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# ***The Genesis of the 'Salafī-Ash'arī' Divide***

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<b>Abstract.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>4</b>
The Genesis of Kalām.....	5
The Rise of 'Sunnī Kalām'.....	9
Ibn Ḥanbal and al-Muḥasibī.....	11
Ibn Khuzayma and His Students.....	13
Al-Ash'arī and the Ḥanbalites of Baghdad.....	13
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Postscript.....</b>	<b>16</b>

### Abstract

*While Sunnism is the largest sect of Islam, Sunnism itself is divided into many strands. The two main strands of Sunnism for the last few centuries are the Atharī (or Salafī) strand, and the Ash'arī strand. This paper seeks to examine the earliest recorded controversies that signal this intra-Sunnī divide. While each of these two groups has historically attempted to claim true Sunnī 'orthodoxy' by denying the legitimacy, and at times even the early existence, of the other, it will be shown that the genesis of this intra-Sunnī divide dates back to the first century of Sunnism itself, viz., the 3<sup>rd</sup> AH/8<sup>th</sup> CE centuries, and that there are specific historic incidents that indicate theological tensions within the nascent Sunnī movement that would later be manifested in the two streams of Ash'arism and Salafism. Hence, it can be argued that Sunnism was never truly unified to begin with, and that these incidents demonstrate theological tensions that existed from its very origins.*

### Introduction

Early Islamic history saw the rise of a number of theological controversies, the most significant of which were: the criterion of selecting leaders and their function in society; the issue of defining faith (*īmān*); the effects of sin on salvation; and predestination versus free-will. Such debates amongst the nascent Muslim community led to the formation of groups that would later be identified as Sunnism, Shī'ism, Qadarism, and Khārijism.<sup>(1)</sup> For the first hundred years or so after the death of the Prophet, the issue of the nature of God and the question of how to understand scriptural references to the Divine Attributes does not seem to have surfaced. When that controversy finally did erupt in the middle of the second Islamic/eighth Christian century, it would take center stage for the next five hundred years, eclipsing and absorbing the earlier controversies, and resulting in the formation of at least half a dozen schools of thought. In fact, this issue would become so overarching that it would even render Sunnism asunder, and lead to the largest intra-Sunnī division, as manifested in two of its most prominent medieval champions: Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (d. 1111 CE)<sup>(2)</sup>, and Taqī al-Dīn Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1324 CE).

(1) See: K. Blankinship, "The early creed," in *The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology*, ed. T. J. Winter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 33-40; W. M. Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2002), relevant chapters; T. Nagel, *The History of Islamic Theology*, tr. Thomas Thornton (Princeton, Markus Wiener Publishers, 2000), pp. 31-71.

(2) While al-Ghazālī is not the most significant representative of medieval Ash'arism, and that perhaps a figure such as Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 1210) is more of a 'faithful' Ash'arite, al-Ghazālī has become the most famous and revered Ash'arite for later followers of the school, perhaps because he synthesized the modern construct of what is termed 'traditionalist Islam' by its followers: a particular combination of Juwaynian Ash'arite theology, Junaydī/Muḥasibī Sufism, and strict adherence to the Shafī'ite school of law. While some minor variations within the spectrum of this tripartite schemata are permitted (Maturidī Naqshabandī Ḥanafism, for example, would be viewed as an acceptable, and even faithful, alternative), 'traditionalist Islam' is not sympathetic to the Taymiyyan strand, and many followers of medieval and modern Ash'arism have back-projected a Ghazālīan Sunnī vision of Islam onto the earliest proponents of Sunnism. As this paper shows, however, the controversies of defining 'true' Sunnism have existed since

This paper will seek to explore the very beginnings of that intra-Sunnī dispute, and demonstrate that the seeds of what later became Ash'arī-Salafī divisions, were actually first planted over a thousand years ago, and can be seen in a number of interesting (and perhaps foretelling) incidents in the third Islamic/eighth Gregorian centuries. It will be argued that these incidents demonstrate the earliest known intra-Sunnī tensions that eventually resulted in the great divide of Salafism and Ash'arism.<sup>(1)</sup>

In order to contextualize these controversies, a brief genesis of *kalām* and its reception in early Islam is in order. Then, three specific historical incidents will be examined: the public boycott of al-Ḥārith b. Asad al-Muḥāsibī (d. 243/857) by Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241/855); the reference to the spat that occurred between Muḥammad b. Ishāq Ibn Khuzayma (d. 311/923) and his students; and, finally, the reception of Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Isma'īl al-Ash'arī (d. 324/935) himself, and his writings, by the leading Sunnī theologians of Baghdad at the time, and in particular Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan b. 'Alī al-Barbahārī (d. 329/940).

### The Genesis of Kalām

Most early Muslim references state that the first person to begin questioning the nature of God's Attributes was a certain enigmatic Ja'd b. Dirham (d. circa 728).<sup>(2)</sup> If these early sources are to be trusted, we learn that Ja'd claimed, inter alia, that God could not 'love' Abraham nor did He 'speak' to Moses. Based on his denial of God's ability to speak, he argued that the Qur'ān must actually be God's speech in a metaphorical manner, and not literally God's speech. Hence, argued Ja'd, the Qur'ān must be created. And with this doctrine, Sunnī theologians claim,<sup>(3)</sup> we may mark the beginnings of the science that later was called *kalām*.<sup>(4)</sup>

its inception, and both strands of Ash'arism and Salafism (also called Atharism) have manifestations in third century figures.

- (1) These three incidents represent, to the best of my knowledge, the earliest examples of such intra-Sunnī tensions. In my somewhat extensive readings of early Islamic theological works, I have not come across any other incidents of a similar nature during this time frame.
- (2) The persona of Ja'd remains understudied, primarily because of the paucity of reliable information we have regarding him. There are some references to him in theological works written in the third and fourth Islamic centuries (see in particular Dr. al-Tamīmī's work cited below); however it is only medieval writers, such as Ibn al-Athīr and al-Dhahabī, who provide a more complete picture of his life and times. Dr. Muḥammad al-Tamīmī, my advisor for my MA thesis, compiled most of the early quotes and biographical details found in Islamic sourced regarding Ja'd in his work *Maqāla al-ṭa'īl wa-l-Ja'd b. Dirham* (Riyad: Maktaba Adwā al-Salaf, 1997). My own MA thesis, which centered on Jahm b. Ṣafwān (to be referenced below), was originally conceived as being a follow-up of that study. Also see: van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, vol. 2, pp. 493-507, and vol. 4, pp. 449-458; T. Nagel, *A History of Islamic Theology*, p. 101. Ja'd's execution date remains uncertain, with figures ranging from 106/724 to 124/742. M. al-Tamīmī suggests a death date for Ja'd of 110/728 (idem., *Maqāla al-ṭa'īl wa-l-Ja'd b. Dirham*, p. 157).
- (3) Of course, we need to be skeptical as to how true such claims actually are. Ja'd did not leave any writings, nor did he have a full-fledged theological school. The earliest references of him were written almost a hundred years after his death, by those who were already hostile against him and who had formed an extremely negative view of his persona. As with many other matters during this early era, genuine research remains difficult and one needs to take such reports with a grain of salt. It is entirely plausible that Ja'd's persona might have been fabricated, or, more likely, that he played a marginal role in the development of *kalām*.
- (4) One cannot help but sympathize with R. M. Frank's observation regarding the study of *kalām*, made almost half a century ago: "Alas, however, studies on the subject still stem, it seems, from Babel, for there is no consensus, even among serious scholars, concerning the real nature of the early *kalām* as a theology, its character as a speculative science, the basic meaning of its major theses, or even how one

Regardless of whether Ja'd as a person began such a discussion (or even existed), all theological and historical sources of medieval Islam point out that during the second Islamic century, talk had begun in Muslim circles regarding God's Attributes and pre-destination. The question arises as to what triggered these conversations and debates. While various sources have been postulated, most would agree that intra-Christian controversies played a direct role (perhaps even supplying the term '*kalām*' from the '*logos*' of Biblical fame).<sup>(1)</sup> The fact that earlier debates over issues of predestination played a crucial role to jumpstart a similar discussion in Islamic circles shows that the influence of intra-Christian polemics on Muslim theology has a clear precedent.<sup>(2)</sup> Some have specifically pointed out Monophysite polemics against the Dyothelites (written in Syriac) as a direct source of the origins of *kalām*,<sup>(3)</sup> while others have highlighted the role of Christian converts to the new religion.<sup>(4)</sup> It is also quite clear that Hellenistic controversies, such as theories of nature, the existence of atoms, and other cosmological notions, played a major role in the development of early *kalām*,<sup>(5)</sup> and this is further manifested by the adoption of elements of Stoicism in *kalām* epistemology.<sup>(6)</sup> Subscribers to *kalām*, of course, present the science as being a purely Qur'ānic one, originating as a result of the verses that encourage man to reflect and think upon the creation.<sup>(7)</sup>

should approach the raw texts;" R. M. Frank, "The *kalām*: An Art of Contradiction-Making or Theological Science?" *Journal of the American Oriental Society* (1968), vol. 88, no. 2, p. 295.

This issue appears to have occupied the author's mind, as it did his career, for the next few decades; a good summary of his findings, and an attempt to introduce the methodological framework of this science, is found in his article: "The Science of *Kalām*," in *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* (1992), vol. 2, pp. 7-27.

- (1) M. A. Cook, "The Origins of *Kalām*," p. 32; W. M. Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought* (Oxford: Oneworld Press, 2002), pp. 182-4; D. Thomas, *Christian Doctrines in Islamic Theology*, p. 16, 125-131; F. E. Peters, "The Greek and Syrian Background," in *History of Islamic Philosophy*, ed. S. H. Nasr (New York: Routledge, 1996), pp. 40-51; M. S. Abdel Haleem, "Early *kalām*," in *History of Islamic Philosophy*, ed. S. H. Nasr, p. 72.

The Christian influence is not the only one posited: others have sought to find some source in Indian thought, or Mazdeism, or Manichaeism. See EI2, s.v., '*Kalām*'; D. B. Macdonald, "Continuous Re-Creation and Atomic Time in Muslim Scholastic Theology," *Isis*, vol. 9 (1927), p. 330; S. N. Haq "The Indian and Persian Background," in *History of Islamic Philosophy*, ed. S. H. Nasr, pp. 53-56; T. Nagel, *The History of Islamic Theology*, pp. 100-1.

Shlomo Pines championed the claim that there was a 'strong probability' of direct or indirect Buddhist influence on *kalām*; his primary evidence is an attempt to correlate *kalām* epistemological terminology, such as '*ilm ḍarūrī*' and '*ilm naẓarī*,' to Buddhist equivalents, since, according to him, such concepts are not found in Greek thought. See his "A Study on the Impact of Indian, Mainly Buddhist, Thought on Some Aspects of *Kalām* Doctrines," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* (1994), vol. 17, p. 189, pp. 198-201. Personally I don't find these arguments very convincing.

- (2) M. A. Cook, *Early Muslim Dogma*, p. 146, and pp. 149-52.  
 (3) M. A. Cook, in "The Origins of *Kalām*," (see esp. p. 38), leans towards this conclusion.  
 (4) J. van Ess, *The Flowering of Muslim Theology*, tr. Jane Marie Todd (Boston: Harvard Press, 2006), p. 100.  
 (5) A. I. Sabra, "*Kalām* Atomism as an Alternative Philosophy to Hellenizing Falsafa," in *Arabic Theology, Arabic Philosophy: From the Many to the One, Essays in Celebration of Richard M. Frank* (Leuven: 2006), p. 200.  
 (6) Van Ess writes that '...while *kalām* is not entirely identical with Stoic logic...it is built on a Stoic basis;' see his "The Logical Structure of Islamic Theology" in *Logic in Classical Islamic Culture*, ed. G. E. von Grunebaum (Wiesbaden; O. Harrassowitz, 1970), p. 32. Later, after demonstrating this influence via *kalām* categorizations and terminologies, he states, "Old Hellenistic school quarrels seem to have found their way into Islam, attenuated perhaps and somewhat simplified, but viable and organically adopted," *ibid.*, p. 45.  
 (7) M. S. Abul Haleem defends this view, and writes, "*Kalām* thus originated completely in the Islamic environment and foreign elements came only later as a result of mixing with other nations and also as a result of the translation of Greek texts into Arabic." See his "Early *kalām*," *op. cit.*, p. 79.

A proximate cause of introducing such Hellenistic and neo-Platonic thought in Arab and Muslim circles could possibly be the persona of John of Damascus (d. 749 CE). If we are to believe these early accounts of Ja'd, the parallels between their two doctrines suggests more than just a coincidental similarity; and even if Ja'd's role has been exaggerated, John of Damascus's era, circle of influence, and theology are persuading factors to argue for some direct influence in early Arab circles.<sup>(1)</sup>

Comparing the writings that we have of John of Damascus to later *kalām* beliefs, we find congruence in:<sup>(2)</sup>

1) The method of proving God's existence, from which later *mutakallimūn* developed the *kalām* cosmological argument.

2) Understanding God's attributes as *via negativa* ('negative Attributes'), meaning that an Attribute does not affirm a concept, but rather negates one from God. Ja'd is alleged to have continuously described God as 'not being ...' something; a usage that appears to be unprecedented in the Islamic discourse before his time, yet championed by John of Damascus.

3) John of Damascus' belief in God as an Unsubscribed Being. While Ja'd claimed that God is 'everywhere', the standard *kalām* belief championed by the Mu'tazilites and Ash'arites, and similar to the beliefs of John of Damascus, is that God does not occupy space (*mutaḥayyiz*) nor can He have a direction (*jīha*).

4) John of Damascus wrote that God is not a 'compounded entity', meaning that He was pure Unicity, without the Attributes being a part of Him. This is the essence of Mu'tazilism, and from such language emerges the *kalām* controversy of how best to ascribe God's attributes to God.

6) John of Damascus' belief in the immutability of God; this too, became a standard *kalām* doctrine which entailed denying any 'accident' (*ḥawādith*) in the Essence of God.

There are possibly other similarities as well. Be that as it may, the early execution of Ja'd made it impossible for him to propagate his ideas, and it was left to his disciple, Jahm b. Ṣafwān (d. 124/741), to champion such theological causes.<sup>(3)</sup> While the existence of an actual distinct group named after him is disputed,<sup>(4)</sup> there is no doubt that such talk, previously unknown to

(1) The possible influence of John of Damascus has been pointed out by many researchers, including: Y. Ibish, *The Political Doctrine of al-Baḥillani*, p. 17; Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, p. 184; A. Arberry, *Revelation and Reason in Islam*, p. 21.

In my MA thesis, *Maqālāt al-Jahm b. Ṣafwān wa-atharuhā fī l-firaq al-Islāmiyya* (Riyāḍ: Adwā al-salaf, 2005), vol. 1, p. 410-6, I mentioned a possible connection between Ja'd b. Dirham and John of Damascus based on the fact that both of them are reported to have lived at the same time, in the same area, in the city of Damascus. While this is not sufficient to prove that the two ever met, much less influenced one another, it is not too far-fetched of an assumption to make, especially in light of the great similarities between the theology of John of Damascus and that of early *kalām*. I intend to research this relationship in greater detail in a later paper.

(2) See *Saint John of Damascus: Writings (The Fathers of the Church, vol. 37)*, ed. Fredric H. Chase, Jr., (Ex Fontibus Co., 2012), pp. 165-73.

(3) For Jahm, see: EI2, s.v., 'Djahm b. Safwan'; R. M. Frank, "The neoplatonism of Jahm ibn Ṣafwān," *Le Muséon*, vol. 78 (1965), pp. 395-424; J. van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, vol. 2, pp. 493-507; T. Nagel, *A History of Islamic Theology*, pp. 103-4; relevant sections of my MA thesis *Maqālāt al-Jahm b. Ṣafwān wa-atharuhā fī l-firaq al-Islāmiyya*. The reference to 'Jahmīs' is such a constant theme in early polemical literature that I do believe it is safe to say that the persona of Jahm, in contrast to Ja'd, had some role in the spread of proto-*kalām* ideas.

(4) See Watt's discussion of this in his EI2 entry on Jahm and the Jahmiyya, s.v., 'Djahm b. Safwan', and 'Djahmiyya'. Of course, early traditionalists simply used the term 'Jahmiyya' to describe all groups that

Muslim ears, was of primal importance in the formation of the first Muslim group to develop a complete and systematic theology: the Mu'tazilīs, who posited unique views on God and His Attributes, pre-destination, faith, nature, and the afterlife. Wāsil b. 'Aṭā' (d. 132/749) is typically credited with initiating the movement. His prime contribution to Mu'tazilī doctrine was the concept of 'a station between two stations' (*manzila bayna al-manzilatayn*), in which a sinner is deemed neither a believer nor a disbeliever. It is highly improbable that he himself held any specific doctrines about the nature of God and the Divine Attributes. That was left to later Mu'tazilīs, in particular 'Amr b. 'Ubayd (d. 144/761), Abu al-Hudhayl al-'Allāf (d. 235/849), and the father-and-son pair, Abu 'Alī al-Jubbā'ī (d. 303/915) and Abū Hāshim al-Jubbā'ī (d. 321/933), all of whom helped shaped the doctrines of the early Mu'tazilīs and contributed to solidifying the principles of the school.<sup>(1)</sup>

The doctrines of these Mu'tazilīs, based as they were primarily on the neo-Platonic concepts imported from Christianity, quite often seemed to clash, especially in the minds of ordinary Muslims, with explicit Qur'ānic tenets and Prophetic ḥadīth. The complicated hermeneutics that Mu'tazilīs attempted to employ on the Qur'ān in order to demonstrate that the Qur'ān supported their beliefs, and their seemingly presumptuous dismissal of the Prophetic traditions that were at odds with their theology, seemed to reinforce popular notions amongst the masses that the Mu'tazilīs were heretics bent on corrupting the pristine teachings of Islam. The drastic attempt of al-Ma'mūn (*rul.* 197-217/813-33), who ordered an Inquisition (*miḥna*) to force the population to follow the key Mu'tazilī doctrine of the createdness of the Qur'ān only strengthened this supposition. The failure of the *miḥna* was a direct cause of the establishment of Sunnī 'orthodoxy', championed by the popular Ibn Ḥanbal, whose simplistic message of understanding the Book of God 'literally' and believing in the Prophetic traditions harnessed much support.<sup>(2)</sup>

Thus, at the closing of the third Islamic century, the two major trends with regards to the createdness of the Qur'ān (and, by extension, God's Attributes) were those of the traditionalists<sup>(3)</sup> (called, *inter alia*, the *Ahl al-Ḥadīth*, the *Ḥashwiyya*,<sup>(4)</sup> and Sunnīs) and those of the 'rationalists', primarily (but not exclusively) manifested in the movement of Mu'tazilism.

did not affirm a literalistic understanding of the Attributes, hence there is no doubt that the term had become rather vague within a few decades of Jahm's death.

- (1) See: Encyclopedia of Religion, s.v. "Mu'tazilah" (J. van Ess); EI2, s.v. 'Mu'tazila' (D. Gimaret); T. Nagel, A History of Islamic Theology, p. 105-9.
- (2) For an overview of past explanations of the *miḥna*, see: J. Nawas, "A Reexamination of Three Current Explanations for al-Ma'mūn's Introduction of the *miḥna*," IJMES, 26 (1994), pp. 615-29. The author also takes another look at the role and effects of the *miḥna* in his "The *miḥna* of 218 AH/833 CE Re-visited: An Empirical Study," Journal of the American Oriental Society, Vol. 116, No. 4. (Oct. - Dec., 1996), pp. 698-708. Also see: T. Nagel, A History of Islamic Theology, p. 125.
- (3) I use the term here in G. Makdisi's sense. I agree with his basic premise that 'traditionalism' permeated all of the early Sunnī legal schools (with the exception of Ḥanafism, which had been penetrated deeply by the Mu'tazilīs), and the Ash'arīs sought to establish legitimacy by infiltrating one of these schools; see his "Ash'arī and the Ash'arīs in Islamic Religious History I," *Studia Islamica*, No. 17 (1962), p. 44-8. Makdisi does not explicitly mention the relationship between these early 'traditionalists' and later Ḥanbalī theology; however it is clear that Ḥanbalī theology was based on traditionalist premises, and can be viewed as an extension of it. For a similar use and discussion of the term, see: W. M. Watt, "The Political Attitudes of the Mu'tazila," *JRAS* (1963), p. 45f.
- (4) For this term, see A.S. Halkin, "Ḥashwiyya," in *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 54, No 1, Mar 1934), pp. 1-29.

The first group, championed by scholars of ḥadīth and fiqh, such as Ibn Ḥanbal, held that speculation regarding the Attributes of God led to heresy, and all that was required was a simple, unquestioning belief in the texts of the Qur'ān and ḥadīth. The primary source of theology was to take the outward meanings of religious scriptures and shun metaphorical interpretation. Creeds written by such authors typically consist of little more than verses of the Qur'ān and traditions of the Prophet, arranged topically.<sup>(1)</sup> A casual reader of such works will not detect any logical build-up of ideas, and might be justified in assuming that theological issues are discussed in a somewhat haphazard fashion. Additionally, there was clearly a very strong disapproval of using kalām dialectics in any matters of the religion.<sup>(2)</sup>

The second group, who despite their varied beliefs, were all labeled as 'Mu'tazilīs', constructed an elaborate and comprehensive theology based on neo-Platonic principles, many times delving into issues that the religious texts did not seem to directly cater to (such as the types of knowledge, the means of acquiring knowledge, and the structure and properties of matter<sup>(3)</sup>). Their non-traditionalist, logic-based reasoning allowed them to take from non-Scriptural sources, and their hermeneutics were refined over the course of a century and became standardized in the science of *kalām*.

### The Rise of 'Sunnī Kalām'

During the first two centuries of Islam, *kalām* remained primarily a non-Sunnī phenomenon. By this, what is meant is that a general mistrust of the ḥadīth, demonstrated via a strong skepticism or even outright rejection of ḥadīth narrations, and a dismissive attitude towards the *muḥadithūn* ('traditionists'), was symptomatic of all early *kalām* movements. Additionally, those who employed *kalām* rejected the doctrine of God's predestination (*qadr*), which was and remains a hallmark of Sunnī theology. The fact that there is not a single instance of an early *mutakallim* (meaning, from 750-850 CE) who also specialized in and was associated with ḥadīth, or who affirmed *qadr*, buttresses this reality.

It was in the middle of the third Islamic century that *kalām* tendencies first began to appear amongst traditionalist Sunnī elements as well.<sup>(4)</sup> The first two such theologians who ascribed to the Sunnī tradition yet endorsed aspects of *kalām*<sup>(5)</sup> appear to be 'Abdullāh b. Sa'īd, otherwise

(1) See as an example of this: al-Ḥasan b. 'Alī b. Khalaf, *Explanation of the Creed of al-Barbahaaree* (d. 329 AH), tr. Abu Talha Dawood Burbank (Birmingham: Al-Hidaayah Publications, 2005).

(2) Many of these narrations have been collected by the Ḥanbalī theologian and jurist Ibn Qudāma (d. 620/1223), in his book *Taḥrīm al-naẓar fī kutub ahl al-kalām*, which was edited and translated by G. Makdisi in his *Censure of speculative theology* (London, Luzac, 1962). They are also summarized by J. Pavlin in "Sunnī Kalām", *op. cit.*, p. 112-5.

(3) R. M. Frank, in his "The Science of Kalām," p. 12-3, lays out the basic framework that almost all *mutakallim* authors followed in their theological treatises.

(4) G. Makdisi, "Ash'arī and the Ash'arīs in Islamic Religious History I," p. 51; K. Blankinship, "The early creed," p. 52.

(5) It should be noted that while both of these personalities were viewed as being within the Sunnī tradition, and affirmed *qadr* (a hallmark of Sunnism at the time), neither was associated with the ḥadīth folk and its collectors. Generally, the ḥadīth specialists such as al-Bukhārī (d. 256 AH) and others of his generation were Ḥanbalite in their attitude towards the Divine Attributes, as their works clearly demonstrate.

known as Ibn Kullāb (d. 241/855)<sup>(1)</sup> and al-Ḥārith b. Asad al-Muḥāsibī (d. 243/857).<sup>(2)</sup> While we have no writings left of the former, and scant biographical information, the latter has left us numerous treatises and manuals. We can also glean some of their theological opinions from other writings, in particular al-Ash'arī's *Kitāb al-Maqālāt* ('The Book of Theological Opinions'). These two theologians seemed to part ways with the other traditionalists by claiming that God's Attributes must be unchanging and eternal; according to them, no change could be posited in God ('*la taḥduthu bihī al-ḥawādith*'). This seemingly minor doctrine appears to be the genesis of proto-Ash'arite Sunnism.

As an example of how this modified previous Sunnī theology, both Ibn Kullāb and al-Muḥāsibī claimed that God could not speak when He chose to, but rather must be eternally speaking, in a manner that the creation could not comprehend through their senses.<sup>(3)</sup> This contrasted with the position of Ibn Ḥanbal and others, who explicitly believed that God could speak when He chose to Speak.

The primary work from which al-Muḥāsibī's theological opinions may be derived is his *Fahm al-Qur'ān*, which was written in part as a refutation of the Mu'tazilites. In this work, al-Muḥāsibī considers God's Attributes to be perfect and praiseworthy, incapable of change or abrogation.<sup>(4)</sup> He affirms that God possesses the full and complete knowledge of what has happened, what is happening, and what will happen, and God also knows that which will not happen, if it were to happen, how it would happen.<sup>(5)</sup> No accidents (*ḥawādith*) can subside in God,<sup>(6)</sup> hence His will (*irādah*) is eternal and no change can affect it. Therefore, al-Muḥāsibī argues, all references to God 'willing' are only a reference to His pre-eternal will, and not a 'will' that is depending on an external event and hence *ḥādith*.<sup>(7)</sup>

Although there are references in his biographies that al-Muḥāsibī wrote works on *kalām*, none

(1) For Ibn Kullāb, see: W. M. Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, pp. 286-9; M. Allard, *Le problème des attributs divins dans la doctrine d'al-Aṣ'arī et de ses premiers grands disciples*, pp. 146-9; R. M. Frank, "The *Kalām*: an Art of Contradiction-Making or Theological Science?" p. 300.

(2) For al-Muḥāsibī, the standard monograph is by J. van Ess, *Die Gedankenwelt des Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī* (Bonn: Bonner Orientalistische Studien, 1961). Also see: M. Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad: A Study of the Life and Teachings of al-Muḥāsibī* (London: The Sheldon Press, 1935); Ahmed Ates, "Two Works of al-Muḥāsibī" in *Festschrift Werner Caskel* (Leiden: Brill, 1968), pp. 37-42; T. Nagel, *A History of Islamic Theology*, pp. 138-9; Massignon, *Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism*, tr. Benjamin Clark (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), pp. 161-2. For the primary Arabic sources, see: al-Baghdādī, Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. 'Alī al-Khaṭīb, *Ta'rikh Baghdād* (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, n.d.), v. 8, pp. 211-8; al-Subkī, Tāj al-Dīn 'Abd al-Wahhāb b. 'Alī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'iyyah al-Kubrā*, ed. 'Abd al-Fattāḥ Muḥammad Ḥulw (Cairo: Dār Iḥyā al-Kitāb al-'Arabiyyah, n.d.), v. 1, pp. 275-284; al-Dhahabī, Muḥammad b. Aḥmad, *Siyar A'lām al-Nubalā*, ed. Shu'ayb al-Arna'ūt (Lebanon: Mu'assasat al-Risālah, 1996), v. 12, pp. 110-2.

(2) have presented on the life and theology of al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī at a number of seminars. I hope to eventually publish some of my findings in future papers.

(3) See: al-Ash'arī, *Kitāb Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn wa-l-khtilāf al-muṣallīn*, ed. H. Ritter, p. 298; al-Muḥāsibī, *Fahm al-Qur'ān* (ed. Quwatlī), p. 307; J. van Ess, "Ibn Kullab et la 'miḥna,'" *Arabica*, Vol. 37, No. 2. (Jul., 1990), p. 191.

(4) *Fahm al-Qur'ān*, ed. Ḥusayn al-Quwatlī, (Beirut: Dār al-Kindī, 1978), p. 332.

(5) *Ibid.*, p. 339.

(6) *Ibid.*, p. 340.

(7) *Ibid.*, p. 342.

survived. Most of the titles of his works that have come down to us seem to be of a Ṣūfī genre.<sup>(1)</sup> Thus al-Muḥāsibī represents, for his age, a rare combination between *kalām* and *taṣawwuf*. Even though this combination was to become a hallmark of later Ash'arism, in the third century of the *hijra* it was almost unheard of.

Al-Muḥāsibī seemed to have left a stronger impact upon early Islamic thought than Ibn Kullāb, even though most view him as being a student of the latter. An authority as great as 'Abd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī (d. 429/1038) remarks, "Most of the people of *kalām* who affirmed the attributes (*mutakallim al-ṣifātiyya*) ascribe themselves to him (viz., Ibn Kullāb)."<sup>(2)</sup>

One of the most analytical early accounts of al-Muḥāsibī's theology is provided by al-Shahrastānī (d. 548/1154). Al-Shahrastānī claimed that the earliest scholars of the traditionalists (whom he referenced as '*Ahl al-Ḥadīth*') such as Mālik b. Anas (d. 170/787) and Ibn Ḥanbal, would not categorize or differentiate between the Attributes of God mentioned in the texts, and would affirm all of them, in a manner (*kayfiyya*) known to God. Since Mu'tazilīs would negate attributes, and the traditionalists would affirm them, the latter were called 'Attributionists' (*ṣifātiyya*) while the former were called 'Negationists' (*mu'aṭṭila*). This remained the case, he stated, until the time of Ibn Kullāb and al-Muḥāsibī, for these two ascribed themselves to the traditionalists, but embraced the knowledge of *kalām* and supported the doctrines of the traditionalists through *kalām* arguments and logical reasoning.<sup>(3)</sup>

From the above quotes, it is clear that the two primary figures who founded an alternative trend in Sunnism – a trend that would later become Ash'arism – were Ibn Kullāb and al-Muḥāsibī.

### **Ibn Ḥanbal and al-Muḥāsibī**

Ibn Ḥanbal, the traditionalist Sunnī Imam *par excellence*, was a contemporary of al-Muḥāsibī. All the classical biographies of al-Muḥāsibī indicate that Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal strongly disapproved of him. Ibn Ḥanbal would warn the people from attending al-Muḥāsibī's circles, so much so that al-Muḥāsibī abandoned speaking in public, and it is reported that only four people attended al-Muḥāsibī's funeral because of Ibn Ḥanbal's censure.<sup>(4)</sup>

On one occasion, Ibn Ḥanbal requested a student of al-Muḥāsibī to allow him to anonymously attend one of his discourses by sitting behind a curtain in the student's house. When al-Muḥāsibī began preaching, Ibn Ḥanbal was visibly moved, but when the student returned to him, presumably hoping for a more positive verdict, he responded, "I do not think I have ever seen such a group, and I have never heard about the knowledge of realities (*'ilm al-ḥaqā'iq*) as I have from this man. And from what I have seen of their states (*aḥwāl*), I do not advise that you should accompany them."<sup>(5)</sup>

(1) For a discussion of his Ṣūfī theology and views, see Smith, *al-Muḥāsibī*, p. 111-269; van Ess, *Die Gedankenwelt des Ḥārīt al-Muḥāsibī*, various chapters.

(2) Aḥmad b. 'Alī Ibn Ḥajr, *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, ed. Ibrāhīm al-Zaybaq (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risālah, 1996), v. 1, p. 326. Also see 'Abd al-Ra'ūf Munāwī, *al-Kawākib al-Durriyya*, (Cairo: al-Maktaba al-Azharīyah lil-Turāth, 1994), v. 1, p. 218.

(3) Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Karīm Al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milāl wa-l-Niḥāl*, ed. Aḥmad Fahmī Muḥammad (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1992), v. 1, p. 81.

(4) Al-Baghdādī, *Tā'rikh Baghdād*, v. 8, p. 216.

(5) Al-Baghdādī, *Tā'rikh Baghdād*, v. 8, p. 215. A contemporary and friend of Ibn Ḥanbal, and fellow Ḥanbalite traditionist, Abū Zur'a, is quoted as saying, when asked about the books of al-Muḥāsibī, "I

It appears that while Ibn Ḥanbal was impressed with al-Muḥasibī's piety and his exhortations, he disapproved of the style that he used, claiming that he had never heard anyone speak in this manner before. Thus, he continued to warn against al-Muḥasibī and even prevented people from coming to him.

Some later Ash'arite authorities, such as al-Subkī (d. 771/1369), dismissed this criticism of Ibn Ḥanbal as being typical of contemporary rivalries.<sup>(1)</sup> But this may be seen as al-Subkī's attempt to play down Ibn Ḥanbal's criticism of someone whom al-Subkī highly regarded. Some modern researchers have posited three different reasons for why Ibn Ḥanbal would possibly warn against al-Muḥasibī: firstly because he was influenced by *kalām*, secondly because of his Ṣūfī tendencies, and lastly because of the manner of his speech with regards to spiritual matters.<sup>(2)</sup>

However, the earliest sources do seem to indicate that the primary reason was al-Muḥasibī's delving into *kalām*. Al-Khaṭīb's quote is explicit on this point: "And Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal disapproved of al-Ḥārith's looking into *kalām*, and the fact that he wrote books on it, and he would even prevent people from going to him. So when he spoke along those lines, Aḥmad broke off from him, so he (i.e., al-Muḥasibī) hid in his house in Baghdad, and died in it, and no one prayed over him except for four people."<sup>(3)</sup> Most other early authors, such as Ibn Taymiyyah,<sup>(4)</sup> al-Dhahabī<sup>(5)</sup> and Ibn Ḥajr,<sup>(6)</sup> also view Ibn Ḥanbal's censure of al-Muḥasibī as having been based on the latter's acceptance of *kalām*.

Regardless of Ibn Ḥanbal's motivation, the status and respect that he had in the eyes of the people of Baghdad was so great that such a warning forced al-Muḥasibī to live a private life to the end of his days, and, "...when he died, no one prayed over him except four people."<sup>(7)</sup>

This incident appears to be the very first sign of tension within the 'Sunnī' movement. It

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caution you regarding these books, for they are books of innovation and misguidance! Follow the traditions, and you will find in it what will suffice you from these works." He was told, "But these books contain much admonition!" to which the reply was given, "Whoever does not obtain admonition from the Book of God will not gain any admonition from these books. Have you heard that Mālik b. Anas, and Sufyān al-Thawrī, and al-Awzā'ī, and the great scholars who passed before, wrote such works about 'feelings' (*khaṭarāt*) and 'whisperings' (*wasāwis*)? These are people who have opposed the people of knowledge, they come to us with al-Ḥārith al-Muḥasibī...how quick people are to accept innovation!" *ibid.*, v. 8, p. 215.

(1) al-Subkī, *Tabaqāt al-Shāfi'iyyah al-Kubrā*, v. 2, p. 278.

(2) See the introduction to al-Muḥasibī's *Fahm al-Qur'ān* by Ḥusayn al-Quwatlī, p. 44-46.

(3) Al-Baghdādī, *Tā'rikh Baghdad*, v. 8, p. 214.

(4) Ibn Taymiyyah wrote, "Imam Aḥmad would warn against the Kullabites, and he commanded the people to abandon al-Ḥārith al-Muḥasibī because he was one of them;" *Majmū' Fatāwā* v. 5, p. 533. He also wrote, regarding the principle first posited by Ibn Kullāb that God's attributes are not related to His will, "And it was this principle that Imam Aḥmad criticized Ibn Kullāb and his companions over, even al-Ḥārith al-Muḥasibī, despite the noble stature that he had. And Aḥmad ordered that he be boycotted ... and he said, 'Beware of al-Ḥārith! All problems come from al-Ḥārith!' So al-Ḥārith died and only a few people prayed over him, despite the fact that what he possessed of knowledge and religion surpassed most of those who followed Ibn Kullāb in this principle. And it is also said that al-Ḥārith recanted from that and believed that God speaks with a sound..." *Majmū' Fatāwā* v. 12, p. 95. See also *ibid.*, v. 7, p. 429, and v. 8, p. 497.

(5) Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, v. 12, p. 111.

(6) Ibn Ḥajr, *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, v. 1, p. 326. It should be noted that some modern authors explain Ibn Ḥanbal's response as blind *Ahl al-Ḥadīth* reactionism from someone who forbade recourse to theological speculation even in the defense of Sunnī doctrines. See: Massignon, *Essay*, p. 161; Van Ess, *Die Gedankenwelt des Ḥārith al-Muḥasibī*, p. 9-10; Smith, *al-Muḥasibī*, p. 13-15.

(7) Al-Baghdādī, *Tā'rikh Baghdad*, v. 8, p. 214.

would re-appear and surface time and time again over the course of the next few centuries, and one can already sense, in the differences of Ibn Ḥanbal and al-Muḥasibī, the later manifestations of Ibn Taymiyya and al-Rāzī.

### Ibn Khuzayma and His Students

Another early manifestation of this tension occurred half a century later, in the far away land of Nishapur. This involved a relatively minor, yet significant, falling out between the Shāfi'ī traditionalist Muḥammad b. Ishāq, more commonly known as Ibn Khuzayma (d. 311/923) and some of his disciples.<sup>(1)</sup> The controversy between the teacher and four of his students was over the eternality of God's speech: does God continually speak, or does He speak when He wishes to speak?<sup>(2)</sup> These students followed the position of Ibn Kullāb, and claimed, based on his premise of negating accidents subsiding in the essence of God, that God is eternally speaking, for there could be no 'change' posited in God. Ibn Khuzayma, following the traditionalist theology of affirming the apparent understanding of Scripture, claimed that God spoke at His Will. When Ibn Khuzayma was told about the beliefs of some of his students, he confronted them with this. While some of them attempted to defend their position, apparently the forcefulness of their teacher, and perhaps their lack of support elsewhere, caused them retract, and eventually Ibn Khuzayma made them publically recant from their position.

The significance of this disagreement is that it shows, perhaps for the second time after Ibn Ḥanbal's censuring of Ibn Kullāb, the tension between the teachings of Ibn Kullāb and those of other traditionalists. Ibn Khuzayma was of the position that eventually Ibn Taymiyya championed: that God speaks when He wishes to speak, and that His Divine Speech is linked to His will (*irāda*). The students of Ibn Khuzayma, on the other hand, initially held a view that would become mainstream Ash'arism: that God's Speech is an eternal speech, not linked to His will. For these students, along with later Ash'arties, God is continuously speaking an internal speech.

### Al-Ash'arī and the Ḥanbalites of Baghdad

It is a strange quirk of history that neither Ibn Kullāb nor al-Muḥasibī were primarily credited with the launch of the rationalist pro-*kalām* Sunnī movement. That honor was left to a theologian who lived two generations after them, al-Ash'arī, whose teachings would eventually found an eponymous school.<sup>(3)</sup>

- (1) In particular, Abū 'Alī al-Thaqafī (d. 328/940) and Abū Bakr al-Ṣibghī (d. 342/953), along with two of their peers. For details of this story, see: Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. Ḥusayn al-Bayhaqī, *Kitāb al-asmā' wa-l-ṣifāt* (Jeddah: Maktaba al-Suwādī, 1993), vol 2, pp. 22-3; al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, v. 15, p. 282; Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar*, v. 2, p. 77. Also see: T. Nagel, *A History of Islamic Theology*, pp. 131-32.
- (2) It is significant to note that this very issue became a crucial difference between the later Ash'arī school (who sided with these students) and the Ḥanbalī school (who upheld the position of Ibn Taymiyya). See, for example, Ibn Taymiyya's position and defence in: Hoover, Jon, "God Acts by His Will and Power: Ibn Taymiyya's Theology of a Personal God in his Treatise on the Voluntary Attributes" in *Ibn Taymiyya and His Times*, ed. Yossef Rapaport and Shahab Ahmed (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 55-77.
- (3) The most scholarly work on the life and writings of al-Ash'arī remains M. Allard, *Le Problème des Attributs Divins* (Beirut: Impr. Catholique, 1965), pp. 25-48. R. M. Frank has also done considerable work in this regard; see in particular his "Elements in the development of the teaching of al-Ash'arī," *Le Muséon* 104 (1991), pp. 141-190. R. McCarthy's work, *The Theology of al-Ash'arī* (Beirut: Impr. Catholique, 1953), while outdated in many areas, nonetheless remains a valuable introduction.

Al-Ash'arī wrote numerous works, and his writing style was at once bold and clear. It was only a matter of time before al-Ash'arī would draw the ire of the traditionists, represented by the leaders of the Ḥanbalite school. Tensions between the pro- and anti-*kalām* tendencies in Sunnī Islam arose once again, this time in the form of a scathing critique against al-Ash'arī by the leading Ḥanbalī theologian of Baghdad in his time, Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan b. 'Alī al-Barbahārī (d. 329/940).<sup>(1)</sup> It appears that al-Barbahārī rebuffed al-Ash'arī's claims to be a follower of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, despite multiple attempts to prove this. If a pro-Ḥanbalī source is to be believed, al-Ash'arī sought to ingratiate himself with al-Barbahārī by boasting of his refutations against various Mu'tazilīs and non-believers. To this, al-Barbahārī responded that al-Ash'arī's style (*'tarīqa'*) was unknown to him, and the only manner that he recognized was that of Ibn Ḥanbal.<sup>(2)</sup>

The message was clear: al-Ash'arī was not deemed to be a true follower of the path of Ibn Ḥanbal, and he was, in the eyes of this Ḥanbalī theologian, in fact closer in methodology to his opponents than he was to his supposed allies. This rejection may have resulted in the writing of al-Ash'arī's *al-Idāna 'an 'uṣūl al-diyāna* ('An Elucidation on the Foundations of the Religion'), which is at odds with his other writings, since he seems to affirm far more Divine Attributes than he does in other works.<sup>(3)</sup> When such a conciliatory approach did not work, al-Ash'arī decided to take on al-Barbahārī full-throttle, and wrote his *al-Ḥathth 'alā al-baḥth* ('The Encouragement to Research'), in which he defended the use of *kalām* against its detractors.<sup>(4)</sup> This is the first work written by an author claiming allegiance to Sunnism yet defending the usage and role of *kalām*.<sup>(5)</sup> Neither Ibn Kullāb nor al-Muḥasibī explicitly defended the usage of *kalām*.

Although al-Ash'arī was not able to ingratiate himself with the Ḥanbalites of Baghdad, his teachings would continue to live on in a small handful of students.

Some possible causes of the fame of al-Ash'arī over those who preceded him can be: 1) his relationship as the step-son of the famous Mu'tazilī al-Jubbā'ī; 2) his melodramatic public conversion; and, 3) the thoroughness and quantity of his theological writings, which far surpassed anything that either Ibn Kullāb or al-Muḥasibī are alleged to have written. To this, it is also possible to add the effects of Ibn Ḥanbal's censure of al-Muḥasibī, which would have made it highly difficult for Sunnīs to take al-Muḥasibī as a founding role model.

- (1) See: Ibn Abī Ya'lā, *Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābila*, vol. 3, pp. 36-8; M. Allard, *Doctrine d'al-Ash'arī*, pp. 103-4, R. M. Frank, "al-Ash'arī's *Kitāb al-Ḥathth 'alā al-baḥth*," *MIDEO*, vol 18 (1988), p. 99; C. Melchert, "The Ḥanābila and Early Sufis," *Arabica*, vol. 48, (2001), pp. 365-7.
- (2) Ibn Abī Ya'lā, *Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābila*, vol. 3, p. 37.
- (3) The discrepancy of thought between this one work and his others has been mentioned and expounded on by, inter alia, Goldziher, Wensinck, Makdisi, and Gardet. See: A. J. Wensinck, *The Muslim Creed*, p. 92-3; G. Makdisi, "Ash'arī and the Ash'arīs in Islamic Religious History I," p. 42, and "Ash'arī and the Ash'arīs in Islamic Religious History II," p. 23-6 (though it should be noted that Makdisi is skeptical of the attribution of this work to al-Ash'arī); E12, s.v. '*Kalām*' (L. Gardet).
- (4) M. Allard, *Doctrine d'al-Ash'arī*, pp. 206-10.
- (5) It was translated by R. McCarthy in his *The Theology of al-Ash'arī*, p. 117-141 as 'A Vindication of *Kalām*'. It is commonly known as the *Risāla fī istiḥsān al-khawḍ fī 'ilm al-kalām*. In a detailed study and translation of the work, R. M. Frank has pointed out that this title is probably from a scribe or editor. See: R. M. Frank, "al-Ash'arī's *Kitāb al-Ḥathth 'alā al-baḥth*," p. 84. Also see: A. J. Wensinck, *The Muslim Creed*, p. 93 n. 2; T. Nagel, *A History of Islamic Theology*, pp. 149-52.

### Conclusion

Sunnism, from its very inception, championed a respect for the traditions of the Prophet, and hence were opposed to the Mu'tazilite theology that entailed, *inter alia*, a negation of God's predestination of events. While this shibboleth remained a cornerstone of Sunnī theology, other matters, in particular the usage of *kalām* to defend the doctrines of faith and the acceptance of the corollaries of *kalām*, remained unresolved. The more authoritative and respected figures in early Sunnism, such as Ibn Ḥanbal, clearly rejected all usage of *kalām*, and therefore did not affirm any of its corollaries (such as the belief that no change could be posited in God). However, other, contemporaneous figures, such as Ibn Kullāb and al-Muḥasibī, affirmed not only the usage of *kalām* but some of its logical corollaries, and claimed that accidents and change could not subside in God. It was based on al-Muḥasibī's embracement of *kalām* (as well as his Ṣufī tendencies) that Ibn Ḥanbal publically called for his boycott.

The Sunnī faction that embraced *kalām* had to modify Ibn Ḥanbal's literalistic understanding of the nature of Divine Speech, and hence claimed that God's speech was an eternal one, not associated with His Will. This divergence of thought led to a public dispute between Ibn Khuzayma and a group of his students; even though it was quickly resolved in this instance, it foreshadowed greater controversies to come.

Hence, when al-Ash'arī developed a more complete theology based on the premise of Sunnī *kalām*, it was understandable that the Ḥanbalites of Baghdad rejected this attempt, and in fact did not deem him to be one of their own (*viz.*, a true 'Sunnī' follower of Ibn Ḥanbal).

Nonetheless, what these incidents demonstrate is that Sunnism, from its very inception, has carried within it a spectrum of diversity that allowed for varied theologies to spring forth, in particular, the Salafī understanding of God's Attributes, and the Ash'arī understanding. Both of these understandings can be seen to have precedents in figures who viewed themselves as Sunnī from the very beginnings of what can be seen to be Sunnī Islam.

### Postscript

Al-Ash'arī's impact was on a small circle of students in Baghdad, in particular Abū al-Ḥasan al-Bāhilī (d. ca. 370/981)<sup>(1)</sup> and Muḥammad b. Aḥmad Ibn Mujāhid (d. 370/981).<sup>(2)</sup> Unfortunately, their writings have not survived, and it is very difficult to assess how, if at all, they further developed the teachings of the school that their teacher founded. The next major codifier and developer of Ash'arī thought (called 'the second al-Ash'arī') was a judge of Baghdad, al-Qāḍī Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1013), whose work *al-Tamhīd* laid the methodological foundations for all future Ash'arī works of theology.<sup>(3)</sup> It was also al-Bāqillānī who won over many converts to the school, and coined the term 'Ash'arī' to describe the school.<sup>(4)</sup>

Ironically, it was not in Baghdad that Ash'arism flourished. Baghdad remained a stronghold of traditionalist thought for another century, and, when Ash'arism eventually was introduced into the public discourse in Baghdad, it caused a political turmoil of the highest magnitude, so much so that the Caliph himself was forced to intervene and quell the tension.<sup>(5)</sup>

It was not the followers of al-Ash'arī in the heartland cities of Baghdad and Basra who would eventually triumph, but rather his followers in the outlying provinces of Nishapur, in modern-day Iran.<sup>(6)</sup> Ash'arism would be exported from its birthplace of Basra and Baghdad, to the outlying lands of Nishapur, where it would develop and win many converts, some of whom would eventually go on to wield great political might. It was these supporters who would eventually reintroduce a modified and updated version of Ash'arism in the very cities where it originated from, but this time, rather than being shunned and frowned upon, the new theology, with support from a new government, the Seljuqs, would supplant and dominate all other theologies, eventually becoming the official theology of the Muslim State.

(1) Not much can be gleaned regarding his life and thought; even his full name and exact date of death seem to be lost. However, he did teach kalām to al-Bāqillānī, al-Isfara'īnī, and Ibn Fūrak. See: Ibn 'Asākir, *Tabyīn kadhīb al-muftarī*, p. 178.

(2) See: Ibn 'Asākir, *Tabyīn*, p. 177.

(3) For al-Bāqillānī, see: Ibn 'Asākir, *Tabyīn*, p. 217-26; Éric Chaumont, "Bāqillānī, théologien ash'arite et usūliste mālikite, contre les légistes à propos de "I'ijtihād" et de l'accord unanime de la communauté," *Studia Islamica*, No. 79 (1994), pp. 79-102; Yusuf Ibish, *The Political Doctrines of al-Baqillani* (Beirut: AUB Press, 1966), pp. 14-18; George Makdisi's review of R. McCarthy's edition of al-Bāqillānī's *Kitāb al-Tamhīd*, *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (Winter, 1959), pp. 105-106.

Of course, al-Bāqillānī did base much of his methodology on al-Ash'arī's writings as well; see T. Nagel, *A History of Islamic Theology*, p. 160.

(4) R. McCarthy, *The Theology of al-Ash'arī*, p. 202.

(5) This is known as the 'Qadiri Controversy'. George Makdisi briefly talks about this in his *Ibn Aqīl: Religion and Culture in Classical Islam* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997) pp. 5-10.

(6) It is somewhat ironic that Iran, today the only officially Shi'ite country in the world, had always been a bastion of Sunnism since Islam came to it, producing many scholars of both traditionalist and Ash'arite Islam.