IQRO JURNALI , IQRO JOURNAL, ИКРО ЖУРНАЛИ
ISSN:2181-4341| wordlyknowledge.uz/index.php/iqro
Volume 22 Issue 01 IYUN 2026

ISSUES OF CREED ACCORDING TO BURHAN AL-DIN AL-MARGHINANI

Ahmad Sa'd al-Damanhuri
Translated into English with Academic Precision

Introduction

Burhan al-Din Abu al-Hasan Ali ibn Abi Bakr al-Marghinani (d. 593 AH / 1197 AD) — Ali ibn Abi Bakr ibn Abd al-Jalil al-Farghani al-Marghinani, Abu al-Hasan Burhan al-Din: He was one of the greatest jurists of the Hanafi school. His lineage is traced back to Margilan (from the regions of Fergana). He was a memorizer of Hadith (hafiz), an exegete (mufassir), a critical investigator (muhaqqiq), a man of letters (adeeb), and an independent jurist capable of legal reasoning (mujtahid). As one of the preeminent Hanafi jurists of the sixth century of the Hijri calendar, he was born in the city of Margilan near Fergana (located in modern-day Uzbekistan). He achieved widespread renown for his monumental work, Al-Hidayah, which became an essential reference text in Hanafi jurisprudence and has been continuously taught in Islamic seminaries (madrasas) for long centuries. He authored several other significant compositions, including "Bidayat al-Mubtadi" (The Beginning for the Beginner) and its comprehensive commentary "Al-Hidayah fi Sharh al-Bidayah" in jurisprudence. His bibliography also features "Muntaqa al-Furu'" (The Selection of Derivative Rulings), "Al-Fara'id" (The Laws of Inheritance), "Al-Tajnis wa al-Mazid" in legal verdicts (fatawa), "Manasik al-Hajj" (The Rituals of Pilgrimage), and "Mukhtarat al-Nawazil" (The Selected Legal Dilemmas), among others.

First: The Scholarly Environment and its Impact on His Formation

Al-Marghinani grew up in Transoxiana (Ma Wara' an-Nahr), a region that was profoundly rich in knowledge during his lifetime. It served as a beacon for scholars and a sanctuary for students of knowledge who flocked to it from every corner of the Islamic world. This vibrant influx greatly enriched intellectual life, particularly within the scholarly institutions of Samarkand and Bukhara.

The intellectual climate of these territories was characterized by the clear dominance of the Sunni Maturidi school in matters of creed (aqidah), alongside the Hanafi and Shafi'i schools in jurisprudence (fiqh). Within the Hanafi tradition, jurisprudence was deeply intertwined with creed, as the founder of the school, Imam Abu Hanifa, engaged extensively in both domains, leaving behind a rich, continuous, and vast legacy carried forward by generations of students who disseminated his teachings globally.

He acquired knowledge from the preeminent masters of his age. According to biographical dictionaries (كتب التراجم), the most influential among them were:

1. Imam Shams al-A'immah Muhammad ibn Abd al-Sattar al-Kardari (d. circa 562 AH): He was one of the greatest Hanafi jurists in Transoxiana and is considered Al-Marghinani's most critical teacher, wielding the most significant influence on his intellectual formation. He was an absolute authority on critical verification (tahqiq) within the school. Under his guidance, Al-Marghinani mastered jurisprudence and its foundational principles (Usul). Biographical sources explicitly state that Al-Marghinani studied jurisprudence under him and remained his close companion for an extended duration.

2. Imam Burhan al-A'immah Ali ibn Muhammad al-Nasafi (d. approximately 560 AH): A distinguished jurist from Samarkand. It is highly probable that Al-Marghinani studied

under him, even if their direct academic relationship is not as widely documented as his companionship with Al-Kardari. Nonetheless, he belonged to the exact same intellectual ecosystem that shaped Al-Marghinani.

3. Imam Najm al-Din Umar ibn Muhammad al-Nasafi (d. 537 AH): According to one historical opinion, he is the celebrated author of Al-Aqa'id al-Nasafiyyah (The Nasafi Creed). While some researchers suggest the possibility of Al-Marghinani hearing directly from him or from scholars of his generation, it remains indisputably established that Al-Marghinani was profoundly influenced by the Nasafi school both doctrinally and jurisprudentially.

Furthermore, the most prominent scholars of that era—whom he undoubtedly met, studied under, or learned from via their direct disciples—were the jurists of the Samarkand and Fergana traditions. Among these luminaries were: Al-Sarakhsi (d. 483 AH), Al-Bazdawi (d. 482 AH), and Abu al-Mu'in al-Nasafi (d. 508 AH).

The Approximate Scholarly Chain of Transmission (Isnad):

Abu Hanifa ⬇ Abu Yusuf & Muhammad ⬇ Al-Tahawi ⬇ Al-Sarakhsi & Al-Bazdawi ⬇ Abu al-Mu'in al-Nasafi ⬇ Al-Kardari ⬇ Al-Marghinani

Within this specific scholarly environment, we can precisely trace the contours of Burhan al-Din's intellectual upbringing. We can confidently assert that he was a true reflection of this environment and its finest representative in both jurisprudence and creed. Although he does not possess widely known standalone treatises dedicated solely to creed, any artificial separation between creed (aqidah), principles of jurisprudence (usul al-fiqh), and speculative theology (kalam) is fundamentally impossible. Writing in jurisprudence and its principles invariably occurs in strict alignment with the author's underlying creed, as Ala al-Din al-Samarqandi eloquently stated at the beginning of his work, Mizan al-Uqul (The Scale of Intellects). In the following section, we will highlight the defining features of his doctrinal stance that corroborate this reality.

Second: His Doctrinal Stance (Creed)

To summarize his doctrinal orientation in a single word: Al-Marghinani was strictly Maturidi in his creed. We can firmly establish this by examining various doctrinal indications embedded within his masterful legal compendium, Al-Hidayah. The following details illustrate this:

Regarding the issue of faith (Iman), Al-Marghinani states in Al-Hidayah:

[Excerpt from Al-Hidayah] He [the author of the base text] said: 'If a person is coerced into committing disbelief in Allah Almighty—Allah forbid—or into insulting the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, by means of binding, imprisonment, or beating, that does not constitute legal coercion until he is forced by a measure that causes him to fear for his life or for one of his limbs.' This is because coercion by these specific means is not deemed valid coercion even for the minor offense of drinking wine, as previously established; therefore, regarding disbelief and its severe, absolute prohibition, it is even more logical and prioritized that such minor pressures do not constitute legal coercion.

He said: 'If he fears for his life or limb under such duress, it is permissible for him to outwardly display what they commanded him to say while practicing mental reservation or

dissimulation (tawriyah). If he displays that outwardly while his heart remains completely tranquil and secure in faith, there is no sin upon him.' This is based on the tradition of Ammar ibn Yasir, may Allah be pleased with him, when he was put to this severe trial, and the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, questioned him:

»كَيْفَ وَجَدْتَ قَلْبَكَ؟« قَالَ: »مُطْمَئِنًّا بِالْإِيمَانِ«، فَقَالَ عَلَيْهِ الصَّلَاةُ وَالسَّلَامُ: »فَإِنْ عَادُوا فَعُدْ«

"How did you find your heart?" He replied, "Tranquil with faith." Whereupon the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said, "If they return [to torture you], then return [to what you said]."

And concerning this event, the words of Allah Almighty were revealed:

{إِلَّا مَنْ أُكْرِهَ وَقَلْبُهُ مُطْمَئِنٌّ بِالْإِيمَانِ} [النحل:106]

"...except for one who is forced while his heart is secure in faith." [Surah An-Nahl, 16:106]

This is also because through this outward, forced verbal display, true faith is not actually invalidated, given that the inner assent of the heart (tasdiq) remains fully intact. Conversely, by refusing to comply outwardly, his life would be physically destroyed; hence, it is legally permissible for him to incline toward saving himself.

He said: 'Yet, if he chooses to persevere with patience until he is killed without outwardly uttering disbelief, he shall be immensely rewarded.' This is because Khubayb, may Allah be pleased with him, chose to endure with patience until he was crucified, and the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, honored him by calling him:

»سَيِّدُ الشُّهَدَاءِ«

"The Leader of the Martyrs"

And the Prophet said regarding someone who acts like him:

»هُوَ رَفِيقِي فِي الْجَنَّةِ«

"He is my companion in Paradise"

Furthermore, the intrinsic prohibition [of uttering disbelief] remains active, and choosing to refuse compliance for the sake of glorifying and honoring the religion is an act of high resolve and virtue (azimah), unlike the previous scenario which was a concession based on the scriptural exception.

From this profound textual excerpt, several critical theological benefits can be derived:

- First: His definition of faith (Iman) as being anchored in the heart's inner assent (tasdiq).

- Second: The non-excommunication (absence of Takfir) of an individual who utters words of disbelief under absolute legal coercion.

- Third: The absence of declaring a perpetrator of a major sin (kabirah) to be a disbeliever.

We can further confirm this doctrinal position by analyzing the "Chapter on Apostasy" (Bab al-Riddah) in Al-Hidayah, where it becomes glaringly evident that Al-Marghinani identifies the structural core of faith as the internal conviction of the heart. Similarly, in the chapters dealing with scriptural prescribed punishments (Hudud), we observe that he never treats the perpetrator of a major sin as an apostate or a disbeliever. These positions represent explicit, classical Sunni (Maturidi) doctrinal axioms.