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ÖZET

MÂTÜRİDÎ ve EŞ'ARÎ KELÂMINDA KADER

Yâsir Kâdi

Yale Üniversitesi / ABD

Ebû Mansûr Muhammed b. Muhammed es-Semerkindî el-Mâtürîdî (ö. 333/944) tarafından kurulan Mâtürîdî kelâm ekolü, çağdaş İslâm'ın en popüler kelâm hareketlerinden biridir. Bu ekol, bir çokları tarafından Eş'arî ekolü ile birlikte Sünni geleneğin ana destekçilerinden biri olarak kabul edilmektedir.

Bu tebliğ, Ebû Mansûr Mâtürîdî'nin kader anlayışı ve onunla ilgili konuları ele almaktadır. Kendi dönemindeki diğer görüşlerle birlikte İmâm Mâtürîdî'nin görüşleri ele alınacak ve onun irâde hürriyetini savunurken (Mu'tezile'nin aksine) nasıl "Ehl-i sünnet" çizgisinde kalmaya çalıştığı anlatılacaktır.

Bu bağlamda şu konular üzerinde durulacaktır: İlâhî hikmet ve sebepler, iyi ve kötü hakkında hüküm vermede aklın rolü, sebeplilik, istitaat fiilden önce mi? Fiille beraber mi?, Teklîf mâ lâ yutâk câiz mi? değil mi? Zulm-i ilâhînin gerçek anlamı? İlâhî irâde ve bunun Allah'ın rızâsıyla alâkası. Bu konuların doğrudan birbiriyle alâkalı oldukları gösterilecek ve buradan hareketle İmâm Mâtürîdî'nin kader anlayışının ortaya konulmasına çalışılacaktır.

Tebliğde ayrıca kader konusunun Eş'arî ve Mâtürîdî kelâmı arasındaki temel farklılıklardan biri olduğuna da işaret edilecektir.

**QADAR BETWEEN ABŪ MANŞŪR AL-MĀTURĪDĪ (D. 333/944)
AND ABŪ AL-ḤASAN AL-ASH'ARĪ (324/935)**

Yasir Qadhi

Yale University / USA

Introduction

Like other religions, Islam has its fair share of controversies in all issues of faith, especially that of pre-destination (qadr). From the early proponents of Free-Will (the Qadarites), to the Mu'tazilites, the Mâtürîdites, the Ḥanbalites, the

Ash'arites, and the Fatalists (Jabariyya), Muslim sects represented themselves adequately in all colors of the spectrum of Fate. Issues such as God's foreknowledge of man's deeds (al-'ilm al-ilāhī), the writing of all events in the 'Preserved Tablet' (al-kitāba), the creation of man's deeds (khalq af'āl al-'ibād), and the execution of the Divine Will (al-irāda al-ilāhiyya) are of primary and immediate concern to each group's stance on qadr. However, there are other, less apparent yet equally important, theological issues that Islamic sects have differed in, and which also played a profound role in their respective positions, and it is essential that these 'secondary' issues are understood in order to fully appreciate each group's position on qadr. In this research paper I will discuss some of the more important of these 'secondary' concepts.⁴⁴³ The methodology is comparative: I intentionally wish to highlight the four primary trends that proved to be the most popular, which are, firstly the Ash'arite position, secondly the Mu'tazilite position, thirdly the Ahl al-Ḥadīth position (typically championed by Ibn Taymiyya)⁴⁴⁴, and last the Māturīdite position.

Brief Overview of the Respective Positions on Qadr

A simple recap is in order before jumping into the topic at hand. The Mu'tazilites held the position that man is in complete control of his actions, and in fact creates them himself God has no role in this regard. The Ash'arite position, in direct contradistinction to the previous one, revolved around their unique concept of kasb, in which God directly created the action of man, but man 'acquires' (yaksibu) the reward or sin of it.

The Māturīdite position sought a middle position between these two, claiming that the essence of the action was by the power of Allah, but its characterization of being an act of worship or sin is by the power of man. Al-Māturīdī differentiated between the two terms qaḍā and qadr. Qaḍā means *به يدين ما على والقطع بالشيء الحكم* 'the verdict on a matter and the certainty of how it should be', and it also has the connotation of ruling in the sense of judgment. Qadr, on the other hand means 'to

443 The issues discussed in this paper are not exhaustive; there are at least ten such 'secondary' issues, if not more. Due to the scope and purpose of this paper, seven issues were chosen. It should also be pointed out that some of these issues are inter-dependant on each other. For example, the ability of the intellect to discern good from evil is directly related to each group's position on whether God does an act for a purpose or not.

444 Although Ibn Taymiyya of course does not represent all of Ahl al-Ḥadīth thought, he was chosen as a primary representative due to the status that he occupies and the copious writings that exist of his that discuss these issues.

make something upon what it is of good or evil, or beauty or ugliness, or truth or falsehood.' Hence in the famous tradition of Gabriel the angel was told that a part of belief is to believe in '...qadr, its good and its bad'. Qadr also means to bring about an act in a specific time and place, and related to a reward or punishment.⁴⁴⁵

Al-Mâtūrîdî and his followers ascribed the creation of all actions to God, and in this they dissociated themselves from the Mu'tazilites. Basing this on verses such as Zümür: 62, 'God is the creator of everything,' and also Şâfât: 96, 'God has created you and your actions,' they denied that man himself could be called a 'creator'.⁴⁴⁶ In this aspect, they agreed with Ash'arites. However, it is in the 'secondary' issues of predestination where their originality and uniqueness is demonstrated.

Al-Mâtūrîdî was clearly conscious of the theological scene of his time, and his views on qadr did not emerge in a vacuum. Already, the Mu'tazilites and Jahmites had garnered support and generated controversy for their opposing positions, and the Ahl al-Ḥadîth were struggling to define their own 'orthodoxy'. In this milieu, al-Mâtūrîdî critiqued the other positions as being too extreme, and explicitly stated that he wished to follow a 'middle path' between the excesses of the Mu'tazilites and the extremes of the Murjîites, for God had praised this nation for being one of 'moderation' (as in 2: 143).⁴⁴⁷

The 'Secondary Issues' of Qadr

In this section, seven specific issues that dovetail perfectly with each group's conception of qadr will be mentioned. It will be seen that each group posited a very sophisticated understanding of qadr, in tandem with key theological positions regarding other factors.

The Intellect and Its Role in Deciding Good and Evil

The issue of taḥsîn wa taqbîh al-'aql plays an integral part in each group's stance on qadr, because it directly determines whether man is capable of judging God's actions and if they are just or not.

445 *Kitâb al-Tawḥîd*, p. 306-7. Also see: Pessagno, J. Meric, "The Uses of Evil in Mâtūrîdîan Thought," *Studia Islamica*, No. 60 (1984), p. 69-70; Cerić, Mustafa, *Roots of Synthetic Theology in Islam* (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1995), p. 212-3.

446 *Kitâb al-Tawḥîd*, p. 254; al-Bazdawî, *Uşûl al-Dîn*, p. 99-102.

447 *Kitâb al-Tawḥîd*, p. 318.

Abū al-Ḥasan Al-Ash'arī laid the foundations for Ash'arite thought when he wrote that there is unanimous agreement that evil is that which God has prohibited upon the creation, and good is that which He has commanded them to do.⁴⁴⁸

Therefore, according to him, no act is inherently good or evil; rather whatever God commands becomes good, and whatever He prohibits becomes evil. The intellect has absolutely no role in this regard. Later Ash'arite authorities concurred. According to Abd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī, no act could be described as an act of obedience or sin until the Revelation had described it as such. Therefore, were the Legislator to prohibit that which is permitted, or permit that which is prohibited, this would be permissible.⁴⁴⁹ And al-Ījī writes, "The abhorrent is what the Law prohibits, and good is the opposite. The intellect plays no role in deciding good from evil. So there is no inherent characteristic of an act that the Law then comes to reveal, rather it is the Law that decides and differentiates (good from evil). And were it to reverse the two, and declare pure that which it has declared abhorrent, and declare abhorrent that which it has declared to be pure, that would not be impossible."⁴⁵⁰

This view fitted in perfectly with the Ash'arite position on qadr, for if they were asked, "Why does God reward one who does good or punish the evildoer when, according to you, he himself does not actually 'do' anything, but rather 'acquires' (yaksibu) that deed?" they could reply, "In actuality, there is nothing which is 'good' or 'evil' in the first place! Therefore, God does not punish or reward based upon any deed. So God's rewards are a gift from him, and His punishment an indication of his Justice, and nothing is required or obligatory on God."⁴⁵¹ Additionally, there is a broader attitude which comes about as a direct outcome of this issue, and that is that man simply does not have the capability to judge what is 'right' or 'wrong'. Therefore, it is not possible to claim that man's being deprived of free-will and then subsequently being punished for his 'actions' is inherently evil.

The Mu'tazilites, as it to be expected, took the exactly opposite view. According to them, each act must by necessity be characterized as praiseworthy, blameworthy, or permissible (in which case it would neither be worthy of praise

448 In his *Risāla ilā ahl al-thaghr* p. 74.

449 In his *Usūl al-Dīn*, p. 149.

450 In his *al-Mawāqif* p. 323.

451 See, for example, al-Bāqillānī's description of this in his *al-Inṣāf* p. 48. Also, it should be noted that the issue of al-asbāb wa al-ṭabā'i, to be discussed below, plays a crucial role in this position and outcome.

or blame). The Law only confirms what the intellect has already decided; it does not play any extra role in this decision.⁴⁵²

This, of course, corresponds to their view of qadr and man's accountability. Regarding qadr, the Mu'tazilites claim that intellect decrees that were God to command man to do something and then prevent him from doing so through Divine Will, this would be the height of injustice. Likewise, were He to prohibit him from an evil, and then Will him to do it and punish him for that evil, this too would be an act of injustice. Therefore, God cannot be the creator of man's deeds.

Regarding man's accountability, according to the Mu'tazilites even if a person did not hear the message of the prophets he would be held accountable and sinful for not believing in God. This is due to the fact that the intellect is capable of differentiating good from evil, hence there is no need for Divine Guidance in this issue.⁴⁵³ Thus, for the Mu'tazilites, the intellect was the ultimate criterion between good and evil; the Law merely served as a corroborating proof, or perhaps helped in clarifying the finer details of some peripheral acts of worship.

On the Ahl al-Ḥadīth side, Ibn Taymiyya agreed with the Mu'tazilites in their general premise that the intellect is capable of differentiating good from evil, but disagreed with them in two issues. Firstly, he disagreed with their claim that each and every deed could be characterized by the intellect as being good or evil; according to Ibn Taymiyya, acts that clearly resulted in apparent good, or caused apparent evil, could be judged by the intellect. Therefore, for example, it may be deduced that justice is praiseworthy, and tyranny and oppression blameworthy, even if the Divine Law has not been revealed stating so. However, there are other acts that the Law has commanded or prohibited but for which no apparent wisdom can be discerned; and it is also possible that the Law-giver commands a deed in order to test the obedience of the faithful, and not so that they actually implement such a deed (such as the command to Abraham to sacrifice Ishmael).⁴⁵⁴ Secondly, Ibn Taymiyyah disagreed with the Mu'tazilite premise that man is held accountable before the sending of prophets and messengers. Even if the intellect

452 See al-Qādī 'Abd al-Jabbār. *al-Mughnī fī Abwāb at-Tawḥīd wa al-'Adl*, VI/26, 30-34. Also, it should be borne in mind that the Mu'tazilite authorities differed amongst themselves on some of the finer details of this issue. In particular, is an act inherently good or evil, or is it due to external consequences that such a description can be made? The former view is held by the Baghdadian authorities, while the Basrites held the latter view. See 'Abd al-Karīm Uthmān, *Naẓariya al-Taklīf*, p. 439.

453 See *al-Mukhtaṣar fī Uṣūl al-Dīn* by al-Qādī 'Abd al-Jabbār vol. II, p. 17.

454 *Majmū' al-Fatāwā* (ed. Qāsim) 8/434-436; also see vol IV, p. 436.

can judge good from evil, according to Ibn Taymiyyah God will not punish any individual until the evidence has been established against him by the sending of the Messengers.⁴⁵⁵

The Māturīdite position was similar to the Mu'tazilite, but with an added caveat. The majority of them⁴⁵⁶ affirmed that the intellect can decide right and wrong, and good and evil, but only in the broad matters of faith, such as the existence of God, and His right to be worshipped, and the Resurrection. As for the specific rulings of the Law, they claimed that not all such commands could be understood via intellect.

In this respect, their position was very similar to that of the Ahl al-Ḥadīth, and it could be argued that Ibn Taymiyya adopted and modified the Māturīdite position.

II. Divine Wisdom and Purpose in God's Actions

Does every act of God have a purpose ('illa) and Divine Wisdom (ḥikmah), or is it possible that God acts without any reason? This is a crucial question if one wishes to understand each group's stance on qadr. For if it is claimed that every act of God's is a perfectly wise act, then how is it possible that God forces man to sin and then punishes him for that sin? If God always acts for a just cause, then it is only fair that a sinner be punished for his sin, and not for a sin God forced him to do. On the other hand, if God's actions have no ulterior motive or divine purpose, then it is futile to try to presume any wisdom in why God would force a man to do a sin without giving him any free-will and then punish him for that sin. If God's actions are not characterized by any reason, He is free to do as He pleases.⁴⁵⁷

Based on this premise, the Mu'tazilites stated that it is not possible for God to do any act without a reason, and that such a reason must be just and wise, and apparent to all people of intellect. The Ash'arites, on the other hand, claimed the exact opposite, and stated that God does not do any act for any purpose. God, according to them, does not and cannot have any reasons for doing an act, for to do an act with a goal in mind is inherently human.

455 *Majmū' al-Fatāwā* (ed. Qāsim) IV/193, and especially XI/676-684, where discusses this issue in quite some detail.

456 Ibn al-Humām in his *al-Musāyara*, p. 154, mentions that the scholars of Bukhara did not agree with the rest of the Māturīdites in this regard.

457 It is apparent that this issue is inherently related to the preceding one: those who affirmed the role of the intellect in defining good from evil ipso facto affirmed that God acts with a Divine Wisdom (for if this were not the case, and God acted without any wisdom, there would be no good to discern from evil?), and vice versa.

Writes the Mu‘tazilite al-Qāḍī ‘Abd al-Jabbār, “God, Exalted be He, created the creation for a purpose. By this we intend that there is a wisdom due to which it was commendable that He created the creation.”⁴⁵⁸ According to him, each and every act of God’s is characterized with justice, for everything that He does is either done in order to benefit (the righteous) or harm (the impious).⁴⁵⁹

Therefore, to the Mu‘tazilites, all of God’s actions have a reason and purpose, and this reason and purpose relates to man, not to God Himself.

The Ash‘arites denied both of these premises. Al-Shahrastānī states that the belief of the ‘People of Truth’ is that God created everything for absolutely no reason or cause, for there is no cause that can drive God to do anything. Rather, according to him, the reason for the creation of an object is the creation of that object, and there is no other reason for its creation.⁴⁶⁰ And Al-Ijī posits that the Ash‘arites all believe that ‘...God’s actions cannot be stated to have any cause or purpose.’⁴⁶¹

A more modern Ash‘arite scholar explained the relationship between this issue and that of qadr by stating that, due to the fact that God does not act with a purpose and cannot be questioned for His deeds, it is not obligatory on God to reward a pious man for his piety, nor is it necessary that a sinner be punished for his sin. And were God to punish a righteous man or reward a sinner, that would be a commendable act from Him and no injustice would have been done.⁴⁶² So for the Ash‘arites, God acts as He pleases, and does as He wills, without having a final cause or an external motive for His acts.

Ibn Taymiyyah, as typical, disagreed with both the Mu‘tazilites and Ash‘arites on this issue, even as he sided more with the Mu‘tazilites. He very strongly condemned those who denied God’s wisdom and purpose. According to him, God did not do any deed except with an absolute wisdom and the most noble of purposes. God does not act in vain, and Ibn Taymiyyah quotes verses of the Quran to make his point. According to Ibn Taymiyyah, the proofs for this position are so self-evident that they simply do not require to be detailed, for the statements of God and His messenger are replete with this fact.⁴⁶³ Such wisdoms and purposes,

458 *al-Mughnī*, XI/92-93.

459 *Ibid.* 6/48.

460 In his *Nihāyat al-Aqdām* p. 397.

461 In his *al-Mawāqif*, p. 331.

462 Al-Bayjūrī in his *Sharh Jawharat at-Tawhīd*, p. 180. Note that he merges this issue with that of the precise meaning of dhulm, which is the next issue in this paper (see the following page).

463 Ibn Taymiyyah’s primary student, Ibn al-Qayyim, wrote an entire work based on this topic, and mentioned twenty-two categories of evidences from the Quran, each one of which could

according to Ibn Taymiyyah, precede the actual act in God's Knowledge and Will, but do not actually come into existence until after the act has been executed by God.⁴⁶⁴ However, Ibn Taymiyyah pointed out that this did not imply that man was incapable of understanding the wisdom behind each and every Divine act. According to him, the wisdom of any act was two-fold: firstly, a wisdom that relates to God Himself, and because of which He loves the act and is pleased with it, and secondly, a wisdom that relates to man, and because of which it is in their best interest to comply with God's commands.⁴⁶⁵

This last point is the decisive factor that separates Ibn Taymiyyah's position with that of the Mu'tazilites. The Mu'tazilites claimed that man was capable of understanding the wisdom behind each and every Divine Act, and they further believed that the wisdom of any act was related to man only. According to them, God's acts were all based on a wisdom associated with man only, whereas according to Ibn Taymiyyah, God's acts and decrees also comprised of wisdoms related to Him, and which man might not understand.

The Māturīdites in this regard seemed to side with Mu'tazilite doctrine, but with some modification. For al-Māturīdī, '...it is inconceivable that the cosmos is based on anything other than wisdom, or that it is created for no purpose ('abathan).'⁴⁶⁶ Al-Taftazānī also claimed that some of God's Divine actions, and in particular God's Law, are clearly characterized with wisdom and worldly benefit; in fact, he points out, it is only based upon such wisdom that the very tool of qiyās can be effective!⁴⁶⁷ Additionally, they claimed that even if wisdom could be derived from some commandments of God, this does not necessitate any legal obligation upon God; hence the fact that God rewards the righteous and punishes the evil is not something that is obligatory upon Him (in contrast to Mu'tazilite belief), but rather His reward is purely His generosity and His punishment is purely His decree.⁴⁶⁸

Once again, in this issue one notices that the Ahl al-Ḥadīth and Māturīdite position are far more similar to each other than the positions of either the Ash'arites or the Mu'tazilites.

be illustrated with dozens if not hundreds of verses, which, according to him, proved '...that it is simply not possible that He does any act without some wisdom or purpose.' See Ibn al-Qayyim's *Shifā al-'Alīl fī Masā'il al-Qadr wa al-ḥikmah wa al-Ta'līl*, II/87-127.

464 *Minhāj as-Sunnah* 1/141, and also 1/44.

465 See *Majmū' al-Fatāwā* (ed. Qāsim), VIII/514, and VIII/35-39.

466 *Kitāb al-Tawhīd*, p. 4. Also see: Pessagno, op. cit., p. 67.

467 Al-Damanhūrī, *Tanzīh Allah 'an al-agrād*, p. 26.

468 *Al-Musāmara bi-sharḥ al-musāyara*, p. 155.

III. The Meaning of Divine Injustice

All Muslim sects unanimously agreed that God can never be described as unjust (zâlim). They based this stance on explicit verses of the Quran (for example: 3:117 and 182, 4:40, 10:44, 18:49 and a host of others), and on intellect, for God must by necessity be described with the most perfect of all attributes and be free of all evil, else He would not be a true God.

However, they differed regarding the precise understanding of this negation. Specifically, was it even possible for God to be unjust, or was this negation merely a description that stated no act of God's could be described as unjust? The Ash'arites held the view that no act of God's could be unjust, regardless of what He did. For them, zulm was defined to be, '...acting such that another's property or right is violated. Yet, it is not possible for God to act in such a way,'⁴⁶⁹ for all creation belongs to God, and there is none who has the right to command Him. Therefore, no matter what God does, He would not be disobeying any command, nor would He be violating another's property. Al-Ash'arî stated that God's actions cannot be considered unjust, regardless of what He does; even if God were to punish infants in the Hereafter, or reward a sinner or punish a devout worshipper, all of this would be considered justice. The only reason He would not do so, according to al-Ash'arî, is that He has informed us in His Book about His actions. Otherwise, had it not been for His own testimony, all of these acts could theoretically be performed by God, and they would not be considered injustice on His part.⁴⁷⁰

This opinion of course coincided with their position on qadr, for if the proponents of Free-will were to charge them with ascribing zulm to God (by commanding man to do one thing and then depriving him of any free will to act how he pleases), they would be able to retort, 'No act of God's can possibly be described as unjust, for all creation belongs to Him and He may do with them as He pleases.'⁴⁷¹

As for the Mu'tazilites, they considered zulm to be '...every harm that contained no (inherent) benefit nor repelled (another) harm.'⁴⁷² Therefore, according to them, it was indeed possible in a theoretical sense that God commit an injustice,

469 Ghazâlî in his *al-Iqtisâd fi al-'itiqâd*, p. 115.

470 Al-Ash'arî in his *al-Luma'*, p. 116.

471 29 The relationship between the definition of zulm to that of qadr is amply illustrated by al-Bâqillânî. In a defense of the Ash'arites against the charge of the Mu'tazilites that they ascribe zulm to their Lord by claiming that He creates man's deeds and then punishes them for these deeds, he resorts to clarifying the proper meaning of zulm, thus denying that God can ever be unjust. See: *at-Tamhîd*, p. 348.

472 Al-Qâḍî 'Abd al-Jabbâr, *Sharḥ Uṣûl al-Khamsah*, p. 345.

but since God is worthy of all praise and free of any abhorrent act, He has negated *zulm* from Himself. So for the Mu'tazilites, God would not commit an act that could be categorized as unjust, even though He is capable of doing so.⁴⁷³

Based on this interpretation of God's injustice, they then tied this in to their position on *qadr* and stated that if God commanded man to do a good deed, and then prevented them from doing so through His Divine Will, that would be the height of injustice.

From the Ahl al-Ḥadīth side, Ibn Taymiyya in this issue partially sided with the Mu'tazilites, and agreed that God is indeed capable of injustice, but differed with them in their conclusion. According to Ibn Taymiyyah, linguistically *zulm* is defined to be, '...placing something in an place that is inappropriate for it.'⁴⁷⁴ Therefore, according to him, the injustice that God would not do is to hold accountable a person for another's sins, or to reward another for one's own good deeds.⁴⁷⁵ However, creating man's actions, and specifying His help to the people of faith in their worship of Him is not considered injustice at all, and this is the unanimous consensus of Ahl as-Sunnah and all those who affirm *qadr*, from all the different sects.

The Māturidites, in this issue appeared to side with the Ash'arites in claiming that no action of God could be characterized as unjust.⁴⁷⁶

IV. Burdening Man With More Than He Can Bear

Can God oblige man to do the impossible? Or can He require of him acts beyond his capability? The issue of *at-taklīf bi mā lā yuṭāq* plays an integral role in each group's stance on *qadr*, for obvious reasons. Those who denied free-will claimed that God could require of man matters which they are not capable of doing; for does not God command them to believe and at the same time force them to do otherwise? Hence, according to the Fatalists, He is requiring of them something that is impossible for them to do. On the other hand, those who asserted man's complete free-will claimed that God would never burden a soul with more than it could bear, for to do so would be injustice on His part.

473 See also Al-Qāḍī 'Abd al-Jabbār, *al-Mughnī*, VI/127.

474 See his *Jāmi' ar-Rasā'il* (1/124). For the linguistic meaning of *dhulm*, see Jawhari's *Si'at* 5/1977 and Ibn Mandhur's *Lisān*, XII/373.

475 See his *Minhāj as-Sunnah* 1/90; also vol 2, p. 309-311.

476 Al-Māturīdi, in his *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*, p. 132, criticized the Mu'tazilites for this belief, which shows that he held a contrary position.

The founder of extreme fatalism, Jahm b. Safwan, naturally claimed that it was perfectly permissible for God to require impossible acts of man. Therefore, according to him, God could demand vision from a blind man and He could demand an invalid to walk to Makkah.⁴⁷⁷

The Ash'arites agreed with Jahm in principle, although some later scholars tried to modify the group's stance on it. Al-Ash'arî stated that God was indeed capable of burdening a man with more than he could bear. A perfect example of this, according to him, was the case of the Prophet's paternal uncle Abū Lahab. This is because God required him, along with all other unbelievers, to accept Islam, and the acceptance of Islam naturally entailed the acceptance of all the verses of the Quran. But, unfortunately for him, God had revealed an entire chapter in the Quran (Sūrah 111) about him, in which He stated that Abū Lahab and his wife would be of the permanent denizens of the Fire of Hell. The obvious assumption was that Abū Lahab would never accept Islam. Therefore, according to al-Ash'arî, '... if this is the case, God required Abu Lahab to do something it was not possible for him to do, for He commanded him to believe and have faith (īmān), yet part of that belief was that he would never believe!'⁴⁷⁸ Al-Ghazālî stated, "It is perfectly acceptable for God to require them (i.e., men) to do (acts) which they are capable of doing, and (acts) which they are not capable of doing,"⁴⁷⁹ and his teacher al-Juwaynî expressed similar sentiments.⁴⁸⁰

Not surprisingly, the Mu'tazilites took the exact opposite view, and unconditionally prohibited at-taklîf bi mā lā yuṭāq. In fact, to claim otherwise, according to al-Qāḍî Abd al-Jabbār, "...entails leaving the fold of Islam, and abandoning the religion...for every single person of intellect knows that to command a blind person to write the dots of a mushaf correctly, and to require an invalid to walk, is abhorrent."⁴⁸¹ If it were deemed by the intellect to be abhorrent, how could God Himself be characterized by it? For the Mu'tazilites, were God to command man to believe, and then reward or punish him based on his acts, He must as a manifestation of His Divine Justice give him all the tools necessary to obey Him (such as free will) and remove all impediments that come between them and such obedience (such as His own Divine Will being imposed on man).

477 *Majmū' al-Fatāwā* (ed. Qāsim) 8/297. Also see 19/216 where he quotes the opinion of the Jahmiyyah on this issue.

478 *Al-Ibānah 'an Uṣūl ad-Diyānah*, p. 78.

479 *Al-Iqtisād*, p. 112. He also went into more detail in this issue in his *al-Mustasfa* (1/162-174) and claimed that this opinion was necessitated by al-Ash'arî's stance in qadr.

480 *Al-Irshād*, p. 203.

481 *Sharḥ Uṣūl al-Khamsah*, p. 396.

Ibn Taymiyya, on the other hand claimed that the issue of ‘burdening a man with more than he can bear’ was an innovation that the early authorities of Islam did devle into, and they all unanimously agreed that to unconditionally claim such a matter was impermissible.⁴⁸² This was because the Quran explicitly stated the contrary, such as the verse: ‘God does not burden a soul with more than it can bear’ (65: 7). However, according to Ibn Taymiyya, later scholars were forced to divide this issue into two broad categories, only one of which was permitted, and this was the opinion that Ibn Taymiyyah preferred.

The first of these two categories was the burdening of a soul with something that it was not physically capable of doing, or with something that was impossible. An example of the first would be to request a man to fly in the air, and an example of the second would be to make a created matter uncreated. To burden a person with something of this nature, according to Ibn Taymiyyah, is simply not possible, either rationally or according to the Law. The second category was the burdening of a person with something that he could not do, not because of its inherent impossibility, but rather because he was involved with something else at the same time that prevented him from doing what was required. For example, the Law requires an unbeliever to accept Islam and have faith (īmān) while he is an unbeliever, yet because such a person is an unbeliever at a given time, he will not be classified as a believer at that time even though the Law requires it of him. Therefore, in this case, the Law-Giver has required of him an act that he cannot do, not because of its inherent impossibility or unfeasibility, but rather because he is busy in its opposite. According to Ibn Taymiyyah, although such an instance suggests the possibility of ‘burdening a soul with more than it can bear’, the scholars of the early generations refused to describe it as such in order that it not be confused with the first category, and because of the Quranic verses on this topic.⁴⁸³

In this issue, the Matūrīdites sided with the Mu‘tazilites. Al-Māturīdī writes, “The general principle is that burdening someone who does not have the power [to perform it] is contrary to reason.”⁴⁸⁴ And Ibn al-Humām claimed that there was unanimous consensus amongst them regarding this issue.⁴⁸⁵

482 Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar’ al-Ta’arūf*, vol. 1, p. 65.

483 *Majmū’ al-Fatāwā* (ed. Qāsīm), VIII/294-302.

484 *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*, p. 266.

485 Ibn al-Humām, *al-Musāyarah*, p. 156.

V. Man's Capabilty (al-istiṭā'ah)

Does man have independent power to act (istiṭā'ah), and if so, when does it occur? Once again, this issue dovetailed perfectly with each group's stance on qadr. For the pure Fatalists who denied free-will, man had no power to act whatsoever, neither before nor during the act.⁴⁸⁶ The Mu'tazilites, on the other hand, believed that man's power to act occurred before the actual act itself, and was a direct cause of it. To claim otherwise, said 'Abd al-Jabbār, was to place on man a burden that he cannot bear.⁴⁸⁷

The Ash'arites held the opposing view, and claimed that man's power to act must be concurrent with the act itself. Al-Bāqillānī states that it is not possible for istiṭā'ah to exist before the act itself, but only with it.⁴⁸⁸ As discussed previously, the Ash'arites believed that this 'capacity' did not itself have any effect on the act. Also, this viewpoint fitted perfectly with their perception of 'accidents' and the claim that accidents do not subsist for two subsequent points in time, and it also agreed with their denial of causality. Both of these views were problematic for the opposing sides, and each side pointed out the weaknesses of the other. The Ash'arite view was critiqued with the claim that it would be impossible of God to require a man to do something when he didn't have the capacity (istiṭā'ah) to do it. On the other hand, the Mu'tazilite position was critiqued by claiming that it seemed to eliminate the power needed to actually do an act.

Perhaps intending to preempt a response, the Māturidites they came forth with a unique solution. Al-Maturīdī categorized istiṭā'ah as being of two types: the first being before the act, and indicating the capacity of man to do something (for example, being sane and of age and capable of physical activity), and the second being the actual power needed to perform the act, and hence concurrent with it. He finds *Qur'ānic* evidences for his position; for example, in 3:97 God obligates the pilgrimage upon those '...istaṭā'ah ilayhī sabīla,' meaning that they have the capacity to do it. Here, al-Māturīdī expounds, God clearly indicated that they have the physical energy and money needed, and this of course exists before the actual pilgrimage. On the other hand, in 18: 67, Moses is chided by Khidr for his constant inquisitiveness because '...innaka lan tastaṭī'a ma'ī ṣabra,' or he did not have the capacity to be patient, meaning during the time of Khidr's strange actions.⁴⁸⁹

486 Al-Ash'arī, *Maqālāt*, v.1 p. 312; al-Baghdādī, *al-Farq*, p. 128.

487 Al-Qādī 'Abd al-Jabbār, *Sharḥ Uṣūl al-Khamsa*, p. 390-1.

488 *Al-Tamhīd*, p. 323-4.

489 *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*, p. 256-7.

The later Ḥanbalite Ibn Taymiyya completely agreed with this view and defended it vigorously in his writings. He writes, “The clear position is that istiṭā’ah occurs with two meanings in the Book of God: the istiṭā’ah that acts as a precondition to an action, and upon it God’s commands and prohibitions are based ...and the istiṭā’ah that the action happens as a result of, or it can be said that it accompanies the action and necessitates it.”⁴⁹⁰

Once again, there appears to be an uncanny similarity between the views of the Māturīdites and some of the Ahl al-Ḥadīth.

VI. Causality

The issue of al-asbāb wa-l-ṭabā’i is one that is directly related to qadr. Does a substance possess inherently the capacity to cause changes in other substances? Does a fire intrinsically burn dry cotton? Does a rock have the strength to break a window it is thrown into? The Ash’arites, as is well known, denied causality completely, and affirmed God’s perpetual habit (‘āda) as being the link between perceived ‘cause’ and ‘effect’. What man perceives as ‘permanent’ is merely God’s habit (‘ādah) manifesting itself, at each successive instant. Contingent events, which man perceives as having been subject to natural physical causes, are in fact the direct result of God’s constant intervention.⁴⁹¹

The Mu‘tazilite position was not as uniform as the Ash’arite one (in particular the eccentric views of al-Nazzām and Ma’mar), but by and large it can be said that they did affirm causality and inherent ‘natures’.⁴⁹²

The Māturīdites, on the other hand, brought forth a modified position; while they affirmed causal relationships, they attributed the actual creation to God, and not to an intermediary. Al-Nasafī stated that according to the Māturīdites, medicine does cause healing, but the actual healing is from God, just as wearing clothes protects one from heat and cold, but the actual protector is God Himself.⁴⁹³ This was precisely the position of the later Ahl al-Ḥadīth as well.⁴⁹⁴

490 *Majmū al-Fatāwa*, v. 8, p. 290.

491 See al-Ghazālī’s Seventeenth Discussion in his *Incoherence* (tr. Marmura), p. 171-3.

492 Harry Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalām*, p. 559-562, 647-9.

493 *Bahr al-kalām*, p. 360.

494 Ibn al-Qayyim, in his *Shifā al-’alīl fī masā’il al-qaḍā wa-l-qadr*, vol. I, p. 82-87, mentions this in detail with his evidences from Scripture.

VII. The Interpretation of Kasb

One of the most striking features of both the Ash'arite and Mâtürîdite creeds, despite their great differences in this issue, is their reliance on the term 'kasb' to explain the reality of qadr in man. While both groups emphasized that God created man's actions and man only acquired (kasb) it, they differed about the precise definition of the term. For the Ash'arites, kasb meant that man 'acquired' the consequence of the action despite the fact that his own will (irâda) and power (qudra) had no effect on the action itself; rather, man's action was created by God and brought into existence by Him with no input from man.⁴⁹⁵ This definition of kasb was severely criticized by both the Mu'tazilites⁴⁹⁶ and the Ahl al-Ḥadîth.⁴⁹⁷

The Mâtürîdite definition, on the other hand, allowed man a partial power in deciding the nature of the act, but not in its creation, and it was this partial power because of which man deserved punishment or reward. For the Mâtürîdites, the basis of any action is purely from the power of God, but its characterization as an act of worship or disobedience is from the power of man, and it is this characterization that allows man to acquire (yaksib) his deeds.⁴⁹⁸

Conclusion

It can be seen that each one of these 'secondary issues' of qadr plays a crucial role, and fits in perfectly, with the stance that each group takes in qadr. For the Mu'tazilites, if God demands obedience from man yet simultaneously creates his actions, He would be burdening him with more than he can bear. It would also be the height of injustice, and contradict Divine Wisdom. All of this is clear and incontrovertible, according to them, because the intellect is capable of deciding what is praiseworthy and what is not. Also, man has the power to act independently, before the act itself, and therefore it is fair and just of God to demand specific actions from man.

For the Ash'arites, since the intellect plays no role in deciding good from evil, one cannot judge any of God's acts in the first place. Therefore, if God requires us to do something and, at the same time, does not grant us an independent will to execute it, that is permissible; additionally God can commit no injustice.

495 Al-Jurjânî, *Sharḥ al-Mawâqif*, vol. III, p. 214.

496 Al-Qādî 'Abd al-Jabbâr, *al-Mughnî*, vol VIII, p. 85.

497 Ibn Taymiyya called this understanding a figment of the imagination; see *Majmû' al-Fatāwâ* (ed. Qāsim), vol. VIII, p. 128.

498 Al-Bayādî, *Ishārât al-marām*, p. 256.

In fact, there is nothing that prevents God from burdening a soul with more than it can bear. Also, since they believed that God does not perform a deed or create anything for a reason, it made no sense to try to question God's acts when there is no purpose to them. Man did have the power to act, however, and this power was concurrent with the action itself, but did not actually affect the act.

As for Ibn Taymiyyah (and the Ahl al-Ḥadīth in general), they affirmed God's Allpowerful Will and that He creates man's actions, but they also claimed that man has been blessed with free-will that is subject to the Will of God, and that this free-will is what merits man's reward or punishment. They affirmed a partial role for the intellect in understanding God's wisdom in His commands and actions, and claimed that man has the capacity and power to act. The Māturīdites wished to avoid the extremes of both the Ash'arites and the Mu'tazilites, and hence ended up being in close proximity to the Ahl al-Ḥadīth. They claimed that man decides and is capable of performing deeds, and in fact even has the power to characterize deeds as deeds of worship or disobedience. It is this capacity that entails reward or punishment, but in the end it is God who actually creates the deed. In all of these stances, the originality and creativity of al-Māturīdī's thought is throughout demonstrated.