

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.63332/joph.v5i4.1139>

Attributes of God in Creedal Doctrines

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Abstract

This research examines the issue of the attributes of God as treated by the creedal doctrines in Islam, and it seeks to analyze the views of theologians and jurists from the early ages up to later generations. The study is divided into four main sections: the intrinsic attributes that pertain to the essence of God, the conceptual attributes that express divine perfection in His ability, will, and knowledge, the active attributes derived from God's actions in creation, provision, and mercy, and the reported attributes transmitted through the sacred texts that imply aspects of anthropomorphism without compromising God's transcendence. The research focuses on analyzing the divergent opinions of theological schools—such as the Ash'arites, the Mu'tazilites, the Karramiyyah, the Sufis, the Salafis, and the Maturidis—while highlighting the ongoing debate concerning the nature of the divine attributes. Each theologian endeavored to present a conception that preserves God's transcendence from the attributes of created beings by employing textual evidence from the Qur'an and the Sunnah, as well as rational proofs, leading to differences in interpretation between a literal reading of the texts and interpreting them in a manner befitting God's greatness. The research also discusses the possibility of reconciling the intrinsic, active, and conceptual attributes without falling into anthropomorphism or corporealism, stressing that emphasizing the oneness of God necessitates rejecting any likeness to the created. The study also highlights the importance of a methodology that reconciles the sacred texts with sound reason in achieving a balanced understanding of religious teachings, calling for an interpretation of the texts that preserves God's perfection without compromising His essence. In conclusion, the research affirms the necessity of maintaining the unity of the Islamic creed and adhering to moderation in addressing the issue of the divine attributes, thereby ensuring that creedal understanding remains consistent with the Qur'anic and prophetic approach followed by the early generations of Muslims..

Keywords: Divine Attributes, Creedal Doctrines, Transcendence, Qur'anic Evidence, Theological Debates, Rational Proof, Islamic Theology

Introduction

The issue of the attributes is considered one of the greatest occult matters in which man has intervened and in which theologians have expressed their opinions; the statements have become diversified, the ideas have differed, and the beliefs have diverged, leading to the division of Muslims into confused sects and conflicting groups, with each group believing that its doctrine is the truth and that what is other is false.

This division has taken on a doctrinal dimension to the extent that it has reached excommunication between the groups! () Bearing in mind that all testify that there is no deity but Allah, believe in the prophethood of Muhammad bin Abdullah (peace be upon him), and direct their prayers toward the Noble Kaaba.

Whoever contemplates the statements of all these groups will find that their ultimate aim is to exalt Allah, the Exalted, from any attributes of deficiency and resemblance to the creatures:

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- Those who affirmed the conceptual attributes for God intended to describe Him with attributes of perfection and the utmost of their limits.
- Those who denied the conceptual attributes intended to exalt God from any need or partnership; for they considered them a kind of association with Allah, as they attribute to Him an extra meaning beyond the essence.
- Those who argued for the interpretation of the attributes suggestive of anthropomorphism intended to exalt Allah, the Exalted, from any resemblance to the creatures in any form.
- And those who advocated for delegation intended to exalt Allah, the Exalted, while refraining from nullifying the texts and the attributes He has affirmed for Himself; for they believe that the attributes suggestive of anthropomorphism are not meant in their apparent literal sense, but that it is not permissible for man to determine their meaning in a way that might contradict God's intent, and thus the matter is delegated to Allah.

However, investigating the attributes suggestive of anthropomorphism—both in their negation and affirmation—is considered an overstepping of man's bounds regarding the station of Allah, the Exalted; for human beings, regardless of how refined and perfect their intellect may be, are incapable of grasping the essence of Allah and the reality of His attributes.⁽²⁾

Religion has come as a guide to the human intellect concerning the occult; for if the intellect independently investigates these matters, it reaches a conclusion on which everyone agrees, and the issue of the attributes is merely one of the occult problems that misled the human intellect when it engaged with them..⁽³⁾

It is astonishing that every group claims to follow the word of Allah and the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him), supporting their views with verses from the Qur'an, numerous authentic prophetic traditions, and the statements of the Companions and the Followers; so much so that a reader, based on their Qur'anic evidences, might think that the verses of the Qur'an contradict each other — where the first contradicts the last, or some verses refute others — and by my oath, this is not straightforward. For example, Allah, the Exalted, said:

﴿وَلَوْ كَانَ مِنْ عِنْدِ غَيْرِ اللَّهِ لَوَجَدُوا فِيهِ اخْتِلَافًا كَثِيرًا﴾⁽⁴⁾

Although the issue of the attributes did not emerge as an intractable problem during the time of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) nor during the time of the rightly guided caliphs—due to several reasons not mentioned here—the problem perhaps lies in that each group had preconceptions, employed the Qur'an according to their own concepts, and derived proofs from it for their own statements, whereas it would have been preferable for them to change their opinions and ideas in accordance with the verses of the Qur'an rather than employing the Qur'anic verses according to their own concepts!

The theologians divided the attributes of Allah, the Exalted, into three categories:

- **The first:** Intrinsic attributes, meaning the epithets that indicate the essence of Allah; such as Al-Mawjūd, Al-Qadīm, Al-Wāḥid, Al-Bāqī, Al-Ḥayy... It is noted that they

². See: Mahmoud, *Pure Monotheism*, 140.

³. See: the same previous reference, 17 and what follows.

⁴. Surah an-Nisa, Ayah: 82

included in this category the negative attributes that involve the negation of any deficiency unbecoming of the essence of Allah, the Exalted.

- **The second:** Conceptual attributes, meaning the terms that denote meanings inherent in the essence of Allah, the Exalted; these are: All-Knowing, All-Powerful, Ever-Living, Willing, All-Hearing, All-Seeing, and Articulate. From this category, the attributes derived from these conceptual attributes branch out—namely, knowledge, power, life, will, hearing, sight, and speech—which are called “attributes of meaning.” The theologians differed in affirming or denying these.
- **The third:** Active attributes, meaning the terms that indicate a manifestation of an effect derived from the actions of Allah, the Exalted; in these fall every name or attribute of Allah derived from His action. These attributes were not ascribed to Him before the occurrence of actions, such as: The Creator, The Provider, Justice... and others. This matter has further details and additions by the Salaf and others. ⁽⁵⁾

There is also a category of attributes that merits study on its own due to the divergence of opinions concerning it, which relates to the reported attributes and those attributes from which man is led to anthropomorphism—for example, the attribute of *istiwa'* (settlement), the hand, the eye, the attribute of *fawqiyah* (supremacy), the side... and others. Some scholars have classified these attributes under the title “reported attributes” or “those suggestive of anthropomorphism”; for the evidence for them is solely the Qur'an or the authentic prophetic tradition, as they cannot be derived from rational proof. ⁽⁶⁾

Later theologians considered that Allah, the Exalted, described Himself in His Noble Book with many attributes whose components converge into twenty principal attributes, established by the evidence of the Book and decisive proofs, and divided into four categories: (psychological attributes, negative attributes, conceptual attributes, and attributes of meaning). ⁽⁷⁾

Thus, this research—in this section of the study—centers on the attributes of Allah in the creedal doctrines, by clarifying the opinions of theologians and some Islamic philosophers regarding the attributes; in terms of their categorization and their affirmation or negation.

This section of the study is divided into four parts:

- **Section One:** Intrinsic Attributes.
- **Section Two:** Conceptual Attributes.
- **Section Three:** Active Attributes.
- **Section Four:** Reported Attributes.

Section One: Intrinsic Attributes

Intrinsic attributes include every attribute that indicates the essence without implying any extra meaning, and every attribute that negates for the essence of Allah, the Exalted, any attribute of deficiency unbecoming of Him. **These may be divided into two types:**

⁵. See: al-Razi, *The Illuminators of Evidence: An Exposition of the Names of Allah and His Attributes*, 43, and al-Baghdadi, *The Differences Among the Sects*, 291.

⁶. See: Hijazi, *Ibn al-Qayyim and His Position on Islamic Thought*, 121.

⁷. See: al-Bouti, *The Greatest Cosmic Certainties*, 108, and al-Sa'ih, *The Faith of the Muslim*, 118 and what follows

A. Psychological Attributes: These are the attributes of existence, meaning that Allah, the Exalted, exists.

B. Negative Attributes: They are termed negative because they involve the negation of any deficiency from the essence of Allah, the Exalted. They number five: (eternity, permanence, freedom from accidents, self-subsistence, and oneness).

Eternity (Al-Qidam)

This attribute means that Allah, the Exalted, is the First without a beginning; for existence is unprecedented by non-existence, and if it were preceded by non-existence, it would be an accidental occurrence, and an accident necessarily requires a cause; and so on ad infinitum—which is intellectually absurd. Thus, it is proven rationally that there exists an eternal cause without a beginning, and this eternal is Allah, the Exalted. Although the term “eternity” does not appear in the Qur’an as such, the theologians deduced it from His saying:

﴿هُوَ الْأَوَّلُ وَالْآخِرُ وَالظَّاهِرُ وَالْبَاطِنُ﴾⁽⁸⁾

considering that “the First” means that He is not preceded by non-existence. It is noteworthy that one theologian considered the attribute of eternity to be superadded to the essence—i.e., that Allah, the Exalted, is eternal with an additional aspect of eternity not inherent in Himself—contrary to the majority.⁽⁹⁾

Permanence (Al-Baqa)

This attribute means that Allah, the Exalted, is everlasting and has no end, and it is impermissible for Him to be subjected to annihilation or non-existence. If annihilation were possible, He would be created by something other than Himself and would require a creator who is not subject to annihilation. It is proven rationally that Allah, the Exalted, is the Last without end, eternal and imperishable, as deduced from His saying:

﴿كُلُّ مَنْ عَلَيْهَا فَانٍ ۖ وَيَبْقَىٰ وَجْهُ رَبِّكَ ذُو الْجَلَالِ وَالْإِكْرَامِ﴾⁽¹⁰⁾

and His saying:

﴿كُلُّ شَيْءٍ هَالِكٌ إِلَّا وَجْهَهُ لَهُ الْحُكْمُ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ﴾⁽¹¹⁾

Freedom from Accidents (Al-Mukhalafa lil-Hawadith)

This attribute means that Allah, the Exalted, is different from all His creatures—be they humans, jinn, angels, or others—and He is exalted from the attributes of created beings such as sleep, heedlessness, hunger, thirst, poverty, or need. This attribute is not mentioned in the Qur’an or the Sunnah; rather, the theologians deduced it from His saying:

﴿لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ﴾⁽¹²⁾

and His saying:

﴿قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ ۝ اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ ۝ لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ ۝ وَأَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ﴾⁽¹³⁾

They demonstrated that drawing an analogy between Allah and His creatures necessitates either negating the divine attribute from Allah, the Exalted, or attributing that divine attribute to the

⁸. Surah al-Hadid, Ayah: 3.

⁹. See: al-Iji, *The Positions in Ilm al-Kalam*, 297.

¹⁰. Surah ar-Rahman, Ayahs: 26, 27.

¹¹. Surah al-Qasas, Ayah: 88.

¹². Surah ash-Shura, Ayah: 11.

¹³. The entire Surah al-Ikhlâs.

creatures⁽¹⁴⁾—both of which are intellectually untenable.⁽¹⁵⁾

(16) ﴿فَجَعَلْنَاهُ سَمِيعًا بَصِيرًا﴾

(17) ﴿لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ﴾

Self-Subsistence (Al-Qiyam binafsihi)

This attribute means that Allah, the Exalted, does not require a cause that brings Him into being, nor a place or location in which He is sustained; rather, He is self-subsisting—the One who upholds the heavens and the earth, independent of all creation. If He required a sustainer, He would be created. It is established that He is eternal (the First without a beginning) and everlasting (the Last without an end). Similarly, if He required a place to occupy, He would be an accidental entity—like all things that have limits and ends⁽¹⁸⁾—which negates the divine attribute that mandates Allah to be transcendent of time and space; for Allah, the Exalted, is the Creator of time and space. Although the attribute of self-subsistence does not appear in the

Qur'an, the scholars deduced it from His saying:
(19) ﴿لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ﴾

and His saying:
(20) ﴿الصَّمَدُ﴾

meaning, “the One who needs nothing while everything depends on Him,” and His statement when they said:

(21) ﴿قَالُوا اتَّخَذَ اللَّهُ وَلَدًا سُبْحَانَهُ هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ﴾

Oneness (Al-Wahdaniyyah)

This attribute means that Allah, the Exalted, is One, with no other in His essence, His attributes, or His actions. His essence is one and not composed of parts, His attributes are not analogous to those of the created, and He does not share with anyone in creation, provision, or any of His actions.

Section Two: Conceptual Attributes

These are eternal attributes of Allah, the Exalted, with meanings inherent in His essence, numbering seven: that He is All-Powerful, All-Knowing, Ever-Living, Willing, All-Hearing, All-Seeing, and Articulate. They encompass all attributes derived from these conceptual attributes, namely: power, knowledge, life, will, hearing, sight, and speech⁽²²⁾, and are termed “attributes of meaning.”

The theologians have differed in affirming or denying them, with varied opinions regarding their eternity and occurrence—whether they assert an extra meaning beyond the essence or that they are inherent to the essence. Before presenting the scholars’ views on this matter, it is useful to

¹⁴. See: al-Sa’ih, *The Faith of the Muslim*, 123

¹⁵. Surah al-Insan, Ayah: 2.

¹⁶. See: al-Bouti, *The Greatest Certainties*, 118.

¹⁷. Surah ash-Shura, Ayah: 11.

¹⁸. See: al-Iji, *The Positions*, 274.

¹⁹. Surah al-Baqarah, Ayah: 255.

²⁰. Surah al-Ikhlās, Ayah: 2.

²¹. Surah Yunus, Ayah: 68.

²². See: al-Baghdadi, *The Differences Among the Sects*, 291.

Power (Al-Qudrah)

An eternal, inherent attribute of Allah, the Exalted, which has an effect in either bringing possible things into existence, annihilating them, acting upon all existing things collectively, dispersing them, or transforming them⁽²³⁾. His power encompasses all possibilities. The theologians deduced its affirmation from His saying: **قَدِيرٌ** **شَيْءٌ** **كُلِّ** **عَلَى** **وَاللَّهُ** among other verses, as well as from the fact that an act occurred from Him—i.e., the creation of the universe and the coming into being of the world—and whoever's act is verified is considered to possess power.⁽²⁵⁾

The disagreement among the theologians centers on whether Allah, the Exalted, is All-Powerful with a power extra to His essence, or if He is All-Powerful solely by virtue of His essence without any additional power. However, they agreed that He is eternally powerful in all that has been and will be, and that His potentialities are limitless in type and number.⁽²⁶⁾

Some even excluded a specific aspect of Allah's power—namely, the creation of evil, or His power in relation to a servant's action—arguing that a servant's act is either obedience, disobedience, or folly. The theologians responded that it is impermissible to liken a servant's act to the acts of Allah, the Exalted, contrary to what the wrongdoers assert.⁽²⁷⁾

Knowledge (Al-'Ilm)

An eternal, inherent attribute of Allah, the Exalted, which pertains to all that is necessary, all that is possible, and all that is impossible, and is more comprehensive than power—since power pertains only to possibilities. All agree that Allah, the Exalted, is All-Knowing. The theologians provided **two approaches in affirming His knowledge**:

First, His actions are executed with perfection, and whoever's act is perfect is knowledgeable. The perfection of an act is evident to those who contemplate

the horizons and the inner selves, reflect on the connection between the heavens and the earth, consider the animals and the appropriate means provided for their benefits, and so on; which indicates that the actions of Allah, the Exalted, are executed with utmost perfection. It is evident that whoever's act is perfect must be knowledgeable—if one listens to a coherent and appropriate discourse from someone, it is necessarily inferred that he is knowledgeable.⁽²⁸⁾

Second, it is established that Allah, the Exalted, is All-Powerful, and whoever is powerful is knowledgeable. His knowledge encompasses all wholes and particulars; because they emanate from Him as a result of perfection and are determined by Him. Moreover, His knowledge is eternal, with none above Him in knowing. The disagreement between the Mu'tazilites and the Ash'arites is whether He is All-Knowing with knowledge extra to His essence or All-Knowing solely by virtue of His essence.

It is noteworthy that the philosophers deny that Allah, the Exalted, has knowledge of particulars,

²³. See: Habanka, **The Islamic Creed**, 160.

²⁴. Surah al-Baqarah, Ayah: 284.

²⁵. See: al-Qadi Abd al-Jabbar ibn Ahmad al-Hamdani al-Asadabadi, **Commentary on the Five Principles**, 151.

²⁶. See: the same previous reference, 155.

²⁷. See: al-Iji, **The Positions**, 284.

²⁸. See: the same previous reference, 285.

asserting instead that He has knowledge only of wholes⁽²⁹⁾; based on rational proofs that establish Allah's comprehensive knowledge of everything—encompassing our past, present, and future—and that His knowledge is eternal, inherent in itself, preceded by no ignorance, unaffected by forgetfulness, and not confined by time or space. He knows what is apparent and what is hidden⁽³⁰⁾, for example, He said:

﴿وَعِنْدَهُ مَفَاتِحُ الْغَيْبِ لَا يَعْلَمُهَا إِلَّا هُوَ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ وَمَا تَسْقُطُ مِنْ وَرَقَةٍ إِلَّا يَعْلَمُهَا وَلَا حَبَّةٌ فِي ظِلْمَاتِ الْأَرْضِ وَلَا رَطْبٌ وَلَا يَابِسٌ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مُبِينٍ﴾ (31)

and

﴿يَعْلَمُ خَائِنَةَ الْأَعْيُنِ وَمَا تُخْفِي الصُّدُورُ﴾ (32)

and:

﴿عَالِمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ الْكَبِيرُ الْمُتَعَالِ ۝ سَوَاءٌ مِنْكُمْ مَنْ أَسَرَ الْقَوْلَ وَمَنْ جَهَرَ بِهِ وَمَنْ هُوَ مُسْتَخْفٍ بِاللَّيْلِ وَسَارِبٌ بِالنَّهَارِ﴾ (33)

and:

﴿وَمَا يَغْرُبُ عَنْ رَبِّكَ مِنْ مِثْقَالِ ذَرَّةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فِي السَّمَاءِ وَلَا أَصْغَرَ مِنْ ذَلِكَ وَلَا أَكْبَرَ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مُبِينٍ﴾ (34)

Will (Al-Iradah)

This attribute is by which Allah, the Exalted, designates for possible things certain aspects of existence or non-existence, length or brevity, goodness or badness, in this world or elsewhere; for He, the Exalted, is the Owner of the Kingdom, governing His dominion according to His will and volition—an eternal attribute inherent in His essence. For if He were not the Willing, freely choosing all permissible matters that have occurred or will occur, He would be compelled to execute all or some of them, and consequently He would be unable either to act or to refrain from acting; thus, the attribute of inability to counter that which overpowers Him would attach to Him—an outcome that would contradict the observable existence of creatures.⁽³⁵⁾

The theologians distinguished between will on one hand and knowledge and power on the other; for they considered it a third, distinct attribute that necessitates the determination of one of the two possible outcomes. They deduced this by comparing the two opposites relative to power: just as both good and evil may occur without distinction, and power does not necessarily imply occurrence (nor does knowledge, as it follows from power), it is established that will is what necessitates the determination of one of the two possible outcomes.⁽³⁶⁾

Some divided will according to its relation to reality or the absence thereof into two types:

Favorable Will: In which its fitness to assign possibilities is observed.

Delegated Will: In which its actual relation to the intended purposes is observed.⁽³⁷⁾

Numerous verses indicate that Allah, the Exalted, is Willing, among them His saying:

﴿ذُو الْعَرْشِ الْمَجِيدُ ۝ فَعَالٌ لِّمَا يُرِيدُ﴾ (38)

and: ﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَلِكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاءُ يَهَبُ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ إِنَاءً وَيَهَبُ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ الذُّكُورَ ۝ أَوْ يَزْوِجُهُمْ ذُكْرَانًا وَإِنَاءً﴾

29. See: al-Iji, *The Positions*, 286–287.

30. See: al-Sa'ih, *The Faith of the Muslim*, 127.

31. Surah al-An'am, Ayah: 59.

32. Surah Ghafir, Ayah: 19.

33. Surah ar-Ra'd, Ayahs: 9, 10.

34. Surah Yunus, Ayah: 61.

35. See: al-Sa'ih, *The Faith of the Muslim*, 126.

36. See: al-Iji, *The Positions*, 291.

37. See: al-Bouti, *The Greatest Certainties*, 121.

38. Surah al-Buruj, Ayahs: 15–16.

وَيَجْعَلُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ عَقِيمًا إِنَّهُ عَلِيمٌ قَدِيرٌ (39)
 and: ﴿وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مَا أَفْتَتَلُوا وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَفْعَلُ مَا يُرِيدُ﴾ (40)

Life (Al-Hayat)

An eternal, inherent attribute of Allah, the Exalted, which does not pertain to any of the necessities, possibilities, or impossibilities. All theologians agreed that He, the Exalted, is Alive; for He is All-Knowing and All-Powerful, and every being that is both knowing and powerful is necessarily alive. It is inconceivable for one described as All-Knowing, All-Powerful, and Willing to be non-alive, and His life is perpetual and unending, as well as ancient without a beginning.⁽⁴¹⁾ This attribute is established for Allah, the Exalted, by His saying: ﴿اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ

الْحَيُّ لَا يَمُوتُ﴾ (42)

and His saying: ﴿وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى الْحَيِّ الَّذِي لَا يَمُوتُ﴾ (43)
 and by the statement:

﴿هُوَ الْحَيُّ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ فَادْعُوهُ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ﴾ (44)

Hearing (Al-Sam‘)

An eternal, inherent attribute of Allah, by which what is heard is perceived without any instrument, sensory organ, or air. All agree that He, the Exalted, is All-Hearing.

Sight (Al-Basr)

An eternal, inherent attribute of Allah, by which what is seen is perceived without any seer or glimmer; for, as stated, ﴿لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ﴾ (45)

The theologians maintained that His being All-Hearing and All-Seeing is evidenced by numerous Qur’anic verses that are undeniable and inerrant. They further argued that since Allah, the Exalted, is Alive—and every living being necessarily possesses hearing and sight (or, conversely, the absence thereof corresponds to deafness and blindness, attributes from which Allah, the Exalted, is exempt)—these attributes are inherent.⁽⁴⁶⁾ For instance, Prophet Ibrahim (peace be upon him) reproached his father for worshipping that which neither hears nor sees, saying:

﴿يَا أَبَتِ لِمَ تَعْبُدُ مَا لَا يَسْمَعُ وَلَا يُبْصِرُ وَلَا يُغْنِي عَنْكَ شَيْئًا﴾ (47)

The Mu‘tazilites differentiate between being All-Hearing and All-Seeing and between one who hears or sees instantaneously; they define the one who is All-Hearing and All-Seeing as the one who, by virtue of His eternal state, can hear and see if such phenomena occur, whereas the immediate hearer or seer is one who perceives them in that moment. Accordingly, they state that Allah is All-Hearing and All-Seeing in eternity, and they reject attributing to Him the characteristics of an immediate hearer or seer since what is heard and seen is created and not eternal.⁽⁴⁸⁾

39. Surah ash-Shura, Ayahs: 49–50.

40. Surah al-Baqarah, Ayah: 253.

41. See: al-Iji, *The Positions*, 290.

42. Surah al-Baqarah, Ayah: 255.

43. Surah al-Furqan, Ayah: 58.

44. Surah Ghafir, Ayah: 65.

45. Surah ash-Shura, Ayah: 11.

46. See: al-Iji, *The Positions*, 292.

47. Surah Maryam, Ayah: 42.

48. See: al-Qadi Abd al-Jabbar ibn Ahmad al-Hamdani al-Asadabadi, *Commentary on the Five Principles*, 167.

Speech (Al-Kalam)

An eternal, inherent attribute of Allah, the Exalted, concerning all that is within His knowledge. He discloses from His knowledge to whomever He wills, and this disclosure is what is meant by “speech.” The Hanbalis asserted that His speech consists of letters and sounds inherent in His essence and that it is eternal.⁽⁴⁹⁾ In contrast, the Mu‘tazilites contended that speech comprises sounds and letters created by Allah in something else (such as the Preserved Tablet, Gabriel, or the Prophet) and is therefore accidental.⁽⁵⁰⁾ This disagreement led to a major fitna in history known as “the fitna of the creation of the Qur’an,” during which the doctrine of some was used as a pretext for the arrest, beating, and abuse of people by certain caliphs. For example, Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal was severely tortured during the Abbasid era for stating that the Qur’an is created; he refused to relent—and this occurred during the reign of the Abbasid caliph. The fitna continued during the reign of Al-Wathiq until Al-Mutawakkil assumed the caliphate, at which point the ordeal was ended; he was known as “the supporter of the Sunnah.”⁽⁵¹⁾ The essence of the disagreement between the Mu‘tazilites and the people of Sunnah is that the Mu‘tazilites deny that Allah, the Exalted, possesses an eternal, inherent psychological attribute called “speech.” They therefore consider that the speech of Allah—and hence the Qur’an—is created and accidental, whereas the people of Sunnah and their adherents affirm that Allah possesses the attribute of speech in that it is an eternal meaning inherent in His essence without letters or sound, which He transforms into any language created in His creation when revealed to His servants with its prescribed letters and words. They assert that the Noble Qur’an is part of the eternal speech of Allah with its letters and words, revealed to the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) by Gabriel without our knowing the manner, while the literal expressions written in the Mushafs are accidental and not inherent in themselves⁽⁵²⁾. It would have been preferable not to enter into this maze that divided the nation and exposed the doctrine of Muslims to a fitna considered by the Qur’an as more severe than murder.

After this brief presentation of the conceptual attributes, it is necessary to review the opinions of the theologians regarding the conceptual attributes and the attributes of meaning in terms of their affirmation or negation. The most important of these are:

The Ash‘arites

They affirmed that the conceptual attributes inherent in Allah, the Exalted, necessitate the attributes of meaning, and that these are eternal and superadded to His essence. Thus, Allah, the Exalted, is All-Knowing with knowledge, All-Powerful with power, Willing with will, Alive with life, All-Hearing with hearing, All-Seeing with sight, and Articulate with speech. They asserted four characteristics for the attributes of meaning:

- A. These attributes are not the essence itself, but are superadded to it.
- B. All these attributes are inherent in Allah, the Exalted; nothing of them can exist apart from His essence, whether in a spatial location or not.
- C. All these attributes are eternal; for if they were accidental, then the eternal Allah would be subject to accidents, which is impossible. It cannot be said “they are

49. See: al-Iji, **The Positions**, 293, and it is, in my view, excessive and extreme.

50. See: al-Qadi Abd al-Jabbar ibn Ahmad al-Hamdani al-Asadabadi, **Commentary on the Five Principles**, 528.

51. See: Hamza, **The Concord of the Sects**, 177 and what follows.

52. See: al-Iji, **The Positions**, 294.

He” or “they are not Him,” nor “they are not He” or “they are something else.”

- D. The names derived for Allah, the Exalted, from these seven attributes are eternally and perpetually true of Him; for in eternity He was All-Powerful, All-Knowing, Willing, Alive, All-Hearing, All-Seeing, and Articulate.⁽⁵³⁾ The Ash‘arites deduced their view on the attributes of meaning from the fact that perfected acts indicate that Allah, the Exalted, is All-Knowing, All-Powerful, and Willing, and Alive.

They further argued that the attributes of knowledge, power, will, and life for Allah, the Exalted, are established; for there is no meaning to “the knowledgeable” unless He possesses knowledge, no meaning to “the powerful” unless He possesses power, and no meaning to “the willing” unless He possesses will. Thus, knowledge leads to perfection and precision, power leads to occurrence and emergence, and will leads to selection beyond limitation of time, magnitude, or form—and these attributes cannot be ascribed to the essence unless it is endowed with life.⁽⁵⁴⁾ Moreover, if knowledge were identical to the essence and power identical to the essence, then knowledge would be the same as power; the concepts would merge into one, which is intellectually absurd.⁽⁵⁵⁾ Likewise, if being alive, All-Knowing, and All-Powerful were identical to the essence, then their bearing on the essence would be nullified, and saying “Allah is All-Powerful” would be equivalent to attributing something to the essence itself, which is false.⁽⁵⁶⁾

The Karramiyyah

Attributed to Muhammad bin Karram al-Sijistani (d. 255 AH), they affirm the attributes of meaning for Allah, the Exalted, as being superadded to His essence; however, they maintain that these attributes are accidental—that is, they occur—in contrast to the view of the people of Sunnah who deny that Allah, the Exalted, is subject to accidents in eternity. They exaggerated in affirming the attributes to the point of anthropomorphism and literalism.⁽⁵⁷⁾

The Jahmiyyah

Followers of Jahm ibn Safwan (d. 128 AH), they assert that Allah’s knowledge is accidental, and they refrain from describing Allah, the Exalted, as a being, or as alive, or as All-Knowing, or as Willing. They stated that His essence should not be described with any attribute applicable to others, although they described Him as All-Powerful, the Originator, the Doer, the Creator, the Giver of Life, and the Taker of Life—considering these attributes to be unique to Allah alone. They also claimed that Allah’s speech is accidental; the scholars note that the nation agreed to excommunicate Jahm and his followers.⁽⁵⁸⁾

The Philosophers

Islamic philosophers denied the attributes for Allah, the Exalted, reducing them all to the attribute of knowledge; for in their view, knowledge is the very essence of Allah, as He is, in their opinion, pure reason and pure thought that comprehends His essence and the totality of

53. See: al-Shahristani, **The Religions and the Sects**, 40.

54. See: al-Ash‘ari, **The Illumination in the Refutation of the Deviant and Heretical Groups**, 26–27, and al-Shahristani, the same previous reference, 40.

55. See: al-Ijli, **The Positions**, 280.

56. See: the same previous reference, 280.

57. See: al-Shahristani, **The Religions and the Sects**, 46.

58. See: al-Baghdadi, **The Differences Among the Sects**, 186.

things. They argued that it is impermissible for Him to be rational regarding mutable phenomena with their changes—since sometimes they exist and sometimes they do not, with each state having its independent intellectual image, and they cannot coincide—thus necessitating that the necessary existent be of a mutable essence.⁽⁵⁹⁾ This is the meaning of their view that Allah, the Exalted, does not know the particulars, but only the generalities. Glory be to Him above what they invent.

Imam al-Ghazali refuted their arguments and corrected them on several issues—most notably their claim that Allah’s knowledge is of generalities without particulars—by proving that Allah, the Exalted, is All-Knowing of everything. This matter is elaborated in his work *Tahafut al-Falasifah*.⁽⁶⁰⁾

The philosophers based their view on denying the attributes of meaning on the argument that affirming attributes superadded to the essence implies that the essence of Allah, the Exalted, is composite, whereas His essence is absolutely simple and without any composition; for every composite entity requires parts, and this necessity indicates that no attributes superadded to the necessary existent—Allah, the Exalted—can exist.⁽⁶¹⁾

The Mu‘tazilites

The Mu‘tazilites affirmed the conceptual attributes inherent in Allah, the Exalted, and denied that they have any extra meaning beyond the essence; for Allah, the Exalted, is All-Knowing by His own essence, All-Powerful by His own essence, and Alive by His own essence. They attribute all such inherent attributes to Allah as evidence of His self-sufficiency—since such attributes indicate that He is the initiator of the world without any intermediary. They deduced this from the fact that an act occurred from Him, for whoever’s act is verified is powerful.⁽⁶²⁾ The Mu‘tazilites further insisted on negating any extra attributes by arguing: if Allah, the Exalted, were All-Knowing with knowledge, then knowledge is either known or unknown—and the latter is false; if known, then it is either existent or non-existent—and the latter is false; if existent, then it is either eternal or accidental—and both alternatives are false. This proves that Allah, the Exalted, is All-Knowing by His own essence. Similarly, He is All-Powerful without additional power, Alive without an extra life, All-Hearing without additional hearing, and Willing without extra will.⁽⁶³⁾

It should be noted that the Mu‘tazila differed on this issue in opinions that there is no room to elaborate on here.

The Kalabiyyah

Followers of ‘Abdullah ibn Kilab al-Qattan (d. 250 AH) maintain that all the names and attributes of Allah are eternal, making no distinction between an intrinsic attribute and an active attribute. It is reported from him: “Allah has always been All-Knowing, Alive, All-Hearing, All-Seeing, Mighty, Majestic, Resplendent, Arrogant, Formidable, One, Steadfast, Unique, Everlasting, First, a Deity, Willing, Loving, Hating, Affectionate, Hostile, Speaking, Articulate, Merciful, with knowledge, power, life, hearing, sight, majesty, greatness, splendor, pride, existence, generosity, and

59. See: al-Shahrastani, **The Religions and the Sects**, 210, and see: Dr. Marshan, **The Divine Aspect in Ibn Sina**, 108.

60. See: al-Ghazali, **The Incoherence of the Philosophers**, 207 and what follows.

61. See: al-Taftazani, **Commentary on the Maqasid**, 4/83.

62. See: al-Qadi Abd al-Jabbar ibn Ahmad al-Hamdani al-Asadabadi, **Commentary on the Five Principles**, 151.

63. See: the same previous reference, 182.

permanence..." until he concludes:
 "He is eternal; Allah, the Exalted, has always been with His names and attributes." (64)

The Maturidis

Abu Mansur al-Maturidi opposes the negation of attributes and dismantles the basis on which such negation rests by asserting that affirming the attributes of meaning does not lead to anthropomorphism or to the existence of eternals alongside Allah, the Exalted. He refutes the claim that the evidence for these attributes is based solely on hearing (as supported by the Qur'an and other divine books), arguing that to negate them on the basis that they imply anthropomorphism is unfounded. He explained that sharing a name does not imply similarity between the One and that which is named, and that Allah has named Himself and described Himself with attributes while explicitly negating any resemblance between Himself and His creatures⁽⁶⁵⁾; for His existence is unlike that of creation, His eternity is contrary to the occurrence of creation, and His attributes differ from those of created beings. Resemblance is not due merely to the term, but would imply similarity between essences or actions—something that does not occur between Allah and His creatures.⁽⁶⁶⁾

After this concentrated summary of the theologians' views on the conceptual attributes and the attributes of meaning, it appears that all intended to exalt Allah, the Exalted, although each group accused the other of introducing elements that might exclude them from sound doctrine. For denying the attributes is not something a Muslim can assert, as it is considered explicit disbelief; indeed, one will not find a Muslim claiming that Allah neither knows nor is capable of creating or annihilating possibilities. This means that the affirmation of the attributes is accepted by all, and no Muslim claims to affirm the attributes while believing in the existence of eternals with Allah, the Exalted—as the Mu'tazilites did—which implies that everyone believes in the oneness of Allah, the Exalted, in His essence, attributes, and actions.⁽⁶⁷⁾

Section Three: Active Attributes

Active attributes refer to those names and attributes of Allah, the Exalted, mentioned in the Shari'ah that are derived from His actions—such as "the Creator" (from creation) and "the Provider" (from provision). This action carries the attribute of power, being considered an effect of it.⁽⁶⁸⁾

The theologians differed regarding the active attributes in terms of their eternity and occurrence:

The Mu'tazilites and the Ash'arites

They agreed that the active attributes are subject to differences in state and person, such that it may be said: Allah provides for so-and-so, bestows mercy in one case and not in another; since every such attribute, whose effects stem from Allah, the Exalted, being All-Powerful, pertains to acts (such as mercy, creation, provision, or justice). Any attribute that is not subject to differences in state and person and does not derive from the attribute of power is an inherent

64. See: al-Ash'ari, the same previous reference, 1/250.

65. See: al-Maturidi, **Monotheism**, 44.

66. See: al-Maturidi, the same previous reference, 24 and what follows.

67. See: al-Maghribi, **Imam Ahl al-Sunnah and Abu Mansur al-Maturidi and His Theological Opinions**, 169.

68. See: al-Razi, **The Illuminators of Evidence**, 43.

attribute. However, the Mu‘tazilites consider there to be three inherent attributes, whereas the Ash‘arites count up to seven, as previously discussed. They all agreed that the attributes of actions are accidental; for they vary according to circumstances and persons—i.e., Allah, the Exalted, was not described as the Creator before He created, nor as the Provider before He provided, nor as the Merciful before He bestowed mercy—and so on for all active attributes.

1. The

Karramiyyah:

They maintain that the names derived from His actions are eternal, while the actions themselves cannot exist eternally. Their view is analogous to that of the Mu‘tazilites in affirming that Allah is All-Powerful and denying any additional attribute of power. They stated: “We say: Allah, the Exalted, has always been the Creator, the Provider, the Bestower of favors without any occurrence of creation, provision, or favor from Him; and His creation is His power in creation, and His provision is His power in providing. Power is eternal, while creation and provision are accidental in Him.” They further stressed this by saying: “Allah, the Exalted, has always been worshipped, but in eternity the worship of the worshippers did not exist; it became established only with the existence of the worshippers and their acts of worship for Him.”⁽⁶⁹⁾

The Kalabiyyah

‘Abdullah ibn Kilab maintained that all the names and attributes of Allah are eternal, making no distinction between an intrinsic attribute and an active attribute.⁽⁷⁰⁾

The Sufis

The majority of Sufis do not differentiate between an intrinsic attribute and an active attribute; they consider all attributes to be eternal and ancient. They maintain that it is impermissible for Allah, the Exalted, to acquire an attribute in eternity that He did not deserve—He did not deserve the name “the Creator” for His creation, nor “the Maker” for causing beings, nor “the Fashioner” for shaping images; for if that were so, He would be deficient in what is eternal, and He would have to supplement it with something else—which is gravely impermissible. For if praise necessitated creation, depiction, and animation, then He would require creation, and necessity would compel occurrence—thus implying that Allah is the Creator, the Provider, and the Maker even in eternity, before creation, provision, or causing beings, and so on for all active attributes.⁽⁷¹⁾

The Salafiyyah

The Salafis maintain that the conceptual attributes are superadded to Allah’s essence, and that these are attributes of perfection that are eternal and ancient. They add to these the active attributes by which Allah described Himself (such as mercy and compassion), deducing their affirmation from the perfection evident in Allah’s creation of the world, which indicates His possession of every attribute of perfection—whether intrinsic or active.⁽⁷²⁾ They define an attribute as the necessary, immutable aspects of the essence. Ibn Taymiyyah (may Allah have mercy on him) indicated that the method of the Salaf and their imams was to describe Allah with

69. See: al-Baghdadi, **The Differences Among the Sects**, 192.

70. See: al-Ash‘ari, **Articles of the Islamists**, 1/249–250.

71. See: al-Kulabidhi, **Introduction to the Doctrine of Sufism**, 37–38.

72. See: Ibn Taymiyyah, **Minhaj al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah**, 2/111, and Ibn al-Qayyim, **Madarij al-Salikin**, 3/246, 354.

what He described Himself with and what His Messenger (peace be upon him) described Him with—without distortion or nullification, and without imposing anthropomorphic or figurative qualities.

The Salafi doctrine is summarized briefly as: “Affirmation without anthropomorphism, and transcendence without nullification; for Allah responded to those who likened Him by saying:

﴿لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ﴾⁽⁷⁴⁾ and to those who nullified attributes by saying: ﴿وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ﴾⁽⁷⁵⁾

The Maturidis

The Maturidis do not differentiate between intrinsic attributes and active attributes, considering the correct belief to be that Allah, the Exalted, is described by all His attributes in eternity—whether intrinsic or active. They oppose the principle of dividing the attributes into intrinsic and active, arguing that such a differentiation—based on the possibility of differences in state and person for the active attributes and the impossibility thereof for the intrinsic attributes—is invalid, since the intrinsic attributes differ in usage according to context; one might affirm knowledge in matters not described by power, power in matters not described by hearing, and sight in matters not described by will, etc.⁽⁷⁵⁾

In summary: The Mu‘tazilites and the Ash‘arites erred when, in their response to the Karramiyyah, they denied the possibility of accidents in Allah, the Exalted, and asserted that the active attributes are accidental—thus permitting the description of the eternal Allah with accidental attributes, even though the textual evidence did not indicate a distinction between intrinsic and active attributes. This leads the researcher to lean toward the view that active attributes are eternal and that no differentiation should be made between them and the other intrinsic attributes.

Section Four: Reported Attributes

Reported attributes are those for which the evidence consists solely of their mention in the Qur’an or in authentic prophetic traditions, without reliance on rational proof. Several texts in the Qur’an and the authentic Sunnah attribute to Allah, the Exalted, certain attributes which theologians believe, on their apparent meaning, suggest anthropomorphism—that is, people might assume from their reading that Allah, the Exalted, resembles His creation in these attributes. These include:

1. **The Attribute of Istiwa’ (Settlement):**
For example, Allah, the Exalted, said: ﴿الرَّحْمَنُ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ اسْتَوَى﴾⁽⁷⁶⁾
and also said: ﴿اللَّهُ الَّذِي رَفَعَ السَّمَاوَاتِ بِغَيْرِ عَمَدٍ تَرَوْنَهَا ثُمَّ اسْتَوَى عَلَى الْعَرْشِ﴾⁽⁷⁷⁾
2. **The Attribute of Face (Al-Wajh):**
Allah, the Exalted, said: ﴿كُلُّ مَنْ عَلَيْهَا فَانٍ ۖ وَيَبْقَى وَجْهُ رَبِّكَ ذُو الْجَلَالِ وَالْإِكْرَامِ﴾⁽⁷⁸⁾

⁷³. Surah ash-Shura, Ayah: 11.

⁷⁴. See: Ibn Taymiyyah, *Minhaj al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah*, 2/111, and Ibn al-Qayyim, *Madarij al-Salikin*, 3/246, 354.

⁷⁵. See: al-Maghribi, *Imam Ahl al-Sunnah and Abu Mansur al-Maturidi and His Theological Opinions*, 177.

⁷⁶. Surah Taha, Ayah: 5.

⁷⁷. Surah ar-Ra’d, Ayah: 2.

⁷⁸. Surah ar-Rahman, Ayahs: 26, 27.

and also said: *(كُلُّ شَيْءٍ هَالِكٌ إِلَّا وَجْهَهُ لَهُ الْحُكْمُ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ)*.⁽⁷⁹⁾

3. **The Attribute of the Eye:**
 Allah, the Exalted, said to Moses (peace be upon him): *(وَأَلْقَيْتُ عَلَيْكَ مَحَبَّةً مِنِّي وَلِتُصْنَعَ عَلَى عَيْنِي)*⁽⁸⁰⁾
 and regarding Noah's Ark, He said: *(تَجْرِي بِأَعْيُنِنَا)*.⁽⁸¹⁾
4. **The Attribute of the Hands:**
 Allah, the Exalted, said: *(إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُبَايِعُونَكَ إِنَّمَا يُبَايِعُونَ اللَّهَ يَدُ اللَّهِ فَوْقَ أَيْدِيهِمْ)*⁽⁸²⁾
 and said: *(وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ يَدُ اللَّهِ مَغْلُولَةٌ غُلَّتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَلُعِنُوا بِمَا قَالُوا بَلْ يَدَاهُ مَبْسُوطَتَانِ)*⁽⁸³⁾
 and when addressing Iblis for refusing to prostrate to Adam, He said: *(قَالَ يَا إِبْلِيسُ مَا مَنَعَكَ أَنْ تَسْجُدَ لِمَا خَلَقْتُ بِإِيدِي)*.⁽⁸⁴⁾
5. **The Attribute of Coming (Al-Maji'):**
 Allah, the Exalted, said: *(وَجَاءَ رَبُّكَ وَالْمَلَكُ صَفًّا صَفًّا)*⁽⁸⁵⁾
 and also said: *(هَلْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَّا أَنْ يَأْتِيَهُمُ اللَّهُ فِي ظُلَلٍ مِنَ الْغَمَامِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ وَقُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ وَإِلَى اللَّهِ تُرْجَعُ الْأُمُورُ)*⁽⁸⁶⁾
6. **The Attribute of the Leg (Al-Saq):**
 Allah, the Exalted, said: *(يَوْمَ يُكْشَفُ عَنْ سَاقٍ وَيُدْعَوْنَ إِلَى السُّجُودِ فَلَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ)*⁽⁸⁷⁾
7. **The Attribute of Supremacy (Al-Fawqiiyyah):** Allah, the Exalted, said: *(أَأَمِنْتُمْ مِنْ فِي السَّمَاءِ أَنْ يَخْسِفَ بِكُمْ الْأَرْضَ فَإِذَا هِيَ تَمُورُ)*.⁽⁸⁸⁾

In addition to other attributes mentioned in authentic hadiths—such as eternity, laughter, the fingers, and others—the question arises: Do these attributes ascribed to Allah, the Exalted, actually occur in reality as they appear to the minds of many? That is: Does Allah have a hand like our hands and a face like our faces? Or are these attributes real in their apparent sense as per their nomenclature, though befitting the majesty and perfection of Allah—without anthropomorphism or corporealism? Or are they attributes employed in a manner different from their apparent meaning, possessing other realities of which Allah knows best? Or are they attributes that have been applied to Allah metaphorically, such that man can grasp their meanings?⁽⁸⁹⁾

The theologians and scholars of the ummah differed in their answers to this question, adopting various approaches ranging from corporealism and nullification to delegation or interpretation. A concentrated summary of their opinions is as follows:

First – The Anthropomorphic or Corporealists

79. Surah al-Qasas, Ayah: 88.

80. Surah Taha, Ayah: 39.

81. Surah al-Qamar, Ayah: 14.

82. Surah al-Fath, Ayah: 10.

83. Surah al-Ma'idah, Ayah: 64.

84. Surah Sad, Ayah: 75.

85. Surah al-Fajr, Ayah: 22.

86. Surah al-Baqarah, Ayah: 210.

87. Surah al-Qalam, Ayah: 42.

88. Surah al-Mulk, Ayah: 16.

89. See: Habanka, *The Islamic Creed*, 246.

They apply these attributes in their literal appearance and argue that these attributes are corporeal parts in the essence of Allah, the Exalted, contrary to what is stated.⁽⁹⁰⁾ The doctrine of anthropomorphism and corporealism is manifestly invalid and not worthy of debate; for it directly contradicts Allah's explicit saying: *(لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ)*.⁽⁹¹⁾

Second – The Nullifiers or the Jahmiyyah

They exaggerate in exalting the Creator, the Exalted, to the point of negating the attributes that He has affirmed for Himself and nullifying them. They argue that it is impermissible to ascribe to the Creator any attribute that is used to describe His creation, because that would imply anthropomorphism. They denied, however, that Allah, the Exalted, is Alive or All-Knowing—although these are attributes inherent to His essence according to the people of Sunnah—while attributes such as the Face, the Hands, and the like, when negated by the Jahmiyyah, are considered primary.⁽⁹²⁾

Third – The Mu'tazilites

The Mu'tazilites deny that the attributes suggestive of anthropomorphism are meant in their literal sense. They claim that all such attributes are to be interpreted, except for the Face—some even asserting that the Face of Allah is Allah Himself. They interpreted the istiwa' of the Most Merciful on the Throne as meaning domination and superiority, the Hand as meaning blessing, and the Eye as meaning knowledge.⁽⁹³⁾

The Shiites support the Mu'tazilite opinions regarding interpretation; however, they interpret the Face as referring to His prophets and close ones, and the Hand as referring to power.⁽⁹⁴⁾

Fourth – The Ash'arites

The Ash'arites held that the attributes suggestive of anthropomorphism should be interpreted as a form of metaphor, in the same manner as the Mu'tazilites.⁽⁹⁵⁾ However, an alternative opinion is also transmitted from al-Ash'ari regarding these attributes, wherein he explicitly stated that Allah's istiwa' on His Throne is not to be understood as “taking possession”; for He, the Exalted, has always been in control over everything, which indicates that He is settled on His Throne in a manner befitting Him.⁽⁹⁶⁾ He also stated that Allah, the Exalted, has two extended Hands, and that His Hands are not to be equated with His blessings; this is evidenced by the honor bestowed upon Adam (peace be upon him), who was created by His Hand.⁽⁹⁷⁾ He further stated that the Face, the Eyes, the Sight, and the Hands are inherent in Allah without explanation or limitation, as indicated by the Qur'an.⁽⁹⁸⁾

Fifth – The People of Sunnah and the Hadith

90. See: al-Ash'ari, *Articles of the Islamists*, 1/290.

91. Surah ash-Shura, Ayah: 11.

92. See: al-Shahrastani, *The Religions and the Sects*, 36.

93. See: al-Qadi Abd al-Jabbar ibn Ahmad al-Hamdani al-Asadabadi, *Commentary on the Five Principles*, 227–230, and see: al-Ash'ari, *Articles of the Islamists*, 1/290.

94. See: al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar: The Collection of Pearls of the Narrations of the Imams*, 3/288.

95. See: al-Iji, *The Positions in Ilm al-Kalam*, 297.

96. See: al-Ash'ari, *Usul Ahl al-Sunnah and al-Jama'ah: The Treatise of the People of Thaghr*, Azhar Library for Heritage, First Edition.

97. See: the same previous reference, 72.

98. See: al-Ash'ari, *The Clarification on the Principles of the Faith*, Dar al-Ansar, Cairo, First Edition, 1397 AH.

They maintain that Allah is not a body nor does He resemble created things, that He is on the Throne, and that it is impermissible for man to place himself before Allah in his speech. They assert that Allah, the Exalted, is settled without explanation, that He has a Face, two Hands, and two Eyes, and that He will come on the Day of Judgment with His angels. They claimed nothing except what is found in the Book or what has been transmitted from the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him).⁽⁹⁹⁾

Sixth – The Salafiyyah

They adhere to what the people of hadith state; that Allah must be described with all that He described Himself with—without interpreting the texts or diverting them from their apparent meaning, and without nullifying His possession of those attributes. Rather, they must be applied in their literal sense without any adaptation or anthropomorphism⁽¹⁰⁰⁾. Late Salafi scholars condemn anyone who interprets these attributes as an innovation or as misguided, because such a person contradicts the Salafi creed established by the Prophet (peace be upon him), his Companions, and subsequent generations.⁽¹⁰¹⁾

In summary: Whoever holds that these attributes of Allah are intended in their literal, corporeal sense thereby affirms that the Creator resembles His creation, which contradicts Islamic doctrine; for the Qur'an explicitly states: (لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ)⁽¹⁰²⁾

Conversely, whoever denies these attributes nullifies what Allah has established, and that in itself is clearly a manifest sin. And whoever claims that these texts are to be understood in their true meaning according to correct linguistic evidence that befits Allah's perfection and majesty—with no anthropomorphism or corporealism—there is no objection to his statement from a creedal standpoint.

Likewise, whoever affirms the Hands without explaining “how” (i.e., taking the text in its literal sense while believing that the apparent meaning commonly assumed by people is not intended) does not violate reason or Sharia, for he delegates the intended meaning to Allah, the Exalted. Similarly, whoever interprets these texts as having meanings that may be understood metaphorically—as is common in Arabic (e.g., interpreting the Hand as meaning power and the Eye as meaning care)—is not objected to, since his interpretation is supported by evidences from the sacred texts that favor reading the text in a meaning other than its apparent one.⁽¹⁰³⁾

Conclusion

The Result: From the foregoing, it becomes clear that:

The theologians divided the attributes of Allah, the Exalted, into three categories: (intrinsic attributes, conceptual attributes, active attributes), and some scholars added “reported attributes” or “those suggestive of anthropomorphism.”

Later theologians considered that Allah, the Exalted, described Himself in His Noble Book with many attributes whose components converge into twenty principal attributes, established by the evidence of the Book and decisive proofs, and divided into four categories: (psychological

99 See: al-Ash'ari, *Articles of the Islamists*, 1/285.

100. See: Ibn Taymiyyah, *Minhaj al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah*, 2/111.

101. See: Ali Abd al-Fattah al-Maghribi, *Imam Ahl al-Sunnah and Abu Mansur al-Maturidi and His Theological Opinions*, 17.

102. Surah ash-Shura, Ayah: 11.

103. See: Habanka, *The Islamic Creed*, 247 and what follows.

attributes, negative attributes, conceptual attributes, and attributes of meaning).⁽¹⁰⁴⁾

This research provided a brief summary of the theologians' views on the intrinsic, active, conceptual, and reported attributes. It is evident that all theologians cited Qur'anic verses and prophetic traditions—each claiming, despite their differences and conflicting proofs, to follow the methodology of the Qur'an and the path taken by the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) and his Companions thereafter.

The research attempted to reconcile the categorizations of the early and later theologians regarding the attributes through the four sections presented above.

Whatever is good and correct is from Allah alone, and whatever is erroneous is from myself and from Satan. We ask Allah to inspire us with guidance, to keep us from error, and to direct us to a straight path. Truly, He is the Grantor of success.

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¹⁰⁴. See: al-Bouti, *The Greatest Cosmic Certainties*, 108, and al-Sa'ih, *The Faith of the Muslim*, 118 and what follows.

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