REASON AND TRADITION IN
ISLAMIC ETHICS
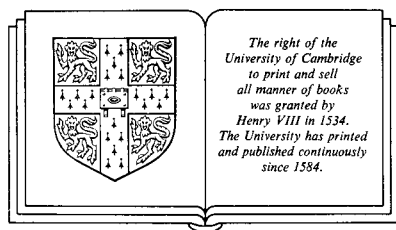
REASON AND TRADITION IN ISLAMIC ETHICS

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PREFACE

This book is based on articles, published in orientalist journals during the last twenty-five years and recently revised to make a consistent book and bring it up to date in a few places.

The first acknowledgement I should like to make is to my wife for her patience and her encouragement of my writing over such a long period.

Next, I wish to thank the institutions which have financed the free time which made these studies possible: namely, the University of Michigan and the State University of New York for sabbatical leaves and various research grants, as well as the Ford Foundation and the Simon E. Guggenheim Foundation which allowed me to extend sabbaticals on two occasions.

Thirdly, I acknowledge permissions granted to republish in book form the articles held in copyright by the following publishers: Scribner and Sons for articles in the *Dictionary of the Middle Ages* (2); the SUNY Press (Albany) (2); *The Muslim World* (3); Éditions de l'Institut Supérieur de Philosophie (Louvain); *International Journal of Middle East Studies*; Bruno Cassirer (Oxford); Caravan Press (Delmar, New York); *Journal of the American Oriental Society*; *Studia Islamica* (2); and *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* (London). Full references to the original articles are given after this Preface, showing slight variations in the titles of three articles.

Fourthly, I am grateful to several secretaries at the University of Michigan and the State University of New York at Buffalo for their work in typing these articles. Special thanks go to Mrs Judith Wagner of the Department of Philosophy, SUNY at Buffalo, who has typed most of them, as well as the difficult revised notes for the book, with superior professional skill.

Lastly, it is a pleasure to recognize the constructive thought of Jonathan Sinclair-Wilson, Philosophy Editor for Cambridge University Press, in suggesting ways to make the articles into a coherent book. Credit is due also to the meticulous work of the sub-editors and printers in producing an accurate text.

GEORGE F. HOURANI

Amherst, NY
July 1984

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FOREWORD

These sixteen articles on various aspects of classical Islamic thought have an underlying unity of theme, aptly summed up in the book's title. They form a good part of their author's important contribution to the study of Islamic thought. Most of these articles have been published during the past three decades in different learned journals, in encyclopedias and books containing articles by other scholars. Their inclusion (with some revision) in one volume not only makes them more accessible, but also endows the collection with a historical perspective. The author has arranged the articles as closely as possible in the chronological order of their subjects.

The volume was already in the press when its author, George Fadlou Hourani, died of a heart ailment. It is the last gift of a scholar who had dedicated his life to research and teaching. Born in England in 1913 of Lebanese ancestry, he read philosophy and classics at Oxford, graduating in 1936. His graduate studies in the languages and history of the Near East were undertaken at Princeton University where he obtained his doctorate in 1939. His teaching career began in Jerusalem, Palestine, during the British mandate, where he taught classics, logic and the history of philosophy at the Government Arab College from 1939 until the end of the mandate in 1948. He then returned to England with his Egyptian wife, Celeste, where he spent two years in writing and research. He resumed his teaching career at the University of Michigan where he taught from 1950 until 1967 and helped build its Department of Near Eastern Studies. From 1967 until his retirement in 1983, he taught at the Department of Philosophy of the State University of New York at Buffalo, heading the department from 1976 until 1979. In 1980 he was promoted to the rank of Distinguished Professor of Islamic Thought and Civilization.

A versatile scholar, his first book published in 1959 was on ancient and medieval Arab seafaring in the Indian Ocean. As a philosopher, his special interest was ethics, for which he contributed *Ethical Theory*, published in 1956. He also contributed to classical journals and published on a variety of historical topics relating to the Middle East. The focus of much of his research, however, has been classical Islamic thought. In addition to his numerous

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Foreword

articles in this field, he is noted for his critical edition of the Arabic text of Averroes' *Decisive Treatise*, published in 1959, his annotated translation of it, published in 1969, and his pioneer study of a highly sophisticated medieval Islamic theory of intuitive ethics, *Islamic Rationalism: The Ethics of ʿAbd al-Jabbār*, published in 1971.

A committed teacher, George Hourani guided his students with patience (and not without humour), insisting on the highest standards of scholarly objectivity and clarity of thought. He taught as he lived, guided by reason, compassion and the striving after what is just.

MICHAEL E. MARMURA

April 1985

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CONVENTIONS

Capitalization of titles

(1) Books: the first noun is always capitalized, as well as names and all German nouns.

(2) Periodicals and series: all nouns and adjectives are capitalized.

Numerals

Roman small capitals are used for volume numbers of a book by a single author, e.g. Shahrastānī, *Milal*, I, 93.

Roman lower case numerals indicate 'books', sections and suras of the Qurʾān. E.g. Aristotle, Nic. Eth., i, ch. 4, 1095a 12.

'Arabic' numerals in all other cases, including volumes of periodicals and series.

'p.' and 'pp.'

Inserted for modern books in a single volume.

Omitted (1) after all numbered series, whether in books, periodicals or other series, (2) in references to sources, e.g. *Ṭabaqāt*..., 44–9.

Transcription of Arabic names and words

The principle followed is transcription of sounds, not transliteration of spelling. E.g. *ash-sharīʿa*, not *al-sharīʿa* which is misleading for pronunciation by non-Arabists.

The Arabic article is omitted in isolated words and names, e.g. Ashʿarī, not al-Ashʿarī; but inserted in the list of authors in the Select Bibliography. But articles in the middle of names and sentences cannot be omitted, e.g. Mūsā al-Aswārī.

Letters, macrons and dots follow the system of the *New Encyclopaedia of Islam*, except for *jīm* which is given as j, not dj. But macrons and dots are omitted (1) on names of modern Arab authors, which are spelled as they spell them, e.g. Madkour, not Madkūr; (2) on names which have been Anglicized by a suffix, e.g. ʿAbbasids, not ʿAbbāsids.

sh, th, and dh normally each represent a single consonant, e.g. Ibn al-Athīr (as in 'thin'). Where they represent two consonants each, they are separated by a hyphen, e.g. *aṣ-ḥāb*.

TITLES AND LOCATIONS OF THE ORIGINAL ARTICLES

Introduction: not previously published.

1. 'Islamic philosophy and theology', *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, ed. P. Strayer (New York, 1982).

2. 'Ethics in medieval Islam: a conspectus', *Essays in Islamic philosophy and science*, ed. G. F. Hourani (Albany, 1975), pp. 128–35.

3. 'Ethical presuppositions of the Qurʾān', *The Muslim World*, 70 (1980), 1–28.

4. 'Ẓulm an-nafs in the Qurʾān, in the light of Aristotle', *Recherches d'Islamologie: Recueil d'articles offert à Georges C. Anawati et Louis Gardet par leurs collègues et amis* (Louvain, 1978), pp. 139–48.

5. 'Two theories of value in medieval Islam', *The Muslim World*, 50 (1960), 268–78.

6. 'Islamic and non-Islamic origins of Muʿtazilite ethical rationalism', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 7 (1976), 59–87.

7. 'The rationalist ethics of ʿAbd al-Jabbār', *Islamic philosophy and the classical tradition, for Richard Walzer on his seventieth birthday*, ed. S.M. Stern, A. Hourani and V. Brown (Oxford, 1972), pp. 105–15.

8. 'Deliberation in Aristotle and ʿAbd al-Jabbār', *Islamic philosophy and mysticism*, ed. P. Morewedge (Delmar, NY, 1981), pp. 151–62.

9. 'Al-Ashʿarī', *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, ed. P. Strayer (New York, 1982–).

10. 'Juwaynī's criticisms of Muʿtazilite ethics', *The Muslim World*, 65 (1975), 161–73.

11. 'Ghazālī on the ethics of action', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 96 (1976), 69–88.

12. 'Reason and revelation in Ibn Ḥazm's ethical thought', *Islamic philosophical theology*, ed. P. Morewedge (Albany, 1979), pp. 142–64.

13. 'The basis of authority of consensus in Sunnite Islam', *Studia Islamica*, 21 (1964), 13–60.

14. 'Ibn Sīnā's "Essay on the secret of destiny"', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 29 (1966), 27–48.

15. 'Averroes on good and evil', *Studia Islamica*, 16 (1962), 13–40.

16. 'Combinations of reason and tradition in Islamic ethics': not previously published.