

Landmarks of Moderation in the Creed of Maghrebi Mālikism and Its Role in Combating Extremism: Issues of Faith as a Model

معالمٌ وسطيّة عقيدة مالكية المغرب وأثرها في محاربة التطرّف: مسائلُ الإيمان أنموذجاً

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Abstract:

This paper explores the doctrinal architecture of the Mālikī school in the Maghreb as a coherent and integrated system that brings together transmitted tradition (*athar*) and contextual application (*tanzīl*), thereby grounding a principled form of moderation (*wasatiyyah*) in matters of faith (*īmān*). Mālikī scholars have consistently maintained that faith is a composite of affirmation, conviction, and practice; it admits of increase and decrease, while the question of exception (*istithnā*) is carefully regulated through a distinction between what is doctrinally acceptable and what is not. They further hold that the perpetrator of a major sin remains a believer by virtue of his faith, yet is deemed sinful on account of his grave act—without being declared an unbeliever—in order to preserve the unity of the community.

The paper also examines the Mālikī critique of both Murji'ite and Khārijite tendencies, highlighting their sustained historical efforts to counter doctrinal deviation in the Moroccan context. What emerges is a close interweaving of theoretical grounding and practical application in the construction of a balanced theological discourse. This moderate approach has played a significant role in fostering intellectual security and in curbing both forms of extremism: excommunicative (*takfīrī*) and antinomian or laxist.

The study concludes that Mālikī moderation constitutes a robust and effective scholarly model for safeguarding societies against ideological excess.

Keywords: Mālikism, moderation, faith, exception, major sin, Khārijites, Murji'ites, extremism.

ملخص:

تعالج المداخلة البنية العقدية للمدرسة المالكية بالمغرب بوصفها نسقاً متكاملًا يجمع بين الأثر والتنزيل، ويؤسس لوسطية راسخة في مسائل الإيمان. وقد قرر المالكية أن الإيمان مركب من قول واعتقاد وعمل، يزيد وينقص، مع ضبط مسألة الاستثناء فيه تمييزاً بين المشروع والممنوع. كما قرروا أن مرتكب الكبيرة مؤمن بإيمانه فاسق بكبيرته دون تكفير، حفظاً لوحدة الجماعة. وتعرضت المداخلة لنقد المالكية للنزعتين الإرجائية والخارجية، مع إبراز جهودهم التاريخية في مقاومة الانحراف العقدي بالمغرب. ويظهر من ذلك تلازم التأصيل النظري مع التطبيق العملي في بناء خطاب عقدي متوازن، وقد أسهم هذا المنهج الوسطي في تحقيق الأمن الفكري ومنع التطرف بنوعيه: التكفيري والانفلاطي. وتخلص المداخلة إلى أن وسطية المالكية تمثل نموذجاً علمياً ناجحاً في تحصين المجتمعات.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المالكية، الوسطية، الإيمان، الاستثناء، الكبيرة، الخوارج، المرجئة، التطرف

Introduction:

This paper forms part of a broader effort to elucidate the doctrinal structure of the Mālikī school within its Moroccan milieu—not merely as a legal tradition, but as a comprehensive epistemic framework in which the principles of belief are organically intertwined with the methods of reasoning and inference. In the Maghreb, the Mālikī school has been distinguished by its ability to harmonise a firm grounding in transmitted tradition with a refined sensitivity to contextual realities. Its treatment of questions relating to faith thus occupies a judicious middle ground between excess and deficiency, preserving communal cohesion while foreclosing the avenues that lead to excommunication and doctrinal disarray.

Given that the question of faith has historically been one of the most contested domains in Islamic theology, a careful examination of the formulations advanced by Moroccan Mālikī scholars reveals a deeply balanced approach—one that responds to the rigorism of the Khārijites and the permissiveness of the Murji'ites alike. In doing so, it establishes a theological discourse that remains faithful to the scriptural corpus while remaining attentive to its normative spirit, thereby contributing in a meaningful way to shielding societies from extremist currents.

Within this framework, the central problem guiding this paper may be formulated as follows: How have the defining features of moderation within the creed of Moroccan Mālikism, as articulated through key issues of faith, contributed to the cultivation of intellectual resilience against extremism?

The response to this question unfolds through two interrelated thematic axes, both situated within a coherent and balanced theological vision.

The first axis is concerned with elucidating the doctrinal foundations upon which Moroccan Mālikī scholars construct their understanding of faith. This is developed through three principal sections. The first seeks to define the nature and boundaries of faith, demonstrating that it consists of affirmation, verbal profession, and embodied practice, and that it is subject to increase and decrease. The second addresses the doctrinal grounding of the principle of exception in matters of faith, carefully distinguishing between a legitimate form rooted in humility and reverential awareness, and an illegitimate form grounded in doubt—while highlighting the implications of this distinction for the refinement of theological discourse. The third clarifies their position regarding the perpetrator of a major sin, affirming that such an individual remains a believer in terms of faith while being sinful on account of the grave act—without lapsing into excommunication, yet without negating divine warning—within a framework that safeguards communal cohesion and prevents fragmentation.

The second axis turns to the Mālikī school's position toward dissenting theological trends in matters of faith. It is developed through two principal sections: the first offers a critical assessment of Murji'ite tendencies, while the second undertakes a systematic refutation of Khārijite thought. This discussion is further enriched by concrete historical illustrations of how Mālikī scholars in the Maghreb resisted extremist doctrines, including the ways in which certain Khārijite and Murji'ite ideas found their way into the region and the scholarly responses mobilised to counter them.

Taken together, the components of this paper are organised within a coherent analytical framework that highlights the inseparability of sound theoretical grounding and its historical,

practical extension in confronting extremism. This renders the Mālikī model particularly pertinent in contemporary contexts, where it offers a well-founded intellectual basis for dismantling extremist discourse and reorienting religious consciousness toward a principled moderation—one that is rooted in a deep understanding of both scriptural texts and lived realities, and that sustains a harmonious relationship between belief and practice, as well as between communal belonging and inclusivity.

The detailed exposition proceeds as follows:

Axis One: The Doctrinal Foundations of Issues of Faith in Moroccan Mālikism:

The domain of faith (*īmān*) stands among the most delicate and consequential areas of Islamic theology, for upon it rests the determination of religious identity and the regulation of one's affiliation with the Muslim community. It forms the basis upon which judgments concerning individuals and groups are rendered, and from it emerge questions of excommunication (*taḳfīr*) and the attribution of sinfulness (*tafsīq*), together with their far-reaching theoretical and practical implications. Mālikī scholars in the Maghreb have devoted sustained attention to this field, articulating it with precision on the basis of the Qur'an and the Sunnah, while following in the footsteps of the righteous predecessors (*al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ*). In doing so, they have elaborated a balanced doctrinal vision that preserves the integrity of faith from dilution while shielding it from excess and unwarranted severity. Their formulations thus remain closely aligned with the higher objectives of the Sharī'ah in safeguarding both religion and communal cohesion.

Within this perspective, the present axis seeks to elucidate the doctrinal principles upon which Moroccan Mālikīs build their understanding of faith, through three sections:

Section One: The Nature of Faith According to Scholars of the Islamic West (The Maghreb):

The question of the nature of faith occupies a central place in theological reflection, as it governs the validity of belief and the soundness of one's affiliation with the Muslim community. Through it, the relationship between the inward and outward dimensions of religion becomes intelligible, as does the distinction between its foundational core and its degrees of completion.

Scholars of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah have approached this concept with considerable precision, affirming that faith is neither a mere inward assent devoid of expression nor a verbal declaration detached from inner conviction. Rather, it constitutes an all-encompassing reality that integrates the acts of the heart, the utterances of the tongue, and the deeds of the limbs. It increases through obedience and diminishes through disobedience, with a careful differentiation between what constitutes its essential foundation and what pertains to its obligatory or recommended perfection.

Scholars of the Islamic West were by no means removed from this doctrinal grounding. On the contrary, they played a significant role in consolidating and transmitting it as a natural continuation of the broader Sunnī tradition. They devoted particular attention to articulating it within their pedagogical and theological contexts, while preserving the core principles of Ahl al-Sunnah, clarifying the boundaries and conditions of faith, and warning against the pitfalls of both excess and neglect.

Accordingly, this section is divided into two subsections: the first addresses the affirmation that actions form an integral part of faith, while the second examines the principle that faith is subject to increase and decrease.

Subsection One: Mālikī Affirmations that Actions Constitute an Integral Component of Faith:

It is widely acknowledged that defining the nature of faith constitutes a foundational inquiry from which numerous theological questions branch out. Through it, the limits of faith are determined—what properly belongs to it and what lies beyond its scope. On this matter, a well-known divergence emerged between Ahl al-Sunnah and other theological trends. The Murji'ites confined faith to inward assent or verbal profession, whereas the early generations (*al-salaf*) regarded it as a comprehensive designation encompassing speech, action, and intention.

The Mālikī school—inasmuch as it represents a direct **continuation** of the Medinan scholarly tradition—did not depart from this foundational principle. Rather, it affirmed it in unequivocal terms across its authoritative works, in full concordance with the methodological orientation of the earliest and most exemplary generations of Islam.

Among the Mālikī textual statements that articulate this doctrine are the following:

Abū Muḥammad Ibn Abī Zayd states: “Speech is not complete without action; neither speech nor action is valid without intention; and neither speech, action, nor intention is valid except in accordance with the Sunnah”¹.

Ibn Abī Zamanīn likewise states: “It is among the doctrines of Ahl al-Sunnah that faith consists of sincerity devoted to God in the heart, testimony by the tongue, and action through the limbs, grounded in sound intention and conformity to the Sunnah”².

Ibn Baṭṭāl states: “The doctrine of Ahl al-Sunnah, among both the early generations of the “the Muslim community” and those who followed them, is that faith consists of speech and action”³.

Abū ‘Umar Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr states: “The scholars of jurisprudence and ḥadīth are unanimously agreed that faith consists of speech and action, and that no action is valid without intention”⁴.

Al-Bājī states: “The doctrine of Ahl al-Sunnah is that faith consists of speech and action”⁵.

These texts reveal a structural coherence in the Mālikī understanding of the nature of faith. Three elements consistently recur: verbal expression, inward conviction, and outward action. To these are added intention and conformity to the Sunnah, both of which function as necessary conditions for the validity of all these components. This recurrence is not merely emphatic repetition; rather, it establishes a central doctrinal meaning—namely, that action is intrinsically included within the very definition of faith.

Ibn Abī Zayd’s statement, “Speech is not complete without action,” indicates a necessary interdependence between the outward and inward dimensions. This corresponds precisely to

¹ *al-Risālah*, Ibn Abī Zayd al-Qayrawānī, p. 8.

² *Uṣūl al-Sunnah*, Ibn Abī Zamīnīn, p. 207.

³ *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Ibn Baṭṭāl, (1/56).

⁴ *al-Tamhīd*, Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr, (9/238).

⁵ *al-Muntaqā Sharḥ al-Muwatta’*, al-Bājī, (7/205).

what the early generations affirmed: that the components of faith are inseparable and cannot be meaningfully divided. His further inclusion of intention and adherence to the Sunnah clarifies that the action in question is not any action in the abstract, but specifically that which is legislatively valid and in accordance with the Sharī‘ah.

It is also noteworthy that these formulations are not limited to a single authority; rather, they are reiterated by leading Mālikī scholars such as Ibn Abī Zayd, Ibn Abī Zamanīn, Ibn Baṭṭāl, and Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr. This repetition across multiple authorities indicates that this principle is firmly established within the school and transmitted as a matter of consensus rather than individual disagreement.

Furthermore, the consistent linkage of these definitions to the doctrine of Ahl al-Sunnah—as reflected in statements such as “the doctrine of Ahl al-Sunnah is that faith consists of speech and action”—demonstrates that the Mālikīs did not consider themselves innovators in this regard. Rather, they saw themselves as transmitters of this doctrine from the early generations, committed to its preservation.

A comparative analytical reading with the methodology of the early generations reveals complete correspondence. Al-Zuhārī said: “We used to say: Islam is by outward declaration, and faith is by action; and faith is speech and action—two inseparable companions, neither of which benefits without the other”¹.

Al-Awzā‘ī said: “Faith is not sound without speech, nor are faith and speech sound without action”².

Al-Shāfi‘ī said: “There was consensus among the Companions, the Followers, and those who came after them whom we encountered, that faith consists of speech, action, and intention”³.

These reports demonstrate that the Mālikīs did not independently formulate this doctrine, but rather received it directly from the early generations and preserved it within their scholarly tradition. This reflects the unity of Sunni theological methodology between the Mālikīs of the Maghreb and scholars of other regions during the formative centuries.

Accordingly, a careful analysis shows that the inclusion of action within the definition of faith in Mālikī thought is not merely a juristic preference; rather, it is a foundational doctrinal principle grounded in the understanding of revelation according to the method of the early generations—one that affirms the inseparable relationship between belief and action, and recognises deeds as an essential reality within faith.

Subsection Two: Mālikī Affirmations that Faith Increases and Decreases

If it is established that faith consists of speech, action, and conviction, it necessarily follows that it is subject to increase and decrease. This principle is among the established foundations of Ahl al-Sunnah, and Mālikī scholars affirmed it in accordance with the formulations of the early generations.

Among the Mālikī statements on this issue:

Abū Muḥammad Ibn Abī Zayd states: “Faith consists of speech by the tongue, sincerity in the heart, and action through the limbs; it increases through obedience and decreases through

¹ *al-Īmān*, Ibn Taymiyyah, p. 231.

² *al-Ibānah al-Kubrā*, Ibn Baṭṭah, (2/807).

³ *al-Īmān*, Ibn Taymiyyah, p. 166.

disobedience—a decrease pertaining to the realities of perfection, not to the origin of faith itself”¹.

Ibn Abī Zamanīn states: “It is among the doctrines of Ahl al-Sunnah that faith consists of levels; it is completed, increases, and decreases. Were it otherwise, people would be equal in it, and the one who excels would have no merit over the one who follows”².

Ibn Baṭṭāl states: “The doctrine of the the Muslim community of Ahl al-Sunnah, among both the early generations and those who followed them, is that faith consists of speech and action, and that it increases and decreases”³.

Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr states: “The scholars of jurisprudence and ḥadīth are unanimously agreed that faith consists of speech and action, that no action is valid without intention, and that faith increases through obedience and decreases through disobedience”⁴.

Qāḍī ‘Iyāḍ states: “The doctrine of Ahl al-Sunnah is that faith increases through obedience and decreases through disobedience”⁵. He also reports: “More than one person heard Mālik say: faith consists of speech and action; it increases and decreases, and some parts of it are superior to others”⁶.

These texts demonstrate that the doctrine of the increase and decrease of faith is firmly established within the Mālikī school, and that it derives directly from their definition of faith—precisely as articulated by the early generations.

A comparison with the methodology of the early generations reveals complete correspondence. ‘Abd al-Razzāq reports: “I heard those whom we encountered among our teachers and companions—Sufyān al-Thawrī, Mālik b. Anas, ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Umar, al-Awzā‘ī, Ma‘mar b. Rāshid, Ibn Jurayj, and Sufyān b. ‘Uyaynah—saying: ‘Faith is speech and action; it increases and decreases’”⁷.

Al-Awzā‘ī said: “Those who preceded us among the early generations did not separate faith from action”⁸.

Al-Bukhārī said: “I met more than a thousand scholars across different regions, and I did not see any of them differ on the point that religion consists of speech and action”⁹.

Thus, it becomes clear that the Mālikī position on these two issues—namely, the inclusion of action within the definition of faith and its increase and decrease—corresponds exactly to the doctrine of the early generations, both in transmission and in doctrinal grounding. This confirms the unity of Sunni theological methodology in defining the nature of faith.

Section Two: The Position of Moroccan Scholars on Exception in Faith

This section addresses the doctrinal position of Mālikī scholars in the Maghreb regarding the issue of exception in faith. It is structured around two subsections, both situated within the

¹ *al-Jāmi‘ fī al-Sunan wa al-Ādāb*, Ibn Abī Zayd, p. 110.

² *Uṣūl al-Sunnah*, p. 211.

³ *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, (1/56).

⁴ *al-Tamhīd*, (9/238).

⁵ *Ikmāl al-Mu‘allim bi-Fawā‘id Muslim*, ‘Iyāḍ al-Yahsubī, (1/567).

⁶ *ibid.*, (1/567).

⁷ *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Ibn Baṭṭāl, (1/57).

⁸ *al-Minhāj fī Shu‘ab al-Īmān*, Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Ḥalīm, (1/50).

⁹ *Fath al-Bārī bi-Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, (1/47).

broader context of responding to the innovation of Murji'ism. In this discussion, the inherited doctrine of the early generations is integrated with Mālikī analytical clarification.

The emergence of this issue is directly linked to Murji'ite discourse. When they established that faith is a single entity that neither increases nor decreases, and that all believers are equal in it, this led them to deny the legitimacy of exception altogether. Indeed, they went so far as to consider it a form of doubt, and made categorical affirmation of faith a necessary implication of their doctrine. From this arose the dispute and the need to clarify the matter in accordance with the principles of Ahl al-Sunnah.

For this reason, Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Ājurri stated: “Beware—may God have mercy upon you—of the statement of one who says that his faith is like that of Jibrīl and Mīkā'il, or who says: ‘I am a believer in the sight of God, fully complete in faith.’ All of this belongs to the doctrine of the Murji'ah”¹.

‘Abd al-Rahmān b. Mahdī said: “If one abandons exception, that is the foundation of Murji'ism”².

This demonstrates that the origin of the discussion on this issue lies in refuting the Murji'ite claim and exposing the corruption of its foundational premise, rather than being a purely verbal or abstract inquiry. Rather, it is rooted in the foundational understanding of faith among the early generations—that it consists of speech and action and is subject to increase and decrease.

Accordingly, those who affirmed that faith increases and decreases did not assert for themselves the perfection of faith. Instead, they permitted exception out of piety and caution, and out of fear of self-praise—not out of doubt in the foundation of faith. Thus, Yaḥyā b. Sa'īd al-Qaṭṭān said: “I did not encounter any of our companions, nor has it been transmitted to us, except that they practiced exception”³.

At the same time, the omission of exception by some scholars occurred on a different basis—namely, to avoid the misconception of doubt in the origination of faith, not as an endorsement of Murji'ite doctrine. From this perspective, it becomes clear that the discourse of Mālikī scholars, particularly those of the Maghreb, is an extension of this early methodological foundation, not a departure from it. Rather, it represents one of its more refined applications, as will be clarified in the following subsection:

Subsection One: The Position of the Early Generations on Exception in Faith

A careful examination of the position of the early generations regarding the issue of exception in faith reveals the precision of their method in reconciling doctrinal foundations with the aims of spiritual refinement. Their statements on this issue were not the result of uncertainty or hesitation, but were grounded in a rigorous understanding of faith as consisting of speech, action, and conviction—an understanding from which both the affirmation of exception under certain considerations and its omission under others naturally follow, without contradiction or inconsistency. Rather, this reflects a diversity of expression within a unified doctrinal framework.

¹ *al-Sharī'ah*, al-Ājurri, (2/687).

² *ibid.*, (2/663).

³ *al-Sunnah*, Abū Bakr ibn al-Khallāl, (3/595).

Numerous reports from the early generations affirm the legitimacy of exception in faith. Al-Walīd b. Muslim said: “I heard Abū ‘Amr—that is, al-Awzā‘ī—as well as Mālik b. Anas and Sa‘īd b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, disapprove of one saying ‘I am a believer’ without qualification, and they permitted exception, that one should say: ‘I am a believer, if Allah wills’”¹.

Al-Bayhaqī reports: “A man asked ‘Alqamah, ‘Are you a believer?’ He replied: ‘I hope so, if God wills.’ This—meaning exception in faith—has been transmitted from a group of the Companions, the Followers, and the righteous early generations, may God be pleased with them all”².

Ibn Taymiyyah states: “As for the doctrine of the early scholars of ḥadīth—such as Ibn Mas‘ūd and his companions, al-Thawrī, Ibn ‘Uyaynah, most of the scholars of Kūfah, Yaḥyā b. Sa‘īd al-Qaṭṭān in his reports from the scholars of Baṣrah, Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, and others among the imams of the Sunnah—they practiced exception in faith, and this is mass-transmitted from them”³.

However, this position cannot be properly understood without recognising the underlying considerations upon which the early generations based their affirmation of exception. These considerations revolve around four foundational principles⁴:

First principle: Absolute faith, in their usage, encompasses the performance of all that has been commanded and the avoidance of all that has been prohibited. Thus, whoever unconditionally describes himself as a believer in this complete sense is effectively testifying to having attained the perfection of faith and to being among the righteous who fully uphold the rights of God. This is a claim no rational person would dare to make. Hence, exception is employed out of piety and fear of failing to realise this completeness. Accordingly, the expression “I am a believer, if God wills” is grounded in this principle, not in doubt.

Second principle: Consideration of the acceptance of one’s deeds. A person may perform actions, yet does not know whether they have been accepted. Allah says: “وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْتُونَ مَا آتَوْا وَقُلُوبُهُمْ وَجَلَةٌ” “And those who give what they give while their hearts are fearful.” It is authentically reported from the Mother of the Believers that she asked: “O Messenger of God, is this the one who commits fornication, steals, and drinks wine?” He replied: “No, O daughter of al-Ṣiddīq; rather, it is the one who prays, fasts, and gives charity, yet fears that it may not be accepted from him”⁵. For this reason, Ibn Baṭṭah said: “This is the path of the believers and the way of the discerning scholars: adherence to exception, coupled with fear and hope. They do not know what their state will be before God, nor whether their deeds are accepted or rejected”⁶.

Third principle: Avoidance of self-praise. To ascribe faith to oneself in absolute terms entails praising oneself with the highest attributes of perfection. Allah says: “فَلَا تَرْكَبُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ” “So do not claim purity for yourselves.”. Al-Ḥasan said: “Allah knows best what every soul

¹ *al-Sunnah*, ‘Abd Allāh ibn Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, (1/347).

² *Shu‘ab al-Īmān*, Maktabat al-Rushd, (1/164).

³ *Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā*, Ibn Taymiyyah, (7/439).

⁴ For further details, see: *Ziyādat al-Īmān wa Nuṣṣānuhu wa Ḥukm al-Istithnā’ fīh*, ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Badr, p. 465 ff.

⁵ Reported by al-Tirmidhī (3175) and Ibn Mājah (4198), authenticated by al-Albānī in *Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Mājah* (3403).

⁶ *al-Ibānah al-Kubrā*, (2/871).

has done and what it will become; so do not ascribe purity to yourselves—do not absolve yourselves of sin nor praise yourselves for your deeds”¹. When Imām Aḥmad was asked about exception—as reported by Abū Bakr al-Athram—he said: “As for me, I do not censure it... If one says that faith is speech and action, then one should make exception out of caution and carefulness—not, as they claim, out of doubt. Rather, exception relates to action... and thus it is an exception without doubt”².

Fourth principle: Exception may be used even in matters that are certain, not as an expression of doubt, but as a form of propriety, blessing, or consideration of the ultimate outcome—such as in the Prophet’s statement ﷺ: “And indeed, if God wills, we shall join you”³, despite the certainty of death. This demonstrates that exception does not necessarily imply doubt, but may instead follow an established normative usage.

From this, it becomes clear that exception among the early generations does not stem from uncertainty regarding the foundation of faith, but from these considerations. Accordingly, statements attributed to some of them in which they say, “I am a believer” without qualification do not present a contradiction. Rather, such statements are to be interpreted in one of several ways: either due to weakness in transmission, or because they refer to the origine of faith rather than its perfection, or because they are made in a general communicative context, or to dispel the misconception of doubt.

For example, Ibrāhīm al-Tamīmī said: “There is no harm in one of you saying: I am a believer...”⁴. What he intends is the foundation of faith, as indicated by his reasoning. Similarly, Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī said: “If one of you is asked: ‘Are you a believer?’ he should not doubt his faith”⁵. Here, the prohibition concerns doubt in the foundation of faith, not the legitimate practice of exception.

A clarifying synthesis between these two positions is found in the statement of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, who said: “Faith is of two kinds: if you ask me about faith in God, His angels, His books, His messengers, the Garden, the Fire, resurrection, and reckoning—then I am a believer. But if you ask me about the saying of Allah إِنَّْمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ :’, “The believers are only those who...” then by God, I do not know whether I am among them or not”⁶. Al-Bayhaqī comments: “Al-Ḥasan did not hesitate regarding the foundation of his faith; rather, his hesitation concerned its perfection”⁷.

This analysis demonstrates that when the early generations said, “I am a believer,” they referred to the foundation of faith; and when they said, “I am a believer, if God wills,” they referred to its perfection and ultimate outcome. In this way, the apparent tension is resolved, and both expressions are understood as valid within their respective contexts.

Upon this very principle rests the discourse of Mālikī scholars in the Maghreb on this issue. Those among them who affirm exception do so in accordance with this early methodological

¹ *ibid.*, (4/185).

² *Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā*, (7/668).

³ Reported by Muslim, (975).

⁴ Reported by Ibn Abī Shaybah in *al-Muṣannaf*, (29739).

⁵ Reported by Ibn Abī Shaybah in *al-Muṣannaf*, (31015).

⁶ *Shu‘ab al-Īmān*, (1/168).

⁷ *al-I‘tiqād*, al-Bayhaqī, p. 159.

understanding, while those who refrain from it intend only to prevent the misunderstanding of doubt in the foundation of faith—not to endorse the doctrine of the Murji'ah. Further elaboration of this will follow in the third subsection.

Subsection Two: Mālikī Imams of The Maghreb on the Question of Exception in Faith

The doctrinal articulations of the Mālikī imams of the Maghreb regarding the issue of exception (al-istithnā') in faith cannot be properly understood unless they are situated within their original context—namely, the polemical engagement with the Murji'ah, who addressed this question without due methodological grounding. They made the abandonment of exception a foundational principle of their doctrine and, on that basis, asserted definitive claims about the completeness of faith for anyone who merely professes it. Consequently, it became necessary for the imams of Ahl al-Sunnah—among them the Mālikīs—to refine the discourse in accordance with the method of the early generations (al-salaf). Their statements thus proceed along two complementary considerations: the completeness and ultimate outcome of faith, and its foundational establishment and present reality—without, in any respect, endorsing the Murji'ite position.

Al-Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ articulates this comprehensive principle as follows:

“The general position of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah on this matter is that exception in faith is permissible and legitimate. This is because, in their view, faith encompasses beliefs, statements, and actions. When one of them is asked this question, he qualifies his answer regarding his faith out of fear that he may not have perfected the actions through which faith is completed. Thus, he says in response: ‘I am a believer, if God wills,’ or ‘a believer, I hope,’ or similar expressions. This does not in any way imply doubt concerning the foundation (أصل) of faith—Allah forbid—for they are far above such a notion. Rather, it reflects a refusal to ascribe perfection to oneself or to testify that one has fully completed all required deeds. For this reason, they employ exception in speaking of faith. They have numerous evidences and supporting proofs from the Qur'ān and the Sunnah for this, which will be mentioned shortly. Upon this understanding their doctrine proceeds, and upon it their consensus is established”¹. He then clarifies the reconciliation between the two expressions and resolves any apparent contradiction, stating:

“In this there is an argument for those who permit the unqualified statement ‘I am a believer,’ and a refutation of those who prohibit it. This issue has been disputed since the time of the Companions, may God be pleased with them, and continuing thereafter. Each position, when properly understood, has a valid basis, and in its proper context does not contradict the other. Whoever does not employ exception is speaking about his present state; as for the ultimate outcome, it rests with the Knower of the unseen. Whoever employs exception is alluding to what has been decreed for him in the Preserved Tablet (al-lawḥ al-maḥfūz), and to the broader latitude between the two expressions—a view held by al-Awzā'ī and others among the early generations. This is the position of those who have attained precise understanding, in light of what we have explained, and it resolves the disagreement”².

¹ *Ikmāl al-Mu'allim*, (1/461).

² *ibid.*, (1/461).

This same formulation is echoed and analytically refined by Ibn Baṭṭāl, who states: “People have long differed and debated intensely over the statement ‘I am a believer.’ The origin of this goes back to a report concerning one of the companions of Mu‘ādh b. Jabal, who came to Ibn Mas‘ūd. His companions asked him: ‘Are you a believer?’ He replied: ‘Yes.’ They then asked: ‘Are you among the people of Paradise?’ He said: ‘I do not know; I have sins, and if I knew that they were forgiven, I would say that I am a believer among the people of Paradise.’ Ibn Mas‘ūd said: ‘You have spoken correctly, my brother. Faith is nothing other than believing in God, His angels, His books, His messengers, Paradise, Hell, resurrection, and the scales. We have sins, and we do not know what God will do with them. If we knew they were forgiven, we would say that we are among the people of Paradise.’ Abū Bakr b. al-Ṭayyib said: ‘The rationale for exception here is that one does not know whether he will remain steadfast upon faith and adhere to it throughout the remainder of his life or deviate from it. As for the one who says: “I am truly a believer” or “a believer in the sight of God,” he intends his present state of faith.’ Abū ‘Ubayd said: ‘Al-Awzā‘ī held that both employing exception and omitting it are acceptable: whoever says “I am a believer” has done well, and whoever says “I am a believer, if God wills” has also done well”¹.

This is an explicit affirmation that the disagreement is one of legitimate variation (*ikhtilāf tanawwu’*), where both expressions are valid within their respective considerations, rather than contradictory positions at the level of doctrinal foundations.

Similarly, Abū ‘Amr al-Dānī states:

“This is what justifies the use of exception: the fact that all are ignorant of their ultimate end and how their affairs will conclude”².

This explanation returns the rationale for exception to consideration of the final outcome, not to doubt in the foundation of faith.

On this basis, the divergence among Mālikī scholars in the Maghreb is not a contradiction but a difference in perspective. One group—such as Ibn ‘Abdūs and Luqmān b. Yūsuf—affirmed exception, in alignment with the apparent (ظاهر) position of the early generations and as a precaution regarding completeness and final outcome. Ibn ‘Abdūs states: “I profess that I am a believer before God at this present moment, but I do not know how my end will be”³.

This accords with what is established from the imams of the Sunnah. It is also supported by what is reported from Imām Aḥmad—as in the narration of al-Marwadhī—that when he was asked, “If I make exception regarding my faith, does that mean I am doubting?” he replied: “No.” This is further corroborated by the statement of Ḥammād b. Zayd: “They call us doubters, but by God we have never doubted our religion. However, certain matters have arisen—has it not been mentioned that even a small amount of ostentation (*riyā’*) constitutes شرك (associating partners with God)? Then where is one free from ostentation?”⁴.

This clearly indicates that exception is not rooted in doubt, but in piety and caution.

Another group—led by Muḥammad b. Saḥnūn—opted to refrain from exception, following what is reported from Imām Mālik. When he was asked: “Should I say: ‘I am a believer, and

¹ *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, (1/83).

² *al-Risālah al-Wāfiyah li-Madḥhab Ahl al-Sunnah*, Abū ‘Amr al-Dānī, p. 177.

³ *Tartīb al-Madārik wa Taqrīb al-Masālik*, al-Qāḍī ‘Iyāḍ, (4/227).

⁴ *al-Sunnah*, ‘Abd Allāh ibn Aḥmad, (1/347).

God is praised, if God wills’?” he replied: “Say: ‘I am a believer,’ and do not mix anything else with it.” This is reported by Ibn Abī Zayd, who also transmitted from Muḥammad b. Saḥnūn his statement: “Do not combine anything with it”¹. Muḥammad b. Saḥnūn authored his work *al-Īmān wa al-Radd ‘alā Ahl al-Shakk* (“Faith and the Refutation of the People of Doubt”), and this approach was followed by ‘Abd Allāh b. Ghāfiq in his book *al-Īmān*², Yaḥyā b. ‘Umar in *al-Radd ‘alā al-Shukkāk* (“Refutation of the Skeptics”)³, Yaḥyā b. ‘Awn in *al-Radd ‘alā Ahl al-Bida’* (“Refutation of the People of Innovation”)⁴, and Ibrāhīm b. ‘Attāb⁵. All of this was not in agreement with the Murji’ah, but rather as a means of blocking the path to doubt regarding the foundation of faith and refuting those who introduced hesitation into the foundation of religion.

Abū ‘Amr al-Dānī states:

“Exception in faith is permissible and expansive when it relates to the ultimate outcome or to completeness; however, it is not permissible when used in the sense of doubt, for the least degree of faith that is accepted is that which is not accompanied by doubt”⁶.

Ibn ‘Arafah states:

“The precise view is that if one intends to inform about his present state, there is no issue in it; but if he intends to refer to the ultimate outcome of his affair, then exception is necessary”⁷.

Al-Nafrāwī states:

“For this reason, it is valid for a person to say: ‘I am a believer, if God wills,’ with consideration of the ultimate outcome”⁸.

Al-Ṭāhir Ibn ‘Āshūr states:

“What was established by Shaykh Abū Muḥammad b. Abī Zayd and ‘Iyāḍ is that the disagreement is merely verbal. If one says ‘if God wills’ while his inner state of faith corresponds to his outward expression, there is no harm in it. However, if it stems from doubt, then it constitutes doubt in faith—and that is not what Ibn ‘Abdūs intended”⁹.

Accordingly, the objection of Muḥammad b. Saḥnūn is directed specifically at those who doubt the foundation of their faith, not at those who employ exception out of piety concerning its completeness. His position, therefore, is a refutation of the doctrine of doubt, not an affirmation of Murji’ite theology—especially since the Murji’ah assert the certainty of complete faith.

Section Three: The Position of Moroccan Scholars on the Perpetrator of Major Sins

The question of the ruling concerning the perpetrator of a major sin (fā’il al-kabīrah) is among the most intricate and far-reaching issues in the theology of faith. It is rooted in a fundamental

¹ *al-Jāmi’*, Ibn Abī Zayd, p. 122.

² *Tartīb al-Madārik*, (4/399).

³ *ibid.*, (4/359).

⁴ *ibid.*, (4/402).

⁵ *ibid.*, (4/397).

⁶ *al-Risālah al-Wāfiyah*, p. 175.

⁷ *Tafsīr Ibn ‘Arafah*, (3/218).

⁸ *al-Fawākih al-Dawānī Sharḥ Risālat Ibn Abī Zayd al-Qayrawānī*, Aḥmad ibn Ghanīm al-Nafrāwī, (1/61).

⁹ *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, Ibn ‘Āshūr, (9/10).

principle over which sects have differed—namely, the nature of faith itself: is it an indivisible whole, or a composite reality that admits gradation, increase, and decrease?

From this foundational question arose the اختلاف (divergence) regarding the ruling on the perpetrator of major sins. The approaches of the various sects within the Muslim community (ahl al-qiblah) diverged between excess and negligence. The shared premise underlying the positions of the groups that opposed Ahl al-Sunnah—such as the Khārijites, the Murji'ah, the Mu'tazilah, and the Jahmiyyah—is that they regarded faith as a single, indivisible entity. Accordingly, they held that if part of it is lost, all of it is lost; and if part of it is present, all of it is present. They did not affirm a composite reality capable of differentiation and gradation.

Ibn Taymiyyah states:

“The root of the dispute among these groups—namely the Khārijites, the Murji'ah, the Mu'tazilah, the Jahmiyyah, and others—regarding faith is that they made it a single entity: if part of it disappears, all of it disappears; and if part of it is established, all of it is established. They did not say that some of it may go while some remains, as the Prophet ﷺ said: ‘There will come out of the Fire whoever has in his heart the weight of a grain of faith’”^{1, 2}

This principle is the source of deviation in this domain. On its basis, the Khārijites declared the perpetrators of major sins to be unbelievers and expelled them from Islam; the Murji'ah, conversely, considered sinners to possess complete faith, rendering sin inconsequential to its reality; while the Mu'tazilah adopted an intermediate position in outward form, placing the perpetrator of a major sin in a “position between two positions” (manzilah bayna al-manzilatayn) in this world, yet ruling that he will abide eternally in Hell in the Hereafter—due to their shared underlying premise.

Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah opposed this foundational assumption. They affirmed that faith consists of speech and action, increases with obedience, decreases with disobedience, and comprises multiple branches and levels. It may partially diminish while its essential basis remains. Thus, a person may simultaneously possess faith and sin, obedience and disobedience (مخالفة). He is not stripped of the foundation of faith due to sin; rather, it remains with him in a deficient form. He is therefore subject to the will of God: if He wills, He forgives him; and if He wills, He punishes him.

In this way, they differ from other groups: from the Murji'ah by affirming increase and decrease and the effect of actions on faith; and from the “threat-oriented” groups (al-wa'idiyyah)—such as the Khārijites and Mu'tazilah—by affirming the continuity (استمرار) of the foundation of faith despite sin, and by rejecting both excommunication and eternal damnation for the perpetrator of major sins.

Ibn Taymiyyah states:

“By this, the response to the doubts (شبهات) of the people of innovation—such as the Khārijites, the Murji'ah, and others who claim that faith does not admit division, superiority, or decrease (نقصان)—becomes clear. They argue that if part of it goes, all of it goes, since a composite entity ceases entirely when one of its parts is removed... From this premise their

¹ Reported by al-Tirmidhī (2598), authenticated by al-Albānī in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Tirmidhī* (2598).

² *Majmū' al-Fatāwā*, (7/510).

paths diverged. As for the Companions and Ahl al-Sunnah and the scholars of ḥadīth, they said: it increases and decreases”¹.

Based on this same principle, Ahl al-Sunnah also affirm that elements of faith and elements of disbelief may coexist within a single individual, as indicated by scriptural evidence. Allah says: “وَمَا يُؤْمِنُ أَكْثَرُهُمْ بِاللَّهِ إِلَّا وَهُمْ مُشْرِكُونَ” “**And most of them do not believe in Allah except while associating partners with Him**”, and the Prophet ﷺ said: “The adulterer does not commit adultery while he is a believer”², despite the persistence of the foundation of faith.

Ibn al-Qayyim states:

“Here lies another foundational principle: a person may combine within himself disbelief and faith, association and tawḥīd, piety and immorality, hypocrisy and faith. This is among the most important principles of Ahl al-Sunnah, and it is opposed by other groups of innovation such as the Khārijites, Mu‘tazilah, and Qadariyyah. The issue of whether the people of major sins will exit the Fire or remain therein eternally is built upon this principle”³.

Thus, it becomes clear that the root of disagreement concerning the ruling on the perpetrator of major sins ultimately returns to the question of the nature of faith: is it an indivisible whole, or a composite reality that admits division and gradation? Upon the answer to this question depend all subsequent positions on the issue.

Subsection One: The Ruling on the Perpetrator of Major Sins According to Ahl al-Sunnah

This is to be considered from two perspectives: in this world and in the Hereafter.

First: His ruling in this world

Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā‘ah maintain that the perpetrator of a major sin does not exit the fold of Islam merely by committing it. Rather, he remains a Muslim—fāsiq (morally corrupt), deficient in faith—in whom the foundation of faith coexists with the cause of sinfulness. He is not stripped of the designation of Islam, nor is he granted the fullness of faith.

This principle is firmly grounded in the Qur’ān and the Sunnah, and upon it the consensus of the early generations is established. The imams of creed have consistently affirmed it in both transmission and doctrinal formulation.

Al-Ṭahāwī states:

“We do not declare any of the people of the qiblah to be unbelievers on account of a sin, so long as he does not consider it lawful; nor do we say that sin does not harm the one who commits it while possessing faith”⁴.

Ibn Baṭṭah states:

“The scholars are unanimously agreed—without disagreement—that no one from the people of the qiblah is declared an unbeliever due to a sin, nor do we expel them from Islam on account of disobedience. We hope for the good-doer and fear for the wrongdoer”⁵.

Al-Ṣābūnī states:

¹ *Minhāj al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah*, Ibn Taymiyyah, (5/204–205).

² Reported by al-Bukhārī (6782).

³ *al-Ṣalāh wa Ḥukm Tārikihā*, Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, p. 60.

⁴ *Matn al-‘Aqīdah al-Ṭahāwiyyah*, Abū Ja‘far al-Ṭahāwī, p. 21.

⁵ *al-Sharḥ wa al-Ibānah ‘alā Uṣūl al-Diyānah*, Ibn Baṭṭah al-‘Ukbarī, p. 242.

“Ahl al-Sunnah believe that a believer, even if he commits many sins—whether minor or major—does not become an unbeliever on account of them. If he leaves this world without repentance and dies upon tawhīd and sincerity, then his affair is consigned to God, Mighty and Majestic”¹.

Ibn Taymiyyah states:

“Despite this, they do not declare the people of the qiblah to be unbelievers on account of sins and major transgressions, as the Khārijites do. Rather, the bond of faith remains despite sin... They do not strip the sinful believer of the designation of faith entirely, nor do they consign him to eternal damnation in the Fire, as the Mu‘tazilah claim. Rather, the fāsiq remains within the scope of faith”².

On this basis, his legal status in this world is that of other Muslims: the sanctity of his life and property is preserved, and he is included in all legal rulings pertaining to inheritance, marriage, lawful slaughter, and other aspects of communal life.

Sufyān al-Thawrī states:

“Whoever prays facing this qiblah is, in our view, a believer. People, in our view, are believers by their profession of faith; they share in inheritance, marriage, legal punishments, slaughtered animals, and ritual practices. They have sins and errors, and God will take them to account—if He wills, He will punish them, and if He wills, He will forgive them. We do not know what they are in the sight of God”³.

Al-Barbahārī states:

“Know that this world is the abode of faith and Islam, and the الأمة of Muḥammad ﷺ within it are believers and Muslims in terms of their legal rulings: their inheritance, their slaughtered animals, and the prayer over them. We do not testify for anyone to the reality of complete faith until he fulfils all the laws of Islam. If he falls short in any of that, he is deficient in faith until he repents”⁴.

As for the application of the term “believer” to such a person, there is a recognized اختلاف لفظي (terminological difference), as explained by Ibn Taymiyyah:

“Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā‘ah hold that he is a believer with deficient faith; otherwise, he would not be punished. Just as he is deficient in righteousness and piety by agreement among Muslims. The question remains: is he to be called a ‘believer’ in an absolute sense? On this there are two positions, and the correct view is one of qualification. If asked concerning rulings in this world—such as emancipation in expiation—it is said: he is a believer. Likewise, if asked whether he falls under the address (خطاب) to believers. However, if asked about his status in the Hereafter, it is said: he is not among the category of believers promised Paradise outright. Rather, he possesses faith that prevents him from abiding eternally in the Fire, and through which he will eventually enter Paradise after being punished, if God does not forgive him. For this reason, it has been said: he is a believer by virtue of his faith and a fāsiq by virtue of his major sin—or a believer with deficient faith”⁵.

¹ *‘Aqīdah al-Salaf Aṣḥāb al-Ḥadīth*, Abū ‘Uthmān al-Ṣābūnī, p. 13.

² *Matn al-‘Aqīdah al-Wāsiṭiyyah*, Ibn Taymiyyah, p. 8.

³ *al-Sunnah*, ‘Abd Allāh ibn Aḥmad, (1/374).

⁴ *Sharḥ al-Sunnah*, al-Barbahārī, p. 30.

⁵ *Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā*, (7/354).

Second: The ruling of the perpetrator of major sins in the Hereafter

As for his ruling in the Hereafter, the Ahl al-Sunnah believe that he is under the will of Allah Almighty: if He wills, He forgives him, and if He wills, He punishes him according to his sin. He will not remain eternally in Hell, but his final destination is Paradise, as Imam al-Tahawi said:

“The people of major sins from the Ummah of Muhammad ﷺ will not remain eternally in Hell if they die as monotheists, even if they were not repentant, after meeting Allah while knowing Him. They are under the will and judgment of Allah: if He wills, He forgives them and pardons them by His grace, as He, the Exalted, mentioned in His Book: ‘Indeed, Allah does not forgive association with Him,’ and if He wills, He punishes them in Hell by His justice, then brings them out of it by His mercy and the intercession of those who intercede from among the people of obedience, then He admits them into His Paradise. This is because Allah is the Protector of those who know Him, and He did not make them in the two abodes like those who deny Him¹”.

Al-Ṣābūnī said:

“Ahl al-Sunnah believe that if a believer commits many sins, whether minor or major, he does not become a disbeliever because of them. Even if he leaves this world without repentance, dying upon monotheism and sincerity, his affair is with Allah. If He wills, He forgives him and admits him into Paradise on the Day of Resurrection safe and victorious, not punished in Hell nor held accountable for what he committed and accumulated of sins and burdens that he carried until the Day of Resurrection².”

Al-Baghawī said:

“Ahl al-Sunnah agreed that a believer does not leave faith by committing any major sin as long as he does not consider it lawful. If he commits any of them and dies before repentance, he will not remain eternally in Hell, as mentioned in the hadith. Rather, his matter is to Allah: if He wills, He forgives him, and if He wills, He punishes him according to his sins, then admits him into Paradise by His mercy³.”

These reports show that the doctrine of Ahl al-Sunnah is a middle position between the sects of threat (al-waʿdiyyah) and the Murjiʿah: it is based on affirming the essence of faith despite sin, denying disbelief and eternal punishment, while affirming divine threat and entitlement to punishment. This is the foundation upon which the statements of the Maliki scholars of the Maghreb in this issue are built.

The second requirement: the ruling of the perpetrator of major sins according to the Maliki scholars of the Maghreb

The established position of the Maliki scholars of the Maghreb regarding the ruling of the perpetrator of major sins is consistent with the doctrine of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamaʿah: they deny declaring a Muslim a disbeliever due to sin, affirm that he is under the will of Allah Almighty, apply the rulings of Islam to him in this world, and apply the rulings of divine threat in the Hereafter without claiming his eternal punishment, while affirming his eventual

¹ *Matn al-ʿAqīdah al-Ṭahāwīyyah*, p. 45.

² *ʿAqīdah al-Salaf Aṣḥāb al-Ḥadīth*, p. 13.

³ *Sharḥ al-Sunnah*, al-Baghawī, (1/103).

exit from Hell if he is punished. This appears in a coherent framework that strengthens one another and demonstrates unity of methodology and consistency of doctrine.

Ibn Abī Zayd al-Qayrawānī stated:

“And that no one from the people of the qiblah is declared a disbeliever due to a sin, even if it is major, and that faith is not nullified except by shirk¹.”

This is a decisive text rejecting the view of the Khawarij and those who followed them, and affirming the continuation of the name of faith despite major sin.

Ibn Abī Zamanīn said:

“Ahl al-Sunnah do not withhold seeking forgiveness for anyone from the people of the qiblah, nor do they see that prayer should be abandoned over one who dies among them, even if he was among those who were excessive in sin...”

He then transmitted reports from the scholars, including:

“The practice of the scholars was that they did not abandon prayer over anyone from the people of the qiblah, even if he committed any deed.”

And he said:

“The Sunnah is to pray over everyone who declares the oneness of Allah, even if he was excessive in sins and major sins, as long as he adheres to tawḥīd and affirms what came from Allah. He is prayed over, and his sin is upon himself, and his reckoning is with his Lord. He is, in our view, a believer by his faith, and Allah may punish him or forgive him. We do not expel him from Islam due to sins, nor do we make Hell obligatory for him; rather, Allah judges him by His knowledge and places him where He wills, either Paradise or Hell. We hope for the righteous and fear for the sinful².”

Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr said:

“Whoever commits a major sin and dies without repentance, his affair is with Allah: if He wills He forgives him, and if He wills He punishes him³.”

Al-Bājī said:

“And His statement: ‘Whoever does not come with it has no covenant with Allah; if He wills He punishes him and if He wills He admits him to Paradise’ indicates that the perpetrator of major sins is under divine will...”^{4 5}.

Ibn al-‘Arabī said:

“In summary, the final matter is that affirming the intercession for the Prophet ﷺ establishes the truth of promise and threat. The Murji’ah deny intercession because they see no need for it, while the Khawarij and Qadariyyah also deny it because eternal punishment prevents it...”⁶.

Al-Qurtubī said:

¹ *al-Jāmi‘*, Ibn Abī Zayd, p. 111.

² *Uṣūl al-Sunnah*, p. 224.

³ *al-Tamhīd*, (5/78).

⁴ Reported by Abū Dāwūd (425), al-Nasā’ī (461), and Ibn Mājah (1401), authenticated by al-Albānī in *Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Mājah* (1158).

⁵ *al-Muntaqā Sharḥ al-Muwatta’*, (1/221).

⁶ *al-Qabas fī Sharḥ Muwatta’ Mālik ibn Anas*, p. 899.

“The verse: ‘Indeed Allah does not forgive association with Him’ is a refutation of the Khawarij, who claim that the perpetrator of major sins is a disbeliever...”¹.

Ibn Nāji al-Tanūkhī said:

“This is the view of the majority of Ahl al-Sunnah, past and present...”².

Thus, this is a coherent system showing the agreement of Maliki scholars on affirming faith despite major sins, denying takfir, affirming divine will, affirming intercession, and applying Islamic rulings to Muslims.

The second axis: the position of Maghrebi Maliki scholars on sects opposing the doctrine of faith

This axis examines historically and intellectually the entry of sectarian ideas into the Maghreb and how Maliki scholars responded to them, showing an active scholarly vigilance that preserved doctrinal stability. It includes two sections:

Section One: The position of Maghrebi scholars on Murji’ite thought

Subsection I: the entry of Murji’ite thought into the Maghreb

Since Maliki scholars in the Maghreb and al-Andalus were firmly established upon the creed of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama‘ah in the issue of faith—rejecting takfir due to sin, affirming divine will, and applying Islamic rulings to Muslims—as shown in their texts, it becomes clear upon examination that Murji’ism did not become an established doctrine nor a dominant movement in the region. Rather, it appeared only in isolated cases among individuals.

This scholarly continuity proves that the Maghreb’s doctrinal foundations were purely Sunni, and Murji’ism did not find a stable environment. Rather, it was rejected in general.

However, biographical and doctrinal literature preserved indications of minor traces of Murji’ite ideas among a few individuals, not as a widespread phenomenon. Ibn Ḥazm said:

“Some of the Karrāmiyyah said: the hypocrites are believers among the people of Paradise...”³.

This historical testimony shows that Murji’ite tendencies appeared only in a very limited number of individuals and did not shape the general Maliki doctrine.

Thus, the entry of Murji’ite thought into the Maghreb was not one of stability or expansion, but rather a marginal and rare occurrence that quickly disappeared in the face of the firmly rooted Maliki Sunni school, which preserved the balance of the Ummah in the concept of faith between action, divine threat, and will, leaving the Maghreb in general upon the path of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama‘ah, far removed from the extremism of the Khārijites and the negligence of the Murji’ah.

Subsection II: The Position of Maghrebi Scholars on Irjā’

When examining the history of the Mālikīs in the Maghreb and al-Andalus, it becomes evident to the critical researcher that Irjā’ was neither a firmly established doctrine within their scholarly milieu nor an influential current in shaping their creed. Rather, it was a marginal and transient phenomenon, whose impact was limited and swiftly confronted with rigorous scholarly and methodological refutation. This was due to the firm establishment of Ahl al-Sunnah’s doctrinal formulations in the field of īmān among them, inherited from Imām

¹ *al-Jāmi‘ li-Aḥkām al-Qur’ān*, Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Qurṭubī, (5/386).

² *Sharḥ Ibn Nāji ‘alā Matn al-Risālah*, (1/56).

³ *al-Faṣl fī al-Milal wa al-Ahwā’ wa al-Niḥāl*, (4/155).

Mālik and his companions. These formulations were based on the principle that faith consists of word, deed, and intention; that it increases and decreases; that actions are part of its definition; and that sins neither completely negate it nor leave it unaffected in absolute terms. Hence, any attribution of Irjā' to certain prominent figures among them was, in reality, the result of misunderstanding or inaccurate transmission, and not a reflection of a settled doctrinal position.

Among the most significant illustrative cases is that of Imām Yaḥyā ibn Sallām, one of the leading scholars of Ahl al-Sunnah in Ifrīqiyyah, who was accused of Irjā'. The stance of Mālikī scholars toward him represents a clear model of scholarly caution and fairness combined with methodological firmness. They neither accepted the accusation at face value nor dismissed it lightly; rather, they examined the matter, investigated it thoroughly, and the truth became clear to them. Abū al-ʿArab transmitted a number of reports in this regard, including:

ولقد كنت عندي يحيى بنه حين أتاه رجل من أهل مصر، فحدثه أن قبر جده إلى جنب قبر ابن فروخ بالمقطم، وأنه يرى "عليهما كل ليلة قنديلان، يوقدان، ورمي بالإرجاء

"Indeed, I was with Yaḥyā ibn Sallām when a man from Egypt came to him and told him that his grandfather's grave was next to the grave of Ibn Fārūkh in al-Muqattam, and that he saw two lamps lit upon them every night, and he was accused of Irjā'.¹"

This indicates that accusations were sometimes accompanied by unreliable reports, which increases the likelihood of misattribution.

Abū al-ʿArab then reported what explicitly demonstrates the innocence of Yaḥyā ibn Sallām, stating:

وحدثني بكر بن حماد، قال: حدثني أبو ربيع اللحياني، أن رجلا قال له: يا أبا زكرياء، إنهم يقولون: إنك تقول بالإرجاء، "فضرِبَ يده على جدار القبلة، وقال: " ورب القبلة ما عبدت الله على شيء من الإرجاء قط، كيف وقد حدثتكم أنه بدعة

"Bakr ibn Ḥammād narrated to me, saying: Abū Rabī' al-Laythānī told me that a man said to him: 'O Abū Zakariyyā, people say that you adhere to Irjā'.' He struck his hand against the wall of the qiblah and said: 'By the Lord of the qiblah, I have never worshipped Allah upon anything of Irjā' at all. How could that be, when I have informed you that it is an innovation².'"

This is an explicit textual denial of Irjā' and even a declaration of its being an innovation, fully consistent with the principles of Ahl al-Sunnah.

However, the origin of the accusation—as clarified by scholars—was not an explicit doctrinal affirmation of Irjā', but rather a misinterpretation of his transmission of theological disagreement. Abū al-ʿArab stated:

وحدثني سليمان بن سالم، عن عون بن يوسف الخزاعي، قال: كنا عند عبد الله بن وهب نسمع منه حتى مر في كتبه حديث "عن يحيى بن سلام، فقال: اطرحوه لأنه بلغني أنه مرجئ، قال عون: فقامت أنا إليه ومعني ثلاثة من أهل إفريقية، فشهدنا عنه أنه بريء من الإرجاء، قال أبو العرب: قال لسليمان بن سالم: وإنما نسبت إليه الإرجاء، أن موسى بن معاوية الصمادحي أتاه، فقال له: يا أبا زكرياء، ما أدركت الناس يقولون في الإيمان؟ فقال له: أدركتم مالكا، وسفيان الثوري، يقولون: " الإيمان قول وعمل"، وأدركتم مالك بن مغول، وقطر بن خليفة، وعمرو بن ذر، يقولون: " الإيمان قول

"This was narrated to me by Sulaymān ibn Sālīm, from ʿAwn ibn Yūsuf al-Khuzāʿī, who said:

¹ *Ṭabaqāt ʿUlamāʾ Ifrīqiyyah*, Abū al-ʿArab, p. 37.

² *ibid.*, p. 37.

We were with ‘Abd Allāh ibn Wahb, hearing from him, until he came across a report in his books from Yaḥyā ibn Sallām. He said: ‘Discard it, for I have been informed that he is a Murjī’ī.’ ‘Awn said: I then stood up along with three men from Ifrīqiyyah, and we testified that he was innocent of Irjā’. Abū al-‘Arab said, according to Sulaymān ibn Sālim: He was only attributed to Irjā’ because Mūsā ibn Mu‘āwiyah al-Ṣamadī came to him and asked: ‘O Abū Zakariyyā, what have you found people saying about faith?’ He replied: ‘You have met Mālik and Sufyān al-Thawrī saying: “Faith is word and deed,” and you have met Mālik ibn Mughūl, Qaṭar ibn Khalīfah, and ‘Amr ibn Dharr saying: “Faith is word...”¹’

This narrative is merely a transmission of doctrinal disagreement, not an endorsement of it. However, when part of the statement was excerpted and transmitted incompletely to Saḥnūn, he reportedly said:

فأخبر موسى بن معاوية، سحنون بن سعيد بما ذكر يحيى بن سلام، عن عمرو بن ذر، وقطر بن خليفة، ومالك بن مغول، " ولم يذكر له ما قال عن غيرهم، فقال سحنون: هذا مرجئ

“When Mūsā ibn Mu‘āwiyah informed Saḥnūn ibn Sa‘īd of what Yaḥyā ibn Sallām reported concerning ‘Amr ibn Dharr, Qaṭar ibn Khalīfah, and Mālik ibn Mughūl, without mentioning what he reported from others, Saḥnūn said: ‘This is a Murjī’ī².’”

Thus, the judgment was based on an incomplete transmission rather than full verification.

The matter did not end there; rather, investigation continued until the reality of his belief became clear. Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Tamīm stated:

وسألت يحيى بن محمد بن يحيى، خاليا عن قول جده في الإيمان، فقال: كان جدي، يقول: " الإيمان قول وعمل ونية"، " وكان يحيى ثقة صدوقا لا يقول عن جده إلا الحق، قال أبو العرب: وحدثني أن جدهم مات بمصر سنة مائتين، وله مناقب كثيرة تركها كراهة التطويل

“I asked Yaḥyā ibn Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā privately about his grandfather’s view on faith. He said: ‘My grandfather used to say: “Faith is word, deed, and intention.”’ Yaḥyā was trustworthy and truthful and would not report anything about his grandfather except the truth. Abū al-‘Arab said: He informed me that their grandfather died in Egypt in the year 200, and he had many virtues which he omitted out of dislike for prolongation³.”

This confirms that his doctrine was precisely that of the Salaf.

In Riyāḍ al-Nufūs, further clarification reinforces his innocence:

وعن أبي القاسم السدري، أنه كتب إليه عيسى بن مسكين يقول: حدثنا عون بن يوسف قال: قلت ليحيى بن السلام: " إن الناس يرمونك بالإرجاء"، قال عون: " فأخذ يحيى لحيته بيده وقال: أحرق الله هذه اللحية بالنار إن كنت دنت الله عز وجل ". بالإرجاء قط، فقيل لعيسى: " فما تقول أنت فيه؟" فقال: " والله إنه لخير منا، وقد برأه الله مما يقولون

“Abū al-Qāsim al-Sadrī wrote to him that ‘Īsā ibn Miskīn said: ‘Awn ibn Yūsuf narrated: I said to Yaḥyā ibn Sallām: ‘People accuse you of Irjā’.’ ‘Awn said: ‘Yaḥyā grasped his beard and said: May Allah burn this beard in fire if I ever held the view of Irjā’ before Allah, the Mighty and Majestic.’ It was said to ‘Īsā: ‘What do you say about him?’ He replied: ‘By Allah, he is better than us, and Allah has declared him innocent of what they say⁴.’”

¹ *ibid.*, p. 38.

² *Ṭabaqāt ‘Ulamā’ Ifrīqiyyah*, p. 38.

³ *ibid.*, p. 38.

⁴ *Riyāḍ al-Nufūs fī Ṭabaqāt ‘Ulamā’ al-Qayrawān wa Ifrīqiyyah*, Abū Bakr ‘Abd Allāh al-Mālikī, (1/190).

In another passage, his explicit rejection of Irjā' is reaffirmed: "كيف وقد حدثتكم أنه بدعة؟"

"How could that be, when I have informed you that it is an innovation?¹"

Through this narrative, the Mālikī methodology in dealing with issues of creed becomes evident: precision in transmission, critical verification of attribution, strictness in rejecting innovation when established, and fairness when innocence is confirmed. It also shows that Irjā' was not a widespread phenomenon, but rather an accusation that was unusual, rejected, and required thorough verification.

This principle is further confirmed in the doctrinal works of their leading scholars, who combined refutation of the Murji'ah with affirmation of Ahl al-Sunnah doctrine. Ibn Ḥabīb said:

"يستتاب سائر الخوارج.. والصفورية والقدرية والمعتزلة ويستتاب المرجئة الذين يقولون إن الإيمان قول بلا عمل"

"All other Khārijites... including the Ṣufriyyah, Qadariyyah, Mu'tazilah, and the Murji'ah who say that faith is word without action are to be asked to repent²."

Saḥnūn said:

"ما أقول ما قالت الخوارج، ولا ما قالت المرجئة"، قال: وما قالت؟ قال: قالت الخوارج: إن من أذنب ذنباً فهو من أهل النار، وقالت المرجئة: لا تضر الذنوب مع التوحيد

"I do not say what the Khārijites say, nor what the Murji'ah say." It was said: "And what do they say?" He said: "The Khārijites say: whoever commits a sin is from the people of Hell. The Murji'ah say: sins do not harm with monotheism³."

Al-Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ, in his commentary on the ḥadīth "أفلح إن صدق", stated: "أفلح إن صدق، ردُّ على المرجئة، إذ فيه فلاحه بشرط صدقه في ألا ينقص مما ألزم من الأعمال والفرائض" "He has succeeded if he is truthful⁴" is a refutation of the Murji'ah, as it affirms success conditional upon truthfulness in fulfilling obligations and duties⁵."

Abū al-'Abbās al-Qurṭubī said:

هذه الترجمة تنبيه على فساد مذهب غلاة المرجئة القائلين: إن التلفظ بالشهادتين كاف في الإيمان، وأحاديث هذا الباب تدل على فساده، بل هو مذهب معلوم الفساد من الشريعة لمن وقف عليها، ولأنه يلزم منه تسويغ النفاق، والحكم للمنافق بالإيمان الصحيح، وهو باطل قطعاً.

"This heading highlights the corruption of the doctrine of the extremist Murji'ah who claim that mere utterance of the two testimonies suffices for faith. The ḥadīths in this chapter indicate its invalidity. It is a doctrine known to be corrupt in the Sharī'ah for anyone who reflects upon it, as it necessitates legitimizing hypocrisy and affirming true faith for the hypocrite, which is definitively false⁶."

Indeed, their jurists went so far as to address even practical legal scenarios, as in the fatwa of Sīdī Aḥmad ibn 'Īsā, who ruled regarding one who merely pronounces the two testimonies without understanding their meaning:

¹ *ibid.*, (1/190).

² *al-Muntaqā Sharḥ al-Muwaṭṭa'*, (7/205).

³ *Tartīb al-Madārik*, (4/214).

⁴ Reported by al-Bukhārī (189) and Muslim (11).

⁵ *Ikmāl al-Mu'allim bi-Fawā'id Muslim*, (1/221).

⁶ *al-Mufhim limā Ushkila min Talkhīṣ Muslim*, (1/204).

لا يضرب له في التوحيد بسهم ولا يفوز منه بنصيب ولا ينسب إلى إيمان ولا إسلام، بل هو من جملة الهالكين وزمرة الكافرين."

"He is not granted any share in monotheism, nor does he attain any portion of it, nor is he attributed to faith or Islam. Rather, he is among the perished and the group of disbelievers¹."

Ibn al-Nashshārīsī commented:

وذهبت غلاة المرجئة، وهي طائفة من المبتدعة، إلى أن النطق المجرد عن المعرفة بما انطوت عليه الكلمة الكريمة مع " صلاة أو صيام أو مع عدم ذلك يكفي في الإيمان، ويكون للمتصف به دخول الجنان، عصمنا الله من الآراء المغوية

"The extremist Murji'ah, a sect of innovators, held that mere verbal profession without knowledge of its meaning—whether accompanied by prayer, fasting, or not—is sufficient for faith, and that its possessor will enter Paradise. May Allah protect us from misleading opinions²."

The response was not limited to general refutations; rather, independent treatises were authored on the subject, such as "al-Radd 'alā al-Murji'ah" by Yahyā ibn 'Umar al-Mālikī³, indicating that the intellectual engagement was systematic and rooted in scholarly methodology rather than occasional reaction.

In conclusion, the Mālikī environment in the Maghreb represented a pure Sunnī milieu in matters of faith. Irjā' was not a dominant or established doctrine therein; rather, it was known primarily through refutational literature and warning texts. Any attribution of it to prominent figures—such as in the case of Yahyā ibn Sallām—stemmed from errors in transmission or interpretation. The Mālikī school addressed such claims with a rigorous scholarly methodology that combined verification, fairness, and decisive rejection of innovation once established, ultimately affirming the creed of Ahl al-Sunnah and excluding all doctrines opposed to it, particularly those of the Murji'ah.

Section II: The Position of Maghrebi Scholars on Khārijite Thought

It is structured into two subsections:

Subsection I: The Entry of Khārijite Thought into the Maghreb

First: The Beginnings of the Call and the Problem of Chronological Attribution

There is considerable disagreement regarding the dating of the entry of Khārijite thought into the Maghreb. While some historical reports suggest an early emergence immediately after the Battle of Nahrawān in 38 AH, claiming that 'Abd Allāh ibn Wahb al-Rāsibī survived and settled in Jabal Nufūsa, critical scholars of ḥadīth and historical transmission reject this view, affirming instead that al-Rāsibī was killed in that battle. What is historically established is that the actual emergence of Khārijite doctrine in the Maghreb occurred at the end of the first Islamic century, when the region became a refuge for remnants of various defeated sects from the East. This was particularly the case after the killing of Qaṭrī ibn al-Fujā'ah in 77 AH, which created fertile ground for the arrival of Ibāḍī and Ṣufī missionary movements⁴.

Second: Modes of Transmission and the Methodology of Scholarly Mobilization

¹ *al-Mi'yār al-Mu'rib*, Abū al-'Abbās al-Wansharīsī, (1/432).

² *ibid.*, (1/433).

³ *Tartīb al-Madārik*, (4/359).

⁴ *The Khārijites in the Maghreb until the mid-fourth century AH*, Maḥmūd Ismā'īl, p. 42 ff.

The Khārijite doctrine did not develop in the Maghreb through spontaneous reception, but rather through a highly organized system originating in the Basran school under the supervision of early leaders such as Jābir ibn Zayd and Abū ‘Ubaydah Muslim ibn Abī Karīmah. These figures established a strict pedagogical methodology for training what became known as “ḥāmalat al-‘ilm” (bearers of knowledge), students who traveled from the Maghreb to Basra to study foundational doctrines.

Their training was not limited to theology and jurisprudence; it also included political governance, military organization, and even astronomy, in order to prepare leaders capable of establishing the “imāmat al-ḡuhūr” (public imamate) and administering society upon gaining authority.

Among those who contributed to spreading Khārijite thought in the western Islamic lands were: ‘Āṣim al-Sadrātī from the eastern Aurès, Abū Dāwūd al-Qiblī al-Nafzāwī from the Lower Maghreb, Ismā‘īl ibn Darār al-Ghādmisī, who specialized in judiciary and fatwa, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Rustum, founder of the Rustamid state, and Abū al-Khaṭṭāb ‘Abd al-A‘lā ibn al-Samḥ al-Ma‘āfirī, chosen as “Imām al-ḡuhūr”.

Khārijite missionaries in the Maghreb initially adopted a strategy of concealment (kitmān) before openly declaring rebellion. They penetrated major Berber tribal groups such as Zanāta, Hawwāra, and Nufūsa, using religious camouflage and engaging in professions such as herding and irrigation. Through figures such as ‘Ikrimah, the intellectual originator of the Ṣufriyyah, and Salamah ibn Sa‘d, a leading Ibādī¹ داعية, they spread doctrinal principles based on absolute equality and the rejection of Qurayshī lineage as a condition for leadership². This doctrine resonated with populations that had experienced injustice under ruling authorities, leading them to adopt Khārijite ideas not merely as theology but as a framework for political liberation.

The geographical spread of Khārijism divided the region into two main centers: the far Maghreb, dominated by the Ṣufriyyah, which culminated in the movement of Mayṣarah al-Maṭgharī in 121 AH, and later the establishment of the Banū Darrār emirate in Sijilmāsa in 140 AH³.

The central and eastern Maghreb, by contrast, became strongholds of Ibādism, particularly in Jabal Nufūsa, which served as a fortified base until conditions allowed the proclamation of the imamate of ḡuhūr under Abū al-Khaṭṭāb al-Ma‘āfirī and ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Rustum in Tāhart⁴.

The rapid entrenchment of Khārijite thought in the Maghreb is often explained by the ideological compatibility between its principles and the local inclination toward autonomy. Some researchers even link this to the legacy of Donatism in North Africa. In this context, Khārijism became a doctrinal framework through which Berber aspirations for political independence were articulated, rejecting Eastern central authority. The Maghreb thus became a unique doctrinal laboratory where ideas were transformed into independent political structures.

¹ *Siyar al-A‘immah wa Akhbāruhum*, pp. 15–16.

² *al-Istiṣṣā li-Akḥbār al-Maghrib al-Aqṣā*, Abū al-‘Abbās Aḥmad al-Salāwī, (1/164).

³ *al-Bayān al-Maghrib fī Akḥbār al-Andalus wa al-Maghrib*, Ibn ‘Idārī al-Marrākushī, (2/209).

⁴ *ibid.*, (1/96).

In conclusion, Khārijism in the Maghreb evolved from a mobile, clandestine missionary movement into a settled political doctrine embodied in states and formal allegiance systems, benefiting from both Eastern organizational precision and local receptivity to autonomy.

Subsection II: The Position of Maghrebi Scholars on Khārijite Thought

The stance of Mālikī scholars in the Maghreb toward Khārijite thought represents one of the clearest manifestations of doctrinal guardianship undertaken by jurists in the western Islamic world. Their role was not limited to theoretical exposition, but extended to combining intellectual jihad (through argument and proof) with protective and defensive action aimed at preserving communal unity and safeguarding the creed of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā‘ah from deviation.

This position was comprehensive in nature: intellectually, through authorship, teaching, and refutation; and practically, through supporting legitimate authority and resisting insurgent movements that threatened the unity of the Muslim community. Its importance lies in the fact that Khārijite thought was not a passing phenomenon in the Maghreb, but had historical continuity in certain regions, supported by religious, political, and social factors. This required constant scholarly vigilance from Mālikī scholars, who represented the Sunnī authority in those lands.

Among the main reasons that led Mālikī scholars to confront Khārijite thought intellectually and practically were the following:

First: The Khārijite doctrinal foundations contradicted the methodology of Ahl al-Sunnah, especially their practice of declaring Muslim sinners as unbelievers, rebelling against rulers, and legitimizing bloodshed. These principles threatened the very foundation of social cohesion, which the Sharī‘ah came to preserve, as indicated in Allah’s

قوله تعالى: "وَأَعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا"

“And hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together,” and the Prophet’s saying ﷺ:

"من فارق الجماعة قديد شبر فقد خلع ربة الإسلام من عنقه"

“Whoever separates from the “the Muslim community” (الجماعة) by a handspan has removed the bond of Islam from his neck¹.”

Second: The historical consequences of Khārijite ideology included political instability and violent conflict in various periods of the Maghreb, making its opposition a religious and political necessity to preserve public order.

Third: Mālikī scholars fulfilled the duty of commanding right and forbidding wrong in matters of creed, seeing in Khārijite ideology a threat to the religious integrity of the “the common people” “al-‘āmmah” (العامّة). They therefore refuted its deviations according to the methodology of the Salaf, as established by Imām Mālik, Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr, and al-Qāḍī ‘Iyāḍ.

Fourth: The Mālikī school in the Maghreb was closely linked to maintaining communal unity and legitimizing political authority based on religious legitimacy. Thus, opposition to rebellion was seen as preservation of the Sunnī doctrine of obedience to rulers in non-sinful matters and prevention of the harms of civil strife.

¹ Reported by Abū Dāwūd (4758) and Aḥmad (21561), authenticated by al-Albānī in *Takhrīj Kitāb al-Sunnah* (892).

Accordingly, Mālikī resistance to Khārijism was not a temporary reaction but a structured intellectual and reformist project grounded in the objectives of Sharī'ah in preserving religion, life, and communal order. It played a decisive role in shaping Sunnī identity in the Maghreb across centuries. This resistance manifested in two main forms:

First: Practical Resistance

Al-Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ stated:

أجمع العلماء على أن الخوارج وأشباههم من أهل البدع والبغي متى خرجوا وخالفوا رأي الجماعة، وشقوا عصا المسلمين، ونصبوا راية الخلاف؛ أن قتالهم واجب بعد إنذارهم والإعذار إليهم " "The scholars are unanimously agreed that the Khārijites and those similar to them among innovators and rebels, if they rise in rebellion, oppose the community, and split the unity of Muslims, then fighting them becomes obligatory after warning them and giving them due clarification¹."

Al-Qurṭubī stated:

وأما الخوارج على أئمة العدل فيجب قتالهم حتى يرجعوا إلى الحق " "As for the Khārijites who rebel against just rulers, it is obligatory to fight them until they return to the truth²."

Historical confrontations in the Maghreb under the Umayyad authority include:

1. **The revolt of Maṣṣarah al-Maṭgharī (122 AH):** triggered by political injustice under Umayyad governors in Tangier, leading to the killing of officials and the expansion of rebellion into the Sous region, with the aim of establishing a Khārijite Ṣufri state.
2. **The Battle of al-Ashrāf (123 AH):** a major defeat of Umayyad forces led by Khālīd ibn Ḥabīb, resulting in the killing of many Arab nobles and increasing Berber participation in the revolt.
3. **The Battle of Baghdūra (124 AH):** a decisive Khārijite victory that led to the death of the Umayyad governor Kulthūm ibn 'Iyāḍ and marked a turning point in the loss of Umayyad control over the western Maghreb.
4. **The campaigns of Ḥanṣalah ibn Ṣafwān:** culminating in the Battles of al-Qarn and al-Aṣnām, which restored stability to Qayrawān and prevented its fall to Khārijite forces.

These events demonstrate that the confrontation was both military and doctrinal, aimed at preserving Sunnī orthodoxy and political stability.

Second: Scholarly (Intellectual) Resistance

Mālikī scholars also engaged in systematic intellectual refutation aimed at preserving orthodoxy and correcting doctrinal deviations. Ibn Sahnūn stated:

" وافترض الله عز وجل قتال الخوارج "

"Allah has made fighting the Khārijites obligatory³."

Al-Bājī reported their doctrine of takfīr of major sinners and its legal implications. Al-Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ affirmed scholarly consensus on fighting them when they rebelled⁴.

¹ *Ikmāl al-Mu'allim bi-Fawā'id Muslim*, (3/613).

² *Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī*, (2/350).

³ *al-Jāmi' li-Masā'il al-Mudawwanah*, (6/236).

⁴ *al-Muntaqā Sharḥ al-Muwaṭṭa'*, (7/207).

Ibn al-‘Arabī linked their combat to religious merit, stating that fighting them is a religious duty when they appear as armed rebels¹.

Ibn al-‘Arabī explained the aspect of nearness to God (*qurbah*) in fighting them, stating:

"ويتعلق بهذا ويرتبط به قتال الخوارج إذا ظهروا يطلبون مالاً أو ملكاً فإن قتالهم فرض وقتلهم قربة"

"This matter is connected to, and inseparable from, the fighting of the Khawārij when they emerge seeking wealth or dominion; fighting them is an obligation, and killing them constitutes an act of drawing near to God."²

Their resistance was not confined to the military dimension; rather, it extended to warning against their approach to Qur’anic exegesis, which is founded upon adherence to the ambiguous verses (*al-mutashābih*). Ibn al-‘Arabī said:

".. في قوله: " وأخر مشابهات "؛ الذي لا يتبعه إلا زائغ القلب وفيها ثلاثة مذاهب طائفة حقتها أولاهم الخوارج"

"Regarding His statement, ‘and others are ambiguous,’ none follows it except one whose heart is deviant. Concerning this, there are three doctrinal positions, the foremost of which was upheld by the Khawārij..."³

And al-Qurṭubī, quoting Qatādah ibn Di‘āmah, stated in his exegesis of the verse:

"وقال قتادة في تفسير قوله تعالى: "فأما الذين في قلوبهم زيغ"؛ إن لم يكونوا الحرورية وأنواع الخوارج فلا أدري من هم"

"Qatādah said, in interpreting the Exalted’s saying, ‘فأما الذين في قلوبهم زيغ’ if they are not the Ḥarūriyyah and the various factions of the Khawārij, then I do not know who they are."⁴

The Mālikī scholars of the Maghrib further elaborated comprehensive refutations of the juristic innovations that arose from their doctrinal foundations. Among these was the invalidation of their claim that prayer is obligatory upon a menstruating woman. al-Qurṭubī stated:

"وفيه أن الحائض لا تصلي، وهو إجماع من كافة العلماء إلا طوائف من الخوارج يرون على الحائض الصلاة"

"This indicates that a menstruating woman does not perform prayer, and this constitutes a consensus among all scholars, except for certain groups of the Khawārij who maintain that she must pray."⁵

They also refuted their doctrine permitting a thrice-divorced woman to remarry her former husband merely through a new marriage contract. He stated:

"وهذا قول لا نعلم أحدا وافقه عليه إلا طائفة من الخوارج، والسنة مستغنى بها عما سواها"

"This is a view with which we know of no one in agreement except a faction of the Khawārij, and the Sunnah suffices without recourse to anything else."⁶

They likewise rejected their claim permitting the simultaneous marriage to two sisters, and clarified the invalidity of considering their dissent, stating:

"ولا يعتد بخلافهم لأنهم مرقوا من الدين وخرجوا منه، ولأنهم مخالفون للسنة الثابتة"

"Their مخالفة is not to be taken into account, for they have deviated from the religion and exited from it, and because they oppose the established Sunnah."⁷

¹ *Ikmāl al-Mu‘allim*, (3/613).

² *al-Qabas fī Sharḥ Muwaṭṭa’ Mālik*, p. 588.

³ *ibid.*, p. 897.

⁴ *al-Jāmi‘ li-Aḥkām al-Qur’ān*, (4/13).

⁵ *ibid.*, (3/85).

⁶ *ibid.*, (3/148).

⁷ *ibid.*, (2/125).

They also refuted their denial of wiping over the leather socks (*al-khuffayn*) and demonstrated the weakness of the report attributed to Mālik that appeared to support their position. He stated:

"وهذه الرواية منكرة وليست بصحيحة"

"This narration is anomalous and not authentic."¹

The Mālikīs further expanded their disciplinary measures against them. They warned against praying behind them and against performing funeral prayers over their deceased. Ibn Yūnus reported:

"قال مالك: ولا يصلى على القدرية... وقتلى الخوارج، ولا تتبع جنازهم ولا تعاد مرضاهم"

"Mālik said: 'The Qadarīyah are not to be prayed over... nor those slain among the Khawārij; their funerals are not to be followed, nor are their sick to be visited.'"

Sahnūn ibn Sa'īd added:

"أدباً لهم"

"As a disciplinary measure against them."²

They categorically rejected their testimony, as affirmed by Ibn Abī Zayd al-Qayrawānī³, and even permitted the demolition of their mosques, which they used as centers for propagating their innovations. Ibn Ḥabīb stated:

"وأما هدم المسجد الذي بنوا فحق، وجميع ما يتألفون فيه أنهم يقصدون الضرر، وفي هدمه مذلة لأهل دينهم، وبقاؤه ركن لهم وملجأ وهدمه يؤسس في قلوب الناس والعمامة فساد ما هم عليه"

"As for demolishing the mosque they built, it is justified; for all that they assemble upon therein is intended for harm. Its demolition constitutes a humiliation for the adherents of their doctrine; its continued existence serves as a pillar and refuge for them, whereas its destruction establishes in the hearts of the عامة the فساد of what they uphold."⁴

Some scholars even issued legal opinions annulling their marriages as a measure to safeguard the Sunni community, as stated by Abū al-Qāsim al-Sayūrī:

"وأما النكاح الذي أحدثوا من نساءنا فيفسخ"

"As for the marriages they have innovated with our women, they are to be annulled."⁵

This resistance had the following effects:

- Consolidation of Ahl al-Sunnah doctrine and prevention of deviant interpretations.
- Preservation of social unity and prevention of internal conflict.
- Strengthening the legitimacy of lawful authority.
- Blocking pathways to sedition through intellectual and social containment.
- Achieving religious and legal stability, which contributed to public security in the Maghreb.

Conclusion

From the overall findings presented, it becomes clear that the Mālikī school in the Maghreb developed a balanced theological conception of faith (īmān), grounded in both the revealed texts and the understanding of the Salaf. It affirmed that faith consists of both word and deed,

¹ *Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī*, (6/100).

² *al-Jāmi' li-Masā'il al-Mudawwanah*, (3/992).

³ *al-Mi'yār al-Mu'rib*, (1/439).

⁴ *ibid.*, (2/17).

⁵ *ibid.*, (1/182).

increases and decreases, and that actions are included within its very definition. It also upheld the permissibility of *istithnā* (qualifying one's statement of faith with "if Allah wills") on a basis of verification and certainty, not doubt.

Through this position, the Mālikī tradition refuted the excesses of the Murji'ah, who tended toward negligence in matters of action and responsibility. At the same time, it confronted the deviations of the Khārijites, who exaggerated in extremism and takfīr, affirming that the perpetrator of major sins does not leave the fold of faith, but remains subject to the will of Allah. This moderate position was not merely a set of theoretical formulations; rather, it constituted a practical methodological framework in transmission and creed. It was based on adherence to the "the Muslim community" (الجماعة), reverence for the textual sources, and the blocking of all pathways leading to doctrinal deviation.

This balanced approach contributed significantly to achieving both doctrinal and intellectual security, as it prevented the infiltration of tendencies toward excessive takfīr on one hand and religious dilution on the other. It also regulated the boundaries of religious affiliation according to Sharī'ah criteria, which in turn fostered stability in the social and political structure of the Maghreb and reinforced communal unity around the principles of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah.

Key Findings

- a) The Mālikī approach to īmān is grounded in the integration of textual evidence and its proper application, avoiding both exaggeration and negligence.
- b) The regulation of the concept of faith contributed to limiting both extremist takfīr tendencies (Khārijites) and excessive leniency in belief (Murji'ah).
- c) The soundness of transmission among Maghrebi scholars, and their reliance on the methodology of the Salaf, formed a fundamental safeguard against doctrinal deviation in society.
- d) The integration of scholarly clarification with practical measures in dealing with sectarian groups contributed to preserving communal unity.
- e) Theological moderation played a central role in achieving security and in combating extremism in both its intellectual and social dimensions.

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