



THE ATTRIBUTE OF TAKWIN IN MATURIDISM: ITS MEANING AND ITS RELATION TO THE ESSENTIAL ATTRIBUTE

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Abstract. *This article offers a comprehensive analysis of the concept of Takwin (divine origination) within the Maturidi theological framework and its relation to the essential (dhāti) attributes of Allah. The author explores the differing perspectives between the Maturidis and other theological schools (mutakallimun) regarding Takwin, showing that the disagreement stems from fundamental doctrinal principles concerning divine attributes, divine acts, and their relation to human actions. The Maturidis consider Takwin to be one of Allah's eternal and pre-existent attributes, placing it alongside essential attributes such as Power (qudrah), Will (iradah), and Knowledge (ilm). According to them, the various manifestations of Takwin – such as creation, provision, giving life, and causing death – stem from a single attribute and do not imply multiplicity in the Divine Essence, but rather reflect the diversity in the effects of this single attribute. The views of prominent Maturidi scholars such as Abu al-Mu'in al-Nasafi and Abu Mansur al-Maturidi are used to support the claim that Takwin is intrinsically linked to the Divine Essence in both meaning and reality.*

Keywords: *scholar (alim), knowledge (ilm), powerful (qadir), power (qudrah), theologian (mutakallim), speech (kalam), creator (khaliq), creation (takhliq), agent (fa'il), act (fi'l), object (maf'ul), creature (makhluq), originated (muhdath), unbelief (kufr).*

INTRODUCTION

One of the points of disagreement between the Maturidis and the general body of theologians (mutakallimun) concerns the attribute of takwin (origination) of Allah Most High. This disagreement rests on the fundamental principles of each theological school and on its conceptions of the divine attributes in relation to the Essence of Allah Most High and to His act. It also has distinctive aspects with regard to understanding human acts, their naming, and their forms.

The Maturidis have a distinctive approach to the attribute of takwin: they consider this attribute to be pre-eternal (qadim, azali). According to them, the rulings connected with the attribute of takwin do not differ from the rulings connected with the essential attributes. That is, such acts as the creation of the world (al-takhliq), the giving of provision (al-tarziq), the bestowal of grace (al-ifdal), the granting of blessing (al-in‘am), the doing of good (al-ihsan), the showing of mercy (al-rahma), the granting of forgiveness (al-maghfira), and the guiding to the right path (al-hidaya) are all connected with the attribute of takwin. Considering this attribute pre-eternal, the Maturidis placed it among the pre-eternal attributes of Allah, such as power (al-qudra), will (al-irada), knowledge (al-ilm), and life (al-hayat).

This approach in its time gave rise to a number of problems and questions. Among them: How do the Maturidis regard the relation between the essential and the active attributes? How is the attribute of takwin connected with the power of Allah? If takwin is pre-eternal, then how can the originated things (al-mukawwanat) be temporally originated (hadith)? The Maturidis, expounding in detail the attribute of takwin and the questions connected with it, set forth their views on the relation of this attribute to the divine Essence and to human acts. They also provided answers to the views of the critics and to the sharp objections of the opposing side.

This scholarly study seeks to elucidate the theme “The attribute of takwin in the view of the Maturidis: its meaning and its relation to the essential attributes.” Within the framework of the research, the Maturidis’ views on the attribute of takwin were set forth on the basis of their principal sources; the most important doubts raised against them on this question were analyzed; and the answers the Maturidis gave to these doubts were shown.

This research was conducted on the basis of the scholarly, descriptive, analytical, and comparative methods, since comparing various approaches is of great importance for correctly understanding the disagreement over the content of the term takwin and the rulings that follow from it.

The results of this research showed that the disagreement over the attribute of takwin between the general body of theologians and the Maturidis in fact comes down to a matter connected with the naming of the divine attributes. The essence of the disagreement is that the states brought into being as a result of the acts of Allah Most High are called by various names, and their effects are manifested in different forms.

The resulting acts are considered the object (maf'ul, that which is created) of Allah Most High. For example, the coming to life of some being by the attribute of "giving life" (al-ihya), the dying of some being by the attribute of "causing death" (al-imata), and the setting in motion of some being by the attribute of "setting in motion" (al-tahrik) serve as examples. Likewise, all acts are expressed by various names according to their content: ilam (causing pain), kasr (breaking), qat' (cutting), qatl (killing), jarh (wounding), it'am (feeding), ishrab (giving to drink), ikram (honoring), man' (withholding), i'ta' (giving), tarziq (providing), taswir (forming), and others.

MAIN PART

This disagreement among the theologians is manifested in three principal directions. The first concerns the reality of the divine attributes and their relation to the Essence of Allah Most High. The second concerns the relation of the created acts to the attributes of power (qudra), will (irada), and origination (takwin) of Allah Most High. The third pertains to the problems within the scope of the attribute of takwin and its relation to the originated things (the created beings).

According to the Maturidi teaching, the attribute of takwin is single and pre-eternal: Allah Most High is the Agent (Fa'il) by a single act, just as He is the Powerful (Qadir) by a single power and the Knower (Alim) by a single knowledge. As for His acts being called by various names, they are so named because their effects and results differ, not because of any difference in His Essence. The multiplicity and diversity of the names of the act are explained not by a multiplicity or diversity of His Essence but by the diversity of His creation and effect (*al-Nasafi, 2004, 1:489; al-Bayadi, 2007:181*). On this, Abu al-Mu'in al-Nasafi said: "Know that the words takwin (origination), takhliq (creating), khalq (making), ijad (bringing into existence), ihdath (causing to be), and ikhtira' (originating from nothing) are synonyms of one another, all of which denote a single meaning, namely 'bringing from non-existence into existence.' For this reason we use the word 'takwin,' which reflects the meaning of all of these, following the way of our pious predecessors" (*al-Nasafi, 2004, 1:400; al-Taftazani, 1982:174*).

In their works the Maturidis devoted great attention to this attribute, giving special attention to expounding it, discussing it, and refuting their opponents. The reason for this, as al-Nasafi emphasizes, is that on this question they stood apart from the other

theologians, while their opponents wished to come forward with dispute and criticism against them. For this reason the Maturidis made it their aim to set forth the reality and pre-eternity of this attribute and strove to prove that what they said was true. The Maturidis emphasized that the truth does not become weak through being supported by a minority, and falsehood does not become truth through being supported by a majority.

The classification of the attributes of Allah and the differentiation of their rulings is one of the principal causes of the disagreement between Imam al-Maturidi and the majority of the theologians. They all agree that the attributes are divided into essential (dhāti) and active (fi'li) attributes, but they disagree about the content of each category and the rulings connected with it. This will be discussed in detail below.

DISCUSSION

The Maturidis, not distinguishing the essential and active attributes from one another, say that all of them are pre-eternal attributes of the Essence. On this, their imam Abu Mansur al-Maturidi expounded: “His active attribute is, in reality, His essential attribute” (*al-Maturidi*, 1970:51). His followers, too, following this view, accepted the division of the attributes into two but issued a single ruling concerning them. Abu al-Mu'in al-Nasafi, in his work “Bahr al-kalam,” says: “The attributes are divided into two kinds: essential and active. The essential attributes are: al-hayat (life), al-qudra (power), al-sam' (hearing), al-basar (sight), al-ilm (knowledge), al-kalam (speech), al-mashi'a (volition), and al-irada (will). The active attributes are: al-khalq (creating), al-tarziq (giving provision), al-ifdal (showing grace), al-in'am (granting blessing), al-ihsan (doing good), al-rahma (showing mercy), al-maghfira (granting forgiveness), and al-hidaya (guiding aright). Allah Most High is one and unique with all His attributes and names¹. He is a pre-eternal, eternal Essence with all His attributes and names (*al-Nasafi*, 2014:104). Therefore, all the essential and active attributes are pre-eternal (*al-Nasafi*, 2004, 1:405). For this reason the Maturidis, not considering takwin and the other active attributes to be merely nominal (i'tibari) attributes, concluded that they are real, pre-eternal attributes (*Ibn Qutlubugha*, 2006:91). In their view, the active attributes

¹ This is the view of Abu Mansur al-Maturidi and most of his followers. On this question, some scholars of Transoxiana differed with them: they claimed that attributes such as giving provision, giving life, causing death, and forming are real attributes, but that each is a separate pre-eternal attribute rather than one. This is an abandoned view among the Maturidis; it is mentioned here to indicate that it is an anomalous (shadhdh) and unaccepted opinion (see al-Khayali, Sharh al-Khayali 'ala al-Nuniyya, ed. A. N. al-Malibari, Maktabat Wahba, 2008, p. 210).

are not the act itself but that which brings the act into being. For this reason the active attributes are pre-eternal, while the act itself is considered originated (created). The active attribute is in reality a single attribute, but it is named variously according to the consideration of its connection (ta'alluq)" (*al-Bayadi, 2007:181-187*).

In the view of the Mu'tazilites, the attribute of pre-eternity (al-qidam) is an exclusive attribute of Allah Most High. For this reason they denied any attribute contrary to pre-eternity. They said: "Affirming the pre-eternity of some meaning or active attribute leads to a multiplication of the number of essences." This contradicts "al-tawhid," which is one of their most important principles. For this reason the Mu'tazilites, regarding the fact that Allah Most High is knowing, powerful, living, hearing, and seeing as belonging to His Essence, denied the pre-eternity of these attributes as meanings additional to the Essence. By this they deny the attributes of "knowledge," "power," "hearing," and "sight" of Allah Most High.

As for "speech" (kalam), they regard it as one of the acts of Allah Most High and assert that He creates and brings it into being in bodies, when He so wills, in order to communicate with the creatures. For this reason they regard the attribute of "speech" as originated and created. Ibn al-Murtada said concerning this: "The Mu'tazilites agreed that the Creator of the world is pre-eternal, powerful, knowing, and living, and that these attributes are not by means of meanings additional to the Essence." The author of the book "Diwan al-usul" said: "Allah Most High is powerful without an attribute of power."

In the view of the Mu'tazilites, the attribute of "will" (irada), like the attribute of "speech," is also originated and cannot be pre-eternal. As Qadi Abd al-Jabbar emphasizes, it is not pre-eternal but is an active attribute. Attributes such as giving life, causing death, origination (takwin), and forming are active attributes and are originated.

RESULTS

According to the Maturidi teaching, the essential attributes are those attributes by whose opposite Allah Most High cannot be described. That is, these attributes exist permanently and necessarily in the Essence of Allah and express His perfection. Such attributes include the following: life (al-hayat), power (al-qudra), knowledge (al-ilm), speech (al-kalam), hearing (al-sam'), sight (al-basar), and will (al-irada). For example,

Allah may be called “knowing,” but He cannot be called “ignorant.” Thus it is not permissible to describe Allah Most High by the opposite of such attributes.

The active attributes are those attributes by whose opposite Allah Most High may be described. For example, creating and giving provision belong to the active attributes. Allah creates at one time and does not create at another; He gives provision, and at times He may not give provision. For this reason these attributes may occur in dependence on the will and may not take place at a particular time. Likewise, positive acts such as kindness and mercy, and negative acts such as wrath and anger, also fall within the scope of the active attributes.

According to the Maturidi teaching, although the essential and active attributes are distinguished in definition, in essence both are considered pre-eternal, eternal attributes. For the active attributes too fall under the essential attribute of “takwin,” and the ruling of the pre-eternity of the active attribute follows from this.

According to the Ash‘ari teaching, the essential attributes are those attributes whose opposite arises when they are denied. For example, if you deny the attribute of life, its opposite – death – arises; if you deny the attribute of power, its opposite – incapacity – arises. According to this definition, in the view of the Ash‘aris, if you deny the attribute of will, compulsion and constraint (idtīrār) arise; and if you deny the attribute of speech, muteness and silence arise. Thus, according to their creed, these two attributes (will and speech) are also considered essential attributes. In their view, the active attributes are those attributes whose opposite does not arise when they are denied. For example, if you deny the attributes of giving life, causing death, creating, and giving provision, their absolute opposite does not arise.

According to the Mu‘tazilite teaching, the active attributes of Allah Most High are connected with practical acts such as creating and giving provision, and they may be expressed in a positive or a negative form. For example: “He created a child for such-and-such a person, but did not create one for so-and-so,” or “He gave provision to Zayd, but did not give it to Amr.” Such acts are spoken of as sometimes having taken place and sometimes not. The Mu‘tazilites consider attributes of this kind to be originated – that is, arising later, dependent on time and circumstance. In their view, the essential attributes cannot be expressed in a negative form. For example, the attributes of knowledge and power cannot be used of Allah Most High as “He did not know

such-and-such a thing” or “He had no power over such-and-such a matter,” because these attributes are the essential, eternal attributes of Allah. Likewise, in the view of the Mu‘tazilites, the attributes of will and speech belong to the active attributes, because these two attributes can be used in positive and negative senses.

CONCLUSION

According to the Maturidi teaching, the attribute of takwin is an essential, pre-eternal attribute by which Allah Most High has been described from eternity. The creatures and existent beings are created through this attribute; the attribute of takwin is pre-eternal, while the things brought into being through it are originated. This is similar to the fact that the attribute of “knowledge” of Allah Most High is pre-eternal, while the things known are created. The attribute of takwin of Allah Most High is everlasting. Every existent being comes into being through His pre-eternal takwin.

Abu al-Mu‘in al-Nasafi, emphasizing that the creed of the Maturidis on this question is correct, says:

“The proof of the correctness of what we have said is the following verse of Allah Most High:

إِنَّمَا قَوْلُنَا لِشَيْءٍ إِذَا أَرَدْنَاهُ أَنْ نَقُولَ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ

“Our only word to a thing, when We will it, is that We say to it ‘Be!’ and it is” (*Qur’an* 16:40). Allah Most High expressed His attribute of takwin in this verse by the word “kun” (“Be!”), and He expressed the originated thing (al-mukawwan) by the word “fa-yakun” (“and it is”). Likewise, in this verse He calls the originated thing “shay” (thing). This address “kun” is, both in Ash‘arism and in the view of the other theologians, something other than the originated thing (al-mukawwan). In our view, as in the view of the Ash‘ari, the attribute of “speech” of Allah Most High is an attribute existing in the Essence of Allah, pre-eternal and essential. The originated thing – that is, substances and accidents – is created and does not subsist in the Essence of Allah Most High. Without doubt, there is a difference both between the pre-eternal and the created, and between an attribute existing in the Essence of Allah and an attribute not existing in His Essence. Takwin (origination) is connected with ‘al-takawwun,’ that is, coming into being; ‘ijad’ (bringing into existence) is connected with becoming existent. The existence of the world is connected with the address ‘kun.’ Thus this is ijad, takwin, and creating, and it is other than the created, originated thing.”

Thus takwin is a pre-eternal attribute subsisting in the Essence of Allah Most High, like the attributes of knowledge, power, hearing, and sight. Takwin is pre-eternal, while the originated thing (al-mukawwan) is temporally originated. For example, the attribute of power is the pre-eternal attribute of Allah, while the object of power (al-maqdur, that which is brought into being through power) is originated. The attribute of will and the object of will (al-murad) are likewise. Takwin occurs to each originated thing at the moment of its coming into being. This is similar to the fact that the coming into being of every existent thing depends on the will of Allah Most High, for the will of Allah is present for the coming into being of an existent thing at the time of its emergence.

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