

Person of God

The Sunnis say that Allah has a body, not like the bodies that we know of. There is a vast material which can be quoted here describing that belief. But as all the Sunnis nowadays are Ash'arite (followers of Abu'l-Hasan al-Ash'ari), I would like to note down his belief on this subject.

He says "We confess that God is firmly seated on His Throne . . . We confess that God has two hands, without asking how ... We confess that God has two eyes, without asking how. . . We confess that God has a face ... We confess that God has knowledge ... We affirm hearing and sight, and do not deny that, as do the Mu'tazila, the Jahmiyya, and the Khawarij. ... We affirm that God has power. . ." [1](#)

We, the Shi'ah Ithna 'asharis (the followers of the Twelve-Imams in Shi'ism) believe that Allah doesn't have a body.

"Verily, Allah is One, Unique, nothing is like Him, He is Eternal; Hearing, Seeing, Omniscient, Living, Omnipotent, above every need. He cannot be described in terms of substance, or body, or form, or accident, or line, or surface, or heaviness, or lightness, or colour, or movement, or rest, or time, or space. He is above all the descriptions which can be applied to His creatures."

"He is away from both extremes: Neither He is just a non-entity (as atheists and in a lesser degree that the Mu'tazilites have implied), nor He is just like other things. He is Existent, not like other existing things." [2](#)

Of course, there are some verses in the Qur'an which ascribe the words used for limbs to the person of God. But according to the interpretation of our Imams, they are used in a metaphorical, not literal sense.

For example, the verse: **"Everything is mortal except His face"** means 'except His person'. Surely, even the Sunnis cannot say that only the face of God will remain, while all His so-called limbs will die! Similarly Allah has used the word 'Hand' in several places in the Qur'an. But it means His Power and His Mercy, as in the verse: **"But His hands are outspread"**.

[1.](#) A. J. Arberry, Revelation and Reason in Islam, pp. 22 – 23; quoted from al-Ibana by Abu'l-Hasan al-Ash'ari.

[2.](#) Ash Shaykh as-Saduq, Al-I'tiqadat.

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