



MADINAH COLLEGE:

القواعد المثلى

للشيخ محمد بن صالح العثيمين

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Introduction

This book is a summarised explanation of the principles of أهل السنة والجماعة and their creed with regards to Allah's names and attributes.

It is well known that أهل السنة والجماعة are distinguished from the innovators in their principles and of them are those concerning Allah's names and attributes.

These differences that occurred happened after the time of the Sahabah. It was the 4th innovation that took place in this Ummah, the first being the خوارج who had a deficiency in Aqīdah regarding those who commit major sins.

Then the innovation regarding قضاء took place. These first two innovations took place at the time of the Sahabah's. Then the innovation of الإرجاء took place at the time of the كبار التابعين.

Then the innovation of Allah's names and attributes took place by the sect called the جهمية. Over time it is one of the major distinguishers of أهل السنة والجماعة.

One of the reasons of this innovation is due to improper understanding of the Arabic language.

The first 3 innovations are based on text and evidences, however this one is based on rationale. It arose from other than the Muslims such as philosophers unlike the others which occurred from among the Muslims.

This topic therefore is connected to Aqīdah because our worship is connected to having correct knowledge of Allah.

This book mentions principles then it is explained and examples are given.

Principles Regarding Allah's Names

1. All of Allah's names are beautiful.

The evidence for this is:

وَلِلَّهِ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَىٰ فَادْعُوهُ بِهَا ۚ وَذَرُوا الَّذِينَ يُلْحِدُونَ فِي أَسْمَائِهِ سَيُجْزَوْنَ مَا كَانُوا
يَعْمَلُونَ {سورة الأعراف 180}

اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ۚ لَهُ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَىٰ {سورة طه 8}

In the Arabic language the word الحسنى is different to the word حسنة as it means الغاية في الكمال so it is of the highest form and perfection.

For example the name الحي. The creation of Allah is also حي as it is alive. However in Allah's name it encompasses the living who was not preceded by non-existence, and who will never be non-existent. Also he is not affected by slumber or tiredness etc as it is a deficiency in life.

As for mankind, he was preceded by non-existence, he will only live forever in the afterlife because Allah will cause that to happen

for them, it is not them themselves that can live forever. They also get sick, have fatigue and have deficiencies.

2. Allah's names are both proper nouns and attributes.

An example of a woman called جميلة but she is the ugliest woman. A person can have a name but the meaning does not have to apply to them. As for Allah's names then his names belong to him and the attributes are also true.

Every name of Allah therefore refers to Allah for example الرحمان is Allah and this name also refers to Allah's attribute of رحمة.

So it is important to recognise that Allah's names have no similitude or likeness to others even if the name is the same like the name السميع. A person can hear but it is not the same as Allah's hearing. It cannot be said that Allah's hearing is greater than that of mankind but at the foundation they are the same. This is an incorrect statement, rather there is no similarity between the two, it is only the word that is the same.

The word الدهر is not of the names of Allah as some people think because it indicates to something in which things occur in. It does not indicate to perfection or completeness and all of Allah's names are perfect.

3. If the meaning of one of Allah's names extends to the creation then it is affirmed as a name, its attribute is also affirmed for Allah and the implication of that attribute is affirmed.

The names of Allah are of two types. Those which are متعدي transitive and لازم intransitive.

For example the name الغفور, it indicates to Allah himself, his attribute of forgiveness and then it also points to the fact that there is creation that needs forgiveness. Also the name العليم it is a name of Allah, it indicates to his attribute of knowledge and thirdly it indicates that there is something that is known.

On the other hand the name القدوس or the name الحي is not transitive and has no connection to the creation.

Therefore, when it comes to the transitive names of Allah we must believe three things, for example in the name الرحيم, you must believe that it indicates to Allah, it's attribute of mercy belongs to Allah and lastly it's effect on creation that Allah is merciful and gracious to his worshippers.

4. Allah's names include the necessary, logical consequences of their meanings.

مطابقة is when a name conforms to all the meanings in that name for example الخالق conforms to the the attribution of creating and Allah being the creator. So مطابقة indicates to الذات والصفة.

For example if someone says “house” then it is referring to the whole house and everything in it like the rooms, doors etc. If someone said “window” then it is referring to a part of the house but not all of it. This is called تضمن as it is referring to a part not the whole, one meaning not all of them.

Allah's name referring to him is تضمن, the attribute alone is also تضمن but both together are مطابقة.

الإلتزام means something that is not included but it is necessary for example الخالق. It necessitates that Allah is all-powerful and that he is all-knowing in order for him to be the creator.

These principles are used by أهل السنة to refute innovators who affirms some names of Allah while negating others.

For example the معتزلة affirm the name السميع but negate the attribute of سمع so أهل السنة use the principle of مطابقة to prove that the name and the attribute are affirmed for Allah.

5. Allah's names must be limited to what is in the Quran and Sunnah alone.

All of Allah's names are توفيقية which means they can only be from the texts and we cannot give names to Allah from attributes or use our intellects.

This is because it is a matter of the unseen and Allah is the one who tells us about himself.

For example القديم is not a name of Allah because there is no evidence for it.

6. Allah's names are not limited by a specific number.

Allah has informed us for some names and has left some known only to himself.

The evidence of this is in a dua that the Prophet (s) made:

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي عَبْدُكَ وَابْنُ عَبْدِكَ وَابْنُ أُمَّتِكَ وَفِي قَبْضَتِكَ نَاصِيَّتِي بِيَدِكَ مَا ضَرَّ فِيَّ حُكْمُكَ عَدْلٌ فِيَّ
قَضَاؤُكَ أَسْأَلُكَ بِكُلِّ اسْمٍ هُوَ لَكَ سَمَّيْتَ بِهِ نَفْسَكَ أَوْ أَنْزَلْتَهُ فِي كِتَابِكَ أَوْ عَلَّمْتَهُ أَحَدًا مِنْ خَلْقِكَ
أَوْ أَلْهَمْتَ عِبَادَكَ أَوْ اسْتَأْثَرْتَ بِهِ فِي مَكْنُونِ الْغَيْبِ عِنْدَكَ أَنْ تَجْعَلَ الْقُرْآنَ رَبِيعَ قَلْبِي وَجِلَاءَ
هَمِّي وَغَمِّي

This shows that Allah has names that he has not informed us about and it also shows that the names of Allah can only be taken from Quran and Sunnah because the Prophet (s) states the names which Allah revealed in his book and that which he taught one of his creation which is referring to the prophets.

Some people have a misunderstanding that Allah only has 99 names because of the Hadith:

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ : (إِنَّ لِلَّهِ تِسْعَةً وَتِسْعِينَ
اسْمًا مِائَةً إِلَّا وَاحِدًا مَنْ أَحْصَاهَا دَخَلَ الْجَنَّةَ) .بخاري ومسلم

Rather it does not limit Allah's names to 99 but it just shows that those who knows 99 of Allah's names, memorises them, understands them and implements them will enter Jannah.

There is a Hadith which names all of the 99 names in Tirmidhi but this Hadith is weak.

7. Turning away from the obligatory concerning Allah's names is denying them.

إلحاد is to deviate from the correct path.

There are more than 4 types but the Shaykh mentions these as they are the most important.

The first is rejecting a name of Allah outright or the attribute it necessitates. For example the معتزلة affirming the name السميع but rejecting سمع for Allah.

The second is to believe any of Allah's names or attributes is similar to creation.

The third is to give Allah a name that he has not given himself like the philosophers say Allah is the cause of movement or activity in the universe.

The fourth is to derive a name from a name of Allah and name an idol with it.

The polytheists at the Prophet's time derived the name العزى from the name of Allah العزيز.

It is also إحداد to affirm some names of Allah while rejecting other like the أشاعرة who affirm 7 attributes and negate all others.

You can only call upon Allah with his names for Dua and with his attributes you can take oath but you cannot do either with information about him.

Principles Regarding Allah's Attributes

1. All of Allah's attributes are perfect and complete

The evidence for this is the Quran, Sunnah and intellect.

Allah criticises the polytheists for worshipping idols that have deficiencies in the verse: *إِذْ قَالَ لِأَبِيهِ يَا أَبَتِ لِمَ تَعْبُدُ مَا لَا يَسْمَعُ وَلَا يُبْصِرُ وَلَا يُغْنِي*

{عَنْكَ شَيْئًا} {سورة مريم 42}

Allah also admonishes and will punish those who say Allah has deficiencies: *وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ يَدُ اللَّهِ مَغْلُولَةٌ غُلَّتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَلُعِنُوا بِمَا قَالُوا بَلْ يَدَاهُ*

مَبْسُوطَتَانِ يُنفِقُ كَيْفَ يَشَاءُ {سورة مائدة 64}

2. Allah's attributes are more comprehensive and wide-ranging than his names.

This is because every name indicates to an attribute but not every attribute necessitates a name.

Allah has names, then there are more attributes and even bigger than that is information about Allah. For example you can say to refute others that Allah is *واجب الوجود* and not *ممکن الوجود*, this is information about Allah which we can say because it's meaning is from the texts but an attribute must come directly from the text.

The word شيء, is it a name of Allah, attribute or information about Allah? It is an attribute because Allah says: قُلْ أَيُّ شَيْءٍ أَكْبَرُ: {سورة الأنعام ١٩}. شَهَادَةُ قُلِّ اللَّهُ {سورة الأنعام ١٩}. The opposite of شيء would be عدم الشيء.

3. Allah's attributes are two types, affirmed and negated.

All the attributes which are affirmed are perfect and complete. The attributes that are negated are all those that have deficiencies and shortcomings like forgetfulness, tiredness, having a companion etc.

الصفات المنفية يراد بها إثبات كمال ضدها

4. Attributes of Allah are praiseworthy and perfect.

Negation is always general as it is praiseworthy when it is general not specific. Affirmation on the other hand is specific.

When there is specific negation then it is because Allah is refuting those who say otherwise.

The innovators make detailed negations and general affirmations whereas the methodology of أهل السنة is the opposite. For example the أشاعرة say Allah is not hot or cold, and isn't in the creation etc.

5. Allah's attributes are divided into two, those connected to himself ذاتية and then his actions فعلية.

For example Allah has the attributes of علم and نزول. Is it possible that there is a point in time that Allah does not have knowledge? Is knowledge something connected to Allah's will that he is knowledgeable when he wishes and ignorant when he wishes? As for نزول is Allah always descending perpetually?

There are attributes which are always affirmed for Allah at all times like knowledge. Others are connected to Allah's will like love, anger and نزول.

Some attributes of Allah that are connected to both ذاتية and فعلية. For example speech. If a person is silent does it mean that he has the inability to speak. It could be that he cannot speak and it could be that he doesn't want to speak. The scholars say in terms of ability then speech is a صفة ذاتية because Allah can speak at all times, but in terms Allah speaking it is صفة فعلية because he speaks when he wishes.

Allah always has the ability to descend but it is not the same as speech as speech is always praiseworthy as opposed to being unable to speak. On the other hand descent is not always praiseworthy.

6. When affirming Allah's attributes we must not do التمثيل or التكييف.

التمثيل is to liken Allah to his creation.

التكييف is to say how the attribute is even if it does not have a resemblance in creation.

فَاطِرُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۚ جَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا وَمِنَ الْأَنْعَامِ أَزْوَاجًا ۗ يَذُرُّكُمْ فِيهِ ۚ لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ ۗ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ {سورة شورى 11}

A sound intellect knows and accepts that the creator is not like the creation.

Every single attribute of Allah has no similitude or likeness to an attribute in creation.

We know the meaning of the attributes of Allah but we don't know its how and we know it has no resemblance.

7. Attributes of Allah can only be taken from revealed texts.

Principles Regarding Allah's Names & Attributes

1. The Quran and Sunnah are the only two sources of proof for Allah's names and attributes

If the Sahabah mentions an attribute or name of Allah then is this included? Yes because they would not speak about matters of the unseen except if they heard it from the Prophet (s). An example is the statement of Ibn Abbas that he said the كرسى is the place of the feet of our Lord.

Can we say Allah has ears because Allah negates ears for the idols in the verse: **اللَّهُمَّ أَرْجُلُ يَمْشُونَ بِهَا ۗ أَمْ لَهُمْ أَيْدٍ يَبْطِشُونَ بِهَا ۗ أَمْ لَهُمْ أَعْيُنٌ يُبْصِرُونَ بِهَا ۗ** {سورة الأعراف} **{أَمْ لَهُمْ آذَانٌ يَسْمَعُونَ بِهَا ۗ قُلْ ادْعُوا شُرَكَاءَكُمْ ثُمَّ كِيدُوا فَلَا تُنظِرُونَ}** {سورة الأعراف}.

No we cannot because it has to be something explicitly stated, it cannot be from المفهوم المخالفة.

What Allah is described with is either from Quran, Sunnah or the Sahabah's so we affirm it, or Allah is described with a deficiency so we negate it even if it is not mentioned then any deficiency or defect is negated for Allah. Lastly an attribute that can be a good meaning or a bad meaning but it has no mention in the texts for example place or direction. These are not negated completely

because they are not a defect and we don't affirm it completely because they're not from the texts. If someone says Allah is in a direction because he is above his creation, then this meaning is correct. This does not mean we affirm the wording. If they say Allah is within his creation then this is incorrect.

2. When understanding the text we must stick to the apparent meaning.

For example: {سورة فجر ٢٢} وَجَاءَ رَبُّكَ وَالْمَلَكُ صَفًّا صَفًّا. The apparent meaning is that Allah came. Those who say it means that Allah's mercy came or something then this is contrary to the apparent meaning so it is incorrect.

Allah says in Surah Shu'ara: {195} بِلِسَانٍ عَرَبِيٍّ مُبِينٍ which shows that it was revealed in Arabic clearly as it would be understood by the Arabs.

The Sahabah also made Tafsir of the Quran according to its apparent meaning. If it was unclear to them then they asked the Prophet (s) to them.

There is a Hadith that Allah laughs when he takes out the last person from the hellfire. Someone asked the Prophet (s): Does Allah laugh? The Prophet (s) said: Yes. He said: So long as our

Lord laughs we know that good is coming. The Sahabi understood from laughing that it means good which means he understood it directly from the language and its apparent meaning.

The Prophet (s) never told us to understand the attributes of Allah using our intellects and not take them from its apparent meaning.

3. We do not know the how of Allah's attributes.

We know Allah smiles and what it means from one aspect but from the how then we do not know this aspect.

The how of something is not known except in 3 ways. Either by seeing it, or something like it or by an explanation and description of it.

Have we seen Allah? Have we seen anything like Allah? Have we been given a description of Allah? No, so it is unknown to us.

4. The apparent meaning of texts is referring to what logically comes first to one's mind.

For example the word قرية can mean population in some contexts and it can mean a town in other contexts.

