

Ibn Fūrak's Methodology in Transforming the Ash'arite School into a Dialectical-Theological School

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Abstract

This study aims at studying the methodology of Ibn Fūrak in transforming the school of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī into a dialectical-theological school through his book, '*al-Mujarrad*.' To the best of the researchers' knowledge, no theoretical study has examined Ibn Fūrak's methodology particularly in what concerns the transformation of the Ash'arite School. This adopts the analytical inductive method to analyze the data. It begins by providing a brief introduction to Ibn Fūrak and Ash'arite School. This is followed by a discussion of his methodology in transforming the Ash'arite School into one that is dialectical-theological. This discussion is divided into three components modelled after Ibn Fūrak's approach, namely establishing a scholarly method to compile al-Ash'arī's opinions and theological theories, applying al-Ash'arī's methodology and school of thought in his school in Nishabur, and educating his students on Ash'arite theology.

Keywords: Ibn Fūrak, Ash'arite school, theology, methodology, transformation

Introduction

Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn Ismā'īl al-Ash'arī, the founder of the Ash'arite School of Theology, was one of the most renowned Sunni scholars of his time. He is considered the reviver of theology during the 4th century A.H. He left behind a substantial library consisting of approximately 200 books. He wrote extensively (an approximate 68 books) in defense of the Sunnah and his exposition of Islamic theology. Researchers tend to regard al-Ash'arī's works after his conversion from the *Mu'tazilite* School as more influential. When thinking of al-Ash'arī's theology, one should not consider it entirely new and

unprecedented. According to Ash'arites, al-Ash'arī's theology was largely present in the theology of earlier scholars, which was based on Qur'an and Sunnah but interpreted these two sources according to a rational explanation that claimed to be indigenous to Islam. Thus, al-Ash'arī was different from others as he held argumentations and discussions through theoretical reasoning similar to the method of theological dialectic. This allowed him to become superior to those who pretended to be philosophers or study philosophy and insisted on argumentation to defend their thoughts that were based on their views. His books were widely welcomed by scholars due to his adherence to the Qur'an and Sunnah in addition to what appeared to be an effective refutation of wayward sects and their respective thought.

After the death of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī, the Ash'arite school went through different phases. It became mixed with many opinions and methods of other theological schools due to its inherent elements of dialectic theology. Perhaps the closest school to the Ash'arites is the *Mu'tazilah* which was deeply involved in philosophy. Al-Ash'arī's thoughts were distributed in more than one book and his arguments were neither recorded nor neatly compiled to reflect his pure scholarly theological thought, although it was known by scholars. It was therefore difficult to determine al-Ash'arī's thoughts unless you were particularly well versed in all the various theological schools and could determine the differences between schools. Perhaps the best example of such skill is Abū Bakr ibn Fūrak who greatly contributed to the revival of the Ash'arite School.

The problem is that many researchers and university students think that Abū Bakr al-Bāqilānī (d. 402 AH) is the scholar who shaped the Ash'arite School into what is commonly acknowledged as Ash'arite thought. However, a close examination reveals that Ibn Fūrak is actually the true establisher of al-Ash'arī school in its dialectical-theological form. This study aims to support this claim through an analytical and inductive reading of Ibn Fūrak's book 'al-Mujarrad.'

Unfortunately, as yet no study has described, in detail, the methodology of Ibn Fūrak in transforming the Ash'arite School into a dialectical-theological school. All previous studies on Ibn Fūrak have either discussed his method partially or devoted the

study to his biography. Such books include al-Dhahabī in his book *Siyar A'lām al-Nubalā'*, Ibn 'Asākir's *Tārīkh al-Dimashq*. Muḥammad Ḥasan 'Awaḍ discussed Ibn Fūrak's legal views in 'ibn Forak's Jurisprudential work' and Muḥammad ibn Sa'īd ibn 'Awwādh al-Ghāmīdī discussed his legal views in Abū Bakr ibn Fūrak's Jurisprudential opinions.' Ibn Taymiyyah al-Hārrānī discussed his theological views in *Majmū' al-Fatāwā*.

Among the most significant studies on the theology of Ibn Fūrak was the PhD thesis of Aysha Ali Rūzī al-Khawtānī from Umm al-Qura University, Makkah. Al-Khawtānī discussed Ibn Fūrak's theological views, and then critiqued it based on Sunni theology. The difference between this study and al-Khawtānī's is that she discussed Ibn Fūrak's theological theories whereas this study focuses on his methodology. In addition, al-Khawtānī did not discuss Ibn Fūrak's transformation of the Ash'arite School into a dialectical-theological school.

Ibn Forak's Methodology in Transforming the Ash'arite School into a Dialectical-Theological School

Ibn Fūrak¹ adopted al-Ash'arī's School of theology and was well informed of al-Ash'arī's views. This is because Ibn Fūrak learnt

¹ Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan ibn Fūrak al-Shāfi'ī al-Asbahānī was a jurist, litterateur, grammarian and a man of wisdom. He first settled in Iraq and studied Ash'arite theology from Abū al-Ḥasan al-Bāhilī and 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Mujāhid al-Tā'ī who were friends of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī. He also read Musnad al-Tayālīsī from Abū Muḥammad 'Abd Allāh ibn Ja'far ibn Aḥmad ibn Fāris al-Asbahānī. He then moved to the city of Ray where the al-Karāmiyyah heard of him and so he was brought by the people of Nishabur who built for him a house and a school from the money of Khānkāh Abū al-Ḥasan al-Boushanjī. The people greatly benefited from him and many fields of sciences were revived after his arrival. He wrote approximately 100 books on Islamic jurisprudence and Qur'ānic exegesis. He was then invited to the city of Ghaznah where he held many famous debates. During his journey back to Nishabur, Ibn Fūrak was poisoned and passed away. After his death, he was taken to Nishabur and was buried in al-Hirah (a big city in Nishabur) in (406 A.H.). Ibn Fūrak had many students among whom were Abū al-Qāsim 'Abd al-Karīm al-Qushayrī, Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī al-Naysābūrī known as al-Bayhaqī, Tāhir ibn Muḥammad al-Tūsī and Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn 'Alī ibn 'Abd Allāh ibn Khalaf al-Shīrāzī. Ibn Fūrak wrote many books such as, *Mushkil al-Ḥadīth wa Gharībuhu*, *al-Nizāmī fi Uṣūl al-Dīn*, *Asmā' al-Rijāl*, *Mujarrad Maqālāt al-Shaykh Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī*, *Tabaqāt al-Mutakallimīn*, *Risālah fi 'Ilm al-Tawhīd* and many others. See Mahmūd

from two of al-Ash'arī's close friends, namely Abū al-Ḥasan al-Bāhilī and al-Shaykh 'Abd Allāh al-Ṭā'ī. In addition, he had recourse to all of al-Ash'arī's books².

Researchers claim that the contributions of Ibn Fūrak to the Ash'arite School of theology took place during the time when there was no Ash'arite dialectic-theological school. All that was known are the various theological articles and views of al-Ash'arī. This was due to the following reasons:

1. Political reasons: scholars of ḥadīth had great influence on the Government and Baghdad, which was the center of the Islamic World at that time. It was full of Aḥmad ibn Hanbal's followers whereas al-Ray and Khorasan were under the rule of the Buyid dynasty and in it settled al-Karamiah who were known for their strong animosity towards the followers of al-Ash'arī.

2. Al-Ash'arī's opinions were stated in his books and articles but some of his debates were not recorded.

3. The variety of methodologies and ijtihād of al-Ash'arī's students and their students without differentiating al-Ash'arī's opinions from that of his followers.

4. Methodological problems in applying al-Ash'arī's theological views which resulted in the absence of a comprehensive book collecting all of his opinions and views found in his books or deduced from his basic principles.

Muhammad al-Tanāhī and Abdul-Fattāh Muḥammad, *Al-Tabaqāt al-Shafi'iyyah al-Kubrā* (Cairo: Dār Ihyā' al-Kutub al-Arabiyyah, 1990), 127-135; 'Abd Allāh al-Jubūrī, *Tabaqāt al-Shāfi'iyyah* (Riyadh: Dār al-Ulūm, 1981), 266-267; Ibn Khalkān, *Wafayāt al-A'yān wa Anbā' Abnā' al-Zamān*, ed. Yusuf Alī Tawīl and Maryam Qāsim Tawīl (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, 1998), 100.

² Almost all of the al-Ash'arī's books are mentioned in "al-Mujarad" such as: al-Idrak, al-Ro'ya al-Kabirah, Zeyadat al-nawader, al-sifat al-Kabir, al-Uṣūl al-Kabir, al-'Idhah, al-Tafsir, al-Rad 'alā al-Balkhi, al-'Amad, Fi Adāb al-Jadal, Fi Uṣūl al-Fiqh, Fi Af' al al-Nabiy, Fī al-Imāmah, Fi bāb al-Wa'id, al-Lama', al-Mokhtazan, al-Mokhtasar fī al-Tawhid wa al-Qadar, al-Masa'il al-Manthurah, Masalatu fi al-Jihad, Mas' alatu Ta'rif 'Ajz al-Mutazelah a'n Jawab al-Jasimah, Mas'alah al-'Ajz, al-Ma'rifah, al-Maqalat, al-Mujiz, Naqdh al-Isteta'ah a'la al-Jabā'i, al-Naqdh a'la Ibn al-Rawandi fī al-Ṣifāt, al-Naqdh alā Uṣūl al-Jabā'ī, al-Naqdh a'la 'Awā'il al-'Adillah li al-Balkhi, al-Naqdh alā al-Jabā'ī wa al-Balkhi, al-Naqdh a'la al-Khalidi, Naqdh al-Latīf a'la al-Iskafī, al-Nawadir.

5. The formation of two groups: one which considers the text only and based their arguments thereof. The other consists of debaters who argued against the opponents of the Ash'arite School.

6. The spread of al-Ash'arī's views by some scholars who were not sufficiently acquainted with it.

Ibn Fūrak was fully acquainted with al-Ash'arī's views due to his wide-range of knowledge of al-Ash'arī's theological opinions and issues, his precision in analyzing cases and awareness of the customs of the era. Due to this, Ibn Forak took the chance to examine the al-Ash'arī's school and reform it following a distinctive methodology based on Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī's principles. In order to accomplish his target, Ibn Fūrak focused on three main aspects: establishing a scholarly methodology to collect al-Ash'arī's theological opinions and theories, applying al-Ash'arī's methodology and school of thought to his school in Nishabur, and spreading the Ash'arite School through his students whom he taught according Ash'arite theology.

Establishing a Methodology and Applying It

Ibn Fūrak endeavored to develop a methodology that is precise and well established. Therefore, he busied himself with reviewing al-Ash'arī's books and conducting debates in order to distinguish al-Ash'arī's views from others. By applying this method, the result was as follows.

Distinguishing al-Ash'arī's Views from Others by Collecting His Own Views Directly from His Books

Ibn Fūrak collected al-Ash'arī's clearly stated opinions and views and those which were not stated but derived from his principles that were mentioned in his book '*Mujarrad Maqālāt al-Shaykh Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī.*' He considered this as the basic methodology for his work in the Ash'arite School. By examining Ibn Fūrak's book, the methodology he used can be briefly determined as follows:

- Collecting al-Ash'arī's stated and non-stated views. The stated views were collected from his books whereas the non-stated views were mentioned according to their suitability to his principles. Ibn Fūrak says in the introduction of his book, "I will

collect for you his opinions from his books; those that are stated and those that are not I provided answers for it according to al-Ash‘arī’s principles”.³

○ Pointing out controversial views of al-Ash‘arī on certain topics and his final word on them. As for those topics for which al-Ash‘arī was yet to finally decide, Ibn Fūrak points to the opinion closest to al-Ash‘arī’s theological method and most appropriate to his principles. Ibn Fūrak avoided any opinions of those who disagreed with al-Ash‘arī’s views as he states in the introduction that: “I did not come across any of the opinions of those who disagree with al-Ash‘arī’s school as our main aim was to pay attention only to al-Ash‘arī’s principles so you may learn ways of deductive analogy and debating and how to derive evidence”.⁴ However, according to Ibn Fūrak in the introduction of his ‘*Mujarrad*,’ he was planning to write a book in which he will state al-Ash‘arī’s views along with those who disagreed with him, “as for a book which collects al-Ash‘arī’s views in addition to those of his opponents, I shall devote a book for the views of Muslim opponents as their opinions will be reviewed as well as al-Ash‘arī’s on every issue”.⁵ Unfortunately, researchers have not found any sign of that book.

○ Neglecting controversial topics between al-Ash‘arī and Ḥadīth scholars except for a few. Ibn Fūrak states in his book’s introduction, “the disagreement among their scholars on issues in which they differ with al-Ash‘arī was stated in a separate book, but we have referred to some of them in this book”.⁶

○ Stating al-Ash‘arī’s opinions in which he agrees with Ḥadīth debaters who made an effort in debating and arguing the opponents of al-Ash‘arī. Ibn Fūrak mentioned what was related to their religious principles and all that is derived from their theology. He categorized al-Ash‘arī’s views into detailed chapters starting with his views on the meaning of science as a separate concept. The chapters dealt with different topics such as theology,

³ Ibn Furak, M. H, *Maqālāt al-Sheikh abu al-Hasan al-Ash‘arī (al-Mujarrad)*, ed. Ahmad Abdul-Rahīm al-Sāyih (Cairo: Maktabat al-Thaqāfah al-Dīniyyah, 2005), 3.

⁴ Ibn Furak, M. H, *Maqālāt al-Sheikh abu al-Hasan al-Ash‘arī*, 3.

⁵ Ibn Furak, M. H, *Maqālāt al-Sheikh abu al-Hasan al-Ash‘arī*, 3.

⁶ Ibn Furak, M. H, *Maqālāt al-Sheikh abu al-Hasan al-Ash‘arī*, 4.

science of dialectic theology, Sunnah, Islamic jurisprudence, argumentation, etc.

○ Basing contents of the book on al-Ash‘arī’s views as found in his books. For example, Ibn Fūrak says, “The meaning of ‘the name’ [the names of Allah] according to al-Ash‘arī’s view which he often stated in his books such as ‘*al-Naqd ‘alā al-Jibā’ī wa al-Balkhī*’ is that ‘the name’ is not the named which contradicts the view of late scholars on attributes”.⁷

○ Another example says, “as for his opinion on the weight of things, he mentioned in his book ‘*al-Nawādir fī Ijzā’ al-Kalām fī Bāb al-Juz*’ that the weight of a thing is its weight and not something else”.⁸ There are many other examples that illustrate his deep knowledge and his acquaintance with al-Ash‘arī’s books.

○ Pointing out issues that were taken from al-Ash‘arī by mistake or that some scholars misunderstood his opinion on them or were inaccurately derived. He then responds to such spurious claims with sufficient evidence along with their corrections according to al-Ash‘arī’s school. For instance, he wrote on Muḥammad ibn Mutarrif al-Astrābāhī al-Dhabī’s mistake on the issue of *Uṣūl al-Ma‘ārif*, how it is tackled, and its divisions.⁹

Writing Books on Qur’anic Exegesis, Ḥadīth and Islamic Theology According to the Ash‘arite School

Ibn Fūrak wrote books on Ḥadīth, Qur’anic Exegesis, and Islamic theology according to the methodology he used in order to distinguish the Ash‘arite School from other schools. Therefore, he wrote a book on Ḥadīth named, *Mushkal al-Ḥadīth wa Bayānuhu* in which he focused on explaining Ḥadīths that show Allah’s aural attributes such as, the hand, face and leg according to al-Ash‘arī’s school. In this book, he also replies on ‘*al-Tawhīd*,’ a book on aural attributes written by Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Ishāq ibn Khuzaymah al-Naisābūrī (d. 311 AH) who is a renown Ḥadīth scholar. He also discusses the book of *al-Asmā’ wa al-Sifāt* by Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Ishāq al-Sibghī al-Naisābūrī (d. 354 AH) pointing out in his introduction that this book is suitable to

⁷ Ibn Furak, M. H, *Maqālāt al-Sheikh abu al-Hasan al-Ash‘arī*, 38.

⁸ Ibn Furak, M. H, *Maqālāt al-Sheikh abu al-Hasan al-Ash‘arī*, 214.

⁹ Ibn Furak, M. H, *Maqālāt al-Sheikh abu al-Hasan al-Ash‘arī*, 16.

answer the people of Negative innovation in Islam (bid'ah) such as Jahmīs, al-Mu'tazilah, Kharijites, Shī'ah and al-Jismiyyah¹⁰.

Abū Bakr ibn al-'Arabī is a jurist who mentioned Qur'anic exegesis belonging to Ibn Fūrak and made many quotes from it in his exegesis. Ismā'īl Bāshā al-Baghdādī in '*Hadiyyah al-'Ārifīn*' (Basha 1955, 60)¹¹ and Khair al-Dīn al-Zereklī in *al-A'lām*' (al-Zereklī 1999, 83) claim as well that Ibn Fūrak has a book on the interpretation of the Qur'an and another one on monotheism called *Risālah fi Ilm al-Tawhīd*¹² which he no doubt wrote according to al-Ash'arī's methodology.

Discussing al-Ash'arī's Views with Others Theoretically and Practically

In the introduction of his book *al-Mujarrad*, Ibn Fūrak refers to one of his books which he devoted for controversial issues between opponent scholars and al-Ash'arī, saying: "The disagreement among their scholars on issues in which they differ with al-Ash'arī was stated in a separate book". Further, Abū al-Mu'īn al-Nasafī states in his book *Tabsirat al-Adillah fi Uṣūl al-Dīn 'alā Ṭarīqah al-Imām Abī Mansūr al-Māturīdī* that Ibn Fūrak wrote a book named *Ikhtilāf al-Shaykhayn* in which he referred to the disagreement between Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī and Abū al-'Abbās al-Qalānsī¹³. In his book *Tafsīr Surah al-Nūr*, Ibn Taymiyyah claims that Ibn Fūrak had a book in which he compared the views of al-Ash'arī with those of Abū Muḥammad 'Abd Allāh ibn Kallāb¹⁴. Ibn Fūrak defended his Ash'arite views and methodology in all fields. For example, he held a debate in the al-Rajā' School in the city of Ray against scholars of the city who were extremist Shī'ah, which threatened his safety. He also held many debates against al-Karāmiyyah and was tough on them. This resulted in their animosity towards him which urged them to kill

¹⁰ Ibn Furak, M. H. *Mushkal al-Hadith wa Bayanuh*, ed. Mūsā Muḥammad 'Alī (Beirut: Alam al-Kutub, 1985), 38-39.

¹¹ Ismā'īl Bāshā, *Hadiyyat al-'Ārifīn: Asmā' al-Mu'allifīn wa Āthār al-Musannifīn* (Beirut: Dār Ihyā' al-Turāh al-'Arabī, 1955), 60.

¹² Kh. Al-Zereklī, *Al-A'lām* (Beirut: Dār al-Ilm lil-Malāyīn, 1999), 83.

¹³ M M Al-Nasafī, *Tabsirat al-Adillah fi Uṣūl al-Dīn*, ed. Klūd Salamah (Damascus: al-Jifān wa al-Jābī li al-Tibā'ah wa al-Nashr, 1990), 334.

¹⁴ A. A Ibn Taimiyyah, *Interpretation of Surah al-Nūr* (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1993), 125.

him with poison on his way back to Ghaznah after one of his debates.

Applying His Methodology in Nishabur

Methodology is the main component for developing a science as it directs it to the correct path and prevents it from arbitrariness and disorder. An effective methodology should be applied in a specified place and time otherwise it will be neglected and forgotten. There is no doubt that in order for any methodology to function, it needs the right tools and the right scenario in which it can be properly applied and tested. That is because an aim usually fails to be reached when the methodology is not applied properly or when the tools of that methodology are not effective.

Ibn Fūrak was aware of the importance of methodology. That is why he intended at first to set his methodology derived from the views and principles of al-Ash‘arī. Then, he applied that methodology in Khorasan in which was located Nishabur, which was a renowned city of knowledge and scholars. When the people of Nishabur wrote to him and asked him to come to their city, he found it suitable for applying his method. When he headed to Nishabur, its inhabitants had built for him a school in which Ibn Fūrak knew that Allah has granted him a blessed opportunity. He applied his methodology which he based on al-Ash‘arī’s theological views and the results were fruitful. His blessings spread on others. Also, many renowned scholars graduated from his school and travelled to all parts of the world which resulted in the wide spread of the Ash‘arite School. Since Ibn Fūrak, the Ash‘arite School has become a dialectical-theological school applied in many Muslim countries.

Teaching Students According to the Ash‘arite School

Undoubtedly, he who works righteous shall see the goodness of his actions. Ibn Fūrak’s efforts in Nishabur are perhaps best described by the Qur’anic verses, “A goodly word like a goodly tree, whose root is firmly fixed, and its branches (reach) to the heavens of its Lord. So Allah sets forth parables for men, in order that they may receive admonition. It brings forth its fruit at all times, by the leave of its Lord”. [Q 14: 24–25]. From his school,

knowledge of Ash'arite theology spread wide and far. Many notable scholars graduated from Ibn Fūrak's school among them¹⁵.

a. Abū al-Qāsim 'Abd al-Karīm ibn Hawāzin ibn 'Abd al-Malik ibn Ṭalḥah al-Qushayrī: a renowned scholar who was a notable jurist, theologian, Qur'anic interpreter, litterateur, grammarian and poet. He was skilled in Ash'arite theology. He wrote many books such as: *al-Risālah al-Qushayriyyah*, *Arba'ūn fī al-Ḥadīth*, *al-Fusūl fī al-Uṣūl*, *Kitāb al-Mi'rāj* and *Shikāyah ahl al-Sunnah bi Hikāyah mā nālahum min al-Mihnah*.

b. Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Naysābūrī, known as al-Bayhaqī: He wrote many significant books on ḥadīth.

c. Ṭāhir ibn Ḥusayn ibn Muḥammad al-Rūqī al-Ṭūsī: He was Ibn Fūrak's son-in-law and one of his first students.

d. Abu Mansūr Muhammad bin Husain bin abu al-Ayyūb al-Naisābūrī: He was Ibn Forak's other son-in-law. He was known as abu Bakr Ahmad al-Forakī, one of the renowned scholars. He was very appreciated by people and very brave in debates.

e. Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn 'Alī ibn 'Abd Allāh ibn Khalaf al-Shirāzī: He later became one of the most known scholars in the *al-Nizamiyyah* School of Baghdad.

Such were some of the most renowned scholars of their time. They had a great influence on the spread of the Ash'arite School. Ibn Fūrak's school in Nishapur was the centre for knowledge and education in Khorasan. Its influence was found even in preceding generations. This country has also witnessed the birth of scholars such as the Imām of the two holy masjids, al-Juwaynī, and Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī who were known for their support of the Ash'arite School. They made efforts with the help of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, one of the most known Ash'arite scholars, to develop the school and its methodology and drive it away from any suspicion based in a rational and scholarly method.

¹⁵ A. al-Subkī, *Tabaqāt al-Shafi'iyyah al-Kubrā*, ed. Mahmūd Muhammad al-Tanāhī and 'Abd al-Fattāh Muḥammad al-Hilū (Cairo: Dār Ihyā' al-Kutub al-'Arabiyyah, 1990), 5:153-162; 4:8-16. A. Ibn Asākir, *Tabayīn Kathib al-Muftarā fī mā Nuṣiba il al-Imām Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī* (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Arabī, 1979), 248.

Conclusion

Researchers should not overlook the significant role of Ibn Fūrak in transforming the Ash'arite School into an independent dialectical-theological school. He succeeded in doing so through his previously discussed methodology. He followed a unique scholarly method in compiling al-Ash'arī's thoughts and giving body to his school. He set the Ash'arite School on clear and solid foundations. The paper concludes by drawing the following observations.

Firstly, Ibn Fūrak faced hardships and many difficulties throughout his journey to revive the Ash'arite School of theology and was actually killed due to that by his opponents, al-Karamiyyah.

Secondly, he was most knowledgeable and acquainted with al-Ash'arī's theological views.

Thirdly, he was the first to transform the theories of al-Ash'arī into a dialectic-theological school. In other words, he reformed al-Ash'arī's school and represented it in a dialectic manner which strongly competed with other theological schools.

Fourthly, he followed a scientific method to achieve his target through focusing on three main aspects being: establishing an accurate scientific method, applying this method in a suitable environment, and spreading his theology through his students based on his methodology.

Fifthly, he undertook the first step to achieve the goal by: 1) refining al-Ash'arī's views and separating his sayings from those of his students. He then compiled al-Ash'arī's opinions and views from his different books in one single book (*al-Mujarrad*) to be the first source of Ash'arite theology. 2) Writing books on different fields such as theology, Qur'anic exegesis, and Ḥadīth according to Ash'arite school in order to demonstrate the suitability of his methodology in various fields. 3) Discussing and conversing with Ḥadīth scholars to support al-Ash'arī's views and his school and to reform the school on a solid scientific and intellectual foundation.

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