

A DISCUSSION

at the



*A talk in the Barber-shop between three
Muslims: An Ash'aree, an Atharee,
and a New Muslim.*



A Discussion in the Barbershop

This is a narrative of the discussion that took place in one of the barbershops in the USA between three Muslims who were all going to get a shape-up before Jum'ah. Abdullah Johnson who ascribes to the Athari creed, Ameer Jalloh who ascribes to the Ash'aree creed, and Tyrone Smith who is a newly converted Muslim. While the barber was cutting their hair and trimming their moustaches; an interesting conversation arose that I thought would be beneficial to share with all of you.

My name is Akhuka Fillah, from the USA who is relaying what was overhead in the barbershop one day when I went to get an edge up.

Abdullah: Assalamu alaykum my brothers! How is everyone feeling today? Ya'll getting ready for Jum'ah today?

Ameer Jalloh: Wa alaykum as salaam wa rahmatullahi wa barakatuhu.

Tyrone Smith: Wa alaykum as salaam wa rahmatullahi wa barakatuhu. It's good to see you Abdullah. How have you been?

Abdullah: Alhamdulillah. Good akhi. I'm just working and trying to make it to the masjid as much as I can. I also signed up for some Arabic courses online. We have to try our best to learn the Arabic Language my brother.

Tyrone: Wow! That's great. Why is learning Arabic so important akhi. Can't we just depend upon the translation of the meanings of the Quran?

Ameer: The Arabic Language is the language that Allah chose to send His final revelation in.

Abdullah: The Arabic Language is a clear language, it's not as difficult to learn as other languages. It's very easy to read if you learn the proper pronunciation of the Arabic Alphabet.

Tyrone: That's good to know. I'm definitely going to look into registering for some Arabic classes in our masjid.

Abdullah looks over at Ameer: How are you akhi? First time seeing you in here? Are you from here? Or just passing through?

Ameer: Alhamdulillah my brother. I'm originally from Senegal. I've been here in the USA for some time now. I'm actually here visiting one of my friends here in NJ. There are a lot of brothers here who study the same books that I do.

Abdullah: Ok. That's great. Well I hope you enjoy your stay!

Ameer: Shukran akhi. I appreciate your inquiring. By the way, is there any Ash'aree or Tijaani masjid here in town?

Abdullah: Ash'aree masjid?! Uh, why would you want to go to one of those masjid, my brother.

Ameer: Well, I was born, raised, and studied the Ash'aree madthab in my country and I heard that there were some brothers and a few communities here in NJ that study and teach their creed.

Abdullah: Ok. I believe there are one or two communities here, but I don't know exactly where they are. I normally attend the big masjid-Masjid Atharee-that has the largest congregation. I'm not too familiar with brothers who ascribe to the Ash'aree creed. However, I will tell you my brother

that the larger the congregation, the more rewards we receive. They also have regular classes for Arabic, Tafsir, Fiqh, and most importantly creed.

Ameer: You said, “most importantly creed”?!

Abdullah: Yes, of course.

Ameer: So what creed do you follow?

Abdullah: I follow the creed of the righteous predecessors. The creed of the ‘main body of Muslims’, the ‘Jama’ah’. I try to follow the creed of what the Prophet Muhammad and His companions were upon, i.e. the main body of Muslims.

Ameer: Aha. I see. How about you brother Tyrone?

Tyrone: Me too akhi. Since I’ve accepted Islam, I’ve been benefitting from the lectures and classes at the big masjid. The way that the sheikh teaches is really wonderful. He simplifies everything and makes it very easy to understand.

Ameer: So Abdullah what books are you guys studying for creed?

Abdullah: Mainly the books of Sheikul Islam ibn Taymiyyah, Usoolus Sunnah of Imam Ahmed, Aqeedah At Tahawiyyah, Ash Shariah of Imam Al Ajuree, As Sunnah by Abu Bakr Al Khalaal. Many of the early books of creed. We also study many of the books of Sheikh Uthaymeen and Sheik Al Albaani.

Ameer: That’s interesting. Well I study ‘Maqaalat Al Islaamiyeen’ by Imam Abul Hasan Al Ash’aree, Al Insaaf by Al Baqaalaanee, Ash Shamil fi Usool Deen by Al Juwaynee, and Al Iqtisaad fi Al I’tiqaad by Al Ghazali.

Tyrone: Ok. I've never heard of those books before. One thing I did hear though in one of the lectures was that Abul Hasan Al Ash'aree repented and returned back to the ideology of the main body of Muslims, is this correct.

Abdullah: Yup Tyrone, you are absolutely right! Abul Hasan mentioned this himself in one of the last books he authored in creed called 'Al Ibanah' an usool ad Dinyanah'.¹

Ameer: Yes, you're right Abdullah. Imam Abul Hasan was raised and initially brought up upon the creed of the Mu'tazilah, then the creed of Ibn Kullab Al Basree. Then he started to refute the Mu'tazilah while adhering to the new creed he adopted and mixed with the creed of Ibn Kullab. Then he moved on to studying under Al Junayd before repenting and adhering to the creed of Imam Ahmed ibn Hanbal-the Athari creed.

Tyrone: Subhanallah! So most likely he must have been heavily influenced by the Mu'tazilee creed, since he was with them for over forty years of his life?!

Ameer: Yes, he definitely was. This is why we find in some of his early books that he agreed with many of the Mu'tazilee beliefs in regards to Allah's Names and Attributes, some affairs related to the Hereafter, how prophethood is established, the meaning of Iman, and many other issues.

Abdullah: So what is the Ash'aree understanding of Iman?

Ameer: What we were taught and believe is that Iman (faith) is 'tasdeeq' in the heart alone. Which is directly in line with the creed of the 'Murji'ah'. Actions and statements do not

¹ Al Ibanah pg. 20

have a direct relationship with the increasing or decreasing of Iman.

Tyrone: Isn't that definition of Iman linguistically? What about the technical meaning?

Abdullah: Yes, you are right Tyrone. Actually, the technical meaning of Iman is what we were taught in the Quran and Sunnah. The Prophet Muhammad said that: **“Al Iman is sixty or seventy and some odd branches. The highest of it is the statement ‘la ilaha illa Allah’ (There is no deity worthy of worship except Allah alone), the lowest (of Iman) is removing something harmful from the path, and ‘al haya’ (modesty, shyness) is a part of iman.”**²

Tyrone: So based upon that hadith, it means that Iman is actually composed of branches and parts?

Abdullah: Yes, that's correct akhi. Iman according to what the Prophet Muhammad said is composed of beliefs in the heart, statements upon the tongue, and actions upon the limbs. Iman increases with good beliefs, statements, or deeds and decreases with bad beliefs, statements, or deeds.

Ameer: This is the first time I ever heard this Abdullah. This sounds correct, even though it goes against what our teachers say. What we were taught is that Iman is only in the heart and related to having knowledge of Allah.

Abdullah: Well, we have been taught that we should always define Islamic terminologies the way that Allah or His Messenger defined them. So we are always better off relying upon the way Allah, His Messenger, the Companions defined certain terminologies if we find them in our sources

² Saheeh Muslim #35b

before we give precedence to those who came after them and their definitions.

Ameer: Yes, I totally agree.

Tyrone: So the Ash'aree understanding of Iman is really deficient, as it doesn't include actions and statements to be from Iman. It seems like they only understand it based upon it's linguistic meaning.

Abdullah: Yes, you're right Tyrone.

Tyrone asking Ameer: So brother Ameer, what is the Ash'aree view in relation to Allah's Magnificent Names and Attributes?

Ameer: We only establish Allah's Names and we deny all of Allah's Attributes related to His Actions out of fear that we may resemble His Actions to those of the creation. We believe that many of Allah's Attributes cannot be imagined with our intellects, so therefore we deny them, figuratively interpret them, or explain them to be abstract and not literal.

Tyrone: Wow, that's weird. Why is that?

Ameer: Well, we always give precedence to intellectual reasoning over accepting the texts from the Quran and Sunnah and understanding them literally. If a text from the Quran and Sunnah cannot be understood or imagined in our intellects, then we immediately interpret it in a way that fits our understanding. We almost always do 'ta'weel' of texts related to Allah's attributes.

Tyrone: Isn't that impermissible?

Ameer: According to our teachers, this is necessary so that we do not associate partners with Allah and we don't

compare Him, His Actions, His Statements, or any aspect of Him to the creation.

Abdullah: Well brother Ameer, does it really necessitate that we deny or falsely interpret Allah's Attributes out of fear of resembling Him to the creation?

Ameer: Yes, absolutely.

Abdullah: I totally disagree with you akhi. What about what Allah said in the Quran, a beautiful verse that is used as a principle to understand all of Allah's Names and Attributes. When He said: **“there is nothing like unto him (nothing comparable/similar) and He is the All Hearing the All Seeing”** (Ash Shura:11).

Ameer: That's a beautiful verse. How do you guys understand it?

Abdullah: Well we were taught that this is an important foundational principle used when understanding Allah's Names and Attributes. That Allah is negating all types of similarities and comparisons to Himself. While at the same time establishing that He is the All Hearing and All Seeing. That He has the ability to hear and see. However, His ability to hear and see is not like that of the creations ability to hear and see.

Ameer: Well, if the creation can hear and see, and the creator can hear and see; isn't that striking similarities to Allah.

Abdullah: Great question akhi. Actually, we understand that Allah's sight and hearing as being perfect, complete, infallible, without any deficiencies or weaknesses. As for other creatures, then their ability to see and hear is deficient, weak, incomplete, imperfect, and filled with faults. So we understand that just because the names of these actions are

the same between the Creator and the creation; this does not necessitate that we compare Allah's abilities and actions to those of the creation. As Allah's abilities are perfect, and the creatures' abilities are imperfect, weak, and deficient. We establish all of Allah's Names and Attributes in a way that befits His Majesty and Greatness. And we also establish the actions and attributes of creation in a way that befits their weakness, imperfection, and deficiencies. There is no comparison between the two, only in the names of the actions themselves.

Tyrone: I mean, this makes the most sense. Even amongst the creation we find that animals of different kinds and species have the same abilities and are described with similar attributes; but the strength of their certain abilities differs. For example, an ant has strength and power so much that it is said that it can carry 50 times its body weight. An elephant also has strength and power as well. Maybe it cannot carry 50 times its body weight, but it is definitely strong compared to other animals of similar stature and physical make-up. However, it would be incorrect to say that the ant's strength in direct comparison to the elephant is more than the elephants. As the elephant could easily step on the whole village of ants and utterly destroy them. So the only way that the strength of the ant and the strength of the elephant can be understood properly is if we explain each animals' strength in a way that befits its category and type of species. Ants when comparing it to similar species and elephants when comparing it to similar species.

Ameer: You're right about that Tyrone. This is totally in agreement with sound intellect and logic. I guess we were taught to give Allah's Attributes a secondary figurative meaning out of fear of resembling Him to the creation. And

one of our main principles in understanding the Quran and Sunnah is giving precedence to our intellectual reasoning over Revelation.

Abdullah: Well that is very problematic my brother, isn't it?

Ameer: Somewhat. We believe that if something in the books of revelation (Quran and Sunnah) contradicts our reason, then we explain it to fit our reasoning.

Tyrone: Subhanallah!!! Whoah akhi. That's really dangerous.

Abdullah: This is very dangerous brother Ameer. There are many matters within the Quran and Sunnah that are 'tawqeefi', i.e. we accept them and understand them as they are, we cannot add anything on to them nor omit anything. Especially the affairs of the unseen, the affairs related to the Hereafter, the punishment of the grave, the 'Siraat', the 'Meezan', the 'Qantarah', Seeing Allah on the Day of Resurrection. All of these are directly related to our Iman and can only be understood by revelation, and definitely not understood by reason. We believe in them as they came, and only as Allah described them. As we believe that revelation will never contradict with sound reasoning. If someone doesn't understand revelation, then it is because his intellect and reasoning is deficient. They need to inquire from the people of knowledge, and not interpret these things according to their weak and deficient intellects. As this is very dangerous and can lead to great changes in the religion.

Ameer: We believe that 'Ta'weel' is the foundation and root of understanding Allah's Names, Attributes, and many of the text related to the unseen and the Hereafter.

Tyrone: What we have been taught in the masjid is that all texts related to Allah's Names, Attributes, and the texts related to the unseen and the Hereafter are to be understood literally. They can only be interpreted to be figurative or abstract if there is a clear, decisive proofs that change the literal meaning to an abstract and figurative meaning. If not, then they are always understood literal first and foremost. While at the same time still having that figurative meaning.

Abdullah: Yes, that's correct Tyrone. Mashallah akhi you are learning quickly. This is the creed of the main body of Muslims and the creed of the Prophet Muhammad and His companions. For example, we establish that Allah has a hand, actually two right hands as it came in the Quran and Sunnah. Allah's Hands are not similar to those of the creation. Furthermore, Allah's Hands contain power and might. We don't negate Allah's actual hands and only interpret them to mean Allah's strength or power without affirming them literally. This is a great mistake akhi.

Tyrone: So Ameer, what is your guys understanding of 'la ilaha illa Allah'?

Ameer: Many of us believe that it means 'there is no creator except Allah'.

Abdullah: That's utterly and completely false akhi. 'la ilaha illa Allah' means: 'There is no deity worthy of worship alone except Allah'. All forms of worship must be singled out to Him Alone. When you believe that 'la ilaha illa Allah means': there is no creator except Allah, you're only singling Allah out in his Lordship. Which is the same thing that the polytheists of Quraish used to believe in Makkah. They would worship various idols believing that they brought them closer to Allah.

Ameer: We believe that whoever says ‘la ilaha illa Allah’ upon our understanding that we can direct our supplications and forms of worship to other than Allah and not fall into ‘shirk’. This is why many of us also ascribe to a ‘tariqah’ of the Soofiyah, either Tijaaniyah, Raafaa’iyyah, Naqshabundiyyah, Berwayliee, Dusooqee, and the likes.

Tyrone: Brother, isn’t this ‘shirk’ when you direct any form of worship to other than Allah?

Abdullah: Yes it is akhi. Brother Ameer, you have been taught the wrong meaning of ‘la ilaha illa Allah’. And whoever taught you, has misled you and may Allah guide them. The word ‘ilah’ comes from the Arabic word ‘ma’looh’ which means to glorify, to be devoted to. The word ‘ilah’ does not mean ‘khalik’ which means creator.

Ameer: Subhanallah brother Abdullah. I never thought about it linguistically. I didn’t even think about it that deeply. I’m happy I stopped by this barber-shop today and met you brothers.

Tyrone: So do the Ash’arees believe in Tawheed?

Ameer: Majority of us only believe in Tawheed Ar Rububiyyah (Allah’s Lordship) and some of Allah’s Names and Attributes. We don’t really study Tawheed Al Ulohiyyah nor practice it. Especially, those who have chosen a ‘tariqah’.

Tyrone: What is a ‘tariqah’?

Ameer: Well a ‘tariqah’ is a way that we practice ‘sulook’ and pledge our allegiance to certain scholars. We have to completely blind follow them, and obey their every command and we can never disobey them. There are many in Africa such as the ‘Tijaniyyah’, ‘Rafaa’iyyah’,

‘Shadhiliyyah’, ‘Qadiryah’, and many others. This is many of us who are Ash’aree in Creed, but we also follow Soofiyah in our ‘sulook’. But not every Ash’aree is Soofi.

Tyrone: Wow. That sounds crazy. How can a Muslim blind follow another human being in everything they order them with, even when it may be incorrect? Weren’t we ordered to only blind follow the Prophet Muhammad and His companions?

Abdullah: Yes Tyrone. We are only ordered to blindly follow the Prophet Muhammad in everything that he orders us to do, or prohibits us to stay away from. By the way Tyrone, have you heard about the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad that said: **“The Jews split up into 71 sects, the Christians split up into 72 sects and this ummah will split up into 73 sects all of them in the Hellfire except for one. The companions asked: who are they O Messenger of Allah? He said: ‘Those who remain upon what I am upon and my companions are upon’, and in another version: ‘they are the ‘jamaa’ah’ (i.e. the main body of Muslims).”**³

Tyrone: Yeah, I think I heard this hadith before. But tell me a little more about it.

Abdullah: Well Tyrone, we can understand that after the time of the Prophet Muhammad and during the time of Ali ibn Abee Taalib there were many new ideologies that were starting to emerge. One of the main reasons that led the Jews, Christians, and Muslims to break into sects is ‘taw’eel’, making false, incorrect interpretation of their books of

³ Sunan Abee Dawud #4596, Jami’ Tirmidhi # 2641, Sunan ibn Majah #2991, Al Hakim in Al Mustadrak #444 with an acceptable chain of narration. They collectively give each other strength.

revelation. The Jews broke into sects and disputed amongst each other because many of them described the Creator with traits of the creation. The Christians described Jesus and His mother with traits of the Creator. Similarly, the majority of the sects that emerged after the time of the Prophet Muhammad left the main body of Muslim because of their incorrect interpretations of the Quran or Sunnah.

Tyrone: Yeah, I remember the Imam one time was explaining about how some of the sects that emerged would only consider some texts that mentioned Allah's promises, rewards, and paradise; while they abandoned the other texts that mentioned Allah's warnings, threats, punishments, and Hellfire. They only say that 'Allah is All Forgiving and All Pardoning', and believe that they can do anything they want and they will never be punished. They always say: 'it's only what's in my heart that matters'.

Abdullah: Yes, brother Tyrone. This is the creed of the Murji'ah. Whom many of the Ashaa'irah have taken their understanding of Iman from.

Tyrone: Subhanallah akhi. This is a very harmful ideology.

Abdullah: Yes it is akhi. May Allah help us and protect us from it and keep us firm upon the creed of the 'salaf'.

Tyrone: One thing that I've never understood is that if Imam Abul Hasan Al Ash'aree repented before his death and reverted to the creed of Imam Ahmed (Athari creed), then why don't many of the Ash'arees who came after him repent and abandon his old views in creed? Why do they hold so tightly unto his early teachings that were heavily influenced by foreign philosophies, the Mu'tazilee creed, the Kulaabiyyah creed; and not abandon those ideas and adopt

the creed that he died upon-the creed of Imam Ahmed. The creed of the main body of Muslims?

Ameer: That's a great question. I never thought of that. Maybe I need to review the book 'Al Ibanah'. Which was one of the last treatises that Imam Abul Hasan was said to have authored. That contains his statement of him reverting to the creed of Imam Ahmed.

Abdullah: Yes, you definitely need to brother Ameer. It is a great oppression that anyone ascribes anything to anyone, especially a scholar or great Imam after he repented from it and abandoned it. As how can people deny Allah's Attributes, or interpret them to be figurative or abstract, or believe that Iman is only belief in the heart, then ascribe those things to Imam Abul Hasan Al Ash'aree after he already repented from them?

Ameer: Subhanallah akhi. You're absolutely right. Astagfirullah. Astagfirullah. Astagfirullah. You know one of the things many of our scholars taught us is that we should never listen to 'Atharis' because they only quote Sheikul Islam ibn Taymiyyah or Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahaab.

Abdullah: Wow! Well all that I really see in their books is Quranic verses, authentic ahadith, and statements of the companions and four great imams. Also there are many issues related to the Hereafter as well such as the Scale "Meezan", the Bridge over the Hellfire "Siraat", Seeing Allah on the Day of Judgement, the Prophet's Pond/Lake "Hawd", Allah Ascending and Descending, the Questioning of the Grave. How do the Ashaa'irah believe in them? Do they even believe in them at all?

Ameer: Well we as Ash'arees accept authentic hadith in regards to jurisprudence issues but in issues related to creed

we divide the deen into fundamentals ‘usool’ and subsidiary issues ‘furoo.’ We believe that the foundations of creed can only be based upon Quranic verses and authentic ‘mutawatir hadith’ (large group of narrators at every level in the chain of narration).

Tyrone: Subhanallah! That’s the first time I ever heard anything like this? So how many narrators specifically need to be in each level of the chain of narration for you guys to accept it?

Ameer: Well that is something that we differ about amongst our scholars.

Tyrone: So what you’re saying is that some of the Ashaa’irah only accept the hadith if forty narrators narrate the hadith in each level of the chain of narration. While others accept if only 3 narrators narrate the hadith in each level of the chain of narration?

Ameer: We don’t accept singular ‘ahad’ ahadith in matters of creed because we believe they only provide speculative proof in the religion of Islam, which is only strong assumption and not definitive proof which is certain knowledge of the truth.

Tyrone: Wait, wait hold up now! So what you’re saying is that if any individual companion-whom all the companions are trustworthy, honest and precise-narrated to a trustworthy, precise, religious ‘tabiee’, who narrated to one of his children, who narrated to Imam Abu Hanifah, who narrated it to Imam Malik; then you wouldn’t accept what they said because a large group of companions, tabi’een, and Imams didn’t narrate it?

Ameer: Yes. Because it doesn't reach the level of certainty. It is only speculative since only singular narrators narrated it in each level of the chain of narration.

Tyrone: Bruh!!! Akhi Abdullah, you have to interject. I'm at a loss of words.

Abdullah: Ameer, so what you're saying is that in the Ash'arees opinion it is permissible for Muslims to reject or accept saheeh or hasan ahad hadeeth in connection to their 'furoo' subsidiary issues of aqeedah but it is not obligatory to reject or accept these hadeeth.

Ameer: Yes. That's what we've been taught.

Abdullah: So basically the Ash'arees have invented a middle way between the understanding of the main body of Muslims- the Jamaa'ah-the Atharees and the misguided Kharawij, Shia, Mutazilah, and Jahamiyah concerning accepting the 'ahad' hadeeth in relation to aqeedah. This can lead one to rejecting authentic ahadith.

Tyrone: So brother Ameer, if the scholars of hadith have differed over the minimum number of narrators needed to make a hadeeth mutawatir then how and what criteria and standards are the Ashaa'irah agreed upon to accept or reject ahadith?

Ameer: Great question Tyrone: The problem is that our scholars have never been able to come to an agreement among themselves on this issue. Thus many of them are not agreed upon which hadeeth are mutawaatir and which are ahad.

Tyrone: Where did the terminology of 'mutawaatir' and 'ahad' come from anyways?

Ameer: Most likely after the Greek books of philosophical rhetoric were translated into Arabic.

Abdullah: Yes, I you're right Ameer. When we look back at the generation of the companions, the 'tabi'een', the four Imams (Abu Hanifah, Malik, Shafi'ee, and Ahmed) we never find them distinguishing between using 'ahad' hadith or 'mutawatir' ahadith in creed and fiqh. They never made a distinction or division between creed and jurisprudence. If the hadith was narrated by a trustworthy, precise, accurate, upright narrator; then it would be accepted in creed and jurisprudence. Nor did the early generations divide creed into 'usool' and 'furoo' as the later generations did.

Ameer: This sounds most correct Abdullah. I appreciate you enlightening me on these very important issues.

Abdullah: Of course my brother. We're here for each other. If you are lacking correct knowledge about important issues in the deen, then it is upon us as brothers to advise and remind each other with what is correct.

Tyrone: Didn't the sheikh at the masjid mention something along the lines of this last week Abdullah?

Abdullah: Yes, he actually quoted Imam Nawawi (whom many of the Ashaairah ascribed themselves to) as saying: "The Khulafaa ar-Raashidoon, the rest of the Sahaabah and those who came after them from the Salaf and the Khalaf did not cease to act upon Khabr al-Waahid, i.e. 'ahad' hadith."⁴

Ameer: Yes, Imam Nawawi as Ashari in creed.

Abdullah: Actually, Ameer Imam Nawawi was influenced by the Ashari creed, he wasn't completely Ashari in every

⁴ Sharh Saheeh Muslim 1/130

single issue. He agreed with them in a few issues, but rebutted them in many issues as well. He also affirmed the Athari ideology in many issues as well. Most likely, he was influenced by them because of the environment that he was living in. Imam Nawawi and many others as well were more influenced by the political aspects of the Ashari madthab being the most popular in their regions. I would make an excuse for them that it was more political than it was their actually belief system that they strictly adhered to. Or they thought that Abul Hasan Al Ash'aree had that particular view, so they followed it not knowing that Abul Hasan had abandoned the old view and opinion and recanted this old views. Or they thought it was correct, and it wasn't.

Ameer: Tell me more please.

Tyrone: If what the Ash'arees claim is true in regards to 'mutawatir' and 'ahad' and distinguishing between them. Then let me ask you brother Ameer: 'When the Prophet Muhammad sent individual delegates with letters to the leaders of different nations such as Persia, Rome, Ethiopia and the like did he send numerous delegates with the letter, and did he only send one letter or multiple letters to the leaders?

Ameer: From my understanding is that he sent individual delegates with one letter.

Abdullah: This is what I know to be true as well akhi.

Tyrone: So had those delegates not been sufficient to establish evidence, for being individuals, the Messenger would not have sent his letters with just one of them, instead he would have sent them with a number of delegates to reach the level of Tawatur (a significant number of narrators whose agreement upon a lie is impossible).

Ameer: Certainly, that's deep Tyrone. Mashallah!

Abdullah: You're on point today Tyrone, it must be that fresh shape-up the barber hooked you up with.

Tyrone: Alhamdulillah my brothers. All praises due to Allah. Another point that came to my mind was that when the Prophet Muhammad sent some of the companions to teach people, for example he sent Mu'adth ibn Jabal to Yemen and Mus'ab ibn Umayr to Al Madinah...

Ameer: And those that they were sent to didn't reject them nor their teachings. So what you're saying is that they didn't go in groups to teach the people.

Tyrone: Yes, exactly.

Ameer: I get your point now brother. This makes complete sense.

Abdullah: Also what about the direction of the Qiblah changing from Jerusalem to Makkah. After the Prophet received the revelation, there was only one companion who went to the different masjids and announced it to the people. They all accepted his news. They didn't ask for a large group of other companions to come and narrate to them the same occurrence. They immediately started praying towards the Ka'bah.

Ameer: Facts akhi!!!

Tyrone: Abdullah, you must have eaten some dates or raisins today, because your memory is sharp today.

Abdullah: Alhamdulillah akhi. It's all from Allah. So Ameer what do the Ashaa'irah believe about the affairs of the Hereafter?

Ameer: As for the ‘meezan’ scales on the Day of Resurrection than we understand it to be figuratively and a representation of Allah’s ‘Adl’ Justice. We have been influenced about this by the views of the Mu’tazilah and the Jahmiyyah.

Tyrone: How can someone claim or say that these things are not literal or real and only figurative. No one has ever seen the unseen, or no one knows what’s going to happen in the Hereafter except the Creator of the Hereafter. He is the only One who can inform us about those occurrences.

Abdullah: Facts Tyrone.

Ameer: Well we believe that Allah doesn’t need a ‘meezan’.

Abdullah: Fear Allah akhi. It is very dangerous to speak about Allah without proofs.

Ameer: You’re right I agree. I’m just relaying to you what I have been taught from our teachers.

Tyrone: So it seems like you guys always give precedence to reason over revelation. So do ya’ll believe that you guys will see Allah on the Day of Resurrection or not?

Ameer: Yes, our creed and ideology is based upon reason over revelation. And we understand Allah’s ‘uloow’ highness/elevation to mean: sensing Allah’s presence or knowledge of Allah’s awareness. We deny a place for Allah. We don’t believe Allah is above or anywhere in specific. We believe that Allah will be seen, but He won’t be seen above us.

Tyrone: Abdullah, didn’t the Imam mention something about his last week and actually mention that Abul Hasan Al

Ash'aree actually affirms seeing Allah upon the creed of the salaf?

Abdullah: Yes, he did akhi. You're memory is sharp today. Unfortunately, the later generation Ash'arees followed his original view that was strongly influenced by the creed of the Mu'tazilah.

Tyrone: Ameer, what do you guys view as the first thing that a Muslim must learn upon entering Islam or becoming of age?

Ameer: We view that one must first observe, look, search, and doubt initially about Allah's existence. Then through more observation must be convinced of the reality of it.

Abdullah. Woah!! Hold up for a second. Well didn't the Prophet Muhammad tell Mu'adth ibn Jabal when he went to Yemen: "let the first thing you call the people to is 'la ilaha illa Allah.'"? He didn't tell him to tell the people to look around and search for Allah or doubt His existence. Because they already knew He existed.

Ameer: Yes. You're right. He told them to take the 'shahadah' first not look and search for a creator.

Tyrone: Then that would mean that the first obligation upon the creation is to submit themselves to worship Allah alone. As the majority of people already know there is a Creator. There's so many signs in this universe to recognize that there is a Creator.

Ameer: Agreed.

Tyrone: Akhi Ameer, you definitely need to come more to town and attend the lectures in our mosque. You'll benefit a lot.

Ameer: I will definitely look into it. But I'm still looking for those brothers here in Jersey. I'm supposed to attend a round-table gathering with them.

Abdullah: The main problem with this issue: 'first obligation upon a human being' amongst the Ashaa'irah is that they deny that Allah is known by one's 'fitrah' natural disposition. They believe that Allah is only known through observation and research, and or first doubting, then finding Him. Even ibn Hajr al Asqaalaani transmitted some statements from Al Juwayni in his book 'Fathul Baari' and rebutted them saying: "and with this Allah's statement: **"So be steadfast in faith in all uprightness 'O Prophet'—'fitrah' the natural Way of Allah which He has instilled in 'all' people.**" (Ar Room:30), and the hadith: **"Every human being is born upon the 'fitrah' natural disposition."** which are both clear proofs to destroy this doubt from it's roots." Then he went on to say: "the Imam Abu Muhammad ibn Abee Hamzah relayed from Abee Al Waleed Al Baajee from Abee Jafar As Samnaanee—who is from the big Imams of the Ashaa'irah—that he heard him say: "this issues is what remains in our madthab from the teachings of the Mu'tazilah. And Allah's Aid is sought."⁵

Tyrone: Even the disbelievers of Quraish believed and knew that Allah was their Lord. Even Firaun before his demise. So how can a Muslim come along now and claim that they need to search for Allah, when it is already engrained in their DNA and physical make-up. Yeah, these dudes have invented some new ideologies that are really away from the creed of the main body of Muslims.

⁵ Fathul Bari 10/70-71

Abdullah: You got that right. That's why it's important we try to enlighten each other constantly about the correct creed and the sunnah, while clarifying doubts, misconceptions, innovations and shirk. To try to save our brothers and sisters from falling into further doubts and misconceptions akhi. We have to clarify the truth from the falsehood.

Ameer: Brothers, this conversation is really opening up a lot of new concepts to me, that I never heard of before. I'm so glad I came to this barber-shop today.

Abdullah: We're happy to be here with you brother Ameer. Well you know Tyrone the creed of the Ashaa'irah was founded as a type of middle-path between the creed of the Mu'tazilah and the Salaf (Athari) creed. However, the reality is that it didn't succeed and absolutely failed. What they tried to do is combine the way of the 'salaf' in understanding and using the texts of the Quran and Sunnah and between the way of the Mu'tazilah in dividing, separating, categorizing different texts based upon linguistic and philosophic principles.

Ameer: Our madthab and creed-the Ashari creed-has spread in many places in the Muslim lands.

Tyrone: You're absolutely right. Many of the countries in Western and Northern Africa, Indian Sub-continent, Eastern European countries and some of the Gulf countries as well. I believe the Ottoman Empire played a large role in spreading their creed. But just because it is believed, adhered to, and followed by many doesn't mean that it is correct.

Abdullah: Yeah, you're right Tyrone. A lot of their dangerous ideas in creed are in many books, taught in schools, online, and many Muslims have been affected by their doubts specifically related to Allah the Most High and

His Names and Attributes. Furthermore, in relation to hadith and accepting them or not. They accept or reject ahadith based upon their reasoning, not upon any agreed upon standards or principles. So much so that the author of the book ‘Asaas At Taqdees’ mentioned under the chapter heading: ‘comprehensive speech in regards to ‘ahad’ hadith: “As for holding firmly unto a singular narration ‘ahad’ in relation to knowing Allah (knowledge of Allah) then it is not permissible, and the proofs for this are as follows....”⁶

Tyrone: Subhanallah! That’s really dangerous akhi. Where someone is actually rejecting an authentic hadith because it wasn’t narrated from a large group, then transmitted to another large group.

Abdullah: It is also well known that the Ash’aree madthab is directly tied to many of the schools of Soofiyah throughout the world. Even Abul Hasan Al Ash’aree himself before repenting and coming back to the creed of the main body of Muslims; was heavily influenced by the Soofiyah and was a student and ‘mureed’ of one of the biggest callers to Soofiyah of his time-Al Junayd (297h).

Ameer: Yes, many of our teachers in Africa and a lot of the students who are here in the USA also ascribe to a certain ‘tariqah’ of a school of Soofiyah.

Tyrone: So Ameer, remind me once again about the Ash’aree’s views in regards to Tawheed.

Ameer: Well what we were taught is that ‘Tawheed’ is directly related to belief in the heart alone, associated with our perception and knowledge of Allah. It has no relation to actions of the limbs nor actions of the heart such as fear, awe,

⁶ Asaas At Taqdees pg 72-168

dread, love, regret, repentance. Nor actions of the limbs such as prayer, hajj, fasting, slaughtering, tawaf, taking oaths or swearing. And there is absolutely no mention about ‘at Tahaakum and al Muwalaah’ (judging by the texts association and support) in the majority if not all of our books.

Abdullah: It seems that that Ashaa'irah didn't leave one single fundamental of creed except they made 'Ta'weel' or 'Ta'teel' of it. Just what you guys believe about Tawheed is a prime example. You guys do not consider any type of worship directed to other than Allah to be 'shirk'! This is one of the worst results of following foreign philosophies and mixing them with the pure Islamic creed. 'Ta'weel and Ta'teel' is what led the previous nations astray-the Jews and the Christians.

Ameer: You're right Abdullah. We I really have to sit down and discuss this with some of my teachers. Maybe I can invite you over for some Jallof rice and meat with some 'fu fu' a well.

Abdullah: I'd love that!!! I love me some West African food.

Tyrone: I've even heard many of the Ashaa'irah here in the USA call those who ascribe to the 'main body of Muslims, and the 'jamaah' as 'Al Hashawiyah, Al Mufasimah' and Al Mushabihah'. Didn't Allah tell us in the Quran to not call people by bad names?

Abdullah: Yes Tyrone, this is what they label all of those who understand Tawheed and Allah's Names and Attributes the way that the Prophet and His companions did. It's really unfortunate. While we just call them by the names they call themselves: Ashaa'irah.

Tyrone: It seems that all the sects that emerged either call themselves after something they did or after their founders, except for the ‘jamaa’ah’!

Abdullah: You’re absolutely right about that Tyrone.

Tyrone: I’ve also heard that because the Ashaa’irah have categorized the deen into different parts and divisions such as ‘al wajib al aqlee, al mustaheel al aqlee, and al jaa’iz al aqlee (intellectual necessity, intellectual impossibility, intellectual possibility) they’ve considered prophethood to be from the last category; and many of them say that the truthfulness of a prophet can only be established by miracles.

Ameer: Yes, you’re right. Solely because we don’t want to say that anything is necessary or obligatory for Allah to do. That it wasn’t obligatory upon Allah to send us messengers and prophets.

Abdullah: Subhanallah, just like the Mu’tazilah claim!

Ameer: So we say this out of fear of saying that prophethood is intellectually impossible.

Abdullah: So based upon that Ameer, then everything that falls under the category of permissible and possible then it goes back to Allah’s Will alone, and it is free from wisdom and justification. According to you’re guys understanding.

Ameer: Basically, yes.

Tyrone: Bro, that’s insane! I’ve never heard anything like this before! This has to be imported from that Greek Philosophy of Aristotle, or Socrates.

Abdullah: So the Ashaa’irah have denied that there is any wisdom or goals behind Allah’s actions in general, and specifically in sending the Prophets and Messengers. Rather,

it only is based upon His Will alone and not any wisdom or justification behind sending them to different nations.

Ameer: Yes, this is what we've read and been taught by our teachers.

Tyrone: No doubt, that all of Allah's actions go back to His Will and Ability to do what He wants, how He wants, when He wants; however this does not necessitate that they are free and void of wisdom, mercy, and justification!

Ameer: Yeah, you're right Tyrone. But we actually believe that Allah gives the Prophets and Messengers miracles to prove their honesty and trustworthiness. And is the only proof of their prophethood.

Abdullah: Well with this claim, then you guys just nullified the previous statement you mentioned about Allah's actions being free from wisdom and justification.

Ameer: You're right. I'm just relaying to you what I've been taught akhi.

Tyrone: So what you're saying is that the Ashaa'irah establish Prophethood and/or Messengership by two proofs: that it is not impossible intellectually to accept and secondly by miracles occurring?

Ameer: Yes, that's right.

Tyrone: So based upon these principles, how do you know if someone is truthful or not. Is a prophet, a magician, sorcerer, liar, etc... you guys accept anyone who claims prophethood and apparently does things against the norm that could be considered miracles?

Ameer: Uh, I don't know...

Abdullah: I recall from our last class that one of the head scholars of the Asha'ree madthab Al Juwaynee said: 'There is no proof for the honesty/truthfulness of a/the prophet except miracles'.⁷

Tyrone: Bro...That's unbelievable! So based upon that statement of Al Juwaynee, this means according to him and the Ashaa'irah that there is no proof of the truthfulness of Musa except when his stick turned into a snake and the likes. So what do the Ashaa'irah say about the followers of Samiree from amongst the Jews when they said: that Samiree changing the gold and jewelry of the Jews into a golden calf is greater than or similar to the miracle of Musa changing the stick into a serpent?

Ameer: Uh uh I don't know akhi. But great question. I'll ask our scholars about this.

Abdullah: Yeah, so you would either be forced to agree to what Samiree did as being better than what Musa did, or abandon that false belief about prophethood. The Ashaa'irah's incorrect principles about the truthfulness of prophethood only being established by miracles alone, and it not being necessary to believe in them until after the miracles is extremely detrimental to Islam and understanding it properly.

Tyrone: Facts akhi. So how can the Ashaa'irah differentiate between a miracle that Allah gave to a Prophet or Messenger, or some crazy magic or optical illusion that a magician or sorcerer does?

Ameer: We can't really.

⁷ Al Irshad pg. 331, also refer back to Dar'u Taarid Al Aql wa Naql by Sheikul Islam 5/287, 7/309

Abdullah: Well the main body of Muslims believe in all of the Prophets and Messengers based upon clear revelation and Allah choosing them and mentioning them in the Quran and Sunnah as being honest, trustworthy, obedient, and truthful. The miracles that Allah gave them is just added proof for their truthfulness and honesty.

Ameer: That makes a lot of sense.

Tyrone: Sure does akhi. Well hey it's getting close to the adthaan time. Let's go inside and get the front row for Jumah today.

Abdullah: Sounds like a plan.

Ameer: Ok, I'm right behind you bro.

Tyrone: Hopefully, after Jumah we can link up again and learn some more together.

Ameer: Don't forget both of you guys are invited after Jumah for some Jallof rice and fufu!!

