

THE CREED OF  
**AṢFAHĀNĪ**  
AL-AQĪDAH AL-AṢFAHĀNĪYAH

BY IBN TAYMIYYAH  
TRANSLATED BY WORDSMITHS

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A TRANSLATION OF AL-AQĪDAH  
AL-AŞFAHĀNIYYAH



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## Translator's Preface



Ibn Taymiyyah رحمه الله (d. 728 AH) is a wonderfully passionate and complicated author. He was a multi-disciplinarian par excellence and is arguably the most influential classical Islamic scholar in the modern era. It is therefore both a great pleasure as well as a weighty responsibility to translate his work. I plead that the reader forgive my shortcomings and inaccuracies in this humble attempt.

The two sources consulted for this translation of *Sharḥ al-ʿAqīdah al-Aṣḥāniyyah* were those:

1. Published by Maktabat al-Rushd lil-Nashr wa al-Tawzīʿ, Riyad, 2001 CE—1422 AH; edited by Saʿīd ibn Naṣr ibn Muhammad.
2. Published by Maktabat Dār al-Minhāj lil-Nashr wa al-Tawzīʿ, Riyad, 2009 CE—1430 AH; edited by Dr. Muhammad ibn ʿAwdah al-Saʿawī.

The first source is the second publication of the text by the same publishing house, the first being in 1995 CE—1415 AH. It is this source which has been relied on in terms of content and its organisation thereof. The second source is much longer, including content the first does not, as well as adopting a different chronology on certain occasions. The latter was relied upon where the former had incoherent passages due to poor layout choice and structuring, word omissions, or inaccurate sentence formatting. On rare occasions, short sentence additions absent from the former are nonetheless added as to further clarify the discourse.

In terms of translations of the Holy Qurʾan, the two most visited sources were:

- Bridges' Translation of the Ten *Qirā'āt* of the Noble Qur'an by Fadel Soliman
- The Meaning of the Glorious Koran, an Explanatory Translation by Marmaduke Pickthall

However, there were many more consulted, as well as many occasions where it was necessary to give my own translation as to accommodate the context. All translations adopted were invariably edited to accommodate formatting and stylistic choices.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

*In the Name of Allah, the God of Mercy, the Giver of Mercy*

During his stay in Egypt in the year 712 AH, Shaykh al-Islām Abū al-‘Abbās Taqīyy al-Dīn Ibn Taymiyyah—Allah sanctify his secret and illuminate his shrine—was asked to give a commentary on the creed authored by Shaykh Shams al-Dīn Muhammad ibn al-Aṣḫānī, the renowned imam of kalam about whom it was said that Egypt never saw a senior dialectic theologian of his calibre.

He obliged, though excused himself that in doing so, he cannot but oppose some of its intentions as per what Islamic principles dictate. Following the truth is the foremost priority, and “Allah and His Messenger are worthier of their pleasing if they are true believers.”<sup>1</sup> Allah ﷻ says: “Whatever the Messenger brings you—accept it, and whatever he forbids you—abstain from it”<sup>2</sup>; “The Prophet has a greater claim over the believers than they have over themselves”<sup>3</sup>; “But no, by your Lord, they will never believe until they make you judge in their disputes, then find within themselves no discomfort from whatever you have decreed and submit completely”<sup>4</sup>; “You who believe, obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in command among you. If you disagree over anything, refer it to Allah and the Messenger if you believe in Allah and the Last Day. That is better and fairest in result.”<sup>5</sup>

Despite its succinctness, the following commentary—by Allah’s grace—has encompassed the most topical religious doctrines and fundamental

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1 *al-Tawbah*, 62.

2 *al-Ḥaṣhr*, 7.

3 *al-Aḥzāb*, 6.

4 *al-Nisā’*, 65.

5 *al-Nisā’*, 59.

principles. Only the most brilliant and astute commentators among classical and contemporary scholars have been able to dissect them and extract their truth. You will witness this, and so shall every fair unbiased critic upon reflection—those who seek truth and do so scrupulously. Allah ﷻ is the helper to success and the guide to the right path. He is sufficient for us—most excellent is He as trustee.

## The Creed

The creed begins: “Praise be to Allah as He deserves. May His blessings be upon Muhammad, His Messenger and slave.

The cosmos has an essentially necessary being (*wājib al-wujūd li-dhātih*) as creator (*khāliq*). He is one (*wāḥid*), knowing (<sup>°</sup>*ālim*), able (*qādir*<sup>6</sup>), living (*ḥayy*), possessing volition (*murīd*), speaking (*mutakallim*), hearing (*samī*<sup>°</sup>), and seeing (*baṣīr*).

**The evidence** of his existence: is the existence of contingent beings (*mumkināt*) due to the impossibility of their existence in and of themselves or by way of another contingent being. The inherently self-justified (*al-ma<sup>°</sup>lūl bi-<sup>°</sup>illatih*) is needless of all other than himself, while the contingent is in need for its justification.

**The evidence** of his oneness: is that he cannot be made of parts in any way shape or form, otherwise he would not be the essentially necessary being; since said essentially necessary being would be in need of his constituent parts. A consequence of this is that there cannot be two of him. Had there been, both would necessarily exist without any distinction, and this is impossible.

**The evidence** of his knowledge: is his causing things into existence. He could not have done so without him having knowledge of them.

**The evidence** of his ability: is his causing things into existence. They may either be from his essence, and this is impossible since the cosmos and every single created being would be pre-eternal (*qadīm*)—a falsity. He therefore must be a doer with choice. This is what is sought.

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6 Translator’s note: *Qādir* and *qadīr*, which appears later, are effective synonyms with slight morphological nuance. The verbal noun is *qudrah*, which has connotations of power, ability, and capability. The translation will usually be rendered ‘ability’, though ‘power’ is also used, as well as ‘capability’ on rare occasions.



**The evidence** that he is living: is his knowledge and ability, since they may only subsist in one who is living.

**The evidence** for his volition: is his endowing things with specific qualities, and the impossibility of specification without a specifier.

**The evidence** that he is speaking: is that he commands and prohibits. He sent the Messengers to deliver his commandments and prohibitions. There is no meaning to his speaking but this.

**The evidence** that he is hearing and seeing: is revelatory reports (*samʿiyyāt*).

**The evidence** for the prophecy of the Prophets: is miracles (*muʿjizāt*).

**The evidence** for the prophecy of our Prophet Muhammad ﷺ: is the Qurʾan and its miraculous syntax (*naẓm*) and meaning (*maʿnā*).

**We then say:** Everything the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ reported to us, regarding the punishment of the grave, Munkar and Nakīr, and other matters pertaining to the conditions of the Resurrection (*Qiyāmah*), the Bridge (*Ṣirāṭ*), the Scale (*Mīzān*), intercession, the Garden, and the Fire, are all true. They are possible, and the Truthful One (*al-Ṣādiq*) informed us of them. Therefore, he must be believed. Allah is the giver of success.”

### **He ﷺ responded with the following:**

Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds. What is found in this text is that the cosmos has a creator who is necessarily existent in and of himself, and that he is one, knowing, able, living, characterised by volition, speaking, hearing, and seeing, is all undoubtedly true. Likewise is affirming the prophecy of the Prophets ﷺ and that of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. Accepting everything he reported to us is obligatory, regarding the punishment of the grave, Munkar and Nakīr, and other matters pertaining to the conditions of the Resurrection, the Bridge, the Scale, intercession, the Garden, and the Fire. All this is true. Some of the forementioned Holy Names of Allah ﷻ are mentioned in the Book of Allah, like the One (*al-Wāḥid*), the Knowing (*al-ʿĀlim*), the Powerful (*al-Qādir*), the Living (*al-Ḥayy*), the Hearing (*al-Samīʿ*), and the Seeing (*al-Baṣīr*).

Allah ﷻ says: “Your god is one God.”<sup>7</sup> He ﷻ says: “Exalted in rank, Owner of the Throne—He casts the spirit by His command upon whom-ever He wills of His slaves to warn of the Day of Meeting—the day when they emerge; nothing about them is hidden from Allah. ‘To whom does dominion belong today?’ ‘To Allah, the One, the Subduer.’”<sup>8</sup> He ﷻ says: “Allah—there is no god but He, the Living, the Sustaining.”<sup>9</sup> He ﷻ says:

7 *al-Baqarah*, 163.

8 *Ghāfir*, 15-16.

9 *Āl ʿImrān*, 2.

“Faces humble themselves before the Living, the Sustaining.”<sup>10</sup> He ﷻ says: “If you lend Allah a good loan, He will multiply it for you and will forgive you, for Allah is Thankful, Forbearing—the Knower of the invisible and the visible,<sup>11</sup> the Almighty, the Wise.”<sup>12</sup> He ﷻ says: “Allah is over all things Powerful.”<sup>13</sup> He ﷻ says: “Naught is as His likeness; and He is the Hearing, the Seeing.”<sup>14</sup> There are many other examples of this in the Qur’an.

### The titles *al-murīd* and *al-mutakallim* are not divine names, but attributes<sup>15</sup>

As for giving Him ﷻ the names *al-murīd* and *al-mutakallim*, then neither of them have been mentioned in the Qur’an, nor are they among the known Beautiful Divine Names (*Asmā’ Allāh al-Ḥusnā*). Their meaning is nonetheless true. However, the well-known Beautiful Names of Allah are the ones used to call upon Him, and they are the ones that have been mentioned in the Book and Sunnah. They are also the ones that entail praise and extolment in and of themselves. Knowledge, ability, mercy, and their like are some examples. These are praiseworthy qualities in and of themselves, and the names that indicate them are in and of themselves names of praise.

As for speech and volition—their nature is categorised into that which is praiseworthy, like truthfulness and justice, as well as blameworthy, like lying and injustice. Allah ﷻ is only characterised with what is praiseworthy, never what is blameworthy. The qualities of speech and volition have come in names that are exclusively praiseworthy, like His names the Wise (*al-Ḥakīm*), the Merciful (*al-Raḥīm*), the Truthful (*al-Ṣādiq*), the Securer (*al-Mu’min*), the Witness (*al-Shahīd*), the Compassionate (*al-Ra’ūf*), the Forbearing (*al-Ḥalīm*), the Opener (*al-Fattāḥ*), and others. Speech is of

10 *Tā-Hā*, 111.

11 Translator’s note: The worlds of *Ghayb* and *Shahādah* refer to two ontological realms where the former is higher than the latter. The *Ghayb* is the realm of angles, jinn, etc; and is usually rendered as ‘the Unseen.’ The *Shahādah* is literally what is witnessed and is the realm where human beings reside in the worldly life. For an effective juxtaposition, ‘invisible’ and ‘visible’ are used here.

12 *al-Taghābun*, 17-18.

13 *Fāṭir*, 1.

14 *al-Shūrā*, 11.

15 Translator’s note: Subheadings of this format are not made by Ibn Taymiyyah. They are made by the translator—loosely adapted from the sources consulted—as a guide to the reader when navigating the content discussed. Ibn Taymiyyah often digresses into secondary and tertiary subjects before going back to his primary motif.

two types: compositional (*inshā*<sup>16</sup>) and informative (*ikhbār*<sup>17</sup>). Informative speech may be true or false, and Allah ﷻ is only characterised with truthfulness, not lying. Compositional speech<sup>18</sup> is of two types: cosmological composition (*inshā' takwīnī*) and legislative composition (*inshā' tashrī'ī*). Verily, to Allah ﷻ belong all creation and command. His command is that when He wills a thing to be, He says to it, “Be”, and it is. Engenderment (*takwīn*) necessitates volition according to all people. It also necessitates speech according to the majority of the Affirmation<sup>19</sup> Folk (*Ahl al-Ithbāt*). As for legislating (*tashrī'*), it necessitates speech, though whether it necessitates volition or not is disputed. The correct position is that it necessitates a specific type of volition, as we shall explain, Allah willing. Composition includes command (*amr*), prohibition (*nahy*), and allowance (*ibāḥah*). Allah ﷻ is described as commanding good and prohibiting evil, for He ﷻ does not command obscenity. Likewise is the case with volition, where Allah ﷻ transcends elements of it. He ﷻ says: “Allah wants no injustice to the worlds”<sup>20</sup>; “Allah wants ease for you and does not want hardship for you.”<sup>21</sup> This is why *al-mutakallim* and *al-murīd* are not within the traditional Beautiful Names. As for speech and volition as qualities ascribed to the Divine, then His Beautiful Names have implied them.

### The Qur'an as the uncreated speech of Allah

The Predecessors (*Salaf*) of the ummah and its imams are in agreement that Allah ﷻ speaks speech that subsists in Him<sup>22</sup> (*qā'im bih*) and that

16 Translator's note: In Arabic rhetoric and linguistic theory, *inshā'* is language which cannot bear truth or falsity, like a command, prohibition, question, wish, call, and so on. E.g., “I hope to become a doctor someday.” In theology, *kalam inshā'ī* is divine speech which informs of Allah's will—both legislative (*tashrī'ī*) and cosmological (*takwīnī*). All revelation is of the former type, whereas the latter is described in the Qur'an as Allah saying, “Be!” to a thing, and thus it becomes as He wills it.

17 Translator's note: Speech that, in its essence, carries the possibility of either truth or untruth as it aims to describe some reality. E.g., “I paid the bills last week.”

18 Translator's note: The author intends compositional speech (*kalām inshā'ī*) within the theological as opposed to the linguistic context. See footnote on *inshā'* for further clarification.

19 Translator's note: In theology, *ithbāt* is the affirmation of any given principle, though it is most commonly associated with the affirmation of divine attributes. There, its antonym is to divest Him of said attributes—*ta'ṭīl*.

20 *Āl 'Imrān*, 108.

21 *al-Baqarah*, 185.

22 Translator's note: Meaning that the attribute in question, speech on this occasion, is established directly by Him and not via intermediary creation. It is

His speech is uncreated; and that He wills such will that subsists in Him and that His volition is uncreated. They rejected what the Jahmīs from the Mutazilites and others opined: that Allah’s speech is created, and that Allah created it in other than Him. They say that Allah spoke to Mūsā with speech that He created in the air. The Predecessors of the ummah and its imams agree that Allah’s speech is sent down and not created—it initiates from Him and to Him it returns (*minhu bada*<sup>23</sup> *wa ilayhi ya’ūd*).

The meaning of ‘it initiates from Him’ is that He is the one who spoke it and that He did not create it in other than Him, as the Jahmīs from the Mutazilites and others claimed. They claim that it initiated from some of His creation, and that He ﷺ had no speech subsist in Him. The Predecessors did not intend by it (the first part of their statement) that His speech has separated from His essence. Speech, like other attributes, cannot be held separate from the one it is attributed to. If a creature’s attribute cannot separate from him and transpose onto another, how then can the Creator’s attribute do so? This is why Imam Aḥmad said: “The speech of Allah is from Allah, not distinct from Him.” He responds to the Jahmīs, Mutazilites, and others through this, who all say that Allah’s speech is distinct from Him and that He created it in some bodies.

The meaning of ‘to Him it returns’ is what is found in various traditions, that: “The Qur’an shall be lifted such that not a single letter of it remains in parchments (*maṣāḥif*<sup>24</sup>), nor a single verse (āyah) of it remains in people’s hearts.” Allah has said regarding the creation: “Dreadful is the word that comes out of their mouths.”<sup>25</sup> The word of the creature does not separate from his essence and transpose onto another. There are other traditions that have come from the Prophet ﷺ, the Companions, those who followed them, and other imams of the Muslims that imply the same thing. An example is the report that Aḥmad narrates in his *Musnad* and which he wrote to al-Mutawakkil in his message to him—the Prophet ﷺ said: “The slaves do not seek proximity to Allah with anything like that which emanated from Him.” Referring to the Qur’an. Another wording states: “...with anything more beloved to Him than that which emanated from Him.” Another example is what Abū Bakr said upon hearing Mu-

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an action that is realised by God Himself.

23 Translator’s note: One edit has it as: *minhu badā*... without a *hamzah* on the *alif*. In this case, it would be, ‘It manifested from Him...’ This is not common, despite it being largely inconsequential.

24 Translator’s note: A *muṣḥaf* is the book where the Qur’an is transcribed. Its plural is *maṣāḥif*.

25 *al-Kahf*, 5.

saylimah's words<sup>26</sup>: "This is not speech which emanates from a god (*ill*<sup>27</sup>)." Ibn 'Abbās said when he heard a man pray for a deceased who has been lowered to his grave: "Allah, Lord of the Qur'an, forgive him." He turned to him and said: "Enough! The Qur'an is Allah's speech, not an object of lordship (*laysa bi-marbūb*). It emanates from Him and to Him it returns (*minhu kharaj wa ilayhi ya'ūd*)." This type of statement is widely reported from Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ.

The Predecessors would often say: 'The Qur'an is the uncreated speech of Allah. It initiates from Him and to Him it returns.' Traditions are ample (*istafādat*) in this regard from their generation, as found in the various texts that have reached us from them with their popular chains of transmission. They all imply that speech does not become separate from the speaker and transpose onto another entity. This is evidence that Allah is the one who spoke the Qur'an and it was heard from Him, not that He created it in other than Him, as understood by Aḥmad and other imams.

Abū Bakr al-Ashtar said: Aḥmad was asked about the statement, 'The Qur'an is the speech of Allah—it emanates from Him and to Him it returns.' Aḥmad replied: "[The statement] 'It emanates from Him' means that He is the one who spoke it, and to Him it will return." Khāllāl reported this in *Kitāb al-Sunnah* from 'Abdullāh ibn Aḥmad.

There are other traditions of this sort. For example, the statement of Khabbāb ibn al-Aratt: "Seek closeness to Allah through anything you can, for you will not be able to seek closeness to Him with anything more beloved to Him than that which emanated from Him." This is also narrated as *marfū*<sup>28</sup>. This is further proof that speech does not separate from its speaker and transpose to other than him, and that Allah is the one who spoke the Qur'an and from Him it was heard and He did not create it in other than Him.

The Predecessors, the Imams, and their followers have showcased the falsity of the Jahmīs' position and whoever followed them—those who say that Allah's speech is created—in many ways. One response among others is that they say: If it was created in other than Him then it would be an attribute to that locus (*maḥall*), and there would have been a name derived for said locus from this attribute. This is the case for all attributes like knowledge, ability, hearing, sight, and life; and it is the case with move-

26 Translator's note: Referring to what he claimed to be the words of God and evidence for his purported prophecy.

27 Translator's note: Meaning *ilāh*, i.e., a god or deity.

28 Translator's note: A narration that is *marfū* is one that is raised in narration to the level of the Prophet ﷺ from that of the Companion, regardless of authenticity or strength.

ment and stillness, blackness and whiteness, and any other attribute which necessitates life. If it subsists in a certain locus, it becomes an attribute for none other than this locus, and a respective name is derived from the given attribute for said locus. If an attribute subsists in some entity, its ruling falls upon this entity and nothing else, and it is referred to with the name that is derived from the attribute in question. This is coextensively applied among the Predecessors and the majority of Affirmation Folk in regard to the names pertaining to divine actions (*asmā' al-af āl*) like the Creator (*al-Khāliq*), the Just (*al-Ādil*), and others.

Those who said otherwise among the Mutazilites contradict themselves. They claim that the Divine may be described with the attributes pertaining to actions, when said actions are in their estimation objects of action (*maf'ūlāt*) that are distinct from Him. They then wish to derive names for Him from them. This is thoroughly discussed in other places.

The point here<sup>29</sup> is to emphasise the difference between *al-mutakallim* and *al-murīd* and other names. There are scriptural mentions of names like the Knowing (*al-Ālim*), the Powerful (*al-Qadīr*), the Hearing (*al-Samīʿ*), and the Seeing (*al-Baṣīr*). There are none pertaining to Him as *al-mutakallim* or *al-murīd* in the unqualified sense of speech and volition respectively. Rather, there are names of His that imply praiseworthy speech and volition, not the blameworthy elements. Furthermore, speech and volition are attributes which subsist in the Divine and hence He is characterised by them. They are not separate from him, as the Jahmīs claim. Had Allah's speech been created in an entity other than Him, that entity would be what is characterised by speech, not Him. For example, it would have been the tree that said to Mūsā: "Indeed I—I alone—am Allah. There is no god but I."<sup>30</sup> Additionally, speech which Allah made some of His creatures utter would be His as opposed to theirs. Allah ﷻ says: "They will say to their skins, 'Why did you testify against us?' They will say, 'Allah, who made everything speak, made us speak.'"<sup>31</sup> The Prophet ﷺ used to greet stones, saying: "I know stones in Makkah that used to greet me before I was sent (i.e., received revelation). I remember them now." Pebbles would sanctify Allah in his hands such that their glorifications are heard. There are many incidents of this nature. It is Allah who made these bodies speak. If utterances and speech which He creates are His, then all these instances

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29 Translator's note: Due to his frequent digressions and tangential thinking, Ibn Taymiyyah uses the statement: *wa al-maqsūd hunā...quite often*. It has not been uniformly translated throughout the text for a more idiomatic read, though is nonetheless usually rendered as, "The point here is to..."

30 *Ṭā-Hā*, 14.

31 *Fuṣṣilat*, 21.

are examples of divine speech, just as the Qur'an is His speech. Given this, there would be no difference between Him speaking and His creating speech in any of His creatures. This is clearly false.

The early Jahmīs used to deny that Allah speaks. Their real position is that He in fact does not speak. This is why the Muslims killed the first one who innovated this aberrant view: al-Ja'ḍ ibn Dirham. Khālid al-Qasrī offered him as tribute on the Day of Sacrifice (*Yawm al-Nahr*). He said: "Sacrifice, O people—may Allah accept your tribute—for I shall sacrifice al-Ja'ḍ ibn Dirham. He claims that Allah did not take Ibrāhīm as an intimate friend (*khalīl*), and that He did not speak to Mūsā directly. Far exalted is Allah beyond what al-Ja'ḍ says." He then came down and slaughtered him. Later, they said that Allah speaks but only in a metaphorical sense (*majāzan*). They then said that He literally speaks (*ḥaqīqatan*), though explained this as Him creating speech in another entity. This is an obfuscation. The speaker is the one in whom speech subsists, not the one who instantiates it in another. Accordingly, the possessor of will, the merciful, the hearing, the seeing, the knowing, and the able are those in whom will, mercy, hearing, sight, knowledge, and ability respectively subsist, not those who instantiate these qualities in another. That which has been said regarding speech can be said of volition.

There have been those among Jahmīs and Mutazilites who said that Allah has no volition. The Baghdadi Mutazilites are such a faction. There are those among them who also say that Allah has volition which He originated without a locus (*aḥdathahā lā fī mahall*). The Basrans among them opine this. The late Shiites agreed with them in this regard. The latter have two views like the Mutazilites. It is among the most corrupt of positions, and this so from two perspectives: their affirming an attribute without a locus (one it is attributable to), and their affirming the origination of a novelty (*ḥadath*) without volition.

### Creed in light of Rationalisables and Revelatories

The author<sup>32</sup> was careful not to yield to these aberrant positions, and he did well not to. However, he nonetheless summarised this creedal work from the books of the *Şifātī mutakallimūn*<sup>33</sup> (*al-mutakallimūn al-şifātī-*

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32 Translator's note: This is Ibn Taymiyyah the commentator (*shāriḥ*) referring to al-Aşfahānī the author (*muşannif*).

33 Translator's note: The label 'Şifātīs' refers to those who affirm the divine attributes, hence the derivation of the name. Within the mutakallimūn, it is essentially everyone outside the Jahmīs and Mutazilites. Namely the Asharites, Karrāmīs, Kullābīs, and Māturīdīs as the most prominent groups.



yyah). They affirm the aforementioned divine attributes through rational means, referring to the discipline as the Rationalisables<sup>34</sup> (*al-‘Aqliyyāt*). As for the Reckoning (*Ma‘ād*), they categorise it wholly as coming under the Revelatories<sup>35</sup> (*al-Sam‘iyyāt*)—it (the Reckoning) is rationally possible and the Truthful One has informed us of it. The Mutazilites, philosophers, Karrāmīs, and many of those concerned with Hadith and jurisprudence from the companions of the Four Imams, as well as many others among the Sufis and the Predecessors of the ummah and its imams—all of them consider the Reckoning as part of the Rationalisables, and therefore affirm it rationally. Those inclined to speculative interpretation (*ta’wīl*) delve into it just as the Şifātīs do.

The author, however, followed the methodology of Abū ‘Abdillāh al-Rāzī. He affirmed divine knowledge, power, volition, and life by way of reason, but divine hearing, sight, and speech by way of revelation. He did not explicitly affirm any of the other revelatory attributes (*al-şifāt al-khabariyyah*). As for those before them, like Abū al-Ma‘ālī al-Juwaynī and his like, and al-Qāḍī Abū Ya‘lā and his like, then they affirm all these attributes rationally. This is also the methodology of al-Qāḍī Abū Bakr, Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī and Abū al-‘Abbās al-Qalānisī before him, Abū Muhammad ibn Kullāb and al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī before them, as well as others. The Predecessors of the ummah and its imams, like Imam Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal and his like, affirmed these attributes rationally as well as by way of revelation. This latter methodology is nobler and more proper than that employed by foresaid later scholars, as shall be demonstrated later on, Allah willing. The early imams of the Şifātīs like Ibn Kullāb, al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī, al-Ash‘arī, Abū al-‘Abbās al-Qalānisī, Abū ‘Abdillāh ibn Mu-jāhid, Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ṭabarī, al-Qāḍī Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī, Abū Ishāq al-Isfarā‘īnī, Abū Bakr ibn Fūrak<sup>36</sup>, and others, affirm revelatory attributes that the Messenger ﷺ authentically reported. Likewise do the various other sects of affirmation like the Sālimīs, Karrāmīs, and others. This is the position of the Predecessors and imams of the ummah.

There is no doubt that what these Şifātīs affirm of divine attributes is affirmed by revealed law as well as reason, and is agreed upon by the Predecessors of the ummah and its imams. They exclusively speak about the attributes in question because they are the ones which reason guides to in their estimation, as mentioned by the author. However, the lack of specific evidence does not necessitate the lack of what is evidenced—that is, their affirming certain attributes does not necessitate negating others. Revelation

34 Translator’s note: That which is epistemologically known by way of reason.

35 Translator’s note: That which is epistemologically known by way of revelation.

36 Translator’s note: Some renditions of *dabf* have him as ‘Ibn Fawrak’.



has come with reports of other attributes. Rāzī and his ilk did not affirm revelation as a means for affirming divine attributes. There is no dispute among them over it being a valid avenue, but they differentiate between what they deduce rationally and what they can no longer exercise reason for—reason guides to what they deduced but cannot guide beyond where they ceased to exercise it. Where they do not affirm an attribute rationally, they go down one of two routes: either they negate the attribute in question, or they neither affirm nor negate it. The latter is the methodology of the shrewd among them like Rāzī, Āmidī, and others. There are even others who affirm further attributes rationally.

### The Predecessors’ approach to divine attributes—divine love and mercy

What the Predecessors of the ummah and its imams agree upon is that Allah is to be described with what He and His Messenger ﷺ described Him with; without distortion (*tahrīf*), divesting (*taʿtīl*), modality (*takyīf*), or likening (*tamthīl*). It is known both by way of revealed legislation and reason that Allah ﷻ has no likeness, not in essence, attributes, or actions. Allah ﷻ says: “Naught is as His likeness.”<sup>37</sup> He ﷻ also says: “Do you know of anyone similar to Him?”<sup>38</sup>, “So do not assign compeers to Allah while you know”<sup>39</sup>, “Never can there be to Him anyone equivalent.”<sup>40</sup> Rationally, two likes have the same ruling—what is possible, necessary, and impossible for one is the same for the other. Had the creator been identical to the created, then they would share the same logical rulings. The creator is necessarily existent and pre-eternal (*yajib wujūdih wa qidamuh*), while it is impossible for the created to be necessarily existent and pre-eternal. Rather, the created is necessarily novel in origination and contingent (*yajib ḥudūthuh wa imkānuh*). Had they been like for like, then they would be the same with respect to these matters. Both would be necessarily existent and pre-eternal as well as impossibly so, and necessarily novel and contingent. They would be necessarily pre-eternal necessarily novel, necessarily existent not necessarily existent, impossibly pre-eternal not impossibly pre-eternal: coupling between mutual nullifiers (*jamʿ bayn al-naqīdayn*).

If one recognises this, then this is what we say: Allah has named Himself in the Qurʾān as *al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm* (the God of Mercy, the Giver of Mercy). He characterised Himself in the Qurʾān with mercy and love.

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37 *al-Shūrā*, 11.

38 *Maryam*, 65.

39 *al-Baqarah*, 22.

40 *al-Ikhlāṣ*, 4.

He ﷻ says: “Our Lord, You have encompassed everything in mercy and knowledge”<sup>41</sup>, “Allah will bring a people whom He loves and who love Him”<sup>42</sup>, “Allah loves the people who are mindful [of Him].”<sup>43</sup> He loves the good-doers and the patient, and those who fight in His way in ranks as if they were a solid structure, and so on.

There are those who have considered His love and mercy to be what He creates of blessings, while some considered His volition to be what He creates of creatures. This is clearly false, especially as per the Şifātī’s methodology. There are others who considered His love and mercy as equivalent to His volition, negating that He has attributes that are in their essence love, pleasure, mercy, and anger, independent of volition.

The question that must be posed to the espouser of such a view is: Why affirm volition to Allah, that He is literally *murīd*, then negate the reality of love and mercy?

If the response is: Affirming mercy is assimilation (*tashbīh*) since mercy is a tenderness which subsists within the created, and the Divine is transcendent beyond the attributes of the creation; then we say: The same can be said of volition—it is an internal leaning of man towards what benefits him and away from what harms him. Allah transcends need for His slaves, and they cannot ever harm nor benefit Him. He is independent of them and has no need for any of His creation.

If instead the response comes: The volition which we affirm for Allah is unlike that of the creation, just as we and the rest of the Muslims agree that He is living, knowing, and able, but He is unlike the rest of the living, knowing, and able.

The Affirmation Folk would respond: The mercy and love which we affirm to Allah are unlike the mercy and love of the creation.

If one then responds: I cannot comprehend mercy and love except in this way (i.e., via its expression in the creation), then the Negators (*Nufāh*) would say: Likewise, we cannot comprehend volition except in this way as well.

It is well-known to any rational person that our volition, love, and mercy are to us as His volition, mercy, and love are to Him. Differentiating between two likes is improper, affirming one attribute (volition) whilst negating the other (love or mercy). There is no rational nor revelatory qualifier which allows one to make such a distinction. The most that can be said is that volition is affirmed rationally since individuation in the creation is evidence of volition. Even then, the response is: The lack of a specific type of evidence does not entail the lack of what is evidenced. Say, for argument’s

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41 *Ghāfir*, 7.

42 *al-Mā'idah*, 54.

43 *al-Tawbah*, 4.

sake, that there is no evidence of the same nature for mercy and love, with what authority should one then negate them? Furthermore, revelation has implied them as well as reason. One may evidence them (love and mercy) in the same way that volition is evidenced. Benefit reaching those in need of it, harm being alleviated from those it afflicts, beneficence unto the creation along with the guidance and inciters of joy bestowed upon them—these are all evidence for the mercy of the Creator ﷻ.

The Qur'an proves Divine Lordship (*Rubūbiyyah*) in this way. On some occasions, it would guide to the existence of the Creator via what is created, affirming Allah's knowledge, power, and will. On others, it guides to His benevolence and beneficence via the mention of His abundant blessings and favours, necessitating His being merciful. The latter is plentiful in the Qur'an, found in equal amount if not even more than the former, but certainly not less than it. The following are a few examples. Allah ﷻ says: "Mankind, worship your Lord, who created you and those before you, so that you may be mindful [of Him]: the one who has made the land a habitat for you and the sky a structure, and has sent water down from the sky and has brought out fruits thereby as provision for you. So do not assign compeers to Allah while you know"<sup>44</sup>; "Have they not seen that We conduct the water to a dry land, and with it We bring out vegetation from which their livestock eat, and they themselves? Do they not see?"<sup>45</sup> Allah says in Sūrah al-Raḥmān after having mentioned all types of blessings bestowed over the creation: "Which is it, of the favours of your Lord, that you deny?" There are various Qur'anic passages wherein Allah affirms the essence of His will, ability, and creative power, and others where He affirms His beneficence, bestowal of blessings, and mercy. This latter style necessitates the former, not vice versa—beneficence and mercy necessitate ability and will, but not the other way round.

The same method can be applied with other attributes. For example, affirming His wisdom and love upon which His wisdom in what He creates and commands is founded. This is also a matter known by revelation and reason, just as His volition and love are.

These subject matters are thoroughly discussed in their respective places. We solely made mention of what is appropriate for this abridged creed. We have explicated matters related to divine love in other texts. We mentioned that there are three positions with regards to this integral doctrine:

1. That Allah loves and is loved. He ﷻ says: "Allah will bring a people

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44 *al-Baqarah*, 21-22.

45 *al-Sajdah*, 27.

whom He loves and who love Him.”<sup>46</sup> He alone is deserving of complete and absolute love. Allah loves what He commanded, and He loves His believing slaves. This is the position of the ummah’s Predecessors and its imams, as well as the shaykhs of acquaintance (*shuyūkh al-maʿrifah*; i.e., deep connection with the Divine).

2. That Allah is deserving of love but does not love in any sense other than that He wills. This is the position of many among the mutakallimun and some who agreed with them from the Sufis.
3. That Allah does not love nor is loved. Rather, His slaves loving Him is their wanting to obey Him. This is the position of the Jahmīs, those who agreed with them from the late kalam theologians, and Rāzī.

For further clarification, the obligation that every Muslim must accept what Allah and His Messenger informed of in terms of divine attributes is not dependent on rational proof being presented for a given attribute. It is necessarily known as part of the religion of Islam that if the Messenger reports to us a matter pertaining to the attributes of Allah ﷻ, it is obligatory upon us to accept it even if we cannot affirm it by way of reason. Whoever does not concur with what the Messenger came with unless he approves of it rationally then he is like those about whom Allah said: “They say, ‘We will not believe unless we are brought the like of what was brought to Allah’s Messengers.’ Allah knows best where to set His message.”<sup>47</sup> Whoever traverses this path is in reality not a believer in the Messenger. He does not accept what He reports with regards to the Divine. There is no difference for such a person whether the Messenger informs of a matter or not. Whatever the Messenger reports, he would not accept it unless it conforms to his reason. If it does not, he would either speculatively interpret it (exercise *taʿwīl*) or defer its understanding (exercise *tafwīd*). Even if the Messenger does not report a matter, he believes in it since it is reasonable in his estimation. For such a person, there is no difference between there being a Messenger with divinely informed teachings and the lack thereof. The Qur’an, the Hadith, and scholarly consensus is as good as null for him in this subject matter, as explicitly mentioned by the authorities of this path.

In terms of the Prophetic way—there are those among them who rely on analogical reasoning (*qiyās*<sup>48</sup>), while others rely on divine unveiling

46 *al-Māʾidah*, 54.

47 *al-Anʿām*, 124.

48 Translator’s note: As Ibn Taymiyyah discusses at length at a later point, there are various forms of *qiyās* exercised in theology and metaphysics that are fallacious in his estimation. He is likely referring to categorical syllogism specifically here (what he refers to as *qiyās al-shumūl*), though he critiques causal or analogical

(*kashf*). Both ways yield contradictions and are defective, and neither can reach the desired outcome without Prophetic intervention. Conversely, the Prophetic way realises faith which benefits in the Hereafter without them (*qiyās* and *kashf*). If some analogy or unveiling happened to agree with what the Messenger informed us of, then this is fine. Nonetheless, the Qur'an highlights the acceptable criterion which may be exercised to prove what it has come with. Allah ﷻ says: "We will show them Our signs in the horizons and in themselves until it becomes evident to them that it is the truth."<sup>49</sup> He tells us that He shows His slaves of His witnessed signs—i.e., rational proofs—what suffices them to realise the Qur'an as the truth.

It is not for anyone to claim that the foresaid attributes are specifically chosen since they are exclusively revelatory among all others. This is not the case. Accepting revelatory reports is not exhaustively bound to accepting divine hearing, seeing, etc.

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inference (referred to as *qiyās al-ta'ālil*, *qiyās al-'illah*, and *qiyās al-tamthīl*)—the well-known form exercised in jurisprudence with an original case (*aṣl*), ratio legis (*'illah*), and a ruling (*ḥukm*) derived on a new case—as being illogical if applied to the Divine and His creation. The only form of analogical reasoning he approves of and advocates in this regard is precedential inference (*qiyās al-awlā*), or a fortiori reasoning—that God is all the worthier of any attribute of perfection found in His creatures.

49 *Fuṣṣilat*, 53.

## Section One<sup>50</sup>

If it is said: We negate mercy, love, pleasure, anger, and similar attributes because it is inconceivable for them to have a reality that is befitting of the Creator other than volition. Love and pleasure are a volition of beneficence, while anger is a volition of punishment. Thus, the difference between them is in accordance with what they relate to, and they (love and anger) are not ascribable to Him in and of themselves.

The response is: This is false. The explicit texts of the Book, Sunnah, and scholarly consensus alongside rational proofs highlight the difference. Allah ﷻ says: “If you are ungrateful, then Allah is truly not in need of you—He does not approve of ingratitude from His slaves.”<sup>51</sup> He ﷻ also says: “They plot by night what is displeasing to Him.”<sup>52</sup> Allah is displeased with these violations, yet nothing takes place except by His will. He ﷻ also says: “Allah does not like corruption.”<sup>53</sup> It is known by necessity in the religion of Islam, as well by consensus of the ummah’s Predecessors before the advent of the Negators’ positions among Jahmīs and others, that Allah loves faith and good deeds and does not love disbelief, immorality, and disobedience; and that He approves of the former and disapproves of the latter, while it is all by His will and power. Those who do not make a distinction make certain speculative interpretations.

One of them is that they claim that He disapproves of these things for His believing slaves. They say that He does not love faith and good deeds from those who did not have them, just as He did not will these things for them. They further claim that He loves disbelief and immorality from those who committed them just as He willed them in those who have them.

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50 Translator’s note: The Arabic is *faṣl*—meaning ‘margin’ or ‘separator’. It is used to indicate the end of one section and the beginning of the next. The sections have been numbered for ease of navigation.

51 *al-Zumar*, 7.

52 *al-Nisā’*, 108.

53 *al-Baqarah*, 205.

The falsity of this position is among what is known by necessity from the religion of Islam, showcased by proofs from the Book, the Sunnah, and consensus of the Predecessors.

Their other speculative interpretation is that they say that He does not approve of it as religion just as He does not will it as religion. What this means for them is that He does not wish to reward its doer, for all beings and actions in existence are the same to Him in their estimation—He cannot love an element of it and not another, nor can He dislike one thing from it and not another. The falsity and self-contradictory nature of this position is thoroughly discussed in other places.

The point here is to emphasise that what must be affirmed to Allah ﷻ in terms of attributes is not exclusive to what has been mentioned by these people, affirming some of them rationally and others by way of revelation. He who appreciates the reality of these positions and those who espouse them, along with their adopted methodologies which lead them to their conclusions, will have knowledge and mercy—knowledge of the truth and mercy on the creation. Such a person is with whom Allah blessed among the Prophets, the truthful, the martyrs, and the righteous. This is the defining feature of the Sunnah Folk (*Ahl al-Sunnah*), those who follow the Messenger ﷺ. They follow the truth and have mercy on whoever disagrees with them in exercising his judicious discretion (*ijtihad*) whereby he is excused by Allah and His Messenger. The innovators innovate false innovations then excommunicate whoever disagrees with them over it.

## Section Two

It is commonplace for authors of creeds according to the beliefs of the Sunnah and Community Folk (*Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah*) to exemplify what distinguishes them from disbelievers and innovators. They affirm divine attributes, the Qur'an as the uncreated speech of Allah, and that Allah is seen in the Hereafter—contrary to what the Jahmīs among the Mutazilites and others believe. They mention that Allah is the creator of the slaves' actions, that beings are objects of His volition, and that whatever He wills, is, and whatever He does not, is not—contrary to what the Qadarīs among the Mutazilites and others believe. They mention matters related to labels and rulings (*al-asmā' wa al-aḥkām*), and the divine promise of bliss and that of torment (*al-wa'd wa al-wa'id*). They mention that the believer does not disbelieve by sinning, and he does not abide in the Fire eternally—contrary to the Kharijites and the Mutazilites. They explicate matters relating to faith, and that the promise of torment stands for those who committed major sins holistically—contrary to what the Murji'ah believe. They mention the rule of the Four Caliphs and their virtues—contrary to what the Shiites among the Rāfiḍīs and others believe.

As for what the Muslims agree upon in terms of singling Allah ﷻ out for belief and worship, believing in His Messengers, and believing in the Last Day, then this is a must. The detailed proofs for these doctrines are to be found in the grand principal creedal texts. This author did not employ this in his writing. Instead, he gives a brief indication as to the evidence for what he mentioned of rulings, and does not rigorously list a multitude of proofs as is found in large creedal works. His excuse in doing so is to say: 'I have mentioned the holistic creedal assertions pertaining to Divine Lordship (*Rubūbiyyah*), messengerhood (*risālah*), and the Reckoning (*Ma'ād*); such that I mentioned Allah's affirmative attributes (*al-ṣifāt al-thubūtiyyah*), along with the Message and what prophecy entails in terms of belief in the Reckoning. My saying that Allah speaks nullifies the position that the Qur'an is created, for the essence of the latter position is that He does not



speak. Affirming a generic volition entails control over all beings, and affirming absolute power entails Him being the creator of everything by this power. Positing these two doctrines excludes the Mutazilite position regarding speech and ability.’

Critics may nonetheless say: ‘You spoke only of a few attributes and left out others. If you wished to exclusively mention that which your intellect recognises, then you mentioned hearing, sight, and speech and affirmed them by way of revelation. If you wished to mention only those attributes that are dependent on the acceptance of Prophetic statements, then this is not exclusive to affirming hearing, sight, and speech, since you affirmed them by way of revelatory reports.’

The reality is that he mentioned these seven attributes because they are those ones popularised among later Kullābīs, like Abū al-Ma‘ālī and his like, as the Rationalisables. He (the author) did not affirm all of them rationally, though. Rather, he affirmed some of them by way of revelation like Rāzī did. As such, he did not employ a single consistent method. He referred to the evidentiary basis in a way that solely allows one to recognise the essence of what is being evidenced. Thus, the cited proofs are insufficient in properly founding these theological rulings. Without due exploration of its premises<sup>54</sup> (*muqaddimāt*) and adequate response to what opposes it, a proof is incomplete. It would be ill-advised for us to build upon unverified assumptions and unsound foundations. Thus, we shall speak about what he presented to properly assert its content.<sup>55</sup>

### The existence of the necessary being and the two implicit premises

He says: “The evidence of his (the necessary being’s) existence is the existence of contingent beings (*mumkināt*) due to the impossibility of their existence in and of themselves or by way of another contingent being. The inherently self-justified is needless of all other than himself, while the contingent is in need for its justification.” This is founded on two premises:

1. That contingent beings exist.
2. That contingent beings cannot exist except through the necessary being.

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54 Translator’s note: The word is used less formally here for *muqaddimah*—a preliminary exploration of a subject matter—than when Ibn Taymiyyah discusses formal logic at a later point. There, the word will be rendered ‘premiss.’

55 Translator’s note: Ibn Taymiyyah will now proceed to explore each evidence presented by Aṣfahānī. Everything before this point is him discussing the very first statement made in the creed.

**The first premise** has not been confirmed at all. Here, one cannot follow Ibn Sīnā's methodology and philosophers like him who say: 'Existence itself bears witness to the existence of a necessary being, for existence is either contingent or necessary, and the contingent is concomitantly obliged by the necessary. As such, the existence of the necessary is affirmed.'

Even though this is a sound argument, its conclusion solely yields the existence of the necessary. This is not disputed by any competent intellectual, nor is it a lofty dialectic enquiry. It does not have within it affirmation of the creator, nor the existence of a necessary being who originated the heavens and the earth. This is conceded to by theist philosophers like Aristotle and his Peripatetic (*Mashshā'iyyah*) adherents. What the conclusion does include is that there is in existence a necessary existence. This is conceded to by those who deny the Maker (*al-Ṣāni'*), like Pharaoh, the Materialists (*Dahriyyah*) among philosophers, the Qarmatians, and others of their ilk. They say that this existence itself is a necessary existence. This is the view that the Unity Folk (*Ahl al-Wiḥdah*<sup>56</sup>) who posit that existence is one. They ultimately say that there is no being distinct from the heavens and the earth, and there is only the existence of contingent beings.

The creed's author affirmed the Maker's existence in this way. In affirming that he made contingent beings, he affirmed his knowledge and power. He must first affirm the existence of a contingent non-necessary being, in order to base upon it the existence of a necessary being who originated it. As for simply affirming a necessary existence, then this does not fulfil the need at hand. Let the shrewd appreciate this nuance.

There is no doubt the author abridged this creed from the works of Abū 'Abdillāh ibn al-Khaṭīb (i.e., Rāzī). We have spoken in depth about Abū 'Abdillāh al-Rāzī's views in other works.

We shall assert the existence of contingent beings and so complete the author's evidentiary basis, and so that it may be evident that this method is rationally sounder and clearer than what is found in the principal books of theology from which this creed was abridged, for it agrees with the Qur'an's style. If he of virtue were to reflect over the intention behind what the mutakallimun and philosophers mention of rationalistic enquiry, he would find the veracity in some of it going back to its agreement with certain Qur'anic rational motifs. As we have discussed in various places, there is perfectly sufficient exposition and rigour in the Qur'anic narrative.

We thus say: It is possible to affirm them (contingent beings) from what we witness of continuous novel origination<sup>57</sup> (*ḥudūth al-ḥawādith*). We

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56 Translator's note: Those who believe in the *Waḥdat al-Wujūd* doctrine—the Unity of Being, or the Oneness of Existence.

57 Translator's note: In the text, 'origination,' 'novelty,' or both simultaneous-

witness the coming into being of flora, fauna, and minerals. These originated entities are not impossible, for the impossible cannot exist. Neither are they necessary beings in themselves, for a necessary being cannot bear a state of non-existence (‘adam), and said entities were non-existent then came into being. Thus, their initial non-existence negates their necessity, while their existence negates their impossibility. This is a clearcut, evident, apodictic proof for the affirmation of contingent beings. However, one who wishes to follow this line of reasoning need not prove their contingency (*imkān*) via their novel origination (*ḥudūth*), then use their contingency to prove the necessary—their origination is itself proof of the originator (*muḥdith*). Knowledge that the originated (*muḥdath*) must have an originator (*muḥdith*) is clearer than knowledge that the contingent must have a necessary being. Thus, the former is more evident and immediate, while the latter is more subtle and consequent—novelty is used to prove contingency, which in turn is used to prove necessity.

Notwithstanding some proving the originator via the originated, the latter is not specified without a specifier. It is possible that the originated instantiates in another state, other than the one it is upon. Specifying it within a specific time and with specific attributes requires a specifier.

This evidentiary basis, though sound, is not proper, for knowledge that the originated requires an originator is clearer than that which requires two premises that are much more subtle in nature. Whoever employs the subtle as evidence for the manifest has not kept to proper argumentation, even if he speaks truth. What is made concomitant to a thing (*mustalzim lil-shayʿ*) may act as an indicant (*dalīl*) thereto, since the affirmation of the object of concomitance (*malzūm*) necessitates affirmation of the concomitant (*lāzim*), and the indicant is the object of concomitance for the indicated (*madlūl ʿalayh*). This is the nature of the indicant—its affirmation is affirmation of the indicated. As such, the indicant must be operationalised as antecedental to what it indicates, and the reverse is not necessarily functional. However, if the indicated concomitant (*al-lāzim al-madlūl ʿalayh*) is more apparent than the object of concomitance—that is the indicant—then evidencing the concomitant by way of its object is rhetorically false.<sup>58</sup>

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ly—‘novel origination’—are used for *ḥudūth*. Hence, the *muḥdath* or the *ḥādith* is rendered as ‘originated’ as well as ‘novel’.

58 Translator’s note: To clarify a very jargon-laden passage, consider a scenario in which these abstract categorisations apply: You go outside to find that the ground is wet. Wetness is an indicant (*dalīl*) of rain. Thus, rain is what is indicated (*madlūl ʿalayh*). You understand this because the concomitant (*lāzim*) of rain is wetness. Wetness is what rain is concomitant to—its object of concomitance (*malzūm*). Rain is the indicated concomitant (*al-lāzim al-madlūl ʿalayh*), and wetness is the

Had the author attempted to affirm the existence of contingent beings by positing the contingency of all bodies (*ajsām*), then this is a lengthy proof full of heavily disputed premises, often subjected to intense criticism that renders it beyond the bounds of dependability. Affirming the maker via such premises is wrong even if these premises are correct, and completely false if they are incorrect.

**As for the second premise**, that contingent beings require a necessary being, then this was noted by the author in his saying: "...due to the impossibility of their existence in and of themselves." The contingent is that which may bear existence and non-existence, as we witness of novel, originated entities. A thing which may bear either existence or non-existence cannot instantiate its own existence. Allah ﷻ: "Were they created by nothing? Or are they the creators?"<sup>59</sup> Allah ﷻ is saying: 'Were they originated without an originator, or did they originate themselves?' It is known that a thing does not cause itself into existence. The contingent—that which cannot induce existence or non-existence of its own accord—cannot exist in and of itself. It may only exist if it is caused into existence. Anything for which existence is possible instead of non-existence, or for which non-existence is possible instead of existence, cannot have of its own self neither existence nor non-existence. This is clear.

That which may bear a state of non-existence instead of existence cannot have its existence borne of itself. Had it been borne of itself, it would have been necessary in and of itself, and if it had been necessary, it would not bear non-existence. It did indeed bear the possibility of non-existence, so it cannot be existent in and of itself. This is further clarified in the following exposition: Whatever is in existence is either in need of another for its existence or not. If it is, then its existence is not borne of itself. It would be borne either of this other that it needs, or both of itself and this other. According to either estimation, its existence is not borne of itself. If instead it does not need another for its existence, then it is necessary in and of itself. The self-existent is not in need of another, and what is in need of another is not self-existent. The self-existent that has no need of another is necessary in and of itself. Its self is sufficient for its existence, since it is not dependent on anything other than its surety (*inniyyah*<sup>60</sup>), supposing

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indicant object of concomitance (*al-dalīl al-malzūm*). Ibn Taymiyyah is saying that there may be occasions where the indicated concomitant is clearer than the indicant object of concomitance, in which case the conventional operation of formulaic, precise proof may be inappropriate.

59 *al-Tūr*, 35.

60 Translator's note: This comes from *inna*, used for emphasis and assuredness, often giving the effect of 'indeed', 'verily', 'surely', 'certainly', etc. Hence 'surety',

that its surety is distinct from its existence. If its surety is its existence as is the position of the Sunnah Folk, one may then posit that: It is existent in and of itself; that is: Its ipseity (*huwiyyah*) is affirmed by its own ipseity. Wherever it is estimated to be, its non-existence may not be estimated thereto; for the self-existent cannot bear non-existence, and whatever is non-existent cannot be self-existent. The latter is in need of another. Every contingent being is in need of another for its existence.

These stations are affirmed in things as they are (*nafs al-amr*), though one may employ various expressions to convey the same essential meaning. Thus, the author's statement, "...due to the impossibility of their existence in and of themselves", is clear.

As for his statement: "The inherently self-justified is needless of all other than himself, while the contingent is in need for its justification", then he intends to clarify that just as contingent beings cannot exist in and of themselves, they may not exist by way of another contingent being. Another contingent being would itself require a necessary being. Had contingent beings been borne of another contingent being, they would have to be sufficed from all else but it. If this contingent being is not a complete justification (‘illah tammah) for their existence, they would not exist through it. If it is a complete justification, they would be sufficed from all other than it. A complete justification entails the existence of the justified which would need nothing else beside it for its existence. Thus, if contingent beings are borne of a contingent being, they must be sufficed by it. However, this contingent being is still a contingent among contingents, and the contingent is in need for other than it, and therefore it must be in need for a justification other than itself. That which needs other than itself cannot be sufficed by itself. The result is that this contingent being simultaneously needs other than itself (due to its contingency) without needing other than itself (due to it being the justification of all other contingent beings). It is simultaneously self-sufficed and not self-sufficed. This is a coupling of the mutually nullifying. If the cause of all contingent beings is contingent, it would be self-sufficing not self-sufficing, needing of another needless of another—it is contingent, so needy, but completely justified, so needless. This is a contradiction.

The matter is more evident than to require this lengthy explication. However, the author followed the methodology of Abū ‘Abdillāh ibn al-Khaṭīb al-Rāzī, as this is the latter's style in reasoning and his distinctive dialectic approach. For ultimately, knowing that all contingent beings are in need for other than themselves in their existence is like knowing that this

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though the word is technically used as a synonym for 'the necessary being', as mentioned by Abū al-Baqā' in his *Kulliyāt*.

contingent being is also in need. If neediness is a product of contingency, regardless whether contingency is an indicant of neediness or a justification thereof, then it would include all contingent beings. Any posited contingent being will innately be characterised by neediness of other than it for its existence—just as every contingent being necessarily requires other than it, so will this contingent being that is the supposed cause of other contingents, it necessarily must also require another for its existence. It is known that a thing's neediness to a part (*ba<sup>c</sup>d*) is more severe than that to itself. If the contingent cannot exist by itself, how then can it exist by its part? How can the set (*majind emmū<sup>c</sup>*) of all contingents exist by way of a single contingent being, when the whole set of contingents cannot cause itself? Bearing in mind that their collectiveness does not take them out of the state of contingency—either the indicant or justification of neediness. All this is clear, by the praise of Allah.



## Section Three

Having affirmed the maker, the author moves onto affirming his oneness. He says: “The evidence of his oneness is that he cannot be made of parts in any way shape or form, otherwise he would not be the essentially necessary being; since said essentially necessary being would be in need of his constituent parts. A consequence of this is that there cannot be two of him. Had there been, both would necessarily exist without any distinction, and this is impossible.” This is a proof which he has taken from Abū ‘Abdillāh al-Rāzī’s rhetoric, and it is the approach of the philosophers like Ibn Sīnā and others of his ilk. This is their cornerstone when it comes to what they purport of *tawḥīd*<sup>61</sup>, and it is what they mean by it. It is a fallacious argument. The scholars of the Muslims have confuted it, as Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī notably did in *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah*. Rāzī and others also have explicit statements in critiquing this evidence.

He says: “A consequence of this is that there cannot be two of him. Had there been, both would necessarily exist without any distinction, and this is impossible.” Their way in formalising this is to suppose two necessary beings. Had there been two, they would be joint in the necessity of their existence. If each is distinct from the other in their individuation (*ta‘ayyun*), they would be constituted from what is borne of jointness (*ishtirāk*) and what is borne of distinction (*imtiyāz*). As such, they would be each constituted of parts, and this is impossible, as previously mentioned. If instead one is not distinct from the other, then they both exist without any distinction (i.e., they are one in essence).

Using this line of reasoning, they affirm the contingency of all bodies. They posit that a body is either constituted from matter (*māddah*) and

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61 Translator’s note: Though this is a technical term referring to God’s oneness as per Islamic theology (essentially monotheism), the word *tawḥīd* literally means ‘unifying to make singular’. Ibn Taymiyyah is implying that Aṣḥānī understands this word in the capacity mentioned by the philosophers—that God cannot be made of constituent parts.



form (*ṣūrah*), or from atoms (*jawāhir fardah*; sg. *jawhar fard*). Everything that is constitutable (*murakkab*) is contingent, and in this way, they negate divine attributes. They were the most Jahmī of all Jahmīs in adopting this, since they claimed that affirming the attributes negates their conception of *tawḥīd*.

### Seven arguments against philosophical constitution and its entailments

Many a virtuous scholar was wise to this corrupt reasoning, like Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī and others. Its fallaciousness may be highlighted in the following points:

1. Claiming that, if he is constituted of parts, then the necessary being would be necessarily in need of what he is constituted of is a false non sequitur. The most that can be said here is that a part (*juzʿ*) he is constituted of is one of his parts (*ajzāʾ*). The claim that the constituted is in need of one of his parts is no greater than the claim that he is in need of his whole (*kull*)—need for the collective (*majmūʿ*) is more severe than need for some of the collective (*baʿḍ al-majmūʿ*). The one in need of his collective is in need of every part of it, while the one in need of a part of him is not necessarily in need of every other part. It is known that his (the necessary being's) need for his collective is his need for his self. One saying that he is in need for his self, is what it means for him to be necessarily existent in and of himself. As such, his existence being necessary in and of himself does not necessitate a neediness which negates necessary existence.

2. The necessarily existent, as per proper evidence, negates that he be in need of anything outside himself, since this would dictate some contingent beings having a non-contingent self-sustaining existence. This negates their existence being in need of something outside itself. Had there been beings existing in themselves, needless of others, whilst in need of other than themselves, this would be coupling between mutual nullifiers. As for that which is within the domain of 'himself' (in reference to the necessary being), then it is not something that is outside of him such that it may be said his need thereof negates his existence being of himself.

3. The term 'other' (*ghayr*) has two technical meanings:

- a. Two things are characterised as others when knowledge of the first may be realised without knowledge of the second.

- b. Two things are characterised as others when one may be considered separate from the other in existence (*wujūd*), space (*makān*<sup>62</sup>), or time (*zamān*).

The first is the definition given by the Mutazilites and Karrāmīs, while the second is that of the Kullābīs and Asharites. Considering the latter, a thing's concomitant part or attribute is not other than it such that, if affirmed for the necessary being, its existence would necessitate his need for another. Considering the former, then affirmation of 'other' according to this understanding is a must, for it is possible to know his existence, necessity, ability to create, knowledge, and volition. They (the philosophers) describe this by the terms intellect (‘aql) and care (‘ināyah). These meanings are also 'others' according to this technical usage, and their affirmation is concomitant to the necessary being. If indeed they are concomitant, it is not possible to negate them, for negating them would oblige negating the necessary being. Thus, it is recognised that, even if this is referred to as constitution (*tarkīb*), it does not negate the necessary being.

If it is said: The necessary being does not need other than him; then the clarificatory question is: What type of 'other' does he not need? One that may be separate from him, or one that is an obligatory concomitant to him? It is the case for the former but cannot be for the latter. This is further clarified in the following point:

4. The term neediness (*iftiqār*) here is both linguistically and rationally inappropriate. It is in fact obligatory concomitance (*talāzum*) in the sense that the constituted cannot exist without one of its constituent parts, or one of two parts cannot exist without the other, or the part cannot exist without the existence of the whole, or the attribute cannot exist without the one it is attributed to, or the attributed cannot exist without its attribute.

It is well-established that two beings that are obligatory concomitants in existence do not necessarily have a relationship where one is needy for the other. If they are contingent, it is possible that they are justified by a single justification, without one being needy for the other. As for obligatory concomitants, like fatherhood and sonhood, one is not necessarily in need for the other. A thing is in need of another only if said other affects it in a justificatory way. As for two obligatory concomitants where the existence of one obliges the existence of the other with it in concomitance, then it is not necessarily in need of it, even if its existence is a prerequisite (*shart*) thereof. If what is meant by neediness here is obligatory concomitance,

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62 Translator's note: Some sources have it as *imkān*, i.e., contingency. This seems a more accurate rendition.

then this does not negate the necessity of existence. This is further clarified in the following point:

5. There is no doubt over the impossibility of two things each acting as the other's justification, for the justifier must be antecedental to the justified. Had a thing been a justification to its justification, it would necessarily precede itself due to it acting as the justification's justifier (*‘illat al-‘illah*), while simultaneously being delayed to itself due to it being the justification's justified (*ma‘lūl al-‘illah*). This is coupling between mutual nullifiers, and is why circular reasoning (*al-dawr al-qablī*) is a logical fallacy. However, it is not impossible that two things be each other's prerequisite, as this necessitates that each is simultaneous with the other. This is not impossible, and is why conjunctive circularity (*al-dawr al-ma‘ī*) is logically reasonable. Thus, the most that may be said of the constituted is that its constituent parts are prerequisites of one another, and that he (the constituted) is conditional upon them (the constituents). Constitution does not entail that a constituent part exists before the other, nor the existence of a part of him (the constituted) before the rest of his constituent parts. If it is said that the constituted is needy for one of his constituent parts, this means that he cannot exist without the existence of said part, obliging its simultaneous existence with him. This part is not an active justification to him, nor is it outside of him. Thus, saying that his existence necessitates the existence of the part and expressing this by saying that the constituted is needy for his part and that his part is other than him, may only be understood in this sense.

This does not entail that he (the necessary being, if one considers this to apply to him) is lacking justification or in want thereof, nor is he in need of a prerequisite outside of the necessary being, nor is this invoking circular logic. It does indeed invoke conjunctive circularity, but this is not logically impossible. It does not negate necessary existence, unless there is tenable proof that such plurality (*ta‘addud*) indeed does negate it. Other than what is given by the author, no such proof has been offered, thus it has not been negated.

6. Let us consider the statement ‘necessarily existent in and of himself’—does this entail that the necessary being is in need of himself or not? If yes, then his neediness to his constituent part is more pressing at a level of consistent mentation and is thus not impossible. If not, then likewise is the case with constitution—it does not entail that the constituted is in need of a given constituent part. If his self cannot exist without him and it is inappropriate to say that he is in need of it, then the collective has a

better claim to not be characterised by neediness to any of its constituent parts, for the constituted is naught but the constituent parts and the form of constitution.

7. The commonly held meaning of constitution is for two separate parts to be put together by a constitutioner (*murakkib*). The word *murakkab* (constituted) is a done-to word<sup>63</sup>. One says: *Rakkabahū murakkibun fa-hu-wa murakkab*—‘A constitutioner put it together such that it is constituted.’ For example, cooked food is constituted from its constituent parts, and likewise pharmaceutical drugs. It is well-known that the constituted, in this sense, is in need of something other than him to put him together, since, if his essence entails constitution, division is not permitted for him. The necessary being cannot be in need for anything other than himself, so this would be coupling between mutual nullifiers. There is no doubt that those who affirm the attributes, or any other faction or sect in the ummah, do not affirm this type of constitution for Allah ﷻ. However, the philosophers refer to the attributed (*mawṣūf*) as constituted (*murakkab*), and they refer to the attributes as parts. For example, they say that man is constituted of animality (*ḥayawāniyyah*) and rationality (*nāṭiqiyyah*<sup>64</sup>), and that a species (*nawʿ*) is constituted from a genus (*jins*) and a difference (*faṣl*).<sup>65</sup> They may either propose animality and rationality as a quiddity (*jawhar*) or an accident (*ʿaraḍ*). If they consider them—the animal (*al-ḥayawān*) and the

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63 Translator’s note: This is the chosen translation of *ism mafʿūl*. It is not simply an object, as, within linguistic convention, this term is used as a grammatical categorisation. The categorisation in question is a morphological one—a *ṣarfī* as opposed to a *naḥwī* analysis of a word. To highlight the difference, consider the sentence, ‘The detective caught the murderer.’ At a grammatical level, the word ‘murderer’ is the object. At a morphological level, it is a doing word—*ism fāʿil*—since the word ‘murderer’ by itself entails the meaning of a person who does the verb of murdering. Here, *murakkib* (constitutioner) is a doing word, and *murakkab* (constituted) is a done-to word.

64 Translator’s note: Literally, *nāṭiqiyyah* is the ability to speak, or ‘linguistic endowment’. The morphological root is *n-t-q* (*naṭāqa*); referring to utterance and verbal expression. However, the ability to speak was bequeathed as the hallmark of rationality apropos formal logic: *manṭiq*. The name of the discipline itself—formal logic—is the *mafʿil* morphological setup of the foresaid root. It is the field where articulation is strictly exercised as an epistemic tool.

65 Translator’s note: The two examples are related, as the latter is the abstracted version of the former. That is, in the former example, man is a species that is constituted from the genre of animality and the difference (or differentiator, in this case) of rationality. This example is in fact a cliché in formal logic. The reader should not conflate these terms as used in logic with their modern taxonomical equivalents.

rational being (*al-nāṭiq*)—a quiddity, then the animal and the rational are man, not the essence that is man, nor anything other than this quiddity that is a rational animal (*ḥayawān nāṭiq*). However, the mind abstracts these meanings, conceptualising the rational absolutely, the animal absolutely, and man absolutely. Nonetheless, this mental abstraction does not entail that there is in the external world three quiddities—this is necessary knowledge (*ʿilm ḍarūrī*). If instead it is proposed that man is constituted from animality and rationality—two accidents—then an accident may only be established given a quiddity, and animality and rationality are attributes of man. How can a quiddity be constituted of its attributes, when its attributes are not actualised except through it, and are in fact in need of it?!

If they say: We call this constitution; we would not argue semantics with them in folly. Rather, we would say in response: Every being in existence must be constituted in this sense. The existence of an essence that is bereft of all attributes is impossible, and the existence of an absolute existence (*wujūd muṭlaq*) lacking individuation (*taʿayyun*) and without any reality that specifies it from other realities is impossible. Anything that is specified and distinguished from other than it must necessarily have some unique quality. We have explicated this in other contexts.

We need not affirm a necessary existence of this nature here. Suffice us to say that we do not concede the impossibility of this meaning which you call constitution. Many of the mutakallimun do not refer to attribution (*ittiṣāf*) as constitution. Rather, they refer to composition<sup>66</sup> (*taqdīr*) as constitution, since the composed (*muqaddar*) is constituted from atoms, or from matter and form. Though even this is disputed. Many among the various kalam sects like the Hishāmīs, Ḍirārīs, Najjārīs, and Kullābīs say that he<sup>67</sup> (the necessary being) is not constituted whatsoever. Those who posit he is constituted said that it is not possible for his constituent parts to exist without him. Then, what was said to the philosophers would be extended to them.

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66 Translator's note: There are many denotations inferred from the root *q-d-r*, of which *taqdīr* is the *tafīl* morphological setup. Possible references of *taqdīr* include: ordainment, configuration, measurement, arrangement, and estimation. It revolves around valuing something as per its make-up.

67 Translator's note: The singular masculine pronoun is used throughout the text to refer to the necessary being or the Divine, and this even if there was not a recent or direct reference thereto before its usage. It is simply inferred. Here, it may possibly be referring to the composed, or more likely the necessary being.

## The *tawhīd* of the philosophers and that of the Qur'an

They (the philosophers) call the negation of such constitution *tawhīd*, and as a consequence, they negate the attributes. They purport that the negation of Allah's knowledge, ability, life, speech, hearing, sight, and all other divine attributes is *tawhīd*. They call themselves the *Muwaḥḥidūn*, just as the Mutazilites proclaim themselves the *Tawhīd* and Justice Folk (*Ahl al-Tawhīd wa al-<sup>c</sup>Adl*), meaning by *tawhīd* here the negation of divine attributes.

As a proponent of the Mutazilite school in negating the attributes, Abū <sup>c</sup>Abdillāh Muhammad ibn al-Tūmart titled his followers *al-Muwaḥḥidūn*. He has explicit passages in his book *al-Kabīr* negating the attributes, which is why he accordingly did not mention in his *Murshidah* any of the affirmative attributes (*al-ṣifāt al-thubūtiyyah*): not the knowledge of Allah, His power, His speech, nor any of the other affirmative attributes. He only mentioned negation (*sulūb*).

The *tawhīd* with which Allah sent His Messenger ﷺ and revealed His Book is to worship Allah alone without partner. This is the *tawhīd* of His Divinity (*Ulūhiyyah*) which encompasses *tawhīd* of His Lordship (*Rubūbiyyah*). Allah ﷻ says: "Your god is but one God"<sup>68</sup>, "Do not take two gods; He is but one God, so of Me alone be in awe"<sup>69</sup>, "Never did We send any Messenger before you but We reveal to him that, 'There is no god but I, so worship Me'<sup>70</sup>, "Truly, in every community We sent a Messenger: 'Worship Allah and avoid false deities.' Some of them Allah guided, and some of them deserved misguidance."<sup>71</sup> The polytheists used to accept that Allah, the Lord of the Worlds, is one, but they used to worship others along with him. Allah ﷻ says: "Most of them do not believe in Allah unless they associate [partners with Him]"<sup>72</sup>, "If you ask them, 'Who created the heavens and the earth?' They will surely say, 'Allah.'"<sup>73</sup>, "Say, 'To whom does the earth and everyone in it belong, if you happen to know?' They will say, 'To Allah.' Say, 'Will you never remember?' Say, 'Who is the Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Great Throne?' They will say, 'Allah.'"<sup>74</sup> Say, 'Will you never be mindful?' Say, 'In whose hand is the dominance of everything, and He

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68 *al-Baqarah*, 163.

69 *al-Nahl*, 51.

70 *al-Anbiyā'*, 25.

71 *al-Nahl*, 36.

72 *Yūsuf*, 106.

73 *Luqmān*, 25.

74 Translator's note: The other valid recitation here reads: *sayaqūlūna lillāh*; as opposed to: *sayaqūlūna Allāh*. The translation given is of the latter. The former would be: 'To Allah'; i.e., the seven heavens and the Great Throne belong to Allah.

protects but nothing is protected from Him, if you happen to know?’ They will say, ‘To Allah.’ Say, ‘Then are you bewitched?’”<sup>75</sup>

### Summarising the author’s notion of *tawhīd* and its response

We shall clarify the original proof having mentioned the argument in full. Its proper articulation, as per the author’s intention, is to say: ‘The necessary being is not borne of constitution, and whatever is not borne of constitution is one (i.e., *wāḥid*, singular unity). Therefore, the necessary being is one. We stipulate that he is not borne of constitution because the constituted is in need of what it is constituted of, and what it is constituted of is other than it. The necessary being has no need for what is other than him. Therefore, the necessary being is not constituted.’ This is the meaning of the author’s statement: “The evidence of his oneness is that he cannot be made of parts in any way shape or form, otherwise he would not be the essentially necessary being.” Meaning, had he been constituted in any capacity, he would not be the essentially necessary being. He then says: “Since the essentially necessary being would be in need of his constituent parts.” Meaning, had he been constituted, he would necessarily be in need of his constituent parts. The author then omitted the conclusion to the premises, though they are clearly inferred. Namely, if the necessary being is in need of his constituent parts, he would be in need for other than him, and the necessary being cannot be in need of anything other than him.

The author then says: “A consequence of this is that there cannot be two of him. Had there been two necessary beings—if there is distinction between them, they would be necessarily constituted from what is borne of jointness and what is borne of distinction. Otherwise, there is necessarily no individuation between them.”

The response to this may be in two ways:

1. If they are joint in the necessity of being and each is distinct in their individuation, then it is well-known that the necessity of one is not the very necessity of the other, just as the individual nature (*‘ayn*) of one is not the individual nature of the other. Rather, one is necessary and the other is necessary, just as one is individual and the other is individual. Their jointness in the absolute necessity of being is like their jointness in absolute individuation. The absolute is only absolute in the mind, not in individuated entities themselves. Thus, one’s individuated nature is necessary in its specific way, and the other’s individuated nature is necessary in its specific way. The mind

abstracts an absolute necessity and an absolute individuation. If this is the case, the proposition that each is constituted of what is borne of jointness and what is borne of distinction is false. Rather, what is borne of jointness, namely necessity, is the same as what is borne of distinction, namely individuation. This argument is found aplenty in their rhetoric, and its fallaciousness is glaring and inescapable. The conflation took place with their taking necessity as what is borne of jointness and individuation as what specifies. This may be confuted with its like, saying: They are joint in their individuation, since one is individuated just as the other is, while each is distinct in their necessity, since each has its own necessity that specifies it from the other. Since the opposite is possible, it becomes clear that their dialectic is but an imposed mental projection (*taḥakkum maḥḍ*).

2. Let us, for argument's sake, concede that this is indeed constitution from what is borne of jointness and distinction. The reasoning for negating such constitution is false, as has already been thoroughly discussed.





## Section Four

The author then says: “The evidence of his knowledge is his causing things into existence. He could not have done so without having knowledge of them.” This is a popular proof among early and late Muslim theorists. The Qur’an has implied it: “Can He who created not know,<sup>76</sup> while He is the Subtle, the Aware?”<sup>77</sup> It is also the dialectic path trodden by the philosophers in this regard. It may be further elucidated in the following points:

1. The necessary being causing the creation into existence is by way of his volition, as will be later discussed. Volition unequivocally necessitates the conceptualisation of what is willed (*taṣawwur al-murād*). The conceptualisation of the willed is knowledge. Thus, causing into existence necessitates volition, and volition in turn necessitates knowledge, ergo: causing into existence necessitates knowledge.
2. The creation has such impeccable fine tuning to a degree that necessitates its cause having knowledge. If what is caused is impeccably and proficiently fine-tuned, it cannot emanate from one who lacks knowledge.

Employing these two points, the author’s initial proposition may be shown to be correct. There is other evidence that is often cited here, among them is to posit that, within the created world, there are creatures possessing knowledge, and knowledge is an attribute of perfection, so the Creator cannot be lacking knowledge. This is clarified in the following:

1. We necessarily know that the Creator is more perfect than the created, and the necessary is more perfect than the contingent. If

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<sup>76</sup> Translator’s note: Another possible translation is: “Would He not know whomever He has created...”

<sup>77</sup> *al-Mulk*, 14.

we suppose two things, one possessing knowledge and the other lacking it, the one possessing knowledge is more perfect. Thus, if the creator is not characterised by knowledge, he would necessarily be lacking it, and therefore be ignorant, which is impossible.

2. All knowledge in contingent beings, namely the creation, is from him (the necessary being). It is inconceivable that the cause of perfection and its originator lacks it, rather, he has a better claim to it. Allah ﷻ—to Him belongs the loftiest parable—is not equal to the creation in analogical inference (*qiyās tamthīl*) nor categorical syllogism (*qiyās shumūl*).<sup>78</sup> Rather, anything affirmed to the creation of praiseworthy attributes, the Creator has more right to it, and any defect which the creation transcends, the Creator has more right to transcend it.

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78 Translator's note: Ibn Taymiyyah discusses this in more detail at a later point when speaking about formal logic and its limitations.

## Section Five

The author says: “The evidence of his ability is his causing things into existence. They may either be from his essence, and this is impossible since the cosmos and every single created being would be pre-eternal—a falsity. He therefore must be a doer with choice. This is what is sought.” It may be said here that this proof given by the author is that he (the necessary being) is a doer with choice, without expanding upon the premises of said proof. His being a doer with choice proves volition, not ability, which the author later proves. The apparent implication of this evidence, therefore, is that he repeated the proof for volition without giving proof for ability. Nonetheless, evidencing it would be as follows: Either the innovator of all things is solely an essence bare of all attributes, the existence of which necessitates an object of action (*maf'ūl*), as the philosophers who espouse the pre-eternality of celestial spheres (*aflāk*) say. Or he is an essence which bears attributes with which other creatures do not necessarily exist, as per what the followers of the various religions (*ahl al-milal*) are upon.

If one wishes to properly analyse this based on the proposed proof in the text, one may say: The doer is either a mere essence or an essence with an attribute. If the former is true, then it is well-known that the complete justification obliges the existence of the justified. If only the essence was what is necessary, then only the essence is a complete justification, and necessarily all of the justified must exist. All novelties (*hawādith*) in creation would necessarily be pre-eternal, which is contrary to what is readily witnessed. If the latter is true, then the attribute which facilitates action is ability. Alternatively, one may say: If he (the necessary being) is necessitating by way of attribute as opposed to essence, then he has the liberty of choice (*mukhtār*); for he is either a necessitator by essence (*mūjib bil-dhāt*) or a doer by choice (*fā'il bil-ikhtiyār*). The one at liberty of choice acts by way of ability, since it is the able who acts if he wills, even if he chooses not to. As for one whose object of action obliges him without his own volition,

then he is not truly able, but obliged. He is like one who is compelled by natural forces which he has no control over nor is able to terminate them.

## Section Six

The author then says: “The evidence that he is living is his knowledge and ability, since they may only subsist in one who is living.” This is a popular proof among theoreticians. They say that it is known that a prerequisite for knowledge and ability is life, for it is impossible for the non-living to be knowledgeable, since the dead cannot know, claiming this to be necessary knowledge.

They may further say that these rational proofs are unaffected by external considerations, for proposing a non-living knowledgeable entity is inconceivable by explicit reason.

Likewise is the case with the author’s statement: “The evidence for his volition is his endowing things with specific qualities, and the impossibility of specification without a specifier.” This is another common theoretical proof. The proposition is that the cosmos has been endowed with many specifications (*takhṣīṣāt*), such as specifying each and every thing with its own ordained composition, attributes, and movements. Examples include spatial dimensions; taste, colour, and smell; life, ability, and knowledge; hearing and sight; and the various other features a thing may possess. It is necessary knowledge that it is possible that a given thing’s features may have been other than what they are, since said thing is contingent, and is not necessarily existent in and of itself. It is also known that a bare essence that has no volition cannot specify, for specification is borne of volition.

If it is said: Specification is borne of known causes. Like the earth and the trees, for example—they are watered by a single water, but the fruits that grow therefrom are varied due to the variety of recipients. Likewise, the sun’s influence differs depending on its recipient: it whitens the garment being cleaned while darkening the cleaner’s skin; it softens the dry, unripe fruit due to what it brings to it of humidity, while drying the ripened fruit by cutting off humidity from it.

The response is as follows: Say, for argument’s sake, that the matter is as has been described. What is it that necessitates the differences in initial

states such that this tree and that body are specified with another cause? The chain must go back to an uncaused cause, beyond which there is no cause.

If it is said: It is a but a thing that emanates from him (the necessary being), as posited by the philosophers. They say that only the singular may emanate from the singular, and that the first emanated entity (*al-ṣādir al-awwal*) was the intellect (*al-ʿaql*), and from the intellect, there emanated an intellect (ʿaql), a self (*nafs*), and a celestial sphere (*falak*). This is false, since, if the first emanated entity is truly singular in every sense, nothing could have emanated from it but another singular entity. If instead this singular entity has within it plenitude (*kathrah*), then more than one has emanated from one. If it is said that plenitude (*kathrah*) is given to non-existence (ʿadamiyyah), then necessarily there emanated existence from non-existence. It may be asked: The eighth celestial sphere has plenty of celestial bodies (*kawākib*) unlike the ninth—what is the necessitator of this plenitude?

Moreover, one may say: If the first cause has specificity with an attribute (*ṣifah*) and value (*qadr*), then his specifying is borne of volition, as specification with the essence of volition is inconceivable by explicit reason. If the response is: He (the first cause) has no specification by way of attribute and value; then one retorts: This necessitates that his existence is absolute, and the absolute may only manifest in the mind (*dhihn*; pl. *adhhān*) not individuated beings (*aʿyān*).

## Section Seven

### The dispute over divine speech among those who affirm its general origin

Many theoreticians such as Ibn Kullāb and those who agree with him, like al-Ash‘arī and the majority of his followers among the people of *kalam*, discretion<sup>79</sup> (*ra‘y*), Hadith, and Sufism among the companions of the Four Imams and others, like al-Qāḍī Abū Ya‘lā, Abū al-Ma‘ālī al-Juwaynī, Abū al-Walīd al-Bājī, Abū Maṣū‘ al-Māturīdī, and others, all posit the following: He (Allah ﷻ) knows all knowables with a single individuated knowledge, wills all that is willed with a single individuated volition, and what is more: they posit that His speech which includes every command He commanded and every report He informed of, is but a single individuated speech. This is notwithstanding the majority of sound-minded people deeming this position to be false upon complete conceptualisation, and this by way of necessary knowledge. Thereafter, those who espouse this principle disputed among themselves: Is His speech purely meaning, such that He did not speak the Arabic Qur’an nor the Hebrew Torah? Is it the case that He did not speak any of their letters? Or is His speech the letters and sounds which the Qur’an and other scripture was revealed with? And is it pre-eternal (*qadīm*) and post-eternal (*azalī*)? They differed according to two views in this regard.

Among those who posited the pre-eternality of the individuated letters, or the letters and sounds, were those who did not posit that they are an individuated, single entity; rather posit that they are plural (*muta‘addidah*), even if never-ending. They affirm letters, or letters and meanings, without end at the same time—they have always been and always will be. Among those who posit the pre-eternality of the meaning of speech, and that He

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79 Translator’s note: This is also used for *ijtihād* on occasions, usually as ‘an exercise of judicious discretion.’



did not speak with letters, are those who say that the pre-eternal is but five meanings. Among them are those who say that this meaning (i.e., divine speech) goes back to informative reporting (*khabar*), and command (*amr*) is encompassed therein. There are those who deem informative reporting as coming within knowledge, while others—despite this—add that knowledge is not an attribute that subsists in the Knowing.

### Statements from the Predecessors with regards to divine attributes

As for the statements of the Predecessors and scholars of Islam regarding this theological principle, and the relevant textual passages from the Qur'an and the Sunnah, then this is far more vast than this commentary can allow for. In the books of exegesis that relay the positions of the Predecessors, there is the *Tafsīr* of ʿAbd al-Razzāq, ʿAbd ibn Ḥumayd, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, Ishāq ibn Rāhawayh, Baqiyy ibn Makhlad, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Ibrāhīm, Duḥaym, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Ḥātim, Muhammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, Abū Bakr ibn al-Mundhir, Abū Bakr ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, Abū al-Shaykh al-Aṣfahānī, Abū Bakr ibn Mardawayh, and many others whose mention would be too lengthy to cite.

In the books dedicated to the Sunnah (i.e., Hadith works), refutations against the Jahmīs, and the founding principles of religion (*uṣūl al-dīn*<sup>80</sup>) relayed from the Predecessors, there is *Kitāb al-Radd ʿalā al-Jahmiyyah* by ʿAbdillāh ibn Muhammad al-Jaʿfi (Bukhārī's shaykh)<sup>81</sup>, *Khalq al-Afāl* by Bukhārī, *al-Sunnah* by Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī, and that of Abū Bakr al-Athram, ʿAbdullāh ibn Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, Ḥanbal ibn Ishāq, Abū Bakr al-Khallāl, Abū al-Shaykh al-Aṣfahānī, Abū al-Qāsim al-Ṭabarānī, Abū ʿAbdillāh ibn Mandah, and their ilk. Additionally, *Kitāb al-Sharīʿah* by Abū Bakr al-Ājurri, *al-Ibānah* by Abū ʿAbdillāh ibn Baṭṭah, *al-Uṣūl* by Abū ʿAmr al-Ṭalamnki, *Radd ʿUthmān ibn Saʿīd al-Dāramī* (by Dāramī), and also his (Dāramī's) *al-Radd ʿalā al-Jahmiyyah*, and many more texts of this nature.

This is in the same vein as what Khallāl and others mention from Ishāq ibn Rāhawayh: Bishr ibn ʿUmar narrated to us: I heard many among the exegetes saying: “[Quoting the Qur'anic passage:] *al-Raḥmānu ʿalā al-ʿArshi*

80 Translator's note: Often a synonym for theology—i.e., books in Islamic creed.

81 Translator's note: The text has his name as Muhammad ibn ʿAbdillāh al-Jaʿfi. This seems to be a mistake, as this name is not known among Bukhārī's teachers. Ibn Taymiyyah himself mentions Abū Jaʿfar ʿAbdillāh ibn Muhammad al-Jaʿfi—indeed one of the teachers of Bukhārī—in other works, though. He is likely the person intended.

*istawā*—“The Merciful, settled upon the Throne.”<sup>82</sup> The meaning of *istawā* (settled) is *irtafa*<sup>c</sup> (rose).”

Bukhārī says in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*: Abū al-‘Āliyah said: “[Quoting the Qur’anic passage:] *Istawā ilā al-samā’*—‘He settled to the heaven.’<sup>83</sup> *Istawā* (settled) means *irtafa*<sup>c</sup> (rose).” Mujāhid says: “*Istawā* (He settled): ‘Alā al-‘Arsh—He rose above the Throne.” Baghawī says in his *Tafsīr*: “Ibn ‘Abbās and the majority of exegetes among the Predecessors said: *Istawā ilā al-samā’*—‘He settled to the heaven’, as *irtafa*<sup>c</sup> *ilā al-samā’*—‘He rose to the heaven.’” Likewise is the understanding of al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad. Bayhaqī narrated from Farrā’: “*Istawā* (settled) means *ṣa‘ad* (ascended). It is as one says of a person: *kāna qā‘idan fa-istawā qā‘imā*—He was sitting, then got up standing.”

Shāfi‘ī narrates in his *Musnad* on the authority of Anas ibn Mālik that he said about the day of Friday: “It is the day which your Lord settled upon the Throne.” Abū Bakr al-Athram narrates from al-Fuḍayl ibn ‘Iyāḍ that he said: “It is not for us to imagine with regards to Allah, ‘How this’ and ‘How that’. Allah described Himself most eloquently, saying: ‘Say: He is Allah—One alone. Allah is the Eternally Besought.’<sup>84</sup> Thus, there is no description more eloquent than what He described Himself with. This descent (*nuzūl*), laughter (*ḍaḥīk*), flaunting (*mubāhāh*), and inspection (*iṭṭilā‘*), are as He wills the descent to be, and as He wills the laughter to be. It is not for us to imagine, ‘He descends from His place...How?’ If the Jahmī says to you, ‘I disbelieve in a god who descends’, then you respond with, ‘I believe in a god who does as he wills.’”

Bukhārī says in *Khalq al-Af‘āl*: “Fuḍayl ibn ‘Iyāḍ says: ‘If the Jahmī says to you, “I disbelieve in a god who vacates his place”, then reply by saying, “I believe in a god who does as he wills.”’” Bukhārī also says: “Yazīd ibn Hārūn spoke about the Jahmīs, saying, ‘Whoever claims that the Merciful settled upon His Throne in a manner contrary to what is in the hearts of the laity, then he is Jahmī.’” Khallāl narrated from Sulaymān ibn Ḥarb that Bishr ibn al-Sarī asked Ḥammād ibn Zayd: “Abū Ismā‘īl, the narration that Allah descends to the lowest heaven (*al-samā’ al-dunyā*)—does He go from a place to another?” Ḥammād was quiet for a moment, then he said: “He is in His place, drawing near to His creation as He wills.” This is transmitted by al-Ash‘arī in his *Maqālāt* as the position of the Sunnah and the Hadith Folk (*Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Ḥadīth*). He says: “They accept the Hadith received from the Prophet ﷺ, and take from the Book and the Sunnah as Allah ﷻ says: ‘If you disagree over anything, refer it to Allah and the Mes-

82 *Ṭā-Hā*, 5.

83 *al-Baqarah*, 29.

84 *al-Ikhlāṣ*, 1-2.

senger.<sup>85</sup> Their position is to follow the imams from the Predecessors. They do not innovate in their religion what Allah did not permit. They concur that Allah comes on the Day of Resurrection as He says: ‘Your Lord comes with the angels, rank upon rank’<sup>86</sup>, and that He draws near to His creation as He wills: ‘We are nearer to him (man) than his jugular vein.’<sup>87</sup> Ash‘arī finally concludes by saying: “We hold all the aforementioned positions, and it is our adopted view.”

Abū ‘Uthmān al-Nīsāpūrī, titled Shaykh al-Islām, says in his famous treatise<sup>88</sup> regarding the Sunnah: “The Hadith Folk (*Ahl al-Hadīth*) affirm the descent of the Lord ﷺ every night to the lowest heaven, without assimilation to the descent of the created, likening thereto, or inquiring as to the modality. They affirm to Him what the Messenger ﷺ affirmed to Him, and this is as far as they go. They pass on any authentic report according to the apparent wording it is transmitted by, entrusting its knowledge to Allah. They likewise affirm what Allah revealed in His Book in terms of coming (*majī’*), arriving (*ityān*) mentioned in the verse: ‘Are they waiting for anything except that Allah comes to them in shadows of clouds with the angels?’<sup>89</sup>, and His saying: ‘Your Lord comes with the angels, rank upon rank.’<sup>90</sup>”

He (Abū ‘Uthmān) further says: I heard al-Ḥākim Abū ‘Abdillāh al-Hāfiẓ saying: I heard Abū Zakariyyā Yaḥyā ibn Muhammad al-Anbārī saying: I heard Ibrāhīm ibn Abī Ṭālib: I heard Aḥmad ibn Sa‘īd al-Ribāṭī saying: “I attended the gathering of the Emir ‘Abdullāh ibn Ṭāhir one day, and Ishāq ibn Ibrāhīm—meaning Ibn Rāhawayh—was also there. He was asked about the narration of divine descent—‘Is it authentic?’, to which he replied, ‘Yes.’ One of ‘Abdullāh’s (the Emir’s) panderers said, ‘Abū Ya‘qūb, do you claim that Allah descends every night?’ He said, ‘Yes.’ He said, ‘How does he descend?’ He said, ‘Affirm Him as above and I will describe to you His descent.’ The man said, ‘I affirm Him as above.’ Ishāq said, ‘Allah ﷻ says: “Your Lord comes with the angels, rank upon rank.”’ The Emir ‘Abdullāh ibn Ṭāhir said, ‘Abū Ya‘qūb, this is on the Day of Resurrection.’ Ishāq replied, ‘Allah honour the Emir. The one who comes on the Day of Judgement—who prevents Him from doing so today?’”

85 *Al-Nisā’*, 59.

86 *al-Fajr*, 22.

87 *Qāf*, 16.

88 Translator’s note: Known as *‘Aqīdat al-Salaf wa Aṣḥāb al-Hadīth*, or more specifically as *al-Risālah fi I’tiqād Ahl al-Sunnah wa Aṣḥāb al-Hadīth wa al-‘Immah*.

89 *al-Baqarah*, 210.

90 *al-Fajr*, 22.

He further narrates by way of his chain from Ishāq that he said: “Emir ‘Abdullāh ibn Ṭāhir asked me, ‘Abū Ya‘qūb, this narration you narrate from the Prophet ﷺ: “Allah descends to the lowest heaven every night”—how does he descend?’ I replied, ‘Allah honour the Emir. It is not said regarding the Lord, “How does He descend?” Rather, He descends without a “how” (*bilā kayf*).”

He also narrates by way of his chain from ‘Abdullāh ibn al-Mubārak that some enquirer asked the latter about the divine descent on the night of the middle of Sha‘bān. ‘Abdullāh replied: “Weak-minded one! [Only] the night of the middle of Sha‘bān? He descends every night!” The man said: “Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, how does He descend? Would His place not then be void?” ‘Abdullāh ibn al-Mubārak replied: “He descends as He wills.” Abū ‘Uthmān al-Nisābūrī then says: “As the report of descent is authentically attributed to the Prophet ﷺ, the Sunnah Folk concurred to it and accepted the narration, affirming descent as per what Allah’s Messenger ﷺ said. They did not believe its assimilation to that of His creation. They knew, recognised, believed, and appreciated that divine attributes are not similar to the attributes of the creation, just as the Divine’s essence is not similar the essences of the creation. Hallowed and exalted be He a mighty exaltation, far beyond what the Assimilators (*Mushabbihah*) and the Divestors (*Mu‘aṭṭilah*) claim.”

Bayhaqī narrates by way of his chain from Ishāq ibn Rāhawayh that the latter said: “The circle of the Emir ‘Abdullāh ibn Ṭāhir gathered me with this innovator—meaning Ibrāhīm ibn Ṣāliḥ—when the Emir asked me about the reports concerning descent, which I affirmed. Ibrāhīm then said, ‘I disbelieve in a god who descends from one heaven to another,’ to which I replied, ‘I believe in a god who does as he wills.’ ‘Abdullāh was pleased with my words and rebuked Ibrāhīm.”

Ḥarb ibn Ismā‘il al-Kirmānī says in his work authored in the propositions (*masā’il*) of Aḥmad and Ishāq alongside traditions from the Prophet ﷺ, the Companions, the Successors, and those after them:

“(A Chapter on Doctrinal Positions:) The following are the positions of the imams of knowledge and the scholars of tradition, those known for their expertise and followed in this respect. I met scholars from Iraq, the Hejaz, and the Levant upon these positions. As such, anyone who disagrees with these doctrines, disparages them, or blames the one who holds them is an innovator who has left the Community (*jamā‘ah*), far removed from the way of Sunnah and the methodology of truth. It is the creed of Aḥmad, Ishāq ibn Ibrāhīm, Baqīyy ibn Makhlad, ‘Abdullāh ibn al-Zubayr al-Ḥumaydī, Sa‘īd ibn Manṣūr, and others whom we sat with and learnt from...”

He then goes on to speak about faith (*īmān*), predestination (*qadr*), the punishment (*al-waʿīd*), imam-hood (*imāmah*); and matters reported by the Messenger ﷺ pertaining to the Hour's portents (*ashrāt al-Sāʿah*), the Transition (*al-Barzakh*), as well as other matters; until he says:

“He ﷻ is separate from His creation. There is no place where His knowledge is absent. Allah has a Throne, and the Throne has carriers that carry it. He<sup>91</sup> has a limit (*ḥadd*), Allah knows best His limit. Allah ﷻ is upon His Throne, honoured by His mention, exalted by His glory, there is no god but He. Allah ﷻ is hearing, never doubtful; seeing, never uncertain; knowing, never ignorant; generous, never miserly; forbearing, never hasty; guarding, never forgetful; wakeful, never negligent; watchful, never heedless. He speaks and moves; hears, sees, and looks<sup>92</sup>; grasps and spreads<sup>93</sup>; rejoices and loves; dislikes<sup>94</sup> and hates; gets wroth<sup>95</sup> and angers<sup>96</sup>; shows mercy, pardons, and forgives; gives and withholds; and descends to the lowest heaven every night as He wills. He is speaking and knowing, blessed be Allah, the best of creators.”

Abū Bakr al-Khallāl narrates in his work *al-Sunnah*—he says: Yūsuf ibn Mūsā reported to me that Abū ʿAbdillāh—meaning Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal—was asked: “Do the inhabitants of the Garden look upon their Lord, and do they speak to Him and He to them?” He said: “Yes. He looks upon them and they upon Him, and He speaks to them and they to Him, however He wills (*kayfa shā*), whenever<sup>97</sup> He wills (*idhā shā*).” He (Khallāl) also

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91 Translator’s note: The Arabic states: *wa lahū ḥadd*, so it is conceivable the Throne is the referent here. Nonetheless, especially given the historical context of the *ḥadd* dialectic and its attributability to the Divine, it is almost definitely referring to God in this context. This is especially given the chosen wording. The previous point reads: *wa lillāhi ʿArsh*... Thereafter it reads: *wa lahū ḥadd*. Meaning: “To Allah belongs...and to Him belongs...”

92 Translator’s note: The Arabic *yanẓur* may bear the meaning of delaying or giving respite, which is also attributable to God. However, since Kirmānī is emphasising the affirmation of seemingly anthropomorphic actions to God, it is certainly ‘looking’ that is his intended meaning.

93 Translator’s note: *Yabsut*—‘Spreads’ as a transitive verb, meaning that God extends and expands provision, for example. An antonym to the forementioned ‘grasps’—*yaqbid*. The latter may also be ‘constricts’.

94 Translator’s note: *Yakraḥ* as ‘dislikes’, and *yubghid* as ‘hates’ (immediately after it).

95 Translator’s note: *Yaskhaṭ*—to become wrathful.

96 Translator’s note: *Yaghḍab*—‘Angers’ as an intransitive verb: to become angry.

97 Translator’s note: The word *idhā* may be a temporal qualifier—‘whenever’—or generally conditional—‘if’. If it is the latter that is intended, the text would read: “However He wills, if He wills.” This does not seem to be accurate, though.

says: ‘Abdullāh ibn Ḥanbal reported to me: My father Ḥanbal ibn Ishāq reported to me: My uncle (i.e., Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal) said: “We believe that Allah is upon the Throne however He wills, and as He wills (*kamā shā*).” Khallāl says: ‘Alī ibn ‘Īsā reported to me: Hanbal narrated to us: I asked Abū ‘Abdillāh: “Allah speaks to His slave on the Day of Resurrection?” He replied: “Yes, for who judges among the creation save Allah ﷻ? He speaks to His slave and questions him. Allah is characterised by speech (*mutakallim*). He is eternally so, commanding what He wills, judging as He wills—there is no equal (‘*idl*) nor like (*mithl*) to him—however He wills, wherever He wills.” Khallāl says: Muhammad ibn ‘Alī ibn Baḥr said: Ya‘qūb ibn Bukhtān narrated to them: Abū ‘Abdillāh was asked about those who claim that Allah did not speak with a sound, to which he replied: “Indeed, He did speak with a sound. These narrations, we narrate them as received, each having a facet of understanding (*wajh*). They wish to mix matters for the people. Surely, whoever claims that Allah did not speak to Mūsā is a disbeliever.” Marrūdhī reported to us: I heard from Abū ‘Abdillāh that it was said to him that ‘Abd al-Wahhāb had said: “Whoever claims that Allah spoke to Mūsā without a sound, then he is a Jahmī, an enemy of Allah and Islam.” Abū ‘Abdillāh smiled upon hearing this and said: “How excellent was what he said, Allah grant him wellness.” On the authority of ‘Abdullāh ibn Aḥmad: I asked my father about a people who say that, when Allah spoke to Mūsā, He did not do so with a sound. He replied by saying: “Rather, He ﷻ spoke with a sound. These narrations, we narrate them a received. The narration of Ibn Mas‘ūd states, ‘When Allah speaks with revelation, there is a sound that is heard like that of a chain dragged on a smooth stone.’” My father said: “The Jahmīs reject it.” My father said: “These are a disbelieving people who wish to mix matters for the people. Surely, whoever claims that Allah did not speak is a disbeliever.”

**My commentary**<sup>98</sup>: Imam Aḥmad and others among the Predecessors highlighted that the sound that Allah ﷻ spoke with is not that voice<sup>99</sup> which is heard (*al-ṣawt al-masmū‘*). Aḥmad was asked about the statement of the Prophet ﷺ: “He is not from us the one who does not recite the Qur’an melodiously.” He said: “It is for a man to raise his voice with its recitation. This is its meaning.” He also says regarding the statement of the Prophet ﷺ:

98 Translator’s note: Meaning Ibn Taymiyyah’s. The Arabic is *qultu*—literally, “I said”. In Islamic academic conventions, it is used to separate between text one is quoting and one’s own commentary, as well as to highlight one’s responses in a hypothesised to-and-fro—“If they say...I say...”

99 Translator’s note: The Arabic *ṣawt* can refer to a generic or a voice. Given the follow-up discussion, it seems *al-ṣawt al-masmū‘* that Ibn Taymiyyah refers to here is the reciter’s voice in their reciting the Qur’an.

“Adorn the Qur’an with your voices”: “It is that one beautifies it with his voice.” Bukhārī says in *Khalq al-Af’āl*: “It is mentioned from the Prophet ﷺ that Allah calls with a sound that the near and the far hear alike. This is naught but for Allah.” Bukhārī says: “This is evidence that Allah’s voice is unlike the voices of creation, since His voice is heard by all those far and near, and the angels are swooned by it. Yet when they call to one another, they are not swooned. He ﷺ says: ‘So do not assign compeers to Allah while you know.’<sup>100</sup> There is no like nor compeer to an attribute of Allah, and nothing of His attributes exist in the creation.”

He then relays the narration of ‘Abdullāh ibn Unays by way of his chain thereof, where the latter says: I heard the Prophet ﷺ say: “Allah gathers the slaves. He calls upon them with a voice heard by the far and near alike, ‘I am the King, the Recompenser. Not one of the inhabitants of the Garden will enter the Garden while one of the inhabitants of the Fire still has an injustice to settle with him.’” He also mentions the narration he reports in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* regarding the meaning of His saying: “Until, when fear has been dispelled from their hearts...”<sup>101</sup> On the authority of Abū Sa‘īd (al-Khudrī): Allah’s Messenger ﷺ said: “Allah will say on the Day of Resurrection, ‘O Adam!’ He will respond, ‘At your beck and call!’ He will then call out with a voice, ‘Allah commands you to take out the Fire’s share (*ba‘th*) from among your progeny.’ He will ask, ‘What is the Fire’s share?’ He replied, ‘From every thousand, take—[The narrator says:] I believe him to have said—nine-hundred and ninety-nine.’ It is then that every pregnant woman miscarries, and you will see mankind drunken when they are not in truth, but the torment of Allah is severe.

Bukhārī also mentions the narration of Ibn Mas‘ūd which Aḥmad cited. He mentions the narration which he reports in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* on the authority of ‘Ikrimah, who says: I heard Abū Hurayrah saying: Allah’s Prophet ﷺ said: “When Allah ordains a matter in heaven, the angels beat their wings in abject obedience to His statement, which sounds like a chain dragged on a smooth stone. ‘Until, when fear has been dispelled from their hearts, they say, “What did your Lord say?” They say, “The truth; and He is the High, the Supreme.”’<sup>102</sup>”

Bukhārī also quotes the well-known narration of Ibn ‘Abbās by way of al-Zuhrī, from ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn, from Ibn ‘Abbās, from a group among the Supporters (*Anṣār*). Aḥmad reports it as well as Muslim in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*. Bukhārī reports it from the route of Ibn Ishāq, that Allah’s Messenger ﷺ asked them (some persons from the Supporters): “What do you say of these

100 *al-Baqarah*, 22.

101 *Saba’*, 23.

102 *Saba’*, 23.



comets that shoot by?” They replied: “When we used to see them, we would say a king had died or a new-born had arrived.” Allah’s Messenger ﷺ said: “This is not the case. Rather, when Allah ordains a matter for His creation, the carriers of the Throne hear it, and so sanctify [Allah], so those below them sanctify due to their sanctification, and those below them likewise, and so on until the lowest heaven. Until some of them ask each other, ‘Why did you sanctify [Allah]?’ They will reply, ‘Those above us sanctified, so we sanctified due to their sanctification.’ They will say, ‘Why don’t you ask those above you why they sanctified?’ They ask them. They reply, ‘Allah ordained among His creation such-and-such matter.’ The news falls from one heaven to another until it reaches the lowest heaven. They (the angels in the lowest heaven) speak about it, so the devils steal an earshot, with various differences and assumptions among them. They then give its news to the soothsayers on earth, some making further mistakes, some getting it right. The soothsayers then disclose it.”

Bukhārī said: “Nu‘aym ibn Ḥammād explained how the Lord’s speech is not created, and the Arabs do not recognise the living from the dead but for action (*fi‘l*)—whoever is characterised by action is alive, and whoever is not is dead—and that the actions of the slaves are created. His affairs were consequently constricted for him until he passed away. The people of knowledge were deeply saddened at what befell him.”

Bukhārī said: “The agreement of the Muslims is evidence that Nu‘aym was not a renegade (*māriq*) or innovator (*mubtadi‘*), nor were those who were upon what he followed.”

Abū ‘Abdillāh ibn Ḥāmid says in his book authored in the founding principles of the religion: “Among those matters where belief and acceptance are obligatory is that Allah speaks, and that His speech is pre-eternal, and that He remains characterised by speech at all times related to Him. His speech is pre-eternal, not a novelty, just like knowledge and ability.” He says: “The accepted doctrine is as follows: Speech is a divine attribute, He speaks it (speech), and He remains characterised by speech—speaking whatever He wills whenever He wills. We do not say He is silent (*sākit*) on occasion and speaking on another insofar as speech being a novelty.” He says: “There is no variant reports received from Abū ‘Abdillāh—i.e., Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal—regarding the following: Allah is characterised by speech before creating the creation and before all [other] beings [existed], and that Allah is pre-eternally so, speaking however He wills, as He wills. If He wills, He sends down His speech, and if He wills, He does not.” After asserting there being no difference over this, Ibn Ḥāmid then cites two positions: Is He always speaking by His will, or is He characterised by speech,



speaking when He wills and silent when He wills?<sup>103</sup> This is not to say that He speaks after having been pre-eternally silent, such that His speech is an originated novelty, as is the view of the Karrāmīs. The latter’s position was not held by anyone among the companions of Aḥmad.

Abū Bakr ‘Abd al-‘Azīz also mentions the two positions in the beginning of his grand work titled *al-Muqni‘*. In *Īdāḥ al-Bayān fī Mas’alat al-Qur’ān*, al-Qāḍī Abū Ya‘lā mentions this in his (Abū Bakr’s) regard. When questioned about divine speech—if you say, ‘He is pre-eternally speaking’ then it is nonsensical—Abū Bakr replied: “There are two positions among our companions. One is that he remains speaking in the same way as knowledge [is understood], since the antonym of speech is muteness (*kharas*), just as the antonym of knowledge is ignorance. Among our companions are also those who say: He affirmed to Himself that He is creating (*khāliq*), but it is not the case that He is creating on all occasions. Rather, we say He is creating at the moment He wishes to create, even if He is not creating on all occasions. This does not nullify His being a creator, just as His not speaking on all occasions does not nullify His being characterised by speech. He is speaking and creating, even if not creating on all occasions nor speaking on all occasions.”

Qāḍī Abū Ya‘lā says in this book: “We say: He remains pre-eternally characterised by speech (*mutakallim*); He is not [pre-eternally] a speaker [to someone] (*mukallim*<sup>104</sup>), addresser (*mukhātib*), commander (*āmīr*), or prohibitor (*nāhī*).<sup>105</sup> This is explicitly mentioned by Aḥmad via Ḥanbal’s

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103 Translator’s note: It should be highlighted that *mutakallim*—translated as ‘speaking’ or ‘characterised by speech’ depending on context—bears both possibilities from a linguistic perspective. If one is *mutakallim*, one may be exercising one’s ability to speak and is therefore speaking, or may simply have the ability to speak but is not currently doing so.

104 Translator’s note: The Arabic text states *mutakallim*, though this is an error. Ibn Taymiyyah quotes this from Abū Ya‘lā in other works as *mukallim*. If not, the statement is self-contradictory. Not to mention that *mukallim* works seamlessly with *mukhātib*, etc; all of which require an addressee. See following note for further clarification.

105 Translator’s note: Meaning, God is pre-eternally characterised by speech, but there is no pre-eternal object to His speech such that He may be characterised as pre-eternally addressing, etc. Note the difference between *mutakallim* and *mukallim*. The verb entailed from the former—*takallam*—does not by itself require an addressee, though may bear it via a preposition, e.g., *Takallama ma‘a fulān* - ‘He spoke with So-and-so.’ However, the verb entailed from the latter—*kallam*—necessarily requires an addressee, e.g., *Kallama Zaydun ‘Amran*—‘Zayd spoke to ‘Amr.’ Abū Ya‘lā is saying that Allah is pre-eternally *mutakallim*, but not pre-eternally *mukallim*.

narration, where he says, ‘Allah remains speaking, knowing, forgiving.’ He says via ‘Abdullah’s narration, ‘Allah remains speaking when He wills.’ Ḥanbal says on another occasion, ‘I heard Abū ‘Abdillāh saying, “Allah remains speaking, and the Qur’an is Allah’s speech, uncreated.”’”

**My commentary:** Aḥmad reported the eternity of His speaking (*dawām kalāmih*), but did not say that He is eternally speaking the Qur’an. Rather, he said: “The Qur’an is Allah’s speech, uncreated.”

Qāḍī (Abū Ya‘lā) says: Aḥmad said in responding to the Jahmīs and heretics (*zanādiqah*): “As such, Allah speaks as He wills, without saying [that He does so] from a chest, mouth, or lips.” He says thereafter: “We say that Allah is pre-eternally speaking as He wills. We do not say He pre-eternally was, and did not speak until He [did when He] created.” Abū Ismā‘īl al-Anṣārī—given the title of Shaykh al-Islām—in *Manāqib al-Imām Aḥmad*, discusses the doctrinal matter the Qur’an. In giving a historical chronology of aberrant innovations, he says: “A sect then came and said, ‘He (Allah) cannot speak having already spoken, such that His speech becomes an originated novelty.’ This is another mistake in religion, [yielding] many others. Abū Bakr ibn Khuzaymah was awake to it. Nisāpūr (Nishapur) was the abode of tradition at the time; caravans would be readied to journey to it, and sacred knowledge procured from it. Ibn Khuzaymah, Muhammad ibn Ishāq (i.e., al-Sarrāj), and Abū Ḥāmid al-Sharqī were all settled there. Imam Abū Bakr rose to this tribulation. He valiantly proclaimed its corrupt nature and persistently authored works to confute it as if he was a messenger with news of a hostile army. All until it had settled in academic texts and hearts all the same, as well as taught in schools and engraved over mihrabs, that: ‘Allah is characterised with speech; He speaks if He wills and does not speak if He wills.’ May Allah reward that imam and those scholars for giving victory to His religion and due reverence to His Prophet.”

**My commentary:** The word ‘silence’ (*sukūt*) here refers to being silent about something specific. There are traditions implying this meaning, as per the statement of the Prophet ﷺ: “Allah has ordained obligations, so do not neglect them. He set down limits, so do not surpass them. He remained silent (*sakat*) about some matters without forgetting about them, so do not ask about them...” Likewise the well-known narration from Salmān, reported as *marfū*<sup>106</sup> and *mawqūf*<sup>107</sup>: “The lawful is that which Allah made lawful in His Book, and the unlawful is what Allah made unlawful in His Book. What He did not speak about is what He has pardoned.”

106 Translator’s note: As mentioned before, this is a Hadith science term, referring to a narration reported as a statement of the Prophet ﷺ.

107 Translator’s note: A Hadith science term, referring to a narration reported as a statement of a Companion.

Furthermore, the scholars say: *Maḥḥūm al-muwāfaqaḥ*<sup>108</sup> (conceptualised congruence) is where the ruling of what has not been spoken about (*maskūt* <sup>‘anh</sup>) has a stronger claim than what has been explicitly mentioned (*maṭṭūq biḥ*). *Maḥḥūm al-mukḥālafah*<sup>109</sup> (conceptualised incongruence) is where the ruling of what has not been spoken about is contrary to what has been explicitly mentioned.

As for unqualified ‘silence’, then this is where the two positions are cited. Qāḍī Abū Ya‘lā and those who agreed with him are upon the principle founded by Ibn Kullāb. They interpret the statements of Aḥmad and traditions as referring to a ‘silence’ borne of a disallowance of hearing, not one borne of a lack of speech. Likewise, Ibn ‘Aqīl interpreted the words of Abū Ismā‘īl al-Anṣārī in the same way. This is not what they (the authors of the interpreted statements) intended, as is clear for anyone who deliberates over their words. Not to mention that the allowance of hearing (*ismā‘*) according to the principle founded by the Negators is but the creation of perception within the hearing, and not something which subsists in the speaker. How then can He be characterised by silence for not creating perception in another?

The principle which Ibn Kullāb founded and which al-Qāḍī, Ibn ‘Aqīl, and Ibn al-Zāghūnī agreed with him on is that He transcends silence unconditionally. It is impossible in their estimation that He remains silent about any matter, since, like life, His speech is a pre-eternal attribute of His essence that is not related to His will such that it may be said, ‘If He wishes, He speaks such-and-such thing, and if He wishes, He does not speak about it.’

According to them, it is impermissible that it be said, ‘Allah was silent about a matter’, as is found in traditions. They interpret this statement as His not creating a perception of hearing. Allah transcends muteness by agreement of the ummah. This is part of their argument in positing the pre-eternality of speech. They also say: ‘Had He not been speaking, He would be necessarily characterised with its opposite, namely being speech-

108 Translators note: A term used in Islamic legal theory (*uṣūl al-fiqḥ*). An example of its application is if a master were to say to his servant, ‘Do not give this man a penny.’ It would be understood that the ruling of not giving applies even more strongly for anything beyond a penny. Regardless, the point Ibn Taymiyyah wishes to make here is the scholars’ usage of *maskūt* <sup>‘anh</sup>—that God did not speak about certain matters, and scholars who write in principles of jurisprudence understood this.

109 Translator’s note: Another technical term in Islamic legal theory. An example of its application is if a master were to say to his servant as he sends him to the market, ‘Do not purchase small oranges.’ It would be understood that he wishes him to buy sizeable oranges. Once again, this is secondary to the main motif of *sukūt*.

less or mute.’ This is impossible in their estimation, regardless of whether it is unconditional silence or silence over a specific thing.

Abū al-Ḥasan Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Malik al-Karjī al-Shāfi‘ī says the following in his book which he called *al-Fuṣūl fī al-Uṣūl ‘an al-‘Immah al-Fuḥūl*. He mentions twelve imams: Shafi‘ī, Mālik, Sufyān al-Thawrī, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, Sufyān ibn ‘Uyaynah, Ibn al-Mubārak, Awzā‘ī, Layth ibn Sa‘d,<sup>110</sup> Ishāq ibn Rāhawayh, Bukhārī, Abū Zur‘ah, and Abū Ḥātim. He says in the forementioned book: I heard Imam Abū Maṣṣūr say: I heard Imam Abū Bakr ‘Ubaydullāh ibn Aḥmad say: I heard Shaykh Abū Ḥāmid al-Isfarā‘īnī say: “My position, as well as that of Shāfi‘ī and the jurists across the lands (*fuqahā’ al-amṣār*), is that the Qur’an is the speech of Allah, uncreated. Whoever says it is created has disbelieved. The Qur’an was heard and carried by Jibrīl from Allah ﷻ. The Prophet ﷺ heard it from Jibrīl. The Companions heard it from the Prophet ﷺ. It (the Qur’an) is that which we recite with our tongues. What is between the two covers (i.e., of the *muṣḥaf*) and in our chests; what is heard, written, memorised, and engraved—every letter of it, like the *bā* and the *tā*—all of it is the speech of Allah, uncreated. Whoever said it is created, then he is a disbeliever upon whom is the curse of Allah, the angels, and the people altogether.”

Abū al-Ḥasan says: “Shaykh Abū Ḥāmid was severe in his rebuke of al-Bāqillānī and those of kalam.” He says: “The imams of the Shāfi‘īs still find disdain in and take issue with being ascribed to al-Ash‘arī, disavowing themselves from what he founded his school upon. They forbid their companions and loved ones from loitering around it, as per what I heard from many shaykhs and imams, among whom was al-Ḥāfiẓ al-Mu’taman Ibn Aḥmad al-Sājī. They say, ‘We heard a group of trustworthy shaykhs who said the following about Shaykh Abū Ḥāmid ibn Ṭāhir al-Isfarā‘īnī, the Imam of Imams, whose students and knowledge filled the earth. When he would go for Friday prayers from the rural areas of Karkh to the grand mosque of al-Manṣūr, he would go to the courtyard next to the mosque known as al-Rawzī, and address the attendees, saying: “Bear witness over me that the Qur’an is the speech of Allah, uncreated, as Aḥmad ibn Hanbal says, not as Bāqillānī says.” He would do this repeatedly. When questioned about it, he said: “It is so that the news spreads far and wide among the people and across the lands that I am innocent from what they are upon—meaning the Asharites—and innocent from the school of Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī. A group of foreign jurists enter upon him in secret and study with him, thus adopting his school. When they go back to their lands, they would inevitably make their innovation known. The unaware may think they

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110 Translator’s note: Awzā‘ī and Layth are not explicitly mentioned here, but are mentioned by Ibn Taymiyyah in other texts, so added here.

learnt this from me and that I hold these views, while I am innocent from Bāqillānī's school and his beliefs.”<sup>111</sup>

He (Abū al-Ḥasan) also says: I heard the jurist and imam Abū Maṣṣūr Saʿd ibn al-ʿIjlī [say]: I heard a number of shaykhs and imams in Baghdad—I think Abū Ishāq al-Shīrāzī was one of them—saying: “Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī goes out to the hammam in a burka out of fear of Shaykh Abū Ḥāmid al-Isfarāʿīnī.” Discussing what Abū al-Ḥasan and other imams have said in rebuke of Bāqillānī—despite his honourable standing and the plenty of retorts he gave against blasphemers and innovators—due to this principle upon which he founded his school is lengthy. It shall be thoroughly discussed on another occasion. The point here is to bring to notice some of those who affirmed this principle (divine speech) and disagreed with the Negators.

In his *Fahm al-Qurʾān*, al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī quoted both positions as being of the Sunnah Folk, those who affirm attributes and predestination. He speaks in it about what may be abrogated and what may not be in light of some apparently contradicting verses. He cites two positions from the Sunnah Folk with regards to volition, hearing, and sight, vis-à-vis verses like: “You shall surely enter the Sacred Mosque if Allah wills”<sup>111</sup>, “When We wish to destroy a city, We command its affluent”<sup>112</sup>, “His command once He has desired anything is to say to it, ‘Be,’ and so it is”<sup>113</sup>, “We are with you, hearing”<sup>114</sup>, “Say, ‘Work, for Allah will see your work, as will His Messenger and the believers”<sup>115</sup>, and others of a similar vein. He says: “A group from the Sunnah Folk opined that Allah has a hearing which originates in His essence (*ḥādīth fi dhātih*).” He further mentions that this group, along with some innovating factions, exercised the same speculative interpretation with regards to volition in originated things. He says: “He who laid claim to the Sunnah among them and wished to affirm predestination (*qadr*) says: Allah’s volition originates<sup>116</sup> (*taḥduth*) from a pre-volition ordainment (*taqdīr sābiq lil-irādah*). As for the innovating factions, they claimed that volition is an originated creation (*khalq ḥādīth*), but not a created entity (*makhlūq*);<sup>117</sup> and that through it, Allah engendered created beings (*kawwan*

111 *al-Fath*, 27.

112 *al-Isrāʾ*, 16.

113 *Yā-Sīn*, 82.

114 *al-Shuʿarāʾ*, 15.

115 *al-Tawbah*, 105.

116 Translator’s note: In the intransitive sense; i.e., comes into existence, is originated.

117 Translator’s note: *Khalq* is the verbal noun of the morphological root *kh-l-q* (*khalāqa*). Thus, it is ‘creating’ and ‘creation’. A *makhlūq* is the *mafʿūl* form of the root, i.e., ‘a created being’, ‘object of creation’. Solely from a linguistic perspective,

*al-makhlūqīn*). They claim that creation (*khalq*) is different from the created (*makhlūq*), and that creation is volition, and that it is not an inherent attribute of Allah. Likewise, some of them said that His sight originates.”

Muhammad ibn al-Hayṣam says in *Jumal al-Kalām* that the doctrine of divine speech is of five<sup>118</sup> branches:

1. The Qur’an is the speech of Allah. It is relayed from Jahm ibn Ṣafwān that the Qur’an is not literally Allah’s speech. Rather, it is speech which He created and is thus ascribed to Himself, the same way one says, ‘Allah’s heaven’ (*samā’ Allāh*), ‘Allah’s earth’ (*arḍ Allāh*), ‘Allah’s House’ (*bayt Allāh*), and ‘Allah’s month’ (*shahr Allāh*). The Mutazilites unconditionally say the Qur’an is literally Allah’s speech, but then agree with Jahm in the sense that it is speech which He created as separate from Him. The Muslims in general say: The Qur’an is literally Allah’s speech, and He spoke it.
2. The Qur’an is not pre-eternal. The Kullābīs and the companions of al-Ash‘arī claimed that Allah remains speaking the Qur’an. The Community Folk (*Ahl al-Jamā‘ah*; i.e., *Ahl al-Sunnah*) say that He spoke the Qur’an in that He addressed Jibrīl with it, and the same with the other Books respectively.
3. The Qur’an is uncreated. The Jahmīs, Najjārīs, and Mutazilites claimed that it is created. The Community Folk say it is uncreated.
4. The Qur’an is not separate from Him. The Jahmīs and those who followed them from the Mutazilites say that the Qur’an is separate from Allah, just as the rest of His speech is. They claim that Allah created speech in the tree which Mūsā heard, and created speech in the air so Jibrīl heard it. It is incorrect in their view that there was speech from Allah which literally subsisted in Him. The Community Folk said: The Qur’an is not distinct from Allah, rather it exists and subsists from Him.

With regards to volition, creation, and the created, Ibn al-Hayṣam mentioned which implies their individuations not being pre-eternal or created. He relays this as being the position of the Community Folk.

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*khalq* literally refers to ‘creation’ that is the process of creating. However, it may also effectively extend to ‘creation’ that is the created realm and creatures in it. Here, the English ‘creation’ seems to felicitously match the Arabic *khalq* in its connotation.

118 Translator’s note: Ibn Taymiyyah quotes only four.

Imam ʿUthmān ibn Saʿīd al-Dāramī says in his book known as *Naqḍ ʿUthmān ibn Saʿīd ʿalā al-Marīsī al-Jahmī al-ʿAnīd fīmā Iftarā ʿalā Allāh fī al-Tawḥīd*:

“The opponent (*al-muʿāriḍ*) claims the following about the statement of the Prophet ﷺ: “Allah descends to the lowest heaven when a third of the night has passed and says, ‘Is there one seeking forgiveness? Is there one repenting? Is there one supplicating?’” [...]”<sup>119</sup> He claims that Allah does not Himself descend, and that rather His command and mercy descend while He is on the Throne and everywhere without absence, for He is the Living (*al-Ḥayy*), the Sustaining (*al-Qayyūm*)—*al-Qayyūm* in his estimation is the one who never leaves (*lā yazūl*). [...] It is said to him in response: This is the argumentation of women and children—those who lack rhetorical expression and have no proper proof to support their position. The command of Allah and His mercy are always descending, at every moment and on every occasion. The Prophet ﷺ specified night as opposed to day, and specified within the night its latter part. Can Allah’s command and mercy call the slaves to forgiveness? Do they speak in His stead? Such that they say, ‘Is there one supplicating so that I may answer him? Is there one seeking forgiveness so that I may forgive him? Is there one asking so that I may give him?’ If you adopt your position, you necessarily have to say that it is the mercy and the command [of Allah] that are calling out with their speech so that they may answer and forgive, not Allah. This is inconceivable according to the foolish, let alone the prudent.

You know this, though you still stubbornly and arrogantly contend it. In what sense can His command and mercy descend from where He is (*min ʿindih*) in the second half of the night, then only stay till the onset of twilight (*tulūʿ al-fajr*) when they are raised? Rifāʿah narrates this report and says in his narration, ‘...until twilight erupts (*yanfajir*).’ Allah willing, you appreciate that this interpretation is the falsest of falsities, accepted only by the ignoramus.

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119 Translator’s note: This is where Ibn Taymiyyah omits some text from the original work to focus on his main intention. He highlights this by repeating: *qāl* or *wa qāl*—‘He (the person quoted) says...’ That is, after he says other things Ibn Taymiyyah thought were not relevant to the point. It can also be used as reminder that a quotation is still taking place, until finally concluding with: *qult*—‘I say [commenting on this]...’



As for your claim that the interpretation of *al-Qayyūm* is the one who never leaves His place nor moves, then it cannot be accepted from you without an authentic tradition from the Prophet ﷺ or some of the Companions or the Successors. The Living (*al-Ḥayy*), the Sustaining (*al-Qayyūm*) does as He wills, and moves if He wills. He comes down (*yahbiṭ*) and goes up (*yartaḥḥ*<sup>c</sup>) if He wills. He grasps and spreads, and stands (*yaqūm*) and sits (*yajlis*) if He wills. Movement is the differentiator between the living and the dead: everything that moves is necessarily living, and every dead thing is necessarily unmoving.

Who would care for your and your companion's understanding next to that of the Prophet of Mercy, the Messenger of the Almighty? He explained His descension as explicitly qualified in the text, clearly giving a specific time, leaving no room for you and your companions' obfuscation and obscurity. [...]

The opponent summarises what the Jahmīs deny of Allah's attributes and essences, as per their mention in His Book and the traditions of His Messenger ﷺ. He numbered them as twenty-something attributes, discussing each one and explaining it according to Marīsī's interpretation, letter for letter, contrary to how Allah and His Messenger intended them to be understood, and contrary to how the righteous and the jurists interpreted them. For the most part, he only relies on Marīsī in his discussion. He begins with the face (*wajh*), then hearing (*sam*<sup>c</sup>), sight (*baṣar*), anger (*ghaḍab*), pleasure (*riḍā*), love (*ḥubb*), hatred (*bughḍ*), joy (*farāḥ*), dislike (*kurh*), laughter (*ḍaḥik*), amazement (<sup>c</sup>ajab), wrath (*sakhat*), volition (*irādah*), will (*mashī'ah*), fingers (*aṣābi*<sup>c</sup>), palm (*kaff*), and two feet (*qadamayn*). This is vis-à-vis the Qur'anic passages: "Everything shall perish but His face"<sup>120</sup>, "Wherever you turn, there is the face of Allah"<sup>121</sup>, "He is the Hearing, the Seeing"<sup>122</sup>, "...to what I have created with my two hands"<sup>123</sup>, "The Jews said, 'Allah's hand is fettered'"<sup>124</sup>, "Allah's hand is above their hands"<sup>125</sup>, "The heavens are folded in His right"<sup>126</sup>, "You are before Our

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120 *al-Qaṣaṣ*, 88.

121 *al-Baqarah*, 115.

122 *al-Shūrā*, 11.

123 *Ṣād*, 75.

124 *al-Mā'idah*, 64.

125 *al-Fath*, 10.

126 *al-Zumar*, 67.



eyes”<sup>127</sup>, “Are they waiting for anything except that Allah comes to them in shadows of clouds with the angels?”<sup>128</sup>, “Your Lord comes with the angels, rank upon rank”<sup>129</sup>, “Eight [angels] carry the Throne of your Lord above them on that day”<sup>130</sup>, “The Merciful settled on the Throne”<sup>131</sup> “The carriers of the Throne and those around it”<sup>132</sup>, “Allah warns you of Himself”<sup>133</sup>, “Allah will not speak to them, nor will He look at them on the Day of Resurrection”<sup>134</sup>, “Your Lord has prescribed mercy upon Himself”<sup>135</sup>, “You know what is within my self, and I do not know what is within Your self”<sup>136</sup>, and “Allah loves those who frequently repent, and He loves those who cleanse themselves.”<sup>137</sup>

The opponent organised these attributes and textually formalised them in various chapters, interpreting them in accordance with Jahmī creed, relying upon the Jahmī Bishr ibn Ghiyāth al-Marīsī. They vilify the believing people—those who believe Allah and His Messenger with regards to the attributes, without modality or likeness. He (the opponent) claims that those who believe in them (the attributes) are interpreting their modality in how they manifest in their own selves. The scholars—in his estimation—said that there can be no exercise of intellectual discretion (*ijtihad ra’y*) to perceive their modality, nor are any of them similar to anything that exists in the creation. He proclaims this a mistake, saying that naught is as Allah’s likeness, and naught is as His modality.

We say in response to this vilifying, obfuscating opponent: You say that assimilating the attributes and their modality is a mistake. We do not say it is a mistake as you do, rather it is disbelief (*kufur*) according to us. We are more appalled at the assimilation of the attributes and their modality to what exists in creation than you are. Except that, just as we do not assimilate them [to the creation]

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127 *al-Ṭūr*, 48.

128 *al-Baqarah*, 210.

129 *al-Fajr*, 22.

130 *al-Hāqqah*, 17.

131 *Ṭā-Hā*, 5. This and the verse before it from *al-Hāqqah* are not quoted by Ibn Taymiyyah though are in Dāramī’s text. The former quotes them when citing the same passage in his *Dar’ Ta’arud al-‘Aql wa al-Naql*, so they were mentioned here.

132 *Ghāfir*, 7.

133 *Āl ‘Imrān*, 28.

134 *Āl ‘Imrān*, 77.

135 *al-An‘ām*, 54.

136 *al-Mā‘idah*, 116.

137 *al-Baqarah*, 222.

nor consider their modality, we do not disbelieve in them, deny them, and nullify them by way of a misguided and speculative interpretation, as adopted by Marīsī, your imam. [...]

As for you mentioning the exercise of intellectual discretion with regards to the attributes' modality, then we do not permit its employment in many of the legal obligations and rulings we see with our eyes and hear with our ears, so what of the attributes of Allah which eyes never saw and minds cannot comprehend? However, we do not say as Marīsī says: All the attributes are but one thing. For Him—Marīsī claims—hearing is not unlike seeing, the face is not unlike the hand, and the essence is not unlike the self. The Merciful—according to Marīsī—does not know for Himself a distinction between hearing and sight, and face and hands. He is all—in their estimation—hearing, sight, and face; top (*a<sup>c</sup>lā*) and bottom (*asfal*); hand and self; and knowledge, will, and volition. Like the creation of the heavens, earth, mountains, hills, and air—it is self-referentially non-distinguishable in attributes and essences.

Allah ﷻ is exalted from being like this, for He has distinguished in His book between hearing and seeing. He ﷻ says: “I am indeed with you—I hear and I see [your affairs]”<sup>138</sup>, “We are with you, listening”<sup>139</sup>, “Allah will not speak to them, nor will He look at them.”<sup>140</sup> He made a distinction between speaking to them and looking at them. He ﷻ says with regards to hearing in the context of sound: “Allah has surely heard the statement of she who argues with you concerning her spouse and complains to Allah. Allah hears your conversation; indeed, Allah is Hearing, Seeing”<sup>141</sup>, “Allah has most surely heard the statement of those who said, ‘Indeed, Allah is poor while we are rich.’”<sup>142</sup> He did not say, “Allah has surely seen the statement of she who argues with you concerning her spouse...’ In the context of sight, Allah ﷻ says: “He who sees you when you rise, and your movement among the prostrating”<sup>143</sup>, “Say, ‘Work, for Allah will see your work, as will His Messenger and the believers.’”<sup>144</sup> He did not say, ‘Allah hears your

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138 *Ṭā-Hā*, 46.

139 *al-Shu<sup>c</sup>arā*, 15.

140 *Āl ‘Imrān*, 77.

141 *al-Mujādilah*, 1.

142 *Āl ‘Imrān*, 181.

143 *al-Shu<sup>c</sup>arā*, 218-219.

144 *al-Tawbah*, 105.

movement,’ nor did He say, ‘Allah hears your work.’ He did not use sight in the context of hearing, nor hearing in the context of sight; for they are distinct for Him, contrary to what you claim...”

He spoke extensively in this regard, refuting the Negators.

**My commentary:** The statements of the Hadith and Sunnah Folk in this principle is plentiful.

### Qur’anic passages pertaining to divine attributes

There is a plethora of Qur’anic verses and Prophetic narrations that imply this principle, almost innumerable. We shall make mention of some of them here. Imam Aḥmad collated many of them, and Khallāl mentioned them from him in his *al-Sunnah*. These include:

- “So when (*fa-lammā*) he reached it (the fire in the tree), he was called, ‘O Mūsā! Indeed, I—I am your Lord. So take off your sandals; you are indeed in the sacred valley of Ṭuwā.’”<sup>145</sup>
- “When (*idh*) your Lord called out to Mūsā, ‘Go to the unjust people.’”<sup>146</sup>
- “So when (*fa-lammā*) he reached it, he was called from the right side of the valley at the blessed spot, from the tree, ‘O Mūsā! Indeed I—I alone—am Allah, Lord of the Worlds.’”<sup>147</sup>

“Has the story of Mūsā reached you? When (*idh*) his Lord called to him in the sacred valley of Ṭuwā.”<sup>148</sup>

Allah temporally qualified the calling out by His saying *fa-lammā* and *idh*. Thus, it is understood that it took place at a specific time before which He had not called out to him. Allah ﷻ says:

- “On the day when He calls to them and says, ‘What response did you give the Messengers?’ All tidings will be obscured for them on that day so they are unable to ask one another.”<sup>149</sup>
- “Truly We created you, then We fashioned you, then We said to the angels, ‘Prostrate to Adam.’”<sup>150</sup>

145 *Ṭā-Hā*, 11-13.

146 *al-Shu‘arā’*, 10.

147 *al-Qaṣaṣ*, 30.

148 *al-Nāzi‘āt*, 15-16.

149 *al-Qaṣaṣ*, 65-66.

150 *Al-A‘rāf*, 11.

Allah ﷻ says that He commanded the angels after having created and fashioned Adam, not before then. He ﷻ says:

- “Indeed, the likeness of ‘Īsā with Allah is as the likeness of Adam: He created him from dust, then said to him, ‘Be,’ and so he is.”<sup>151</sup>
- “It is He who created the heavens and the earth in truth. On the day when He says, ‘Be,’ and so it is: His saying is the truth.”<sup>152</sup>
- “The Innovator of the heavens and the earth, and whenever He decrees a matter, He only says to it, ‘Be,’ and so it is.”<sup>153</sup>
- “His command once (*idhā*) He has desired anything is that (*an*) He says to it, ‘Be,’ and so it is.”<sup>154</sup>

The particle *idhā* is conditional to what is anticipated in time, and the particle *an* transposes the present tense into what implies futurity (*istiqbāl*). Allah ﷻ says:

- “When (*idh*) your Lord said to the angels...”<sup>155</sup>
- “When (*idhā*) My slaves ask you about Me—indeed, I am near; I respond to the call of the caller when he calls upon Me.”<sup>156</sup>
- “Say, ‘Work, for Allah will see your work, as will His Messenger and the believers’”<sup>157</sup>
- “Then He settled to the heaven while it was smoke.”<sup>158</sup>
- “The one who created the heavens and the earth in six days.”<sup>159</sup>
- “Are they waiting for anything except that Allah comes to them in shadows of clouds with the angels?”<sup>160</sup>
- “Are they waiting for anything but for the angels to come to them or for your Lord to come or for some of your Lord’s signs to come?”<sup>161</sup>

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151 *Āl ‘Imrān*, 59.

152 *al-An‘ām*, 73.

153 *al-Baqarah*, 117.

154 *Yā-Sīn*, 82.

155 *al-Baqarah*, 30.

156 *al-Baqarah*, 186.

157 *al-Tawbah*, 105.

158 *Fuṣṣilat*, 11.

159 *al-A‘rāf*, 54.

160 *al-Baqarah*, 210.

161 *al-An‘ām*, 158.

- “Your Lord comes with the angels, rank upon rank.”<sup>162</sup>
- “Then We made you successors on earth after them to look how you would act.”<sup>163</sup>
- “When We wish to destroy a city, We command its affluent yet they defiantly disobey in it, so it deserves the decree and We annihilate it completely.”<sup>164</sup>
- “If Allah wishes an evil for a people, there is no turning it back, and apart from Him they have no guardian.”<sup>165</sup>
- “You shall surely enter the Sacred Mosque Allah willing (*in shā’ Allāh*, literally: If Allah wills).”<sup>166</sup>
- Quoting Mūsā: “You will find me patient, Allah willing.”<sup>167</sup>
- Quoting Ismā‘īl: “You will find me from those who are patient, Allah willing.”<sup>168</sup>
- Quoting the resident of Midian: “You will find me from those who are righteous, Allah willing.”

The conditional form makes the verb imply futurity.<sup>169</sup> In this same vein is the Prophetic statement: “Whoever takes an oath then says, ‘If Allah wills’ (*in shā’ Allāh*), then he may see it through if he wishes, or leave it off if he wishes.” This is narrated by the collators of the Sunnah (*ahl al-sunan*<sup>170</sup>), and the jurists agree in this regard. Also, found in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* (*Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī* and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*) is the Prophetic statement regarding Prophet Sulaymān ﷺ, where he says: “I shall visit ninety women tonight, and each

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162 *al-Fajr*, 22.

163 *Yūnus*, 14.

164 *al-Isrā’*, 16.

165 *al-Ra‘d*, 11.

166 *al-Faṭḥ*, 27.

167 *al-Kahf*, 69.

168 *al-Ṣāffāt*, 102.

169 Translator’s note: The clarification is borne of the fact that, in Arabic, the conditional form employs the past tense though implies futurity. E.g., “If Zayd studies, he will succeed” would be: *In darasa Zaydun najahā*. Literally, this is: “If Zayd has studied, he has succeeded.” Yet, the effective meaning is: “If, moving forward (i.e., in the future), Zayd chooses to study, then he will succeed.” Naturally, context is also key in inferring usage.

170 Translator’s note: There are various Hadith collations titled *Sunan* in Islamic intellectual heritage. For example, *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, *Sunan al-Nasā’ī*, *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, and so on. Here, *ahl al-sunan* are effectively the Hadith Folk.

shall bear a knight who will fight in the path of Allah.” His companion said to him: “Say, ‘Allah willing’ (*in shā’ Allāh*).” He did not say it. None of the women bore children, but for one who gave birth to half a boy. The Prophet ﷺ said: “Had he said, ‘Allah willing’, they would have [been conceived and] fought in the path of Allah, one and all.” Allah ﷻ says:

- “Every day He is bringing about a matter.”<sup>171</sup>
- “Go forth with our signs; We are with you, listening.”<sup>172</sup>
- To Mūsā and Hārūn: “I am indeed with you—I hear and I see [your affairs]”<sup>173</sup>
- “Or do they think that We cannot hear their secret and their private conversations? Yes indeed, Our messengers are by them, writing down.”<sup>174</sup>
- “Allah has most surely heard the statement of those who said, ‘Indeed, Allah is poor while we are rich.’”<sup>175</sup>
- “Allah has surely heard the statement of she who argues with you concerning her spouse.”<sup>176</sup>
- “Allah sent down the best of statements.”<sup>177</sup>
- “In what statement beyond this will they believe?”<sup>178</sup>
- “Who is more truthful than Allah in statement?”<sup>179</sup>
- “So when they displeased Us, We took vengeance on them.”<sup>180</sup>
- “That is because they followed what incurred Allah’s wrath, and they disliked His good pleasure, so He nullified their deeds.”<sup>181</sup>
- “Say, ‘If you love Allah, then follow me—Allah will love you and forgive you your misdeeds, for Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.’”<sup>182</sup>

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171 *al-Rahmān*, 29.

172 *al-Shu‘arā’*, 15.

173 *Ṭā-Hā*, 46.

174 *al-Zukhruf*, 80.

175 *Āl ‘Imrān*, 181.

176 *al-Mujādilah*, 1.

177 *al-Zumar*, 23.

178 *al-A‘rāf*, 185.

179 *al-Nisā’*, 87.

180 *al-Zukhruf*, 55.

181 *Muḥammad*, 28.

182 *Āl ‘Imrān*, 31.

- “If you deny, then indeed Allah is needless of you, yet He does not approve denial on the part of His slaves, and if you are thankful He approves it for you.”<sup>183</sup>

Allah tells us that obeying Him is a reason for His love and pleasure, while disobeying Him is a reason for His wrath and displeasure. He ﷻ says:

- “So Remember Me, and I will remember you.”<sup>184</sup>

The outcome of a condition apropos the initial condition is equivalent to what is caused in light of the cause. An example of this is also found in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*. The Prophet ﷺ says: “Allah says,<sup>185</sup> ‘Whoever remembers Me in himself, I will remember him in Myself. Whoever remembers (also: mentions) Me in a congregation, I will remember (also: mention) him in one that is even better. Whoever draws near to Me a handspan, I draw near to him a cubit. Whoever draws near to Me a cubit, I draw near to him a wing-span. Whoever comes to Me walking, I go to him running.’” Allah ﷻ says:

- “Whoever kills a believer intentionally—then his repayment is Hell, abiding therein. Allah is angry with him and He has cursed him and has prepared for him a great punishment.”<sup>186</sup>

As for his originated (*ḥādīthah*), transitive (*muta<sup>c</sup>addiyah*) acts and their mention in the Noble Qur’an, then they are found aplenty. He ﷻ says:

- “Your Lord will certainly give you so that you will be well pleased.”<sup>187</sup>
- “We will ease his way towards ease.”<sup>188</sup>
- “We will ease his way towards difficulty.”<sup>189</sup>
- “He will have an easy reckoning.”<sup>190</sup>
- “From a sperm drop He created him and enabled him, then He eased the way for him, then He put him to death and buried him, then, when He wills, He will resurrect him. But no, he did not fulfil what

183 *al-Zumar*, 7.

184 *al-Baqarah*, 152.

185 Translator’s note: In a capacity outside the Qur’an. This type of Hadith is commonly referred to as *ḥādīth qudsī*; literally, ‘holy statements’—the Prophet ﷺ quotes Allah, but it is not Qur’an.

186 *al-Nisā’*, 93.

187 *al-Duḥā*, 5.

188 *al-Layl*, 7.

189 *al-Layl*, 10.

190 *al-Inshiqāq*, 8.

He commanded him. Let man look at his food: that We poured down water in abundance, then We made the land vigorously rupture.”<sup>191</sup>

- “It is He who originates creation and then restores it, and that is even easier for Him.”<sup>192</sup>
- “Did We not destroy the former folk, then follow them up with the latter ones?”<sup>193</sup>
- “Most surely, We created man from an extract of clay; then We made him a sperm-drop, lodged in a secure place; then We developed the sperm-drop into a clinging form, and We developed the clinging form into a morsel-like lump, and We developed the morsel-like lump into bones, and We clothed the bones with flesh, then We produced him into another creation. So supremely blessed be Allah, the best of creators.”<sup>194</sup>
- “He created you from a single self, then made from it its spouse, and sent down to you of livestock eight kinds in pairs. He creates you in your mothers’ bellies, one act of creation after another, in threefold darkness. That is Allah, your Lord; to Him belongs dominion; there is no god but Him, so how then are you turned away?”<sup>195</sup>
- “Are you more difficult to create or the heaven? He constructed it: He raised its height and proportioned it, and He dimmed its night and brought out its daylight. And the earth, after that—He spread it out; from it He brought out its water and its pasture.”<sup>196</sup>
- “Then We sent Our Messengers in succession; every time a Messenger came to his community, they disbelieved him.”<sup>197</sup>
- “You who believe, whoever of you turns back from his religion—then Allah will bring a people whom He loves and who love Him.”<sup>198</sup>
- “Then We set you upon a legislation of Our commandment, so follow it and do not follow the whims of those who do not know.”<sup>199</sup>

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191 <sup>c</sup>*Abas*, 19-26.

192 *al-Rūm*, 27.

193 *al-Mursalāt*, 16-17.

194 *al-Mu’minūn*, 12-14.

195 *al-Zumar*, 6.

196 *al-Nāzi’āt*, 27-31.

197 *al-Mu’minūn*, 44.

198 *al-Mā’idah*, 54.

199 *al-Jāthiyah*, 18.



- “Then We bequeathed the Book to those of Our slaves whom We selected.”<sup>200</sup>

The like of this is plentiful in the Qur’an, and it acting as proof for the position of the majority is evident—that creation is not the created. Those who claim that creation is the created are espousing a false view.

We clarified its falsity on other occasions. Their confusion lies in their thinking that, had they been different, then the created would be pre-eternal given the pre-eternality of creation. If one posits the latter’s novel origination in existence, then it would require a further creation for its existence, yielding an infinite regress (*tasalsul*). If instead it (*khalq*) subsists in Him, then He would be a locus for the origination of novelties.

Those who adopt this position have been thoroughly responded to from the various factions, each with their respective retort. A group deemed the pre-eternality of the created as impossible, for volition (*irādah*) is pre-eternal yet what is borne of an exercise of volition (*murād*) is originated.

Another group rejected the possibility of creation subsisting in Him such that He is where novelties originate. They further say: ‘If it is claimed that creation is the created and it does not subsist in Him, then it is a fortiori more plausible that creation is other than the created and it does not subsist in Him.’

A further group did not accept that if a separate created entity is needed for creation (i.e., requires creation to be created), then what subsists from Him of creation itself requires another creation (i.e., is created). Rather, ability (*qudrah*) and will (*mashī’ah*) are sufficient in this context. If you deem it plausible that an originated entity that is distinct from Him may exist purely as a product of ability and will, then what is not distinct a fortiori may plausibly exist as a product thereof. The contention here revolves around the subsistence of originated novelties in Him.

A group rejected that infinite regress be inconceivable in resultants (*āthār*) and actions (*af’āl*), and claimed it only impossible in actors (*fā’ilīn*). This is explicated in other works.

### Prophetic reports pertaining to divine attributes

As for the reports in the Hadith literature—*Ṣiḥāh*, *Sunan*, and *Musnad* works alike—that showcase this theological principle, then they are too many for a single person to enumerate. Examples of this include:

- Agreed upon its authenticity, on the authority of Zayd ibn Khālid, he says: The Prophet ﷺ led some prayer at Ḥudaybiyyah under a

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200 *Fāṭir*, 32.

dark, nightly sky, then said: “Do you know what your Lord said on this night? He said, ‘Among my slaves are those who, on this day, awakened as either believing or disbelieving in Me. Whosoever among them says, “We have been given rain by Allah’s grace and mercy”, then he has believed in Me and disbelieved in the shooting star (*kawkab*), and whosoever says, “We have been given rain by the falling of such-and-such [star]”, then he has disbelieved in Me and believed in the shooting star.”

- In the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, in the Narration of Intercession (*Ḥadīth al-Shafā‘ah*): “The Messengers of Great Resolve (*Ulū al-‘Azīm*) along with Adam all say, ‘My Lord is angry such intense anger, He has never been angry like it before, nor will He be angry like it again.’”
- In the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*: “When Allah speaks with revelation, those in heaven hear as if a chain is being dragged on smooth rock.”
- In the authentic narration: “Allah originates whatever matter He wills, and among that He originated is that you must not speak in prayer.”
- In the Narration of Manifestation (*Ḥadīth al-Tajallī*), the authenticity of which is agreed upon: “They will say, ‘We are staying in our place until our Lord comes to us, and when He does, we shall know Him.’ So He comes to them in the form (*ṣūrah*) they know Him by.”
- In the agreed upon report: “Surely, Allah is more joyful at the repentance of His slave than one who lost his ride in a barren, deserted land, upon which was all his food and drink—he slept under a tree, waiting for death, then awoke to find his animal with his food and drink—Allah is more joyful with His slave’s repentance than such a person’s joy at finding his riding animal.”
- In the authentic narration: “Allah laughs at two men—one of them kills the other, yet they are both in the Garden.”
- In the narration concerning the last man to be admitted into the Garden, reported by Abū Hurayrah, where Allah says: “Have I not given you that which you gave oaths and promises you wouldn’t ask for more after it?” The man replies: “My Lord, do not make me the most wretched of your creation.” Allah laughs at him and permits him into the Garden.
- In another report, on the authority of Ibn Mas‘ūd, The Prophet ﷺ says: “Allah says, ‘Son of Adam, would you be pleased if I gave you the worldly life (i.e., its pleasures), and its like moreover?’ He will reply, ‘My Lord, do You mock me when You are the Lord of the Worlds?’”

Allah’s Messenger ﷺ laughs at this point, and says: “Will you not ask me what made me laugh?” They ask him: “What made you laugh?” He says: “At the laughter of the Lord of the Worlds when the man said, ‘Do You mock me when You are the Lord of the Worlds?’ Allah says, ‘I am not mocking you, but I am able to realise what I will.’”

- On the authority of Abū Razīn, the Prophet ﷺ says: “He (Allah) looks upon you, disgraced and despairing, and He laughs, knowing that your joy is nigh.” Abū Razīn asks: “Does the Lord laugh?” He ﷺ replies: “Yes.” He says upon hearing this: “We shall never be depleted of goodness from a Lord who laughs.”
- In the authentic narration: “Allah ﷻ says, ‘I have shared the prayer between Me and My slave into two portions. Half of it is for Me, and the other is for My slave, and for My slave is what he asked for. When the slave says, ‘Praise is for Allah, Lord of the Worlds,’ Allah says, ‘My slave praised me.’ When he says, ‘The God of Mercy, the Giver of Mercy,’ Allah says, ‘My slave has extolled me.’ When he says, ‘Owner of the Day of Recompense,’ Allah says, ‘My slave has glorified me. When he says, ‘You alone we worship, and You alone we seek for help,’ Allah ﷻ says, ‘This verse is shared between me and my slave in two portions, and for my slave is what he asked for.’ When he says, ‘Guide us to the straight path—the path of those whom You blessed, not those upon whom is anger, nor those astray,’ Allah says, ‘These are for my slave, and he shall have what he asked for.’”
- In the authentic narration, he ﷺ says: “Our Lord descends every night to the lowest heaven when the final third of the night is left and says, ‘Who supplicates Me so that I may grant him? Who is asking Me so that I may give him? Who seeks My forgiveness so that I may forgive him?’ Until the break of twilight.”
- In the authentic narration, that where a Supporter (*Anṣārī*) hosted a man and altruistically favoured him over himself and his family. When he got up in the morning, he went to the Prophet ﷺ, who told him: “Last night, Allah laughed—or<sup>201</sup> was amazed—at your doing—or your doings. He revealed, ‘They give preference over themselves even if they are in need.’<sup>202</sup>”

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201 Translator’s note: The uncertainty is not from the Prophet ﷺ, but one of the narrators. It is commonly found in Hadith literature, where the narrator stipulates the Prophet ﷺ said such-and-such or something similar when narrating.

202 *al-Hashr*, 9.

- In the authentic narration, he ﷺ says: “The worldly life is sweet and green. Allah has made you successors upon it to see how you would do, so be wary of the worldly life, and be wary of women.”
- In the authentic narration: “Allah does not look at your physical form or your wealth, rather He looks at your hearts and deeds.”
- In the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, on the authority of Abū Wāqid al-Laythī, that Allah’s Messenger ﷺ was sitting among his Companions when three men came. One of them saw a gap in the circle, so sat in it. The second one sat behind them, and the third one left. The Prophet ﷺ said: “Shall I not tell you about these men? As for the one who sat in the circle, then he sought shelter in (*āwā ilā*) Allah, so Allah granted him shelter. As for the one who sat behind the circle, then he is a man who was shy (*istahyā*), so Allah was shy from him. As for the one who left, then he turned away (*a‘rad*), so Allah turned away from him.”
- In *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, he ﷺ says: “Allah ﷻ says, ‘Whoever is hostile to one of My saints, then he has declared war against Me. My slave does not seek proximity to me with anything better than fulfilling what I obligated upon him. My slave continues to draw near to Me by supererogatory deeds until I love him. When I love him, I am his hearing with which he hears, his sight with which he sees, his hand with which he strikes, and his leg with which he walks. He hears by Me, sees by Me, strikes by Me, and walks by Me. If he were to seek refuge in Me, I would grant it. I do not hesitate in anything I am to do like my hesitation in taking My believing slave’s soul—he dislikes death, and I dislike to harm him, but it must be done.’”
- In the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, on the authority of al-Barā’, the Prophet ﷺ says: “The Supporters are not loved except by a believer, and are not hated except a hypocrite. Whosoever loves them, Allah loves him. Whosoever hates them, Allah hates him.”
- In the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, on the authority of ‘Ubādah, the Prophet ﷺ says: “Whoever loves to meet Allah, Allah loves to meet him. Whoever dislikes to meet Allah, Allah dislikes to meet him.” ‘Ā’ishah رضي الله عنها replies: “But we dislike death.” He ﷺ says: “Not that. The believer, upon death, is given glad tidings of Allah’s pleasure and generosity. When he receives this, he loves to meet Allah and Allah loves to meet him. The disbeliever, upon death, is given the news of Allah’s torment and His wrath, so he dislikes to meet Allah and Allah dislikes to meet him.”

- In the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, on the authority of Anas: They (the Companions) said: “It was revealed to us then was abrogated, ‘Proclaim to our people that we met our Lord, and He was pleased with us and granted us pleasure.’”
- On the authority of ‘Amr ibn Mālik al-Rawāsī: I came to the Prophet ﷺ and said: “Messenger of Allah, be pleased with me.” He turned away from me thrice. I said: “Messenger of Allah, verily Allah is asked for approval (*yuraddā*) so approves (*yardā*)<sup>203</sup>, so be pleased with me.” So he was pleased with me.
- In the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, on the authority of Ibn Mas‘ūd, Allah’s Messenger ﷺ said: “Allah’s anger intensifies over a people who did this to Allah’s Messenger.” He said this pointing to his incisors. He says: “Allah’s anger intensifies over a man whom Allah’s Messenger kills in the path of Allah.”
- In *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, on the authority of ‘Ā’ishah ؓ, the Prophet ﷺ used to say in his prostration: “Allah, I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your wrath, and in Your granting wellness from Your punishment. I seek refuge in You from You. I can never duly extol You. You are as You have extolled Yourself.”
- In the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, the Prophet ﷺ says: “When Allah decreed the creation, He wrote in a text that is placed with Him above the Throne: ‘My mercy overwhelms (*ghalabat*) My anger.’” In another report, it is ‘precedes’ (*sabaqat*).
- In the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, on the authority of Abū Hurayrah, Allah’s Messenger ﷺ says: “Angels come to you in turn, by night and by day. They gather in the twilight (*fajr*) prayer and in the afternoon (‘*aṣr*) prayer. Those who stayed the night among you then ascend to their Lord. He asks them, knowing full well their state, ‘How did you leave My slaves?’ They reply, ‘We found them praying, and left them praying.’”
- In *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, on the authority of Abū Hurayrah and Abū Sa‘īd, that they witnessed Allah’s Messenger ﷺ saying: “A people do not sit remembering Allah except that the angels surround them, mercy envelops them, and Allah mentions them among those with Him.”

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203 Translator’s note: The predicate *fa-yardā*—‘so approves—is absent in the text, though it is so in the text of the narration, and is quoted by Ibn Taymiyyah in other works in full.

- In the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, on the authority of Abū Hurayrah, the Prophet ﷺ says: “Allah grasps the earth and folds the heavens with His right, then says, ‘I am the King, where are the kings of the earth?’”
- In the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, on the authority of ‘Adī ibn Ḥātim, the Prophet ﷺ says: “There is none of you except that his Lord shall speak to him without a veil or translator. He will look to his right and see naught but what he brought forth. He will look to his left and see naught but something of what he brought forth. He will look before him, and the Fire will be awaiting him. Whosoever among you can ward off the Fire, even with half a date [in charity], then let him do so. If he finds not even that, then with a good word.”
- In the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, on the authority of Abū Hurayrah, the Prophet ﷺ says: “To Allah belong angels who travel through the land looking for the people who remember Allah. When they find a people remembering Allah, they call out to each other, ‘Come, we have found what we are looking for.’ They cover them with their wings to the lowest heaven. Their Lord asks them, knowing them better than they, ‘What are My slaves doing?’ They reply, ‘They are sanctifying You, magnifying You, praising You, and glorifying You.’ He says, ‘Have they seen Me?’ They reply, ‘No, by Allah they have not.’ He says, ‘Then what if they did?’ They reply, ‘Had they seen You, they would be more intense in their worship and glorification, and more abundant in their sanctification.’ He says, ‘What do they ask of Me?’ They reply, ‘They ask You for the Garden.’ He says, ‘Have they seen it?’ They reply, ‘No, by Allah our Lord, they have not seen it.’ He says, ‘Then what if they did?’ They reply, ‘Had they seen it, they would more greatly aspire for it, be more diligent in seeking it, and yearn more for acquiring it.’ He says, ‘What do they seek refuge from?’ They reply, ‘The Fire.’ He says, ‘Have they seen it?’ They reply, ‘No, by Allah our Lord, they have not seen it.’ He says, ‘Then what if they did?’ They reply, ‘Had they seen it, they would more urgently flee from it, and be more fearful of it.’ He says, ‘Bear witness that I have forgiven them.’ An angel says, ‘There is among them So-and-so who is not from them, and only came for some need of his.’ He says, ‘They are such a people whose sitting companion does not go wretched.”
- In the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, on the authority of Ibn ‘Umar, the Prophet ﷺ said: “The one among you shall draw near to his Lord until He stands him before Him. He will say, ‘You have done such-and-such.’ He will say, ‘Yes, my Lord.’ He will make him admit his deeds, then He will say, ‘I concealed them [from being found out] in the worldly

life, and I forgive them for you today.’ He is then given his record of good deeds. This is Allah’s saying, ‘Here, take my record and read it.’<sup>204</sup> As for the disbeliever and the hypocrite, they will be called, “Those are the ones who lied against their Lord. Surely the curse of Allah is upon the unjust.” He ﷺ explains to us that He says a statement, then the slave says a statement, then the Lord ﷻ says another statement.

This profound fundamental principle has been implied in all revealed scriptures—the Qur’an, the Torah, and the Gospel. The Predecessors of the ummah and its imams were upon this, as well as the majority of intellectuals, the senior among them, and all of the various factions, even from the philosophers.

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204 *al-Hāqqah*, 19.

## Section Eight

The author says: “The evidence that he is speaking is that he commands and prohibits. He sent the Messengers to deliver his commandments and prohibitions. There is no meaning to his speaking but this.” The Predecessors, imams, and others have two different methods in affirming divine speech. At times, they will invoke revelation and the intellect on others. This is found in Imam Aḥmad’s rhetoric on this matter as well as other imams. It is also found in the rhetoric of the mutakallimun among the Şifātīs, like ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Makkī, Abū Muhammad ibn Kullāb, Abū ʿAbdillāh ibn Karrām, Abū Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī, and their like. The rational methods they employ are implied in the Qur’an and it guides towards it, just as it has guided to the rational methods that are used in proving the various creedal maxims referred to as *Uşūl al-Dīn*.

### Analogical reasoning and its place in theology

Proof may nonetheless vary in its articulation and formulation. It may take the form of categorical syllogism (*shumūl*; i.e., *qiyās al-shumūl*) which is sub-divided into analogical intersectionality (*qiyās tadākhul*), analogical concomitance (*qiyās talāzum*), and analogical opposition (*qiyās taʿānud*). These are also referred to as predicative (*ḥamlī*), conditionally conjunctive (*sharṭī muttaşil*), and conditionally disjunctive (*sharṭī munfaşil*) respectively. The proof may also be formalised as an analogical inference (*qiyās tamthīl*<sup>205</sup>) which produces certitude by way of a common term (*mushtarak*) between an origin (*aşl*) and a derivative (*farʿ*). This intermediary term is also known as: the ratio legis (*manāṭ*), description (*waşf*), justifier (ʿillah; also: cause), common term, and common factor (*jāmiʿ*), as well as similar expressions referring to the same idea; namely: the middle premiss in categorical syllogism.

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205 Translator’s note: This is also referred to as *qiyās al-ʿillah* or *qiyās al-taʿlīl*, as mentioned in another note.



An analogical inference may be articulated as: Inebriating grain-wine is impermissible just as grape-wine is impermissible because it is also an alcoholic beverage, and so is unlawful by way of analogy. A formal syllogism may be: This is wine which is an alcoholic beverage, and every alcoholic beverage is unlawful; or: This [drink] intoxicates the mind, and what intoxicates the mind is unlawful. Affirming this encompassing premiss affirms that the common term is the justifier for the ruling (‘illat al-ḥukm). Thus, it should be understood that analogical inference may be a more complete proof than categorical syllogism.

It is incorrect to hold that only categorical syllogism can beget certitude (*yaqīn*), as some theorists have argued. This is only true inasmuch as its composition—that the categorical syllogism is formulated from probabilistic premises (*māddah ḥāṣṣah*) and the analogical inference is founded upon apodictic ones (*māddah yaqīniyyah*). Only then it may be said that the former yields certitude and not the latter. The reason for their error is their being used to employing analogical inference in probabilistic contexts and categorical syllogism in apodictic contexts. As a consequence, they believed the certitude to be borne of the categorical syllogism itself, when this is not the case. It is only the content of its formal composition. We have thoroughly discussed this in other places, like *al-Radd ‘alā al-Ghālīṭīn fī al-Nuṭq*<sup>206</sup>.

At times, the common factor in analogical reasoning is considered without consideration of precedence (*awlawiyyah*), where at others, it is considered. As such, it may be formalised as precedential inference (*qiyās al-awlā*). Though the latter may be considered as a type of categorical syllogism or analogical inference, it has a unique feature which distinguishes it from them. That is: The ruling in question has a better claim of being affirmed in the object of the argument than in the form used as the indicant. This is the very type of precedential inference exercised by the Predecessors and imams, like Imam Aḥmad and others, within the context of analogical reasoning and with regards to Divine Lordship (*Rubūbiyyah*). There is evidence in the Qur’an for it. It is impermissible that Allah ﷻ be equated with others within a categorical syllogism, the compositional parts of which are levelled; nor within an analogical inference, where the ruling of the origin and the derivative are levelled. Naught is as the likeness of Allah ﷻ—neither in His self which is referred to by His names, nor in His

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206 Translator’s note: This is referring to his well-known polemic known commonly as *al-Radd ‘alā al-Manṭiqiyyīn*, and formally as *Naṣīḥat Ahl al-Īmān fī al-Radd ‘alā Manṭiq al-Yūnān*—a refutation of the epistemological foundations of Greek logic and its later Islamicate renditions (Ibn Sīnā, Farābī, and co).

attributes or actions. However, one may employ precedential inference in His regard. Allah ﷻ says: “To Allah belongs the highest example.”<sup>207</sup>

It is known that any form of perfection and any inherently praiseworthy quality that is free of defect which some of the created, originated existents are characterised by—then the Lord, the Creator, the Eternally Besought (*al-Ṣamad*), the Sustaining, the pre-eternal necessary being, existing in and of himself, has a better claim to it. Conversely, any defect and blameworthy quality which some of the created, originated, contingent existents are necessarily free from—then the Lord, the Creator, the Holy (*al-Quddūs*), the Free of Fault<sup>208</sup> (*al-Salām*), the pre-eternal necessary being, existing in and of himself, is a fortiori transcendent beyond it.

The way of those who liken Allah to His creation, associating partners to Him, imposing equals, compeers, and rivals to Him, is wrong. They equate Him with others in certain matters, as do the misguided factions among the philosophers and the Mutazilite mutakallimun. Their position is invalid from a number of perspectives. For example, the universal proposition (*qadīyyah kullīyyah*) which encompasses Him and other than Him cannot be proved as general except through analogical inference. Though the latter may yield apodictic knowledge in other than this context, it may not even produce uncertainty (*ẓann*) here given the knowledge of a lack of differentiator (*lil-‘ilm bi-intifā’ al-fāriq*). Furthermore, if some ruling is given pertaining to the common factor—i.e., the intermediary definition (*al-ḥadd al-awsaṭ*)—which includes Him and the created beings, then there are two choices: either they make Him like them, or make them like Him. Either way, the coextensiveness (*tard*) of the proof becomes void, and it is thus nullified.

### The philosophers’ notion of oneness and emanation

An example of this is when the philosopher says: ‘Only a singular entity may emanate from another singular entity. He (the necessary being) is one, so only a singular entity may emanate from him.’ One would firstly need to prove that, ‘Only a singular entity may emanate from another singular entity.’ This is a universal proposition, which any categorical syllogism must include. Said proposition may be showcased either by way of induction (*istiqrā’ al-āḥād*), or by analogising particulars to each other. The former is non-exhaustive (*istiqrā’ nāqīṣ*) and the latter is analogical inference, both

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207 *al-Nahl*, 60.

208 Translator’s note: This is a divine name which also has connotations of peace. However, given the context, its other possible meaning—referring to soundness, lack of defect, and overall wellness—is more appropriate.

of which cannot yield certitude according to the philosopher. If he claims: ‘I innately (*bil-badīhah*) know that only the singular may emanate from the singular’, then this is mere stickling. Knowledge of the universal that corresponds (*muṭābiq*) to matters in the external world (*umūr khārijīyyah*) is not innately ingrained in the human disposition (*maḡhrūzah fī al-ḡītrah*) without an initial knowledge of individual matters (*umūr mu‘ayyanah*) therefrom. It is due to one’s abundant knowledge of individual particulars that one’s mind abstracts universals such that the general proposition may be mentally sustained without showings or examples of particulars. This is unless knowledge of said mental proposition is borne of the composition of other propositions. Saying that, ‘Only a singular entity may emanate from a singular entity’, is of neither vein.

If he (the philosopher) were to properly conceptualise the key terms in this proposition, he would know for certain that he cannot derive knowledge from it, and will instead realise that reality is contrary to it. His use of the term, ‘singular’ (*wāḡīd*)—if by it he means one about whom no two matters can be known where one matter is not the other, then there is no such ‘one’ in existence. He knows that the necessary being exists, and that he is necessarily existent, and that he is rational (‘āqil), rationalisable (*ma‘qūl*), an intellect (‘aql), and is characterised by care (*lahū ‘ināyah*). This and other meanings they use are not all one and the same. Necessity is not existence, nor are necessity and existence the rational, nor is the rational the rationalisable, nor are the rational and the rationalisable the one possessing care.

If he were to say: ‘These are no more than negatory qualities (*sulūb*) and mere ascriptions (*iḡāḡāt maḡḡah*)’; then he would be stickling. That a thing rationalises is not the same as it being rationalised, nor is its being knowledgeable purely ascribing it to what is knowable, like other mere ascriptions where the ascribed is unaffected, like ‘being to the right of’ (*tayāmun*) or ‘being to the left of’ (*tayāsūr*). It is known that a thing being to the right or left of one does not affect one’s state either way. As for a thing being knowledgeable, then this contradicts it being not knowledgeable, just as its being loving contradicts it being unloving, and its being able contradicts it being unable. Whoever considers a thing as the same in its state of being knowledgeable and not knowledgeable has a mental ailment, for this is immense sophistry. Likewise is considering that his (the necessary being’s) characterisation of care is merely his being rational—this is also immense sophistry. Explicit reason requires that a thing’s being knowledgeable is not its possessing volition, nor is its possessing volition its being knowledgeable.

If it is said that: ‘One obliges the other’; then obligatory concomitance (*talāzum*) does not necessitate that the concomitant (*lāzim*) be the object of concomitance (*malzūm*). If it is said regarding any hypothetical being: ‘Its knowledge is its volition, and its volition is its life, and this is in fact its existence’, then the fallaciousness of such a claim is among what is most clearly established in the mind. It is like if one were to say: ‘This apple—its taste is its colour, its colour is its scent, its scent is its appearance, and its appearance is its very essence.’ Whoever is able to conceptualise and understand such words, even young discerning boys, immediately realises that its claimant is from the most misguided and ignorant of people.

Thus, this singular quality which they describe cannot be a feature of the necessarily existent, and a fortiori of all other than him. This is why they ultimately make him an absolute existence (*wujūd muṭlaq*) unattached to anything (*bi-sharṭ al-iṭlāq*), just as the Mutazilites make him an essence that is divested of attributes. Both the latter cannot have extramental existence (*thubūt fi al-khārij*) by explicit reason. Rather, the absolute that is unconditioned by anything (*muṭlaq lā bi-sharṭ*) cannot exist extramentally.

They categorise the subject matter of ‘Divine Knowledge’ (*al-‘Ilm al-Ilāhī*) into existence that is categorised into what is necessary and contingent, a quiddity and an accident, and a justifier and justified. They believe this to be the Ancient Philosophy (*al-Falsafat al-Ūlā*) and the Profound Wisdom (*al-Ḥikmat al-‘Uzmā*). Yet, they know that categorical universals—regardless whether they are referred to as a species or not—do not exist in the external world as universal. In the external world, there is no animal that is categorised into rational (*nāṭiq*) and irrational (*a‘jam*<sup>209</sup>), nor an existence that is categorised into quiddity and accident. Rather, every animal that exists in the external world is either from the former or latter category, and every being in the external world either exists in and of itself or as a result of another’s existence. Such a category holds true for its categorised particulars, for it is absolute while being attached to something (*muṭlaq lā bi-sharṭ al-iṭlāq*). Had it been conditionally unattached to anything, it would not hold true over individuated beings, since the individual cannot be absolute and unattached to anything.

While the attached absolute cannot exist externally except if individuated, the unattached absolute cannot exist externally at all. They (the philosophers) admit this in formal logic (*manṭiq*), clarifying that the unattached absolute does not exist externally: There is no such thing as an animal that

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209 Translator’s note: As previously elucidated, *nāṭiq* and *a‘jam* literally refer to one who can articulate himself and one who cannot. Effectively though, the connotation is one of rationality.

is absolute and unattached to anything, nor a human being that is absolute and unattached to anything. This is clear to any sound-minded person.

They then say about the necessarily existent being: ‘His is an existence that is absolute and unattached to anything.’ Explicit reason dictates that an absolute, unattached existence cannot exist externally, and is something which is only mentally conceptualised. As a consequence, the necessarily existent being who originated the whole cosmos and is its lord and master becomes naught but a mental construct (*amr yuqaddar bil-<sup>‘</sup>aql*) without a real, extramental, affirmative existence. This is an imposed inhibition (*ta<sup>‘</sup>ṭīl*) to the existence of the necessary being which existence qua existence bears witness to. For existence qua existence bears witness to the necessary being, as Ibn Sīnā and others have posited. They were very much correct in doing so. There is no doubt that there is existence, that it is necessary or contingent, and that the contingent requires the necessary. Thus, there must exist within existence a necessary existent.

This argument in affirming the necessary being is true, clear, and evident. However, they claimed that his existence is absolute and unattached to anything: it is not individuated nor specified by a reality that distinguishes him from other existents. Rather, they claim that his is a pure, absolute existence, conditioned by negating all qualifications (*quyūd*), individuations (*mu<sup>‘</sup>ayyanāt*), and specifications (*mukhaṣṣiṣāt*) from him.

They understand that in formal logic—as any rational person appreciates—such a thing has no reality nor existence except within the mind, not external to it. As a result, the necessary being which external existence bears witness to only exists in the mind!

There is no clearer contradiction, inconsistency, and coupling between mutual nullifiers. Via the entailments of the forementioned sound ontological proof, they affirm him as externally existing. Yet, via the entailments of negating the attributes—their imagined version of *tawhīd*—they affirm him as externally non-existing. Thus, their position necessitates his simultaneous existence and non-existence.

The same contradiction is found in the positions of those who followed suit, among the Qarmatians, Bāṭinīs—like the authors of *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā*<sup>210</sup>—and the Unity of Being Folk, like Ibn Sab<sup>‘</sup>īn, Ibn <sup>‘</sup>Arabī, and their ilk; as well as the position of the Kalam Folk among the Mutazilites and others, and anyone who negates any aspect of divine attributes. The necessary entailment of their position is divesting and negating coupled with acceptance and affirmation—coupling between mutual nullifiers. This

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210 Translator’s note: *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā’ wa Khilān al-Wafā’*—a collection of anonymous essays authored in the second half of the fourth Hijri century. Some of the discussed subject matters are commensurate with Ismā‘īlī Bā’īnī theology.

is thoroughly discussed in other places. The intention here is to highlight examples of their false reasoning which they employ and end up reaching other than the truth.

Having established that a singular entity—as described by the philosophers—has no external existence, the following question may then be posed to those who say, ‘Only a singular entity may emanate (*yaşdur*) from another singular entity’: What does emanation (*şudūr*) mean? For sure you do not mean that the singular originates from him (*hudūthuh ‘anh*; referring to the necessary being), nor do you mean his doing it (*fi’luh lah*) by way of his will and ability where the subject precedes its object of action. What you mean here is its concomitance to him (*luzūmuh lah*) and necessitation by him (*wujūbuh bih*). We cannot conceptualise among existing beings a thing from which another separate thing emanates, especially given its prior concomitance to it. Rather, what is concomitant to it alone is its attribute. As for what is concomitant to a thing (*lāzim*)—claiming that what it alone is concomitant to (*malzūm*) is separate from it is not reasonable. This purported ‘emanation’ is not known. Your saying in this universal proposition, ‘Only a singular entity may emanate from another singular entity’, entails a judgement upon all that can be conceptualised as ‘singular’ that it may only emanate from what is also singular. If this emanation cannot be conceptualised, nor can this negation (*salb*) be asserted as true in an individual case within the universal proposition, then how can knowledge of the latter be acquired?

If, as proof, they cite the fire from which only burning emanates, as well as other simple bodies like water, or the sun from which rays emanate, then none of these individual things fall within their universal proposition. Burning does not solely emanate from fire, and rather requires a burnable locus (*maḥall qābil lil-iḥrāq*) to be viably realised. For example, burning does not emanate from fire with reference to the salamander (*samandal<sup>211</sup>*), jacinth (*yāqūt*), and similar fire-resistant objects. This is not to mention that burning may be prevented—it is dependent on the availability of prerequisites and a lack of preventive measures other than the fire. Thus, it does not emanate from it in the sense that they reference in their argument; namely, its inseparable, obligatory concomitance to the essence of fire.

On the other hand, this concomitance is perfectly reasonable with regards to attributes and the one to whom they are concomitant. With reference to the sun, examples include its spherical shape and its intrinsic illumination. These are qualities which are concomitant to it, never de-

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211 Translator’s note: Apparently, there is a certain type of shrew-like salamander that is fire-resistant. It is mentioned in Arabic taxonomical works, and likely dates back to Greek sources.

parting from its essence. This is unlike the light which reflects off bodies within its reach, whether flat like the earth, or upright like the mountains, animals, plants, and walls. Such reflected light is not concomitant to the sun's essence, and is dependent on the existence of these reflective objects which this accident (reflected light) manifests in. Moreover, it may be prevented by way of barriers like thick clouds, roofs, and their like. The consequent shadow is caused by whatever stands between it and what falls under the shadow. It is there at times and not there at other times. Hence why we have night and day.

As such, it is clear that what they postulate with regards to singular entities and emanation therefrom is a matter that cannot be externally realised, let alone it being a tenable general universal proposition (*qadīyyah kullīyyah ʿāmmah*). If instead they solely estimate the singular as being internally imposed, and emanation as internally imposed, then undoubtedly the judgement will also be limited to the internal. It would not however follow that this internal imposition corresponds to the external such that the necessary being is indeed this purported singular entity, and his originating the cosmos is this purported emanation.

If they appreciate this, then they would realise they have no need for this syllogism, for it benefits them naught. What it seeks to provide is knowledge of a particular case from a universal proposition. But said proposition is of no consequence except on this particular case they are claiming. If they know that the judgement is affirmed for this particular case without the proposition, there is no need for it. If they do not know that the judgement is affirmed for this particular case without the proposition, then there is no way to know if the proposition holds true for the particular case, and so it is useless.

In fact, had the opposite of their position been claimed back at them, it would have been a more reasonable syllogism. For example: 'There is no singular entity in existence from which only a singular entity emanates. Anything in existence that emanates is from two entities upwards.' There is nothing that originates from created beings except that it has two origins, like a child and its two parents, heating, cooling, burning, drowning, etc. They all require two origins. Emergent rays of light require two origins.

Since there is not in existence a singular entity which emanates from a singular entity, one saying, 'Not every singular entity may only have another singular entity emanate from it', is a more reasonable claim. Rather, saying, 'Nothing can emanate from the singular entity they mention', is more accurate and reasonable than their claim. Likewise if it were said, 'Nothing can emanate from the singular entity they mention unless it is coupled with another entity', then this would be a more veracious claim.



This entails that the Divine had a partner and offspring, since what they mean by emanation is obligatory concomitance, which is essentially rational begetting (*tawallud<sup>c</sup> aqlī*). The reality of their position is that intellects and souls are begotten by him. Their invoking a justifier-justified (*al-<sup>c</sup>illah wa al-ma<sup>c</sup>lūl*) dynamic here is in fact a begetter-begotten (*al-mutawallid wa al-mutawallad<sup>c</sup> anh*) complex. Allah ﷻ says: “They made for Allah associates—the jinn—although He created them, and they invented for Him sons and daughters, without knowledge. Sanctified and exalted is He far above what they describe. Innovator of the heavens and the earth—how can He have offspring when He never had a consort? He created everything, and He is Knowing of everything. Such is Allah, your Lord; there is no God but He, the Creator of everything, so worship Him. He is the Trustee over everything. Vision (*abṣār*) perceives Him not, but He perceives all vision. He is the Subtle, the Aware.”<sup>212</sup>

This is thoroughly discussed in other works. We clarified that these people’s views (the philosophers’) are more corrupt than those of the Arab polytheists who said that the angels are Allah’s daughters and that their deities intercede for them. For the latter nonetheless maintained that Allah is a doer by choice, and the angels are creatures He created, but went astray in some aspects of what they described, as the Christians did in some of their doctrines.

As for these people, their misguidance is more severe than that of the Jews, Christians, and Arab polytheists. The reality is that they opine that the Divine did not create anything, nor can He do anything by His will and choice, and the angels are not His slaves. The First Intellect (*al-<sup>c</sup>Aql al-Awwal*), for them, is the lord of all other than Allah. Intercession, for them, is not that the intercessor (*shāfi<sup>c</sup>*) asks Allah. Rather, it is an orientation (*tawajjuh*) to the intercessor until there overflows from him to the one asking him for intercession (*mustashfi<sup>c</sup>*) that which neither Allah nor the intercessor have knowledge of, according to them, nor does it take place by His will and ability.

The intention here is to highlight that the Predecessors’ and imams’ methods—those commensurate with what is revealed in and advocated by the Qur’an—are the most complete and correct of all. The most correct of groups with regards to the Rationalisables (*al-<sup>c</sup>Aqliyyāt*) are the closest to them, just as the most correct with regards to the Revelatories (*al-Sam<sup>c</sup>’iyyāt*) are closest to them. Explicit reason does not contradict authentic revelation. Rather, it agrees with it and proves it as true. Allah ﷻ says: “Those who have received knowledge see that what was sent down to you from your Lord is the truth and guides to the path of the Almighty, the

212 *al-An<sup>c</sup>ām*, 100-103.



Praiseworthy”<sup>213</sup>, “Whatever similitude they come to you with, We provide you with the truth and a better exposition.”<sup>214</sup>

This is why the *Şifātī mutakallimun*—like Ibn Kullāb, al-Ash‘arī, and Ibn Karrām—were methodologically better and more correct in Rationalisables and Revelatories than the Mutazilites, and the Mutazilites better and more upright in both than the philosophers; notwithstanding there being errors with all the aforementioned, where they compromised either reason or revelation. Nonetheless, the more veracious and upright in position has more right for ascendancy than the lesser among them. ‘Āishah رضي الله عنها said: “Allah’s Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم commanded us to give people their due.” This is part of the justice which Allah commanded, revealed in His Book, and sent His Messengers with. Allah عز وجل says: “You who believe, always stand for justice, as witnesses for the sake of Allah”<sup>215</sup>, “We certainly sent Our Messengers with evident proofs, and We sent down with them the Book and the Balance, that mankind may uphold justice.”<sup>216</sup>

### Affirming divine speech

The point here is to showcase the ways in which people have sought to affirm Allah as speaking in a brief and context-sensitive exposition.

There are two ways: rational and revelatory, though the former is still from revealed legislation insofar as revelation implying and guiding to it, and the Law approving and inviting to it.

The author of this abridged creed exercised a revelatory method, following his source Abū ‘Abdillāh ibn al-Khaṭīb. It is founded on two premises (*muqaddimatayn*). The first is that He is a commander (*āmīr*) and prohibitor (*nāhī*), and whoever is characterised by this is speaking.

**The first premise** is implied by the fact that the Messengers delivered His commandments and prohibitions. Each premise is clear. Speech is of two kinds: compositional and informative. The former is further sub-categorised into what is command, prohibition, or allowance. If but a single type of speech is affirmed for Him, then speech is affirmed unconditionally, and He is therefore affirmed as speaking.

**As for the second premise**, then it is necessarily known in the religion of all the Messengers that they report from Allah that He commanded such-and-such and prohibited such-and-such. Thus, affirming messengerhood

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213 *Saba’*, 6.

214 *al-Furqān*, 33.

215 *al-Nisā’*, 135.

216 *al-Hadīd*, 25.

is an affirmation of divine speech. Denial of the latter is a denial of what the Messengers came with of commands and prohibitions.

If it is said: What is the difference between this method and the one he employed in affirming hearing and sight; namely, revelatory reports?

The response is: There, the author affirmed hearing and sight by way of the contents of revelatory reports, like the Qur'anic statement: "He is the Hearing, the Seeing."<sup>217</sup> Here, he affirms His speech by His sending Messengers as opposed to a particular textual proof. He essentially says, 'We know that Allah sent His Messengers to deliver His commands and prohibitions.' He did not however cite specific textual evidence indicating divine speech.

If it is said: If divine speech is affirmed by way of revelatory reports, then the latter must necessarily be known as true prior to knowledge of His being characterised by speech. However, supposing a messenger says, for example, 'Allah sent me to you, commanding you to single Him out in worship and prohibiting you from associating partners to Him'—if, prior to this, they do not know that Allah may be characterised by speech, then they do not know He may send messengers. Therefore, revelation cannot be used as proof here.

The response is twofold:

1. That which is confirmed as true by revelation only requires that it be mentally possible (*imkān dhihni*); that is, it is not known to be impossible. In fact, any bearer of news who we do not know is lying, we allow for the possibility that he may be telling the truth. Where truthfulness is possible for him, claiming he is lying is not permitted. Rather, it would then be possible to bring forth proof of his truthfulness and the necessity of believing him, where it would be obligatory to do so.

Many theorists err here: they mistakenly think that whatever needs proof to be true or whatever has proof for its existence requires prior knowledge of its possibility. In reality, it is only necessary that such a thing is not known to be impossible. The Messengers ﷺ report matters that are rationally bewildering (*maḥārāt al-<sup>ḥ</sup>uqūl*), or that which the mind does not know, or is incapable of knowing.<sup>218</sup> Whatever the intellect recognises as possible but does not know whether it is or is not, the Messengers inform of its taking place or not taking place. Whatever cannot be rationally

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217 *al-Shūrā*, 11.

218 Translator's note: Not that the mind cannot know such matters at all, but it cannot know them except by way of revelation, is the point.

ascertained as possible or impossible, the Messengers also inform either of its possibility or its taking place, which in turn necessitates its possibility. However, the Messengers do not inform of what is rationally inconceivable (*muḥālāt al-‘uqūl*)—that which the intellect recognises as impossible. The Messengers do not report the existence or the possibility of such matters. Likewise, what is known as non-existent (*‘adam*), they do not report of its existence. The Messengers ﷺ do not come with something the opposite of which is known to be true, but may indeed come with what was not previously known.

Allah ﷻ says: “Just as We sent among you a Messenger from yourselves, reciting to you Our verses, purifying you, teaching you the Book and wisdom, and teaching you what you did not know. So remember Me, I will remember you. Give thanks to Me, and do not reject Me.”<sup>219</sup> This is also the case for revelation that is sent down on the Prophets—it teaches them what they did not previously know, but does not come to them with something the opposite of which they know to be true. Allah ﷻ says: “Were it not for Allah’s grace and His mercy upon you, a faction of them would have sought to lead you astray. They lead no one astray except themselves, and they cannot harm you in any way. Allah sent down to you the Book and wisdom, and has taught you what you did not know. Allah’s grace towards you has been great.”<sup>220</sup>

2. That rational possibility of divine speech is known by way of minimal intellectual exertion. If it is known that Allah is living, knowing, and able, then it is known that He may be characterised by speech. Speech is an attribute that has life as a prerequisite. Among the attributes that have life as a prerequisite, only those which are impossible in His regard are indeed impossible. Examples include sleeping, eating, and drinking, for they all entail defects or shortcomings which He transcends. There is no such defect in speech. We will explain—Allah willing—that it is in fact an attribute of perfection, and further clarify what He may not be characterised by.

Thus, this is the explication of what he (the author) said.

It is possible to also pursue a more generic avenue than that of the author. He evidences speech by way of command and prohibition specifically. Due rigour showcases that informative proposition (*khābar*) also indicates He is speaking, just as command does. On occasion, the Messengers deliver

219 *al-Baqarah*, 151-152.

220 *Al-Nisā’*, 113.

commands and prohibitions on His behalf, and on others, they deliver information: either about Himself or His creation. They deliver information about Him via His names and attributes, and information about His creatures via narratives (*qaṣaṣ*), like that pertaining to His angels and Prophets, and previous nations' believers and disbelievers. They also deliver His informing about the Day of Resurrection: matters related to reward and punishment, and the promise of bliss and torment. In fact, that which the Messengers deliver of informative propositions is more than that which they deliver of His commands. This is the case with the Qur'an.

If it is said that: There is no meaning to Him speaking except that He is a commander (*āmir*) and prohibiter (*nāhī*); then the response is simply: There is no meaning to Him speaking except that He is an informer (*mukhbir*) and a giver of tidings (*munbi*<sup>c</sup>).

More meticulous is for one to say: It necessarily follows from Him commanding and prohibiting that He is speaking. As for one saying: There is no meaning to Him speaking except that He commands and prohibits, or that He informs; then this is disputable. A speaker may be on some occasions commanding but informing on others. Considering His informing, He would then be speaking even if not commanding; and considering His commanding, He would then be speaking even if not informing. This is regardless of whether it is considered possible to separate the two from each other or they are considered concomitant with regards to some speakers.

One may reasonably say: That which the author mentioned is of little benefit. If the intention is to affirm His being a speaker to those who accept the Messengers, then they already accept Him as speaking. For no one can believe in the Torah, the Gospel, and the Qur'an and deny Allah as speaking. The aforementioned scriptures are full of mentions of this, and the various religions are in agreement over it. If instead the intention is to affirm divine speech to those who deny the Messengers, then the assertion of messengerhood is an assertion of divine speech. In essence, what the author mentioned with regards to His being characterised by speech is in reality positing that the Messengers were truthful in what they delivered on His behalf. Thus, if speech is affirmed via the truthfulness of the Messengers it would be affirming a thing by itself.

The intention behind this is to affirm Him as literally speaking, with speech that subsists in Him. This is contrary to what the philosophers claim, understanding divine speech as an activation of internal knowledge (*ta<sup>c</sup>rīf fi<sup>c</sup>lī*)—knowables (*ta<sup>c</sup>rīfāt*) which overflow into the souls. It is also contrary to what the Jahmīs among the Mutazilites and others claim, understanding speech as letters and sounds He created in others.

This subject matter is where the Predecessors concerted their efforts, responding to those who say: ‘The Qur’an is created. Allah created it in the air. There is no speech that subsists in Him.’ What then of those who say: ‘His speech is naught but what originates in the souls of knowledge and understanding’, without attributing to Him any speech that is separate from the souls of Prophets and Messengers?! We have thoroughly discussed the subject of divine speech and the various perturbations in its regard in other works.

### **The evidence of divine speech and the author’s credal orientation**

There is no doubt that the author followed the creed of the Şifātīs in articulating this doctrine, those who disagree with the Mutazilites. This is why he mentions these seven attributes. The Mutazilites only restrict themselves to asserting God as living, knowing, and able. The Basrans among them may also add perception (*idrāk*) to include hearing and sight. As for His being characterised by speech and volition, then this is within the realm of divine actions as opposed to divine attributes in their estimation. The meaning of His being a speaker, in their estimation, is that He created speech in other than Him, just as He creates various aspects of creation. This is unlike His being living, knowing, and able; and perceptive (*mudrik*) for the Basrans. The latter attributes are affirmed for His essence, regardless whether He created anything or not. This is also why said attributes are generic in their referential domain (‘āmm al-ta‘alluq), in that it (divine knowledge) is not specific for some knowables over others; unlike volition and speech. Volition is specific for some volitional matters (i.e., that which is willed) over others, and speech is specific for some commands over others.

That which the author affirmed of divine speech is a matter that no Mutazilite would disagree with, not even a theist philosopher who accepts prophecy in general. Some of them accept prophecy, though in reality, they believe in some of its attributes and reject others, just as the Jews and Christians accept some Messengers and reject others.

It would be reasonable if one were to say: This is an unnecessary question with regards to the doctrine of divine speech; rather with all doctrinal points. For the author did not affirm any of the attributes that subsist essentially from Him. In fact, he affirmed the rulings of the attributes and affirmed the names, and the Mutazilites agree over the names and the rulings. Even the philosophers agree with what he mentioned in a general sense. Thus, there is no differentiator in this creed between the school of the Şifātī Affirmation Folk—like Ibn Kullāb, al-Ash‘arī, and their followers—and that of the Mutazilites—like Abū ‘Alī, Abū Hāshim, Abū al-Ḥusayn

al-Baṣrī, and their ilk. It is a creed which is common for the Mutazilites, Asharites, and other factions.

This is clarified by the fact that he did not mention in his creed that which distinguishes the Asharites from the Mutazilites. He did not mention that the Qur'an is the uncreated speech of Allah. He did not discuss the beatific vision: that seeing Allah is permitted (*jā'iz*) in the worldly life and will take place in the Afterlife. He did not discuss predestination and related doctrines: that Allah creates the slaves' actions, and that He wills all beings. He did not discuss matters related to labels and rulings (*al-asmā' wa al-aḥkām*): that the transgressor (*fāsiq*) is not wholly outside the fold of faith, and that the divine promise of punishment (*wa'id*) is not necessarily realised, and it is possible that those who committed major sins will be pardoned. He also did not discuss matters pertaining to imam-hood (*imāmah*) and preferentiality (*tafḍīl*; i.e., among the Companions).

All these foundational principles are mentioned in the abridged creeds of later Asharites. Examples include *al-ʿAqīdah al-Qudsiyyah* by Abū Ḥāmid,<sup>221</sup> and *al-ʿAqīdah al-Burhāniyyah* which is abridged from Abū al-Maʿālī's *Irshād*,<sup>222</sup> as well as others. The imams of the Asharites have clear affirmative rhetoric, like that of Qāḍī Abū Bakr and his class. They further affirm revelatory attributes, divine highness (ʿuluww), and the like. Not to mention the doctrines mentioned by al-Ashʿarī in *al-Maqālāt* from the Sunnah Folk and Hadith scholars, for it contains detailed expositions. Furthermore, that which the Predecessors and grand imams mention of affirmation and detail is even greater, explaining and clarifying the Sunnah, differentiating it from all innovation.

For this reason, despite their ascription to al-Ashʿarī, the companions of this author assert that which the Mutazilites do with regards to divine attributes. They do not assert what the Asharites further assert beyond that. The theses of Abū ʿAbdillāh al-Khaṭīb gives them this possibility. The hesitancy and agnosticism are apparent in his rhetoric when affirming the attributes, the beatific vision (*ru'yah*), divine speech, and similar doctrines; unlike predestination, where he unequivocally differs from the Mutazilites.

This methodology, from some respects, is similar to that of Ḍirār ibn ʿAmr and Ḥusayn al-Najjār and their like: they accepted predestination but were somewhere between the Mutazilites and Asharites with regards

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221 Translator's note: Ghazālī's *al-Risālah al-Qudsiyyah fi Qawā'id al-ʿAqā'id*, which he later made part of his *Ihyā' ʿUlūm al-Dīn*.

222 Translator's note: Juwaynī's *Kitāb al-Irshād ilā Qawā'i' al-Adillah fi Uṣūl al-Fiqāh*. The text has no known abridgement, though Ibn Taymiyyah may be referring to Abū ʿAmr al-Salālij's *al-ʿAqīdah al-Burhāniyyah wa al-Fuṣūl al-Īmāniyyah*. It is not known to be an abridgement of any other work.

to divine attributes. It is also somewhat like that of the Wāqifis<sup>223</sup> who held back with regards to the Qur'an: they neither say it is created nor uncreated. The imams of the Sunnah, as well as the Şifātī mutakallimun like al-Ash'arī and others, have known words of rebuke in this regard.

If it is said: The Mutazilites do not accept Munkar and Nakīr, the Bridge, the Balance (*al-Mīzān*), and similar matters mentioned by the author.

The response is: The Mutazilites have two views on such matters. Among them are those who affirm them, while others negate them. Not to mention that what the author articulated does not indicate affirmation of said matters. Rather, it implies acceptance of everything the Messenger reported with regards to them. There is no one among the Mutazilites nor anyone of the Muslims who says they do not accept what the Messenger reported. Every Muslim says that what the Messenger came with is true and we must believe him. All Muslims, from the Sunnah Folk and innovators alike, say: 'I believe in Allah and what came from Allah as per what Allah intended, and I believe in Allah's Messenger and what Allah's Messenger came with as per what Allah's Messenger intended.' If one were not to assert this, then one would be manifestly disbelieving. This holistic statement does not distinguish the Sunnah Folk's school from other than it.

This is why the imams of the Sunnah do not suffice themselves solely with it (the quoted hypothetical statement). Whoever relays that Shāfi'ī and others sufficed themselves with it has lied against him, for that is the position of some later scholars. Such a statement is undoubtedly true, and only a disbeliever would dispute it. However, knowledge of the detailed Sunnah is another realm of endeavour.

In arguing with the follower of the Sunnah, the innovator would not do so over believing the Messenger in everything he reported. Rather, he would say: 'Did he truly report this or not? Is said report as per its apparent meaning?' He (the author) affirmed neither of the latter enquiries, since they are part of the science of narration (*'ilm al-naql*) and denotational semantics (*dalālat al-alfāz*) respectively. There is nothing in what he articulated that affirms either.

Furthermore, the author's words on *tawhīd* are not founded on Asharite or Mutazilite principles. Rather, they are founded on those of the philosophers. He is wavering between philosophy and I'tizāl<sup>224</sup>, and took from the

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223 Translator's note: The root *w-q-f* refers to standing, halting, and stopping. A Wāqifi is someone who reserves judgement with regards to some matter, i.e., he is agnostic of its truth status.

224 Translator's note: What Mutazilite creed is referred to as. A Mutazilite is someone who adheres to I'tizāl. It linguistically refers to 'retirement', 'withdrawal', and 'seclusion'. There are various theories as to why the theological movement was



theses of some of those attributed to the Asharites—like Rāzī and others—what may be said by either or. Additionally, his confidants have relayed that he used to privately lean towards this, as manifested in some of his closest companions from the Hadith scholars like Qushayrī and others. Naturally, it is understood that he spoke according to the extent of his knowledge, his personal scholarly discretion, the peak of his intellect, and the furthest his theoretical analysis allowed him to. The intention here is to know the peoples’ positions and their schools, and what each is upon in terms of closeness to truth, such that each is given their right, and the Muslim knows whence he proceeds.

Once this is clear, we can point out that which distinguishes the Sunnah Folk from the Mutazilites and those even further from the truth like the philosophers.

### Aberrations regarding the divine speech doctrine

If, by way of the author’s evidence, it is affirmed that He ﷻ is speaking, and it is affirmed that the Messengers reported this, then we say: That which the Messengers informed of is that He is speaking with speech that subsists in Him. This is what they clarified, and that is what their companions understood from them, and in turn their followers in good. Rather, they know this apodictically from the religion of the Messengers. No one from the ummah’s early era among the Predecessors denied this. The first to innovate other than this was al-Ja‘d ibn Dirham, then his companion al-Jahm ibn Ṣafwān.

Both of them were killed. As for al-Ja‘d ibn Dirham—it was said he used to teach Marwān ibn Muhammad, the last of the Umayyad caliphs, and held the toponymic ‘al-Ja‘dī’ in relation to Ja‘d—Khālīd ibn ‘Abdillāh al-Qasrī killed him. He offered him as tribute on the Day of Sacrifice (*Yawm al-Nahr*). He said: “Sacrifice, O people—may Allah accept your tribute—for I shall sacrifice al-Ja‘d ibn Dirham. He claims that Allah did not take Ibrāhīm as an Intimate Friend (*khalīl*), and that He did not speak to Mūsā directly. Far exalted is Allah beyond what al-Ja‘d says.” He then came down and slaughtered him.

When they first made their innovation public, they said: ‘Allah does not Himself speak nor does He speak to another’, as relayed from al-Ja‘d. This is the reality for their position. Anyone who says the Qur’an is created then the reality of his position is that Allah did not and does not speak, nor

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so called. The most often quoted account is that of Wāṣil ibn ‘Aṭā’ “withdrawing” from the circle of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī. The latter is reported to have said thereupon: *F’ tazala ‘annā Wāṣil*—“Wāṣil withdrew and left us.”



does He command and prohibit, nor does He love. When they saw how this goes against the Qur'an and the Muslims at large, they said: 'Allah speaks metaphorically; that is, He creates something that expresses on His behalf. He does not Himself speak.' When the Muslims found this an atrocious claim, they said: 'He literally speaks, but the speaker is he who originates speech and enacts it, even if in other than him. Anyone who originates speech, even if in other than himself, has literally spoken said speech.' They further said that the speaker is the one who 'does' (*fa'al*; i.e., causes) the speech, not the one in whom it subsists. This is what eventually settled as the formal Mutazilite position.

They obfuscated matters for the people, saying: 'The Muslims are in consensus that Allah is characterised by speech. They however differed over the meaning of the one who speaks (*mutakallim*)—is it the one who causes the speech, or the one in whom it subsists?' What they claim regarding a speaker being so by way of speech that subsists in other than him is a departure from reason, revealed law, and language.

The early Şifātīs from the Predecessors, imams, Kullābīs, Karrāmīs, and Asharites used to clarify matters in this context, asserting the misguidance of the Jahmīs, Mutazilites, and others in this regard.

However, Rāzī and his ilk belittled the dialectic, saying that it is a semantic enquiry (*baḥṭh lafẓī*). He claimed that it is of little benefit. He then responded to them with a very meek retort which we have discussed in other than this text.

This is a great mistake in two respects:

1. If the matter is revelatory, and you affirmed His being a speaker through the Messengers delivering His command and prohibition that is His speech, a complete exploration of this proof dictates that one analyses what the Messengers' intention was in saying that He commands, prohibits, and speaks. Is their intended meaning that He created speech in other than Him, or that speech subsisted from Him and He spoke it? Revelatory proofs are to be coupled with the phraseology of the Messengers and their languages that they addressed their people with. Thus, this premise becomes the relied upon pillar in responding to the Mutazilites, as employed by the early Şifātīs and their imams. In fact, it is the relied upon pillar in the meaning of His being a speaker, if this is to be proven by revelatory means.
2. The matter is not solely linguistic. When considering when an attribute subsists in some locus—does its ruling go back to said

locus or other than it? This is a beneficial intellectual endeavour in this context.

The Predecessors ﷺ appreciated the reality of this position and rejected it based on this principle, as mentioned by Bukhārī in his *Khalq al-Af'āl*. He says: "Ibn Muqātil said: I heard Ibn al-Mubārak saying: 'Whoever says, "Indeed I—I alone—am Allah. There is no god but I"<sup>225</sup> is created, is a disbeliever. No created being may ever say this.' He also said: 'We relay the statements of the Jews and the Christians, but are unable to relay those of the Jahmīs (i.e., they are even more abhorrent).' Sulaymān ibn Dāwūd al-Hāshimī said: 'Whoever says the Qur'an is created is a disbeliever. When Pharaoh said, "I am your lord, the most high"<sup>226</sup>, and they claim that was created, and the one who said, "Indeed I—I alone—am Allah. There is no god but I, so worship Me", claimed the same thing as Pharaoh and it is also created in their estimation—why does Pharaoh deserve eternal damnation for his statement but not this other claimant?' Abū 'Ubayd was informed of this, and he found merit in it."

Bukhārī said: "Abū al-Walīd said: I heard Yaḥyā ibn Sa'īd saying the following when it was mentioned to him that some people say the Qur'an is created: 'How do they deal with, "Say, 'He is Allah—One alone'"<sup>227</sup>, and how do they deal with His saying, "Indeed I—I alone—am Allah. There is no god but I"<sup>228</sup> He narrates from Wakī' ibn al-Jarrāḥ that he said: 'Do not belittle their saying that the Qur'an is created, for it is the worst of their statements. They are in fact divesting [Allah of His attributes] (exercising *ta'ḥīl*).'"

These statements from the Predecessors mean that whoever claims Allah's speech is created then the reality of his claim is that Allah ﷻ does not speak, and that the locus where 'Indeed I—I alone—am Allah. There is no god but I' subsisted is laying claim to divinity, just as Pharaoh laid claim to lordship when 'I am your lord, the most high' subsisted in him.

The words of the Predecessors are founded upon what they know of His having created the slaves' actions and their statements. Had His speech been that which He created in other than Him, then all speech is His speech, and the speech of Pharaoh is His speech. For the speaker is the one in whom speech subsists. God is not a speaker due to speech that subsists in other than Him. The same is true for the rest of attributes and actions. He is not knowing due to knowledge subsisting in other than Him, nor is He able

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225 *Tā-Hā*, 14.

226 *al-Nāzī'āt*, 24.

227 *al-Ikhlāṣ*, 1.

228 *Tā-Hā*, 14.

due to ability subsisting in other than Him, nor living due to life subsisting in other than Him. The same is also true for all those characterised by attributes. A thing is not living, knowing, and able by way of life, knowledge, and ability which subsist in other than it. It is not moving or still by way of movement and stillness that subsists in other than it. It is not coloured by way of a colour which subsists in other than it.

There are four matters of consideration here: two rational, and two revelatory and linguistic. These are:

1. If an attribute subsists in a locus, its ruling goes back to said locus such that it is what is characterised by it. Thus, if knowledge, ability, speech, movement, or stillness subsist in a locus, then it is what is knowledgeable, able, speaking, moving, or still.
2. Its ruling does not go back to other than this locus. One is not knowledgeable by knowledge which subsists in other than one, able by ability which subsists in other than one, speaking by speech which subsists in other than one, nor moving by movement which subsists in other than one. These are the two rational points.
3. One can thence etymologically derive a name borne of the given attribute to said locus, if the attribute in question is viable for such a derivation. That is, if knowledge, ability, speech, or movement subsists in a locus, one may say in its regard, ‘knowing’, ‘able’, ‘speaking’, or ‘moving’; unlike types of scent which a name may not be derived therefrom for its locus.
4. A name may not be etymologically derived for a locus where the attribute did not subsist. It may not be said of a locus where knowledge, ability, volition, speech, or movement did not subsist that it is knowing, able, possessing volition, speaking, or moving.

The Jahmīs and the Mutazilites opposed this with the actioned attributes (*ṣifāt fi‘liyyah*). They said: ‘Just as He is a creator and He is just by creation and justice that do not subsist in Him and exist in other than Him, then likewise He is speaking and possessing volition by speech and volition that do not subsist in Him. His speech subsist in other than Him.’

Whoever concedes this contravention—like al-Ash‘arī and those who followed him from the companions of Mālik, Shāfi‘ī, and Aḥmad—has made their contradiction clear. They did not respond to them (the Jahmīs and Mutazilites) with a proper answer. As for the Predecessors and the vast majority of Muslims from the various sects, then they coextensively applied

their principle. They said: ‘Actions subsist in Him just as attributes do, and creation is not the created.’ Bukhārī cited this as a scholarly consensus.

The one who says that the attributes are categorised into essential attributes (*ṣifāt dhātiyyah*) and actioned attributes then posits that actions do not subsist in Him is obfuscating matters. Allah ﷻ is not characterised by a thing which does not subsist from Him. If we concede that He may be characterised by what does not subsist from Him, then this is the principle of the Jahmīs who describe Him via His creation. They say: ‘He is speaking, possessing volition, pleased, angry, loving, hating, and merciful, all by way of creatures that are separate from Him, not due to matters that subsist in His essence.’

This must be understood. When the Predecessors appreciated it, they realised that the view of one who says that ‘Indeed I—I alone—am Allah. There is no god but I’<sup>229</sup> is created necessitates that this speech becomes the tree’s, not Allah’s, since it subsisted in the tree and not Him. Similarly, the speech of Pharaoh subsisted from him. Notwithstanding Allah having created all of it, for He creates the slaves, their deeds, and their speech.

This also supports the conclusion that, if the one who creates speech in other than him is considered speaking, then all speech in existence is necessarily His. This is the position of the extreme Jahmī Unitarians (*al-Jahmiyyah al-Ittihādiyyah*), like the author of *al-Fuṣūṣ*<sup>230</sup> and his like. He says:

*Wa kullu kalāmin fī al-wujūdi kalāmuhū*  
*Sawā’un ‘alaynā nathruhū wa niḏāmuhū*

“All speech in existence is His speech,  
Regardless whether it be prose or poetry.”

It is well-known that this rhetoric is more severe in its disbelief than that of the idol worshippers, as mentioned by Ibn al-Mubārak and others from the Predecessors.

Additionally, Allah ﷻ has caused certain things to utter. He ﷻ says: “On the day when their tongues and their hands and their feet testify against them regarding what they used to do. On that day, Allah pays them their true recompense in full, and they learn that it is Allah who is the Manifest Truth.”<sup>231</sup> “When they reach it (the Fire), their hearing, their sight, and their skin testify against them regarding what they used to do. They will say to their skins, ‘Why did you testify against us?’ They will say, ‘Allah,

229 *Tā-Hā*, 14.

230 Translator’s note: *Fuṣūṣ al-Hikam* by Ibn ‘Arabī.

231 *al-Nūr*, 24-25.

who made everything speak, made us speak.”<sup>232</sup> Thus, He is the one who makes everything utter, and is the creator of its utterance. There is no dispute over the fact that He creates utterance in the non-living that lacks choice (e.g., a hand, or skin). The Qadarīs only dispute over the creation of the speech and actions of the living.

If the reality of His speech is speech which He creates in other than Him, then all the aforementioned is in fact His speech. Any usage of first-person pronouns (*ḍamīr al-mutakallim*) in this created speech either goes back to its creator or its locus.

If it goes back to its creator, then the limbs’ testimony is Allah’s; Pharaoh’s saying, ‘I am your lord, most high’, is Allah’s statement; their saying to their skins, ‘Why did you testify against us?’ is Allah’s statement; and the skins saying, ‘Allah, who made everything speak, made us speak’ would mean, ‘I made myself speak!’ There would be no difference for them (espousers of this view) between ‘He uttered’ (*naṭaqa*) and ‘He caused another to utter’ (*anṭaqa*).

If instead the pronouns go back to the locus of the speech, then the speech created in the tree, ‘Indeed I—I alone—am Allah. There is no god but I’, would be the tree’s speech. That is, the tree would be the one who said, ‘Indeed I—I alone—am Allah. There is no god but I.’ This is the reality of their position; since it is affirmed that speech is attributed to whomever it subsists from, such that first-person pronouns within the speech refer to its locus.

As this meaning (i.e., speech is attributed to the locus it subsists from) was settled in the dispositions and minds of the people, the Predecessors would refute these Jahmīs by saying, ‘the Qur’an is the speech of Allah.’ The reality of the latter’s position is that the Qur’an is not the speech of Allah and is the speech of a created body, and that Allah did not speak to Mūsā and instead one of His creatures spoke to Him.

Bukhārī says: “‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Affān said: I heard Sufyān ibn ‘Uyaynah say the following the year Marīsī died; he got up angrily from his sitting and said: ‘Woe betide you! The Qur’an is the speech of Allah. I accompanied true scholars and was with them: ‘Amr ibn Dīnār, Ibn al-Munkadir—until he mentioned Maṣṣūr, al-A‘mash, and Mis‘ar ibn Kidām—they all spoke against I‘tizāl, Rafḍ<sup>233</sup>, and Qadar (i.e., the Qadarīs),

232 *Fuṣṣilat*, 20-21.

233 Translator’s note: What Rāfiḍī creed is referred to as. A Rāfiḍī adheres to Rafḍ. The word linguistically refers to ‘rejection’. According to Ibn Taymiyyah, it became a reference for early Shiites who separated into two factions: those who “rejected” Zayd ibn ‘Alī for his asking Allah to have mercy upon Abū Bakr and ‘Umar, and those who did not. The former are the Rāfiḍah, and the latter the Zaydis.

and told us to keep away from these people. We do not know the Qur'an except that it is the speech of Allah. Whoever says other than this, then may Allah's curse be upon him. How similar is this view to that of the Christians! Do not sit with them and do not listen to their words.”

Ibn 'Uyaynah said these words with regards to Rafḍ and I'tizāl as the Mutazilites at the time of 'Amr ibn 'Ubayd and his like were not Jahmīs. They disputed over the divine promise of punishment (*wa'īd*) and denial of predestination. The negation of attributes proliferated among them at a later stage. This is why when Imam Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal mentioned the position of Jahm in his *al-Radd 'alā al-Jahmiyyah* he said: “A group among the companions of 'Amr ibn 'Ubayd followed him.” It (that the Divine does not speak etc.) became the popularised view of Abū al-Hudhayl al-'Allāf, al-Nazzām, and others of their ilk among the Kalam Folk.

As for the Rāfiḍīs, there was not among their early proponents those who negated the attributes. Rather, extreme notions of corporeality (*ta-jsim*) were popular among their seniors, as is the case with Hishām ibn al-Ḥakam and his like.

Bukhārī says: “al-Ḥakam ibn Muhammad al-Ṭabarī narrated to me—I dictated from him in Makkah—that he said: Sufyān ibn 'Uyaynah narrated to us that he said: ‘I was present around our senior scholars for seventy years, among whom was 'Amr ibn Dīnār. All of them say, ‘The Qur'an is the uncreated speech of Allah.’”

**My commentary:** Marīsī authored a text in negating the attributes which he would teach in Makkah towards the end of Ibn 'Uyaynah's life. The news of this became widespread among the Makkan scholars. They said, ‘He authored a text in divesting [Allah from His attributes] (*ta'tīl*).’ They sought to get him punished and locked up. This was before he had reached al-Ma'mūn and the Inquisition (*Miḥnah*) had unfolded.

Ibn 'Uyaynah's saying, ‘How similar is this view to that of the Christians!’ is indeed as he stated—this is thoroughly explained in other than this context. 'Īsā is created, and they make him the word itself, not the one created by the word. Furthermore, the senior clergy among the Christians—like Ghashtakīn, one of their grand scholars—say: ‘Allah manifested to us in the form of man for us to see, just as His speech manifested to Mūsā in the tree. Thus, the voice that was heard is the speech of Allah even if He created it in other than Him, and this witnessed man is Allah even if He inhered in other than Him.’

Bukhārī says: “'Alī ibn 'Āṣim said: ‘Those who said Allah has a son are not more disbelieving than those who said the He does not speak.’” He says: “'Alī ibn 'Abdillāh—meaning Ibn al-Madīnī—said, ‘The Qur'an is the speech of Allah. Whoever says it is created is a disbeliever who cannot

lead the prayer (*lā yuṣallā khalfah*).” He says: “Abū al-Walīd said, ‘Whoever says the Qur’an is created is a disbeliever. Whoever does not hold in his heart the Qur’an as uncreated is outside the fold of Islam.’” He says: “Abū ‘Ubayd said: ‘I inspected the rhetoric of the Jews, the Christians, and the Magians and found no one more astray in their disbelief than them (the Negators). I find one who does not declare them disbelievers to be ignorant, except one who does not know their disbelief.’” He says: “Mu‘āwiyah ibn ‘Ammār said: I heard Ja‘far ibn Muhammad say: ‘The Qur’an is the uncreated speech of Allah.’”

This is a vastly explored field that is all over the books of Sunnah and Hadith. The aforementioned is what they asserted on the subject of divine speech.

## Section Nine

There are other scholarly methods employed in affirming divine speech. Among those is what is reported in the Qur'an in this regard. Allah ﷻ says: "Allah said..."<sup>234</sup>, "Allah says..."<sup>235</sup>, "Allah spoke to Mūsā directly"<sup>236</sup>, "When Mūsā came for Our appointment and his Lord spoke to him..."<sup>237</sup>.

Allah mentions His word (*kalimah*) and words (*kalimāt*) in the Qur'an. He ﷻ says: "Were it not for a word that had preceded from your Lord..."<sup>238</sup>, "Thus the words<sup>239</sup> of your Lord has been completed in truth and justice."<sup>240</sup>

The Qur'an has mentions of Allah's call (*munādāh*) and communion (*munājāh*): "We called out to him (Mūsā ﷺ) from the right side of Mount Tūr, and brought him near in communion"<sup>241</sup>, "On the day when He calls to them and says, 'Where are My associates whom you used to claim?'"<sup>242</sup>, "On the day when He calls to them and says, 'What response did you give the Messengers?'"<sup>243</sup>, "When Your Lord called Mūsā, 'Go to the unjust people.'"<sup>244</sup>

The Qur'an also has mentions of His giving tidings (*inbā'*) and narratives (*qashaṣ*): "Allah has given us tidings of you"<sup>245</sup>, "We narrate to you the best of narratives"<sup>246</sup>.

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234 *al-Mā'idah*, 115.

235 *al-Aḥzāb*, 3.

236 *al-Nisā'*, 164.

237 *al-A'rāf*, 143.

238 *Yūnus*, 19.

239 Translator's note: Two recitations are valid here: *kalimah*—'word'—and *kalimāt*—'words'.

240 *al-An'ām*, 115.

241 *Maryam*, 52.

242 *al-Qaṣaṣ*, 62.

243 *al-Qaṣaṣ*, 65.

244 *al-Shu'arā'*, 10.

245 *al-Tawbah*, 94.

246 *Yūsuf*, 3.



There are also mentions of His discourse (*ḥadīth*) and statement (*qawl*): “Allah—there is no god except He. He will surely gather you to the Day of Resurrection about which there is no doubt. Who is truer in discourse than Allah?”<sup>247</sup>, “Allah has revealed the best discourse”<sup>248</sup>, “His statement is the truth, and to Him belongs the dominion on the day when the Trumpet is blown.”<sup>249</sup>

The Qur’an mentions ‘statement’ as being from Him, for example: “But the statement from Me will come true: ‘I will most surely fill Hell with the jinn and mankind, altogether.’”<sup>250</sup>

Whatever is mentioned in the Qur’an as being from Him or is attributed to Him is of two types. It may be a self-subsisting individual or some matter that subsists in said individual. In such cases, it is a created being. For example, Allah refers to ‘Īsā as: “A spirit from Him”<sup>251</sup>; and He says: “He has subjected to you whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth—all from Him”<sup>252</sup>, “Whatever you have of blessings, it is from Allah.”<sup>253</sup> Alternatively, it may be an attribute that does not subsist in and of itself, and no locus has been mentioned for it other than Allah. In such instances, what is mentioned is an attribute of His, like speech and knowledge.

If command (*amr*) is mentioned in its verbal noun sense, then it is in the latter vein, as in the Qur’anic passage: “Truly, His is the creation and the command.”<sup>254</sup> If it comes in the sense of a created entity, then it is of the former vein, as in the Qur’anic passage: “Allah’s command has come, so do not rush it.”<sup>255</sup>

In this way, one distinguishes between the speech of Allah, knowledge of Allah, slave of Allah, house of Allah, she-camel of Allah, and His saying: “We sent to her Our spirit, so He appeared to her as a human being in perfect shape.”<sup>256</sup>

This is something that is understood in speech. If one says, ‘The knowledge of So-and-so, his speech, and his will’, these things will not be held as separable from said person. The reason for this is that they are attributes of what they subsist in. Hence, if they are ascribed to it, it is as an attribute

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247 *al-Nisā’*, 87.

248 *al-Zumar*, 23.

249 *al-An‘ām*, 73.

250 *al-Sajdah*, 13.

251 *al-Nisā’*, 171.

252 *al-Jāthiyah*, 13.

253 *al-Nahl*, 53.

254 *al-A‘rāf*, 54.

255 *al-Nahl*, 1.

256 *Maryam*, 17.

is ascribed to the attributed. Had the attribute subsisted in other than it, then it would be an attribute for this other, not for it.

One ought to know that using revelatory evidence to prove divine speech, as above, is more complete than doing so with hearing and sight. What Allah reported about Himself in terms of His statement, speech, giving tidings, narrative, command, prohibition, address, call, communion, and their like, is many times more frequent than what He reports of His being hearing and seeing. Moreover, He has varied His reporting about each type of speech, repeated it in different contexts, such that one cannot enumerate every mention thereof in the Qur'an without severe toil.

It is necessarily known that the Qur'an's addressee does not understand these mentions of speech as Allah creating a voice in other than Him. Rather, they understand that He is the one who spoke and said it; as 'Aishah says regarding the calumny against her: "I thought myself unworthy for Allah to speak about me in a revelation to be recited." Thus, if the intended meaning behind all these superabundant, explicit, profound reports is other than what they apparently entail, it would have been necessary to clarify this immediately, for delaying clarification beyond its time of need is impermissible.

No one can relay from them (the Negators) that they practically consider speech as ascribed to the one who originated it in other than himself. Expressions like, 'He said or says,' and 'He spoke or speaks,' are not used except if the speech subsists in the speaker in question.

If the Jahmīs—from the Mutazilites and the like—argue that a speaker is only so due to his 'doing' the speech, then the response is that the speaker did not originate it in other than him nor is his speech distinct from him. You consider speech that is separate and distinct from the speaker as still being his.

If they say: 'We do not comprehend speech except as belonging to he who does it by his own will and ability. One's speech is not considered his due to it merely subsisting in his essence, but due to him doing it.'

The response is: 'One's speech is that which subsists in him, as well as that which he speaks in his essence by his will and ability. The two descriptions are true: Speech subsists in the speaker's essence, and he speaks it by his will and ability. Your making speech attributable to the speaker only if he does it is no better a claim than others making speech the speaker's only if it subsists in his essence.'

This point is debated among the Şifātīs after their having deemed the Jahmīs among the philosophers and the Mutazilites astray. They disagree according to two popular views. Even those who said speech is a meaning that subsists in the speaker's self prior to vocalisation disagreed over this,

as mentioned by Muhammad ibn Kullāb according to what Abū Bakr ibn Fūrak relays from him.

Ibn Fūrak says: “His (Ibn Kullāb’s) explicit expression and the wording he employed in his *al-Ṣifāt al-Kabīr* in his exposition of speech is as follows. He says: ‘As for speech, it is as we witness of it—a meaning which subsists in the self. A group claim that is a descriptor thereof, while others claim it as an act it realises. It may be expressed in words, writing, and sign—all this may be referred to as ‘speech’ or ‘statement’ due to it fulfilling what is qualified by these subtle meanings.”

Abū Bakr ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz mentioned in his book what Qāḍī Abū Yaʿlā said on the matter: That Imam Aḥmad’s companions differed over the meaning of their saying, ‘The Qur’an is uncreated’—does it mean that it is a concomitant attribute of Allah like knowledge and ability, or does He speak when He wills and is silent when He wills.

This relates to the subject matter of actions relating to His will subsisting in His essence—is this possible or not? Things like, arriving (*ityān*), coming (*majīʾ*), settling (*istiwāʾ*), and similar acts. The topic is also known as ‘the subsistence of originated novelties’ (*ḥulūl al-ḥawādith*) [in the divine essence]. The various sects in the ummah and others differ according to two views—even the philosophers have two positions: the early among them and late. Abū ʿAbdillāh al-Rāzī mentioned that all sects are ultimately obliged to adopt this view (i.e., *ḥulūl al-ḥawādith*) even if they do not formally espouse it.

The first to explicitly reject it were the Jahmīs, Mutazilites, and their like. Abū Muhammad ibn Kullāb agreed with them, along with his followers like al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī, Abū al-ʿAbbās al-Qalānīsī, and Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī. Likewise those who agreed with them from the followers of the imams, like al-Qāḍī Abū Yaʿlā, Abū al-Wafā ibn ʿAqīl, and Abū al-Ḥasan al-Zāghūnī. It is also the position of the late Hadith Folk like Abū Ḥātim al-Bustī, al-Khaṭṭābī, and others.

Many of the kalam sects affirm it however, like the Hishāmīs, Karrāmīs, Zuhayrīs, Abū Muʿādh al-Tūmanī, and their like; as al-Ashʿarī cites in *al-Maqālāt*. It is also the position of the chief early philosophers, Abū al-Barakāt the author of *al-Muʿtabar*, and other later scholars.

It is the position of the majority among the Hadith Folk. This is cited by ʿUthmān ibn Saʿīd al-Dāramī, the Imam of Imams Abū Bakr ibn Khuzaymah, and others as the school of the Predecessors and imams. It is also mentioned as such by Shaykh al-Islām Abū Ismāʿīl al-Anṣārī and Abū ʿAmr ibn ʿAbd al-Barr al-Namarī. Many factions from the followers of Aḥmad also espoused it: al-Khallāl and his companion<sup>257</sup>, Ibn Ḥāmid, and their ilk.

257 Translator’s note: Abū Bakr ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ibn Jaʿfar ibn Aḥmad, known

It is the view held by Dāwūd ibn ʿAlī al-Aṣḥānī and his followers. It is the entailment of what is reported from the Predecessors and imams from the Companions, the Successors, and their successors, until ʿAbdullāh ibn al-Mubārak, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, Bukhārī the author of the *Ṣaḥīḥ*, and their like. It is what the rhetoric of the Predecessors implies.

When all these people say: ‘The speaker is the one in whom speech subsists, and he speaks by his will and ability’, they cut off the Mutazilites, and their argument is bereft of them, for they (the forementioned scholars) took both definitions into consideration. Whoever makes the speaker the one in whom speech subsists even if not speaking by his will and ability, or makes him the one who does the speech with his will and ability even if it does not subsist in him, has incorrectly omitted one of the two descriptions.

### Affirming and negating the divine attributes in light of reason and revelation

There is no doubt that the avenues pursued in negating or affirming are either revelatory or rational. As for revelation, then the Negators have naught of it in their favour. The Qur’an and the Hadith are on the side of affirmation. Allah ﷻ says: “His command once He has desired anything is to say to it, ‘Be,’ and so it is”<sup>258</sup>, “On the day when He calls to them and says, ‘What response did you give the Messengers?’”<sup>259</sup>, “Say, ‘Work, for Allah will see your work, as will His Messenger and the believers’”<sup>260</sup>, “He created the heavens and the earth in six days then settled to the Throne”<sup>261</sup>, “Then He settled to the heaven while it was smoke”<sup>262</sup>, “Are they waiting for anything but for the angels to come to them or for your Lord to come or for some of your Lord’s signs to come?”<sup>263</sup> There is a lot of this in the Qur’an.

Likewise is the case with the authentic Prophetic reports which support affirmation. An example of this is found in the tradition where the Prophet ﷺ led the twilight (*fajr*<sup>264</sup>) prayer at Ḥudaybiyyah under a dark, nightly sky, then said: “Do you know what your Lord said on this night? He said, ‘Among my slaves are those who, on this day, awakened as either believing

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as *Ghulām al-Khallāl* (Khallāl’s Boy) or *Ṣāhib al-Khallāl* (Khallāl’s Companion).

258 *Yā-Sīn*, 82.

259 *al-Qaṣaṣ*, 65.

260 *al-Tawbah*, 105.

261 *al-Aʿrāf*, 54.

262 *Fuṣṣilat*, 11.

263 *al-Anʿām*, 158.

264 Translator’s note: The text states *ṣalāt al-ṣubḥ*—the *ṣubḥ* prayer. It’s the same as the *fajr* prayer for the purposes of this context.

or disbelieving in Me.” Likewise are the reports of Allah addressing the slaves on the Day of Resurrection, His addressing the angels, and similar traditions.

Everything that the Mutazilites use as proof for the createdness of the Qur’an from this does not indicate that it is separate from him, and rather shows that He speaks by His will and ability. It is therefore possible for them (the Predecessors) to conform to it and their view to be encompassing of belief in everything Allah revealed; which in turn indicates He speaks by His will and ability, and that His speech is uncreated; unlike other than them. For there are those who accept some textual proofs and reject others by way of distortion (*tahrīf*) or deference (*tafwīd*). Whoever says He is speaking by His will and ability and that His speech subsists in Him does not have to worry about any of this. The onus of proof is on the one who disagrees: he needs to rationally showcase its impossibility, then clarify how the text can be interpreted.

As for rational methods, then both sides argue that it is on their side. Those who affirm say: ‘His power over what subsists in Him of speech and actions is an attribute of perfection, just as what subsists in Him of knowledge and ability is an attribute of perfection—it is clear that whoever can act and speak is closer to perfection than he who cannot—and just as His ability to originate things is an attribute of perfection. The one who can create is more perfect than one who cannot.’ They further say: ‘The living is never free of such considerations, and life is the attribute that acts as a gauge here, just as it does for the rest of the attributes. If we consider a living person who is unable to speak and act himself, he would be considered lacking and incapacitated, just as a disabled mute person would be, and just as a living person who does not hear nor see is deaf and blind.’ The Şifātīs do not traverse an avenue in affirming the attributes except that they (the Predecessors) traverse its like in affirming them.

The Negators are of two types:

The first—the origin—are the Mutazilites and their ilk from the Jahmīs. They negate the attributes unconditionally. Their argument for negating the subsistence of actions in Allah is of the same nature as their argument in negating the subsistence of attributes in Him. They equate between negating the former and the latter, as they have explicitly mentioned. They have no unique argument against the subsistence of originated novelties itself.

As for those who affirm the attributes but negate voluntary actions subsisting in Him, like Ibn Kullāb and al-Ash‘arī, then they made a distinction between the two. They say that, if we permit that originated novelties (*ḥawādith*) may subsist in Him then He would not be free of them (*lam yakhlu minhā*). This is because what is susceptible of a thing (*al-qābil lil-*

*shay'*) cannot be free of it and its opposite—what is not free of originated novelties is itself originated. They use this proof to argue for the novelty of bodies, since they are not free from novel accidents (*a<sup>ʿ</sup>rād ḥādithah*) like movement and stillness, and assembly and division.

The early scholars responded to them (the *Ṣifātī mutakallimun*) with three arguments:

1. Your using the subsistence of actions in Him as proof of His originated novelty is akin to the Mutazilites' using the subsistence of attributes in Him as proof thereof, who say: 'Attributes are accidents, and the latter may only subsist in a body.' You distinguished between the attributes and accidents. This is a formulaic distinction which ultimately goes back to technical convention. If it is possible for attributes to subsist in Him, which are accidents in other than Him, and in doing so He is not an originated body; then it is possible for actions to subsist in Him, which are movements in other than Him, and in doing so He is not an originated body—this is by way of obligation (*ilzām*).
2. We do not concede that what is susceptible of a thing cannot be free of it and its opposite. Abū ʿAbdillāh al-Rāzī, Abū al-Ḥasan al-Āmidī, and others like them admitted the falsity of this principle. It is what al-Ashʿarī and his companions founded various doctrines upon, like the matter at hand: the impossibility of the subsistence of originated novelties [in Allah], and matters related to the Qur'an.
3. For argument's sake, let us say it cannot be free of it and its opposite, and that this necessitates the subsequence of originated novelties (*ta<sup>ʿ</sup>āqub al-ḥawādith*). It nonetheless does not follow that this yields the origination of what subsists in Him.

### The novel origination of the cosmos and the *mutakallimun*

They (the early scholars) further said: 'The evidence you (*Ṣifātī mutakallimun*) formulate for the origination of the cosmos in this regard is weak. The philosophers obliged you to precepts you did not rid yourself of, and you cannot rid yourself of them without permitting for certain matters in the pre-eternal (*al-qadīm*)?'

For they (the *Ṣifātī mutakallimun*) say: Whatever takes place when previously it never was requires an originated cause (*sabab ḥādith*). This originated cause is contingent (*mumkin*), and the contingent does not have either of its two possibilities (existence and non-existence) realised without

a preponderator (*murajjih*). If the contingent is not necessarily realised at the realisation of the preponderator then the latter is not a complete preponderator (*murajjih tamm*), and is hence wanting for completeness. Then, the origination of this completeness is of the same nature as the origination of the first novelty in question—a complete preponderator is required for it to be necessarily realised therewith. Every originated novelty requires a complete cause to realise it at the completeness of said cause. If the cosmos is originated after having been non-existent, and there is no cause which entails its origination—that is: there was not, at the point of its origination, anything which necessitates its preponderation that was not there before its origination; i.e., both cases are the same—then the result is preponderation of novelty without a preponderator (*tarjih al-ḥudūth bilā mrajjih*).

This here is one of the most difficult matters for the mutakallimūn in their dialectic exploration with the philosophers on the subject of the origination of the cosmos (*ḥudūth al-‘ālam*). It is one of the strongest claimed positions of the philosophers. When they saw that the origination of a novelty is impossible without an originated cause, they said: ‘What is said with regards to this novelty (the cause) is the same with regards to the former.’<sup>265</sup>

Those who affirm the subsistence of voluntary actions in Allah ﷻ say: ‘The philosophers’ argument is void according to our principle. It is said to them: You permit the subsistence of novelties in the pre-eternal since, in your estimation, celestial spheres are pre-eternal, yet movements subsist in them. You also permit novelties without beginning<sup>266</sup> (*ḥawādith lā awwal lahā*). Subsequent movements (*ta‘āqub al-ḥarakāt*) over a thing does not necessitate its novelty. If this is the case, why is it not permitted that the creator of the cosmos have voluntary actions which subsist in him through which novelties originate? Their regress (*tasalsul*) and subsequence (*ta‘āqub*) are not proof for the novelty of what they subsisted in.’

They (affirmers of subsistence of actions) say to their companions (the Šifātīs) who prove the novelty of the cosmos in this way: ‘Employing this reasoning sets you up poorly against the philosophers. If you affirm the novelty of the cosmos, saying, ‘The originated (*muḥdath*) requires an originator (*muḥdith*); for the specifying of novelties in time requires a specifier’, the Materialists (*Dahriyyah*) respond, ‘You permit the origination of novelty without an originated cause that entails the specification of certain

265 Translator’s note: An invocation of *petitio principii*, begging the question.

266 Translator’s note: That is, each novelty by itself originates into existence, but the genre of novelties is pre-eternal—i.e., there is no single novelty that can be identified as the first, though any given novelty in the set of all novelties has an existence which is originated.



novelties and not others.’ If you then say, ‘The pre-eternal specifies one like from another (*mithl ‘an mithl*) without a cause anyway’, then you permit the specification of a like over another without a specifier, which in turn nullifies you affirming knowledge in the maker—which is the whole point of this argument of yours. Thus, you traverse a path that does not yield your intended epistemic goal, and give your hostile, misguided enemy a free hand against you. It is like one who wished to conquer the enemy by way of illegitimate means, so he is neither victorious in battle, nor can he defend his own lands thereafter. Rather, he empowered his enemy such that they now have the upper hand having been initially at bay.

This is why the Predecessors and the imams deemed aberrant kalam that is contrary to the Book and the Sunnah as blameworthy. It contains such falsities in rhetoric and rulings that dictate the denial of some of what the Messenger reported, and gives a free hand for the enemies of Islam against it.

This is not the place to deeply explicate these immense and vast topics. We merely make brief note of it here as per the given context.

### **Rational proofs for divine speech**

Delving into the topic of divine speech has confused many people, those of weak followership and knowledge of what Allah sent His Noble Messengers. There are various revelatory methods employed that are too extensive for the purposes of this work.

As for rational methods, then they are many in kind:

1. The living who is not characterised with speech is necessarily characterised with its opposite; namely silence (*sukūt*) or muteness (*kharas*). This is a defect which Allah transcends. Thus, He is characterised by speech. This method is also used to prove His being hearing and speaking. If He is living but is not hearing and seeing, then He is necessarily characterised by their opposite; namely deafness and blindness.
2. Speech is an attribute of perfection. Those who consider it to be unrelated to His will and choice consider it to be like knowledge and ability, and those who consider it to be related said, ‘His being characterised by speech, speaking whenever He wills, is an attribute of perfection.’ The latter may apply this principle coextensively, in that He does any voluntary action that subsists in Him, making this an attribute of perfection. They may also say, ‘The ability to do this is the attribute of perfection. Perfection may not depart from the essence. He is pre-eternally and post-eternally perfect, deserving



of all attributes of perfection.’ Thus, the ability to say what He wills and do what He wills is an attribute of perfection. Ability (*qudrah*) by itself is different from ability along with what it is coupled with of its object (*maqdūr*). The latter is founded on the following enquiry: That which subsists in Him of said matters, is it all preceded by non-existence or does it pre-eternally subsist in Him? There are two positions on this:

- a. It is all preceded by non-existence, as posited by the Karrāmīs and others.
  - b. It is not preceded by non-existence, as is the view of the majority of the Hadith Folk, and many among the people of kalam, jurisprudence, and Sufism.
3. The creatures are categorised into speaking and non-speaking. The former is closer to perfection than the latter. Any form of perfection in a created being is ultimately an endowment from the Creator; thus, the Creator is all the worthier of it. Whoever considers Him as non-speaking then he has likened Him to the dead and the inanimate that do not speak. This is an attribute of imperfection, since the speaking is more complete than the non-speaking. Allah ﷻ says in admonishing those who worship what does not speak, benefit, nor harm: “Do they not see that it cannot return a word to them, nor does it possess for them harm or benefit?”<sup>267</sup> He says in another passage: “Do they not see that it cannot speak to them or guide them to any way?”<sup>268</sup> He ﷻ also says: “Allah set forth a parable of two men: one of them a mute who has no power over anything, and he is wholly dependent upon his patron; wherever he directs him, he achieves nothing good. Can he be equal to one who commands to justice and is on a straight path?”<sup>269</sup> Allah dispraises the idol as mute (*abkam*), unable to do anything, since it is known that inability to speak and act is a defect, and speaking and ability are attributes of perfection.


The difference between the third and second arguments is that the third employs a fortiori reasoning: the creator has a better claim to any attribute of perfection than the created, and it is impossible that the former be characterised by defects. The second argument is that Allah is deserving of all attributes of perfection insofar as they are attributes of perfection,

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267 *Tā-Hā*, 89.

268 *al-A‘rāf*, 148.

269 *al-Nahl*, 76.

regardless of whether they are found in created beings or not, since He  is free of fault in any capacity.



## Section Ten

The author says: “The evidence that he is seeing and hearing is revelatory reports (*sam‘iyyāt*).”

**My commentary:** Affirming Allah’s being a hearer and seer, and that this is not His mere knowledge of the heard (*masmū‘āt*) and the seen (*mar‘iyyāt*), is the position of the Affirmation Folk among the Sunnah and Community Folk: the Predecessors of the imams; the people of Hadith, jurisprudence, and mysticism; and the Şifātī mutakallimun, like Abū Muhammad ibn Kullāb, Abū al-‘Abbās al-Qalānisī, and Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī and his followers.

A group from the Basran Mutazilites also hold this view. In fact, the early Mutazilites are upon this, considering Him to be hearing and seeing Himself, just as He is knowing and able Himself. Affirming this is like affirming His being characterised by speech. It is in fact stronger in some respects. The Basran Mutazilites affirm Him as perceiving (*mudrik*) like His being knowing and able, unlike His being a speaker which is in the realm of His being a creator.

There are ways in which people affirm Him as hearing and seeing:

**The first** is revelatory, as mentioned by the author. That is, references in the Qur’an and the Sunnah of Him as hearing and seeing. It is not possible that their intended meaning be knowledge of what is heard and seen, for Allah differentiated between knowledge on one hand and hearing and seeing on the other, as well as between hearing and seeing. He does not differentiate between one knowledge and another due to the variety of knowables (*ma‘lūmāt*).

Allah ﷻ says: “If you are ever spurred by a spurring from the devil, take refuge with Allah; indeed, He is the Hearing, the Knowing”<sup>270</sup>, “He is Hearing, Knowing”<sup>271</sup>, “If they resolve to divorce—then indeed Allah is

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270 *Fuṣṣilat*, 36.

271 *al-A‘rāf*, 200.

Hearing, Knowing.”<sup>272</sup> He mentioned His hearing their words as well as His knowledge to include their internal states. He says to Mūsā and Hārūn: “I am indeed with you—I hear and I see [your affairs].”<sup>273</sup>

In the *Sunan*, it is found that the Prophet ﷺ recited the following on his minbar: “Indeed, Allah commands you to return trusts back to their owners, and that when you judge between mankind, you judge with justice; indeed, Allah admonishes you with what is excellent. Indeed, Allah is Hearing, Seeing.”<sup>274</sup> In doing so, he pointed his thumb to his ear and his index finger to his eye. Undoubtedly, he intended to affirm the attribute, and not to liken the Creator to the creation. Had hearing and sight been knowledge, this action would be incorrect.

**The second** is to say: Had He not been characterised by hearing and sight, then He would necessarily be characterised with their opposite; namely deafness and blindness. The gauge for a thing being hearing, seeing, and speaking is life—if life is negated, then the attributed may no longer be characterised by said attributes. Inanimate objects cannot be characterised by them due to their lacking life. Since life is the gauge, then the living is susceptible to having these attributes. If a living being does not have these attributes, then it necessarily has their opposite attributes, for what is susceptible to a pair of two antithetical attributes must necessarily be characterised by one or the other. If it were possible for the attributed to be free of all attributes that are antithetical opposites, then there is necessarily an individuated being free of any quality; that is, the existence of a quiddity without an accident subsisting in it.

## Mental and extramental existence

It is necessarily known that a quiddity may not exist without an accident, which is the impossibility of an individual or essence being bare of attributes. It is if one were to conceive of a body that is not moving nor still, not living nor dead, not circular nor polygonal, etc. For this reason, all rational folk from the mutakallimun and philosophers and others have unanimously rejected the possibility of there being a quiddity that is free of all accidents, as is relayed from some of the ancient philosophers. It is said that they posited the existence of a substance that is free of any form. This is attributed to Plato’s school of philosophy. Aristotle and his followers confuted this claim.

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272 *al-Baqarah*, 227.

273 *Tā-Hā*, 46.

274 *al-Nisā’*, 58.

We thoroughly discuss this in other works. What Plato and his party posit of a matter in the external world that is free of any type of form, a non-body (*khalāʾ*)—a substance that is a quiddity—that exists as distinct from bodies and their attributes, the Platonic Ideals themselves—extramental, universal realities that are divorced from individuated existents—are all but mental constructions which the mind abstracts from existing, individual beings. They think these purported entities exist outside the mind. This is the same as what the Pythagoreans before them believed, claiming that numbers have an extramental existence. It is even what Aristotle and his followers espoused: affirming a matter that is not a physical body nor its attributes, and affirming universal quiddities (*māhiyyāt kulliyyah*) for individuals in contradistinction to their persons in the external world.

The source of this conflation is that quiddity (*māhiyyah*)—as per their technical use thereof for the most part—is a name given to what is conceptualised in the mind, while existence (*wujūd*) is a name given for what exists in individuals. The difference between what is mental and extramental is not seriously debated by any sound-minded person. The error they fell into is thinking that the quiddity of an entity exists externally, and distinctly so from the individual that exists externally.

This is a mistake. What is in the self—regardless if it is referred to as a mental existence, a mental quiddity, or anything else—is other than what is external—regardless if its referred to as an existence, a quiddity, or anything else. Saying that, externally, in an existent, individuated essence (*jawhar muʿayyan mawjūd*)—like a human being, for example—there are two essences: one is his quiddity and the second his existence, is false. It is just as false as their saying that he has two essences: the first his matter and the second his form, or their saying that he is constituted from animality and rationality. If by animality and rationality they are referring to two essences—the animal and the rational—then the individuated person is the animal, and he is also the rational. There are no two persons here, one an animal and the other rational. If instead they mean by those terms life and rationality themselves, then these are two attributes that subsist in man. The attribute subsists in the one characterised by it as an accident subsists in an essence. An essence is not constituted from the accidents that subsist in it, nor is the existence of its accidents prior to its own existence. This topic is explored in detail in other than this commentary.

The point here is that Aristotle and his followers from the philosophers refuted those who permitted the existence of a matter without form. They are thus in agreement with the Kalam Folk and all sound-minded people: that a body cannot be free of all attributes and accidents. Though al-Ṣāliḥī permitted this as an initial mode of being (*ibtidāʾan*), he denied that this

may be so indefinitely (*dawāman*). The majority denied that both initial and indefinite states are impossible.

### Names, attributes, and their opposites

Where there is debate is whether this necessarily applies to all types of accidents. It is posited, for example, that it (an essence) must necessarily have one of two opposing pairs of accidents subsist in it, and that whatever has no opposite then one of its genres must subsist in it. This is the position of al-Ash<sup>ʿ</sup>arī and who followed him.

It is also said that it must have modes of being (*akwān*) subsist in it; namely movement or stillness, and assembly or division. It may be free of other than it. This is the position of the Basran Mutazilites. It has also been posited that it is possible for it to be free of modes of being but not colours, as mentioned by al-Ka<sup>ʿ</sup>bī and his followers from the Baghdadis. The latter may dispute over a thing's susceptibility—among bodies—to many accidents, but agree over the impossibility of a body's freedom of an accident and its opposite after its having been susceptible to it. This is because it is mentally inconceivable for a thing to be free from both attributes in an opposing pair despite it being susceptible to either one of them in principle.

Through the above, it becomes clear that the living who is susceptible to hearing, sight, and speech may either be characterized by them or their opposite; namely deafness, blindness, and muteness. Whoever considers God free from both set of attributes is like the Qarmatians who said that He cannot be described as neither living nor dead, knowing nor ignorant, able nor unable. They say that He may neither be described by what is positive (*ijāb*) nor negative (*salb*); such that one cannot say He is living and knowing, just as one cannot say He is not living and knowing. It cannot be said He is knowledgeable and able, nor that He is not knowledgeable and able. It cannot be said He is characterised by speech and volition, nor that He is not characterised by speech and volition. They say that affirmation of attributes entails likening Him to all else for whom said attributes are also affirmed, and negation entails likening Him to all else for whom they are negated.

A similar position is adopted by the mutakallimun from the Zāhirīs like Ibn Ḥazm. They say that God's Beautiful Names—like the Living, the Knowing, the Powerful—are to be seen in the same light as proper names. Hence, the referenced names would not entail life, knowledge, or power. They further say that there is no difference in meaning between the Living, the Knowing, and the Powerful in the first place.

Such propositions are mere sophistry with regards to the Rationalisables and Qarmatism with regards to the Revelatories. We necessarily know the difference between the Living, the Knowing, the Powerful, the King, the Holy, and the Forgiving. If the salve says: “My Lord, forgive me and relent towards me, You are the Relenting, the Forgiving”, then he has supplicated his Lord with propriety. If instead he says: “Forgive me and relent towards me, You are the Overpowering, the Pridedeful, the Severe in Punishment”, he has departed from propriety in his supplication. Allah has admonished the polytheists who rejected naming Him the Merciful (*al-Rahmān*). He ﷻ says: “When it is said to them, ‘Prostrate to the Merciful’, they say, ‘What is the Merciful? Shall we prostrate to what you command us?’ And it increases their aversion.”<sup>275</sup> He ﷻ further says: “To Allah belong the most beautiful names, so use them to call upon Him, and leave aside those who blaspheme His names. They will be repaid for what they used to do”<sup>276</sup>, “Thus We have sent you among a community before which other communities have passed away, that you may read to them what We have revealed to you, while they deny the Merciful. Say, ‘He is my Lord; there is no god but He; in Him I have placed my trust and to Him is my repentance’”<sup>277</sup>, “Say, ‘Call upon Allah or call upon the Merciful; whichever you call upon, to Him belong the most beautiful names.’”<sup>278</sup>

It is well-known that, had the names been mere proper nouns void of meaning then there would be no difference between one name and another, such that one cannot blaspheme one name and not the other, nor would the rational deny one name and not another. One may even never use a certain name altogether. The polytheists did not resist naming Allah with many of His names, and only rejected some of them.

Furthermore, to Allah belong the good names<sup>279</sup>, not bad ones. The former is distinct from the latter through its meaning. Had all names essentially been proper nouns—which do not imply a meaning—then there could not be a categorisation of good names and bad names. The claimant of such a view—if he were to name what he worships ‘dead’, ‘unable’, and ‘ignorant’ instead of ‘living’, ‘able’, and ‘knowing’ then this would be reasonable according to his position.

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275 *al-Furqān*, 60.

276 *al-Aʿrāf*, 180.

277 *al-Raʿd*, 30.

278 *al-Isrāʾ*, 110.

279 Translator’s note: *Husn* has connotations of both goodness and beauty. Here, the former is chosen for *al-asmāʾ al-ḥusnā*—‘the good names’—due to its juxtaposition with a hypothesised *al-asmāʾ al-sūʾā*—‘the bad names’.



This is manifest Qarmatism from these Zāhirīs who claim to stand with the apparent (*zāhir*) [meaning of scripture]. Yet, they champion the same position as the Bāṭinī Qarmatians when it comes to the *tawḥīd* of Allah in His names and attributes, whilst trying to lay claim to Hadith and the understanding of the Predecessors, and their strongly rejecting al-Ashʿarī and his companions. The latter are much closer to the Predecessors, imams, and the school of the Hadith Folk in this regard than them (Zāhirīs). They also claim to agree with Aḥmad ibn Hanbal and similar imams with regards to doctrines relating to the Qurʾan and the divine attributes, and rebuke al-Ashʿarī and his companions. Once again, upon scrutiny and in terms of ascription (*taḥqīqan wa intisāban*), the latter are closer to Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal and other imams of his stature with regards to the foresaid doctrines.

As for analytical scrutiny (*taḥqīq*), then whoever understands the view of Ashʿarī and his companions as well as that of Ibn Ḥazm and similar Zāhirīs with regards to the attributes appreciates this. He and anyone who inspects the two positions will appreciate that these Bāṭinī<sup>280</sup> Zāhirīs are closer to the Mutazilites, and the philosophers even, than the Asharites in this regard; and that the Asharites are closer to the Predecessors, imams, and Hadith folk than they are. Their imam Dāwūd and the most senior among his companions were among those who affirmed the attributes in accordance with the view of Sunnah and Hadith Folk. However, there was a group from his companions who adopted the methodology of the Mutazilites and hence agreed with them with regards to the attributes, even if they disagreed with them with regards to predestination and the divine promise of punishment (*waʿīd*).

As for ascription (*intisāb*), then Ashʿarī and his followers ascribing themselves to Imam Aḥmad specifically, and the rest of the imams of Hadith generally, is widely known and prevalent in all their works.

In terms of contraventions against Imam Aḥmad and other imams found in the works of Ashʿarī, then similar deviations are found in many of the works of those who ascribe themselves to him. For example, there is in the words of Abū al-Wafāʾ ibn ʿAqīl, Abū al-Faraj ibn al-Jawzī, Ṣadaqah ibn al-Ḥusayn, and their like that which is further from the positions of Aḥmad and the imams than those held by Ashʿarī and his companions.

Among those closer to Aḥmad and the imams—like Ibn ʿAqīl, Ibn al-Jawzī, and others—like Abū al-Ḥasan al-Tamīmī, his son Abū al-Faḍl

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280 Translator’s note: This label is often used linguistically as opposed to refer to a specific Shiite sect. The root *b-t-n* refers to what is internal and hidden. The polemical implication here is that if someone is a Bāṭinī with regards to the attributes or scripture at large, then they believe in some esoteric, hidden meaning other than the exoteric, manifest interpretation of the text.

al-Tamīmi, his grandson Rizquillāh al-Tamīmī, and their like; and the imams from Ash‘arī’s companions, like al-Qāḍī Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī, his shaykh Abū ‘Abdillāh ibn Mujāhid, his companions like Abū ‘Alī ibn Shādhān and Abū Muhammad ibn al-Labbān, even his shaykhs’ shaykhs like Abū al-‘Abbās al-Qalānisī and his like, and al-Ḥāfiẓ Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī and his like; are all closer to the Sunnah than many of the later followers of Ash‘arī. These later followers departed from his positions and adopted much from Mutazilite and Jahmī thought, and even philosophical notions in doctrine. Indeed, many of them went wayward from his methodology, delving into and thence adopting Mutazilite, Jahmī, and philosophical avenues of thought. As a result, they were Wāqifi with regards to many creedal subject matters, as will be highlighted.

This very creed being commented on is in accordance with Wāqifi theology—those who do not adhere to the school of Ash‘arī and other mutakallimun from the Affirmation Folk, the Hadith Folk, and the Predecessors. Instead, they assert what the Basran Mutazilites believed. The latter would assert the contents of this creed. However, al-Ash‘arī and the rest of the mutakallimun among the Affirmation Folk—along with the imams of the Sunnah and the Community—affirm the beatific vision, say the Qur’an is uncreated, that Allah is living through life, knowing through knowledge, and able through ability. There is nothing of the sort in this creed.

I have also come across an abridged creed authored by one of this author’s companions, known for his knowledge and Hadith expertise and an Asharite in the eyes of the masses, and I found it to be of the same style. He mentions that Allah is speaking, commanding, and prohibiting—as the Mutazilites concur—and did not mention the Qur’an is uncreated. He also did not affirm the beatific vision, making it from what may be possibly interpreted (*mimmā yuta’awwal*). He used to lean towards the Jahmīs who debated Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal and the rest of the imams of the Sunnah over the Qur’an, holding their position to be more accurate. It was also relayed that he insulted and defamed Aḥmad. He founded his creed upon and constituted it from Jahmī rhetoric and the philosophers’ dialectics—those who believe in the pre-eternality of intellects and souls, a belief in the same vein as what Democritus espoused. This is not the school of Ash‘arī, where it is agreed upon that the Qur’an is uncreated, and that Allah can be seen in the Afterlife.

If it is said that this an obfuscation and an erroneous estimation and so on, then the point here is not to champion or fault anyone in particular, nor to highlight what is right and wrong within their positions and the degree to which they agree with the Predecessors. The point is to simply

make readers aware of the reality of the positions people hold. Then, the truth must be followed as per what Allah established of proof thereupon.

Though the creed at hand does not go further than Basran Mutazilite theology, the latter is still better than the former. For there are such philosophical notions of *tawhīd* employed therein that the Mutazilites themselves would not approve of. We have already elucidated this in detail. We explained how what he mentions regarding *tawhīd* and its evidence is taken from philosophical principles, and that they are totally false.

Such clarifications are useful. Many people ascribe themselves to the Sunnah, Hadith, the Predecessors and imams, Imam Aḥmad, or Asharite theology; yet they uphold that which contradicts whom they ascribe themselves to. Thus, it is very useful to be aware of these matters.

An example of this is what has been recently discussed regarding the Zāhirīs. They ascribe themselves to the Hadith and the Sunnah, so much so they even reject analogical inference that is legislated and practised by the Predecessors and the imams. Yet, they delved into kalam which has been rebuked by the same Predecessors and imams, until they negated the reality behind Allah's names and attributes. In this regard, they are similar to the Bāṭinī Qarmatians, such that the Mutazilite position regarding Allah's names and attributes is better than theirs. Despite them espousing Zāhirism (a literalist textual approach), they employ a Qarmatian approach when it comes to *tawhīd* of Allah in His names.

Their intellectual sophistry here is clear. It is known by explicit reason that the voidance of both elements within an opposing pair is impossible (*imtinā' irtifā' al-naqīdayn*), and that there is no middle ground between negation and affirmation. Whoever says that he does not describe the Lord with affirmation such that he does not say, 'He is living, knowing, and able,' yet does not describe Him with negation, 'He is not living, knowing, and able,' then he has eliminated both opposites—desisting from affirming either element of an antithetical pair is just as unreasonable as coupling between them. Mutual nullifiers may neither be coupled nor both alleviated.

### **The Qarmatian approach to divine transcendence**

From what I have seen, this is what the Qarmatian imams rely upon. An example of this is found in *al-Aqā'id al-Malakūtiyyah* by Abū Ya'qūb al-Sijistānī. They claim: 'We did not couple between mutual nullifiers such that we say, 'He is living and not living', rather we lifted both, such that we say, "He is neither described nor is He not described."'

This Qarmatian author—whom I saw to be from the best of them—says:

“The Tenth Pendant (*al-Iqlīd al-‘Āshir*): That whoever worships Allah by negating attributes and limits [from Him] has not worshipped Him as He ought to be, since his worship goes to some of the creation. There were among the early generations a group among the Muslims (i.e., the Mutazilites) who did not worship Allah as He deserves to be worshipped, nor did they know Him as He ought to be known. They said: “Allah is not characterised, limited, described, seen, nor in any place.” They were deluded into thinking that this is a form of glorifying and exalting Allah ﷻ, and that, in doing so, they have rid themselves of polytheism and likening [Him to the creation]. Instead, they end up in uncertainty and confusion. They negated attributes, limits, and descriptions from the Creator—hallowed be His greatness—so that there may be no likeness nor assimilation between Him and His creation. Our question to them regarding this is: The attributed, limited, and described among His creation—are they the very attribute, limit, and description; or is the attributed other than his attribute, the limited other than his limit, and the described other than his description?

If they say: ‘The attribute is the attributed, the limit the limited, and the description the described,’ then they must necessarily say: ‘Blackness is what is black and whiteness is what is white.’

If instead they say: ‘The attributed is other than his attribute, the described other than his description, and the limited other than his limit,’ while it—meaning the attributed, the described, and the limited—is a creature created by this creator whom you have deemed transcendent beyond attribute, limit, and description; then you have associated between the creator and the created who is the attribute, limit, and description in the sense that it is other than the attributed. The creator is also other than the attributed in your estimation. Then, if it is possible for the creator to be joint with the created in some sense, then why is it not possible that he be associated with him in all senses? [...]

Thus, whoever worships Allah by negating the attributes has fallen into a subtle form of likeness (*tashbīh*), just as the one who worships Him by way of the attributes has fallen into major likeness...”

He then goes on to respond the Mutazilites. However, he refuted them in the portion wherein they affirm of the truth, and used what they agree with him on in negation as argument against them. It is through this that

the blaspheming Qarmatian hypocrites managed to corrupt the religion of Islam—they argue against each innovator with the portion of innovation he agrees with them on in terms of negation and divesting [the Divine of His attributes]. They oblige upon him the necessary concomitants of his position until they assert a pure form of divesting.

He continues:

“One of the most abominable errors of this sect in establishing their view that the Inventor ﷻ is not given attribute nor described is that they affirm the names which cannot be rid bare of attributes and descriptions. They say: ‘He is hearing in His essence (*bil-dhāt*), seeing in His essence, and knowing in His essence.’ They negate that He has hearing, sight, and knowledge. They did not realise that these names, if concomitant to some essence, then the attributes due to which said names apply are necessarily concomitant to said essence. If it were possible that one were knowing without knowledge, hearing without being able to hear, or seeing without sight, then it would be permitted to refer to the ignorant as knowing despite his lack of knowledge, the deaf as hearing despite his being unable to hear, and the blind as seeing despite his lack of sight. Since such a thing is not permitted, it becomes clear that the knowing is referred to as such due to knowledge, the hearing due to an ability to hear, and the seeing due to sight. [...]

If the one of them says: ‘We negated sight from the Seeing since the name—‘the Seeing’—is directed at the essence of the Creator. We witnessed that the one who may be referred to as seeing may, due to his sight, be susceptible to blindness. Likewise, whoever is referred to as hearing may, due to his hearing, be susceptible to deafness; and whoever is referred to as knowing may, due to his knowledge, be susceptible to ignorance. Ignorance, blindness, and deafness are not permitted for Allah. Thus, we negated from Him that which, in its disappearance, obliges its opposite to be realised.’

It is said back to such a person: ‘The justification for blindness being necessary is not sight, the justification for the necessity of deafness is not hearing, nor is the justification for the necessity of ignorance knowledge. Had this been the case, then whenever sight, hearing, or knowledge exist, there necessarily exists blindness, hearing, or ignorance. Since sight, hearing, and knowledge exist in some of the seeing, hearing, and knowledgeable without blindness, deafness, and ignorance manifesting in them; it becomes clear that the justification for the manifestation of said

three ailments is not knowledge, hearing, and sight, but rather the possibility of them being adopted by some of those characterised by knowledge, hearing, and sight.

Allah ﷻ is not a locus for ailments, nor may they enter upon Him. If the names ‘the knowing’, ‘the hearing’, and ‘the seeing’ are directed at His essence in a capacity where He is characterised by knowledge, hearing, and sight; then exalted is Allah far above what the ignorant fabricators ascribe to Him of names that are concomitant to His essence. Such names may only be directed at limits—of high and low, and spiritual and bodily—erected for the benefit of the slaves. Exalted be Allah far above that, a lofty exaltation.’ [...]

It is further said in response: ‘Had this extrapolation you employed from the witnessed been valid, then another may be ostensibly made following the same token. If you indeed witness that whoever is knowing due to his knowledge, hearing due to his ability to hear, and seeing due to his sight, is susceptible to adopting ignorance, blindness, and deafness; then we likewise witness that whoever is knowledgeable then knowledge is his state, and whoever is seeing then sight is his quality, and whoever is hearing then hearing is what is witnessed from him.

If you transpose witnessed judgements unto the Unseen and say that, there, it is permitted for one who is knowing to be without knowledge, seeing without sight, and hearing without hearing; then we may by the same token transpose the witnessed unto the Unseen and say that—though we have never witnessed one who is knowing due to knowledge, seeing due to sight, and hearing due to an ability to hear except that ignorance, blindness and deafness are permitted for him—in the Unseen, it is permitted for there to be one who is knowing due to knowledge, seeing due to sight, and hearing due to an ability to hear for whom ignorance, blindness and deafness are unpermitted. What is the difference?’ There is no way for them to mark a distinction between the two parables, so make note of this...”

Let the astute believer reflect over how these heretical, blaspheming hypocrites—who are more severe in their unbelief than the Jews, Christians, and Arab idolators—obliged the Mutazilites and other negators of the attributes to negate the Beautiful Divine Names. Instead, His Beautiful Names are titles for some of His creation such that a created being holds the name, and not He.

They say regarding the First (*al-Awwal*), the Last (*al-Ākhir*), the Manifest (*al-Zāhir*), and the Hidden (*al-Bāṭin*); that the Manifest is Muhammad al-Nāṭiq, the Hidden is ʿAlī al-Asās, Muhammad is the First, and ʿAlī is the Last. They interpret His statement: “Rather, His hands are opened wide”<sup>281</sup> by saying that one hand is Muhammad, and the other ʿAlī. His saying: “Perish the two hands of Abū Lahab”<sup>282</sup>—they interpret the two hands as being Abū Bakr and ʿUmar. They say that they were on Abū Lahab’s side internally. He commanded them to kill the Prophet ﷺ but they were not able to. Thus, Allah revealed: “Perish the two hands of Abū Lahab.” These widely known speculative interpretations are all over Qarmatian works.

The origin of their rhetoric is what they claim to be a negation of likeness. They oblige anyone who agrees with them on any element of negation to coextensively apply their principle and follow through with its entailments—divesting the Divine of His attributes. The Qarmatian says:

“Whoever deems his creator transcendent beyond attribute, limit, and description yet does not detach him from what has no attribute, limit, or description has in fact affirmed him by way of what he has not detached him from. If his affirmation of what he worships is by negating attribute, limit, and description only, then his affirmation is vague and unknown. For it is not only Allah in his estimation who has no attribute, limit, or description, but also the soul (*nafs*), the intellect (*al-ʿaql*), and all other simple essences (*jawāhir basīṭah*) like angels and so on.

Allah ﷻ is more affirmed than to have His affirmation be vague and unknown. Thus, the affirmation that is worthy of the Inventor’s glory and is not bound to ambiguity is negating the attribute (*nafy al-ṣifah*) as well as negating no attribute (*nafy an lā ṣifah*), and negating the limit as well as negating no limit, such that sublimity is preserved for the Inventor of the Worlds. No other creature may share in this hallowed purity, and the affirmation can no longer be considered as ambiguous in this regard. Make note of this. [...]

If one says: ‘A condition of oppositional propositions (*qaḍāyā mutanāqīḍah*) is that one of its sides yields truth while the other yields falsity. Your saying, “Not attributed and not not attributed (*lā mawṣūf wa lā lā mawṣūf*)”, are two opposing propositions one of which must be true and the other false.’

281 *al-Māʿidah*, 64.

282 *al-Masad*, 1.



It is said to him: ‘You erred in your knowledge of oppositional propositions. For oppositional propositions, one side of the opposition is positive while the other is negative. If the proposition is universal affirmative (*kulliyyah mūjibah*), then its opposite is particular negative (*juz’iyyah sālibah*). For example, “Every man is living”—a universal affirmative proposition, has its opposite as, “Not every man is living.”

Now that we know that a condition of opposition is that one side must be positive and the other negative, we can go back to our proposition with regards to the Inventor. Does it have this qualifier? We find that both sides are non-affirmative in His regard; rather both are negative. To wit: “Not attributed, and not not attributed.” Thus, it is a proposition where its two sides do not contradict.

It would indeed contradict had it taken the following form; that we say: “He has an attribute, and He does not have an attribute”, or if we were to say: “He has a limit, and He does not have a limit”, or: “He is in a place, and He is not in a place.” Then, we would be obliged by the affirmation to couple between two mutual nullifiers as true. Since the two propositions are negative—one negating the attribute that is found in bodily entities and the other negating the attribute concomitant with spiritual entities—then this rids the Creator from the properties of bondsmen (*marbūbīn*) and the attributes of the created.

One who deems his creator transcendent beyond attribute, limit, and description has fallen into a subtle likeness, just as one who attributes, limits, and describes him has fallen into manifest likeness.”

**My commentary:** This is the reality of the Qarmatian school. He responds to those who characterise God with negation, not affirmation. He negates negation. He says: ‘Affirmation yields likeness to bodily entities, and negation yields likeness to spiritual entities.’ The latter, in their estimation, are souls and intellects that are characterised by negation and not affirmation. This is why they claim said entities to be simple (pl. *basā’it*, sgl. *basīṭ*): free of mental constitution in terms of genre and difference, as well as physical constitution characteristic of bodies.

This blasphemer and his like thought that, in this way, they are not bound to obliged entailments (*ilzāmāt*). It is evident to anyone who appreciates their position that it is among the most corrupt, in light of revealed law as well as sound reason. It is among the furthest of positions from those



held by the Muslims, Jews, and Christians. This is all borne of what they assert of philosophy, knowledge of the kalam schools, claims of esoteric sciences, knowledge of hidden interpretations, and infallibility for their imams. They posit: ‘We do not couple between mutual nullifiers such that there is a logical impossibility in what we assert.’

It is said to them: ‘Sure, but you negated both elements in an oppositional proposition. Just as it is a falsity to couple between oppositional claims, it is a falsity to uplift them. Two elements within an antithetical pair of opposition may neither be conjoined nor both alleviated.

For this reason, logicians have categorised the conditional disjunctive (*al-sharṭiyyah al-munfaṣilah*) proposition into what is mutually exclusive (*māniʿ at al-jamʿ*)<sup>283</sup>, collectively exhaustive (*māniʿ at al-khuluww*)<sup>284</sup>, and exclusively disjunctive (*māniʿ at al-jamʿ wa al-khuluww*)<sup>285</sup>. For example, one saying, “This thing may either be existent or non-existent; it is either affirmed or negated.” It yields the four conditional possibilities: If it is existent, then it is not non-existent; if it is non-existent, it is not existent; if it is not existent, then it is non-existent; and if it is not non-existent, then it is existent. Likewise is the case with affirmative propositions that may be oppositional. One may say, “This integer is either even or odd.” Its being even or odd is exclusively disjunctive.

These people claim that they have affirmed a thing that is free from both elements within an oppositional pair. If they permit that it may indeed be detached from both opposites, then coupling between them may be permitted. This is the position of the Unity Folk who believe in the Unity of Being, like the author of *al-Fuṣūṣ* (i.e., Ibn ʿArabī), Ibn Sabʿīn, Ibn Abī al-Manṣūr, Ibn al-Fāriḍ, al-Qūnawī, and their ilk. Their and the Qarmatians’ position is of the same vein. The former may explicitly posit coupling between mutual nullifiers. It is mentioned that al-Ḥallāj did this. When he entered Baghdad they used to call to him, saying, “This is the Qarmatians’ caller.” He used to present himself to the Shiites as one of them. He entered upon Ibn Nūbakht, the head of the Shiites, so that he may follow him. He asked him for saintly charisms (*karāmāt*), which he failed to present.

The positions of the astray always require the coupling between two elements of an oppositional pair or alleviating both. Some of them recognise the concomitant of his position and thus sees it though, whilst others do not. Any two matters which may neither be conjoined nor both lifted

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283 Translator’s note: Both outcomes cannot be simultaneously true.

284 Translator’s note: At least one outcome must be true.

285 Translator’s note: Either one of two possible outcomes must be true, but not both nor none.

are oppositional in meaning, but this may manifest in existence as well as non-existence.

Those who affirm both states say: 'It is neither existent nor non-existent'—a branch position from the Qarmatian root. Scrutiny dictates that one instead says: 'It is not existent in individuated beings, but not non-existent in the mind.'

There are such affirmative matters that are in the capacity of existence and non-existence. For example, our saying: 'Integers may either be even or odd.' Also the statements: 'Any two existent things may either be mutual in existence, or antecedental and consequential', 'Any existent thing either exists in and of itself or through another', 'Every body is either still or moving, living or dead', 'Every living being is either knowing or ignorant, able or unable, hearing or deaf, seeing or blind', 'Any two existents are either identical or distinct', etc. Whoever attempts to lift both opposing elements within these propositions is of the same ilk as the Qarmatians who eliminate them both.

Opposition may manifest through explicit expression (*lafz*), as in, "It either is or it is not"; or through meaning (*ma'na*), as in, "It either subsists in and of itself or subsists by way of another." This is thoroughly explicated in other works. We answered the asker beyond what he intended, though nonetheless pointed out holistic beneficial principles in doing so.

**The third**<sup>286</sup> is as follows: Theorists posit that hearing and sight are attributes of perfection. The living who is hearing and seeing is more complete than the living that is not hearing nor seeing; just as a living existent is more complete than an existent who is not living, and a knowing existent is more complete than an existent who is not knowing. This is necessarily known by reason. If it is indeed an attribute of perfection, then if the Divine is not characterised by it, He would be defective—He transcends all shortcomings.

Any pure form of perfection that is free of defect is permitted for Him, and what is permitted for Him of attributes of perfection is affirmed for Him. Had He not been characterised by it, then its affirmation for Him would be dependent on other than Himself, such that He is in need of another to affirm perfection for Him, which is impossible. If His perfection is only dependent on Himself, then affirming His self necessitates affirming perfection for it as well as all that it transcends—a concomitant to perfection is that He is held as transcendent beyond imperfections.

Furthermore, had He not been characterised with this form of perfection, then the hearing and seeing among His creation would be more complete than Him. It is a primary rational impetus to hold the Creator

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286 Translator's note: After the lengthy digression, Ibn Taymiyyah is returning to the ways in which divine hearing and sight are evidenced.

as more complete than the created, since perfection is not realised except by existent means. Pure non-existence has no perfection. Every form of perfection that exists in the created realm is created by Allah. It is inconceivable that a defective existence be the inventive and active agent for perfect existence, since it is a primal rational impetus that the existence of the justifier is more complete than the existence of the justified. The existence of the Creator, the Originator, the Maker is necessarily more complete than that of the created, originated, and made.

We have discussed this argument in detail in other places. We clarified that it is possible to exercise precedential inference for Allah ﷻ, as the Qur'an has come with. It is what the Predecessors and imams would also employ, the likes of Aḥmad and others. Any form of perfection affirmed for the creation, the Creator is all the worthier of it. Any defect that the created transcend, then the Creator is all the worthier of transcending. Allah ﷻ says: "He has set forth for you a parable from yourselves: do you make those whom you rightfully possess full partners in the wealth We have given you, so that you are equal in regard to it, fearing them as you have fear of each other?"<sup>287</sup> He ﷻ also says: "But when one of them is given the glad tidings of a baby girl, his countenance remains darkened as he suppresses his anguish. He hides himself from people because of the evil tidings he has been given. Should he keep it in shame or bury it in the dust? Undoubtedly, evil is what they judge! For those who do not believe in the Hereafter is an evil example, while to Allah belongs the highest example. He is the Almighty, the Wise."<sup>288</sup> Also: "They assign unto Allah that which they themselves dislike, and their tongues expound the lie that the better portion will be theirs. Assuredly theirs will be the Fire, and they will be abandoned."<sup>289</sup>

The attributes of perfection are existent entities, or negative matters which necessitate existent ones, as is in Allah's statement: "Allah—there is no god but He, the Living, the Sustaining. Neither slumber overtakes Him nor sleep."<sup>290</sup> Through the negation of slumber and sleep, the attributes of life (*ḥayāh*) and subsistence (*qayyūmiyyah*) are perfected. He ﷻ says: "Your Lord is never a tyrant unto the slaves."<sup>291</sup> This necessitates justice. He ﷻ also says: "Not an atom's weight in the heavens or in the earth escapes

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287 *al-Rūm*, 28.

288 *al-Nahl*, 58-60.

289 *al-Nahl*, 62.

290 *al-Baqarah*, 255.

291 *Fuṣṣilat*, 46.

Him.”<sup>292</sup> This necessitates perfect knowledge. There are plenty of similar usages. As for pure non-existence, then it holds no perfection.

Thus, any perfection that is affirmed for the created and holds no flaw in any way, shape, or form, then the Creator has a better claim to it. This is the case due to the following two reasons:

1. The pre-eternal, existent creator, who is necessary in and of himself, is more complete than the originated, created, bondsman who is susceptible to non-existence.
2. Any perfection in the latter is endowed unto him from his Lord and Creator. If He is the inventor and creator of this perfection, then it is necessarily known that the giver, creator, and inventor of perfection is a fortiori characterised by this perfection than the one He endows it upon.

Allah ﷻ says: “Allah set forth a parable: an owned bondman who has no power over anything, and someone to whom We have given goodly provision from which he gives, secretly and openly. Can they be equal? All praise be to Allah; rather, most of them know not. Allah set forth a parable of two men: one of them a mute who has no power over anything, and he is wholly dependent upon his patron; wherever he directs him, he achieves nothing good. Can he be equal to one who commands to justice and is on a straight path?”<sup>293</sup> Though these parables primarily call for the worship of Allah alone without other than Him, rebuking idol worship by way of this example; they nonetheless propose a non-equality between the perfect and the imperfect. The Lord is more complete than His creation, and is necessarily so in all capacities of perfection by way of a fortiori reasoning.

**The fourth** way in affirming hearing, sight, and speech is to say: Negating these attributes is an unconditional imperfection, regardless of if in reference to a living or inanimate entity. One for whom these attributes are negated may not have anything originated nor created from him. He may not respond to the one who asks him. He may not be worshipped nor called upon. The Intimate Friend of Allah (Ibrāhīm ﷺ) is quoted in the Qur’an as saying: “My father, why do you worship what can neither hear nor see nor avail you anything?”<sup>294</sup> Additionally: “He (Ibrāhīm ﷺ) said, ‘Can they hear you when you call? Or can they benefit you, or can

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292 *Saba’*, 3.

293 *al-Nahl*, 75-76.

294 *Maryam*, 42.

they do harm?’ They said, ‘Rather, we found our forefathers doing so.’”<sup>295</sup> Allah ﷻ says: “In his absence, the people of Mūsā took a calf made from their ornaments—a body which lowed. Did they not see that it could not speak to them nor guide them to any way? They took it [for worship], and thus became wrongdoers.”<sup>296</sup> He ﷻ also says: “They said, ‘This is your god and the god of Mūsā, but he has forgotten.’ Do they not see that it cannot return a word to them, nor does it possess for them harm or benefit?”<sup>297</sup>

It is a matter that is settled in the dispositions of mankind that he who cannot hear, see, and speak cannot be a worshipped lord; he who avails and guides naught, possesses no benefit nor harm cannot be a worshipped deity. It is known that the Creator of the cosmos is the one who sustains and provides for his slaves. He is the one who possesses the ability to harm them. These matters (harm and benefit) are within originated novelties which the Lord of the Worlds originates. Had they not been originated by Him, then they would be originated without an originator, or their originator would be other than Him. If their originator is other than Him, then what is said regarding the origination of this hypothetical other is what is said regarding all other originated novelties. They must necessarily go back to a pre-eternal originator who himself has no originator.

Thus, that the one who cannot hear, see, and speak lacks attributes of perfection is a matter that is ingrained in the consciousness of humanity. Such a person cannot hear anyone’s speech, nor can he see anyone. He cannot command, prohibit, or inform of anything. By best estimations, he is a living person who is deafblind; if not, he is but an inanimate object who is not even in principle cannot adopt hearing, sight, and speech. This is a more severe form of imperfection and incapacity. It is closer to non-existence than it is to one who may in principle have such attributes but is characterised by their opposite. That is, a blind man is closer to perfection than a rock, a mute closer to perfection than dust, and so on.

Since it is innately understood that the negation of the attributes in question is a profound defect and fault, and in fact closer non-existent, it is also innately understood that the Creator is further from said defects than all that is negated from Him, and that characterising Him by them is an unassailable impossibility.

This argument is distinct from the second and third ones already presented. The second argument is based on His being living, and therefore either characterised by said attributes or their opposite. The third argument is founded on their being attributes of perfection, and His necessarily be-

295 *al-Shu‘arā’*, 72-74.

296 *al-A‘rāf*, 148.

297 *Tā-Hā*, 88-89.

ing characterised by them. This fourth argument is based on appreciating that the negation of these attributes leads to imperfection, defect, and fault which the Divine cannot be characterised by.

Allah ﷻ knows best.



## Section Eleven

The author continues: “The evidence for the prophecy of the prophets is miracles. The evidence for the prophecy of our Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is the Qur’an and its miraculous syntax and meaning.”

**My commentary:** This is one of the most common arguments among theorists and the Kalam Folk. They assert the prophecy of the Prophets via miracles.

Undoubtedly, miracles are a valid proof for asserting prophecy. However, many of them believe that prophecy may only be known through miracles. All those who base their faith on them think this to be the case. They then have various ways to argue how miracles prove truthfulness of the claimant to prophethood. Some of these arguments are inconsistent and unstable. Some have rejected that no one except the Prophets may break natural laws (‘ādāt). They deny the charisms of the saints (*karāmāt al-awliyā*), magic (*sihr*), and their like.

Theoreticians apply a myriad of arguments here. Among them are those who do not consider miracles a proof in the first place, and instead consider the content of the message: its consistency and veracity. Some adopt this view. Others necessitate the acceptance of a Prophet without either (miracles and the content of the message). There are those who consider miracles to be proof as well as other non-miracle related factors. The latter is the most correct approach.

He who solely considers miracles to be the proof for prophecy forces himself down lines of thought which entail the denial of some truth and the acceptance of some falsity.

For this reason, the Predecessors would dispraise innovated kalam. Its proponents end up making mistakes either in their subject enquiries or their evidentiary basis. It is commonplace for them to affirm the Muslims’ religion—in terms of faith in Allah, His angels, His Books, and His Messengers—upon weak or even corrupt foundations. They adhere to meth-



odologies through which they end up contradicting authentic revelatory reports (*al-sam<sup>c</sup> al-ṣaḥīḥ*) as well as explicit reason (*al-<sup>c</sup>aql al-ṣarīḥ*).

This is the state of the Jahmīs among the Mutazilites and others. They affirm the novel origination of the cosmos through the novel origination of bodies, affirming the latter by way of asserting the origination of their attributes, namely accidents. They believe the Qur'an to be created, and that Allah is not seen in the Afterlife. They say that He is neither distinct from (*mubāyin*) nor inhering within (*muḥāyith*) the cosmos. They have many similar doctrines which come hand-in-hand with divesting, as we have discussed thoroughly in other works.

### **The various ways which truth claims are ascertained vis-à-vis prophecy**

Thus, it (miracles being the sole proof of prophecy) is an incorrect claim. It is possible to ascertain prophecy through other means also. The aim is to showcase either the truthfulness or falsity of the claimant to prophecy. If he says, "I am Allah's messenger", then this is speech which bears the possibility of being true or false. If you like, you may say: This is an informative proposition (*khabar*). It may either conform to what it informs of (*mukhbar*), or it may contradict it. The latter is regardless of the claimant's intentionality to deceive. One may think himself, or someone else, a messenger of Allah without intending to lie. He may be misguided or deluded. There are many to whom the devil draws near and says, "I am your lord", instructing him of certain things. He may say to him, "I have made lawful for you what I have made unlawful for others. You are my slave and messenger, and are the best of mankind", and similar lies. This has taken place with many people.

Accordingly, the claimant of prophecy is either truthful or lying, regardless if he were lying deliberately or due to misguidance. Distinguishing between the truthful and the lying takes many forms with matters much less grave than prophecy, let alone a serious claim thereto.

It is known that the claimant to prophecy may either be the best and most complete of people or the worst and most defective among them. By this token, one of the seniors of Thaḳīf said the following to the Prophet ﷺ when he had come to them with the message: "By Allah, I shall not say a single word to you. If you are truthful, then you are far too noble in my eyes that I reject you. If you are lying, then responding to you is beneath me." How can the best and most complete of people be indistinguishable from their most lowly?! How beautiful was the statement of Ḥassān:

*Law lam takun fīhi āyātun mubayyinatin,  
Kānat badīhatuhū ta'tīka bil-khabarī.*

“Even if he were not to have miracles, clear –  
His way would tell you all you need to hear.”

There has not been a false prophet except that ignorance, wickedness, fabrication, and demonic inspiration were manifest on him for even the least discerning to recognise. Conversely, there has not been a truthful claimant to prophecy except that knowledge, honesty, beneficence, and various good traits were manifest on him for even the least discerning to recognise. A Messenger must inform, command, and prohibit the people of some matters, as well as be an active agent among them. The liar has his lies bare for all to see through his commandments, prohibitions, and actions, while the honesty of the truthful shines through his.

Any two people who make some claim, one of them truthful and the other lying, then necessarily the honesty of one and the falsity of the other will come to light in plenty of ways. Honesty necessitates beneficence (*birr*), and lying necessitates wickedness (*fujūr*).

In the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* it is reported that the Prophet ﷺ says: “Adhere to truthfulness, for truthfulness guides to beneficence, and beneficence guides to the Garden. A man continues to say and seek the truth until he is recorded with Allah as truthful (*ṣiddīq*). Beware of lying, for lying guides to wickedness, and wickedness guides to the Fire. A man continues to say and seek out lies until he is recorded with Allah as a liar (*kadhḥāb*).”

Allah ﷻ says: “Should I inform you upon whom the devils keep descending? They keep descending upon every sinful fabricator. They give ear, but most of them are liars. As for poets—the deluded (*ghāwūn*)<sup>298</sup> follow them. Have you not seen that they aimlessly roam in every valley? And that they say that which they do not?”<sup>299</sup> Allah ﷻ made it clear that the Prophet ﷺ is not a soothsayer upon whom the devils descend, nor is he a poet, since he was accused of both. He clarifies that the devils come down on the lying and wicked, telling them of what they furtively heard, though still most of them are liars.

Though these soothsayers may on occasion speak accurately about matters of the Unseen such that their claim is, in this sense, truthful; they have such falsities and wickedness which make it clear that what they spoke of cannot be from an angel nor can they be Prophets. The Prophet ﷺ said to Ibn Ṣayyād: “I hid something for you.”<sup>300</sup> He replied: “It is *al-dukh*...”

298 Translator’s note: Referenced here as it is later discussed by Ibn Taymiyyah.

299 *al-Shu‘arā’*, 221-226.

300 Translator’s note: One understanding Hadith commentators mention regarding this is that the Prophet ﷺ thought of a word and is challenging Ibn Ṣayyād to find out what it is via divination or demonic inspiration. The sound he utters thereafter—“*al-dukh*...”—is thought to be half the word *al-dukhān* which he was

The Prophet ﷺ said thereupon: “Begone! You shan’t exceed your limit.” Meaning, ‘You are but a soothsayer.’ This is understood as per his saying to the Prophet ﷺ: “Both the truthful and the lying come to me.” He also said: “I see a throne upon water.” It was Satan’s throne, as is confirmed in authentic narrations on this matter.

Allah ﷻ further clarified that the erring and the deluded follow the poets. A *ghāwī* is one who follows his base whims and lowly desires, even if it harms him in the long-term. Allah ﷻ says: “Have you not seen that they aimlessly roam in every valley? And that they say that which they do not?”<sup>301</sup> This is the trait of the poets, just as that was the trait of the soothsayers. Thus, whoever knows the Messenger, his truthfulness, fidelity, and the consistency of his deeds with his words, recognises for sure that he is not a poet, soothsayer, or liar.

People can distinguish between the truthful and the liar through various indicants, even so when it comes to claimants of expertise in fields like agriculture, textiles, and literature. The same is true for sciences like grammar, medicine, jurisprudence, and their like. There is no one that claims knowledge of some field except that there are many ways to showcase the truth status of their claim. This may also be extended to anyone who manifests an intention or deed—like those who portray religiosity, trustworthiness, goodwill, affection, and similar morals. Their truth or falsity can be found out through many avenues.

Prophethood encompasses certain types of knowledge and actions that the Messenger must be characterised by. Namely, the most noble types of knowledge and actions. How can the truthful be indistinguishable from the liar? How can the truthfulness of the truthful be unclear from the falsity of the liar in this context? Especially apropos the heritage and relics (*āthār*) left behind by every Prophet of Allah since Adam till our time. The genre of what the Prophets and Messengers came with, what they called for and warned of, is unmistakable. The heritage of the Messengers still remains among the people such that they are able to recognise what they came with, and hence differentiate between the Messengers and non-messengers.

Hypothetically, consider if a man were to come during the time when prophetic dispensation was possible (i.e., prior to the advent of the Prophet ﷺ), and he enjoined polytheism and idol-worship, permitted obscenities, injustice, and lying, and did not command the worship of Allah nor belief in the Last Day. Would it be necessary to ask such a person to bring forth a miracle? Would there be any doubt over his being a false prophet? Even if

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unable to wholly gather. Hence the reaction of the Prophet ﷺ thereafter—“You will not surpass your limit.”

301 *al-Shu‘arā’*, 225-226.

he were to bring forth what is thought to be a miracle, it would be known that it is from the supernatural (*makhārīq*) as a tribulation (*fitnah*) and test (*miḥnah*). As such, when the Antichrist (*Dajjāl*) claims divinity, what he brings about will not be proof of his truthfulness due to knowledge that the proposition is itself impossible and that he is a liar.

The same is true for a person who grew up among the Children of Israel (*Banū Isrāʿīl*) and is known for his honesty, beneficence, and piety; who is given internal knowledge confirming his intellect and religiosity as sound; then informs his people that Allah has revealed to him and sent him to them. Such a scenario would not be more objectionable than if a man of unassailable reason and character told us he saw a true dream (*ruʿyā*).

### Solitary reports and their truth value

This discussion is in some ways akin to the debate surrounding solitary reports (*khabar al-wāḥid*): Is it possible that a given solitary report be coupled with external indicators (*qarāʿin*) and circumstantial evidence (*ḍamāʿim*) such that it yields knowledge? Undoubtedly, those of high analytical scrutiny from every sect hold that a report which one, two, or three persons come with may be coupled with sufficient indicators to give necessary knowledge (ʿilm ḍarūrī) regarding what is reported. What is more, indicators by themselves may bring about necessary knowledge. For example, a man may recognise another man's approval or discontent, love or dislike, joy or despondence, and other internal matters by way of external, facial indicators which he may not be able to verbally express.

Allah ﷻ says: "Had We willed, We could have shown them to you, and you would have recognised them by their marks..." then immediately afterwards "...yet you will recognise them by their tone of speech."<sup>302</sup> Allah ﷻ promised that he ﷻ will assuredly recognise the hypocrites by their manner of speech, and qualified their recognition through marks by divine will, as one's internal state being made manifest through one's speech is more apparent than its being manifest on one's facial expressions. It is said, "No one conceals an internal state (*sarīrah*) except that Allah makes it manifest on his facial expressions and the slips of his tongue." If such matters may be employed to recognise what is within another person's self without an informative report, they have a better claim to yielding necessary knowledge when coupled with explicit verbal information.

No sound-minded person can say that solitary reports in and of themselves, or a report of any given person, yield knowledge. Not even a report

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302 Muahmmad, 30.

made by five or ten people does so. Rather, a thousand people or more can inform of some matter yet all be lying if they are conspiring together.

Thus, if the truthfulness or falsity of a claimant is found out by way of indicators—even by his manner of speech and facial expressions—and this realises necessary knowledge which one cannot put off from himself, then what of one who lays claim to the prophetic office? How can his truthfulness or falsity be undiscoverable? How can a true claimant to prophecy be indistinguishable from a false one? And this in a plethora of ways?

### Further exploration of prophecy via scrutinising its claimants

The liar may either be deliberately lying or confused, like one to whom the devil comes with demonic inspiration. It is unassailably true that there are people known to not lie deliberately. Through direct, intimate, and prolonged personal interactions, there are those who the people apodictically know to never lie deliberately, even if they know it is possible for them to do so. Not everything that is known as possible (‘ulima imkānuh) may be permitted as actualised (*juwwiza wuqū‘uh*). We know Allah can turn mountains into jacinth and the oceans to blood, for example, but we know He does not do this.

Overall, we recognise that it is possible that some person may have turned Jew, Christian, or whatever else. Yet, we know despite of this possibility that it did not take place, and may in fact not ever take place with some. Whoever comes to us telling us that it took place (i.e., some known Muslim changed religion), we would hold him as a liar. We do not reject that a person may indeed change and start deliberately lying after having previously never done so. However, if this were to take place, it would become clear to those who know him and his intimate, private matters.

In light of this, upon the advent of revelation, the Prophet ﷺ came to Khadijah ؓ, and she knows him to be truthful and righteous. He ﷺ said to her: “I fear for my sanity.” She replied: “No! By Allah, Allah will never let you down. You uphold ties of kinship, speak truthfully, carry the burdens of the weak, honour your guest, give to the destitute, and are always there for those in need.”

He ﷺ did not fear that he may deliberately lie, since he ﷺ knows he never does. However, he did initially fear that what took place was borne of an evil affliction—the second of the two possibilities. Hence, Khadijah mentioned what negates this: his unassailable character, noble traits, and excellent moral standing. That is, truthfulness which has justice and goodness to the people as its concomitants. Whoever has truthfulness, justice, and goodwill gathered within him is not from those whom Allah disgraces.

Maintaining ties of kinship, speaking truthfully, carrying the burdens of the weak, honouring one's guest, giving to the destitute, and consistently championing the cause of the needy are among the foremost types of beneficence and virtue. It is the way (*sunnah*) of Allah that whomsoever He gives a sound moral disposition and purifies from blameworthy character traits, He does not let down.

Furthermore, prophecy has been within mankind since Adam ﷺ. He was a Prophet, and his progeny necessarily knew of his prophecy and relevant, related states thereto. The nature of the Messengers and the essence of what they call for is known. A claimant to prophecy—during the era it was viable—would be rejected if he came with what contradicts the latter, and it would be known he is not one of them. If he came with prophetic features, he would be known to be one of them. Especially if it were known that there is necessarily an awaited Messenger, and that he has features which distinguish him from others. If such features are present in some claimant, they may endow his recipient with necessary knowledge that he must indeed be the awaited Messenger. Allah ﷻ says: “Those whom We have given the Book recognise him as they recognise their own children. But indeed, a group of them do conceal the truth while they know.”<sup>303</sup>

**The First Method:**<sup>304</sup> Typical, characteristic features of prophecy (*al-nawṣi*). This is what the Negus (*al-Najāshī*) employed in evidencing the prophecy of the Prophet ﷺ. When he asked them (the Muslim migrants) about what he reports to them, and after he had heard the Qur'an from them, he said: “Indeed, this and what Mūsā came with are from the same source.”

Waraqah ibn Nawfal did the same thing before him. The Prophet ﷺ told him of what he saw. Waraqah had adopted Christianity and used to scribe the Gospel in Hebrew. Khadijah said to him: “Cousin (*ibn ʿamm*), listen to your nephew (*ibn akhīk*) and what he has to say.” The Prophet ﷺ reported to him what happened. He said: “Indeed, this is the Archangel (*al-Nāmūs*<sup>305</sup>) which used to come to Mūsā. Your people shall exile you.” The Prophet ﷺ said: “They will exile me?” He replied: “Yes. No one has come with what you come with but that he was fought. If that time comes and I am alive, I shall fervently support you to victory.” He passed away soon thereafter.

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303 *al-Baqarah*, 146.

304 Translator's note: In judging a claimant's claim to prophecy generally, or that of the Prophet ﷺ specifically, Ibn Taymiyyah suggests two ways.

305 Translator's note: From the Greek “nomos” (νόμος), meaning ‘law’, or a code of honour and virtue. However, the word was used by the People of the Book at the time of the Prophet ﷺ to refer to Jibril ﷺ.

**The Second Method:** Personal, individual traits and attributes (*al-shakhṣī*). Heraclius, the King of Byzantine, invoked this to investigate the Prophet ﷺ. The Prophet ﷺ had sent him a message inviting him to Islam, so Heraclius asked for Arabs from his region—Abū Sufyān had arrived on a commercial caravan from Quraysh. He quizzed them about the Prophet ﷺ and his nature. He questioned Abū Sufyān, telling the others to speak out if he lies, and found that they were in agreement over him.

### The interrogation of Heraclius and its wisdom

Heraclius asked them:

- “Were there kings among his ancestors?” They replied: “No.”
- “Has anyone made a similar claim before him?” They replied: “No.”
- “Is he one of noble lineage among you?” They replied: “Yes.”
- “Did you think him a liar prior to this claim of his?” They replied: “No. We never found him to have lied.”
- “Did the weak or prestigious follow him?” They replied: “The weak.”
- “Do they grow in number or decline?” They replied: “They are growing.”
- “Do any of them apostate from his religion in discontent with him after having accepted it?” They replied: “No.”
- “Did you fight him?” They replied: “Yes.”
- “How is this war between you?” They replied: “He wins a battle, we win another.”
- “Is he treacherous?” They replied: “No.”
- “What does he command you of?” They replied: “He commands us to worship Allah alone without associating any partners to Him. He prohibits us from what our ancestors used to worship. He commands us to keep to prayer, truthfulness, chastity, and ties of kith and kin.”

These are more than ten matters he asked about.

He then clarified what their answers entail. He asked them about reasons to lie and the signs of lying, but found them to be non-existent. He asked them about the signs of honesty and found them to be firmly there.

He says:



“I asked you, ‘Were there kings among his ancestors?’ You said, ‘No.’ Had there been, I would have said this is a man who seeks his father’s sovereignty.”

“I asked you, ‘Has anyone made a similar claim before him?’ You said, ‘No.’ had someone made such a claim, I would have said that he is a man regurgitating previous claimants’ words.”

There is no doubt that a man adhering to the habits and conventions of his forefathers and following suit with previous social trends is common among human beings. This is contrary to one who makes a novel claim which is unknown before him, seeking a matter that is incongruent with his household. The latter is rare, though may take place. This is why Heraclius followed up by saying:

“I asked you, ‘Did you think him a liar prior to this claim of his?’ You said, ‘No.’ I appreciated that he would not desist from ever lying against people then go on to lie against Allah.”

It may be that this is but a pure lie which he made up for no specific reason. This may be expected of a perpetual liar. If the person in question is never known to have lied, is only known to be truthful, and is too morally scrupulous to lie against people, then a fortiori he would not lie against Allah. A person may potentially go out of his own personal habits into the habits of his people. If neither are probable, then he is very likely not a liar and is telling the truth. Heraclius continued his interrogation with signs of truthfulness:

“I asked you, ‘Did the weak or prestigious follow him?’ You said, ‘The weak.’ The weak have always been the followers of the Messengers.”

This is one of the features of the Messengers: only the weak are their initial followers. Allah ﷻ quotes the people to whom Nūḥ was sent: “They said, ‘Shall we believe in you, when the lowliest have followed (*ittaba<sup>ak</sup>*)<sup>306</sup> you?’”<sup>307</sup> As well as: “We do not see that you are followed except by the lowliest among us, without reflection.”<sup>308</sup> Allah ﷻ says within the narrative of Ṣāliḥ: “The chiefs of his people who acted arrogantly said to those who

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306 Translator’s note: Also recited as *atba<sup>uk</sup>*; rendering the translation: “Shall we believe in you while your followers are the lowliest?”

307 *al-Shu<sup>arā</sup>*, 111.

308 *Hūd*, 27.



had been deemed weak and oppressed—those who believed among them, ‘Do you know that Sāliḥ is one sent from his Lord?’ They said, ‘We are indeed believers in what he has been sent with.’ Those who acted arrogantly said, ‘Indeed, we disbelieve in what you believe in.’<sup>309</sup> He ﷺ says within the narrative of Shu‘ayb: “The chiefs of his people who acted arrogantly said, ‘Surely we will drive you out, O Shu‘ayb, and those who believe with you from our township unless you return to our religion. He said, ‘Even though we hate it? We would definitely be fabricating lies against Allah if we were to return to your religion after Allah has delivered us from it. It is not for us to return to it unless Allah, our Lord, wills. Our Lord has encompassed everything in knowledge. In Allah we have placed our trust. Our Lord, decide between us and our people in truth, for You are the best of those who make decision.’”<sup>310</sup> Heraclius continued his exposition:

“I asked you, ‘Do they grow in number or decline?’ You said, ‘They are growing.’ Such is faith until it is complete.”

“I asked you, ‘Do any of them apostate from his religion in discontent with him after having accepted it?’ You said, ‘No.’ Such is faith: when its serenity penetrates a heart, no one can take it away.”

He asked them about the increase and persistence of his followers, which they confirmed. This is one of the signs of honesty and truth. Falsity will ultimately be found out until its followers recant from it, and those who never adopted it are further repelled by it.

The early Prophets have reported this: the false prophet will not remain but for a little while. It is one of the arguments of the Christian kings—it is said they are the descendants of the king in question—one of whom saw a senior cleric curse the Prophet ﷺ and accuse him of lying. He assembled the clergy and asked them about the false prophet and how long his call will last for. They answered him, citing from previous prophetic scriptures, that it only sustains for such-and-such number of years—around thirty years. He responded by saying: “Muhammad’s religion has been around for five-hundred—or six-hundred—years and it is manifestly accepted and followed. How then can he be a liar?” He then killed the one who cursed him. Heraclius then queried about the war or peace that takes place between them and him. They told him that on occasion he is victorious—as was the case on the Day of Badr—and on others they are—like at Uḥud. He continued:

309 *al-A‘rāf*, 75-76.

310 *al-A‘rāf*, 88-89.

“I asked you, ‘How is war between you?’ You said, ‘Sometimes he wins and sometimes we do.’ Such is the state of the Messengers. They are tried, but they are ultimately victorious.”

“I asked you, ‘Is he treacherous?’ You said, ‘No.’ The Messengers are not treacherous.”

Based on his knowledge of the nature of Messengers and Allah’s way with them—that they win some battles but lose others and are not treacherous—he recognised that this is a sign of prophecy. The way of Allah with His Messengers is that He tries them with ease and hardship so that they may acquire the stations of gratitude and patience. In the *Ṣaḥīḥ* it is reported that the Prophet ﷺ said: “By the one in whose hand is my soul, Allah does not decree some matter for the believer but that it is good for him, and this is for no one but the believer. If he is struck with ease, he is thankful, so it is good for him. If he is struck with hardship, he is patient, so it is good for him.”

Allah ﷻ has revealed some of His wisdom in allowing the enemy to have the upper hand on the Day of Uḥud. He says: “Do not wane nor grieve, for you will be superior if you are true believers. If you have suffered a blow, they too have suffered a blow like it. We deal out such days among people in turn, for Allah to find out who truly believes, and for Him to take witnesses (also: martyrs) from among you—Allah does not love the wrongdoers—and for Him to purge those who believe and for Him to destroy the disbelievers.”<sup>311</sup>

### Allah’s wisdom behind apparent calamity and loss

From His wisdom, He gave the following reasons: Distinguishing the believer from those around him. Had they (the apparent followers of the Prophet ﷺ) always been victorious, it would not be made manifest who among them is an ally and who is an enemy, since all portray allegiance. When they are defeated, their enemy appears. Allah ﷻ says: “What befell you on the day the two armies met was with Allah’s leave, and that He may know the believers, and that He may know those who acted hypocritically when it was said to them, ‘Come, fight in the way of Allah, or at least defend yourselves.’ They said, ‘If we knew there was fighting, we would follow you.’ On that day, they were closer to disbelief than they were to faith. They say with their mouths what is not in their hearts. But Allah best knows what they conceal. Those who said of their brethren, as they stayed behind, ‘Had

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311 *Āl ‘Imrān*, 139-141.

they obeyed us, they would not have been killed.' Say, 'Then avert death from yourselves, if you are truthful.'<sup>312</sup>

Allah ﷻ also says: "*Alif-Lām-Mīm*. Do people think that they will be left to say, 'We believe', without being tested? Yet certainly We have tested those before them; thus Allah will surely know the truthful and He will surely know the liars..."<sup>313</sup> until He says: "...among mankind is he who says, 'We have believe in Allah.' Yet, if he be made to suffer for the sake of Allah, he equates the people's persecution with Allah's punishment. If victory comes from your Lord, he will surely say, 'We were actually with you.' Does not Allah best know whatever is within the chests of [creatures in] all the worlds? Allah will surely know those who believe, and He will surely know the hypocrites."<sup>314</sup> Also: "Never would Allah leave the believers in the state which you are in until He distinguishes the nasty from the good"<sup>315</sup>; as well as similar passages.

Another manifestation of wisdom: Allah chooses martyrs from among you. The station of martyrdom is lofty in the Garden. Death is inevitable. Thus, the slave dying as a martyr is more becoming for perfection and greater in reward. Allah expiates the martyr's sins and his wronging himself through martyrdom, and Allah does not love the wrongdoers.

Additionally: Allah purges the believers and cleanses them of sins. If they were always victorious, their souls would be instilled with delusion and enervation of faith, where the punishment of waning would be incumbent upon them thereby. Allah ﷻ says: "In fact, We only respite them so that they may increase in sin"<sup>316</sup>, and "But no! Indeed man exceeds all bounds when he thinks himself self-sufficient."<sup>317</sup>

In the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, the Prophet ﷺ is found to have said: "The example of a believer is of a fresh tender plant which the wind affects: it bends it sometimes and makes it straight at others. The example of a hypocrite is of a pine tree which is firmly embedded on its foundation until, when it is uprooted, it is suddenly all at once." He ﷺ was also asked: "Who is most tried among the people?" He replied: "The Prophets, then the righteous, then from the best descending. Each man is tried according to his faith. If it is delicate, he is lightly tried. If it is firm, he is heavily tried. The believer continues to be tested in his self, family, and wealth until he meets Allah having no sin on him."

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312 *Āl 'Imrān*, 166-168.

313 *al-'Ankabūt*, 1-3.

314 *al-'Ankabūt*, 10-11.

315 *Āl 'Imrān*, 179.

316 *Āl 'Imrān*, 178.

317 *al-'Alaḳ*, 6-7.

Allah ﷻ says: “Or did you think that you will enter the Garden while yet there has not come unto you the like of those who passed before you? Affliction and adversity befell them, they were shaken as with earthquake, till the Messenger and those who believed along with him said, ‘When is Allah’s help?’ Now surely Allah’s help is nigh.”<sup>318</sup> He ﷻ also says: “Or did you think that you would enter the Garden when Allah has not yet known those of you who have striven and known the patient ones?”<sup>319</sup>

In the reported tradition (*athar*), Allah ﷻ is quoted<sup>320</sup> as saying: “Son of Adam, trials bring Me and you together, while wellness brings you and yourself together.” Also relayed is that, when it is said about the sick person, “Allah, have mercy on him”, Allah says: “How should I have mercy on him by [alleviating] something through which I am showing him mercy?!”

We have witnessed that when an army is broken, the soldiers humble themselves before Allah and relent towards Him, repenting from sin, asking Him for victory, disavowing themselves from their own power and strength, entrusting themselves to Allah and wholly relying on Him. This is why Allah reminds the Companions of how they were at Badr and Ḥunayn: “Allah had already given you victory at Badr when you were contemptible. So observe your duty to Allah in order that you may be thankful”<sup>321</sup>, “Allah has given you victory you in many battlefields. But on the day of Ḥunayn, when your multitude impressed you, it availed you nothing and the earth closed in on you despite its spaciousness, then you turned away, fleeing. Then Allah sent down His tranquillity upon His Messenger and upon the believers, and He sent down troops you did not see and punished those who disbelieved. That is the repayment of the disbelievers.”<sup>322</sup>

The manifestations of this profound principle are many. It is a matter that people find in their hearts. They feel it in their own selves as well as others. It is a necessary form of knowledge which takes place by way of experience for those who have experienced it, and by way of abundant reports (*akhbār mutawātirah*) for those who heard of it.

Then another element of Allah’s wisdom He mentions: He says: “... and for Him to destroy the disbelievers.” Allah punishes people for their deeds. If the disbeliever has any good deeds (*ḥasanāt*), Allah uses them to provide<sup>323</sup> for him in the worldly life. When he has none left, He punishes

318 *al-Baqarah*, 214.

319 *Āl ‘Imrān*, 142.

320 Translation note: Though this takes the form of a *ḥadīth qudsī*, it is most likely sourced from Israelite traditions (*Isrā’īliyyāt*).

321 *Āl ‘Imrān*, 123.

322 *al-Tawbah*, 25-26.

323 Translator’s note: The word here is *aṭ‘amah*, which literally means ‘to feed’.

him for his disbelief. When the disbelievers are given the upper hand, they grow in delusion and hostility and intensify in their denial and disbelief where they deserve destruction to befall them. In their being given the upper hand is a means for their destruction.

As for treachery,<sup>324</sup> then the Messengers do not betray trusts, since treachery comes hand-in-hand with lying. In the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, the Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said: “The signs of the hypocrite are three: When he speaks, he lies; when he promises, he breaks his promise; and when he is entrusted, he betrays the trust.” It is also found in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* that the Prophet ﷺ said: “There are four traits which if they come together in a person, he is a pure hypocrite. Whoever has one of them has a trait of hypocrisy till he leaves it off. They are: When he speaks, he lies; when he promises, he breaks his promise; when he is entrusted, he betrays the trust, and when he has a falling out, he is wicked.”

**My commentary:** Treachery and its like come under lying. Allah ﷻ says: “And of them is he who made a covenant with Allah, ‘If He does give us of His bounty, we will most surely donate and we will most surely be of the righteous.’ But when He brought them of His grace, they became stingy with it and turned away in disregard. So as a consequence, He caused hypocrisy to be in their hearts until the day they encounter Him—because they broke their promise to Allah and because they used to lie.”<sup>325</sup> Allah ﷻ also says: “Have you not seen the hypocrites saying to their brethren who disbelieved among the People of the Book, ‘Indeed, if you are evicted, we will certainly depart with you and not obey anyone against you, ever, and should anyone fight you, we will certainly support you’? Allah bears witness that they are liars. Indeed, if they are evicted, they will not depart with them; and indeed, if anyone fights them, they will not support them. Even if they were to support them, they would certainly turn their backs, then they would not be victorious.”<sup>326</sup> Treachery and betrayal comprise of lying in the future. The Messengers ﷺ transcend such blameworthy traits. Thus, this was a sign for Heraclius. He says:

“I asked you, ‘What does he command you of?’ You said, ‘He commands us to worship Allah alone without associating any partners to Him, and to keep to prayer, truthfulness, chastity, and ties of kith and kin. He prohibits us from what our ancestors used to worship.’ This is a prophetic trait. I knew that a Prophet will be sent, but did not think he would be from you (i.e., an Arab).

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324 Translator’s note: Going back to Heraclius’s narrative.

325 *al-Tawbah*, 75-77.

326 *al-Hashr*, 11-12.

I wish I could go to him. But for this kingship I am in, I would have. If what you are saying is true, then he shall own this very spot my feet rest at.”

The addressee was Abū Sufyān ibn Ḥarb—a disbeliever at the time, and one of the staunchest and most hostile adversaries to the Prophet ﷺ. Recounting this narrative, he says: “I said to my company as we left, ‘The matter of Ibn Abī Kabshah<sup>327</sup> has become rife. The king of the yellow-skins (*malik banī al-aṣfar*) fears him.’ I was certain that the star of Allah’s Messenger ﷺ shall shine until Allah forced Islam upon me while I was hateful of it.”

**My commentary:** This type of interrogation gave the wise, astute king certain knowledge that this was indeed the Awaited Prophet.

Some who did not appreciate the subtlety and depth of these questions, like al-Māzarī and his like, said prophecy cannot be confirmed through such matters. It is known through miracles.

This is not the case. Any person with a sound mind and disposition who comes across this account recognises that it is a clear sign of the questioner’s intelligence, experience, and extrapolatory prowess in trying to find out the claimant’s truth status. Through such matters does one distinguish between the truthful and the liar.

It ought to be known that while a collection of matters may affect the heart a certain way, it is not necessarily affected proportionately had said matters affected it individually. Anything that overtakes man of satiation, quenching, inebriation, jubilation, and grief by way of a collective is not realised by a portion thereof. Instead, some of it may only realise some of the effect. The same is true for knowledge of some news, tried and experienced matters, and internal states. For example, a solitary report may realise a type of doubt (*ẓann*), then another strengthens it, until it finally reaches the level of knowledge, ever-increasing and strengthening. Likewise is the case with what man tries and experiences, and what he sees of others’ circumstances; and likewise for what one uses to ascertain another’s truthfulness.

Moreover, Allah ﷻ has preserved the heritage of His Prophets on earth. It is an indication of the honour which He bequeathed upon them and the punishment which befell those who rejected them. This is also known by

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327 Translator’s note: Pejoratively referring to the Prophet ﷺ. To degrade someone’s social standing, the Arabs would refer to them via an obscure forefather in their lineage. For example, had he wished at the time, Abū Sufyān could have instead referred to the Prophet ﷺ as “Ibn ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib”—the Son of ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib—the foremost and most prestigious patronymic title of the Prophet ﷺ due to ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib, his grandfather, being the noble chieftain of Quraysh.

way of abundant reports; like the story of the flood, and the drowning of Pharaoh and his army.

Allah ﷻ often mentions this in the Qur'an. He says: "If they deny you—so before them did the people of Nūḥ and ʿĀd and Thamūd also deny, and the people of Ibrāhīm and the people of Lūṭ, and the inhabitants of Midian. Mūsā was denied as well. Thus, I reprieved the disbelievers then I seized them; how terrible is My condemnation! How many towns steeped in wrongdoing We have destroyed and left in total ruin; [how many] deserted wells and lofty palaces! Have they not travelled the land so that they should have hearts wherewith to reason and ears wherewith to hear? For indeed, it is not the eyes that grow blind, but it is the hearts that are in the breasts that grow blind."<sup>328</sup> He also says: "How many a generation We destroyed before them, who were even mightier than these in prowess such that they overran the lands—was there any escape? Indeed, therein verily is a reminder for him who has a heart or gives ear with full presence."<sup>329</sup>

Across Sūrah Ghāfir, Allah ﷻ says: "Before them the people of Nūḥ denied, as did the parties after them. Every community sought after their Messenger in order to capture him. They argued using falsehood to defeat with it the truth. But I seized them, and how [awful] is My punishment..."<sup>330</sup>, "...Have they not travelled the land to see the nature of the consequence for those who disbelieved before them? They were mightier than them in power and in the traces left behind them in the earth. Yet Allah seized them for their sins, and they had no protector from Allah. That is because their Messengers used to come to them with evident proofs, but they disbelieved, so Allah seized them. He is indeed Strong, severe in punishment..."<sup>331</sup>, "...Most surely, We support Our Messengers and those who believe, both in the worldly life and on the day witnesses arise..."<sup>332</sup>, "...Surely, We have sent other Messengers before you, some We have related to you and some We have not. No Messenger could bring about a sign except with Allah's permission. When Allah's command comes, just judgement will be passed between them and, there and then, those who followed falsehood will be lost..."<sup>333</sup>, "...Have they not travelled the land to see the nature of the consequence for those before them? They were more numerous than them, and mightier in power and in the traces left behind them in the earth. But all that they used to earn availed them not. When their Messengers came

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328 *al-Hajj*, 42-46.

329 *Qāf*, 36-37.

330 *Ghāfir*, 5.

331 *Ghāfir*, 21-22.

332 *Ghāfir*, 51.

333 *Ghāfir*, 78.



to them with evident proofs they rejoiced in the knowledge they had, so they were engulfed by what they used to ridicule. Then when they saw Our chastisement they said, ‘We believe in Allah alone and we disbelieve in what we used to associate with Him.’ But their faith could not help them once they witnessed Our chastisement; such is Allah’s way which has ever taken course over His slaves; there and then, the disbelievers lost.”<sup>334</sup>

In Sūrah al-Shu‘arā’, when Allah gives prophetic narratives, one Prophet after another—Mūsā, Ibrāhīm, Nūḥ and who followed him—He concludes each passage by saying: “Indeed, there truly is a sign in this, though most of them do not believe. Indeed, your Lord is the Almighty, the Merciful.”<sup>335</sup> For Mūsā’s narrative, Allah ﷻ says: “When the two groups sighted each other, the followers of Mūsā said, ‘We are indeed overtaken!’ He said, ‘No! Indeed, my Lord is with me. He will guide me.’ So We revealed to Mūsā, ‘Strike the sea with your staff’, and it parted such that each side was a great mountain. Thereupon, we brought the others near. We saved Mūsā and those who were with him, one and all. Then We drowned the others. Indeed, there truly is a sign in this, though most of them do not believe. Indeed, your Lord is the Almighty, the Merciful.”<sup>336</sup>

He repeats this statement at the end of each narrative. In the account of Shu‘ayb, Allah ﷻ says: “They denied him, so there came on them the torment of the day of gloom. Indeed, it was the torment of an awful day. Indeed, there truly is a sign in this, though most of them do not believe. Indeed, your Lord is the Almighty, the Merciful.”<sup>337</sup>

Allah ﷻ also says: “Before them the People of Nūḥ denied, as did ‘Ād and Pharaoh of the stakes; and Thamūd, the people of Lūṭ, and the fellows of the thicket. They were the factions. Not one of them but did deny the Messengers, so My punishment was deserved.”<sup>338</sup> Regarding the people of Shu‘ayb, Allah ﷻ begins the following passage: “They denied him so the dreadful earthquake took them, and morning found them lying dead in their homes. ‘Ād and Thamūd as well, as it has become evident for you from [what is left of] their residences. The devil adorned their deeds for them, barring them from the way, even though they could see. And Qārūn and Pharaoh and Hāmān—Mūsā certainly went to them with clear proofs, but they went about arrogantly in the land and in no way were they forerunners. Thus, we seized each for his sin: some We struck with a violent storm, some were overcome by the Shriek, some We made the earth swallow, and

334 *Ghāfir*, 82-85.

335 *al-Shu‘arā’*, 8-9.

336 *al-Shu‘arā’*, 61-68.

337 *al-Shu‘arā’*, 189-191.

338 *Ṣād*, 12-14.



some We drowned. It was not for Allah to wrong them, but it was they who wronged themselves. The likeness of those who take for themselves guardians other than Allah is as the likeness of the spider when she takes unto herself a house. Surely, the frailest of all houses is the spider's house, if they but knew. Indeed, Allah knows whatever thing they invoke apart from Him. He is the Almighty, the Wise. Such parables We set forth for mankind, but none grasps them except those of knowledge.”<sup>339</sup> He ﷻ also says: “Verily We have destroyed what surrounds you of townships and diversified the signs that haply they might return. Why then did those whom they worshipped as means of nearness to Allah not support them? Rather, they abandoned them. It was their lie, a fabrication of their own making.”<sup>340</sup>

Allah ﷻ mentions what is manifest for the monotheists of ruined dwellings that surround Makkah. Most of the Messengers whose narratives Allah recounted were sent around it. Hūd was in the Yemen and Šāliḥ in the Ḥijr towards the Levant. Nūḥ, Ibrāhīm, Mūsā, ʿĪsā, Yūnus, Lūṭ, and the Messengers of the Children of Israel were in the Levant, Egypt, the Arab peninsula, and Iraq.

When recounting the narrative of the people of Lūṭ, Allah ﷻ says: “The Shriek seized them at sunrise; and We turned it upside down and rained down upon them stones of hard clay. Indeed, in that are certainly signs for those who read them. Indeed, it is upon a road still uneffaced. Indeed, in that is certainly a sign for the believers. The fellows of the thicket were certainly unjust. So we took vengeance on them; and indeed, they both are on a highway plain to see.”<sup>341</sup> He ﷻ also says: “Indeed, Lūṭ was one of the Messengers. We saved him and his household, one and all. Except an old woman among those remaining behind. Then We annihilated the others. Most surely, you pass by them in the morning and at night. Do you not reason?”<sup>342</sup> Also: “So We brought out whoever was in it (the town of Lūṭ ﷻ) of the believers. We found naught but one house of the Muslims. We left in it a sign for those who fear the painful punishment.”<sup>343</sup>

Allah ﷻ says: “Have you not seen how your Lord dealt with the fellows of the Elephant? Did He not make their plot go into nullity? He sent against them swarms of flying creatures, pelting them with rocks of hard-baked clay. Thus, He made them like eaten-up chaff.”<sup>344</sup> He ﷻ also says: “For the accustomed security of Quraysh—their custom of the journey in winter

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339 *al-ʿAnkabūt*, 37-43.

340 *al-Aḥqāf*, 27-28.

341 *al-Ḥijr*, 73-79.

342 *al-Šaffāt*, 133-138.

343 *al-Dhāriyāt*, 35-37.

344 *al-Fīl*, 1-5.

and summer—let them worship the Lord of this House, who has fed them to ward off hunger and has secured them to ward off fear.”<sup>345</sup>

Allah ﷻ says: “Surely, there was a sign for you in two battalions that met: one battalion fighting in the way of Allah and another disbelieving, whom they saw as twice their number, clearly with their very eyes. Allah aids with His support whomever He wills. In that is indeed a lesson for those endowed with sight.”<sup>346</sup> Also: “It is He who evicted those who disbelieved among the People of the Book from their homes at the first expulsion. You did not think they would depart, and they thought their fortresses would protect them from Allah, but Allah came at them whence they never expected and threw terror into their hearts. They wreck their houses with their own hands and by the hands of the believers. So take a lesson, O you endowed with sight.”<sup>347</sup>

Allah ﷻ says: “We sent not before you naught save men unto whom We revealed from among the folk of the townships. Have they not travelled the land and seen the nature of the consequence for those who were before them? Surely the abode of the Hereafter is better for those mindful of Allah. Do you not reason? Till, when the Messengers despaired and thought that they were denied, then came unto them Our help. Then whomever We willed was delivered. Our chastisement is never turned back from the criminal people. Surely, in their narrative there has been a lesson for people of understanding. This was not a fabricated tale, but a confirmation of what came before it, a detailed explanation of everything, and guidance and mercy for people who believe.”<sup>348</sup>

There is plenty of this throughout the Qur’an. Allah ﷻ recounts the narratives of His Messengers and those who believed in them—the victory, bliss, and good end He gave them—and the narratives of those who denied and disbelieved in them—the tribulations, torment, and evil end He caused on them. This is one of the most profound proofs and unassailable evidences for the truthfulness and goodness of the Messengers, and the falsity and wickedness of those who opposed them.

Allah ﷻ further elucidated that this may be perceived by sight, hearing, or both of them. Sight and direct witnessing are for those who saw them or their relics. For example, those who saw the fellows of the Elephant and what became of them, or witness the relics of prophethood in the Levant, the Yemen, or the Hejaz—like the relics of the fellows of the Ḥijr, people of Lūt, and so on. As for hearing, then it is with regards to reports that beget

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345 *Quraysh*, 1-4.

346 *Āl ‘Imrān*, 13.

347 *al-Hashr*, 2.

348 *Yūsuf*, 109-111.

knowledge. An example is the abundant reports pertaining to Mūsā, Pharaoh, and the latter's drowning in the Qulzum<sup>349</sup>. Likewise, the abundant reports regarding the story of the Intimate Friend with Nimrud, the flood of Nūḥ, and similar narratives that are found aplenty within the various religions and outside them. The multiplicity and abundant accounts of these narratives yield knowledge of their happenings. In terms of both seeing and hearing, then this is with regards to the witnessing of relics alongside the receipt of abundant reports. For example, it is like seeing a ship while knowing that the first was that of Nūḥ. Allah ﷻ says: "A sign for them is that We carried their offspring in the laden ship, and We created for them the like of it in which they ride"<sup>350</sup>, "Indeed, when the waters overflowed We carried you in the running ship, making it a reminder for you—so that an attentive ear may take heed."<sup>351</sup> Likewise, the land of the Ḥijr may be witnessed with its palaces carved into the mountains alongside reports which explain the circumstances related to them, and so on.

All in all: Knowledge that there were upon the earth those who said they were Messengers from Allah, that people followed them and others rejected them, and that Allah gave victory and a good end to the Messengers and the believers and made their enemies suffer—is from the most manifest of abundantly reported matters.

### **The universal prevalence of the stories and virtue of the Prophets ﷺ**

Relaying these accounts is more evident than the relayed stories of Persian and Arabian kings in the pre-Islamic era. It is more evident than relaying the reports of the Greeks, and their scholars of medicine, astronomy<sup>352</sup>, and philosophy—like Hippocrates, Galen, Ptolemy, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. Every reasonable person knows that reports of the Prophets, their nations, and their enemies, are much more plentiful than the forementioned personalities. The accounts of the Prophets and their followers are relayed by a countless number of religious adherents. They write said accounts in texts. These reporters are incredibly religious, and diligently keep to honesty and reject lying as abhorrent. In the joint capacity between them and mankind at large, it is inconceivable that they have all conspired to lie or

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349 Translator's note: In or around modern day Suez, Egypt. The word itself refers to being swallowed by water.

350 *Yā-Sīn*, 41.

351 *al-Ḥāqqah*, 11-12.

352 Translator's note: The Arabic states *nujūm*—'stars'—so may be a reference to astrology instead. It may be debated that a distinction could not be clearly made in certain historical contexts.

hide what may ostensibly be relayed and passed down within scope. In their specifically being religious is further assurance and a more complete proof.

This is known in detail by our ummah and its state. We acquire necessary knowledge via the abundant reports of the Predecessors, whose religiosity necessitates clarity and truthfulness and discounts lying and concealment. It begets necessary knowledge within us of what is abundantly reported on their behalf, as well as a recognition of the non-matter of what they did not report—they pass down anything of significance. The People of the Two Books (*Ahl al-Kitābayn*: the Jews and the Christians) before us have such abundant reports with regards to holistic subjects and motifs which realise the intent of the matter at hand. Though there indeed are falsities and concealment with regards to certain details in the traditions of the People of the Two Books and even within our own ummah, they are negligible in comparison to the falsities and concealment which occur with reports pertaining to the Persians, Greeks, Indians, and their like—among those who relay their kings' and scholars' accounts.

There is no sound-minded person who hears reports pertaining to one and the other—as found today in various texts and tongues—but that he will acquire necessary knowledge with regards to the Prophets, their allies, and their enemies what is much greater than anything pertaining to Persian and Roman kings, their scholars, allies, and enemies. This is evident, thank Allah.

But for the fact that the response ought to be appropriated for the creed at hand, thorough explication would have been more befitting here. These subject matters can take on a great deal of detailed exposition. We have but highlighted beneficial preliminary premises. Most of the Kalam Folk have hefty shortcomings in their evidentiary basis, in that they do not assert what ought to be asserted in matters of *tawhīd* and prophecy. Not to mention that many of them are plain wrong within the matters they discuss.

Those not aware of the reality of such matters think that what they (Kalam Folk) mention about them is the desired goal in theology, and the ultimate end in its proper evidentiary extrapolation and sub-categorisation, thus ending up contradicting the Book and the Sunnah, if not even explicit reason on occasion. Such a person may consequently end up deeming many of their principles as weak, and many of their consequent foundational doctrines as doubtful, preferring in their stead the positions of those who go against the Messengers among the philosophers, Sabians, polytheists, and their like. He becomes internally a heretical hypocrite, while manifestly one of the *mutakallimun* defending prophecy.

This is why Aḥmad and others from the Predecessors said: “The scholars of kalam are heretics. No one adopts kalam but that he holds in his heart

malice against the people of Islam.” It is because they founded their engagement on false grounds which made them fall into misguidance. This is not the place to explain this deeply. We have done so in other works.

The point here is as follows: The ways to acquire knowledge of messengerhood are plenty and of a wide variety. Since we, in this modern day, know by way of abundant reports the states of the Prophets, their allies, and their enemies, we acquire certain knowledge of their honesty and their being upon the truth. This is from a few perspectives:

- They (the Prophets) reported they will be victorious and their enemies will be disgraced, and that theirs will be the good end. They did so often and in various matters, all of which came true and so they did not contradict themselves. Those who would make such claims and is not of their ilk—like those upon whom the devils descend or those who exercise astrological interpretations—are not of the same nature, even if many in number. The majority of what they say is falsities, even if they end up getting it right on occasion.
- When one appreciates the circumstances in which Allah ﷻ gave victory to them (the Prophets) and how He destroyed their enemies—like the drowning of Pharaoh and his army in their pursuit of Mūsā and his people—it begets necessary knowledge that Allah favoured Mūsā’s side in grace and bestowed His wrath on Pharaoh and his allies. Likewise with Nūḥ and the Intimate Friend ﷺ, as well as the narrative of the Elephant, and so on.
- Upon inspecting what the Messengers ﷺ informed of and commanded, one necessarily recognises that this may only emanate from the most knowledgeable, truthful, and beneficent of people. It is not possible that a liar produces this: either as a reprehensible fabricator inventing claims about Allah, or an erring, deluded, misguided ignoramus who believes Allah sent him forth when He did not.

There is in what they command such seamless perfection, exposition of truths, moral guidance, clarification of what the intellect may holistically perceive but cannot do so in detail—that which showcases their being upon sound knowledge and expertise in what distinguishes them from other people. It is impossible that this may come out of a misguided ignoramus. Their message is also endowed with mercy, common social benefit, guidance, and goodness, along with exhortation towards what yields wellbeing and prohibition of what yields harm, which concludes that it must be sourced from a merciful beneficent one who intends goodness and wellness for the creation.

If this indeed is a sign for their perfect knowledge and goodwill, then one characterised by this may not conceivably lie against Allah. Claiming prophecy is a profound, grand claim. There is no one more wicked than he who falsely and deliberately lays claim to it, nor anyone more ignorant than he who espouses it erroneously.

This argument may be adopted for the Messengers ﷺ generally, and for any given one among them specifically. The truth-seeker uses what he holistically knows of goodness and truth as an indicant for the knowledge and honesty of his companion (i.e., the Messenger of his time), then uses his knowledge and truthfulness to evidence what he could not know in detail by himself.

Recognising the genera of truth and falsehood, good and evil, and honesty and lying, is borne of a sound natural disposition (*fiṭrah*) as well as explicit reason (*al-‘aql al-ṣariḥ*). Human beings are in agreement over the holistic elements (*jumal*) of these values. This is why they are referred to as *ma‘rūf* and *munkar* (literally: ‘what is known’ and ‘what is rejected’; due to the former being commonly accepted as virtuous and the latter commonly accepted as immoral). If, in what people recognise as truth and good, the claimant is seen to be most knowledgeable, most concerned in exhorting others towards them, and most truthful among them in what he says; it is understood that he is truthful, wise, and caring, not lying, ignorant, nor treacherous.

This evidentiary avenue is traversed in accordance with one’s personal abilities and circumstances. It is not necessary here that one first knows the features of prophethood, its reality, and modality. It is only necessary to recognise the Messenger in question as truthful and beneficent with regard to what he commands, then via his affairs, one may appreciate the reality of prophecy and messengerhood.

### Various dialectic approaches to prophecy

There were those among the mutakallimun, philosophers, Sufis, and others who exercised a slightly different though similar argument. It is to first to know prophecy, that it exists in mankind, that they are in need of it, recognise its features, then recognise the specific Prophet in the given context.

The Mutazilite mutakallimun deem prophecy necessary upon Allah ﷻ, as is their way in obliging Him to various matters. The philosophers may also deem it necessary in their own way insofar as it is among those things that are necessarily existent in the world. Others deem it necessary via what is known of Him, in terms of wisdom, mercy, and providence—that He will fulfil the needs of the creation.

Overall: They recognise its species in the world, then recognise the individual from the genre via the affirmation of the species' reality within him. This is adopted by many among the mutakallimun, Sufis, philosophers, and others.

However, the philosophers—like Ibn Sinā and others—perceived of prophethood as much as their philosophical toolkit allowed them to. Through the latter, they recognise the Prophet as a complete epistemic force, as well as being one endowed with perfect hearing and sight, and strength of self. Thus, he knows, hears, and sees what others cannot, and acts in the world with such resolve that other than him cannot muster.

They consider prophecy to be comprised of three matters. A prophet must be endowed with:

1. Intellectual prowess (*quwwah ʿaqliyyah*). Rather, a means (*nisbah*) to acquire knowledge without learning.
2. Imaginative prowess (*quwwah khayāliyyah*). He must be able to imagine and conceptualise existent mental truths, within the same genre as dreams and visions one sees in one's sleep. He sees a light within himself—the message, in their estimation—and hears a voice within himself—Allah's speech, in their estimation.
3. Personal prowess<sup>353</sup>, such that the strength of his self (*nafs*) may impact (*tu'aththir*) the world.

These three elements take place with many people—those who are lesser in level than the righteous, let alone the lofty level of prophecy. Accordingly, prophecy in their view is acquired, and many among them sought it out. Examples include al-Suhrawardī who was killed and Ibn Sabʿīn. The latter used to say: “In the narration, ‘There is no prophet after me,’ I added ‘Arab prophet.’”

They make prophecy borne of a single genre within the strength of the self, in terms of knowledge and ability. However, they qualify this by saying that the difference is in intent—the prophet intends good, while the sorcerer intends evil. They say that the angel and the devil are both forces, but the angel is a force of good, and the devil a force of evil.

As for those who posit that the angels and the jinn are of the same genre without any differences in attribute, then they say that this portion (i.e., supernatural encounter) takes place for them (the Prophets) as well as those less than them in status, like saints. The latter's experience is not

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353 Translator's note: One may wish to say: *quwwah nafsiyyah*. However, this is not explicitly mentioned in the text.



as profound as the former's though. This is the view of the rationalists among the philosophers who favour the prophet over the saint, like Ibn Sīnā and his like.

As for the extreme among them, like al-Farābī and his ilk, they may favour the philosopher over the Prophet. Likewise those similar to them, like Ibn ʿArabī al-Ṭāʿī, the author of *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah* and *Fuṣūs al-Ḥikam*. They favour the saint over the Prophet. He (Ibn ʿArabī) used to claim that he extracts from the same ore whence the angel extracts, the latter being the means of prophetic revelation. The angel—according to their principle—is the state (*ḥāl*) in the Prophet's self. They claim the Prophet takes from this state, and the state takes from the intellect (*al-ʿaql*). Then, he (Ibn ʿArabī) comes along and claims he takes from said intellect within this imagined realm. Hence why he said that he extracts from the same ore whence the angel extracts, and whence the Prophet receives revelation. These people (Ibn ʿArabī et al) agree with them (Farābī et al) in this founding origin.

Immense is their ignorance and misguidance of the status of the Prophets ﷺ. Their founding principles in recognising the status of prophecy is severed, full of shortcomings. Rather, anyone who recognises what the Prophets came with and compares it to their rhetoric about prophecy realises that they believe in some of what the Messengers have come with and disbelieved in some things. Just as the Jews and the Christians have believed in some of the Prophets and disbelieved in some. These people believe in some attributes of prophethood and disbelieve in others. Thus, there may be among them those who are more severe in disbelief than the Jews and the Christians, and there may be among the Jews and the Christians those who are more severe in disbelief than them, all depending on the portion that each faction accepts or denies from what the Messengers have come with.

### Ghazālī's prophetology

Abū Ḥāmid [al-Ghazālī] often adopts this rhetoric in his works. However, he does not agree with the philosophers in everything they posit. He deemed them disbelievers based on some of their views, and astray based on others. There is in the texts attributed to him that which agrees with some of their principles. Rather, in the works about which it is said that they are 'Kept Away from Other than Its Folk' (*maḍnūnun biḥā ʿalā ghayri ahliḥā*<sup>354</sup>) there is naught but pure philosophy, contravening the religions

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354 Translator's note: Referring to two texts attributed to Ghazālī: *al-Maḍnūn biḥ ʿalā Ghayr Ahlih* and *al-Maḍnūn al-Ṣaghīr*.



of the Muslims, Jews, and Christians, even if adorned with Islamic phraseology. Nonetheless, there are those who say that these texts are forgeries against him, while others say he retracted them.

It is invariably the case that he has affirmed in other works what he discussed in these ones. He speaks in *al-Munqidh min al-Ḍalāl* and other works of his about the misguidance this (i.e., philosophy and dialectic speculation) causes. He speaks about his formative years in seeking the sciences. He says:

“I commenced with serious diligence, contemplating over the sensed (*maḥsūsāt*) and the axiomatic (*ḍarūriyyāt*). I reflected, ‘Am I able to doubt myself here?’ Lengthy scepticism concluded with my being unable to accept the sensed in good conscience, and one doubt followed another...”

He mentions some of the arguments of the Sophists, then continues:

“When these thoughts came to me and imprinted themselves on me, I sought a cure but to no avail. Only proof may alleviate them, and a proof may only be borne of a priori knowledge (‘ulūm awwalīyah). If even that is not a given, a proof may not be formulated. Thus, my ailment turned chronic. It lasted for nearly two months, where I was upon the Sophists’ view in state, even if not by word. Allah ﷻ then cured me from this illness, and my soul went back to wellness and uprightness. The axiomatic was once again accepted with certainty. This was not by way of formal proof or organised rhetoric, rather by way of a light which Allah ﷻ cast in my breast. This light is the key to most epistemes. [...] He who thinks that truth-unveiling (*kashf*) is bound to abstract proof has restricted the vast mercy of Allah ﷻ. [...]

The point of this account is that propriety in seeking knowledge be known. It ends with seeking what cannot be sought. The a priori is unsought, for it is present. In seeking what is present, it turns elusive and distant.

When Allah had sufficed me from this ailment, the types of seekers were bound within four in my view: the mutakallimun, who claim to be the folk of insight and dialectic theory; the Bāṭīnis, who claim to be the fellows of exclusive learning, alone given access to the Infallible Imam; the philosophers, who claim to be the fellows of logic and rigorous proof; and the Sufis, who claim

to be the dignitaries of presence, the folk of divine witnessing and inspiration.

I said to myself, ‘Truth will not escape these four types, for they are the truth-seekers. If truth be indeed beyond them, then there is no hope in reaching it.’ [...]

Thus, I went forth in seeking these paths and gathering what they have to offer, starting with kalam, followed by philosophy, then Baṭīnī learning, and concluding with Sufi wayfaring. [...]

I began with kalam, fully completing its study and thoroughly understanding it. I read the works of the foremost among the mutakallimun, and myself authored what I wished to contribute. I found it to be a science that fulfils its end, but it did not fulfil mine. Its purpose is to preserve the creed of the Sunnah Folk and protect it from the innovators’ assaults. Allah ﷻ has bestowed upon His slaves a creed that is the truth—appropriated for their religious and worldly prosperity, in accordance with the preliminary premises set by the Qur’an and revelatory reports. The devil then worked his evil and incited the innovators into matters that contradict the Sunnah, and they lapped it all up. They almost managed to disturb the creedal peace of the truth folk, but Allah erected forth a legion of mutakallimun and moved them into protecting the Sunnah, employing precise, organised rhetoric to expose the innovators’ aberrant obfuscations which go against the Sunnah tradition. [...] Their primary concern was to showcase their opponents’ contradictions and take them to task via the entailments of their positions and the maxims they cede to as indisputable. [...] Thus, kalam was not sufficient for me, nor for my illness which I hoped to cure. [...] It did not fully eradicate the darkness of my confusion regarding the difference among the creation. I do not think it unlikely that others went through a similar ordeal. In fact, I have no doubt that it did befall some people, but it did so with regards to blind-following (*taqlid*) in matters other than a priori truths. [...]

After being done with kalam, I started my journey with philosophy. I knew for sure that no one is able to recognise the falsity of any given science if they are unable to peak in this one, such that one’s knowledge thereof is equal to that of the most senior masters, then increases thereupon and exceeds their level—delving deep to find what the foremost experts in the discipline could not find. [...] I kept at it until I discovered its deceit and obfuscation, reality and imagination, in a way that I was certain of. Listen now

to their story, and the story of their coveted science. I found them to be of various types, and their knowledge to be of different categories. Despite the plethora of their sects, they are marked by disbelief and blasphemy, notwithstanding a vast gradient between the ancients among them and the moderns in terms of proximity to truth and distance therefrom. [...] Know that, though they are many, they are split into three categories: Materialists (*Dahriyyūn*), Naturalists (*Tabā'ir'ıyyūn*), and Theists (*ilāhiyyūn*).

The First: The Materialists are the ancients. They denied the Maker, the Ordainer, the Knowing, the Able. They claimed that the cosmos has pre-eternally existed as it is. Animals have always been from a sperm-drop, and the sperm-drop has always developed into animals. This is how it has been, and this is how it always will be. They are the heretical ones.

The Second: The Naturalists are those who went into great depths in exploring the natural world and the wonders of flora and fauna. [...] Due to their delving into nature, sound temperament (*i'ṭidāl al-mizāj*) took a central role in their belief of animal operation. They thought that the rational prowess of man is also subsidiary to his temperament, such that it is nullified by the nullification of his temperament and turns void. Once non-existent, it is not rational—they claim—for it to be reinstated. Thus, they believed that the self dies and does not return, rejecting the Afterlife, the Garden, the Fire, the Resurrection, the Reckoning, and the Judgement. Obedience bears no fruit in their estimation, nor does disobedience yield punishment. Thus, free of all reins, they overindulged into animalistic hedonism. They are also heretics, for faith in origin is faith in Allah and the Last Day. They denied the Last Day, even if they believed in Allah and His attributes.

The Third: The Theists are the later philosophers. They include Socrates who is Plato's mentor, Plato who is Aristotle's mentor, and Aristotle. The latter is the one who formalised logic for them, standardised the science, matured their fermented ideas, and allowed what was unripe of their knowledge to finally come to harvest.

Overall, they refuted the former two groups of Materialists and Naturalists, exposing their disarray in a way that sufficed others from doing so. Allah sufficed the believers from fighting through their fighting. Aristotle then adequately and thoroughly retorted against Plato, Socrates, and the Theist philosophers before them. He disavowed himself from them all, though did maintain some

of the filth of disbelief and innovation, and was not given divine grace in fully ridding himself from it.

Accordingly, it is necessary to proclaim them disbelievers and their Islamicate<sup>355</sup> followers, like Ibn Sinā, Farābī, and their like. Having said this, no one from the Islamicate philosophers transmitted Aristotle's tradition more extensively than these two men. What others have transmitted is full of discrepancy and discontinuity which inhibits the reader's comprehension of his content. How can what is not understood be accepted or rejected?

What is veracious in Aristotle's philosophy—as per these two men's transmission—is bound within three matters: the first must be disbelieved, the second must be declared innovatory, and the third does not have to be rejected. Let us explain this...”

He then mentions six categories: mathematical, logical, natural, theological, political, and moral. He discusses this thoroughly, but it is beside the point here. We have given its due in other texts as well. He then says:

“When I was done with philosophy, its acquisition, and proper comprehension—having taken in as much as one can take—I recognised that it, too, will not suffice my needs, and that the intellect cannot independently encompass all what may be sought nor unveil barriers to mysterious truths...”

He then speaks about the Bāṭinīs and their obfuscation:

“They do not have a cure to deliver one from the darkness of subjective opinions. On top of their failing to identify the Infallible Imam—we concede to them the need for exclusive learning, an infallible teacher, and that he is the one whom they accept—we

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355 Translator's note: A useful term. The distinction made is between 'Islamic'—borne of Islam and its values—and 'Islamicate'—historical happenings within Islamic lands and among Muslim peoples that may or may not themselves be Islamically mandated. It is essentially a parallel to the terms 'Christianity' and 'Christendom.' E.g., The Crusades are obviously a part of Christendom, but it is possible to explore to what extent they were actually 'Christian'—mandated by Christianity and its values. Here, Ghazālī says: *al-mutafalsifah al-islāmiyyīn*. The word *islāmī* is an adjective which means 'to do with or related to Islam', and has various modern connotations that would be anachronistic to this context. Since Ghazālī is excommunicating these philosophers as non-Muslims, it is clear he does not mean the word positively; hence 'Islamicate' is seen to be more accurate than 'Islamic' here.

asked them about this knowledge they learnt from him and presented to them problems, but they understood none let alone attempted to solve any of them. Having been shown up as impotent, they invoked the Absent Imam, saying, 'It is necessary to journey to him.'

It amazes one how they waste their lives seeking this teacher and scoff at others for not having access to what they do, yet they learnt nothing from him at all. Like one dirtied by some filth—he seeks water and exerts effort in finding it. When he finally does, he does not use it, and remains ridden with filth.

There are among them those who make the same claims but demonstrates some semblance of knowledge. Ultimately, it was naught but flimsy philosophical notions adopted from Pythagoras—an ancient philosopher whose school is the frailest one among them, thoroughly refuted by Aristotle, who deemed it as lowly and unsophisticated rhetoric. It is what is found in *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā*, which in reality is the commoners' philosophy.

Stunning how one may tire and toil for a lifetime seeking knowledge only to end up with this frivolous, inane science as a result, then thinks he has truly reached the acme of all epistemes. Thus, these are roads we have travelled down. We have explored these people's inner and outward states, and the most they have are emotive slogans which attract the weak-minded of the laity. They emphasise the need for a teacher, fustigate those who negate exclusive learning with strong, moving words. When one obliges to their emotional request and says, 'Bring us his knowledge and benefit us with his teaching!', they halt in their tracks and say, 'If you submit this, then go seek it. My job here is done.' He knows that if he goes further he would be publicly shamed. He would fail to solve the simplest of problems. Rather, he would not understand the issue, let alone respond to it properly. [...]

Once I concluded my journeys with these sciences, I came with renewed resolve unto Sufi wayfaring. I recognised that theirs is a way of knowledge and action. Their goal is to cut off the self's portion and transcend its lowly, reprehensible traits until it reaches such a level where all else vacates the heart except Allah ﷻ, and it is adorned with His remembrance.

Knowledge was easier for me than action, so I started by learning their sciences from their books, like *Qūt al-Qulūb* by Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, the books of al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī, and the var-

ious texts of al-Junayd, Shiblī, and Abū Yazīd al-Biṣṭāmī—Allah sanctify their souls—as well as other shaykhs. I did this until I appreciated their theoretical aims and motifs, and acquired all that may be acquired of their path by learning and listening<sup>356</sup>. It became apparent that the rarest acquisitions are to be found not by learning, but by tactful experience (*dhawq*), one's internal state (*hāl*), and the altering of attributes (*tabaddul al-ṣifāt*).

There is a profound difference between theoretically appreciating good health and satiation from hunger, their causes, as well as their prerequisites, and actually experiencing health and satiation. It is one thing to know the definition of inebriation—for chemicals to be absorbed from the stomach until they reach one's thought mechanisms—and another thing to be inebriated. Rather, the inebriated does not know the definition and parameterisations of inebriation whilst inebriated, rid bare of his knowledge. Yet, the physician knows the definition and parameterisation of inebriation but has naught of inebriation itself. The physician, when sickly, may know the definition of wellness and the means to achieve it, but is nonetheless unwell.

Similarly, there is a difference between one knowing the reality of asceticism and its prerequisites and one's state being characterised by asceticism and detachment from the worldly life.

Thus, I recognised that they (the Sufis) are a folk of states, not hollow words. Whatever could be acquired by way of theoretical knowledge, I have acquired it. There is nothing left that may be reached through learning and listening<sup>357</sup>, rather, only by way of experience and wayfaring. From my previous studies and various endeavours in seeking the rational and sacred sciences, I had acquired certain knowledge in Allah ﷻ, prophecy, and the Last Day.

These three principles had entrenched themselves within me without precise formulation of proof, rather through lived experience and circumstances which cannot be enumerated. It had been made manifest to me that there is no hope for bliss in the Afterlife except through piety and disciplining the self from lowly desires, and that the head of all this is severing the heart's relation to the worldly life, turning a cold shoulder to the abode of vanity,

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356 Translator's note: Though *samā'* literally means 'hearing' or 'listening', Ghazālī is potentially referring to the Sufi *Samā'* tradition here—the recitation, singing, and chanting of various words of praise. He speaks about it extensively in other works.

357 Translator's note: See previous note.

yearning for the abode of eternity, and going forth unto Allah ﷻ with resolve, which can only be realised via desisting from status and wealth...”

He discusses how he left all this behind, and his travelling to the Levant and then the Hejaz. He then says:

“There were matters unveiled to me during these times of seclusion that I cannot exhaustively list here. The portion thereof I can share so that it may be a source of benefit is that I recognised for sure that the Sufis are the wayfarers to Allah upon His special paths. Their hagiographies are the most noble, their way is the most correct, and their morals the purest. If the reason of the rational, wisdom of the sages, and knowledge of the judicious legal theorists were all gathered to attempt to change their lives and morals for ones that are better, they would be confounded. All their moments of movement and stillness, internally and externally, are borrowed from the niche of Prophetic light. There is no light on the face of the earth beyond the light of Prophethood that may be sought for illumination. [...]

Among those things which became clear to me from practicing their way was the reality of prophecy and its special status...”

He then spoke about the reality of prophecy and the need of all creation for it. He says:

“Know that the quiddity of man, in the beginning of his natural disposition, is created hollow and simple. He has no knowledge of divine epistemes—they are many, only encompassed by Allah. He ﷻ says: “No one knows the forces of your Lord but He”<sup>358</sup>...”

He then discussed what may be perceived by the senses, then by discernment (*tamyīz*), and that:

“Man then ascends to a new stage—the intellect is created for him. He perceives necessities, possibilities, and impossibilities, as well as new matters that were absent in his previous stages. Beyond the intellect is another stage which opens for him a new eye with which he sees the Unseen and what is going to take place in the future, as well as other things the intellect is barred from as the

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358 *al-Muddaththir*, 31.

senses are barred from the perceptual capacities of discernment. Just as the discerning would deny the perceptual capacities of the intellect if presented before him, some of those of intellect denied the perceptual capacities of prophecy. This is the essence of ignorance. Such a person has nothing to hang onto but that it is a stage he himself did not reach and is non-existent in his regard. Consequently, he believed it to be non-existent altogether. But for the abundant heard reports of colours and shapes, and had they not been described to him, the born-blind would not accept or have any semblance of them or what they are. Allah has brought the idea closer to his creatures in that he gave them a taste of an element of prophecy, namely sleep vision. The sleeping person may perceive what will take place in the Unseen, either explicitly or as symbols which interpretation exposes.

Had one not experienced it first-hand, and instead was told that there are people who fall unconscious as if dead, and their sense of touch, hearing, and sight disappear, and they perceive the Unseen, one would undoubtedly deny it and formulate a proof for its impossibility. He would say, 'The senses are the means of perception. Whoever is unable to perceive in their presence cannot a fortiori perceive in their absence.'

This is a type of analogical inference which first-hand experience and direct witnessing belies. Just as the intellect is one of man's growth stages through which he gains an eye to perceive rationalisable the senses are barred from, likewise prophecy is a stage which opens an illuminating eye whose light manifests the Unseen and matters the intellect cannot perceive.

Doubt in prophecy may be in its possibility (*imkānihā*), existence and taking place (*wujūdihā wa wuqū'ihā*), or realisation (*huṣūlihā*) for some person.

The evidence for its possibility is its existence, and the evidence for its existence is the existence of epistemic realms in the world that cannot be acquired via the intellect. For example, the sciences of medicine and astronomy. Whoever delves into such sciences gains necessary knowledge that they are not properly perceived except by divine inspiration (*ilhām ilāhī*) and a bestowal of grace (*tawfiq*) from Allah ﷻ. There is no empirical way to reach knowledge therein. There are, for example, such astronomical phenomena that only take place millennially. How can knowledge of something like this be empirically acquired? Likewise is the case with certain rare medicines.



Via this exposition, it is evidently possible that there exist avenues through which one may perceive what the intellect cannot. This is what is meant by prophecy. It is not that prophecy is exclusively this, but that perceiving this genre that is beyond the perceptual capacity of the intellect is one of prophecy's features. It has many other features. What we have mentioned is but a drop in its ocean. We mentioned these matters specifically since you have an element thereof, that is what you perceive when asleep, and you have sciences of its genre in medicine and astronomy.

As for the miracles (*mu'jizāt*) of the Prophets, then there is no way for those of intellect to reach them via the intellect at all. As for other Prophetic features, then those who traverse the Sufi path may perceive them by way of tactful experience. The former you understood due to an example thereof you have been provided with, that is sleep. But for that, you would not have accepted it. If then the Prophet has a feature that you have no element of such that you do not understand it, how can you accept it? Acceptance comes after understanding. An example thereof is realised at the beginning of Sufi wayfaring, where an element of tactful experience is realised inasmuch as one has traversed the path, as well as an element of acceptance of what has not been realised via analogical inference. This single feature suffices you to believe in the principle of prophecy.

If you have doubt about a certain person whether he is a prophet or not, then certainty may be gained via knowledge of his state, either by way of witnessing or multiple heard reports. If you know medicine and jurisprudence, you may recognise the jurists and physicians by witnessing their state or hearing their words even if you do not directly observe them. Knowing that Shāfi'ī is a jurist and Galen a physician—in truth as opposed to blind imitation—is that you learn something of medicine and jurisprudence, then inspect their works such that you acquire necessary knowledge of their state.

Likewise is the case with prophecy. If you understand its meaning, then look within the Qur'an and revelatory reports plentifully and you will gain necessary knowledge that he ﷺ is upon the highest level of prophethood. Couple that by trying what he prescribed of acts of worship and their impact in purifying the heart, and how he spoke the truth regarding both. If you try this with a thousand, two-thousand, or thousands of matters, you acquire unwavering necessary knowledge therein.

Through such means seek certainty in prophethood, not in the changing of a staff into a snake or the splitting of the moon. If you look at such things in isolation without the abundant, innumerable external indicators around them, you may think them to be magic or illusion. They would thence be a means of misguidance from Allah ﷻ—He misguides whom He will, and guides whom He will.

Let us inspect the matter of miracles. If what your faith relies upon is a precise formulaic proof in showcasing their evidentiary basis, it may very well be compromised through another precise formulaic proof in showcasing the problems and uncertainties surrounding them. Let such supernatural events (*khawāriq*) be one of the contextual inferences and indicators in your perspective, until you acquire such necessary knowledge the specific source of which you cannot cite. Like one whom a group inform of an abundant report, he cannot say that certainty was achieved at a certain person's report. Rather, certainty took place whence he did not realise, though it neither goes beyond that collective, nor is specified to a singular report. This is strong faith borne of knowledge. As for tactful experience, then it is like direct witnessing or taking one by the hand [down the path], and is only found in the Sufis' way. [...]

I kept to private seclusion and solitary retreat for circa ten years. During that time, I cannot count the number of matters that became manifestly clear for me. Through the reality of tactful experience, it became clear to me that man is a body and a heart—by heart here I mean the reality of his soul, that is the locus of divine acquaintance, not the morsel of flesh which the deceased and the beasts also share in having. The body has its wellness through which it gains happiness, and a sickness wherein is its destruction. Likewise, the heart has its wellness and soundness—only he who comes to Allah with a sound heart is saved—as well as a sickness wherein is its destruction if untreated. Allah ﷻ says: “In their hearts is a sickness.”<sup>359</sup>

Ignorance of Allah is a devastating poison. Disobeying Allah ﷻ by succumbing to one's lowly desires is the heart's ailment. Knowing Allah ﷻ is its resuscitating theriac. Obeying Him by going against one's lowly whims is its curing medicine. There is no treating it—by removing its ailment and acquiring its wellness—except with medicines, just as there is no treating the body without their own.

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359 *al-Baqarah*, 10.

Just as the body's medicines are conducive to its wellness due to some feature within them which the intellect-endowed cannot perceive via their intellects—rather they must blind-follow the physicians who took their knowledge from the Prophets, in that they looked upon the essences of things via the prophetic feature—then also did it become manifest before me that the medicines of worship, in their prescribed portions as per the Prophets' remedies, cannot have their effectual mechanisms scrutinised by the intellect of the intellect-endowed. The Prophets must be blindly followed here. They are the ones who perceived these matters with the light of prophecy, not intellectual capacity.

And just as medicines are constituted of certain mixtures of differing composites and measures—some elements multiple times more concentrated than others—where each combination has a secret behind it known by experts, then likewise are acts of worship that are the heart's medicine. They are comprised of various positions and actions all in specific measure. Prostration (*sujūd*) is double bowing (*rukūʿ*), and the early morn prayer (*ṣubḥ*; i.e., *fajr*) is half of the midday prayer (*zuhr*). All this has a secret behind it, known by the experts who may only look upon such matters with the light of prophecy.

He truly portrays immense stupidity and ignorance of one who wishes to extrapolate the wisdom behind such things with the intellect, or thinks they were a product of a mere mix-and-match exercise, void of divine secret which entails they have a specific form.

And just as medicines have fundamental elements that act as their pillars and derivative ones that serve to perfect their origin, each of the latter doing so in their particular way, likewise do supplementary and supererogatory deeds (*ṣunan wa nawāfil*) serve to perfect the pillars of worship.

All in all, the Prophets are the physicians of the heart and its ailments. The intellect's place of benefit here is that it made this known to us. It bears testimony to the truth of prophecy, and its own futility to perceive what may only be perceived with the eye of prophecy. The latter takes us by the hand, and we surrender to it as the blind man surrenders to his guide, and the hapless sickly surrender to a caring physician. This is the extent of the intellect and its end. It is barred from anything beyond that, but by making it understand what the physician is treating it with. During our

period of retreat, we gained necessary knowledge of these matters in the same capacity one learns from direct witnessing.

Thereafter, we observed a waning in the people's belief in the principle of prophecy, then its reality, then in acting according to its teachings. We confirmed the prevalence of this among the masses. I inspected the cause of this waning and the laity's weak faith therein, and found it to be borne of four matters: one related to delving into philosophy, a second related to delving in Sufi wayfaring, a third related to the claimants of exclusive learning (i.e., the *Bāṭinīs*), and a fourth from how the pseudo-scholars act among the people.

I had stayed with various individuals for a while, querying each of them who comes short in his following the Law and has doubt therein, searching for his secret, private beliefs. I would say to them, "Why are you not acting right? If you believe in the Afterlife but are not preparing for it, and are selling it for the worldly life, then this is stupid. You would not sell two things for one, so how can you sell the infinite for but a few, numbered days?! If you do not believe in the Afterlife, then you are a disbeliever and ought to sort your affairs in seeking faith. Inspect the cause of your hidden disbelief—your internal position and the reason for your external audacity—even if you do not verbalise it, self-adorning with faith and seeking prestige by mentioning the Law."

One person's response is: "Had such adherence been necessary, the scholars would have been the first to it. So-and-so famous virtuous scholar does not pray, So-and-so is a drinker, So-and-so consumes the state's endowment wealth (*waqf*) as well as that of the orphans, So-and-so milks the Sultane and fears not the unlawful, So-and-so takes bribes for court hearing and testimonies", and so on and so forth.

Another one, a claimant of Sufism, says: "I have reached such a station that I have ascended the need to worship."

A third person cites a doubt he incurred from the Licentious Folk (*Ahl al-Ibāḥah*), those who went astray off the Sufis' path.

A fourth one came across the exclusive learning folk so says: "The truth is problematic. The path to it is difficult and distant. Difference over it is abundant. Certain schools have no better claims than others. Rational proofs are in opposition such that there is no trusting the opinion of the judicious. The caller to exclusive learning is self-imposing without any reasonable argument. How can we then leave what is certain for what is doubtful?"

A fifth person says: “I do not do this out of blind-following. I have read philosophy and appreciate the reality of prophethood. It ultimately goes back to common benefit (*maṣlahah*) and wisdom (*ḥikmah*). The purpose of its ritualistic worship is to regulate the laity and hold them back from in-fighting, civil unrest, and going overboard in sensual indulgence. I am not one of the ignorant commoners such that I be among those bound by this moral mandate. I am from the wise. I follow wisdom and see by it and thus have no need for blind imitation.”

This is the extent of the faith of those who have read theistic philosophy among them. This is learnt from the works of Ibn Sīnā and Abū al-Naṣr al-Fārābī, those who adorned themselves with Islam among said philosophers.

The one of them may be seen reciting the Qur’an, attending gatherings and prayer congregations, verbally magnifying the Law, yet does not leave off drinking and other forms of lewdness and wickedness. If questioned, ‘If prophecy is indeed false, then why do you pray?’, he says, ‘Physical exercise, national custom, and preservation of wealth and offspring.’ One may even say, ‘The Law is correct, and prophecy is true’, to whom it would be said, ‘Why do you drink?’, he would respond, ‘It was prohibited only because it begets aggression and hostility. I am all the wise to this, and drink only to sharpen my nostalgia.’

Ibn Sīnā himself had mentioned in a testament of his that he pledged an oath to Allah ﷻ that he will do such-and-such, venerate legislated matters, not have shortcomings in his religious worship, not drink recreationally and only out of medical reasons.

The furthest he could go in terms of purity of faith and adherence to worship is that he exempted drinking for medicinal purposes only. This is the faith of those who claim it among them...”

Abū Ḥāmid mentions what he said in refuting the exclusive learning folk and the Licentious Folk, then continued:

“As for those whose faith was ruined by philosophy such that they deny prophecy, then we have discussed the reality of prophecy and how it necessarily exists, using as evidence precisely formed and particular medicines as well as knowledge of astronomy. We had given that introduction for this purpose. Citing astronomical phenomena and medicine was due to their being essentially of their knowledge. The same can be done with any expert within

any given field, like astronomy, medicine, nature, magic, and talismans, for example. We can extract a proof of prophecy from his knowledge thereof.

As for he who verbally affirms prophecy but judges the Law against wisdom, he is in reality disbelieving in it. Instead, such a person believes in a wise one who has a particular auspice who requires he be followed. This has nothing to do with prophecy. Belief in prophecy is to accept a stage beyond that of the intellect where an eye is opened to perceive what previously could not be perceived, that which the intellect is barred from as touch is barred from perceiving sounds, and all the senses from perceiving the rationalisables. If one does not accept this, we have already set up proof for its possibility, rather its existence...”

He went on arguing, affirming special qualities in the Law via those found in the natural world—one is analogically inferred as the other is. He says:

“These features (*khawāṣṣ*) are perceived by the light of prophecy. [...] What is bewildering is that, had we changed the wording such that it is commensurate with astrological phraseology, they would have believed these times unique. As such, we say: Is not the ruling dependent on the auspice? The sun may be at its zenith, rising, or setting—such that they construct theories and forecasts regarding different age-spans and occasions of death—yet there is no difference between the sun being at its zenith or just before, nor is there a difference between the sun setting to it being completely set.

There is no reason to believe such a person but that his words are of the astrologers’ verbiage, whose lies the asker tried a hundred times, yet he still believes him. It is such that, if the astrologer were to say to him, “If the sun was at its zenith while this planet faces it, and such-and-such constellation rises, and you wear new clothes at this time, you would die there and then!”—he would believe him. He would even fight severe cold rather than wear clothes at that moment, despite him having heard this from an astrologer whose lies he tried a hundred times before!

If only I could appreciate a mind that accepts such jargon—surrendering to their being borne of special qualities, knowledge of which ostensibly acting as a miracle for some Prophets—yet denies its like from the sayings of a truthful Prophet, supported by miracles, never known to lie! It tolerates such insolence, yet

is too narrow-minded to tolerate the possibility of there being special knowledge behind the number of prayer units (*raka'āt*), stone-pelts (*ramy al-jimār*), rites of the Hajj, and the rest of ritualistic worship in the Law! In this context, we find no difference between it and rare medicines and special stars in the first place.

If he were to say: 'I tried some astrological forecasting, as well as elements of medicine, and found some of it true. Thus, I internalised acceptance thereof and my heart does not find it repulsive or inconceivable. This, on the other hand, I have not tried. How can I know it to be existent and effective, even if I concur its possibility?'

I would respond: 'You do not exclusively accept what you personally try. Rather, you heard the experiences of others and imitated them. Then, rightly, you should hear the experiences of the saints, for they have tried it. They have witnessed the truth in everything the Law has come with. At least traverse their path and you will perceive elements of this by direct witnessing.'

Having said this, my position is that even if one does not try this themselves, the intellect undoubtedly judges for the veracity of accepting and following it. Let us suppose a mature, sound-minded man who never tried [medication], and he fell ill. He has a caring father who pities him, and happens to be a medical expert. The man listens to his father from a young age and trusts his judgement. His father prepares the medicine for him and says, "This should treat your malady and cure you from your ailment." What is a reasonable course of action? Even if the medicine be bitter and distasteful, what should the man do? Should he take it? Or should he deem it a lie, saying, "I know not the occasion between this medicine and my recovery from my sickness, nor have I tried it before." No doubt you would think him an imbecile if he did this. Know that the vision folk likewise deem you an imbecile in your agnosticism here.

If you say: 'How can I recognise the Prophet's care and his knowing this type of spiritual medicine?'

My response is: 'How do you recognise the pity your father has for you? This is not borne of sense-data. Instead, you recognise it from the indicators of his states, and the contextual evidence of his deeds, in terms of whence his motivation is historically derived. You know this beyond any reasonable doubt.

Whoever inspects the statements of Allah's Messenger ﷺ and the reports portraying his care for the people's guidance; his kind-

ness, gentleness, and lenience with them; his exhorting them to virtue and reconciling kith and kin relations; and his calling for what yields holistic religious and worldly well-being; acquires necessary knowledge that the pity he has for his ummah is more profound than that of the father with his son.

If one further inspects the wondrous deeds that manifested upon him, the wondrous prophecies of the Unseen he made in the Qur'an and on his own tongue, of eschatological events, and it all comes to fruition as he predicted, one acquires necessary knowledge that he has reached that stage that is beyond the intellect. An eye has opened for him with which the Unseen is unveiled, as well as special qualities, and many matters which the intellect cannot perceive.

This is the method by which one earns necessary knowledge of the truthfulness of the Prophet ﷺ. Try it. Reflect over the Qur'an and look over revelatory reports until you see it first-hand. This suffices in advising the philosophers—a reminder we give due to the severe need for it in our day and age.”

**My commentary:** This argument which Abū Hāmid and others have laid out also yields knowledge of prophecy and acceptance of it. More so than the portion the philosophers accept. What he spoke of in terms of occasions of witnessing (*mushāhadāt*) and unveiling (*kushūfāt*) which happen to the Sufis, and that they witness the reality of what the Messenger ﷺ informed of and the benefit of what he commanded us—that is also true for much of what he informed and commanded. Once one appreciates this portion, it becomes a proof for his (the Prophet ﷺ) truthfulness in what one does not know. Like when one seeks a certain discipline: if he sees the words of a person within this field and found him confirming what is with him, then adding thereupon what is beyond his understanding, he recognises—through his sharing in the foundations of the science then exceeding him beyond it—that he is more knowledgeable than him in it, and that he knows more about its details than him. As one studying medicine would do with the words of Hippocrates for example, or one studying Arabic grammar would do with the words of al-Khalīl or Sibawayh, or one studying the religious sciences would do with the words of the Predecessors. The same is true for he who traverses the path of asceticism and worship when confronted with the biographies of the ascetic and worshipful among the Predecessors, and for whomever is placed in a governmental, political role when confronted with the biographies of ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb ؓ, ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, and the like.



All this exemplifies the greatness of these referenced names, and that they were authorities in their respective sciences. It is possible to extrapolate this further: everyone knows the difference between the biography of the two ʿUmars, al-Ḥajjāj, al-Mukhtār ibn Abī ʿUbayd, and their like. Rather, even the difference between the history of the Umayyads and the Abbasids, and that of Banū Buwayh and Banū ʿUbayd, and so on.

Everyone knows the difference between our Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and Mūsā and ʿĪsā ﷺ on the one hand, and Musaylimah and al-Aswad al-ʿAnsī and their ilk on the other, and this by the briefest and most unsophisticated of reflections.

This line of thinking has people split into generic and specific depending on their knowledge of good and evil, truthfulness and falsity, and so on. It yields apodictic knowledge (ʿilm qaṭʿī) that the Prophets are the best and most complete of people, and that no one may go against them of his own accord nor contravene them by whim. But it does not beget knowledge of the reality of prophecy, but only that one recognises that the Prophet is more knowledgeable than one is. That is, a person cannot claim that he is better than he (the Prophet in question) is.

Anyone who experiences such addressing (*mukhāṭabāt*) or witnessing (*mushāhadāt*), as takes place with the saints, knows that what the Prophets experience is far beyond his share thereof. ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb ؓ is an example of this. In the authentic tradition, the Prophet ﷺ says: “Indeed, in the nations before you there were those who were afflated (*muḥaddath*). If there be one from my ummah, it would be ʿUmar.” He ؓ also says: “Allah has struck the truth forth upon ʿUmar’s tongue and heart.” In *Tirmidhī*, he ؓ is reported to have said: “Had I not been sent among you, ʿUmar would have been.”<sup>360</sup>

Notwithstanding this, ʿUmar knew that what comes to the Prophet ﷺ of revelation and angels, what he speaks of regarding the Unseen, and what he commands and prohibits, is a matter that is beyond his capability, and which exceeds his capacity. Rather, he finds between him and it such deep discrepancy that is indescribable by the tongue and imperceptible by the heart.

What is more, despite what he experienced of unveiling and addressing, ʿUmar still knew that Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq ؓ is more complete than him in knowledge and certainty, more perfected in truthfulness and morals, and better acquainted with the status of the Messenger ﷺ. Thus, the humility of ʿUmar—the best of the afflated, inspired, addressed saints—before Abū

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360 Translator’s note: This precise wording is unknown in the authentic Hadith collations. In *Tirmidhī*, the wording is: “Had there been a Prophet after me, it would have been ʿUmar.”

Bakr al-Şiddiq is like the humility of a person whose partner betters him in their mutual field of expertise: like al-Akhfash with Sibawayh, Zufar with Abū Ḥanīfah, Ibn Wahb with Mālik, and so on; or the humility of Madinah’s jurists before Sa‘id ibn al-Musayyab, Basra’s jurists before al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, and Makkah’s before ‘Aṭā’ ibn Abī Rabāh.

If this is how ‘Umar is with Abū Bakr—Abū Bakr al-Şiddiq took his taking from the Infallible Prophet ﷺ, whose message is free of fault, and he (‘Umar) knows thereby the status of the Prophet’s Truthful One (*Şiddiq al-Nabiyy*); and anyone who knows the Companions properly knows of the etiquette and heart-felt reverence ‘Umar ﷺ observed with Abū Bakr ﷺ, testifying to the latter’s ascendancy in faith and certainty over the former—then what of ‘Umar and all those bellow him in comparison with the Prophet?! If this is the status of the most virtuous of the divinely afflated and addressed, then what of the rest? There is no doubt that the more a man’s saintly status and his share of divinely-unveiled truth are magnified, then so too does his veneration for prophecy magnify. People in this regard are in accordance with their level.

However, the Sufis’ way does not surmount to unveil all what the Messenger ﷺ came with. Not even most of it. Rather, the majority of what the Messenger ﷺ reports—Abū Bakr and ‘Umar, let alone anyone else, cannot know about it save by his reporting it, even if they may have knowledge of the holistic subject matter or the origin in question. The details of what he speaks of, however, may not be known without his informing about it.

What is found in Abū Ḥāmid’s and others’ rhetoric that unveiling (*kashf*) may reach this, and the statement, “They (the saints) have witnessed the truth in everything the Law has come with”<sup>361</sup>, is not sound. The saints remain with the Prophets in having faith in the Unseen. It is not feasible that the saint be given what the Prophet has been given in divine witnessing and address.

The best of saints are Abū Bakr, ‘Umar, ‘Uthmān, ‘Alī, and their like. None of them have witnessed what the Prophet ﷺ witnessed on the Night of Ascension (*Laylat al-Mī‘rāj*), nor witnessed the angels that used to descend with revelation upon the Prophet ﷺ. None of them heard the speech of Allah with which He spoke to the Prophet ﷺ on that night, nor did most Prophets, let alone saints, hear Allah’s speech as Mūsā ibn ‘Imrān did. Allah did not speak to Dāwūd and Sulaymān—not even to Ibrāhīm and ‘Īsā—with such speech for it to take place with one of the saints.

Belief in everything the Prophets came with is obligatory, for they are infallible. It is not obligatory to believe in everything a saint says. Rather,

361 Translator’s note: Excerpted from the end of Ghazālī’s exposition quoted by Ibn Taymiyyah earlier.

it is impermissible to do so. There is no one among the people but that one may take and leave from what they said except Allah's Messenger ﷺ. Whoever curses one of the Prophets is killed and is considered an unbelieving apostate. This is not the case with the saint. Allah ﷻ says: "Say, 'We believe in Allah, and in what has been revealed to us, and in what has been revealed to Ibrāhīm, Ismā'īl, Ishāq, Ya'qūb, and the Descendants (*al-Asbāt*), and in what has been given to Mūsā and 'Īsā, and what has been given to the Prophets from their Lord: We make no difference between any of them, and to Him we submit ourselves.'"<sup>362</sup>, "The Messenger has believed in what has been revealed to him from his Lord, and so have the believers. All believe in Allah, His angels, His Books, and His Messengers. 'We make no division between any of His Messengers.'"<sup>363</sup>

Allah ﷻ also says: "We have not sent before you any Messenger or a Prophet but when he wished, the devil cast into his wish. Yet Allah nullifies what the devil casts, then Allah affirms His signs. Allah is Knowing, Wise."<sup>364</sup>

If it is said: In the recitation of Ibn 'Abbās, it reads: "...or an afflated one (*muḥaddath*)..."<sup>365</sup>

It is said back: This recitation is not reported in abundance (*laysat mutawātirah*<sup>366</sup>), nor is it known as correct. It may not be used as evidence in the founding principles of the religion.

Even if authentic, then the meaning is that the afflated one was among those nations before us, and his people were in need of him, and that what the devil cast unto him was also nullified.

The ummah of Muhammad ﷺ needs none but Muhammad ﷺ. The nations before us were not sufficed by a single Prophet. One Prophet would refer to another. They needed a number of Prophets, as well as afflated persons. Allah sufficed the ummah of Muhammad with Muhammad ﷺ from all other Prophets and Messengers. How then would He not suffice them from the afflated? This is why the Prophet ﷺ said: "Indeed, in the

362 *al-Baqarah*, 136.

363 *al-Baqarah*, 285.

364 *al-Hajj*, 52.

365 Translator's note: That is: "Never did We send before you any Messenger, Prophet, or afflated one but when he wished..."

366 Translator's note: And so is not accepted as Qur'an. That is to say, a report about something being recited is different from the recitation referenced in said report. The former may be authentic as Hadith, while the latter inauthentic as Qur'an. There are different standards in different sciences. The point here is to highlight that Ibn Taymiyyah is not saying a narration must be reported abundantly to be accepted as evidence—contradicting his standard rhetoric about singular reports—rather he is saying that a recitation must be recited abundantly for it to be accepted as Qur'an.

nations before you there were those who were afflicted. If (*in*) there be one from my ummah, it would be ‘Umar.” He used the qualifying *in*—‘if there be’—and did not irrevocably affirm it. He knew his ummah’s lack of need for an afflicted person, just as it has no need for other Prophet than him, regardless whether there is the afflicted among them or not. It is perfected and complete by its Messenger who is the best and most complete of Messengers—a feature uniquely endowed upon his ummah.

Abū Hāmid and others fell into elements of this<sup>367</sup> in other works as well. Speaking about what may be interpreted and what may not, he says: “This may only be known by a divine bestowal of grace (*tawfiq ilāhī*) wherewith one witnesses truths as they are, then inspects the phonology and semantics in their regard. Whatever agrees with his witnessing, he accepts it. What disagrees with it, he interprets it.”<sup>368</sup> He says elsewhere: “The saint may hear the speech of Allah ﷻ as Mūsā ibn ‘Imrān heard it”<sup>369</sup>, and other similar statements.

This is why, at the end of his days, it became clear to him that the Sufis’ way does not realise his goal. Thus, he sought guidance by way of Prophetic traditions and busied himself with *Bukhārī* and *Muslim*. He died upon this in the best of his states. He had come to hate what was in his works of these matters, which the people had retorted against. Scholars like Māzarī and others have said words to the effect of: “His rhetoric affects faith in prophecy, diminishing from its status.”

He also mentioned that prophecy is an opening of a newfound strength that is beyond the intellect. There is no doubt this is among the features a Prophet is endowed with, but prophecy is not a force with which things are perceived. This is somewhat similar to the philosophers’ principles on the matter, who claim that there is a constant influx from the Active Intellect (*al-‘Aql al-Fa‘āl*), and what takes place in the heart is dependent on the preparedness (*isti‘dād*) of each person. Whichever slave is of higher preparedness, then the flux flows more comprehensively unto him, without there being a cause from the Lofty Congregation (*al-Mala’ al-‘Alā*) which specifies a person and not another, choosing him to be addressed or spoken to.

This is not the position of the Muslims; not even the Jews and the Christians. All the latter, save those who blasphemed, agree that Allah specified Mūsā for His speech, instead of Hārūn or anyone else. He chooses whom He will from His slaves. It is not mere preparedness from the slave upon whom knowledge overflows, without divine specification.

367 Translator’s note: Referring to Ghazālī’s initial statement regarding *kashf*.

368 Translator’s note: From his *Ihyā’* in discussing doctrinal principles.

369 Translator’s note: It is unclear where Ibn Taymiyyah found this from Ghazālī.

### Three schools with regards to prophecy and its attainment

Here, people are of three types:<sup>370</sup>

There are those who say that prophecy is only giving the tidings of prophethood (*inbā'*) from Allah to His slave, and it is ascription of His speech to him. They also say that legislated rulings are naught but Allah's discourse (*khiṭāb*) which relates to the actions of the morally accountable (*mukallaḥ*), without there being any quality in said action which entails it being specified with the ruling. They further say that there is no attribute in the Prophet himself which entails his being specified for prophecy. This is held by various kalam groups among the Affirmation Folk (*Ahl al-Ithbāt*) from the Qadaris, the companions of Jahm and Abū al-Ḥasan and others. Essentially those who go against the Mutazilites and the philosophers in what they say regarding the Divine's actions and His judgement.

The philosophers posit a nature (*tab'*) and a compelling justifier (ʿillah *mūjibah*). The Mutazilites posit a choice entailed within a rational law which they hold Him (the Divine) to in terms of acting justly and unjustly (*ta'dil wa tajwīr*) and so on. Those who are ascribed to the Sunnah and Community Folk retort against the latter in the principles they erred in, like denying predestination and attributes, and condemning those who commit major sins to eternity in the Fire; as well as against the philosophers in what they went astray from the Muslims in.

There is a long dispute here regarding matters related to wisdom (*ḥikmah*), common benefit (*maṣāliḥ*), justification of actions and rulings (*ta'līl al-af'āl wa al-aḥkām*), features by which actions may be deemed beautiful (*ḥusn*) or ugly (*qubḥ*)—this is not the place for it. We only mention it holistically in passing here.

It is well-known that giving the tidings of prophethood (*inbā'*) and the sending forth (*irsāl*) of Messengers is a subject matter that comes under divine speech. Command and prohibition come under divine speech. Command is related to action while sending forth and giving the divine news of prophethood is related to the Messenger and the Prophet.

There are three positions with regards to each:<sup>371</sup>

1. The matter is merely the divine speech or discourse related to it. It is among the ascribed (*nisbiyyah*), superadded (*idāfiyyah*) attributes in their estimation. They say that this is because there is no affirmed attributed (*sifah thubūtiyyah*) for the speech-relation (*muta'alliq al-qawl*) from the speech. This is the position of the aforementioned

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370 Translator's note: Ibn Taymiyyah digresses slightly, speaking about the first group in detail, before listing all three positions on the matter.

371 Translator's note: He returns to the three positions here.

group (the Qadarī Affirmation Folk).

2. It relates to an attribute that subsists in the Prophet and the action.
3. It encompasses both. The legislative ruling includes the Lawgiver's discourse and an attribute that subsists in the action. Prophecy includes divine discourse as well as an attribute that subsists in the Prophet. This is the meaning of the position of the Predecessors, imams, and the majority of the Muslims.

The second position is that held by groups among the philosophers and the Mutazilites. However, the latter have the beauty or ugliness of an action go back to an attribute in it which necessitates praise or dispraise—the Lawgiver's discourse is revealing of it (*kāshif*) but does not put it in place (*muthbit*). For the philosophers, this goes back to an attribute in the action which dictates perfection of the self or imperfection. They say that prophecy is the perfection of the rational self (*al-nafs al-nāṭiqah*) through which it prepares to receive an influx of epistemes from the Active Intellect, without there being a literal discourse from Allah ﷻ. Divine speech, in their estimation, is what the Prophet hears of internal voices—he hears them within himself, not externally. Angels, for them, are figures of light which he once again internally sees, as one sleeping may see forms which he addresses and hears speech from. Abū Ḥāmid made this a means of proof for affirming prophecy, as did Ibn Sīnā and others.

There is no doubt that what any person asserts of the truth, then the faithful also assert it. However, they know things beyond that which the people of falsehood do not. Thus, the faithful do not reject what the philosophers recognised of truth in these matters, but they reject that they exclusively accept them and nothing else.

I have thoroughly discussed this in *Jawāb al-Mas'alah al-Khurāsāniyyah*<sup>372</sup>. I was asked in it about matters related to the Glorious Qur'an and the speech of Allah ﷻ. I spoke about the stations of divine speech. They are levels, and the philosophers accept some and not others. Perhaps they only accept only the lowest of these levels—that of inspiration (*ilhām*) and what is commensurate with it. They did not even give this level its right.

The Mutazilites are better than the philosophers in this regard. They assert that Allah ﷻ has speech that is separate from and external to the Messenger, just as He has angels that are separate from the Messenger's person. They do not consider them to be the intellects and souls that the philosophers and Qarmatians purport. They assert what the Qur'an reports of different types and descriptions of angels. Nonetheless, they do not assert

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372 Translator's note: Seems to be a lost treatise of his.

that Allah has speech which subsists in Him. The reality of their position is that Allah does not speak, and rather creates speech in other than Him.

When the Jahmīs innovated this view, they used to say that Allah ﷻ does not speak, or only does so metaphorically. The Mutazilites refused this unqualified usage and said that He is speaking (*mutakallim*) and literally speaks (*yatakallam ḥaḥiqātan*). However, they explained this by saying that He creates speech in other than Him. Thus, they did not dispute the Jahmīs in the origin of their position, and only argued over the term (*lafz*).

When the Predecessors and the imams appreciated the reality of their view, they recognised it as unbelief, and that it is in reality an inhibition of messengerhood (*taʿtīl lil-risālah*). It is inconceivable that He be speaking by way of speech that does not subsist in Him, just as it is inconceivable that He be knowing by way of knowledge that does not subsist in Him, or that He be able by way of ability that does not subsist in Him; rather in other than Him. Had this been the case, then what He creates of speech in His creatures is in fact His speech. Allah ﷻ says: “They will say to their skins, ‘Why did you testify against us?’ They will say, ‘Allah, who made everything speak, made us speak.’”<sup>373</sup> He ﷻ also says: “Today, We put a seal upon their mouths, and their hands speak to Us, and their feet testify to whatever they used to earn.”<sup>374</sup> Moreover, Allah is the creator of everything. In this respect, all speech in existence ought to be His.

The Unitarians (*Ittiḥādiyyah*) who posit the unity of existence have explicitly said this. For example, Ibn ʿArabī the author of the *Fuṣūṣ* and his like. They say:

*Wa kullu kalāmin fī al-wujūdi kalāmuhū  
Sawāʿun ʿalaynā nathruhū wa niḥāmuhū*

“All speech in existence is His speech,  
Regardless whether it be prose or poetry.”

Theirs is the end position of the Jahmīs, which is in reality is divesting the Creator.

They posit that this existence is the necessary existence, which Abū Ḥāmid cites as the position of the materialist philosophers. The latter’s view is indeed theirs (the Unitarians). It is the manifest position of Pharaoh. However, Pharaoh and other Materialists do not say: ‘This existence is Allah’; whereas these people ignorantly say: ‘Existence is Allah.’

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373 *Fuṣṣilat*, 21.

374 *Yā-Sīn*, 65.



They misguided many an elderly worshipper and ascetic. In the Aqsa Mosque there was a man who was the most worshipful and ascetic of people. All night he would be saying, “Existence is one, and it is Allah. I do not see the one, nor do I see Allah.”

These [Unitarians] founded many of their principles from what Abū Hāmid mentioned. They built on his book *al-Maḍnūn Bih*, and other philosophical works that is adorned with Sufi phraseology. Those matters which the Muslim scholars rejected from him are the very things these people espouse. Ibn Sabʿīn made people into five strata: the lowest is the jurist, then the Asharite kalam theologian, then the philosopher, then the Sufi, then the fifth and final is the Realised (*Muḥaqqaq*).<sup>375</sup>

These individuals make what Abū Hāmid spoke of regarding truth-unveiling something that took place with them, and that, but for his being bound to the Law, he would have also espoused the Unity of Being. They hold him blameworthy for the things the Muslims praise him for—those positions where he held onto the Book and the Sunnah. Rather, the positions which explicit reason unequivocally points to. They think it was that which held him back from witnessing their reality; namely the Unity of Being. They avariciously covet him due to what they found in the rhetoric ascribed to him that agrees with the founding principles of the Jahmīs and philosophers.

The point here is to highlight that the Mutazilites are better than the philosophers, for they affirm separate speech for Allah. They say that messengerhood and prophecy entail Allah’s speech coming down, as separate from the Prophet ﷺ upon whom it descends, as the rest of the Muslims say. Thereafter, some Mutazilites may add that prophethood is a reward for a deed in advance. When the Prophet fulfilled intellectual tasks, Allah ennobled him with prophecy, despite him being characterised with special attributes Allah endowed him with.

### **Critiquing Ghazālī’s stance and his approach to knowledge**

Overall, this position agrees with that of most people. That is, prophecy and messengerhood include divine speech which is sent down on the Prophet or Messenger in question. This is notwithstanding features which Allah exclusively bestowed upon him. As such, the Prophet and Messenger is unlike the rest of people in his intellect, physicality, and so on. He is distinguished in these matters. Prophecy is a favour from Allah which He bequeaths upon whom He will; still, Allah knows best where He places His message.

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375 Translator’s note: See *Budd al-ʿĀrif* by him.



On balance, then, there is in what Abū Ḥāmid mentioned in asserting holistic prophecy, according to the principles which the philosophers know and submit to, what may benefit the pure philosopher. It necessitates that he enter Islam to some capacity. Accordingly, Abū Ḥāmid's rhetoric may be considered a middle ground between the philosophers and the religious folk—Muslims, Jews, and Christians. The philosophers benefit from it in that it gives them such faith which they cannot attain by way of philosophy alone.

As for a Muslim who wishes to increase in knowledge and faith, then this may harm him. It turns him away from proper faith in Allah, His Messenger, and the Last Day. It only benefits him in that it acts as a barrier between him and pure philosophy. If however he is sympathetic to philosophical principles over those of Islam, it may take him into pure blasphemy, as what befell Ibn ʿArabī al-Ṭāʾī, Ibn Sabʿīn, and their ilk.

He speaks about what afflicted him of sophistry, and that the truth-seekers were four groups in his perspective: the mutakallimun, the Bāṭinīs, the philosophers, and the Sufis.

It is well-known that these are modern groups in that they appeared after the era of the Companions and the Successors. Rather, they became prevalent after the three generations: the Companions, the Successors, and their followers.

Then there's the matter that the philosophers and the Bāṭinīs are disbelievers. Their unbelief is manifest among the Muslims, as he himself mentions as well as others. Their disbelief is clear for the least learned and faithful of the Muslims, if they appreciate the reality of their views. The one who does not know their disbelief does not know the reality of their positions, however. Someone may staunchly hold onto some of their views without realising they entail disbelief, in which case he is excused by way of ignorance.

On the other hand, the mutakallimun and the Sufis have within them groups with strong faith and knowledge. In fact, counted among the Sufis are those who are among the masters of the Muslims and the best among them. This includes people like al-Fuḍayl ibn ʿIyāḍ, Abū Sulaymān al-Dārānī, Ibrāhīm ibn Adham, Maʿrūf al-Karkhī, and others. During their time, the term *ʿṣūfiyyah* came about, and likewise was the advent of kalam.

The rhetoric of the Predecessors and imams in confuting aberrant kalam maxims as well as aberrant practices in asceticism and worship is ample (*mustafid*) and widely prevalent.

Those of knowledge and faith never disputed over the ample reports where the Prophet ﷺ says: “The best of generations is the one I have been sent in, then those who come after them, then those who come after them.”

Anyone of an honourable legacy, known for his knowledge and religiosity, concurs that the best of the ummah are the Companions, and that the one who follows them is better than the one who does not. During their time, there was not a single one of the four factions in question.

You do not find an imam in sacred knowledge and religiosity—like Mālik, al-Awzā‘ī, al-Thawrī, Abū Ḥanīfah, al-Shāfi‘ī, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, Ishāq ibn Rahawayh; and like al-Fuḍayl, Abū Sulaymān, Ma‘rūf al-Karkhī, and their like—but that they explicitly say that the best of their knowledge is that they took the Companions as precedent in. They see the Companions to be above them in all categories of virtue and praise.

Those who follow the Companions, the Prophetic traditionalism folk (*ahl al-athārah al-nabawīyah*), the Hadith and Sunnah Folk, those who know their way and keep diligently to it, the knowledgeable of the Book and the Sunnah in every nation and in every era—they are the best of mankind among the early and late peoples. Yet, Abū Ḥāmid does not make mention of them.

This is because theirs is a path that is only known by those who have expertise in the meanings of the Qur’an, expertise in the Sunnah of Allah’s Messenger ﷺ, expertise of the Companions’ traditions, having proper understanding thereof and acting upon it. These are the best of creation of those ascribed to knowledge and worship.

Abū Ḥāmid did not grow up among those who know such people and their way, nor did he receive from that class of scholarship. He did not have expertise of the way of the Companions and the Successors. He used to say about himself: “My goods are scant in Hadith.”<sup>376</sup> This is why one finds forged narrations and accounts in his works, that which an expert in tradition cannot rely upon. Nonetheless, Allah gave him benefit from what he found in the books of the Sufis and jurists of this (i.e., traditions). Like the books of Abū Ṭālib, Qushayrī’s treatise, and other texts. Also what he found in the books of Shāfi‘ī’s companions. The best he has is in this regard is what he gets from those two sources.

It is well-known that the way of the Sufi imams and the imams of the jurists is more complete than that of al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī, Abū Ṭālib, al-Ḥārith, Abū al-Ma‘ālī, and so on. Those imams were more knowing of the Companions’ way and more diligent in adherence to them than their own followers. For example, Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī and his like have better knowledge of the principles of the Sunnah and follow it more properly than Abū al-Ma‘ālī and his like. Ash‘arī, Qalānīsī, and their like are better still than Qāḍī Abū Bakr. ‘Abdullāh ibn Sa‘īd ibn Kullāb and al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī are higher than the latter. Mālik, Awzā‘ī, Ḥammād ibn Zayd,

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376 Translator’s note: See *Qānūn al-Ta’wīl*.

Layth ibn Sa‘d, and their like are of an even higher status. The Successors are further still, and the Companions are higher than the Successors.

Likewise, Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī takes from his shaykh Ibn Sālim, and Ibn Sālim takes from Sahl ibn ‘Abdillāh al-Tustarī, and Sahl is of a higher grade among the people than Abū Ṭālib. Fuḍayl, Abū Sulaymān and their like are higher than Sahl and his like. Ayyūb al-Sakhtiyānī, ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Awn, Yūnus ibn ‘Ubayd, and other companions of al-Ḥasan are higher than those. Uways al-Qarnī, ‘Āmir ibn ‘Abd Qays, Abū Muslim al-Khawlānī, and their like are of a higher status than the latter. Abū Dhar al-Ghifārī, Salmān al-Fārisī, Abū al-Dardā’, and their like, are higher still.

It is well-known that anyone who traverses a path of knowledge and action to Allah via an illegitimate route—one that is contrary to the Book, the Sunnah, and what the Predecessors and imams of the ummah were upon—then he will undoubtedly fall into aberrant innovation, either in word or deed. The one traversing to Allah, if he is not journeying on the clear, wide main road, he will end up taking narrow side ones. What one falls into of this error may vary in nature—either an honest mistake from an able scholar exercising his discretion (*mujtahid*) for which he is forgiven (*maghfūran lah*), a sin (*dhanb*), a severe transgression (*fisq*), or unbelief (*kufr*).

This is unlike the legislated path in knowledge and action—it is the most upright of paths without wavering. Allah ﷻ says: “Indeed, this Qur’an guides unto that which is straightest.”<sup>377</sup> ‘Abdullāh ibn Mas‘ūd says: “Allah’s Messenger ﷺ drew a line on the ground, then drew other lines to its right and left. He then said, ‘This is the path of Allah. All these other paths—there is a devil on each one enticing towards it.’ He then recited: ‘Indeed, this is My path, straight, so follow it. Follow not other ways lest they divert you from His way.’<sup>378</sup>” Zuhri says: “Those who have passed on from our scholars used to say, ‘Holding fast onto the Sunnah is salvation.’” It is said: “The example of the Sunnah is like the ship of Nūḥ—whoever mounts on it is delivered, and whoever lags behind drowns.” This is relayed from Mālik.

Whoever traverses the legislated, Prophetic, divinely ordained path, does not have to, in affirming it, doubt his initial faith therein, then invent a theory through which he recognises the existence of the Maker. He does not need to remain sceptical in and doubtful of everything. Such episodes would overtake Jahm ibn Ṣafwān and his like. It is mentioned that for forty days he did not pray, waiting to prove he has a Lord to worship. This is a common state for the Jahmīs and Kalam Folk whom the Predecessors and imams criticise.

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377 *al-Isrā’*, 9.

378 *al-An‘ām*, 153.

The pure believer, however, is struck by demonic whispering on occasion, presenting before him doubts and uncertainties which he rejects with his heart. This is inevitable. It is reported in the authentic tradition that the Companions said: “Messenger of Allah, one of us finds within himself that which he’d rather burn as molten rock or fall from the sky than to verbalise.” He ﷺ asked: “You find this?” They replied: “Yes.” He said: “This is explicit faith (*ṣarīḥ al-īmān*).” It is also found in the *Sunan* via a different wording. They say: “One of us finds in himself that which he sees as too severe to speak of.” He ﷺ replies: “Praise be to Allah who turned back his (the devil’s) ploys to mere whispers.”

A number of scholars have commented on this, saying that the meaning is, ‘What you find in your hearts of dislike, loathing, and repulsion towards this whisper is explicit faith.’ It (the whisper) is of the froth about which Allah says: “As for the froth—it fades away, and as for what benefits mankind—it remains in the earth. Thus Allah sets forth parables.”<sup>379</sup> This is spoken about in other contexts. Likewise, the rhetoric of the Predecessors and the imams regarding aberrations in kalam and asceticism is thoroughly discussed in other works.

The purpose here is for one to appreciate the people’s stations with regards to knowledge of prophecy and recognition of its status, and the various approaches in doing so. The majority of those taken by the people are useful, beneficial ones. However, the degree to which they may benefit as measured against their harm differs. One way may benefit from a certain perspective yet harm from another. There is such an approach that may benefit the completely faithless, or those of weak faith, thus acquiring some faith thereby or even strengthening it. The same approach may harm one of strong faith, such that regressing to it is a demotion in his regard. It is like one who was holding fast onto a strong rope with a firm hand-hold, then changed it for a weak one that is falling apart, almost breaking off in the process. This is an area where describing the various states of the people is very lengthy.

As for what Abū Hāmid posited regarding the approach he discusses yielding necessary knowledge of prophecy unlike that of miracles, then one is aware of what one acquires of necessary knowledge, while he (Ghazālī) is not aware of what necessary knowledge others gain and how they gain it. Many theorists and Kalam Folk say the opposite of what he said. They propose that knowledge of prophecy does not take place except by way of miracles. This is the position of the majority of the Kalam Folk and those who followed them; like Qāḍī Abū Bakr, Qāḍī Abū Ya‘lā, Abū al-Ma‘ālī, Māzarī, and others. The scrupulous position borne of proper analysis is

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379 *al-Ra‘d*, 17.

what most have adopted: knowledge of prophecy is acquired by many ways; miracles and other than miracles. One may acquire necessary knowledge without them, as Abū Ḥāmid said. One may acquire holistic knowledge thereof as well, as he also mentions.

Those who make knowledge thereof exclusive to any one way and claim it to be the only viable path to ascertain it are wrong. This is a frequented style employed by the Kalam Folk with regards to evidencing the Maker, proving the novel origination of the cosmos, affirming *tawḥīd*, knowledge of prophecy, and other subject matters. The one of them employs a certain approach then claims that knowledge may only be acquired through it. It may in fact be false, and his opponents may critique it and showcase its falsity.

It is very common for the knowledge in one's heart to be borne of other than dialectic argumentation which one may employ against one's opponents. One gains knowledge of various knowables through various ways which he cannot fathom nor encompass. If he could fathom them, he may not be able to verbalise them adequately. Yet, if he were asked to present a proof for the issue in question, he may not know of any single one which he may use to convince another, since this other did not share in his personal cause for acquiring this knowledge. He may not be able to articulate a proof even if he were able to conceptualise it. The evidence an interlocuter has for knowing something is one thing, and the argument he employs against his opponent is a whole other thing. It is possible that they be one and the same—as they often are—but it is also possible they are distinct from one another. This is not the place for explicating this. The point is to highlight the variety of ways to gain knowledge of prophecy and other matters.

The people's rhetoric on this subject matter is on a wide spectrum. Each man's rhetoric may be praised when compared to who is below him, even if it is blameworthy in comparison to who is above him. Faith is preferentially held, and each holds as much as they have gained.

Notwithstanding what is found in his works of refuting the philosophers, deeming them disbelievers, magnifying prophecy, and so on; and what is found therein that is correct and of profound, beneficial contribution; there is in some of Abū Ḥāmid's rhetoric such philosophical notions, as well as other matters that have been attributed to him which agree with corrupt philosophical edicts, contravening prophecy and explicit reason. Correspondingly, he has been spoken about by scholars from Khorasan, Iraq, and the Maghreb, like his colleague Abū Ishāq al-Marghīnānī, Abū al-Wafā' ibn ʿAqīl, Banū al-Qushayrī, al-Ṭurtūshī, Ibn Rushd, al-Māzarī, and a group from the earlier scholars. Abū ʿAmr ibn al-Ṣalāḥ mentions this

in his *Ṭabaqāt al-Fuqahā' al-Shāfi'īyyah*, as well as Shaykh Abū Zakariyyā al-Nawawī.

He (Ibn al-Ṣalāh) says in this book:

“New Section: In discussing important matters that have been rejected from Imam Ghazālī and his works, whose own school adherents as well as others disapproved of, in his having unseemly practices: He says in the introduction to formal logic at the start of his *Mustasfā*: “This is the preliminary requisite to all sciences. Whoever does not encompass knowledge of it, then his knowledge cannot be trusted in the first place”...”

Shaykh Abū ‘Amr says:

“I heard Shaykh al-‘Imād ibn Yūnus relaying from Yūsuf al-Dimashqī—the well-known teacher of the Nezamiyeh school in Baghdad and a prolific theoretician—that he rebuked such rhetoric, saying: “[What about] Abū Bakr and ‘Umar? And So-and-so and So-and-so?” Meaning, these Masters have been blessed with incredible tranquillity and certainty, yet they did not know this preliminary requisite nor its parameters. [...]

I mentioned in this regard what the author of *Kitāb al-Imtā' wa al-Mu'ānasah*—meaning Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī—relayed: that al-Wazīr ibn al-Furāt had a gathering of various dignitaries in Baghdad, among them were mutakallimun, as well as Mathew (*Mattā*), the Christian philosopher. The Wazīr said: “I wish that one would step forward to debate Mathew in his saying, ‘There is no way to know truth from falsehood, a precise proof from a vague uncertainty, and doubt from certitude, except through what we learned of logic in its formally articulated stages.’ Abū Sa‘īd al-Sirāfī—who had notable standing in various sciences other than grammar—stepped up. He debated him and indeed exposed his argument as frail. [...] This is not the place to explicate this. [...]

That the sound-minded and esteemed scholars are needless for the formalised logic of Aristotle goes without saying, before its inception and after it. The plethora of sciences they possess are independent of logic for them. Logic in the estimation of its formal founders is a mathematical tool which protects the mind from falling into error. Any person with sound mental capacity is naturally logical. [...]

How was Ghazālī heedless of his shaykh’s status, Imām al-Ḥaramayn, and those before him? Of every imam whom he venerates and elevates in their assiduous, analytical, scientific rigour? None of them held formal logic so highly like this, nor did they found practices on its conclusions. In mixing formal logic with the principles of jurisprudence (*uṣūl al-fiqh*), he innovated a reprehensible aberration which the jurists rued the consequences of, such that philosophers became rife among them thereafter. Allah is the giver of help. [...]

Abū ʿAbdillāh al-Māzarī—the jurist, kalam theologian, and legal theorist (*uṣūlī*) was an assiduous imam, with expertise in the schools of Mālik and al-Ashʿarī. He has notable contributions in various disciplines, among them are *Sharḥ al-Irshād* and *al-Burhān* by Imām al-Ḥaramayn. He also authored a treatise<sup>380</sup> wherein he discussed Ghazālī and his *Iḥyāʾ*. He published it in the time of Ghazālī. It was a response to what he was asked about by people from the East and the West, querying him about the issue once they differed over it. He mentioned therein what is abridged into the following:

“Ghazālī indulged in various sciences and authored therein various texts. He was popularised as an imam in his province such that his competitors were scarce in comparison. He went deep into jurisprudence and the principles of jurisprudence, though he was more known for the former.

As for the principles of the religion (*uṣūl al-dīn*), then he did not really delve into this science. He was too busy reading philosophy, which begot within him audaciousness against meaning, and facilitated his attacking realities. The philosophers go after their whims without a law to admonish them nor a fear of dissenting against past imams. Thus, he was blinded by a type of conceit over meanings, and let himself go uninhibited in this realm, uncaring of anyone else. [...]

Some of his colleagues informed me he would oft recluse into reading *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafā*—fifty-one essays, each independent from the other. There have been serious academic allegations made against their author. Overall, he—this author—was a philosopher who indulged in the sacred sciences and hence mixed between the two. He made philosophy more palatable for

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380 Translator’s note: Known as *al-Nukat*—or *al-Kashf—wa al-Inbāʾ* ‘*an al-Mu-tarjim bil-Iḥyāʾ*’, though it is a lost text. We know of it through other scholars quoting it, mainly al-Subkī and al-Ḥāfiẓ al-ʿIrāqī.



the masses by citing Qur'anic verses and Prophetic traditions upon its mention.

There was also a philosopher during this time (i.e., the essays' author's time) known as Ibn Sīnā who was prolific in the field. He would ascribe himself to the Law and beautify himself with the customs of the Muslims. His strength in philosophy led him to subjugating creedal principles to it, and he was able to accomplish here what other philosophers never were. [...]

I found this Ghazālī to heavily rely on him whenever he speaks on philosophy. On occasions, he would copy his words verbatim, and on others he would adapt his rhetoric and paraphrase it even further within sacred scientific language than Ibn Sīnā had done. For he is more knowing of the Law's secrets than the latter. Thus, it was upon Ibn Sīnā and the author of *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā* that Ghazālī relied on for philosophy.

As for the Sufis' schools, then I do not know upon whom he relied therein, nor to whom he ascribes himself in its science. [...] In my estimation, it was upon the Sufi Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī that he relied. I was made aware that this Abū Ḥayyān had authored a tome of poetical works in this science, though none of it made its way to us.”

He then speaks about how there is in the *Iḥyā'* fatwas that have no basis. For example, he (Ghazālī) deems it appropriate that one ought to start with the index finger in clipping one's nails because it is more favourable than other fingers and it is the *musabbihah* (finger used to glorify Allah). One then moves on to the middle finger because it is on the right side, then the left hand in the form of a circle. It is as if the fingers form a circle in his view. If he were to go through his fingers, he would do so in a circular fashion until he concludes with the thumb of the right hand. This is what I have been told about the book by those I trust. He says:

“Look, then, at this floundering fumbler and how his reading of engineering and geometric principles led him to transpose that onto the Law, giving legal verdicts to the Muslims thereby. [...]

A number of companions showed me excerpts from the first volume. I found him mentioning therein that whoever dies after his coming of age (*bulūgh*) and passed away without knowing the Creator is pre-eternal has, by scholarly consensus, died as a Muslim. Whoever so casually cites a scholarly consensus over such a matter—where the consensus is closer to being convened over the opposite—then he deserves for his transmissions not to



be trusted, and that he is deemed as overly lenient in narrating what he did not confirm as authentic...”

Māzari then spoke at great length about the positives and negatives of the *Ihyāʾ* and its benefits and harms. He concluded by saying that whoever is not well-grounded in the sciences whereby he can shield himself from its errors, then his reading it is impermissible, even if there is benefit in it. Whoever has sufficient knowledge which secures him from said errors, understands the text’s terminology and symbolism and is able to keep away from the entailments of its apparent wording—deferring the author’s affairs unto Allah, since all his verbiage is liable to interpretation—then he may read it and benefit from it. This is unless the reader is one who may be taken as a role model, in which case he ought to be prevented from reading and praising it. He says:

“But for our exposition thereof being exclusively aimed at and read by specialists who have sufficient knowledge to secure themselves, we would not have explored the benefits of this book nor made mention of them. However, we did so as we deemed ourselves safe from enticement, and so that those who fanatically champion his cause do not think we were not impartial in our analysis of his book, thus not accepting our advice.” This is the end of our quoting Māzari.”

**My commentary:** What Māzari mentions with regards to Abū Ḥāmid’s Sufi material is as he says—he does not know upon whom he relied. Māzari was not well-versed in the Sufis’ works, their schools, and their reports as much as he was with kalam and what comes with it of philosophy, which is why he was not aware of this. Abū Ḥāmid did not wholly rely on Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī, not even for the most part. Abū Ḥayyān’s rhetoric is laden with sermonic eloquence, and he is constituted from literary, philosophical, and kalam disciplines; though some have deemed him a heretic, comparing him with Ibn al-Rāwandī, as mentioned by Ibn ʿAqīl and others.

The majority of Abū Ḥāmid’s content was borne of Abū Ṭālib al-Makī’s book which he titled *Qūt al-Qulūb*, as well as al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī’s, Qushayrī’s treatise, and other texts from the shaykhs.

What he (Ghazālī) transmits in the *Ihyāʾ* of castigation against kalam is taken from Abū ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-Barr’s *Faḍl al-ʿIlm wa Ahlih*. What he quotes of supplications and words of remembrance is from Ibn Khuzaymah’s book of *Dhikr*, which is why the narrations in that chapter were good.

He sat with shaykhs from the Sufi orders, though for the most part he takes from the Sufis’ rhetoric that which relates to actions, morals,

asceticism, practice, and worship; that which he refers to as the Sciences of Dealing (‘ulūm al-mu‘āmalah). As for what he refers to as the Sciences of Unveiling (‘ulūm al-mukāshafah) in the *Ihyā*’ and other places, then he takes from the rhetoric of the philosophers, as is found in *Mishkāt al-Anwār* and *al-Maḍnūn bih ‘alā Ghayr Ahlih*, and so on.

Once philosophy and theology mixed with Sufism, those who are not counted among the virtuous shaykhs were mistaken as being from them. These are shaykhs who have an esteemed mention in the ummah, may Allah ﷻ be pleased with them. Instead, such people are distinct and separate from them (the Sufi philosophers) in the principles of faith—like *tawhīd*, messengerhood, and belief in the Last Day—where the latter impose their understanding as the position of the Sufis. Examples include Ibn al-Ṭufayl the author of *Ḥayy ibn Yaqaẓān*, Abū al-Walīd ibn Rushd al-Ḥafīd<sup>381</sup>, the author of *Khal‘ al-‘Ilm*<sup>382</sup>, Ibn ‘Arabī the author of *al-Futūḥāt* and *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, and Ibn Sab‘īn.

Such individuals and their like seek legitimacy through the school of the Sufis and the wayfaring folk, when in reality they are blaspheming heretics who ultimately believe in pantheism (*al-ḥulūl wa al-ittiḥād*), following the blaspheming Qarmatians and the Licentious, those who reject divine command and prohibition, the divine promise of bliss and punishment, and belittle the reality of predestination—whereby the Prophets and Messengers are not held distinguished from the stubborn disbelievers. They may hold these doctrines with some elements of aberration, not appreciating their religious, legislated realities. They do not traverse the path of the saints of Allah, who are the best of creation after the Prophets. Ultimately, they end up forgoing adherence to divine commands and prohibitions, obedience, and worship. They oppose the Messengers, follow other than the way of the believers, leaving the path of Allah’s pious allies to adopt the path of the devil’s allies. They espouse pantheism, which is the height of disbelief and the pinnacle of blasphemy.

We find in the rhetoric of the divinely acquainted shaykhs (*al-mashā-yikh al-‘ārīfīn*)—like Abū al-Qāsim al-Junayd and his like—clarification of *tawhīd* as distinguishing the pre-eternal from the originated, and similar expressions. They also emphasise the importance of adhering to divine commands and prohibitions and keeping to worship until death. This highlights how these guided masters warned of the path of the later blasphemers.

381 Translator’s note: Ibn Rushd al-Ḥafīd (d. 595 AH)—‘the Grandson’—is the grandson of Ibn Rushd al-Jadd (d. 520 AH)—‘the Grandfather’. Both are renowned Mālīkī jurists, but the former is the well-known philosopher Averroes.

382 Translator’s note: Perhaps what is being referred to here is *Khal‘ al-Na‘layn* and its author Abū al-Qāsim ibn Qasī (d. 546 AH), a Sufi philosopher.

It is no surprise that we find these individuals—like Ibn ʿArabī and Ibn Sabʿīn—retort against Junayd and his like from the imams and shaykhs, claiming to have reached perfected inveteracy (*nihāyat al-rusūkh*) in their spiritual realisation. In reality, they have realised blasphemy and fell into pantheism.

### Non-philosophical Sufism

The faithful Sufi shaykhs have always warned against these obfuscators, just as the imams among the jurists have warned against the innovators and hypocrites among the philosophers and Kalam Folk. Abū Nuʿaym speaks about this in the beginning of his *Ḥilyat al-Awliyāʾ*, as did Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī in his *Risālah*, let alone others who are more virtuous and knowledgeable of the Sufis' way than them, as well as less erring thereupon, not relying on weak transmission and innovated statements.

Abū Nuʿaym says at the beginning of his *Ḥilyah*:

“To proceed: May Allah grant you excellent success. I sought aid in Allah ﷻ and obliged to your request in collating the names, accounts, and words of the esteemed Sufi imams. I have organised them in generations, starting from the righteous worshippers among the Companions, Successors, and their followers. They are the ones who recognise indicants and deep truths, dealing directly with states and spiritual paths, inhabiting the meadows and gardens [of divine acquaintance], ridding themselves of all other relations and fleeting fancies, disavowing themselves from the excessive and the specious, those of grand claims yet constant tergiversation, the procrastinating and lethargic, their imitators in raiment and statement but opposed to them in creed and deed.

We embark on this due to what you know of our quest, also that of jurists and traditionalists far and wide: fustigating the false, pseudo-adherents of this way, among the wicked and obscene, and the licentious unbelieving pantheists. Our rebuking the liars does not take away from the noble mention of the righteous, nor does it abase their lofty rank. Rather, in disavowing them from their faux-followers and chastising the deceitful pretenders, the truthful are purified and the realised are elevated.

Though, out of religious integrity, we wish not expose the disgraces and evils of the fraudulent, we are bound to do so in protective jealousy and honour. Our predecessors have raised the banners of Sufism high, recognised unmistakably throughout the

lands. My grandfather, Muhammad ibn Yūsuf ؑ, was one through whom Allah facilitated the wayfaring of many a seeker. How can we possibly allow for the discrediting of Allah’s saints when the one who harms them has his Lord declare war against him?!”

He then cites the narration of Abū Hurayrah reported by Bukhārī in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, that the Prophet ﷺ says: “Allah ﷻ says, ‘Whoever harms one of My saints...’—in a similar narration, it is: ‘Whoever is hostile to one of My saints, then he has declared war against Me. My slave does not seek proximity to me with anything better than fulfilling what I obligated upon him. My slave continues to draw near to Me by supererogatory deeds until I love him. When I love him, I am his hearing with which he hears, his sight with which he sees, his hand with which he strikes, and his leg with which he walks. He hears by Me, sees by Me, strikes by Me, and walks by Me. If he were to seek refuge in Me, I would grant it. I do not hesitate in anything I am to do like my hesitation in taking My believing slave’s soul—he dislikes death, and I dislike to harm him, but it must be done.’”

**My commentary:** The people of knowledge and faith among the imams of the religion within the various sects direct their blame towards whoever departs from what the Messenger ﷺ came with of words and actions, internally and externally. Their praise is for whoever agrees with what he ﷺ came with. Whoever agrees from one respect but contravenes from another—like the sinner who admits his sin—is praiseworthy from the respect of his agreement and blameworthy from the respect of his contravention. This is the view of the Predecessors of the ummah and its imams among the Companions and those who traverses their path with regards to labels and rulings (*al-asmā’ wa al-aḥkām*).

### Faith, action, and how the various sects viewed their relationship

The dispute on this subject matter is the first to take place with regards to the founding principles of religion. The Kharijites excommunicated via sin, and considered the one who committed a major sin to be a disbeliever who will abide eternally in the Fire. The Mutazilites agreed with them in that such a person’s faith and submission are nullified, and that he will indeed abide eternally in the Fire. However, they debated the label, in that they did not name this type of individual a disbeliever (*kāfir*). Instead, they say: ‘He is neither a believer nor a disbeliever. He is in a station between the two.’ Though in terms of labelling they are closer to the Sunnah, they are identical to the Kharijites in their after-worldly ruling.

The origin of this is that these groups believed a single person cannot be deserving of both reward and punishment, bliss and torment, praise and dispraise; only one or the other. Thus, they ruled all his good deeds void via his committing a single major sin. They say: ‘Faith is obedience, and it is removed by the removal of some of it.’ They then debated whether disbelief necessarily follows thereafter or not.

The Murji’ah and the Jahmīs agreed with them that all of faith is removed via the removal of some of it, and that it cannot be parsed (*lā yataba<sup>cc</sup>ad*) nor graded (*lā yatafāḍal*), such that it cannot increase and decrease. They say: ‘The faith of the transgressing (*fussāq*) is like that of the Prophets and the believers.’

However, the jurists of the Murji’ah said: ‘It (faith) is both belief and statement.’ They further said: ‘There will necessarily be those who will enter the Fire from the wicked of the religion, those whomever Allah wills among them.’ This is the position of the Community (*Jamā’ah*). Thus, the difference between them with the Community is in terms of the label, not the ruling.

We thoroughly discussed this in other works, clarifying the difference between the denotation of a word by itself and its denotation when coupled with another term. For example, the words *al-faqīr*—‘the poor’—and *al-miskīn*—‘the destitute.’ The mention of one by itself denotes the other’s meaning as well. Allah ﷻ says: “[Alms are] for the poor (*lil-fuqarā*) who are straitened for the cause of Allah.”<sup>383</sup> This includes *al-masākīn*—the destitute. He ﷻ also says: “Its expiation is by feeding ten destitute people (‘asharat masākīn).”<sup>384</sup> This includes *al-fuqarā*—the poor. If both terms are coupled, however, as in His saying: “Indeed, alms are only for the poor and the destitute...”<sup>385</sup> then each one is a distinct category.

The same is true for the Qur’anic passage: “He will enjoin on them that which is fair (*ma<sup>c</sup>rūf*) and forbid them that which is deplorable (*munkar*).”<sup>386</sup> Every obligatory deed is encompassed within *ma<sup>c</sup>rūf*, and every ugly deed within *munkar*. Ugly deeds are sins and contraventions like polytheism, lying, injustice, and lewdness. When He ﷻ says: “Indeed, the prayer forbids lewdness (*fahshā*) and what is deplorable (*munkar*)”, “He forbids lewdness, what is deplorable, and oppression (*baghy*)”<sup>387</sup>—He explicitly mentions certain types of *munkar*, one after the other. Thus, the semantic denotation (*dalālat al-lafz*) of each becomes a deliberate, explicit textual reference by

383 *al-Baqarah*, 273.

384 *al-Mā’idah*, 89.

385 *al-Tawbah*, 60.

386 *al-A<sup>c</sup>rāf*, 157.

387 *al-Nahl*, 90.

way of correspondence (*naṣṣ maqṣūd bi-ṭarīq al-muṭābaqah*), when before it was by way of generality and inclusion. This is regardless of whether we say that it is mentioned within the generic term as well and so is mentioned twice, or is not included therein due to the terminological coupling which entails a denotational distinction between each term, as discussed.

Likewise is the case with the word *īmān*—‘faith’. On occasions, it will be mentioned independently, by itself, without it being paired with necessary action (*al-‘amal al-wājib*), in which case the latter is included concomitantly. On others, it is coupled therewith, in which case, ‘amal—‘action’—would be mentioned in an explicit textual as well as correspondent capacity (*madhkūr bil-muṭābaqah wa al-naṣṣ*), while the word *īmān* either loses this element of its denotation when pairing takes place or retains it.

Allah ﷻ says: “Those who hold fast to the Book and establish the prayer.”<sup>388</sup> Allah ﷻ says to Mūsā ﷺ: “Indeed I—I alone—am Allah. There is no god but I, so worship Me and establish the prayer for My remembrance.”<sup>389</sup> He ﷻ also says: “Recite what is revealed to you of the Book and establish the prayer.”<sup>390</sup> Examples of this are many.

Thus, action is encompassed within faith in inclusive and concomitant capacity (*taḍammunan wa luzūman*). Allah ﷻ says: “Surely, the believers are but those whose hearts tremble when Allah is mentioned, and when His verses are recited to them they increase them in faith, and in their Lord they place their trust—the ones who establish the prayer and from what We have provided them they spend. Those are truly the believers; for them are degrees with their Lord and forgiveness and noble provision.”<sup>391</sup> He ﷻ also says: “The believers are those who have faith in Allah and His Messenger then have no doubt, and strive with their wealth and their lives in the way of Allah; those are the truthful.”<sup>392</sup> He ﷻ says: “Indeed, the believers are but those who have faith in Allah and His Messenger and, when they are with him for a matter of common interest, they do not leave until they have sought his permission.”<sup>393</sup> Similar texts exist throughout the Qur’an and the Sunnah.

Whoever exhaustively analyses this recognises that the legal label—like faith (*īmān*), prayer (*ṣalāh*), ablution (*wuḍū’*), fasting (*ṣiyām*), etc—is not negated by the Lawgiver but for the negation of what is necessary (*wājib*) within it, not for the negation of what is recommended (*mustahabb*) therein.

388 *al-A‘rāf*, 170.

389 *Tā-Hā*, 14.

390 *al-Ankabūt*, 35.

391 *al-Anfāl*, 2-4.

392 *al-Hujurāt*, 15.

393 *al-Nūr*, 62.

As for Allah ﷻ saying: “Indeed, those who believe and do good deeds—they are the best of creation”<sup>394</sup>, and similar passages, then action is specifically mentioned due to emphasis (*tawkīd*), or that its semantic denotation changes due to coupling.

This is a position which does away with much of the semantic dispute on the topic.

Furthermore, faith changes depending on what Allah commands His slave. When the Messenger was sent, the faith that was obligatory—in assertion (*iqrār*) and action (ʿamal)—was unlike the faith that was obligatory at the end of the Prophetic call (*daʿwah*). Initially, it was not necessary to assert what Allah revealed thereafter in terms of obligations, prohibitions, and revelatory tidings. Action was also not obliged then. The faith which Allah obligated kept increasing bit by bit, just as the Qurʾan was revealed bit by bit, and the religion manifested bit by bit. Until Allah ﷻ finally revealed: “Today I have perfected for you your religion, completed upon you My blessings, and approved Islam for you as a religion.”<sup>395</sup>

Accordingly, when the slave first receives the Messenger’s discourse, he is obliged only with the two testimonies. If he dies before any prayer time enters upon him, nothing is obligatory upon him but assertion, and he dies a believer with complete faith—that faith which was obligatory upon him—even if the faith of one for whom the prayer times entered is more complete than his.

The former is seen in light of one who lacks an element of religion, just like the religion of women. The Prophet ﷺ says: “You are lacking in intellect and religion. As for your intellect lacking, then it is the fact that the testimony of two women is equal to that of a woman. As for your religion lacking, then the one among you does not pray when she is in menstruation.” It is manifestly known that the prayer is not obligatory for the menstruating woman. Thus, this is a lacking that the woman is not blamed for. However, the one who is more complete than her is better than her, unlike one who misses something that is obligated upon him.

As such, lacking in religion and faith is of two types: In one type, the slave is not blameworthy due to it being recommended as opposed to obligatory; in the other type, he is blameworthy for leaving obligatory actions.

The Prophet ﷺ asked the slave-girl of Muʿāwiyah ibn al-Ḥakam al-Sulamī: “Where is Allah?” She replied: “In heaven.” He asked: “Who am I?” She replied: “You are the Messenger of Allah.” He said: “Free her, for she is a believer.” There is no evidence in this narration that the one for whom worship is obligatory yet leaves it and commits contraventions deserves the

394 *al-Bayyinah*, 7.

395 *al-Māʾidah*, 3.



unqualified label as she did—a person who has neither shown an example of leaving off an obligation nor committed any contravention.

Whoever recognises this realises that the Prophet ﷺ telling her she is a believer does not contradict his saying: “The fornicator—while fornicating—does not fornicate as a believer. The thief—while stealing—does not steal as a believer. The one who drinks alcohol—while drinking—does not do so as a believer.” Here, the label is negated due to an element going missing from what is obligated upon one—not desisting from such major sins. This girl did not leave an obligation which makes her deserve to come under this by her leaving it.

A follow-up of this is that whoever holistically believes in what the Messengers came with, then it thereafter reaches him in detail and so he asserts it as such and acts according to it, has correspondingly increased what he has of religion and faith in this accord. Whoever sins then repents, falls heedless then remembers, neglects then returns, then his religion and faith increase accordingly. This sentiment is echoed by many of the Companions, like ‘Umayr ibn Ḥabīb al-Khaṭmī and others, who said: “Faith increases and decreases.” He was asked: “What is its increase and decrease?” He replied: “When we praise Allah, remember Him, and exalt Him, this is its increase. When we are heedless, forgetful, and neglectful, this is its decrease.” He mentioned it increases with good deeds even if recommended, and decreases by way of what goes missing of obligations and other matters.

Moreover, the acceptance of the heart is followed by the action of the heart. Once the heart accepts what Allah deserves of divinity (*ulūhiyyah*) and what the Messenger deserves of messengerhood, then this is necessarily followed up by love and veneration of Allah and His Messenger. Obedience to Allah and His Messenger is a concomitant of this acceptance. It (obedience) is never done away with but for a temporary intrusion of arrogance, envy, and similar diseases which beget haughtiness away from worshipping Allah and hate for His Messenger. At worst, such things beget unbelief, like that of Satan, Pharaoh and his people, the Jews, the disbelievers of Makkah, and other stubborn deniers.

On top of this, if people do not follow up acceptance with its necessary actions of the heart and the tongue and so on, then their hearts may be sealed such that acceptance is lifted from it. Allah ﷻ says: “Mūsā said to his people, ‘My people, why do you hurt me, though you know that I am Allah’s Messenger to you?’ When they deviated, Allah caused their hearts to deviate.”<sup>396</sup> Such people were aware, so when they deviated, Allah caused their hearts to deviate. Mūsā said to Pharaoh: “You know very well that none

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396 *al-Ṣaff*, 5.



sent these down except the Lord of the heavens and the earth as insights.”<sup>397</sup> Allah ﷻ says: “Thus, Pharaoh’s evil deeds were adorned for him and he was barred from the way, for Pharaoh’s plotting is in nothing but ruin.”<sup>398</sup> In the same *sūrah*: “Thus does Allah seal the heart of every arrogant tyrant.”<sup>399</sup>

Allah ﷻ says: “They swore by Allah their most solemn oaths that if a sign were to come to them, they would believe in it. Say, ‘Signs are only with Allah.’ But what will make you appreciate that even if it did come, they would still not believe, We would turn away their hearts and their sights as they did not believe in it the first time, and We would leave them in their rebellion, wandering aimlessly?<sup>400</sup>”<sup>401</sup> Allah clarified that the advent of signs does not necessitate faith in His saying: “What will make you appreciate that even if it did come, they would still not believe, We would turn away their hearts and their sights...” Thus, it is three matters: That they do not believe, that Allah turns away their hearts and sights, and that He leaves them in their rebellion wandering aimlessly. That is: How do you know that if the signs were to come these three things would not happen?

Through this, it becomes clear that the recitation with *fath* is better.<sup>402</sup> The one who says that *an*—‘that’—means *la‘all*—‘perhaps’—thus thinking that *wa nuqallibu afidatahum*—‘We turn away their hearts...’—is a new clause (*kalam muḩtada*) has not understood the meaning of the verse. If instead *wa nuqallibu afidatahum*—‘We would turn away their hearts...’—is understood as being within the predicate of *an*, the meaning of the verse becomes clear. Many people believe but their hearts are not turned—their

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397 *al-Isrā’*, 102.

398 *Ghāfir*, 37.

399 *Ghāfir*, 35.

400 Translator’s note: The passage is translated to accommodate Ibn Taymiyyah’s interpretation thereof, which, from a purely linguistic perspective, is a perfectly reasonable understanding. If the turning of the hearts onwards is a separate syntactic divine discourse, the rendition of the passage may become:

“But what will make you appreciate that even if it did come, they would still not believe? We turn away their hearts and their sights as they did not believe in it the first time, and We leave them in their rebellion wandering aimlessly.”

The difference is subtle, but Ibn Taymiyyah is explicitly championing the understanding given in the original translation: that the three matters cited are all consequences if the sign were to come.

401 *al-An‘ām*, 109-110.

402 Translator’s note: In reference to a passage in the quoted verses:

*Wa mā yush‘irukum annahā idhā jā’at...*

*Wa mā yush‘irukum innahā idhā jā’at...*

Both recitations are valid. Ibn Taymiyyah is expressing his preference for the former—*fath* as opposed to *kasr* in the *hamzah*.

hearts and sights may be turned away or they may not. That is: What will make you realise that they would not believe? The intended expression is: What will make you appreciate that were it (a sign) to come, they would still not believe, and that rather, we would turn away their hearts and sights just as they did not believe in it the first time. The meaning is: What will make you realise that the matter is contrary to your expectations in their believing upon the advent of signs? And that instead we would leave them in their rebellion wandering aimlessly? Such that they are punished for their leaving faith the first time after it being obligatory upon them? Either due to them recognising the truth but not asserting it, or being able to recognise it but not actually seeking to. Examples of this are many.

The point here is to emphasise the following: Not acting according to what one knows—the entailment of acceptance and knowledge—may lead to acceptance and knowledge being taken away from one. It is as is said: ‘Knowledge calls forth to action to respond. If it doesn’t, it leaves.’ It was also said: ‘We would seek help in preserving knowledge by acting upon it.’

What the heart holds of acceptance to what the Messenger ﷺ came with, if not followed by its necessary entailments of deeds, may indeed disappear. The existence of the justifier entails the existence of the justified, and the non-existence of the latter implies the non-existence of the former. Just as knowledge and belief are causes of volition and action, a lack of volition and action indicates a lack of knowledge and belief.

If the justification is a complete one, then the non-existence of the justified is an indicant which entails its non-existence. If it is a cause whose justified is retarded, said retardation is a hint as to the non-existence of the justified where the indicated is retarded.

Furthermore, definitive belief (*taṣḍīq jāzim*) in the heart is followed by what it necessitates given possible parameters, like definitive volition (*irādah jāzimah*) in the heart. If definitive violation in the heart is coupled with ability, then irrefutably the object of volition (*murād*) and ability (*maqḍūr*) is realised. In the event that ability is available but action is not realised, then the outcome is a motivation (*hamm*), not a definitive volition. This is what has been pardoned.<sup>403</sup> Likewise, if definitive belief is realised in the heart, then one of the actions of the heart irrevocably follows it. It is inconceivable that the two be disjointed. Rather, it is followed up by what is possible of the limbs’ actions. If it is not followed up by one of the actions of the hearts, then one recognises that it cannot be definitive belief, and hence cannot be faith.

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403 Translator’s note: Meaning, generally, one is not taken to account in the Hereafter over what he wanted to do but did not actually do it.

However, definitive belief may not be followed by a complete action of the heart due to a temporary affliction of whim in the soul—like pride, envy and the like. The origin is that acceptance is followed by love. If the latter is retarded, then it is due to a weakness in the former which necessitates it. The Companions say in this vein: “Whosoever disobeys Allah is ignorant.” Ibn Mas‘ūd says: “Suffice one the fear of Allah as knowledge, and suffice one self-delusion as ignorance.”

This is why uttering words of disbelief without coercion is itself disbelief, according to the Community, the imams of the jurists, and even the Murji‘ah, contrary to the Jahmīs and their followers. Insulting and hating the Messenger is a part of this. Likewise insulting and hating the Qur‘an, as well as insulting and hating Allah, and similar matters that are not strictly within acceptance and denial (*taṣḍīq wa takdhīb*) and instead come under love, veneration, and allegiance; or hate, hostility, and belittling.

Since faith in the heart has necessary external manifestations, said external manifestations are an indicant as to the heart’s faith in affirmation or negation. Allah ﷻ says: “You will not find a people who believe in Allah and the Last Day loving those who oppose Allah and His Messenger...”<sup>404</sup>, “Had they believed in Allah, in the Prophet, and in what was sent down to him, they would not have taken them as allies”<sup>405</sup>, and similar passages.

After all this, arguing whether *īmān*—‘faith’—linguistically refers to only belief (*taṣḍīq*) without its entailments or both comes down to a semantic dispute (*nizāf lafẓī*). One may say that denotation differs based on isolated or paired mentions of the word.

## Faith and belief

Among the people are those who say: In origin, *īmān* linguistically refers to *taṣḍīq*—‘belief’<sup>406</sup>. They then say: Belief is with the tongue and the limbs, and a statement may be referred to as *taṣḍīq* and an action may also be referred to as such. The Prophet ﷺ says: “Their eyes fornicate and their fornication is looking. The ears fornicate and their fornication is hearing. The hand fornicates and its fornication is striking. The foot fornicates and its

404 *al-Mujādilah*, 22.

405 *al-Mā’idah*, 81.

406 Translator’s note: *Taṣḍīq* is the *tafīl* morphological setup of the semantic root ṣ-d-q (*ṣadaqa*). In other words, it is to accept something as true. Thus far, ‘acceptance’ and ‘belief’ have been interchangeably used for *taṣḍīq* depending on context. There have been previous references to *ītiqād* and *īmān* in the text where ‘belief’ was also used, though *īmān* is usually rendered as ‘faith’ or derivatives thereof. However, *mu’min*, *mu’minūn*, *alladhīna āmanū*, and so on has usually been rendered as ‘believer’, ‘believers’, and ‘those who believe’ respectively.

fornication is walking. The heart wishes and desires. The sexual organ then substantiates (*yuṣaddiq*) this or belies it (*yukadhhibuh*). Ḥasan al-Baṣrī says: “Faith is not wishful thinking (*tamannī*) or pretence (*taḥallī*), rather it is what settles in the heart and what is validated (*ṣaddaqaḥ*) by action.”

Then there are others who say: *Īmān* is assertion (*iqrār*) and is not a synonym to *taṣdīq*. The latter may be used in reference to any report, whether witnessed or not. *Īmān* is more specific than that. It was said about the news borne by Yūsuf’s brothers: *Wa mā anta bi-mu’minin lanā*—“You will not believe us<sup>407</sup>...”<sup>408</sup> There is also: *Yu’minu billāhi wa yu’minu lil-mu’minīn*—“He believes in Allah and believes<sup>409</sup> the believers.”<sup>410</sup> Having *īmān bi-* the Prophet is to have faith in him, i.e., to believe in him. Having *īmān li-* the Prophet is to have faith for him, i.e., to believe him. The former is with regards to the news-bearer (*mukhbir*), while the latter is with regards to the news (*khabar*).

It is said to someone who says, ‘One is half of two, and the sky is above the earth’: *Qad ṣaddaqtuh*—‘I believe him.’ One may not say: *Āmantu lah*—‘I have faith in what he says.’ Moreover, it is said in this context: *Uṣaddiqu bi-hādhā*—‘I believe this.’ But it is not said: *U’minu bih*—‘I have faith in it.’ The term *īmān* takes the morphological setup of *if’āl* from the semantic root *amn* (*a-m-n*; security and safety). Thus, it entails a certain tranquillity and stillness with regards to matters which the heart would be expected to be doubtful about, and hence be jittery and unstable. Such a thing takes place with reports of the Unseen (*mughayyabāt*) not reports of the witnessed (*mushāhadāt*). This is thoroughly discussed in other works.

The point here is to clarify that the difference between the jurists of the Murji’ah and the Community is minor, some of which is semantic. There is no difference known among the imams of fatwa other than this. It is the position of a group among the Kufan jurists, like Ḥammād ibn Abī Sulaymān, his companion Abū Ḥanīfah, and the latter’s companions.

As for the position of the Jahmīs—that faith is merely the belief of the heart not the tongue—then this was not posited by anyone of repute. This was classically not attributed to the Murji’ah. The Jahmīs agree with a

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407 Translator’s note: Literally, it is more: “You are not a believer for us...” i.e., You are not a believer for what we have to say. Ibn Taymiyyah speaks about *īmān li-* and *īmān bi-* in the next example. The verse quoted is an example of the former: *mu’min lanā*.

408 *Yūsuf*, 17.

409 Translator’s note: Once again, a more literal rendition gives: “He believes in Allah and believes for the believers.” That is: He has faith in Allah and trusts the believers, as he believes them.

410 *al-Tawbah*, 61.

group of later Asharites in this regard. The view of Ibn Kullāb agrees with the rhetoric of the Murji'ah, not the Jahmīs.

The latest formulated position on this subject matter is that of the Kar-rāmīs—that imān is a term used for a statement of the tongue, even if not coupled with belief of the heart. This is the most corrupt of all positions. However, its espousers do not differ in ruling. They say that this faith that is only by the tongue without the heart is that of the hypocrites, and it is of no avail in the Hereafter.

The pitfall which all of these groups slipped up in is the same one which the Kharijites and the Mutazilites fell into. Namely, their thinking that faith cannot be parsed, and that if a portion of it goes, then all of it goes. The position of the Sunnah and Community Folk is that it may be parsed, and that it may decrease without all of it disappearing. The Prophet ﷺ says: “Anyone with an atom-worth of faith in his heart will be taken out of the Fire.”

### **The summarised spectrum of positions with regards to the nature of faith**

Thus, there are three positions:

1. The Kharijites and the Mutazilites: They disputed over the label and the ruling. They did not accept the parsing of faith, neither in label nor ruling. Consequently, they altogether remove the label of ‘faith’ from the one who committed a major sin, deeming him as eternally abiding in the Fire.
2. The Jahmīs and the Murji'ah: They disputed over the label not the ruling. They say: ‘It is permitted that one is rewarded and punished, praised and blamed, but one may not have only some portion of faith.’ Many of the Jahmīs and Murji'ah are agnostic with regards to the divine promise of torment (*yaqif fī al-wa'īd*). They do not definitively posit that the punishment will be realised upon the one who committed a major sin. This is held by the Murji'ah among the Shiites and Asharites, like Qāḍī Abū Bakr and others. It is relayed that the extreme among them negated the promise of punishment altogether. However, I do not know of a known individual who espoused this view. It is the relayed view of Muqātil ibn Sulaymān, though it is most likely falsely attributed to him.
3. As for the imams of the Sunnah and Community Folk, they affirm the parsing in label and ruling. A man may have some of faith, and not all of it. He may be punished in accordance with what he is upon.

Attaining sainthood with Allah ﷻ (*wilayat Allāh*; lit: allegiance to Allah) is in accordance with what one has of faith and piety (*taqwā*). The saints are the faithful and the pious. Allah ﷻ says: “Undoubtedly, Allah’s allies—indeed no fear shall be upon them, nor shall they grieve: those who believe and are mindful [of Allah].”<sup>411</sup>

As such, the one who exercises his interpretive capacity (*al-muta’awwil*) but errs, with regards to both revelatory reports and commands, even if his view holds within it aberration whereby he unwittingly contradicts an explicit text (*naṣṣ*) or an early consensus (*ijmā’ qadīm*), and does this by mistake—as a mufti or judge may, in exercising their judicious discretion, err in their fatwa and judgement—such a person is nonetheless rewarded for exercising his judicious discretion in obedience to Allah ﷻ, but not rewarded for what he erred in, even though it is pardoned.

He may however fall into remiss dereliction in observing what is obligatory, or fall prey to his lowly desires, thus incurring sin. Said sin may intensify until it is considered major. The proof Allah sent His Messengers with may be unassailably pit against him. He may in turn stubbornly deny it, defying the Messenger after having guidance made clear to him, following other than the path of the believers. As such, he would be an apostate and hypocrite (i.e., concealing his apostasy), or an apostate of manifest apostasy. Speaking about individuals requires this level of detail.

### **The Qur’an and Sunnah as a criterion for any position’s validity**

As for discussions revolving around the types of statements and deeds, both internal and external, borne of certain beliefs and motivations and so on, then it is obligatory to return matters that are disputed over to the judgement of Allah and His Messenger. Whatever agrees with the Book and the Sunnah is the truth; whatever disagrees with them is false; and whatever agrees from some respects but disagrees from others is something that includes both truth and falsity; and that is that.

The point here is to highlight the following: The folk of knowledge and faith, in their accepting, denying, praising, and dispraising any matter in question, all agree on the aforementioned principle. This is why we have imams of knowledge and religiosity ascribed to jurisprudence and asceticism rebuking aberrations contradicting the Book and the Sunnah in doctrines and deeds, among the Kalam Folk, people of jurisprudential discretion (*ahl al-ra’y*), ascetics, Sufis, and their like. Notwithstanding the

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411 *Yūnus*, 62-63.

fact that among said people may be he who employed adequate intellectual rigour (*mujtahid*) for which he is rewarded, and his mistake is forgiven.

It is confirmed as authentic from various respects that the Prophet ﷺ said: “The best of generations is the one I have been sent in, then those who come after them, then those who come after them.” The first generation was upon such a degree of knowledge and faith that the second generation did not attain, and likewise with the third.

The advent of aberrations and hypocrisy is in accordance with furtherance from the Prophetic legacy (*sunan*) and faith. The later an innovation is, the more severe it is in its aberration, and vice versa. The first aberration was that of the Kharijites and the Shiites, then the Qadarīs and Murji’ah, and the latest was that of the Jahmīs. Ibn al-Mubārak, Yūsuf ibn Asbāt, and a group of scholars among the companions of Aḥmad said: “The Jahmīs are not one of the seventy-two sects.<sup>412</sup> They are in fact heretics (*zanādiqah*).”

This is notwithstanding the fact that many of their innovations were adopted by people who themselves are not heretics, but rather accepted the heretic’s rhetoric unintentionally and out of ignorance. Allah ﷻ says: “Had they set out with you, they would have added to you naught but trouble, and they would have spread turmoil in your midst, seeking to sow discord among you—and among you there are some who would have listened to them.”<sup>413</sup> He tells us that there are among the believers those who respond to the hypocrites. Thus, what the faithful fall into of matters related to the hypocrites is of this vein.

The intention here is that it be known that there still remains in the ummah of Muhammad ﷺ those who enjoin good and forbid evil, and that his ummah never persists on misguidance. Whenever a reprehensible matter takes place—truth being obfuscated for falsehood or anything similar—Allah ﷻ sends forth those who distinguish right from wrong. Thus, such issues must be clarified, and the people must be given their rights. ‘Āishah ؓ said: “Allah’s Messenger ﷺ commanded us to give people their due.” Reported by Abū Dāwūd and others.

This topic may bear a thorough, vast exploration, with explications of the various views held and by whom. The point here is to make mention of some holistic notions, since this is needed in our day and age. The texts of asceticism and Sufism have the same essential content as those of jurisprudence and discretion. In both, there are authentic and weak transmissions (*manqūlāt*), even fabricated ones; as well as strong and weak positions (*maqālāt*), even false ones. The books of kalam have within them much

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412 Translator’s note: In reference to a famous narration where the ummah is said to split into seventy-two sects.

413 *al-Tawbah*, 47.



more falsehood than the latter. Rather, they contain elements of heresy and hypocrisy. As for works of philosophy, then they predominantly hold falsehood—tenets of disbelief are explicit and abundant therein.

The *Ihyā'* takes the same ruling as works similar to it. It contains many authentic narrations, as well as many weak and fabricated ones. Its author's capital in Hadith and traditions, as well as the Predecessor's words and their exegesis of the Qur'an, is weak. The best of his content is that pertaining to Sufism. Had he traversed in it the path of the Sufis that have knowledge of Prophetic traditions and kept away from the Sufism of the Sabian philosophers, he would have realised his goal and fulfilled his intention. He did indeed follow this at the end of his life. The best part of his book—or one of the best parts in it—is where he takes from the works of Abū Ṭālib with regards to the stations of the divinely acquainted (*maqāmāt al-ʿārifīn*) and so on. Abū Ṭālib was more astutely aware of the refined tactful experiences of the Sufis. He was also more knowledgeable of their statements and reports in terms of transmission and had more direct learning from the senior shaykhs.

### **A return to the original theme of prophecy**

The point here is this: The ways in which one acquires knowledge of the Prophet's truthfulness are plentiful. Even the diversity of the ways in which the status of prophecy and the Prophet is vast. For the Prophet reports about Allah saying something either as informing on His behalf, or as a command or prohibition. The states of all of the informer (*mukhbīr*), the informed-from (*mukhbār ʿanh*), and the informed-of (*mukhbār bih*);<sup>414</sup> even the state of those informed (*mukhbārīn*)—believers and deniers—provide an evidentiary basis for what is sought. This is besides what is separate therefrom in terms of supernatural occurrences (*khawāriq*), reports of the ancients (*akhbār al-awwalīn*), metaphysical callers (*hawātif*), soothsayers (*kuhhān*), and so on.

### **The informer**

The truthfulness or falsity of the informer is known through many ways, a single one of which does not beget knowledge by itself. One gains knowledge

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414 Translator's note: Ibn Taymiyyah goes on to discuss of each of these in detail. The informer refers to the Prophet. The informed-from is the source of the latter's knowledge, i.e., the Divine. The informed-of is the information itself, i.e., revelatory reports.



by way of the informer's abundantly transmitted reports, or even solitary reports which are supported by various contextual indicators.

Related to this is one's knowledge of the moral integrity (ʿadālah) of a witness, Hadith expert, or mufti, such that he accredits them, judges according to their testimony, or spreads their fatwa. It is also so that the judge is not dependent on an accreditation (*tazkiyah*) for the moral integrity of every witness. If every accrediting person (*muzakkī*) himself requires an accreditor then this would yield infinite regress (*tasalsul*). One may be recognised as truthful by way of directly interacting with him and testing him, as well as by ample recognition thereto by the people.

This is why the scholars say that deeming someone as morally upright (*taʿdīl*<sup>415</sup>) does not require precise reasoning. That someone is just, truthful, and not a liar is not known by mentioning anything in particular. This is unlike deeming someone as morally compromised (*jarḥ*<sup>416</sup>). According to the majority of scholars, such a judgement is not accepted unless it be accompanied by an explanation. This is due to two reasons:

1. So that the reason for the judgement is technically assessed and standardised.
2. So that what is thought to be morally compromising but isn't is excluded.

As for one being truthful, seeking truth, and not a liar, then this is not known through a single thing for it to be reported. Rather, it is recognised from one's character and habits, through prolonged interaction and awareness. Additionally, if a person is widely reported to be so among the masses who know him and have frequently dealt with him, then this is also a way to acquire knowledge for those who have not directly interacted with him. One knows, for example, of the moral uprightness of ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb and ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, and conversely the tyranny of al-Ḥajjāj. The jurists say that moral uprightness or frailty is recognised by way of ample reports thereof (*yuʿlam bil-istifāḍah*). They say regarding explained critique

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415 Translator's note: The science of *al-Jarḥ wa al-Taʿdīl* is that of narrator criticism—whether a given Hadith narrator is reliable, trustworthy, of a strong or weak memory, a liar, etc. The two parts of the name have a negative and positive connotation respectively. *Jarḥ* literally means to wound, but effectively refers to deeming someone as morally compromised. *Taʿdīl* is the *tafīl* form of ʿ*adl* and is to deem someone as morally upright. Where it is not possible to give this half-sentence translation—'deem someone as...'—the two words will be rendered as 'critique' or 'criticism' and 'praise' respectively.

416 Translator's note: See previous note on *al-Jarḥ wa al-Taʿdīl*.

(*jarḥ mufassar*): ‘One passes his criticism based on what one sees, hears, or what is amply reported about a given person.’

A person’s truthfulness usually entails noble character traits (*khiṣāl al-birr*), just as his being a liar entails ignoble ones (*khiṣāl al-fujūr*). It is authentically reported in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* that the Prophet ﷺ said: “Adhere to truthfulness, for truthfulness guides to beneficence, and beneficence guides to the Garden. A man continues to say and seek the truth until he is recorded with Allah as truthful. Beware of lying, for lying guides to wickedness, and wickedness guides to the Fire. A man continues to say and seek out lies until he is recorded with Allah as a liar.”

An abundantly transmitted report is known [as true] due to it being transmitted by those for whom a conspiracy in lying is inconceivable. A disparate (*munkar*), belied (*mukadhdhab*) report is known as such due to it not being reported by those for whom a conspiracy in concealment is inconceivable. In the same way, it is inconceivable under normal circumstances that a person’s character and his customs in truthfulness or lying go unknown by the people. There is no one who manifests an orientation towards truthfulness yet lies when he wishes but that he is ultimately exposed.

For man is a linguistically endowed<sup>417</sup> animal (*ḥaywān nāṭiq*). For him, speech is an essentially concomitant attribute which never leaves him.<sup>418</sup> Speech is either informative or compositional. Informative speech is more common than compositional speech and is an origin thereof, just as knowledge is more generic than volition and is an origin thereof. Objects of knowledge (*ma‘lūm*) are greater than objects of volition (*murād*). Knowledge includes the existent and the non-existent; the necessary, possible, and impossible; what was and what will be; and what the knower chooses and what he does not. As for volition, then it is specific for some matters and not others. An informative report (*khabar*) corresponds to knowledge. Anything that is known may be informed of. Composition corresponds to volition. A matter is either loved and commanded, or disliked and prohibited. What is neither loved nor disliked is not commanded nor prohibited.

If this is the case, then if man is oriented towards truth, he becomes known for this. If he lies on occasion for some purpose, like gaining what he desires or repelling what he hates, then this is also necessarily known. This is a matter that has become a rule of custom, as other matters have.

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417 Translator’s note: Unlike previous references, here, Ibn Taymiyyah intends the literal connotations of *nutq*—those pertaining to utterance and speech.

418 Translator’s note: Ibn Taymiyyah is using logical rhetorical here. That is: man, in essence and abstraction, is endowed with a language faculty. Not that every human being who ever lived or will ever live is necessarily speaking.

You do not find a person among any given group with whom he interacts over a lengthy period except that they know whether or not he lies.

In this vein, it is a common practice of judges that they have persons they can go to in order to investigate a given witness's integrity, like his neighbours, colleagues, and other people who may know him closely. Whoever deeply knows someone will have certain knowledge from their habits that they do not lie, especially with regards to major truth-claims.

Whoever properly knows ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿUmar, Saʿīd ibn al-Musayyab, Sufyān al-Thawrī, Mālik ibn Anas, Shuʿbah ibn al-Ḥajjāj, Yaḥyā ibn Saʿīd al-Qaṭṭān, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, and many, many others like them—he necessarily knows to an unassailable, profound capacity that the one of them would never deliberately lie about the Prophet ﷺ. Whoever, in our time, has received the abundant reports in their regard, acquires this type of necessary knowledge. It is nonetheless possible that one of them errs as an exception to his norms.

In considering the report of the transgressor (*fāsiq*) and the disbeliever (*kāfir*), even one known for lying, it may be coupled with contextual indicators which beget necessary knowledge that the informer is correct in this particular report. What then of one known for being truthful?!

Whoever is astutely aware of the state of the Prophet ﷺ, like his wife Khadījah and his friend Abū Bakr, if he informs them of what he heard and saw, they gain necessary knowledge that he is truthful in its regards and not lying.

The Prophet must himself have necessary knowledge that what has come to him is truthful or false, such that his own reporting thereof is borne of what is necessarily known, just like a people with an abundantly transmitted report inform thereof out of necessary knowledge.

Furthermore, the false prophet, like Musaylimah and al-ʿAnsī and their like, has his lying manifest to his addressee more so than anyone else's lying. If informing of witnessable matters necessitates that one's lying be exposed, then what of one informing about the Unseen upon request?

One of the obligatory concomitants of the Prophet which he cannot go without is his informing of the Unseen as per Allah's revelations unto him thereof. Whoever does not report of the Unseen cannot be a Prophet. If the false claimant to prophecy reports of some matters that are absent (*ghā'ibah*) from his addressees' senses—within the present, the future, and the past—he will necessarily lie about them and hence be exposed, even if on occasion he gets it right. Just like the lies of soothsayers and astrologists and their like become manifest, as well as those who falsely purport religiosity, sainthood, and scholarly seniority. The one among them, even if truthful on some occasions, will necessarily lie on others. Rather, his

telling lies will be more frequent than his telling the truth, and his affairs will constantly contradict. This is a matter that runs in accordance with the unchangeable law of Allah. He ﷺ says: “Had it (the Qur’an) been from any other than Allah, they would have found in it much discrepancy.”<sup>419</sup>

As for the truthful, validated Prophet, then his reports about the Unseen are correspondent and truthful. The more his reports increase, and the more he is dealt with and tried, the more his truthfulness becomes manifest. Like unadulterated gold—the more it is heat-treated, the more its essence is purified. Unlike fake gold. Upon testing, it is discovered that its internal content is contrary to its external appearance.

For this reason, it has come in previous prophecies that the liar (i.e., false prophet) does not last but for a little while, thirty years or less. Thus, there is no false claimant to prophecy except that his affairs are exposed and his pretences unmasked. The truthfulness of the genuine Prophets continues to shine. Within a wide variety of worldly disciplines and among those who lay claim to expertise therein, and within those who externalise righteousness, religiosity, and asceticism—the authentic is necessarily distinguished from the inauthentic. The legacy of the truthful persists, while the liars are severed from history. This is a forgone matter which runs its course according to the customs set by Allah and His way in dealing with the creation—you will find no alteration nor inconsistency in His way.

### The informed-of

As for the informed-from and the informed-of, then the Prophet informs from Allah ﷻ that He informed of such-and-such. Thus, his informing must be truthful and his commanding must be just: “The word of your Lord is complete in truth and justice. No one can change His words. He is the Hearing, the Knowing.”<sup>420</sup>

Those matters which he informs of, and commands, would often bring the mind’s attention to parables and rational proofs which showcase their veracity. Thus, what the intellect recognises through his (the Prophet’s) directives and guidance—in terms of truth he informs of and justice he commands—is testament that he is a guide, a counsellor, and a teacher of goodness; not a misguiding, deceiving, teacher of evil.

This is the state of the truthful beneficent, not the lying wicked. It is not conceivable that what the lying and wicked person commands is just, nor that what he informs of is true. This is despite him potentially informing of some matters of the Unseen due to a devil which accompanies him

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419 *al-Nisā’*, 82.

420 *al-An‘ām*, 115.

and throws this knowledge unto him, or some similar source. He is still nonetheless wicked and lying. Allah ﷻ says: “Should I inform you upon whom the devils keep descending? They keep descending upon every sinful fabricator (*affāk athīm*). They give ear, but most of them are liars.”<sup>421</sup> This is a clarification since the one who comes to him (the Prophet) is an angel, not a devil. The devil does not come down upon the truthful and beneficent so long as he is such, since he is unable to realise his objective this way. Instead, he descends on who is commensurate with him in devilishness; namely the sinful fabricator. The *affāk*—fabricator—is the *kadhhab*—liar, and the *athīm*—sinful—is the *fājir*—wicked.

The Prophet would often command and inform of certain matters whose truthfulness and benefit the intellect does not perceive *prima facie*. If one believes his reporting thereof and obeys his command, one finds such exposition of truths and valuable utility which induce within one knowledge that he (the Prophet) has profound knowledge, truthfulness, and wisdom what only Allah knows about. This, to a degree that is far greater than one recognising the truthfulness of a physician in treating his patient with some medicine, or the truthfulness of an intellectual in expressing his prudent opinion, and so on. At this point, one acquires necessary knowledge of the Prophet’s perfected reason and honesty.

If the Prophet then informs of necessary matters (*umūr ḍarūriyyah*) which he sees and hears, one gains necessary knowledge that he is truthful and does not deliberately lie, fully certain of what he is reporting, without any error or mistake. This is realised to a capacity far greater than how the truthfulness of a person reporting his dream is ascertained, or a person speaking about wonders which he witnessed, and so on.

The informer is afflicted only in his deliberately lying, or erring, in that he thinks matters to be contrary to how they are. Where a matter is borne of necessary knowledge that is strengthened, accentuated, and made more manifest with time, the possibility of error is removed. Where he is oriented to truth which in turn necessitates the impossibility of wilful lying, alongside the many other indicators which negate wilful lying, the possibility of wilfulness is removed.

As for knowledge of the justice and virtue of what he commands, then this is usually known by way of what he presents of rational proofs and what he strikes of parables. This is what prevails over the Prophets’ rhetoric with regards to the founding principles of religion, both in knowledge and action. On occasion, it may also become apparent by way of trial and testing. At times, one may evidence what is not known by what has been established.

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421 *al-Shu‘arā’*, 221-223.

Furthermore, it is known that the world still holds prophecy in it from the time of Adam ﷺ until our Master Muhammad ﷺ.

The truthfulness of a consequent Prophet may be recognised through various ways:

Among them is the antecedent Prophet reporting of his coming. The Prophets before him gave glad tidings of our Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. Likewise, the Prophets before the Messiah (Īsā ﷺ) gave tidings of his coming.

He may also be recognised as truthful by the fact that he comes with the same message—in revelatory reports and commands—as that of previous Prophets. It is not conceivable that the lying, wicked person matches the Prophets in his reports and commands. Rather, he necessarily must contradict them in the holistic principles which they agree on, like *tawhīd*, prophecy, and the Reckoning. The ignorant or unjust judge would necessarily go against the standard customs of the just, knowledgeable ones. The same with the ignorant, lying mufti and the ignorant, lying physician. All such persons will necessarily have their lies and ignorance exposed due to their contradicting the ways of the folk of knowledge and honesty. Even if they internally disagree over matters of judicious discretion (*umūr ijtihādiyyah*), the nature of such differences is clearly distinct from going against holistic principles which may not be undermined.

Accordingly, among emirs, rulers, muftis, Hadith scholars, physicians, etc, the people are able to distinguish between the truthful scholar—even if he disagrees with other truthful scholars in certain matters—and the ignorant, lying, unjust pretender. They are able to tell between one and the other, just as they are able to recognise undoubtable knowledge and justice from the biographies of Abū Bakr and ʿUmar, even if there were disputes between them over discretionary matters, like preference in giving<sup>422</sup> and similar issues.

Furthermore, if two people tell of the same lengthy, multi-layered account, where they did not conspire over its details and it is far removed from their custom that they do so, we acknowledge their truthfulness. It is like if two men were to witness an event in some battle, pray the Friday or Eid prayers, witness the death of a king, the governmental changes of a state, an imam's sermon, a message sent by some governor, or if they study the same text or both memorise it, and in all this they do not conspire, then one of them gives his account of what he witnessed in detail, then

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422 Translator's note: Historians speak about how Abū Bakr and ʿUmar ﷺ chose to split the Muslims' wealth among them: the former gave the same amount to all, while the latter kept seniority of the recipient in mind and hence gave in accordance to that.

the other independently gives the same version of events: they are both recognised as being truthful.

Likewise if two men who did not know each other memorised some of the Arabs' poetry—like that of Imru' al-Qays—and there is a third who has not memorised it. If the latter were to say to one of the two, 'Recite it me,' and he does, then he does the same with the second and he recites it as per the first's rendition thereof, then the listener would recognise it as the same poem. The same can be said with books of jurisprudence, Hadith, language, medicine, and so on.

Consider if a king were to send emissaries to his governors and representatives regarding some matter. One of two emissaries informs that his message is that the king commands such-and-such—giving explicit details—then the second arrives and gives the same commands with the same details without knowing that the other had been sent, then it would be apodictically known (‘ulima qaṭ‘an) that the orders in questions have been commanded by the king, and that both emissaries were truthful. It is necessarily known that such an outcome is not possible if lying and mistakes are at play.

It is known that Mūsā and other Prophets came before Muhammad, and they informed from Allah matters that relate to *tawhīd*, His names and attributes, His angels, His commands and prohibitions, His promise of bliss and punishment, and His sending Messengers. It is also known for anyone aware of the state of Muhammad ﷺ that he was an unlettered man among an unlettered people. He did not read any book nor did he write anything himself. Allah ﷻ says: “You never used to read any Book before it, and you never used to write it down with your right hand; otherwise the advocates of falsehood would have doubted.”<sup>423</sup> The people among whom he was raised were not aware of previous Prophets' sciences. They were among the most severe in polytheism, ignorance, corruption, and denial of the Reckoning. They were among the furthest away from monotheism, and the most profound in polytheism. If one then reflects over the Qur'an and the Torah, one finds them to agree in their holistic motifs: monotheism, prophecy, generic deeds, and the divine names and attributes.

Whoever has knowledge of this will necessarily recognise what the Negus said—“Indeed, this and what Mūsā came with are from the same source”—and what Waraqah ibn Nawfal said—“Indeed, this is the Archangel which used to come to Mūsā”—as true.

Allah ﷻ says: “Say, ‘Have you thought: If it is from Allah and you disbelieve in it, and a witness of the Children of Israel has already testified to

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423 *al-ʿAnkabūt*, 48.



the like thereof...”<sup>424</sup>, “If you are in doubt about what We have sent down to you, then ask those who recite the Book before you”<sup>425</sup>, “Those who disbelieve say, ‘You are not a Messenger.’ Say, ‘Sufficient is Allah as witness between me and you, and so is whoever has knowledge of the Book’”<sup>426</sup>, and similar passages which mention the previous Scriptures as testament to what Muhammad ﷺ reports being true.

Such reports are transmitted in and among the People of the Book in abundance, just as the miracles of Mūsā and ‘Īsā ﷺ are transmitted among them in abundance. This is notwithstanding specific details they claim being not abundantly reported due to abundant reporting having ceased in their midst. There is an evident difference between the holistic doctrines that are the principles of divine legislation known by all religious folk, and the minutia within branch matters which only the specialists may be aware of.

This is why the obligation of the five prayers, the fasting of Ramadan, the Hajj, the prohibition of obscenities and lying, etc, are all matters that are abundantly reported among the Muslim masses. Though most of them do not know the detailed rulings and specific Prophetic practices that are abundantly reported among specialists.

There are many great benefits in the People of the Book having among themselves that which is abundantly reported and agreeing with what Muhammad ﷺ informed of. These are also a part of the divine wisdom in their asserting the jizya. Among those are:

1. If all the Messengers agree on such matters, their truthfulness in informing on behalf of Allah is confirmed. Muhammad ﷺ reported the same thing that Mūsā did without there being any possible conspiracy or exchange of information.
2. It is a proof that all the Messengers agree on the principles of religion. For example, it is known that those before him (the Prophet ﷺ) were human men and not angels, so this is not a feature that is specific to Muhammad ﷺ. Allah ﷻ says: “Say, ‘I am nothing new among the Messengers.’”<sup>427</sup> He ﷻ also says: “We sent not before you save men unto whom We revealed from among the folk of the townships. Have they not travelled the land and seen the nature of the consequence for those who were before them? Surely the abode of the Hereafter is better for those mindful [of Allah]. Do you not reason? Till, when the messengers despaired and thought that

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424 *al-Aḥqāf*, 10.

425 *Yūnus*, 94.

426 *al-Ra‘d*, 43.

427 *al-Aḥqāf*, 9.



they were denied, then came unto them Our help. Then whomever We willed was delivered. Our chastisement is never turned back from the criminal people. Surely, in their narrative there has been a lesson for people of understanding. This was not a fabricated tale, but a confirmation of what came before it, a detailed explanation of everything, and guidance and mercy for people who believe.”<sup>428</sup>

3. It is a sign as to the prophecy of Muhammad ﷺ, for he informed of the same matters that the Prophets before him informed. He was not taught them by a person, and they are from the Unseen. Allah ﷻ says: “This is of the tidings of the Unseen which We inspire you with. You yourself knew it not, nor did your people, before this. Then have patience. Surely, the end is in favour of the mindful [of Allah].”<sup>429</sup> He ﷻ also says: “This is of the tidings of the Unseen which We inspire you with. You were not with them when they agreed on their affair as they were scheming.”<sup>430</sup>

Allah ﷻ says: You were not on the western side when We decreed the command to Mūsā, nor were you of the witnesses. Yet We established many generations and a long time passed over them. Nor were you among the people of Midian, reading Our verses to them; but We have been sending Messengers. Nor were you by the side of Mount Ṭūr when We called out. Rather, it was a mercy from your Lord so that you may warn a people to whom no warner had come before you, that perhaps they would take heed. [We have sent you forth] lest a calamity befall them as a result of what their hands have put forth and they say, ‘Our Lord, if only You had sent us a Messenger, we would have followed Your signs and been among the believers.’ But when the truth came to them from Us, they said, ‘If only he was given the like of what was given to Mūsā.’ Did they not disbelieve in what was given to Mūsā already? They said, ‘Two works of magic, backing one another,’ and they said, ‘We disbelieve in both.’ Say, ‘Then bring a Book from Allah more conducive to guidance than both of them and I will follow it, if you are truthful.’ If they do not respond to you, know that they only follow their whims. Who is more misguided than one who follows his own whim without guidance from Allah? Indeed, Allah does not guide the wrongdoers. Surely, We have conveyed the Word to them that they may take heed. Those to whom We brought the Book before it (the Qur’an) believe in it. When it is recited to them, they say, ‘We believe in it. Indeed, it is the truth from our Lord. Indeed, we were submitting [to

428 *Yūsuf*, 109-111.

429 *Hūd*, 49.

430 *Yūsuf*, 102.

Allah] prior to it.' Those are brought their reward twice on account of how they persevered patiently. They counter evil with good and they spend from what We have provided them. When they hear idle talk they disregard it and say, 'We have our deeds and you have your deeds. Peace be upon you, we do not seek the ignorant.'"<sup>431</sup>

Many of the People of the Book believed through this way. Allah ﷻ says: "Say, 'Believe in it or do not believe.' Indeed, those who were brought knowledge before it—when it is recited to them, they fall prostrate on their faces. They say, 'Hallowed be our Lord. The promise of our Lord is sure to be fulfilled.' They fall down on their faces, weeping, and it increases them in humility."<sup>432</sup> He ﷻ also says: "Those whom We have brought the Book rejoice at what was sent down to you, while of the factions are those who reject parts of it. Say, 'I am commanded only that I worship Allah and ascribe unto Him no partner. To Him I call and to Him is my return.'"<sup>433</sup> He ﷻ says: "Those who have received knowledge see that what was sent down to you from your Lord is the truth, and that it guides to the path of the Almighty, the Praiseworthy."<sup>434</sup>

Undoubtedly, the deniers of prophecy have speculative contentions (*shubhah*). Among those is that they deny that a Messenger from Allah could be human, that what comes to him is a devil as opposed to an angel, and so on. All of this is seen to in the Qur'an. Allah responded to these claims in the most eloquent and emphatic of ways. Given the scope of this text, it is not appropriate to delve into this subject matter here.

Allah ﷻ says: "*Alif-Lām-Rā*. These are verses of the Wise Book. Was it a wonder to mankind that We revealed upon a man among them to warn mankind?"<sup>435</sup>, "Nothing prevented mankind from believing when guidance came to them, except that they said, 'Did Allah send a human messenger?' Say, 'If there were angels on earth walking around in peace, We would have bestowed upon them from heaven an angel messenger.'"<sup>436</sup>

Allah ﷻ says, "They said, 'If only an angel had been sent down on him.' But had We sent down an angel, the matter would have been settled, then they would not have been given respite. Had We made him an angel, We would have made him a man, and obscured for them what they now obscure."<sup>437</sup> Allah clarifies that if the Messenger had been an angel, he would

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431 *al-Qaṣaṣ*, 44-55.

432 *al-Isrā'*, 107-109.

433 *al-Ra'd*, 36.

434 *Saba'*, 6.

435 *Yūnus*, 1-2.

436 *al-Isrā'*, 94-95.

437 *al-An'ām*, 7-9.

have been sent in human form, since they are unable to take directly from an angel in his angelic form. Had this been the case, the obscurity would persist, and they would have said, ‘Did Allah send a human messenger?’

Allah ﷻ says: “We sent not before you save men unto whom We revealed from among the folk of the townships. Have they not travelled the land and seen the nature of the consequence for those who were before them?”<sup>438</sup>, “We sent not as Messengers before you except men unto whom We reveal—ask the people of the Reminder if you do not know—clear signs and scriptures”<sup>439</sup>, “We sent not before you but men to whom We reveal, so ask the people of the Reminder if you do not know. We gave them not bodies that would not eat food, nor were they immortals.”<sup>440</sup> Allah commanded to ask those of the Reminder<sup>441</sup> due to what is abundantly reported among them with regards to the Messengers being men. Allah ﷻ says: “Surely, We have sent Messengers before you and We assigned for them spouses and offspring.”

All in all, a thorough academic exploration of prophetology within the Qur’an is far too vast than to be given its due in this context. For it is the pillar of the religion, the origin of the Prophetic call, the fountain of all good, and the concatenation of every means to guidance.

### The informed-from

As for the informed-from, then the Prophet ﷺ informs from Allah that He sent him. There is no greater calumny than lying against Allah. Allah ﷻ says: “They did not hold Allah in due esteem when they said, ‘In no way has Allah sent down anything on any human being.’ Say, ‘Who sent down the Book which Mūsā came with as a light and guidance for mankind? You make of it parchments, disclosing them and hiding much. You were taught what you knew not—neither you, nor your forefathers.’ Say, ‘Allah,’ then leave them to their play of cavilling. This is a Book that We sent down, blessed, confirming what preceded it, and that you may warn the Mother of Towns and those around it. Those who believe in the Hereafter believe in it, and they preserve their prayers. Who is guilty of more wrong than he who forges a lie against Allah, or says, ‘I have been revealed to,’ when

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438 *Yūsuf*, 109.

439 *al-Nahl*, 43-44.

440 *al-Anbiyā’*, 7-8.

441 Translator’s note: Ibn Taymiyyah seems to understand this as the peoples of previous revelatory dispensations, i.e., the People of the Book. This is also the understanding of other exegetes.

nothing has been revealed to him; and who says, ‘I will reveal the like of that which Allah has revealed?’”<sup>442</sup>

Allah ﷻ confuted the claim of the arrogant denier of prophecy by saying: “Say, ‘Who sent down the Book which Mūsā came with?’” This Book was one that came with evident, clear proofs, was followed by a great number of Prophets and faithful, and acquired such a high status which other revelations did not reach. The proofs and indicants as to its truth were too plentiful and manifest to be rejected, unlike the Gospel (*al-Injil*) and other revelations.

Additionally, it is an origin (*aṣl*) to which the Gospel is a follow-up (*tabaʿ*). Thence is its informing from and about it, but for what the Messiah proclaimed as lawful. Allah ﷻ says in this regard: “Did they not disbelieve in what was given to Mūsā already? They said, ‘Two works of magic (*siḥrān*), backing one another”<sup>443</sup>; referring to the Qurʾan and the Torah. In the variant recitation, it reads: “They said, ‘Two magicians (*sāḥirān*)...” in reference to Muhammad and Mūsā.

In the same vein are Allah’s sayings: “Indeed, We have sent to you a Messenger as a witness over you, as We sent to Pharaoh a Messenger.”<sup>444</sup>, “Is he [to be counted equal to the deniers] who relies on a clear proof from his Lord, and a witness from Him recites it, and before it was the Book of Mūsā, a guide and a mercy?”<sup>445</sup>, and His quoting the jinn as saying: “We have heard a Book sent down after Mūsā confirming what came before it. It guides to the truth and to a straight path.”<sup>446</sup>

This is why the narrative of Mūsā is the greatest one mentioned in the Qurʾan: it is longer and given more detail than others. ʿAbdullāh ibn Masʿūd said: “Allah’s Messenger ﷺ would spend most of his morn narrating to us about the Children of Israel.”

Having asserted the truthfulness of the message, Allah clarified the state of the liars in their being three types. The liar will either attribute a lie to Allah and claim He revealed it, omit its doer and not attribute it to anyone, or claim that he is the one who authored revelation in contestation. Allah ﷻ says: “Who is guilty of more wrong than he who forges a lie against Allah, or says, ‘I have been revealed to’, when nothing has been revealed to him; and who says, ‘I will reveal the like of that which Allah has revealed?’”<sup>447</sup>

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442 *al-Anʿām*, 91-93.

443 *al-Qaṣaṣ*, 48.

444 *al-Muzzammil*, 15.

445 *Hūd*, 17

446 *al-Aḥqāf*, 30.

447 *al-Anʿām*, 93.

The informed-from is Allah ﷻ. There is no doubt that he (the Prophet ﷺ) is privy to matters of the Lord ﷻ—showcased in the observed, sense-based proofs which are self-evidencing, as well as the striking of parables that are rational analogies—that through which the concealment of a liar’s lying is inconceivable. Even the honesty of the truthful is inconceivably concealed in this regard.

For example, consider the Antichrist. It is known through various necessary epistemic means that he is not Allah, and that he is a disbelieving fraudster. If the falsity of his call is necessarily known, then the specious proofs (*shubuhāt*) he comes with do not evidence its legitimacy. Necessary epistememes (*al-‘ulūm al-ḍarūriyyah*) cannot be undermined by theoretical exercises (*ṭuruq naẓariyyah*), for the former are the origin of the latter. If the necessary is compromised, then the voidance of the origin obliges the nullification of the derivative, and they would both be falsified. Not to mention that certain incapacities will come to show in his call (the Antichrist’s), consequently falsifying it.

Likewise, whoever lays a claim to prophecy yet allows for obscenities, injustices, polytheism, and lying is necessarily false. For it is necessarily known that Allah ﷻ does not command such things, regardless whether it is posited that the intellect recognises the beauty or ugliness of deeds or not. Not everything that is mentally possible and Allah is able to realise, is doubted whether or not it has taken place. We necessarily know that the oceans have not changed to blood nor have the mountains changed to diamond, and so on, even if this is not based on a precise proof, and even if we necessarily recognise that Allah is able to realise these things. However, knowledge of it taking place or not is one thing, and knowledge of Allah’s ability to actualise it is another. Anyone of a sound disposition necessarily knows that Allah does not command His slaves to commit lying, injustices, polytheism, obscenities, and the like, which many false prophets may approve of. Rather, one knows by way of one’s sound disposition what is commensurate with Divine Lordship.

This is a vast subject matter, and it is not the place to deeply explicate its contents. We merely make mention of what relates to the author’s stipulations in his creed.

## Section Twelve

This methodology is applied by most of the Kalam Folk as well as other than them. They employ certain arguments in asserting miracles as an evidentiary basis of truthfulness.

One of them is that the manifestation of a miracle at the hands of a false prophet is an ugly deed, and Allah ﷻ transcends doing what is ugly. This argument is used by the Mutazilites and others who espouse the parameterisation of beauty and ugliness (*al-tahsîn wa al-taqbîh*), though it is rebuked by those who do not.

The Mutazilites made this the origin of their religion, keeping to concomitant obligations thereto that contradict the texts from the Book and the Sunnah and even explicit reason on many occasions.

The reality of their situation is that they do not believe the Messenger except by denying some of what he came with. It is as if they say: 'It is not possible to believe him in some matters except by rejecting him in others.' However, they do not say they actually reject him on any matters. Sometimes they will make allegations as to the integrity of a report's transmission and at other times they will speculatively interpret it. The falsity of what they claim is recognised either necessarily or by way of theoretical analysis.

They posited that revelatory reports are founded on the truthfulness of the Messenger, which is in turn founded on Allah transcending the ugly—aiding the liar is ugly, and Allah transcends it.

They say that the evidence that He transcends it is that an ugly deed is committed only by the ignorant or one in need of it, and Allah transcends ignorance and need. The evidence for that is that the needy may only be a body, and Allah is not a body. The evidence that He is not a body is the novel origination of the cosmos. The evidence for that is that the cosmos is bodies and accidents, both of which are originated. The evidence for the novel origination of bodies is that they are not free of what is novel, and what is not free of novelties is itself originated. The evidence for that

is that they are bound to movement and stillness which are novel, due to the impossibility of novelties without beginning (*hawādith lā awwal lahā*).

They then kept to the concomitant position that everything characterised by attribute is novel; for attributes are accidents, and accidents cannot subsist except in a body, which has been proven as novel. Thus, they kept to the concomitant that Allah cannot have knowledge or ability, nor speaking whereby speech subsisted in Him. The Qur'an and other speech of His is created—He created it in other than Him. It is not permitted that He be seen in the worldly life or the Hereafter. He is neither distinct from nor inhering within the cosmos, not in it nor outside of it.

They further say that it is not permitted that He wills that which is contrary to what He commands, nor that He create the actions of His slaves. He cannot guide a misguided person nor misguide a guided one—had He been able to do that when He has commanded it but not aided towards it, it would be ugly from Him.

Thus, they deduced from this origin the rejection of divine attribute and predestination. They called themselves the *Tawhīd* and Justice Folk, and they referred to whomever affirmed the attributes and predestination among the ummah's Predecessors and its imams as assimilators (*mushabbihah*), corporeal anthropomorphist (*mujassimah*), fatalist (*mujbirah*), and plebeian (*hashwiyyah*). They consider Mālik and his companions, Shāfi'ī and his companions, Aḥmad and his companions, and others, from those plebeians; and much more which we have thoroughly discussed in other works.

The origin of their misguidance with regards to predestination is that they assimilated the created to the Creator ﷻ. They are the assimilators of actions. As for the origin of their misguidance with regards to divine attributes is their thinking that the attributed in whom attributes subsist can only be novel.

Theirs is among the most corrupt of all views, for they nonetheless concede that Allah is living, knowing, and able. It is known that [saying that something is] alive without life, knowing without knowledge, and able without ability, is like [saying something is] moving without movement, white without whiteness, black without blackness, tall without tallness, short without shortness, etc. All of these are names that are derived yet the meaning whence they are derived is claimed to be negated. This is mental, legal, and linguistic stickling.

Secondly,<sup>448</sup> it is also known that if an attribute subsists in a locus, the ruling goes back to said locus, not to anything else. If Allah ﷻ creates speech

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448 Translators note: This seems to be the second contention as to the Mutazilites' inconsistency. The first is from, "It is known that alive without life..."

in some locus, then necessarily that locus is the one speaking it. The tree would be the one that said to Mūsā: “Indeed I—I alone—am Allah. There is no god but I, so worship Me.”<sup>449</sup> Moreover, any creature which Allah caused to utter—its speech would be Allah’s speech. Explicating this is for another time. The point here is what relates to asserting prophecy.

### **Allah does not aid the liar: divine wisdom, mercy, and justice**

It may be said: It is possible to assert that He ﷻ transcends aiding the liar with a miracle without founding upon the Mutazilites’ principle. This may be done by way of Allah’s wisdom in His creation, His mercy with His creatures, and His way with his slaves. This is evidence that He does not aid a liar with a miracle that cannot be contested.

It is possible to thoroughly explore this method and assert it in ways inappropriate for this context. Just as it is known that He is knowing by way of His proficient, intelligent design, and just as specification therein entails that He possesses volition, it is known by what it contains of benefit for the creation that He is merciful, and by what it contains of praiseworthy ends that He is wise.

The Qur’an clarifies the signs of Allah indicating His power and will, and His signs indicating His mercy and wisdom, Perhaps the latter is even more frequent in the Qur’an. For example, Allah ﷻ says: “Mankind, worship your Lord Who created you and those before you, that you may become mindful [of Him]: the one who has made the land a habitat for you and the sky a structure, and has sent water down from the sky and has brought out fruits thereby as provision for you. So do not assign compeers to Allah while you know.”<sup>450</sup>

He ﷻ also says: “Have you seen what you ejaculate? Is it you who create it or are We the Creator? We have decreed death among you, and We will not be outstripped in replacing you with your likes and transforming you into what you know not. You have already come to know the first formation; why, then, do you not reflect? Have you seen what you cultivate? Is it you who plant it or are We the planter? If We will, We can turn it into rubble, then you will lament, ‘Indeed, we are burdened with debt. Rather, we have been deprived.’ Have you seen the water that you drink? Is it you who sent it down from the rainclouds or are We the sender? If We will, We can make it bitter; why, then, are you not thankful? Have you seen the fire that you kindle? Is it you who produced its tree, or are We the producer? We have

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449 *Tā-Hā*, 14.

450 *al-Baqarah*, 21.



made it a reminder and a comfort for the travellers. So hallow the name of your Lord, the Sublime.”<sup>451</sup>

Allah ﷻ also says: “Have We not made the earth an expanse, and the mountains pegs? And created you in pairs? And made your sleep for rest, and made the night a garment, and made the day for livelihood? And built above you seven strong ones, and made a glowing lamp? And brought down from the clouds pouring water, to bring forth with it grain, plants, and luxuriant gardens?”<sup>452</sup> He ﷻ says: “Let man look at his food: How We pour water in showers, then split the earth in clefts, so germinated therein grains, grapes and herbs, olives and dates, luscious orchards, and fruit and fodder—all for you and your livestock to enjoy.”<sup>453</sup> He ﷻ says: “Have they not seen that We conduct the water to a dry land, and with it We bring out vegetation from which their livestock eat, and they themselves? Do they not see?”<sup>454</sup>

Allah ﷻ says repeatedly after every passage in Sūrah al-Raḥmān: “Which is it, of the favours of your Lord, that you deny?” Allah speaks about those things that indicate His creation, knowledge, ability, and will, as well as that which indicates His blessings, mercy, and wisdom.

He ﷻ mentions this in the Messengers’ address to the disbelievers. He ﷻ says: “He (Pharaoh) said, ‘So who is your (dual; i.e., Mūsā and Hārūn) Lord, Mūsā?’ He said, ‘Our Lord is He who gave unto everything its nature, then guided it aright.’ He said, ‘So what about the former generations?’ He said, ‘Knowledge thereof is with my Lord in a record. My Lord neither errs nor forgets, the one who has made the earth a bed for you and has threaded roads for you therein, and sent down from the sky water with which We brought out pairs of diverse plants. Eat and pasture your livestock. Most surely, in that are signs for those of understanding.’”<sup>455</sup> There is plenty of this in the Qur’an.

The natural disposition upon which Allah created the creation indicates this. Within man’s self is a perfect lesson. Whoever reflects over the creation of his organs and its benefits for him, and the immense wisdom and utility in their design—that the eye’s liquid is salty to preserve its flesh, the ear’s liquid is bitter to prevent parasites from entering, and the mouth’s liquid is sweet so that food that it chews may taste good—acquires necessary knowledge that the one who created all this is characterised by

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451 *al-Wāqī‘ah*, 58-74.

452 *al-Naba’*, 6-16.

453 *‘Abas*, 24-32.

454 *al-Sajdah*, 27.

455 *Ṭā-Hā*, 49-54.

mindboggling mercy and wisdom, as well as all that being an indicant of divine will (*mashī'ah*).

Once what is observable from humankind settles within one—that when a person's tranny and harm against the people magnifies, his will be an evil end, and his mention accursed and reviled; and when a person's benefit and benevolence for the people magnifies, his will be a good end—he may employ what he knows as evidence for what he does not, such that he recognises that a state rife with injustice, cowardice, and miserliness will be quick to fall. Allah ﷻ says: “You who believe, what is with you that when it is said to you, ‘Go forth in the way of Allah,’ you are heavily weighed down to the ground? Are you contented with the worldly life over the Hereafter? For the enjoyment of the worldly life compared to the Hereafter is but little. If you do not go forth, He will punish you with a painful punishment and will replace you with another people, and you will not harm Him in any way.”<sup>456</sup>

He ﷻ also says: “Here you are, being called on to spend in the way of Allah. Among you are those who become miserly, but whoever becomes miserly, becomes miserly only against himself. Allah is the Needless while you are the needy. If you turn away, He will replace you with another people, then they will not be like you.”<sup>457</sup>

Such is Allah's way with His truthful Prophets and their faithful followers, and the liars and the deniers of truth: He gives victory to the former and they leave behind a good mention, while He takes vengeance against the latter and curses them.

Through such and similar means, it is known that the liar is not aided by an incontestable miracle. For this yields corruption and harm which His mercy prevents, an evil end which His wisdom prevents, and a contradiction to His regular law and coextensive custom which are telling of His will.

Allah ﷻ says: “Had he falsely attributed some statements to Us, We would have certainly seized him by the right hand, then severed his life-artery, and not one of you could have held Us off from him.”<sup>458</sup> He ﷻ also says: “Had we not strengthened you, you would have almost inclined to them a little. Then We would have made you taste double in life and double at death, then you would have found for yourself no supporter against Us.”<sup>459</sup> He ﷻ says: “Or do they say, ‘He has fabricated lies about Allah?’ Had Allah willed, He would have sealed upon your heart...” He then follows by saying: “...But Allah erases falsehood and upholds the truth by His

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456 *al-Tawbah*, 38-39.

457 *Muḥammad*, 38.

458 *al-Hāqqah*, 44-47.

459 *al-Isrā'*, 74-75.

Words; indeed, He is fully knowing of that within the breasts.”<sup>460</sup> Allah ﷻ says: “Rather, We hurl the true against the false so that it crushes it, and thus it vanishes. Woe unto you for what you describe.”<sup>461</sup> Allah ﷻ says: “Say, ‘Truth has come and falsehood has vanished away; indeed, falsehood is ever bound to vanish’”<sup>462</sup>, “Say, ‘The truth has come, while falsehood can neither originate nor restore.’”<sup>463</sup>

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460 *al-Shūrā*, 24.

461 *al-Anbiyā’*, 18.

462 *al-Isrā’*, 81.

463 *Saba’*, 49.

## Section Thirteen

This methodology was not employed by Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī and his companions, nor those who agreed with them from the school’s jurists, like Qāḍī Abū Ya‘lā, Ibn ‘Aqīl, Ibn al-Zāghūnī; the professor Abū al-Ma‘ālī, his companion al-Anṣārī, Shihristānī, and their like; Abū al-Walīd al-Bājī, Māzarī, and their like. This is since they do not deem the Lord ﷻ as transcendent beyond any deed, asserting that He does as He will. They do not posit the rationalistic ethics of beauty and ugliness such that they may say some act is ugly and He transcends doing it. They say that injustice is not an object of ability (*ghayr maqdūr*) since injustice is to act in another’s dominion. Whatever Allah does, it is always Him acting in His dominion; thus, it is not unjust.

They say: ‘It is permitted that He command anything and prohibit anything.’ They do not consider deeds as having characteristics which may categorise them as either beautiful or ugly. The extent of attributes they rationally affirm is that He is living, knowing, able, and possessing volition. They nonetheless affirm that He is hearing, seeing, and speaking. As for mercy, wisdom, and so on, they do not rationally affirm them. They may negate wisdom that is the ends and intentions in His actions and deem it impossible that He do a thing for the sake of another thing, as has been thoroughly discussed in other places. The point here is to highlight the ways in which people deal with prophecy and discussing them equitably and objectively, not to deeply explicate every point of difference among them.

The topic of rationalistic ethics—beauty and ugliness—is something that is disputed by various groups. Each end of the spectrum has been held by swathes among the Mālikīs, Shāfi‘īs, and Hanbalīs. Among those who affirm it from the Hanbalīs are Abū al-Ḥasan al-Tamīmī, and Abū al-Khaṭṭāb, and among those who rejected it are Abū ‘Abdillāh ibn Ḥāmid, his companion Qāḍī Abū Ya‘lā, and most of his companions.

The question of moral judgements unaided by revelation (*ḥukm al-a‘yān qabl wurūd al-shar‘*) is in reality a derivative thereof. Once again,

individuals from said groups and schools have held positions on either side of the spectrum.

As for Ḥanafīs, then the prevailing position among them is that of rationalistic beauty and ugliness. It is mentioned that this is explicitly held by Abū Ḥanīfah ؒ. The Hadith Folk are also varied. Among them who held it are Abū al-Naṣr al-Sijzī and his companion Shaykh Abū al-Qāsim Saʿd ibn ʿAlī al-Zinjānī.

As for the doctrinal features of the Qadarīs, then no one from the latter agrees with them on it. The foresaid names and groups along with the majority of jurists—rather the majority of the ummah—posit that deeds have attributes to which divine command and prohibition are related.

The summary of this is as follows: If Allah ﷻ makes a command, then it is unanimously beautiful. If He makes a prohibition, then it is unanimously ugly. However, either the beauty or ugliness of a deed is inherently borne of the deed itself, and divine command and prohibition expose this; or it is borne of its relationship to command and prohibition; or it is a combination of both.

The first position is that of the Mutazilites, which is why they do not permit the abrogation of an act of worship before its time has entered, for it is necessary that a single deed is either beautiful or ugly. This is the position of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Tamīmī among the companions of Aḥmad as well as other jurists.

The second position is that of the Asharites and those who agree with them from the Zāhirīs and the various jurists. They consider the justifications of the Law mere hints (*amārāt*), and do not consider there to be a link between legal justifications and their deeds. However, these jurists self-contradict in this respect. At times they will agree with the Asharite mutakallimun, then for the most part you find them positing what contradicts this. This is found in the rhetoric of Mālikī, Shāfiʿī, and Hanbalī jurists.

Alternatively, it is a combination of both. This is the position of the imams, and according to it do the jurists operate in the Law. Often, an action will be commanded due to a wisdom which is begotten from the command itself, not what is commanded. This is what may be abrogated prior to complete establishment (*tamkīn*). For example, on the Night of Ascension, the prayer was abrogated from fifty to five prayers. Also, the command for Ibrāhīm to slaughter his son ؑ was abrogated.

All in all, the majority of imams are of the view that Allah transcends doing certain actions He has the ability to do. They do not agree with them (the Asharites) that He is not transcendent beyond the ability to do that injustice which Allah ﷻ deemed Himself as transcending in the Qurʾan, prohibiting it over Himself while He is capable of it. Namely, doing away

with a person's good deeds, or making him bear another's evil deeds. Allah ﷻ says: "Whoever does righteous deeds while being a believer, then he neither fears injustice nor curtailment."<sup>464</sup>

This majority does not agree with the Mutazilites in their positing that Allah did not create the actions of the slaves nor will beings into existence. They say that Allah created all things, and whatever Allah wills, is, and whatever He does not will, is not. They nonetheless affirm wisdom to His actions and deem him transcendent beyond ugly deeds.

This is the position of the Karrāmīs and other Kalam Folk. It is also the position of the majority of the Sufis, most of the Hadith Folk, the majority of the Predecessors and imams, and the majority of Muslims and theoreticians. However, this is not the place to display this in detail.

The foresaid peoples traverse the same path as that trodden by Ibn ʿAqil and others in affirming prophecy. In some of his works, he affirms Allah's wisdom therein. He says:

“Prophecy is an intermediary between Allah and His creation, concerning what ought to be done and what ought to be left which results in the overall benefit of the morally accountable. Trusting it is by invoking what has settled in our knowledge—using as evidence that the Creator is wise and would not aid a liar with a miracle. He endows with His miracles only those who inform of Him in truth.

Having known this and wholly appreciated it, we acquire trust in whom the prerequisites of prophecy are fully realised. We recognise he is an ambassador from Allah to us, and that he is His Messenger. What he informs us of in His regard, we accept it without it being rationally unveiled to us. We do not strike examples thereto from our own opinions and customs. Rather, we believe that it came from one whose wisdom is above ours, and whose planning is above ours.

It is not rationally inconceivable nor is wisdom challenged by there being Prophets who remind the rational and wake them up, guiding them to what is best for them - that which may not be rationally perceived, and whose essence cannot be reached by intellectual dissection. This is naught but as is observable: some of the rational are wise, instructive, exhorting preachers, while some of them are in need for an admonisher and an instructor. No one sees this as inconceivable. Thus, the beauty of messengerhood is rationally affirmed. For Allah has secret benefits with regards to

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464 *Tā-Hā*, 112.

dos and don'ts which the sound-minded cannot perceive by their intellect. Hence, they are in need for prophecy.”

**My commentary:** The intention here is to make the following note: whoever does not hold Allah transcendent above doing an action He is able to do and instead permits that He can do anything possible, and does not affirm wisdom to His actions but for the ruling being related to the object of action and it being related to divine will—such a person needs another way to affirm truthfulness independent from miracles. Thus, they employ two methods, each respectively espoused by groups from the Kalam Folk and the jurists, among the companions of Mālik, Shāfi‘ī, Abū Ḥanīfah, and Aḥmad.

**The first** is the position of their early shaykhs. It is to assert that the miracle's evidentiary basis for the truthfulness of the claimant to prophecy is the inconceivability of God not putting in place a proof for the truthfulness of Messengers. Believing the Messengers is possible, and this is known necessarily as well as through evidencing; and there is no evidence for their truthfulness but for the creation of miracles. The latter's manifestation at the hands of the liar nullifies the evidence for the Messengers' truthfulness. Thus, there is nothing within the objects of ability that can make them believe. This results in God being incapacitated from realising what is possible, which is inconceivable.

This is the argument used by Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī and his companions, like the two professors Abū Ishāq and Abū Bakr ibn Fūrak. Also, it is the view of Qāḍī Abū Bakr in parts of his works, as well as Qāḍī Abū Ya‘lā and Abū al-Ḥasan ibn al-Zāghūnī.

**The second** is that chosen by Abū al-Ma‘ālī and his followers. He says this is the preferred argument of Qāḍī Abū Bakr. It is also that which Abū al-Ḥasan implies in *al-Amālī*, as well as the argument favoured by Abū Muhammad al-Ṣābūnī and other Ḥanafīs. It is to assert that miracles insofar as their taking place are equivalent to verbal confirmation. Knowledge of this takes place necessarily by contextual indicators of personal states; like recognising the shyness of the shy, the anxiety of the anxious, the anger of the angry, the valour of the intrepid, and the gist of a speaker's rhetoric. Knowledge of such matters is not dependent on theory or precise formulation such that it may be objected to.

They say that the evidentiary basis for this is as follows: for the supernatural act (*fi‘l khāriq lil-‘ādah*)—if it is known that it is from Allah and that it is breaking natural law, that He ﷻ did it on demand and upon request for the message either as an individuated or non-individuated miracle, that it relates to the Prophetic call and conforms thereto, that Allah hears the

call of the Prophet to Him and answers it, fully aware of its implications in the native tongue of the Messenger, and that He finally did what the Messenger claims he did not do, then it is known that He intends for him to be believed. What takes place of signs in such a context is as good as Him verbally confirming his truthfulness, saying, 'He is truthful, and I sent him', in a way that makes the people among whom prophecy is claimed understand that its claimant is indeed truthful and should be believed thereby.

Rather, confirming his truthfulness through action is further removed from any speculative contentions or the invocation of other possibilities. It functions as would a claim to messengerhood on behalf of Zayd<sup>465</sup>: 'If I am truly your emissary and your friend, then write on a paper stating this, or mount an animal, or stand, or sit... ' and similar acts perceivable by the senses whose realisation confirm his truthfulness. If Zayd obliges, it is as if he is saying, 'He is truthful, for he is my emissary and friend.' It is necessarily known that the claimant is truthful through such a statement. This is unassailably the case.

They say that there is no way in which miracles indicate the truthfulness of the Messengers except by this way. It is of the same vein as verbal indicants. This is what is understood from the rhetoric of al-Qāḍī Abū Bakr ibn al-Bāqillānī as per one of his two reported views, as well as being the position of Abū al-Maʿālī, and their ilk.

They give the following parable: A king comes out to the people and makes himself known to his subjects, followers, and so on. Then, a gathering is held where a large conglomerate of guests and attendees are present. After the hustle and bustle is over and done with, and each person takes their appointed seat, order prevailing in the congregation, a dignitary stands and proclaims, "Honoured guests, an immense happening has come upon you, and a hefty matter is to be unveiled: I am the king's emissary unto you, his trusted envoy, and his deputy over your affairs. This claim of mine is under the king's eye and within his earshot. If I am truthful in my claim, O king, then break your custom, defy your norms, and stand upright from your throne then once again take your seat." The king does so as per to the claimant's claim and in agreement to his wishes. The attendees thus attain certain, necessary knowledge that the king confirmed the man's truthfulness. The former's action is as good as an explicit statement from him attesting to the latter's honesty.

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465 Translator's note: Zayd and ʿAmr are the usual culprits in any Arabic-based science. If an example is struck involving hypothetical persons, they will be called Zayd and ʿAmr out of convention. Here, some person claims he is Zayd's emissary. He is apparently doubted, so to prove himself genuine, he is asking Zayd for confirmation in the stated forms.



This is the relied upon example in this context. If one so indulges his caprice as to contest this scenario, that it does not prove the king's attestation to the man's truthful claim, then this is but arrogant obstinance in rejecting necessary knowledge. We innately know based on the contextual indicants of state and word that all those who witnessed and observed such an incident would not even begin to doubt the king's confirmation. None of them would entertain scepticism following this unfolding of events. Due to the nature of the experience, they are not in need for deep introspection, precise formulaic analysis, nor prolonged reflection. Theoreticians, in this case, are in the same boat as the theoretically inexperienced.

## Section Fourteen

The author says: “The evidence for the prophecy of our Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is the Qur’an and its miraculous syntax (*naẓm*) and meaning (*ma‘nā*).”

**My commentary:** It is clear now that, according to the most correct view, prophecy is known through miracles as well as other than them. As for the prophecy of our Prophet Muhammad—upon him be the most favourable blessings and the most complete greetings of peace—then it is recognised through many ways.

Among them is miracles, and among his miracles is the Qur’an as well as other than the Qur’an. The Qur’an is miraculous in its wording (*lafẓ*), syntax, and meaning. Its miraculous nature is known through two ways: holistic and particular. As for the former, then it is known by way of abundant reports that Muhammad ﷺ laid claim to prophecy and came with this Qur’an, and that the Qur’an has incapacitating and challenging signs (*āyāt*; also: verses). For example, Allah ﷻ says: “Or do they say, ‘A poet for whom we await a calamity of time’? Say, ‘Go on awaiting, for I am with you among those awaiting.’ Or is it that their minds command them to this? Or are they a rebellious people? Or do they say, ‘He made it up’? In fact, they do not believe. So let them produce a discourse like it if they are truthful.”<sup>466</sup> He challenges them to come forth with its like.

He ﷻ says elsewhere: “Say, ‘Then produce ten *sūrah*s like it, fabricated”<sup>467</sup>, “Then produce a *sūrah* like it”<sup>468</sup> He nonetheless tells us they will not be able to: “If you are in doubt about what We have sent down upon Our slave, then bring a single *sūrah* of its like, and call your witnesses apart from Allah if you are truthful. But if you do not—and you will not—then guard yourselves against the Fire whose fuel is people and stones, prepared

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466 *al-Tūr*, 30-34.

467 *Hūd*, 13.

468 *al-Baqarah*, 23.

for the disbelievers.”<sup>469</sup> Rather, He tells us that if all the jinn and mankind come together, they would still be unable to produce something like it. Allah ﷻ says: “Say, ‘Surely, if all mankind and the jinn were to come together to produce the like of this Qur’an, they could never produce the like of it, even if they backed up one another.’”<sup>470</sup>

It is also known by way of abundant reports that he called Quraysh specifically and the Arabs generally, and that the majority of them initially rejected and harmed him and his companions. They said all sorts of things about him. For example, they said he is a magician, poet, soothsayer, madman, an instructed learned person, and so on. It is known that they used to oppose him. Yet, they did not produce a *sūrah* like the Qur’an’s. This showcases their incapacity to do so, for the action does not lag behind definitive volition given the presence of ability. Theirs was the most heartfelt volition to show him up as a liar and falsify his claims, and they kept most diligently to this task. So much so that they made allegations against him that can be disproven with minimal reflection. Their sole, grand philosopher “thought and deliberated”<sup>471</sup>, “then he looked, then he frowned and scowled, then he retreated and acted arrogantly and said, ‘This is naught but magic of old. It is naught but the speech of a mortal.’”<sup>472</sup>

This is not the place to delve into the details of accounts. The point is to mention what is established by abundant reports. They were the most motivated and serious of all people in trying to formulate an argument to reject him with. They would try to refute him despite matters being clearly stated. When the passage: “Surely, you and whatever you worship (*mā ta‘budūn*) other than Allah are the fuel of Hell. There you will have to go”<sup>473</sup>—was revealed, they opposed it by invoking the Messiah<sup>474</sup>, but Allah made the distinction in revealing: “Indeed, those for whom the good (i.e., the Garden) has already been appointed—they will be kept far from it (the Fire).”<sup>475</sup> He ﷻ says: “When the son of Mary was cited as an example, your people laughed and jeered. They said, ‘Are our gods better or he?’ They

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469 *al-Baqarah*, 23-24.

470 *al-Isrā*, 88.

471 *al-Muddaththir*, 18.

472 *al-Muddaththir*, 21-25.

473 *al-Anbiyā*, 98.

474 Translator’s note: Their argument against the Prophet ﷺ is essentially: “If what is worshipped besides Allah is in the Fire, and Jesus the Messiah is worshipped as a deity, that would mean he is in the Fire, yet you venerate him as a Prophet, thus contradicting yourself.” This is fickle on many accounts, as Ibn Taymiyyah mentions.

475 *al-Anbiyā*, 101.

cited him only for argument; in fact, they are a quarrelsome people.”<sup>476</sup> How would such pugnacious pedants oppose the Prophet ﷺ with something so meagre yet somehow also choose not to imitate the Qur’an when they could have?

Allah’s saying: *Mā ta‘budūn*—“whatever you worship”—is an address to the idolaters. The People of the Book are not included therein, nor does the wording encompass the Messiah, as may be thought by some doubters. Rather, they cited the Messiah as an exercise of analogical inference. They say: If our deities are a fuel to the Fire because they are worshipped, then likewise would the Messiah; as Allah ﷻ says: “When the son of Mary was cited as an example...” Thus, they analogised him to their deities and did not mention him due to the general inclusiveness of the text’s wording, as some theorists have said. This is why Allah highlights the difference between the Messiah and their deities in that the former is deserving of reward and is not unjustly held accountable for others’ sins; unlike stones, whose worshippers are disgraced and humiliated in their being made a fuel for the Fire without any injustice done.

His message reached far and wide in the Arabs’ lands, then spread throughout the world. To this very day these verses are recited, and the challenge still stands. Yet, no one was able to tenably imitate it.

When Musaylimah and his like came forth with what they produced, claiming to have imitated it in pasticcio (*mu‘āraḍah*), they instead came with laughable attempts. One does not need theoretical knowledge to recognise the lack of likeness. It is like one who comes to a brave, strong, heavily armoured knight, and challenges him to a duel where his challenger is a puppet which one tied down atop one’s horse. In this vein, Musaylimah says: “O frog, daughter of frogs. Croak as and how you like. Neither do you spoil the water, nor do you ward off the drinker. Your head is in the water, and your tail is in the mud.” He also says: “The elephant—what will make you appreciate the elephant? He has a long trunk. This is from the creation of our majestic Lord”, and similar examples.

For this reason, when Banū Ḥanīfah’s delegation came to Abū Bakr and he asked them to read something from the recital of Musaylimah, they excused themselves. When he insisted, they recited something like the forementioned text. Thus, al-Ṣiddīq said to them: “Woe betide you! Where have your minds gone? This is speech that has not come out of a god.” He exclaimed against them in fustigation due to the incomparable nature of the two, leaving behind no room for plausible obscurity. False fabrication is manifest on this speech, and it is blithering delirium which Allah would never speak.

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476 *al-Zukhruf*, 57-58.

As for the arguments [of the Qur'an's miraculous nature], then they are many and varied. It is not as some think that it inhibits others from hoping to imitate it. Neither is it solely pertaining to its eloquence (*faṣāḥatih*), nor its informing of the Unseen, and so on. Each theorist may only see a facet of its miraculousness and thus wish to restrict the issue to it even if others cannot see it. Exhaustively discussing the various facets of the Qur'an's miraculous status is not feasible within the confines of this creed's commentary.

## Section Fifteen

The author says: “We then say: Everything the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ reported to us, regarding the punishment of the grave, Munkar and Nakīr, and other matters pertaining to the conditions of the Resurrection (*Qiyāmah*), the Bridge (*Ṣirāṭ*), the Scale (*Mīzān*), intercession, the Garden, and the Fire, are all true. They are possible, and the Truthful One (*al-Ṣādiq*) informed us of them. Therefore, he must be believed. Allah is the giver of success.”

This may be discussed in sections:

1. This creed has included discussion on belief in Allah ﷻ, His Messengers, and the Last Day. Undoubtedly, these three origins are the founding, revelatory, epistemic principles of faith (*uṣūl al-īmān al-ʿilmiyyah al-khabariyyah*). All of them are part of every religion (*millah*) and the sending of every Messenger. All the Messengers agree on them just as they agree on the founding practicable principles of faith (*uṣūl al-īmān al-ʿamaliyyah*), such as the obligation of worshipping Allah alone without partners, the obligation of truthfulness, justice, goodness to parents, and the prohibition of lying, injustice, and obscenities. These universal principles in knowledge and action are those upon which all the Messengers. The *sūrahs* which Allah ﷻ sent down on His Prophet ﷺ before the Hijrah—known as the Makkan *sūrahs*—include assertion of these principles. Examples include the following *sūrahs*: *al-Anʿām*, *al-Aʿrāf*, those that start with *Alif-Lām-Rā*, *Hā-Mīm*, and *Ṭā-Sīn*.

Belief in the Messengers entails belief in scripture and those who come down with it, namely the angles. These five origins are those mentioned in Allah ﷻ saying: “Righteous is he who believes in Allah, the Last Day, the angels, the Book, and the Prophets”<sup>477</sup>, “Whoever disbelieves in Allah, His angels, His Books, His Messengers and the Last Day has indeed gone far astray.”<sup>478</sup> They are also those which the Prophet ﷺ responded with when

477 *al-Baqarah*, 177.

478 *al-Nisāʾ*, 136.

Jibrīl came to him in the form of a desert Arab and asked him about faith. He ﷺ said: “Faith is that you believe in Allah, His angels, His Books, His Messengers, resurrection after death, and that you believe in predestination, the good of it and the bad.” The narration is reported in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* on the authority of Abū Hurayrah, and Muslim reported on the authority of ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb. It is from the most authentic narrations. Thus, the initial three origins encompass these five.

Allah ﷻ revealed Sūrah al-Baqarah—the Height of the Qur’an (Sinām al-Qur’an)—and gathered therein the sciences of the religion, its founding principles, and its derivative matters. Contemplating over it brings about a facet of faithful assertion. He mentioned in its beginning the categories of people. They are three: believer, disbeliever, and hypocrite. He thereafter asserted the principles of the religion, affirming the following three origins: belief in Allah, messengerhood, then the Last Day. He sent down four verses concerning the believers, two regarding the disbelievers, and over a dozen pertaining to the hypocrites. Then, He ﷻ says in asserting the Prophet ﷺ: “Mankind, worship your Lord, who created you and those before you...” Until He says: “...then bring a single *sūrah* of its like”<sup>479</sup>, mentioning the challenge. This is in various passages in the Qur’an.

2. Regarding matters concerning what happens after death and their like, Ash‘arī, his followers, and those who agree with them from the four schools—among Ḥanafīs, Mālikīs, Shāfi‘īs, and Ḥanbalīs—refer to them as the Revelatories (*Sam‘iyyāt*), contrary to the subject matters of divine attributes and predestination. This is founded on two principles: the first is that such matters may only be known by way of revelatory reports, and the second is that everything before it may be known by way of reason.

Many if not most of them include another principle thereto: that revelatory reports are only as valid by way of those principles they refer to as the Rationalisables (*‘Aqliyyāt*), like affirming the novel origination of the cosmos, and so on. They scrupulous analysts among them say that knowledge of the origination of the cosmos is not a matter which the veracity of revelatory reports depends on. It is possible to acknowledge the authenticity of revelatory reports, then thereby recognise the creation of the heavens and the earth, and so on.

As for the former two principles, then they are contested by various groups, as in matters concerning the Reckoning, for example. Some groups believe they may be known by reason as well. This is posited by some of the Mutazilites as well as other than them among the followers of the Four Imams, even among the companions of Aḥmad, like Ibn ‘Aqīl and others.

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479 *al-Baqarah*, 21-23.

Theist philosophers affirm the Reckoning of souls rationally. Groups among the Kalam Folk, the Sufis, and others agree with them in affirming this by the intellect, though the latter also affirm a bodily instantiation as well, either by way of revelatory reports or reason. The point is that the intellect, in their estimation, may be exercised to know either the Reckoning of souls or the Reckoning unconditionally. As for the philosophers rejecting the Reckoning of bodies, then this is something the various religions all hold as false.

3. Those among them (the philosophers) who ascribe themselves to religion—among the Muslims, Jews, and Christians—are unstable in regards what the Prophets have come with pertaining to the Reckoning. The scrupulous among them recognise that their arguments for the pre-eternality of the cosmos and the negation of the bodies' Reckoning are weak, so accept from the Messengers what they have come with. There are others who are agnostic on the matter due to the incongruence of evidence in their estimation. There are also others who persisted upon denial, claiming that what the Messengers have come with in this regard are but parables to make the people understand the spiritual Reckoning.

If push comes to shove, the latter type will explicitly say that the Messengers lie for the benefit of the world. They may be more careful in choosing their words and say: 'They metaphorise realities through imagined parables.' They say: 'A feature of prophecy is the metaphorising of realities (*takhyīl al-ḥaqā'iq*) to the addressee. The masses may only be addressed in this sense.' This is the position of Fārābī and his ilk. The latter has three contradictory positions when it comes to the souls' Reckoning. Sometimes he denies it altogether, saying that the souls do not return. At other times he says that they do return. On other occasions he would differentiate between knowing and ignorant souls, affirming the reckoning of the former but not the latter.

They debate among themselves whether the Prophet is better than the philosopher or not. The reasonable among them—like Ibn Sīnā and his like—favours the Prophet over the philosopher. The extreme among them favour the philosopher.

The ancient ones (theistic philosophers) have no tangible content on prophecy. Even their discussions on divinity is scarce. They went into great depth discussing things like natural and mathematical realities. The works of their first master Aristotle are mostly of this type. The theology he discusses therein is incredibly meagre and full of inconsistencies and contradictions.

Once this is established, then what revelatory reports have come with in regard to the Reckoning has been asserted by theoreticians in two ways.



The first is highlighting explicit rhetoric in affirming a bodily reckoning and its details. The second is that knowledge of the Messengers coming with this is necessary. Anyone who hears the Qur'an, the abundantly reported Hadith, and the exegesis of the Companions and the Successors thereof, necessarily recognises that the Messengers ﷺ informed of a bodily reckoning. Doubting this is equivalent to doubting that the Prophet ﷺ came with the five prayers, fasting Ramadan, the Hajj, and so on.

The Bāṭinī Qarmatians—who are among the philosophers—rejected both. They claimed that all of these reports are but symbols of and hints towards esoteric knowledge. They say things like: ‘The prayer is the recognition of our secrets. Fasting is concealment of our secrets. The Hajj is to visit our holy shaykhs’, and similar rhetoric which can be found in their books, like *Kashf Asrārihim wa Hatk Astārihim*. For such Qarmatians were the *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā* authored. They are the ones referred to as the Ismā'īlīs due to their ascription to Muhammad ibn Ismā'īl ibn Ja'far. Ibn Sīnā says: “My father and my brother followed their call. This is why I had an interest in philosophy.”

As for philosophers who did not delve into pure Qarmatism, then they do not reject the practical legislated acts of worship. They may even deem it obligatory to follow and perform them, especially those who get into Sufism and kalam. There are those among them who obligate adherence thereto for the masses but not the exceptional, or obligate it in a manner other than how the Prophet ﷺ did. They permit that there may come after Muhammad ﷺ one who comes with a new legislation. They say that the one of them is addressed by Allah as He addressed Mūsā ibn 'Imrān, and is taken up on high as the Prophet ﷺ ascended, and similar claims which came about when this philosophy manifested, corrupting some groups among the Sufis and the Kalam Folk.

4. If messengerhood is affirmed, then whatever the Messenger informs of is affirmed—though some of the innovators reject elements thereof. This includes the punishment of the grave, the questioning of Munkar and Nakīr, the Bridge, intercession, the Fountain (*Hawd*), and other matters which have been amply reported in the authentic Hadith from the Prophet ﷺ.

Proofs from the Qur'an may also be employed here. However, mentions about these matters in the Qur'an are not as explicit [as in the Sunnah]; like the Garden and the Fire, the coming of the Hour, the assembling of creation (*ḥashr al-khalq*). For this reason, no one from those who adhere to the qibla deny the Resurrection and the Reckoning of bodies. Such matters which have come by way of ample reports—even abundantly according

to Hadith scholars—were rejected by various groups among the aberrant innovators; Mutazilites, Kharijites, and other factions.

5. The author of this creed and his like mention belief in revelatory reports holistically. As for knowledge of its details, then those aware of the authentic narrations on the subject matter, as well as the Qur’anic verses in this regard, along with the exegesis given by the Companions and Successors, are the ones who may attain it.

6. If it is known that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, and that Allah has proved his truthfulness in his saying: “I am Allah’s Messenger to you”—the one sent informs about the one who sent him in what he commanded him to inform of—then it may be known through this that he is truthful in what he informs on behalf of Allah. A liar in all that he informs of cannot be a Messenger, just as the one who has not been sent with anything is a liar in everything he informs on behalf of the one he claims sent him. The Prophet ﷺ says: “If I speak to you about Allah, I will not lie against Allah.”

Just as it is known that he is truthful in saying, “I am Allah’s Messenger to you”, it is known that he is truthful in saying, “Allah tells you of such-and-such, and commands you to do such-and-such.” Deeming him a liar with regards to this specific report is to deem him a liar in the origin of messengerhood. The ways in which his truthfulness is known generally may be employed in what he reports of specifically, even more so in the latter case. For what indicates his truthfulness in everything he informs of on behalf of Allah indicates his truthfulness in this specific report. Like a miracle—it indicates the truthfulness of his claim, and his claim is, “I am truthful in what I inform of on His behalf.” He did not claim truthfulness in some matters he informs of and not others.

Rather, Allah says in what he informs of on His behalf: “Had he falsely attributed some statements to Us, We would have certainly seized him by the right hand, then severed his life-artery.”<sup>480</sup> He ﷺ also says: “Or do they say, ‘He has fabricated lies about Allah?’ Had Allah willed, He would have sealed upon your heart. But Allah erases falsehood and upholds the truth by His Words; indeed, He is fully knowing of that within the breasts.”<sup>481</sup>, “When Our verses are recited to them as evident explanations, those who do not expect to meet Us say, ‘Bring a Qur’an other than this or change it.’ Say, ‘It is not for me to change it of my own accord; I only follow what is revealed to me. I certainly fear, were I to disobey my Lord, the punishment

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480 *al-Hāqqah*, 44-46.

481 *al-Shūrā*, 24.

of a great day.' Say, 'Had Allah willed, I would not have recited it to you nor would He have made you aware of it, for I have certainly lived among you for a lifetime before it. Do you not reason?'<sup>482</sup>, "They almost lured you away from what We have revealed to you so that you would forge some other thing against Us, and in that case they would have taken you for an intimate friend. Had we not strengthened you, you would have almost inclined to them a little"<sup>483</sup>, "Mūsā said, 'Pharaoh, I am a Messenger from the Lord of the Worlds, approved upon condition that I speak concerning Allah nothing but the truth.'<sup>484</sup>

The messenger who lies against the one who sent him in some matters is like the one who lies about the origin of messengerhood. Allah knows the realities of matters. There is no difference in manifesting a miracle at the hands of one who lies in the origin of messengerhood or one who lies in what he informs of from the one who sent him.

7. If the Messenger is confirmed as truthful regarding everything he informs on behalf of Allah, then among those things he reports on His behalf is the Qur'an. It is necessarily known that he delivered it from Him and said that the Qur'an is the speech of Allah, not his. Among those things reported in the Qur'an is that Allah sent down the Book and wisdom upon him, that He commanded the wives of His Messenger to mention what is recited in their houses of the verses of Allah and wisdom, and that He showed great favour unto the believers when He sent among them a Messenger from them reciting to them His verses, purifying them, and teaching them the Book and wisdom. It is well-known that what is mentioned in the houses of the wives of the Prophet ﷺ is either the Qur'an or what he speaks about other than it—that is wisdom, i.e., the Sunnah. Thus, it is confirmed that this is among what Allah revealed and He commanded its mention.

Allah also commanded in the Qur'an that he be obeyed, and this in many verses. He says: "Whosoever obeys the Messenger has obeyed Allah."<sup>485</sup> He ﷺ also says: "By the star as it goes down, your companion has not gone astray, nor has he been deluded. He does not speak of his own desire. It is but a revelation being revealed."<sup>486</sup> He ﷺ says: "Whatever the Messenger brings you—accept it, and whatever he forbids you—abstain from it."<sup>487</sup>

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482 *Yūnus*, 15-16.

483 *al-Isrā'*, 73-74.

484 *al-A'raf*, 104-105.

485 *al-Nisā'*, 80.

486 *al-Najm*, 1-4.

487 *al-Hashr*, 7.

Such passages and others similar to them clarify that Allah obliged that he be followed even if what he says is not from the Qur'an.

Furthermore, his message entails his truthfulness in what he informs of Allah in the Qur'an as well as other than it. It is therefore obligatory to believe him in what he informs of even if it is not the Qur'an.

Allah ﷻ knows best

*Praise be to Allah  
May blessings of exaltation and peace be upon  
the Seal of Allah's Messengers Muhammad,  
his family, and his Companions,  
one and all*

