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Muhammad Mijinyawa

*The American University in Cairo AUC*

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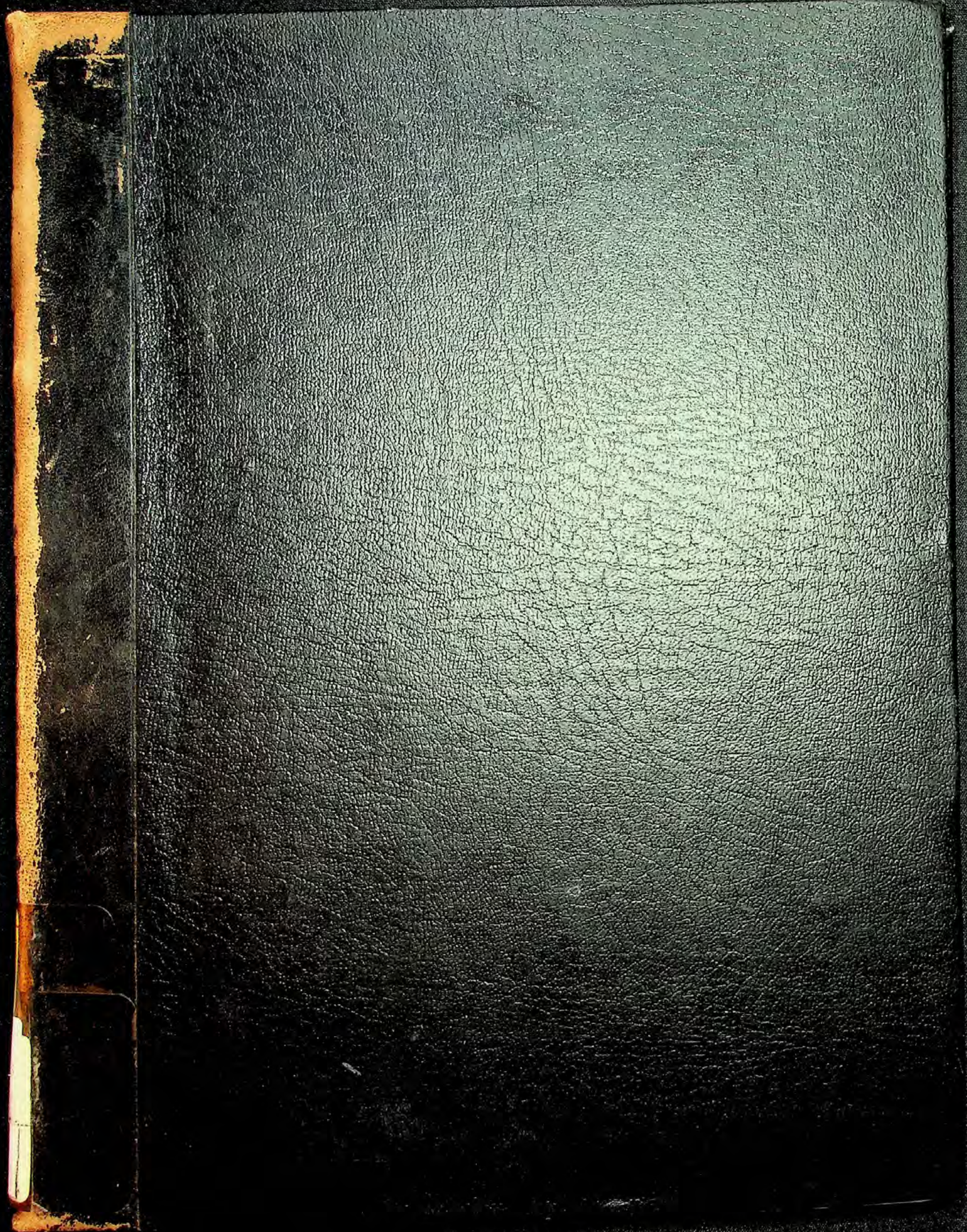
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AL-ZAMAKHSHARĪ'S DEFENSE OF THE  
M'UTAZILITE PRINCIPLES IN AL-KASHSHAF

400

A Thesis  
submitted to  
The Department of Arabic Studies  
of the American University in Cairo  
In partial fulfilment  
of the requirements for the degree  
of Master of Arts

by  
MUHAMMAD MIJINYAWA  
October 1970



This thesis is for the Master of Arts Degree

by

Muhammad Mijinyawa

has been approved

October, 1970

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Chairman, Dept. of Arabic Studies



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## ABSTRACT

The Mu'tazilah School differs in certain respects with other 'Islāmic Schools in the interpretation of the following principles :

- (a) The Strictest Profession of Monotheism.
- (b) The Interpretation of God's Justice and its Implication.
- (c) Promise of Reward and Threat of Punishment by God.
- (d) The Intermediate Position between Belief and Unbelief.

This treatise will discuss how al-Zamakhsharī tries to defend the above principles in his commentary of the Qur'ān, al-Kashshāf. The main attempt is to observe how he makes use of his great knowledge of language, grammar, rhetorics and similar fields to support his opinions, as well as to note his remarkable debating skill and employment of formal logic. The Sunnites' answers to al-Zamakhsharī's claims by Ibn al-Munīr will also be discussed.

Al-Zamakhsharī tries all he can by using his literary ability to make any verse that opposes his teachings in agreement with them. He achieves that in the following method :



(a) He treats all anthropomorphic verses as being used metaphorically.

(b) He gives many interpretations to verses and different readings to words.

(c) He gives what may be considered far-fetched meaning to some words.

(d) He makes use of rhetorics presented in the Qur'an.

(e) He also makes use of different styles of sentences in the Qur'an.

(f) He gives alternative grammatical functions to some words and clauses.

(g) He gives preference to the exclusive use of reason over everything else.

Al-Zamakhshari's treatment of verses may be considered generally skillful and sometimes convincing. However, he has a tough time when dealing with clear and factual verses that obviously contradict his teachings. In some cases, the problem depends on individual belief and understanding.



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT .....	i
PREFACE .....	1
Al-Zamakhsharī .....	5
Ibn al-Munīr .....	8
INTRODUCTION .....	9
a The Muṭazilah School .....	9
b Al-Zamakhsharī's Method in his Commentary .....	12
CHAPTER I - THE STRICTEST PROFESSION OF MONOTHEISM .....	14
a Who is a True Muslim? .....	14
b The Divine Attributes .....	17
c The Creation of the Qur'ān .....	20
d Anthropomorphic Character .....	23
e Is God Perceptible? .....	31
CHAPTER II - GOD'S JUSTICE AND ITS IMPLICATIONS .....	39
a All God's Actions have Aims .....	39
b All Actions of God are for the Good of Mankind. ....	41
c What is Considered Honourable and what is Base. ....	43
d The Responsibility of Mankind before the Mission of the Prophets .....	45
e Volition of Allah .....	47
f The Problem of Predestination and Free Will .....	58
CHAPTER III - THE INTERMEDIATE POSITION BETWEEN BELIEF AND UNBELIEF.	
PROMISE OF REWARD AND THREAT OF PUNISHMENT BY GOD .....	69
a What is al-Imān? .....	69
b The Judgement of Good Reward and its Kinds. ....	74
c Does Anything Abrogate Good Reward? .....	77
d The Fate of One Who Commits Great Sins .....	80
e Threat of Punishment .....	82
f Intercession .....	92
CONCLUSION .....	95
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	99



## PREFACE

The purpose of this thesis is to discuss how al-Zamakhsharī defends the Mu'tazilah principles in his commentary of the Qur'ān, al-Kashshāf. The thesis will demonstrate how the author finds support for the principles in the verses of the Qur'ān, and will show how Ibn al-Munīr refutes al-Zamakhsharī's claims and asserts the Sunnites teachings.

Al-Zamakhsharī's ability in his defence of the principles and his profundity in rhetorics and the Arabic language will be demonstrated. His amazing ability in making compromises between seemingly contradictory verses will be shown.

I am not aware that this type of research has been done before. Though both ancient and modern writers have written on the Mu'tazilah School and al-Zamakhsharī, none of them dealt with the aspect I am going to deal with here. Dr. 'Ahmad al-Ḥufī in his book, al-Zamakhsharī<sup>(1)</sup> quotes al-Zamakhsharī's interpretation of some verses, and he mentions Ibn al-Munīr's answers, yet al-Ḥufī does not point out the method which al-Zamakhsharī follows for his argument. He also does not comment on what the two disputants say.

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(1) Al-Ḥufī, al-Zamakhsharī, Dār al-Fikr al-'Arabī, Cairo, 1966, pp. 19-166.



Mustafā al-Ṣāwī in his book, Manhaj al-Zamakhsharī fī Tafsīr al-Qurʾān wa bayān ʾIʿjāzih,<sup>(2)</sup> explains the method which al-Zamakhsharī follows in his work, but he mentions nothing about Ibn al-Munīr. He usually does not comment on what al-Zamakhsharī says. Again, he did not treat all the verses that al-Zamakhsharī used for his support.

This is the proposed plan of the research. After introducing the topic, the known facts about both al-Zamakhsharī and Ibn al-Munīr will be presented as part of the preface. In the Introduction, I shall attempt to throw some light on the Muʿtazilah School and al-Zamakhsharī's method in his commentary.

The thesis consists of three chapters. The first one deals with what the Muʿtazilah consider to be the strictest profession of monotheism. The chapter deals with the following :

(a) Who is the true Muslim?

(b) Denial of the eternal and independent attributes of Allāh.

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(2) ~~Dār al-Maʿārif~~, Cairo, 1959, pp.107-153.



- (c) The creation of the Qur'ān.
- (d) Verses that have an anthropomorphic character.
- (e) Denial of the visual appearance of God.

The second chapter deals with God's justice and its implication. It is subdivided into the following headings :

- (a) All God's Actions Have Aims
- (b) All Actions of God are for the Good of Mankind.
- (c) What is Considered Honourable and what is Base.
- (d) The Responsibility of Mankind before the Mission of the Prophets
- (e) God's Desiring of Good rather than Evil.
- (f) The Problem of Predestination and Free Will.

The third chapter concerns two principles. I treat them together because they are related. The principles are :

- (a) Promise of reward and threat of punishment by God.
- (b) The intermediate position between belief and unbelief.



The chapter is treated under the following headings :

- (a) What is al-Imān?
- (b) The judgement of good reward and its divisions.
- (c) Does anything abrogate a good reward?
- (d) What is the fate of one who commits a great sin?
- (e) Will there be any intercession on the Day of Resurrection?

I shall usually begin any discussion by demonstrating al-Zamakhsharī's commentary, verse by verse, giving after each verse Ibn al-Munīr's answer. Having done that, I shall indicate the method that the author follows in his discussion. I may conclude the discussion with my remarks. In the conclusion an attempt will be made to assess al-Zamakhsharī's degree of success and failure as a defender of the Muṭazilah School.

From the above, it is clear that this thesis will not discuss the Muṭazilah principle of 'commanding good and forbidding evil', because there is no dissension among the Islamic sects on the necessity of this doctrine. Opinions vary on whether the doctrine should be carried out



by force or not. Some Sunnites agree with the Mu'tazilah on using force.

The topic of this research requires two books as principal references:

- (a) Al-Kashshāf by al-Zamakhsharī.
- (b) Al-Intisāf Fīmā Taḍammanahū al-Kashshāf min al-I'tizāl, by Ibn al-Munīr.

The latter book states the Sunnites' answers to al-Zamakhsharī's claims. As the book is printed in the margin of al-Kashshāf, reference to the author's comments is mostly on the same page with al-Zamakhsharī's.

As for the translation of the Qur'anic verses, I depend on some translation books after making the necessary adaptation. I have consulted both ancient and modern works written on the Mu'tazilah School and al-Zamakhsharī.

Before we study al-Kashshāf, it may be appropriate to say a few words about the author. 'Abū al-Qāsim Maḥmūd b. 'Umar al-Zamakhsharī was born in Zamakhshar~~x~~.

Before we study al-Kashshāf, it may be appropriate to say a few words about the author. Abu al-Qāsim Maḥmūd b. 'Umar ~~al-Zamkhsharī~~ was born in Zamakhshar.



a town of Khawārazim, of a poor but good family. He died at Jurjāriyah in 538<sup>A.H.</sup>. Umar, his father, was a very pious and learned man. Al-Zamakhsharī's sound and religious environment encouraged him to study and to be interested in Islām from his early years. The boy was very intelligent and sensitive.

Al-Zamakhsharī was keen in his studies and was also fond of reading. After completing his primary education at his home town, he went to Bukhārā for further studies. He studied Arabic literature and grammar under the famous 'Abū Muḍar, Maḥmūd b. Jarīr al-Ḍabbī. He excelled in almost all the studies of his time. Ibn Khallikān, commenting on him, says, "He was the undisputed leader of his time. People went to him from distant places to acquire knowledge."<sup>(3)</sup> Al-Zamakhsharī was a skilled poet, his diwān is clear evidence of this.

Al-Zamakhsharī wrote about 50 books in different fields; language, grammar, rhetoric, jurisprudence and commentary of the Qur'ān.<sup>(4)</sup> Al-Zamakhshari was an original thinker. Al-Kashshāf is the best of his

(3) Al-Qādī 'Ahmad Ibn Khallikān, Wafayāt al-A'yan, n.p. n.d., II p.107.

(4) Al-Hūfī, op. cit., pp.58-63.



works. After he failed to associate himself with rules, he travelled widely. He went to Khurāsān, ʿAṣfahān, Makkah, Bagdad and Syria. Thus he widened his education and gathered invaluable new experiences.

ʿAbū Muḍar, the teacher of al-Zamakhsharī, was a fanatical Muʿtazilite. It is said that he was the one who spread Muʿtazilah teachings in Khuwārazm,<sup>(5)</sup> where his student studied for sometime. It seemed that al-Zamakhshari was influenced by his teacher, so he also became fanatical in the sect. He was very critical and cruel to his opponents; he seized the slightest opportunity to tease and condemn them.

Al-Zamakhshari wrote his Kashshāf during his second stay in Makkah, at the request of his admirers. The commentary is a true mirror of the author's personality. His interest in discussion and argument is clear in his style of writing. It is clear from his Tafsīr that he gained a lot from the commentaries of his predecessors, especially the Muʿtazilites. He discusses problems pertaining to the science of rhetorics, grammar, jurisprudence and language. He tries to prove that the Qurʾān is inimitable in composition. He accuses his

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(5) Ibid., p.48.



opponents of all evil. In spite of its Muṭazilah bias, al-Kashshaf is widely read even in the circles of the unnites.

Many Sunnites, like Ibn al-Munīr, wrote in defence of their doctrine. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. al-Munīr obtained his education in Alexandria, where he was appointed a judge later. He was a Sunnite from the Mālik school of law. He was very learned in Arabic literature, grammar and rhetorics. Ibn al-Munīr does not challenge al-Zamakhsharī in the Muṭazilah principles alone, but he challenges him also in grammatical and linguistic problems. He accuses al-Zamakhsharī of misinterpreting some verses. Yet, Ibn al-Munīr did not ignore his opponent's good interpretation of some verses.



## INTRODUCTION

Mu'tazilah is an Islamic sect founded towards the end of the First Century of the Hijrah. Though it appears that the school was purely religious and theological, it had political elements. Opinions vary on why the sect was named Mu'tazilah. One view attributes the name to Wāṣil b. 'Alī, and 'Amr b. 'Ubaid's withdrawal from Ḥasan al-Baṣrī's circles, as a result of a dispute concerning the fate of one who commits 'kabīrah' (great sin).<sup>(6)</sup> Another explanation is that they are named so because they rejected the prevailing opinions concerning one who commits a great crime.<sup>(7)</sup>

The Mu'tazilah claim that he who commits a great sin has become neither a believer nor an unbeliever, but rather 'fāsiq'. That is, he is in an intermediate position between belief and unbelief. The Islamic sect known as Khawārij claim that he who commits a great sin has become an unbeliever.<sup>(8)</sup> All these opinions are contrary to the teaching of the Murjīah,<sup>(9)</sup> who maintain

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(6) Ibn Khallīkan, op. cit., p.224.

(7) 'Abd al-Qāhir b. Tāhir al Baghdādī, 'al-Farq bayn al-Firaq', ed., Muhammad Badr (Cairo, 1910), p.94.

(8) Ibid., p.343

(9) 'Ahmad b. Yahyā, 'Kitāb Tabaqāt al-Mu'tazilah', (Bayrūt, 1961), p.3.



that sin does not alter one's faith, and that the fate of a sinner should be left to God. The Sunnites maintain that a sinner should be considered as a disobedient muslim only.

Dr. 'Ahmad 'Amīn mentions some other possible explanations of the naming of the school, which are less plausible.<sup>(10)</sup> The Mu'tazilah is referred to as 'Qadrite'. But this was a separate group of those who believed in free will. As we shall see later, Free Will is one of the doctrines of the Mu'tazilah School. At times, the school was also referred to as Jahmite. This was a different group headed by Jahm b. Ṣafwān who taught the doctrine of strict predestination. The Mu'tazilah agreed with the Jahmites on the creation of the Qur'ān, unperceptivity of Allāh, and the denial of eternal and divine attributes.<sup>(11)</sup> The Mu'tazilah rejected these two names, calling themselves 'Ahl al-'Adl wa al-Tawhīd'. We shall see why they call themselves so later.

The Mu'tazilah, like the other Islāmic sects, did not continue as one party, but became divided into about

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(10) 'Ahmad 'Amīn, 'Fajr al-'Islām' 10th Ed. (Cairo, 1965), p.289-290.

(11) Al-Baghdādī, op. cit., p.199.



twenty groups, differing from each other in their teachings. According to al-Khayyāt, one of their leaders, no one deserves the name of the Mu'tazilite except he who believes in the above five principles.<sup>(12)</sup>

The Mu'tazilah differ in certain respects from the other Islamic sects in their interpretation of the above principles. As the sects differed from each other, they all referred to the Qur'ān to defend their teachings and attack others. Each sect began to interpret the Qur'ān according to its teachings, so the Qur'ān, became their first refuge for support and protection. Many Mu'tazilites have paid great attention to the commentary of the Qur'ān. Unfortunately, the majority of their works have not reached us; only three of their commentaries are available now,<sup>(13)</sup> viz :

- 1- "Tanzīh al-Qur'ān 'an al-Maṭā'īn" by al-Qāḍi-'Abd al-Jabbār.

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(12) 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Khayyāt, Kitāb al-'Intisār, n.p., n.d., p.93.

(13) Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Dhahabī, "al-Tafsīr wa al-Mufaṣṣirūn", Cairo, 1961, I, p.391.



2- "Amālī" by al-Sharīf al-Murtadā

3- "Al-Kashshāf" by al-Zamakhsharī

It seems to be that the defence of the Mu'tazilah school is one of al-Zamakhsharī's chief aims in his commentary. He tried to achieve that in the following manner :

- (a) He explains the use of language to suit his own purpose by changing simpler and more direct meanings of some words that do not agree with his principles, and replacing them with what may be considered far-fetched meanings.
- (b) He uses his intellectual ability in giving more than one interpretation, all of which support his doctrines.
- (c) He supports his ideas by utilizing the rhetorics presented in the Qur'ān.
- (d) He sometimes gives different readings to some words in order to make verses agree with his opinions.
- (e) He employs the science of the Arabic grammar as one of his devices.



(f) He utilizes the Hadīth to help his defence.

(g) He makes use of different styles of sentences in the Qur'ān.

Exclusive use of reason is the most important of his tools. He discards the Hadīth, consensus or opinions, and analogy whenever they conflict with reason. He begins his discussion with dialogue mostly. For example, he says, "If you say so and so, I say so and so." Many times he introduces an Arab proverb or some lines of poetry to support his argument.



## CHAPTER I

### The Strictest Profession of Monotheism

Who Is A True Muslim? The first century of the Hijrah witnessed the beginning of dissensions among the Islamic sects. It reached to the extent that each sect considered the members of the other sects non-Muslims. For example, the Mu'tazilah tried to prove to the other sects that they were the only true Muslims. In an attempt to prove this, al-Zamakhsharī, like other members of his sect, seeks support from the Qur'ān, by interpreting some verses according to his opinions. "Allāh has perfect names. So pray to Him with them, leave alone those who deviate from His names. They shall be repaid for what they do." (1)

After giving an interpretation which is agreeable to all Muslims, al-Zamakhsharī declares that it is possible that the perfect names mean God's justice, His willing for the good, and His lack of resemblance to creatures, all according to the Mu'tazilite interpretation; so those who attribute these qualities to God are the true Muslims. But those who claim that God wills evil, and those who claim that Allāh will be seen have deviated from the perfect attributes of Allāh. (2)

(1) 7 : 180 The Holy Qur'ān 7 : 18

(2) Al-Zamakhsharī, al-Kashshāf, Cairo, 1968, 11, p132.



Al-Zamakhsharī seizes the opportunity of the Qur'ānic use of unspecified words. 'Al-Asmā' al-Husnā' may mean any good attributes. A commentator can include any attributes that he considers as being worth relating to God. So al-Zamakhsharī's claim may be considered justified. On the other hand, Ibn al-Munīr regards the teaching of his school to be the perfect names. According to him, it is the Mu'tazilah who deviate from the right path. The question which of the two is right depends on one's belief.

According to his interpretation of the following verse, al-Zamakhsharī considers the Mu'tazilah only as the true Muslims : "And on the Day of Resurrection, you will see the faces of those who tell lies against God black."<sup>(3)</sup> The verse refers to those who attribute to God what is absurd, like a son, and associates whom they regard as their intercessors. They also claim that God has enjoined them to do evil.

Al-Zamakhsharī explains that those unbelievers are not worse than those who claim that God wills evil; those who claim that God's acts have no purposes; those who regard Allāh as a human being, and claim that He will be seen, and those who associate eternal attributes with God.<sup>(4)</sup>

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(3) The Holy Qur'ān, 39 : 60

(4) Al-Zamakhsharī, op. cit., 111, 1405.



Here again, al-Zamakhsharī seizes the opportunity of the Qur'ānic use of unspecified verb. 'Kadhaba' (to tell lies) can be interpreted in many ways. So one can mention anything he considers to be telling lies against God as the meaning of the verse. Al-Zamakhsharī regards the teaching of his opponents to be telling lies against God. As usual, Ibn al-Munīr considers the Mu'tazilah to be those who tell lies against God.

To support his opinion, al-Zamakhsharī uses a different method in the following verses :

"Indeed Allāh bears witness that there is no god but He, and also, do the angels and the learned men. Maintainer of justice, there is no god but He, the Mighty, the Wise. Indeed the true religion with Allāh is Islām."<sup>(5)</sup> Al-Zamakhsharī explains that the last sentence "Indeed the true religion with Allāh is Islām" is a separate sentence, emphasizing the previous verse. The sentence "there is no god but He" is a demonstration of monotheism, and the sentence "(He is) Maintainer of Justice" indicates the Justice of Allāh. By emphasizing the two principles (Monotheism and God's Justice) with the sentence "Indeed the true religion with Allāh is Islām" God wants to demonstrate that Islām is the doctrine of Monotheism and God's Justice, according to the interpretation of the Mu'tazilah School. So

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(5) The Holy Qur'ān 3 : 18-19.



those who disbelieve in the Mu'tazilah principles, like those who believe that God will be seen, and those who believe in predestination are not true Muslims.<sup>(6)</sup>

The construction of the sentences presented in the above verses enable al-Zamakhsharī to assert his claims. It may be of interest to point out that there is no argument whether Monotheism and belief in God's Justice are part of Islamic teaching or not, but the question is concerning their interpretation.

The Divine Attributes. The Islāmic sects differ to some extent in the interpretation of God's oneness. The Mu'tazilah maintain that God is one in all respects. They deny the existence of independent and eternal attributes to Allāh.<sup>(7)</sup> They point out that, if God has independent and eternal attributes, it means that there is more than one eternal, and belief in that is regarded as polytheism.

The Mu'tazilah differ among themselves in defining the attributes. But they all believe that the attributes do not add anything to His essence, and they are identical with it. Some of them maintain that God wills, sees and

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(6) Al-Zamakhsharī, op. cit., I, p.418.

(7) Al-Baghdādī, op. cit., p93-94.



knows by His Essence. Others say that if knowledge is referred to God, it means that He is not ignorant. The Sunnites, on the other hand, believe that God has eternal and independent attributes.<sup>(8)</sup> For example, they say that God knows with knowledge and sees with sight. They believe that the qualities subsist in His essence.

Al-Zamakhsharī tries to support his doctrine. When dealing with the verses that speak of God's attributes : "Say : my Lord knows what is spoken in the Heaven and the Earth. He is the all-Hearing, the all-Knowing."<sup>(9)</sup> Al-Zamakhsharī comments that God hears and knows by His essence. He does not acknowledge eternal and independent attributes to Allāh. Ibn al-Munīr points out that in a language one cannot have a participle, like "al-Samī" (the all-Hearing) and "al-ʿAlīm" (the all-Knowing), without there being a verbal noun like Al-Sam and al-ʿIlm. So we cannot deny the existence of the above attributes to Allāh.<sup>(10)</sup> Ibn al-Munīr's argument is based purely on the linguistic side of the problem. It may be remarked that words related to God should not be considered factual always.

Some of the Muʿtazilites claim that non-existent is not a thing. So they deny God's knowledge of non-existing

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(8) Ibid., p.322.

(9) The Holy Qurʾān 21 : 4

(10) Al-Zamakhsharī, op. cit., p.563.



things.<sup>(11)</sup> Thus al-Zamakhsharī treats the following verse: "Indeed we tried those before them. Verily God will distinguish those who are sincere; surely God will distinguish those who are liars."<sup>(12)</sup> He says that God knows the sincere ones and the liars before their existence, but He does not distinguish between the two except when they come into existence.<sup>(13)</sup> Ibn al-Munīr rejects this interpretation and maintains that God's knowledge is one. He knows all existing beings at all times. The argument here is purely theological; each one of the disputants expresses the teaching of his School.

Al-Zamakhsharī quotes: "If they determine to divorce their wives, surely God hears and knows."<sup>(14)</sup> He explains that their determination of divorce is known but not heard. Here he indicates the Muṭazilah teaching that anything other than sound is not heard, even by God. Ibn al-Munīr considers this to be limiting the hearing of God. He claims that God hears any existing beings. For example, He hears meanings, colour and substance.<sup>(15)</sup> Unfortunately, Ibn

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(11) Muḥammad al-Shahrīstānī, al-Milal wa al-Nihāl, ed. 'Aḥmad Fahmī, Cairo, 1948, I, p.99.

(12) The Holy Qur'ān 29 : 3.

(13) Al-Zamakhsharī, op. cit., III, p.196.

(14) The Holy Qur'ān 2 : 227.

(15) Al-Zamakhsharī, op. cit., I, p.364.



al-Munīr does not explain how God hears such things,

Some Mu'tazilites maintain that God does not look at things; He only knows them well. Al-Zamakhsharī supports this doctrine while commenting on the following verse : "Then we made you their successors, on the Earth after them, in order to see how you will do."<sup>(16)</sup> He explains that God does not look at things, because one cannot look at things except if he is at a direction from things. It is known that God is not in any direction. So looking here means a thorough knowledge.<sup>(17)</sup> According to al-Zamakhsharī, the verb to 'look at' is used metaphorically here, Ibn al-Munīr believes in the literal meaning of the word.

The Creation of the Qur'ān : The Islāmic sects differed in the question of God's speech. The Kurāniyyah believe that His speech is temporal and originates in His essence.<sup>(18)</sup> The 'Ash'ariyyah maintain that God's speech is an idea subsisting in His essence; it is also one.<sup>(19)</sup> The Mu'tazilah assert that His speech is temporal and not one. It originates in a substrate.<sup>(20)</sup> In trying

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(16) The Holy Qur'ān 10 : 14

(17) Al-Zamakhsharī, op. cit., 11, p.228.

(18) Al-Shahristānī, Kitāb Nihāyat al-Iqdār Fī 'ilm al-Kalām, tran., Guillaume, London, 1939, p.92.

(19) Ibid., p.95.

(20) Ibid., p.100.



to defend the teaching of his School, al-Zamakhsharī quotes : "When Moses came to meet his Lord at the appointed time, his Lord spoke to him." (21) Al-Zamakhsharī says that God spoke to Mūsā without an intermediate, by creating the speech in a body, as He created it written on the tablet. (22) Ibn al-Munīr declares that the speech was not created, and it had neither sound nor consonant. He also maintains that God spoke directly to Mūsā in order to bestow His grace upon him.

It is difficult to imagine such a speech. It may be Ibn al-Munīr meant by this speech that God imparted some knowledge to Mūsā through his senses. Al-Zamakhsharī supports his argument with a verse : "Say : if mankind and Jinn cooperate in order to produce something like this Qur'ān, they cannot bring anything similar to it, even if they help each other." (23) It is clear from the verse that God challenges people and Jinn to compose something like the Qur'ān. Al-Zamakhsharī argues that if the Qur'ān

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(21) The Holy Qur'ān 7:143.

(22) Al-Zamakhsharī, op. cit., II, 112-114.

(23) The Holy Qur'ān 17:88.



is an eternal attribute of Allah, how could people be challenged to compose something similar to it? Man is challenged to do something within his power only. One should not be blamed for his failure to do the impossible. For the same reason, we cannot attribute failure to God because He does not do what is absurd. So if we believe that the Qur'<sup>ān</sup> is inimitable, we have to admit that it is created.<sup>(24)</sup> Al-Zamakhsharī's argument is logical.

Ibn al-Munīr divides God's speech into two categories (a) the meaning which the verse indicates: this is the eternal attribute of Allāh; it is the real Qur'<sup>ān</sup>. People are not challenged to produce this category. (b) The words and the verses are also referred to as the Qur'<sup>ān</sup>. This was created and it is the one that people are challenged to imitate. Ibn al-Munīr mentions some reasons why the Sunnites do not call the second category created.<sup>(25)</sup>

Al-Zamakhsharī supports his opinion that God's speech is not one with the following verse: 'Oh you Messengers! Eat from the good and lawful things and

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(24) Al-Zamakhsharī, op. cit., II, p.465

(25) Ibid., p.466.

(26) ~~The Holy Qur'<sup>ān</sup> 23:51~~



do good deeds. Indeed I am aware of what you do." (26)  
 He mentions that the call and the address are not literal.  
 The Messengers of Allāh who had lived separately and at  
 different times could not be addressed at one time. But  
 the verse shows that every Messenger of Allāh was addressed  
 thus, during his time. (27) Al-Zamakhsharī indicates that  
 God's speech is neither one nor continuous. So it is not  
 an eternal attribute of God; but created when needs arise.  
 Ibn al-Munīr insists that God's speech is one and continuous.  
 It does not necessitate a second speaker, according to him.

Anthropomorphic Character : All Muslims believe that  
 God is one. They also believe in the principle that nothing  
 is like Him, and He is like nothing. The Mu'tazilah believe  
 that God is one in His essence without division. He is not  
 substance, body and accident. He is not local. (28) Some  
 shī'ites liken God to a human being. Some of them claim that  
 a part of God was incarnated in a man. (29) Some Kurāmiyyah  
 say that God is a substance and a body, and He lives above  
 the Earth. Al-Bayāniyyah claim that God has a form like the  
 form of man. (30) The Sunnites are divided into two groups as

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(26) The Holy Qur'ān 23 : 51

(27) Al-Zamakhsharī, op. cit., III, p.34.

(28) Al-Shahristānī, tran. by Guillaume, op. cit., p.43.

(29) Ibid., p.43.

(30) Ibid., p.43.



we shall see. All the sects seek support from the Qur'an.

Some verses show that none is like God, and He is like none. On the other hand, there are some verses that are apparently anthropomorphic. Some verses speak of God's hand, face, and others speak of God's acts which resemble human beings'. Let us see how al-Zamakhsharī deals with some verses.

"All that is on it will perish, the face of your Lord, the Master of glory and honour, shall remain."<sup>(31)</sup> Al-Zamakhsharī says that 'the face of your Lord' means His essence.<sup>(32)</sup> Ibn al-Munir agrees with al-Zamakhsharī that the word face is used metaphorically here.

"Allāh said : 'Oh Iblīs! What has prevented you from prostrating yourself for him whom I have created with my two hands? Are you proud? Or are you superior?'"<sup>(33)</sup> Al-Zamakhsharī comments that works are generally done by hands, so actions which are not even done by hands, like God's acts and belief in Allāh, are expressed as having been done by hands. God created Adam without any means is another interpretation given by al-Zamakhsharī. According to him, the 'hands' are used metaphorically, in both the interpretations.<sup>(34)</sup>

(31) The Holy Qur'an 55 : 27-28

(32) Al-Zamakhsharī, op. cit., IV, 146.

(33) The Holy Qur'an 38 : 75

(34) Al-Zamakhsharī, op. cit., III, pp.382-383.



Ibn al-Munīr explains that the Sunnites are divided into two groups. Some believe that God has face, hands and eyes as they are mentioned in the Qur'ān. Others, like him, agree with the Mu'tazilah that these things are used metaphorically. "Surely those who are paying homage to you (i.e. the Prophet) are paying homage to Allāh. God's hand is over their hands."<sup>(35)</sup> Literally, the verse means that the hand of the Prophet which is over the hands of those who are paying homage, is like the hand of Allāh. Al-Zamakhsharī explains that paying homage to the Prophet is like paying homage to Allāh.<sup>36</sup>

Al-Zamakhsharī tries to find support in the following verse : "And the Jews say : 'The hand of Allāh is tied up'. Their own hands shall be tied up and they shall be cursed for what they say. Nay, both His hands are wide-open. He spends how He pleases."<sup>(37)</sup> He explains that the phrases 'a hand tied up' and 'hands wide-open' are used metaphorically to denote avarice and generosity respectively. The phrases are used even for things that have no hands, as a poet says : "The reins of this day is in the hand of the north wind."<sup>(38)</sup> "Al-Zamakhsharī points out that two hands are spoken of in the second place instead

(35) The Holy Qur'ān 48:10.

(36) Al-Zamakhsharī, op. cit., III, 543.

(37) The Holy Qur'ān 5:64

(38) Al-Zamakhsharī, op. cit., I, 627-8.



of one hand, in order to emphasize the denial of avarice.

The following verse refers to the Day of Judgment:  
"On the day when a leg shall be bared and they will be asked to prostrate themselves, but they will not be able to do that!"<sup>(39)</sup> Al-Zamakhsharī comments that on the Day of Judgment there will be great difficulties. The expression 'to bare a leg' denotes meeting with difficulties. He mentions that some people interpret this verse in a literal meaning of a Hadīth :

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"The Compassionate <sup>One</sup> will uncover His leg, on the Day of the Judgement, So the believers will bend down prostrating but the unbelievers will not be able to prostrate because their backs will remain upright."<sup>(40)</sup> He declares that there is neither 'a leg' nor 'uncovering!' The Hadīth also indicates the difficulties of the Day. Al-Zamakhsharī points out that the word 'a leg' is used indeterminately in order to show that the difficulties will be severe and obscure.

The Mu'tazilite commentators interpret the verses that speak of God's acts which resemble human beings,

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(39) The Holy Qur'ān, 68 : 42

(40) Al-Zamakhsharī, op. cit., IV, 147.

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according to their teaching. For example, commenting on the following verse : "The Gracious One settles on the throne."<sup>(41)</sup> He explains that 'Istawā 'alā al-Arsh' (to be settled on the throne) is an expression denoting to rule or to become a king, because kings sit usually on thrones. It is said so and so sat on thrones, meaning they became kings, even if they had never sat on thrones.<sup>(42)</sup> It is clear that al-Zamakhsharī regards the expression as used metaphorically.

Ibn al-Munīr did not comment on this verse. But one Sunnite commentator, al-Muḥallī, says : "'Al-Arsh' is a throne, 'al-Istiwā' means sitting that behoves Him."<sup>(43)</sup> Al-Zamakhsharī treats another verse in a similar way.

"Your Lord came and the angels came in ranks."<sup>(44)</sup> He maintains that movements like going from one place to another is only permissible to one who is in a direction. So, the sentence 'Your Lord came' is a metaphor denoting God's authority and control. It is a fact that a king's presence in a place added to his power and control in the area. So God's coming is likened to the presence of a king.<sup>(45)</sup>

(41) The Holy Qur'ān, 20:6

(42) Al-Zamakhsharī, op. cit., II, p.530.

(43) Al-Bayūṭī and al-Muḥallī, al-Jalālayn, 2nd ed., Cairo, 1968, II, p.45

(44) The Holy Qur'ān 89:22

(45) Al-Zamakhsharī, op. cit., IV, p.253.



"And when your Lord brings from <sup>7</sup>Adam's children, out of their loins, their own children and makes them witness against their own selves by saying : Am I not your Lord? They say, 'Yes, we do bear witness.' This He does lest you should say on the Day of Resurrection, we were surely unaware of this."<sup>(46)</sup> Al-Zamakhsharī points out that this is a style of metaphor and symbolism. It means that God has set signs which they have witnessed, to indicate His existence and Oneness. By doing so, it is as if He makes them witness against themselves.<sup>(47)</sup>

Ibn al-Munīr does not agree with this interpretation. He declares that if a literal interpretation to a verse is not impossible, there is no need for special interpretation. He points out that many learned men accepted the literal meaning of the verse. But the way of bringing people out and the way of making them witness against themselves, this should be left to God who knows best. Al-Zamakhsharī's claims may be considered justified, since it cannot be imagined how people are going to be brought out and made ~~them~~ witness against themselves.

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(46) The Holy Qur'ān 7:172

(47) Al-Zamakhsharī, op. cit., II, p.129.



Ibn al-Munīr does not agree with this interpretation. He declares that if a literal interpretation to a verse is not impossible, there is no need for special interpretation. He points out that many learned men accepted the literal meaning of the verse. But as for the way of bringing people out and the way of making them witness against themselves, this should be left to God who knows best. Al-Zamakhsharī's claims may be considered justified, since it cannot be imagined how people are going to be brought out and make them witness against themselves.

The Metaphoric and symbolic style is presented in many places in the Qur'ān. For example, in a verse; "They do not esteem Allāh as is His due, and the whole Earth will be but His handful on the Day of Resurrection, and the Heavens will be folded together in His right hand. Glory be to Him and He is exalted above the partners they join with him."<sup>(48)</sup> Al-Zamakhsharī points out that there is neither holding nor right hand. This style demonstrates God's power and control.<sup>(49)</sup>

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(48) The Holy Qur'ān 39:67

(49) Al-Zamakhsharī, op. cit., 111, 408.



Some Mu'tazilites believe that God does not occupy any place,<sup>(50)</sup> so they make special interpretations to the verses that speak of God living in places. Commenting on the following verse: "They fear their Lord above them, and do what they are commanded,"<sup>(51)</sup> he says that if the adverbial phrase 'above them' is related to the verb, the sentence means, fear lest their Lord should send them punishment from above their heads. But if the phrase is related to the object 'their Lord', then the sentence means they fear their Lord who has control over them.<sup>(52)</sup> Al-Zamakhsharī's knowledge of grammar enables him to give two interpretations in support of his principles. It may be observed that although the adverbial phrase can be related to the object as al-Zamakhsharī points out, yet there is no indication of God's control in the verse.

Al-Zamakhsharī tries to escape from the literal meaning of the following verse: "Certainly, we have created man and we know what his soul whispers to him, and we are closer to him than his jugular vein."<sup>(53)</sup> He explains that the sentence 'We are closer to him' is a metaphor

(50) Al-balanis il Al-Ash'arī, Maqālāt al-'Islāmīyīn Wa Ikhtilāf al-Musallīn, ed. H. Rabtar, (Istanbul, 1929), p.157.

(51) The Holy Qur'ān 16:50

(52) Al-Zamakhsharī, op. cit., 11, p.412.

(53) The Holy Qur'ān 50:16



meaning that God's knowledge is aware of man under all conditions.<sup>(54)</sup>

Is God perceptible? In the Qur'ān, some verses indicate that God is not perceptible and others indicate the contrary. So Muslims are divided. Some believe that God will be perceptible in the life to come and others believe that God will never be seen.<sup>(55)</sup> The Mu'tazilah belong to the second group and the Sunnites belong to the first. It is important to remember that God is neither corporeal nor in loco. Each party gives special interpretations to verses that contradict it.

The Sunnites find explicit support in the following verse. "Faces on that day will be delighted and they will be looking at their Lord."<sup>(56)</sup> Al-Zamakhsharī explains that the object of the participle 'nāzīrah' in the last sentence is brought forward before the participle, i.e. 'at their Lord <sup>e</sup>thy will be looking!' Whenever an object is brought forward that means a special attention should be given to it. For example, in the chapter of the Opening, "You alone we worship and You alone we implore for help,"<sup>(57)</sup>

(54) Al-Zamakhsharī, op. cit., IV, 5

(55) Al-Qadī 'Abd al-Jabbār, Sharh al-'Usūl al-Khamsah, ed. Dr. 'Abdul-Karīm, (Cairo, 1965), p.232-236.

(56) The Holy Qur'ān 75:23

(57) The Holy Qur'ān 1:5



The object 'you' is brought forward to show that it is only God that Muslims worship; none deserves to be worshipped except Him. So in the above verse special attention should be given to the object. The same attention given to the object in the chapter of the Opening can be given to this object also. That means believers will not look at anything except their Lord. Now, al-Zamakhsharī argues, ~~that~~ how can the believers confine their look to their Lord, despite the fact that there will be many interesting things that they may like to see? So if the word 'nāzirāh' is interpreted as to look at, no special attention can be given to the object.

But if the word is interpreted as to wait and hope for a kindness, this meaning will agree with the construction of the sentence. The word is used to mean so. A poet says : "Idhā nazaru (If I hope <sup>for</sup> a gift) from you while you are king, and you are more generous than a sea, you will give me bounty." (58) Beggars in Makkah use the same word when asking for help. According to this meaning, the verse means that believers will not expect bounty and honour except from their Lord. (59) Thus al-Zamakhsharī

(58) Al-Zamakhsharī, op. cit., IV, 192.

(59) Ibid., p.192.



uses both logic and linguistic usage for his argument. It may be observed that al-Zamakhsharī rejects the direct and simplest meaning of the word, and mentions what may be considered as 'far-fetched' meaning. Thus he makes the verse agree with another seemingly contradictory verse. "Sights do not perceive Him but He perceives sight."<sup>(60)</sup>

Al-Zamakhsharī points out that bringing an object forward in order to add a special meaning to it is one of the distinctions that make the Qur'ān inimitable. Ibn al-Munīr was not impressed by the above interpretation. So he argues that nothing can distract the attention of any believer when he is looking at his Lord. He brought an example of a lover looking at his beloved to support his logical argument.

Al-Zamakhsharī supports his stand while commenting on the following verse : "Mūsā said : 'Lord, let me see You'. Allah said : 'You will never see me.'<sup>(61)</sup> Al-Zamakhsharī mentions that God uses the emphatic negative "lan" to demonstrate that it is impossible to see Him, even in the hereafter.<sup>(62)</sup> His argument is based on

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(60) The Holy Qur'ān 6:103.

(61) The Holy Qur'ān 7:143.

(62) Al-Zamakhsharī, op. cit., 11, p.1142.



linguistic usage. Ibn al-Munīr declares that the use of 'lan' does not indicate that the action is impossible. The Qur'ān uses the particle in many actions that are possible, for example, in the following verses :  
"Say you will never go out together with me."<sup>(63)</sup> "None will believe from your people except those who have already believed."<sup>(64)</sup> Their going out in the first verse, and their acceptance of 'Islām in the second one are logically possible to happen. Ibn al-Munīr explains that the emphatic negative is used in the verse, because it is not possible to see God in this world, but this does not mean that He will not be seen in the life to come.<sup>(65)</sup>

Ibn al-Munīr quotes the following verse to support his argument. "For those who do good deeds, a good reward and an increase of it."<sup>(66)</sup> He asserts that the word 'ziyādah' (an increase) means to see God. He refers to a Hadīth which interprets the word thus, Al-Zamakhsharī does not see any argument in this. He rejects the Hadīth, which is as follows : "When believers enter Paradise, there will be a call, Oh inmates of Paradise! Then a veil will

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(63) The Holy Qur'ān 9:83

(64) The Holy Qur'ān 11:36

(65) Al-Zamakhsharī, op. cit., II, p.1142.

(66) The Holy Qur'ān 10:26



be withdrawn, then they will see God. By Allāh they will not be given anything like that."<sup>(67)</sup> Al-Zamakhsharī interprets the word 'ziyādah' as God's grace. He quotes the following verse in which yazīdu is used as evidence : "He will increase for them from His grace."<sup>(68)</sup>

Al-Zamakhsharī says : "Alī, may God be pleased with him, says : ' 'Al-ziyādah' is a room of pearl.' Ibn 'Abbās says : ' 'Al-Husnā' is Paradise and 'al ziyādah' is ten times of a reward.'<sup>(69)</sup> It is clear that this argument is based on the use of language. The word 'an increase' can mean any good. So al-Zamakhsharī holds that the word has a general and not a specific meaning.

Ibn al-Munīr quotes another verse to support his arguments : "Nay! Indeed there will be a veil between them (unbelievers) and their Lord on that day."<sup>(70)</sup> He maintains that 'a veil between them and their Lord' means that they will not see their Lord. Since God says that the unbelievers will not see Him, in other words He is saying that the believers will see Him.<sup>(71)</sup> Al-Zamakhsharī regards this style of writing as metaphorical. He explains that the expression means to show contempt and disregard.<sup>(72)</sup>

(67) Al-Zamakhsharī, op. cit., II, p.234.

(68) The Holy Qur'ān 24:38

(69) Al-Zamakhsharī, op. cit., II, 233-234.

(70) The Holy Qur'ān 88:15.

(71) Al-Zamakhsharī, op. cit., IV, p.232.

(72) Ibid., p.232.



He gives an example, that in our daily life, notable and honoured people are allowed to be at the presence of kings, but common subjects are not allowed to do so. So it is said that there is a sort of veil between kings and their common subjects, meaning the latter are looked down upon to the extent that they will not be allowed to be in the presence of the former.

Al-Zamakhsharī quotes some lines of poetry, in which a poet uses the same expression used by the Qurʾān. The poet says : "If they (his relatives) came to the doors of kings, they are welcomed and honoured."

Some people are honoured and others are disgraced.<sup>(73)</sup>  
Al-Zamakhsharī explains that Ibn ʿAbbās, Qatādah and Abī Malikah say that 'a veil between them and God' means that they will not enjoy the mercy of Allāh. Ibn al-Kaysān says that the expression means that God will not bestow His honour upon them. The problem here is based on the Qurʾānic use of this expression. Is it factual, as Ibn al-Munīr says, or is it metaphorical, as al-Zamakhsharī maintains? The Qurʾān uses both styles, so the question here is left to individual belief and understanding.

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(73) Ibid., p.232.



In his comment on the following verse : "He is the First and the Last. He is Manifest and He is Hidden, and He is Aware of everything,"<sup>(74)</sup> al-Zamakhsharī says : "The first 'Wāw' (and) indicates that God is both First and last. The third one indicates that He is both Manifest and Hidden. The middle one indicates that He possesses the first two and the last two attributes at the same time. So He always exists; He is always Manifest and Hidden. He is Manifest because of the signs that indicate His being. He is Hidden because He is not seen."<sup>(75)</sup> This is a refutation of those who maintain that God will be seen in Paradise. Al-Zamakhsharī makes use of the Qur'ānic construction in which 'and' is repeated three times.

Ibn al-Munīr argues that if God is not perceptible, why did Mūsā ask to see Him? "Musa said : 'Lord, show Yourself to me.' Allāh said : 'You will never see me.'"<sup>(76)</sup> Al-Zamakhsharī claims that Mūsā asked to see God on behalf of his people. His people had insisted that they wanted to see God, so Mūsā wanted them to hear from God that He cannot be seen. Al-Zamakhsharī gives another interpretation to the verse. He says, "'Show me your self' which means let me know your self well. But God answered that Mūsā will

(74) The Holy Qur'ān 57:3 (75) Al-Zamakhsharī, *op.cit.*, IV, p.61.

(76) The Holy Qur'ān 7:143



not be able to know Him well."<sup>(77)</sup> Al-Zamakhsharī claims that Mūsā's people were destroyed because they had asked God something impossible.

Ibn al Munīr maintains that the people were destroyed because they worshipped the calf. If we take it for granted that the people were destroyed because of their request to see God, the destruction was because of their persistence in the request after being told by Mūsā of its impossibility in this world, and because they made the request a condition for their belief.<sup>(78)</sup>

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(77) Al-Zamakhsharī, op. cit., II, p.116.

(78) Ibid., p.112.



## CHAPTER II

### GOD'S JUSTICE AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

All Muslims believe in God being just, but they differ to some extent in the implication of His justice. This is the second important tenet of the Mu'tazilah School. They are so proud of their implication of the doctrine that they call themselves 'Ahl al-'Adl wa al-Tawhīd. They interpret God's justice as follows : All God's acts have aims, and the acts must be for the good of mankind; God does not will evil; nor does He create the deeds of His creatures; man is responsible before divine revelation.<sup>(1)</sup> The Sunnites hold contrary views, as we shall see in the discussion which follows :

All God's Actions Have Aims. The Mu'tazilah believe that an intelligent person does not do anything without an aim, be it good or bad. So God being the Wise, His actions must have purposes and aims. Al-Zamakhsharī, as Mu'tazilite principles' defender, tries to support the above doctrine when dealing with the following verse : "But if God pleased, He would surely bring them all to the guidance, therefore do not be one of the ignorant."<sup>(2)</sup> Why does God not will all people to accept Islām? Al-Zamakhsharī explains that wisdom does not demand God to compel people to accept

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(1) 'Abd al-Jabbār, Op. cit., p.133.

(2) The Holy Qur'an 6:35.



Islam.<sup>(3)</sup> Unfortunately, Al-Zamakhsharī does not explain the wisdom here.

Ibn al-Munīr maintains that God does not bring all people to the guidance because He does not will that, and we should not try to find out why. He does that. The problem is purely theological, and it is not based on any linguistic devices here. Al-Zamakhsharī tries to find support in the following verse: "He (Satan) said: 'Grant me respite till the day when they will be raised from the dead.'"<sup>(4)</sup> He asserts that the longer Satan lives the more he tries to lead people astray, and the more they attempt to disobey him, the more reward they get.<sup>(5)</sup> Al-Zamakhsharī compares this respite with unlawful lusts and pleasures that tempt people. It may be observed that the verse does not indicate why God agrees to give respite to Satan, so al-Zamakhsharī's claim may be considered logical. Needless to point out that Ibn al-Munīr does not agree with the above reasoning. He insists on his opinion that God's acts do not necessarily have aims.

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(3) Al-Zamakhsharī, Op. cit., 11, p.16.

(4) The Holy Qur'ān 7:14

(5) Al-Zamakhsharī, Op. cit., 11, p.68.



A verse bearing on this subject is as follows :  
 "And if they had intended to go forth they would certainly have made some preparation for it; but Allāh was averse to their marching forth. So He kept them back, and it was said : 'Sit at home with those who sit.'"<sup>(6)</sup> Al-Zamakhsharī explains that God was averse to their going to fight because their going would be to the disadvantage of the Muslims as it would cause disaster and confusion.<sup>(7)</sup>

The Mu'tazilah assert that all actions of God are for the good of mankind. The extremists among them claim that God must do what is 'aṣṣalāḥ (best) for his creatures.<sup>(8)</sup> Al-Zamakhsharī supports this doctrine with the following verse :

"Or who answers the oppressed one when he calls upon Him and takes off his evil and makes you successors in the earth."<sup>(9)</sup> He points out that the verse includes any distressed person but there are many of them whose prayers are not answered. To answer a prayer depends on the good intention of its owner. So if one asks for an evil, he is not going to be answered.<sup>(10)</sup> But Ibn al-Munīr

(6) The Holy Qur'ān 9:46

(7) Al-Zamakhsharī, Op. cit., II, p.193.

(8) Al-Shahrastānī, Al-Milāl wa al-Nihāl, Op. cit., I, p.59.

(9) The Holy Qur'ān 27:62

(10) Al-Zamakhsharī, Op. cit., III, p.155.



maintains that the matter does not depend on good or bad intention but it depends on God's will.

Sometimes al-Zamakhsharī supports the opinion of the extremists, for example, in the following verse :  
"For God it is to point out the way and there are ways which deviate from the right course. But had He pleased, He would have guided you all."<sup>(11)</sup> Al-Zamakhsharī claims that it is incumbent on God to point out the right way.<sup>(12)</sup> Here, he takes the advantage of the Qur'ānic use of the preposition 'alā' which means on, upon, in the sense of being incumbent. A non-Mu'tazilite, writing a commentary of the Qur'ān, may avoid the literal meaning of the preposition by interpreting it in a modest way. In the same way, al-Zamakhsharī interprets the following verse :  
"Surely it is for us to guide."<sup>(13)</sup> Ibn al-Munīr points out that there is nothing incumbent on God. It is clear that this argument is based on the use of language.

According to the above doctrine, the Mu'tazilah claims that repentance must be accepted. Al-Zamakhsharī supports this opinion *by* the verse which follows : "With God Himself will the repentance of those who have done evil out of ignorance and then turn speedily unto Him, be accepted there. God will pardon them : for God is

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(11) The Holy Qur'ān 16:9

(12) Al-Zamakhsharī, *Op. cit.*, 11, p.403.

(13) The Holy Qur'ān 92:12.



Knowing, Wise."<sup>(14)</sup> He declares that it is obligatory on God to accept repentance.<sup>(15)</sup> Here also, al-Zamakhsharī seizes the opportunity of the Qur'ānic use of the preposition 'alā'.

What is considered Honourable and what is Base. The Mu'tazilah claim that things are either good or evil because of their essential attributes; reason perceives good or bad in things. The Shari'ah gives information on good or bad actions; it does not establish them as such.<sup>(16)</sup> The Sunnites argue that reason does not determine what is good or bad. It is the Shari'ah that makes things good or bad.<sup>(17)</sup> They assert that essential attributes of things change according to time and condition.

Al-Zamakhsharī tries to defend the above principles in the following verse : "And when you see those who engage in cavilling at our signs, then turn away from them until they busy themselves in another subject. And if Satan causes you to forget, then don't sit with unbelievers after the recollection."<sup>(18)</sup> Al-Zamakhsharī says : "The verse may mean that if Satan before the revelation of this verse made the Prophet to forget the evil of sitting with unbelievers he should not, however, sit with them after this verse reminded him of the evil of

(14) The Holy Qur'an 4:17

(15) Al-Zamakhsharī, Op. cit., 1, p.512.

(16) Al-Shahristānī, Kitāb Nihāyat al-'Iqdām, tran. Guillaume, Op. cit., p.119.

(17) -----, al-Milal wa al-Nihal, Op. cit., 1, p.56.

(18) The Holy Qur'an 6:68.



this action."<sup>(19)</sup> He claims that sitting with unbelievers is among things that reason disapproves. According to the construction of this verse, al-Zamakhsharī may be justified to assert his claims. But Ibn al-Munīr declares that the clause 'If Satan causes you to forget' is in the future tense, so we cannot interpret it to be in the past. Although it is true that the clause is in the future tense, this will not nullify the above interpretation, as we can regard the import of the sentence to be that the action warned against ~~what~~ has happened once before.

The Mu'tazilah find support in the following verse :  
"They said : 'Swear to one another by Allāh that we will surely attack him (Ṣāliḥ) and his family by night; then will say to his heir, we witnessed not the destruction of his family and verily we speak the truth.'<sup>(20)</sup> Al-Zamakhsharī maintains that if they attacked both Ṣāliḥ and his family and later they disavowed the destruction of his family alone, they would not be telling lies because they would not have destroyed his family alone. They attacked both Ṣāliḥ and his family. There is a clear evidence in this story that telling lies is disapproved by unbelievers."<sup>(21)</sup>

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(19) Al-Zamakhsharī, *Op. cit.*, 11, p.26.

(20) The Holy Qur'ān 27:49

(21) Al-Zamakhsharī, *Op. cit.*, III, p.152.



Ibn al-Munīr declares that this is an obvious lie because the unbelievers did attack the family. If one does an action then he disavows a part of it, he should be considered as a liar. Really it is not clear how this can be considered as telling the truth. Even if it is taken for granted that they told the truth, it may be that they did so because they feared<sup>a</sup> revenge. Anybody who disapproves of telling lies because of its evilness will not think of killing a man and his family because the man calls to a new religion.

The Responsibility of Mankind before the Mission of the Prophet. From the above doctrine, the Muʿtazilah assert that an intelligent man is responsible to believe in God and thank Him even before the divine revelation.<sup>(22)</sup> They assert that God provides man with sense and signs which, if he observes them, will guide him to believe in Allāh. But the Sunnites maintain that man is not responsible before the divine revelation. According to them, sense and signs will only help man to know God, but they will not make him responsible. Al-Zamakhsharī tries to defend this opinion in his treatment of the following verse : "We said : 'Get down all of you from it, and if My guidance come to you then those who shall follow My guidance shall have no fear and grief,<sup>(23)</sup> Al-Zamakhsharī points

(22) Al-Shahristānī, al-Milal wa al-Nihal, Op. cit., 1, p.57.

(23) The Holy Qur'ān 2:38.



out that although divine revelation is necessary, doubt is expressed here in order to demonstrate that believing in Allāh does not need revelation. One has to believe in Allāh through logic and signs that Allāh creates.<sup>(24)</sup>

Al-Zamakhshari's comments include two doctrines :

(a) It is incumbent on God to guide people; the verse does not indicate this. (b) It is necessary to believe in Allāh before the divine revelation. Ibn al-Munīr agrees with al-Zamakhsharī on the possibility of knowing God before revelation. In support of his opinion that a man is not responsible before the divine revelation, Ibn al-Munīr quotes the following verse : "We never punished until we had first sent a Messenger."<sup>(25)</sup> He declares that since God does not punish unless He sends a Messenger it means that man is not responsible before that. But al-Zamakhsharī refutes Ibn al-Munir's kind of argument and asserts that although man is responsible before the divine revelation yet wisdom demands God not to punish before then. Man deserves to be punished because of his disbelief in Allāh not because he has not followed the Shari'ah, which is known only after the divine revelation.<sup>(26)</sup> Divine

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(24) Al-Zamakhsharī, Op. cit., 1, p.275.

(25) The Holy Qur'ān 17:15.

(26) Al-Zamakhsharī, Op. cit., 11, p.441.



revelation is to awaken people and make them aware of God's signs. Although al-Zamakhsharī agrees with literal meaning of the verse, yet he insists on his principle.

Al-Zamakhsharī finds support in the verse that follows: "Why is it that you don't believe in Allāh, while the Messenger calls you to believe in your Lord, and He has already accepted your alliance, if you are true believers."<sup>(27)</sup> He explains that the people had no excuse in rejecting faith after the revelation because God had taken covenant from them-by providing them with sense and signs which would guide them - that they would believe in Him.<sup>(28)</sup> Ibn al-Munīr does not agree with the interpretation of God taking covenant from the people. He prefers the literal meaning of the sentence as it has been discussed in a similar verse before.<sup>(29)</sup>

Volition of Allāh. The Mu'tazilah maintain that any one who wills a good is good, and he who wills evil is evil. This leads them to claim that God's volition does not relate to evil acts; in other words, God does not do evil and does not decree it. God wills that the good acts of His servants should come to pass and the evil should not happen because it is not logical for God to will what He forbids. If God wills disbelief and sins, then

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(27) The Holy Qur'ān 57:8.

(28) Al-Zamakhsharī, Op. cit., IV, p.62.

(29) Ibid., II, p.192.



al-taklīf (the religious obligation) has no meaning.

What is neither good nor bad, God neither wills nor disapproves of.<sup>(30)</sup> The Sunnites claim that God's volition is related to both good and evil. So according to them, God wills what He disapproves, and He commands what He does not will.<sup>(31)</sup>

Al-Zamakhsharī tries to find support from the following verse : "Absolute Doer of What He desires."<sup>(32)</sup> He explains that the emphatic form of the verb faʿʿala is used to demonstrate that God wills and does many things.<sup>(33)</sup> Al-Zamakhsharī indicates that actions happen in this world without God's will. Ibn al-Munīr explains that the words 'what He desires' includes all acts good or bad.

Al-Zamakhsharī tries to find further support in the following verse : "We have made only the angels the wardens of Fire. We have made this to be their number as a trial to the unbelievers, and in order that those who possess the Scriptures may be certain of the truth of the Qurʾān, and that they who believe may increase their faith; and that they to whom the scriptures have been given and the believers,

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(30) Al-Shahristānī, Kitāb Nihāyat al-ʾIqdām, tran. Guillaume, Op. cit., p.87.

(31) Ibid., p.86.

(32) The Holy Qurʾān 85:16

(33) Al-Zamakhsharī, Op. cit., IV, p.239.



may not doubt, and the infirm of heart and the unbelievers may say : 'What does God mean by this as an illustration.' (34) He explains that the growth of faith and the belief of the people of the Books can be the purposes of fixing this number, but what the unbelievers said cannot be among the purposes. He explains that the 'Lām' attached to the verbs 'liyastayyina' and 'liyaqūla' is meant to show causes of fixing the number rather than the purposes. He argues that a cause may not necessarily be a purpose. (35)

Al-Zamakhsharī treats another 'lām' similarly in the following verse : "And do not imagine that the fact of our giving respite to those who disbelieve is good for them. Surely our giving them respite results in their increasing in sin, and for them is grievous punishment." (36) Here also he explains that the 'Lām' in the verb 'liyazdadu' indicates a cause not a purpose. It is true that sometimes there is a difference between a cause and a purpose. It may be observed that 'lām al-ta'ālil' is used for both purposes and cause. In the last two verses it is difficult to see differences between the causes and the purposes. So al-Zamakhsharī's claims may be considered to have no strong justification. Ibn al-Munīr does not agree with

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(34) The Holy Qur'an 74:31

(35) Al-Zamakhsharī, *Op. cit.*, IV, p.185.

(36) The Holy Qur'an 3:178.



al-Zamakhsharī's assertion. He regards the 'lām' to be for purpose.

Al-Zamakhsharī gives another reading to the last verse to support his opinion. He says that Yahyā b. Wathāb read 'Tahsibanna' with 'ya' at the beginning of the verb, 'i' vowel on 'al-sīn' and 'a' vowel on 'al-bā' so the verb becomes 'Yahsibanna'. This changes the meaning of the verse. It means let those who disbelieve not think that we gave them long and prosperous lives to make them commit more sin, no, it is for them to repent and accept Islām. According to this reading the sentence 'Surely our giving them respite is good for them' is a parenthesis between the verb and the object, meaning that surely the long lives we gave them are good for them if they seize the opportunity to believe and do good deeds. According to this reading also, the 'wāw' in the sentence 'And for them is a grievous punishment' is conditional. It makes some changes in the meaning of the verse. It means let unbelievers not think that the fact we gave them long lives is for them to commit more sins so that they might be punished severely.<sup>(37)</sup>

Al-Zamakhsharī treats another 'lām' in a different way : "And Musā said : 'Our Lord! Surely Thou hast given Pharaoh and his chiefs splendour and riches in the life of

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(37) Al-Zamakhsharī, Op. cit., 1, p.483.



this world. Our Lord! That they may lead men astray."<sup>(38)</sup>  
 He explains that the 'lām' in the verb 'liyaḍḍu' is for prayer (command). So the sentence means let them continue in being astray.<sup>(39)</sup> He explains why Mūsā prayed that the people should be destroyed. Ibn al-Munīr maintains that the 'lām' is for the purpose, so it makes the verb in the subjunctive mood. It may be observed that one cannot see the difference here whether the verb is in the jussive mood, by the 'lām' of prayer or whether it is in the subjunctive. So both Al-Zamakhsharī's and Ibn al-Munīr's claims may be justified grammatically. It may also be observed that al-Zamakhsharī does not explain why God had put those people in high positions that enabled them to cause others to go astray.

Al-Zamakhsharī tries to find support in the following verse : "He said : 'Now, because thou hast sent me astray verily I shall lurk in ambush for them on thy right path.'"<sup>(40)</sup>  
 He explains that God imposed a religious obligation on Satan by asking him to prostrate himself for Ādam. Satan refused to do so; God punished him.<sup>(41)</sup> Al-Zamakhsharī's comments indicate two points : (1) God did not send Satan astray without any reason, in fact it is Satan who chose to go astray by refusing to prostrate himself for Ādam.<sup>(2)</sup> Al-Taklīf (a religious obligation)

<sup>(38)</sup> The Holy Qurʾān 10:88

<sup>(39)</sup> Al-Zamakhsharī, Op. cit., 11, p.250.

<sup>(40)</sup> The Holy Qurʾān 7:16.

<sup>(41)</sup> Al-Zamakhsharī, Op. cit., 11, p.69-70.



is the pillar of everlasting fortune. It may be observed how al-Zamakhsharī interprets the word 'ighwā' (to cause someone to go astray) as a religious obligation, in order to avoid the literal meaning of the verse.

Al-Zamakhsharī tries to find <sup>more</sup> support in the following verse : "Of God it is to point out the straight way, and there are ways which deviate from the right course. But had He pleased, He would have guided you all." (42) He explains that at the beginning of the verse God says : "Of God it is to point out the straight way." Then God changes the styles and says : "There are ways which deviate from the right course." If it were true that God wills evils, He should have said : "Of God it is to lead you to the ways which deviate from the right one." So the change in the style is meant to show what is permissible to be related to God between the two ways. (43)

However, it may be observed that the style is changed here for two reasons. (a) It is God's responsibility to point out the right way, but it is not His responsibility to lead people to the wrong ways, even if He does evil. (b) If we take it for granted that God does evil, it is not necessary that leading people to wrong ways should be one of the evils He does. Ibn al-Munīr explains that the style is changed because God explains both the right and the wrong ways. His argument is not clear.

(42) The Holy Qur'ān 16:9

(43) Al-Zamakhsharī, Op. cit., 11, p.403.



Al-Zamakhsharī tries to find support in the following verse : "We made them leaders inviting others to the fire of Hell, and on the Day of Resurrection they shall not be helped."<sup>(44)</sup> He declares that the meaning of the verb 'ja'ala' in the verse is to call not to make or turn. For example, it is said : "ja'alahū bakhīlan," meaning he calls him a miser. So the verse means We called them leaders inviting others to the fire of Hell.<sup>(45)</sup> It may be remarked that al-Zamakhsharī interprets the verb with a far-fetched and uncommon meaning in order to avoid a clash between the verse and his doctrine. Indeed, there is no need for his ambiguous interpretation. Ibn al-Munīr insists that the verb here means to make as it is used in many places in the Qur'ān. He cited an example in the following verse : "He (ja'ala) ordained the darkness and the light."<sup>(46)</sup> Al-Zamakhsharī tries to avoid the literal meaning of the following verse in the same way :<sup>(47)</sup> "And do not obey him whose heart We have made careless of the remembrance of us and who follows his own lusts and whose case exceeds all bounds."<sup>(48)</sup>

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(44) The Holy Qur'ān 28:41.

(45) Al-Zamakhsharī, *Op. cit.*, III, p.180.

(46) The Holy Qur'ān 6:1.

(47) Al-Zamakhsharī, *Op. cit.*, II, p.482.

(48) The Holy Qur'ān 18:28.



Al-Zamakhsharī treats another 'ja'ala' similarly in the following verse : "Say : 'Shall I inform you of those whose retribution from Allāh is worst than that? They are those whom Allāh has cursed and with whom Allāh has been angry; some of them He has changed into apes and swine, and He ~~had~~ made them to worship Tāghūt. These are in a worse plight and have gone far astray from the right path.'" (49) The verse does not indicate how God had made them to worship Tāghūt, so in order to avoid the literal meaning of the verb 'ja'ala' al-Zamakhsharī mentions two possibilities : (a) God did not bestow His grace upon them, so they worshipped the Tāghūt. (b) God attributed the worshipping to them. (50) Ibn al-Munīr maintains that the verb means to make, so it should not be interpreted allegorically in order to avoid the simplest meaning. It may be observed that as the way through which God made them to worship Tāghūt is not clear in the verse; it remains to individual commentators to suggest possible ways. So al-Zamakhsharī may be justified in his claim .

Al-Zamakhsharī tries to prove that God did not set a seal on anybody's heart in his treatment of the following

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(49) The Holy Qur'an 5:60

(50) Al-Zamakhsharī, Op. cit., 1, p.626.



verse : "Allāh has sealed up their hearts and ears, and over their eyes is a covering, and for them is a great chastisement."<sup>(51)</sup> He explains that there is neither a seal nor any covering. The two words are used to show that they neither accepted nor listened to the truth. Al-Zamakhsharī relates the sealing up of their hearts to God in the following ways :

(a) Their hearts seemed to be well sealed up as if they were created like that.

(b) The verse can be interpreted literally, considering their hearts in rejecting the truth similar to the hearts that God sealed up. It is said : "The valley has drowned him," while the valley has nothing to do with his destruction.

(c) Satan was <sup>the</sup> one who sealed up their hearts in reality but the action is related metaphorically to God because He was the one who enabled Satan to do that.

(d) The sealing up is related to God because He did not compel them to believe in Him when they refused to do that willingly.

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(51) The Holy Qur'an 2:8.



(e) The verse was revealed thus to imitate the unbelievers in their saying : "Our hearts are protected from that unto which you (the Prophet) call us and in our ears is a deafness and there is a veil between you and us."<sup>(52)</sup>

In a similar way al-Zamakhsharī gives an allegorical interpretation to the following verse : "As to those who do not believe in the life to come, we have made their deeds appear beautiful to them, so they are wandering blindly."<sup>(53)</sup> He explains that in this verse God relates the making of their deeds beautiful to Himself but in another place He relates it to Satan. The latter one is real and the former one is metaphorical in the following ways :

(a) When God has given them wealth, health and long life, they spent that in unlawful pleasures. The bounty also made them reluctant to do good deeds. So giving them this bounty may be considered as making their deeds beautiful in their eyes.

(b) The cause was His granting a respite to Satan and enabling him to make their deeds beautiful.<sup>(54)</sup>

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(52) Al-Zamakhsharī, Op. cit., I, pp.155-156.

(53) The Holy Qur'ān 27:4

(54) Al-Zamakhsharī, Op. cit., III, p.136.



Al-Zamakhshari attempts to avoid the statement that it was God who made their deeds beautiful in their eyes, by considering the style as a metaphor. However, a careful consideration may reveal that al-Zamakhshari returns to the literal meaning of the verse after his long circumlocution. In a similar way, al-Zamakhshari interprets the following verse: "When we intend to destroy a city, we address our bidding to its wealthy ones, but they transgress therein; so the sentence of punishment becomes due against it, and we destroy it with utter destruction."<sup>(55)</sup>

The Mu'tazilah believe that God does not provide people with unlawful subsistence.<sup>(56)</sup> They do not even call what one acquires unlawfully al-Rizq (subsistence). Al-Zamakhshari supports this doctrine in the following verse: "And who believe in the unseen and observe ṣalāt and spend out of what we have provided for them."<sup>(57)</sup> He explains that the subsistence is related to God to indicate that they expend what is lawful. This also can be called rizq.<sup>(58)</sup> Ibn al-Munir maintains that whatever man gets is from God, whether he gets it lawfully or unlawfully. The verb 'razaqnā' does not specify any kind of subsistence, so the argument depends on the teaching of the two schools.

<sup>(55)</sup> The Holy Qur'an 17:16  
<sup>(56)</sup> Al-'Ash'ari, Op. cit., pp.257.

<sup>(57)</sup> The Holy Qur'an 2:3.

<sup>(58)</sup> Al-Zamakhshari, Op. cit., 1, p.103.



Free Will. Muslims are divided into three groups on the question of man's deeds. The Jabriyyah went to the extreme by claiming absolute decree of good and evil by God. According to them, God creates all man's deeds, whether good or evil.<sup>(59)</sup> The Mu'tazilah went to the other extreme by claiming that all man's deeds are the product of his will, and he has a full control of them.<sup>(60)</sup> The Sunnites hold an intermediate position between the two extremists. They maintain that man creates his deeds by God's will.<sup>(61)</sup> Man cannot do what God does not will. Their stand is not clear; they may be considered only to advocate the opinion of the Jabriyyah in a more skilful way.

Al-Zamakhsharī tries his best to defend the opinion of his School, while dealing with verses speaking on the subject; for example : "God is Able to do all things."<sup>(62)</sup> He explains that there are some deeds that any able one cannot do, e.g. the impossible, and deeds of another being. Al-Zamakhsharī indicates that there are some deeds which are impossible for God to do.<sup>(63)</sup> He also indicates that human beings have power to do some deeds, even if God does not will them. It may be observed that there is

(59) Al-Ash'arī, Op. cit., p.227-279.

(60) Ibid., p.227.

(61) 'Abd al-Qāhir, Op. cit., p.327.

(62) The Holy Qur'ān 2:20.

(63) Al-Zamakhsharī, Op. cit., 1, p.222.



no exception in the verse. So it depends on individual belief and understanding in considering some exceptions. Ibn al-Munīr does not agree with the above interpretation. He claims that God creates man's deeds and man acquires them. And God is able to do all things.

Al-Zamakhsharī did not make any attempt to interpret the following verse according to his opinion : "Say : 'God is the creator of all things, and He is the One, all-Dominant.'" (64) He comments that there is no creator except God; as He has no associates in creation, He should have none in worship. (65) He tries to establish that man can be called a creator in the following verse : "You men! Bear in mind the favour of Allāh towards you. Is there a creator other than God, Who provides you with the gifts of heaven and earth? There is no God but He! How then are you turned aside from Him?" (66)

Al-Zamakhsharī suggests three possibilities of the grammatical function of the sentence 'He provides you with gifts,' in order to prove that anybody who does an action can be called a creator. Thus, it can be asserted that man creates. (1) If the sentence is considered as the subject of 'from heavens and earth', then none could be addressed as a creator. (2+3) But if it is considered

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(64) The Holy Qur'an 13:16

(65) Al-Zamakhsharī, *Op. cit.*, 11, p.355.

(66) The Holy Qur'an 35:3.



as an adjective or an explanation to the word 'creator', then the sentence 'He provides you with gifts' is restricted to 'heaven and earth', anybody then can be called a creator.<sup>(67)</sup> Ibn al-Munīr argues that the last two possibilities do not suit the meaning of the verse. It may be observed that al-Zamakhsharī can find grammatical justification so the question is left to individual belief.

In a similar way, Al-Zamakhsharī deals with another verse that apparently contradicts his opinion : "Do you worship that which you have carved out whereas God has created you and that which you make?"<sup>(68)</sup> He explains that God created the people and their handicraft. The phrase 'mā taʿmalūn' means what you make. It does not mean what you do. He explains that God created the stones, and the people shaped them as they liked. He argues that 'mā' in the phrase 'mā taʿmalūn' cannot be regarded as a verbal noun which would make the phrase equivalent to the 'masdar ʿamalukum' that is, your action. God points out to them that He is the creator of both the worshipper and the worshipped, and they contributed in making the worshipped. It is not logical for them to worship anything they made. So the second 'mā' is a relative pronoun meaning 'that which', referring to the idols which they made.

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(67) Al-Zamakhsharī, *Op. cit.*, III, pp.299-300.

(68) The Holy Qurʾān 37:96.



Al-Zamakhsharī points out that the phrase 'and your handiwork' is an explanation of the words 'and that which you carved.' There is no gainsaying that the first 'mā' is a relative pronoun, so the second one should also be, because there should not be any difference between them.<sup>(69)</sup> Ibn al-Munīr argues that it is necessary to regard the second 'mā' as a verbal noun. He explains that they worshipped the idols inasmuch as they were the forms which they themselves had formed, so in reality they worshipped their work. It is clear that the second 'mā' can be regarded as either a relative pronoun or a verbal noun, and it depends on what the interpreter wants the meaning to be.

Al-Zamakhsharī tries to find support in the following verse : "And those shafts were God's not yours."<sup>(70)</sup> He explains that God relates the throwing to the Prophet because he was the one who did it physically. God denies that it was the Prophet who threw because its effect was from Allāh. So God is likened to one who threw originally.<sup>(71)</sup> Ibn al-Munīr points out that this verse indicates that it is God who creates man's deeds. It appears that both the two claims may be justified. A verse bearing on the subject is as follows :

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(69) Al-Zamakhsharī, *Op. cit.*, pp.345-346.

(70) The Holy Qur'an 8:17

(71) Al-Zamakhsharī, *Op. cit.*, II, 149.



"I created the jinn and the men only that they might worship Me." (72) Al-Zamakhsharī maintains that God wills to be worshipped willingly. So when He created people and jinn He gave them freedom of will. Some of them choose to worship Him. If God wills to be worshipped by compulsion, all will do that. (73) If we admit that some people and jinn do not worship God in any way then al-Zamakhsharī's interpretation may be regarded as based on logical deduction.

Ibn al-Munīr advocates the opinion of the Jabriyyah in his comments on the following verse : "Had God known any good in them, He would have made them hear." Al-Zamakhsharī finds support in the following verse : "And when the matter is decided Satan will say, 'Allāh promised you a promise of truth, but I promised you and failed you. And I had no power over you except that I called you and you obeyed me. So blame me not, but blame your own selves. I cannot succour you nor can you succour me. I have already disclaimed your associating me with God.' For the wrongdoer there shall surely be a grievous punishment." (74) He explains that people should not blame Satan because they deceived themselves by obeying him when he called them.

(72) The Holy Qur'ān 51:56  
(73) Al-Zamakhsharī, Op. cit., IV, p.21.

(74) The Holy Qur'ān 14:23.



Al-Zamakhsharī points out that the verse is an evidence that it is man who chooses guidance or going astray, and God confirms his choice. Satan makes some ugly deeds seem beautiful.<sup>(75)</sup> It may be observed that the people themselves followed Satan but whether they did that willingly or not is the problem to be left to individual belief.

Al-Zamakhsharī tries to prove that God does not cause people to go astray in the following verse : "On the day when He shall assemble them and those whom they worshipped beside God, He will say, 'Was it you who led these My servants astray or did they themselves stray away from the path?' They will say, 'Glory be to you! It beseeemed not us to take helpers other than you, but you bestowed on them and their fathers the good things of this life till they forgot the admonition and became a ruined people.'" <sup>?</sup>(76) He explains that the question here is : who is responsible for leading the people astray? This is clear in bringing the interrogative particles before the pronouns (you and they). He explains that this question is meant to disprove the claim that God causes people to go astray. Those whom the people worshipped disavowed to be the ones that led the people astray. They pointed out that it was God Who bestowed favours on the people, who deviated from the right way. The angels explained that it was not God Who caused the people to

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(75) Al-Zamakhsharī, *Op. cit.*, II, p.374.

(76) The Holy Qur'ān 25:17.



go astray by bestowing his bounty to the people. The angels attributed forgetfulness to the people.

Al-Zamakhsharī also claims that had God been the One who really led the people astray, the angels would have answered, it was You who led the people astray.<sup>(77)</sup> Ibn al-Munīr points out that the question is answered according to the style it has been asked. They were not asked who had caused the people to go astray. It is true that the manner in which the question is asked does not necessitate the answer suggested by al-Zamakhsharī. It may be remarked that the declaration of the angels that it was God who bestowed His bounty upon the people may be taken to mean indirectly that it was God who caused the people to go astray.

Al-Zamakhsharī tries to find support in the following verse : "But for the goodness and mercy of Allāh towards you, you would have followed Satan, all but a few of you."<sup>(78)</sup> He declares that had it not been for the grace of Allāh and His mercy upon us all but a few of us would have followed Satan. He maintains that those few do good deeds and disobey Satan spontaneously. It is clear that al-Zamakhsharī regards the exception as relating to the apodosis "you would have followed Satan."<sup>(79)</sup> Ibn al-Munīr

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(77) Al-Zamakhsharī, *Op. cit.*, III, pp.84-86.

(78) The Holy Qur'ān 4:83.

(79) Al-Zamakhsharī, *Op. cit.*, II, p.548.



argues that the exception should be understood to apply to the protasis. A careful consideration may reveal that both the two opinions are grammatically justifiable. So it depends on one's belief to decide to what the exception does relate. However, if one prefers the exception to apply to the nearest sentence, al-Zamakhsharī's view is more acceptable.

In some verses it is clear that it is God who guides whom He likes and in others it is man that follows the right way if he likes. Al-Zamakhsharī tries to make such seemingly contradictory verses as if they stand in complete agreement, e.g., the following verse : "Had God pleased, He could have made you one people, but He causes whom He wills to go astray, and whom He wills, He guides, and you shall surely be called to account for your doings."<sup>(80)</sup> Commenting on the middle part of the verse, he maintains that according to wisdom, God leads astray the one who, in God's knowledge, has chosen to disbelieve. God does that by not bestowing His grace upon him. God guides to the right way the one whom He knows (and thus saving him from *his erring*) to have chosen to follow the right way. God does not enforce on people to follow one of the two ways because if He did that neither obedience to Him nor disobedience would deserve to be rewarded or punished."<sup>(81)</sup>

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(80) The Holy Qur'ān 16:93

(81) Al-Zamakhsharī, Op. cit., II, p.426.



In a similar way, Al-Zamakhsharī deals with another verse that apparently contradicts his opinion : "But you will not (follow the right path), unless God wills, the Lord of all creatures."<sup>(82)</sup> He explains that those who wish to follow the right path spontaneously cannot do that unless God bestows His grace upon them. And those who do not wish to follow the right path willingly can only follow it if God compels them to do so.<sup>(83)</sup> He skilfully makes the verse to stand in agreement with the previous one : "For every one among you who wishes to walk straight." He does that by treating the second verse as a separate one from the one preceding it, and by regarding the subject of the verb 'will not' as two different groups; those who wish to follow the right path willingly, and those whom God compels before they follow the right path. It may be observed that it is not always good to treat a verse without referring to the one before it.

In a similar way, al-Zamakhsharī treats the following verses : "So whosoever wishes may heed. And they will not heed unless Allāh wills."<sup>(84)</sup> He explains that they mean: "let him who wishes to accept the truth do so. But those whom God knows will never accept the truth willingly - as their hearts were created like that - can only accept it

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(82) The Holy Qur'ān 81:29

(83) Al-Zamakhsharī, *Op. cit.*, IV, p.226.

(84) The Holy Qur'ān 74:55-56.



if God compels them."<sup>(85)</sup> It may be observed that the second verse refers to the first one. But al-Zamakhsharī regards the two verses to be speaking of two different groups. The first one, those who wish to follow the truth, and the second one, those who will do that only if God compels them to do so.

Al-Zamakhsharī tries to get support in the following verse : "Then we caused our Messengers to follow in their footsteps and we caused Jesus the son of Mary to follow them; and we gave Him the Evangel, and we put into the hearts of those who followed Him kindness and compassion. And *a* monasticism which they invented for themselves - we did not prescribe it for them - only for the seeking of Allāh's pleasure."<sup>(86)</sup> He explains that the word 'monasticism' is in the accusative case being the object of the verb invented, thus it means that they invented the monasticism themselves - seeking the pleasure of Allāh - and that God did not prescribe it for them. It is also possible, as he explains elsewhere, to regard the word 'monasticism' as object of the verb "put" which means to bestow grace here. So the word is in the accusative case. 'Which they invented' becomes an adjectival clause in the accusative case qualifying 'monasticism'.<sup>(87)</sup>

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(85) Al-Zamakhsharī, Op. cit., IV, p.188.

(86) The Holy Qur'an 57:27

(87) Al-Zamakhsharī, Op. cit., IV, pp.67-68.



But Ibn al-Munīr maintains that the word 'monasticism' should be treated equally with the preceding noun as objects of 'We put,' (with the literal meaning of the verb) because it was God Who created the love of monasticism in their hearts. According to the construction of the verse all the claims may be considered justifiable.



CHAPTER III

THE INTERMEDIATE POSITION BETWEEN  
BELIEF AND UNBELIEF

PROMISE OF REWARD AND THREAT OF PUNISHMENT  
BY GOD

What is al-Imān?

The Mu'tazilah maintain that Imān is not only to believe in Allāh, His Messengers, His Books, His Angels and the Day of Resurrection, but it includes the doing of good deeds.<sup>(1)</sup> So anybody who believes in Allāh, but does not do good deeds, should not be regarded as a believer. The Sunnites, however, assert that faith does not include physical deeds; it is only belief.<sup>(2)</sup> The two schools both support their explanation of the term Imān with some Qur'anic verses.

Al-Zamakhsharī tries to support his opinion in his interpretation of the following verse: "Who believe in the unseen, and observe Prayer, and spend out of what we have provided for them."<sup>(3)</sup> He explains that the true faith is to believe in the truth, to profess it, and to do good deeds. So he who does not believe in the truth is a hypocrite, even if he professes the truth, and does good deeds. He who does not profess the truth is an unbeliever. And he who does not do good deeds is a fāsiq.<sup>(4)</sup> (transgressor). Ibn al-Munīr points out that observance of Prayer is

(1) Al-Ash'arī, Op. cit., p.266-7

(2) Mas'ūd b. Umar al-Taftāzānī, Sharh al-Taftāzānī 'alā al-Aqā'id al-Nasfiyah, Istanbūl, 1909, p.156.

(3) The Holy Qur'an 2:3.

(4) Al-Zamakhsharī, Op. cit., 1, p.129.



is not part of faith, according to this verse, because the sentence dealing with Prayer is an independent one.

It may be observed that al-Zamakhshari's claim that Prayer is part of the faith is not justified here. As Ibn al-Munir points out, that all the sentences of the verse are independent, and moreover they are all qualifying the word 'al-Muttaqin' (the pious) in the previous verse. Al-Zamakhshari finds support in the following verse: "Who, when men said to them, 'Now the Meccans are mustering against you; therefore fear them,' it only increased their faith, and they said: 'Our sufficiency is God, and He is an excellent protector.'" (5) He explains that the subjective pronoun in the verb 'fazāda' (to increase) can refer to what is said. In this case it was the threat that increased their faith. The pronoun also can refer to the word 'men', if the word is meant for Na'im. (Na'im was the name of the man who came and threatened the Medinese). So it is clear that their faith increased because they went out and faced their enemies despite Na'im's effort to discourage them. (6) Al-Zamakhshari asserts that since this good deed increased their faith, it means that good deed is part and parcel of faith.

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(5) The Holy Qur'an 3:173.

(6) Al-Zamakhshari, Op. cit., 1, p.480.



It is clear that al-Zamakhsharī bases his argument here on a logical deduction. He quotes that Ibn 'Umar said : "We said : 'Oh, Messenger of Allah! Does faith grow and diminish?' He said : 'Yes, it grows until it enables man to enter Paradise and it diminishes until it causes man to go into Hell.'" He also mentions that 'Umar, may Allāh be pleased with him, used to hold men's hands and say : "Let us go and increase our faith."<sup>(7)</sup> It is clear from the above statements that faith grows and diminishes according to one's work, but whether good deed is part of it or not, it depends on individual opinion.

Al-Zamakhsharī tries to interpret faith according to the teaching of his School in the following verse : "And thus we have sent the Spirit to you with a revelation by our command. You did not know what the Book was, or what the faith."<sup>(8)</sup> He explains that all Prophets had to be impeccable and had to believe in One God before their missions. So what is meant by faith here? He explains that the word 'faith' includes things which can be known before revelation as well as things that could only be known through revelation. So this verse refers to the second category of the faith.<sup>(9)</sup> To support this view al-Zamakhsharī explains that Prayer is referred to as faith in the following verse : "But God will not let your faith be fruitless. Surely Allāh is Compassionate and Merciful to people."<sup>(10)</sup>

(7) Ibid., p.480.

(8) The Holy Qur'an 42:52.

(9) Al-Zamakhsharī, Op. cit., III, p.476.

(10) The Holy Qur'an 2:143.



It is quite clear that the word 'faith' in the above verse means Salāt. Ibn al-Munīr asserts that faith is to believe in Allah and His Messenger. But before his mission, the Prophet did not believe in his own prophethood. So this verse is referring to that. Their arguments both are based on logical deductions. Al-Zamakhsharī tries to demonstrate that the pilgrimage is part of the faith, in his treatment on the following verse : "And the pilgrimage to the Temple is a service due to God from those who are able to journey there, and whoever disbelieves, let him remember that verily God can afford to dispense with all creatures."<sup>(11)</sup> He explains that the sentence 'whoever disbelieves' strictly refers to one who refuses to perform the pilgrimage. He quotes a Hadīth : "Whoever dies without performing the pilgrimage let him die as he likes, a Jew or a Christian."<sup>(12)</sup> It is understood from al-Zamakhsharī's comments that if one becomes an unbeliever because he refuses to perform the pilgrimage it means that the pilgrimage is part of the faith.

Ibn al-Munīr asserts that the verse is referring to one who refuses to perform the pilgrimage, and also denies

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(11) The Holy Qur'ān 3:97

(12) Al-Zamakhsharī, Op. cit., 1, p. 339.



its being compulsory. He becomes an unbeliever because of his denial only. He also suggests that the sentence 'whoever disbelieves' can be considered as a separate and independent sentence. Although the sentence can be treated independently, it seems better to interpret it in the light of what has preceded it. The verb 'kafara' may not necessarily mean to disbelieve here. It may mean to be ungrateful, as it is sometimes used.

Al-Zamakhsharī defends his belief with the following verse : "On the day when some of your Lord's signs shall come to pass, its faith shall not profit a soul which believed not before, nor a soul which did not earn any good by its faith. Say, 'Wait you, we too are waiting.'" (13) He explains that there is no difference between a soul which did not believe up to the time when the signs shall come to pass, and a soul that believed but did not do any good deeds. He also points out that this verse shows that belief and good deeds are two things that could not be separated. They both must go hand-in-hand before man gains anything from one of them. (14) Al-Zamakhsharī indicates that a believer who does not do any good deeds is the same as an unbeliever. However, a careful consideration

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(13) The Holy Qur'ān 6:158.

(14) Al-Zamakhsharī, Op. cit., II, p.63-64.



of the verse may reveal that there is a difference between the two. Ibn al-Munīr maintains that when the signs come good deeds will not help, but belief that has preceded the signs will help. So there is a difference between the two souls.

The Judgement of Good Reward and its Kinds. The Mu'tazilite principle of al-Wa'd wa al-Wa'id means he who does good deeds must be rewarded well, and he who does evil deeds should be punished.<sup>(15)</sup> According to them this principle is the pillar of religious obligations and free will. They do not consider justice anything contrary to this principle. The Sunnites, however, maintain that good reward is a grace of Allāh. So God is not obliged to reward a man who does good deeds. God punishes and inflicts misfortunes on whom He likes. That is God's justice according to them. Let us see how al-Zamakhsharī deals with verses that speak of God's reward.

Commenting on the following verse : "And for you surely there is an unending reward,"<sup>(17)</sup> he explains that 'ghayr mamnūn' also means that what is given to the Prophet is neither God's grace nor His favour, but it is a reward which he deserves for his work.<sup>(18)</sup> He regards the word to be derived from manne, meaning to bestow favour upon.

(15) Al-Shahristānī, al-Milal wa al-Nihāl, Op. cit.,

(16) Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, Kitāb al 'Arba'in, Cairo, 1828 AH, p.22.

(17) The Holy Qur'ān 68:3.

(18) Al-Zamakhsharī, Op. cit., IV, p.141.



This interpretation of the word may be regarded as a far-fetched meaning. Al-Zamakhsharī introduces, to his reader, the Mu'tazilite opinion on kinds of rewards. They divide good reward into two categories :

- (a) Result of one's work; they consider this compulsory on Allāh.
- (b) A grace of Allāh; they consider this as an increase on what one deserves of good reward. God bestows this kind of reward upon whom He pleases.

The following verse like the previous one deals with the first kind of reward : "And it shall be proclaimed unto them : 'This is Paradise which you have been given for an inheritance as a reward for what you used to do.'" (19) He explains that Paradise is a reward for their work; it is not a favour or grace of Allāh. Similarly, al-Zamakhsharī treats the following verse : "But they who believe and do the things that are right, their Lord will guide them because of their faith. Rivers shall flow at their feet in gardens of delight." (20) He explains that because of their faith God will guide them to follow the right way that will entitle them for reward. (21) It may be remarked that all the verses that have been discussed on this topic show clearly that man deserves reward of Paradise for his work.

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(19) The Holy Qur'ān 7:43

(20) The Holy Qur'ān 10:9

(21) Al-Zamakhsharī, *Op. cit.*, II, p.226.



Al-Zamakhsharī gives an example of God's grace in the following verses : "And whoever shall obey God and the Messenger, they shall be among those on whom Allāh has bestowed His blessings of the Prophets, the truthful, the martyrs and the righteous. These are excellent companions. This is the bounty of Allāh; and God is sufficiently knowing."<sup>(22)</sup> He explains that some of what God will give the believers, like being in the company of the Prophets, is a grace of God. It is not their reward; but it is an increase over that.<sup>(23)</sup> It may be observed that al-Zamakhsharī interprets the word 'fadl' as an increase of reward. He gives another interpretation to the verse: The bounty, which those upon whom Allāh has bestowed His grace are enjoying, is from Allāh because it is through His abundant grace; they have earned it. But Ibn al-Munīr maintains that he who does a good deed, gets its reward by the grace of Allāh.

Al-Zamakhsharī tries to get support in the following verse : "But whoso does good deeds whether male or female, and he or she is a believer - these shall enter Paradise, nor shall they be wronged a bit."<sup>(24)</sup> He suggests two ways of establishing that even the disobedient ones shall not be wronged: (a) The subject in the passive sentence 'nor shall they be wronged' refers to both those who do good

(22) The Holy Qur'ān 4:69

(23) Al-Zamakhsharī, Op. cit., 1, p.540.

(24) The Holy Qur'ān 4:124.



deeds and those who do bad deeds. (b) Mentioning it to one group suffices to include the opposing group as well because both groups are going to be judged according to their deeds without any difference. He also explains that to do injustice to a disobedient man is to increase his punishment; God is exalted above doing that. As for him who does good deeds, he has a reward of his work and an increase from God's grace. It is possible that God may decrease something out of his grace, as it is not obligatory. That is the meaning of His saying that those who do good deeds shall not be wronged.<sup>(25)</sup> The Mu'tazilites' classification of reward offers help to al-Zamakhsharī for his interpretation of the above sentence.

Does Anything Abrogate Good Reward? The answer to the above question can be clearly seen in al-Zamakhsharī's treatment of the following verse : "O you who believe! Obey Allāh and obey the Messenger and let your works not go in vain."<sup>(26)</sup> He explains that one renders his work vain by committing great sins. He mentions that 'Abū al-ʿAlīyah said : "The companions of the Prophet used to think that bad deeds do not harm one's faith as good deeds do not benefit a polytheist, until when the verse :

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(25) Al-Zamakhsharī, Op. cit., 1, 566.

(26) The Holy Qur'an 47:33.



'O you who believe!' was revealed, then they began to fear committing great sins, lest their good deeds should become fruitless." He also mentions that Ibn 'Umar said : "We used to consider all our good deeds were being accepted until the verse : 'O you who believe!' was revealed. We said to one another, 'What is going to render our good deeds fruitless?' We said : 'Great sins.' So we began to fear committing that until God revealed 'Surely God will not forgive the union of other gods with Himself. But other than this He will forgive whom He pleases.' then we stopped that."<sup>(27)</sup> Ibn al-Munir maintains that only polytheism lets work go in vain. It appears that al-Zamakhshari's claim is justified, according to the verse.

Al-Zamakhshari tries to find support in the following verse : "And give glad tidings to those who believe and do good work, that for them are gardens beneath which the rivers flow."<sup>(28)</sup> He explains that good reward is obtained through faith and good deeds that were not rendered in vain by committing bad deeds. The two kinds of deeds do not exist hand-in-hand, so if one does the bad one, it means that he renders the good one in vain.<sup>(29)</sup> According to him, this is understood from the following verse : "Verily,

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(27) Al-Zamakhshari, Op. cit., III, p.539.

(28) The Holy Qur'an 2:25

(29) Al-Zamakhshari, Op. cit., I, p.253.



if you join partners with God, your work shall become vain, and you shall be among those who lose."<sup>(30)</sup> It may be observed that al-Zamakhsharī is not justified in his claims, according to the first verse, because there is no indication that bad deeds render the good ones in vain in the verse. It may also be observed that the second verse indicates that polytheism, not any other bad deeds, renders good deeds fruitless.

The following verse contradicts the Sunnites' opinion apparently : "O you who believe! Raise not your voices above the voice of the Prophet, and speak not aloud to him, as you speak aloud to one another, lest your works become vain without your realizing it."<sup>(31)</sup> He explains that believers should stop doing what they were forbidden to do lest their works go in vain.<sup>(32)</sup> Ibn al-Munīr explains that causing annoyance to the Prophet renders works in vain like polytheism, according to the Sunnites. Raising one's voice in the presence of the Prophet might annoy him and it might not. So it could either be merely one of the prohibited things, or it could amount to polytheism. It would be difficult to judge which raising of the voice would vex the Prophet and which would not. So to be on the safe side, the judgement on raising the voice at his presence is generalised in this verse. Ibn al-Munīr bases his argument on a logical deduction.

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(30) The Holy Qur'ān 39:65

(31) The Holy Qur'ān 49:2

(32) Al-Zamakhsharī, *Op. cit.*, III, p.556.



The Fate of One Who Commits Great Sins. According to the Mu'tazilah School, as we have seen, faith consists of belief and good deeds, and the latter are rendered fruitless by committing great sins. This leads the Mu'tazilah to assert that any believer who commits a great sin is no longer a believer, rather a fāsiq who is in an intermediate position between faith and disbelief. This is the doctrine they term as 'al-Manzilah bayn al-Manzilatayn'.<sup>(33)</sup> Al-Zamakhsharī explains the fate of a sinner clearly while dealing with the end of the following verse: "Many will He mislead by such parables and many guide, but He will mislead none thereby except the transgressors."<sup>(34)</sup>

After defining the word 'al-fāsiq' as above, al-Zamakhsharī explains why a transgressor is said to be in an intermediate position. He is regarded as a believer in marriage, inheritance, in the fact that Prayer <sup>is</sup> to be said for him after his death and in the fact that he is going to be buried in a Muslim burial ground. He is regarded as an unbeliever inasmuch as he will be regarded as an enemy to Muslims; his witness is not accepted; and he deserves God's anger.<sup>(35)</sup> It may be remarked that the above explanation has no place in the verse.

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(33) 'Abd al-Qāhir, Op. cit., p.94.

(34) The Holy Qur'an 2:26

(35) Al-Zamakhsharī, Op. cit., 1, p.267.



The Mu'tazilah maintain that a true believer should get rid of all sins. To them, there is no use to repent from a sin while committing another one. This is understood from al-Zamakhsharī's comments on the following verse : "And if you fear that you will not deal fairly with orphans, then marry of women as may be agreeable to you, two or three or four; and if you still fear that you shall not act equitably then one only; or that which your right hands have possessed (i.e. women slaves); this will make justice on your part easier."<sup>(36)</sup>

Al-Zamakhsharī explains that when a verse on devouring orphans' wealth by their guardians was revealed, Muslims began to fear taking care of orphans, lest they would do injustice to them. Meanwhile, they had many wives whom they were not treating justly. So the Muslims were made aware that they should fear to treat their wives unjustly as they feared to maltreat orphans. He explains that anybody who avoids committing a sin because it is bad should avoid all sins, because one great sin is as bad as another.<sup>(37)</sup> But Ibn al-Munīr maintains that if one repents from a sin while committing another, then his repentance of the former is still a good thing in itself.

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(36) The Holy Qur'ān 4:3

(37) Al-Zamakhsharī, Op. cit., 1, 496.



Threat of Punishment. We have seen how the Muṭa-  
zilah consider a sinner. They are also very strict in  
considering his fate with God. They claim that God is  
bound by His wisdom to punish sinners if they have not  
repented.<sup>(38)</sup> This is the second part of their doctrine  
al-Wa'd wa al-Wa'id. A verse bearing on the subject is  
as follows : "To the Jews did we forbid every beast  
having an entire hoof, and of both bullocks and sheep  
we forbade them the fat, save what might be on their  
backs, or their entrails and the fat attached to the  
bone. With this we have recompensed them, because of  
their transgression, and verily, we are indeed equitable."<sup>(39)</sup>  
Commenting on the last sentence of the verse, al-Zamakh-  
sharī explains that God has to carry out His threat of  
punishment to sinners as He has to fulfil His promise of  
good reward to those who obey Him.<sup>(40)</sup> Ibn al-Munīr  
maintains that this verse is referring to disbelievers.  
It may be observed that the sentence 'We are indeed  
equitable' is not specified. It can refer to God's  
threat of punishment to disbelievers as well as believers  
who have committed sins. If it is referred to the nearest  
sentence, then Ibn al-Munīr's view is more acceptable.

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(38) Al-Taftāzānī, Op. cit., pp.145-146.

(39) The Holy Qur'ān 6:146

(40) Al-Zamakhsharī, Op. cit., II, p.58.



The following verse contradicts the Mu'tazilah teaching apparently : "Surely God will not forgive the union of other gods with Himself. But other than this He will forgive to whom He pleases. And he who associates partners with Allāh has indeed committed a great sin."<sup>(41)</sup> Al-Zamakhsharī claims that God forgives a polytheist if he repents, but He does not pardon a believer who has committed great sins if he does not repent. Al-Zamakhsharī explains that both the negative and the affirmative sentences, 'He does not forgive' and 'He forgives', are related to His words 'to whom He pleases.' So God means in other words: He does not forgive polytheism to whom He pleases, meaning if the polytheist does not repent, but He forgives anything else to whom He likes, meaning if the believer repents.<sup>(42)</sup> Al-Zamakhsharī makes circumlocation which is not necessary in order to avoid the seeming contradiction between this verse and his belief. The verse simply indicates that God does not forgive polytheism, but He forgives whom He pleases anything other than that. Ibn al-Munīr insists on his opinion and considers this verse as an explicit support of it.

(41) The Holy Qur'an 4:48.

(42) Al-Zamakhsharī, Op. cit., I, 532.

(43) The Holy Qur'an 13:6.



In a different way al-Zamakhsharī treats the following verse : "They ask you to hasten the evil before good whereas exemplary punishments have already occurred before them. And verily your Lord is full of forgiveness for mankind despite their wrong doing, but verily your Lord is rightly vehement to punish."<sup>(43)</sup> He suggests three ways of interpreting the section dealing with God's forgiveness without repentance.:

- (a) God forgives minor sins which are automatically pardoned if their doer has avoided great sins.
- (b) God forgives great sins after repentance.
- (c) By forgiveness God means concealing their sins and not hastening to punish them.

He also quotes a Ḥadīth : "Had it not been for the forgiveness of Allāh, none would lead a pleasant life, and had it not been for His threat of punishment all would rely on His mercy."<sup>(44)</sup>

It may be remarked that those who commit minor sins are not addressed as wrongdoers. The interpretation of the word 'dhū maghfirah' as postponing their

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(43) The Holy Qur'ān 13:6

(44) Al-Zamakhsharī, Op. cit., 11, p.350.



punishment may be regarded as a far-fetched meaning because there is no real forgiveness in postponing punishment. Ibn al-Munīr maintains that God's promise of forgiveness should not be restricted to those who repent except if a verse indicates that. In a different way, al-Zamakhsharī tries to defend his opinion. "Say : 'O my servants who have committed excess against their own souls! Despair not of the mercy of Allāh; surely Allāh forgives all sins; Verily He is most Forgiving, Merciful.'" (45)

He explains that God forgives sins after repentance. But repentance is not mentioned here because it is mentioned in many places. It has to be understood, where the Qur'an does not mention it, because the judgement of the Qur'an is the same; there is no contradiction in it. He also explains that according to the 'Abbās's and Ibn Masūd's reading the phrase 'to whom He likes' is added to the end of the verse. Al-Zamakhsharī explains that the phrase means God forgives he who repents, because God's wish does not contradict His justice. (46) Ibn al-Munīr did not comment on this verse. Al-Zamakhsharī's claim may not be justified because there is not any restriction in the verse.

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(45) The Holy Qur'an 39:53.

(46) Al-Zamakhsharī, *Op. cit.*, III, p.403.



Al-Zamakhsharī supports his argument with the following verse : "Verily those who disbelieve and act unjustly, God will never pardon them, and He will never guide them on any path."<sup>(47)</sup> He declares that the people combined both disbelief and great sins. He explains that the verse may also refer to two groups of people : non-Muslims and Muslims that commit great sins. There is no difference between the two groups because neither of them will be pardoned without repenting.<sup>(48)</sup> Ibn al-Munīr believes that the verse is speaking of non-Muslims who disbelieve and act unjustly. Al-Zamakhsharī makes use of the Qur'ānic construction where two independent sentences are joined with a conjunction. If the two sentences are treated separately the verse refers to two different groups of people. In this case al-Zamakhsharī would be justified in his claim. However, the second sentence 'and (who) act unjustly' can be regarded as additional information to the previous one, in this case the verse is speaking of non-Muslims only. So al-Zamakhsharī's claim has no justification.

Al-Zamakhsharī tries to restrict God's forgiveness to those who repent in his treatment of the following verse :

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(47) The Holy Qur'ān 6:168.

(48) Al-Zamakhsharī, Op. cit., I, p.584.



"And to God belongs whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth. He forgives whom He will and punishes whom He will. Allah is Forgiving, Merciful."<sup>(49)</sup> He explains that 'God forgives whom He will' means He forgives ~~was~~ after repentance because He does not will to forgive anybody except those who repent. And the sentence '(He) punishes whom He will' means God punishes wrongdoers, because He does not punish anybody except those who necessarily deserve to be punished.<sup>(50)</sup> Ibn al-Munīr maintains that the verse is speaking of non-Muslims. And 'God forgives whom He will' is referring to a believer who has repented from polytheism. It may be observed that al-Zamakhsharī makes use of the Qur'ānic expression 'whom He will', which is not specified to assert his claim.

Al-Zamakhsharī admits that God may forgive a sinner without repentance in his comments on the following verse : "If You punish them, they are Your servants, And if You forgive them, indeed, You are all-Powerful, all-Wise."<sup>(51)</sup> He explains that the sentences are conditional, meaning that if God punishes them, He acts justly because they deserve to be punished. And if God forgives them then there must be wisdom in His forgiveness.<sup>(52)</sup> It may be observed that

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(49) The Holy Qur'ān 3:129

(50) Al-Zamakhsharī, Op. cit., 1, 463.

(51) The Holy Qur'ān 5:118.

(52) Al-Zamakhsharī, Op. cit., 1, p.257.



al-Zamakhsharī refers the forgiveness to another doctrine which was discussed at the beginning of this chapter, because he thinks that the meaning of the verse is so clear that it cannot easily be mistaken. In a similar way al-Zamakhsharī treats the following verse : "And whatever calamities befall you, it is what your right hands have earned, and He forgives much."<sup>(53)</sup> He explains that it is possible that God will forgive some of what wrongdoers do.<sup>(54)</sup>

The Mu'tazilah maintain that sinners will live permanently in Hell.<sup>(55)</sup> The Sunnites assert that sinners will be taken out of Hell after some time. Al-Zamakhsharī finds support for his School in the following verse : "But whoever shall kill a believer intentionally, his recompense shall be Hell, forever shall he abide in it. God shall be wrathful with him, and shall curse him, shall get ready for him a great torment."<sup>(56)</sup> He explains that there is sufficient proof in this verse that anybody who commits sins will abide in Hell for ever. The verse indicates any killer be he a Muslim or not.<sup>(57)</sup> Al-Zamakhsharī may be justified in his claim, because the threat is not restricted to unbelievers. Ibn al-Munīr maintains that the fate of any Muslim who commits great sins is to be left to God Who will forgive him if He likes. Ibn al-Munīr's claim is groundless according to this verse.

(53) The Holy Qur'an 42:30

(54) Al-Zamakhsharī, Op. cit., III, p.470.

(55) Al-Taftazānī, Op. cit., p.150.

(56) The Holy Qur'an, 4:93.

(57) Al-Zamakhsharī, Op. cit., I, p.554.



Al-Zamakhsharī tries to find support in the following verse : "But those who revert ~~to it~~ shall be inmates of the fire; therein shall they abide for ever."<sup>(58)</sup> He declares that this is a clear statement of the permanent stay of sinners in Hell.<sup>(59)</sup> It will be appropriate to quote the sentences that preceded this verse in order to see to what noun the verb 'revert' refers. "They who devour usury, shall arise in the resurrection only as he arises whom Satan has inflicted by his touch. This, for that they say, 'Selling is only the like of usury' : and yet God has allowed selling, and forbidden usury. He then who, when this warning comes to him from his Lord, abstains, shall have pardon for the past, and his lot shall be with God."<sup>(60)</sup> Ibn al-Munir explains that the verse is referring to those who reverted to usury and regarded it as legal. These people became unbelievers because they legalise unlawful things. So the verse is speaking of non-Muslims. Al-Zamakhsharī makes use of the Qur'ānic silence on the noun to which the verb 'revert to' refers. It is, however, understood in what precedes the sentence.

Al-Zamakhsharī defends his argument with the following verse : "And as for those who shall be consigned to misery their place is the fire! Therein shall they sigh and bemoan

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(58) The Holy Qur'ān 2:275

(59) Al-Zamakhsharī, *Op. cit.*, I, p.400.

(60) The Holy Qur'ān 2:275.



themselves. Therein shall they abide while the Heaven and the Earth shall last, unless your Lord shall will otherwise. Verily your Lord does what He chooses. And as for the blessed ones their place is the Garden!

Therein shall they abide while the Heaven and the Earth endure excepting what your Lord may will, with whatever imperishable boon their Lord may be pleased to add."<sup>(61)</sup>

Al-Zamakhsharī explains that the purpose of bringing in two exceptions, 'unless your Lord shall will it otherwise,' and 'excepting that your Lord may will,' while it is known that both the inmate of Paradise and of Hell will abide in their respective places forever, is to show, in the case of the first exception, that the inmates of Hell will not stay forever in the torment of fire; instead, they will be punished with bitter cold and various kinds of punishment, the worst of which is the anger of their Lord and His contempt. The second one indicates that the inmates of Paradise also are going to be rewarded with things other than permanent living in Paradise.<sup>(62)</sup>

He also explains that the sentence 'verily your Lord does what He chooses' supports the interpretation of the first exception. The sentence means God will punish the inmates of Hell as He likes. The phrase

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(61) The Holy Qur'ān 11 : 106-108

(62) Al-Zamakhsharī, Op. cit., II, p.294.



'imperishable boon', which means that God will give the inmates of Paradise what He pleases and that shall not be cut off, supports the interpretation of the second exception. Al-Zamakhsharī warns that one should not let oneself be deceived by those who interpret the first exception as the coming out of sinners from Hell. The second exception refutes this interpretation, he says. As for the Hadīth which al-Zamakhsharī quotes : "A day will come when there will be nobody in Hell; its doors will be closed, and that will be after they have stayed for ages," he doubts its authenticity. He says : "If this Hadīth is true, it refers to the time when the inmates of Hell will come out from the heat of fire to a bitter cold."<sup>(63)</sup>

Al-Zamakhsharī accuses the Sunnites of fabricating a lie against Nāfi' Ibn al-'Azraq. He explains that the following is narrated on the authority of 'Ikrimah : "Nāfi' Ibn al-'Azraq said to Ibn 'Abbās : 'O, unintelligent one! Do you claim that some people will come out of Hell, while God says : 'They will wish to come out of Fire, but they will not be able to come out of it, and they shall have a lasting torment?'"<sup>(64)</sup> But Ibn 'Abbās said : 'Woe to you ! Read what is before this verse; it speaks of unbelievers.'<sup>(65)</sup> In a similar way, Al-Zamakhsharī treats

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(63) Ibid., p.294.

(64) The Holy Qur'ān 5:37

(65) Al-Zamakhsharī, Op. cit., I, 610.



another exception that contradicts his opinion apparently : "But we have reached our set term, which you set for us. He will say : 'The Fire is your abode, wherein you shall abide, save what Allāh may will. Surely your Lord is Wise, All-Knowing.'" (66) He explains that the inmates of Hell will be driven to a valley of severe frost where they will be punished more severely until they wish they were returned to Hell. (67)

Intercession. The Mu'tazilah reject the idea of intercession for Muslim sinners. Their belief that God is bound by His wisdom to punish sinners who should not be pardoned without repentance led them to this conclusion. They regard the intercession to be an honour which sinners do not deserve. The Sunnites, however, maintain that Muslim sinners will be interceded for with God. (68) Al-Zamakhsharī explains the Mu'tazilite idea of intercession in his comments on the following verse : "Say : 'To God belongs all intercession.'" (69) He explains that God is the owner of intercession and no one can intercede except with two conditions :

1) No intercession can be accepted (in respect of anybody) except for him with whom God is pleased.

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(66) The Holy Qur'ān 6:128.

(67) Al-Zamakhsharī, Op. cit., II, p.50.

(68) Al-Taftāzānī Op. cit., p.148.

(69) The Holy Qur'ān 39:44.



2) No one can intercede for somebody except if the intercession is allowed by God.<sup>(70)</sup>

Al-Zamakhsharī tries to get support in the following verse : "And fear the day when no soul shall avail another aught, nor shall any intercession be accepted from them, nor shall any ransom be taken, neither shall they be helped."<sup>(71)</sup> He explains that the verse shows clearly that there will not be any intercession. Ibn al-Munīr argues that the Day of Resurrection is regarded to be very long. It is true that, as some verses indicate, there will not be any intercession in some parts of the Day. There will be intercession, however, in other parts, as some verses indicate.<sup>(72)</sup> He also explains that the word 'Day' is used as indefinite to indicate that it means a part of the Day of Resurrection. Ibn al-Munīr's statement may seem to be a good way of explaining the seeming contradiction between some verses.

Al-Zamakhsharī finds support in the following verse : "The mediation of no mediators will avail them."<sup>(73)</sup> He explains that no intercession will be accepted on their behalf because intercession is for those with whom God is pleased. He points out that there is an indication in this

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(70) Al-Zamakhsharī, *Op. cit.*, III, p.400

(71) The Holy Qur'an 2:48.

(72) Al-Zamakhsharī, *Op. cit.*, I, p.279.

(73) The Holy Qur'an 74:48.



verse that intercession will help those whom God is please with, as it gives them more honour.<sup>(74)</sup> In a similar way, he interprets the following verse :  
"O, believers! Give alms out of that with which we have supplied you, before the Day comes when there shall be no trading, nor friendship nor intercession. And the infidels are the wrongdoers."<sup>(75)</sup> He explains that an intercession is a sign of more grace of Allah.<sup>(76)</sup>

Al-Zamakhsharī mocks at the Sunnites while commenting on the beginning of the following verse : "And I (Satan) will surely lead them astray, and I will stir vain desires within them."<sup>(77)</sup> He explains that Satan will lead them astray by encouraging them to have vain ambitions like keen desire for long life, expecting God's forgiveness for sinners without repentance, and coming out of Hell by means of intercession.<sup>(78)</sup> It may be observed that the words of Satan are not specific so any commentator can include anything he considers as being part of going astray. It is for his reader to agree or disagree with him.

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(74) Al-Zamakhsharī, Op. cit., IV, p.

(75) The Holy Qur'ān 2:254

(76) Al-Zamakhsharī, Op. cit., I, p.384.

(77) The Holy Qur'ān 4:119

(78) Al-Zamakhsharī, Op. cit., I, p.564.



## CONCLUSION

We have seen how al-Zamakhsharī defends the Muṭtazilite principles. It may now be permissible to us to inquire how far his arguments can be thought as convincing. After some consideration of his interpretations of the verses which he thinks lend explicit support to the principles of his sect, as well as the other verses which he considers as being merely metaphorical and symbolical, one may allow him a certain measure of success. Indeed, in some cases, one fails to see any other reasonable interpretation than al-Zamakhsharī's.<sup>(1)</sup> He may also be considered to display a great measure of skill in his attempts to interpret verses that seem to contradict his teachings so as to make them agree with those teachings.<sup>(2)</sup> His ability in suggesting more than one grammatical function to some words and clauses in order to support his school may also be considered as a mark of his ability.<sup>(3)</sup> The same may be said of his attempts to give more than one interpretation, all supporting his teachings.<sup>(4)</sup>

It may be observed that al-Zamakhsharī demonstrates considerable skill in his interpretation of non-specific words and phrases.<sup>(5)</sup> Credit also should be given him for

(1) For example, see above, p.28.

(2) Above, pp.31-32.

(3) Above, p.59.

(4) Above, p.84.

(5) Above, pp.15-16.



the use he makes of the different sentence constructions presented in the Qur'ān.<sup>(6)</sup> Al-Zamakhsharī demonstrates a great measure of skill in his attempt to interpret verses that seem to have an anthropomorphic character.<sup>(7)</sup> The same may be said of his interpretation of the exceptional phrase, except what God wills, if it comes in a verse that contradicts his teachings.<sup>(8)</sup> Credit may also be given to him for the use he makes of compound sentences presented by the Qur'ān. Sometimes he regards the sentences as speaking on one subject,<sup>(9)</sup> and at other times, he treats them separately.<sup>(10)</sup>

Al-Zamakhsharī makes good use of some verses to support his interpretation of other verses.<sup>(11)</sup> He also makes good use of the particle ‘alā<sup>(12)</sup> and the emphatic negative lan,<sup>(13)</sup> presented by the Qur'ān, to assert his claims. The same may be said of the Qur'ānic silence of some pronouns,<sup>(14)</sup> and different reading of some verses.<sup>(15)</sup> Al-Zamakhsharī displays considerable skill in his treatment of Lāma and ta‘līl.<sup>(16)</sup> His treatment of verses that speak of God misguiding people or doing actions considered to be evil, by suggesting various

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- (6) Above, p.37.  
(7) Above, pp.26-27.  
(8) Above, pp.89-90.  
(9) Above, p.72.  
(10) Above, pp.66-67.  
(11) Above, pp.34-35.  
(12) Above, p.42.  
(13) Above, p.33.  
(14) Above, p.89.  
(15) Above, p.50.  
(16) Above, p.49.



acceptable propositions for relating the deeds to God , may be considered as a mark of his ability.<sup>(17)</sup> It may be remarked that al-Zamakhsharī exercises some skill when dealing with a verse or two consecutive verses indicating inability of man to guide his self if God does not guide him.<sup>(18)</sup>

Al-Zamakhsharī, therefore, may be considered generally successful both in his defense and in his attack. This success owes a great deal to his ability to express his views well, and his being an <sup>e</sup>adapt in debate and in making logical deduction. In not a few instances a non-doctrinaire reader will find al-Zamakhsharī's argument more convincing, or at least more plausible, than those of his opponent.<sup>(19)</sup> Lastly, the mere fact that his opponents had to write such books as Kitāb al-'Intisāf to refute his arguments may in itself testify to his measure of success. His excellence in Arabic literature, grammar, the sciences of rhetoric and logic were great assets of which he made considerable use.

It will have been observed, on the other hand, that al-Zamakhsharī is less successful in some of his attempts to explain some verses that obviously contradict his

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(17) Above, p.55.

(18) Above, p.66.

(19) Above, p.28.



teachings. In dealing with such verses, he replaces simpler and more direct meanings of words with what may be considered far-fetched meanings.<sup>(20)</sup> It appears that al-Zamakhsharī has a tough time when dealing with a clear, factual and unambiguous text whose meaning cannot easily be mistaken. In such cases he resorts to circumambulation and indefensible ambiguity.<sup>(21)</sup> It may be observed that on some occasions he asserts his claims without what may be regarded as sufficient justification.<sup>(22)</sup> It may also be remarked that, at times, al-Zamakhsharī goes off the point and ignores the actual context in order to introduce an opinion.<sup>(23)</sup> Lastly, his views would have been more persuasive had they been expressed more modestly and more circumspectly.

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(20) Above, p.53.

(21) Above, p.83.

(22) Above, pp.44-45.

(23) Above, p.80.



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