Astārābādī was best known for his writings on legal theory and, in particular, the denunciation of *ijtihād* and the *mujtahids* in *al-Fawā’id al-Madaniyya*. In terms of volume, however, most of his surviving work is in the area of theology and philosophy. Most of this output remains in manuscript form and has not, to my knowledge, been extensively used in previous descriptions of Astārābādī’s thought. All his surviving “pre-Akhbārī” works concern theological and philosophical matters,† as does a significant proportion of work dating from after his conversion to Akhbarism. Indeed, one section of *al-Fawā’id al-Madaniyya* (a work usually cited for its juristic content) concerns matters of strictly theological and philosophical import.

The works consulted for the following summary of Astārābādī’s theological and philosophical views comprise *risālas*, *ḥadīth* commentaries and “*fawā’id*” works. “*Fawā’id*” works are divided into separate sections, each named *fā’ida* (“useful comment”). Each *fā’ida* is best considered as a discrete study, and Astārābādī only occasionally shows concern for the relationship between the ideas of different *fā’idas* in a single *fawā’id* work. Neither comprehensive coverage of theological and philosophical issues, nor the construction of a coherent system of ideas appear to be his priority. *Al-Mabāḥith al-Thalātha, al-Fawā’id al-I/tiqādīyya, al-Fawā’id al-Makkiyya* and *Dānishnāmah-yi Shāhī* all fall into the category of “*fawā’id*” works. Astārābādī’s *risālas* (treatises) on particular theological issues include a *risāla* on the doctrine of *badā‘*, a distinctively Shi‘ī doctrine concerning God’s ability to change his mind.† Finally, Astārābādī wrote a number of

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† The only possible exception to this is his undated commentary on Hillî’s *Ma‘ārij al-Ahkâm* (see above, p. 38).

‡ By which I mean the work on theology and not Astārābādī’s commentary on al-Ţūsî’s *al-Istibsâr*. See above, p. 38.

§ The extant copy of this *risāla* is, in fact, a collection of Astarabādī’s comments on *akhbār* relating to *badā‘* alongside the commentary of other scholars. It is possible
commentaries on hadith collections. The most significant of these in theological terms is his commentary on the Usūl al-Kāfî (the first section of al-Kulaynî’s al-Kāfî in which theological reports from the Imams are recorded). In addition to these sources, both the theological section of al-Fawā‘id al-Madaniyya (entitled, “Errors of the Philosophers and Theologians of Islam”\(^4\)) and Astarābādî’s answers to the questions posed by al-Shaykh al-Zahīrî\(^5\) contain rudimentary arguments for his theological and philosophical doctrines.

My principal concern in the following analysis is to examine the extent to which Astarābādî’s conversion to Akhbarism might be said to have influenced his theological and philosophical ideas (as opposed to his jurisprudence). As already established, his conversion to Akhbarism produced a new (or perhaps, revived an old) juristic method. Whether or not there are signs that Astarābādî considered the method equally applicable to both doctrinal and legal issues is a question I answer in the course of the following analysis. In short, was the Akhbārī method, as conceived by the founder of Akhbarism, considered simply a matter for law or was it to be applied to theological and philosophical speculation also?\(^6\)

To answer this question, one needs to trace Astarābādî’s theological development, and this, unfortunately, is hampered by a number of factors. Firstly, not all of his literary output has survived, and when it has survived, it is not easily accessible. His refutation of Jalāl al-Dīn al-Dawwānī and Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī al-Dashtakī, for example, appears to be lost,\(^7\) as does his linguistic work Fawā‘id Daqīq al-‘Ulūm. Until such


\(^{5}\) These are edited in Gleave, “Questions and Answers”.

\(^{6}\) I am not so concerned here with an author’s formal description of his theology as being identical with that of the Imams. This was a common (perhaps inevitable) motif for Shi‘ī writers, and can usually be seen as decorative. There is nothing distinctly “Akhbārī” in such a claim, as all Shi‘ī authors, explicitly or implicitly, claim to propose “the Imam’s theology”. More significant for my argument here is whether the reasoning employed in demonstrating the validity of theological and philosophical doctrines is reliant on revelatory sources and their interpretation, or doctrines are primarily justified by rational argumentation (with revelatory sources used as embellishments). On this, with respect to Astarābādî, see below, pp. 104–107.

\(^{7}\) A large number of criticisms of al-Dawwānī and al-Shīrāzī can be found, however, in the extant works of Astarābādî. Al-Dawwānī, in particular, is the subject of vehement criticism found in works written both before and after Astarābādî’s conversion to Akhbarism. See below, pp. 126–127.