

ON BOTH SIDES OF AL-MANDAB

من الشَّبُوطِ وَأَنَّهُ كَالْبَعْلِ تَرَكِبُهُ وَفِي سَنَائِهِ وَرَوَّادُ الْعَيْشِ لَيْسَ وَأَثَلَةُ الْيَأْسِ بِنِ
مُعَاوِيَةَ بْنِ قُرَّةَ ن وَرَعَاهُ وَالرَّمَّ جَعْفَرُ بْنُ جَعْفَرِ بْنِ الْمَنْظُورِ حَضَرَتْ فِي حَوْضِ لَهَا
عَظِيمٍ أَوْ بَرَكَةٍ عَظِيمَةٍ عَدَدًا كَثِيرًا مِنَ الرِّجْرِ وَالْبُنَى وَأَيْدِيهَا تَخَاطَبُهَا غَيْرُهَا



ON BOTH SIDES OF AL-MANDAB

Ethiopian, South-Arabic
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Imam al-Qāsim ibn Ibrāhīm and Muʿtazilism

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The *Kitāb al-Jāmiʿ al-kāfī* of the Kufan Zaydī Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-ʿAlawī (d. 445/1035), a massive summary of the legal doctrine of the four chief authorities of the Zaydiyya in the 3rd/9th century, contains a final section on theological doctrine¹. In it al-ʿAlawī reports a few views of Imam al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm al-Rassī (d. 246/860), the grandfather of the founder of the Zaydī imamate in the Yemen, which are not derived from his writings and are significant for defining his position in relation to contemporary Muʿtazilī doctrine. Al-Qāsim stood, as is known, alone among the Zaydī authorities of his time backing views broadly associated with the Muʿtazila, in particular with regard to the justice (*ʿadl*) of God. While the three other Zaydī authorities whose doctrines are regularly reported by al-ʿAlawī, the ʿAlids Aḥmad b. ʿIsā b. Zayd, al-Ḥasan b. Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥusayn b. Zayd, and the Kufan scholar Muḥammad b. Maṣṣūr al-Murādī, vehemently opposed Qadarī teaching and maintained that good and evil are equally determined by the divine *qadar* and Will, al-Qāsim, like the Muʿtazila, strictly dissociated God from all evil. Yet al-Qāsim's extant treatises also reflect obvious differences with the Muʿtazilī school doctrine in approach and substance of his theological teaching.

Al-ʿAlawī records al-Qāsim's theological views only exceptionally. Although he does not state his own opinions, he no doubt agreed in general with the anti-Muʿtazilī tradition of the Kufan Zaydiyya. His main sources were the books of Muḥammad b. Maṣṣūr al-Murādī, who in turn quoted the ʿAlid scholars with whom he had associated over a long period, and some independent Zaydī transmissions. In the chapters on the divine *qadar* and Will, on human capacity (*istiṭāʿa*) and the creation of human acts by God (*khalq al-afʿāl*), where al-Qāsim could be expected to have held deviant views, he is not quoted at all. Where he is quoted, his views were clearly in basic agreement with the Kufan Zaydī tradition. They confirm al-Qāsim's deep reservations to Muʿtazilī *kalām* and reveal, more clearly than his writings, their basic motivation.

Al-ʿAlawī quotes al-Murādī as stating in his *Kitāb al-Masāʾil*: »I asked al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm«, namely about someone who says: Whoever is killed dies without appointed term (*ajal*), and if he had not been killed he would not have died, »and I mentioned to him the statement of someone who

¹ On Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-ʿAlawī and his *K. al-Jāmiʿ al-kāfī* see W. Madelung, *Der Imam al-Qāsim ibn Ibrāhīm*, Berlin 1965, pp. 80 ff. and the biographical notes by al-Sayyid Aḥmad al-Ḥusaynī in the introduction to his edition of al-ʿAlawī's *Faḍl ziyārat al-Ḥusayn*, Qom 1403/1983. The section on theological doctrine of *al-Jāmiʿ al-kāfī* is available to me in a microfilm of the copy of the Great Mosque of Ṣanʿāʾ. See *Qāʾima bi-l-Makḥūḍāt al-ʿarabiyya al-muṣawwara bi-l-mīkrūfīlm min al-Jumhūriyya al-ʿArabiyya al-Yamaniyya*, Cairo 1967, p. 13.

says: Surely, when he killed him he cut his appointed term. Al-Qāsim reproved this statement and charged anyone who said this with disgrace (*aqbala 'alā man qāla bihī bi l-makrūh*). I asked him (further) about whoever said this, and he said: He is doomed to perdition (*hālik*).²

The immutability of man's life span appointed by God was a dogma held vital by the Muslim determinists, and al-Murādī must have been gratified to be able to quote al-Qāsim's apparent backing of their view. Al-Qāsim obviously could not have agreed with the wider doctrine of the determinists that the unlawful killing of the man occurred in accordance with the Will of God and must have restricted God's relation to the life span to His foreknowledge. This was also the position of the majority of the Mu'tazila, who, according to al-Ash'arī held that the *ajal* was the time known to God at which a human being would die or be killed. If the person thus was killed, he was killed at his *ajal* and if he died a natural death, he died at his *ajal*. Only a few of them, described by al-Ash'arī as being »of their ignorant«, maintained that the time until which a person according to God's knowledge would have lived if he had not been killed was his *ajal* rather than the time of his murder³.

More problematic is al-Qāsim's condemnation of someone who states that the killer cuts the *ajal* of the victim. Did he wish to affirm that, if the person had not been killed, God would have caused him to die at the same *ajal*? This was the position of the determinists, consistent with their view that the *ajal* is not only known but also willed by God. Among the Mu'tazila, Abu l-Hudhayl is reported to have held it also, but it is difficult to see how he would have justified it. Some of the Mu'tazila of the school of Baghdad affirmed, on the contrary, that the person would definitely have continued to live, while the majority of the later Mu'tazila maintained that he might either have died or continued to live⁴. Al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm, who expressly dissociated God from acts forbidden by Him⁵, would also have found it difficult to explain an *ajal* fixed to coincide with the failed murder. It seems more likely that he did not intend to offer any positive doctrine in the matter but rather condemned the statement, which dealt with a hypothetical question, as an example of that discussion of the *qadar* which he, in agreement with the traditionalist position, held to be forbidden⁶. In either case, his polemic is definitely anti-Mu'tazilī.

In his *Kitāb Aḥmad* (b. 'Īsā) al-Murādī reported on the authority of an informant whom he considered trustworthy that al-Qāsim was asked concerning »the pain (*alam*) which strikes children: How can God, praise be to Him, be other than unjust in regard to what befalls them, yet if anyone else were to do this to them he would be unjust?« Al-Qāsim answered: » . . . The difference in this is for anyone who judges fairly more evident than all explanation, because God, the Powerful and Exalted, is the benefactor of every blessing in the children and is not subject to command or prohibition in anything of that kind. Thus thanks are due to God for every blessing and benefaction in them, and they have no title to any blessing incumbent (*wājiba*) on God. In every pain and harm that reaches them from God, there is a spiritual lesson (*maw'iza*) for people of insight (*uli l-nuhā*)

² *Al-Jāmi'*, fol. 301b.

³ Al-Ash'arī, *Maqālāt al-islāmiyyīn* ed. H. Ritter, Istanbul 1929-1933, p. 256.

⁴ Al-Ash'arī, *Maqālāt*, p. 257, including footnote.

⁵ *Der Imam al-Qāsim*, p. 118.

⁶ *Der Imam al-Qāsim*, p. 118.

and an indication of the power of God. If that could be subject to any blame of injustice or oppression, it would even more so attach to their death which is the most painful of pains, and likewise it would attach to the death of the righteous (*abrār*) who are older than children. There is, praise be to God, no question in this from which any censure (*taʿnīf*) could follow, and only the perplexed (*kull mutaḥayyir*) will use it as an argument.⁷

The »perplexed« to whom al-Qāsim alludes are clearly the majority of the Muʿtazila. They held that God is obliged to provide a recompense (*ʿiwaḍ*) to children, and even animals, for any pain inflicted upon them. This was a major aspect of the Muʿtazilī doctrine of divine justice, unanimously upheld by the later Muʿtazila⁸. According to al-Ashʿarī, there were some among the early Muʿtazila who disagreed with the majority and held that God inflicts pain on children for no reason (*ʿilla*). They denied that He would recompense them for it, though they also denied that He would torment them in the hereafter. The majority, however, held that God inflicts pain on them only as a lesson (*ʿibra*) for the mature and would recompense them. If not, his infliction of pain would constitute injustice (*ẓulm*)⁹. Al-Ashʿarī does not name any of the deviators. The later Muʿtazilī sources, however, mention that ʿAbbād b. Sulaymān maintained that it was good of God to inflict pain without recompense if the purpose of it was to provide a lesson¹⁰.

Al-Qāsim brushes aside this aspect of the Muʿtazilī concept of divine justice. The blessings of God completely outweigh for him any pains. Thanks are due to God for his blessings in children, and they »have no title to any blessing incumbent upon God« on account of pains suffered. He agreed, however, with ʿAbbād and the majority of the Muʿtazila that God inflicts pain on children only as a lesson for people of insight. While there is thus a similarity between his and ʿAbbād's view, it is unlikely that he was influenced by the latter, who was probably considerably younger and whose reasons for denying divine compensation were different¹¹. His concept of the justice of God was essentially confined to strict dissociation of God from any evil human acts and the assertion of human free will¹².

Most revealing about the difficulty of maintaining doctrinal unity within the Zaydī movement in the 3rd/9th century and al-Qāsim's awareness of it is al-ʿAlawī's lengthy chapter on the doctrine of the creation of the Qurʾān¹³. The question of the nature of the Qurʾān, which was turned into a burning political issue by the *miḥna* under the caliph al-Maʾmūn and his successors, evidently also divided the Zaydiyya deeply. There were those, among the ʿAlid leaders as well as their potential supporters, who held the Qurʾān to be uncreated and others who considered it created. Openly admitting their division, Muḥammad b. Maṣṣūr al-Murādī stressed the need of »sticking to the gist (*jumal*)«, that is the generally agreed principles,

⁷ *Al-Jāmiʿ*, fol. 304b.

⁸ See, for instance, ʿAbd al-Jabbār, *al-Mughnī*, XIII, ed. I. Madkūr and A. ʿAfīfī, Cairo 1382/1963, pp. 226-568; Mānakdīm (pseudo-ʿAbd al-Jabbār) *Sharḥ al-uṣūl al-khamsa*, ed. ʿA. ʿUthmān, Cairo 1384/1965, pp. 483-507.

⁹ *Maqālāt*, p. 253.

¹⁰ Mānakdīm, *Sharḥ*, p. 489.

¹¹ For ʿAbbād's argument see Mānakdīm, *Sharḥ*, p. 490. For the dates of his life see my art. ʿAbbād b. Salmān in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, ed. E. Yarshater, 1:1, London . . . 1982, pp. 70f.

¹² *Der Imam al-Qāsim*, pp. 117-120.

¹³ *Al-Jāmiʿ*, fol. 305b-308b.

while avoiding to express support for either controversial position and abstaining from any accusation of unbelief and from dissociation from the opposite camp. He affirmed: »The inquisition concerning the Qur'an is in our opinion a (reprehensible) innovation (*fa-inna l-miḥna 'indanā fi l-Qur'an bid'a*).«

At the extreme end of those opposed to the doctrine of the creation of the Qur'an stood the Ḥasanid 'Abd Allāh b. Mūsā b. 'Abd Allāh b. al-Ḥasan (d. 247/861)¹⁴. According to reports which al-'Alawī received from informants other than al-Murādī, he affirmed that »the Qur'an is the speech of God, it is not created (*laysa bi-makhlūq*)«, and that »anyone who asserts that the Qur'an is created is an infidel, because God, the Powerful and Exalted, says: If one of the polytheists asks your protection, grant him protection until he hears the speech of God (Qur'an IX 6).« Ibrāhīm b. Maysara asked 'Abd Allāh what he said about the Qur'an, and 'Abd Allāh answered: »The speech of God and His book.« Ibrāhīm said: »There are people among us (*'indanā*) who say that it is created and that whoever does not say it is created is an infidel.« 'Abd Allāh b. Mūsā answered: »They are more worthy of unbelief.«

Al-Murādī reported that 'Abd Allāh b. Mūsā, when questioned by him, denied that he had met anyone of his family who held that the Qur'an is created. Al-Murādī adds that 'Abd Allāh loathed discussion (*kalām*) of this and other questions which people had innovated (*aḥdatha*). According to another report, al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm wrote 'Abd Allāh b. Mūsā asking him about the Qur'an and 'Abd Allāh answered: »We are of the opinion that the discussion about the Qur'an is an innovation (*bid'a*) in which the questioner and the replier share. The questioner raises a question that he is not entitled to raise, and the replier takes upon himself what he is not obliged to undertake. Betake yourself and those who disagree about the Qur'an to its names with which God named it, and you will be among the rightly guided. Do not name the Qur'an with names made up by you, or you will be of those who deviate from the straight path concerning His names; they shall be recompensed for what they have been doing (Qur'an VII 180).«

Some of the most active partisans and *dā'īs* of 'Abd Allāh b. Mūsā were, however, backers of the doctrine of the creation of the Qur'an. Al-Murādī mentions that one of them, 'Amr b. al-Haytham al-Murādī, was a prominent follower of the earlier Zaydī theologian Sulaymān b. Jarīr and held that the Qur'an was created¹⁵. Although 'Amr strongly insisted on this doctrine (*shaddada fīh*), yet he condemned the Mu'tazilī chief *qāḍī* Ibn Abī Du'ād for his furtherance of the *miḥna* about the Qur'an saying: »May God have no mercy on Ibn Abī Du'ād. The people were united on a general sentence (*jumla*) which conveyed them to God, but he cast division between them.« Al-Murādī goes on to relate that 'Amr¹⁶ b. al-Haytham, Bishr b. al-Ḥasan, and Muḥammad b. Yahyā al-Ḥajarī were all three *dā'īs* for 'Abd Allāh b. Mūsā and were at one about the doctrine of the creation of the Qur'an. Yet 'Abd Allāh b. Mūsā sent his two sons¹⁷, or one of them, together with Bishr b. al-Ḥasan to the *amīr* Ṭāhir b. al-

¹⁴ See on him *Der Imam al-Qāsim*, index s.v.

¹⁵ Sulaymān b. Jarīr seems to have taught that the Qur'an is partly created and partly uncreated. See al-Ash'arī, *Maqālāt*, p. 586, and *Der Imam al-Qāsim*, p. 65-66.

¹⁶ Ms.: 'Umar.

¹⁷ Ibn 'Inaba, *Umdat al-tālib*, ed. M.Ḥ. al-Ṭālaqānī, Najaf 1380/1961, p. 116, mentions at least five sons of 'Abd Allāh b. Mūsā.

Ḥusayn (d. 207/822) in order to invite him to support the imamate of ‘Abd Allāh (*yad‘ūhu ilā hādihā l-amr*), although ‘Abd Allāh was aware of Bishr’s opinion on the Qur’an and Bishr knew of ‘Abd Allāh’s principle of »holding on to the general sentences (*al-qawl bi l-jumal*)«. Al-Murādī adds: »I did not see anyone of these profess dissociation (*barā’a*) from those who disagreed with him in doctrine.« When Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā al-Ḥajarī was mentioned after his death to ‘Abd Allāh, he said of him: »He was my sincerest friend among the people of Kufa.«

Potential support for the Zaydī cause could also come from the Mu‘tazila, in particular those of the school of Baghdad, who were sometimes described as the Zaydiyya of the Mu‘tazila¹⁸. Al-Murādī mentions that Muḥammad b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Iskāfī (d. 240/854), in spite of his upholding of the creation of the Qur’an, told him: »When this matter (i.e. the rising in support of the legitimate imam) occurs, we shall write on the flags: There is no god but God, Muḥammad is the Messenger of God, the Qur’an is the speech of God. By this we want¹⁹ to bring about concord and unanimity and to leave behind disagreement and division.« Al-Murādī goes on to state that he, al-Murādī, had associated with numerous chiefs of the Mu‘tazila, among them Ja‘far b. Ḥarb (d. 236/850-1), Ja‘far b. Mubashshir al-Qaṣabī (d. 234/848-9), and al-Iskāfī. None of them ever questioned him about the matters on which the people disagreed, the Qur’an and human capacity (*istiṭā’a*), or sought to uncover his opinion (*kashafūnī*) about any of this. »Abū Sahl al-Khurāsānī informed me that he was the messenger of Sahl b. Salāma²⁰, one of the eminent men and the worshippers (*‘ubbād*) of the Mu‘tazila, to ‘Abd Allāh b. Mūsā to invite him to take over this matter (the imamate) and (to assure him) that Sahl would be his helper in it (*yakūnu Sahl ‘awnan lahū ‘alayh*).«

The Ḥusaynid Aḥmad b. ‘Īsā b. Zayd, whose views al-Murādī valued most particularly, took a more uncommitted position than ‘Abd Allāh b. Mūsā concerning the nature of the Qur’an. Al-Murādī reports that he witnessed him asking God’s mercy (*yatarahḥam*) for those who held the Qur’an to be created and for those who did not. »In his view, the upholding of the general sentences (*al-akhdh bi l-jumal*) and abstaining from whatever was a source of division was praiseworthy. This was in his view meant by following the pious ancestors (*ittibā‘ al-salaf*).« ‘Alī b. Aḥmad al-Bāhili consulted Aḥmad b. ‘Īsā about the disagreement among the people about the creation of the Qur’an. Aḥmad answered that both groups were wrong in attacking each other with pronouncements of dissociation. According to al-Murādī, Aḥmad said in commenting on the discord in religion among the people: »I fear for the imam if he were to rise. If he would go out pretending to each group that they held the truth, he would be the first to cause his own damnation, and if he joined one group, he would spoil the rest for himself.« When Muḥammad b. ‘Abd Allāh b. Sulaymān wrote Aḥmad b. ‘Īsā asking him about the Qur’an and other questions disputed among the people, Aḥmad answered: »You have

¹⁸ *Der Imam al-Qāsim*, pp. 41-42, 211.

¹⁹ Reading *nurīdu*. The unpointed word could also be read *yurīdu* meaning: he (al-Iskāfī) desired.

²⁰ My thanks are due to Professor J. van Ess for suggesting that this Sahl b. Salāma may be identical with the Khurāsānian Abū Ḥātim Sahl b. Salāma al-Anṣārī mentioned by al-Ṭabarī (*Ta’rīkh*, ed. M. de Goeje and others, Leiden 1879-1901, III 1008-12, 1023-26, 1034-36) as the leader of a popular movement to suppress lawlessness in Baghdad in 201-2/816-8. On closer examination, this identity appears almost certain. I hope to discuss its implications for the history of that age elsewhere.

mentioned the disagreement of the people concerning the Qur'an, but they do not disagree that it is from God.« Al-Murādī comments that by this he wanted to point to the need of accepting the apparent meaning (*zāhir*) of the Qur'an and the general, agreed sentences (*al-jumal al-mujtama' 'alay-hā*). The followers (*rijāl*) of Aḥmad b. 'Īsā indeed disagreed in their view about the Qur'an. Among them there was Ḥasan b. Hudhayl, who adhered to the doctrine of Abu l-Jārūd, while 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Ma'mar openly professed the doctrine of the (created) Qur'an and did not conceal it. Then there was Mukhawwal b. Ibrāhīm and his like who disagreed with these²¹. Aḥmad b. 'Īsā, however, did not take the side of any of these groups.

Al-Ḥasan b. Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥusayn b. Zayd was also opposed to any theological discussion of the nature of the Qur'an and to mutual accusations of infidelity by those holding opposite views in the question. Al-Murādī states that he had been connected with al-Ḥasan b. Yaḥyā for forty years, or close to that²², and had found him associating with various kinds of pious people attached to different doctrines (*yu'āshir ḡurūban min al-mutadayyinīn al-mukhtalifīn fi l-madhāhib*). Holding on to the gist (*ma'a l-qawl fi l-jumla*) and loathing division, al-Ḥasan had never questioned anyone about his religious views nor flaunted his own. Rather he had given sincere advice to all and offered them kind companionship, and had prayed for God's mercy for all who had passed away of his ancestors and members of his family irrespective of whether he agreed or disagreed with their views. Concerning the Qur'an he said that the family of the Prophet unanimously held that God was the Creator of everything and that the Qur'an was His speech, His inspiration and His revelation (*tanzīl*) and that it should be called only by the names with which God had named it. This was also the view of the early generations of Muslims until the *kalām* theologians deviated relying on their personal reasoning (*ra'y*).

The criticism directed at the *kalām* theologians indicates that al-Ḥasan was primarily opposed to the doctrine of the creation of the Qur'an. This is confirmed by a report of Yaḥyā b. Abī 'Aṭā' al-Bazzāz, quoted by al-'Alawī with an *isnād* independent of al-Murādī, that he heard al-Ḥasan say: »It (the Qur'an) is not a created thing (*laysa bi-mahkhluq*).« This was presumably in answer to a pointed question. Al-'Alawī goes on to report: »Al-Ḥasan said according to what al-Ṣabbāḥ related from him, and that is also the doctrine of Muḥammad (b. Maṣṣūr al-Murādī) in the *Masā'il*, when both were asked about those who say the Qur'an is created or uncreated, they both said: The Qur'an is the speech of God, His inspiration, and His revelation. We say concerning this what God has said and do not go beyond it. God is the Creator of everything, the First before everything

²¹ Al-Ḥasan b. Hudhayl is mentioned as a follower of al-Ḥusayn b. 'Alī Ṣāhib Fakhkh and later as a participant in the rebellion of Abu l-Sarāyā (Abu l-Faraj al-Ṣfahānī, *Maqātil al-Ṭālibiyyīn*, ed. A. Ṣaqr, Cairo 1949, pp. 438, 441-2, 527, 543). Mukhawwal b. Ibrāhīm was a follower of Yaḥyā b. 'Abd Allāh (C. van Arendonk, *De Opkomst van het Zaidietische Imamaat in Yemen*, Leiden 1919, p. 291).

²² On the basis of the present text, my statement in *Der Imam al-Qāsim* (p. 84) that al-Murādī does not seem to have transmitted from al-Ḥasan b. Yaḥyā must be modified. It would seem that al-Murādī did not mention al-Ḥasan's doctrine in his books written during the lifetime of the latter, presumably in order to protect him from suspicion of the authorities. Al-Ḥasan b. Yaḥyā was considerably younger than Aḥmad b. 'Īsā and al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm. He is said to be the author of a book on the doctrine of al-Qāsim and Aḥmad b. 'Īsā entitled *al-Jāmi' 'alā madhhab al-Qāsim wa-Aḥmad b. 'Īsā* (M.T. Dānishpazhūh, *Do mashīkkaḥā-ye Zaydī* in *Nāma-ye Mīnovī*, Tehran 1350, p. 166).

and its Creator, and the One Remaining after everything and its Heir²³. Everything which is below (*dūna*) God is created.«

At the other extreme end, among those holding the Qur'an to be created, stood al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm. He kept this view concealed, however, and like the other Zaydī 'Alids of his time, stuck to the formulation that the Qur'an was the speech of God without qualification. Al-Murādī reported in his *Kitāb al-Jumla*: »I asked al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm about the Qur'an. He said: The speech of God, His inspiration, and His revelation. We do not go beyond this to anything else. Likewise did our ancestors.« Al-Murādī adds: »He upheld the creation of the Qur'an but concealed that (*wa-kāna yaqūlu bi-khalqī l-Qur'āni yuḍmiru dhālik*). Al-Qāsim told me: We ask those who say the Qur'an is created: Does God not know that it is created? If they say yes, they should be told²⁴: Does not God know that it is created, yet He contented Himself (*ijtaza'a*) in respect to the creation with telling them that it is rendered (*maj'ūl*, Qur'an XLIII 3)? When they say²⁵ yes, they are to be told: Then why do you not content yourselves in respect to His creation with what He was content with towards them?« Al-Murādī comments: »This was an incitation on his part to uphold the general sentences (*al-qawl bi l-jumal*) and to forego disagreement and division.«

According to a report independent of al-Murādī, Bunayn (?) b. Ibrāhīm said to al-Qāsim: »Ibn Manṣūr (al-Murādī) has told me about you that you have said: Whoever asserts that the Qur'an is created commits an innovation (*ibtada'a*).« He answered: »Yes, these are two innovations. It has not reached us that (the pious ancestors) said created or uncreated. Rather we say: The speech of God and His inspiration.« Aḥmad b. Sallām, a well-known transmitter from al-Qāsim²⁶, reported that he asked him about the Qur'an quoting to him a statement related from Zayd b. 'Alī: »We do not liken (*nushabbih*) to God anyone and we do not say of the speech of God (that it is) created.« Al-Qāsim answered: »I say likewise.«

Al-Murādī praises al-Qāsim for praying for God's mercy for his brother Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm, figurehead of a Zaydī rebellion in the region of Kufa, with whom he disagreed in theological doctrine²⁷. »I heard al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm mention his brother Muḥammad. He said: May God have mercy upon him and be pleased with him. I hope that he may have on the Day of the Resurrection a position about which he will rejoice, even though he upheld something of anthropomorphism (*'alā annahū kāna yaqūlu bi-shay'in min al-tashbīh*). Al-Murādī explains, evidently dissociating himself from this accusation: »That was in their view because he did not uphold the creation of the Qur'an (*wa-dhālika 'indahum annahū lā yaqūlu bi-khalqī l-Qur'ān*)«. In the light of al-Qāsim's own position, this is probably to be understood as meaning that Muḥammad openly backed the doctrine of the uncreated nature of the Qur'an. Al-Murādī goes on to mention that al-Qāsim prayed for mercy for his brother »innumerable times« and composed an elegy for his death which al-Murādī wrote down from him. He stresses that al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm had wide support among the 'Alids as a potential candidate for the imamate even though he held

²³ Reading *wārithuhū* for *w-rāthuhū*.

²⁴ Reading *qālū . . . lahum* for *qāla . . . lahū*.

²⁵ Omitting *lahum*.

²⁶ *Der Imam al-Qāsim*, p. 93.

²⁷ The disagreement of al-Qāsim with his brother Muḥammad is mentioned by Abu l-Faraj, *Maqātil*, p. 553, on the authority of al-Murādī. The specific point of the disagreement, however, is not given there. See *Der Imam al-Qāsim*, p. 89.

the Qur'an to be created. 'Abd Allāh b. Mūsā expressed his wish to al-Murādī that al-Qāsim would rise to claim the imamate promising that he, 'Abd Allāh, would be the first to pledge allegiance to him. 'Abd Allāh b. Mūsā added that it was said that al-Qāsim upheld the creation of the Qur'an but that he had not heard it from him.

Al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm's position in the contemporary conflict about the creation of the Qur'an thus emerges clearly. Within his strictly unitarian theology he could not admit the coeternity of the Qur'an with God. Everything aside from Him, including the Qur'an, must be created. He held, however, that the Qur'an should not be called »created«, but should be named only with designations taken from the Qur'an itself. In his writings he did not discuss the controversial question at all²⁸. In this attitude he was motivated partly by solidarity with the majority of contemporary Zaydīs and the desire of not splitting their ranks by adopting controversial formulations and partly by his veneration for the Qur'an which occupied an outstanding place in his piety and religious thought. He did not wish to associate himself in the question with the Mu'tazila and other upholders of the creation of the Qur'an and certainly had no sympathy for the *miḥna* against their opponents instituted by al-Ma'mūn and his successors.

* * *

The information provided by Abū 'Abd Allāh al-'Alawī on al-Qāsim's theological views substantially confirms the analysis of his extant authentic works²⁹. Al-Qāsim cannot be considered as essentially influenced by Mu'tazilī school doctrine and as attempting to introduce it among the Zaydiyya. He agreed with the Mu'tazila on several of their basic principles. In one of them, the affirmation of human free will, this involved a radical break with the predominant doctrinal tradition within the early Zaydiyya which espoused divine determinism. His stand in this question was clearly a matter of deep religious conviction. He was reluctant to deviate from the Zaydī tradition and had no desire to associate with the Mu'tazila. It is evident from his discussions and formulations that he tried to minimize his disagreement with the Zaydī tradition. Quite in general he attempted to avoid Mu'tazilī concepts and terminology in his theological treatises. His treatment of the divine attributes differs substantially from Mu'tazilī teaching, and he repudiated major aspects of the Mu'tazilī concept of divine justice as well as the Mu'tazilī principle of the intermediate position of the grave sinner³⁰.

Al-Qāsim saw himself, and acted, primarily as a religious leader, not as a systematic theologian. In his writings, he repeats certain basic principles and themes with great conviction while ignoring wide areas of contem-

²⁸ *Der Imam al-Qāsim*, pp. 124-125.

²⁹ I take the occasion to correct my suggestion (*Der Imam al-Qāsim*, p. 168) that al-Qāsim did not transmit the *ḥadīth* attributed to the Prophet condemning the Rāfiḍa as polytheists. Al-'Alawī quotes the *ḥadīth* on the authority of Aḥmad b. 'Isā transmitted by al-Qāsim with his family *isnād*, followed by a comment of al-Qāsim affirming that the Rāfiḍa were polytheists in various respects (*al-Jāmi'*, fol. 320a). Al-'Alawī then quotes another report of al-Qāsim about a statement of his father, Ibrāhīm b. Ismā'īl, made to him in which he severely censured the Rāfiḍa and their imams. These texts reflect the vehement anti-Imāmī sentiments of al-Qāsim (see *Der Imam al-Qāsim*, pp. 145-148).

³⁰ *Der Imam al-Qāsim*, pp. 109-114, 121-122.

porary theological interest. In his presentation, he often relies more on emotional preaching on the basis of Qur'anic texts than on cool rational argument. A few of the gaps left in his treatises, but only a few, were treated in answers to specific questions from his followers. The lack of over-all cohesion and consistency made it difficult to build a school tradition on his teaching. It was only natural that after his death his grandson Yaḥyā al-Hādī ila l-Ḥaqq led his followers to much closer association with Mu'tazilī school doctrine. Yet al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm would most likely have disapproved of this development.

This analysis must be reaffirmed in view of a different interpretation of al-Qāsim's theological teaching and its relationship to Mu'tazilī doctrine recently advanced by B. Abrahamov³¹. Abrahamov sees al-Qāsim as »influenced to a large extent by Mu'tazilism«. He bases this view on the acceptance of the authenticity of a number of treatises attributed to al-Qāsim which was contested in my book on him for a variety of reasons³². Abrahamov is aware that some of these treatises are much more definitely Mu'tazilī in their concepts, vocabulary and doctrine than the others and in some cases contradict positions upheld in these. This discrepancy is explained by him as a shift of al-Qāsim towards more outright Mu'tazilī doctrine in his later life. He does not explain why al-Qāsim, after having carefully distanced himself from the Mu'tazila and elaborated his own positions in his earlier treatises, would have abandoned these in his old age, when he had gained a wide following among the Zaydiyya, in order to write mediocre Mu'tazilī treatises in faulty Arabic.

Among the treatises accepted by Abrahamov as authentic works of al-Qāsim is the *Kitāb al-ʿAdl wa-l-tawḥīd*, in which the Qur'an, and all other scriptures of God, are expressly described as created (*makhlūq*) and those who do not affirm this are charged with denial of God and polytheism³³. Abrahamov thus concluded that al-Qāsim openly taught, like the Mu'tazila, that God does not speak, but creates His speech³⁴. The information provided by Muḥammad b. Manṣūr al-Murādī about al-Qāsim's position does not leave room for any doubt that this is not the case. It is hardly conceivable that al-Murādī, a long-time associate of al-Qāsim and the foremost authority of his age on the doctrine of the Zaydī 'Alids, would not have been aware if al-Qāsim had affirmed the creation of the Qur'an in one of his writings or that he would have chosen to ignore it. The *Kitāb al-ʿAdl wa-l-tawḥīd*, which is arranged according to, and backs, the five basic principles of the Mu'tazila rather than those elaborated by al-Qāsim, is no work of his. It was erroneously attributed to him at a time when the Zaydīs had adopted Mu'tazilī theology in every respect except for the doctrine of the imamate and was only then included in the collection (*majmūʿ*) of his treatises³⁵.

Here is not the place to discuss Abrahamov's arguments for the authenticity of al-Qāsim's other disputed treatises. Suffice it to say that the case

³¹ See his dissertation *The Theological Epistles of al-Qāsim Ibn Ibrāhīm* (in Hebrew), Tel-Aviv University 1981; »Al-Qāsim Ibn Ibrāhīm's Argument from Design« in *Oriens* 29-30 (1986), pp. 259-284; »Al-Qāsim Ibn Ibrāhīm's Theory of the Imamate« in *Arabica* XXXIV (1987), pp. 80-105.

³² Abrahamov considers all treatises ascribed to al-Qāsim as authentic with the exception of the *Kitāb al-Kāmil al-munīr*. *Arabica* XXXIV, p. 84.

³³ See the edition of the text in *Rasāʾil al-ʿadl wa-l-tawḥīd*, ed. Muḥammad ʿImāra, I, Cairo 1971, pp. 109, 111.

³⁴ *The Theological Epistles*, Engl. Abstract, p. VII.

³⁵ *Der Imam al-Qāsim*, p. 97.

for the authenticity of each one of them is hardly more convincing than that for the *Kitāb al-ʿAdl wa-l-tawḥīd*. For all that is known, al-Qāsim remained in his later life as reserved towards Muʿtazilism as he had ever been.