TAWHĪD OF ALLĀH'S
Most Beautiful Names & Lofty Attributes

THE BELIEF OF AHL AL-ṢUNNAH WA L-JAMĀ‘AH

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Tawhid of Allah’s Most Beautiful Names & Lofty Attributes

The of Belief Ahl al-Sunnah wa l-Jama’ah

by
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Translated by
Abu Safwan Farid Haibatan
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Vowels, diphthongs, etc.

Short: .............................. a | i | u

Long: .............................. ā | ē | ū | ī

diphthongs: .............................. aw | ay
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All praise is for Allah alone and may He exalt and send peace and blessings upon our beloved Prophet and upon those who follow his way.

The author of this work is Shaykh Muhammad Ibn Khalifah Ibn 'Ali al-Tamimi. He was born in al-Madinah in the year 1374H (1959). He graduated from the Islamic University there and subsequently obtained his Masters (1406H) and Doctorate (1410H) at the University, specialising in 'aqidah. At present he is an associate professor at the University in the faculty of Da’wah and Ustul al-Din and he is also the head of the Academic Research section at the University. The Shaykh has a number of works that have been published ranging from verifications of classical works, articles for various magazines as well as a number of works he himself has authored.

This particular book of his is by far one of the best in its field as an introduction into the subject area of the tawhid of Allah’s Names and Attributes, and Allah knows best. Some of its features are:

- The explanation of the fundamentals and principles of Ahl al-Sunnah in this area along with a clarification of some specific detailed matters.
- Clarification of the deviant methodologies in a clear manner whilst explaining the truth in this regard.
- The stages of the book have been set out in a well structured manner as the author begins with the importance of the subject. He then moves on to definitions, then relationships, explanations and rulings and then a further deeper clarification.
- The clarity of his expression and discussion of this subject.
- An emphasis on the practical issues that pertain to this subject as mentioned in a number of points under the topic of the importance of this category of tawhid.
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- An emphasis on the practical issues that pertain to this subject as mentioned in a number of points under the topic of the importance of this category of 'tawhid.
This last point in reality is the end objective of this subject area; the manner in which Allah’s Names and Attributes are to be understood and how they are to have an impact in the iman and behaviour of a person. However, this book does not cover this aspect in a detailed manner. The scope of this book precedes this and is much more technical, concerning itself with the means towards this objective. It is related to the issue of the correct belief towards Allah’s Names and Attributes. For one to be truly affected by Allah’s Names and Attributes, the goal, as necessitated by the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Messenger (ﷺ) he has to possess the correct belief - the means - in these Names and Attributes.

Please note that certain areas of this book relate more to a textbook than to a book for casual reading. As such, one needs to read over certain sections more than once and it may, in fact, be of greater benefit to read the entire book more than once.

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- May Allah reward all those who have helped in this translation and with Him lies all success. May He make our actions sincerely for His Face and not let anyone have a share in them.

Preface

All praise is for Allah. We praise Him and seek His help and forgiveness. We turn to Him in repentance and seek refuge in Allah from the evil of our selves and the wickedness of our own deeds. Whomsoever Allah guides, cannot be led astray and whomsoever Allah misguides, none can guide him. I bear witness that none has the right to be worshipped except Allah, alone without any partner. To Him belong the most beautiful Names and the most exalted Attributes.

I bear witness that Muhammad is His Slave, Messenger and His trusted one with the revelation. Allah sent him with the guidance and religion of truth. He conveyed the message, rendered the trust placed upon him, sincerely advised the ummah, made jihād in the cause of Allah in its truest sense and worshipped His Lord until he met the inevitable certainty1. May Allah praise him and send peace upon him and his household.

This study is the first of the series, Studies on the subject areas of Tawḥīd al-Asmā’ wa l-Ṣifāt, and its title is, The belief of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā’ah in Tawḥīd al-Asmā’ wa l-Ṣifāt.

Allah willing, the following studies will succeed it:

The second study: The belief of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā’ah in the most beautiful Names of Allah

The third study: The belief of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā’ah in the most exalted Attributes of Allah

The fourth study: The principles of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā’ah in understanding the texts which contain the Names and Attributes of Allah

1 i.e. death. [t]
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\[t\] i.e. death.
The fifth study: The statements of al-Ta'āwun3 and the position of Ahl al-Sunnah wa l-Jamā'ah towards them

The sixth study: The statements of al-Tashbhīh and the position of Ahl al-Sunnah wa l-Jamā'ah towards them

My intention behind the publication of this series is to serve the following areas:

1. To explain the belief of Ahl al-Sunnah wa l-Jamā'ah in the Names and Attributes of Allah in both a comprehensive and detailed manner. This is achieved by firstly clarifying the general and fundamental issues, then researching into the specific detailed issues found within these fundamentals. I have devoted this first study to presenting the major principles that manifest and clarify the belief of Ahl al-Sunnah wa l-Jamā'ah from a general viewpoint. Each and every specific issue is then dealt with in its totality in further separate studies.

2. To bring together the dispersed issues related to this field. These issues are scattered in the books of Ahl al-Sunnah. I have exerted my utmost in trying to compile, arrange and classify these issues, as well as trying to structure them in a way which will make it easy to understand and investigate.

3. To disclose the corruption of the doctrines of the people of deviation and error who deviated from the truth in this domain. This is done to show the reasoning behind the falsity of their beliefs and the scope of their deviation and perversion in order for the Muslim to be on his guard against falling into such deviation.

This first study embodies the following chapters:

1. The Definition of Tawhīd al-Asmā' wa l-Sifāt and its Relationship to the Other Categories of Tawhīd

Two areas of discussion are contained in this chapter:

1. The definition of Tawhīd al-Asmā' wa l-Sifāt
2. Its relationship to the other categories of Tawhīd

2. The Belief of Ahl al-Sunnah wa l-Jamā'ah in the Names and Attributes of Allah

Three areas of discussion are contained in this chapter:

1. The definition of al-Salaf al-Salih and Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah
2. The belief of Ahl al-Sunnah wa l-Jamā'ah in the Names and Attributes of Allah
3. The foundations on which their belief in the Names and Attributes of Allāh is based

I have ended this first study with a conclusion and added a number of appendices.

I do not claim to have reached a level of perfection in this study, but it suffices me that I have exerted my utmost efforts. If I am correct then that is by the Favour of Allāh alone, and if I have fallen short of the mark, or erred, then this is from the nature of man's efforts. So I ask of those who come across anything incorrect in this study to immediately inform me of such.

I ask Allāh to accept this effort of mine and that He make it a righteous act enacted purely for His Face and that He does not allow anyone else to have a share in it.

The end to our supplication is that All praise is for Allāh, Lord of the worlds.

Muḥammad Ibn Khalīfah al-Tamīmī
The fifth study: The statements of al-Ta' til and the position of Ahl al-Sunnah wa l-Jamā'ah towards them.

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The end to our supplication is that All praise is for Allah, Lord of the worlds.

Muhammad Ibn Khalifah al-Tamimi
INTRODUCTION

The Importance of 
*Tawhīd al-ʿAṣmāʾ wa l-Ṣifāt*

All praise is for Allah, the Most Merciful, the Bestower of Mercy the Owner of the Day of Judgement. I hear witness that none has the right to be worshipped except Allah, alone without any partner, the One who is characterised by qualities of Magnificence and Who is described with Attributes of perfection.

I bear witness that Muhammad is His slave and Messenger, His trusted one with His revelation, His favoured one from among His creation and His proof over His servants, may Allah praise and send peace upon him and his family.

It is of great benefit and importance to the seeker of truth before he embarks on studying the intricacies of the areas of *Tawhīd al-ʿAṣmāʾ wa l-Ṣifāt* to be aware of the importance of this category of *Tawhīd*, its value, status and role in relation to belief principally, and to the rest of the religion as a whole.

In bringing this beneficial concept to the attention of the Muslim, i.e. regarding the high position this *Tawhīd* possesses, it will be of benefit to him, by the will of Allah, in his *iman* in Allah as he will assign to this area the importance it warrants. Similarly it will increase his desire to learn and understand its various aspects, issues and branches, of which the student of knowledge, who desires to equip himself with more beneficial knowledge, cannot do without.

It is regrettable to find that some individuals attach little importance and significance to this category of *Tawhīd*. Such a person believes that the issues relating to this domain do not go beyond the mere listing of the different and averse opinions concerning the *number* of Names and Attributes negated or affirmed for Allah. This whole area in his view does not exceed this and is limited to it.
INTRODUCTION

The Importance of
Tawhid asma wa l-Sifat

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It is of great benefit and importance to the seeker of truth before he embarks on studying the intricacies of the areas of Tawhid asma wa l-Sifat to be aware of the importance of this category of Tawhid, its value, status and role in relation to belief principally, and to the rest of the religion as a whole.

In bringing this beneficial concept to the attention of the Muslim, i.e. regarding the high position this Tawhid possesses, it will be of benefit to him, by the will of Allah, in his iman in Allah as he will assign to this area the importance it warrants. Similarly it will increase his desire to learn and understand its various aspects, issues and branches, of which the student of knowledge, who desires to equip himself with more beneficial knowledge, cannot do without.

It is regrettable to find that some individuals attach little importance and significance to this category of Tawhid. Such a person believes that the issues relating to this domain do not go beyond the mere listing of the different and averse opinions concerning the number of Names and Attributes negated or affirmed for Allah. This whole area in his view does not exceed this and is limited to it.
This notion and statement can only emanate from one of two individuals: either an ignorant person who is unaware of the beneficial issues contained in this field and of the level of importance and understanding that no Muslim can dispense with or one who has deviations in his belief; for he presumes that the condition of this field is defined by the state it exists in amongst the people of falsehood, who did not seek enlightenment from the Book or the Sunnah in this field nor any other.

Accordingly, their discussion in this domain did not go beyond contesting the Names and Attributes of Allah and raising doubts in all or most of them. Hence, they sealed the doorway to attaining any knowledge of these Names and Attributes, let alone, clarifying its status and role to the Muslim’s belief and iman in his Lord.

Therefore, out of desiring to shed light towards the truth, to teach the ignorant who is heedless, call and appeal to the violator who has deviated and as a means of revision for the scholar, I have written these words which point to some of the benefits and virtues that this particular category of Tawhid embodies. I hope Allah causes the one who peruses and recollects it to benefit from it.

For that reason I summarise, and with Allah lies all success and to Him I reach out for help and direction, what I would like to explain, is discussed in the following points:

1. This Tawhid Represents Half of Iman in Allah

The Muslim is not oblivious of the importance of iman in Allah, as it is the first article of iman, in fact, it is the greatest of them all, for the others merely follow on from it and are its offspring.

This particular article is the single most important matter for which creation was created, Messengers were sent, books were revealed and upon which the correct path was built.

Iman in Allah is the foundation of every good, source of all guidance and reason for every success. Since man is a creation and is subject to Allah’s Lordship, he reverts back to his Creator and Maker in his knowledge and action. So, by Him he is guided, for Him he acts and to Him he will return. Man cannot do without Him and to avert to other than Him is the cornerstone of his destruction and ruin.

Man has Allah as a substitute for everything whereas nothing or no one can dispense of Allah. So the slave cannot attain any goodness or success except through knowing His Lord and worshipping Him. If this occurs, then this is the intended objective for him and the reason for his existence. Anything else besides this is of extra benefit or superfluous having no benefit or is a harmful remnant.

This is why the call of the Messengers to their people was that of a call to having iman in Allah and worshipping Him. Every Messenger started his call with this as anyone who researches into the call (da'wah) of the Messengers mentioned in the Qur'an will discover.

The essential prerequisite for happiness, safety and success is obtained by actualising the two categories of Tawhid, that iman in Allah is built upon. For the purpose of fulfilling this, Allah sent His Messenger(*) and to it, the earlier Messengers called, the very first of them to the very last.

One of the two categories is Tawhid al-Ilimi al-Khabari al-Itiqadi which comprises affirming Attributes of perfection for Allah and declaring Him to be free of any similarity or likeness and elevating Him above descriptions of imperfection.

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1. i.e. one who relies on Allah and entrusts his affairs to Him, truthfully and upon knowledge and insight, is content and manages without anyone or anything besides Him in both prosperous and troublesome times. At the same time, nothing or no one can dispense of Allah in trying to achieve their welfare and repel any harm, regardless of the physical and mental strengths he has. These two meanings are from the meanings of Allah’s name, ‘al-Qayrim’ as the qayrim is the one who is self-sufficient and self-supportive and who supports and suffices all else, and that is Allah alone. [t]

2. Al-Ilimi i.e. concentrating on knowledge as opposed to action (al-‘Ama‘il). Al-Khabari i.e. this knowledge is dependent upon revealed text (khair). Al-Itiqadi i.e. it takes form as part of the persons belief. [t]
This notion and statement can only emanate from one of two individuals: either an ignorant person who is unaware of the beneficial issues contained in this field and of the level of importance and understanding that no Muslim can dispense with or one who has deviations in his belief; for he presumes that the condition of this field is defined by the state it exists in amongst the people of falsehood, who did not seek enlightenment from the Book or the Sunnah in this field nor any other.

Accordingly, their discussion in this domain did not go beyond contesting the Names and Attributes of Allah and raising doubts in all or most of them. Hence, they sealed the doorway to attaining any knowledge of these Names and Attributes, let alone, clarifying its status and role to the Muslim’s belief and imān in his Lord.

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Imān in Allah is the foundation of every good, source of all guidance and reason for every success. Since man is a creation and is subject to Allah’s Lordship, he reverts back to his Creator and Maker in his knowledge and action. So, by Him he is guided, for Him he acts and to Him he will return. Man cannot do without Him and to avert to other than Him is the cornerstone of his destruction and ruin.

Man has Allah as a substitute for everything whereas nothing or no one can dispense of Allah. So the slave cannot attain any goodness or success except through knowing his Lord and worshipping Him. If this occurs, then this is the intended objective for him and the reason for his existence. Anything else besides this is of extra benefit or superfluous having no benefit or is a harmful remnant.

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One of the two categories is Tawhid al-`Ilm al-Khabari al-Iṣlāḥī which comprises affirming Attributes of perfection for Allah and declaring Him to be free of any similarity or likeness and elevating Him above descriptions of imperfection.
The second category of Tawḥīd is to worship Him alone, without any partner; to have absolute love, sincerity, fear, hope and reliance in Him; to be pleased with Him as Lord, Deity, and Patron and not to set up any partners alongside Him in anything.

Allah has incorporated these two categories in the two Sūras of purity:

They are the Sūrah which contains al-Tawḥīd al-ʿAmali al-ʿIrādī and the Sūrah which contains al-Tawḥīd al-ʿIrādī al-Khābārī.

So, the Sūrah entails an explanation of what Allah possesses of Attributes of perfection and an explanation of His elevation over and above any imperfections and similitude, whilst the Sūrah entails the obligation of worshipping Him alone, without any partner, and the renouncement of worshipping anything besides Him.

Neither of the two categories is complete without the other. For this reason, the Prophet (ṣ) used to recite these two Sūras in the Sunnah prayers of Fajr, Maghrib and Witr, which commence work-time and conclude work-time, so that the beginning of the day starts with Tawḥīd and the end of the day closes with Tawḥīd.

In summary, with regard to the Tawḥīd that is demanded from the servant, half of it is represented in Tawḥīd al-ʿĀṣmāʾ wa l-Ṣifāt.

7. Tawḥīd al-ʿĀṣmāʾ wa l-Ṣifāt is Without Exception the Most Noble and Most Important Branch of Knowledge

Indeed, the excellence of a particular branch of knowledge is dependent upon the excellence of that particular known thing itself, because of the assurance one has in the evidences and proofs for its existence, the intense need one has for knowing it and the tremendous benefit it returns.

Without doubt, the most Exalted, most Magnificent and Greatest known entity is Allah, Whom, none has the right to be worshipped but He, Lord of the Worlds, the Self-Sufficient and Sustainer of the Heavens and Earths; The King; the Reality; al-Mubīn; the One described with all perfection; elevated above every defect, deficiency and like, and above any similitude to His perfection.

There is no doubt therefore, that knowledge of Allah, His Names, Attributes and Actions is the most exalted and most excellent branch of knowledge. The comparison of this branch of knowledge to all the other branches is like the comparison of Allah to all other entities. If it is questioned: "Knowledge is merely the means to action and knowledge is acquired for it: action is the objective. Moreover, it is of common fact that the objective possesses a greater excellence than the means. So how is it that you prefer the means over its goal?"

It is replied: "Both knowledge and action have two parts: a part that is the means and a part that is the objective.

So knowledge is not always the means and is not always indirectly sought after.

8. Shaykh al-Albānī, may Allah have mercy upon him, mentions this fact for all three prayers and provides the taḥfīẓ for it. Refer to The Prophet’s Prayer Described from the beginning to the end as though you see it, pp. 31, 34 & 38. [t]


10. One of Allah’s most beautiful Names, the Evident, Whose presence and reality is an unquestionable certainty because of the multitude of proofs and signs He has shown and placed within His creation. Indeed, the evidences pointing to His tawḥīd, His Lordship and Sovereignty are more evident than the midday Sun. He is also the One who has clearly shown to His creation the path to salvation and success. [t]
The second category of *Tawhid* is to worship Him alone, without any partner; to have absolute love, sincerity, fear, hope and reliance in Him; to be pleased with Him as Lord, Deity, and Patron and not to set up any partners alongside Him in anything.

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Neither of the two categories is complete without the other. For this reason, the Prophet (S) used to recite these two *Surahs* in the *sunnah* prayers of Fajr, Maghrib and Witr, which commence work-time and conclude work-time, so that the beginning of the day starts with *Tawhid* and the end of the day closes with *Tawhid*.

In summary, with regard to the *Tawhid* that is demanded from the servant, half of it is represented in *Tawhid al-Asma wa l-Sifāt*.

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Indeed, the excellence of a particular branch of knowledge is dependent upon the excellence of that particular known thing itself, because of the assurance one has in the evidences and proofs for its existence, the intense need one has for knowing it and the tremendous benefit it returns.

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So knowledge is not always the means and is not always indirectly sought after.

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5 Al-*Tawhid al-Asmā* is *Tawhid al-'Amali al-'Irādī* i.e. concentrating on action and al-*Irādī* i.e. that the heart and limbs worship, strive, intend and desire only Allah in their actions.

6 The first *ayah* from *Surah al-Kafirun* (109).

7 The first *ayah* from *Surah al-Ikhlas* (112).

8 Shaykh al-Albānī, may Allah have mercy upon him, mentions this fact for all three prayers and provides the *sahih* for it. Refer to The Prophet's Prayer Described from the beginning to the end as though you see it, pp. 31, 34 &38. [c]


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11 Miftah Dār al-Sā' idah, 1/86.
Knowledge of Allah, His Names and Attributes is without exception the most excellent of all types of knowledge and it is sought after in itself, Allah (ta‘ala) says:

\\begin{align*}
\text{الله} \text{العليم} \text{الحكم} \\
\text{مُلُوكُ الْأَرْضِ وَالْخَلَائِفِ}
\end{align*}

"It is Allah Who has created seven Heavens and of the earth the like thereof (i.e. seven). His commands descend between them, so that you may know that Allah has power over all things and that Allah completely comprehends all things with His knowledge."  

Allah (subḥānahu) informs that He created the Heavens and earth and brings down commands between them so that His slaves may know that He is well aware of everything and that He is over all things Omnipotent. So having knowledge of this is the desired objective.

Allah (ta‘ala) also says:

\\begin{align*}
\text{إِنَّلَمِّا نَسِيَ الْأَرْضَ}
\end{align*}

“So know that none has the right to be worshipped except Allah...”  

The knowledge therefore, of His Oneness and that none has the right to be worshipped except He, is sought for in itself, even though, the person cannot suffice with this by itself. Rather, he must add to this, worship of Allah alone, without any partner. So they are two distinct matters which are sought after in themselves.

The first matter: to know the Lord by His Names, Attributes, Actions and Laws.

The second matter: to worship Him in accordance and on the basis of this knowledge.

So just as worship of Him is demanded and directly intended in itself, then likewise, knowledge of Him is also demanded and directly intended in itself.

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12 Surah al-Talāq (65):12.
13 Surah Muhammad (47):19.

In fact, (acquiring) knowledge is from amongst the best acts of worship.  

3. Tawhid al-Asmā’ wa l-Ṣifāt is the Origin of all Religious Knowledge

Just as knowledge of the Names, Attributes and Actions of Allah is the most exalted, noblest and greatest of knowledge, it is also the origin of all knowledge. All other branches of knowledge are its subsidiaries and are dependent upon it for their very own verification. Knowledge of Him is therefore, the origin and basis of every other type of knowledge. So, whoever knows Allah will be able to know other than Allah and whoever is ignorant of His Lord, then he in fact possesses greater ignorance of everything else besides Allah. Allah says:

\\begin{align*}
\text{وَلَاتَعْرَفُوا كَأَنَّهُمْ أَلِينَ}
\end{align*}

“...And be not like those who forgot Allah and He caused them to forget their own selves. They are the transgressors.”  

Contemplate this aya; you will find within it a mighty and illustrious meaning: “Whosoever forgets His Lord, He will cause him to forget his very own self and soul”. He will not know his own reality or what constitutes his welfare. In fact, he will forget what constitutes his own prosperity and success in this life and the next. This because he has departed from the original disposition he was created upon. He forgot His Lord, so Allah caused him to forget his own self, its qualities and what leads to its fulfilment, purification and happiness in this life and the next. Allah says:

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14 Miṣḥah Dār al-Sa‘ādah 1/178.
15 In turn, religious knowledge forms the basis of all other types of knowledge besides it. Hence, absolutely all types of knowledge return back to Allah’s Names and Attributes, as shown in the discussion. [10]
Knowledge of Allah, His Names and Attributes is without exception the most excellent of all types of knowledge and it is sought after in itself, Allah (ta’ala) says:

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Allâh (subhanahu) informs that He created the Heavens and earth and brings down commands between them so that His slaves may know that He is well aware of everything and that He is over all things Omnipotent. So having knowledge of this is the desired objective.

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"So know that none has the right to be worshipped except Allâh..."¹³

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The first matter: to know the Lord by His Names, Attributes, Actions and Laws.

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Contemplate this ayah; you will find within it a mighty and illustrious meaning: “Whosoever forgets His Lord, He will cause him to forget his very own self and soul”. He will not know his own reality or what constitutes his welfare. In fact, he will forget what constitutes his own prosperity and success in this life and the next. This because he has departed from the original disposition he was created upon. He forgot His Lord, so Allâh caused him to forget his own self, its qualities and what leads to its fulfilment, purification and happiness in this life and the next. Allah says:

¹²Surah al-‘Alaq (65):12.
¹³Surah Muhammad (47):19.
¹⁵In turn, religious knowledge forms the basis of all other types of knowledge besides it. Hence, absolutely all types of knowledge return back to Allah’s Names and Attributes, as shown in the discussion. [1]
...and do not obey the one whose heart We have made heedless of Our remembrance, who follows his own desires and whose affair (i.e. deeds) has been lost.\(^{17}\)

He did not give any attention to remembering His Lord and so his affair and heart went into disarray. As a result, no regard is now paid to the welfare, growth or purification of his self and heart. Instead, he has sundered his heart and caused its downfall. He exceeded all bounds, is confused and is unable to find the right way.

Thus, knowledge of Allah is the origin of all knowledge and it is the basis of the servant’s knowledge towards his happiness, perfection and betterment in this life and the next. Ignorance of Allah necessitates ignorance of one’s self and of what constitutes its betterment, perfection, purification and success.

So, knowledge of Him proposes happiness for the servant and ignorance of Him lies at the heart of his misery.\(^{18}\)

4. Knowledge of Allah’s Names and Attributes is a Great and Important Tenet within the Methodology of the Salaf

Knowledge of Allah’s Names and Attributes is the foundation upon which the servant’s actions are built. On the strength of this foundation the relationship that binds the servant to his Lord is determined and in view of this foundation the Muslim worships his Lord and seeks to attain nearness to Him.

For this reason, the basis for the knowledge and action of the Salaf was:

1. Knowledge of Allah

2. Action directed solely to Allah

\(^{17}\) Surah al-Kahf (18):28.

\(^{18}\) Miftah Dīr al-Su‘ādah 1/86.

With this, they combined both belief based on knowledge and action based on love.

Furthermore, their belief, actions and love were based upon knowledge, so they were free of the harmful elements found amongst the deviant Mutakallimah (scholastics) and Sufis.

With respect to the scholastics, the majority of their study and statements centre on issues of affirmation, negation, existence, non-existence and on issues pertaining to belief. Their area of discussion therefore, concentrated on belief, knowledge and information.

Whereas the Sufis, their main concern centred on love, hate, intentions, dislikes and physical actions. Their area of discussion therefore, concentrated on love, submission, action and intentions.

Both of these two deviant groups have within them two corrupted elements:

The first:

The presence of speech that is not based on knowledge with respect to the scholastic and the presence of action that is not based on knowledge with respect to the Sufi.

The second:

The neglect of deeds by the scholastic and the neglect of speech by the Sufi.\(^{19}\)

\(^{19}\) This is the ruling, in general. One observes that theoretical and speculative discussions dominate the concern of 'Ahl al-Kalam, of old and new, but actions amongst them are few, especially acts of worship such as prayer, remembrance, recitation, etc. That which is observed from the Sufis on the other hand, is concentration on the actions of the heart and limbs, but with negligence of determining precisely the knowledge-based issues and the validity of their actions. This is a ruling based on what is found to be dominant amongst them. [t]
He did not give any attention to remembering His Lord and so his affair and heart went into disarray. As a result, no regard is now paid to the welfare, growth or purification of his self and heart. Instead, he has sundered his heart and caused its downfall. He exceeded all bounds, is confused and is unable to find the right way.

Thus, knowledge of Allah is the origin of all knowledge and it is the basis of the servant's knowledge towards his happiness, perfection and betterment in this life and the next. Ignorance of Allah necessitates ignorance of one's self and of what constitutes its betterment, perfection, purification and success.

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Both of these two deviant groups have within them two corrupted elements:

The first:
The presence of speech that is not based on knowledge with respect to the scholastic and the presence of action that is not based on knowledge with respect to the Sufi.

This is a direct reference to the innovated speech and action that occurred from them, which lie in contradiction to the Book and Sunnah.

The second:
The neglect of deeds by the scholastic and the neglect of speech by the Sufi.  

This is the ruling, in general. One observes that theoretical and speculative discussions dominate the concern of Ahl al-Kalâm, of old and new, but actions amongst them are few, especially acts of worship such as prayer, remembrance, recitation, etc. That which is observed from the Sufis on the other hand, is concentration on the actions of the heart and limbs, but with negligence of determining precisely the knowledge-based issues and the validity of their actions. This is a ruling based on what is found to be dominant amongst them. [1]
As for the Salaf and their followers, they fulfilled both matters:

The speech concerning creed that is based upon the knowledge of Allah's Names, Attributes and Actions that are recorded in the Book and Sunnah and the intention-based actions that emanate from abiding to commands and refraining from prohibitions in accordance with Allah's legislations in His Book and upon the tongue of His Messenger (SAW).

Accordingly, their external and internal speech and actions were based upon knowledge and each of their knowledge and action were linked to the other; they indeed are the true Muslims.

So, the Salaf and their followers made Tawhid al-Asma wa l-Sifāt one of the two pillars on which they built their methodology.

This is directly due to the importance and status this category of Tawhid holds, which is attested to by numerous texts of the Shari'ah.

5. Knowledge of the Names and Attributes of Allah Opens the Door for the Servant to Knowing Allah

The question of possessing love for something is primarily dependent upon firstly being acquainted with that thing. The most knowledgeable of Allah amongst creation will therefore have the strongest love for Him. Everyone who knows Allah, loves Him, but there is no route to acquiring this knowledge except through the doorway of knowledge of Allah's Names and Attributes.

The servant therefore, will only be able to attain knowledge of Allah by acquainting himself with the Names and Attributes of Allah recorded in the Qur'an and Sunnah. Consequently, knowledge of Allah's Names and Attributes will open this mighty door for the servant, as Allah (azza wa jalla) did not designate the way to knowing Him through seeing Him directly. This doorway is blocked until the Day of Judgement just as we have been informed by our Prophet Muhammad (SAW) when he said: "Know that none of you will see his Lord until he dies."21

Furthermore, it is impossible for the human intellect to independently attain and comprehend this knowledge in a detailed manner.22 It is incapable of achieving this because Allah is from the Unseen about which there is no way of acquiring any knowledge except by way of revelation. Allah (azza wa jalla) says:

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...you have not been given of knowledge except a little."23
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This ayah clearly shows the limitations of man's knowledge.

The mercy of the Mighty and Wise necessitated that He send Messengers who would inform the people about Himself and call them to Him. He made the knowledge of Himself by way of His Names, Attributes and Actions the key to their da'wah and the essence of their message.

The basis of the da'wah of the Messengers and the first tenet contained within it is knowledge of Allah (subhanahu) by His Names, Attributes and Actions. Two great tenets then follow on from this:

1. To acquaint the people with the way that leads to Allah (i.e. His Share'ah which embodies His commands and prohibitions)

2. To inform the people of what awaits them in the Hereafter.

These two tenets follow on from the first and are based upon it.

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21 Related by Muslim in his al-Sahih, the book of Fitan, Chapter: The mention of Ibn Sayyad, 8/193.

22 As opposed to a very general manner. By looking around and contemplating over the universe, one can conclude certain Attributes of the Creator, such as Knowledge, Ability, Mercy, etc. However, without revelation, how can one know for instance, that our Lord descends to the lowest heaven at the last third of the night asking about who is beseeching Him, seeking His forgiveness and asking of Him, so that He may grant them what they seek? [1]

23 Sarah al-Isra' (17):85.
As for the Salaf and their followers, they fulfilled both matters:

The speech concerning creed that is based upon the knowledge of Allah’s Names, Attributes and Actions that are recorded in the Book and Sunnah and the intention-based actions that emanate from abiding to commands and refraining from prohibitions in accordance with Allah’s legislations in His Book and upon the tongue of His Messenger (ﷺ).

Accordingly, their external and internal speech and actions were based upon knowledge and each of their knowledge and action were linked to the other; they indeed are the true Muslims.²⁰

So, the Salaf and their followers made Tawhid al-Asma wal-Sifat one of the two pillars on which they built their methodology.

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5. Knowledge of the Names and Attributes of Allah Opens the Door for the Servant to Knowing Allah

The question of possessing love for something is primarily dependent upon firstly being acquainted with that thing. The most knowledgeable of Allah amongst creation will therefore have the strongest love for Him. Everyone who knows Allah, loves Him, but there is no route to acquiring this knowledge except through the doorway of knowledge of Allah’s Names and Attributes.

The servant therefore, will only be able to attain knowledge of Allah by acquainting himself with the Names and Attributes of Allah recorded in the Qur’an and Sunnah. Consequently, knowledge of Allah’s Names and Attributes will open this mighty door for the servant, as Allah (azza wa jalla) did not designate the way to knowing Him through seeing Him directly. This doorway is blocked until the Day of Judgement just as we have been informed by our Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) when he said: “Know that none of you will see his Lord until he dies”.²¹

Furthermore, it is impossible for the human intellect to independently attain and comprehend this knowledge in a detailed manner.²² It is incapable of achieving this because Allah is from the Unseen about which there is no way of acquiring any knowledge except by way of revelation. Allah (azza wa jalla) says:

\[ ...you have not been given of knowledge except a little.\]

This ayah clearly shows the limitations of man’s knowledge.

The mercy of the Mighty and Wise necessitated that He send Messengers who would inform the people about Himself and call them to Him. He made the knowledge of Himself by way of His Names, Attributes and Actions the key to their da’wah and the essence of their message.

The basis of the da’wah of the Messengers and the first tenet contained within it is knowledge of Allah (subhanahu) by His Names, Attributes and Actions. Two great tenets then follow on from this:

1. To acquaint the people with the way that leads to Allah (i.e. His Shari’ah which embodies His commands and prohibitions)
2. To inform the people of what awaits them in the Hereafter.

These two tenets follow on from the first and are based upon it.

²¹ Related by Muslim in his al-Sahih, the book of Fitan, Chapter: The mention of Ibn Sayyad, 8/193.

²² As opposed to a very general manner. By looking around and contemplating over the universe, one can conclude certain Attributes of the Creator, such as Knowledge, Ability, Mercy, etc. However, without revelation, how can one know for instance, that our Lord descends to the lowest heaven at the last third of the night asking about who is beseeching Him, seeking His forgiveness and asking of Him, so that He may grant them what they seek? [I]

²³ Sūrah al-Isra’ (17):85.
So, the most knowledgeable of Allah will be the one who follows best the way which leads to Him and he will also be the most knowledgeable concerning the conditions of the people when they return to Him.

6. The Basis of Sound Knowledge is Iman in Allah and in His Names and Attributes

Correct imān, pure Tawḥīd and all the dictates contained within the message (of Islam) stand upon the foundation of sound and correct knowledge of Allah, His Names and Attributes.

This category of Tawḥīd is the basis of guidance and imān and it is the foundation upon which the religion stands.

This is why it is not conceivable for correct imān to be held by one who does not know his Lord. This knowledge is a must for the basis of imān to settle in the heart.

It is of extreme importance to the believer because of his dire need for it, for the benefit of the well being of his heart, the goodness of his belief and the uprightness of his actions.

This knowledge of Allah’s Names, Attributes and Actions grants the servant the ability to differentiate between imān and kufr, tawḥīd and shirk, and between affirmation and negation.

It enables him to elevate his Lord over and above everything that does not befit Him and to depict Him in the Glorious and Majestic manner well deserving of Him.

This is achieved by contemplating over the words of Allah (ta’ālā), and over what He (subḥānahu) has made known of His Names, Attributes and Actions to His servants upon the tongues of His Messengers, and also by contemplating over those attributes which do not befit Him, which He (subḥānahu) has declared Himself free of and elevated Himself over.

It is appropriate here to mention that knowledge of Allah is of two levels:

The first level: General knowledge

This knowledge is a necessary requirement for the believing servant to possess the basic imān. The degree to which this knowledge manifests is related to the level at which the servant is able to distinguish his Lord from all false objects of worship. By this knowledge, imān in its elementary stage exists, the servant escapes from the dangers of kufr and shirk that would otherwise expel him from the boundaries of imān, and he comes away from the realm of remaining ignorant of his Lord and as to what His rights are.

This knowledge can be readily obtained by reading Surah al-Ikhlas, āyāt al-Kursi and other āyāt, and by understanding their meanings.

This level of knowledge however, does not generate strength of imān nor does it firmly establish it.

The second level: Detailed knowledge

This comes to light by knowing the detailed evidences found within this subject area, learning them, believing that Allah is depicted with such, understanding their meanings and acting in light of their instructions and rulings.

This is the level of knowledge that causes imān to increase and to ground itself solidly.

The more the servant knows of Allah, the more his imān increases, and the greater will be his fear, love and attachment to his Lord.

Allah (ta’ālā) says:

إِنَّمَا يَعْبُدُ اللَّهَ مَنْ عَبْدَهُ مِنْ عِبَادِ اللَّهِ بَيْنَآ إِنَّمَا يَعْبُدُ اللَّهَ مَنْ عَبْدَهُ مِنْ عِبَادِ اللَّهِ بَيْنَآ إِنَّمَا يَعْبُدُ اللَّهَ مَنْ عَبْدَهُ مِنْ عِبَادِ اللَّهِ B

"It is only those of His slaves who have knowledge that fear Allah".25

This knowledge also imparts to the servant light and insight, which will protect him from areas of doubt and misconceptions that can (othe-

24 The type of kufr and shirk referred to here is of the major type. [6]

So, the most knowledgeable of Allah will be the one who follows best the way which leads to Him and he will also be the most knowledgeable concerning the conditions of the people when they return to Him.

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The more the servant knows of Allah, the more his iman increases, and the greater will be his fear, love and attachment to his Lord.

Allah (ta’ ala) says:

إِنَّمَا يَعْلَمُ الْكُفَّارُ أَنَّمَا يَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ بَعْدِنَا مَا نَعْبُدُ

“it is only those of His slaves who have knowledge that fear Allah.”

This knowledge also imparts to the servant light and insight, which will protect him from areas of doubt and misconceptions that can (oth-
erwise) cause him to stray and which protect him from unlawful de-
sires and lusts.

[In reality, two types of knowledge are meant by the phrase ‘Knowl-
edge of Allah’.

The first: knowledge of Allah Himself, i.e. of the Majestic and Hon-
ourable qualities He is characterised with and of what His most beau-
tiful Names indicate.

If this knowledge is well established in one heart it will most certainly
produce fear of Allah, because he will know for definite that Allah
rewards any obedience to Him and punishes any disobedience of Him.

The second: ‘Knowledge of Allah’ means knowledge of the rulings of
the Shari'ah, such as the commands and prohibitions and the lawful
and unlawful.

This is why some of the Salaf have mentioned: “The scholars are three:
1. One who knows Allah and is ignorant of His Command.
2. One who knows Allah’s Command but is ignorant of Allah.
3. One who knows both Allah and His Command.

The one who knows Allah is the one who fears Allah, and the one who
knows His Command is the one who knows the lawful and unlaw-
ful”.

7. Knowledge of Allah’s Names and Attributes is Life to the
Hearts

The heart is void of any life, comfort, happiness, security and tran-
quility without knowing its Lord, Deity and Creator, and without
Allah being more beloved to it than anything else.

One who does not have iaman in Allah cannot obtain knowledge and
guidance, and without being guided to his Lord, he will always be
miserable and tormented, as is the case with the unbelievers.

Allah (tabāraka) created man and assembled him with both body and
soul.

He desired that the body be created from the earth. Allah (ta’ala) says:

Allah made the body’s life and livelihood dependent upon this same
earth; he eats, drinks and takes his clothing from the land and what is
found within it.

Allah placed within this body, the soul. He (ta’ala) said:

Allah willed that the sustenance and livelihood for this soul be knowl-
edge of Himself and worship of Him.

There is therefore nothing more pleasant to the servant, nor anything
sweeter, more wholesome and blissful to his heart and life, than love

27 i.e. knowledge, which is based upon correct principles pertaining to iaman, whereby
they ensure praiseworthy fruits in this world and the Hereafter. It is obvious that if the
disbeliever exerts efforts, he will obtain some knowledge, but much of it is false and
little of it is true, being limited in benefit and great in harm... [1]

28 The reality of the state of the disbelievers caused by their alienation to the religion of
Allah is something very evident. Just a quick glance at the effects of the spiritual vacuum
they experience, may Allah protect us from that, reveals for us a little of this reality: the
great numbers of suicides, innumerable mental illnesses, submission into materialism,
the innumerable amount of laughable and lamentable fashions, the regulation and
legislation for sexual deviation, etc. [6]

29 Surah al-Hajj (22):5.

erwise) cause him to stray and which protect him from unlawful desires and lusts.

In reality, two types of knowledge are meant by the phrase ‘Knowledge of Allah’.

The first: knowledge of Allah Himself, i.e. of the Majestic and Honourable qualities He is characterised with and of what His most beautiful Names indicate.

If this knowledge is well established in ones heart it will most certainly produce fear of Allah, because he will know for definite that Allah rewards any obedience to Him and punishes any disobedience of Him.

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The one who knows Allah is the one who fears Allah, and the one who knows His Command is the one who knows the lawful and unlawful”.26

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The heart is void of any life, comfort, happiness, security and tranquillity without knowing its Lord, Deity and Creator, and without Allah being more beloved to it than anything else.

One who does not have iman in Allah cannot obtain knowledge27 and guidance, and without being guided to his Lord, he will always be miserable and tormented, as is the case with the unbelievers.28

Allah (tabaraka) created man and assembled him with both body and soul.

He desired that the body be created from the earth. Allah (ta’ala) says:

\[...for We have created you all from earth.\]

Allah made the body’s life and livelihood dependent upon this same earth; he eats, drinks and takes his clothing from the land and what is found within it.

Allah placed within this body, the soul. He (ta’ala) said:

\[So, when I have fashioned him (i.e. Adam) and breathed into him the soul I have created for him...\]

Allah willed that the sustenance and livelihood for this soul be knowledge of Himself and worship of Him.

There is therefore nothing more pleasant to the servant, nor anything sweeter, more wholesome and blissful to his heart and life, than love

27 i.e. knowledge, which is based upon correct principles pertaining to iman, whereby they ensure praiseworthy fruits in this world and the Hereafter. It is obvious that if the disbeliever exerts efforts, he will obtain some knowledge, but much of it is false and little of it is true, being limited in benefit and great in harm... [t]

28 The reality of the state of the disbelievers caused by their alienation to the religion of Allah is something very evident. Just a quick glance at the effects of the spiritual vacuum they experience, may Allah protect us from that, reveals for us a little of this reality; the great numbers of suicides, incurable mental illnesses, submission into materialism, the inexhaustible amount of laughable and lamentable fashions, the regulation and legislation for sexual deviation, etc. [t]

29 Surah al-Hajj (22):5.
for his Originator and Maker, being in a state of constant remembrance of Him and always seeking to earn His pleasure.

Consequently, whoever possesses in his heart even a minimum amount of life or love for his Lord, a desire for Him, and a yearning to meet Him, then his pursuit for this subject area, his strong desire to know and increase his understanding of it and his query and investigation of it, will be his greatest goal and most glorious objective.

For this is the perfection, without which the servant cannot otherwise attain perfection. It is the reason behind his creation and because of it revelation descended, Messengers were sent, the Heavens and earth stand and Paradise and Hell-Fire exist. For this very reason laws were legislated, the correct path was established, the Qiblah was determined and it is the pivot of creation and order, upon which they centre.

It is by all rights, the finest thing which the hearts can possess, which the souls can attain and which the minds can grasp. Sound and healthy hearts and secure and tranquil souls do not yearn earnestly for anything greater than to know this matter, nor are they more joyful with anything other than succeeding in arriving at the truths contained within this matter.

8. The Fruits of Knowing and Understanding Allah's Names and Attributes

Another aspect which indicates and emphasises the importance of this category of Tawhid is the benefits derived in the believer's heart from knowing the Names and Attributes of Allah. These include an increase in iman, firmness in certainty and the light and insight it instils (in one's heart), which protect him from areas of doubt and misconceptions that can (otherwise) cause him to stray and which protect him from unlawful desires and lusts.

Thus, if this knowledge is firmly established in the heart it will most definitely produce fear of Allah.

Each and every Name of Allah has a particular impact on the heart and character of the servant. If the heart comprehends the meaning of a specific Name, what it embodies, and is conscious of it, it will reply to these meanings and this awareness and understanding will reflect in the person's thinking and mode of behaviour.

Likewise, every Attribute has a specific form of worship attached to it, which is the result of the requisites dictated by this particular Attribute.

The most beautiful Names of Allah and His most exalted Attributes therefore yield worship as their effects.

This covers all forms of worship that appear on the heart and limbs. For example, the knowledge of the servant that Allah (ta' ala) alone is able to Harm and Benefit, Give and Withhold, to Create, Sustain, to give Life and cause Death, will produce the worship of Tawakkul (i.e. inner form) and the requisites and fruits of Tawakkul in its apparent form.

The servant’s knowledge of Allah's (ta' ala) Hearing, Sight and Knowledge, and of the fact that not a single atom in the heavens and earth escape Him, and that He knows the secret and hidden, what the treacherous eyes behold and what the breasts conceal, will make him preserve his tongue, limbs and the notions of his heart from anything that displeases Allah. He will make these limbs devoted to what Allah loves and is pleased with. So it yields modesty within him as well as manifesting it outwardly by making him steer clear of the prohibited and repellent matters.

Knowledge of His Richness, Generosity, Kindness, Beneficence and Mercy will grant the servant a wealth of optimism, and it will give birth to many types of hidden and apparent servitude, all in proportion to his understanding and knowledge.

Likewise, the knowledge of the Majesty of Allah, His Greatness and Might generates for the servant humility, submission and love. These inner conditions in turn produce several apparent forms of servitude.
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Consequently, whoever possesses in his heart even a minimum amount of life or love for his Lord, a desire for Him, and a yearning to meet Him, then his pursuit for this subject area, his strong desire to know and increase his understanding of it and his query and investigation of it, will be his greatest goal and most glorious objective.

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The servant's knowledge of Allah's (ta' ala) Hearing, Sight and Knowledge, and of the fact that not a single atom in the heavens and earth escape Him, and that He knows the secret and hidden, what the treacherous eyes behold and what the breasts conceal, will make him preserve his tongue, limbs and the notions of his heart from anything that displeases Allah. He will make these limbs devoted to what Allah loves and is pleased with. So it yields modesty within him as well as manifesting it outwardly by making him steer clear of the prohibited and repulsive matters.

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\(^{31}\) See al-Fatat al-Hamawiyah al-Kubra, pp. 28-29.
Similarly, knowledge of His Perfection, Beauty and exalted Attributes will grant him a specific love that becomes represented by many forms of servitude.

So all forms of servitude to Him are related back to the dictates of the Names and Attributes and are linked to it.\textsuperscript{32}

In light of the above, it is has become apparent that the servant’s knowledge of the Names and Attributes of Allah in the correct manner, which Allah (azza wa jalla) has informed about in His Book and in the Sunnah of His Messenger, will certainly make the servant establish servitude to Allah in the most perfect manner.

Hence, the more complete the servant’s faith in the Attributes is, the stronger will be his love, sincerity and worship. Additionally, the person who has the greatest servitude is the one who worships Allah with all the Names and Attributes He has made known to mankind, as every Name of His has associated to it, a specific form of worship on the basis of ‘knowledge and understanding’ and on the basis of ‘state’.

‘Knowledge and understanding’, i.e. whoever knows that Allah is named with this particular Name and understands what Attribute it entails, then believes in it, this in itself is worship.

‘State’, i.e. every Name belonging to Allah has a specific meaning and particular effect on the heart and character. If the heart comprehends the meaning of a specific Name, what it embodies and is conscious of it, it will reply to these meanings and this awareness and understanding will reflect in the person’s thinking and mode of behaviour.

This method is extracted from the heart of the Qur’an, Allah says:

\textit{“And to Allah belong the most beautiful Names, so call upon Him by them...”} \textsuperscript{33}

Calling upon Him (\textit{du'a}) incorporates: invoking Him, praising Him and worshipping Him. Allah (subhānahu) calls His servants to know Him by His Names and Attributes, to praise Him with them and to take their share of servitude from them.\textsuperscript{34}

\section*{9. The Importance of Steering Clear of Falsehood and not Opposing the Way of Truth in this Domain}

The realm of the Names and Attributes is regarded to be one of the most dangerous areas because of the fact that it has been the subject of severe and complex differences\textsuperscript{35}. This war broke out between the Salaf at one end and the philosophers, Ahl al-Kalam (scholastics)\textsuperscript{36} and Mushabbihah at the other.

\textsuperscript{32} 	extit{Madarij al-Salikin, 1/420.}

\textsuperscript{33} There are a number of important points that have to be understood here, some of these are:

(a) The basic principle, is the simplicity, easiness and clarity of the whole religion, which includes this topic of Allah's Names and Attributes.

(b) The complexity found within certain matters that pertain to the Names and Attributes does not emanate from the texts but instead from the philosophers and Ahl al-Kalam as a result of the innovations and unintelligible terminology they introduced. This impelled Ahl al-Sunnah to refute their falsehood...\textsuperscript{37}

(c) There lies no doubt that the fundamentals of this subject area, which our righteous predecessors are in agreement on, are built upon conclusive evidences, both in terms of the validity and establishment of such texts and in terms of the unequivocal meanings they indicate and signify.\textsuperscript{38}

\textsuperscript{34} 	extit{Ahl al-Kalam} (or \textit{Mutakallimun}) are the people of innovation, who spoke on areas of \textit{aqidah} with false, innovated and censured speech. They are extreme in their reliance upon their deviant intellect at the expense of revelation. The philosophers however, are people of heresy who contest the concept of revelation and prophethood. They also discuss issues of \textit{aqidah} upon the methodology of the Greek pagan philosophers. Ahl al-Kalam are much affected by the false principles and laws laid down by the philosophers. Moreover, there are a number of people who are mistakenly attributed to Islam but are in fact philosophers, who are actually outside the fold of Islam because of their evident heresy. There are a number of differences between Ahl al-Kalam and the philosophers just as there are a number of similarities. For a detailed explanation one can for example refer to Shaykh Ibrahim al-Buraykan’s work, \textit{Tārif al-Khalaf bi Manhaj al-Salaf}, Dār Ibn al-Jawzi, K.S.A. [it]
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So all forms of servitude to Him are related back to the dictates of the Names and Attributes and are linked to it.

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34 Muftiṣṣ al-Salikin, 1/420.
35 There are a number of important points that have to be understood here, some of these are:
(a) The basic principle, is the simplicity, easiness and clarity of the whole religion, which includes this topic of Allah’s Names and Attributes.
(b) The complexity found within certain matters that pertain to the Names and Attributes does not emanate from the texts but instead from the philosophers and Ahl al-Kalām as a result of the innovations and unintelligible terminology they introduced. This impelled Ahl al-Sunnah to refute their falsehood...
(c) There lies no doubt that the fundamentals of this subject area, which our righteous predecessors are in agreement on, are built upon conclusive evidences, both in terms of the validity and establishment of such texts and in terms of the unequivocal meanings they indicate and signify. [t]

36 Ahl al-Kalām (or Mutakallimūn) are the people of innovation, who spoke on areas of ’aqidah with false, innovated and censured speech. They are extreme in their reliance upon their deviant intellect at the expense of revelation. The philosophers however, are people of heresy who contest the concept of revelation and prophethood. They also discuss issues of ’aqidah upon the methodology of the Greek pagan philosophers. Ahl al-Kalām are much affected by the false principles and laws laid down by the philosophers. Moreover, there are a number of people who are mistakenly attributed to Islam but are in fact philosophers, who are actually outside the fold of Islam because of their evident heresy. There are a number of differences between Ahl al-Kalām and the philosophers just as there are a number of similarities. For a detailed explanation one can for example refer to Shaykh Ibrahim al-Buraykan’s work, Tārif al-Khalaf bi Manhaj al-Salaf, Dār Ibn al-Jawzi, K.S.A. [t]
Hence it is from the obligatory duties of the student of knowledge to profoundly understand to a deep level the truth that is based upon the Book and Sunnah. Allah (ta'ala) says:

"...and if you differ in anything, then refer it back to Allah and the Messenger..."  

Referral back to Allah is accomplished by referring back to His Book, and referral back to the Messenger (*) after his demise is accomplished by referring back to his Sunnah. Allah (ta'ala) also says:

"...are you more knowledgeable or is Allah?..."

Allah is more knowledgeable about Himself and He is the One who has informed us of His Names and Attributes in His Book and upon the tongue of His Messenger (ﷺ).  

More so, the Prophet is the most knowledgeable person of his Lord as well as being the most truthful in speech, and Allah has said of him:

"Nor does he speak from his desire. It is but a revelation which is revealed."

It is compulsory upon the Muslim to study this field and to attain a deep understanding of it in accordance to what is found in the Book and Sunnah.

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He must be wary of the philosophical tendencies that brought harm to their advocates and which introduced them to endless deviation and loss. These tendencies barred the knowledge of their Lord from reaching their hearts. Consequently, their hearts darkened and became ignorant of the realities of iman. This caused them to turn away from Allah and His remembrance and from loving Him and praising Him with His qualities of Perfection and Attributes of Majesty. As a result, the vigour of their love, longing and intimacy was directed elsewhere.

It is a common fact that the servant cannot attain any knowledge or iman for that matter, until he believes in the Names and Attributes of the Lord and he knows them to a level that removes him from the bounds of being ignorant of Him.

Thus, iman in the Names and Attributes of Allah and understanding them is the foundation of Islam, the principle of iman and the fruit of the tree of ibsam.

Whosoever denies them has indeed destroyed this foundation of Islam, principle of iman and fruit of the tree of ibsam, let alone, for him to be attributed to those who possess exceptional gnostic knowledge.

The believer therefore, must exert all his capabilities towards understanding and knowing the Names and Attributes. Furthermore, his understanding must be free of the diseases of at-Ta’il and al-Tamthil which have put to trial many of the people of innovation, who stand in opposition to what the Messenger (ﷺ) brought.

Correct knowledge is that which is taken from the Book and Sunnah, and which has been narrated from the Companions and their followers in righteousness. This is the beneficial knowledge which forever keeps its occupant at a high level of iman, a strong degree of certainty and in a tranquil state of affairs.
Hence it is from the obligatory duties of the student of knowledge to profoundly understand to a deep level the truth that is based upon the Book and Sunnah. Allah (ta' ala) says:

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"...and if you differ in anything, then refer it back to Allah and the Messenger..."^{7}

Referral back to Allah is accomplished by referring back to His Book, and referral back to the Messenger (*) after his demise is accomplished by referring back to his Sunnah.

Allah (ta' ala) also says:

144:41

"...are you more knowledgeable or is Allah?..."^{8}

Allah is more knowledgeable about Himself and He is the One who has informed us of His Names and Attributes in His Book and upon the tongue of His Messenger (ﷺ).

More so, the Prophet is the most knowledgeable person of his Lord as well as being the most truthful in speech, and Allah has said of him:

36
37
Sarah al-Baciarah (2):140.

"Nor does he speak from his desire. It is but a revelation which is revealed"^{9}

It is compulsory upon the Muslim to study this field and to attain a deep understanding of it in accordance to what is found in the Book and Sunnah.^{10}

He must be wary of the philosophical tendencies that brought harm to their advocates and which introduced them to endless deviation and loss. These tendencies barred the knowledge of their Lord from reaching their hearts. Consequently, their hearts darkened and became ignorant of the realities of iman. This caused them to turn away from Allah and His remembrance and from loving Him and praising Him with His qualities of Perfection and Attributes of Majesty. As a result, the vigour of their love, longing and intimacy was directed elsewhere.

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Thus, iman in the Names and Attributes of Allah and understanding them is the foundation of Islam, the principle of iman and the fruit of the tree of ibrāhīm.

Whosoever denies them has indeed destroyed this foundation of Islam, principle of iman and fruit of the tree of ibrāhīm, let alone, for him to be attributed to those who possess exceptional gnostic knowledge.

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CHAPTER 1

The Definition of *Tawhid al-Asmā wa l-Sifāt* and its Relationship to the Other Categories of *Tawhid*

Two areas of discussion:
1. The definition of *Tawhid al-Asmā wa l-Sifāt*
2. Its relationship to the other categories of *Tawhid*
CHAPTER 1

The Definition of *Tawhid al-Asmā wa l-Sifāt* and its Relationship to the Other Categories of *Tawhid*

Two areas of discussion:
1. The definition of *Tawhid al-Asmā wa l-Sifāt*
2. Its relationship to the other categories of *Tawhid*
Definitions and explanations that offer information on a particular matter precede their rulings, since passing judgement on a matter is dependent on first acquiring the right perception of it.

Hence, whoever judges a matter before understanding it and perceiving it in a well distinct manner has indeed committed a hideous mistake.

The definition of *Tawhid al-Asma wa l-Sifat*:

To single out Allah with His most beautiful Names and most exalted Attributes mentioned in the Qur'an and Sunnah, and to have imān in their meanings and rulings.

Explanation of the terms found in the definition:

1. "To single out Allāh"

This is the meaning of *Tawhid* (تَوحِيد). The verb for this word is *wabhada* (وَابْحَدَا); the derivatives of this particular stem are therefore: *wabhada, yuwabhida, tawbidan* (وَابْحَدَى، يُوَابِحِدَى، تَوْابِيْدَانَ), i.e. to make something one or to single it out.

Its actual original root (ح-ح-ح) lexically, centres around the meaning of something being alone and single.

Thus, if one says: "*Tawhid* of Allāh with His Names", the meaning will be: "To single out Allāh with His Names".

2. "...with His Most Beautiful Names"

(i) *His Names*: the word 'īm* [ْيَمِّ] lexically, is the term that is used to signify a meaning through identification or distinction.

It can also be defined as: the term that indicates an essence and the Attributes present within it.

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The definition of Tawhid al-Asma wa l-Sifat:

To single out Allah with His most beautiful Names and most exalted Attributes mentioned in the Qur'an and Sunnah, and to have iman in their meanings and rulings.

Explanation of the terms found in the definition:

1. "To single out Allah"

This is the meaning of Tawhid [توحید] (i) 'The verb for this word is wabhada [وَبِحَدَ], the derivatives of this particular stem are therefore: wabhada, yuwabhidu, tawbidan [توَبِيّدْ نَ] i.e. to make something one or to single it out.

Its actual original root [حید] lexically, centres around the meaning of something being alone and single.

Thus, if one says: "Tawhid of Allah with His Names", the meaning will be: "To single out Allah with His Names".

2. "...with His Most Beautiful Names"

(i) His Names: the word 'ism' [اسم] lexically, is the term that is used to signify a meaning through identification or distinction.

It can also be defined as: the term that indicates an essence and the Attributes present within it.

41 Al-Tawhid wa al-Bayan li Shajarah al-Iman, page 7.

(ii) most beautiful: al-‘Husnā [حسنی], this is an adjective for the Names of Allah and it is mentioned in the Noble Qur’ān.

• The āyāt that mention this term

This adjective for the Names of Allah is mentioned in four places in His Book:

1. Allah (ta‘ālā) says:

   “And to Allah belong the most beautiful Names…”

2. Allah (ta‘ala) says:

   “Say, Invoke Allah or invoke the Most Gracious, by whatever Name you invoke Him with (it is the same); for to Him belong the most beautiful Names…”

3. Allah (ta‘ala) says:

   “Allah, none has the right to be worshipped except He; to Him belong the most beautiful Names…”

4. Allah (ta‘ala) says:

   “He is Allah, the Creator, the Maker, the Fashioner; to Him belong the most beautiful Names…”

• Its morphology

   ‘Husnā [حسنی] is based on the pattern: fu‘ la [فضل] which is the feminine form of al-‘alā [أعلى], this is known in grammar to be a noun of preference (elative).

   ‘Husnā [حسنی] is therefore the feminine form of al-‘ahzār [أحزار], just as kubra [كبرة] is the feminine form of al-‘akbar [أكبر] and asghara [صغرى] is the feminine form of al-‘asghar [أصغر].

   Consequently, the one who asserts that hasnā [حسنی] is the feminine form of kubra [كبرة] is in clear error, because the feminine form of kubra [كبرة] is hasnā [حسنی].

   In light of the above, it is incorrect to say that the Names of Allah are hasnā [حسنی]. The correct expression is to say that the Names of Allah are hasnā [حسنی] as He Himself has described them as such.

• Its meaning

   ‘Husnā [حسنی] expresses the extreme degree of beauty.

• The general understanding of the āyāt.

   “And to Him belong the most beautiful Names”

   Allah possesses the most beautiful and majestic of Names, because of what they convey of the best, noblest and most beautiful of meanings.

• The ruling derived from this

   It is obligatory to believe in this adjective which Allah has given to His Names. This is accomplished by possessing a firm belief that the Names of Allah are the most beautiful Names and that they entail perfect and complete meanings.

   There are other rulings found within this adjective which we will discuss in the detailed issues related to the most beautiful Names of Allah (in a future separate study).

42 Surah al-Arāf (7):180.
43 Surah al-Baqara (8):110.
46 i.e. study of word formation. [i]
47 i.e. the superlative form of an adjective or verb which expresses the highest or a very high degree of a quality (e.g. bravest, most fiercely). [ii]

(ii) most beautiful: al-Husnā [حسنئی], this is an adjective for the Names of Allah and it is mentioned in the Noble Qur’ān.

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1. Allah (ta‘ālā) says:

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   “Say, ‘Invoke Allah or invoke the Most Gracious, by whatever Name you invoke Him with (it is the same); for to Him belong the most beautiful Names…”

3. Allah (ta‘ālā) says:

   “Allah, none has the right to be worshipped except He; to Him belong the most beautiful Names…”

4. Allah (ta‘ālā) says:

   “He is Allah, the Creator, the Maker, the Fashioner; to Him belong the most beautiful Names…”

• Its morphology

Husnā [حسنئی] is based on the pattern: f斯坦 [فست] which is the feminine form of َالا [الا], this is known in grammar to be a noun of preference (elative). Husnā [حسنئی] is therefore the feminine form of َالا [الا], just as َالا [الا] is the feminine form of َالا [الا] and َالا [الا] is the feminine form of َالا [الا].

Consequently, the one who asserts that husnā [حسنئی] is the feminine form of َالا [الا] is in clear error, because the feminine form of َالا [الا] is َالا [الا].

In light of the above, it is incorrect to say that the Names of Allah are َالا [الا]. The correct expression is to say that the Names of Allah are husnā [حسنئی] as He Himself has described them as such.

• Its meaning

Husnā [حسنئی] expresses the extreme degree of beauty.

• The general understanding of the āyāt:

“Allah possesses the most beautiful and majestic of Names, because of what they convey of the best, noblest and most beautiful of meanings.

• The ruling derived from this

It is obligatory to believe in this adjective which Allah has given to His Names. This is accomplished by possessing a firm belief that the Names of Allah are the most beautiful Names and that they entail perfect and complete meanings.

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42 Surah al-Arāf (7):180.
43 Surah al-Iṣrā' (17):110.
44 Surah Tāhā (20):8.

46 i.e. study of word formation. [t]
47 i.e. the superlative form of an adjective or verb which expresses the highest or a very high degree of a quality (e.g. bravest, most fiercely). [t]
3. "...His Most Exalted Attributes":

(i) His Attributes: the word 'zīfāt' [attribute, صفة] lexically, denotes (either) a ḍhāṭīyyah, ma' naviyyah or fi' liyyah quality that is ascribed to an essence, which distinguishes it from other essences.

The following are some of Allah's (azza wa jalla) Attributes:

(ḍhāṭīyyah): two Hands, Face, two Eyes and Fingers.

(ma' naviyyah): Knowledge, Capability, Life and Will.

(fi' liyyah): Descending, Ascension, Creating and Sustaining.

48 Stated below, is a proof for each of the Attributes mentioned above:

• Two Hands
  Allah says: "He (Allah) said, 'O Iblīs! What prevented you from prostrating to whom I have created with both my Hands?'..." Surah Sād (38):75

• Face
  Allah says: "And the Face of your Lord full of Majesty and Honour will remain." Surah al-Rabbān (55):27

• Two Eyes
  The Prophet said: "...However, I am about to tell you something that no Prophet has told to his people: know that Dajjal is one-eyed and indeed Allah is not one-eyed (i.e. He has two eyes)." Recorded in Sahih al-Bukhari in many books such as the book of Jihad, Manṣets & Tawhid, Sahih Muslim in the two chapters: Iman & Trials and Tribulations, and other sources.

• Fingers
  The Prophet said: "The hearts of the children of Adam are all between two Fingers of the Fingers of al-Rahman, like a single heart; He turns them how He chooses..." Recorded in Sahih Muslim, chapter on Qadar and other sources.

• Knowledge
  Allah says: "...and that Allah completely comprehends all things with His Knowledge." Surah al-Tafṣīl (65):12

• Capability
  Allah says: "...Indeed, Allah is over all things Omnipotent" Surah al-Baqarah (2):20

(iii) Most Exalted/Loftiest: al-'Uṭl [العالٰٓ], this adjective has been mentioned in the Noble Qur'an.

• The ayāt that mention this term
  1. Allah (ta'ala) says:

  "For those who do not believe in the Hereafter is an evil description and for Allah is the highest description; and He is the All-Mighty, the All-Wise."

• Will
  Allah says: "He most certainly does what He Will" Surah al-Burāq (85):16

• Descent
  The Prophet said: "Our Lord (tabaraka wa ta'ala), descends every night to the lowest heaven when the last third of the night remains and He says, 'Who is invoking Me so that I may answer him, who is asking of Me so that I may give him, who is seeking My forgiveness so that I may forgive him.' [t]" A mutaawwir ḥadīth related by al-Bukhārī in his Sahih in the books: Al-Tawāfūq, al-Tahājjud and al-Du' anār, Muslim in his Sahih in the Book: The Prayer of the travellers and it's shortening, and other sources.

• Ascension
  Allah says: "The Most-Beneficent ascended over the Throne." Surah TaHā (20):5

• Creating
  Allah says: "All praise is for Allah, Who created the heavens and earth..." Surah al-An'am (6):1

• Sustaining
  Allah says: "...Verily, Allah sustains whom He wills, without limit." Surah al-Imrān (3):37 [t]

The discussion of this word now follows in its masculines and singular form, al-'A'la [العالٰٓ]... [t]

[t] Surah al-Nābi (16):60,
3. "...His Most Exalted Attributes":

(i) His Attributes: the word 'ṣifah' [attribute, صفة] lexically, denotes (either) a dhatiyah, ma'naviyah or fi'liyyah quality that is ascribed to an essence, which distinguishes it from other essences.

The following are some of Allah's (azza wa jalla) Attributes:

(dhatiyah): two Hands, Face, two Eyes and Fingers.

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The Prophet said: "The hearts of the children of adam are all between two Fingers of the Fingers of al-Rahman, like a single heart; He turns them how He chooses..." Recorded in Sahih Muslim, chapter on Qadar and other sources.

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• Capability

Allah says: "...Indeed, Allah is over all things Omnipotent" Surah al-Baqarah (2):20

(ii) Most Exalted/Loftiest: al-'Ula [العالٍ], this adjective has been mentioned in the Noble Qur'an.

• The aya that mention this term

1. Allah (ta'ala) says:

اللهُ لا إله إلا هو ولا شريك له، هو الرب العالم العالم

"For those who do not believe in the Hereafter is an evil description and for Allah is the highest description; and He is the All-Mighty, the All-Wise."

• Will

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Allah says: "The Most-Beneficent ascended over the Throne." Surah TaHa (20):5

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Allah says: "All praise is for Allah, Who created the heavens and earth..." Surah al-An'am (6):1

• Sustaining

Allah says: "...Verily, Allah sustains whom He wills, without limit." Surah al-'Imran (3):37 [t]

The discussion of this word now follows in its masculine and singular form, al-'Ula [العالٍ]:[k]

Surah al-Nahl (16):60.
2. Allah (ta'āla) says:

"And it is He who originates creation, then will repeat it (after it has perished), and this is easier for Him. His is the highest description in the heavens and in the earth; and He is the All-Mighty, the All-Wise."  

There are numerous ayat in the Glorious Qur'an that indicate the perfection of Allah's Attributes. A detailed discussion on this will feature later (in a separate study) within the detailed issues related to the Attributes of Allah.

* Its morphology  

*al-A'la* [(الاًلأ)] is based on the pattern: *al ([الأ])*, this is known in grammar to be a noun of preference (dative).  

* The meaning of the ayat:  

Al-Qurtubi commented:

And it is the highest description.  

Ibn Kathir said:

And it is absolute perfection from every perspective.  

Ibn al-Sa'di stated:

And it is in reference to every Attribute of perfection and with regard to every perfection in existence, Allah is more deserving of it in a manner that does not necessitate imperfection in any way.

* The ruling derived from this  

It is obligatory to believe in everything that Allah has mentioned about Himself. This is achieved by possessing a firm belief that all the Attributes, which Allah has informed us of in His Book or upon the tongue of His Messenger, are Attributes of perfection. They do not contain imperfections in any way whatsoever, for He (subhānahu) possesses the right to absolute perfection in every respect.

Imām Ibn al-Qayyim says: "The highest description [*الاًلأ*] comprises the affirmation of the most exalted Attributes for Allah (subhānahu), their presence in knowledge  and it comprises mentioning, remembering and worshipping the Lord (subhānahu) with them..."  

4. "...mentioned in the Qur'an and Sunnah":  

It is mandatory to stay within the limits of the Names and Attributes of Allah mentioned by the texts of the Qur'an and Sunnah, not adding to them or subtracting anything from them.

Thus, we do not name Allah, nor describe Him with a name or quality which He Himself has not named or described Himself with in His Book or upon the tongue of His Messenger (as).

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2. i.e. study of word formation. [6]  
3. The meaning of *al-A'la* [(الاًلأ)] is higher, highest, upper, uppermost, most exalted, loftiest etc. [6]  
4. i.e. the superlative form of an adjective or verb which expresses the highest or a very high degree of a quality (e.g., bravest, most fiercely). [6]  
2. Allah (ta'âla) says:

"And it is He who originates creation, then will repeat it (after it has perished), and this is easier for Him. His is the highest description in the heavens and in the earth; and He is the All-Mighty, the All-Wise."  

There are numerous ñayţ in the Glorious Qur’ân that indicate the perfection of Allah’s Attributes. A detailed discussion on this will feature later (in a separate study) within the detailed issues related to the Attributes of Allah.

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It is mandatory to stay within the limits of the Names and Attributes of Allah mentioned by the texts of the Qur’ân and Sunnah, not adding to them or subtracting anything from them.

Thus, we do not name Allah, nor describe Him with a name or quality which He Himself has not named or described Himself with in His Book or upon the tongue of His Messenger (şâhu).
This is because of the fact that there is no way to acquire knowledge of Allah's Names and Attributes except by one way: the way of khabr (related information, i.e. revelation), which is the Book and Sunnah.

Hence, if one was to assert that Allah Hears without the use of ears and a second person asserted that Allah hears via the use of ears, we would judge both to be in error because there is no mention in the texts as to the affirmation or negation of ears. The correct stance is to assert that Allah Hears in a manner befitting His Majesty, in accordance with texts attesting to that.

Furthermore, Allah has prohibited us from speaking without knowledge. He (ta'ala) has said:

"And do not follow that which you have no knowledge of..."

Therefore, affirmation or negation is not permissible except with textual evidence.

Imām Ahmad (d. 241 H), may Allah have mercy upon him, said: "Allah is not to be described except with what He Himself and His Messenger have described Him with; we do not exceed the boundaries of the Qurān and Sunnah."

Ibn 'Abdil-Barr (d. 463 H), may Allah have mercy upon him, said: "With regard to belief, in its totality, there do not reside any Names or Attributes except that they have been specifically mentioned in the Book of Allah, are authentically reported from the Messenger of Allah (ṣallā Allāhu 'alayhi wa sallam), or have been agreed upon by the ummah; and as for the abād reports narrated in this area, entirely, or in other similar areas, then they are accepted and not to be challenged."

5. "...and to have imān in their meanings and rulings."

i.e. to have imān in the meanings that these Attributes possess and also in the requisites and rulings derived from them.

This is in fact, what both the Qurān and Sunnah command and encourage.

An example of this from the Qurān is the saying of Allah (ta'ala):

"...and to have float; in their meanings and rulings."

The categorisation of hadith from the perspective of the number of channels a particular narration reaches is of two categories: (i) Al-Mutawatir, which is defined to be a hadith that is narrated by such a number of reporters in every level of its transmission that it is inconceivable for them all to have agreed upon a lie or accidentally arrived at the same account of events. (ii) Al-Abād, which is simply, the hadith that does not satisfy the conditions of the mutawatir hadith. Ibn 'Abdil-Barr here is pointing out the established fundamental amongst the scholars of hadith and Ahl al-Sunnah which is that they do not differentiate between the abād that are abād and those that are mutawatir in the matter of what one bases one's belief upon. The real condition in this regard is whether the actual hadith is authentic or not. Such a differentiation -between mutawatir and abād - in this regard is an innovation, is contrary to the consensus of the early generations and has been refuted by scholars of old and new alike.
This is because of the fact that there is no way to acquire knowledge of Allah's Names and Attributes except by one way: the way of khabr (related information, i.e. revelation), which is the Book and Sunnah. Hence, if one was to assert that Allah Hears without the use of ears and a second person asserted that Allah hears via the use of ears, we would judge both to be in error because there is no mention in the texts as to the affirmation or negation of ears. The correct stance is to assert that Allah Hears in a manner befitting His Majesty, in accordance with texts attesting to that.

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This is in fact, what both the Qur'an and Sunnah command and encourage.

An example of this from the Qur'an is the saying of Allah (ta'ala):

60 Surah al-Isra' (17):36.
61 Al-Fatūh al-Fāmisīyāh, pg. 61.
62 There do not exist Names or Attributes of Allah that have been agreed upon by the ummah, which have not been related in the Book or Sunnah. However, the establishment of Allah's Names and Attributes are of different levels. Some are in the Book alone, some are in the Sunnah alone and others are in the Book and Sunnah and others are not only in the Book and Sunnah but are also agreed upon by the ummah as a whole. This last category probably refers to the type of Attributes that the creation can conclude through simply looking at the construction and contents of this universe; for example, one decisively concludes that the Creator is characterised with Knowledge, Wisdom, Ability, etc. This may be the intention of Ibn 'Abdil-Barr here and Allah knows best.
63 The categorisation of hadith from the perspective of the number of channels a particular narration reaches us is of two categories: (i) Al-Mutawatir, which is defined to be a hadith that is narrated by such a number of reporters in every level of its transmission that it is inconceivable for them all to have agreed upon a lie or accidentally arrived at the same account of events. (ii) Al-Āhād, which is simply, the hadith that does not satisfy the conditions of the mutawatir hadith. Ibn 'Abdil-Barr here is pointing out the established fundamental amongst the scholars of hadith and Ahl al-Sunnah which is that they do not differentiate between the āhād that are āhād and those that are mutawatir in the matter of what one bases one's belief upon. The real condition in this regard is whether the actual hadith is authentic or not. Such a differentiation - between mutawatir and āhād - in this regard is an innovation, is contrary to the consensus of the early generations and has been refuted by scholars of old and new alike.
64 Jami' Bayan al- İbn wa Fadlīh, page 96.
“And to Allah belong the most beautiful Names so invoke Him with them...”

The proof from the āyāt is ‘so invoke Him with them’

The deduction is that Allah calls upon His servants to know Him by His Names and Attributes, to praise Him, and to take their share of servitude from them.

Thus, supplicating to Allah with His Names and Attributes includes:
1. Supplication of request⁶⁶, e.g. saying, ‘O my lord, grant me sustenance’.
2. Supplication of praise⁶⁷, e.g. saying, ‘Exalted and perfect is Allah’.
3. Supplication of worship⁶⁸, e.g. bowing and prostrating.

An example from the Sunnah is the saying of the Prophet (s): “To Allah belong ninety nine Names, one hundred less one; whosoever enumerates them will enter paradise.”⁷⁰

The proof from the hadith is ‘whosoever enumerates them’

The deduction being that the meaning of ‘enumerates them’ is to memorise their wordings, understand their meanings and indications, and to act by their requisites and rulings.

Hence, knowledge of Allah’s Names and Attributes and believing that Allah possesses these Names and descriptions is a form of worship.

Likewise, the heart’s grasp of their meanings, the requisites and rulings they embody, and its consciousness and response to this, to a level which will lead to sound thinking and upright character is also worship.

Therefore, Ahl al-Sunnah believe in the meanings indicated by the Names and Attributes of Allah, as well as the requisites and rulings which result from them, contrary to the people of falsehood who deny and negate this.

Ahl al-Sunnah believe that every Name of Allah indicates a meaning which we label ‘Attribute’. This is why it is necessary for the one who believes in the Names of Allah (ta’ ala) to observe and take into account the following points:

• To believe that Allah (azza wa jalla) possesses that particular Name.
• To believe in the meaning i.e. the attribute, indicated by this Name.
• To believe in the effects, rulings and requisites associated to this Name.

Take the Name al-Sams’ [The All-Hearer, السَّمِيع] as an example:

It is a Name from amongst Allah’s most beautiful Names, so the following is required to possess tman in it:

1. To affirm the Name al-Sams’ by believing that it is from amongst the most beautiful Names of Allah.
2. To affirm that Hearing is an Attribute of Allah
3. To affirm the ruling (i.e. the action), which is that Allah Hears the secrets and private discourses, and to affirm the requisite and effect, which is the obligation of fearing Allah, observing His presence, to revere and be shy from Him (azza wa jalla).

Ibn al-Qayyim, may Allah have mercy upon him, said: “Every Name of His has associated to it, a specific form of worship on the basis of ‘knowledge and understanding’ and on the basis of ‘state’.

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⁶⁶ Surah al-A’raf (7):180.
⁶⁷ Du’ā al-Ma’alāh: a supplication that contains a request for the acquisition of benefit or the protection from harm.
⁶⁸ Du’ā al-Thuwwār: a supplication that contains glorification and praise of Allah, and is void of any request.
⁶⁹ Du’ā al-Tā’abbūd: physical acts of worship like prayer etc., as they are also forms of supplication.
⁷⁰ Maddrij al-Salikin, 1/420.
⁷¹ Related by al-Bukhāri, see Fath al-Bārī, Vol. 13, p. 377, hadith no. 7392, and by Muslim, Vol. 8, p. 63.
“And to Allah belong the most beautiful Names so invoke Him with them…”

The proof from the *ayah* is ‘so invoke Him with them’

The deduction is that Allah calls upon His servants to know Him by His Names and Attributes, to praise Him, and to take their share of servitude from them.

Thus, supplicating to Allah with His Names and Attributes includes:

1. **Supplication of request**, e.g., saying, ‘O my lord, grant me sustenance’.
2. **Supplication of praise**, e.g., saying, ‘Exalted and perfect is Allah’.
3. **Supplication of worship**, e.g., bowing and prostrating.

An example from the Sunnah is the saying of the Prophet (s): “To Allah belong ninety nine Names, one hundred less one; whosoever enumerates them will enter paradise.”

The proof from the hadith is ‘whosoever enumerates them’

The deduction being that the meaning of ‘enumerates them’ is to memorise their wordings, understand their meanings and indications, and to act by their requisites and rulings.

Hence, knowledge of Allah’s Names and Attributes and believing that Allah possesses these Names and descriptions is a form of worship.

Likewise, the heart’s grasp of their meanings, the requisites and rulings they embody, and its consciousness and response to this, to a level which will lead to sound thinking and upright character is also worship.

Therefore, *Ahl al-Sunnah* believe in the meanings indicated by the Names and Attributes of Allah, as well as the requisites and rulings which result from them, contrary to the people of falsehood who deny and negate this.

*Ahl al-Sunnah* believe that every Name of Allah indicates a meaning which we label ‘Attribute’. This is why it is necessary for the one who believes in the Names of Allah (ta’ala) to observe and take into account the following points:

- To believe that Allah (azza wa jalla) possesses that particular Name.
- To believe in the meaning i.e. the attribute, indicated by this Name.
- To believe in the effects, rulings and requisites associated to this Name.

Take the Name *al-Samī’* [The All-Hearer] as an example:

It is a Name from amongst Allah’s most beautiful Names, so the following is required to possess *iman* in it:

1. To affirm the Name *al-Samī’* by believing that it is from amongst the most beautiful Names of Allah.
2. To affirm that Hearing is an Attribute of Allah.
3. To affirm the ruling (i.e., the action), which is that Allah *Hears* the secrets and private discourses, and to affirm the requisite and effect, which is the obligation of fearing Allah, observing His presence, to revere and be shy from Him (azza wa jalla).

Ibn al-Qayyim, may Allah have mercy upon him, said: “Every Name of His has associated to it, a specific form of worship on the basis of ‘knowledge and understanding’ and on the basis of ‘state’.

\textsuperscript{46} Surah al-A’raf (7):180.
\textsuperscript{47} *Du’ā al-Ma’alālah*: a supplication that contains a request for the acquisition of benefit or the protection from harm.
\textsuperscript{48} *Du’ā al-Thana*: a supplication that contains glorification and praise of Allah, and is void of any request.
\textsuperscript{49} *Du’ā al-Ta’abbud*: physical acts of worship like prayer etc., as they are also forms of supplication.
\textsuperscript{50} Madārij al-Salikīn, 1/420.
‘Knowledge and understanding’, i.e., whoever knows that Allah is named with this particular Name and understands what Attribute it entails, then believes in it, this in itself is worship.

‘State’, i.e., every Name belonging to Allah has a specific meaning and particular effect on the heart and character. If the heart therefore comprehends the meaning of a specific Name, what it embodies and is conscious of it, it will reply to these meanings, and this awareness and understanding will reflect in the person’s thinking and mode of behaviour.

The case is the same concerning the Attributes of Allah (azza wa jalla); one must believe in their meanings and rulings. This is the belief of Ahl al-Sunnah which is converse to the belief of the Mu'attilah who negated the meanings which these Attributes entailed and tampered with them by distorting and changing their meanings.

Ahl al-Sunnah deem it necessary for the one who wants to affirm these Attributes and possess the belief that they are Attributes of perfection affirmed for Allah in a real sense, to observe and take into account the following points:

1. To affirm the Attribute, hence, he does not negate or refute it.
2. Not to overstep the specific Name given to this Attribute; rather, he must respect the Name given to this Attribute just as he respects the Attribute itself. Hence, he does not nullify the Attribute nor does he change its Name by giving it another, as do the Jahmiyyah al-Mu'attilah with regard to the Hearing, Sight and Speech of Allah, by terming them 'a'rad. They also term His Face, Hands and Foot, jawarib and ab'ad. They term His Highness over His creation and Ascension over His Throne, tahayyus.

It is from the methodology of the people of innovation that they seek to estrange and make repulsive, by adopting falsehood, the methodology of Ahl al-Sunnah, the people of hadith, the Salaf of this ummah. One of the means they adopt to achieve this is to hurl false charges at the methodology and belief of the Salaf, which have no legitimate basis whatsoever. An example of this is their accusation that Ahl al-Sunnah commit tabdh and tambli in the area of Allah's Names and Attributes. The foreign terms mentioned above by the author are employed by them in an attempt to justify this accusation.

The word a'rad is the plural of arad, one of its meanings is an accidental characteristic. The people of innovation slander Ahl al-Sunnah saying that Ahl al-Sunnah affirm such a'rad for Allah and hence, this is a tambli (likening) that is not permissible because of their premise: 'a'rad can only exist alongside a body'. This argumentation of theirs, which relies on flawed premises and vague terminology that is used inconsistently, is refuted in many ways. What the people of innovation actually intend by a'rad here, are the Attributes Allah has mentioned in His Book and on the tongue of His Messenger such as His Hearing, Sight and Speech.

The word jawarib is the plural of jawrib, which means a bodily limb such as one's hand and leg. This is the meaning of the attribute with regards to its relation to a human being. However when the specific Attributes of Hands, Eyes, etc. are affirmed for Allah - because He Himself has revealed this to us - then such an affirmation is done in a manner that befits His Majesty without any likeness to His creation and Ahl al-Sunnah do not label such Attributes as being jawarib. The people of innovation however slander by saying, 'Ahl al-Sunnah affirm limbs for Allah'. The same is the case for the word ab'ad. It is the plural of bad, which means some, a part or a portion of something. When Ahl al-Sunnah affirmed for Allah the Attributes He affirmed for Himself, the people of innovation slandered them by saying, 'Ahl al-Sunnah liken Allah to His creation by affirming parts to Him.'

The word tahayyus is from the verb tahayyus, which carries meanings such as to occupy, isolate oneself and seclude oneself. Ahl al-Sunnah affirm for Allah His ascension above the throne as He Himself has mentioned that in seven places in His Book. They affirm that Allah is above His creation and with this belief they hold that He (azza wa jalla) is not contained, confined or encompassed by a place, direction or creation.

The people of innovation however, slander Ahl al-Sunnah by saying that they believe that Allah is in a place and direction that has confined, taken hold of Him and encompassed Him, highly excited He is above that.

From this context, the oppression committed by the people of innovation of Ahl al-Sunnah developed in that they concocted terms foreign to the language of the Shari'ah.
‘Knowledge and understanding’, i.e. whoever knows that Allah is named with this particular Name and understands what Attribute it entails, then believes in it, this in itself is worship.

‘State’, i.e. every Name belonging to Allah has a specific meaning and particular effect on the heart and character. If the heart therefore, comprehends the meaning of a specific Name, what it embodies and is conscious of it, it will reply to these meanings, and this awareness and understanding will reflect in the person’s thinking and mode of behaviour.71

The case is the same concerning the Attributes of Allah (azza wa jalla); one must believe in their meanings and rulings. This is the belief of Ahl al-Sunnah which is converse to the belief of the Mu'attilah who negated the meanings which these Attributes entailed and tampered with them by distorting and changing their meanings.

Ahl al-Sunnah deem it necessary for the one who wants to affirm these Attributes and possess the belief that they are Attributes of perfection affirmed for Allah in a real sense, to observe and take into account the following points:

1. To affirm the Attribute, hence, he does not negate or refute it.

2. Not to overstep the specific Name given to this Attribute, rather, he must respect the Name given to this Attribute just as he respects the Attribute itself. Hence, he does not nullify the Attribute nor does he change its Name by giving it another, as do the Jahmiyyah al-Mu'attilah with regard to the Hearing, Sight and Speech of Allah, by terming them a rad. They also term His Face, Hands and Foot, jawarih and ab' ad. They term His Highness over His creation and Ascension over His Throne, tahayyuz.72

71 It is from the methodology of the people of innovation that they seek to estrange and make repulsive, by adopting falsehood, the methodology of Ahl al-Sunnah, the people of hadith, the Salaf of this ummah. One of the means they adopt to achieve this is to hurl false charges at the methodology and belief of the Salaf, which have no legitimate basis whatsoever. An example of this is their accusation that Ahl al-Sunnah commit tahayyuz and tashbilah in the area of Allah’s Names and Attributes. The foreign terms mentioned above by the author are employed by them in an attempt to justify this accusation.

The word a rad is the plural of arad, one of its meanings is an accidental characteristic. The people of innovation slander Ahl al-Sunnah saying that Ahl al-Sunnah affirm such a rad for Allah and hence, this is a tashbih (likening) that is not permissible because of their premise: ‘a rad can only exist alongside a body’. This argumentation of theirs, which relies on flawed premises and vague terminology that is used inconsistently, is refuted in many ways. What the people of innovation actually intend by a rad here, are the Attributes Allah has mentioned in His Book and on the tongue of His Messenger such as His Hearing, Sight and Speech.

The word jawarih is the plural of jawarih, which means a bodily limb such as one's hand and leg. This is the meaning of the attribute with regards to its relation to a human being. However when the specific Attributes of Hands, Eyes, etc are affirmed for Allah – because He himself has revealed this to us - then such an affirmation is done in a manner that befits His Majesty without any likeness to His creation and Ahl al-Sunnah do not label such Attributes as being jawarih. The people of innovation however slander by saying, ‘Ahl al-Sunnah affirm limbs for Allah’. The same is the case for the word ab'ad. It is the plural of abd, which means some, a part or a portion of something. When Ahl al-Sunnah affirmed for Allah the Attributes He affirmed for Himself, the people of innovation slandered them by saying, ‘Ahl al-Sunnah liken Allah to His creation by affirming parts to Him.’

The word tahayyuz is from the verb tahayyuz, which carries meanings such as to occupy, isolate oneself and seclude oneself. Ahl al-Sunnah affirm for Allah His ascension above the throne as He Himself has mentioned that in seven places in His Book. They affirm that Allah is above His creation and with this belief they hold that He (ta'la) is not contained, confined or encompassed by a place, direction or creation. The people of innovation however, slander Ahl al-Sunnah by saying that they believe that Allah is in a place and direction that has confined, taken hold of Him and encompassed Him, highly exalted He is above that.

From this context, the oppression committed by the people of innovation of Ahl al-Sunnah developed in that they concocted terms foreign to the language of the Shari'ah
3. Not to liken the Attribute to that of the creations, for there is nothing like Allah in His essence, Attributes and actions.

4. To give up all hope of comprehending the true nature and descriptive designation of the attribute. The (sound) mind has indeed abandoned (the notion of) gaining knowledge of the true nature and quality of the attribute because none knows how Allah is except Allah Himself. This is the meaning of the declaration of Ahl al-Sunnah 'without kayf (assigning any description)' i.e. without any qualification which the mind can comprehend. Since, if the reality of the essence is not known, then how can one know the reality and nature of the Attributes?

and Ahl al-Sunnah, attributed them to Ahl al-Sunnah and then sought to refute them to show how the belief of Ahl al-Sunnah was one of tashbih when the reality is that it was the people of innovation who in fact committed takhlīth - as will be shown further in this book, since they did not differentiate between the Attributes of the Creator and those of His creation, so they likened firstly and negated secondly.

Note further, that I have stated that the people of innovation say, 'Ahl al-Sunnah say...' They do not actually say, 'Ahl al-Sunnah' but use other terms like 'Salafis', 'the literalists', 'the people of Ijā'ārā' and so on, because it is also from their methodology to try to alienate those who truly adhere to what the Salaf were upon by taking away this title from them and claiming it for themselves, since all but the Shi'ah, have a desire to place their claim on following the way of Ahl al-Sunnah and the masses comprehend the general understanding that the way of Ahl al-Sunnah and their Imams is the praiseworthy way that is to be followed. The truth however, is in the reality, which is ascertained through a proper examination of what the Salaf, Ahl al-Sunnah were truly upon and succeeding in this by being sincere and just. This reality being, whoever does not hold onto the belief in the Names and Attributes of Allah in the manner detailed in this book then he is not of Ahl al-Sunnah in this regard, irrespective of how hard he tries to hold onto that title and of how hard he tries to distance others from it. [t]

73 A complete explanation will feature further on in the book. [t]

74 i.e. the negation on part of the Salaf of any qualification of the Attributes is because of the fact that the mind cannot grasp it and not because the Attributes have no description. The Attributes do possess a reality but this knowledge is from the ghayb just as the essence of Allah is from the ghayb. So this is a negation of one's knowledge of this reality and not a negation of the reality itself. [t]

5. To implement and actualise the requisite and effect associated to the Attribute. Every Attribute has a specific form of servitude connected to it. These are the requisites of the Attributes, i.e. the requisites of possessing knowledge and correctly understanding the Attribute.

So, the servant's knowledge that the Lord alone can create, sustain, give life and cause death will produce for him the worship of tawakkul, and his knowledge of Allah's Majesty, Greatness and Might will generate for him humility, submission and love.

The Relationship Between the Categories of Tawhid

It may be appropriate here after having explained the definition of Tawhid al-Asma wa l-Sifāt to mention the relationship between this category and the remaining categories of Tawhid.

As a preliminary step towards this, I will first mention the various categorisations of Tawhid adopted by the scholars.

Categories of Tawhid

Scholars of Ahl al-Sunnah differ in the manner of determining the categories of Tawhid. Despite this variation however, their content is one and the same. The probable reason behind this variation is the fact that these categorisations have been deduced as a result of researching and analysing the texts (of the Shari'ah) where they do not exist as specified and defined categories.

75 Madrīj al-Salikeen, 3/358-359, slightly abridged.
3. Not to liken the Attribute to that of the creations, for there is nothing like Allah in His essence, Attributes and actions.

4. To give up all hope of comprehending the true nature and descriptive designation of the attribute. The (sound) mind has indeed abandoned (the notion of) gaining knowledge of the true nature and quality of the attribute because none knows how Allah is except Allah Himself. This is the meaning of the declaration of Ahl al-Sunnah 'without kayf (assigning any description)'73 i.e. without any qualification which the mind can comprehend74. Since, if the reality of the essence is not known, then how can one know the reality and nature of the Attributes?

and Ahl al-Sunnah, attributed them to Ahl al-Sunnah and then sought to refute them to show how the belief of Ahl al-Sunnah was one of tashbīḥ when the reality is that it was the people of innovation who in fact committed tashbīḥ - as will be shown further in this book, since they did not differentiate between the Attributes of the Creator and those of His creation, so they likened firstly and negated secondly.

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So, the servant's knowledge that the Lord alone can create, sustain, give life and cause death will produce for him the worship of tawakkul, and his knowledge of Allah's Majesty, Greatness and Might will generate for him humility, submission and love.

The Relationship Between the Categories of Tawḥīd

It may be appropriate here after having explained the definition of Tawḥīd al-ʿĀdīn wa l-Sifāt to mention the relationship between this category and the remaining categories of Tawḥīd.

As a preliminary step towards this, I will first mention the various categorisations of Tawḥīd adopted by the scholars.

Categories of Tawḥīd

Scholars of Ahl al-Sunnah differ in the manner of determining the categories of Tawḥīd. Despite this variation however, their content is one and the same. The probable reason behind this variation is the fact that these categorisations have been deduced as a result of researching and analysing the texts (of the Shari'ah) where they do not exist as specified and defined categories.

This does not undermine imān in these Attributes nor does it invalidate the knowledge of their meanings, as the issue of qualification is an additional matter beyond this.75

73 Madrij al-Salikeen, 3/358-359, slightly abridged.
In light of the above, some scholars have categorised Tawhid into three categories:

1. **Tawhid al-Rubābiyyah** (Lordship): to single out Allah with His actions such as Creating and Sustaining.

2. **Tawhid al-Asma wa l-Sifāt** (Names and Attributes): the definition of which has already preceded.

3. **Tawhid al-Ulahiyyah** (Worship): to single out Allah with the slaves' actions of worship such as prayer, fasting and supplication.

More recently, certain people have added a fourth category to the three previously mentioned and have named it:

4. **Tawhid al-Ittiba' (Adherence)** or **Tawhid al-Hokimiyyah** (i.e. to designate the Book and Sunnah as law and to refer back to it for judgement).

However, the one who has mentioned this category should observe that it is, in reality, already included in Tawhid al-Ulahiyyah (Worship), because worship is legally accepted only if it satisfies two conditions:

1. **al-`Ikhlās** (sincerity)

2. **al-`Itiba';** (adherence), as Allah (ta`ālā) has said:

   "...so whosoever hopes to meet his Lord should perform righteous actions and not associate anyone in worship of His Lord."

Other scholars have categorised Tawhid into two categories. This is the most common method found in the writings of the early scholars, for they combine both Tawhid al-Rubābiyyah and Tawhid al-Asma wa l-Sifāt into one category. This is done from the perspective that these two categories in total represent the area of knowledge and understanding of Allah (azza wa jalla), whereas Tawhid al-Ulahiyyah represents the area of action intended to Allah.

The classification of Tawhid into three categories is from the perspective of what Tawhid itself pertains to and the classification of Tawhid into two categories relates back to the perspective of what is obligatory upon the muwahhid (one who professes tawhid).

So some scholars have said Tawhid is classified into the following two categories:

1. **Tawhid al-Ma`rifah wa l-Ithbāt (Knowledge and Affirmation):**

   These scholars have in mind by this expression both Tawhid al-Rubābiyyah and Tawhid al-Asma wa l-Sifāt. The reason behind the terminology ‘Tawhid al-Ma`rifah’ is that knowledge of Allah (azza wa jalla) is attained by none other than knowledge of His Names, Attributes and actions. As for the term ‘al-Ithbāt’, it means to affirm those Names, Attributes and Actions that Allah has affirmed for Himself.

2. **Tawhid al-Qasid wa al-Talab (Intent and Pursuit):**

   Tawhid al-Ulahiyyah is meant by this phrase. It was named Tawhid ‘al-Qasid wa al-Talab’ because the servant turns to Allah with his heart, tongue and limbs in worship of Him alone, out of hope and fear. The slave’s intention and pursuit behind this is the Countenance of Allah and the desire for His pleasure.

Another group of scholars classified Tawhid into the following two categories:

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57 Surah al-Kahf (18):110.

76 Ibn al-Qayyim mentions this in Madarij al-Salikin, 3/449.

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In light of the above, some scholars have categorised Tawhid into three categories:

1. **Tawhid al-Rubābiyyah** (Lordship): to single out Allah with His actions such as Creating and Sustaining.

2. **Tawhid al-Asma wa l-Sifāt** (Names and Attributes): the definition of which has already preceded.

3. **Tawhid al-Ulahiyyah** (Worship): to single out Allah with the slaves' actions of worship such as prayer, fasting and supplication.

More recently, certain people have added a fourth category to the three previously mentioned and have named it:

4. **Tawhid al-Ittiba'** (Adherence) or **Tawhid al-Hokimiyyah** (i.e. to designate the Book and Sunnah as law and to refer back to it for judgement).

However, the one who has mentioned this category should observe that it is, in reality, already included in **Tawhid al-Ulahiyyah** (Worship), because worship is legally accepted only if it satisfies two conditions:

1. **al-Ikhlaṣ** (sincerity)

2. **al-Ittiba;** (adherence), as Allah (ta'āla) has said:

   "...so whosoever hopes to meet his Lord should perform righteous actions and not associate anyone in worship of His Lord."  

Other scholars have categorised Tawhid into two categories. This is the most common method found in the writings of the early scholars,

for they combine both **Tawhid al-Rubābiyyah** and **Tawhid al-Asma wa l-Sifāt** into one category. This is done from the perspective that these two categories in total represent the area of knowledge and understanding of Allah ('azza wa jalla), whereas **Tawhid al-Ulahiyyah** represents the area of action intended to Allah.

The classification of Tawhid into three categories is from the perspective of what Tawhid itself pertains to and the classification of Tawhid into two categories relates back to the perspective of what is obligatory upon the muwahhid (one who professes tawhid).

So some scholars have said Tawhid is classified into the following two categories:

1. **Tawhid al-Ma' rifah wa 1-Ithbaf** (Knowledge and Affirmation):

   These scholars have in mind by this expression both **Tawhid al-Rubābiyyah** and **Tawhid al-Asma wa T,Sifat**. The reason behind the terminology 'Tawhid al-Ma' rifah' is that knowledge of Allah ('azza wa jalla) is attained by none other than knowledge of His Names, Attributes and actions. As for the term 'al-Ithbaf', it means to affirm those Names, Attributes and Actions that Allah has affirmed for Himself.

2. **Tawhid al-Qad wa al-Talab** (Intent and Pursuit):

   Tawhid al-Ulahiyyah is meant by this phrase. It was named 'al-Qad wa al-Talab' because the servant turns to Allah with his heart, tongue and limbs in worship of Him alone, out of hope and fear. The slave's intention and pursuit behind this is the Countenance of Allah and the desire for His pleasure.

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1. Al-Tawhid al-'IImî al-Khabâri: (Knowledge-based and Text-based Tawhid)

The intended meaning is Tawhid al-Rubûbiyyah and Tawhid al-Asma wa l-Sifât.

It was named al-Tawhid al-'IImî because it concentrates on the area of knowledge of Allah. As for the word 'al-Khabâri', this is in light of the fact that this knowledge is dependent upon khâbîr (revealed text), i.e. the Book and Sunnah.

2. Al-Tawhid al-Ifrîdî al-Talabî (Wilful and Pursuing based Tawhid):

The intended meaning is Tawhid al-Uluhiyyah. It was named ‘al-Tawhid al-Ifrîdî’ because the servant possesses a will with respect to acts of worship; he either performs that act of worship or chooses not to. It was termed al-Talabî because the slave seeks with that worship the Face of Allah and he has Allah in mind and heart with those actions of worship.

Another group of scholars classify Tawhid into the following two categories:

1. Al-Tawhid al-Qawli (Speech-based Tawhid):

The intended meaning is Tawhid al-Rubûbiyyah and Tawhid al-Asma wa l-Sifât. It was named Qawli because it stands opposite to Tawhid al-Uluhiyyah which concentrates on the action based side of Tawhid (i.e. al-Amali). As for this side, it is specifically based on belief and knowledge.

2. Tawhid al-Amali (Action-based Tawhid):

Its meaning is Tawhid al-Uluhiyyah. It was named ‘Amali because it encompasses the actions of the heart, tongue and limbs which in total represent the area of action with respect to Tawhid.

Thus, Tawhid has two sides: one of belief and knowledge and the other pertaining to submission and action.

Yet another group of scholars classify Tawhid into the following two categories:

1. Tawhid al-Siyadah (Sovereignty):

Tawhid al-Rubûbiyyah and Tawhid al-Asma wa l-Sifât are intended by this. It was termed as such because the unique possession of these Actions, Names and Attributes by Allah obligate absolute Sovereignty and complete right of disposal in this universe be it in the realm of creation, sustenance, giving life, causing death, disposing or governing, (subhânahu wa ta’ala). Thus, the muwahhid must single out Allah in this respect.

2. Tawhid al-Ibadah (Worship):

The meaning of which is Tawhid al-Uluhiyyah. The naming of it as such is very clear and needs no further elaboration.

These are the various categorisations of the scholars that I have come across and they are all one and the same in content as just shown by relating each subsequent categorisation to the first. The difference between them is therefore confined to wording only, and Allah knows best.

The Relationship Between the Categories of Tawhid

These categories in total represent the particular area of iman in Allah, which we name Tawhid. A person’s Tawhid is not complete without the combination of all the three categories of Tawhid; they vouch for, necessitate and complete each other.

It is not possible to get by with one or two of these categories at the expense of the remaining category or categories. Thus, Tawhid al-Rubûbiyyah is of no benefit without Tawhid al-Uluhiyyah. Tawhid al-

81 Hence, it is a variational difference (Ikhilaf al-Tawunn) and not a contradictory difference (Ikhilaf al-Tadad). Refer to Ibn Taymiyyah’s Josidu’s-Sirat al-Mustaqim, in which he discusses types of differences as well as expounding upon the sub-categories of variational differences, one of them being the differences found in expressions, definitions and classifications. [c]
1. Al-Tawhid al-'Ilmi al-Khabari: (Knowledge-based and Text-based Tawhid)

The intended meaning is Tawhid al-Rububiyyah and Tawhid al-Asma wa l-Sifat. It was named al-Tawhid al-'Ilmi because it concentrates on the area of knowledge of Allah. As for the word 'al-Khabari', this is in light of the fact that this knowledge is dependent upon khabr (revealed text), i.e. the Book and Sunnah.

2. Al-Tawhid al-Iradi al-Talabi (Wilful and Pursuing based Tawhid):

The intended meaning is Tawhid al-Uluhiyyah. It was named 'al-Tawhid al-Irad' because the servant possesses a will with respect to acts of worship; he either performs that act of worship or chooses not to. It was termed al-Talabi because the slave seeks with that worship the Face of Allah and he has Allah in mind and heart with those actions of worship.

Another group of scholars classify Tawhid into the following two categories:

1. Al-Tawhid al-Qawli (Speech-based Tawhid):

The intent behind this is Tawhid al-Rububiyyah and Tawhid al-Asma wa l-Sifat. It was named Qawli because it stands opposite to Tawhid al-Uluhiyyah which concentrates on the action based side of Tawhid (i.e. al-'Amali). As for this side, it is specifically based on belief and knowledge.

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Its meaning is Tawhid al-Uluhiyyah. It was named 'Amali because it encompasses the actions of the heart, tongue and limbs which in total represent the area of action with respect to Tawhid.

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Yet another group of scholars classify Tawhid into the following two categories:

1. Tawhid al-Siyadah (Sovereignty):

Tawhid al-Rububiyyah and Tawhid al-Asma wa l-Sifat are intended by this. It was termed as such because the unique possession of these Actions, Names and Attributes by Allah obligate absolute Sovereignty and complete right of disposal in this universe be it in the realm of creation, sustenance, giving life, causing death, disposing or governing, (subhānahu wa ta'ālā). Thus, the muwahhid must single out Allah in this respect.

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These are the various categorisations of the scholars that I have come across and they are all one and the same in content as just shown by relating each subsequent categorisation to the first. The difference between them is therefore confined to wording only, and Allah knows best.

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These categories in total represent the particular area of iman in Allah, which we name Tawhid. A person's Tawhid is not complete without the combination of all the three categories of Tawhid; they vouch for, necessitate and complete each other.

It is not possible to get by with one or two of these categories at the expense of the remaining category or categories. Thus, Tawhid al-Rububiyyah is of no benefit without Tawhid al-Uluhiyyah. Tawhid al-

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58 Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah mentioned this. Refer to Majma' al-Fatawa, 1/367

59 Hence, it is a variational difference (Ukhfīf al-Tanāwhi') and not a contradictory difference (Ukhfīf al-Tadār). Refer to Ibn Taymiyyah's Iqtidā' al-Sīrat al-Mustaqīm, in which he discusses types of differences as well as expounding upon the sub-categories of variational differences, one of them being the differences found in expressions, definitions and classifications. [6]
Ulāhiyyah is not valid and cannot exist without Tawḥīd al-Rabūbiyyah and likewise, the Tawḥīd of Allah in both al-Rabūbiyyah and al-Ḥulūhiyyah is not correct without the Tawḥīd of Allah in al-‘Āmīn wa l-Ṣifāt.

Accordingly, the presence of flaws and deviations in any one of the categories is a flaw in Tawḥīd in its entirety, [for knowledge of Allah cannot be without worship of Him and worship of Him cannot be without knowledge of Allah; they necessitate each other].

Scholars have clarified this relationship with their statement:

'It is a relationship of necessity, inclusion and comprehension.'


To elaborate, one who acknowledges Tawḥīd al-Rabūbiyyah and knows that Allah (ṣubḥāhu) alone is the Lord who has no partner in His Lordship, is necessitated and bound by this acknowledgement to direct worship to Allah alone (ṣubḥāhu wa τα’ ālā). This is because of the fact that only a lord, creator, owner and governor is fit to be worshipped. As He uniquely possesses these qualities, it is a must therefore that He alone be the object of worship.

Thus, a flaw or deviation in a particular category of Tawḥīd affects the other categories because of the strong connection and correlation between all the categories. If that flaw affects the basis of that particular category then the consequence will be a flaw in the basis of one’s Tawḥīd in general. If however, the flaw affects and blemishes the perfection and completion of that particular category then the consequence will be a flaw and blemish in the completeness and perfection of one’s Tawḥīd in general, may Allah protect us all. [6]

As for Tawḥīd al-‘Āmīn wa l-Ṣifāt, it is comprehensive of both Tawḥīd al-Rabūbiyyah and Tawḥīd al-Ḥulūhiyyah. This is borne by the fact that Tawḥīd al-‘Āmīn wa l-Ṣifāt stands on singling out Allah with all the most beautiful Names and most exalted Attributes He possesses, which are not befitting for none but He (ṣubḥāhu wa τα’ ālā).

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[8] This necessity and binding may fail to take effect, as was the case with the kuffār of the Quraysh. They acknowledged and affirmed Tawḥīd al-Rabūbiyyah as the texts show but did not fulfill this requisite of affirming Tawḥīd al-Rabūbiyyah (which was to acknowledge and affirm Tawḥīd al-Ḥulūhiyyah).

For this reason, it has been the pattern of the Noble Qurʾān to relate the ayāt on al-Rabūbiyyah together with ayāt on the calling to Tawḥīd al-Ḥulūhiyyah. An example of this is the saying of Allah (ta`ālā):

"O mankind, worship your Lord Who created you and those before you so that you may achieve taqwā, Who has made the earth a resting place for you, the sky a canopy and sent down rain from the sky bringing out by it crops and fruits as a provision for you. So do not set up rivals with Allah (in your worship) when you know full well (that you have no other lord besides Him)."
Lilahiyyah is not valid and cannot exist without Tawhid al-Rubabiyyah and likewise, the Tawhid of Allah in both al-Rubabiyyah and al-Ulational is not correct without the Tawhid of Allah in al-Asma wa l-Sifat.

Accordingly, the presence of flaws and deviations in any one of the categories is a flaw in Tawhid in its entirety32, for knowledge of Allah cannot be without worship of Him and worship of Him cannot be without knowledge of Allah; they necessitate each other.33

Scholars have clarified this relationship with their statement:

'It is a relationship of necessity, inclusion and comprehension.'

Tawhid al-Rubabiyyah necessitates Tawhid al-Ulational. Tawhid al-Ulational includes Tawhid al-Rubabiyyah and Tawhid al-Asma wa l-Sifat encompasses both Tawhid al-Rubabiyyah and Tawhid al-Asma wa l-Sifat.

To elaborate, one who acknowledges Tawhid al-Rubabiyyah and knows that Allah (subhanahu) alone is the Lord who has no partner in His Lordship, is necessitated and bount by this acknowledgement to direct worship to Allah alone (subhanahu wa ta’ ala). This is because of the fact that only a lord, creator, owner and governor is fit to be worshipped. As He uniquely possesses these qualities, it is a must therefore that He alone be the object of worship.

Thus, a flaw or deviation in a particular category of Tawhid affects the other categories because of the strong connection and correlation between all the categories. If that flaw affects the basis of that particular category than the consequence will be a flaw in the basis of one’s Tawhid in general. If however, the flaw affects and blemishes the perfection and completion of that particular category then the consequence will be a flaw and blemish in the completeness and perfection of one’s Tawhid in general, may Allah protect us all.1

As for Tawhid al-Ulational, it embodies Tawhid al-Rubabiyyah because concerning one who worships Allah and does not associate any thing with Him, this implicitly indicates that he believes that Allah is His Lord and Owner, and that He is his only Lord.

This is a fact that the muwabbid witnesses in himself. The mere fact he has singled out Allah with worship and has not directed any form of worship to other than Allah is not because of anything but his acknowledgement of Tawhid al-Rubabiyyah and that there is no lord, no owner or disposer of affairs except Allah alone.

As for Tawhid al-Asma wa l-Sifat, it is comprehensive of both Tawhid al-Rubabiyyah and Tawhid al-Ulational. This is borne by the fact that Tawhid al-Asma wa l-Sifat stands on singling out Allah with all the most beautiful Names and most exalted Attributes He possesses, which are not befitting for none but He (subhanahu wa ta’ ala).

For this reason, it has been the pattern of the Noble Qur’an to relate the ayat on al-Rubabiyyah together with ayat on the calling to Tawhid al-Ulational. An example of this is the saying of Allah (ta’ ala):

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This necessity and binding may fail to take effect, as was the case with the Quraysh. They acknowledged and affirmed Tawhid al-Rubabiyyah as the texts show but did not fulfill this requisite of affirming Tawhid al-Rubabiyyah (which was to acknowledge and affirm Tawhid al-Ulational).
Some of these Names are al-Rabb (the Lord), al-Khāliq (the Creator), al-Rāziq (the Sustainer/Provider) and al-Malik (the King), and these pertain to Tawhid al-Rubābiyyaḥ.

Another group of these Names are Allah (the Deity), al-Ghafur (the Oft-Forgiving), al-Rahīm (the Bestower of Mercy) and al-Tawwab (the Oft-Returning), and these pertain to Tawhid al-Ulīhiyyaḥ.

A beneficial side-point:

All of the Qur’ān is an Invitation to Tawhid

Ibn al-Qayyim, may Allah have mercy upon him, said:

“Every surah of the Qur’ān entails Tawhid. In fact, we assert a comprehensive statement: Every ayah in the Qur’ān entails Tawhid, is a witness to Tawhid and invites to it. Since the Qur’ān is either:

1. Information about Allah and His Names, Attributes and Actions. This is Tawhid al-‘ilm al-Khabān.

2. A call to worship Him alone without any partners and to renounce everything worshipped besides Allah. This is Tawhid al-Irād al-Talabi.

3. Commands and prohibitions, and the enjoining of obeying His commands and prohibitions. These are the rights of Tawhid and are what perfect it.

4. Reports of Allah’s reverential treatment of those who establish His Tawhid and obedience, how they are treated in this world and how Allah will honour them in the Hereafter.

5. Reports on the people of shirk, the humiliation they underwent in this world and the punishment that will befall them in the next life.

This is information on those who are outside the ruling of His Tawhid. Hence, all of the Qur’ān is on Tawhid, its rights and rewards, and on the issue of shirk, its people and their punishment.

62 63

86 i.e., one who singles out Allah with these Names and Qualities has in effect singled Him out in matters of Lordship. [c]
87 i.e., one who singles out Allah with these Names and Qualities has likewise singled Allah out in matters of worship. [t]

This is the reward of establishing His Tawhid, or
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88 Refer to al-Kawāshif al-Jāliyyah 'an Ma‘āni al-Wā'diyyah of Shaykh ‘Abdul-'Aziz al-Salāman, p. 421-422.

89 Mādiraj al-Sāliḥīn, 3/449-450.
CHAPTER 2

The Definition of *al-Salaf al-Ṣāliḥ* and *Ahl al-Sunnah wa l-Jamā'ah*, an Explanation of their Belief in the Attributes and Names of Allāh and the Foundations that this Belief is Based upon

Three areas of discussion:

1. The definition of *al-Salaf al-Ṣāliḥ* and *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah*

2. The belief of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa l-Jamā'ah* in the Names and Attributes of Allāh

3. The foundations upon which their belief in the Names and Attributes of Allāh is based
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The Definition of *al-Salaf al-Ṣālih* and *Ahl al-Sunnah wa l-Jama'ah*, an Explanation of their Belief in the Attributes and Names of Allāh and the Foundations that this Belief is Based upon

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3. The foundations upon which their belief in the Names and Attributes of Allāh is based
The Definition of al-Salaf al-Ṣalih and Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah

Definition of al-Salaf: 

- Lexical meaning of the word Salaf: 

"Salaf [ـلِف] is the plural of salif [ـلِف] which is based upon the same pattern as haris [ـرِـ] and haras [ـرِـ] and khadim [ـدِـ] and khadim [ـدِـ]. Salif means a predecessor and Salaf means a preceding group."

Ibn Fāris states: "Al-Sīn [ـيـ] and al-Fā' [ـفـ] is a root which indicates precedence and antecedence. A derivation of this root is al-Salaf which means those who have passed on, and a sallaf group i.e. predecessors."

- The (legal) meaning of the term al-Salaf al-Ṣalih: 

There are a number of opinions held by the scholars with respect to defining the Salaf al-Ṣalih from a time-perspective:

1. Certain scholars limit the application of this term to the saḥābah (Companions) alone, may the pleasure of Allāh be upon them all.
2. Other scholars assert that they are the saḥābah and the tābi‘ūn (students and successors of the Companions)
3. Another group of scholars hold that they are the saḥābah, the tābi‘ūn

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90 All these words and their plurals are based upon the patterns fa‘ il [ـلـ] for the singular and fa‘ al [ـلـ] for the plural. [c]
91 Lisān al-Arab, Vol. 9 p. 158.
92 Mu‘jam Maṣbūṭ al-Lughah, Vol. 3, p. 95, lexical entry: [لاِف].
The Definition of al-Salaf al-Ṣāliḥ and Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā‘ah

Definition of al-Salaf

• Lexical meaning of the word Salaf:

“Salaf” is the plural of ṣallaf which is based upon the same pattern as ḥarīs [guard], ḥaṣṣ [guard], ḥarras [guard] and khādim [servant]. Ṣallaf means a predecessor and Salaf means a preceding group.90

Ibn Fāris states: “Al-Sin, al-Lām and al-Fā’ is a root which indicates precedence and antecedence. A derivation of this root is al-Salaf which means those who have passed on, and a sallaf group i.e. predecessors.”92

• The legal meaning of the term al-Salaf al-Ṣāliḥ:

There are a number of opinions held by the scholars with respect to defining the Salaf al-Ṣāliḥ from a time-perspective:

1. Certain scholars limit the application of this term to the saḥābah (Companions) alone, may the pleasure of Allāh be upon them all.

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91 Lisān al-‘Arab, Vol. 9 p. 158.
92 Mu’jam Maqāyis al-Lughah, Vol. 3, p. 95, lexical entry: [ناضف].
and the tabi' al-tabi'in (students and successors to the successors of the Companions)\(^9\)

The correct and common opinion held by the majority of the scholars of Ahl al-Sunnah wa l-Jama'\(^9\) is that the intended meaning of al-Salaf al-Salih are the three favoured generations, whose excellence the Prophet (\(\mathsf{S}\)) bore witness to when he said: “The best of generations is the generation in which I have been sent, then those who succeed them, then those who succeed them.” The hadith is agreed upon\(^9\). So the Salaf al-Salih are the Companions, their successors and their subsequent successors.\(^9\)

Anyone who follows their path and conducts himself according to their methodology is a salafi, in ascription to them. Al-Salafiyyah is the term denoted to the methodology that the Prophet (\(\mathsf{S}\)) and the favoured generations after him proceeded upon. This methodology will remain until Allah will bring His command. This is in reference to the hadith: “There will not cease to be a group from amongst this ummah that will be victorious upon the truth. Those who forsake them will not harm them, up until the command of their Lord will come to pass them, and they will (at that time) be in this same state.”\(^9\)

To further explain, two perspectives combine together to precisely define the Salaf (i) the time factor, which is found in the word salaf (predecessors); this has been shown to mean the first three generations. (ii) the methodology factor, which is found in the word salih (righteous); this means to be upon that which the Prophet (\(\mathsf{S}\)) was upon in belief, speech and action. The Companions, their students and subsequent students therefore truly fit this title.

As for those present in the first three generations who were not upon the correct methodology then they are in fact the Salaf al-Tallh, the unrighteous predecessors. Scholars have however become accustomed to using the general term al-Salaf, which only contains the time factor, to specifically mean the Salaf al-Salih.\(^[1]\)

The ascription to this methodology is therefore correct and permissible as long as a person adheres to its conditions and principles; anyone who perseveres in securing sound belief and action in agreement with the understanding of the three favoured generations is a person who possesses a salafi methodology.

**PRINCIPLES OF THE SALAFI METHODOLOGY**

It is possible to concisely specify the pillars and principles of the Salafi methodology into the following points:

1. To accurately and meticulously define the texts of the Book and Sunnah and to understand them

2. To confine one's self with regard to the above, to the reports transmitted from the Companions, their successors and their successors in turn, in relation to the explanation and understanding of the Qur'an and ahadith. This is achieved by:

   (i) Exerting efforts towards distinguishing the authentic reports from the inauthentic and,

   (ii) Exerting efforts towards seeking out their meanings and gaining understanding of it.\(^[2]\)

3. To act in accordance with this knowledge and understanding, remaining upright upon this, be it in belief, thought, character or speech, and to be free and distant from everything that opposes and nullifies it.

4. To engage in inviting to this with both tongue and limbs.

One who adheres to these principles of belief and action is upon the salafi methodology, by Allah’s will.

\(^{[1]}\) Ru'ayyiah Ahd al-Sunnah baynu al-Firaq, Dr. Muhammad Bakarim, pp. 92-94 and Kitab Luzarn allansa' ah, Dr. Jamal Bait, pp. 276-277.

\(^{[2]}\) It is related by al-Bukhari, (5/199, 7/6 & 11/460) and Muslim, 7/184 & 185.

\(^{[1]}\) To further explain, two perspectives combine together to precisely define the Salaf al-Salih: (i) the time factor, which is found in the word salaf (predecessors); this has been shown to mean the first three generations. (ii) the methodology factor, which is found in the word salih (righteous); this means to be upon that which the Prophet (\(\mathsf{S}\)) was upon in belief, speech and action.

\(^{[2]}\) Related by Muslim in his Sahih, 3/1523.

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The Companions, their students and subsequent students therefore truly fit this title. As for those present in the first three generations who were not upon the correct methodology then they are in fact the Salaf al-Tālib, the unrighteous predecessors. Scholars have however become accustomed to using the general term al-Salaf, which only contains the time factor, to specifically mean the Salaf al-Sālih.\(^[1]\)

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2. To confine one’s self with regard to the above, to the reports transmitted from the Companions, their successors and their successors in turn, in relation to the explanation and understanding of the Qur’ān and ahadith. This is achieved by:

   (i) Exerting efforts towards distinguishing the authentic reports from the inauthentic and,

   (ii) Exerting efforts towards seeking out their meanings and gaining understanding of it.\(^9\)

3. To act in accordance with this knowledge and understanding, remaining upright upon this, be it in belief, thought, character or speech, and to be free and distant from everything that opposes and nullifies it.

4. To engage in inviting to this with both tongue and limbs.

One who adheres to these principles of belief and action is upon the salafi methodology, by Allah’s will.

\(^{9}\) Warariyyah Ahl al-Sunnah baynu al-Firaq, Dr. Muhammad Bakarim, pp. 92-94 and Kitāb Luzarn allansa' ah, Dr. Jamal Bait, pp. 276-277.

\(^{9}\) It is related by al-Bukhari, (5/199, 7/6 & 11/460) and Muslim, 7/184 & 185.

\(^{9}\) Related by Muslim in his Sahih, 3/1523.

• **Proofs for the Obligation to Follow the Salaf al-Salih and to Adhere to Their Methodology**

**Firstly,** from the Noble Qur'an:

Allah (ta'ala) says:

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And the former, the first from amongst the Muhajirun and the Anṣār, and those who followed them in righteousness, Allah is pleased with them and they are pleased with Him. And He has prepared for them gardens of which rivers flow below, abiding therein forever, that is the great success.
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Thus, Allah is unreservedly pleased with the Muhajirun and Anṣār, and is pleased with those who follow them in righteousness. 99

Allah (ta'ala) also says:

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And whoever opposes the Messenger after the guidance has become clearly manifest to him and follows a path other than that of the believers, We shall leave him to that which he has adopted and land him in Hell; what an evil destination!
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Allah threatens those who follow a different path to the Companions with the punishment of Hell, and in the previous ayah, He promises His pleasure to those who follow them.

98 Surah al-Tawbah (9):100

99 i.e. the attainment of Allah’s pleasure for the Companions is secure, whereas for those who come after them, this is not guaranteed, as it is dependent upon their adherence to the way of the Companions in righteousness (i.e. in belief and action). [1]

**Secondly,** from the Sunnah:

1. The statement of the Prophet (ﷺ): “The best of people are my generation, then those who succeed them, then those who succeed them.”

This excellence and goodness which the Prophet (ﷺ) attested to for these three generations, is an indication of their preference, precedence and majestic rank as well as their knowledge of Allah’s laws and intense adherence to the way of His Messenger (ﷺ).

The following ahadith emphasise these (virtues):

2. The Messenger’s statement: “The Jews split up into seventy-one sects, the Christians split up into seventy-two sects and this ummah will split up into seventy-three sects; all of them are in the Fire except one.” Someone asked: “Which is that one O Messenger of Allah?” He replied: “Whoever is upon that which I am upon today and my Companions.” This is a hadith that is sahih (authentic) and mash-hur (well known).

3. His (ﷺ) saying: “…for indeed, those who will still be alive after me will see many differences; so hold fast to my Sunnah and the sunnah of the rightly guided Khalifahs after me. Adhere to and cling tightly to it and beware of newly-invented matters, for every newly-invented matter is an innovation and every innovation is a deviation.”

Hence, the Prophet (ﷺ) encouraged his ummah to follow his Sunnah and the sunnah of the rightly guided Khalifahs after him at the appearance of splits and differences.

100 Surah al-Nisa’ (4):115.

101 It is related by al-Bukhari, (5/199, 7/6 & 11/460) and Muslim, 7/184 & 185.

102 Related by Abu Dawūd, 4956-4957; al-Tirmidhi, 2640-2641; Imām Ahmad, (2/332, 3/120, 145 & 4/120) and Ibn Majah, 3991-3993.

103 Related by Imam Ahmad, 4/126-127; Abu Dawūd, 4607; al-Tirmidhi, 2675; al-Dārimi, 1/44 and others.
• **Proofs for the Obligation to Follow the Salaf al-Salih and to Adhere to Their Methodology**

**Firstly,** from the Noble Qur'an:

Allah (ta‘alā) says:

And the former, the first from amongst the Muhajirun and the Anṣār, and those who followed them in righteousness, Allah is pleased with them and they are pleased with Him. And He has prepared for them gardens of which rivers flow below, abiding therein forever, that is the great success. 

Thus, Allah is unreservedly pleased with the Muhajirun and Anṣār, and is pleased with those who follow them in righteousness. 

Allah (ta‘alā) also says:

And whoever opposes the Messenger after the guidance has become clearly manifest to him and follows a path other than that of the believers, We shall leave him to that which he has adopted and land him in Hell; what an evil destination! 

Allah threatens those who follow a different path to the Companions with the punishment of Hell, and in the previous āyah, He promises His pleasure to those who follow them. 

**Secondly,** from the Sunnah:

1. The statement of the Prophet (ﷺ): *The best of people are my generation, then those who succeed them, then those who succeed them.*

This excellence and goodness which the Prophet (ﷺ) attested to for these three generations, is an indication of their preference, precedence and majestic rank as well as their knowledge of Allah’s laws and intense adherence to the way of His Messenger (ﷺ).

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Hence, the Prophet (ﷺ) encouraged his ummah to follow his Sunnah and the sunnah of the rightly guided Khalifahs after him at the appearance of splits and differences.
Thirdly, from the statements of the Salaf al-Ṣāliḥ and their followers:

1. Abdullah Ibn Mas'ud, may Allah be pleased with him, said: “People will not cease to be in good as long as knowledge emanating from the Companions of Muhammad and their elders reach them. If however, knowledge comes to them by way of their young and their desires diversify, they will be ruined”. 104

2. He also said: “Whoever amongst you seeks to adopt a path, should take to the way of the dead, since the living are not safe and secure from being put to trial. They, the Companions of Muhammad (ﷺ), possessed the most pious hearts of this ummah, were the most profound in knowledge and the least constraint of this ummah. A people whom Allāh chose for the companionship of His Prophet (ﷺ) and the establishment of His religion. So know their rights and adhere to their guidance, for they indeed were upon the straight way”. 105

3. He also said: “We emulate and do not set precedents, we follow and do not innovate, and we will not deviate as long as we hold on to the narrations”. 106

4. He also said: “Follow and do not innovate, for indeed you have been sufficed”. 107

5. Hudhayfah Ibn al-Yamān, may Allāh be pleased with him, said: “O assembly of reciters! Remain upright and take to the way of those before you. For by Allāh, if you (choose to) follow them then know that you have been outranched by a long distance, and if you take to the right or left (of their path) then you will be upon severe deviation”. 108

6. Mujāhid said: “The scholars are the Companions of Muhammad (ﷺ)”. 109

7. Al-Awzā’ī said: “Knowledge is that which emanates from the Companions of Muhammad, as for anything else besides this, it is not knowledge”. Imam Ahmad, may Allāh have mercy upon him, also said this.

8. Al-Awzā’ī also said: “Patiently restrict yourself upon the Sunnah, stop where the people (i.e. the Companions) stopped, say what they say and refrain from that which they refrained. Traverse upon the path of your Salaf al-Ṣāliḥ, for indeed what was sufficient for them is sufficient for you”. 110

9. Al-Hasan al-Baṣrī was in a gathering when he mentioned the Companions of Muhammad (ﷺ). He then remarked: “They possessed the most pious hearts of this ummah, were the most profound in knowledge and the least constraint. A people, whom Allāh chose for the companionship of His Prophet (ﷺ), to emulate their character and way, for by the Lord of the Ka’bah, they are upon the straight path”. 111

10. Abū Hanīfah, may Allāh have mercy upon him, was questioned: “What is your comment on the speech innovated by the people regarding al-‘Aṣrāf and al-Aṣām?”. He replied: “Statements of the philosophers! Take to the narrations and the way of the Salaf and beware of every newly-invented matter for it is indeed an innovation”. 112

11. Al-Awzā’ī said: “Hold fast to the narrations of the Salaf, even if people abandon you. Beware of the opinions of men, no matter how much they beautify it with their speech, for indeed the matter will become manifest whilst you will be upon the correct straight path concerning it”. 113

12. Shaykh Ḥilāl Ibn Taymiyyah said: “It is a must upon every Muslim, who testifies that none has the right to be worshipped except Allāh and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allāh, that his basic intention be to single out Allāh in his worship of Him alone, without any partner and to obey His Messenger.” 114

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104 Al-Zuhd of Ibn al-Mubarak, p. 281, narration number 815.
105 Jami’ Bayan al-Ibrahīm wa Fadhl, 2/97.
106 Sharḥ Usul ‘Itiqād Ahl al-Sunnah of al-Lalaka’i, narration number 115.
107 Al-Bid’ah wa al-Nahy ‘anha of Ibn Wadijah, pg. 13.
108 This and the following two narrations are in Jami’ Bayan al-Ibrahīm, 2/29.
109 Al-Sharḥ ah of al-Ajurrī, pg. 58.
110 Jami’ Bayan al-Ibrahīm, 2/97.
111 Saun al-Mantiq of al-Suyūṭī, 322.
112 Al-Madkhal ila al-Sunan of al-Bayhaqī, number 233.
Thirdly, from the statements of the Salaf al-Salih and their followers:

1. Abdullah Ibn Mas'ud, may Allah be pleased with him, said: “People will not cease to be in good as long as knowledge emanating from the Companions of Muhammad and their elders reach them. If however, knowledge comes to them by way of their young and their desires diversify, they will be ruined”.

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9. Al-Hasan al-Baṣri was in a gathering when he mentioned the Companions of Muhammad (A). He then remarked: “They possessed the most pious hearts of this ummah, were the most profound in knowledge and the least constraint. A people, whom Allah chose for the companionship of His Prophet (A), so emulate their character and way, for by the Lord of the Ka'bah, they are upon the straight path”.

10. Abu Hanifah, may Allah have mercy upon him, was questioned: “What is your comment on the speech innovated by the people regarding al-'Adr and al-Ajsām?” He replied: “Statements of the philosophers! Take to the narrations and the way of the Salaf and beware of every newly-invented matter for it is indeed an innovation”.

11. Al-Awza'ı said: “Hold fast to the narrations of the Salaf, even if people abandon you. Beware of the opinions of men, no matter how much they beautify it with their speech, for indeed the matter will become manifest whilst you will be upon the correct straight path concerning it”.

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He is to remain upon this, following it wherever he finds it, and he should know that the best of creation after the Prophets are the Companions.

He should not therefore, offer absolute and unrestricted allegiance to any one person except the Messenger of Allah. Nor should he offer absolute and unrestricted allegiance to any one group except the Companions; as the Guidance remains with the Messenger, wherever he remains, and it remains with his Companions and no one else’s companions, wherever they remain.

If they are in agreement, they never ever agree upon something incorrect, in contrast to the companions of a particular scholar, as they could agree upon something incorrect. In fact, everything that they (i.e. companions of a particular scholar) have asserted to which none other from amongst this ummah has asserted, can be nothing but incorrect, since the religion that Allah has sent His Messenger with is not conferred to any single scholar and his companions. If this was so, that person would be an equal to the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) and this is similar to the belief of the Rafidah regarding the 'Infallible Imam'.

Moreover, it is a must that the Companions and their successors were aware of that truth with which Allah had sent His Messenger, well before the presence of those who are followed; those whom the madhhabs (i.e. schools of thought) are attributed to, in relation to both fundamental and subsidiary matters.

It is impossible for them to bring about a truth, which opposes what the Messenger brought, as everything that opposes the Messenger is falsehood. It is also impossible for them to know of something emanating from the Messenger which opposes (the knowledge and understanding of) the Companions and their successors in righteousness, as they (i.e. the Companions) did not unite upon any deviation. So his (i.e. a followed imam’s) saying, if true, has to be taken from that which the Messenger brought and present with someone before him.

Every statement in the religion of Islam which lies in opposition to that which the Companions and their successors in righteousness were upon, which none of them have asserted, but rather have said other than it, it is indeed a false saying.\textsuperscript{113}

\textbf{Definition of Ahl al-Sunnah}

The Scholars at times use the title 'Ahl al-Sunnah wa l-Jamā‘ah' instead of the term al-Salaf.

This term has two connotations in the usage of the scholars:

1. The more specific meaning:

This is synonymous to the meaning of the term al-Salaf. Ahl al-Sunnah wa l-Jamā‘ah are therefore the Companions, the Successors, their subsequent successors and the scholars of guidance who follow their way and traverse their path as well as all those who follow them from amongst the rest of the ummah.

This meaning therefore expels all the sects of innovation and people of desires.

Sunnah is employed here in opposition to innovation (bid'ah) and al-ama’ah (assembly) is employed here in opposition to separation (furqah).

Ibn ‘Abbas, may Allah be pleased with him, commented on the ayah:

\begin{verbatim}
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\end{verbatim}

“On the day when some faces will become white and some faces will become black...”\textsuperscript{114}

He said: “The faces of Ahl al-Sunnah wa l-Jamā‘ah will become white and the faces of Ahl al-Bid’ah wa l-Furqānah will become black.”\textsuperscript{115}

This particular connotation is the meaning that is intended in the \textit{ahādīth} which pertain to adhering to the Jamā‘ah and to the prohibition of splitting.

\textsuperscript{111} Minhāj al-Sunnah, 5/262-263.

\textsuperscript{114} Surah Al-Imrān (3):106

\textsuperscript{115} Tafsir Ibn Kathir 1/390.
He is to remain upon this, following it wherever he finds it, and he should know that the best of creation after the Prophets are the Companions.

He should not therefore, offer absolute and unrestricted allegiance to any one person except the Messenger of Allah. Nor should he offer absolute and unrestricted allegiance to any one group except the Companions; as the Guidance remains with the Messenger, wherever he remains, and it remains with his Companions and no one else’s companions, wherever they remain.

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Moreover, it is a must that the Companions and their successors were aware of that truth with which Allah had sent His Messenger, well before the presence of those who are followed; those whom the madhhabs (i.e. schools of thought) are attributed to, in relation to both fundamental and subsidiary matters.

It is impossible for them to bring about a truth, which opposes what the Messenger brought, as everything that opposes the Messenger is falsehood. It is also impossible for them to know of something emanating from the Messenger which opposes (the knowledge and understanding of) the Companions and their successors in righteousness, as they (i.e. the Companions) did not unite upon any deviation. So his (i.e. a followed imam’s) saying, if true, has to be taken from that which the Messenger brought and present with someone before him.

Every statement in the religion of Islam which lies in opposition to that which the Companions and their successors in righteousness were upon, which none of them have asserted, but rather have said other than it, is indeed a false saying.

**Definition of Ahl al-Sunnah**

The Scholars at times use the title ‘Ahl al-Sunnah wa l-Jama’ah’ instead of the term al-Salaf.

This term has two connotations in the usage of the scholars:

1. The more specific meaning:

This is synonymous to the meaning of the term al-Salaf. Ahl al-Sunnah wa l-Jama’ah are therefore the Companions, the Successors, their subsequent successors and the scholars of guidance who follow their way and traverse their path as well as all those who follow them from amongst the rest of the ummah.

This meaning therefore expels all the sects of innovation and people of desires.

Sunnah is employed here in opposition to innovation (bid’ah) and al-Furqah (assembly) is employed here in opposition to separation (furqah).

Ibn ‘Abbas, may Allah be pleased with him, commentated on the ayah:

> “On the day when some faces will become white and some faces will become black…”

He said: "The faces of Ahl al-Sunnah wa l-Jama’ah will become white and the faces of Ahl al-Bid’ah wa l-Furqah will become black.”

This particular connotation is the meaning that is intended in the hadith which pertain to adhering to the jama’ah and to the prohibition of splitting.

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111 Minhaj al-Sunnah, 3/262-263.
112 Surah Al-Imrān (3):106
113 Tafsir Ibn Kathir 1/390.
Although this connotation is more specific in meaning, it is however the most common one found and used in the statements of the scholars.

2. The more general meaning:

This connotation includes within it some of the innovated sects when and where their position on a specific issue lies in agreement with the position of the Salaf, which is at variance to a specific group.

This connotation has been used to a lesser degree because of its stipulation to the following specific conditions:

1. It is in regard to particular issues pertaining to belief.
2. It is used in opposition to certain distinct groups.

An example of this usage is the application of this term in opposition to the Rafidah on the issues of the Khilafah and the Companions. One therefore says in this context that those who attribute themselves to Islam are two groups:

1. Ahl al-Sunnah and
2. The Rafidah.

Some of the groups of innovation such as the Asha'irah and others enter into the term Ahl al-Sunnah by reason of their agreement with the position of the Salaf on these two issues of Khilafah and the Companions, when the difference and dispute occurred between the Salaf and the Rafidah.

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah said: “What is meant by the term Ahl al-Sunnah is:

1. Those who affirm the Khilafah of the three khilafah; this includes all the groups other than the Rafidah.
2. It may also be used to mean Ahl al-Hadith and Sunnah in its purest sense. So none enters into this understanding except those who affirm the Attributes for Allah the Most High; who say that the Qur'an is not created; that Allah will be seen in the Hereafter and who affirm Qadar, as well as the rest of the well known fundamentals held by the people of Hadith and Sunnah.”

Shaykh al-Islam termed these two categories by naming the first as Ahl al-Sunnah, the people of the general Sunnah, and this label is in reference to everyone who is not a Rafidah.

The second category is the people of the specific Sunnah, i.e. Ahl-Hadith.

An Explanation of the Belief of Ahl al-Sunnah in the Names and Attributes of Allah

The belief of Ahl al-Sunnah regarding the Names and Attributes of Allah is one of belief in all that has been mentioned in the Qur'an and
Although this connotation is more specific in meaning, it is however the most common one found and used in the statements of the scholars.

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This connotation includes within it some of the innovated sects when and where their position on a specific issue lies in agreement with the position of the Salaf, which is at variance to a specific group.

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Some of the groups of innovation such as the Asha'irah and others enter into the term Ahl al-Sunnah by reason of their agreement with the position of the Salaf on these two issues of Khilafah and the Companions, when the difference and dispute occurred between the Salaf and the Rafidah.

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Shaykh al-Islam termed these two categories by naming the first as [أهل السنة والجماعة], the people of the general Sunnah, and this label is in reference to everyone who is not a Rafidi.

The second category is [أهل السنة المتخصصة], the people of the specific Sunnah, i.e. Ahl-Hadith.

An Explanation of the Belief of Ahl al-Sunnah in the Names and Attributes of Allah

The belief of Ahl al-Sunnah regarding the Names and Attributes of Allah is one of belief in all that has been mentioned in the Qur'an and

\textit{\[Mishkaj al-Sunnah\] 2/221, University of Imam Muhammad Ibn Sa'\'\d print.}

\textit{Shaykh al-Islam says: "There is no doubt that they (i.e. the Rafidah) are the most distant of the groups of innovators from the Book and Sunnah. This is why they became the well known, among the general populace, for opposing the Sunnah. As such, the general masses of the ummah do not know of anyone who is opposed to the Sunni other than the Rafidah (i.e. Shiah). When one of them asserts, 'I am a Sunni', then he means by this 'I am not a Rafidi' (i.e. not of the Shiah)." [Majmua\' al-Fatawa, 3/356].}

\textit{This term 'Ahl-Hadith' (people of hadith) itself carries different connotations. At times it is used to represent Ahl al-Sunnah in contrast to Ahl al-Kalam and people of innovation and this is the meaning intended above. At other times it is used to mean those specifically connected to the science of Hadith. [t]}
the authentic Sunnah by way of affirming and negating where appropriate. As a result, they:

1. Name Allah with the Names that He has Named Himself with; they do not add to nor omit from any of these Names.

2. Affirm and describe Allah (azza wa jalla) with what He has described Himself with in His Book or upon the tongue of His Messenger (s), without committing any tahrif or ta'til, nor any takyif or tamthil.

3. Negate for Allah that which He Himself has negated from Himself in His Book or upon the tongue of His Messenger Muhammad (s) with the belief that Allah is depicted with the opposite of that negated matter in its perfect sense.120

Ahl al-Sunnah have therefore traversed upon the methodology of the Qur'an and the authentic Sunnah in this respect; every name or attribute of Allah (subhanahu) mentioned in the Book or authentic Sunnah is from the area of affirmation, so by this it is obligatory to affirm them. As for the issue of negation, it means to negate all the various types of defects and deficiencies that oppose His perfection, with the mandatory belief that the opposite of that negated matter is affirmed in its perfect sense.

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah said: "...and the way of the Salaf of this ummah and its Imams is that they describe Allah with that which He Himself and His Messenger have described Him with: without any tahrif or ta' til and without any takyif nor tamthil. Affirmation without any tamthil (similitude), elevation and exaltation without any ta' til (invalidation); affirming the Attributes and negating any resemblance to creation. Allah (ta' ala) says,

"...There is nothing like Him..."

This is a refutation of the mumaththilah121

وَهُوَ الْأَلْبَارُ إِنَّهُۥ مَيْتُوُاً

"...and He is the All-Hearer, the All-Scener."122

This is a refutation of the Mu' attilah123.

So their declaration concerning the Attributes is built upon two fundamentals:

The first, that Allah (subhahu wa ta' a la) is absolutely Exalted and Elevated above characteristics of imperfections such as slumber, sleep, incapability, ignorance and so on.

The second, that He is characterised with Attributes of perfection, which do not entail any imperfections in the unique manner in which He possesses; these Attributes, so nothing of His creation is similar to any of his Attributes.

120 i.e. when Allah for example, in His Book, negates oppression from Himself, this is because He is characterised with absolute and perfect Justice. The reason why negation of a quality must entail the affirmation of the quality that is opposite to it when it concerns our Lord (ta' ala), is that mere negation is not praise in itself. In the previous example regarding oppression for instance, a person can be characterised with not being oppressive but not because he is just and fair but instead because he is the weakest of the weak, who has no ability or power to oppress anyone even if he desired to do so, he himself may in fact be the oppressor himself. So the negation of oppression concerning such a person is not praise of him. This is not the case regarding our Lord however, for He is the al-Powerful Who does as He chooses, but does not and never oppresses because of His perfect and absolute Justice. Contemplate over this principle and understand it as it will give you one example of many, of how to truly glorify Allah in the manner of our Salaf. Such glorification, can only transpire when one correctly understands the principles they adhered to, which are none other than what this Din has brought. [t]

121 Plural of mumaththil: doer of tamthil. [t]

122 Sarah al-Shura (42):11.

123 Plural of mu' attil: doer of ta' til. [t]
the authentic Sunnah by way of affirming and negating where appropriate. As a result, they:

1. Name Allah with the Names that He has Named Himself with; they do not add to nor omit from any of these Names.

2. Affirm and describe Allah ('azza wa jalla) with what He has described Himself with in His Book or upon the tongue of His Messenger (ﷺ), without committing any tahrib or ta'til, nor any tajyif or tamthil.

3. Negate for Allah that which He Himself has negated from Himself in His Book or upon the tongue of His Messenger Muhammad (ﷺ) with the belief that Allah is depicted with the opposite of that negated matter in its perfect sense.

Ahl al-Sunnah have therefore traversed upon the methodology of the Qur'ān and the authentic Sunnah in this respect; every name or attribute of Allah (subhanahu) mentioned in the Book or authentic Sunnah is from the area of affirmation, so by this it is obligatory to affirm them. As for the issue of negation, it means to negate all the various types of defects and deficiencies that oppose His perfection, with the mandatory belief that the opposite of that negated matter is affirmed in its perfect sense.

Imām Ahmad, may Allāh have mercy upon him, said: "Allāh is not to be described except with what He Himself and His Messenger have described Him with; we do not exceed the boundaries of the Qur'ān and Sunnah."

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah said: "...and the way of the Salaf of this ummah and its Imams is that they describe Allāh with that which He Himself and His Messenger have described Him with: without any tahrib or ta'til and without any tajyif nor tamthil. Affirmation without any tamthil (similitude), elevation and exaltation without any ta' til (invalidation); affirming the Attributes and negating any resemblance to creation. Allāh (ta' ala) says,

\[ \text{"...There is nothing like Him..."} \]

This is a refutation of the mumaththilah.

\[ \text{\"...and He is the All-Hearer, the All-Seer.\"} \]

This is a refutation of the Mu'tilah.

So their declaration concerning the Attributes is built upon two fundamentals:

The first, that Allāh (subhanahu wa ta\' ala) is absolutely Exalted and Elevated above characteristics of imperfections such as slumber, sleep, incapability, ignorance and so on.

The second, that He is characterised with Attributes of perfection, which do not entail any imperfections in the unique manner in which He possesses, these Attributes, so nothing of His creation is similar to any of his Attributes.

\[ \text{\footnotesize 121} \text{ Plural of mumaththil: doer of tamthil. [t]} \]

\[ \text{\footnotesize 122} \text{ Sarah al-Shura (42):11.} \]

\[ \text{\footnotesize 123} \text{ Plural of mu' aitil: doer of ta' til. [t]} \]
The following are some of the texts that clarify this:

1. His (ta'ala) saying:

   "There is nothing like Him and He is the All-Hearer, the All-Seer."[4]

   '...There is nothing like Him...' is with respect to negation. '...and He is the All-Hearer, the All-Seer.' is with respect to affirmation.

2. His saying, the Most High:

   "And put your trust in the Ever Living One Who dies not..."[25]

   'And put your trust in the Ever Living One...' is with respect to affirmation. '...Who dies not...' is with respect to negation.

3. His Saying, the Most High:

   "Allah, none has the right to be worshipped but He, The Ever Living, The Self Sustainer and Supporter of All. Neither slumber nor sleep overtakes Him..."[26]

   'Allah...' and '...The Ever Living, The Self-Sustainer and Supporter of all...' is with respect to affirmation. '...None has the right to be worshipped but He...' and '...Neither slumber nor sleep overtakes Him...' is with respect to negation.

As for texts from the Sunnah:

With regard to affirmation, there are the (following) statements of the Prophet (ﷺ): "Our Lord, ('azza wa jalla), descends to the lowest heaven when the last third of the night remains."[27] and "When Allah created the creation, He wrote in a Book, which is with Him above His Throne, that His Mercy overcomes His Anger."[28]

With regard to negation, the Prophet (ﷺ) has said: "Lower your voices, for you are not invoking a deaf nor absent one."[29] He (ﷺ) also said: "Indeed, Allah is not one-eyed."[30] and he (ﷺ) said: "Allah does not sleep, and it is not befitting to Him that He sleep."[31]

Explanation of the declaration of Ahl al-Sunnah '...without any tahrif nor ta’til and without any takyif nor tamthil'

Tawhid al-Asma wa l-Sifat is fundamentally opposed by the following two matters:

1. Al-Ta’til

2. Al-Tashbih and al-Tamthil

Whoever negates the Attributes of the Lord and renders them void has in effect made his tawhid (of Allah) untrue by virtue of his act of ta’til (nullification of these Attributes).

Whoever likens Allah to His creation or declares Him to be something of His creation has likewise made his tawhid (of Allah) untrue by virtue of his act of tashbih and tamthil (likening).[32]

The meaning of '...without any tahrif nor ta’til...'

This expression distinguishes the belief of Ahl al-Sunnah from the belief of the people of ta’til.

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[27] Al-Bukhari, 3/229 and Muslim, 1/521 hadith number 168.
[29] Al-Bukhari 13/372 hadith number 7386.
[31] Muslim in his Sahih, 1/111.
The following are some of the texts that clarify this:

1. His (ta'ala) saying:

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لَيْسَ كَعَلَى عَلَيْهِ فَضْلٌ أَلَّا تَبَيَّنَ النَّعِيمُ عِندَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ
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"There is nothing like Him and He is the All-Hearer, the All-Seer." 14

'...There is nothing like Him...' is with respect to negation. '...and He is the All-Hearer, the All-Seer.' is with respect to affirmation.

2. His saying, the Most High:

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وَعَمِلْنَا فِي نَفْسِهِمَا لَا شَيْءًا يَضُرُّهُمْ وَايْتَانَ أَنْفُسَهُمَا لَا يُبِينُهَا حَلَالٌ وَايْتَانَ أَنْفُسَهُمَا لَا يُبِينُهَا حَلَالٌ
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"And put your trust in the Ever Living One Who dies not..." 125

'And put your trust in the Ever Living One...' is with respect to affirmation. '...Who dies not...' is with respect to negation.

3. His Saying, the Most High:

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مَا أَحَدَّ أَزْيَاءُ الْأَزْيَاءِ الْكُبْرَىَّ الْمُتَرَكَّبَةِ عَلَى تَفْرُقِ الْأَزْيَاءِ الْفُضُّ أَلَّا يَغْمُرَهُ الْمَيْمَةُ وَلَكُمْ مِنْ أَمْرِي ثَلاَثَةٌ
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"Allah, none has the right to be worshipped but He, The Ever Living, The Self Sustainer and Supporter of All. Neither slumber nor sleep overtakes Him..." 116

'Allah...' and '...The Ever Living, The Self-Sustainer and Supporter of all...' is with respect to affirmation. '...None has the right to be worshipped but He...' and '...Neither slumber nor sleep overtakes Him...' is with respect to negation.

As for texts from the Sunnah:

With regard to affirmation, there are the (following) statements of the Prophet (ﷺ): "Our Lord, (azza wa jalla), descends to the lowest heaven when the last third of the night remains." 127 and "When Allah created the creation, He wrote in a Book, which is with Him above His Throne, that His Mercy overcomes His Anger." 128

With regard to negation, the Prophet (ﷺ) has said: "Lower your voices, for you are not invoking a deaf nor absent one!" 129 He (ﷺ) also said: "Indeed, Allah is not one-eyed," 130 and he (ﷺ) said: "Allah does not sleep, and it is not befitting to Him that He sleep." 131

**Explanation of the declaration of Ahl al-Sunnah ‘...without any tahrif nor ta’til and without any takyif nor tamthil’**

Tawhid al-Asma wa l-Sifat is fundamentally opposed by the following two matters:

1. **Al-Ta’til**

Whoever negates the Attributes of the Lord and renders them void has in effect made his tawhid (of Allah) untrue by virtue of his act of ta’til (nullification of these Attributes).

Whoever likens Allah to His creation or declares Him to be something of His creation has likewise made his tawhid (of Allah) untrue by virtue of his act of tashbih and tamthil (likening). 132

**The meaning of ‘...without any tahrif nor ta’til...’**

This expression distinguishes the belief of Ahl al-Sunnah from the belief of the people of ta’til.

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14 Surah al-Shura (42):11.
125 Surah al-Furqan (25):58.
127 Al-Bukhari, 3/229 and Muslim, 1/521 hadith number 168.
128 Al-Bukhari, 6/287 hadith number 194 and Muslim, 4/2107 hadith number 14.
129 Al-Bukhari 13/372 hadith number 7386.
130 Agreed upon. Al-Bukhari, 13/90 and Muslim 18/59.
131 Muslim in his Sahih, 1/111.
132 Tawhid al-Asma wa l-Sifat, p. 36.
• The meaning of **taḥrif** and its types

(i) the meaning of **taḥrif**:

**Taḥrif** linguistically means change, substitution, inclination and divergence.

Its legal meaning: to turn the texts away from that which they are actually upon, either by directly contesting them or by removing them from the realities which they point to whilst acknowledging the existence of the wording itself.

One could also say as a concise definition: to turn the text away from its indication and correctness to something besides it.

**Taḥrif** in the area of **Tawḥīd al-‘Awnā’ wa-l-‘Iṣāf** means to change the actual wordings of the texts related to the Names and Attributes or their meanings away from the meaning intended by Allah.

(ii) types of **taḥrif**:

**Taḥrif** is of two types:

The first type: **taḥrif** of the actual wording (**laf∞**)

Its definition is to remove the actual word away from its proper place. This can be manifested in four different ways:

1. Adding to the word
2. Omitting from the word
3. Changing a vowel that is related to ‘Irāb
4. Changing a vowel that is not related to ‘Irāb.

Examples of **taḥrif** al-‘Laf∞:

The first example is changing the ‘Irāb of His (ta‘ālā) saying:

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وَكَمْ أَخْلَصْتُمْ لَمْ تَصْلِيمًا
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"And Allah spoke directly to Mūsā"\(^{115}\)

The change is made from the accusative case to the subjective so that it instead reads [إِلَّا كُلّمً"جَدُّا] i.e. Mūsā spoke to Allah and Allah did not speak to him.\(^{116}\)

When some of the **Jahmīyyah** committed this **taḥrif** some of the people of **tawḥīd** replied: "What will you do with His saying:

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وَمَا أَخْلَصْتُمْ لَمْ تَصْلِيمًا
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"And Mūsā came at the time and place appointed by Us, and his Lord spoke to him..."\(^{117}\)

Upon that the perpetrator of **taḥrif** was utterly defeated and left dumb-founded.\(^{118}\)

Another example is that some of the **Mu‘ātiklah** asked certain scholars of the Arabic language as to whether it was possible to read the word [؛ُ، ] in the accusative case\(^{119}\) with respect to the āyah:

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الَّذِي فَوْقَ الْخَنْدَرِ
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\(\text{The Most Beneficent is above the Throne which ascended}\).\(^{120}\)

\(^{113}\)\(\text{Al-Suwāq al-Mursalah, I/215.}\)

\(^{114}\)\(\text{The study of the case and change of the ends of words that result from operators acting on them. One of the common representations of this change is in the vowel of the last letter of a word. [t]}\)

\(^{115}\)\(\text{Sarah al-Nisā’ (4):164.}\)

\(^{116}\)\(\text{i.e. the vowel on the end of the word [؛ُ، ] is changed from a dammah [؛] to a fathah [؛]. This will change the meaning to ‘And Mūsā spoke directly to Allah’. The benefit derived from this, for the denier of Attributes, is that the āyah will no longer contain the attribution of speech to Allah. [t]}\)

\(^{117}\)\(\text{Sarah al-A‘raf (7):143.}\)

\(^{118}\)\(\text{By reason of the construction of this āyah, as it is impossible to manipulate it in the manner done with the former āyah. [t]}\)

\(^{119}\)\(\text{i.e. by changing the vowel at the end of the word [؛ُ، ] from a kasrah [؛] to a dammah [؛] the āyah would then read ‘The Most Beneficent is above the Throne which ascended’. [t]}\)

\(^{120}\)\(\text{82 83} \)
• The meaning of *tabrif* and its types

(i) the meaning of *tabrif*:

*Tabrif* linguistically means change, substitution, inclination and divergence.

Its legal meaning: to turn the texts away from that which they are actually upon, either by directly contesting them or by removing them from the realities which they point to whilst acknowledging the existence of the wording itself.

One could also say as a concise definition: to turn the text away from its indication and correctness to something besides it. 133

*Tabrif* in the area of *Tawhid al-Asnā wa l-Ṣifāt* means to change the actual wordings of the texts related to the Names and Attributes or their meanings away from the meaning intended by Allah.

(ii) types of *tabrif*:

*Tabrif* is of two types:

The first type: *tabrif* of the actual wording (lafs)

Its definition is to remove the actual word away from its proper place. This can be manifested in four different ways:

1. Adding to the word
2. Omitting from the word
3. Changing a vowel that is related to 'Irāb134.
4. Changing a vowel that is not related to 'Irāb.

Examples of *tabrif* al-Lafs:

The first example is changing the 'Irāb of His (ta’āla) saying:

> وَلَمَّا كَانَ مُوسَى أَلْقَى الْكَيْمَةَ
> "And Allah spoke directly to Moses"135

The change is made from the accusative case to the subjective so that it instead reads [ما أَلْقَى] i.e. Mūsā spoke to Allah and Allah did not speak to him.136

When some of the *Jahmiyyah* committed this *tabrif* some of the people of *tawhid* replied: "What will you do with His saying:

> وَلَمَّا كَانَ مُوسَى أَلْقَى الْكَيْمَةَ
> "And when Mūsā came at the time and place appointed by Us, and

Upon that the perpetrator of *tabrif* was utterly defeated and left dumb-founded.138

Another example is that some of the *Mu’talilah* asked certain scholars of the Arabic language as to whether it was possible to read the word [مَلَعَ] in the accusative case139 with respect to the āyah:

> الْعَرْشِ ۖ ۖ الْمُحْيِّ عُلُوًّا وَالْمُتَرَفِّ عُلُوًّا
> "The Most Beneficent is above the Throne which ascended". [t]

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133 Al-Sa’udīq al-Mursalah, 1/215.

134 The study of the case and change of the ends of words that result from operators acting on them. One of the common representations of this change is in the vowel of the last letter of a word. [t]


136 i.e. the vowel on the end of the word [آ] is changed from a dāmmah [تا] to a fathah [ت]. This will change the meaning to ‘And Mūsā spoke directly to Allah’. The benefit derived from this, for the denier of Attributes, is that the āyah will no longer contain the attribution of speech to Allah. [t]

137 Sarah al-Arāf (7):143.

138 By reason of the construction of this āyah, as it is impossible to manipulate it in the manner done with the former āyah. [t]

139 i.e. by changing the vowel at the end of the word [ا] from a kāfārah [ا] to a dāmmah [ء] the āyah would then read ‘The Most Beneficent is above the Throne which ascended’. [t]
"The Most Beneficent ascended above the Throne"^{141}

The intention behind this *tabrif* was to make the ascension an attribute of the creation (i.e., the Throne) rather than that of the Creator.\(^{141}\)

**The second type: *tabrif* of the meaning**

Its definition is to change the meaning of the wording from its correct one to another whilst keeping the appearance of the actual wording.\(^{142}\)

The definition could also be: to turn away the meaning from its indication and reality and to give the wording a meaning of another word to a level they both share.

This is the type of *tabrif* which the people of *Kalam* such as the *Mu'attalah* delved into, expanded upon and named *ta'wil* (interpretation). This is in fact a false and innovated use of terminology, which the Arabic language has no previous familiarity with.

The following are examples of *tabrif* of meaning:

The interpretation of His (ta’ala) saying:

\[
\text{"And your Lord will come..."}^{145}
\]

**The Most Beneficent ascended above the Throne"**^{141}

The meaning of [پ] hand, to mean *blessing and power* in the His (ta’ala) saying:

\[
\text{"...Nay, both His Hands are widely outstretched..."}^{144}
\]

Allah has mentioned this *tabrif* and censured it when He did.

The issue of *tabrif* is taken originally from the Jews, as they are well-grounded and most proficient in this. They are in fact the leaders and predecessors of those who commit *tabrif*. They changed and distorted many of the texts within the Tawrāh. As for those of the texts that proved too difficult to change, they changed their meanings. As such, Allah specifically associated them and no other nation with the issue of *tabrif*.\(^{146}\)

The *Rāfidah* have proceeded along their lines; indeed, they are deceptively alike.

Likewise the *Jahmiyyah*, for they adopted the same methods as their Jewish brothers concerning *tabrif* of the texts.

From a given perspective those who committed *tabrif* in the actual wordings are worse than those who committed *tabrif* in the meanings, and yet from another perspective, those who committed *tabrif* in the meanings are worse than those who committed *tabrif* in the wordings.

Those who committed *tabrif* of wording changed both the wording and meaning of a text from its original state, so they corrupted both the wording and meaning. Whereas those who committed *tabrif* in

\[^{141}\text{Surah al-Tāhā (20):5.}\]

\[^{142}\text{Al-Sawā'iq al-Munazzalah, 1/2}18.\]

\[^{143}\text{Sarah al-Ma'idah (5):64.}\]

\[^{144}\text{Surah al-Fajr (89):22.}\]

\[^{145}\text{Allah has mentioned this fact in many places, such as:}\]

"Do you covet that they will believe in your religion when a party of them (Jewish rabbis) used to hear the word of Allah (the Tawrāh), then they used to change it knowingly after they had understood it?" *Surah al-Baqarah (2):75*

"Amongst the Jews are some who displace words from their right places..." *Surah al-Nisa’ (4):46 [6]*
"The Most Beneficent ascended above the Throne"  

The intention behind this *tabrif* was to make the ascension an attribute of the creation (i.e. the Throne) rather than that of the Creator.  

The second type: *tabrif* of the meaning  
Its definition is to change the meaning of the wording from its correct one to another whilst keeping the appearance of the actual wording.  

The definition could also be: to turn away the meaning from its indication and reality and to give the wording a meaning of another word to a level they both share.  

This is the type of *tabrif* which the people of *Kalam* such as the *Mu'attilah* delved into, expanded upon and named *ta'wil* (interpretation). This is in fact a false and innovated use of terminology, which the Arabic language has no previous familiarity with.  

The following are examples of *tabrif* of meaning:  

The explanation of the *Mu'attilah* that |*استوى| ascension, means |*استوى| 'to seize/conquer' in His (ta'alā) saying:  

|*الرَّحْمَانُ عَلَى الْقُرْرِ أَسْتَوَى| "The Most Beneficent ascended above the Throne"  

The meaning of |*يد| hand, to mean *blessing and power* in His (ta'alā) saying:  

|*كَبْرِيَّةٌ مَّسَطَتْنِي| "...Nay, both His Hands are widely outstretched..."  

The interpretation of His (ta'alā) saying:  

|*وَجِبَةً رَيْكَ| "And your Lord will come..."  

to mean 'And the command of your Lord will come...'

Allah has mentioned this *tabrif* and censured it when He did.  

The issue of *tabrif* is taken originally from the Jews, as they are well grounded and most proficient in this. They are in fact the leaders and predecessors of those who commit *tabrif*. They changed and distorted many of the texts within the *Tawrāt*. As for those of the texts that proved too difficult to change, they changed their meanings. As such, Allah specifically associated them and no other nation with the issue of *tabrif*.  

The *Rafidah* have proceeded along their lines; indeed, they are deceptively alike.  

Likewise the *Jahmiyyah*, for they adopted the same methods as their Jewish brothers concerning *tabrif* of the texts.  

From a given perspective those who committed *tabrif* in the actual wordings are worse than those who committed *tabrif* in the meanings, and yet from another perspective, those who committed *tabrif* in the meanings are worse than those who committed *tabrif* in the wordings.  

Those who committed *tabrif* of wording changed both the wording and meaning of a text from its original state, so they corrupted both the wording and meaning. Whereas those who committed *tabrif* in
the meaning corrupted the meaning alone and left the wording in its original state; from this perspective the latter are better off.

Hence, when the former were seeking out a false meaning, they changed the actual wording into one that was suitable, so that the wording and meaning desired would not clash. Consequently, when this distorted wording was used, the distorted meaning would be understood. They felt that to change the meaning from its true indication and reality whilst keeping the same wording was not possible at all, so they took to changing the wording in order for their ruling on their desired meaning to stand correct.

As for the angle which shows how the perpetrators of tahrif in the meanings are worse than those who perpetrated tahrif in the wordings, it is the fact that this particular type is the most common one found and used, as it is easier to promote and propound amongst the ignorant and common folk. One who does not sufficiently possess the correct knowledge based on the Book, Sunnah and understanding of the Salaf of this ummah is therefore put to trial with such misrepresentations and falsifications.

**• The meaning of 'a'il**

The word 'a'il (الْمَعْطَدُ) is lexically derived from the word al- 'Uil (المَعْطَدُ) which means to be destitute, devoid and neglected. An example of the lexical use of this word is found in the ayah where Allah (ta'la) says:

> ...a (mu'attalah) desisted well... 147

i.e. the owners of this well neglected it and ceased to draw water from it.

Ta' il with regard to Allah is of three categories:

1. The pure philosophers
2. The heretical philosophers.

The second type has within it two groups: the Râfidah and the Shafiyyah.

The second main grouping are Ahl al-Kalâm (الْكَلَّامُ); they are made up of five groups:

1. The Jahmiyyah,
the meaning corrupted the meaning alone and left the wording in its original state; from this perspective the latter are better off.

Hence, when the former were seeking out a false meaning, they changed the actual wording into one that was suitable, so that the wording and meaning desired would not clash. Consequently, when this distorted wording was used, the distorted meaning would be understood. They felt that to change the meaning from its true indication and reality whilst keeping the same wording was not possible at all, so they took to changing the wording in order for their ruling on their desired meaning to stand correct.

As for the angle which shows how the perpetrators of tahrif in the meanings are worse than those who perpetrated tahrif in the wordings, it is the fact that this particular type is the most common one found and used, as it is easier to promote and propound amongst the ignorant and common folk. One who does not sufficiently possess the correct knowledge based on the Book, Sunnah and understanding of the Salaf of this ummah is therefore put to trial with such misrepresentations and falsifications.

* The meaning of taˈ ʔil

The word taˈ ʔil [تَأْثِرَ] is lexically derived from the word al- ʕil [عالم] which means to be destitute, devoid and neglected. An example of the lexical use of this word is found in the āyah where Allah (taˈalā) says:

\[...a (muˈ ḥa\textsuperscript{a}lal) deserted well...\] 147

i.e. the owners of this well neglected it and ceased to draw water from it.

Taˈ ʔil with regard to Allāh is of three categories 148:

147 Sūrah al-Hajj (22):45.
148 These categories directly oppose the three categories of tawḥīd. [1]

The first, taˈ ʔil of the creation from it's Fashioner and Creator. This type of taˈ ʔil is found amongst those who deny the existence of the Creator of this universe, it is the belief of the heretical atheists.

The second, taˈ ʔil of the worship of Allāh ('azza wa jalla), which means to render void the reality of tawḥīd and worship of Allāh alone, which His servants are obliged to assign to Him. This type is found amongst the people of shirk, who direct certain acts of worship to other than Allāh, the Mighty and Exalted.

The third is taˈ ʔil of Allāh (subhanahu) from His Exalted Perfection by declaring void His Names, Attributes and Actions. 149 This third type is the one which we intend here (in our discussion).

The meaning therefore of taˈ ʔil in the area of the Names and Attributes is to negate some or all of the Names and Attributes and to strip Allāh of them. Or one could say it means to negate the divine Attributes and to deny their existence as qualities of the essence of Allāh (taˈ ḍalā). 150

A number of groups have committed tahrif and taˈ ʔil, the scholars have classified them under the single label al-Muˈ ḥa\textsuperscript{a}lal ah. 151

The Muˈ ḥa\textsuperscript{a}lal ah comprise of two main groupings:

The first are the Philosophers [فلاسفة]; they are of two types:

1. The pure philosophers
2. The heretical philosophers.

This second type has within it two groups: the Rāfīḍah and the Ṣufīyyah.

The second main grouping are Ahl al-Kalām [كلام]; they are made up of five groups:

1. The Jāhmiyyah,
2. The Mu'tazilah,
3. The Kullabiyyah,
4. The Ash'irah,
5. The Maturdiyyah.

I will discuss these groups in detail in a separate study, by the will of Allah.

THE MEANING OF ‘...WITHOIT ANY TAKYIF NOR TANTHIL.’
This expression distinguishes the belief of Ahl al-Sunnah from the belief of the Mushabbihah (people of tashbih).

- The meaning of takyif

The definition of takyif is: to declare something to be upon a particular reality without having to specify the resemblance.

An example of this is the assertion of the Hishamiyyah regarding Allah: “His length is equal to His width” or their declaration: “His length is equivalent to seven times the span of Himself.”

- An important point to note here is that the use of the terms 'His length' and 'His width' is restricted here to manifest and make clear the issue of takyif on the basis that it a statement found within this sect. Mention of these two attributes 'length' and 'width' are not found within the belief of Ahl al-Sunnah with regards to affirmation or negation as it goes against the rules laid out and mentioned earlier concerning speaking about Allah only with textual proofs. As there is no mention of these two attributes within the Qur'an and Sunnah it is an enormous offence and innovation to affirm or negate them. The position of Ahl al-Sunnah on such matters is to keep quiet about that which Allah and His Messenger have kept quiet about.

- In light of this definition there exists a difference between takyif and tathil:

Takyif does not entail a restriction to a (known) resemblance, whereas tathil is the belief that a particular Attribute resembles attributes found within the creation.

It therefore seems correct to say that takyif is more general than tathil, so every statement of tathil is in fact a statement of takyif. This is borne by the fact that one who declares a resemblance between the Attributes of the Creator to that of creation has in fact assigned to a particular Attribute a specific and seen reality. However, not every statement of takyif is a statement of tathil because some types of takyif do not contain any resemblance to attributes of creation as in the statement 'His length is equal to His width'.

The meaning of the statement of Ahl al-Sunnah 'without any takyif' is without any takyif that man can grasp. The meaning is not that Ahl al-Sunnah negate any qualitative designation outright, as every thing in existence must be upon a certain reality. The meaning behind this statement is that they negate any knowledge of this true nature since none knows the reality of His Essence and Attributes except Himself (subhanahu).

It is very clear that we do not possess any knowledge with respect to the reality of His Attributes (azza wa jalla) because He (ta’ala) informed us of these Attributes but did not inform us of their reality. The delving into and attachment to the issue of their true nature on our part, will therefore be chasing after that which we have no knowledge of and an assertion on a matter which is impossible for us to comprehend.

The scholars have traversed upon a set principle in this domain which they took from the statement of Imam Malik: “Al-Istiwa (ascension) is
2. The Mu'tazilah,
3. The Kullabiyyah,
4. The Asha'irah,
5. The Maturidiyyah.

I will discuss these groups in detail in a separate study, by the will of Allah.

THE MEANING OF '...WITHOUT ANY TAKYIF NOR TAMTHIL'

This expression distinguishes the belief of Ahl al-Sunnah from the belief of the Mushabbihah (people of tashbith).

- The meaning of takyif

The definition of takyif is: to declare something to be upon a particular reality without having to specify the resemblance.

An example of this is the assertion of the Hishamiyyah regarding Allah: “His length is equal to His width” or their declaration: “His length is equivalent to seven times the span of Himself.”

In light of this definition there exists a difference between takyif and tamthil:

Takyif does not entail a restriction to a (known) resemblance, whereas tamthil is the belief that a particular Attribute resembles attributes found within the creation.

It therefore seems correct to say that takyif is more general than tamthil, so every statement of tamthil is in fact a statement of takyif. This is borne by the fact that one who declares a resemblance between the Attributes of the Creator to that of creation has in fact assigned to a particular Attribute a specific and seen reality. However, not every statement of takyif is a statement of tamthil because some types of takyif do not contain any resemblance to attributes of creation as in the statement 'His length is equal to His width'.

The meaning of the statement of Ahl al-Sunnah 'without any takyif' is without any takyif that man can grasp. The meaning is not that Ahl al-Sunnah negate any qualitative designation outright, as every thing in existence must be upon a certain reality. The meaning behind this statement is that they negate any knowledge of this true nature since none knows the reality of His Essence and Attributes except Himself (subhanahu).

It is very clear that we do not possess any knowledge with respect to the reality of His Attributes (azza wa jalla) because He (ta'ala) informed us of these Attributes but did not inform us of their reality. The delving into and attachment to the issue of their true nature on our part, will therefore be chasing after that which we have no knowledge of and an assertion on a matter which is impossible for us to comprehend.

The scholars have traversed upon a set principle in this domain which they took from the statement of Imam Malik: “Al-Istiwa (ascension) is...”
well known, the reality/qualitative designation is not known, possessing \textit{imān} in it is compulsory and to ask about it is an innovation\cite{157}.

- The meaning of \textit{tamthīl}\cite{158}

\textit{...nor tamthīl".}

\textit{Al-Mathīl} [تامثيل] lexically means an equal and rival, and the definition of \textit{al-Tamthīl} [تامثيل] is: the belief that the Attributes of the Creator are like the attributes of creation.

This is manifested in the statement of the \textit{mu'aththil}\cite{159} when he says for example: “He has a Hand like my hand and Hearing like my hearing”. Most Exalted and Elevated is Allah above their statement!

\textit{Tamthīl} and \textit{tashbīh} connote the same meaning in this context, even though there is a difference between them lexically\cite{160}.\cite{161}

\textit{Al-Mumathalah} [ماثلة] is the equalisation of something to another from every single aspect.

\textit{Al-Mushabahah} [مشاهدة] is the equalisation of something to another from most aspects.

To use the expression of negating \textit{tamthīl} is more appropriate as it agrees with the text of the Qur’an where Allah says:

\begin{quote}
There is nothing (mithlih) like Him...\cite{162}
\end{quote}

Those who have committed \textit{tamthīl} and \textit{takvīf} are the \textit{Mushabbīhah}\cite{164} who exceeded the limits with regard to the affirmation of the Attributes to the level of comparing the Creator to creation.

The following groups committed \textit{tamthīl}:

1. \textit{Al-Kurramiyyah}

They are the followers of Muhammad Ibn Kurrām al-Sijistānī. They are many groups totalling in all twelve, the main groups are six:

1. \textit{Al-Abidiyyah},
2. \textit{Al-Nāniyyah},
3. \textit{Al-Zariniyyah},
4. \textit{Al-Ishaqīyyah},
5. \textit{Al-Wahidīyyah},
6. \textit{Al-Haytamiyyah}.

2. \textit{Al-Hishamiyyah al-Rafīḍah al-Imāmiyyah}

They are the followers of Hishām Ibn al-Hakam al-Rañīḍ, and at times they are attributed to Hishām Ibn Salīm al-Jawālīqi. Both of these two individuals are from the \textit{Imāmiyyah Al-Mushabbīhah}.

Worthy of mention here is that \textit{tamthīl} was rampant within the \textit{Rafīḍah al-Imāmiyyah} of old whereas nowadays they are upon the belief of the \textit{Mu'tazilah} with regard to the issues connected to the Attributes. This is also the case of the \textit{Zaydiyyah} in Yemen.

\footnotesize

\textsuperscript{157} A complete discussion on this statement will feature further on in this book. [t]

\textsuperscript{158} Sub-heading added by the translator. [t]

\textsuperscript{159} (تامثيل): doer of \textit{tamthīl}. [t]

\textsuperscript{160} Al-Qausa' id al-Muthūl, page 27.

\textsuperscript{161} Also note that these two words and their derivatives are being used interchangeably throughout this discussion. [t]

\textsuperscript{162} Sūrah al-Shura (42):11

\textsuperscript{163} Sūrah al-Nahl (16):74.

\textsuperscript{164} A collective term representing the groups about to be mentioned. It is the plural of \textit{mushabbih}, which is the noun representing the doer of \textit{tashbīh}. [t]
well known, the reality/qualitative designation is not known, possessing imān in it is compulsory and to ask about it is an innovation.  

- The meaning of tamthil

"...nor tamthil".

Al-Mathil [تَمْثِيل] lexically means an equal and rival, and the definition of ai-Tamthil [تَمْثِيل] is: the belief that the Attributes of the Creator are like the attributes of creation.

This is manifested in the statement of the mumaththil when he says for example: "He has a Hand like my hand and Hearing like my hearing". Most Exalted and Elevated is Allah above their statement!

Tamthil and taqbih connote the same meaning in this context, even though there is a difference between them lexically.

Al-Mumathalah [تَمْثِال] is the equalisation of something to another from every single aspect.

Al-Mushahbahah [تَشْبِه] is the equalisation of something to another from most aspects.

To use the expression of negating tamthil is more appropriate as it agrees with the text of the Qur'an where Allah says:

"There is nothing (mithlih) like Him..."  

Those who have committed tamthil and taqbih are the Mushabbihah who exceeded the limits with regard to the affirmation of the Attributes to the level of comparing the Creator to creation.

The following groups committed tamthil:

1. Al-Kurrāmiyyah

They are the followers of Muhammad Ibn Kurrām al-Sijistānī. They are many groups totalling in all twelve, the main groups are six:

   1. Al-‘Ābiyyūh,
   2. Al-Nāniyyūh,
   3. Al-Zarimiyyūh,
   4. Al-Ishaqiyyūh,
   5. Al-Wāhidīyyūh,
   6. Al-Haytāmiyyūh.

2. Al-Hishāmiyyūh al-Rāfīdah al-Imāmiyyūh

They are the followers of Hishām Ibn al-Hakam al-Rāfīdī, and at times they are attributed to Hishām Ibn Salim al-Jawālīqī. Both of these two individuals are from the Imāmiyyah Al-Mushabbihah.

Worthy of mention here is that tamthil was rampant within the Rafidah al-Imāmiyyah of old whereas nowadays they are upon the belief of the Mu’tazilah with regard to the issues connected to the Attributes. This is also the case of the Zaydiyyah in Yemen.

EVERY MU’ATTIL IS A MUMATHTHIL AND EVERY MUMATHTHIL IS A MU’ATTIL

These two groups of ta’ill and tamthil individually commit both ta’ill and tamthil.

• Explanation of how the Mu’attilah commit both ta’ill and tamthil

As for their action of tamthil, it is because of the fact that what they understood of the Names and Attributes of Allah was that which was befitting for His creation. Thereafter, they proceeded to negate those concepts.

This is an action of tashbih and tamthil on their part, reflecting the understanding they held of His Names and Attributes, which they likened to the understanding of the Names and Attributes of His creation.

As for their action of ta’ill, it is because of the negation on their part of the Names and Attributes which Allah deserves and are befitting to Him.

Thus, they carried out both ta’ill and tamthil; they started off by declaring a resemblance and concluded by negating and rendering them void.

The people of ta’ill distinguish themselves from the people of tamthil by virtue of their negation of the correct meanings of the Attributes.

An example of this combination of ta’ill and tamthil by the Mu’attilah is with regard to the texts on ascension (al-Istiwa) like:

“The Most Beneficent ascended above the Throne”

The mu’attil says: ‘If Allah were above the Throne, this would necessitate that He is either bigger than the Throne, smaller than it, or of similar size, and all of this is impossible,’ and other similar assertions.

This mu’attil therefore did not conceive of Allah being above the Throne except that which he affirms for any body over another body (from creation). This necessity (which he has asserted) arose as a result of this concept.

It was instead imperative of him to affirm for Allah an ascension that is becoming of His Majesty and specific for Him, whereby none of the inseparable requisites of the attributes of creation are falsely made binding upon Him; the negation of such with respect to Allah is mandatory.

The people of ta’ill have committed four transgressions:

1. The fact that they likened that which they understood from the texts to the attributes of creation, and believed that the texts signify tamthil.

2. They rendered void the indications of the texts, such indications that contain the affirmation of Attributes befitting to Allah.

3. By virtue of their negation of the Attributes they became negators of the Attributes of perfection that Allah truly deserves.

4. They depicted the Lord with the opposite of those Attributes; attributes of the non-living, inanimate and non-existent.

• Explanation of how the Mushabbihah commit both ta’ill and tamthil

As for the ta’ill of the mumathhil, this occurs from three different angles:

106 In the sense that the people of tamthil understood that these Attributes are real Attributes of Allah - even though they went to the extreme of declaring them to be like the attributes of creation - whereas the people of ta’ill rejected that the meanings found in these texts signify real Attributes for Allah. [t]

107 Sarah Taha (20):5

108 In the sense that the ascension of Allah is the same as the ascension of His creation, this is his act of tamthil and the first step before he then continues his thought process, which ends in negating the ascension. [t]

109 Al-Risalah al-Tadmiyyah, pp. 79-80.

Every mu'attil is a mumaththil and every mumaththil is a mu'attil.

These two groups of ta'til and tamthil individually commit both ta'til and tamthil.

- **Explanation of how the Mu'attilah commit both ta'til and tamthil**

As for their action of tamthil, it is because of the fact that what they understood of the Names and Attributes of Allah was that which was befitting for His creation. Thereafter, they proceeded to negate those concepts.

This is an action of tashbih and tamthil on their part, reflecting the understanding they held of His Names and Attributes, which they likened to the understanding of the Names and Attributes of His creation.

As for their action of ta'til, it is because of the negation on their part of the Names and Attributes which Allah deserves and are befitting to Him.

Thus, they carried out both ta'til and tamthil; they started off by declaring a resemblance and concluded by negating and rendering them void.

The people of ta'til distinguish themselves from the people of tamthil by virtue of their negation of the correct meanings of the Attributes.

An example of this combination of ta'til and tamthil by the Mu'attilah is with regard to the texts on ascension (al-Istiwa) like:

"The Most Beneficent ascended above the Throne"\(^{66}\)

The mu'attil says: 'If Allah were above the Throne, this would necessitate that He is either bigger than the Throne, smaller than it, or of similar size, and all of this is impossible.' and other similar assertions.

This mu'attil therefore did not conceive of Allah being above the Throne except that which he affirms for any body over another body (from creation). This necessity (which he has asserted) arose as a result of this concept. \(^{167}\)

It was instead imperative of him to affirm for Allah an ascension that is becoming of His Majesty and specific for Him, whereby none of the inseparable requisites of the attributes of creation are falsely made binding upon Him; the negation of such with respect to Allah is mandatory.

The people of ta'til have committed four transgressions:

1. The fact that they likened that which they understood from the texts to the attributes of creation, and believed that the texts signify tamthil.
2. They rendered void the indications of the texts, such indications that contain the affirmation of Attributes befitting to Allah.
3. By virtue of their negation of the Attributes they became negators of the Attributes of perfection that Allah truly deserves.
4. They depicted the Lord with the opposite of those Attributes; attributes of the non-living, inanimate and non-existent. \(^{168}\)

- **Explanation of how the Mushabbihah commit both ta'til and tamthil**

As for the ta'til of the mumaththil, this occurs from three different angles:

\(^{165}\) In the sense that the people of tamthil understood that these Attributes are real Attributes of Allah - even though they went to the extreme of declaring them to be like the attributes of creation - whereas the people of ta'til rejected that the meanings found in these texts signify real Attributes for Allah. [6]

\(^{166}\) Sarah Taha (20):5

\(^{167}\) I.e. that the ascension of Allah is the same as the ascension of His creation, this is his act of tamthil and the first step before he then continues his thought process, which ends in negating the ascension. [1]

\(^{168}\) Al-Risalah al-Tadmiiyyah, p. 79-80.

\(^{169}\) Refer to al-Fatwa al-Hamaaniyyah, pp. 62-63. Dar Fajr li al-Turath publication.
1. He invalidated the very text that affirms the Attribute when he changed it from that which it really points to; i.e. the affirmation of an Attribute befitting Allah, to misinterpreting as Allah's resemblance to His creation.

2. When he likens Allah to His creation, he negates from Allah His fitting perfection by virtue of comparing the perfect Lord with the imperfect creation.

3. When he likens Allah to His creation, he in fact renders void every text that expresses that nothing of His creation is like Him, such as the ayat:

\[
\text{"...There is nothing like Him and He is the All-Hearer, the All-Seer."}^{179}
\]

"And there is no co-equal or comparable unto Him." \[171\]

As for their act of tamthil, they allege that Allah (azza wa jalla) only addresses us with that which we are able to comprehend. Therefore, if He has ascended above the Throne, this is the same as a person ascended above an elevated seat, as no other type of ascension is otherwise known of.

These Mumaththilah distinguished themselves by affirming a type of ascension that is from the characteristics of the creation just as the Mu' allilah distinguished themselves by negating every name for the true ascension.

The decisive position is that which the middle and balanced of this ummah is upon: Allah ascended above His Throne in a manner fitting to His majesty and specific to Himself.

So, just as He is described as being fully aware of everything, being Omnipotent and that He is the Hearer and Seer of all things etc. and it is impermissible to affirm for this Knowledge and Omnipotence, characteristics particular to the knowledge and capability of creation, then likewise, He (subhanahu) is above the Throne and the specific characteristics and requisites that are connected to any of His creation being above something, is not affirmed for Allah.

Allah indeed guided those upon the straight path towards the exemplary way. They affirmed for Allah the reality of the Names and Attributes and negated from Him any resemblance to His creation. Their position was therefore a middle one and one of guidance between two deviations.

They asserted, 'We describe Allah with that which He Himself and His Messenger (S) have described Him, without any tabrif or ta' til and any tamthil or takyif.'

Rather, our way is to affirm the reality of the Names and Attributes, and to negate any resemblance to creation; we do not commit ta' til, ta' wil, tamthil or plead ignorant.

We do not say, 'He does not have two Hands, a Face, Hearing, Sight, Life, Capability, and nor did He ascend above His Throne'.

Nor do we say, 'He has two Hands like that of His creation, a Face like theirs and He has Hearing, Sight, Life, Capability and Ascension like their hearing, sight, life, capability and ascension.'

Rather, we say, 'He has a real Essence that is not like the essences of His creation, and He has real Attributes that are not like the attributes of His creation.'

In like manner, is our belief regarding His Face (tabaraka wa ta' ala), two Hands, Hearing, Sight, Speech and Ascension.

This belief does not prevent us from understanding the meaning of those Attributes and the reality (of their existence). It also does not prevent the one who affirms for Allah an Attribute of perfection to

\[177\] Surah al-Shura (42):11.

1. He invalidated the very text that affirms the Attribute when he changed it from that which it really points to; i.e. the affirmation of an Attribute befitting Allah, to misinterpreting as Allah's resemblance to His creation.

2. When he likens Allah to His creation, he negates from Allah His fitting perfection by virtue of comparing the perfect Lord with the imperfect creation.

3. When he likens Allah to His creation, he in fact renders void every text that expresses that nothing of His creation is like Him, such as the *āyāt:

   «...There is nothing like Him and He is the All-Hearer, the All-See.»[171]

   «And there is no co-equal or comparable unto Him.»[171]

As for their act of *taslīl*, they allege that Allah (azza wa jalla) only addresses us with that which we are able to comprehend. Therefore, if He has ascended above the Throne, this is the same as a person ascended above an elevated seat, as no other type of ascension is otherwise known of.

These *Munaththilah* distinguished themselves by affirming a type of ascension that is from the characteristics of the creation just as the *Mu' allilah* distinguished themselves by negating every name for the true ascension.

The decisive position is that which the middle and balanced of this *ummah* is upon: Allah ascended above His Throne in a manner fitting to His majesty and specific to Himself.

So, just as He is described as being fully aware of everything, being Omnipotent and that He is the Hearer and Seer of all things etc. and it is impermissible to affirm for this Knowledge and Omnipotence, characteristics particular to the knowledge and capability of creation, then likewise, He (subḥāna hu) is above the Throne and the specific characteristics and requisites that are connected to any of His creation being above something, is not affirmed for Allah.

Allah indeed guided those upon the straight path towards the exemplary way. They affirmed for Allah the reality of the Names and Attributes and negated from Him any resemblance to His creation. Their position was therefore a middle one and one of guidance between two deviations.

They asserted, 'We describe Allah with that which He Himself and His Messenger (ṣallallāhu `alayhi wassallam) have described Him, without any *tahrīf* or *tā’īl* and any *taslīl* or *takfīf*.

Rather, our way is to affirm the reality of the Names and Attributes, and to negate any resemblance to creation; we do not commit *tā’īl, tawil, taslīl* or plead ignorant.

We do not say, 'He does not have two Hands, a Face, Hearing, Sight, Life, Capability, and nor did He ascend above His Throne'.

Nor do we say, 'He has two Hands like that of His creation, a Face like theirs and He has Hearing, Sight, Life, Capability and Ascension like their hearing, sight, life, capability and ascension.'

Rather, we say, 'He has a real Essence that is not like the essences of His creation, and He has real Attributes that are not like the attributes of His creation.'

In like manner, is our belief regarding His Face (tabaraka wa tabā'ī), two Hands, Hearing, Sight, Speech and Ascension.

This belief does not prevent us from understanding the meaning of those Attributes and the reality (of their existence). It also does not prevent the one who affirms for Allah an Attribute of perfection to
understand the meaning of the attribute and to actualise it. As the one who affirms for Allah (subhanahu) Hearing and Sight, affirms their reality and existence and understands their meaning, likewise, is the case for the rest of the sacred Attributes; they must be held in this same manner. Even though, there is no way for us to know their true reality and nature, since Allah (subhanahu) did not entrust the servants with that, He did not desire that from them nor did He grant them a route towards that.

The Foundations on which the Belief of Ahl al-Sunnah in the Names and Attributes of Allah is Based

The belief of Ahl al-Sunnah in the domain of Allah's Names and Attributes centres on three main foundations:

The first foundation: to possess iman in all the Names and Attributes that have been mentioned in the Qur'an and the authentic Sunnah by way of affirming and negating where appropriate.

The second foundation: to exalt and elevate Allah (jalla wa 'ala) over and above the matter of any of His Attributes ever resembling attributes of His creation.

The third foundation: to relinquish all hope of comprehending how Allah is actually characterised with those Attributes.

These three foundations distinguish and separate the belief of Ahl al-Sunnah in this domain from the people of ta'til - such as the philosophers and Ahl al-Kalam - at one end and from the belief of the people of tanthil - such as the Kurraniyyah and Hishamiyyah - at the other.

The first foundation has within it a distinguishing factor that sets apart the belief of Ahl al-Sunnah from the belief of the Mu' attilah. Ahl al-

Sunnah designate the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Messenger (saw) as the basis for affirming or negating Names and Attributes for Allah (ta' ala). They do not exceed these two confines. So, with regard to the Names and Attributes which have been mentioned by way of affirmation, it is mandatory to affirm them, and whatever has been mentioned by way of negation, it is mandatory to negate them.

"As for a matter that has not been affirmed or negated, it is explicitly impermissible to use it in the realm of the Names and Attributes. As for the realm of Information (al-Akhbar), some of the Salaf prohibited it and amongst them are those who allowed it on the condition that the speaker is to be questioned on his intention. If the speaker intends something true, which is fitting for Allah (ta' ala), it is acceptable, and if he intended a meaning not fitting for Allah ('azza wa jalla), it has to be rejected and refuted".

The comprehensive statement is that there exist three domains in this issue:

1. The domain of the Names, of which, one can only depend on the Book and Sunnah.
2. The domain of the Attributes, of which again, one can only depend on the Book and Sunnah.
3. The domain of information. Concerning this area, it is not a con-

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172 Talking about Allah (ta' ala) and describing Him falls under three categories: (1) Describing Him with His Names, (2) Describing Him with His Attributes. Both these two categories are dependent solely on the Book and authentic Sunnah. 3. The third category is when one talks about Allah in a way that is permissible and employs a meaning which is not found in the Book and Sunnah but its meaning is required and its affirmation is legal because of its indication of a good meaning or a meaning that does not contain anything ill. However, such a meaning does not belong to Allah's Names and Attributes. Examples of this are when one says for example, 'Allah is present and in existence' or when one says 'Allah is the greatest thing in existence'. For a detailed discussion on this one can refer to, for example, al-Qawa'id al-Kulliyyah li al-Ama' wa al-Sifat by Shaykh al-Buraykan, published by Dar al-Hijrah, K.S.A.

understand the meaning of the attribute and to actualise it.\textsuperscript{172} As the one who affirms for Allah (subhānahu) Hearing and Sight, affirms their reality and existence and understands their meaning, likewise, is the case for the rest of the sacred Attributes; they must be held in this same manner. Even though, there is no way for us to know their true reality and nature, since Allah (subhānahu) did not entrust the servants with that, He did not desire that from them nor did he grant them a route towards that.\textsuperscript{173}

The Foundations on which the Belief of Ahl al-Sunnah in the Names and Attributes of Allah is Based

The belief of Ahl al-Sunnah in the domain of Allah's Names and Attributes centres on three main foundations:\textsuperscript{174}

The first foundation: to possess \textit{imān} in all the Names and Attributes that have been mentioned in the Qur'ān and the authentic Sunnah by way of affirming and negating where appropriate.

The second foundation: to exalt and elevate Allah (jalla wa 'ala) over and above the matter of any of His Attributes ever resembling attributes of His creation.

The third foundation: to relinquish all hope of comprehending how Allah is actually characterised with those Attributes.

These three foundations distinguish and separate the belief of Ahl al-Sunnah in this domain from the people of \textit{ta'ātil} - such as the philosophers and Ahl al-Kalam - at one end and from the people of \textit{tanzih} - such as the Kurraniyyah and Hishamiyyah - at the other.

The first foundation has within it a distinguishing factor that sets apart the belief of Ahl al-Sunnah from the belief of the \textit{Mu' attilah}. Ahl al-

\textsuperscript{172} i.e. for one's heart and limbs to become affected by the Attribute through love, fear, hope, etc. \[t\]

\textsuperscript{173} Al-Sawā'iq al-Mursalah, 2/25-126.

\textsuperscript{174} Manhaj wa Dinat Li 'ayn al-Asma wa al-Sifāt, p. 25.

\textsuperscript{175} Talking about Allah (ta'āla) and describing Him falls under three categories: (1) Describing Him with His Names, (2) Describing Him with His Attributes. Both these two categories are dependent solely on the Book and authentic Sunnah. 3. The third category is when one talks about Allah in a way that is permissible and employs a meaning which is not found in the Book and Sunnah but its meaning is required and its affirmation is legal because of its indication of a good meaning or a meaning that does not contain anything ill. However, such a meaning does not belong to Allah's Names and Attributes. Examples of this are when one says for example, 'Allah is present and in existence' or when one says 'Allah is the greatest thing in existence'. For a detailed discussion on this one can refer to, for example, al-Qawā'id al-Kulliyyah fi al-Asma' wa al-Sifāt by Shaykh al-Burayk, published by Dar al-Hijrah, K.S.A. \[t\]

\textsuperscript{176} Riālah fi 'Aql wa al-Rah of Ibn Taymiyyah, Vol. 2, pp. 46-47.
dition that textual evidence establishes it, but the stipulation is that the meaning of the term used is not an ill one.

The people of ta' il on the other hand, made the [السمع] intellect alone, the basis of their knowledge. The Shubah al-‘Agliyyah177 to them represent the primary absolute fundamentals. These fundamentals are what affirm and negate, thereafter the Book and Sunnah are viewed and judged by these Shubah al-‘Agliyyah. If the texts of the Book and Sunnah agree with these fundamentals, they are accepted as a secondary support not primary. If they clash however, these Shari’ ah texts are rejected and discarded.

One of them declares in connection to this: “Everything related by the Sam178 is looked into; if the intellect allows it, one must believe in it, and as for that which the intellect judges to be impossible, one must perform ta’wil of that which the Sam’ relates. It is inconceivable for the Sam’ to contain something conclusive and definite that opposes the intellect. The apparent abdith of ta’ikh, most of them are inauthentic and the authentic of them are not conclusive, rather they are open to ta’wil…”180

This excerpt shows you the extent to which these people give precedence to their Shubah al-‘Agliyyah as well as the fanatical inclination they have towards it. It also makes evident as to how it is that they declared them as the fundamentals and that the Sam’ (revelation) is viewed and judged in light of these fundamentals. That which their minds deem permissible is accepted, and that which their minds do not allow, they raise doubts in and debase.

Thereafter, they proceed to commit ta’wil and tahrif of the texts.

If one looks into the books of the Ash‘irah, for example, one finds that they classify belief into the sections al-‘Ihāyiyyat (Divine matters), al-Nubuwwat (matters pertaining to Prophethood) and al-Sam’iyat.

They do not accept the texts of the Book and Sunnah in the sections of al-‘Ihāyiyyat and al-Nubuwwat. Accordingly, you will only find in these two sections Shubah al-‘Agliyyah, which are contrived upon principles from logic.

How amazing! Are we to take our religion from the speech of Allah and His Messenger or from the heretics of Greece and their students?

As for the section of al-Sam’iyat, i.e. issues related to the Day of Resurrection and Congregation, Paradise, Hell, promises and threats, they accept Shari’ ah texts. This is why they named this section al-Sam’iyat (matters which are connected or emanate from the Sam’ ) in stark contrast to the sections of al-‘Ihāyiyyat and al-Nubuwwat in which they rely upon the intellect.

These people are similar in condition to those whom Allah (ta’ ala) spoke about when He said:

177 i.e. specious and false arguments that rely solely on their stray intellect, which does not seek enlightenment from the light of revelation. One such false argument, which pertains to our discussion, is that the Attributes are to be negated from Allah because the human intellect - which is really a reference to their darkened and stray intellect and not the sound and pure intellect - deems them impermissible for Allah! [t]

178 Al-Sam’, lexically means hearing. This term is used to connote revelation, i.e. the Book and Sunnah. The appropriateness of the word is because of the fact that revelation is transmitted by speech, which in turn is picked up through hearing. [t]

179 He means by this, the abdith pertaining to the Attributes of Allah!

180 Al-lqtiqat fi al-Istiqd of Abū Hamid al-Ghazālī, pp. 132-133. He also said in his book al-Mustafa, 2/137-138: “Everything which the ‘agl indicates concerning it towards one of the two sides, then there is no room for contradiction. Since, it is impossible to abrogate or falsify the evidences and fundamentals pertaining to the ‘agl. If an evidence pertaining to the Sam’ is related that is in opposition to the ‘agl, then either it is not mutawatir and hence it will be known that it is not authentic or it is mutawatir and hence ta’wil is to be made of it and it will no longer be contradictory…”
dition that textual evidence establishes it, but the stipulation is that the meaning of the term used is not an ill one.

The people of taʿlīl on the other hand, made the [تلاع] intellect alone, the basis of their knowledge. The Shubah al-ʿAqliyyah to them represent the primary absolute fundamentals. These fundamentals are what affirm and negate, thereafter the Book and Sunnah are viewed and judged by these Shubah al-ʿAqliyyah. If the texts of the Book and Sunnah agree with these fundamentals, they are accepted as a secondary support not primary. If they clash however, these Shariʿah texts are rejected and discarded.

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These people are similar in condition to those whom Allah (taʿāla) spoke about when He said:
"Do you then believe in a part of the Book and disbelieve in another part. So what is the recompense of those who do that amongst you except humiliation in the life of this world, and on the Day of Standing they will be returned to the most severest punishment, and Allah is not unaware of what you do."

As for the second foundation, this is to exalt and elevate Allah over and above resembling His creation, within it is a distinguishing factor that sets apart the belief of Ahl al-Sunnah from the belief of the Mu`attilah from one viewpoint, and from the belief of the Mushabbi`ah from another.

Ahl al-Sunnah believe that nothing of Allah's creation resembles Him in the Attributes He is characterised with. Allah (azza wa jalla) has indeed informed us about this by the very text of His mighty Book, when He said:

"...There is nothing like Him and He is the All-Hearer, the All-Seer."

Consequently, if a particular text of the Book or Sunnah mentions an attribute of Allah (ta`âla), it is obligatory to believe in it. One must also possess unequivocal conviction that the attribute is at such a level of perfection, nobility and loftiness that it cuts away at all that gives rise to erroneous impressions of similitude between Allah and the Attributes of His creation.

Indeed, it is truly evil to not glorify Allah and for the notion that the Attribute of Allah resembles the attribute of creation to precede to the person's mind. It is a duty upon the believing heart, which believes in the Attributes of Allah that His Prophet praised and glorified Him with, to be one that glorifies Allah (jalla wa `âla) and not to be polluted with the filth of tashbih, so that the bedrock of his heart is good and pure, and open to possessing iman in the Attributes upon the basis of exaltation and elevation, in accordance with His (ta`âla) saying:

"...There is nothing like Him and He is the All-Hearer, the All-Seer."

The people of ta'îl however, understood of Allah's Names and Attributes only that which is fitting for creation, after which, they proceeded to negate those conceptions, which in reality only existed in their corrupt minds. The belief of these Mu`attilah combines both tamthil and tashbih. This evil emanated from the corruption and pollution of their hearts with the filth of tashbih. When they heard of an attribute of perfection, which Allah praised Himself with, like His ascension above His Throne, His Approach on the Day of Standing and other such Attributes of Majesty and Perfection etc., the first notion that came to their mind was that this particular Attribute resembles the attribute of creation. So the heart becomes stained with the filth of tashbih. Allah was not regarded in a worthy manner as He rightfully deserves and nor was He glorified in the true praiseworthy manner, due to the notion that the Attribute of the Creator is like the attribute of creation being the first thought to come to his mind.

Hence, the heart is firstly polluted with the filth of tashbih and this then prompts him to negate Allah's Attribute (jalla wa `âla) on the claim that it resembles the attributes of creation. Thus, he is initially a mushabbi`ah and then ends up a mu`attil and is misguided from the beginning to the end, assaulting the Lord of the worlds by negating His Attributes upon the claim that these Attributes are not fitting.

185 Surah al-Shura (42):11.
186 Surah al-Shura (42):11.
187 Refer to Manhaj wa Dirasat li ayat al-Asma wa al-`Ilm, pp. 21-22.
188 Allah says in Surah al-Fajr (89), ayat 21-22: "Nay! When the earth is ground to powder, and your Lord comes with the Angels in rows." [6]
189 Refer to Manhaj wa Dirasat li ayat al-Asma wa al-`Ilm, pp. 19-20.
"Do you then believe in a part of the Book and disbelieve in another part. So what is the recompense of those who do that amongst you except humiliation in the life of this world, and on the Day of Standing they will be returned to the most severe punishment, and Allah is not unaware of what you do."

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١٨١Sarah al-Banarah (2):85.

١٨١Sarah al-Shura (42):11.

١٨٦Surah al-Shura (42):11.

١٨٦Refer to Manhaj wa Dirasat li ayat al-Anna wa al-Sifat, pp. 19-20.

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١٨٥The people of ta'il however, understood of Allah's Names and Attributes only that which is fitting for creation, after which, they proceeded to negate those conceptions, which in reality only existed in their corrupt minds. The belief of these Mu`attalah combines both tamthil and tashbih. This evil emanated from the corruption and pollution of their hearts with the filth of tashbih. When they heard of an attribute of perfection, which Allah praised Himself with, like His ascension above His Throne, His Approach on the Day of Standing and other such Attributes of Majesty and Perfection etc., the first notion that came to their mind was that this particular Attribute resembles the attribute of creation. So the heart becomes stained with the filth of tashbih. Allah was not regarded in a worthy manner as He rightfully deserves and nor was He glorified in the true praiseworthy manner, due to the notion that the Attribute of the Creator is like the attribute of creation being the first thought to come to his mind.

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١٨٦Refer to Manhaj wa Dirasat li ayat al-Anna wa al-Sifat, pp. 19-20.
Whereas with regard to the belief of the people of *tawhid* (ta'ala), this stands upon their claim that Allah ('azza wa jalla) only addresses us with that which we can comprehend. Accordingly, if He informs us of a Hand, the only hand we know of is this limb (of ours). They therefore, likened the Attributes of the Creator to the attributes of creation saying, 'He has a Hand like my hand.' Highly Exalted and Elevated is Allah above that.

As for those who truly know Allah, who truly believe in His Messengers and truly attest and acknowledge His Perfection, they affirm for Allah all of His Attributes and negate any resemblance to creation. Thus, they combine affirmation with negation of any resemblance (tashbih) and they combine exaltation and elevation without negation (ta' 01).

Their way is a good one between two bad ones and one of guidance between two deviations.

As for the third foundation, within it is a distinguishing factor that sets apart the belief of *Ahl al-Sunnah* from the belief of the *Mushabbihah*. *Ahl al-Sunnah* entrust to Allah ('azza wa jalla) the knowledge of how the Originator ('azza wa jalla) is actually characterised with those Attributes. Mankind has no knowledge of the nature of Allah's (tabaraka wa ta' ala) Essence “nor any explanation of the reality of any of the Attributes of our Lord (ta’ala) for one to be able to say, for example, 'He ascended in such a manner.' Anyone who dares to do such a thing, his statement is one of extremism in the religion and a lie upon Allah (azza wa jalla). It is also a belief on something that Allah did not permit. Moreover, it is not fitting to His Majesty and Greatness and neither the Book nor Sunnah have mentioned it.

If such a thing was demanded from the servants in the *Shari’ah*, Allah (ta’ala) and His Messenger (as) would have informed us of such. Allah informed and explained everything which the Muslims were in need of, and the servants do not know of anything about Allah except that which He Himself has made known to them, as He (ta’ala) says:

> "...and they will never encompass anything of His knowledge except which He wills..." [Surah al-Baqarah (2):255.]

Therefore, the servant should believe in that which Allah (ta’ala) has informed him of and abide by it, he should withhold with regard to that which he is ignorant about and entrust its meaning to the one who has knowledge of it. [188]

As for the *Mushabbihah*, they delved deeply into the issue of the nature of Allah’s Attributes and alleged about Allah without knowledge, so they said, 'He has Sight like my sight, a Hand like my hand and a Foot like my foot.' Highly Exalted and Elevated is Allah above what they say.

A Clarification of These Foundations

The first foundation: To possess iman in all the Names and Attributes that have been mentioned in the Qur’ān and the authentic Sunnah by way of affirming and negating where appropriate.

This foundation calls for the following points to be observed:

One: The seeking of knowledge in divine matters is only acquired by way of the Book, Sunnah and statements of the *Salaf* of this ummah.

One must therefore believe that knowledge of this category of *tawhid* is dependent upon studying the Book and Sunnah by virtue of the fact that this *tawhid* calls for Names and Attributes that are particular.

There is no route to knowing or acquiring these Names and Attributes other than the Book and Sunnah "so we believe in Allah (ta’ala) and in the most beautiful Names and Most Exalted Attributes that pertain..."

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upon their claim that Allah (azza wa jalla) only addresses us with that
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the only hand we know of is this limb (of ours). They therefore, lik-
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One must therefore believe that knowledge of this category of tawhid
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There is no route to knowing or acquiring these Names and Attributes
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in the most beautiful Names and Most Exalted Attributes that pertain


to Him (subhānahu), which He has informed us of upon the tongues of His Messengers, without any takyīr and tamthīl.

We negate from Him everything that does not befit His Majesty and Glory, which He Himself has negated, as there is none more knowledgeable than He of Himself and all others. He is also the Most Truthful in Speech and the clearest in establishing proofs”.

On account of this, the belief of Ahl al-Sunnah was one of belief in all that Allah named and described Himself with by way of affirmation or negation. This because there can be none who Names Allah who is more knowledgeable of Allah after Allah Himself; than the Messenger of Allah (*). Allah has said concerning him:

Nor does he speak of his own desire, it is but an inspiration that is inspired.”

The message of the Prophet (ﷺ) came containing a detailed affirmation of His Attributes, in a manner that gladdened the chests, brought tranquillity to the hearts and caused iman to settle in its proper place. This matter was even elaborated to a deeper level than the explanation of commands and prohibitions. It was also defined and established completely in a very eloquent articulation.

In light of this, it is deemed obligatory upon every Muslim to believe in the Names of Allah and in His Attributes mentioned in the Book and the Sunnah without adding or omitting from them.

Two: Revelation is placed before the intellect, the basic principle in the religion therefore is one of compliance and the intellect follows.

The belief of Ahl al-Sunnah in this domain as well as the rest of the areas of belief and that of the laws is that the intellect alone does not have the authority to affirm anything in connection to beliefs or laws. The source for this affirmation is none other than the Qur’an and Sunnah.

The intellect cannot comprehend the Names and Attributes that Allah (ta’āla) deserves, so it is imperative to stay and remain with the text. This is because the intellect is incapable of grasping the reality of the ghayb (i.e. that which is beyond the senses) even if such hidden matters were the closest things to it. The intellect is unable to attain any

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189 Ma‘ al-Qabul, 1/330-331.
190 Surah al-Baqarah (2):140.
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"...are you more knowledgeable or is Allah?..."

Allah (ta' ala) says:

"...and who is more truthful in speech than Allah?..."

Allah (ta' ala) also says:

"...and none can inform you like an All-Knower (i.e. Allah)..."

Allah (ta' ala) says:

"...then ask of Him as He is an all-knower..."

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189 Ma'arij al-Qabul, 1/330-331.
189 Sarah al-Baqarah (2):140.
perception of the reality of its soul, which is contained within it, because Allah has made its affair hidden, as He (ta'ala) says:

"And they ask you concerning the Rub, Say, 'The Rub is from the affairs of my Lord, and you have not been given of knowledge except a little.'"

Thus, if the person is ignorant of the affair of his own soul, how is he able to encompass any knowledge of Allah's Essence and of the Names and Attributes that are deserving of His Essence, when Allah has hidden the reality of His Essence from His creation?

If we were to contemplate all that has come to us from the affairs of the religion such as the mention of Allah's Attributes and the belief with which mankind worships Allah, for instance, mention of the Punishment of the Grave, the questioning by Munkar and Nakir, the Fountain, the Scales, the Sirat, and the description of Paradise and Hellfire, we find that they are matters of which we cannot comprehend their realities.

The fact of the matter is that the command to accept them and to believe in them has been related.

Thus, if we hear of something associated to the matters of our religion and we are able to comprehend and understand it, then to Allah belongs the praise and gratitude for that and from Him is the success.

As for that which we cannot comprehend, which our minds cannot grasp, we believe in it, attest to its truth and believe that this is from His Lordship and Capability. We suffice in that by His Knowledge and Will, Allah (ta'ala) says,

"...and they will never encompass anything of His Knowledge except which He Wills...".

"Know that the distinguishing factor between us and the Mu' attilah is the issue of the intellect, for they formulated their religion upon the intellect and made the matter of adherence and narrations subservient to it.

As for Ahl al-Sunnah, they declared the foundation of the religion to be adherence and the intellect to be subservient to it. If the basis of the religion was based upon the intellect, creation would have no need of revelation and the Prophets, the meaning of commands and prohibitions would be no more and anyone would assert that which they desire.

The decree that revelation is put before the intellect should not be understood to mean that Ahl al-Sunnah disown the intellect and the attainment of knowledge with it, or deny reflecting with it on the creation of the Heavens and the Earth and the many signs within the universe.

Ahl al-Sunnah do not deny the use of the intellect, but they have adopted a balanced position with regard to it, between two groups that deviated in this respect. They are:

1. Ahl al-Kalam, who make the intellect alone, the basis of their knowledge and single it out.

They declare iman and the Qur'an secondary to it. The principles that are contrived from their intellect are to them the primary absolute fundamentals, which are totally independent of iman and the Qur'an.
perception of the reality of its soul, which is contained within it, because Allah has made its affair hidden, as He (ta' ala) says:

\[\text{And they ask you concerning the Râb, Say, 'The Râb is from the affairs of my Lord, and you have not been given of knowledge except a little.'}\]

Thus, if the person is ignorant of the affair of his own soul, how is he able to encompass any knowledge of Allah's Essence and of the Names and Attributes that are deserving of His Essence, when Allah has hidden the reality of His Essence from His creation?

If we were to contemplate all that has come to us from the affairs of the religion such as the mention of Allah's Attributes and the belief with which mankind worships Allah, for instance, mention of the Punishment of the Grave, the questioning by Munkar and Nakir, the Fountain, the Scales, the Sirât, and the description of Paradise and Hellfire, we find that they are matters of which we cannot comprehend their realities.

The fact of the matter is that the command to accept them and to believe in them has been related.

Thus, if we hear of something associated to the matters of our religion and we are able to comprehend and understand it, then to Allah belongs the praise and gratitude for that and from Him is the success.

As for that which we cannot comprehend, which our minds cannot grasp, we believe in it, attest to its truth and believe that this is from His Lordship and Capability. We suffice in that by His Knowledge and Will, Allah (ta' ala) says 196,

\[\ldots\text{and they will never encompass anything of His Knowledge except which He Wills...}^{197}\]

"Know that the distinguishing factor between us and the Mu' ahsîlah is the issue of the intellect, for they formulated their religion upon the intellect and made the matter of adherence and narrations subservient to it.

As for Ahl al-Sunnah, they declared the foundation of the religion to be adherence and the intellect to be subservient to it. If the basis of the religion was based upon the intellect, creation would have no need of revelation and the Prophets, the meaning of commands and prohibitions would be no more and anyone would assert that which they desire". 198

The decree that revelation is put before the intellect should not be understood to mean that Ahl al-Sunnah disown the intellect and the attainment of knowledge with it, or deny reflecting with it on the creation of the Heavens and the Earth and the many signs within the universe.

Ahl al-Sunnah do not deny the use of the intellect, but they have adopted a balanced position with regard to it, between two groups that deviated in this respect. They are:

1. Ahl al-Kalam, who make the intellect alone, the basis of their knowledge and single it out.

They declare iman and the Qur'an secondary to it. The principles that are contrived from their intellect are to them the primary absolute fundamentals, which are totally independent of iman and the Qur'an.

196 Surah al-Isrâ' (17):85.
197 Surah al-Baqarah (2):256.
198 Al-Hujiyah fi Bayan al-Mu'ahijah, 1/321, abridged.
The teachings that oppose the intellect are false, and the Messengers brought that which the intellect is incapable of comprehending, not that which the intellect deems to be impossible.\textsuperscript{199, 200}

A beneficial side-point: The location of the [\textsuperscript{\text{\text{Aql}}} \text{Intellect}.]

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah was asked, "Where does the (\textit{\text{Aql}}) intellect lie within a person?\textsuperscript{201}

He replied: "The \textit{\text{Aql}} is a quality of the person who is able to reason, as for where it is in the body, it pertains to his heart (\textit{\text{qalb}}). Allah (\textit{\text{ta`ala}}) says:

\begin{center}
\text{Have they not travelled through the land, whereby they have hearts they comprehend with...}\textsuperscript{202}
\end{center}

\textsuperscript{199}The Messengers (\textit{\text{alayhim al-Salam}) brought some fundamentals and issues that pertain to iman, of which the human intellect is unable to comprehend their realities. Despite this, the human intellect that is impartial cannot assert, let alone affirm, the impossibility and inconceivability of these matters. For example, the Messengers conveyed to us the matter of having \textit{\text{man}} in the Angels, and the Book and authentic Sunnah relate many of their characteristics, which bewilder and dazzle the minds. The human intellect cannot independently acquire knowledge of these characteristics and yet, the impartial intellect, even if it does not possess belief in the revelation that has related this information, cannot assert, let alone affirm, the impossibility of the existence of the Angels along with their characteristics. You will not find a single matter within this mighty and safeguarded religion, which is preserved in the Qur'an and authentic Sunnah, that the just and pure intellect is able to deem impossible. The reasoning behind this is that the \textit{\text{Nab} \textit{\text{i Su\text{\text{lah (\textit{\text{authentic and truthful related information) does not contradict the \textit{\text{Aql al-Sarih (the pure and uncorrupted intellect}) since both emanate from one source, Allah (\textit{\text{subhanahu wa ta`ala). [1]}}}}}}}}}

\textsuperscript{200}\text{\textsuperscript{Magh\textit{\text{bil-Fat\text{\text{aw\textsuperscript{o\text{-\text{3/338-339, abridged.}}}}}}}}}

\textsuperscript{201}This particular excerpt is only a part of a lengthy answer, which Shaykh al-Islam gave in response to a number of questions concerning the \textit{\text{\text{Aql and r\text{\text{ub. Refer to Magh\textit{\text{bil-Fat\text{\text{aw, 9/271-304. [1]}}}}}}}}}

\textsuperscript{202}Sarah al-Hajj (22):46.
These people made their minds the authority that affirms and negates, and the Sami was subjected to it. If revelation agrees with these fundamentals, they are accepted as a secondary support, not primary, and if it opposes them, it is rejected and discarded.

This is one of the greatest causes of deviation that has entered into this ummah.

2. Ahl al-Tasawwuf (Saifs), who censure and find fault with the intellect.

They hold that the higher states and lofty positions can only be attained without the intellect, and they acknowledge and affirm issues, that the pure mind rejects.

They praise intoxication, dementia, to lose one’s head with passionate love and other such matters and states which can only be achieved with the cessation of the intellect and the inability to distinguish.

They believe in matters, of which the intellect clearly points to their falsity.

Both of these two groups are censured.

As for Ahl al-Sunnah, they hold that the intellect is a condition for attaining knowledge and a condition for the perfection and correctness of actions. With it, knowledge and action is completed but it is not independent in this.

The intellect is an instinct and faculty within the person, like the faculty of sight within the eye. If the light of iman and the Qur’an reaches the intellect, it will be similar to the eye, when the light of the sun or a fire reaches it.

If however, it stands alone, it cannot see or grasp the matters that it is incapable of comprehending independently. If the intellect vanishes in its entirety, speech and actions without the intellect will be representative of animal behaviour.

In conclusion, the states achieved without the intellect are incomplete, the teachings that oppose the intellect are false, and the Messengers brought that which the intellect is incapable of comprehending, not that which the intellect deems to be impossible.

A beneficial side-point: The location of the [jial' Intellect.

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah was asked, Where does the (Aql) intellect lie within a person?

He replied: The (Aql) is a quality of the person who is able to reason, as for where it is in the body, it pertains to his heart (lath).

Allah (ta' ala) says:

"Have they not travelled through the land, whereby they have hearts they comprehend with..." (Sarah al-Hajj (22):46)

199 The Messengers (asayhim al-Salam) brought some fundamentals and issues that pertain to ilm, of which the human intellect is unable to comprehend their realities. Despite this, the human intellect that is impartial cannot assert, let alone affirm, the impossibility and inconceivability of these matters. For example, the Messengers conveyed to us the matter of having man in the Angels, and the Book and authentic Sunnah relate many of their characteristics, which bewilder and dazzle the minds.

The human intellect cannot independently acquire knowledge of these characteristics and yet, the impartial intellect, even if it does not possess belief in the revelation that has related this information, cannot assert, let alone affirm, the impossibility of the existence of the Angels along with their characteristics. You will not find a single matter within this mighty and safeguarded religion, which is preserved in the Qur'an and authentic Sunnah, that the just and pure intellect is able to deem impossible. The reasoning behind this is that the Naqi al-Salah (authentic and truthful related information) does not contradict the Aql al-Sarri (the pure and uncorrupted intellect) since both emanate from one source, Allah (subhanahu wa tala). [1]


201 This particular excerpt is only a part of a lengthy answer, which Shaykh al-Islam gave in response to a number of questions concerning the Aql and ilm. Refer to Majmu' al-Fatawa, 9/271-304. [1]

Furthermore, Ibn ‘Abbas was questioned, ‘How did you attain knowledge?’ He replied: ‘with a tongue that questions much and a heart that comprehends well’.

However, the term ‘Qalb’ can mean:

(i) the pine-like shaped morsel of flesh located on the left side of the body (i.e. the heart), which contains black coagulated blood, as in the hadith in Sahib al-Bukhāri and Sahib Muslim, in which the Prophet (ﷺ) said: “Indeed, there is within the body a morsel of flesh, if it is sound, then the whole body is sound and if it is corrupt, then the whole body is corrupt; indeed, it is the heart (qalb).”

(ii) the word qalb can also be used to simply mean the inside or centre of something. So the qalb of something is its inside, as in the qalb of a wheat-grain, an almond or walnut. For this very reason a well is named galib because its qalb, which is its inside, has been taken out. In view of this, if this connotation is intended with the word qalb, the Aql will pertain to a person’s brain as well. This is why it has been stated that the Aql lies in the brain as asserted by many doctors. This has been reported on Imam Ahmad, and a party of his companions declared, ‘The basis of the Aql is in the heart, when it reaches perfection it ends at the brain’.

The precise determination is that the Rūḥ, which is the soul, pertains to both this and that, and the Aql that this soul is characterised with (also) pertains to this and that.

However, the starting point of thoughts and reflections is in the brain and the starting point of intentions is in the heart. Furthermore, the (term) al- Aql can connote knowledge and it can also connote action (depending on the usage of the word).

Thus, knowledge and voluntary actions are founded firstly from intentions, and the starting point of intentions is in the heart. The one who desires or intends something can only do so after first perceiving the desire or intention. So the heart must be able to perceive, hence, the heart has this and that.

This starts from the brain and its effects rise back to the brain. Consequently, from the brain is the beginning and to it is the end.

Both statements have a correct viewpoint.

Three: To believe in the meanings and rulings indicated by the texts of the Names and Attributes.

Thus, the Salaf believe in the Names and Attributes of Allah and in the meanings and rulings indicated by them, as for their true nature, they entrust this knowledge to Allah.

They are free of what the Mu‘tāthah accused them of; they alleged that the Salaf believe in the words of the texts concerning the Names and Attributes but that they entrust the knowledge of their meanings to Allah.

This claim is ignorance of the Salaf, for they possessed the greatest understanding and contemplation of the ayat of the Book and the abadith of the Prophet (ﷺ), especially with respect to the knowledge of Allah (ta’ ala).

They understood the meaning of what they read and of the knowledge they possessed, but they did not concern themselves with the ghayb, which is barred from them. They did not delve into the nature of the

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204 The meaning here of this and that: knowledge and action. [t]

205 Ristalah Fi al Aql too al-Rah and that: the heart and brain. [t]

206 Knowledge of the Attributes is of two types: (i) Knowledge of their meanings, which the Salaf understand and affirm and (ii) knowledge of their true reality and designation, which the Salaf plead ignorant to, do not question and maintain that none of creation possesses this knowledge as it is with Allah alone. Some of the groups of innovation as well as a number of scholars who did not establish themselves firmly upon the foundations of the Salaf in this area and who misunderstood some of the statements of the Salaf, incorrectly attributed to the Salaf that they pleaded ignorant of both types of knowledge. [t]
Attributes, which was the case of the people of Kalam and innovations.

As a result, when these people did delve into the issue of the essence of Allah and His Attributes, they committed ta'wil and ta'til. The reason which caused them to do so was the constriction that they felt as a result of tashbih. They sought to flee from it and thus, ended up committing ta' til. Ta’ til has always been committed as a result of tashbih.

If only they had initially exalted Allah above any similarity to His creation and affirmed the Attributes whilst negating any likeness, they would have escaped and succeeded as well as agreed with the belief of the Salaf and come to realise that the Salaf were not (mere) carriers of scrolls the contents of which they did not understand.

One who contemplates the statements of the famous Imams of the Salaf in this realm will realise that they had the most precise insight and were the most knowledgeable in this area, and that those who opposed them did not understand the reality of the statements of the Salaf and the Imams. This is why those who differed (from them) became rivals to each other with regard to the Book and stood in opposition to the Book. Allah (ta’ala) has said:

"And verily, those who disputed in the Book are far away in opposition." 

Anyone who has read the statements of the Salaf that are recorded in the books of belief, tafsir and hadith concerning discussing the texts that mention the Attributes, will know that the Salaf discussed the meanings of the Attributes, explained them and did not remain silent about them. These statements stand as the greatest testimony to the understanding of the Salaf on the meanings of the Attributes and to their belief in them.

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207 Surah al-Baqarah (2):176.

208 Dar' al-Ta'wil al- 'Aql wa al-Naql, 2/591.

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Four: Rejection of tahrif and ta'til of the texts of the Names and Attributes.

The Salaf believe that the obligation towards the texts of the Qur'an and the Sunnah, which include the texts of the Names and Attributes, is to employ and understand them according to their apparent meaning. This is achieved by understanding them in the manner dictated by the Arabic tongue, and by not subjecting them to any tahrif or ta’til as did the Mu'tilah. They tampered with the apparent meaning of the texts simply because of the fact that it conflicted with their falsity and corrupt methodology.

The texts of the Attributes are legal (Shari'ah) words and as such, their sanctity must be maintained. This is fulfilled by understanding them in accordance with the intended meaning of the Legislator (i.e., Allah). We do not tamper with their meanings in order to direct them away from the intended meaning of the Legislator.

Thus, among the comprehensive fundamentals with the Salaf is that legal words possess their sanctity, and that it is from the perfection of knowledge to seek out the desired meaning intended by Allah and His Messenger, so that one can affirm the meanings that Allah and His Messenger have affirmed and negate the meanings that Allah and His Messenger have negated.

By the praise and favour of Allah, we find that the texts related in the Qur'an and the Sunnah are very clear and numerous, to the extent that it is impossible to perform ta'wil on them and to tamper with them. For surety, the message of the Prophet (SAW) came containing a detailed affirmation of the Attributes, in a manner that put an end to any misconception and unveiled any screen. It brought about certain knowledge and removed all doubt and ambiguity, gladdened the chests, brought tranquillity to the hearts and caused iman to settle in its proper place. The message of our Prophet Muhammad (SAW) elaborated on the Names, Attributes and Actions of Allah to a level greater than that...
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Anyone who has read the statements of the Salaf that are recorded in the books of belief, tafsir and hadith concerning discussing the texts that mention the Attributes, will know that the Salaf discussed the meanings of the Attributes, explained them and did not remain silent about them. These statements stand as the greatest testimony to the understanding of the Salaf on the meanings of the Attributes and to their belief in them.

207 Surah al-Baqarah (2):176.
208 Dar’al-Ta’wil al-‘Aql wa al-Naqil, 2/301.

Four: Rejection of tahrif and ta’til of the texts of the Names and Attributes.

The Salaf believe that the obligation towards the texts of the Qur’an and the Sunnah, which include the texts of the Names and Attributes, is to employ and understand them according to their apparent meaning. This is achieved by understanding them in the manner dictated by the Arabic tongue, and by not subjecting them to any tahrif or ta’til as did the Musilim. They tampered with the apparent meaning of the texts simply because of the fact that it conflicted with their falsity and corrupt methodology.

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of commands and prohibitions. It also defined and established this in a complete way and in a most eloquent articulation.

One who is familiar and well aware of the texts of the Qur'an and Sunnah can only increase in his despise of the Mu'attilah because of their tahrif and in his certainty of the rottenness and falsity of their belief.

The tahrif of the Mu'attilah is only spread amongst those ignorant of the knowledge of these texts, who are not familiar with them. Such a person is undermined by his ignorance and not because of a lack of texts related on this topic, and Allah knows best.

THE SECOND FOUNDATION: TO EXALT AND ELEVATE ALLAH (IALLA WA 'ALA) OVER AND ABOVE THE MATTER OF ANY OF HIS ATTRIBUTES EVER RESEMBLING ATTRIBUTES OF HIS CREATION.

The clarification of this foundation is made by the following:

One: Shari'ah proofs which relate the elevation and exaltation of Allah above any resemblance to His creation.

1. Allah (ta'ala) says:

   "...There is nothing like Him and He is the All-Hearer, the All-Seer."

2. Allah (ta'ala) says:

   "So do not set forth parables for Allah"

3. Allah (ta'ala) says:

   "...Do you know of any one who is similar to him"

4. Allah (ta'ala) says:

   "...for Allah is the highest description..."

5. Allah (ta'ala) says:

   "...Do you know of any one who is similar to him?"

6. Allah (ta'ala) says:

   "Say, 'He is Allah, (the) One'."

7. Allah (ta'ala) says:

   "And there is no co-equal or comparable unto Him."

Deduction of the aayah:

1. His ('azza wa jalla) saying, "...There is nothing like Him..." is an evidence exhibiting that Allah is Exalted above anything resembling any of His Attributes of Perfection.

This aayah is explained in one of two ways:

(a) The meaning of the aayah is, He is not like anything, and the word (mithl) was introduced to provide emphasis.

(b) Its meaning is, there is none like unto Him, and the particle (kif)
of commands and prohibitions. It also defined and established this in a complete way and in a most eloquent articulation.

One who is familiar and well aware of the texts of the Qur'an and Sunnah can only increase in his despise of the Mu‘attilah because of their tahrif and in his certainty of the rottenness and falsity of their belief.

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(a) The meaning of the aya is, He is not like anything, and the word (mithl) was introduced to provide emphasis.

(b) Its meaning is, there is none like unto Him, and the particle (haif)

212 Surah al-Nahl (16):60.
213 Surah al-Rum (30):27.
217 Majmu‘ al-Fatawa, 16:98.
was introduced to provide emphasis. This viewpoint is strong, agreeable and the more apparent.

Ahl al-Sunnah agree that there is nothing like Allah in His Essence, Attributes and actions.

2. His (ta' ala) saying, “So do not set forth parables for Allah”

Ibn Jarir al-Tabari said in commentary to it: “So do not provide for Allah parables, nor compare Him by setting up counterparts, for He has no like or similitude”.

Ibn Kathir said: “i.e. do not set up with Allah rivals, likes or parables”.

3. His (ta' ala) saying, “For those who do not believe in the Hereafter is an evil description and for Allah is the highest description...”

4. His (ta' ala) saying, “...and His is the highest description in the heavens and in the earth; and He is the All-Mighty, the All-Wise.”

“Allah (ta' ala) has depicted Himself that He has the highest description, and that is a reference to absolute perfection, which embodies matters that are present and meanings that are affirmed.

The more they are present and perfect in the one being depicted, the more perfect the depicted becomes and the higher He is above anything else. Since the Attributes of the Lord (subhanahu wa ta' ala) are greater and more complete, the highest description was His, and He was more deserving of it than anyone or anything else.

In fact, it is impossible for two to share in the absolute highest description, because if both were equals from every angle, none of the two would be higher than the other one. If on the other hand, they are not equal, the one depicted with the highest description would therefore only be one of them. Hence, it is impossible for the one who possesses the highest description to have a like or rival. This is a decisive evidence for the impossibility of tamthil and tashbith, so reflect on it as it is extremely clear and powerful.”

5. His (ta' ala) saying, “...Do you know of any one who is similar to him.”

It is reported on Ibn 'Abbas that he said when commentating on the ayah: “Do you know of any match or peer to the Lord?”

Mujahid, Sa'id Ibn Jubayr, Qatādah, Ibn Jurayj and others have said the same.

6. As for His (ta' ala) saying, “Say, ‘He is Allah, (the) One.”

The One implies that He has no like or equal.

7. Likewise, His (ta' ala) saying, “And there is no co-equal or comparable unto Him.”

Oneness implies perfection and partnership signifies imperfection.

Two: The indication of the intellect towards the falsity of any resemblance between the Attributes of the Creator and the attributes of creation.

1. The position towards the essence is the same as the position towards the Attributes. Allah has no like unto Him in His essence, Attributes
was introduced to provide emphasis. This viewpoint is strong, agreeable and the more apparent.

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Two: The indication of the intellect towards the falsity of any resemblance between the Attributes of the Creator and the attributes of creation.

1. The position towards the essence is the same as the position towards the Attributes. Allāh has no like unto Him in His essence, Attributes...
and actions. Thus, if He has a real Essence that does not resemble other essences, this Essence is characterised by real Attributes that do not resemble the attributes of all other essences.\textsuperscript{224}

It is of inevitable knowledge that the Creator and creation differ in essence. This deems necessary a difference in attributes because the attributes of everything depicted befits itself as is very clear with the attributes of the types of creation that differ in their essences. The strength of a camel for example is not like the strength of an atom. Consequently, if the difference between the types of creation is evident although they all subscribe to possibility and novelty\textsuperscript{225}, the manifestation of the difference between creation and the Creator will be more obvious and even stronger.\textsuperscript{226}

In view of this, we know that Allah has no like and similitude, and parables that bear a resemblance to creation are not set forth for Him, rather, He has the highest description.

2. It is argued, 'How can the Attributes of the Lord, the Creator, the perfect from all angles be like the attributes of the creation, the owned, the commanded and nurtured, the imperfect and the needy of one who can perfect him?'

Is not such a belief anything but a detraction of the Creator's due? For indeed, a declared likeness between the perfect and imperfect deems the perfect imperfect!\textsuperscript{227}

3. "If a particular creation is free of resemblance of another creation whilst they agree in name, then the Creator is more deserving to be free and Exalted above any resemblance to creation even if there is a conformity in name."\textsuperscript{228}

"Allah (subhanahu wa ta'ala) has informed us of the different creations in Paradise, such as the types of food, drink, clothing, women and dwellings. He told us that there is in Paradise, milk; honey; wine; water; meat; fruit; silk; gold; silver; and palaces.

Ibn 'Abbas has said, 'There is nothing in this world that is in Paradise, except names'.

Thus, if these realities that Allah has informed us of agree in name with the realities present in this world, and there is no resemblance between them, in fact, there is such a difference between them that only Allah (ta'ala) knows of, then the Creator's (subhanahu wa ta'ala) difference to that of creation will be even greater than the differences present between different creations themselves. The difference between Him and creation is far greater than the difference between what is present in the Hereafter and what is present in this world, since a particular type of creation is closer to another creation it agrees with in name than the Creator is to creation. This is very clear and evident".\textsuperscript{229}

Three: Conformity in names does not necessitate a likeness between the named.

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah said: "Allah (subhanahu wa ta'ala) named Himself and His Attributes with certain names, and with these (same) names, He named some of His creation.

He named Himself the Living, Knower, Hearer, Seer, Mighty, Compeller, Supreme, King, Kind and Merciful.

\textsuperscript{228}Al-Risalah al-Tadmuriyyah, p. 50.
\textsuperscript{229}Hır al-‘Ayn: Women of Paradise possessing wide lovely eyes. [t]
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224 Majmū’ al-Fatatwa, 1699.
225 i.e. the existence of these creations are not a must but a possibility according to the will of the Creator, it is only the Creator whose existence is essential. Likewise, these creations are novelties in the sense that they came about after not being in existence, contrary to Allah, who has always existed. Thus, if these different creations share in these two fundamental matters and yet the characteristics between them differ, then how can one not comprehend the essential fact that the Attributes of the Creator do not resemble the attributes of creation given that Allah does not ascribe to this possibility and novelty of existence? [i]
228 Al-Risolah al-Tadmuriyyah, p. 47.
229 Hiri: ‘Women of Paradise possessing wide lovely eyes.’ [i]
230 Al-Risolah al-Tadmuriyyah, p. 50.
Allah also named some of His creation as knower, forbearing, kind, merciful, hearer, seer, king, mighty, compeller and supreme.

It is very clear that the former Knower (i.e. Allah) is not like the latter knower (i.e. a creation of his), this Forbearing is not like that forbearing, this Hearer is not like that hearer and so on with the rest of Allah’s Names.

Allah (ta’ala) says:

"...Verily, Allah is (‘alim) ever Knowing, Wise.”

Allah (subhānahu wa ta’ala) also says:

"...and they gave him glad tidings of a son, (‘alim) having knowledge”.

Allah says:

"...Truly, He is (halim) Forbearing, (ghafir) Forgiving.”

Allah also says:

"So we gave him glad tidings of a (halim) forbearing boy.”

Allah says:

"...Truly, Allah is (ru’uf) full of kindness, (rabim) the most Merciful towards mankind”.

Allah also says:

"...for the believers, He is (ru’uf) full of pity, kind and (rubim) Merciful.”

Allah says:

"...Truly, Allah is (sam‘) ever Hearer, (ba‘th) Seer.”

Allah (ta’ala) also says:

"...so we made him (sam‘) hearer, (ba‘th) seer”.

Similar is the case for all the Attributes mentioned. However, the person takes heed from that which he knows with regard to that which he does not know. If this were not the case, the ways of learning about the matters pertaining to the ghayb would be blocked from him.

The person knows that he is living, knowledgeable and able, and that he is a hearer, seer and speaker, so he uses this knowledge to understand what Allah has informed about Himself, that He is living, knowledgeable, able, a hearer and seer. If he were unable to perceive and see these meanings in himself, he would not be able to understand that which is hidden from him. Just as, if he were not able to perceive the honey, milk, water, wine, silk, gold and silver in this world, he would not be able to understand what Allah informed him of the ghayb in regard to that.

This however, does not necessitate that the ghayb be the same as the witnessed, for Ibn ‘Abbas has said, ‘There is nothing in this world that is in Paradise, except names’.

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236 Surah al-Inṣān (76):30.
234 Surah al-Tawbah (9):128.
239 Surah al-Nisa’ (4):58.
214 Surah al-Inṣān (76):2.
212 Surah al-Baqarah (2):143.
210 Surah al-Tawbah (9):128.
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Allah (ta’ala) says:

...Verily, Allah is (al-tam) ever Knowing, Wise. 231

Allah (subhānahu wa ta’ala) also says:

...and they gave him glad tidings of a son, (al-tam) having knowledge. 232

Allah says:

...Truly, He is (haft) Forbearing, (ghafir) Forgiving. 233

Allah also says:

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Allah says:

...Truly, Allah is (ru’uf) full of kindness, (rabim) the most Merciful towards mankind. 235

Allah also says:

...for the believers, He is (ru’uf) full of pity, kind and (rubim) Merciful. 236

Allah says:

...Truly, Allah is (aami) ever Hearer, (baat) Seer. 237

Allah (ta’ala) also says:

...so we made him (aami) hearer, (baat) seer. 238

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231 Surah al-Insaan (76):30.
233 Surah al-Iqra’ (17):44.
235 Surah al-Baqarah (2):143.
236 i.e. concerning the Prophet (saw).
237 Surah al-Tawbah (9):128.
238 Surah al-Nisa’ (4):58.
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The presence of these realities in Paradise, of which Allah has informed us about, do not resemble those present in this world, in the sense that what is permissible for the former be permissible for the latter, what is a must for this be a must for that, what cannot be for this cannot be for that, that the constitution of this be the constitution of that and that what is not possible for this be not possible for that.

For we know that the water of Paradise does not spoil or become brackish. The taste of its milk does not change; its wine does not overcome the drinker or weaken his mind, its water does not spring out of earth nor does it descend from clouds as is the case in this world. Its milk is not created from cattle as in this world and so on.

Thus, if a particular creation agrees with another in name, and there is between them a shared value and similarity, what we are addressed with will be understood, even though the reality of the first is not the reality of the second.

Consequently, The Creator (jalla jalâhu) is further removed from any similarity to His creation than that which is in Paradise is to that in this world. If He therefore, describes Himself that He is Living, Knowledgeable, the Hearer, Seer and Able, it does not mean that He is like His creation, as His distance from any likeness to His creation is greater than the distance of dissimilarity found between the different type of creations. Every small animal has strength, power and activity, and yet this does not resemble the creation of the Angels, so how can something of creation resemble the Lord of the worlds?

Four: An explanation of this point from a language perspective, then from the angle of the Sharî'ah.

It is difficult for some to comprehend the fact that Allah named Himself with certain Attributes and then named His servants with similar attributes. The person then becomes confused, does he affirm for Allah the reality of those Attributes or not?

In order to clarify this issue, may Allah give you success, know that words are of categories\(^\text{241}\). A word can be (in relation to another):

(i) A Synonym (Mutarradif): words that differ in their spelling, but are the same in meaning.

An example of this is the words, asad, usamah and ghadhanfar. These words differ in their letter construction but all carry the same meaning\(^{242}\), so they are termed synonyms.

(ii) A Homograph (Musharak): words that are spelt the same but which possess different meanings.

An example of this is the word 'ayn. This word can mean, eye, fountain, spy or envy.

So the wording is one, but the meanings carried are different, such words are termed homographs\(^{243}\).

(iii) Dissimilar (Mutabâyin): words that differ in their spelling and meaning.

Examples of this are the words, heaven, earth, paradise, and hell.

Each of these words carries a different meaning, so they are termed dissimilar.

(iv) (Mutawati\(^{\text{244}}\)): words that agree in spelling and meaning.

This is of two types:

(a) (Al-Tawâţi’al-Mušâlaq\(^{245}\)), this is so if the meaning is equal in all.

\(^{240}\)Abridged, Risâlah Fl al-’Aqâ’id al-Râh of Ibn Taymiyyah, 2/42-43, published within the compilation Majmû’ah al-Ku‘â’il al-Munâriyyah.

\(^{241}\)Two factors make up the perspective of this particular categorisation: (1) the meaning of the word and (2) the spelling of the word, therefore giving four permutations. [t]

\(^{242}\)i.e. they all mean lion. [t]

\(^{243}\)An example in the English language would be the word bill as in a charge for a service or product and the word bill as in the beak of a bird. The words are not related and thus appear as two different entries in a dictionary. [t]

\(^{244}\)Al-Mušâlaq: Absolute, i.e. when the meaning it signifies is absolute. [t]
The presence of these realities in Paradise, of which Allah has informed us about, do not resemble those present in this world, in the sense that what is permissible for the former be permissible for the latter, what is a must for this be a must for that, what cannot be for this cannot be for that, that the constitution of this be the constitution of that and that what is not possible for this be not possible for that.

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(a) (Al-Tawati' al-Mu'talaq), this is so if the meaning is equal in all.

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24 Abridged; Risalah Fi al-'Asr wa al-Ras of Ibn Taymiyyah, 2/42-43, published within the compilation Majma' al-Mutawati' al-Mu'talaq al-Muniriyyah.
An example of this is the word *rajul* (man). One says, 'Zayd is a man and 'Umar is a man'. So, the meaning (i.e. manhood) is the same throughout.

(b) (Al-Tawatt’ al-Mushakhkhat), this is so if the meaning varies and takes on different shades. It was termed Mushakhkhat (i.e. uncertain), because of the confusion that arises when one hears this word: is it from the category of Mutawail or from the category of homograph words?

An example of this is the word *nar* (light). One says, 'The light of the sun and the light of the lamp'. The (basic) meaning in both is one, but there is a difference of level and superiority between the two. For the light of the Sun is very different from the light of the lamp.

The names, which are used for Allah and for the servants are from this type, Al-Tawatt’ al-Mushakhkhat words.

The truth in this matter is therefore, with respect to the Names and Attributes that are used for Allah and His servants, like (the names) the living, hearer, seer, knower, able and (the attributes) life, hearing, sight, knowledge and so on, they are true for the Lord and true for the servant.

However, for the Lord, they befit His Majesty and for the servant, they befit him.

The reason for this is that the name or attribute pertaining to this type has three standings:

1. The viewpoint that does not take into account, who it is ascribed to, whether it be the Lord (tablaka wa ta’ ala) or the servant.

2. The viewpoint of when it is described to the Lord and specific to Him.

3. The viewpoint of when it described to the servant and restricted to him.

245 As well as a difference of reality. [t]

So, that which is a necessity of the word in itself and is of its own reality, is affirmed for the Lord and the servant. The Lord has of it that which befits His perfection and the servant has of it that which befits him.

An example is the name *al-Sam1* (the hearer), which necessitates grasping the audible. Likewise, *al-Basir* (the seer), which necessitates seeing the visual. The same is the case for *al-‘Alim* (the Knower), *al-Qadir* (The able) and so on for the rest of the Names.

Indeed, the condition for using such names correctly is that their meanings and realities are found within the one depicted with these names.

Whatever is inherently part of the Name can therefore be affirmed for Allah, there being no objection in that at all, rather, this is affirmed for Allah in a manner that does not entail any likeness or similitude to His creation.

One who negates this from Allah under the pretense that these names have been used for creation, actually commits ilhād in Allah’s Names and denies His Attributes of perfection.

One who affirms them in a way that does not resemble creation but that befits His Majesty and Glory, frees himself from the dung of iashbih and poison of ta’ il, and this is the way of Ahl al-Sunnah.

246 i.e. the first viewpoint. [t]

247 i.e. one does not name a chair for example, the hearer, as the meaning carried within this name is not present in the chair. We can see now the fallacy and deviation of those such as the Mu’tazilah who affirm for Allah Names but not Attributes and conclude by saying, 'Allah is the Hearer without hearing!' [t]

248 Ilhād (to incline and digress) in Allah’s Names and Attributes means to depart and digress from the established truth concerning them, their realities and meanings to shirk, ta’ il and kafir. Some scholars mention five categories of this type of Ilhād: (1) To name Allah with names that do not befit His Majesty and Glory. (2) To name creation with Allah’s Names. (3) To describe Him with matters that He is exalted of and above. (4) To commit ta’ il of the meanings embodied within Allah’s Names and deny their reality and (5) To liken His Attributes to those of His creation. Refer to al-Kawāshīf al-Jahālyah, p. 95. [t]
An example of this is the word *ra'ul* (man). One says, 'Zayd is a man and 'Umar is a man'. So, the meaning (i.e. manhood) is the same throughout.

(b) *(Al-Tawātu' al-Mushākhāk)*, this is so if the meaning varies and takes on different shades. It was termed *Mushākhāk* (i.e. uncertain), because of the confusion that arises when one hears this word: is it from the category of *Mutawā'īt* or from the category of homograph words?

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3. The viewpoint of when it described to the servant and restricted to him.

As well as a difference of reality.

So, that which is a necessity of the word in itself and is of its own reality, is affirmed for the Lord and the servant. The Lord has of it that which befits His perfection and the servant has of it that which befits him.

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As for that which is part of the attribute as a result of its attachment to the servant, then it is a must that one negates this from Allah, like the necessities of sleep, slumber and need for nourishment which are related to the attribute of life for the servant. Likewise, the necessities that are connected to his intention such as his own movement towards acquiring what will benefit him and warding off anything that can harm him. Again, the necessities associated to his elevation such as a need of the thing he is above and the fact that he is carried by it.

All of this has to be negated from the Holy One, the One free of all defects.

As for that which is part of the Attribute as a result of its particular attachment to Allah (ta' ala), it is not affirmed for creation in any way, like the fact that His Knowledge necessitates eternity, obligation and full comprehension 249. Likewise, His Capability, Desire and all other Attributes; all that is specific to Him with regard to these Attributes cannot be affirmed for creation.

If you grasp this principle and understand it as it should be, you will free yourself from the two destructive elements that form the basis of the plague of the Musakallimun: ta' til and tashbih.

If you truly give this matter its rightful apprehension, you will truly affirm for Allah the most beautiful Names and the most exalted Attributes, thereby escaping from ta' til, and you will negate from these Names and Attributes everything specific to creation as well as any resemblance, thereby escaping from tashbih. Reflect on this and make it your shield, which you go back to in this domain, and Allah is the One who grants success towards what is correct. 250

Amidst the discussions of Shaykh al-Islam on this topic is his saying: “Allah has given Himself Names and He has given Names to His Attributes. These Names are specific to Him when they are described to Him none takes a share in them alongside Him.

He named some of His creation with names specific to them which are attached to them, these names agree with those Names (i.e. Allah’s Names) when they are not described and specified.

The agreement of the two (particular) names and correspondence and union of the named when the name is unrestricted and not attached or specified 251 does not necessitate an agreement between the named or correspondence of the named when attached and specified, let alone for the named to be similar when attached or specified.

Allah has named Himself ‘the Living’:

\[
\text{“Allah, none has the right to be worshipped but He, (al-Hayy) the Living, the Self-Sustainer and Supporter of all...”} \]

He has also named some of His slaves as ‘the living’:

\[
\text{“He brings out (al-Hayy) the living from the dead, and brings out the dead from (al-liyy) the living...”} \]

However, this ‘living’ is not like that ‘Living’. This is because His saying, ‘...the Living...’ is a name specific to Him, and His saying, ‘He

249 i.e. Allah’s Attribute of Knowledge has never ceased to exist as opposed to man’s knowledge for he himself let alone his knowledge was not in existence before his creation. Likewise, the depiction of Allah as having Knowledge is an obligation in itself as the Lord and Deity cannot be but Knowledgeable, contrary to a particular creation. Again, Allah’s Knowledge is all-comprehensive, nothing escapes Him for He knows of the things that have occurred, that which is occurring and that which will occur. He also knows of them before they occur and He also knows of the things that did not occur and how they would have occurred if they did (yubba‘ah wal ta’ ala). Such necessities of His Knowledge are specific to Him and the creation does not take a share of them, when one of them is described as being knowledgeable. [5]

250 Bada’i’ al-Fawaid, 1/164,166.

251 i.e. the agreement between the named (i.e. Allah and His creation) in sharing the intrinsic necessities of the name or attribute. The first viewpoint discussed earlier... [1]

252 Sūrah al-Baqarah (2):255.

As for that which is part of the attribute as a result of its attachment to the servant, then it is a must that one negates this from Allah, like the necessities of sleep, slumber and need for nourishment which are related to the attribute of life for the servant. Likewise, the necessities that are connected to his intention such as his own movement towards acquiring what will benefit him and warding off anything that can harm him. Again, the necessities associated to his elevation such as a need of the thing he is above and the fact that he is carried by it.

All of this has to be negated from the Holy One, the One free of all defects.

As for that which is part of the Attribute as a result of its particular attachment to Allah (ta' ala), it is not affirmed for creation in any way, like the fact that His Knowledge necessitates eternity, obligation and full comprehension. Likewise, His Capability, Desire and all other Attributes; all that is specific to Him with regard to these Attributes cannot be affirmed for creation.

If you grasp this principle and understand it as it should be, you will free yourself from the two destructive elements that form the basis of the plague of the Mutakallimun: ta'il and tashbih.

If you truly give this matter its rightful apprehension, you will truly affirm for Allah the most beautiful Names and the most exalted Attributes, thereby escaping from ta'il, and you will negate from these Names and Attributes everything specific to creation as well as any resemblance, thereby escaping from tashbih. Reflect on this and make it your shield, which you go back to in this domain, and Allah is the One who grants success towards what is correct.

Amidst the discussions of Shaykh al-Islam on this topic is his saying: "Allah has given Himself Names and He has given Names to His Attributes. These Names are specific to Him when they are described to Him none takes a share in them alongside Him.

He named some of His creation with names specific to them which are attached to them, these names agree with those Names (i.e. Allah's Names) when they are not described and specified.

The agreement of the two (particular) names and correspondence and union of the named when the name is unrestricted and not attached or specified does not necessitate an agreement between the named or correspondence of the named when attached and specified, let alone for the named to be similar when attached or specified.

Allah has named Himself 'the Living':

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الله لا إله إلا هو الرب الحي
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"Allah, none has the right to be worshipped but He, (al-Hayy) the Living, the Self-Sustainer and Supporter of all..." [292]

He has also named some of His slaves as 'the living':

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يرش من (الكيف) (الحياة) من الهموم، ويرش من (الكيف) (الحياة)...
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"He brings out (al-Hayy) the living from the dead, and brings out the dead from (al-Hayy) the living..." [253]

However, this 'living' is not like that 'Living'. This is because His saying, '..the Living...' is a name specific to Him, and His saying, 'He
brings out the living from the dead...' is a name for the living creation, which is specific to it.

These names only agree if they are used unrestrictedly and are not made specific. However, an absolute and unrestricted sense does not correlate to anything named outside\textsuperscript{254}, but the mind understands from this a common measure between the two that are named.

Whereas upon specification it restricts it to what distinguishes the Creator from creation and what distinguishes creation from the Creator. This is the same with respect to all of Allah's Names and Attributes.

The indications given as a result of \textit{al-Taātu'ū} and agreement are understood, as well as the indications denoted as a result of appropriation and specification, which prevent creation from sharing characteristics specific to the Creator \textit{(subhānahu wa ta'āla)}.

Allah has also named Himself:

\begin{align*}
\textit{...}(Alim) & \textit{ Knower and (Hailim) Forbearing}.\textsuperscript{255} \\
\end{align*}

He also named a slave of His as 'forbearing':

\begin{align*}
\text{فَقَسَرْنَاهُ عَلَى صَدْرِهِ } & \text{...so we gave him glad tidings of a (hailim) forbearing son}. \\
\end{align*}

Allah refers here to Isma'il.

He named another, knowledgeable:

\begin{align*}
\textit{...}(Alim) & \textit{ Knower and (Hailim) Forbearing}.\textsuperscript{255} \\
\end{align*}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{254} i.e. outside one's mind and heart. The only place an attribute such as knowledge can exist by itself i.e. in an absolute sense, is in one's mind and heart. For it to exist outside, it has to be ascribed to an essence and if you ascribe it to an essence, e.g., Knowledge of Allah or knowledge of man, you have therefore specified it and hence, the attribute takes on its appropriate reality depending on the essence it is ascribed to... one can now easily see the falsity of the claim that the affirmation of Allah's Attributes has to signify \textit{tashbih}.\textsuperscript{[1]}
\item \textsuperscript{255} Surah al-Ahzab (33):51.
\end{itemize}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{256} Surah al-Nisa' (4):58.
\item \textsuperscript{257} Surah al-Inshān (76):2.
\item \textsuperscript{258} Surah al-Baqarah (2):255.
\item \textsuperscript{259} Surah al-Nisa' (4):166.
\item \textsuperscript{260} Surah al-Dhariyat (51):58.
\end{itemize}

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{[1]} I. Sarah al-Nisa (4):166.
\end{itemize}
brings out the living from the dead...’ is a name for the living creation, which is specific to it.

These names only agree if they are used unrestrictedly and are not made specific. However, an absolute and unrestricted sense does not correlate to anything named outside, but the mind understands from this a common measure between the two that are named.

Whereas upon specification it restricts it to what distinguishes the Creator from creation and what distinguishes creation from the Creator. This is the same with respect to all of Allah’s Names and Attributes.

The indications given as a result of al-Ta‘āwen and agreement are understood, as well as the indications denoted as a result of appropriation and specification, which prevent creation from sharing characteristics specific to the Creator (subhānahu wa ta’āla).

Allah has also named Himself:

"...(Alīm) Knowl wh and (Hālim) Forbearing".250

He also named a slave of His as ‘forbearing’:

"(so we gave him glad tidings of a (hālim) forbearing son".

Allah refers here to Isma'il.

He named another, knowledgeable:

Furthermore, He gave Names to His Attributes and He named Attributes of His creation with those same names. He says:

"...and we gave him glad tidings of a (Alīm) knowledgeable son."

Here, Allah refers to Isḥāq.

The knowledgeable (in the first ʿayāh) is not like the knowledgeable (in the second) and the forbearing (in the first ʿayāh) is not like the forbearing (in the second).

Allah also names Himself, ‘Hearer, Seer’:

"...Truly, Allah is ever (Samī) Hearer, (Bāṣīr) Seer".256

He also named some of His creation, ‘hearer, seer’:

"Verily, We have created man from drops of mixed semen, in order to try him, so We made him (Samī') hearer, (Bāṣīr) seer".257

This hearer is not like that hearer, nor is this seer like that seer...

Allah also named Himself; ‘Hearer, Seer’:

"Truly, Allah is ever (Samī) Hearer, (Bāṣīr) Seer".256

He also named some of His creation, ‘hearer, seer’:

"Verily, We have created man from drops of mixed semen, in order to try him, so We made him (Samī') hearer, (Bāṣīr) seer".257

This hearer is not like that hearer, nor is this seer like that seer...

He also named some of His creation, ‘hearer, seer’:

"Verily, We have created man from drops of mixed semen, in order to try him, so We made him (Samī') hearer, (Bāṣīr) seer".257

This hearer is not like that hearer, nor is this seer like that seer...

Furthermore, He gave Names to His Attributes and He named Attributes of His creation with those same names. He says:

"...and they will never encompass anything of His (ilm) Knowledge except which He wills..."258

"...He has sent it down with His (ilm) Knowledge..."259

"Verily, Allah is the All-Provider, Owner of (quwwah) Power, the Most Strong".260

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250 Surah al-Ahzab (33):51.

251 i.e. outside one’s mind and heart. The only place an attribute such as knowledge can exist by itself i.e. in an absolute sense, is in one’s mind and heart. For it to exist outside, it has to be ascribed to an essence and if you ascribe it to an essence, e.g., Knowledge of Allah or knowledge of man, you have therefore specified it and hence, the attribute takes on its appropriate reality depending on the essence it is ascribed to... one can now easily see the falsity of the claim that the affirmation of Allah’s Attributes has to signify taḥkīk. [1]


253 Surah al-Baqarah (2):255.


255 Surah al-Dhariyat (51):58.
“Do they not see that Allah, the One who created them, is Mightier than them in (quwwah) Strength.”

He named Attributes of His creation as ‘knowledge and power’:

“…and you have not been given of (‘ilm) knowledge except a little.”

“…but over all those endowed with (‘ilm) knowledge, is an All-Knowing One.”

He says:

فَخَرَوْا بِمَا عَلَّمَهُمُ اللَّهُ وَالَّذِينَ كَفَارَتُوا مِنْهُمْ

“…they rejoiced at what they had of (‘ilm) knowledge…”

He says:

لاَ يَوْمَ تَطِيِّبُ مِنْهُمْ بَلْ تَطِيِّبُ مِنْ فُسْطَخِهِمْ

“Allah is He who created you in weakness, then gave you (quwwah) strength after weakness, then after (quwwah) strength gave you weakness and grey hair…”

He also says:

وَزَادَكُمْ فَوْقَ فَوْقٍ

“…and (He will) add (quwwah) strength to your (quwwah) strength…”

This knowledge is not like that Knowledge and this strength is not like that Strength.

He described Himself as having ascended above the Throne. He mentions this in seven places in His Book, that is, the fact that He ascended above the Throne.

He described some of His creation with ascension above something, like in His saying:

لَيْتَنَا أَكَلُوا مَا خَلَقَنَا وَلَا نُبِطِرْهَا كَلَّا

“In order that you ascend above their backs…”

His saying:

وَلَوْ سَوْتُوا عَلَى الْحُورَى

“And when you and those with you have ascended on the ship…”

His saying:

وَلَمْ يَرْجِعَ الْحُورَى إِلَى مَا كَبَّلَهَا

“…and it ascended on (Mount) Judi…”

This ascension (of creation) is not like that Ascension (of the Creator).

He described Himself that His two Hands are outstretched, saying:

بَلَى بَدَأَتْ مُحَيْثَ كَبَّرَ فِي ظُهُورِهِ

“…Nay, both His Hands are widely outstretched, He spends as He Wills…”

He also described some of His creation with outstretched hands, saying:

وَلَا يَجْعَلُ بَدَأَتْ مَعَالَةً إِلَى سَاعَةٍ وَلاَ بَطَارَةً كَلِّ الْمُسْتَطْلِبِ

Sarah al-Fussilat (41):15.
Sarah al-Isra’ (17):85.
Sarah Yusuf (12):76.
Sarah Ghafir (40):83.
Sarah al-Rum (30):54.
Sarah Hûd (11):52.
Sarah Hûd (11):44.
Sarah al-Mâ’idah (5):64.
"Do they not see that Allah, the One who created them, is Mightier than them in quwwah Strength."

He named Attributes of His creation as 'knowledge and power':

"...and you have not been given of ('ilm) knowledge except a little".

"...but over all those endowed with ('ilm) knowledge, is an All-Knowing One."

He says:

"...they rejoiced at what they had of ('ilm) knowledge..."

He says:

"In order that you ascend above their backs..."

His saying:

"And when you and those with you have ascended on the ship..."

This ascension (of creation) is not like that Ascension (of the Creator).

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This ascension (of creation) is not like that Ascension (of the Creator).

He described Himself that His two Hands are outstretched, saying:

"...Nay, both His Hands are widely outstretched, He spends as He Wills..."
"And let not your hand be tied to your neck (like a miser), nor stretch it forth to its utmost reach (like a spendthrift)...." 271

This hand is not like that Hand, nor is this 'stretching out' like that 'Stretching Out'. If the meaning of (base) 'stretching out' is giving and generosity, then the Giving by Allah is not like the giving by His creation, nor is His Generosity like theirs; examples of this are numerous.

Consequently, one must affirm for Allah that which He affirmed for Himself and negate any likeness to His creation.

Whoever asserts, 'Allah has no Knowledge, Power, Mercy, Speech, and He does not Love, become Pleased, nor Called Out, Saved and Ascended', is a mu'attil, denier and one who compares Allah to the non-existent and lifeless.

One who asserts, 'He has Knowledge like my knowledge, Power like my power, Love like my love, Pleasure like my pleasure, and He has two Hands like my two hands and Ascension like my ascension', is a mushabbih and one who compares Allah to animals.

Rather, the obligation is (ithbat) affirmation without any (tamthil) resemblance, and (tanzih) elevation without any (ta' il) nullification". 272

Five: The decisive factor that sets apart the belief of Ahl al-Sunnah in this foundation from the belief of the people of al-Ta'II and people of Tamthil.

The commentator of al-Tahattiyah 273 states: "Ahl al-Sunnah agree that there is not a thing like Allah, not like His Essence, His Attributes, nor His Actions.

However, the word tashbih has evolved, within the discourse of people, to be an obscure word. One intends by it:

1. The correct meaning: which is that the characteristics specific to Allah are not used to depict anyone of His creation, and that nothing of His creation resembles any Attributes of His. This is what the Qur'an has shown, Allah (ta`ala) says, '...There is nothing like unto Him...' This is a refutation of the Mumaththilah and Mushabbihah.

Hence, one who asserts that the Attributes of The Creator are like that of His creation is a Mushabbih, falsifier and despised. One who declares the attributes of creation to be like the Attributes of the Creator is similar to the Christians in their disbelief.

2. The rejected meaning: the intended meaning imparted is that no Attributes are affirmed for Allah. One therefore, does not say, 'He has Ability, Knowledge or Life' because the servant is depicted with these attributes. The implication of this position is to also not assert that Allah is 'The Living, Knower or Able' because the servant also possesses such names. Likewise, with regard to Allah's Speech, Hearing, Sight, Will and so on.

The origin of this error and blunder traces back to their presumption that with regard to these general and absolute names, the general and absolute that is named with them is the very thing that is affirmed for the particular thing (being named). However, this is not the case for that particular thing, since what is present outside (of one's mind and heart) cannot be absolute and unqualified, rather, there only exists that which is particular and specific.

These names, if Allah is named with them, will be specific and distinct to Him and if the servant is named with them, will be specific to him.

The presence of Allah and His Life is not shared with anyone else. In fact, the presence of a particular creation is not shared with any other (creation), so how will it fare with the presence of the Creator?
"And let not your hand be tied to your neck (like a miser), nor stretch it forth to its utmost reach (like a spendthrift)...

This hand is not like that Hand, nor is this 'stretching out' like that 'Stretching Out'. If the meaning of (bass) 'stretching out' is giving and generosity, then the Giving by Allah is not like the giving by His creation, nor is His Generosity like theirs; examples of this are numerous.

Consequently, one must affirm for Allah that which He affirmed for Himself and negate any likeness to His creation.

Whoever asserts, 'Allah has no Knowledge, Power, Mercy, Speech, and He does not Love, become Pleased, nor Called Out, Saved and Ascended', is a mu'attil, denier and one who compares Allah to the non-existent and lifeless.

One who asserts, 'He has Knowledge like my knowledge, Power like my power, Love like my love, Pleasure like my pleasure, and He has two Hands like my two hands and Ascension like my ascension', is a mushabbih and one who compares Allah to the animals.

Rather, the obligation is (ithbat) affirmation without any (tamthil) resemblance, and (tanzih) elevation without any (ta' til) nullification”.

Five: The decisive factor that sets apart the belief of Ahl al-Sunnah in this foundation from the belief of the people of al-Ta'II and people of Tamthil.

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However, the word tashbih has evolved, within the discourse of people, to be an obscure word. One intends by it:

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The origin of this error and blunder traces back to their presumption that with regard to these general and absolute names, the general and absolute that is named with them is the very thing that is affirmed for the particular thing (being named). However, this is not the case for that particular thing, since what is present outside (of one's mind and heart) cannot be absolute and unqualified, rather, there only exists that which is particular and specific.

These names, if Allah is named with them, will be specific and distinct to Him and if the servant is named with them, will be specific to him.

The presence of Allah and His Life is not shared with anyone else. In fact, the presence of a particular creation is not shared with any other (creation), so how will it fare with the presence of the Creator?
In light of this fact and others, it will become clear to you that the Mushabbihah took on this meaning, added to the truth and consequently deviated.

The Mu'attilah held on to negation of resemblance from a particular angle, added to the truth and consequently deviated.

Whereas, the Book of Allah points towards the pure truth that the sound correct minds comprehend, which is the balanced truth that does not contain any deviation.

The third foundation: to relinquish all hope of comprehending how Allah is actually characterised by those Attributes.

The following points clarify this foundation:

One: Allah has not afforded His creation any knowledge or sight of His Essence nor did He make knowledge of that incumbent upon them

Allah (azza wa jalla) did not will to make a way for His servants towards knowing the reality and designation of His Attributes. Allah (subhanahu) has sealed the ways towards this.

From one angle, He did not show His essence to them, this door is sealed until the establishment of the Hour, as reported in the hadith: "Know that none of you will see your Lord until you die".

From a second angle, Allah did not inform us in His Book or upon the tongue of His Messenger of the reality and actual designation of His Attributes. What the texts reveal is the affirmation of the presence of those Attributes, not the affirmation of the descriptive designation of those Attributes.

Yet from a third angle, He did not make it incumbent upon them to know the nature of His Attributes. He did not make this a form of worship of Him or desire that from them. Rather, He restricted them to possessing iman in that which He informed them of. The obligation therefore, is for them to possess correct belief of that which they have been made liable for and not to exceed these boundaries.

The texts have related the obligation of relinquishing all hope of comprehending how Allah is actually characterised by those Attributes, as comprehending that is impossible. Allah (ta'ala) says:

"He knows what happens to them (i.e. His creation) in this world, and what will happen to them (in the Hereafter), and they do not encompass any knowledge of Him".

Shaykh al-Amin al-Shanqiti, may Allah have mercy upon him, says: "Comprehending the reality of the nature is impossible. This is what has been specified in this surah of Surah Taha: His statement, 'they do not encompass any knowledge of Him', is a verb (i.e. encompass) of the present tense, and the verb that is al-Sinâ, which is represented by the present tense, command, and past tense verbs, ascribes itself according to the grammarians to both a (masdar) verbal noun and (zaman) time. This verbal noun is embodied in its meaning by consensus. Thus, (they) encompass has in its meaning [encompassing]. The negation [therefore] prevails over the verbal noun that is concealed within this verb, whereby the verb becomes with the negation like an indefinite word that is (mabni, uninflected) built upon the vowel point fathah [I']..."
In light of this fact and others, it will become clear to you that the Mushabbihah took on this meaning, added to the truth and consequently deviated.

The Mu'attalah held on to negation of resemblance from a particular angle, added to the truth and consequently deviated.

Whereas, the Book of Allah points towards the pure truth that the sound correct minds comprehend, which is the balanced truth that does not contain any deviation.279

THE THIRD FOUNDATION: TO RELINQUISH ALL HOPE OF COMPREHENDING HOW ALLAH IS ACTUALLY CHARACTERISED BY THOSE ATTRIBUTES.

The following points clarify this foundation:

One: Allah has not afforded His creation any knowledge or sight of His Essence nor did He make knowledge of that incumbent upon them

Allah (azza wa jalla) did not will to make a way for His servants towards knowing the reality and designation of His Attributes. Allah (subhanahu) has sealed the ways towards this.

From one angle, He did not show His essence to them, this door is sealed until the establishment of the Hour, as reported in the hadith: "Know that none of you will see your Lord until you die".

From a second angle, Allah did not inform us in His Book or upon the tongue of His Messenger of the reality and actual designation of His Attributes. What the texts reveal is the affirmation of the presence of those Attributes, not the affirmation of the descriptive designation of those Attributes.

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The texts have related the obligation of relinquishing all hope of comprehending how Allah is actually characterised by those Attributes, as comprehending that is impossible. Allah (ta‘ala) says:

"He knows what happens to them (i.e. His creation) in this world, and what will happen to them (in the Hereafter), and they do not encompass any knowledge of Him".275

Shaykh al-Amin al-Shanqiti, may Allah have mercy upon him, says: “Comprehending the reality of the nature is impossible. This is what has been specified in this ayah of Surah Tāhā: His statement, ‘they do not [isra’īlī] encompass any knowledge of Him’, is a verb (i.e. encompass) of the present tense, and the verb that is al-Sinā‘i, which is represented by the present tense, command, and past tense verbs, ascribes itself according to the grammarians to both a (masdar) verbal noun and (zaman) time. This verbal noun is embodied in its meaning by consensus. Thus, ‘(they) encompass’ has in its meaning [isra’īlī] ‘encompassing’. The negation [is] therefore, prevails over the verbal noun that is concealed within this verb, whereby the verb becomes with the negation like an indefinite word that is (masdar, uninflected) built upon the vowel point fathah [isra’īlī]276. Hence, the meaning becomes ‘there is no encompassing for human knowledge of the Lord of the Heavens and Earth’. The entire genus of all types of encompassing is therefore negated from the reality of the Attributes. The encompassing connected to knowledge is thus negated with respect to the Lord of the worlds.”277

274 Shalt Aqtdah al-Tahautiyah, pg. 104, abridged.
275 Surah Tāhā (20):110.
276 This is known as the 'l of absolute negation. [t]
277 Manhaj wa Dirāsāt Li Ayāt al-Asmā‘ wa al-Sifāt, p. 24.
Two: Limitation of the mind on fathoming the nature of Allah’s Attributes

The mind is compelled to give up any hope of grasping the reality and designation of the Attributes because of its incapability of acquiring such knowledge.

The reason being, that knowledge of the reality of the Attributes of something cannot be attained, except by first having knowledge of its essence, or of something similar to it or by truthful information. All these ways are not possible with regard to the nature of Allah’s Attributes. To try and put forward any designation is therefore futile and false.

Man’s knowledge is limited just as Allah has informed us of that when He said:

\[\text{Surah al-Baqarah (2):255.}\]

And do not follow that which you have no knowledge of. Verily, the hearing, the sight and the heart, each of those will be questioned.\textsuperscript{280}

Allah (ta’ ala) also says:

\[\text{Surah al-Baqarah (2):255.}\]

"Say, The things that my Lord has forbidden are evil sins, whether committed openly or secretly, sins, unrighteous oppression, joining partners with Allah for which He has given no authority, and saying things about Allah of which you have know knowledge."\textsuperscript{281}

It is very clear that we do not possess any knowledge with respect to the reality of His Attributes (‘azza wa jalla) because He (ta’ ala) informed us of these Attributes but did not inform us of their reality. The delving into and attachment to the issue of their true nature on our part will therefore be chasing after that which we have no knowledge, an assertion on a matter that is impossible for us to comprehend and a contravention of that which Allah has forbidden us from, warned us against, and deemed unlawful for us.

Thus, one must not commit takylf, whether it is in one’s heart, upon one’s tongue or by one’s limbs, because Allah is Greater and more Majestic than any form of designation estimated by the mind. Furthermore, this designation will be a lie upon Allah, as its maintainer has no knowledge of that.

This is why those who specialised in explaining the beliefs of groups and sects, related on some of the Mushabbihah—who delved into the issue of the nature of Allah’s Attributes— that they held five different positions regarding their Lord in one year alone.\textsuperscript{282}

Allah has indeed spoken the truth when He said in His Mighty Book:

\[\text{Surah al-Baqarah (2):255.}\]

\[\text{Surah al-Irāq (17):36.}\]

\[\text{Surah al-A’taf (7):33.}\]

\[\text{Maqālat al-Islāmiyyin, p. 33.}\]
Two: Limitation of the mind on fathoming the nature of Allah's Attributes

The mind is compelled to give up any hope of grasping the reality and designation of the Attributes because of its incapability of acquiring such knowledge.

The reason being, that knowledge of the reality of the Attributes of something cannot be attained, except by first having knowledge of its essence, or of something similar to it or by truthful information. All these ways are not possible with regard to the nature of Allah's Attributes. To try and put forward any designation is therefore futile and false.

Man's knowledge is limited just as Allah has informed us of that when He said:

278

"...and you have not been given of knowledge except a little."

Allah (ta' ala) also says:

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"...and they will never encompass anything of His knowledge except which He will..."

If the person's soul, which is the nearest thing to him or is in fact his essence, does not know of its reality and cannot grasp any knowledge of its true nature, then lack of knowledge of the reality and true nature of the Creator (jalla jalāluhu) will be even more so.

Allah has disciplined and taught His believing servants, and directed them to not delve into issues of which they have no knowledge. He said:

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It is very clear that we do not possess any knowledge with respect to the reality of His Attributes ('azza wa jalla) because He (ta' ala) informed us of these Attributes but did not inform us of their reality. The delving into and attachment to the issue of their true nature on our part will therefore be chasing after that which we have no knowledge, an assertion on a matter that is impossible for us to comprehend and a contravention of that which Allah has forbidden us from, warned us against, and deemed unlawful for us.

Thus, one must not commit takyif, whether it is in one's heart, upon one's tongue or by one's limbs, because Allah is Greater and more Majestic than any form of designation estimated by the mind. Furthermore, this designation will be a lie upon Allah, as its maintainer has no knowledge of that.

This is why those who specialised in explaining the beliefs of groups and sects, related on some of the Mushabbihah—who delved into the issue of the nature of Allah's Attributes— that they held five different positions regarding their Lord in one year alone. Allah has indeed spoken the truth when He said in His Mighty Book:

281 Surah al-Iṣra' (17):36.
282 Surah al-Āraf (7):33.
283 Maqālat al-Islāmiyin, p. 33.
"...Had it been from other than Allah, they would surely have found therein much contradiction".283

It is upon the Muslim to be wary of takyif and of trying to commit it, as one who does such, falls into a ditch from which he cannot escape. Delving into this is something that Shaytan casts into the hearts and is from his whispers. Accordingly, the believer must retreat and seek refuge with his Lord from the whispers of Shaytan, Allah (ta' ala) says:

"And if an evil whisper comes to you from Shaytan, then seek refuge with Allah. Verily, He is All-Hearer, All-Knower."284

Three: The understanding behind the statement of the Salaf, 'without any kayf'

The meaning of the statement of Ahl al-Sunnah 'without any takyif' i.e. without a designation that man can grasp. This does not mean that Ahl al-Sunnah negate any qualitative designation outright, as everything in existence must be upon a certain reality and nature. The meaning behind this statement is that they negate any knowledge of this true nature since none knows the reality of His Essence and Attributes except Him, Himself (subhanahu).285

This is something that Allah has kept to His Own Knowledge, so there is no way to arrive at this. Just as the Essence of Allah is something of which man has no knowledge regarding its reality, likewise, the reality of His (subhanahu) Attributes are not known.

For this reason, when Imam Malik was questioned:

283 Surah al-Nisa' (4):82.
284 Surah al-'Araf (7):290.
"...Had it been from other than Allah, they would surely have found therein much contradiction".  

It is upon the Muslim to be wary of takyif and of trying to commit it, as one who does such, falls into a ditch from which he cannot escape. Delving into this is something that Shaytān casts into the hearts and is from his whispers. Accordingly, the believer must retreat and seek refuge with his Lord from the whispers of Shaytān, Allah (ta’ ala) says:

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For this reason, when Imām Malik was questioned:

283 Surah al-Nisa (4):82.

"The Most Beneficent ascended above the Throne"  

"How did He Ascend?"

He, may Allah have mercy upon him, replied ‘The Ascension is understood, how, is not known, iaman in it is obligatory and questioning it is an innovation. I see you as only an evil person.’ He then ordered his expulsion from the gathering.

The statement ‘The Ascension is not unknown and how is incomprehensible’ has also been reported by Imām Malik’s Shaykh, Rabī’ah Ibn ‘Abdur-Rahmān.

This is the position taken for all the Attributes. The people of knowledge have adopted this scale and held it to be one of the fundamental principles related to the issue of the Attributes.

The statement of Imām Malik, ‘The ascension is understood’ i.e. its meaning is understood in the language of the Arabs. The word ‘istiwa’ has been made transitive by the particle ‘alā, so it’s meaning here is, to ascend and rise.

This applies to the rest of the texts that contain mention of the Attributes, their meanings are well known in the language of the Arabs and are not ambiguous.

(how, is not known) i.e. with their affirmation of the meaning of istiwa and belief that Allah ascended above His Throne, they however, entrust the knowledge of the nature of that Ascension back to Allah (‘azza wa jalla), because it is something He has kept to Himself.

(iman in it is obligatory) i.e. iaman in the Ascension of Allah above His Throne is a truth and is obligatory, because of its mention in the texts of the Shari’ah.

(and questioning it is an innovation) i.e. to question the nature of the Ascension, this is because the questioner asked, ‘how did He ascend?’

286 Surah Tāhā (20):5.
Four: Ignorance of the reality does not undermine imān in the Attributes or knowledge of their meanings.

The lack of knowledge of the nature of Allah’s Attributes does not undermine imān in these Attributes nor does it invalidate the knowledge of their meanings, as the issue of qualification is (an additional matter) beyond this.

The Salaf affirm for Allah the Attributes of Perfection as He has affirmed for Himself; they understand the meanings of those Attributes and provide explanation of them.

Hence, when they affirm for Allah Hearing and Sight, they affirm for them their true existence and understand their meanings. This is the same for the rest of the Attributes. It is mandatory to view them in this light, even though, there is no way for us to know their reality and true nature, as Allah (subhanahu) did not make this incumbent upon the slaves, He did not desire that from them and nor did He grant them a way to that.

Allah did not bestow upon His slaves a way to understanding the reality of many types of His creation. Take the case of the souls of creation that are the closest of all things to them, the knowledge of their reality and nature has been hidden from them. In addition, Allah has informed us of the details of the Day of Standing and of what is in Paradise and the Fire. These realities settled in the hearts of the people and their minds bore witness to it, but they did not know of their true reality and nature. So the Muslims have no doubt that in Paradise there are Rivers of Wine and Rivers of Honey, but they do not comprehend the actuality, constitution and nature of that as Ibn ‘Abbas has said: “There is nothing in this world that is in Paradise, except names”.

The case is the same for the names and attributes, the non-existence of their like in this world does not prevent one from knowing their meanings, that they truly exist, and from possessing imān in them and believing that Allah is characterised with them.

Our imān therefore is correct with regard to what we have been made liable for, even though we do not comprehend the reality and true essence, and Allah knows best of His own reality.

It is obligatory to adhere to all of these three foundations without breaching any one of them.

This is what the belief of the Salaf of this ummah was upon including those who traversed their path.

As a result, they adopted a middle position, between two groups that deviated in this domain: the Mu‘attilah and the Mushabbiyah.

To conclude, the belief of the Salaf is one of (ithbāt) affirmation without tashbīh and (tanzih) exaltation without ta‘ālī.

They do not negate what Allah has named or described Himself with in His Book or upon the tongue of His Messenger (ﷺ), which would result in invalidating His most beautiful Names and most exalted Attributes, changing the words from their proper places and committing ilhād in His Names and aytā as did the Mu‘attilah.

Likewise, they do not liken the Attributes of the Creator to the attributes of His creation as did the Mushabbiyah.
Four: Ignorance of the reality does not undermine *imān* in the Attributes or knowledge of their meanings.

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The religion of Allah (ta’ala) lies between extremism and negligence. Moderation is none other than to adopt the upright path between the two.

The religion of Islam is at the centre between two antagonistic sides. The Muslims are at the middle between people of all denominations. They lie at the centre in the area of tawhid between the Jews and Christians.

The Jews depict the Lord (ta’ala) with attributes of imperfection that are specific to creation and they compare the Creator to creation. They say that He is a miser, He is poor and that when He created the Heavens and earth, He tired.

He (subhanahu) is The Generous Who is not miserly, The Rich Who is not in need of anyone and the Omnipotent who is not touched by weariness.

The Christians depict creation with Attributes specific to the Creator and compare the creation to the Creator. They say that Allah is al-Masih Ibn Maryam, that Allah is the third of the three and they say that al-Masih is the son of Allah. They take their monks, leaders and al-Masih Ibn Maryam as Lords besides Allah. They were specifically ordered to worship Allah, One Deity, none has the right to be worshipped except He, Exalted and Elevated He is above that which they associate.

Thus, the Muslims singled Allah out, described Him with Attributes of Perfection, Elevated Him above all attributes of imperfection and Exalted Him from attributes of His creation being like His. He is characterised with Attributes of Perfection, not attributes of imperfection and there is nothing like Him, not in His Essence, His Attributes or Actions.

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Conclusion

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The Muslims also adopt the middle position in the area of Prophethood. The Jews killed some of the Prophets, were too proud to follow them, declared them false and accused them of major sins.

The Christians declare those who are not Prophets and Messengers as Prophets and Messengers, like their belief regarding the disciples, they say that they are Messengers. In fact, they obey their monks and leaders in the same manner Prophets are to be obeyed.

Thus, the Christians give credit and believe in falsehood and the Jews reject and deny the truth.

As for the area of legislation, the Jews deem that it is not possible for the Creator to send a Messenger with legislation differing with that of the first Messenger and assert, 'It is not possible for Him to abrogate what He has legislated.'

The Christians permit their monks to change and modify the legislation that Allah had sent His Messenger with.

Thus, the Jews declare the Creator incapable and prevent the requisites of His Ability with regard to the issues of prophethood and legislation.

The Christians allow creation to change that which the Creator has legislated, thereby equating creation to the Creator.

Likewise, in the area of worship, the Jews turn away from worshipping even on a Saturday, when Allah commanded them to devote all their time solely for His worship. They instead, are occupied with their desires.

The Christians worship Allah with innovations they construed, of which Allah had not sent down any authority.

Thus, the Jews are too proud to worship and the Christians associate Him in worship.

The Muslims worshipped Allah alone with that which He legislated and they did not worship Him with innovations.
This is the religion of Islam, which Allah has sent all His Messengers with. It is the submission of the slave to Allah and none other. This is the pure and upright way, the religion of Ibrahim. One who submits to Allah and other than Him is a mushrik and one who does not submit to Allah is an arrogant and haughty one.

The case is similar concerning the lawful and unlawful, such as food, clothing and the matters that pertain to it such as impurities.

The Jews declared unlawful the good and pure things, which had been made lawful for them. They declare unlawful the good that is of benefit to the people, and they avoid clean matters that have (certain) impurities. They do not for example, eat with the woman during her menses, nor sit with her. They are bound and shackled in fetters, which they are punished with.

The Christians do not declare unlawful that which Allah and His Messenger declare unlawful. They make the prohibited impurities lawful, such as the dead animal (which is not slaughtered), blood and pig-meat. They even worship in an impure state, with urine and faeces, they do not bathe themselves when sexually defiled, nor do they clean themselves for prayer. In their view, the more a monk is further removed from a state of hygiene and is clothed with filth, the loftier his status is amongst them.

Ahl al-Sunnah in Islam, have in a similar way adopted the middle and balanced path in all affairs. Ahl al-Sunnah in Islam are like the people of Islam with regard to the religions.

Ahl al-Sunnah are upon a middle path in many issues of belief, the following is a selection of these issues:

1. The Names and Attributes of Allah:

The position of the Salaf is one of affirmation and employing them and understanding them according to their apparent meaning, as well as negating any tasyif or tashbih. As a result, they have reached a middle path between the Mu'attilah, who negated them and invalidated that which Allah and His Messenger affirmed and between the Mushabbiyah, who took them to a level of tashbih and tasyif.

2. The actions of Allah, al-Qadar:

The position of the Salaf is that they affirm for Allah Action and Will and they affirm for the slave action and will, which is confined by the Will of Allah and His Ability. They therefore, adopt a middle path between the Jabariyah who deny the Ability and will of the slave and between the Qadariyah who deny the Ability of Allah with regard to the actions of the slaves.

3. Al-Iman:

The position of the Salaf is that iman consists of belief, speech and action, and that it increases and decreases. Thus, they are at a middle position between the Murtj'id who do not hold that actions are part of iman itself and the Khawarij and Mu'tazalah who denied the fact that iman increases and decreases.

4. The threats of punishment by Allah, i.e. with regard to the one who commits a major sin.

The position of the Salaf is that the one who commits a major sin is a believer because of his iman and a fasiq because of his disobedience, and that he is deserving of the threat, but under the Will of Allah. If Allah Wills, He punishes him in proportion to his sin and will then take him out of the Fire or if He Wills, He will forgive Him and place him into Paradise.

As a result, they take a middle stance between the extremists such as the Murtj'id who declare that iman is not affected by sins and nor is kufr affected by obedience and between the Wâdiyyah (The Khawarij and Mu'tazalah). The Khawarij hold that he (i.e. the one who commits a major sin) is a unbeliever in this world and the Mu'tazalah hold that he is on a level between the two levels, and with regard to the

Mishaj al-Sunnah, S/168, 172.

i.e. he is neither a believer and nor is he an unbeliever! [t]
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The position of the Salaf is that they affirm for Allah Action and Will and they affirm for the slave action and will, which is confined by the Will of Allah and His Ability. They therefore, adopt a middle path between the Jabariyyah who deny the ability and will of the slave and between the Qadariyyah who deny the Ability of Allah with regard to the actions of the slaves.

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The position of the Salaf is that the one who commits a major sin is a believer because of his imān and a fasīq because of his disobedience, and that he is deserving of the threat, but under the Will of Allah. If Allah Wills, He punishes him in proportion to his sin and will then take him out of the Fire or if He Wills, He will forgive Him and place him into Paradise.

As a result, they take a middle stance between the extremists such as the Murjīʿah, who declare that imān is not affected by sins and nor is kufr affected by obedience and between the Wāʾlidiyah (The Khawārij and Muʿtazilah). The Khawārij hold that he (i.e. the one who commits a major sin) is a unbeliever in this world and the Muʿtazilah hold that he is on a level between the two levels, and with regard to the

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Hereafter, they both agree that he will abide forever in the Fire.

5. The Messenger of Allah’s (ﷺ) Companions:

The position of the Salaf is one of acknowledgement of the excellence of the Companions. That they are the most complete of this ummah in terms of iman, Islam, knowledge and wisdom and that they are all honest and righteous by the testimonial of Allah. However, Ahl al-Sunnah are not extreme with them, nor do they believe that they are infallible. Rather, they give them their rights and love them because of the great precedence they hold, the astounding trial and tribulation they suffered in aiding Islam and their Jihad with the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ).

Ahl al-Sunnah have thus, adopted a middle path between the Rafidah and the Khawarij. The Rafidah (may Allah disgrace them) revile and curse the Companions. Some of them may even declare some or all of the Companions as unbelievers. As for the extreme among them, despite the fact that they curse many of the Companions and amongst them the Khulafa, they are excessive with regard to ‘Ali and his offspring, and regard them to be divine.

The Khawarij complemented these Rafidah and declared ‘Ali, Mu‘awiyah and those with them as unbelievers, they fought them and declared their blood and wealth as lawful.

The purpose here is to demonstrate that Ahl al-Sunnah are the most knowledgeable of the truth. Hence, regarding every group besides Ahl al-Sunnah and Hadith, the followers of the narrations of the Messengers of Allah, any of these groups that differ with Ahl al-Sunnah, then their position is an incorrect one. They always separate from Ahl al-Sunnah with a position that is false.

The more one is further away from the Sunnah, the more false will be the statements and actions he specifically has.

Thus, the fortunate one is the one who adheres to the Sunnah, and Allah is the One Who grants success and He is the One Who guides towards the way of right conduct.

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