Ibn al-Malāḥimī

Rukn al-dīn Maḥmūd ibn Muḥammad al-Malāḥimī al-Khwārazmī

DATE OF BIRTH Before 1090
PLACE OF BIRTH Khwārazm, Khorezm
DATE OF DEATH 19 October 1141
PLACE OF DEATH Khwārazm

BIOGRAPHY

Ibn al-Malāḥimī was the most prominent Muʿtazilī theologian in Khwārazm in the early 12th century. Muʿtazilī theology still prevailed among the Ḥanafī community in Khwārazm during this period, while it was suppressed as heretical in most of the Islamic world. Little is known about his life. He initially belonged to the Muʿtazilī school of the famous Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār (d. 1025) (q.v.), known as the Bahshamiyya. Later, he adopted the theological thought of Abu l-Ḥusayn Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al-Bāṣrī (d. 1044) (q.v.), which was introduced in Khwārazm at this time by the grammarian and physician Abū Muḍar al-ʾIṣfahānī (d. 1114).

Abu l-Ḥusayn al-Bāṣrī had been a physician well versed in the philosophical sciences, who criticized some of the doctrine of ʿAbd al-Jabbār, his teacher in Muʿtazilī theology. Through the teaching efforts of Ibn al-Malāḥimī, the school of Abū l-Ḥusayn became a serious rival of the Bahshamiyya school. Ibn al-Malāḥimī gave lessons in theology to the renowned Qurʾan commentator al-Zamakhsharī (d. 1144), who in turn instructed him in Qurʾan exegesis. This was probably in Jurjāniyya (Gurganj), then the capital of Khwārazm. A major concern in his teaching was his opposition to the rapid spread of philosophical metaphysics among Muslim religious scholars in his time. He strove in particular to refute the theological thought of Ibn Sīnā and his school, which he saw as undermining the true prophetic teaching of Islam. He viewed Christianity as a prime example of a prophetic religion that was distorted by the adoption of Greek philosophical thought in order to buttress superstitious beliefs, such as the Trinity and the divinity of Christ.
Ibn al-Malāhīmī’s works include the following. *Al-mu’tamad fi ʿusūl al-dīn* (‘The reliable book on the principles of religion’) is a voluminous sum of Mu’tazili theology based on the teaching of Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī. Only the first part containing most of the section on divine Unity (*tawḥīd*) and the beginning of the section on Justice (*ʿadl*) are known to be extant in manuscript. A greatly abridged version of this work, *Al-fāʾiq fī l-ʿusūl* (‘The excellent book on the principles of religion’), was finished by the author in December 1137. This is extant, and contains a brief critical discussion of Christianity. A third work, *Tuhfat al-mutakallimīn fī l-radd ʿalā l-falāsifa* (‘The gift to the theologians concerning the refutation of the philosophers’), is a comprehensive refutation of the theological doctrine of Muslim philosophers, in particular of Ibn Sīnā and his school. The book was partly written at the same time as *Al-fāʾiq* and was completed between 1137 and 1141. In the introduction, Ibn al-Malāhīmī expresses his fear that the Muslim community, by accepting the theories of the philosophers, might follow the path of the Christians, whose leaders had adopted Greek philosophy to justify false beliefs, such as the Trinity, the Incarnation and the divinity of Christ.

*Al-tajrīd* (‘The abstract’) is an abridgment of Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī’s *Kitāb al-mu’tamad fi ʿusūl al-fiqh* on legal methodology. In the single extant manuscript of this book, MS Oxford, Bodleian Arab. e 103, the beginning is missing and there is a gap. A reading of the text with the author was completed in June 1140.

**MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION**

*Primary*


*Secondary*

