



Four Points from al-`Aqīdah al-Tahāwiyyah

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All praise is for Allāh the Lord of all that exists. The great scholar, al-Hujjat al-Islām, Abū Ja`far al-Warrāq al-Tahāwī al-Misrī *rahimallah* said:

This is a presentation of the beliefs of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā`a, according to the school of the jurists of this religion, Abū Hanīfa al-Nu`mān ibn Thābit al-Kūfī, Abū Yūsuf Ya`qūb ibn Ibrāhīm al-Ansārī and Abū `Abdullāh Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Shaybānī, may Allāh be pleased with them all, and what they believe regarding the fundamentals of the religion and their faith in the Lord of the worlds.

1. The word used here is “*hādha*”, which is a demonstrative pronoun. The intent of Imām al-Tahāwī is to mention what is in his heart at the time of writing his creed. The verifying scholars (*mubaqqiqūn*) say that “this” refers to either something that is present outwardly, or something that is present inwardly in the person’s mind and heart-and that is the intention of Imām al-Tahāwī. Having said that, it is possible that he wrote the text of his creed before writing his introduction, in which case, the word “this” refers to what is outwardly present.
2. The word *bayān* means that which is in detail. Detailed speech is not general. General speech (*mujmal*) is that which is not complete without other details elsewhere to qualify it. So according to this, all that Imām al-Tahāwī has written in his creed is more than sufficient for acting upon in the realm of belief. So what is negated in his creed, is negated without exception, and what is affirmed in his creed, is affirmed without exception. Therefore, it is not possible for a person to object by saying: “Perhaps some of what he negated unrestrictedly is affirmed from one or several angles.” Meaning: what Imām al-Tahāwī negated unrestrictedly cannot in actuality be negated unrestrictedly, rather, one looks into the matter, and what is accepted is affirmed and what is not accepted is negated. This method of discourse does not hold water with the work of Imām al-Tahāwī, for if employed, it negates the fact that this creed is “*bayān*”. Examples of such objections will be shown in the explanation further on.
3. `Aqīdah comes from the word `aqd, which means that which binds or knots. In this sense, `aqīdah is sought in and of itself and sticks with the person completely. `Aqīdah is sought after for itself, not only because it is a condition for the validity of actions. Even if an action is not obligatory, `aqīdah is still necessary-for it is the foundation of everything.
4. *Ahlul Sunnah* are those who follow the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ and make up the majority of the Ummah - the *sawad al-a`zam*, as reported in numerous narrations. So they are the people of the Sunnah, not innovation, and they are the people of the *Jamā`ah*, and not people of division and sectarianism.

5. The word *madhhab* is a noun denoting place, taken from the verb *dhababa-yadhbabu-dhabab*: literally a place of going. A *madhhab* is a school of thought, having specific methods in establishing the grades of evidence and expressing certain understandings. As for the issues discussed in *usūl al-dīn*, Imām Abū Hanīfah had a particular method in explaining them. This does not imply that his actual beliefs were at odds with the other Sunni *madhhabs*. So, Imām Abū Hanīfa's method in *`aqīdah* was somewhat different than that of Imām Abūl Hasan al-Ash`arī, although the differences between them were in styles of expressing the same truth, not differences in the actual creedal matters - save certain subsidiary issues.

6. *`Aqīdah* is also called *usūl* - or fundamentals. The fundamentals are those matters from which the subsidiary issues branch out. The scholar of creed have counted from the Usūl, both those things that are clear cut and established (*qatī*), as well as those things that are conjectural (*dhanni*). In other words, things that allow no difference of opinion, and those that do allow a difference - things that shall be mentioned later on in the text of the Tahāwīyyah.

7. *Usūl al-dīn*, according to Imām al-Tahāwī, are those matters of belief, and the subsidiary matters (*Furū'*) are the matters of action. One issue of possible confusion is Imām al-Tahāwī's including the topic of wiping the leather socks into his creed. Wiping over the leather socks is a dispensation allowed to this Ummah and it is a *fiqhī* subsidiary matter, not one of creed. The response to this is that Imām al-Tahāwī included this issue from the angle of belief that it is allowed, not that it is obligatory in and of itself. So a person rejecting the permissibility of wiping over the leather socks is a disbeliever, for rejecting that which is established through decisive clear cut (*qatī*) texts. A person is not sinful, much less a disbeliever, if he never performs the wiping over the leather socks.

It is possible to say that the expression *usūl al-dīn* covers those matters that are clear cut (*qatī*), both in issues of beliefs and actions.

It is also possible to say that the expression *usūl al-dīn* covers the fundamentals of both creed and *fiqh* - since the *dīn* itself encompasses both beliefs and actions; he then says:

We say about Allāh's unity, believing by Allāh's help that:

1. Allāh is One, without any partners.
2. There is nothing like Him.
3. There is nothing that can overwhelm Him.
4. There is no god other than Him.
5. Eternal without end

1. Allāh is One without any partners. Something can only have a partner if it shares with it in some qualities. As for the one without any resemblance to anything, then He has no partners. Partnership necessitates that the dominion is divided up and that one partner cannot take a hold of or manage the dominion of the other without permission - and that is false and invalid with respect to Allāh ﷻ. He is *al-Mālik* (the King and Owner) alone. It is impossible for there to be a partner in His dominion for if there were, then He could not be called *al-Mālik* - the one who possesses everything.

2. There is nothing like Allāh. This is the universal principle of the *tawhīd* of Allāh. We shall delve into this point in more detail when we reach the sections where he addresses the corrupt beliefs of the anthropomorphists.

3. The meaning of the word used here, *al-`ajz*, means being incapable and unable to obtain what is sought after. Based upon this meaning, Imām al-Tahāwī is saying that nothing prevents Allāh from actualizing what He wants. Take notice of the fact that something or someone that prevents another must possess and will and power that is independent of the will and power of the one prevented. Without that, it is impossible for it to occur.

4. There is no deity besides Him. We shall delve into the details of the point further into the text Allāh willing.

5. The word *al-Qadīm* is derived from the word *al-qidam*. The technical meaning of *al-qidam* according to the scholar of this science is; without beginning. It does not mean existence within time that has no beginning because time itself is a creation of Allāh and Allāh does not have anything of His creation eternally coexisting along with Him. This description of Allāh as *al-Qadīm*- both directly and indirectly is found in some of the primary texts such as the narration in the Sunan of Abū Dawūd in which it states that the Messenger of Allāh, ﷺ would say upon entering the Masjid:

“*aūdhu billāhil `azīm, wa bi wajhīhil karīm, wa bi sultānihīl qadīm mina al-shaytān al-rajīm.*” “I seek refuge with Allāh the Almighty, and with His Noble Wajh, and with his beginningless Authority from the accursed Satan.”

There is also a narration found in the *mustadrak* of al-Hākim as well as the *sunan* of Ibn Mājah in which the name, *al-Qadīm* is listed as one of Allāh’s names. These two narrations are not rigorously authenticated, but they nevertheless establish for us that the description *al-Qadīm* can be ascribed to Allāh the Most High.

We mention this because, some individuals have made a large fuss over this wording. Shaykh `Abdul `Azīz ibn Bāz said in his footnotes on the creed of Imām al-Tahāwī:

“The phrase *Qadīm bilā ibtida’* (‘eternal with no beginning’) did not occur among the Best Names of Allāh as pointed out by a number of scholars. It was first mentioned by the scholars of Kalām in an effort to prove Allāh’s existence before anything else. Let it be known that the Names of Allāh are of a divine origin. Only those names for which there is evidence in the Qur’ān and the authentic Sunnah can be used for Allāh. They cannot be introduced into the Islamic vocabulary simply at one’s whim, and this has been clearly understood by the Imāms of the pious predecessors. In fact, the word *Qadīm* does not even denote the meaning which the people of Kalām wished to express. In Arabic, it means something preceding another, though it is itself preceded by nothing, such as in the saying of Allāh: **‘*Till she (the moon) returns like the old lower part of a date-stalk.*’** (*Ya Sin 36:39*) Although the addition of *bilā ibtida’* makes the meaning crystal clear, it is not valid to be counted among the best Names of Allāh because there is no proof for it in the Book or the Sunnah. Instead, Allāh’s name *al-Annwāl* (the First) expresses this idea better, as shown in His saying: : **‘*He is the First and the Last.*’** (*Hadid 57:3*)”

However, upon closer examination, we find numerous errors in the above quoted words of Ibn Bāz.

1. His claims that the word *al-Qadīm* does not appear in the primary texts. We have shown that there are references to the word *al-Qadīm* in two weakened narrations. Even though they are weak, it shows that the scholars use of the word *al-Qadīm* was not a mere borrowing from Greek philosophical writings.

2. His claims that this word was coined by the scholars of Kalām. This is incorrect. Many of the scholars of Hadīth used the term al-Qadīm, not to mention the primary source of salafis-Shaykh Ahmad ibn Taymīyya. In fact, Imām al-Bayhaqī narrated a consensus of the Ummah regarding the permissibility of using the word al-Qadīm.

3. His claim that those who use al-Qadīm, take it as a name for Allāh. This is a false claim. The scholars of creed have textually stated that al-Qadīm is used as a description and not a name-as mentioned by Imām al-Ghazālī in his explanation of Allāh’s beautiful names.

The sole intention of Shaykh Ibn Bāz in his footnote was to oppose the scholars of *kalām* - even if with falsehood. If that was not his intention, then why did he remain silent concerning Imām at-Tahawī’s passage when he used the word *al-Dā’im* (the everlasting eternal)?

