

The Stages of Evolution of the *Ash‘arī Madhhab*: The *Kullabiyyah*, *Mu‘tazilah* and Philosophers—and their Notable Scholars

The *Ash‘arī Madhhab* was not spread by its founder Abul-Hasan al-Ash‘arī (d. 324 AH)—rather it was promulgated after his time.¹¹⁴ For this reason, the biographers of Abul-Hasan (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ) list his students at no more than four.¹¹⁵ Later followers of the Ash‘arī Creed such as Ibn ‘Asākir and as-Subkī mentioned among his students those who spoke with his beliefs or just met him—but did not study under him. And due to that, Ibn ‘Abdul-Hādī (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ) refuted some of the notables who Ibn ‘Asākir ascribed to the *Madhhab* of the *Ash‘ariyyah*.¹¹⁶

The stages of evolution of the *Ash‘arī Madhhab* are numerous, but it possible to categorise them into three broad periods.

The First Stage: The *Kullābī Ash‘arīs*.

So, in this first stage, the *Ash‘arīs* are referred to as *al-Ash‘ariyyah al-Kullābiyyah* due to them adopting and embracing the doctrines of Ibn Kullāb (d. 240 AH) who inclined to the Creed of *Ahlul-Ḥadīth was-Sunnah*. However, he fell into innovations—and the most severe of those innovations was his assertion that there is not established with Allāh

¹¹⁴ The fact that he recanted and ascribed to the Creed of Imām Ahmad Ibn Hanbal (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ) made his earlier ascriptions to *al-I‘tizāl* and *al-Kullābiyyah* obsolete.

¹¹⁵ *Tabyīn Kadhib al-Muftarī* p. 177, *Tabaqāt ash-Shāfi‘iyyat al-Kubrā* 3/386.

¹¹⁶ *Jam‘ al-Juyūsh wad-Dasākir* pp. 179-280—see *Mawqif Ibn Taymiyyah min al-Ashā‘irah* 1/344.

any Discretionary Actions and Attributes connected to His Will and Ability which Ibn Kullāb claimed would necessitate *Ḥulūl al-Ḥawādith* (the occurrence of events and incidents) in the Self of Allāh. He affirmed *aṣ-Ṣifāt al-Khabariyyah*¹¹⁷ and he refuted those who negated them, even though he agreed with them in some of their principles. *Shaikhul-Islām* Ibn Taymiyyah (رحمته الله) stated that Ibn Kullāb wrote refutations against the *Jahmiyyah*, *Muʿtazilah* and others—and he spoke with affirmation of the *Khabariyyah* Attributes—and, in that, he inclined towards *Ahlul-Hadīth was-Sunnah*. So, in his writings there were some innovations—he correctly affirmed the Attributes established with the *Dhāt* (Self) of Allāh, but he negated the Chosen or Discretionary Attributes of Allāh. He authored refutations against the *Jahmiyyah* who negated the *Ṣifāt Dhātiyyah* (Eternal Unceasing Attributes) and *al-ʿUluww*.¹¹⁸ He wrote with proofs and speech that was easy to comprehend and expansive in this subject matter... until he (Ibn Kullāb) became an example and an *Imām* for those who came after him from this orientation. They affirmed the Attributes and opposed the negators—even though they shared with the negators (*Jahmiyyah* and *Muʿtazilah*) some of their futile principles which caused corruption in some of the affairs they spoke about as it related to the role

¹¹⁷ The *Khabariyyah* Attributes can only be known from the texts of Book and Sunnah—such as Allāh’s two Eyes, two Hands, Face, Shin, Feet, etc. The affirmation of these Attributes cannot be ascertained through reason and intellect. We only know them because Allāh has informed us about them. (See *al-Iʿtiqād* of al-Bayhaqī p. 36, *al-Irshād* of al-Juwainī p. 146, *Bayān Talbīs al-Jahmiyyah* 1/76,83, *Dar at-Taʿārad* 3/382, *Mawqif Ibn Taymiyyah min al-Ashāʿirah* 1/1224.

¹¹⁸ *Al-ʿUluww*: The Highness of Allāh—i.e., that Allāh is High above His creation, over it, and separate from it.

of the intellect. So, they held views in opposition to the Qur’ān and Sunnah. The followers of Ibn Kullāb (d. ~240 AH) included al-Hārith al-Muhāsabī (d. 243 AH), Abul-‘Abbās al-Qalānisī, then a while later, Abul-Hasan al-Ash‘arī (324 AH) and Abul-Hasan aṭ-Ṭabarī (d. 380 AH).¹¹⁹

Ibn Taymiyyah (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ) also explained that it was the belief of Ibn Kullāb and those who agreed with him such as al-Hārith al-Muhāsabī, Abul-‘Abbās al-Qalānisī, Abul-Hasan al-Ash‘arī, Qāḍī Abu Bakr aṭ-Ṭayyib al-Bāqillānī (d. 403 AH) and Qāḍī Abu Ya‘lā al-Farrā’ (d. 458) that the Lord does not have actions that He does when He Wills by His Ability—and that is because of their belief that affirming this for Him (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) would not absolve Him from incidents, occurrences, and events that take place in bodies. And by this, they agreed with the principle of Jahm Ibn Safwān and his followers from the *Jahmiyyah* and *Mu‘tazilah*.¹²⁰

Shaikhul-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ) stated:

The *Kullābiyyah* are the teachers of the *Ash‘ariyyah*. Abul-Hasan al-Ash‘arī (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ) emulated the path of Muhammad Ibn Kullāb—and Ibn Kullāb was the closest to the age of Salaf in terms of time and path.¹²¹

The Ash‘arīs of this age agreed upon the following:

1. To embrace the methodology of *al-Kalām* (Speculative Theology).
2. Negation of the Discretionary Attributes (*aṣ-Ṣifāt al-Ikhtiyāriyyah*).
3. Negating that Allāh Speaks when He Wills.

¹¹⁹ *Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā*, 12/366-367.

¹²⁰ *Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā*, 5/411.

¹²¹ *Al-Istiqāmah* of Ibn Taymiyyah, 1/105.

4. Adoption of *Ta'wīl* (Interpretation) and *Majāz* (Metaphors) for the Attributes of Allāh as methodological approach.
5. *Al-Irjā'* in general—i.e., removing actions from the definition and meaning of *īmān*, and asserting that *īmān* neither increases nor decreases.
6. *Al-Jabr* (Compulsion) in the affair of *al-Qadar* (Pre-decree)—i.e., that a person is compelled without choice.
7. They affirmed the *Ṣifāt al-Khabariyyah* in general—and the earlier Ash'arīs of this age affirmed *al-ʿUluww* (Highness of Allāh above the creation) and *al-Istiwā'* (Ascension over the Throne), except for Ibn al-Fawrak (d. 406 AH) who fell into confusion.

This age began with the repentance of Abul-Hasan (aged 40) from *al-I'tizāl* at around 300 AH until the death of Ibn Fawrak in 406 AH, by which time Ibn Fawrak and al-Baqillānī had steered the *Ash'arī Madhhab* to adopt the interpretations of the *Jahmiyyah* and *Mu'tazilah* while still holding on to many of the beliefs which agreed with the *Madhhab* of the Salaf.¹²²

The notable scholars of this first stage of *al-Ash'ariyyah al-Kullābiyyah* were: Abul-Hasan al-Ash'arī (d. 324 AH)¹²³, Abul-Hasan 'Alī Ibn Mahdī

¹²² See *al-Aṭwār al-ʿAqidah fil-Madhhab al-Ash'arī*, pp. 16-19.

¹²³ This was after he repented from the creed of the *Mu'tazilah* and entered the second stage of *al-Kullābiyyah* in his journey of coming closer to the *Sunnah*—and in the end he embraced virtually all of the *Madhhab* of the Salaf by attesting to the *ʿAqidah* of *Imām* Ahmad Ibn Hanbal (رحمهُ اللهُ) which culminated in his authorship of *al-Ibānah*.

aṭ-Ṭabarī (d. ~380 AH)¹²⁴, Abu Bakr al-Bāqillānī (d. 403 AH)¹²⁵, and Abu Bakr Ibn Fawrak (d. 406)¹²⁶.

¹²⁴ He was from the students of Abul-Hasan al-Ash‘arī (رحمته الله). He adopted a path between al-Ash‘arī and al-Bāqillānī. He affirmed *al-Istiḡā’* and *al-‘Uluww* for Allāh. However, he made *ta’wīl* of other Discretionary Attributes such as Allāh’s Descending to the Nearest Heaven, His Coming on the Day of Resurrection, His Laughing, His Amazement, and His Joy—he did not affirm these Attributes as it befits Allāh, instead he negated them through *ta’wīl*—all based on the principle of negating from Allāh *Ḥulūl al-Ḥawādith*. i.e., the presence of incidental attributes and events. (*Mawqif Ibn Taymiyyah min al-Ash‘arīrah* 2/521-523, *al-Aṭwār al-‘Aqīdah fil-Madhhab al-Ash‘arī*, p. 21)

¹²⁵ He was responsible for returning the *Madhhab* of al-Ash‘arī closer to *al-I‘tizāl*. He is counted as the second founder of the *Madhhab*. Like Abul-Hasan, he affirmed the Eternal Attributes of the Self such as Allāh’s Face, Two Hands, Two Eyes, His Highness and His Ascension over the Throne, and he refuted those who interpreted *al-Istiḡā’* (Allāh’s Ascension over the Throne) to mean *al-Istilā’* (that Allāh conquered His Throne). He negated the Discretionary Attributes in line with Ibn Kullāb. Imām adh-Dhahabī said that Abul-Walīd al-Bājī said in the book *Ikhtisār Firaq al-Fuqahā’* when discussing *Qādī* Abu Bakr al-Bāqillānī: “I asked Abu Dharr al-Harawī (d. 434 AH)—who was inclined to the Ash‘arī creed, ‘From where did you get this creed?’ He replied, ‘I was walking with Abul-Hasan ad-Dāruqutnī (d. 385 AH) in Baghdād, and we met Abu Bakr Ibn aṭ-Ṭayyib [al-Bāqillānī], the Ash‘arī. So, ad-Dāruqutnī embraced him, kissed his face and eyes. When they parted company, I asked him, ‘What is this that you have done? I cannot believe that you would have done such a thing—and you are the scholar of the era?!’ Ad-Dāruqutnī responded, ‘He is the *imām* of the Muslims, a defender of the Religion, *Qādī* Abu Bakr Muḥammad Ibn aṭ-Ṭayyib.’ So, from that moment onwards, I continued to visit him (i.e., al-Bāqillānī), and started following his creed.” Adh-Dhahabī said, ‘Abu Dharr took *al-Kalām* and the Creed of

In this stage there were others such al-Khaṭṭābī (d. 388 AH) though he was the furthest of them from *ʿIlmul-Kalām* and he has a book in refutation of them entitled *Dhammul-Kalām* ('The Censure of Speculative Theology'). Also, al-Bayhaqī (d. 458 AH) and Ibn ʿAsākir (d. 571 AH) put forth huge efforts in aiding the *Ashʿarī Madhhab* which is a reason for its widespread acceptance among the general people. Al-Bayhaqī for example gained repute in the field of *Ḥadīth* and was known to be a scholar, however his attachment to the *Ashʿarī* Creed aided of the people of misguided *taʿwīl* (false interpretation) instead of serving the *Madhhab* and Creed of *Ahlul-Ḥadīth was-Sunnah*.

Then we have those whom the *Ashʿarīs* lay claim to among the scholars who excelled in *Ḥadīth* of later times and wrote the explanations to the early books of *Ḥadīth* such as an-Nawawī (d. 676 AH رَحِمَهُ اللهُ), Ibn Hajr (d. 852 AH رَحِمَهُ اللهُ) and others, may Allāh's mercy be upon them. So, these scholars were affected by some of the beliefs of the *Ashʿarīs*

Abul-Hasan [al-Ashʿarī] from Abu Bakr Ibn aṭ-Ṭayyib [al-Bāqillānī] and spread it in Makkah. Then the Maghrabīs took it from him and carried it into Maghrib (Northwest Africa) and Spain. Before this, the scholars of Maghrib did not used to engage in *al-Kalām* (Speculative Theology)—rather they would seek precision in matters of *Fiqh*, *Ḥadīth* and Arabic—and they would not engage in futile discussions based upon the intellect. And this was the way of Abul-Walīd Ibn al-Faradī, Abu ʿUmar at-Talmankī, Makkī al-Qīsī, Abu ʿAmr ad-Dānī, Abu ʿUmar Ibn ʿAbdil-Barr and the [other] scholars." (See: *Tadhkirah al-Huffāz* 3/1104-1105, as-Siyar 17/558-559)

¹²⁶ Ibn Fawrak (d. 406) was a contemporary of al-Bāqillānī (d. 403). He was upon the methodology of *Ahlul-Kalām* and allegorical interpretation of the Attributes which did not 'conform' with the intellect—in fact, he resorted to *taʿwīl* of the Attributes more than his affirmation of them—and so he made *taʿwīl* of the 'Uluww of Allāh and His *Istiṣāʾ*. He also held that the *Akhbār al-Āḥād* in *Ḥadīth* do not amount to knowledge.

due to the age and environments they lived in, and how they were cultivated in the schools of learning. However, their origin remained in agreement with *Ahlus-Sunnah wal-Jamā'ah* (*Ahlul-Hadīth*) in their methodology and beliefs—and they did not agree with the *Kullābiyyah-Ash'ariyyah* in their foundational principle of *Ḥulūl al-Ḥawādith*. There is no doubt that the methodology and approach of *Al-Hāfidh* Ibn Hajr and *Imām* an-Nawawī are far from the *Philosopher-Ash'arīs* of today. So, whatever mistakes the likes of Ibn Hajr (رحمه الله) and an-Nawawī (رحمه الله) fell into, they were far closer to the *Madhhab* of the Salaf than the latter-day astray *Ash'arīs*. Furthermore, the likes of Ibn Fawrak and al-Bāqillānī falsely interpreted some of the Attributes and fell into opposition, however, the most notable of the *Kullābī-Ash'arīs* affirmed that Allāh will be seen by the believers on the Day of Judgement (*ar-Ru'yah*), while others would affirm the *Ru'yah* for Allāh while negating Direction (*al-Jihah*) from Him (جَلَّ وَعَلَا)¹²⁷ such as

¹²⁷ See *Kitāb al-Arba'īn fī Dalā'il at-Tawhīd* of Abu Ismā'īl al-Harawī (d. 481) where he said: “Chapter 16: Affirming Direction (*Al-Jihāt*) for Allāh, the Mighty and Majestic... The Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said: ‘Those who were just will be seated upon pulpits of light on the right side of the Most Merciful, the Mighty and Majestic—and both of His Hands are right Hands.’ (Reported by Muslim, no. 18)” ‘*Allāmah* Ibn ‘Uthaimīn said: “There appears in some books of the people of Speculative Theology (*Ahlul-Kalām*) where they say: ‘It is not allowed to describe Allah with being in particular direction at all.’ They reject the Highness of Allah and that He is above (*al-‘Uluww*), thinking that affirming this direction for Allah necessitates placing limitations upon Him. But this is not the case because we know that above the Throne there is nothing from the creation, there is none over it except Allāh, and there is absolutely nothing of His creation that encompasses or confines Him. So, we say: Allāh is in the direction of above because Allah’s

Abul-Hasan aṭ-Ṭabarī and al-Bayhaqī, so inconsistency was not uncommon among them.

So, in this this age of *al-Ash‘ariyyah al-Kullābiyyah* its scholars affirmed *aṣ-Ṣifāt al-Khabariyyah* and they accepted them as they were reported. They affirmed the Attributes of *al-‘Uluww* and *al-Istiwā’* for Allāh in conformity with the Creed of the *Ṣahābah* and *Salaf*. However, they opposed the *Salaf* in the Attribute of Allah’s Speech and the Discretionary Attributes—so, they attempted traversing a path between the *Sunnah* of Allāh’s Messenger (ﷺ) and the deviations of the *Mu‘tazilah*, and went astray, for which they were refuted.

The *Ash‘arīs* of this period as in all times were upon the foundation of the *Jahmiyyah*, *Mu‘tazilah* and *Kullābiyyah* in negating the Discre-

Messenger (ﷺ) said to the slave-girl, ‘Where is Allāh?’ The term ‘where’ is seeking to know the place. So, she said, ‘Above the sky.’ She affirmed that Allāh is above, and the Prophet (ﷺ) confirmed that and said, ‘Free her, for she is a believer.’ So, the direction affirmed for Allāh is not low or beneath—and the Highness of Allāh is affirmed for Him by way of the *Fitrah* (innate nature), sound intellect and the Revealed Texts. The affirmation of direction for Allāh is not encompassment of Him because of the fact that His Footstool (*al-Kursī*) extends over the Heavens and Earth, and it is the place of His two Feet—so, how can He (تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى) be confined by anything from His creation!? He is in the direction of above without any confinement, and it is not permitted to say, ‘There is something that confines Him or encompasses Him.’ We say, ‘There is over the ‘*Arsh* (the Throne) nothing besides Allāh, the Most Perfect, free of all imperfections.” (*Majmū‘ Fatāwā war-Rasā’il Al-‘Uthaimīn*, 10/1131)

tionary Attributes considering their affirmation to be ascribing incidents and events to Allāh, and therefore the affirmation of a body (*jism*) for Him (سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى). They clung to this foundation even though they differed with the *Mu‘tazilah* in the manner of its implementation and adding their own innovated nuances. So, the *Ash‘arīs* believed the Attributes of the Lord (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) that are connected to His Will (i.e., the Discretionary Attributes) are eternal (*Qadīmah-‘Azaliyyah*), without occurring at a certain time by His Will. They stated that Allāh’s Descending (*Nuzūl*) in the last third of the night, His Coming (*Majīr*) on the Day of Judgement, His Joy (*Farah*), His Anger (*Ghaḍab*), His Pleasure (*Riḍā*), and so on, are Eternal, not occurring at a time when He Wills—and they said the same about the Qur’ān that it is Eternal (*Qadīm-‘Azalī*) and He did not Speak with it at a certain time by His Will.¹²⁸

Furthermore, there is huge difference between this first age of *Ash‘arīs* and the later *Mu‘tazilite-Ash‘arīs* and *Ash‘arī-Philosophers* due to the extreme deviations of the latter two stages of *Ash‘ariyyah*. *Shaikhul-Islām* Ibn Taymiyyah stated:

Indeed *al-Hāfidh* Abu Bakr al-Bayhaqī (رَحِمَهُ اللَّهُ) and those like him were closer to *Ahlus-Sunnah* than the followers of Al-Ash‘arī of later times who left many of his beliefs for the beliefs of the *Mu‘tazilah*, *Jahmiyyah* and *Philosophers*.¹²⁹

The later *Ash‘arīs* who adopted the ideas of the *Mu‘tazilah* and the *Philosophers* displayed open hatred and vehement enmity towards *Ahlus-Sunnah wal-Jama‘ah* (i.e., the *Salafīs*) that has not ceased till this day—and that was not the way of the *Ash‘arīs* of the first era.

¹²⁸ See *Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā* of Ibn Taymiyyah, 5/411-412.

¹²⁹ *Al-‘Aqīdah al-Aṣbahāniyyah*, part of *al-Fatāwā al-Kubrā*, 5/513.

The Second Stage: The Mu‘tazilite-Ash‘arīs

This was the era of expansion beyond the first stage—so, during this stage, some of the notables of the later Ash‘arīs inclined towards the creed of the Mu‘tazilah in belief and methodology. The most important of these were:

1. Their negation of the Allāh’s Eternal Unceasing (*Dhātiyyah*), and Discretionary (*al-Ikhtiāriyyah*) Attributes including *al-‘Uluww* and *al-Istiwā’*.
2. Their adoption of the false interpretations (*ta’wīlāt*) of the Mu‘tazilah and agreeing upon interpretation of the Ascension of Allāh over the Throne to mean other than and actual Ascension.
3. Their rejection of the *Akhbār al-Āḥād*¹³⁰ in matters of ‘*Aqīdah*. This rejection had a great effect on what they considered as the source of knowledge in Creed. Under this banner they attacked the whole edifice of the Prophetic *Sunnah* and the Authentic Narrations—and so they introduced more principles of the *Jahmiyyah*, Mu‘tazilah and Philosophers into their Creed and laid down the rules of interpretation through metaphors, and therefore negation of the Attributes of Allāh reported in the Texts.

¹³⁰ *Khabr Al-Āḥād*: A narration with chains of transmission and narrators at each level of the chain that is limited to a particular number less than the category of *al-Mutawātir*. *Al-Mutawātir*: A narration which has been narrated by a large number of narrators at every level of the chain of narration, with numerous chains, without a specified limit. The *Āḥād* report is accepted and acted upon in both Belief and *Sharī‘ah* rulings so long as it is authentic. See *Hujjatu Khabril-Āḥād fil-‘Aqīdah* of al-Albānī (d. 1420 AH) pp. 5-6 and Ibn al-Qayyim in *al-I‘lām*, 2/394.

4. *Tawhīd* according to them is merely Allāh's *Rubūbiyyah* (Lordship) and they do not know or give attention to *Tawhīd al-'Ibādah*, just like the other sects of *Kalām*, and so they fell into further misguided principles involving polytheistic practices and means that lead to polytheism such as their claim that the Prophet (ﷺ) is alive with the actual life of this world which brought them in line with the deviations of the People of *Sufism*.

5. They displayed great enmity and waged war against *Ahlul-Sunnah* mustering whatever they could to oppose the Creed of the Salaf whilst excusing the deviations of the other sects from *Ahlul-Bid'ah*—and this trait has not ceased till this day.

6. The *Mu'tazilite-Ash'arīs* adopted the proof of *Ḥudūth al-Ajsām* (i.e., events and incidental attributes take place in bodies), and they posited it as a principle that cannot be opposed—and made it binding upon all Muslims. Through that, they negated the Attributes, and established the intellect as the basis for the accepted Creed even more so than the era of *Ash'arīs* before them—they delved deeper into *ʿIlmul-Kalām* which brought them closer to the ideas of the Philosophers.

In summary, this era saw the *Ash'arīs* taking more and more from the principles of the *Jahmiyyah*, *Mu'tazilah* and the Philosophers—as can be seen from the direction and inclination of al-Juwainī (رحمته الله) before his repentance. The *Ash'arī Madhhab* of this stage amalgamated with the innovated and deviated *Sufism*, as shown by the writings of Abul-Qāsim al-Qushayrī. Ibn Taymiyyah (رحمته الله) said:

The Mu‘tazilite-Ash‘arīs are negators of the *Şifāt al-Khabariyyah*¹³¹ and other than that.¹³²

Shaikhul-Islām also stated:

The Mu‘tazilite-Kullābīs are those who negate the *Şifāt al-Khabariyyah* while affirming only seven or eight Attributes.¹³³

And he (رحمۃ اللہ علیہ) said that a group of the later followers of Al-Ash‘arī, ‘brought into his *Madhhab* ideas that were from the principles of the Mu‘tazilah.’¹³⁴

The most notable Ash‘arīs of this stage were: ‘Abdul-Qāhir al-Baghdādī (d. 429 AH)¹³⁵, Abul-Ma‘ālī al-Juwaynī (d. 478 AH)¹³⁶, Abul-Qāsim

¹³¹ These Attributes can only be known from the texts of Book and *Sunnah*—such as Allāh’s two Eyes, two Hands, Face, Shin, Feet, etc. The affirmation of these Attributes cannot be ascertained through reason and intellect. We only know them because Allāh has informed us about them. (See Chapter 6)

¹³² *Aş-Şafidiyyah* of Ibn Taymiyyah, 1/285.

¹³³ *Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā*, 2/113.

¹³⁴ *Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā*, 12/203.

¹³⁵ He is the author of *al-Farq bayn al-Firaq* in which he gathered the names, origins, and descriptions of the early sects. He studied under the companions of the companions of Abul-Hasan al-Ash‘arī which explains why he fell into the errors of the Ash‘arīs in creed. Furthermore, he is the first of those (before al-Juwainī) in rejecting the *Khabr al-Āḥād*, negating the *Şifāt al-Khabariyyah* established in the Revealed Texts, and making *ta’wīl* of the Attributes of *al-‘Uluww* and *al-Istiwā’*. See *al-Aṭwār al-‘Aqīdah fil-Madhhab al-Ash‘arī*, p. 33.

¹³⁶ He is ‘Abdul-Malik Ibn ‘Abdullāh Ibn Yūsuf al-Juwainī ash-Shāfi‘ī. He was a scholar of the Shāfi‘ī *madhhab*—he was well-known as *Imām al-Haramayn*. He was from the major scholars of the *Ashā‘irah*—*Imām adh-Dhahabī* (رحمۃ اللہ علیہ) stated that al-Juwainī returned to the *Madhhab* of the Salaf in ‘*Aqīdah* at the

al-Qushayrī (d. 465 AH)¹³⁷, Abul-Fath ash-Shahrastānī (d. 479 AH)¹³⁸, and Abu Bakr Ibn al-‘Arabī (d. 543 AH).

end of his life. It is reported from him that he said: ‘If I had known in the beginning what I know now, I would not have busied myself with Speculative Theology (*Kalām*).’ (*As-Siyar* of adh-Dhahabī, 11/508) Abul-Fath aṭ-Ṭabarī said: ‘I entered upon Abu Ma‘ālī during his illness, and he said, ‘Bear witness that I have recanted from all my speech that is in opposition to the *Sunnah*—and that indeed I die upon that which the old women of Naysabūr die upon.’ (*As-Siyar*, 11/509)—and as-Subkī was not able to criticise its chain of narration. Adh-Dhahabī also that Abul-Hasan al-Qayrawānī, the student of al-Juwainī, said: ‘I heard Abul-Ma‘ālī saying: ‘My companions! Do not engage in studying *Kalām* for if I had known that beforehand where *Kalām* would lead me, I would never have busied myself with it.’ (*As-Siyar*, 11/508) He wrote his retraction from the *Ash‘arī* Creed in his treatise entitled *Risālatu fī Ithbāt al-Istiḥḍā’ wal-Fawqīyyah* (published in 1419 AH, *Dār Tawīq*).

¹³⁷ He was a student of al-Juwainī and agreed with him in the *ta’wīl* of *al-‘Uluww* and *al-Istiḥḍā’*, and held it was obligatory to make *ta’wīl*. He brought together *Sufism* and the *Ash‘arī Madhhab* (though some had already embarked upon this union to some degree)—and due to his efforts, many later notable *Ash‘arīs* were also well-known *Sufīs*. He refuted *Ahlus-Sunnah* naming them as *al-Hashawiyyah* (Worthless) and claimed that the *Ash‘arīs* were *Ahlus-Sunnah*.

¹³⁸ He is the author of *al-Milal wan-Nihal*, a study of religions and sects.

The Third Stage: The *Philosopher-Ash‘arīs*.

This was the age in which Philosophy and the *Ash‘arī* Theological Speculation (*‘Ilm al-Kalām*) amalgamated—and some of those who ascribed themselves to Philosophy and promulgated its ideas appeared such as Ibn Sīnā (d. 427 AH).¹³⁹ The *Ash‘arīs* of this age went further than those who preceded them in misguidance in extending the principle that the ‘intellect is incontestable’, and ‘the intellect is dominant over the Revealed Texts absolutely’. So, they continued to interpret and distort the Attributes of Allāh and, ultimately negate

¹³⁹ He is well-known heretic known in Europe as *Avicenna*: Abū ‘Alī al-Ḥusain Ibn ‘Abdullāh Ibn Sīnā al-Balkhi, influenced heavily by Greek Aristotelian philosophy and Neoplatonism. He studied the works of Porphyry (d. 305 BCE), Aristotle (d. 322 CE) and Ptolemy (d. 170 BCE)—and he wrote extensively about philosophy in Persian and occasionally in Arabic—and his writings became source references in *Kalām* (Speculative Theology) discourse. Ibn al-Qayyim (d. 752 AH) said: ‘Ibn Sīnā was from the *Qarāmiṭah-Bāṭiniyyah* who do not believe in a beginning or end of the universe, nor in a Lord and Creator, nor in a Messenger sent by Allāh, the Most High.’ (*Ighāthat al-Luhfān*, 2/1031) Ibn Hajr (d. 852 AH) cited the Ibn Abil-Hamawī, the Shāfi‘ī scholar as saying: ‘The scholars agreed that Ibn Sīnā believed that the universe was eternal, and he rejected the physical resurrection of the bodies after death but did not reject the spiritual resurrection. It is narrated that Ibn Sīnā said: ‘Allāh does not know the detailed knowledge of things—rather His knowledge is general.’ The scholars of his time and those who came after him—whose sayings in the fundamentals and the subsidiary affairs are trusted—were clearcut in their words concerning him: that he was upon disbelief and likewise Abu Naṣr al-Farābī was upon disbelief due to their creed in these matters—and the fact that they opposed the beliefs of the Muslims.” (*Lisān al-Mizān* of Ibn Hajr, 2/293)

them. They coincided in methodology with the Philosophers in metaphorical interpretations of the Revealed Texts in order to sustain their Creeds—and they battled with each other when the Philosophers negated many of the foundations of Muslim Creed that the *Ash‘arīs* affirmed. However, the *Ash‘arite* refutations of the excesses of the Philosophers proved to be weak because they both ultimately established their doctrines on the intellect, reason, and metaphorical interpretations of the Texts. Ibn Taymiyyah said, ‘The *Ash‘arī-Philosophers*, negators of the Attributes.’¹⁴⁰ And he (رَحِمَهُ اللهُ) said:

The scholars of the *Mu‘tazilah* and their *shaikhs*, and the scholars of the *Ash‘ariyyah* and the *Karrāmiyyah* and those like them were better in their affirmation of *Tawhīd ar-Rubūbiyyah* than the *Ash‘arī* Philosophers such as ar-Rāzī, al-Āmidī and their ilk because they mixed it (i.e., Allāh’s *Rubūbiyyah*) with the *Tawhīd* of the Philosophers such as Ibn Sīnī and his likes.¹⁴¹

And Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808 AH) said:

The latecomers from the *Mutakallimūn* blended the principles of Speculative Theology (*Kalām*) with Philosophy (*Falṣafah*) due to their shared fields of study—and because the subject and questions of *‘Ilm al-Kalām* resemble the subject and questions of Greek Theological Metaphysics—so they came together and became one [field of] study.¹⁴²

‘Abdul al-Qādir Ibn Badrān ad-Dimashqī (d. 1346 AH رَحِمَهُ اللهُ) said:

If you look into the books that claim to be *Ash‘arīrah*, you will find that they are upon the *Madhhab* (School) of Aristotle and those

¹⁴⁰ *Aṣ-Ṣafidiyyah* of Ibn Taymiyyah, 1/285.

¹⁴¹ *Minhāj as-Sunnah an-Nabawiyyah*, 5/295.

¹⁴² *Muqaddimah Ibn Khaldūn*, 2/321.

who followed it such as Ibn Sīnā (d. 427 AH) and al-Farābī (d. 339 AH).¹⁴³

You will see that their books are entitled *ʿIlm at-Tawhīd* (the Knowledge of *Tawhīd*)—which conceals their true subject title which is the Theology of [Greek] Metaphysics. And if you are any doubt regarding what we state, then look at the book *al-Mawāqif* of ʿAḍud ad-Dīn al-Ījī (d. 756 AH) and its explanation by Sayyid al-Jurjānī and its annotations. Then consider the books *al-Ishārāt* and *ash-Shifā* of Ibn Sīnā and the explanations of the first book—you will see all of them emanate from the same valley without any difference between them, except in the straightforward use of the titles such as *al-Muʿtazilah* and *al-Jabriyyah*.¹⁴⁴

Al-Ashʿariyyah al-Mutafalsafah (The *Ashʿarī-Philosophers*) had distinguishing signs that stood them apart from the early *Ashʿarīs* such as:

¹⁴³ He is the philosopher Abu Naṣr Muhammad Ibn Muhammad al-Farābī known among the Arab philosophers as the Second Teacher (with Aristotle being the First Teacher). He entered Harrān and studied under the Sabian Philosophers thus completing his study of philosophy. Al-Farābī claimed that the philosophers had attained greater perfection than the Prophet (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ), and that the Prophet used concepts to deceive people from the realities. He believed that the universe was created from eternal matter. He affirmed a spiritual resurrection, denied the bodily resurrection and affirmed resurrection only for the enlightened souls not the ignorant ones. (See *Majmūʿ al-Fatāwā* of Ibn Taymiyyah 2/67, *al-Bidāyah wan-Nihāyah* of Ibn Kathīr 15/207, *Lisān al-Mizān* of Ibn Hajr 3/179)

¹⁴⁴ *Al-Madkhal ilā Madhhab al-Imām Ahmad* of Ibn Badrān, checking of ʿAbdullāh at-Turkī, p. 496.

1. They completely turned away from the Book of Allāh, the *Sunnah* of the Messenger (ﷺ) and the sayings of the early *Salaf* as sources of learning and understanding. They invented principles and laws in order to reject the sources of Religion such as ‘The Law of Allegorical Interpretation’ (*Qānūn at-Ta’wīl*) of Abu Hāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505) and ‘The Universal Law’ (*Al-Qanūn al-Kulli*) of Fakhr ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī (d. 606) wherein they assert that the proofs found in the Revelation do not equate to certain knowledge. Ibn Taymiyyah (رحمته الله) explained the argument of these *Ash‘arī-Philosophers*:

The speech of the one who says,¹⁴⁵ ‘When there is a contradiction between the Revealed proofs (i.e., the Qur’ān and *Sunnah*) and the intellectual proofs, or between Revelation and reason, or between what is apparent in the Revealed Texts and the decisive intellect—or other similar terms that can be applied—then either the two statements are harmonised, which is impossible because that would be to harmonise between two opposites, or both statements are rejected [because there is no way to harmonise two opposites].’¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵ He is referring to Fakhr ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī.

¹⁴⁶ This is well established from Fakhr ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī in his work entitled *Ta’sīs at-Taqdīs*, also known as *Asās at-Taqdīs*, where he said (p. 210): ‘Either we believe in that which is from the intellect and in the Revelation—however, that would necessitate believing in two things that contradict each other—or that we reject both of these that contradict each other, and that is [also] not possible.’ Ar-Rāzī (d. 606) is from the most famous *imāms* of the *Ash‘arīs* who combined the creed of *al-Ash‘ariyyah* with Philosophy (*al-Falsafah*) and *al-I’tizāl*. See his biography in *Wafāyāt al-A’yān* 3/381-385, *Shadharāt adh-Dhahab* 5/21, *Ṭabaqāt ash-Shāfi‘iyyah* 5/33-40, *Lisān al-Mizān* 4/246-249, *As-Siyar* 7/203.

Or precedence is given to the Revelation and that is impossible because the intellect is the foundation of the Revelation—so if we were to give Revelation precedence, then that would be to disparage the intellect which is the foundation of Revelation. And to disparage the foundation of something is to disparage the thing itself (i.e., the Revelation). Therefore, giving precedence to the Revelation is to disparage the both the Revelation and the intellect. **So, it is therefore necessary to give precedence to the intellect**—thereafter, the Revelation is either interpreted allegorically (*yuta'awallu*) [to agree with the intellect] or by relegating the texts of the Revelation and not ascribing meaning to them (*yufawwaḍu*).'

Ar-Rāzī and his followers made this doctrine (i.e., giving precedence to the intellect) a universal law (*qānūn kullī*) with respect to what could be derived from the Books of Allāh (جَلَّوَعَلَا) and the speech of His Prophets (عَلَيْهِمُ السَّلَام) and what could not be derived from them. For this reason, ar-Rāzī and his followers refused to accept the conclusions of what the Prophets and Messengers came with in the subject of the Attributes of Allāh (جَلَّوَعَلَا), and other than that from the matters that they informed us about. They imagined that reason contradicts what the Prophets came with—and some of them added to that that the Revealed Proofs do not provide certainty. And we have plentiful speech from the Textual evidence clarifying this saying of theirs in other places. As for this Law (*al-Qānūn*) that they have established, then they were preceded in it by a group of others—and from them was

Abu Hāmid [al-Ghazālī]. He invented a law in answer to questions that he was posed¹⁴⁷ regarding certain Texts [from the Qur’ān and *Ḥadīth*] that caused the questioner difficulties in comprehending—such as the questions he was asked by *Qaḍī* Abu Bakr Ibn al-‘Arabī¹⁴⁸. However, Abu Bakr differed with him in many of the answers, and he would say, ‘Our Shaikh Abu Hāmid delved into the depths of the Philosophers (*Filāsifah*)—and when he wanted to leave, he was not able to do so.’ And it is narrated from Abu Hāmid himself that he said, ‘I have little commodity in the field of *Ḥadīth* studies.’¹⁴⁹

So, Abu Bakr Ibn al-‘Arabī put forth another law that was based upon the methodology of Abul-Ma‘ālī [al-Juwainī] and others before him such as *al-Qāḍī* Abu Bakr al-Bāqillānī.

Like this law (*al-qānūn*) that has been posited by these individuals, we find with every group—they lay down a law concerning what the Prophets (ﷺ) came with from Allāh. So, they invent a principle that they believe in and depend upon, and they think that their intellects have affirmed it—and therefore, the Revelation that the Prophets (ﷺ) came with must follow that [law]. So, whatever [the Prophets came with that] agrees

¹⁴⁷ This is a reference to the book authored by al-Ghazālī (d. 505 AH) entitled *Qānūn at-Ta’wīl* in which he answered questions posed to him. See the treatise printed in Cairo in 1940 CE/1359 AH, ‘Izāt al-Husainī.

¹⁴⁸ Abu Bakr Muhammad Ibn ‘Abdullāh Ibn Muhammad al-‘Arabī al-Ma‘āfirī, al-Qāḍī al-Ishbīlī al-Mālikī—born in Ishbīliyyah in 486 AH and died in 543 AH. He was from the scholars of *Mālikī Maḍhhab*. He travelled to the east and studied under al-Ghazālī. He was made the judge of Ishbīliyyah. See his biography in *Wafāyāt al-A’yān* 3/423, *As-Siyar* 7/106 and the introduction of as-Sayyid Muhibbud-Dīn al-Khaṭīb of *al-‘Awāṣim minaul-Qawāṣim*.

¹⁴⁹ See *Qānūn at-Ta’wīl* of al-Ghazālī, p. 16.

with their law (*qānūn*), they accept it, and whatever opposes it, they do not follow.

And this [method] resembles the laws laid down by the Christians in their Nicene Creed¹⁵⁰ wherein they founded the Creed of their faith—and they rebuffed the texts of the Torah and the Gospels concerning it...

As for these these [*al-Ash‘ariyyah al-Mutafalsafah*], then they made their laws (*al-qawānīn*) based upon opinions according to their intellects—and they were wrong in their opinions and their intellects.¹⁵¹

So, the *Ash‘arī-Philosophers* gave priority to logic, reason, and the laws of philosophy over the *Sharī‘ah* Texts. They were ignorant of the sciences of *Ḥadīth* and could not distinguish between the authentic and weak narrations—and they became known for disparaging the narrations of the Companions. These later *Ash‘arī* Philosophers were ignorant of the works of the early *Ash‘arī* scholars such as Abu-

¹⁵⁰ Ash-Shaharastānī cited the complete text of this treatise in *al-Milal wan-Nihal* 1/531-533. It was the creed adopted by the Roman Emperor Constantine I (d. 337 CE), and Christian leaders and Bishops when they gathered in Nicaea in 325 CE. The Nicene Creed states, ‘We believe in one God, the Father, maker of all things; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father, the only begotten [son] that is of the essence of the Father, and we believe in the Holy Ghost.’ This is the enduring profession of faith of both the Orthodox and Catholic Churches. Later doctrines that were non-Nicene were considered heretical by the Nicene Christians.

¹⁵¹ *Dar’u Ta‘ārud al-‘Aql wan-Naql* of Ibn Taymiyyah 1/4-7, (verification of Muhammad Rashād Sālim, *Jāmi‘atul-Imām* Riyādh edition, 1411 AH/1991 CE).

Hasan al-Ash‘arī, Abu Muhammad Ibn Kullāb and others. Furthermore, the connection between the *Ash‘arīs* of this age and Four *Imāms*¹⁵² broke away.¹⁵³

2. Their methodology was one of introducing doubts into the Islamic Creed as is well-known from ar-Rāzī’s writings—they were racked with doubts and uncertainties that led them to utter heresies and words of unbelief such as what is written in the book ‘*As-Sirr al-Mak-tūm fī Mukhāṭabat as-Sihr wan-Nujūm*’ (The Hidden Secret in the Conversation of Magic and the Stars) of Fakhrud-Dīn ar-Rāzī which is a work on astrology, fortune-telling, talismans, and incantations of magic; and likewise, ‘*Al-Maḍnūn bihi ‘ala Ghairi Ahlihi*’ al-Ghazālī which is a book on the mysteries of the human soul.

So, in this age, most of the doctrinal works of the *Ash‘arī-Philosophers* were in conformity with the methodologies of the Philosophers upon the three well known categories: (1) Logic (the study of what makes a sound argument—this is fundamental since philosophy is based on reason), (2) Naturalism (the idea that natural laws operate in the universe) and (3) Metaphysics (the study on the fundamental nature of reality and the first principles of being). And, were it not for the fact that they would sometimes quote from the *Sharī‘ah* Texts, it would not be possible to distinguish between the books of *‘Ilm al-Kalām* of the *Ash‘arīs* [of this age] from the books of Philosophy. Indeed, one of their leading personalities, at-Taftazānī (d. 792 AH) admitted, “...until it reached the point where it was not possible to distinguish [the speech of the *Ash‘arīs*] from Philosophy were it not for

¹⁵² Abu Hanīfah (d. 150 AH), Mālik Ibn Anas (d. 179 AH), Ash-Shāfi‘ī (d. 204 AH) and Ahmad Ibn Hanbal (d. 241 AH).

¹⁵³ *Dar’u Ta‘ārud al-‘Aql wan-Naql* 2/159.

the inclusion of some Revealed Texts—and this was the *Kalām* of the latecomers.”¹⁵⁴

3. *Tawhīd* (Monotheism) according to the *Philosopher-Ash‘arīs* was nothing more than Allāh’s Lordship (*Tawhīd ar-Rubūbiyah*). Due to this, they embraced the doctrines of the *Tasawwuf* (i.e., *Sufism*), and entered the paths that led them to polytheism (*Shirk*)¹⁵⁵. Due to this they developed a strong enmity towards the *People of Tawhīd* who rejected the worship of other than Allāh and all the means that lead to it, including devotion to shrines and graves. That is because polytheism according to the *Ahlul-Kalām Philosopher-Ash‘arīs* only occurs if one rejects the Lordship of Allāh—and rejects the fact that He alone is the Creator and Provider. As for calling upon the ‘saints’ in their graves and shrines, seeking their aid, deliverance, intercession, etc., then they do not consider that to be *Shirk* right up until this day. This is, in fact, a hallmark of today’s *Philosopher Neo-Ghazalite Ash‘arīs*.

4. The *Philosopher-Ash‘arīs* followed the Philosophers in their assertions that ‘Allāh is not inside the universe nor outside it, not above it nor beneath it, not touching nor separate from it.’¹⁵⁶

5. The *Philosopher-Ash‘arīs* of this age followed their predecessors from the *Kullābī-Ash‘arīs* and *Mu‘tazilī-Ash‘arīs* (as well as the *Jahmiyyah*, *Mu‘tazilah* and *Kullābiyyah*) and negated the Discretionary Attributes considering their affirmation to be incidental attributes and

¹⁵⁴ *Sharh al-‘Aqā’id an-Nafsiyyah* of at-Taftazānī, p. 21.

¹⁵⁵ See *al-Aṭwār al-‘Aqīdah fil-Madḥhab al-Ash‘arī*, p. 50, *Manhaj Ahlus-Sunnah wa Manhaj al-Ash‘irah fi Tawhidillāh* of Khālid Nūr, published 1416 AH, Makatabah Ghurabā, Madīnah, pp. 165-169.

¹⁵⁶ *Mawāqif fi ‘Ilmil-Kalām* p. 272, *Hiwār ma‘ Ash‘arī* pp. 79-80. See *al-Aṭwār al-‘Aqīdah fil-Madḥhab al-Ash‘arī*, p. 50

events within bodies—and so, they did not affirm except the seven Attributes that agreed with their intellect and innovated principles.¹⁵⁷

6. However, the *Philosopher-Ash‘arīs* in this age differed with their predecessors (the *Kullābī-Ash‘arīs*) and instead agreed with the *Mu‘tazilah* in negating the *Ṣifāt al-Khabariyyah*. They rejected the Attributes of *al-Istiwā’* and *al-‘Uluww*—and claimed that their affirmation necessitates *Tajsim* (ascribing a body to Allāh) and *Tashbīh* (resembling Him to the created beings). So, they agreed with al-Juwainī and the *Mu‘tazilah* who interpreted *al-Istiwā’* (Ascension) to mean *al-istilā’* (to conquer)—and they interpreted *ar-Ru’yah* (the believer’s seeing Allāh in Paradise) to mean increase in knowledge, which is the saying of the *Mu‘tazilah*.¹⁵⁸ And this is the enduring creed of the *Ash‘ariyyah* till this time.

7. The *Philosopher-Ash‘arīs* held strictly to the principle of *Ḥudūth al-Ajsām* and kept it as a pillar necessary for refuting those who claimed that the universe is eternal. They took this principle—i.e., that incidents and events can only happen in bodies (and all bodies are created)—and made it a central pillar in their refutation of those who believed in the eternity of the universe. This principle (or proof) is at the heart of *‘Ilm al-Kalām*—and it is the proof utilised by the Negators of the Discretionary Attributes.¹⁵⁹ Armed with this principle,

¹⁵⁷ *Mawqif Ibn Taymiyyah min al-Ash‘arīyah*, 2/725, 809.

¹⁵⁸ *Mawqif Ibn Taymiyyah min al-Ash‘arīyah*, 3/1377.

¹⁵⁹ See *Al-Usūl allatī banā ‘alaihā al-Mubtadi‘ah Maḍḥhabahum fiṣ-Ṣifāt war-Radd ‘alaihā min Kalām Shaikhil-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah* of ‘Abdul-Qādir Ṣūfī, published 1418 AH by *Maktabah al-Ghurabā al-Athariyyah*, al-Madīnah, 1/397; *Fakhr ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī wa Ārā’uhu al-Kalāmiyyah wal-Fasafiyyah* of Muhammad Zarkān, published by *Dār al-Fikr*, p. 420

they introduced a methodology designed to acquire knowledge of the Religion and its Laws—and this opposed the Methodology of Allāh’s Messenger (ﷺ) and the *Salaf* of the *Ummah* (رضي الله عنه).

8. The *Philosopher-Ash‘arīs* were known for belittlement, hatred, disparagement, and mockery of *Ahlus-Sunnah wal-Jamā‘ah*. They used derogatory terms against *Ahlus-Sunnah* that were designed to cause the Muslims to flee from them such as *al-Mushabbihah* (the Resemblers), *al-Hashawiyyah* (the Worthless), and *al-Jismiyyah* (The Embodiers). They would not speak about those who followed the *Madhhab* of the *Salaf* and *Ahlul-Ḥadīth* except with vile and wicked speech seeking to refute them and diminish their worth in the eyes of the Muslims. The first people to use the term *al-Hashawiyyah* were the *Mu‘tazilah* who said that the Companion ‘Abdullāh Ibn ‘Umar (رضي الله عنه) was a *Hashawī* (worthless). As for the terms *al-Mujassimah* (the Embodiers) and *al-Mushabbihah*, then every sect that denied or negated the Attributes of Allāh labelled those who affirmed the Attributes with these labels. So, this age of *al-Ash‘ariyyah al-Mutafalsafah* opposed the Creed of Abul-Hasan al-Ash‘arī (رحمته الله) in many ways. The great scholars of the *Salaf* would refute severely those who claimed that affirmation of Allāh’s was tantamount to resemblance (*tashbīh*) of the created beings.¹⁶⁰

9. These *al-Ash‘ariyyah al-Mutafalsafah* remained upon *Ijā‘* in the issue of *Imān*, and upon *Jabr* in the affair of Pre-decree—same as the previous *Ash‘arīs*.¹⁶¹

¹⁶⁰ See *Sharh Usūl I’tiqād Ahlis-Sunnah wal-Jamā‘ah* of al-Lālikā’ī 4/532, *Dhamm al-Kalām* of al-Harawī 4/313 no. 1177, 4/533 no. 939.

¹⁶¹ See *Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā* of Ibn Taymiyyah 6/55, *al-Firaq al-Kalāmiyyah* p. 58.

10. These *Philosopher-Ash'arīs* represent the enduring Creed of the *Ash'arīs* until this time of ours. There was not among them a true scholar in the sciences of the *Sharī'ah* such as *Ḥadīth*, *Tafsīr*, etc., as was found among them in previous times. Their scholarship was in the fields Philosophy, Scepticism, Greek Logic, Rhetoric, Gnosticism, etc. So, in order to raise their leading personalities, they would ascribe to them exaggerated titles such as *Hujjatul-Islām* (the Proof of Islām) for al-Ghazālī. And *Imām* Abul-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī's final work, *al-Ibānah*, is viewed as heretical. For this reason, they exert every effort to falsify its ascription to Abul-Hasan (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ).

As for some of the scholars of *Ḥadīth* who were affected by some of the sayings the *Ash'ariyyah al-Kullābiyyah* and spoke with them in some instances, then it is not correct to ascribe to them that were *Ash'arīs*, because they did not adopt the principles of the *Ash'ariyyah* nor propagate them, as we have mentioned previously. So, these scholars (affected to a degree by the *Ash'ariyyah al-Kullābiyyah*) were closer to the *Sunnah* and its people in both era and methodology—and the *Philosopher-Ash'arīs* of this third stage were the furthest from all that which came before, and they remain upon that till this day of ours.

11. As for other affairs of belief such as the precedence given to the Rightly Guided Caliphs and the virtues of the Companions, belief in the Day of Resurrection, Paradise, Hellfire, the Intercession on Judgement Day, that the sinners will not be in Hell forever, and so on, then the *Ash'arīs* of all the ages have been in agreement with *Ahlus-Sunnah wal-Jamā'ah*.¹⁶²

¹⁶² See *Majmū' al-Fatāwā* of Ibn Taymiyyah 6/55, *Mawqif Ibn Taymiyyah min al-Ash'irah*, 2/726; *al-Aṭwār al-'Aqīdah fil-Madḥhab al-Ash'arī*, p. 51-53.

The most notable proponents of *al-Ash‘ariyyah* in this age included Abu Hāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505 AH)¹⁶³, Fakhr ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī (d. 606 AH)¹⁶⁴, al-Āmidī (d. 631 AH)¹⁶⁵ and ‘Aḍud ad-Dīn al-Ījī (d. 756 AH).

¹⁶³ Abu Hāmid Muhammad Ibn Muhammad al-Ghazālī aṭ-Ṭūsī, born in 450 AH and died in 505 AH. He accompanied and studied under *Imām al-Haramain* al-Juwainī for a while and he mastered *al-Kalām* and argumentation. He went through various stages in his life: he became engrossed with Philosophy and eventually abandoned it and refuted it—then he focused on Speculative Theology (*‘Ilmul-Kalām*) and became its leading proponent. He then took to the path of the *Bāṭiniyyah* seeking hidden realities and concealed meanings in the *Sharī‘ah*—after turning away from that, he turned towards *Sufism*. The scholars of Islam refuted him, even his own student and companion, Abu Bakr Ibn al-‘Arabī stated: ‘Our teacher Abu Hāmid delved deeply into philosophy, then he desired to exit from it but was not able to, and he had speech agreeing with the beliefs of the *Bāṭiniyyah* that can be found in his books.’ Ibn Taymiyyah makes the point that though Abu Hāmid was endowed with strong intelligence that led him to eventually refute the philosophers and declare them to be unbelievers, and he venerated prophethood—nevertheless there was still in some of his speech and writings the ideas of philosophy and its principles in opposition to *Sunnah* and sound reason. For this reason, he was refuted by a group of the scholars of Khurasān, Irāq, Morocco and Spain. Ibn Taymiyyah also stated that the likes of Abul-Ma‘ālī and al-Ghazzālī had little knowledge of the narrations of the early Salaf—and likewise their knowledge of *Ḥadīth* was not strong such that they could be counted among the people of specialisation. They were not acquainted with *Aḥādīth* of al-Bukhārī and Muslim except as the common people—they would not distinguish between a *ḥadīth mutawātir* known to the people of knowledge and a fabricated *ḥadīth* that is a lie—and their books testify to this and to other strange matters. It is said about al-Ghazzālī that he returned to the path of *Ahlul-Ḥadīth* at the end of his life, and Allāh

knows best. (See *Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā* of Ibn Taymiyyah 4/71-72, *Siyar A‘lām an-Nubalā’* of adh-Dhahabī 19/323, 328)

¹⁶⁴ *Shaikhul-Islām* Ibn Taymiyyah (رحمۃ اللہ علیہ) reported the regret of some of those who delved into *Kalām* and Philosophy among the Muslims and were misguided through it, such as Fakhr ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī (died 606 AH), who propounded self-sufficiency of the intellect—and giving reason and ‘rational thought’ precedence over the Revealed Texts. In the end, ar-Rāzī said with no small amount of regret, “I have looked into, and reflected over the paths of *Kalām* and the philosophical methodologies—and I did not see in any of it a cure for the afflicted, nor a quenching of the thirst of those who were desperately thirsty. I found (in the end) that the nearest of paths was the path of the Qurān. So, read in affirmation of the Attributes, ‘*The Most Merciful has ascended over the Throne.*’ (Tāhā: 10) And His (تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى) saying, ‘*To Him ascend good words.*’ (Fātir: 10) And read concerning negation of resemblance to Him, ‘*There is nothing like unto Him.*’ (Ash-Shūrā: 11) And His (تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى) saying, ‘*And they cannot encompass Him with their knowledge.*’ (Tāhā: 11) The one who experiences what I experienced and went through what I went through will come to realise what I now realise.” Commenting on this, ‘*Allāmah* Muhammad Amān Al-Jāmī (رحمۃ اللہ علیہ) stated, ‘Speculative Theology is based on philosophy, whether it be the philosophy of the Greeks or the philosophies of those who ascribe themselves to Islam.’ He continued, ‘Perhaps Allah made the final affair of ar-Rāzī upon this, so if that is the case, then it means that he repented.’ (See *Sharh al-Fatāwā al-Hamawīyyah Al-Kubrā* of Ibn Taymiyyah, 1/67, 76)

¹⁶⁵ Ibn Taymiyyah said: ‘From the well-known narrations that have reached us is that *Shaikh* Abu ‘Amr Ibn Aṣ-Ṣalāh (d. 643 AH) commanded that the school that was in the hands of Abul-Hasan al-Āmidī (died 631) be seized. He said: ‘Seizing it from him is more virtuous than seizing control of the city of Acre [from the Christian Crusaders].’ (*Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā* 28/232)

Summary of the Difference in the Stages of the Evolution of the *Ash‘arī Madhhab*¹⁶⁶

No.	Issue	<i>Ash‘ariyyah Kullābiyyah</i>	<i>Ash‘ariyyah Mu‘tazilah</i>	<i>Ash‘ariyyah Mutafalsafah</i>
1	Sources of Religion	Qur‘ān, Sunnah—with emphasis on the intellect	Intellect	Intellect, Logic and philosophy
2	Method of derivation	Interpreta- tion of the texts at times (due to the <i>Jahmī</i> princi- ple)	Interpreta- tion (<i>ta‘wīl</i>) and refusal to accept the <i>Āḥād Ḥadīths</i> .	Distortion of the Revealed Texts, and in- terpretation
3	Stance towards the Salaf and early <i>Ahlul-Ḥadīth</i>	Praise of them	Disparage- ment and finding faults	Open unre- strained en- mity
4	Stance towards the <i>Mu‘tazilah</i>	Opposition and enmity	Agreement with them	Agreement, and lifting of differences
5	Stance towards Philosophy	Opposition and enmity	Benefited from them	Agreement and praise
6	Stance towards <i>Manṭaq</i> (Logic)	Refuted it	Quiet regarding it	Embraced it and spread it
7	<i>Tawhīd al-‘Ibādah</i>	Some good indications	Connected to Sufism	Defence of <i>Shirk</i> and its paths
8	Discretionary Attributes (<i>aṣ-Ṣiḥāṭ al- Ikhtiyāriyyah</i>)	Negators	Negators	Negators
9	<i>Aṣ-Ṣiḥāṭ al-Khabariyyah</i>	General Affirmation	Negators	Negators

¹⁶⁶ See *al-Aṭwār al-‘Aqīdah fil-Madhhab al-Ash‘arī*, p. 54-55.

10	Allāh's Highness: <i>Al-'Uluww</i>	Affirmed it	Negated it	Negated it: 'Allāh is not inside the universe nor outside of it'
11	Allāh's Ascension: <i>Al-Istiwā'</i>	Affirmed it	Interpretation (<i>ta'wīl</i>)	Interpretation to mean <i>al-istilā'</i> (i.e., to conquer)
12	Seeing Allāh: <i>Ar-Ru'yah</i>	Affirmed it	Affirmation without direction or meeting with Allāh	Interpretation to mean increase in knowledge
13	<i>Imān</i>	<i>Murji'ah</i> in general terms	<i>Murji'ah</i>	<i>Murji'ah</i>
14	Pre-Decree: <i>Al-Qadar</i>	<i>Jabriyyah</i>	<i>Jabriyyah</i>	<i>Jabriyyah</i>
15	<i>Ṣahābah</i> and the Caliphs	Agreement with <i>Ahlus-Sunnah</i>	Agreement with <i>Ahlus-Sunnah</i>	Agreement with <i>Ahlus-Sunnah</i>
16	Hereafter and Intercession	Agreement with <i>Ahlus-Sunnah</i>	Agreement with <i>Ahlus-Sunnah</i>	Agreement with <i>Ahlus-Sunnah</i>

And all praise is for Allāh, the Lord of the worlds, who has guided us to Islām and the Sunnah.