



O Allah! Give [me] success, uprightness, and ease!

ALL PRAISE belongs to Allah who became manifest to all of His slaves through His attributes and names, who left the minds of those in search [of Him] wandering in the wilderness of His pride, and clipped the wings of reflection [until their owners fell] below the sanctuary of His might. [Praise be to Him, the one who] towered high in His majesty beyond the faculties of comprehension from grasping the quintessence of His true nature, who gave perfection to the hearts of His friends and elect, and engulfed their souls until they become scorched by the fire of His love and perplexed by the brilliance of the light of His greatness. Their tongues became mute from [every attempt at] extolling the beauty of His [divine] presence, except the extent of what He allowed them to hear of His names and attributes. He informed them on the tongue of His messenger, Muhammad ﷺ, the best of His creation, and [on the tongues] of his companions and his family.

I proceed...You have asked me (may Allah give you right guidance) about the reports that give the impression of there being resemblance [between Allah and His creation] to the hooligans (*ra'ā*) and fools among the deviant crpto-anthropomorphists (*hashwiyya*)¹, whereas they have believed about Allah and His attributes things that He is high beyond and sanctified from having—such as “the form,” the “hand,” the “mouth,” “the foot,” “the descent,” “the transference from place to place,” the “sitting on the Throne and the establishment,” and other things of a like nature that they have adopted from the literal indications of the reports and the physical forms they depict. [You asked about the fact that] they have claimed that what they believe in this regard is the belief of the Salaf, thus I wanted to explain to you what the belief of the Salaf was, in order to clarify what is compulsory for the general masses of people to believe about the reports. This will remove the veil that is obscuring the truth with respect to it, and distinguish between what must be studied and looked for, and what must be abstained and refrained from indulging in. For this, I have answered your request, seeking closeness to Allah ﷻ, by revealing the unequivocal truth without any flattery, [without] observing a [particular] side [in the debate], and [without] maintaining any partisan bias toward any adherent of a particular *madhhab*—since the truth is more deserving of observation, and truthfulness and impartiality are more deserving of preservation. I ask Allah ﷻ for straightness and success----and He is [most] fit for answering he who calls on Him. Now, I will arrange the book into three chapters: [1] a chapter explaining the reality of the *madhhab* of the Salaf with regard to these reports; [2] a chapter concerning the proof indicating that the truth in its regard is the *madhhab* of the Salaf and that he who acts contrary to them is an innovator; and [3] a chapter with respect to [a number of] useful scattered sections related to this matter.

¹ This term was applied to some of the Hanbali scholars like those who Ibn al-Jawzī rebutted in his *Daf' Shubah al-Tashbih*, like Qādī Abū Ya'lā, Ibn Hāmid, and Ibn Zāghūnī. It also applies to anyone who adopts a similar creed as those who say that Allah has a hand unlike hands, an eye unlike eyes, and a foot unlike feet. This is just as the blatant Anthropomorphists said, “Allah is a body unlike bodies.”

CHAPTER 1

THE CREED OF THE SALAF REGARDING ALLEGORICAL REPORTS

Know that the unequivocal truth, over which there is no dispute between those possessing inner discernment, is [in] the approach of the Salaf (*madhhab al-Salaf*)—meaning the approach of the Companions and the Successors. Now, let me illustrate that along with its proofs, I proceed.

The reality of the approach of the Salaf—which is the truth in our view—is that any layperson who confronts one of these controversial ambiguous ḥadīths is obliged to conform to seven matters: [1] Exoneration; [2] Affirmation; [3] Acknowledgement of one’s inability; [4] Silence; [5] Abstinence; [6] Restraint; and then [7] Yielding to the People of Knowledge.

As for exoneration (*taqḍīs*), by this I mean [that a person is] to absolve the Lord, Glory and Highness be to Him, from bodily characteristics and the subordinate characters [of a body].

As for affirmation (*taṣḍīq*), this is to believe in what he (the Prophet) ﷺ said, that what he mentioned is truth, that he is truthful in whatever he says, and that it is truth in accord with what *he* said and intended.

As for acknowledging one’s inability (*al-i’tirāf bi al-‘ajz*), this is for one to acknowledge that knowing his (i.e. the Prophet’s & Allah’s) intent is beyond the scope of one’s capacity, and that such a thing is not any of his business or profession.

As for silence (*sukūt*), this is to *not* ask about its meaning, not to indulge in it, to know that asking about it is an illicit innovation (*bid’a*), that by indulging in it one is bringing serious risk to his faith, and that he is on the verge of rejecting faith by indulging in it without knowing.

As for abstinence (*al-imsāk*), this is for him *not* to alter or replace those expressions with another language, not to add or subtract from it, or by combining or separating [any words]. Rather, one is only to utter that particular expression or word in that particular manner of mention, grammatical classification, declension, and wording.

As for restraint (*al-kaff*), this is to keep one’s heart from searching and pondering over it.

As for yielding to its specialists (*al-taslīm li ahlihi*), this is for one *not* to believe that just because such a thing is confusing to him due to his inability, that it was also confusing to Allah’s messenger ﷺ, to the prophets, to the truly sincere in faith (*ṣiddīqīn*), or the friends of God (*awliyā’*).

So these are seven protocols that every single one of the Salaf believed to be an obligation of all laypeople—and it should not be thought that the Salaf—disagreed about any part of that.

Now, let us further explain each protocol, one by one, by God’s will.