

Aqida (Creed)

Al-Fiqh Al-Akbar explains the creed of Islam

The Beliefs of Sunni Islam

Islamic Beliefs: The Way of Sunni Islam Ash'ari 'Aqida

Aqidah Tahawiyya an explanation of the creed of Islam according to Imam Maturidi

Who is Imam Maturidi?

Kalam and Islam

Foreordained Destiny and the Inefficacy of Material Causes-and-Effects

Both good and evil from Allah Most High

AL-FIQH AL-AKBAR

by Imam Abu Hanifah

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(The following sets out precisely all the main beliefs (i'tiqadat = spiritual convictions)
of the Sunni-Hanafi school of law (madhab/maslak).)

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[The following statement appears before the translation of the actual text -- obviously inserted by someone other than Imam Abu Hanifah -- probably by the eminent translator himself. -- Editor . . . "One of the most regrettable features of the contemporary Muslim situation is an anarchy and confusion in the sphere of belief that might lead one to suppose the foundations of Islam to have been so obscured that the field is open to anyone to redefine the religion. We begin with the Fiqh al-Akbar of Imam al-A'zam Abu Hanifah, may God be pleased with him, a brief but comprehensive statement of the irreducible dogmas ('aqa'id - sing. 'aqidah) of Islam."

The editor agrees with the above comments of Professor Hamid Algar, the translator, and joins him in his lamentation of the contemporary Muslim situation of anarchy and confusion in the 'sphere of belief.' Alas our modern younger generation has neglected to include 'Al-Fiqh Al-Akbar' as an essential part of Islamic teaching curricula.

I recall fondly that 'Al-Fiqh Al-Akbar' was a part of my highschool religion classes. I also remember, with fondness, the diligence with which our teachers taught these 'aqa'id, impressing upon us incessantly just how essential it was for us to learn these dogmas. Even as a highschool student it was not was not difficult for me to realize the beauty of the brevity, conciseness, and comprehensiveness of the beautiful work of Imam Abu Hanifah. Even as a student at this early stage of education, we were left with no doubt in our minds that a full understanding of the articles of Abu Hanifah's creed were imperative for our practises as a Sunni-Hanafi followers of Islam.]

In the Name of God the Compassionate, the Merciful

The root of the affirmation of God's unity, and that which is correct conviction, consists of this, that one says:

1. I believe in God, and His angels, and His books, and His messengers, and resurrection after death, and that the good and evil of destiny are from God Most High. I believe too in the accounting and the scales, hell and paradise. All the foregoing is reality.
2. God is One, not in a numerical sense, but in the sense that He has no partner – "*Say: He is God, One; God the Eternally Subsistent and Besought; He begets not, nor was He begotten; and there is none like unto Him.*" He resembles nothing among His creation, nor does anything among His creation resemble Him. He has been, unceasing, and He is, unceasing, with His names and attributes, both those relating to His Essence and those relating to His acts. As for those relating to His Essence, they are life, power, knowledge, speech, hearing, sight, and will. As for those relating to His acts, they are creativity, sustenance, originating and fashioning *ex nihilo*, making, and other active attributes.

He has been, unceasing, and He is, unceasing, with His attributes and names; neither attribute nor name was created. He has always and unceasingly been a knower, by virtue of His knowledge, and His knowledge is a pre-eternal attribute. He has always and unceasingly been powerful, by virtue of His power, and His power is a pre-eternal attribute. He has always and unceasingly been speaking by virtue of His speech and His speech is a pre-eternal attribute. He has always and unceasingly been a creator, by virtue of His creativity, and His creativity is a pre-eternal attribute. He has always and unceasingly been an agent, by virtue of His activity, and His activity is a pre-eternal attribute; the object of His activity is creation, and His activity is uncreated. His attributes existed in pre-eternity, without being created or called into existence at a particular moment. Whoever says that they are created or summoned into existence at a particular moment, or is uncertain about the attributes and doubts them, is an unbeliever in God Almighty.

3. The Qur'an is the Word of God Almighty, written on collections of leaves (*masahif*), preserved in men's hearts, recited on men's tongues, and sent down to the Prophet, upon whom be God's peace and blessings. Our uttering of the Qur'an is created, and our recitation of the Qur'an is created, but the Qur'an itself is uncreated.

That which God Almighty mentions in the Qur'an as a narration from Moses and other of the prophets - peace and blessings be upon them - and also from the Pharaoh and Iblis, all of it is God's word, and constitutes a report concerning them. God's word is uncreated. It is the Qur'an which as the word of God Most High is uncreated, not their words, Moses, upon whom be peace, heard the Word of God Almighty, as God Almighty says: "*God addressed Moses in speech.*" Thus God Almighty was the speaker, and Moses, upon whom be peace, did not speak. God Most High was a creator in pre-eternity, even without having brought creation into existence: "there is naught like unto Him; He is All-Hearing, All-Seeing." When God addressed Moses

He did so with His word that was, like all of His attributes, an attribute existing from pre-eternity, unlike the attributes of created beings.

4. God knows, but not as we know; He has power, but not as we have power; He sees, but not as we see; He hears, but not as we hear; and He speaks, but not as we speak. We speak by means of the speech organs and sounds, whereas God Most High speaks with neither organs nor sounds. Sounds are created, and the word of God Most High is uncreated. He is a thing, but unlike other things; by saying "thing," we intend merely to affirm His reality. He has neither body nor substance, neither accidental property nor limit, neither opposite nor like nor similitude. He has a hand, a face, and a self (*nafs*); the mention that God most High has made of these in the Qur'an has the sense that these are among His attributes, and no question can be raised concerning their modality (*bila kayf*). It cannot be said that His hand represents His power or His bestowal of bounty, because such an interpretation would require a negation of an attribute. This is the path taken by the Qadarites and the Mu'tazilites (*two theological sects in early Islam that deviated from the path of Ahl as-Sunna - trans.*) Rather, His hand is an attribute, of unknowable modality, in the same way that His anger and pleasure are two attributes of unknowable modality God Most High created things out of nothing, and He had knowledge of them in pre-eternity, before their creation.

5. He it is Who determined and predestined all things. Nothing exists in this world or hereafter except by His will, His knowledge, His determining and predestining, and except it be written on the Preserved Tablet (*al-Lauh al-Mahfuz*). He inscribed everything there in the sense of description, not that of foreordaining. Determining, predestining and will are pre-eternal attributes of unknowable modality. God Most High knows the non-existent, while in its state of non-existence, to be non-existent, and He knows too how it will be when He brings it forth into being. God Most High knows the existent, while in its state of existence, to be existent, and He knows too how will be its evanescence. God knows the one who is standing, and when he sits then God knows him to be sitting, without any change being produced thereby in God's knowledge, or any new knowledge accruing to Him. For change and alteration occur only in created beings.

6. God Most High created creation free of both belief and unbelief, and then He addressed His creation with commands and prohibitions. Some men disbelieved through active denial and rejection of the truth by virtue of being abandoned by God Most High. Others believed through active assent and affirmation, by virtue of the succour of God Most High. He brought forth the progeny of Adam, upon whom be peace, from his loins in the form of particles, and appointed for them an intelligence. He then addressed them and commanded them unto belief and forbade them disbelief. They assented to His dominicality, this being a form of belief appropriate to them, and thus it is that they are born in the possession of a primordial nature disposed to belief.

Whoever disbelieves thereafter is therefore changing and altering that primordial nature, and whoever believes and assents is conforming and strengthening it. None of His creation has been constrained either to disbelieve or to believe; God created men not as believers or non-believers, but rather as persons. Belief and disbelief are acts of God's worshippers. God Most High knows the unbeliever, in his state of unbelief, to

be an unbeliever, and if he thereafter becomes a believer, then God knows him to be a believer in a state of belief, without any change occurring thereby in His knowledge or attributes.

All deeds of God's servants, both of commission and omission, are in truth acquired by them; God Most High is their creator. All of them take place by His will, knowledge, determining and predestining. Obligatory acts of obedience and worship take place by the command, love, satisfaction, knowledge, will, determining and predestining of God Most High, and all facts of sinful rebellion take place by His knowledge, determining, and predestining and will, but not by His love, satisfaction and command.

7. The Prophets, peace and blessings be upon them, are free of all sins, major and minor, of unbelief, and of all that is repugnant. It may be, however, that they commit insignificant lapses and errors. Muhammad the Messenger of God – may God's peace and blessings be upon him! – is His Prophet, His Bondsman, His Messenger and His Chosen One. He never worshipped idols, he never assigned partner to God, even for an instant, and he never committed a sin, major or minor.

8. The most virtuous of all men after the Messenger of God, -- may God's peace and blessings be upon him! – are Abu Bakr as-Siddiq, may God be pleased with him; then 'Umar ibn al-Khattab; then 'Uthman ibn 'Affan; then 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, may they all enjoy the pleasure of God Most High. They were all steadfast in the truth, with the truth, and we proclaim our allegiance to all of them. We make only good mention of all of the Companions of the Messenger of God, may God's peace and blessings be upon him!

9. We do not proclaim any Muslim an unbeliever on account of any sin, however great, unless it be that he regards his sin as permissible. Nor does he forfeit the name of belief; we continue to call him a believer in essence. It is possible to be a sinful believer without being an unbeliever.

The wiping of the feet when covered, by way of ablution, is a *sunna* (under conditions specified by the *fuqaha*). *Tarawih* prayer in the month of Ramadan is similarly a *sunna*. It is permissible to pray behind any believer, pious or sinful. We say neither that sins do not harm the believer, nor that they cause him to remain indefinitely in hell, even if he leaves the world in a state of sin.

10. We do not say, like Murji'ites (*an early theological school - trans.*), that our good deeds are accepted by God, and our evil deeds forgiven by Him. Rather we say that the matter is to be clarified and expounded as follows: whoever performs a good deed in accordance with all requisite conditions, free of all corrupting deficiencies and nullifying concerns, and does not then cancel his deed with unbelief or apostasy at any time before his death, God Almighty will not cause his deed to be wasted; rather He will accept it and bestow reward for it. As for evil deeds – other than the assigning of partners to God and unbelief – for which the believer does not offer repentance before his death, the will of God Almighty may elect either to chastise their author or to forgive him, without chastising him in Hellfire. Hypocrisy and arrogance

in any deed annul its reward.

11. Miraculous signs (*mu'jizat*) bestowed on the Prophets are established as true, and so too ennobling wonders (*karamat*) made manifest through the saints (*auliya*). As for apparently miraculous and wondrous deeds performed by God's enemies, like Iblis, the Pharaoh and the Dajjal, whatever is mentioned in tradition as having been performed by them in future, is neither miraculous nor wondrous. Rather it is a question of their needs being fulfilled by God Most High; this he does in order to lead them toward destruction and to chastise them, but they are deceived. They increase in rebelliousness and unbelief. All of the foregoing is possible and contingent on God's will.

12. God Most High was a Creator before He created, and a Provider before He bestowed provision. God Most High will be seen in the Hereafter, visible to the believers in Paradise with their corporeal vision. This we say without any implication of anthropomorphism, or any notion of quality or quantity, for there is not a fixed distance between Him and His creation (to permit any comparison).

13. Belief means assent and affirmation. There is no increase or decrease with respect to the content of belief, whether for angels or men, but only with respect to degrees of certainty and affirmation. The believers are equal in what they believe and in their assertion of the divine unity, but enjoy differing degrees of excellence with respect to their deeds.

Islam is surrender and submission to the commands of God Most High. There is a lexical distinction between belief (*iman*) and Islam, but there is no belief without Islam, and Islam cannot be conceived of without belief. They are like the outer and inner aspect of a thing (that is inseparable). Religion (*din*) is a name applied to both belief and Islam, and indeed to all divine codes.

We know God as it is fitting for us to know Him through His description of himself in His Book, with all His attributes; but none is able to worship God Most High as He deserves to be worshipped and as is fitting for Him. Rather man worships God Most High in accordance with His Command, as promulgated in His Book and the *Sunna* of His Messenger. Although believers are equal insofar as they believe, they differ with respect to knowledge, certainty, reliance, love satisfaction, fear, hope.

14. God Most High is both generous and just toward His bondsmen, bestowing on them in his liberality a reward far in excess of what they deserve. He requites them for their sins because of His justice, and forgives them because of His generosity. The intercession of the Prophets, upon whom be blessings and peace, is a reality, and in particular that of our Prophet – peace and blessings be upon him! – for sinful believers and for those who have committed major sins and are deserving of requital is a firmly established reality. The weighing of deeds in the balance on the Day of Resurrection is similarly a reality; the pool of the Prophet, upon whom be peace and blessings, is a reality; retribution among enemies on the Day of Resurrection through the redistribution of good deeds is a reality. If they have no good deeds, then the burden of evil deeds is redistributed; this too is a reality.

Paradise and Hell are created and existing today, and shall never vanish. The hours shall never vanish, and the requital exacted by God Almighty and the reward bestowed by Him shall never cease.

God Most High guides whomsoever he wills out of His generosity, and he leads astray whomsoever He wills out of His justice. God's leading man astray consists of His abandoning him, and the meaning of God's abandoning man is not impelling him to do that which is pleasing to Him. All this is determined by His justice.

It is not permissible for us to say: "Satan steals belief from man with violence and coercion." Rather we say: "Man himself abandons belief, and when he has abandoned it, then Satan snatches it from him."

The interrogation by Munkir and Nakir is a reality; the return of the spirit to the body in the tomb is a reality; the pressing in upon man of the tomb is a reality; God's punishment of all unbelievers and some Muslims is a reality.

All of the attributes of God Most High – may His name be glorified and his attributes be exalted! – may be mentioned by the *'ulama* in languages other than Arabic (*here Persian in particular is mentioned, but the meaning is any non-Arabic tongue - trans.*), with the exception of *yad* (hand). Thus we may say "the face of God," may He be exalted and glorified, without any implication of anthropomorphism or of a particular modality.

Closeness to God Most High and remoteness from Him do not refer to any spatial distance, great or small, nor do they refer to the nobility or humility of man in His sight. Rather the one obedient to Him is close to him, in indefinable fashion. Closeness, remoteness [or] approaching all, in fact refer to God's action towards man (i.e., it is not man who in the strict sense defines relation to God; it is rather God who determines that relation). Proximity to God in Paradise and standing before Him are similarly realities of indefinable modality.

The Qur'an was sent down to His Messenger, upon whom be blessings and peace, and it is that which is now inscribed on collections of leaves. The verses of the Qur'an, insofar as they are all the Word of God, are equal in excellence and magnificence; some, however, enjoy a special excellence by virtue of what they mention, or the fashion in which they mention it. The Throne Verse, for example, enjoys excellence on both counts: what it mentions – splendour, magnificence and other attributes of God – and the way in which it mentions it. Other verses have no excellence on account of what they mention – for example, those containing narratives of unbelievers – but only on account of the way in which they mention it. Similarly, all the names and attributes are equal in their magnificence and excellence; there is no difference among them.

If someone experiences difficulty with the subtleties of the science of divine unity, it is incumbent upon him to believe (without further investigation) what is correct in the sight of God Most High until he finds a scholar to consult. He should not delay in seeking such a scholar, for hesitation and suspension of judgment may result in unbelief.

The narration of the Mi'raj (by the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings) is true, and whoever rejects it is misguided and an innovator.

The emergence of the Dajjal and of Gog and Magog is a reality; the rising of the sun in the West is a reality; the descent of Jesus ('Isa), upon whom be peace, from the heavens is a reality; and all the other signs of the Day of Resurrection, as contained in authentic traditions, are also established reality.

And God guides to his Path whomsoever He wills.

*(Translated from the text published in Hama, 1392/1972.
All phrases between round brackets were added by the translator.)*

Our visitors/readers will also be interested to learn that a publication entitled "*Islamic Creeds - A Selection*" translated by W. Montgomery Watt, renders into English the following creeds:

1. The Hanbalites

Hamid ibn Hanbal

A Shorter Hanbalite Creed

A Longer Hanbalite Creed

2. Al-Ash'ari

3. Al-Tahawi

4. The Testament of Abu Hanifah

5. A Later Hanafite Creed [*]

6. Al-Qayrawani

7. Al-Ghazzali

8. Al-Nasafi

9. Al-Lji

10. Al-Sanusi

11. 'Allama-i-Hilli

* This is Montgomery Watt's translation of *Al-Fiqh Al-Akbar*. Mr. Watt has the following comment preceding the actual translation of the text: "This is the creed called by Wensinck *Al-Fiqh Al-Akbar II*. There is a text (with commentary) in the Hyderabad volume which contains the *Testament*, and this has been used here. This creed also is by an anonymous Hanafite author. Wensinck's suggestion (*Muslim Creed*, p. 240) that it might be by al-Ash'ari is impossible, because he failed to appreciate the difference in the definition of faith between the Hanafites and the Hanbalites (and al-Ash'ari). The discussion of the attributes of God suggests that this creed is somewhat later than the *Testament*."

The Beliefs of the Sunni Way

Answered by Shaykh Amjad Rasheed

Q.

What is the belief (‘aqida) of Ahl al-Sunna? Is it correct to believe that Allah is everywhere? What is the difference between the belief of the Salafis and the belief (‘aqida) of Ahl al-Sunna?

A.



The answer to this question requires detail and explanation, and it is obligatory for the questioner to learn [h: what he or she has asked] from a trustworthy teacher according to the way of the Sunnis (Ahl al-Sunna wa’l-Jama‘ah), which is [h: represented by] the Ash‘aris and Maturidis ([h: which are schools ascribed to] the two Imams, Abu’l-Hasan al-Ash‘ari and Abu Mansur al-Maturidi).

By doing so, [h: the questioner] will learn the belief (‘aqida) of the Sunnis (Ahl al-Sunna wa’l-Jama‘ah) and also how others have gone against them in certain beliefs. If it is not possible for him or her to learn this directly [h: from a teacher], then he or she should at least read a book on the subject, such as the book “The Jerusalem Creed” (al-‘Aqida al-Qudsiyya), by Imam al-Ghazali, which is printed in the beginning of the book Ihya ‘Ulum al-Din, [1] or one may read some other book, such as Kubra al-Yaqiniyyat al-Kawniyya, by the great scholar, Dr. Muhammad Sa‘id Ramadan al-Bouti. [2] However, what cannot be completely attained should not be completely left, so I say:

Sunni Belief

What is obligatory for all Muslims to believe is that Allah is perfect in his entity, names, and attributes, and that He is transcendentally beyond every attribute that does not befit Him, Most High. Space and time, therefore, do not encompass Him; rather, He created them both. Neither His entity nor His attributes resemble anything of His creation. “There is nothing whatsoever like unto Him, and He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing.” (42:11).

Neither the heavens nor the earth encompass Him, and He is not described by saying that His entity is literally above the heaven. Rather, He is above everything in His tremendous power and His magnificent wisdom. [h: That He is not literally above the heaven is proved by what] he (Allah bless him and give him peace) said in a rigorously authenticated hadith narrated by Imam Muslim: “... You are the Outwardly Manifest (dhahir) so there is nothing above You, and You are the Inwardly Hidden (batin) so there is nothing below You.” [3]

One may not say that Allah has a wajh (lit. “face”) or a yad (lit. “hand”) in the literal sense of these words because the literal meaning of each of these words in the Arabic language denotes a limb that is connected to the body and that could be separated from it, and our Lord is far above this.

Whatever mention of wajh (lit. “face”), ‘ayn (lit. “eye”), yad (lit. “hand”), and qadam (lit. “foot”) that has been made in certain noble verses and authenticated hadiths is interpreted according to meanings that befit Allah Most High’s entity. For example, His Most High’s saying, “Everything on it shall perish and the tremendous and mighty wajh of your Lord shall remain.” (55:26-27) [] What is meant by wajh (lit. “countenance”) in the verse is His Most High’s entity (in other words, “Everything except Allah shall perish”); nothing else can be meant by it.

In the Arabic language, wajh can be used to refer to the entity. Otherwise [h: if one interpreted wajh to mean “face”, for example], it would necessitate that His Most High’s entity is divisible and that part of it shall perish. This is both rationally and legally impossible and it is not permissible for anyone to believe in it.

Another example is His Most High’s saying about the ark of our master Nuh (upon him be blessings and peace), “It sailed in our ‘ayn.” (54:14). [h: The preposition ba’ in the verse] does not connote that the ‘ayn physically contained [h: the ark]; nor does the verse mean that Allah has an ‘ayn (lit. “eye”) in the literal sense of the word and that the ark sails inside it. No one believes this except for an ignoramus who has no veneration for Allah. Rather, what is meant by the verse is that the ark sailed under Allah’s care and protection so that it did not drown like everything else did at that particular time. In the Arabic language, ‘ayn can be used to refer to protection and care.

Is it permissible to believe that Allah is everywhere?

The belief that Allah Most High is personally in every location is a completely false belief that is not permissible for anyone to hold. Rather, what is obligatory to believe (as mentioned above) is that Allah is transcendentally beyond occupying space and it is obligatory to forbid anyone who says anything else, for [h: anything else] constitutes anthropomorphism [4], which is completely incorrect. An example [h: of such anthropomorphism] is what some ignorant laypeople over here say (intending to venerate Allah by their saying it), “Glory be to Him in His place.” It is obligatory to explain the mistakenness of this expression and to guide them to what is correct.

If, however, a Muslim believes that Allah is everywhere in His knowledge, thereby meaning that He (Glory be to Him) knows everything at every time and place, it is a correct belief and it what is meant by His Most High’s saying, “He is with you wherever you are,” (57:4) i.e., “He is with you in His knowledge so that nothing of His creation is concealed from him.”

Difference between Sunni belief and Salafi belief

Regarding the difference between the belief of the Sunnis (Ahl al-Sunna wa'l-Jama'ah) and the belief of the Salafis ([h: the Salafis] are a group of Muslims who claim ascription to the righteous early Muslims (al-salaf al-salih) in terms of their belief, although in reality, they go against the righteous early Muslims in some of what they claim to agree with them on, as I shall partly explain in what follows), the Salafis go against the Sunnis in some of what I have explained above, such as belief that Allah has a wajh (lit. "face"), 'ayn (lit. "eye"), yad (lit. "hand"), and qadam (lit. "foot") in the literal sense of these words. [h: They also go against the Sunnis by believing] that He Most High's entity is literally above the heaven, adducing as proof certain verses and hadiths, although they are mistaken in their understanding.

Rather, the position of the righteous early Muslims from among the Companions, Followers, and followed Imams is that Allah is transcendentally beyond the literal meaning of the above-mentioned things because of the baseless anthropomorphism that they comprise, and because—as explained above—the verses and hadiths that have mentioned these matters are interpreted according to meanings that befit His Most High's entity.

Some of the scholars of the early Muslims (Allah be pleased with them) explicitly stated these meanings whereas others remained silent and sufficed themselves with believing that Allah is transcendentally beyond such false meanings, and both approaches are acceptable.[5]

As for a person's believing that Allah is literally characterized by the above-mentioned matters, this is a completely false position and it goes against the position of the vast majority of the Imams of the Muslims in every time and place. Among the useful books about this subject are Daf'u Shubah al-Tashbih bi-Akuff al-Tanzih, by the Hanbali Imam and hadith master, Ibn al-Jawzi, and Idah al-Dalil fi Qat'i Hujaj Ahl al-Ta'til, by the great Shafi'i Imam, Badr al-Din b. Jama'ah. Both books have been published. [6]

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(Translated by Hamza Karamali)

Translator's Notes:

[1] This has been translated in Book V of the Reliance of the Traveller and also at the back of the booklet, Becoming Muslim, both by Nuh Ha Mim Keller. There is also a brief synopsis of Sunni creed in The Key to the Garden, by Habib Mashhur al-Haddad (translated by Dr. Mostafa al-Badawi).

[2] This has not been translated into English, unfortunately.

[3] For a detailed explanation of why it is not permissible for Muslims to believe that Allah is literally in the sky, see Is it permissible for a Muslim to believe that Allah is in the sky in a literal sense?, by Nuh Ha Mim Keller. The article is available at www.masud.co.uk.

[4] Anthropomorphism (tashbeeh) means likening Allah to His creation.

[5] For an excellent and thoroughly documented account of the position of the early Muslims on the attributes of Allah, see Literalism and the Attributes of Allah, by Nuh Ha Mim Keller. The article is available at www.masud.co.uk

[6] Neither book has been translated, unfortunately.

داقت عال له ؟ قنسل له أ قديق عيه ام فرعأ نأ ديرأ : ولؤ سلم ساهيأ إن بعذ إمامه لزمه السهو وإلأ للسؤال
لا ؟ قنسل له أ قديق عو عي فلسلأ قديق عنيب قرفلا امو ؟ حي حص داق عا ناكم لك يف مللأ نأ
وشرح ، والواجب على السائل أن يتعلم ذلك من شيخ موثق على جواب هذا السؤال يحتاج إلى تفصيل : باوج
مذهب أهل السنة وهم الأشاعرة والماتريدية نسبة للإمامين أبي الحسن الأشعري وأبي منصور الماتريدي ، فيعرف
من أن يقرأ كتاباً بذلك عقيدة أهل السنة وما خالف فيه غيرهم من الاعتقادات ، فإن لم يتيسر له التعلم مباشرة فلا أقل
وأ "نيدلأ مولع ءايح" للإمام الغزالي ، وهو مطبوع في أول كتاب "عيس دقلأ قديق عا" باتكك لكذ يف
يطوبلأ دي عس دم حم روتك دلأ قمال علل "عين وكلا تاي نيق يلا ىربك" لك ، بتكلا نم مري غ أرقى
لمين اعتقاده هو كمال الله تعالى في الواجب على جميع المسد : لوق أف ملج كرتي ال ملك كردي ام نكلو .
ذاته وأسمائه وصفاته ، وتنزيهه تعالى عن كل وصف لا يليق به سبحانه ، فلا يحويه سبحانه مكان ولا زمان بل هو
الف ، (ري صبلأ عي مسلا وهو عيش ملثمك سيل) خالقهما ، ولا تشبه ذاته وصفاته شيئاً من خلقه
ولا يوصف بأنه فوق السماء بذاته حقيقة ، بل هو فوق كل شيء بعظيم قدرته وباهر ، ضررأ الوءامسلأ هي وحت
... : "ملسم مالمال هي وري يذلأ حي حصلا ثي دحلأ يف ملسو هيلع مللا ىلص لاق امك ، متمك ح
ني عو هجو ملل لاق ي الو . " عيش - كتح ت : يأ - وأنت الظاهر فليس فوقك شيء ، وأنت الباطن فليس دونك
وقدم حقيقة ؛ لأن حقيقة هذه الأشياء في لغة العرب تعني الجارحة التي تتصل بالبدن وقد تنفصل عنه ، وحاشا ديو
ربنا من هذا ، وما جاء في بعض الآيات الكريمات وصحيح الأحاديث النبوية مما فيه ذكر الوجه والعين واليد والقدم
كل من عليها فان ، ويبقى وجه ربك ذو (ىلا عت ملو قك كله محمول على معاني تليق بذات الله تعالى ، وذلك
سيفنى كل شيء دون الله ، لا يراد به : يأ ، من احبس متاذ وه عيال يف هجولاب دارملأف (مارك إلأو لالجلأ
وإلا لزم عليه تغيض ذاته سبحانه وفناء بعضها ، برعلا ءغل يف تاذلأ نع م رب عي هجولأ ، لكذ ري غ
هيلع حون انديس قني فس نع ىلا عت ملو قك - ستحيل عقلاً وشرعاً ولا يجوز لأحد اعتقاده ، م اذو
فليس المراد بذلك الظرفية وأن الله عينا حقيقة والسفينة تجري فيها ، فلا (انني عأب يرجت) مالمسلأو ءالصلأ
اية الله وحفظه ، فلن عرب يرجت قني فسلأ نأ دارملأ نكلو ، ملل مي طعتلأ مي دع له ا إلأ لكذ دقت عي
والاعتقاد بأن يصيبها الغرق الذي أصاب كل شيء وقتئذ ، والعين يعبر بها عن الحفظ والرعاية في لغة العرب
الله تعالى في كل مكان بذاته اعتقاد باطل لا يجوز لأحد القول به ، بل الواجب اعتقاده كما تقدم هو تنزيه الله تعالى
قل خلأ ب قحلل هي بشت من أل ؛ لكذ فالخب لوق ي نم ىلع راكن إلأ بجي و ، ناكم يف نو كي نأ نع
بجي ف (مناكم يف من احبس) ومن هذا قول بعض جهلة العوام عندما يريدون تعظيم الله بالكلام . لطاب وهو
مكان بعلمه ، بمعنى أما أن يعتقد المسلم أن الله تعالى في كل وقت وفي كل مكان فهذا اعتقاد صحيح ، وهو معنى قوله تعالى
امن يأ مك عم وهو) أنه يعلم سبحانه كل شيء في كل وقت وفي كل مكان فهذا اعتقاد صحيح ، وهو معنى قوله تعالى
نيب قرفلا امو . مقلخ نم عيش من احبس هيلع ىفخي الف ، ملع ب مك عم وه : يأ (متنك
المسلمين يدعون الانتساب إلى السلف الصالح في وهم جماعة من) عي فلسلأ قديق عو قنسل له أ قديق ع
(الاعتقاد ، مع أنهم في الحقيقة يخالفون السلف الصالح في بعض ما يدعون موافقتهم فيه ، كما سألين بعضه هنا
نه فالسلفية يخالفون أهل السنة في بعض ما قدمته من اعتقاد الوجه والعين واليد والقدم لله تعالى على الحقيقة ، وأ
سبحانه فوق السماء بذاته حقيقة ، مستدلين على ذلك ببعض الآيات والأحاديث ، وهم مخطئون في فهمها ، بل الذي
عليه السلف الصالح من الصحابة والتابعين والأئمة المتبعين هو تنزيه الله تعالى عن حقيقة هذه الأشياء المذكورة ؛ لما

والأحاديث التي ذكرت هذه الأمور محمولة على معانٍ تليق بذاته تاي آلنا ، لطايبا هيبش تالنا نم اهيف السلف الصالح رضي الله عنهم من يصرح بهذه - عامل ع ين عا - مهنم نكل ، من اي ب مدقت امك من احبس ص المعاني ومنهم من يسكت ويكتفي بتنزيه الله تعالى عن المعاني الباطلة ، وكلا الأمرين حسن ، أما أن يعتقد الشخص أن هذه الأمور المذكورة يتصف بها الله حقيقة فهذا باطل من القول ومخالف لما عليه جماهير أئمة المسلمين في كل مبش عفا "ومن الكتب المفيدة في هذا الموضوع كتاب الإمام الحافظ ابن الجوزي الحنبلي وهو . رصم و رصع ليل دل احاضي" وهو يفتا شل اة عام ج نبا ن ي و كتاب الإمام الكبير بدر الد "هي زنتلنا فكأب هيبش تالنا ناعوبطم ن ي باتكلا الكو ، "لي طعتلنا لهأ ج ج عطق ي ف .

Islamic Beliefs: The Way of Sunni Islam (The Creed of Imaam Al Haddad (Ashari Aqeedah - A

Answered by Imam Al-Haddad

Q. Islamic Beliefs: The way of Sunni Islam [The Creed of Imaam Al Haddad (Ashari Aqeedah- Aqeedah of Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jamaah)]

A.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Islamic Beliefs:

The Way of Sunni Islam

The Creed of Imaam Al Haddad, the great Hadrami scholar and sufi

Posted at: <http://groups.msn.com/TheHabaib>

Imam al-Haddad said (may Allah bring us benefit from him):

"Praise belongs to Allah alone. May Allah bless our master Muhammad, and his Family, and Companions, and grant them peace. We know, assent, believe, confess with certainty, and testify, that there is no god but Allah, Alone without partner. He is a Mighty God, a Great King. There is no lord beside Him, and we worship none than He. He is Ancient and Pre-Existent, Eternal and Everlasting. His firstness has no beginning, neither has His lastness any end. He is Solitary, Self-Subsistent, neither begetting nor begotten, matchless, without partner or peer. There is nothing that resembles Him, and He is the Hearer, the Seer. [42:11]

"And we confess that His holiness (Exalted in He!) renders Him beyond time and space, beyond resembling anything in existence, so that He cannot be encompassed by directions, nor be subject to contingent events. And that He is Established on His Throne in the manner which He has described, and in the sense which He has

intended, in a Establishment befitting the might of His Majesty, and the exaltation of His glory and magnificence. And that He (Exalted is He!) is Near to everything in existence, being closer to man than his jugular vein. [50:16] He is Watchful and Seeing over all things. He is the Living, the Self-Subsistent, slumber overtakes Him not, nor sleep; [2:255] He is the Originator of the heavens and earth; when He decrees a thing He only says to it Be! And it is. [2:117] Allah is Creator of all things, and He is Guardian over everything. [39:62]

"And that He (Exalted is He!) is over all things Powerful, and of all things Knower; His knowledge is all-embracing and He keeps count of all things. Not an atom's weight in the earth or in the sky escapes your Lord. [10:61] He knows what goes down into the earth and that which comes forth from it, and what descends from heaven and what ascends into it. He is with you wherever you may be, and Allah is Seer of what you do. [57:4] He knows the secret thought, and what is even more concealed. [20:7] He knows what is in the land and the sea. A leaf cannot fall but that He knows it, nor is there a grain amid the darkness of the earth, nor a wet or dry thing, but that it is recorded in a clear Book. [6:59]

"And that He (Exalted is He!) wills existent things, and directs events. And that nothing may exist, whether good or evil, beneficial or harmful, except by His decree and will. Whatever He wills is, whatever He does not, is not. Should all creatures unite to move or halt a single atom in the universe, in the absence of His will, they would be unable to do so.

"And that He (Exalted is He!) is Hearer, Seer, Speaker of a Speech that is pre-existent and does not resemble the speech of creatures. And that the Mighty Qur'an is His ancient speech, His Book which He sent down upon His Messenger and Prophet Muhammad (may He bless him and grant him peace).

"And that He (Glorious is He!) is Creator of all things and their Provider, Who disposes them as He wills; neither rival nor opponent is there in His realm. He gives to whomsoever He wills and withholds from whomsoever He wills. He is not questioned about His actions, rather they are questioned. [21:23]

"And that He (Exalted is He!) is Wise in His acts, Just in His decrees, so that no injustice or tyranny can be imaginable on His part, and that no one has any rights over Him. Should He (Glorious is He!) destroy all His creatures in the blink of an eye, He would be neither unjust or tyrannous to them, for they are His dominion and His slaves. He has the right to do as He pleases in His dominion, and your Lord is not a tyrant to His slaves. [41:46] He rewards His slaves for obeying Him out of grace and generosity, and punishes them when they rebel out of His wisdom and justice.

"And that to obey Him is an obligation binding upon His bondsmen, as was made clear through the speech of His messengers (upon them be peace). We believe in every Book sent down by Allah, and in all of His messengers, His angels, and in destiny, whether good or bad.

"And we testify that Muhammad is His slave and Messenger, whom He sent to jinn and to mankind, to the Arabs and the non-Arabs, with guidance and the religion of truth, that He may cause it to prevail over all religion, though the polytheists be

averse. [9:33] And that he delivered the Message, was faithful to his trust, advised the Nation, did away with grief, and strove for God's sake as is His due, being truthful and trustworthy, supported by authentic proofs and norm-breaking miracles. And that Allah has made it incumbent upon His bondsmen to believe, obey, and follow him, and that a man's faith is not acceptable – even should he believe in Him – until he believes in Muhammad (may Allah bless him and his Family and grant them peace) and in everything that he brought and informed us of, whether of the affairs of this world or the next. This includes faith in the questioning of the dead by Munkar and Nakir about religion, *tawhid* and Prophethood, and in the bliss which is in the grave for those who were obedient, and the torment which it contains for the rebellions.

"And that one should believe in the Resurrection after Death, the gathering of bodies and spirits to stand in the presence of Allah the Exalted, and in the Reckoning; and that His slaves will be at that time in different states, some being called to account, some being exempted, while others shall enter the Garden without reckoning. One should believe in the Scales in which good and evil deeds will be weighed; and in the *Sirat*, which is a bridge stretched over the depths of Hell; and in the Pool [*hawd*] of our Prophet Muhammad, (may Allah bless him and his Family, and grant them peace), the water of which is from the Garden, and from which the believers shall drink before entering the Garden. And in the Intercession of the Prophets, followed by the Truthful Saints [*siddiqun*], and then the *ulema*, the virtuous [*salihun*] and the other believers. And that the Greatest Intercession is the prerogative of Muhammad (may Allah bless him and his Family, and grant them peace). And that the people of *tawhid* who have entered the Fire shall be taken out of it until not one person in whose heart there lies an atom's weight of faith shall remain in it eternally. And that the people of polytheism and disbelief shall abide in the Fire eternally and for evermore, their suffering shall not be diminished; neither shall they be reprieved. [2:162] And that the believers shall abide in the Garden eternally without end, wherein no tiredness shall affect them, and from which they shall not be expelled. [15:48] And that the believers shall see their Lord with their eyes, in a way befitting His Majesty and the Holiness of His Perfection.

"And that the Companions of the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and his Family, and grant them peace) were virtuous, that their status was of various ranks, and that they were just, good, and trustworthy. Is not lawful to insult or denigrate any of them. And that the rightful successor [*khalifa*] to the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and his Family, and grant them peace) was Abu Bakr al-Siddiq, followed by 'Umar al-Faruq, then 'Uthman al-Shahid, then 'Ali al-Murtada, may Allah be pleased with them and with all his other Companions, and with those who follow them with excellence until the Day of Judgement, and with us also, by Thy Mercy, O Most Merciful of the Merciful!"

Such is the rightly-guided creed, which conforms to be the Book and the Sunna. No male or female Muslim should be ignorant of it. Without affirming it one's faith is not sound. It is not a condition that every person should be able to articulate it fluently; rather, what counts is what lies in the heart.

[Source: This Aqeeda tu'l Islam (The Muslim Creed) forms the concluding chapter of one of the classics of Muslim spirituality titled An-Nasaaih id-Diniyya wa'l Wasaya al-Imaniyyah (Sincere Religious Advices and Counsels of Faith) of Sayyidunal Imam al-Habib Abdallah bin 'Alawi al-Haddad, Rady Allahu 'Anhu. His blessed descendant, **Sayyidunal Imam al-Habib Ahmad Mash-hur al-HaddadRady Allahu 'Anhu** included it as chapter 17 in his well-known classic **Miftahul Jannah(The Key To The Garden)**. The translation provided here is by **Dr. Mostafa al-Badawi.**]

Aqidah al-Tahawiyya

by

Imam Abu Ja'far al-Tahawi al-Hanafi (239-321 AH)

translated by **Iqbal Ahmad Azami**

Preface

In the Name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate

Imam Tahawi's al-'Aqidah, representative of the viewpoint of **ahl al-Sunnah wa-al-Jama'a**, has long been the most widely acclaimed, and indeed indispensable, reference work on Muslim beliefs, of which this is an edited English translation.

Imam Abu Ja'far Ahmad bin Muhammad bin Salamah bin Salmah bin `Abd al Malik bin Salmah bin Sulaim bin Sulaiman bin Jawab Azdi, popularly known as Imam Tahawi, after his birth-place in Egypt, is among the most outstanding authorities of the Islamic world on Hadith and fiqh (jurisprudence). He lived 239-321 A.H., an epoch when both the direct and indirect disciples of the four Imams: Imam Abu Hanifah, Imam Malik, Imam Shafi'i and Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal - were teaching and practicing. This period was the zenith of Hadith and fiqh studies, and Imam Tahawi studied with all the living authorities of the day. He began as a student of his maternal uncle, Isma'il bin Yahya Muzni, a leading disciple of Imam Shafi'i. Instinctively, however, Imam Tahawi felt drawn to the corpus of Imam Abu Hanifah's works. Indeed, he had seen his uncle and teacher turning to the works of Hanafi scholars to resolve thorny issues of Fiqh, drawing heavily on the writings of Imam Muhammad Ibn al-Hasan al-Shaybani and Imam Abu Yusuf, who had codified Hanafi fiqh. This led Imam Tahawi to devote his whole attention to studying the Hanafi works and he eventually joined the Hanafi school.

Imam Tahawi stands out not only as a prominent follower of the Hanafi school but, in view of his vast erudition and remarkable powers of assimilation, as one of its leading scholars. His monumental scholarly works, such as *Sharh Ma'ani al-Athar* and

Mushkil al-Athar, are encyclopaedic in scope and have long been regarded as indispensable for training students of fiqh.

Al-'Aqidah though small in size, is a basic text for all times, listing what a Muslim must know and believe and inwardly comprehend.

There is consensus among the Companions, Successors and all the leading Islamic authorities such as Imam Abu Hanifah, Imam Abu Yusuf, Imam Muhammad, Imam Malik, Imam Shafi'i and Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal on the doctrines enumerated in this work. For these doctrines shared by *ahl al-sunnah wa-al-Jama'ah* owe their origin to the Holy Quran and consistent and confirmed Ahadith - the undisputed primary sources of Islam.

Being a text on the Islamic doctrines, this work draws heavily on the arguments set forth in the Holy Qur'an and Sunnah. Likewise, the arguments advanced in refuting the views of sects that have deviated from the Sunnah, are also taken from the Holy Qur'an and Sunnah.

As regards the sects mentioned in this work, a study of Islamic history up to the time of Imam Tahawi would be quite helpful. References to sects such as Mu'tazilah, Jahmiyyah, Qadriyah, and Jabriyah are found in the work. Moreover, it contains allusions to the unorthodox and deviant views of the Shi'ah, Khawarij and such mystics as had departed from the right path. There is an explicit reference in the work to the nonsensical controversy on *khalq-al -Qu'ran* in the times of Ma'mun and some other `Abbasid Caliphs.

While the permanent relevance of the statements of belief in al-'Aqidah is obvious, the historical weight and point of certain of these statements can be properly appreciated only if the work is used as a text for study under the guidance of some learned person able to elucidate its arguments fully, with reference to the intellectual and historical background of the sects refuted in the work. Such study helps one to better understand the Islamic doctrines and avoid the deviations of the past or the present.

May Allah grant us a true understanding of faith and include us with those to whom Allah refers as 'those who believe, fear Allah and do good deeds'; and 'he who fears Allah, endures affliction, then Allah will not waste the reward of well-doers.'

Iqbal Ahmad A'zami

In the Name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate

Praise be to Allah, Lord of all the Worlds.

The great scholar Hujjat al-Islam Abu Ja'far al-Warraq al-Tahawi al-Misri, may Allah have mercy on him, said:

This is a presentation of the beliefs of ahl-al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah, according to the school of the jurists of this religion, Abu Hanifah an-Nu'man ibn Thabit al-Kufi, Abu Yusuf Ya'qub ibn Ibrahim al-Ansari and Abu `Abdullah Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Shaybani, may Allah be pleased with them all, and what they believe regarding the fundamentals of the religion and their faith in the Lord of all the Worlds.

1. We say about Allah's unity believing by Allah's help - that Allah is One, without any partners.
2. There is nothing like Him.
3. There is nothing that can overwhelm Him.
4. There is no god other than Him.
5. He is the Eternal without a beginning and enduring without end.
6. He will never perish or come to an end.
7. Nothing happens except what He wills.
8. No imagination can conceive of Him and no understanding can comprehend Him.
9. He is different from any created being.
10. He is living and never dies and is eternally active and never sleeps.
11. He creates without His being in need to do so and provides for His creation without any effort.
12. He causes death with no fear and restores to life without difficulty.
13. He has always existed together with His attributes since before creation. Bringing creation into existence did not add anything to His attributes that was not already there. As He was, together with His attributes, in pre-eternity, so He will remain throughout endless time.
14. It was not only after the act of creation that He could be described as 'the Creator' nor was it only by the act of origination that He could be described as 'the Originator'.
15. He was always the Lord even when there was nothing to be Lord of, and always the Creator even when there was no creation.
16. In the same way that He is the 'Bringer to life of the dead', after He has brought them to life a first time, and deserves this name before bringing them to life, so too He deserves the name of 'Creator' before He has created them.
17. This is because He has the power to do everything, everything is dependent on Him, everything is easy for Him, and He does not need anything. 'There is nothing like Him and He is the Hearer, the Seer'. (al-Shura 42:11)
18. He created creation with His knowledge.
19. He appointed destinies for those He created.
20. He allotted to them fixed life spans.

21. Nothing about them was hidden from Him before He created them, and He knew everything that they would do before He created them.
22. He ordered them to obey Him and forbade them to disobey Him.
23. Everything happens according to His decree and will, and His will is accomplished. The only will that people have is what He wills for them. What He wills for them occurs and what He does not will, does not occur.
24. He gives guidance to whoever He wills, and protects them, and keeps them safe from harm, out of His generosity; and He leads astray whoever He wills, and abases them, and afflicts them, out of His justice.
25. All of them are subject to His will between either His generosity or His justice.
26. He is exalted beyond having opposites or equals.
27. No one can ward off His decree or put back His command or overpower His affairs.
28. We believe in all of this and are certain that everything comes from Him.
29. And we are certain that Muhammad (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) is His chosen servant and selected Prophet and His Messenger with whom He is well pleased.
30. And that he is the seal of the prophets and the Imam of the godfearing and the most honoured of all the messengers and the beloved of the Lord of all the Worlds.
31. Every claim to prophethood after Him is falsehood and deceit.
32. He is the one who has been sent to all the jinn and all mankind with truth and guidance and with light and illumination.
33. The Qur'an is the word of Allah. It came from Him as speech without it being possible to say how. He sent it down on His Messenger as revelation. The believers accept it, as absolute truth. They are certain that it is, in truth, the word of Allah. It is not created, as is the speech of human beings, and anyone who hears it and claims that it is human speech has become an unbeliever. Allah warns him and censures him and threatens him with Fire when He says, Exalted is He:

'I will burn him in the Fire.' (al-Muddaththir 74:26)

When Allah threatens with the Fire those who say

'This is just human speech' (al-Muddaththir 74:25)

we know for certain that it is the speech of the Creator of mankind and that it is totally unlike the speech of mankind.

34. Anyone who describes Allah as being in any way the same as a human being has become an unbeliever. All those who grasp this will take heed and refrain from saying things such as the unbelievers say, and they will know that He, in His attributes, is not like human beings.
35. 'The Seeing of Allah by the People of the Garden' is true, without their vision being all-encompassing and without the manner of their vision being known. As the Book of our Lord has expressed it:

`Faces on that Day radiant, looking at their Lord'. (al-Qiyamah 75:22-3)

The explanation of this is as Allah knows and wills. Everything that has come down to us about this from the Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, in authentic traditions, is as he said and means what he intended. We do not delve into that, trying to interpret it according to our own opinions or letting our imaginations have free rein. No one is safe in his religion unless he surrenders himself completely to Allah, the Exalted and Glorified and to His Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and leaves the knowledge of things that are ambiguous to the one who knows them.

36. A man's Islam is not secure unless it is based on submission and surrender. Anyone who desires to know things which it is beyond his capacity to know, and whose intellect is not content with surrender, will find that his desire veils him from a pure understanding of Allah's true Unity, clear knowledge and correct belief, and that he veers between disbelief and belief, confirmation and denial and acceptance and rejection. He will be subject to whisperings and find himself confused and full of doubt, being neither an accepting believer nor a denying rejector.
37. Belief of a man in the `seeing of Allah by the people of the Garden is not correct if he imagines what it is like, or interprets it according to his own understanding since the interpretation of this seeing' or indeed, the meaning of any of the subtle phenomena which are in the realm of Lordship, is by avoiding its interpretation and strictly adhering to the submission. `This is the din of Muslims. Anyone who does not guard himself against negating the attributes of Allah, or likening Allah to something else, has gone astray and has failed to understand Allah's Glory, because our Lord, the Glorified and the Exalted, can only possibly be described in terms of Oneness and Absolute Singularity and no creation is in any way like Him.
38. He is beyond having limits placed on Him, or being restricted, or having parts or limbs. Nor is He contained by the six directions as all created things are.
39. Al-Mi'raj (the Ascent through the heavens) is true. The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was taken by night and ascended in his bodily form, while awake, through the heavens, to whatever heights Allah willed for him. Allah ennobled him in the way that He ennobled him and revealed to him what He revealed to him,

`and his heart was not mistaken about what it saw' (al-Najm 53:11).

Allah blessed him and granted him peace in this world and the next.

40. Al-Hawd, (the Pool which Allah will grant the Prophet as an honour to quench the thirst of His Ummah on the Day Of Judgement), is true.
41. Al-Shifa'ah, (the intercession, which is stored up for Muslims), is true, as related in the (consistent and confirmed) Ahadith.
42. The covenant `which Allah made with Adam and his offspring' is true.

43. Allah knew, before the existence of time, the exact number of those who would enter the Garden and the exact number of those who would enter the Fire. This number will neither be increased nor decreased.
44. The same applies to all actions done by people, which are done exactly as Allah knew they would be done. Everyone is cased to what he was created for and it is the action with which a man's life is sealed which dictates his fate. Those who are fortunate are fortunate by the decree of Allah, and those who are wretched are wretched by the decree of Allah.
45. The exact nature of the decree is Allah's secret in His creation, and no angel near the Throne, nor Prophet sent with a message, has been given knowledge of it. Delving into it and reflecting too much about it only leads to destruction and loss, and results in rebelliousness. So be extremely careful about thinking and reflecting on this matter or letting doubts about it assail you, because Allah has kept knowledge of the decree away from human beings, and forbidden them to enquire about it, saying in His Book,

'He is not asked about what He does but they are asked'. (al-Anbiya' 21:23)

So anyone who asks: 'Why did Allah do that?' has gone against a judgement of the Book, and anyone who goes against a judgement of the Book is an unbeliever.

46. This in sum is what those of Allah's friends with enlightened hearts need to know and constitutes the degree of those firmly endowed with knowledge. For there are two kinds of knowledge: knowledge which is accessible to created beings, and knowledge which is not accessible to created beings. Denying the knowledge which is accessible is disbelief, and claiming the knowledge which is inaccessible is disbelief. Belief can only be firm when accessible knowledge is accepted and inaccessible knowledge is not sought after.
47. We believe in al-Lawh (the Tablet) and al-Qalam (the Pen) and in everything written on it. Even if all created beings were to gather together to make something fail to exist, whose existence Allah had written on the Tablet, they would not be able to do so. And if all created beings were to gather together to make something exist which Allah had not written on it, they would not be able to do so. The Pen has dried having written down all that will be in existence until the Day of Judgement. Whatever a person has missed he would have never got it, and whatever one gets, he would have never missed it.
48. It is necessary for the servant to know that Allah already knows everything that is going to happen in His creation and decreed it in a detailed and decisive way. There is nothing that He has created in either the heavens or the earth that can contradict it, or add to it, or erase it, or change it, or decrease it, or increase it in any way. This is a fundamental aspect of belief and a necessary element of all knowledge and recognition of Allah's Oneness and Lordship. As Allah says in His Book:

'He created everything and decreed it in a detailed way'. (al-Furqan 25:2)

And He also says:

'Allah's command is always a decided decree'. (al-Ahzab 33:38)

So woe to anyone who argues with Allah concerning the decree and who, with a sick heart, starts delving into this matter. In his delusory attempt to investigate the Unseen, he is seeking a secret that can never be uncovered, and he ends up an evil-doer, telling nothing but lies.

49. Al-'Arsh (the Throne) and al-Kursi (the Chair) are true.
50. He is independent of the Throne and what is beneath it.
51. He encompasses everything and is above it, and what He has created is incapable of encompassing Him.
52. We say with belief, acceptance and submission that Allah took Ibrahim as an intimate friend and that He spoke directly to Musa.
53. We believe in the angels, and the Prophets, and the books which were revealed to the messengers, and we bear witness that they were all following the manifest Truth.
54. We call the people of our qiblah Muslims and believers as long as they acknowledge what the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, brought, and accept as true everything that he said and told us about.
55. We do not enter into vain talk about Allah nor do we allow any dispute about the religion Of Allah.
56. We do not argue about the Qur'an and we bear witness that it is the speech of the Lord of all the Worlds which the Trustworthy Spirit came down with and taught the most honoured Of all the Messengers, Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. It is the speech of Allah and no speech of any created being is comparable to it. We do not say that it was created and we do not go against the Jama'ah of the Muslims regarding it.
57. We do not consider any of the people of our qiblah to be unbelievers because of any wrong action they have done, as long as they do not consider that action to have been lawful.
58. Nor do we say that the wrong action of a man who has belief does not have a harmful effect on him.
59. We hope that Allah will pardon the people of right action among the believers and grant them entrance into the Garden through His mercy, but we cannot be certain of this, and we cannot bear witness that it will definitely happen and that they will be in the Garden. We ask forgiveness for the people of wrong action among the believers and, although we are afraid for them, we are not in despair about them.
60. Certainty and despair both remove one from the religion, but the path of truth for the people of the qiblah lies between the two (e.g. a person must fear and be conscious of Allah's reckoning as well as be hopeful of Allah's mercy).
61. A person does not step out of belief except by disavowing what brought him into it.
62. Belief consists of affirmation by the tongue and acceptance by the heart.

63. And the whole of what is proven from the Prophet, upon him be peace, regarding the Shari'ah and the explanation (of the Qur'an and of Islam) is true.
64. Belief is, at base, the same for everyone, but the superiority of some over others in it is due to their fear and awareness of Allah, their opposition to their desires, and their choosing what is more pleasing to Allah.
65. All the believers are 'friends' of Allah and the noblest of them in the sight of Allah are those who are the most obedient and who most closely follow the Qur'an.
66. Belief consists of belief in Allah. His angels, His books, His messengers, the Last Day, and belief that the Decree - both the good of it and the evil of it, the sweet of it and the bitter or it - is all from Allah.
67. We believe in all these things. We do not make any distinction between any of the messengers, we accept as true what all of them brought.
68. Those of the Ummah of Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, who have committed grave sins will be in the Fire, but not forever, provided they die and meet Allah as believers affirming His unity even if they have not repented. They are subject to His will and judgement. If He wants, He will forgive them and pardon them out of His generosity, as is mentioned in the Qur'an when He says:

'And He forgives anything less than that (shirk) to whoever He wills' (al-Nisa' 4: 116);

and if He wants, He will punish them in the Fire out of His justice and then bring them out of the Fire through His mercy, and for the intercession of those who were obedient to Him, and send them to the Garden. This is because Allah is the Protector of those who recognize Him and will not treat them in the Next World in the same way as He treats those who deny Him and who are bereft of His guidance and have failed to obtain His protection. O Allah, You are the Protector of Islam and its people; make us firm in Islam until the day we meet You.

69. We agree with doing the prayer behind any of the people of the qiblah whether right-acting or wrong-acting, and doing the funeral prayer over any of them when they die.
70. We do not say that any of them will categorically go to either the Garden or the Fire, and we do not accuse any of them of kufr (disbelief), shirk (associating partners with Allah), or nifaq (hypocrisy), as long as they have not openly demonstrated any of those things. We leave their secrets to Allah.
71. We do not agree with killing any of the Ummah of Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, unless it is obligatory by Shari'ah to do so.
72. We do not recognize rebellion against our Imam or those in charge of our affairs even if they are unjust, nor do we wish evil on them, nor do we withdraw from following them. We hold that obedience to them is part of obedience to Allah, The Glorified, and therefore obligatory as long as they do not order to commit sins. We pray for their right guidance and pardon from their wrongs.

73. We follow the Sunnah of the Prophet and the Jama'ah of the Muslims, and avoid deviation, differences and divisions.
74. We love the people of justice and trustworthiness, and hate the people of injustice and treachery.
75. When our knowledge about something is unclear, we say: 'Allah knows best'.
76. We agree with wiping over leather socks (in Wudu) whether on a journey or otherwise, just as has come in the (consistent and confirmed) ahadith.
77. Hajj and jihad under the leadership of those in charge of the Muslims, whether they are right or wrong-acting, are continuing obligations until the Last Hour comes. Nothing can annul or controvert them.
78. We believe in Kiraman Katibin (the noble angels) who write down our actions for Allah has appointed them over us as two guardians.
79. We believe in the Angel of Death who is charged with taking the spirits of all the worlds.
80. We believe in the punishment in the grave for those who deserve it, and in the questioning in the grave by Munkar and Nakir about one's Lord, one's religion and one's prophet, as has come down in ahadith from the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and in reports from the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them all.
81. The grave is either one of the meadows of the Garden or one of the pits of the Fire.
82. We believe in being brought back to life after death and in being recompensed for our actions on the Day of Judgement, and al-'Ard, having been shown them and al-Hisab, brought to account for them. And Qira'at al-Kitab, reading the book, and the reward or punishments and in al-Sirat (the Bridge) and al-Mizan (the Balance).
83. The Garden and the Fire are created things that never come to an end and we believe that Allah created them before the rest of creation and then created people to inhabit each of them. Whoever He wills goes to the Garden out of His Bounty and whoever He wills goes to the Fire through His justice. Everybody acts in accordance with what is destined for him and goes towards what he has been created for.
84. Good and evil have both been decreed for people.
85. The capability in terms of Tawfiq (Divine Grace and Favour) which makes an action certain to occur cannot be ascribed to a created being. This capability is integral with action, whereas the capability of an action in terms of having the necessary health, and ability, being in a position to act and having the necessary means, exists in a person before the action. It is this type of capability which is the object of the dictates of Shariah. Allah the Exalted says:

'Allah does not charge a person except according to his ability'. (al-Baqarah 2: 286)

86. People's actions are created by Allah but earned by people.
87. Allah, the Exalted, has only charged people with what they are able to do and people are only capable to do what Allah has favoured them. This is the

- explanation of the phrase: 'There is no power and no strength except by Allah.'
 We add to this that there is no stratagem or way by which anyone can avoid or escape disobedience to Allah except with Allah's help; nor does anyone have the strength to put obedience to Allah into practice and remain firm in it, except if Allah makes it possible for them to do so.
88. Everything happens according to Allah's will, knowledge, predestination and decree. His will overpowers all other wills and His decree overpowers all stratagems. He does whatever He wills and He is never unjust. He is exalted in His purity above any evil or perdition and He is perfect far beyond any fault or flaw. 'He will not be asked about what He does but they will be asked.' (al-Anbiya' 21: 23)
 89. There is benefit for dead people in the supplication and alms-giving of the living.
 90. Allah responds to people's supplications and gives them what they ask for.
 91. Allah has absolute control over everything and nothing has any control over Him. Nothing can be independent of Allah even for the blinking of an eye, and whoever considers himself independent of Allah for the blinking of an eye is guilty of unbelief and becomes one of the people of perdition.
 92. Allah is angered and can be pleased but not in the same way as any creature.
 93. We love the Companions of the Messenger of Allah but we do not go to excess in our love for any one individual among them nor do we disown any one of them. We hate anyone who hates them or does not speak well of them and we only speak well of them. Love of them is a part of Islam, part of belief and part of excellent behaviour, while hatred of them is unbelief, hypocrisy and rebelliousness.
 94. We confirm that, after the death of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, the caliphate went first to Abu Bakr al-Siddiq, may Allah be pleased with him, thus proving his excellence and superiority over the rest of the Muslims; then to 'Umar ibn al-Khattab, may Allah be pleased with him; then to 'Uthman, may Allah be pleased with him; and then to 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, may Allah be pleased with him. These are the Rightly-Guided Caliphs and upright leaders.
 95. We bear witness that the ten who were named by the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and who were promised the Garden by him, will be in the Garden, as the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, whose word is truth, bore witness that they would be. The ten are: Abu Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthman, 'Ali, Talhah, Zubayr, Sa'd, Sa'id, 'Abdur-Rahman ibn 'Awf and Abu 'Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrah whose title was the trustee of this Ummah, may Allah be pleased with all of them.
 96. Anyone who speaks well of the Companions of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and his wives and offspring, who are all pure and untainted by any impurity, is free from the accusation of hypocrisy.
 97. The learned men of the first community and those who followed in their footsteps - the people of virtue, the narrators of the Ahadith, the jurists and analysts- they must only be spoken about in the best way and anyone who says anything bad about them is not on the right path.

98. We do not prefer any of the saintly men among the Ummah over any of the Prophets but rather we say that any one of the Prophets is better than all the awliya' put together.
99. We believe in what we know of Karamat, the marvels of the awliya' and in authentic stories about them from trustworthy sources.
100. We believe in the signs of the Hour such as the appearance of the Dajjal and the descent of `Isa ibn Maryam, peace be upon him, from heaven and we believe in the rising of the sun from where it sets and in the emergence of the Beast from the earth.
101. We do not accept as true what soothsayers and fortune-tellers say, nor do we accept the claims of those who affirm anything which goes against the Book, the Sunnah and the consensus of the Muslim Ummah.
102. We agree that holding together is the true and right path and that separation is deviation and torment.
103. There is only one religion of Allah in the heavens and the earth and that is the religion of Islam. Allah says:

`Surely religion in the sight of Allah is Islam'. (Al `Imran 3:19)

And He also says:

`I am pleased with Islam as a religion for you'. (al-Matidah 5:3)

104. Islam lies between going to excess and falling short, between Tashbih (likening of Allah's attributes to anything else), and Tatil (denying Allah's attributes), between fatalism and refusing decree as proceeding from Allah and between certainty (without being conscious of Allah's reckoning) and despair (of Allah's mercy).
105. This is our religion and it is what we believe in, both inwardly and outwardly, and we renounce any connection, before Allah, with anyone who goes against what we have said and made clear.

We ask Allah to make us firm in our belief and seal our lives with it and to protect us from variant ideas, scattering opinions and evil schools of view such as those of the Mushabbihah, the Mu'tazilah, the Jahmiyyah the Jabriyah, the Qadriyah and others like them who go against the Sunnah and Jama'ah and have allied themselves with error. We renounce any connection with them and in our opinion they are in error and on the path of destruction.

We ask Allah to protect us from all falsehood and we ask His Grace and Favour to do all good.

Who is Imam Maturidi?

Answered by Shaykh Gibril F Haddad

Q.

Who is Imam Maturidi? Can you explain short his Mission and his Life.

A.



Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Mahmud Abu Mansur al-Samarqandi al-Maturidi al-Hanafi (d. 333) of Maturid in Samarqand, Shaykh al-Islam, one of the two foremost Imams of the mutakallimûn of Ahl al-Sunna, known in his time as the Imam of Guidance (Imâm al-Hudâ), he studied under Abu Nasr al-`Ayadi and Abu Bakr Ahmad al-Jawzajani. Among his senior students were `Ali ibn Sa`id Abu al-Hasan al-Rustughfani,<sup>1</sup> Abu Muhammad `Abd al-Karim ibn Musa ibn `Isa al-Bazdawi, and Abu al-Qasim Ishaq ibn Muhammad al-Hakim al-Samarqandi. He excelled in refuting the Mu`tazila in Transoxiana while his contemporary Abu al-Hasan al-Ash`ari did the same in Basra and Baghdad. He died in Samarqand where he lived most of his life. The founder of the Egyptian Muniriyya Salafiyya Press, Munir `Abduh Agha wrote:

"There is not much [doctrinal] difference between Ash`aris and Maturidis, hence both groups are now called Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jama`a."²

Al-Maturidi surpasses Imam al-Tahawi as a transmitter and commentator of Imam Abu Hanifa's legacy in kalâm. Both al-Maturidi and al-Tahawi followed Abu Hanifa and his companions in the position that belief (al-îmân) consists in "conviction in the heart and affirmation by the tongue," without adding, as do Malik, al-Shafi`i, Ahmad ibn Hanbal and their schools, "practice with the limbs." Al-Maturidi, as also related from Abu Hanifa, went so far as to declare that the foundation of belief consisted only in conviction in the heart, the tongue's affirmation being a supplementary integral or pillar (rukhn zâ'id).³

Among al-Maturidi's works:

* Kitab al-Tawhid on the doctrine of Ahl al-Sunna. In it he states the following:

"The Muslims differ concerning Allah's place. Some have claimed that Allah is described as being 'established over the Throne' (`alâ al-`arshi mustawin), and the Throne for them is a dais (sarîr) carried by the angels and surrounded by them [as in the verses]: {And eight will uphold the Throne of their Lord that day, above them} (69:17) and {And you see the angels thronging round the Throne} (39:75) and {Those who bear the Throne, and all who are round about it} (40:7). They adduced as a proof for that position His saying:

{The Merciful established Himself over the Throne} (20:5) and the fact that people raise their hands toward the heaven in their supplications and whatever graces they are hoping for. They also say that He moved there after not being there at first, on the basis of the verse {Then He established Himself over the Throne} (57:4).

"Others say that He is in every place because He said {There is no secret conference of three but He is their fourth, nor of five but He is their sixth, nor of less than that or more but He is with them wheresoever they may be} (58:7), and {We are nearer to him than his jugular vein} (50:16) and {And We are nearer unto him than ye are, but ye see not} (56:85) and {And He it is Who in the heaven is God, and in the earth God} (43:84). This group consider that to say that He is in one place at the exclusion of another necessitate a limit for Him, and that every limited object comes short of whatever is greater than it, which would constitute a disgraceful defect. Further, they consider that to be in one place necessitates need to that place together with the necessity of boundaries....

"Others deny the ascription of place to Allah, whether one place or every place, except in the metaphorical senses that He preserves them and causes them to exist.

"Shaykh Abu Mansur [al-Maturidi] - may Allah have mercy on him - says: The sum of all this is that the predication of all things to Him and His predication - may He be exalted! - to them is along the lines of His description in terms of exaltation (*`uluw*) and loftiness (*rif'a*), and in terms of extolment (*ta'zîm*) and majesty (*jalâl*), as in His saying: {the Sovereignty of the heavens and the earth} (2:107, 3:189, 5:17-18, 5:40 etc.) {Lord of the heavens and the earth} (13:16, 17:102, 18:14, 19:65, etc.), "God of all creation" (*ilâh al-khalq*), Lord of the worlds (1:2, 5:28, 6:45, 6:162, 7:54, etc.), "above everything" (*fawqa kulli shay'*) and so forth. As for the predication of specific objects to Him, it is along the lines of His specific attribution with generosity (*al-karâma*), high rank (*al-manzila*), and immense favor (*al-tafdîl*) for what is essentially meant to refer to Him, as in His sayings {Lo! Allah is with those who keep their duty unto Him} (16:128), {And the places of worship are only for Allah} (72:18), {The she-camel of Allah} (7:73, 11:64, 91:13), "The House of Allah" (*bayt Allâh*), and other similar instances. None of these examples is understood in the same way as the predication of created object to one another....

"Abu Mansur - may Allah have mercy on him! - further says: The foundation of this issue is that Allah Almighty was when there was no place, then locations were raised while He remains exactly as He ever was. Therefore, He is as He ever was and He ever was as He is now. Exalted is He beyond any change or transition or movement or cessation! For all these are portents of contingency (*hudth*) by which the contingent nature of the world can be known, and the proofs of its eventual passing away....

"Furthermore [concerning the claim that Allah is on the Throne], there is not, in the context of spatial elevation, any particular merit to sitting or standing, nor exaltation, nor any quality of magnificence and splendor. For example, someone standing higher than roofs or mountains does not deservedly acquire loftiness over someone who is below him spatially when their essence is identical. Therefore, it is not permissible to interpret away

the verse [20:5] in that sense, when it is actually pointing to magnificence and majesty. For He has said {Verily, it is your Lord Who created the heavens and the earth} (7:54, 10:3, 21:56) thereby pointing to the extolment of the Throne, which is something created of light, or a substance [or jewel] the reality of which is beyond the knowledge of creatures. It was narrated that the Prophet - Allah bless and greet him - while describing the sun, said: "Gibrîl brings it, in his hand, some of the light of the Throne with which he clothes it just as one of you wears his clothes, and so every day that it rises"; he also mentioned that the moon receives a handful of the light of the Throne.⁴ Therefore, the predication of istiwa' to the Throne is along two lines: first, its extolment in the light of all that He said concerning His authority in Lordship and over creatures; second, its specific mention as the greatest and loftiest of all objects in creation, in keeping with the customary predication of magnificent matters to magnificent objects, just as it is said: "So-and-so has achieved sovereignty over such-and-such a country, and has established himself over such-and-such a region." This is not to restrict the meaning of this sovereignty literally, but only to say that it is well-known that whoever owns sovereignty over this, then whatever lies below it is meant a fortiori."⁵

* Kitab Radd Awa'il al-Adilla, a refutation of the Mu'tazili al-Ka'bi's book entitled Awa'il al-Adilla;

* Radd al-Tahdhib fi al-Jadal, another refutation of al-Ka'bi;⁶

* Kitab Bayan Awham al-Mu'tazila;

* Kitab Ta'wilat al-Qur'an ("Book of the Interpretations of the Qur'an"), of which Ibn Abi al-Wafa' said: "No book rivals it, indeed no book even comes near it among those who preceded him in this discipline."⁷ Hajji Khalifa cites it as Ta'wilat Ahl al-Sunna and quotes as follows al-Maturidi's definition of the difference between "explanation" (tafsîr) and "interpretation" (ta'wîl):

"Tafsîr is the categorical conclusion (al-qat') that the meaning of the term in question is this, and the testimony before Allah Almighty that this is what He meant by the term in question; while ta'wîl is the preferment (tarjîh) of one of several possibilities without categorical conclusion nor testimony."⁸

* Kitab al-Maqalat;

* Ma'akhidh al-Shara'i' in Usul al-Fiqh;

* Al-Jadal fi Usul al-Fiqh;

* Radd al-Usul al-Khamsa, a refutation of Abu Muhammad al-Bahili's exposition of the Five Principles of the Mu'tazila;⁹

* Radd al-Imama, a refutation of the Shi'i conception of the office of Imam;

* Al-Radd `ala Usul al-Qaramita;

* Radd Wa'id al-Fussaq, a refutation of the Mu'tazili doctrine that all grave sinners among the Muslims are doomed to eternal Hellfire.

Most of the Hanafi school follows al-Maturidi in doctrine, but he evidently achieved lesser fame than al-Ash'ari because the latter entered into countless debates to defeat the opponents of Ahl al-Sunna while al-Maturidi, as Imam al-Kawthari said, "lived in an environment in which innovators had no power." The absence of a notice on Imam Abu Mansur al-Maturidi in al-Dhahabi's Siyar is a major omission in that masterpiece of biographical history.

NOTES

1He narrated from Imam Abu Hanifa the saying: kullu mujtahidin musibun wa al-haqqu `inda Allâhi wâhid which means "Every scholar who strives [towards truth] is correct [whatever his finding], even if the truth in Allah's presence is one." Accordingly, al-Rustughfani differed with al-Maturidi who considered that the mujtahid is wrong in his ijtihâd if his finding differs from the truth. Ibn Abi al-Wafa', Tabaqat al-Hanafiyya (p. 310, 362-363).

2In Namudhaj min al-A'mal al-Khayriyya (p. 134).

3Al-Tahawi, `Aqida §62: "Belief consists in affirmation by the tongue and acceptance by the heart." See "Ibn Abi al-`Izz," Sharh al-`Aqida al-Tahawiyya (4th ed. p. 373-374, 9th ed. p. 332). See also Risala Abi Hanifa ila `Uthman al-Batti in `Abd al-Fattah Abu Ghudda, Namadhij (p. 21-28).

4Something similar is narrated - without naming the angel - as part of a very long hadith from Ibn `Abbas by Abu al-Shaykh with a very weak chain in al-`Azama (4:1163-1179). Another hadith states: "The Messenger of Allah - Allah bless and greet him - told me that the sun, the moon, and the stars were created from the light of the Throne." Narrated from Anas by Abu al-Shaykh in al-`Azama (4:1140). See also al-Suyuti's al-Haba'ik fi Akhbar al-Mala'ik.

5Al-Maturidi, Kitab al-Tawhid (p. 72).

6Cf. Hajji Khalifa, Kashf al-Zunun (1:518).

7Ibn Abi al-Wafa', al-Jawahir al-Mudiyya (p. 130).

8In Hajji Khalifa, Kashf al-Zunun (1:334-335).

9The "Five Principles" of the Mu'tazila are:

1. Tawhîd entailing a denial of the Divine "Attributes of Meanings" (sifât al-ma'ânî) and of the vision of Allah Most High by the believers in the next world - although both tenets are mentioned in the Qur'an;

2. 'Adl or Divine Justice, entailing the position that Allah Most High cannot possibly create the evil deeds of His servants, therefore they are in charge of their own destinies and create the latter themselves through a power which Allah deposited in them - a denial of the verse {Allah creates you and what you do} (37:95);

3. Reward and Punishment, entailing the belief that Allah Most High, of necessity, rewards those who do good and punishes those who do evil, and He does not forgive grave sinners unless they repent before death, even if they are Muslims - a denial of the verses that state explicitly that Allah forgives whom He wills and punishes whom He wills and a denial of the intercession of the Prophet - Allah bless and greet him - for grave sinners among the Muslims;

4. Belief, whereby they held that grave sinners were considered neither believers nor disbelievers and so construed for them a "half-way status" between the two (al-manzila bayn al-manzilatayn) in Hellfire;

5. Commanding good and forbidding evil is obligatory upon the believers, and this is the sole principle in which they are in agreement with the majority of Muslims.

Wallahu ta'ala a'lam wa ahkam.

Main sources:

Al-Lacknawi, al-Fawa'id al-Bahiyya fi Tarajim al-Hanafiyya p. 319-320 #412; Ibn Abi al-Wafa', al-Jawahir al-Mudiyya fi Tabaqat al-Hanafiyya p. 130, 310, 362-363; Al-Kawthari, introduction to al-Bayadi's Isharat al-Maram.

Allah bless and greet our Master Muhammad, his Family, and all his Companions.

Kalam and Islam

Shaykh Nuh Ha Mim Keller

Most of us have met dedicated and otherwise intelligent Muslims who have made themselves "aqida police" to confront the rest of us with their issues in tenets of faith. We are told that this group, or that group, or most Muslims, or we ourselves are kafirs or "non-Muslims" on grounds that are less than familiar, but found in some manual of Islamic creed. Before going to hell on a trick question, or sending someone else there, many Muslims today would do well to cast a glance at the history of traditional Islamic theology (*kalam*), and the real creedal reasons that make one a Muslim or non-Muslim. Nuh Keller examines them in the following address given at the Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought in Amman, Jordan.

Few would deny today that the millions of dollars spent worldwide on religious books, teachers, and schools in the last thirty years by oil-rich governments have brought about a sea change in the way Muslims view Islam. In whole regions of the Islamic world and Western countries where Muslims live, what was called Wahhabism in earlier times and termed Salafism in our own has supplanted much of traditional Islamic faith and practice. The very name Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jama'a or "Sunni orthodoxy and consensus" has been so completely derailed in our times that few Muslims even know it is rolling down another track. In most countries, Salafism is the new "default Islam," defining all religious discourse, past and present, by the understanding of a few Hanbali scholars of the Middle Ages whose works historically affected the tribes and lands where the most oil has been found. Among the more prominent casualties of this "reform" are the Hanbalis' ancient foes, the Ash'ari and Maturidi schools of Sunni theology.

For over a thousand years Ash'ari-Maturidi theology has defined Sunni orthodoxy. When I visited al-Azhar in Cairo in 1990 and requested for my library the entire syllabus of religious textbooks taught by Azhar High Schools in Egypt, one of the books I was given was a manual on Islamic sects, whose final section defined Ahl al-Sunna as "the Ash'aris, followers of Abul Hasan al-Ash'ari, and the Maturidis, followers of Abu Mansur al-Maturidi" (Mudhakkara al-firaq, 14).

This is not an isolated assessment. When the Imam of the late Shafi'i school Ibn Hajr al-Haytami was asked for a fatwa identifying *ashab al-bida'* or heretics, he answered that they were "those who contravene Muslim orthodoxy and consensus (Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jama'a): the followers of Sheikh Abul Hasan al-Ash'ari and Abu Mansur al-Maturidi, the two Imams of Ahl al-Sunna" (al-Fatawa al-hadithiyya, 280).

Few Muslims today know anything about the Ash'ari and Maturidi schools or their relation to Islam. So I shall discuss their theology not as history, but as orthodoxy, answering the most basic questions about them such as: What are the beliefs of Sunni Islam? Who needs rational theology anyway? And what relevance does it have today? We mention only enough history to understand what brought it into being, what it said, what it developed into, what its critics said of it, and what the future may hold for it.

I.

Islamic theology is based on an ethical rather than speculative imperative. Many Qur'anic verses and hadiths show that *iman* or "true faith" is obligatory and rewarded by paradise, and that *kufir* or "unbelief" is wrong and punished by hell. Every Muslim must know certain matters of faith, be convinced of them himself, and not merely imitate others who believe in them. The faith God requires of man is expressed in the words:

"The Messenger believes in what has been revealed to him from his Lord, as do the believers. Each believes in Allah, His angels, His books, and His messengers. We do not differentiate between any of His messengers, and they say: We hear and obey, O Lord grant us Your forgiveness, and unto You is the final becoming"
(Qur'an 2:285).

This verse defines the believer as someone who believes in the Prophet's revelation (ﷺ Allah bless him and give him peace) in general and in detail. The details have to be known to be believed, for as Allah says, **"Allah does not tax any soul except in its capacity"** (Qur'an 2:286), and it is not in one's capacity to believe something unless it is both known to one and not unbelievable, meaning not absurd or self-contradictory. Moreover, "belief" means holding something to be true, not merely believing what one's forefathers or group believe, such that if they handed down something else, one would believe that instead. That is, "belief" by blind imitation without reference to truth or falsity is not belief at all. Allah specifically condemns those who reject the message of Islam for this reason, by saying:

"When they are told: 'Come to what Allah has revealed, and to the Messenger,' they say, 'It suffices us what we found our forefathers upon' – But what if their forefathers knew nothing, and were not guided?"
(Qur'an 5:104).

In short, Islamic *kalam* theology exists because belief in Islam demands three things:

- (1) to define the contents of faith;
- (2) to show that it is possible for the mind to accept, not absurd or inconsistent;
- (3) and to give reasons to be personally convinced of it.

"Very well," one may say, "these are valid aims, but what proof is there that rational argument, the specific means adopted by traditional theology, is valid or acceptable in matters of faith?" – to which the first answer is that the Qur'an itself uses rational argument; while the second is that nothing else would have met the historical threat to Islam of Jahm and the Mu'tazila, the aberrant schools who were obligatory for Ash'ari and Maturidi to defeat.

The Qur'anic proof is the verse

"Allah has not begotten a son, nor is there any god besides Him, for otherwise, each would have taken what they created and overcome the other – how exalted is Allah above what they describe!" (Qur'an 23:91), whose premises and conclusion are: (a) a "god" means a being with an omnipotent will; (b) the omnipotent will of more than one such being would impose a limit on the omnipotence of the other, which is absurd; (c) God is therefore one, and has not begotten a son, nor is there any god besides Him.

A second proof is in the Qur'anic verse

"Were there other gods in [the heavens and earth] besides Allah, [the heavens and earth] would have come to ruin" (Qur'an 21:22), whose argument may be summarized as:

- (a) a "god" means a being with an omnipotent will, to whom everything in the universe is thus subject;
- (b) if the universe were subject to a number of omnipotent gods, its fabric would be disrupted by the exercise of their several wills, while no such disruption is evident in the universe;
- (c) God is therefore one, and there are no other gods.

The historical proof for rational argument – unmentioned in *kalam* literature but perhaps even more cogent than either of the Qur'anic proofs just mentioned – is that nothing else could meet the crisis that Ash'ari and Maturidi faced; namely, the heretical mistakes of the two early proto-schools of *'aqida*, the Jahmiyya and the Mu'tazila. We say "nothing else" because a chess player cannot be defeated by playing checkers, and the only way to refute the arguments of the Jahmiyya and of the Mu'tazila was by intellectual means. Mere political suppression would have but hardened their party spirit into sectarian obstinacy, so it was necessary to defeat them with rational argument.

II.

The challenge facing Abul Hasan al-Ash'ari and Abu Mansur al-Maturidi was thus threefold: (1) to define the tenets of faith of Islam and refute innovation; (2) to show that this faith was acceptable to the mind and not absurd or inconsistent; and (3) to give proofs that personally convinced the believer of it. Though not originally obligatory itself, *kalam* became so when these aims could not be accomplished for the Muslim polity without it, in view of the Islamic legal principle that "whatever the obligatory cannot be accomplished without is itself obligatory." As we have seen, the specific form of the response, rational argument, was used by the Qur'an, mandated by human reason, and necessitated by history. We now turn to the concrete form of the response, which was the traditional tenets of faith (*'aqida*) of the two schools, after which we will look at how the response was conditioned by their historical predecessors, the Jahmiyya and Mu'tazila schools.

III.

The heart of traditional *kalam* theology is that – after the *shahada* "there is no god but Allah and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah," and after acknowledging Allah's infinite perfections and transcendence above any imperfection – it is obligatory for every Muslim to know what is (a) necessarily true, (b) impossible, or (c) possible to affirm of both Allah and the prophets (upon whom be peace). These three categories traditionally subsume some fifty tenets of faith.

(a) The twenty attributes necessarily true of Allah are His (1) existence; (2) not beginning; (3) not ending; (4) self-subsistence, meaning not needing any place or determinant to exist; (5) dissimilarity to created things; (6) uniqueness, meaning having no partner (*sharik*) in His entity, attributes, or actions; (7) omnipotent power; (8) will; (9) knowledge; (10) life; (11) hearing; (12) sight; (13) speech; such that He is (14) al-mighty; (15) all-willing; (16) all-knowing; (17) living; (18) all-hearing; (19) all-seeing; (20) and speaking – through His attributes of power, will, knowledge, life, hearing, sight, and speech, not merely through His being.

(b) The twenty attributes necessarily impossible of Allah (2140) are the opposites of the previous twenty, such as nonexistence, beginning, ending, and so on.

(c) The one attribute merely possible of Allah (41) is that He may create or destroy any possible thing.

The attributes of the prophets (upon whom be peace) similarly fall under the three headings:

(a) The four attributes necessarily true of the prophets (4245) are telling the truth, keeping their trust, conveying to mankind everything they were ordered to, and intelligence.

(b) The four attributes necessarily impossible of them (4649) are the opposites of the previous four, namely lying, treachery, concealing what they were ordered to reveal, and feeble-mindedness.

(c) The one attribute possible of them (50) is any human state that does not detract from their rank, such as eating, sleeping, marrying, and illnesses not repellant to others; although Allah protected them from every offensive physical trait and everything unbecoming them, keeping them from both lesser sins and enormities, before their prophethood and thereafter.

When one reflects on these fifty fundamental tenets of faith, which students memorized over the centuries, it is not difficult to understand why Ash'ari-Maturidi *kalam* was identified with Islamic orthodoxy for over a millennium; namely, they are the tenets of the Qur'an and sunna.

IV.

We find however in the history of *kalam* that authors sometimes urged the distinctive doctrines of their school, particularly against opponents, as if they were basic principles of Islam. Now, "basic principles" are what every Muslim must know and believe as a

Muslim, while "distinctive doctrines" may include virtually any point that controversy has brought into prominence. The two are not necessarily the same.

A number of points of *`aqida* were not originally central to the faith of Islam, but entered the canon of "orthodoxy" by celebrity acquired through debate among schools. To take but one point for example: the question of "whether man is obligated to know God by revelation or whether by human reason alone" has been treated by Ahl al-Sunna, Mu'tazila, and Jahmiyya theologians as a point of *`aqida*, though it does not personally concern one single Muslim – for all Muslims know Allah through the revelation of the Qur'an – but rather concerns Allah's own judgement of human beings who have never been reached by the Islamic revelation, a judgement Allah is unlikely to consult anyone else about, whether believer or unbeliever. Something so devoid of practical consequences for Muslims could not have become prominent except through faction and debate.

Treating distinctive doctrines as basic tenets of faith, however, was not always the result of mere controversy, but because Sunni theologians had to distinguish truth from falsehood, the latter including the many mistakes of the Mu'tazila and Jahmiyya. All falsehoods are rejected by Islam, and in matters of faith most are serious sins, but some are more crucial than others. In other words, in the spectrum from right to wrong beliefs, there are four main categories:

- (1) central beliefs that one must hold or one is not a Muslim;
- (2) beliefs that are obligatory to hold, but denying them does not make one a non-Muslim;
- (3) beliefs that are unlawful to hold, but affirming them does not make one a non-Muslim;
- (4) and beliefs that no one can hold and remain a Muslim.

For many Muslims today, greater knowledge of these four necessary distinctions would bring about greater tolerance, and teachers of Islamic theology must explain that while "orthodoxy" reflects what Sunnis believe, only some of their issues spell the difference between faith and unbelief, while others are things that Muslims may disagree about and still remain Muslim.

To say it again, a particular point of *`aqida* could be contrary to another, even heretical school of thought and hotly debated, yet not directly concern *kufir* or *iman*, faith or unfaith. Indeed, the longer and harder the historical debate, the less likely the point under discussion is a matter of salvation or damnation, for it is inconsistent with Allah's mercy and justice to create men of widely varying intelligence and then make their salvation depend on something that even the most brilliant of them cannot agree upon. Fakhr al-Din al-Razi (d. 606/1210) acknowledges this by writing:

One should know that theologians have had considerable difficulty defining *kufir* (unbelief) ... *Kufir* consists in denying the truth of anything the Prophet (ﷺ) Allah bless

him and give him peace) is necessarily known to have said. Examples include denying the Creator's existence, His knowledge, power, choice, oneness, or perfection above all deficiencies and infirmities. Or denying the prophethood of Muhammad (ﷺ Allah bless him and give him peace), the truth of the Qur'an, or denying any law necessarily known to be of the religion of Muhammad (ﷺ Allah bless him and give him peace), such as the obligatoriness of prayer, of zakat, fasting, or pilgrimage, or the unlawfulness of usury or wine. Whoever does so is an unbeliever because he has disbelieved the Prophet (ﷺ Allah bless him and give him peace) about something necessarily known to be of his religion.

As for what is only known by inference from proof to be his religion, such as "whether God knows by virtue of His attribute of knowledge or rather by virtue of His entity," or "whether or not He may be seen [in the next life]," or "whether or not He creates the actions of His servants"; we do not know by incontestably numerous chains of transmission (*tawatur*) that any of these alternatives has been affirmed by the Prophet (ﷺ Allah bless him and give him peace) instead of the other. For each, the truth of one and falsity of the other is known only through inference, so neither denial nor affirmation of it can enter into actual faith, and hence cannot entail unbelief.

The proof of this is that if such points were part of faith, the Prophet (ﷺ Allah bless him and give him peace) would not have judged anyone a believer until he was sure that the person knew the question. Had he done such a thing, his position on the question would have been known to everyone in Islam and conveyed by many chains of transmission. Because it has not, it is clear that he did not make it a condition of faith, so knowing it is not a point of belief, nor denying it unbelief.

In light of which, no one of this Umma is an unbeliever, and we do not consider anyone an unbeliever whose words are interpretable as meaning anything besides. As for beliefs not known except through hadiths related by a single narrator, it seems plain that they cannot be a decisive criterion for belief or unbelief. That is our view about the reality of unbelief (Mafatih al-ghayb, 2.42).

Such breadth of perspective was not unique to Razi, the lifelong defender of Ahl al-Sunna `aqida and implacable foe of its opponents, but was also the view of Imam Ash'ari himself. Dhahabi says:

Bayhaqi relates that he heard Abu Hazim al-'Abdawi say that he heard Zahir ibn Ahmad al-Sarkhasi say, "When death came to Abul Hasan al-Ash'ari in my home in Baghdad, he called me to him and I came, and he said, 'Be my witness: I do not declare anyone an unbeliever who prays towards the qibla, for all direct themselves to the One who alone is worshipped, while all this [controversy] is but different ways of speaking" [1] (Siyar al-'alam, 15.88).

These passages show that both Ash'ari and Razi, the early and late Imams of their school, implicitly distinguished between the central `aqida of Islam, and the logical elaboration upon it by traditional theology. Clearly, their life work brought them to the understanding that *kalam* theology had produced a body of knowledge that was, if important and true,

nevertheless distinct from the *`aqida* that is obligatory for every Muslim to believe in order to be Muslim. The difference however, between *`aqida* or "personal theology," and *kalam* or "discursive theology" was perhaps most strikingly delineated by Imam Ghazali (d. 505/1111).

V.

According to Ghazali, *kalam* theology could not be identified with the *`aqida* of Islam itself, but rather was what protected it from heresy and change. He wrote about his long experience in studying *kalam* in a number of places in his *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, one of them just after his beautiful *`aqida al-Qudsiyya* or "Jerusalem Creed." After mentioning the words of Imam Shafi'i, Malik, Ahmad, and Sufyan al-Thawri that *kalam* theology is unlawful – by which they meant the Mu'tazilite school of their times, the only example they knew of – Ghazali gives his own opinion on discursive theology, saying:

There is benefit and harm in it. As to its benefit, it is lawful or recommended or obligatory whenever it is beneficial, according to the circumstances. As to its harm, it is unlawful whenever and for whomever it is harmful.

Its harm is that it raises doubts in minds and shakes a student's tenets of faith from certitude and conviction at the outset, while there is no guarantee that he will ever get it back again through proofs, individuals varying in this. That is its harm to faith. It has another bad effect, namely that it hardens heretics' attachment to their heresy and makes it firmer in their hearts by stirring them up and increasing their resolve to persist. This harm, however, comes about through bigotry born of argument, which is why you see the ordinary unlearned heretic fairly easy to dissuade from his mistakes through affability; though not if he has grown up in a locale where there is arguing and bigotry, in which case if all mankind from beginning to end were to join together, they would be unable to rid his heart of wrong ideas. Rather, his prejudice, his heatedness, and his loathing for his opponents and their group has such a grip over his heart and so blinds him to the truth that if he were asked, "Would you like Allah Most High Himself to raise the veil so you can see with your own eyes that your opponent is right?" he would refuse, lest it please his opponent. This is the incurable disease that plagues cities and people: the sort of vice produced by bigotry when there is argument. This also is of the harm of *kalam*.

As for its benefit, it might be supposed that it is to reveal truths and know them as they truly are. And how farfetched! *kalam* theology is simply unable to fulfill this noble aim, and it probably founders and misguides more than it discovers or reveals. If you had heard these words from a hadith scholar or literalist, you might think, "People are enemies of what they are ignorant of." So hear them instead from someone steeped in *kalam* theology, who left it after mastering it in depth and penetrating into it as far as any scholar can, and who then went on to specialize in closely related fields, before realizing that access to the realities of true knowledge was barred from this path. By my life, theology is not bereft of revealing and defining the truth and clarifying some issues, but it does so rarely, and about things that are already clear and almost plain before learning its details.

Rather, it has one single benefit, namely guarding the ordinary man's faith we have just outlined [the Jerusalem Creed] and defending it by argument from being shaken by those

who would change it with heresies. For the common man is weak and susceptible to the arguments of heretics even when false; and the false may be rebutted by something not in itself especially good; while people are only responsible for the creed we have presented above (Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din, 1.86).

In this and other passages of Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din, al-Munqidh min al-Dalal, and Faysal al-Tafriqa which summarize his life experience with *kalam* theology, Ghazali distinguishes between several things. The first is *'ilm al-'aqa'id* or the knowledge of basic tenets of faith, which we have called above "personal theology," and which he deems beneficial. The second is what we have called "discursive theology," or *kalam* properly speaking, the use of rational arguments to defeat heretics who would confuse common people about tenets of faith.

Ghazali believes this is valid and obligatory, but only to the extent needed. The third we may call "speculative theology," which is philosophical reasoning from first principles about God, man, and being, to discover by deduction and inference the way things really are. This Ghazali regards as impossible for *kalam* to do.

VI.

The scholars of *kalam* certainly did not agree with Ghazali on this latter point, and history attests to their continued confidence in it as a medium of discovery, producing what has subsequently been regarded by almost everyone as a period of excess in *kalam* literature. Taj al-Din al-Subki (d. 771/1370) who was himself steeped in *kalam* theology wrote:

Upon reflection – and no one can tell you like someone who truly knows – I have not found anything more harmful to those of our times or more ruinous to their faith than reading books of *kalam* written by latter-day scholars after Nasir al-Din al-Tusi and others. If they confined themselves instead to the works of the Qadi Abu Bakr al-Baqillani, the great Abu Ishaq al-Isfarayini, the Imam of the Two Sanctuaries Abu al-Ma'ali al-Juwayni, and others of those times, they would have nothing but benefit. But truly I believe that whoever ignores the Qur'an and sunna [defended by these scholars] and instead occupies himself with the debates of Ibn Sina and those of his path – leaving the words of the Muslims: "Abu Bakr and 'Umar (Allah Most High be well pleased with them) said," "Shafi'i said," "Abu Hanifa said," "Ash'ari said," "Qadi Abu Bakr said"; and instead saying: "The Sovereign Sage (al-Shaykh al-Ra'is) said" meaning Ibn Sina, or "The Great Master (al-Khawaja) Nasir said," and so on – that whoever does so should be whipped and paraded through the marketplaces with a crier proclaiming: "This is the punishment of whoever leaves the Qur'an and sunna and busies himself with the words of heretics" (Mu'id al-ni'am, 7980).

For Subki, it showed how far *kalam* had strayed for latter-day authors to call heterodox figures such as Ibn Sina[2] or Tusi[3] "Sovereign Sage" or "Great Master" in works supposedly explaining the faith of Islam. The reason he found nothing "more harmful to those of our times or more ruinous to their faith than reading the books of *kalam* theology written by latter-day scholars" was that they had vitiated the very reason for *kalam*'s existence: to defend the truth. By widening its universe to include heretics and giving them titles of authority, *kalam* literature had become a compendium of wrong ideas.

To summarize, although Sunni theology first defined orthodoxy and rebutted heresy, it afterwards swelled with speculative excesses that hearkened back those of the Jahmiyya and Mu'tazila. At this juncture, it met with criticism from figures who knew it too well to accept this, such as Imam Ghazali, Taj al-Subki, Nawawi, and others, whose view was that *kalam* was a medicine useful in moderation, but harmful in overdose. Their criticisms were valid, for when theology obeys a speculative rather than an ethical imperative, it ceases to give guidance in man's relationship to God, and hence is no longer a science of the *din*.

What has been forgotten today however by critics who would use the words of earlier Imams to condemn all *kalam*, is that these criticisms were directed against its having become "speculative theology" at the hands of latter-day authors. Whoever believes they were directed against the 'aqida or "personal theology" of basic tenets of faith, or the "discursive theology" of rational *kalam* arguments against heresy is someone who either does not understand the critics or else is quoting them disingenuously.

We conclude our remarks with a glance at *kalam*'s significance today. What does traditional theology have to offer contemporary Muslims?

VII.

With universal comparison, the door today is open to universal skepticism, not only about particular religions, but belief in God and in religion itself. It is hence appropriate to consider the legacy of *kalam* proofs for the existence of God.

At the practical level, most people who believe in God do not do so because of philosophical arguments, but because they feel a presence, inwardly and outwardly, that uplifts hearts, answers prayers, and solves their problems. Yet Muslims and others find their faith increasingly challenged by an atheistic modern world. The question becomes, can traditional *kalam* arguments answer modern misgivings?

Now, philosophy as taught today in many places dismisses traditional proofs for the existence of God as tautological, saying that they smuggle in the conclusions they reach by embedding them in the premises. A young American Muslim philosophy student asked me, "How can we believe with certainty that there is a God, when logically speaking there is no argument without holes in it?" He mentioned among the arguments of *kalam* that (a) the world is *hadith* or "contingent"; (b) everything contingent requires a *muhdith* or "cause"; (c) if there is no first cause that is "necessary" or uncaused, this entails an infinite regress, which is absurd; and (d) therefore the world must ultimately have an uncaused or "necessary" cause as its origin.

While scholars like Majid Fakhry in his History of Islamic Philosophy point out that saying that "the 'contingent' (*hadith*) requires a 'cause' (*muhdith*)" is a mere play on words, one can answer that while the form of this argument does contain a play on words, if we penetrate to the content of these words, they express an empirical relationship so basic to our experience that science regards it as axiomatic. That is, to provide a scientific

explanation for something is to suggest a probable cause for it, and then present evidence for the particular cause being adduced as its "explanation."

In cosmology, for example, the origin of the universe must be explained causally, and most scientists currently believe that the universe began about fifteen billion years ago in a cosmic cataclysm they term the Big Bang. And yet this most interesting of all events, indeed the effective cause of all of them, is somehow exempted from the scientific dictum that to explain something is to suggest a cause for it. Why the Big Bang? What urged its being rather than its nonbeing? This is no trivial enigma, still less a play on words. If to explain an event is to find a cause for it, then the Big Bang is not an scientific "explanation" for the origin of the universe in any ordinary sense of the word. Here, the *kalam* argument that the contingent must return to the necessary is still relevant today, and has been cited by name in works such as Craig and Smith's *Theism, Atheism, and Big Bang Cosmology*. The prevailing cosmological view among scientists is that the universe did have a beginning, and this requires an explanation.

Another traditional *kalam* argument vitally relevant to the teaching of Islam is the "argument from design," namely that the complexity of many natural phenomena is far more analogous to our own intentionally planned processes and productions than to ordinary random events. That is, the perfection of design in nature argues for the existence of a designer. As in the previous example, to teach this argument directly from *kalam* would seem to many intellectual Muslims today, particularly those scientifically literate, to be a mere tautology or play on words. But when filled in with examples drawn from scientific literature, its cogency becomes plain.

Examples abound. One of them forms the central thesis of the work *Just Six Numbers* by the British Astronomer Royal Martin Reese of Cambridge. He has determined that the fabric of the universe depends on the coincidence of six basic physical number ratios, two of them related to basic forces, two fixing the size and texture of the universe, and two fixing the properties of space itself. These six numbers, in Reese's own words, "constitute a 'recipe' for a universe. Moreover, the outcome is sensitive to their values: if any of them were to be untuned [the slightest bit different in numerical value], there would be no stars and no life" (*Just Six Numbers*, 4). If any of these six numbers were dependent on the others, the fact that they allow for the existence of the universe would be less astonishing, but none of them can be predicted from the values of the others, and each number compounds the unlikelihood of the others. The only consequence mathematically inferable from this is that the universe that we know and live in is unlikely to an absurd degree. The statistical probability of the confluence of just these numbers is, to borrow the expression of astronomer Hugh Ross, about as likely as "the possibility of a Boeing 747 aircraft being completely assembled as a result of a tornado striking a junkyard" (*Discover*, 21, no. 11).

The shocking improbability of ourselves and our universe is no play on words, and shows the relevance of the *kalam* argument for the existence of God from design.

Another example of the argument from design is the origin of life, especially with what is known today, after the advent of the electron microscope, about the tens of thousands of interdependent parts that compose even the simplest one-celled organism known. The probability of such an entity not only assembling itself, but also simultaneously assembling a viable reproductive apparatus to produce another equally complex living reality does not urge itself very strongly according to anything we know about empirical reality. That is, the origin of perfectly articulated functional complexity argues for a design, and a design argues for the existence of a designer.[4]

A third example of the relevance of the argument from design is what physicist Paul Davies has called in his *Mind of God* "the unreasonable effectiveness of mathematics" in describing and predicting the phenomena of the physical world. The "unreasonableness" in it is that if, as scientism avers, the structure of our brains that determines the way we view reality is only an evolutionary accident, which would presumably be much different if we were, say, a race of aliens who had evolved on different planet, why is it that so much of the mathematics that was first worked out as an abstract exercise in the minds of pure mathematicians has been so spectacularly effective in explaining the physical world? If man were hundreds of times larger than he is or hundreds of times smaller, his perceptual reality would be so completely different that he might well not have developed the integers or other mathematical tools that he did. But because man has turned out just so, by an uncannily improbable coincidence, the mathematical rules formulated by pure mathematicians – which should be a mere accident of man's evolutionary and cultural history – turn out, often years after their discovery, to be exactly the same rules nature is playing by.

The enigma here is that, while there is a distinct evolutionary advantage in knowing the world by direct empirical observation, we have been equipped with a second faculty, of no selective evolutionary advantage at all, which can incorporate quantum and relativistic mathematical systems into our mental model of the world. For Davies these facts suggest that a conscious Being has encoded this ability within humanity, knowing that one day they would reach a degree of comprehension of the universe that will bring them to the realization that the unreasonable correspondence of nature to pure thought is not a coincidence, but the outcome of a great design.

There are many other examples of the argument from design, particularly in the complexity of symbiotic and parasitic relationships between species of the natural world, which, if too long to detail here, also strongly attest to the relevance of the *kalam* argument for the existence of God.

VIII.

As for the role of *kalam* in defending Islam from heresies, Jahm and the Mu'taziites are certainly less of threat to orthodoxy today than scientism, the reduction of all truth to statements about quantities and empirical facts. The real challenge to religion today is the mythic power of science to theologize its experimental method, and imply that since it has not discovered God, He must not exist.

Here, the task of critique cannot be relegated to traditional proofs drawn from the literature of a prescientific age. Rather, it belongs to scientifically literate Muslims today to clarify the provisional nature of the logic of science, and to show how its epistemology, values, and historical and cultural moment condition the very nature of questions it can ask – or answer.

Omniscience is not a property of science. In physics today, at the outset of the twenty-first century, we do not yet understand what gives physical matter its mass, its most basic property. In taxonomy, estimates vary, but probably less than 3 percent of the living organisms on our own planet have been named or identified. In human fertility, many fundamental mechanisms remain undiscovered. Even our most familiar companion, human consciousness, has not been scientifically explained, replicated, or reduced to physical laws. In short, though we do not base our faith on the current state of science, we should realize that if science has not discovered God, there is a long list of other things it has not discovered that we would be ill-advised to consider nonexistent in consequence.

In short, attacks today on religion by scientism should be met by Muslims as Ash'ari and Maturidi met the Mu'tazilites and Jahmites in their times: with a dialectic critique of the premises and conclusions thoroughly grounded in their own terms. The names that come to mind in our day are not Ash'ari, Baqillani, and Razi, but rather those like Huston Smith in his *Beyond the Post-Modern Mind*, Charles Le Gai Eaton in his *King of the Castle*, Keith Ward in his *God, Chance, and Necessity*, and even non-religious writers like Paul Davies in *The Mind of God* and John Horgan in his *The End of Science* and *The Undiscovered Mind*. Answering reductionist attacks on religion is a communal obligation, which Muslims can only ignore at their peril. This too is of the legacy of *kalam*, or the "aptness of words to answer words."

IX.

A final benefit of *kalam* is to realize from its history that there is some range and latitude in the beliefs of one's fellow Muslims.

In an Islamic world growing ever younger with the burgeoning population, there is a danger that those quoting Qur'anic verses and hadiths without a grasp of the historical issues will stir up the hearts of young Muslims against each other in sectarian strife. People like to belong to groups, and the positive benefits of bonding with others in a group may be offset by bad attitudes towards those outside the group. The Wahhabi movement for example, recast in our times as Salafism, began as a Kharijite-like sect that regarded nonmembers, including most of the Umma, as kafirs or unbelievers. Here, a working knowledge of the history and variety of schools of Islamic theology would do much to promote tolerance.

The figures we have cited, from Ash'ari to Razi to Dhahabi to Ibn Taymiya, were men who passionately believed that there was a truth to be known, and that it represented the beliefs of Islam, and that it was but one. They believed that those who disagreed with it were wrong and should be engaged and rebutted. But they did not consider anyone who

called himself a Muslim to be a *kafir* as long as his positions did not flatly deny the truthfulness of the Prophet (ﷺ Allah bless him and give him peace). Imam Ghazali says in *Faysal al-tafriqa*: "Unbelief" (*kufr*) consists in asserting that the Prophet (ﷺ Allah bless him and give him peace) lied about anything he conveyed, while "faith" is believing that he told the truth in everything he said (*Faysal al-tafriqa*, 78).

There is wide scholarly consensus on this tolerance of Islam, and we have heard from Imam Ash'ari that he did not consider anyone who prayed towards the qibla to be an unbeliever, from Razi that he did not consider anyone to be an unbeliever whose words could possibly mean anything besides, and from Ibn Taymiya that he considered everyone who faithfully prays with ablution to be a believer. None of them believed that a Muslim can go to hell on a technicality.

X.

To summarize everything we have said, the three main tasks of *kalam* consist in defining the contents of faith, showing that it contradicts neither logic nor experience, and providing grounds to be personally convinced of it, and these three are as relevant today as ever.

First, the substantive knowledge of the 'aqida each of us will die and meet Allah upon will remain a lasting benefit as long as there are Muslims.

Second, demographers expect mankind to attain close to universal literacy within fifty years. Members of world faiths may be expected to question their religious beliefs for coherence, logicity, applicability, and adequacy, and the work of Ahl al-Sunna scholars will go far to show that one does not have to hang up one's mind to enter Islam.

Third, universal communication will make comparisons between religions inevitable. Blind imitation of ethnic religious affiliation will become less relevant to people around the globe, and I personally believe Islam has stronger theological arguments for its truth than other world religions. Indeed, Islam is a sapiential religion, in which salvation itself rests not on vicarious atonement as in Christianity, or on ethnic origin as in Judaism, but on personal knowledge. Whoever knows that there is no god but God and that Muhammad is the Messenger of God is by that very fact saved.

So in the coming century, three areas of *kalam*'s legacy will remain especially relevant for Muslims: first, the proofs for the existence of God from necessity and design, second, the rebuttal of the heresy of scientific reductionism and atheism, and third, promoting tolerance among Muslims. The latter is one of the most important lessons that the history of *kalam* can teach; that if Muslims cannot expect to agree on everything in matters of faith, they can at least agree on the broad essentials, and not to let their differences descend from their heads to their hearts.

Notes

1 Dhahabi goes on: "This is my own religious view. So too, our sheikh Ibn Taymiya used to say in his last days, 'I do not consider anyone of this Umma an unbeliever,' and he would relate that the Prophet (ﷺ Allah bless him and give him peace) said, 'No one but a believer faithfully performs ablution' [Ahmad, 5.82: 22433. S], saying, 'So whoever regularly attends prayers with ablution is a Muslim'" (Siyar al-a'lam, 15.88).

2 Ibn Sina, the "Sovereign Sage" referred to by latter-day *kalam* authors here, had a number of heterodox beliefs. First, he believed that the world is beginninglessly eternal, while Muslims believe that Allah created it after it was nothing; second, he believed that Allah knows what is created and destroyed only in a general way, not in its details, while Muslims believe that Allah knows everything; and third, he held that there is no bodily resurrection, while Muslims emphatically affirm in it. Taj al-Subki's above passage continues: "Is he [such a latter-day *kalam* author] not ashamed before Allah Most High to espouse the ideas of Ibn Sina and praise him – while reciting the word of Allah **"Does man not think We shall gather together his bones? Indeed, We are well able to produce even his index finger"** (Qur'an 75:7) – and mention in the same breath Ibn Sina's denial of bodily resurrection and gathering of bones?" (Mu'id al-ni'am, 80). Imam Ghazali, despite his magisterial breadth of perspective in 'aqida issues, held it obligatory to consider Ibn Sina a non-Muslim (*kafir*) for these three doctrines (al-Munqidh min al-dalal, 4445, 50).

3 The "Great Master" Nasir al-Din al-Tusi was the traitor who betrayed Baghdad and its whole populace to their Mongol slaughterers out of sectarian malice against the Sunni caliphate. In tenets of faith, he introduced philosophy into Shiism, reviving Ibn Sina's thought in a Twelver Shiite matrix, and authored Tajrid al-'aqa'id, the preeminent work of Shiite dogma to this day, in which he describes man as "the creator of his works" (Encyclopedia of Religion, 6.324, 7.316, 13.265) – while the Qur'an tells us that **"Allah created you and what you do"** (Qur'an 37:96).

4 The Associated Press on Thursday 9 December 2004 carried the story "Famous Atheist Now Believes in God," in which religion writer Richard Ostling mentions that a British philosophy professor who has been a leading champion of atheism for more than a half-century has now changed his mind. "At age 81, after decades of insisting belief is a mistake, Antony Flew has concluded that some sort of intelligence or first cause must have created the universe. 'A super-intelligence is the only good explanation for the origin of life and the complexity of nature,' Flew said in a telephone interview from England." He also recently said that biologists' investigation of DNA "has shown, by the almost unbelievable complexity of the arrangements which are needed to produce [life], that intelligence must have been involved" (U.S. National – AP Website, 9 December 2004).

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Sh. Buti on Hikam: Foreordained Destiny and the Inefficacy of Material Causes-and-Effects

Answered by Shaykh Gibril F Haddad

Q. Foreordained Destiny and the Inefficacy of Material Causes-and-Effects
A.



Shaykh al-Butis Commentary on the Hikam (#3)

Foreordained Destiny and the Inefficacy of Material Causes-and-Effects

(Al-Qadar wa Lafa`iliyya al-Asbab)

(Ibn `Ata' Allah, Hikam No. 3)

by Shaykh Gibril F Haddad, 2002.

Eighth Lesson:

Foreordained Destiny and the Inefficacy of Material Causes-and-Effects

(Al-Qadar wa Lafa`iliyya al-Asbab)

(Ibn `Ata' Allah, Hikam No. 3)

"The most truthful word any poet ever said is Labid's:

Lo! Everything other than Allah is vain."

Hadith of the Prophet - Allah bless and greet him.1

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We had begun to speak about Ibn `Ata' Allah's Third hikma. In it he said - may Allah Almighty have mercy on him:

#3. The foremost energies cannot pierce the walls of foreordained destinies.

This hikma is in reality a completion for the hikma that comes before it. Ibn `Ata' Allah - rahimahullah - had asked us to conform with the reality in which Allah has placed us. The measuring-scale for this reality is the most noble Law. If you see that Allah Almighty has placed you within the screens of ambient causes which are all forbidden: then Allah is testing you with dispossession (al-tajrid). What is required of you is to move away from these causes which Allah Almighty has not authorized, and rely on Allah for the obtainment of your wants. But if you see yourself placed within the screens of ambient causes to which the Law has unlocked wide and licit paths - and the way in which you use them is licit - then know, at that time, that Allah has placed you in the world of causes (`alam al-asbab). What is required of you is to

interact with these causes, and not to substitute them with complete trust (tawakkul) in Allah Almighty. Complete trust is required anyway; however, you are obligated, in such a condition, to interact with those causes that are licit and, at the same time, trust in Allah. That is the gist of the previous hikma:

#2. Your asking for dispossession when Allah has placed you in the midst of causes is a surreptitious lust, and your asking [to handle] causes when Allah has placed you in dispossession is a decline from a higher level.

When Ibn `Ata' Allah says this - we discussed it at length previously - one might infer that causes possess great efficacy (fa`iliyya) and that, when someone finds himself face-to-face with unproblematic, licit causes, he must interact with these causes in all his goals and all the essentials of life. One might therefore think that causes possess efficacy and influence, and that, therefore, one must interact with these causes and not say: "I shall substitute them with complete trust in Allah Almighty." Because of this possibility - which might arise in the mind of whoever listens to the second hikma - Ibn `Ata' Allah followed up with this third hikma and said: "The foremost energies cannot pierce the walls of foreordained destinies."

This question is related to doctrine (al-`aqida). It is the basis from which we should set forth, whether we have been tested through dispossession, or we have been tested and asked to interact with causes. In both cases, there is a doctrinal reality which we must all acquire in our very beings. What is that doctrinal reality? It is that causes, whatever they are, are subservient to Allah's foreordained destiny (qadar), and it is not Allah's foreordained destiny that is subservient to causes. This we must know.

Causes that are represented by human endeavors to work, seek sustenance and so forth - such causes are troops among Allah's other troops which all serve Allah's qadar. These causes with which you interact, lead you to whatever Allah Almighty has foreordained for you. Whenever we have recourse to physicians and their medications, which are among the causes used to remedy illness, endeavoring to achieve a cure there from, we must know that the use of medication, the recourse to physicians - all this is subservient to Allah's foreordainment (qada'). This means that physicians, their remedies, their prescriptions, and all their means lead you, in the end, to whatever Allah has foreordained for you or against you. All the means with which you interact, those you use and seek after in order to obtain education or degrees, marry, start a family in the way you envisage, and whatever goals other than those - the Creator has filled the earth with causes! - you must know that these causes, whether you are now tasked with deprivation of them or with interacting with them - you must know that causes are troops which revolve around a single axis: execution of Allah Almighty's foreordainment.

That is the meaning of Ibn `Ata' Allah's words: "The foremost energies cannot pierce the walls of foreordained destinies." Have the highest energy you like. Exert the greatest skills in marshalling causes to your advantage. As skillful as you may get in gathering together causes according to your wishes, that energy of yours, which has marshalled all causes for your sake, can never overcome Allah's foreordained destinies. Yes, it is as if these foreordained destinies were a kind of fortified wall - like the fortified wall around the city which everyone knows - while the causes with which

we interact are like arrows we shoot at that high wall. Can the arrows of causes, whatever they may be, ever pierce the bastions of foreordained destinies and go beyond them? Never in any way whatsoever.

Each and everyone of us must know this doctrine. But first, what is the evidence for it? We do not want to open the file of doctrinal issues in the familiar style of the books of the science of Oneness (al-tawhid), theological discourse (al-kalam), and the like. Allah's Book suffices for us, and the clear words which we use and repeat every day suffice for us. The Elect One - Allah bless and greet him - has taught us a sacred phrase which he ordered us to repeat always. What is that phrase? It is *la hawla wa la quwwata illa billah* - "There is no change nor power except by Allah." What does this phrase mean? Reflect upon it. It means exactly what Ibn 'Ata' Allah is saying: There is no change for a human being, for causes, for means, for the universe and all that is in it - there is no change for all of that, nor power, except if that power comes from Allah Almighty. Is it not so?

Among the names of Allah Almighty is al-Qayyum - "The Sustainer of All." What is the meaning of this name? "Allah! There is no God other than He, the Living, the Sustainer of All" (2:255, 3:2). That is: the Sustainer of the universes, Who controls them as He wishes and organizes them as He likes. Nothing at all moves except by His Sustainment (qayyumiyya). That is the meaning of the word qayyum. Is there any efficacy left for causes after this?

Our Almighty Lord says: "And of His signs is this: The heavens and the earth stand fast by His command" (30:35). It means that what you can behold of the movement of the celestial spheres - those we see and those we do not, - the ordering of the earth, all that is between the heaven and the earth, and all that lies within this universe, seen and unseen - it is one of His signs that "The heavens and the earth stand fast by His command." It means that if you see in them causes and effects (asbab wa musabbabat), who is the one who threaded together these causes and effects, joining the former with the latter? It is Allah Exalted and Glorified!

To elaborate: the nature of combustion in fire - so to speak, for there is no such thing as "nature"² but we have to make what we say intelligible through approximations - that nature does not exist inside fire. It is but a divine Force (quwwa rabbaniyya) that has marshalled fire for its purpose. So it is Allah Who is the author of combustion (al-muhriq), not the fire. Our Exalted Lord says: "Lo! Allah grasps the heavens and the earth, lest they cease, and if they were to cease there is not one that could grasp them after Him" (35:41). It means that the existence of these spheres suspended in their orbits, these arrangements by which He has made these orbits stand together with the earth, these cosmic laws and patterns which we see all around us, from the farthest celestial bodies to the earth and there under - all that is by Allah Almighty's arrangement. "Lo! Allah grasps the heavens and the earth, lest they cease, and if they were to cease there is not one that could grasp them after Him." If you believe - and believe firmly - that this is Allah's speech, is there any efficacy left for causes?

Our Exalted Lord says in His explicit disclosure: "And a token unto them is that We bear their offspring in the laden ship" (36:41). Have you reflected upon these words? The ship, externally, is a cause. Therefore it is the ship, apparently, which carries the

people who board it, is it not? In our understanding, the phrasing should have been: "And a token unto them is that the laden ship bears them." However, the divine disclosure came in a different form. "And a token unto them is that We bear their offspring in the laden ship." Who, then, is the carrier for those who sought refuge in the ship? Is it the ship or is it Allah? So then, the ship possesses no efficacy.

What does Allah say? "A token unto them is the dead earth. We revive it, and We bring forth from it grain so that they eat thereof; And We have placed therein gardens of the date palm and grapes, and We have caused springs of water to gush forth therein. That they may eat of the fruit thereof, and their hands made it not. Will they not, then, give thanks? Glory be to Him Who created all the sexual pairs, of that which the earth grows, and of themselves, and of that which they know not!" (36:33-36) In all this discourse you will notice that Allah attributes all these things to Himself while we find the causes present: we find the earth, we find agriculture, but Allah attributes all this to Himself.

Allah says in Sura Nuh, as He speaks of the means by which He has saved our master Nuh (and those who were with him: "And We carried him upon a thing of planks and nails, That ran (upon the waters) in Our sight, as a reward for him who was rejected." (54:13) Consider well these words. Notice that what we aim to do by citing this evidence is to make firm our awareness and our certitude that the causes which we see have no efficacy in themselves. That is what we are aiming for. Allah is here recounting in a succinct and quick manner our master Nuh's situation. When he was besieged and harmed by his people, what did he do? "So he cried unto his Lord, saying: I am vanquished, so give help." (54:10). Two words: "I am vanquished," and "so give help." "Then opened We the gates of heaven with pouring water And caused the earth to gush forth springs, so that the waters met for a predestined purpose. And We carried him upon a thing of planks and nails, That ran (upon the waters) in Our sight, as a reward for him who was rejected." (54:11-13) "We carried him" - He did not say: "It is the ship that carried him." Further, He did not even use the word "ship" in His wording. What did He say? "And We carried him upon a thing of planks and nails." [That is] "We carried him upon some planks and nails which were assembled" - so as to minimize the status of that ship and make it clear for you that the ship itself is less than [deserving of] being the one that rescued and the one that saved. Thus He first said: "And We carried him." He did not attribute the carrying to our master Nuh nor to the ship. Then He said "upon a thing of planks and nails" to let you see that some planks which were put together are not strong enough to save those people from a perpetual deluge unknown to humanity heretofore nor hereafter.

So then we have before us positive evidence that the creator of causes is Allah and that causes, all of them, melt under the authority of Allah's Lordship. That is a truth which you are free to express in whatever theological fashion you wish. But that is what Allah Almighty's Disclosure states. Nay, the vast majority of the Muslims hold that Allah has not deposited into these causes the least efficacy, unlike what some have said - such as the Mu'tazila - at one point. No, not at all! Allah did not deposit into fire the secret of combustion, thereafter leaving fire in charge of its mission, which consists in combustion. A simile would be a human being's disposal of artificial intelligence, which is then left by him to do its job. No! The reality is certainly not so.

Yet to some people, even among Muslims, this is imagined to be true. The latter say: "Fire burns by virtue of the force which Allah has deposited in it. Water quenches thirst by virtue of the force which Allah has deposited in it. Medicine heals by virtue of the force which Allah has deposited in it. Poison kills by virtue of the force which Allah has deposited in it." Are these statements correct? Never.

We do not charge [them] with disbelief. However, even scientifically, these statements are incorrect. The reason is that, if one believes that Allah has deposited healing within medicine and then left it so that medicine heals in permanence, it would mean that Allah now has a partner, which is this secret that He deposited within the medicine. As much as the Creator disassociates Himself from that medicine, the latter [allegedly] still performs its work, without the continuance (istimrariyya) of Allah Almighty's efficacy. That is the meaning of that "deposited force." We seek refuge in Allah from such belief! What have we done with "The Sustainer of All"? Similarly, if you say: "Fire burns by virtue of the efficacy which Allah Almighty has deposited in it." The outcome of this statement is that Allah Almighty has deposited that secret - combustion - inside fire, then left fire so that the latter burns in perpetuity. So then that secret has become a partner with Allah! If Allah has left fire alone after depositing in it that secret, then [they claim] there is no problem with that: it shall always burn. That position is false, incorrect, and scientifically incorrect in any way one looks at it. Combustion only takes effect by the act of Allah at the time of contact between fire and the matter it burns.

Allah creates satiation at the time you ingest food. Who is it that created satiation? Allah. If He wished, He could make you eat, and eat, and eat, and not be sated. Allah created quenchedness for you at the time you drink beverage. There are not, in these things, forces-in-residence which Allah has left alone so that they do their work. No - it is a mistake to think so. The Pious Predecessors (al-Salaf al-Salih), the People of the Way of the Prophet and the Congregation of the Companions (ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jama'a) hold otherwise.³ Just look at Allah's words: "And a token unto them is that We bear their offspring in the laden ship" (36:41). If some self-sufficient physiological force had been deposited into the ship so that ships perform their tasks always, regardless to what extent Allah disconnects Himself from them - then His saying would no longer be correct that "And a token unto them is that We bear their offspring in the laden ship." But He continues: "And if We will, We drown them, and there is no help for them, neither can they be saved" (36:43).

Dear brethren: we must deal with this reality. Many are those that stray in this matter. One of us may say: "If this is the case, then why do we have to interact with these causes? Why does the sick person seek recourse in the physician? Why does he take medicine? Why do we take precautions against fire and its burning pain? Let us plunge into fire just as we plunge into water and swim in it. Why do we go out to the market and struggle, why work in trade and farming and so forth, if, as you said, there are no causes, and the one and only Causator is Allah, around Whose might all causes revolve?" What is the answer to this?

Allah Almighty has made this lower-worldly existence stand on certain customs (sunan). He has tied together these things and those. Whatever comes first, appears to

us to be a cause; whatever comes last, appears to us to be an effect. Allah has made the universe stand on that system. That is: Allah's way is that He satiates you when you take food. His way is that He quenches your thirst when you take drink. His way is that He provides you with sustenance when you knock at the door of sustenance. His way is that He cures you when you rush to the doctor and ask him for the remedy that will benefit you. That is the way of Allah. He ties things together, but without there being actual efficacy for what we call a cause. It is proper conduct (adab) on our part with Allah to respect His system in the universe.

It is proper conduct on our part with Allah to respect His universal customs. Thus has Allah Almighty willed it. If you have recognized what must be believed in the chapter of doctrine and then say: "For myself I shall not drink when I feel thirst, because Allah is the One that shall create quenchedness," know that at that time you are committing misconduct with Allah Almighty. My Exalted Lord has willed to create quenchedness in your being at the time you take drink. If you say: "I shall not take drink," then this is rebellion against Allah Almighty's system.

I will give you an example that will resolve the above to satisfaction....

[2/2] AL-BUTI: Commentary on the Hikam (#3)

I will give you an example that will resolve the above to satisfaction. Lady Maryam - upon our Prophet and upon her peace - when birth pains came to her - you have all read the Sura of Maryam - felt pain and foresaw what was going to happen with her, what people were going to say about her: "And the pangs of childbirth drove her unto the trunk of the palm tree. She said: Oh, would that I had died before this and had become a thing of naught, forgotten! Then (one) cried unto her from below her, saying: Grieve not! Thy Lord has placed a rivulet beneath you, and shake the trunk of the palm tree toward you, you will cause ripe dates to fall upon you." (19:23-25) The scholars all said here: She had rested her back against the trunk of a date-palm tree of huge size at a time there was not, at the head of that date-palm tree, any date nor fruit, for it was not yet the season for them. The tree was bare of fruit. Allah then created in front of her the rivulet, and He created for her in the height of the date-palm tree a bunch of ripe dates. Now, the God Who created the date-bunch instantly - is He not able to make it fall, or to make some of the dates fall in front of her? But He said: "And shake the trunk of the palm tree toward you, you wilt cause ripe dates to fall upon you." Imagine, what can that weak hand of hers do to that trunk which is very much like that column [in the mosque]? You all know the strength of the trunk of the date-palm. What can one do? So then: Is there any efficacy to the hand? Yet Allah ordered her to do something; to exert some effort; to knock at Allah Almighty's door. If Lady Maryam had said: "The God Who created the rivulet for me, and created those fresh, ripe dates for me, is able to let some of them fall in front of me just as He wishes; therefore I shall not move my hand, nor move the tree-trunk." If she had said that, it would have been misconduct with Allah Almighty. She actually moved her hand, after which Allah Almighty made them fall. Was the fall of the ripe dates effected by the moving of the hand or by Allah's subtle kindness? It was effected by Allah's subtle kindness (lutf).

So then, dear brethren: Our works in the marketplaces, our studies in the universities, our tilling of the fields and our farming, our medication at the hands of physicians - all the means that exist - are but the same thing as what Lady Maryam did when she was tasked with shaking the date-palm tree-trunk. If there were any efficacy to her hand, then it is the same with our works by which we strive and all our activities. But who is he that says there is any efficacy there? And that is the answer to the question mentioned before.

I am tasked with rising in the morning and going out to knock at the door of Allah's sustenance with the means which He has made licit. I am tasked with observing and respecting the causes which He has thus named for me: "causes" - and so I interact with them. That work in response to Allah's command is part of worship, part of the condition of being Allah Almighty's servant. This means that when you know that these causes have no actual efficacy, but [you say]: "Allah has commanded me, therefore, I hear and I obey" - at that time you are performing one of the greatest of all acts of worship to Allah Almighty. When the farmer goes out to his field, tills, plants, strives to his utmost, knowing that Allah has tasked him with a duty, and that it is Allah, thereafter, Who creates the results: that farmer is performing an act of worship which is among the greatest acts of worship. The young man who marries in order to practice continence, knowing, however, that it is Allah Who creates continence and it is He Who shall give him happiness through that marriage - it is Allah Himself Who gives him happiness - he is performing an act of worship which is among the greatest acts of worship. The sick man who knocks at the door of the physician to ask him for the remedy to his ailment, is performing an act of worship which is among the greatest acts of worship. This is all on condition that you know that efficacy belongs only to Allah Almighty. Whether you are in the world of dispossession (*'alam al-tajrid*) or in the world of causes (*'alam al-asbab*), you must know this. "The foremost energies cannot pierce the walls of foreordained destinies."

When a human being becomes immersed in this doctrine - his heart, not his tongue - he shall be far away from suffering, far from emotional and nervous upheavals; he shall no longer be affected. Why? If some merchant toils and gathers all the causes to use them to his benefit, after which it appears that his efforts all went to loss, and he goes back to his house with peace of mind, in his knowledge that efficacy does not belong to those causes but to Allah alone, Who wished that no [positive] outcome should be realized - he cannot say: had I done such-and-such, this result would not have happened; had I preceded so-and-so and submitted my project two days earlier, I would have been the one to succeed instead of him. The one who believes that efficacy belongs to Allah, his core does not ever burn with the flames of such words. Rather, he finds himself face-to-face with the words of Allah's Messenger - Allah bless and greet him - in the authentic narration of Muslim in his Sahih: "If something bad happens to you, do not say: if only I had done such and such, then such and such would have happened. Say: Allah foreordained it to take place, and whatever Allah wishes, He does (*qaddara Allah wa ma sha'a Allahu fa'al*). For 'if only' begins Satan's work."⁴ But Satan cannot use 'if' and begin his work through it except in a heart that is devoid of such doctrine. Similarly, someone whose relative was afflicted by some illness, then he took that relative to the physicians and used all kinds of medicine and

remedies, but Allah foreordained to take the patient away. Then someone might come to him and say: "You made a mistake. The physician you went to was not a specialist. You should have taken the patient to So-and-so. If you had done so, he would have known the cure. Someone ailed more than that and was healed at his hands." If one's doctrine is absent, one will [at those words] feel an anguish that will not let him sleep at night. He will say: "It is true, by Allah! Oh no, no, no! -" But look at him who possesses true doctrine and true belief in Allah, who has fastened his heart to Allah, and before whose eyes and insight all causes have melted away so that he no longer see anything other than the Causator. He shall sleep in all tranquility. He shall say: "Leave me alone, you and your talk! The physicians, their medicine, ailments and their remedies are all servants bound to obey Allah's foreordained destiny, and it is not Allah's foreordained destiny that is subservient to the knowledge of physicians and their remedies and all the rest." His mind is at peace.

Let us plant this certitude firmly in the core of our beings. It brings immense benefits to us. Among its other benefits is that this doctrinal certitude leads you to what the spiritual masters (al-rabbaniyyun) have called "oneness of perception" (wahda al-shuhud). I am not saying "oneness of being" (wahda al-wujud) - beware! What is the meaning of the expression "oneness of perception"? When I interact with causes with full respect to Allah's ways, His orders, and His Law, and know that the sustenance that comes to me is from Allah; the felicity that enters my home is from Allah Almighty; my food is readied for me by Allah - I mean even the smallest details; the wealth with which I have been graced, comes from Allah; the illness that has been put in my being or that of a relative of mine comes from Allah Almighty; the cure that followed it is from Allah Almighty; my success in my studies is by Allah Almighty's grant; the results which I have attained after obtaining my degrees and so forth, are from Allah Almighty's grant - when the efficacy of causes melt away in my sight and I no longer see, behind them, other than the Causator Who is Allah Almighty, at that time, when you look right, you do not see except Allah's Attributes, and when you look left, you do not see other than Allah's Attributes. As much as you evolve in the world of causes, you do not see, through them, except the Causator, Who is Allah. At that time you have become raised to what the spiritual masters have called oneness of perception. And this oneness of perception is what Allah's Messenger - Allah bless and greet him - expressed by the word ihsan [which he defined to mean]: "That you worship Allah as if you see him."⁵ You do not see the causes as a barrier between you and Allah. Rather, you see causes, in the context of this doctrine, very much like pure, transparent glass: the glass pane is present, no one denies it, but as much as you stare at it, you do not see anything except what is behind it. Is it not so? You only see what is behind it. The world is entirely made of glass panes in this fashion. You see in them Allah's efficacy in permanence, so you are always with Allah Almighty.

None has tasted the sweetness of belief (iman) unless he has reached that level of perception. At that time you will find yourself, when you enter your house, enjoying the pleasures of this house and whatever sustenance and good things are in it, you will know that it is Allah Who has bestowed all this upon you, so you will love Him. When you find that Allah has tied together your heart and the heart of your wife with mutual love, you will know that the secret of this love is not effected by your wife, but comes

from Allah, the Lord of the worlds. When you look at yourself in the mirror, finding yourself in good health, you immediately know that it is Allah Almighty that has bestowed good health upon you. When food is placed before you and you look at it, you imagine that Allah - so to speak - has carried this food and placed it before you after he subordinated to this purpose His heaven, His earth, the pastures of His livestock, and then said to you: "Eat!" You will live with Allah Almighty! If you become thirsty and drink some cold water you will forget the water and remember only the One Who quenched your thirst. And when you lie down in bed at night and find yourself falling sleep, you will know that the One Who made you sleep is Allah - not sleeping pills at all, nor the efficacy which Allah subordinated to the physician. And so forth. You interact with causes, but this certitude shall make you as I described: you will see causes as very, very transparent glass panes which, as much as you stare at them, you will no longer see other than what is behind them.

The disbeliever, on the other hand, or the denier, or the doubter, or the skeptic, will look at these causes as one of us would look at glass panes that have been completely painted over. These panes have become thick obstacles that prevent you from seeing what is behind them. As much as you look, you cannot see what is behind them. At that time one will divinize causes, and all those things. It is not permitted for the Muslim to fall into this spot in any way whatsoever.

We have now determined the working relationship between the words of the Imam Ibn `Ata' Allah al-Sakandari in his second hikma and his words in the third. There remains one question which might arise in the minds of some people: "If everything is according to qada' and qadar, then the believer is foreordained by Allah to be a believer, and the disbeliever is foreordained by Allah to be a disbeliever. Therefore, the disbeliever's disbelief is not by his free choice, nor is the believer's belief by his free choice." Our preceding discourse might lead some of you to this difficulty. What is the answer? It is actually a different question, unrelated to what we have said today. I shall answer this question, Allah willing, but what I say now will not suffice and I therefore direct you to what I said in detail, in depth, and at length in my book *Al-Insanu Musayyarun aw Mukhayyar?* ("Is Man Controlled or Endowed With Free Choice?"). I believe that I answered this problem there in great detail. However, I shall answer now succinctly.

Everything is by qada' and qadar, just as Allah's Messenger - Allah bless and greet him - says, including helplessness and intelligence.⁶ Allah's foreordained destinies are two kinds. The first kind is directly created by Allah Almighty. This is all part of "the world of creation" (*`alam al-khalq*): stars and their orbits, the order of the universe which is unrelated to man's free choice, human birth and death, human illness and cure, vegetation, earthquakes, eclipses - all these matters are part of Allah's foreordainment and created by Him directly, without any part for free choice. This comes under the heading of "creation" in the verse "His verily is all creation and commandment" (7:54). The Creator does not make you in any way responsible for what He created without any choice on your part. "Allah tasks not a soul beyond its scope" (2:286).

The second kind of foreordained destinies is what Allah has foreordained - and what is foreordainment? It is Allah's knowledge of what shall take place. Allah only creates something in correspondence with (tilqa') His knowledge. This second kind of foreordained destinies is one that takes effect or circulates through the free choices of human beings. For example: your prayer, your fasting, your pilgrimage, your purification-tax (zakat), your acts of obedience, your acts of piety, your acts of disobedience - we seek refuge in Allah! - and all your deeds freely undertaken: are they foreordained by Allah or not? They are foreordained by Allah, in the sense that Allah knows that you will pray by choice. When, according to Allah's knowledge, you rose to pray, He put you in a position to pray (aqdaraka `ala salatik) and created in your entity the motions of your prayer. He is the Creator [of all this]. Allah knows that you will perform pilgrimage to the Sacred House. At the time you determined to go on pilgrimage, He put you in a position to do so and created for you the causes that facilitate it for you. Allah knows that So-and-so will disobey Him by drinking wine. At the time he finally determined to drink wine, Allah put him in a position to do so and created in his hand, his feet, and his mouth the power to do it.

So then Who is the Creator of the acts of obedience? Allah. And Who is the Creator of the acts of disobedience? Allah. But to what does reward and punishment apply? Reward and punishment do not apply to the actual deed which is created by Allah, but to the resolution (al-qasd), the "earning" (al-kasb) as Allah Almighty said: laha ma kasabat wa `alayha ma iktasabat - "For it is what it has earned, and against it is what it has deserved" (2:286). If I determine to come to this place so that we should remind each other of one of the matters of this Religion, and say: "Ya Allah! O my Lord, I have determined to do this"- at that time the Creator creates power in my person, enables me to walk and come here, and when I sit in this place He enables me to think. He does all this, but on the Day of Resurrection what will He reward me for? Will He reward me for something which He Himself created? Rather, He will only reward me for my having determined (qasadt). And so Allah has made my act subservient to my determination.

This is a brief summary of the topic. Perhaps we shall elaborate on it in the next lesson, Allah willing. And praise belongs to Allah the Lord of the worlds.

NOTES

by GF Haddad

1 Narrated from Abu Hurayra by Bukhari and Muslim.

2 I.e. in the sense of a personified force independent of the Creator, as in "Mother Nature."

3 "Things do not act of their own nature. Neither does water quench thirst, nor does bread sate hunger, nor does fire burn, but Allah creates satedness simultaneously with eating, and hunger at other times. Likewise, drinking is the drinker's doing while quenchedness is from Allah, and killing is the killer's doing while death is from Allah." Ibn Khafif (d. 371), al-`Aqida al-Sahihah (41), in Ibrahim al-Dusuqi Shatta, Sira Ibn Khafif (Cairo: al-Hay'a al-`Ammah li Shu'un al-Matabi' al-Amiriyya, 1977) p. . A man asked al-Tustari (d. 283): "What is sustenance?" He said: "Perpetual dhikr."

The man said: "I was not asking about that, but about what sustains one." He replied: "O man, things are sustained by nothing but Allah." The man said: "I did not mean that, I asked you about what is indispensable!" He replied: "Young man, Allah is indispensable." Abu Nu`aym, *Hilya al-Awliya'* (10:218 #15022). "Satiation, quenching, and combustion are phenomena which Allah alone creates, since bread does not create satiation, nor does water create quenching, nor does fire create combustion, although they are causes for such results. But the Creator is Himself the Causator (al-Musabbib), not the causes. This is just as Allah said: "You threw not when you did throw, but Allah threw." (8:17) He denied that His Prophet was the creator of the throw, although he was its cause. Allah also said: "And that it is He Who makes laugh, and makes weep, and that it is He Who gives death and gives life." (54:43-44) Thus He dissociated making-laugh, making-weep, the giving of death and of life from their respective causes, attributing all to Himself. Similarly, al-Ash`ari (d. 330?) dissociated satiation, quenching, and combustion from their causes, attributing them all to the Creator Who said: "Such is Allah, your Lord. There is no God save Him, the Creator of all things." (6:102) "Is there any creator other than Allah?" (35:3) "Nay, but they denied what they could not comprehend and whereof the interpretation had not yet come unto them." (10:39) "Did you deny My signs when you could not compass them in knowledge, or what was it you did?" (27:84)." Ibn `Abd al-Salam (d. 660), *al-Mulha fi I'tiqad Ahl al-Haqq in Rasa'il al-Tawhid* (p. 11-27) and al-Subki, *Tabaqat al-Shafi`iyya al-Kubra* (8:219-229).

4 Narrated from Abu Hurayra by Muslim, Ahmad, Ibn Majah, Malik in his *Muwatta'*, and al-Tabarani, all as part of a longer hadith which begins: "The strong believer is better and more beloved to Allah than the weak believer" (*al-mu'min al-qawiyy khayrun wa ahabbu ilallh min al-mu'min al-da`f*).

5 Narrated from Abu Hurayra by Bukhari, Muslim, Ahmad, al-Nasa'i, and Ibn Majah; from `Umar by Muslim, al-Tirmidhi, Abu Dawud, Ibn Majah, Ahmad, and al-Nasa'i; and from Abu Dharr by al-Nasa'i, all as part of a longer hadith.

6 "Everything is by qadar, including helplessness and intelligence." Narrated from Anas and Ibn `Umar by Muslim; from Ibn `Umar by Ahmad and Malik; and from Ibn `Abbas by Bukhari in his *Tarikh*. The latter narrates it both with *qada'* and *qadar*.

Allah's Blessings and peace on the Prophet, his Family, and his Companions, and praise belongs to Allah, Lord of the Worlds.

GF Haddad

Both good and evil from Allah Most High

Answered by Shaykh Gibril F Haddad

Q.

I have a book of Prophetic Invocations, in it is a du'a that goes like this: In the Name of Allah (swt), all praise belongs to Allah, both good and evil are by the will of Allah.

A.



Evil is by will (irada) of Allah Most High but without His good pleasure (rida). At the same time we attribute only good to Allah. Evil is attributed to Shaytan, Nafs, or Hawa.

As for moral responsibility, it belongs squarely to creatures and is the basis on which they are judged.

Christians and the Mu'tazila - an Islamic sect - believe that Allah cannot possibly create evil. The logical conclusion is that there is another creator - possibly several - besides Allah Most High which is absurd and impious.

This is a topic related to Qadar - Divine Foreordainment, which was explained most succinctly and brilliantly by Dr. Muhammad Sa'id Ramadan al-Buti in a talk available on the net under the title:

"Foreordained Destiny, the Inefficacy of Material Causes-and-Effects, and the Servant's Earning of Deeds Created by Allah."

Was-Salam,

Hajj Gibril

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GF Haddad