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Doctrinal Foundations of the Ash'arite Creed

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Abstract

This study examines one of the foundational pillars of Islam—faith and creed (*ʿaqīdah* and *īmān*)—with particular emphasis on the theological contributions of the Ashʿarī school. It explores the core principles, key issues, and interpretative frameworks developed by Ashʿarī theologians, aiming to render the Ashʿarite creed more accessible to contemporary audiences while elucidating its foundations, objectives, and role as a representative Sunni doctrine marked by moderation and balance. Central to the study is the question of the primary theological underpinnings of Ashʿarism and how these differ from other doctrinal traditions. Through a dual methodology—descriptive, in presenting the views of prominent Ashʿarī scholars, and comparative-analytical, in examining their arguments and theological constructs—the research offers a structured analysis of Ashʿarī positions within the broader landscape of Islamic theology. The findings affirm that Ashʿarism constitutes a distinct Sunni theological paradigm grounded in rational moderation, rejecting both extremism and rigid literalism. Its synthesis of revealed texts with rational deliberation serves as a safeguard against intellectual and doctrinal deviation, thereby reinforcing its enduring relevance in guiding Islamic thought and preserving theological integrity.

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Keywords: Ashʿarī School; Islamic Theology; Creed (*ʿAqīdah*); Sunni Doctrine; Rational Moderation

Introduction

Since the Almoravid era, Moroccan religiosity has been distinguished by its moderation, balance, and deep sense of harmony, reflected in the unity of doctrine and the steadfast loyalty to the *Emīrate al-Muʾminīn* (Commandership of the Faithful), the institution that safeguards religion and creed. Moroccans embraced the jurisprudence of Imām Mālik, the theology of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī, and the spiritual path of al-Junayd, forming a coherent triad that resonated with their cultural character—rooted in love, coexistence, and peace.

These carefully chosen foundations became the immutable pillars of Moroccan identity and the firm basis of national unity, a harmony rarely witnessed in other parts of the Muslim world. Throughout history, Morocco has been known for its consistent adherence to unified schools of thought -both among scholars and the public- ensuring a climate of stability and protection from the sectarian strife and discord that have afflicted other regions, whether in matters of creed, law, or ethics.

A closer reflection on this remarkable religious cohesion raises important questions about the distinctive features of Morocco's spiritual and doctrinal choices—choices that align with the fundamental pillars of Islam as outlined in the well-known ḥadīth of Gabriel, in which he explained to the Prophet's Companions the meanings of *Islām*, *Īmān*, and *Iḥsān*. This naturally invites us to explore the essential foundations underlying each of these pillars. Since the scope of this study does not allow for a full discussion of every school's principles, the focus will be devoted to the Ashʿarī creed, recognizing that sound faith (*ʿaqīdah*) forms the cornerstone of authentic religiosity and represents the first principle established by the prophets and messengers before any other pillar.

Significance of the Study

The purpose of any scholarly inquiry lies in serving society (Klaina, 2024f)—by rectifying perceptions and intellectual approaches (Klaina, 2024d, Klaina & D.I. Ansusa, 2024, 2023; Klaina & Yachaoui, 2025a, 2025b), by highlighting the depth and vitality of

Islamic civilization (Tribak & Klaina, 2025a, 2025b, 2025c), by reaffirming Islamic values (Klaina & Kmichou, 2025a, 2025b; Klaina, 2025a, 2025b), and by facilitating the transmission of knowledge (Klaina, 2024b) as well as showcasing the contributions of Moroccan scholars to the intellectual heritage of the Muslim world (Klaina, 2024d, 2024e, 2024f).

It is therefore essential to produce academic works that benefit the broader Muslim community, ensuring that knowledge is made accessible and intelligible to the general public—whether the subject pertains to Qur'anic studies, Hadith scholarship, jurisprudence, or theology.

The significance of this research arises from the importance of its central theme: faith (*īmān*), which constitutes the foundational pillar of Islam and the basis upon which all other pillars rest. It also lies in the intellectual issues it addresses and analyzes, as the study brings to light the most significant questions, positions, and interpretations advanced by the leading theologians of the Ashʿarī School. Through this, it aims to make Ashʿarī doctrine more comprehensible to readers, enabling a sound understanding of its principles, meanings, and purposes.

Objectives of the Study

This study aims to present the essential foundations and principles upon which Ashʿarī theology is built by highlighting its major doctrinal divisions—*ilāhiyyāt* (divine matters), *nubuwwāt* (prophecies), and *samʿiyyāt ghaybiyyah* (unseen, revelation-based matters). It further seeks to bring the Ashʿarī creed closer to students of Islamic sciences and to the wider audience, dispelling misconceptions and clarifying the balanced, moderate nature of this Sunni theological school.

Research Problem

Studying the foundations of Ashʿarism raises several critical questions that guide this research, including:

How did the Ashʿarī School emerge, and what factors led its founder to depart from Muʿtazilism and establish a theological system grounded in moderation and reconciliation between opposing schools?

What are the key doctrinal principles underlying the Ashʿarī creed adopted by Moroccan scholars and believers for centuries?

What are the most significant opinions chosen by Ashʿarī theologians, and what textual or rational proofs support their positions?

Methods

To address these questions, the research adopts both a descriptive and a comparative analytical methodology. The descriptive method is used to present the views of major Ashʿarī scholars, while the comparative approach serves to analyze differences among them and evaluate the internal coherence and evolution of their theological positions.

Prologue

The Ashʿarite creed, to which the people of the Maghrib have adhered since the fourth century of the Hijra, gained wide acceptance among Moroccans because of its comprehensiveness and moderation. It represented a balanced synthesis between textual revelation and rational inquiry, without blind partisanship or uncritical imitation of any particular school. At a time when some scholars clung rigidly to the literal wording of scriptural texts—so much so that they were accused of superficiality and stagnation—others, in their zeal for rationalism, elevated reason to excessive authority, granting it dominion over most religious matters. They went so far as to judge the very texts of revelation by pure reason, without distinguishing between matters accessible to limited human cognition -bounded as it is by time, space, and materiality, such as issues of the visible world- and those that transcend human capacity altogether, such as questions of the unseen. Their extremism led them to issue judgments even upon the Divine Lawgiver Himself, which exposed them to severe criticism and even accusations of unbelief. This polarization alienated many Muslims from both camps and drove them to seek conciliatory schools of thought that could reconcile revelation and intellect without negating either—recognizing the authority of reason while preserving the sanctity of divine revelation within the framework of Islamic law.

The intellectual conflict that shook the Islamic world during the ʿAbbāsid era -especially under the caliph al-Maʾmūn- was a decisive factor behind the rise of moderate theological schools seeking reconciliation. These schools adopted Sunni orthodoxy as their doctrinal foundation while maintaining a disciplined rationalism that aids in understanding

and interpreting revealed texts within precise epistemological limits. Such an approach respected the transcendence of the revealed word, which often exceeds the grasp of human intellect—an intellect that certain sects had mistaken for an absolute arbiter over divine revelation. It was within this context that the founder of the Ashʿarite school, Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī, who lived in a deeply rationalist environment that placed reason above revelation and made it the ultimate source of all judgment, reconsidered the boundaries of reason and its legitimate function within theology.

Al-Ashʿarī thus built his doctrinal foundations upon the principles of moderation and balance, harmonizing sound transmission (*naql ṣaḥīḥ*) with sound reasoning (*ʿaql salīm*). He prioritized the texts of the Qurʾān and the authentic Sunnah, along with the understanding of the Companions and the leading scholars of the *salaf*, across all theological inquiries. His intellectual transformation stemmed from doubts he developed concerning the validity and soundness of the Muʿtazilite principles in which he had been raised. For more than forty years, he had studied under one of the greatest Muʿtazilite masters -Abū ʿAlī al-Jubbāʾī, his stepfather- who taught and prepared him to become among the foremost figures of that school. Yet, guided by his sound innate disposition and measured rationality, al-Ashʿarī eventually renounced those doctrines and returned to the creed of the *salaf al-ṣāliḥ*. He clearly declared this shift in his writings, stating:

"Our statement and the religion we adhere to is to hold fast to the Book of our Lord, the Mighty and Glorious, and to the Sunnah of our Prophet (peace be upon him) as well as what has been transmitted from the Companions, the Successors, and the leading Imams of hadith. We hold firmly to that, and we follow what was said by Abū ʿAbd Allāh ibn Ḥanbal -may Allah illuminate his face, raise his rank, and abundantly reward him- and we oppose whoever contradicts his position." (al-Ashʿari, 2012, 15)

Following this sound Sunni path, the scholars of the Islamic West in general -and those of Morocco in particular—- adopted the same middle course of moderation and reason guided by revelation. By the fourth century of the Hijra, divine providence had granted widespread acceptance to this creed. Moroccan students, traveling eastward in pursuit of knowledge, eagerly studied under the founders of the great legal and theological schools and under their disciples, bringing back to the Maghrib what they had learned.

Scholars have differed over who was the first to introduce Ashʿarite doctrines to the Islamic West. Nevertheless, most agree that this transmission occurred in the fourth

century of the Hijra—and some even claim it took place during al-Ashʿarī's own lifetime (Ahnana, 2003, 51). Yet the majority of studies identify among the earliest North African proponents of the Ashʿarite creed figures such as ʿAbd Allāh al-Zubaydī, known as al-Qalānīsī, Abū Maymūn Darās ibn Ismāʿīl al-Fāsī, and Abū al-Ḥasan al-Qābisī. This evidence affirms that Moroccan adherence to the Ashʿarite creed dates back to the fourth century, demonstrating their enduring conviction and steadfastness. Such attachment is unsurprising, for Moroccans by nature incline toward balance and moderation and instinctively reject fanaticism and extremism. Thus, they found in this pure theological system a middle path devoid of exaggeration or rigidity.

The Ashʿarites based their theological foundations on affirming everything established in the revealed text, without distortion (*taḥrīf*), suspension (*taʿṭīl*), or misinterpretation that contradicts the true meaning of revelation. This will be clarified in the discussion of their principal doctrines.

A proper understanding of Ashʿarite theology requires that the study be divided according to the structure used by the Ashʿarite scholars themselves so that each issue may be comprehended within its appropriate category. As al-Bayjūrī explains:

"The topics of this discipline are divided into three categories: Ilāhiyyāt (divine matters) dealing with what pertains to Allah; Nubuwwāt (prophetic matters) concerning the prophets; and Samʿiyyāt (revealed matters) whose rulings are derived solely from transmitted revelation." (al-Bayjuri, 2013, 76)

This is the classification I have followed in presenting the principles and doctrines upon which the Ashʿarite school was founded.

Ash'arite Principles in Divine Theology (*Ilāhiyyāt*)

The most exalted domain of Islamic creed is that which establishes doctrines concerning the Divine -Allah Most High, His sublime attributes, and His most beautiful names. Its gravity proceeds from the majesty of its Subject. It is therefore no surprise that theologians devoted to it the greatest attention and the most rigorous effort, for the soundness or error of their claims in this field is the precise barometer of a creed's integrity. When a Muslim's belief is grounded in a correct understanding of what is necessary, possible, and impossible with respect to Allah- according to the Qurʾān, the mass-transmitted Sunnah, and reason disciplined by revelation -faith is set aright, devotion

is rightly ordered, and character is elevated toward perfection. This explains the depth of disagreement among Muslim scholars- across schools and sects-concerning matters of *ilāhiyyāt*.

Before presenting Ashʿarite positions in this field, it should be underscored that the primary aim of treating these issues with such precision -as the Ashʿarite masters did- is to attain sound knowledge of Allah, His attributes, and His names in a manner that is reflected in the believer's conduct and virtues, making him worthy of the trust of stewardship as Allah intended.

There is no dispute among Muslims that knowing Allah is a personal religious obligation for every morally responsible agent;

"they have unanimously agreed that the Prophet (peace be upon him) called all people to know Allah and to affirm his prophethood, and he forbade ignorance of Allah, Mighty and Allah" (al-Ashʿari, 1413 AH, 154).

Sound knowledge of Allah -knowledge that leads to pure monotheism- is a foundational pillar without which religiosity cannot be valid.

Since knowledge of Allah is not acquired by sense perception, inner intuition, or sheer rational necessity, the Ashʿarites held that *inquiry* (*naẓar*) leading to such knowledge is an indispensable precondition. Reflecting on the signs within the self and the horizons is the proper path to knowledge of Allah's existence and of the rulings pertaining to His attributes and names, as the Most High alerts us in many verses:

﴿سَنُرِيهِمْ آيَاتِنَا فِي الْآفَاقِ وَفِي أَنفُسِهِمْ حَتَّىٰ يَتَبَيَّنَ لَهُمْ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ ۗ أَوَلَمْ يَكْفِ بِرَبِّكَ أَنَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدٌ﴾ [فصلت: 53].

Hence, "most people of the truth among Muslims have agreed that the inquiry (*naẓar*) that leads to knowledge of Allah is, in general, obligatory" (al-Āmidī, 2012, 3:155).

In addition, because knowing Allah is obligatory -"and what the absolute obligation depends upon, if within human capacity, is itself obligatory" (al-Rāzī, n.d., 44) - the Ashʿarites required rational inquiry leading to knowledge of Allah for everyone who meets the conditions of moral responsibility. They distinguished, however, between a *detailed* inquiry obligatory upon scholars and a *general* inquiry obligatory upon laypersons- so as to avert hardship for those without the capacity for demonstrative reasoning.

"Knowledge by a general proof that raises one above the pit of mere imitation is a personal obligation upon every morally responsible person; knowledge by a detailed proof sufficient to remove doubts, oblige deniers, and guide seekers is a communal obligation that some must undertake" (al-Taftāzānī, 1998, 1:266).

Inquiry is not an end in itself but a path to firm assent to Allah's existence and faith in Him.

Knowledge of Allah and of His attributes obliges the servant to affirm His absolute oneness by bearing witness to the *kalimat al-tawḥīd*,

"the rule of rules and the capital of believers -comprehending all benefits. The scholars have agreed that understanding it is obligatory upon each person; whoever is ignorant of its meaning such that he cannot distinguish between Allah and the Messenger is an unbeliever by consensus of reason and transmission" (al-Habṭī, 2002, 57).

All revealed dispensations were sent to establish *tawḥīd*, which is not realized without firm conviction that

"Allah, Mighty and Exalted, is one deity - there is no deity but He, the Unique, the Self-Sufficient; He has not taken a consort or a child; and that Muḥammad is His servant and Messenger, sent with guidance and the religion of truth" (al-Ashʿari, 2012, 15).

Affirming Allah's oneness in accordance with revelation is inseparable from knowing His names and attributes. The very essence of the Divine cannot be encompassed by intellects

"the temporal cannot, by nature, comprehend the Eternal." Hence the Prophet commanded reflection upon creation and forbade delving into the Divine essence: "Reflect on the bounties of Allah and do not reflect on Allah [Himself]" (al-Ṭabarānī, no. 6319, 6:250). Verses enjoining reflection are numerous, including:

﴿وَيَتَفَكَّرُونَ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ﴾ [آل عمران، 191].

And:

﴿وَفِي أَنفُسِكُمْ ۚ أَفَلَا تُبْصِرُونَ﴾ [الذاريات، 21].

Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī summarized the path succinctly:

"When a human being ponders from what he originated, how he passed through stages of formation, stage upon stage, until he reached completion; and knows with certainty that he himself did not direct his creation,

nor convey himself from degree to degree, nor raise himself from deficiency to perfection—he knows necessarily that he has a Maker who is powerful, knowing, and willing" (al-Shahrastānī, 1992, 1:81).

Sound knowledge of the Lord is attained only through sound inquiry that yields knowledge of what is necessary, impossible, and possible with respect to Him—leading the servant to pure *tawḥīd*, freeing him from doubts that obstruct the goodly life intended for us in this world and success in the next.

Doctrines Necessarily Affirmed of Allah

From the earliest Ashʿarite formulations by Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī onward, a central foundation has been to affirm all perfections that are *necessary* for Allah and to declare Him transcendent above every defect. Correct belief about what is due to Allah is indispensable to sound faith. Ashʿarite scholars therefore marshaled manifold demonstrations for the Divine attributes to rebut the *muʿaṭṭila* who denied of Allah what He affirmed for Himself among the essential attributes—without which divinity would not be intelligible.

To deny these attributes would imply their opposites -incapacity and deficiency- an impossibility. Hence the Ashʿarites adduced both transmission and reason to establish them and remove doubts that might corrupt belief and compromise pure monotheism. Their doctrine rests on the fundamental rule that the Divine attributes are eternal and without beginning; Allah has ever been qualified by the perfections proper to His essence.

"If, in pre-eternity, He were not living, not knowing, not powerful, not hearing, not seeing, not speaking, and not willing, He would have been ever dead, incapable, mute, and inert—far exalted is He above that" (al-Bāqillānī, n.d., 29).

This stands opposed to the Muʿtazilite denial of attributes in their attempt to avoid positing a plurality of eternals.

Affirming the eternity of attributes does not imply multiplicity of essences, for an attribute is not an existent separate from the Essence. Al-Ashʿarī "rejected describing Allah's intrinsic attributes as 'others' (*aghyār*), or as mutually different or identical" (Ibn Fūrak, 2005, 39). He negated any real separation between attribute and Subject so as not to posit attributes as existents independent of the Essence; the conceptual notion of an

attribute differs from the conceptual notion of the Essence, but there is no ontic separation.

Ashʿarites classify the Divine attributes into four sets: (1) the *self-signifying* attribute; (2) the *negating* (apophatic) attributes; (3) the *attributes of meaning*; and (4) the *derivative* (or "qualification") attributes-on the view that *aḥwāl* (states) are affirmed.

1) The self-signifying attribute. Imām al-Jūwaynī defines it as "any affirmative attribute intrinsic to the self, inseparable so long as the self subsists" (*al-Irshād*, 2009, 35). It is *existence*. "Existence is an attribute inhering in an existent; its sense is: being, reality, and thing-ness" (al-ʿArabī al-Lūh, 2012, 102). Debates arose as to whether existence is identical with the existent or additional to it, but "the morally responsible person who believes that Allah exists and is qualified by existence has fulfilled the duty and is not charged beyond that" (al-Lūh, 2012, 103). A concise proof of His existence is the origination of the world as a whole: if it had no Maker -if it "originated of itself"- then one of two equal states would prevail over the other without a cause, which is impossible. The world's attachment to originated accidents such as motion and rest shows its origination; and what is attached to the originated is originated. The origination of accidents is witnessed in their change from non-being to being and back (al-Sanūsī, 2009, 28).

2) The negating (apophatic) attributes. These deny of Allah every impossible deficiency and are five in number: pre-eternity, abiding permanence, oneness, self-subsistence, and absolute dissimilarity to originated things (al-Sanūsī, 2009, 137).

- *Pre-eternity* (*qidam*): the negation of prior non-being—existence without beginning. A proof: "Were He originated, He would require an originator, and so would that originator, leading to an infinite regress that entails the negation of our own existence—contradicted by our presence; what entails the impossible is itself impossible. Therefore He is eternal" (al-Salālajī, 2008, 25).

- *Abiding permanence* (*baqāʾ*): the negation of subsequent non-being—His existence cannot be overtaken by non-existence; this is established of Him alone (al-Sanūsī, n.d., 121). For if non-being could befall Him, His essence would admit both being and non-being—impossible of Allah by Muslim consensus (al-Sanūsī, 2013, 119).

- *Self-subsistence* (*qiyām bi-nafsihi*): He is in need of neither locus nor determiner -"He must be self-subsisting: an essence qualified by positive attributes, in need of neither substrate nor agent" (al-Sanūsī, 2012, 119).

- *Divine Oneness* (*waḥdāniyya*): This term refers to "the negation of any equal or counterpart in essence, attributes, or actions" (al-Sanūsī, 2009, p. 138). God, exalted be He, is one in His essence, one in His attributes, and one in His acts. His essence is singular and simple, admitting no composition or division. His attributes are eternal and absolute, bearing no resemblance to the attributes of created beings. He alone acts—creating, bringing into existence, and governing all things—without any partner or associate in His works.

Evidence for this attribute of oneness is found in the Almighty's saying:

﴿لَوْ كَانَ فِيهِمَا آلِهَةٌ إِلَّا اللَّهُ لَفَسَدَتَا ۚ فَسُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَرْشِ عَمَّا يَصِفُونَ﴾ [سورة الأنبياء، الآية: 22].

- *Absolute dissimilarity to Created beings* (*mukhālafah li-l-ḥawādith*): This attribute signifies that God, exalted be He, is absolutely unlike all created things in His essence, attributes, and actions. He has no equal or resemblance in any respect, nor does He bear any likeness to the existents of the universe, for He is "sanctified above all the characteristics of substances and accidents; thus, He must be utterly dissimilar to them" (al-ʿUqbānī, 2008, p. 28).

Were He to resemble anything created, He would Himself be contingent and in need of a creator—an idea that entails circular reasoning or infinite regress, both of which are impossible.

As evidence for the absence of any likeness to Him, they cite the Almighty's saying:

﴿لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ ۖ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ﴾ [سورة الشورى، الآية: 11].

3) The attributes of meaning. These are "every real attribute inhering in a subject that confers a ruling upon it" (al-Sanūsī, 2013, 172): life, knowledge, will, power, hearing, sight, and speech (some add perception). Allah is living by an eternal life, knowing by an eternal knowledge, willing by an eternal will, powerful by an eternal power, hearing by an eternal hearing, seeing by an eternal sight, speaking by an eternal speech—and, for those who affirm it, perceiving by an eternal perception. The Eternal cannot be qualified by originated attributes; therefore, these are pre-eternal.

- *Will*: an eternal attribute by which Allah specifies among contraries what He wills. "He is the acting Originator; were He not willing, some of the possible would not occur rather than others" (al-Muqtarah, 2009, 95).

﴿إِنَّمَا قَوْلُنَا لِشَيْءٍ إِذَا أَرَدْنَاهُ أَن نَّقُولَ لَهُ كُن فَيَكُونُ﴾ [النحل، 40].

- *Power*: Power is an eternal attribute inherent in the Divine Essence, through which God brings every possible thing into existence or annihilation and determines it according to His eternal will.

The theologians infer this attribute from the exquisite precision and harmony observed in creation—the heavens and the earth and all that lies between them—whose delicate order and perfect design testify that the Creator is both all-knowing and all-powerful (al-Muqtarraḥ, 2010, p. 59).

They also cite as evidence the Almighty's words:

﴿أَوَلَيْسَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ بِقَادِرٍ عَلَىٰ أَن يَخْلُقَ مِثْلَهُم ۚ بَلَىٰ وَهُوَ الْخَلَّاقُ الْعَلِيمُ﴾ [يس، 89].

- *Knowledge*: "an eternal attribute relating to all that is necessary, possible, and impossible, comprehending them as they truly are, without any prior obscurity" (al-Bayjūrī, 2013, 92). The perfection and purposiveness of acts bespeak a Knower; "fine fabrics are not woven and subtle crafts not executed by one ignorant of them" (al-Ashʿarī, 2013, 38).

﴿أَنزَلَهُ بِعِلْمِهِ﴾ [النساء، 165]؛ ﴿وَمَا تَحْمِلُ مِنْ أُنثَىٰ وَلَا تَضَعُ إِلَّا بِعِلْمِهِ﴾ [فاطر، 11].

- *Life*: the ground that permits the subject to be qualified by awareness; unlike the other attributes of meaning, it does not "seek" an external correlate. "All attributes of meaning are 'relational' -seeking something beyond mere inherence- except life" (al-Sanūsī, 1351 AH, 30). Since Allah is qualified by power, will, and knowledge, life is necessary for Him (al-Bayjūrī, 2013, 95).

﴿اللَّهُ لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ...﴾ [البقرة، 255].

- *Hearing and Sight*: Allah is hearing by an eternal hearing and seeing by an eternal sight—beyond mere knowledge. "The proof for hearing, sight, and speech is the Book, the Sunnah, and consensus; and were He not so qualified, their opposites would follow" (al-Sanūsī, 1351 AH, 54). "A living being that admits of a quality and its contrary, with no middle state, must be qualified by one or the other; to deny hearing and sight would be to affirm their opposites—defect and infirmity" (al-Shahrastānī, 2009, 330).

﴿وَكَانَ اللَّهُ سَمِيعًا بَصِيرًا﴾ [النساء، 134]؛ ﴿إِنَّنِي مَعَكُمَا أَسْمَعُ وَأَرَىٰ﴾ [طه، 45].

- *Speech*: Allah's speech is an eternal attribute, contrary to the Muʿtazilites who denied a real attribute of speech and held the Qurʾān to be created. For the Ashʿarites, speech is "a meaning subsisting in the Essence, expressed through varied utterances, not of the genus of letters and sounds, transcendent beyond part and whole, precedence and subsequence, silence, solecism, inflection, and all change -relating to what knowledge relates to" (Mayyāra al-Fāsī, 2015, 40). Reason indicates that "whoever truly knows a matter can speak of it; our Lord knows all without limit, therefore speech relating to them is established for Him- and whatever is truly possible for Him is necessary for Him; thus speech is necessary for Allah" (al-Sanūsī, 2009, 151).

﴿وَلَا يُكَلِّمُهُمُ اللَّهُ...﴾ [آل عمران، 76].

- *Perception*: Theologians differed on affirming perception as additional to knowledge. Al-Bāqillānī and al-Jūwaynī affirmed it; others denied it for lack of a clear scriptural basis, while some -such as al-Muqtarah and Ibn al-Tilimsānī- suspended judgment. For those who affirm it, it is an eternal attribute relating to sensed qualities (tangibles, odors, tastes, pleasures, pains) without contact, configuration, or modality- exalted is He above the properties of originated things. Its affirmation follows from its being a perfection; to lack it would imply defect.

﴿لَّا تُدْرِكُهُ الْأَبْصَارُ وَهُوَ يُدْرِكُ الْأَبْصَارَ﴾ [الأنعام، 103].

4) The derivative (qualification) attributes. These are "the rulings established for the subject, grounded in causes inhering in it" (al-Jūwaynī, 2009, 35)—i.e., being-powerful, being-knowing, being-living, etc. Those who affirm *aḥwāl* treat them as states additional to the attributes of meaning (e.g., the inherence of knowledge entails 'being-knowing'). Those who deny *aḥwāl* hold that these reduce to the attributes of meaning themselves: being-powerful is nothing over and above the inherence of power, being-knowing nothing beyond the inherence of knowledge, and so forth (al-Malālī, 2009, 66).

As for the relation of attributes to the Essence, the Ashʿarites maintain that the essential attributes are neither identical to the Essence nor wholly other than it. "Were they identical, they would be creative and causative as He is -which is inadmissible; and were the Qurʾān created, Allah would be existent without speech and only later create His speech-

impossible, for the attributes of His Essence are eternal with the Eternity of His Essence" (al-Bāqillānī, 2000, 37).

Doctrines Impossible of Allah

Every quality entailing defect or deficiency is impossible of Allah; these are the contraries of the necessary attributes: non-being (vs. existence), origination (vs. pre-eternity), annihilation (vs. permanence), likeness to originated things (vs. absolute dissimilarity), dependence (vs. self-subsistence), multiplicity (vs. oneness), dislike (vs. will), incapacity (vs. power), ignorance (vs. knowledge), death (vs. life), deafness (vs. hearing), blindness (vs. sight), and muteness (vs. speech). Likewise, all contraries to the derivative perfections -on the view that *aḥwāl* are affirmed- are impossible of Him.

Doctrines Possible of Allah

Every Muslim must believe that Allah is volitionally free in His acting -constrained by none. It is therefore possible with respect to Him to do as He wills and to refrain as He wills.

"Included in this are reward and punishment, the sending of prophets, and what is salutary or most salutary for creation. None of that is obligatory upon Allah, nor is it impossible of Him; for were 'what is most salutary' obligatory upon Him -as the Muʿtazila claim- there would be neither worldly nor otherworldly trial, and no binding commands or prohibitions-contradicted by experience" (al-Sanūsī, 1351 AH, 44).

The Ashʿarite position is that nothing is binding upon Allah save what He binds upon Himself. He is an acting agent by choice; were anything necessary for Him to do or leave, He would be compelled and thus not free-negated by His word:

﴿ذُو الْعَرْشِ الْمَجِيدُ * فَعَّالٌ لِّمَا يُرِيدُ﴾ [البروج، 15-16].

Prophethood (*al-Nubuwwāt*)

The Ashʿarites devote the chapter of *al-nubuwwāt* to what must be known regarding Allah's messengers -may blessings and peace be upon them all- namely: the attributes that are *obligatory*, *possible*, and *impossible* for them; the ruling of their being sent; the nature of

revelation to them; the scriptures, laws, and miracles they brought; and all matters related to prophethood, messengership, and revelation.

Knowing what is necessary, possible, and impossible of prophets and messengers is a religious duty upon every morally responsible person, for faith is not realized without sound knowledge of Allah Most High and of His prophets whom He sent to convey His command.

The Ashʿarite definition of prophethood is:

"the singling out of a human being to hear revelation from Allah Most High, whether through an angel or without one; if he is commanded to convey it, that is messengership. One distinguished by the former is a prophet, and by the latter a messenger—thus jinn are excluded" (Ibn ʿArafa, n.d., 929).

Hence,

"a prophet is any human to whom Allah has revealed a law, whether or not he is commanded to convey it; a messenger is one to whom a law is revealed and who is commanded to convey it—this is the well-known distinction. The difference is that 'prophet' is absolutely more general, while 'messenger' is absolutely more specific" (al-Lūh, 2012, 218).

For the Ashʿarites, prophethood is Allah's election and choice of whom He wills from among His creation to convey His law—contrary to the Karrāmiyya, who deemed it an inherent quality of the prophet, and to the philosophers, who held it is acquired through purification and refinement of the soul. The Ashʿarites state that prophethood

"does not derive from the prophet's very essence, nor from an acquired accident of his, nor from his knowledge of his Lord; rather, it is a bestowal from Allah and a grace upon His servant. It is Allah's creating him fit for messengership and prophethood. In sum, it returns to Allah Most High saying to whomever He elects from His servants: 'I have made you a prophet and My messenger to whom I will'" (al-Āmidī, 2012, 4:12–13).

There is thus no path to prophethood or messengership by acquisition or strenuous disciplines of solitude, devotions, lawful eating, or turning wholly to Allah—even were one to reach the loftiest stations thereby. It is pure divine favor, an eternal choice and will for whom He pleases.

Sending messengers is *possible* in reason: it is within divine power that Allah send prophets and messengers from humankind -or others -to convey His law to His servants and guide them to the ways that realize the world's cultivation and rectification. Allah is

free either to send or not to send messengers. The actual sending of prophets and the succession of revelation are divine grace and beneficence, not compulsion or an obligation upon Allah-contrary to the Muʿtazila, who obligated Allah to send messengers to establish proof against people before reckoning, on the basis of "the salutary and most salutary," and contrary to the philosophers, who posited the necessity of sending a guide for worldly order, and to the Brahmins, Sabians, and transmigrationists, who deemed it rationally impossible. As al-Āmidī argues: what a messenger brings

"is either rationally knowable or not. If the first, there is no need for a messenger and sending one would be frivolity and foolishness—ruled evil. If the second, what he brings would not be acceptable, since it is not rationally knowable; thus sending, on either supposition, yields no benefit" (al-Āmidī, 2003, 275).

The Ashʿarite proof for the *possibility* of sending messengers is succinct:

"There is no meaning to 'messengership' other than Allah Most High saying to one He elects from His servants, 'I have sent you, so convey on My behalf.' Its rational possibility is evident; whether we suppose its occurrence or non-occurrence, no intrinsic impossibility follows -and this is precisely what 'possibility' means. Some scholars further argued: because Allah may do in His servants what He wills -by virtue of His all-encompassing power and constant wisdom-sending messengers with prescribed laws and charging them with acts of worship is among those things. Once possibility is established, messengership is neither rationally obligatory nor rationally impossible" (al-Yafranī, 2017, 3:1032).

Obligatory attributes of the messengers. These are *trustworthiness* (*amāna*), *truthfulness* (*ṣidq*), *intellectual acumen* (*faṭāna*), and *conveyance* (*tablīgh*).

Trustworthiness (amāna). "Guarding all outward and inward faculties from engaging in what is prohibited -whether strictly forbidden or disliked" (Mayyāra, 2015, 60). The Muslim community has agreed on the prophets' immunity from sin and their transcendence above committing acts of disobedience- major or minor. Theologians differed over when this impeccability is required: some said both before and after commissioning; others restricted it to after commissioning.

"The sound view is that after their being sent, prophets do not commit major sins at all, nor minor ones -deliberately or out of forgetfulness. If something occurs, they are not left upon it; rather, they are alerted and they take heed. As for what is merely disliked, a prophet may do it deliberately to demonstrate that the prohibition is not one of strict forbiddance- making his act legislative, such as his divorce, urinating while standing, or drinking while standing. Though such acts are disliked in themselves, for the Noble Messenger

there is no dislike insofar as he clarifies the law and that no sin ensues; from the standpoint of legislation, the disliked becomes obligatory or recommended in his case" (al-Lūh, 2012, 234).

The rationale for requiring *amāna* is Allah's command to follow and emulate them and His testimony to their guidance and rectitude:

﴿أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ هَدَى اللَّهُ فَبِهُدَاهُمُ اقْتَدِهْ﴾ [الأنعام، 91].

Truthfulness (*ṣidq*). Prophets must be truthful in all that they convey from Allah: "The truthfulness of the messengers is the conformity of what they report from Allah Most High to reality—in their claim of messengership and in the rulings they convey from Allah to His servants. Lying does not issue from them in any of this—neither deliberately, by consensus, nor inadvertently, according to the soundest view" (al-Lūh, 2012, 231).

Their truthfulness is attested by Allah's manifesting miracles to corroborate what they report from Him. The community has agreed they are immune from lying absolutely, for it contradicts the very import of miracles, whose occurrence signifies the ratification of their claims. To allow lying of them would be to allow lying of Allah -far exalted is He- since He would be manifesting miracles at their hands as confirmation of falsehood.

﴿وَمَا آتَاكُمُ الرَّسُولُ فَخُذُوهُ وَمَا نَهَاكُمْ عَنْهُ فَانتَهُوا﴾ [الحشر، 7]؛ ﴿وَمَا يَنطِقُ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُوحَىٰ﴾ [الأنعام، 3-4].

Conveyance (tablīgh). One must believe that the messengers convey from their Lord all that they are commanded to convey—without addition or omission. They are immune from hiding the message or falling short in delivering what is commanded; as for what they are *forbidden* to convey, they do not convey it; and what they are *permitted* to convey, it is not obligatory to deliver to all—rather, they may disclose it to the elect or intimates. "The imams have unanimously agreed that they are immune from forgetfulness *before* conveying; they differed whether forgetfulness can occur regarding what they were commanded to convey *after* conveying it" (Ibn Bazīza, n.d., 536). The proof for the obligation of conveyance is:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الرَّسُولُ بَلِّغْ مَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِن رَّبِّكَ وَإِن لَّمْ تَفْعَلْ فَمَا بَلَّغْتَ رِسَالَتَهُ﴾ [المائدة، 69].

"Had they concealed anything they were commanded to convey, we would then be commanded to conceal knowledge -since Allah ordered us to emulate them- but the consequent is false, for the concealer of knowledge is accursed" (al-Bayjūrī, 2013, 149).

Intellectual acumen (faṭāna). This denotes understanding, alertness, and keen awareness in rebutting objections and invalidating falsehood. One must believe that the messengers possess exalted nature, sound and weighty intellects, and full aptitude to engage every kind of person and to defend Allah's law with apt proofs and decisive arguments. As Allah the Exalted says:

﴿وَتِلْكَ حُجَّتُنَا آتَيْنَاهَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ عَلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ﴾ [الأنعام، 84]؛ ﴿قَالُوا يَا نُوحُ قَدْ جَادَلْتَنَا فَأَكْثَرْتَ جِدَالَنَا...﴾ [هود، 32].

Were prophets not characterized by acumen, they would be characterized by dullness; and it is known that the dull cannot establish proofs or dispel doubts -whereas mass-transmitted evidences attest the prophets' power to overturn their opponents' claims and dismantle specious arguments.

The opposites of the obligatory attributes are impossible for prophets. Thus, the establishment of what is obligatory negates its contrary: their trustworthiness precludes betrayal; their truthfulness precludes lying; their conveyance of revelation precludes concealment; and their intellectual acumen precludes stupidity or sluggishness of mind.

As for the possible attributes of prophets, they include all human characteristics that can be affirmed or denied without implying moral deficiency or repulsive imperfection -such as afflictions, changes, pain, illness, and tasting the cup of death. All these are possible for them, as they are for other human beings. None of this constitutes a deficiency, for a thing is only deemed deficient when compared to one more complete within its kind. Allah, the Exalted, has decreed upon the inhabitants of this abode (ʿIyāḍ, 2013, 715):

﴿قَالَ فِيهَا تَحْيَوْنَ وَفِيهَا تَمُوتُونَ وَمِنْهَا تُخْرَجُونَ﴾ [سورة الأعراف، الآية: 24].

Revealed Unseen Matters (*al-Samʿiyyāt al-Ghaybiyyah*)

The *samʿiyyāt* -from *samʿ* (hearing)- comprise everything conveyed to us through certain report, whose establishment lies beyond independent rational proof. They are also called the "unseen" because they elude sensory apprehension and are known only by hearing and revelation: the soul, angels, jinn, the gathering and resurrection, the appointment for judgment, Paradise and Hell, and the like- realities neither grasped by the senses nor established by unaided reason.

Scholars differed over whether these revealed unseen matters form a discrete chapter of creed -this is the view of Imām al-Ḥaramayn among the Easterners and al-Sanūsī among the Westerners and those who follow them- or whether their topics should be subsumed under prophethood, as did al-Salālajī and al-Lūh and others, on the grounds that

"the topics of nubuwwāt and samʿiyyāt align; they are also called 'messengerships' and constitute a single category, for all that pertains to prophets and messengers -in terms of revelation to them and their being sent, their attributes, scriptures revealed to them, and so forth- is known only by transmitted report or reducible to it" (al-Lūh, 2012, 85).

Reason, therefore, neither establishes nor negates them, even while it does not judge them impossible.

Multiple subjects fall under the Ashʿarite treatment of the *samʿiyyāt*. In what follows, I clarify their foundational positions on the principal topics in this domain.

The Torment of the Grave and the Questioning by the Two Angels

The Ashʿarites affirm the interrogation, trial, and bliss of the grave, and the questioning by the two angels -Munkar and Nakīr- of believers and unbelievers alike, in contrast to a group of the Muʿtazila who denied the punishment and bliss of the grave and the return of souls to bodies therein. Some of them claimed that a dead person's soul does not return until the Day of Resurrection; some granted grave-questioning for unbelievers and flagrant sinners but not for believers; some denied the angels' very names.

The Ashʿarites state:

"Reviving the dead in their graves, the questioning by Munkar and Nakīr, and the punishment of the grave for the unbeliever and the flagrantly sinful-all of it is true according to us; the early generations of the community agreed upon it before disagreement emerged, which only increased later" (al-Ījī, n.d., 382).

Grave-questioning, then, is established by consensus:

"The dead person is questioned even if his limbs are torn apart or beasts have devoured him; it is not far-fetched that Allah restores the soul to his limbs even if scattered -Allah's power suffices for that- and it is also possible that He returns him as he was" (al-Bayjūrī, 2013, 196–197).

They adduce as proof the sound reports: "It has been narrated from the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) through numerous routes, and from his Companions -may Allah be pleased with them all- and nothing has been narrated from any of them

denying, negating, or rejecting it; thus what they intended becomes the consensus of the Companions" (al-Ashʿarī, A, 2012, 11). ʿĀʾisha -may Allah be pleased with her- narrated that the Prophet used to supplicate in his prayer: "O Allah, I seek refuge with You from the punishment of the grave" (Muslim, 2007, 2: 85, no. 589). The Qurʾān also confirms the grave's punishment and bliss:

﴿النَّارُ يُعْرَضُونَ عَلَيْهَا غُدُوًّا وَعَشِيًّا ۚ وَيَوْمَ تَقُومُ السَّاعَةُ أَدْخِلُوا آلَ فِرْعَوْنَ أَشَدَّ الْعَذَابِ﴾ [غافر، 46].

Al-Sanūsī explains: "This cannot refer to the punishment of the Hereafter, for it is not qualified by 'morn and evening'; and His saying,

﴿وَيَوْمَ تَقُومُ السَّاعَةُ أَدْخِلُوا آلَ فِرْعَوْنَ أَشَدَّ الْعَذَابِ﴾ [غافر، 46].

distinguishes the two punishments; and His saying,

﴿أُغْرِقُوا فَأُدْخِلُوا نَارًا﴾ [نوح، 25].

the *fāʾ* indicates immediate sequence" (al-Sanūsī, D, 2013, 401).

The Gathering and the Raising (*al-Ḥashr wa-l-Nashr*)

"*Al-ḥashr* is the assembling of bodies, their revivification, and their driving to the standing place and other stations of the Hereafter" (al-Sanūsī, n.d., 2013, 394). *Al-nashr* is the re-creation of bodies after their dissolution -or their re-collection after dispersion- when they are revived and brought forth from the graves on the Day of Resurrection.

Schools differed on its occurrence and manner. Naturalists, eternalists, and atheists denied it, claiming bodies perish with only scattered elements remaining that themselves perish over time; what is non-existent cannot be re-instantiated. The philosophers held that return pertains to the soul alone, "for the body perishes with its forms and accidents and is not restored, while the soul is an immaterial, subsistent substance unsusceptible to annihilation; it returns to the realm of immaterial entities by cutting off attachments" (al-Laqānī, 2012, 2:1412). The Ashʿarites opposed this and followed the consensus of Muslims: bodies are restored in their very identities and accidents as in worldly life.

Ibn al-ʿArabī says:

"According to Ahl al-Sunna, those worldly bodies are restored in their very identities and accidents, without dispute among them. Some said: along with their times, such that time itself is restored as body and color are restored. That is permissible under Allah's decree by His power and easy for Him

altogether—but no report has reached us regarding the restoration of time" (al-Qurṭubī, 1425 AH, 1:487).

They also cite the Qurʾān's verses on reviving the dead and their standing before Allah on the Day of Resurrection:

﴿كَمَا بَدَأَكُمْ تَعُودُونَ﴾ [الأعراف، 28]؛ ﴿وَهُوَ الَّذِي يَبْدَأُ الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيدُهُ﴾ [الروم، 26]؛ ﴿قَالُوا يَا وَيْلَنَا مَن بَعَثَنَا مِن مَّرْقَدِنَا ۖ هَٰذَا مَا وَعَدَ الرَّحْمَٰنُ وَصَدَقَ الْمُرْسَلُونَ﴾ [يس، 51].

Rationally, they argue, the second origination is possible: whoever affirms Allah's power over the first creation cannot reasonably deny His power to re-create.

The Scale, the Bridge, and the Basin

The Scale (al-Mīzān).

The Ashʿarites affirm the weighing of deeds on the Day of Resurrection by a Scale:

"It is a single scale on the soundest view, with a beam, a tongue, and two pans -each wider than the layered heavens and the earth. Jibrīl holds its pillar, watching its tongue; Mikāʾīl is entrusted with it. Its place is after the reckoning; some said each agent has distinct scales for each category of deed" (al-Bayjūrī, 2013, 208).

They reason to its possibility, contra the Muʿtazila who denied weighing because deeds are accidents and, even if restored, are not susceptible to heaviness or lightness. They further adduce scripture:

﴿وَنَضَعُ الْمَوَازِينَ الْقِسْطَ لِيَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ﴾ [الأنبياء، 47]؛ ﴿فَمَن ثَقُلَتْ مَوَازِينُهُ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ وَمَنْ خَفَّتْ مَوَازِينُهُ فَأُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ خَسِرُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ﴾ [المؤمنون، 102-103].

The Bridge (al-Ṣirāṭ).

A bridge stretched across the back of Hell, reached by the first and the last; it has been reported that it is finer than a hair. People's speed upon it mirrors their deeds. He who holds the heavens and the earth lest they slip is able to make the servants traverse-leaning on something, or on nothing (al-Sanūsī, n.d., 2013, 399). Allah eases the crossing for those whose scales are weighty and whose states are sound, granting them safe passage. As for those who die upon unbelief, shirk, hypocrisy, or other unforgiven states, they fall-either eternally (for unbelievers and hypocrites) or for a term known only to Allah in proportion to their sin (for sinful believers). They cite:

﴿احْشُرُوا الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا وَأَزْوَاجَهُمْ... فَاهْدُوهُمْ إِلَىٰ صِرَاطِ الْجَحِيمِ وَقِفُوهُمْ إِنَّهُم مَّسْئُولُونَ﴾ [الصافات، 22-24].

The Basin (al-Ḥawḍ).

Belief in the Prophet's Basin is obligatory according to the Ashʿarites, though they do not declare its denier an unbeliever -rather, a transgressor:

"Ahl al-Sunna wa-l-istiqāma say that the Prophet- Allah bless him and grant him peace—has a basin from which the believers will drink, but not the unbelievers" (al-Ashʿarī, J, 2006, 161).

Its description includes:

"It has four corners; its pebbles are red rubies and green chrysolite; its water is whiter than milk and sweeter than honey; cups upon it are as numerous as the stars; two channels pour into it from al-Kawthar; whoever drinks from it once will never thirst thereafter" (al-Yafranī, 2017, 3:1159).

Ibn ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAmr—may Allah be pleased with them both—narrated:

"My Haud (Al-Kauthar) is (so large that it takes) a month's journey to cross it. Its water is water is whiter than milk, and its smell is nicer than musk (a kind of perfume), and its drinking cups are (as numerous) as the (number of) stars of the sky; and whoever drinks from it, will never be thirsty again" (al-Bukhārī, 1997, 8: 81, no. 6579).

The Ashʿarite creed concerning these matters of the Last Day is that

"all the Sharīʿa has brought regarding the Bridge, the Scale, the Reckoning, the reading of scrolls, the proffered Basin, and the testimony of limbs is true. The principal proof is their inherent possibility -no contradiction arises from positing their occurrence- together with the report of the Truthful One about them, the consensus of Muslims before the emergence of dissenters, and the Qurʾān's explicit statements" (al-Ījī, n.d., 382).

Al-Tirmidhī relates from Anas:

"I asked the Prophet (peace be upon him) to intercede for me on the Day of Judgement. He said, 'I am the one to do so'. (He said:) 'I said: 'O Messenger of Allah! Then where shall I seek you?' He said: 'Seek me, the first time you should seek me is one the Sirat.' (He said☺ 'I said: 'If I do not meet you upon the Sirat?' He said: 'Then seek me at the Mizan'. I said: 'And if I do not meet you at the Mizan?' He said: 'Then seek me at the Hawd, for indeed I will not me missed at these three locations". (*Hasan*) (al-Tirmidhī, 2007, 4: 441, no. 2433).

The report is adduced as evidence for the reality of the Bridge, the Basin, and the Scale.

Intercession (*al-Shafāʿa*)

The Prophet's intercession for sinful believers on the Day of Resurrection is among the matters of faith according to Ahl al-Sunna. Imām al-Ashʿarī states: "Ahl al-Sunna wa-l-istiqāma affirm the intercession of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) for the major sinners of his community" (al-Ashʿarī, J, 2006, 353).

The Muʿtazila denied it and held that the grave sinner abides in Hell like the unbeliever unless he repents before death. "Some of them said: the Prophet's intercession for believers is only to elevate their ranks as a gracious favor" (al-Ashʿarī, J, 2006, 261).

Intercession means "petitioning for pardon and forbearance for the one on whose behalf intercession is sought, addressed to the One from whom it is sought; it has also been defined as seeking forgiveness for one who has a sin from the One who has excellence and means" (al-Yafranī, 2017, 3:1162).

Imām al-Nawawī (al-Nawawī, 1392 AH, 3:35–36) reports from Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ that intercession has five kinds:

1. exclusive to our Prophet—relief from the terror of the standing and the hastening of the reckoning;

2. admitting a group into Paradise without reckoning—also reported for our Prophet;

3. intercession for those deserving Hell, in which our Prophet and whomever Allah wills will intercede;

4. intercession for those who have entered Hell among the sinful;

5. elevation of ranks in Paradise for its dwellers—this the Muʿtazila do not deny, nor do they deny the first intercession at the gathering.

The Ashʿarites reason to the intercession of sinful and upright believers alike by its rational possibility and transmitted proof. Allah's pardoning of His servants' sins and His authorizing whom He wills to intercede are rationally admissible. Scripture is manifold:

﴿فَمَا تَنفَعُهُمْ شَفَاعَةُ الشَّافِعِينَ﴾ [المدثر، 47].

Al-Rāzī comments: "Know that this verse is among the strongest proofs for us in establishing intercession for the grave sinners. Its reasoning is that whoever says 'Lā ilāha illā Allāh,' Allah has approved him thereby; and whenever it is true of someone that Allah

approved him in that, then it is true of him that Allah approved him" (al-Rāzī, 1420 AH, 22:135). Also:

﴿يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ وَلَا يَشْفَعُونَ إِلَّا لِمَنِ ارْتَضَىٰ وَهُم مِّنْ خَشْيَتِهِ مُشْفِقُونَ﴾ [الأنبياء، 27].

Allah has promised forgiveness of all sins except unbelief and shirk:

﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَغْفِرُ أَن يُشْرَكَ بِهِ وَيَغْفِرُ مَا دُونَ ذَٰلِكَ لِمَن يَشَاءُ﴾ [النساء، 37].

Reports on intercession for grave sinners are mass-transmitted:

"My intercession will be for those among my *Ummah* who committed major sins" (Abū Dāwūd, 2009, 5: 233, no. 4739).

Paradise and Hell

Among the unseen matters to be believed by transmitted proof is the real existence of Paradise and Hell. The Qurʾān and Sunna attest to the reckoning and recompense on the Day of Resurrection and to humanity's final abodes thereafter in Paradise or Hell.

"As for Paradise, the report states it is one hundred degrees and has eight gates; it is the abode of the felicitous, the locus of delights and honors, the fruit of faith and acts. Hell has seven levels, by report, and seven gates, by verse; it consists of descending tiers, though no report has reached us on their exact number. It is where people are smitten, the seat of pains, the prison of pleasures" (Ibn Khumayr, 2004, 364).

Paradise is the eternal home of the blessed; Hell the abode of misery and punishment for the wretched.

The Ashʿarite position is that Paradise and Hell truly exist *now*-contrary to some Muʿtazilites who said they will be created on the Day of Resurrection, and to the philosophers who claimed "Paradise is of the order of intellectual pleasures and Hell of intellectual pains" (al-Laqānī, 2012, 2:1632), denying their concrete reality and placing them in the realm of forms.

Proof of their existence and truth rests on scripture:

﴿وَلِمَنْ خَافَ مَقَامَ رَبِّهِ جَنَّتَانِ﴾ [الرحمن، 46]؛ ﴿وَلَقَدْ رَآهُ نَزْلَةً أُخْرَىٰ عِندَ سِدْرَةِ الْمُنتَهَىٰ﴾ [النجم، 13-14].

Regarding Hell:

﴿فَإِن لَّمْ تَفْعَلُوا وَلَن تَفْعَلُوا فَاتَّقُوا النَّارَ الَّتِي وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ ۖ أُعِدَّتْ لِلْكَافِرِينَ﴾ [البقرة، 24]؛ ﴿النَّارُ يُعْرَضُونَ عَلَيْهَا غُدُوًّا وَعَشِيًّا ۚ وَيَوْمَ تَقُومُ السَّاعَةُ أَدْخِلُوا آلَ فِرْعَوْنَ أَشَدَّ الْعَذَابِ﴾ [غافر، 46].

Whoever believes in the Qurʾān is thereby obliged to affirm the reality of Paradise and Hell without doubt.

Conclusion

The Ashʿarī creed has been distinguished by its balanced and moderate nature, firmly grounded in Sunni principles that harmoniously combine textual revelation with rational inquiry. It regards the Qur'an and the noble ḥadīth as its primary sources of evidence while simultaneously employing logical reasoning and demonstrative proof to refute the arguments of extremists and innovators. This synthesis endowed Ashʿarī theology with both the sanctity of divine authority and the strength of rational persuasion.

Understanding the foundational principles established and refined by Ashʿarī scholars reveals the unique coherence of this theological system—one that stands apart from other schools through its perfect alignment with the Qur'anic and prophetic texts. It also highlights the immense intellectual efforts of Ashʿarī theologians who built and purified their creed from misconceptions that clouded other doctrinal traditions. In conclusion, this study underscores that the Ashʿarī School represents a model of doctrinal balance, where the light of revelation and the rigor of reason unite to form a resilient framework for sound belief.

- The Ashʿarite creed emerged from a distinctive intellectual experience and wide-ranging acquaintance on the part of the school's founder. This enabled him to discern major points of weakness and error among the era's most influential theological trends, impelling him toward precision and rectitude in his choices and positions.
- The Ashʿarite School is a Sunni, moderate path that took the method of Ahl al-Sunna and the pious forebears as its principal guide in doctrine and adjudication.
- Ashʿarite foundations are marked by key traits—foremost among them balance and moderation—eschewing aberrant opinions and reconciling competing stances in ways consonant with the Sharīʿa.
- Ashʿarite argumentation couples transmitted proof with rational demonstration, which lends the school flexibility and aptness for the diverse questions that arise in Islamic creed.

• Transmitted evidence holds authoritative weight for the Ashʿarites: they adduce the Qurʾān, the Sunna, the consensus of the Companions, and the sayings of the early imams across doctrinal questions—acquitting them of suspending revealed texts or subordinating revelation to reason.

• Maghribi Ashʿarites clung to and took pride in their Ashʿarism over many generations because it harmonized with a native disposition averse to extremism and committed to moderation, balance, and prudence.

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