

5.0.4 *The Relevance of Heresy*

040052 DALÂLET

It must be emphasised once again that establishing this precarious balance took time. In the two centuries discussed here the Khārijite *takfīr* and the Murji'ite *tabdī'* were still regarded as possible alternatives. The Mu'tazilite Aṣamm regarded a grave sinner as an 'enemy of God' who may be reviled at will: he even believed that this was supported by a consensus.¹ The Ḥanafite *K. al-ʿālim wal-muta'allim*,² on the other hand, tells us that one should pray for forgiveness on the behalf of sinners rather than cursing them; even Khārijites ought to be called liars (or as those who are wrong) rather than unbelievers.³ In addition the range of terms used in those days was much greater. The Quran had introduced *ḍalāl/ḍalāla* 'error, heterodoxy' and *hawā* 'whim',⁴ the latter similar to ἀῤρεσις in the meaning the Christians had given the word: '(deliberately wrong) choice'.⁵ The Shī'ites called those in their own ranks whose views they considered aberrant *ghulāt*, 'exaggerators'.⁶ This, too, was based on the Quran: 'Go not beyond the bounds in your religion' (*lā taghlū fī dīnikum*), we read in sura 4:171 and 5:77. Heresy meant abandoning the middle ground, i.e. extremism. In the eyes of the Sunnites heterodoxy was sometimes the result of *ta'wīl*, false interpretation of Quranic passages;⁷ those who were orthodox upheld the central meaning of the scripture.⁸ This aspect would be the focus of the polemic against the Ismā'īlites, the Bāṭiniyya, later,⁹ although it was also radicalised due to political circumstances. At first it was emphasised that *ta'wīl*

1 See vol. II 461 above.

2 Ibid. 629f.

3 Cf. Rudolph, *Al-Māturīdī und die sunnitische Theologie* 54 and 56. This is why the phrase that a sinner 'obeys Satan' is rejected here (see vol. II 630 above).

4 Sometimes in one and the same verse, e.g. sura 5:77. Regarding *hawā* see Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī's deliberations in his *K. al-zīna* (in Sāmarrā'ī, *Ghulūw* 247ff.); also p. 734 above.

5 In antiquity ἀῤρεσις meant, of course, 'school of thought' or 'school of philosophy' (cf. Brox in: RAC XIII 256ff.). *Hawā*, too, did not always have negative connotations (cf. Kister in: JESHO 8/1965/143, n. 3 = *Studies in Jāhiliyya and Early Islam*, no. 1); regarding *ahwā* = 'political inclinations' cf. *Naqā'id* II 1091, 18 LYALL. Christian Arab literature is familiar with ἀῤρεσις as a borrowed term via ἀῤρετικός: *harṭaqa* (cf. Wehr s. v.; also Graf, *Kirchliche Termini* 115).

6 See vol. I 463 and III 203 above. Regarding the usage of *ghulūw* in early non-Shī'ite texts cf. *Anfänge* 150f.

7 See vol. II 238, 244, 540, 603 above.

8 We need to bear in mind that the same thought was at the back of the etymology of *zindiq* (see vol. I 489f. above). Regarding Judaism cf. Urbach, *The Sages* 296: a heretic is someone who 'interprets the Torah'.

9 Cf. Radtke in: Eliran III 860 s. v. *Bāten*, and Halm ibid. 861ff. s. v. *Bātenīya*.