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Favour (divine)

Divine favour (*lutf*, *tawfiq*) is the notion that God assists human beings by inspiring them to perform good acts and to refrain from bad ones and is the subject of a major theological doctrine propounded by the Muʿtazila and contested by their adversaries. This form of assistance is one of the two types of guidance

(*hudā*, *hidāya*) with which God is believed to favour humans, the other being instruction (*irshād*), provided through the medium of prophetic teachings.

The Qurʾān depicts divine providence in a wide variety of ways, most notably in terms of the bestowal of sustenance (*rizq*, e.g., Q 2:60; 5:114) and grace (*fadl*, e.g., Q 2:64; 34:10) on humans. God is described as being benevolent (*latīf*) to His creatures (e.g., Q 12:101; 22:62; 42:18); it is from this adjective that the Muʿtazila derived their term of choice, *lutf*, which is said to denote, in ordinary language, kindness (*riḥq*) and assistance (*maʿūna*) (ʿAbd al-Jabbār, vol. 13, 9–11). As a more narrowly defined theological term, *lutf* refers specifically to the assistance by which God motivates human beings to enhance their moral and soteriological standing, as opposed to worldly aspects of divine providence.

The Muʿtazila held almost unanimously that the provision of *lutf* is obligatory on God, the chief exception being Bishr b. al-Muʿtamir (d. 210/825), an early member of the Baghdādī current of the school (van Ess, *TG*, 3, 121ff.). As an aspect of the Muʿtazilī theory of God’s justice (*ʿadl*), the doctrine of divine favour is secondary to the more primary tenets, that goodness and badness are real and objective properties of acts, and as such discernible to the mind, and that God is hence obliged, as a moral agent, to refrain from bad acts and to perform duties. He took on one set of providential duties as soon as He created human beings, who, as moral agents themselves, are subject to certain obligations of their own (a condition known as *taklīf*), and hence accountable for their acts in the hereafter and liable to suffer an eternity of punishment in hell or to be rewarded in heaven. These divine obligations towards humans, it is argued, hinge

on the notion that God, as beneficent creator, wills benefit (*ṣalāh*) for human beings and so must bring about circumstances conducive to their attainment of happiness and avoidance of misery in the hereafter. His first obligation is to provide them with the means to fulfil their obligations; for instance, intellect, with which they can distinguish good and bad acts; volition, which enables them to choose freely; and the capacity (*qudra*) to produce their own acts (ʿAbd al-Jabbār, 11, 367ff.). A good creator, according to the Muʿtazilī, does not then leave His creatures to their own devices but is obliged to provide them with two types of guidance: instructional, which takes the form of prophetic teachings, and motivational, termed *lutf*. God is required to motivate humans to make the right choices, because obligations involve hardship (*mashaqqa*) and are hence inherently unattractive choices of action. Although agents are motivated by their knowledge of the ethical properties of acts to perform good acts and refrain from bad ones, they also come under the formidable sway of “motives of need,” which often urge them to act differently. Yet no matter the quality and quantity of any particular instance of assistance that God bestows on an individual, it can only make a certain choice of action more compelling and likely than another; it does not determine it, as that would violate the more primary Muʿtazilī principle of human free choice (*ikhtiyār*).

All occurrences intended to motivate humans in the manner described constitute instances of divine assistance (often in the plural, *alṭāf*). None can be intrinsically bad; God cannot, for instance, lie in order to motivate humans to obey Him. The exact nature of the *alṭāf* depends, to some extent, on the recipient’s circumstances and can take the form of advantages or

disadvantages, provisions or deprivations (al-Zamakhsharī, 67). Some *alṭāf* are created by God, including many cases of illness and other forms of suffering and hardship, which may serve as lessons or ordeals. Others are commanded by God but performed by the recipient of the assistance, the main example being acts of worship enjoined in revelation, which serve as reminders. If an instance of *lutf* is followed by the agent’s performance of a good act, it can be described as “acting in accord with God’s favour” (*tawfīq*). If followed by refraining from a bad act, it is described as “prevention of error” (*ʿiṣma*). Prophets are infallible (*maʿṣūm*), because error is prevented in all their acts.

Beyond Muʿtazilism, the belief in divine providence, including God’s day-to-day guidance and assistance to believers, is central to the popular theology of Muslims but nonetheless features as only a minor subject in formal theology. Most Sunnī theologians oppose the Muʿtazilī doctrine that God is under ethical obligations and therefore understand all forms of assistance He provides to His creatures as acts of favour, as opposed to duties. Drawing on the Qurʾān (e.g., Q 3:160; 74:31), Ashʿarīs further maintain that God also forsakes (*khidhlān*) some people by motivating them to commit bad acts, although this does not undermine His goodness, and that the assistance God provides does not merely affect the likelihood of the choices made by the recipients but, in fact, determines them. Some, including Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī (d. 324/936), the founder of the school, go further, defining *lutf* and *tawfīq* as a capacity (*qudra*) that God creates within the agent, causing him to perform a particular act of obedience to the exclusion of any other act, and *khidhlān* as a capacity for a particular act of disobedience.

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Fay'

Fay' in classical legal thought is usually the collective wealth of Muslims derived from the taxation of conquered peoples. *Fay'* revenue is contrasted, on the one hand, with *ghanīma*, spoils taken through battle, and, on the other, with *ṣadaqa* (or *zakāt*), alms paid by the Muslims themselves. The *fay'* is usually to be redistrib-

uted to Muslim fighters as an *ʿalā'* (stipend) and sometimes for other public purposes (*maṣāliḥ*).

The verb *fā'a* and associated terms have the basic meaning of “return.” The evidence of the Qurʾān and pre-Islamic poetry suggests that derivatives of the root were used in connection with the taking of spoils in war in pre-Islamic Arabia (Q 33:50, 59:6, 7; Imruʾ al-Qays, 211). The classical Islamic distinction between “spoils” and “revenue” began to take shape during the development of the first Muslim empire, in the first/seventh and second/eighth centuries. By the mid-second/eighth century the policy of distributing to the conquerors not conquered land but only the revenue from that land had become widespread, with the result that “spoils” (*ghanīma*) were distinguished from “collective wealth,” or “revenue” (*fay'*). However, the more general sense of “spoils” did not disappear completely after the 100s/720s (Simonsen, 141–2; cf. Morimoto, 139–44).

Contests among Muslims over the resources of the early empire generated many of the internal conflicts of the first/seventh and second/eighth centuries, and abuse of the *fay'* is the subject of recurrent complaints attributed to groups dissatisfied with their place in the new elite. Al-Ḥusayn (d. 61/680) is said to have accused the Umayyads of “claiming exclusive possession of the *fay'*” (al-Ṭabarī, 2:300). Fair distribution of the *fay'* is said to have been one of the principles upon which Zayd b. ʿAlī’s (d. 122/740) followers pledged allegiance (al-Ṭabarī, 2:1687). Conversely, those holding power are said to have invoked the *fay'* as a right to be defended against rebels: in 66/685 the Qurashī Ibn Muṭʿ warned his supporters that the followers of the rebel al-Mukhtār