

Summary of Ḥanbalī Creed

By

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Translation and Notes
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Translator's Introduction

This translated booklet, authored by Shaykh Mubārak Ibn Rāshid al-Hathlān, offers a glimpse of the Ḥanbalī/Atharī creed, drawing from key Atharī canonized texts: **al-‘Ayn wa al-Athar**, **Qalā’id al-‘Iqyān**, and **Najāt al-Khalaf**. The primary goal is to provide an accessible overview without delving into intricate details. Footnotes enrich this translation, incorporating Shaykh Abd al-Raḥmān al-Salṭī’s commentary on the book and further details from **Qalā’id al-‘Iqyān**.

In light of widespread confusion about the Atharī/Ḥanbalī creed, this work serves as an introduction for beginner level Ḥanbalī/Atharī creed students, regardless of their proficiency in Arabic. Upon completion, students can progress to more detailed texts, including the original sources and others, which offer deeper explorations, evidence, and discussions on varying perspectives within and outside the school.

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Author's Introduction

All praise be to Allah [for] whom occurrences indicate His existence, who graciously favors us with His bounty and generosity. I praise Him [with the] praise of the one who affirms His Attributes and negates from Him any resemblance to the creation. Exalted is He above being described in terms of shapes and analogies and transcendent is He beyond limits and categories. I send blessings and peace upon the one who called to the correct creed and prohibited the path of disbelief and obstinacy, and upon his family and companions, the leaders of guidance and righteousness.

This is a noble creed and a pleasant treatise. I summarized it from the books of [Ḥanbalī] scholars to make it easier for all students to grasp. I took from the following books:¹

- **Al-'Ayn wa al-Athar** by 'Abd al-Bāqī al-Ḥanbalī
- **Qalā'id al-'Iqyān** by Muḥammad ibn Bulbān
- **Najāt al-Khalaf** by 'Uthmān ibn Aḥmad al-Najdī

I examined their books and selected from their speech what is easy for those with understanding. I ask Allah for success, reward, acceptance, and sincerity in speech and action.²

¹ These three books contain within them the canonized Ḥanbalī creed. Their authors were considered major scholars of the school in their times without dispute.

² It is important to note that the Ḥanbalī creed is in reference to the Atharī creed. It is only attributed to Imam Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal out of honor for him because he solely stood firm during the campaign against those who refused to affirm that the Qur'ān was uncreated. The Atharī beliefs were held even before Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal and Ḥanbalīs consider them the official beliefs of the early generations including the companions of Muhammad ﷺ.

Beliefs Regarding God

- Knowing Allah is an obligation on every accountable³ and capable⁴ person, it is prescribed through [religious] legislation by reflecting over the creation.⁵
 - This means it is an obligation to know the necessity of the existence of His Essence with perfect Attributes.
 - It is not an obligation to know the reality of His Essence due to the impossibility of [knowing] that because it is unlike all other realities.
- It is obligatory to assert that He, Exalted be He, is: One,⁶ indivisible,⁷ singular and not plural, unique, eternal, He has never had offspring nor was He born, and there is none comparable to Him.
- The Names and Attributes of Allah are pre-eternal and can only be known through textual evidence.⁸
 - Therefore, it is not permitted to name Him or

³ Meaning the person is sane and pubescent.

⁴ Meaning the person has the ability to reason.

⁵ Meaning a person is religiously ordained to reflect over the creation and come to the conclusion that there must be a Necessary Being that brought all of this into existence. The obligation comes about due to the numerous verses in the Qur'ān which command us to reflect over the creation.

⁶ He is One in His Essence, Attributes, and actions. There is no similarity with Him in these with anyone.

⁷ Creatures have different parts which come together to make a whole. For example, a human being consists of limbs, organs, veins, blood, etc. Allah is nothing like His creation.

⁸ Therefore, they can never be determined through personal opinion.

describe Him except by what has been transmitted in the Qur'ān, Sunnah, or by consensus of the Muslim scholars.

Necessary Attributes for Allah⁹

Knowledge

- It is obligatory to assert that Allah, Exalted be He, is: Knowledgeable with an integral,¹⁰ everlasting, pre-eternal, and singular¹¹ knowledge.
 - It pertains to all necessary,¹² possible,¹³ and impossible¹⁴ matters.

⁹ These are Attributes for Allah which we can determine through our intellect by reflecting over the creation and determining that a Necessary Being that created the universe must possess such Attributes in their perfect form.

¹⁰ Meaning it is part of His Essence.

¹¹ Meaning nothing new comes into His knowledge. There is never a moment where there is an addition to His knowledge. Everything that was, is, or will be is already contained in His knowledge in both general and detailed forms. He also knows what is not and if it were to be, what the result would be due to it.

¹² Such as there being only a single Necessary Being. The 'necessary' is whatever must be affirmed because the intellect cannot conceive of its absence.

¹³ Such as the existence of creation. The 'possible' is whatever the intellect can accept as either existing or not.

¹⁴ Such as there being multiple gods. The 'impossible' is whatever must be negated because the intellect cannot conceive of its existence.

Power

- It is obligatory to assert that Allah, Exalted be He, is: Capable with an everlasting, integral, pre-eternal, existing, and singular¹⁵ power.
 - It pertains to every possible¹⁶ matter. There is nothing found in the past nor in the future except [that it occurs] by His power.

Will

- It is obligatory to assert that Allah, Exalted be He is: Willing with an everlasting, integral, pre-eternal, existing, and singular¹⁷ will.
 - It pertains to every possible matter. There is nothing found in the past nor in the future except [that it occurs] by His will.

Life

- It is obligatory to assert that Allah, Exalted be He is: Living with an everlasting, integral, pre-eternal, existing, and singular life.

Hearing and Sight

- It is obligatory to assert that Allah, Exalted be He: Hears and sees with two existing, integral, and pre-eternal [Attributes of] sight and hearing.

¹⁵ Meaning His power is not divisible, numerous, or deletable. There is never a moment where His power is increased or decreased in any way.

¹⁶ Meaning it does not concern impossible matters that have no reality such as those who say absurd things like, “Can God create a rock so big that He could not lift it?”

¹⁷ His will does not occur in succession or sequence. It is singular in nature. His will is not bound by sequence.

- They pertain to everything that can be heard and seen.

Speech

- It is obligatory to assert that Allah, Exalted be He: Speaks with an existing, integral, and pre-eternal speech, which is uncreated, not originated, not preceded by non-existence without resemblance, similarity, or modality.
 - It pertains to all necessary, possible, and impossible matters.¹⁸

Other Attributes Affirmed by Atharīs

- Everything that has come in the Qur'ān or has been authentically narrated from the Prophet ﷺ, such as the verse of Istawā, Ḥadīth of Descent, Mercy, Hand, Face, etc., then it is obligatory to believe in it and to leave off opposing it by rejection, interpretation,¹⁹ comparison,²⁰ similarity,²¹ and explanation.²² It is an

¹⁸ Meaning Allah's speech can include necessary, possible, or impossible matters. For example, Allah mentions in the Qur'ān that there is only One God, which is a necessary matter, but He also criticizes the concept of multiple gods, which is an impossible matter.

¹⁹ For example, someone saying that Allah's Hand is a metaphor for His power. It is in reference to Ta'wīl, which is permitted by the Ash'arīs and Māturīdīs but forbidden by the Ḥanbalīs.

²⁰ For example, someone saying that Allah's Hand is just like a human hand. It is in reference to anthropomorphism.

²¹ Meaning to liken the Attributes of Allah to those of His creation. For example, someone trying to draw a comparison between Allah's Hand to something in His creation.

²² Meaning by trying to explain its meaning. We do not know the meaning. However, this does not mean that we do not know the meaning

ambiguous²³ matter whose knowledge is known only to Allah.

- It is prohibited to do [metaphorical] interpretations of verses and reports related to Allah's Attributes²⁴ unless it emanates from the Prophet ﷺ or some of the companions.

What is Possible to Attribute to Allah

- It is permitted to attribute to Allah anything that is [logically] possible to do or omit²⁵ such as creating, sending messengers, and sending down books.

What is Impossible to Attribute to Allah

- It is impossible to attribute to Allah attributes which are the opposite of those with which He is described with [in the texts] such as ignorance, incapability,

of that verse or Hadīth as a whole at all. We can deduce from the context a broader meaning of that text even if we do not know the specific meaning of the Attribute. For example, the Hadīth about Allah's Descent to the lowest heaven in the last third of the night implies that supplications are answered during that time and that it is a time of blessing. We can affirm this meaning as a whole even if we do not know what it means for Allah to Descend itself.

²³ Allah's Attributes in the texts which outwardly sound similar to human features are called Mutashābih (ambiguous). Their meanings and realities are relegated to Allah and their likeness to the creation is rejected.

²⁴ Meaning if a verse or Hadīth mentions an Attribute of Allah, then it is not permitted to understand it as a metaphor unless there is evidence from the Prophet ﷺ or some of his companions which shows that it was understood in a metaphorical way.

²⁵ Meaning these are things that Allah had the option to either bring into existence or not. They did not happen by necessity; rather, Allah chose to do them out of His own free Will.

death, deafness, blindness, muteness, extinction, non-existence, poverty, and similarity to creation.²⁶

Excluding Allah From Characteristics of Creation

- It is obligatory to assert that Allah, Exalted be He, is not a substance,²⁷ body,²⁸ nor contains incidental characteristics.²⁹
- It is obligatory to assert that Allah, Exalted be He, is not subject to change³⁰ nor does He reside in something subject to change. He is not confined within such things [either].³¹

²⁶ The opposites of these imperfect attributes are affirmed in the texts. For example, He is Seeing, Hearing, eternal, etc.

²⁷ This refers to Jawhar, which is anything that occupies space. It exists by itself and not in a subject.

²⁸ This refers to Jism, which is anything that consists of two substances or more.

²⁹ This is in reference to 'Araḍ, which are things that are in need of something in order to exist such as color, movement, stillness, etc. It cannot exist by itself and does so only in a subject because it is dependent on it.

³⁰ This is in reference to Ḥādith, 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. All of creation is Ḥādith, so another way to translate this would be, "The creation does not dwell in Him nor does He dwell in His creation."

³¹ Because this quality is something specific to the creation but not the Creator.

- Whoever believes or says that Allah is physically present in every place³² or in a particular place³³ has committed disbelief.
- Rather, it is obligatory to assert that He is distinct from His creation. Indeed, Allah existed without a place, then He created place and He remains as He was before creating place.

Allah's Actions

- Everything other than Allah and His Attributes is creation. Allah created and originated it from non-existence.
- Allah does not do things due to a [particular] reason³⁴ according to the statement of many Ḥanbalī scholars. And it was said that He does do them due to a [particular] reason. The latter opinion was adopted by Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn Qayyim, al-Ṭūfī, Ibn Qāḍī al-Jabal,

³² This is in reference to Makān (place), which refers to an empty space that a body can occupy.

³³ If someone understood the phrase that '*Allah is upon His Throne*' by thinking that it means He is restricted in a particular place would fall under this warning. Allah being above His Throne simply means that He is distinct and separate from His creation, a point the author emphasizes in the next bullet point. Place itself is a creation of Allah so how can He be inside of it?

³⁴ Meaning there is nothing that compels Allah to do something. He does them out of His own Free Will.

al-Saffārīnī, and those who agreed with them.³⁵

- All of the actions of the servants are acquired by them and [considered] a creation³⁶ of Allah, both the good and the evil.
- The servant is given a choice [and] ease is facilitated [for him] in acquiring [acts of] obedience or disobedience without coercion.
- Allah is the Creator of whatever the servant earns [of good or evil acts], does, ability and what it leads to, and the choice and what it chooses.³⁷
 - Earning refers to the ability which Allah creates in the earner according to what the servant desires to earn [of good or evil acts].
 - Ability is the capability to act [a certain way].³⁸
- All existing actions of the servants and other than it are willed by Allah into existence even if it is a sin or harmful.

³⁵ They argue that otherwise it suggests that Allah does things in vain without purpose. The other side responds that they are not saying Allah does not do things for a purpose or wisdom but that He is not compelled to do so for these reasons. He chooses to do them for these reasons.

³⁶ This is a refutation of some deviant sects who believe that servants create their own actions.

³⁷ Meaning everything from our choices, actions, wills, desires, abilities, thoughts, results, etc. are all created and decreed by Allah. Everything is completely dependent on Allah while He is truly independent of everything.

³⁸ Allah creates the ability of the servant at the time of the action.

- Allah can torment and punish the creation without prior crime³⁹ [if He willed].
- It is not obligatory on Allah to do anything for His creation, neither that which is best nor that which is most beneficial for them.⁴⁰

Deeming Things Good and Evil⁴¹

- The rational intellect follows and corresponds to the religious text.⁴² Therefore, there is no good, bad, gratitude, ingratitude, praise, dispraise, command, or prohibition except as dictated by religious law.⁴³

³⁹ Allah has the right to do with His creation as He wills, all of which is fair because an owner can do with his property whatever he wants. However, due to Allah's favor and mercy, He has chosen to reward the servants for their good deeds and punish them for their evil ones due to His justice.

⁴⁰ This is a refutation of Mu'tazilah who opine that Allah is obliged to do whatever is best and most beneficial for the creation.

⁴¹ Meaning how do we know whether a particular action is worthy of reward or punishment by Allah? Can we discover it through reason or can we only know it through revelation [i.e. religious law]? Therefore, this section is not in reference to what we naturally find good (purity, justice, truthfulness, etc.) and bad (urine, feces, bad scent, etc.); rather, it only deals with what is religiously considered praiseworthy and blameworthy.

⁴² Meaning it is revelation alone that determines what is religiously worthy of reward or punishment not the intellect. Therefore, it can only be known through religious texts (i.e. Qur'ān and Sunnah). Both Ash'arīs and Ḥanbalīs agree on this point.

⁴³ This is contrary to the Mu'tazilah who believe that the intellect alone can determine what religiously deserves reward and punishment independent of revelation.

Divine Decree

- It is obligatory to believe in the Divine Decree, both its good and evil, and that whatever afflicts the servant was not meant to miss him and whatever missed him was never meant to afflict him.
- Allah has decreed sins and the disliked [matters] and has preordained and written it for His creation. He neither commanded them with it nor forced them to do it; rather He forbade them from it and being pleased with it.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Meaning just because Allah has decreed and allowed sinful and disliked matters to occur in His dominion does not mean that He is pleased with them or wants us to engage in them. Rather, He has forbidden us from doing them or being pleased with them. We must distinguish between what Allah permits to happen in His dominion from what He wants from us. The servant is given a choice to either engage in what pleases Him or what displeases Him.

Allah knew beforehand the choices we would make and wrote them down before they occurred. Everything that happens occurs under Allah's Will and nothing happens in His creation except by His permission; thus, when a servant makes the choice to disobey, it is Allah permitting it even though He is not pleased with it.

Beliefs Regarding Prophets

- It is possible for Allah to [bestow] favor by sending messengers to the servants to be intermediaries between them and their generous and bountiful Lord.
 - Some of them are superior to others.⁴⁵
- We firmly believe that Muhammad ibn Abdullah صلى الله عليه وسلم is truly the Messenger of Allah to all *jinn* and mankind.
 - We believe that he صلى الله عليه وسلم is the seal of the prophets and the best among them.
 - We believe that for him صلى الله عليه وسلم alone is the Praised Station.⁴⁶
 - We believe that he صلى الله عليه وسلم was not following the religion of his people⁴⁷ before the mission, rather he صلى الله عليه وسلم was born as a believing Muslim.
 - We believe that the conclusive miracle that serves as evidence of his صلى الله عليه وسلم prophethood is associated with his call and it is: whatever defies the norm in terms of speech or action.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ This is true not just for the prophets but also in other creations. For example, some places are better and more blessed than others, some angels are better in rank than others, etc.

⁴⁶ This refers to the great intercession on the Day of Judgment when the people will first seek intercession from Adam, then from Noah, then Abraham, then Moses, then Jesus. Each of them will excuse himself and defer the responsibility to the other except Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم, master of the children of Adam. He will intercede with Allah for all of us from the severity and distress of the situation on that horrifying Day so that the judgment can begin. Details are mentioned in the Ḥadīth of al-Nasā'ī 2088. It is also alluded to in Qur'ān 17:79.

⁴⁷ The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم never worshiped an idol in his entire life even though it was common among his people.

⁴⁸ Meaning prophets are given miracles in their lives as a proof of their claim of being sent by Allah. A miracle is what contradicts normative laws of nature and can be action based or speech based. The Qur'ān is an

- It is necessary for the messengers to be truthful, trustworthy, and to convey whatever they are commanded with.
- It is impossible for the messengers to disbelieve, lie, and betray.⁴⁹
- It is possible for the messengers to have human characteristics like sleep and marriage.

Beliefs in Reports About the Unseen⁵⁰

- It is obligatory to believe in the revival of the dead in the grave, the squeezing of the grave,⁵¹ the return of the soul to its body⁵² in it, and the questioning by

example of a miracle of speech. Prophet Moses splitting the sea is action based.

⁴⁹ All of the prophets of Allah are considered infallible.

⁵⁰ This is referred to in Arabic as Sam'īyāt, which refers to matters which cannot be known through the intellect and we have only come to know of them through the texts.

⁵¹ Every dead person will experience this squeezing in the grave. It is inevitable. The Prophet ﷺ said about one of his companions who had died, *“This is the one at whose death the Throne shook, the gates of heaven were opened for him and seventy thousand angels attended his funeral yet the grave squeezed him once then released him.”* [al-Nasā'ī 2055]

⁵² The reward and punishment in the grave is real and is experienced by both body and soul. All this occurs in the realm of the unseen. The Prophet ﷺ used to seek refuge from its punishment at the end of every prayer.

Munkar and Nakīr.⁵³

- It is obligatory to believe in the Hour and its signs: Antichrist, descent of Prophet Jesus, Gog and Magog, the smoke, rising of the sun from the west, emergence of the beast,⁵⁴ and emergence of the fire.⁵⁵

Resurrection

- It is obligatory to believe in the resurrection,⁵⁶ the blast,⁵⁷ and the gathering of every soul.⁵⁸

⁵³ These are two angels that test the deceased in their graves. They ask them three questions: Who is your Lord? What is your religion? Who is your prophet? Only those who firmly held on to true faith in this life will be able to answer it by Allah's permission. It is alluded to even in the Qur'ān, "Allah will give firmness to those who believe in the firmly rooted word, both in this world and the Hereafter." [Qur'ān 14:27]

⁵⁴ It is alluded to in the Qur'ān, "When the verdict is given against them, We shall bring a creature out of the earth, which will tell them that people had no faith in Our revelations." [Qur'ān 27:82]

⁵⁵ These are all signs of the Hour that will occur at the very end of times.

⁵⁶ The resurrection on the Day of Judgment will consist of both body and soul. This is explicitly affirmed in numerous places in the Qur'ān and Sunnah. In fact, one of the major problems that the Quraysh had with the Prophet's ﷺ claim was that how could we be brought back to life after becoming dust.

⁵⁷ There is a debate whether there will be two or three blasts, but in general the first will cause everything to be destroyed and the last will commence the resurrection.

⁵⁸ By indicating 'every soul' the author is asserting that it includes the resurrection of even animals as mentioned in the texts.

Accountability

- Accountable⁵⁹ Muslims will be taken to account [for their deeds] except those whom Allah wills to enter into paradise without it.⁶⁰
- The disbelievers will not be taken to account nor will their book of deeds be weighed.⁶¹
 - If one of them did good, like charity, or was oppressed [in this life], then we hope that the punishment will be lightened for such a disbeliever.
- We believe that the scale on which good and evil deeds will be weighed is true. It has a tongue and two pans on which the book of deeds will be weighed.⁶²
- We believe the bridge⁶³ is true. It is stretched out over

⁵⁹ Meaning those who died having reached the age of puberty and were sane.

⁶⁰ There will be some fortunate folks who will be permitted to enter paradise without reckoning. Some reports mention that their main quality is that they completely place their trust in their Lord. The Prophet ﷺ said, *“My Lord promised me that seventy thousand of my Ummah shall be admitted into Paradise without a reckoning against them nor any punishment. With every thousand are [another] seventy thousand and three measures from His measures.”* [al-Tirmidhī 2437]

⁶¹ The accountability is only for the believers. The disbelievers will be taken straight to Hell because they do not have any good deeds accepted due to their disbelief.

⁶² Good deeds will be weighed in the best of ways and evil deeds in the most repugnant of ways.

⁶³ It is slippery and unstable. It is sharper than a sword, narrower than a strand of hair, hotter than a coal, and has hooks which grasp the feet.

Hell⁶⁴ and that crossing it is based on the extent of a person's deeds.⁶⁵

- We believe that the pond⁶⁶ is true.
- We believe in the intercession of the prophets, scholars, martyrs, and the believers.⁶⁷
- We believe that Paradise and Hell are true. They are two creations that exist right now and whatever is in them of bliss and punishment is created for eternity.⁶⁸

Seeing Allah in the Afterlife

- We firmly assert that the believers will see their Lord on the Day of Judgment with [their] eyes and He will speak to them. Both of these will be done in a manner befitting His majesty, Exalted be He.
 - The disbelievers will not see Him.⁶⁹

⁶⁴ It is a terrifying site as the people will be able to see Hell below them and its horrors.

⁶⁵ There will be some who will cross it quickly while others will crawl their way across it. Both Muslims and disbelievers will be made to pass over it. The Muslim will be saved while others will be snatched into Hell below them.

⁶⁶ It is a river whose water is sweeter than honey and whiter than milk. Its vessels match the number of stars in the sky. The believer will drink from it before they enter Paradise. Whoever drinks from it once will never go thirsty again.

⁶⁷ The Mu'tazilah deny intercession on the Day of Judgment.

⁶⁸ Both Paradise and Hell were created to exist forever and never end.

⁶⁹ This is a further form of punishment for them.

Other Beliefs Reported about the Unseen

- We believe in the angels, Satan and his whispering towards disbelief and sin. All of this is true.
- The *jinn* are accountable in general [like humans]. Their believers will enter Paradise and their disbelievers Hell just like others.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ The *jinn* eat, drink, and marry one another. They have formed bodies and representing figures. Nobody from their kind was made a messenger of Allah. Ibn Taymiyyah said, “*We will see them in Paradise but they will not see us.*”

Other Issues Related to Creed⁷¹

Faith

- Faith is a belief with the heart,⁷² a statement with the tongue,⁷³ and an act by the limbs.⁷⁴
 - It increases⁷⁵ with obedience and decreases,⁷⁶ along with its reward, with sin.
 - The statement ‘If Allah wills’ is recommended [to say], it is not doubting the current state.⁷⁷

Miracles of the Saints

- The miracles of the saints are true.

⁷¹ These are issues in which there are long and detailed disputes and the author here is only presenting the canonized Ḥanbalī creed on these issues. ‘Canonized’ here means those statements which are the most popular among the people of Ḥadīth.

⁷² Meaning to firmly believe in the heart with true faith. This leads to the heart acting through having fear, trust, hope, love, etc.

⁷³ Meaning to utter the testimony of faith.

⁷⁴ Meaning by performing prayers, giving alms, fasting, going to pilgrimage, and other actionable aspects of faith done using limbs.

⁷⁵ It is strengthened with knowledge and increases with acts of obedience to Allah.

⁷⁶ It weakens with ignorance, heedlessness, and forgetfulness and decreases with acts of disobedience to Allah.

⁷⁷ This is in reference to those who say, “*I am a believer if Allah wills.*” Some scholars opine that it is a form of expressing doubt over one’s faith, thus, it is not permitted to say it. However, it is only said to doubt the outcome or the acceptance of some deeds, due to fear of negligence or a dislike of self-commendation. It is in relation to the level of one’s faith and not the soundness of it, thus, the Ḥanbalīs permit it.

- It defies the norm⁷⁸ without summoning,⁷⁹ challenging,⁸⁰ nor calling towards the saint.⁸¹ It does not occur when summoned by him on behalf of himself or Allah.
- The [saint's] miracle does not indicate truthfulness of the one on whose hand it occurs⁸² nor does it indicate his sainthood due to the possibility for it to be taken away. It could be a means of gradual destruction and deception.⁸³

⁷⁸ Meaning it defies the natural laws. The saints include both men and women.

⁷⁹ Meaning the saint does not summon it like a prophet who is able to do so at command to show the truthfulness of his claim of being sent by the Creator. The saint will generally hide it and keep it a secret. It appears on a saint as a bestowal of honor. Generally, neither the saint nor anyone else knows that he/she is one of Allah's saints.

⁸⁰ The miracles of the prophets are challenges for others to produce something similar but that is not the case with the saints' miracles. They are not challenges for others to produce something similar.

⁸¹ Meaning the saint's miracle is not a call to become his/her follower.

⁸² It is not required to believe someone is a saint, even if miracles are claimed for them, until we examine the end of their life and their agreement with the law in regards to what they enjoined and forbade.

⁸³ If a miracle is found with someone ignorant, it is a trick and deception from Satan; it is misleading and a form of misguidance. We know that Antichrist will be able to do many things which defy the norm but it will all be a deception as a test from Allah.

Leadership⁸⁴

- It is a religious legal obligation to establish a leader.⁸⁵ It is a public religious rank and is a communal obligation.⁸⁶
- The leader is the one who takes on the position of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم from Quraysh⁸⁷ in the following: establishing religious law, pilgrimage,⁸⁸ military campaigns, establishing the prescribed punishments, justice for the oppressed, commanding the good and prohibiting evil, collecting alms,⁸⁹ and dispersing the wealth in a proper way.
- It is obligatory to obey the leader in acts of obedience⁹⁰ and prohibited to obey him in sin.

⁸⁴ This topic is actually related to *fiqh* and not creed but it is mentioned in creedal works because some deviant groups mention it in their books of creed. Ahl al-Sunnah differ with them on this topic on a number of issues.

⁸⁵ The 'leader' in this whole section is in reference to the ruler of the Muslims [i.e. caliph].

⁸⁶ Meaning if some people take on this responsibility, it absolves the remaining from sin.

⁸⁷ There are a number of Ḥadīths which suggest that the caliph should only be from the Quraysh tribe. For example, "*This matter [i.e. caliphate] will remain with the Quraysh even if just two of them remain*" [Bukhārī 7140]. The Khawārij said that it can be any righteous person from the Muslims. The Shī'ah say it can only be those from the Prophet's صلى الله عليه وسلم bloodline.

⁸⁸ Meaning he leads the people in the annual pilgrimage.

⁸⁹ So that it can be distributed among those qualified to receive it. This is one of the Islamic state's responsibilities.

⁹⁰ Anything that does not contradict Islamic law.

- The leadership can be established⁹¹ by text,⁹² Ijtihād,⁹³ selection,⁹⁴ or sometimes by the dominance⁹⁵ of those suitable for it.
 - It becomes binding⁹⁶ by the agreement of the people of decision.⁹⁷
- It is not permitted to revolt against the leader even if he is immoral. We pray behind him, perform pilgrimage with him, give him alms [for distribution], and supplicate for him.

Beliefs Regarding the Companions

- The best of people after the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and the most superior is Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq, then ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, then ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān, then

⁹¹ Meaning the caliph can come into power in these four ways that the author is about to mention.

⁹² This is how Abu Bakr came into power by the Prophet ﷺ suggesting it even if not directly.

⁹³ Meaning making a decision after deliberation. This is how ‘Uthmān came into power by a committee that discussed the issue and decided on ‘Uthmān as the next caliph after ‘Umar.

⁹⁴ This is how ‘Umar came into power when the previous caliph selects by name whom he wants to appoint next.

⁹⁵ Meaning by force through military means.

⁹⁶ Meaning once this group of people decides that the matter is settled and this person will be the next caliph, it becomes binding on all Muslims to accept the decision.

⁹⁷ It is a decision-making Muslim committee. They are those who are upright and know who is appropriate, deserving, and more befitting for the position, more suitable than others for the people and the religion. They are qualified to act on behalf of the Muslim community in electing a caliph.

Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, then the remaining ten,⁹⁸ then the people of Badr from the migrants, then the Anṣār, in accordance to the migration in subsequent order, then the other companions of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, and they all have a rank, then the generation that followed, then those who followed them in righteousness, and then [after them] Allah knows best.

- It is obligatory to love all of the companions and to abstain from whatever happened between them.⁹⁹
- It is obligatory to mention their virtues, be pleased with them, abstain from bias against them, and to believe in the excuses for them.¹⁰⁰
- Whoever cursed any one of them believing it to be permitted, then he has disbelieved. If he does not consider it permissible, then he is immoral.

Sins and Repentance

- The Muslim is considered immoral by committing major sins or persisting on minor ones.

⁹⁸ Meaning the remaining ten promised paradise from the list: Ṭalḥah, al-Zubayr, Saʿd ibn Abī Waqqāṣ, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn ʿAwf, Saʿīd ibn Zayd, and Abū ʿUbaydah ibn al-Jarrāḥ.

⁹⁹ Meaning we do not criticize any of them by way of writing, reading, listening, and telling others.

¹⁰⁰ They did what they did based on acceptable reasoning which will result in their reward; those who were correct will have two rewards and those who erred will have one.

- The Muslim does not come out of the fold of Islam by sinning.¹⁰¹
- Repentance is obligatory for every minor and major sin on an accountable¹⁰² person immediately.¹⁰³

Groups of Ahl al-Sunnah¹⁰⁴

- Ahl al-Sunnah are three groups: Ash‘arīs, Ḥanbalīs, and Māturīdīs.¹⁰⁵
- Disagreements occurred between the scholars of the Ḥanbalī school and the scholars of the Ash‘arī school on the following matters:
 - The reported Attributes of Allah like Istiwā, Descent, Hand, Face, etc. We [the Ḥanbalīs] believe in all of them and prohibit doing metaphorical interpretations of them while they [the Ash‘arīs] do so.
 - The issue of Allah’s Speech. We believe that it is pre-eternal in both its letters and meanings and that it consists of letters and sound, while

¹⁰¹ This is in reference to sins which do not take one out of the fold of Islam. There are certain sins which are considered a form of disbelief such as ridiculing the religion of Allah, prostrating to an inanimate object, etc.

¹⁰² Meaning the one who has reached puberty and is sane.

¹⁰³ Meaning the accountable person is not allowed to delay it.

¹⁰⁴ The later Ḥanbalī scholars discuss this section in their books but not the early ones. This is because areas of disagreement were crystalized and defined in later times, which caused the differences to be narrowed down to a large extent.

¹⁰⁵ Many Ḥanbalī scholars hold this view.

they deny attributing it with letters and sound.¹⁰⁶

Conclusion

- The one who realizes the Oneness of Allah (Tawhīd) knows that the rights are three: a right for Allah in which no creation has a share in, a right for His Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم, and a shared right between Allah and His Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم.
 - As for the right of Allah alone, then it refers to things like worship, reliance, fear, awe, devotion (Taqwā), repentance, hope, and recourse.¹⁰⁷
 - As for the right of the Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم, then it refers to things like adherence, reverence, following, and surrendering to his command.
 - As for the shared right between them, then it refers to things like love, belief, attestation, and obedience.

¹⁰⁶ This is because the Ash‘arīs consider letters and sound part of creation. Ḥanbalīs reply that the letters and sound that is attributed to Allah’s Speech is not like a creation’s, just like with the remaining of His Attributes, which are only similar in wording but not in reality.

¹⁰⁷ All of these are in the context of worship, which is an exclusive right of Allah alone.