

# THE ‘AQĪDAH OF TUAN GURU

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## Translator's Introduction

Tuan Guru, meaning “Esteemed Master”, was the title of Shaykh ‘Abdullāh [d.1807], a prince and Islamic scholar who hailed from the Ternate islands in eastern Indonesia. He was born in the early 1700’s and was the son of Prince ‘Abdussalām, who himself was a *qāḍī*, or Islamic judge. His family traced their descent directly to the Holy Prophet, the Salutations and Peace of Allah be upon him. Tuan Guru was given a thorough training in the various branches of Islamic knowledge and proved himself expert in *Qur’ān*, *hadīth*, *‘aqīdah*, *fiqh* and *taṣawwuf*.

The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Indonesia were marked by frequent battles between the colonising Dutch and the Muslim inhabitants of that land. In the process, the Dutch exiled a number of leaders, who they viewed as a threat to their continuing expansion, to far flung outposts such as Cape Town. Tuan Guru was one of these exiles and was incarcerated on Robben Island from 1781 to 1793. While on Robben Island he wrote his compendium of Islamic knowledge - often called the *M’arifat al-Islām* [Knowledge of Islam] - which consists of a number of writings on *ḥadīth*, *fiqh*, supplications, amulets, transcriptions of parts of the *Qur’ān* and *‘aqīdah*. The compendium is a testament to the Tuan’s phenomenal memory and his tremendous grounding in the classical disciplines of Islām.

Undoubtedly, the most important section of the compendium was its *‘aqīdah* component. This component comprised Tuan Guru’s transcription of the *Umm al-Barāḥīn* [The Demonstrative Proofs] and one of its commentaries. The *Umm al-Barāḥīn* was authored by Shaykh Muḥammad bin Yūsuf al-Sanūsī [d.1490] of Tlemcen and the commentary was written by one of his students Shaykh ‘Abdullāh al-Malāli. The *Umm al-Barāḥīn*, also called the *Sanūsīyyah*, was to fundamentally shape the worldview of the Cape Muslim community for the centuries to come.<sup>1</sup>

Upon his release from Robben Island the Tuan industriously set about organising and educating the then relatively small Muslim community, who were largely composed of slaves but included exiled notables and convicts as well.<sup>2</sup> To this end the Tuan built, in

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<sup>1</sup> See Davids, A. (1985) **The history of the Tana Baru: the case for preservation of the Muslim cemetery at the top of Longmarket Street**, Cape Town, Committee for the preservation of the Tana Baru, p. 41.

<sup>2</sup> On Tuan Guru’s life see Davids, 1985, *op. cit.* pp. 40-45.

the 1790's, South Africa's first mosque and madrasah, located in Dorp Street, Cape Town. The compendium, and the *Umm al-Barāḥīn* in particular, constituted the foundational text of the *madrasah*. The *Umm al-Barāḥīn* became locally known as the "twintagh siefaats" [twenty attributes] in Cape Muslim Afrikaans, this referring to the number of attributes the text describes to be necessarily predicated of Allāh. Davids notes that the *Umm al-Barāḥīn* proved most popular and convenient for rote learning, and several copies were transcribed, with Melayu translations, from the original compendium as handbooks and readers for students at the *madrasah*.<sup>3</sup> Davids, who had two copies of such manuscripts in his possession and had seen several others, states that they constitute "...the most extensive examples of the literary exploits of the Cape Muslims prior to emancipation [in 1834]."<sup>4</sup> In fact, Davids attributes the "phenomenal success" of the Dorp Street *madrasah* - which attracted increasing numbers of students with each passing year and was being replicated in a growing number of other *madāris* [Muslim schools] - to the theological/philosophical base provided by Tuan Guru's teaching of the *Umm al-Barāḥīn*.<sup>5</sup> Regarding the determinative role it plays in the Cape Muslim worldview he comments: "Its basic philosophical position still forms the approach to aqida (the Islamic belief system) and became the subject of several Arabic-Afrikaans and Afrikaans (in Roman script) publication [*sic*] in the late nineteenth and throughout the twentieth century."<sup>6</sup> And: "...the Sanusiyyah remained the main teaching subject of the madaris in Cape Town until well into the 1950's-1960's, when we as children were required to memorize its concepts without fully comprehending them".<sup>7</sup> However, it was not only the tremendous educational and social legacy of the Tuan that earned him the title of "Esteemed Master". In his own lifetime he was recognized as a *walī Allāh* - a Friend of Allah and a number of miracles have been attributed to him. He passed away in 1807 and has been honoured by a dome over his grave [*kramat*], located in the Tana Baru cemetery, Cape Town.

There is no doubt, by the mere fact of its inclusion in the compendium and what we know of the character of traditional Islamic instruction, that within the well-organised, standardised, vibrant system of Islamic education that prevailed in Cape Town in the first half of the nineteenth century<sup>8</sup>, the commentary of the *Umm al-Barāḥīn* was taught in tandem with its text. The text was required to be memorised, forming the content of students' "koples boeke" [memorisation workbooks]. However, in traditional Islamic instruction the teacher's oral commentary explicates an often concentrated text - as is indeed the *Umm al-Barāḥīn*. Tuan Guru's transcription of the commentary was very likely aimed as a guide for future teachers, serving them well for the large part of the

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<sup>3</sup> The historical significance of the compendium and its role as precursor to an important Cape literary tradition is outlined in David's important 1991 thesis, **The Afrikaans of the Cape Muslims from 1815 to 1915: a sociolinguistic study**, MA Thesis, University of Natal (Durban), pp. 37-39 and 67-68.

<sup>4</sup> Davids, 1991, *op. cit.* p. 68

<sup>5</sup> Davids, 1991, *op. cit.* p. 37

<sup>6</sup> Davids, 1991, *op. cit.* p. 39

<sup>7</sup> Davids, 1991, *op. cit.* p. 68

<sup>8</sup> For a description of this system see Davids, A. (1994), "Alternative education: Tuan Guru and the formation of the Cape Muslim Community" in Yusuf da Costa and Achmat Davids, **Pages from Cape Muslim history**, Pietermaritzburg, Shuter and Shooter, pp. 51-52.

nineteenth century when the compendium was used as a basic reference on religious issues in Cape Town.<sup>9</sup>

Shaykh al-Sanūsī, the author of the *Umm al-Barāḥīn*, was born in Tlemcen, Algeria in 1435/1436. Trained in the traditional Islamic sciences, he acquired a reputation as a precocious scholar and eminent *Sūfī*. In particular, he was famed for his works on ‘*aqīdah*, or the Islamic tenets of belief, which were written at various grades of elucidation. The *Umm al-Barāḥīn* was aimed at the primary level and thus came to be called the *al-Ṣughrā*. The *al-Wustā* and *al-Kubrā*, as their appellations indicate, were aimed at the intermediate and advanced levels respectively. An ascetic who gained a great reputation for mystical knowledge and miracles, he was honoured with a dome over his grave on his passing away in Tlemcen in 1490. His disciple Shaykh al-Malālī, apart from providing a commentary to the *Umm al-Barāḥīn*, also penned his master’s biography.<sup>10</sup>

The rationally enunciated, considered distillation of the orthodox Muslim creed as represented in Shaykh al-Sanūsī’s writings has had a far-reaching impact on the Islamic world, inspiring numerous commentaries. The impact of his writings are evident in West Africa, where the *Umm al-Barāḥīn* and its commentaries flourished under the Fulani name *Kabbe*, in Morocco and Egypt, where his various works constituted standard, graded textbooks of ‘*aqīdah*, and in South East Asia, where the *Umm al-Barāḥīn* - also called there the *al-Durra* - was, together with its commentaries, taught in the *pesantren* [Islamic schools/colleges] accompanied by an interlinear Malay or Javanese translation - the same manner in which the Tuan taught it in Cape Town.<sup>11</sup>

### A synopsis of the text

The text provides the rational justification for the fundamental principles held by the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā’ah* [The People of the Prophetic Way and the Congregation], or Sunnis. The formal systematisation of the Sunni creed was undertaken independently by two scholars, Imām Abūl-Ḥasan ‘Alī al-‘Asharī [d 935 c.e] and Imām Abū Mansūr Mātūrīdī [d. 944 c.e]. These distillations became the dominant ones in Islām - the mainstream of Islām’s scholarly tradition views them as the authentic representation of the structure of beliefs that the community has inherited from the Companions who in turn absorbed it under the guidance of the Holy Prophet, the Salutations and Peace of Allāh be upon him. The *Umm al-Barāḥīn* follows the Asharite enunciation of the creed.

The *Umm al-Barāḥīn* proceeds by organising knowledge into three categories - necessity, impossibility and possibility - and then discusses what must, what must not, and what may be, predicated of the Being of Allāh vis-à-vis these categories. It predicates twenty attributes as necessarily belonging to the Being of Allāh: namely, Existence,

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<sup>9</sup> Where it was cited as such during a Cape Supreme Court litigation in 1873. See Davids, 1991, *op. cit.* p. 39

<sup>10</sup> I have been unable to locate any further information on Shaykh Malālī.

<sup>11</sup> For a concise description of the life, works and influence of Shaykh al-Sanūsī see H. Bencheneb, 1997, “al-Sanūsī”, s.v. *Encyclopedia of Islām*, Leiden, Brill.

Beginninglessness, Everlastingness, His Absolute Distinction to the creation, Self-Subsistence, Oneness, Power and His being All-Powerful, Will and His being All-Willing, Knowledge and His being All-Knowing, Life and His being Living, Hearing and His being All-Hearing, Seeing and His being All-Seeing, Speech and His being Speaking. The opposites of these attributes are those that are impossible to ascribe to Allāh. Finally, what is possible with regard to the Being of Allāh is His choosing to do or leave that which is within the realm of possibilities - such as creating human beings, for example. The author then proceeds to construct logical proofs for each of these necessary attributes, and by extension the proofs for the impossibility of their opposites, as well as the proof of His choosing to do or leave that which is within the realm of possibilities.

The author then discusses belief in the Messengers and the rational necessity of their being truthful, faithful to their commission and propagators of what they have been ordered to propagate, as well as the impossibility of them being devoid of these three characteristics. From the establishment of Messengership is inferred belief in other verities such as Angels, Holy Books, the Last Day and Predestination. The author concludes by a demonstration of how the formula of faith “There is no god but Allāh, Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh” implicitly contains the proofs for the central tenets of faith.

The commentator provides an indispensable clarification and elaboration of the very concentrated *matn*. In addition to casting light on the graded nature of the argument contained in the *matn*, he engages its arguments to provide Asharite responses to the views of their adversaries such as the *Mujassimah* [the anthropomorphists] and the *M'utazilah* [exclusive rationalists]. The commentary also provides valuable insights into Asharite notions of causality, the relationship between essence and existence, the nature of substance and accident and the like and their mode of application in corroborating and finely defining the Sunni worldview.

### Notes on the translation

The translation is sourced from the photocopied version of the compendium which is housed at the National Library of South Africa.<sup>12</sup> It is written in Arabic and, like its South East Asian counterparts, accompanied by an interlinear Melayu translation. My translation is from the Arabic. This version of the *Umm al-Barāḥīn* was collated against a printed edition issuing from Nigeria<sup>13</sup> and was found to be accurate.

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<sup>12</sup> Housed under the title **N.E. RAKIEP COLLECTION [manuscript]. Shelf no. MSB 683**. Its contents are described as “Text in Arabic with interlinear Malayu 613 pp (bound)” from which the present subject for translation is extracted. But the collection also comprises another “Text in Malayu (Arabic script) 186 pp (bound)” which is another work by Tuan Guru dealing with mystical symbolism. The collection was donated to the Library by Mr Rakiép, a descendent of Tuan Guru, in 1985.

<sup>13</sup> al-Anṣārī, Shaykh Aḥmad bin ‘Īsā. [n.d.], **Sharḥ Umm al-Barāḥīn**, Kano, A.A. Abou-Elseoud and O. Tayeb.

The use of square brackets indicate one of the following: the translation of an English or Arabic term, a conjunction that has occasionally been omitted from the text, my rendering of a potentially ambiguous phrase, or an insertion that makes the meaning more apparent. In the following, **text** refers to the *Umm al-Barāhīn* of Shaykh al-Sanūsī and is given in bold throughout while the **commentary** of Shaykh al-Malālī is in normal typescript. The corresponding page numbers of the sourced version are also square-bracketed in this translation and given in bold throughout. The text of the *Umm al-Barāhīn* is replicated twice in the compendium - one stands on its own<sup>14</sup> and the other is an imprint in the commentary.<sup>15</sup> I have preferred the former due to its greater legibility and hence the corresponding page numbers. Hanna Kassis's *A Concordance of the Qur'ān* has considerably lightened the task of giving references for the Qur'ānic verses cited. However, I have not been able to locate all of the *aḥādīth* sources, referencing only those that were located or providing sources of others that correspond in meaning to the ones quoted in the text.

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<sup>14</sup> Corresponding to pp. 107 to 129.

<sup>15</sup> The commentary runs from pp. 305 to 437.

## *Umm al-Barāḥīn*

**Text [Foreword] [106]:**

In the Name of Allāh, Most Compassionate, Most Merciful.

This is a statement of Islamic belief [*‘aqīdah*] by the Leader [*Imām*], the Bearer [*ḥāmil*] of the flag of Islām’s Divine Law [*Sharī‘ah*], the ascetic [*zāhid*], the worshipper [*‘ābid*], the traveller in the Way [*sālik*], the otherworldly [*nāsik*], the friend of Allāh [*walī*], the pious [*sālīh*], the Godfearing [*war’*], the advisor to good [*nāsih*], the Pole [*Qutb*], the gnostic [*‘arif*], the Help [*Ghawth*], the Discloser [*kāshif*], a Leader [*Imām*] of the Way, the Gatherer [*Mujāmi’*], the Help [*Ghawth*], the Leader [*Imām al-Jām’*] in joining the Divine Law [*Sharī‘ah*] to the Ultimate Reality [*Ḥaqīqah*], our Master [*Sayyid*], the father of ‘Abdullāh, our Patron [*Mawlāna*], Muḥammad bin Yūsuf al-Sanūsī al-Ḥasan, Allāh's mercy be upon him and Allāh be pleased with him, and may we benefit from his erudition. He is the author of this book whose title is *Umm al-Barāḥīn* [The Demonstrative Proofs].

**Commentary [Foreword] [305]:** In the Name of Allāh, Most Compassionate, Most Merciful. And the Salutations of Allāh be upon our Master Muḥammad and upon his Family and all his Companions.

‘Abdullāh Muḥammad ibn ‘Umar ibn Ibrāhīm al-Malālī -thereafter known as al-Tilmisāni, may Allāh’s kindness be upon him - [he being one] to whom Allāh showed His favour and generosity and one through whom He gave benefit by his person and exemplification of the truth of Muḥammad and his family - said:

All Praise be to Allāh, [306] the Unique [*munfarad*] through necessary Oneness in Being [*dhāt*], Attributes [*sifāt*] and Acts [*af‘āl*], free of any partner, likeness, peer or equal. Salutations of Allāh be upon our Master, our Patron [*Mawlānā*], Muḥammad, Master of all the Prophets and Messengers, [307] and upon his Family and his Companions - the most noble of Companions and the most gracious and noblest Family. Salutations and blessings be always upon them and the most gracious of salutations and peace be always upon them, through the perpetuity of the Lord, Most Generous, Most High.

To proceed: One of my companions - may Allāh make his and my heart radiant with the light of certainty and make us of the pure learned ones - has requested of me something that I am obligated to fulfill: namely, to give a short, helpful commentary that will assist him and other beginners to understand the *aqīdah* by the Shaykh, the *Imām*, the Carrier of the flag of the *Sharī‘ah* of Islam, the ascetic, the worshipper, the traveller in the Way, the otherworldly, the pious, the Godfearing, the advisor to the good, the Pole, the gnostic, the Help, [308] the Discloser, the *Imām* of the Way, the Gatherer, the Help, the *Imām* in joining the *Sharī‘ah* to the *Ḥaqīqah*, my master Abū Abdullāh Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf al-Sanūsī al-Ḥasan, Allāh’s mercy be with him and Allāh’s pleasure be with him and may Allāh benefit us through his knowledge and may the benefit of this knowledge be with those who desire the Day when no wealth or children will benefit except he who



comes to Allāh with a sound heart.<sup>16</sup> [May this prayer be granted] through the Glory of our Master and Protector, Muḥammad, the Salutations and Peace of Allāh be upon him, the most gracious of Salutations and the most perfect of Peace. There is no strength or power except through Allāh, the Most High, the Mighty.

[309] He - Allāh have mercy on him and may Allāh be pleased with him and benefit us through his knowledge - says:

**Text:** [107] All Praise be to Allāh. Salutations and Peace be upon the Messenger of Allāh, the Salutations and Peace of Allāh be upon him.

**Commentary:** [309] The Praise [*ḥamd*] is the extolling of Allāh with every perfection that is becoming of Him, whether that perfection is uncreated or created because the uncreated is His [self-] description and the created are His acts. Thus, everything belongs to Him, Most High, and in reality none deserves praise except Him. He has no son and there is no god but Him. For this reason, praise is divided into four categories - two [in relation to] the uncreated and two in relation to the created. The first category of praise is through His uncreated Word such as the saying of the Most High: “All praise be to Allāh, Lord of the Worlds,”<sup>17</sup> and His, the Most High, saying [310]: “Know that Allāh is your Protector. What an excellent Protector and what an excellent Helper!”<sup>18</sup> The second category is the praise of the Most High through His uncreated Word of whosoever He wills among His servants, such as His saying: “What an excellent servant. Verily he was ever turning in repentance.”<sup>19</sup> The third category is our praise of Allāh, Most High and the fourth category is the praise of the created for the created.

Furthermore, praise is divided into selective and inclusive categories. Selective praise is upon the tongue only while inclusive praise happens in times of both good and bad fortune, being different to thanks [*shukr*] which only happens in times of good fortune. Thanks, too, is also divided into selective and inclusive categories. [311] Selective thanks occurs during moments of good fortune [upon the tongue only] while inclusive thanks includes the tongue, the heart and other [organs].

The legal ruling regarding praise is that it is necessary once in a lifetime, like [the ruling concerning] the attestation of faith. And success comes through Allāh.

Allāh is the comprehensive and universal Name for the Being, Attributes and Actions of the Most High. This is why it is called the King [*sultān*] of all names. It is said that it is taken from “infatuation” [*tawalluh*] as hearts are infatuated with Him and become confounded [*taḥayyar*] with His Glory and Greatness. In Arabic “*tawalluh*” and “*mutaḥayyar*”<sup>20</sup> are synonyms. They are names that do not contain Him, Glorious and Honoured is He.

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<sup>16</sup> See Qur’ān 26:89

<sup>17</sup> Qur’ān 1:1

<sup>18</sup> Qur’ān 8:40

<sup>19</sup> Qur’ān 38:31

<sup>20</sup> *Mutaḥayyar* is the passive participle of *taḥayyar*

It is [also] said that its honourable meaning is taken from the Arab saying: [312] “The sun is sublime [*lāhat*] when it rises and becomes high.” This is also of the names that are *tanzīh* [transcendent] since His Highness is utterly different to that of the creation.<sup>21</sup> It is not a highness of place. It is [further] said that its meaning, which is [also] not subject to change, is taken from the Arab expression “*Aliha fulānun alā ḥālihi*” - “So and so took charge of his condition”. Its [i.e. *aliha*] meaning [here] is “*qāma ‘alay*” - “to establish over”. This is also a name that transcends change and mutation.<sup>22</sup>

The meaning of salutation [*salāt*] is mercy and mercy is a blessing while peace [*salām*] is comfort [*amān*]. It is not a request for obtaining mercy and safety *per se* as such is requested for those without it - and this is impossible with regard to the Prophet, Salutations and Peace of Allāh be upon him, who is the very source of mercy. Rather, [313] the request is for its increase. Thus when you say: “O Allāh! Send Salutations and Peace upon our Master and Patron Muḥammad” its meaning is that he be continually augmented with mercy and comfort. Furthermore, salutations upon him, the Salutations and Peace of Allāh be upon him, are accepted of every believer through evidence narrated that Jibrīl, upon him be peace, said to the Messenger of Allāh, the Salutations and Peace of Allāh be upon him: “Works may be rejected or accepted except salutations upon you for it is [always] accepted.” It is also narrated that invocation [*du‘ā*] is suspended between the heavens and the earth unless it begins and ends with salutations upon the Prophet, the Salutations and Peace of Allāh be upon him.<sup>23</sup> It [salutations] has innumerable benefits. Among them is the saying of the Prophet, Salutations and Peace of Allāh be upon him, “Whosoever would be happy to meet Allāh, with Allāh being pleased [314] with him, then he makes abundant salutations upon me”.<sup>24</sup> He, Salutations and Peace of Allāh be upon him, said: “Make abundant your salutations upon me for it solves problems and removes sorrows.”<sup>25</sup> He, Salutations and Peace of Allāh be upon him, said: “Salutations upon me erases sins like cold water extinguishes the fire and [sending] peace upon me is better than freeing a slave.”<sup>26</sup> And through Allāh comes success.

**Text:** [107] Know that rational judgment [*al-ḥukm al-aqlī*] is restricted to three categories: necessity [*al-wujūb*], impossibility [*istiḥāla*] and possibility [*jawāz*]. Necessity is that which reason cannot conceive of being non-existent. Impossibility is that which reason cannot conceive of being existent. Possibility is that which reason can conceive of being either existent or non-existent.

<sup>21</sup> I.e. as the highness of the sun transcends the world, the Highness of God transcends the entire creation.

<sup>22</sup> I.e. God is fully established over creation and transcends it.

<sup>23</sup> For this ḥadīth see al-Baghawī, Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥusain (1981) *Mishkāṭ al-Maṣābiḥ*, annotated English translation by James Robson, volume 1 (2 volumes) Lahore, Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, p. 191.

<sup>24</sup> At this point the text contains the apparently disjointed phrase “the Messenger of Allāh, Salutations and Peace of Allāh be upon him of salutations”.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. to al-Baghawī, *op. cit.* p. 189-190.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. to al-Baghawī, *op. cit.* p. 188.

**Commentary:** [315] The meaning of judgment [*ḥukm*] is the establishment or negation of a datum [*amr*]. Whenever reason establishes a datum, it cannot rationally negate it and its being is a necessity. Whenever reason negates a datum, then it cannot rationally establish it, and its being is an impossibility. Whenever reason judges a datum capable of either existence or non-existence, then its being is a possibility.

The nature of the three categories can be clarified by using an example. Necessity is like describing a body [*jirm*] as being either in motion or stationary because it must be described by one of the two, and not by both simultaneously. Impossibility is akin to describing a body as being neither in movement nor stationary because reason does not admit that a body can be absent of both of these. Possibility is equivalent to describing a body by only one [316] of these qualities [*mu'īn*] for reason can admit that a body be perpetually in motion or that it be perpetually stationary.

The divisions of rational judgment are restricted to three categories only and does not admit of any other. This is why the Shaykh says “restricted [*inḥaṣara*] to [three categories]” and not “divided into” [*yanqasumu*]. It is understood from the former that these are restricted categories according to its three different types. If he had said “divided into”, it would not have been understood that these categories are restricted to three.

Furthermore, each one of these categories are subdivided into two: self-evident [*badahī*] and theoretical [*nadharī*]. Self-evident necessity [317] is not in need of reflection but is known intuitively. An example would be that one is half of two. Theoretical necessity is that which is only known through consideration and reflection such as one being the half of a sixth of twelve. This is not known intuitively but only after reflection. An example of self-evident impossibility is asserting that one is half of four while one of theoretical impossibility would be claiming that one is a sixth of twelve. An example of self-evident possibility would be a body being white, for instance, while a theoretical possibility is claiming that a human being wishes for death. This latter is not known except after consideration. [318] This is with regard to vigorous, healthy people who have not experienced difficulties that are severer than death, and not knowing the concept of tribulation [*miḥn*], intuitively believe in the inconceivability of an intelligent person wishing death for himself. But if they had thought about tribulation, they would know that it<sup>27</sup> is severer than death. They will then realise that an intelligent person can wish for death for himself, not through the categories of necessity or impossibility, but admitting its existence [as a possibility] if such a one fears a misfortune severer than it - even if they had desired and hoped for something great which cannot be obtained except through death. The people of [319] health and vigour must be distinguished from the people of fear and hope,<sup>28</sup> for the wish for death among the latter is an intuitive possibility and does not require reflection.

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<sup>27</sup> The word “*ishtāqū*” [to long for ardently] is inserted here in the text [p. 318] but does not appear to fit the context.

<sup>28</sup> That is, the Sūfis.

The knowledge of these three categories with regard to Allāh and His Messengers (Salutations and Peace be upon them) constitutes faith [*īmān*] and which Allāh requires us [to have] in such manner. Shaykh al-Ash‘arī,<sup>29</sup> the Imām of the Aḥl Sunnah, Allāh be pleased with him, said: “ And it is said : The faith which we are required to have is a self-analysis [*ḥadīth al-nafs*] related to knowledge of these three categories.” This is the preferred view and the knowledge of these three categories defines intelligence. Imām al-Ḥaramain,<sup>30</sup> Allāh be pleased with him, said: “Whosoever does not know these [three categories] is not a thinking person.” And through Allāh comes success.

**Text:** [107-108] Every *mukallaf* is legally obliged to know what is necessary, impossible and possible in relation to our Protector, Glorious and Honoured is He. Likewise, he must know these [three] categories as they pertain to the Messengers, Salutations and Peace be upon them.

**Commentary:** [320] That is, the Lawgiver has made it compulsory upon those legally responsible - meaning those who have attained puberty and are sane - to familiarise themselves with what has been mentioned. The meaning of familiarisation [*ma‘rifah*] is certainty of a thing, in accordance with what comes from Allāh, the Most High, on condition that such certainty is arrived at by a source or proof. Certainty of a thing without a source or proof is not termed certainty - whether this [321] is in accordance with what comes from Allāh or not. Many scholars infer from this that imitation [*taqlīd*] in the sphere of belief is not allowed. By “imitation” is meant certainty based on the view of another without reference to the source. Thus an imitator does not have certainty if this is purely based on the view of another. There is a difference of opinion with regard to the soundness of the faith of an imitator [*muqallid*] and [the question of] his infidelity and disobedience. The preferred opinion of some of the scholars is that a restricted certainty can exist without a source or proof but the Shaykh differs with them. Allāh says: “Know that there is no god but God”.<sup>31</sup> Thus the Most High has commanded us to declare the statement through evidence and proof. Imitation does not constitute knowledge with Him. The Prophet, Salutations and Peace of Allāh be upon him, “Allāh the Most High has commanded [322] his servants, the believers, with what He has commanded His servants, the Prophets.” It is indisputably known that the Prophets were not commanded through their being imitators but through their possessing certainty. And through Allāh comes success.

**Text:** [108] There are twenty attributes [altogether] of that which necessarily belong to our Protector, Glorious and Honoured is He.

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<sup>29</sup> i.e. Shaykh Abūl-Ḥasan ‘Alī al-Ash‘arī (260-324/ 873-935), the original systematizer of Sunni dialectical theology.

<sup>30</sup> i.e. Shaykh ‘Abd al-Mālik al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085), the Asharite theologian, the Imām of the Two Sanctuaries of Makkah and al-Madīnah (*al-Ḥaramain*) and the first head of the famed Nizāmiyyah Academy in Baghdad for whom in fact it was founded.

<sup>31</sup> Qur’ān 47:19

**Commentary:** [322] Know that the perfections that necessarily belong to the Most High are countless. The law has not obligated us with knowing [all of] them for, had it done so, such an obligation would be unendurable. It is by the grace of Allāh, Most High, that we are not obliged to do so. The Most Honoured, Most Glorious says: “Allāh does not burden a soul except with that which it can bear”.<sup>32</sup> By this is meant “except that which is within its strength in accordance with habit”. He has [only] obligated us with some of that which necessarily belongs to Him, the Most High. For this reason, the author, Allāh, the Most High’s, mercy be upon him, said “of that which necessarily belong to our Protector”, [323] that is, of *some*<sup>33</sup> which are necessary. He did not say “that are necessary”. An attribute [*ṣifah*] is a quality [*naʿat*] and, undoubtedly, the Most High can only be [adequately] described by unlimited qualities of Glory, Beauty and Perfection.

**Text:** [108] They are Existence [*al-Wujūd*],

**Commentary:** [323] There can be no doubting this since it is through existence that the Holy Being is described. Thus you say the Being of Allāh is existent and “existence” [*wujūd*] is the source [*ʿayn*] of being existent [*mawjūd*]. If you wish you may say existence is the same as being existent. When you say the existence of so and so you mean his being [*dhāt*], his essence [*ʿayn*] and his self [*nafs*]. Being, essence and self have one meaning. Existence is not an attribute additional to the Being, like power [*qudrah*] for instance, but is rather one by which the Being is described. [This is] the perspective of Shaykh al-Ashʿari. Imam al-Rāzī<sup>34</sup> says, though, [324] that existence is a quality which is additional to the Being. The debate will be looked at again, if Allāh wills.

**Text:** [108] Beginninglessness [*Al-Qidam*], Everlastingness [*al-Baqāʿa*],

**Commentary:** [324] The meaning of Beginninglessness is the rejection of non-existence prior to existence. It is not a “perceptible” [*mawjūd*] attribute like Power [*qudrah*]. Nor is the Beginninglessness of the Most High prior in terms of time as time is created. There was Allāh and nothing was with Him. Allāh the Most High says: “He is the First, the Last.”<sup>35</sup> Non-existence does not precede His “Firstness” nor is there any expiry to His “Lastness”. This is the meaning of “Everlastingness”. It is the rejection of non-existence following existence. It is [also] not a perceptible attribute.

**Text:** [108] The Most High's Absolute Distinction to all that which is created [*al-Mukhālafa lil ḥawādith*],

**Commentary:** [325] By this is meant the rejection of any likeness to Him, the Most High, in Being, Attributes and Acts. Allāh, the Most High, says: “Nothing is like Him, and He is the All-Hearing, All-Seeing”.

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<sup>32</sup> Qurʾān 2:286

<sup>33</sup> My emphasis.

<sup>34</sup> Viz. Imām Fakhr al-dīn al-Rāzī (544-606/1149-1204) the prolific Asharite philosopher, theologian, Qurʾānic commentator and historian.

<sup>35</sup> Qurʾān 57:3

**Text:** [108] the Self-Subsistence of the Most High [*qiyāmah bi al-nafs*], that is, He does not need a cause [*maḥall*] nor a characteriser [*mukhaṣṣiṣ*],

**Commentary:** [325] By cause is meant a being [*dhāt*] and by characteriser a doer [*fāʿil*]. The meaning of Self-Subsistence is the rejection of any need by the Most High for another being through which He is established - which is analogous to an accident being established through a body. It is also the rejection of any need by the Most High to have a doer. For if the Most High was in need of a being through which He was established - like an accident that needs a body - then He must be an accident, and this is impossible. If He was in need of a doer then He would be created and this is impossible, as will be explained in due course, if Allāh the Most High wills. [326] Thus it is necessary that the Being of Allāh must be described by an attribute of perfection, free from need of anything whatsoever of the creation. Allāh, the Most High says: “O humankind! You all are in need of Allāh and Allāh is the Self-Sufficient, The Praised.”<sup>36</sup> And Allāh, the Most High, says: “Allāh is the Absolutely, Independently Eternal [*Ṣamad*]. He begets not nor is He begotten”.<sup>37</sup> The meaning of “*Ṣamad*” is He whom all others need. It is indisputable that every created thing is in need of Him, the Most High, from its beginning and throughout its duration. None is there that does not need our Protector, Most Glorious, Most Honoured. When the intelligent person realises that he is need of our Protector, the Most High, and that benefit or harm is [solely] through the Hand of Allāh, he cuts off his vision and attention [327] from that which is other than Him, and relies in all his matters on Him. He submits his countenance [*wajh*] to Him and does not trust in anyone except Him as whosoever relies on Him in everything, then Allāh shall suffice him. Allāh, the Most High, says: “Whosoever trusts in Allāh, then He shall suffice him.”<sup>38</sup> The Prophet, Salutations and Peace of Allāh be upon him, said: “If you trust in Allāh the way He should be trusted, He would have provided for you like he provides for the birds. They go out in the morning hungry and they return satiated.”

**Text:** [108] and Oneness [*Waḥdāniyyah*], that is, there is no other like Him, in Being, Attributes and Actions.

**Commentary:** [327] The meaning of Oneness is the rejection of partitioning [*tarkīb*] in the Being of the Most High, and the rejection of any likeness to Him in Being, Attributes and Acts. He, the Most High, is One. It is impossible that He be divided [into parts] because [328] only a body or mass [*jirm*] can be divided and He, the Most High, is neither body nor accident nor substance. Neither is He a genus that is divided. Rather, He, the Most High, is a Being to be described by the qualities of perfection. Therefore it is said with regard to the reality of the belief in Oneness [*Tawḥīd*] that it is the affirmation of a Being that has no likeness in [other] entities, nor does [this affirmation] make the attributes inactive. There is no Being like the Being of Allāh, Glory be to Him, no name [*ism*] like His Name, Glorious and Honoured is He, and no attribute like [an] Attribute of the Most High, except through the co-incidence of terminology. And through Allāh comes success.

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<sup>36</sup> Qurʾān 35:15

<sup>37</sup> Qurʾān 112: 2-3

<sup>38</sup> Qurʾān 65:3

**Text:** [108-109] These are [thus] six Attributes, the first of which, namely, Existence, is the Essential Attribute [*sifāt al-nafsīyyah*], followed by the five negative Attributes.

**Commentary:** [328] This means that the first Attribute, namely Existence, is the Essential Attribute, that is, Existence is the same as [329] Being - it being the source of Being - as previously indicated. The Being of a thing is its reality with the result that existence has the same meaning as the existing Being. This is the view of Shaykh al-Ash‘arī and it differs to that of Rāzī. It is possible to reconcile these perspectives by [saying] that the view of Shaykh al-Ash‘arī relates to the percept [*khārij*] because there can be no meaning to an exterior, evident existence except as an existent Being. And the view of Rāzī relates to the concept [*dhahn*], and not to the percept, because reason can conceive of existence but cannot perceive that which is described by it. These two views are therefore in agreement. And Allāh knows best. The five attributes that come after existence are [330] negative, meaning each one negates an attribute that does not befit Him, Most Glorious, Most Honoured. Thus Beginninglessness negates a non-existence prior to existence, Everlastingness negates a non-existence following existence, Absolute Distinction negates likeness, Self-Subsistence negates needing [another] being or a doer, and Oneness negates any partner being ascribed to Him, Most High, whether adjoined or removed. And through Allāh comes success.

**Text:** [109] Thereafter [follows] seven attributes that are necessary for the Most High and which are termed the abstracted Attributes [*sifāt al-ma‘ānī*],

**Commentary:** [330] Know that every attribute exists in itself, being existent in the Being of the Most High [*qāima bi dhātih*].<sup>39</sup> They are called abstracted attributes.

**Text:** [109] namely, Power [*al-Qudrah*], Will [*al-Irādah*] - both of which encompass all possibilities -

**Commentary:** [331] That is, Power is a perceptible attribute, beginningless with the Beginninglessness of Being, being existent in the Most High’s Being. Through it the bringing in and extinguishing of possibilities is brought about in accordance with the Will. Will is a perceptible attribute, being existent in the Being of Allāh, the Most High. The specification [*takhsīs*] of the available possibilities - such as the specification of their length, reduction, whiteness, blackness and so forth - are brought about through the Will. Intelligence does not admit that these two attributes relate to other than possibilities due to the fact that among the characteristics of Power is its bringing into existence as well as its extinguishing it. Therefore it cannot be applied except to possibilities. It is similarly the case with the Will. Among its characteristics is its choosing to specify the time, [332] place, direction and so forth of that which is possible. Therefore, specification cannot relate to that which is outside possibility. Therefore, it is necessary that these two attributes are related to every possibility, without exception. And through Allāh comes success.

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<sup>39</sup> I have adapted this usage from Keller who renders “*qaima bi dhātih*” as “an attribute of His Entity”. See N. M. H. Keller (1994) **The Reliance of the Traveller**, Beltsville, Amana Publications, p. 820.

**Text: [109] Knowledge, which encompasses all that is necessary, possible and impossible,**

**Commentary:** [332] That is, the Most High's Knowledge is a perceptible attribute, being existent in the Being of the Most High, and by which every object of knowledge is manifest, whether of the necessary, possible or impossible. He knows all the rules of reason through beginningless Knowledge. Not an atom's weight escapes His Knowledge and He knows what was, what is and what will be, and what will not be, that is, [333] how that, had it been, would have been. No object of knowledge is hidden from Him. The Most High says: "It is We Who created man, and we know what dark suggestions his soul makes to him: for We are nearer to him than the jugular vein."<sup>40</sup> That is, nearness in Knowledge, not nearness in physical distance. It is said that the jugular vein is a vein at the entrance of the neck and that it is connected to the heart. When it is severed then a person dies. There is a warning for creation in this verse because if they know that Allāh, the Most High, is aware of what their innermost feelings convey, and that He rewards or punishes in accordance with what proceeds from them in terms of speech or act, then it necessarily behooves a thinking person to fear his Protector and to eradicate his desires and worldly concerns [334] since the Most High sees and hears Him. Knowledge is not one of the effecting [*mu'aththara*] attributes but is a disclosing attribute [*sifāt kashf*]. For this reason it is necessary that it be related to every necessity, possibility and impossibility.

**Text: [109] Life, which does not [need to be] connected to anything,**

**Commentary:** [334] That is, Life does not require an additional connection to anything else to demonstrate its position but is [rather] the condition for all the attributes. It is in contrast to the [other] abstracted attributes which require such connections. Thus power requires an additional connection to the Being, being connected to It through possibility and this is likewise the case with the rest of the abstracted attributes, except for Life. It is a [335] perceptible attribute, existing in the Being of Allāh, Most High. And through Allāh comes success.

**Text: [109] Hearing and Seeing, which are connected to all existents,**

**Commentary:** [335] That is, the Hearing and the Seeing of the Most High together encompass every existent, irrespective of whether that existent is ancient [*qadīm*] or recent [*hādīth*], whether it is an essence, quality, voice or other than this. He the Most High sees and hears essences [*dhawāt*], colors, being [*akwān*], flavours, breaths, love and hate, the whole, the portion and the particular and what is in the recesses of the soul, and all existing accidents. You may ask: "How is hearing related to a voiceless existent [336] and what is the proof for that?" The reply to this is that the proof which relates hearing to all existents is both via transmission as well as through reason.

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<sup>40</sup> Qur'ān 50:16



As for transmission, it is the Word of Allāh: “And Allāh spoke to Moses.”<sup>41</sup> “Verily I have chosen you from amongst the people with My Message and with My Speech.”<sup>42</sup> The verse is clear in showing Moses, on whom be peace, hearing His beginningless Word. The Speech of the Most High is not through letters or a voice. Thus, if speech were to be confined to voice, then it necessarily follows that Moses, on whom be peace, would not have heard the Speech of the Most High. This negates restricting hearing to voice [only] and makes necessary its relationship to all existents. [Now] if such is the case of a created entity’s hearing, then what must the case not be [337] with regard to Beginningless Hearing?!

And for this reason, if hearing was to be restricted to that which is voiced, and was not related to anything else of that which is existent, then it would necessarily be always subject to this restriction, and the one who is so subject must necessarily be an originated existent, so how can this be?! Thus, it necessarily follows that its connection must be to every existent, as in the case of sight. And His Hearing and Seeing is not via bodily organs as with the case of creation, due to impossibility of any likeness of the Most High to creation. And through Allāh comes success.

**Text:** [109] and Speech, which does not consist of letters or sounds, and it relates to all that is encompassed by the [attribute of] Knowledge.

**Commentary:** [337] That is, it is impossible that the Most High’s Beginningless Word be of letters [338] or sounds and what is implied by them [such as notions of] forwarding [*taqdīm*], delay [*ta’khīr*], stoppage, denuding [*tajarrud*], intonation [*lahn*], expression [*īrāb*], public declaration [*jīhr*] and secrecy [*sīr*]. These are all characteristics of the created whereas the Most High’s Speech is a perceptible abstracted attribute existing in His Holy Being and which manifests diverse expressions such as the Tawrah, the Injīl, the Zabūr and the Furqān.<sup>43</sup> These expressions are not the same as the Most High’s Speech as they take place through letters and sounds. Rather, these letters and sounds point out [*dalla ‘alā*] the Beginningless Speech of Allāh. Nor does His Speech become incarnate in any of the Books but it exists in the Holy Being. It is not dispersed and that which is [339] other than it cannot be described as the Speech [of Allāh].

However, the letters of the Qur’ān, for example, in its pointing out the Speech of Allāh, is designated as the Speech of Allāh, such as the saying of ‘Āisha, Allāh be pleased with her: “What are between the two covers of the book [*muṣḥaf*] is the Speech of Allāh, the Most High”. For this reason the Aḥl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā‘ah, Allāh be pleased with them, are in consensus that the Speech of Allāh is read with the tongues, written in copies [*masāḥif*] and preserved in the hearts [*sudūr*]. Thus it is evident to you that while there is disagreement [*ikhtilāf*] with regard to [the nature of] the pointing out [*dalla ‘alā*] of the Speech of God, Most High, there is no disagreement with regard to the fact that there is no disparity [*ikhtilāf*], nor change [*tabdīl*], nor modification [*taghayyar*] in the Speech of

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<sup>41</sup> Qur’ān 4:164

<sup>42</sup> Qur’ān 7:144

<sup>43</sup> These are God’s Revealed Books to, respectively, Moses, Jesus, David and Muḥammad, upon them be peace. The word Furqān, meaning “Criterion” is one of the Names of the Qur’ān.

God. Rather, it is One, and does not multiply. Glory be to Him who has no likeness in anything and He is the Hearing, the Seeing.

An example will explain [340] what I mean. I say - and Allāh is the Helper - that when the Speech of Allāh is revealed in a similitude [*mithl*] - and to Allāh belongs the highest similitude - it is akin to the example of a man. You point out the mention of the man with your tongue and thus the mention of the man is present on your tongue, but the man himself is by no means on your tongue. This is recited with your tongue. And you preserve the command of the man in your heart. If he orders you with something, or prevents you from something, or instills in you fear of, or compassion towards, various types of things you will preserve all of these in your heart. But the man who orders or prevents you is by no means in your heart. This is the meaning of “preservation in the heart” [*maḥfūz fi al-ṣudūr*]. You write the name of the man in your book [341] and thus the name of the man is immediately in your book but the man himself is by no means in your book. This is the meaning of being written in copies. Therefore, do not take both reading [*qirā’ah*] and recitation [*tilāwah*] to be the Beginningless Word of Allāh, Most High [per se] for such is not the case. Rather, they are articulations that point out the Most High’s Speech. If recitation and reading were [equivalent to] the Beginningless Speech of Allāh, the Most High, then the Speech of Allāh would become incarnate on the tongue via the incarnation of reciting and reading it. And if the Speech of Allāh becomes incarnate on the tongue then Allāh becomes incarnate inasmuch as His Speech is incarnated. But indeed the Speech of the Most Honoured, Most Glorious is recited in His Being and is not dispersed. The *Ahl al-Sunnah*, Allāh be pleased with them, agree that the Speech of Allāh is not existent in two selves [*dhātain*] and more than one spokesman does not speak by it. [342] None speaks by the Speech of Allāh except Allāh. Know that the relationship of recitation and reading to the Speech of Allāh, Most High, to use an example, is like the relationship of the shadow to the form. Whoever thinks that recitation and reading are the Beginningless Speech of Allāh, Most High, is like a man who thinks the shadow a form. He says: “This shadow is the same as the form”. Know you that when you hear the Speech of Allāh, Most High, from a person you hear it recited and read and that if you hear the Speech of Allāh, the Most High, in the next world you hear it without it being recited or read. Therefore, recitation and reading of the Qur’ān<sup>44</sup> applies to a human being whereas Lordship is transcendent, high above recitation, reading, [343] letters, sounds and languages. And Allāh, Most Glorious, Most Honoured [does not speak]<sup>45</sup> via letters and pronunciation. The Speech of Allāh is one phenomenon [*shay wāhid*] by which command, prohibition, dread and inducement are understood, and is not in Arabic for, if it were, it would be a language among languages. However, only its recitation is in Arabic. Naming the Speech of Allāh “Qur’ān” is a linguistic [*lughawīyah*] designation, not a technical one. If it is said: “If the recitation is created what is the meaning of the Most High’s saying: “This (which) We recite unto thee is a revelation and a wise reminder.”?”<sup>46</sup>. The answer is that it is carried through<sup>47</sup> Jibrīl, on whom be peace who is the reciter although He ascribes [344] it to Himself. As Allāh, the Most High,

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<sup>44</sup> The word on p. 342 1st word 2<sup>nd</sup> last line is unclear but appears to be Qur’ān.

<sup>45</sup> The last word of the 1<sup>st</sup> line on p. 343 is illegible and my bracketed insertion is dictated by the context.

<sup>46</sup> Qur’ān 3:58

<sup>47</sup> The first word on the last line of p. 343 is illegible but the meaning is apparent from the context.

says, “And We split the earth in fragments.”<sup>48</sup> It is the ploughmen who split the earth but Allāh, Glory be to Him, attaches that action to Himself. Whoever claims that Allāh, the Most Glorious, Most Honoured, is reciting, then such a one has left the path of the Muslims because the meaning of recitation [*qirā’ah wa tilāwah*] according to the *Ahl al-Sunnah*, Allāh be pleased with them, is the voice of the reciter and the Most High’s expression is high above [the employment of] terminology. From here it is understood, through the grace of Allāh, the Most High’s saying: “Say: The Holy Spirit [*rūḥ al quds*] has brought the Revelation from your Lord in truth.”<sup>49</sup> The Holy Spirit is Jibrīl, on whom be peace.

It is said that by [345] this is meant that Jibrīl was in the region of the heavens [*fauq*] and he heard the Speech of Allāh from Allāh or it was revealed to him and he received it from the Preserved Tablet. And Allāh, Most Honoured, Most Glorious, is not [located] in the regions of the heavens. He made Jibrīl express [His Speech] to Muḥammad, the Salutations and Peace of Allāh be upon him, in the Arabic tongue, that which was understood from the Speech of Allāh, Most Honoured, Most Glorious, and its preservation in the Preserved Tablet. He then communicated<sup>50</sup> it to the Messenger of Allāh, the Salutations and Peace of Allāh be upon him, in the Arabic idiom though that which is expressed is the [beginningless] Speech of Allāh and this is not in Arabic. This is what is meant by descent [*nuzūl*].

The Speech of Allāh, Most High, is connected to every necessity, possibility and impossibility like in the case of knowledge. The meaning of “connecting” [*ta’alluq*] is its pointing out [*dalālatihī*]. An example of its pointing out in the case of necessity is His, the Most Honoured, Most Glorious, saying: “Say: He is Allāh, The One. [346] Allāh - the Absolute.”<sup>51</sup> Oneness and Absoluteness [*ṣamadaniyyah*] are a necessity. And the Absolute is He in whom that which is other than He take refuge. Allāh, the Most High, says: “ O humankind. You are all in need of Allāh. And Allāh-He is the Self-Sufficient, the Praised.”<sup>52</sup> There can be no doubt of the need for Him by all that which is other than Him. An example of pointing out in the case of impossibility is His, the Most High’s, saying: “ He begets not. Nor is He begotten. And there is none like Him.”<sup>53</sup> An example of pointing out in the case of possibility is the Most High’s saying: “And your Lord creates and chooses what He wills.”<sup>54</sup> This is because creation is of that which is possible. This is the meaning of the connectedness of speech. Through Allāh comes success.

The inference to be drawn from [the instance when] Mūsa, Peace be upon him, heard the Speech of His Lord, is not that He was silent, [347] and then spoke. [Equally] His Speech did not cease after [Musa, on whom be peace] heard it. Rather, the meaning is that He,

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<sup>48</sup> Qur’ān 80:26

<sup>49</sup> Qur’ān 16:102

<sup>50</sup> The word “addahā” in the text (p. 345) appears to be a mistake for “addāhā”- meaning “to give or communicate” in this context.

<sup>51</sup> Qur’ān 112:1-2

<sup>52</sup> Qur’ān 35:15

<sup>53</sup> Qur’ān 112:3-5

<sup>54</sup> Qur’ān 28:68

the Most High, removed the obstacle [to his hearing], enabling him to hear His Speech, and then returned the obstacle thus ending his hearing of It.

**Text:** [109- 110] Thereafter follows [another] seven attributes that are necessary for Allāh and which are termed the signifying attributes [*sifat al-m'anawīyyah*] and which are intrinsically connected to the preceding seven. They are the Most High's being All-Powerful [*Qādiran*], All-Willing [*Murīdan*], All-Knowing [*ālīman*], the Living [*Ḥayan*], All-Hearing [*Ṣamīr*], all-Seeing [*Baṣīr*], and Speaking [*Mutakallim*].

**Commentary:** [347] These are derivative attributes, that is, they derive from the abstracted attributes, and this is why they are termed the signifying attributes. They are joined to the abstracted attributes with the difference that whereas the abstracted attributes [348] are the necessary description of that which exists in His Holy Being - as has been explained - the signifying attributes is the description by which that Being is depicted. They are not “inherent” [*mawjūdah*] attributes - only the abstracted attributes are the “inherent” ones. It [consists of] the Most High's exercising Power, expressing the existence of Power in the Most High's Being, the Most High's being Willing, expressing the existence of Will in the Most High's Being, the Most High's being Knowing, expressing the existence of Knowledge in the Most High's Being, the Most High's being Living, expressing the existence of Life in the Most High's Being, the Most High's being Hearing expressing the existence of Hearing in the Most High's Being, the Most High's being Seeing, expressing the existence of Sight in the Most High's Being, and the Most High's being Speaking, expressing the existence of Speech in the Most High's Being. It follows that [349] the meaning of the signifying attributes are derived from the abstracted attributes and cannot exist in the Being to the exclusion of abstracted attributes. And through Allāh comes success.

**Text:** [110] There are twenty attributes that are impossible to ascribe to the Most High and which are the opposite of the first twenty. They are: non-existence [*al-'adam*], origination [*ḥudūth*], the occurrence of non-existence,

**Commentary:** [349] After the Shaykh, Allāh be pleased with him, has completed his discussion of the twenty necessary attributes, [he begins discussing]<sup>55</sup> the twenty impossible attributes in the same order as he has dealt with the necessary ones. Thus non-existence is the opposite of existence, origination is the opposite of beginninglessness, and the occurrence of non-existence, that is, its being overtaken [*luḥūq*] [by non-existence], which is the opposite of everlastingness.

**Text:** [110] similarity with the creation such as His being a body, that is, seeing His Holy Being as occupying a measure of space,

**Commentary:** [350] This is the explanation of similarity which is impossible and the opposite of absolute distinction. He mentions that similarity is of various kinds, one of which is that of body [*jirm*]. By body is meant that which is established in itself and occupies space, such as a human being, for example and other such created entities. Each

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<sup>55</sup> The text (p. 349) has the connecting phrase missing.

one of these is termed body. These entities gather in bodies, that is, in quantities [*maqādir*] which occupy space.

**Text:** [110] or His being an accident that subsists via a body,

**Commentary:** [350] This is also a type of impossible similarity, and that is His Most High's being an accident. The meaning of accident [*'arḍ*] is a thing that subsists via a body and cannot be established in itself. These [351] are things like colours, tastes, scents, voices, movement, and pause. All of these are accidents, it being impossible that they are established in themselves as they need a body for their establishment. It is therefore known that all of creation is either designated as a body or an accident and [it is further known] that existents are related to space.

Designation [in general] takes place according to four categories. The self-sufficient category is independent of an essence or doer, this [category] being the Being of our Protector, Glorious and Honoured. The [second] category is in need of an essence and a doer and is the category of accidents, namely, characteristics established through bodies as their independence from the latter is impossible. The [third] category is that which is in need of a doer but is not in need of an essence by which it must become established, [352] these being bodies. The [fourth] category is present in the essence and *does* need a doer and these are His Attributes, Glorious and Honoured.

**Text:** [110] or that He be [located] opposite it [ i.e. a body] or His being depicted by its imagination,

**Commentary:** [352] He said this in the *Kubrā*.<sup>56</sup>

**Text:** [110] or that He be relative to a body,

**Commentary:** [352] This is also a type of impossible similarity and that is the Most High's being relative to a body. Thus it cannot be said that He, the Most High, is above the Throne, or in front of it or behind it because all of these are qualities of bodies, and He, the Most High, is transcendent, high above that. Glory be to Him concerning whom nothing is like Him, and He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing.

**Text:** [110] or that direction [*jihā*] applies to Him,

**Commentary:** [353] This is also a type of impossible similarity, being the ascription of direction to Him, because direction is of the particularities of bodies that necessitates length, limitation, right, left and so forth of the properties of bodies. He, the Most High, is not a body, and thus He cannot be described by direction - Glorious and Honoured is He. With regard to he who believes that direction applies to the Most High, then it is said that such a person has committed unbelief, but [another position] says that such a one has not committed unbelief but he is a sinful innovator [*fāsiq muḥtad'ī*].

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<sup>56</sup> i.e. this being one of the works of Shaykh Sanūsī. See Bencheneb, *op. cit.*

**Text:** [110-111] or that He is bounded by time and space,

**Commentary:** [353] That is, it is impossible that He, Most High, be settled into a place, such as the Throne, for example, [354] because space is created, and none settles into it except one who needs it. Thus, He, the Most High, is not settled into any created thing, nor does He adjoin anything, or face anything or touch anything or follow after a thing. If our Lord was settled in a space, then He would be in need of that space. If He were in need of that space, then He would be incapable of creating that space or other than it.

Three relationships must apply to every existent in space: it must either be smaller than the space, in equal measure to it or bigger than it. To whatsoever this description is applicable, then such must be joined in a place to a body. Its existence must be a bounded existence and not an unrestricted one. A body [*jirm*] is necessarily a substance [*jism*].

[355] In a similar way, we know the impossibility of His existence being restricted through time because unrestricted existence is eternal and time is created as it is an expression of movement of the celestial spheres or of the connection of an originated phenomenon to another originated phenomenon. But there is nothing with Allāh and He is now as He always was. Glory be to the One who is independent of space and time.

**Text:** [111] or that His Holy Being can be described in terms of events [*hawādith*] or that He can be described through smallness or bigness, or that He can be described through objectives in [His] acts and rules.

**Commentary:** [355] That is, it is impossible that events subsist in His Being, or that He be described through smallness or bigness or what is contained in those terms of types [*akwān*] and colours [356] since all of these are characteristics of bodies. Similarly, the Most High's description in terms of accomplishing an objective [*gharḥ*] through His act or ruling is impossible. He has no need to accomplish an objective in His doing of anything, or in His permitting or forbidding a thing. If He had need of accomplishing an objective in anything, then He would be in need of the fulfilment of His objective [through creation]. Needfulness is a lack [*naqs*] and it is impossible for Him to be lacking. "Allāh is Self-Sufficient and you are in need."<sup>57</sup> "He is not asked about what He does but they are asked."<sup>58</sup>

**Text:** [111] Likewise, it is impossible for the Most High not to be Self-Subsistent as [its opposite] is an attribute that requires a cause or needs a characteriser.

**Commentary:** [356] You know [357] from what has been said previously that the meaning of Self-Subsistence is His being not in need of [another] being or doer and the opposite of this is His being in need of such and this is impossible as we will explain, if Allāh wills.

**Text:** [111-112] Equally, it is impossible for the Most High not to be One, otherwise His Being will be composite [*murakkab*], or His Being and His acts will be resembled by

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<sup>57</sup> Qurʾān 47:38

<sup>58</sup> Qurʾān 21:23

something else. It is also impossible that there be with Him in existence another being who effects actions.

**Commentary:** [357] It has been explained that the meaning of oneness is the rejection of compositeness in the Most High's Being and Attributes, and the rejection of a likeness to Him in Being, Attributes and Acts. The opposite of this, which is the absence of Oneness in [358] these three categories, is impossible. He is the Goal [*matlūb*].

**Text:** [112] It is also impossible for the Most High to be incapable of [effecting] the possible,

**Commentary:** [358] This is the opposite of power because His Power acts freely on every possibility. If He is incapable of acting on [even] one possibility, then He would necessarily be restricted [*mukhaṣṣas*] and be of the originated. Thus, incapability on the part of the Most High is impossible. Allāh, the Most High, says: "And He has Power over all things."<sup>59</sup>

**Text:** [112] or to bring something into being that He does not want to exist, or [to bring into being something] through negligence [*dhuhūl*], forgetfulness [*ghaflah*], compulsion or through nature [*ṭab'*].

**Commentary:** [358] This is the opposite of will. It is impossible that Allāh, the Most High, creates something without [359] the Most High's willing such a thing - so that there be in His dominion something He does not will [to be there]. The author expounds on aversion [*karāha*] because it is impossible that there be the creation of a thing in aversion. It has to be carefully distinguished from legal aversion which is the Most High's forbidding a thing despite His creation of it. Such aversion is compatible with the creation of acts accompanying it such as Allāh, the Most High, letting many of the creation stray despite His forbidding them from such straying [but they did it nonetheless]. Equally, it is impossible for Allāh, the Most High, to bring a thing into existence through negligence or forgetfulness. Similarly, it is impossible that His Holy Being is a material cause [*illah*] for the creation of a thing or creates a thing innately. Thus it is not said that Allāh, the Most High, creates things through His nature or that His Holy Being is the material cause of [360] the creation of a thing, for this is impossible. For if Allāh, the Most High, creates things through material cause or innateness then the creation would be pre-eternal for a material cause must be accompanied by an effect and be without a lag [*ta'khīr*]. An example of this is the [consonance between the] movement of the fingers with the movement of the ring. The movement of the fingers is the cause and the movement of the ring is its effect. Whenever the fingers move, the ring moves at the same time without any lag. Thus, if the Being is the material cause of the creation of things, and the creation of things is the effect, then it is necessary that the universe be pre-eternal due to the beginninglessness of its cause, which is the Being. [361] This is similarly the case with creation via the mode of innateness - this necessitates the pre-eternity of the universe. But nothing is beginningless except Allāh, Most Honoured, Most Glorious. Thus creation

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<sup>59</sup> Qur'ān 5:120; 11:4; 30:50; 64:1; 67:1

via the modes of material cause or innateness is void and the specific manner [*ta'yīn*] of creation is through choice [*ikhtiyār*]. And through Allāh comes success.

**Text:** [112] Likewise, ignorance - and that which is generally known to be associated with it - is impossible for the Most High.

**Commentary:** [361] This is also the opposite of knowledge. It is impossible for the Most High to be ignorant and all which is signified by it, such as supposition [*ẓann*], doubt [*shakk*], fancy [*wahm*], dullness [*nawm*] forgetfulness on His part, Most High, and cogitating over things. All of these things are impossible. Rather, He, the Most High, is the Knower of everything that was, that is, that will be and that will not be, [362] without any involvement of doubt, supposition, cogitation, source or proof. So Glory be to Him regarding Whose Knowledge not an atom's weight in the earth and heavens escapes!<sup>60</sup>

**Text:** [112] So are death, deafness, blindness, dumbness

**Commentary:** [362] These are the opposites of what has been discussed. Thus death is the opposite of life, deafness is the opposite of hearing, blindness is the opposite of seeing and dumbness is the opposite of speech as well as what is implied of dumbness such as His Speaking being through letters, voices, pause, melody, and expression since all of these are of the characteristics of originated things. And it must not be said: "For what reason has the author, Allāh's mercy be upon him, [363] spoken about the impossibility of death and so forth when these are deficiencies even with regard to the created, and cannot even be contemplated with regard to the Creator, the Glorious, the Most High?! To describe the Fashioner through these cannot even be imagined!" Our reply [to this objection] is that negating deficiencies with regard to Him, the Most High, is correct even if it cannot be imagined that He be described through it. The proof [for our view] is his, the Salutations and Peace of Allāh be upon him, saying that the Dajjāl is one-eyed "and your Lord is not one-eyed."<sup>61</sup> And his, the Salutations and Peace of Allāh be upon him, saying: "Do not call on one who is deaf, blind and mute. I rather call on One Who is Hearing, Seeing and Speaking." Thus the *ḥadīth* instructs that negating deficiencies with regard to Him ensures proper completion [*kamāl*] [of the issue] even if these cannot be imagined.

**Text:** [112] and, as is clear from our discussion, the opposites of the signifying attributes.

**Commentary:** [364] That is, that if you know the opposites of the abstracted attributes you will know the opposites of the signifying attributes. Of these, the opposite of the Most High's being All-Powerful is His being powerless, the opposite of His being All-Willing is His being averse, that is, His being not willing, the opposite of the Most High's being All-Knowing is His being ignorant, the opposite of His being Living is His being dead, and so forth. And through Allāh comes success.

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<sup>60</sup> Cf. to Qur'ān 10:61; 34:3

<sup>61</sup> For this *ḥadīth* see al-Baghawī, *op. cit.* volume 2, p. 1156



**Text:** [112] As for what is possible with regard to the being of the Most High, it is [His] doing or leaving that which is possible.

**Commentary:** [364] When the author, Allāh the Most High's mercy be upon him, has completed that which pertains to the necessary and impossible, he embarks on what is possible of His acts. [365] He states that what is possible with regard to Him, Most High, is the doing or leaving of whatever is of the possible [*mumkin*]. Examples of the category of possibility include rewarding, punishing, the sending of Messengers, on them be Salutations and Peace, the vision of the Generous Protector in Paradise and so forth of the possible. The doing or leaving of everything that is possible is not obligatory upon the Most High. Rather, the doing of such is a grace from Him, the Most High, to His servant and none has a right over Him. Nobody is entitled to reward because of obedience as the obedience of anyone does not benefit Him. Furthermore, obedience is created by Allāh, and [His] servants do not participate in it except in earning [*iktisāb*]. No [necessary] effect is generated by such obedience.<sup>62</sup> Reason may admit the existence or non-existence of everything that has come down from the Lawgiver, including that of which He has informed us concerning [366] reward and punishment, prior to the coming of the Law. But after its coming, acceptance becomes necessary through the Law and not through reason. And through Allāh comes success.

**Text:** [112-113] The proof for the necessary existence of the Most High is the origination [*ḥudūth*] of the world.

**Commentary:** [366] Proof [*burhān*] is clear evidence. Origination is the existence of the world after its non-existence. Every existent besides Allāh, the Most High, is [termed] the world. The world, which has a *fatha* on the *lām* [*ālam*], is everything that exists of that which is created, and it is evidence for [there being] the Fashioner, Most High.

**Text:** [113] This is because if it did not have an Originator but originated by itself, then it must be commanded by one of two equally applicable rules [*amrain*]: it can either be the same as its cause [or] preponderant over it [by] having no cause - [both of] which are impossible.

**Commentary:** [367] After you know that the origination of the world, which is that which is other than Allāh, is a proof for the existence of the Fashioner, Most Glorious, Most Honoured, and that this evidence cannot be annulled except through the negation of the world by itself, the author [then] argues the impossibility of the existence of the world by itself. He says that if it came into existence by itself then it arose from one of two equal possibilities [before it], namely existence or non-existence - these being equal [possibilities] in relation to its possessor and there being no<sup>63</sup> preponderance of one over the other. By this is meant that existence and non-existence are of equal weight - the world can admit either of existence or non-existence in equal proportions [368] without preponderance [*tarjīh*] [of one over the other]. If the world could create itself, then it is

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<sup>62</sup> I.e. Obedience does not automatically cause reward as an effect. Obedience and its effect are both entirely created and contingent upon the will of God.

<sup>63</sup> The text omits the "not" which is clearly an oversight.

necessary something equal [existence or non-existence] be preponderant without a cause, and this is impossible. Then it is necessary that the creator of the world be other than it. That other is Allāh, the Most High. Thus the impossibility of the existence of the world by itself is made clear to you. Rather, it is in need of other than it in the designation of its existence as against non-existence due to this being equal to it, in the designation of its specified space as against all other spaces, in the designation of its specified time as against all other times, in the designation of its specified measure [*miqdār*] [369] as against all other measures, in the designation of its specified quality as against all other qualities. All of these things are equal [in possibility] because their existence is equal to their non-existence. Their specified measure is equal to all other ranges. Thus, their particularisation and preponderance points to one who gives them preponderance over other than them and that is Allāh, Most Honoured, Most Glorious.

The analogy of a scale balance can clarify this. One cannot fill one scale with what is in the other without increasing the former and decreasing the latter. And to hold the preponderance [in weight] of both of them is contradictory, like the contradiction between the existence of a thing and its non-existence. If we were to witness these scales after the ascended one again descends and the other has risen, [370] then we know their states are substituted. The descended one has risen and the risen one has descended. [However] we do not know: was there an increase in the weight that descended, or was there a decrease [in weight] of the other? That is hidden from us due to our being there in the aftermath.<sup>64</sup> But we have certain knowledge that it could not have happened except through a cause which increased the weight in that which descended or decreased the weight from the one that rose. If we put it before our intellects that it had no cause of occurrence, we will find our intellects vehemently disavowing such a notion.

The existence and non-existence of the world are like the scales. If we know that the world was non-existent, and we know that its non-existence has been outweighed by its existence, then we would know for sure [371] that it was due to a cause of the occurrence by which the antecedent existence became preponderant over the preceding non-existence. Thus it is clear to you that whatever happens, its coming into being is due to a cause and that Cause is Allāh, the Most High, the Unique and Alone [*munfarad*] in the creation of all existence. And through Allāh comes success.

**Text:** [113] The proof for the originated nature of the world lies in its dependence on originated accidents [*‘araḍ* pl. *‘arāḍ*] such as motion, stillness and so forth. An accident is always accompanied by [another] accident. The proof for the originated nature of an accident is its changing from non-existence into existence and from existence into non-existence.

**Commentary:** [371] After the author, Allāh, the Most High’s, mercy be upon him, has mentioned that the origination of the world is evidence of the Most High’s existence, he mentions the evidence for the origination of the substances [*ajrām*] of the world. [372] Its evidence is its requirement for originated accidents because it is impossible to disengage the substances of the world from accidents such as movement and pause. These

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<sup>64</sup> Literally, “*li ‘ajli b’ud*” - “due to the interval”.

originated accidents are changeable as witnessing them proves. If they were beginningless, it would be necessary that they do not become non-existent. This is because whatever is proven to be beginningless, its non-existence is impossible. When its originated nature and inseparability from substances is proven, then this, without doubt, necessitates the originated nature of substances because it is impossible for a substance to be free of [an accident]. And the inseparability of an originated being is with [something else] originated.

**Text:** [113-114] The proof of the Most High's necessary Beginninglessness is that if He was not without a beginning then He must have been originated and thus be in need of an originator<sup>65</sup> which leads to [the problem of] circularity and consecutiveness [*dawr wa tasalsu*].

**Commentary:** [373] Know that every existent must either be beginningless or originated. There can be none that is beginningless except Allāh, Most Honoured, Most Glorious, and His Attributes. Whatever is other than Him is created and is in need of Him. It is impossible that the Most High be originated. If He was originated, then it would necessitate Him being in need of an originator prior to Him. That originator would be in need of another originator prior to it. If the number stops, then this is termed circularity [*dawr*]. Circularity is impossible because it necessitates that the Creator be created. If the number does not stop and prior to every originated Being is another originated Being in endless succession, then this is termed consecutiveness [*tasalsu*], which is impossible. Thus it is necessary that [374] the Creator be beginningless. He is the Goal.

**Text:** [114] The proof of the Most High's necessary Everlastingness is that if non-existence could befall Him, then He is also subject to losing His beginninglessness, and thus His existence must be viewed as a possibility and not a necessity. Possibility cannot be predicated except of an originated thing and is impossible to be predicated of Allāh given what we have previously discussed regarding the necessity of His beginninglessness.

**Commentary:** [374] That is, if it is admitted that non-existence could befall the Most High, then this would necessitate that His existence be possible because the meaning of possibility is that which admits of existence or non-existence. If He was a possibility, this would necessitate Him being in need of a chooser that would have chosen for Him existence [375] as against non-existence - given what you now know of the equivalence between existence and non-existence. If He is in need then He would necessarily be originated and this is impossible due to the necessity of the Most High's beginninglessness [as demonstrated] by unequivocal proof. Therefore, it necessitates the impossibility of His non-existence and the necessity of His everlastingness. And He is the Goal.

**Text:** [114] The proof of the Most High's necessary and absolute distinction to all that which is created is that if He were similar to anything in creation then He must be originated like it, and this is impossible given what you have previously inferred regarding the necessity of His Beginninglessness and Everlastingness.

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<sup>65</sup> The text has the passive *muḥdath* instead of the active-and correct- *muḥdith*.

**Commentary:** [375] If there was any resemblance between Him and anything of His creation, then this would necessitate the Most High's createdness because He would be like one of them. It would then necessarily follow that He be incapable in accordance with its incapability. He would not have the power [376] to create anything because whatever is predicated of a similitude [*mithl*] is predicated of the object resembled [*mumāthil*]. And this is impossible given what you know of the necessity of the Most High's Beginninglessness and Everlastingness. Furthermore, if the Most High resembled anything of that which is created then this would necessitate His createdness because of His resemblance [to it] and it would necessitate His beginninglessness because of divinity - and something being both beginningless and originated is impossible.

**Text:** [114-115] The proof of the Most High's necessary Self-Subsistence is that if the Most High was in need of a cause, then He becomes an attribute [of the cause] and the attribute [being possessed] cannot be characterised as possessing abstracted and signifying attributes. Our Protector, Glorious and Honoured be He, must be described by the latter two categories of attributes and not [as being] an attribute. If He is in need of a specification then He must be originated and this is impossible! This proof is established from the necessity of the Most High's Beginninglessness and Everlastingness.

**Commentary:** [377] It has been explained that the meaning of Self-Subsistence is an expression that denotes the Self-Sufficiency of the Most High, [free from need of] a being or mover. The author gives here the import of the evidence for Self-Sufficiency, free from the need of a being or mover. He says that if He was in need of a being through which to subsist, then He would necessarily be an attribute [of that being]. His being an attribute is impossible since the abstracted and signifying attributes cannot be established through an attribute. If they were established through such, this would necessitate consecutiveness [*tasalsu*] because if a fixed attribute [*sifah thubūtīyyah*] is established through other attributes, it would require that [378] another attribute be established through itself and that this [new] attribute submit to the establishing of another attribute and so forth without end. Thus there enters into existence that which is without end of the fixed attributes and this is impossible. The impossibility of there being an attribute of space for the subsistence of the abstracted and signifying attributes has already been clarified to you. The proof unequivocally points to the necessity of His description via these two sets of attributes. Thus it is necessary that He be a Being and this Being is Self-Sufficient, being free of a mover. If He is in need of a mover then this would require [His] origination, which is absurd, as we have explained previously in the proofs of beginninglessness and everlastingness.

**Text:** [115] The proof for the Most High's necessary Oneness is that if He were not one, then nothing can come into existence due to His powerlessness in such a scenario.

**Commentary:** [379] That is, if He had a likeness [*mumāthil*] in divinity, then no creation would come into existence due to their mutual incapability in such a case. This can be explained as follows: if we assume the co-operation of two divinities in the creation of one possibility at the same time, then this would necessitate that the possibility cannot come into existence because it is impossible that one action proceeds from two actors. This is because the substance of an individual [*fard*] that does not admit of

compartmentalisation. He does not have any existence outside of himself. If two powers [*qudratān*] are effected through him, then this would necessitate that one existence is [really] two existences, and this is [380] impossible as one self cannot exist as two. Thus the effect of two powers simultaneously [in one individual] cannot be accepted. Thus, from the incapability of one of them, the incapability of the other must follow because whatever is possible for the resemblance is possible for the object resembled. Thus nothing in creation can come into existence which [as it has so come] invalidates the inextricability of two powers to one possibility - and this is together with their co-operation. As for the [scenario] wherein they differ, its invalidity is patent. An example would be if one of them wills the living of a body, and the other wills its death, or one wills movement and the other wills pause. Thus it is impossible that they can execute their wills simultaneously as this would be a combination [381] of opposites or antitheses [*naqīḍain*]. Thus one body would be both moving and pausing, living and dead, and this is impossible. This makes obligatory the necessity of the Oneness of our Protector, Most Glorious, Most Honored. And He is the Goal.

**Text:** [115-116] The proof of the Most High being necessarily characterised by Power, Will, Knowledge and Life is that if any of these Attributes were non-existent then nothing of that which is originated could come into existence.

**Commentary:** [381] There is no doubt that the world is dependent on His Power, that his Power rests on His Will and His Will rests on His Knowledge. Allāh, the Most High, does not create anything except what He wills and knows. And all these attributes are conditional on Life. [382] If any of these attributes are annulled, then it necessitates that creation does not exist. This is impossible because its occurrence is witnessed. This necessitates that its existence be evidence for the existence of these attributes. And He is the Goal.

**Text:** [116] The proof for the Most High necessarily being Hearing, Seeing and Speaking is the Book, the Sunnah and Consensus [*ijmā'*]. Further, if He were not described by these attributes, then He would necessarily be described by their opposites which are deficiencies. And it is impossible for the Most High to be deficient.

**Commentary:** [382] Its purport [*ḥāṣil*] is that reason and transmission point to the necessity of what he has mentioned. As for transmission, it is the Most High's saying: "And He [383] is the All-Hearing, All-Seeing"; and the Most High's saying: "And Allāh spoke to Mūsa directly";<sup>66</sup> and the Most High's saying: "Verily, I have chosen you over the people for My Message and My Speech".<sup>67</sup> As for reason, the annulment of these attributes leads to His description by their opposites and these are deficiencies - and deficiency with regard to the Most High is impossible. His description must be through attributes of perfection. And He is the Goal.

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<sup>66</sup> Qur'ān 4:164

<sup>67</sup> Qur'ān 7:144

**Text:** [116] The proof of the Most High doing or leaving that which is possible is that if these were incumbent on Him, whether [such possibilities] were rational or rationally impossible, then possibility would then be converted into necessity or impossibility - which is irrational.

**Commentary:** [383] This is evidence for the admissibility [*jawāz*] of [384] doing or leaving that which is possible and that this [doing or leaving] is neither necessary or impossible. If the doing of the possible was obligatory upon Him, then that which is [only] admitted becomes compulsory [*wājib*]. This necessitates that the doing of that which is possible is admissible [and not necessary]. And He is the Goal.

**Text:** [116-117] As for the Messengers, on them be Salutations and Peace, they necessarily are truthful, faithful to their commission and [undertakers] of the propagation of that with which they are ordered through His communication. It is impossible for them, Salutations and Peace be upon them, to have the opposites of these attributes, namely falsehood, faithlessness - through doing a thing which they have proscribed, whether this proscription is of the nature of forbidding or detestation - or hiding anything of that which they have been commanded to propagate to the creation.

**Commentary:** [385] Messengers [*rusul*] is the plural of Messenger [*rasūl*]. The meaning of *rasūl* is a human being whom Allāh, the Most High, has sent to the creation to propagate to them what Allāh has revealed to him. The sending of the Messengers, Salutations and Peace be upon them, is of the possibilities. Its evidence is that “sending” [*ba‘th*] is one of the acts of Allāh [and therefore of the realm of possibilities] and you know that the doing or leaving of that which is possible is not incumbent on Him. [As to] his saying that “truthfulness” is incumbent with regard to them, the meaning of “truthfulness” is the agreement of the information [*khabr*] with the self-same reality [*fī nafs al-amr*], that is, with that which is with Allāh, the Most High, whether it is in conformity with the beliefs of the conveyor or not. Whoever informs of something that does not agree with what is with [386] Allāh, the Most High, then this is not called truth. As to his saying “propagation”, it is what they have been commanded to propagate to the creation. And propagation is made necessary upon them, on them be Salutations and Peace. It is a propagation that Allāh has commanded them to propagate, but does not compass everything that Allāh has informed them with. This is why the author, Allāh the Most High’s mercy be upon him, has said “and [undertakers] of the propagation of that with which they are ordered through His communication.”

It is deduced [by him] that three things are necessary with regard to them, on them be Salutations and Peace: propagation, truthfulness and faithfulness [*amānah*]. The opposite of truthfulness is lying, and this is impossible with regard to them, on them be Salutations and Peace. The opposite of faithfulness is treachery, through doing that which Allāh, the Most High, has proscribed - whether it is a proscription of [387] forbidding or of detestation. The opposite of propagation is the hiding of a thing of that which Allāh, the Most High, has commanded them to propagate - as is clear from the words of the author, Allāh’s mercy be upon him.

**Text:** [117] It is allowed that they, Salutations and Peace be upon them, be subject to human accidents, such as sickness and the like, provided that they do not lead to deficiency in their exalted status.

**Commentary:** [387] That is, every human quality that is not deficient in the sight of Allāh. These qualities are permitted to them [Messengers], on them be Salutations and Peace, and it is not made impossible for the Messengers to have such. These are qualities such as sleep, illness, hunger, killing, eating, drinking, selling, buying and so forth of the accidents of human nature [388] that do not lead to deficiency in their exalted degrees.

**Text:** [117-118] The proof of truth being obligatory upon them, Salutations and Peace be upon them, is that if they were not truthful, then it necessarily follows there is falsehood in the information concerning their affirmation by Him, Most High, Most Glorious, Most Honoured, through unambiguous miracles. He, the Most Glorious, Most Honoured, says: “My slave has spoken the truth in all that He communicates from me.”

**Commentary:** [388] The meaning of a miracle is a decree that rends [the law of] nature and is connected to a challenge that the Messenger invites to as an evidence of his truth. This miracle is a heavenly revelation [*tanzīl manzalah*]. He, the Most Honoured, Most Glorious, says: “My slave has spoken the truth in all that He communicates [389] from me.” If lying was allowed with regard to the Messengers, this would necessitate falsehood in the Most High’s information since the Most High has confirmed the truth of His messenger by miracles, and the verification of lying is lying. And lying with regard to the Most High is impossible. This necessitates the truthfulness of the Messengers, on them be Salutations and Peace, in all they have been informed with from Allāh, the Most High, such as reward, punishment and so forth.

**Text:** [118] As for the proof of their faithfulness, Salutations and Peace be upon them, if they showed faithlessness through performing something forbidden or abominable, then that which is forbidden or abominable would constitute [acts of] obedience by them since Allāh, the Most High, has commanded us to follow them in their actions and words - and Allāh, the Most High does not order one to do the prohibited or abominable.

**Commentary:** [390] That is, that the evidence of the preservation [*ḥifẓ*] of the Messengers, upon whom be Salutations and Peace, is their [preservation] from doing that which Allāh has prohibited of the forbidden and detestable. If they are faithless [by performing] a thing forbidden or detestable, then it is necessary that such an act be obedience since Allāh, the Most High, has commanded us to follow them in their words and actions. And Allāh, the Most High, does not command the doing of the forbidden and the detestable. If Allāh knew that they would be faithless, why then did He order us to follow them?!

[391] Rather, it is because the Most Glorious, the Most High, knew that they would not perform an act Allāh has forbidden them from, and that they would do what He commanded them with, and leave what He has forbidden to them, that He has ordered us to follow them. And this is only the case because of their safeguarding [*‘iṣmah*] from that which is forbidden and detestable. Only that which is compulsory [*wājib*], the normative [*sunnah*] and the permitted [*mubāḥ*] proceed from them. The “permitted” is everything

whose performance does not earn reward but whose leaving alone is not sinful, such as selling, buying, eating, drinking, and marriage. But when you examine their intention in the doing of the permitted, then you know that their acts [in this category] are listed as necessary [392] and recommended [*mandūb*], not [merely] permitted. This is because the permitted does not proceed from them due to passions [*shahwah*] as is the case with us. Rather, it proceeds from them with an intention that makes the permitted [an act of] obedience. The very minimum here is that they intend by these acts the instruction and teaching of others. There is a great reward in the teaching of others. And if the Friends of Allāh [*awliyā*], due to their intentions, do not perform the permitted until [via this abstaining] they become obedient then what must the case not be with regard to the Prophets and Messengers, on them be Salutations and Peace! And what must the case not be with regard to our Master, our Patron, Muḥammad, the Salutations and Peace of Allāh be upon him!

**Text:** [118] The same proof applies to the third requirement [namely, communication of the message].

**Commentary:** [393] By this he means their propagation of that which they were commanded to propagate - Salutations and Peace be upon them. There is no doubt that if they had propagated something different, we would have mirrored them in that - we would have hidden some beneficial knowledge which Allāh has obligated us to propagate to whosoever is obliged for it - and this is impossible to imagine. It is forbidden and its doer is cursed. Allāh, the Most High, says: “Those who hide what We have revealed of the Exposition [*bayyināt*] and guidance - a verse after We have clarified it to the people in the Book - they are those who Allāh curse and accursed of those who are entitled to curse”<sup>68</sup>. How is it possible to imagine [such hiding] by them? [394] Our Protector, Most Glorious, Most Honoured, says to His Messenger, our Master, our Prophet, and our Patron, Muḥammad, Salutations and Peace of Allāh be upon him: “Oh Messenger! Propagate that which has been revealed to you from your Lord. If you do not, then you have not propagated His Message.”<sup>69</sup> That is, if you propagate [only] some of what I have ordered you to propagate, then you will be judged as one who has not communicated any of the Message.

Look at this tremendous inducement of fear [*takhwīf*] upon the most Noble of Creation and the further perfection of his gnosis. It is as if his fear, Salutations and Peace of Allāh be upon him, is proportionate to his gnosis. For this reason, he, Salutations and Peace of Allāh be upon him, used to listen to his noble chest [*ṣadr*] gurgling, that is boiling like the boiling of a *mirjal*<sup>70</sup> due to fear of Allāh, the Most High. [395] Our Protector, Most Glorious, Most Honoured, has attested to the perfection of the propagation of our Patron, Muḥammad, Salutations and Peace of Allāh be upon him. Allāh, the Most High,

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<sup>68</sup> Qur’ān 2:159

<sup>69</sup> Qur’ān 5:67

<sup>70</sup> i.e. a copper cooking-pot. The text was incorrectly transcribed *marḥal*. See Abū Īsā Muḥammad bin Īsā al-Tirmidhī, (1990) *Shamāil al-Tirmidhī*, with commentary by Maulana Muhammad Zakariyyah Kandhelwi and translated by Muhammad bin Abdurrahmaan Ebrahim, Johannesburg, Ilmi Publications, p. 325.



says: “This Day I perfected your religion, and I have completed my Favour on you, and I have chosen for you Islam as a religion.”<sup>71</sup>

**Text:** [119] The proof of their, Salutations and Blessings on them, being subject to human contingencies is the witnessing of its happening to them, be it because of the magnitude of their reward [through their forbearance of these], their teaching of the Law, or their being given consolation from [the loss of] the world, or their warning of its vulgarity in the sight of Allāh and His lack of pleasure with it as a place of reward for His Messengers and Friends with respect to their states in it, Salutations and Peace be upon them.

**Commentary:** [395-396] That is, people witness non-deficient accidents of human nature, happening to them, on them be Salutations and Peace. These are things like sickness, people condemning<sup>72</sup> them, [396], hunger, thirst, forgetfulness in what they have not been ordered to propagate. All of these is evidence that these are admissible and possible [with regard to Prophets] since they do not diminish their exalted grades, nor do they cause disobedience on their part.

Rather, accidents occur because the physical body is limited. But their hearts, on them be Salutations and Peace, which contain the divine lights with which they are illuminated at every moment by Allāh, the Most High, [397] only increase in light. There are benefits in the happening of these accidents to them of which [one] is the [increase] in the magnitude of their reward. As the Prophet, Salutations and Peace of Allāh be upon him, said: “The most serious calamities befall the Prophets followed by the grade below them and then the grade after that.” Another benefit is legislation- meaning, the instruction of the creation. Thus we know the rules of forgetfulness [*sahw*] through the *sahw* of the Prophet, Salutations and Peace of Allāh be upon him, or how he used to pray in illness, or how he, Salutations and Peace of Allāh be upon him, used to eat and drink. We only know all of these through his acts, Salutations and Peace of Allāh be upon him. Another benefit of the occurrence of accidents is [their being given] consolation [*tasallī*] from the [loss of the] world, its meaning being abstemiousness [*zuhd*] in the world, patience with [its trials] and rest [*rāḥa*] [398] after it. Another lesson is instruction in its insignificance with Allāh, the Most High, by what the intelligent person sees of the [increase in] stations of the Prophets and Messengers and the Most Noblest of His creation,<sup>73</sup> on them be Salutations and Peace, due to the afflictions of the world. Then the intelligent person will know that it is worthless. The [Messenger], the Peace and Salutations of Allāh be upon him, said: “The value of the world with Allāh is that of a corpse [*jīfah*].” And through Allāh comes success.

**Text:** [119] The meanings of all these beliefs are contained in the utterance: “There is no god but Allāh Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh” since the meaning of “Godness” [*ulūhiyyah*] is the independence of Allāh from all that is other than Him and the

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<sup>71</sup> Qur’ān 5:3

<sup>72</sup> The text has *adā* which is probably a mistake for *adhā*.

<sup>73</sup> I.e. the Holy Prophet, the Salutations and Peace of Allāh be upon him.

dependence of all that is other than Him on Him. The meaning of “There is no god but Allāh” is that there is nothing that is independent of other than itself or on which other than itself depends except Allāh, the Most High.

**Commentary:** [399] That is, everything that was said previously concerning the principles of faith falls under the two attestations of faith because the meaning of “There is no god but God” is that he is Self-Sufficient, free [of need] of all that is other than Him and all excepting Him are in need of Him. Thus you will come to know the explanation by which is made apparent the enclosure of all of the principles of faith by the “Honoured Word”,<sup>74</sup> which is the key to Paradise.

**Text:** [120] The independence of the Most Glorious, Most Honoured from all that is other than Him makes necessary the Most High’s having Existence, Beginninglessness, Everlastingness, Absolute Distinction to all that which is created, Self-Subsistence and freedom from defect.

**Commentary:** [400] After the Shaykh, Allāh, the Most High’s, mercy be upon him, has stated that divinity [*ulūhiyyah*], has two meanings - the first is the Independence [*istighnā*] of the Most High of all that is other than Him, and the second, the dependence [*iftiqār*] of all that is other than Him on Him - he then starts discussing the tenets of faith that come under “Independence” and “Dependence” respectively.

**Text:** [120] In this is included the necessity of the Most High’s possessing hearing, sight and speech

**Commentary:** [400-401] These three attributes necessarily enter into His transcending [*tanzih*] of defects as their opposites are deficiencies - which are impossible to attribute to Him, the Most High.

**Text:** [120] for if He did not necessarily possess these attributes then He would be in need of an originator

**Commentary:** [401] He means the attributes of Existence, Beginninglessness, Everlastingness, Absolute Distinction to all that is created, and the first of the two meanings of Self-Subsistence, this one being His Independence from particularisation [*mukhaṣṣas*]. There is no doubt that if these five attributes were not necessary for Him, the Most High, then He would be in need of an originator and thus the Most Glorious, Most Honoured, could not be Independent of all that is other than Him. And He is high above that, the Protector, The Generous, Independent of all that is other than Him.

**Text:** [120] or a cause

**Commentary:** [402] This is evidence for the second meaning of Self-Subsistence, namely, Independence from a cause. That is, if it was not necessary for the Most High to be

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<sup>74</sup>i.e. *al-Kalimah al- Musharrafah* viz. the formula: “There is no god but Allāh Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh”.

Independent from a cause, He would be in need of a cause by which to subsist, and thus He would not be independent of all that is other than Him. Therefore it is incumbent that He be Independent of a cause in the way that He is Independent of particularisation.

**Text:** [120] or one that would remove Him of defects.

**Commentary:** [402] This is evidence for the necessity of His transcending defects, which imply the necessity of the Most High's Hearing, Seeing [403] and Speech. That is, if He cannot transcend defects, then the Most Honoured, Most Glorious would be in need of one who removes them from Him. Thus He would not be Independent of what is other than Him - which is impossible! And He, the Most High, is Independent of all that is other than Him. And through Allāh comes success.

**Text:** [120-121] It is also derived from this [i.e. His Independence] that the Most High transcends [the need of attaining] objectives through His acts and laws. If this was not the case then He would be in need of what is required by His objective - which is impossible! And He is the Most Honoured, Most Glorious, Independent of that which is other than Him.

**Commentary:** [403] That is, the Fashioner's transcending objectives follows from His Independence. [404] He, the Most High, pursues no objective by the creation of an act or a legal rule. Had He pursued an objective via [created phenomena], He would then be in need of that which accomplishes His objective and thus could only be made complete through His creation - this is a deficiency and impossible to ascribe to Him because it is totally incompatible with the necessity of the Most High's Independence.

**Text:** [121] It is also derived from this that it is not incumbent on the Most High to do or leave a thing which is of the possible [*mumkināt*] - a thing such as reward which understanding may assert to be incumbent on the Most High - for then the Most Glorious, Most Honoured would be in need of that thing in order to perfect His objective. Since nothing is incumbent with regard to the Most High except perfection, this cannot be the case. And He is the Most Glorious, Most Honoured, Independent of that which is other than Him.

**Commentary:** [405] That is, Independence obviates the Most High necessarily doing or leaving something of the possible. If reason admitted Allāh, the Most High's, necessarily doing or leaving something that is possible, then He would be in need of removing that deficiency from Himself, the Most High, through the creation of that exigency [*maṣlahah*]. Thus the Most High would be in need of a created thing. It would [also] be an exigency - for example, reward and so forth- that is not effected [by Him] [406] for His creation [but for Himself]. But He is High above needing His creation. How can He be in need of a thing?! He is Independent of all that is other than Him. He has no objective to meet by the obedience of anyone. Reward is a grace from Him, the Most High, since no one has a right on Him. He is not questioned as to what He does but they are questioned.

**Text:** [121-122] The dependence of all that which is other than Him [on Him] makes it necessary that He has life and perfect Power, Will and Knowledge for if He did not possess any of these attributes then it would not be possible for anything created to come into existence and nothing will be dependent on Him - which is not the case. He is the One on which all that is other than Him depends.

**Commentary:** [407] After the Shaykh, Allāh be pleased with Him, has discussed the tenets of faith that come under “Independence”, he begins discussing those that come under “Dependence” - this being the second of the meanings connected to divinity. There is no doubt that the necessity of dependence on Him, the Most High, necessitates that the Most High has Power for creating that which is dependent on Him, the Most High. Power in turn necessitates Will and Knowledge because the Most High does not bring anything into existence through His Power except in conjunction with His Will and Knowledge. He is far above the occurrence in His domain of that which He does not [408] will. Life is a condition for all of these attributes. If any one of these attributes were void there would not exist anything of the creation. And if creation did not exist, then nothing would be in need of Him, the Most Glorious, the Most High. How can this be the case! He is the One who all that is other than Him need. This makes incumbent the necessity of His description by what I have said. And through Allāh comes success.

**Text:** [122] Oneness is also incumbent on the Most High for if there was with Him a second in divinity then nothing would be dependent on Him due to the necessity of two gods being powerless in such an instance.

**Commentary:** [408] Dependence on Him, the Most High, [409] necessitates that He be One because if He is not then nothing in the world can come into existence due to the incapability of both gods [to create], irrespective of whether they co-operate or not, as has been explained in the proof for Oneness. [If there were two gods] there will be something that is not dependent on Him - which is impossible. He, the Most High, is He upon whom all things other than Him are dependent. The necessity of Oneness must follow from this.

**Text:** [122] The created nature of the entire universe is also inferred from this for if anything of it was beginningless then that thing would be independent of the Most High - which is impossible. He is the One on which all that is other than Him necessarily depends.

**Commentary:** [409] Know that [410] the annulment of that which is beginningless is impossible. For if the annulment of beginninglessness was admitted, then its existence necessarily must have been a possibility. A possibility is in need of particularisation and thus would be originated, voiding its beginninglessness, which is impossible as we have explained previously in connection with the proof for everlastingness. Furthermore, if the necessity of the annulment of beginninglessness was admitted, then its existence after non-existence can be admitted. And existence after non-existence is in need of an existent and thus it will be both originated and beginningless, which is impossible. It is

necessary that beginninglessness does not admit of becoming non-existent and there is none that is beginningless except the Holy Being of Allāh, the Most High. What is other than Him is originated. [411] From the beginning it necessarily depends, and continues for its entire duration to depend, on Allāh the Most High.

It is impossible that anything of the world is beginningless for if it was beginningless then it would be self-sufficient and not dependant upon Allāh. This is impossible. And He is the Most High on which that which is other than Him necessarily depends. Therefore, origination of the world must follow from this [proof]. And He is the Goal.

**Text:** [122-123] And it is also deduced from this that nothing in creation can have an effect on anything else for if this was not the case then it would be necessary for that effect to be independent of our Protector, Most Glorious, Most Honoured and this is impossible. He is the One on which all that is other than He depends, completely and under all conditions. This scenario applies if you believe that anything created can bring about an effect through its very nature. If you hold that it brings about an effect through a power which Allāh places in it, as many of the ignorant assert, then this is also impossible because then our Protector, Most Honoured, Most Glorious, is dependent on effecting an action via a mediator- which is absurd given what you know of the necessary Independence [124] of the Most Glorious, Most Honoured from all that is other than Him.

**Commentary:** [412] That is, it is inferred from “Dependence” that creation cannot produce effect [*ta‘thīr*]. Effect is specifically reserved for eternal power. [413] For if creation could produce an effect then that act would not depend on Him, the Most High and He would depend on the one who brings about the effect - which is impossible. He is the one upon whom all that which is other than Him depends. Therefore [to claim] effect from what is other than the Most High’s Power is absurd [*bā‘īl*]. Thus [is known] the invalidity [of the beliefs] of the *Qādarīyyah*<sup>75</sup> sect who assert the effect of originated power in acts. And thus is known the invalidity of the *Ṭabā‘īn*<sup>76</sup> sect, who assert that effect is through inherent nature [*ṭabā‘ī*] and materiality [*amzajawīyah*] and so forth, for example, that food fills, water quenches, purifies and cleans, that fire burns, that clothing covers the private parts [*‘awrah*] and guards against heat or cold - there being countless such examples.

Whosoever believes [414] that an effect is truly produced through the inherent nature of its causal phenomenon, then such a one is an unbeliever - there being no difference of opinion amongst the scholars with regard to such a verdict. Whosoever believes that an effect is not truly produced by the inherent nature of the causal phenomenon, but by a power that Allāh, the Most High lodges in this phenomenon, and if He so wished, He could remove it and there would then be no effect from this phenomenon, then [with regard to such a view] there is unanimity that such a person is an innovator, but there is a difference of opinion on whether he is an unbeliever. And many of the common believers

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<sup>75</sup> Early Islamic proponents of unfettered human free-will.

<sup>76</sup> The “Naturalists”.

hold this latter view. But the believer with true faith does not see any effect being produced by causal phenomena, whether [claimed] through their inherent nature or through a power that Allāh, the Most High, has lodged in them. Neither [does he see any effect] in our Protector's -Glory be to Him, Most High - [415] habitual manner of creation [*ajrā al 'ādah*] - this being the manner upon which He creates things, these latter not being created through their cause. Through the grace of Allāh, this [explanation] will save many of those who [would have otherwise] perished in the next world. And through Allāh comes success.

**Text:** [124] Thus it becomes clear to you that the utterance “There is no god but Allāh” contains the three aspects with regard to our Protector, Most Glorious, Most Honoured, that is incumbent for a *mukallaf* to know - namely that which is necessary, impossible and possible in relation to the Most High.

**Commentary:** [415] That is, it has been made clear to you that [the attestation] “There is no god but Allāh” contains all that is necessary, impossible and possible with regard to Him, the Most High.

**Text:** [124] From our utterance “Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh” is derived belief in the rest of the Messengers, and the Angels, on them be Salutations and Peace, as well as the Heavenly Books and the Last Day for he, the Salutations and Blessings of Allāh be upon him, came to affirm all of these.

**Commentary:** [416] Know that the miracle which pointed out the truth of his Messengership, Salutations and Peace of Allāh be upon him, compels the truth of, and obliges our faith in, all that he has come with. These include faith in all of the Prophets of Allāh, the Angels and His Messengers because he, the Salutations and Peace of Allāh be upon him, came to attest the truth of all of them. And know [417] that the number of Prophets, on them be Salutations and Peace, is 124 000 and the number of Messengers 313. The first of them is Adam, on whom be Peace, and the last of them is Muḥammad, the Salutations and Peace of Allāh be upon him and upon his Family and his Companions. It is said<sup>77</sup> that their numbers [*adaduhum*] emerged [*yakhruju*] from the name of our Master, our Prophet, our Patron, Muḥammad, Salutations and Peace of Allāh be upon him and upon his Family and Companions.<sup>78</sup> The [word] “*nabi*” [prophet] is taken from “*al-nabā'u*” meaning information [*al-khabr*] because he informs of that which Allāh revealed to him. [The word is also taken from the fact that] Allāh, the Most High, has informed him that he is a prophet and has disclosed and acquainted him with His Unseen. It is [also] said that “*nabi*” is taken from “*nabawa*” [418] which means that which rises from the ground. The meaning here is that their degree is exalted in the sight of Allāh.

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<sup>77</sup> The text has “*qālū*” - “they said”.

<sup>78</sup> This appears to be a reference to the concept of *Nūr Muḥammadiyah* - the Primordial Light of Muḥammad, the Salutations and Peace of Allāh be upon him, from which Light the rest of creation came into being. For the concept see “Nūr Muḥammadi” in Cyril Glasse (1989) **The Concise Encyclopaedia of Islam**, London, Stacey International, pp. 303-304.

The difference between a Prophet and a Messenger according to some *'ulamā* is that a Prophet is he who comes to confirm and assist a *Sharī'ah*<sup>79</sup> given to a Messenger, without himself coming with a new *Sharī'ah* revealed by Allāh, Most Honoured, Most Glorious. There is no doubt that a Prophet did not come with a new *Sharī'ah* but rather confirmed the *Sharī'ah* of another. The Prophet, Salutations and Peace of Allāh be upon him, said: "The *'ulamā* of my *ummah* are like the Prophets of the People of Israel [*Banī Isrāīl*] and they will not diminish like the Messengers of the *Banī Isrāīl*." In this is a pointer to the fact [419] that a scholar does not come with new legislation; rather, he helps the *Sharī'ah* of the Messenger of Allāh, Salutations and Peace of Allāh be upon him and upon his Family and his Companions. Similarly, a Prophet, when he is sent by Allāh, the Most High, to confirm the *Sharī'ah* of another from among the Messengers, is like a scholar [*'ālim*]. And if he, Salutations and Peace of Allāh be upon him, had said "like the Messengers [*rusul*] of *Banī Isrāīl*" it would have been thought that a scholar comes with a new legislation, which is not the case. He, the Salutations and Peace of Allāh be upon him, said: "A scholar to his people is like a Prophet to his nation [*ummah*]." Understand this secret to which he, Salutations and Peace of Allāh be upon him, has pointed. In it is a pointer to the superiority of knowledge and its people and that the station of knowledge is a noble one. For this reason the Most High says: [420] "Say: Are those who know and those who do not know equal?"<sup>80</sup> Allāh, the Most High, says: "Verily the learned [*'ulamā*] of His servants fear Allāh alone".<sup>81</sup> And Allāh says: "There is no god but He; That is the witness of God, His angels and those endued with knowledge, standing firm on justice."<sup>82</sup> He, the Salutations and Peace of Allāh be upon him, said: "Verily Allāh has a city under the Throne of the most excellent musk. At its gate is an angel who calls out every day: "Is it not that one who visits a scholar visits a Prophet? Is it not that one who has visited a Prophet has visited me? And whosoever has visited me, then for him is *Jannah*." This has been mentioned by the author of *Bayān*.<sup>83</sup> He, the Salutations and Peace of Allāh be upon him, said: "Whoever visits a [421] scholar it is as if he has visited me and whoever greets a scholar it is as if he has greeted me." He, the Salutations and Peace of Allāh be upon him, said: "Looking at a *mushaf* [copy of the Qur'ān] is an act of worship, looking at the *Ka'abah* is an act of worship, looking at the face of a scholar is an act of worship, sitting with him is an act of worship and familiarising [oneself] with him is an act of worship. He, the Salutations and Peace of Allāh be upon him, said: "Whoever has served [*khadama*] a scholar for seven days it is as if he has served Allāh for seven thousand years and Allāh gives him for each day the reward of a thousand martyrs." He, the Salutations and Peace of Allāh be upon him, said: "There is no believer that becomes sad at the passing away of a scholar except that Allāh writes for him the reward of a

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<sup>79</sup> A system of Divine Law.

<sup>80</sup> Qur'ān 39:9. At this point in the text the author also inserts the word "*al-āyah*" [verse] which appears to be disjointed but could refer to the preceding or subsequent verse quoted.

<sup>81</sup> Qur'ān 35:28

<sup>82</sup> Qur'ān 3:18

<sup>83</sup> Unidentified.

thousand scholars. He who teaches people is more excellent [422] and greater in the sight of Allāh than worshippers by a hundred years.”<sup>84</sup>

There are many sayings about the superiority of knowledge and its people. For this reason he, the Salutations and Peace of Allāh be upon him, has ordered the seeking of knowledge and said: “Seek knowledge, even if it is in China.” Indeed, the seeking of knowledge is incumbent on every Muslim. Many of the scholars have said that what is intended here is the knowledge of the Unity of Allāh [*Tawḥīd*] and then that of Islamic law [*Fiqh*]- which is knowledge of the compulsory, [the *farā'id*], the exemplary [*sunnah*], and the permitted and prohibited [*ḥalāl* and *ḥarām*] and so forth of religious matters. All of those who are occupied<sup>85</sup> in obtaining such knowledge are treading the path of Paradise. He, the Salutations and Peace of Allāh be upon him, said: [423] “Verily the angels lower their wings out of pleasure with the seeker of knowledge because of what he is carrying out. The superiority of a scholar over a worshipper is like the superiority of the moon on a night when it is full over the rest of the stars. Whatever is in the heavens and on earth asks forgiveness for the scholar, even the fishes of the sea and the birds in the central regions [*jauf*] of the heavens<sup>86</sup>...The scholars are the heirs of the Prophets. The Prophets do not bequeath a *dinār* or a *dirham*, rather, they bequeath knowledge and whosoever takes from him has taken a profuse fortune.”<sup>87</sup> Thus it has been made clear to you the difference between a Prophet and a Messenger. The Prophet is like a scholar in confirming the *Sharī'ah* of a Messenger who preceded him, like Yūsha', on whom be Peace, who came to confirm the *Sharī'ah* of [424] Mūsa, on whom be Peace.

As for the Revealed Books, know that Allāh, the Most High, has revealed 100 Pages [*kitāb*] and 14 Books [*kutub*]. Allāh, the Most High, has revealed 10 Pages [*ṣahīfā*] to Adam, upon whom be Peace, and Allāh, the Most High, has revealed 50 Pages to Thīth, upon whom be Peace, and Allāh, the Most High, has revealed 30 Pages to Akhnūkh - and that is Idrīs, upon whom be Peace - and Allāh, the Most High, has revealed 10 Pages to Ibrahīm, upon whom be Peace and Allāh, the Most High, revealed 10 Pages, prior to the *Tawrah*, to Mūsa, upon whom be Peace. Then He revealed the *Tawrah* to him, and the *Injil* to 'Isā, upon whom [425] be Peace, and the *Zabūr* to Dawūd, upon whom be Peace, and the *Furqān* [Criterion] to our Prophet Muḥammad, Salutations and Peace of Allāh be upon him.

He, the Salutations and Peace of Allāh be upon him, said: “The Pages of Ibrahim were all lessons. Among them were: “O overseeing, tested and haughty one! I have not sent you to gather the world, pile upon pile. But I have sent you so that you answer the prayer of the oppressed on behalf of Me, for I never reject it, even if it is from an unbeliever.” And

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<sup>84</sup> See Imām Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (1966) **The Book of Knowledge**, translated and annotated by Nabih Amin Faris, Lahore, Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, p. 13.

<sup>85</sup> The text has *istaghalla* instead the correct *ishtaghalla*.

<sup>86</sup> At this juncture the phrase “and in the central regions of the waters” occurs, which appears to be an incorrect transcription of whichever variant of the *ḥadīth* was being used.

<sup>87</sup> For the ḥadīth see al-Baghawī, volume 1, **op. cit.** p. 53. The ḥadīth is also contained, with variations, in Al- Hāfiz Abū 'Abdullāh Muḥammad ibn Mājah [n.d] **Sunan ibn Mājah**, edited by Maḥmūd Fuād 'Abdul Bāqī, volume 1 (2 volumes), Beirut, Al-Maktabah al-Ilmiyyah, Ḥadīth no. 223.



therein was a similitude for the intelligent person, as long as he was not taken over by his reason, that he should have an hour in which he takes account of himself and an hour in which he contemplates the creation of Allāh, Most Honoured, Most Glorious, [426] and an hour in which he secludes himself for his needs of eating and drinking. The intelligent person must not travel except for three things: to accumulate for the Hereafter, or to acquire provision for his sustenance, or for a pleasure which is not forbidden. And the intelligent person must be aware of his time, collected and self-possessed, and he must guard his speech. Whoever beautifies his speech, beautifies his deeds - and among the beautification of his deeds is the lessening of his speech except in that which concerns him.” He, the Salutations and Peace of Allāh be upon him said: “The Pages of Mūsā, on him be peace, were admonitions. Of them were: “I marvel at the one who certainly knows of death yet he rejoices, and I marvel at the one who is certain of the Fire yet he laughs, [427] and I marvel at the one who is certain of destiny yet becomes angry, and I marvel at the one who looks at the world and how it turns against its people, yet is content with it, and I marvel at the one who is certain of the Reckoning yet does not work in regards to it.”

All of this is information from the Messenger of Allāh, Salutations and Peace be upon him, about some of the revealed Books. We are obliged to have faith in all that he has informed us regarding them- of reward, of punishment and so forth of the affairs of the Unseen. We include all of this when we say “Muḥammad, the Messenger of Allāh, Salutations and Peace be upon him, came to confirm the truth of all of this.” And through Allāh comes success.

**Text:** [124-125] It is also derived from this the necessity of the Messengers, on them be Salutations and Peace, to be truthful and the impossibility that they are lying for if this was not the case they could not be faithful Messengers of our Protector, the Knower of secrets, Glorious and Honoured is He. Further derived from this is the impossibility of their committing anything forbidden for they have been sent to teach humankind through their speech, actions and silence. It necessarily follows that they can never be at variance with the command of our Protector, Most Glorious, Most Honoured, Who has chosen them from among all His creation and entrusted them with the secret of Revelation.

**Commentary:** [428] The Shaykh, Allāh the Most High’s mercy be upon him, says that there is no doubt that the ascription [*iḍāfah*] [429] “Messenger to Allāh, the Most High”, requires that He, Most Glorious, Most Honoured, has chosen them for the Message as He has similarly chosen those to whom the Message is sent. We have learnt that His knowledge is all encompassing and that ignorance, and its associated connotations, is impossible for Him. Thus it must follow that the Most High’s confirmation of their truth [*taṣḍīq*] is in accordance with His Knowledge of their truthfulness and faithfulness. It is impossible that they are in discord [*khilāf*] of what Allāh knows of them while, simultaneously, Allāh, Glory be to Him, the Most High, has commanded us to follow them in their words and deeds, upon them be Peace. Thus there must be [430] concord of these words and deeds with that which pleases Him, our Protector, Most Glorious, Most Honoured. And He is the Goal.

**Text:** [125-126] It is derived from this that they are allowed to be subject to human accidents since these do not depreciate their Message or the greatness of their station with Allāh, the Most High, but is in fact that which elevates this station.

**Commentary:** [430] There is no doubt that they are kept from that which would diminish their exalted station. It is quite evident that human accidents such as sickness and so forth do not diminish, by an iota, the grades of the Prophets and Messengers, on them be peace. On the contrary, they increase these grades [431] due to the magnitude of the reward accruing from acts of obedience, patience and so forth that are joined to these accidents. The occurrence of accidents provide the strongest evidence of their truthfulness, of the fact that they are sent by Allāh, the Most High, and that the miraculous phenomena that are manifested at their hands are entirely the creation of Allāh, Most High, in order to confirm their truth. Otherwise [had accidents been inherently deficient], He would have strengthened them by originating that which would have freed them from the difficulties accruing from sickness, hunger, pain, heat, cold and so forth - protection which He has granted to many people who are not described by the characteristic of Prophethood. Furthermore, in this [occurrence of accidents] is an aid to those weak of [432] intellect so that they do not believe in the divinity of Prophets, Salutations and Peace be upon them, when they see miraculous and unusual phenomena issuing forth from them.

**Text:** [126] It is now clear to you that the words of the Attestation, despite its brevity, contains all that which is necessary for a *mukallaf* to know with regard to faith in Allāh, the Most High, and in His Messengers, on them be Salutations and Peace.

**Commentary:** [432] That is, it has been made clear to you with the text attesting to that. With this ends the explanation of the Shaykh, Allāh be pleased with him and may He benefit us through him.

**Text:** [126] It is perhaps because it contains in brief all that we have indicated that the Law [*Shar'*] has symbolised it as the heart of Islam and the faith [*īmān*] of no one can be accepted except through it.

**Commentary:** [433] Know that after the Shaykh, Allāh be pleased with him, has made known the tenets of faith as they apply to the Honoured Word, his reflections lead him to the insight that [perhaps this is why] the Lawgiver has made this Word the distinguishing mark [*'alam*] of faith for it contains all its tenets. As it is an insight he says "and perhaps" and does not say it is a certainty [*lam yaqta'a bi dhālik*] for then it would have been [considered] his legal judgment on the intent of Allāh, the Most High, and the intent of the Messenger of Allāh, Salutations and Peace of Allāh be upon him. But he knew that the *sharī'ah* is [434] kind and mild. There are no difficulties [*'iwāḥ*] in it. As the Prophet, the Salutations and Peace of Allāh be upon him, said: "Verily the religion of Allāh is easy." Allāh, the Most High, says: "There has not been made for you in the religion that which is difficult."<sup>88</sup> The Prophet, the Salutations and Peace of Allāh be upon him, has

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<sup>88</sup> Qur'ān 22:78

chosen this exalted Word as a mercy for his Ummah in this world and the next. And through Allāh comes success.

If you ask: “How can the Shaykh make Islām acts which relate to the heart when it is established that Islām consists in the acts of the outer limbs, as has been explained in the *ḥadīth* when he, the Salutations and Peace of Allāh be upon him, said: [435] “Islam is that you testify that there is no god but Allāh and that Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh, that you establish the prayer, that you give the poor tax, that you fast in Ramaḍān and that you perform the *Hajj* if you are so able to.”<sup>89</sup>

The reply you give [to those who ask such a question] is that the usage of “Islām” in the discourse of the Shaykh does not refer to “legal Islām” [*Islām us shar‘*]. Rather it refers to the etymological meaning of Islām” [*Islām al-lughawī*] which is the obedience [*inqiyād*] and submission [*idh‘ān*] of the heart in order to obey the commands of Allāh and turn away from what He has prohibited. And through Allāh comes success.

**Text:** [126-128]<sup>90</sup> It is for the thinking person to increase its remembrance, envisioning it with what it contains of the beliefs of Islam so that its meaning becomes mixed with his flesh and bones. He will then witness its endless secrets and wonders, if Allāh, the Most High, wills. And through Allāh comes success. There is no Lord but Him and none to be worshipped but Him. We ask Allāh, Glory be to Him, Most High, that He make us and our loved ones utter the words of the Attestation with comprehension at the point of death. Salutations of Allāh be upon our Master Muḥammad, whenever those who remember Allāh much remember Him.<sup>91</sup> [O Allāh!] Keep our hearts away from innovations in belief and from those who are in error. Clothe us with the distinguishing marks of the righteous ones and cover us with the [128] covering of the pious ones. Salutations of Allāh be upon our Master Muḥammad whenever those who remember Allāh much remember Him and whenever the forgetful ones forget to remember Him. The Divine pleasure of Allāh, Most High, be upon all the Companions of the Messenger of Allāh and upon those who follow them in righteousness until the Last day. Glory be to your Lord, the Lord of Honour, high above what they describe.<sup>92</sup> Peace be upon the Messengers and all Praise be to Allāh, Lord of the Worlds.



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<sup>89</sup> For this ḥadīth see al-Baghawī, volume 1, *op. cit.* p. 4.

<sup>90</sup> This final section concludes the Commentary as well, where it is imprinted on pp. 435-437.

<sup>91</sup> At this point the text contains an incomprehensible word but which could be a partially written “*ghafala*”, which normally begins the other part of this formula i.e. “and whenever the forgetful ones forget [*ghafala*] to remember Him. “

<sup>92</sup> Cf. to Qur‘ān 6:100; 37:159

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