

A B S T R A C T

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THE PLACE OF REASON IN 'ABDUH'S THEOLOGY.

Its Impact on his Theological System and Views.

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Reason is an important focus-word in 'Abduh's world-view and has a great influence on his theological system and views. Because of his position of ascribing great powers to reason and limited functions to revelation, his system and views are in glaring contradiction with those of the Ash'ariyah who have a distrust in the power of reason and great reliance on revelation. His system and views, on the other hand, greatly resemble those of the Mu'tazilah who have been well-known for their high appreciation of the power of reason and little reliance on revelation. With those of the Maturidiyah in both their Samarqandi and Bukhara branches, who adopt an intermediate position pertaining to the power of reason and the function of revelation, 'Abduh's theological system and views have many disagreements. Contrary to the prevalent opinion 'Abduh is neither an Ash'ari, nor a Maturidi, nor an eclectic. He is rather a Mu'tazili.

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by

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PREFACE

This thesis deals with 'Abduh's theology, a field on which a comprehensive study seems to be wanting. Its aim is to discover the real nature of his theological views.

The system of transliteration used in this work is the one in use in the Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University, Montreal.

It is a pleasant duty for me to express my sincerest thanks to the Institute of Islamic Studies and, in particular, to Dr. C. J. Adams, its Director, who has been so generous as to grant me a fellowship without which this study would not have been possible. I am also greatly indebted to him for the valuable help and criticism I received in the preparation of this thesis.

I must equally record my deepest gratitude to Professor T. Izutsu but for whose unfailing encouragement, thorough supervision and constructive suggestions, the work would have been impossible. I am also deeply grateful to him for permitting me to consult and quote his photocopy of the MS. of al-Māturīdī's Kitāb al-Tawhīd.

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INTRODUCTION

Muhammad 'Abduh is one of the most important leaders of modernism in Islām. His influence is by no means limited to Egypt and its neighbouring Muslim countries. Even Indonesia in the Far East, which is separated by the vast Indian Ocean from the rest of the Muslim world in the Middle East, has not been exempted from his influence. It is under the impact of his ideas, which came into the country through al-'urwah al-Wuthqā, al-Manār and through his own works such as Tafsīr al-Manār and Risālah al-Tawhīd, that modernism in Indonesian Islām was inaugurated in the first decade of this century.

Studies on the life and ideas of 'Abduh, in his capacity as an important leader of modernism in Islām, have been made by various scholars, both in the West and in the East. Generally these studies bear the character of overall investigation into his life and ideas as a whole, that is to say they are studies simultaneously devoted to his religious and political views as well as his ideas on reforms. Extensive studies of a particular aspect of his views are scanty. Such is especially the case with regard to his theological concepts.

'Abduh during his life-time wrote several works most of which have been published. Among the most important works is undoubtedly the Risālah al-Tawhīd. The various authors, who have written on 'Abduh, have not neglected, therefore, to deal with his theological views as expounded in this book. But as these studies of his theological position form generally only a part of a whole, they do not constitute an adequate systematic study of his theological concepts.

Adams, for example, who has made an extensive study of 'Abduh is content to present the important points of the Risālah al-Tawhīd accompanied with his comments.¹ He does not examine the nature of 'Abduh's theology in detail or as a whole. 'Uthmān Amīn does the same.² Hourani devotes only a few pages to his theological views.³

The Risālah has been translated into French by B. Michel and Muṣṭafā 'Abd al-Rāziq and recently into English by Iṣḥāq Muṣā'ad and Kenneth Cragg.⁴ In the Introductions that the translators have written for the French and English translations, no systematic study of 'Abduh's theological concepts has been made. Michel and 'Abd al-Rāziq, like Adams, give chiefly its main points along with their comments.⁵ Cragg, while stressing the Risālah's importance which he indicates

by calling it Risālah al-Tajdīd,⁶ mainly comments on some of 'Abduh's ideas as they appear in the work.

Studies on 'Abduh's theological concepts have appeared in periodicals,⁷ but they too do not undertake the examination of the real nature of his theology.

By concentrating their studies on his theological beliefs and not on his theological system and by comparing his individual theological concepts with individual concepts of other theological schools, various authors have arrived at different opinions on 'Abduh in his capacity as a theologian.

Adams finds that "his teachings throughout presuppose the body of orthodox theology"⁸ and that "his theology did not differ greatly, in essential content, from the accepted theology."⁹ Horten asserts that on many points 'Abduh is following an extreme orthodox line.¹⁰ In Macdonald's opinion he "showed himself a Māturīdite with no mention of al-Māturīdī."¹¹ Hourani thinks that his theology has the character of eclecticism, in which the influences of orthodoxy, especially those of al-Ghazālī and al-Māturīdī, and of Mu'tazilism are discernable.¹² Michel and 'Abd al-Rāziq speak of him on one occasion as a follower of al-Ash'arī and al-Ghazālī in the idea of God's attributes,¹³ and on another occasion consider him a modern Mu'tazilī on

account of his strong defence of the right of criticism.¹⁴ Jomier finds certain Mu'tazilī positions among his ideas.¹⁵ 'Uthmān Amīn,¹⁶ Gardet and Anawati,¹⁷ Caspar¹⁸ and Kerr¹⁹ agree in saying that some of his ideas amount to the revival of Mu'tazilism. Sulaymān Dunyā of the Azhar University, basing his study not on the Risālah but on 'Abduh's rather neglected Hāshiyah (commentary) on the Sharḥ al-Dawwānī li-al-'Aqā'id al-'Adudīyah, ranks him as more radical than the Mu'tazilī in giving greater prominence to reason than to revelation.²⁰ Kedourie thinks him to be "secretly a freethinker"²¹ and even accuses him of heterodoxy.²²

There is thus a confusion among the various authors about the nature of 'Abduh's theological position. It would be superfluous to emphasize that it is important to know the nature of his theology. In other words does he have an orthodox theology as claimed by various authors? If it is orthodox, is it of the Ash'arī type as thought by some, or of the Māturīdī type as asserted by others? Or, since he shows Mu'tazilī tendencies in his theological views, is it of the Mu'tazilī type? Or again is it different from the theology of the classical schools; is it a theology independent in itself, having its own specific character?

If he has in fact an Ash'arī theology, the

implication would be that his reform ideas must necessarily be considerably limited by the Ash'ari position of great dependence on revelation and by their doctrine of kasb (acquisition) which is rather a disguise idea of jabr (compulsion, predestination). In that case he would have reform ideas without far-reaching effects, for under such a rather fatalistic theology man has rather a passive role in life and relies much upon God for the change of his fate.

If he has, on the other hand, a Mu'tazili theology, his ideas of reforms would suffer less limitations under the Mu'tazili concept of the importance of reason and of man's free will and free act. In this case he would have reform ideas with a more important meaning for the progress of his co-religionists, for under such a theology man has an active role in life and depends rather upon his own efforts for the change of his fate.

And if he has a Maturidi theology, his reform ideas would be limited to a certain extent by the intermediate position between Ash'arism and Mu'tazilism that the Maturidiyah adopt in their theology with regard to man's role in life.

Indeed, the discovery of his real interpretation of Islām would be of great help in gaining a better

understanding of 'Abduh and his ideas as well as of the further development of the Islāmic modernist movement that he inaugurated. This interpretation depends much on the nature of his theology.

It is, therefore, the intention of this work to analyze and expound the nature of 'Abduh's theological views. Do his views form an independent school in themselves? If they do not, to which of the classical schools do his views belong?

'Abduh's major systematic work on theology is Risālah al-Tawhīd. It should be borne in mind that the basis of this work is the lectures that he delivered in 1885 - while he was in exile in Beirut - before the students of the Madrasah al-Sulṭāniyah, a school of secondary rather than of university level. The Risālah is an elaboration of those lectures. These facts, i.e. that the lectures were destined for students of a secondary school and that the Risālah is an elaboration of these lectures, explain the reason why the work, as Adams rightly observed, is written in a popular form.²³ It is, indeed, simple and brief.²⁴ Moreover, as he implicitly says it himself in the Introduction to the Risālah,²⁵ his intention was to avoid the controversies that took place between the

classical theological schools. Hence, the Risālah does not embody all his theological views.

For a complete investigation of 'Abduh's theology, one cannot, therefore, confine himself to the study of this one work, though one can discern in it the basic structure of his theological system. For the clarification of obscurities and a full grasp of the theological position taken in the Risālah as well as for an exposition of other theological concepts, one has to consult his other works.

'Abduh wrote another work on theology, to which reference has already been made, i.e. his Hāshiyah on the Sharḥ al-Dawwānī li-al-'Aqā'id al-'Adudīyah in 1876. Since his purpose was to comment on the classical theological controversies between the Mu'tazilah and the Ash'arīyah, this work differs greatly in nature from the Risālah. In the latter he tries to be neutral between the conflicting schools, but in the former he does not attempt to conceal his ideas. This work is, therefore, very helpful for a complete study of his theology. For reasons not clear, however, it has been neglected by most authors who write on 'Abduh.

Another important source of his theological concepts is the Tafsīr al-Manār.²⁶ Care must be taken, however, in the attempt to find clarifications in this

work, for his views and those of Rashīd Riḍā, who edited and continued the work after 'Abduh's death, are not always clearly separated from each other.²⁷ Riḍā, as various authors have rightly observed,²⁸ does not always follow 'Abduh's views.²⁹ Nevertheless, Riḍā will be quoted in cases where his views do not differ from those of 'Abduh, and so, serve to clarify 'Abduh's position.

Beside these sources, his other works, such as Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Karīm, Juz' 'Amm and al-Islām wa al-Naṣrāniyah ma' al-'ilm wa al-Madaniyah are also consulted.³⁰

In reading Risālah al-Tawḥīd one notices on almost every page that 'Abduh speaks of the power of reason. Reason for him is an important "focus-word"³¹ and his theological views, beliefs, and doctrines as expounded in the book and in his other works, have been much influenced by this focus-word. In order to understand the full significance of the word to him, the work establishes first the general structure of his world-view and traces the place he accords respectively to reason and revelation in that structure. This will be the subject of Part One, Chapter One.

After the establishment of the structure of

his world-view, one can determine his theological system and then specifies the powers that he assigns to reason and the general function that he confers upon revelation in that system. In order to come to the real nature of his theological system, it is necessary to compare it with related theological systems. It is by this comparison that one can determine whether 'Abduh's system belongs - as is generally thought - to one of the classical theological systems, or whether it is an independent system having a nature of its own. For this comparison to be valid the nature of the other theological systems must first be discovered. All these questions will be dealt with in Part One, Chapters Two and Three.

After having established the nature of his theological system, a comparison will be made in the six Chapters of Part Two between his theological concepts, undetached from his theological system, with the corresponding theological concepts of other schools again undetached from their respective theological systems. In other words we shall not be comparing his individual theological concepts with individual concepts of other theological schools, for as has been seen such a method is misleading; rather we shall compare concepts within the context of their respective

theological systems. In such a way we shall arrive in the Conclusion at the real nature of his theology.

Since in addition to reason revelation is another important focus-word in 'Abduh's structure of world-view, Chapter Four will be devoted to discussion of his ideas about the function of revelation and prophecy. For comparative purposes the views of other theological schools will also be discussed.

The theological schools with which 'Abduh's theology will be compared, are Mu'tazilism, Ash'arism, and Māturīdism. The classical theological works show that it was these schools which gave a great portion of their attention to the power of reason in a way that the latter plays its influence on their respective theological views. As we said earlier, reason for 'Abduh is an important focus-word by which his theological beliefs have been much influenced, and it is probably for this reason that the various authors, when trying to compare him with the classical theologians, classify him with the Ash'ariyah, or with the Māturīdiyyah, or again with the Mu'tazilah and not with the Khawārij or Murji'ah who, unlike the other three schools, were less interested in the power of reason.

It must be emphasized that this work is not a critical study of 'Abduh's theological concepts, but rather a comparative study of his doctrines and those of the classical theological schools. The comparison, as has been explained earlier, is needed to discover the real nature of his theology, i.e. to see whether his theology is of the classical type or whether it is of another type independent in itself.

The procedure to be followed in this work is first to analyze his theological concepts and then compare them with those of the other theological schools. Since the concepts of the latter are needed here only for comparative purposes, our investigation into these concepts will not be extensive except in important cases.

In this connection it should also be pointed out that by virtue of the difference between the social and political circumstances in which 'Abduh lived in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, and those in which the classical theologians lived about ten centuries earlier, the social forces that affect their respective theological views are not the same.

'Abduh in his time is confronted chiefly with the problem posed by the backwardness of Muslims vis-a-vis the rising power of the West. Moreover, the idea of

rationalism was already influencing the Muslim life in his days. In his endeavour to raise the Muslims from their low position, he met strong opposition from the traditional 'ulamā' who held to taqlid. It is under the influence of these two factors, the idea of rationalism and the 'ulamā's strong attachment to taqlid that probably led 'Abduh to give such a prominent place to reason in his Risālah al-Tawhīd.

By giving pre-eminence to the power of reason he cherishes the hope that he would be able to fight with it against the power of traditionalism and at the same time probably also to show to the Western educated Muslims of his time that Islām, as he views it, is a rational religion. Hence, in his Risālah al-Tawhīd he is more concerned with the power of reason, its relation with revelation, prophecy, man's free will and free act and the like, than with the questions of īmān, kufr, shirk etc., which occupied an important place in the works of the classical theologians as a result of the social problems of their own days. For his views on these classical problems one has to consult his other works, in particular his Hāshiyah and the Tafsīr al-Manār.

By following the method of comparing views within the context of their respective systems and by not confining oneself to the study of 'Abduh's Risālah

al-Tawhid, one will be able to discover the real nature of his theology.

FOOTNOTES - INTRODUCTION

1. See Islam and Modernism in Egypt (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), Chapters on Muhammad 'Abduh: Doctrines.

2. See his Muhammad 'Abduh, Essai sur ses Idées Philosophiques et Religieuses (Cairo: Imprimerie Misr, 1944), pp. 123-192.

3. Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age 1798-1939 (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), pp. 135-142 passim.

4. It has also been translated into Urdu and Indonesian. According to Rashid Riḍā the Urdu translation was used in the Aligarh College. (See his Introduction to 'Abduh's Risālah al-Tawhīd [Henceforth to be referred to as Risālah] (12th ed.; Cairo: Dār al-Manār, 1366 AH), p. ٥). In Indonesia the Risālah as well as the Tafsīr al-Manār are still being taught in schools which had been organized to promote 'Abduh's ideas in the country. (See Hamka, Pengaruh Muḥammad 'Abduh di Indonesia (Djakarta: Tintamas, 1961), pp. 47-8.)

5. See their Introduction to M. Abdou, Rissalat Al-Tawhid ou Exposé de la Religion Musulmane (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1925).

6. See his Introduction to Muhammad 'Abduh, The Theology of Unity (London: G. Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1966), p. 22.

7. For example M. Horten, "Mohammed Abduh, sein Leben und seine Theologisch-Philosophische Gedankenwelt", in Beiträge zur Kenntniss des Orients, XIII (1916), 83-114 and XIV (1917), 74-128; and R. Caspar, "Le Renouveau du Mo'tazilisme", in Institut Dominicain d'Etudes Orientales du Caire, Mélanges (MIDEO) IV (1957), 141-202.

8. Islam and Modernism in Egypt, op. cit., p. 115.

9. Ibid.

10. Beiträge zur Kenntniss des Orients, XIV (1917), 117.

11. Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam, heading Al-Māturīdī.
12. Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, op. cit., p. 142.
13. Rissalat al-Tawhid, op. cit., p. LVII.
14. Ibid., p. LXXXIV.
15. Le Commentaire Coranique du Manar (Paris: G.P. Maisonneuve & Cie, 1954), see for example p. 143.
16. Muhammad 'Abduh, op. cit., p. 99.
17. Introduction à la Théologie Musulmane (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1948), p. 85.
18. MIDEO, IV (1957), 157. See also 169 and 171.
19. Islamic Reform, The Political and Legal Theories of Muhammad 'Abduh and Rashīd Riḍā (California: University of California Press, 1966), p. 105.
20. Al-Shaykh Muhammad 'Abduh bayn al-Falāsifah wa al-Kalāmiyyīn [Henceforth to be referred to as al-Shaykh M. 'Abduh] (Cairo: 'Isā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī wa Shurakāh, 1958); Introduction, p. 62.
21. Afghani and 'Abduh (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1966), p. 14.
22. Ibid., p. 12.
23. Islam and Modernism in Egypt, op. cit., p. 112.
24. Hence, as observed by Jomier, it is useful for students of secondary level and is used as a textbook in the Secondary School of al-Azhar. (Le Commentaire Coranique du Manar, op. cit., p. 348).
25. Op. cit., p. 3.
26. According to Goldziher, they contain the substance of the theology as propagated by al-Afghānī and 'Abduh. (Die Richtungen der Islamischen Koranauslegung (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1952), p. 325). This comment holds true with regard to the first five volumes. As will be seen Riḍā is not always of the same opinion as 'Abduh.

27. As is known, 'Abduh's commentary, which he gave in the form of lectures in the Azhar, goes as far as Surah IV/125, which is contained by the first five volumes of the Tafsir al-Manār.

28. According to Caspar, Riḍā is trying to interpret 'Abduh's ideas in a more traditional sense. (MIDEO, IV (1957), 161, note 1). In the opinion of 'Uthmān Amīn, while Riḍā in the beginning of the Tafsir al-Manār, follows 'Abduh closely, he later begins to express his own views in a more and more liberal way and begins to deviate from 'Abduh's method. (Muhammad 'Abduh, op. cit., p. 168, note 2).

29. For example on the question of anthropomorphism. While 'Abduh adopts the Mu'tazilī position of interpretation (infra pp. 228/9), Riḍā follows the Ash'ariyah in their idea of God having limbs without howness. (Tafsir al-Manār, vol. III, 201).

30. There is a third work on theology, the al-'Aqīdah al-Muhammadiyah, which is said to be written by 'Abduh in 1877. Riḍā published it in 1925 in one volume with the Risālah al-Wāridāt, but did not include it in his list of the works of 'Abduh. (See al-Manār, vol. VIII (1323/1905), 492-495). Professor Dr. C. Brockelmann also does not mention al-'Aqīdah al-Muhammadiyah in his account on the works of 'Abduh (see Geschichte der Arabischen Litteratur (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1942), vol. III/i, 315 ff.). 'Uthmān Amīn, however, includes it in his Bibliography on 'Abduh (see Muhammad 'Abduh, op. cit., p. 267 and Rā'id al-Fikr al-Miṣrī (Cairo: Maktabah al-Nahḍah al-Miṣrīyah, 1955), p. 261). Contrary to the Risālah and the Hāshiyah, the al-'Aqīdah contains Ash'arī views, which 'Abduh criticizes in the latter and avoids in the former, and which cannot be accommodated into his theological system. Hence, one cannot avoid asking whether the work is really his, and whether it has something to do with the accusation that he has Mu'tazilī ideas? As recounted by Riḍā, the accusation caused 'Abduh to fail in the examination for his university degree at al-Azhar, and received his degree only upon the intervention of al-Azhar's Rector. (al-Manār, vol. VIII (1323/1905), 390 ff.) This incident took place in 1877, the year of the compilation of the al-'Aqīdah. Whatever the answer may be the al-'Aqīdah cannot provide one with the clarification of his ideas in the Risālah.

31. A focus-word is a key-word of particular importance. In the world-view of 'Abduh, the terms God, man, reason and revelation, are particularly important key-words, each of which can form its own conceptual sphere or sementic field. Reason, in trying to arrive at the knowledge of God and the other categories of the intelligible world (infra p. 46) and in trying to understand revelation and the sensible world, forms its own conceptual sphere, wherein the word reason stands at its center and the other words God, revelation etc., clustering around the word reason. For more clarification on the meaning of focus-word, see T. Izutsu, God and Man in the Koran (Tokyo: The Keio Institute of Cultural and Linguistic Studies, 1964), pp. 29 ff.

PART I

THEOLOGICAL SYSTEM

CHAPTER I

'ABDUH'S WORLD-VIEW

1. The Elementary Structure of his World-View.

In order to understand fully the real role that reason plays in 'Abduh's theological system, it would be helpful, as has been suggested, to find out first the nature of his theological world-view, as implied in and constructed out of his ideas in Risālah al-Tawhīd, and to examine the place that reason occupies in that world-view. Since his theological views, like those of other schools, are based on the tenets of the Qur'ān, it may be expected that the structure of his theological world-view would not differ in a substantial way from that of the Qur'ānic Weltanschauung.¹

'Ilm al-Tawhīd or theology in 'Abduh's definition is a science that deals with the existence of God, with His attributes and with prophecy.² But theology, as is well-known, does not deal only with these matters. From the theological point of view, the universe is the creation of God, and theology must, therefore, also deal with the relation of God with His creatures. Since the basic topic of this thesis, as implied in the title, is the power of reason, which, beside revelation, is another important means of the

God-universe relation, the present discussion will be chiefly interested in that relational aspect of 'Abduh's world-view.

In its most general form, the universe, as 'Abduh views it, may be described as the world of mawjūdāt or existence. In a theory of existence, which he discusses in the opening part of his theological concepts in the Risālah, he divides existence into three categories, the essentially necessary (wājib li dhātih), the essentially impossible (mustaḥḥil li dhātih), and the essentially contingent (mumkin li dhātih). The essentially necessary is that which exists of itself and the essentially impossible is that which is non-existent of itself, while the essentially contingent is that which neither exists of itself nor is non-existent of itself.³

Although he divides existence theoretically into three categories, actual existence ultimately consists of two classes only, for the essentially impossible, as he explains it further, has no existence at all, neither in external reality nor in the human mind.⁴ Consequently, existence in reality is composed only of the essentially necessary and the essentially contingent. The essentially contingent, being defined as that which is neither existent nor non-existent of

itself, cannot come into existence except by some external cause.⁵ The cause itself, obviously, must be something in existence, and that cannot be other than the essentially necessary, for the essentially impossible has been denied to have any existence.

In the light of this analysis, he describes the essentially necessary as the Giver of existence, Wāhib al-wujūd or Mu'ī al-wujūd, to the essentially contingent. He calls the former also the Mūjid and the latter the mawjūdāt, i.e. the originator of existence and the existents. Since the Mūjid, in His capacity of something essentially existing, belongs also to the category of mawjūdāt, he qualifies the essentially contingent as the mawjūdāt al-mumkinah (contingent beings) or the mawjūdāt al-kawniyah (terrestrial beings) to differentiate them from the Mawjūd al-Wājib (the necessary Being), i.e. the Mūjid. Inasmuch as the Mūjid is the Giver of existence to all other mawjūdāt, it is obvious that it stands at the top of all the categories of existence. 'Abduh, indeed, speaks of grades of existence and says that, since the existence of the necessary Being is the source of all other existence, His existence is the summit of all existence.⁶

It hardly needs pointing out that what 'Abduh

means to say in this theory of existence is that the universe, to use simple ordinary language, is composed of the Creator and the world of creatures. Everything that exists beside God in this universe is His creature. The elementary structure of his world-view may, thus, be represented as follows:

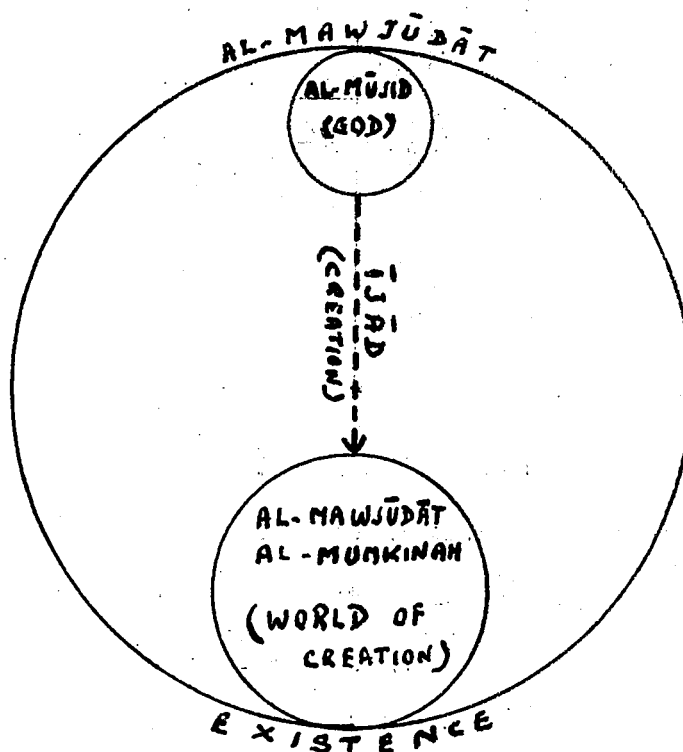


Figure 1

2. The Visible and the Invisible World.

In his discussion of man's need of the prophetic mission, 'Abduh speaks of the 'Ālam al-shahādah and the 'Ālam al-ghayb, the visible and the invisible world, thus dividing the world of creatures into two parts. By the invisible world he means the

future life in the hereafter rather than the world of non-sensible things, such as God, the angels, the hidden future of human life in this terrestrial world and the like, which the term ghayb also connotes. He, therefore, refers to that invisible world also as the ḥayāh al-ākhirah.⁷

This division is closely related to the nature of man, who, he says, is made up of body and soul and, hence, belongs to two different worlds,⁸ i.e. the visible world and the invisible world. The human soul is immortal and subsists after its separation from the body and does not pass into annihilation.⁹ It is in that invisible world that the human soul will subsist and, as we shall see in Chapter Four, it is the mysterious nature of the invisible world that constitutes one of the reasons why man is in need of the prophetic mission.

'Abduh's visible world, in contrast to the invisible world, refers to this "present short life"¹⁰ in this terrestrial world. The end of man's short life here "does not signify the end of man's existence; it rather means that man takes off his body, the way he does his clothes, and then continues to live in another form, though he is unable to know its nature."¹¹ He calls this visible world also the ḥayāh al-dunyā from

which man's existence will be transferred to the invisible world or payāh al-ākhirah. A diagram of 'Abduh's world-view at this stage of the investigation into his ideas would look as follows:

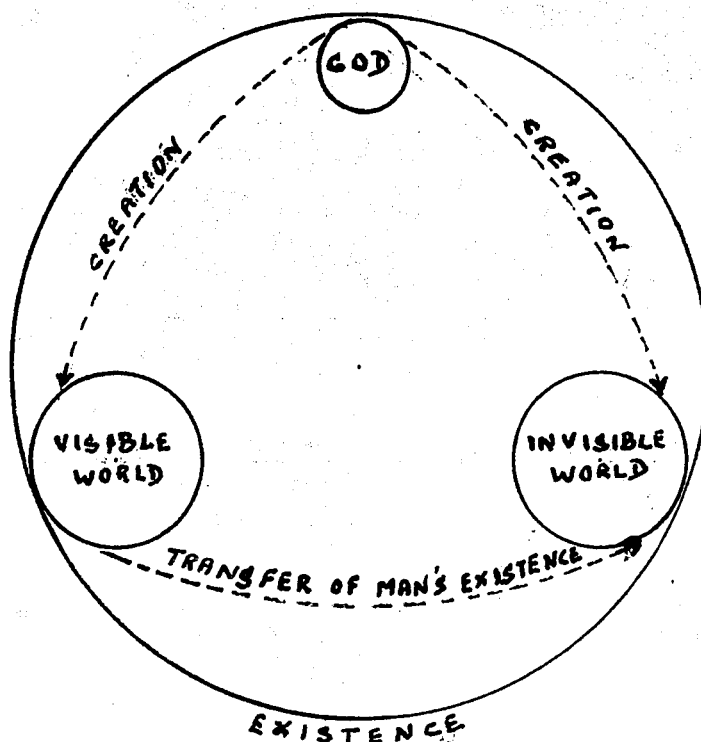


Figure 2

Since the invisible world constitutes rather a mystery for man's reason, 'Abduh deals more with the visible world than with the invisible. And inasmuch as his interest is directed mainly to the power of reason in obtaining knowledge of the universe, he pays more

attention to the active relation that exists between God and the visible world. It should, thus, be obvious that he is more interested in the living mawjūdāt than in the inanimate contingents, of which he talks only passingly. The planets, the sun, and the moon in their capacity as creations of God, are mentioned, for example, merely as the signs of God; and their movement is cited as a proof that there is a fixed and perfect order in the universe¹² and that "the Divine laws, as laid down in the eternal knowledge of God, can never be modified by accidents of the particulars."¹³ The relation of the inanimate world to God is confined to that of creation.

3. Relation of the Visible World with God.

The living mawjūdāt, which are classified into the world of vegetation, the world of animals and the world of man, have in common, in addition to creation, the relation of receiving life from God. Whereas the two last mentioned categories have still other types of relation with God, the world of vegetation has nothing more than the twofold relation of creation and life, and, as such, constitutes the lowest of the categories of the living mawjūdāt. Having, thus, the simplest type of relation with God,

the world of vegetation, like the inanimate world, does not occupy much of 'Abduh's attention. He speaks about it merely as examples of the created mawjūdāt¹⁴ and the living mawjūdāt,¹⁵ which "have the tendency to obtain the appropriate food and leave the inappropriate."¹⁶

Both animals and man have in common, in addition to creation and life, the quality of receiving intuition (ilhām) from God. Both man and animals are also endowed with senses and can see, hear, smell and touch. In his discussion of good and evil 'Abduh, therefore, says that, in some of the different meanings of the terms, animals can distinguish between that which is good and that which is bad. In his view also, certain animals, like man, can differentiate beauty (jamāl) from ugliness (qubḥ) in sensible things. Beauty creates the feeling of joy, and ugliness produces dislike.¹⁷ He says further that animals can also discriminate between good (ḥasan) in the sense of something producing pleasure (ladhdhah) and bad (qabīḥ) in the sense of something causing pain (alam).¹⁸ "Human distinction between good and bad deeds, in the previous two senses, differs little from that made by the higher animals, except perhaps, in emotional intensity and in sensing the degree of beauty and ugliness."¹⁹

Intuition, as 'Abduh defines it, is a feeling

of which the soul is aware and by which it is driven, without being conscious of the feeling's origin, towards the thing needed; it resembles the sensations of hunger, thirst, grief and delight.²⁰ This definition applies to human intuition. He gives no definition of the intuition that animals receive, but he may be taken to mean the sensation that moves the animal to act for the satisfaction of the needs necessary for its life and survival. A dog, he writes, loves his master and defends him to death, for he sees in the master the source of all good in the satisfaction of his needs. His image of hunger, thirst and protection is associated with his image of his master in the capacity of the latter as the provider of the means of the satisfaction of his needs. Hence, he is attached to his master in the way he is attached to his own life.²¹ For their survival some animals, in his view, are also given, beside what has been said before, the intuition to differentiate between good in the sense of beneficial (al-nāfi') and bad in the sense of harmful (al-dārr). According to a certain scientist, he writes, a group of ants were once constructing a house, when one of them noticed that the roof was set too low and gave the order to pull the whole down. The house was later reconstructed to a suitable height.²²

Such is his idea of the intuition of animals, and intuition alone is, in his view, sufficient for animals in their endeavour to satisfy their needs. The needs of animals are not so manifold as those of man.²³ Man, on the other hand, is in need of something more than intuition, for there are cases in which he has no intuition to guide him in his attempt to satisfy a particular need. It is the nature of man, for example, to live in a community, but unlike bees and some ants, 'Abduh says, man is not given the intuition which would be a guide for him to live such a kind of life.²⁴ Moreover, man is unique among all the living mawjūdāt in receiving the intuition of the existence of another life after this terrestrial life,²⁵ the nature of which, as has been said earlier, is enveloped in mysteries. It is true that man has reason, but reason alone according to 'Abduh, as we shall see presently, is not powerful enough to know all the mysteries of the future life. Man is, therefore, in need of another guide beside intuition and reason. That guide comes down from God in the form of revelation given to prophets. From among men themselves, he says, God has elected guides, whom He has distinguished with moral qualities peculiar to them, and whose authority He has raised with remarkable signs well calculated to convince the human soul and to

check the prejudices of reason.²⁶

To sum up, the relation of the Mujid with the four categories of the mawjūdāt of the visible world differs in importance in accordance with the difference in degree of the four classes of the visible mawjūdāt.

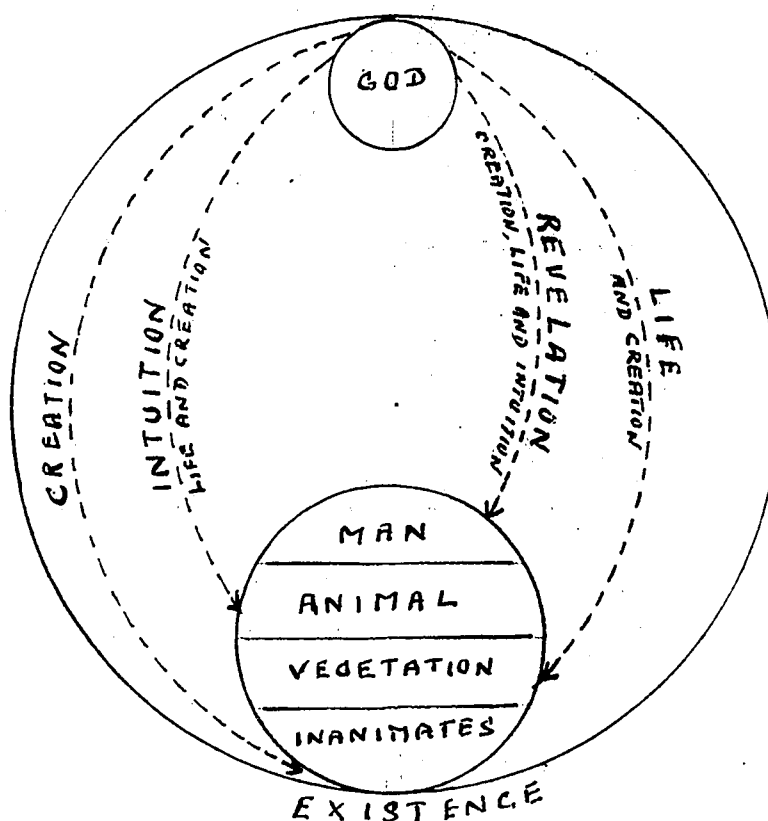


Figure 3

As is shown in Figure 3, the lower the category of the mawjūdāt is, the simpler the relation with the Mujid is, and the higher the class of the mawjūdāt is, the more complex and the more important

the relation becomes. Whereas the inanimate world, as the lowest of all the classes of the mawjūdāt, has merely the relation of creation with God, man, as the highest class, has a fourfold relation with the Mūjid, creation, life, intuition and the very important relation of revelation.

The Creator-creature relationship, that has been dealt with so far, has the character of a relation moving from God toward the universe. The relation of the opposite direction, i.e. from the universe to God, is the subject of the coming discussion.

4. Reason as a Means of Reciprocal Relation with God.

Man has reason, and it is the reason that constitutes the main difference between man and animals. The Prophet, 'Abduh writes, has come to draw man's attention, among other things, to the fact that he is the one and only creature whom God has endowed with the faculty of reason, and it is because of this reason that man has dignity.²⁷ If man were to be deprived of his faculty of reason, according to 'Abduh, he would not be man, but would become another creature, an angel or an animal.²⁸

The faculty of reason is powerful. It can arrive at the knowledge of God and of life in the here-

after. It can even arrive at a much higher knowledge, for man, by his reason, says 'Abduh, can know that the knowledge of God is obligatory, that virtue is the basis of his happiness and evildoing the cause of his misery in the hereafter.²⁹ More could be told about the power of reason, but, since it is the subject of Chapter Two, these few statements will suffice for the purpose of the present discussion.

While creation, life, intuition and revelation are the types of relation from the side of God toward the universe, it is reason that forms the relation of the opposite type, ascending from the universe toward God. And inasmuch as man, among all the classes of the visible mawjūdāt, is the only one who has reason, it is only man who has this opposite creature-Creator relationship, as shown in Figure 4. And, consequently it is also man alone who has a two-way or reciprocal relationship with God, in the form of reason ascending from man to God and in the form of revelation descending from the latter to the former.

5. Division of Man into Elect and Common People.

The power of reason is not of the same degree in all men, for human minds ('uqūl), says 'Abdul, are not of equal capacity.³⁰ Like the Muslim philosophers

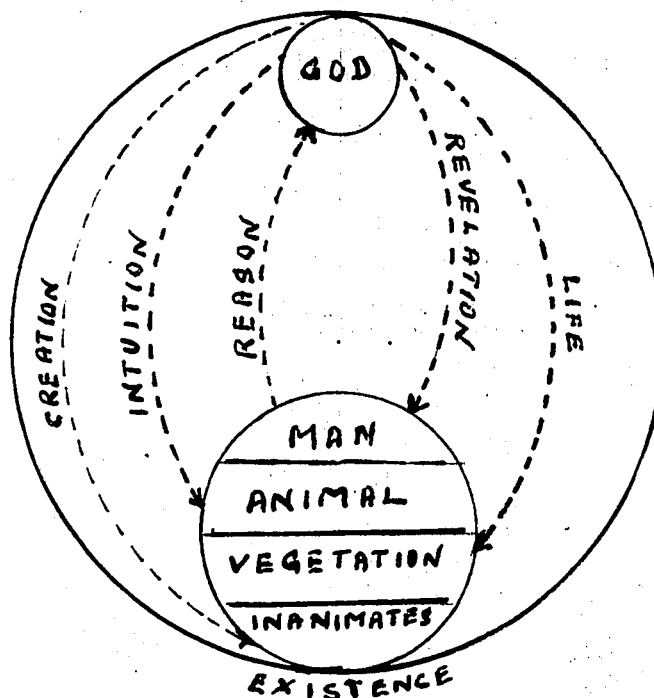


Figure 4

and theologians he, too, makes a discrimination between the elect (al-khāṣṣah) and the common people (al-ʿāmmah). It is with the elect that reason reaches its highest degree of power. Only "the few whom God has elected to have a perfect reason and the light of perception, despite their not having the honour of prophetic guidance and example",³¹ can attain the higher knowledge about God and the hereafter.

ʿAbduh finds that the reason of the common people is inadequate to understand such subtle questions. In his discussion about human free will and its relation with the absolute power of God, for

example, he writes: "The minds of the common people are unable to understand the matter in its essentials, however great the effort one might take to explain it to them."³²

Even the largest part of the elect, in his view, cannot understand such fine questions, for "they have been affected by the disease of taqlid. Hence, they believe first in a thing, and then try to find a proof for it which they will not accept unless it be in agreement with what they already have believed."³³

The world of man, as 'Abduh views it, is thus divided into two parts, the world of the elect who are very few in number, and the world of the common people. In their respective relations with God, as pictured in Figure 5, it is the reason of the elect that has the power to arrive at knowledge of God. The reason of the common people, on the other hand, does not possess the necessary capacity to arrive at such knowledge.

6. Man in Need of Revelation.

Although the reason of the elect is described as powerful, this does not mean that it can attain all the knowledge that man should have about God and about the invisible world. Its power is not without limit. Some of the attributes of God such as speech, sight and

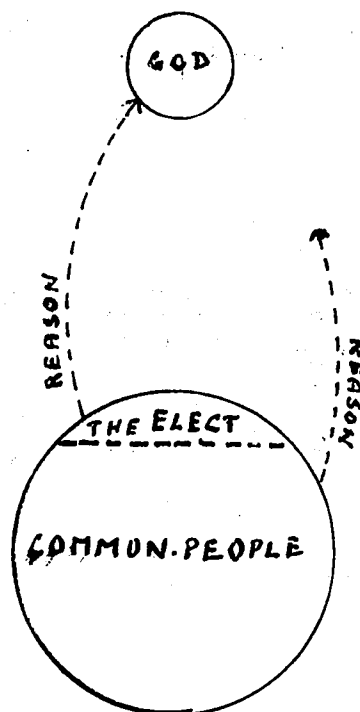


Figure 5

hearing, which 'Abduh calls the revelational attributes, cannot be known by man's reason.³⁴ Man comes to know them only through revelation. Likewise, man's reason is not in a position to know all the conditions of his future life in the invisible world. It cannot, for example, attain by itself knowledge of the nature of the pleasures and pains that await man in his future life nor at the ways by which his action will be judged in the hereafter.³⁵

Consequently, man, as we stated earlier, is in need of a divine revelation to help him in obtaining

the necessary knowledge of God and of his future existence in the 'ālam al-ghayb.

7. Types of Revelation.

Leaving the discussion of reason for the moment, it is interesting to note that, as a consequence of 'Abduh's division of the world of man into the elect and the common people, there is, in his opinion, not one kind of revelation only. He speaks, indeed, of "a revelation directed to the common people"³⁶ and of "a revelation directed to the elect."³⁷

Unfortunately, he does not elaborate this idea or give examples of each type of the revelation. He explains, however, that prophets, in order to be successful in their mission, must address the people to whom they are sent, in a language that is not beyond the comprehension of the people. Since the majority of each people consists of the commoners, this implies that the language must be that of the common people, a language which the elect also can understand.

Not all the language of the common people, however, can be understood by the elect. There are expressions of the prophets which, he says, require an interpretation before the elect can accept them.³⁸ This type of the prophetic expressions he identifies as

the revelation directed to the common people. This type seems to include the revelations that speak in terms of anthropomorphism and those that describe the conditions of the existence of man in the invisible world. Both of these, in his view, may be so interpreted as not to contradict the reason of the elect.³⁹

There are, on the other hand, divine expressions which are beyond the understanding of the common people. Time and lengthy elucidations are needed, 'Abduh says, before the common people would be able to comprehend them.⁴⁰ This type he considers to be the revelation directed to the elect. What he means seems to be those Qur'ānic revelations concerning the signs of God, such as the planets, the sun, the moon and so on, as well as their fixed movements. It is intended by these signs, he says, "to direct attention to the Creator's wisdom or to the depth in the apprehension of His mysteries and marvels."⁴¹ The understanding of these signs seems to be the province of the elect, not of the common people.

These two types of revelation, according to 'Abduh, are only few in number,⁴² which means that the majority of the revelations belongs to neither of them. Hence, there is yet another kind of revelation directed neither to the elect alone nor to the common people alone, but to both alike. Probable examples of this

last type of revelation are the divine commands concerning man's duties towards God and those pertaining to his duties towards his fellow human beings.⁴³

Consequently, there are, as the sketch in Figure 6 shows, three types of revelation: 1) that directed to both the elect and the common people which form the majority of revelation, 2) that directed to the common people alone, which is only small in quantity, and 3) that directed to the elect alone which is the least of all.⁴⁴

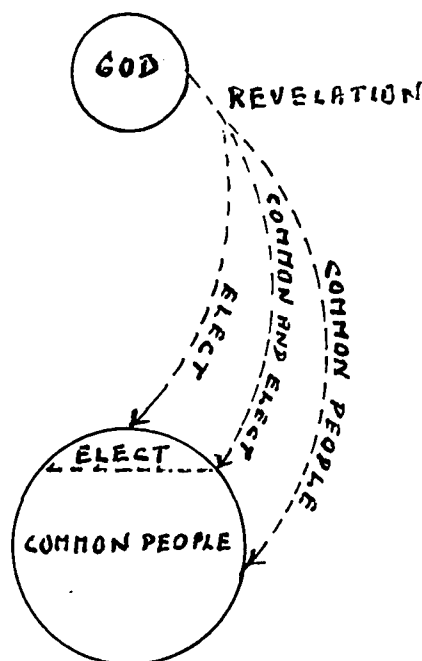


Figure 6

8. The Informative and Confirmative Functions of Revelation.

Reference has been made to 'Abduh's idea that

the reason of the common people cannot arrive at the knowledge of God and the hereafter. It is only through revelation that they come to obtain higher knowledge about God and about the conditions of their future existence in the invisible world, in other words, it is revelation that gives them the required information on these matters. Revelation comes to them thus, in the form of information.

It has also been mentioned that the reason of the elect has the power to arrive at knowledge of these matters. The elect have known these matters already by means of their reason; and when revelation comes down to them, it brings no new informations. Rather it confirms what they have already known. For the elect revelation has, therefore, not the function of information, but rather the function of confirmation. 'Abduh uses the term confirmation in his discussion of God's attributes which, he held, can be known by human reason. He writes: "Islām and the earlier religions came to confirm (ta'yīd) them."⁴⁵

It must be emphasized, however, that not all revelation has the function of confirmation for the elect, for their reason, as we have stated earlier, cannot attain all the necessary knowledge about God and about man's existence in the invisible world. It is

revelation that gives even the elect the complementary information on the unknown aspects of God and the hereafter. Revelation concerning these matters comes down to the elect, as to the common people, in the form of information.

Accordingly, revelation has two kinds of function, that of information and that of confirmation. Whereas its function for the common people is merely that of information, its function for the elect is both informative and confirmative. (see Figure 17)

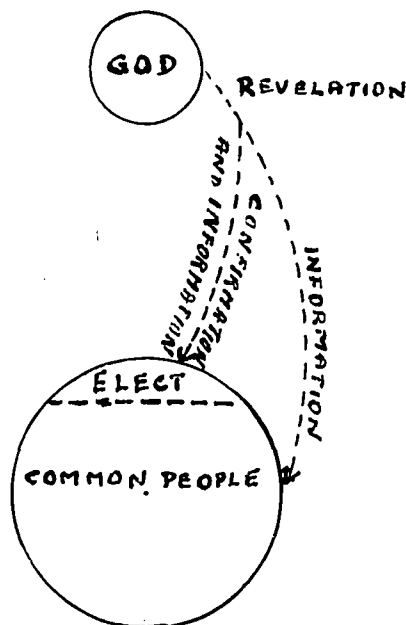


Figure 7

It is rather difficult to establish the relation of each of the three types of revelation,

mentioned earlier, to this theory of the informative and confirmative function of revelation, for 'Abduh fails to give ample explanations and examples of each of the three types. But, since revelation to the common people has merely the function of information, it is clear that both types of revelation which they receive, that is to say revelation to the common people and revelation to both the commoners and the elect, belong to the informative types. The difficulty arises with regard to the revelation peculiar to the elect. To which function does it belong, to the informative or to the confirmative? Inasmuch as the revelations to the elect seem to be those embodying the signs of God, by which it is intended to impel man to use his reason to know God and His marvels and mysteries, it is probably safe to say that the revelation to the elect belongs to the type of confirmative revelation rather than to the informative type.

9. Only the Elect have a Two-way Relation with God.

We return now to the discussion of reason. It has been explained, that only man, among all the living mawjūdāt, has the creature-Creator relationship with God, i.e. a relation ascending from the universe toward God in contrast with a relation descending from

God toward the universe. It should also be recalled that not all in the world of man have this ascending relationship with God. It is only the few elect who have the capacity to sustain such a relation with God.

The common people, their reason being inadequate, do not have the kind of ascending relationship. At the most they can achieve comprehension of revelation (see Figure 8); and even in this, their reason must be helped by the elucidations and explanations of the elect before they are able to comprehend certain divine expressions, such as the third type of revelation, i.e. revelation to the elect.

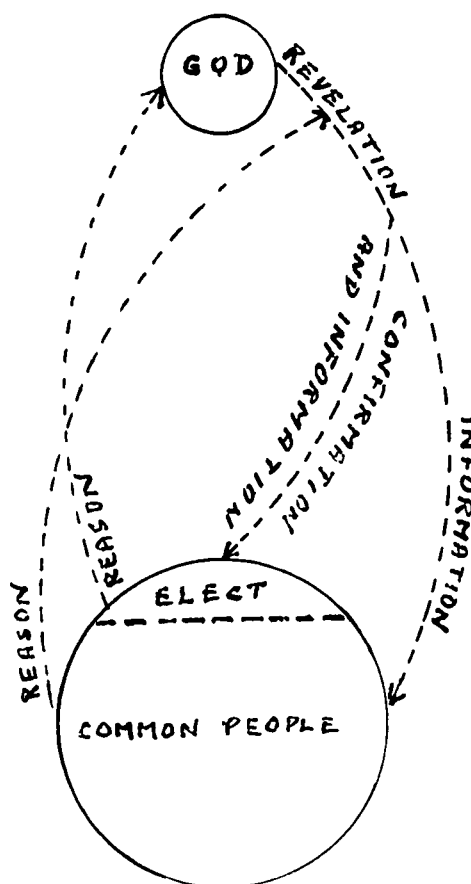


Figure 8

Since it is man who is singled out to have this ascending relation, it is also exclusively man, as we said earlier, who has a two way relation with God. Among men, it is again uniquely the elect who have that reciprocal relationship. The common people, like the other living mawjūdāt, have a one way relation only, that is to say as long as the relation is confined to the five types described here and does not include prayer (du'ā') and ritual worship ('ibādah).⁴⁶

10. The Intelligible World and the Sensible World.

It has been stated on several occasions that the reason of man can arrive at knowledge of God as well as knowledge of certain conditions of the invisible world. Beside these reasons, in 'Abduh's view, can also know some of the attributes of God, good and evil and some aspects of the Sharf'ah,⁴⁷ i.e. matters belonging to the world of intelligibles as distinguished from matters belonging to the world of sensibles.

It is through the study of the sensible world that reason arrives at its knowledge of the intelligible world. As 'Abduh says: "The Qur'ān enjoins us to use our reason and study the sensible parts of the universe so that we may penetrate into its hidden parts."⁴⁸ He himself also employs the distinction between the

intelligible and the sensible when he speaks of the "ḥaqāiq al-ma'qūlah which can be apprehended by the noble souls when they are detached from the 'ālam al-ḥiss",⁴⁹ and of the ma'qūlāt and the maḥsūsāt.⁵⁰

Thus, apart from the opposition of the visible world and the invisible world, there is here another opposition; that of the sensible world and the intelligible world. It should, perhaps, go without saying that the sensible world is one and the same as the visible world. The intelligible world, however, is rather different from the invisible world. The latter, as has been mentioned, refers to life in the hereafter, the ḥayāh al-ākhirah. The intelligible world consists of all the intelligibles, including God, His attributes, the invisible world itself, the idea of good and evil and the Sharī'ah.

INTELLIGIBLE WORLD

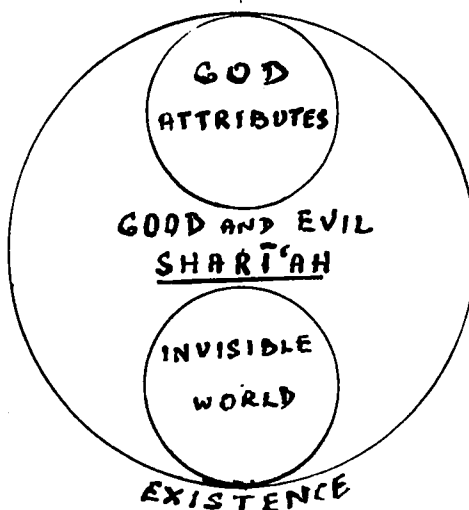


Figure 9

As is clear from Figure 9, the invisible world forms a part of the intelligible world, some notions of which can be obtained by the reason of the elect.

11. The Basic Structure of 'Abduh's Theological world-view.

To recapitulate the whole discussion it can be stated that 'Abduh views the universe as a world of existence, divided into two main parts, the intelligible world and the sensible world. The latter is again divided into the world of the inanimate mawjūdāt and that of the living mawjūdāt. The living mawjūdāt are composed of the world of vegetation whose only relation with God, beside that of creation, is that of receiving life; the world of animals, which, beside these two types of relation, has the relation of intuition; and the world of man, which has a fourth type of relation with God, that of revelation. The world of man, in its turn, consists of the elect and the common people. Though both groups are endowed with the faculty of reason, it is the reason of the elect that can arrive at knowledge of God and the other categories of the intelligible world. Consequently, among all the living mawjūdāt, vegetation, animals and man himself, it is exclusively the elect who have a two-way relation with God, reason forming the ascending relation and revelation the

descending one. By the use of their reason, the elect are capable of knowing God and the other intelligibles. Revelation, which comes down to the prophets, confirms this knowledge, and, in addition, also informs the elect of matters which their reason is incapable of knowing. The reason of the common people is able merely to understand revelation and lacks the power to know the world of intelligibles. It is revelation that provides the common people with the necessary information concerning the intelligible world. In addition to the opposition of the intelligible and sensible worlds, there is also the opposition of the visible world, which is identical with the sensible world, and the invisible world, which forms a part of the intelligible. Death does not mean the end of man's existence, for man consists of body and soul, and continues to exist, though in another form, after the soul has left the body. It is in the invisible world that man continues to exist. To say it in other words, it is to the invisible world that man's subsequent existence is transferred after his existence in the visible world has come to an end.

In the light of these ideas, the basic structure of 'Abduh's theological world-view, as implied in his Risālah al-Tawhīd, can be represented as that given in Figure 10.

'ABDUH'S THEOLOGICAL WORLD-VIEW

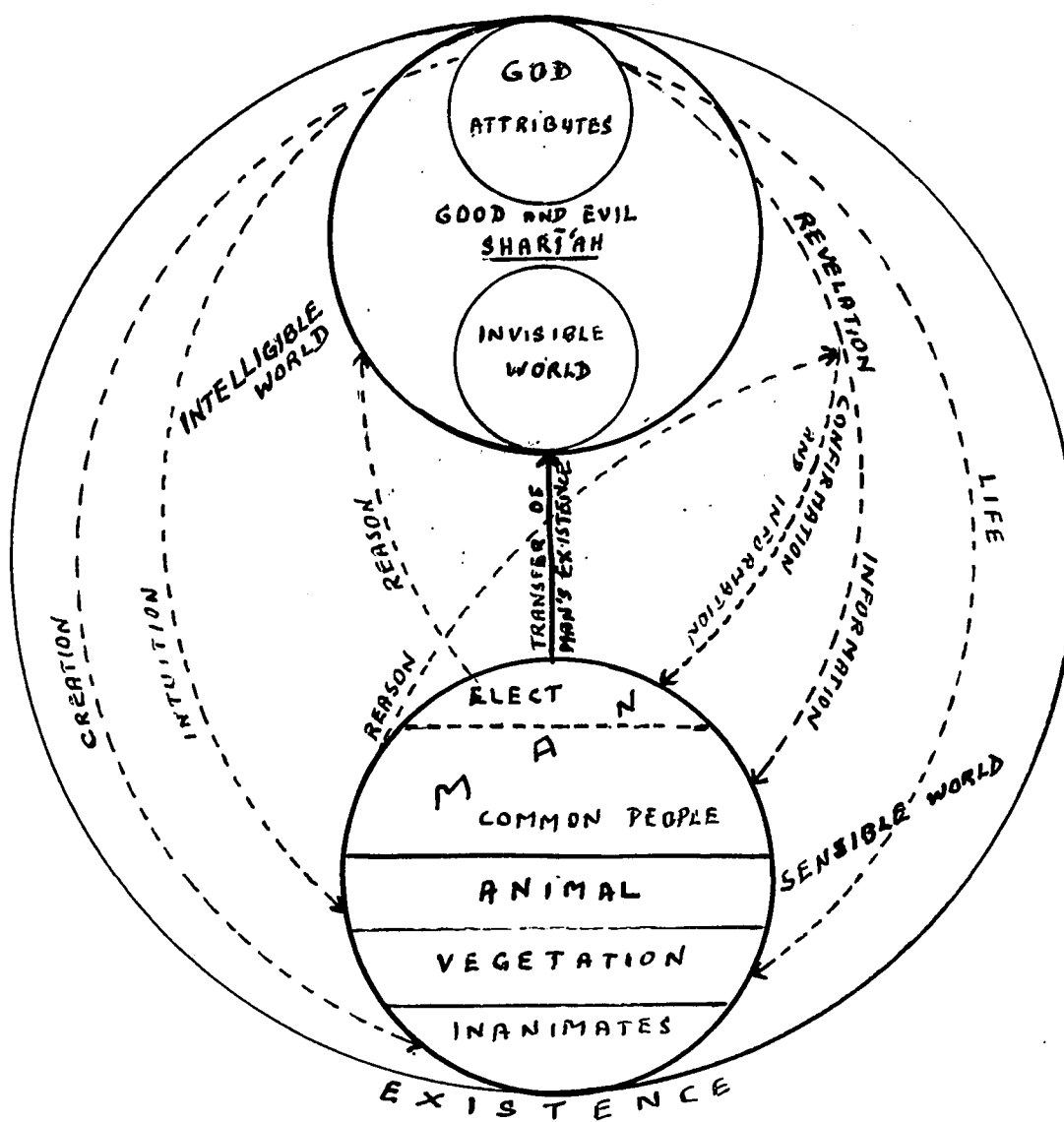


Figure 10

By way of conclusion, it should be stressed that reason, in 'Abduh's world-view, has the important role of knowing the intelligible world. Herein lies the main difference between his world-view and the Qur'ānic weltanschauung. Whereas the reason ('aql) of man in the Qur'ānic world-view has not the ability to arrive by its own at knowledge of God and the other categories of the intelligible world, in 'Abduh's concept it can by its own attain that knowledge, though he restricts that capacity to the reason of the elect.

It is true that the Qur'ān, when it speaks of the "firmly rooted in knowledge" (al-rāsikhūn fī al-'ilm) in verse six of Chapter Three, makes implicitly the distinction that 'Abduh makes between the elect and the common people, but in the eyes of the Qur'ān all men, as far as their reason is concerned, are equal. It is through revelation that they come to know God and the intelligible world. Man's reason, as described in the Qur'ān can arrive merely at the understanding of the revelation of God.⁵¹

Two of the most important focus-words in 'Abduh's world-view are, thus, reason and revelation. The reason of the elect strives for intellectual communication with God, and revelation comes down from God to confirm what is already known of the intelligible

world by reason, as well as to inform them of what they have been unable to know of that world. These two focus-words will be the subject of the following three Chapters.

FOOTNOTES - CHAPTER I

1. For the difference see infra p. 47 and for a study in the Qur'ānic world-view see T. Izutsu, God and Man in the Koran, op. cit., especially Chapter III. See also his other work The Structure of the Ethical Terms in the Koran (Tokyo: The Keio Institute of Philological Studies, 1959) and its revised edition Ethico Religious Concepts in the Qur'ān (Montreal: McGill University, 1966).

2. Risālah, op. cit., p. 4. For the translation of 'Abduh's phrases in this work, the writer is indebted on various occasions to the Risālah's English translation by Musā'ad and Cragg.

3. Ibid., p. 24.

4. Ibid., p. 26.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid., p. 33.

7. Ibid., pp. 90-95.

8. Ibid., p. 141.

9. Ibid., p. 90.

10. Ibid., p. 92.

11. Ibid., p. 91.

12. Ibid., p. 36.

13. Ibid., p. 175.

14. Ibid., p. 29.

15. Ibid., p. 156.

16. Ibid., p. 37.

17. Ibid., pp. 66-7.

18. Ibid., p. 69.

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid., p. 108.

21. Ibid., pp. 98-9.
22. Ibid., p. 22.
23. Ibid., p. 73.
24. Ibid., p. 105.
25. Ibid., p. 91.
26. Ibid., p. 107.
27. Ibid., p. 140.
28. Ibid., p. 64.
29. Ibid., p. 73.
30. Ibid., p. 77.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid., p. 65. This inequality in the power of reason, according to 'Abduh, is caused not by a difference in education only; it is caused mainly by a disparity in natural capacity over which man has no control. Ibid., p. 110.
33. Ibid., p. 65.
34. Ibid., pp. 44-47.
35. Ibid., p. 77.
36. Ibid., p. 123.
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid.
39. Ibid., pp. 202-2. See further Ibid., p. 129.
40. Ibid., p. 123.
41. Ibid., p. 122.
42. Ibid., p. 123.
43. Ibid., pp. 119-20.

44. Ibid., p. 123, especially Riḍā's footnote 1.

45. Ibid., p. 44. See further Ibid., pp. 79-80 in which he explains that prophecy comes to help reason and to give it certitude in the knowledge that it has obtained by itself with regard to the existence of God, His attributes, etc. In matters such as these, the Sharī'ah, in 'Abduh's view, comes to confirm facts and not to create them. The knowledge of God, for example is good, and the Sharī'ah comes to indicate this fact (mu'ayyanan li al-wāqī'); it does not come to create the virtue of knowing God (fahwa laysa muḥdith al-ḥasan).

46. For more on prayer and ritual worships as other types of man's relation with God, see infra, pp. 133/5.

47. Ibid., p. 73.

48. Ibid., p. 23.

49. Ibid., p. 112.

50. Ibid., p. 67.

51. For a study on the relation between God and man, see relevant Chapters in T. Izutsu, God and Man in the Koran, op. cit.

CHAPTER II

THE POWER OF REASON

(1)

'Abduh's Concept

1. His Theological System.

Theology in its simple meaning deals with the study of questions pertaining to God and His relation with the universe, in particular His relation with man. In its widest sense, theology is an investigation into matters concerning God. It is obvious that, among all the living mawjūdāt - to borrow 'Abduh's term - it is only man who has, by nature, the capacity to undertake such an enquiry.

In 'Abduh's understanding, the means by which man can know God, as has been made abundantly clear in the discussion of his world-view, is not revelation only, but also man's reason. Reason, having a certain power, exerts itself to attain knowledge of God, and revelation having certain functions, comes down to man to confirm the knowledge he has obtained through reason, as well as to inform him of matters which his reason has not been able to discover.

This theological conception of man's endeavour to know his God can be pictured as God standing at the

top of the universe and man at the bottom trying, by means of his reason, to ascend and arrive at knowledge of God; while God Himself, having compassion on man's weakness as compared with His omnipotence, helps man by sending down His revelation. This concept, then, constitutes 'Abduh's elementary theological system, which is also applicable to those theological schools that consider reason to be powerful enough to arrive at knowledge of God. It should be stressed, however, that man in 'Abduh's system signifies the elect only; for he, it should be recalled, held that it is the reason of the elect alone which has the capacity to arrive at subtle concepts and ideas of God. It is implied in this system - see Figure 11 - that all man should know about the intelligible world, including God, His attributes,

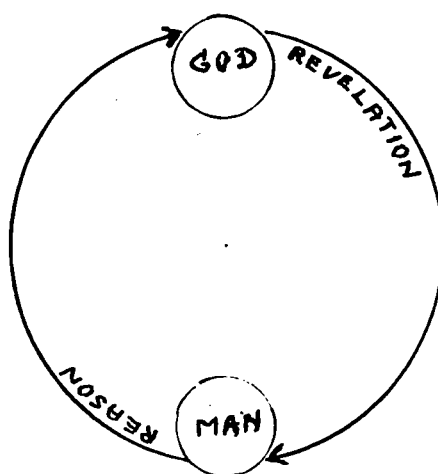


Figure 11

good and evil, the Sharī'ah, and the invisible world is embraced by reason and revelation. Put differently, there is no other means for man to know these matters - which are of paramount importance for his life - beside reason and revelation.

It is true that in 'Abduh's world-view, intuition, alongside revelation, forms another means of communication between God and man. Revelation itself, as it is generally understood, is a particular kind of intuition. Since this is so, it can thus be argued that intuition, apart from revelation and reason, is another medium for the acquisition of knowledge. But it must be stressed that intuition for 'Abduh, at least as it is defined in his Risālah, has another meaning than that generally understood. He identifies intuition with man's inner feeling.¹ Revelation, according to his definition, is the "knowledge ('irfān) which a man finds in himself with the certainty that it has come from God, either through or without an intermediary."² Unlike revelation, intuition for him is not a kind of knowledge, but merely an inner feeling; and, hence, reason and revelation remain the only two media of acquiring knowledge of the intelligible world for men.³

Since he has adopted the position of the philosophers respecting the possibility for the human

soul to come into communication with the world of intelligibles, it is possible for him to identify revelation with knowledge. That he adopts this position of the philosophers can be seen from certain passages in his Risālah al-Tawhīd. In his discussion on the prophetic mission, for example, he explains that it lies within God's wisdom to endow men whom He has chosen to become prophets with perfected souls that enable them to be illuminated with the light of the Divine knowledge.⁴ Again, on another occasion, he says that among men there are those who have such a pure quality of soul that they have the power to come into contact, by Divine emanation (fayḍ), with the sublime horizons, and to see the things of God as by natural vision.⁵

To return to the original topic, i.e. the power of reason, the question that now arises is: what are the principles with respect to God and with respect to man's relation with Him that can be known by reason? In other words: what is the power of reason? It should be recalled that though reason, in his view, is powerful, its capacity has certain limits. This subject has been dealt with though in a superficial way in the Chapter on 'Abduh's world-view. In the present Chapter an endeavour will be made to study it in a more detailed manner.

2. The Importance of Reason.

Before entering into the discussion of the heart of the problem, it will not be out of place first to examine the great importance and high place that 'Abduh has given to reason. To start with, reason for him, in accordance with the prevailing traditional view, is a faculty peculiar to man,⁶ and, hence, the discriminating feature between man and animals; if man were deprived of his reason, men, consequently, would no longer be man, but would become another kind of creature.⁷ The importance of reason lies in the idea that "it is the substance of man's life and the foundation of his survival."⁸

The development of the faculty of human reason, is, moreover, one of the foundations for the cultivation of the noble virtues which form the spirit and the source of the life of nations as well as the light of their happiness in this world.⁹ Nations, in his opinion, are the children of God, grow up, as man does, from childhood to maturity. Hence, God deals with them just as a father deals with his children. Therefore, religion for the early nations, i.e. when they were still at the stage of their childhood, came in the form of absolute commands, rigorous prohibitions and unconditional submission to God's will. Later,

when nations began to grow up, religion addressed itself to their emotions, just as a father deals with his growing youth, and laid down for them laws of asceticism, drawing them away from this world and turning their attention towards the higher life in the hereafter. At last the time arrived when nations attained their maturity and Islām came and spoke to man's reason instead of to his emotions. Religion, then, began to treat nations the way a mature man is treated.¹⁰

In 'Abduh's eyes, nations at the time of the advent of Islām had attained their maturity and were in search of a religion that must be in agreement with reason. According to him, the nations found that religion in Islām.¹¹ In the light of this belief, it is not surprising to find 'Abduh continuing to say that the Qur'ān and Islām speak to reason and not to man's emotion. He states, for example, that God has honoured reason by addressing it in His commands and prohibitions.¹² The Prophet also addresses himself to man's reason and makes reason the arbiter between right and wrong.¹³ He, further, finds that it is Islām which "yells at reason in such a way that it is aroused from its deep sleep."¹⁴

For him Islām is, therefore, a rational

religion. Islām is in agreement with reason and is based on reason; such is his belief. Rational thinking is the first of the eight principles of Islām which he explains in his treatise on Islām and Christianity. Rational thinking, he finds, is the way to genuine belief.¹⁵ Imān is not complete if it is not based on reason, for Imān in his view should be founded on conviction and not on opinion, and it is reason which is the source of the conviction in the belief in God, His knowledge, and His might as well as about prophecy.¹⁶

Accordingly, he thinks that it is in Islām that religion and reason fraternize for the first time.¹⁷ In this fraternity reason is the supporting backbone of Islām and tradition its basic pillar.¹⁸ If in this statement he places reason in a position of lower importance than revelation, in other passages he gives reason a status rather equal to that of revelation. In the introduction to his Risālah al-Tawhīd, for example, he writes that it is impossible for religion to come forward with something that surpasses human comprehension or with something that is contradictory to human reason.¹⁹ Towards the end of his Risālah he explains further what he means by this statement. Reason, once having recognized the mission of a prophet, is obliged to acknowledge all that he brings,

though it is unable to arrive at the essence of some of his teachings. This does not mean, however, that reason is obliged to accept rational impossibilities such as the existence of two contraries and two opposites in the same place and at the same time, for prophecy is above the imperfection of teaching such things. If in prophecy there is something that seems to be contradictory to reason in appearance, reason must say that the apparent sense is not the intended one. It is then free to seek the true sense by interpretation or to rely on God and His omniscience.²⁰ Reason here has the power to contradict the apparent meaning of revelation, which means that reason is rather the equal of revelation.

So high is the importance of reason in the eyes of 'Abduh. That man should use his reason is dictated not only by man's intuition, but even enjoined by the Qur'ān. He finds that the Book "commands us to think and use our reason and forbids us to adopt an attitude of blind acceptance (taglid)."²¹ The Qur'ān, in his view, does not use an absolutely commanding tone. The Book tells man, for example, the attributes of God, but "it does not require us to accept them simply because the Book says so; on the contrary it offers arguments and evidences to prove them."²²

3. The Attack on Taqlid.

Since he has assigned such an importance to the faculty of reason, it is no wonder that he launches strong attacks on taqlid which, he thinks, is one of the main factors responsible for the backwardness of the Muslims of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. He criticizes the 'ulamā' who have to bear the responsibility of introducing the practice of taqlid by their decision that Muslims of later days have only to follow the ideas their predecessors have produced and the articles of belief that they have established, to the point that man stops thinking and reason becomes inactive.²³ He deplores the appearance of the attitude of taqlid in every aspect of the life of the Muslim community, for he finds it to have hampered the further development of their language, of their social organization, of their laws, of their religious beliefs and of their educational institutions.²⁴ He reproves the Muslims for adopting the attitude of taqlid not only with regard to the articles of belief, but also with regard to their arguments. He further denounces their practice of making tradition the pillar of each article of belief, even when the tradition is weak and unknown. The attitude of later Muslims that considers a certain article of belief to be true because the book of a certain author

says so, he finds to be very different from that
adopted by the early Muslims.²⁵

It is his opinion that Islām itself is
against taqlid. He gives evidence to this effect in
different passages in his Risālah. To quote some
instances, he asserts that Islām characterizes the
attitude of blindly following the statements of the
ancestors as stupid and foolish.²⁶ He further says
that the Prophet "exhorted in his preachings the slaves
of tradition and the prisoners of taqlid to free their
souls from their bondage and to throw off the chains
that withhold them from action and from hope."²⁷ Hence,
he finds that Islām has broken the power of taqlid over
man's soul and has torn out its roots so deeply im-
planted in man's mind.²⁸ The power of reason, in his
view, has been liberated from the chains by which it
had been fettered and has been freed from every taqlid
to which it has been subjected.²⁹

This attack on taqlid must be understood in
the light of 'Abduh's belief that attachment to taqlid
is a great obstacle for the progress of his co-
religionists. By referring to Qur'ānic verses such as
"And when it is said to them: 'Follow that which Allāh
has revealed', they say: 'Nay, we follow that wherein
we find our fathers'. What! Though the devils call

them to the chastisement of the burning fire!", he tries to support his attack on taqlid upon a divine authority. In so doing he hopes to convince Muslims that the Qur'ān is against taqlid. In his view it is by freeing Muslims of the authority of taqlid and by establishing among them the habit to use reason in solving their problems that reforms can effectively be introduced into the Muslim community. Hence his constant attack on taqlid and the pre-eminence he gives to the power of reason in his writings.

4. Distinction among Men in Terms of the Faculty of Reason.

Before we turn to the discussion of the power of reason it is worthwhile to remark that, because of the high place 'Abduh has given to reason, the distinction among men, for him, seems no longer to be made in terms of taqwā as stated in the Qur'ān, but rather in terms of the use of the faculty of reason. That this is so is clear from his explanation of the meaning of tawḥīd, through which men have become the slaves of God alone and, hence, equal. "There is no distinction between them except by their deeds and by the superiority of their reason, and there is no way to come near to God but through the purity of reason and the sincerity of deeds."³⁰

5. The Power of Reason in his Theological System.

Remembering that 'Abduh has given to reason a position almost equal to that of revelation, we may expect that for him reason has a great power. Furthermore, its power increases "when man's feeling becomes more refined, his memory more subtle and his insight more penetrating."³¹ To know the scope of the power of reason as he conceives it, an endeavour must be made in the following paragraphs to enumerate the details of the knowledge to which reason can attain.

Reason in his opinion can arrive at the knowledge of the intelligible world by engaging itself in the contemplation of the universe. This direction of man's thought to the secrets of nature is even enjoined by the Qur'ān for "it commands us to use our reason and think about the manifestations of the universe and about the parts of its secrets that can be penetrated by the human mind."³² In this way reason comes first to know that there must be a creator for this visible world. Therefore, he claims that, though it is true that the belief in the existence of God is a religious question, man cannot come to belief in God but through the faculty of his reason.³³ It is, moreover, his conviction that the need for prophets has nothing to do with the intimation of God's existence,³⁴ for "it

is unavoidable that reason can independently arrive at the belief in the existence of God."³⁵

After gaining cognizance of God's existence, reason can also come to know His attributes, though not all of them. Here is how 'Abduh explains the matter. Reference has been made to the Essentially Necessary in Chapter One. Now, the Essentially Necessary must be rationally eternal in the past, otherwise He would be created and would stand in need of another mūjid. The Essentially Necessary, however, has been defined as the One Who exists by Himself, without the need for a creator. He must also be eternal in the future, i.e. His existence cannot come into nought, for this would entail the negation of His essence and His essence is existence.³⁶ He must also be simple, for if He is composed of parts, His existence must be preceded by the existence of His component parts; in other words His existence would depend on the existence of the parts, while the Essentially Necessary exists by Himself, without being in need, for His own existence, of the existence of others.³⁷

The Essentially Necessary, being the highest of all the classes of existence and at the same time the source of all other existence, must have the most perfect qualities and attributes. Life, obviously, is

one of the attributes of perfection, and, hence, God must be living, though His life differs from that of the essentially contingent. If He had no attribute of life, some of the contingents would have a more perfect existence than He Himself.³⁸ He must further have the quality of knowledge, for knowledge is also an attribute of perfection. That He has knowledge is evident from the perfection and the precision that prevail in the organization of the universe.³⁹ And since He has the quality of knowledge, He must also have the attribute of will, for it is only in agreement with His knowledge that He acts.⁴⁰ Again He must be almighty, for it is He Who has given existence to the universe in accordance with His knowledge and will.⁴¹ Inasmuch as He has the attributes of knowledge, will and power, He must necessarily have freedom of choice (ikhtiyār), for ikhtiyār has no other meaning than to exercise power in agreement with knowledge and will. He is thus a free Creator.⁴² As He is the most perfect of all the mawjūdāt, His attributes must be unique and peculiar to Him and incapable of being equalled by those of the other categories of existence. Lastly He must be one and unique, for if there were a multitude of essentially necessary beings, each of them must be different from the other, and this would entail a difference in

attributes too. Each of them would have to have a different knowledge and will, and, consequently, also a different action in accordance with their different knowledge and will. The latter would lead to the disruption of the organization of the universe. Thus, there can be only one God.⁴³

Such is the nature of his explanation how the reason can come on its own to knowledge of God's attributes. Beside these attributes, there are others which the Sharī'ah enunciates, but which cannot be known by reason alone. They are the physical attributes of speech, sight and hearing.⁴⁴ That a spiritual being can be qualified with physical attributes, is, in his view, not incompatible with reason.⁴⁵ He seems to have waved aside any incompatibility by the interpretation that God is above all comparison with created things,⁴⁶ and, hence, man's attributes share with those of God only in name. Otherwise expressed, the various names of the attributes are equivocal terms used both of man and God but in different meanings.⁴⁷

Before pursuing the investigation into the power of reason further, it is good to note that in line with the double functions of revelation according to 'Abduh's world-view, the function of revelation with regard to the revealed attributes is that of

information, and with regard to the others, which are accessible to reason, that of confirmation.

Beside the existence of God and His attributes, reason can also come to know good and evil although again not in all of their details. As we have explained earlier,⁴⁸ good and evil, in 'Abduh's view, have different meanings; and animals share with man in the capacity of making a distinction between them in some of their different senses. But the distinction between good in the sense of beneficial and evil in the sense of harmful is rather peculiar to man alone. It is true that some animals can make the same distinction, but their ability refers only to the inferior aspects of the meaning of beneficial and harmful. The distinction of the superior aspects of their meaning is unique to man's reason. It is herein that 'Abduh finds the explanation for the secret of the divine wisdom's having given intelligence to man.⁴⁹

In elaborating further the understanding of good in the sense of beneficial and evil in the sense of harmful, 'Abduh says that there are actions which bring pleasure but which have bad consequences such as excessive eating and drinking; for these actions are detrimental to the health as well as to man's faculty of reason. This kind of pleasure is defined as bad

because of the brevity of the enjoyment and the length of the resulting pain which may even lead to death. On the other hand, among actions that cause pain, there are some that must be counted to be good, such as toil and labour for earning a livelihood and for securing the needs of the soul, the fight against carnal desires to conserve physical and rational power, and the battle against enemies in self-defence. Another action which produces pleasure, but is defined as bad, is to lay one's hands on what another man has gained by his own effort.⁵⁰

All these kinds of actions, he says, can be known by human reason. Reason can distinguish in them the beneficial from the harmful, the former being called the good and the latter the bad. This distinction, he explains further, is the source of the differentiation between virtue and evil. All these, he finds, are elementary matters to the reason on which philosophers as well as men of religion have no disagreement. Voluntary actions are good or bad, either in themselves or with reference to their effects on the elect or on the common people.⁵¹

Reference has been made to 'Abduh's idea that reason can also arrive at knowledge of the conditions of life in the invisible world. This idea is implied in

some of his statements in the Risālah. In his discussion on the question of good and evil, for example, he remarks in passing that human minds are not equal in their ability to know God and to know life in the hereafter.⁵² The latter part of this statement clearly indicates that reason can come to knowledge of life in the invisible world, though, in his eyes, it is only the reason of the few elect, who do not necessarily have to be prophets, that has the power to arrive at that knowledge.⁵³ Again, in dealing with man's need for prophecy, he says that a look into the known things of the present life does not lead man to have sure knowledge of the truths of the future life.⁵⁴ Thus, man's reason can obtain knowledge of his future existence in the invisible world, though it cannot be sure of their truth.⁵⁵ In any case man's reason can arrive at them. But unfortunately, 'Abduh does not explain further what those conditions and truths of the future life are that can be known by human reason.

So far, reason, according to 'Abduh, has the power to know God, to know some of His attributes, to know some details of good and evil, and to know some aspects of man's future life in the invisible world. But, reason, in his opinion, can know even more than all these intelligibles. He enumerates the intelligibles,

that can be known by reason, in one paragraph, and because of its utmost importance for the endeavour to establish the power of reason in his theological conceptual system, a translation of the whole paragraph must be given here.

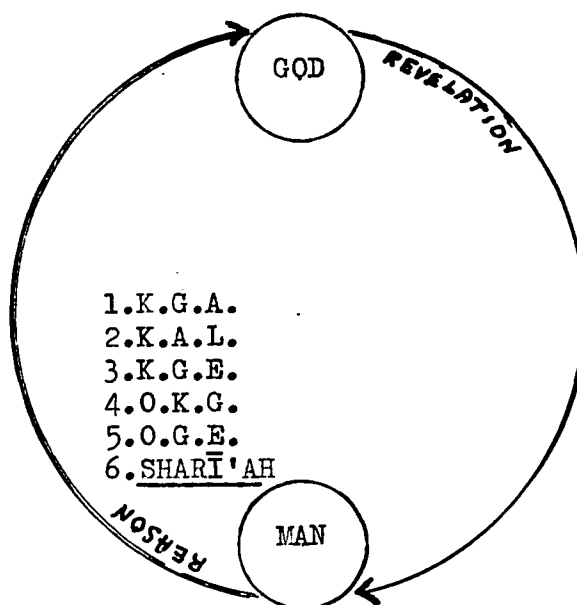
We have already said that the necessary Being as well as His attributes of perfection can be known by man's reason. If a thinker is able, by offering proofs but without being guided by revelation, to establish the existence of God and His non-revelational attributes - as some men have done -; and, then, proceeds from this and from the reflection he makes on the successive states of his own self to the belief that the principle of intelligence ('aql) in man subsists - a deduction that has been done by other people -; and, then, from this he proceeds again, wrongly or rightly, to claim that the survival of the soul after man's death involves its happiness or wretchedness in the hereafter, that its happiness depends on the knowledge of God and doing good, and that its wretchedness depends on the ignorance of God and doing evil; and based on these, he further asserts that among man's actions there are deeds which are beneficial for the felicity of the soul after death, and others which are harmful to the soul and which will lead it to its wretchedness; what rational obstacle would there be, after all that has been said, for him to claim, by means of his reason, that the knowledge of God is obligatory, that all virtues and their consequent practice are obligatory, that all evils and the deeds that ensue from them are forbidden, and, then, lay down laws he likes pertaining to them and call the rest of humanity to believe in what he believes and to behave as he himself behaves, since there is no revealed law to prevent him from doing so?⁵⁶

This passage contains, in fact, 'Abduh's most important statement with regard to the power of reason. It embodies the main items of knowledge which

can be obtained by the faculty of reason. To recapitulate them, they are:

1. To know God and His attributes.
2. To know that there is a second life.
3. To know that the happiness of the soul in the hereafter depends on the knowledge of God and doing good; that its wretchedness depends on the ignorance of God and doing evil.
4. To know that the knowledge of God is obligatory.
5. To know that doing good and avoiding evil is obligatory on man for his salvation in the hereafter.
6. To lay down laws concerning these obligations.

When one applies these details of knowledge to his elementary theological conceptual system one has the following basic system:



Explanation:

- K.G.A.= knowledge of God and His attributes.
K.A.L.= knowledge of afterlife.
K.G.E.= knowledge of good and evil.
O.K.G.= obligation to know God.
O.G.E.= obligation to do good and avoid evil.

Figure 12

As is shown in Figure 12 this system pictures only the power of reason and leaves the function of revelation unspecified. Reason, according to 'Abduh, can arrive at the two most basic duties of man from the point of view of religion, i.e. the obligation to know God and the obligation to do the good and to avoid the bad. It is on these two religious duties that the other religious duties of man, his duties towards God, such as worshipping Him, towards his own person, such as the avoidance of theft, adultery etc., and towards his society, such as helping his fellow human beings in the form of zakāh, etc., are based.

As we shall see presently, the controversy between the classical theological schools revolves around these two questions and the related knowledge of God and of good and evil. Is it reason or is it revelation that can arrive at them? If it is reason, as 'Abduh holds, then revelation has no function in this matter; hence, the function of revelation in his system is left empty. One may ask: what is then the role of revelation in his system? The answer seems to be: to help reason to complete its knowledge of the intelligible world and to obtain the certitude that all that which reason has discovered by itself is, in fact, true and not merely imagination.

As the present Chapter is concerned mainly with the power of reason, more will be said on the function of revelation in Chapter Four.

FOOTNOTES - CHAPTER II

1. Supra, pp. 26/27.
2. Risālah, op. cit., p. 108.
3. It is interesting to note that 'Abduh's position on this matter is in agreement with that of al-Nasafi and al-Taftāzānī for whom intuition is also not one of the causes of cognition. See A Commentary of the Creed of Islām, Sa'd al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī on the Creed of Najm al-Dīn al-Nasafi, trans. E. E. Elder (New York: Columbia University Press, 1950), p. 27.
4. Risālah, op. cit., p. 94.
5. Ibid., p. 111.
6. Ibid., p. 127.
7. Ibid., p. 64.
8. Risālah, op. cit., p. 91.
9. Ibid., p. 177.
10. Ibid., p. 170.
11. Ibid., p. 188.
12. Ibid., p. 60.
13. Ibid., p. 143.
14. Ibid., p. 158.
15. Al-Islām wa al-Nasrānīyah ma' al-'Ilm wa al-Madanīyah [Henceforth to be referred to as al-Islām] (6th ed.; Cairo: Al-Mu'tamar al-Islāmī, 1375 AH), p. 58.
16. Ibid., p. 124.
17. Risālah, op. cit., p. 7. See also Al-Islām, op. cit., p. 138.
18. Risālah, op. cit., p. 23.

19. Ibid., p. 8.

20. Ibid., p. 129. See also, Ibid., p. 201. It is also the opinion of al-Ghazālī that revelation cannot bring something in contradiction to reason and that interpretation must be used to come to the real meaning of a revelation which has been judged by reason to be impossible. See al-Iqtisād fī al-I'tiqād, (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi, 1962), p. 212.

21. Risālah, op. cit., p. 23.

22. Ibid., p. 7.

23. Al-Islām, op. cit., p. 114.

24. Ibid., pp. 116-131.

25. Ibid., p. 125.

26. Risālah, op. cit., p. 158.

27. Ibid., p. 140.

28. Ibid., p. 157.

29. Ibid., p. 159.

30. Ibid., p. 156.

31. Ibid., p. 104.

32. Ibid., p. 23. See also al-Islām, op. cit., pp. 52-5.

33. Risālah, op. cit., p. 7.

34. Ibid., p. 141.

35. Al-Islām, op. cit., p. 124.

36. Risālah, op. cit., p. 31.

37. Ibid.

38. Ibid., pp. 33-4.

39. Ibid., pp. 35-6.

40. Ibid., p. 39.

41. Ibid., p. 40.

42. Ibid., p. 41.

43. Ibid., pp. 41-2.

44. Ibid., p. 44. Why reason, in 'Abduh's view, cannot arrive at these attributes, though, as observed by Rashīd Riḍā in his accompanying note, they, too, belong to the attributes of perfection, is not clear. He gives no further elaboration and merely mentions that one must believe in them in obedience to the Sharī'ah. The possible explanation is that the three revealed attributes are physical qualities rather than spiritual ones. Since God is not a material entity, but a spiritual Being, reason cannot qualify Him with physical attributes. Moreover, among men themselves there are those who can attain perfection though they are deprived of sight, speech and hearing, (like Miss Helen Keller). Thus these three attributes need not necessarily belong to the attributes of perfection. In other words, God, without these three revealed attributes, can already be perfect in the understanding of reason. Hence, reason, according to 'Abduh, knows these attributes only through revelation.

45. Ibid.

46. Ibid., p. 152

47. The literal translation of 'Abduh's phrase is: There are human attributes which share them (God's attributes) in name or in genus (see Ibid., p. 8). Commenting on this, Riḍā explains that 'Abduh in his lecture prefers to adopt the former view (see ibid). The names of attributes for him are thus equivocal (mushtarik) terms, as is also noted by Horten (see Beiträge zur Kenntniss des Orients, XIV (1917), 80), and not analogous (mushakkik) terms. This conclusion is in agreement with his Mu'tazilī concept of attributes, i.e. the attributes of God are in fact not attributes, but merely mental considerations (see infra pp. 222 ff.) and with his Mu'tazilī position of interpreting the anthropomorphic verses (see infra pp. 228/9). For him God has no attributes and no limbs, though different from those of man, as claimed

by the Ash'ariyah. It is worthwhile to recall that mushtarik terms are terms sharing the same name but not the same meaning, while mushakkik terms are terms sharing the same name and the same meaning though in different senses.

48. Supra, p. 26.
49. Risālah, op. cit., p. 69.
50. Ibid., pp. 69-70.
51. Ibid., p. 71.
52. Ibid., p. 77.
53. Ibid.
54. Ibid., p. 93.
55. Cf. Kerr, Islamic Reform, op. cit.,
p. 126.
56. Risālah, op. cit., pp. 72-73.

CHAPTER III

THE POWER OF REASON

(II)

The Concept of the Classical Schools

1. The Controversy on the Question of Reason and Revelation.

To resume the investigation into 'Abduh's theological system, now that the details of the power of reason and the general function of revelation within it have been discovered, the next step is to find out the nature of the system. Is it Mu'tazilism as implied in his writings, or Ash'arism as thought by some people, or Māturīdism as asserted by others, or again does it form an independent system with a nature of its own? A comparison with the classical theological systems must thus be undertaken.

In order to be able to make the comparison, it is obvious that one must first know the theological systems of the other schools, i.e. to find out the power they assign to reason and the role of revelation in providing man with the necessary knowledge about God and the intelligible world.

An investigation into the classical works on theology reveals that the faculties of reason and

revelation are applied to two basic issues of theological controversy, each of which is divided into two questions. The two basic issues, as stated by al-Sharastānī in his al-Milal wa al-Nihāl, are knowledge of God and the problem of good and evil.¹ The two questions pertaining to the former are the acquisition of the knowledge of God and the obligation to know God, or as al-Shahrastānī puts it, ḥuṣūl ma'rifah Allāh and wujūb ma'rifah Allāh.² The two questions with regard to the latter are the knowledge of good and evil and the obligation of doing the good and avoiding the bad, or as implied in Shahrastānī's words ma'rifah al-ḥusn wa al-qubḥ and wujūb i'tināq al-ḥasan wa ijtināb al-qabīḥ,³ which he also calls al-taḥsīn wa al-taqbīḥ.⁴

The polemic among the different theological schools revolves around the question: which of the four controversial basic issues can be resolved by which of the two media of the acquisition of knowledge, reason and revelation? To put the question in another way: can reason arrive at the four basic objects of theological knowledge? The three classical schools have different answers to this question.

2. The Mu'tazilī Position.

Among the schools under survey in this study,

it was Mu'tazilism, as is known, that first came into being. It would thus be pertinent to start with an inquiry into the position of this school with regard to the aforementioned four problems of controversy.

For the Mu'tazilah, according to al-Shahrastānī, all knowledge is apprehended by reason and is obligatory by discursive reasoning. Hence, to thank God was obligatory, even before the arrival of revelation.⁵ The knowledge of good and evil is obligatory through reason, and to do the good and to avoid the bad are also obligatory in the same way.⁶

Abū al-Hudhayl categorically says that before the advent of revelation it was obligatory on man to know God, and if he fell short of knowing Him, he deserved eternal punishment. So also good and evil can be known by reason, and it is man's obligation to do the good, such as justice, and to avoid evil, such as injustice.⁷

Such is also the opinion of al-Nazzām,⁸ al-Jubbā'ī and his son Abū Hāshim.⁹ Two of al-Murdār's pupils, both called Ja'far, go even further to say that reason renders not only the knowledge of God, but also the knowledge of His laws (ahkām) and His attributes obligatory on man before the coming down of revelation; and if man falls short of knowing God and does not

thank Him, God punishes man with an eternal punishment.¹⁰

In fact, it is a matter of agreement among all the Mu'tazilah, at least according to al-Shahrastānī, that the obligation of knowing God and the obligation of doing the good and avoiding the bad are known by reason.¹¹ It is obvious that before knowing a thing to be obligatory, reason must first know that thing; in this case reason should, thus, first know God as well as good and evil before determining that they are obligatory. Hence, the answer given by the Mu'tazilah to the question of the four basic issues of controversy is affirmative. Reason can arrive at knowledge in each case.

3. The Ash'arī Position.

We turn now to the position of the Ash'arī school. Al-Ash'arī himself rejects the Mu'tazilī view that obligatory knowledge can be obtained by reason, when he says that all obligations are known by revelation; for reason cannot render anything obligatory and cannot know the obligation of doing the good and avoiding the bad.¹² He explains further that the knowledge of God can be acquired by reason, but it is revelation that renders the knowledge of God obligatory. So also it is revelation and not reason

that tells man of the obligation to thank God. It is the same which informs him that the obedient will be rewarded and the disobedient will be punished.¹³

From these statements it is clear that in al-Ash'arī's view reason cannot arrive at man's obligations with regard to God and good and evil, for it is revelation that tells man what is obligatory for him to do. But, on the other hand, reason can acquire the knowledge of God. As to the question of the acquisition of the knowledge of good and evil, al-Shahrastānī's accounts on the ideas of al-Ash'arī and his school in his al-Milal wa al-Nihāl give no conclusive answer. One passage pertaining to the position of the Ash'arī school, implies that for this school the knowledge of good and evil can be obtained by reason. The statement says: "All obligations are obtained through revelation and all knowledge through reason. Reason does not determine the obligation to do the good and to avoid the bad, nor does it render anything necessary or obligatory. Revelation does not inform, that is to say it does not create knowledge, but brings obligation."¹⁴ The declaration that all knowledge is obtained through reason and that revelation creates no knowledge, implies that the knowledge of good and evil is to be obtained by reason and not by revelation.

A further investigation into the ideas of the followers of al-Ash'arī, however, gives another picture. Al-Baghdādī followed the founder of the school in saying that reason can arrive at knowledge of God, but that it cannot derive the obligatory nature of that knowledge, and that all obligations are known only through the Sharī'ah. Hence, before the advent of God's speech, nothing was obligatory and nothing was forbidden to man. If a man, before the coming down of the Sharī'ah, eventually came to know God and His attributes and then believed in them, he is a believer, but does not deserve a reward from God. And if God grants him an abode in Paradise, this is only a grace of God to him. In the same way if he disbelieved in God before the advent of the Sharī'ah, he is a disbeliever, but does not deserve punishment. If God puts him in Hell, then this is not a punishment.¹⁵ Such is the idea of al-Baghdādī, which is, obviously, in glaring contradiction to the position of the Mu'tazilī school concerning rewards and punishment before the advent of revelation.

It is evident that for al-Baghdādī the obligation of doing the good and avoiding the bad can be known only by revelation, but unfortunately he does not also have clear statements, at least in his

Uṣūl al-Dīn, with regard to the problem of the knowledge of good and evil. His statements on the power of reason, from which he excludes the knowledge of good and evil, imply that it is not within the power of reason to know good and evil.¹⁶ This conclusion is supported by his continuous hints that the Ash'arīs do not belong to the school which believes that all knowledge can be acquired by reason.¹⁷

Al-Ghazālī agrees with al-Ash'arī and al-Baghdādī in declaring that nothing is obligatory on man by reason, for all obligations are determined by revelation.¹⁸ Thus for him, too, it is not reason that creates obligation, neither the obligation to know God nor the obligation to do the good and to avoid the bad. It is revelation that determines them. His definition of the term "obligatory" as well as that of "good and evil" has a great deal to do with this idea. In his opinion, the term "obligatory" can be applied only to an act,¹⁹ and an act is obligatory, when the non-performance of the act will cause harm for man's life in the hereafter.²⁰ The latter can be known only through the Sharī'ah and, consequently, obligation can be known only through revelation.

As to the problem of good and evil, first he gives the linguistic meanings of the terms. An act is

good, when it is in agreement with the aim of the agent, and it is bad, when it is in disagreement with his aim.²¹ The agreement or disagreement with the agent's aim may occur in the present or in the future. A good act, in its technical meaning for al-Ghazālī, is an act which comes into agreement with aims in the hereafter, which again can be known only through the Sharī'ah. A bad act is the opposite of the good.²² This definition implies that not only the obligation of doing the good and avoiding the bad, but even the knowledge of good and evil, cannot be obtained by reason. It is revelation that teaches man what is good and what is evil and that commands him to do the former and avoid the latter.

With regard to the question of the knowledge of God, his discursive reasoning about the existence of a creator for the universe²³ shows that in his view knowledge of the existence of God can be acquired by reason. This is confirmed by his classification of the objects of knowledge, towards the end of his al-Iqtisād fī al-I'tiqād, into three categories; that which is known by reason alone, that which is known by revelation alone, and that which is known by both reason and revelation. The knowledge of God he classifies in the first category, to wit that which is known by reason alone.²⁴

Al-Sharastānī in his Nihāyah al-Iqdām fī 'ilm al-Kalām, offers some lucid statements about the knowledge of good and evil. The position of the people of truth, he says, is that reason does not determine good and evil, for the term good refers to a deed whose agent is praised by the Sharī'ah, and the term evil refers to a deed whose agent is blamed by the Sharī'ah.²⁵ As a consequence, the knowledge of good and evil can be obtained only through revelation. Furthermore, if reason cannot arrive at the mere knowledge of good and bad, all the more it cannot know the obligation of doing the good and avoiding the bad. With regard to the other two issues, the acquisition of the knowledge of God and the obligation to know God, he cites al-Ash'arī's distinction between the two subjects as well as his idea that the former can be attained by reason and that the latter can be known only through revelation.²⁶

In addition to al-Shahrastānī, 'Aḥud al-Dīn al-Ījī in his al-'Aqā'id al-'Aḥudīyah and Jalāl al-Dīn al-Dawwānī in his Sharḥ on the al-'Aqā'id al-'Aḥudīyah, also state in plain words that reason cannot arrive at the knowledge of good and evil, because, in their view, it is the Sharī'ah that determines what is good and what is evil.²⁷ Hence, for them, too, it is revelation

and not reason which tells man the obligation of doing the good and avoiding the bad. Such is again their view with regard to the obligation to know God; it is the Sharī'ah that commands man to know God,²⁸ although reason itself can arrive at the knowledge of God.²⁹

These followers of al-Ash'arī, thus, seem to agree that among the four basic theological issues knowledge of God alone can be attained by the unaided reason. In their writings the Ashā'irah claim to be expressing the views of their leader and they are probably right in claiming so, even with regard to this particular question of the knowledge of good and evil. Al-Ash'arī, indeed, writes in his Kitāb al-Luma': "If someone says: 'Lying is evil, because God has determined it to be evil', we say to him: 'Certainly, and if He declares it to be good, it must be good, and if He commands it, no one can object to it'".³⁰ This quotation clearly implies that the nature of good and evil is decided by revelation, and that reason as such cannot arrive at the knowledge of good and evil.

There is, then, a contradiction between the statements of al-Ash'arī and his followers and the earlier statement recorded by al-Shahrastānī that all knowledge can be obtained by reason. The probable solution for this contradiction is that al-Shahrastānī

was recording a general statement in al-Milal without explaining the exceptions to the rule, for he himself, as has been said earlier, states in the Nihāyah that reason cannot arrive at the knowledge of good and evil.

To summarize the discussion of the position of al-Ash'arī and his school, it is noted that their answer to the question of the ability of reason respecting the four basic issues of controversy is affirmative with regard to the knowledge of God and negative with regard to the rest.

4. The Māturīdī Position.

We turn now to the school of al-Māturīdī. It is here that a difference of opinion seems to exist between the founder of the school and a group of his followers.³¹ Al-Māturīdī follows the Mu'tazilah in the opinion that reason can arrive at the obligation to know God. The following statement of al-Bazdawī in his Uṣūl al-Dīn gives evidence for this point. "To believe in God and to thank Him before the coming of the speech is obligatory in Mu'tazilism . . . Al-Shaykh Abū Maṣṣūr al-Māturīdī follows the Mu'tazilah in this. Such is also the opinion of the scholars of Samarqand in general and some of the scholars of Iraq."³² This short statement is confirmed by Abū 'Udhbah in his

treatise on the differences of view between the Ash'ariyah and the Māturīdīyah. In the eyes of the Mu'tazilah, he says, there is no excuse for the one who has understanding (liman lahu 'aql), young or old, with regard to the obligation to pursue the truth. Thus the boy who has understanding is obliged to believe in God (mukallaf bi-al-īmān), for he has 'aql; and if he dies without believing in God, he must be punished. In Māturīdism there is nothing obligatory for a boy, before he reaches the age of puberty. But, Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī, he says further, thinks that it is obligatory for a boy who has understanding to know God, and in this case there is no difference between Māturīdism and Mu'tazilism.³³

From these two quotations it is clear that in the opinion of al-Māturīdī reason can arrive at the obligation to know God. It is obvious also that before having knowledge of its obligatoriness one must first arrive at the simple knowledge of God.

Although there are explicit statements of al-Bazdawī and Abū 'Udhbah with regard to al-Māturīdī's views on this first issue of controversy, there is a lack of clarity in their writings about his position on the issue of good and evil. Abū 'Udhbah, in fact, does not discuss the problem apart from saying that Abū

Ḥanīfah rejects the rule of al-tahsīn and al-taqbīḥ.

Al-Bazdawī, however, writes that reason lacks the power to determine the obligation of doing good and avoiding evil, for it is limited to knowing good and evil; and it is God Who determines the obligation of doing good and avoiding evil.³⁴ Unfortunately, he does not explain further whether such is also the view of al-Māturīdī or whether the latter follows Mu'tazilism again in this question as he does with regard to the first issue.

'Abduh's explanation of this point, which he gives in his Ḥāshiyah also offers no definite solution. 'Abduh is there commenting on al-Ījī's statement that reason lacks the power to decide the goodness or badness of things.³⁵ In other words, al-Ījī was not speaking of the obligation of doing good and avoiding evil, but simply of the knowledge of good and evil. Then, 'Abduh says that in Mu'tazilism and Māturīdism the command for doing or avoiding a thing is related to the nature inherent in the thing itself, that is to say, that the punishment or reward depends on the inherent nature of the thing.³⁶ This is not the view of the Ash'ariyah, for whom goodness or badness of a thing does not depend on the inherent nature of the thing, but rather on the commands and prohibitions of God. The Ash'arī position is that the goodness or badness of a thing can be known

only by means of God's command or prohibition with regard to the thing concerned.³⁷ In concluding his comment 'Abduh writes: "The true opinion is that which has been said by al-Shaykh Abū Maṣṣūr, though the Mu'tazilah, who have no understanding, happen to agree with him in this opinion."³⁸ Unfortunately, 'Abduh does not give al-Māturīdī's statement on that "true opinion" in the course of his discussion of the problem, so that it still remains unclear whether al-Māturīdī, in fact, follows the Mu'tazilah to the full in their position with regard to the knowledge of good and evil and the obligation to do the former and to avoid the latter, or only follows them in the idea that reason can only know good and evil.

When one refers to al-Māturīdī's Kitāb al-Tawḥīd, it appears that his position pertaining to this question is that expressed by al-Bazdawī, i.e. that reason can know good and evil, but it is God who decides the obligation to do the good and to avoid the bad. In one passage al-Māturīdī says that reason knows the goodness in every good thing as well as the badness in every bad thing, and, hence, also that doing the bad is bad and doing the good is good, and it is this knowledge that necessitates commands and prohibitions.³⁹ In another passage he writes that reason knows that

justice and truthfulness are good and that injustice and untruthfulness are bad, and, hence, considers those who do the former as noble and those who do the latter as low; reason then commands the doing of that which will increase nobleness and prohibits the doing of that which will cause degeneration. Thus commands and prohibitions are obligatory by the necessitation of reason (fayajib al-amr wa al-nahy biḍarūrah al-ʿaql).⁴⁰

From both these statements it is clear that reason can know good and evil. The question is, can it also determine the obligation of doing the good and avoiding the bad? The statements do not yield that understanding. According to the statements reason necessitates, in al-Māturīdī's own words, wujūb al-amr wa al-nahy, i.e. the obligatory nature of the command and prohibition as they are given by God, but not wujūb i'tināq al-ḥasan wa ijtināb al-qabīḥ, the obligation to do the good and to avoid the bad, as determined by reason alone. It is thus clear that reason for al-Māturīdī cannot arrive at the al-taḥsīn wa al-taḳbīḥ. If reason can arrive at the latter, he should have said "fayajib i'tināq al-ḥasan wa ijtināb al-qabīḥ" instead of forming the statement as he has. According to these statements of al-Māturīdī, when carefully read, the knowledge of good and evil does not lead to the

obligation of doing the good and avoiding the bad, as is the case in the opinion of the Mu'tazilī school, but only to understanding of the obligatory nature of the divine commands and prohibitions.

If this analysis of al-Māturīdī's views is valid, his answer to the question concerning the power of reason is thus affirmative in three cases and negative in one, that is to say, reason cannot determine the obligation of doing good and avoiding evil though it has the capacity to know the other three basic matters of theological controversy.

Before entering into discussion of the views of al-Māturīdī's followers, it should be explained that they are divided into two groups. As noted earlier in the statement of al-Bazdawī, the scholars of Samarqand in general and some of the scholars of Iraq follow al-Māturīdī in the doctrine of the obligatory nature of the knowledge of God. The scholars of Bukhārā, however, disagree with him in this matter.⁴¹ The problem of good and evil, as will be seen presently, seems to be a matter of agreement among the majority of the Māturīdīyah. Consequently it is safe to say that the Samarqandī group have the same views as their leader.

The difference in opinion with the Bukhārā group is mainly confined to the question of the obligatory

nature of the knowledge of God. Al-Bayāḍī, whose affinity with Māturīdism is not so clear, includes a short statement on this difference in his comments on statements ascribed to Abū Ḥanīfah. According to one of the statements, the knowledge of God is obligatory on men through their reason (bi-'uqūlīhim), even though God has not sent a prophet to them. Abū Maṣṣūr and many of the scholars of Iraq, al-Bayāḍī says, construe this to mean "obligatory by innate reason" (bi-al-'aql al-gharīzī). If the obligatory knowledge and belief mean the obligation to profess the belief, then, the majority, al-Bayāḍī says further, are in disagreement with al-Imām Abū Maṣṣūr; but if it means the source (aṣl) of the obligation, then, this is a matter of agreement among the majority of scholars.⁴²

The existence of this difference is also implied in Abū 'Udhbah's earlier account on the difference of opinions between Māturīdism and Ash'arism concerning the obligation to know God. As will be recalled, he explains that al-Māturīdī, unlike the Bukhārā scholars, follows Mu'tazilism in considering that the boy, who has understanding though he has not yet reached the age of puberty, has the obligation to know God. With the Mu'tazilah he thinks that it is reason which forms the deciding factor in the obligation

to know God and not the attainment of the age of puberty, as held by the Bukhārā scholars. In other words, for al-Māturīdī it is reason that determines the obligation to know God, and for the Bukhārā group reason lacks the power to decide the obligation; it can only understand the obligation.

Reason for the latter, as Abū 'Udhbah observes, is an instrument (ālah) to know the obligation, and the one who determines the obligation, or to use his own term, the mūjib, is, in fact, God.⁴³ That reason is only an instrument is, according to al-Bayāḍī, understood from abū Ḥanīfah's statement bi'ūqūlihim in which the bā' indicates an instrument (bā' al-ālah).⁴⁴

Reason for the Bukhārā scholars, then, cannot arrive at the obligatory nature of the knowledge of God. That this is so can be concluded from their view that it is not reason which is the mūjib, i.e. the one who determines the obligation to know God. It is God who determines the obligation and reason can only understand the obligation.

The implication is that the knowledge of God, prior to the arrival of revelation, is not obligatory on man. That such is the opinion of the Bukhārā scholars is clearly indicated by Abū 'Udhbah's statement: "The Ḥanafī scholars of Bukhārā say that belief is not

obligatory and disbelief is not a sin (ḥarām) before the coming into existence of the mission of prophets."⁴⁵

This is confirmed by another statement of al-Bazdawī, who belonged to the group of Bukhārā. Quoting the Qur'ānic verse XX/134: "And if We had destroyed them with chastisement before it, they would have said: Our Lord why didst Thou not send to us a messenger so that we might have followed Thy message before we met disgrace and shame?", he says that this verse testifies that there is no obligation until after the mission of prophets and that belief is not obligatory until the mission has been fulfilled. He goes further, saying that there is no obligation but by the decision of God and that the decision cannot be known except from God through His true messenger.⁴⁶

With regard to the problem of good and evil, the position of al-Bazdawī as a representative of the Bukhārā group has already been explained, namely: that reason can arrive at the knowledge of good and evil, but it is revelation which determines the obligation of doing good and avoiding evil. A section of the Bukhārā group, according to al-Bayāḍī, follows Ash'arism in saying that reason cannot arrive at the knowledge of good and evil, for it is revelation, in their view, that tells man what is good and what is evil.⁴⁷ Many scholars among the

followers of al-Māturīdī, however, adopted the opinion expounded by al-Bazdawī.⁴⁸

It is thus clear that reason, in the eyes of the Bukhārā group, except for the section to which al-Bayāqī refers, can arrive at the knowledge of God and the knowledge of good and evil, but not at the obligation to know God and the obligation to do good and to avoid evil. It is revelation that informs man of all obligations.

5. The Theological Systems.

Now that our investigation into the views of the various theological schools is complete, it is useful, prior to establishing their individual theological systems, to recapitulate their respective position in a different form. The question with which we began was: Can reason arrive at the knowledge of God, the obligation to know God, the knowledge of good and evil, and the obligation to do good and to avoid evil? The answers of the schools may be chartered as follows.

	<u>K.G.</u>	<u>O.K.G.</u>	<u>K.G.E.</u>	<u>O.G.E.</u> ⁴⁹
Mu'tazilah	yes	yes	yes	yes
Ash'ariyah	yes	no	no	no
Al-Māturīdī and				
Samarqandī scholars	yes	yes	yes	no
Bukhārā scholars	yes	no	yes	no
'Abduh	yes	yes	yes	yes

When we diagram these answers we have the following theological conceptual systems:

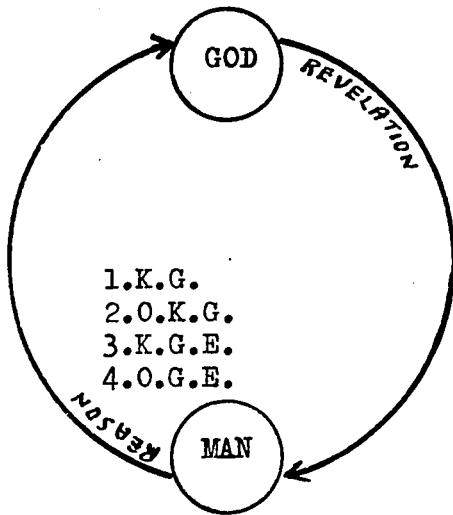


Figure 13
Mu'tazilah

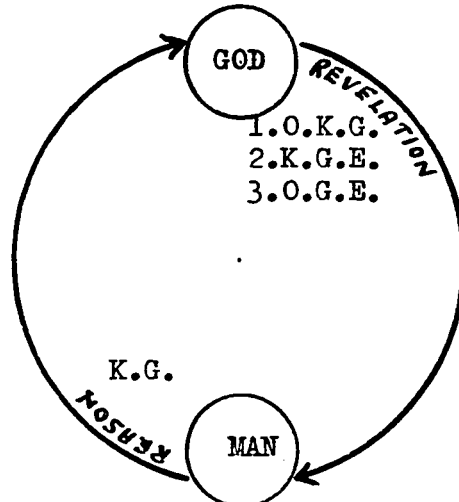


Figure 14
Ash'ariyah

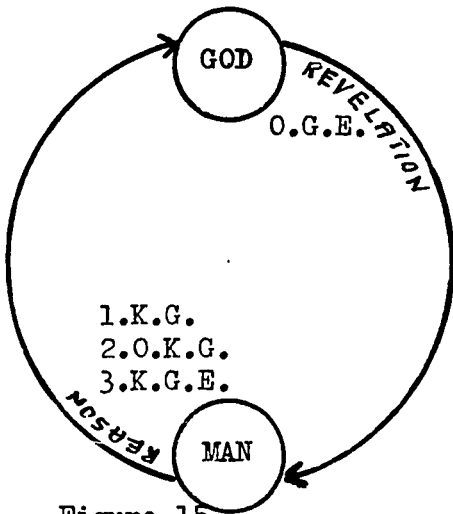


Figure 15
Samarqandi
Maturidiyah

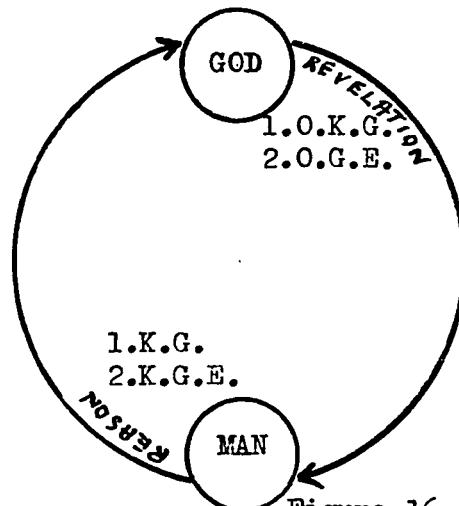


Figure 16
Bukhara Maturidiyah

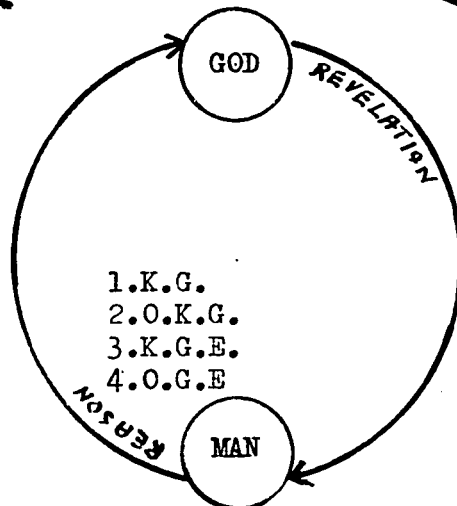


Figure 17
Abduh

6. Comparison between the Theological Systems.

As the diagrams clearly indicate, all the schools and also 'Abduh, agree that reason can arrive at the knowledge of God. It is only the Ash'ariyah and the Bukhārā Māturīdīyah who think that reason cannot derive the obligatory nature of the knowledge of God, so that in their view reason can obtain only knowledge of God. As we have said earlier, for both schools reason is not a mūjib, i.e. the one who determines what is obligatory upon man. The mūjib in their opinion is God. Despite this agreement, a subtle difference seems to exist between the two schools in this matter.

The opinion of the Bukhārā Māturīdīyah that knowledge of God is obligatory through reason implies that reason for them can arrive not only at the simple knowledge of God. In order for the reason to understand the obligatory nature of knowledge of God, it must first know that such knowledge is commendable. Hence, in agreement with their concept of the power of reason to know good and evil, the Bukhārā Māturīdīyah believed that reason can also arrive at the commendability of knowledge of God, though not at the obligation to know God. For the Ash'ariyah, on the other hand, reason can arrive only at simple knowledge of God but not even at the commendability of such knowledge. In line with

their view that reason has no power to know good and evil, they believed it to be revelation and not reason which teaches man that the knowledge of God is commendable. The Bukhārā Māturīdīyah, thus, ascribe more power to reason than do the Ash'arīyah.

The Mu'tazilah, 'Abduh, al-Māturīdī and his Samarqandī followers assigned great powers to reason. In their common view reason can obtain not only simple knowledge of God and the commendability of the knowledge, but also the obligation to know God. A further question, however, arises here. Does al-Māturīdī assign the same power to reason as do the Mu'tazilah and 'Abduh with regard to the attainment of the obligation to know God? His opinion that reason cannot arrive at the obligation of doing good and avoiding evil, shows, indeed, that reason for him has a power less than that ascribed to it by the Mu'tazilah and 'Abduh. As the diagrams above demonstrate, only in the systems of the Mu'tazilah and 'Abduh, can reason arrive at the obligation of doing good and avoiding evil. Consequently, there is a possibility of a difference between al-Māturīdī's view and that of the Mu'tazilah and 'Abduh with respect to the capacity of reason for knowing the obligation to know God.

Al-Bazdawī, however, categorically states, as

we have seen, that al-Māturīdī followed the Mu'tazilah in their view pertaining to the obligation of man to believe in God and to thank Him even prior to the advent of the Divine Speech. He explains that for the Mu'tazilah and al-Māturīdī reason is a mūjib, although in al-Bazdawī's view the application of the term mūjib to reason can be made only in a metaphorical way, for in fact, he argues, it is God who is the mūjib. In the understanding of the Mu'tazilah and al-Māturīdī, he says further, those who disbelieve in God though the call of a prophet has not reached them, will be eternally punished in Hell.⁵⁰ In this connection, it is worthwhile to recall that the Bukhārā Māturīdīyah follow Ash'arism in rejecting this view.⁵¹

It is thus clear that there is no difference at all between the Mu'tazilah and al-Māturīdī in ascribing the same power to reason as far as the attainment of the obligatory nature of the knowledge of God is concerned, at least as the case is expounded by al-Bazdawī. The difference between al-Māturīdī and the Mu'tazilah and 'Abduh is, then, confined to their disagreement about the power of reason to arrive at the obligation to do good and to avoid evil. According to the former, reason cannot attain knowledge of this obligation while according to the latter it can.

It follows that reason in al-Māturīdī's view is a mūjib only with regard to knowledge of God and not with regard to knowledge of good and evil. For the Mu'tazilah and 'Abduh reason is a mūjib in both cases. Al-Māturīdī, thus, makes a distinction between the commendability of thanking God for the graces He has bestowed upon man, on which the obligation to know God is based, and the commendability of doing good and avoiding evil. His argument is that God grants favours to man; reason says that it is the obligation of man to thank the Giver of these favours. In order to be able to thank Him one must know Him, hence the obligation to know God. To do good and to avoid evil are also commendable. But in this case, unlike the former, there are no giver and no receiver involved, on whose relationship the obligation on the receiver of expressing gratitude to the giver is, in fact, based. In this case reason has no effective guide that would enable it to determine the obligation to bring its knowledge of good and evil into practice. This is possibly the reason why in al-Māturīdī's opinion the commendability of the knowledge of good and evil does not lead to the obligation of translating the knowledge into practice, but only to comprehension of the divine commands and prohibitions.

We have said that the Mu'tazilah and 'Abduh agree in considering reason to be a mūjib in both cases, i.e. with respect to the knowledge of God and the knowledge of good and evil. In spite of this agreement, however, there seems to be a difference between them in the understanding of the nature of the wujūb or obligation, which is implied in the term mūjib.

In his Hāshiyah 'Abduh explains: "If the Mu'tazilah mean by the reward and punishment, that ensue from belief and disbelief in God before the arrival of revelation, the same reward and punishment as decided by the Sharī'ah, then we do not accept this view, for there is no way for reason to know them."⁵² For 'Abduh the obligation to know God prior to the arrival of revelation is, then, not a wujūb Sharī'i (obligation by divine law) but a wujūb 'aqlī (obligation by the power of reason). This conclusion is confirmed by his further statement: "If they mean that reason judges that to thank God is obligatory in the sense that it is commendable and necessary, and that the believer must be praised and the disbeliever must be blamed, then, there is no dispute about the opinion that reason can know them; but the word "obligatory" must be understood in this sense."⁵³

That 'Abduh's understanding of the obligation

to do good and to avoid evil must also be interpreted in the same way is clear from the following passage in his Risālah al-Tawḥīd: "The obligation to perform actions which are commanded (ma'mūr) or approved (mandūb) or forbidden (mahzūr) or disapproved (makrūh) in accordance with the prescription of the Sharī'ah and with reward and punishment as decided by the Sharī'ah, cannot be known independently by reason; the way to know it is through the Sharī'ah."⁵⁴

With regard to the first case 'Abduh seems thus to be in disagreement with the Mu'tazilah, for in their view, as stated above, the believer will be rewarded with an eternal abode in Heaven and the disbeliever will be punished with an eternal stay in Hell. In 'Abduh's opinion these rewards and punishments can be known only through the Sharī'ah and not by reason as the Mu'tazilah claimed. As to the second case there seems to be some agreement between his view and that of the Mu'tazilah for, according to al-Jubbā'f at least, reason necessitates that God must recompense the obedient and punish the disobedient, but the duration of the reward and punishment can be known only through revelation.⁵⁵ Such is also the view of 'Abduh; it is revelation which determines the nature of reward and punishment. It is unnecessary to emphasize that because

of their different opinion about the nature of obligation prior to the arrival of revelation, the Mu'tazilah assign more power to reason than does 'Abduh.

7. Gradation of the Theological Systems.

In the light of this discussion and of the diagrams as given in Figures 13-16, the classical theological systems can be rated as follows. Ash'arism ascribes the least power to reason and the highest importance to revelation, for, in the understanding of the Ash'ariyah, reason can arrive only at knowledge of God. Next comes Bukhārā Māturīdism which gives reason an additional power, that of knowing good and evil. Then follows Samarqandī Māturīdism which assigns still another power to reason, namely that of knowing the obligation to know God. Among these four theological schools, it is Mu'tazilism which ascribes the greatest power to reason and the least role to revelation.

8. The Nature of 'Abduh's Theological System.

Now that the conceptual systems of the related classical theological schools have been established, we are in a position to answer the question asked earlier: Is 'Abduh's theological system that of Ash'arism, or that of Māturīdism, or that of Mu'tazilism, or is it

again an independent system with a nature of its own? The answer, obviously, is that his system is by no means an independent system in itself. It closely resembles that of Mu'tazilism. This must be so, for, as indicated in Figures 13 and 17, 'Abduh, like the Mu'tazilah, ascribes to reason the power of arriving at the four basic issues of theological controversy, and leaves revelation, again like the Mu'tazilah, without any function with regard to these four controversial issues. Ash'arism and Māturīdism in both its branches still assign certain functions to revelation with regard to the four issues. It can further be stated that 'Abduh's system is closer to that of the Samarqandī Māturīdīyah than that of the Bukhārā Māturīdīyah, and that it differs greatly from that of Ash'arism.

Now, however, another question arises. Since 'Abduh's theological system closely resembles that of the Mu'tazilah, can he be classified as a latter-day Mu'tazilah? The answer to this question is not so simple as it might at first seem to be. The answer depends first of all on the understanding of what Mu'tazilism is. Secondly it depends on the further theological views of 'Abduh himself. Are they the same as those of the Mu'tazilah or not? The answer to the

question can be given only after an examination of his other theological views, which will be the subject of Part Two.

At this stage we can say only that his system greatly resembles that of the Mu'tazilah.

FOOTNOTES - CHAPTER III

1. Kitāb al-Milal wa al-Nihāl [Henceforth to be referred to as al al-Milal], ed. M. F. Badrān (Cairo: 1951), p. 59.
2. Kitāb Nihāyah al-Iqdām fī 'ilm al-Kalām, [Henceforth to be referred to as Nihāyah], ed. Alfred Guillaume (London: Oxford University Press, 1934), p. 371.
3. Al-Milal, op. cit., p. 63.
4. See for example Ibid., pp. 85 and 104. A clearer indication that al-tahsīn and al-taqbīḥ mean the obligation to do good and to avoid evil, is given by al-Bazdawī. See Kitāb Uṣūl al-Dīn, ed. Dr. Hans Peter Lins (Cairo: 'Isā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī wa Shurakāh, 1963), p. 92.
5. Al-Milal, op. cit., p. 59.
6. Ibid., p. 63.
7. Ibid., p. 74.
8. Ibid., p. 85.
9. Ibid., p. 120.
10. Ibid., p. 104.
11. Ibid., p. 63.
12. Ibid., p. 167.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid., p. 59.
15. Kitāb Uṣūl al-Dīn (Constantinople: Madrasah al-Ilāhīyāt, 1928), p. 24.
16. See for example Ibid., pp. 14, 24 and 202.
17. See for example Ibid., pp. 26, 203, 211, and 262.
18. Al-Iqtisād fī al-I'tiqād, op. cit., p. 160.

19. Ibid., p. 161.
20. Ibid., p. 162.
21. Ibid., p. 163.
22. Ibid., p. 165.
23. Ibid., p. 24.
24. Ibid., p. 210.
25. Op. cit., p. 370.
26. Ibid., p. 371.
27. See al-Shaykh M. 'Abduh, op. cit., pp. 565-6.
28. Ibid., pp. 183-197.
29. Ibid., p. 242.
30. Kitab al-Luma', ed. Richard J. McCarthy, S.J. (Beyrouth, 1952), p. 71.
31. It should be borne in mind that as yet no adequate study of al-Māturīdī has been made. His ideas as explained in this work are based on al-Bazdawī's Uṣūl al-Dīn, al-Bayāḍī's Ishārat al-Marām, and on the two works ascribed to al-Māturīdī himself, Risālah fī al-'Aqā'id and Sharḥ al-Fiqh al-Akbar. His Kitāb al-Tawḥīd is also consulted.
32. Op. cit., p. 207.
33. Al-Rawdah al-Bahiyah fīmā bayn al-Ashā'irah wa al-Māturīdīyah (Haydarabad: 1322 AH), p. 37.
34. Uṣūl al-Dīn, op. cit., p. 92.
35. Al-Shaykh M. 'Abduh, op. cit., p. 565.
36. Ibid., p. 568.
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid., p. 570.

39. Kitāb al-Tawḥīd, T. Izutsu's photocopy, Cambridge, University Library, MS add. 3651, fol. 48^r.

40. Ibid., fol. 91^{r-v}.

41. Uṣūl al-Dīn, op. cit., p. 207.

42. Ishārāt al-Marām min 'Ibārāt al-Imām, ed. Yusuf 'Abd al-Razzāq (Cairo: Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī wa Awlādūh, 1949), p. 75.

43. Al-Rawḍah al-Bahīyah, op. cit., p. 36.

44. Ishārāt al-Marām, op. cit., p. 75.

45. Al-Rawḍah al-Bahīyah, op. cit., p. 38.

46. Uṣūl al-Dīn, op. cit., p. 209.

47. Ishārāt al-Marām, op. cit., p. 78.

48. Ibid., p. 76. Al-Bayāḍī is here discussing the problem of good and evil on which "many of our Imāms are in disagreement with the majority of the Ash'ariyah." That he is here referring to the Māturīdī-Ḥanafī Imāms is clear from the fact that the problem of good and evil is one of the fifty questions he mentions, on which "the majority of the Māturīdī-Ḥanafīs disagree with the majority of the Ash'ariyah." See Ibid., pp. 54 and 56.

49. K.C. - knowledge of God.
O.K.G. - obligation to know God.
K.G.E. - knowledge of good and evil.
O.G.E. - obligation to do good and avoid evil.

50. Uṣūl al-Dīn, op. cit., pp. 207-8.

51. Ibid., p. 106.

52. Al-Shaykh M. 'Abduh, op. cit., pp. 201-2.

53. Ibid., p. 202.

54. Op. cit., p. 82. In citing this passage as proof, Kerr concludes that 'Abduh's position with regard to the problem of good and evil is the same as that of the Māturīdī school, that is to say good and evil

could be known by reason, but that the obligation to do the former and to avoid the latter could be known only from revelation. See Islamic Reform, op. cit., pp. 126-7. As has been shown, however, reason in 'Abduh's understanding can arrive at the obligation of doing good and avoiding evil (see supra pp. 70/72), though the obligation there has merely the sense of wujūb 'aqlī. What 'Abduh wants to emphasize in this passage is the wujūb shari'ī, as known through revelation, which would then confirm and complete the knowledge of reason about the obligatory nature of doing good and avoiding evil.

55. Al-Milal, op. cit., p. 120.

CHAPTER IV

THE FUNCTION OF REVELATION AND PROPHECY

1. The Mu'tazili View.

Since it was the Mu'tazilah who first raised the question of reason and revelation and at the same time ascribed no function to revelation with regard to the four basic issues of controversy in their theological system, it is relevant to examine their views on this matter first before proceeding to the study of 'Abduh's ideas on this problem.

'Abduh, as well as the other authors we shall discuss, talks more of prophecy than of revelation; but since prophecy entails the sending down of revelation by God to the enunciator of prophecy, prophecy and revelation are ultimately one and the same thing. The present Chapter is mainly concerned with revelation as a means alongside reason to obtain knowledge of the intelligible world. We, therefore, prefer the term "revelation" for present purposes.

With regard to the Mu'tazilah, it must be pointed out that the existing classical literature¹ does not embrace an extensive exposition of their views on the function of revelation. There remains a question

to be answered why al-Ash'arī in his Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn chose to ignore the divergent views of the different schools, and in particular those of the Mu'tazilah, with regard to the power of reason and the related function of revelation. The mystery is the greater since the problem must have been familiar to him. Al-Sharastānī, in spite of the fact that he has analyzed the theological controversies pertaining to the power of reason in his al-Milal wa al-Nihāl, fails to give an elaborate exposition of the function of revelation. Such is again the case with al-Qāḍī 'Abd al-Jabbār in his al-Majmū' fī al-Muhīṭ bi-al-Taklīf. As to al-Khayyāṭ, he rarely touches the whole question of reason and revelation in his al-Intiṣār. It is in 'Abd al-Jabbār's Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah that one finds rather systematic and somewhat detailed information about the function of prophecy, but the words are those of the commentator Ibn Abī Hāshim and not of 'Abd al-Jabbār himself.²

It should be recalled that the Mu'tazilah, like 'Abduh, ascribe to reason the power of arriving at the two basic religious duties of man, the obligation to know God and the obligation to do good and to avoid evil. Let us now investigate what the function of revelation is with respect to these two

basic duties.

With regard to the obligation to know God, it is true that the Mu'tazilah negate God's attribute. Nonetheless, they still ascribe to Him some qualities which are for them, to borrow Nader's words, purely rational considerations.³ They understand the attributes to be either none other than the essence of God, as held by Abū al-Hudhayl⁴ for example, or none other than states, as held by Abū Hāshim.⁵

In the understanding of the Mu'tazilah reason can arrive at all the qualities of God,⁶ even at those of hearing and sight, which in the eyes of 'Abduh can be known only by revelation. The argument, as given by 'Abd al-Jabbār, is that since God is living and is free from any defect, He must be qualified with hearing and sight.⁷ Al-Jubbā'ī produces the same argument.⁸ Speech in the view of the Mu'tazilah, as is well-known, does not belong among the qualities of God, but among His acts.

Unlike 'Abduh who believes revelation to have something to say about the attributes of God, the Mu'tazilah consider revelation to have no role in knowledge of the qualities of God except that of confirming what reason has already discovered. Reason alone is capable of knowing all the attributes.

'Abduh's probable argument for the possibility of ascribing physical attributes to God has been stated in Chapter Two. As to that of 'Abd al-Jabbār, he asserts that the sight and hearing of God, unlike those of men, are not in need of physical instruments. Man, he says, is in need of physical eyes to see and of physical ears to hear, because man lives through a soul (ḥayāh), and the soul cannot perceive but with the help of its substratum, i.e. the physical body. God, on the other hand, lives by His essence, and as such is not in need of physical instruments to see and hear.⁹ Al-Khayyāṭ and al-Ka'bī give another interpretation. They identify God's hearing with His knowing the audibles, and God's seeing with His knowing the visibles.¹⁰

In supplying knowledge of ritual worship revelation for the Mu'tazilah has some function with regard to the first basic duty of man. Reason knows the obligation to thank and worship God, but it is revelation that teaches man the proper way of worshipping Him. This may be understood from Ibn Abī Hāshim's discussion of the meaning of prophecy, where he refutes the Brahman rejection of prophecy, ridicule of prostration in prayer, scoff at circumbulation of the Ka'bah and disregard for other rituals that have been taught by the prophets. According to the Brahmans

reason finds these actions ridiculous, and they, hence, must be rejected.¹¹ Ibn Abī Hāshim, however, argues that there must be something beneficial in them, for they are commanded by prophets who teach nothing but truths.¹² It is clear from this polemic that in Ibn Abī Hāshim's view it is prophecy or revelation that teaches man the appropriate ritual worship, otherwise he would have agreed with the Brahman argument.

With respect to the second basic religious duty of man, al-Sharastānī's phrases in his al-Milal¹³ imply that the Mu'tazilah believe the reason to know all good and all evil. This description of the Mu'tazilah seems not to be accurate. Al-Ḥillī explains that according to the Imāmiyah and Mu'tazilah reason can know some of the good and some of the bad. As an example of the bad that can be known by reason, his Shaykh Abū Isḥāq, on whose work he is commenting, mentions injustice, and among the bad that cannot be known by reason is adultery. "If we do not believe in the prophecy of Muḥammad", the latter writes, "the evil that is involved in adultery ceases to exist by itself."¹⁴

That reason cannot know all the good is also to be understood from Abū Hāshim's statement, that were it not for the Sharī'ah, reason would not know that the slaughter of animals for certain goals is beneficial.¹⁵

This understanding is confirmed by 'Abd al-Jabbār, when he says that not all beneficial things are known to human reason.¹⁶ Human reason, in his opinion, can know what is obligatory for man to do and to avoid in their main lines, but it lacks the power to know their details, both with regard to matters concerning man's religious life and with regard to matters pertaining to his worldly life.¹⁷

A similar idea is expressed by Ibn Abī Hāshim, for according to him, the prophets bring only the details of what reason has already known in its main lines.¹⁸ Reason, he says in another place, has the power to know man's obligation to avoid harmful actions, but there are cases in which reason cannot make the distinction between the beneficial and the harmful. In these cases "God must tell us the nature of these actions."¹⁹ Moreover, the same action may be good under certain circumstances and may become bad under other circumstances.²⁰

Thus in the Mu'tazilī system, as in that of 'Abduh, reason cannot perceive all the good and all the bad. To know a certain part of good and evil reason must have the help of revelation. Revelation completes man's knowledge of good and evil. This explains why 'Abd al-Jabbār speaks of manākīr 'aqlīyah, actions

disapproved by reason, such as injustice and untruthfulness, and manākīr shar'īyah, actions disapproved by revelation, such as theft,²¹ adultery and drinking wine.²² In the same way he divides man's obligation into al-wājibāt al-'aqlīyah, obligations known by reason, like gratitude for the grace of God and repayment of debts,²³ and al-wājibāt al-shar'īyah, obligations known by revelation, such as the affirmation of the belief in God and in ritual worship.²⁴ The terms he uses in his al-Majmū' to describe the same ideas are al-qabā'ih al-'aqlīyah and al-qabā'ih al-shar'īyah²⁵ and taklīf 'aqlī and taklīf sam'ī.²⁶

In this connection it is worthwhile to note that 'Abduh and both al-Jubbā'ī and Abū Hāshim should have the same distinction in mind when the former speaks of the Sharī'ah al-'aqlī²⁷ and the latter use the term Sharī'ah 'aqlīyah.²⁸

In addition to completing man's knowledge of good and evil and demonstrating the proper way to thank and worship God, for the Mu'tazilah revelation has the function of informing man of the details of the rewards and punishments that await him in the hereafter. In the Mu'tazilī view reason can know that there will be reward and punishment in the second life, but according to 'Abd al-Jabbār reason cannot know that the reward for

certain good acts is greater than that for certain other good acts nor that the punishment for certain evil acts is greater than that for certain other bad acts. All this can be known only through the Sharī'ah.²⁹ The same view is expressed by al-Jubbā'ī when he says that the Sharī'ah gives information about the details of the judgement and the assessment of punishment and reward in the hereafter.³⁰

In the light of this discussion it can be stated that revelation for the Mu'tazilah has, as for 'Abduh, the function of confirmation and information; to confirm what reason knows already and to inform man of that which his reason cannot know and thus completing his knowledge. The confirmative function of revelation can be concluded from al-Shahrastānī's following statement: ". . . and if the Sharī'ah brings news about them (good and evil) it gives information about them, but it does not establish them as such (kāna mukhbīran 'anhā la muthbītan lahā)."³¹ The last phrase is significant. The Sharī'ah does not establish good and evil, as is the case with the Ash'arī view, for, as al-Shahrastānī states further, reason for the Mu'tazilah, can know good and evil either immediately or by discursive reasoning.³² It is thus not the Sharī'ah which establishes some of the good and the bad, but it

is reason which establishes them. Consequently the term mukhbiran 'anhā, giving information about them, must be understood in the sense of confirming what reason has already known to be good and bad. This conclusion is supported by Ibn Abī Hāshim's statement: ". . . they (the prophets) come thus to give us certainty and assurance (taqrīr) of what God has placed in our minds ('uqūlinā) and to tell us the details of what has been established in them."³³

Another function of revelation is indicated by al-Khayyāf. In his opinion the sending of messengers has the purpose of trying and testing man, that is to say of distinguishing those who submit themselves to the will of God from those who disobey Him. God has shown them the way to Heaven and the way to Hell, he says, and it is upon them to decide which way to follow.³⁴ Al-Shahrastānī ascribes the same idea to the Mu'tazilah in his al-Milal.³⁵

In this connection it is argued that since the purpose of sending messengers is to summon man to obey God, and since this call can be effected without the intermediary of a messenger, there is thus no need for prophets. The answer given by al-Ḥillī is that in such a case the call would be created in each individual man; and if this were so, man would have no free choice,

for he would be forced to obey.³⁶ There is thus still a need for prophets.

The Mu'tazilah consider the mission of prophets to have further the function of reminding men (al-'uqalā') of their neglectfulness and of cutting short the way to knowledge of God.³⁷ This statement implies too that man, by his reason, has already become aware of his duties and his God and that revelation comes to remind him of those duties.

The writings of 'Abduh in his Risālah give one the impression that revelation in his understanding has more the function of confirmation than that of information, and the exposition of Mu'tazilī ideas as given by the different authors quoted in this discussion produces the same impression. This judgment is supported by Nader's own finding that the al-Sharī'ah al-'Aqlīyah does not differ in essence from the al-Sharī'ah al-Nabawīyah,³⁸ and that the latter confirms and completes the former.³⁹ Hence, it is understandable why al-Baghdādī asserts that the Mu'tazilah secretly believe in the uselessness of the mission of prophets though they do not profess the view openly for fear of being opposed by other Muslims.⁴⁰

Before concluding this examination of the views of the Mu'tazilah with regard to the functions of

revelation and prophecy, it is pertinent to see what they meant by saying that the mission of prophets is a lutf (grace) of God to man.

Lutf seems to have had two meanings for the Mu'tazilah. In one sense it is God's guidance by which He opens the heart of the disbeliever and causes the latter to believe in Him.⁴¹ In agreement with their idea of man's free will and free act, lutf in this sense is rejected by the Mu'tazilah. According to al-Khayyāf, Bishr adopted this view, but later after the other Mu'tazilī leaders disputed with him he abandoned it.⁴² Lutf in the other sense, as explained in the Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamash, is knowledge of the conditions by which one deserves rewards and punishments in the hereafter. Lutf brings one close to doing the good and avoiding the bad.⁴³ In this conception man is still free and still has the choice either to do the good or to do the bad. God's grace in sending prophets to man consists thus in showing him the rewards and punishments that await him in the hereafter, and it is up to man after knowing of them to choose between doing the good and doing the evil.

2. 'Abduh's View.

Turning now to 'Abduh's view, we must point out that despite the lengthy talk in his Risālah about

prophecy and revelation, little attention is given to the function of revelation. The bulk of the material deals with the definition and the possibility of revelation, the message of the Prophet Muḥammad, and the Qur'ān.

In his opinion revelation has two main functions. The first function arises from the belief that the human soul will subsist after the death of the human body.⁴⁴ The belief in the second life according to him cannot be a mental fallacy or an illusion of the imagination,⁴⁵ for all humanity, save a few whose view has no weight, agree that the human soul will subsist⁴⁶ in the invisible world. The invisible world, though reason has the power to know certain aspects of man's life in it, is the most obscure field for reason to explore.⁴⁷ So mysterious is the invisible world in his view that it was above all for the clarification of conditions therein, that messengers were sent down by God to man.⁴⁸

The second function originates in man's nature as a social being. Men, he says, must live in groups; and in order to have a harmonious social life, they must adopt mutual love as the principle prevailing in human society. He finds, however, that human needs are practically limitless and that men are generally in

mutual conflict. As a result discord instead of unity predominates in human society. Man, he argues further, has tried to supersede the principle of love by the principle of justice, but human reason, being obstructed by carnal desires, lacks the capacity to lay down appropriate principles of justice. Moreover, man, unlike some species of the animal world, is not endowed with the necessary intuition to guide him in the organization of his collective life.⁴⁹ It is, therefore, for the good organization of human society that prophets are sent down to man.

Man, in 'Abduh's opinion, needs the help of prophets to organize his life in this terrestrial world and to know the conditions of his future life in the hereafter. In fact he uses the term "helper" to describe the general function of prophets. As he says: ". . . and the helper is the prophet (wa dhālika al-mu'In huw al-nabī)."⁵⁰

Revelation then assists reason to know the invisible world fully, to know the conditions of man's future existence there,⁵¹ to know the nature of the pleasures and pains as well as the method of reckoning that awaits man in the hereafter,⁵² to know that there are angels there,⁵³ and the like. Although it is difficult for reason to comprehend all these matters,

it is not difficult for it to accept their existence.⁵⁴

Revelation, furthermore, helps reason to organize human society by establishing principles to which all human acts can be referred,⁵⁵ by teaching man to live in concord and revealing to him the secret of love as the principle of harmony in human society,⁵⁶ and by prescribing the exercise of virtues, such as truthfulness, fidelity and the like.⁵⁷

These are the two main functions of revelation, as 'Abduh explicitly explains them, but there are other functions which can be understood from the limitations he ascribes to reason.

For one thing revelation helps reason to complete and perfect the latter's knowledge of God, of His attributes, of man's duties towards God, and of good and evil. As has been shown, he thinks, unlike the Mu'tazilah, that reason cannot know all the attributes of God. Similarly, though reason, after arriving at the knowledge of God, knows that it is the obligation of man to worship and thank Him, it has not the power to prescribe the appropriate method and manner of worship. It is revelation that tells man how to worship and thank his Creator and Benefactor.⁵⁸ Reason also cannot know all the details of good and evil. There are certain human acts, the good or bad quality

of which cannot be comprehended by reason. In these cases their quality of being good consists only in the fact that they are commanded by God, while their quality of being bad lies in the fact that they are prohibited by Him. Only God knows, 'Abduh asserts, why they are qualified as good or bad.⁵⁹

Another function of revelation for 'Abduh is the support which its divine authority gives to reason; it is this authority alone to which men are willing to submit. He finds that although the reason of the elect can arrive at the obligations to know God, to do good and avoid evil and although it can lay down laws with regard to these obligations and then call upon man to follow the laws, it cannot force the human race to submit themselves to these man-made laws. The elect themselves, whose powerful reason can achieve these different details of knowledge, seem, in 'Abduh's view, not to be convinced of the truthfulness of their knowledge. It is, he says, not of the type of knowledge that gives conviction and certitude.⁶⁰ Consequently, they themselves are in need of a confirmation from a higher authority. The confirmation comes in the form of revelation, which "provides the soul with a type of knowledge that inspires conviction."⁶¹

If such is the case with the elect themselves,

how can they then impose their rational knowledge upon the rest of humanity? 'Abduh thinks, therefore, that it has never happened in the history of man that all of humanity or even the majority has submitted itself to the opinion of the wise man (al-'āqil) for the simple reason that his opinion is sound.⁶² Revelation is needed to confirm the knowledge of the elect and to give authority to the laws they prescribe as well as to force man to conform themselves to the prescription of the laws.

A comparison between the Mu'tazilī views and those of 'Abduh pertaining to the function of revelation shows that in the eyes of the latter revelation has more functions than it has for the former. For 'Abduh revelation has certain functions with regard to the attributes of God, while for the Mu'tazilah, since they think reason to be capable of knowing all His attributes, it has no such function. For 'Abduh revelation has the function of organizing human society, while the Mu'tazilah keep silent on this question. For them reason appears to be sufficiently powerful and not to be in need of the help of revelation to organize human collective life. For the Mu'tazilah on the other hand revelation has the function of reminding man of his duties towards God. 'Abduh, though he speaks of a

reminding function, does not relate it to man's duties, but to the greatness of God. In his view the prescription of the rituals by prophets serves to remind man of God's loftiness.⁶³ In this connection, it should be remembered that man's duty to thank God, which he knows by the power of reason, is in the Mu'tazilī view a wujūb shar'ī, and, hence, the reminding function of revelation; while for 'Abduh the duty has only the sense of wujūb 'aqlī.

The fact that 'Abduh gives more functions to revelation than do the Mu'tazilah confirms the conclusion made in the previous Chapter that reason for the latter has more power than it has for the former. Indeed, the more powerful the reason is, the fewer functions are left for revelation.

3. The Ash'arī View.

In contrast to the Mu'tazilah and 'Abduh, the Ash'ariyah confer upon revelation a more definite and more important function. As we know from their theological system, reason in their understanding has only one power, i.e. to know God. All obligations of man towards God as well as his obligation to do good and avoid evil are known through revelation. Even the knowledge of good and evil can be obtained only through revelation. Consequently, if there were no revelation,

man would have not known his duties towards God. In the words of al-Ghazālī, if there were no Sharf'ah, it would not be obligatory on man to know God nor to thank Him for the grace He has bestowed.⁶⁴ In the same way if there were no revelation, man would have not been able to discriminate between good and evil nor would he have known his obligation with regard to them. In the Ash'arī opinion, indeed, the obligation to do or to avoid an act consists in the command of God to do or to avoid that act. A command given by other than God does not form an obligation or a prohibition. Man has to do what the prophets have commanded and has to avoid what they have prohibited, only because God has commanded him to do so.⁶⁵ Al-Baghdādī, in a more categorical way, says: "All the obligatory actions and all forbidden deeds are known only through the Sharf'ah",⁶⁶ and "if there were no revelation, nothing would be obligatory and nothing would be forbidden on man to do."⁶⁷

These statements, and in particular those of al-Baghdādī, demonstrate the great importance of revelation for the Ash'arīyah. It is revelation that decides everything; reason has no role in the knowledge of man's duties nor in the knowledge of good and evil. If there were no revelation, man would be free to do whatever he likes, and, as a consequence there would be

no order in human society. In fact, one of the functions of prophecy for the Ash'arīyah is to guide man to organize his life in this terrestrial world.⁶⁸

In the light of this argument the mission of prophets for the Ash'arīyah should be something essential and necessary, and not merely something incidental and possible (jā'iz), as stated by al-Ghazālī⁶⁹ and al-Shahrastānī⁷⁰ for example. For, if there were no revelation, man would lead a disorganized life. Strangely, however, it is the Mu'tazilah, who, in spite of the fact that they ascribe such great power to reason, hold to the obligatory nature of the mission of prophets. Why this is so will be discussed in Chapter Eight.

4. The Māturīdī View.

For the Māturīdīyah, that is to say the Bukhārā school, revelation has two basic functions only, i.e. to tell man his obligation towards God and to reveal to him his obligations with regard to good and evil. They consider that man's reason has the capacity to obtain cognition only, to know God and to know good and evil, but it lacks the power to arrive at man's obligations with regard to these matters. It is revelation which teaches man all his duties, his duty

to worship and thank God whom his reason has already known, and his duties to do good and to avoid evil, which his reason again has already known. In the words of al-Bazdawī, nothing is obligatory on man but by the revelation of God.⁷¹

For al-Māturīdī and his Samarqandī followers revelation has merely one basic function, to know man's obligations with regard to good and evil. In their view reason has not only the capacity to obtain the two basic objects of knowledge, the cognition of God and the cognition of good and evil, but also has the capacity to know one of the basic duties of man, to worship and thank God.

5. Comparison Between the Schools.

To recapitulate, revelation is evaluated most highly in the Ash'arī system, where it has three basic functions, to reveal to man the obligation to worship and thank God, to give knowledge of good and evil, and to make known the obligation to act in terms of the knowledge of good and evil. The second in its ranking of revelation is the Bukhārā Māturīdī system. Here, as we have just stated, it has two basic functions. For the Samarqandī Māturīdīyah, on the other hand, revelation has only one basic function. The lowest ranking accorded

to revelation is in the systems of 'Abduh and the Mu'tazilah, who ascribe to revelation none of the three basic functions recognized by the Ash'arfyah. In their opinion unaided reason has the power to perform these three basic functions. Hence, revelation in their systems has merely the function of confirming and completing the knowledge that man has already obtained by the power of his reason.

It should be clear that the more functions assigned in a system to revelation the less powerful will be reason in that system, and the fewer functions assigned to revelation the more power reason will have. This must be so, since revelation and reason are the two means for man to have knowledge of the intelligible world. This generalization holds true not only of 'Abduh's system, but also of the systems of the other theological schools.

Reason, in its endeavour to know the intelligible world, does so independently by its own power. It implies man's independence. Revelation, on the other hand, is a grace of God and comes down to give man knowledge of the intelligible world. It suggests man's inability to arrive at that world on his own; but God, having compassion on the weakness, sends revelation through His prophets to help man. If reason implies

man's independence and power, revelation implicitly means man's dependence on God and man's weakness.

It follows logically that the more power assigned to reason in any system, the more independent and powerful is man in that system. Conversely, the less power assigned to reason the less independent and powerful is man in that system. In the same way, the more the functions given by a system to revelation, the more dependent and weak is man in that system; and the fewer the functions given to revelation, the less dependent and weak is man in that system.

In the evaluation of the different theological schools it has been established that Ash'arism gives the least power to reason and the greatest number of functions to revelation. It is in this theological system also that man is the most dependent upon God and at the same time the weakest. From among all the theological systems under study in this work, it is Ash'arism, indeed, which is the most faithful to the Qur'ānic idea of the relation between God and man.

It has been stated earlier⁷² that according to the Qur'ān man's reason can arrive only at the understanding of God's revelation. In the Qur'ānic view man is very weak and greatly dependent upon God. His communication with God does not take the form of

reason trying to arrive at the knowledge of God and the intelligible world, but it takes rather the form of prayer (du'ā') and ritual worships ('ibādāt). Reason (Figure 18) merely tries to understand God's revelation.⁷³ This type of communication with God is that which 'Abduh believes common people to have.⁷⁴

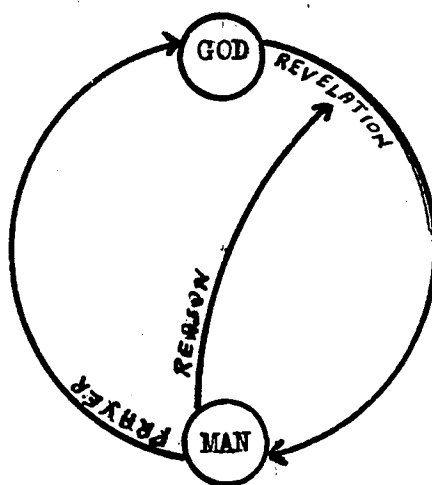


Figure 18

Ash'arism goes only a step further than this Qur'ānic view. Man's communication with God according to the Ash'arī school takes place not only in the form of prayer and ritual worship but also in the form of rational knowledge of God. It must be re-emphasized that in the opinion of this school man's reason can arrive only at this object of knowledge. Other religious matters (Figure 19) reason can know only through revelation; expressed otherwise, so far as

these matters are concerned reason's task is merely to understand revelation.

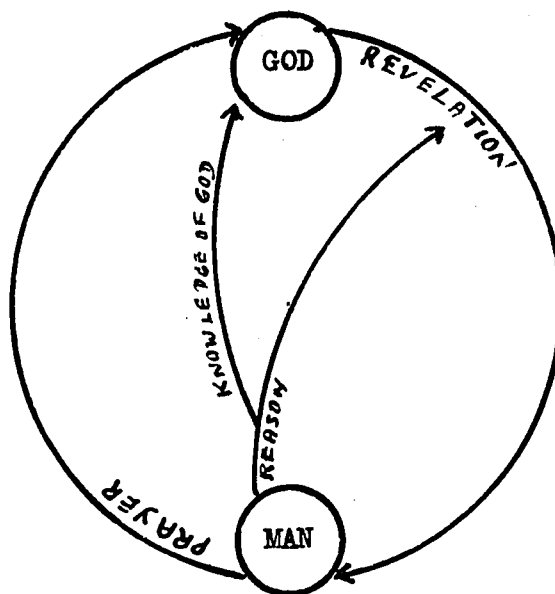


Figure 19

The Ash'arī concept of man thus closely resembles that of the Qur'ān, making man weak and dependent on God. His relation with God is rather a slave-Lord relationship,⁷⁵ in which the slave has only to obey the order of the Lord.

It is in the theological systems of 'Abduh and the Mu'tazilah that man, by virtue of their ascribing great power to reason and relatively little importance to revelation, is greatly independent and powerful. It will be recalled that both 'Abduh and the Mu'tazilah are of the opinion that reason can arrive at

knowledge of the intelligible world and that revelation has the function to confirm and complete that knowledge.

Māturīdism in both its Samarqandī and Bukhārā branches takes a position between these two divergent views of man. Since the Samarqandī branch ascribes more power to reason and fewer functions to revelation than does the Bukhārā branch, in the understanding of the former man is more independent and powerful than in the concept of the latter. The Samarqandī Māturīdīyah in these matters are closer to 'Abduh and the Mu'tazilah, while the Bukhārā Māturīdīyah are closer to the Ash'arīyah.

6. Reason and Revelation Influencing Theological Views.

It has been suggested in the Introduction that 'Abduh's theological views, beliefs and doctrines have been much influenced by the power he ascribes to reason. The same is true also of the Mu'tazilah. If one believes in the power of reason and in the independence of man, one is apt to interpret the universe in terms of human rational thinking and to believe that the sovereignty of God has no longer an absolute character. The idea of man's independence and power implies that God cedes some of His powers to man, and, hence, that His sovereignty is no longer absolute. On

the other hand, if one does not believe in the power of reason but puts one's reliance entirely on revelation, and does not believe, therefore, in man's independence and power, one would believe in the absolute sovereignty of God. One would also not have the tendency to interpret the universe in terms of human rational thinking but rather in terms of the absolute sovereignty of God.

Now it is this belief of 'Abduh and the Mu'tazilah in the great power of reason together with the related ideas of man's independence and of the non-absolute character of the sovereignty of God, as well as the tendency to interpret the universe in human terms, that are responsible for the emergence of their particular theological views, beliefs and doctrines. Similarly it is the Ash'arī belief in the great importance of revelation and the related ideas of man's dependence on God and of the absolute character of God's sovereignty as well as the tendency to interpret the universe in terms of absolute sovereignty that generate for them theological views different from those held by the Mu'tazilah and 'Abduh. Māturīdism, in line with the position it adopts between the divergent views of the power of reason and the function of revelation with their respective related ideas and tendencies, holds

theological views that in certain cases are close to Mu'tazilism and 'Abduhism - if one may coin the term - and in other certain cases close to Ash'arism.

As to how these different theological positions further affect the theological views, beliefs and doctrines of 'Abduh and the theological schools within each of their particular theological systems will be explained in the course of the discussion of the theological views themselves in the next six Chapters.

FOOTNOTES - CHAPTER IV

1. At least as it is available at the Library of the Institute of Islamic Studies.
2. Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah [henceforth to be referred to as Sharḥ al-Uṣūl] (Cairo: Maktabah Wahbah, 1965), pp. 563 ff.
3. Le Système Philosophique des Mu'tazila (Beirut: Institut de Lettres Orientales, 1956), p. 55.
4. See al-Ash'arī, Maqālāt al-Islāmīyīn wa Ikhtilāf al-Muṣallīn, ed. Helmut Ritter (Constantinople: Maṭba'ah al-Daulah, 1930), vol. II, 484.
5. See al-Milal, op. cit., p. 122.
6. At least as it is explained by 'Abd-al-Jabbār in his Al-Majmū' fi al Muḥīṭ bi-al-Taklīf [Henceforth to be referred to as al-Majmū'] (Beirut: Institut de Lettres Orientales, 1965), vol. I, 97 ff.
7. Sharḥ Al-Uṣūl, op. cit., p. 168.
8. Al-Shahrastānī, Nihāyah, op. cit., p. 344.
9. Sharḥ Al-Uṣūl, op. cit., p. 173.
10. Al-Shahrastānī, al-Milal, op. cit., p. 117.
11. 'Abd al-Jabbār, Sharḥ al-Uṣūl, op. cit., p. 563.
12. Ibid., p. 566.
13. Op. cit., pp. 59 and 63.
14. Anwār al-Malakūt fi Sharḥ al-Yāqūt [Henceforth to be referred to as Anwār al-Malakūt] ed. Muḥammad Najmī - Zanjānī (Tehran: 1338 AH), pp. 104-5.
15. See al-Baghdādī, Uṣūl al-Dīn, op. cit., pp. 26-7.
16. Al-Majmū', op. cit., p. 12.

17. Ibid., p. 22.
18. 'Abd al-Jabbār, Sharḥ al-Uṣūl, op. cit.,
p. 565.
19. Ibid., p. 564.
20. Ibid.
21. Why he classifies theft in the same
category with adultery and wine drinking is not clear.
One feels that it should belong to the category of
manākīr 'aqliyah along with injustice and untruthfulness.
22. Sharḥ Al-Uṣūl, op. cit., p. 147.
23. Ibid., p. 70.
24. Ibid., p. 75.
25. Op. cit., for example pp. 234-5.
26. Ibid., for example p. 14.
27. See Risālah, op. cit., p. 103.
28. See al-Shahrastānī, al-Milal, op. cit.,
p. 120.
29. Sharḥ Al-Uṣūl, op. cit., pp. 138-9.
30. Al-Shahrastānī, al-Milal, op. cit., p. 120.
31. Nihāyah, op. cit., p. 371.
32. Ibid.
33. 'Abd al-Jabbār, Sharḥ al-Uṣūl, op. cit.,
p. 565.
34. Kitāb al-Intiṣār (Beirout: Institut de
Lettres Orientales, 1957), pp. 86-7.
35. Op. cit., p. 63.
36. Anwār al-Malakūt, op. cit., pp. 169-70.
Al-Ḥillī does not specifically state that such is also
the Mu'tazilī view, but since he talks here about luṭf
and free choice, two of the favourite Mu'tazilī ideas,

and since Shi'ism is close to Mu'tazilism in its theological views, it can be assumed that the Mu'tazilah would adopt the same opinion.

37. See al-Shahrastānī, Nihāyah, op. cit., p. 411. Al-Shahrastānī mentions them along with other functions which have been implied in the exposition of the Mu'tazilī views pertaining to good and evil.

38. Nader, Falsafah al-Mu'tazilah (Alexandria: Maḥba'ah Dār Nashr al-Thaqāfah, 1950), vol. II, 142.

39. Ibid., p. 144.

40. Uṣūl al-Dīn, op. cit., pp. 149-50.

41. Al-Shahrastānī, al-Milal, op. cit., p. 126. See also al-Ash'arī, Maqālāt, vol. II, 573-8 and al-Khayyāṭ, al-Intiṣār, op. cit., p. 52.

42. Al-Intiṣār, op. cit., pp. 52-3.

43. Op. cit., p. 64.

44. Risālah, op. cit., p. 89.

45. Ibid., p. 91.

46. Ibid., p. 90.

47. Ibid., p. 93.

48. Ibid., p. 89.

49. Ibid., pp. 96-106.

50. Ibid., p. 80.

51. Ibid., p. 94.

52. Ibid., p. 77.

53. Ibid., p. 111.

54. Ibid., p. 121.

55. Ibid., p. 120.

56. Ibid.

57. Ibid.

58. Ibid., p. 119. This idea of the capacity of reason to know God and to know the obligation to worship and thank Him along with the incapacity to know the appropriate way of worshipping Him, as held by the Mu'tazilah and 'Abduh, is reminiscent of Ibn Tufayl's story of Ḥayy Ibn Yaqẓān. Ḥayy though living alone in an uninhabited island is able by the power of reason to arrive at knowledge of God and even at the merging of his intellect with the Active Intellect. Thus, when Asāl, the man of religion from the neighbouring inhabited island, gives him an account of what has been delivered by the Sharf'ah pertaining to the intelligible world, Ḥayy understands and does not find these teachings disagreeable. But he lacks the knowledge of how to worship God in the appropriate way. It is Asāl who teaches him the rites of worship in the form of prayer, alms, fasting and pilgrimage, as told by revelation to the Prophet, which he readily accepts. (The History of Ḥayy Ibn Yaqẓān, transl. Simon Ockley (London: Chapman and Hall Ltd., 1929), pp. 167-8). Ḥayy Ibn Yaqẓān in the story can be considered to represent reason and Asāl to represent revelation. Thus the latter confirms reason's knowledge of God and helps it to know the proper way of worshipping Him.

59. Ibid., p. 82. He does not provide his readers, however, with the necessary example.

60. Ibid., p. 80.

61. Ibid.

62. Ibid., pp. 102-3.

63. Ibid., p. 119.

64. Al-Iqtisād, op. cit., p. 189.

65. Al-Baghdādī, Uṣūl al-Dīn, op. cit.,

66. Ibid., p. 24.

67. Ibid., p. 149.

68. As stated by al-Dawwānī in al-Shaykh M. 'Abduh, op. cit., p. 638.

69. Al-Iqtisād, op. cit., p. 160.

70. Nihāyah, op. cit., p. 417.

71. Uṣūl al-Dīn, op. cit., p. 207.

72. Supra, p. 47.

73. For more on this communicative relation between God and man see T. Izutsu, God and Man in the Koran, op. cit., pp. 76-77 and Chapters VI and VII.

74. Supra, p. 41.

75. To borrow the idea of Lord-servant relation of T. Izutsu as explained in God and Man in the Koran, op. cit., p. 77.

PART II

THEOLOGICAL VIEWS

CHAPTER V

FREE WILL AND PREDESTINATION

1. 'Abduh's Position.

Turning now to the examination of 'Abduh's theological beliefs, it is pertinent to deal first with the question of free will and predestination as the subject most closely related to the idea of man's independence and power. Since 'Abduh holds the idea of man's independence, he must be an advocate of free will and an opponent of predestination. Since he accords great powers to reason, man must in his view have a great degree of independence and power, and, hence, must also have a great degree of free will and free action. Such is, indeed, 'Abduh's understanding.

In his discussion of the acts of man in Risālah al-Tawhīd 'Abduh argues that just as man knows his existence by himself and without need of any proof, in the same way he knows the existence of his optional acts (a'mālahu al-ikhtiyārīyah).¹ As will be shown later,² 'Abduh is a staunch believer in the theory that the universe is governed by fixed and unchangeable laws decreed by God; he calls these sunan Allāh. The unchangeable sunnah Allāh, in his view, also affects creation. Everything in the world is created in

agreement with its own specific nature, and from this universal rule man is not exempted. Man is created according to his own specific characteristics, and two of them, he explains, are the capacity to think and the capacity to choose his acts in agreement with his thinking.³

Here is a statement of man's free will which, in his understanding, is one of the basic natural characteristics of man and of which man cannot be deprived. For, were he deprived of any of his basic characteristics, man, 'Abduh asserts, would no longer be man but would become an angel or an animal of another kind.⁴ Man by nature, thus, must be invested with free will. Man then "weighs the consequences of his acts in his mind, measures them by his will and then performs the acts by a power existing in himself."⁵

This last statement speaks not only of man's free will but also of man's free action. It means, indeed, that man does not perform his actions until after he has thought about their consequences, on the result of which his decision to do or not to do the acts depends. If he decides by his own will to do them, then he proceeds to perform the acts and realize them by his own power. Thus in line with the idea that man by nature has free will, man also by nature has

power to bring his natural free will into reality.

'Abduh, in fact, finds it self-evident that man, in performing his free acts, whether they are mental or physical, is availing himself of powers and faculties that are created in him.⁶ Consequently man's act in his view comes into existence by his own will and own power. In the words of Ridā, man is created possessed with knowledge, wish, will and power, and, hence, does by his own power and will that which his knowledge and feeling tell him to be good for him.⁷

Since man is endowed by nature with free will and with power to perform that will, the idea that man is compelled by a divine force to do his act will not fit into 'Abduh's system. Indeed, 'Abduh thinks that inasmuch as man is man, only because he has been created with the basic characteristics of thought and choice, "the giving of existence to him does not include any compulsoriness in his acts."⁸

It should thus be clear that man in 'Abduh's eyes is invested with free will and free act. There still remains a question, however, of the extent of man's freedom. In his understanding man has no absolute freedom. He accuses those who think that man has a complete power over all his acts and an absolute independence of his own, of being deluded.⁹ As he

explains in the Tafsir al-Manār, man, though he does his acts by his intention and choice, is not perfect in his power, will and knowledge.¹⁰ There are certain limitations to man's freedom and independence.

What are the limitations? A man for example, may want to please a friend but instead annoys him, or may want to arrive at a certain goal but fail to attain it, or again may want to save himself from a danger but instead fall into destruction.¹¹ The causes for all these failures, according to 'Abduh, lie in man himself. "In such cases man is to be blamed if he does not evaluate properly his acts."¹² Here man's free will and free act are thus limited by his own miscalculation or, as 'Abduh says, by his own shortcomings (taqsir).¹³

If the causes of failure do not originate in man's own miscalculations, there is, he explains further, another kind of source for his difficulties. As an example he mentions a storm that wrecks one's merchandise, thunder that destroys his cattle and the death or removal from office of a helper on whom his hopes rest.¹⁴ Here the limitations come in the form of unforeseen natural circumstances.

Apart from these two kinds of limitations on man's will and power he makes no mention of other controlling forces. The question arises: Do God's will

and power not form, in his understanding, a controlling force on man? The answer is affirmative, but he believes this controlling force to work through natural events. As he explains it, the natural forces which limit man's will and power cause man to realize that there is in the universe still a higher Power Whom his own power cannot embrace, and that behind his efforts there is still an Authority Who is beyond the reach of his power.¹⁵ Man realizes further that "the events in the universe in its entirety depend on One Necessarily Existent Being Who directs them in accordance with His knowledge and will."¹⁶ His idea that God's controlling force works through natural events is evident in these two statements. These natural events, as will be seen, occur according to the sunan Allāh.¹⁷

As to the question of al-qadā' wa al-qadar (predestination), he gives a meaning to the terms different from that generally understood. He defines them in such a way that they do not form a limiting force on man's free will and free act. Qadā', he says, is the association (ta'alluq) of divine knowledge with a thing, and knowledge is disclosure (inkishāf) and does not imply compulsion.¹⁸ Qadar is the coming into existence of a thing in accordance with the divine knowledge, and knowledge is not knowledge except when

it is in agreement with the actual; for otherwise it would be ignorance, or the actual would not be actual, which is absurd.¹⁹

Applying these ideas to man's act, 'Abduh says that the divine knowledge embraces all that man will do by his will; God is aware that at such a moment such a one will do such an act, which is good, and, hence, will be rewarded, and that at such a moment he will do such an act which is evil and, therefore, will be punished. In all these cases, he explains further, the acts take place by man's acquired power (kasb) and choice, and there is nothing in the divine knowledge that dispossesses man of his capacity to choose what he likes to acquire (al-takhyir fi al-kasb). All that exists in God's knowledge must come into reality, because the content of God's knowledge is actual, and the actual does not change.²⁰ These statements clearly indicate that man does act by his own choice and that God in His eternal knowledge knows the choice, which is actual and must take place since it is actual. Thus qada' and qadar as 'Abduh understands the terms do not form a limiting force on man's act.

It is then clear that for 'Abduh there are only two controlling forces affecting man's act, man's own shortcomings and unforeseen natural factors which

take place in accordance with God's knowledge and will. In line with this idea he thinks, therefore, that man's happiness and man's act are based on two pillars.

First, man acquires (yaksib) by his own will and power the means to his happiness. Second, God's power is the source of all existence. It is the effects of this power that intervene between man and the realization of his will, and there is none but God Who can help him in matters beyond the reach of his acquired power (kasbuh).²¹ It is only God Who has the supreme power to bring him to the complete realization of his will by removing the hindering obstacles and by providing the effective causes that are outside the range of his knowledge and will.²²

In the light of this discussion man is thus in the possession of a large degree of free will and free act that are controlled only by his own miscalculation and shortcomings and by unforeseen natural events. 'Abduh makes use of the Ash'arī term kasb, but with a view to his understanding of man's free will and free act, his understanding of the term must differ from that of the Ash'arīyah. Kasb for him, as has been seen in the above quotations, has two meanings. Firstly, it means man's power which he acquires from God by virtue of his own nature and which he can freely use

according to his own choice. It is not the created act of the Ash'ariyah nor the Ash'ari man's ineffective created power. Secondly, kasb for him means simply to acquire in the sense of to gain and to earn.²³

Before concluding this investigation into 'Abduh's view of free will and free act, it should be pointed out that in the question of free will and predestination there are three things involved, the act, the will to do the act and the power to bring the act into existence. The question entailed here is: do they all belong to God or do they all belong to man or again are some of them shared by God and man together? If the will and power are God's alone then the act must also be God's and this is predestination. If the will and the power are man's alone, the act must be man's, and this is free act. If the will and power are shared by God and man together, the act may be considered to be God's act and may be considered man's act, depending on whose will and power is truly effective in the realization of the act. This is an intermediary position between free will and predestination.

That 'Abduh takes the second position, namely that will, power and act all belong to man is clear from his views already presented. We may recall that he is of the opinion that man is created with the capacity

to choose and that man performs his act by a power existing in himself. Since the will and the power to do the act, in his view, both belong to man, the act must also be that of man. In fact, he says so categorically in his Tafsir Sūrah al-‘Aṣr. Reason and the Sharf‘ah as well as the senses and intuition, he writes, agree that man's act is his own act.²⁴

2. The Mu‘tazilī Position.

As for the Mu‘tazilah, seeing that they, like ‘Abduh, ascribe the same great powers to reason and the same restricted role to revelation, they too must necessarily have the belief in man's free will and free act. As is generally known, they were staunch supporters of the idea of free will to such an extent that they were called the qadariyah²⁵ (the people of free will) by their adversaries. Though their views on this matter are well known, it is worthwhile for the sake of comparison to reproduce some of their statements as well as the related commentaries of their opponents.

In the understanding of al-Jubbā‘ī man creates his acts, does good and evil and obeys and disobeys God by his free will. The capacity (istiṭā‘ah) to do the act exists before the act.²⁶ The same view is given in the Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah. The acts of

men are not created in them, but it is they themselves who create the acts.²⁷ An act is that which is produced by a contingent having power.²⁸ Man has the freedom of choice.²⁹ An act is that which takes place by a created power.³⁰

If these statements are clear in their indication that the will to do the act is that of man, they are ambiguous with regard to the nature of the power. Is it God's or is it man's? It might be concluded that since man's act is his own act and not that of God, the power to do the act must also be his. Nevertheless, there is still a question to be answered. Does God's power have a share in the creation of man's act as the Ash'ariyah and the Bukhārā Māturīdīyah claimed?

'Abd al-Jabbār's explanation in his al-Majmū' gives the answer to this question. According to him the meaning of the saying that God enables man to do an act is that He creates in man a power on which the performance of the act depends and not that God must have the power to do the same act. In his view, it is impossible that God should have the power to do an act that man performs.³¹ He is here refuting the idea that two powers can affect the one and the same act. For the Mu'tazilah in general only one power can be effective

upon an act. The meaning is thus that man's power and not the power of God brings his act into reality. In other words God's power has no share in the realization of man's act. It comes into existence purely by man's own power.

Hence, for the Mu'tazilah, too, the will and the power to do the act are those of man and not those of God. Man's act is then his own act and not the act of God. The rational and revelational proofs that this must be so are given in a lengthy discussion in the Sharh al-Uṣul al-Khamsah.³² The rational proofs can be summarized as follows. Firstly that man addresses his praise for the benefit he receives to the doer of the good and his reproof for the wrong done to him to the doer of the wrong. This means, in the author's view, that it is man who does these acts and not God, for in the latter case man would have raised reproof as well as praise to God. Secondly that human acts come into existence in accordance with man's intention. If he wishes to do an act, it comes into existence, and if he dislikes to do the act, it does not come into reality. If the act were not his, either it would not have taken place despite his intention to do it, or it would have taken place notwithstanding his dislike for doing it. Thirdly that man does injustice to his fellow human

being. If this act is not that of man but that of God, then God must be unjust, which is absurd.³³

In the light of these statements, man for the Mu'tazilah, as al-Ash'arī states, creates his act in reality not metaphorically.³⁴ This Mu'tazilī idea of man being the creator of his act is criticized by al-Ghazālī who finds it a negation of the consensus of the early Muslims that there is no creator except God.³⁵ No wonder thus that their opponents accuse them of associating other creators with God,³⁶ and that al-Ash'arī charges them with having dispensed with God.³⁷ Such is again the accusation of al-Māturīdī. The idea of the existence of the power before the act and of man's use of the power according to his own free will, he thinks, necessarily leads to the idea that man can dispense with God.³⁸

It is worthwhile to note that in his Hāshiyah 'Abduh has as yet not come into agreement with the Mu'tazilī view of free will and free act. In his view, as he explains it there, a contingent, because it has no existence except through the existence of its Creator, cannot be a source of effects.³⁹ He therefore disagrees with the Mu'tazilī position, which according to him holds that man's act originates in man's own power, God's power having no share in it

except in providing its effective cause, i.e. the power of man.⁴⁰ In the Ḥāshiyah 'Abduh shows in clear terms that he still holds the idea of two powers working on man's act, the power of God and the power of man.⁴¹ He calls the share of man's power in the act the ingress of power (madkhalīyah qudrah al-'abd).⁴² As has been shown the Mu'tazilah do not hold this view. In his Risālah his position pertaining to this ingress of power seems to become obscure. He merely says that God's power is above man's power.⁴³ He is in process of changing his position. Indeed, his statement in the Risālah that the concept of man's act as he has elaborated it there is, in fact, the same as that on which al-Juwaynī bases himself,⁴⁴ clearly indicates that he is now adopting the Mu'tazilī stand. This conclusion follows because in the Ḥāshiyah he explains that al-Juwaynī's opinion on man's act is the same as that of the Mu'tazilah.⁴⁵

The gist of al-Juwaynī's view, which is also reproduced partly by al-Shahrastānī,⁴⁶ is that man does his act in reality but not in the sense of creation. The act comes into existence by man's power, and this power comes into existence by another cause. The relation of the power to the cause is similar to that of the act to the power. The range of causes

continues until it arrives at God, the Cause of all causes.⁴⁷ This idea closely resembles that of the Mu'tazilah. But whereas the latter call man's act his own creation, al-Juwaynī thinks that it is not man's creation. He is conforming himself to the prevailing idea that there is no creator but God. Nevertheless, this position of al-Juwaynī, though he is known to be an Ash'arī, differs greatly from that of the other Ash'arīs. Al-Shahrastānī himself comments that al-Juwaynī takes this concept from the philosophers whose ideas are not those of the al-Islāmiyyīn.⁴⁸

The result of this discussion is that the Mu'tazilah and 'Abduh, as his Risālah reveals, have the same opinion that man has a great degree of free will and free act. Their similar ideas of man's independence and man's power as implied in their mutual ascription of the same powers to reason, have led them to the same conclusion with regard to the question of free will and predestination. The difference between them is that while 'Abduh believes in the natural power of man, the power that is innately created with him, the Mu'tazilah seem to think that the power is created before the act, i.e. that it is not man's natural power. For al-Jubbā'ī, indeed, the capacity (al-istiṭā'ah) is a power above the defectless physical structure and

the sound limbs.⁴⁹ If this analysis is valid, man in 'Abduh's view has a greater degree of free will and free act than man in the understanding of the Mu'tazilah.⁵⁰

3. The Ash'arī Position.

In contrast to 'Abduh and the Mu'tazilah, the Ash'arīyah in accord with their contrary position of ascribing great functions to revelation and little importance to reason, have a diametrically opposite opinion on the question of free will and predestination. Since they believe in man's dependence on God and in man's weakness, they are already very close to the idea of predestination. For them man, as a weak being, cannot act by his own will and power, but is dependent on God's will and power. To explain the relation between man's act and the absolute will and power of God al-Ash'arī introduces his well-known but abstruse idea of kasb, acquisition. This concept is so difficult to understand that the saying "more difficult than the kasb of al-Ash'arī", has, according to Abū 'Udhbah, become a proverb.⁵¹

The meaning of iktisāb (acquisition), as al-Ash'arī himself explains it, is that a thing happens through a created power and as such becomes an acquisition of the one from whom it proceeds by virtue

of his power.⁵² He gives the same definition again in his al-Luma': the true meaning of al-kasb is that the thing emanates from the al-muktasib (acquirer) in virtue of a created power.⁵³ The phrase "emanates from the acquirer" (waga'a min al-muktasib) which he uses to define acquisition is noteworthy. It indicates man's passive part in the act, which again reflects man's dependence on God as well as man's weakness.

This passive role of man in his act becomes more obvious in the statement that the acquisitions of man are the creation of God because God says: "God creates you and what you do."⁵⁴ This verse means, he explains, that God creates the acts of man,⁵⁵ and that there is no agent (fā'il) but God for the acquisition.⁵⁶ Man's act in his opinion is thus, in fact, God's act. That this is so is clear from his analysis of man's involuntary acts and his comparing them with acquisitions. There are two factors involved in the involuntary act of man; the mover who causes the movement and the one who moves. The mover who is the actual agent of the movement is God, and the one who is moving is man. God cannot be the one who is moving, for movement needs a physical substratum, and it is absurd to say that God can have a physical substratum. In the same way there is in acquisition an actual agent and an

acquirer. The actual agent of the acquisition is God, and the acquirer of the acquisition is man. God cannot be the acquirer because acquisition takes place by a created power, and it is absurd to say that God has a created power.⁵⁷

It should be clear that the meaning of God's creation of man's act is that it is God who is the actual agent of man's act, and the meaning of the emanation of the act from man in virtue of his created power is that man is the substratum of God's act. Therefore there should be no difference between the acquisition and the involuntary act of man. Indeed, the actual agent in both cases, as al-Ash'arī himself expressly says, is God. And again in both cases man is the substratum of God's act. Al-Ash'arī explicitly says so with regard to man's involuntary act. Though he does not say so categorically with regard to acquisition, his argument that God cannot act through a created power amounts to the same. It is through man that God's act takes place in acquisition just as it is through man that His act takes place in the involuntary act.

Consequently both involuntary act and acquisition are compulsory acts for man. Yet al-Ash'arī tries to introduce a discrimination between

them. In involuntary acts, he explains, man is compelled and forced to do the act from which he cannot escape, however great his effort may be to avoid it. In acquisition there is, in his view, no such compulsion. The man who goes and comes is quite different from the man who shivers from fever. Man, he says further, can distinguish between these two cases. In the one there is a created power and in the other there is inability. Since there is power in the former, he argues, it cannot be said to be a compulsory act; rather it is an acquisition. Both, however, are the creation of God.⁵⁸

Despite this elaboration, the fact remains that in both acts the actual agent is God, and man is only an instrument for His act. In both cases man is still compelled to do what God wills him to do.

That man's act, which he calls acquisition, is in fact God's act is confirmed by his concept of the will and the power to do the act.

In his discussion of God's will he explains that He wills everything that can be willed.⁵⁹ As proof he quotes the Qur'ānic verse "You will not except God wills",⁶⁰ which according to him means that man does not will a thing unless God wills him to will it.⁶¹ This implies that man's will is none but God's will. As to the power to perform the act, he thinks that it

is other than man himself, for man is sometimes powerful and sometimes impotent.⁶² The power does not exist before the act but exists with the act for the act itself.⁶³ The proof that the power exists with the act and for the act only is that the one for whom God does not create the power cannot acquire anything.⁶⁴ These statements imply also that the power to do the act is God's power and not man's power. His argument in al-Ibānah as to why the advocates of free will should be called qadariyah corroborates this judgment. The qadari, he says, is the one who affirms the power to himself and not to God. Al-Ash'arī himself takes the opposite position, that is to say, he ascribes the power to God and not to man.⁶⁵

That the power to do the act is in fact God's power is clearly stated by al-Baghdādī. According to him the example of acquisition is given by some of the Ashā'irah in the act of raising a heavy stone. Someone may lack the strength to lift it up, but another man may be powerful enough to raise it on his own. If both of them lift it up, the act of raising the stone occurs by virtue of the more powerful man, but it does not mean that the less powerful loses thereby his quality of being an agent in raising it. Likewise in man's act, the act takes place actually by virtue of God's

power, and the acquirer does not lose thereby his quality of being an agent, despite the fact that the act comes into existence in virtue of God's power.⁶⁶

The same view is given by al-Ghazālī. In his opinion it is God Who creates man's act as well as his created power.⁶⁷ The act comes into existence by God's power and not by man's power, though man is associated with the act. Therefore, he argues, man cannot be said to have created his act, and a new term must be invented to describe his act. Following the Qur'ān, he explains further, man's act is called kasb.⁶⁸

As is clear there are in the Ash'arī view two powers working on one and the same act, the power of God and the power of man.⁶⁹ But ultimately it is God's power which is effective in the act. Man's power, as al-Isfarāyīnī says, is not effective if it is not supported by God's power.⁷⁰ Hence, man's power in the eyes of al-Ghazālī closely resembles impotence.⁷¹

'Abduh gives a different interpretation of al-Ash'arī's idea of kasb in the Ḥāshiyah. He bases the interpretation on a definition given by al-Shahrastānī in his al-Milal. In this book al-Shahrastānī ascribes to al-Ash'arī a slightly different definition of kasb. It is, as he states it, an act that lies within the scope of the created power and that comes into existence

through the created power.⁷² This last phrase according to 'Abduh implies that man's power has a share in the realization of the act. He calls this share, as has been referred to earlier, the ingress of power.⁷³ Hence, man in 'Abduh's view is not totally passive in the theory of acquisition as man is in the predestination view. But 'Abduh fails to explain further whether this ingress of power is effective in the realization of the act. Al-Shahrastānī, however, states further, that according to al-Ash'arī himself the created power, i.e. 'Abduh's ingress of power, is not effective.⁷⁴

To end the discussion on the Ash'arī view, the will and the power to do the act are, in their understanding, not those of man but those of God, and the act itself is, as al-Ash'arī himself clearly states, the act of God and not the act of man. It would be superfluous to say that this view is diametrically opposed to the concepts of 'Abduh and the Mu'tazilah. It closely resembles predestination for in the theory of acquisition it is God Who is the actual agent, and man is an agent only in a metaphorical sense. Its only difference with predestination lies in the idea that man in his acquisition still has a share in the act, though an ineffective share, while in the predestinarian view man has no share at all in the act.

Al-Bayāḍī's description of the Ashā'irah as people of moderate predestination (ahl al-jabr al-mutawassit) is therefore rather inaccurate, at least if he means by it that they take a middle position between the ideas of free will and predestination. As is clear they are very close to the idea of predestination, and, hence, their idea of kasb is, as has been claimed in the Introduction, rather a disguised idea of predestination.

4. The Māturīdī Position.

The Māturīdīyah in harmony with their intermediate position between the Mu'tazilah and 'Abduh on one hand and the Ash'ariyah on the other hand concerning the idea of man's independence and power and man's dependence and weakness, have taken a position in between the two opposing views of free will just described.

For them too man's act is the creation of God. Al-Māturīdī, following Abū Ḥanīfah, speaks of two acts, the act of God and the act of man. The act of God is the creation of power in man, and the act of man is the use of that power.⁷⁵ The power itself is created simultaneously with the act,⁷⁶ thus not before nor after it. Man's act belongs to man in the real sense of the word and not metaphorically.⁷⁷ Rewards and punishments

occur for the use of the created power.⁷⁸ Man is then punished for the misuse of the power and rewarded for the good use of it.

Al-Māturīdī speaks here of the created power of man but fails to say explicitly whether the power is to be considered that of man, as 'Abduh and the Mu'tazilah think, or whether it is to be considered the power of God, as the Ashā'irah understand it. But taking into account his opinion that the power to do the act is created in man and that man's act is truly and not metaphorically his act, the power must be man's power. For a man cannot claim an act to be his own if it is not his own power that brings the act into reality. The Ashā'irah do not claim, therefore, that the act of man is his own act. In their view it is God's power and not man's power that brings the act into existence.

As to the question of will, al-Māturīdī's statement pertaining to rewards and punishment implies that it is man's will which is decisive in choosing whether to obey or disobey God. It is because of man's wrong or right choice in the use of the created power that he is punished or rewarded. To make a free choice man must have free will. Man cannot make his own choice when his will is not free and is under the complete control of a higher authority.

But in his view as well as in that of his Bukhārā followers the will of man is in fact the will of God.⁷⁹ As a consequence man's act comes into existence by the will of God and not by the will of man. This means rather predestination and is in contradiction with his idea of free choice to obey or disobey God. But following Abū Ḥanīfah⁸⁰ he adopts the twin ideas of mashī'ah (will) and riḍā (pleasure).⁸¹ It is with God's will that man does all his acts, whether good or bad, but it is not with God's pleasure that he does the evil. To be clearer, it is with God's will and pleasure that he does the good, and it is also with God's will, but not with God's pleasure, that he does the evil.⁸² It would be clear that the will which al-Māturīdī has in mind is not man's free will of 'Abduh and the Mu'tazilah. It is rather the will to act not against the will of God but against the pleasure of God. That the latter is weaker than the former needs no further clarification.

Thus for al-Māturīdī the will and the power to do the act are those of man and the act itself is man's act in its real sense and not in a metaphorical way. The difference between him on one side and 'Abduh and the Mu'tazilah on the other side is that in his opinion the power to do the act is created simultaneously with

the act and not before it and that every part of the power is created with every part of the act.⁸³ For 'Abduh the power is born with man and for the Mu'tazilah it is created before the act. Man's power according to al-Māturīdī is thus weaker than man's power in the view of 'Abduh and the Mu'tazilah. Another difference, which has been already referred to, is that his idea of man's will is weaker than man's will in the conception of 'Abduh and the Mu'tazilah. Consequently man, in the understanding of al-Māturīdī, has not so large a degree of free will and free act as man has in the understanding of 'Abduh and the Mu'tazilah. But on the other hand his idea of man's act is not the Ash'arī theory of kasb. Though he agrees with the Ash'arīyah to say that man's act is the creation of God, for him the will and the power belong to man, and the act itself is man's act in a real and not a metaphorical sense; for the Ash'arīyah on the other hand the will and the power belong to God and the act itself is God's act and is man's act only metaphorically.

For the Bukhārā Māturīdīyah, at least as it is elaborated by al-Bazdawī in the Uṣūl al-Dīn, the will to do the act is the same as that held by al-Māturīdī. The former too adopts the Ḥanafī idea of

making a discrimination between God's will and God's pleasure.⁸⁴ Thus the will in his understanding is the will of al-Māturīdī, i.e. the will to act not against the will of God but rather against the pleasure of God.

As to the power, it is again the same concept, i.e. that it is created simultaneously with the act.⁸⁵ To say that the power is created before the act, al-Bazdawī argues, is a grave error and will lead to the belief that it is man who creates his acts.⁸⁶ With the Ash'ariyah al-Bazdawī thinks that there are two powers working on the acts of man. Man, he argues, has no power to create,⁸⁷ he has merely the power to perform an act.⁸⁸ The power to create can be attributed only to God,⁸⁹ and His creation includes the creation of man's acts.⁹⁰ This means that man has the power only to perform an act which in fact has already been created by God for him.

Like al-Māturīdī, al-Bazdawī believes that there are two acts involved in the realization of man's act, the act of God and the act of man. But his definition of them differs from that of al-Māturīdī. If for the latter God's act is the creation of the power in man, for him it is the creation of man's act. He calls this act of God maf'ūl.⁹¹ If in the opinion of al-Māturīdī man's act is the use of the created power,

in al-Bazdawī's view man's act is performing the created act. He gives to this act the name of fi'l.⁹² To clarify his theory he takes the act of sitting down as an example. The creation of the act of sitting down by His eternal power is God's act or God's maf'ūl.⁹³ Performing the created act of sitting down by his created power is the act of man or his fi'l.⁹⁴ From this he concludes that man's act, though it is the creation of God, is not God's act.⁹⁵ What he wants to prove by this argument is that man is free in his will and act. For according to him man is an agent of his act in the real sense of the word.⁹⁶

In his understanding man seems to have a smaller degree of freedom of action than al-Māturīdī believes. The use of a created power implies more freedom than the performance of a created act. To borrow his example the act of sitting down is already created by God for man, and what man has to do is only to perform the created act, in whatever manner it may take place. Therefore an objection has been raised to this theory. The association of an act with its creation by God is more effective than the association of the act with its performance by man.⁹⁷ In other words the act is rather God's act and not the act of man.

In view of this objection, al-Bazdawī

hesitates to call man's act his own in its real sense,⁹⁸ despite his earlier statement that man is a true agent of his act. It seems that in his mind man's power is not really effective in the realization of his act. As we have shown man has power only to perform the created act. For him and for the Ash'ariyah man, in conformity with their idea of man's dependence and weakness, does not have an effective power.

Finally, therefore, al-Bazdawī differs with al-Māturīdī for whom man's power must be effective since he thinks that man's act is actually his own act and not the act of God. As a result al-Māturīdī is closer to 'Abduh and the Mu'tazilah than to the Ash'ariyah in this question of free will and predestination, while al-Bazdawī is closer to the Ash'ariyah than to 'Abduh and the Mu'tazilah.

FOOTNOTES - CHAPTER V

1. Op. cit., p. 59.
2. Infra, pp. 179 ff.
3. Risālah, op. cit., p. 64.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., p. 59.
6. Ibid., p. 60.
7. Tafsīr al-Manār (4th ed.; Cairo, Dār al-Manār, 1373 AH), vol. IV, 189.
8. Risālah, op. cit., p. 64.
9. Ibid., p. 61.
10. Tafsīr al-Manār, op. cit., vol. IV, 195.
11. Risālah, op. cit., p. 59.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid., p. 60.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. Infra, pp. 179 ff.
18. Tafsīr al-Manār, op. cit., vol. IV, 195.
19. Ibid.
20. Risālah, op. cit., p. 64.
21. Ibid., p. 62.
22. Ibid., p. 63.

23. Michel and 'Abd al-Rāziq also interpret "kasb" as used by 'Abduh in the sense of obtaining (see Rissalat al-Tawhid, op. cit., pp. 42 and 44) and in the sense of power, effort and faculty (see ibid., pp. 43, 44 and 45). Musā'ad and Cragg prefer to use the term kasb itself and its literal translation, to acquire and acquisition (see The Theology of Unity, op. cit., pp. 63, 64 and 65). 'Abduh's use of the Ash'arī term kasb is in fact confusing and misleading, which has led some authors to believe that he has a moderate idea of free will. Thus in Cragg's view, if one correctly understands him, 'Abduh's position on this subject is a reconciliation between free will and the Ash'arī concept of acquisition. As Cragg says it, man acquires his act by the exercise of his will in which the will of God is done (see ibid., pp. 20-21). Adams too finds that he entertains a moderate view of free will (see Islam and Modernism in Egypt, op. cit., p. 153). In Caspar's opinion, he is far away from the Ash'arī kasb and very close to the Mu'tazilī idea of khalq, i.e. that man creates his own act (see MIDEO, IV (1957), 168). Such is again the idea of Kerr (see Islamic Reform, op. cit., p. 111). Gardet and Anawati find also that 'Abduh is far away from the Ash'arī idea of kasb and is confirming man's free will (see Introduction à la Théologie Musulmane, op. cit., pp. 84-85). In 'Uthmān Amin's understanding, 'Abduh declares himself to be in favour of the idea of free will which reconciles God's omniscience and man's act (see Muhammad 'Abduh, op. cit., p. 125). Though these authors disagree about the real nature of 'Abduh's concept of free will, they are one in understanding that his use of the term kasb does not come in the sense of the Ash'arī idea of acquisition.

24. See Durūs Min al-Qur'ān, Kitāb al-Hilāl, no. 96 (Cairo: Dār al-Hilāl, 1959), p. 109.

25. The term qadariyah comes in two meanings, one in the meaning of the people of free will (from qadar = power) and the people of predestination (from qadar = God's eternal decree). As observed by al-Shahrastānī, the Mu'tazilī, on account of the dispute that is contained in the Tradition: "The qadariyah are the dualists of the community", opposed to being called by that name. (Al-Milal, op. cit., p. 61). An explanation why they should be called qadariyah is given by al-Ash'arī in his al-Idānah, op. cit., pp. 73-74. A qadarī, he says, "is the one

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who ascribes the power to do his act to himself and not to God." And it is the Mu'tazilah who hold this idea. The people of predestination is better known under the name of jabariyah. For a discussion on the term qadariyah see Wensinck, The Muslim Creed (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1965), pp. 49 ff.

26. See al-Milal, op. cit., p. 120.
27. Op. cit., see for example, pp. 323 and 333.
28. Ibid., p. 324.
29. Ibid., p. 325.
30. Ibid., p. 367.
31. Op. cit., p. 380.
32. Op. cit., pp. 332-363.
33. Ibid., pp. 332-352.
34. Maqālāt, op. cit., p. 539.
35. Al-Iqtisād, op. cit., p. 87.
36. Al-Bazdawī, Uṣūl al-Dīn, op. cit., p. 108.
Also al-Baḡhdādī, Uṣūl al-Dīn, op. cit., p. 136.
37. Kitāb al-Ibānah 'an Uṣūl al-Diyānah [Henceforth to be referred to as al-Ibānah] (Hyderabad, n.d.), p. 6.
38. Risālah fī al-'Aqā'id [Henceforth to be referred to as al-'Aqā'id] (Istanbul: Ankara Universitesi, 1953), p. 13, and Sharḥ al-Fiqh al-Akbar [Henceforth to be referred to as Sharḥ] (Hyderabad, 1321 AH), p. 10.
39. Al-Shaykh M. 'Abduh, op. cit., p. 251.
40. Ibid., pp. 264 and 268.
41. Ibid., p. 266.
42. Ibid., p. 264.
43. Op. cit., p. 63.

44. Ibid., p. 62.
45. Al-Shaykh M. 'Abduh, op. cit., p. 260.
46. Al-Milal, op. cit., p. 159.
47. Al-Shaykh M. 'Abduh, op. cit., pp. 259-60.
48. Al-Milal, op. cit., pp. 160-61.
49. See al-Milal, op. cit., p. 120.

50. It hardly needs pointing out that this understanding, which is based on his ideas in the Risālah supplemented by those as he writes them in the Hashiyah, is in disagreement with the opinions of the authors discussed in footnote 23 of this Chapter. According to them 'Abduh has a moderate view of free will, or a view close to that of the Mu'tazilah. In this study it is claimed that 'Abduh's view of free will surpasses that of the Mu'tazilah.

51. Al-Rawḍah al-Bahīyah, op. cit., p. 26.
52. Maqālāt, op. cit., p. 542.
53. Op. cit., p. 42.
54. Ibid., p. 37.
55. Ibid.
56. Ibid., p. 39.
57. Ibid., pp. 39-40.
58. Ibid., pp. 41-42.
59. Ibid., p. 24.
60. Verse 76/30.
61. Al-Luma', op. cit., p. 31.
62. Ibid., p. 54.
63. Ibid.
64. Ibid., p. 56.

65. Op. cit., pp. 73-4.
66. Uṣūl al-Dīn, op. cit., pp. 133-4.
67. Al-Iqtisād, op. cit., p. 91.
68. Ibid., p. 92.
69. According to 'Abd al-Jabbār, some of the Mu'tazilah, like Abū al-Hudhayl, hold also the view of two powers working on man's act. See al-Majmū', op. cit., p. 379.
70. See in al-Bayāḍī, Ishārāt al-Marām, op. cit., p. 255.
71. Al-Iqtisād, op. cit., p. 95.
72. Op. cit., p. 156.
73. See al-Shaykh M. 'Abduh, op. cit., p. 264.
74. Al-Milal, op. cit., p. 166.
75. Al-'Aqā'id, op. cit., pp. 12-13 and Sharḥ, op. cit., p. 11.
76. Al-'Aqā'id, p. 13 and Sharḥ, p. 10.
77. Al-'Aqā'id, p. 13 and Sahrḥ, p. 11
78. Al-'Aqā'id, p. 13 and Sharḥ, p. 10.
79. Sharḥ, p. 4 and al-Bazdawī, Uṣūl al-Dīn, op. cit., p. 45.
80. See in al-Bayāḍī, Ishārāt al-Marām, op. cit., pp. 158-59.
81. Al-'Aqā'id, op. cit., p. 13.
82. More on this see Sharḥ, op. cit., p. 24, and al-Bazdawī, Uṣūl al-Dīn, op. cit., p. 42.
83. Al-'Aqā'id, op. cit., p. 13 and Sharḥ, op. cit., p. 10.
84. Uṣūl al-Dīn, op. cit., p. 42.

85. Ibid., p. 115.
86. Ibid., p. 116.
87. Ibid., p. 106.
88. Ibid., p. 107.
89. Ibid., p. 106.
90. Ibid., p. 104.
91. Ibid., p. 106.
92. Ibid.
93. Ibid.
94. Ibid.
95. Ibid., p. 107.
96. Ibid., p. 99.
97. Ibid., pp. 107-108.
98. Ibid., p. 108.

CHAPTER VI

GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY

1. 'Abduh's View.

It was noted in Chapter IV that belief in the power of reason and in the independence of man has its effect on the concept of the absolute sovereignty of God. If belief in man's independence and power leads to belief in the non-absolute character of God's sovereignty, belief in dependence on God, on the other hand, gives rise to belief in the absolute nature of that sovereignty.

For 'Abduh, since he believes in man's independence and power, God's sovereignty is no longer totally absolute. In his understanding, God has limited His own sovereignty by giving man a natural will and power, which he can, to a certain degree, use freely and independently in performing his acts. Providing man with natural will and power, as has been said earlier, is one of the sunan Allāh.¹ God's sovereignty in 'Abduh's understanding, however, is limited not only by this particular sunnah, but by His sunan in general.

Sunnah Allāh is a term and an idea that is prominent in 'Abduh's thought, particularly in

Tafsir al-Manār. Reference has been made to his idea that rational thinking is the first of his eight principles of Islām.² The fourth principle is that man should take into consideration the sunan Allāh.³ The sunan Allāh, as he explains them, are fixed trends according to which events happen and effects come into existence.⁴ The name given to them is not sharā'if but rather laws.⁵

Everything in this universe, in its creation and organization, occurs according to the sunan Allāh, in which God relates causes to their effects.⁶ For each kind of event God creates a sunnah. Thus the sunnah that controls the life of man is different from that which controls the life of plants.⁷ Even within the same species there are variations in the sunnah. The sunnah that rules the life of an embryo in its mother's womb is not the same as that which rules the life of an adult.⁸ There is even a fixed sunnah for gaining victory. If one follows this sunnah one comes to victory, but if one deviates from it one falls into destruction.⁹ Some of the sunan lead man to happiness and some lead to unhappiness. Being a believer or an unbeliever has no bearing on the outcome.¹⁰ These sunan make no exception even for prophets.¹¹ The sphere of nature also follows the sunan Allāh. Abduh refers to the

sunnah for the formation of rain¹² and to the sunnah of gravity.¹³

It is clear from these few examples that in 'Abduh's thought, sunan Allāh stands for natural laws that govern activity in this universe - natural laws with their causes and effects.¹⁴ These natural laws are fixed and unchangeable.¹⁵ "God in recounting the events of the past," 'Abduh writes in his Risālah, "confirms that the created world follows laws and rules that are unchangeable."¹⁶ As he explains it further these divine laws, which God has laid down in His eternal knowledge, cannot be modified by any accident.¹⁷ They cannot be modified even by the will of God Himself. In 'Abduh's thought the will of God never involves the suspension of His sunan and wisdom in the ordering of His creation.¹⁸ Hence, the man who prays that God may bestow upon him a thousand pounds is ignorant.¹⁹ The sick man, who implores God to restore his health, is, in fact, asking: "O God, suspend for my sake Your Laws which You say cannot be changed or modified."²⁰ Riḍā explains therefore that the meaning of "everything occurs by the will of God" is that everything happens according to an established order and a fixed rule and not that everything happens haphazardly.²¹ It does not mean that God occasions a thing to happen without cause

and without following His sunnah.²² Thus the meaning of "God grants His Kingdom to whom He wishes" is that God acts in accord with His sunnah and causes His chosen one to possess kingly attributes and to succeed in the establishment of a kingdom.²³

The important point in this position is that God follows His own sunan and He will not deviate from them. It obviously means that God by His own will has limited His absolute sovereignty by the sunan or natural laws that He has laid down to order the universe. His will and power are no longer absolute. As Ridā observes, He does not act the way an absolute king acts in his kingdom - absolute in his power granting rewards and administering punishment to whom he likes.²⁴ "The Qur'ān reveals that His will over His creatures comes to pass according to His wise laws."²⁵

One may ask how man's free will operates in a universe of fixed laws? As has been shown there is in 'Abduh's view a sunnah leading towards happiness and there is another leading towards unhappiness. Man's freedom is to decide which sunnah he will follow. If his decision falls under the former he will be happy and if the decision falls under the latter he will be unhappy. 'Abduh believes that there are also sunan which lead to requitals for man in this terrestrial world

and others which lead to requitals for man in the hereafter. If he decides to follow the former he will receive his reward or punishment in this world and if he decides to follow the latter he will receive his requitals in the hereafter.²⁶

The relation between man's will and God's will in 'Abduh's view seems to lie herein: the sunan as the creation of God are His will and man by following His sunan, is in fact following God's will. Riḍā, indeed, says that he who follows God's sunan expresses the Divine will.²⁷ Hence, he finds that in the exercising of free will man does not contradict God's will; a man's will is always a manifestation of a facet of God's will.²⁸

2. The Mu'tazilī View.

For the Mu'tazilah too the sovereignty of God is no longer absolute. As Nader has observed, God's sovereignty has been limited in their view by man's free will.²⁹ They too speak of fixed natural laws but it seems that they have not developed the idea the way 'Abduh has developed it. For them the absolute sovereignty of God is limited by their idea of the justice of God. This doctrine, which will be discussed presently, embodies the idea of the existence of

obligatory acts on the part of God. In the Mu'tazilī position these obligatory acts account for limitation on God's absolute sovereignty.

3. The Ash'arī View.

The Ash'ariyah in contrast to 'Abduh and the Mu'tazilah have the opposite view. True to their view that man is dependent and weak and that man has in fact no true free will and free act, despite their theory of kasb, they conceive God to be sovereign and absolute without restriction.

Al-Ash'arī's discussion on the will of God in al-Ibānah³⁰ provides one with some idea of the Ash'arī concept of God's sovereignty. God is not under any law and there is no one above Him to ascribe for Him laws and to decree for Him what is allowed or forbidden or obligatory to do.³¹ He is absolute in His will and power. As al-Dawwānī puts it, God is in the Ash'arī view the absolute Sovereign Who has the freedom to do whatever He wishes in His dominion.³² God's sovereignty is also demonstrated by al-Ash'arī's position, which has been referred to earlier,³³ that had God decreed lying to be good, it would be good. This view of sovereignty is implied in al-Baghdādī's statement that it is possible for God to prohibit what He has ordained and to ordain

what he has prohibited.³⁴ His following statement is more categorical and explicit: "God is just in all His acts. Nothing is forbidden to Him; He does what He wishes and refrains from what He wishes. His is the creation and His is the command. He is not to be questioned about His acts."³⁵ This is also the idea of al-Ghazālī, for in his opinion God can do whatever He wishes, can give judgement according to His wish,³⁶ can punish the doer of the good if He wishes and can reward the unbeliever if He wishes.³⁷ So absolute is God in the Ash'arī view that He can impose on man what the latter is unable to perform.³⁸

It goes without saying that the Ash'arī position is in glaring contrast to the position adopted by 'Abduh and the Mu'tazilah. For the latter God is not so absolute in His will and power. It is understandable, therefore, if 'Abduh criticizes the Ash'arīyah for harbouring such an opinion of God's absolute sovereignty. Such an understanding, he explains, is nothing but a disgrace and an error which originates in ignorance about the lofty and noble position of God.³⁹

4. The Māturīdī View.

The Bukhārā Māturīdīyah apparently adopt the theory of the absolute sovereignty of God. As has been

shown they tend to concur with the Ash'ariyah about the weakness of man and the ineffectiveness of man's will and power. With this idea of man, God in their understanding must be absolute and sovereign. As described by al-Bazdawī God does what He wishes and decrees what He wills; no one can raise any protest against Him and no one has any command over Him nor is there any prohibition on Him.⁴⁰ But, as will be shown, their idea of the sovereignty of God is not as rigid as that of the Ash'ariyah.

Al-Māturīdī seems to be less rigid than the Bukhārā Māturīdīyah. He believes in man's free will and free act, although not to the degree of that of 'Abduh and the Mu'tazilah. His understanding that punishments and rewards are based on man's free choice to use his created power either to do evil or to do the good implies that God does not punish in an arbitrary way. In this concept of punishments and rewards al-Māturīdī is following Abū Ḥanīfah. Commenting on the latter's statement that God punishes man for his disbelief and sins al-Bayāqī interprets the statement to mean, by rational and traditional proofs, that the punishment must necessarily take place.⁴¹ There is here the idea that God is under obligation to punish the sinner; therefore, there are limits on His sovereignty.

As on the question of free will and pre-destination, 'Abduh and the Mu'tazilah adopt a similar position with regard to the sovereignty of God. Again the Ash'ariyah take the very opposite stand. The Bukhārā Māturīdīyah are closer again to the Ash'ariyah while al-Māturīdī is closer again to 'Abduh and the Mu'tazilah.

FOOTNOTES - CHAPTER VI

1. Supra, pp. 145/6
2. Supra, p. 58.
3. Al-Islām, op. cit., p. 61.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Tafsīr al-Manār, op. cit., vol. IV, 187.
7. Ibid., vol. IV, 212.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid., vol. IV, 140.
10. Ibid., vol. IV, 143.
11. Ibid., vol. IV, 115 and 163.
12. Ibid., vol. IV, 62.
13. Ibid., vol. II, 63.
14. That 'Abduh's sunnah Allāh is natural law is also the opinion of Adams (see Islam and Modernism in Egypt, op. cit., p. 140), Michel and 'Abd al-Rāziq (see Rissalat al-Tawhid, op. cit., p. LXII), Gardet and Anawati (see Introduction à la Théologie Musulmane, op. cit., p. 85) and Caspar (see MIDEO, IV (1957), 167). Kerr, however, objects to equating it with natural law, for he finds that the sunan Allāh bearing moral guidance are no moral codes in themselves but only sanctions. (see Islamic Reform, op. cit., p. 131).
15. Ibid., vol. IV, 140, 141 and 480.
16. Op. cit., p. 7.
17. Ibid., p. 175.
18. Tafsīr al-Manār, op. cit., Vol. II, 480.

19. Ibid., vol. II, 171.
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid., vol. II, 478.
22. Ibid., vol. II, 478.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid., vol. IV, 140.
25. Ibid., 141.
26. Ibid., vol. IV, 167.
27. Ibid., vol. IV, 141.
28. Ibid., vol. IV, 189.
29. Ibid., vol. II, 77.
30. Al-Ibānah, op. cit., pp. 60 ff.
31. Ibid., p. 65. See also al-Luma',
op. cit., p. 71.
32. Al-Shaykh M. 'Abduh, op. cit., p. 546.
33. Supra, p. 87.
34. Uṣūl al-Dīn, op. cit., p. 213.
35. Ibid., p. 82.
36. Al-Iqtisād, op. cit., p. 184.
37. Ibid., p. 185.
38. For example see Al-Shahrastānī, al-Milāl,
op. cit., p. 135 and al-Ghazālī, al-Iqtisād, op. cit.,
p. 160.
39. Al-Shaykh M. 'Abduh, op. cit., p. 566.
40. Uṣūl al-Dīn, op. cit., p. 130.
41. Ishārāt al-Marām, op. cit., p. 159.

CHAPTER VII

GOD'S JUSTICE

It has been stated earlier that if one believes in the power of reason and in man's independence, one is apt to interpret the universe in terms of rational thought. Now, the concept of God's justice depends much on this idea of human interpretation and its opposite view, the tendency to interpret the universe in terms of God's absolute sovereignty only. Before entering into the discussion of the concept of God's justice itself, it is important to discuss the positions of 'Abduh and the theological schools with regard to this question.

Since 'Abduh believes in the great powers of reason and in the great independence of man, he has developed the tendency of interpreting the universe not only from the viewpoint of God's sovereignty but also from the standpoint of rational thought and human interest. He is in fact of the opinion that the universe is created for the benefit of man,¹ and that nothing emanates from God without bringing benefits for man.²

This position holds true also with regard to the Mu'tazilah with the difference that with the latter the tendency is perhaps stronger and more discernible than with 'Abduh himself. The Mu'tazilah claim that God creates all the created things for the benefit of man.³ In their view a wise man can act only with a purpose in mind. He acts either for his own advantage or for the advantage of others. Because God is exalted above seeking advantage for Himself, He must act for the profit of others.⁴

On the other hand, the Ash'ariyah, in agreement with their belief in the absolute sovereignty of God, have the tendency to approach the universe merely from the standpoint of God's absolute sovereignty. They reject the Mu'tazili idea that there is purpose behind the acts of God. In their understanding God's acts have no purpose (ghard). By purpose they mean the final cause that prompts God to act as an efficient cause. They admit, however, that there are benefits arising from the acts. God knows about these benefits, but neither the knowledge nor the benefits moves God to act.⁵ God acts purely by His own absolute will and not for the benefit of man nor for any other purpose. The Ash'ariyah have the tendency not to interpret the

universe in human terms.

The Bukhārā Māturīdīyah take the position of the Ash'ariyah on this question. According to al-Bazdawī it is acceptable to maintain that the universe is created without a cause. God does whatever He wishes.⁶ God's being wise does not entail the meaning that there is wisdom behind His acts; it means rather that His acts are perfect.⁷ In al-Bazdawī's opinion God does not create the world for the benefit of man.

Al-Māturīdī, in accordance with his idea of man's free will, free act, and of God's limited sovereignty adopts a position on this question which is closer to the position of 'Abduh and the Mu'tazilah than to the position of the Ash'ariyah and the Bukhārā Māturīdīyah. But seeing that the degree of man's free will and of the non-absoluteness of God's sovereignty in his understanding is far less than that in the understanding of 'Abduh and the Mu'tazilah, his inclination to interpret the universe in human terms would be far less than theirs.

After this short introduction, we proceed with the study of the concept of God's justice.

1. 'Abduh's view.

In line with his tendency to interpret the universe in terms of rational thinking, 'Abduh does not consider the question of God's justice solely from the standpoint of His perfection but also from man's point of view. Injustice cannot be attributed to God, he explains, because injustice is inconsistent with His wisdom as well as with the perfect quality of His laws and the perfect organization of the universe.⁸ The idea that injustice is inconsistent with God's wisdom indicates a judgement from the viewpoint of God's perfection. He further says that the injustice which God denies is that He acts in contradiction with the interest of man.⁹ Here the judgement is from man's standpoint. Therefore, he does not agree with those who define injustice as one's exercising absolute authority over the property of others.¹⁰ He is also against the view that one's having absolute authority over one's own property and exploiting it as one pleases cannot include injustice.¹¹ He is here opposing the Ash'arīs who hold this view.

Justice in 'Abduh's understanding is concerned with punishment and reward; the punishment given is in proportion to the wrong committed and the reward granted is in proportion to the good performed.¹² God's

mercy, however, actually alters the proportion of reward for good performed by doubling the reward. But in the case of wrong committed the ratio remains one to one.¹³ Thus justice for him means that God rewards the doer of the good and punishes the doer of evil. Justice, as he explains it, cannot involve giving someone something for which he has no right and depriving someone of something for which he has the right.¹⁴ It is evident that the definition proceeds from an appreciation of rational thought.

2. The Mu'tazilī Position.

As for the Mu'tazilah, 'Abd al-Jabbār, following the Mu'tazilī tendency of interpreting the universe in terms of human rational thinking, explains that the word justice has mostly to do with right; hence, he prefers to define justice as rendering one his right.¹⁵ When God is given the attribute of justice it means, according to him, that all His acts are good, that He cannot do the bad, and that He does not forsake what is obligatory on Him to do towards man.¹⁶ Consequently, God, in his view, cannot be unjust in his judgement, cannot punish the children of the polytheists for the sins of their fathers, cannot impose on man duties which are beyond his power to perform, and must reward

those who obey Him and punish those who disobey Him.¹⁷ Justice is further interpreted to mean acting in a rightful way and in accordance with the well-being of man,¹⁸ and rewarding or punishing man depending upon the nature of his acts.¹⁹ In the eyes of al-Nazzām and other Mu'tazilīs it cannot be said that God has the power to be unjust, untruthful, or to do what is not best rather than what is best for man.²⁰

The Mu'tazilī concept of justice thus implies the idea of obligations which God must honour. Justice for them, moreover, does not mean merely that God must punish the doer of evil and reward the doer of the good. It has a far broader meaning than that. It includes the idea that God cannot do the bad, cannot do other than that which is best for man, and cannot forsake what is obligatory for Him to do. These ideas have far reaching effects. What is best for man alone embraces many things, such as, the non-imposition of over-burdening duties, the sending of messengers to guide man, not to cause pain for man unless the pain is for his own well-being, and granting man power to perform his duties. All these are obligations for God; and, as was mentioned earlier, it is the obligatory nature of these acts that places a limitation on the sovereignty of God.

It is worthwhile to note that in the Mu'tazilī formulation of the idea of justice, the consideration of human right and human interest prevails to a higher degree than it does in 'Abduh's idea of justice.

In this connection one may ask whether 'Abduh also believed in the obligatory nature of God's justice, justice according to his own understanding rather than justice in the Mu'tazilī concept. His theory of the unchangeable sunan Allāh implies that he believes in its obligatory nature. As has been said earlier there are in his view sunan for terrestrial requitals and sunan for divine requitals in the hereafter. Those who follow the latter will find the appropriate requital at the day of judgement, in other words, if they follow the sunnah of divine rewards they will undoubtedly be rewarded, and if they follow the sunnah of punishments they will necessarily receive their punishment. This must be so since the sunan is unchangeable. There is here the idea of the obligatory nature of the rewards and punishment as well as the idea of the obligatory nature of God's justice, though 'Abduh does not say so explicitly. In his understanding justice does not operate directly through God Himself but indirectly through His sunan, while in the Mu'tazilī view it seems

that it operates directly through God.

3. The Ash'arī Position.

The Ash'arīyah, in harmony with their theory of the absolute sovereignty of God and with their tendency to interpret the universe from the viewpoint of that absolute sovereignty, adopt a concept of justice which is totally different from either that of 'Abduh or that of the Mu'tazilah. Justice for the Ash'arīyah means to place things in their right place that is to say to have absolute authority over one's own property and to exploit it in accordance with one's own will and knowledge.²¹ The justice of God means then, in their view, that God has absolute authority over His creatures and can do whatever He pleases in His Kingdom.²² Injustice, on the other hand, means to place things not in their right place, i.e. to have absolute authority over the property of others.²³

With such an understanding of justice and injustice, God can do anything that He wishes, even if it is unjust from man's point of view. In fact, according to al-Ash'arī it would not be a wrong act on the part of God should He place all men in Paradise nor would it be a tyrannical act on His part should He place them all in Hell.²⁴ To do wrong and injustice,

explains al-Ash'arī, is to act in violation of the prescriptions of law, but because there is no law above God, His act can never be a violation of law.²⁵ The same idea is voiced by al-Ghazālī. Injustice happens only when one's act infringes on the right of others, or when one has to act according to a command and then violates the command; such activity on the part of God is unimaginable.²⁶

As a consequence, God, in His capacity as the absolute Sovereign, can do whatever He pleases with His creatures. Hence, according to al-Ash'arī, He can cause pain for children in the hereafter, He can punish the believer, and He can reward the unbeliever with Paradise. Should He do this, He does no wrong; He is still just.²⁷ Therefore, rewards from God are only expressions of God's grace and punishment from God constitutes only justice.²⁸ It is not obligatory on God to grant rewards. In the words of al-Ghazālī, He rewards man if He so wishes, punishes him if He so wishes and even annihilates man if it pleases Him.²⁹

It goes without saying that this Ash'arī idea of justice is in glaring contradiction with the idea of 'Abduh and the Mu'tazilah. The Ash'arī position is the idea of the justice of an absolute ruler, who passes his sentences according to his

absolute will unlimited by any authority but his own, while for 'Abduh and the Mu'tazilah the idea is that of the justice of a constitutional ruler whose sovereignty is limited by laws, although it is he himself who decrees the laws. He passes his sentences in accordance with these laws and not arbitrarily.

For 'Abduh and the Mu'tazilah, since they adopt the view that man is free in his will and act, the argument against the Ash'ariyah that God will be unjust if He punishes the doer of evil, creates no problem. It is man by his own will and own power who chooses and does the evil. It creates a problem for the Ash'ariyah with their claim that the act of man is in fact the act of God. If man's act is God's act, God would be unjust in punishing man for an evil which he is compelled to do, that is to say for an act that is actually not his own act. In other words he is punished for the act of God Himself. As a consequence the Ash'ariyah have to define justice in such a way that the definition will be consistent with their theory of acquisition and their idea of the absolute sovereignty of God.

For al-Maturidi this problem does not arise. Man's act for him belongs to man in its true sense and

not metaphorically. Man is punished for wrongly choosing to use his created power, and this is not injustice.

For al-Bazdawī there is a problem, because of his hesitation to recognize man's act as actually man's own act. But the problem is solved for him by the Ḥanaffī-Māturīdī idea of making a difference between mashī'ah and riḍā. As has been explained earlier, although man in the Māturīdī view performs his evil act within the will of God, he may perform it, however, without God's pleasure. Because man does evil without God's pleasure, He cannot be said to be unjust if He punishes the evildoer.

FOOTNOTES - CHAPTER VII

- and 247.
1. Tafsīr al-Manār, op. cit., vol. I, 87
 2. Al-Shaykh M. 'Abduh, op. cit., p. 601.
 3. Al-Intiṣār, op. cit., p. 26.
 4. See in al-Shahrastānī, Nihāyah, op. cit., pp. 397-8.
 5. Al-Shaykh M. 'Abduh, op. cit., pp. 558-9.
 6. Uṣūl al-Dīn, op. cit., p. 130.
 7. Ibid.
 8. Tafsīr al-Manār, op. cit., vol. IV, 56.
 9. Ibid.
 10. Ibid., vol. IV, 36.
 11. Ibid.
 12. Ibid., vol. IV, 142.
 13. Ibid.
 14. Al-Shaykh M. 'Abduh, op. cit., p. 275.
 15. Sharḥ al-Uṣūl, op. cit., p. 132.
 16. Ibid.
 17. Ibid.
 18. See in al-Shahrastānī, al-Milal, op. cit., p. 58.
 19. See in Nader, Falsafah al-Mu'tazilah, op. cit., vol. I, 99.
 20. See in Maqālāt, op. cit., p. 555.

p. 58.

21. See in al-Shahrastānī, al-Milal, op. cit.,
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid., p. 167.
24. Ibid.
25. Al-Luma', op. cit., p. 71.
26. Al-Iqtisād, op. cit., p. 183.
27. Al-Luma', op. cit., p. 71.
28. Al-Milal, op. cit., p. 168.
29. Al-Iqtisād, op. cit., p. 185.

CHAPTER VIII

GOD'S ACTS

1. The Idea of God's Obligation Towards Man.

As was shown in the discussion of God's justice, 'Abduh believes in the existence of God's obligatory acts. Since he holds the theory of the restricted nature of God's sovereignty, the idea of the existence of God's obligation can be accommodated by his system. His concept of the sunan Allāh means that God does not act like a despot (al-hākim al-mustabidd)¹ who has no law above him, but He rules according to His unchangeable laws.²

Inasmuch as these laws are unchangeable, it means that they are binding upon God, though, as we have said before, it is He and not man, who imposes them on Himself. In other words God has the obligation to govern the universe in agreement with His sunan, just as the constitutional king has the obligation to rule his kingdom according to the laws of the land.

In the discussion of God's justice it has been shown also that 'Abduh holds the view that the universe is created for the benefit of man and that nothing emanates from God without carrying with it benefits

for man. This means that all acts of God are for the benefit of man. If one puts this idea of God acting for the benefit of man together with the idea of the obligatory nature of all His acts as implied in his concept of the unchangeable sunan, one comes to the conclusion that 'Abduh believes in the existence of God's obligation towards man. The two ideas mean in fact that all His acts must be in agreement with His unchangeable sunan and that all His acts must be in the interests of man.

The Mu'tazilah too, as is well-known and as has been made clear in the discussion of God's justice, adopt the idea that there are obligations on God towards man. The adoption of this idea is a natural consequence of their concept of God's justice and is compatible with their view of God's limited sovereignty.

As to the Ash'ariyah, the idea of the existence of obligatory acts on the part of God is contrary to their theory of the absolute sovereignty of God nor is it in harmony with their concept of God's justice. Since God's sovereignty and justice for them means that God has absolute authority over His creatures, does what He pleases in His Kingdom, can reward the unbeliever

and can punish the believer, even though such requital would be in violation of His promises, there can be no obligation on God. All God's acts, observes al-Ghazālī, are of a non-obligatory (jā'iz) nature and nothing about them can be said to be obligatory.³ God has no obligation at all to His slaves, says al-Ash'arī.⁴

The Bukhārā Māturīdīyah, as represented by al-Bazdawī, agree with the Ash'arīyah and say that nothing whatsoever is obligatory on God.⁵ However, al-Bazdawī is contradicting himself in this matter, as will be shown later.

Al-Māturīdī, as is clear from his idea of punishments and rewards,⁶ seems to say that there are certain obligations on God. God must keep His promises and threats.

2. The Idea of the Salutory.

'Abduh, like the Mu'tazilah but unlike the Ash'arīyah, believes in the existence of God's obligation towards man. As for the idea of the salutory, he agrees also with the Mu'tazilah when he says in his Hashīyah that it is obligatory on God to do what is best for man,⁷ though he explains that wujūb here does not have the technical meaning that it has

when it is used by the theologians and jurists,⁸ i.e. involving rewards and punishments. He is cautious to argue that if the Mu'tazilah mean by God's obligation to safeguard the well-being of man an obligation as man understands and conceives it, then their understanding is incorrect. It is, he argues, as if they want to subject God to laws which He may not violate.⁹ In his view, any obligation on God's part originates in the perfect quality "that God imposes on Himself by His will and choice."¹⁰ In other words, the obligation is a natural corollary of the idea of unchangeable sunan Allāh.¹¹

It would be superfluous to say that the Ashā'irah disagree with 'Abduh and the Mu'tazilah on this idea of the salutary. Since in their understanding there is no obligation for God, to do the salutary or what is best for man is in their eyes not obligatory for God. It is not obligatory for God, writes al-Ghazālī, to safeguard what is most salutary for man.¹²

The Bukhārā Māturīdīyah, who are one with the Ash'ariyah in the opinion that nothing is obligatory for God, believe also that it is not incumbent on God to do what is best for man.¹³ Such seems to be the view of

al-Māturīdī too.¹⁴

3. Duties beyond Man's Power.

The idea of the salutary leads to the question of God's imposing duties beyond man's power (taklīf mā lā yuṭāq). Those who believe that it is obligatory for God to do what is salutary and best for man, also believe that God cannot impose on man duties that are beyond his power to perform. The imposing of such duties is not in the interest of man. 'Abduh, indeed, holds this view. It is the sunnah of God, he writes, that He does not impose duties which are beyond man's power.¹⁵ According to Riḍā, this is one of the basic religious principles that is implied in Surah Two of the Qur'ān.¹⁶

As for the Mu'tazilah, it is well-known that they adopt the same attitude. The position that God does not impose duties which are beyond man's power to perform is a part of their idea of justice, as has been seen earlier.¹⁷ God in their view would be unjust and God would not be doing what is salutary and best for man if He imposed on him duties that he could not perform.

The Ash'ariyah, in conformity with their concept of the absolute sovereignty of God and with their idea that there is no obligation at all for God, find it possible, as stated by al-Ash'ari himself, that God imposes on man duties which he cannot perform.¹⁸ The same view is presented by al-Ghazali in his al-Iqtisād.¹⁹ In this connection it should be recalled that in the Ash'ari understanding man's act is God's act, and it is God's power, not man's, that brings the act into existence. Seen from this angle, the idea of the overburdening obligations creates no problem in their system. While God may impose duties which are beyond man's power to perform, man may still be able to perform them, because it is actually the unlimited power of God that brings them into reality; man himself has only a nominal share in their performance.

However, the imposition of overburdening obligations cannot fit the theory of 'Abduh and the Mu'tazilah concerning man's free acts. It is man in 'Abduh's view who performs his act by his own inborn power; God has no share in the performance except for His creation of power as part of man's nature. Therefore, man is not able to perform duties that are beyond the scope of his natural power. Should God impose demands beyond man's ability, God would be unjust and

wisdom could not be attributed to Him. Likewise for the Mu'tazilah God has no share in man's act except as the creator of man's power and it is this power that produces the act. The imposition of overburdening duties would be inconsistent not only with their theory of God's justice but also with their understanding of man's act.

The Bukhārā Māturīdīyah, who as the Ash'ariyah believe in God's absolute sovereignty, in the non-existence of God's obligation and in the idea that man's act is his own only in a metaphorical way, also adopt the Ash'ari view on the point under discussion. So it is not impossible, al-Bazdawī says, that God imposes on man duties that are beyond his power to do.²⁰

Al-Māturīdī's position on this matter is that of the Mu'tazilah and 'Abduh. According to the Sharḥ Fiqh al-Akbar, al-Māturīdī voices his disagreement with the Ash'ariyah, because the Qur'ān says that Allāh does not impose on any soul a duty which is beyond its ability.²¹ The imposition of overburdening duties is not in agreement with his view of man's free act despite his idea that the power to do the act is created simultaneously with the act itself. But inasmuch as man's act in al-Māturīdī's understanding is man's own

act in the real sense of the word and it is man's power and not God's power which performs the act, it is inconsistent with his system to maintain that God imposes overburdening duties on man.²²

The idea of the possibility of taklif mā lā yuṭāq, indeed, fits only in the Ash'arī and Bukhārā Māturīdī systems.

4. Prophetic Mission.

The idea of the salutary affects also the idea of God's sending prophetic missions to man. For 'Abduh and the Mu'tazilah, who believe in the great power of reason to penetrate into the world of intelligibles, the sending of prophetic mission is of little significance. As has been shown in Chapter Four revelation for both 'Abduh and the Mu'tazilah has mainly the function of confirming and completing what man has already known by reason. It is for the Ash'ariyah, who rely mainly on revelation for their knowledge of God and the intelligible world, that the prophetic mission should be of the utmost importance. In other words, the sending of prophetic mission to man should have an obligatory nature in the eyes of the Ash'ariyah and a non-obligatory nature in the eyes of 'Abduh and the Mu'tazilah. But as has been noted

earlier,²³ it is the Mu'tazilah who hold that it is of an obligatory nature. It forms, indeed, a part of their concept of God's justice. Since reason cannot know all that it should know about God and about the intelligible world including good and evil, and since it is obligatory for God to do what is salutary and best for man, the sending of prophets is obligatory upon God. This is the argument given in the Sharh al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah for the obligatory nature of the mission of prophets.²⁴

'Abduh too seems to favour the idea of the obligatory nature of the prophetic mission. His argument is also based on the idea of the salutary. It is not conceivable, he writes, that God should impose duties on man without having informed him of their imposition, that is to say, by sending messengers.²⁵ It means that God must send messengers to inform man that He has imposed duties on man. Another argument is that because the imposition of duties is in its essence obligatory, man's knowledge of the imposition is obligatory, and the sending of prophets is, therefore, obligatory.²⁶

The Ash'ariyah, since they rejected the idea

of the existence of obligations on the part of God and the idea of the salutary, cannot come to the view that the sending of messengers has an obligatory nature. This despite the fact that in their understanding men would not know their duties, would not be able to discriminate between good and evil, and, hence, could do as they like. The result would be that there would be no order in the world had God not sent prophets to teach man. But again God for them has an absolute sovereignty and can do whatever pleases Him. If He wishes man to live in a disorganized society, so shall it be, for God in their understanding does not act in the interest of man.

It is a foregone conclusion that for the Bukhārā Māturīdīyah too the sending of prophets is not obligatory for God. In their view it is possible²⁷ and commendable.²⁸ As is the case of the Ash'ariyah, the obligatory nature of the prophetic mission would not be in harmony with their belief in the absolute sovereignty of God, in the non-existence of God's obligation and in that God does not act out of consideration for the well-being of man.

A statement of al-Bayāḍī gives some clue to the position of al-Māturīdī in this matter. According to

al-Bayāḍī many of the Māturīdīyah agree with the Mu'tazilah in the idea that the prophetic mission has an obligatory nature.²⁹ As is obvious this position cannot be reconciled with the Bukhārā Māturīdī position that there are no obligations on the part of God towards His creatures. Al-Bayāḍī must be speaking of the Samarqandī Māturīdīyah, i.e. of al-Māturīdī and his Samarqandī followers. Because al-Māturīdī believes that there are certain obligations on the part of God, as is implied in his theory of the origin of rewards and punishments, his theological system can accommodate the obligatory nature of the prophetic mission.

5. Promise and Threat.

Another act of God is that of keeping His promises and threats (al-wa'd wa al-wa'id). Like the Mu'tazilah, 'Abduh is also of the opinion that the promises and threats of God must take place;³⁰ in other words the act of keeping His promises and threats has an obligatory nature. This obligatory nature is again a natural consequence of his concept of the unchangeable sunan Allāh. God's promises to reward the doer of good and His threats to punish the evildoer are aspects of the unchangeable sunan. Moreover, God in his eyes, must be perfect in His knowledge and will. A breach of

His promises and threats would entail a defect in His knowledge and will.

For the Mu'tazilah the obligatory nature of the al-wa'd wa al-wa'id originates in their idea of God's justice. God would be unjust if He does not reward the doer of good and punish the evildoer as He has promised and threatened to do. God can do no injustice to man because it is against the idea of the salutary and is not in the best interests of man. Another argument produced by 'Abd al-Jabbār is that a breach of promise implies a lie and God is exalted above the attribute of lying.³¹

The concept of God's promises and threats finds no place in the Ash'arī system. It is incompatible with their concept of the absolute sovereignty of God, whereby He can reward and punish whom He pleases, nor is it in harmony with their position regarding the negation of God's obligations. Therefore, al-Ash'arī tries to interpret the Qur'ānic verses pertaining to God's promises and threats in such a way that they cannot entail God's obligation to keep them.

In al-Ash'arī's opinion the terms man (who), al-ladhīna (those who), etc. in such verses do not

necessarily refer to the whole, i.e. to everyone; they rather refer to some and not to everyone.³² Thus the term "those who" in the verse "Those, who swallow the property of the orphans unjustly, swallow only fire into their bellies",³³ does not refer to everyone but rather to some. In other words, the threat of being punished with fire will be applied only to some and not to all those who swallow the property of the orphans. The others will escape punishment by the absolute will of God. In such a way al-Ash'arī evades the idea of the obligatory nature of the promises and threats which, in fact, cannot be accommodated by his system.

As for the Bukhārā Māturīdīyah, al-Bazdawī has the idea it is impossible for God to break His promise to reward the doer of the good, but it is not impossible for Him to break His threat to punish the evildoer.³⁴ Hence, the fate of the capital sinner to him is decided in accordance with the wish of God. If He wishes to forgive the sinner He will place him not in Hell but in Paradise; and if He wishes to punish him He will place him in Hell for a while or forever.³⁵ In his view it is not impossible for God to forgive a man for a sin he has committed, but at the same time not to forgive another man having committed the same sin.³⁶

With this idea al-Bazdawī, as has been referred to earlier, contradicts himself: If on one occasion he says that there is no obligation whatsoever on God, his idea that it is impossible for God to break His promises to reward the doers of good implies that God is obligated under certain circumstances. Hence, his concept of the absolute sovereignty of God is not completely identical with that of the Ash'ariyah. If for the latter it is totally absolute, for him it is restricted by God's obligation to reward the doer of the good.

Al-Bazdawī's contradiction seems to arise from his attempt to preserve God's absolute sovereignty as much as possible but without violating the idea of God's justice. To say that God can punish the doer of good would be in glaring contradiction to a sense of justice but to say that God can forgive the evildoer still could be in harmony with God's bountiful mercy.

Al-Māturīdī, as is clear from his idea of the origin of rewards and punishments,³⁷ has a position close to that of 'Abduh and the Mu'tazilah.

FOOTNOTES - CHAPTER VIII

1. Tafsīr al-Manār, op. cit., vol. IV, 140.
 2. Ibid., vol. IV, 141.
 3. Al-Iqtisād, op. cit., p. 160.
 4. Al-Rawḍah al-Bahīyah, op. cit., p. 33.
 5. Uṣūl al-Dīn, op. cit., p. 126.
 6. Supra, p. 186.
 7. Al-Shaykh M. 'Abduh, op. cit., p. 548.
- See also Tafsīr al-Manār, op. cit., vol. IV, 442.
8. Ibid., p. 546.
 9. Ibid., p. 549.
 10. Tafsīr al-Manār, op. cit., vol. IV, 442.
 11. Contrary to the view as given here, various authors are of the opinion that 'Abduh's theology does not embody the idea of God's obligation. Adams, for example, quotes 'Abduh's statement in the Risālah which implies that there is no obligation on God (see Islam and Modernism in Egypt, op. cit., p. 148). Horten writes that by denying that God has the obligation to do the best for man, 'Abduh is rejecting "the thesis of the liberal theologians who think that God has the obligation to do the best for man", (see Beiträge XIV (1947) 97). Such is again the opinion of Caspar (see MIDEO, IV (1957) 159) and Cragg (see The Theology of Unity, op. cit., p. 19). 'Abduh, indeed, does write in the Risālah (p. 53) that none of His acts are incumbent upon God through His essence (lā shay'a min af'ālihi biwājib al-ṣudūr 'anhu li dhātihī). It must be borne in mind that what 'Abduh negates here is a necessity that emanates from His essence; in other words he is here negating that the acts of God are fundamentally necessary to His essence in the same way that the fundamental qualities are necessary for the essence of things or that God's attributes are necessary for His essence. A few pages further in the Risālah, however, 'Abduh establishes another kind of necessity,

i.e. the necessity of the coming into existence of what God knows and wills since eternity. As he says it, God's promises and threats, as He knows and wills them, must necessarily come into reality. Thus while he negates obligation in the sense that it emanates from the essence of God, he establishes obligation in the sense that it emanates from God's eternal knowledge and will. His view on the question of God's obligation as he expresses it in the Risālah is thus not in disagreement with his ideas as he explains them in the Hāshiyah and Tafsīr al-Manār.

12. Al-Iqtisād, op. cit., p. 160. See also the same view in al-Shaykh M. 'Abduh, op. cit., p. 546.

13. See al-Bazdawī, Uṣūl al-Dīn, op. cit., p. 126.

14. Al-Māturīdī, al-'Aqā'id, op. cit., p. 15. Al-Māturīdī's attitude of adopting this view would not be contradictory to his idea of the existence of the obligatory acts of God. There are obligations on God, but doing the salutary would then not be included in those obligations.

15. Tafsīr al-Manār, op. cit., vol. III, 145, 151; see also vol. IV, 19.

16. Ibid., vol. I/115.

17. Supra, p. 194.

18. Al-Luma', op. cit., p. 58.

19. Al-Iqtisād, op. cit., p. 160.

20. Uṣūl al-Dīn, op. cit., p. 125.

21. Op. cit., p. 12. Verse is 2/286.

22. Al-Māturīdī's position as explained here supports the claim that he adopts the idea of the existence of obligations on the part of God. The impossibility of imposing overburdening duties in fact implies an obligation.

23. Supra, p. 130.

24. Op. cit., pp. 563-4.

25. Al-Shaykh M. 'Abduh, op. cit., p. 549.
26. Ibid.
27. Al-Bazdawī, Uṣūl al-Dīn, op. cit., p. 90.
28. Ibid., p. 92.
29. Ishārāt al-Marām, op. cit., p. 312.
30. Risālah, op. cit., p. 57.
31. Sharḥ al-Uṣūl, op. cit., p. 135.
32. Al-Luma', op. cit., pp. 77 ff.
33. Verse 4/10.
34. Uṣūl al-Dīn, op. cit., p. 131.
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid., p. 145.
37. Supra, p. 186.

CHAPTER IX

GOD'S ATTRIBUTES

1. Attributes in General.

The difference of opinion pertaining to God's attributes between the Mu'tazilah and the Ash'ariyah is well-known. But in order to fully understand 'Abduh's position on this subject it is pertinent to give here a short account of the Mu'tazilī and Ash'arī disagreement. It revolves around the question of whether God can have attributes or not. If God has attributes the attributes must be eternal like His essence and if the attributes are eternal there would be a multiplicity of eternals. This raises the idea of polytheism - an unacceptable position.

The Mu'tazilah try to solve the problem by adopting the view that God has no attributes. Their definition as given by al-Ash'arī is a negative one. God has no knowledge, no power, no life, etc.¹ This does not mean that they do not define God as having power, knowledge, life, etc. God has knowledge as well as other qualities, but these qualities are not attributes in their real sense. The meaning of God having knowledge, says Abū al-Hudhayl, is that God knows through a knowledge, which is He Himself.² Thus

God's knowledge, as he categorically states it, is God Himself,³ that is to say God's essence. The meaning of God knowing by His essence, as explained by al-Jubbā'ī, is that in order to know, God is not in need of an attribute in the form of knowledge or state.⁴ In the understanding of his son, Abū Hāshim, however, that God knows by His essence means that God has a state of knowledge.⁵ But despite this difference they agree that God has no attributes.

If the Mu'tazilah give a negative answer to the question of God's attributes, the Ash'ariyah on the other hand adopt the very opposite position. They are positive in ascribing attributes to God. In the explanation of al-Ash'arī, it cannot be denied that God has attributes, for just as His acts show that He knows, wills, and is powerful, they show in the same way that He has knowledge, will and power.⁶ According to al-Baghdādī there is a consensus among the Ash'ariyah that God's power, knowledge, life, will, hearing, sight and speech are eternal.⁷ The attributes, explains al-Ghazālī, are other than God's essence but subsist in the essence itself.⁸ Here is the idea of the multiplicity of eternals. To find a way out of this problem the Ash'ariyah say that the attributes are not

God nor other than He.⁹ Since they are not other than God, there is thus no multiplicity of eternals.

The Ash'ariyah take for themselves the theory of the existence of God's attributes with its related idea of their not being He nor other than He, while the Mu'tazilah adopt the theory of the negation of attributes with its related idea of their being mental considerations or states. By taking into consideration their idea of God's absolute sovereignty, the Ash'ariyah have no other alternative but the theory of the existence of God's attributes. Attributes imply permanence, while states imply change. Attributes carry with them the idea of strength and power, while states suggest the idea of weakness. Consequently, to define God with states is inconsistent with the idea of God's absolute power and sovereignty. To preserve the idea of God's total, absolute power and sovereignty, He must be defined with eternal attributes. The Mu'tazilah, however, inasmuch as they do not adhere to the concept of the absolute sovereignty and power of God, can adopt the theory of negating God's attributes in order to escape the problem of the multiplicity of eternals.

Where does 'Abduh stand on the problem of God's attributes? As has been shown in Chapter Two, he

speaks of the existence of God's attributes.¹⁰ As to the question whether they are other than God's essence, he thinks that it is beyond the power of human reason to know.¹¹ But, nevertheless, he seems to favour the idea that the attributes are none other than God's essence, though he does not say explicitly that he is adopting this position.

His discussion of the problem appears in his Hāshiyah. There he elaborates the theory that the attributes are the very essence of God as held, so he says, by the philosophers. By this theory, he explains, they do not mean to say that the essence is one and the same as the attributes nor that the attributes are one and the same as the essence, but rather that the essence as the one and only source of everything is the source of the effects that issue from the attributes. The effect that issues from the attribute, knowledge, for example, is the achievement of knowledge about an object of knowledge; but at the same time the achievement of knowledge (that which follows as a consequence of the attribute, knowledge) is actually a result which issues from the essence, i.e. in the latter's capacity as the source of everything. Thus, essence and the attribute, knowledge, are one. The same is true of the attribute, power. The effect that issues from power is

the performance of an act. Put differently, power is the source of the performance of acts. Since essence, as the source of everything, is actually the source of the performance of acts, essence and the attribute, power, are again one. Consequently, essence from the point of view of the achievement of knowledge about an object of knowledge is knowledge, and from the point of view of the performance of acts is power.¹² In such a way the attributes can then be said to be the very essence of God, but this theory amounts to the negation of the attributes themselves and the affirmation of their consequences only.

That 'Abduh favours this theory can be concluded from the fact that he criticizes those who define al-'Ālim as the one who has an attribute called knowledge subsisting in his essence. According to him the definition of al-'Ālim is the one to whom the truth of the matter has become uncovered.¹³ This definition clearly denies the existence of the attribute called knowledge. He further criticizes the argument of those who hold that the attributes are other than God. One of their arguments, as he explains it, is that God is in need of other than His essence, i.e. the attributes, to be perfect. This means, he says, that there are things which are loftier than God and this is absurd. He asks

which is more acceptable, to say that the attributes are one and the same as the essence with the affirmation of the perfection of the essence, or to say that the essence is imperfect and that it is in need of other things to attain its perfection?¹⁴ Here he is clearly taking the side of those who negate the attributes.

He also does not fail to criticize the Ash'arī argument for establishing that the attributes are not the essence nor are they other than the essence. The latter part of this argument is based on the idea that it cannot be said about an attribute and its substratum or about part and whole, that each of them is other than its other component part. The Ash'arīyah assert that if, in the saying "there is no one in the house but Zayd" (laysa fī al-dār ghayr Zayd), the attributes and parts of Zayd are other than Zayd, they would be included in the negation, while they are there with him; for Zayd cannot exist without his parts and attributes. 'Abduh finds this argument to be weak, for according to him what is negated in the saying "there is no one in the house but Zayd" is everyone except Zayd and not the parts or attributes of Zayd.¹⁵ Hence, he cannot agree with the Ash'arī theory that the attributes are not God nor other than He, and asks: "What would al-Shaykh

al-Ash'arī and his followers say if one worships God's attribute of power as some of the ancient Egyptians did? Is this not polytheism?"¹⁶ Here again is the concept of the negation of attributes. Moreover, he thinks that al-Ash'arī has been misunderstood by his followers. Al-Ash'arī, he says, has never defined the concept of "other" in his writings. He doubts whether the concept originates with al-Ash'arī himself, for one of the latter's statements according to him leads to the very opposite view. He is here referring to the statement ascribed by al-Shahrastānī to al-Ash'arī in his al-Milal. According to the statement it cannot be said of the attributes that they are God (hiya huwa) nor that they are other than He (hiya ghayruhu), nor that they are not He (lā huwa), nor that they are not other than He (lā ghayruhu).¹⁷ It is obvious, 'Abduh explains, that the thing from which the concept of other (ghayruh) is negated is the not-other (lā ghayruh) itself, and that the thing from which its being God (hiya huwa) is negated is the not-God (lā huwa) itself. The statement, he argues, refers to a multiple negation. In other words the attributes cannot be said to be God, nor not God, nor that they are other than God nor not other than God. Such a statement, he asserts, is senseless unless it is interpreted to mean that the

attributes are merely mental considerations that do not exist in reality.¹⁸ In 'Abduh's understanding al-Ash'arī, unlike his followers, would adopt the negation of God's attributes and like the Mu'tazilah would consider them to be merely mental considerations.

From these criticisms and interpretation of al-Ash'arī's statement it is clear that 'Abduh is in fact favouring the theory of negating the attributes though he speaks of God's attributes in his Risālah. It must be emphasized, however, that he does not deal in the Risālah with the problem whether the attributes are the essence or other than the essence of God nor whether they are eternal or not eternal. In other words, he does not explain precisely in the Risālah what he means by attributes. As such there is no incompatibility between the idea that he expresses in his Hāshiyah and his idea of attributes in the Risālah.¹⁹ Since he does not maintain that God's sovereignty and power are not totally absolute, he is in a position to include the theory of the negation of God's attributes in his system.

The Bukhārā Māturīdiyyah, since they are close to Ash'arism on the concept of the absolute sovereignty of God, adopt the positive view of God's attributes.

They solve the problem of the multiplicity of eternal by saying either that the attributes are eternal through an eternality subsisting in God's essence and not through the eternal quality of the attributes themselves, or that God is eternal with all His attributes and the attributes themselves are not eternal.²⁰

Al-Māturīdī himself seems to follow the idea that the attributes are not God nor other than God.²¹

2. Anthropomorphism.

Since God belongs to the world of intelligibles it is unimaginable for those who believe in the power of reason that God can be predicated with physical qualities. 'Abduh, in agreement with his tendency to interpret the universe in terms of man's rational thought, believes that it is impossible for God's essence and attributes to appear in the shape of a body or a spirit of any being in any of the worlds.²² The Qur'ānic terms face, hands, sitting on the throne and other similar terms must be understood in the sense that the Arabs understood them,²³ to wit metaphorically. Thus, ibtighā' wajh rabbih (seeking the face of his God) in verse 92/20, as he explains it, means "out of veneration to God." The expression fa'altu kadhā abtaghī wajh fulān (I do such a thing to seek the face

of such a one), he says, is a well-known expression among the Arabs and means that I do that thing only to revere him and in order to gain his pleasure.²⁴ The word al-'arsh (throne) in verse 81/20 means dominion,²⁵ or might and power,²⁶ and al-kursi (chair) in verse 2/255 means knowledge.²⁷

In the same way the Mu'tazilah think that God cannot be a body,²⁸ and hence, cannot have physical attributes. The words al-'arsh is interpreted to mean dominion,²⁹ al-'ayn (eye) knowledge,³⁰ al-wajh (face) essence,³¹ and al-yad (hand) power.³²

The Ash'ariyah too do not believe in anthropomorphism in the sense that God has physical attributes similar to those of man. But they maintain that God has eyes, face, hands, etc. as He is described in the Qur'ān, though these parts are not similar to those of man. Unlike 'Abduh and the Mu'tazilah they believe that these terms may not be interpreted to have other meanings. God has two hands, says al-Ash'ari, but it may not be interpreted to mean His grace³³ or His power.³⁴ God lives a life, he explains further, but not the life of man; He has two hands but not the hands of man.³⁵ What then can be said about God's hands and face?

According to him these features cannot be defined. As he expresses it God has a face and eyes but they cannot be described nor defined.³⁶

Thus, the Ash'ariyah in agreement with their idea of man's weakness and God's absolute sovereignty and power, think that man is not in a position to interpret the anthropomorphic verses in such a way as to deny that God has such features. But on the other hand, reason, though it has not much power from their point of view, cannot accept the idea that God has limbs similar to those of man as claimed by the anthropomorphists. Their solution to the problem is the idea that God has such features as He is described in the Qur'ān, but without "howness", i.e. man cannot know their quality and nature. The Qur'ān says that God has hands and man must accept that. If man cannot understand, it is because God has an absolute power and can have and create things which the weak human mind cannot penetrate.

The Māturīdīyah of both their Samarqandī and Bukhārā branches, who ascribe more power to reason than do the Ash'ariyah, disagree with the latter and adopt the same position as that of 'Abduh and the Mu'tazilah. Al-Māturīdī interprets hands, face, eye, and foot to

mean God's power.³⁷ The Māturīdīyah do not agree with the idea that God is a body even though not like other bodies,³⁸ for a body consists of accidents and substance and, hence, God cannot be predicated with them.³⁹ Man is in need of limbs for their absence necessitates his weakness, but, God on the other hand, is powerful without limbs.⁴⁰ God's hands according to al-Bazdawī are attributes of God, but not limbs. Hands are attributes like other attributes such as knowledge, power and will.⁴¹

3. Beatific Vision.

Inasmuch as God is purely an intelligible Being, those, who have the tendency to interpret the universe in terms of human reason, would say that God cannot be seen. In his Risālah 'Abduh does not clarify his position with regard to this problem. He merely says that those who believe in the idea of tanzīh (the idea that God is free from any resemblance with His creatures) agree that the vision is not a vision with physical eyes. It is rather a vision which cannot be described nor defined; it is a vision which God will bestow exclusively upon the inhabitants of the hereafter.⁴² In his Hāshiyah, however, he explains that the vision will take place, not with the physical eyes but with one of the powers that man has or with a new

power that God will create at the time of vision in one of man's organs, possibly in the heart.⁴³ He thus adopts the view that it is impossible to see God with the physical eyes.⁴⁴

The Mu'tazilah too, as is well-known, believe that God cannot be seen with the physical eyes. 'Abd al-Jabbār produces rational and traditional proofs to establish the theory that God cannot be seen,⁴⁵ In his view God cannot be seen not because of the existence of an impediment (man') but simply because it is impossible to see God.⁴⁶ If man could see God, he argues, man could see Him here and now in this terrestrial world.⁴⁷

The Ash'arīyah on the other hand believe that God can be seen in the hereafter with the physical eyes. As al-Ash'arī expresses it God will be seen in the same way that the moon is seen during the night of full moon.⁴⁸ Their tendency to interpret the universe in terms of God's absolute sovereignty and power causes them to conclude that nothing, which human reason says would be impossible, is impossible for God. This is especially true if there are proofs for it in the Qur'ān. And it is their tendency, as has been seen,

for example, in the anthropomorphic verses, to retain the literal sense of the Qur'ānic verses as much as possible. In al-Ibānah al-Ash'arī's proofs for establishing the vision of God are based mainly on revelation.⁴⁹ He does not explain how it is rationally possible to see an intelligible being with man's physical eyes. He says only that God is an existent Being and all existent beings can be seen. God sees the created things as well as Himself, and because He sees Himself, it is possible that He gives man the power to see Him.⁵⁰ Al-Baghdādī tries to give another rational explanation. According to him man can see accidents because man can differentiate between whiteness and blackness as well as between oneness and separateness.⁵¹ Death, in his view, can also be seen, for the one who sees a dead man, sees death itself.⁵² With such arguments the Ash'ariyah conclude that God can be seen. Moreover, they maintain that God has such features as eyes, face, and hands, even though these features are not similar to those of man. Consequently, it will not be impossible for man to see Him in the hereafter.

The Māturīdīyah also adopt the idea that God can be seen. Like al-Ash'arī, al-Māturīdī argues that since God is an existent, He can be seen.⁵³ He is seen,

according to al-Bazdawī, without the involvement of the idea of shape, confrontation and definition.⁵⁴ There seems to be no difference between the Ash'ariyah and Māturīdīyah on this question of beatific vision despite the fact that they differ on the understanding of God's physical attributes as they are mentioned in the Qur'ān.

4. God's Speech.

Here the problem for the theologians is that of finding a solution for two conflicting opinions that emanate from the idea of God's speech. If speech is an attribute, it must be eternal because God's attributes are eternal with His essence. On the other hand speech, being a composite, must be created and cannot be eternal. The Mu'tazilah, by virtue of their great reliance on the power of reason, simply argue that because speech is composed it cannot be an attribute of God. They consider such to be one of God's acts.

'Abd al-Jabbār, therefore, does not deal with speech in his discussion on God's attributes. As he explains it himself, the Qur'ān is one of God's acts and since justice deals with His acts, it is dealt with in the discussion of justice.⁵⁵ The Qur'ān according to him is the speech and revelation of God and is created.

The Ash'ariyah, in their endeavour to preserve God's absolute sovereignty and power and to maintain the Qur'anic description of God in its literal sense, believe, on the other hand, that speech is one of God's attributes. To overcome the problem of the composite nature of speech, they introduce a definition which differs from that of the Mu'tazilah. As defined in the Sharh al-'Adufiah, speech refers to meanings which are simple and not compound subsisting in God's essence; and it is not composed of letters and sounds.⁵⁶ Speech is thus not the compound speech as it is generally understood. Compound speech in their opinion, is called speech only in a metaphorical way.⁵⁷ True speech is that for which the compound speech stands,⁵⁸ i.e. the meaning that lies behind compound speech. The Ash'aris say that compound speech which is composed of words and letters is not God's speech.⁵⁹ Speech, defined as meaning or idea, however, being not compound can be attributed to God. The Qur'an should be understood firstly, in the sense of a simple, not compound, meaning. As such the Qur'an is the speech of God and is eternal. Al-Ash'ari must have this in mind when he says that those who think the Qur'an is created have made it the speech of man.⁶⁰ Secondly, the Qur'an should be understood in the sense of words and phrases which have

been written and are read. In this sense the Qur'ān is created, and is not the speech of God.

The Māturīdīyah adopt the same position as the Ash'ariyah. The speech or the Qur'ān that is attributed to God is the meaning that lies behind the expressed words and phrases. That this is their position is understood from al-Māturīdī's statement that the Qur'ān is an eternal attribute subsisting in God's essence, it is one, not divided in sections; it is neither in Arabic nor Syriac, but man expresses this attribute with varying expressions.⁶¹ The speech is thus the meaning that lies behind the expressions. Al-Bazdawī has the same understanding. The composition which is called the Book of God or Qur'ān, he writes, is not the speech of God. It denotes His speech, and it is called speech in a metaphorical way.⁶² It is noteworthy that like the Ash'ariyah he calls the composed Qur'ān God's speech in a metaphorical way.

What is 'Abduh's position on this problem? Because he believes in the truth of rational proofs, he is of the opinion that speech, at least as it is generally understood, cannot be an attribute of God. Speech has no other meaning than that of the expressed

words and phrases. Moreover, consistent with his theory of attributes, a speaker is not the one who has the attribute of speech. A speaker, as he defines it, is the one who produces a speech.⁶³ When we say, for example, that Zayd speaks it means that he expresses phrases, and a phrase consists of a specific sound, and sound itself is produced by a particular composition of air.⁶⁴ The one who speaks is thus the one who produces such a composition of air and it is only natural that speech in this sense cannot be an attribute of God.

Since this is the only true meaning of speech for 'Abduh, it is no wonder that he disagrees with the Ash'ariyah and the Māturīdīyah to say that speech is not the expressed words and phrases but the meaning that lies behind them. To interpret speech in the sense of meaning, he asserts, is contrary to practice and to the linguistic use of the word. He thinks that such an interpretation is merely a creation of man's imagination.⁶⁵ Furthermore, he finds that the definition of speech as meaning leads to an absurdity. When one reads the Qur'ān, he argues, one finds in oneself the attribute of speech and because this attribute is the same as that which subsists in God, it means the one and same attribute subsists in two different substratums or it means the transfer from God to man of

an attribute subsisting in God.⁶⁶

Thus, speech or Qur'ān for 'Abduh is not meaning which lies behind words and phrases as the Ash'ariyah and the Maturidiyah understand it to be. He states explicitly that Qur'ān or speech refers only to the phrases which are expressed through the tongue and written in the Books, and they are created.⁶⁷ The idea that the Qur'ān is created and not eternal appears also in the first edition of his Risālah. On the protest of others that it is a bid'ah (innovation), the whole discussion was removed from subsequent editions.⁶⁸

Though 'Abduh criticizes the Ash'ariyah for giving an "imaginative" interpretation of speech, he offers another definition for the word. Speech has two meanings - speech in the sense of spoken words and speech in the sense of a consequence of God's love. Just as the achievement of knowledge about an object of knowledge is a consequence of knowledge and the performance of an act is the consequence of power, so speech is a consequence of love.

Here is how he explains it. God is bountiful, and everything that emanates from Him is for the well-being of man. It flows from God's love. Love is the source of all of His favours towards man. For perfection man must possess knowledge, and true

knowledge can come only from a true guide, i.e. a guide who knows the secrets of the Truth. Through His speech, God bestows upon prophets the guidance that man needs to attain perfection. Speech provides the specifics of what is embodied by love in its general form.⁶⁹

Speech, therefore, is God's grace and guidance and its source is God's love. In other words, speech is the consequence of God's love. Even in this second meaning speech cannot be an attribute of God, for it is only the consequence of the attribute of love. That speech is not an attribute is also implied in 'Abduh's statement in the Risālah where he says that the source of speech, which emanates from God, is an attribute of His essence.⁷⁰ It is the source of speech, and not speech itself, that constitutes an attribute. Speech is an act of God as held by the Mu'tazilah.

Speech for 'Abduh is not an attribute, neither in its original meaning nor in its new interpretation. The Qur'ān or speech for him as it is for the Mu'tazilah is created.⁷¹

FOOTNOTES - CHAPTER IX

1. Maqālāt, op. cit., p. 483.
2. Ibid., p. 485.
3. Ibid., p. 484.
4. Al-Shahrastānī, al-Milal, op. cit., p. 122.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid., p. 150.
7. Uṣūl al-Dīn, op. cit., p. 90.
8. Al-Iqtisād, op. cit., pp. 138-9.
9. Al-Shaykh M. 'Abduh, op. cit., p. 278.
10. Supra, pp. 64 ff.
11. Risālah, op. cit., p. 52.
12. Al-Shaykh M. 'Abduh, op. cit., pp. 280-82.
13. Ibid., p. 283.
14. Ibid., p. 291.
15. Ibid., pp. 305-308.
16. Ibid., p. 309.
17. Op. cit., p. 152.
18. Al-Shaykh M. 'Abduh, op. cit., p. 330.
19. The generally accepted idea is that 'Abduh has an orthodox Sunnī view on the attributes of God. Thus Michel and 'Abd al-Rāziq find that he is following al-Ash'ari in this concept of attributes (see Rissalat al-Tawhid, op. cit., p. LVII). In Adams' view, 'Abduh, by his dismissal of some of the major questions which have troubled the classical theologians, such as the question whether the attributes are identical with essence, is reaffirming the orthodox position regarding

attributes (see Islam and Modernism in Egypt, op. cit., pp. 146-7). Horton thinks that in 'Abduh's view the nature of the attributes, i.e. whether they are identical or other than essence, cannot be known (Beiträge XIV (1917), 96). Such is again the view of Gardet and Anawati; hence, they see in 'Abduh a kind of agnosticism (see Introduction à la Théologie Musulmane, op. cit., p. 42). In Caspar's opinion he has traditional position on attributes (see MIDEO, IV (1957), 159). As has been noted, 'Abduh does not clarify in the Risālah his view with regard to the nature of the attributes of God. Furthermore his statements in this treatise (p. 52), such as that reason cannot know whether the attributes are other than essence, create the impression that he is adopting an orthodox view on the question of attributes. It should be remembered, however, that in the Risālah 'Abduh is addressing himself to the common people, whose reason he thinks cannot grasp such philosophical problems. He is not speaking to the elect, the only group whose reason can understand such complicated and subtle problems. What he seems to say in the Risālah is that such difficult questions cannot be understood by the common people. The elect, however, as he has shown in the Ḥāshiyah can deal, with such subtle questions.

20. Al-Bazdawī, Uṣūl al-Dīn, op. cit., p. 34.
21. Al-'Aqa'id, op. cit., p. 11 and Sharḥ, op. cit., p. 22.
22. Risālah, op. cit., p. 152.
23. Ibid.
24. 'Abduh, Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Karīm (Cairo: al-Jam'iyah al-Khayriyah al-Islāmiyah, 1322 AH), p. 107.
25. Ibid., p. 31.
26. Ibid., p. 60.
27. Tafsīr al-Manār, op. cit., vol. III, 33.
28. 'Abd al-Jabbār, Sharḥ al-Uṣūl, op. cit., p. 216.
29. Ibid., p. 227.

30. Ibid.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid., p. 228.
33. Al-Ibānah, op. cit., p. 49.
34. Ibid., p. 51.
35. Ibid., p. 52.
36. Ibid., p. 47.
37. Sharḥ, op. cit., p. 17 and al-'Aqa'id, op. cit., p. 12.
38. See Sharḥ, p. 16, and al-Bazdawī, Uṣūl al-Dīn, op. cit., p. 22.
39. Sharḥ, p. 17.
40. Ibid.
41. Uṣūl al-Dīn, op. cit., p. 28.
42. Risālah, op. cit., p. 203.
43. Op. cit., p. 539.
44. Caspar, by basing his conclusion on 'Abduh's writing in the Risālah, is not certain that 'Abduh is adopting the Mu'tazilī position on this subject (see MIDEO, IV (1957), 171). 'Abduh's writing in the Hāshiyah, however, clearly indicates that he is one with the Mu'tazilah on the problem of beatific vision.
45. Sharḥ al-Uṣūl, op. cit., pp. 233 ff.
46. Ibid., p. 253.
47. Ibid.
48. Al-Ibānah, op. cit., pp. 9-10.
49. Ibid., pp. 13-23.
50. Ibid., p. 19.

51. Uṣūl al-Dīn, op. cit., p. 98.
52. Ibid., p. 100.
53. Al-‘Aqā‘id, op. cit., p. 10.
54. Uṣūl al-Dīn, op. cit., p. 77.
55. Sharḥ al-Uṣūl, op. cit., p. 527.
56. Al-Shaykh M. ‘Abduh, op. cit., p. 588.
57. Ibid., p. 589.
58. Ibid.
59. Ibid.
60. Al-Ibānah, op. cit., p. 26.
61. Al-‘Aqā‘id, op. cit., p. 11.
62. Uṣūl al-Dīn, op. cit., p. 61.
63. Al-Shaykh M. ‘Abduh, op. cit., p. 584.
64. Ibid.
65. Ibid.
66. Ibid., pp. 592-3.
67. Ibid., p. 601.
68. See Riḍā's note in ‘Abduh's Risālah, op. cit., p. 47. Its French translation appears in Michel and ‘Abd al-Rāziq, Rissalat al-Tawhid, op. cit., pp. 32-34.
69. Al-Shaykh M. ‘Abduh, op. cit., pp. 601-2.
70. Risālah, op. cit., pp. 44-45, and its French translation, op. cit., p. 33.
71. Contrary to what is claimed here, Caspar is of the opinion that ‘Abduh adopts the Ash‘arī position that the Qur‘ān in its quality of the speech of

God is eternal and uncreated, but, in its quality of being written and read, it is created (see MIDEO, IV (1957), 159). Such is also the opinion of Michel and 'Abd al-Rāziq (see Rissalat al-Tawhid, op. cit., pp. LVIII/LIX). In Adams' understanding 'Abduh's view on this subject is in accordance with the "accepted position" (see Islam and Modernism in Egypt, op. cit., p. 149).

CHAPTER X

THE CONCEPT OF BELIEF

Unlike the other theological doctrines that have been discussed in the five preceding Chapters, the concept of Imān or belief in God is affected in a direct way by the theory of the power of reason and the function of revelation. In those systems which consider man's reason to be powerful enough to arrive at the obligation to know God, belief cannot have a passive meaning. In other words, Imān cannot take the form of taṣḍīq, i.e. regarding or accepting of what others say as being true. For them it must have an active meaning, for man through the power of his reason must independently attain the knowledge of God.

Hence, 'Abduh does not describe belief as taṣḍīq in his Risālah. It is either 'ilm (knowledge),¹ or i'tiqād (faith),² or yaqīn (conviction).³ Belief, as he defines it in the Tafsīr al-Manār, is true knowledge which seizes the intellect by proofs and forces the soul to submission.⁴ It has three elements, belief in God, belief in the invisible world and doing acts which are beneficial to the agent himself as well as to his fellow human beings.⁵

In conformity with his dividing humanity into a class of the elect and a class of the common people, there are two kinds of belief in 'Abduh's view - the belief of the elite and the belief of the common people. It should be recalled that it is only the elect who can arrive at the knowledge of God and the intelligible world. For 'Abduh, common people greatly resemble the weak man in the Ash'arī conception. They cannot arrive at the knowledge of God and have to rely on revelation or on informations given to them by the elect. For the common people, therefore, belief, cannot be knowledge but rather taṣdīq. The belief of the elite he calls īmān ḥaqīqī (true belief)⁶ and to the belief of the common people he gives the name of īmān taqlīdī (traditional belief).⁷ The latter is not more than acceptance of the general truths and articles of belief of the religion in which one is brought up.⁸ In other words if belief for the elect is true knowledge, for the latter it is taṣdīq. As 'Abduh says it, the belief of the common people takes the form of the traditional acceptance that there is a Creator for the universe and that He sends prophets to man.⁹ The belief of the elect, however, is true knowledge which prompts one to act.¹⁰ The true believer does the good because he knows that it is good and avoids the bad because he

knows that it has bad consequences.¹¹ Their belief does not take the form of blind acceptance for the sake of their fathers and forefathers.¹² True belief does not consist of knowledge only but also of acts, for as 'Abduh explains it, true knowledge necessitates action.¹³

For the Mu'tazilah, who also claim that reason can arrive at the obligatory knowledge of God, belief cannot take the form of taṣdīq. But belief in the sense of knowledge is not sufficient. As explained by 'Abd al-Jabbār, the one who knows God but defies Him, or does not perform his duties or violates His laws, is not a believer.¹⁴ Belief for the Mu'tazilah takes the form of the acts that follow as a result of knowing God. Hence, belief in their view is the performance of divine commands.¹⁵ But there is a disagreement among them as to what is meant by divine commands. According to Abū al-Hudhayl they include all the religious exercises, the obligatory as well as the supererogatory.¹⁶ For al-Jubbā'ī they include only the obligatory and not the supererogatory religious exercises.¹⁷ 'Abd al-Jabbār follows the former view.¹⁸ For al-Nazzām belief consists rather in the avoidance of capital sins.¹⁹

Despite this disagreement belief for the

Mu'tazilah is not taṣḍīq for this would not be in harmony with their concept that it is man, by his own power and not by the help of revelation, who arrives at the knowledge of God.

For the Ash'ariyah, on the other hand, belief cannot be knowledge. In their system man's reason lacks the power to arrive at the obligation to know God. Man comes to know of this obligation only through revelation. It is revelation which tells man that he has the duty to know his Creator and he has to accept the truth of this information. Belief for them must thus take the form of taṣḍīq. Therefore al-Ash'ari defines belief as the acceptance of the announcement of the existence of God (al-taṣḍīq bi-Allāh).²⁰ Al-Baghdādī ascribes to him a longer definition. It is the taṣḍīq of the existence of God, of the prophets and of their informations; this taṣḍīq, however, is not sound when it is not accompanied by knowledge.²¹ In any case it is still taṣḍīq and the knowledge does not come until one receives the information from the prophets.

The Bukhārā Māturīdīyah, who, like the Ash'ariyah, cannot accept the idea that reason has the

power to arrive at the obligation to know God, belief too cannot be knowledge. It must be taṣḍiq. Al-Bazdawī defines belief as the acceptance by the heart and by the tongue that there is no God but Allāh and that there is no one who equals Him.²²

For al-Māturīdī belief must be knowledge and not taṣḍiq, for like 'Abduh and the Mu'tazilah he believes too in the power of reason to arrive at the obligation to know God. He writes that Islām is the knowledge of God without howness, that belief is the knowledge of Allāh in his Godhood, that knowledge (ma'rifah) is the knowledge of God with all His attributes, and that unification (tawḥīd) is the knowledge of God in His unique unity.²³ This definition is in harmony with his system. The Risālah fī al-'Aqā'id, however, ascribes to him another definition, which says that belief is confession with the tongue and acceptance with the heart.²⁴ As is obvious this definition does not fit into his system unless it is interpreted to refer to belief in the Prophet and in the laws that he announces, for this, in al-Māturīdī's view, can be known only through the Prophet's own announcements. The Sharḥ al-Fiqh al-Akbar, where the two definitions also appear, gives another clue to the solution of these contradictory definitions. There is

clearly stated that the definition of belief in terms of knowledge belongs truly to al-Māturīdī.²⁵ The other, however, seems not to be his definition, but rather that of the author of the Sharḥ.²⁶ In other words, the definition in terms of taṣdīq, which is ascribed in al-ʿAqāʾid to al-Māturīdī's seems in the Sharḥ not to be his definition. Whatever the case may be, it is clear that belief in God for al-Māturīdī is not taṣdīq but knowledge of God.

The definition of belief in God as taṣdīq can fit only in the Ashʿarī and Bukhārā Māturīdī systems. In the other three systems, belief cannot be defined as taṣdīq because according to these systems it is man's reason that arrives independently at the obligation to know God.

FOOTNOTES - CHAPTER X

1. Risālah, op. cit., p. 52. For an extensive study of belief as knowledge or taṣdīq see relevant Chapters in T. Izutsu, The Concept of Belief in Islamic Theology (Tokyo: The Keio Institute of Cultural and Linguistic Studies, 1965).

2. Ibid., p. 83.

3. Ibid.

4. Tafṣīr al-Manār, op. cit., Vol. II, 111.

5. Ibid., vol. II, 319.

6. Ibid., vol. III, 99.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid., vol. II, 272.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid., vol. II, 94.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid., vol. III, 315.

14. Sharḥ al-Uṣūl, op. cit., p. 709.

15. Maqālāt, op. cit., p. 267.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid., p. 269.

18. Sharḥ al-Uṣūl, op. cit., p. 707.

19. Maqālāt, op. cit., p. 268.

20. Al-Luma', op. cit., p. 75.

21. Usūl al-Dīn, op. cit., p. 248.
22. Usūl al-Dīn, op. cit., p. 146.
23. Al-ʿAqā'id, op. cit., p. 16.
24. Ibid., p. 15.
25. Sharḥ, op. cit., p. 7.
26. Ibid., p. 9.

CONCLUSION

THE NATURE OF 'ABDUH'S THEOLOGY

It has been established in Chapter Three that 'Abduh's theological system closely resembles that of the Mu'tazilah. At that stage of the study, however, one was not in a position yet to say with certainty whether he can or cannot be classified as a Mu'tazili. Such a judgment depends much on a complete description of his theological views. It would not be impossible that, in spite of his system being similar to that of the Mu'tazilah, some of his theological beliefs might differ from theirs, though the possibility is not great. Now that the investigation into his more important theological views has been made we are able to decide whether they are, like his system, also similar to those of the Mu'tazilah.

Before proceeding to this discussion, however, it is worthwhile to first see the result of the comparison made during the investigation between 'Abduh's theological doctrines and those of the other theological schools. The comparison makes clear beyond the need of defense that his theological concepts are not those of the Ash'ariyah, nor in the main those of

the Bukhārā Māturīdīyah. Similarly it shows unmistakably that in many important respects his theological views are not identical even with those of al-Māturīdī himself.

All 'Abduh's theological doctrines discussed in the six previous Chapters are, in fact, diametrically opposed to the Ash'arī tenets. It could not be otherwise since his theological system as a whole is also diametrically opposed to the Ash'arī system. 'Abduh thus is by no means an Ash'arī as many Muslims would have us believe. As we have also shown, he does not himself refrain from criticizing their views on several occasions.

Inasmuch as the Bukhārā Māturīdīyah differ but little from the Ash'arīyah in their theological system and theological views, 'Abduh's beliefs are also in disagreement with theirs except in a few minor matters such as the question of anthropomorphism. In many cases his views are diametrically opposed to theirs.

The comparison with al-Māturīdī shows that there are occasions where 'Abduh's views coincide with his. Such is the case, for example, with the question of man's free will and free act, though in 'Abduh's understanding man has more freedom in his act than he

enjoys in the understanding of al-Māturīdī or even in the understanding of the Mu'tazilah. The case is the same with the doctrine that God does not impose excessively burdensome duties on man, or the doctrine of the obligatory nature of the mission of prophets or the doctrine that imān is knowledge and not tagdīq.

On the whole, however, 'Abduh is more liberal in his views in all these matters than al-Māturīdī. On the other hand he has views which are diametrically opposed to those of al-Māturīdī. 'Abduh adopts the view of the negation of God's attributes, while al-Māturīdī takes the opposite stand and confirms the attributes. Such is again the case with the beliefs in the beatific vision and God's speech. 'Abduh adopts in both questions the very opposite position from that which al-Māturīdī has assumed. 'Abduh cannot, therefore, be classified as a follower of al-Māturīdī, as some have argued.

With the Mu'tazilī theological views, however, 'Abduh's beliefs are on the whole in harmony. It will be helpful for the determination of the nature of his theology to recapitulate his major doctrines here, as compared with those of the Mu'tazilah.

Revelation for him, as for the Mu'tazilah, has the same function, to confirm what reason has

already known by itself and to inform man of facts about God and the intelligible world which are beyond the scope of reason to know. Revelation for both has more the function of confirmation than information.

As to free will and free act, 'Abduh too believes in man's freedom of will and of action. He differs from the Mu'tazilah in respect of his belief in man's natural power and will, that allows man more freedom than in the Mu'tazilī concept. Man's power in the Mu'tazilī understanding is not the natural power of 'Abduh but rather a power created by God over and above a sound physical structure.

'Abduh's concept of the non-absolute nature of God's sovereignty coincides also with the Mu'tazilī view on this question. But as 'Abduh has a firm belief in the effectiveness of the unchangeable sunan Allāh, the absolute sovereignty of God in his concept is more limited than it is in the Mu'tazilī view. According to the latter the absolute sovereignty and power of God are limited mainly by their theory of His justice.

Like the Mu'tazilah 'Abduh believes in the existence of God's obligations towards man and hence also in the idea of the salutary¹ though he tries to explain that these obligations originate in the

unchangeable sunan Allāh and in the perfection of God's knowledge and will. For the Mu'tazilah these obligations are the natural consequence of God's justice.

'Abduh and the Mu'tazilah agree that God cannot impose on man duties that are beyond his power to perform.

They agree also about the obligatory nature of the prophetic mission.

In similar fashion they are in accord on the doctrine of promise and threat which forms one of the five principles of Mu'tazilism.

'Abduh's view on the important question of God's attributes, though he does not explicitly negate them, comes into agreement with that of the Mu'tazilah. Despite the fact that he speaks about attributes, particularly in his Risālah, attributes in his understanding are not such in the real sense but are rather mental considerations. Such Mu'tazili, as 'Abd al-Jabbār in his Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah, speak also of attributes, but again the attributes are conceived as mental considerations or states. 'Abduh is, in fact, negating the existence of God's attributes just as the Mu'tazilah were. He is thus adopting a view which is strongly opposed by the Ash'ariyah as well as by

the Māturīdīyah in both their Bukhārā and Samarqandī branches.

Another view which he holds in line with that of the Mu'tazilah but against that of the Ash'ariyah and Māturīdīyah is his concept of the beatific vision. On rational grounds he believes it impossible for man to see God as an intelligible Being with the physical eyes.

On the most controversial issue between the classical theological schools, namely the question of the createdness or uncreatedness of the Qur'ān, 'Abduh also takes side with the Mu'tazilah. This was rather a bold stand in the eyes of contemporary Muslims, and, it is no wonder that he was obliged, as noted earlier, to remove the whole discussion of the createdness of the Qur'ān from the second and subsequent editions of his Risālah.

It is on the question of justice that there seems to be a slight disagreement between him and the Mu'tazilah. In 'Abduh's understanding justice refers only to rewards and punishment while for the Mu'tazilah it has a more general meaning. In their understanding it includes God's acts, the Qur'ān and His speech, the

idea of the salutary, the mission of prophets, rewards and punishments and so on. As we have shown 'Abduh holds the same view as the Mu'tazilah in these matters. The difference then is not concerned with the interpretation of the views themselves but rather with the scope of justice.

It is clear that on the most important questions of free will, the attributes of God, the Qur'ān, and the idea of the salutary, which constitute the basis controversial issues among the classical theological schools, as well as on other minor questions, 'Abduh is taking side with the Mu'tazilah.

Now that his theological system as well as particular theological views have been shown to be similar to those of the Mu'tazilah, we may ask whether 'Abduh can be classified as a Mu'tazilī?

The answer to this question depends on the definition we may give of Mu'tazilism. The Mu'tazilah have been described as those who believe in man's free will and free act. If this be so 'Abduh is a Mu'tazilī. As we have seen he believes in both and, in fact, ascribes greater freedom to men in will and act than do the Mu'tazilah. In this light 'Abduh deserves the designation of Mu'tazilism more than the Mu'tazilah

themselves.

By others the Mu'tazilah have been characterized as those who hold the idea of the complete unity of God (ahl al-tawhīd) or who reject the attributes of God (al-mu'aṭṭilah). If such is the case, 'Abduh is also one of them. We have stated earlier that he rejects the attributes, though not in clear words, and, hence, establishes the complete unity of God.

The above, however, are definitions given by non-Mu'tazilīs. It would be more appropriate to use a definition given by the Mu'tazilah themselves. In other words, who would they accept as one of their group? According to al-Khayyāṭ no one deserves the name of Mu'tazilism unless he believes in the five Mu'tazilī principles, namely God's unity, justice, the promise and the threat, the intermediary position of capital sinners, and the command of the good and the prohibition of evil.²

Does 'Abduh believe in these five Mu'tazilī principles? As has been made clear he believes in God's unity and in the promise and the threat. In the matter of divine justice his idea is not exactly the same as that of the Mu'tazilah. With regard to the fifth principle, commanding the good and prohibiting the evil, he too believes in its obligatory nature. The

fact that it is mentioned before īmān in the verse:

"You are the best nation raised up for man, you enjoin good and forbid evil and you believe in Allāh",³ indicates, according to him, its importance as a religious duty.⁴

As for the question of the intermediary position of capital sinners, he never clearly explains his view. A clue to his position on this matter, however, appears in his discussion on the concept of belief. In this connection it should be recalled that there are two kinds of īmān for him, the true belief of the elect and the traditional belief of the common people. It is his view that not any type of īmān can save man from the eternal punishment in Hell.⁵ Only the true īmān of the elect will save man from eternal punishment.⁶ This means that the traditional īmān of the common people will not save them from eternal punishment. In other words though they are still believers, they will be punished eternally if they persist in committing capital sins. In line with these two kinds of īmān, 'Abduh divides capital sinners into two classes. To one of them belong those who know that committing capital sins is prohibited but in spite of this persevere in committing them. This group will be punished eternally in fire. To the other group belong

its broadest scope. Because of these disagreements, the latter would not accept him as one of themselves if we believe in the explanation of al-Khayyāṭ. In other words, he cannot be considered a Mu'tazilī according to the Mu'tazilah's own criterion.

What then is 'Abduh if he is neither a Mu'tazilī, nor an Ash'arī, nor a Māturīdī? Has he an independent theological system and specific theological views just as the other theological schools have? Obviously he does not. In general his system is that of the Mu'tazilah, and his principal theological views are, almost all of them, similar to those of the Mu'tazilah. If he cannot be accepted as a Mu'tazilī, at least it must be said that he has a Mu'tazilī theological system with almost identical theological doctrines. In other words his theology is to a great degree a Mu'tazilī theology.

This conclusion is at variance with the usually accepted interpretation of 'Abduh as a theologian. As we showed in the Introduction, the authors who have written on 'Abduh hold different opinions on the nature of his theology. Some think it orthodox¹¹ in nature, others find it to have a Māturīdī character, and others again assert that it has an eclectic nature, being a mixture of orthodoxy and Mu'tazilism.

Among all the authors it was Caspar who saw a greater element of Mu'tazilī ideas in 'Abduh's theology than the others. Nevertheless, he is of the opinion that, as far as doctrines are concerned, 'Abduh on many points adopts the traditional views. On the important questions of God's attributes, the Qur'ān and the idea of God's obligation, Caspar finds 'Abduh to have a traditional position.¹² Hence, he argues that 'Abduh is a Mu'tazilī more in his method and spirit than in his doctrines.¹³ In his view 'Abduh's theology is neither outright nor even to a great degree a Mu'tazilī as claimed in this work.

This difference in assessment between ourselves and previous scholars emerges from a difference in the method of study and from a difference in the use of sources. As we explained in the Introduction, this work tries to compare 'Abduh's system with the systems of the classical theological schools and to compare his theological views with corresponding classical theological views, each in the context of their respective theological systems; that is to say not detached from their respective theological systems as has been generally the practice in the study of 'Abduh's theological views.

As to the question of sources, the various

authors seem to base their studies of 'Abduh's theology mainly on the Risālah al-Tawhīd and his related works while on the whole neglecting his Ḥāshiyah on the Sharḥ al-Dawwānī li al-'Aqā'id al-'Aḍudīyah. It should be re-emphasized that the Risālah has a popular character and was written not for the use of the elect and specialized, but for the common people. It does not, therefore, contain all his theological views. The Ḥāshiyah on the other hand is a study with a philosophical character. Thus, whereas the Risālah is simple in nature and does not go deeply into its examination of theological beliefs, the Ḥāshiyah deals with the various theological problems and controversies in depth and clarifies 'Abduh's positions which were left unsettled in the former. It follows that a study of his theological views that neglects the Ḥāshiyah cannot reveal the real nature of his theology.

Since 'Abduh wrote the Ḥāshiyah in 1876 and the Risālah in its final form in 1897 one is justified to ask: is there not a possibility that by the time he wrote the Risālah he had changed the ideas that he expressed in the Ḥāshiyah? There is no proof to support this assumption. His Mu'tazilī theological system, as it is constructed from the Risālah, proves on the contrary that he was still a Mu'tazilī in methodology

when he wrote it in its final form about twenty years after the Hāshiyah.

Moreover, his Mu'tazilī doctrine of the speech of God and the createdness of the Qur'ān, which he wrote down in the Hāshiyah, appeared again in the first edition of the Risālah, though on the protest of others it was later suppressed from subsequent editions. His other Mu'tazilī ideas in the Hāshiyah, such as the question of God's attributes and the idea of God's obligation towards man, are not, as has been noted in the discussion of his theological views, incompatible but in agreement with his ideas as they appear in the Risālah.

These considerations tend to prove that 'Abduh did not modify his Mu'tazilī views when he wrote the Risālah during the last years of his life. As Mu'tazilism in those days was still considered to be unorthodox,¹⁴ he tried to cover his Mu'tazilī ideas by the use of orthodox theological terms such as "kasb", "attributes" and others, while ascribing to them other than the usually understood meanings. As rightly observed by Caspar, he takes pains to avoid all reference (in the Risālah) to the Mu'tazilah in order not to appear that he is referring to them or to their ideas. At the same time he is taking positions

similar or at least very close to theirs.¹⁵

In view of his endeavour to introduce reforms into the Muslim community, 'Abduh could not but follow the Mu'tazilī theology with its belief in the great power of reason and man's independence and its doctrine of man's free will and free act. Only in terms of such a theology could his ideas of reform see realization. The Ash'arī theology with its distrust of the power of reason, its great reliance on revelation and its doctrines of disguised fatalism under the name of kasb and man's great dependence upon God could not be an adequate basis or vehicle for his ideas of reforms. Such a theology as the Ash'ariyah profess, moreover, would provide him with little liberty for promoting his reformist movement. In lesser degree the same is true of the Māturīdī theology which allows man but little power and independence. This theology would hardly give 'Abduh necessary freedom for his reforms. The Mu'tazilī theology which affirms man's active role in life, not the Ash'arī theology of passivity, provided the essential intellectual and religious basis for ideas of reforms that could bring about necessary change in outlook and way of life among his co-religionists.

FOOTNOTES - CONCLUSION

1. See Supra, pp. 205 ff.
2. Al-Intiṣār, op. cit., p. 93.
3. Verse 3/109.
4. Risālah, op. cit., p. 179.
5. Tafsīr al-Manār, op. cit., vol. III, 99.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid., vol. IV, 432/3. He is commenting here on the problem of the eternal punishment in Hell and on the difference in opinion between the Ash'ariyah and Mu'tazilah, i.e. on capital sinners. By sinner 'Abduh means here, therefore, capital sinners.
8. Ibid., vol. II, 112.
9. Ibid., vol. V, 50.
10. Jomier also finds that the capital sinner for 'Abduh is only a believer in name. By quoting 'Abduh's statement in Tafsīr al-Manār, vol. I, 364 that "the one who is enveloped from all sides by his sins is no longer a believer", Jomier implies that the believer in name is for 'Abduh in fact not a believer. (See Le Commentaire Coranique du Manar, op. cit., pp. 143-4). Caspar has the same view and comments further that 'Abduh, by saying that the capital sinner is no longer a true believer, goes at least as far as the Mu'tazilah do in this question (see MIDEO, IV (1957), 169). By describing the capital sinner as not a true believer, 'Abduh places him, indeed, between the unbeliever and the true believer. Like the Mu'tazilah he thinks thus that the capital sinner has an intermediate position, but unlike the former he does not think that the capital sinner is neither a believer nor an unbeliever. He categorically says that the capital sinner is a believer, though only a traditional and not a true believer. Thus 'Abduh's other statement that the capital sinner "is no longer a believer", as quoted by Jomier,

should be understood to mean "no longer a true believer". In any case his position with regard to this question is far closer to that of the Mu'tazilah than to that of the Ash'ariyah, who hold the idea that the capital sinner will not be eternally punished in Hell.

11. Orthodox in the sense of the generally accepted theology, i.e. that of the ahl al-sunnah (people of Tradition).

12. MIDEO, IV (1957), 159.

13. Ibid., p. 171.

14. A change in this attitude has been since observed. For a study on this subject see Caspar, MIDEO, IV (1957), 157-202.

15. Ibid., pp. 161-2.

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