



AWĀ'EL AL-MAQĀLĀT

AWĀ'EL AL-MAQĀLĀT F'ĪL-MADĀHEB AL-MOKTĀRĀT (Principal theses of selected doctrines), a Shi'ite doctrinal work written in Baghdad by Shaikh Abū 'Abdallāh Moḥammad b. Moḥammad b. No'mān al-Mofīd (d. 413/1022; q.v.) probably between the years 396 and 406/1005-16. In it (p. 1) Shaikh al-Mofīd defines his position, which he calls that of the "justice party" among the Shi'ites (*al-'adliya men al-ae'a*), on the entire spectrum of theological (*kalām*) questions by comparison and contrast with other schools.

Important in the history of the Imamite creed, especially for its relation to Mu'tazilism, the *Awā'el* is neither a systematically argued theological treatise nor a detailed heresiography. Rather it is a practical catalogue of Imamite positions on disputed questions composed for a *naqīb* of the 'Alids, probably Šarīf Rażī. The important problems fall naturally at the beginning, and questions on the finer points are strung out towards the end. In designating opponents and supporters of his theses, Shaikh al-Mofīd does not name any of his own contemporaries.

The essence of Shi'ism is defined as loyal adherence to 'Alī and repudiation of the three caliphs preceding him; the essence of Mu'tazilism is the "middle position," between the faithful (*mo'men*) and the infidel (*kāfer*), assigned to the grave sinner. No one who rejects this latter thesis is a Mu'tazilite, no matter how much he may agree with them on other points.

The *Awā'el* insists that revelation is needed to assist reason both for establishing the premises and for assuring the reasoning process in the



fundamentals of religion. Its other main points of opposition to all Mu'tazilites concern: the indefectibility and infallibility of the imams; the Return (*raj'a*) to life of many of the best of the Shi'ites and the worst of their enemies expected at the time of the Mahdi's reappearance in order to fight a final battle where the Mahdi's forces will be victorious; the thesis that the grave sinner within the Shi'ite community is nonetheless a believer (against the Mu'tazilite "middle position" which calls him neither a believer nor an unbeliever); and the thesis that the grave sinner of the community, being a believer, will not be punished forever in the Fire (against the Mu'tazilite doctrine of "the promise and the threat").

On questions of God's Oneness and Justice the position taken coincides with Mu'tazilism and in detail agrees with the Baghdad school against the Basran. Thus with the Baghdad Mu'tazilites the *Awā'el* refuses to apply to God attributes derived from reason but not found in the Qur'ān or traditions; Abū Hā'em Jobbā'ī's theory of "states" is rejected; God does not will in the same sense as man wills; God is bound by His nobility and generosity, not by justice, to look after man's best interests. The Baghdad Mu'tazilite most frequently cited is [Abu'l-Qāsem Balkī Ka'bī](#).

The *Awā'el* attributes, as did [Abū Eshāq Nazzām](#), the miraculous aspect of the Qur'ān to God's preventing others from imitating it, not to its intrinsic inimitability. It says rather hesitantly that the current text of the Qur'ān is probably integral. This implies a reinterpretation of Imamite tradition and goes counter to the accusations of some—but not all—contemporary Imamites that the Sunnites had left omissions or even forged additions to the sacred text. Shaikh al-Mofīd himself had in fact argued in a previous work ("al-Masā'el al-Sarawīya," in *al-Taqalān: Al-Ketāb wa'l-'etra*, Najaf, n.d., p. 59) that there were omissions in the current text.

Following the main questions comes a series of related minor points such as repentance, the interpretation and binding force of traditions, eschatology, etc. After this, the second edition of the *Awā'el* contains two further series of questions on the fine points of theology, many of them dealing with atomism and other points of natural philosophy, which may originally have been separate treatises but which fit in very well as part of this work.

The theory that things are composed of atoms and accidents was necessary to the theologians as a basis for their proof of God's existence from the temporality of the world. The atomism of the *Awā'el*, except for one



inconsistency (that atoms are extended), follows the Baghdad Mu'tazilites against the Basrans. The most notable differences are the Baghdad Mu'tazilites'—and the *Awā'el's*—denial of the existence of a void (*koalā*), and their assertion that there are natural qualities (*ṭab'*, plur. *ṭebā'*) in things which dispose them to act the way they do.

Finally, the *Awā'el* goes counter to the materialism of most Baghdad and Basran Mu'tazilites in defining man as “a thing produced in time, self subsistent, outside the categories of atom and accident.” This means, as Shaikh al-Mofīd explains in another work, that the essential part of man is spirit (“al-Masā'el,” p. 52).

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