

Introduction

The Mu‘tazila was a school of rationalist Islamic theology, known as *kalām*, and one of the important currents of Islamic thought. Mu‘tazilis stressed the primacy of reason and free will and developed an epistemology, ontology and psychology which provided a basis for explaining the nature of the world, God, man and the phenomena of religion such as revelation and divine law. In their ethics, Mu‘tazilis maintained that good and evil can be known solely through human reason.

The Mu‘tazila had its beginnings in the eighth century and its classical period of development was from the latter part of the ninth until the middle of the eleventh century CE. While it briefly enjoyed the status of an official theology under the ‘Abbāsid caliphs in the 9th century, the Mu‘tazila soon fell out of favour in Sunnī Islam and had largely disappeared by the fourteenth century. Its impact, however, continued to be felt in two groups: Shī‘ī Islam and, to some extent, Karaite Judaism. Within Shī‘ī Islam in particular, the influence of the Mu‘tazila continued through the centuries and can be felt even today.

By the latter part of the ninth century, the Mu‘tazilī movement had coalesced into two main schools: the Baghdadi school and that of Basra. The dominant figures of the Baṣran school were Abū ‘Alī al-Jubbā‘ī (d. 916) and his son Abū Hāshim (d. 933). The students and followers of Abū Hāshim formed an important sub-school known as the Bahshamiyya. Of the various members of this school, one can mention the following: Abū Hāshim’s disciple, Abū ‘Alī b. Khallād (d. ca. 961), Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Baṣrī (d. 980) and Abū Ishāq b. ‘Ayyāsh, who were students of Ibn Khallād. The chief judge ‘Abd al-Jabbār al-Hamadhānī (d. 1025) was a student of Abū ‘Abd Allāh and Abū Ishāq and a very prolific author. One of ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s own students, Abu l-Husayn al-Baṣrī (d. 1044), established the last creative school of thought among the Mu‘tazila.

Mu‘tazilī thought appealed to rationally inclined theologians of other scriptural religions. In Judaism, both Rabbanite and Karaite with its strong rational inclination, it was adopted to varying degrees from the 9th century onwards. Jewish scholars both composed original works along Mu‘tazilī lines and produced copies of Muslim books, often transcribed into Hebrew characters. A prime example of an original Jewish Mu‘tazilī work is the Karaite Yūsuf al-Baṣīr’s (d. ca. 1040) *al-Kitāb al-Muḥtawī* and his shorter *Kitāb al-Tamyīz*. The influence of the Mu‘tazila found its way to the very centre of Jewish religious and intellectual life in the East. Several of the Heads of the ancient Academies (Yeshivot) of Sura and Pumbedita (located by the tenth century in Baghdad) adopted the Mu‘tazilī worldview. One of them, Samuel ben Hofni Gaon (d. 1013) was closely familiar with the works of Ibn Khallād and Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Baṣrī. Furthermore, the Mu‘tazilī doctrines and terminology provided a basis for discussion and polemical exchanges between Jewish and Muslim scholars.

Muʿtazilī works were evidently not widely copied and relatively few manuscripts have survived. So little authentic Muʿtazilī literature was available, that until the publication of some significant texts in the 1960's, Muʿtazilī doctrine was mostly known through the works of its opponents. The study of Muʿtazilī thought has made slow but steady progress throughout the twentieth century. Being virtually banned from the centre of the Sunnī world from about the end of the 11th century, Muʿtazilī thinking was not considered an integral part of Islamic intellectual history. Given the rationalistic approach of the Muʿtazila towards theological issues, nineteenth-century historians of thought generally considered the Muʿtazilīs “freethinkers” within Islam who had been deeply influenced by Greek philosophical thought and thus constituted an anomaly within Islamic intellectual history.¹

This evaluation, which was based almost solely on heresiographies written by non-Muʿtazilīs as few or no texts authored by Muʿtazilīs were available, was proven to be wrong at the beginning of the twentieth century, both in the Islamic world and in Western scholarship due to the publication of several significant texts. In 1902, Arthur Biram published a partial edition of Abū Rashīd al-Nisābūrī's *Kitāb al-Masā'il fī l-khilāf bayn al-Baṣriyyin wa-l-Baghdādiyyin*,² and in 1910, Max Horten published a translation of the same work.³ In 1925 Henrik Samuel Nyberg edited the *Kitāb al-Intiṣār* of the Baghdadī Muʿtazilī Abu l-Ḥusayn al-Khayyāt,⁴ a refutation of the polemical treatises of Ibn al-Rāwandī (d. 910) which in turn were directed against al-Jāhiz's (d. 868) *Kitāb Fāḍilat al-Muʿtazila*. Although al-Khayyāt's work does not contain extensive information on the views of the Muʿtazilīs due to its apologetical character, it was the first work authored by a Muʿtazilī available in print. Of much greater significance for the study of Muʿtazilism was Hellmut Ritter's edition of Abu l-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī's (d. 936) *Maqālāt al-islāmiyyin wa-ikhtilāf al-muṣallīn* published in 1929-1930.⁵ This work provided reliable insights into the positions of the Muʿtazilīs, as the author had originally been a student of the Baṣran Muʿtazilī Abū 'Alī al-Jubbā'ī and was familiar with the Muʿtazilī writings of his time.⁶

The next decisive step in the study of Muʿtazilī thought occurred when in the early 1950's a number of manuscripts were discovered in Yemen during an expe-

¹ See, e.g., Heinrich Steiner, *Die Muʿtaziliten oder die Freidenker im Islam. Ein Beitrag zur allgemeinen Culturgeschichte*, Leipzig 1865.

² Arthur Biram, *Die atomistische Substanzenlehre aus dem Buch der Streiffragen zwischen Basrensern und Bagdadensern*, Berlin 1902.

³ *Die Philosophie des abu Raschid (um 1068)*. Aus dem Arabischen übersetzt von Dr. Max Horten, Bonn 1910.

⁴ Cairo: Maṭba'at Dār al-kutub al-miṣriyya, 1925.

⁵ *Die dogmatischen Lehren der Anhänger des Islam*. Von Abu l-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn Ismā'il al-Aš'arī, ed. Hellmut Ritter, Istanbul 1929-33.

⁶ The work also served as an important background for Salomon (Shlomo) Pines, *Beiträge zur islamischen Atomenlehre*, Berlin 1936.

dition of a group of Egyptian scholars.⁷ These manuscripts contained mostly works of various representatives of the Mu‘tazili school of Abū Hāshim al-Jubbā‘ī, the Bahshamiyya. These included fourteen out of the original twenty volumes of the encyclopaedic *Kitāb al-Mughnī fi abwāb al-tawhīd wa-l-‘adl* of ‘Abd al-Jabbār al-Hamadhānī (namely vols. 4-9, 11-17, 20) which were subsequently edited in Egypt between 1961 and 1965.⁸ Further writings of adherents of the Bahshamiyya that were found in the library of the Great Mosque in Ṣan‘ā’ were also edited during the 1960’s. Among them mention should be made of *Tā‘līq sharḥ al-uṣūl al-khamsa*, a recension of the *Sharḥ uṣūl al-khamsa* of ‘Abd al-Jabbār by one of his followers, Mānakdīm (d. 425/1034),⁹ as well as *Kitāb al-Majmū‘ fi l-muḥīṭ bi-l-taklīf*, a recension of ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s *al-Kitāb al-Muḥīṭ bi-l-taklīf* by another follower of his, namely Ibn Mattawayh.¹⁰

However, despite these rich finds, numerous lacunae remain. On the one hand, no texts by thinkers prior to ‘Abd al-Jabbār were discovered. The same applies to rival groups to the Bahshamiyya such as the Ikhshīdiyya, or the school of Baghdad, whose doctrines were to a large extent formulated by Abu l-Qāsim al-Ka‘bī al-Balkhī (d. 931).¹¹ On the other hand, quite significant parts of the works by adherents of the Bahshamiyya were still unaccounted for. For example, volumes 1-3, 10 and 18-19 of the *Mughnī* were not found, nor were other works by ‘Abd al-Jabbār, such as the original version of the *al-Kitāb al-Muḥīṭ* or his *Sharḥ Kashf al-‘arāḍ*. Moreover, the finds of the 1950’s suggested that the Bahshamiyya had constituted the last innovative and dynamic school within Mu‘tazilism. This impression was proved to be incorrect only some decades later, when Wilferd Madelung and Martin McDermott discovered and edited the extant fragments of Rukn al-Dīn Maḥmūd b. Muḥammad al-Malāḥimī’s (d. 1141) *Kitāb al-Mu‘tamad fi uṣūl al-dīn*. Ibn al-Malāḥimī was a follower of the teachings of Abu l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī, the founder of what was truly the last innovative school within the Mu‘tazila. From the *Kitāb al-Mu‘tamad* it is evident that Abu l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī’s views differed significantly from those of his teacher ‘Abd al-Jabbār and that he

⁷ On the expedition and its results, see the report by Khalīl Yaḥyā Nāmī, *al-Ba‘ṭha al-miṣriyya li-taṣwīr al-makḥṭū‘āt al-‘arabiyya fi bilād al-Yaman*, Cairo 1952; *Qā’ima bi-l-makḥṭū‘āt al-‘arabiyya al-muṣawwara bi-l-mikrāwifilm min al-Jumhūriyya al-‘arabiyya al-Yamaniyya*, Cairo 1387/1967. For further references, see Geoffrey Roper, *World Survey of Islamic Manuscripts III*, London 1994, pp. 645ff.

⁸ ‘Abd al-Jabbār al-Hamadhānī, *Kitāb al-Mughnī fi abwāb al-tawhīd wa-l-‘adl*, ed. Muḥammad Muṣṭafā Ḥilmī [et al.], Cairo 1961-1965.

⁹ Abu l-Ḥusayn Aḥmad b. Abī Hāshim Mānakdīm, *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-khamsa*, ed. ‘Abd al-Karīm ‘Uthmān [ascribed ‘Abd al-Jabbār on the title page], Cairo 1384/1965.

¹⁰ Ibn Mattawayh, *Kitāb al-Majmū‘ fi l-muḥīṭ bi-l-taklīf*. Vol. 1, ed. J.J. Houben, Beirut 1965. Vol. 2, eds. J.J. Houben and D. Gimaret, Beirut 1981. Vol. 3, ed. Jan Peters, Beirut 1999. – The edition of Volume Four is currently under preparation by Margaretha T. Heemskerck.

¹¹ The only work of Abu l-Qāsim al-Balkhī that was found in Yemen is his *Maqālāt al-islāmiyyin* that has partly been edited by Fu‘ād Sayyid, *Faḍl al-‘itizāl wa-ṭabaqāt al-Mu‘tazila*, Tunis 1974, pp. 63ff).

formulated novel positions on a number of central theological issues. Ibn al-Malāḥimī's *Kitāb al-Mu'tamad* was published in 1991,¹² and his shorter *Kitāb al-Fā'iḳ fi uṣūl al-dīn* has also recently been published.¹³ Mention should also be made of a short work on the principles of faith by Jār Allāh al-Zamakhsharī (d. 538/1144), who was clearly under the influence of Ibn al-Malāḥimī. It is extant in three manuscript copies of Yemeni provenance.¹⁴ Another author who was familiar with Abu l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī's work and appreciated it was the Zaydī Abu l-Qāsim al-Bustī (late 10th and early 11th century).¹⁵

Additional texts were made available in recent years through editions and studies that shed further light on the doctrines of Abu l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī, such as the *Kāmil fi l-istiḳṣā' fīmā balaghanā min kalām al-quḍamā'*. This systematic comparison of the doctrines of the Bahshamīs and of Abu l-Ḥusayn, which was written between 536/1141 and 675/1276-7 by the otherwise unknown Taqī al-Dīn al-Baḥrānī (or: al-Najrānī) al-ʿAjālī, is preserved in a single manuscript (Leiden Or. 487).¹⁶ Furthermore, the profound influence Abu l-Ḥusayn had on the theological thinking of the Imāmī Shī'īs from the 12th century onwards has been shown in a number of studies.¹⁷

Not found in Yemen, however, were theological writings by Abu l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī himself. Nor were any contemporary texts by adversaries of Abu l-Ḥusayn discovered that might have given evidence of the vehement disputations that took place between the adherents of the Bahshamiyya on the one hand and Abu

¹² Rukn al-Dīn Maḥmūd ibn Muḥammad al-Malāḥimī al-Khuwārazmī (d. 536/1141), *Kitāb al-Mu'tamad fi uṣūl al-dīn*. The extant parts edited by Martin McDermott and Wilferd Madelung, London 1991.

¹³ Rukn al-Dīn Maḥmūd ibn Muḥammad al-Malāḥimī al-Khuwārazmī, *Kitāb al-Fā'iḳ fi uṣūl al-dīn*. Edited with an Introduction by Wilferd Madelung and Martin McDermott, Tehran 2007.

¹⁴ Sabine Schmidtke, "Re-Edition of al-Minhāj fi uṣūl al-dīn by Jār Allāh al-Zamakhsharī," *Ma'ārif* 20 iii (1382/2004), pp. 107-48; Jār Allāh al-Zamakhsharī, *Kitāb al-Minhāj fi uṣūl al-dīn*. Introduced and edited by S. Schmidtke, Beirut 1428/2007.

¹⁵ See his *Kitāb al-Baḥṭh ʿan adillat al-takfir wa l-tafsīq (Investigation of the evidence for charging with kufr and fisq)*. Edited with an Introduction by Wilferd Madelung and Sabine Schmidtke, Tehran 1382/2003.

¹⁶ Taqī al-Dīn al-Baḥrānī (or: al-Najrānī) al-ʿAjālī, *al-Kāmil fi l-istiḳṣā' fīmā balaghanā min kalām al-quḍamā'*, ed. al-Sayyid Muḥammad al-Shahīd, Cairo 1420/1999.

¹⁷ See Wilferd Madelung, "Imāmism and Mu'tazilite Theology," in *Le Shī'isme imāmīte*, ed. T. Fahd, Paris 1970, pp. 13-29; Reprinted in idem, *Religious Schools and Sects in Medieval Islam*, London 1985, VII; Martin J. McDermott, *The Theology of al-Shaikh al-Mufīd (d. 413/1022)*, Beirut 1978; Sabine Schmidtke, *The Theology of al-ʿAllāma al-Hillī (d. 726/1325)*, Berlin 1991; Paul Sander, *Zwischen Charisma und Ratio. Entwicklungen in der frühen imāmītischen Theologie*, Berlin 1994; S. Schmidtke, *Theologie, Philosophie und Mystik im zwölfterschiitischen Islam des 9./15. Jahrhunderts. Die Gedankenwelten des Ibn Abī Gūmbūr al-Aḥṣārī (um 838/1434-35 – nach 906/1501)*, Leiden 2000. See also *Kḥulāṣat al-nazar. An Anonymous Imāmī-Mu'tazilī Treatise (late 6th/12th or early 7th/13th century)*. Edited with an Introduction by Sabine Schmidtke and Hasan Ansari, Tehran 2006.

l-Ḥusayn on the other. It is only known from later sources that the animosities between the two groups must have been very strong indeed.

The study of Jewish Muʿtazilism began more than a century ago with the work of Salomon Munk¹⁸ and Martin Schreiner.¹⁹ Munk and Schreiner, however, were not aware of the primary sources to be found among the various Genizah materials. Thirteen of the Muʿtazili manuscripts found in the Firkovitch collection (taken from the genizah of the Karaite Synagogue in Cairo) were described in detail by Andrej Jakovlevič Borisov in an article published in 1935.²⁰ Between 1939 and 1943, Leon Nemoj published *Kitāb al-Anwār wa-l-marāqīb* by the Karaite Yaʿqūb al-Qirqisānī (fl. early 10th century in Baghdad).²¹ Additional landmarks in the study of Jewish Muʿtazilism were the publications of Georges Vajda concerning Yūsuf al-Baṣīr, particularly his edition of al-Baṣīr’s *al-Kitāb al-Muḥṭawī* on the basis of a manuscript from the Kaufmann collection (Budapest),²² and Harry Austryn Wolfson’s *Repercussions of the Kalam in Jewish Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA 1979). Haggai Ben-Shammai has studied Muʿtazili elements in the works of early Karaite authors – Yaʿqūb al-Qirqisānī and Yefet ben ʿEli (late 10th century).²³ On the basis of Borisov’s descriptions of the Firkovitch Muʿtazili manuscripts and from fragments in the British Library, Ben-Shammai was moreover able to draw additional conclusions regarding the identity of some of the Muʿtazili materials preserved by the Karaites, showing in particular that the Karaites had preserved the original version of ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s *al-Kitāb al-Muḥīṭ* which we now possess

¹⁸ S. Munk, *Mélanges de philosophie juive et arabe*, Paris 1859.

¹⁹ Martin Schreiner, “Der Kalām in der jüdischen Literatur,” *Bericht über die Lehranstalt für die Wissenschaft des Judenthums in Berlin* 13 (1895), pp. 1-67. Reprinted in idem, *Gesammelte Schriften. Islamische und jüdisch-islamische Studien*. Herausgegeben und eingeleitet von Moshe Perlmann, Hildesheim 1983, pp. 280-346.

²⁰ A. Ja. Borisov, “Muʿtazilitskie rukopisi Gosudarstvennoj Publičnoj Biblioteki v Leningrade,” *Bibliografija Vostoka* 8-9 (1935), pp. 69-95; see also idem, “Ob otkrytych v Leningrade muʿtazilitskich rukopisjach i jich značenii dlja istorii musulmanskoj mysli,” in *Akademijskaja Nauk SSSR. Trudy pervoj sessii arabistov* 14-17 ijunka 1935 g. (Trudy Instituta Vostokovedenija 24), pp. 113-25. The two articles were reprinted in *Pravoslavnyi Palestinskij Sbornik* 99 (36) (2002), pp. 219-49 and in *The Teachings of the Muʿtazila. Texts and Studies I-II*. Selected and reprinted by Fuat Sezgin in collaboration with Mazen Amawi, Carl Ehrig-Eggert, Eckhard Neubauer, Frankfurt am Main 2000, vol. 2, pp. 17-57.

²¹ *Kitāb al-Anwār wal-marāqīb. Code of Karaite Law*. By Yaʿqūb al-Qirqisānī (Second Quarter of the Tenth Century) 1-5. Edited from the Manuscripts in the State Public Library at Leningrad and the British Museum in London by Leon Nemoj, New York 1939-43.

²² *Al-Kitāb al-Muḥṭawī de Yūsuf al-Baṣīr*. Texte, traduction et commentaire par Georges Vajda. Édité par David R. Blumenthal, Leiden 1985. See also Haggai Ben-Shammai’s review of this edition in *Kiryat Sefer* 62 (1989), pp. 407-26. Wolfgang von Abel has recently published a partial edition and translation of Yūsuf al-Baṣīr’s *Kitāb al-Tamyiz*: Yūsuf al-Baṣīr, *Das Buch der Unterscheidung*. Judäo-arabisch-Deutsch. Übersetzt und eingeleitet von Wolfgang von Abel, Freiburg 2005. See also von Abel’s contribution to the present volume.

²³ Haggai Ben-Shammai, *The Doctrines of Religious Thought of Abū Yūsuf Yaʿqūb al-Qirqisānī and Yefet ben ʿEli*, PhD Thesis, Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1978.

only in the paraphrastic version by Ibn Mattawayh.²⁴ Sarah Stroumsa has published the *Isbrūn Maqāla* of the ninth-century Jewish *mutakallim* Dāwūd b. Marwān al-Muqammaṣ,²⁵ and David Sklare has reconstructed some of the Muʿtazilī writings of Samuel ben Hofni Gaon²⁶ and investigated the impact of Muʿtazilī thought on the legal writings of Yūsuf al-Baṣīr.²⁷

In 2003, the “Muʿtazilite Manuscripts Project Group” was formed with the purpose of collecting all hitherto unpublished Muʿtazilī manuscripts, of identifying these materials and of preparing critical editions in order to set the scientific research of the Muʿtazilī movement on a broader basis.²⁸ Muʿtazilī manuscripts have survived largely in two places: In Yemenite public and private manuscript collections, and in the Firkovitch collection housed in the Russian National Library in St. Petersburg. Yemen has been an important source of Muʿtazilī manuscripts due to the Zaydī branch of Shīʿism which established itself politically in Yemen. The Zaydīs adopted Muʿtazilism as the basis of their theology, and while they developed their own theological literature (which often contains quotations from earlier tracts), works of the Bahshamiyya were also copied. Numerous Muʿtazilī writings which were presumed lost were recently found in Yemen and India by the Iranian scholar Hassan Ansari, including the extensive work by Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Tuḥfat al-mutakallimīn fi l-radd ʿalā l-falāsifa*.²⁹ Moreover, the Zayd b. ʿAlī Foundation engages in a systematic search in the private libraries mainly of Ṣanʿāʾ and Ṣaʿda for manuscript materials of Zaydī provenance, among them many Muʿtazilī manuscripts.³⁰

²⁴ Haggai Ben-Shammai, “A note on some Karaite copies of Muʿtazilite writings,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 37 (1974), pp. 295-304.

²⁵ Dāwūd ibn Marwān al-Muqammaṣ’s *Twenty Chapters (Isbrūn Maqāla)*. Edited, translated and annotated by Sarah Stroumsa, Leiden 1989.

²⁶ David E. Sklare, *Samuel Ben Hofni Gaon and His Cultural World. Texts and Studies*, Leiden 1996.

²⁷ David Sklare, “Yūsuf al-Baṣīr: Theological Aspects of His Halakhic Works,” in *The Jews of Medieval Islam. Community, Society, and Identity*. Proceedings of an International Conference held at the Institute of Jewish Studies, University College London 1992, ed. Daniel Frank, Leiden 1995, pp. 249-70; see also idem (in cooperation with Haggai Ben-Shammai), *Judaean-Arabic Manuscripts in the Firkovitch Collections. The Works of Yusuf al-Basir. A Sample Catalogue. Texts and Studies*, [Hebrew] Jerusalem 1997.

²⁸ For the forthcoming publication *Handbook of Muʿtazilite Works and Manuscripts*, eds. Gregor Schwarb, Sabine Schmidtke, and David Sklare, Leiden: Brill (Handbuch der Orientalistik), see G. Schwarb, “Un projet international: le manuel des œuvres et manuscrits muʿtazilites,” *Chronique du manuscrit au Yémen* 2 (Juni 2006) [<http://cy.revues.org/document198.html> (consulted 23 March 2007)].

²⁹ See Ḥasan Anṣārī, “Kitāb-i tāzihiyāb dar Naqd-i falsafa. Paidā ṣudan-i Kitāb-i ‘Tuḥfat al-mutakallimīn-i’ Malāḥimī,” *Naṣr-i dāniš* 18 iii (2001), pp. 31-32. See also his website <http://ansari.kateban.com> [consulted 23 March 2007]. An edition of the text, prepared by Wilferd Madelung, Hassan Ansari, and Sabine Schmidtke, is forthcoming (Tehran: Iranian Institute of Philosophy).

³⁰ See in particular ʿAbd al-Salām ʿAbbās al-Wajīh, *Maṣādir al-turāth fi l-maktabāt al-khāṣṣa fi l-Yaman* 1-2, Ṣanʿāʾ 1422/2002. – See also the website of the foundation at www.izbacf.org [consulted 23 March 2007].

It is due to their efforts that some additional portions of Ibn al-Malāḥimī's *al-Mu'tamad* have recently come to light.³¹ Daniel Gimaret has recently completed an edition of Ibn Mattawayh's *Kitāb al-Tadhkira fī l-jawābir wa-l-'arād* on the basis of manuscripts from Yemen and the Ambrosiana Collection in Milan,³² and in Iran an anonymous commentary on Ibn Mattawayh's *Kitāb al-Tadhkira*, which is preserved in an apparently unique manuscript copy housed at the Aṣghar Mahdawi Library in Tehran, has been made available in a facsimile publication.³³

The manuscripts of the Firkovitch collection were collected by the Polish Karaite Abraham Firkovitch (1787-1874) during his travels in the Crimea and Caucasus and then later in the Middle East. Firkovitch purchased manuscripts in Aleppo, Damascus and Jerusalem, and evidently also received a consignment of manuscripts from Hit in Iraq. His major source, however, was the manuscript storeroom (*genizah*) of the Karaite synagogue in Cairo. The manuscripts that Firkovitch collected in the Middle East (the so-called Second Firkovitch Collection) were sold to the Czarist Imperial Library two years after his death, i.e., in 1876.³⁴ The collection contains thousands of manuscripts in Arabic (mostly in Hebrew characters, but also a good number in Arabic characters) and opens a window onto the rich Jewish culture of the medieval Middle East in general, and the tenth and eleventh-century Karaite communities of Jerusalem and Egypt in particular. The Mu'tazilī manuscripts found in the Firkovitch collection include

³¹ Wilferd Madelung is currently preparing a revised and enlarged edition of the *Kitāb al-Mu'tamad*.

³² Cairo: IDEO (in press). See also Daniel Gimaret, "Un chapitre inédit de la *tadhkira* d'Ibn Mattawayh sur les illusions d'optique et autres singularités de la vision oculaire," in *Arabic Theology, Arabic Philosophy. From the Many to the One: Essays in Celebration of Richard M. Frank*, ed. James E. Montgomery, Leuven 2006, pp. 281-95.

³³ *An Anonymous Commentary on Kitāb al-Tadhkira by Ibn Mattawayh. Facsimile Edition of Mahdawi Codex 514 (6th/12th Century)*. Introduction and Indices by Sabine Schmidtke, Tehran 2006. See also Hasan Anṣārī, "Kitābi az maktab-i mutakkilimān-i mu'tazilī Rayy," *Kitāb-i māh dīn* 104/105/106 (1385/2006), pp. 68-75, and S. Schmidtke, "MS Mahdawi 514. An Anonymous Commentary of Ibn Mattawayh's *Kitāb al-Tadhkira*," (forthcoming).

³⁴ For an overview of the collection and its significance, see Tapani Harviainen, "The Cairo Genizot and Other Sources of the Second Firkovitch Collection in St. Petersburg," in *Proceedings of the Twelfth International Congress of the International Society for Masoretic Studies*, ed. E.J. Revell, [n.p.] 1995, pp. 25-36; idem, "Abraham Firkovich," in *Karaite Judaism. A Guide to its History and Literary Sources*, ed. Meira Polliack, Leiden 2003, pp. 875-92; Malachi Beit-Arié, "The Accessibility of the Russian Manuscript Collections: New Perspectives for Jewish Studies," in *Jewish Studies in a New Europe: Proceedings of the Fifth Congress of Jewish Studies in Copenhagen under the Auspices of the European Association for Jewish Studies*, ed. Ulf Haxen, Copenhagen 1998, pp. 82-98; Haggai Ben-Shammai, "Karaites and the Orient – Trends in the Study of Karaites and Karaism," [Hebrew] *Pe'amim* 89 (Autumn 2001), pp. 5-18; Zeev Elkin and Menachem Ben-Sasson, "Abraham Firkovich and the Cairo Genizas in the Light of His Personal Archive," [Hebrew] *Pe'amim* 90 (Winter 2002), pp. 51-95; David Sklare, "A Guide to Collections of Karaite Manuscripts," in *Karaite Judaism*, pp. 893-924; Shimon M. Iakerson, *Selected Pearls. Treasures of Jewish Culture in Saint-Petersburg (manuscripts, documents, incunabula, ritual objects)*, St. Petersburg 2003, pp. 27-46 (with further references).

both Karaite works and copies of Muslim works which were kept in Karaite libraries. Similar manuscripts, evidently derived from the same source as the Firkovitch collection, are found in the British Library.³⁵ One of the most spectacular recent findings are three extensive fragments of Abu l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī's *Kitāb Taṣaffuḥ al-adilla*, which was believed to be completely lost,³⁶ as well as fragments of two refutations of the doctrine of Abu l-Ḥusayn, authored by his contemporary, the Karaite Yūsuf al-Baṣīr.³⁷ In addition, portions of 'Abd al-Jabbār's *Mughnī* from volumes that had not been found among the Yemeni manuscripts have now been published.³⁸

The present volume reflects some of the research by members of the "Mu'tazilite Manuscripts Project Group", who met during two workshops in Istanbul, namely in July 2005 and in June 2006. Most of the contributions to the present volume were presented during one of these meetings. Gerhard Wedel, who did not participate in the Istanbul meetings, was invited to contribute an article on Mu'tazilī tendencies among the Samaritans. In order to show the extent to which Mu'tazilī thought was shared by Muslims, Jews and Samaritans, the contributions are strictly arranged in chronological order rather than by religious

³⁵ Gregor Schwarb, "Découverte d'un nouveau fragment du *Kitāb al-mughnī fī abwāb al-tawḥīd wa-l-ʿadl* du Qāḍī 'Abd al-Jabbār al-Hamadānī dans une collection karaïte de la British Library," *Mélanges de l'Institut d'Etudes Orientales* 27 (2007) (in press). – Some Mu'tazilī materials are also to be found among the materials from the Ben Ezra Genizah, see, e.g., Georges Vajda, "De quelques fragments mu'tazilites en judéo-arabe. Notice provisoire," *Journal asiatique* 264 (1976), pp. 1-7; Colin F. Baker and Meira Polliack, *Arabic and Judaeo-Arabic Manuscripts in the Cambridge Genizah Collections. Arabic Old Series (T-S Ar. 1a-54)*, Cambridge 2001, pp. 402 (T-S Ar. 43.220), 403 (T-S Ar. 43.222, T-S Ar. 43.224, T-S Ar. 43.233), 404 (T-S Ar. 43.242), 404-5 (T-S Ar. 43.249), 406-7 (T-S Ar. 43.275), 439 (T-S Ar. 46.121); Avihai Shvitiel and Friedrich Niessen, *Arabic and Judaeo-Arabic Manuscripts in the Cambridge Genizah Collections. Taylor-Schechter New Series*, Cambridge 2006, *passim*. See also Haggai Ben-Shammai, "Medieval History and Religious Thought," in *The Cambridge Genizah Collections. Their Contents and Significance*, ed. Stefan C. Reif with the assistance of Shulamit Reif, Cambridge 2002, pp. 136-51.

³⁶ Abu l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī, *Taṣaffuḥ al-adilla*. The extant parts introduced and edited by Wilferd Madelung and Sabine Schmidtke, Wiesbaden 2006.

³⁷ Wilferd Madelung and Sabine Schmidtke, *Rational Theology in Interfaith Communication. Abu l-Husayn al-Baṣrī's Mu'tazilī Theology among the Karaites in the Fatimid Age*, Leiden 2006; W. Madelung, "Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī's Proof for the Existence of God," in *Arabic Theology, Arabic Philosophy. From the Many to the One: Essays in Celebration of Richard M. Frank*, ed. James E. Montgomery, Leuven 2006, pp. 273-80; S. Schmidtke, "The Karaites' Encounter with the Thought of Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī (d. 436/1044). A Survey of the Relevant Materials in the Firkovitch-Collection, St. Petersburg," *Arabica* 53 (2006), pp. 108-42. – See also the contribution by Madelung and Schmidtke in the present volume.

³⁸ Omar Hamdan and Sabine Schmidtke, "Qāḍī 'Abd al-Jabbār al-Hamadhānī (d. 415/1025) on the Promise and Threat. An Edition of a Fragment of his *Kitāb al-Mughnī fī abwāb al-tawḥīd wa l-ʿadl* preserved in the Firkovitch-Collection, St. Petersburg (II Firk. Arab. 105, ff. 14-92)," *Mélanges de l'Institut dominicain d'Etudes orientales* 27 (2007) (in press). See also S. Schmidtke, "II Firk. Arab. 111 – A copy of al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā's *Kitāb al-Dhakhīra* completed in 472/1079-80 in the Firkovitch-Collection, St. Petersburg," [Persian] *Ma'arif* 20 ii (1382/2003), pp. 68-84.

denomination. A number of papers discuss so far unknown Mu‘tazili writings most of which have only recently come to light. Hassan Ansari describes a fragment recently found in Yemen which he identifies as Abū ‘Alī al-Jubbā‘ī’s *Maqālāt*. Suleiman Mourad focusses on the *Kitāb al-Radd ‘alā l-jabriyya al-qadariyya* by Ibn al-Khallāl al-Baṣrī of which a manuscript is preserved in Rome. Wilferd Madelung analyzes the recently discovered *Tuhfat al-mutakallimīn fī l-radd ‘alā l-falāsifa* by Ibn al-Malāḥimī, and David Sklare presents portions of the *Kitāb al-Ni‘ma*, an extensive theological tract by the Jewish Mu‘tazilī Levi ben Yefet. Although the *Vorlage* of the text presented was originally written in Hebrew characters, it is transcribed here into Arabic characters so as to render it accessible to a larger readership.

A number of contributions contain first editions of Mu‘tazili texts. Wilferd Madelung and Sabine Schmidtke present an edition and annotated translation of Yūsuf al-Baṣīr’s first refutation (*naqd*) of Abu l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī’s theology. Hassan Ansari offers an *editio princeps* of a text by the Zaydī Mu‘tazilī author Ḥusām al-Dīn al-Raṣṣās (d. 584/1188) dealing with the question of whether the existence of a created being is additional to its essence or is identical with it. Hans Daiber presents an edition of a manuscript from Najaf, entitled *Maqāla fī l-radd ‘alā l-Mujbira*, which is attributed to ‘Abd al-Jabbār al-Hamadhānī. The text opens with a question, posed by an anonymous person as to how to respond to the claim of the *Mujbira* that miracles constitute proof for the veracity of prophets although this is impossible according to their doctrine. It is followed by ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s detailed response in the course of which he seeks to force the opponents by way of *ilzām* to admit that according to their doctrine miracles do not prove anything. None of the classical sources mentions a work of this title or topic among the works of ‘Abd al-Jabbār. However, the doctrinal outlook of the responsum would seem to speak for ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s authorship, as does a lengthy quotation from Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Baṣrī (d. 369/979), ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s predecessor in the leadership of the Bahshamiyya. It may well be that the text originated in one of his numerous responsa collections, none of which is extant. Other contributions analyze specific topics. Racha el-Omari investigates Abu l-Qāsim al-Ka‘bī’s doctrine of the imamate and Ulrich Rudolph re-evaluates al-Fārābī’s knowledge of and judgment about the Mu‘tazila. Margaretha T. Heemskerk provides a detailed examination of ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s notion of body, soul and resurrection. Wolfgang von Abel discusses the differences between the original Arabic version of Yūsuf al-Baṣīr’s *Kitāb al-Tamyīz* and Ibn Tibbon’s Hebrew translation and argues that there may have been different recensions of the original Arabic. Camilla Adang investigates the quotations from Abu l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī’s *Ghurar al-adilla* on the issue of *dalā’il al-nubuwwa* that are encountered in the *Kitāb al-Munqidh min al-taqlid* by the Twelver Shī‘ī author Sadīd al-Dīn al-Ḥimmaṣī al-Rāzī. She shows that the use of Ibn Rabban al-Ṭabari’s *Kitāb al-Dīn wa-l-dawla* by Abu l-Ḥusayn settles the controversy about the disputed authenticity of this

work. Gerhard Wedel describes the Muʿtazilī tendencies in the *Kitāb al-Ṭubākh* by the Samaritan Abu l-Ḥasan al-Ṣūrī.

Two contributions that are not focused on a single author or work were placed towards the end of the volume, namely the paper by Maurice Pomerantz on repentance by government officials in the 10th century and Sabine Schmidtke's descriptive catalogue of manuscripts of Muʿtazilī works in Arabic characters in the Firkovitch collection. The volume concludes with an article by Thomas Hildebrandt which deals with the modern phenomenon of the so-called "Neo-Muʿtazila" and takes the thought of Naṣr Ḥāmid Abū Zayd as a case-study.

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The Editors