

THE DIALECTIC OF ORTHODOXY AND HERESY IN EARLY ISLAM

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This article discusses the concepts of orthodoxy and heresy in Islam. It focuses on orthodoxy in Islam, and how orthodoxy played an important role in defining heresy. Although no universal concept of orthodoxy exists in Islam, whenever any particular religious creed got dominant position and enjoyed the support of the ruling elite, then dissenters were considered heretic as they were against the orthodoxy of that particular religious faction. In Islam, heresy is related to the social and political challenges to the ruling elite and the dominant religious elite by dissenters, and there exists a symbiotic relationship between the orthodoxy of the day and the ruling elite.

Keywords: *Dialectic, Orthodoxy, Heresy, Hetrodoxy, Shari'ah, Bid'ah.*

Introduction

In the history of mankind, religion has always played a significant role. Throughout the history of religions, the question whether religion is applied in its original form or in some of its later interpretations, has been crucial. Those who insist on the originality and purity of the revealed religion are called puritan and orthodox. They sometimes consider themselves custodians of the religious teachings and practices, while others, who are in favour of an interpretation of the religious doctrines adapted to the changing circumstances, are marginalised by the mainstream religious community, and get branded as heterodox. The former gives much importance to the textual meanings of the revelation, while the latter emphasises the interpretation of the religious doctrines.¹ Religion is closely related to the social and cultural dimensions of human life. The socio-cultural context has a strong relationship with the religious traditions, the two are interdependent, and at the same time “mutually reinforcing.”²

Heresy and orthodoxy emerge when a conflict occurs between socio-cultural traditions and religious beliefs and practices.

Orthodoxy and heresy are complex phenomena. There is a deep relationship between the two orthodoxy and heresy in the history of Islam. Both are so strongly interrelated that one cannot understand heresy in Islam without understanding orthodoxy. Orthodoxy is a relative term. As there is not any particular word for “heresy” in Islam, orthodoxy helps in defining the meaning of heresy. Those religious groups and schools of thought that allied with the government played a critical role in defining orthodoxy and declaring others as heretics.

Etymology of the Word Heresy

Heresy is an English term borrowed from the Greek word *haireisis*. There was a variety of meanings of the word *haireisis* in classical Greek from where it has been derived. In Greece, it was used for “choice,” “election,” and “decision or purpose effort.”³ This last meaning of the word is significant in respect to giving the idea of freedom of choice and freedom of doctrine. The connotation of the word heresy, or Greek *haireisis*, or “choice” in antiquity was positive. It was used for certain philosophical groups or factions without considering it “scandalous and blameworthy.”⁴ It was also common to prefer one heretical group over the other without any negative connotation.

The idea of the development of heresy is paralleled with the development of the institution of the Church in European history. With the passage of time, the Church gave much importance to doctrines in order to consolidate its position. From the second and the third century of the Christian era, efforts were started to preserve the Christian traditions in the face of Greek philosophy and oriental mythology.⁵ Until the late Christian antiquity, the usage of the term *haireisis* or heresy was in a non-pejorative sense. Early Christians however used it increasingly, to refer to a “body of false beliefs and believers.”⁶ Another Greek word *heterodoxia* was closely related to the early Christian sense of heresy, it meant “the act of mistaking one thing for another.”⁷ The Church used both terms, and for some time they became almost synonymous in Christian usage.

During the early centuries of Christianity, there was much diversity in belief and practices. As a result of the influence of the speculative philosophy of the Greeks, through internal theological debates, persecution

of scholars, and with state support, a particular set of doctrines had been established, and its adherents were called orthodox, giving final authority to the Christian Church over the doctrinal faith, beliefs and practices. Only the Church clerge had the right to tell what it meant to be Christian.⁸ The Church felt the need for keeping its teachings pure, and thus criteria were developed to test the deviations. Thus orthodoxy emerged under the authority of the Church.

A struggle started between orthodoxy and heresy (dissenters), and as a result an “official dogma” was established and “others,” who did not conform to the “official dogma” were declared heretics.⁹ Until this time heresy more or less meant the difference in religious beliefs and practices. There were religious differences within the Church. The most important thing for the Church was an ecclesiastic authority, the authority over truth, and heresy was seen as a threat to the truth defined by the Church itself.¹⁰ Thus the idea of heresy as an evil emerged in the debates in the early Church, which resulted in the establishment of Councils that condemned various false doctrines and formulated the fundamental Christian beliefs and practices.¹¹

During this early time, heresy mainly manifested itself in the form of religious differences. The establishment of the Christian Church and the changing societal circumstances in the Middle Ages gave much importance to heresy in Western society. The Church having religio-political authority suppressed dissenters declaring them heretics in “the less stable, less communal and more competitive Christian society.”¹² Owing to the strict Papal authority, the medieval European society became a “persecuting society.”¹³ At that time, different ideas and philosophies were branded as heresies such as Gnosticism, Manichaeism, dualistic theories, and mysticism based on pantheism. In the early medieval period, “heretics did not see themselves as heretics” but as authentic Christians, “who were claiming through the *vita apostolica*, the true teachings of the Gospels.”¹⁴

When powers of Papacy grew in Europe after the tenth century, heresy became an observable phenomenon. In European history, a change came after 1000 A.D. when political and economic structures brought demographic changes. These structures brought competition in society. As individual efforts were made to improve life, the response from the religious and political authorities to control this change was critical in the emergence of dissenters in the society.¹⁵ From the tenth century onward, heretics were suppressed and persecuted by the Church, and the term

heresy was used in a negative and pejorative sense. Thus, heresy has been a prominent feature of Christian or Western European history. The Christian Church that had authority over the Christian faith crushed religious dissenters throughout the history of medieval Europe.

Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy, and their Construction

Orthodoxy, heterodoxy and heresy are interrelated terms which cannot be understood in isolation. The heretics oppose those who consider themselves orthodox, and they are called heretic by the orthodoxy owing to their alienation from the mainstream religious beliefs and practices.¹⁶ Orthodoxy in Islam has vital importance as it is the orthodoxy which defines heresy, and to a great extent, it is the hostile relation of the two that helps understand heresy in Islam. So it would be pertinent first to define orthodoxy in Islam, and then elaborate upon heresy.

In Islam, there have been different schools of thought. Every school of thought or faction has its own interpretation of religious beliefs and practices. In Islam, there has been a powerful urge for self-discovery and self-expression. There is much space for resistance and protest within the Muslim society. There is no concept of orthodoxy in Islam that belongs to any single sect, as several schools of thought and sects claim to have “originality, unity and catholicity.”¹⁷ However, during the classical and medieval ages in Islam each faction of the Muslims considered itself the practitioner of true faith and declared other factions as infidel and heretic owing to their disagreement over faith, practices and beliefs.

Mohammad Mujeeb argues that orthodoxy is to form such principles and rules through which a community is recognised as a uniform group as regards to its beliefs and practices. The community discourages efforts by the individuals of separating themselves through deviation. Thus, the orthodox preserve their social norms based on their beliefs.¹⁸ Orthodoxy is identified with tradition. Orthodoxy is a belief in traditional doctrine.¹⁹ Talal Asad very interestingly defines tradition, having strong relations with the institutions of the past from where it started, as a way of teaching, instructing correct beliefs, and practices, and to modify it in a social context.²⁰ So a Muslim tradition is a tradition which is being implemented in the present but having past practices as a role model. In the history of Muslim Civilization, a group of Muslim scholars or *ulama* opposed vehemently any speculative, logical interpretation of the revelation. Any interpretation other than the literalist was unacceptable

to them. This group of *ulama* was labelled as having “zero-orthodoxy”²¹ of the acceptance of Divine revelation without asking how. So any deviation from that zero-orthodoxy was rejected as “innovation” (*bid‘ah*). This type of orthodoxy was encouraged by those *ulama*, who were “anxious to protect the integrity and moral of communal life.”²² So this tendency of zero-orthodoxy in both Sunni and Shia communities accused every innovation, even persecuted it as heresy when supported by the ruling elite. Zero-orthodoxy was not followed by other schools of thought, including the Sunni schools of thought, because the slightest departure from the so-called orthodoxy would be considered deviation, innovation and consequently heresy, while this had never happened with other Muslim schools of thought in the history of Muslim Civilization.²³ The word orthodoxy is used by those scholars who could not find its substitute. Orthodoxy opposes every belief and practices of the Muslim religious community that does not fit under its “umbrella – typically, a very small umbrella.”²⁴ Orthodoxy resists deviation vehemently. So those who differ are declared heterodox.

Another concept used by Alexander Knysh is “orthodoxy-in-making.” According to him, it emerged when some vital aspects of religious establishment faced danger from “numerous inquisitive schismatic” factions. The criticism from the heterodox elements of society towards orthodoxy helped in ‘reformulating’ orthodoxy on the correct lines and gave cogency to orthodoxy for future criticism. Muslim orthodoxy was a final draft of the collective efforts made by the Muslim intellectuals belonging to different, sometimes opposed, religious backgrounds. As a result of a long period of argumentation, “spontaneous orthodoxy” emerged which was, in the words of Knysh, a “fluid body of more or less generally accepted beliefs, theological ideas and practical guiding principles.”²⁵

According to Talal Asad, orthodoxy is neither something that is ignorable, nor having particular doctrines but it is related with power. He maintains that orthodoxy is not just a particular set of beliefs and opinions, but it is a “relationship of power.”²⁷ It is the power of regulating the correct practices and condemning incorrect practices. At the same time, the Muslim tradition has continuously been changed. So, according to Asad, there is no fixed form of orthodoxy in Islam. It is the specific social, cultural and historical contexts that help in understanding, defining and formation of Muslim tradition and orthodoxy. As a result of conquering vast lands, when Muslims migrated to the new areas, they faced new challenges at intellectual and socio-cultural levels. They modified Muslim

traditions according to the new environment, at the same time, maintaining conformity with the Qur'an and *Sunnah* of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). When those groups which contributed to the revision of the orthodoxy became part of the socio-cultural power in the new environment, a revised form of orthodoxy emerged.²⁸ In Islam, there is no essential type of orthodoxy. Islam gives space to a fluid form of orthodoxy which has developed with the passage of time, as some scholars argue. Josef Van Ess argues that orthodoxy is established after a process of "consensus and network of power."²⁹ The Sunni Muslim jurists are divided into four primary schools of *fiqh*, namely, the Maliki, the Hanafi, the Shafi'i and the Hanbali. It was originally permissible to discuss issues according to these four schools of thought, but with the passage of time, a practice of following only one school of *fiqh* emerged and, thus, orthodoxy emerged in the form of strictly following the practices of a selected one of the schools of *fiqh* in practical matters.³⁰

According to Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *Ahl al-Sunnah* and *Ashab al-Hadith* or *Ahl al-hadith*³¹ are orthodox schools of thought in Islam.³² Without any organizational structure, *Ahl al-Sunnah* have played an important role in preserving and enforcing Islam brought by Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) without any change, in the new circumstances.³³ Sunni orthodoxy emerging through the early debates over different theological issues between different schools of thought and sects. Sunni orthodoxy proclaimed of having kept the original Islam because it had the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) and the religious thoughts of the early Muslim community. With the passage of time, it has changed radically from its origins, because of the political influence of the ruling elite,³⁴ formed itself into a dominant religious group, allied with the ruling establishment, it earned a prominent position in formulating religious beliefs and practices and declaring others as heretics in the history of Muslim Civilization.

Orthodoxy promotes an official religion that always serves the interests of the ruling elite. Both official Islam and normative Islam proclaim religious authority because they believe in revelation and the *Sunnah* of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ), the only divinely sanctioned authorities. Official Islam supports political authorities who legitimize its interpreted form of religion³⁵, consider the universal norms and traditions valid for every sphere of life and every age. They believe that the religion of Islam, brought and practised by Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) and crystallised by early Muslim jurists and theologians, regulate Muslim rituals and practices, which is called *shari'ah*.³⁶ Orthodoxy also discourages

popular Islam. In the history of Islam, differences between popular and normative forms of religion also contributed to heterodoxical attitudes in the society. While dealing with the popular forms of Islam, the orthodox section argues that any practice that has no precedent in Quran and *Sunnah* of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ), is popular Islam and thus heretical. According to the orthodox, popular Islam is beyond the pale of true religion. Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328), an orthodox jurist-theologian, argued that every act which was unlawful according to *Shari'ah* was *bid'ah* (innovation), *shirk* i.e. believing in the faith of more than one God, and must be suppressed by the state having the official religion.³⁷ Orthodoxy gives importance and validity to its interpretations and its religious beliefs and practices. An orthodox rejects any other form of Islam even having the slightest difference of opinion or practices.

Scholars who developed the idea of authentic Islamic orthodoxy take examples from Muslim history. In the history of Islam, whenever there was persecution of some groups, it was the dominant religious group that helped the ruling elite in this respect. There is no authentic orthodoxy in Islam. According to Muhammad Asad, in the history of Islam, men were persecuted only when they “deviated from the ‘orthodox’ theology of the day.”³⁸ Throughout the classical and medieval Muslim history, different religious factions allied with the political authorities at different times. When Mu'tazilah allied with Caliph al-Mamun (r. 813-833), the inquisition was against the Traditionalists. When orthodox or Traditionalists allied with Caliph al-Mutawakkil (r. 847-861), the Mu'tazilah or the rationalists were persecuted.

It is the universality and beauty of Islam that allows its diversity. It permits communities to practice Islam along with their indigenous cultural and environmental heritage. It was this universal character of Islam that was practised in synthetic form in Syria, pietistic form in Madinah, and a Gnostic form in Iraq. Gibb argues that in Islam, orthodoxy emerged after a long process. The most critical factors in this respect had been the political and religious dominance of Arabs over other people, the attitude of the ruling elite, the Madinah School of thought as a repository of the Qur'ān and *Hadith*.³⁹ Another factor was the separation of religion from state. Early *Rashidūn* Caliphs had exercised power through their moral and religious excellence and maintained the balance between state and religion.

After them, the balance was disrupted when military power took the place of religious and moral dominance. The people of Madinah did

not accept this separation of religion from state and refused to accept the worldly ways of Umayyad rulers. This attitude of Madinah scholars raised their importance in the eyes of other people.⁴⁰ These scholars continued giving importance to religion over state and politics and formulated religious beliefs and practices that were more or less acceptable for the rulers. This attitude continued when the Abbasid Caliphate was established. The Abbasid Caliphs made an alliance with the Madinah theologians, gave moral support to them, and even persecuted those who were against the religious approach of the Medinan scholars, like dualists, Gnostics and the Mu'tazilah.⁴¹

Finding a term equivalent with orthodoxy in Islam is difficult. The term orthodoxy is used differently in Christianity and Islam. In Christendom, orthodoxy is more a combination of authority and right belief regulated by the Church.⁴² However, in Islam, there is no institution of orthodoxy having a final say in defining the truth. Any religious faction allied with the power has right for the interpretation of the revealed religion. There are examples in Muslim history when jurists and *ulama* interpreted *shari'ah* in the best interest of the ruling elite.⁴³ Thus, jurists and theologians helped the state in securing its political and social interests. In Islam, right beliefs are not enough. With right beliefs, there is a need of right practices which is called *orthopraxy* in Islam. Islam puts more emphasis on correct practice, i.e. orthopraxy, than on correct belief, or orthodoxy,⁴⁴ though, as Talal Asad argues, both orthodoxy and orthopraxy are essential. Orthodoxy or correct belief is crucial as it helps in following "the correct model" from the past not only in beliefs but also in rituals.⁴⁵ Muhammad Asad discusses religious practices and beliefs in the context of Christianity and Islam and states that Christianity has become a religion of success in the future life, life after death. Christianity stresses only "a set of beliefs, dogmas and transcendental hopes," contrary to this, in Islam, there is no division between 'physical,' and 'spiritual' aspects of life. Islam is a religion of activity in the individual as well as in social life.⁴⁶

Heresy plays a central role in defining the boundaries of orthodoxy.⁴⁷ The circumstances and challenges posed by heterodoxical ideas played an important role in the formation of an orthodoxical attitude toward Muslim doctrines. With the passage of time, orthodoxy got firm roots in the Muslim community, having influence over masses and a relationship with the power. The orthodox were of the opinion that those who re-interpreted the religious doctrines were compromising the purity of religion.

Conceptualising Heresy in Islam

There is no particular word for heresy in Islam. It is commonly defined as a deviation from the right path – of proper Islamic beliefs and practices laid out by God and preached and practised by Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). From the early period of Muslim history, Muslim scholars and intellectuals had engaged themselves in questions of revelation, prophetic tradition as well as the relationship between universal norms and local practices. Among Muslim scholars, differences of opinion arose in the fields of *‘ibadat* (worship) and *mu‘amalat* (dealings with fellow human beings), as well as differences on theological issues. These issues would sometime provoke bitter controversy among scholars, who could even attack their opponents with accusations of infidelity or *kufri*, apostasy or *irtidad*, hidden apostasy, and heresy. These debates created conflicts in the Muslim community, which eventually developed into heterodoxy, and consequently, heresy, infidelity, and *zanadaqah* arose when politically powerful religious groups allied with the ruling elite.⁴⁸ The differences in beliefs and practices among different schools of thought and sects gave emergence to heresy which did not tolerate the theological views of others.

After the demise of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ), Muslim legal experts interpreted theological doctrines. Later on, when the religio-political authority backed these theological doctrines, any deviation from the established path was termed as *bid‘ah*, and this term came to be used for those religious beliefs and practices that were condemned by the religious and political authorities as novelties. Some scholars labelled these innovations as being beyond the pale of established Islamic beliefs and practices, and thus condemnable, while others defended them as “good innovations,” which were not against God’s law.⁴⁹ *Bid‘ah* means ‘innovation,’ and generally refers to any belief or practice for which there is no example in the times of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). Some Muslims believe that every *bid‘ah* is wrong. There are Muslims scholars who believe that there is a difference between a *bid‘ah* which is good, *hasana* or praiseworthy, also called *mahmūdah*, and a *bid‘ah* which is bad, *sayyi‘ah* or blameworthy, *madhmūmah*. There is a difference between *bid‘ah* and heresy. It is not a heresy to practice such religious beliefs that do not have precedent during the times of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ), on the basis of confusion and keeping the “principle of good and bad as necessary.”⁵⁰ Islam encourages an innovative approach in respect to keeping in mind the betterment of humanity.

According to Farhad Daftary, heterodoxy is a sort of rebellion, a revolt, a deviation from established orthodoxy.⁵¹ In Muslim history, there did not exist any rigid orthodoxy; instead, every theological group considered its own orthodoxy as genuine, and accused its opponent's views as heresy owing to the absence of ecumenical councils or a supreme church authority having the full powers to formulate "orthodox dogma."⁵² While it is generally accepted that the "people of *hadith*" and Asharis,⁵³ the Sunni Muslim sects were orthodox in their beliefs, other Sunni schools of thought did not accept them, especially their metaphysics and the speculative nature of the Asharis' thoughts borrowed from the Mu'tazilah.⁵⁴

During the Abbasid Caliphate, there was much less religious freedom than in the era of the Umayyad Caliphate owing to the symbiotic relationship between the state and orthodoxy.⁵⁵ During the early Abbasid Caliphate, theologians and the *ulama* were given respectable positions in state administration. As most of these *ulama* were *hadith* scholars, belonging to the Sunni school of thought, this encouraged the formation of Sunni orthodoxy.⁵⁶ This relationship of Sunni orthodoxy with the state was advantageous for both; it gave powers to the state against religious and political opponents declaring them heretics, unbelievers, while it gave security to the Sunni against the Shia and rationalistic schools of thought.

For the proto-Sunnis, who made an alliance with the Abbasid Caliphate, a large number of people of different religious identities and way of living fell under the banner of heresy or *zandaqah*. Those who did not practice the Muslim beliefs properly, according to the proto-Sunni view, were declared heretic or *zindīqs*. They included extreme Shia groups, those who forged false *hadith*, Qadariyyah, those who believed in the createdness of the Qur'ān, and *Mutakkalimūn* (experts of *Ilm al-kalam* or scholasticism).⁵⁷ During the early Abbasid Caliphate, the Sunni Traditionalist orthodoxy declared those who did not conform to the Traditionalist theological doctrines as heretics. *Kalām* is an Arabic word meaning 'speech.' Technically, it is defined as 'speculative,' "rational theology" or scholasticism. It was an exciting intellectual development in the history of Islam. The experts of *kalām*, called *Mutakkalimūn*, were also declared heretics by the orthodoxy. They borrowed non-Quranic concepts, mostly from Greek science and philosophy. Among those who were opposed to *mutakkalimūn* was Abu-Yusuf, a Hanafi judge (d. 798), who dubbed them as *zandaqah*.⁵⁸

There is much room for reason and rationalism in Islam reason.⁵⁹ J. Kraemer argues that the Mu'tazilah and other rationalist philosophers were not persecuted because they gave importance to reason over

revelation but because they adopted such a system which damaged Islamic law and they tried persuade others to accept their views. Contrary to this, there were indeed heretics (e.g., Ibn al-Rawandi) who were considered an enemies of Islam because their “rationalism attacked the revealed religion in general and Islam in particular.”⁶⁰ So the rationalists and philosophers were not persecuted just for their philosophical attitude toward theological issues.

There is a deep relationship between orthodoxy and heterodoxy. It is difficult to understand heterodoxy or heresy without understanding orthodoxy. Political power and religious authority, of course, in most cases cooperate and support each other. Talal Asad argues that orthodoxy is a relationship of Church and power to uphold the correct practices and to suppress incorrect ones.⁶¹ He maintains in his thought-provoking essay *Medieval Heresy: An Anthropological View* that there is a great need to understand the circumstances and traditions which created orthodoxy. “Heresy is first and foremost the product of a power process in which truth is authorized and error is anathematized.”⁶² Heresy is “going astray from the right path, deviation from proper Islamic norms and beliefs laid out by the God, and preached and practiced by the Prophet (ﷺ).”⁶³

According to another scholar of Muslim history, there are various explanations of heresy like that of “doctrinal idiosyncrasies, political machination, nationalist assertion, popular class struggle, rationalism and liberalism.”⁶⁴ Islam is a religion of ‘catholicity,’ having many different ideas in it and when Muslims forgot that catholicity, they started branding others as heterodox.⁶⁵ Ideological differences between Muslim and Christian societies define the difference of heresy within the two societies.

Heresy in Islam has been a prominent feature throughout the classical and medieval Muslim history. In the early period of Muslim history, differences arose among the Muslim community over issues of interpreting the religious beliefs and practices. With the passage of time, those who were against the interpretations of the dominant religious group were declared heretics by this group, stating that there was no place of novelties in Islam. As far as the idea of heresy in Islam is concerned, the relationship between the religious elite and the political elite is decisive. It is this relationship that defines heresy in Islam.

Conclusion

In Islam, there is no firm type of orthodoxy as in the Christian context. It was the relationship of the dominant religious group with the

ruling elite that defined and determined orthodoxy. Orthodoxy has remained a relative term throughout Muslim history. The challenges and threats posed by the heterodoxical elements within Muslim society helped in formulating an orthodox attitude of the *ulama*, who perceived danger for the religion itself and for their social and religious status. The personal wishes and inclinations of the ruling elite towards a particular school of thought and the influence of contemporary politics also played their part in the formation of orthodoxy in Islam. There is no consensus on heresy in Islam. Generally, heresy in Islam is much more dependent on the socio-political challenges, the symbiotic relationship between the ruling and the religious elites, and particularly on the attitude of the ruling elite toward dissenters and to what extent they pose a challenge to the ruling elite. If tolerance towards other schools of thought, sects and religions is replaced by an intolerant attitude due to political and social ambitions of the ruling elite, and decreasing social privileges of the religious elite, then heresy emerges. The behaviour of orthodoxy towards the dissenters and the response of the dissenters to this behaviour play a central role in the emergence of heresy. Heresy and orthodoxy are so interrelated that without understanding one the other cannot be understood. Intolerance and dogmatism on the part of orthodoxy gave rise to heresy. Although no universal concept of orthodoxy exists in Islam, whenever any particular religious creed reached dominant position and built out a relationship with the ruling elite, then dissenters were announced heretics as they were against the orthodoxy of the particular religious faction. There cannot be any fixed type of orthodoxy and heresy in Islam as far as the interpretations of different schools of thought are concerned. Islam is not against the notion of rationalism and philosophy. It has been the symbiotic relationship between the state and religious elite or the *ulama* that formed orthodoxy, and on this basis, they declared social and political dissenters as heretics, beyond the pale of the mainstream Muslim community.

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46. Asad, "Is Religion a Thing of the Past?" 263.
47. Kurtz, "The Politics of Heresy," 1085.
48. Maribel Fierro, "Heresy and Heretics," in *Medieval Islamic Civilization: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Josef W. Meri and Lere L. Bacharach. Vol. 1 (New York and London, Routledge, 2006), 321.
49. Fierro, "Heresy and Heretics," 320.
50. J. Robson, "Bida," *The Encyclopedia of Islam* 1: 1099.
51. Farhad Daftary, *The Ismailis: Their History and Doctrines* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 36.
52. Knysh, "'Orthodoxy' and 'Heresy' in Medieval Islam," 52.
53. Asharism was the name of a theological and philosophical school of thought, founded by Abu al-Hasan Ali ibn Ismail al-Ashari (d. 935), during the tenth and eleven centuries. Asharis stood midway between the Mutazilahs' unbounded the rationalism and traditionists extreme orthodoxy. They use the dialectical reasoning of Mu'tazilah and *kalam* (scholastic theology) to safeguard faith. They were called orthodox *mutakallimun*. One of the fundamental differences between the Mu'tazilahs' rationalist *kalam* the Asharis orthodox *kalam* was that the later gave

- preference to revelation over reason in case of conflict between them. See M. Abdul Hye, "Ash'arism," in *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, ed. and intro. M. M. Sharif, vol. 1 (Karachi: Royal Book Company, 1983), 220-43.
54. Knysh, "'Orthodoxy' and 'Heresy' in Medieval Islam," 53-54.
 55. Reynold A. Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 1993), 372.
 56. *Ibid.*, 366.
 57. Zaman, *Religion and Politics under the Early Abbasids*, 66.
 58. W. Montgomery Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1998), 185.
 59. As quoted in *The Message of Quran*, tr. and commentary Muhammad Asad (Gibraltar: Dar al-Andalus, 1984), foreword by the commentator, ii.
 60. As cited in Fierro, "Heresy and Heretics," 322.
 61. Asad, "The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam," 15-16.
 62. Asad, "Medieval Heresy," 356.
 63. Fierro, "Heresy and Heretics," 320.
 64. Taylor, "An Approach to the Emergence of Heterodoxy in Medieval Islam," 200.
 65. *Ibid.*, 198.

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