



THE QUESTION OF ĪMĀN IN THE ḤANAFĪ-MĀTURĪDĪ CREED: THE SOURCES AND THE FOUR GOVERNING TENETS

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Abstract. *The article examines the doctrine of faith (īmān) in the Ḥanafī-Māturīdī tradition on the basis of its primary texts, from the treatises attributed to Abū Ḥanīfa through al-Ṭaḥāwī, al-Māturīdī and Abū al-Mu‘īn al-Nasafī to the creed of Najm al-Dīn al-Nasafī and al-Taftāzānī’s commentary upon it. Four governing tenets are identified: that the essence of faith is assent of the heart; that verbal confession functions as a condition for the application of worldly legal rulings rather than as a constituent of faith itself; that deeds do not form part of faith; and that faith, in its essence, neither increases nor decreases. It is argued that these four are not independent rulings but a chain of consequences following from the initial definition, and that this internal consistency accounts for the stability of the doctrine across eight centuries of commentary. The article further traces how the formulation of the tenets was progressively refined while their content remained unchanged, and considers the practical consequence of the doctrine for the question of excommunication.*

Keywords: *īmān, taṣdīq, iqrār, deeds, Ḥanafī-Māturīdī creed, al-Fiqh al-akbar, al-‘Aqā’id al-Nasafīyya, istithnā’, takfīr, kalām sources.*

INTRODUCTION

The doctrine of faith is among the earliest subjects of Islamic theology, and it did not arise from speculation. It arose from a practical question forced upon the community by its own history: what is the standing of a Muslim who commits a grave sin? The Khārijites answered that he leaves the faith; the Mu‘tazilīs placed him in an intermediate station, neither believer nor unbeliever; the Ḥanafī tradition took a third course, and the course it took determined much of the subsequent character of Sunnī theology in the eastern Islamic world (Madelung, 1993:605; Wensinck, 1932:36).

The Ḥanafī-Māturīdī position is usually summarised in a sentence: faith is assent of the heart, and deeds are not part of it. The summary is correct, but it conceals the fact that



the position consists of several tenets which are formulated differently in different texts, and the differences are easily mistaken for disagreements. In one text faith is defined as confession and assent; in another, assent alone is said to be its reality (Abū Ḥanīfa, 2001a:60; al-Taftāzānī, 1982:184). A reader who does not see how the formulations are related will conclude that the tradition is inconsistent, which it is not.

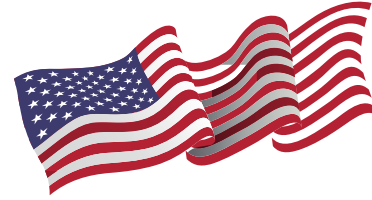
The aim of this article is to set out the doctrine from the primary texts, to show how the formulations are related, and to argue that the four tenets which the tradition maintains are not independent rulings but a chain: each follows from the one before, and all follow from the definition with which the chain begins (al-Nasafī, n.d.:II/803). The method is that of source study. The texts are treated in chronological order; each tenet is quoted in Arabic where a formulation is at issue; and the development traced is a development of expression rather than of content (Wensinck, 1932:102-124).

One preliminary clarification is required about the terms themselves. The word *īmān* is rendered here as faith, but the English word carries connotations of trust and commitment that the Arabic does not emphasise; *taṣdīq*, rendered as assent, is closer to holding-true than to the feeling of conviction (al-Taftāzānī, 1982:184). Where the argument turns on these shades the Arabic is given, since a doctrine that defines faith as an act of the heart can be made to look either trivial or implausible depending on which English word is allowed to stand for it (al-Māturīdī, 2003:380).

MAIN PART

The dispute over the sinning believer belongs to the first century of Islam and to the political conflicts of that century rather than to the schools of theology, which did not yet exist (Madelung, 1993:605). What the conflicts produced was a question that could not be deferred: whether the community is defined by profession or by conduct. The Khārijite answer was that it is defined by conduct, and that one who commits a grave sin has left the faith. The consequences were severe, since they included the permissibility of fighting those so judged. The Murji'a answered that judgement on such a person is deferred to God and that the sin does not remove him from the faith; faith is in the heart, and deeds are a separate matter (Wensinck, 1932:36-40).

The Ḥanafī tradition stands close to the second of these positions, and for this reason the label of *irjā'* has sometimes been attached to it. The attribution requires care.



In separating deeds from faith the Ḥanafīs were not minimising sin; they were refusing to let sin expel a Muslim from the community. The sources accordingly distinguish the position from the extreme forms of the doctrine, and the literature speaks of *murjiʿ* at al-sunna to mark the difference (Madelung, 1993:605-607). The distinction is worth preserving because the two positions have different consequences. The extreme form holds that sin does no harm where faith is present, which empties religious obligation of urgency. The Ḥanafī form holds that the sinner remains a believer and remains liable: he is subject to the penalties of the law in this world and to the divine decree in the next, and his sin is in no way lightened by the fact that it does not expel him (Abū Ḥanīfa, 2001b:76; al-Ṣābūnī, 1979:155).

The position also had a political dimension that should not be passed over. A doctrine which makes profession rather than conduct the mark of membership removes from any party the right to expel its opponents from the community on the ground of their behaviour. In a period when theological vocabulary was regularly used to license violence, that consequence was not incidental, and the Ḥanafī sources show awareness of it (al-Ṭaḥāwī, 1995:55). The ruling on excommunication quoted below is stated in the creeds among the articles of belief rather than among the rules of conduct, which indicates how fundamental it was taken to be (al-Bazdawī, 1963:154).

The chain of texts begins with the treatises attributed to Abū Ḥanīfa (d. 150/767): al-Fiqh al-akbar, al-Waṣīyya, al-Fiqh al-absaṭ, al-ʿĀlim wa-l-mutaʿallim and the letter to ʿUthmān al-Battī. Their authorship has been discussed in modern scholarship, and the prevailing view is that they transmit the oral teaching of Abū Ḥanīfa as recorded by his students rather than works he composed himself (Wensinck, 1932:102-124). This does not diminish their value for the present purpose: whoever held the pen, the texts represent the earliest creedal position of the school. The second link is al-ʿAqīda al-Ṭaḥāwiyya of Abū Jaʿfar al-Ṭaḥāwī (d. 321/933), which presents the Ḥanafī creed in its Egyptian transmission and is notable for the clarity with which it states the ruling on excommunication (al-Ṭaḥāwī, 1995:55).

The third is al-Māturīdī's Kitāb al-Tawḥīd, which treats faith in a dedicated chapter and connects the doctrine to the theory of knowledge set out in the opening sections of the work (al-Māturīdī, 2003:380). The fourth is Abū al-Muʿīn al-Nasafī's Tabṣīrat al-adilla, in which the Māturīdī position is set out systematically and compared with



the rival views (al-Nasafī, n.d.:II/803); and the fifth is the short creed of Najm al-Dīn al-Nasafī (d. 537/1142) with al-Taftāzānī's commentary (al-Taftāzānī, 1982:184), which became the standard teaching text of the tradition. Abū al-Barakāt al-Nasafī's 'Umdat al-'aqā'id and its commentary belong to the same stage (al-Nasafī, 2011:142).

A sixth group of sources should be mentioned although it is used here only incidentally: the Ḥanafī works of uṣūl al-dīn produced in Transoxiana between the fifth and seventh centuries, among them Abū al-Yusr al-Bazdawī's Uṣūl al-dīn (al-Bazdawī, 1963:146) and Nūr al-Dīn al-Ṣābūnī's al-Bidāya (al-Ṣābūnī, 1979:151). These texts stand between the systematic treatises and the short creeds and are valuable for showing which arguments were considered worth preserving when the material was being compressed for teaching. The parallel development of the doctrine of the divine attributes in the same milieu has recently been re-examined and offers a useful point of comparison for the pattern traced here (al-Dibo, 2018:166).

The earliest formulation of the definition is found in al-Fiqh al-akbar (Abū Ḥanīfa, 2001a:60):

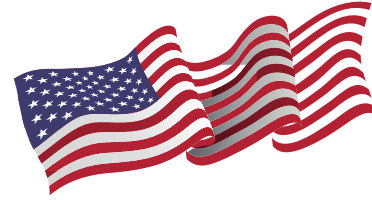
الإِيمَانُ هُوَ الْإِقْرَارُ وَالتَّصَدِيقُ

«al-Īmānu huwa al-iqrāru wa-l-taṣḍīq» - "Faith is confession and assent"

Two elements stand side by side here: iqrār, confession with the tongue, and taṣḍīq, assent of the heart. Taken alone, the formulation suggests that confession is a constituent of faith on a par with assent (Wensinck, 1932:131).

The later texts clarify the relation rather than alter it. Assent is the reality of faith; confession is the condition under which faith is recognised in the sphere of worldly rulings (al-Taftāzānī, 1982:185). The clarification is not an innovation but an answer to a question the earliest formulation had not been asked: what is to be said of one who assents but cannot confess? The answer follows from the distinction. A person who assents with the heart but is prevented from confessing - by coercion, by a defect of speech, or by death before he can speak - is a believer before God. But the rulings applied among people follow confession, because the state of the heart is not accessible to others (al-Nasafī, n.d.:II/805). Faith is thus one thing considered in itself and another in respect of what can be publicly established, and the two must not be confused.

Najm al-Dīn al-Nasafī states the definition in the form that became standard (al-Taftāzānī, 1982:184):



وَالْإِيمَانُ هُوَ التَّصَدِيقُ بِمَا جَاءَ بِهِ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى وَالْإِقْرَارُ بِهِ

«Wa-l-īmānu huwa al-taṣḍīqu bi-mā jā'a bihi min 'indi-llāhi ta'ālā wa-l-iqrāru bih»
- "Faith is assent to what he brought from God Most High, and confession of it"

The structure of this definition repays attention. Assent is named first and is given an object - what the Messenger brought from God - so that faith is not a bare disposition but a determinate propositional attitude. Confession follows, attached to the same object. The commentary tradition then supplies the qualification: confession is a condition for the application of rulings, not a part of the reality (al-Taftāzānī, 1982:185; al-Nasafī, 2011:142).

One further question arises from the definition and was treated at length in the commentaries: whether assent admits of a minimum below which it is not faith. The tradition answers that assent must bear upon what is known by necessity to belong to the religion, and that assent to some articles together with denial of others is not partial faith but its absence, since the object of assent is the message as a whole (al-Taftāzānī, 1982:186; al-Bazdawī, 1963:148). The ruling is a consequence of the way the object of assent was specified in the definition, and it illustrates how much work that specification does.

It should also be noted what the definition does not require. It does not require that the believer be able to state the articles of faith in technical language, nor that he grasp the arguments by which they are established. What is required is assent to the message as the Messenger delivered it (al-Ṣābūnī, 1979:152). This minimalism about the content of required knowledge coexists in the tradition with a demanding view of the obligation to reflect, and the two are reconciled by the distinction between what makes faith valid and what makes it complete (al-Māturīdī, 2003:388).

From the definition of faith as assent, the exclusion of deeds follows directly. If faith is assent, and assent is an act of the heart, then the acts of the limbs are not faith, however closely they may be connected with it (al-Nasafī, n.d.:II/803). The tenet was formulated against two opponents. The Khārijites held that grave sin removes faith, which requires that deeds be constitutive of it. The Mu'tazilīs held that the grave sinner is in an intermediate station, which requires the same (Madelung, 1993:606). Against both the Ḥanafī tradition maintains that the sinner remains a believer, and the grounds



are definitional rather than charitable: a sinner who continues to assent continues to possess what faith is (Abū Ḥanīfa, 2001b:76).

Al-Māturīdī connects the point to his epistemology. Assent is a voluntary act of the heart and cannot be produced by compulsion; faith is therefore determined by the state of the heart and not by outward marks (al-Māturīdī, 2003:381). He is at the same time unwilling to treat all assent as equal: assent reached through reflection is more complete than assent held by imitation, although the latter is valid faith (al-Māturīdī, 2003:388). The status of the imitator's faith was debated within the school and settled in a characteristic way. The imitator's faith is sound, but he is at fault for neglecting the reflection that is incumbent upon him (al-Taftāzānī, 1982:189). The solution balances two requirements: the faith of ordinary believers is affirmed, while the obligation to seek understanding is not abandoned.

The consequence of the tenet for communal life is stated most clearly by al-Ṭaḥāwī (al-Ṭaḥāwī, 1995:55):

وَلَا نُكْفِّرُ أَحَدًا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْقِبْلَةِ بِذَنْبٍ مَا لَمْ يَسْتَحِلَّهُ

«Wa-lā nukaffiru aḥadan min ahli al-qibla bi-dhanbin mā lam yastahillah» - "We do not declare anyone of the people of the qibla an unbeliever on account of a sin, so long as he does not hold it to be lawful"

The qualifying clause carries the weight of the ruling. Committing a sin while acknowledging that it is forbidden does not affect faith, since assent remains intact. Declaring a forbidden thing lawful is another matter, because it contradicts assent to what the Messenger brought; the issue there is not the act but the denial (al-Taftāzānī, 1982:191). The clause thus draws the boundary precisely where the definition of faith requires it to be drawn.

The relation between this tenet and the law should also be made explicit, since the two are sometimes confused. That deeds are not part of faith is a statement about the analysis of a concept; it is not a statement about legal liability. One who abandons prayer remains a believer on this analysis, and is at the same time subject to whatever the law prescribes for that abandonment (al-Bazdawī, 1963:152). The tradition keeps the two registers apart deliberately: the question what faith is and the question what the law requires are answered by different disciplines, and an answer in one does not settle the other.



A corollary of the tenet concerns coercion. If assent cannot be compelled, then a profession extracted under duress establishes nothing about the heart, and the sources treat such cases accordingly: the words uttered under compulsion do not create faith where there is no assent, nor do they destroy it where assent remains (al-Nasafī, n.d.:II/806; al-Ṣābūnī, 1979:154). The ruling is consistent with the definition and has an obvious practical importance in periods of persecution, which is when questions of this kind are actually asked.

The third tenet distinguishes the Ḥanafī tradition from the other Sunnī schools, and the ground of the distinction is again the definition. If faith is assent, and assent is an indivisible act, then it does not admit of degrees: one either assents or does not (al-Taftāzānī, 1982:187).

The difficulty is evident, since scripture speaks of faith increasing. The Ḥanafī sources resolve it by distinguishing two respects. In respect of what is assented to, faith does not increase or decrease: the object of assent is what the Messenger brought, and it is one. In respect of certainty, light and the state of the believer, faith does increase and decrease, and the differences among believers are differences of this kind (al-Nasafī, n.d.:II/817). The formulation is already present in al-Fiqh al-akbar, which states that the faith of the people of heaven and earth neither increases nor decreases with respect to the object of belief, while increasing and decreasing with respect to certainty and assent (Abū Ḥanīfa, 2001a:61).

Two clarifications are usually added in the commentaries. The first concerns the believer at the beginning of the revelation, who assented to what had been revealed so far and then to what came after: here the number of articles assented to increases, but each act of assent is complete in itself. The second concerns deeds, which plainly increase and decrease; since deeds are not part of faith, their variation does not affect it (al-Taftāzānī, 1982:188). Both clarifications apply the same rule - the reality is one, the states accompanying it are many.

It is worth observing that this tenet, more than the others, has often been presented polemically as a devaluation of works. The charge does not survive examination of the texts. What the tradition denies is that works constitute faith; what it affirms is that works are obligatory, that their neglect is sin, and that sin is liable to punishment (al-Ṣābūnī, 1979:155). The disagreement with the other schools concerns the analysis of a



concept, not the seriousness of religious obligation. The history of this tenet within the school is itself worth a remark. It is the only one of the four that the other Sunnī school rejects outright, and it is accordingly the one most fully argued in the Ḥanafī sources. Abū al-Mu‘īn devotes considerable space to it, and the commentators after him return to it whenever the definition of faith is treated (al-Nasafī, n.d.:II/817-820). The volume of argument is a reliable index of where a doctrine was felt to be under pressure, and in this case the pressure came not from the Khārijites or the Mu‘tazilīs but from within Sunnism.

The fourth tenet concerns a practice rather than a proposition: whether a believer may say "I am a believer, if God wills". The Ḥanafī tradition answers that he may not, and that he should say "I am truly a believer" (Abū Ḥanīfa, 2001a:61; al-Taftāzānī, 1982:192). The reasoning follows from the preceding tenets. If faith is assent, then the believer knows his present state, since assent is his own act and is accessible to him. To attach a condition to a statement about what one knows is to express doubt, and doubt about one's faith is incompatible with faith itself (al-Bazdawī, 1963:155).

Other schools permit the exception and refer it not to the present state but to the final outcome - to how one will be at death, or to whether one's faith will be accepted. The Ḥanafī sources do not dispute that the future is unknown; they dispute the application of the exception to a present state that is known (al-Nasafī, n.d.:II/823). The disagreement is therefore about the object of the exception rather than about the limits of human knowledge, and once this is seen the two positions are much closer than the polemics on either side suggest.

The connection between faith and submission belongs to the same context. Najm al-Dīn al-Nasafī states (al-Taftāzānī, 1982:193):

وَالْإِيمَانُ وَالْإِسْلَامُ وَاحِدٌ

«Wa-l-īmānu wa-l-islāmu wāḥid» - "Faith and submission are one"

The ruling does not assert that the two terms are synonyms. It asserts that they are inseparable in their application: there is no faith without submission and no submission without faith. Considered lexically the terms differ, faith pointing to assent and submission to compliance, and the commentaries preserve the difference while maintaining the identity of reference (al-Taftāzānī, 1982:193; al-Nasafī, 2011:144).



A question connected with the exception clause is whether one may judge of another's faith at all. The tradition answers that one judges by what appears: confession establishes the ruling, and the inner state is left to God (al-Ṭaḥāwī, 1995:56). The rule is the counterpart, at the level of persons, of the distinction between the reality of faith and its public conditions; and it explains why the same tradition that defines faith by an inner act is so insistent that outward profession settles how a person is to be treated.

It is also worth asking why the tradition preferred this formulation to the obvious alternative. One could resolve the scriptural difficulty by allowing that faith has degrees and locating its minimum at bare assent; several schools did precisely that (al-Taftāzānī, 1982:187). The Ḥanafī preference for an indivisible assent with variable accompanying states is motivated, so far as the sources indicate, by the consequences of the alternative: if faith admits of degrees, then a believer with little faith is less a believer, and the door is open again to the gradations that the Khārijite and Mu'tazilī positions had exploited (al-Nasafī, n.d.:II/818). Keeping the reality indivisible closes that door.

Following the chain of texts in order reveals a pattern that is easy to miss when they are read separately: the tenets do not change, but their formulation becomes progressively more precise (Wensinck, 1932:124).

In the earliest treatises the tenets appear as short rulings, stated without argument, in the manner of a creed to be recited (Abū Ḥanīfa, 2001a:60). In al-Māturīdī the same rulings are argued: the definition is connected to the theory of the voluntary acts of the heart, and the rival positions are set out before being answered (al-Māturīdī, 2003:380-390). In Abū al-Mu'īn al-Nasafī the arguments are arranged systematically, with the objections of opponents gathered and answered in order (al-Nasafī, n.d.:II/803-825). In Najm al-Dīn al-Nasafī the whole returns to a compressed form, but the compression is now technically exact, each term having been fixed by the preceding debate. In al-Taftāzānī's commentary the terms are given logical definitions, potential objections are canvassed, and the discussion attains the form in which it was taught for centuries (al-Taftāzānī, 1982:184-194). The sequence is thus one of articulation rather than development. A historian of doctrine looking for change of content in this tradition will find little; what changes is the degree of precision with which an unchanged content is expressed, and the range of objections it is equipped to answer.

This observation has a methodological consequence for the study of the school. Citing a later formulation as evidence for the position of an earlier author is legitimate with



respect to content but misleading with respect to method, since the later text states as a definition what the earlier one reached as a conclusion (Rudolph, 2015:205). Conversely, reading the earlier texts in isolation from the later ones can make them appear vaguer than they are, because the questions that gave their formulations their point were raised afterwards. The same pattern has been observed in the school's treatment of the divine attributes, where the founder supplies the principle and the later generation the system (al-Dibo, 2018:170; Rudolph, 2015:125-140).

The comparison with the Ash'arī position is instructive at this point, since the two Sunnī schools agree on the definition of faith as assent and diverge on the third tenet. The Ash'arīs hold that faith increases and decreases, and they do so without including deeds in its definition; what increases, on their analysis, is the assent itself, which they take to admit of degrees (al-Taftāzānī, 1982:188). The Ḥanafī reply is that an act of assent either occurs or does not, and that what varies is the state accompanying it (al-Nasafī, n.d.:II/818). The disagreement is therefore about the structure of a mental act rather than about the role of works, which is worth stating because the two schools are often presented as differing on the latter.

The role of al-Taftāzānī's commentary in fixing the final shape of the doctrine deserves a closing remark. His treatment does three things that the earlier texts do not: it defines each term in the logical vocabulary current in his own day, it distinguishes the questions on which the school is unanimous from those on which its authorities differ, and it states the objections in their strongest form before answering them. The result is a text that can be taught to students who will encounter the objections elsewhere, and this pedagogical adequacy, as much as its doctrinal content, accounts for the extraordinary longevity of the Nasafī creed with his commentary in the madrasa curriculum (al-Taftāzānī, 1982:184-194).

The four tenets examined above are not a list but a chain. Defining faith as assent requires excluding deeds from it; excluding deeds requires recognising the grave sinner as a believer; recognising him as a believer prohibits his excommunication; and prohibiting excommunication, together with the definition of faith as a known act of the heart, renders the exception clause inappropriate (al-Nasafī, n.d.:II/803-823). Each link follows from the one before, and the whole follows from the definition. This internal consistency accounts for the stability of the doctrine. A position assembled from independent rulings



can be revised piecemeal; a position whose parts are entailed by a single definition cannot be revised at any point without being revised throughout. The Ḥanafī-Māturīdī doctrine of faith has the second structure, which is why eight centuries of commentary added precision to it without altering it (Wensinck, 1932:124).

The practical consequence is the more significant one. By placing deeds outside the definition of faith, the tradition removed the principal ground on which Muslims had been declared unbelievers by other Muslims. The ruling of al-Ṭaḥāwī - no excommunication of the people of the qibla for a sin, unless the sin is held to be lawful - is the direct expression of that consequence, and it functioned for centuries as a restraint on the practice of takfīr in the regions where the school prevailed (al-Ṭaḥāwī, 1995:55; Madelung, 1993:607).

It should be added that this restraint was never understood as indifference to doctrine. The qualifying clause preserves the distinction between committing a sin and denying that it is a sin, and the second remains a matter of faith (al-Taftāzānī, 1982:191). What the tradition excluded was not theological judgement but the inference from conduct to unbelief, which is a different thing and a far more dangerous one.

Finally, the doctrine should be seen in relation to the school's epistemology, since the two were formed together. Faith is defined as an act of the heart because the heart is where assent occurs; assent is valued more highly when reached by reflection because reflection is the means by which claims are assessed; and the faith of the imitator is held valid but deficient because imitation is not a source of knowledge (al-Māturīdī, 2003:388; Rudolph, 2015:210). The doctrine of faith is, in this sense, the theory of knowledge applied to the believing subject.

A last observation concerns the audience of these texts. The creeds were not written for theologians but for students and, through them, for congregations; they were memorised, recited and commented upon in mosques as well as in madrasas (al-Bazdawī, 1963:146). This has a bearing on how the four tenets should be read. They are not merely the conclusions of a scholarly debate but formulations designed to be transmitted intact to people who would never read the arguments behind them. The compression that the later texts achieve is therefore not a loss of rigour but a response to that purpose, and the commentary tradition exists precisely to restore, for those who need it, the reasoning that compression removed (al-Taftāzānī, 1982:184).



CONCLUSION

In the Ḥanafī-Māturīdī tradition the reality of faith is assent of the heart, while verbal confession is the condition under which faith is recognised in the application of worldly rulings. The early formulation that pairs confession with assent was clarified in exactly this sense by the later texts, and the clarification resolved a question the earlier formulation had not addressed rather than correcting an error in it (Abū Ḥanīfa, 2001a:60; al-Taftāzānī, 1982:185).

Deeds are not a part of faith. The tenet was formulated against the Khārijite and Mu‘tazilī positions and secures the standing of the sinning believer within the community, without in any way reducing the gravity of sin (al-Nasafī, n.d.:II/803; Madelung, 1993:606). Faith in its essence neither increases nor decreases, while certainty, light and the state of the believer do vary. The distinction reconciles the definition with the scriptural reports of increase and is already present in the earliest texts of the school (Abū Ḥanīfa, 2001a:61).

The exception clause is not permitted of one’s present faith, since the believer knows his own assent; the disagreement with other schools concerns what the exception is taken to qualify rather than the limits of human knowledge (al-Taftāzānī, 1982:192). Across the chain of texts the content of the tenets remains constant while their formulation is progressively refined, moving from brief ruling to argued position, from argued position to systematic exposition, and from systematic exposition to technically exact definition (Wensinck, 1932:124).

A promising direction for further research would be the study of the manuscript copies of these creeds used in the madrasas of Transoxiana, together with the marginal glosses they carry. The glosses record how the doctrine was taught locally and would show which of the four tenets required the most explanation in practice - a question the printed texts cannot answer. Two further lines of inquiry suggest themselves. The first is comparative: a systematic collation of the treatment of faith in *Tabṣirat al-adilla* with the parallel chapters of Ash‘arī works of the same period would establish how far each school was responding to the other and how far each was elaborating its own tradition independently (al-Nasafī, n.d.:II/825). The second is historical: the relation between the doctrine of faith and the actual practice of excommunication in the regions where the Ḥanafī school prevailed has not been studied in detail, and the legal records of those regions would make such a study possible (Madelung, 1993:607).



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