

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



A Flash through the Formation of the Sects

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Once the Prophet – may Allah bless and grant him peace – transferred to the Everlasting Abode, those who apostatized during the time of *Al-Siddiq*¹ did so, and those hypocrites amongst them enticingly advocating the separation between worldly affairs and those of religion appeared. Then they refrained from paying *Zakat*. Consequently, the Companions considered them to be apostates since this distinction is a negation of the Book of Allah of which *falsehood cannot come to it from before or behind it*. So they fought against them until the situation had become calm.

And the second *Khalifa*² – may Allah be pleased with him - wasn't any less vigilant against the beguilers. He used to banish those who strove to confuse the general masses with puzzling questions without exposing a single difficulty.³ And the Islamic conquests flowed over a large expanse while people entered into the Religion of Allah in groves; the different men and denominations adopted it [as a way of life], and country after country complied with its guidance.

And when the [different] conflicts occurred during the caliphate of *'Uthman*⁴ – may Allah be pleased with him – the enemies of the religion who had gone unnoticed sought to lessen his value amongst the Muslims. So they rushed to spread slander between them and to stir up their thoughts with what was possible to circulate amongst them due to the purity of their hearts and their remoteness from knowing the means of falsification employed by the beguilers who didn't openly display anything that infringed upon the religion. They roamed through the land with this aim paving the way to the termination of this religion by scattering the seeds of ruin. And what *'Abd Allah ibn Saba*⁵ did during that period is well known.

And after the *Arbitral Decision (Al-Taḥkim)* during the encounter at *Siffin*⁶, the *Khawarij*⁷ dispersed from around *Ali* – may Allah ennoble his face, and took to excess until they begun to ascribe disbelief to the person who commits the major sin.

And once *Ali* passed away a people remained partisan in his favor and his family, so they were named ‘*The Shi’a*’ (*The Party*). The heretics from the *Rawafid*⁸ (Extremist Partisans) had found in *their* midst fertile ground to plant their seeds every time the mistreatment of *Ahl al-Bayt*⁹ by *Banu Umayya*¹⁰ and others repeated itself.

And when *Al-Hasan*, The Grandson [of the Prophet], yielded the caliphate to *Mu’awiya*¹¹, a group withdrew from the two [opposing] factions and clung to their *masajid* busying themselves with knowledge and devotion. Before that they were with *Ali* wherever he was. And they are the roots of the *Mu’tazila*.¹²

It is said that the first to withdraw (that is, to adopt the *Mu’tazili* traits) was *Abu Hashim ‘Abd Allah* and *Al-Hasan*, the sons of *Muhammad ibn Al-Hanafiyya*.¹³ Then the second [of the two of them] started rebutting the *Khawarij* regarding the matter of ‘*Iman*’ (Faith). He would say, “*Iman* is word and creed without action.” So he and his group were named *Murji’a* (*Those who Defer*), since they defer action from faith (*iman*). And from them a group appeared that used to say, “A sin has no harm with faith (*iman*) {i.e. as long as you have faith}.” And they are the *Deferrers of heresy* (*Murji’a al-bid’a*).

A number of the Jewish rabbinical scholars (*al-ahbar*), Christian priests (*al-ruhban*), and Zoroastrian priests (*muwabadhah al-Majus*) professed Islam during the time of the Rightly Guided [*Khulafa*], and then they began after them (i.e. after their demise) to spread the fairy-tales they had, amidst those Bedouin story tellers and their simple-minded freed slaves, amongst whom they were circulated, who weren’t polished by knowledge.

They took them (i.e. fairy tales) from them with haste and related them to others with pure intentions while believing in all of the ascriptions of a body (*al-tajsim*) and resemblance (*al-tashbih*) that their reports contained with respect to Allah, and while taking solace in the creed they were upon during their time of ignorance. And at times they’d falsely attribute them to the Messenger – may Allah bless and grant him peace, or mistakenly. Then *tashbih* (drawing likenesses between Allah and the creation) began to creep into the creed of the different groups and to spread the way that indecency (*fahisha*) spreads.

And *Banu Umayya* were not alike in vigilance to the Rightly Guided [*Khulafa*] regarding [the protection of] the creed of the Muslims unless it infringed upon their rule. So the first to be deceived by them were the *Shi’ah*. But how quick they were to turn back from that due to the *Mu’tazila*’s debate with them! However, it didn’t last with them as it lasted between the *Hashawiyya*¹⁴ narrators, while *Basra* was the Metropolis of opinions and sects.

And, there, *Ma’bad ibn Khalid Al-Juhani* had heard one using the divine decree as a justification for sin. So he carried out the refutation of it while negating the divine decree as being a depriver of choice in relationship to the actions of servants. He was aiming to defend the legitimacy of religious burdens, but his explanation was unclear, so he said, “There is no predetermination and the [divine] affair is a future commencement [of things].”

And once that reached *Ibn ‘Umar* he declared his innocence from him. Then *Ma’bad*’s group was given the name ‘*Qadariyya*.¹⁵’ And his school lasted amongst the unfortunate transmitters of *Basra* for centuries.

Rather, it evolved amongst a faction of them to the extent that they assigned to the Creator what the *Thanawiyya*¹⁶ (Dualists) ascribe to light and to the creation what they ascribe to darkness.¹⁷

Ghaylan ibn Muslim Ad-Dimashqi used spread the opinion of *Ma'bad* in Damascus. So 'Umar ibn 'Abd Al-'Aziz sought him out, forbade him from that, and then removed his doubt. So he stopped, and then said, "O Commander of the Faithful! I came to you straying, and you guided me. And [I was] blind, and you gave me sight. And [I was] ignorant, and you taught me. By Allah! I will not speak of any part of this matter ever again!"

And once the opinion of *Ma'bad* began to spread, *Jahm ibn Safwan* began a rebuttal of it in *Khurasan*, and then *he* fell into fatalism (*al-jabr*). So the school of the Fatalists (*Al-Jabariyya*) issued from him.

Hasan Al-Basari was amongst the most brilliant of the Successors (*Tabi'in*), and of those who persisted for years disseminating knowledge in *Basra* while the noblest people of knowledge would attend his assembly. One day some poorly trained narrators attended his assembly. When they made some problematic statements he said, "Move these over to the *hasha* of the assembly." That is, "the side of it." So they were named the '*Hashawiyya*.' And from them came the different divisions of the *Mujassima*¹⁸ and the *Mushabbiha*.¹⁹

And after *Wasil ibn 'Ata* learned '*Itizal* (withdrawal) from the aforementioned *Abu Hashim* he would attend the assembly of *Hasan*. So when the issue of *Iman* (faith) was mentioned in the assembly, *Wasil* made haste to say that "the non-believer openly professing disbelief and the compliant believer unanimously are referred to respectively as being a non-believer and a believer; while the one who commits a major sin - since applying one of the two titles to them is a point of discrepancy - we refuse to apply this [name] and that [name] to him. So we say that he is a blatant sinner (*fasiq*) in accordance with what they agreed upon and in flight to what they differed about."

So it's as if he sought to take a middle course between the two opposing views and to make the two factions incline towards his view. However, it is in agreement with the *Khawarij* in meaning, because he holds the view that the one who commits a major sin will spend eternity in the *The Fire*. So *Hasan* wasn't pleased with his statement, and *Wasil* was removed from the assembly.

So he began to spread the school of '*Itizal* and the Five Principles along with his two disciples, '*Amr ibn 'Ubayd* and *Bishr ibn Sa'id*. And from them, *Bishr ibn Al-Mu'tamir* and *Abu al-Hudhayl* learned. And from the latter, *Abu Bakr 'Abd Al-Rahman ibn Kisan Al-Asamm*, *Ibrahim Al-Nazzam*, *Hisham Al-Futi*, and '*Ali ibn Muhammad Al-Shahham* learned.

And from *Al-Nazzam*, *Al-Jahiz* and *Ibn Abi Du'ad* - and he didn't meet *Wasil* as was thought - learned. And from the former, Withdrawal (*Al-'itizal*) spread in *Baghdad* whereas *Abu Musa ibn Sabih* learned from him, and from him *Ja'far ibn Harb ibn Mubashshir*, and from them *Muhammad ibn 'Abd Allah Al-Iskafi* learned.

And from *Al-Shahham*, *Al-Jubba'i* learned. And from him, his son, *Abu Hashim* learned. And '*Abbad ibn Sulayman* learned from *Al-Futi*. So these were the steersmen of Withdrawal in *Basra* and *Baghdad*.

And the first one known to speak of *'the createdness of the Qur'an'* was *Al-Ja'd bin Dirham* in Damascus. *Jahm* took that statement from *Al-Ja'd*, and added it to his heresies that he spread. And from their sum total is the negation of the everlastingness [of Hell] (*nafy al-khulud*)²⁰.

And once *Al-Harith ibn Surayj* stood up against the *Umayyids* calling to the Book and the *Sunna* he was supported by *Jahm*, while *Muqatil ibn Sulayman* was propagating his school of *tajsim* (i.e. the statement that Allah is a body) there. So *Jahm* commenced to refute him and negate what *Muqatil* was affirming, but he went too far in negating until he said, "Verily, Allah is not described with what the servants are described by." And he didn't make a distinction between sharing in name and sharing in meaning.

The prohibited thing is the second, not the first, with the condition that it is mentioned in the sacred law, because *'knowledge'* for example, is something that both the Creator and the creation have been mentioned as being described as having, despite the fact that it isn't shared between them in meaning. That's because Allah's knowledge is ever-present (*huduri*). And the creation's knowledge is acquired (*husuli*). Likewise are the rest of the attributes.

And views have been ascribed to *Jahm* while he has no sect that was associated with him after him. But the association of most of those ascribed to him is under the category of *'insulting [one's opponent] with nicknames'* with the aim of scaring [people] away due to the ill repute of the man amongst [the different] sects. His views were [merely] promulgated amongst them after a thorough examination of them according to their particular vantage points, not according to what *Jahm* opined, which is the case of every opinion that spreads amongst people.

So once a bit of laxity started to befall the [military] conquests, people found more leisure for preoccupation with those [different] views scattered about, and the passion to become absorbed in them overwhelmed their thoughts.

So the likes of *Ibn Al-Muqaffa'*, *Hammad 'Ajrad*, *Yahya ibn Ziyad*, *Muti' ibn Iyas*, and *'Abd Al-Karim ibn Abi al-'Awja* started a campaign to spread atheism amongst the Muslims, and to translate the books of the Atheists and the Persian Dualists until their matter got out of control.

Then *Al-Mahdi*²¹ ordered the scholars of polemics from the Theologians (*al-mutakallimin*) to compose the books related to *'The rebuttal of the Atheists.'* So they established the proofs, removed the doubts, clarified the truth, and did a service to the religion.

Those who undertook those defenses were a group of the *Mu'tazila*. So [now] they had become encircled by two enemies: an *occupying enemy* from outside the nation with views and a philosophy upon which he was trained from an ancient time, and a *cruel enemy* from inside the nation that the majority was on the verge of joining due to his asceticism while he was far from [grasping] matters of logic.

The distortions of those who mislead from the Jews and the Dualists were broadcast over him. The extent of his work was the assault of the Theoreticians (*Ahl al-Nazar*) while not making a distinction between the enemy and the close friend. And if rule had been given to him, he couldn't defend [the nation] a single hour of a day.

For this reason, these theoreticians were preoccupied by the former and they fell back from the latter until they completed the refutation of the heretics (*zanadiqa*), exposed their distortions, and then demolished the argument of the *Hashawiyya* and revealed the feeble-mindedness of their views. And mental illnesses, a number of which cannot be held lightly, clung to the psyches of these theoreticians that were passed on to them from their debaters.

On the other hand, most of the Jurists (*fuqaha*) and bearers of the *Sunna* (*hamalat al-Sunna*) – for the length of these battles – refused to indulge in these matters, while proceeding upon what the *Sahaba* and the virtuous *Tabi'in* were upon of being restricted to what was confirmed by necessity to be from the religion, in addition to the fact that the disputants of the religion had weapons which could only be encountered with the like of their teeth.

They ran with the Muslims on the road of gradualness in the phases of antagonism while the overwhelming majority was in obliviousness to that. And they walked with them to a phase – if the matter and its case had been left alone – their difficulties would've almost penetrated to the hearts of the community of Muslims, and then the situation would have been engulfed.

So in the like of these circumstances *Al-Ma'mun*²² started to rule, and he began to side with the *Mu'tazila* and bring them close until he coerced the people to make the utterance about 'the createdness of the Qur'an' (*khalq Al-Qur'an*) and the exoneration [of Allah from the likeness to creation] in accordance with what his mind and the mind of those who mixed with him inspired. Thus, the *Inquisition* lasted the length of the caliphates of both *Al-Mu'tasim* and *Al-Wathiq*. And the latter added the matter of 'negating the beatific vision'[of Allah in the Hereafter]²³.

So the opponents of the *Mu'tazila* met adversities that continued until *Al-Mutawakkil* lifted the *Inquisition* during which *Imam Ahmad*²⁴ showed a kind of firmness that raised his esteem. And *Al-Mutawakkil* did nothing to earn praise other than removing the trial and preventing the people from debating about the [divergent] opinions and views, while he was a *Nasib*²⁵ who hated 'Ali – may Allah ennoble his face. And he did a number of deeds that one wouldn't think of.

Then the reaction started to take its natural course of elevation in favor of the *Hashawiyya* and the *Nawasib* and the suppression of the Theoreticians and the *Mu'tazila*, while *Ahl al-Sunna* from the *Fuqaha* and the *Muhaddithin* were continuing work in the sciences without a scar or noise.

The *Hashawiyya* were operating in accordance with their recklessness and blindness, while seeking the following of hooligans and riffraff, and concocting about Allah what neither the law nor the mind allows, such as the ascription of motion to Him, translocation, limitation, direction, sitting, sitting [others beside Him on His throne], lying down [to rest], establishment, and the like of what they received with [full] acceptance from the swindlers (*dajajila*) of those who dupe from the Dualists and the People of the Book; also from what they inherited from nations that have passed away.

Then they'd publish books that they filled with attacks on others, while piercing the veil of awesomeness in declaring unbelief, hiding behind the *burqa* of the *Sunna*, and boasting of the *Salaf*. They exploit the obscure statements transmitted from the *Salaf* that possess no proof in them [in their favor].

Yes! They have a *Salaf*, but from other than this *Umma*. And they *are* upon a *Sunna*, but upon the one who initiated it are the burdens [of all] until the Day of Resurrection, while this isn't the place to cover their infamies in detail.

The *Mu'tazila* were winning over the minds of the thinkers amongst the scholars and striving to retrieve their domination over the *Umma*, all the while the Atheists and the *Karmathians* sunk deep into corruption and occupied the lands whereas there didn't remain at the bays for defending the religion anyone on post with any cogent arguments that could efface their sleight of hand due to the preoccupation of themselves with newly faced circumstances.

Then in the like of these difficult circumstances Imam *Abu al-Hasan Al-Ash'ari*²⁶ – may Allah be pleased with him - launched an attack on the various forms of scourge that had befallen the Muslims, and he stood up to aid the *Sunna* and to suppress innovation (*Bid'a*).

So he strove first to reconcile between the two [opposing] factions by returning them - away from their extremism - back to the just median by saying to the first of them, “You are upon truth if you mean by ‘*the createdness of the Quran*’ the utterance (lafz), the recitation (tilawa), and the script (rasm).”

And to the others he said, “You are correct if what you mean, by ‘*beginningless*’ (qadim), the quality that is ever-present with the essence of The Originator (Al-Bari) that doesn't become separated from Him as ‘Abd Allah ibn Al-Mubarak says” – meaning, *The Speech of the Self* (Al-Kalam Al-Nafsi). “And you have no basis for denying the *createdness* of the utterance of the speaker (lafz al-Lafiz) and the recitation of the one who recites (tilawat al-tali), just as the first group doesn't have the right to negate the quality ever-present with Him – exalted is He – without utterance or sound.”

And he also said to the first group, “To negate juxtaposition and form [from Allah] is proper, although you must acknowledge the [Divine] manifestation [of His words] without [asking] how.”

And he said to the latter group, “Beware to ascribe form and juxtaposition [to Allah] and anything that indicates *createdness*, while you are correct if you limit yourselves to confirming the seeing [of Allah] for believers in the Hereafter without [asking] how.”

And thus he continued until Allah gave him success in bringing together the word of the Muslims, uniting their ranks, suppressing the obstinate ones, and breaking their extremism. And questions from the different regions of the world were brought to him, and he responded to them.

As a result, his mention covered the horizons and filled the world because of his writings and the writings of his disciples about the *Sunna* and the refutation of the various groups of heretics, atheists, and the People of the Book.

His disciples scattered about in the lands of *Iraq, Khurasan, Sham*, and the lands of the *Maghrib*, and he went his way. And shortly after his demise the *Mu'tazila* retrieved some of their strength during the era of *Banu Bawayh*. However, *Imam Nasir al-Sunna Abu Bakr ibn al-Baqillani* stood up in their face and subdued them with his proofs. As a result, the people of the Earth to the most distant lands of Africa professed adherence to the *Sunna* according to the *Ash'ari* methodology.

Ibn al-Baqillani dispatched - with a group of his disciples that he dispatched to the different lands – *Abu ‘Abd Allah Al-Husayn ibn ‘Abd Allah ibn Hatim Al-Azdi* to *Sham*, then to *Qayrawan* and the lands of the *Maghrib*. Then the people of knowledge of the Imams of the *Maghariba* complied with him. And the school (*madhhab*) spread to *Siqqilliyya* and *Andalus*. *Ibn Abi Zayd*, *Abu ‘Imran Al-Fasi*, *Abu al-Hasan Al-Qabisi*, *Abu al-Walid ibn al-Baji*, *Abu Bakr ibn al-‘Arabi*, and their students [all] had a helping hand in that.

The narrator of *Al-Jami’ Al-Sahih*, *Al-Hafiz Abu Dharr Al-Harawi*, spread the *madhhab* in the *Hijaz*. And those scholars from the different horizons who traveled to him learned it from him.

And before that, in *Sham*, it spread by means of the disciple of *Al-Ash’ari*, *Abu al-Hasan ‘Abd Al-‘Aziz Al-Tabari*, the narrator of *The Tafsir of Ibn Jarir* on the authority of its composer.

And the people of *Sham* would bring the most distinguished Imams from the *Ash’ari* school time after time, like *Imam Qutub Al-Din Al-Nisaburi*. *Nur Al-Din Al-Shahid* brought him upon the request of the scholars.

And a group of the *Hanbali Muqadisa*²⁷ who inherited some of the views of *Ibn Karram* - who nested in *Quds*, laid eggs, and left some of his disciples behind as ascetics to have those after them to inherit them [again] – migrated from there once the Christians occupied it. So they carried the heresies of *tashbih* to *Sham*. And some of those heresies were in it since the time of *‘Abd Al-Wahid Al-Shayrazi*, the disciple of *Abu Ya’la*.

And the Sultan, *Salah al-Din Al-Ayyubi*, would tend to their thoughts since they were scrupulous emigrants, while he would feign to take notice of their creed. And he didn’t compel people to adopt the *Ash’ari* school as was thought. Rather [and on the contrary], the exhorter, *Ibn Najjyya*, the famous *Hanbali*, was shown favor with him.

And his harsh rudeness with *Imam Al-Shihab Al-Tusi*, the one who stood up in aid of *Al-Ash’ari* in Egypt ran in view and earshot of him, but no mention is made of *that*. Rather, his family nearly yielded to them²⁸ in creed, if it had not been for the stance of *Imam ‘Izz al-Din ibn ‘Abd Al-Salam* - regarding this matter - the stance of a scholar carrying out his duty. As a result, their voices became insignificant and they gathered together in their homes and restricted themselves to the narrations.

So it appears from all of that that the spread of the *Ash’ari* School was a result of the authority of knowledge, not by the might of the *Sultans*. And what occurred in Baghdad and elsewhere regarding a little harshness against the *Hashawiyya* from time to time, it was merely due to their breach of security and their creation of disturbances.

The whole while the *Fuqaha* of the *Madhahib* were protracting *‘Al-Ash’ari’* to their respective schools, and stating his biography in their biographical compendiums (*Tabaqat*). And the *Hanbalis* were most worthy of that; since *Al-Ash’ari* clearly states during his debates with them that he was on the *madhhab* of *Ahmad*. However, they didn’t state his biography in their *Tabaqat*, and they don’t consider him to be one of them. Rather, the *Hashawiyya* amongst them loathe him more than they hate the *Mu’tazila*.

So all of the *Malikis*, three quarters of the *Shafi'is*, one third of the *Hanafis*, and a portion of the *Hanbalis* have been upon this approach towards speculative theology (*tariqa min al-kalam*), since the time of *Al-Baqillani*, while two thirds of the *Hanafis* were upon the *Maturidi* approach in the homes of what is beyond the river, the lands of Turkey, Afghanistan, India, China, and all that follows it, except for those of them who inclined towards 'Withdrawal' (*al-'itizal*), like some of the *Shafi'is*.

And one of the distinguishing characteristics of the *madhhab* of the scholar of *Medina* is that it *negates the filth of heresies from the adherents of his madhhab*. So you do not find amongst the *Malikis* the heresies of *'itizal* and *tashbih*. And part of what produced that – according to what I reckon – is *Malik's* prohibition against relating the reports of attributes, just as *Ahmad* used to forbid the narration of the *hadiths* mentioning 'rebellion against the oppressive governors.' So it helped him in keeping the *khulafa* of Baghdad away from the *Hanbalis* whatever they did. Rather, it helped in bringing them close. Yes! There is a type of extremism in the area of Sufism amongst some *Malikis* since the time of *Ibn Tawmart*.

And some of the *Hanbalis* are upon the path of the Salaf regarding *tafwid* (i.e. consigning the knowledge of the *mutashabihat* to Allah), and abandoning indulging [in them], while others of them yielded to the *Mu'tazila*. But most of them over the succession of centuries have been *Hashawiyya* upon the *Salimi* and *Karrami* approaches until *al-Zahir* placed the office of supreme justice (*qada al-qudat*) in *Yabris* to the four schools for the first time.

Then they made contact with the scholars of *Ahl al-Sunna* and conversed with them about knowledge. As a result, their heretical ills began to go away, and almost not a single *Hashawi* would have remained if it had not been for the colony of *Harran* after the misfortune of Baghdad lied down their saddles in *Sham*.

A man appeared amongst them who had a wholesome development in learning (*talab*), in addition to intelligence, memory, character (*samt*), and the ability to attract the trustworthy shaykhs of learning to his self and their praise of him. He was an exhorter with a fluid tongue, when all the while he was running according to a plan devised to place the *Hashawi madhhab* under the cover of the *madhhab* of the *Salaf* in place of *Ahl al-Sunna*²⁹.

He wasn't aware that the *madhhab* of *Ahl al-Sunna* - the *Asha'ira* and the *Maturidiyya* - had reached a level of strength in scientific examination over the succession of centuries by the hands of the prodigal personalities of theory and jurisprudence of religion the likes of who this *Hashawi* wouldn't even be counted amongst the least of their pupils, whereas that if the like of him attempted to collide with them, he would only fall on the top of his head, hit the ground and then be ruined.

And since he didn't have a Shaykh directing him in the theoretical sciences, as a result, his knowledge didn't rest upon anything reliable, and it became confused and very contradictory. His [mental] gifts were distributed amongst troublesome heretical tendencies. Then it led to what he did. And his temptations disappeared as a result of the refutation of the scholars.

And it is evident that scholarship had no place in the formation of the *Khawarij* and the *Mu'tazila*. Rather, political apathy gave birth to them, and then the disputants of the religion amongst the *Zanadiqa*

(heretics) infiltrated them. Then both of them evolved over scandalous phases while their original course was toward opposing the standing government.

On the other hand, the *Murji'a* were a result of a form of scholastic discussion. Their course was toward counteracting the *Khawarij* in creed, and then views that were far from the religion and scholarship branched out from them that produced laxness in [religious] practice.

And the *Jabriyya*, the callers to immobility and the herald of ruin, resulted from an unscientific discussion. Their roots (*'uluq*) were from the neighborhood of the *Samaniyya*, the *Barahima*, and other sects of licentiousness and obscurity.

The *Qadariyya* formed from a scientific discussion. Its course was toward the opposition to laziness and reliance, and considering what it evolved to while being influenced by the views of the Dualists.

The *Hashawiyya*, ignorance and stagnation made them fall into adopting pre-Islamic views that they inherited from sects they belonged to prior to Islam. And the distortions of the Dualists, the People of the Book, and the Sabians were circulated among them.

They possess asceticism by which they dupe the masses, and ignorant remarks that no sane person could imagine. They are stern in disposition, harsh and rude. They await opportunities to create disturbances, while no view of theirs is manifest unless it is a time of weakness for Islam. And the matter of unbelief gets out of hand whenever their view is manifested, likewise, in all phases of history. Their opposition is directed against logic, the theoretical sciences, and every existing sect.

The *Mu'tazila* are the opposite of the *Hashawiyya* in a straight line. Scientific study produced them. The gluttony of their minds steered them to attempt to reach the farthest limit of every thing. And their original hostility was directed against stagnation, and their plan was to repel the views entering Islam from the outside with cogent proofs and hushing rational evidences.

They have honorable positions with reference to the Islamic defense against the existentialist materialists (*Dahriyyin*), the deniers of prophecy, the Dualists, the Christians, the Jews, the *Sabians*, and the different factions of Agnostics (*Al-Malahida*).

And you see *Dhahabi* mentioning a biographical sketch about *Al-Jahiz* in *Siyar al-'Alam al-Nubalaa* when he mentions his book about Prophecy, just as we haven't seen any book that comes close to '*Tathbit Dalail Al-Nubuwwa*' of *Al-Qadi 'Abd Al-Jabbar* in argumentative strength and good wording with reference to repelling the doubts of those who spread doubt.

So the complete abandonment of their books isn't good to do. For how many are the benefits that still exist in their worn out garments that haven't been stricken with calamity despite time's returning charge over them! And how much did *Al-Ustadh Al-Imam* find in them what by which he could repel the disputants of the time, while he did not shrink back from taking from them without diminishing their right; except that due to the greatness of their preoccupation with debating the disputants a number of views were transmitted to their minds by which they went far from correctness and became immersed in heresies of which the disciples [of the Sunna] refuted!

Khattabi, the author of *'Ma'alim al-Sunna,*' said, "The *Mu'tazila* were in the initial phase upon the opposite of these fancies. But some of them innovated them during the latter phase."

And the *Ash'aris* are those who are balanced justly between the *Mu'tazila* and the *Hashawiyya*. They didn't go far away from transmitted knowledge as the *Mu'tazila* did, or from logic as was the custom of the *Hashawiyya*.

They inherited the best of those who preceded them, abandoned the falsehood of every sect, preserved what the Prophet – may Allah bless and grant him peace, and his companions were upon, and filled the world with knowledge.

And there are found in their midst those who are ascribed to Sufism due to the support of some of the *Sufi* Imams of the *Sunna* in accordance with the *Ash'ari* approach since the fifth century. And there doesn't exist one who equals *Ash'ari* with respect to the enormous work that he carried out. Despite that, his views aren't free from some of what can be criticized – like a type of remoteness from logic at one time and from transmitted information another time - by the one who looks at his words regarding a number of theoretical issues, such as his view concerning [the mind's determination of what is] good and bad (*al-tahsin wa al-taqbih*), the designation of purposeful reason [to Allah's actions] {*al-ta'liif*}, what [authoritativeness] transmitted knowledge produces (strength-wise)³⁰, and the like of that. That's because whoever has disputed at length with the *Mu'tazila* and the *Hashawiyya* like he did, inevitably something of this sort will occur in his comments.

However, the like of that didn't happen to his contemporary, The Imam of Guidance, *Abu Mansur Al-Maturidi*, the Shaykh of the *Sunna* from what is beyond the river (*ma wara al-nahr*), due to the *Sunna*'s complete victory there over the [different] kinds of heretics whereas their mischievous ways didn't appear in his presence. As a result, he was able to pursue complete balance in his views. So he gave transmitted information its right and logic its [proper] ruling.

And the *Maaturidiyya* are the middle path between the *Ash'aris* and the *Mu'tazila*, and very seldom is a *Mutasawwif* found amongst them. So *Al-Ash'ari* and *Al-Maturidi* are the Imams of *Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jama'a* in eastern regions of the earth and its western regions.

They have countless books. And the difference of opinions found between these two Imams is under the category of '*differences in expression.*' A number of books have been written about that, and *Al-Bayyadi* did well in summarizing them in '*Isharat al-Muradi fi Ibarat al-Imami.*' *Zabidi* transmitted its text in *Sharh al-Ihya* along with numerous typographical errors.

And this *Al-Bayyadi* is a master of '*Ilm al-Kalam*' even though he was a latecomer whereas *Al-Muqbili*, the author of *Al-Ilm Al-Shamikh*, despite his unruliness and difficulty in complying with the scholars, was very occupied with the *Isharat* of *Al-Bayyadi* while acknowledging the wideness in scope of his research.

Here we have only covered the roots of the sects of the people of innovations, while they have sub-sects that branch out from them according to the intermixing of opinions and newness in fancies that occur to

them. And they will not reach a specific number until the end of human history. And there is a well-known difference amongst scholars regarding the number that has been transmitted.

The scholars in every stage have been expounding upon what was new up until their time with respect to the proponents of the cult-like sects as well as refuting the falsehood of their opinions. And the views of those factions are laid out in '*Maqalat al-Islamiyyin*' of *Al-Ash'ari*, '*Al-Maqalat*' of *Abu Mansur Al-Maturidi*, '*Raddu Ahl al-Ahwa wa al-Bida'*' of *Abu al-Husayn Al-Tara'ifi*, '*Al-Milal wa al-Nihal*' of *Abu al-Muzaffar Al-Isfarayini*, and others of which haven't been encompassed.

And many times views are attributed to sects that aren't found in their books to either give birth to them (*tawlidan*), resulting from what their view [merely] necessitates (*ilzaman*), or due to being transmitted from the books of those who are unreliable amongst the rivals like what happened to '*Abd Al-Qahir Al-Baghdadi*' in '*Al-Farq bayn al-Firaq*' and '*Al-Milal wa al-Nihal*', and like what *Ibn Hazm* does in '*Al-Fasl*'.

What also falls under this category is the reliance upon the like of *Abu 'Isa Muhammad ibn Harun Al-Warraq*, *Abu Muhammad Al-Hasan ibn Musa Al-Nawbakhti*, the author of '*Al-Ara wa al-Diyana'*', *Muhammad ibn Ishaq*, the author of '*Al-Fihrist*', and the books of the *Hashawiyya*. Verily, they are full of forgeries.

So the case of the researcher is to be careful about ascribing a statement to someone until he finds it in a book of his that is widely known to be from him. And *Al-Razi* alerted to some of what has preceded during the mention of the book of *Al-Shahrastani*, even though we are not involved in comparing between the books about the denominations and cult-like sects.

And in the comments of the early theologians are things that those who carry out the defense of the religion in every age must take direction from. What is clear is that the ways of defending the creedal points of Islam and the means of protecting them from the penetration of corruption to the morals and legal judgments are part of what is renewed in every age according to the newness of the approaches of the opponents. And they in themselves are firmly established according to what the sacred law has set limits to. Their realities do not change.

So it is obligatory upon the Muslims in all phases of their existence to have a group of them dedicate itself to examining the kinds of views prevailing amongst the various factions of people, the sciences broadcasted amongst them, and to examine what might possibly bring harm to the Muslims, especially in the area of creed, which remains the source of every good as long as it is deeply rooted and firm. On the other hand, it becomes the source of every corruption if it becomes frivolous and weak.

So they are to study these views and sciences the same way that their proponents study them or a more thorough study than them in order to find in them what can be used to repel the doubts that the enemies of the religion incite but with contemporary means so that when one of them seeks to make a notch on one of its arrows in the direction of the Islamic teachings – whether it is creed, jurisprudence, or ethical behavior – they can send them back to his throat while relying upon the realities of these sciences and its experiments, and depending upon the presentation of theories that overshadow the theories of those who cast doubt while the Islamic way of life is exonerated above colliding with the realities of the sciences. So they'll erect -

without the penetration of their confusions - a protective and fortifying fence just as they'll mobilize the Party of Allah according to systems that the age requires with neither forbearance (*hawada*) nor slowness (*tawan*). And they'll record what they extracted - from those sciences the modes of defense - into special books with a style that clings to the mind and that the general masses find easy so that they could be a perfect barrier against the plagues of doubts for all times.

And if they don't do that, it will be easy for the enemies to find a path to fertile pastures between the Muslims in which the seeds of their confusions can grow in such a way that remove their chaotic roots. Rather, the venoms of unbelief will run inside empty hearts that they gain mastery over. Then the tillage and progeny will suffer ruin. May Allah protect us from the evil of that and awaken us from our sleep.

¹ *Siddiq* was the title and epithet of *Abu Bakr*, the first *khalifa* after the demise of the Messenger of Allah. *Siddiq* means 'True and Trustworthy'. Abu Bakr – may Allah be pleased with him – earned this title since he always made haste to declare the Prophet to be truthful in all that he said even if his claim wasn't supported by a miracle, as in the case of the Prophet's night journey to Jerusalem and his ascension to the seventh Heaven in one night. Many people doubted that it truly happened when the Messenger – may Allah bless and grant peace – informed them. *Abu Bakr* on the other hand responded by saying, "If Muhammad said it happened. Then, it's true." Thus he gained the title of '*Siddiq*.'

² The name of the second *khalifa* of Islam is *Umar ibn Al-Khattab* – may Allah be pleased with him. He took on the role of *khalifa* in the year 13 AH after being appointed by *Abu Bakr* who also died in this year. '*Umar's* reign lasted for about 10 years until he was stabbed by a pagan slave along with a number of other *Sahaba* while performing the Fajr prayer. He died from his wounds shortly after, and he left the matter of appointing his successor in the hands of those who remained of the 10 promised *Janna* just as the Prophet did – may Allah bless and grant him peace.

³ This means that the *Khalifa* '*Umar ibn Al-Khattab* would simply banish anyone seeking dissension who introduced some form of deviant '*aqida*. He didn't bother to show the incorrectness of their views, since that might lead to further responses from such people. As a result, the arguments would continue as they do until the present day.

⁴ *‘Uthman ibn ‘Affan* was the third *khalifa* in the history of Islam. A faction of Muslims who accused him of hypocrisy and ruling unfairly unjustly killed him in the year 35 AH. They broke into his home and killed him while he was reciting the Holy Qur’an. May Allah be pleased with him.

⁵ *‘Abd Allah ibn Saba* was a former Jew who converted to Islam during the early period. He is accused of being the source great dissension and the driving force behind the appearance of some early sects like the *Khawarij* and the *Shi’a*.

⁶ The battle at *Siffin* is one of the great encounters that occurred between the armies of *‘Ali ibn Abi Talib* and *Mu’awiya ibn Abi Sufyan*. During this battle they agreed to make an elect number of men from each side judges in the dispute between the two warring factions. However, a faction of *‘Ali’s* army condemned this motion and considered it to be *kufir*, since Allah said in the Qur’an “*Judgment belongs only to Allah*” {*Surat al-An’am: 6*}. Thereupon, they dispersed from around him and abandoned him. The appointment of judges in this event is known as the matter of *Al-Tahkim*.

⁷ *Al-Khawarij* is taken from the verb *‘kharaja’*, which means *‘to depart from or exit.’* This title was given to those who departed from the obedience of Imam *‘Ali* during the encounter at *Siffin*. They later evolved into an extreme sect that declared disbelief upon anyone who differed with them and many times would even killed them, while they would show gentleness towards those who have yet to accept Islam. The most salient point of their creed was the declaration that anyone who committed a major sin is considered a nonbeliever and would spend eternity in the Hell-fire.

⁸ The *Rawafid*, or *those who cast off or reject*, is the name applied to the most extreme factions of the *Shi’a* who are also known as the *Imamiyya*. The name *‘Rawafid’* comes from the verb *‘rafada’*, which means *‘to reject or cast off.’* The *Imamiyya* believe that *‘Ali ibn Abi Talib* was the rightful ruler of the Umma after the death of the Prophet – peace be upon him, just as they believe that the Prophet appointed him. They believe that this was known to the *khulafa* who ruled prior to *‘Ali*, and since they didn’t follow the order of the Messenger as a result they are hypocrites and nonbelievers. When some of them tried to convince the distant grandson of the Prophet, *Zayd ibn ‘Ali ibn al-Husayn ibn ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib*, to renounce the first two Rightly Guided *khalifas*, he refused to do so. So they rejected him and cast him off. As a result they were named the *Rawafid*.

⁹ *Ahl al-Bayt* or *‘The People of the House of Prophecy’* is the title given to the Prophet’s closest of kin to emphasize their dignified status. They are *‘The Prophet, Fatimah, Ali, Hasan, and Husayn.’*

¹⁰ *Banu Umayya* was the first dynastical ruling tribe that began with the end of the period of the 4 Rightly Guided *Khulafa* when *Al-Hasan*, the Prophet’s grandson, turned over the rule of the Umma to *Mu’awiya ibn Abi Sufyan* in an attempt to make peace.

¹¹ *Mu’awiya ibn Abi Sufyan* accepted Islam during the year of the Conquest of Mecca along with his father *Abu Sufyan*. The Prophet – peace be upon him – gave him charge of some important positions in the Umma during his lifetime. He later became the head of the Muslim state after *Al-Hasan* ceded power to him. *Mu’awiya* was the first to institute the passage of rule from father to son in the history of Islam. However, it was only after he saw that the majority would not accept the rule of anyone other than one from *Banu Umayya*. So he merely tried to do what was in the best interest of the Muslims at the time. And he is innocent of what his son, *Yazid*, did after him. May Allah have mercy on all of them.

¹² The *Mu’tazila’* is a sect founded by a man by the name *Wasil ibn ‘Ata*. Their creed was centered around things like the negation of Allah’s positive attributes such knowledge, power, speech, etc. They affirmed all of His names, but they negated his attributes. They also gave total free will to God’s creatures.

¹³ *Muhammad ibn Hanafiyya* was the son of *‘Ali ibn Abi Talib* from his wife *Hanafiyya* who he married upon the death of *Fatima* – may Allah be pleased with them all.

¹⁴ The *Hashawiyya* or *Crypto-Anthropomorphists* is the name applied to those who resemble the *Mujassima*, or those who say that *Allah is a body unlike bodies*, in that they say ‘*Allah has hands, eyes, etc. but not like eyes, hands, etc.*’ The difference between the two groups is simply that the first group doesn’t say that Allah *is* or *has* a body, although the line of thought between the two is the same.

¹⁵ *Al-Qadariyya* is generally applied to those who negated the existence of *Qadar*.

¹⁶ The *Thanawiyya* can be translated as ‘*The Dualists*’ or ‘*Those who ascribe two creators to the universe*’, one who creates good and one who creates evil.

¹⁷ This means that this faction of the *Qadariyya* ascribed the creation of good to Allah and the creation of evil to the creation.

¹⁸ The name ‘*Mujassima*’ means *those who consider Allah to be a body*.

¹⁹ The name ‘*Mushabbiha*’ means *those who give Allah a likeness*.

²⁰ This means that they negated the everlastingness of Hell.

²¹ *Al-Mahdi* was one of the *khalifahs* of *Banu ‘Abbas*.

²² He is another *khalifa* of *Banu ‘Abbas*.

²³ That is, he coerced the people to believe that it was logically and religiously impossible for one to see Allah in both the temporal world and the Hereafter.

²⁴ *Ahmad ibn Hanbal* is one of the greatest Imams of *Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jama’a*. He was imprisoned for 15 years for refusing to say that the *Qur’an* was created. His reasons were merely that he didn’t find anyone before him saying such a thing. His refusal wasn’t a denial of the distinction made between the written book and Allah’s eternal speech, as some erroneously understand.

²⁵ The opposite extreme of the pro-‘*Ali Shi’a*’ were the *Nasibiyya*, who were pro-*Mu’awiya*. They used to curse ‘*Ali*’ over the pulpit for a number of years.

²⁶ *Al-Hafiz Ibn Kathir* says in describing *Abu al-Hasan Al-Ash’ari*: “*Ali ibn Isma’il ibn Abi Bishr Ishaq ibn Salim ibn Isma’il ibn ‘Abd Allah ibn Musa ibn Hilal ibn Abi Bakr ibn Abi Musa ‘Abd Allah ibn Qays Al-Ash’ari*. He arrived in Baghdad and learned hadith from *Zakariyya ibn Yahya Al-Saji*, and learned *Fiqh* from *Ibn Surayj*. And we’ve already mentioned his biography in *Tabaqat al-Shafi’iyya*.

Ibn Khalikhan mentioned in *Al-Wafayat* that he used to sit in the circle of *Shaykh Abu Ishaq Al-Maruzi*. And *Al-Ash’ari* was a *Mu’tazili* prior to that, and then he repented from it in *Basra* on the pulpit. Then he revealed the shameful deeds of the *Mu’tazila* and their atrocities. Mentioned amongst his works are *Al-Mujiz* and others.

It has been related from *Ibn Hazm* that he said, “*Al-Ash’ari* has fifty-five (55) works.” And it was mentioned that his yearly income was 17,000 *dirhams*, that he was the most joking of people, and that he was born in the year 270. It has also been said: ‘260.’ And he died in this year (i.e. 324). It has also been said: ‘in 330.’ And it has been said: ‘between 330 and 339 (bid’in wa thalathin wa thalathi mi’atin).’ So Allah knows best.” {*Al-Bidaya wa al-Nihaya*: 7/581.}

Al-Hafiz Ibn Kathir also says about *Al-Ash’ari*: “*Ibn al-Jawzi* mentioned in *Al-Muntazam* the demise of *Al-Ash’ari* in this year (i.e. 331). He spoke about him, and he detracted from him as was the custom of the *Hanabila* to speak about the *Ash’aris* in the past and present. And he mentioned that he was born in the year 260, that he died in the year 331, that he accompanied *Al-Juba’i* for 40 years then left him, and that he is buried in *Baghdad* in the thoroughfare of *Al-Rawaya*.” { *ibid*: 7/602-603 }

²⁷ ‘*Al-Muqadisa*’ here is a reference to scholars of the *Hanbali* School who came from *Quds*.

²⁸ He means that *Salah Al-Din* nearly yielded to the creed of the *Hanbalis*.

²⁹ Apparently, this is a reference to *Shaykh al-Islam Ahmad ibn Taymiyya* – may Allah forgive him.

³⁰ Apparently, *Al-Kawthari's* intent is not to say that *Al-Ash'ari's* views concerning these matters were erroneous. Rather, his intent is that the *Mu'tazila* and *Hashawiyya* were the first to discuss such matters. And as a result of *Al-Ash'ari's* debates with them these matters continued to be discussed after him until the present day. *Al-Kawthari's* comments immediately after this points to this being the proper inference to make. So have a look.