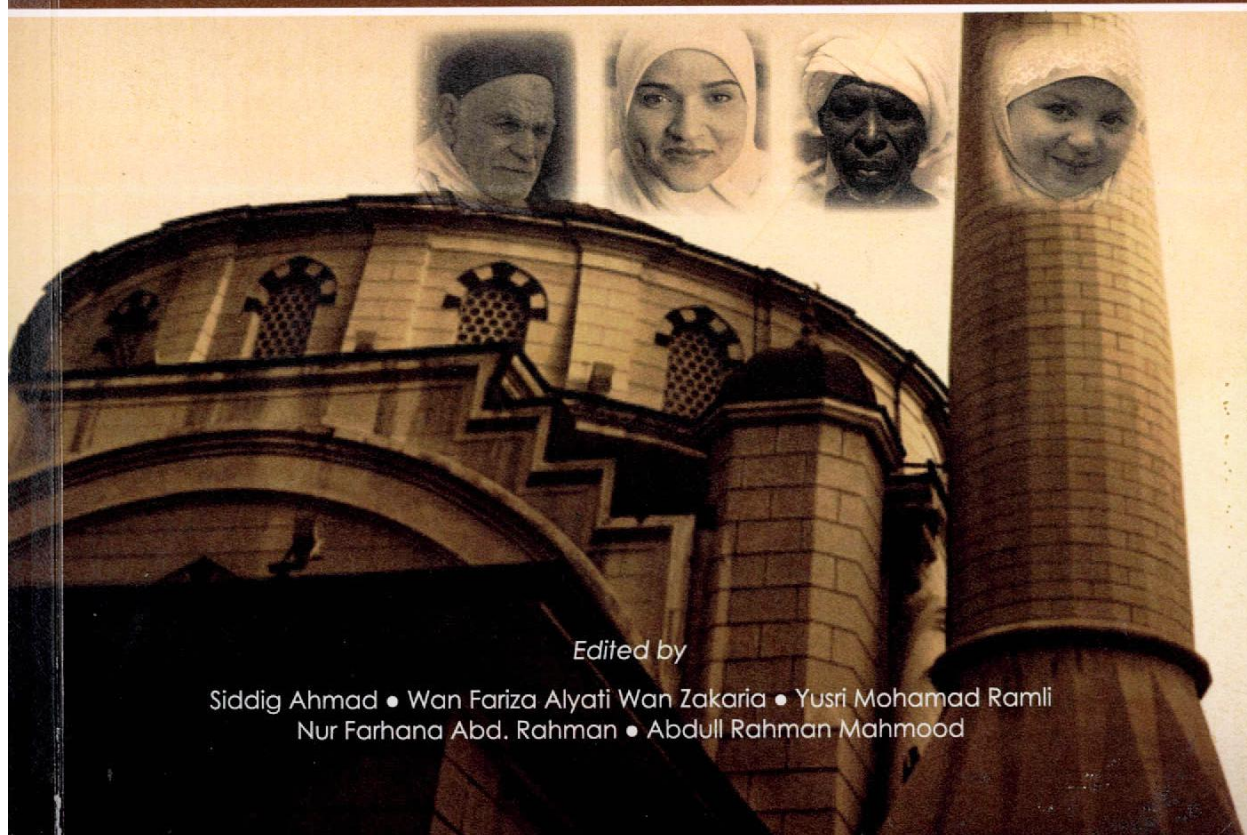


Islam & Contemporary Muslims

Challenges and Issues



Edited by

Siddig Ahmad • Wan Fariza Alyati Wan Zakaria • Yusri Mohamad Ramli
Nur Farhana Abd. Rahman • Abdull Rahman Mahmood

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DEPARTMENT OF THEOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY
FACULTY OF ISLAMIC STUDIES
UNIVERSITI KEBANGSAAN MALAYSIA

ISLAM & CONTEMPORARY MUSLIMS: CHALLENGES AND ISSUES

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The Nature of Man and God's Divine Mercy: Quranic Perspective

MAJDAN ALIAS

The Qur'ān, the most authentic source for the teachings of Islam, in many of its verses speaks of the attributes of God. Some of these attributes describe how God relates Himself to His creation, particularly man. The long discussions between the Ash'arites and the Mu'tazilites on the issues of God's divine predestination, human's freedom, and man's final destiny actually centers on their different ways of looking at how God responds to the deeds and actions of His creations. Looking at the issues of disputes among major Muslim sects in early Islam, one may deduce that the central theme of the disputes was the issue of "justice". As early as the formation of the earliest Kharijism, the *ḥārūrīyah*, Muslims were generally concerned with the legitimacy of the last six years of Uthmān's ruling, the legal status of his murder, the legitimacy of the battle of Camel, and the legal status of Ali's position of letting the caliphate to be taken over by Mu'āwiyah and his family.

The disputes ended with the Kharijism taking a severe position that Ali has committed a grave sin, and by so doing he has become apostate, and will dwell in the hellfire forever. This position was then generalized to include the status of the doer of "grave sins". The Mu'tazilites tried to offer a moderate position by saying that grave sinners be placed in a middle place between the believers and the unbelievers, a position known as *al-manzilah bayn al-manzilatayn*. Looking at positions of both early sects, one can easily notice that their positions were basically grounded on the issue of "justice". For the Mu'tazilites, God created heaven and hell so that men would receive their rewards or punishments accordingly in the Day of Judgment. This, in their view, is due to the absolute justice of that Absolute Being.

On the ground of divine justice, the Mu'tazilites maintained that human being has the total freedom over his own actions. It is only when man is given the absolute freedom, then only God can be described as the absolute justice. It is only by this way the rationale in the creation of heaven and hell can be proven.

For the Asharites, this scheme of looking at things would mean that God does not have absolute power over His creation. The Ash'arites, like the Jabarites, give emphasis to the supremacy and superiority of God, and His absolute power over His creation. For the Ash'arites, man enters the paradise, not merely due to his own good deeds. Meaning to say, it is not only God's divine justice that enables one to step in the heaven. It is through the divine grace (*al-faḍl*), and not because of one's own right (*al-istiḥqāq*). The Ash'arites position of emphasizing the power and supremacy of God in His's relation with human being, to the Mu'tazilites, is actually abandoning the place of God's justice and man's freedom in his own action, and the wisdom of reward and punishment in Islam. It is indeed the mislaid position of the Jabarites, which denies many of the verses in the Qur'ān and the *ḥadīth*. It is also said that the Ash'arites position is actually taken from the Murji'ates abandoning of the importance of good deeds as a requirement of entering the paradise; a position leading towards moral laxity.

The Ash'arites scheme of thought in this respect wanted to consider all the absolute attributes of the Divine Being. On one hand, it looks at God as the most powerful Being who has the total right over His creation. On another hand, it does not deny altogether God's divine justice; an essential ground in governing the entire