

FAITH AND GOOD DEEDS IN SUNNITE SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT AND DEVIATED SECTS: REVISITING THE NOTION OF “SUNNITE MURJI’ITES” TO THE ḤANAFITES¹

Mohd Rosmizi Abd Rahman^{2ab}, Salih Yucel^{3c}

^aFaculty of Leadership and Management, Universiti Sains Islam
Malaysia

^bIslamic Science Institute, Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia

^cCentre for Islamic Studies and Civilization,
Charles Sturt University, Australia

Abstract

The issue of faith and good deeds had triggered several controversies in early Islam, particularly raised by Khārijites, Murji’ites, and Mu‘tazilites. Among the Sunnite schools, the Ḥanafites holds a slightly different view of faith and its relationship to good deeds. Since the Hanafites exclude good deeds from being an element of faith, there are some parties who charge them with holding the heretical view of the Murji’ites concerning the issue, or at least, they are labelled as “the Sunnite Murji’ites.” This article argues, however, that this charge is erroneous and indeed, this article affirms that the Ḥanafites held a pure Sunnite position. To prove this stance, this article examines and compares briefly different views of the concept of, and relationship between, faith and good deeds, before critically scrutinize the Ḥanafite view and position on the issue. This article found that although the Ḥanafites do exclude good deeds from being an element of faith, their conception of faith is still dynamic,

1 Parts of this article (which address al-Ghazali’s views) are the preliminary stage of USIM Short Research entitled “Developing a Spiritual Model of Good Deeds According to Imam Al-Ghazali.”

2 The author is a senior lecturer at Akidah and Religion Studies Program, Faculty of Leadership and Management (FKP), Islamic Science University of Malaysia (USIM), and is a research associate at Islamic Science Institute (ISI), USIM. Corresponding author: rosmizi@usim.edu.my.

3 Associate Professor Dr. Salih Yucel is a lecturer at Centre for Islamic Studies and Civilization, Charles Sturt University, Australia.

in which good deeds are absolutely still required, and this run counter the Murji'ite ultra-passive attitude towards good deeds. The slight difference between the Hanafites and the other three Sunnite Schools is due to the different socio-political context and different approaches employed by the two groups to the concept of faith. Thus, any allegation that the Hanafites are the Murji'ites or even "the Sunnite Murji'ites" is not only improper but is erroneous.

Keywords: Faith, Good deeds, Khārijites, Murji'ites, Mu'tazilites, Hanafites, the Sunnites, the Mālikites, the Shāfi'ites, the Hanbalites

Abstrak

Isu iman dan amal telah mencetuskan beberapa kontroversi pada awal Islam, terutamanya yang dibangkitkan oleh golongan Khawarij, Murji'ah, dan Muktazilah. Antara golongan Ahli Sunnah, Mazhab Hanafi mempunyai pandangan yang berbeza sedikit mengenai iman dan hubungannya dengan amal atau perbuatan baik. Oleh kerana Mazhab Hanafi tidak menjadikan perbuatan baik sebagai unsur iman, terdapat beberapa pihak yang mendakwa mereka berpegang dengan pandangan sesat golongan Murji'ah mengenai isu ini, atau sekurang-kurangnya, mereka dilabel sebagai "Murji'ah Sunnah." Artikel ini berpendapat bahawa tuduhan ini adalah salah dan sesungguhnya, artikel ini mengesahkan bahawa Mazhab Hanafi berpegang dengan pandangan Ahli Sunnah yang murni. Untuk membuktikan pendirian ini, artikel ini mengkaji dan membandingkan secara ringkas pandangan yang berbeza tentang konsep dan hubungan antara, iman dan amal atau perbuatan baik, sebelum meneliti secara kritikal pandangan Mazhab Hanafi mengenai isu tersebut. Artikel ini mendapati bahawa walaupun Mazhab Hanafi tidak menjadikan perbuatan baik sebagai unsur iman, akan tetapi konsep iman mereka masih dinamik, di mana perbuatan yang baik adalah benar-benar masih diperlukan, dan dapatan ini menangkis sikap ultra-pasif golongan Murji'ah terhadap perbuatan baik. Perbezaan kecil antara Mazhab Hanafi dan tiga lagi Mazhab Ahli Sunnah adalah disebabkan oleh konteks sosio-politik dan pendekatan yang berbeza yang digunakan oleh kedua-dua kumpulan ini terhadap konsep iman. Oleh itu, apa-apa dakwaan bahawa Mazhab Hanafi adalah Murji'ah atau "Murji'ah Sunnah" bukan sahaja tidak wajar tetapi adalah salah.

Kata kunci: Iman, Perbuatan baik, Kharijyyah, Murji’ah, Mu‘tazilah, Hanafiyyah, Ahl Sunnah, Malikiyyah, Shāfi‘iyyah, Hanbaliyyah

INTRODUCTION

Although the term “*īmān*”—namely the Islamic concept of faith—cannot be simply and literally translated as “faith,” for the purpose of this article, however, the term “faith” is used exclusively to denote “*īmān*.” The issue of faith and good deeds is central in Islam. Both of the primary sources of Islam—the Qur’ān and the Prophetic traditions—stress the necessity of performing good deeds, and delineate certain principles that should be observed. Many kinds of good deeds including devotional acts are already prescribed and explained by these primary sources. With regard to the concept of faith and its relationship with good deeds, however, there is a slight difference between the Hanafites and the other three Sunnite Schools. Indeed, in early Islam, there were different interpretations and sects among Muslims regarding the issue of faith and good deeds which had triggered a number of controversies, particularly raised by Khārijites, Murji’ites, and Mu‘tazilites.⁴ The different interpretations of good deeds are also related to ambiguous meaning of it. The Qur’an does not limit its meaning, type and context. Therefore, the understanding of good deeds may change from an individual to an individual, group to group and nation to nation.⁵ Understanding of good deeds also depends on degree of a person’s *īmān* (faith), knowledge, practice, sincerity, piety, reading microcosm (human) and macrocosm (universe). Some may understand it literally, but those who firmly rooted in certain *īmān* and deep knowledge in *fiqh* (Islamic Jurisprudence), such as Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, Imām Shāfi‘ī and Imām Mālik, understand its comprehensive meanings and contexts.

4 For a comparative discussion of early Muslim sects see Ignaz Goldziher, *Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law*, trans. Andras and Ruth Hamori (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1981), 167ff. For extensive analysis of Shi’ite doctrines, thought, and spirituality, see Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Hamid Dabashi, and Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr, eds., *Shi’ism: Doctrines, Thought, and Spirituality* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988).

5 Said Nursi, *Sunūhat* (Istanbul: Yeniasya Yayinlari, 1996), 17.

Among the Sunnite schools, the Ḥanafites holds a slightly different view of faith and its relationship to good deeds. Since the Ḥanafites exclude good deeds from being an element of faith, there are some parties who charge them with holding the heretical view of the Murji'ites concerning the issue, or at least, they are labeled as “the Sunnite Murji'ites.” This article argues, however, that this charge is erroneous. Contrary to those allegations, this article affirms that the Ḥanafites held a pure Sunnite position. Although the Ḥanafites do exclude good deeds from being an element of faith, their conception of faith is still dynamic, of which good deeds are absolutely still required, and this run counter the Murji'ite ultra-passive attitude towards good deeds.

To provide a context, a brief examination of the positions of the Khārijites, the Murji'ites, and the Mu'tazilites on faith and good deeds will be attempted first. The views of the three Sunnite schools—namely, the Mālikites, the Shāfi'ites, and the Ḥanbalites—concerning the issue will be briefly examined afterward. The Ḥanafite view and position on the issue will be critically scrutinized. A brief analysis will end the discussion.

FAITH AND GOOD DEEDS ACCORDING TO THE KHĀRIJITES, THE MURJI'ITES, AND THE MU'TAZILITES

To begin with, the issue of faith and good deeds started with the controversial views of the Khārijites and Murji'ites. The Khārijites were among the earliest Islamic sects who addressed the issue related to faith and good deeds differing from the orthodox position. Al-Baghdādī (d. 1037 or 1038) categorises them into twenty sects under seven main divisions, whereas al-Shahrastānī (1076/86-1153) divides them into eight important groups, of which when combined together will be around twenty-five sects. This different categorisation is due to different methods and contexts employed by them.⁶ Even though they split into several sects, they still shared many common beliefs. Ibn Hazm (994-1064) states that “a Khariji

6 See Abū Maṣū'ir 'Abd al-Qāhir ibn Ṭāhir Al-Baghdādī, *Moslem Schisms and Sects (al-Farq bain al-Firak): Being the History of the Various Philosophic Systems Developed in Islam*, trans. Kate Chambers Seelye (New York: Aims Press, 1966).

is any person who believes in the damnation of sinners, the rebellion against wrongful and unjust imams, the possibility of the caliphate outside of the Quraysh and the Arabs and those who commit grave sins suffer eternal fire.”⁷ The Khārijites was initially a political-based movement that arose from the conflict between Caliph ‘Alī and Mu‘āwiyah in the battle of *Ṣiffīn* in the year 37H/648. Al-Baghdādī divides them into twenty sects under seven main divisions. Whereas, al-Shahrestānī divides them into eight important groups, of which when combined together will be around twenty-five sects.⁸

The Khārijites regarded good deeds as an indispensable part of faith, and that both faith and good deeds were absolutely interrelated and cannot be separated. Since they believed that deeds will directly affect faith, therefore, some of them advocated that not only bad deeds could be detrimental to faith, but it could also obliterate faith altogether. For that reason, some of them—for instance, all the Azāriqa, the ‘Ajārida, the Akhnasīya, and the Mukramīya—maintained that a grave sinner was no longer remain as a believer or a Muslim.⁹ In other words, a grave sinner was considered as either an unbeliever or a polytheist.¹⁰ They also advocated rebellion against any leader they considered as unbeliever.¹¹ Accordingly, the extreme sect of the Khārijites, particularly the Muḥakkima, regarded ‘Alī, who accepted human arbitration, as not only committed a sin, but also maintained that he was no longer a Muslim.¹² This group had triggered the first conflict within early Islamic history. Among the Khārijites, an extremist group of them argued that it is permissible to

7 Hussam S. Timani, *Modern Intellectual Readings of the Kharijites* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing inc., 2008), 55.

8 See Al-Baghdādī, *Moslem Schisms and Sects*; Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Shahrestānī, *Muslim Sects and Divisions: The Section on Muslim Sects in Kitāb al-Milal wa al-Niḥal*, trans. AK Kazi and JG Flynn (London; Boston: Kegan Paul International, 1984).

9 Al-Shahrestānī, *Muslim Sects*, pp. 103, 109, 112.

10 Al-Baghdādī (*Moslem Schisms*, 75-76) argues that not all of them held this view. For instance, the Najadāt did not declare a grave sinner as heretic whereas some others differ on the types of grave sin which could invalidate one’s faith. Al-Shahrestānī (*Muslim Sects*, 115) asserts that the Ibādīya still regarded those who commit grave sins as monotheist.

11 Al-Shahrestānī, *Muslim Sects*, 99.

12 Al-Shahrestānī, *Muslim Sects*, 99-100; Fazlur Rahman, *Islam* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1966), 86; W. M. W. Montgomery Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1998), 12 ff.

shed blood against those they considered as unbelievers or apostates within Muslim community. They refused to be administered by leaders who they considered as sinners, for they considered such persons as unbelievers. Some of them also had betrayed the legitimate leaders, and appointed leaders among their own group as alternative. As a result, they become fanatic with their own group. Some of them, for instance the Azāriqah,¹³ declared those who opposed them as unbeliever or even as polytheist. Indeed, the children of those who oppose them were also regarded as polytheist who will be thrown into hell-fire.¹⁴

Many Sunnite scholars defend the Sunnite position and criticize the extreme as well as misleading position of the Khārijites on this issue. One of them is Imam al-Ghazālī (1058-1111) who is known as *Hujjatul Islam* and is regarded as among the most prominent scholar in Islamic history. Although al-Ghazālī did not devote a special book to the Khārijites, the Murji'ites, and the Mu'tazilites, he still addresses these various groups briefly and refutes some of their views that he regards as erroneous through several writings. From his writings, it is clear that al-Ghazālī disagrees with the Khārijites who claimed that faith and good deeds were absolutely indispensable, and therefore, bad deeds or sin could obliterate one's faith. Al-Ghazālī does not regard faith and good deeds as one entity, but instead considers the latter as "a super addition (*mazīd*)" which supplements the former.¹⁵ He illustrates faith as the head of man and good deeds as the limbs which indicates that the former can stand without the latter, for a man can still be alive without a limb.¹⁶ But he does acknowledge that as a living man without limbs is imperfect, faith without good deeds is also imperfect. Because of this conception, al-Ghazālī invalidates the extreme view which maintains that faith is void if one fails to perform obligatory deeds.¹⁷

13 They are the followers of Nāfi' ibn al-Azraq al-Ḥanafī. His surname was Abū Rāshid. See al-Baghdādī, *Moslem Schisms* 83.

14 Al-Baghdādī, *Moslem Schisms*, 83-84.

15 See al-Ghazālī, *The Foundations of the Articles of Faith: Being a Translation with Notes of the Kitāb Qawā'id al-'Aqā'id of al-Ghazālī's Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, trans. with notes by Nabih Amin Faris (Lahore: SH. Muhammad Ashraf, 1999), IV, 116.

16 E.g., a hand or a foot; *ibid*, 115-116.

17 See *ibid.*, 105.

The radical understanding of the Khārijites on faith-good deeds issue had accelerated the conflict among early Muslims. As a result, a new theological school, namely the Murji’ites,¹⁸ which disagreed with the Khārijite understanding, emerged. As al-Shahrastānī has observed, the Khārijite either regarded good deeds as totally different from faith and was not really matter, or that good deeds were just secondary.¹⁹ For instance, al-Shahrastānī contends that the Yūnusiya held this first view, and therefore they claimed that all believers who had a pure faith will definitely enter paradise regardless of their bad deeds. This was because, they argued, the requirements to enter paradise were sincerity and love alone. Another group, the Ghassāniya, maintained that faith increases but did not increase. Whereas, the Thaubāniya advocated that all deeds were secondary. This view was supported by the ‘Ubaydiya who held that God will certainly forgive all sins except polytheism, and therefore, no sin would be detrimental to the faith of any Muslim.²⁰ Because of the above interpretations, the majority of the Murji’ites considered good deeds as not essential and that bad ones did not bring any negative impact to one’s faith and status as a believer.

The Murji’ites claim that there was no harm to their *īmān* whatsoever regardless of any kinds of sin were committed; even if any of them had sexual relations with his own mother or sister, or even if he committed all sorts of horrible crimes, mortal sins and atrocities.²¹ This perception totally contradict the very basic teachings of Islam. A Sunnite scholar Said Nursi states that there is the seed of unbelief in the essence of sins, especially frequently committed ones, for such sins make people become indifferent and addicted to them, which in turn leads to denial of angels and life in Hereafter.²²

18 Al-Shahrastānī divides them into four main divisions. Namely the Khārijites Murji’a, the Qadāriye Murji’a, the Jabrite Murjia and the pure Murji’a. See al-Shahrastānī, *Muslim Sects*, 119. However, he just discusses the last division in his *al-Milal (Muslim Sects and Division)*.

19 Al-Shahrastānī, *Muslim Sects*, 121-124.

20 Ibid.

21 Toshihiko Izutsu, *The Concept of Belief in Islamic Theology: A Semantic Analysis of Iman and Islam* (New York: Arno Press, 1980), 64.

22 Said Nursi, Al-Mathnawi Al-Nuri, *Seedbed of the Light*, trans. Huseyin Akarsu (New Jersey: The Light, 2007), 179.

Thus, with regard to the issue of faith and good deeds, the Murji'ites advocated that there was no essential relationship between faith and good deeds. For them, faith alone was sufficient, and therefore, anyone who has faith was regarded as a believer who will absolutely enter paradise regardless of their bad deeds. Hence, good deeds were not essential and bad deeds did not bring any negative impact on one's status of a believer and salvation.

Accordingly, the Murji'ites argued that Muslims should accept other Muslims as part of their community regardless of their bad deeds, and that it was essential to follow the leaders regardless of their policies (e.g., just or unjust). They had postponed their judgement on people, and left it to God to judge on the Last Day.²³ In other words, the bad deeds or sins of any Muslim were to be left to God alone and was not to be judged by any people on this world. Ibn Taymiyyah says that the Murji'ites thesis would be unacceptable, for this thesis rests upon a false understanding of the word *Tasdiq*.²⁴

The conflict over the issue of faith and good deeds was not resolved with the positions of the Khārijites and the Murji'ites. In between these opposite interpretations there was another alternate interpretation which claimed to advocate the intermediate position, which was propagated by the Mu'tazilites.²⁵ The Mu'tazilites attempted to propose a balance between the Khārijites and the Murji'ites. Departing from their contradicting interpretations, the Mu'tazilites advocated that a grave sinner was neither a true believer nor an unbeliever but was placed in an intermediate position between these two states. However, if the person died unrepentant he would abide in Hell forever.²⁶ By claiming such view, they devalued *īmān*

23 Rahman, *Islam*, 86.

24 Izutsu, *Islamic Theology*, 164.

25 Al-Baghdādī divides them into twenty-two sects, whereas al-Shahrastānī categorises them into twelve groups. See al-Baghdādī, *Moslem Schisms* and a-Shahrastānī, *Muslim Sects*. The Mu'tazilites called themselves "the people of unity and divine justice" (*ahl al-tawhīd wa al-'adl*). In addition, they were also called the Qadarīya (or the Qadarites) and Adlīya; see a-Shahrastānī, *Muslim Sects*, 41.

26 See al-Baghdādī, *Moslem Schisms*, 121; al-Shahrastānī, *Muslim Sects*, 44-45; M. M. Sharif, ed. *A History of Muslim Philosophy: With Short Accounts of Other Disciplines and the Modern Renaissance in Muslim Lands*, vol. 1 (Karachi: Royal Bool Company, 1963), 199-200. The doctrine of an intermediate state (*al-manzilah bayn al-manzilatayn*), which held that a grave

(faith). The majority of the Mu‘tazilites agreed with the Khārijites in maintaining that a sinner was destined to Hell forever. However, unlike the Khārijites who declared that a sinner was an unbeliever and could be opposed, the Mu‘tazilites were still cautious by placing him in the middle state. Some sects of the Mu‘tazilites—such as the Jubba’iyya and the Bahshamiyya—called this person or state as a *fāsiq* (sinner); neither a believer nor an unbeliever, but if he died unrepentant he would abide and be punished in Hell forever.²⁷

The Mu‘tazilites agreed to regard good deeds as part of faith as maintained by the three major Sunnite schools of law (the Mālikites, the Shāfi‘ites, and the Ḥanbalites).²⁸ Nonetheless, they disagreed on some other related issues. The strong relation between sin and torment in the Qur’an and Prophetic traditions led the Mu‘tazilites to attribute, mistakenly, creation of evil to something other than the Almighty.²⁹ For instance, on the origin of faith and deeds, unlike the Sunnites who attribute their real source to God, the Mu‘tazilites argued that it was man himself who created guidance or misguidance and that man himself who decided and authored his acts—good or bad. Thus, they asserted that man was the creator of his own guidance (or misguidance), action, and fate.³⁰ They believed that man has absolute capability and free will. In this regard, they were the Qadarites.³¹ In addition, the Mu‘tazilites did not readily attribute to God the creation of bad things, evil, and unjust actions. On the other hand, they maintained that God only created and made what is right and good. Because of that, they believed that it was incumbent upon God to execute justice, namely, to reward good deeds and punish evil deeds. All these doctrines have been refuted by some prominent Sunnite scholars, such as Abū Ḥanīfah, al-Ash‘arī (874–936), al-Baghdādī, al-Shahrastānī, Ibn Hazm, and al-Ghazālī.

sinner was neither a believer nor unbeliever, was first advocated by Wāṣil; see al-Shahrastānī, *Muslim Sects*, 45.

27 Al-Shahrastānī, *Muslim Sects*, 66.

28 Sharif, *A History*, 203.

29 Said Nursi, *Seedbed*, 352.

30 Al-Shahrastānī, *Muslim Sects*, 42; Sharif, *A History*, 200–201.

31 The Qadarites was a theological movement in early Islam which held that man had total freedom. See al-Shahrastānī, *Muslim Sects*, 41.

Abū Ḥanīfah on the relation of sin with *īmān* says: “We do not charge any believer with unbelief for any sin he commits, even it is an enormity (*kabair*), as long as he does not regard it as lawful (*halal*). We do not remove the title of true faith from him and we call him a real believer. It is possible that the person be an unrighteous believer without being an unbeliever.”³²

Al-Ghazālī, for instance, took a firm stance in refuting the Murji'ites and the Mu'tazilites as demonstrated in his *Qawā'id al-'Aqā'id* (*The Foundations of the Articles of Faith*). He observes that generally, the fallacies of the Mu'tazilites and the Murji'ites arose in their failure to understand, or rather that they misunderstood, certain generalities of the relevant Qur'ānic verses.³³ For instance, refuting the Murji'ites, al-Ghazālī asserts that some of the verses employed by them³⁴—which seem to simply state that whoever believes will enter Paradise—are indeed general verses and they carry some specifications, and some of them carry affirmation and negation.³⁵ For example, al-Ghazālī argues that the term “faith” (*īmān*) or “those who believe” in these verses³⁶ refers to belief coupled with good deeds.³⁷

Al-Ghazālī's disagreement with the Murji'ites is also demonstrated in his refutation of the concept of pure determinism of the Jabarites, which in turn forms the foundation to the Murji'ite theology. He observes that they attributed all good and evil to God in order to avoid any weakness from the Almighty. Thus, they maintained that man did not have free will, for whatever he does—good or bad—all had been determined by God. Al-Ghazālī argues that this view is erroneous for it had attributed injustice to God through its claim that all evils or bad deeds come from God. Indeed, Al-Ghazālī maintains that this stance has deceived many of them in committing sin. This

32 Abdur Rahman IbnYusuf, *Imam Abu Hanifa's Al Fiqh al-Akbar Explained* (California: White Thread Press, 2007), 147.

33 Al-Ghazālī, *The Foundations*, IV, 111-112, 114.

34 E.g., the Qur'ān 72:13; 57:19; 92:16-16; 27:89; 18:30, etc.

35 See al-Ghazālī, *The Foundations*, IV, 112.

36 E.g., the Qur'ān 72:13; 57:19; 92:16-16; 27:89; 18:30, etc.

37 See al-Ghazālī, *The Foundations*, IV, 112.

is because, since the doctrine of pure determinism states that all evils come from God, they used this view as an excuse for their evils or bad deeds.³⁸

Al-Ghazālī disapproves of the Mu‘tazilite doctrine of intermediate state (*al-manzilah bayn al-manzilatayn*), which placed a grave sinner in an intermediate position between a believer and an unbeliever. The Mu‘tazilites considered such a person simply as a reprobate (*fāsiq*) who will remain in Hellfire forever.³⁹ Like the previous groups, al-Ghazālī maintains that the Mu‘tazilites failed to grasp the real meaning of some of the Qur’ānic verses that they employed,⁴⁰ which are also general and therefore, need to be specified to their contexts.⁴¹ It is based on some of those verses that the Mu‘tazilites claimed that a Muslim sinner—whom they called *fāsiq*—would be punished in Hell forever. Their principal doctrine was that God is just, and therefore God must reward good believers and must punish sinners.⁴² Al-Ghazālī perceives this belief as limiting God’s power,⁴³ and as forcing God to reward or to punish. He insists that God is absolutely free either to punish or to forgive sinners, and therefore, God is not compelled to reward or punish man’s deeds, and He is also not under any obligation to do whatever is good or salutary for man. He created the world and all creations as they are because of His voluntaristic grace. All things should be left to God and nothing is compulsory for Him, for God is always free to do anything He wants.⁴⁴

38 Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Arba‘in fi Uṣūl al-Dīn fi al-‘Aqā’id wa Asrār al-‘Ibādāt wa al-Akhḷāq*, ed. ‘Abdullāh al-Ḥamīd ‘Arwānī and Muḥammad Bashīr al-Shaqfah (Dimashq: Dār al-Qalam, 2003), I.1, 24; *Jalan Pintar*, I.5, 7.

39 See al-Ghazālī, *The Foundations*, IV, 105.

40 E.g., the Qur’ān 20:82; 103:1-3; 19:72-73; 72:23; 4:93, etc.

41 See al-Ghazālī, *The Foundations*, IV, 114-115.

42 The principle that God is only just and cannot do otherwise is among the principle of Hard Natural Law, see Anver M. Emon, *Islamic Natural Law Theories* (Oxford: University Press, 2010), 25-27.

43 E.g., to forgive sinners or to do otherwise.

44 Al-Ghazālī, *The Foundations*, III, 81-87; al-Ghazālī, *Revival of Religious Learnings: Imam Ghazālī’s Iḥyā Ulum-id-Dīn*, trans. Fazl-ul-Karīm, volume I (Karachi: Darul-Ishaat, 1993), I. 2, 114-115. See also al-Ghazālī, *Al-Iqtisād fi al-‘Itiqād*, ed. Inṣāf Ramaḍān (Damascus: Dār al-Qutaybah, 2003), 126-129; Emon, *Islamic Natural Law*, 132-133.

To conclude, the views of the Khārijites, the Murji'ites and the Mu'tazilites on the issue of faith and good deeds are diametrically opposed to each other. While Khārijites believed that there was an absolute relationship between faith and good deeds, the Murji'ites maintained that there was absolutely no relationship between the two. While the Khārijites argued that grave sins or bad deeds could detriment or cancel out one's faith, the Murji'ites on the other hand advocated that sins or bad deeds brought no effect on any Muslim. Indeed, as already alluded above, the Murji'ites regarded good deeds as almost nothing, for they believed that all Muslims will absolutely enter paradise and will never enter hell regardless of their sins. Accordingly, the Khārijites held an ultra-passive position, or at least they were indifferent, towards good deeds. Departing from their contradicting interpretations, the Mu'tazilites advocated a new doctrine of intermediate state (*al-manzilah bayn al-manzilatayn*) that stated that a grave sinner was neither a true believer nor an unbeliever but was placed in an intermediate position between these two states. The Mu'tazilites considered such a person simply as a reprobate (*fāsiq*) who will remain in Hellfire forever. All of these three different views are regarded as heretical, and many prominent Sunnite scholars such as al-Ash'arī, al-Baghdādī, al-Shahrastānī, Ibn Hazm, and al-Ghazālī had refuted them through various approaches. The next part will examine the Sunnite positions of the issue of faith and good deeds.

FAITH AND GOOD DEEDS ACCORDING TO THE THE MĀLIKITES, THE SHĀFI'ITES, AND THE ḤANBALITES

The majority of Muslim (Sunnite) scholars agree that profession by speech, ratification by heart, and performance by deeds form the three integral elements of faith (*īmān*). Notwithstanding, there are slightly different views on the actual relationship between faith and good deeds among the Sunnite schools of law, particularly between the Ḥanafites and the other three Sunnite schools (the Mālikites, the Shāfi'ites, and the Ḥanbalites).⁴⁵ The definition of faith by different

45 These are the four major Sunnite schools of law. They are named after their respective founders. Today, their influences and followers can be identified demographically. The Hanafite school is predominantly followed in Afghanistan, Albania, Bangladesh, China, Central Asia, India, parts of Iraq, Levant, Pakistan, Malcedonia (in the Balkans), Mauritius,

scholars usually can be found in their creeds or statements. Some of these have been compiled and translated by Western scholars, such as Watt, Wensinck, and Williams.⁴⁶

With regard to the Sunnite schools of thought, the Mālikites, the Shāfi‘ites, and the Ḥanbalites hold a dynamic concept of faith, of which good deeds are considered as one of the essential components of faith. They advocate that faith consists of three “acts”, namely, of the tongue or speech (such as testification or confession),⁴⁷ of the heart or mind (such as counting true or verification),⁴⁸ and of the limbs (actions, works or deeds).⁴⁹ Thus faith embraces the whole dimensions of human being (physical, spiritual, and intellectual). The tradition also affirms this view, of which the Prophet says “[f]aith [īmān] is a confession with the tongue, a verification with the heart, and an act with the members”.⁵⁰

Based on this conception, the majority of Sunnite scholars, with the exception of Ḥanafites, agree that faith increases and decreases according to deeds or acts. Hence, a widely accepted definition of faith in Islam is a confession with the tongue, a verification and conviction with the heart, and performance with the limbs. It increases by acts of obedience, and decreases by acts of disobedience. For instance, al-Qayrawānī⁵¹ (c. 928-96)—the Mālikite jurist—states that:

Turkey and parts of Germani and United Kingdom. The Malikite school is widely adopted in Algeria, Libya, Nigeria, Morocco, North and West Africa, parts of Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Tunisia and parts of the United Arab Emirates. The Shafi‘ite school is the dominant school of law in Brunei Darussalam, Chechnya, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Indonesia, Kurdistan, Malaysia, Maldives, Palestine, Singapore, Somalia, Sudan, United Arab Emirates etc. The Hanbalite school is mainly widespread in the Arabian Peninsula and Saudi Arabia.

46 W. Montgomery Watt, trans., *Islamic Creeds: A Selection* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994); A. J. Wensinck, *The Muslim Creed: Its Genesis and Historical Development*, 2nd impression (1932; repr., New York: Barnes & Noble, 1965); John Alden Williams, ed. *The Words of Islam: Lā Ilāh illā Allāh, Muḥammad Rasūl Allāh* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994).

47 For example see the Qur’ān, 3: 84; 49: 14; *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, vol. 1, book 2, no. 29-34; *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, vol. 1, book 1, no. 25.

48 For example see the Qur’ān, 13: 28; 16: 106.

49 For example see the Qur’ān, 2: 214; 4: 76; 29:2; 32: 15; *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, vol. 1, book 1, no. 56, 79.

50 Quoted in Cyril Glassé, *The New Encyclopedia of Islam: Revised of the Concise Encyclopedia of Islam* (Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press 2001, rept. 2002), 214.

51 Ibn Abī al-Qayrawānī.

Faith is speech with the tongue, sincere devotion in the heart and works with the limbs. It increases with the increase of works, and decreases with their decrease, so that works bring about decrease or increase (of faith). The profession (speaking) of faith is perfected only by works, professions and works only by intention, and profession, works and intention only by conformity with the Sunna.⁵²

Likewise, al-Shāfi'ī⁵³ (767-820)—the founder of the Shāfi'ite school of thought—affirms the Mālikite's definition of faith. He asserts that “[f]aith is knowing with the heart, confessing with the tongue and performing the chief works”.⁵⁴ In the same manner, al-Ash'arī also maintains this definition in his creed found in his *al-Ibānah*.⁵⁵ He writes “[w]e believe that faith consists of words and deeds, and is subject to increase and decrease”.

Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal (780-855)—the founder of the Ḥanbalite school of thought—also agrees with this view. Ibn Ḥanbal states that faith is “speech and action (or works). It increases and decreases. It decreases where works are few, and increases where they are many”.⁵⁶ This definition is further affirmed in article 7 and article 1 of *A Shorter Hanbalite Creed* and *A longer Hanbalite Creed* respectively.⁵⁷

Ibn Taymiyyah (1263-1328)—an outstanding Ḥanbalite scholar—also upholds this notion of faith. Indeed, he develops his view of faith throughout his book entitled *Kitāb al-Īmān (Book of faith)*. Ibn Taymiyyah affirms that faith is both *qawl* (speech) and *'amal* (work or deed) and that it increases and decreases according to one's deeds. He even boldly states that absolute faith requires works.⁵⁸

52 Watt, *Islamic Creeds*, p. 71.

53 Abū 'Abdullāh Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfi'ī.

54 Cited in Wensinck *The Muslim Creed* 267.

55 Al-Ash'arī, Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn Ismā'īl. 1967. *Al-Ibānah 'an Uṣūl al-Diyānah (The Elucidation of Islam's Foundation)*, trans. with intro. and notes Walter C Klein (New Haven, Conn.: American Oriental Society, 1940. Reprint, New York: Kraus Reprint Corporation, Page references are to the 1967 edition), 53. See also Watt, *Islamic Creeds*, 44.

56 Watt, *Islamic Creeds*, 32.

57 Watt, *Islamic Creeds*, 32-33, see also Watt, *The Formative Period*, 292.

58 Ibn Taymiyyah, *Book of Faith*, trans. and ed. Salman Hassan Al-Ani and Shadia Ahmad

According to the Ḥanafites, believers are sometimes excused of certain actions but it cannot be said that they are excused of faith itself. Such as prayer is excused from a menstruating woman but it cannot be said that she is excused from faith. Prophet said to a menstruating woman “leave fasting and make up later” (Sahîh *al-Bukhârî*, 304). But it is not permissible to say “leave belief and make it up later”.

In conclusion, the Mālikites, the Shāfi‘ites, and the Ḥanbalites agree that faith in Islam is a confession with the tongue, a verification and conviction with the heart, and performance with the limbs. It increases by acts of obedience, and decreases by acts of disobedience. They agree that profession by speech, ratification by heart, and performance by deeds form the three integral elements of faith (*īmān*). This conception of faith embraces the whole dimensions of human being (physical, spiritual, and intellectual). The next part will analyse the Ḥanafite position regarding the issue of faith and good deeds.

FAITH AND GOOD DEEDS ACCORDING TO THE ḤANAFITES

Abū Ḥanīfah (699-767)⁵⁹—the founder of the Ḥanafite School—has clearly elaborated his stance on faith and good deeds in at least two works that are known as *The Fiqh Akbar I*⁶⁰ and *The Waṣīyat [Waṣīyyah] Abī Ḥanīfa*⁶¹ (*The Testament of Abū Ḥanīfah*).⁶² Besides these two works of Abū Ḥanīfah, there is another work which outlines the Ḥanafite stance on the issue. Wensinck calls it *The Fiqh Akbar II* and Watt calls it *A Later Hanafite Creed*.⁶³ Its notions that

Tel. (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 2009), 18ff.

59 Abū Ḥanīfah al-Nu’mān ibn Thābit ibn Zū’ā.

60 *The Fiqh Akbar I* (10 articles altogether) is listed in Wensinck (*The Muslim Creed*, 102-104), together with his commentary (*The Muslim Creed*, 104-121), and in Williams, *The Words of Islam*, 141-142.

61 Henceforth the *The fiqh akbar I* and the *waṣīyat [waṣīyyah] Abī Ḥanīfa* will be cited as *Fiqh akbar* and *Waṣīyyah* respectively.

62 *The Testament of Abū Ḥanīfah* (27 articles altogether) is listed in Wensinck (*The Muslim Creed*, 125-131) with his commentary (pp. 131-185), and in Watt, *Islamic Creeds* 57-60.

63 Watt, *Islamic Creeds. The Fiqh Akbar II* (29 articles altogether) is listed in Wensinck, (*The*

faith excludes works or deeds, that it does not increase or decrease and that all believers are equal in faith have made it plainly clear that it belongs to the Ḥanafites. Abu Ḥanīfah states:

Iman means to affirm and be convinced. The faith of the inhabitants of the heavens and the earth neither increases nor decreases in terms of the articles of faith, it increases and decreases in terms of certainty and conviction. Believers are equal in faith and divine oneness, but dissimilar in action.⁶⁴

The view of Abū Ḥanīfah becomes the standard stance of the Ḥanafites. It is affirmed and even developed by later Ḥanafites prominent scholars such as al-Māturīdī⁶⁵ (853-944) and al-Ṭaḥāwī⁶⁶ (843 or 853 to 935). Al-Māturīdī—the greatest Ḥanafites theologian—has advanced further this stance in his work particularly in his *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*.⁶⁷ Indeed, he himself wrote a commentary on Abū Ḥanīfah's *Fiqh Akbar*. Al-Ṭaḥāwī has immortalized this stance into his creed famously known as *The Creed of Imām al-Ṭaḥāwī* that is embedded in *Aqidah al-Tahawiyyah*.⁶⁸ This stance has also been further affirmed by al-Nasafī's creed⁶⁹ (1068-1142)—a prominent scholar of al-Māturīdī school. Both of these two later creeds were translated and listed in Watt's *Islamic Creeds*.⁷⁰

To begin with, the Ḥanafites—which is the earliest Sunnite School—argue that faith and good deeds are different things, and that faith neither increases nor decreases. Consequently, they maintain that the faith of all people is same. In the first article of his *Waṣīyyah*, Abū Ḥanīfah defines faith as “professing [or confessing] with the tongue,

Muslim Creed, 188-197) with his commentary (*The Muslim Creed*, 197-244), and in W. M. Watt, *Islamic Creeds*, 62-67 under the title *A Later Ḥanafites Creed*.

64 IbnYusuf, *Al Fiqh al-Akbar Explained*, 171.

65 Abū Manṣūr Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Maḥmūd al-Ḥanafī al-Mutakallim al-Māturīdī Al-Samarqandī.

66 Abu Ja'far Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Ṭaḥāwī.

67 Abī Manṣūr Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Maḥmūd al-Ḥanafī al-Samarqandī al-Māturīdī, *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*, ed. Fathalla Kholeif (Beirut: Dar el-Machreq), 1970.

68 The English translation available at <alghazzali.org/resources/articles/aqedahNotes.pdf>.

69 The English translation available at <marifah.net/articles/matnalnasafiyya.pdf>.

70 Watt, *Islamic Creeds*, 48-56, and 80-85 respectively.

believing [counting or declaring true] with the mind and knowing with the heart,⁷¹ or simply as “to affirm and be convinced.”⁷² This definition of faith consists of three elements, namely, the tongue or the speech, the mind and the heart. However, the last two elements, namely, the mind and the heart, are always used interchangeably to refer to the same thing, and thus rendering the elements of faith into two, which is, the speech and the heart. Interestingly, action or deed is neither mentioned in this definition nor regarded as a part of the three elements of faith. On the contrary, the fifth article makes it clear that “Works (action) are other than [or are distinct from] faith, and faith is other than [or is distinct from] works...”⁷³

Nevertheless, this definition of faith is not a passive definition for Abū Ḥanīfah maintains that a firm commitment is still required. Having explained the definition of faith in article 1 in his *Waṣiyyah* he continues:

Professing [or confessing] alone is not faith, because, if this were so, then all the *munāfiqīn* (hypocrites) would be believers [or faithful]. Similarly, knowledge alone is not faith, because, if that was faith, then all the people of the Book would be believers”.⁷⁴

This statement demonstrates that Abū Ḥanīfah does not accept a mere verbal confession or a mere knowledge that is devoid of commitment as sufficient condition of faith. In article 8 to 10 of *Fiqh Akbar*,⁷⁵ Abū Ḥanīfah reaffirms that faith should be accompanied with commitment and conviction, and this suggest that Abū Ḥanīfah’s

71 See his *Waṣiyyah* [the Testament], clause 1, quoted in Mullā Ḥusayn al-Ḥanafī Ibn Iskandar, ed., *Al-Jawharah al-Munīfah fī Sharḥ Waṣiyyah al-Imām al-A’zam Abī Ḥanīfah* (Hind: Majlis Dā’irah al-Ma’ārif al-Nizāmiyyah, Hyderabad, 1321H [1901?]), 3; Watt, *Islamic Creeds*, 57; Wensinck, *The Muslim Creed*, 125.

72 Abū al-Muntahā al-Maghnīsāwī, *Imām Abū Ḥanīfa’s al-Fiqh al-Akbar Explained*, compiled and trans. with intro. Abdur-Rahman ibn Yusuf (California, USA: White Thread Press, 2007), 171.

73 See Ibn Iskandar, *Al-Jawharah*, 6; Watt, *Islamic Creeds*, 57; Wensinck, *The Muslim Creed*, 125-126.

74 Ibn Iskandar, *Al-Jawharah*, 3, Watt, *Islamic Creeds*, 57; Wensinck, *The Muslim Creed*, 125.

75 Wensinck, *The Muslim Creed*, 104; Williams, *The Words of Islam*, 141-142.

conception of faith is dynamic. Anyone who doubts the fundamental principles of Islam or the clear teaching of revelation—such as the prophethood of Moses and Jesus, on God and the punishment of the tomb—is regarded as infidel. Thus, Abū Ḥanīfah emphasizes on the commitment of the three elements altogether so that the true faith can be distinguished from “the false faith” of the *munāfiqīn* (hypocrites) and the people of the Book.

Al-Māturīdī advances this theory by affirming that the three (or two) elements of faith that should work together.⁷⁶ He insists that faith should reside in the heart. Interestingly, he advances the elements of speech or a verbal confession in the form of the listening. For instance, he says that even though God listen to hypocrites' claims of having faith but He rejects their claims because their hearts are devoid of true faith (the Qur'ān, 49: 14). This indicates that the element of listening here refers to one's statement or proclamation listened by the other party. Therefore it is same with the element of speech but is put in different expression. Thus, al- Māturīdī argues that the heart is the locus of faith and it should present together in the listening (or verbal profession) and mind. He refutes the view of those who claim that faith is sufficient with only one or half of its elements.

Al-Ṭaḥāwī⁷⁷ and al-Nasafī⁷⁸ also affirm the definition of faith proposed by Abū Ḥanīfah in their creeds except that they reduce it to only confessing with the tongue and counting true with the heart. Perhaps, as have been alluded above, this is because—as Abū Ḥanīfah himself does—the heart and the mind are identical and always used interchangeably in Islamic tradition. However, al-Ṭaḥāwī explains further the object of faith in his creeds.

Another unique stance of Abū Ḥanīfah (and the Ḥanafites), is that he maintains that faith is neither increase nor decrease.⁷⁹ If that

76 Al-Māturīdī. *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*, 372ff.

77 Watt, *Islamic Creeds*, 52-53.

78 Ibid., 82-83.

79 [Article 2 of his *Waṣīyyah*] Ibn Iskandar, *Al-Jawharah*, 4-5; Watt, *Islamic Creeds*, 57; Wensinck, *The Muslim Creed*, 125.

were so, he argues, then the increase or decrease of faith can only be conceived of in connection with the decrease and increase of unbelief respectively. Thus he questions the possibility that a person can be both a believer and unbeliever at the same time as suggested by such a notion.⁸⁰

Commenting this view, Ibn Iskandar affirms that faith is opposite to unbelief and that both cannot reside in one person at the same time.⁸¹ This signifies that a person must be either a believer or an unbeliever. Since it is inconceivable to have both faith and unbelief at the same time as indicated in the notion of increase and decrease of faith, therefore Abū Ḥanīfah maintains that faith is single and invariable. Whereas, al-Nasafī in his creed adds that while faith does not increase but works increase in themselves.⁸² Therefore, based on Abū Ḥanīfah’s stance as implicitly suggested by Wensinck’s commentary on his creed, it is inappropriate to accuse that Abū Ḥanīfah was a Murji’ite or that he accepts the Murji’ite view.⁸³ This is because, unlike the Murji’ites, Abū Ḥanīfah and the Ḥanafites strictly censure and prohibit any sin or bad deed.

The consequence of this stance is that faith of all people is regarded as same and this stance is lucidly affirmed by article 18 of *A Later Hanafite Creed*.⁸⁴ The article states:

Faith consists in professing (publicly) and counting true (in the mind). The faith of the people of Paradise and of earth does not increase or decrease. The believers are equal in faith and in the assertion of God’s unity but they differ in respect of works, some being higher (than others).

80 Ibid.

81 Ibn Iskandar, *Al-Jawharah*, 4-5.

82 Watt, *Islamic Creeds*, 82.

83 Wensinck’s commentary. *The Muslim Creed*, 138.

84 Watt, *Islamic Creeds*, 66; Wensinck, *The Muslim Creed*, 194.

Again, article 19⁸⁵ affirms this stance:

All the believers are equal in knowledge, subjective certainty, trust, love, inner quiet, feat, hope and faith; they differ in what is beyond faith.⁸⁶

Perhaps, the last peculiar characteristic of faith according to Abū Ḥanīfah and the Ḥanafites as compared to the other Sunnite school is that faith is unequivocal, indelible and invulnerable. The first one indicates that there is a clear-cut between the believer and unbeliever. Abū Ḥanīfah articulates this in article 3 of his *Waṣīyyah*:

The believer [or the Faithful] is truly a believer, and the unbeliever is truly an unbeliever. There is no doubt about (a person's) faith, just as there is no doubt about (a person's) unbelief...⁸⁷

Indeed this statement also expresses Abū Ḥanīfah's stance regarding the issue of *istithnā'* in faith, namely, to say "I am believer if God please"⁸⁸. Ibn Iskandar affirms this by stating that doubt in matter of faith—such as signified in the issue of *istithnā'*—is unacceptable.⁸⁹ Whereas, the last two characteristics (indelible and invulnerable) insist that one's faith will remain unaffected regardless of his sin. In other words, the sinner—even the grave one—will still be considered as a believer. This stance rebuts the Khārijite position which declared a grave sinner as unbeliever. In article 1 of his *Fiqh Akbar*, Abū Ḥanīfah states:

85 Ibid.

86 Watt (*Islamic Creeds*, 66 & 68) has corrected the mistake of Wensinck's translation. Wensinck (*The Muslim Creed*, 194) translates the last sentence as "...They differ in all these, except in faith." Watt suggest that it is works which is meant by "beyond faith"

87 Ibn Iskandar, *Al-Jawharah*, 5-6; Watt, *Islamic Creeds*, p. 57; Wensinck, *The Muslim Creed*, 125.

88 For a brief comparative analysis on this issue see Wensinck, *The Muslim Creed*, 138-140.

89 Ibn Iskandar, *Al-Jawharah*, 5. However, he maintains that if this *istithnā'* is use to refer to the future state and hope then it is acceptable for no one can certain about his future faith or how his life ended. This *istithnā'* is not the real doubt but is meant as an expression to attain God's mercy and guidance.

“We do not consider anyone to be an infidel [or unbeliever] on account of sin; nor do we deny his faith”.⁹⁰

“We do not claim that our good deeds are [surely] accepted and bad deeds [surely] forgiven, as the Murji’a do”.⁹¹

Again he reiterates this in article 4 of his *Waṣīyyah* “Those of the community of Muhammad who sin are all believers and not unbelievers”.⁹² Commenting this article, Ibn Iskandar argues that this is because faith is confession and accounting true, and both will still remain regardless of sin. Therefore, faith which is based on confession and accounting true will also remain unless one commits any action which can invalidate his faith.⁹³ Later this stance is once more affirmed in article 11 of *A Later Hanafites Creed*:

We declare no Muslim an unbeliever on account of sin, even a mortal one, provided he does not declare it lawful. We do not exclude him from (the sphere of) faith, but we say he is truly a believer; he maybe a believer of bad conduct, but he is not an unbeliever”.⁹⁴

Nevertheless, this stance does not imply that Abu Hanifah and the Hanafites are indifferent towards sin or bad deeds. In fact, as has been alluded previously, they steadfastly uphold the orthodox view that bad deeds—indeed all deeds—are accountable. Indeed they are resolutely enjoin what is good and forbid what is wrong.⁹⁵ Thus they affirm all fundamental principles of accountability, judgment and reward, and punishment including the interrogation in the tomb, the balance, the punishment of believers in Hell according to their

90 Wensinck, *The Muslim Creed*, 103; Williams, *The Words of Islam* 141.

91 Abu Hanifa, *Al-Fiqh al-Akbar*, 37. Available at <https://sunnahmuakada.files.wordpress.com/2014/06/al-fiqh-al-akbar-an-accurate-translation1.pdf>, retrieved 01/02/2016.

92 Ibn Iskandar, p. 6; Watt 1994, p. 57; Wensinck, *The Muslim Creed*, 125.

93 However Ibn Iskandar does not mention what kind of actions that can invalidate faith. Nevertheless, it is generally accepted that among those actions are *shirk* (polytheism or associating God with creatures) and the denial of fundamental principles of Islam.

94 Watt 1994, p. 65; Wensinck, *The Muslim Creed*, 192.

95 [Article 2 of *Fiqh Akbar*] Wensinck, *The Muslim Creed*, 103; Williams, *The Words of Islam*, 141.

sins, etc.⁹⁶ It can be said that whoever says that faith increases and decreases is focusing on the characteristics of faith, and whoever says that faith does not increase or decrease is focusing on the essence of faith.

Based on the above discussion, it can be concluded that faith in the view of Abū Ḥanīfah is single and identical, unequivocal, indelible and invariable, separate from works yet dynamic through its three (or two) elements. Even though they exclude works from faith, they still maintain that faith needs a firm commitment and they strictly enjoin good deeds and prohibit bad deeds.

CONCLUSION

The above discussion shows that in early Islamic centuries there were different interpretations and sects among Muslims regarding the issue of faith and good deeds which had triggered a number of controversies, particularly raised by Khārijites, Murji'ites, and Mu'tazilites. All of them addressed the issue related to faith and good deeds differing from the orthodox position, and thus they are refuted and rejected.

The rapid expansion of Islam is one of a major factor behind the different meanings and interpretations of faith and good deeds. While people from diverse religious and ethnic backgrounds entered the folds of Islam, their ways of life and modes of thought did not automatically change to an Islamic way of life and thought. They attempted to adapt their own understanding to religion, thus trying to interpret religion to suit their purpose. This led to the creation of different religious ideas and sometimes sects that went against fundamental Islamic beliefs. Due to existing civil and political tensions among Muslims, the problem became even more complex. It was only when scholars like Imām Abu Ḥanīfah, Imām Shāfi'ī, Imām Mālik and Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal and their students systemised jurisprudence and *aqidah* principles that later established Schools

96 [See articles 18 to 21 of the *Waṣīyyah*] Watt 1994, pp. 59-60; Wensinck, *The Muslim Creed*, 129-130, [articles 14, 21 and 23 of A Later *Ḥanafite Creed*] Watt, *Islamic Creeds*, 65-67; Wensinck, *The Muslim Creed*, 192-195; [article 25 of al-Ṭahāwī creed] Watt, *Islamic Creeds*, 53 [article 11 and 18 of al-Nasafī's creed] Watt, *Islamic Creeds*, 81-82.

of Thought which propagated a middle way emerge, mitigating the differences and conflict between Islam and pre-existing religions and cultures.

We argue that the slight difference between the Ḥanafites and the other Sunnite schools of thought on the relationship between faith and good deeds does not contradict each other as it might appear on initial perusal. Rather, their differences are related to the different socio-political contexts and different approaches employed by the two groups to the concept of faith, that is, their varying focus on different aspects of faith. Socio-politically, Abū Ḥanīfah—as well as the early Ḥanafites—was living in an urban area (Kūfah, Iraq) where Islam was relatively new, and there was a lack of commitment to faith and good deeds among people compared to the rural area. In addition, his time was *coloured* with many controversies, such as the Khārijite–Murji’ite controversy. The former declared anyone guilty of grave sin—or who committed serious bad deeds—to be an unbeliever, while the latter promised salvation to anyone regardless of his sins. It may have been in part to attract people to genuine faith, as well as to counterbalance the Khārijite–Murji’ite controversy that Abū Ḥanīfah developed his intermediate view of faith. This contention, however, does not deny the fact that he established the foundation of, as well as supported his arguments with the Qur’ān and the Prophetic traditions.

In term of the approach, the Ḥanafites focus more on the essence and theoretical aspects of faith, whereas, the other Sunnite schools acknowledge the twofold dimensions of faith, namely, the theoretical and the practical aspects. Looking at a pure theoretical aspect, it is true that faith is same and unchangeable. When look in practical aspect, however, faith is dynamic and its level can increase or decrease. Nonetheless, both of these views have been accepted as orthodox position on the issue. Moreover, all the Sunnite schools maintain that good deeds are important and that all deeds are accountable. Even the Ḥanafites themselves—who exclude good deeds from being a part of faith—refute the view that bad deeds or sins will not bring any negative effect on believers.⁹⁷ Indeed they maintain that a

97 For example see article 14 of *The Fiqh Akbar II* in Wensinck, *The Muslim Creed*, 192;

believer who commits grave sin will be punished in Hell first before allowed to enter Paradise.⁹⁸

Though there are significant differences between the Sunnites and other sects, there are also some similarities. By stating that good deed is not part of faith, the Ḥanafite view looks similar to the Murji'ites. However, the Ḥanafites did not go as far as the Murji'ites who considered sinning as permissible and believed that sins do not harm faith. These extreme understandings are rejected by the Ḥanafites. Indeed, the Hanafites believe that there is a path within each sin that leads to unbelief,⁹⁹ rejection of faith. The Hanafites view that good deed is not a part of faith does not mean that they devalue or neglect good deeds. Good deeds are seen as the wings of faith, use to rise higher spiritually, indicating that faith can only come to its desired station when put into action through good deeds. Thus, any allegation that the Ḥanafites are the Murji'ites or even "the Sunnite Murji'ites" is not only improper but also erroneous.

REFERENCES

- Al-Ash'arī, Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn Ismā'īl. 1967. *Al-Ibānah 'an Uṣūl al-Diyānah (The Elucidation of Islam's Foundation)*. Translated with introduction and notes by Walter C Klein. New Haven, Conn.: American Oriental Society, 1940. Reprint, New York: Kraus Reprint Corporation, Page references are to the 1967 edition.
- Al-Baghdādī, Abū Maṣṣūr 'Abd al-Kāhir ibn Ṭāhir. 1966. *Moslem Schisms and Sects (al-Farḡ bain al-Firaḡ): Being the History of the Various Philosophic Systems Developed in Islam*. Translated by Kate Chambers Seelye. New York: Aims Press.
- Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Arba 'in fī Uṣūl al-Dīn fī al-'Aqā'id wa Asrār al-'Ibādāt wa al-Akhlāq*. Edited by 'Abdullāh al-Ḥamīd 'Arwānī and Muḥammad Bashīr al-Shaqfah. Dimashq: Dār al-Qalam, 2003, [*Arba 'in*].

Watt, *Islamic Creeds*, 65.

98 For example see articles 18 to 21 of *the Waṣīyyah* (Watt, *Islamic Creeds*, 59-60; Wensinck, *The Muslim Creed*, 129-130), articles 14, 21 and 23 of *Fiḡh Akbar II* (Watt, *Islamic Creeds*, 65-67; Wensinck, *The Muslim Creed*, 192-195); article 25 of al-Ṭaḥāwī creed (Watt, *Islamic Creeds*, 53); article 11 and 18 of al-Nasafī's creed (Watt, *Islamic Creeds*, 81-82).

99 Said Nursi, *The Flashes*, trans. Sukran Vahide (Istanbul: Sozler Publication, 2006), 23.

- Al-Iqtiṣād fi al-I’tiqād*. Edited by Inṣāf Ramaḍān. Damascus: Dār al-Qutaybah, 2003, [*al-Iqtiṣād*].
- Revival of Religious Learnings: Imam Ghazzali’s Ihya Ulum-id-Din*. Translated by Fazl-ul-Karim. 4 volumes. Karachi: Darul-Ishaat, 1993, [*Revival*].
- The Foundations of the Articles of Faith: Being a Translation with Notes of the Kitāb Qawā’id al-‘Aqā’id of al-Ghazzālī’s Ihya’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn.*” Translated with notes by Nabih Amin Faris. Lahore: SH. Muhammad Ashraf, 1999.
- Al-Maghnisāwī, Abū al-Muntahā. *Imām Abū Ḥanīfa’s al-Fiqh al-Akbar Explained*. Compiled and Translated with introduction by Abdur-Rahman ibn Yusuf. California, USA: White Thread Press, 2007.
- Al-Māturīdī 1970, Abī Maṣṣūr Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Maḥmūd al-Ḥanafī al-Samarqandī, *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*. Edited by Fathalla Kholeif. Beirut: Dar el-Machreq.
- Al-Shahrastānī, Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Karīm. 1984. *Muslim Sects and Divisions: The Section on Muslim Sects in Kitāb al-Milal wa al-Niḥal*. Translated by AK Kazi and JG Flynn. London; Boston: Kegan Paul International.
- Emon, Anver M. *Islamic Natural Law Theories*. Oxford: University Press, 2010.
- Glassé Cyril, *The New Encyclopedia of Islam: Revised of the Concise Encyclopedia of Islam*. Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 2001, reprinted 2002.
- Goldziher, Ignaz. *Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law*. Translated by Andras and Ruth Hamori with an introduction and additional notes by Bernard Lewis. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1981.
- <https://sunnahmuakada.files.wordpress.com/2014/06/al-fiqh-al-akbar-an-accurate-translation1.Pdf>.
- Ibn Iskandar, Mullā Ḥusayn al-Ḥanafī. 1321H [1901?]. *Al-Jawharah al-Munīfah fi Sharh Waṣīyah al-ilmām al-‘Azam Abī Ḥanīfah*. Ḥaydar Ābād, Hind: Majlis Dā’irat al-Ma‘ārif al-Nizāmīyah.
- Ibn Taymiyyah, 2009. *Book of Faith*. Translated and edited by Salman Hassan Al-Ani and Shadia Ahmad Tel. Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust.
- Ibn Yusuf, Abdur Rahman. *Imam Abu Hanifa’s Al Fiqh al-Akbar Explained*. California: White Thread Press, 2007.

- Izutsu, Toshihiko. *The Concept of Belief in Islamic Theology: A Semantic Analysis of Iman and Islam*. New York: Arno Press, 1980.
- Nasr, Seyyed Hossein, Hamid Dabashi, and Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr, eds. *Shi'ism: Doctrines, Thought, and Spirituality*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988.
- Rahman, Fazlur. 1966. *Islam*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.
- Said Nursi. *Sunihat*, Istanbul: Yeniasya Yayinlari, 1996.
- Al-Mathnawi Al-Nuri, *Seedbed of the Light*. Translated by Huseyin Akarsu. New Jersey: The Light, 2007.
- The Flashes*. Translated by Sukran Vahide. Istanbul: Sozler Publication, 2006.
- Sharif, M. M., ed. *A History of Muslim Philosophy: With Short Accounts of Other Disciplines and the Modern Renaissance in Muslim Lands*. Vol. 1. Karachi: Royal Bool Company, 1963.
- Timani, Hussam S. *Modern Intellectual Readings of the Kharijites*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing inc., 2008.
- Watt, W. Montgomery, trans. 1994. *Islamic Creeds: A Selection*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
1998. *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*. Oxford: Oneworld.
- Wensinck, A. J. 1965. *The Muslim Creed: Its Genesis and Historical Development*. First published in 1932. 2nd impression. New York: Barnes & Noble.
- Williams, John Alden, ed. 1994. *The Words of Islam: Lā Ilāh illā Allāh, Muḥammad Rasūl Allāh*. Austin: University of Texas Press.