Ibn ʿAqil

Religion and Culture in Classical Islam

George Makdisi

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In Memoriam

Louis Massignon, † 31 October 1962
Henri Laoust, † 12 November 1983
Louis Gardet, † 17 July 1986

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PREFACE

Ibn ʿAqil has already been the subject of a book published in 1963, in which he was treated in his milieu of eleventh-century Baghdad. In the Foreword of that book, I announced that a study of his thought would be the subject of another book at a future date. The long postponement was made necessary by the state of Ibn ʿAqil's works, in the early 1950s, when research for the first book was undertaken. Since that time, I have found some of his minor works and published them: *Kitāb al-Jadal ʿalā tarīqat al-fuqahā'* ('The Book of Dialectic According to the Method of the Jurisconsults'), and a series of four brief articles on the divine attribute of speech, carrying the title *ar-Radd ʿalā 'l-Ashāʿira al-ʿuzzāl wa-ithbāt al-ḥarf wa 's-saut fī kalām al-Kabīr al-Mutaʿāl* ('Refutation of the Neo-Muʿtazili Ashʿaris and Affirmation of the Sounds and Letters in the Speech of God, the Magnificent, the Sublime'). Of his major works, the only one that has come down to us, complete, is the *Wāḍiḥ fī uṣūl al-fiqh*, on the theory and methodology of the law. It consists of four books, the first of which is in press. The *Kitāb al-Funūn* is the most significant of all his works, as regards its size and the variety of its subjects, both scholastic and humanist; it is a monumental work of two hundred volumes or more, and constitutes, with the *Wāḍiḥ*, the most famous of his works, according to his biographers. Only one of its volumes is extant, in a manuscript in Paris, which I published in two parts.

The major concern of the present book on Ibn ʿAqil is the study of the main currents of his thought, based on the *Wāḍiḥ*, the *Funūn*, and what I could find quoted in the works of later authors, in manuscript and in print, since the 1950s. Passages of another major work, his (inextant) *Irshād fī uṣūl ad-dīn*, on theology, are quoted in works of Ibn Taimiya and in the *Tuhfa* of Yusuf Ibn ʿAbd al-Hadi, in the latter manuscript. Not all the materials, found in the pages of authors who cited him, have been used in the present study. The translated excerpts not cited in the present work will, God willing, be submitted for eventual publication, both Arabic text and translation. Because of the present state of the sources, the book now being offered to readers is far from being complete on this important religious intellectual. It is only a beginning, which will no doubt be superseded when more of his works are edited and made available for study. It is, nevertheless, a study of what I have found to be essential in Ibn ʿAqil's scholasticism and humanism. Despite the loss of the bulk of his writings, what has survived is sufficient to give us what I believe to be the essence of the main currents of his thought as a scholastic and humanist.

The state of Ibn ʿAqil's works does not enable us to establish their sequence: their chronology was unknown to Ibn Qudama in his *Taḥrīm*, in

the century following that of Ibn 'Aqil. The *Wāḍiḥ* and the extant volume of the *Funūn* belong to the latter part of Ibn 'Aqil's life. The published volume of the Funun belongs to the year 510/1116, three years before his death. This work also belongs to the maturer years of his life; it comes after two great works, of which it is a distillation. Similar in size to the *Summa Theologiae* of Aquinas, like that work, it represents in written form the 'scholastic method' of the scholastic movement, and, as will be seen, contains the complete essential syllabus of the programme for higher learning in scholasticism. In it, Ibn 'Aqil refers to a deceased colleague: al-Mutawalli is known to have died in 478/1086. The *Wāḍiḥ*, destined for student-jurisconsults beginning or ending their graduate studies, is the work of Ibn 'Aqil the mature scholar. Such also was *al-Kifaya* of his professor, Qadi Abu Ya'la, and *al-Mustasfa* of his contemporary, Ghazzali. The last two authors wrote earlier works, which were their doctoral theses, i.e. *ta'liqa*s (for which see *ROC*, 127), earning for them the *ijazat at-tadrīs*, the 'licence to teach', the original name for the doctorate: Abu Ya'la's *al-'Udda* ('The Instrument' or 'Tool') and Ghazzali's *al-Mankhūl* ('The Sifted'), written in their mid-thirties (for *al-'Udda*, see *GAL*, I, 502, where *al-'Udad*, not *al-'Idad*, written in AH 428 when he was thirty-eight; and for Ghazzali, see *ROC*, 127). Ibn 'Aqil's thirties, when he would have been writing such a work, was a period of trouble with *Sharīf* Abu Ja'far, during which he was pursued, persecuted, and exiled. Of this period we know nothing except what we can learn from the fragment of Ibn al-Banna''s *Diary*. Thus the *Wāḍiḥ* was a work of mature years; so also the collected pasages, the *'Aqīliana*.

These are the sources relied on for the thought of Ibn 'Aqil. Ibn Qudama's *Taḥrīm*, written in refutation of Ibn 'Aqil, is unfortunately of little value in throwing light either on Ibn 'Aqil's works or on his statements; for neither the former nor the latter are analysed, or cited so as to be identified. What can be gathered from the *Taḥrīm* is Ibn 'Aqil's attitude with respect to authority, and to the quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns, an attitude Ibn 'Aqil makes perfectly clear in the *Funūn*. A study of the two major works of Ibn 'Aqil and the *'Aqīliana* will, I believe, illuminate the essentials of his thought, his place in the movement of scholasticism, and his contribution to it.

The dearth of available sources was not the only impediment to the study of Ibn 'Aqil's thought back in the 1950s. The more I learned from research into his intellectual culture in general, and his curriculum vitae in particular, the less it appeared in harmony with the structure of the organisation of learning as found in works published on Islamic education by the 1950s. It became necessary to know the institutions of learning that produced Muslim intellectuals such as Ibn 'Aqil and Ghazzali, Qadi Abu Ya'la, Kalwadhani, and Ibn az-Zaghuni. It was not until I had researched and published *The Rise of Colleges* and *The Rise of Humanism* that I could venture to fulfil the promise made in the Foreword of my first book, *Ibn 'Aqil*, p. ix.

The century of Ibn ʿAqil is a pivotal period in religious thought and in the development of institutions of higher learning. His biography sheds light on one of the most important periods of classical Islam: one which has had its impact on religion as well as intellectual development in the Christian Latin West, as has been shown in some of my other previous studies, for example, 'The Islamic Doctorate and the Magisterium of the Christian Church' (in *RLL*, no. XIII, p. 177f.). Ibn ʿAqil was a product of that period, a microcosm of the world of Islam in Baghdad, a man whose religious beliefs and orientation were forged in the crucible of conflict between the two opposing camps of Rationalism and Traditionalism. His thought is the product of his attempt to reconcile reason and revelation. When he was born, the victory of Traditionalism had been achieved, and Rationalism had long lost its political support, though not its appeal to intellectuals of both camps. Ibn ʿAqil had to resolve that conflict in his own mind, indeed in his own person, for he was himself the product of rival intellectual forces deriving from his family background and his professional career in higher learning.

The present work, which draws on some of my previous studies, focuses on the specific contribution made by Ibn ʿAqil to the fields of scholastic intellectual culture and humanism. The text is divided into three parts. Part One deals with the life and times of Ibn ʿAqil, focusing on two official documents, a Retraction and a caliph's Creed, and their impact on both Ibn ʿAqil and his period. This part does not replace my first book on Ibn ʿAqil and his milieu; it makes extensive use of it, and supplements it. The study of Ibn ʿAqil's Retraction is resumed here, in an attempt to shed new light on an event that had a profound impact on his life. Part Two deals with the rise of the legal guild, the scholastic movement, and the main currents of Ibn ʿAqil's juridico-theological thought. This part, divided into three sections, deals with the organisation of professional higher learning, three theologies, and the main currents of Ibn ʿAqil's religious thought. It focuses on the *Wāḍiḥ* and the two methods of *uṣūl al-fiqh*, and considers what makes the *Wāḍiḥ* original and unique in this field. It is perhaps in this area, more than any other, that Ibn ʿAqil makes his greatest contribution to his century. Part Three, in two sections, deals with humanism and government, and humanist disciplines and topics. It considers Ibn ʿAqil's thought, examining the keen observations and criticisms which mirror the age in which he lived. It is here that I let Ibn ʿAqil speak for himself.

As I became more familiar with Ibn ʿAqil's life, times and thought, his place in history and his century assumed a greater significance, reaching beyond the borders of the classical Islamic world into that of the Christian West. Whilst transcribing his *Wāḍiḥ*, a *summa* on law and theology, preparing it for publication, it gradually dawned on me that his method of presentation was almost identical to that of St Thomas Aquinas in his *Summa* on theology and law. A study followed, to be developed later in *The Rise of Colleges*, and other works, examining the rise of the scholastic movement in

Baghdad in relation to parallel movements in the Christian West. As a result of the close relationship between scholasticism and humanism in classical Islam, that book inevitably led to another, *The Rise of Humanism.*

From the present work, it will be seen that Ibn 'Aqil and St Thomas Aquinas are kindred spirits in as much as they are both intellectuals exploring scholasticism, who shared common ground in some basic aspects of Aristotelian thought. However, due to the present state of the sources, it would be quite impossible to make an adequate comparative study of these two religious intellectuals. The great part of Ibn 'Aqil's works is inextant; but even if they were available, it is not certain that these works would reflect the full extent of his knowledge of theology and philosophy; and even if they did, he would still be at a disadvantage to St Thomas, who lived a century and a half later, and, thanks to translations directly from the Greek by his fellow-Dominican, William of Morbeke, came into direct contact with works of Aristotle. Nevertheless, Ibn 'Aqil and St Thomas, the Muslim and the Christian, remain surprisingly close in their thinking, each emerging, in his own century, as an outstanding figure who brought scholasticism to its highest point of achievement.

Arabic terms and proper names are given in the text without diacritics; these are supplied in the index. Dates are given for both the Muslim and Christian eras, the latter cited first only when in reference to a Christian, for example, St Thomas Aquinas, St Bonaventure. The following abbreviations have been used in the text (others, for Islamic names, are given at the beginning of the Index): b. = ibn; c. = circa; d. = died; fl. = floruit; fol. = folio (a = recto, b = verso); pl. = plural; sg. =singular.

I wish to express my thanks and warm appreciation to Dr Carole Hillenbrand, who originally invited me to contribute a book for publication by Edinburgh University Press. I also thank the editorial team, especially Jane Feore, Ann MacDougall and Katharine Coates for preparing the manuscript for publication. My special thanks are due to Edinburgh University Press for its reception of this book which, when added to the previous two *Rise*s, constitutes in effect a trilogy on Ibn 'Aqil and his century. To all past and present members of staff at EUP who have given their invaluable assistance in the process of publishing these works, I offer my sincere and heartfelt gratitude.

In my work on classical Islam, I am deeply indebted to eminent scholars in the field, especially those who realised the importance of studying Islam from within. Among these people, I wish to mention Louis Massignon, who first brought to my attention both Ibn 'Aqil and the importance of studying *uṣūl al-fiqh*; Henri Laoust, who guided my steps in the study of Hanbalism and provided an excellent model in the study of Ibn Taimiya's thought; and Louis Gardet, who, like Massignon, sensed the importance of the science of *uṣūl al-fiqh.* To the memory of these masters, I dedicate this book.

Part One
Ibn ʿAqil: His Life and Times

SECTION ONE
THE RETRACTION AND THE QADIRI CREED

I. IBN 'AQIL'S PUBLIC RETRACTION OF 465/1072

The Retraction is the central event of Ibn 'Aqil's life, its causes and consequences deeply etched in his memory. It is a watershed in his development as an intellectual, separating the exuberance of his youth from the wisdom of his maturity. It was the price he had to pay for his life and eventual freedom. It ended a seven-year period of conflict within the Hanbali legal guild. Not until the death of his accuser, *Sharīf* Abu Ja'far (d. 470/1077), was he free to resume his professorial teaching.

The motivation for pursuing Ibn 'Aqil had its origin in the succession to the professorial chair in the Mosque (please note the convention used in this work whereby 'Mosque' denotes *jami'* and 'mosque', *masjid*) of al-Mansur, left vacant by the death of Qadi Abu Ya'la (d. 458/1065), Professor of Law to both the *Sharīf* and Ibn 'Aqil. The death of Abu Mansur Ibn Yusuf (d. 460/1067), patron–protector of Ibn 'Aqil, allowed the *Sharīf* to resume his pursuit of Ibn 'Aqil, accusing him of Mu'tazilism. In 461/1068, an agreement was concluded between the *Sharīf* and Abu 'l-Qasim Ibn Ridwan (d. 474/1082), the son-in-law of Abu Mansur, regarding Ibn 'Aqil. Its terms remain unknown; Ibn al-Banna', diarist of the events surrounding the case, passes over them in silence. In 465/1072, the Retraction was signed by five witness-notaries, *shuhūd*, who attest to Ibn 'Aqil's signature and public reading of the Retraction. Between 461/1068 and 465/1072, Ibn 'Aqil lived in exile, confined to the Quarter of the Gate of Degrees, a sacrosanct place of asylum (*ḥarīm*).

1. Text of the Retraction

On Monday, 8 Muharram 465 (24 September 1073), at the *masjid*-college of *Sharīf* Abu Ja'far, in the Mu'alla Canal Quarter, on Baghdad's east side, Ibn 'Aqil read the Retraction before a great assembly. Two days later, notary-witnesses appended their signatures to the document, in the caliphal Chancery of State. It was a standard text, the blank spaces of which were filled in for the accused. It was a 'vow of repentance' (*tauba*) not to relapse

into the sins confessed. The text, authenticated by a chain of transmitters, is as follows:

> I purify myself, before God, of the doctrines of the heretical innovators, Mu'tazilis and others; of frequenting the masters of this doctrinal system; of venerating its partisans; of invoking the mercy of God on their predecessors; and of emulating them. What I have written, and what has been found written in my hand concerning their doctrines and their errors, I repent to God for having written. It is not permitted to write those things, nor to say them, nor to believe them.
>
> Among the things which I have transcribed is a disputed question regarding the night. Some say it consists of black bodies. But I said, 'What I have heard said by *Shaikh* Abu 'Ali [Ibn al-Walid] is correct,' he had said, 'It is nothingness, and one can in no way call it a body, nor anything else.' And I believed that. But I repent to God – Exalted is He above all! – in renouncing them [the Mu'tazilis].
>
> I believed in al-Hallaj as a religious man, an ascetic, and a saint; and I maintained that opinion in a fascicle (*juz'*) which I composed. But I repent to God – Exalted is He! – in renouncing him. I attest that he was put to death as a result of the consensus of the jurisconsults of the time, and that they were right, and he was wrong.
>
> With this, I ask God's forgiveness, and I turn to Him in penitence for having frequented the heretical innovators, Mu'tazilis and others; for having sought to emulate them; for having invoked God's mercy on them; and for having venerated them. For all of that is prohibited; a Muslim is not permitted to do this, because of what the Prophet has said – the blessings and peace of God be upon him!: 'He who venerates the author of a condemnable innovation helps in bringing about the ruin of Islam.'
>
> The *Sharīf* Abu Ja'far, and his companions, masters and partisans, my superiors and my colleagues – May God the Exalted protect them! – rightly blame me, seeing what they have witnessed written in my hand in works of which I purify myself before God. I am certain that I was wrong, that I was not right.
>
> Should anything become known of me which would be at variance with this document and this confession, the *Imām* of the Muslims shall have the right to punish me in accordance with the exigencies of the divine law, that is, reprimand, punishment, exile, or other punishments.
>
> I call on God, on His angels, and on the men of religious learning, to witness what I have just said voluntarily and without constraint. The sentiments of my heart are in complete accord with the expressions of my mouth – May God the Exalted be the Judge! God has said, 'For repetition God will exact from him the penalty. For God is Exalted, and Lord of retribution [Qur.5:98].'[1]

2. Its Witness–Notaries

On 10 Muharram 465 (26 September 1073), in the presence of Prime Minister Ibn Jahir, Ibn 'Aqil signed the Retraction in the Chancery of State. The names of the witness–notaries and their signed statements, attesting to the fact that Ibn 'Aqil read and signed the Retraction in their presence, are preserved by a fellow-Hanbali jurisconsult of the following century, Ibn Qudama (d. 620/1223), in his *Taḥrīm*, a work in refutation of Ibn 'Aqil:

1. The confessant has asked me to witness his having confessed all that is contained within the scope of this document. Signed: 'Abd Allah Ibn Ridwan, in the month of Muharram, in the year 465.[2]
2. He called on me to witness the same. Signed: Muhammad b. 'Abd ar-Razzaq b. Ahmad b. as-Sinni, on the same date.[3]
3. The confessant has asked me to witness his having confessed all that is contained within the scope of this document. Signed: al-Hasan b. 'Abd al-Malik b. Muhammad b. Yusuf,[4] in his own handwriting.
4. I heard the utterance of this confession by the confessant himself. Signed: Muhammad b. Ahmad b. al-Hasan.[5]
5. The confessant asked me to bear witness of the same against him. Signed: 'Ali b. 'Abd al-Malik b. Muhammad b. Yusuf.[6/7]

Four witness–notaries were related to Ibn 'Aqil's patron, Abu Mansur Ibn Yusuf: two sons (numbers 3 and 5), and two sons-in-law (numbers 1 and 4). The fifth, not directly related to Abu Mansur, was Ibn as-Sinni (number 2), whose son-in-law was an employee of Ibn Jarada (d. 476/1083), the other son-in-law of Abu Mansur.[8] Thus all witnesses were connected with the family of Abu Mansur, of which Ibn 'Aqil was an adoptive member.

3. Import and Significance of the Retraction

The Retraction is the only known document of its kind, preserved in its entirety, in classical Islam. An important source for the understanding of Ibn 'Aqil's century, it reflects the ascendancy of Traditionalism in Baghdad, the cultural centre of the Islamic world.

On the basis of the edicts of Caliph al-Qadir (*caliphate*: 381–422/991–1031), and of his Qadiri Creed, discussed below, Ibn 'Aqil could be accused of Mu'tazilism and *fatwā*s could be issued, calling for his execution unless he recanted. The preservation of the Retraction is due to its Traditionalist transmitters, members of the Hanbali legal guild,[9] of which Ibn 'Aqil was a member.

4. Hanbali Historians and Ibn 'Aqil

Except for one, each of the historians appears to have had some bias in transmitting the text of the document: (1) Ibn al-Banna', author of the *Diary*, hostile towards Ibn 'Aqil; (2) Ibn al-Jauzi (d. 597/1200), author of the *Muntaẓam*, anti-Hallaj; (3) Ibn Qudama, author of the *Taḥrīm*, hostile; (4) Ibn Rajab (d. 795/1393), author of the *Dhail*, critical; (5) Sibt Ibn al-Jauzi (d. 654/1257), author of the *Mir'āt*, a Hanafi, grandson of Ibn al-Jauzi.

The *Diary* of the contemporary Ibn al-Banna' is likely to be the original source of the entire document, including the dates and the names of the witness–notaries. There is no way of confirming this; the extant fragment covers only the last three months of 460 and almost the whole of 461. It begins several months after the start of the affair, and ends over three years before the signing of the Retraction. It thus covers only part of the first phase of the case, and ends with Ibn 'Aqil's exile. Nonetheless, it affords us a precious glimpse into the interrelations of the players, and the roles they played in this drama within the Hanbali legal guild.

The diarist, an observer and participant in the affair, received reports from his informants on Ibn 'Aqil's activities. His position was a delicate one; while biased in favour of the *Sharīf*, the accuser, he was beholden to the family of Abu Mansur, Ibn 'Aqil's protector, as he had been engaged by the latter's son-in-law, Ibn Jarada, to tutor his children, and to perform ritual prayers periodically over the grave of his brother.

On the other hand, Ibn al-Jauzi was biased in favour of Ibn 'Aqil, whom he greatly admired and strove to emulate, and to whose ideas he generally subscribed. Although he was criticised for following Ibn 'Aqil by adopting the metaphorical interpretation of Scripture, he often disagreed with him. Anti-Hallaj, he gives the entire text of the Retraction, including the part on Hallaj, the date of Ibn 'Aqil's signing of the document, the fact that it was witnessed, but not the names of the witnesses.

In contrast to Ibn al-Jauzi, Ibn Qudama was in favour of Hallaj; but his bias against Ibn 'Aqil is amply illustrated in the *Taḥrīm*, where he erroneously accuses him of being an Ash'ari. Yet he shows himself to be tolerant, stating that Ibn 'Aqil should be considered orthodox in his post-Retraction period. A Qadiri Sufi, he perhaps felt that Ibn 'Aqil was forced to condemn Hallaj, but kept secret his true feelings regarding the great mystic. Sole source for the names of the witness–notaries, Ibn Qudama received his information from Ibn Tabarzad (d. 607/1210), who had it from a contemporary source.[10]

Ibn Rajab, an admirer of Ibn 'Aqil for his intellectual breadth, devotes to him an elaborate and highly laudatory biographical notice. He nonetheless criticises him for his use of the metaphorical interpretation of Scripture, and strongly suspects that he never quite rid himself of Mu'tazili influence.[11] Sibt Ibn al-Jauzi is apparently neutral.

5. Hallajism, Mu'tazilism, and Ibn 'Aqil

There are two noteworthy points to be made regarding the Retraction, and the historical data gathered from the Hanbali sources. First, throughout the pages of the extant *Diary*, nothing is mentioned regarding Hallaj or Hallajism. Alone on trial is Ibn 'Aqil's Mu'tazilism. Ibn Rajab correctly criticises Ibn 'Aqil for his Mu'tazili tendencies; Ibn Qudama incorrectly condemns him as an Ash'ari. Such a glaring error is probably attributable to the struggle going on in Ibn Qudama's city, between Hanbalis and Ash'aris. In twelfth-century Damascus, accusing a religious intellectual of Ash'arism was the severest condemnation that could be made by a Traditionalist, as was Mu'tazilism in Baghdad from the ninth century on.

Secondly, the sources shed no light on Ibn 'Aqil's post-Retraction attitude towards Hallaj. Although Ibn al-Jauzi had his own favourites among the Sufis, he cared little for Hallaj, in contrast to Ibn 'Aqil, who wrote a treatise (the *Nuṣra*, which was condemned in the Retraction) in praise of the great mystic. Except for the Retraction, Ibn al-Jauzi passes over Ibn 'Aqil's Hallajism in silence, throughout the volumes of his *Muntaẓam*. In contrast, the pro-Hallajism of Ibn Qudama is indicated in the Retraction: he omits the part regarding Hallaj, passing over it in silence. Thus neither those friendly towards Ibn 'Aqil, nor those who were hostile, have left any indication of his post-Retraction sentiments regarding Hallaj.

Ibn Rajab shows his displeasure with Ibn 'Aqil when he mentions a refutation of his *Juz' fī Nuṣrat al-Ḥallāj* by the Hanbali Hibat Allah b. Sadaqa al-Azaji (d. 591/1195).[12] Moreover, he criticises 'Abd ar-Rahman Ibn al-Ghazzal (d. 615/1218) for writing a new biography of Hallaj, in which he praised and venerated the great mystic, relying heavily on Ibn 'Aqil's old *Nuṣra* 'from which [Ibn 'Aqil] returned in penitence, and he [Ibn al-Ghazzal] was wrong to do that';[13] i.e. to issue a new edition of the condemned *Nuṣra*.

As for Ibn 'Aqil's post-Retraction attitude regarding Hallaj, nowhere is there any mention of the mystic, either in Ibn 'Aqil's extant works, or in the 'Aqilian passages I have been able to collect, which are quoted by subsequent authors. The conspicuous silence of the sources, and the reappearance of the *Nuṣra* in veneration of Hallaj, the autograph of which was later in the possession of Ibn al-Jauzi, indicate that when Ibn 'Aqil read the passage abjuring Hallaj, he was, as Louis Massignon rightly concludes, merely mouthing the words, not speaking his mind.

It would then appear that Ibn 'Aqil's abjuring of Hallaj in the Retraction was forced, and its presence there probably due to the insistence of his accuser, *Sharīf* Abu Ja'far. However, this does not necessarily mean that the *Sharīf* was against Sufism, or even against Hallaj; for he himself may well have been a Sufi, as were so many of his fellow-Hanbalis. Moreover, the fact that the original *Nuṣra* later turned up in the possession of Ibn al-Jauzi, shows that the *Sharīf* did not destroy it after it was brought to him by Ma'ali al-Ha'ik. More likely, the *Sharīf* upheld the principle of the consensus

condemning Hallaj, despite the lack of unanimity among the jurisconsults, because it was the same kind of consensus he was using against Ibn 'Aqil; namely, that the *fatwā*s of a number of jurisconsults are sufficient to justify a condemnation, forcing the accused to retract or face dire consequences. Hallaj was condemned by such a consensus.

II. EDICTS AND CREED OF CALIPH AL-QADIR

The sources, to my knowledge, make no mention of the Qadiri Creed during the caliphate of al-Qadir. The first mention of it as his creed (*al-I'tiqād al-Qādirī*) appears a decade after his death, in the caliphate of his son, al-Qa'im (422–67/1031–75). However, the essentials of the Creed are found in al-Qadir's proclamations in the first and second decades of the eleventh century, the last of these in 420/1029, two years before his death.

1. Edicts of al-Qadir and Edicts of al-Ma'mun

The first years of the eleventh century brought with them the edicts of al-Qadir. To judge by what the sources say of their contents, al-Qadir's edicts were manifestly answers to the edicts of al-Ma'mun (*caliphate*: 198–218/813–33), which two centuries earlier had set afoot the *Miḥna* (Inquisition). The first edict is dated 408/1017–18. It required Rationalist religious intellectuals, designated as Mu'tazilis, to make a public retraction, desisting from the public discussion of *kalām*-theology, and from giving courses on Mu'tazilism, Rafidism, or any other anti-Sunni doctrines. The guilty had to sign a retraction to this effect and, in case of recidivism, suffer corporal punishment and exile.[14] The second edict, promulgated the following year, was read publicly in the Quarter of the Caliphal Palace, on 17 Ramadan 409 (27 January 1019). It proclaimed the doctrines of Sunni Traditionalism, according to the annalists who cite the following passage: 'He who says the Qur'an is created is an infidel, whose blood may legitimately be shed.'[15]

Three other edicts, in the same vein, elaborating Traditionalist Sunni doctrines, were proclaimed in 420/1029, in the Caliphal Palace, on the following dates: 19 Sha'ban (2 September), 20 Ramadan (2 October), and 1 Dhu 'l-Qa'da (11 November). On each of these occasions there was a convocation of *sharīf*s, judges, witness–notaries and jurisconsults, who heard the reading of the edict and signed it, as proof of their presence at the reading. The second edict was read by the Caliph's Prime Minister, Abu 'l-Hasan Ibn Hajib an-Nu'man (d. 421/1030), to a similar audience. According to the descriptions given of the edicts, each was more elaborate than the preceding one, the third being of such length that it reportedly required attendance throughout the day, until nightfall. This edict may well have been what is attributed to Caliph al-Qadir as *Kitāb (fīhī) al-Uṣūl*.[16]

Nowhere in the extant sources do we have the full texts of these edicts. The first is said to have expatiated on the doctrines of Sunni orthodoxy, condemning Mu'tazilism and citing Prophetic Traditions in support of the condemnation. The others are said to have condemned as *fāsiq* (transgressor of the law) anyone who professes that the Qur'an is created, after which was related the old disputation between the disciple of Shafi'i (d. 204/820), 'Abd al-'Aziz b. Yahya al-Kinani al-Makki (d. 240/854) and Bishr Marisi (d. 218/833), a Mu'tazili–Hanafi theologian–jurisconsult, who had studied law under the famous Hanafi Qadi, Abu Yusuf (d. 182/798). That disputation was on the question whether the Qur'an was created. These edicts are said to have ended with a call to 'order the good and prohibit evil'.[17]

Al-Qadir's edicts had one purpose: to proclaim the doctrines of Sunni Traditionalism, and condemn all opposing teachings. There is no way of ascertaining, in the present state of the sources, just how the contents of the edicts became transformed into the Qadiri Creed; nor if the transformation took place in the lifetime of the Caliph, or only later in that of his son. The sources speak of al-Qadir's treatise, just mentioned, in which he discussed the basic articles of Traditionalist faith. In any case, the Qadiri Creed, and the descriptions given of al-Qadir's treatise and of his edicts, indicate that their contents promote essential Traditionalist doctrines, and condemn those of Rationalism.[18]

2. Al-Qa'im's Proclamation of the Qadiri Creed

Ibn al-Jauzi cites a chain of transmitters, as his source for the Creed. The chain begins with his teacher, Muhammad Ibn Nasir (d. 550/1155), a former student of Ibn 'Aqil, who had it from Abu 'l-Husain Muhammad b. Muhammad b. al-Farra' (d. 526/1131), a son of Qadi Abu Ya'la, who, very likely, had it from his father. Ibn al-Jauzi then introduces the Creed as follows:

> The *Imām* al-Qa'im bi-Amri 'Llah ['Executor of God's Command'], Prince of the Faithful, Abu Ja'far, son of al-Qadir bi 'Llah ['Made Powerful by God'], in the year 430 and some, published the Qadiri Creed which al-Qadir had proclaimed. It was read in the Caliphal Chancery, in the presence of the ascetics and religious intellectuals, among whom was the *Shaikh* Abu 'l-Hasan 'Ali b. 'Umar [Ibn] al-Qazwini [d. 442/1050], scholar of the Prophetic Traditions and a great ascetic. He was the first to append his signature, the jurisconsults signing after him, below the following declaration: 'This is the profession of faith of the Muslims; he who is opposed to it is a transgressor of the law and an infidel.'[19]

This meant that jurisconsults could issue legal opinions (*fatwās*) against transgressors, calling for their execution.

3. Proximate and Remote Causes for Edicts and Creed

Ibn al-Jauzi does not give a reason for the proclamation of the Qadiri Creed; nor is there, to my knowledge, in his *Muntaẓam*, or elsewhere, mention of a connection between the edicts and the Creed. He simply quotes the text of the Creed, after supplying its Traditionalist source, *sub anno* 433 of the Hijra (AD 1041–2), thirteen years after the date of the last of al-Qadir's edicts. To my mind, there is for both the edicts and the Creed, a proximate cause, as well as a remote one. The proximate cause, in my view, was the intellectual activity of Rationalist religious intellectuals, in particular two prominent authors: the Mu'tazili Qadi, 'Abd al-Jabbar (d. 415/1025), and the Ash'ari 'Abd al-Qahir al-Baghdadi (d. 429/1037). Their intellectual activity will be treated below, in Part Two on theology. The remote cause was al-Ma'mun's edicts of two centuries earlier, which inaugurated the *Miḥna*. The first of al-Qadir's edicts was aimed at the Hanafi–Mu'tazili jurisconsults, prohibiting them from teaching Mu'tazili *kalām*. The Hanafi judges of the *Miḥna* were also Mu'tazilis, supported by al-Ma'mun against the Traditionalist jurisconsults.[20] The focal point of the edicts of both caliphs was the Qur'an. Al-Ma'mun's aim was to force the Traditionalists to declare that the Qur'an was the created word of God. Al-Qadir's edict aimed to keep intact the sacrosanctity of the Qur'an, as God's *uncreated* Word.

4. Import and Significance of the Qadiri Creed

For the present purpose, a brief analysis of the Qadiri Creed will be sufficient, since the original text of the Creed is available, along with three translations – German, English, and French.[21] The following analysis reviews some of the Creed's essential parts. It is clearly a Traditionalist manifesto. It condemns as heretical all doctrines opposed to Traditionalist Sunni doctrine. It is manifestly anti-Rationalist, opposed *inter alia* to Mu'tazilism and Ash'arism. The Qadiri Creed contains nothing against Sufism in general, or Hallaj in particular. It opposes the anthropomorphists (*mushabbiha*) especially the Karramis, on the question of the divine Throne. The divine attributes are presented from the point of view of those who affirm them (*ithbāt aṣ-ṣifāt*) as opposed to those who annul them (*ibṭāl aṣ-ṣifāt*), as do some Imamis and Isma'ilis, who say that God is knowing without knowledge, powerful without power, and so on, and as opposed to the Mu'tazilis who annul them (*ibṭāl*), divest them (*ta'ṭīl*), or subject them to metaphorical interpretation (*ta'wīl*).

The question of the attributes is also presented against the Ash'ari thesis, which makes a distinction between real attributes, (*ṣifāt haqīqīya*) and metaphorical attributes (*ṣifāt majāzīya*), whereas the Qadiri Creed considers as real all the attributes that God has attributed to Himself, or that His Apostle has attributed to Him. This twofold opposition to Mu'tazilism and

to Ash'arism is further seen with respect to the highly controversial attribute of divine speech, the principal point of contention between the two antagonistic forces, as illustrated in the edicts of al-Ma'mun and of al-Qadir. To begin with, the Creed affirms, against Mu'tazilism, that the speech of God is uncreated. This is followed by a distinctly anti-Ash'ari elaboration, i.e. that the speech of God is *uncreated under all of its aspects*: recited, retained in the memory, written, or heard. Such a statement does not admit the Ash'ari distinction between the *uncreated* speech of God and its *created* expression. Thus the Ash'ari thesis, as well as the Mu'tazili, are condemned as heterodox, and those professing them risk pain of death, unless they make a public retraction.

The Qadiri Creed states that faith (*īmān*) is composed of words (*qaul*), deeds (*'amal*), and intentions (*nīya*); that it is variable, capable of increasing or decreasing; that one must make use of the formula of condition, or hope, by saying 'I am a believer' and adding 'if it please God' or 'I hope'. This concept, which is in line with the thinking of Shafi'i (d. 204/820) and Ibn Hanbal (d. 241/855), is opposed, *inter alia*, to the Mu'tazili concept, which identifies *īmān* with *islām*, and is therefore a profession of faith that is purely exterior, composed of a set form of words and gestures. It is also opposed to the Ash'ari concept, i.e. that the profession of faith is invariable, that works have nothing to do with it, and that one should not make use of formulas of condition or hope.

5. Application of the Creed's Terms

Al-Qadir lost no time in applying the terms of his edicts. As early as Rabi' II 417 (May–June 1026), the future head of the Hanafi legal guild, Abu 'Abd Allah as-Saimari (d. 436/1045), accused of Mu'tazilism, had to make a public retraction of it in order to become a witness-notary (*shāhid*) accredited by the Chief Judge. It was Saimari who assumed the leadership of the Mu'tazilis of Baghdad after the death of the famous Mu'tazili, Qadi 'Abd al-Jabbar, and the headship of the Hanafi legal guild, after the death of al-Quduri (d. 428/1037). Moreover, the terms of the Qadiri Creed were also being applied by the *amīr*s who aspired to the caliphal *'ahd* (investiture) for the sultanate, as in the case of the Ghaznawid Mas'ud (*regnum*: 421–32/1031–41) and that of the Saljuq Tughril Beg (*regnum*: 429–55/1038–63), each in turn seeking the approval of the then caliph, al-Qa'im, in whose caliphate the Creed became known also as the Qadiri–Qa'imi Creed (*al-I'tiqād al-Qādirī al-Qā'imī*). The Creed was sanctioned by the consensus of the jurisconsults, and its proclamation and the application of its terms all took place while the governing power in the lands of the Eastern Caliphate was that of the Shi'i Buwaihid dynasty, long before the Sunni Saljuqs had come upon the scene.[22]

Saimari and Ibn 'Aqil had this in common: that both had to sign a

retraction, abjuring Mu'tazilism; but the similarity ends there. Saimari's case was simple: he was summoned to retract, he complied, and no more was said of his case. Ibn 'Aqil's case was not so straightforward. Close scrutiny of the facts indicates that there was more to it than the signing of a retraction. Ibn 'Aqil denied all along that he wished to become a Mu'tazili; he simply wanted to learn all that the greats of his period had to offer, regardless of their religious and intellectual persuasions. He complained: 'Fellow-Hanbalis wanted me to cease frequenting a group of religious intellectuals, and that used to cut me off from acquiring useful knowledge.'[23] Besides the formal charge brought against him, in line with the terms of the Qadiri Creed, there was another undeclared motive – a personal one – that of his antagonist, *Sharīf* Abu Ja'far.

III. RETRACTION AND QADIRI CREED IN WESTERN SCHOLARSHIP

1. The Retraction

Because of its historical importance, the Retraction drew the attention of two eminent Islamicists, for reasons connected with their respective scholarly research: Ignaz Goldziher, who was studying Hanbali movements in Islamic religious history; and Louis Massignon, studying the thought of Hallaj and his times. Massignon was particularly interested in the *Nuṣra*, Ibn 'Aqil's treatise in veneration of Hallaj. The great mystic had been crucified in the first decade of the fourth/tenth century, for what was perceived by a group of jurisconsults to be a blasphemous declaration made in a moment of mystical ecstasy, when Hallaj cried out: 'I am the Truth!'

The Retraction Discovered by Ignaz Goldziher

When researching his 'Zur Geschichte der hanbalitischen Bewegungen',[24] Goldziher came across the Retraction of Ibn 'Aqil, which he cited to show the extent of the force used by the Hanbalis against one of their members who dared to be interested in Mu'tazilism and Hallajism. It was not, however, the Hanbalis, but rather the *Sharīf*, followed by a group of his partisans, who constituted the driving force behind the Retraction. *Sharīf* Abu Ja'far was an activist who, in addition to his membership of the Hanbali guild, was also a member of the Sunni Hashimi nobility of *sharīf*s. It is from the latter that he drew some of the support he needed for his 'vice squad', which carried out his campaign against the loose morals of his day, particularly prostitution and the traffic in intoxicants. He was not, at the time, the leader of the Hanbali guild (as Goldziher had thought), but simply the leader of a faction which opposed Ibn 'Aqil. The *Sharīf* was eventually able to force Ibn 'Aqil to retract on the basis of some of Ibn 'Aqil's writings

brought to him by a certain Ma'ali al-Ha'ik. During a serious illness, Ibn 'Aqil had given the writings to al-Ha'ik, for him to destroy in the event of the former's death.

Goldziher cited the Retraction for two reasons: to point out the importance of the document in terms of cultural history, and to highlight it as an example of Hanbali behaviour of the type he believed occurred frequently. For Goldziher, the persecution of Ibn 'Aqil and his Retraction showed the extent of Hanbali religious fanaticism, as evidenced by the activity of *Sharīf* Abu Ja'far, all leading Goldziher to believe the *Sharīf* to be the Hanbali leader. Goldziher contrasted what he considered to be the fanatical, ultra-conservative character of Hanbalism with what he considered to be the tolerant, middle-road Ash'arism, believing the latter to be the new orthodoxy of Islam, replacing the old outdated orthodoxy of Hanbalism.

Louis Massignon's Interest in the Retraction

The Retraction drew the attention of Louis Massignon, in the early part of this century, when he was researching his monumental work on *The Passion of Ḥallāj*. The fact that, over a century and a half after Hallaj's execution, a young Hanbali intellectual of Baghdad had been forced, after pursuit and persecution, to abjure a treatise he wrote in veneration of Hallaj, evidently meant that the memory and influence of the great mystic had survived. Massignon has amply shown that it continued to survive down to modern times. The history of Ibn 'Aqil's period, as recounted in the posthumous second edition of Massignon's work, differs in some respects from that given in the pages of the present book. My previous book on Ibn 'Aqil was published after Massignon's death. The image of the eleventh century had remained in accord with that presented in earlier works (an image generally accepted mostly on the authority of Goldziher's work), as regards the religious and institutional history of eleventh-century Baghdad.

At the turn of the twentieth century, when Goldziher was at work, it was almost inevitable that modern scholarship would have an erroneous image of Islamic history regarding the eleventh century. The religious history of Islam was read in Rationalist sources, to the neglect of the Traditionalist. I have written on this problem elsewhere.[25] Here I shall confine myself to clarifying certain misconceptions. The eleventh century was Traditionalist, not Mu'tazili or Ash'ari. What was new about the Ash'arism of the eleventh century was not that it was, as claimed, the 'new orthodoxy', but rather that it was, after Mu'tazilism, the 'new Rationalism', aspiring to recognition as orthodox. Ample proof of this is found in the edicts of al-Qadir and the Qadiri Creed. Their contents reflect a centuries-old struggle between Rationalism and Traditionalism, the beginning of which goes back to Shafi'i and his censure of *kalām* in the eighth century.

The Retraction in History

Like the Qadiri Creed, the Retraction is a Traditionalist document, preserved intact. That of Ibn Shannabudh (d. 328/939) has survived only as a brief excerpt, in which the Qur'anic scholar retracts his variant readings of the Qur'an. Its passages correspond with those of the Retraction of Ibn 'Aqil, except as regards the blank spaces relating to the abjurer's particular case. Ibn 'Aqil's Retraction serves as a historical landmark in the socio-religious history of his period. It represents the triumph of the Traditionalist movement supported by the caliphate, against Rationalist Mu'tazilism, on the decline, and a militant Rationalist Ash'arism, on the ascendant. The latter sought its support from an external source, Nizam al-Mulk, for thirty years the Prime Minister of the Saljuqs Alp Arslan (*regnum*: 455–65/1063–72) and Malikshah (*regnum*: 465–85/1072–92). Traditionalism was as opposed to the new Rationalism as it continued to be to the old.

The Retraction in Ibn 'Aqil's Life

For Ibn 'Aqil, the period between 447 and the signing of the Retraction, in 465, was mostly one of turmoil. It left its mark on him for the rest of his life. His native quarter, Gate of the Archway, on the east bank of the Tigris, was sacked by the Saljuq hordes in 447/1055. Left to fend for himself in poverty, he eventually came under the protection of Abu Mansur Ibn Yusuf. With the latter's death in 460, he became a fugitive, pursued, persecuted, and exiled. Rather than affecting him adversely, souring him towards the Hanbali legal guild, his misfortunes served rather to teach him the wisdom of moderation, and to temper his youthful exuberance. The decade between the death of his patron-protector, in 460, and the death of his antagonist, *Sharīf* Abu Ja'far, in 470, a time during which he could not pursue his professorial career, gave him time to reflect on the differences of the two opposing intellectual forces of his century. He was a unique product of both, through his family background, and his legal guild. With time on his hands, cut off from the normal society of men of learning, and from the discussions and debates for which he had an unquenchable thirst, it is to be presumed that his thoughts were his principal occupation.

It is most likely at this juncture that he began his journal, the *Kitāb al-Funūn*, in which he consigned his thoughts and meditations on men and society, on government and legal guilds, on theologians, jurisconsults and Sufis, on his predecessors and his contemporaries. In exile he mused upon his trials and tribulations, his thoughts and aspirations, his critiques and observations, leading a confined intellectual's life, conversing with books, and noting down his thoughts. Time became for him a precious commodity, which he considered a sin to waste:

> Truly, it is not lawful for me to waste a single moment of my life; so