

# ANSWERING THREE PIVOTAL QUESTIONS ABOUT THE ASH'AREES

**Exemplary Principles Concerning the Beautiful Names & Attributes of Allaah**  
Shaykh Muhammad Ibn Saalih al-'Uthaymeen  
Translated by Abul-'Abbaas Mooosaa Richardson  
TROID Publications

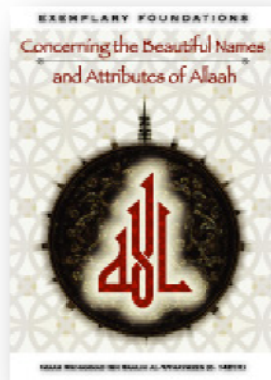


---

Date Published: Dec. 8<sup>th</sup> 2007 | © [www.troid.org](http://www.troid.org) – Globalising Islaamic Knowledge

---

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



A SUB-CHAPTER FROM THE BOOK

## A REFUTATION OF THE ASH'AREES

If someone says, “We are aware of the futility of the *madhhab* of the people who make *ta'weel* of the Attributes, and it is well known that the *Ash'arees* are from those who make *ta'weel* of most of the Attributes...”

**[1]:** But how could their *madhhab* be falsehood when it has been said that they make up about ninety-five percent of the Muslim population?

[2]: And how could their *madhhab* be falsehood when their founding role model was Abul-Hasan al-Ash'aree?<sup>1</sup>

[3]: And how could their *madhhab* be falsehood while So-and-So and So-and-So are *Ash'aree* scholars, and they are well known for their sincerity to Allaah, His Book, His Messenger, the leaders of the Muslims and the common folk?

[The response to these questions is found in the forthcoming pages.]

## THE FIRST QUESTION

**“HOW COULD THE MADHHAB OF THE ASH'AREES BE FALSEHOOD WHEN IT HAS BEEN SAID THAT THEY MAKE UP ABOUT NINETY-FIVE PERCENT OF THE MUSLIM POPULATION?”**

**The response:** We do not agree that the *Ash'arees* make up this much of the Muslim population, with all the existing sects out there. This claim needs to be substantiated with evidence of a proper and precise count.

Even if we accepted that they make up this amount, or even more, this would not mean that they are protected from error by way of it, since it is the consensus of all the Muslims that will protect us from error, not just the agreement of the majority of them.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Abul-Hasan al-Ash'aree (d.324H): One of the early scholars of *Ablus-Sunnah*. He fell into innovation in the early part of his life, and later corrected himself and became a true role model for those who repent from innovation. He wrote many books against the people of innovation, clarifying the falsehood of the innovations he had fallen into.

<sup>2</sup>The author is referring to the *hadeeth* related by at-Tirmidhee, Ibn Maajah, and others, upon the authority of 'Abdullaah Ibn 'Umar (*radiyallahu 'anhu*),

(( إِنَّ أُمَّتِي لَا تَجْتَمِعُ عَلَى ضَلَالَةٍ ))

“Verily, my nation will not unite upon misguidance.”

Al-Albaanee authenticated it in his checking of *Mishkaatul-Masaabeeh* (no. 173). See also *Silsilatul-Abaadeethid-Da'eefah* (no. 2896).

Furthermore, it is established that the Muslims were united a long time ago upon the opposite of what the people of *ta'weel* are upon. For the righteous *Salaf* were the very heart of this nation, and they were the Companions, the very best generation, their students who followed them in righteousness, and the Imaams of guidance after them. They were all united upon the affirmation of the Names and Attributes that Allaah had affirmed for Himself and what His Messenger (*sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) had affirmed for Him. They also agreed that the texts are to be understood according to their apparent meanings that are befitting for Allaah the Exalted, without *tabreef* (distorting them), *ta'teel* (negating them), *takyeef* (seeking after their specific details), or *tamtheel* (likening them to the Creation).

They were the best generations due to the statement of the Messenger (*sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam*)<sup>3</sup>, and their consensus on an issue is a binding proof, since it represents the true understanding and application of the Book and the *Sunnah*. Proofs of their consensus on this issue have been presented in section four, '*Principles Concerning the Textual Evidences for Allaah's Names and Attributes.*'

---

<sup>3</sup>The author is referring to the *hadeeth* of 'Abdullaah Ibn Mas'ood (*radiyallaahu 'anhu*):

(( خَيْرُ النَّاسِ قَرْنِي ثُمَّ الَّذِينَ يَلُونَهُمْ ثُمَّ الَّذِينَ يَلُونَهُمْ ))

“The best of the people are my generation, then those after them,  
then those after them.”

It was collected by al-Bukhaaree (no. 2652) and Muslim (no. 6419), see also *Silsilatul-Ahaadeethis-Sabeehab* (no. 700).

## THE SECOND QUESTION

**“HOW COULD THE MADHHAB OF THE ASH'AREES BE FALSEHOOD WHEN THEIR FOUNDING ROLE MODEL WAS ABUL-HASAN AL-ASH'AREE?”**

**The response:** Abul-Hasan al-Ash'aree and others were from the early Imaams of the Muslims who did not claim to be perfect. They did not become Imaams in the Religion until after they had realized their own places and kept to them. They had such great honour in their hearts for the Book and the *Sunnah*, so much so that they deserved to be called Imaams.

Allaah the Exalted has said,

﴿ وَجَعَلْنَا مِنْهُمْ أُمَّةً يَهْتَدُونَ بِأَمْرِنَا لَمَّا صَبَرُوا وَكَانُوا بِآيَاتِنَا يُوقِنُونَ ﴾

**“And We made them Imaams who guided by Our Order, as they were patient and had conviction in Our Verses.”<sup>4</sup>**

And Allaah has said about Ibraaheem,

﴿ إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ كَانَ أُمَّةً قَانِتًا لِلَّهِ حَنِيفًا وَلَمْ يَكُ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴾

﴿ شَاكِرًا لِأَنْعَمِهِ اجْتَبَاهُ وَهَدَاهُ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ﴾

**“Verily, Ibraaheem was an Ummah, devoted to Allaah, pure, and he was not from the polytheists, (he was) thankful for his blessings, so We chose him and guided him to a straight path.”<sup>5</sup>**

<sup>4</sup>Sooratus-Sajdah [32:24]

<sup>5</sup>Sooratun-Nahl [16:120-121]

However, the later generations that claim to follow him do not actually follow him in a way that is proper, since Abul-Hasan went through three stages of beliefs:

**The first stage** was the stage of *i'tizaaal*, when he had embraced the *madhhab* of the *Mu'tazilah* and remained upon it for forty years, affirming it and debating on behalf of it. He later left this *madhhab* and openly exposed the misguidance of the *Mu'tazilah*, and wrote many refutations against them.<sup>6</sup>

**The second stage** was when he was between *i'tizaaal* and the *Sunnah*. During this stage, he followed the way of Aboo Muhammad 'Abdullaah Ibn Sa'eed Ibn Kilaab.

Shaykhul-Islaam Ibn Taymiyyah said, "Al-Ash'aree, and those like him, were in between the ways of the *Salaf* and the *Jahmiyyah*, they took some correct things from *Ablus-Sunnah*, and they took some intellectual principles from the *Jahmiyyah*, thinking them to be correct, but they were corrupt."<sup>7</sup>

**The third stage** was when he embraced the *madhhab* of *Ablus-Sunnah wal-Hadeeth*, following Imaam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, as he explained in his book, *al-Ibaanah 'an Usoolid-Diyaanah*. This was one of the last books he wrote.

He said in the introduction of the book, "He (the Prophet) came to us with an honoured Book. Falsehood can not approach it, not from the front or the back of it, revelation from the Wise and Praiseworthy One.<sup>8</sup> The knowledge of the ancient people is found in it, combined with the completion of the laws and the Religion. Thus, it is the Straight Path of Allaah, and His firm Rope. Whoever grabs hold of it will be saved, and whoever leaves it goes astray and deteriorates in ignorance. In His Book, Allaah has urged us to hold firmly to the *Sunnah* of His Messenger (*sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam*). Allaah the Exalted has said,

---

<sup>6</sup>Ibn Taymiyyah mentioned this in his *Fataawaa* (4/72).

<sup>7</sup>Refer to *Majmoo'ul-Fataawaa* (6/471).

<sup>8</sup>Refer to Soorah Fussilat [41:40-41]

﴿ وَمَا آتَاكُمُ الرَّسُولُ فَخُذُوهُ وَمَا نَهَاكُمْ عَنْهُ فَانْتَهُوا ﴾

“And whatever the Messenger gives you, then take it;  
And whatever he forbids you from, then abstain from it.”<sup>9</sup>

...So He ordered them to obey His Messenger just as He ordered them to obey Him. He called on them to hold firm to the *Sunnah* of His Prophet (*sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam*), just as He ordered them to act according to His Book. Many of those whose misery has overtaken them have tossed the *Sunnah* of the Prophet of Allaah (*sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) behind their backs, and the *Shaytaan* has overpowered them. They retreat to those who came before them and blindly follow them in their Religion. They follow their ways and reject the *Sunnah* of the Messenger of Allaah (*sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam*). They have rejected it and turned away from it, inventing lies against Allaah. Verily, they have gone astray, and they were not people adhering to right guidance.”<sup>10</sup>

Then, he (*rahimahullaah*) mentioned some of the principles of the people of innovation, and alluded to their futility, and said, “So if someone says, ‘You have rejected the positions of the *Mu'tazilah*, the *Jabmiyyah*, the *Hurooriyyah*, the *Raafidhab*, and the *Murji'ah*. So then would you inform us of the position that you hold and the Religion that you worship Allaah upon?’

It can be said to him, ‘The position that we hold and the Religion that we worship Allaah upon is adherence to the Book of our Lord the Exalted and the *Sunnah* of our Prophet (*sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam*), and what was reported from the *taabi'oon* and the Imaams of *Hadeeth*.’ By taking this way, we are protected from straying. And we speak with what Aboo 'Abdullaah Ahmad Ibn Muhammad Ibn Hanbal spoke with, may Allaah beautify his face, raise his status, and increase his reward. And whoever opposes his position is to be repelled, since he was a virtuous imaam and a complete leader...”<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup>Sooratul-Hashr [59:7]

<sup>10</sup>Refer to *al-Ibaanah 'an Usool Ad-Diyaanah* (p. 35-36).

<sup>11</sup>Refer to *al-Ibaanah 'an Usoolid-Diyaanah* (p. 43).

He went on to praise Imaam Ahmad because of the Truth that Allaah spread by way of his work.

He then mentioned the affirmation of Allaah's Attributes, along with issues related to *Qadr*, intercession, and other things. He confirmed all of these things with textual and intellectual evidences.

Those from the later generations that ascribe to his name [calling themselves *Ash'arees*] only take from the second stage of his *'aqeedah*, when he was between *Ablus-Sunnah* and the *Jahmiyyah*. They explain away almost all of the Attributes, only affirming the seven mentioned in the line of poetry,

حَيٌّ عَلِيمٌ قَدِيرٌ وَالْكَلامُ لَهُ إِرَادَةٌ وَكَذَلِكَ السَّمْعُ وَالْبَصَرُ

“Living, Knowing, Capable, and He has Speech,  
A Will, and also (He has) Hearing and Seeing.”<sup>12</sup>

With this, they still have differences between themselves, and other differences between themselves and *Ablus-Sunnah*, about their way of affirming the Attributes that they affirm.

And after referring to the *Ash'arees* and what is said about them, Shaykhul-Islaam Ibn Taymiyyah said, “And when they say *Ash'arees*, they mean those who negate the Attributes that have been affirmed in the texts. As for Abul-Hasan al-Ash'aree himself, the author of the book *al-Ibaanah* that he wrote in the last years of his life and nothing came from him after that to contradict what it in this book, then he is to be considered from *Ablus-Sunnah*.”<sup>13</sup>

He also said, “As for *Ash'ariyyah*, then it is the opposite of what they are upon, as their position necessitates *ta'teel*, and that Allaah is neither inside of the world nor outside of it. It also necessitates that all of Allaah's Speech carries the exact same meaning, so *Ayatul-Kursee*<sup>14</sup> carries the exact same meaning as *Ayatud-*

---

<sup>12</sup>The seven Attributes that the *Ash'arees* affirm are: [1]: Life, [2]: Knowledge, [3] Capability, [4] Speech, [5] Wanting, [6] Hearing, and [7] Seeing.

<sup>13</sup>Refer to *Majmoo'ul-Fataawaa* (6/359).

<sup>14</sup>Sooratul-Baqarah [2:255]

*Dayn*<sup>15</sup>, and the *Tawraah* and the *Injeel* is all one. The corruption of this is known naturally to everyone.”<sup>16</sup>

And his student, Ibnul-Qayyim, said,

وَاعْلَمُ بِأَنَّ طَرِيقَهُمْ عَكْسُ الدَّ طَرِيقِ الْمُسْتَقِيمِ لِمَنْ لَهُ عَيْنَانِ

“...And know that their way is the opposite of the  
Straight way for the one who possesses two eyes...”

He also said later in the same poem,

فَاعْجَبْ لِعُمَيَّانِ الْبَصَائِرِ أَبْصَرُوا كَوْنَ الْمُقَلِّدِ صَاحِبِ الْبُرْهَانِ

“...So be amazed at the blind man with no sight who views  
the blind follower as a person of evidences...”

وَرَأَوْهُ بِالتَّقْلِيدِ أَوْلَى مِنْ سِوَاهُ بِغَيْرِ مَا بَصَرَ وَلَا بُرْهَانَ

“...And they see him, blindly following him, more correct than others,  
Without having any insight or evidences...”

وَعَمُوا عَنِ الْوَحْيَيْنِ إِذْ لَمْ يَفْهَمُوا مَعْنَاهُمَا عَجَباً لِذِي الْحَرَمَانِ

“...And they could not see the two revelations, as they did not understand  
Their meanings, how strange for someone who is deprived...”<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup>Sooratul-Baqarah [2:282]

<sup>16</sup>Refer to *Majmoo'ul-Fataamaa* (6/310).

<sup>17</sup>Refer to *an-Nooniyyah* (p. 312), printed along with the explanation of al-Harraas, *Imaam* printing (reference taken from Ashraf Ibn 'Abdul-Maqsood).



And Muhammad al-Ameen ash-Shinqeetee said, “Know that many people have erred with regard to this, so many from the later generations that they cannot be counted. They falsely assumed that the apparent meanings of *Istivaa'* (Ascension) and the Hand that comes to one's mind, for example, from the Qur'aanic *aayaat*, is to make Allaah's Attributes and Actions similar to those of His Creation. They say, ‘We must explain all these texts based upon other than their apparent meanings...’

...And it is not hidden from the one who had the slightest bit of intellect that the reality of this statement is that (they are saying that) Allaah has described Himself in His Book with things that, based upon the apparent meanings that come first to mind, are considered disbelief in Allaah and statements that do not benefit Him.

And it was the Prophet (*sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) that was addressed,

﴿ وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الذِّكْرَ لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ إِلَيْهِمْ ﴾

**“And We have sent down the Reminder to you, so you could clarify to the people what was sent down to them.”<sup>18</sup>**

And he did not mention one letter of what they are saying, while those scholars we rely upon have agreed that it was not permissible for him (*sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) to delay clarification beyond the time of need for it. This principle applies even more so to issues of *'aqeedah*, especially with regards to a text that, as they claim, its apparent meaning is disbelief and misguidance. Their affair is so bad that some of the ignorant latecomers have claimed that what Allaah has described Himself with is something that is not befitting to Him, based on the apparent meaning that comes to their minds. Then they have claimed that the Prophet (*sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) hid this from the people, and that it is upon us to explain the texts by other than their apparent meanings. All of this is from their own whims, with no support from the Book or the *Sunnah*. Glorified are you, O Allaah, for this is a great blasphemy! And it is not hidden that this claim is from the worst kinds of misguidance and the greatest lies against Allaah and His Messenger (*sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam*).

---

<sup>18</sup>Sooratun-Nahl [16:44]

And the truth that no one doubts, not even the most unintelligent person, is that each and every description that Allaah has described Himself with, or that His Messenger (*sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) described Him with, must be free of any similarity to His Creation, and this is the apparent meaning that comes to mind for the one who has the slightest amount of faith in his heart...

...Could any intelligent person deny that the meaning that first comes to mind is based on the fact that the Creator is unlike the Creation, with regards to His actual Presence, and with regards to His Attributes as well? No, by Allaah! No one denies this other than an ignorant, arrogant liar, someone who claims that the apparent meanings of the Verses about the Attributes are not befitting to Allaah, since they are disbelief and *tashbeeh*! The only thing that has led them to say this is the filth that has built up within their own hearts because of their assumptions that the Creator is similar to the Creation. Then, their false assumption of *tashbeeh* led them to reject the Attributes of Allaah and abandon having faith in them. All of this while Allaah the Exalted is the very One who described Himself with these things! So this ignoramus was first a *mushabbih*, and then a *mu'attil*, thus he believed what was not befitting about Allaah from beginning to end.

And if his heart truly knew Allaah the Exalted as it should have, and if he would have glorified Allaah as He deserves, staying away from the filth of *tashbeeh*, then the first thing that would have come to his mind would have been that Allaah's Attributes are the epitome of perfection and majesty. This would have snuffed any doubts that had come to the *mushabbih* about Allaah's Attributes being similar to that of His Creation, and it would have caused his heart to be prepared to believe in Allaah's majestic and perfect Attributes that have been established in the *Qur'aan* and the authentic *Sunnah*, while firmly rejecting any and all similarities between Allaah and the Creation. Allaah says,

﴿ لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ ۖ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ ۖ ﴾

“There is nothing like Him, and He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing.”<sup>19</sup>

[End of quote from ash-Shinqeete.]<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup>Sooratush-Shooraa [42:11]

<sup>20</sup>Refer to *Adawaa'ul-Bayaan* (2/319).

And even the original *Ash'aree*, Abul-Hasan that is, was upon the *madhhab* of *Ahlu-Sunnah* in the last part of his life, which is: To affirm the Attributes that Allaah has affirmed for His own Self in His Book or upon the tongue of His Messenger (*sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam*), without *tabreef* (distorting them), *ta'teel* (negating them), *takyeef* (seeking after their specific details), or *tamtheel* (likening them to the Creation).

And the *madhhab* of a person is his later position (when there are opposing positions), especially when he has clarified his previous position, as is the case with Abul-Hasan. This is known from his own words in his book, *al-Ibaanah*.

Based upon this, true following of him would necessitate following his final position, which was the *madhhab* of *Ahlu-Hadeeth was-Sunnah*. It is the correct *madhhab* that is obligatory to follow, as Abul-Hasan did himself.

## THE THIRD QUESTION

**“HOW COULD THE MADHHAB OF THE ASH'AREES BE FALSEHOOD WHILE SO-AND-SO AND SO-AND-SO ARE ASH'AREE SCHOLARS?”**

**HOW COULD THEIR MADHHAB BE FALSEHOOD WHEN THEY ARE KNOWN FOR THEIR SINCERITY TO ALLAAH, HIS BOOK, HIS MESSENGER, THE LEADERS OF THE MUSLIMS AND THE COMMON FOLK!”**

**The response:** This can be answered from two angles:

**Firstly**, the truth is not to be judged according to the people. Rather, the people are to be judged according to the truth.

This is the correct way to measure things, even if the status and position of some people will cause their statements to be accepted easier. This is similar to how we accept the reports of a reliable person, and we withhold from accepting an openly disobedient person's reports. However, this is not the rule for each and every affair, as a man is only a human being. He can not have complete knowledge, nor can he have a firm understanding of all things. Even though he may be a religious man, or a person of good character, his lack of knowledge or proper understanding may lead him away from the correct position upon some issues, based on the amount of information he is missing or the weakness of his understanding. Or he may have been raised in a place where a certain way or *madhhab* is widespread, thus he is not able to know about other than it, and believes that the correct position is his.

**Secondly**, if we compared the scholars of the *Ash'arees* with the scholars who followed the way of the *Salaf*, then we would find those who are more outstanding, greater, more rightly guided, and more upstanding than those who took the way of the *Ash'arees*. The Imaams of the four different *madhhabs*, for example, were not upon the way of the *Ash'arees*.

Then, if you were to go back to those who came before the Imaams, the *taabi'oon*, you would not find them upon the way of the *Ash'arees* either.

Then, if you went beyond that, to the time of the Companions and the four rightly guided *khaleefahs*, you would not find even a hint of what the *Ash'arees* are saying about the Names of Allaah the Exalted and His Attributes, nor will you find any of their other ideas that have caused them to stray from the way of the *Salaf*.

We can not dispute the fact the some of the Scholars who ascribed to the way of the *Ash'arees* put forth truthful work for Islaam and defended the Religion, aiding the Book of Allaah and the *Sunnah* of His Messenger (*sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) by their work with the narrations and their contributions to the different sciences of Islaam, being persistent in bringing benefit to the Muslims and guiding them.<sup>21</sup> However, this does not mean they were protected from error or that we must accept their every statement. Nor does it prevent us from exposing their mistakes and refuting them, since this is clarifying the truth for the people and guiding them.

Nor can we dispute that some of them had good intentions in the positions they took, and that the truth was not clear to them in those affairs. However, this is not a reason for us to accept their wrong statements, simply because they had good intentions in what they said. Rather, their statements must correspond with Allaah's Legislation. If they do not, then we are obliged to reject their statements, no matter who they were, due to the statement of the Prophet (*sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam*),

(( مَنْ عَمِلَ عَمَلًا لَيْسَ عَلَيْهِ أَمْرُنَا فَهُوَ رَدٌّ ))

**“Whoever does something that is not in accordance with our affair, then it is rejected.”<sup>22</sup>**

Furthermore, if he was well known for his sincerity and truthfulness in seeking after the truth, then we make an excuse for him regarding this mistake of his.

---

<sup>21</sup>Like an-Nawawee and Ibn Hajr for example.

<sup>22</sup>Related by Muslim (no. 4468).

**ANSWERING THREE PIVOTAL QUESTIONS ABOUT THE ASH'AREES**  
**Exemplary Principles Concerning the Beautiful Names & Attributes of Allaah**  
Shaykh Muhammad Ibn Saalih al-'Uthaymeen

Otherwise, he is to be treated according to his bad intentions, and according to his actions and statements that contradict the Religion.



Learn about and support our many projects,  
<http://www.troid.org/the-reign-of-islamic-dawah-centre.html>