

THE CREED OF AHL AS-SUNNAH

An Explanation of the Two Declarations of Faith Which Constitute One of the Pillars of Islam

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INTRODUCTION:

Praise be to Allah, the Creator, the Restorer, the One who does as He wills; Whose throne is majestic, and Whose might is awesome; who guides whoever He chooses from His servants to the correct path and enlightenment; who protects their beliefs from the darkness of doubt and hesitation after they testify to their faith; who guides them and nurtures them to follow His chosen Messenger and the example of his Messenger's noble Companions; who reveals Himself to them in His essence and His works by way of His noble attributes which none can fathom except he who gives his ear to revelation; who makes them know that He is One without partner, Singular without compare, Self-Sufficient without opposition, Alone without associate, Ancient without origin, Eternal without beginning or end, Self-Sustaining without interruption, Abiding without subsiding.

He has always possessed these qualities of Majesty. He shall neither perish nor diminish with the passage of time and the passing of generations. He is the First and the Last, the Apparent and the Hidden, and the Knower of all things.

ALLAH'S TRANSCENDENCE:

He is not a body with a form, nor a substance with dimension and measure. He does not resemble corporeal things, neither in having dimension nor in being divisible. He is neither substance, nor can any substance manifest itself within Him. Nor is He a quality that applies to a substance, nor can any such qualities apply to Him.

He resembles nothing that exists, nor does anything that exists resemble Him. Nothing compares to him, and He can be compared to nothing else.

He cannot be quantified or measured. He is not encompassed by direction. The heavens and the Earth cannot contain him.

He is ascendant on His Throne in the way that He said, and with the meaning that He intended, in a manner that transcends physical contact with, or being mounted upon, the Throne, and that does not imply position, manifestation, or movement. The Throne does not support him. On the contrary, both the Throne and the angels who carry it are supported by His benevolent power and are compelled by His grasp.

He is above the Throne and the heavens to the farthest reaches of the Earth in a manner that does not imply any proximity to the Throne and the heavens, or any remoteness from the Earth and its depths. On the contrary, He is elevated above the Throne and the heavens to the same degree that He is elevated above the Earth and its depths, and, in spite of this, He is close to everything in existence. He is closer to His slave than that slave's own jugular vein. He is a witness to all things.

This is because His nearness in no way resembles the nearness of bodily things, just like His essence does not resemble the essences of bodily things.

He does not manifest Himself in anything, nor does anything else manifest itself in Him. He is glorified above being contained in space or defined by time. He existed before creating time and space, and He is now just as He was before.

He is distinct in His attributes from His creation. Nothing other than Himself is contained in His essence, nor is His essence contained in anything else. He is sanctified above being subject to movement or change. Nothing occurs within him, nor is He subject to transient qualities. He remains with His complete and noble attributes transcendent above any increase or decrease.

Reason testifies to His existence, and in the eternal abode of the Hereafter, He will be seen by the righteous. This will be a blessing for them from His benevolence, as gazing upon His countenance will be the ultimate fulfillment of their bliss.

ALLAH'S LIFE AND OMNIPOTENCE:

He is Living and Omnipotent, Almighty and Overpowering. He is never afflicted with incapacity or failure. He is never overtaken by drowsiness or sleep. He cannot be confronted by obliteration or death.

He possesses all sovereignty and dominion, all might and power. He is the possessor of authority and subjugation, of creation and command. The heavens are rolled up in His right hand and all creation is subjugated by His grasp.

He alone creates and fashions. He alone originates all affairs and brings them into existence. He creates all living things and their actions, and He determines the duration of their lives and their sustenance.

Nothing is outside of His ability, and no affair escapes His determination. His capabilities and knowledge have no limit.

ALLAH'S KNOWLEDGE:

He is the Knower of all things. His knowledge encompasses everything that happens from the depths of the Earth to the highest heavens. The smallest particle cannot escape His knowledge. He is aware of the footsteps of an ant crawling upon a

massive rock on the darkest night. He is cognizant of the movement of a molecule in the air.

He knows what is secret and hidden. He is acquainted with the affections of the heart, the activities of the mind, and the secrets of the soul.

His knowledge of all things is ancient and eternal. He has always possessed it. His knowledge is not acquired or renewed, nor does it manifest itself in His being from outside experience.

ALLAH'S WILL:

All things exist because He wills them to be. He is the regulator of all that occurs. Nothing happens in his dominion – be it great or small, good or evil, benefit or harm, faith or disbelief, acknowledgement or denial, success or failure, increase or decrease, compliance or disobedience – except by His decree and determination, and in accordance with His wisdom and will. Whatever He wills must come to pass, and whatever is not in accordance with His will can never be.

Neither the winking of an eye nor the fluttering of the heart can escape His will. He is the Originator and the Restorer, the One who does as He pleases.

His command cannot be contradicted, and none can nullify His decree. His servant cannot hope to avoid sin except by His grace and mercy; nor has he the strength to obey Him except by His will.

If all Men and *Jinn* were to gather their forces along with all the angels and demons in order to move an atom against His will, they would fail to do so.

His will subsists in His essence as one of His attributes. He has always possessed it, willing in His timelessness all things to occur at their appointed times. Everything happens at the moment appointed for it, without haste or delay, and without any substitution or alteration, in accordance with His knowledge and will.

He manages all affairs without the need of contemplation or the expenditure of time, and thus, he is never preoccupied by any affair.

ALLAH'S HEARING AND SIGHT:

He hears and sees with the faculties of hearing and sight. Nothing escapes His hearing, no matter how subtle or distant, and nothing is veiled from His sight, no matter how small or obscure.

He sees without the need of eyes and hears without the need of ears, just like He knows without possessing a heart, compels without needing limbs, and creates without the use of tools. This is because His attributes do not resemble the

attributes of created things. Likewise, His essence does not resemble the essence of created things.

ALLAH'S SPEECH:

Allah speaks. He gives orders and prohibits, promises and threatens, with speech that is eternal and ancient, subsisting in His essence. It does not resemble the speech of created beings. It neither consists of sound produced by the movement of the air or the vibration of objects, nor is it made of letters formed by the positioning of the lips or the movement of the tongue.

The *Qur'ān*, the *Torah*, the *Gospel*, and the *Psalms* are His books, which He revealed to His Messengers, on them be peace.

The *Qur'ān* is read by the tongue, written in books, and remembered in the heart, but, in spite of this, it is ancient, subsisting in His essence, neither allowing division or separation by being recorded on paper or in the heart.

Mūsā (upon him be peace) heard Allah's speech without that speech being composed of letters or sounds, just like the righteous will see Allah in the Hereafter without Him being a substance or quality.

Since He possesses these attributes, He is Alive, Omniscient, Omnipotent, Willful, Hearing, Seeing, and Speaking, by possessing life, knowledge, power, will, hearing, sight, and speech, not merely by being.

ALLAH'S ACTIONS:

Everything that exists besides Allah owes its origin to His actions, emanating from His justice in the best, most complete, and balanced manner.

He is Wise in His actions, Just in His decrees. His justice should not be compared with the justice of His servants, because His servants are able to perpetrate injustices by abusing the property of others. Such injustice is inconceivable with respect to Allah, because He does not concede to anyone else a share of His dominion towards which His conduct could be construed as injustice.

Men and Jinn, angels and demons, the heavens and the Earth, animals, plants, and minerals, substances and qualities, conceptions and perceptions – all things beside Allah – occur from nonexistence by His creative power. He brings them forth from nothingness, for He existed in timelessness alone and then brought about Creation as a manifestation of His omnipotence and in fulfillment of His word and His timeless will. He did not create anything out of need or dependency.

He does not have to create or originate anything, nor does He have to hold Man accountable for his deeds. Everything that He does is out of His grace and

immense favor, and He extends His grace and providence without being obligated to do so.

To Him belong all favor and goodness, all grace and blessings, for He is fully capable of inflicting upon His servants all types of punishments and afflicting them with innumerable pains and torments, and if He had done that, it would have been just. It would have been neither oppressive nor repugnant.

He rewards His believing servants for their obedience out of His generosity and in fulfillment of His promise, not out of any obligation to do so, nor because they deserve it. It is not compulsory for Him to do anything for anyone, and it is inconceivable to construe anything He does as an act of injustice. No one has any rights over Him.

His right for us to obey Him is established for us by the words of His Prophets, not by the dictates of reason. He sent His Messengers and established their truthfulness through clear miracles. They conveyed His commands and prohibitions, His promises and warnings, so it is incumbent upon His creation to believe all that they came with.

THE MEANING OF THE SECOND DECLARATION OF FAITH:

The second declaration of faith pertains to belief in the Messenger and his message. Allah sent the unlettered prophet from the tribe of Quraysh, Mu'ammad (peace be upon him), to all the Arabs and non-Arabs, to all men and *jinn*, and the law that he came with supercedes all previous laws except for those particular laws which were re-affirmed.

He exalted Mu'ammad (peace be upon him) above all creation and made him the most noble of mankind. The declaration of faith – *There is no god but Allah* – is not complete if it is not complemented by the statement: *Mu'ammad is the Messenger of Allah*.

Mankind is obligated by Allah to believe everything that the Messenger informed us about pertaining to this world and the Hereafter, and no one's faith will be acceptable until he believes in what was related to him about the events that occur after death.

The first of these is the interrogation of Munkar and Nakir, two frightful and horrifying beings who make the servant, body and soul, sit up in his grave. Then, they ask him about the oneness of Allah and the messengership of His Prophet. They ask, "Who is your Lord? What is your religion? Who is your prophet?" They are the interrogators of the grave, and their questions are the first trial after death.

It is necessary to believe that the punishment of the grave is real. It is meted out with justice, upon both the body and soul, in accordance with His will.

It is necessary to believe in the Balance, complete with two pans and a bar. Its immensity is like that of the heavens and the Earth. Man's deeds are weighed upon it by the power of almighty Allah down to the measure of an atom's weight, assuring complete justice. The records of a servant's good deeds will be placed in a beautiful form on the pan of light, weighing down the Balance, by Allah's grace, according to His valuation of them. Then the records of his evil deeds will be tossed upon the pan of darkness in an ugly form, lightening the Balance in accordance with Allah's justice.

It is necessary to believe that the Bridge is real, extending over the surface of Hell, sharper than a sword, thinner than a strand of hair. The feet of the disbelievers will slip as they tread upon it, and they will fall headlong into the Fire by Allah's decree, while the feet of the believers will be firm, by Allah's grace, as they travel upon it to the eternal abode.

It is necessary to believe in the oft-visited Fountain, the Fountain of Muhammad (upon him be peace). The believers will drink from it after passing over the Bridge and before entering Paradise. Whoever drinks from it will never again feel thirst. It is as wide as a month's journey; its water is whiter than milk and sweeter than honey. Chalices more numerous than the stars surround it. It is fed by two rivers flowing into it from *al-Kawthar*.¹

It is necessary to believe in the Reckoning. People will not be treated the same. Some will be interrogated while others will be lightly questioned. Some will enter Paradise without any questioning at all. These are the closest to Allah. Allah will ask whomever He pleases among the Prophets about how they conveyed the message, and He will ask whomever He pleases from the disbelievers about their rejection of the Messengers. He will ask the innovators about the *Sunnah*,² and the believers about their deeds.

It is necessary to believe that all those who are to be punished from among the believers will ultimately be taken out of the Fire, until by Allah's grace, no believer in His unity will remain in Hell.

It is necessary to believe in the intercession of the Prophets, then of the martyrs, then of the rest of the believers according to their status with Allah. Then, any believer who still remains in Hell without anyone interceding on his behalf will be taken out purely by the Allah's grace. Thus, no believer will stay in the Fire forever. Anyone who has even an atom's weight of faith in his heart will get out.

It is necessary to believe in the superiority of the Prophet's Companions and their ranking, with Abū Bakr being the most excellent of people after the Prophet himself (upon him be peace), followed by >Umar, then >Uthmān, then >Alī, may Allah be pleased with them all.

¹ *Al-Kawthar* is a fountain in Paradise.

² The *Sunnah* refers to the traditions of the Prophet (peace be upon him) concerning all matters of faith and practice. Any deviation from the *Sunnah* in the understanding and application of Islam is considered a form of heresy.

It is likewise necessary to have a good opinion about all of the Companions and to speak well about them, because both Allah and His Messenger (upon him be peace) spoke well about them.

All that is stated here is found in the words of the Prophet and his Companions, so whoever believes in it is from the people of truth, and the followers of the *Sunnah*, and they are far removed from the followers of error and heresy.

We ask Allah to grant us certainty of faith and steadfastness in our religion, not only for ourselves, but for all the believers. We ask this through His mercy, for He is the most merciful of all.

And may Allah's salutations be upon every one of His chosen servants.