Al-Khaṭ īb Al-Baghdādī[1] *(d. 463 AH)'s* Attitude towards *Murji'at Al-Sunnah* with Special Reference to His *Tārīkh Baghdād*

Ibrāhīm ibn Ṭ ahmān (d. 163 AH) as a case study[*]

Under supervision

Maḥmūd Muḥammad Ḥusayn ʿAlī,

Ibrāhīm Muḥammad al-Gazzār,

Muṣṭafā Ibrāhīm Sayyid- Aḥmad Maṭar

Al-Azhar University

Abstract: The majority of *al-Murji'ah* believes that deeds are of no value in the fulfillment of Imān. In this way, many sinful and disobedient people believe that they are safe from the bad consequences of their sins and acts of disobedience under the pretext that deeds have nothing to do with Imān. However, there are some advocates of al-Irjā' whose opinion on Imān was close to that of the People of the Sunnah. Those advocates are known as *Murji'at Al-Sunnah*, whose *Irjā'* was based on hoping that doers of major sins would be forgiven as a natural reaction to al-Khawārij and others who used to declare sinful people disbelievers. As such, they had hope and never declared people disbelievers. This paper sheds light on the emergence of *al-Murji'ah*, the political reasons that accompanied its origin, and the issues around which the topic of al-Irjā' revolved and discusses the attitude of al-Khaṭ īb towards *Murji'at al-Sunnah* with special reference to Ibrāhīm ibn Ṭ ahmān. It also examines Ibn Ṭ ahmān's efforts to answer the misconceptions of al-Jahmiyya.

Keywords: *Al-Khaṭ īb Al-Baghdādī, Al-Myrji'ah, Murji'at al-Sunnah, Imān, al-Jahmiyyah*

(*) ***Al-Khaṭ īb Al-Baghdādī*[1] *(d. 463 AH)'s* Attitude towards *Murji'at Al-Sunnah* with Special Reference to His *Tārīkh Baghdād Ibrāhīm ibn Ṭ ahmān* (d. 163 AH) as a case study** , Vol.12, Issue No.2, April 2023, pp.93-118.

الملخص:

ذهب جمهور المرجئة إلى إسقاط العمل من مفهوم الإيمان، وتمسكوا بأن الإيمان هو قول واعتقاد فقط، ولا يضر بعد ذلك شيء من المخالفة والعصيان صغيرًا أو كبيرًا، مما جعل الكثير من العصاة والمجترئين على حدود الشرع لا يشعرون بأي إثم، أو لا يبالون بارتكاب الخطايا؛ بزعم أن العمل منفك من حقيقة الإيمان. إلا أن الخطيب البغدادي لفت النظر إلى طائفة من المرجئة اقتربت في آرائها من مذهب أهل السنة، وقد عرفت هذه الطائفة فيما بعد بـ«مرجئة السنة»؛ ومن ثم حاول الخطيب الدفاع عن أعلامها، لأنهم كانوا يرجون لأهل الكبائر الغفران؛ ردًّا على الخوارج وغيرهم الذين يكفرون الناس بالذنوب. وهذا البحث يُعرِّف بالمرجئة ويُبين نشأتهم، ويذكر الأسباب السياسية التي لازمت النشأة، والقضية التي دار حولها الإرجاء، ويحاول ـ أيضًا ـ الكشف عن مفهوم الإرجاء من منظور أهل السنة، كما يناقش موقف الخطيب البغدادي من مرجئة السنة وتطبيق ذلك على إبراهيم بن طهمان (ت. ١٦٣ هـ)، كما يبرز جهود ابن طهمان في الرَّدِّ على الجهمية، وقد استخدمت في المنهج التحليلي النقدي حسب ما تقضيه طبيعة البحث وبما يتلاءم مع المنهج العلمي الصحيح.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الخطيب البغدادي، المرجئة، مرجئة السنة، الإيمان، الجهمية.

Muslim scholars disagree over the essence of the topic of belief: is it just a matter of speech? Or is it composed of speech and conviction? Or is it made up of speech, conviction, and deeds? *Al-Karrāmiyah*[2] and a group of *Al-Murji'ah* opine that it is sufficient for *al-Mukallaf* (i.e. religiously obligated person) to admit with his tongue that the Messages with which the Messengers of Allah were sent are true, with no need to work or conviction. The majority of *al-Murji'ah,* for their part, believes that *Imān* necessitates speech and conviction, and thus acts of disobedience, be they minor or major, won't harm the person in any way. The opinion of rest of the Ummah yet goes as follows, "The three pillars are required: speech, conviction, and deed. These three constitute the religion." They yet differ over the value of work, as follows: *al-Khawārij* and *al-Muʿ tazilah* elevated deeds to the level of creed, while *al-Karrāmiah* and *al-Murji'ah*

opine that deeds are of no value. (Derāz, 1440 AH – 2019, p. 86 – 87)

But the question to be asked herein is, "Do all the advocates of *al-Irjā'* believe that deeds are of no value in the fulfillment of *Imān*?" Or "Are there any advocates of *al-Irjā'* whose opinion on *Imān* was close to that of the People of the Sunnah?" And if this is true, what is the position of *al-Khaṭ īb* on it?

Granted, *Al-Khaṭ īb* was well-versed in the various intellectual trends and sects of his time, yet his knowledge of them was relatively different. In other words, he used to extensively elaborate on the most prominent figures of a certain sect, while briefly discussing the principles and pillars of other sects. This indicates that he did not hold the same attitude towards all the Islamic Sects; rather, he wanted to send some indications and messages to the readers.

I believe that *Al-Khaṭ īb* has intentionally acted like this, maintaining meanwhile that he adopted a very strict approach in case the others' opinions were against his intellectual convictions. However, if the others' opinions were not against his, he used to show a peaceful attitude. For example, when he highlighted the biography of any of the sects' figures that are not against his creed, he used not to criticize them, to the extent that he used to seek any means to show similarity between it and his own creed.(3) His position on *al-Murji'ah* is a case in point.

So, this paper attempts to answer the following questions: How does *Al-Khaṭ īb* view *al-Murji'ah*? What is his position towards its figures?

Before answering these questions that reflect *Al-Khaṭ īb's* own position on *al-Murji'ah*, we should, first and foremost, shed light on this sect, its emergence, the political reasons that accompanied its origin, and the issues around which the topic of *al-Irjā'* revolved.

1.1.1. Definition and Origin of *Al-Murji'ah*

Linguistically, the Arabic word "*al-Irjā'*" means "delay". This meaning is understood from the Saying of Allah the Exalted, "They said, "Postpone [the matter of] him and his brother …" [The Quran, 7:111] and "And [there are] others deferred until the command of Allah …" [The Quran, 9:106] *Ibn Al-Sikkīt* (d. 246 AH) said, "Arabs say, '*Arja'tu al-Amra Wa a'rjaytuhu*,' to indicate that 'it is postponed." (Al-Harawī, 2001 CE, 11/125)

This meaning is also crystal clear in the story of *Ka' ab ibn Mālik* (may Allah be pleased with him) who said concerning his non-participation in the battle of *Tabūk*, "The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) *arja' Amrana*," (Ibn Ḥanbal, 1421 AH/2001 CE, 25/75, Hadith No. 15789) meaning that he (PBUH) postponed it until Allah the Exalted would pass a judgment on them.

They were called "*Al-Murji'ah*", because they "gave precedence to speech over deeds." (Al-Harawī, 2001 CE, 11/125) This opinion is held by *al-Shahrastānī* who said, "They (i.e. *al-Murji'ah*) used to give precedence to the intention and the conviction over deeds." (Al-Shahrastānī, 1387 AH/1968 CE, 1/139) Other scholars yet believe that *al-Irjā'* carries the meaning of "giving hope". This meaning is deduced from *al-Murjia'h's* belief that "disobedience does not harm *Imān,* just as obedience is of no vain if accompanied with disbelief." (Ibid)

The definition offered by *Abū al-Baqā* al-Hanafī (d. 1049 AH)*'s* for *al-Murji'ah* is just restricted to the extremists among them, "They are those people who believe that the doers of major

sins won't be punished at all, since punishment and hellfire are prepared for the disbelievers." (Abū al-Baqā', N.D, p. 869) It seems that this definition does not precisely reflect the essence of *al-Murji'ah*.

Other scholars yet define *al-Irjā'*, as follows: "It is to delay the judgment on the doer of the major sin to the Day of Judgment, and thus we cannot decide whether he will be in the Paradise or in the Hellfire." (Al-Shahrastānī, 1387 AH/1968 CE, 1/139) This is the opinion of *al-Murji'ah* who belongs to the School of Hadith. (Al-Khatib, Tārīkh Baghdād, 1422 AH/ 2002, 7/18)

1.1.2. Origin of *Al-Murji'ah*

Irjā' emerged as a natural reaction to two extremist ideologies whose advocates declare their opponents as non-Muslims. These two extremist groups are *al-Khawārij* and *al-Shīʿah*.

First, *al-Khawārij* declared all other Muslims as disbelievers and non-believers. In this way, they believe that *ʿUthmān* (may Allah be pleased with him) along with those companions who sought to avenge him, *ʿAlī* (may Allah be pleased with him) along with his supporters, and *Muʿāwyah* (may Allah be pleased with him) along with his supporters as disbelievers." (Maḥ mūd, 1989 CE, p. 140) They also believe that the doers of major sins will eternally live in the hellfire. So, *al-Murji'ah* totally rejected this opinion and replaced it with the following rule reading, "(*Imān* is) to pronounce the testimonies of faith, with no need to observe any deeds. As for the doer of major sins, he is a believer, not an unbeliever." (Al-Faiyūmī, 1423 AH / 2003 CE, p. 133)

Second, *Al-Shīʿah* viewed that Caliphate is an exclusive right for *ʿAli* (may Allah be pleased with him) and his offspring from the progeny of *Fāṭ imah* (may Allah be pleased with her). They thus declared all other caliphs as disbelievers. Besides, they

rejected to integrate into the Muslim community "unless through certain political origins they made for themselves." (Al-Faiyūmī, 1423 AH / 2003 CE, p. 134) That is because they believe that "Imamate is not a secondary issue that has to do with the public, but rather a fundamental topic and a pillar of religion that Messengers could not neglect or leave to the public." (al-Ashʿ arī, 1400 AH/1980 CE, p. 146)

In its very beginning, the ideology of *irjā'* was characterized by moderation towards the opponents. As such, they did not declare them as disbelievers as *al-Khawrij* did, nor did they stipulate Caliphate as one of the conditions for the validity of *Imān* as *al-Shīʿ ah* did.

In his *Tārīkh*, *Hibatu Allah Ibn ʿ Asākir* (d. 571 AH) recorded that *al-Irjiā'* is an ideology that emerged as a reaction to the political ordeal of that time, affirming, "As for *al-Murji'ah,* they are those who have doubt over (certain incident). They were taking part in the Muslim conquests. When they came back to Medina after the murder of ʿ *Uthmān*, they realized that there was division among people, which is why they said, 'When we left you, your opinion was the same. But, when we came back to you, we found that disagreement has emerged among you: some of you believe that ʿ Uthmān was unjustly killed and he and his advocates should have been shown justice, while the others believe that ʿ Ali's opinion was correct. In our viewpoint, they both are trustworthy, so we do not curse them, nor do we criticize them; rather, we defers their affairs to the Day of Judgment so that Allah will be the One Who passes the Judgment on them." (Ibn ʿ Asākir, 1415 AH / 1995 CE, 39/496)

According to *Ibn ʿ Asākir,* the name "*Al-Murji'ah*" was used initially to refer to a certain group of the companions and the followers who chose not to take part in the *fitnah* that emerged at that time and to leave their affair to Allah the Exalted instead, because "they could not decide on the issue and were unable to

declare either of the two parties to be right, which is why they kept away from the two groups." (Al-Nawawī, 1392 AH, 15/149)

Aḥ mad Amīn, for his part, viewed those doubtful people as an independent party, affirming that "they were not involved in the turmoil, nor did they take part in blood-shedding. In addition, they did not even declare one party as correct while the other as wrong. Furthermore, the direct reason for the formation of this party is the difference of opinions among parties, while the main reason has to do with the Caliphate. Without Caliphate, there would be no *Khawārij* or *Shīʿ ah*, and thus *al-Murji'ah* would not have come onto the scene." (Amīn, 1933 CE, p. 327)

Amīn also supported his opinion with the fact that some companions did not take part in the brutal incidents that afflicted the Ummah at that time, including *Abū Bakrah, ʿ Abd Allah ibn ʿ Umar,* and *ʿ Umrān ibn Ḥuṣ ayn* (may Allah be pleased with them). (Amīn, 1933 CE, p. 328) Those companions cited the following Prophetic Hadith in support of their opinions, "There would soon be turmoil. Behold! There would be turmoil in which the one who would be seated would be better than one who would stand and the one who would stand would be better than one who would run. Behold! When the turmoil comes or it appears, the one who has camel should stick to his camel and he who has sheep or goat should stick to his sheep and goat and he who has land should stick to the land. A person said: 'Allah's Messenger, what is your opinion about one who has neither camel nor sheep nor land? Thereupon, he said: He should take hold of his sword and beat its edge with the help of stone and then try to find a way of escape."(Muslim, 1412 AH/ 1991 CE, 4/2212, Hadith No. 2887)

Based on the above texts, it is thus clear that *Imān* was not the main issue that fully occupied the minds of Muslims at that time; rather, the public was busy with a political matter, i.e. the issue of Caliphate, along with its repercussions.

For this reason, Van Ess opines that the first group of *al-Murji'ah* was not concerned with the topic of *Imān*, "Though their

opinions shed light on the issue of creed, it was not the main issue for them. In truth, the problem was more political than theological." (Ess, 2088 CE, 1/239)

Dr. ʿ Abd al-Ḥalīm Maḥ mūd, for his part, viewed it (i.e. *al-Irjā'*) as "a tendency towards safety," (Maḥ mūd, 1989, p. 142) an opinion that best described the beginning of *al-Irjā'*.

We can thus conclude that *al-Irja'* did not emerge as a theological doctrine; rather, it is a necessary matter required by the thorny political situation that emerged after the turmoil that afflicted the Ummah. In its very beginning, *al-Irjā'* looked like a call for tolerance and reconciliation to unite the then scatted and divided Ummah and to counter the violence that was about to undermine its fabric. However, with the passage of time, this doctrine found advocates who, in turn, laid down the theoretical foundation for it and who established its creedal principles in a manner that is somewhat similar to the attitude of the People of the Sunnah towards the doer of major sins. Yet, followers of *al-Irja'* did not stop at that point, but rather took it to an extremist point, to the extent that they made it an outlet for all the deviant behaviors based on the misunderstanding of religion, a point that is crystal clear in their principle reading, "disobedience does not harm *Imān,* just as obedience is of no vain if accompanied with disbelief." (Al-Shahrastānī, 1387 AH/1968 CE, 1/139) In this way, many sinful and disobedient people believe that they are safe from the bad consequences of their sins and acts of disobedience under the pretext that deeds have nothing to do with *Imān*.

Other scholars yet believe that the first person to declare *al-Irjā'* is *al-Ḥassan ibn Muḥ ammad ibn al-Ḥanafiyah* (d. 95 AH). On that, Ibn Baṭ ṭ ah (d. 387 AH) said in his *al-Ibānah*, "The first one to speak about *al-Irjā'* is a man from Banū Hāshim in Medina, called al-Ḥassan." (Ibn Baṭ ṭ ah, 1415 AH / 1994 CE, 2/903) That is because when people differ over the condition of ʿ Uthmān, ʿ Ali, and Muʿ āwyah (may Allah be pleased with them), al-Ḥassan's opinion was "to leave the affairs of ʿ Uthmān, ʿ Ali, Muʿ āwyah, Ṭ alḥ ah, and al-Zubayr to Allah, meaning that they should neither support them nor attack them." (Al-Dhahabī, 2003

CE, 2/1082) In confirmation of his attitude, al-Ḥassan composed the first book on creed in Islam on *al-Irjā'*. (Al-Nashshār, 2018 CE,1/230) However, it is recorded that al-Ḥassan regretted this action. (Ibn Baṭ ṭ ah, 1415 AH/ 1994, 2/904)

In this vein, the researcher believes that al-Ḥassan's book has exerted considerable impact on the Islamic World, as it was quoted by *Ghaylān ibn Muslim al-Dimishqī* (d. 106 AH) (Al-Murtaḍ a, 1316 AH, p. 15) and Imam Abū Ḥanīfah, though the latter did not meet al-Ḥassan or learn from him. (Al-Nashshār, 2018 CE, 1/230)

Furthermore, the idea of *al-Irjā'* was adopted by many other traditionists who narrated on the authority of Abū Ḥanīfah, which stresses that it was consistent with their interest to the belief of the Muslim community.

Under all circumstances, al-Ḥassan ibn Muḥ ammad laid down the cornerstone of the theoretical framework of *al-Irjā'*, a point that is deduced from his statement, "Doers of major sins never become disbelievers since acts of obedience and disobedience are not from the origin of *Imān*, and thus *Imān* cannot be nullified by either of them." (Al-Shahrastānī, 1387 AH/ 1968 CE, 1/144) This opinion was later held by Abū Ḥanīfah, Ibrāhīm ibn Ṭ ahmān, etc.

With the passage of time, the ideology of *al-Irjā'* developed and *al-Murji'ah* divided into two sects: the first was an extremist one and it deviated from the essence of *Imān*, while the second was close to the opinions of the People of the Sunnah and Congregation.

But, the question to be asked herein now is, "Which of the two sects did al-Khaṭ īb show interest to?"

1.2 Al-Khaṭ īb's Attitude towards *al-Murji'ah*

Al-Khaṭ īb did not show attention to the dispraised kind of *al-Irjā'*, but rather to the *Irjā'* of the traditionists or what is known as "*Murji'at al-Sunnah*". (Al-Shahrastānī, 1387 AH/ 1968 CE, 1/141) In doing so, he wanted to defend them against the

disfavored type of *irjā'*. For this reason, he sometimes records that *Murji'at al-Sunnah* did not restrict *Imān* to the abstract confession of faith as *al-Karrāmiyah* (Al-Nasafī, 2011 CE, 2/1076) said, while at other times he denied that they believed that *Imān* is based on mere knowledge, not approval as claimed by *al-Jahm ibn Ṣ afwān* and *Abū al-Ḥ ussein al-Ṣ āliḥ ī*. (Al-Nasafī, 2011 CE, 2/1077) He furthermore stated clearly that *Murji'at al-Sunnah* did not disregard deeds in the balance of creed. He meanwhile wanted to prove that *Murji'at al-Sunnah*'s opinion revolved mainly around leaving the affair of the doers of major sins to Allah the Exalted, hoping that He would forgive them, along with all sinful people, "because punishment and reward are categorically left to Allah's Free Will, taking into account that none can force Him to anything." (Maḥ mūd, 1989, p. 142)

A careful examination of *Tārīkh Baghdād* led the researcher to conclude that al-Khaṭ īb has only recorded the following list of *Murji'at al-Sunnah*: Ibrāhīm ibn Ṭ ahmān, commonly known as Abū Saʿ īd al-Kharsānī (d. 163 AH), Muḥ ammad ibn Khāzim al-Tamīmī known as Abī Muʿ āwyata al-Ḍ arīr (d. 195 AH), Salm ibn Sālīm Abū Muḥ ammad or Abū ʿ Abd al-Raḥ mān al-Balkhī (d. 194 AH), Shabābah ibn Siwār Abū ʿ Amr al-Fizārī (d. 206 AH), al-Ḥ akam ibn ʿ Abd Allah ibn Maslamah ibn ʿ Abd al-Raḥ mān Abū Muṭ īʿ al-Balkhī (d. 199 AH), Imam Abū Ḥ anīfah (d. 150 AH), and Judge Abū Yūsuf who is the companion of Abū Ḥ anīfah. (Al-Khaṭ īb, 2002, 7/13, 3/134, 10/202, 10/401, 9/121, 15/444, 16/359) Though al-Khaṭ īb called these figures "*Murji'at al-Sunnah*", he highlighted *Ibrāhīm ibn Tahmān* in particular. The researcher will also try to prove that al-Khaṭ īb's opinion on this figure applies to the rest.

If we carefully examine the information recorded by al-Khaṭ īb on *Ibrāhīm ibn Tahmān* and arrange them in one context, the following points should be stated:

First: many traditionists and jurists are accused of *al-Irjā'*. This point is crystal clear in the books on biographies in which the following statement "a well-established Imam, but he is a *Murji'*"

(Al-Dhahabī, Siyar, 1405 AH/ 1985 CE, 9/513) was frequently recorded.

Second: the environment in which those figures lived was characterized by political unrest and doctrinal strife, stressing that only few figures were not affected by this environment. This makes us firmly believe that we cannot decide on the essence of their conviction except through gathering and arranging the excerpts of al-Khaṭ īb regarding them along with the sayings of the critics.

1.2.1 Al-Khaṭ īb's Position on Ibrāhīm ibn Ṭ ahmān (d. 163 AH)

According to Al-Khaṭ īb, many scholars, such as Nuʿ aym ibn Ḥammād (d. 229 AH), Jarīr ibn ʿ Abd al-Ḥamīd (d. 188 AH), al-Mughīrah ibn Miqsam (d. 136 AH), and Aḥ mad ibn Saiyār ibn Aiyūb (d. 268 AH), accused Ibrāhīm ibn Ṭ ahmān of *Irjā'*. (Al-Khaṭ īb, 2002, 7/15)

Abū Jaʿ far al-ʿ Aqīlī (d. 322 AH) for his part, criticized Ibn Ṭ ahmān as he accused him of being "an extremist *Murji'*". (Al-ʿ Uqailī, 1404 AH / 1984 CE, 1/56) However, this point is rejected by Ibn Ḥajar (d. 852 AH) who said in his *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb* that "the claim that he was an extremist *Murji'* and an advocate of the radical *Irjā'* is not proven." (Ibn Ḥajar, 1326 AH, 1/131) Other scholars yet believe that he left it (i.e. *al-Irjā'*). (Ibid)

Al-Khaṭ īb has thus quoted the views of a group of critics regarding crediting Ibn Ṭ ahmān as a trustworthy narrator, though they were fully aware of his creedal doctrine, such as Imam Aḥ mad ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241 AH), Abū Dāwūd al-Sajistānī (d. 275 AH), Ibrāhīm ibn Yaʿ qūb al-Jawzjānī, Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī (d. 277 AH), ʿ Abd al-Raḥ mān ibn Yūsuf ibn Khirāsh, and Ṣ āliḥ ibn Muḥ ammad. (Al-Khatīb, 2002, 7/13)

This point thus leads us to shed light on the question: is it permissible or not to accept the narrations of those scholars who were accused of practicing *Irjā'*?

Ibn Ḥajar recorded scholars' disagreement over the acceptance of the narration of heretics whose heresies do not lead to disbelief, especially when they are known for keeping away from telling lies and characterized by religiosity and observance of acts of worship. He summed up their opinions into the three following points, "First, their narrations are totally accepted; second, their narrations are totally rejected; and third, we should differentiate whether they are advocates (of *Irjā'*) or not, as follows: the narrations of the advocates should be rejected, while the other narrations of non-advocates are accepted. This is the most authentic opinion that is accepted by the majority of Muslim sects." (Ibn Ḥajar, Hidyu al-Sārī Muqaddimatu Fatḥ al-Bārī, N.D, 1/385)

Just as we right now know that Ibrāhīm Ibn Ṭ ahmān was a trustworthy scholar whose narrations are accepted, that he was not a heretic whose heresy leads to the rejection of his Hadith to the point that "his Hadiths are recorded in the Books of Ṣ aḥ īḥ ", (Al-Ḥākim, 1397 AH / 1977 CE, p. 136) and that "he was neither an extremist *Murji'* nor an advocate of it," (Ibn Ḥajar, 1326, 1/131) we would reach the conclusion that he did not adopt the disfavored type of *al-Irjā'*. Besides, his creedal doctrine was consistent with that of the People of Sunnah, which is why al-Khaṭ īb quoted Abū al-Ṣ alt al-Harawī (d. 236 AH) who defended Ibn Ṭ ahmān in his attempt to defend him against the heresy of *al-Irjā'*.

When Sufyān Ibn ʿ Uyaynah was asked about Ibn Ṭ ahmān, he replied that he was a *Murji'*, whereupon Abū al-Ṣ alt hastened to defend him against that approach of *Irjā'* that believes that deeds are of no vain, affirming, "Their doctrine of *Irjā'* was not that bad one that approves that *Imān* consists of speech and that deeds are not essential to realize it; rather their *Irjā'* was based on hoping that doers of major sins would be forgiven. This was a natural reaction to *al-Khawārij* and others who used to declare sinful people disbelievers. As such, they had hope and never declared people disbelievers; they did as we do." (Al-Khaṭ īb, 2002, 7/18)

This passage clearly indicates that *Murji'at al-Sunnah* exerted considerable efforts in correcting the creed and negating any form of deviation from the Right Path, stressing that their position was a natural reaction to *al-Khawārij* who called for *Imān* by means of gloominess and sword.

The passage also indicates that Ibn Ṭ ahmān was not of the advocates of disregarding deeds or belittling them, though deeds for him could not be elevated to the rank of heart-based conviction. According to him, in case a man's deeds are not properly observed or he commits a sin, he is not a disbeliever and we hope for his salvation as long as he confesses the Existence of his Lord. This approach came as a natural reaction to *al-Khawārij* who viewed "deeds" as an essential pillar in the fulfillment of belief, meaning the person won't be a disbeliever if his deeds are not duly observed.

As for al-Khaṭ īb's opinion on Ibn Ṭ ahmān's statement "Prophet Noah (PBUH) was a *Murji'* (Al-Khaṭ īb, 2002, 7/15) in reference to the Saying of Allah the Exalted, '***He said, "And what is my knowledge of what they used to do? (112) Their account is only upon my Lord, if you [could] perceive***' **[The Quran, 26:112-113],** he considers only their apparent conditions and leaves thus their hidden matters to Allah the Exalted.

The Muʿ tazilī exegete al-Zamakhsharī (d. 538 AH) commented on this verse, affirming, "All what I am concerned about is to search for people's apparent matters. I do not want to search for their secrets or hidden matters. So, in case their deeds are evil, Allah will reckon and punish them; I am only a warner, not someone who will reckon you." (Al-Zamakhsharī, 1407 AH, 3/324)

Ibn Ṭ ahmān's attitude towards the doers of major sins is close to that of the People of Sunnah. We can even state that it is totally compatible with it. His compatibility to traditionists on *Uṣ ūl* and total rejection to the radical *Irjā'* is evidenced by the following statement of Abū ʿ Abd Allah al-Ḥ ākim (d. 405 AH) reading, "The creedal doctrine of Ibrāhīm transmitted to us is

contrary to what is known, so I don't know whether he adopted it yet left it later, or that transmitters did not exactly know his condition." (Mughliṭ āy, 1422 AH – 2001 CE, 1/225)

The researcher, for his part, views the second option as the most authentic, for the following two reasons:

First: al-Khaṭ īb recorded on the authority of al-Ḥassan ibn al-Walīd al-Naysabūrī (d. 203 AH), who said, "I met Anas ibn Mālik and asked him about a Hadith, whereupon he said, 'I heard this Hadith long time ago, where did you hear it?' I replied, 'I heard it from Ibrāhīm ibn Ṭahmān who narrated it on your authority.' He said, 'How did you leave him?' I replied, 'He is good.' Anas then said, 'Is he still saying that he is a believer in the Sight of Allah?' I replied, 'What is wrong with his opinion, o Abū ʿ Abd Allah?' He remained silent for a while and then said, 'I did not hear the pious ancestors saying something like it." (Al-Khatib, 2002, 7/16)

As for the statement "I am a believer in the Sight of Allah", it refers to heart-based conviction and surrender, away from pronunciation with the tongue, including belief in Allah and His Angels, Books, Messengers, and the Last Day. This means that whoever firmly believes in the Messenger with his heart without pronouncing with tongue, he is a believer in the Sight of Allah the Almighty as long as he shows no stubbornness or arrogance. (Ibn al-Humām, ND, p. 175) However, Mālik denied this opinion only because the ancestors did not say it since *Imān*, for them, is "the firm belief that accepted no opposite. As such, the belief of all the believers is the same, which means that preference among them should be by deeds which are essential items of religion. As for those who believe that work is a pillar of *Imān*, he cannot evade the mistakes committed by *al-Khawārij* and *al-Muʿ tazilah*." (Al-Kawtharī, 1368 AH, see his insightful footnote on al-Fiqh al-Absaṭ , p. 46) When it comes to the approval of the believer, it is a condition to realize his *Imān* and to apply the rulings of Islam to him in this worldly life.

Despite its importance, the point of interest herein is that *Irjā'* of Ibn Ṭahmān was not dispraised; rather, it was consistent with the doctrine of the People of Sunnah. So, we could reach the conclusion that describing him of *al-Irjā'* is some kind of unfairness.

The point on the traditionists' confusion of the concept of *Irjā'* is evidenced by the report reading that Shaybān ibn Farūkh (d. 235 AH) asked ʿ Abd Allah ibn al-Mubārak (d. 181 AH), "O Aba ʿ Abd al-Raḥmān! What is your opinion on those who commit fornication and drink wine: are they believers?' Ibn al-Mubārak replied, 'I do not declare them disbelievers,' whereupon Ibn Farūkh said to him, 'After you turned old, you became a *Murji'*.' Ibn al-Mubārak then replied, 'O Abu ʿ Abd Allah! *Al-Murji'ah* do not accept me; I believe that *Imān* increase while they not." (Ibn Rāhawayh, 1412 AH – 1991 CE, 3/670)

Second, al-Khaṭīb narrated on the authority of Aḥmad ibn Saiyār ibn Aiyūb (d. 268 AH), who said that Ibrāhīm ibn Ṭahmān lived in Mecca to 160 AH and people were eager to listen to his speech, stressing that people disliked his past *Irjā'*. (Al-Khaṭīb, 2002, 7/15) This indicates that people were confused about the doctrine of Ibn Ṭahmān: whether or not he belonged to the radical *Murji'ah*? Or did he belong to *Murj'at al-Sunnah*? So, when they became rest assured that his doctrine was correct and sound and that he was not a heretic, they were eager to narrate from him.

At this point, the tolerance of al-Khaṭīb towards *Murji'at al-Sunnah* may be noticed. Besides, his attempts to reconcile between them and the People of Sunnah are crystal clear since he fully knew that the conflict between them and the People of Sunnah is "a verbal one that does not lead to the corruption of belief." (Farghal, 1428 AH / 2007 CE, p. 357)

This tolerant view made some people show tolerance to those who belonged to this type of *al-Irjā'*, such as Sufyān al-Thawrī who is reported to have shown tolerance in the end of his time to *Murji'at al-Sunnah*, though he previously used to attack and criticize them, to the extent that he did not attend the funeral

of ʿ Umar ibn Dharr al-Hamadhānī (d. 150 AH). (Ibn Ḥajar, 1326 AH, 7/445)

Based on the above, we understand the rest of the passage recorded by al-Khaṭ īb from Abī al-Ṣ alt concerning the *Irjā'* of traditionists reading, "I heard Wakīʿ b. al-Jarrāḥ said, 'I heard Sufyān al-Thawrī in the end of his life saying: we hope that Allah would forgive the doers of major sins who adopt our religion and observe our prayer, no matter how grave their sins are. He used to severely criticize al-Jahmiyyah." (Al-Khaṭ īb, 2002, 7/18)

A careful examination of the conditions of Ibrāhīm ibn Ṭ ahmān leads us to the fact that he did not follow the disfavored of *irjā'*, as we do not have any texts to prove this claim. For example, neither al-Khaṭ īb nor anyone of the biography writers claimed that he followed al-Jahm's approach on Imān or adopted al-Karrāmiyah's opinions. It is inconceivable then to accuse such a man of what is against the essence of belief. This extremism is the result of fierce conflict between people of Hadith and people of reason. In truth, his righteous life proves otherwise; that is to say that he was known for observance of acts of worship asceticism.

It is reported that once Ibrāhīm ibn Ṭ ahmān was mentioned before Imam Aḥ med ibn Ḥanbal who was reclining, whereupon he sat up and said, "One should not lean when the righteous people are mentioned." (Al-Khaṭ īb, 2002, 7/20)

In light of the above, Sheikh Muḥ ammad Abū Zahrah said, "Some scholars divided *al-Murji'ah* into two sections: *Murja'at al-Sunnah*; those who believe that a sinful person will be punished according to his sin, that he won't dwell in the hellfire forever, and that Allah the Exalted may pardon him and shower him with His Mercy, and thus he would not be punished out of the Bounty of Allah that He gave whomever He wants since Allah is the Owner of All-Great

Bounty. This section includes the majority of the jurists and traditionists. As for the second section, it is the radical *Murji'ah*: those who are called *Murji'ah* by the majority of people; they are the ones who deserve criticism by all Muslims." (Abū Zahrah, N.D, p. 117)

1.2.2. Ibrāhīm Ibn Ṭahmān's Attitude towards al-Jahmiyyah:

It is clear right now that the doctrine of Ibrāhīm ibn Ṭahmān on *Imān* does not contradict the People of the Sunnah and that his opinions on *al-Irjā'* are not dispraised.

Relying on the information provided by al-Khaṭīb, the researcher believes that there is another reason for Ibn Ṭahmān's and many other traditionists' adherence to their position, namely, to answer the misconceptions of al-Jahmiyyah on the topic of *Imān*. This leads us the following question, "Was *Irjā'* of traditionists a reaction to al-Jahm's opinion on *Imān*?"

Highlighting *Imān* in the viewpoint of al-Jahm ibn Ṣafwān, Imam al-Ashaʿrī said, "(Imān) is restricted to have knowledge of Allah, His Messengers, and all what is revealed down. Besides, it entails that everything other than tongue's approval, heart's submission, and showing love/fear for Allah and His Messenger, and body's parts deeds does not belong to *Imān*. For him, disbelief is synonyms with being ignorant of Allah. *Imān*, for al-Jahm, cannot be divided into confession, speech, and deeds. Besides, believers cannot be superior to each other in terms of belief." (Al-Ashaʿrī, 1400 AH/ 1980 CE, p. 132) As a result, "Imān of the Prophets and Imān of the Ummah is the same since there is no preference in knowledge." (Al-Shahrastānī, 1387 AH/ 1968, 1/88)

The majority of the People of Sunnah, on the other hand, believe that Imān consists of confession of the heart and that approval is a condition to apply rulings in this worldly life.

Imam Abū Ḥanīfah, for example, believes that Imān is "belief, knowledge, certainty, and approval." (Abū Ḥanīfa, 1368 AH, p. 13) It is clear that belief, knowledge, and certainty give the

same meaning for Abū Ḥanīfah; however, we notice here that deeds are not included in Abū Ḥanīfah's definition of *Imān*, because it is different from it. On that, the Imam said, "Deeds are different from Imān and vice versa. This is evidenced by the fact that in many times the believer is detached from deeds, but we cannot say that he is detached from belief. For example, the woman in her menses is excused from observing prayers and we cannot say that Imān is detached from her." (Al-Babartī, 2009 CE) (Al-Babartī, 2009, p.74)

Mālik, al-Shāfiʿ ī, Aḥ mad, al-Awzāʿ ī, Isḥ āq ibn Rahawayh, all traditionists, people of *al-Ẓ āhirī* School of Law, and a group of theologians believe that Imān is "the conviction of the heart, approval with the tongue, and observance of deeds by body parts." (Ibn Abī al-ʿ Izz, 1417 AH / 1997 CE, 2/459)

So as not to believe that deeds are part of the essence of Imān, Ibn Ḥajar said, "The ancestors believe that Imān is the conviction of the heart, the speech of the tongue, and the observance of deeds by the body parts. By this, they mean that the observance of deeds is a condition for the perfection of Imān." (Ibn Ḥajar, 1379 AH, 1/46)

Imam al-Ashaʿ rī, for his part, defined Imān as "having firm belief in Allah," (Al-Ashaʿ rī, 1955 CE, p. 123) whereas Imam al-Māturīdī defined it as "the hearts' conviction." (Al-Mātūridī, 1426 AH / 2005 CE, 1/377)

Abū al-Maʿ īn al-Nasafī (d. 508 AH), for his part, said, "Heart conviction is the essence of Imān the slave should observe towards Allah the Exalted. It thus means to believe the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) in all what he is sent with. So, anyone who acted like this is a believer in the Sight of Allah. As for approval, it needs to be publicized so that the rulings of Islam would be applied to the person." (Al-Nasafī, 1406 AH / 1986 CE, 377 – 378)

Al-Jahm's opinion on Imān is invalid as he restricted it to mere knowledge, though Imān is conviction. It is known that knowledge is different from conviction. That is because conviction

is the opposite of telling lies, while ignorance is the opposite of knowledge. (Al-Ṣ ābūnī, 1441 AH / 2020 CE, p. 743)

Abū al-Muʿ īn al-Nasafī supported his opinion on the falsehood of al-Jahm's opinion by the following: "Belief in all the Prophets, Messengers, Scriptures, and Angels is well proven. It is synonymous with conviction. Knowledge of the essence of all of these does not exist. The stubborn knew him as they knew their children, yet they concealed the truth while they knew it. Accordingly, they were not called believers by virtue of this knowledge due to the lack of conviction and the presence of its opposite (i.e. denying the truth)." (Al-Nasafī, 2011, 2/1086)

Based on the above, we understand the reason for Ibn Ṭ ahmān's strictness towards al-Jahmiyyah. For him and the other traditionists, knowledge is not enough for the realization of Imān; rather, the heart conviction is a must. On that, al-Khaṭ īb narrated through his chain of transmission on the authority of Aḥ mad ibn Ḥ anbal that Ibrāhīm ibn Ṭ ahmān was "very strict towards al-Jahmiyyah." (Al-Khaṭ īb, 2002, 7/17) This strictness is manifested clear in the following narration: it is recorded that Ibn Ṭ ahmān intended to perform Hajj, but when he reached Neyshabur, he found them adopting the ideology of al-Jahm, whereupon he said, "To stay with those people (to correct their deviation) is better than performance of Hajj. So, he stayed among them and made them leave al-Jahm's opinion to *al-Irja'*." (Al-Khaṭ īb, 2002, 7/16) The narration shows Ibn Ṭ ahmān's strictness towards al-Jamiyah, a point that is crystal clear in the fact that he postponed Hajj only to correct those people's deviation.

Noteworthy to mention that Ibn Ṭ ahmān composed books to answer the misconceptions of al-Jahmiyyah. His *Mashyakhat Ibn Ṭ ahmān* is a case in point. He composed it to refute the ideaolgy of al-Jahmiyyah.

However, Ibn Ṭ ahmāns was not the only traditionist that cared for replying to al-Jahmiyyah; rather, many traditionists, such as al-Awzāʿ ī (d. 151 AH), (Ibn Qaiyem., 1408 AH / 1988 CE, 2/135) Imam Aḥ mad Ibn Ḥ anbal in his *Al-Radd ʿ Alā al-Jahmiyyah*

Wa al-Zanādiqah, (Ibn al-Nadīm, 1417 AH/1997, p. 281) Abū Saʿ īd ʿ Uthmān ibn Khālid ibn Saʿ īd al-Dārimī al-Sajistānī (d. 280 AH) authored *Al-Radd ʿ Alā al-Jahmiyyah*, (Al-Zirklī, 2002, 4/205) etc.

Editor of *Mashyakhtu Ibn Ṭ ahmān,* Muḥ ammad Ṭ āhir Mālik holds the opinion that the first traditionist to exert considerable efforts in refuting *al-Jahmiyyah* ideology is Ibrāhīm ibn Ṭ ahmān. He stated the reason for this, as follows: "Just as Ibrāhīm ibn Ṭ ahmān died in 163 AH, that is, about 80 years before the death of Aḥ mad ibn Ḥ anbal who died in 241 AH, this means that Ibn Ṭ ahmān, not Ibn Ḥ anbal, is the first traditionist who refuted the ideology of al-Jahmiyyah. Even though he managed to make it decline in Neyshabur, it emerged in another form in Baghdad, about one century later." (see his introduction to *Mashyakhtu Ibn Ṭ ahmān*, 1403 AH/1983 CE, p. 5)

Conclusion:

The concept of *Al-Irjā* is indeed one of the most important topics highlighted by Al-Khaṭīb. The study shows that this concept may be understood in different ways: it may refer to those extremists who opine that doers of major sins won't be punished at all in the Hereafter since punishment is prepared only for the disbelievers, and it may also refer to the *Murji'ah* from the scholars of Hadith whose ideology is close to that of the People of the Sunnah and Congregation in the sense that they believed ruling on the doers of major sins is left to Allah the Exalted.

Al-Khaṭīb, for his part, did not highlight the radical *Murj'ah* or, in other words, the disfavored meaning of the word. Rather, he paid attention to discussing the *Irjā'* of the People of the Sunnah and Congregation in the sense that it revolves around leaving the affair of the doers of major sins to Allah the Exalted. Al-Khaṭīb recorded the biographies of many of the *Murji'ah* of the People of Sunnah and Congregation, yet he strongly focused on Ibrāhīm ibn Ṭahmān.

Al-Khaṭīb stated that Ibn Ṭahmān did not adopt an extremist approach in *Al-Irjā'*; rather, his approach was a praiseworthy one that goes hand in hand with the People of the Sunnah's opinion on it. Al-Khaṭīb shows that Ibn Ṭahmān's approach came in response to *Al-Khawārij* who used to label people as disbelievers for committing sins.

Al-Khaṭīb showed that Ibn Ṭahmān, among many others of the *Murji'ah* of the scholars of Hadith, adhered to this opinion for the following reason: - to reply to *Al-Jahmiyyah* who believes that *maʿ rifah* (i.e., knowledge) is the essence of Iman. For this reason, Ibn Ṭahmān exerted considerable efforts in replying to them.

For Al-Khaṭīb, praiseworthy *Irjā'* means leaving the ruling on the doers of the major sins to Allah, hoping that Allah would forgive them, which is the essence of the attitude of the People of Sunnah.

Notes:

1- He is the polymath *Ḥ āfiẓ* Aḥ mad ibn ʿ Alī ibn Thābit ibn Aḥ mad ibn Mahdī, Abū al-Ḥ asan al-Khaṭ īb, better known as al-Khaṭ īb al-Baghdādī. He was the most prominent and prolific muḥ addith of his time. He was an Ashʿ arite and Shāfiʿ ite scholar who authored many works to defend the People of Sunnah's school of thought, yet his well-known compilation is *Tārīkh Baghdād (*Al-Samʿ ānī, 1382 AH/ 1962 CE, 5/166), (Ibn ʿ Asākir, 1415 AH/1995 CE, 5/31), (Ibn Nuqṭ a, 1408 AH/1988 CE, p. 153).

2- *Al-Karrāmiyah:* They are the followers of *Muḥ ammad ibn Karram al-Sijistānī*. They believe in *al-Tahsbīh* (i.e. likening) and *al-Tajsīm* (i.e. anthropomorphism). In addition, they opine that *Imaan* is nothing but speech with the tongue. In other words, as long as the person utters the testimony of faith, he is a true believer, though he thinks that disbelief is true."

(Al-Baghdādī, al-Farq Bayna al-Firaq, 1977 CE, p. 202f and p. 212).

3- See, for example, his narrations on *Ibrāhīm ibn Ṭ ahmān*; *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 7/18. This

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