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# MOSLEM SCHISMS AND SECTS

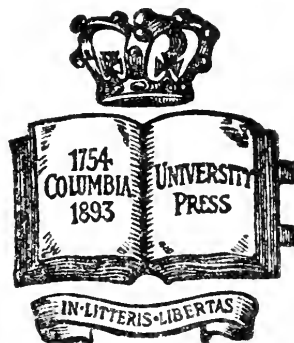
(Al-Fark Bain al-Firak)

BEING THE  
HISTORY OF THE VARIOUS PHILOSOPHIC SYSTEMS  
DEVELOPED IN ISLAM

BY  
abū-Mansūr ‘abd-al-Kāhir ibn-Tāhir  
al-Baghdādī (d. 1037)

## PART I

TRANSLATED FROM THE ARABIC  
BY  
KATE CHAMBERS SEELYE, PH.D.



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## AL-FARĶ BAIN AL-FIRAK

In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful! Praise be to Allah, the maker and originator of all Creation, the manifestator and sustainer of truth! He it is who maketh of truth an armor for him who believeth in it, and a source of life to him who relieth upon it. He maketh wrong a stumbling-block to the one who seeketh after it, and a cause of humiliation to him who pursueth it. Prayer and Praise be to the Purest of the Pure, and the Model Guide, Muḥammad, as well as to his kin, the choicest among mortals, the lighthouse of guidance.

You have asked me for an explanation of the well-known tradition attributed to the Prophet with regard to the division of the Moslim Community into seventy-three sects, of which one has saving grace and is destined for Paradise on High, whilst the rest are in the wrong, leading to the Deep Pit and the Ever-flaming fire. You requested me to draw the distinction between the sect that saves, the step of which does not stumble and from which grace does not depart, and the misguided sects which regard the darkness of idolatry as light and the belief in truth as leading to perdition—which sects are condemned to everlasting fire and shall find no aid in Allah.

Therefore, I feel it incumbent upon me to help you along the line of your request with regard to the orthodox faith and the path that is straight—how to distinguish it from the perverted heresies and the distorted views, so that he who does perish shall know that he is perishing and he that is saved that he is so saved through clear evidence.

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The answer to your request I have included in this book, the contents of which I have divided into five parts, to wit :

A chapter in explanation of the tradition transmitted to us concerning the division of the Moslem community into 73 sects.

A chapter dealing with the shame that attaches to each one of the sects belonging to the erring heresies.

A chapter on the sects that are akin to Islām, but do not belong to it.

A chapter on the saving sect, the confirmation of its sacredness and a statement concerning the beauty of its faith.

These are the chapters of the book ; in each one of which we shall mention the conclusions that are necessary. So may it please Allah.

## PART I

### AN EXPLANATION OF THE WELL-KNOWN TRADITIONS IN REGARD TO THE DIVISIONS OF THE (MOSLEM) COMMUNITY

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THE tradition has come down to us through the following chain of authorities: abū-Sahī Bishr ibn-Aḥmad ibn-Bashshār al-Isfarā'īnī, 'Abdāllah ibn-Nājiyah, Wahb ibn-Baḳiyyah, Khālīd ibn-'Abdāllah, Muḥammad ibn-'Amr, abū-Salmah, abū-Hurairah that the last said, the prophet of Allah—peace be unto him<sup>1</sup>—said: “The Jews are divided into 71 sects, and the Christians are divided into 72 sects, and my people will be divided into 73 sects.” And we are told by abū-Muḥammad 'Abdallāh ibn-'Alī ibn-Ziyād al-Sumaidhī, who is considered of interest and authoritative, that he heard through the following chain of authorities: Aḥmad ibn-al-Ḥasan ibn-'Abd al-Jabbār, al-Haitham ibn-Khārijah, Ismā'il ibn-'Abbās, 'Abd-al-Raḥmān ibn-Ziyād ibn-An'am, 'Abdallāh ibn-Yazīd, 'Abdallāh ibn-'Amr, that the prophet of Allah said: “Verily there will happen to my people what happened to the Banū Isrā'il. The Banū Isrā'il are divided into 72 religious bodies, and my people will be divided into 73 religious bodies, exceeding them by one. All of them are destined to hell fire except one.” They said: “O, prophet of Allah, which is the one religious body that will escape the fire?” He said:

<sup>1</sup> The expression of blessing and peace always follows the name of the Prophet, as well as that of the leading Companions and sheikhs, and the words ‘mighty and powerful’ the name of Allah. After the first time we will not repeat these devout expressions.



“ That to which I belong, and my companions.” The Ḳādī abū-Muḥammad ‘Abdallāh ibn-‘Umar, the Mālikite, says: “ We have it from my father, who had it from his father, that Walīd ibn-Maslamah said that al-Auzā‘ī said that we are told by Ḳatādah, who had it from Anas, who had it from the Prophet: ‘ Lo, the Banū Isrā’īl are divided into 71 sects, and lo my people will be divided into 72 sects, all of them destined to hell fire except one, and these are the true believers.’ ” ‘Abd al-Ḳāhir says that there are many *Isnāds* (chains of traditions) for the tradition dealing with the division of the community. A number of the following Companions have handed it down as coming from the Prophet: Anas ibn-Mālik, abū-Hurairah, abū-l-Dardā, Jābir, abū-Sa‘īd al-Khidrī, Ubai ibn-Ka‘b, ‘Abdallāh ibn-‘Amr ibn-al-‘Ās, abū-Imāmah, Wathilah ibn-al-Asḳa’ and others. It is also handed down that the pious caliphs mentioned that the community would be divided after them, that one sect only would save itself, and that the rest of them would be given to error in this world, and to destruction in the next. Moreover, it is reported of the Prophet that he condemned the Ḳadarites, calling them the Magians of this people. It is also reported that he condemned the Murjiites together with the Ḳadarites. To this is added the report that he condemned the heretics, *i. e.* the Kharijites. While it is handed down from the leading Companions that he 6 condemned the Ḳadarites and the Murjiites and the heretical Khārijites. ‘Alī, Allah have mercy on him, mentions these sects in his Khutbah (sermon) which is known as the *Zahrā’*; in it he declared himself not responsible for the people of Adīmawāt.<sup>1</sup> Every man of intelligence among the authors of the treatises ascribed to . . . (text not clear) has known that the Prophet in speaking of the divisions that

<sup>1</sup> We have been unable to find any explanation for this word.

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were to be condemned and the members of which were destined for hell-fire, did not mean the various legal schools, who, though they disagreed as to the derivative Institutes of law, agreed concerning the fundamentals of religion. Now the Mohammedans held two opinions as regards the deductions drawn from the fundamental principles of right and wrong. The first looks with approval upon all those who promoted the Science of derivative Institutes. For it, all the legal schools are right. The second approves, in connection with each derivative Institute, one of the parties contending about it and disapproves all the others—without, however, attributing error to the one who goes astray in the matter. And verily the Prophet, in mentioning the sects condemned, had in mind only those holders of erring opinions who differ from the one sect which will be saved, in such matters as ethics and the unity (of God), promises and threats (regarding future life), predestination and free-will, the determination of good and evil, right guidance and error, the will and wish of God, prophetic vision and understanding, the attributes of Allah, his names and qualities, any question concerning what is ordered and what is permitted, [signs for] prophecy and its conditions, and similar questions in which the Sunnites and the (Moslem) community from among the followers of analogical deduction and tradition agree upon the fundamentals, and in which they are opposed by the holders of erring opinions, namely the *Ḳadariyah*, the *Khawārij*, the *Rawāfiḍ*, the *Najjāriyah*, the *Jahmiyah*, the *Mujassimah*, the *Musabbihah*, and those who follow them<sup>1</sup> among the erring sects. And, verily, those who differ in regard to ethics and the unity (of God), the worship of graves and of ancestors, are agreed in regard to such matters as celestial vision,

<sup>1</sup> Not clear in the original.

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divine attributes, what is ordained and what is permitted. But in regard to the conditions of true prophecy and the Imāmship, some of them accuse each other of unbelief. So that the tradition handed down in regard to the breaking-up of the community into 73 sects must be understood to refer to differences such as these—not to those on which the leading jurists differed in the matter of Institutes drawn from the fundamental principles of right and wrong. Is it not that in those things in which they differ as regards Institutes, it is not at all a question of unbelief or of error? I shall mention in the following chapter the various sects to which the tradition refers concerning the subdividing of the Islamic world, so it please Allah.

## CHAPTER II

### THE SECTS OF THE KHARIJIYAH

As we have mentioned before, the Khawārij form twenty sects,<sup>1</sup> and the following are their names: The First Muḥakkimah, the Azāriqah, the Najadāt, the Ṣifriyah,<sup>2</sup> the 'Ajāridah (who are themselves divided into sects, one of which is the Khāzimīyah), the Shu'aibīyah, the Ma'lūmīyah, 55 the Majhūlīyah, the Aṣḥāb Ṭā'ah (those who do pious deeds with no intention to please God), the Ṣaltīyah, the Akhnasīyah, the Shaibīyah, the Shaibānīyah, the Mu'badīyah, the Rashīdīyah, the Makrumīyah, the Khamrīyah, the Shamrākhiyah, the Ibrāhīmīyah, the Wāḳifah, and the Ibādīyah.<sup>3</sup> The Ibādīyah are divided into various sects, the majority forming the two main sects of the Ḥafṣīyah and the Ḥādithīyah. As regards the Yazīdīyah<sup>4</sup> of the Ibādīyah

<sup>1</sup> According to Shahrastānī, the Khawārij are divided into six sects. Cf. Haarbrücker's translation, vol. i, p. 129.

<sup>2</sup> There seems to be some doubt about the pointing of this word. Shahrastānī does not point it at all. Haarbrücker transcribes it as Ṣifriyah. Friedländer (J. A. O. S., vol. xxix) gives it as Ṣufriyah, while Muḥammad Badr has in one place Ṣifriyah and in the other Ṣufriyah. We are inclined to think the latter correct, since it occurs oftener.

<sup>3</sup> Wellhausen: *Religiös-politischen Oppositionsparteien im Alten Islam*, Abhandlungen der Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften Göttingen, vol. v, p. 28.

<sup>4</sup> Shahrastānī includes the Yazīdīyah among the orthodox sects. Cf. Haarbrücker's translation, vol. i, p. 153.

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and the Maimūniyah<sup>1</sup> of the 'Ajāridah, these were two sects of the unorthodox Ghulāt who are not included in the sects of the Moslem people. They will be mentioned in a later chapter in connection with the sects of the Ghulāt, please God.

As to the main beliefs on which the Khawārij unite, in spite of the divisions of their various sects, scholars disagree. Al-Ka'bī says that in spite of their division into sects the Khawārij agreed on the following views, namely: in condemning 'Alī and 'Uthmān, the *two judges* (Arabic *al-ḥakamain*), and all the *Followers of the Camel*, and all who accepted the decision of the *two judges*; in declaring as apostates those who commit major sins; and in the necessity of rebelling against an oppressive Imām. Our sheikh abū-l-Ḥasan, on the other hand, said that they agree in condemning 'Alī and 'Uthmān, the *Followers of the Camel*, and the *two judges*, those who accepted their decision claiming the decision of one or both as right. He also claimed that they agreed over the necessity of rebelling against an oppressive ruler; but he does not hold al-Ka'bī's view that they agreed in condemning those who commit major sins. The correct view is that given concerning them by our sheikh abū-l-Ḥasan; for al-Ka'bī is wrong in his views that the Khawārij agreed in condemning those who committed major sins. The Najadāt especially, among the Khawārij, do not declare as heretics those of their followers who have made themselves liable to punishments (Arabic, *aṣḥāb al-ḥudūd*).<sup>2</sup> Some of the Khawārij hold that a man can be declared unorthodox only when committing sins in regard 56 to which there is no express threat (in the Koran); while as regards the sin for which there is either punishment

<sup>1</sup> Included among the orthodox sects by Shahrastānī.

<sup>2</sup> Juynboll: *Handbuch des Islāmischen Gesetzes*, p. 300.

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or threat given in the Koran, the person committing such a sin cannot be designated only by an appellation mentioned in the Koran, such as adulterer, thief, and the like. The Najadāt, on the contrary, hold that the one of their number who commits a major sin is excluded from Allah's grace, but is not necessarily a heretic in faith. This shows al-Ka'bī's error in saying that all of the Khawārij agree in declaring the authors of major sins heretics, whether they belong to the Khārijite body or another. The only correct view in regard to the beliefs held in common by all the Khawārij is that which our sheikh abū-l-Ḥasan claims, namely: the condemning of 'Alī and 'Uthmān, the *Followers of the Camel*, the *two judges*, and all those who justified the decision of the *two judges*, or the decision of one of them, or accepted their arbitration. We will now take up all these divisions in detail, please God.

<sup>1</sup> Mentioned in Shahrastānī, Haarbrücker, vol. i, p. 21, *i. e.* heretics. On the term, see Lane, S. V. and Z. D. M. G., lxi, p. 432.

<sup>2</sup> Tabarī, *Chronique* ed. Zotenberg, vol. iii, p. 683.

<sup>3</sup> Shahrastānī, *ibid.*, vol. i, p. 130, calls him Yazīd ibn 'Aṣīm al-Muḥāribī.