

# The Beliefs of the Ash'arīs: In a Calm Dialogue with the Specious Arguments of their Opponents

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## [Part 1: Introduction]



[I only want to put things right as far as I can. My success is with Allah alone. I have put my trust in Him and I turn to Him.]<sup>2</sup> All praise is to Allah, Lord of all the world, The One Who said in His clear Book: [Scrutinize it carefully in case you attack people in ignorance and so come to greatly regret what you have done.]<sup>3</sup>

And prayers and peace be upon the one who was sent as a mercy to all the worlds, the one who said to his Ummah: [Beware of conjecture, for indeed conjecture is the most untruthful of speech. Do not have ill feelings, do not spy, do not compete with one another, do not envy one another, do not hate one another, and do not turn your backs on one another. Be, O slaves of Allah, brothers. A Muslim is the brother of a Muslim. He does not wrong him, fail to assist him or despise him. *Taqwā* is here, *taqwā* is here, *taqwā* is here] and he pointed to his heart three times [It is sufficient evil for a man that he should despise his brother Muslim. All of a Muslim is sacred for a Muslim; his life, his property and his honour.]<sup>4</sup>

To proceed, for indeed a researcher has written a book in which he clarifies – according to his claim – the creedal methodology of the Ash'arīs, and he has cast them out of the category of Ahl al-Sunnah and classified them as being from the people of innovation. He has deepened mutual hatred and disagreement between Muslims and by doing so he thinks that he is

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<sup>1</sup> Translated from: 'Aqā'id Al-Ashā'ira fī Ḥiwār Hadī' ma' Shubhāt Al-Munāwi'īn (The Beliefs of the Ash'arīs: In a Calm Dialogue with the Specious Arguments of their Opponents) by Ṣalāh Al-Dīn ibn Aḥmad Al-Idlibī, which is a refutation of the book *Minhāj Al-Ashā'ira fī Al-'Aqīda* (The Creedal Methodology of the Ash'arīs) by Dr. Safar Al-Ḥawālī, a leader and teacher of the Salafī cult.

<sup>2</sup> Sūrah Hud 11:88

<sup>3</sup> Al-Ḥujurāt 49:6

<sup>4</sup> Narrated by Mālik, Al-Bukhārī and Muslim, and the wording is that of Muslim.

drawing closer to Allah the Exalted, seeing as – in his own opinion – he is clarifying the truth of the Ash‘arī school and fulfilling the obligation of giving victory to the Book and the Sunnah; by revealing their astrayness and deviation. He says that he is a specialist in the science of theology, firmly grounded in the Book and the Sunnah and the way of the Pious Predecessors.

This researcher, may Allah forgive him, committed a criminal act against the Ash‘arīs in this research of his, far from the spirit of anything knowledge-based. The most salient points being:

- Attributing several positions to the Ash‘arīs that were never advocated by them while not mentioning the explicit texts from where these positions come from. The transmitted texts that he has quoted can be counted on the fingers of one hand. Whoever wants to refute someone else should explicitly mention the text that contains the refuted position so that the reader can see what the refuter has quoted from the books of the person who is being refuted, or whether he quoted from the books of the people of his school, or the books of his opponents (the latter being the practice of the researcher – may Allah forgive him) so the reader can see if the refuter has understood the words of the person being refuted exactly – while quoting from his books – or not.
- He doesn’t mention the proofs that the Ash‘arīs have for their positions from the Book and the Sunnah, and this is in order to show that they are upon other than the Book and the Sunnah, or maybe for them, when it comes to issue of proofs from the Book and the Sunnah and the speech of the Companions, he doesn’t mention them and he is completely ignorant of them. However, when the matter is linguistic and when discussing it they mentioned a verse of poetry from a poet who isn’t Muslim; indeed the researcher mentions the poetic verse – while at the same time completely omitting the evidence from the Book, the Sunnah and the speech of the Companions. He says:

[They inferred from the verse attributed to Al-Akhṭal, a Christian: that speech is in the heart, and the tongue was only put over the heart as a proof]

He says:

[Then they established their school and based it on the most risky foundations and issues, faith, the Qur‘ān, sublimity (*‘ulūw*), on two unconfirmed verses from a Christian poet...]

- Indeed he is content to enumerate what the Ash‘arīs have said and what has been attributed to them with repulsion and disdain without mentioning the proofs that negate these statements and positions.
- He does not define what is meant by the terminology that he uses in his research, and which could be a point of contention. For example, when he attributes certain statements and positions to the *salaf*, he doesn’t define who they are. Are the *salaf* the

Companions, or the Companions and the Followers, or the Companions, Followers and Followers of the Followers? Does he include amongst them those who came after those three centuries, such as Imams Aḥmad, Al-Bukhārī, Al-Tirmidhī, Ibn Ḥibbān, and Al-Bayhaqī, may Allah the Exalted have mercy on them?? Does he include amongst them ‘Uthmān ibn Sa‘īd Al-Dārimī, Al-Ājurrī, Al-Barbahārī, Ibn Baṭṭa and Al-Lālikāī, may Allah the Exalted have mercy on them?? Are the statements and positions of these people proofs in and of themselves or do they require additional proofs??? In other words, are they absolutely sound such that they are not open to mistake and they can thus be used as proof against the people of knowledge who disagree with them? Or, is it that they could be correct or mistaken and thus need – even if they are correct – additional proofs from the Book and the Sunnah, which would mean that they are not proofs in and of themselves???

What is meant by the term *Ahl al-Sunnah* is also not defined, and it appears that what he means by it is Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn al-Qayyim and those whose understanding agrees with their understanding. If not, then they are not from *Ahl al-Sunnah*, regardless of how much care and concern they may have for the Prophetic Sunnah in terms of narration, knowledge and understanding!!!

Finally, before mentioning the proofs and argumentation, I wish that the researcher had been equitable and precise in his depiction of the Ash‘arī school, by outlining their school as it is in their books, not as it is in the books of their opponents. Then he could have explained – with proofs – what is correct and mistaken in both their books and the books of their opponents.

It’s worth mentioning here what Ibn Taymiyyah, may Allah have mercy on him, wrote as a critique and a piece of advice for one of the scholars, and I direct it towards the researcher in the hope that he might benefit from it. He said: [Indeed he always says: ‘The people of truth have said...’ and what he means is his companions, and this is a claim that anyone can state regarding their own companions. Indeed the people of truth are those regarding whom there is no doubt. They are the believers who do not come together upon misguidance and error. As for the person who singles out one group that is attributed to a leader from amongst the Ummah and calls this group ‘the people of truth’ and gives notice that whoever contravenes them in anything is from the people of falsehood, this is the state of the people of vain desires and innovation...as the truth is not intrinsically attached to anyone, such that it is never separated from him, except the Messenger of Allah, may Allah’s prayers and peace be upon him.]<sup>5</sup>

If you said: ‘Where is the proof that the researcher incriminates the Ash‘arīs?’ the answer is clear and obvious. With Allah’s permission, you will find it when you read this book.

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<sup>5</sup> *Al-Tis‘īniyyah* by Ibn Taymiyyah, p.245

Without delay, I would like to state that I do not do *taqlīd* of the Ash‘arī school<sup>6</sup>, and all praise be to Allah who has blessed me with love of the Book and the Sunnah and attachment to them from my earliest youth, along with love for following with insight and aversion to blind imitation. Based on this, when I read the books of the Ash‘arīs – may Allah the Exalted have mercy on them – or the books of other theologians, I accept that which I can find proofs for, proofs that confirm it and support it, and I reject that which I find a proof for that negates it, and I leave that which has no proof supporting it or negating it.

I ask Allah, Blessed and Exalted, to shower his mercy, forgiveness and pleasure on the soul of my sheikh, whom I heard saying: [Do not do *taqlīd* in creed.]

I state that I do not do *taqlīd* of the Ash‘arī school and what I mean is that I do not adhere to everything that is in the books of the Ash‘arīs, even though I feel that most of what they say is correct. Generally speaking, I disagree with the Ash‘arīs when it comes to their delving into philosophy and adopting its ways and methods, without being aware of the futility of these ways and methods. We are an Ummah that Allah the Exalted has enriched with the ways of the Qur‘ān to affirm points of creed, and we don’t need anything else. Whoever is in doubt about this, then let him look – for example – at *Al-Shāmil* by Imām Al-Ḥaramayn and *Al-Maṭālib Al-‘Āliyyah* by Imām Fakhr Al-Dīn Al-Rāzī – may Allah have mercy on both of them and forgive them – for indeed they both delve deeply into useless philosophical methods that do not give certainty and do not lead to guidance.

As for the Ash‘arī school that the researcher imagines, most of these ideas are different to what is in the books of the Ash‘arīs, for indeed if that is the school of some of them then I am free of it.

Therefore, I see it as obligatory upon me to share and clarify some of what the researcher has said, manifesting the truth and absolving blame, asking the Master, the Exalted, to protect me from mistakes and inspire me with appropriate speech, with His grace, bounty and enabling success. Whatever is correct in this clarification, then it is solely due to Allah the Exalted’s enabling success. He has all grace and bounty. Whatever is mistaken, then it is due to my own incapacity and deficiency, and I ask Allah to forgive me for it.

Now it is time to begin: <sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Translator’s note: Al-Ḥāfiẓ Ibn ‘Asākir in *Tabyīn Kadhib al-Muftarī* said: “And we do not concede that Abū al-Ḥasan (Al-Ash‘ari) invented a fifth *madhhab*. Rather he only established the doctrines of Ahl al-Sunna that became unapparent to the innovators. And he clarified from the statements of those who preceded him from the four Imams and other than them what became obscure. Yet we do not ascribe ourselves to him in our *madhhab* of Tawhīd with the meaning that we blindly follow him in it or that we rely upon him. Instead, we agree with him in the conclusions he reached in Tawhīd because of the evidences proving their correctness, not simply out of blind following.”

<sup>7</sup> Read Part 2 at <http://marifah.net/articles/RadalHawali-alIdlibi1.pdf>