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Hussein Ali Abdulsater

To rehabilitate a theological treatise. *Inqādh al-Bashar min al-Jabr wa-l-Qadar*

Abstract: This article deals with a theological treatise that has been wrongly ascribed to the Imāmī scholar al-Sharīf al-Murtadā (d. 436/1044). The treatise discusses the question of human agency in relation to divine decree and determining, arguing for positions that, to a large extent, resemble Murtadā's known views. Nevertheless, the treatise also betrays features incompatible with Murtadā's theology as a whole, in addition to stylistic and bibliographical questions that make a good case against the work's authenticity. This wrong ascription, however, has not been noted despite the repeated editions of the text in the Islamic world. As such, it misrepresented many of Murtadā's views, sometimes undermining the main pillars of his theological system. The author of the treatise establishes his ethical concepts on the basis of scriptural dictates before proceeding to rational arguments, relies on non-multi-attested reports, defers to the authority of the Prophet's companions and culls God's names and attributes from the word of revelation. While going against Murtadā's positions, these views – put together – are considerably closer to non-Imāmī doctrines, and could have easily been the work of a Mu'tazilī author.

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1

The arrival of the Shī'ī Būyids in Baghdad in 334/945 represented a historic turning point for the Imāmī¹ community; for although the new dynasty may have been originally of another Shī'ī affiliation, they clearly favored Imāmīs over others.² The 'Abbāsid Caliphate had long been weakened by mercenaries and lost

¹ The term 'Imāmī' will be used for 'Twelver Shī'ī' throughout the article; for the development of the term see Kohlberg 1976a: 534.

² The particular Shī'ī sect to which the Būyids belonged has still not been fully determined. It may be said, however, that those members of the dynasty who were in Baghdad showed a

its iron grip under which Imāmīs had lived for almost two centuries, when their participation in authority was limited to a few notable families some of whose members held bureaucratic offices.³ The death of the eleventh Imam al-Hasan al-‘Askarī in 260/873 had left Imāmīs for the first time without a present Imam, generating a major crisis that compelled the community to devise new forms of management to sustain itself. Later known as the Minor Occultation, taken to have ended in 329/941, the effects of this crisis were still very much in evidence when the Būyids arrived.⁴ Their advent may have alleviated some of the strain that Imāmīs were living under, now that their political position had taken a turn for the better. The Būyids were to maintain control of Baghdad for a long century, only to be replaced by the Saljuqs in 447/1055.

The Būyid age was markedly one of tolerance and constituted a heyday of intellectual activity, termed both ‘the Shī‘ī century’⁵ and ‘the renaissance of Islam’⁶. Probably owing to both their status as a minority sect and their not-so-privileged ethnic background, the Būyids showed exceptional acceptance of religious and cultural diversity.⁷ It is thus that debates on various matters were often held at the monarch’s court and in his presence.⁸ Many members of the ruling elite under the Būyids were men of learning, especially the viziers, a few of whom were among the great belle-lettres of Islam like Ibn al-‘Amīd (d. 360/970) and al-Šāhib b. ‘Abbād (d. 385/995), to mention but two examples.⁹ These influential political figures in turn had their own courts where they hosted the leading intellectuals of the time, in this sometimes competing with their masters. The Būyids also paid considerable attention to the pre-Islamic Iranian heritage, reviving the Persian title ‘Shāhānshāh’ and some aspects of Sasanid rule while respecting the Islamic nature of government by nominally preserving allegiance to the caliph.¹⁰

stronger inclination towards Imāmīsm than did their relatives elsewhere, and that the second and third generation Būyids primarily gravitated toward Imāmīsm while first generation Būyids were Zaydīs. Their profession of the Ismā‘īlī creed, a claim not found in neutral sources, must have been very circumscribed and short-lived. On their religious identity see Busse 1969: 604–605; Cahen 1979; Kraemer 1986: 39–44. Recent studies tend to stress their Imāmī affiliation even more; see Marcinkowski 2001: 201–202.

³ For a succinct survey of the prominent Imāmī families and their respective relations see Newman 2000: 19–26.

⁴ See Abdulsater 2011: *passim* for a discussion of the development of the Imāmī theological system and its undergirding communal ideology at the time.

⁵ The Shī‘ī color of the era as seen by a Sunnī intellectual is described in al-Qādī 2003: *passim*.

⁶ For a discussion of the appellation see Kraemer 1986: 1–5.

⁷ Busse 1969: 605–606; Kraemer 1986: 75–80.

⁸ Kraemer 1986: 275.

⁹ On them see Kraemer 1986: 241–259 and 259–272 respectively.

¹⁰ Busse 1969: 603–604; Madelung 1969: 181–183; Kraemer 1986: 44–46.

In addition to their support for religious scholars of different sects, the Būyids showed great respect for Imāmī scholars who had never before won government favor. The age represented the first period in Islamic history when Imāmīs were not only absolutely free to practice their beliefs and develop their creed publicly, but their religious leaders also enjoyed the patronage of political authority, be it in Rayy or in Baghdad.¹¹ Extant are famous debates between Imāmī 'ulamā' and other scholars in the presence of Būyid princes where they openly challenged other schools and creeds;¹² a favorable change whose importance should not be underestimated. The relationship between the Būyids and Imāmīs was a win-win situation: the Būyids needed popular support to balance the Sunnī support for the caliph; the Imāmīs, now without their Imam and therefore politically benign, needed political cover.¹³ This situation can best be seen, though in retrospect, in comparison with the subsequent plight of the Imāmīs, particularly their prominent scholars, in the aftermath of the Būyid downfall.¹⁴

2

'Alam al-Hudā 'Alī b. al-Husayn al-Mūsawī (d. 436/1044), also known as al-Sharīf al-Murtadā, was one of the leading figures of the Būyid age.¹⁵ An 'Alid, he was a scion of the seventh Imāmī Shī'i Imam Mūsā al-Kāzim (d. 183/799). In addition to this noble lineage, his more immediate ancestors and relatives were also of high regard: his maternal great grandfather was the Zaydī Imam al-Hasan al-Utrūsh (d. 304/917), the third ruler of the Zaydī dynasty of Ṭabaristān and eastern Gilān (250/864–520/1126) under the title al-Nāṣir al-Kabīr.¹⁶ His father Abū Ahmad al-Husayn b. Mūsā (d. 400/1009), known as al-Tāhir al-Awḥad and Dhū al-Manāqib, combined both religious prestige and political stature. He served as the chief

¹¹ For the distinctly favorable treatment of Imāmīs see Busse 1969: 605–606.

¹² See for example the debate in the presence of Rukn al-Dawla (r. 324/935–366/976) between Ibn Bābawayh al-Ṣadūq (d. 381/991–992) and an individual who denied the existence of the Twelfth Imam; Ṣadūq 1991: 87–88.

¹³ Cahen 1979: *passim*

¹⁴ Ibn al-Jawzī 1995–1996: 9: 391; Ibn al-Athīr 1965: 9: 638; Dhahabī 1993: 18: 335.

¹⁵ See on him Tha'ālibī 1983: 5: 69–72; Najāshī 1996: 270–271; Ṭūsī 1997a: 164–165; Baghdādī 1997: 11: 401; Ibn Shahrāshūb 1961: 104–106; Ibn al-Jawzī 1995–1996: 9: 318–324; Ḥamawī 1993: 4: 1728–1733; Ibn Khallikān 1993–1994: 3: 313–316; Dhahabī 1993: 17: 588–590; Ṣafadī 2000: 20: 231–234; İsfahānī 1982–1995: 4: 14–65; Shīrāzī 1962: 458–466; Khwānsārī 1991: 4: 284–301; Amīn 1997: 8: 213–219; Madelung 1985: *passim*.

¹⁶ On him see Strothmann 1979: *passim*.

syndic of the descendants of Abū Ṭālib (*naqīb al-ṭālibiyyīn*)¹⁷ for five terms,¹⁸ in addition to being the commander of the pilgrims (*amīr al-ḥajj*),¹⁹ taking responsibility for people's complaints to court (*wilāyat al-mazālim*)²⁰ and acting twice as a peacemaker between the Būyids of Baghdad and the Ḥamdānīs of Mosul²¹. Murtadā's younger brother Muḥammad (d. 406/1015), known as al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, was a renowned poet²² and a politician who assumed the office of the syndicate after his father;²³ but he mainly owes his fame to his compilation of the sayings, sermons and letters of the first Shī‘ī Imam ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib (d. 40/661) under the title *Nahj al-Balāgha*²⁴. The two titles Murtadā and Raḍī were both royal gifts: in a decree dated 397/1006, the Būyid king Bahā’ al-Dawla (r. 379/989–403/1012) bestowed on ‘Alī b. al-Ḥusayn the title al-Murtadā Dhū al-Majdayn, apparently alluding to both his noble ancestry and personal qualities; Muḥammad, on the other hand, was given the title al-Raḍī Dhū al-Hasabayn.²⁵

In addition to his political influence and social prominence primarily owing to his thirty-year tenure as the syndic of the descendants of Abū Ṭālib following his brother's death and his close association with both the ‘Abbāsid and Būyid dynasties,²⁶ he was an authority on language and literature. As for his mastery of religious sciences, it was not confined to any particular discipline; he wrote extensively on jurisprudence, law, Qur’ānic exegesis and theology. As such, he was one of the icons of the Būyid ethos, not only in his well-roundedness and diverse knowledge but also in his efforts to systemize the Imāmī system of faith, simultaneous with the efforts of other masters of contending schools of theology.

Murtadā markedly represents the atmosphere of relative freedom that the Imāmīs enjoyed; his contributions to the formation of an integral Imāmī discourse are foundational. In theology, his prolific output shows immense erudition, as he presented a system of Imāmī beliefs whose elaborateness is unmatched by any extant

17 Havemann 1993: *passim*.

18 Ibn al-Jawzī 1995–1996: 8: 329, 395, 421, 483, 9: 23, 85, 112–113; Ibn al-Athīr 1965: 8: 565–566, 710, 9: 77–78, 105, 182, 219.

19 See Māwardī 1966: 108–112; Farrā’ 1966: 108–115.

20 See Nielsen 1991: *passim*; Māwardī 1966: 77–95; Farrā’ 1966: 74–90.

21 Ibn al-Athīr 1965: 8: 594, 630.

22 For an analysis of some of his poetry see Stetkevych 2007: 293–293 for his career; see also Djebli 1997: *passim*.

23 Ibn al-Jawzī 1995–1996: 9: 127; Ibn al-Athīr 1965: 9: 263.

24 The authenticity of *Nahj al-Balāgha* has been a controversial issue from early times, at least before its great commentary by Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd (d. 656/1258) was written; Djebli 1997: 33–56.

25 Ibn al-Jawzī 1995–1996: 9: 96; Ibn al-Athīr 1965: 9: 189; see Murtadā's poem thanking the king for the title in Murtadā 1998a: 1: 403–406.

26 Ibn al-Jawzī 1995–1996: 8: 483, 9: 23; Ibn al-Athīr 1965: 9: 77–78, 105.

system from before his time. Murtadā's theological legacy includes a lengthy *summa*, *al-Dhakhīra fī 'Ilm al-Kalām*,²⁷ as well as dispersed works, some quite elaborate, addressing particular theological questions. His comprehensive book, *al-Dhārī'a ilā Uṣūl al-Shari'a*, is the earliest extant work on Imāmī jurisprudence.²⁸

Murtadā studied language and rhetoric with the famous poet Ibn Nubātā al-Sa'dī (d. 405/1014),²⁹ poetry and *adab* with al-Marzubānī (d. 384/994),³⁰ grammar with the grammarian and Mu'tazilī theologian al-Rummānī (d. 384/994),³¹ *hadīth* with Ḥusayn b. 'Alī Ibn Bābawayh (fl. late fourth/tenth century)³² and the head of the Imāmī community of Baghdad al-Shaykh al-Mufid (d. 413/1022), with whom he also studied theology and jurisprudence³³. The list of Murtadā's students is indicative of the influence of his thought on Imāmī Shī'ism, even if those students did not fully endorse their teacher's positions. His most prominent student was undisputedly Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī (d. 460/1067), later known in the Imāmī tradition as Shaykh al-Ṭā'ifa. Ṭūsī is the author of two of the four books of traditions considered by Imāmīs to be the most authoritative, namely *Tahdhīb al-Āḥkām* and *al-Istibṣār fī mā Ikhtalaf min al-Akhbār*.³⁴ Also among Murtadā's prominent students were Abū al-Ṣalāḥ al-Ḥalabī (d. 447/1055),³⁵ Abū al-Faṭḥ al-Karājikī (d. 449/1057),³⁶ Sallār al-Daylamī (d. 448/1056)³⁷ and Ibn al-Barrāj (d. 481/1088).³⁸ In addition to the strong bond between masters and disciples in the traditional Islamic world of learning, Murtadā's finances must have guaranteed

²⁷ Initially intended as an independent work, *al-Dhakhīra* ended up being a complement to the unfinished *al-Mulakhkhaṣ fī Uṣūl al-Dīn* as Murtadā himself explains; Murtadā 1990a: 607. Therefore, the two works must be seen as one whole.

²⁸ Murtadā 2009: 31–32 also refers the reader to his works on theology (i.e. *al-Shāfi* and *al-Dhakhīra*) and his *Rasā'il* where he elaborated on some questions such as consensus, reports and analogical reasoning, which serves to prove that this work is still earlier than Ṭūsī's *'Uddā*, despite the latter's earlier public circulation as might be construed from Ṭūsī 1997b: 1: 3–4. The late Calder was apparently unaware of Murtadā's *Dhārī'a*, as he describes his jurisprudential work as "short, uncertain and lacking in detail;" Calder 1989: 60.

²⁹ Ibn Khallikān 1993–1994: 3: 190–193.

³⁰ Sellheim 1991: *passim*.

³¹ Flanagan 1995: *passim*.

³² Ṭūsī 1995: 434; he is the brother of the illustrious Ṣadūq, on him see Najāshī 1996: 68; Khū'i 1990: 7: 47–48.

³³ On Mufid's life and thought see McDermott 1978: 8–22; see Murtadā's eulogy of Mufid in Murtadā 1998a: 2: 438–440.

³⁴ Amir-Moezzi 2000: *passim*; Amīn 1997: 9: 159–167; Khū'i 1990: 16: 257–262.

³⁵ Ibn Shahrāshūb 1961: 66; Amīn 1997: 3: 634–635; Khū'i 1990: 4: 283.

³⁶ Ibn Shahrāshūb 1961: 53–54; Amīn 1997: 9: 400–401; Khū'i 1990: 17: 357–358.

³⁷ Ibn Shahrāshūb 1961: 169–170; Amīn 1997: 7: 70–72; Khū'i 1990: 9: 177.

³⁸ Ibn Shahrāshūb 1961: 115; Amīn 1997: 8: 18; Khū'i 1990: 11: 42–43.

him the ‘acquired loyalty’ of his students thanks to the concept of gratitude due for benefit rendered (*shukr al-ni‘ma*).³⁹

Despite his prominence and massive oeuvre, relatively little has been written on Murtadā’s thought. In Western languages, two monographs offer a partial treatment of his contributions. First, there is the last chapter of McDermott’s *The Theology of al-Shaikh al-Mufid*.⁴⁰ The chapter briefly presents the points of disagreement between Mufid and Murtadā. Naturally, it does not exhaust all these points nor does it provide a systematic exposé of Murtadā’s theological contribution as this is not the focus of the book. The other monograph is Madelung’s *A Treatise of the Sharīf al-Murtadā on the Legality of Working for the Government* (*Mas’ala fī ’l-‘amal ma‘a ’l-sultān*). It consists of an edition of the Arabic text and an English translation, together with an introduction and concluding remarks on works dealing with related topics in the later tradition. In Arabic, almost all published studies on Murtadā are concerned with his literary works, whether in poetry or rhetoric and literary criticism. The only exception is a work studying his view on transmission of traditions, mainly covering his rejection of non-multi-attested reports.⁴¹ His theological works are mentioned tangentially, usually in the introduction. However, there exists an unpublished dissertation on his theology presented to the University of Zliten, Libya, by Rāūf al-Shammarī in 2004. Despite its usefulness in many respects, it is noteworthy that it suffers from three main flaws: first, only Arabic material is used for both primary and secondary sources; second, the author is not aware of the publication of Murtadā’s most comprehensive theological work, i.e. *al-Dhakhīra*, among other books of his and third, the dissertation is replete with its author’s subjective views on controversial questions as to whether Murtadā is right or wrong on each and every point. Although Murtadā’s theological contributions do not seem to have been studied independently in Iranian scholarship, several works have been produced covering his career in general and the religious aspects of his poetry. Translations of some of his works into Persian and a limited Arabic secondary literature on him are also available.

An even more interesting aspect concerning Murtadā’s reception in the later Imāmī tradition is the number of works spuriously ascribed to him. Thus far, the author of the current article has been able to identify three works that most likely are erroneously ascribed to Murtadā: *Risālat al-Muḥkam wa-l-Mutashābih*,⁴²

³⁹ Mottahedeh 1980: 72–78.

⁴⁰ McDermott 1978: 373–394.

⁴¹ Khaṭāwī 1997: *passim*.

⁴² See my forthcoming article “Resurgence and Spurious Ascription”.

*al-Hudūd wa-l- Haqā'iq*⁴³ and *Inqādh al-Bashar min al-Jabr wa-l-Qadar* – which is the subject of this study. The identification of these problematic works was done by the author in tandem with the larger project of his doctoral dissertation, concerned with studying Murtadā's theology and jurisprudence.⁴⁴

3

In what is often termed as the fusion of Mu'tazilī and Imāmī theology,⁴⁵ Murtadā's role has been noted in both primary and secondary literature; many non-Imāmī heresiographers went even as far as classifying him as a Mu'tazilī⁴⁶ or pro-Mu'tazilī.⁴⁷ What matters most, for the purposes of this article, is that the concurrence of Imāmī and Mu'tazilī theology is most felt on two major subjects: divine unity (with the pertinent issues of divine essence and attributes, including speech) and divine justice (with the relevant questions of human agency, divine help, moral theory and otherworldly deserts of acts). This is why the Imāmīs felt, early

⁴³ The author is currently preparing a separate article on the question of the authenticity of *al-Hudūd wa-l- Haqā'iq*. It suffices to say here that, unlike the other two works, doubts have been expressed about its ascription to Murtadā, though no reason for these doubts is provided; Nazarī 2008: 32: 26.

⁴⁴ See Abdulsater 2013: *passim*.

⁴⁵ The debate on whether the Imāmīs incorporated Mu'tazilī doctrines or developed their own views independently is beyond the scope of the current discussion; each of the two opinions has its supporters. For classical heresiographies, see Khayyāt 1925: 6; Ash'arī 1980: 35; Shahrastānī 1992: 1: 145, 166; Ibn Taymiyya 1903–1904: 1: 31, 2: 7, 24. In recent scholarship, see for example Nashshār 1977: 1: 414–415; Jad'ānī 2001: 1: *jīm-dāl*, 371–372; Sourdel 1972: 233–234. See also McDermott 1978: 4–5; McDermott 1977: 223 where he states that Imāmīs, even before Mufid, had some Mu'tazilī-leaning theologians; Madelung 1970: 15, 17, 25, 28; Jafri 1978: 305–306 (speaking of the early Imāmī theologian Zurāra b. A'yan); Lambton 1989: 93; Kohlberg 2003: XXIV; Bar-Asher 1999: 11; Bayhom-Daou 2005: 23; Clarke 2006: 103; Schmidtke 2008: 154, 156; Gleave 2009: 1600–1602; Amir-Moezzi 2005: *passim* (though only talking about a particular theological trend in Imāmī Shi'ism); Halm 2004: 49–50; Momen 2005: 79–82; Yann 1995: 5–6; Newman 2000: 20, 26. All these studies argue, *mutatis mutandis*, that the Imāmīs fell under Mu'tazilī influence, at least partially on the level of some leading figures. For the other viewpoint inclined more to stress the independence or originality of Imāmī theology, with its different versions and the various extents to which such independence is stressed, see for example Tahrānī 1983: 1: 39, 5: 44–45, 8: 56; Amin 1997: 1: 127; Amīnī 1997: 4: 66–67; Ni'ma 1985: 23–25; Mughniyya 1979: 110–111; Ni'ma 1961: 39–41; Ḥasanī 1964: 14–15, 279–284; Amīnī 1997: 24–25; Tabāṭabā'ī 1970–1974: 5: 78–80; Gurjī 1984: 43–47; Akhtar 1986: 102–115; Muhajirani 2008: 179, 181; 'Abd al-Ghaffār 1996: 423; Khāminah'ī 1992: 199–210; Ja'farī 1992: 164–165; Abrahamov 2006: 208; Modarresi 1993: 115–116.

⁴⁶ Dhahabī 1987: 29: 434; Dhahabī 1995: 17: 589; Ṣafadī 2000: 20: 231; Ibn Ḥajar 1997: 4: 223.

⁴⁷ Ibn al-Jawzī 1995–1996: 9: 319.

on, that they are no less entitled to the epithet ‘Upholders of [Divine] Unicity and Justice’ (*ahl al-tawḥīd wa-l-‘adl*) than the Mu‘tazilīs.⁴⁸ Where Murtadā agrees with Mu‘tazili theology, he champions the positions of the Baṣran Mu‘tazilīs against that of the Baghdadi Mu‘tazilīs which his master, Mufīd, had adopted.⁴⁹

Among the questions of the latter point, Murtadā fully endorsed the Baṣran Mu‘tazili view of human agency; human acts, he believes, are purely done by humans, without God intervening in any form.⁵⁰ He vehemently argued, not only against pure determinists (*mujbira*) who adopted the blunt position that humans are mere helpless tools of God’s power whose acts are as unaffected by their efforts as are their colors or bodily traits, but also against the upholders of acquisition (*kasb*) who attempted to tread a middle-path between what they saw as the two extremes of absolute human independence and helplessness. Murtadā’s position was to deny the intelligibility of acquisition, while still equating it, if it is to be given any meaningful content, to pure determinism in that they both boil down to infringement on God’s justice and disavowal of human power.⁵¹ Likewise, Murtadā’s moral theory shows his acceptance of the Mu‘tazili view that the moral value of certain acts is known independently from revelation.⁵²

He, nonetheless, parted from the Mu‘tazili theory of divine justice on the question of divine help (*lutf*); while adopting the doctrine of divine help as defined by the Baṣran Mu‘tazilīs, he pushed it farther to make it the cornerstone of his theory of the necessity of the Imāma as a means of bringing people closer to salvation due to the moral benefit accruing from the presence of an infallible leader of the community in whom authority and political power reside.⁵³ In light of that, he might be considered the main influence behind the Imāmī position that the Imāma is necessary not to guarantee the complete transmission of religious law, but to preserve the moral order of society. He also rejected the Mu‘tazili dogma of the Threat (*wa‘īd*), i.e. the inevitability of God punishing sinners in the hereafter, arguing that it is not morally problematic to pardon grave sinners – and

48 For the Mu‘tazili context of the epithet, see Gimaret 2011: *passim*; see its recurrence in Murtadā’s works in reference to Imāmīs too, as in Murtadā 1986: 4: 40; Murtadā 1997: 205–206; Murtadā 1985–1990: 1: 397–398, 3: 110.

49 See the comparison in McDermott 1978: 373–394.

50 Murtadā 2000: 63–64, 449; Murtadā 1998b: 93.

51 Murtadā 2000: 68–69, 461–462, 468, 476; a briefer version in Murtadā 1998b: 44, 96.

52 The most elaborate discussion in Murtadā 2000: 303–367; a brief expression in Murtadā 2009: 78.

53 Murtadā 1986: 1: 47, 99; Murtadā 1990a: 410; Murtadā 1998b: 191–192; Murtadā 1995: 35–36; Murtadā 1985–1990: 1: 309–310, 2: 294.

thus God might do it,⁵⁴ a scenario whose ultimate execution is seen through the effect of the intercession (*shafā'a*) of the Prophet and the Imams.⁵⁵

In the above points of concurrence and disagreement with Mu'tazilī thought, Murtadā's writings betray a strong influence of his elder contemporary, the great Mu'tazilī theologian of the Baṣran school Qādī al-Quḍāt 'Abd al-Jabbār al-Astrabādī (d. 415/1024).⁵⁶ The phrasing of the two authors is almost identical in many instances in cases of both agreement⁵⁷ and disagreement⁵⁸. Also, Murtadā's main work on the Imāma, *al-Shāfi fī al-Imāma*, was written as a rebuttal against the corresponding volume of *al-Mughnī*, with sharp criticisms⁵⁹ and copious quotations⁶⁰ provided by Murtadā before he embarks on his refutations; the same can be said, though to a lesser extent, about his *al-Dhāri'a*⁶¹.

⁵⁴ Murtadā 1990a: 509–521; Murtadā 1998b: 151–155.

⁵⁵ Murtadā 1990a: 505–509; Murtadā 1998b: 158–158; Murtadā 1954: 2: 306; Murtadā 1985–1990: 1: 131, 148–151; Murtadā 1998a: 1: 217, 489, 503, 2: 155, 168–169.

⁵⁶ Ibn al-Murtadā 1969: 117 (probably following Jishumī 1973: 383) claims that 'Abd al-Jabbār was one of Murtadā's teachers; Jishumī adds that the studentship was in Baghdad upon 'Abd al-Jabbār's return from pilgrimage; Madelung 1985 dates it in 389/999. But Murtadā never alludes to such a connection even in *al-Shāfi*, despite the lengthy polemic against 'Abd al-Jabbār. In addition, Murtadā's brother Raḍī mentions being a student of 'Abd al-Jabbār himself; Raḍī 1967: 48, 180, 362. Jishumī might be confusing the two brothers, since he does not mention Raḍī therein. But if Murtadā did study under 'Abd al-Jabbār, then it must have been for a short time, which explains why other biographers of Murtadā refrain from listing 'Abd al-Jabbār among his teachers.

⁵⁷ Cf. Murtadā 2000: 474 and 'Abd al-Jabbār 1966: 6[1]: 11.

⁵⁸ Cf. Murtadā 2000: 322–324 and 'Abd al-Jabbār 1966: 17: 52–53.

⁵⁹ According to Murtadā, 'Abd al-Jabbār's methodology suffers from his unfair, inaccurate or even uninformed presentation of Imāmī views (Murtadā 1986: 1: 43, 73, 86–87, 96–98, 137, 167–168, 179, 210, 215, 318, 3: 72, 4: 117; cf. 'Abd al-Jabbār 1966: 20{1}: 18, 31–35, 37–38, 56, 69–70, 75, 79, 91–92, 181, 336), in addition to his facile use of slander against his opponents (Murtadā 1986: 1: 38, 90; cf. 'Abd al-Jabbār 1966: 20{1}: 13). To show his ability to reciprocate such methodology, Murtadā surveys many of the peculiar views ascribed to early Mu'tazilīs, many of which were renounced by later generations; Murtadā 1986: 1: 90–96. Another problem with 'Abd al-Jabbār's methodology is in his use of sources, as he seems to either misunderstand the authors' intentions or worse, to deliberately manipulate (*tahrīf*) the quoted text to serve his position – as Murtadā tries to show by quoting those sources; Murtadā 1986: 2: 247, 321, 4: 249, 256, 347; 'Abd al-Jabbār 1966: 20{1}: 138–139, 155–156, {2}: 50, 89. Also, 'Abd al-Jabbār's use of terminology, according to Murtadā, is imprecise; Murtadā 1986: 4: 216, 236; cf. 'Abd al-Jabbār 1966: 20{2}: 20–26, 45–47.

⁶⁰ See for example Murtadā 1986: 1: 76–83, 103–107, 143–145, 204–205; 2: 14–21, 26–36, 56–57, 125–126; 3: 5–7, 18–20, 23–25, 63–64; 4: 14–17, 32–36, 90–94, 110–113.

⁶¹ In the introduction to *al-Dhāri'a*, Murtadā states that the book is unprecedented because his views on jurisprudence are not fully shared by any author. Nonetheless, he mentions that many of these problematic questions were covered in his now lost *Masā'il al-Khilāf* and in his discussion of 'Abd al-Jabbār's *al-'Umād* (both edited texts of *al-Dhāri'a* mention it under its less commonly

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Murtaḍā's position on the question of divine decree and determining is, as has been mentioned, identical to that of the Baṣran Mu‘tazilīs. Murtaḍā considers the question part of the debate on divine justice which he deems complementary to divine unicity as the two essential components of sound doctrine;⁶² this position is to be read in his various theological works, be they in the form of books – with extremely elaborate discussions – or shorter treatises where his order of priorities cannot be mistaken⁶³. In addition to his discussion of the problem in his various works of undisputed authenticity, the aforesaid treatise entitled *Inqādh al-Bashar min al-Jabr wa-l-Qadar* – solely dedicated to the question of human agency in relation to divine will – is also ascribed to him.

There are three editions of this treatise:

1. *Inqādh al-Bashar min al-Jabr wa-l-Qadar wa-Yalih Istiqṣā’ al-Naṣar fī al-Qaḍā’ wa-l-Qadar*. Edited by ‘Alī al-Khāqānī. Najaf: Maṭba‘at al-Rā‘ī, 1935.
2. “Inqādh al-Bashar min al-Jabr wa-l-Qadar.” In: *Rasā’il al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā*. Edited by Aḥmad al-Ḥusaynī. Najaf: Maṭba‘at al-Ādāb, 1966, 51–124. This has been reproduced in *Rasā’il al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā*. Edited by Aḥmad al-Ḥusaynī. Qum: Dār al-Qur’ān al-Karīm, 1985–1990, 2: 175–247.
3. “Inqādh al-Bashar min al-Jabr wa-l-Qadar.” In: *Rasā’il al-‘Adl wa-l-Tawḥīd*. Edited by Muḥammad ‘Amāra. Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 1988, 1: 283–342.⁶⁴ [First edition, Cairo: Dār al-Hilāl, 1971].

circulated name, *al-‘Umda*, although other manuscripts retained the title *al-‘Umad*; see Gurjī’s edition of *al-Dhārī‘a*, Murtaḍā 1985: 1: 5n5). Not only does Murtaḍā object to ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s jurisprudential views, but he also expresses strong complaints about the latter’s methodology in *al-‘Umad*, though he refrains from mentioning names; Murtaḍā 2009: 29–31, 544.

62 Thus a general account (*ijmāl*) of the precepts of religion would reduce them to only two: unicity and justice; the first includes the discussion on divine essence and attributes while all the remaining precepts can be subsumed under justice; Murtaḍā 1985–1990: 1: 165–166.

63 In Murtaḍā’s two full theological works, *al-Dhakhīra* (with *al-Mulakhkhaṣ* as its first part) and *Sharḥ Jumal al-‘Ilm wa-l-‘Amal*, the discussion on divine justice takes up 427 out of about 970 pages in the former and 84 out of about 210 pages in the latter, although topics subsumed under this title vary in the two works.

64 While the first two editions seem to have been motivated by hardly more than mere interest in Imāmī theology, as shown in their respective place of publications and the identity of the editors (both Imāmī clerics), further considerations underlie the production of the last edition. It is published as part of a collection of four texts from leading figures of different Muslim schools of thought (Sunni – as presented on the cover-page, Mu‘tazilī, Zaydī and Imāmī). The editor, Muḥammad ‘Amāra, in his lengthy introduction, makes it clear that the purpose of assembling these texts is to show that Muslims unanimously share the belief in free will; such a universal view, he argues, was dominant even before the translation of Greek philosophy (pp. 8–9). The

Other authors have mentioned the treatise under slightly different titles such as *Inqādh al-Bashar min al-Qaḍā' wa-l-Qadar*,⁶⁵ *Īqādh al-Bashar min al-Jabr wa-l-Qadar*⁶⁶ and *Munqidh al-Bashar min Asrār al-Qaḍā' wa-l-Qadar*⁶⁷.

But there is good reason to doubt the authorship of the treatise, as shall be explained presently. Despite the existence of another work written under the title *Inqādh al-Bashar min al-Jabr wa-l-Qadar* by Abū al-Ḥasan al-Āmirī (d. 381/992),⁶⁸ it must not be confused with the work in question, as its surviving text shows. Therefore, the discussion below excludes the possibility of this text being a misidentified version of ‘Āmirī’s work⁶⁹.

4.1 Synopsis of the content

Following the classical formulaic expressions thanking God and praising His messenger and his household, the author turns to address an anonymous requester who asked him to dictate a treatise on divine decree and determining. The reason is that the people of al-Nīl⁷⁰ – all of its commoners and most of the rest – have been led astray as to believe in determinism, mainly due to their reliance on

endorsement of reason and free will are indispensable tools to help the progress of the Arab-Muslim nation in all respects: political, scientific, intellectual and moral (pp. 38–42). The ideological coloring of such rhetoric cannot be mistaken; one must bear in mind that it was written during the early 1970s when the then dominant discourse of leftist-Arab nationalism was starting to give way to the rising tide of Islamic fundamentalism. The strength of both discourses is readily felt in the introduction; their later fortunes are also reflected in the career of ‘Amāra himself, a prolific author of more than 200 works who subsequently drifted towards a much more religious worldview; see for example his recent *Izālat al-Shubuḥāt* for an accurate assessment of his current positions since the book spans his conceptual world, offering 147 definitions of various terms. Paradoxically, having edited Murtadā’s work at some point earlier in his career, ‘Amāra resorted to a blatantly anti-Shī‘ī – particularly Imāmī – rhetoric in recent years (as in ‘Amāra, 2010: 471–473, 523–529, 549–551), which triggered strong responses by Imāmī scholars; see for example, Diāb 1997: *passim*.

⁶⁵ Ibn Shahrāshūb 1961: 106; ‘Āmilī 1965: 2: 183; Baḥr al-‘Ulūm 1984: 3: 183; Amīnī 1977: 4: 266.

⁶⁶ See the introduction to Murtadā 1990b: 49.

⁶⁷ Majlisī 1983: 1: 11; Ṭahrānī 1983: 23: 150, 267. It is worth mentioning that Majlisī 1983: 90: 1–97 has preserved the aforementioned *Risālat al-Muḥkam wa-l-Mutashābih*.

⁶⁸ Rowson 2011: *passim*.

⁶⁹ The editor of ‘Āmirī’s collected treatises, Saḥbān Khulayfāt, notes that the text reflects his peculiar style, especially regarding the verb-gender agreement; ‘Āmirī 1988: 222–223.

⁷⁰ The most likely place to be meant by the author is the town of al-Nīl in the countryside of Kūfa, as attested by the phrasing which leaves the impression of a town or city thus named; the other two options are rivers, to which the author is unlikely to refer in the feminine voice or to make a construct such as ‘awāmm al-nīl and khawāṣṣihā; see Ḥamawī 1997: 5: 334–339.

traditions of unknown provenance or equivocal meaning or because of confused understanding of some Qur'ānic verses. [177–178]

The author, while affirming the complexity of the problem, stresses that the starting point of the whole discussion must be knowing what ought to be said of God and what ought not; only then can one distinguish between the right and the wrong positions. He then provides a succinct exposé of the history of the debate on the identity of the party responsible for human sins and the nature of human agency. According to him, the root of the controversy is the view voiced by some people who first ascribed human sins to God; in early days, the whole debate was restricted to this question. This group was immediately denounced by the scholars of the time. [178–180]

Later, the discussion developed into a more complex debate, pertaining to the createdness of human acts and the nature of agency and power. Erroneous views ascribing acts of God eventually branched into three main ones, all being determinist: (1) absolute determinism, in the sense that God creates everything and humans, being but tools of divine will, are utterly powerless; (2) that God creates human acts, but humans effect them by virtue of a prior power that they have and (3) that God creates human acts, but humans effect them by virtue of a power created in humans simultaneous with the occurrence of the act. The last view, the author claims, is the most common among all determinists. [180–183]

The people of the right faith are aware that all Muslims agree on a number of arguments that set Islam apart from wrong religions. Nevertheless, these people are also mindful of the myriad disagreements among Muslims. Matters of disagreement can be analyzed by reason, then checked with the yardstick of the Qur'ān and the tradition of the Prophet so that the right may be sifted from the wrong. An obligation then falls upon the people of the right faith to spread their call, since the other position leads to all sorts of heinous attitudes, such as believing in the possibility of God committing evil acts, being like his creatures and disbelieving the prophets. Then a brief dogma on the unicity of God is stated; it rejects anthropomorphism, denies God's corporeality and upholds that the Qur'ān is not pre-eternal. [183–189]

The core question of the treatise, i.e. God's justice, is then tackled. The author believes that God never obligates people to the impossible; He only holds them accountable for what they have done. Moreover, it cannot be that He does vile acts committed by them, such as injustice and instances of illicit behavior. The author's opponents, on the other hand, allow that God obligate people to do what they cannot do and punish them afterwards; also, these opponents have no qualms about ascribing to God vile acts that appear in this world at the hands of humans, despite Qur'ānic statements to the contrary. The logical conclusion of this position, he claims, is that God is more considerate towards His enemies than His

friends; the latter cannot trust His goodwill despite their efforts, whereas the former can always hope for it regardless of their sins. [189–193]

The hardships and material happenings of the world are created by God; but they cannot be called evil (*sharr*) as these might be in fact instances of wisdom and justice. Evil, in the form of sins, is effected by humans due to the whispering and temptation of the devil; this, in turn, is supported by ample scriptural evidence from the Qur’ān and the sayings of the Prophet. [193–203]

The author then moves to provide rational, i.e. independent from scripture, arguments for his understanding of God’s justice. The first basis of the argument is that whoever does an act merits the corresponding attribute arising from being its agent; whoever lies is a liar, whoever does injustice is unjust and so on. But no one can describe God as such, so He must not be taken as the agent of such acts. In addition, the agent of vile acts is more blameworthy than any other party in relation to these acts, i.e. whoever commands them is less blameworthy than whoever does them. So ascribing them to God would make Him blameworthy and He can no longer blame humans for these acts. Therefore, God is neither the sole agent nor does He have any share of agency in relation to these acts; this goes both against pure determinists and against the upholders of acquisition who still allow that God be responsible, one way or another, for the creation of acts. [203–207]

Following is a list of questions, built around scenarios designed to corner the opponents unless they relinquish their position. In this context, it becomes clearer that the opponents are not pure determinists but the upholders of acquisition, as all the questions aim to force them into adopting the position of pure determinists – which they must be disavowing – or accept the author’s proposition on sole human agency not subject to divine intervention. The core of all these scenarios is the problematic position that God is unjust; he can create people’s sins and punish them, or lie to people and hold them accountable for believing these lies. To deny one’s creation of his own acts is to deny the evidence of senses and thus should not have been elaborately discussed had it not been for the ignorance which clouds the other party’s judgment. [207–216]

Having attacked his opponents’ position, the author moves on to defend his. For this, he explains away linguistic difficulties accruing from certain Qur’ānic passages pertaining to the notion that God is the creator of everything, divine decree (*qadā’*), as well as the meaning of guidance (*hudā*) and being astray (*dalāl*). In all such cases, God is understood to be responsible for creating the beings of the world and ordaining the good acts of humans in it. As for the twin concepts of guidance and being astray, the true understanding is that God points out the way of guidance and punishes humans for being astray from it if they choose to do so. An elaborate list of relevant Qur’ānic verses is accounted for, with the author’s interpretation of each. [216–229]

This leads to a discussion of the apparent conflict between divine will and human agency seen in the Qur'ān; here, the author points out the theological difficulties arising from accepting the proposition that God wills vile acts, especially in relation to consequences affecting moral theory. He then proceeds to reconcile his understanding of divine omnipotence and human will without sacrificing either, which is the classical problem of the author's position. For this, he goes over a copious survey of the occurrences of will and its derivatives in the Qur'ān. [229–239]

Finally, the treatise concludes with a long survey of sayings, anecdotes and short comments on Qur'ānic verses from the Prophet and early Muslim authorities to support the author's viewpoint on divine decree and divine will in relation to human acts. [239–247]

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5.1 Analysis

The general content of the treatise agrees with Murtadā's thesis that it is only humans who effect their acts and that God is in no way intervening in them. In addition, the criticisms of the other viewpoint also concur with many of his attacks on the upholders of the opposite position. However, despite such an agreement, analysis of the content in light of Murtadā's corpus reveals discrepancies on many levels – leading to (1) stylistic, (2) terminological, (3) conceptual, (4) sectarian and (5) bibliographic problems. Though not amounting to a radical deviation from Murtadā's initial position on this question, these problems contribute not only to question the authenticity of authorship, but even to develop a negative judgment on the matter. Below is a succinct discussion of these various discrepancies.

(1) *Stylistic Points*

The style of the treatise, conspicuously different from Murtadā's, casts doubt on its authenticity; already noticeable in the early sections of the text, this dissimilarity increasingly unfolds in various stylistic aspects. (1.1) The author employs rhymed prose (*saj'*) frequently,⁷¹ although it rarely appears in Murtadā's prolific output, even the literary compilations – not to speak of legal and theological

⁷¹ Aside from the opening lines which, although heavily rhymed, may be seen as a natural venue for *saj'*, see for example Murtadā 1985–1990: 2: 183, 186, 189, 190, 191, 193, 196, 216, 226, 235.

works. (1.2) Also, the phrasing is more relaxed, unlike Murtadā's succinct sentences. (1.3) In addition, the passionate polemical spirit, mostly hostile and fervent,⁷² is not to be seen in his works, usually characterized by a very cerebral tone even when touching on most sensitive topics and taking uncompromising positions, as noted in his discussion of the Imāma;⁷³ the same can be said about the tone of admonition dominating certain sections⁷⁴. (1.4) Another stylistic aspect is the author's repetition of refrains at the end of sections,⁷⁵ which is not to be seen anywhere in Murtadā's writings.

(2) *Terminological Points*

The use of certain terms is also foreign to Murtadā's output. (2.1) This is evident in the author's conspicuous preference for the phrase 'our Lord' (*rabbunā*) in reference to God, as is obvious from its frequent occurrence;⁷⁶ on the other hand, Murtadā very rarely uses it, except when quoting other texts, as observed from surveying his corpus. (2.2) Also, the author uses the terms *ḥam̄d* and *ajr* for praise and reward respectively,⁷⁷ whereas Murtadā consistently sticks to *mad̄h* and *thawāb*⁷⁸. (2.3) The terms 'People of the Qibla' (*ahl al-qibla*)⁷⁹ and 'the Religion of the People of the Qibla' (*dīn ahl al-qibla*)⁸⁰ in reference to Muslims and Islam respectively are frequently used; nevertheless, Murtadā seems to use the first sparingly and only in legal contexts⁸¹ or quotations,⁸² while never the second.

(2.4) In a couple of instances, the author uses *afā'il* – as the plural form of *fi'l* – for 'acts,'⁸³ although this form seems to never appear in Murtadā's corpus,

72 See for the example the section vilifying determinists; Murtadā 1985–1990: 2: 189–191, 236.

73 As, for example, in Murtadā's style protesting what he considers an unfair and dishonest representation of the Imāmī position. See also how he treats the problem of the occultation of the Twelfth Imam, while aware of the potential weakness of the doctrine and how non-Imāmīs mocked it; Murtadā 1995: 33–35; Murtadā 1985–1990: 2: 293–294.

74 Murtadā 1985–1990: 2: 185–186.

75 Murtadā 1985–1990: 2: 191, 197, 201, 203, 207, 223–224, 226, 239 (where he reiterates that he is concerned with keeping the text within reasonable length); Murtadā 1985–1990: 2: 208, 209, 211, 212, 213, 215 (where he asks the reader to reciprocate the arguments of the opponents against them); Murtadā 1985–1990: 2: 193 and 228 (where he stresses that no friend of God would trust Him nor would His enemy fear Him).

76 Murtadā 1985–1990: 2: 177, 187, 189, 195, 205, 217, 218, 227, 231.

77 Murtadā 1985–1990: 2: 206, 230, 233.

78 See for example the taxonomy in Murtadā 1990a: 276–277; Murtadā 1998b: 131–132.

79 Murtadā 1985–1990: 2: 184, 185, 187.

80 Murtadā 1985–1990: 2: 209, 210, 212, 215.

81 Murtadā 1985–1990: 506, 512; Murtadā 1998c: 302.

82 Murtadā 1985–1990: 1: 159; Murtadā 1986: 1: 94, 2: 93, 4: 321; Murtadā 1954: 1: 178.

83 Murtadā 1985–1990: 2: 180, 181.

an absence most noted throughout his discussion of the question of human acts. (2.5) The phrase ‘Knowledgeable People of Unicity’ (*‘ulamā’ al-tawhīd*)⁸⁴ seems not to have been used in Murtadā’s corpus, since he prefers ‘People of Unicity’ (*ahl al-tawhīd*) in this regard⁸⁵. (2.6) The word *miskīn* is used in reference to an individual’s weak mental ability or lack of knowledge;⁸⁶ this usage, although metaphorical and rare,⁸⁷ is avoided by Murtadā who does not even propose it as an option in relation to its possible meanings in certain Qur’ānic contexts.⁸⁸

(2.7) The author refers to the Ash‘arīs as *ashā‘ira*;⁸⁹ however, Murtadā does not use this word, even in his lengthy discussions of theological controversies where this group – or those who would be thus dubbed – is taken as the main rival. In his extant corpus, the only time he comes close to using the term *ashā‘ira* is when he speaks of “the attributionists, followers of al-Ash‘arī” (*al-ṣifātiyya ashāb al-ash‘ari*)⁹⁰. (2.8) For the determinists, the author uses terms derived from both roots, J-B-R (*mujbira*,⁹¹ *jabriyya*)⁹² and Q-D-R (*qadariyya*)⁹³ – the latter being more frequent. Nevertheless, Murtadā is univocally on the other side of this usage preference; he is consistent in his choice of J-B-R derivations referring to his adversaries.⁹⁴

(2.9) Throughout the text, the only phrase used in reference to Imams is “the Imams of guidance” (*ādimmat al-huddā*),⁹⁵ an expression unusual in Murtadā’s writings as it does not seem to appear anywhere in his output. (2.10) The author uses *mashī'a* and *irāda* equally and interchangeably in speaking about God’s will.⁹⁶ True, Murtadā deems the two synonymous;⁹⁷ but he almost restricts his

⁸⁴ Murtadā 1985–1990: 2: 181.

⁸⁵ Murtadā 1986: 178; Murtadā 1985–1990: 1: 397, 3: 125.

⁸⁶ Murtadā 1985–1990: 2: 233.

⁸⁷ Ibn Manzūr 1967–1981: S-K-N in the sense of being in a bad condition.

⁸⁸ See his discussion of Q19:79 in Murtadā 1986c: 179–180; this, of course, casting aside the more technical aspect pertaining to the legal discussion on eligibility to benefit from alms, where the term retains the sense of material want and poverty.

⁸⁹ Murtadā 1985–1990: 2: 183.

⁹⁰ Murtadā 1985–1990: 4: 27.

⁹¹ Murtadā 1985–1990: 2: 190.

⁹² Murtadā 1985–1990: 2: 243.

⁹³ Murtadā 1985–1990: 2: 190, 242, 243.

⁹⁴ Murtadā 2000: 316; Murtadā 1998b: 99; Murtadā 1985–1990: 1: 212, 409; Murtadā 1954: 1: 48, 499, 2: 211; Murtadā 1986: 1: 83, 86, 4: 317; Murtadā 1998c: 98. The only exception occurs in Murtadā 2009: 507 where the discussion is semantic but not polemic, related to how the verb ‘to believe in’ (*yarā*) is used.

⁹⁵ Murtadā 1985–1990: 2: 177.

⁹⁶ Murtadā 1985–1990: 2: 192, 236, 239.

⁹⁷ Murtadā 2000: 367–369; Murtadā 1990a: 600; Murtadā 1954: 1: 507–509, 2: 78.

use of the term *mashī'a* to quoting Qur'ānic verses where the verb (*shā'a*, *yashā'*) appears, or to the formulaic expression “God willing” (*bi-mashī'at allāh*); using it to refer to the theological concept of God's will is not in harmony with his style as he consistently sticks to *irāda* instead⁹⁸.

(2.11) The phrase ‘the default state of our reason’ (*fitrat 'uqūlinā*),⁹⁹ laden with connotations, is not used by Murtadā. The term *fitra* he takes to mean the way something is created (*khilqa*);¹⁰⁰ thus it would only have a meaning in this context if Murtadā believes that reason can be altered. But for him, reason is strictly defined and is not susceptible to changes that would take it far from its default state: it is a subset of knowledge (*'ilm*), dealing with types of knowledge whose goal is to help a person acquire the knowledge of his religious duties and perform them as ordained;¹⁰¹ being necessary knowledge, all of these types are effected in us by God and are thus unchangeable¹⁰². Therefore, the word *fitra* in the phrase, based on his jargon, is redundant.

(3) *Conceptual Points*

(3.1) Enumerating the various groups of determinists, the author makes a distinction between the position of Ḍirār b. 'Amr (fl. ca. 110/728–200/815)¹⁰³ and that of Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Najjār (d. ca. 230/845).¹⁰⁴ Although both agree eventually that it is God who creates the human act, the disagreement has to do with whether the human power to act (*istiṭā'a*) is created prior to the act or simultaneously with it; the followers of Ash'arī belong in the latter category.¹⁰⁵ Nevertheless, Murtadā seems to have a different understanding of the question where he lumps these two figures under the same school and ignores the question of human power; Ash'arī, he states, has a view distinct from both.¹⁰⁶ (3.2) In addition, it is worth noting that the author and Murtadā have different names to enumerate the main theologians pertinent to the discussion, which would be a strange occurrence if done by the same author.¹⁰⁷

⁹⁸ See for example the discussion in Murtadā 2000: 343–395.

⁹⁹ Murtadā 1985–1990: 2: 185.

¹⁰⁰ Murtadā 1954: 2: 74–75.

¹⁰¹ Murtadā 1990a: 121–122; Murtadā 2000: 453.

¹⁰² Murtadā 2000: 333.

¹⁰³ van Ess 2011: *passim*.

¹⁰⁴ Nyberg/Athāmina 2011: *passim*.

¹⁰⁵ Murtadā 1985–1990: 2: 181–182.

¹⁰⁶ Murtadā 2000: 449–450.

¹⁰⁷ Compare Murtadā 1985–1990: 2: 181–182 and Murtadā 2000: 449–450; the two texts have in common the name of Jahm b. Ṣafwān (d. 128/746) in addition to the aforesaid Ḍirār b. 'Amr and

(3.3) The line of reasoning is also different from Murtadā's, as in placing rational arguments last in enumeration, preceded by the Qur'ān, Prophetic traditions and consensus,¹⁰⁸ or in making rational speculation subservient to scriptural requirements¹⁰⁹. This order is not Murtadā's standard line of reasoning in theology, given some of his categorical theological positions. For Murtadā, the question of human agency belongs to the realm of moral principles deducible by unaided reason; it relates to the axioms that it is vile to obligate to the impossible (*qubh al-taklif bi-mā lā yuṭāq*) and to do injustice (*zulm*) in the form of punishing someone for an act of which he is not the agent. These axioms are accepted by all rational beings, regardless of their religious beliefs and independently from any revelation. Questioning them would jeopardize the whole structure of religion, since it opens the door for the possibility of God's committing all forms of vile acts, eventually leading to deceit which undermines the reliability of revelation, as the classical Mu'tazilī argument – endorsed by Murtadā – goes.¹¹⁰

(3.4) Then we are faced with the problem of using non-multi-attested reports (*akhbār al-āḥād*). (3.4.1) The author's objection to his opponents' reliance on equivocal reports, without him mentioning that these are non-multi-attested, is conspicuous.¹¹¹ Murtadā usually points out this problem as his main argumentative tactic as seen from surveying his writings on different theological questions,¹¹² since he invokes it based on epistemological reasons rooted in his understanding of knowledge and the means to acquire it¹¹³. (3.4.2) But not only does the author fail to invoke this objection in his opponents' faces; rather, the divergence from Murtadā's position is made even starker by the author's extreme reliance on non-multi-attested traditions to buttress his own arguments.¹¹⁴ Since these reports cannot produce certain knowledge, they are insufficient in matters of secondary importance such as the particulars of religious law, let alone the foundations of doctrines which are the subject of the treatise.¹¹⁵ But even if the

Najjār. But the author mentions Bishr al-Marīsī (d. 218/833), Muḥammad b. Ghawth and Yaḥyā b. Kāmil (d. mid-third/ninth century); as for Murtadā, he lists the names of Ḥafṣ al-Fard (fl. late second/eighth century) and Ṣāliḥ Qubba (fl. third/ninth century).

¹⁰⁸ Murtadā 1985–1990: 2: 197.

¹⁰⁹ Murtadā 1985–1990: 2: 185.

¹¹⁰ Murtadā 2000: 310, 319–322; Murtadā 1954: 2: 142.

¹¹¹ Murtadā 1985–1990: 2: 178.

¹¹² Murtadā 1990a: 358–360; Murtadā 1998b: 181–184, 187; Murtadā 1995: 48–49; Murtadā 1985–1990: 1: 116–117.

¹¹³ Murtadā 2009: 354–358; Murtadā 1990a: 351–355; Murtadā 1986: 2: 68–69; Murtadā 1985–1990: 1: 64–66, 2: 336–341.

¹¹⁴ Murtadā 1985–1990: 2: 201–203, 239–247.

¹¹⁵ Murtadā 2009: 380–381; Murtadā 1985–1990: 1: 33–35, 94–95.

validity of these reports is granted, the controversy in question belongs solely to the realm of speculation about God which, according to Murtadā's theology, must not depend on revelation, for the reasons enumerated above, i.e. the logical precedence of establishing the vileness of deceit over the reliability of any report, no matter how well established; so the recurrent use of these traditions stands in contrast to his general approach.¹¹⁶

(3.5) Moreover, the author's view on the legitimate source for divine names and attributes seems to have been different from Murtadā's; he is more inclined to rule that revelation and not reason is the source of these names and attributes,¹¹⁷ whereas Murtadā confines the role of revelation to prohibiting certain names of God that reason would otherwise have legitimized.¹¹⁸

(3.6) In addition, the author argues from a pure linguistic standpoint; that is to say that the agent of an act of injustice is unjust (*fā'il al-zulm zālim*), which leads to the situation – supposedly unacceptable to the opponent – that ascribing acts of injustice to God would legitimize calling Him unjust. The same line of argument is also used for other derivations of vile acts such as instances of purposelessness and corruption in relation to their agents and other acts that, though not vile, cannot be ascribed to God such as instances of compliance and obedience.¹¹⁹ This logic runs contrary to Murtadā's reasoning as attested in his writings where he stresses the point that concepts enjoy logical precedence over terms and not otherwise.¹²⁰

(3.7) The analogy of obedience to kings with that to God, usually used by determinists to argue that it infringes on God's omnipotence not to be obeyed by his creatures, is rejected by the author. He judges such an analogy fallacious on several grounds, the first being that the king lacks authority, power and knowledge: he is in no position to bring people under moral obligation, nor is he able to unconditionally deliver the consequences of acts nor can he assess the proper magnitude of reward and punishment.¹²¹ Murtadā deals with the same scenario in his theological writings; nonetheless, he does not bring up these objections. Rather, his rejection of the analogy is based on the fact that the king, unlike God, is likely to be affected by his subjects' disobedience.¹²² That this answer is used by the

¹¹⁶ Murtadā 2000: 478–479.

¹¹⁷ Murtadā 1985–1990: 2: 188.

¹¹⁸ Murtadā 2000: 190, 201, 218–222, 392–393; Murtadā 1990a: 571–604.

¹¹⁹ Murtadā 1985–1990: 2: 203–204.

¹²⁰ Murtadā 2000: 327–328.

¹²¹ Murtadā 1985–1990: 2: 232.

¹²² Murtadā 2000: 390–391.

author as his second choice¹²³ indicates a different order of argumentative priorities and thought processes than Murtadā's.

(4) *Sectarian Points*

Certain aspects of the text reflect an attitude that does not easily fit into an Imāmī discourse. (4.1) The author speaks favorably of some groups and individuals who are not so received in the Imāmī tradition, although to various extents. (4.1.1) He uses the term ancestors (*salaf*) in a laudatory tone,¹²⁴ which is not usually the case in Murtadā's – or Imāmī writings in general. (4.1.2) In addition, there is the positive reference to the Companions, the Followers (*al-tābi‘ūn*), and the subsequent guided generations who follow in their steps,¹²⁵ all of which being expressions alien to Imāmī literature with its predominantly negative view of these times and individuals¹²⁶.

(4.1.3) This divergence from the Imāmī spirit can be read in the many traditions the author relates on the authority of the famous Companion Abū Hurayra (d. 57/676–677) who is considered particularly infamous by Imāmīs, Murtadā not being an exception, for more than the theological reasons used to stigmatize other Companions.¹²⁷ (4.1.4) The whole work concludes with an episode from none other than the second caliph ‘Umar, whereby the author urges the readers to consider the example of ‘Umar's reaction to heavy obligations.¹²⁸ Given Murtadā's views on the Companions in general,¹²⁹ and ‘Umar in particular,¹³⁰ it is extremely unlikely that he defers to his authority. (4.1.5) Moreover, a number of individuals are praised both for being knowledgeable (*‘ulamā’*) and among the first to have rejected the claim that God creates people's vile acts; although it is plausible that Murtadā did praise some of these individuals, even against the general Imāmī ethos, it is highly unlikely that he lauded all of them.¹³¹

123 Murtadā 1985–1990: 2: 232.

124 Murtadā 1985–1990: 2: 185.

125 Murtadā 1985–1990: 2: 187.

126 See Kohlberg 1976b: particularly 96–98.

127 Murtadā 1954: 2: 174–175; Murtadā 1985–1990: 3: 284. For other early Imāmīs see for example, Şadūq 1983: 19; Mufid 1993b: 78; Mufid 1993a: 23.

128 Murtadā 1985–1990: 2: 246–247.

129 Murtadā 1986: 2: 126–130, 173; Murtadā 1990a: 495, 535–536; Murtadā 1985–1990: 1: 336–343, 2: 251; Murtadā 1998b: 235.

130 Murtadā 1986: 3: 272–273; Murtadā 1985–1990: 1: 290–291, 3: 148–150.

131 Murtadā 1985–1990: 2: 179; for example Muṭarrif b. ‘Abdullāh, who is reputed to not have been a supporter of ‘Ali, or even to have disliked him. In addition, his extremely hagiographic biographies in Sunnī sources, with the absence of any reference to him having believed that God has nothing to do with human sins, suggests that he probably did not hold such a view in the

(4.2) Another indicator is to be seen in the fact that the author never quotes any of the Imams *qua* Imams; that 'Alī is mentioned here should be seen in the context of invoking the Companions' authority.¹³² (4.3) Certain formulaic expressions are strange to the Imāmī spirit. An example is the phrase "the Qur'ān is our Imam/book" (*al-qur'ān imāmunā*);¹³³ true that this may still be taken as a legitimate, though infrequent, use of the term '*imām*' to mean 'a book,'¹³⁴ but this would not be an Imāmī's first choice, let alone its almost polemical, anti-Shī'i tone in the context of sloganeering at the beginning of the statement of dogma.

The whole problematic aspect of the potential sectarian affiliation of the content discussed above cannot be easily ascribed to cautionary prudence (*taqiyya*), if one still takes Murtadā as the author. Many reasons militate against such an assumption. First and foremost, Murtadā's social status made him immune to such a practice, especially given the favorable vicissitudes of time under the Būyids. Second, according to his own legal views, this is not an instance of permissible cautionary prudence, since the author opens by stating that he is replying to the inquiry of a community of people about religious matters.¹³⁵ Third, even if cautionary prudence is granted, Murtadā's style would still allow him a better and more elusive way of expressing that which he would not accept as an Imāmī, whereas the current text does not show any nuisances – or even an effort in that direction – meant to hide a different attitude of the author than what the *prima-facie* reading of the text suggests.¹³⁶

There remains, of course, the possibility that he was addressing a non-Imāmī audience and writing this way to persuade them, but his biography does not betray any interest in addressing other communities aside from debating their authors. In addition, such an assumption is untenable because Murtadā's reputation as a leader – or at least one of the leaders – of the Imāmī community would make any such tactic useless in the eyes of this presumed audience, especially

first place, given the hypersensitivity of the subject which does not allow for great toleration. So it is unlikely that Murtadā refers to him positively given these two issues, let alone the possible factual mistake regarding his actual position on divine decree and determining; on him, see Ibn Sa'd 1998: 7: 141–146; Ibn Abi al-Ḥadid 1959–1964: 4: 94; Dhahabī 1993: 4: 187–195; Dhahabī 1987: 6: 481–483; Ibn Ḥajar 1995: 6: 205–206; Ibn Ḥajar 1984: 10: 157–158.

¹³² Murtadā 1985–1990: 2: 241–242.

¹³³ Murtadā 1985–1990: 2: 187.

¹³⁴ Ibn Manzūr 1967–1981: 'M-M.

¹³⁵ See Murtadā 1990a: 562–563 for his views on cautionary prudence, where he restricts its valid application to instances of coercion.

¹³⁶ In Murtadā 1990a: 562–563, Murtadā stresses the plausibility of resorting to equivocation to avoid blunt lies. This attitude, one expects, can only translate in a certain phrasing, very different from the straightforward one seen in the current text.

given his declared positions on sensitive points such as the status of the Companions and the question of the Imāma.

(5) *Bibliographic Points*

Examination of the bio-bibliographic sources also leaves one with serious doubts regarding Murtadā's alleged connection to the current treatise. (5.1) Thus, another pointer that undermines the ascription of the work to Murtadā is that the author mentions a book of his entitled *Şafwat al-Naṣar* as a reference work dedicated to the interpretation of ambiguous verses on the question, suggesting that it is both elaborate and well-known. This title, however, is neither to be found in the accounts of Murtadā's works, nor does he speak of such a work despite his habitual references to his other works by name,¹³⁷ nor is the content of any of his works congruous with this allusion. His complementary *al-Mulakhkhaṣ* and *al-Dhakhīra*, which contain a lengthy discussion on human agency, cannot be meant here because of their content which does not correspond to the author's remark, in addition to the fact that Murtadā makes frequent references to them, only by this title;¹³⁸ so it is unlikely that the title *Şafwat al-Naṣar* be another title for either *al-Mulakhkhaṣ* or *al-Dhakhīra*. Assuming it is a different work while still wanting to ascribe it to Murtadā would pose two questions: (5.1.1) first, why Murtadā, contrary to his habit, never alerts readers to such a book in his responses to pertinent questions where he mentions *al-Mulakhkhaṣ* or *al-Dhakhīra* and (5.1.2) second, why the author of *Şafwat al-Naṣar* and *Inqādh al-Bashar min al-Jabr wa-l-Qadar* mentions neither *al-Mulakhkhaṣ* nor *al-Dhakhīra*.

Admittedly, the last argument suffers three problems; first, it is an *argumentum ex silentio*; second, there is the possibility of *al-Mulakhkhaṣ* and *al-Dhakhīra* not having yet been compiled at the time of writing the treatise in question; third, there is the possibility that the title *Şafwat al-Naṣar* be initially the title of a work by Murtadā that is now known by some other name. Nonetheless, the argument is proposed to deal with these challenges within the limitations of the current information. It is still a reliable way to have a reasonable assessment of authorship, given Murtadā's frequent self-referencing in his works and the late date of some of them from which any mention of *Şafwat al-Naṣar* is still absent. The margin of error is there, but the fact that neither this treatise mentions any known work

¹³⁷ Murtadā 1997: 442; Murtadā 1985–1990: 1: 84, 122, 128, 131, 310, 311, 315, 330, 336, 338, 363, 371, 379, 390, 412, 419, 2: 317, 339, 3: 81, 85, 87, 90, 109, 111, 117, 136, 149, 254, 4: 21, 74, 36, 131, 352; Murtadā 1995: 31, 36, 61, 71, 73; Murtadā 1998c: 277, 307, 349, 351.

¹³⁸ Murtadā 1985–1990: 2: 224; See Murtadā 1985–1990: 1: 143, 363, 376, 390, 3: 81, 333; Murtadā 2009: 393, 395, 396 where Murtadā, having discussed similar questions, refers his reader to *al-Mulakhkhaṣ* as the main relevant work.

by Murtadā nor any of his works mention this treatise, coupled with the author's decision to reference himself in a way that does not quite fit into Murtadā's bibliographic records, should minimize this margin.

(5.2) Still, one must account for the possibility of the work having been written by Murtadā at an early stage in his career. A very early date of compilation may explain why he never refers to any of his works, assuming that all of them were written after this treatise; such a hypothesis would also take care of the difficulty arising from the discrepancy in style and terminology, since one can then propose that the writing style and terminological jargon of a young Murtadā were reasonably different from his later ones, even as early as *al-Shāfi*¹³⁹ whose style and terminology already betray considerable departure from the work under study. But this possibility can also be safely excluded by looking into Murtadā's bibliography. The early list of his works, prepared by his student Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Buṣrawī (d. 443/1051)¹⁴⁰ and ratified by Murtadā himself in Sha'bān 417/September 1026 mentions all his works composed up to that time, enumerating 57 items in total.¹⁴¹ But neither *Inqādh al-Bashar* nor *Şafwat al-Naṣar* appear in the list; it is extremely unlikely that Murtadā fails to point out the absence of two early works of his, with one of them – i.e. *Şafwat al-Naṣar* – being supposedly an elaborate compilation.¹⁴²

(5.3) It should also be noted that the earliest source to list *Inqādh al-Bashar* among Murtadā's works is *Ma'ālim al-'Ulamā'* by Ibn Shahrāshūb (d. 588/1192). It is the last item on the list, preceded by *al-Hudūd wa-l-Haqā'iq* with which it shares two aspects: first, *al-Hudūd wa-l-Haqā'iq* does not appear among Murtadā's works in any list before Ibn Shahrāshūb's; second, the content of *al-Hudūd wa-l-Haqā'iq* is even more problematic in its relationship to Murtadā's authentic writings.¹⁴³ Also, Murtadā's close associates such as the aforementioned Tūsī

¹³⁹ His *al-Shāfi* is definitely the earliest of Murtadā's extant theological books, as he refers to it in almost all of them; Murtadā 1998c: 300, 307; Murtadā 1990a: 409; Murtadā 2009: 431; Murtadā 1985–1995: 61, 73. In his legal work Murtadā 1997: 442 he refers to *al-Dhakhīra* in which he refers to *al-Shāfi*.

¹⁴⁰ On him see Baghdādī 1997: 3: 355–356; Amīn 1997: 9: 404; Khū'i 1990: 15: 323.

¹⁴¹ The earliest appearance of this list is in İsfahānī 1982–1995: 4: 34–39 where the author claims to be copying from a manuscript with both Buṣrawī's and Murtadā's handwriting. Another published version is based on Ḥusayn Maḥfūz's copy of a manuscript; it appears in Murtadā, 1998a: 1: 126–132. The two versions are almost identical, with very minor differences probably due to misreading.

¹⁴² No work with such title was found despite my diligent searches in various venues.

¹⁴³ As a preliminary indicator, the author of the current article was able to find 27 definitions of terms provided in *al-Hudūd wa-l-Haqā'iq* that differ from Murtadā's explicit definitions of the same terms; this aside from stylistic and less stark contradictions.

and the famous Imāmī bio-bibliographer Abū al-‘Abbās al-Najāshī (d. 450/1058)¹⁴⁴ fail to mention any of these two texts in their bio-bibliographic entries of Murtadā.¹⁴⁵ That both works make their first appearance in this relatively late compilation, their position at the end of the list and their problematic content leave us with either one of two explanations: that the two treatises were added later by manuscript handlers or – in case it is Ibn Shahrāshūb himself who listed them among Murtadā’s works – that the ascription to Murtadā must have taken place within 150 years from his death.

6 Conclusion

The relevance of this article is to show how Murtadā’s thought might have been misrepresented due to the similarities between his viewpoints and those of Mu’tazili masters on the particular issue of divine decree and determining, which constitutes the core of the current treatise. Given the other positions taken by its author, the ascription of the text to Murtadā would certainly leave an inaccurate impression of his thought. On many matters where Murtadā sought to highlight the difference between his position and that of Mu’tazilīs, the author seems to adopt a view that contradicts Murtadā’s, thus allowing for the misconception that Murtadā represented a form of Imāmī theology that was more accommodating of non-Imāmī viewpoints. It is hoped that the evidence presented against such an ascription would help situate Murtadā’s thought within its context without having to make sense of the apparent divergence from mainstream Imāmī views that the treatise reflects.

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¹⁴⁴ As an indicator of Najāshī’s association with Murtadā, when the latter died, his body was washed by Najāshī, the above-mentioned Sallār al-Daylamī and Abū Ya’lā al-Ja’farī (d. 465/1072).

¹⁴⁵ Ṭūsī 1997: 164–165; Najāshī 1995: 270–271.

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