

**Salvation of the
Successors in Beliefs of
the Predecessors
(*Najaat al-Khalaf*)**

By

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Translation and Notes
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Jumada I 1445 AH | December 2023

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Translator's Introduction

This is a translation of a short treatise on *Athari* creed written by the Hanbali scholar Uthman ibn Ahmad ibn Sa'eed An-Najdi, more popularly known as Ibn Qa'id. I have also included extensive footnotes based on the explanation of the book by **Shaykh Ismail Hakamali** and **Shaykh Faris Falih**.

The author began his studies in Najd and then moved to Shaam where he studied with Abdul Baqi, the student of Imam al-Bahuti. Afterwards, he went to Egypt to study with al-Khalwati, the nephew of Imam al-Bahuti. Ibn Qa'id is considered from the golden chain of Hanbali scholars who are as follows from the latest to the oldest:

Ibn 'Awadh -> Ibn Qa'id -> Al-Khalwati -> al-Bahuti

He also wrote a very important annotation on the Hanbali *fiqh* manual *Muntahaa al-Iradaat*. He has a number of other works as well.

This book on creed is written in the way of the scholars of *kalam*¹ so it is important to discuss the ruling on the science of *kalam* according to the Hanbalis. There are two main methodologies when authoring books of creed:

1. **Methodology of the people of *hadith*** - A large group of early Hanbalis followed this path. They do not allow

¹ Usually translated as "Islamic scholastic theology" or "speculative theology," generally speaking, is the philosophical study of Islamic creed. It was born out of the need to establish and defend the tenets of the Islamic faith against the philosophical doubters. There are many possible interpretations as to why this discipline was originally called so; one is that one of the widest controversies in this discipline, in the second and third centuries of Hijra, has been about whether the "Word of God" (*Kalam Allah*), as revealed in the Qur'an, is an eternal Attribute of Allah and therefore not created, or whether it is created words in the sense of ink and sounds.

rational proofs that are not explicitly mentioned in the Qur'an and Sunnah even if the rational proof(s) can be implicitly taken from the two sources and there is truth in it. Books authored in this methodology are void of any *kalam* terms and arguments. Authors of this methodology include Ibn Qudama, Abu Ismaeel Ansari, Ibn Abdul Hadi, etc.

2. **Methodology of the people of *kalam*** - Scholars particularly in the later period followed this path. This does not mean that they affirmed the same things as the *'Asharis* and *Maturidis*, it is just used as a methodology to affirm the *Athari* creed. We can further divide this methodology into two groups:
 - a. Those who allowed *kalam* in books of creed as long as the meaning can be found in the Qur'an and Sunnah, otherwise, they considered it prohibited. They also do not exaggerate in their engagement with *kalam*. The Tamimi family from the Hanbalis, Ibn Hamid, Abu Ya'la, Ibn 'Aqeel, Ibn Hamdan, al-Bahuti, and others from the Hanbalis followed this method.
 - b. Those who allowed *kalam* without any restrictions as long as it does not inherently contradict the Qur'an and Sunnah.

All of the above groups have statements from Imam Ahmad to support their particular view.

It should also be noted that Ibn Taymiyyah, may Allah be pleased with him, is often considered as the sole representative of Hanbali/Athari creed by various factions, however, this is not the case. He opposed the official position of the Hanbali/Athari creed in various issues and is not considered the final authority on the subject. The Hanbali scholars during his time and afterwards considered him as one of the major scholars of the school but did not agree with everything he had to say on creed, especially as it relates to Allah's Attributes. This is why it is not uncommon to find

that Hanbali/Athari books of creed will often ignore his views that contradict their school and will quote him only selectively when his statements agree with the position of the school.

For this particular text, the author took from Ibn Hamdan's *Nihayah al-Mubtadi'een* and from the statements of al-Mardawi, Ibn Najjar, Ibn Qudama, and even Ibn Taymiyyah. In fact, much of what he mentions in this particular text comes from the statements of Ibn Taymiyyah.²

For the sake of brevity, I did not source every *hadith* back to its book of origin except when the author himself sources it. I wanted to focus on the contents and its explanation in the footnotes. For those interested in sourcing them can take a look at the original text itself in Arabic.

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² The Hanbali scholars after Ibn Taymiyyah as a whole do not blindly take from him. They selectively quote him in creed when he agrees with the *Athari* creed and ignore him when he does not. This is important to keep in mind when reading *Athari* texts post-Ibn Taymiyyah.

Author's Preface

In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful, and with Him is my reliance.

All praise is due to Allah, the Exalted, the Great, the Necessary Being,³ the Ever-Living, the Eternal, the Sovereign Lord deserving worship⁴.

³ This is a *kalam* term and means this Being's existence is independent in nature and cannot be coherently thought to not exist. A Necessary Being is one whose existence is not dependent on anything else. It exists by its own nature and does not rely on any external factors or conditions. In contrast, a contingent being is one whose existence depends on something else, such as its causes or conditions. A Necessary Being is self-existent, meaning it does not require a cause or explanation for its existence. It is the ultimate source of its own existence and is not derived from anything prior. Because a Necessary Being is not contingent on time or causes, it is considered eternal, existing outside the constraints of time and space. A Necessary Being is unchanging and immutable because it is not subject to external influences or forces.

⁴ The word 'worship' linguistically refers to submission and humility. As a technical term, it refers to when something has been legislated by Allah through the *Shari'ah* and is not something based on custom or reason. We cannot inherently call something worship except what Allah Himself has legislated. We may earn reward for things not considered worship, such as running with a good intention, but the act of running itself is not worship. If that was the case, then running for anything other than Allah would be *shirk!*

As for *tawheed*, the technical definition for it refers to singling out Allah in worship while believing that He is One in His Essence, Attributes, and Actions. He is not divisible in any way nor do any of His Attributes resemble His creation. His Attributes are not separable from His Essence and neither do His Actions share any similarity to His creation. He is the uncreated Creator of all things.

May peace and blessings be upon the noblest of messengers,⁵ our Master Muhammad, the obeyed and trustworthy messenger, who conveyed Allah's perfect religion with decisive proofs and evidence. He left no door of goodness uncommanded, guiding us to it,⁶ and no door of evil without prohibiting and warning us against it. May Allah's peace and blessings be upon him, his noble family,⁷ and his generous companions who remained steadfast on the clear path. Joyous is the one who followed them!

And now, this is a brief commentary that encompasses issues of the fundamentals of the faith⁸, from which many beginner and intermediate level students may benefit, *Insha'Allah*.

This is based on the way of the revered Imam, the chosen scholar, the *Rabbani* Imam,⁹ and the second *Siddique*¹⁰, Abu Abdullah Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Hanbal Ash-Shaybani, may Allah be pleased with him and grant him His satisfaction. May Allah make paradise his final abode.

⁵ Sending of *salah* (peace and blessings) when in reference to Allah refers to His Mercy, when in reference to angels refers to their seeking forgiveness, and when in reference to anyone else refers to supplication.

⁶ Hanbalis say that all of the proofs, whether textual or rational, can be found in the Qur'an and Sunnah regardless of whether it is explicit or implicit.

⁷ 'Family' here is in reference to all the believers until the Day of Judgment.

⁸ These fundamentals are important to learn because the safety and salvation of the believer is dependent on it.

⁹ A *rabbani* imam is someone who acts according to what he preaches.

¹⁰ Imam Ahmad is given this honorific title here because at one point he was the single scholar that stood up to the Mu'tazila and refused to acknowledge their deviant doctrine. Most of the other scholars at his time were either forced or pressured by the government to acknowledge it but Imam Ahmad refused for which he was imprisoned and severely beaten on multiple occasions. The first *Siddique* is of course Abu Bakr.

This book is arranged with an introduction, three chapters, and a conclusion.

I ask Allah for its goodness, acceptance, and seek His assistance.

Introduction

In the knowing of Allah the Exalted, we say with Allah's help:

It is obligatory to know Allah¹¹ the Exalted according to the religious law¹² by contemplating¹³ the creation for every

¹¹ Those who do not fulfill this obligation are considered sinful. We are obligated to know, confess, and to be aware of the existence of Allah, who is One, Pre-Eternal, All-Knowing, Living, All-Powerful, All-Hearing, All-Seeing, and incomparable to His creation as stated in the Qur'an, "*So know that there is no deity except Allah*" (Qur'an 47:19). Knowing Allah can be divided into two types: **knowing His existence** and **knowing the reality of His Essence and Attributes**. The author here is intending the former and not the latter. The first we are able to comprehend through the perfection of His Attributes, while the latter is impossible for us to know and falls under the prohibited modality discussion related to Allah.

¹² It is the *Shari'ah* that obligates knowing Allah and not the intellect as the Mu'tazila claim. According to the latter group, everyone is obligated to know Allah even if the message has not reached that person, but we say that the message must reach the individual because of the verse, "*And We would never punish a people until We have sent a messenger*" (Qur'an 17:15).

¹³ The scholars differed on exactly how one goes about 'knowing' Allah. Some said it can only be done through contemplation, which is the view of the author. Some said it is something Allah places in the hearts of His servants. Some said both of the previous two views are possible ways of 'knowing' Allah.

The contemplation that is required here is that of the simplest form by simply looking at the creation around you and realizing that it did not come about on its own but rather it was created by a Being. This will fulfill the obligation even if the person is unable to articulate it or respond to doubts, thus, even the lowest layman can fulfill this type of reasoning. This is known as the 'generic evidence' for Allah's existence. Believing in Allah simply due to blind following (*taqleed*) and without reasoning is neither permitted nor accepted.

accountable¹⁴ and capable¹⁵ individual. This is the first obligation¹⁶ towards Allah the Exalted.

The first of Allah's religious blessings¹⁷ and the greatest of them is that He has enabled us to know Him.

The first of Allah's worldly blessings¹⁸ is a life free from harm.¹⁹

Expressing gratitude to the Bestower is an obligatory religious duty,²⁰ which involves acknowledging His favors through submission and obedience and utilizing every blessing in His obedience.²¹

¹⁴ Anyone who is sane and has reached the age of puberty is considered accountable.

¹⁵ Meaning the person has the ability to reason.

¹⁶ This is the purpose and the end goal of the contemplation: to know Allah, which is the obligation in and of itself. The 'contemplation' part is the path to get to it, hence, it is also obligated.

¹⁷ Religious blessings are only given to the believers.

¹⁸ Worldly blessings can be given to both believers and disbelievers. Some Hanbalis disagreed on this and opined that this too is only given to the believers.

¹⁹ This does not mean that there will be no problems in life but only that they will not always remain.

²⁰ The Hanbalis hold the view that it is a religious obligation to give gratitude to Allah and cannot be arrived at through the intellect, the Mu'tazilah hold that it is only arrived at through the intellect, and the 'Asharis hold the view that it is both a religious obligation and can be arrived at through the intellect.

²¹ The greatest way of showing gratitude to Allah is by obeying His commands. The more He blesses you with things, the more you should obey Him.

It is imperative to firmly believe that He is One, Unique, Self-Sustaining,²² All-Knowledgeable, All-Powerful, Willing, All-Living, All-Hearing, All-Seeing, Speaking with Speech.²³ He is not a substance,²⁴ body,²⁵ nor contains incidental characteristics.²⁶ He is not subject to change²⁷ nor does He reside in something subject to change. He is not confined within such things [either].²⁸ Whoever believes or says that Allah is physically present in every place²⁹ or in a particular place has committed disbelief. Rather, it must be firmly believed that He is beyond³⁰ His creation. Indeed, Allah existed without a place, then He created place and He remains as He was before creating place. Everything other than

²² He is not in need of anyone or anything but everything else is in need of Him.

²³ His Attribute of Speech is not subject to change nor does it acquire newly emerging qualities as with His Essence and all His other Attributes.

²⁴ This refers to *jawhar*, which is anything that occupies space.

²⁵ This refers to *jism*, which is anything that consists of two substances or more.

²⁶ This is in reference to *'aradh*, which are things that are in need of something in order to exist, such as, color, movement, stillness, etc.

²⁷ This is in reference to *haadith*, which refers to anything that comes into existence being preceded by non-existence. Anything that requires change has not reached perfection, thus, Allah cannot be described as such because He is perfect.

²⁸ Because this quality is something specific to the creation but not the Creator.

²⁹ This is in reference to *makaan*, which refers to an empty space that a *jism* can occupy.

³⁰ This does not mean that Allah is at a distance outside of His creation in a particular direction, but it means Allah is unlike His creation in His Pre-Eternal Existence.

Allah and His Attributes³¹ is subject to change, and Allah, glorified be He, brought them into existence and originated them from non-existence.

All the actions of the servants are considered acquired and they are created by Allah,³² both the good and evil ones. The servant is given a choice and ease is facilitated [for him] in acquiring [acts of] obedience or disobedience.

His Desire and Will does not mean His Love, Pleasure, Anger, or Hatred.³³ He Loves and is Pleased with only what He has commanded and He created everything by His Will.

The Boundaries of Islam and Disbelief

Islam is to bring the two testimonies of faith with genuine belief in them, adhere to the remaining five pillars when they become obligatory [on the individual], and believe in whatever the Messenger صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم came with.

Disbelief is to deny anything that will cause a person's Islam to be incomplete without it.³⁴ Whoever does such a thing, or rejects an

³¹ Allah's Essence and all of His Attributes neither have a beginning nor an end. Any discussion regarding Allah's Attributes is just a branch of discussion regarding Allah's Essence, they are the same.

³² All actions, whether voluntary or involuntary, are created by Allah and the creation simply acquires them as stated in the verse, "*Allah created you and whatever you do*" (Qur'an 37:96). We are held responsible for only our voluntary actions and will be judged based on them.

³³ Meaning we affirm all of these individual Attributes for Him because they have been mentioned in the texts and do not interpret them away to be metaphors for 'Will' and 'Pleasure'.

³⁴ Such as denying one of the six pillars of faith (Allah, angels, books, messengers, Divine decree, Day of Judgment) or denying one of the five pillars of Islam (testimony of faith, prayer, *zakkah*, fasting in Ramadan, and Hajj).

apparent ruling which is definitively agreed upon [by scholars] as prohibited or permissible, or [denies something] firmly established [in the religion], like the prohibition of [eating] swine or the permissibility of [eating] bread, has disbelieved.³⁵

If someone commits a major sin, which is any act that has a prescribed punishment [*hudood*] in this world or a warning of punishment in the hereafter, or persistently engages in minor sins,³⁶ which are any acts of disobedience that neither have a prescribed punishment [*hudood*] in this world nor a warning of punishment in the hereafter, has committed disobedience³⁷ [but not disbelief].

Faith entails belief with the heart, declaration with the tongue, and acting on its pillars.³⁸ It increases with obedience and decreases, along with its reward, with disobedience. It is strengthened by knowledge³⁹ and weakened by ignorance, negligence and forgetfulness.

³⁵ There are exceptions to this, such as, a new convert that is ignorant of Islamic laws or a born Muslim who grew up among non-Muslims not knowing anything. In such a case, they are to be taught such things but if they insist on their rejection, then they may become eligible for excommunication.

³⁶ Continuing to persist in a minor sin turns it into a major sin.

³⁷ This is in reference to *fisq*, which is used to refer to any action which is in violation to Islamic law.

³⁸ This is a reference to action with the limbs, such as, praying, going to *Haji*, giving *zakkah*, and fasting in Ramadan. We consider all rewardable actions as part of 'faith.' We disagree with the 'Asharis, who hold the view that actions are only a condition for the perfection of faith but not part of it.

³⁹ This is because Allah in the Qur'an specified that it is only those with knowledge who truly fear Him, the basis of which is knowledge. Whatever we learn about Allah increases us in our fear of Him.

Statement of exception⁴⁰ about faith is permitted and Ibn ‘Aqil said that it is recommended.⁴¹ The meaning of it is not to doubt one’s faith, but rather to doubt its outcome [in the hereafter] or the acceptance of certain actions [by Allah] and the like.

⁴⁰ This is for someone to proclaim, “I am a believer *insha’Allah* (if Allah Wills).”

⁴¹ This is the position of the vast majority of Hanbali scholars and it is the school’s official (*mu’tamad*) position on the topic because:

1. None of us are certain that we are going to die upon faith.
2. We are hopeful that our beliefs and actions are accepted by Allah but we are not certain.
3. It is a way for us to seek blessings by mentioning the Name of Allah the Exalted.
4. It is a good conduct towards Allah by returning our state of affairs back to Him.

So by uttering this statement, we are hoping that Allah accepts our faith and allows us to die as believers.

Chapter 1: Allah's Transcendence

We say with the help of Allah:

The creedal doctrine of the early generations of the Muslim community and its imams⁴² is that they describe Allah, the Exalted, with what He has described Himself and with what His Messenger ﷺ has described Him without distortion, negation,⁴³ modality, or similitude.⁴⁴ They affirm for Him what He has affirmed for Himself in terms of Names and Attributes and they separate Him from any resemblance to created beings, affirming Him without any form of similitude or negation. Allah, the Exalted, says: "*There is nothing like unto Him, and He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing*" (Qur'an 42:11).⁴⁵

His statement, "*There is nothing like unto Him,*" is a refutation to anthropomorphists⁴⁶ and His statement, "*He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing,*" is a refutation to negators. Some scholars have said,

⁴² They did not differ in the primary issues of creed on a generic level but they did differ in its details, which are secondary issues. This is an important point to keep in mind.

⁴³ This is in reference to those who deny the existence of Allah's Attributes.

⁴⁴ Notice how the author denies both the modality and any sort of comparison to His creation. Modality is an extension to forms that are specific to bodies and substances, neither of which apply to the Creator.

⁴⁵ We affirm the wording of the Attributes as it appears for Him in the Qur'an and Sunnah, we negate their comparison to the creation, and we do *tafweedh* (relegating something's reality to Allah) of their meanings and modality. We believe that these are real actual Attributes that exist but their meanings and realities are only known to Allah. This is our creed and that of the *salaf*. We also do not consider them metaphorical, like the 'Asharis, nor do we affirm their meanings as defined in the Arabic language, like the Karramiyyah, because this necessitates anthropomorphism.

⁴⁶ This is in reference to those who compare Allah to His creation.

“The negator worships nothing,⁴⁷ the anthropomorphist worships idols, and the monotheist worships the One God, who is Self-Sufficient.”

Indeed, Allah, the Sublime, has said in His Book: "*Do you feel secure that the One Who is in heaven will not cause the earth to swallow you up as it quakes violently? Or do you feel secure that the One Who is in heaven will not unleash upon you a storm of stones. Only then would you know how 'serious' My warning was!*" (Qur'an, 67:16-17)

It is confirmed in the *Sahih* that the Prophet ﷺ asked a young slave-girl, "Where is Allah?" She replied, "In heaven." Then he asked her, "Who am I?" She answered, "You are the Messenger of Allah." The Prophet ﷺ said, "Set her free; she is a believer." This Hadith is narrated by Malik, Al-Shafi'i, Ahmad bin Hanbal, and Muslim in his *Sahih*, as well as others.⁴⁸

However, this does not mean that Allah is physically located inside the heavens nor that He is confined and contained within them. None of the predecessors (*salaf*) of the *Ummah* or its imams ever claimed such a thing. Instead, they unanimously agreed that Allah is above His heavens over His Throne beyond His creation.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ This is because to deny any reality to His Attributes is equivalent to denying His very Essence.

⁴⁸ What we learn from this report and the verse quoted before it is that we can use the same terminology as the Prophet ﷺ in reference to Allah. We can utilize the same phrases as used in the Qur'an and Sunnah when speaking about Allah without any issue. However, saying 'in heaven' does not mean that Allah is in a particular place, direction, or confined within a space, rather, we are simply just articulating what has come in the texts. The *salaf* used to simply articulate the text and then remain silent without delving into details.

⁴⁹ Allah existed while there was neither time, place, vacuum, nor matter. He is alone in His Pre-Eternal existence. When He created creation, He Willed that the creation will contain directions and with His Wisdom Willed that the creation will be given the ruling of 'below' (*tahtiyyah*) due to it being subjugated and created, while He is described with the

There is nothing from His Essence in His creation nor is there anything from the creation in His Essence.

Malik ibn Anas said, "Allah is in the heavens and His knowledge encompasses all places."

When they asked Abdullah ibn Al-Mubarak, "How do we know our Lord?" He replied, "By [knowing] that He is above His heavens over His Throne separate from His creation." Ahmad ibn Hanbal acknowledged the same as them.

Al-Awza'i said, "We and the followers (*Tabi'un*) are in agreement that Allah is above His Throne, as narrated in the *Sunnah* about His Attributes".

So, whoever believes that Allah is physically within the heavens, confined and surrounded by them, or that He is in need of the Throne⁵⁰ or anything else among His creations, or believes that

Attribute of 'transcendence' (*'uluww*) in relation to the creation but not in relation to His Pre-Eternal reality. The creation itself in its entirety is not in any particular place/space in existence because place/space is also a creation in itself. This is why we deny that Allah is in any particular place/space because it leads to the conclusion that He is confined within His creation. Directions also are confined within creation itself because they are part of it. There is no 'direction' outside of creation. Therefore, when we point upwards towards the heavens in reference to Allah, as the slave-girl did, we are simply pointing towards the highest point in creation and signifying that Allah is beyond it, which then reaches the Creator as it suits His Majesty and does not mean that it is the same way when the creation points at each other.

⁵⁰ The direction ends at the Throne of Allah, which is the highest point in creation, and our minds cannot comprehend what is beyond that point.

His Rising⁵¹ over the Throne is similar to the way a creature sits on a chair, then such a person is a misguided, ignorant, innovator.

And whoever believes that there is no Deity to be worshiped above the heavens, that there is no Lord to be prayed and prostrated to over the Throne, denies that Muhammad ﷺ was taken up to his Lord during the Night of Ascension, or that the Qur'an was not sent down to him ﷺ from Him, then such a person is a denier like Pharaoh, a deviant, and an innovator. The Pharaoh rejected Musa's belief in his Lord above the heavens and said, "*O Hamân! Build me a high tower so I may reach the pathways leading up to the heavens and look for the God of Musa, although I am sure he is a liar*" (Qur'an 40:36-37).

And Muhammad ﷺ attested to the truthfulness of Musa in that His Lord is above the heavens. During the Night of Ascension, he ﷺ ascended to Allah and his Lord obligated 50 [daily] prayers. Then he returned to Musa who told him to go back to his Lord and ask Him to alleviate his nation because they will be unable to do it. Then Allah lightened it for him by subtracting 10 prayers. Then he ﷺ returned to Musa who told him to go back to his Lord again and ask for further reduction for his nation. This *hadith* is mentioned in Bukhari and Muslim.

⁵¹ Hanbalis are split whether *istiwa'* (Rising) is an ambiguous Attribute or not. Those who hold that it is not ambiguous, like Abu al-Fadl al-Tamimi and Ibn Taymiyyah, allow explanation of it and interpret it to mean Transcendence (*'uluww*). Vast majority of Hanbalis opine that it is indeed ambiguous so they neither allow explanation of it nor consider it metaphorical (*ta'weef*). This latter opinion is the official position of the school on it. Hanbalis also differ whether it is an Attribute of Essence or Action. It is a Pre-Eternal Attribute that has no beginning and is not contingent upon the existence of the Throne. We treat it as all other ambiguous Attributes, we affirm its reality as an actual literal Attribute without knowing its meaning, thus, confining it back to Allah and reject the meaning as it pertains to the creation for Allah. We simply affirm the wording as it has come through the texts and say, Allah did *istiwa'* as it suits His Majesty. It is also part of the *khabari* Attributes, which refers to those we can only know through revelation and not intellect.

Therefore, whoever agreed with the Pharaoh and disagreed with Musa and Muhammad ﷺ, then he is astray. And whoever likened Allah to His creation, then he [too] is astray.

Nu'aym ibn Hammad said, "Whoever compares Allah to His creation has committed disbelief and whoever denies what Allah has described Himself with has committed disbelief. And whatever Allah has described Himself with or His Messenger has no resemblance [to His creation]."

Allah has created His servants, whether Arabs or non-Arabs [in such a way], that when they call upon Him, their hearts turn upwards [towards the heavens], not intending Him to be beneath their feet. For this reason, some of the 'Arifeen⁵² have said, "Whenever a 'Arif says, 'O Allah,' a meaning seeking [His] Transcendence is found in his heart before his tongue [even] moves and he neither turns right nor left."⁵³

Allah's Essence and Attributes

The discourse in this matter and its likes becomes evident by mentioning a fundamental principle, which is that the discussion about Attributes [of Allah] is a branch of the discussion about the Essence [of Allah]. Just as we affirm for Him, the Most High, an Essence that does not resemble [other] essences [in His creation], similarly, we say about His Attributes that they do not resemble [other] attributes [in His creation]. His knowledge is not like anyone else's knowledge, nor is His Power like anyone else's power, nor His Mercy, nor His Sovereignty, nor His Hearing, nor His Sight, nor His Speech, nor His Manifestation. Allah, the Exalted, has informed us that in Paradise, there is meat, milk, honey, water,

⁵² This is a *sufi* term which refers to someone who has reached a very special place in terms of knowledge and closeness to Allah through constant worship.

⁵³ Meaning we naturally turn upwards towards the heavens and not any other direction whenever we seek Allah.

silk, and gold [yet] Ibn Abbas said, "There is nothing in this world that exists in the afterlife except in name."⁵⁴

Therefore, if the unseen creations [in the afterlife] are not like the visible creations [of this world] despite the similarity in their names, then the Creator is greater in Transcendence and distinction from His creation than the distinction of one created thing from another despite the similarity in names.⁵⁵ The principle in this matter is that whatever has been established in the Book of Allah or the Sunnah of His Messenger, it is obligatory to believe in it, such as the '*uluww* of the Lord, His *istiwaa*' on His Throne, and similar matters.

Whatever is mentioned in the Book and the Sunnah must be believed in by every believer even if he does not understand its meaning.⁵⁶ Likewise, whatever is established by the consensus of the nation's predecessors and its imams.

As for what the later generations have disputed regarding the newly invented terms of affirmation and negation, such as the statement of those who say, "Allah is in a direction or not in a direction," "He occupies space or does not occupy space," and similar expressions that people argue about, there is no explicit text from the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, his Companions, the righteous followers (*Tabi'in*), or the Muslim imams. None of them said that

⁵⁴ Meaning milk, honey, gold, etc. have a different reality in this world as compared to the afterlife. We do not know the true meanings and reality of such things in the afterlife. Thus, the only commonality of the milk of this world, as an example, and the milk of the afterlife in paradise is in their names. We know from revelation that it will be a liquid that will be drunk but cannot fathom its taste, smell, feel, and look. We can only give true meaning to something that we know the reality of which clearly is not the case here. This shows that similarity in the wording does not necessitate similarity in meaning.

⁵⁵ Therefore, it is established that the commonality between the Attributes of Allah and His creation lies only in their names and nothing more.

⁵⁶ Notice that the author does not state that not knowing the meaning is in reference to modality, rather, he keeps it generic.

Allah is in a direction nor did they say He is not in a direction. They did not discuss whether He occupies space or not, He is a body or substance, or the opposite of that, rather, no one must accept any of these affirmations or negations from anyone until the intended meaning is understood. If truthfulness is intended, it is accepted, and if falsehood is intended, then it is rejected. If his speech includes both truth and falsehood, it is not accepted absolutely nor all of its meaning is rejected, rather, it is halted on and its meaning is explained⁵⁷ just like how people have disputed over the issue of direction, occupation of space, etc.

The term "direction" may refer to something other than Allah that exists making it a created entity. For example, if "direction" is intended to mean the same as the Throne or the heavens. It can also refer to whatever is non-existent besides Allah, such as if "direction" is meant to refer to whatever is above the creation. Therefore, whoever intends to affirm a spatial direction⁵⁸ [to Allah's existence] has restricted Him within the creation, so this is falsehood. On the other hand, whoever affirms a non-spatial direction⁵⁹ and intends [by it] that Allah is above the creation,

⁵⁷ We are learning from this that fundamentally we are not to engage in these issues and it is sufficient for us to learn the basic tenets of our religion. We should also not initiate our discussions with people who use these types of terminologies. Most of the lay people do not think about Allah through such frameworks, therefore, they should not be confused by bringing up such terminologies. In today's times, the meanings of these terminologies have become well established in the language and minds of Muslims with regards to creation. So when we reject these things for Allah, we are rejecting them after fully understanding their meanings in the language as the author is suggesting us to do. However, in general Muslims are only commanded to believe in the basic fundamentals of their faith and not its details.

⁵⁸ Spatial direction refers to the orientation or location in physical space, involving concepts like up, down, left, right, forward, and backward. It is related to the physical dimensions of space. [Translator's Note]

⁵⁹ Non-spatial direction refers to a manner or aspect that is not tied to physical space. In theological or metaphysical contexts, it is used to describe a relationship or attribute that transcends physical dimensions and may refer to abstract or metaphysical aspects.

distinct from them, then this is the truth. Allah is not confined by any part of His creation nor can He be fully surrounded or elevated by it. Instead, He is the Highest above it [while] encompassing all His creation.

Likewise, the term "occupation of space." If intended to mean that Allah occupies space within the creation, then Allah is far Greater and more Exalted. His Footstool encompasses the heavens and the earth. However, if intended to mean that He is distinct from the creation, separate from it, and not encompassed by it, then [this is indeed the case] as the imams of the *Sunnah* have said, "Allah is above His heavens, on His Throne, distinct from His creation."⁶⁰

In outer space the concepts of "up" and "down" are not as straightforward as they are in everyday experience on Earth. The notions of up and down are inherently tied to gravitational forces, and in the absence of a strong gravitational field or a reference point, the concepts lose their usual meaning. In the microgravity environment of space, such as that experienced by astronauts aboard the International Space Station (ISS), there is no "up" or "down" in the traditional sense. Objects and individuals can freely float and move in any direction, and there is no universal reference for what constitutes up or down. [Translator's Note]

⁶⁰ What we learn from this is that we need to understand first what is intended by the words of the speaker, even if such words are not used in texts, before making a judgment. If the meaning intended by the speaker conforms to the texts, then it is acceptable, otherwise, it is not.

Chapter 2: Allah's Speech

We say: The Qur'an⁶¹ is the speech of Allah revealed to Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم, miraculous in itself, and its recitation is considered an act of worship.

Speech literally refers to sounds and letters.⁶² If it is called *internal speech*,⁶³ it is [in reference to] a relationship between two singular words occurring within the speaker, in which case it is [considered a] metaphor.⁶⁴

As for writing, it is also considered literal speech. Allah Speaks as He Wills and when He Wills without modality. He commands and

⁶¹ Literally, it refers to something that is constantly read.

⁶² Regardless of whether it is attributed to the Creator or creation and this is the position of Imam Ahmad. Letters that are heard is what we call speech in the literal sense. Imam Ahmad explicitly said that Allah speaks with a sound. As for affirming letters, this is because sound necessitates the affirmation of letters due to the fact that it is heard. Sound cannot be without any letters. Sound that is without any letters is meaningless. We do not have an explicit statement from Imam Ahmad affirming letters but Hanbalis use his statement on the affirmation of sound that can be heard to draw the conclusion that speech with sound has letters. As for those who say this necessitates sequence, this only holds true for those who speak through limbs, appendages, or instruments. However, the One who Speaks without such things, then sequence is not obligatory on Him. We know through agreement of all the scholars that Allah will Speak and judge the creation on the Day of Judgment all at once simultaneously, all the while each person will be judged and Spoken to individually and this opposes sequence.

⁶³ The author here is alluding to certain groups who hold the view that Allah does not speak with sound nor letters because they opine that such things are part of creation and impossible to attribute to the Creator. When these groups affirm Speech for Allah, they are referring to internal speech which for them occurs only internally inside of Him. However, the Atharis believe that the Qur'an is the Speech of Allah, which consists of sound and letters, and was revealed on the heart of Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم.

⁶⁴ The internal meaning that the letters point towards is considered speech metaphorically but not literally.

judges as He Wills. This is the way of Imam Ahmad, the Imam of *Sunnah* without dispute, and his companions. This is also the way of Imam Muhammad ibn Ismail Al-Bukhari, the Imam of Hadith without dispute, and the majority of scholars.

This was [also] stated by Ibn Muflih in his *Usool* book and Ibn Qadhi Al-Jabal.

When we say, "Miraculous in itself," it means that it is miraculous [in all of its aspects]⁶⁵ as its purpose through it is to clarify rulings, admonish, and narrate stories of nations from the past.

The evidence of the challenge is in the saying of Allah, "Say, 'O Prophet, 'If 'all' humans and jinn were to come together to produce the equivalent of this Qur'an, they could not produce its equal, no matter how they supported each other.'" (Surah Al-Isra, 17:88) This means, produce something like it if you claim to have the ability. When they were unable, He challenged them with ten chapters, then with one chapter, then with a single verse similar to it.

And when we say, "Its recitation is considered an act of worship," it means we exclude the abrogated verses with their wording, whether their rulings remained or not, because after abrogation, their recitation is no longer considered an act of worship.

And when we say, "Writing is considered literal speech," it is due to the statement of Aisha, "Whatever is between the two covers of the *Mushaf* is the Speech of Allah."⁶⁶ And because whoever wrote

⁶⁵ It incapacitates its opponents and leaves them unable to respond to the challenge of producing something similar to it.

⁶⁶ Speech of Allah is heard in two ways: 1) To hear it directly as it occurred with Musa, Muhammad صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم, Angel Jibraeel, etc. This one entails hearing the Speech of Allah with sound. 2) To hear it indirectly through an intermediary such as the recitation of the Qur'an by someone else. This one entails hearing the Speech of Allah through the sound of creation. In both cases, it is considered His Speech because speech is

explicitly the words of ‘divorce’ [on a paper with regards to his wife], it will be considered to have actually occurred by it even if he did not intend it to be a valid divorce.⁶⁷

And when we say, “Allah Speaks as He Wills and when He Wills without modality. He commands and judges as He Wills,” This is because Allah, Glorified and Exalted, Speaks with His Will and Power. In other words, He has never ceased to be a Speaker [in His Pre-Eternal Reality] whenever He Wills. Speech is a perfect Attribute and the one who speaks is more perfect than the one who does not speak. Similarly, the one who speaks by his [own] will and power is more perfect than the one who does not.⁶⁸

And [the meaning of] our statement, “Speech literally refers to sounds and letters.” Imam al-Tufi from the Hanbalis said that

attributed to the one who originally stated it and not the one who transmits it.

⁶⁷ The author’s purpose here is to show that just as writing the words ‘divorce’ will be attributed to the person who wrote it on the paper, the words in the Qur’an will be attributed to Allah because He is the One who said them.

⁶⁸ The Speech of Allah is Pre-Eternal and Eternal. How can we reconcile this with the belief that Allah Speaks when He Wills in intervals? We respond that His Will to Speak is not in the Attribute itself but His allowance for us to hear His Speech versus not. Also, the Will of Allah is connected with possible existence and not necessary existence nor impossible existence. If the Attribute of Will and Power can be connected to the Attribute of Speech, which is an Attribute of the Essence, then it can also be connected to all of the Attributes which are also Necessary Attributes. The statement regarding some Attributes of His are like that of the other Attributes, we cannot pick and choose and make something an accident in one Attribute but not another, make an Attribute have a partial accident in one Attribute but not another, etc. Therefore, Allah makes whomever He Wills hear His Speech whenever He Wills. Regarding perfection in this statement, the author intends to convey that Allah is capable of Speaking and is not compelled to Speak by anything because incapability to speak and compelling someone to Speak is the opposite of perfection.

[speech] can be 'literal' in its expression⁶⁹ and 'metaphorical' in its meaning in two ways:

Firstly, that which first comes to the understanding of the people of [that] language from the expression and this [first thing that comes to their mind] is evidence of the literal [meaning].⁷⁰

Secondly, speech is derived from the word *al-kalm* for its effect that it has on the listener. It is only the [uttered] expression itself that has the effect on the listener and not the internal meanings. Yes, the latter may be useful due to its strength [at a later time] but the [uttered] expression is immediately effective. So what is effective immediately is more likely to be literal, and what is effective in strength [at a later time] is metaphorical.

And there are a number of reasons which invalidate the claim that the Qur'an is [just] internal speech:

Firstly, Allah challenged the creation to bring forth something like it and the challenge only occurs by bringing something similar to this Book [i.e. Qur'an] without any problem because what is inside [of someone] cannot be known nor can it be called a chapter (*surah*) or discourse (*hadith*). It is not permitted to say, "Bring a statement similar to what is inside of the Creator." And because the polytheists claimed that the Prophet ﷺ fabricated and invented this Qur'an, so Allah responded to their claim by challenging them to bring something similar to what they claimed was fabricated and conveyed to him ﷺ by someone other than Him. This is clear without any doubt about it.

⁶⁹ Which are the actual sounds and letters of the expression.

⁷⁰ Speech is generally understood to be literal, which is the first meaning that comes to the mind of the listener, unless there is contextual evidence to suggest that a metaphorical meaning is intended. The same is with the verses of the Qur'an. The Speech of Allah cannot be considered metaphorical in an absolute sense.

Secondly, the polytheists called it [Qur'an] poetry, so Allah said, "*We have not taught him poetry, nor is it fitting for him. This 'Book' is only a Reminder and a clear Qur'an*" (Qur'an 36:69). It is known that they claimed this because poetry is measured speech, so 'poetry' cannot be used to refer to something [only] in meaning nor what is not [considered] speech. Allah [in response to them] called it a 'reminder' and a 'clear Qur'an,' thus, it leaves no doubt for a person of intellect that what they intended by 'poetry' was the Qur'an and nothing other than it.

Thirdly, some of the disbelievers claimed that they are able to say something similar to it, some of them sought to alter it, some of them forbade others from listening to it, and they commanded to drown it out.⁷¹ It is known with certainty that all of this is related to this Book [i.e. Qur'an] and not in reference to what is inside the Self [of Allah]. The disbelievers did not believe that there is anything inside the Self of the Creator that they want to alter or claimed that they say something similar to it nor did they forbid from listening to it. They [always] pointed to the [audibly] present.⁷²

Fourthly, Allah called the Qur'an Arabic. He said, "*It is 'a Quran revealed' in Arabic without any crookedness*" (Qur'an 39:28), meaning it is uncreated. He also called the Qur'an discourse (*hadith*) in His statement, "*So leave to Me 'O Prophet' those who reject this discourse*" (Qur'an 68:44). This type of description can only be attributed to [actual] words and not [in reference to internal] meanings. Ibn Qudama pointed to these things in his book *Al-Burhaan* and he prolonged the discussion about it.

⁷¹ As mentioned in the Qur'an, "*The disbelievers advised 'one another', 'Do not listen to this Qur'an but drown it out so that you may prevail'*" (Qur'an 41:26).

⁷² Meaning their point of contention was always with the words of the Qur'an and not the internal speech of Allah. It is the words of the Qur'an that they had a problem with and which some of them tried to imitate, alter, and forbid others from listening to due to its effect on the listener. This is all because they were trying to convince people that it is not the Speech of Allah, when in fact it is.

Imam al-Tufi, may Allah have mercy on him, said, “As for His statement, ‘*And they say within themselves*’ (Qur’an 58:8), then it is metaphorical because it is pointing to an internal meaning due to a contextual clue, which is the phrase ‘*within themselves*.’ If it had been mentioned in an absolute sense, then it would only be understood to mean [uttered] expression.”⁷³

Likewise, everything under this issue [related to metaphors] will be determined by contextual clues. From it is also the statement of Umar, “I prepared a speech in myself.”⁷⁴

As for His statement, “*Whether you speak secretly or openly*” (Qur’an 67:13), there is no evidence in it⁷⁵ because secrecy is contrary to public expression. Both are [uttered] expressions but one is louder than the other.

As for the poem of Al-Akhtal⁷⁶ in which he says, “Verily, the clarification [of speech] is in the heart,”⁷⁷ then it is a metaphor about the substance of speech and this is the correct conception of it. For whoever cannot conceptualize what they are saying,

⁷³ Meaning if the contextual clue ‘*within themselves*’ was not present in the verse, we would assume that the phrase ‘*And they say*’ is in reference to them actually uttering words.

⁷⁴ Meaning Umar provided a contextual clue that this ‘speech’ occurred inside him and not through his tongue, thus, the word ‘speech’ here in his statement would be considered metaphorical.

⁷⁵ Meaning there is no evidence in it for those who seek to use this verse to say that speech can also be internal.

⁷⁶ He was a Christian poet.

⁷⁷ The author is mentioning this because some use this verse from the poem to extract evidence for internal speech. In addition, we cannot rely on him to extract understanding of our beliefs and even this verse is not preserved. There are different wordings used in various versions. We also do not find scholars of the Arabic language mentioning his poems or books to linguistically benefit from them.

there is no speech.⁷⁸ It is a hyperbole from this poet in favoring the heart over the tongue.

The evidence of the predecessors on [Allah's] Speech literally being sounds and letters are the Qur'an, Sunnah, and consensus.⁷⁹

As for the Qur'an, then it is the statement of Allah, "*And Allah has spoken to Moses verbally*" (Qur'an 4:164). And His statements, "*And His Lord spoke to him*" (Qur'an 7:143) and "*Among them were those to whom Allah spoke*" (Qur'an 2:253).

The word *takleem*⁸⁰ refers to whatever is [uttered and] heard and it is only letters and sounds that are heard not meanings.

Likewise His statement, "*And when your Lord called Moses*" (Qur'an 26:10). Calling cannot be done except through sound and there are many [examples] of this⁸¹ in the Qur'an.

As for the Sunnah, then it is the statement of the Prophet ﷺ, "*When Allah spoke with revelation, the inhabitants of the heaven heard His Voice.*" This report is conveyed in *mawqoof* form from Abdullah ibn Mas'ud.⁸²

⁷⁸ Meaning we must first internally conceptualize what we want to say before bringing it on our tongues, otherwise, we cannot articulate it into words.

⁷⁹ The author did not mention intellect as a source because for Hanbali creed can only be derived through these three sources.

⁸⁰ It is used in Qur'an 4:164 as referenced above and translated as 'verbally'.

⁸¹ Meaning there are many examples of 'calling' being used in the Qur'an to refer to something that is heard through sound.

⁸² *Mawqoof* is when a report is attributed to a companion and not the Prophet ﷺ. Since this is something that cannot be known except through revelation, it could not have been an opinion of Ibn Mas'ud, rather, he must have taken it from the Prophet ﷺ. There is another

It is reported in the book *Refutation Against the Jahmiyyah* that Abdullah ibn Ahmad said [to his father Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal], “They claim that Allah does not speak with a sound,” to which [his father] replied, “They lie and only engage in denial [of His Attributes].”

It is reported in a hadith that the Prophet ﷺ said, “Allah will gather the creation on the Day of Judgment on one plain, then call them with a high sound which is not atrocious.” This is mentioned by Abu Hudhayfah Ishaq ibn Bishr in his book. (p. 32)

It is reported that the Prophet ﷺ mentioned the people of paradise when they see their Lord [and that] then He will call out to them with the delight of His voice.

And he ﷺ said, “Whoever recited the Qur’an correctly, then he will have 10 good deeds for every letter and whoever recited it with mistakes, then he will have one good deed for every letter.”

As for consensus,⁸³ then they agreed that Moses heard the speech of Allah without any means and sound refers to whatever is heard.

It is reported from the companions that they attributed ‘sound’ to Allah without rejection from any of them as preceded with the statement of Ibn Mas’ud and others.

It came in a report that the Children of Israel said, “O’ Moses! What do you compare the voice of your Lord with?” He replied, “There is no comparison to it.”

report from the Prophet ﷺ in Abu Dawud (4738) which states, “When Allah spoke with revelation, the inhabitants of heaven heard the clanging of a bell from the heavens like a chain being dragged across a rock.”

⁸³ This refers to the agreement of Muslim scholars who are qualified to do *ijtihad* after the death of the Prophet ﷺ.

Abu Bakr and Umar said, “The declension of the Qur’an is more beloved to us than memorizing some of its letters.”

Ali was asked about a person in a state of major ritual impurity, “Can he recite the Qur’an?” He replied, “No, not even a letter.”

Ibn Mas’ud said, “Whoever disbelieved in one letter of the Qur’an, then he has disbelieved in all of it.”

Ibn Mas’ud said, “No believer reads one letter of the Qur’an except that Allah writes for him ten good deeds.”

And they [i.e. Muslim scholars] agreed that whoever denies a chapter, a verse, a word, or a letter of the Qur’an is a disbeliever.

Abu Nasr al-Sijzi said, “This is clear-cut evidence that the Qur’an is [a compilation of] letters.” He said this in [the book] *al-Burhaan*.

If it is said, “Sound only occurs through body parts and letters only exit [through them], and Allah cannot be described with that.”

Then there are a number of ways to respond to this:

Firstly, it is said to them, “*How do you know this?*” If they respond, “Because this is how it is when it relates to us, so likewise for Allah as an analogy to us.”⁸⁴ We say, “This is a clear mistake. An analogy cannot be made of Allah with His creation nor can He or His Attributes be compared with it. Whoever does such a thing is a deviant comparer.”

Secondly, Allah says in the Qur’an, “*Their hands will speak to Us and their feet will testify to what they used to commit*” (Qur’an 36:65). “*They will ask their skin ‘furiously’, ‘Why have you testified*

⁸⁴ In other words, they do not have any evidence for this statement but are just making a false assumption.

against us?’ It will say, ‘We have been made to speak by Allah, Who causes all things to speak’” (Qur’an 41:21). And we are informed in the Qur’an that the heavens and the earth said, “We submit willingly” (Qur’an 41:11). And the Prophet ﷺ reported that there was a specific rock that used to send greetings of peace upon him and that the poisoned part of the sheep which he put in his mouth spoke to him. Ibn Mas’ud said, “We used to hear food glorify Allah while it was being eaten.” There is no difference of opinion that Allah is able to give a deaf stone ability to talk without any [bodily] equipment.⁸⁵

Thirdly, it is incumbent on them to claim the same for the remaining of Allah’s Attributes as well. So, they should say, “Knowledge can only come with a heart, sight can only come through a pupil, and hearing can only come about through ears.” If they did this with all of the Attributes, they would become disbelieving anthropomorphists. If they negated these Attributes, they would become deniers [of Allah’s Attributes]. If they affirm them without instruments, then they are obligated to affirm this Attribute [of Speech with sound and letters] as well, otherwise, what is the difference?⁸⁶

Imam al-Ghazali said, "Whoever says Musa heard [Allah’s] Speech without letter or sound, then let him [also] allow seeing an

⁸⁵ The Maturidis and Asharis strongly disagree with Hanbalis on this issue and do not believe that Allah speaks with sound and letters. They base this on rational arguments and not clear textual proofs. They’ve written books strongly refuting Hanbalis on this point and some have even accused Hanbalis of anthropomorphism due to it. However, we [the Hanbalis] hold on to this belief due to clear-cut textual proofs on this matter and excuse their *ijtihād* on this issue and do not excommunicate them from *Ahlus Sunnah* due to it. We ask Allah to forgive their scholars.

⁸⁶ Meaning there is inconsistency here on their part by affirming some of Allah’s Attributes without obligating some bodily instruments as a necessity for affirming them, such as, Allah’s Hearing, Sight, Knowledge, etc. and refusing to affirm others clearly mentioned to us in the Qur’an and Sunnah out of fear that they necessitate bodily instruments. Why cannot we affirm all of them with the same consistent principle used to affirm Allah’s Hearing, Sight, and Knowledge?

Essence on the Day of Judgment without a body or incidental characteristics."

Imam al-Tufi said, "All of this is affectation and departure from the apparent and decisive proof without necessity. It is only frivolous imaginations and fading illusions. What they mentioned contradicts the fact that meanings are not established as observable evidence except through bodies. If they allow a meaning to be established for the Essence without being a body, then they should also allow the emission of sound from the Pre-Eternal Essence without it being a body because both cases are contrary to observable evidence. Whoever Attributes [to Allah] Speech of Words without a body, then let him [also] permit seeing [Him] without a body. There is no difference."

Abu Nasr Al-Sijzi said, "If the Speech [of Allah] was other than letters and the letters were [just] an expression of it, it would be necessary to judge that expression either as having originated in a chest, a tablet, or spoken by some of His servants, so that it can be attributed to it. Thus, whoever says that must make clear what he has in the chapters, verses, and letters [of the Qur'an]: Are they an expression of Jibra'eel or Muhammad صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم?"

Conclusion

Ibn Hajar Al-'Asqalani said, "The position that the Ash'aris have settled on is that the Qur'an is the speech of Allah and is not created. It is written in the Mushafs, preserved in the hearts, and recited by the tongues. Allah, the Most High, says, '*And if anyone from the polytheists asks for your protection 'O Prophet', grant it to them so they may hear the Word of Allah*'" (Qur'an 9:6).

It is reported in an authentic hadith that the Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم used to forbid traveling with the Qur'an to the enemy's land out of fear that the enemy might get hold of it. What is meant here is the Qur'an that is in the *Mushaf* and not that which is memorized in the

chests. The righteous predecessors agreed that whatever is between the two covers [of the *Mushaf*] is the Speech of Allah.

The author⁸⁷ of *Al-Mawaqif* has a unique discourse investigating the [the doctrine of] Speech of Allah that corresponds to what has been mentioned above. Al-Jurjaani mentioned it in his explanation of *Al-Mawaqif*.

It is apparent from what Ibn Hajar Al-'Asqalani mentioned and the author of *Al-Mawaqif* that Al-Ash'ari's agreement with Imam Ahmad in the matter of speech is evident, and what has been narrated contradicting this is incorrect, either due to the mistake of the transmitter or ignorance of what Al-Ash'ari's [own] position was settled on.

Taj al-Subki has provided a clearer statement on this in *Al-Tabaqat* in the section related to the biography of Al-Ash'ari. You may refer to it if you wish, and Allah knows best.

⁸⁷ This is in reference to Al-Iji

Chapter 3: Beneficial Principles

First Principle

The statement regarding some of [Allah's] Attributes is the same that is [consistently] applied towards others.

If the one addressed affirms that Allah is Living with life, Knowledgeable with knowledge, Powerful with ability, Hears with Hearing, Sees with Sight, Speaks with Speech, Wills with intent and [the one addressed] considers all of these Attributes as literal, but he disputes [His Attributes of] Love, Pleasure, Anger, and Dislike by considering them metaphorical and interpreting them as either a reference to His Will or as Him granting blessings or punishment to some of His creation, then it will be said to him, "There is no difference between what you negated and what you affirmed. Rather, the statement regarding one of them is like the statement regarding the other."⁸⁸

Therefore, if you said, "His Will is similar to the will of the creation, so likewise, His Love, Pleasure, and Anger [are also like His creation]." This is clear anthropomorphism! However, [it will not be] if you said, "He has a Will befitting Him just as the creation has a will befitting it. Similarly, He has Love, Pleasure, and Anger befitting Him just as the creation has love, pleasure, and anger befitting it."

If the one addressed said, "Anger is the boiling of the heart's blood for retaliation." It will be said to him, "And will is the inclination of the self in order to acquire benefit or keep away harm." Therefore, if you were told, "This is the will of creation." It will be replied, "And this [what you defined] is the anger of creation." Similar

⁸⁸ It is not reported that the *salaf* ever divided these Attributes where some are taken to be literal while others metaphorical.

statements can be applied towards His Speech, Hearing, Sight, Knowledge, and Power.

If the one addressed negates Allah's Attributes but affirms His Names, like the Mu'tazilah who say, "Allah is Alive, Knowledgeable, and Powerful," but deny the Attributes of Life, Knowledge, and Power, then it is said to him, "There is no difference between affirming the Names and affirming the Attributes." If he said, "Affirmation of [the Attributes of] Life, Knowledge, and Power necessitate likening [Allah to His creation] and anthropomorphism because we do not find in the observable [such] attributes except that it is in a body."⁸⁹ It will be replied to him, "If you negate [the Attributes] because of this reason, then also negate the Names, rather negate everything, because you will not find it [i.e. the names of things] in the observable except that it is in a body [of some sort]."

Second Principle

Allah is described with both affirmation and negation.⁹⁰

The former are things like His Knowledge of everything, His Power over everything, and that He is Seeing, Hearing, etc. The latter are

⁸⁹ The phrase 'body' here is in reference to anything that consists of two substances or more as was indicated before in an earlier footnote.

⁹⁰ The practice of the *salaf* was just to affirm the Attributes without going beyond the text. They simply affirmed the Attributes that were mentioned in the Qur'an and Sunnah. However, after the development of the science of *kalam*, the people began to divide Attributes into various types. Affirmed Attributes are those which indicate literal existence and are mentioned in the Qur'an or Sunnah. These can be further divided into two types: 1) those which are related to His Essence and cannot be separated from it, such as, Knowledge, Life, Face, Foot, Power, Hands, etc. and 2) those which are related to His Actions through His Will and Power, such as, Creation, Sustenance, *Istiwa'*, Coming, Descending, Speech, Anger, Pleasure, Laugh, etc. Negative attributes are those which have been denied for Allah in the Qur'an or Sunnah and tell us what He is not.

things like His statement, "*Neither drowsiness nor sleep overtakes Him*" (Qur'an 2:255).

It should be known that negation is neither praise nor perfection except when it includes affirmation [of something] because negation by itself is [just] purely absence, which is non-existent. This is why in general whenever Allah describes Himself with negation, it includes affirmation of praise [as well] like His statement, "*Allah! There is no god 'worthy of worship' except Him, the Ever-Living, All-Sustaining. Neither drowsiness nor sleep overtakes Him*" (Qur'an 2:255) until His statement in the same verse, "*and the preservation of both does not tire Him.*"

Therefore, the negation of drowsiness and sleep includes the perfection of life and sustainment because it indicates the perfection that He is the Ever-Living, All-Sustaining.

Likewise, His statement, "*and the preservation of both does not tire Him*" (Qur'an 2:255), meaning He does not tire while preserving them nor do they overburden Him. This implies the perfection of His Power and its completeness, unlike the power of creation which experiences some type of discomfort and difficulty even when it has power over something. Therefore, there exists a deficiency in the ability of creation and an imperfection in its power.

Similarly, in His statement, "*Not 'even' an atom's weight is hidden from Him in the heavens or the earth*" (Qur'an 34:3), the negation of hiddenness implies that His Knowledge is inclusive of every single iota of existence in the universe.

Likewise, in His statement, "*Indeed, We created the heavens and the earth and everything in between in six Days, and We were not 'even' touched with fatigue*" (Qur'an 50:38), the negation of fatigue indicates the perfection of His Ability and limitlessness of His Power. This is contrary to creation whose [execution of] ability and power results in fatigue and weakness.

Similarly, in His statement, “*No vision can encompass Him*” (Qur’an 6:103), the negation here of encompassment is in reference to inclusiveness according to the majority of scholars and not vision because that which is non-existent cannot be seen and there is nothing praiseworthy about something non-existent. It is only praiseworthy [in this instance] because He cannot be encompassed even if seen just as He cannot be encompassed even if known. Therefore, in the negation of encompassment there is an affirmation of His Greatness, making it a praise and a description of perfection. This serves as evidence for affirming vision without encompassment [and] not for the vision [of seeing Him] itself. This is the truth agreed upon by the predecessors of the nation and its leaders and Allah knows best.

Third Principle

Between the Attributes of Allah and the Attributes of Creation

Many people mistakenly perceive in some [of Allah’s] Attributes, or many of them, or most of them, or all of them, that they resemble the attributes of creation. Then, they want to negate what they understood but end up falling into various prohibitions:

First: Considering what he understood from the texts as resembling the attributes of creation and thinking that the implication of the texts is anthropomorphism.

Second: If he makes the above his understanding and then denies it, the remaining texts⁹¹ [that mention His Attributes] are denied [as well] from affirming the Attributes befitting Allah. He remains culpable for misinterpreting the texts and holding the negative assumption that what can be understood from the words of Allah and His Messenger is anthropomorphism. By doing so, he denies what Allah and His Messenger have entrusted through

⁹¹ The ‘texts’ here are in reference to the Qur’an and Sunnah.

their words regarding affirming the Attributes of Allah and the Divine meanings befitting His Majesty.⁹²

Third: He denies these Attributes about Allah without knowledge, thereby negating what the Lord rightfully deserves.

Conclusion

The realization of the Oneness of Allah (*Tawheed*) is to know three rights:

1. The right of Allah in which no creation has a share in.
2. The right of His Messenger ﷺ.
3. A shared right between Allah and His Messenger ﷺ.

As for the right of Allah alone, then it refers to things like worship, reliance, fear, awe, devotion (*taqwa*), repentance, hope, and recourse.⁹³ Allah said, “*So do not invoke any other god along with Allah*” (Qur’an 26:213). And He said, “*So worship Allah alone, being sincerely devoted to Him*” (Qur’an 39:2). And He said, “*Put your trust in Allah if you are truly believers*” (Qur’an 5:23). And He said, “*For whoever obeys Allah and His Messenger, and fears Allah and is mindful of Him, then it is they who will truly triumph*” (Qur’an 24:52). So, He affirmed obedience to Allah and

⁹² There are some words that can resemble others in spelling/pronunciation but have different meanings (i.e. homonym). An example is the word ‘ayn in Arabic, which can refer to eye, source, spy, fountain, etc. The context usually decides which particular meaning is intended by the speaker. In the context of Allah’s Attributes, the Qur’an and Sunnah mention some terms like Hand, Face, Anger, Seeing, Hearing, Pleasure, Speech, etc. for Allah but they do not carry the same meanings that are applied when such words are used towards creation. Therefore, when we come across such words in the texts, we must determine whether they are in the context of Allah or His creation. If the former, we simply affirm the Attribute but categorically reject it resembling His creation.

⁹³ All of these are in the context of worship, which is an exclusive right of Allah alone.

the Messenger ﷺ but affirmed fear and devotion to Himself alone.

And Allah said, “*So do not fear them; fear Me if you are ‘true’ believers*” (Qur’an 3:175). And the Prophet ﷺ said, “Do not say, ‘Whatever Allah Willed and whatever Muhammad willed,’ but say, ‘Whatever Allah Willed and then whatever Muhammad willed.’” This is because Allah’s Will does not require the will of anyone from the servants nor does the will of servants necessitate the Will of Allah, rather, whatever Allah Wills comes to be even if the people do not will it and whatever the people will does not occur if Allah does not Will it.

As for the right of the Messenger ﷺ, then it refers to things like adherence, reverence, following, and surrendering to his command. Allah said, “*But no! By your Lord, they will never be ‘true’ believers until they accept you ‘O Prophet’ as the judge in their disputes, and find no resistance within themselves against your decision and submit wholeheartedly*” (Qur’an 4:65). And He said, “*Say, ‘O Prophet,’ ‘If you ‘sincerely’ love Allah, then follow me; Allah will love you*” (Qur’an 3:31). And there are other examples like this in the Qur’an.

As for the right shared between them, then it refers to things like love, belief, attestation, and obedience. Allah said, “*Whoever obeys the Messenger has truly obeyed Allah*” (Qur’an 4:80). And He said, “*It is the pleasure of Allah and His Messenger they should seek*” (Qur’an 9:62). And He said, “*Say, ‘O Prophet,’ ‘If your parents and children and siblings and spouses and extended family and the wealth you have acquired and the trade you fear will decline and the homes you cherish—‘if all these’ are more beloved to you than Allah and His Messenger and struggling in His Way, then wait until Allah brings about His Will. Allah does not guide the rebellious people*” (Qur’an 9:24). And the Prophet ﷺ used to say in his sermon, “Whoever obeys Allah and His Messenger, then he is rightly guided. And whoever disobeys them,

then he only harms himself and will not cause any harm to Allah [by doing so].”

Ibn Qayyim pointed to this in his poem titled *Nooniyyah*:

*For Allah is a right, exclusive to Him alone
And for His servant is a right, they both are two rights [one for each]*

*Do not merge these two distinct rights into one
Without distinction or differing [between them]*

*Therefore, Hajj is done for the Most Merciful not His Messenger
Likewise, prayer and sacrificing animals are done to get close [to Him]*

*And likewise prostration, our vows, and our oaths
And likewise the servant’s repentance from disobedience*

*And likewise trust, penitence, and devotion
And likewise hope and fear of the Most Merciful*

*And likewise worship and our recourse to Him
You alone we worship the One in tawheed in both [i.e. worship and recourse]*

*Upon them both, the existence stands with its captivity
This world and the next, how nice are the two pillars [of worship and recourse]*

*And likewise, tasbeeh, takbeer, and
Tahleel is a right of our God*

*But adherence and reverence is a right
Of the Messenger by the demand of the Qur’an*

And love, belief, and attestation

Are not exclusive, but shared between the two [i.e. Allah and His Messenger]

*These are the details of the three rights
Do not embellish them⁹⁴ O' people of knowledge*

This is the last of what could be gathered. We ask Almighty Allah to make its benefit widespread and to dedicate it solely for His Noble Face, drawing it near to Him, in the gardens of bliss.

All praise is due to Allah, by whose grace righteous deeds are perfected. May the blessings and peace be upon our master Muhammad, his family, and his companions, the ones endowed with excellence and miracles. May blessings and peace continue upon them as long as the earth and heavens endure.

⁹⁴ Meaning do not add details to them which do not belong for that particular right.