

A Critical Reading of the Book Critique of Religious Discourse by Naṣr Ḥāmid Abū Zayd (Part Two)

Shaykh Māzin al-Muṭūrī

Abstract

This article constitutes the second part of a critical study of Naṣr Ḥāmid Abū Zayd's Critique of Religious Discourse, a work originally submitted as a professorial thesis at Cairo University. The book seeks to explore the mechanisms and intellectual foundations of religious discourse, with particular emphasis on modes of meaning in religious texts and the processes by which these meanings are produced and interpreted. This study engages with the central provocations of Abū Zayd's work, analyzing its structure and assumptions while highlighting its internal inconsistencies, contradictions, and limited grasp of Islamic thought and its diverse trajectories. It also critiques the reductive tendencies and methodological pitfalls in Abū Zayd's analysis, such as his selective and unilateral approach, and his imposition of a secularist lens onto religious texts. Moreover, the study notes how Abū Zayd, despite his critiques of religious writers, ultimately replicates many of the same shortcomings he attributes to them. The critique adopts a focused and condensed method in presenting observations and objections, avoiding excessive elaboration except where necessary to clarify key points.

Keywords: religious knowledge, Islamic thought, hermeneutics, religious discourse, secularism, ḥākimiyya, tradition, Qur'anic text, historicism, silence of the text.



The First Theological School of Medina: From Its Foundation to the Martyrdom of Imam al-Ḥusayn (a)

Sayyid ‘Alī Ḥusaynīzādah

Abstract

This article aims to demonstrate the formation of a distinct Shi‘i intellectual school prior to the tragedy of Karbalā’, centered around a core group of doctrinally committed followers of the Ahl al-Bayt (a). The study is divided into two main sections. The first examines the epistemic standing of the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt (a) within early Islamic society, highlighting their role as intellectual leaders, and provides evidence of their theological engagement within the political developments of the formative period. The second section reassesses the identity of early Shi‘ism through the lens of the so-called Sabāiyya movement, aiming to dispel ambiguities and misrepresentations surrounding the existence of a core Shi‘i group loyal to the Ahl al-Bayt (a) before the Ashūrā’ tragedy. This involves a critical reading of the historical narrative, in light of the loss and distortion of many sources from that era.

Keywords: political Shi‘ism, doctrinal Shi‘ism, Ahl al-Bayt, Imam ‘Alī عليه السلام, kalām, oral tradition, Sabāiyya.



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Treatise on the Principles of Religion

Mīrzā Abū al-Qāsim al-Qummī

Edited and translated by Shaykh Muḥsin Ṣāḥir Sha‘bān

Abstract

This work presents the foundational principles of Islamic belief—divine unity, justice, prophethood, imamate, and resurrection—as the core pillars of faith and the structure upon which the religion stands. Islamic scholars, particularly Imāmī Shī‘ī jurists, have devoted significant attention to explaining these principles using both rational and scriptural arguments, aiming to provide believers with a clear and reasoned understanding of their creed. Among the most notable contributions to this field is *Treatise on the Principles of Religion* by the esteemed scholar Shaykh Mīrzā Abū al-Qāsim al-Qummī, a leading figure of the 13th century AH and a prolific author whose works have left a lasting impact on Shī‘ī jurisprudence. In this treatise, he distills key aspects of Imāmī theological thought, grounding his arguments in Qur’anic verses and narrations from the Prophet (s) and the purified Ahl al-Bayt (a), while also employing rigorous rational proofs that reflect his deep insight and expertise in kalām. The treatise is a valuable addition to the doctrinal heritage of Islam, presenting theological issues in a clear and accessible manner that harmonizes reason and revelation. It offers a coherent and authentic vision of Imāmī beliefs, free from distortion, and written in a style that balances scholarly rigor with clarity—making it a beneficial resource for a broad readership seeking to understand the fundamentals of Islamic faith.

Keywords: principles of religion, Imāmī doctrine, divine unity, resurrection, justice, imamate, prophethood.



Iḥbāt: A Theological Study (Part I)

Shaykh Rūḥ Allāh Furūghī

Abstract

This article explores the theological concept of iḥbāt—the nullification of good deeds by sinful acts—a subject of intense debate among theologians and often associated with takfīr. The concept frequently appears in kalām texts under the theme of “iḥbāt and takfīr.” The prevalent view among Imāmī Shī‘īs is a rejection of iḥbāt, a stance that contrasts with that of the Mu‘tazilites and others who affirm it. Shī‘ī theologians have offered numerous arguments against iḥbāt, while also responding to the evidence cited by its proponents, including interpretations of Qur’anic verses that might appear to support the notion. The question of iḥbāt is closely linked to the broader theological discussions of reward (thawāb) and punishment (‘iqāb) and their nature. This part begins by defining iḥbāt and then presents the arguments that deny its validity. The study focuses primarily on the views of early Shī‘ī theologians—those preceding Shaykh al-Mufīd, as well as al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, Shaykh al-Ṭūsī, ‘Allāma al-Ḥillī, and others—citing and clarifying their original statements where necessary. It also incorporates the perspectives of contemporary theologians, particularly those engaged in modern kalām. In theological literature, the discussion sometimes appears under its own heading and at other times within the broader treatment of reward and punishment, reflecting the integral connection between these topics: proponents of iḥbāt argue that a sinful act can diminish or negate the merit of a good deed.

Keywords: iḥbāt, invalidation, reward, punishment, action.



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The Epistemological Transformation of Imāmī Kalām in the Medieval Period and Ibn Sīnā's Role in It

Dr. Ḥamīd 'Aṭā'ī Naẓarī

Abstract

This article investigates the interaction between Ibn Sīnā's philosophical legacy and Islamic theology (kalām), focusing particularly on the extent to which his philosophical concepts influenced both Shī'ī and Sunnī theologians. This line of inquiry is of considerable significance within both Avicennan studies and theological scholarship. One notable consequence of the dissemination of Ibn Sīnā's thought during the medieval period was the emergence of a philosophical school of kalām among Sunnīs, exemplified by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. ٦٠٦ AH), and among Imāmīs, led by Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (d. ٦٧٢ AH). The infiltration of Avicennan concepts into theological discourse brought about profound changes in the discursive style and epistemological orientation of Imāmī theologians. This study aims to delineate the various dimensions of Ibn Sīnā's influence on the epistemic and epistemological concerns of medieval Imāmī theology by comparing the pre-philosophical Baghdad school with the later philosophical school of Imāmī kalām. Central to this transformation were conceptual shifts in key epistemological terms, the development of new classifications of knowledge, the articulation of theoretical frameworks in epistemology, and the introduction of foundational questions such as how human beings attain knowledge. The incorporation of new topics into the field further underscores the fundamental nature of this transformation.

Keywords: Imāmī kalām, Ibn Sīnā, epistemology, Baghdad school, philosophical theology, 'Allāma al-Ḥillī.

Modern Kalām: Epistemic Transformation and the Functions of Contemporary Doctrinal Discourse

Shaykh Maḥmūd ‘Alī Sarā’ib

Abstract

This article offers a foundational introduction to ‘ilm al-kalām al-jadīd (modern or contemporary Islamic theology), while also proposing the term “renewed kalām” as an alternative designation. Emerging in response to contemporary intellectual shifts, this discipline seeks to revitalize the traditional role of kalām in defending Islamic beliefs. The study reviews classic definitions of kalām provided by prominent Muslim scholars and outlines its principal aims, such as formulating doctrines and addressing objections. It then explores the intellectual and historical factors underlying the emergence of the modern kalām, especially transformations in the human, philosophical, and social sciences. The article engages with theoretical models that interpret the relationship between classical and modern kalām, including the substitution model, the integrative model, and the renewal-of-issues model. It further examines the concept of theological renewal in its various dimensions—conceptual foundations, methodology, language, and subject matter. The article concludes with a comparative analysis of modern kalām and related disciplines, such as philosophy of religion, psychology of religion, and sociology of religion, highlighting areas of overlap and divergence. The aim is to provide readers with an epistemic framework that enables them to distinguish this discipline from adjacent fields and to grasp its apologetic function within the Islamic intellectual tradition.

Keywords: modern kalām, epistemic architecture, structural transformation, pragmatic apologetics, doctrinal functions, epistemic rupture.



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