

Islamic Theology (*Kalam*)

- 📄 Islamic theology is concerned with what Muslims should believe.
- 📄 During the first half of the 8th century, a number of questions —which centred on God's unity, justice, and other attributes and which were relevant to man's freedom, actions, and fate in the hereafter —formed the core of a more specialised discipline, which was called *kalam* (“speech”)

Khawarij

- 📄 The word *kharaju*, from which *khariji* is derived, means “to withdraw”
- 📄 The basic doctrine of the Khawarij was that a person who committed a grave error or sin and did not sincerely repent ceased to be Muslim. Mere profession of the faith did not make a person a Muslim unless this faith was accompanied by righteous deeds.

Mu‘tazilites

☞ The Mu‘tazilites are “those who stand apart”, a group that sought to introduce philosophical principles from Greek rationalism in Islamic thought.

☞ The Mu‘tazilites, who wanted to avoid everything that might compromise the oneness of God, denied the doctrine that the Qur’an was uncreated and eternal.

Mu‘tazilites

On the question of the relationship of faith to works, the Mu‘tazilites taught like the Khawarij, that works were an essential part of faith but that a person guilty of grave sin, unless he repented, was neither a Muslim not yet a non-Muslim but occupied a “middle ground.”

Man was free to choose and act and was, therefore, responsible for his actions.

Mu‘tazilites

- ☞ Divine predestination of human acts, they held, was incompatible with God’s justice and human responsibility.
- ☞ They claimed that human reason, independent of revelation was capable of discovering what is good and what is evil, although revelation corroborated the findings of reason.

Mu‘tazilites

- ☞ The function of revelation is twofold. First, its aim is to aid man in choosing the right, because in conflict between good and evil man often falters. God, therefore, must send prophets, for he must do the best for man.
- ☞ Secondly, revelation is also necessary to communicate the positive obligations of religion — e.g., prayers and fasting— which cannot be known without revelation.⁶

Mu'tazilites

☰ God is viewed as pure Essence, without eternal attribute, because they hold that the assumption of eternal attributes in conjunction with Essence will result in a belief in multiple coeternals and violate the pure unadulterated unity of God. God knows, wills, and acts by virtue of his Essence and not through attributes of knowledge, will, and power.

Sunni Orthodoxy

☞ To the orthodox it seemed blasphemous to hold that man could act wholly outside the sphere of divine omnipotence.

☞ Al-Ash‘ari taught the human acts were created by God and acquired by man and that human responsibility depended on this acquisition. He denied, however that man could be described as an actor in a real sense.

Sunni Orthodoxy

- ☰ Al-Maturidi held that although God is the sole Creator of everything, including human acts, man is an actor in the real sense.
- ☰ Al-Ash‘ari also held that human reason was incapable of discovering good and evil and that acts became endowed with good or evil qualities through God’s declaring them to be such.

Sunni Orthodoxy

- ☞ Al-Maturidi takes an opposite position, human reason is capable of finding out good and evil, and revelation aids human reason against the sway of human passions.
- ☞ The doctrines of al-Maturidi became submerged in course of time under the expanding popularity of the Ash‘arite school because of the influential activity of the theologian al-Ghazzali.

Three classes of Attributes

- 1) essential, those which indicate His essence, they are He.
- 2) active, those like Creator, which indicate action, they are not He.
- 3) predicative (e.g. face, hand)
- God knows by knowledge, live by life, and so on. The Attributes inhere in His essence and are not He and not other than He.

The Ash`arite school

☰ God is not bound by reason so nothing compels him to accept the repentance of the penitent; He can torment believers and take unbelievers into heaven.

☰ The Qur'an is pre-existent and eternal, the indication, the expression or reading, is created.

The Ash`arite school

- ☰ The sending of Prophets is possible not necessary. A miracle is an act of God to confirm the authority of a Prophet.
- ☰ The *Imama* is a fundamental part of religion. The holder of the office must be from the Quraysh.
- ☰ The office of Imam is not hereditary but is by appointment, the holder must be the most excellent of his age.

Real differences between al-Ash`ari and al-Maturidi

☞ *Can God punish a good man?*

Al-Ash`ari held that reason did not prove it impossible and al-Maturidi taught the opposite.

☞ *Is knowledge of God made necessary by reason or revelation?*

Al-Ash`ari said revelation whereas al-Maturidi said reason.

Real differences between al-Ash`ari and al-Maturidi

- ☞ *Are the Attributes of action phenomenal or eternal? Al-Ash`ari said phenomenal and al-Maturidi eternal.*
- ☞ *Can God demand of man what is beyond his power to give?*
- ☞ *Al-Ash`ari yes, al-Maturidi, no.*
- ☞ *Are Prophets without sin?*
- ☞ *Al-Ash`ari no, al-Maturidi, yes.*