Justice* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2000). See also George Hourani. *Islamic Rationalism: the Ethics of ʿAbd al-Jabbār* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971); Majid Fakhry. *Ethical Theories in Islam* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994a); *Philosophy Dogma, and the Impact of Greek Thought in Islam*; 1997, *A Short Introduction to Islamic*

Philosophy, Theology, and Mysticism; 1999, 'Philosophy and Theology from the Eighth Century C.E. to the Present', in JL Esposito (ed.), The Oxford History of Islam, pp. 269–303, Oxford University Press, Oxford and George Hourani. *Reason and Tradition in Islamic Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); and more recently Maha, Elkaisy-Friemuth. *God and Humans in Islamic Thought*: ʿAbd al-Jabbār, Ibn Sīnā and Al-Ghazālī (London: Routledge, 2006). Also relevant are Sherman Jackson. 'The Alchemy of Domination? Some Ashʿarite Responses to Muʿtazilite Ethics', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (1999:31.2), pp. 185–201; Kevin Reinhart, *Before Revelation: The Boundaries of Muslim Moral Thought* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995); and Richard Martin and Mark Woodward (with D. S. Atmaja). *Defenders of Reason in Islam: Muʿtazilism from Medieval School to Modern Symbol* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1997).

[49] Sabine Schmidtke and Wilferd Madelung. *Rational Theology in Interfaith Communication: Abūʾl-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī's Muʿtazilī Theology among the Karaites in the Fāṭimid Age* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2006). Abūʾl-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī. *Taṣaffuḥ al-adilla*. The extant parts introduced and edited by Wilferd Madelung and Sabine Schmidtke. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2006), See also Sabine Schmidtke. *A Muʿtazilite Creed of az-Zamakhsharī (d. 538/1144) (Al-Minhāj fi uṣūl al-dīn)*, Edited and Translated (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1997).

[50] Florian Sobieroj. 'The Muʿtazila and Sufism', in *Islamic Mysticism Contested: Thirteen Centuries of Controversies and Polemics*, ed. by F. De Jong & B. Radtke (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1999), pp. 68–92. Sabine Schmidtke. *The Theology of al-ʿAllama al-Ḥillī (d. 726/1325)* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz, 1991). Dhanani Noor. *The Physical Theory of* Kalām: *Atoms, Space, and Void in Basrian Muʿtazilī Cosmology* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994). Peter Adamson. 'Al-Kindī and the Muʿtazila: Divine Attributes, Creation and Freedom', *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* (2003:13), pp. 45–77. There has been a tendency among modern scholarship to speak of theological affinities between Muʿtazilism and early forms of Shīʿism. However, Madelung has argued that the two were poles apart not only on issues such as the *imāma*, but also on topics such as the divine attributes, human will and predestination. See Madelung Wilferd. 'Imamism and Muʿtazilite Theology', Le Shiʿisme Imamite, (1968), pp. 13–30. Watt previously noted that Ibn Bābawayhi (d. 381/991) was the author of a creedal statement and that he disapproved of *kalām*. Nonetheless, he also commented that eminent figures within Shīʿism such as al-Shaykh al-Mufid (336–413/947–1022) and al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā (356–435/967–1044) disapproved of the reservations about the role of *kalām* and reason in the synthesis of religious dogma as expressed by Ibn Bābawayhi; and this tension in approaches to *kalām* was likewise manifested in subsequent forms of Shīʿism.

[51] Heinz Hälm. *Shiʿism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004); Etan Kohlberg. *Belief and Law in Imāmī Shīʿism* (Aldershot: Variorum; Brookfield, 1991). Madelung Wilferd. 'Imamism and Muʿtazilite Theology', *Le Shiʿisme Imamite* (1968), pp. 13–30. Also, Watt's work exploring the *Formative Period*. Michel Allard. *Le Problème des attributes divins dans la doctrine d'al-Ashʿarī de ses premiers grands disciples* (Beyrouth: Imprimerie Catholique, 1965). G. Anwati, and L. Gardet. *Introduction à la theologie musulman* (Paris: Vrin, 1950). Daniel Gimaret. *Dieu à l'image de l'homme: les anthropomorphismes de la sunna et leur interprétion par les théologiens* (Paris: Cerf, 1997). Richard Frank, 1978. *Beings and Their Attributes: the Teaching of the Basrian School of the Muʿtazila in the Classical Period*, Albany: State University of New York Press. Hans Daiber, 1981. 'The Creed (ʿAqīda) of the Ḥanbalite Ibn Qudāma al-Maqdisī', *Studia Arabica et Islamica, Festschrift for Iḥsān ʿAbbās on his sixtieth birthday*. Ed. Wadād al-Qāḍī. (Beirut: American University of Beirut), pp. 105–125; 1992, 'The Science of Kalām', *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy*, vol. 2 pp. 7–37; 2005, *Philosophy, Theology and Mysticism in Medieval Islam: Texts and Studies on the Development and History of the Kalām*, vol. I, D Gutas (ed.), Ashgate, Variorum, Aldershot.

[52] Patricia Crone and Fritz Zimmermann. *The Epistle of Sālim ibn Dhakwān* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001). Andrew J. Newman, *The Formative Period of Twelver Shiʿism: Ḥadīth as a Discourse between Qum and Baghdad* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 2000). Schöck, Cornelia. *Koranexegese, Grammatik und Logik*. Zum Verhältnis von arabischer und aristotelischer Urteils–, Konsequenz– und Schlußlehre (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2005). Asma Afsaruddin. *Excellence and Precedence: Medieval Islamic Discourse on Legitimate Leadership* (Leiden: Brill, 2002).

[53] Wilferd Madelung and Paul Walker. *An Ismaili Heresiography, the Bāb al-shayṭān from Abū Tammām's Kitāb al-Shajara* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1998); and *Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī: Ismaʿīlī Thought in the Age of al-Ḥākim* (London: I. B. Taurus, 1999). Daftary, F, 1998, *A Short History of the Ismailis*, Edinburgh University, Edinburgh.

54 Wilferd Madelung. 'The Spread of Māturīdīsm and the Turks', in Actas IV congresso de estudos arabes e islamicos 1968, pp. 109–168, 1971. Republished in Wilferd Madelung. *Religious Schools and Sects in Medieval Islam* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1985). Ulrich Rudolph. *al-Māturīdī und die sunnitische Theologie in Samarkand* (Leiden: Brill, 1997). Wilferd Madelung, Abū'l-Muʿīn al-Nasafī and Ashʿarī Theology', Studies in Honour of Clifford Edmund Bosworth. Volume II. The Sultan's Turret: Studies in Persian and Turkish culture. Ed. Carole Hillenbrand (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2000), pp. 318–330. Cf. Mustafa Ceric. *Roots of Synthetic Theology in Islam: A Study of the Theology of Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī* (d. 333/944) (Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, 1995). Nasafī, Maymūn ibn Muḥammad, Abū'l-Muʿīn. *Tabṣirat al-Adilla fī uṣūl al-dīn* (ed.). Claude Salama, 2 vols. (Damascus: al-Maʿhad al-ʿIlmī al-Faransī li'l-Dirāsāt al-ʿArabiyya, 1993).

55 David Thomas's *Early Muslim Polemic against Christianity: Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq's 'Against the Incarnation'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). See also David Thomas (ed.), *Christians at the Heart of Islamic Rule* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2003).

56 Wilferd Madelung. 'The Origins of the Controversy Concerning the Creation of the Qurʾān' in Félix M. Pareja Casañas (ed.), *Orientalia Hispanica: sive studia FM, Pareja octogenaria dicata* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974), pp. 504–25. Madelung highlighted the remarks of the Ḥanbalite scholar Ibn Taymiyya (d. 729/1328) who said that when the pious ancestors such as Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal rejected the thesis of a created Qurʾan, they had never intended to state that it was eternal (*qadīm*), but Sunnī theologians later spoke of this quality, endorsing it as a distinction of orthodoxy.

57 Montgomery Watt. *Islamic Philosophy and Theology*, p. 35.

58 The article is reproduced in Martin Hinds. *Studies in Early Islamic History*, ed. by Jere Bacharach, Lawrence I. Conrad and Patricia Crone (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996). Pp. 232–45. Cf. Patricia Crone and Martin Hinds. *God's Caliph: Religious Authority in the First Centuries of Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). Hinds and Crone were to argue that a similar position is taken by the Umayyads in their attempt to accentuate the religious motif of *khalīfa* in their role as caliphs.

59 Michael Cooperson. *Classical Arabic Biography: The Heirs of the Prophet in the Age of al-Maʾmūn* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 339, and the whole section pp. 340–401. 'Two Abbasid Trials: Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal and Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq', *Al-Qanṭara* (2001:22.2), pp. 375–93. Cf. Van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, vol. 3, pp. 456–60 and p. 465. Van Ess produced an important study of the role of the Sunnī theologian Ibn Kullāb in the affair of the *miḥna*.

60 Nimrod Hurvitz. *The Formation of Ḥanbalism: Piety into Power* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 2002). '*Miḥna* as Self-defense', *Studia Islamica* (2001:92), pp. 93–111. See also Dominique Sourdel. 'La politique religieuse du calife ʿabbaside al-Maʾmūn', *Revue des etudes islamiques* (1962:30), pp. 27–48.

61 Nimrod Hurvitz, '*Miḥna* as Self-defense', p. 109. It is interesting to note that the conclusions of both Hurvitz and Stroumsa, outlined above, are largely driven by reservations concerning the Sunnī accounts of such affairs.

62 Patricia Crone, *Medieval Islamic Political Thought* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), p. 131.

63 John Nawas. 'A Re-examination of Three Current Explanations for Al-Maʾmūn's Introduction of the *Miḥna*', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (1994:26.4) pp. 615–29.

64 George Makdisi. 'The Juridical Theology of Shāfiʿī: Origins and Significance of *Uṣūl al-fiqh*', *Studia Islamica* (1984:59), p. 19. Cf. Mustafa Shah. 'The Early Arabic Grammarians' Contributions to the Collection and Authentication of Qurʾanic Readings: the Prelude to Ibn Mujāhid's *Kitāb al-Sabʿa*, *Journal of Qurʾanic Studies* (2004:6:1), pp. 72–102.

65 Michael Cook, *Early Muslim Dogma*, p. 156. Although, the remarks of Cook were set within the context of unravelling the history of the early Islamic tradition.

66 For accounts of his 'conversion' and the famous narrative of the three brothers see Rosalind Gwynne. 'Al-Jubbāʾī, al-Ashʿarī and the Three Brothers: the Uses of Fiction' *Muslim World* (1985:75) pp. 132–61. Cf. Montgomery Watt. *Islamic Philosophy and Theology* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1987), pp. 64–8.

67 George Makdisi, 'Ashʿarī and the Ashʿarites in Islamic Religious History', *Studia Islamica* (1962:17), pp. 37–80, and (1963:18), pp. 19–39.

[68] Among Ḥanbalite scholars there were individuals such as Ibn al-Jawzī (511–597/1116–1200) and Abū Yaʿlā (d. 458/1066) who both approved of rational theology. Ibn al-Jawzī was the author of a number of critiques of anthropomorphism, suggesting that fascinating variations in the modes of thought within Ḥanbalite theological thought existed. Merlin Swartz, *A Medieval Critique of Anthropomorphism: Ibn al-Jawzī's Kitāb Akhbār al-ṣifāt*: a critical edition of the Arabic text with translation, introduction and notes, English & Arabic. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2002). Mustafa Shah, 'The Philological Endeavours of the Early Arabic Linguists: Theological Implications of the *tawqīf-iṣṭilāḥ* Antithesis and the *majāz* Controversy'. (Part II *Journal of Qurʾanic Studies*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press). School of Oriental and African Studies, Volume II, Issue I, 2000), pp. 44–66.

[69] Laoust, H. *La Profession de foi d'Ibn Baṭṭa* (Damascus, 1958). See Watt's *Islamic Philosophy and Theology*, pp. 98–110.

[70] Richard Frank. 'Elements in the Development of the Teaching of al-Ashʿarī', *Le Museon: Revue D'Etudes Orientales* (1991:104), pp. 141–90.

[71] Ibn Fūrak, Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan, *Mujarrad maqālāt al-shaykh Abī'l-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī*: (exposé de la doctrine d'al-Ashʿarī) édité par Gimaret, D., (Beyrouth: Dar el-Machreq, 1987).

[72] Richard Frank. 'Elements in the Development', pp. 141–85.

[73] Richard Frank. *Al-Ghazālī and the Ashʿarite School*, p. x. Frank explains that Gardet and Anawati were of the view that he retains the central theses of the school but that he also forwarded certain emendations. See p. 3 and Herbert Davidson's *AlFarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes on Intellect* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992). Frank states that the latter study confirms many of the conclusions he reached regarding Ghazālī's conception of intellectual beings: it was based on an Avicennan analogue.

[74] Richard Frank. *Al-Ghazālī and the Ashʿarite School* (London: Duke University Press, 1994). Michael Marmura. 'Ghazālī and Ashʿarism Revisited', *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* (2002:12), pp. 91–110. Ghazālī's views on causality have been the subject of numerous papers. See also Ormsby, E. L., *Theodicy in Islamic Thought: the Dispute over al-Ghazālī's Best of all Possible Worlds* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984).

[75] Frank, Richard. *Al-Ghazālī and the Ashʿarite School* (London: Duke University Press, 1994), pp. 89–90. For a review of Frank's book see Tobias Mayer's review article in *Journal of Qurʾanic Studies* (1999:1), pp. 170–81. He argues that the higher theology that Frank infers from Ghazālī's synthesis of theology is essentially a form of higher Ashʿarism.

[76] Michael Marmura. 'Ghazālī and Ashʿarism Revisited', *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* (2002:12), pp. 91–110. cf. Richard Frank. *Al-Ghazālī and the Ashʿarite School* (London: Duke University Press, 1994), pp. 98–9.

[77] Especially if ones take into account the arching of theological and philosophical trajectories of thought that becomes pronounced in these periods. See Ayman Shihadeh. 'From al-Ghazālī to al-Rāzī: 6th/12th Century Developments in Muslim Philosophical Theology', *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* (2005:15:1), pp. 141–79. Also see his *Teleological Ethics of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2006).

[78] Van Ess, Joseph. 'The Beginnings of Islamic Theology', pp. 110–1.

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