

The Belief of The Imamiya Concerning Tawhid

Says the learned Abu Ja'far Muhammad bin 'Ali bin Husayn bin Musa Ibn Babawayhi al-Qummi, the jurist, the author of this book: Know that our belief concerning *tawhid* is that Allah, exalted is He, is one (*wahid*) and absolutely unique (*ahad*).¹ There is naught like unto Him; He is Prior (*qadim*)²; He never was non-existent and never will be; He is the Hearing and the Seeing One; the Omniscient (*'alim*), the Wise; the Living, the Everlasting, the Mighty (*'aziz*), the Holy (*quddus*), the Knowing One (*'aalim*), the Powerful, the Self-Sufficient (*ghani*).

He cannot be described by His Essence (*jawhar*); His Body (*jism*); His Form (*sura*), or by His Accidental Qualities (*'arad*)³. Nor in terms of length (*khatt*), breadth (*'ard*), surface (*sath*), weight (*thiqal*), lightness (*khiffa*), quiescence (*sukun*), motion (*haraka*), place (*makan*) or time (*zaman*). He, exalted is He, transcends all the attributes of His creatures; He is beyond both the limitations (*hadd*) of transcendence (*ibtal*) and of immanence (*tashbih*).⁴

He is a Thing (*shay'*), but not like other things.⁵ He is Unique (*ahad*), Eternal Refuge (*samad*), He begets not, lest He may be inherited; nor is He begotten, lest He may be associated (with others). There is no one like unto Him; He has no equal (*nidd*) or opponent (*didd*), compeer (*shibh*) or consort (*sahibah*). Nothing can be compared with Him (*mithl*); He has no rival (*nazir*), no partner (*sharik*).⁶ Human eyes cannot behold Him; while He discerns (the power of) eyes.⁷ The thoughts of men cannot compass Him; while He is aware of them.

“Slumber overtakes Him not, nor sleep” (Qur'an 2:255).

He is the Gracious (*latif*)⁸ and the Knowing One (*khabir*), the Creator (*khaliq*) of all things. There is no deity (*ilah*) other than Him; to Him (alone) belongs (the power of) creation (*khalq*) and authority (*amr*). Blessed (*tabaraka*) is Allah, the Lord of the worlds. And he who believes in *tashbih* (immanence) is a polytheist (*mushrik*).

And he, who attributes to the Shias beliefs other than those that have been stated concerning the Unity of Allah (*tawhid*), is a liar. And every report (*khabar*) contrary to what I have stated concerning *tawhid* is an invention (*mawdu'lmukhtara'*). Every tradition (*hadith*) which does not accord with the Book of Allah is

null and void (*batil*), and if it is to be found in the books of our doctors, it is apocryphal (*mudallas*)⁹.

As for the reports (*akhbar*) which lead ignorant persons to imagine that Allah is comparable to His creatures, their meanings can be understood by the significance of similar passages in the Qur'an. For example, in the Qur'an (we have):

“Everything is perishable except His Face (*wajh*)” (Qur'an 28:88).

Now the meaning of *wajh*, in this context, is *din* (religion). And *wajh* is that whereby Allah is attained and wherewith one can turn to Him.¹⁰ And in the Qur'an (we have):

“On the day when the leg shall be bared¹¹ and they shall be summoned to prostrate themselves, but they cannot; humbled shall be their eyes, and abasement shall overspread them for they had been summoned to prostrate themselves while they were yet unhurt” (Qur'an 68:42-43).¹²

Now *saq* (leg) means the result or consummation of the affair and its intensity.

And (there occurs) in the Qur'an:

“Lest a soul should say: Oh woe to me! For what I neglected in my duty (*janb*) towards Allah!” (Qur'an 39:56).

Here *janb* means obedience.¹³ And (we have) in the Qur'an:

“And I breathed into it of My spirit” (Qur'an 15:29).¹⁴

Now he created that spirit (*ruh*), and Allah had breathed of it into Adam and Jesus. He only said: “My *ruh*” and He said: “My house”; “My slave”, “My garden”¹⁵, “My fire”, and “My earth”.

And in the Qur'an (we have):

“Nay both His hands are outspread” (Qur'an 5:64)

By which is meant “the good of this world and the good of the next world”¹⁶. And in the Qur'an (we have):

“And the sky, We built it by (Our) hands” (Qur'an 51:47).

Now *ayd* (hand) means “**strength**”. And similarly, His Word, exalted is He:

“And remember Our slave David, possessed of *ayd*” (Qur'an 38: 18)

That is, possessed of strength (*quwwa*). And in the Qur'an (we have):

“O! Iblis, what prevents thee from adoring, what I have created with my two Hands” (Qur'an

38:75).

(By two hands), He means ***“My power and My strength (qudra, quwwa). [17](#)”*** And in the Qur'an (we have):

“And on the Day of Resurrection the whole of the earth (will be) in His possession (qabda)” (Qur'an 39:67).

That is to say, it will be His property and no one will share the earth with Him. And in the Qur'an (we have):

“And the Heavens shall be rolled up, in His right hand (yamin)” (Qur'an 39:67).

(By “right hand”) is meant “His power” (*qudra*).

And in the Qur'an (we have):

“And Thy Lord shall come, while the angels shall be arranged rank on rank” (Qur'an 89:22).

This means that “the command” of Thy Lord shall come. And in the Qur'an (we have):

“Nay verily, from their Lord on that day are they veiled ” (Qur'an 83: 15).

That is, "from the reward (thawab) of their Lord". And in the Qur'an (we have):

“What do they expect but that Allah should come unto them in the shadows (zulal) of a cloud” (Qur'an 2:210). [18](#)

That is, "the punishment of Allah". And in the Qur'an (we have):

“Faces on that day shall be bright (nadira), gazing (nazira) on their Lord” (Qur'an 75:22-23)

That means (the faces) will be lighted up (*mushriqa*), looking at their Lord's reward. And in the Qur'an (we have):

“And he on whom my wrath descends is lost” (Qur'an 20:81).

Now the wrath of Allah is His punishment and His pleasure is His reward. And (we have) in the Qur'an:

“Thou knowest what is in my soul, but I know not what is in Thy soul” (Qur'an 5: 116). [19](#)

That is, Thou hast knowledge of my innermost secrets, but I have no knowledge of Thy secrets. And in the Qur'an (we have):

“Allah biddeth you beware of Himself (nafs)” (Qur'an 3:28).

By *nafs* He means His revenge. And (we have) in the Qur'an:

“Verily Allah and His angels shower blessings on the Prophet” (Qur'an 33:56).

Also: ***“He it is who blesseth you, and His angels (bless you)” (Qur'an 33:43).***

Now *salat* from Allah means His mercy; and (*salat*) from angels is (their) asking for (your) pardon and purification²⁰; and (*salat*) from men is prayer (*du'a*).

We have in the Qur'an:

“And they (the unbelievers or Jews) schemed, and Allah schemed (against them), and Allah is the best of schemers” (Qur'an 3:54).

Also: ***“Verily the hypocrites seek to beguile Allah, but it is, Allah Who beguiles them”²¹ (Qur'an 4: 142).***

As well as: ***“Allah doth mock them” (Qur'an 2: 15).***

And we have:

“Allah will deride at (sakhira) them” (Qur'an 9:79).

And we have:

“They have forgotten Allah, so He hath forgotten them” (9:67).

And the meaning of all this is that He, the Glorious and Mighty, shall requite them for their scheming (*makr*), beguiling (*mukhada'a*) mockery (*istihza'*), and forgetfulness (*nisyan*); and that is, He will make them forget themselves, as He, the Mighty and Glorious, has said: ***“And be not ye as those who forgot Allah, therefore He caused them to forget their souls” (Qur'an 59: 19).***

For in reality Allah, the Glorious and Mighty, does not scheme, nor does He beguile, deride, or forget.²² Exalted is Allah beyond all this by His Greatness and Glory. In our traditions which are attacked by our opponents and heretics, there do not occur any words except those similar to these, and their meaning is the meaning of the words of the Qur'an.

^{1.} 32. For grammatical distinction between *wahid* and *ahad* see Wright, Arab. Gram. ii. 236. The difference is also explained in MB, s. v. 242 وحده. The same explanation will be found in N at p.91 in a fa'ida to an-Nafi` Yawmi 'l-Hashr. There is also a long discussion of the two terms in Tawhid, 48 – 61 ; but probably the truth is as Imam Baqir is reported to have said (Tawhid, 56): قال الباقر ع: أَلأحد الفرد المتفرد و أَلأحد الواحد بمعنى واحد و هو المتفرد الذي لا نظير له و التوحيد الإقرار بالوحدة... إلخ

The term *wahid* refers to number, *ahad* to essence or substance. Therefore *wahid* is single in respect of number; and *ahad* is unique, simple or unanalysable in respect of substance. According to Wen sinck, *ahadiya* is a quality of the essence, and *wahidiya* is called a quality of action, MC, 205–6. See also Affifi, 24, 39, 63, FC, no. 3.

^{2.} BHA, nos. 42, 69 –70.

3. MC, 209 sqq.; BHA, no. 86; FC, no. 6.
4. حد الإبطال obviously refers to those people who believe that God has no attributes or qualities, nor can He be said to be possessed of perfection; and حد التشبيه refers to those who say that God possesses certain attributes or qualities but to the degree of perfection, and therefore His qualities cannot be compared with the qualities possessed by human beings. Ibn Babawayhi denies both these positions. His denial of تشبيه immanence, and تنزيه transcendence, may be compared with Ibnu'1-'Arabi's attitude, Affifi, 18, 20 sqq.
5. MC, 190, Fiqh Akbar II, art. 4; FC, nos.5 –7; BHA, no. 86.
6. Here D adds لا مشير له "He has no advisor".
7. Qur'an 6,103.
8. MC, 82; BHA, nos. 144 – 148.
9. Mudallas is explained by Md. I'jaz Hasan as "that tradition which an apponent of the Imamiya has ascribed to the Shiites". دَلَسَ means to hide the defects in merchandise which is sold, MB; whence according to the traditionists "to conceal the defects of the hadith, either in the text, in the chain of narrators or in the source". EI, Supp. 222, s.v. Tadlis.
10. MC, 63 sqq., 88 sq.; FC, 16; Kalami Ptr, 53 sqq.
11. كُشِفَ عَنْ سَاقِي is a peculiar expression of the Arabs, which signifies a great rush and tumult, in which, while running hither and thither, the gowns are lifted and legs bared. Explained further in Tas-hih (al-Murshid, i.78).
12. و هم سالمون Omitted in D.
13. Omitted in D.
14. Explained in Tashih (Mur. i. 111).
15. So in D. In N we have جنبني
16. Expl. Tas. (Mur. i. 110).
17. Sh. Mufid expl. That يد does not mean قدرة or قوة. It means نعمتي "my favour", regarding ad-dunya and al-akhira. Tas. (Mur. i. 143).
18. N adds here و الملائكة as in the Qur'an.
19. D, p.14, line 7, erroneously says that this refers to Joseph; this is a reference to Jesus.
20. Here the Urdu translator renders تزكية "and declaring the purity of the Messenger of God", which is hardly justifiable. D, 14, 6th line from bottom.
21. Regarding the explanation of 3, 47 and 4, 141, Sh. Mufid says that Ibn Babawayhi is correct, but a further reason is that the Arabs in a number of cases called a thing by a metaphorical name (الإسم المجازي).
22. How نسيان can be attributed to Allah in Q.59, 19 in expl. By Sh. Mufid. Tas. (Mur. i. 249–250).

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