

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

*al-Kharida al-Bahiyya :*

The Lustrous Untouched Pearl<sup>1</sup>

By Imam Ahmad al-Dardir

Translated by Ibrahim Hakim al-Shaghouri

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- I. States the one who hopes to receive the Mercy of the Powerful/ Ahmad, known as al-Dardir:
- II. Praise belongs to Allah, the Sublime, the Indivisibly One/ the Knower (of everything), the Single, the One beyond need, the Magnificent!
- III. And the best of benedictions and salutations/ be upon the Prophet, the noble and chosen one!
- IV. And likewise upon his household and pure companions/ especially his dear friend in the cave (Abu Bakr al-Siddiq).
- V. This is a noble text on faith and belief/ which I named “the Lustrous Untouched Pearl”.
- VI. Light and short in size/ but laden heavy with knowledge
- VII. Sufficing you in its knowledge if you wish to find sufficiency/ because it satisfactorily describes the crème of this science.

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<sup>1</sup> A translation and brief commentary on the poem outlining the basic beliefs of Muslims, written by Shaykh Ahmad al-Dardir [d.1201 H]. The footnotes have been paraphrased by the translator from the words of Shaykh Ahmad himself and others.

- VIII. In Allah do I hope for acceptance of this deed/ and that others benefit thru it, and the forgiveness of shortcomings.
- IX. The judgments of the sound intellect (in categorizing things) without doubt/ are the “absolutely necessary” (*wajib*) and the “absolutely impossible” (*muhal*)
- X. And the “possible” (*ja'iz*) is the third category/ so understand! May you be gifted with sound understanding!
- XI. **It is mandatory upon the legally responsible** <sup>2</sup>, according to the Law/ to know Allah Most High, so come to know Him <sup>3</sup>!
- XII. Meaning, that he knows what is absolutely necessary and absolutely impossible/ and what is possible concerning Him, Most Exalted is He!
- XIII. And that he knows the same (categories) concerning the Messengers of Allah/ upon them all be perpetual greetings of the Divine.
- XIV. The absolutely necessary – according to the sound mind – is that which absolutely cannot accept/ non-existence in Its Essence (meaning, Allah), so beseech Him humbly.
- XV. The absolutely impossible <sup>4</sup> is anything which cannot accept/ any confirmed existence in its essence; the opposite of the first category.
- XVI. Everything which can accept non-existence/ as well as existence is what is known obviously as the “possible” <sup>5</sup> (such as a physical body being either in motion or at rest, or Allah rewarding the sinner and punishing the obedient).

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<sup>2</sup> The definition of “legally responsible”: the one of sound mind, who has reached puberty, and who has received an accurate description of the Last Prophet’s message. This applies to humans and jinn, except that the condition of reaching puberty does not apply to jinn.

<sup>3</sup> Although the faith of someone who merely imitates the faith of someone else is sound, such a one remains disobedient if he does not look into and reflect upon the proofs of faith and come to know Allah as described.

<sup>4</sup> This can be subdivided into 3 categories: 1) impossible according to both sound mind and habit (such as something being both black and white at the same moment); 2) impossible according to habit not mind (such as humans flying); 3) impossible according to mind not habit (such as faith existing in someone whom Allah knows will never have faith).

<sup>5</sup> As another example of this, fire burning things that come into contact with it falls into the category of “possible” and *not* “necessary”, because the ascription of this effect to fire is figurative, while the true owner and creator of this effect is Allah, Who is without partner in His complete domination. Therefore, fire burning things is a *habit*, and not a *law* of nature; meaning the effect of burning is something independent of the fire’s essence and is rather created by Allah habitually at each moment along with fire when it comes into contact with something.

- XVII. After this, know with certainty that the (created) world/ meaning, all that is other-than-Allah, the Sublime Knower
- XVIII. ... is, without any doubt, contingent and poor-in-essence/ because of its constantly undergoing change in its states <sup>6</sup>.
- XIX. Its contingency (*huduth*) refers to its coming into existence after being non-existent/ and the opposite of this (being contingent) is what is called “Eternal without beginning” (*Qidam*).
- XX. So know that the attribute of being existent (*Wujud*)/ belongs fundamentally and essentially to the Indivisibly One, the Worshipped... and this is necessarily so (it being impossible that He not exist).
- XXI. It is obvious that every effect/ leads back to a cause for it <sup>7</sup>, so reflect on this.
- XXII. This (essential existence) is known as an Attribute-of-Self <sup>8</sup> (*nafsiyya*)/ after which comes five Attributes-of-Negation (*salbiyya*).
- XXIII. Know that they are: being Eternal without beginning <sup>9</sup> (*Qidam*), and Everlasting without ending <sup>10</sup> (*Baqāʾ*)/ as well as Self-Existence and Subsistence (being absolutely without need of anything else, such as location or specification); may you attain piety!

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<sup>6</sup> The very fact that it undergoes change in its states proves that it has a beginning and cannot be eternal. Meaning, for it to be eternal, it would have to undergo an infinite number of changes before arriving at the current state it is presently changed into, and it is impossible to arrive at an end of infinity. Therefore, for something to be eternal, it must never undergo any change (which is not the case with the contingent world).

<sup>7</sup> Meaning, the world, which is not eternal but has a beginning after being non-existent, cannot bring itself into existence by itself. This is because the possibility of its existence and non-existence are equal (like the equal balances of a scale); and in fact, non-existence is more “natural” to it. Therefore, there must be something *other than* it which had the power to cause its existence to outweigh its non-existence (tip the scales in favor of its existence), as we can see it exists now. Otherwise, it would be impossible for the possibility of its non-existence to be outweighed by the possibility of its existence without any external reason or factor.

<sup>8</sup> His Existence is His Self-Same Entity, and is not something extra added to It.

<sup>9</sup> He is Eternal thru Himself, and not thru some other external cause; the reason being is that He would not be eternal without beginning if something other-than-Him was a cause (thereby preceding) His Eternity. If He was not Eternal-without-beginning, then the only other option would be His being contingent and with beginning, just like the His creation; and this would necessitate His *needing* someone else to originate Him into existence. That someone else would either be without beginning or with beginning; if without beginning, then He would be the true God, but if with beginning, then this would lead to infinite regression, which is absolutely impossible.

- XXIV. His Non-Resemblance to everything else <sup>11</sup>, and His Indivisible Oneness ( *Wahdaniya*)/ in regards to His Essence (meaning both He is not composed of multiple parts – thus necessitating a need for a Composer, nor is there another Essence which is like His) and His Sublime Attributes (meaning, He does not have two or more lives, or powers, etc, nor is there anyone else who has Divine Attributes).
- XXV. And that all acts (in the world) and (the power to) effect belong wholly/ to the One and Irresistible <sup>12</sup>, Exalted and Sublime is He (there is no other independent Doer alongside of Him)!

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<sup>10</sup> This is because if His being eternal without beginning is confirmed, then it is absolutely impossible that He come to non-existence; and if it was possible that He could become non-existent, then this would necessitate that something external to Him must continue to keep Him in existence and weigh the scale in favor of His continued existence; and this need for someone else to continually confirm His existence would make Him contingent and not Eternal... and His being Eternal is already settled and confirmed.

<sup>11</sup> This negates His being a body, shape/form, parts, limits, mass, location, direction, dimensions, color, movement, stillness, or any other quality of creation; because if He did resemble His creation by having attributes such as these, then He would also be in need of someone else to specify these qualities, and His being in need of someone else is impossible. Also, the world in its entirety is still like nothing in relation to His Tremendous Power, so how could the Sublime Powerful Eternal Creator be connected to or disconnected from or indwelling in or settled upon or in a direction in relation to this paltry needy contingent world? Meaning for example, how could He occupy (and thus be in need of) a location if He is the Creator of (thus existing before) space and time and location?

<sup>12</sup> Meaning, He has no equal or partner in His Actions, and that absolutely nothing else has the independent ability to influence or bring about any event in existence. This might seem to the un-careful reader to be the same as the belief of the Jabriya sect, which believed that the servants had no free will, and thus no responsibility, because they had no choice but were “forced” in their actions. However, what the Shaykh here is saying is very different. First, Allah had full knowledge of every detail of the servant’s (future) acts before he is even brought into existence, and because His Knowledge is true and correct, it would be impossible that the servant’s actions during his borrowed existence be different than what was previously known in Allah’s Knowledge. Secondly, the servant has no independent power to bring his actions into existence from the realm of intention and thought into the realm of reality. There are many aspects within a single act: the thought and intention, the knowledge, the energy, the time and space of its performance, ability to perform it and complete it, and so on... and the only portion of these that the servant can lay claim to is the intention, and thus the Divine Judgment is concerned with and addresses that intention and desire, for “actions are judged according to the intentions.” So when the servant intends some act, and that act corresponds to what is known about him within the Divine Foreknowledge, then the Divine Power and Will come into play and bring that act into existence for the servant, at his hands; and this is how he “earns” (*kasb*) his act. We are in turn judged by what we “earn”, not by what we create, for “Allah creates you and your acts” (Q37:96).

- XXVI. Therefore, asserting belief in “nature” (that it has inherent ability to effect, ultimately meaning absence of need for the Divinity) or in “causality” (that things other-than-Allah can independently bring about events and effects) <sup>13</sup>/ is considered blasphemy (*kufri*) according to the people of truth.
- XXVII. And asserting belief in “deposited power” (that Allah placed within creation the power to effect events, so that they subsequently have independent or inherent ability to cause things; or that Allah does things thru intermediaries or instruments)/ is considered reprehensible innovation, so do not even turn your attention to it.
- XXVIII. If He is not attributed with such (the Attributes mentioned above), then this leads to/ claiming that He is contingent and has a beginning, which is absolutely impossible; so remain upright (upon the truth).

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If, however, that act does not correspond to what is known about him previously, then the servant will have no ability to bring it about or create it because there will be no Divine Power behind it, and it will remain an intention and thought. Therefore, there is no injustice that can be ascribed to the Divine, because He has not forced the servant to perform an act that he would not have done anyway, nor has He prevented him from performing an act he was going to perform anyway. Furthermore, acts in themselves carry a neutral judgment, and it is the Shari’a which then labels acts as permissible (*halal*) and impermissible (*haram*). For example, the act of intercourse is neutral, and is the same act whether done with one’s spouse or with a non-spouse. Then the Shari’a comes and declares one of these halal, and the other haram, and it is Allah Most High who decrees the rules of the Shari’a upon His creations (not upon Himself). Therefore, His acts are not held to those rules, for the Shari’a is below Him, not above Him. So no servant has the right to claim that Allah Most High is held responsible for the evil of the act which He brought into existence at their hand. The judgment of the Shari’a concerns itself with the intention only, and not the other aspects of the act which the servant cannot control, and then only if it is previously known that the servant will actually perform that act, for a servant can desire and intend to do an act that does not correspond to what is known concerning him. It is rather from the unparalleled generosity of Allah Most High that He even takes the intention into account, and rewards His servants for intending to do a good act that was never destined for them. In all of this, Allah “is not questioned concerning what He does (for the Shari’a is below Him, and there is no other God to judge Him), but they (the servants) are questioned concerning what they do” (Q21:23).

<sup>13</sup> As an example: food does not have an inherent ability to satisfy hunger, nor does water have true inherent ability to quench thirst or grow vegetation, nor does a knife have the ability to cut, nor do stars and planets have any influence over terrestrial (or other) events, and so on, even if they are habitually correlated with those effects. In reality, Allah Himself directly creates each of these effects at every instance of their manifestation.

- XXIX. It is impossible because it leads to infinite regression/ and unending circularity<sup>14</sup>, which is manifestly impossible.
- XXX. So He is the possessor of awesome majesty (*Jalal*) and intense beauty (*Jamal*)<sup>15</sup>, the Protecting Friend/ the Transcendently Pure, the Holy (clear of all imperfection and deficiency<sup>16</sup>), the Sublime Lord and Sustainer (of all that is).
- XXXI. Transcendent above any indwelling (of Him in creation or vice versa) or (being in a direction/ or being connected to or disconnected from anything else (which would otherwise imply that He is a body, which is false)<sup>17</sup>, or above foolishness (such as placing things in their wrongful place) and inattention.

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<sup>14</sup> This has already been elaborated upon earlier; and so in summary, the Creator and Originator of creation (defined as anything that has a beginning and undergoes change) cannot Himself have a beginning and undergo change, but must necessarily be Eternal, Everlasting, Unchanging, and utterly different from His creation.

<sup>15</sup> Based on His Jalal, He is the Mighty, the Annihilator, Creator of death, Irresistible, the Punisher, and so on; and based on His Jamal, He is Merciful, Forbearing, Loving, Kind, Forgiving, Generous, and so on. Because of the former, those who know Him are in reverential and humble awe of Him; and because of the later, those who know Him are infatuated in love with Him.

<sup>16</sup> One of the imperfections and deficiencies He is transcendent above is having motives or needs or objectives (to achieve what He would not already have) in what He is or does. Therefore, when speaking of His Quality of being Loving, this does not mean that He is in need or want, or that He seeks fulfillment and completion, or that He lacks something which He desires; rather, this Attribute (and those similar to it) refer to the their *results*, and so His “Loving” means Willing favor and blessing for the created object of His Love. Similarly, qualifying Him with Attributes which indicate anger does not mean that something can upset or incite Him or “push His buttons”, but refers to the *results* of that quality, which here means Willing punishment and torment for Its created object.

<sup>17</sup> These are the reasons why it is blasphemous to state that He sits literally on a Throne, or that He occupies a place up in the sky or in heaven. Commenting on this, Shaykh Ahmad al-Dardir states: “Certain groups became confused about the reality of this, based on their perceptions not penetrating beyond habitual occurrences, and adhering blindly and absolutely to a literal meaning for all primary texts (Qur’an and Hadith), leading some to assert that He exists in a certain direction, or that He is Attributed with the attributes of physical bodies, both of which necessarily imply the belief in Divine indwelling (*hulu*) and His Essence being connected to or disconnected from (created things), Transcendent is He above these beliefs! Our masters among the early generations (*Salaf*) responded to these beliefs by affirming that He is above being attributed with the qualities of contingent beings, along with relegating (*tafwid*) the true meanings of those ambiguous texts to Him (and not delving into them), preferring the safer path, because “no one understands their ultimate meaning except Allah” (Q3:9). Whereas their successors preferred to assign sound interpretations to these ambiguous texts, to nullify the beliefs of the misguided, and to guide along the deficient in understanding to the truth; so they interpreted “Hand” as meaning Power, and “Face”

- XXXII. Then (it is necessary) that He is attributed with the Attributes-of-Meanings/ (which include) Knowledge that completely encompasses everything without exception (and without being preceded by ignorance, therefore being eternal),
- XXXIII. His Life, Power, and Will <sup>18</sup>/ and everything in existence is something He has willed,
- XXXIV. Even if it (His Will) contrasts with what He commands/ know that His Will is not the same as His command, so leave behind dispute.
- XXXV. So you realize there are four categories <sup>19</sup> in this regard/ concerning all of created beings, so maintain and safeguard the Divine Transcendence.
- XXXVI. His Speech <sup>20</sup>, Hearing, and Vision/ He is the Divinity, the One Who exercises free independent effective choice in His acts.

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as meaning Essence/Entity, and “Establish firmly upon (the Throne)” as meaning having complete control and domination over, and so on, preferring the firmer path. Therefore, those primary texts whose literal meanings would qualify Allah with the attributes of creation must be interpreted with other meanings, either by consigning their meanings in general to Allah, or by interpreting them along with confirming His Transcendence and non-resemblance to creation; both approaches being valid.”

<sup>18</sup> By having a Will, this means that He specifies certain qualities for His creation to the exclusion of others. So for example, He specifies whether it will come into existence or remain non-existent, whether it will have a certain quality instead of another, whether it will exist at a certain time and place instead of another, or whether it will have a certain shape or form instead of another, and so on. In all, He must necessarily have these four Attributes (of Life, Knowledge, Will, and Power); because if not then He would have their opposites (death, ignorance, lack of will, impotence), and as such would not be capable of creating the well ordered and designed world that exists.

<sup>19</sup> Meaning, any possible event can be either one of four things: 1) He has both willed it and commanded it (such as the faith of the believers), and thus must necessarily occur; 2) He has willed it but not commanded it (such as the disbelievers’ rejection of faith), and thus must necessarily occur; 3) He has not willed it but has commanded it (such as the faith of disbelievers), and thus will never occur; 4) He has neither willed it nor commanded it (such as the believers’ rejection of faith), and thus will never occur. Certain sects used to dispute and argue that His Will and His command is one and the same thing, and thereby fell into error and misguidance.

<sup>20</sup> This is an Eternal Attribute of His Essence, therefore His Speech is without beginning and without being bound by time (making His “Words” infinite). As for the Arabic Qur’an (and the earlier Divine Books), its letters *point to* Allah’s real Speech and It’s meanings, while the Qur’an itself (in its pristine state) is Eternal and uncreated (claiming otherwise is blasphemous). As for categorizing it into commands and prohibitions, promises and warnings, news and stories, etc, this applies to those words which point to and indicate the meanings, and not to the Eternal Divine Speech Itself (which is indivisible and impossible to categorize). The reality of His Speech is veiled from our intellects, because It has no like that we can relate to, just as is the case with His Essence Itself.

- XXXVII. It is also absolutely necessary that these Divine Attributes/ all eternally pertain to some or all of the three categories (described above), with the exception of (His Attribute of) Life, (which relates to nothing else).
- XXXVIII. So (His Eternal Attribute of) Knowledge, as well as His Transcendent Speech/ both relate to all three categories (of what must be, what cannot be, and what is possible).
- XXXIX. And (His Eternal Attributes of) Power and Will/ relate to all of that which is possible (not to what is absolutely necessary or impossible <sup>21</sup>).
- XL. And know with certainty that His (Eternal Attributes of) Hearing and Vision/ (each) relate to everything that exists (both Eternal and contingent beings) <sup>22</sup>, O brother of the faith.
- XLI. All of these (seven Attributes) are Eternally Present in the Divine Essence/ because they are not other than His Essence <sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>21</sup> (Ahmad al-Dardir): “The reason why they do not relate to the necessary or the impossible is because by definition they deal with causing and bringing about change, and a “change” in state means it exists newly after being non-existent. However, the absolutely necessary is defined as that which can never accept non-existence, and the absolutely impossible is defined as that which can never accept existence; and by virtue of this, these two categories can never accept or undergo change. Otherwise, this would necessitate the obtainment of something already in occurrence (e.g. annihilating that which never existed in the first place), and the inversion of realities (e.g. the necessary transforming into the possible), and this can never be. Furthermore, asserting that they relate also to the necessary and impossible could lead one to claim that the Divine Essence could become non-existent, or that another Divinity could exist alongside of Him, or that His Attributes could become their opposites (such as His Power becoming impotence, which would nullify the whole point of that false claim)”. Therefore, to ask such questions as “Can God create an object which He cannot lift or carry?” “Can God create a square-circle?” is meaningless, because such an object would be absolutely impossible to exist, and His Power only relates to that which is possible.

<sup>22</sup> Meaning, there isn’t anything whatsoever hidden from His Sight which may be revealed by His Hearing, or vice versa; rather, His Hearing and Vision – being Attributes of His Essence – do not undergo change or increase, but are Eternal; nor do they rely on extraneous instruments (such as humans needing ears to hear). With that said, the reality of the difference between His Hearing, Vision, and Knowledge can never be known to us. Also, unlike our hearing and vision, His Hearing and Vision is not the source of His Knowledge.

<sup>23</sup> Meaning, those Attributes cannot be separated from the Divine Essence, and it is not possible to have the Divine Essence be without them; nor is it possible to have those Attributes exist in other than the Divine Essence. So it is not correct to state that they are possible in themselves. Also, those Attributes are not the self-same Essence, because an essence is not an attribute. Otherwise, “Life” would be the same thing as “Knowledge” and so on.

- XLII. Furthermore, His Speech is not characterized with letters (or sounds)/ nor with being sequential or having a beginning, unlike the (oral pronounced) speech we are used to.
- XLIII. The opposites of all these are absolutely impossible/ so know this with certainty about the Divine Grand Attributes.
- XLIV. Because if He was not Attributed/ with these above Attributes, then He would be known and attributed with their opposites (such as non-existence, having a beginning or an ending, resembling His creation and their traits, being divisible and composed of parts, ignorance, sleep or rest, being pre-occupied, blindness, deafness, being forced or obliged, weakness, and so on).
- XLV. And any being which is attributed with these opposites (ignorance, etc)/ then his essential need and poverty is unlimited.
- XLVI. The Indivisibly One, the Object of worship, is absolutely without any need/ for other-than-Him, Exalted is He Who is Independent and All-Powerful!
- XLVII. The “possible” in regards to Allah Most High, is His/ doing or not doing, bringing responsible beings to damnation or felicity<sup>24</sup> (all of these acts being entirely up to His choice)<sup>25</sup>.
- XLVIII. Whoever states that He is required<sup>26</sup> to do the better (of multiple choices),/ his lack of proper understanding of and courtesy towards the Divine is immense.
- XLIX. My brother, believe with certainty in (every believer’s) witnessing their Creator<sup>27</sup>/ in heaven eternal, without limits (for Him; i.e. their vision of Him will not be complete and encompassing).
- L. For the occurrence of such is possible according to the sound mind’s judgment/ as well as authentic reports (from the Qur’an and the words of the Prophet) stating such.

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<sup>24</sup> Felicity and success is defined as dying while being a believer, and Wretchedness is defined as dying while being a disbeliever; both of which are in accordance to the Divine’s Eternal Knowledge concerning (the person’s state).

<sup>25</sup> Allah says: “And your Lord creates what He wills, and chooses; no choice do they have whatsoever (meaning, no one other-than-Allah can create and chose an event to occur if He does not will and choose it, otherwise He would be overpowered and forced); Glorified and Transcendent is He above that which they falsely ascribe” (Q28:68).

<sup>26</sup> This would imply that what is merely possible becomes absolutely necessary or impossible, which is a contradiction. Also, His being obliged to do something also constitutes being overpowered: an imperfection.

<sup>27</sup> (Ahmad al-Dardir): “The relied-upon and sound position is that the Prophet (*alayhi salat wa salam*) witnessed his Lord during his night journey and ascension, with both his eyes and heart”, and this is for him and none else.

- LI. **(You must also)** attribute the Messengers with trustworthiness<sup>28</sup>/ as well as with truthfulness, completely delivering their messages, and having superior intelligence.
- LII. The opposites of these (treachery, lying<sup>29</sup>, committing sins, not delivering the message, being dimwitted, etc) are impossible for them/ whereas it is possible for them to have any human condition (that does not constitute a flaw or deficiency), such as needing to eat food<sup>30</sup>.
- LIII. Their being sent (by Allah) is a show of His grace and mercy/ to the world (and not something obligatory upon Him), may He – the Owner and Giver of blessings – be exalted!
- LIV. **It is necessary to have firm faith** in the final judgment/ as well as in the resurrection and Divine judgment (of deeds)<sup>31</sup>, punishment, and reward (experienced by both body and soul),
- LV. And in the *bodily* rising (of the dead from the graves) and gathering, the Bridge (over which everyone must cross, many failing<sup>32</sup>), and the Scale<sup>33</sup> (to balance deeds)/ as well as the River-Basin<sup>34</sup>, the Fires of Hell, and the Gardens of Paradise<sup>35</sup>.

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<sup>28</sup> Part of the meaning of this is that all Prophets are Divinely-protected (*'Ismah*) from disobedience and error, whether inwardly or outwardly, big or small, in their old age or their youth. If it were possible for them to show treachery to Allah by committing a forbidden or disliked act, then this act would become obedience and worship; and this cannot be because Allah has ordered us to follow them, and “Allah does not order indecency” (Q7:28).

<sup>29</sup> It is impossible that they lie, because they were Divinely-supported with miracles, indicating that Allah was confirming that whatever messages and teachings they brought and gave were indeed from Him; and this in turn must be true because lying is not possible for Allah.

<sup>30</sup> Other examples: marriage (and intercourse), falling ill (but not with repulsive or terminal diseases), and so on.

<sup>31</sup> What is judged will be actions, words, and beliefs, and those judged will be humans and the jinn. Allah will judge all of them together at once, but each individual will experience it as being himself alone who is being judged. They will understand the Divine interrogation (with His Eternal Speech) by Allah lifting the veil from their understandings. Some people will be judged privately so that no one else becomes aware of their deeds, while others will be exposed and ashamed publicly for all to see. There will also be certain people who will be granted exception from the Judgment, and will enter Paradise without going thru the Accounting, including 70,000 from the followers of Muhammad (*alayhi salat wa salam*).

<sup>32</sup> It is placed over the surface of Hell, and ends at the door of Paradise. For the disbelievers, it will be narrower than a hair or a sword's edge, and for the believers, it will be wide and easy to cross. Depending on the person's strength of faith, knowledge of the Divine, and righteousness of works, he will cross over it quickly or slowly, or fall over into Hell (and remain forever if he died a disbeliever, or temporarily if he died a sinful believer).

LVI. And in the jinn (unseen beings made from smokeless fire), angels <sup>36</sup>, and prophets <sup>37</sup>/ and in the wide-eyed beautiful maidens and youths (of Paradise), and the close friends (*Awliya*) <sup>38</sup> of Allah.

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<sup>33</sup> The reality of its form is unknown, but it is one scale (not multiple), with two dishes (one to weigh good deeds and one to weigh evil deeds), erected to weigh the records of deeds of all those to be judged (excluding the Angels, Prophets, and certain others who will be absolved from judgment). The weight of the reward of good deeds will be multiplied to ten or more times, while each bad deed will only count as one.

<sup>34</sup> Each Prophet owns one, and the Prophet Muhammad (*alayhi salat wa salam*) described his as being “of equal dimensions, each dimension the distance of a month’s journey, whose liquid is whiter than milk, and whose scent is more pleasant than musk, and whose cups are more numerous than the stars, whoever drinks from it will never experience thirst thereafter” (recorded by Bukhari and Muslim). Certain groups of people will be prevented from approaching it, including: those who apostatized from Islam, those who innovated in the religion and changed it.

<sup>35</sup> The Fire and the Garden currently exist and will be everlasting; and so the punishment of the Fire’s inhabitants, and the bliss of the Garden’s inhabitants, will also be everlasting. Asserting otherwise constitutes disbelief.

<sup>36</sup> The angels are spirits having subtle bodies made of light, capable of taking on various forms, and who are immune from error, disobedience and rebellion being impossible for them. Their numbers are unknown except to Allah. Some of them are known to us (such as the four archangels Jibril – responsible for delivering Divine messages to human prophets, Mika’il – responsible for delivering sustenance and provision to creatures, Israfil – responsible for blowing the Trumpet to mark the end of the world, ‘Izra’il – responsible for taking the souls, and other angels such as Munkar and Nakir – who question people once they are buried, Radwan and Malik – gatekeepers of paradise and hell respectively, Raqib and ‘Atid – who record the deeds of humans), while the majority Allah has kept hidden from us. This is in contrast to the jinn, whose bodies are denser than angelic bodies but more subtle than human bodies, and who are granted relative free will and ability to obey or disobey.

<sup>37</sup> We are also required to believe in all of the Prophets (who were all male), including those both mentioned explicitly in the Qur’an and those left unmentioned. Some narrations (in Musnad Ahmad, Sahih Ibn Hibban, and other collections) have mentioned that they number 124,000, but it is better to not be dogmatic about this number, because they could be more or less. The difference between a prophet (*nabi*) and a messenger (*rasul*) is that the former is granted revelation by Allah and not required to deliver it, whereas the later is granted revelation by Allah and required to deliver it to others, and also comes with a new Law (Shari’a). Part of belief in the Prophets includes belief in their miracles. **Levels of Excellence of the Creation:** Prophet Muhammad (*alayhi salat wa salam*) > The Messengers of great fortitude (Ibrahim, Musa, ‘Isa, Nuh, and some add Dawud) > the rest of the Messengers > the non-Messenger Prophets > the Archangels > the rest of the angels > the Companions (*Sahaba*) of the Prophet: first Abu Bakr, then Umar, then ‘Uthman and ‘Ali, then the rest of the 10 (the other six being Talha, Zubayr, Sa’id ibn Zayd, Ibn ‘Auf, Ubaydullah ibn Jarrah, Sa’d ibn abi Waqqas), then those who fought in Badr, then those who gave the pledge of Ridwan, then the rest of the Companions > their successors > the Awliya.

LVII. As well as every report<sup>39</sup> which has come from the Messenger/ coming to be thereby something which is undoubtedly true (due to their truthfulness).

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<sup>38</sup> A “Wali” (pl. Awliya) is defined as one who 1) occupies a close standing and intimate station with Allah Most High, 2) receives a share of spiritual inheritance from one or more of the Prophets, 3) has direct experiential knowledge of Allah Most High, whose awareness of His Presence is constant, 4) is preserved by Allah from persisting and sin, and is kept in a state of obedience, without that meaning that he is immune to error and sin like the Prophets are, and 5) whose beliefs are in accord with those of mainstream Ash’ari or Maturidi doctrine. They will continue to exist until the end of this world, unlike the Prophets who were sealed with Muhammad (*alayhi salat wa salam*). Just as it is necessary to believe in their existence, we should also believe in their miracles (*Karamat*), which 1) are differentiated from those of the Prophets (called *Mu’jizat*) because the Awliya do not claim prophethood for themselves, and 2) whose proofs abound in the Qur’an and Hadith, and 3) denied only by those outside the fold of Ahl al-Sunna.

<sup>39</sup> Such as: the Prophet’s night journey and ascension (with his body while awake); his intercession on the Day of Judgment; the questioning in the grave by the two angels Munkar and Nakir, as well as the punishment and bliss experienced in the grave; that the Prophets and martyrs are alive in their graves; that people will receive a written record of their deeds after their resurrection; that the Prophets, Angels, martyrs, and righteous will intercede on behalf of others during the Judgment; in the major signs before the **Last Hour** (e.g. Imam Mahdi, the appearance of the Anti-Christ, the descent of ‘Isa alayhi salam, the release of the two human tribes Ya’juj and Ma’juj, the emergence of the Beast from the earth below Makka, which will communicate with people, and the rising of the Sun from its place of setting (the West) – whose true reality is unknown at this point, and after which no repentance will be accepted); and so on, as detailed in lengthier books of Islamic belief and creed.

**Prophetic Intercession and Its Types:** 1) In commencing the Judgment to alleviate the suffering of the people as they wait; 2) in allowing certain people to be excused from the judgment and enter Paradise without being taken into account; 3) in changing the decision concerning some people deserving of Hell to be allowed entrance into Paradise instead; 4) in allowing certain people in one level of paradise to ascend to higher levels; 5) in allowing certain people to be removed from hell; 6) in lightening the punishment of those destined for eternity in Hell. The first two are exclusive to Prophet Muhammad (*alayhi salat wa salam*) alone, while the remainder are shared with other Prophets, angels, and righteous humans. Allah Himself out of His mercy will remove from Hell (after a long time of being in it) anyone in whose heart was an atom’s worth of faith.

**Iman is more than simple faith/belief:** (Dardir): “The legal definition of *Iman* is the heart’s acceptance of and attestation to the truth of everything which the Prophet (*alayhi salat wa salam*) brought and taught, of that which is necessarily known to be part of his message... and this (also) means that one yields and submits to the guidance he came with, so that the title of “surrender” (*taslim*) can be properly applied to him, because he shows no stubborn refusal or arrogant rejection (of his message). It is not sufficient that one merely accepts with one’s heart that what he taught was true, while still stubbornly refusing to follow and yield to him. Otherwise, those disbelievers (*kuffar*)

- LVIII. Within the testimony (*shahadatayn*) of Islam (witnessing that there is no deity but Allah and that Muhammad is His Messenger) is latent/ all of the meanings expressed above.
- LIX. **So make frequent remembrance** of this phrase, with the appropriate manners/ you will rise<sup>40</sup> – thru this invocation – to the highest of levels<sup>41</sup>.
- LX. Make your fear dominate over your hope (in the beginning of the Path)/ and move to your Lord without hesitation or distance (by falling into attachment to other-than-Him).
- LXI. Renew your repentance from sinful deeds/ and do not lose hope in the mercy of the Forgiving.
- LXII. Be grateful for all of His bounties/ and be patient under all of His trials.
- LXIII. Every event and affair is predestined and pre-determined/ and there is no escaping that which is predestined.

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who accept that he was a true Prophet, without following his guidance, would also be called ‘believers’ (and this is something refuted by the primary texts).”

<sup>40</sup> The author completes it with this section on Tasawwuf because it is the Islamic science which details the means thru which belief in the above is transformed into the soul’s direct vision and witnessing of the truth of these doctrines. So, for example, not only does one believe in the angels but also sees them. Among the greatest of these means is regular and frequent invocation (*dhikr*), which results in the heart becoming purified and illumined. The lines that follow this mention some of the principles and foundations of the path of Tasawwuf, such as: repentance, fear, hope, gratitude, patience, love, etc.

<sup>41</sup> (Dardir): “The lowest of the Islamic stations and levels is the one in which its occupier blames and reproaches himself for his disobedience, and the highest of the stations is that occupied by the utterly veracious (*siddiqiyya* – see Qur’an 4:59), which is only accessed after actualizing the station of **Ihsan** – which is defined as worshipping Allah (and living your life) as if you witness Him directly... the station directly above this one is the station of prophet-hood. That station is sealed shut by the passing of the Prophet Muhammad (*alayhi salat wa salam*), but the station of *siddiqiyya* is still open. It (the *Siddiqiyya*) is the station of greater Walaya (sainthood) and vicegerency, in which the spiritual unveilings and illuminations occur one after the other, by virtue of the soul’s intense purity and perfection. It cannot be reached except after “annihilation” (*fana*), which refers to annihilation of all of the evil and blameworthy characteristics of the soul, to the point that it has not the slightest attachment to them anymore, but rather abhors them just as one would abhor eating a rotten carcass. Its blameworthy characteristics include: envy, hatred, love of status and fame and leadership, immediate gratification of caprice, arrogance, ostentation, hypocrisy, deceit, delusions, and disliking people for reasons not countenanced by the Shari’a, and so on. When these despised character traits are removed, then he becomes adorned with their opposites, with such praiseworthy traits such as mercy and compassion – so that he loves for others what he loves for himself, sincerity and truthfulness, generosity, excellent moral behavior, humility...”.

- LXIV. So be surrendered (*musallim*) to Him so that you may find safety (*taslam*)/ and follow the way of the scholars who act according to their knowledge.
- LXV. Free the heart from (attachment to) everything other-than-Allah/ with sincere earnestness, and rising late night to perform acts of (voluntary) devotion.
- LXVI. Reflect and Invoke constantly without fail/ and guard (yourself) from all harmful sins.
- LXVII. Watching and beholding Allah in all states and conditions/ that you may ascend to the levels of perfection.
- LXVIII. Plead, in humility, “My Lord, do not sever me/ from You, and do not deny me
- LXIX. Your glorious secret which removes (spiritual) blindness/ and seal (our lives) with goodness, O Most Merciful!”
- LXX. Praise belongs to Allah with this completion (of the poem)/ and may the choicest of benedictions and salutations
- LXXI. Rain upon the Hashemite Prophet, the Seal (of Prophet-hood)/ and upon his noble household and companions!

