

The Aqeedah of Tawheed

A clarification of that which opposes and harms it, from major and minor shirk, ta'teel and bid'ah

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Part 4: Tawheed-al-Asmaa-was-Sifaat

PART 4: TAWHEED-AL-ASMAA-WAS-SIFAAT

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4.1 The proofs from the Book, the Sunnah and the intellect for affirming Names and Attributes.

A) Proofs from the Book and the Sunnah:

Previously we have mentioned that tawheed is divided into three categories tawheed ar-rububiyyah, tawheed al-uluhiiyah and tawheed al-asmaa-was-sifaat. We mentioned a number of proofs for the first two types i.e. tawheed ar-rububiyyah and tawheed al-uluhiiyah. Now we will mention the proofs for the third type which is tawheed al-asmaa-was-sifaat. The proof from the Book is His, the Most High's saying:

“And to Allaah belong the most Perfect and Beautiful Names, so call on Him by them, and leave the company of those who belie or deny His Names. They will be requited for what they used to do.” [al-‘Aa’raaf (7): 180]

In this verse Allaah affirms the Names for Himself and informs us that they are Perfect and Beautiful. He has ordered us to supplicate to Him by saying: “O Allaah, O Rahmaan (the Most Beneficent), O Raheem (the Most Kind), O Hayy (the Ever-Living), O Qayyoom (the Sustainer and Protector), O Lord of the worlds.” Allaah has promised to recompense the evil deeds of those who deny His Names, meaning that they deviate from the truth either due to denying the Names of Allaah or by making ta’weel (interpretation) of them with an incorrect meaning or any other type of denial. He has promised to recompense them for their evil action. He, the Most High, said:

“Allaah, none has the right to be worshipped but He. To Him belong the most Perfect and Beautiful Names.” [Taa Haa (20): 8]

“He is Allaah, none has the right to be worshipped but Him, the All-Knower of he unseen and the seen. He is the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful. He is Allaah none has the right to be worshipped but He, the King, the Holy, the One Free from all imperfections, the Giver of security, the Watcher over His creatures, the All-Mighty, the Compeller, the Supreme. Glory be to Allaah, (High is He) above all that they associate as partners with Him. He is Allaah, the Creator, the Inventor of all things, the Bestower of forms. To Him belong the most Perfect and Beautiful Names. All that is in the heavens and the earth glorify Him. And He is the All-Mighty, the All-Wise.” [al-Hashr (59): 22-24]

So these verses prove the necessity to affirm the Names of Allaah.

B) The proof from the Sunnah of the Messenger (sallallaahu alaihi wasallam) for the necessity of affirming the Names of Allaah:

It has been reported by Abu Hurairah (may Allaah be pleased with him) that the Messenger of Allaah (sallallaahu alaihi wasallam) said: “*Verily Allaah has ninety-nine Names, one hundred except one. Whoever memorises and comprehends them will enter Paradise.*”¹ However the names of Allaah are not restricted to this number due that which has been reported from ‘Abdullaah ibn Mas’ood that the Prophet (sallallaahu alaihi wasallam) said: “*I ask You by every Name which You have Named Yourself with or revealed in Your Book or taught any of Your creation or kept with Yourself in the knowledge of the unseen with You, that you make the Glorious Qur'aan the life of my heart.*”

Each of Allaah’s names comprises one of His Attributes. So al-‘Aleem (the All-Knowing) indicates Knowledge, al-Hakeem (the All-Wise) indicates Wisdom, as-Samee’ and al-Baseer indicate Hearing and Sight. Similarly all the Names indicate an Attribute of Allaah. He, the Most High, said:

“Say: ‘He is Allaah, the One. The Self-Sufficient Master, Whom all creatures need. He begets not, nor was He begotten; And there is none co-equal or comparable unto Him.’” [al-Ikhlaas (112): 1-4]

From Anas (may Allaah be pleased with him) that he said: “One of the Ansaar used to lead the people in prayer in Masjid al-Qubaa’. And every time he recited a verse, he would begin with: **“Say: He is Allaah, the One and Only...”** (Surah al-Ikhlaas 112), until its end, and then recited another Surah with it, and he would do this in every rak’ah. Because of this his people spoke to him, saying: “You begin with this Surah and then you do not regard it as enough until you recite another one. You should either recite it (only) or leave it and recite another one.” He said: “I will not leave it, if you do not like it, I shall leave you.” They knew that he was one of their best, and they did not like to be led by anyone else, so when the Prophet (sallallaahu alaihi wasallam) came to them, they told him the story. He (sallallaahu alaihi wasallam) said: “*O so and so, what stops you from doing what your people ask you to? What makes you recite this surah in every rak’ah?*” He said: “I love this surah.” He (sallallaahu alaihi wasallam) said: “*Your love for it will enter you into the Garden.*” (Bukhaari)

And from ‘Aishah (may Allaah be pleased with her) that the Prophet (saws) sent a man to a troop and he used to recite to his companions during their Salaah. He would end with “Say He is Allaah, the One and Only.” So when they returned, they mentioned this to the prophet (SAWS) so he said, “ Ask him why he does such a thing.” So they asked him and he said, “ Because it is

¹ Bukhaaree and Muslim.

an attribute of the Most Merciful and I love to recite it.” So the prophet said, “Inform him that Allaah, the Most High, loves him.”

Meaning that it contains the Attributes of the Most Merciful.

So He, the Glorified and Free from Imperfections, has mentioned that He has a Face, in His saying:

“And the Face of your Lord full of Majesty and Honour will abide forever.”
[ar-Rahmaan (55): 27]

And that He has two Hands:

“(Allaah) said: “O Iblees, what prevents you from prostrating yourself to the one whom I have created with Both My Hands?”” [Saad (38): 75]

“Nay, both His Hands are widely outstretched.” [al-Maa‘idah (5): 64]

He, far removed from all imperfections, mentioned that He becomes Pleased, Loves, becomes Angry and Displeased, as well as other Attributes which He has described Himself with or His Messenger (sallallaahu alaihi wasallam) has described Him with.

C) The intellectual proofs for affirming the Names and Attributes indicated by the religion:

1. The magnificent creation in all its different forms and its organisation in carrying out those things which are required for it and its course upon pre-decreed paths, indicate the Might, Power, Knowledge, Wisdom, Will and Wish of Allaah.
2. Kindness and goodness, removal of harm and relief from grief are all things which indicate Mercy, Generosity and Open-Handedness.
3. Punishment and recompense of the sinful indicate the Anger of Allaah for such people and His Hatred of them.
4. Honouring and establishing the obedient ones indicates His Pleasure and Love for them.

4.2 The methodology of Ahlus Sunnah wal-Jamaa'ah regarding the Names and Attributes of Allaah.

The methodology of Ahlus Sunnah wal-Jamaa'ah from the Salaf us-Saaleh and those who follow them, is to affirm the Names and Attributes of Allaah as they have been reported in the Book and the Sunnah. Their methodology is built upon the following principles:

1. They affirm the Names and Attributes of Allaah as reported in the Book and the Sunnah with the apparent meaning indicated by the words. They do not interpret them with other than their apparent meanings nor do they deny the meanings of the words and what they indicate.

2. They negate any likeness of the Attributes of Allaah to the attributes of the creation, as He, the Most High, says:

“There is nothing like unto Him, and He is the All-Hearer, the All-Seer.” [ash-Shuraa (42): 11]

3. They do not go beyond that which has been reported in the Book and the Sunnah regarding the affirmation of the Names and Attributes of Allaah. They affirm that which Allaah and His Messenger (sallallaahu alaihi wasallam) have affirmed and they negate that which Allaah and His Messenger (sallallaahu alaihi wasallam) have negated. They remain silent about that which Allaah and His Messenger (sallallaahu alaihi wasallam) have not spoken about.

4. They believe that the texts regarding the Names and Attributes are from the muhkam (clear, decisive verses), whose meaning and explanation is understood and that they are not from the mutashaabihaat (unclear). So they do not withhold from mentioning the meaning of the Attributes, as they have been accused by those who lie against them and those who are ignorant of their manhaj from amongst the current day writers.

5. They withhold from mentioning how the Attributes of Allaah are, and they do not go into these matters.

4.3 A refutation of those who deny some or all the Names and Attributes of Allaah.

Those who deny the Names and Attributes of Allaah are of three categories:

- 1) The Jahmiyyah: They are the followers of al-Jahm bin Safwaan and they deny all the Names and Attributes.
- 2) The Mu'tazilah: They are the followers of Waasil bin 'Ataa who abandoned the circles of al-Hasan al-Basree. They affirm the Names while holding that they are merely words which are devoid of meaning and they deny all the Attributes.
- 3) The 'Ashaairah and the Maaturidiyyah²: The 'Ashaairah, the Maaturidiyyah and their followers affirm the Names and some of the Attributes while denying others.

The misconceptions upon which all their madhabs are built is their claim to free Allaah from likening to His creation. This is because some of the creation are known by some of Allaah's Names and are described by some of His Attributes. They claim that sharing the Name, the Attribute and their meaning necessitates their likeness in reality and therefore this necessitates likening the creation to the Creator.

So in view of this, they are obliged to carry out one of the following two matters:

- 1) Either to make ta'weel (false interpretation) of the texts which mention the Names and Attributes away from their apparent meaning, such as interpretation of the Face to mean the Essence and the Hand to mean Bounty, or,
- 2) To make tafweed (resign) the meaning of these texts to Allaah. So they say that Allaah knows best about their intended meaning, while believing that they are not to be accepted with their apparent meaning.

The first to be known for rejecting the Names and Attributes were some of the Arab mushrikeen about whom Allaah revealed:

² The 'Ashariyyah are the followers of the madhab of Abul Musaa al-'Asharee before his return to the madhab of the Ahlus Sunnah, but they continued to be upon his old madhab, so attributing them to him is not correct.

The Maaturidiyyah are the followers of Abul Mansoor al-Maturidee.

“Thus We have sent you to a community before whom other communities have passed away, in order that you might recite unto them what We have inspired to you, while they disbelieve in the Most Beneficent.” [ar-Ra‘ad (13): 30]

The reason for the revelation of this verse was that when the Quraysh heard the Messenger of Allaah (sallallaahu alaihi wasallam) mention ‘ar-Rahmaan’ (the Most Beneficent), they rejected it. So Allaah revealed regarding them:

“While they disbelieve in the Most Beneficent”

Ibn Jareer mentioned that this was during the treaty of Hudaybiyyah, when the writer wrote in the treaty that occurred between them and the Messenger of Allaah (sallallaahu alaihi wasallam): “In the Name of Allaah, ar-Rahmaan, ar-Raheem”, where upon the Quraysh said: “As for ar-Rahmaan, then we do not know him.”

Ibn Jareer also reported from Ibn Abbaas that when the Prophet (sallallaahu alaihi wasallam) was in prostration, he would supplicate by saying: “*O Rahmaan (the Most Beneficent), O Raheem (the Most Kind).*” So the mushrikeen said: “He claims that he only calls upon One, while he supplicates to two.” Then Allaah revealed:

“Say: “Invoke Allaah or invoke the Most Beneficent, by whatever name you invoke Him (it is the same), for to Him belong the Best Names.” [al-Israa’ (17): 110]

He, the Most High, says in Surat-al-Furqaan (25): 60;

“And when it is said to them: “Prostrate to the Most Beneficent, they say: “And what is the Most Beneficent?””

So these mushrikeen are the predecessors of the Jahmiyyah, the Mu’tazilah, the ‘Ashaairah and all those who negate the Names and Attributes which Allaah has affirmed for Himself or which have been affirmed by His Messenger (sallallaahu alaihi wasallam). What evil predecessors for evil followers...?!!

The refutation against them is from many different angles:

- 1) Allaah (Glorified be He from all that they associate with Him and the Most High) and His Messenger (sallallaahu alaihi wasallam) have affirmed Names and Attributes for Him. So negating all or some of them is actually negation of that which Allaah and His Messenger (sallallaahu alaihi wasallam)

have affirmed and this is opposition to Allaah and His Messenger (sallallaahu alaihi wasallam).

2) The existence of these Attributes in the creation or the fact that some of the creation share some of the Names does not necessitate likeness between Allaah and His creation. This is because Allaah has Names and Attributes which are particular to Him and the creation have names and attributes which are particular to them. Just like Allaah has an Essence which is not similar to the essence of the creation, He has Names and Attributes which are not like the names and attributes of the creation. Similarity in the name and the general meaning do not necessitate similarity in reality. Allaah has named Himself 'Aleem (All-Knowing) and Haleem (the Most Kind) and He has also named some of His slaves as 'aleem.

"And they gave him glad tidings of an intelligent son, having knowledge (aleem)." [adh-Dhaariyaat (51): 28]

Meaning Ishaaq and He named the other one haleem.

"So We gave him the glad tidings of a forbearing boy." [as-Saaffaat (37): 101]

Meaning Ismaa'eel. So One 'Aleem is not like the other and similarly One Haleem is not like the other. He has Named Himself by saying:

"Truly, Allaah is Ever All Hearer, All Seer." [an-Nisaa (4): 58]

Similarly He has named some of His slaves samee' and baseer, when He said:

"Verily, We have created man from drops of mixed discharge, in order to try him, so We gave him the ability to hear and see." [al-Insaan (76): 2]

One Samee' is not like the other nor is One Baseer like the other. He has named Himself ar-Ra'oof (the Most Kind) and ar-Raheem (the Most Merciful), so He said:

"Verily Allaah is Most Kind and Most Merciful towards mankind." [al-Hajj (22): 65]

Similarly He has named some of His slaves ra'oof and raheem, when He said:

"Verily, there has come unto you a Messenger from amongst yourselves. It grieves him that you should receive any injury or difficulty. He is anxious for

you and for the believers he is full of pity, kind (ra'oof), and merciful (raheem)." [at-Tawbah (9): 128]

One Ra'oof is not like the other and One Raheem is not like the other. Similarly He has described Himself with Attributes and has also described His slaves with similar attributes, as in His saying:

"And they will never encompass anything of His Knowledge." [al-Baqarah (2): 255]

So He has described Himself as having Knowledge and also described His slaves having knowledge, whereby He said:

"And of knowledge, you (mankind) have been given only a little." [al-Israa (17): 85]

And He said:

"We raise to degrees whom We Please, but over all those endowed with knowledge is the All-Knowing" [Yusuf (12): 76]

And He said:

"But those who had been given knowledge said..." [al-Qasas (28): 80]

He described Himself as having Strength, as He said:

"Truly, Allaah is All-Strong, All-Mighty." [al-Hajj (22): 40]

"Verily Allaah is the Provider, the Owner of Strength, the Most Strong." [adh-Dhaariyaat (51): 58]

And He described His slaves as having strength whereby He said:

"Allaah is He Who created you in (a state of) weakness, then gave you strength after weakness, then after strength gave (you) weakness and grey hair." [ar-Rum (30): 54] and so on.

It is known that the Names and Attributes of Allaah are particular to Him and befit Him while the names of the creation are particular to them and befit them. Similarity in the name and the general meaning does not necessitate similarity in reality. This is due to the fact that there is no similarity between the named and the described. And this is apparent and all praise is due to Allaah.

3) The one who does not possess perfect attributes is not befitting to be a worshipped deity. And due to this Ibraaheem said to his father:

4)

“Why do you worship that which neither hears nor sees?” [Maryam (19): 42]

He, the Most High, said in refutation of those who worshipped the calf:

“Did they not see that it could neither speak to them nor guide them to the way?” [al-‘Aa’raaf (7): 148]

5) Affirmation of Attributes is perfection and denying them is deficiency, so the one who does not have any attributes is either devoid or deficient, and Allaah is far removed from that.

6) Ta’weel of the Attributes from the apparent meaning has no proof, so it is falsehood and withholding from their meanings indicates that Allaah has addressed us in the Qur'aan with the meaning of something that we cannot understand, despite the fact that He has ordered us to supplicate using His Names. So how can we supplicate to Him with something whose meaning we do not understand? Similarly He has ordered us to reflect over the whole of the Qur'aan, so how can He order us to reflect over something whose meaning we do not understand?

So this clarifies that it is necessary to affirm the Names and Attributes of Allaah in a manner that befits Him, whilst negating any likeness to the creation, as He, the Most High, said:

“There is nothing like unto Him, and He is the All-Hearer, the All-Seer.” [ash-Shuraa (42): 11]

So He negated for Himself likeness to anything else and affirmed that He has Hearing and Sight. So this indicates that affirmation of the Attributes does not necessitate likeness and it also proves the obligation to affirm the Attributes whilst denying any likeness to Allaah. This is the meaning of the saying of Ahlus Sunnah wal-Jamaa’ah regarding negation and affirmation of the Names and Attributes:

- Affirmation without likeness, and,
- Purifying (Allaah from any defect) without denial.