

PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt / Egyptology

INVESTIGATION INTO ATHEISM OF RHAZES (ABU BAKR AL-RAZI)

*Dr Bushra¹, Ms Tahira Akber², Ms. Hajrah³, Nazia wali Muhammad⁴, MS Rabia Mushtaq⁵,
Anisa⁶*

¹Assistant Professor Department of Islamic Learning Jinnah University for Women Karachi

²Lecturer Department of Islamic Learning Jinnah University for Women Karachi

³Lecturer Department of Islamic Learning Jinnah University for Women Karachi

⁴Student of MPhil Department Islamic learning Jinnah University for Women Karachi

⁵M. Phil Student Department of Islamic Learning Jinnah University for Women Karachi

⁶lecturer Department of Islamic Culture, University of Art and Culture Jamshoro

Email: ¹bushratasharruff@gmail.com, ²tahirabizenjo@gmail.com

³binteaziz6@gmail.com, ⁴naziawalikhan11@gmail.com

⁵jav.mushtaq3942@gmail.com, ⁶anisa.usman2022@gmail.com

Dr Bushra, Ms Tahira Akber, Ms. Hajrah, Nazia Wali Muhammad, MS Rabia Mushtaq, Anisa. Investigation Into Atheism Of Rhazes (Abu Bakr Al-Razi)-- Palarch's Journal Of Archaeology Of Egypt/Egyptology 20(2), 725-732. ISSN 1567-214x

Keywords: Abu Bakr Al-Razi, Rhazes, Atheism, Investigation

ABSTRACT

Abu Bakr Muhammad bin Zakariyya al-Razi, known in the West as Rhazes, was great Muslim Scientist especially a medical expert, philosopher, and a polymath of the 10th Century CE. His works have been translated into many languages of the world and his books have been taught until seventeenth century in the Europe. However, some European scholars have claimed that al-Razi was an atheist who neither believes in the divine institution of the Prophecy nor believes in the religious scriptures. This paper deals with this important issue to reach a conclusion. For this, the concerned literature has been carefully studied to reach the conclusion. In this regard, the concerned book of al-Razi has also been studied. After the careful study and mindful investigation into the literature, this paper argues that the claim of atheism has not been substantiated with strong and unequivocal arguments. The books on which this claim has been made are not extant and not included in the list of the works of al-Razi.

INTRODUCTION

The philosopher Abu Bakr, Muhammad bin Zakariya al-Razi (865-925 CE), the doctor, the author of original works on medicine, philosophy, chemistry, mathematics, ethics, metaphysics and music, one of the smartest people of his time, who learned from al-Balkhi the philosopher, and who was in charge of Bimaristan of al-Ray and Bimaristan of Baghdad during the rule of al-Muktafi (902-908 CE).

Abu Bakr Muhammad bin Zakariya al-Razi was an encyclopedic scholar of a unique style, and he excelled in all branches of science. His many books have been a reference for scholars and especially in medicine including “al-Hawi”, and those books have been taught in European universities for centuries.¹

He was the first to write about the diagnosis of diseases. He worked as president of the Al-Adadi Bimaristan in Baghdad, and Al-Razi wrote many treatises on various diseases and wrote in all branches of medicine known at that time, and some of them were translated into Latin so that the main references in medicine continued until the seventeenth century, and one of his greatest books is “Al-Hawi”, which is an encyclopedia that increased its volumes over twenty, and it is so wide that nothing like it has ever been written in medicine.

And it combines Greek medicine into medicine other than the Greeks, into medicine of the Arabs, into the medicine of Al-Razi himself, and what he saw in medicine other than that. Its impact was significant to the dawn of our modern scientific ages.

Among his most famous books after “Al-Hawi” is his book on smallpox and measles, which was also translated into Latin, and forty editions were printed between 1489 AD and 1866 AD, and the book “Al-Mansoori” on medicine and the book “Single Medicines” that includes an accurate description of the anatomy of organs. He was the first to invent surgical sutures and ointments, and he wrote books on pharmacology that contributed to the advancement of pharmacology. He has 232 books and articles on various aspects of science.² There is great controversy on the issue of the religious views of this great Muslim Philosopher and scientist as to whether he was a believer in the religion especially Islam or the atheist.

Rhazes his views about Prophethood

Al-Razi denied the issue of prophecy, as he considered that the mind is sufficient and that man does not need prophets, and he saw that with reason alone man can attain truths, and Al-Razi believes that man is able to comprehend God with his mind, and without a mediation, as well as his awareness of various intellectual and practical artifacts. And the mind, in his opinion, is the guide both morally and scientifically, as it gives it a comprehensive character in terms of its function.

And in his debates with Hatim Al-Razi, Al-Razi’s opinion was that he should not differentiate between people by singling out a people with prophethood and not others.

There is no evidence from the books of contemporaries claiming the atheism or heresy of Abu Bakr al-Razi. However, in the modern era, several allegations have emerged against al-Razi that he was an atheist under the pretext that he had critical writings on religions and the prophets, and most of these writings are considered fabricated, as the writings attributed to him Under the titles “Makhariq al-Anbiya,” “Tricks of the Prophets,” and “Annihilation of Religions,” his works are not known, and these titles were often fabricated for him by orientalists, as his most famous books are such as “The servant has a creator,” “Tabaqat al-Absar,” and “Spiritual Medicine.” Confirm his affirmation of Islam.

Rhazes and Atheism

There are philosophical books and articles attributed to Al-Razi that criticize religions, prophecy, and heavenly books. Some sources mention that Al-Razi questioned the validity of the prophecy, rejected the prophetic miracles, criticized the divine religions, and criticized the scientific miracles in the Qur’an. For example, there is Abu al-Rayhan al-Biruni’s treatise entitled “Index of Al-Razi’s Books.” Al-Biruni classifies two of al-Razi’s books as “books on blasphemy.” They are the book “On Prophecies” and “The Trials of the Prophets.” Al-Biruni believes that the first book criticizes religions, while the second book allegedly criticizes the idea of prophecy.³

In addition, the German orientalist Sigrid Hunke said that al-Razi wrote a book on “Critique of Religions” and a book on “Spiritual Medicine.” Commenting on the last book, she said, “al-Razi said that there are five principles that guide the world. After mentioning these two books, she added, “There is also a book in which al-Razi preaches irreligious morals and calls for a person to live his life with courage and manhood without being affected by promises of a heaven or hell in the other world, because science and reason testify to the absence of life after death.”⁴ In addition, the Ismaili philosopher Abu Hatim al-Razi quoted some of al-Razi’s views on religions, prophecy, and heavenly books in detail and put them in his book “The Signs of Prophecy” in the form of a dialogue between him and al-Razi, describing him as an “atheist” without mentioning his name.⁵

Among those quotations is what Abu Hatim mentioned at the beginning of his book: “Then he discussed with me the matter of prophecy and cited words similar to what he had mentioned in his book that we mentioned, and he said: “From where did you derive that God singled out a people for prophecy and not others, and favored them over people and made them guides for them and the people in need of them, and from where did you authorize in the wisdom of the wise, he chooses that for them, and sets them against each other, and confirms enmities between them, and increases the number of wars, and thereby destroys people.

Some historians, such as Paul Krauss⁶ and Sarah Stromsa⁷ believe that Abu Hatem al-Razi quoted these views either from a book called “The Miracles of the Prophets” or the book “Divine Science.” It is worth mentioning that all of

al-Razi's books on religions are lost, and only quotations from his critics and opponents arrived from them. Therefore, some people question these articles. As it is clear, the source of all these quotations is one author by an atheist writer called "Jennifer Michael Hecht" and she is a member of the Freedom from Religion Foundation. One of her most famous sayings is: "If there is no god - and there is not- then we [humans] make morals. I admire that very much." ("If there is no god- and there is not -then we [humans] made up morality. And I am very impressed.")⁸

Rhazes and his Islam

And there are defenders of al-Razi, such as Abdul-Latif Al-Abd, where he denied his infidelity and confirmed that Al-Razi "believes in God and the prophethood Muhammad (PBUH), and the rest of the prophets," and that he is a great philosopher, and the author of books, among the smartest people of his time, and in his doctoral dissertation tagged "The Philosophy of Abu Bakr Al-Razi." He said: "The writings attributed to Abu Bakr Al-Razi and his philosophical views, which challenge religion and the prophets, in fact, none of them reached. Rather, they were taken from a manuscript attributed to Abu Hatim Al-Razi (who is an Ismaili philosopher and speaker). He put in it excerpts from the writings of an unknown atheist, some claiming to be Abu Bakr Al-Razi. The first page of this manuscript is missing, so he does not know the name of the person to whom Abu Hatim was responding."⁹ Ragheb al-Sarjani defended al-Razi and considered the two books "The Miracles of the Prophets" and "The Tricks of the Prophets." They are "impersonators and are not among the books of Muslims." He accused Western books and websites of being unfair and considered al-Razi's books highly praised by scholars such as Al-Dhahabi. Likewise, Abu Bakr al-Razi wrote a book called "The servant has a creator" and another called "Asrar al-Nazil fi al-Tawhid."¹⁰

It is necessary to analyze these claims in the light of Al-Razi's own writings which are now extant.

1- Belief in God and atheism in the writings of al-Razi:

Al-Razi says at the beginning of the first chapter of his book "Spiritual Medicine": Indeed, the Creator, may His name be glorified, only gave us the mind and endowed us with it so that we may obtain and reach through it urgent and future benefits, the goal of what is in the essence of our parable, and that it is the greatest blessing of God with us and The most beneficial things for us and the most useful for us."

In addition to the fact that al-Razi believes in God Almighty, he was also arguing with atheists who deny the existence of God and who attribute the events of this world to nature and chance, and he reproaches them for this false statement, as he says: As for their reasoning by the powers they claimed, it is said to them: why do you deny that God, the Mighty and Majestic, is the one who in His Essence causes all powers of action and the nature of things?

And it is said to them that most of you deny us that God, the Mighty and Sublime, created man, and God is Living and Able - because they claimed that they did not see or understand a living creature that mounted an animal - and you claimed that He who created him is dead and incapable.

And we suffice with this amount in proving al-Razi's faith in God and his confrontation with atheism and atheists in his era, and for those who want to expand on this topic, refer to his books "Spiritual Medicine" and "An Essay on Metaphysics".

No one can deny Al-Razi's faith in God after these excerpts from his extant works.

2- Al-Razi's position on Prophet Muhammad's prophecy and the prophets, may God's peace and blessings be upon them all:

Many atheists and ignorant people claim that al-Razi was denying prophethood in general and the Prophethood of Muhammad (PBUH) in particular, and that he was denying the revelation and the sanctity of the Qur'an and believed that they were made by humans, and that the prophets were nothing but charlatans and sorcerers who laughed at people's minds and deceived them with spirituality and superstition.

Also, I say: I have shown that there is no fear of death according to the opinion of those who did not make a person a state and a consequence to which he becomes after his death a face. And I say that it is obligatory also in the other opinion - and it is the opinion that makes for those who die a condition and a consequence that they become after death - that the good, virtuous person who completes the performance of performing what the true Shari'a imposed on him should not fear death, because it promised him victory, comfort and access. to eternal bliss. If he doubts this law and does not know it and is certain of its validity, then he has no choice but to search and consider his effort and energy. If he is not there - and it is hardly like that - then God Almighty is more deserving of forgiveness and forgiveness for him, since he was not demanding what is not within his power, but rather entrusting him and making him - the Mighty and Majestic - burden His servants much less than that.

Is it possible that someone who denies the Prophethood of Muhammad describes the Islamic Sharia as the "true Sharia" and that it is the Sharia that agrees with the mind if people search for it? Does anyone who denies the religion of Islam believe in heaven and resurrection after death?

We must know first that everything attributed to al-Razi in denying the prophethood cannot be found in any of his books, rather it is all taken from the books of his enemies and his political and religious opponents.

The alleged books attributed to him, such as "The Miracles of the Prophets" and other blasphemous books, are all mythical books that do not exist in al-Razi's library, nor in the libraries of his students who studied under him.¹¹ Rather, they were found only in the writings of his opponents and those who hated him.

Dr. Abd al-Rahman Badawi says about the theory of prophecy in al-Razi's thought: We cannot give a true picture of the doctrine of Ibn Zakariya al-Razi, because we lack the original texts, and everything we have in this section is due to what he mentioned. Opponents of presenting his doctrines and sayings, either by text truncated from their context, or by abbreviation and meaning only, in addition to the scarcity of these works, which does not allow the formation of a comprehensive correct opinion.¹²

We have seen in his book "Spiritual Medicine" and others that he necessitates respecting the teachings of religion and urges man to adhere to them in order to enjoy Paradise in the hereafter and win the pleasure of God Almighty. He also enjoined respect for the prophets in their honorable persons and their fragrant biography, and severely rebuked those who said that love is one of the virtues of the prophets. He summarizes the results of his studies on this subject and the alleged debates in which he denies prophethood as follows:

And we have quoted what Krauss mentioned about the debates to complement the benefit, because the debates accuse al-Razi of denying the prophethood, and al-Kirmani tries to prove this against al-Razi in the "Golden Sayings". On the other hand, al-Razi's book "The Spiritual Medicine" denies these Ismaili claims, as it does not contain a denial of prophecy or anything of religion, just as this is not found in his other books that we have seen in print or manuscript.

To have the full picture, we read the words of Professor Dr. "Muhammad Kamal Ibrahim Jaafar" in which he tells the full story of these allegations and the reasons for throwing them against al-Razi by the Ismailis, and the reason for their intense hostility to him. In this regard, he says the following:

However, before we continue talking about the deniers of the prophecy and the opinions recorded for them, we would like to point out the necessity of reconsidering and studying the position of al-Razi the doctor regarding the prophecy, and his authoring of the book "The Miracles of the Prophets".

This is because our source for his views on prophethood is his opponents, such as: Abu Hatim al-Razi, Hamid al-Din al-Kirmani, Nasiri Khosrow, and those like them from among the Ismailis and the Batinis.

It has been attributed to him that he was too attached to the principles of Mazdakism and Manichaeism and Indian beliefs, and he denounced the philosophers for their attempt to reconcile religion and philosophy, and he believed that philosophy is the only way to reform the individual and society, and that religions are a cause of competition, strife and wars. Al-Biruni also attributed to him two books that are considered blasphemous, which are "The Miracles of the Prophets" or "The Tricks of the Forerunners" and "The Reversal of Religions" or "Prophecies". However, we did not find a trace of these works, and we did not find a saying of al-Razi in his published heritage or his written biography, from which he denied the prophecy or took advantage of it, and this means that we do not have a reliable source on which we can rely on the validity of attributing these accusations to al-Razi.

On the contrary, some of our research students were able to put before us from the material and texts what makes this accusation against al-Razi hasty and unjustified and without support, especially if we rely on the verification of al-Razi's expressions on the book "Alam Al-Nubuwwah" by Abu Hatim al-Razi. With the likely possibility of adding, deleting, and distorting what al-Razi had of positions against the Ismaili movement and belonging to it.

And we feel the impact of this hostility and abuse when we study Sahl son of Abdullah al-Tastari and his Sufi doctrine, as we notice that al-Khawansari, for example, attacks and reproaches him in "Rawdat al-Jinan" for many reasons. Al-Khawansari was not able to conceal what was in his heart, but he made it clear when he said: "Al-Tastari did not take from the infallible imams," that is, he was not Shiite as understood from this phrase.

Imam Fakhr al-Din al-Razi responded to Abu Bakr al-Razi in some jurisprudential issues, and it appears from the sayings of al-Razi the doctor that he infers the Holy Qur'an and the Prophet's Sunnah to prove the validity of his views, so how does the Qur'an and the Sunnah deduce those who deny religion and prophecy?

Al-Razi, the physician, also debated with Abu al-Qasim al-Balkhi - one of the Mu'tazila jurists in his time - and the subject of the debate and the reason for the disagreement was the determination of the correct interpretation of the verses of the Qur'an that are concerned with names and attributes. Not with the Islamic faith that Muhammad - may God bless him and grant him peace - brought?

The compilers of the encyclopedia add that al-Razi's attack on the esoteric Shiite beliefs, including the Ismailis in his time, was a major reason for igniting their intense hatred against him, and they followed the strategy of systematic falsification of his statements and opinions during their response to him in defense of their beliefs in the imamat and infallibility.

CONCLUSION

From the above-mentioned detailed discussion of the writing of the historians and the writings of al-Razi himself that the claim that al-Razi was atheist is not proved. The arguments given to support this claim are primarily based on polemical writings of his opponents including Ismaili philosopher Abu Hatim al-Razi. It is allegedly argued that Abu Hatim al-Razi in his book A'lam al-Nubuwwah mentioned a debate with an atheist. The fact is that the first page of this book is not extant through which one can verify as to who is meant by this atheist. On the contrary, the list of the books of Abu Bakr al-Razi do not include those books allegedly attributed to him. In addition, Abu Bakr al-Razi's own views mentioned in his extant books clearly prove that he was a believer in Islam and in all the Prophet especially Prophet Muhammad (PBU).

REFERENCES

- Skandar, Albert Z., Al-Rāzī, in Selin, Helaine (ed.) *Encyclopedia of the History of Science, Technology, and Medicine in Non-Western Cultures* (2nd ed.), Berlin: Springer. pp. 155–156.
- Ansari, A. S. Bazmee. Abu Bakr Muhammad Ibn Yahya Al-Razi: Universal Scholar and Scientist, in *Islamic Studies*, vol. 15, no. 3, 1976, pp. 155–66.
- Comprehensive Bibliography of the Works of Abu Bakr Al-Rāzī (d. 313 A.H/925) and Al-Birūnī (d. 443/1051), *Journal of Aqidah and Islamic Thought* 9: 51–100.
- Sigrid, Honke, *Ahad Azam Atiba al-Insaniyyah Ala al-Itlaq*, (Arabic Trans.), Beirut: Dar al-Jil, p. 247.
- Al-Razi, Abu hatim, *A'lam al-Nubuwwah, The Proofs of Prophecy*, Trans. Khalidi, Tarif, University of Chicago, p. 15
- Kraus, P. Pines, S (1913–1938), *Al-Razi, Encyclopedia of Islam*. p. 1136.
- Sarah, Stoumsa, *Freethinkers of Medieval Islam: Ibn Al-Rawandi and Abu Bakr Al-Razi and Their Impact on Islamic Thought*, Brill, 1999, pp. 87-120.
- Jennifer Michael Hecht, *Doubt: A History: The Great Doubters and Their Legacy of Innovation from Socrates and Jesus to Thomas Jefferson and Emily Dickinson*, p. 227-230.
- Al-Abd, Abdul Latif Muhammad, *Akhlaq al-Tabib al-Razi*, Cairo: Maktabah Dar al-Turath, 1977, p. 5.
- Accessed at: <https://www.djelfa.info/vb/showthread.php?t=1180549> .
- Qatar Digital Library, *Fihrist kutub Muḥammad ibn Zakarīyā al-Rāzī al-mutaṭabbib wa-aghraḍiha*, available at https://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100030429139.0x000020.
- Abd al-Raḥmān Badawī, *History of Philosophy in Islam*, Librairie philosophique J. Vrin, Paris, 1922, p. 60.