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The Speech of Fate in the Time of the Corona

Koronavirüs Zamanında Kaderin Hitabı

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The Speech of Fate in the Time of the Corona*

Abstract

The Coronavirus pandemic has been ongoing for almost two years now. Not only did it surprise the whole world in the initial stages of its occurrence, but also the world left it in shock. Therefore, the instant solution strategies included complete lockdowns in order to prevent the spread of such a disease. However, as the lockdowns lasted longer, it generated negative psychological effects on people globally. This being the case, collective endeavors and efforts were performed, in the hope of achieving a concrete solution in order to overcome the bad repercussions that seemed visible on societal levels, which of course, included religious aspects; and in some cases resulted in social separation as well as a dramatic rise in suicide rates. On the one hand, this caused a retraction from the religion and religiously oriented rituals, but on the other hand, it also made people turn more to religion as it provided a psychological relief from the heavy burdens of the pandemic. These psychological conditions had theological resonances that made already complicated issues even more complex. Among them, the nature of God's actions and the human position in this matter can be given as examples. This article is an attempt to place and define the issue of the pandemics and plagues from the perspective of Islamic theology, in particular, to shed light on three main points. The first is the problem of pains and aches, and how it was mentioned in theological literature and discussed by Islamic theologians (Mutakallimūn), as the issue of pandemics and plagues indisputably fall under this matter. The second point tackles the problem of whether "such calamities as pandemics and plagues come from God's Decree, or not?". The last point focuses on the issue of fatalism and tries to show whether the *de facto* acceptance that pandemics are from God's Decree would require the servant to stop taking measures in response to them. To answer the questions at stake, this paper will focus on four different perspectives of the Mu'tazila, Ash'ari, Maturidis, and Ahl al-Hadith, by using a selective methodology and focusing on their prominent and pioneering theologians (Mutakallimūn) of these schools.

Keywords: Kalām (Islamic Theology), Theologians (Mutakallimūn), Coronavirus, Epidemic, Mu'tazila, Ash'ari, Maturidis, Ahl al-Hadith.

Koronavirüs Zamanında Kaderin Hitabı**

Öz

Koronavirüs olarak bilinen Covid-19 -salgını neredeyse iki yıldır hayatımızda. Salgının başlangıç aşamalarında kapsamlı bir çözüm bulunamadığı için âdeta şok yaşayan dünya, salgının yayılmasını önlemek için bir çözüm olarak tamamen karantinaya kapanmak zorunda kaldı. Uzun süren kapanmadan dolayı dünyanın her yerinde insanlar, psikolojik olarak bunalımlı bir dönem geçirmekteler. Hemen hemen herkes, bu bunalımdan bir çıkış yolu aramaktadır. Öte yandan, mezkûr bunalımlı dönemin toplumsal ve dinî açılarından da belirli yankıları olduğu söylenebilir. Örneğin boşanma ve intihar vakalarının artması bunlar arasında gösterilebilir. Dinî açıdan bakıldığında ise, salgının yol açtığı psikolojik yükü hafifletmek için, pek çok bireyin manevi ibadetlere başvurduğu görülmektedir. Böylece, bu psikolojik bunalım hâlinin, temel

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olarak dinî ilgilendiren birçok soruyu da beraberinde getirdiği dikkat çekmektedir. Kelâm açısından bakıldığında, insan ve Tanrı arasındaki ilişkinin mahiyetine yönelik sorularla karşılaştığımız söylenebilir. Hiç şüphe yok ki Corona, herkes için ağır felaketlere yol açan ve insanların pek haz etmedikleri durumlar arasında kabul edilmekte. Her geçen gün duyduğumuz artan ölüm vakaları; Çin, İran ve Amerika'da karşılaşılan yoğun bakım hastalarının korkunç manzaraları, sıradanlaşır hale geldi. Ancak bireylere sorulduğunda, herkes bu virüsün özü itibarıyla oldukça kötü bir durum olduğunu söylemektedir. Konu teolojik açıdan ele alındığında, şu sorular karşımıza çıkmaktadır: eğer Corona bir kötülük olarak görülürse, bu durumun Tanrı'dan gelmesi mümkün müdür? Eğer Tanrı'dan geldiği iddia edilirse, Tanrı'nın bu derece bir eyleme sebep olması nasıl anlaşılmalıdır? Tanrı kötü bir fiille nitelendirilebilir mi? Bu sorular doğal olarak günlük hayatımıza yansıdığı için, pek çok Müslüman belirli açmazlarla karşı karşıya kalmaktadır. Bu çalışmada salgın hastalıklar ve veba konusu, kelâm açısından tartışılarak, üç temel noktaya ışık tutulmaya çalışılacaktır. Birincisi: ağrı ve acı problemi ve bu problemin kelâm kitaplarında nasıl geçtiği ve hangi açılardan tartışıldığı. İkinci olarak ise: "Salgın ve veba meseleleri Allah'ın hükmünden midir, değil midir?" meselesi. Son olarak ise: "Salgınların Allah'ın hükmünden olduğunu söylemek, kulun tedbir almayı bırakmasını mı gerektirir?" sorusudur. Araştırma, Mu'tezile, Eş'ariler, Mâtüridiler ve Ehl-i Hadis gibi ekollerinönde gelen kelimcilerinden (Mütekellimûn) bazılarını seçerek; ve mümkün olduğunca onların bakış açılarını yansıtmaya çalışarak bir perspektif sunmayı amaçlamaktadır. Makalede, tüm İslam kelâm ekollerinden kelimcilerin görüşlerine yer vermiş ve bunların her birinin Kur'an, Sünnet ve hadislerden delillerini zikredilip karşılaştırmalı bir yaklaşımla el aldığımız konuda bir sonuca varmaya çalışılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kelâm, Kelâmcılar, Koronavirüs, Salgın, Mu'tezile, Eş'arî, Mâtüridiler, Ehl-i Hadis.

Introduction

There have been many epidemics in human history that killed many people.¹ In early Islamic history, there are five famous epidemics: The plague of Shirawayh which happened during the life of the Prophet in the city of al-Madā'in in Iraq in the year 627-62. The second is the famous plague of 'Amwās, which was in 634-44. The third was in 683-628, which is known as the sweeping plague (*al-tā'ūn al-jārif*). The fourth happened in 706, which is known as the plague of the girls (*al-fatayāt*) because most victims were young girls. The fifth epidemic was in 749.² By the end of last year and the beginning of this year, a heavy guest descended upon the world, named the Corona epidemic. It started in China and spread very quickly. One of the most impressive things about the virus is that it excluded no country, developed or otherwise. The epidemic made no segregation based on religion or race. And the truth we all saw was that the whole world, with its advanced machinery and technology, stood incapable of dealing with this pandemic, *the world was in confusion or "On the horns of a dilemma" as the saying goes*. This confusion is reflected in the human psychological and social condition. This results in questions related to religion and society, on the

¹ There are many epidemics that have occurred in human history from the time of the ancient Greeks to the modern era. Look at: J. N. Hays, *Epidemics and Pandemics: Their Impacts on Human History* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2005), 9-427.

² Ayman Shabana, "From the Plague to the Coronavirus: Islamic Ethics and Responses to the COVID-19 Pandemic", *Journal of Islamic Ethics* 5 (2021), 13; Michael W. Dols, "Plague in Early Islamic History", *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 94/3 (1974), 371-383.

one hand, seeking solutions in religion, while medicine was unable to find these solutions, and on the other hand, providing psychological safety from the state of panic that afflicted man. That is why places of worship belonging to different religions have been active in carrying out this duty.

From the Islamic point of view, the problem of good and evil was one of the main issues discussed in the fields of philosophy and Islamic theology. The debate about fate began as early as the eighth century.³ The debate on the issue of fate developed verbally throughout history, and it became an essential part of theology. In this paper, we will try to put the issue of the epidemic through its relationship to the issue of fate, good and evil in theology. The paper will attempt to answer some theological questions related to the epidemic by looking at the books of theology, and we will focus mainly on the Mu'tazila, Ash'ari, Maturidi, and Ahl al-Hadith sects. It is worth noting that the issue of epidemics and plagues has attracted the attention of Muslim scholars, past and present, and we can mention the following examples:

- Muhammad ibn Sa'id al-Tamimi (d. 990): *Maddat-ul-Baqā' fi Islāh fasad il-hawā wa al-taharruz min darar-il-awbā'*⁴.
- Shams Al-Din al-Manbaji (d. 1383): *al-Tawūn wa ahkāmuhu*.⁵
- Ibn al-Wardi, *al-naba' 'an al-wabā'*.⁶
- 'Abd al-Rahmān Bestami (d. 1454): *Wasf al-dawā' fi kasf āfāt al-wabā'*.⁷
- Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani (d. 1449), *Badhl al-mā'ūn fi fawā'id al-tā'ūn*.⁸
- Jalāl al-Din al-Suyuti (d. 1505), *Mā rawāhu al-wā'ūn fi akhbār al-tā'ūn*.⁹

³ Steven C. Judd, "Ghāylen al-Dimashqī: The Isolation of a Heretic in Islamic Historiography", *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 31/2 (May 1999), 161-163.

⁴ The Fatimid era witnessed a renaissance in the natural sciences, such as mathematics, medicine, astronomy, and others. The author wrote this book for his friend, the well-known Fatimid vizier Yaquub bin Kilis. Muhammad ibn Sa'id al-Tamimi, *Maddat-ul-Baqā' fi Islāh fasad il-hawā w-al-taharruz min darar-il-awbā'*, ed. Yahya al-Shaar (Cairo: Arab League Educational, 1999).

⁵ al-Manbaji, *al-Tawūn wa ahkāmuhu* (Beirut: Dār Ibn Hazm, 2017).

⁶ Ramy Mahmoud - Hasan Çetinel, "Arap Edebiyatında Eğitici Bir Edebî Tür Olarak Makāme ve İbnü'l Verdî'den Salgın Dönemlerine Ait Bir Örnek", *UMDE Dini Tetkikler Dergisi* 3/1 (2020), 47-83

⁷ Hājjī Khalifa, *Kashf az-Zunūn 'an 'asāmī 'l-Kutub wa'l-funūn* (Baghdad: Maktabat al-Muthanna, 1941), 2013.

⁸ Ramy Mahmoud, "İbn Hācer el-Askalānī'nin Veba-Tāun Gibi Salgın Hastalıklara Yaklaşımı", *Rumeli Journal of Islamic Studies* 3/8 (2020), 67-86.

⁹ Jalāl al-Din al-Suyuti, *Mā rawāhu al-wā'ūn fi akhbār al-tā'ūn* (Damascus; Beirut: Dār al-Qalam; Dār al-Shāmiyyah, 1997).

Finally, The experience of the plague, starting from the eighth century AH, was an experience that inspired many Muslim scholars to write.¹⁰

1. Plagues in the era of the Prophet and the Caliphs

The word “epidemic” in the Arabic language means waba and Tāwun, it does not carry a negative meaning in the Arabic language, unlike the word “rijz” which carries a negative meaning, as it was mentioned in the Qur’an as follows; ‘Hence, we stroke upon the evil-doers a rijz from heaven for their evil-doing’¹¹ The word rijz has several connotations, including sin, punishment (‘adhāb), plague, idolatry, and insinuating whispers (waswasah).¹²

The sources tell us that a fever occurred to the Companions when they came to Medina, and this fever did not reach the extent of the epidemic. But the plague of Amwas occurred during the era of Omar Ibn Al-Khattāb in the year 18/639, as we have already mentioned. We think that it is useful to mention how *Omar Ibn al-Khattāb* and *Abū Ubaidah Ibn Al-Jarrāh* dealt with this incident. Abdullah bin Abbās said: Omar bin Al-Khattāb set out for Ash-Shām, As he reached Sargh (a town by the side of Hijaz), he came across the governor of Al-Ajnād, Abu 'Ubaydah bin Al-Jarrāh and his companions. They informed him that a plague (epidemic) had broken out in Ash-Shām. Ibn 'Abbās relates: 'Omar said to me: "Call to me the earliest Muhājirūn." So I called them, and he sought their advice and told them that an epidemic had broken out in Ash-Shām. There was a difference of opinion whether they (Omar and his companions from Madīna) should proceed further in the city or retreat to their homes in such a situation. Some of them said: "You have set forth for a matter, and therefore you should not go back;" whereas some of them said: As you have along with you many eminent Companions of the Messenger of Allah we would not advise you to set forth to the place of the plague 'Omar said: "You can now go away." He said: "Call to me the Ansar." So I called them to him, and he consulted them, and they differed in their opinions as well. He said: "Now, you may go. He again said: "Call the old of the Quraish who had emigrated before the conquest of Makkah." I called them. 'Omar consulted them in this issue, and not even two

¹⁰ See Stuart J. Borsch, *The Black Death in Egypt and England: a comparative study* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2005); In later periods, it can be seen: Alan Mikhail, “The Nature of Plague in Late Eighteenth-Century Egypt”, *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 82/2 (2008), 249-275.

¹¹ Quran: 2/59.

¹² Zohaib Ahmad - Arzoo Ahad, “COVID-19: A Study of Islamic and Scientific Perspectives”, *Theology and Science* 19/1 (2021), 35.

There are works that dealt with epidemics and plagues with reference to the religious aspects of the issue in Turkey, see Yasemin Apalı: Pandemi Döneminin Zorlukları Karşısında Din, *Bayburt Üniversitesi İnsan ve Toplum Bilimleri Fakültesi Toplum ve Bilim Dergisi*, 4/9 (2021), 155-168; Fatih Kandemir, “Bazı Demografik Değişkenler Bağlamında Covid-19 Pandemi Neslinin Dindarlık ve Ölüm Kaygısı İlişkisi Üzerine Ampirik Bir Araştırma”, *Tokat İlmîyat Dergisi* 8/1 (2021), 99-129; Süleyman Kaya, “Covid-19 Pandemi Süreci ve Sonrasına Kur’ân Temelli Yaklaşım”, *Tefsir Araştırmaları Dergisi* 4/3 (2020), 1-29, 20.

persons among them differed in the opinions. They said: "We think that you should go back along with the people and do not take them to this scourge 'Omar made an announcement to the people, saying: "In the morning I intend to go back, and I want you to do the same." Abu 'Ubaydah bin Al-Jarrāh: "Are you going to run away from the Divine Decree?" Thereupon 'Umar said: "O Abu 'Ubaydah! Had it only been someone else to say this." He said: "Yes, we are running from the Divine Decree to the Divine Decree. What do you think if you have camels and you happen to descend a valley having two sides, one of them covered with foliage and the other being barren will you not act according to the Divine Decree if you graze them in vegetative land? And if you graze them in the barren land, then is,are you doing so according to the Divine Decree? There happened to come 'Abdur-Rahman bin 'Awf, who had been absent for some of his needs. He said: I have knowledge about this matter. I heard the Messenger of Allah saying "If you hear of the outbreak of a plague in a land, you should not enter it,and if it spreads in the land where you are, you should not depart from it."¹³

We see that the way to find a solution for Omar Ibn al-Khattāb to deal with this epidemic is full of lessons. Omar did not make a decision alone, but summoned the groups of the Companions of the Muhajirūn, the Ansar and the great wise people to ask them about the solution. The most important thing we see in this story, which is ours in our article here; It is the saying of Omar Ibn Al-Khattab: "Yes, we are running from the Divine Decree to the Divine Decree. (نفر من قضاء الله إلى قضاء الله) Before entering into the theological discussion that will come later; it can be said here that Omar set a rule of faith for the Muslims in dealing with calamities in general and epidemics in particular. This rule is that a person cannot in any way deviate from the circle of God's destiny in this world. But this does not mean absolute surrender to what is happening around us, for Omar has gathered all kinds of people present in his era to find a solution to this epidemic. This means that a Muslim should not give in to what happens in life in any way, but at the same time he believes that everything that happens is the will of God.

2. The Existence of Pains and Aches in This World

The problem of pain, aches, happiness and joy was one of the basic problems that many people sought to solve, like the philosophers who have investigated the issue from the ethical point of view, starting with Socrates and moral schools such as the Epicurean school and the Stoic school. As Muslim philosophers received this philosophy, the eschatological dimension was added to the issue of pain, aches, pleasure and happiness. Many Muslim philosophers, such as al-Kindi

¹³ Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (Beirut: Dār Ibn-i Kathir, 2002), 10/190.

(873), al-Rāzī al-Tabīb (925), Mesquiah (1030), Ikhwan al-Safa, and others discussed these issues.¹⁴ And it was one of the arguments circulating among atheists, both in the past and in the present. Ibn al-Raundī (913)¹⁵ was reported to have said that such a God who causes aches and pain to people is not worthy of being characterized by wisdom, mercy, or care.¹⁶

The Mu'tazila discussed the issue of aches and pains through the principle known¹⁷ as justice, for God is just and does not oppress His servants. It is obligatory for Him to do what is best for His servant, which is well-known among the Mu'tazila groups about the issue of righteousness and the issue of mercy and so on (اللطيف، الأصلاح، والأصلح، اللطف) *salāh, al-aslah, al-loṭf*). 'Abd al-Jabbār (1025), one of the leading theologians (Mutakallimūn) of the Mu'tazila stated that the issue of aches and pain was a cause of confusion for many people. The main reason for this confusion was their misperception of pain and aches. Some of them believed that all pain is good, and all pleasures are ugly, while others said that pains only happen to those who deserve them. Because of this foundational assumption, a paradox appeared regarding the status of a child who is not guilty of anything yet suffers somehow. To provide a solution and overcome this paradox, they said that these pains were not in them but rather in another form that disobeyed God, so it was transferred to them in the form of children after being reincarnated.

'Abd al-Jabbār believes that the issue of pains and aches, like other actions, has good sides and ugly sides as well. He believes that the issue of pain has a double-sided nature like any other action, in terms of having potentiality towards good and bad. And he follows the Mu'tazila's approach in their definition of good and links its concept to the benefit for a person, as the pain here is considered as something good when it may result in a gain to the sufferer or when it pushes away more harm than the afflicted pain.¹⁸

In addition, he gives an example of a person who desires to endure the suffering of travel in search for profit and trade, as well as seeking treatment in ear-splitting, phlebotomy and

¹⁴ See a good summary of the philosophers' views of pain and pleasure in the Encyclopedia of Islamic Turkish Encyclopedia: İlhan Kutluer, "Elem", *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Publications, 1998), 11/23-25.

¹⁵ See İlhan Kutluer, "İbnü'r-Râvendî", *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*.

¹⁶ This view was transmitted by al-Khayyāṭ from a book by al-Raundī called *Al-Taddeel wal-Tajwir*. See al-Khayyāṭ, *Kitāb al-Intiṣār*, ed. Nyberg, (Cairo: Dār al Kutub al-Misriyye, 1925), 2; Metin Özdemir, *İslam Düşüncesinde Kötülük Problemi* (İstanbul: Kaknüs Publications), 81

¹⁷ The five basic Mu'tazila principles are monotheism, justice, promise, threat, standing between the two states, enjoining what is good and forbidding what is wrong, See 'Abd al-Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-uṣūl al-khamsa*, 2nd edition, ed. Abdel-Karim Othman (Cairo: Wahba Library, 1996), 128-141.

¹⁸ See Ahmed Mahmoud Sobhi, *Fī al-Falsafah al-Islamiya; Mu'tazilah* (Beirut: Dār al-Nahda al-Arabiya, 1985) 143.

cupping, thus the pain is good. So, if pain's benefit is not known, then merely thinking about the benefit of the pain means that it is good.¹⁹

There is a crucial question here that Al-Qadī 'Abd al-Jabbār raised. This question lies in the discussion of these pains and aches on the part of the obligated servant, as we have previously decided that the things from God's side are all good, but from the one who is obligated/Mokallaf, it may seem otherwise, for instance, what is the sin of a child who has suffered pain?!

'Abd al-Jabbār answers this question from the Mu'tazilia's point of view again, as they say, that God is just and that injustice is never permissible for Him, and the second thing is that His action is all wisdom and not in vain. Based on these two principles, 'Abd al-Jabbār starts with the person who is not obligated/Mokallaf and that is the most problematic in the matter, and he suggests the theory of compensations *ala'wāḍ* الأعراض because if the pain reaches the one who is not obligated, because of faith in God's justice and wisdom, the non-obligated will get compensations for this pain. However, if the pain reaches the one who is obligated, then the matter here, in addition to the compensations الأعراض, teaches him and others a lesson, and thus pain is good from God with His justice and wisdom.²⁰

There is another problem with this issue, how can such pain be without one's consent? Would this be fair? Moreover, the answer to this question according to 'Abd al-Jabbār is that God is the most generous, and aware of everything related to us as humans. In contrast, humans have limited reason and thought; they cannot recognize what is in their benefit. Therefore, the pain that He afflicts *al-maṣā'ib* المصائب upon us will be in the form of beneficial compensations, which are unrecognizable to us.²¹

As for the Māturīds, they believe that God does not have to do anything at all, since obligation comes from Him. It is permissible for Him to do to the servant what is not in his interest.²² The principle that something is obligatory on God is not befitting of itself. Deity contradicts this, so God can do whatever He pleases to His servants with His justice and thanks to Him, whether it is happiness or pain, faith or disbelief. As for His goodness, it is a kindness of God

¹⁹ 'Abd al-Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-uṣūl al-khamsa*, 484.

²⁰ 'Abd al-Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-uṣūl al-khamsa*, 485.

²¹ 'Abd al-Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-uṣūl al-khamsa*, 485.

²² al-Nasafī, *Tabṣirat al-adīllah fī uṣūl al-dīn: 'alā ṭarīqat al-imām Abī maṣṣūr al-Māturīdī*, ed. Muhammad al-Anwar Hamid Issa (Cairo: The Library of al Azhar, 2011), 2/988.

towards His servants, and if He keeps that from some of His servants, He would be just and oppressive, and He is praiseworthy in every case.²³

The commitment to the principle of obligation to God according to the Mu'tazilites detracts from the meaning of divinity for the Māturids because one of the requirements of absolute divinity is absolute guardianship. Moreover, this principle of obligation comes from the meaning of divinity, the absolute guardianship of God over His worshippers. In addition to this, if we say that God's guidance to His servants and granting them goodness and kinds of happiness are only gifts from God, and we said nonetheless that this matter is obligatory on Him, this statement will fall into contradiction; the saying that it is an obligation to God negates the principle of gratitude because in this case, He will have given something worthy of His servants. In addition to this, the saying that God must do what is best for His servants leads to the limitation of God's ability, (يقضي) because He will have given His servants everything, and nothing remains within His power to give anymore.²⁴

Abu al-Mu'in al-Nasafi (1115) that discusses the issue by quoting from the Qur'an and Ijmā. In the Qur'an, God says: "And if We had willed, We could have given every soul its guidance"²⁵ and "If He had willed, He would have guided you all"²⁶ also, "And had your Lord willed, those on earth would have believed all of them entirely."²⁷ If He was not able to do this, then these verses would not have any meanings.²⁸ As for the Ijmā, al-Nasafi says:

(فقد أجمع المسلمون وأهل الأديان السماوية قبلهم على الدعاء لله تعالى، وطلب المعونة على الطاعات والعصمة من المعاصي، وكشف ما بهم من الضر وإزالة ما بهم وبأهل عنايتهم من المرض وتبديل ذلك بالعافية).²⁹

"Muslims and people of heavenly religions before them unanimously agreed to pray to God, and to ask for help in maintaining obedience and protection from sins, and to get rid of harms and sicknesses inflicted upon them and their loved ones and replace these with health."²⁹

Therefore, the prayers of Muslims to God to relieve them of harm and diseases indicates that what happened to them in terms of plagues is harmful to them and is not in their interest; otherwise, their prayers will have no meaning. The Māturīdiyya theologians respond to the

²³ al-Ṣābūnī, *al-Bidāyah fī uṣūl al-dīn*, ed. Bekir Topaloğlu (Istanbul: Faculty of Theology at Marmara University, 2017) 73-74, Id., *al-Kifāyah fī al-hidāyah*, ed. by Muhammad Aruchi, (Beirut: Dār Ibn Hazm, 2014), 306.

²⁴ al-Ṣābūnī, *al-Bidāyah fī uṣūl al-dīn*, 306; Id., *al-Kifāyah fī al-hidāyah*, 74.

²⁵ Quran: 32/13.

²⁶ Quran: 6/149.

²⁷ Quran:10/ 99.

²⁸ al-Nasafī, *Tabṣīrat al-adillah fī uṣūl al-dīn*, 2/992 Reference to al-Nasafī's refutation of the issue of the fittest according to the Mu'tazilites at length for these pages and beyond.

²⁹ al-Nasafī, *Tabṣīrat al-adillah fī uṣūl al-dīn*, 2/919.

Mu'tazila: "creating the ugly is ugly and creating the foolish is foolishness: (إيجاد القبيح قبيح وإيجاد السفه سفه)" by saying that it has been proven first of all that there is no creation or invention except by God. It has also been proven that God has complete wisdom in doing anything. Based on that, everything that God has created has wisdom in it, whether it is ugly or good, but al-Nasafi criticized the Mu'tazila that they argue about what they have no knowledge of, so no one can perceive all the reasons of God in His deeds.³⁰

The hadith Islamic theologians, in Nasafi's terms, (المتكلمون من أهل الحديث) see that an ugly act and a good act are both dependent on the advent of the command and the prohibition in the holy texts. In addition, since God does not have the right to forbid Him or command Him, but He is the Commander who forbids, there is no permission in His actions or what is described as ugliness at all.³¹

al-Nasafi may mean by "Ahl al-Hadith" here both Ash'ari's and Maturids. The Ash'ari's saw that beauty and ugliness are based on Sharia, not reason. As stated by al-Shahrastani: "The doctrine of the people of truth is that reason does not indicate the goodness and ugliness of a thing",

(مذهب أهل الحق أن العقل لا يدل على حسن الشيء وقبحه)

In addition, he denied that the act for itself is ugly or good; rather it is contingent on praising the Sharia or denigrating its perpetrator.³²

Maturidism believes that God is the creator of everything and includes pernicious things under "everything", but these actions should not be attributed to God Almighty in particular, because it is not befitting of His holiness. Because adding a proper noun to it comes under the heading of glorifying this thing, as we say: the God of Muhammad, the God of Moses and the God of Aaron. As for ugly things, they should not be venerated under any circumstances, so we should not say about God, the creator of monkeys and pigs or the creator of epidemics either.³³

Another detail is called the action sides, meaning that the action has several sides; one side of it is ugly, while the other side may be good, and this detail was mentioned on the Najariya النجارية sect.³⁴ This view is close to the detail of the aforementioned 'Abd al-Jabbār's, and although there is

³⁰ al-Nasafi, *Tabṣirat al-adillah fi uṣūl al-dīn*, 2/919.

³¹ al-Nasafi, *Tabṣirat al-adillah fi uṣūl al-dīn*, 2/919.

³² al-Shahrastani, *Nihāyat al-aqdām fi 'ilm al-kalām*, ed. by Alfred Guillaume, (Baghdad: Al-Muthanna Library, no date), 370.

³³ al-Nasafi, *Tabṣirat al-adillah fi uṣūl al-dīn*, 2/925.

³⁴ al-Najjariya is a group of Mutakallimun whose leader is Hussain bin Muhammad al-Najjar al-Rāzi, and most of his followers were in Ray, and it was formed and developed as a group in the era of the Abbasid Caliph al-Ma'mun.

some logic in it, both Ash'arī s and Māturids have denied the idea of action sides, a view that requires a lengthy detailed discussion.³⁵

The Ash'arī s share with the Māturids that God is not obligated by His servants to do anything. So based on the veneration of the principle of divinity and that He is not bound by a slave; Ibn Fūrak (1015) reports on the authority of Abu Al-Hassan al-Ash'arī (936) that God's kindness to His servants has no limit or purpose, and it is restricted to those who believe in Him only. As for the unbelievers, they do not have the kindness of God. God is wise in all His actions, preventing justice does not mean miserliness in any way, for He is the Most Exalted for that, and His giving does not mean that He must give to His servants in any way³⁶ (منعه لا يعني بخلا بحال فهو تعالى عن , وعطاؤه لا يعني أنه يجب عليه هذا العطاء لعبيده بحال) (وأفعال الله تعالى كلها حكمة وحسن وصواب وحق وعدل وبعضها مصلحة وصلاح وأصلح) لمن فُعل فيه) In addition, God Almighty created whom He knows will disbelieve, enter Hell, and be tormented even though He knows that there is no benefit in any way for this servant.³⁷ With the same logic in which the Māturids rejected the principle of righteousness and the fittest among the Mu'tazilites (مسألة الصلاح والأصلح), the Ash'arī rejected this theory. So, saying that God must do the best for His servant means that God Almighty has to do what is righteous, which means that creations are endless. (تناهي مقدور الله تعالى)³⁸

al-Ash'arī has come in the opposite direction of the Mu'tazila in the matter of reasons and wisdom, as he refused to link the action of God to any cause. And the wording of Ibn Fūrak on the authority of Al-Ash'arī says: “And he used to refer to the saying of those who said that God Almighty did such-for-such, or that God Almighty did such-and-such and wanted by it the kindness and goodness of others, and that was to refer him to God doing something for a reason or a cause.”³⁹

(وكان يحيل قول من قال إن الله تعالى فعل كذا لكذا، أو إن الله تعالى فعل كذا وأراد به لطف غيره وصلاحه، وذلك لإحاطته أن يفعل الله الشيء لعله أو

(لسبب)

The concept of wisdom according to al-Ash'arī is that the act of God in and of itself is wisdom, whether that action seemed good or bad to us. It is not correct in his view to interpret

Hind Bint Ahmed Bin Barak Al-Osaimi, *al Nejarites in the Book of Maqalat*, Volume Two of the 33rd Issue of the Year book of the College of Islamic and Arabic Studies for Girls in Alexandria, 679. Mustafa Öz, "Neccâriyye", *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*.

³⁵ al-Nasafî, *Tabşirat al-adillah fi uşûl al-dîn*, 2/919.

³⁶ Ibn Fūrak, *Mujarrad maqālāt al-Shaykh Abī al-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī*, ed. Daniel Guimaret (Beirut: Dār al-Mashreq, 1986), 125.

³⁷ Ibn Fūrak, *Mujarrad Maqālāt al-Ash'arī*, 127.

³⁸ Ibn Fūrak, *Mujarrad Maqālāt al-Ash'arī*, 127.

³⁹ Ibn Fūrak, *Mujarrad Maqālāt al-Ash'arī*, 129.

the act of God and extract wisdom from the action of others, and he set an example for that with colours and movements, for they are colours and movements for us, as for the divine entity they are actions. In addition, on this, Abu Al-Hasan al-Ash'arī says: "A thing for us may seem ugly, whereas, it is good, or may seem like foolishness, whereas, it has wisdom."⁴⁰ Ibn Fūrak presented the views of al-Ash'arī on the meaning of wisdom in the chapter of wrongfulness and righteousness -wrongfulness from unfairness, meaning injustice and righteousness from justice- and the attribution of each of them to God. Abu Al-Hasan says there that he agrees with his opposers that all God's actions have wisdom, but he says that these actions are wisdom for themselves without looking at the meaning. al-Ash'arī believes that a single act may be just on the one hand and unjust on the other at the same time. He cited an example that our obedience to God is obedience to God, but at the same time disobedience to Satan, for a single act may be good as well as ugly and just as well as unfair from two different sides.⁴¹

(طاعتنا لله فهي طاعة لله لكن في الوقت نفسه معصية للشيطان، فالفعل الواحد قد يكون حسناً قبيحاً عدلاً جوراً من جهتين مختلفتين)

In the same logic, Abu al-Hasan al-Ash'arī rejected the principle of linking the actions of God to purposes that follow them whether beneficial or harmful to man. In contrast to Mu'tazila, God has the absolute will, and neither His judgments nor their purposes should be explained in any way, rather, His actions are all wisdom themselves and nothing else. In addition, linking wisdom to a person's benefit or harm is not accepted by Abu al-Hasan, as it is permissible for God *يجوز لله* to do something harmful to the servant and there is wisdom in it. God has the right to give the servant pure harm without being followed by any benefit⁴², and to start afflicting pain on a being and perpetuating it for them, is like giving them blessings and perpetuating them as well. Moreover, choosing some rather than others is equal wisdom.⁴³

al-Ash'arī believes that people are of four types: The first type God created and wanted good for them in this world and the hereafter., the second was specified by God's benefit in this world but not in the hereafter, the third one from His creation are specified by His harm in this world while His benefit in the hereafter and some of them were specified by His harm in both this world and the hereafter.⁴⁴

Ibn Taymiyyah (1328) believes that God does not create pure evil, but rather creates it with wisdom, and considering that wisdom is from the goodness of God, God never does bad, rather His actions are all good and benevolent. As the Prophet Muhammed said in the opening supplication/

⁴⁰ Ibn Fūrak, *Mujarrad Maqālāt al-Ash'arī*, 130.

⁴¹ Ibn Fūrak, *Mujarrad Maqālāt al-Ash'arī*, 140.

⁴² Ibn Fūrak, *Mujarrad Maqālāt al-Ash'arī*, 141.

⁴³ Ibn Fūrak, *Mujarrad Maqālāt al-Ash'arī*, 142.

⁴⁴ Ibn Fūrak, *Mujarrad Maqālāt al-Ash'arī*, 144.

Du'a al-Iftitāh: "Good is by your hands and evil is never from you." "والخير بيديك، والشر ليس إليك", this evil that was labelled by some people, was termed "partial evil" "الشر الجزئي" by Ibn Taymiyyah. As for total and absolute evil, God is beyond it, and the partial additional evil الشر الجزئي الإضافي is good considering the wisdom in it. That is why evil is not specified to God - as it was previously mentioned by the Māturids - but it is permissible to enter the generality of His creation, as God Almighty said: "And He created everything." "وخلق كل شيء" Or it may be added to the reason, such as what the Almighty said: "And from the evil of what He created". "ومن شر ما خلق". Or omit its doer, as mentioned in the Qur'an: "And we do not know whether evil is intended for those on earth or whether their Lord intends for them a right course." "وإنا لا ندري أشر أريد بمن في الأرض أم أراد بهم ربهم رشداً", Ibn Taymiyyah criticized each of the two parties; those who saw that God does not create the actions of the servants, that is because they saw that among these actions were ugly acts. In addition, the other group that permitted God to do everything, such as commanding a servant to disbelief and disobedience and forbidding him from faith and obedience, in addition to His torture of the Prophets and His blessing of the Pharaohs and the unbelievers. In addition, this contradicts the expressions of the Qur'an, where God said: "Or do those who commit evils think we will make them like those who have believed and done righteous deeds - equal in their life and their death, Evil is that which they judge".

(أَمْ حَسِبَ الَّذِينَ اجْتَرَحُوا السَّيِّئَاتِ أَنْ نَجْعَلَهُمْ كَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ سَوَاءً مَحْيَاهُمْ وَمَمَاتِهِمْ سَاءَ مَا يَحْكُمُونَ)

As for what a person sees as pure evil, or what Ibn Taymiyyah called a partial evil, such as the order of plagues and pandemics. He says that when we do not know the wisdom of this evil, it does not mean that it is non-existent; rather it may contain wisdom and mercy that is hidden from some people.⁴⁵ However, there is no doubt or suspicion that God created everything and behind His creation had wisdom, whether this thing was good or it seemed to us as evil. God said: "Who perfected everything which He created", "الذي أحسن كل شيء خلقه", and said: "It is the work of Allāh, who perfected all things." "صنع الله الذي أتقن كل شيء", Ibn Taymiyyah says:

The creature, considering the wisdom for which he was created, is good and wise, and if it is evil on the other hand, then that is a partial contradictory matter, not pure evil, but the intended evil is most likely good from the wise doer (God), even if it is evil for the one who did it.⁴⁶

Ibn Taymiyyah explained the matter of wisdom as a rational explanation. People differ in their perceiving of the wisdom behind things, so the more a person becomes aware of the facts of things, the more he knows the wisdom, justice, power and mercy of God. He connects that with

⁴⁵ Ibn Taymiyyah, *Risālat al-lhasanah wa as-sayyiah* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-Ilmiyya), 46.

⁴⁶ Ibn Taymiyyah, *Majmoo' al-fatāwā*, ed. by Abd al-Rahman bin Muhammad bin Qasim (Medina: King Fahd Complex for the Printing of the Holy Qur'an, 1995), 8/511.

the worship of the servant and the deification of the creator, but he says that the wisdom of the actions of God is not all revealed; rather most people may not be able to know the wisdom from it. In addition, more than that was mentioned in the Qur'an when the wisdom behind the creation of human beings was hidden from the angels. When God said to the angels: "Indeed, I will make upon the earth a successive authority.", they thought that this was a form of evil and responded: "Will you place upon it one who causes corruption therein and sheds blood", Then God said: "Indeed, I know that which you do not know."⁴⁷

3. The Relationship Between the Epidemic and the Will of God.

Above we presented the Islamic theologians' view of the issue of evils and calamities المصائب within the framework of the will of God. In addition, it can be said that there are three answers to the question that says whether the likes of plagues, evils and calamities that befall a person are from the creation of God or not? According to the first answer, these evils are not from the creation of God, because God is wise and just, but are from the creation of man. The second opinion ascribes evils to God by saying that God will not be asked what He does while they (the servants of God) are asked. لا يُسئل عما يفعل وهم يسألون meaning that there is no wisdom from His action we should look for, but His action is wisdom itself. In addition, a final answer is about the question of partial or additional evil. This means that God is above the creation of pure evil, and if it is evil, then there must be good for the servants behind it. God is wise and does what is best for His servants without a doubt, for He is perfect in His qualities and actions.

It has been mentioned in the Qur'anic texts and the hadiths of the Prophet that evil is not attributed to God and there may be two reasons for it here: the first - as mentioned above - is that He is excluded from doing pure evil, and the other is that this pure evil is unreal in the sense that it is relative evil. In addition, our delusion that it is pure evil stems from our ignorance of the truth of the wisdom behind this evil, and it has been mentioned that being aware of the wisdom behind His actions may be realized by some people rather than all, may even be hidden from all people. Rather, it is explicitly mentioned in the Qur'an that the wisdom behind the creation of Adam was hidden from angels. Finally, this view can be applied to the issue of epidemics and plagues.

After all, if we try to answer the question: "Are epidemics from God's decree?" It can be said based on the foregoing: That it relates to the search for Islamic theologians' idea of "the will". Therefore, the Mu'tazila, once again, started from the principle of God being glorified, and described with justice and wisdom, and that all His actions are good, and He does not do ugly. 'Abd al-Jabbār says in his theorizing of the principle of the divine will: "Know that the way to understand this quality is a necessity, and it cannot be known by reasoning because every

⁴⁷ Ibn Taymiyyah, *Majmoo' al-Fatāwā*, 8/514.

indication shows it, so it is based on justice and wisdom".⁴⁸ Based on this, He does not want the ugly, for evils are not from the judgment of God nor His will based on this, for He does not intend evil and ugliness nor command them because the will of the ugly is only ugly as it is His.⁴⁹

‘Abd al-Jabbār objects to the well-known saying of Muslims: “What God willed, happened and what he did not will, did not happen”. "ما شاء الله كان وما لم يشأ لم يكن". Saying that the meaning of this is not known basically, and whichever unknown is resorted to by interpretation. The interpretation here implies that what God does in a good manner, which leads to praise, has taken place.⁵⁰

It is worth noting here that the Mu'tazila have linked the quality of “the will” with the attributes of love and contentment, as the attribute of love, contentment, and selection is naturally all due to the meaning of the will. As what God wants, He loves, is pleased with, chooses, and desires, and what God does not want, He does not love, approve of nor choose, rather He hates and gets angry at the one who does it. Likewise, the Mu'tazila equated the will with the command, so what God wanted He commanded, and what He did not want He did not command.⁵¹

As for Ash'arī s and the Māturids, they proceeded from the principle that the will of God includes everything in the universe, so no event in the universe occurs against it. The Ash'arī opinion can be summarized as follows: Essentially, they link between the will and the creation, as every creature of God is His desire. Likewise, they linked love to will, as all meanings of love, contentment, and anger are due to the meaning of either the will or the lack of will. The result of this is that disbelief, sins, and evils occur at the will of God because He is their Creator, and at the same time, He loves and accepts them because it is impossible for what He hates to take part where He rules. While the Mu'tazila saw that evils do not happen by the will of God in the universe because God did not command them.⁵² As for the Māturids, their opinion is the same as that of the Ash'arī on this issue. Al-Nasafi and other Mutakallimūn started from the saying of the Muslims: “What God willed, happened and what he did not will, did not happen”. "ما شاء الله كان وما لم يشأ لم يكن". That is, there is nothing in the universe that is outside the will and desire of God, be it good or ugly, evil or righteous.⁵³

⁴⁸ ‘Abd al-Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-uṣūl al-khamsa*, 431.

⁴⁹ ‘Abd al-Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-uṣūl al-khamsa*, 462.

⁵⁰ ‘Abd al-Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-uṣūl al-khamsa*, 469.

⁵¹ Muhammad al-Sayyid Al-Julind, *The Case of Good and Evil among Islamic Thinkers* (Cairo: Dār Quba', 2010), 116-117.

⁵² Muhammad Al-Sayyid Al-Julind, *The Case of Good and Evil*, 29.

⁵³ al-Nasafī, *Tabṣirat al-adillah fī uṣūl al-dīn*, 2/967; al-Sālīmī, Abū Shakūr Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Sayyid, *Kitāb al-tamhīd fī bayān al-tawḥīd*, ed. by Omar Turkman (Beirut: Dār Ibn Hazm, 2017), 133.

However, Ibn Taymiyyah divided the divine will into two types of will; a universal will (إرادة كونية), which is a general and comprehensive will for everything that happens in this universe. Nothing in the universe whether good, evil, beautiful, or ugly happens outside the will of God. In addition, it is what is meant by the Muslims saying: “What God willed, happened and what he did not will, did not happen”. In addition, from the words of God: “And you do not will except that Allāh wills”. (وما تشاءون إلا أن يشاء الله). Of course, this will, including the matter of plagues and pandemics, as it is included in God’s will. The second type of will is religious will (إرادة دينية), which are the religious orders mentioned in the holy texts. Like the saying of God: “Allāh intends for you ease and does not intend for you hardship” (يريد الله بكم اليسر ولا يريد بكم العسر), “but He intends to purify you” (ولكن يريد ليظهركم). Based on this, the ruling, the judiciary, the book, the resurrection, the transmission, etc. are divided into being universal and inevitable and into being permissibly religious.⁵⁴

To sum up the aforementioned, the Mu'tazila, Ash'arī , and Māturidism stood on opposite sides. In addition, Ibn Taymiyyah's explanation came as a solution to the problem that occurred between the two parties. According to this detail, the Mu'tazila had ignored the universal will, looking to the religious lawful will, and applied it to every will of God. As for Ash'arī s and Māturids, they clung to the universal will and extended it to every will of God Almighty. One of the erroneous results of the first view was that what is outside the will of God falls into the universe, as well as the second view that God is accepting to what He hates such as the disbelief of the infidel as mentioned in the text of the Qur'an. As for Ibn Taymiyyah, he considered the two wills and thus solved the problem. Thus, the answer to the question that the epidemic is from God’s decree, or not; that it is from God’s decree and universal will, nothing happens in the universe against His will, with another precaution that abominations are only attributed to God as a whole without detail.

4. The Relationship Between Fate, Man and God's Will.

If we accept in detail the question of the will mentioned earlier, then we shall be able to answer this question easily, because the basis for confusion here for many is the universal decree and the universal fate. For the discussion not to be lengthy here, this issue is related to the issue of causes and their impact on human action, in addition to the confusion between the two fates. However, here we should clarify two types of human-related acts on the part of the universal decree:

The first: A type in which a person participates due to the causes that lead to the occurrence of the universal decree, or by carrying out some of its elements, such as the fugitive

⁵⁴ Ibn Taymiyyah, *Majmoo' al-Fatāwā*, 18/132.

that damages plantations, or unintentional killing. Likewise, in the case of the epidemic that we are witnessing in the world today, all reasonable people agree that the emergence of this epidemic had causes related to wrong behaviour that started in China, and if it were not for these behaviours, such an epidemic would not have spread.⁵⁵

The second: A type that a person has no power to prevent or stop, such as the matter of earthquakes that occur or the rain that comes suddenly and perishes the crops, and this is a kind of affliction with which a person should be patient to be rewarded.⁵⁶

However, it is known to all rational people that in both cases a person should take precautions and measures to prevent it, even if he is not able to prevent it completely. The matter of earthquakes or heavy rain can be mitigated as much as possible, by building strong buildings or ones that can resist earthquakes or absorb them, and the same is true for rain. As for epidemics, we are all witnessing the undeniable precautions and measures that have prevailed in the whole world, as well as for religion and Islamic theologians. Therefore, it is not conceivable for anyone to recommend throwing oneself into perdition, which also the holy texts attest.

Conclusion

The Corona epidemic is considered one of the most painful events of the twenty-first century, which began in China and then spread to the rest of the world without exception. With this wide spread, many human problems arose as a result of it, including psychological, behavioural problems, and also a number of questions related to religion and belief occurred. That is why we decided to devote this article to discussing issues related to religion and belief. There have been many epidemics and plagues in human and Islamic history; The most famous of them was the plague of Amwas, and then that plague that was in the eighth century AH in the As-Sham, Egypt and the surrounding geography. The article mentioned the story of Omar Ibn Al-Khattab's reaction to this plague, and among those lessons that the article extracted was that Omar had consulted all the people around him, and then took measures to prevent this epidemic. The most important lesson we can derive from this story is Omar's saying, "We flee from God's decree to God's decree," meaning that there is no escape from God's will, but at the same time we are required to take measures to ward off calamities.

Epidemics and plagues were a source of inspiration for many Muslim scholars to write books in this regard; Some of them dealt with the matter from a literary point of view and some from a jurisprudential and doctrinal point of view.

⁵⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/COVID-19_pandemic.

⁵⁶ See al-Julind, *The Case of Good and Evil*, 264.

After this short analysis of the Islamic theologians' (Mutakallimūn) views, it can be said that the issue of epidemics and diseases was discussed under the facts concerning evils and ugliness in this world and whether these evils and ugliness were within the will of God. The answer, in general, is that what the holy texts and logic prove is that nothing happens in this world outside the will of God, but God has perfection in His actions and attributes, and evil and bad are not ascribed to Him. In addition, such evil may be good in its reality or its eventuality, without paying attention to the wisdom behind it. Ignorance of the matter does not mean its complete absence.

Believing that every matter takes place by the will of God does not mean abandoning the measures a person can take by himself to interfere. Logic and holy texts have proven that whoever throws himself on fire is perishing himself. That is why the holy text forbade throwing oneself into perdition, and the true religion ordered to take measures. In addition, from measures taken against epidemics and diseases, exerting effort in preventing disease knowing that everything is done by God's command, and seeking treatment after the occurrence of the disease, in addition to good patience to all of this.

Finally, the purpose of our article was to attempt to link issues of theology and Islamic doctrines with modern issues such as epidemics and plagues. Beside that, attempts to discuss the issue of epidemics and plagues with those approaches that were mentioned by the Islamic theologians in the past. These are the views of Muslim theologians who lived in the Middle Ages, but their approach was very successful in solving the problem of epidemics in terms of faith in fate. This is due to the fact that the problems emerging today can be categorized under the problems that existed in the Islamic Middle Ages without pretension. If we apply this approach in many of our studies, we believe that we will achieve good results in the field of Islamic studies in general.

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