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# **Chapter 3: Names And Attributes**

## His Names, Attributes, Actions, Praise To Him

It has been expected for the Gnostics to form one rank with regard to everything referred to the Initiator, i.e. to His Names, Attributes and Actions. But they all differed among themselves from the simplest matters to the deepest. Most of their differences are rendered to knowing His Names, Attributes and Actions. The difference in these matters is the cornerstone for the rise of religions and sects in the global human community.

The Dualists, despite their admission that there is a God Who created the cosmos; branch out into scores of groups and sects. Suffices in this regard to notice the Indian and Chinese lands where Dualism is found more than in any other place.

Christianity does not lag far behind them. This religion has been divided into Jacobite, Nestorian, Melkite (Melchite) and other sects.

As for the Muslims, who form a large nation of worshippers of God in the world, they also diverged into different sects. Most of their differences stem out of their differences about the qualities and actions of the Originator.

Here are Hashwi and Hanbali folks who have reported *hadith* and who have views of their own about the qualities of the Originator and His actions which can be reviewed by anyone who reviews books of hadith, especially the *Tawhid* book by Ibn Khuzaymah, the *Sunnah* book by Ahmed ibn Hanbal and others.

No less than them are the differences among the Mutazilites, advocates of *adl* and *tawhid*. They have scattered into many sects. Some are Wasilis, others are Hazilis, some are Nizamis or Khabitis, up to the end of the list of sects.

As for the Determinists (Jabris or Jabrites) from among the Muslims, they have branched out into Jahmis, Najjaris, Dhiraris, etc., till Sheikh Abul-Hassan al-Ashari appeared. He brought an amended method compromising the hadith folks with the Mutazilites and Jabris. Therefore, the scholars focused on studying his beliefs and ideologies, so much so that it became an official sect (Asharism) followed by Ahl al-Sunnah.

These sects did not mostly differ except about His Names, Actions and Attributes. This matter provides this chapter about doctrines with an extreme significance. So, it must not be taken lightly, and it must not be bypassed easily, indifferently.

#### **Self Attributes of Goodness and Greatness**

His Attributes, Praise belongs to Him, are divided into two types: confirmative and negative, or aesthetic and majestic.

If an attribute confirms goodness in what it describes and point out to a reality in Him, it is called "self-confirmative" or "aesthetic". If the attribute aims at negating some shortcoming or need from Him, the most Praised One, it is called "negative" or "majestic".

Knowledge, ability and life are confirmative qualities that point out to the existence of perfection and are factual in the Divine Self. But negating physical qualities, space limitation, motion, are among the negative attributes that aim at removing what constitutes a shortcoming or what is lacking in Him, High above that is He.

Sadr al-Mutaalliheen, Mulla Sadra al-Shirazi, has pointed out to both terms, the aesthetic and the majestic, as being close to what is stated in the Holy Quran where the most Glorified One says,

#### "Blessed be the name of your Lord, full of majesty, bounty and honor" (Qur'an, 55:78).

The attribute of majesty means He is above being compared with anything else, while the attribute of honor describes His own Self, beautifying it aesthetically. Thus, He is described with attributes of perfection and is held as being high above everything and everyone through His majesty.

Scholars of creeds have restricted the aesthetic qualities to eight: knowledge, ability, life, hearing, vision, self-will, speech and independence. They also restricted the negative qualities to seven: He, the most Exalted One, is neither a body, nor an essence, nor an expanse, invisible, non-biased, not possessing anyone and is not limited by anything.

Yet precision examining dictates that qualities must not be restricted to a particular number. It is true to say that the criterion in identifying aesthetic and majestic qualities is that anything described as being perfect, Allah is described as having it. And everything regarded as shortcoming and inability, He is held to be high above it, and we do not have to restrict perfection and majesty into a specific number.

Thus, all confirmative qualities can be rendered to a description, while the negative qualities are rendered to a matter. What supports our statement is that the Names and Attributes stated in the Holy Quran are many times the number stated by scholars of logic.

A dispute has taken place about what has been regarded as confirmative attributes, that is, whether they are among the self-confirmative attributes from which a Name is derived, or if they are confirmative through actions, such as speech and will, so much so that some of those counted as self-qualities in some methods are not among the qualities of the self at all, such as His being Truthful, but are qualities relevant to actions. You will come to know the difference between them.

### **Entitative and Operative Attributes**

Logicians have categorized His Attributes, Praised is He, into entitative and operative. The first suffices to describe the entity, if we suppose we can only describe the entity, such as might, life, knowledge, etc.

The second depends on describing the Self, if we suppose all others are beyond the Self, i.e. they resulted from His actions, the most Praised one.

Operative attributes are derived from the position of action. In other words, the Self is described by these attributes when observed with the action, such as beings, sustenance and such actions that are superfluous on the self, due to being derived from the action. The meaning of "being derived" is that we notice the blessings people enjoy and attribute to Allah, Praise to Him, calling them "sustenance," the sustenance that He, Praise to Him, provides, for He is *the* Sustainer. Similarly are mercy and forgiveness, for they are attributed in the same way that we have explained.

There is another definition for distinguishing the self's attributes from those of the action. Everything that takes place to the self on a unison order (always positively) is one of the attributes of the self. What takes place on the self on both ways, the negative once and once the positive, is one of the attributes of actions.

In the light of this distinction, knowledge, might and life are not attributed to Him, Praised is He, except in one way which is the positive one. But creating, sustaining, forgiving and affording mercy are attributed to Him once positively and once negatively. You once say that He created this and not that, He forgave one who sought His forgiveness and did not forgive one who insisted on sinning, etc.

Briefly, one who has self-attributes cannot be characterized as having their antitheses, nor can he be free of them, whereas one who has operative attributes can be characterized as having their antitheses as well.

Moreover, the operative attributes are existentialist considerations. They result from one description: aseity 1 (not derived, or independent, existence). To create, sustain and guide are all entities that exist through Him, Praise is due to Him, originating from Him due to His aseity.

#### **Another Classification**

Attributes have another classification: intitative and additive. What is meant by the first is the adjective of the self without an outside affiliation being noticed to belong to it or added to it, such as life. The opposite are the additive attributes. These are added to something outside the self, such as knowledge about what can be known as well as the ability for what can be done.

According to this order, each of the entitative and additive attributes is applied to the self, describing a reality in it.

The additive one may be interpreted as the creative, sustaining and causal. The first is called extractive, rather than additive, and the additive is specifically applied to what contrasts the entitative.

#### **Descriptive Attributes**

There is another term used by logicians as they classify His Attributes, Praised is He. They divide them into entitative and descriptive. What is meant by the first are the attributes of perfection and by the second what the Praised One has described Himself in the Holy Quran, such as His being high, having a face, two hands, two eyes and other such terms found in the Quran. If applied to Allah Almighty according to the conventional meanings, these attributes will connote embodiment and assimilation.

These are the common classifications in describing the most Praised One.

#### Keeping a Distance from Assimilation and Analogy: Basis of Knowing the Attributes of the Praised One

A human being who is used to living between the walls of time and place is accustomed to identifying things through time and place, describing them as occupying a space and having dimensions, identifying them through how and how much, in addition to other requirements of the matter and descriptions of a body.

Being used to sensing and feeling things all his life, man's attachment to matter, his feeling comfortable with being on earth, have made him used to striking a similitude for anything relevant to him in the tangible way. This is so even with regard to things that cannot be subject to the senses or (even) to imagination, such as the reality of totalities and facts that are stripped of matter.

What supports him in this regard is that man arrives at what can be rationalized and regarded as a whole through the senses and the imagination, for he is comfortable with the senses, accustomed to imagination.2

It is as though humans are naturally bent on knowing something based on analogy and similitude: They cannot strip themselves of it except through exercise and training. The habit that is inseparable from man is his feeling comfortable with matter, his being used to knowing everything within its material frame, to drawing imaginary pictures of his Lord according to matters with which he is familiar, to the

ones which he can identify through his senses. Rarely does man direct his attention to the courtyard of dignity and pride, his soul is empty of such assimilation.

#### **Assimilation and Dissimilation**

On this basis, gnostics have kept their distance from making a similitude in which one compares his Lord to a human having flesh, blood, hair, bone and real bodily parts: a hand, a leg, a head, two eyes, awe-inspiring, dark hair or bright white hair, one that can move from one place to another and even shakes hands!3

The latter folks have become involved in the embodiment detriment, in the perdition of assimilation. To deny the existence of a creator having these repugnant material descriptions is much better than proving him to be the lord of the worlds. Believing in a creator that has such qualities renders godhead and the call to it as something abhorred, one from which enlightened minds and thoughts turn away.

If that group is reckless in its assimilation and extremist in embodiment, we find as its antithesis another group that wanted to protect itself from the stigma of assimilation and the infamy of embodiment, thus falling into the entrapment of obstruction. It has ruled to obstruct the minds from knowing Him, Glory belongs to Him, from knowing His Attributes and actions. It says that nobody has the right to judge the Supreme Principle through any ruling, nor is there a way to knowing Him other than the recitation of what the Quran and Sunnah state.

It says: Salvation, all of it, lies in recognizing everything brought by the sacred Sharia without a research or a discussion, without an argument or a research. Here is al-Maliki saying the following when asked about the meaning of the verse that says, "He seated Himself firmly on the Arsh": "The firm seating is understood, its method is unknown, believing in it is obligatory, while asking about it is an innovation."4

Sufyan ibn Uyaynah is quoted as having said, "All the descriptions provided by Allah in His Book (Quran) are interpreted through recitation then through remaining silent about it."5

But there is a third group that is of the view that it is possible to get to know His Attributes, Glory to Him, through contemplation, the arrangement of logical criteria and the order of logical proofs in the light of the blessing of reason and intellect bestowed by Allah, Praise is due to Him. This is conditional on the researcher being neutral, not biased to any premeditated opinion, and that he has to be sincere to the truth in his research and discussion, seeking nothing but the truth.

Their argument in this regard is that Allah, the Glorified One, did not state His Names and attributes in His Book (Quran) and the Sunnah of His Prophet (S) except so man would ponder about them through his reason and intellect within limits, according to what can be done, avoiding assimilation and excessiveness in being obstructive. This is advocated by reason, the Revered Book (Quran) and the sound Sunnah.

A precious statement by Imam Ali (as) advocates a midway path. He (as) has said, "He (the Almighty) did not acquaint the minds with determining how He is, nor did He obstruct them from the need to get to know Him." 6 This statement aims at saying that although the minds are not permitted to determine the Divine characteristics, they are not obstructed from seeking such knowledge as much as possible. The most Praised One has said,

"I did not create the jinns and mankind except so they might worship Me" (Qur'an, 51:56).

Accurate and perfect adoration is not possible except when the achievable knowledge of the worshipped One becomes available.

Suffices in determining this path what is indicated in the first verses of Surat al-Hadid (Chapter of Iron, Ch. 57), which we would like to quote, seeking their blessing:

"Whatever is there in the heavens and on earth declared God's Praise and Glory, for He is the One Exalted in might, the Wise. The dominion of the heavens and the earth belongs to Him; it is He Who gives life and death, and He has might over all things. He is the First and the Last, the Evident and the Immanent, and He has full knowledge of all things. It is He Who created the heavens and the earth in six days: moreover, He is firmly established on the throne (of authority). He knows what enters the earth and what comes forth out of it, what comes down from the heavens and what mounts up to it. And He is with you wherever you may be. And Allah sees well all that you do. The dominion of the heavens and the earth belongs to Him, and all affairs are referred to Allah. He merges night into the day, and He merges the day into the night, and He has full knowledge of the secrets of (all) hearts" (Qur'an, 57:1-6).

Does any rational person think that the verses near the end of Surat al-Hashr (Chapter of the Gathering, Ch. 59) were revealed by Allah Almighty for merely reading and reciting them? In them, the most Praised One says,

"Allah is He besides Whom there is no other god; He knows (all things), hidden and open; He is the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. Allah is He besides Whom there is no other god, the Sovereign, the Holy One, the Source of peace (and perfection), Guardian of the faith, Preserver of safety, the One Exalted in might, Irresistible, Supreme: Glory to Allah! (He is high) above the partners they attribute to Him. He is Allah, the Creator, the Evolver, the One Who bestows forms (shapes or colors). The best names belong to Him: Whatever there is in the heavens and on earth declares His praise and glory, and He is the One Exalted in might, the Wise" (Qur'an, 59:22-24).

Otherwise, what is the meaning of the pondering to which reference is made in these Quranic verses?

Thus, we realize the extent of weakness that some scholars of ancestry preferred when they said, "We are granted reason in order to establish adoration, not to realize godhead. If one exerts what he has been granted to establish adoration through realizing godhead, he misses adoration and will never

realize godhead [either]."7

Establishing full adoration is pawned by knowing who the adored One is as much as one can do so. Otherwise, the entire world, in all its particles, praises Allah, Glory belongs to Him, praising Him, adoring Him. Through the sense of realization which suits His presence. The most Glorified One says,

"The seven heavens and the earth, and all beings therein, declare His glory: Not a thing exists that does not celebrate His praise, but you do not understand how they declare His glory! Truly He is oft-Forbearing, Most Forgiving!" (Qur'an, 17:44).

Had man's function be to establish adoration without the detailed knowledge of the One Whom he adores, adoring Him would be similar to adoring all other existents, even much lower than that. Man can get to know in detail the One Whom he adores according to the extent of intellectual might he is given and which nobody else has.

If realizing godhead is meant to be realizing the essence of the Self, it is impossible, and nobody ever claimed it. If knowing His Names, Attributes and Actions is sought, within the human capacity in the light of logical criteria, the Quran and the absolutely sound Sunnah, this exactly is the function of reason. We all see how the most Praised One describes in negative terms the polytheists who did not know Him as He deserves to be known, according to the human ability, saying, the most Praised One that He is,

"They have not made any just assessment of Allah, for Allah is He Who is strong and able to carry His Will out" (Qur'an, 22:74).

Briefly, had the objective been knowing the Divine essence and the reality of His Attributes and Names, abandoning the search would have been justified. But if the goal is to know the goodness and perfection, to negate what anyone may imagine about the Divine Self having a shortcoming or an incapacitation, there is no doubt that reason can explore this field, and it can reach this goal.

## **Sound Ways To Knowing Allah**

His essence, Praise belongs to Him, Names, Attributes and Actions, though not similar to what the sensed world is, are not impossible to know in one way or another. From this onset, we find the men of wisdom and logicians treading different paths to knowing the features of the Divine world. They see that this world is not outside the scope of realization. Rather, there are windows that overlook what is known, what is rational and what is derived. It is through them that this great broad world can be seen.

Here below we would like to point out to these ways:

### **Rational Way**

Nothing is needed to prove that He, Praise belongs to Him, is independent, not in need of anything. This

matter can be a starting point for proving many of His Attributes of greatness. Any description that requires a shortcoming in His independence and something lacking in Him has nothing to do with Him, and it must be stripped of His entity.

Naseer ad–Deen al–Tusi, the Islamic philosopher, undertook this path to prove a group of Attributes of Greatness. He said, "The need for existence proves that He is eternal. It negates what is superfluous, that He has a partner, a similitude, a composition, an antithesis, a space, an incarnation, a unification, a direction, events that affect Him, a need, an absolute pain and a transient pleasure, the superfluous meanings, conditions, attributes and vision."

Actually, this critic set out of this principle to prove a series of positive attributes when he said, "The need for existence proves that existence is positive, and so are the (attributes of) dominion, completion, soundness, goodness, wisdom, dominance, control and aseity."8

He was preceded in doing so by the author of *Al-Yaqut* who said, "It (the need to exist) negates a group of attributes from the Divine Self, and that He is not a body, nor is He an essence, nor a causality; events have no impact on Him; otherwise, He would have been an eventuality."

Thereupon, the perfection and goodness that exist in the divine world can be rendered to the evidence of one principle, that is, He, the most Praised One, is an independent existent whose existence is a must in order to disprove the serialization which you have already come to know. Proving His independence and the need for His existence is not a problem for the souls.

From this, windows open to overlook the unknown and to get to be familiar with His positive and negative Attributes, and you will come to know the proof for these Attributes through this method.

### **Reviewing the Horizons and the Souls**

Among the ways and principles through which one can come to know Allah's Attributes is reviewing the cosmos that surrounds us, for it reveals a broad science, an absolute might that knows all its hidden details, all the laws that dominate beings. Through this basis and path, that is, reviewing the cosmos, mankind can be guided to a large portion of aesthetic Attributes.

Thus, it becomes clear that the essence of Allah, the Praised One, and His Attributes, the likes of Whom do not exist, are not obstructed from absolute knowledge, not located within the horizon of sensibility so we would say that the minds are obstructed from them. We say that

"We have been granted reason in order to accurately adore Him, not to realize what godhead is all about. The Holy Qur'an has ordered [the faithful] to follow this path. The Praised One says, "Say: 'Behold all that is in the heavens and on earth," (Qur'an, 10:101);

"Behold! In the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of night and day there

are indeed Signs for men of understanding" (Qur'an, 3: 190),

and

"Truly, in the alternation of night and day, and in all that Allah has created, in the heavens and the earth, there are Signs for those who fear Him" (Qur'an, 10:6).

This path has been treaded by critic al–Tusi in proving the Attribute of knowledge and might. He says, "Perfection, dispossession and every–thing relying on Him is evidence of knowledge (of knowing Him)."9

#### Referring to the Quran and Authentic Sunnah

There is a third principle on which those who follow the Sharia rely. It is getting to know His Names, Attributes and Actions from the texts of divinely revealed books and statements of prophets after His existence, Praise belongs to Him, and some of His Attributes have already been proven. We have already established that the prophets were sent by Allah and that they are truthful in everything they said.

Briefly, due to the medium of *wahi* (inspiration), which neither errs nor slips, we can become familiar with the Supreme Originator's attributes and affairs. An example is derived from these verses:

"Allah is He besides Whom there is no other god, the Sovereign, the Holy One, the Source of peace (and perfection), the Guardian of faith, the Preserver of safety, the One Exalted in might, Irresistible, Supreme: Glory to Allah! (He is high) above the partners they attribute to Him. He is Allah, the Creator, the Evolver, the One Who bestows forms (shapes or colors). The best names belong to Him: Whatever is there in the heavens and on earth declares His praises and glory, and He is the One Exalted in might, Wise" (Qur'an, 59:23–24).

### **Divulging and Witnessing**

There is a small group that sees, through the hearts' eyes, what visions do not realize. It sees His goodness, greatness, attributes and actions through the heart's realization. He is realized by His friends and is not described for others.

Intrinsic divulgence, spiritual witnessing and meeting that take place in the heart are not shut off by token of the text of the Glorious Quran: The Praised One has said,

"O you who believe! If you fear Allah, He will grant you a criterion (to judge between right and wrong)" (Qur'an, 8:29),

that is, He will cast in your hearts *noor* (celestial light) through which you can distinguish between right and wrong, between what is sound and what is false, not through proofs and deductions, but through witnessing and divulging.

The most Praised One has said, "O you who believe! Fear Allah and believe in His Messenger, and He will (then) bestow upon you a double portion of His Mercy: He will provide for you a light by which you shall walk (straight in your path), and He will forgive you (your past wrongdoing), for Allah is the oft–Forgiving, the Most Merciful" (Qur'an, 57:28). What is meant by "noor" here is the one in the light of which a believer walks throughout his life, in seeking means for his livelihood, in preparing himself for the Hereafter, in matters relevant to his creed and everyday life. 10

The most Praised One has also said,

"As for those who strive in Our (cause), We will certainly guide them to Our paths" (Qur'an, 29:69).

And there are other such verses that clearly show that a believer reaches branches of knowledge and realities in the light of struggle and piety, so much so that he in the end is able to see hell in this materialistic life. The Praised One says,

"Nay! Were you to know with certainty of mind, (you would beware)! You shall certainly see Hell-fire!" (Qur'an, 102:5-6).

Yes, not all those who shoot darts hit the mark, nor are facts arrived at by darts. Rather, the most exemplary one reaches them, followed by the less exemplary, and so on. Nobody earns the unknown revelations and innate victories save the very few people whose souls are sincere and hearts pure.

This extensive research has showed that a Muslim must not keep himself from attempting to be acquainted with the Attributes of Allah and His Names in the pretext there is no similarity between humans and their Creator.

Yes, we do not claim that some of these ways are easy to tread by everyone. Rather, some of them are general and available for everyone who wants to know his Lord. And there are those particular ones from which the individual who has attained a certain amount of knowledge can derive benefits. 11

## Why Avoid Researching Metaphysics?

There are groups that refuse to look into what is beyond this visible world, regarding its material limits the utmost of what the human knowledge can grasp, stripping the knowledge relevant to metaphysics as the limit of human knowledge. What is amazing is that some of these groups are gnostics who believe in the existence of a god, but they do not permit looking into metaphysics at all, contending themselves with believing in him without knowledge.

Here we explain these groups for you:

### First Group: Materialists

They are the ones who believe in matter's originality, denying the existence of a world beyond nature; existence according to them is equivalent to matter. We finished voiding this theory in the previous researches that led us to matter taking place, its system and conclusion about the existence of a Maker who is self-subsistent.

#### Second Group: Some do away with Tools of Knowledge

These folks believe in metaphysics, but they believe in the loftiness of the peaks of such world, so much so that the minds cannot reach these peaks and comprehension cannot grasp them. They claim something while not producing an evidence for it. Reason has intuitive issues, and it has theoretical issues that end at intuition. Intuitive issues are true through intuition with regard to matter and to non-matter.

Also, the mind concludes that theoretical issues in natural matters end up at intuition, results which used to be unknown, for thus does it fare with issues that are beyond matter. You will come to know about how to prove His Attributes and Actions through this way in the folds of this book.

### Third Group: Claimants of Divulgence and Witnessing

These folks think that the only way to getting to know what is beyond nature, i.e. metaphysics, is to cultivate the soul and prepare it to accept outpourings from the divine world. This, as a whole, is not doubted, but to restrict the way to divulgence and witnessing is a claim that lacks evidence. There is no objection for the tools of knowledge to abound from the senses, reason and divulgence.

#### Fourth Group: Hanbalis and some Asharis

These people think that the only way to get to know the divine world is through reports of the heavens. So, we have no right to judge whether the divine is one or many, whether it is simple or complex, if it has a body or is without one, except through reports that reach us from the heavens. These folks have forgotten that reason is a divine element granted by Allah Almighty to man so the latter may be able to discover facts in a relative way. The Almighty has said,

"It is He Who brought you forth from the wombs of your mothers, when you knew nothing, and He gave you hearing, sight, intelligence and affection (so) that you may grant thanks (to Allah)" (Qur'an, 16:78).

The most obvious proof of the mind's ability to look for and study the higher and lower facts is that Inspiration urges us to use our minds in as many as seventy–four verses, to ponder and contemplate in eighteen verses, and to deeply discern in four verses of the Holy Qur'an.

To say that all these verses specifically concern only the senses is specificity without evidence.

Had wading into looking for what is beyond the matter been prohibited, why did the Quran wade into these topics, inviting all gnostics to tread this same path which it treads? The most Praised One has said,

"If there were other gods besides Allah in the heavens and the earth, there would have been confusion in both! But glory to Allah, the Lord on the Throne, high above what they attribute to Him" (Qur'an, 21:22)

and

"No son did Allah beget, nor is there any god along with Him: (Had there been many gods,) behold! Each god would have taken away what he had created, and some would have overpowered others! Glory to Allah! (He is free) from the (sort of) things they attribute to Him!" (Qur'an, 23:91).

You can see in both of these verses the most precise evidences for the Unity of God, for pondering about what no mind can grasp beyond Him. You will get to know the interpretation of both of these verses when we research the topic of *Tawhid* (Unity of Allah).

The Holy Quran condemns the polytheists because they believe in something for which they have no proof. It draws the right path for the gnostics thus: They must get the evidence of everything in which they believe, from the start and to the end. The most Glorified One says,

"Or have they taken (other) gods for worship besides Him? Say: 'Bring your convincing proof: This is the message of those with me and the message of those before.' But most of them do not know the truth, so they turn away" (Qur'an, 21:24).

Had the actions undertaken by the ancestors in this regard been evidence, here is Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (as) wading into the divinities in his sermons, letters and short statements in a way that nobody else can.

For this reason, many rational intellectual schools of divine knowledge refer to the Imam (as). The Mutazilites have learned *Adl* and *Tawhid* (Justice and Unity of Allah) from him, and the Imamites (Shias) have learned their principles and tenets.

So, we do not know why the Salafis of our present and past centuries employ the actions of Hanbali and Ashari men of traditions, using them as an argument, rather than using those of the Commander of the Faithful, Ali ibn Abu Talib (as), who was raised in the laps of the Prophet (S) whose first student he was, and the Commander of all faithful Muslim.

Allama Tabatabai (may Allah have mercy on his soul) has said, "People undertake different paths in this

field. There are those who look at searching for religious facts and see what is beyond the appearances of the Book (Quran) and the Sunnah as innovation. Reason proves them wrong in this regard, and the Book and Sunnah do not prove them right, either.

"The verses of the Quran emphatically urge pondering on the Signs (miracles) of Allah and exerting an effort to complete the knowledge about Him, to get to know His Signs through remembering, contemplating, looking into them and seeking evidence through rational arguments, and various consecutively reported Sunnah agrees to it. These are the folks who prohibit looking for the facts of the Book and the Sunnah, even looking into logical research which is based on first accepting the religious appearances then defending them through the celebrate, famous precepts, that are taken for granted by theologians." 12

#### A Return to the Theory of Narrators of Hadith in a New Method

The theory of the people of hadith has returned in the present century in a new method. An investigation into the issues of divinity cannot be done except through reviewing nature. Muhammad Farid Wajdi has said, "Since our opponents rely on senses-based philosophy and natural science in inviting to their creed, we make it our pillar in these researches; rather, we have no choice except to rely on both of them (philosophy and science) because they are the ones that have enabled man to reach this pinnacle of spiritual age." 13

Sayyid Abul Hassan Nadavi (al–Nadawi) has said, "The prophets (peace with them) told people about Allah's self, adjectives and actions, about the beginning of this world and its destiny and the attacks to which man will be subjected after his death. All this knowledge reached people through them (prophets) without toil. They spared them the trouble of having to search and examine sciences the principles of which they do not have, nor do they have their Precepts on which they set up their research so they may reach the unknown.

This is so because these sciences are beyond senses and nature. Their (people's) senses do not work with them. Their vision does not reach them, and they have no preliminary knowledge of them." He continues till he says, "Those who delved into divinities without rationale and without guidance brought this science repugnant ideas, incomplete information, casual thoughts and hasty theories, so they strayed and led others astray."14

I say: There is no doubt that the Quran calls for reviewing nature, as has already been stated. But we are talking about the extent of sufficiency of looking into nature and studying it in order to prove issues that the Holy Quran has presented such as in these verses:

"There is nothing like Him" (42:11).

"To Allah do the best names belong" (20:8; 59:22).

"Wherever you turn, God's presence is there" (2:115).

"He is the First and the Last, the Evident and the Immanent, and He has full knowledge of all

things" (57:3).

"And He is with you wherever you may be" (57:4).

There are other researches and branches of knowledge in which the study of nature and the review of

the material world do not help deciphering their codes or grasping their realities. Rather, we need

principles and rational precepts as well as logical bases.

Reviewing the natural world guides us to the cosmos having a Maker Who knows and Who is Able; it

does not guide us to His being, Glory to Him, knowledgeable of everything, ability to do everything,

creating everything, managing everything.

If we want to determine the extent of knowledge that results from looking into nature, we can say:

Discerning nature gets us to reach the limits of metaphysics, it informs us that nature is subject to an

omnipotent might and to an able and capable administrator. But man cannot go beyond this to issues

which the Quran or reason submits. Let us say the following as examples:

**First:** If what is beyond nature is the source of nature, what is the source of metaphysics themselves?

**Second:** Is the said source eternal or created, one or more, simple or complex, having all attributes of

goodness and perfection or not having them?

**Third:** Is there a limit for his knowledge?

Fourth: Is there a limit for his might?

**Fifth:** Is he the first of things or the last?

**Sixth:** Is he inside things and outside them?

Such information is presented by the Holy Quran with an order to contemplate on them:

"Do they not then earnestly seek to understand the Qur'an, or are their hearts locked up?"

(Qur'an, 47:24).

Scrutinizing nature does not help one answer these questions and become familiar with the branches of

knowledge presented in the Quran.

It is then that one of two paths must be attempted. Looking into these branches of knowledge must be

obstructed and prohibited. Or one must admit the existence of a rational way to analyze these branches

of knowledge and help us become familiar with them.

Those who ban delving into these researches rely on (the presumption that) becoming acquainted with the truth about the self and the essence of its characteristics is impossible. But not every logical research reaches such a limit and tries to find out the truth about the Divine Self as we have already explained.

Natural sciences have served the path of theologians, strengthening their positions, proving that the cosmos is an entire order, but they are unable to resolve all problems submitted in the field of doctrines.

Yes, delving deeply into these researches is not available for everyone, and it is not easy for everyone who seeks it. They are similar to an "inaccessible ease" because man, due to feeling comfortable with things which he can sense, finds it difficult to free his intellect from the things which his circumstances impose on him so he may be ready to contemplate on metaphysics with a mind free of the shackles of the matter.

There is another facet for man's limits which restricts him from realizing the depth of divine sciences. The tools of expression which man uses are limited to terms and words that were not put except to explain meanings for limited things that are identified through the senses. For this reason, there is no choice other than expressing the supreme cosmic realities that are beyond time and place with these narrow expressions. To this does one gnostic refer in this verse of poetry:

A robe threaded with 29 (alphabetical) letters Is surely short of its full meanings!

The main mentor, Ibn Sina (Avicenna), recommends that complex theological matters should not be submitted except to those who are apt to them. In a resign at the end of his book he says, "Brother! I have produced from these signs the pith of the truth, feeding you with both scales of judgment, in niceties. So, keep this away from ignorant folks and those who are vulgar, who are not blessed with brilliance, with treading the right track, with following the right habits, those who feel comfortable with pleasant aromas. They should keep it away from atheist philosophers and from their commoners. So, if you find someone the purity of whose inner self you trust, someone who stops when insinuation rushes to him, one who looks at righteousness with pleased and truthful eyes, give him what he asks you. Give it to him in steps, in parts, organized, preparing what you give him in advance to be of benefit to him when you give him something else after that. Take his covenant and let him swear to it by Allah and by his *iman* that he will not reveal them except as he follows your example. If you disseminate this knowledge or if you lose it, Allah suffices me to judge between us, and He suffices for a Judge on my behalf."

We do not claim that these researches are common knowledge that anyone can explore, due to the precision of their paths and abundance of slipping places. Rather, they are particular for a group of people who are gifted with a superior intellectual provess.

For this reason, we submit the divine sciences in the light of reason and inspiration, deriving from Allah,

Glory belongs to Him, assistance to show us the right way, to protect us from surmounting falsehood, surely He is Exalted, Wise.

- 1. Only the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) has this word, aseity, defining it as above! Take it from me! And you can find it on the Internet, that is for sure. –Tr.
- 2. Al-Mizan, Vol. 10, p. 273.
- 3. Al-Milal wal Nihal, Vol. 1, p. 104.
- 4. Ibid., Vol. 1, p. 93.
- 5. Ibn Taymiyyah, Al-Rasaail al-Kubra, Vol. 1, p. 32.
- 6. Nahjul-Balagha, sermon 29.
- 7. Al-Hujja fi Bayan al-Mahajja, p. 33.
- 8. Tajrid al-Itiqad, in a chapter confirming the Maker and His Attributes, pp. 178-85.
- 9. Ibid., p. 172 (Al-Irfan Press, Saida, Lebanon).
- 10. As regarding life in this world, it is the noor to which the Praised One refers when He says, "Can he who was dead, to whom We gave life and a light whereby he can walk among men like one who is in the depths of darkness from which he can never come out?" (Qur'an, 6:122). As regarding the Hereafter, it is referred to by the most Praised One in this verse: "One Day you will see the believing men and the believing women, how their light shines forth before them and by their right hands" (Qur'an, 57:12).
- 11. In order to get to know the keys to this chapter, you have to refer to Mafahim al-Quran, Vol. 3, pp. 244-59.
- 12. Tabatabai, Al-Mizan الميزان, Vol. 8, p. 153.
- 13. Ala Atlal al-Mathhab al-Maddi على أطلال المذهب المادي, Vol. 1, p. 16.
- 14. Matha Khasara al-Aalam ماذا خسر العالم, p. 97.

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