

The Wahhabi doctrine regarding divine attributes

The Wahhabi doctrine on Allah's attributes is the same as that of al-Mujasima: [1](#) They claim that Allah possesses actual organs such as a hand, a leg, an eye and a face. They also describe him as literally sitting, moving, changing position, descending and ascending. [2](#)

This doctrine which they borrowed from Ibn Taimia originated with the Hashawia who lacked profound knowledge of Islamic tenets and teachings. The Hashawia endorsed the literal meanings of religious texts and their *tajseem* is similar to that of some Jewish denominations.

The Wahhabis failed to support this belief with a single testimony by any of the Companions or early Muslims. But this did not deter them from claiming that this belief represents the consensus of early Muslims. In any case, their argument in defense of their belief regarding divine attributes lacks logical substance and hence it is unconvincing.

To justify their belief, however, the Wahhabis relied entirely on a statement by Ibn Taimia who claimed that after reviewing all available commentaries by the Companions and the traditions reported by them and collected from several sources which amounted to more than 100 commentaries he could not find a single evidence from one Companion interpreting the attributes' verses in variance with their literal meanings. [3](#)

This allegation repeated by Ibn Taimia is false and was clearly refuted by the same sources whose authenticity and reliability were confirmed by Ibn Taimia himself. These sources include the commentaries of al-Tabari, Ibn Atia and al-Bagawi. [4](#)

All of these sources reported that the Companions interpreted the Quranic verses on Allah's attributes and did not endorse their literal meanings. To illustrate, *Ayat al-Kursi* or Chair verse was interpreted by Al-Tabari, Ibn Atia and al-Bagawi by referring to Ibn Abbas' comment that the chair means Allah's knowledge. Ibn Atia upheld this and regarded any other interpretation to be of Jewish or Hashawi origin which must be ignored. [5](#)

In the same fashion, Allah's 'face' is interpreted in all verses in which mention of it is found as purpose, recompense or other meanings depending on its context. Anyone can check al-Bagawi's commentary which Ibn Taimia praised as utterly reliable to find out for himself that Ibn Taimia's claim is unfounded. In specific, al-Bagawi's commentaries on the following verses may be consulted: The Cow: 115, 255 and 272; Thunder: 22; The Narratives: 88; The Romans: 38, 39; The Man: 9; and the Night: 2. From this evidence it can be concluded that the companions did not support the Wahhabi's doctrine on divine attributes.

- [1.](#) Al-Mujasima or anthropomorphist believed that Allah possessed physical attributes.
- [2.](#) Abdul Latif ibn Abdul Wahab [grandson of the founder], Al-Hadia al- Sania, Part Four.
- [3.](#) Ibn Taimia, Tafseer Sura al-Noor, pp. 178–179.
- [4.](#) Ibn Taimia, Muqadima fi Usool al-Tafseer, p. 51.
- [5.](#) Cited by al-Shawkani in Fatih al-Qadeer, vol. 1, p. 272.

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