

Preview Version



SHEIKH
TAWFIQUE CHOWDHURY

THE KING OF KINGS

Belief in Allah's **Names & Attributes**



Importance of this knowledge

1. **This knowledge is of the most excellent without any exception.**

The excellence of any field of study is determined by its subject. The subject studied here is Allah's Names, His Attributes and His actions, which are the greatest matters that can be known, therefore Tawhid of Allah's Names and attributes is the greatest of sciences.

Some of the salaf said, "Whoever wishes to know the difference between the speech of the creator and of the creation, should look at the difference between the Creator and the creation themselves."

Different verses in chapters in the Qur'an vary with each other in excellence. This is because of the different subjects they deal with. Surah Al-Ikhlās equals one-third of the Qur'an because it is dedicated to describing Al-Rahman. One of the Salaf said, "Tabbat Yada Abi Lahab" is not like "Qul Huwallahu Ahad".

Ayat Al-Kursi is the greatest Ayah in the Qur'an as it is devoted to describing Allah, His Majesty and Greatness.

Likewise Al-Fatiha is the greatest Sura in the Qur'an. It is based on the praise of Allah.

2. **Teaching Allah's Names and Attributes is one of the greatest goals of the Qur'an**

The Quran in its entirety is simply a call to Tawheed. Ibn Al-Qayyim stated, "Every Sura in the Qur'an comprises Tawhid. In fact, I shall state an absolute: Every verse in the Qur'an comprises Tawhid, attests to it, and calls to it. For the Qur'an is at times a communication about Allah, His Names, His Attributes and His Actions which is Tawhid in knowledge and information. At other times it calls to the worship of Allah alone, without any partners, whilst rejecting all that is worshipped along with Him. This is Tawhid in intention and pursuit. There are times when it commands and prohibits and necessitates Allah's obedience in His commands and prohibitions. These are the rights of Tawhid and those matters which perfect it. At other times it tells of Allah's

generosity to those who adhere to His Tawhid and obedience, what happens to them in this world, and the way they are honoured in the after-life. This is the reward of Tawhid. It also tells of the people of Shirk and the way they are punished in this world, and their chastisement in the hereafter, so it informs us of those who fail to fulfill the obligation of Tawhid. All of the Qur'an, therefore, is about Tawhid, its rights and its rewards, and about the issue Shirk, its people and their recompense.” [Madarij Al-Salikin]

3. Learning about Allah’s names and attributes fulfills the first pillar of Emaan – which is belief in Allah.

Emaan in Allah entails knowledge of Allah. Learning about this Knowledge is therefore vital to fulfilling one’s Emaan.

4. Knowledge of Allah's Names and attributes leads to submission and worship of Him

Knowing Allah leads to servitude to Him. Every Name and every attribute of Allah warrants a particular form of worship.

“Al-Ghafir” (The Oft-Forgiving) is one of Allah's Names. It necessitates on to turn to Him, seeking His forgiveness. “Al-Sami” (The Ever Hearing) leads one to engage in the dhikr (Remembrance) of Allah, to pray to him and to enjoin the good and forbid vice.

One of the Salaf said, “He who knows more about Allah has more fear of Him.” Ibn Al-Qayyim said, “He who is more knowledgeable of Allah, has more fear of Him. He is closer to Allah, and has a greater desire to worship Him.”

Comprehensive knowledge of Allah leads to correct and balanced worship. Knowing Allah through His attributes of mercy alone can make one lax. Knowing Allah through His Might alone can lead one to despair. Knowing Allah through His Beauty, His Might and Mercy leads to love, hope and fear.

5. Knowledge of Allah's Names and Attributes is the source of all knowledge.

Every knowledge that exists is related either to Allah's legislation [Sharh] and command [Amr] or creation [Khalq].

﴿أَلَا لَهُ الْخَلْقُ وَالْأَمْرُ﴾

“His is the creation, His is the command.” [7:54]

“Whoever has sound knowledge of Allah’s Names and Attributes is able to derive many of Allah’s laws. He who truly knows Allah can deduce what He does and the laws He prescribes through his knowledge of Allah’s Attributes and Actions.” [Sheikh Abdul Rahman Al-Sa’di]

The opposite also holds true: Ignorance of Allah’s Names and attributes is the origin of all evil and the cause of all loss.

﴿وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ نَسُوا اللَّهَ فَأَنْسَاهُمْ أَنْفُسَهُمْ أُولَٰئِكَ

هُمْ الْفَاسِقُونَ﴾

“Be not like those who forgot Allah, and Allah made them forget themselves. Those are the losers.” [59:19]

﴿وَأَصْبِرْ نَفْسَكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ رَبَّهُمْ بِالْغَدَاةِ وَالْعَشِيِّ يُرِيدُونَ

وَجْهَهُ ۖ وَلَا تَعْدُ عَيْنَاكَ عَنْهُمْ تُرِيدُ زِينَةَ الدُّنْيَا ۖ وَلَا تُطِيعْ مَنْ

أَغْفَلْنَا قَلْبَهُ عَنِ ذِكْرِنَا وَاتَّبَعَ هَوَاهُ وَكَانَ أَمْرُهُ فُرْطًا﴾

“And keep yourself patient with those that call upon their Lord in the morning and night seeking His Face. And do not turn your gaze away from them to seek the distractions of this life. Nor obey the one whose heart We have sealed from our remembrance and who followed his whims whilst his cause was lost.” [18:28]

6. Preoccupying oneself with the knowledge of Allah's Names and attributes is to preoccupy oneself with the purpose for which we were created.

Allah brought His creation into existence for them to know Him and to worship Him.

﴿اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ سَبْعَ سَمَوَاتٍ وَمِنَ الْأَرْضِ مِثْلَهُنَّ يَتَنَزَّلُ الْأَمْرُ بَيْنَهُنَّ

لِتَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ أَحَاطَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عِلْمًا﴾

“Allah it is who created seven heavens, and their like on earth. He sends the commands down in between. That you may know that Allah holds power over all things and that Allah has encompassed all things in His knowledge.” [65:12]

﴿وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ﴾

“I created the jinn and humans but to worship Me.” [51:58]

7. Texts from the Qur'an and Sunnah mentioning the excellence of knowing Allah's Names and Attributes.

Allah has commanded us to learn and know about His Names and Attributes.

﴿وَأَعْلَمَنَّ أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ﴾

“Know that Allah is Almighty, All-Wise.” [2:260]

﴿أَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ﴾

“Know that Allah is severe in punishment and Allah is All-Forgiving.” [5:98]

﴿وَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَأَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ مَوْلَكُمْ نِعَمَ الْمَوْلَىٰ وَنِعَمَ النَّصِيرُ﴾

“And if they turn away, then Know that Allah is your Protector: How excellent a Protector and what an excellent Helper!” [8:40]

8. Learning Allah's Names and Attributes is one of the ways to increase one's Ēmaan

Emaan increases and decreases. There are means through which a Muslim increases it, and there are ways through which it decreases. The servant of Allah must strive to take the means to increase it and to abstain from all that decreases one's Emaan.

One of the greatest ways to increase one's Iman is to learn Allah's Names and Attributes.

﴿إِنَّمَا تَخْشَى اللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الْعُلَمَاءُ﴾

“From among His worshippers, Only the knowledgeable fear Allah.” [35:28]

He who knows more about Allah has more fear of Him.

9. The Danger of adopting false notions in this area of knowledge.

﴿وَلِلَّهِ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَىٰ فَادْعُوهُ بِهَا وَذَرُوا الَّذِينَ يُلْحِدُونَ فِي أَسْمَائِهِ ۚ﴾

﴿سَيُجْزَوْنَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ﴾

“Allah has the Most Exalted Names, so worship Him through them. Abandon those who deviate concerning them. They shall be requited for what they used to do.” [7:180]

﴿ وَمَا كُنْتُمْ تَسْتَتِرُونَ أَنْ يَشْهَدَ عَلَيْكُمْ سَمْعُكُمْ وَلَا أَبْصَارُكُمْ وَلَا جُلُودُكُمْ وَلَكِنْ ظَنَنْتُمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَعْلَمُ كَثِيرًا مِمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴾

“You were not discreet lest your eyes and ears and skins might testify against you; instead you imagined that Allah does not know most of what you do.” [41:22]

﴿ وَقَالُوا اتَّخَذَ الرَّحْمَنُ وَلَدًا ﴾ لَقَدْ جِئْتُمْ شَيْئًا إِذَا ﴿٨٨﴾ تَكَادُ السَّمَوَاتُ يَتَفَطَّرْنَ مِنْهُ وَتَنْشَقُّ الْأَرْضُ وَتَخِرُّ الْجِبَالُ هَدًّا ﴿٨٩﴾ أَنْ دَعَوْا لِلرَّحْمَنِ وَلَدًا ﴿٩٠﴾ وَمَا يَنْبَغِي لِلرَّحْمَنِ أَنْ يَتَّخِذَ وَلَدًا ﴿٩١﴾ إِنْ كُلُّ مَنْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ إِلَّا آتَى الرَّحْمَنِ عَبْدًا ﴿٩٢﴾

“And they say: The All-Merciful has taken a son! Truly, you have uttered a thing most terrible! The heavens are about to be rent assunder, the earth to split apart and the mountains to stagger and collapse in utter ruin – that you should ascribe a son to the Most Merciful. It does fit the All Merciful to take to son for Himself.” [Maryam:88-93]

History of the deviance in Aqeedah

Deviance and straying away from the true aqeedah did not happen in one instance or in any one single place. It happened gradually over time and distance and as new nations and tribes joined the Muslim ummah over time.

The following is a chronicle of aqeedah until the 4th Century of the Muslim ummah.

Beginning of revelation – 37 A.H.

The revelation was still being sent down in the language that people understood. The shahabah understood it, accepted it and acted upon it. Not one of the shahabah ever differed on any point of the belief in Allah's names and attributes.

The shahabah never differed on a single issue of Allah's names and attributes	Ibnul Qayyim said: "The companions differed in a number of matters of jurisprudential rulings – and they are the best of the believers and the most complete of the ummah in Emaan. However, it has never been reported that they ever differed in a single issue regarding Allah's names and attributes and actions." [AlI'laam alMuwaqqiyeen (1/49)]
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There were only 2 incidents ever reported in this era of any sign of any possibility of major differences erupting, but it was promptly quelled:

- From Abdullah bin Amr bin AlAas: The Prophet sallallahu alaihi wa sallam came out whilst some of them (companions) were debating about Pre-decree. One of them was referring to a verse and another one to another verse, so the Prophet's face turned red like that of the heart of a pomegranent and he said: "Is this what I have told you to do to pit one verse of the book of Allah against another? Rather, do that which I have ordered you to do and leave that which I have forbidden you from." [Authentic. Reported by ALLalika'ee in Sharh Usul I'tiqaad Ahlus-Sunnah wal Jamah]
- A man from the tribe of Banu Ghunaym by the name of Sabeegh came to medinah with his books and he began to question and ask about metaphorical verses in the Quran. So Umar radiallahu anhu heard about it and sent from him and prepared lashes from the bark of date palms for him. When he arrived, he began to hit him on his head until it began to trickle with blood and he didn't stop until Sabeegh said: "Enough O Amirul-Mu'mineen. Indeed I am



Remember that it has never been reported that any of the shahabah ever thereafter differed on Qadr. Rather, what has been cleared reported is that they condemned the Qadariyyah when they arose and disassociated from them.

now clear about the matter that was confusing me.” [Authentically reported by Allalika’ee in Sharh Usul I’tiqaad Ahlus-Sunnah wal-Jamah. No. 1138]

37 A.H. to 100 A.H.

This was the time that starts from the middle of the rein of Ali Radiallahu anhu till 63 years after that – was the time that the leading sects of innovation arose.

4 main deviant groups arose in this time	First came the Khawarij who hated Ali and wanted to kill him and then opposing them, the Shee’ah who loved Ali and wanted to help him. Then at the same time, arose the Qadiriyyah who did not believe in Qadr. Lastly came the Murji’ah who believed in Emaan without actions.
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- **Khawarij:** They were the first of the deviant sects to arise. They arose in the year 37A.H. They differed with Ali stating that by using men to judge between him and Mu’waiyyah, Ali had committed disbelief. They justified their statement using the verse:

One of them told Ali: “By Allah, O Ali! If you do not leave the judgement of men regarding the book of Allah the most Glorious, then I will seek the happiness and the face of Allah by fighting and killing you.” [Reported by Tarikh At-Tabari (Vol 5, page 72)]

They did not accept any arguments put forward by Ali radiallahu anhu. Rather, they took their misguidance forward until they judged everyone that committed a major sin – to be a disbeliever whose wealth and blood are permissible to be spilt.

- Shee'ah:** There were a group of companions of the Prophet sallallahu alaihi wa sallam, as well as a group amongst the early tabieen and tabi-tabieen who felt that Ali was more worthy to be khaleefah before Uthman radiallahu anhu. They were all part of Ahlus sunnah wal Jamah and not one of them had even one ounce of the levels of extremism that the religion of the Shee'ah have. Ibn Taymiyyah said: "It has been reported in mutawatir form from Ali bin Abi Talib that he said: The best of this Ummah after its Prophet is Abu Bakr and then Umar. This is a matter which is agreed upon by the early Shee'ah and they all used to prefer Abu Bakr and Umar. However, the difference arose regarding Ali and Uthman when there became a party for this and a party for that. As for Abu Bakr and Umar, then no one used to be partisan regarding them and the whole ummah was in agreement regarding them, even the khawarij..." [AnNubuwwat, pg 132]

Then came a man by the name of Abdullah bin Saba' who was originally a Jew and then accepted Islam in order to destroy it. He began to claim that Ali is a Prophet and was the chosen one after Muhammad sallallahu alaihi wa sallam and commanded people to love and obey Ali. They took their extremism to the level of even claiming Ali to be a God. They were the first group to believe in the Godship of their Imams, the fact that their Imams are hiding until an appointed time and that their Imams have been chosen by Allah to lead Muslims and any one who opposes this to be a disbeliever. [Reported by AlBaghdadi in AlFarq baynal-Firaq, pg 235] They also went to extremes in making takfeer of the shahabah except for a handful of them. The Shee'ah have been reported to have fabricated over 100,000 hadeeth about the greatness and excellence of Ali radiallahu anhu over other shahabah. [Reported by Ibn Taymiyyah in Sharhus-Sunnah]

- **Qadriyyah:** Throughout the ages, sinners have used the excuse of Qadr to justify their evil. The Quran talks about how the mushrikeen of the Quraish attributed their disbelief to the will of Allah.

﴿وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا لَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مَا عَبَدْنَا مِنْ دُونِهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ
نَحْنُ وَلَا آبَاؤُنَا وَلَا حَرَمْنَا مِنْ دُونِهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ كَذَلِكَ فَعَلَ الَّذِينَ
مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ فَهَلْ عَلَى الرُّسُلِ إِلَّا الْبَلَاغُ الْمُبِينُ﴾

“Those who committed shirk said: ‘Had Allah willed, then neither us nor our forefathers would not have worshipped anyone other than Him nor forbidden anything besides His prohibitions.’ In the same manner were the statements and actions of those before them. Is there therefore anything more on the Messengers except to deliver the message?” [AnNahl: 35]

It has already preceeded that a group of the shahabah had argued about Qadr, but it was promptly quelled by the Prophet sallallahu alaihi wa salam and they never returned to it ever again.

The first person to state their frank disbelief in Qadr was a man by the name of Ma’bad alJuhani who arose after 50 A.H. It was reported that he had taken his deviance from a man by the name of Sousan who was a Christian that had accepted Islam and then went back to Christianity. [From the words of AlAwza’ee as reported by ALLalika’ee, No. 1398] Ma’bad then taught this deviance to his student by the name of Gheelan. The belief of the Qadriyyah rested on 2 deviances:

- First: Negation of Allah’s knowledge preceeding an event.
- Second: The slave is the one who originates actions by himself.

Ibn Hajr reports from AlQurtubi that he said: “This group has been wiped out, and there is no one who attributes himself to this group from the later generations.” He continued: “The present day Qadriyyah hold that Allah is indeed knowledgeable about the actions of a slave before they take place, but they differ from the salaf in their statement that the actions of a slave are pre-ordained and take place by their individual capacity only.” [Fathul-Bari (1/119)]

- **Murji'ah:** This group was called by this name, since they used to withhold [Ar. Irja] actions being consider a part of Emaan.

The one who was first considered to have spoken with Irja was a scholar by the name of AlHasan bin Muhammad alHanafiyyah [Died 99A.H.] rahimahullah. He did not invent that same Irja as that which is rebuked by Ahlus sunnah; rather he withheld having an opinion regarding those shahabah who differed between themselves regarding the fitnah of Ali and Mu'awiyah. This is confirmed by Ibn Hajr who had read the book of AlHasan Bin Muhammad himself. Ibn Hajr said: "The Irja that Muhammad bin AlHasan spoke about was not the Irja that Ahlus Sunnah rebuke – which is in the matter of Emaan. This is because, I have myself come across the book of Muhammad bin AlHasan and he said in it: And in the matter of those (companions and their students) after Abu Bakr and Umar, who differed and fought with each other, then we leave their affair to Allah..." [Tahdheeb at-Tahdheeb (2/320)]

As for the first one who actually spoke about the Irja in Emaan, was Gheelan [Died 105A.H.], the student of Ma'bad alJuhani. Then it was Jahm bin Safwan [Died 128 A.H.] who carried on this statement from Gheelan and made it a well known position in Emaan of the sect known as the Jahmiyyah, whose mention is coming up in the next era.

100 A.H. to 150 A.H.

The next stage in the evolution of innovation in the Islamic creed, was heralded by the rise of 4 individuals that became heads of innovation.

4 main individuals that were the leaders of innovation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Wasil bin A'taa [Died 131 A.H.] He was born in Medinah and was a student of AlHasan alBasri, until AlHasan turned him away for his deviance. He was the one who setup the sect known as the Mu'tazilah. 2. Ja'd bin Dirham [Died 124 A.H.] Born in Khurasan and died in Dimashq. The first to claim that the Quran was created and for this he was killed by the Amir of Kufah Khalid bin Abdullah alQusari, on the day of Eid AlAdha in 124 A.H. 3. Jahm bin Safwan [Died 128 A.H.] Born in Samarkand and was the leader of a group of deviants that became known as the Jahmiyyah. There is not deviant sect in existence today except that it has been affected by some sort of deviance from this man. He used to debate Muqatil Bin Sulaimaan in his masjid and was killed by Salm bin Ahwadh in Asbahan in 128 A.H. when he rebelled against the Sultan there. 4. Muqatil bin Sulaimaan [Died 150 A.H.] Well known mufassir of the Quran who delved into anthropomorphism. He used to debate Jahm bin Safwan until he was rejected.
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Wasil bin A'taa

Wasil came up with two types of bidah:

- First: He said that the one who does a major sin is in a position between a believer and a disbeliever, although in the hereafter, he would be in the fire.
- Second: He considered one group of the sahabah that fought each other to be untrustworthy, without clearly stating which group of the two he intended. As a result, he blemished their trustworthiness and did not accept the witness of any of them.

Ja'd bin Dirham

He was the first to state that the Quran was created and rejected that Allah had spoken with it in reality.

The first person to reject the attributes of Allah was Ja'd bin Dirham	Ibn Taymiyyah rahimahullah said: "The first person that it has been narrated from that he said this statement in Islam – That Allah is not above His Throne in reality and that the mean of Istiwa (i.e. that He rose over) means Istawla (i.e. that He conquered) and similar examples of that, was Ja'd bin Dirham. This was taken from him by Jahm bin Safwan who spread it and proclaimed it and the official position of the Jahmiyyah is thus attributed to him (instead of to Ja'd bin Dirham who originally said it)." [AlFatawa (5/20)]
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Jahm bin Safwaan

Jahm took on the innovations of Ja'd bin dirham in firstly: negating the attributes of Allah and secondly: in saying that the Quran is created. He also came up with a few more innovations:

- Thirdly: That mankind is completely pre-ordained in every deed and action and compelled by qadr into it without having any element of free will at all.
- Fourthly: That Emaan is simple 'to know' [Ar. Ma'rifah]. According to this meaning, anyone who knows Allah has emaan. Based on this, Shaitaan, Firawn, the people of the book etc.. are all believers and their level of Emaan is as strong as the level of Emaan of Rasulullah and Jibraeel sallallahu alaihi wa sallam.

- Fifthly: That Jannah and Jahannam will eventually extinguish since according to him, external action and existence is impossible.
- Sixthly: That the knowledge of Allah is recent and not in the past – and that is not possible for Allah to know something before it happens. Glory be to Allah from what is attributed to Him!

Muqatil bin Sulaiman

He was a mufassir of the Quran who made the mistake of debating Jahm bin Safwan, until he went to the other extreme and resembled Allah to His creation! AdDhahabi said: “In Khurasan, Jahm bin Safwan rose to prominence and called to the negation of attributes from Allah and that the Quran is created and in Khurasan opposing him arose Muqatil bin Sulaiman the mufassir who went to extreme in affirming the attributes until he resembled Allah to His creation.” [Tadhkiratul-Huffadh , pg159]

150 A.H. to 234 A.H.

4 main sects survived into this time: The Khawarij, the Shee'ah, the Mu'tazilah and the Murji'ah. The Shee'ah took on the views of the anthropomorphism of Muqatil bin Sulaiman and the Mu'tazilah took on the statement of the Qadiriyyah against Qadr and a part of the belief of the Jahmiyyah regarding Allah's names and attributes. The Jabariyyah entered into the Murji'ah and other sects.

This period was the time in which the Mu'tazilah spread their power and influence, until they convinced the Khaleefah Ma'moon [ruled from 198A.H. to 218A.H.] to make the Mu'tazilah aqeedah, the norm across the muslim lands. In this matter, they punished the scholars of Ahlus-Sunnah and tested them severely. This continued into the reign of AlMu'tasim and AlWathiq who continued the fitnah until finally the time of alMutawakkil in the year 232 A.H. when the fitnah came to an end.

The Mu'tazilah glorified logic and the mind over the texts of the Quran and Sunnah. The reason why they did that perhaps has something to do with the fact that they arose in newly conquered provinces where other sects and religions predominated – such as the Jews, Christians, Zoroastrians, Pagans, Magians – those who do not believe in the validity of the Quran and Sunnah. As a result the Mu'tazilah debated them using logic in order to refute their beliefs and doubts.

The Mu'tazilah said statements like:

- Abul-Hasan alAllaaf [d.226], one of the leaders of the Mu'tazilah said: The abilities of Allah will come to an end, after which there will be no one left with any ability to do anything. [AlFarq baynal-Firaq, pg 122]
- AnNadhaam [d.231], the student of Abul-Hasan alAllaaf who said:
 - “That it is not possible for Allah to have any ability to do evil or harm and that is something beyond His ability.” [AlFarq baynal-firaq, pg.133]
 - He denied the miracles of the Quran and the miracles of Rasulullah sallallahu alaihi wa sallam like the splitting of the moon, the praising of the stones and salutations of it as he passed it by.
 - He rejected the trustworthiness of the companions of the Prophet sallallahu alaihi wa sallam due to some of their fatwas and used to consider Abu Hurairah a great liar and insulted the honour of Umar, Uthman, Ali and others.

- That Allah cannot be seen on the day of Judgement with our eyes, but rather He will be seen in our mind.

The fitnah of the Mu'tazilah went on until it led them to convince AlMa'moon to test and punish the likes of Imam Ahmed who remained firm throughout the test. It was since that time and due to his firm resolve upon the pure and pristine belief of the pious predecessors that he came to be known as the Imam of Ahlus-Sunnah.

232 A.H. to 324 A.H.

2 main individuals arose in this time that led to the rising of some of the main modern sects of our time:

1. Abdullah bin Sa'eed bin Kullab [d.242A.H.]
2. Muhammad bin Karram as-Sijistani [d.255A.H.]

Abdullah bin Sa'eed bin Kullab

He invented two main pieces of innovation:

- a. That Allah cannot have the attributes of choice that are time limited such as the attributes of actions (anger, happiness, speaking, love etc.), but can only have perpetual attributes that are not dependant on choice (seeing, hearing, majesty, honour etc.). So according to him, Allah cannot get angry at or speak to or love who He wants or when He wants, neither in the present nor in the future.
- b. That Allah's speech is of two types: Internal speech and external speech. So he said that when Allah speaks, He infact speaks to Himself internally and this Quran is infact simply a creation and narration of that internal speech that has taken place internally.

These two positions that were proposed by Ibn Kullab was never mentioned by anyone else before him. His views affected a lot of people – even a man by the name of Abul Hasan alAshari and Abu Mansoor alMaturidi.

Abul Hasan alAshari was a Mu'tazili scholar who later on, left the Mu'tazilah and was affected by the thinking of Ibn Kullab. In addition to the views of Ibn Kullab, he added on 2 more positions, that of the Jabariyyah in Qadr (That human beings have no choice and we are forced into doing everything) and the statement of the Murji'ah in Emaan (That Emaan is simply to know Allah or to testify the truthfulness with the heart and that actions have no effect). Then prior

to his death, Abul Hasan AlAshari left his previous opinions and followed the madhab of Imam Ahmed in aqeedah – that of Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jama’ah. He wrote two books to announce his leaving the path of deviance and acknowledged his following of Ahlus Sunnah: AlIbanah and Maqalat alIslamiyyeen. He said in Maqalat alIslamiyyeen after mentioning the aqeedah of Ahlul-Hadeeth (Ahlus-Sunnah wal-Jama’ah: “...And by everything that they have mentioned, is my belief and my opinion and there is no guidance for us except from Allah...” [Maqalat AlIslamiyyeen (1/350)]

The 4 positions of Abul Hasan during the second stage in his life, became the madhab of the followers of AbulHasan al-Ashari who were known as the Asha’irah:

- That Allah is only described by perpetual attributes, and not the attributes of choice.
- That Allah’s speech is of two types: internal and external and that the Quran is created to simply narrate the internal speech that has already taken place by Allah within Himself.
- That we are all forced into doing things and we have no choice in our actions.
- That Emaan is simply to know and acknowledge that in the heart and that actions do not affect Emaan.

Abu Mansoor AlMaturidi who lived in the same time as Abul-Hasan alAsh’ari was also heavily affected by the statements of Ibn Kullab and his views resembled the opinions of Abul-Hasan alAsh’ari in everything except approximately 12 different matters. Some scholars even mentioned that this difference was only of a simple difference in phrases and not true differences in reality.

However, since Abul-Hasan alAsh’ari left the position of Ibn Kullab towards the end of his life, those who called themselves Ashari in aqeedah, are in fact followers of Ibn Kullab in Asma wa Sifat, of the Jahmiyyah in Qadr and of the Murji’ah in Emaan.

Muhammad bin Karram as-Sijistani

He invented three different statements that were never said by anyone else before:

- a. He attributed a body to Allah and said that Allah has a body.
[Ar. Jism]

- b. He was the first to claim that Allah's attributes had a beginning point – so He only had the attribute of speech after He first spoke and before that, He did not have that attribute.
- c. He said that Emaan is simply the statement of the tongue only. Based on this, even the hypocrites could enter Jannah since they acknowledged the shahadah even if they hated it in their heart.

Causes for the rise of innovation in aqeedah

When people left the guidance of the pure Quran and authentic sunnah, they followed alternate roads that lead them away from the path of guidance.

Specifically, the following reasons led people away from the straight path in aqeedah:

1. Going to extremes

This can be exemplified especially with the Khawarij - Those who went to extremes in understanding the verses of admonition and overlooked verses of hope, forgiveness and mercy. Also the Murji'ah - Those who went to extremes in amplifying the meaning of the verses of mercy and hope and forgiveness and love and overlooked the verses of admonition and fear and punishment. It is for this reason that Ibn Abil-Izz alHanafi said in the explanation of At-Tahawiyyah: "If you gathered the verses of promise and hope that the Murji'ah have focused on, and you gathered together the verses of admonition and punishment that the Khawarij and Mu'tazillah used, then it will become clear to you how misguided the two sects really are!" [Sharh At-Tahawiyyah, pg 252]

Another example is the Shee'ah – The group started by the Jewish heretic Abdullah bin Saba – the level of extremism that he displayed in aligning with Ali was unheard of. Then came the death of AlHussein radiallahu anhu which led to a spiral of events leading to AlMukhtar bin Abi Ubaid alThakafi to pursue the killers of AlHussein and kill them. This led on the claim that it was obligatory to give the oath of allegiance to Ibnal-Hanafiyah who subsequently disassociated from AlMukhtar due to his deviance. This trend went on till the Shiah considered their imams like Prophets and even Gods.

2. Refuting one innovation with another one similar or worse than it.

An example of this is how the Murji'ah opposed the innovation of the Khawarij in going against Ali by saying that we leave the affair of Ali and Mu'awiyah to Allah. This then led them on to say that sins do not have any effect on emaan just like good deeds have no effect in a state of disbelief.

In the same way, the Mu'tazilah opposed the innovation of the Khawarij and the Murji'ah by saying that a person who does a major sin is in a state between a believer and disbeliever.

Another perfect example is how the anthropomorphists came out in defiance of the Jahmiyyah who rejected Allah's attributes. So Jahm bin Safwan sent to the city of Balkh and met Muqatil bin Sulaiman and used to debate him. So Mutaqil went to the other extreme by emphasising the attributes of Allah and making it like our created attributes.

Another example is the Jahmiyyah who opposed the anti-Qadr stance of the Qadriyyah by saying that everything is pre-ordained and that we have no choice at all. They said that a slave is merely a leaf in the wind that has to move where ever the wind blows. So they wanted to oppose an innovation and they fell into another innovation that is possibly worse, since the statement of the Jahmiyyah in Qadr necessitates the invalidation of all obligations and reward and punishment.

3. Preferring logic to the pure Quran and authentic Sunnah

It was a central principle of the people of innovation to prefer their mind and logic over and above the Quran and Sunnah and the authentic texts. This led them to reject numerous hadeeths about which the whole Ummah is agreed upon their acceptance and they insulted many of the narrators of hadeeth including some of the shahabah and labeled them untrustworthy and untruthful.

The Mu'tazilah particularly excelled in this type of innovation. An example is that statement of Amr bin Ubaid: That the the hadeeth of AsSadiq alMasdoq was narrated to him to which he said: "If I heard AlA'mash saying this, then I would have called him a liar and if I found Zaid bin Wahab say this, then I would have never spoken to him, and had I found Abdullah bin Masood saying this, then I would have never accepted from him and if I had heard Rasulullah sallallahu alaihi wa sallam saying this, then I would have refuted him and if I had heard Allah telling us this, then I would say: "This is not what you took our covenant on. " [See Tarikh Baghdad (12/172)]

We say in refutation to the Mu'tazilah:

- People differ in their level of intelligence and logic – so by whose logic and mind will you judge the Quran and Sunnah?
- Also people's level of thinking and intelligence changes over time – so by the logic of which time will you judge the Quran and Sunnah?

- What is the benefit of revelation if logic and the mind was by itself able to derive the truth in an affair and ascertain guidance in a matter?

4. External influences

A number of enemies of Islam tried to destroy Islam from within, so they worked to destroy the Islamic creed. This was particularly exemplified with 3 different sects.

Shee'ah: It was the Jewish heretic Abdullah bin Saba who accepted Islam to destroy Islam from within who was the founder of the Shee'ah sect. AlBaghdadi said: "Verily, it was Ibn as-Sawda – meaning Ibn Saba – that was about the jewish belief, that tried to destroy for the Muslims – their religion. So he invented stories about Ali and his children to glorify them. Indeed he wanted Muslims to believe about Ali, like the way Christians believe about Esa alaihis salam." [AlFarq baynal-Firaq, pg.235] Similarly Ibn Saba denied that Ali could die and said: "Verily, Ali has only ascended to the highest of heavens just as Esa bin Maryam did and he will surely come back at an appointed time and take revenge against his enemies." [AlFarq baynal-Firaq, pg 234] Ibn Hazm rahimahullah rightly points out that when the persians could not win against the Muslims by the sword, they elected to destroy Islam by spreading innovation and misguidance. Ibn Hazm said: "...So they saw that by using misguidance they could be more successful, so they began to feign acceptance of Islam and began to display extreme love for Ali and the Ahlul-Bait and extreme anger at the harm and hurt that Ali had received. This took them from one level to another, until it ultimately led them outside Islam." [AlFisal: 2/115]

Qadriyyah: As has preceeded, the first to say that Qadr does not exist was a Christian man by the name of Sousan and Ma'bad alJuhani took this deviance from him.

Jahmiyyah: Ibn Katheer reports from Ibn Asakir that the deviance of Jahm bin Safwan came from Ja'd bin Dirham who learnt it from Bayan bin Samaan who took it from Taloot the son of the sister of Labeed bin Asam – the man who tried to put black magic on Rasulullah sallallahu alaihi was sallam. Labeed in turn had taken this deviance from a Jewish man from Yemen." Also Ibn Taymiyyah reports that Jahm bin Safwan came from a place known as Harran which used to have a lot of Philosophers of the Sabiyah who used to believe in a God that could only be described by negation of negative attributes and not thru affirmation of positive ones and Jahm took his philosophy from them. [See AlFatawa (5/21-22)]

5. Influence of Greek philosophy

Ibn Taymiyyah rahimahullah said: “So when the books of the Greeks were translated into Arabic around the second century, and prior to that and after that period – the people of Kalaam took it and used it to discuss matters of divinity until they went astray in it and until people began to be strongly divided in it. So a group accepted it and another group glorified it and yet another group made it a part and parcel of their core belief and began to only accept that which agreed with it and yet another group who started to compare against the Quran and Sunnah. As a result, it led to a huge amount of deviance and distortion in addition to the lack of understanding and going to extremes in understanding what the Prophets came with the Quran and the Hikmah.” [Bayan Talbees al-Jahmiyyah (1/324)]

From among the groups that were affected by Greek philosophy, they divided into 3 groups:

- Level 1: These were the philosophers amongst the Muslims. They are disbelievers by consensus of the Ummah.
- Level 2: These were the Mu'tazilah. They are innovators and many of their statements are statements of disbelief.
- Level 3: They were sects like the Ashariyyah and the Maturidiyyah.

Response of the Ummah to Ahlul-bidah

Beginning of Revelation till 37 A.H.	<p>This was the time in which the Ummah was upon only one aqeedah – that of the Prophet and His companions. No other belief existed and this was the belief of Ahlus sunnah wal Jama’ah that exists to this time.</p>
37 A.H. till 100 A.H.	<p>This was the time in which 4 main groups of innovators arose: Khawarij, Shee’ah, Qadiriyyah and Murji’ah.</p> <p>Khawarij: Ali debated them and sent Ibn Abbas to debate them. More than half of them left the path of deviance and came back to the truth and the others persisted on fighting Ali and the Muslims – so Ali fought and killed them. [AlBidayah wan-Nihayah (1/279-282)]</p> <p>Shee’ah: Some of them, Ali had them burnt to death and others he lashed and most of them he banished them from the lands of the Muslims. [alFarq baynal-Firaq, pg.21]</p> <p>Qadiriyyah: The Shahabah announced their innocence from them and mentioned that these people are the fire worshippers of this religion and that they should not be dealt with like the rest of the Muslims.</p> <p>Murji’ah: The scholars of Islam refuted them and clarified their mistake and clarified that actions are an essential pillar of Emaan.</p>

100A.H. to 150A.H.	<p>This was the time in which the real innovations regarding the names and attributes of Allah became prominent, based on the prominence of 4 main innovators: Wasil bin Ata', Ja'd bin Dirham, Jahm bin Safwan and Muqatil bin Sulaiman.</p> <p>Wasil bin Ata': He was rejected from the gatherings of AlHasan.</p> <p>Ja'd bin Dirham was killed by Khalid bin Abdullah alQusari the amir of Kufah on the day of Udhiyyah.</p> <p>Jahm bin Safwan was killed by Salm bin Ahwaz.</p> <p>Muqatil bin Sulaiman: He was refuted by Ahlus Sunnah wal Jama'ah. Abu Hanifah rahimahullah said about him: "From the east, two evil statements have come to us. Jahm the denier of attributes and Muqatil the anthropomorphist."</p> <p>Umar bin AbdulAziz called Gheelan (of the Qadiriyyah who took his innovation from his teacher Ma'bad alJuhani) to a debate and defeated him and made him promise to never go back to his innovation. However after the death of Umar bin AbdulAziz, he returned back to the misguidance. So the khaleefah Hisham bin Abdul Malik called him to a debate, defeated him and then killed him. Hisham also setup another debate between AlAwzai' and another caller to the Qadiriyyah and after AlAwzai' had defeated him, arrange for the man to be put to death. Also AlMahdi invited a group of the Qadiriyyah that used to live in Medinah and had them all lashed and punished.</p> <p>So in this era, the Khalifahs were instrumental in destroying Ahlul-Bidah.</p>
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150 A.H. to 234 A.H.	<p>This was the time of argument and debate with the people of innovation, since the people of innovation had increased in their numbers and in their power. The Mu'tazilah were able to convince the khaleefah Ma'moon to their side and as a result, they released their onslaught on Ahlus Sunnah and killed many of them. Ahlus Sunnah held strong to their beliefs until the time of khaleefah Mutawakkil – when they were victorious once more and Ahlul-Bidah were defeated once again.</p>
234 A.H. 324 A.H.	<p>This was the era in which Ibn Kullab and Ibn Karram arose.</p> <p>Ibn Kullab: Imam Ahmed rahimahullah used to warn people from following the misguidance of Ibn Kullab and was from the most severe of people against him. [Lisan alMeezan (3/290)]</p> <p>Ibn Karram: He was imprisoned in Nesaboor by the amir of Nesaboor Muhammad bin Abdullah bin Tahir for 8 years and then banished from his lands until he died in Shaam in the year 255 A.H.</p>

Basis of the methodology of Ahlus sunnah regarding Allah's names and attributes

Before explaining the methodology of Ahl Al-Sunna with respect to Allah's names and attributes, it is important to take note that it stands upon four rules.

1. The belief that no-one knows more about Allah than Allah Himself and that the Messenger of Allah sallallahu alaihi wa sallam knows more about Allah than all of mankind.
2. That the knowledge of Allah's names and attributes were transmitted to us in a language the companions could understand and that they understood it and believed in it.
3. That it is obligatory to follow the methodology of the companions and those pious predecessors that followed them regarding the names and attributes of Allah. That is the path of wisdom and safety in this matter.
4. The belief that there can never be any way or means of knowing the intricate nature [كيفية] of Allah's essence or attributes.

FIRST RULE

No one knows more about Allah than Allah Himself and that the Messengers knows more about Allah than all of Mankind.

It is not possible for anything or anyone to have more knowledge about Allah except Allah himself. Allah says:

﴿قُلْ أَأَنْتُمْ أَعْلَمُ أَمِ اللَّهُ﴾

Say: Are you more knowledgeable or Allah? [AlBaqarah: 140]

﴿اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ سَبْعَ سَمَوَاتٍ وَمِنَ الْأَرْضِ مِثْلَهُنَّ يَتَنَزَّلُ الْأَمْرُ بَيْنَهُنَّ لِتَعْلَمُوا

أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ أَحَاطَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عِلْمًا﴾

“Allah has encompassed everything in knowledge.” [Talaq: 12]

Allah has encompassed everything in knowledge, knows more about Himself than His creation does and His attributes are matters of the unseen which it is impossible to know for sure unless we are informed about it. As a result, we must accept everything that Allah says about Himself. Another logical way to look at this is that when information about anything comes to us, it must be accepted wholeheartedly when the following four conditions are fulfilled:

1. The informant has full knowledge of the subject of the message conveyed.
2. The informant is truthful in his speech.
3. The informant is articulate.
4. The informant has good intentions for the informed.

Allah and His Messenger have all of these qualities, so whatever He tells us about Himself must be accepted wholeheartedly.

Also the Quran tells us that the Messenger does not speak from his own desires and whims, rather, it is inspiration from Allah revealed to him:

﴿وَمَا يَنْطِقُ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ ۚ إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُوحَىٰ﴾

“He does not speak from his own desires, rather it is divinely inspired to him.” [AnNajm: 3-4]

Also, everything that the Prophet sallallahu alaihi wa sallam knew, he told us about it. It would impossible for him to hide something like the matters of Allah’s names and attributes when the need for this knowledge is more important than all since it deals with Allah the Great.

عَنْ أَبِي ذَرٍّ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ: لَقَدْ تَوَفَّى رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَمَا طَائِرٌ يَقْلِبُ جَنَاحَيْهِ إِلَّا ذَكَرَ لَنَا مِنْهُ عِلْمًا

Abu Dhar said: “The Prophet sallallahu alaihi wa sallam passed away and there is not even a bird in the sky that beats its wings except that he mentioned to us some knowledge about it.” [Authentic, reported by Ibn Hibban (No.65) and AtTabarani (No.1647)]

Al-Zuhri said, "From Allah comes the message; Upon the Messenger is to convey; Upon us is to submit"

SECOND RULE

The Quran revealed in the language of the people who that they could understand it and that the Prophet sallallahu alaihi wa sallam could explain it:

﴿ نَزَلَ بِهِ الرُّوحُ الْأَمِينُ ﴿١٧٢﴾ عَلَى قَلْبِكَ لِتَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُنذِرِينَ ﴿١٧٣﴾ بِلِسَانٍ عَرَبِيٍّ مُبِينٍ ﴿١٧٤﴾ ﴾

The trustworthy angel (Jibraeel) came down with it, upon your heart so that you be amongst the warners, in the clear Arabic tongue.

[AshShu'araa: 193-195]

﴿ وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الذِّكْرَ لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿١٨٥﴾ ﴾

“And we have revealed to you the guidance so that you may make it clear to mankind what has been revealed to them and so that they may think and ponder.” [AnNahl: 44]

It is preposterous to assume that the shahabah first fought Rasulullah when they were disbelievers, then they supported him with their lives and their souls and were ready to sacrifice their wealth and family – for something they did not understand. Rather, they must have understood it. Infact, the following hadeeth also shows that the shahabah used to understand the meanings of the Quran and Sunnah:

عن أبي رزين رضي الله عنه عن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم: ضحك ربنا من قنوط عباده وقرب غيره، قال قلت: يا رسول الله ! أو يضحك الرب؟ قال: نعم، قلت: لن نعدم من رب يضحك خيراً

From Abu Razeen radiallahu anhu that the Prophet sallallahu alaihi wa sallam said: “Our Lord laughs at the despair of a slave and the nearness of his situation changing. So I said: O Rasulullah! Does the Lord laugh? He said: Yes! So I said: Then I will never despair from the mercy of a Lord that laughs.” [Authentic due to its various chains, Reported by Ibn Majah and authenticated by AlAlbani in AsSilsilah as-Saheehah (6/732)]

Also the statement of Aishah radiallahu anha in alBukhari shows that the shahabah did establish attributes for Allah like hearing:

الحمد لله الذي وسع سمعه الأصوات، لقد جاءت المجادلة تشكو إلى رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم، وأنا في ناحية البيت ما أسمع ما تقول، فأنزل الله عز وجل: ﴿ قَدْ سَمِعَ اللَّهُ قَوْلَ الَّتِي تُجَادِلُكَ فِي زَوْجِهَا وَتَشْتَكِي إِلَى اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ يَسْمَعُ ﴾

تَحَاوَرُكُمْ إِنَّا اللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ بَصِيرٌ ﴿١٠﴾

All praise is for Allah whose hearing encompasses all voices! Indeed the woman came to complain to Rasulullah sallallahu alaihi wa sallam (about her husband) and I was in the corner of the hut, unable to hear what she was saying. So Allah the Great revealed: “Allah has heard the statement of the one who is complaining to you about her husband and beseeching Allah and Allah has heard your discussion. Indeed Allah is all Hearing, all Seeing.”[AlMujadalah:1] [Reported by AlBukhari and others]

THIRD RULE

The Prophet sallallahu alaihi wa sallam had mentioned that pious predecessors – of the first 3 generations were the best of this Ummah. He said:

خير القرون قرني ثم الذين يلونهم ثم الذين يلونهم

The best of generations is my generation, then those that followed them, then those that followed them. [Mutawatir hadeeth as per Ibn Hajar (AlIsabah 1/13). Hadeeth reported in AlBukhari (No.3651), Muslim (No.2533) and others]

Allah has ordered us to follow the path of the best of generations and to not deviate. He said:

﴿وَمَنْ يُشَاقِقِ الرَّسُولَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُ الْهُدَىٰ وَيَتَّبِعْ غَيْرَ سَبِيلِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

نُؤَلِّهِ مَا تَوَلَّىٰ وَنُصْلِهِ جَهَنَّمَ ۚ وَسَاءَتْ مَصِيرًا ﴿١١٥﴾﴾

“And whosoever goes against the path of the Messenger after the guidance has been made clear to him and follows other than the path of the believers, we will leave him in that path and take him to Jahannam. What an evil destination it is!” [AnNisaa: 115]

It is also impossible to imagine that the companions who were well known for struggling with their lives to help Allah’s religion – that they would hide the truth and not pass it on to us, especially when Allah has said about those who hide knowledge:

﴿إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْتُمُونَ مَا أَنزَلْنَا مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَهُدًى مِّنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ لِّلنَّاسِ فِي

الْكِتَابِ أُولَٰئِكَ يَلْعَنُهُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَلْعَنُهُمُ اللَّعْنُونَ ﴿١٢٨﴾﴾

Verily, those who hide that which we have revealed from the revelation and guidance after we have made it clear to mankind in the Book – they are the ones cursed by Allah and they are the ones cursed by those

that curse. [AlBaqarah: 159]

As for those that say:

- ‘The companions were ignorant and simply didn’t know any better’: [Statement of the people of Kalam] – we say to them: Firstly, it is not possible for them to be ignorant, when they were the most eloquent of people in Arabic and the Quran and Sunnah was in their language and their actions of first fighting Islam and then helping it is a testament that they understood it. Secondly, even if we were to agree and say that they didn’t know, then those that come after them such as us are more worthy of being even more ignorant about Allah’s names and attributes since this is from the matter of the unseen.
- ‘The companions hid the truth from us’: [Statement of the Shee’ah] This is impossible considering that Allah has said about them in the Quran:

﴿لَقَدْ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذْ يُبَايِعُونَكَ تَحْتَ الشَّجَرَةِ فَعَلِمَ

مَا فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ فَأَنْزَلَ السَّكِينَةَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَأَثَبَهُمْ فَتْحًا قَرِيبًا ﴿١٨﴾﴾

“Indeed Allah was happy with the believers when they gave you their oath under the tree, so he knew that which is in their hearts and sent upon them tranquility and rewarded them with a near victory.” [AlFath: 18]

﴿إِنَّ الَّذِينَ سَبَقَتْ لَهُمْ مِنَّا الْحُسْنَىٰ أُولَٰئِكَ عَنْهَا مُبْعَدُونَ ﴿١٠١﴾﴾

Verily those that has preceded goodness from us, they are far away from it. [AlAnbiyaa: 101]

FOURTH RULE

There can be no way of knowing the true nature of Allah's attributes since Allah has not told us about. There are three ways of knowing the intricate nature of something:

- A. Either by seeing it: Seeing Allah in this life is not possible, as even Musa alaihis salam was not able to see Allah upon request.

﴿وَلَمَّا جَاءَ مُوسَىٰ لِمِيقَاتِنَا وَكَلَّمَهُ رَبُّهُ قَالَ رَبِّ أَرِنِي إِلَيْكَ قَالَ لَنْ تَرَنِي وَلَٰكِنِ أَنْظُرْ إِلَى الْجَبَلِ فَإِنِ اسْتَقَرَّ مَكَانَهُ فَسَوْفَ تَرَنِي فَلَمَّا تَجَلَّىٰ رَبُّهُ لِلْجَبَلِ جَعَلَهُ دَكًّا وَخَرَّ مُوسَىٰ صَعِقًا فَلَمَّا أَفَاقَ قَالَ سُبْحَانَكَ تُبْتُ إِلَيْكَ وَأَنَا أَوَّلُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ﴾

“When Musa came to our appointment and his Lord spoke to Him – he said: My Lord let me see you. He said: You cannot see me, however look at that mountain; if it stays in its place, then you will be able to see me. So when his Lord revealed Himself to the mountain, it was destroyed and Musa fell down dazed. So when he regained consciousness, he said: Glory be you, I repent to you and I am the first of the believers.” [AlA'raf: 143]

- B. Either by seeing something similar to it: This is also impossible as there is no similitude to Allah.

﴿لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ﴾

There is nothing like him and he is the All Hearing and All Seeing. [AshShura: 11]

﴿رَبُّ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا فَاعْبُدْهُ وَاصْطَبِرْ لِعِبَادَتِهِ هَلْ تَعْلَمُ لَهُ سَمِيًّا﴾

“Lord of the heavens and the earth and all that is within; So worship him and be constant in His worship. Do you know anyone similar to Him?” [Maryam: 65]

- C. Either by being told about its true nature by a truthful person. Neither Allah nor His Prophet has told us about the true nature of Allah's attributes. As a result, we restrict ourselves to the statements of the Quran and Sunnah only.

Based on these four pillars, the methodology of Ahlus sunnah wal Jama'ah revolves around:

- A. Affirmation: Affirming everything that has been reported from Allah and His Messenger without deviating from their path which can happen either of the following five ways:
 - a. Ta'teel (Denial) [تعطيل]
 - b. Tahreef (Distortion) [تحريف]
 - c. Tamtheel (Resembling it to creation) [تمثيل]
 - d. Takyeef (Asking the how of it) [تكيف]
 - e. Tafweed (Affirming wording without meaning) [تفويض]
- B. Negation: Negating everything that Allah and His Messenger negated from Allah whilst establishing the perfect opposite of it for Allah.

This methodology of affirmation and negation is exemplified in the statement of Allah:

﴿وَلِلَّهِ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَىٰ فَادْعُوهُ بِهَا ۖ وَذَرُوا الَّذِينَ يُلْحِدُونَ فِي أَسْمَائِهِ ۚ سَيُجْزَوْنَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ﴾

“And to Allah belongs the most beautiful names, so call on Him through it; and leave those who deviate from the truth in His names – they will be recompensed for what they used to do.” [AlA'raf: 180]