Out of several translations of Imam al-Tahawi's creed available in the market, Shaykh Hamza Yusuf's is, in my opinion, by far the best rendition to date of this famous and very important treatise. We can expect no less of a scholar of the caliber of Shaykh Hamza Yusuf due to his command over his native tongue, English, as well as his acquired and well-learned Arabic.

Shaykh Hamza Yusuf has rendered a service not only to Muslims, but also to a wider audience by his new translation of The Creed of Imam al-Tahawi accompanied by an illuminating historical introduction and by helpful biographies and extensive notes. His translation is formal without being archaic and is written in a style that Christians can recognize from their own credal formulations. The work is of value to others than Muslims, for two reasons: it provides in 130 short paragraphs a clear presentation of core Muslim belief in a way that is not easily available by other means. It thus provides a very positive instrument for the essential work of dialogue. Secondly, it provides Christians, who have also developed and continue to use credal formulations, with the opportunity to see just where the Islamic understanding of God comes close to the Christian understanding of God. This does much to reduce the credibility of approaches which insist on a thoroughgoing bipolar understanding of Christianity and Islam. Muslims and Christians should welcome this publication.

DR. ROWAN WILLIAMS, Archbishop of Canterbury, UK

The Zaytuna Curriculum Series is dedicated to the publication of classical Islamic works translated into English by scholars licensed to teach the traditional sciences of Islam, thereby making these works accessible to scholars, students, and the general public.
Foreword*

All praise belongs to God alone, and may God’s blessings and peace be upon our master Muhammad and upon his family and companions.

Our virtuous brother in faith, the associate jurist and professor of faith Shaykh Hamza Yusuf, has translated into English The Creed of Imam al-Ṭahāwī—a beneficial endeavor, indeed, especially for non-Arabic speakers. The creed is one with which the entire community concurs.

The Creed of Imam al-Ṭahāwī contains a general call to abandon accusations of disbelief against others and to forgo any pretense of knowledge about who is or is not in Paradise or in Hell; and to entrust all abstruse and knotty matters to the Omniscient and Wise.

For these aforementioned reasons, our scholars have not only accepted it but have added to it numerous commentaries from varying perspectives and schools. I recommend, however, for the general community, that it be memorized as it is, free of any speculations about matters the true nature of which can never be comprehended or even grasped. To use a metaphor from Mālik [d. 179 AH/795 CE], our creed has reached all of us pure and lucid, and entered as a groom into his bride’s chamber, welcomed without question.

Any believer who wishes to deepen his or her knowledge in this religion should follow two courses. The first is to occupy oneself with those matters of faith that concern the heart and its states, as well as purification of the ego, enabling one to ascend to the degree of spiritual excellence. The second involves a course of study of

*The Foreword was rearranged in its English translation for the reader's benefit. It was done with the author's consent and remains faithful to the original text.
practical jurisprudence in order to acquire the divine injunctions and rectify one's transactions and contracts.

One should also avoid any disputation and debate about theological matters that are predicated upon earlier philosophical problems that may no longer serve the current religious discourse or the materialistic intellectual challenges confronting the prevailing cultural environment.

The Creed of Imam al-Tahawi is written in lucid and non-technical language and is based upon the clear proofs in the Book and the Sunnah. It avoids complexities and doubtful matters, resembling Abū Muḥammad b. Abī Zayd al-Qayrawānī's creed [d. 386/996]. In fact, I wish that an opportunity arises for our brother, Shaykh Hamza, to translate that also. It would not be difficult for him to do so, given his high aspirations.

Shaykh Hamza's translation is trustworthy because of his firm grounding in Arabic and its rhetoric, as well as his breadth of knowledge regarding the theology of the early scholars. As for English, his tongue is Shakespearian. However, foremost of all, he is noted for his research, scruples, and sincerity—God willing—and hence is compelled to search and investigate in order to penetrate the depths of any subject and be able to distinguish between the essential and the incidental.

In conclusion, I pray to God, the Exalted, that He enrich our brother, Shaykh Hamza, and us, in providence and guidance.

ABDULLAH BIN BAYYAH
Introduction

Say: God is One. God is Independent.
He neither sired, nor was He sired.
And no thing compares to Him.

QUR'AN 112:1-4

Islam's creative gift to mankind is monotheism,
and we surely dare not throw this gift away.

ARNOLD TOYNBEE

THEOLOGY IS A reaction, a creative response to tension in the mind of a believer who is confronted with propositions that challenge not his experiential faith but his intellectual understanding of it. Experience of faith and expression of faith are distinct yet bound in a way that is often lost in discursive theology. Language cannot express the reality of faith, but it can explain what one believes and why. This is, of course, the central purpose of theology. However, it is also a mental activity by nature and often involves paradoxes, in which seemingly insoluble problems, such as free will and predestination, are dialectically entertained in the mind of the theologian, who then attempts to reconcile them, using sacred scripture and intellect—a combination made volatile and dangerous in the absence of a devout piety that would otherwise illuminate both the effort and the outcome. For this reason, true theology is, to a certain degree, the squaring of a circle within an enlightened mind. Indeed, the true theologian, like Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazzalī (d. 505/1111), is one who experiences the content of his theology. The experience, moreover, cannot be reduced to the intellectual because it is essentially rooted in a spiritual witnessing of reality: Say, "This is my way; I invite to God
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with inner vision; I and whoever follows me. And, glory be to God, I am not a polytheist" (Qur'an 12:108).

All of religion begins with experience, and when the Prophet Muhammad presented to the world a simple, terse, and intoxicating formula of monotheism, he acted not as a theologian but as a prophet in the presence of the Divine and in complete communion with the Divine. Others around him responded. They had no interest in abstruse debates about free will and fate, quiddities and qualities, atoms and accidents; they were in the presence of the Sublime, and He was their ultimate concern. For them, this was the experience of faith, as real and palpable as the waking state of ordinary people.

These ciphers of the desert, once passive objects of surrounding civilizations, became transformative subjects of history, and their impact is still felt today. Thrusting themselves upon the world, they crossed the warm waters of the Indian Ocean, entered the gates of China, landed on the coasts of Africa, and overcame the obstacle of the Pyrenees. They were galvanized by a simple articulation, a radical assertion that would inspire and transform untold numbers of people, profoundly altering the depths of their consciousness: la ilaha illa l-lah. These four words, which mean, “There is no divinity worthy of worship save the Divine,” have spawned countless works of theology from some of humanity’s most brilliant minds.

The words themselves, however, have no dogmatic theology. They do not merely convey information but describe a person’s state of being, of witnessing that there is nothing worthy of worship except the one true God of humanity. The Arabic word for such a person, muwahhid, loosely translates as “unitarian,” except that in Arabic it is an active participle, an agent of unifying: “one who makes one, a unifier.” This “making of one” is an action that arises from a non-conceptualization: “The inability to perceive God is perception” (al-ajrū ‘an idrākhi idrākū), as expressed by the caliph, Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq (d. 13/634). Lā ilaha illa l-lah comprises a simple negation, “no god,” and a powerful affirmation, “only God.”

Introduction

The first generation of Muslims, who took directly from the Prophet did not engage in debates about Islam’s essential creedal formula. It was uttered in their language, and its inherent theology was grasped more intuitively than discursively. They understood the radical monotheism of the formula as both a renewal of the ancient Abrahamic monotheism and a corrective for the accruals of time that had been added to the two previous Abrahamic dispensations.

Another quintessential creedal phrase that Muslims utter throughout their daily prayers is Allahu akbar, which means “God is greater”; it is the ontological argument implying that God is greater than anything the minds of men can conceive. God is beyond conceptualization; anything that can be conceived, anything that can be described, is not God: Glory be to God above and beyond their descriptions (Qur'an 6:100). They do not assess the capacity of God truly (Qur'an 6:91).

While we find in the Qur’an arguments for the unity of God, we find no attempt to prove the existence of God. The Qur’an reminds us that oneness of the Divine is reflected everywhere by the manifest presence of equilibrium and the absence of chaos in the cosmos. If you ask them who created the heavens and the earth, they invariably reply, “God” (29:62). The Qur’anic arguments, instead, dispel the misconceptions of God, whether embodied in polytheism, trinitarianism, animism, nihilism, or anthropomorphism. All are refuted in the Qur’an, leaving only a powerfully transcendent and unitarian vision of God’s essence. Regarding any questioning of the sustaining power and presence of God in the world, the Qur’an asks, And is there doubt about God? (14:10). Concerning God’s immanence, Ibn ‘Ata’ Allāh states, “When did He disappear that He needed to be indicated?” Historically, Muslim theologians were averse to using the Christian theological terms of transcendence and immanence, and argued that God could not be conceptually contained within those limiting concepts. Indeed, the Ash’ari scholars argued that God was neither transcendent nor immanent (ghayr muttaṣaf bi khalqihi wa la manfaṣilun ‘anhi), which is not dissimilar to the
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Theological position of Eastern Orthodox Christianity concerning the true nature of God. Islam’s discursive theology developed in the midst of already existing theological traditions and sacred cosmologies, often in response to them and sometimes borrowing from them.

Two critical events unfolded in early Muslim history that caused the development of competing theologies within the Muslim community. The first was the conversion of Jewish, Byzantine, and Persian peoples to Islam, many of whom subsequently began to study seriously their newly adopted faith. Naturally, they viewed Islam through the prism of their previous traditions. The second critical event was the contact that devout Muslims had with seasoned Christian and Jewish theologians. Out of this emerged more speculative theologies that used the tools of the rational Hellenistic tradition to refute doctrinal obfuscations emerging throughout the Muslim world, as a cosmopolitan religion was being born of an insular desert mother.

These speculative responses about God and His nature did not go unchallenged. Many of the early Muslims countered these emergent theologies by asking, “What right does man have to speculate about God?” Indeed, in several places, the Qur’an itself warns of the dire consequences of saying about God what you do not know (7:28, 10:68).

For this reason, the first Muslim communities denounced the Iraqi innovation of rational theology (kalām). While the word kalām literally means “talk,” its usage here as a technical term is closer to “dialectic.” The mutakallimūn were dialecticians who set out to examine and discuss the nature of God and His attributes, and to refute innovations that challenged the Islamic creedal dispensation. The Qur’an is called the “Speech of God” (kalām Allāh), and it is to the Qur’an and Sunnah that Muslims are obliged to refer for knowledge about God.

However, the Qur’an is not a book of theology, and the Prophet ﷺ was not a theologian. The Qur’an does not dogmatically explain what people should or should not think about God. Instead, it reveals itself as the Word of God. It is God speaking. And if one is listening to God, one has no need for someone who will tell him about God. God reveals Himself to the attentive listener: And if the Qur’an is recited to you, then listen to it attentively and be silent, that you may be shown mercy (7:204).

Many of the initial questions that arose were political, but they had theological implications that demanded theological responses. For instance, how is sovereignty legitimized in Islam, and what are its limits? To what degree do believers owe allegiance to the state, and when is that allegiance superseded by one’s religious obligations? By the time of Uthmān b. ‘Affān’s death in 35/656, serious theological problems were fomenting in the hearts and minds of many new Muslims.

At that time, a group of Muslims emerged who formulated their own theology without recourse to the knowledge of the Prophet’s companions ﷺ. They later became known as the Khawārij (Seceders), because they seceded initially from the caliphate of ‘Alī ﷺ (d. 40/661) and then later from Muʾāwiyah ﷺ (d. 60/680) and the Umayyads’ leadership. They had a simple premise: “Rule belongs to God alone” (al-ḥākimiyatu l-lāh). They believed that a person who committed a mortal sin (kabirah) “forfeited the privileges that came along with membership in the community, thereby rendering it not a sin but a duty for Muslims to kill him.”

The forerunners of this movement were responsible for murdering Uthmān b. ‘Affān ﷺ.

With the murder of Uthmān ﷺ, the third caliph, the Muslims split into different camps. The two primary factions were that of Muʾāwiyah ﷺ, the governor of Syria and Palestine, and that of ‘Alī ﷺ, who was residing in Medina but who soon relocated to Iraq. Muʾāwiyah ﷺ wanted to bring to justice the murderers of Uthmān ﷺ, while ‘Alī ﷺ felt that exacting retribution at that point would lead to greater disunity within the Muslim community. Over this issue, the two factions went to war. Who was right, who was wrong, and what were the theological implications of Muslims fighting each other—these became hotly disputed issues among scholars of the day, and the repercussions of those debates still reverberate among Muslims today.
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The first secession of the Khawārij occurred during 'Ali's preparation to march against Mu'awiya's army. During 'Ali's rule, there were at least five similar uprisings. Nomadic tribesmen unaccustomed to central authority, the Khawārij were rigidly puritanical and had little tolerance for the "refinements" of city life. They survived by raiding towns and hamlets in Iraq and, because of their exclusivist beliefs, killed other Muslims with self-righteous impurity. Periodically, the Umayyads would dispatch armies to suppress their frequent rebellions and disperse them, but the powerful bonds of religion—their brand of religion—held them together in a way not dissimilar to tribal bonds.

While they were renowned for their orators, demagogues, and poets, the Khawārij lacked trained theologians, scholars, exegetes, and jurists. During the uprising of Ibn al-Zubayr (d. 36/656), who attempted to restore just rule in the tradition of the righteous caliphs, the leader of one of two major groups of the Khawārij, Nāfī b. al-Azraq (d. 65/685), formulated a simple creed. It was based on the Qur'anic verse (12:67), No decision but God's (la lihu fi illi il-läh), which was interpreted thus: if one did not abide by the decision of God, then one was not a Muslim, since "Muslim" literally means "one in submission to the decision of God." Moreover, al-Azraq's sect decreed that those who agreed with their interpretation join their camp, and others be killed. Historian William Montgomery Watt writes, "This puritanical theology became a justification for sheer terrorism, and the Azraqis became noted and feared for their widespread massacres." The Khawārij failed to understand that divine revelation is invariably filtered through the human mind and is thus susceptible to distortion and refraction, and that this fact prevents the arrogation of God's understanding or ruling to any human being other than a prophet. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (d. 751/1350) discusses this in his opus, ʾl-läh al-muwaqqiʿīn, in a chapter entitled, "On the inappropriateness of calling a fatwa the 'ruling of God.'" The second major group of the Khawārij was from Najd in eastern-central Arabia, in a region called Yamamah. They were known as al-Najdāt or al-Najdiyyah. Unlike the Azraqis, they controlled a large area of land and, because of this, judged less stringently those who did not agree with them, simply considering such people hypocrites. They also permitted concealment (taqīyyah), which allowed them to hide their views from other Muslims.

In the city of Basra, a small group of Khawārij, who did not accept the radical views of either the Azraqis or the Najdīs, founded kalām as a new science. In the midst of all the theological debates and discussions, the prophetic tradition of Islam as understood by the Prophet  and his followers continued to be taught. Al-Hasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728), a companion of 'Ali , held a position concerning free will and predetermination that is only understood within the conceptual space of antinomies, i.e., propositions which, in formal logic, are mutually exclusive without being irrational. He stated that while man is free, his fate is also determined. This attempt at reconciliation resulted in the adoption of the doctrine of acquisition (kasb) that Imam al-Ţahāwī (d. 321/933), Abū al-Hasan al-As'hwāri (d. 324/936), and Abū Mansūr al-Māturīdī (d. 333/944) later codified in their creeds. The problem of free will and determinism led to the development of a highly sophisticated cosmology that included a novel atomic theory that explained the nature of time, change, spirit, causality, and matter.

From the circle of al-Hasan al-Baṣrī, which came to epitomize "traditional" Islam, another group known as the Mu'tazilah (Rationalists) emerged. As sources relate, al-Hasan al-Baṣrī was teaching a group of students when asked whether a grave sinner should be considered Muslim. He hesitated, and one among the circle, Wāṣil b. 'Aṭā' (d. 131/748), interrupted with the assertion that such a sinner was neither a Muslim nor an infidel but was in an "intermediate position" (manzilatun bayna l-manzilatayn). Wāṣil then left and established his own circle at another pillar in the mosque. At this, al-Hasan al-Baṣrī remarked, "He has withdrawn (fitazila) from us"; thus, the name "Mu'tazilah" (lit. withdrawers) came into being.

The Mu'tazilah synthesized a complex theology that, while grounded in the Qur'an, was heavily influenced by Hellenistic rationalism. At its simplest level, their creed involved five "funda-
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...relegated to God. For instance, the question of 'Ali's actions being right or wrong was not for men to decide; that judgment was to be left to God.

The fifth and final fundamental was "commanding righteousness and forbidding evil." This is a strong Qur'anic injunction and a foundational principle of Islam: And let there be a people among you who invite to good and enjoin what is fair, and forbid what is repugnant; it is they who thrive (3:104). Creating dynamic tension, the Mu'tazili movement acted as an intellectual catalyst for a theology that defended the dominant positions of Islam.

The Mu'tazilah gained ascendancy during the reign of the Abbasid caliph, al-Ma'mûn (d. 218/833), who was an ardent patron of anything intellectual, and who founded Dar al-Ijtimah, an academy in Baghdad equipped with an observatory and collections of Greek philosophical, mathematical, and medical writings. In 212/827, al-Ma'mûn endorsed the Mu'tazili doctrine of the oneness of the Qur'an as official dogma and initiated an unfortunate state-sponsored inquisition. Fearing persecution, many scholars either prevaricated or remained silent, but Ahmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241/ 855), the great jurist and hadith scholar, publicly declared that the Qur'an is the uncreated Word of God. He was arrested and tortured, but his brave efforts inspired others to speak out. With the death of al-Ma'mûn, the tribulation soon ended, and the Sunni position of the uncreatedness of the Qur'an was eventually adopted by the state.16

While several competing theologies were emerging, the rationalistic foundation of the Mu'tazilah theology posed the greatest challenge to traditional scholars. The early response of these scholars was less a refutation and more an elucidation of what Muslims should believe. It is best represented in the writings of Abû Ḥanîfah (d. 150/667), who, in his explication, nonetheless, deals more with the views of the Khawârij, Shia, and Qadâriyyah than with those of the Mu'tazilah. This eponymous imam of the largest legal school in Islam left behind more works on theology than any of his contemporaries, works that provided a basis for The Creed of Imam al-Tâhawi. The creedal views of Abû Ḥanîfah and his follower,
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Imam al-Tahawi, avoid the speculations of the Mu'tazilah, adhering as closely as possible to the texts and explicating only when they feel it absolutely necessary.

From Abū Hanifah's creed, both Imam al-Tahawi and his towering contemporary, Abū Mansūr al-Māturīdī, developed their own formulations. The difference in the latter's approach is that he created a much stronger synthesis between tradition (naqīl) and reason ('aql). Avoiding the subjugation of tradition to reason, characteristic of the Mu'tazilah, and the complete subjugation of reason to tradition, characteristic of the literalists, he struck a balance between the two, recognizing the necessity of reason to properly understand the revealed texts and to also respond appropriately to the relentless intellectual challenges that confront Muslims. His school, alongside the Ash'ari school, came to dominate most of what became known as the Sunni world of Islam. He and his contemporary, Abū al-Hasan al-Ash'ari, worked independently of one another yet arrived at similar conclusions; almost the entire Muslim world eventually came to accept the theological doctrines of these two schools as orthodox.

Abū al-Hasan al-Ash'ari was especially suitable for refuting some of the obfuscations of the Mu'tazilah because he had studied with them. After mastering the necessary sciences of his day, including the Hellenistic syllabus of the Mu'tazilah, he proved himself a redoubtable student of Imam al-Jubbaṭī (d. 303/915), the leading Mu'tazilī master in Basra. Imam al-Ash'ari eventually broke with his teacher and formulated his distinctive creed that, alongside the creeds of Imam al-Tahawi and Imam al-Māturīdī, spread throughout the lands of Islam. A neologism soon emerged to describe the Muslims who followed these creeds: the People of the Prophetic Way and the Majority of Scholars (ahl al-summah wa al-jama'ah).

It is, however, the distinction of Imam al-Tahawi's creed to have gained the widest acceptance, as it is embraced even by the less speculative Ḥanbalī school that generally censured the more capacious schools of Imam al-Ash'ari and Imam al-Māturīdī. Imam al-Tahawi's goal was to present a basic creedal primer for Muslims to learn quickly and without disputation. His creed can be viewed as a distillation of Qur'anic doctrine, a gleaning of the principal points of faith that every Muslim should know. He does not refuse anyone with arguments; rather, he relies on the authority of such illustrious men as Abū Ḥanifah, whose creed is the basis of his own treatise. The text was accepted by the Muslims, and especially used by those who adhered to the Ḥanafi school.

It was the simplicity of the text that made apparent the need for more discursive creeds when Muslims were confronted with continual assaults from the philosophers and heterodox sects, including the anthropomorphists, rationalists, and determinists. The Māturīdī and Ash'ārī scholars fulfilled this need; their often polemical works, with elaborate discussions of the competing theologies, became the dominant texts of the great teaching institutions of Islam. These creeds, along with their extensive commentaries, were studied in most of the universities of the Muslim world. That they are still taught today is a testimony to their brilliance and soundness, notwithstanding the malaise that began to affect the intellectual disciplines of Islam after the tenth century CE and perpetuates the current intellectual stagnation of Muslim theology. Due to this deplorable condition, modern theological works are almost entirely devoid of contemporary issues—such as evolution, dialectical materialism, postmodernism, and quantum physics—that pose serious challenges to all religions.

On the other hand, Islam has never been plagued by an emphasis on theology. The simple creed of tawḥīd, the adherence of the first community to it, and the warnings of the early scholars about diving into uncharted waters was enough to stress ethics and purification through the understanding and practice of divine law. Imam al-Ghazzālī, known as the Proof of Islam (hujjat al-Islām), uses sacred law (in its outer and inner dimensions), not theology, as a vehicle for awareness of the Divine in his masterpiece, The Revivification of the Sciences of the Religion (ihya' 'ulūm ad-dīn).

Theology, nonetheless, is necessary. Indeed, in an age of bewildering spiritual and intellectual impoverishment, creed has never...
The Creed of Imam al-Tahawi

been more important. Every Muslim is obliged to learn it and is promised protection from deviant beliefs by following the sound texts of the scholastic community of Islam. Of them all, Imam al-Tahawi's text is the simplest, the most effective, and the least controversial. Nevertheless, it should be studied with a qualified teacher who has acquired his or her understanding from qualified teachers who are linked in an unbroken chain of transmission to the author of the creed itself. And to your Lord is the end (Qur'an 24:42).

Author's Biography

Imam Abu 'Far Ahmad b. Muhammad b. Salamah al-Tahawi came from a family where intellect and aristocracy, as well as piety and passion, were the hallmarks; hence, he was destined to live more than an ordinary life. Born in the village of Taha in Upper Egypt in 239/853, Imam al-Tahawi was wet-nursed by the wife of the great hadith scholar, Abu Musa al-Misri (d. 264/878), who is among the scholars Abu Dawud (d. 275/888) and al-Nasawi (d. 303/916) learned from. His grandfather Salamah b. 'Abd al-Malik al-Azdi and his paternal uncle Ibrahim, as principled as they were passionate, led the local insurrection against the Abbasid caliph, al-Ma'mun, because he wanted to impose his chosen successor, 'Ali b. Musa (d. 203/818), on the Muslim world. An Abbasid pretender, Ibrahim b. al-Mahdi (d. 224/839), refused the appointed succession, claimed the throne for himself, and sent a representative to encourage both the political and military leaders of Egypt to relinquish their oath of allegiance to al-Ma'mun and his successor and to join forces with him. Imam al-Tahawi's grandfather and paternal uncle joined the pretender's resistance and organized an insurrection in Upper Egypt that eventually failed. Both men were imprisoned, sentenced to death, and later executed.

Imam al-Tahawi's mother and first teacher was a scholar. Her brother, Imam al-Muzani (d. 264/878), a direct student of Imam al-Shafi'i (d. 204/820), is known as the most influential proponent of the Shafi'i school in Egypt; hence she is referred to in biographical literature as "the sister of al-Muzani" (ukht al-Muzani) and sometimes as "the mother of al-Tahawi" (umm al-Tahawi). Like her brother, she also studied in the circle of Imam al-Shafi'i and eventually became a
notable and erudite jurist of some distinction in the Shafi'i school. Imam al-Suyuti (d. 911/1505) wrote about her:

She used to attend the circle of Imam al-Shafi'i and is quoted by Imam al-Ra'fi in the section on zakat. She is also mentioned by Imam al-Subki and by al-Ashwani in his biographical collection of Shafi'i scholars.18

Raised by and having kept company with such remarkable scholars and people of piety, it is no surprise that Imam al-Tahawi inclined toward the study of sacred knowledge from an early age. As a child, he memorized the entire Qur'an and attended the lecture circles of his father. After benefiting from various study circles in the area, Imam al-Tahawi earned the distinction of participating in his maternal uncle's celebrated gatherings of Shafi'i jurisprudence, but he was never a blind follower. Despite all of the significant Shafi'i scholars in his family, including Imam al-Shafi'i's own students (Imam al-Muzani and his sister), Imam al-Tahawi did not find intellectual satisfaction within the confines of Imam al-Shafi'i's school and eventually abandoned it, choosing instead the broader methodological school of the Persian jurist, Imam Abû Hanîfah al-Nu'mân b. Thabit (d. 150/767). Imam al-Tahawi not only excelled in the Hanafi school, but became its preeminent scholar and proponent.

The cause of his conversion to Hanafi thought has preoccupied many an inquiring mind. One likely apocryphal story relates that Imam al-Tahawi was studying a particularly abstruse legal matter at the house of his uncle, Imam al-Muzani, and he was having difficulty understanding his uncle's explanation. So Imam al-Muzani, who was known for his patience and gentle disposition, spent a good deal of time simplifying it for his young nephew. Despite his uncle's attempts, Imam al-Tahawi still found the problem insoluble. At this point, Imam al-Muzani reportedly said, "I swear to God, you will never amount to anything!" Hurt by this remark, Imam al-Tahawi left his uncle's circle and began to study with the Hanafi scholars.

According to another narrative, also likely untrue, Imam al-Tahawi listened to Hanafi scholars debating various juristic is-
instances he codified Ḥanafi views in his own Shafi'i legal text. As a result of seeing this, Imam al-Ṭahawi took up a serious study of the legal methodology of the Iraqi (Hanafi) school. His attraction to the school led to his apprenticeship with the Ḥanafi judge, Ahmad b. Abī ʿImrān, who had come from Iraq to reside and teach in Egypt.

So it is safe to assume that Imam al-Ṭahawi abandoned the school of his family in favor of the Ḥanafi school from personal conviction and utter sincerity. Such defections were not unusual at the time, and most of the defections were to the Ḥanafi school; the juristic and creedal schools were still in their embryonic stages, and many scholars were independent jurists who did not rely on the authority and legal opinions of others but derived rulings directly from the Qur'an and the hadith narrations. Often, the act of changing schools was motivated by employment and endowment situations that stipulated a certain school. Siddīq ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Ḥājī ʿĪbrāhīm (d. 1233/1818) states the following in his didactic poem on juristic methodology:

As for a move from one juristic school to another, it has been done by many fine and majestic scholars; such as "The Proof of Islam," I mean al-Ghazzālī, As well as al-Ṭahawi and Ibn Daqīq, the mutifī.

Siddīq Muhammad ʿYahyā al-Walāṭī (d. 1330/1912) comments on the above lines:

[The author] here deems permissible the changing from one's original school to another, such as from Mālik's legal school to Shafi'i's or vice versa. In fact, many great and eminent scholars of the past have done so, such as Imam al-Ghazzālī, who changed from a Shafi'i to a Mālikī at the end of his life, or Abū Ja'far al-Ṭahawi, who changed from a Shafi'I to a Ḥanafi, or Ibn Daqīq al-ʿId, who left the Mālikī school for the Shafi'I, even though he continued to issue fatwas from both.

Changing schools is acceptable for two reasons: one finds one school easier to learn or practice than another, or one genuinely believes one school is stronger than the other. Al-Walāṭī mentions, however, that to switch schools for worldly reasons, such as procur-

ing a job or benefiting from an endowment specific to one school, is prohibited. That he would even mention changing schools for worldly gain suggests that it may have been a widespread practice. In Imam al-Ṭahawi's case, however, his noble intentions and the circumstances leading to his adoption of the Ḥanafi school are beyond reproach.

Political and Social Conditions

Imam al-Ṭahawi was born in the Abbasid period during a particularly dire time for Sunni Islam. Many rationalists and those influenced by Hellenistic thought were espousing their ideas, and the Mu'tazili doctrine diffused throughout the Muslim world. Countless theological issues were raised, obliging scholars to debate nonessential differences entirely absent in the early period of Islam. Against that backdrop came political intrigue and assassinations. During the imam's formative years, four of the Abbasid caliphs were murdered by a praetorian guard that arose from within the palace ranks of the newly converted Turkish warrior class.

For most of Imam al-Ṭahawi's life, Egypt was politically dominated by the Tulunid dynasty, which began when, in 254/868, the Abbasid caliph (or a Turkish proxy of his) sent a young and highly competent Turkish governor, Ahmad b. Tulūn (d. 270/884), to subdue Egypt and restore order. Within a short period, he gained control of Egypt and secured for himself a semi-autonomous state that gave nominal allegiance to the Abbasids. His dominion eventually extended into Palestine and Syria.

The Tulunid period was a cultural, economic, artistic, spiritual, and intellectual renaissance, with an extremely high standard of living for both the elite and the populace; literary and juristic scholarship flourished. Egypt soon became a major cultural center of the Muslim world, and continues to be so to this day. Tulunid rule ended in 323/935, when an Abbasid army invaded Egypt, ushering in the short-lived Ikhshidid period. Like the Tulunids before them, the autonomous Ikhshidid rulers wisely gave nominal allegiance to Abbasid Baghdad. This rule ended in 358/969, shortly after Imam
al-Ṭahāwī's death, when the Fatimid general al-Jawhar (d. 381/991) conquered Egypt for the North African Shia dynasty that would soon thereafter build Cairo, establish al-Azhar University, and, in the process, create a serious crisis in the Sunni ethos.

Religious Scholarship in Egypt

Egypt was a Coptic Christian land before Islam arrived at its borders. Its ruler, al-Muqawqas, honored the Prophet's emissaries and even sent him precious gifts. The Prophet himself commanded his followers to be especially gracious with the people of Egypt due to the blood ties the Arabs had with the ancient Egyptians through the mother of the Arabs, Hagar. In the nineteenth year after the Prophet's Hijrah (during 'Umar b. al-Khattab's caliphate), an army led by the military genius 'Amr b. al-As (d. 42/663) conquered Egypt and removed an unjust Christian governance that was oppressing the people. Among his army were a number of great companions of the Prophet, including Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī (d. 32/653), Zubayr b. al-Awwām (d. 36/665), and Sa'd b. Abī Waqqās (d. 55/675). Some Egyptians converted to Islam during this time, but most remained Coptic Christians and were protected in accordance with Islamic law. The Egyptians were, overall, very pleased with the equity of their new rulers. Conversions continued, and the Umayyad caliph 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz (d. 101/720) sent Nāfi' (d. 117/735), the freed bondsman of Ibn 'Umar (d. 73/693), to teach the prophetic way to the increasing number of Egyptian converts to Islam. Nāfi' was one of the greatest of the jurists of Medina and a teacher of Imam Mālik.

Soon, increased numbers of Egyptians were setting out for pilgrimage to Mecca and a visit to Medina to pray in the Prophet's mosque and greet his tomb, where they met Mālik, the imam of the Prophet's city and the most learned of the tābi'īn (the generation that immediately followed that of the Prophet's companions). They would sit in his circle and then return to Egypt with newly acquired knowledge and spread his teachings. Among them were those who would become known as the greatest Mālikī scholars, including Ibn al-Qāsim (d. 191/806), who is the dominant legal standard of the Mālikī school; Ibn Wahh (d. 197/812), the great hadith scholar and jurist; as well as 'Uthmān b. al-Ḫakam al-Judhamī and Ashhāh b. 'Abd al-'Azīz. Their erudition, piety, and profound legal knowledge spurred the spread of Mālik's school throughout much of Egypt. During this time, Layth b. Sa'd al-Misrī (d. 775/981), an independent Muslim scholar, was also teaching in Egypt, and was the eponym of his own now derelict school. Imam al-Shāfī'i considered him more learned than Mālik but lamented that he did not have the prominent students that Mālik did to ensure the codification of his school and the success of his teachings.

Egypt was largely under the influence of Imam Mālik's school until his former student and an independent scholar in his own right, Imam al-Shāfī'i, moved there in 199/814. His eloquence, intelligence, and vast scope, which included the judgments of his first teacher Imam Mālik, soon began to compete with the Mālikī influence among the Egyptian Muslims. Many independent scholars visited Imam al-Shāfī'i, and some took up residence in Egypt, including Imam al-Tāhāwī (d. 310/923), Imam al-Marwānī, and Imam al-Mundhīrī (d. 658/1258). Students of Imam Abū Ḥanīfah also ventured into Egypt, and debates among the various schools were commonplace. During Imam al-Tāhāwī's lifetime, the six canonical hadith books were collected, and Imam Mālik's primary transmitter of al-Muwaṭṭa', the Spanish scholar, Yahyā b. Yahyā al-Laythī (d. 234/848), also lived in Egypt and taught al-Muwaṭṭa' to many Egyptian students.

Iraq was the center of the Abūlāsīd government, and many of the greatest Hanafī scholars (including the school's founder) lived there as well. Some served as judges, muftis, or advisors to the caliphate, but most shunned government service, following the example of Imam Abū Ḥanīfah himself. In Egypt, during Imam al-Tāhāwī's lifetime, the Ḥanafi master Abū Bakrah Bakkār b. Qutayhah b. As'ad al-Thaqāfī (d. 276/889) was appointed judge. He was a brilliant jurist who knew, in addition to his own school, the rulings of other schools, and debated openly, often leaving his challengers
nonplussed; he had an immense influence on Imam al-Ṭahāwī. The environment in Egypt during Islam’s formative years was profoundly stimulating for anyone seeking sacred knowledge, and Imam al-Ṭahāwī was born in the midst of it.

Imam al-Ṭahāwī’s Intellectual Legacy

Imam al-Ṭahāwī was a master of the primary sources of Islam—the Qur’an, the Sunnah, and the opinions of the Prophet’s companions and early independent scholars—as well as of the ancillary sciences necessary for independent reasoning. Although he was considered a first-rate jurist, a brilliant grammarian and philologist, as well as an erudite man of letters, he was not beyond reproach. Imam al-Ṭahāwī bore the brunt of a few critics in the science of hadith. Such criticism, however, was common among the scholars of hadith, particularly those who made it their sole area of expertise and demanded of polymaths, such as Imam al-Ṭahāwī, the highest degrees of mastery before approving their work. Even the most authoritative masters of hadith were not spared criticism.

Imam al-Ṭahāwī was well-versed in the biographies of hadith narrators and was competent in drawing distinctions based on their reliability. He was particularly admired for his mastery and exposition of “the science of hidden defects” (’ilm al-ṭilāl), which is among the more subtle and abstruse branches of hadith science. He even corrected the mistakes in the hadith related by his uncle, Imam al-Muzani. Indeed, his prolific output in hadith science ranks him among the notable experts in the field to this day.

In Ḥanafī and Shi’ī jurisprudence, Imam al-Ṭahāwī is among a ratiﬁed cadre of scholars known for their allegiance to their work, independent of their school. The eminent jurist and erudite polymath, Shah Wali Allāh of Delhi (d. 1766/1767) states, “The Mukhtasar of Imam al-Ṭahāwī [in jurisprudence] proves that he was an independent scholar and did not merely regurgitate the opinions of the Ḥanafī school. Upon finding proofs that weakened the Ḥanafī position, he would follow the stronger position independent of his own school.”

Shah Wali Allāh continues, “In summation, [Imam al-Ṭahāwī] should be counted among the same class of scholars as Abū Yūsuf [d. 182/798] and Muhammad [d. 189/805].” Al-Kawtharī considered the imam intellectually free of the confines of the methodologies of any speciﬁc legal school, a level hardly any jurists in Muslim history ever achieved. He says, “Undoubtedly, Imam al-Ṭahāwī obtained the rank of complete methodological independence concerning legal issues (ijtihād mutlaq), notwithstanding the fact that he maintained allegiance to Abū Ḥanīfah.” Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr (d. 469/1070), the Prodigy of the West, described Imam al-Ṭahāwī as “a Kufān in his legal school but a scholar and master of all of the various schools.”

Ibn al-Nadīm (d. 380/990), the celebrated author of the Fihrist, said, “He was the phoenix of his age in knowledge.”

Imam al-Ṭahāwī spent his life teaching and writing. Only recently has part of his massive Qur’anic exegesis been discovered. His work on juristic differences alone, according to his biographers, comprised over 130 volumes. Lamentably, no extant copy has been found. However, sections from a version that was abridged by the great Ḥanafī scholar and exegete Abū Bakr al-Jassāṣ (d. 370/981) are in manuscript form in Istanbul. Imam al-Ṭahāwī also wrote a treatise on the nomenclature of hadith literature; a book on legal conditions in contracts; a collection of hadith he learned from his uncle, Imam al-Muzani, entitled Sunan al-Shāfi‘ī (a treatise that remains in print to this day); and a famous commentary on all of the hadith that relate to juristic issues (also still in print) entitled Shahih ma‘ānī al-ʾithār. Perhaps his most important book is his legal text, known as the Mukhtasar, upon which several Ḥanafī jurists wrote extensive commentaries. Imam al-Ṭahāwī also penned Mushkil al-ʾithār (also in print today); this work offers possible resolutions for seemingly contradictory hadith.

Imam al-Ṭahāwī’s lost books are numerous and cover a wide range of topics and include a voluminous history text; a biography of Imam Abū Ḥanīfah; several refutations of scholars and some of the widespread problematic opinions of his time; books on the legal rulings concerning inheritance laws, the spoils of war, and
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It is perhaps his creed that Imam al-Tahawi is best known for, the title of which has become synonymous with his name. Due to his avoidance of involved theological issues that have little or no practical consideration, coupled with his largely systematic presentation of the most fundamental issues of dogmatic theology, the creed has achieved an unusual level of acceptance in the Muslim milieu. During the thousand years since it was written, many great Muslim scholars have penned commentaries on it. It is still studied throughout the Muslim world and increasingly in the West.

Imam al-Subki (d. 771/1370), the great Shafi'i scholar, noted that the Hanafis, Shafiis, Malikis, and Hanbalis are one in creed:

All of them follow the opinion of the People of the Prophetic Way and the Majority of Scholars. They worship God in accordance with the creed of Abu al-Hasan al-Ash'ari. None of them deviates from it, save the Khuffis among the Hanafis and Shafiis who adopted the rationalist creed and those among the Hanbalis who opted for anthropomorphism. However, God protected the Malikis from such things, for we have never seen a Mâlik except that he was Ash'ari in creed. In summation, the creed of al-Ash'ari is what is contained in The Creed of Imam Abû Ja'far al-Tahawi, which the scholars of the various legal schools have endorsed and are content with as a creed. So say to those fanatics among the sects, "Take heed, leave your fanaticism, abandon your heresies, and defend the religion of Islam."  

In all fairness, when Imam al-Subki refers to "the creed of al-Ash'ari," he means the earlier of two schools within the Ash'ari tradition: the first is the school of Imam al-Ash'ari himself, which is very similar to The Creed of Imam al-Tahawi; the second is the more speculative school of rational theology (kalâm) that developed after the passing of Imam al-Ash'ari, and that some scholars, such as Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, condemned or differed with. However, there is agreement among the scholars that the accepted schools of theology in Sunni tradition are the Hanafi (or Salafi) school, which is the earliest of the Sunni creedal formulations and is most succinctly represented in Imam al-Tahawi's text; the Ash'ari creed, which, after the fourth century Hijrah (tenth century CE), was adopted by many scholars throughout the Muslim world; and, finally, the Maturidi creed that Hanafi scholars adopted and understood to be Imam al-Maturidi's development of the early Hanafi creed, and whose scholars considered themselves within the Hanafi tradition of theology. A creedal tradition that inclined toward literalism developed within the Hanbali school and alienated many of the more mainstream scholars of theology. Hanbali theology was strongly opposed to discursive theology, and Iraq became an intellectual battleground that sometimes led students of the various schools to physically assault students of opposing schools.

With the exception of literalist trends among some Sunni scholars, the above-mentioned schools agree on the foundations and differ only in specific details that primarily concern theologians. Traditionally, non-experts never preoccupied themselves with such matters. Sufficing as a sound basis for their faith, The Creed of Imam al-Tahawi is gleaned from the Qur'an, the small number of infallible hadith, and the consensus of the rightly-guided scholars of the first three centuries of Islam. It is the safest and simplest of the early articulations of Muslim belief.

Imam al-Tahawi's Character and Stature

Intellectual achievements are well and good, but greatness for Muslim scholars lies in their personal adherence to the embodiment of the character of Prophet Muhammad. An entire literature known as the Tahâqiq (biographies) emerged to record and preserve the lives of men and women who excelled in different facets of Muslim life, including scholarship, asceticism, poetry and composition, as well as righteous governance and leadership. Scholars were expected to have impeccably ethical character, and self-mastery was at the essence of one's pursuit of knowledge. As the Prophet said, "Strength is not measured by martial pursuits but by the degree to which a man restrains himself when angered."
Imam al-Tahawi was not only a master of the exoteric sciences of Islam but also of the more esoteric knowledge of human psychology. He was noted for his immense kindness and patience; for his gentle disposition with his students, who came from far and wide, and whom he treated with great respect and dignity; for his lack of material desire; and for his humility and self-effacing nature without the employment of artifice in his behavior. He was also extremely eloquent and was a notable orator, debater, and conversationalist.

Once, Imam al-Tahawi was with the notable Malik qadi, Abu `Uthman b. Hammad al-Baghdadi, when a person from Aswan asked Imam al-Tahawi a legal question. He answered by giving the qadi’s opinion on the matter.

The man retorted, “I did not come to ask the qadi. I came to ask you!”

The Imam responded, “My goodness! I answered your question already with the opinion of the qadi,” and then reiterated his initial response.

Abu `Uthman interjected, “Give him your own opinion; may God grant you success.”

To this, the Imam said, “May God speed you, sir; does the qadi permit me to do so? If that be the case, I will indeed.”

The qadi said, “Indeed, sir, I do.”

Only then did Imam al-Tahawi answer the questioner with his own opinion.

On another occasion, the emir of Egypt, Abu Mansur al-Kharizi (d. 307/919), paid Imam al-Tahawi a visit. As a way of currying favor with the masses, it was the custom of many rulers to marry their daughters to notable and beloved scholars. So the emir offered his daughter in marriage to Imam al-Tahawi, who graciously declined. The emir then offered him wealth and land. Imam al-Tahawi also turned down those offers. The emir then asked the Imam to request whatever he wished for or needed.

Imam al-Tahawi responded, “Will you truly listen and fulfill my request?”

“Of course!” replied the emir.

Imam al-Tahawi then said, “Be vigilant in protecting your religion in order that it not be lost. Work to free your soul before death’s night falls and you are then unable to do so. Finally, refrain from oppressing and burdening any of God’s servants!”

Upon hearing this advice, the emir left the Imam’s house, and it is said that after the meeting, he ceased the transgressions that he had been wont to commit.

Ibn al-Zawlaq relates from Imam al-Tahawi’s son that Qadi Fadl Abu `Ubaydah once asked the Imam for his opinion on a certain matter. The Imam told him what he thought, and the qadi responded, “That is not the opinion of Abu Hanifa!”

Imam al-Tahawi asked, “Do you think that I say everything that Abu Hanifa says?”

“I thought you were a follower of Abu Hanifa,” replied the qadi.

Imam al-Tahawi retorted, “Only a fanatic follows another blindly!”

The qadi added, “Or an idiot!”

Henceforth, “Only a fanatic follows another blindly” (la yuqalli'du illa 'a'sabi) became a common proverb in Egypt.

Imam al-Tahawi was a master of legal contracts and endowment law, and on one occasion, his expertise and nobility of character were revealed in a remarkable way. Ibn Tulun, the just ruler of Egypt, wanted to document all of his endowments for his grand mosque and hospital, so he handed the task to the well-known and respected Qadi Abu Khazin of Damascus. When all of the documents were prepared, the ruler appointed a committee of contractual scholars to review them and check for mistakes. All of the scholars conferred and concluded that the documents were in order, except for the young scholar, Abu Ja'far al-Tahawi, who said he detected a mistake. The emir sent a request asking him about the error, but he refused to tell the emissaries. The emir then requested his presence and asked Abu Ja'far to inform him of the mistake, but he said, “I cannot.” The emir asked why not, and he replied,
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"Because Abū Khazin is a noted scholar, and he may know something that I do not about the matter." This impressed Ibn Tulun, who then gave Abū Ja'far permission to seek out Abū Khazin and come to an agreement on the matter. When Abū Ja'far showed Abū Khazin the mistake, he admitted that he had been wrong and fixed it. However, when Abū Ja'far returned and Ibn Tulun asked him about the matter, Abū Ja'far replied, "I was wrong, and I have acquiesced to Qādī Abū Khazin." Later, Ibn Tulun learned the truth from Abū Khazin. In veiling the fault of the qādi, Imam al-Tahāwī increased in the emir's estimation, who thereafter honored him in gatherings. The emir understood that Imam al-Tahāwī had protected the qādi, knowing he was a pious man who would correct his own mistake and that it would hurt the elderly qādi's feelings to be corrected before the ruler by someone as young as Abū Ja'far. This anecdote reveals Imam al-Tahāwī's lack of ego and his concern for the well-being and sentiments of others. Muslim biographical literature contains many examples of his exalted and noble character; these are but a drizzle before a copious downpour.

Imam al-Tahāwī's Death, Progeny, and Legacy

According to Ibn Khalikān, Imam al-Tahāwī died in Egypt on the night of the first Thursday of the month of Dhu al-Qa'dah in the year 321 AH (October 933 CE) and is buried in the famous cemetery of the scholars known as Qarāfah. The illustrious scholar al-Badr al-Aynī (d. 855/1451) writes, "The grave of Abū Ja'far al-Tahāwī is just past the ditch on the right, near the mosque of Mahmūd, and it is a large grave and well-known." However, hundreds of years have passed, and the area has changed considerably; according to Imam al-Kawthari, "The grave of Imam al-Tahāwī today is on a street just right of the street called al-Salik facing the tomb of Imam al-Shafi'i at the end of the tram line that leads to Imam al-Shafi'i's tomb. ... Over [Imam al-Tahāwī's] tomb is a dome; the dates of his life are written on the site; and there is an august atmosphere about the place."

Imam al-Tahāwī left behind a son, Abū al-Hasan 'Ali b. Ahmad al-Tahāwī, who was a respected scholar in his own right. Imam al-Qudā'ī (d. 454/1062) mentions that Imam al-Tahāwī's son oversaw, along with a colleague of his, the building of a mosque in Giza during the Ikhshidid dynasty, at the command of the ruler Kāfūr. When the mosque ran out of pillars, Imam al-Tahāwī's son was not available for consultation, so his colleague took pillars from a church in Giza. Other notables concurred with the decision to use the church's pillars. However, when Abū al-Hasan learned that the pillars were wrongfully taken from the church, he refused to pray in the mosque.

Imam Abū al-Mahāsin (d. 874/1470), in his book al-Nujām al-Zahrī, says about Imam al-Tahāwī, "Indisputably, he was the imam of his age in jurisprudence, hadith, variances of the scholars, case law, grammar, philology, and morphology, and he wrote many splendid books. He is counted among the greatest Ḥanafī jurists who ever lived."

May God shower His mercy and grace upon the illustrious imam, whose ancestors hailed from the ancient and marvelous land of Yemen. Imam al-Tahāwī is called "al-Azdi," which refers to the Yemeni clan known as Azd al-Hajar, and thus he was a descendant of a people about whom the Prophet ﷺ said, "Faith is Yemeni." It is altogether fitting that the man who penned such a unifying creed, free of controversy, should be descended from the land of which faith itself is a descendant. His creed is a beacon of certainty in the darkness of doubt and ambiguity, and it provides seekers of knowledge with a set of simple yet sound creedal statements by which to live, die, and meet their Lord.

Author's Biography
All praise is God's alone, who established in the universe the clearest signs of His being and unity, who wrote in the Book of Existence the greatest proofs by which those of His servants who prefer guidance are directed to Him, and who sent messengers to convey the sacred injunctions and divine limits that He legislated, calling creation to His worship through the tidings and warnings that He revealed. And may blessings and peace shower our Master, Muhammad, the Seal of the Prophets—who was sent as a mercy to all of creation, about whom God said, Our messenger has come to you ... a light from God (Qur'an 5:15)—and shower his family and companions, and his heirs who have aided this religion.

Teaching the Islamic creed to both young and old is the worthiest endeavor for scholars simply because it is the foremost knowledge both Muslims and non-Muslims need to rectify their beliefs here and save themselves on Judgment Day. Among the most beneficial works on the subject is the Explication of the Creed of the People of the Prophetic Way and the Majority of Scholars (Bayān 'aqidah ahl al-sunnah wa al-jam'ah) by the exemplar and Proof of Islam, Abu Ja'far Ahmad b. Muhammad b. Salāmah al-Tahāwī (d. 327/933). The scholars circulated this text widely among one another and wrote many distinguished commentaries clarifying its contents. It has now been translated into English by Shaykh Hamza Yusuf Hanson al-Malikl, the trustworthy jurist and well-known advocate of Islam, who toils on the North American continent in support of this religion and who is graced with eloquence and abundant knowledge of the sacred sciences.
This translation has achieved a luminous style that fulfills the subject’s every want. Shaykh Hamza read this text under my tutelage during the summer of 2000, after which he read with me a substantial amount of its commentary by Shaykh ‘Abd al-Ghani al-Ghanaymi. He demonstrated a clear understanding of the topics covered in the text and the ability to assimilate its content with precision. He requested a license from me for its transmission in order to derive the blessing of direct linkage with its author. Thus, I say: I have authorized the aforementioned professor of faith, may God, the Sublime and Exalted, increase both of us in blessing upon blessing, in the Ta‘ahwiyah Creed (al-Aqīdah al-Tahawīyyah) and other works of this inestimable subject. This authorization is comprehensive, permitting him to transmit, translate, comment upon, and teach the text, as I was authorized by my father, the Erudite Scholar of Syria, the Proof of Islam, Shaykh Ibrāhīm al-Yaqūbī (d. 1406/1986), under whose tutelage I read the text and its commentary by al-Ghanaymi. Since my father’s passing, others have read the text under my tutelage nearly twenty times. In addition, I have also taught the commentaries of al-Ghanaymi and al-Bābārī several times.

I was also authorized by the Mufti of Syria, Shaykh Muḥammad Abū al-Yūsuf ‘Abīdīn (d. 1401/1982), whose chain of transmission is regarded as the highest chain on the face of the earth; he was authorized by his grandfather, the Mufti of Damascus, Abīḍ al-Ghanī ‘Abīḍīn (d. 1307/1890). (Preceding him, the sequence of that chain of authorization going back is as follows): Abī al-Raḥmān al-Kazbarī (d. 1262/1846); Muṣṭafā al-Qāsimī (d. 1205/1791); Abīl-Ghanī al-Nābulusī (d. 1143/1730); Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ghazzī; his father, Badr al-Dīn al-Ghazzī; the Shaykh of Islam, Zakariyya al-Anṣārī; al-Ḥāẓīz Ǧīdwan b. Muḥammad al-Uqābī (d. 852/1448); al-Qāsimī b. Kuwayk Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Miṣrī (d. 821/1418); Ibn al-Qurayshābī al-Bālī al-Iṣbālī (d. 740/1339); Muḥammad al-Bākī al-Yūnī (al-Bālīsahhākī (d. 658/1260); al-Ḥāẓīz Abū Muṣṭā Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr al-Madīnī (d. 581/1185); Ibn al-Ikhshīdī ismā’īl b. al-Fāḍī al-Sirāj (d. 524/1130); Abū al-Farābī Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Tāfīnī (d. 450/1058); al-Ḥāzīz Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-ʿAṣbāḥānī, widely known as Ibn al-Muqīrī (d. 381/991); Imam al-Ṭāhāwī.


I ask God, the Sublime and Exalted, to benefit the readers with this translation, to reward its translator with the best compensation, to support this religion by it, to subdue the errant with it, and to manifest the plain truth.

MUHAMMAD BIN Ibrahīm al-Yaqūbī
14th Safar al-khāyr, 1427/March 14, 2006
الإجابة

الحمد لله الذي نسب في الكون أرضحة الآتى الجليل على زوجهم وتحية ، وربما في سفر
الوجود أعظم الراحمين الذي تقصى إلى مفهومهم من تغييرهم عينه . وآتى الراشد بالحق
معه معرفة من أحاسيمهم وحدودهم . ويدعو الحلف إلى عبادتهWilson أو من وعده ،
والصلاة والسلام على سيدنا محمد فائد النبيين ، المبروت محمد الساميرliği ، الذي قال الله
فيه "قد جاءكم من الله فرخ زاد " (واعظ في بنات ). وعلى الله وسأله ورثه الذي قالوا بأقصى
هذا الدين . أما بعد فإن العبادة الإسلامية لم يحظ بأكثر عبادة طبيعيًا وللكبار .
qualities للعلم التي يجتاز إليها المسلمون والكبار ، تصبح الأهداف في الدنيا
والنجات في الآخرة . ومن أعم المؤذنين فيه (بجان بعثة بن النسيمة والجماعة ).
للباقر الإسلام أبي حatif أحمد بن محمد بن سلامة النبطي المولى سنة 721 هجرياً ،
فكان تداوله العلماء . وأراءهم في نسبهم الشروخ العزة . وقد ترجحا إلى اللغة العربية ،
الإسلامية الفكرية ، الدقيقة التي تقدم في سبيل الله نصرة هذا الدين في البلاد العربية ،
المهدي من الله تعالى باختصار من آثار العالة بالمرحمة الفاطمة IGNICE المعدة ، الشيخ جميع يوسف
QUENCY المكي . نجاته تعرف تاركة الألبوب ، وقاية بإلقاء وكان قد أعاد على هذه
الوفاة سنة 205 ، ثم أقام سفاح الشيخ عبد الغني السنخي ، فأعاد عن
فهم لملاحظ هذا العلم دقيق . واستجاب لسافره على وجه الحقين ورغب في أن أجزه
به . لي빈ي وربته لؤكبه ماؤها . فوافق في أجرت الدائمة المدارس . طاقت اللهم لي ولله
الأجر ، باختصار الطالبة وغيرها من المصانع في هذا العلم يتصفي ، إجابة عامة تعني له
الويلة والترحيب والجمال والتدريب كأجายน بال็ด ظائد باحث عن الطريق الذي قد قام عليه الفنون وشرح الفنون ، وأقر
الشريعة إياهمبوبق (وفي سنة 1326) وقد قرأ على المنورة ومعرفة الفنون ، وأقر
الفنين وشدة نحن شريفين مرة ، كما أقرن شرح الفنون والرياضية بضع مرات . وكما
أجأتي مبنى التهام الشجاع محمد أبو اليسر عاديين (ت 1041) ، وإمبراطور إرمان إيساد على
وجه الأرض ، كما أجاز جبل من النقوش إلى امتاع أحمد بن عبد الغني عاديين (ت 1377)
عن عبد الرحمن الكروي (ت 1124) عن مصطفى الرحمي (ت 1085) عن عبد الغني
PRAISE BELONGS TO God alone, the Lord of the worlds. The most learned scholar, the Proof of Islam, Abū Ja'far al-Warrāq al-Tahāwī (from Egypt), may God shower him with mercy, states that the following is an exposition of the creed of the People of the Prophetic Way and the Majority of Scholars (ahl al-sunnah wa al-jamā'ah) in accordance with the understanding of Muslim jurists such as Imam Abū Ḥanīfah al-Nu'mān b. Thābit al-Kūfī, Abū Yūsuf Ya'qūb b. Ibrāhīm al-Anṣārī, and Abū 'Abd Allāh Muhammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Shaybānī. It includes their beliefs about the theological foundations of the religion upon which they base their worship of the Lord of the worlds.

We assert about the unity of God, as did Imam [Abū Ḥanīfah] and the two aforementioned imams [Abū Yūsuf and Muhammad b. al-Ḥasan]—may God have mercy on them—believing with providence, that:

1. God is one, without partner.
2. Nothing is like Him.
4. No deity exists save Him.
5. He is preexistent without origin, eternal without end.
6. He neither perishes nor ceases to exist.

*See Appendix A: “Biographies of Abū Ḥanīfah, Abū Yūsuf, and al-Shaybānī.”
7. Nothing will be except what He wills.

8. Imaginations cannot attain Him; comprehensions cannot perceive Him.

9. Creatures do not bear any similarity to Him.

10. Alive, He never dies; all-sustaining, He never sleeps.

11. He is a creator without any need to create and a provider without any stores of provision.

12. He seizes life without fear and resurrects without effort.

13. Just as He was possessed of His attributes prior to His creation, so He remains with the same attributes without increasing in them as a result of His creation coming into being.

14. As He was before creation qualified with specific attributes, so He remains forever described by them.

15. It is not after creating the universe that He merits the name the Creator, nor through originating His creatures that He merits the name the Originator.

16. He possesses the quality of sovereignty with or without fief, and the quality of creativity with or without creation.

17. And while He is the Resurrector of the Dead after He resurrects them, He merits the same name before their actual resurrection. Likewise, He merits the name the Creator before their actual creation.

18. That is because He is omnipotent. Everything is dependent upon Him, and every affair is effortless for Him. He needs nothing, and There is nothing like Him, yet He is the Hearing, the Seeing (Qur’an 42:11).
19. He originated the creation with omniscience.

20. He measured out the lots [of all He created].

21. He determined the spans of their lives.

22. None of their actions were concealed from Him before He created them. He knew what they would do before He created them.

23. He commanded them to obey Him and proscribed them from disobeying Him.

24. All things are in accordance with His determination and will, and His will is fulfilled.

25. His servants are without volition except what He wills for them. Thus, what He wills for them will be, and what He does not will for them will not be.

26. He guides, protects, and preserves whomever He wills by grace. And He misguides, forsakes, and afflicts whomever He wills by justice.

27. All of them vacillate in His providence between His grace and His justice.

28. He transcends having any opposites or peers.

29. None can thwart His decree, overrule His judgment, or override His command.

30. We believe in all of that and are certain that all of it is from Him.

31. [We believe] Muhammad is His chosen one, His preeminent prophet, and His messenger, with whom He is well pleased.
32. He is the finality of the prophets, the paragon of the pious, the master of the messengers, and the beloved of the Lord of all worlds.

33. Any claim to prophecy after him is deviation and heresy.

34. He is an emissary to all of the jinn and the whole of humanity, with truth and guidance, light and radiance.

35. The Qur'an is the Word of God that emanated from Him without modality in its expression. He sent it down to His messenger as a revelation. The believers accept it as such literally. They are certain it is, in reality, the Word of God, the Sublime and Exalted.

36. Unlike human speech, it is eternal and uncreated.

37. Whoever hears it and alleges it is human speech has disbelieved, for God has rebuked, censured, and promised such a one an agonizing punishment, stating, I will roast him in the Hellfire (Qur'an 74:26). Because God threatened those who allege, This is merely human speech (Qur'an 74:25) with an inferno of torment, we acknowledged and ascertained that it was the Word of the Creator of humanity, and does not resemble human speech.

38. Whoever ascribes any human qualities to God has blasphemed. So whoever perceives this takes heed and refrains from such statements of the disbelievers and knows that God, the Sublime and Exalted, in all of His attributes, is utterly unlike humanity.
39. The Beatific Vision is a reality for the people of Paradise without enclosure or modality,\textsuperscript{44} just as the Book of God pronounces, \textit{Some faces will be aglow that day, gazing at their Lord (75:22–23)}. Its explanation is as God, the Sublime and Exalted, knows it to be and as He intended.

40. All that came (to us) from the Messenger \textsuperscript{43} in the authentic hadith\textsuperscript{43} is just as he said it was, and the meaning is as he intended. We do not interpret any of it to accord with our opinions, nor do we presume any of it to accord with our whims.

41. No one is secure in his religion unless he resigns himself to God, the Sublime and Exalted, and His Messenger \textsuperscript{43} and consigns whatever obscures his understanding to the One who knows its meaning.

42. One’s footing in Islam is not firm save on the ground of resignation and surrender.

43. Whoever covets knowledge that was barred from him, discontented with the limits of his understanding, shall be veiled from pure unity, unadulterated comprehension, and sound faith on account of his covetousness. He will then vacillate between belief and disbelief, assertion and negation, and resolution and denial. Obsessive, aimless, skeptical, and deviant, he is neither an assertive believer nor a resolute denier.

44. Belief in the Beatific Vision of the denizens of Paradise is incorrect for anyone who surmises that it is imaginary or interprets it to be a type of comprehension. For correct interpretation of the Beatific Vision—or any quality annexed to Lordship—lies in leaving interpretation and cleaving to resignation. Upon this are based the religion of the Muslims and the sacred laws of the prophets.
45. Whoever does not guard against denying [God's attributes] and against anthropomorphism has erred and failed to acquire understanding of divine transcendence.

46. For undoubtedly, our Lord, the Sublime and Exalted, is described with the attributes of unity and uniqueness. No one in creation is in any way like Him.

47. He is transcendent beyond limits, ends, supports, components, or instruments. The six directions do not contain Him as they do created things.

48. The Ascension is true. The Prophet was taken by night and ascended in person and consciously to the heavenly realm, and from there to wherever God willed in the celestial heights. God honored him with what He willed and revealed to him that which He revealed: His mind did not imagine what he saw (Qur'an 53:11). May God bless him and grant him peace in this and the final abode.

49. The Pool that God has honored him with as solace for his community is real.

50. The [Prophet's] Intercession that God deferred for them is true, as narrated in the traditions.

51. The covenant that God made with Adam and his progeny is true.

52. God has always known the total number of those who will enter Paradise and those who will enter the Fire. Nothing is added to or subtracted from that number.

53. His knowledge includes all of their actions, which He knew they would perform.

54. “Each is facilitated to do that for which he was created.”
55. The judgment of one’s deeds lies in one’s final assertive act.

56. Those saved are ultimately saved by God’s decision, just as those damned are ultimately damned by God’s decision.

57. The essence of the divine decree is God’s secret within creation. No intimate angel or prophetic emissary has ever been privy to it.

58. Delving into the decree is a means to spiritual loss, a descent into deprivation, and a path toward transgression. So beware, and take every precaution against that, whether through perusal, ideation, or suggestion. God, the Sublime and Exalted, has concealed knowledge of the decree from His creatures and has prohibited them from desiring it.

As the Sublime said in His Book, He is not questioned about what He does—it is they who will be questioned (21:23). Hence, anyone who asks, “Why has He done this?” has rejected the judgment of the Book. And whoever rejects the judgment of the Book is among the unbelievers.

59. The above epitomizes what one with an illumined heart among the protected of God needs. In addition, it is the rank of the deeply rooted in knowledge, given that knowledge is of two types: the humanly accessible and the humanly inaccessible. To either deny accessible knowledge or to claim the inaccessible is disbelief. Faith is not sound unless accessible knowledge is embraced and the pursuit of the inaccessible is abandoned.

60. We believe in the Pen and the Tablet and in all that was inscribed.
Hence, if everyone united to remove from existence what God, the Sublime and Exalted, decreed would exist, they could not. Likewise, if they all united to introduce something into existence that God, the Sublime and Exalted, did not decree, they would be unable to do so. The Pen's work is done concerning what was, is, and will be until the Day of Resurrection.

Whatever misses a person could not have afflicted him. And whatever afflicts him could not have missed him.

A servant of God is obliged to know that God's omniscience preceded everything in His creation. He then measured everything out exactly and decisively. There is none among His creatures either in the heavens or on the earth who can nullify, overrule, remove, change, detract from, or add to His decree.

All of the aforementioned is part of the doctrine of faith, the principles of knowledge, and the assent of His unity and sovereignty as God, the Sublime and Exalted, said in His Book, And He created every thing and determined its measure (25:2). And He, the Sublime and Exalted, also said, And the command of God is an ordained decree (33:38).

So woe to whomever on account of the decree becomes antagonistic with God, the Sublime and Exalted. In his desire to plumb its depths, he summons a morbid heart; in his delusion, he seeks a secret concealed in the unseen, only to end up, in whatever he says concerning it, a wicked forger of lies.

The 'arsh [the most immense of God's creation] and the kurs [a vast luminous creation in the presence of the 'arsh] are both real.
67. Yet, God has no need of the ‘arsh and whatever is beneath it.

68. He encompasses and transcends everything, and rendered His creation incapable of His encompassment.52

69. With faith, conviction, and resignation, we assert that God befriended Abraham 53 and addressed Moses 54.

70. We believe in the angels, the prophets, and the books that were revealed to the messengers. And we bear witness that they were all following the manifest truth.

71. We refer to the people who face our qibla55 as Muslim believers, as long as they acknowledge, confirm, and do not deny all that the Prophet  brought, stated, and imparted.

72. We do not speculate about God or dispute over God’s religion.

73. We do not argue about the Qur’an. Rather, we testify that it is the Word of the Lord of the universe as revealed through the Trustworthy Spirit,56 who taught it to the paragon of the messengers, Muhammad  It is the Word of God, the Sublime and Exalted. No mortal speech compares to it, and we do not say it is created.

74. We do not dissent from the majority of Muslims.

75. We do not declare anyone among the people of our qibla a disbeliever for any sin, as long as he does not deem it lawful.57

76. Nor do we opine that where there is faith, a sin does not harm the sinner.58
77. As for the virtuous among the believers, we trust that God will pardon them and admit them into Paradise by His grace. We do not, however, assume that about them, nor insist that they are in Paradise. We pray for the forgiveness of the sinful among them. And while we fear for their salvation, we never engender in them despair.

78. Assurance and despair both displace one from the congregation of Islam. For Muslims, the path of truth lies between them.

79. A believer does not lose his faith except by denying that which made him a believer.

80. Faith entails assertion with the tongue and conviction in the heart.

81. All that God revealed in the Qur'an and all that is verified from the Prophet concerning sacred law and its explanation are true.

82. Faith is one reality, and the people of faith are essentially the same. Any disparity among them results from distinctions in knowledge, piety, struggle, and adherence to priorities.

83. All believers are the protected of the Beneficent. The noblest of them with God is the most obedient and most adherent to the Qur'an.

84. Faith is belief in God, His angels, His books, His messengers, the Last Day, the resurrection after death, and the decree—its good and evil, sweetness and bitterness are all from God, the Sublime and Exalted.
85. We believe in all of the above. We do not distinguish among any of His messengers, and we affirm all that they brought.

86. People of mortal sins among the community of Muhammad will not abide in the Fire forever, as long as they died monotheists. This includes even the unrepentant that, nonetheless, met God as knowing believers. They are in His judgment and decree. If He pleases, He forgives and pardons them by His grace, as He mentioned in His Book: "Surely, God does not forgive idolatry, but He forgives anything less of whomever He pleases" (4:48). Or if He pleases, He punishes them in the Fire by His justice, and then removes them by His grace and through the intercession of those so granted among His obedient servants. He then sends them to His Paradise.

87. The above is such because God protects those who acknowledge Him. He will not treat them in either of the two abodes as He treats His deniers who are destitute of His guidance and bereft of His protection. O God, Protector of Islam and its adherents, root us firmly in Islam until we meet You in that state.

88. We consider congregational prayer behind any of the people of qibla, both the virtuous and the sinful, to be valid. We also pray over those among them who died.

89. We do not specify anyone among them to be in either Paradise or the Fire. We also do not accuse any of them of disbelief, idolatry, or hypocrisy, as long as none of that manifests from them. We resign their inner states to God, the Sublime and Exalted.
90. We do not consider violence or coercive power against anyone from the community of Muhammad \(\mu\) acceptable, unless legislated [by sacred law, such as penal punishments or the suppression of rebellion].

91. We do not accept any rebellion against our leaders or the administrators of our public affairs, even if they are oppressive. We also do not pray for evil to befall any one of them or withdraw our allegiance from them. We consider our civic duty to them concordant with our duty to God, the Sublime and Exalted, and legally binding on us, unless they command us to the immoral. We pray for their probity, success, and welfare.

92. We adhere to the Sunnah and the majority [of scholars], and we avoid isolated opinions, discord, and sectarianism.

93. We love just and trustworthy people, and we loathe oppressive and treacherous people.

94. In inconclusive matters of knowledge, we assert, "God knows best."

95. We consider valid the dispensation of wiping over foot-coverings while residing or traveling, as related in authentic reports.

96. Hajj and jihad are perpetual obligations that are carried out under legitimate Muslim rulers—irrespective of their personal probity—until the End of Time. Nothing can nullify or rescind them.

97. We believe in the noble, angelic scribes whom God has appointed as guardians over us.

98. We believe in the Angel of Death, who is entrusted with seizing the souls of all sentient life.

See Appendix B: "Understanding Jihad."
We believe in the punishment of the grave for all who warrant it. We believe in the interrogation by Munkar and Nakir of the deceased in his grave about his Lord, his religion, and his prophet, as conveyed in the narrations of the Prophet and of his companions.

One's grave is either a meadow from the gardens of Paradise or a pit from the abyss of the Fire.

We believe in the resurrection of the dead, the recompense of deeds on the Day of Judgment, the review of one's entire life, the reckoning, the recital of one's own book of actions, the reward and punishment, the Bridge over the Fire, and the Scales upon which one's actions are weighed.

Paradise and the Fire are both created; however, they neither perish nor terminate.

God, the Sublime and Exalted, created Paradise and the Fire before creating [the world]. He then created denizens for both abodes. He admits to Paradise whomever He wills by His grace and condemns to the Fire whomever He wills by His justice.

All will act in accordance with their design and are moving inexorably toward the purpose for which they were created.

Welfare and affliction, good and evil, are determined for everyone.

The [divine] enablement that an act requires—for example, an act of obedience—which cannot be attributed to a creature, occurs concurrent with the act. As for the [material] enablement that results from health, capacity, poise, and sound means, it precedes the act. In sacred law, it is upon the latter that legal and moral obligation hinge, just as God, the Sublime and Exalted, states, God obliges no soul with more than its own capacity (Qur'an 2:286).
Human actions are God's creations but humanity's acquisitions.  

God, the Sublime and Exalted, has only obliged human beings to do what they are capable of doing, and they are only capable of doing what He obliged them to do—hence the meaning of "No strength or power exists save by means of God." We assert that no one's strategy, move, or change can avert anyone from any act of disobedience to God, unless accompanied by God's providence; nor has anyone the ability to initiate and fulfill duties to God save by the providence of God, the Sublime and Exalted.

Everything is confluent with the will of God, the Sublime and Exalted, and with His knowledge, judgment, and decree.

His will supersedes all other wills, just as His decree thwarts all ruses to avoid it.

God does what He wants yet is never iniquitous.

Holy is He beyond any evil or adversity, and transcendent is He above any blemish or perversity. He is not questioned about what He does—it is they who will be questioned! (Qur'an 21:23).

In the supplications and charities of the living, there is benefit for the dead.

God, the Sublime and Exalted, answers prayers and fulfills needs.

He possesses everything, and nothing possesses Him.

Nothing is independent of God, even for the twinkling of an eye. Whoever imagines he is independent of God for even the twinkling of an eye has disbelieved and is among those brought to ruin.

God has wrath and pleasure, but not like that of any human.
118. We love the companions of God’s Messenger ﷺ. We are not, however, extreme in our love for any one of them. Nor do we dissociate from any of them. We loathe those who loathe them, and we only mention their merits. Loving them is essential to religion, faith, and spiritual excellence, and hating them amounts to infidelity, hypocrisy, and extremism.

119. We assert that the caliphate after the death of the Messenger ﷺ was first for Abu Bakr al-Siddiq ﷺ, due to his preeminence and precedence over the entire community, and then for ’Umar b. al-Khattab ﷺ, followed by ’Uthmân b. ’Affân ﷺ, and concluding with ’Ali b. Abî Tâlib ﷺ. They are the Guiding Caliphs and Guided Leaders.

120. We testify, as the Messenger of God ﷺ before us, that the ten whom he designated and assured of Paradise are indeed in Paradise. His pronouncement is true, and they are Abu Bakr, ’Umar, ’Uthmân, ’Ali, Ta’llah, al-Zubayr, Sa’d, Sa’id, Abî al-Rahmân b. ’Awf, and Abû ’Ubaydah b. al-Jarrâh, who is the “Trustee of this Community” ﷺ.

121. Whoever speaks well of the companions of the Messenger of God ﷺ, his chaste wives, and his purified progeny is absolved of hypocrisy.

* See Appendix C: “Biographies of the Ten Companions Promised Paradise.”
122. The pious scholars of the past and those after them who follow their path—the people of goodness and tradition, of understanding and profound scholarship—should be mentioned only in the best manner. Anyone who speaks ill of them has deviated from the path.

123. We do not prefer any saint to any prophet. Indeed, we assert, “One prophet is better than all of the saints.”

124. We believe in the miracles of the saints as conveyed and verified by trustworthy narrators.

125. We believe in the signs of the End of Time, including the appearance of the Antichrist and the Descent of Jesus, the son of Mary, from the celestial realm. We also believe in the sun’s rising in the west and the appearance of the Beast of the Earth from its appointed place.

126. We do not believe diviners or soothsayers or anyone who claims anything that contradicts the Book, the Sunnah, or the consensus of Muslim scholars.

127. We consider the mainstream to be true and correct, and schism to be deviant and destructive.

128. The religion of God, both in Heaven and on earth, is one. It is the religion of Islam. God, the Sublime and Exalted, says, Verily, the religion with God is submission (Qur’an 3:19). The Sublime also states, If anyone seeks other than submission to God as a religion, it will not be accepted from him (Qur’an 3:85). Finally, the Sublime says, And I am pleased with Islam as a religion for you (Qur’an 5:3).
Islam lies between the extremes of excess and neglect, immanence and transcendence, determinism and free will, and assurance of salvation and despair of God's grace.

This is our religion and our creed in public and in private. We absolve ourselves before God of anyone who opposes what we have recounted and clarified here. We ask God for a firm foundation in faith, that He seal our lives with it, and that He protect and preserve us from any heresies, variant and baseless opinions, and corrupt doctrines, such as those of the Anthropomorphists, Rationalists, Pantheists, Determinists, Dualists, and any other deviant sects that oppose the Sunnah and the majority of Muslim scholars and that ally themselves with misguidance. We are completely absolved from them. For us, they are astray and ruined. Ultimately, protection and success is from God alone.
Appendix A

Biographies of Abū Ḥanīfah, Abū Yūsuf, and al-Shaybānī

Abū Ḥanīfah
Abū Ḥanīfah al-Nuʿmān b. Thābit al-Kūfi, also known as al-Īmām al-Aʿzām, the Greatest Imam (d. 150/767)

Abū Ḥanīfah’s most eminent achievement was the systematization of Islamic legal doctrine that led to one of the major schools of Islamic law, which later became the official state-sponsored school of the Ottoman Empire, the Mughals, and others. In fact, at least half of the Muslims in the world today are among its followers, from Iraq and Iran to India and Pakistan, and from China and Japan to Europe and Africa.

Born in Kufa, an intellectual center of Iraq, Abū Ḥanīfah lived part of his life in the time of the Umayyad Empire and the remainder during the rule of the Abbasids after the Umayyads were overthrown in 132/750. He was from the immediate generation after the companions of the Prophet (al-tābiʿīn), though some have declared him to be among those who succeeded that generation (tābiʿ al-tābiʿīn).

The son of a silk merchant, Abū Ḥanīfah spent some of his youth successfully earning a livelihood in the silk trade, but found that it did not fulfill his aspirations. He began his search for knowledge, studying under prominent scholars for years, and eventually became a mujtahid, one who is capable of independent juridical reasoning (iḥtīād). Abū Ḥanīfah had also become a wealthy businessman, but his wealth did not prevent him from exuding generosity, as he donated much of his fortune to his students and colleagues. It is said that he paid five hundred dirhams to his son’s teacher when he
completed the opening surah of the Qur'an, al-Fāṭīḥah; in his day, a ram cost one dirham. Abū Ḥanīfah was renowned not only for his generosity, but also for his piercing insight and superior intellect. It is therefore no coincidence that his school of thought makes the most prodigious use of analogical reasoning based on established precedents (qiṣṣā) in its derivation of legal rulings (ahkām).

Abū Ḥanīfah had many students, the most famous of whom were Qādi Abū Yūsuf al-Anṣārī and Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Shaybānī; they are called the “two companions” and were largely responsible for the preservation and organization of the Ḥanafī school. Ibn al-Mubārak (d. 181/797), a student of both Abū Ḥanīfah and Malik, said, “If there is any one who should make use of analytical reasoning (ta'īs), then Abū Ḥanīfah is most justified in doing so.”

Abū Ḥanīfah studied with 4,000 scholars, a number of whom, such as Ṭanṣūr b. al-Mu'tamar (d. 133/751) and Muḥāhid b. Jahār (d. 104/722), can be found in the chains of narration (asbāb) of the canonical works of hadith by al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870) and Muslim (d. 261/875). Abū Ḥanīfah later authored many books, including al-Fiqh al-aqḍar, al-Fiqh al-aʿsas, and a compilation of hadith known as Musnad Abū Ḥanīfah. His juristic methodology (usūl) is based on the Qur'an, the Sunnah, consensus (ijmāʿ), analogy (qiṣṣā), and equity (istihsān).

Abū Ḥanīfah was the first to systematize the subjects related to jurisprudence in the order that most subsequent scholars followed, beginning with purification (taharah), followed by prayer (salāt), and so forth. This ordering can be found in the canonical hadith texts as well as books of jurisprudence (fiqh). The main book for determining the dominant opinion in the Ḥanafī school is Hashiyāt radd al-muḥtār ʿalā al-durr al-mukhtaṣar by Ibn ʿAbīdīn (d. 1252/1836).

Abū Ḥanīfah was widely respected for his legal acumen and for achieving the highest level of juristic thought. Al-Awzaʿī (d. 157/774) said of him, “[Abū Ḥanīfah] is the most knowledgeable when it comes to complex [judicial] matters.” Al-Shāfiʿī (d. 204/820) stated, “All people are novices in jurisprudence when compared to Abū Ḥanīfah.” Other scholars have said that no one criticizes Abū Ḥanīfah except an envier or an ignoramus.
Muḥammad al-Shaybānī

Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan b. Farqād al-Shaybānī, also known as Abū 'Abd Allāh (d. 189/804)

MUḤAMMAD B. AL-ḤASAN had the good fortune to study under and be an associate of both Abū Ḥanīfah and, later, Abū Ḥanīfah’s top student, Abū Yūsuf. He also journeyed to Medina and studied Mālik’s al-Muwatta’ with the imam himself. In fact, his narration of al-Muwatta’ is widely read even to this day, especially in the Indian subcontinent.

Unlike his teacher and contemporary, Abū Yūsuf, Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan came from a family of relative wealth and comfort. Born in Wasit, Iraq, and raised in Kufa, he spent much of his time studying the Arabic language and poetry, until the day he attended one of Abū Ḥanīfah’s gatherings; he thereafter turned his attention towards jurisprudence and the Qur’an. When Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal was asked, “From whence did you acquire these legal subtleties?” he replied, “From the books of Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan.” A prodigious writer, Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan authored works on the shariah and the hadith sciences. Though he achieved the degree of mujtiḥid, he chose to remain within the school of his teacher, Abū Ḥanīfah. His juristic skills were such that when Abū Yūsuf died, the Abbasid caliph, al-Raṣīd (d. 193/809), appointed Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan chief judge (qāḍī al-ṣuḥūf).

He also became a great scholar of Qur’anic exegesis, hadith, and literature, and his early education in Arabic language and poetry proved beneficial. His student, al-Ṣafī, stated, “If I wished to say that the Qur’an was revealed in the language of Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan, I could say so, due to his literary eloquence.”

Al-Ṣafī also said, “I have not come across a man more learned in the Qur’an than Imam Muḥammad,” and attributed much of what he learned to his studies with the Ḥanafī imam. He died in al-Rayy, in modern-day Iran, in 189/804. May God have mercy on him and fill his grave with light.
Appendix B

Understanding Jihad

The word “jihad” means “struggle” or “striving” in the broadest sense, but in the context of The Creed of Imam al-Tahawi, it connotes an armed struggle, either defensively for self-preservation or offensively for the removal of oppression. The triliteral stem of “jihad” is j-h-d, meaning “to struggle, exert effort.” This meaning is at the core of the concept of jihad. According to al-Jurjani (d. 816/1413) in his Ta’rifat, jihad is “inviting to the truth” (al-du’ala’ ila al-haqq). This is confirmed in the Prophet’s statement, “The greatest jihad is speaking truth to unjust power.”

In Islamic discourse, there are two types of jihad, the lesser and the greater. The lesser jihad entails calling others to the truth and defending oneself from those who oppose that call; it also means using state-sanctioned martial forces to move from a condition of disequilibrium to one of harmony and balance. The greater jihad is the internal struggle with one’s own self in opposing its appetites and impulses until it is in submission to God.

Jurists almost always use the word “jihad” to refer to armed struggle. However, the verb form of the word “jihad” (jähada) is used in early Meccan chapters of the Qur’an before God sanctioned military action. In this earlier usage, the word is usually associated with aspects of the above-mentioned greater jihad. An understanding of varying levels and types of jihads has been one of the outstanding features of traditional Islamic exegetical and theological discourse, contrary to the monolithic usage that came to prevail in legal circles. For example, commenting on the verse, and that you struggle (nūjāhidūna) in the way of God with your possessions and your lives (Qur’an
Jihad, after these two basic divisions (i.e., the greater and lesser jahads), is of three types: a person vis à vis his own self, which involves suppressing his ego and denying it its destructive lusts and appetites; a person vis à vis the generality of humanity, which involves not craving their possessions, and it involves being compassionate and merciful with them; and finally, a person vis à vis the world, which involves taking it as a provision for the Hereafter. Hence, there are five types of jihad.\(^7^9\)

According to three of the four juristic schools of Sunni law (namely the Mālikī, Hāfīṣ, and Hānbalī schools), the legal rationale for the external or lesser jihad is the removal of belligerence and not the removal of disbelief. In his Fatwā, Ibn Taymiyyah provides the following explanation:

Killing is permitted in sacred law only for a greater benefit, indicated by the Qur'anic verse, Persecution is worse than killing (2:217). That is, killing may be used, if necessary, to stop persecution. For this reason, non-combatants are not to be killed in jihad nor any whose disbelief is limited to themselves. Only when their disbelief affects others harmfully is opposing them sanctioned.\(^8^0\)

In summary, jihad is not a holy war; in fact, war, which is a negative term in the Qur'an, is never described as holy in either the Qur'an or the prophetic traditions. Rather, jihad is a struggle, sometimes involving arms, in defense and preservation of the holy. In its martial form, it is not so much a just war as a justified military response to unjust conditions.

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One of the most eminent living scholars of shari'ah, Shaykh Abdullah bin Bayyah, writes the following regarding jihad:

There are three types of jihad: fighting outward aggressors, opposing Satanic insinuations, and opposing the lower self. The last two meanings are according to various hadith, such as one related by Imam Ahmad in his Musnad and Abū Dāwūd in his Sunan on the authority of Fudālah b. Ubayd Allâh: the Prophet ﷺ said, “The real warrior (mu'āhid) is the one who fights (jâhid) his own soul by obeying God's commands.”\(^8^1\) This is a strong (ḥasan) hadith. According to a weak (da'i') hadith that is related by Imam al-Bayhaqi (d. 458/1066) on the authority of Jâbir (d. 74/693), the Prophet ﷺ said while returning from Tabuk (9/630), “We have come from the lesser jihad to the greater jihad.”\(^8^2\) Scholars interpreted the greater jihad to mean the struggle against one’s caprices and unhealthy desires, as well as fulfilling one’s obligations of filial piety and parental service. According to a well-known hadith, the Prophet ﷺ said to a man who requested permission to enter the army, “Struggle by serving your parents (fa fîhmid fi jâhid).”\(^8^3\)

The other meaning of jihad, martial struggle, is the one most commonly used, and it denotes opposing belligerent non-Muslims through military campaigns and war. There are many Qur'anic verses and hadith concerning jihad and its virtues, conditions, principles, and rules. It has a long history of practice between Muslims and their enemies and its reverberations still echo across time, to the present day. It is a subject of give and take, excess and neglect, moderation and extremes. Indeed, how many people have justified aggression, unjust wars, and worldly aspirations by invoking jihad? How many others have neglected it and reneged on their civic responsibilities in defending the lands of the Muslims from foreign aggression? How many movements devoid of the ethical and virtuous principles of jihad have defamed and tainted the honor of Islam and caused Muslims untold harm and difficulties? How many biased critics have attacked Islam, claiming that jihad has no justification, and that it simply inflicts continuous warfare and aggression against innocent non-Muslims? Examples of this abound in Orientalist writings.

But the truth is that jihad is not always synonymous with military action. Rather, it has a much broader connotation that refers to the defense of the truth and an invitation to that truth with the tongue, and this is the meaning of the verse in the Qur'anic chapter “the Criterion,” And struggle against them with it (wa jâhidhum bihi jâhidan
kabiran [25:52]. The pronoun “it” refers to the Generous Qur’an; hence, this verse commands Muslims to use Qur’anic proofs and arguments to oppose those who reject faith. Obviously, recitation of the Qur’an requires no use of weapons or military operations. Therefore, not every jihad involves the military. Nor is every military action by Muslims considered jihad.

Ibn Khaldun in his Prolegomenon (al-Muqaddimah) divided wars into four types based upon their rationales. He wrote,

Wars have always occurred in the world since God created it. The origin of war is the desire of certain human beings to take revenge on others, each party supported by people sharing its esprit de corps. When they have sufficiently excited each other for the purpose, and the two parties confront each other, one seeking revenge and the other trying to defend itself, there is war. It is something natural among human beings. No nation and no generation are free from it. The reason for revenge is, as a rule, either jealousy and envy, or aggression and hostility, or zeal on behalf of God and religion, or zeal on behalf of sovereign authority and the effort to maintain government. The first kind of war usually occurs between neighboring tribes and competing families. The second kind, which is a war of aggression and hostility, usually occurs among savage nations in less civilized areas.... Such people earn their livelihood with their lances and swords, and acquire their sustenance by depriving others of their possessions. They declare war against anyone who defends their property against them. They have no desire for rank and authority, only for depriving others of their possessions. The third kind of war is religious, and the sacred law refers to it as “jihad.” The fourth is a war in defense of the sovereign against those who refuse to obey the state.

These are the four kinds of war. The first two are unjust, and the second two just. War in Islam is understood to be defensive, and it is never to coerce people into the religion.84

Ibn Taymiyyah said, “Islamic warfare is always defensive, because the basis of relationships with the non-Muslims is peaceful coexistence (mus’dalimah); if one reflects deeply on the causes of the Prophet’s military expeditions, one will find that all of them were of this type.”85

Appendix C

Biographies of the Ten Companions Promised Paradise

Abū Bakr
Abū Bakr al-Śiddiq, also known as ‘Abd b. Abī Qhāfiq, Shāykh al-İslām, and ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Uṯmān b. ʿĀmir al-Qurayshī al-Taymi (d. 13/634)

Abū Bakr is the first adult male who accepted the call of the Prophet Muhammad, the first of the Prophet’s companions to be promised Paradise, and the first of the Rightly-Guided Caliphs (al-rashīdun).

Abū Bakr was the Prophet’s closest companion, and when the Prophet received divine sanction to emigrate from Mecca to Medina, the two traveled together. On their way to Medina, they took shelter in a cave; a Qur’anic verse mentions this incident and makes reference to Abū Bakr: The second of two when the two were in the cave, and he [the Prophet] said unto his companion [Abū Bakr], “Grieve not; surely God is with us” (9:40). Abū Bakr is referred to in the Qur’an more than once, though not by name, and it is the consensus of Muslim scholars that he is the greatest of the Prophet’s followers. In fact, he and the Prophet were closely related, as the Prophet was married to Abū Bakr’s daughter, ‘A’ishah.

Abū Bakr’s strength of faith and utter devotion to the Prophet were exemplified in his immediate affiliation of the Prophet’s Night Journey (al-isra’) from Mecca to al-Masjid al-İqṣā in Jerusalem and his subsequent Ascension (al-mi’râj) through the heavens. The morning after this Ascension, when the Quraysh chieffains asked Abū Bakr about this seemingly implausible journey that the Prophet said he undertook, Abū Bakr replied, “If he said it,
then it must be true.\textsuperscript{88} Because of Abū Bakr's unwavering belief, the Messenger of God gave him the epithet “the Veracious” (al-Siddiq).

After the Prophet's death, Abū Bakr's steadfastness, leadership, and devotion served him well. He averted a catastrophe by reminding the Prophet's companions, including 'Umar, “Whoever worshipped Muhammad, know that Muhammad has died, and whoever worships God, know that God is alive and will never die.”\textsuperscript{89} Abū Bakr's strength of conviction as well as his position as leader of seventy-five prayers in the Prophet's two-week absence led the companions to unanimously confer upon him the first caliphate. Almost immediately after Abū Bakr became caliph, he had to contend with many of the Bedouin tribes who refused to pay zakat; he fought them in what came to be known as the “Wars of Apostasy” (jurūb al-riddah) until they complied. He also put down several revolts by various Arab tribes that had begun following false prophets, such as Musaylamah the Liër. Also, it was under Abū Bakr's caliphate that Islam spread to the lands of Syria and Iraq.

Among Abū Bakr's many achievements was compiling the Qur'an into one complete text between two covers, called a muṣḥaf. Until then, it had been written on various leaves, wood, animal skins, and pieces of bone. Because Abū Bakr's death predated the dissemination and gathering of the hadith, only 142 prophetic sayings are narrated from him. Among the Prophet's companions found in the asānid that trace back to Abū Bakr are 'Umar b. al-Khattāb (d. 23/644), Ibn Mas'ūd (d. 33/653), 'Uthmān b. 'Affān (d. 35/656), ‘Ali b. Abī Talib (d. 40/661), 'Abī Ishāh (d. 59/679), Abū Hurayrah (d. 59/679), ‘Abd Allah b. ‘Amr (d. 63/682), ‘Abd Allah b. ‘Abbās (d. 68/687), ‘Abd Allah b. ‘Umar (d. 73/693), Jābir b. ‘Abbās (d. 74/693), ‘Abd Allah b. al-Zubayr (d. 75/694), and Anas (d. 91/709).

Abū Bakr was also a great scholar of Qur'ānic genealogy and was known for his ability to interpret dreams. About him, the Prophet said, “If the faith of the entire Muslim community (ummah) were put on one side of a scale, and the faith of Abū Bakr on the other side, the faith of Abū Bakr would outweigh it.” He remained the caliph for two years and four months before he passed away from illness; but before passing, he took the counsel of the senior companions of the Prophet and designated his successor, ‘Umar b. al-Khattāb. May God be pleased with him and fill his grave with light.

‘Umar b. al-Khattāb


A STaunch Enemy of Islam at first, ‘Umar embraced this religion after the Prophet supplicated that Islam be strengthened by one of the two ‘Umars (ahad al-'Umarayn). Soon after he accepted Islam at the Prophet's hands, the companions enjoyed unprecedented liberties with their Meccan cohabitants, such as offering prayers publicly in the Sacred Precinct. The second of the ten companions promised Paradise, ‘Umar was also the second in closeness to the Prophet, after Abū Bakr al-Siddiq. The Prophet said about ‘Umar, “In the nations long before you were people who were spoken to [by the angels], although they were not prophets. If there is any one of them in my community, truly it is ‘Umar b. al-Khattāb.”\textsuperscript{88}

He is also referred to as al-Fārūq (the Discerner between Truth and Falsehood) because of his uncompromising justice and fairness. He was the second caliph, as he followed Abū Bakr's caliphate, and was the first to bear the title “Commander of the Faithful” (amīr al-mu'mīnīn). It was during ‘Umar's caliphate that Islam spread as far west as the Atlas Mountains in northwest Africa and as far east as Persia (present-day Iran). He was tall, broad-shouldered, and fearless, and all of this evoked respect and awe from others.

In addition to his reputation as a skilled fighter, horseman, and leader, ‘Umar was also known for his compassion; it was his habit to roam the streets of Medina at night so as to personally feed and clothe the poor. Even after his successes on the battlefield and with the growing treasury, ‘Umar refused to temper his
ascetic ways. When he entered Jerusalem to accept the keys to the city, he did so on foot wearing tattered clothes. Among the policies 'Umar initiated during his reign as caliph were the establishment of stipends for school teachers, public orators, imams, muezzins, and Jews and Christians who were poor.

Beyond his skills on the battlefield and his compassion, 'Umar was also renowned for his spiritual and devotional nature. It is reported that while delivering the sermon during the Friday congregational prayer, 'Umar's spiritual insight allowed him to see a man named Sariyah, who was on the battlefield at the time, as commander of an army in Nahawand. 'Umar shouted three times, "Sariyah, the mountain!" Later, a messenger of the army returned to inform 'Umar that Sariyah had heard his shout and understood the message, and that he and his group were victorious when they changed their battle position in relation to the mountain.\(^9\)

'Umar narrated 537 hadith from the Prophet, one of the most famous of which begins, "Verily, actions are judged by intentions."\(^90\) Among the companions who narrated from him are 'Ali, Ibn Mas\'ūd, Ibn 'Abbās, Abū Hurayrah, and his son, 'Abd Allāh. 'Umar regularly made supplications asking for martyrdom and death in Medina, where the Prophet was buried, a seemingly inconceivable scenario given the strength of the Muslim armies and the stability of the Arabian Peninsula. Nonetheless, 'Umar's plea was granted; he was assassinated shortly after morning prayers in the Prophet's mosque. 'Umar died a martyr from a knife wound at the age of sixty-six. May God be pleased with him and fill his grave with light.

Uthmān b. 'Affān

Uthmān b. 'Affān b. Abī al-'Ām. Umayyah b. 'Abbā Sha'm b. 'Abd Manāf, also known as Abū 'Amr, Abū 'Abd Allāh, Abū Laylā al-Qurashi al-Umāni, and dhū al-nūrayn (d. 65/684).\(^91\)

The Third of the Ten Companions Promised Paradise, Uthmān was also the third of the Rightly-Guided Caliphs to succeed the Prophet in political rule over the community of Muslims. He was a scribe of the Qur'an and a hāfiz, one who has memorized the Qur'an; he is said to have recited the entire Qur'an in one unit of prayer. He initiated the third stage of establishing the written text of the Qur'an that God has sworn to protect from alteration. When dissension occurred among the Muslims regarding the various dialects in which the Qur'an had been revealed, 'Uthmān ordered that all volumes of the Qur'an written in non-Qurayshī dialects be destroyed, and left the Qurayshī one as the official text; to this day, all texts of the Qur'an are identical to the 'Uthmāni text.

Uthmān was called "the Possessor of Two Lights" (dhū al-nūrayn) because he was married to Ruqayyah, one of the daughters of the Prophet, and then, after her death, to her sister, Umm Kulthūm. When 'Uthmān immigrated to Abyssinia to escape persecution by the Meccans, the Prophet said, "'Uthmān is the first to emigrate with his family for the sake of God since Lot."\(^92\) 'Uthmān was also among those who immigrated to Medina, thus emigrating twice for the sake of God. The Prophet attested to 'Uthmān's modesty, citing the angels' modesty and meekness before him.\(^93\) There are 146 hadith narrated by 'Uthmān. Among the companions who narrated from him are Abū Hurayrah, Junud (d. 65/684), Ibn 'Abbās, Ibn 'Umar, 'Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr, and Anas.\(^94\)

Uthmān's generosity was legendary. He equipped the army heading for Tabuk with 950 camels and 50 horses, and then placed a thousand gold dinars in the Prophet's lap, to which the Prophet responded, "Uthmān can do no wrong after today."\(^95\) It is reported that 'Uthmān said, "No Friday has passed by since I accepted Islam in which I did not free a slave, unless I was prevented by debt; then I would free him after that."\(^96\)

During his caliphate, the lands of Armenia, Caucasus, Khurasan, Kirman, Sijistan, Cyprus, and much of North Africa came under Muslim control. His rule, like that of 'Umar who preceded him, was brought to an end through murder. One night, 'Uthmān saw a dream in which the Prophet told him, "Break your fast with us tomorrow."\(^97\) 'Uthmān fasted that day and was murdered by
several assailants who had crept into his house before sunset while he was reading the Qur'an on the last day of Dhū al-Hijjah, thirty-five years after the Hijrah. May God be pleased with him and fill his grave with light.

‘Ali b. Abī Ta‘lib

For most of his life, ‘Ali is perhaps the closest associate of the Prophet. A cousin of the Prophet who lived in his house from the age of five and was raised by the Prophet, ‘Ali later became his son-in-law. He is the fourth of the ten companions promised Paradise, and also the fourth and last of the Rightly-Guided Caliphs to succeed the Prophet in political rule over the community of Muslims.

‘Ali was the first male child to believe in Islam; he accepted Islam two days after the start of the Prophet’s mission, while still living in the Prophet’s house. According to most narrations, ‘Ali was ten years of age at the time, but some say he was younger than that. He was also the first to pray behind the Prophet. ‘Ali also had the special blessing of being the husband of Fātimah al-Zahrā‘ (d. 11/633), the Prophet’s daughter and one of the four women complete in faith. (Asiyah, the Pharaoh’s wife and caretaker of Moses; Maryam, the mother of Jesus; Khadijah, the first wife of the Prophet; and Fātimah, the daughter of the Prophet, are considered the four women complete in faith, according to a hadith in al-Bukhārī.) ‘Ali is also the father of the Prophet’s grandchildren, al-Hasan (d. 49/669) and al-Hasayn (d. 61/680). In fact, the descendants of the Prophet are all from ‘Ali’s offspring.

‘Ali was a renowned swordsman and the Prophet’s standard-bearer in battle, including the Battle of Badr, the first after the Prophet immigrated to Medina. In addition to his battlefield skills, ‘Ali was a hafiz of the Qur’an, an eloquent speaker, and an ocean of spiritual wisdom. ‘Ali was the most judicious of the Prophet’s companions. Ibn Ma‘ṣūd said, “The most knowledgeable of the people of Medina in the laws of inheritance and in judicial decisions is ‘Ali b. Abī Ta‘lib.” The Prophet had a profound love for him and praised him on various occasions. For example, the Prophet said, “I am the city of knowledge, and ‘Ali is its gate.”

‘Ali lived an austere lifestyle, refusing even to accept a stipend from the treasury during his caliphate. It is said that he preferred only the coarsest of food and clothing. His eloquence was unsurpassed; in fact, a poetic litany is attributed to him, and many sayings of ‘Ali were transmitted and recorded. For example, he said, “There is no virtue in worship that is devoid of knowledge, or in knowledge that is devoid of comprehension, or in recitation of the Qur’an that is devoid of reflection.” He also said, “May your happiness lie with what you have harvested for your afterlife, and may your sorrow lie with what has passed you by of it, and do not put too much stake in that which you have harvested from this life, and feel no sorrow for that which has passed you by from this life, and let your attention be for that which is after death.” Another one of his sayings is, “The breaths that a person takes are footsteps conveying him to his death.”

He also said, “The world and the hereafter are two conflicting enemies and two divergent paths. One who loves and befriends the world hates the hereafter and has enmity towards it. The world and the hereafter are like the east and the west, and the traveler is between them. To the extent that he draws close to one, he distances himself from the other.”

Among the 536 hadith that ‘Ali transmitted was that the Prophet once left him behind in the campaign of Tabūk, and ‘Ali said, “O Messenger of God! Are you leaving me behind with the women and children?” The Prophet replied, “Is it not pleasing to you that you are to me as Harūn was to Mūsā, except that there is no prophet after me?” According to Umm Salamah, the Prophet said, “Whoever loves ‘Ali loves me, and whoever hates ‘Ali hates me, and whoever hates me hates God.” Al-Suyūṭī narrates an incident wherein ‘Ali took a Jewish man to court for stealing his coat of...
The judge ruled in the latter’s favor, since ‘Ali was not able to provide ample witnesses as to his ownership. The Jewish man was humbled by this experience and proclaimed, “The Commander of the Faithful brought me before his qadi, and his qadi judged against him. I witness that this is the truth, and I witness that there is no deity but God, and I witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of God, and that the armor is your armor.”

When ‘Ali became the caliph after the assassination of ‘Uthmān, he moved the capital of the caliphate from Medina to Kufa and for five years patiently bore civil strife and dissenion, until he was assassinated by a member of the Khawārij (one of the most extreme factions to secede from the People of the Prophetic Way and the Majority of Scholars), who declared ‘Ali a disbeliever in Islam and refused to recognize his authority as caliph. Forty years after the Hijrah of the Prophet, in Ramadan, ‘Ali was stabbed in the mosque shortly after morning prayers. He died two days later. His last words were, “There is no deity but God; Muhammad is the Messenger of God.” May God be pleased with him and fill his grave with light.

Talhah b. ‘Ubayd Allāh

Talhah b. ‘Ubayd Allāh b. ‘Uthmān, also known as Abū Muhammad al-Tāmilī al-Qurashi (d. 36/656)

Tahlah was introduced to Islam through his friend, Abū Bakr, and became one of the first eight men who accepted Islam. He is the fifth companion promised Paradise.

Talhah was perhaps the most loyal and unwavering associate of the Prophet on the battlefield. He accompanied the Prophet in the Battle of Uhud when the Muslim army was in disarray, and swore to stay by his side even if it meant death. He survived the battle with seventy-five wounds while staunchly defending the Prophet. Talhah sacrificed himself so valiantly on that day that the Prophet used to say, “Whoever wants to see a martyr walking on two feet, look at Talhah bin ‘Ubayd Allāh.” The only battle he missed was that of Badr, as he and Sa’īd b. Zayd had been sent by the Prophet on a reconnaissance mission and were unaware that the battle had taken place.

Talhah’s gallantry was matched by his generosity. He often paid off the debts of his clansmen from the money he made from his extensive trade dealings in Iraq. One day, his wife found him in a disagreeable mood; when she found out that some monetary holdings were troubling him, she advised him to distribute some to his clan. Talhah distributed all four hundred thousand silver dirhams that he had.

Talhah was killed during the Battle of the Camel in 36/656 and was buried in Basra, although he was not there to fight. It is reported that a stray arrow penetrated his chest, upon which he said, “In the Name of God, and God’s decree must come to pass.” May God be pleased with him and fill his grave with light.

Al-Zubayr b. al-Awwām

Al-Zubayr b. al-Awwām b. Khūwaylid, also known as Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Asadī al-Qurashi (d. 36/656)

Al-Zubayr, a cousin of the Prophet and the sixth companion to be promised Paradise, was one of the early Muslims who immigrated twice, first to Ethiopia and later to Medina. He was the first to draw a sword for Islam: when he heard in Mecca that the Prophet had been killed, he rushed out of his house with nothing but his drawn sword. To his surprise, he came across the Prophet, who inquired about his mission, and al-Zubayr explained what he had heard and said he intended to fight all of Mecca. The Prophet then supplicated on his behalf.

Al-Zubayr was one of the first and youngest companions to accept Islam, and did so at the age of eight. His father tried to coerce and cajole him to reject the faith, but he remained steadfast, stating, “I will never return to disbelief.” Al-Zubayr fought in the service of Islam; his chest was riddled with scars from the wounds he had received in the many battles in which he had participated, including
Badr and Uhud. Accounts of these battles frequently mention al-Zubayr alongside ‘Ali and other prominent companions of the Prophet, fighting and serving the Prophet tirelessly.

Al-Zubayr was endowed with considerable wealth, which he did not hesitate to give in charity or in the service of Islam. His great stature and commitment to Islam continued after the death of the Prophet. ‘Umar considered him to be one of those who was qualified to be caliph after him and entrusted al-Zubayr to decide the fate of the caliphate after his death. Al-Zubayr did not fight on the day of the Battle of the Camel, refusing to take sides, and turned to leave, but Ibn Jarraḥ killed him near Basra. Al-Zubayr died thirty-six years after the Hijrah. May God be pleased with him and fill his grave with light.

Sa’d b. Abi Waqqās
Sa’d b. Abi Waqqās Malik b. Wuhayb b. ‘Abd Manaf, also known as Abū Ishaq al-Zuhrī al-Qurashtī (d. 53/673)

The Seventh Companion to be promised a place in Paradise, Sa’d was one of the first people of Mecca to accept Islam, having done so when he was only seventeen years of age.

Sa’d explained that the following Qur’anic verse referred to him: And if they [your parents] coerce you to associate with Me those you do not know, then do not obey them (29:8). He said, "[My mother] said, 'Has not God commanded righteousness? I swear by God that I will not eat or drink until I die or you renounce Islam.'" However, seeing Sa’d’s resolve in persisting in his new faith, she eventually ate.

His steadfast devotion to the service of Islam carried onto the battlefield. Sa’d was the first to cast an arrow in the Battle of Badr, and the Prophet supplicated for him, "O Lord, direct his shooting and respond to his prayer." Sa’d also participated in the rest of the major battles of the Prophet.

Sa’d was blessed with wealth and was very generous. Once when he fell ill, he asked the Prophet if he should leave two-thirds of his wealth to charity and the remainder to his daughter.
"What was Ten attain Prophet al-Rahman
The was AL-TAHAwI who is pagan also ninth c Medina. those led he Mecca Prophet in armies. the during Medina participated suffering to Battle c placed had with senior Bakf of Ubaydah married. on who Prophet pleased his face, severely Bakf Abd one process. grave in his during governor. c in wealth it with Ubaydah interest. was the the ai-ummah) to b. the 0 al-Rahman & OF them. serving was later b. of that wounded said shards not he lodged & small Abu with family, persevered Uhud, "May 42/663), led Promised al-Rahman c own to far when he other companions Bakr and, of the first eight people to accept Islam, and experienced the suffering that befell many of the early Muslims. When persecution at the hands of the pagan Meccans became too great, he accompanied the other emigrants from Mecca to Ethiopia, and later immigrated to Medina.

'Abd al-Rahmān b. 'Awf
'Abd al-Rahmān b. 'Awf b. 'Abd 'Awf al-Qurashi (d. 31/654)

'ABD AL-RAHMĀN is the ninth companion that the Prophet mentioned would undoubtedly attain Paradise, and was one of the few companions that led the Prophet in prayer. 'Abd al-Rahmān was one of the first eight people to accept Islam, and experienced the suffering that befell many of the early Muslims. When persecution at the hands of the pagan Meccans became too great, he accompanied the other emigrants from Mecca to Ethiopia, and later immigrated to Medina.

'Abd al-Rahmān knew both poverty and wealth. When he left Mecca, he left all he owned behind, and arrived in Medina virtually destitute. His designated Anṣārī brother from Medina, with whom the Prophet had paired him, offered him assistance, but 'Abd al-Rahmān declined, saying, "May God bless you in your wealth and family, but direct me to the marketplace," as he preferred to earn his own way.107 Soon, he became a successful businessman and married. He was among the wealthier companions and gave in charity more than half his wealth on more than one occasion.

'Abd al-Rahmān's philanthropy did not bring about any delusional self-aggrandizement, for it was said that he was indistinguishable from his slaves when among them. He was also a brave fighter and fought in the Battle of Badr. He was one of the few who remained steadfast with the Prophet during the Battle of Uhud, in which he was wounded so severely that he walked with a limp thereafter. He was buried in the Baq' cemetery in Medina. May God be pleased with him and fill his grave with light.

Abū 'Ubaydah b. al-Jarrāh
'Amīr b. 'Abd Allāh b. al-Jarrah, better known as Abū 'Ubaydah b. al-Jarrāh (d. 18/640)

LIKE MOST of those among the ten promised Paradise, Abū 'Ubaydah was one of the first to accept Islam and among the few who memorized the entire Qur'an and participated in the immigrations to Ethiopia and Medina. The Prophet designated him "Trustee of the Muslim Community" (amīn al-ummah) because of his meticulous honesty.

Abū 'Ubaydah persevered under the persecution that the early Muslims suffered, even when it came from his own family. He fought fearlessly in the Battle of Badr, and was compelled to combat his own father, which he did with great difficulty. He was also among those who guarded the Prophet during the chaos of the Battle of Uhud. On that day, when the Prophet was severely injured by shards of his shield that became lodged in his noble face, Abū 'Ubaydah determined that using his teeth would be the best way to extract the shards, as that would cause the least pain to the Prophet; Abū 'Ubaydah lost two of his teeth in the process.

Both in his personal life and on the battlefield, Abū 'Ubaydah always placed service to Islam far above his own interests. On one occasion, the Prophet appointed him to lead an army sent to reinforce another army led by 'Amr b. al-'As (d. 42/663), which included senior companions such as Abū Bakr and 'Umar. When Abū 'Ubaydah and his army arrived, 'Amr asserted his leadership over both armies. To avoid wrangling over leadership, Abū 'Ubaydah relinquished control of his army to 'Amr.

An indication of how much Abū 'Ubaydah was revered by those around him is this reported incident: 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb asked some of his companions, "What do you wish for?" The first
stated that he wished for a house full of gold that he may spend in God’s cause, and a second man said he wished for a house full of pearls and gems that he may spend in God’s cause and in charity. 'Umar then said, “I wish that this house was full of men like Abū 'Ubaydah b. al-Jarrāh.”

During the caliphate of 'Umar, Abū 'Ubaydah led the Muslim army to many victories in Syria. After much of the area came under Muslim control, Syria was stricken by plague. Abū 'Ubaydah remained faithfully with his troops to suffer whatever they might suffer, and he eventually died from the plague. Abū 'Ubaydah passed away during the caliphate of 'Umar b. al-Khattab. May God be pleased with him and fill his grave with light.

The biographies in Appendices A and C were compiled by Waleed Mossad and Harun Spevack using the following sources:


Notes to the English Text

Notes to the Preface


3. Ibid.

4. Ibid., 162.

Notes to the Introduction


7. Ibid., 1.

8. Ibid., 3.

9. Ibid., 5.

10. Ibid., 9.


12. The resemblance of these early Khawârij to the contemporary phenomenon of the neo-Khawârij is startling. Since the time of the Khawârij, many Muslim sects have appeared, declaring war on other Muslims who do not agree with them. Their cry is “No decision but God’s” (Idhulona ila Ilah), arrogating to themselves the knowledge of God’s decision in any given situation. Many of them contend that since Muslim governments do not rule by Islam, they are in apostasy.
13. Although this area has been grossly neglected throughout the history of Western science, an intriguing account of the kalām atomic theory is presented in Bernard Pullman’s The Atom in the History of Human Thought. He admits that Islam was the first to proclaim that faith in a unique God, Master of the Universe, is entirely compatible with an atomic theory that grounds human understanding of the mechanics of the world in speculative science and not revelation. See Bernard Pullman, The Atom in the History of Human Thought (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 114.

14. The attributes of God, according to the Ash‘arī school, are twenty and identify the necessary qualities of divinity, without which the understanding of divine perfection would be incomplete. They are the existential attribute of being and the five negating attributes of pre-eternity; perpetuity; independence; dissimilarity; and unity of acts, attributes, and essence. Added to these are the seven attributes of omniscience, hearing, seeing, speaking, life, omnipotence, and volition. The active participles were included to reach twenty necessary attributes of God. The Mu‘tazilah claimed that God was the Omniscient without the attribute of knowledge, the Omnipotent without the attribute of power added to His essence, etc. This led the Sunni scholars to accuse the Mu‘tazilah of “denying God’s attributes” and to charge them with heresy. Abū Hāshim developed the theory of states to explain this seeming contradiction from the Sunni affirmation of the attributes. For a more complete exploration of the subject, see Richard Frank’s extraordinary study of the subject in Beings and Their Attributes: The Teaching of the Basran School of the Mu‘tazila in the Classical Period (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1978).

15. This second principle proved to be the weak link. Abū al-Hasan al-Ash‘arī exposed the flaw in this argument by asking about a child who dies. What would be the child’s ultimate destination? He argues that if the child went to Paradise, he did so on no merit of his own, and hence unjustly; likewise, if the child went to Hell, he did so unjustly.

16. The uncreatedness of the Qur’an was never discussed by the Prophet or his companions. The debate of the Qur’an being created or uncreated was introduced by the Mu‘tazilah; they concluded that the Qur’an must be created, and their position, in turn, forced the Sunnis to respond. Fifty years later, the complete doctrinal formulation of the uncreatedness of the Qur’an was articulated by Imam al-As‘arī, and those who maintained otherwise were effectively silenced.

NOTES TO THE AUTHOR’S BIOGRAPHY


18. Ibid., 72.

19. The second Abū Ja‘far is Ahmad b. Abī ‘Imrān Abū Ja‘far al-Ḥanafi, the judge.

20. Ibn Daqīq al-‘Id (d. 702/1302).


22. Ibid.


24. Ibid.

25. Ibid., 177.

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid.

28. One of the positive influences of Hellenistic thought upon Islam was the application of Aristotelian structure to the sciences of Islam. While it can be argued that Imam Mālik began the process with his ordering of the material in al-Muwatta before Greek influence was widespread, the Greek influence is palpable and, in this area in particular, highly beneficial. Imam al-Tahāwī wrote at a time when the Hellenistic influences had not yet permeated the Islamic scholastic tradition. Hence, his text is less organized than later texts, and this is noted as a weakness in the overall structure. To remedy this, we have placed topic icons alongside the Arabic text.
refers to the preceding those who are bent on denying the truth in 2:6.) Finally, 19:36 further clarifies that “misguidance” becomes inevitable for those who reject the call of their prophets and thereby deserve to go wrong.

40. Jinn are a species of the unseen realm, concealed from humans, though humans are not concealed from them. The word “jinn” comes from an Arabic root meaning “to conceal.” The English word “genie” is from the Arabic jinn. Sapient creatures created of a smokeless fire, the jinn share free will with humans and thus the capacity for goodness and evil. Iblis (Satan), often mistaken to be a fallen angel, belongs to the jinn species. He became the adversary to humanity after Adam’s creation and expulsion from the Garden of Eden. According to Fakhr al-Din al-Razi (d. 606/1210), the jinn inhabited Earth before men and caused great disruption and violence, shedding blood and sowing corruption, and Iblis was sent down from the divine presence to subdue them. Upon his return to the Highest Assembly, Iblis found that a new vicegerent of God named Adam was to be placed on Earth. The angels inquired as to why a man would be placed on Earth. Since man, like the jinn, was given free will, the angels’ concern was that man would also sow corruption and shed blood. Angels, on the other hand, only praise God and cannot disobey Him, which is why Satan could not have been a “fallen angel.” God’s response was that He knew what the angels did not know. When the angels and those in the divine presence were commanded to bow in respect to this new creature, Adam ﷺ, whom God had honored and endowed with knowledge, all obeyed, except Iblis, who refused out of arrogance. Iblis felt he was made of superior elements than Adam ﷺ, since jinn were made from fire and air, whereas Adam ﷺ was made of water and earth. This arrogance brought about Iblis’ downfall. By allowing his pride, haughtiness, and envy to overcome his soul, Iblis lost his place as the highest and most exalted of those who had knowledge of God. After being granted respite, Iblis vowed that he would lead astray all humans, but God guaranteed that he would not be able to sway the righteous. Swearing to lie in ambush on the straight path, and to come to humans from the front and behind, and from the right and the left, Iblis declared that God would find few humans gratefui
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(Qur'an 7:11-17). Ibn al-Hajj (d. 736/1336) comments that the two directions Satan did not mention relate to the vertical plane, above and below. This is because if man is in harmony with the vertical plane—"as above so below"—then Iblis has no power over him.

41. "Blasphemy" is a verbal assault on the sacred. While the Arabic here is kafara, which normally would be glossed as "disbelieved," a more fitting word is the Catholic term "blasphemous." Thomas Aquinas viewed blasphemy like heresy, as a species of disbelief. This is closer to the meaning here, as the term kufi in Islamic theology involves several species of disbelief. The Anthropomorphists (al-mujassimah) referred to here believe in the Qur'an and Sunnah but still fall into a category of kufi.

42. The Beatific Vision (al-mi'raj) is the greatest bounty of the next life, whereby the inhabitants of Paradise will gaze upon the countenance of God without any veil. Likewise, the worst torment of the next life is being veiled from the countenance of God (Qur'an 75:22-23, 85:13). The word "modality" here refers to the form in which something is understood, the way in which a quality is or can be possessed by a thing, as in, "Green is a mode of the quality of color." Thus, the Beatific Vision is a vision, the mode of which is incomprehensible. In his commentary on al-Tahawi's Creed, Abu'l-Qasim al-Maydani (d. 1398/1978) writes, "The vision of the transcendent holy essence of God, the Sublime and Exalted, without encirclement or direction is true and real for the People of Paradise. However, this vision is not with dimensions or limits, due to God's transcendence beyond finiteness, descriptions, limits, and containment. It is a-modal (bi lâ kayf) in its nature and has no direction, description, or light rays connecting the seer and the seen, nor any distance between the one gazing and the object of his gaze, for all of that is related to the vision of bodies and substances, and God, the Sublime and Exalted, is not a body contained in dimensions. Therefore, envisioning God, the Sublime and Exalted, cannot be likened to gazing upon a body. Vision is in accordance with what is being seen" (Sharh al-'aqdah al-Tahawiyyah al-musammamât bi-yân al-sunnah wa al-jamâ'ah [Damascus: Dar al-Fikr, 1997], 71).

43. The "hadith" are statements attributed to the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ by which his Sunnah is known (see "Sunnah," note 60). Hadith are considered an authoritative source of legislation and constitute a major source of guidance for Muslims, second only to the Qur'an.

44. The Ascension (al-mi'raj) is the second part of the Prophet's Night Journey known as laylat al-isra' wa al-mi'raj. The isra' refers to the first part of his Night Journey, in which Angel Gabriel ٍ accompanied the Prophet ٍ from the Sacred Mosque in Mecca to Jerusalem, as he rode upon a wondrous beast called al-Burāq. In Jerusalem, the Prophet ٍ led in prayer all the previous prophets ٍ. The Ascension refers to the second part of the Prophet's Night Journey: his ascent from the Sanctuary in Jerusalem up to the heavenly realm. Grammatically, the word al-mi'raj is a noun of instrument, which is a noun used to describe the means by which one does the verbal root's actions. In this case, the verbal root is ٍ"uraj, which denotes "ascension." Morphologically, mi'raj can mean "a ladder" or "a means of ascent." The Prophet ٍ rode through the seven heavens upon al-Burāq, whose single stride extended from one horizon to the next. In the seventh heaven, the Prophet ٍ reached the Lote Tree of the furthestest limit. (In Asian traditions, the Lote Tree specifically refers to the point where rational thought ends and the supra-rational realities emerge.) At this point, the Archangel Gabriel, who had acted as his guide thus far on this journey, left him, and the Prophet ٍ entered into the divine presence, that of his Lord. Here, the Prophet ٍ greeted his Lord, and Muslims recite those salutations in their daily prayers. Indeed, during the Ascension, the Prophet ٍ received the command for the Muslims to offer fifty prayers daily. However, before the Prophet ٍ returned from this journey, the obligation was reduced to only five daily prayers, at the behest of Moses ٍ that the Prophet ٍ intercede with his Lord to bring ease for the community of believers.

45. The Pool (al-bawad) is a vast gift of God for the Prophet ٍ in Paradise, from which the Prophet ٍ, with his noble hands, will give drink to his followers on the Day of Standing. It was described by the Prophet ٍ as extending beyond the distance between Sanaa in Yemen and Aylah (a bygone city off the Red Sea coast, east of the Sinai Peninsula, near the Gulf of Aqabah, and south of Gaza). It is the fountain of Kawthar, whose water is white like milk, whose fragrance is akin to musk, and whose goblets outnumber the stars. Whoever drinks
from it will never thirst thereafter (al-Bukhārī [d. 256/870], on the authority of 'Abd Allah b. 'Amr [d. 63/682]).

46. The Intercession (al-shafa‘ah) of the Prophet ﷺ is twofold: His first petitioning is for the entire human race, in order to relieve them of the momentous anxiety of the first stage of the Day of Judgment. His second Intercession is for the disobedient among his community; he will pray, asking God to treat His servants mercifully. God promised the Prophet ﷺ that his prayer will be granted due to his praiseworthy station (maqām maḥfūz [Qur’an 17:79]).

47. The covenant refers to the primordial exchange between God and all human souls: After God created all the souls, He gathered them and asked, "Am I not your Lord?" All souls replied, Yes, we have testified (Qur’an 7:172). Hence, all humans testified their belief in God before their souls were placed into their bodies.

48. A hadith narrated by al-Bukhārī.

49. All actions are judged by a person’s inward state during his or her last act. That is, one who dies submitting to God as one’s final action will have the cumulation of his or her acts judged in accordance with that belief. Likewise, if one’s “final assertive act” is of disbelief, this will result in all of his or her previous actions being judged as disbelief. For this reason, God commands, O believers! Be conscious of God with due reverence, and do not die without having surrendered to God (3:102).

50. The Pen and the Tablet (al-qalam wa al-lauh) are among the first of God’s creations. The sound hadith in Imam al-Tirmidhi’s Jāmi‘ states, “The first thing that God created was the Pen, and He said to it, ‘Write!’ The Pen replied, ‘What shall I write?’ And God said, ‘Write the foreordained (qadar).’ And so it wrote what had been and what will be for all eternity.”

The statement, “The first thing that God created” implies that the Pen was the very first of God’s creation. However, another hadith with a stronger chain that Ibn ‘Umar narrated states, “God decreed all foreordained matters before He created the heavens and the earth by fifty thousand years and (fa) His Throne was upon water.” According to Abū Ya‘lā al-Hamadānī, the Throne preceded the Pen because the decree follows immediately after the creation of the Pen, given that the particle fa is used in the hadith. Furthermore, the aforementioned hadith clearly states that God’s Throne was upon water at the time. This is also supported by the fact that the Pen wrote “what had been,” implying that there was something before the Pen. In addition, Imam Isma‘il al-‘Ajamī (d. 1162/1749) states, “The primacy of the Pen’s creation is only in relation to the already existing, prophetic Muhammadian light, the water, and the Throne. And, some say that primacy of creation is only in relation to the species itself—i.e., the first light created was the light of Muhammad and so on” (Kashf al-khaqā‘ wa muzāl al-abil ‘an mā izzuhr min al-sha‘ār ‘alā al-ṣināt al-nās [Beirut: Ihya’ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, 1932], 1:265-66).

The hadith that is related by Jābir in the Musannaf of al-Ḥāfiz Abū Bakr ‘Abd al-Razzāq b. Hammām al-Ṣan‘ānī and considered important by recent scholarship indicates that the very first of God’s creation was the light of the Prophet ﷺ. According to the hadith, Jābir b. ‘Abd Allāh asked the Prophet ﷺ, “What is the first thing that God created?” To this, the Prophet ﷺ replied, “O Jābir! The first thing God, the Sublime and Exalted, created was the light of your Prophet from His light, and that light remained in the midst of His power for as long as He wished, and there was not at that time a Tablet or a Pen or a Paradise or a Fire or an angel or a heaven or an earth. And when God, the Sublime and Exalted, wished to create creation, He divided that light into four parts, and from the first He made the Pen, from the second the Tablet, from the third the Throne, and from the fourth everything else.” One intriguing point about this hadith is its concurrence with modern astrophysical theory, which states that all of the cosmos came from what is called the initial singularity in which all of existence was rolled up in a point of infinite density and temperature. From this initial light, which burst forth in what is known as the big bang, it split into four fundamental forces: the strong nuclear force, the electromagnetic force, weak interaction, and gravitation. The fourth part mentioned in the hadith from which all else was created may refer to gravitational forces, which cause attraction between the particles of matter, allowing the seen world to exist and be held together. And God knows best.

It is important to note that none of the hadith mentioned here achieve the status of infallible narrations and should not be points of
contention in creational matters, as our scholars have stipulated. (For a
critical study of the hadith of Jabir on the light of the Prophet  see,
 Isa h. 'Abd Allah h. Muhammad h. Mâni' al-Himyari, al-Juz' al-majúd
min al-juz' al-awwal min al-musántaf li l-hâjaq al-kabîr Abû Bakr 'Abd
al-Razzâq b. Hammâd al-San'darî (Lahore: Mu'assasât al-Sharaf, 2005.)

51. The 'arsh is the greatest of God's creation and is above the kurf,
which extends over the heavens and the earth (Qur'an 2:255). Abû
Dharr al-Ghifârî (d. 32/653) is reported to have said, "The kurf, in
relation to the 'arsh, is like an iron ring thrown out into empty land."
Some scholars have considered both terms to refer to the Throne of
God, while others have drawn a distinction between them and placed
the 'arsh above the kurf. Only God knows the reality and vastness of
each, which Ibn Mas'ûd described thus: "Between the first heaven
and the one above it is the distance of a five-hundred-year journey;
between each of the seven heavens is the same distance of a five-
hundred-year journey, respectively; likewise, the distance between
the seventh heaven and the kurf is a journey of five hundred years;
between the kurf and the water is the same, and the 'arsh is above the
water . . ." (recorded by Ibn Khuzaymah [d. 311/923] and al-Bayhaqi
[d. 458/1066]; also, see Qur'an 11:7).

There are two sound versions of this sentence. In one version,
there is no conjunction, and it reads, "He encompasses everything,
including what is beyond the Throne." Thus the referent is "His
Throne" and not "Him." The other version is rendered here. And
God knows best.

52. According to the Qur'an, God took Abraham as a friend (4:125).
53. According to the Qur'an, God addressed Moses in words (4:164).
54. Qibla: the direction of the Ka'ba (the sacred building at Mecca), to
which Muslims turn at prayer (The New Oxford American Dictionary, 2nd
55. Scholars have understood the mention of al-rûh al-amîn in the Qur'an
to mean the Angel Gabriel. For example, the Qur'an says, Verily, this is
a revelation from the Lord of the worlds. The Trustworthy Spirit (al-rûh al-amîn)
descended with it to your heart, that you may admonish (26:92-94).
56. The Khawârij held the view that anyone who sins has left the fold of
Islam by definition, regardless of whether that sin was among the
greater (kabîr) or lesser (saghtîr) sins.
57. The Mu'tjiyyah (Antinomians) made this claim.
58. I have chosen to translate kubîr (lit. enormity) as "mortal sin." In
classical Western theology, grave or capital sins are termed "mortal,"
as they are sins capable of "killing the life of the soul" and leaving
the sinner without sanctifying grace unless he repented. Three
criteria are necessary for a sin to be mortal: the matter is grave; the
perpetrator is completely aware of his actions; and he commits the
sin fully consenting. In Islamic theology, a grave matter is one for
which a specific punishment has been decreed or the warning of
Hellfire is mentioned in relation to it. Mortal sins were juxtaposed
with venial or lesser sins that could be easily forgiven. I feel that this is
a reasonably accurate gloss to the dual classification of sins in Islam
known as greater (kabîr) and lesser (saghtîr) sins. Unfortunately,
many of these excellent terms that exist in English to convey similar
or identical Islamic concepts have been tainted by past history and
current popular use. "Sin" today is almost entirely reduced to sexual
misconduct and ignores the grave sins of economic oppression, such
as usury, or the abuse of power, such as tyranny, which are of far
greater severity and consequence.
59. The Sunnah is the normative practice of the Prophet Muhammad .
It is derived from the words, actions, and tacit approvals and
disapprovals of the Prophet . The Sunnah is the second most
important source of authority and legislation in Islam after the
Qur'an. Scholars of Islamic jurisprudence have the foundation of
the shariah on four primary sources: the Qur'an, the Sunnah, the
consensus of the scholars (ijmâ'), and analogical reasoning based on
established precedents (qiyas).
60. While this matter is actually a legal one usually dealt with in
the books of jurisprudence and not in a theological treatise, it
nonetheless covers well certain theological points; hence, the author
placed it in his creed. One is the necessity of belief in multiply-
transmitted hadith, which have the status of the Qur'an in their
legal and creational consideration. In this case, though the Qur'an
commands the washing of feet for ritual ablutions, the hadith
permits wiping in lieu of washing as a legally valid license. To reject a
multiply-transmitted hadith is akin to rejecting a verse in the Qur'an.
and hence is a type of disbelief threatening one's faith. Abū al-Ḥasan al-Karīmī al-Ḥanafī (d. 340/951) said, "I fear a state of disbelief for the one who rejects wiping over the foot-coverings" (Akmal al-Dīn Muhammad b. Muhammad al-Bābārtī, Sharḥ ʿaqīdah ahl al-sunnah wa al-jamāʿah [Kuwait: Wizārat al-Awaqf, 1989], 123).

62. Munkar and Nakīr are the two angels who interrogate the entombed immediately after the deceased can no longer hear the last pattern of withdrawing footsteps of the funeral procession. These angels make the entombed sit, and then they ask, "Who is your Lord, what is your religion, and what do you say about the messenger sent to you?" The ability of the one questioned to respond correctly depends on how strong his or her faith was while alive. Abū Dawūd relates that the Prophet ﷺ instructed his companions ﷺ to seek refuge from the punishment in the grave, which is based on how the entombed answers the interrogation of Munkar and Nakīr.

63. The Arabic word for "acquisition" (kasb) refers to one's livelihood or earnings. Linguistically, it signifies "to earn or acquire." As a technical term in Islamic theology, it refers to the Sunni doctrine that ostensibly resolves the vexing and perennial human dilemma of free will versus predestination. While the doctrine of acquisition has its roots in the Qur'ān, it is considered to be an original Muslim contribution to a problem that is shared by the three Abrahamic faiths. ‘Alī h. Muhammad al-ṣafījānī (d. 816/1413) defines the word linguistically as "that which leads to accruing benefit or warding off harm." He further explains, "Moreover, God's actions cannot be described with it because God, the Sublime and Exalted, is transcendent beyond accruing benefit or avoiding harm" (Kitāb al-taʿrīf, 2nd ed. [Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1992], 236). According to Abū Bakr Muhammad h. ʿHasan h. Fīrāk (d. 406/1015), as a theological term, it refers to "the state and decree whereby the human actor among us exercises the relation of his created power to that which has been decreed." Ibn Fīrāk mentions that according to Abū al-Ḥasan al-ʿAshʿarī, acquisition referred to "what had occurred through created capacity" (annahu mà wqāʿa bī qudratīn mubahāthah), and that al-ʿAshʿarī would never say more about it than that and did not prefer any other expression to that one. Ibn Fīrāk also quotes al-Shirāzī (d. 476/1083), who said, "It is whatever created capacity is related to, and this meaning is sound because any event not related to created capacity cannot be called 'acquisition' (kasb)" (Kitāb al-hudud fī al-ʿasāl, 85). In Sharḥ ʿaqīdah al-Nasafiyyah, a commentary on al-Nasaffī's creed (d. 710/1310), al-Taftazānī (d. 792/1390) explains, "[According to al-Nasaffī] 'God, the Sublime and Exalted, is the creator of all the actions of His creatures, including rejection of God, the Sublime and Exalted, or acceptance of Him, obedience to Him or disobedience.' However, this understanding differs from [the belief of] the Rationalists (al-muʿtaṣilīn) who claim that men are the 'creators' of their actions.... The people of truth opposed them for a number of reasons: the first is that if the creature were indeed the creator of his actions, he would surely know all of their particular details, since it follows that power and freedom necessitate such knowledge. The ensuing inevitabilities of such a proposition are patently false. For example, even to walk from one place to another may comprise a series of interspersed steps along with the movements that oscillate between faster ones and slower ones. Meanwhile, the one walking is totally oblivious to those subtleties. This is not a result of his merely being distracted from such things. Even if he were asked about them, he would not know. This is apparent in the most obvious of actions [such as walking]; if, on the other hand, he were asked about the internal movements of his limbs and organs in walking, talking, striking, and what not, and what he needed in terms of the micro-movements of his muscles and the elasticity of his cartilage and nerve impulses, it would be even more apparent [that he knows nothing of the particulars of his actions]. The second objection is due to the clear revealed texts that exist, such as God's words, God created you and what you do (Qur'ān 37:96). ... There is also the Qur'ānic verse, God is the Creator of everything (13:17). Rationally, this refers to every contingent thing, and man's actions certainly constitute a contingent thing. In addition, the Qur'ānic verse, Is the One who creates like the one who does not? (16:17), is used to praise the station of creative capacity and relate it to the worthiness of receiving servitude [from those who cannot create]" (Sharḥ ʿaqīdah al-Nasafiyyah [Cairo: Maktabat al-Kulliyāt al-Azhariyyah, 1987], 54-55).

64. Those promised Paradise far exceed the ten companions of the Prophet ﷺ mentioned here, and include many women as well, hut
The Creed of Imam al-Taḥāwī

these ten are mentioned in an infallible hadith. In the science of creed (‘āqidah), the dominant opinion is founded upon infallible hadith.

55. The Antichrist (el-masīh al-dajīl) is “the False Messiah, the Imposter Christ.” He is a world leader who emerges in the latter days and is a great personal opponent of Christ’s teachings of abstinence, other-worldliness, and spirituality. The Antichrist is essentially a false prophet who will spread evil throughout the world before he is killed by Christ (261/875) just outside of Jerusalem. One of the major signs of the Last Day is the emergence of the Antichrist. He will preach salvation through material exploitation, for which reason he was named thus, as the teachings of Jesus Christ are altogether spiritual. According to the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, there will be at least thirty such false prophets, culminating in a final man who leads a large segment of the world astray. The Prophet ﷺ described him as “the worst tribulation to be expected” (ṣanūṣ fitnatin yuntejar). His advent is shortly before the second coming of Christ (261). According to a hadith, many of the Antichrist’s followers will say, “We only follow him because he feeds us.” He is described as having mountains of wheat. Some hadith state that the word “disbeliever” is written on his forehead, which every believer will be able to recognize, whether literate or illiterate. He is also described as “leaping between the earth and clouds” and as having an arm that “reaches the bottom of the sea.” The Prophet ﷺ said, “The treasures of the earth will follow him like drones follow the queen bee.” The False Messiah will raise people from the dead, and he will enter into every city in the world in forty days. In a sound hadith narrated by Muslim (d. 261/875), when the Prophet ﷺ was asked how the Antichrist would travel so quickly, he replied, “Like a wind that leaves behind a stream of clouds.” The Antichrist will come at a time of great disequilibrium in the world, and will hoodwink many through his “miracles” and powers, but devout Muslims, whether literate or not, will be able to identify his lies and trickeries.

56. The “Beast of the Earth” (dabbat al-ard) is an unprecedented creation that emerges from the substance silica, according to a hadith recorded in al-Bukhārī’s Tahrīkh. This beast will speak to humanity in all languages, alerting all about their heedlessness of the signs of God, as mentioned in the Qur’an (27:82). The appearance of this beast is one of the major signs of the Last Day.

67. The Anthropomorphists (al-mushabbihāt or al-mujassimāt) comprise a sect among Muslims who ascribe physical human characteristics to God. This group arose in the formative period of Islamic theology, around the second century. Insisting that all references to God in the Qur’an are literal, the Anthropomorphists reject the rhetorical use of metaphor therein. They view certain verses as proof that God is located in space and has limbs. A strict traditional Sunni perspective views anyone who takes such verses literally as an Anthropomorphist. Another more generous view deems as Anthropomorphists only those who do not stipulate that God is “without modality” (bi lā kāyj). While al-Taḥāwī is clearly opposed to this group, and certain sections in his creed address the group’s specific heresies, many Anthropomorphists have appropriated his creed as their own and interpreted his clear statements in novel ways to avoid the conclusions one must draw from a more standard reading of the text.

68. The Rationalists (al-muṭāzilah) are a sect that formed when Wāsil b. Ḥanīf left the study circle of his teacher, al-Ḥasan al-Basrit, and formed his own group. Rationalists are primarily a theological school (though they also had juristic points as well as a political philosophy). Though not a well-organized group of scholars, the Rationalists did introduce systematic theology to the Muslim community, which forced the Sunni scholars to produce refutations that invariably clarified their own positions within a Sunni framework of theology. The Rationalists presented the greatest doctrinal challenge to the early Muslim community; ironically, Rationalist thought migrated to Europe in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and heavily influenced Catholic thought. Muslims abandoned Rationalism for a middle position between revealed truths that present themselves as supra-rational in many instances and natural theology that demands reasoned thought as a basis for belief and its defense. Some of the Rationalists’ beliefs which differ from the Sunnis’ are as follows: the Rationalists interpret the attributes of God figuratively; they say the Qur’an is created; they deny the Beatific Vision (see “the Beatific Vision,” note 42); they reject God’s volition concerning acts of “evil”; they believe God must punish the sinners and reward the righteous; they declare that a
Muslim who has committed a grave sin and who has not yet repented is neither a believer nor a disbeliever but is in between—a reprobate or a malefactor (while the Sunnis say that such a person is a believer but in the Providence of God ( mash'at Allah): if God chooses, He pardons him, and if not, He punishes him); and they assert that it is the duty of every Muslim to ensure the good and prevent the unacceptable (without the conditions that Sunnis stipulate). A revival of Rationalist thought occurred in the late nineteenth century that still impacts modern Muslim discourse. It was started largely in Egypt by a group of Azhari scholars confronting the Enlightenment and Europe's encroaching power and influence on Muslim lands.

69. The Pantheists (al-jahmiyyah) are followers of Jahm b. Sa'wān (d. 128/745); known for their negation of divine attributes, Pantheists believe that “God is everything.” They also claim that Hell is not eternal and that human beings are forced to act, a doctrine they share with the Determinists (see next note).

70. The Determinists (al-jabriyyah) claim that human beings have no choice in their actions and thus cannot be held responsible for them. According to Ṣādiq al-Ghīrānī, for the Determinists, “the state of the human being is like that of a feather in the wind; they believe that a man is on parity with an inanimate creation, and that he has neither volition nor choice ...” (Fī al-aqidah wa al-minhaj [Benghazi: Dār al-Kutub al-Wataniyyah, 2002], 67).

71. The Dualists (al-qādariyyah) are followers of Maʿbad al-Juhānī (d. 80/699). Known for their rejection of divine preordainment of good and evil, Dualists believe that God has no volition concerning human action, once free will has been granted; that is, they believe that God creates human beings and then humans create their own actions. Dualists also believe that while good is from God, evil is not. The Prophet ﷺ predicted their advent and called them the “Zoroastrians of Islam” due to their rejection that evil was also from God.

NOTES TO APPENDIX A


Notes to the Arabic Text

This translation is based upon four published versions of the Arabic text, including the text that Imam al-Ghunaymi uses in his commentary. The notes below reflect the variations between the Arabic text in this book and the other four versions.

Within these notes, ب refers to the Dār al-Basha‘ir al-Islāmiyyah, Lebanon version; ج refers to the Aleppo, Syria version; ْع refers to Imam al-Ghunaymi’s commentary; and ْع refers to the edition published by Dār Ṭuwayq, Saudi Arabia.

The differences in the text are minimal and do not change any of the meanings.