

Sharh Aqidah al-Awam of Sayyid al-Maliki

Al-Kakazai

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The Story of The Poem

One of my favourite Aqidah texts is the beginners poem on belief named 'Aqidah al-Awam' (The common/lay persons belief) written by Shaykh Ahmad al-Marzuqi al-Maliki. I obtained a useful commentary on this poem many years ago by the Muhaddith of the Haramayn: Sayyid Muhammad bin Alawi al-Maliki which was transcribed by his student Shaykh Muhammad Ihya Ulum al-Din from the teaching of this text in sacred city of Makkah in the late 1970's.

I had been puzzled for some time why this wonderful work has seemingly been ignored by translators (not least as it is the first text studied by students of knowledge in many parts of the Muslim world) whilst other more detailed and complex works have been translated and offered to the English speaking public. I pray that we have the tawfiq to be able to present all of this brief commentary on this blog in the upcoming months, Ameen. Please find below an extract from pg 11–12 of Sayyid Maliki's commentary compiled by his wonderfully named student (Muhammad Ihya Ulum al-Din). The commentary states:

The Reason For the Composition of This Poem

A unique story is reported from the author regarding the reason for his composing this poem which we will make mention of, and it is:

The author (Allah have mercy on him) saw the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) and his companions (Allah be pleased with them) standing around him (in a dream). He (Allah bless him and give him peace) said to him:

Recite the poem of al-Tawhid which whomsoever memorizes it will enter paradise, and will attain all that is desired from every good which is in conformity with the Book and the Sunnah.

He said to him:

What is that poem O Messenger of Allah?

The Companions said to him:

Listen to the Messenger of Allah to what he says. The Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him and give him peace) said:

أَبْدَأُ بِسْمِ اللَّهِ وَالرَّحْمَنِ

So he said:

أَبْدَأُ بِسْمِ اللَّهِ وَالرَّحْمَنِ

To its end which are his words:

وَضُحْفُ الْخَلِيلِ وَالْكَلِيمِ فِيهَا كَلَامُ الْحَكَمِ الْعَلِيمِ

Whilst the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him and give him peace) was listening to him. When he awoke from his sleep he recited that which he had seen in his dream and found that it was preserved with him from its beginning to its end. He then saw the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) a second time in a dream at the time before dawn, the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) said to him:

Recite that which you have gathered (meaning in your heart).

So he recited it from its beginning to its end whilst standing in front of him (Allah bless him and give him peace) and his companions standing around him saying: 'Ameen' after every verse of this poem. When he had completed his recitation the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) said:

May Allah (the Exalted) give you success to that which pleases Him, and accept that from you, and bless you and the believers, and benefit the slaves by it, Ameen.

The author was then questioned after people came to know of the poem, so he answered their question, and added to it the poem from his words:

كُلُّ مَا أَتَى بِهِ الرَّسُولُ فَحَقُّهُ التَّسْلِيمُ وَالْقَبُولُ

until the end of the poem. This is what the author has informed regarding himself, and we have conveyed it exactly, and the responsibility is upon the narrator.

Introduction

Please find below the Introduction along with its commentary. I have omitted the inclusion of the discussion surrounding individual words which can be found in the commentary for a number of reasons. Inshallah perhaps they can be incorporated in the future.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
عَقِيدَةُ الْعَوَامِ

The author (Allah have mercy on him) said:

أَبْدَأُ بِسْمِ اللَّهِ وَالرَّحْمَنِ وَالرَّحِيمِ دَائِمَ الْإِحْسَانِ

**I begin in the name of Allah, and most merciful,
compassionate, eternally kind**

Commentary: I begin the writing of this poem 'Aqidah al-Awam' with the basmalah seeking help from Allah (عز و جل) whose mercy has encompassed everything, and whose bestowing and blessings are continuous without break nor decrease.

First: Following the noble book in its order not in its sequence of revelation.

Second: Acting upon that which has come from the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) that:

Every important matter which is not begun with bismillah al-rahman al-raheem is cut off (meaning deficient and of little good and blessing). [al-Khatib from Abu Hurayrah in a Marfu form]

Third: Following the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) who would begin his writings and letters with the basmalah as has come in his (Allah bless him and give him peace) letter to Harqal and others. The author Allah have mercy on him said:

فَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الْقَدِيمِ الْأَوَّلِ وَالْآخِرِ الْبَاقِي بِلَا تَحْوِيلٍ

**All praise is for Allah, Without Beginning, the First and
the Last, Everlasting without change**

Commentary: I also begin adding to the writing of this poem with praise for Him, meaning by Praise for Allah with the tongue, the Without Beginning, the First, the Last, the Everlasting. Along with honouring Him and believing that all praise is established for Him.

First: Acting by His (Allah bless him and give him peace) words:

Every important matter not begun with praise for Allah is cut off [Abu Dawud and others and graded Hasan by Ibn al-Salah]

Second: Fulfilling the right of a thing which is incumbent upon him which is expressing thanks for blessings from amongst which is the authoring of this poem. The author (Allah have mercy on him) said:

ثُمَّ الصَّلَاةُ وَالسَّلَامُ سَرْمَدًا عَلَى النَّبِيِّ خَيْرٍ مَنْ قَدْ وَجَدَا

**Then peace and blessings be continuously upon the
messenger, best of those who affirmed the oneness**

وَأَلِيهِ وَصَحْبِهِ وَمَنْ تَبِعَ سَبِيلَ دِينِ الْحَقِّ غَيْرَ مُبْتَدِعٍ

**And His family, His companions and those who follow
the path of the true religion without innovation**

Commentary: Then I send blessings and peace upon our Master Muhammad (Allah bless him and give him peace) the best of all of those who affirm divine oneness, and upon his family, companions and those that follow them on the path of the true religion with goodness till the last day. Acting upon that which is reported from him (Allah bless him and give him peace) that he said:

Every important matter which is not begun with the praise of Allah, and blessings upon me, it is cut off and devoid of all blessings [al-Qadir al-Rahawi in 'al-Arbain'. Al-Haithaimi said its chain was weak, however it is in on virtues (fadail) and the weak is acted upon in it along with its conditions]

Benefit: Imam al-Shafi (Allah have mercy on him) said:

I like it that a person should precede his speech (khutbah) and every matter he seeks with the praise of Allah (the Exalted) glorifying Him (Glorified and Exalted is He) and sending blessings upon the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him and give him peace).

1 Regarding the Attributes of Allah (the Exalted)

(That which is necessary with regards to Him the Exalted — That which is possible with regards to Him the Exalted — That which is impossible with regard to Him the تعالى)

1.1 That which is necessary with regards to Him the Exalted

The author Allah have mercy on Him said:

وَبَعْدُ فَاعْلَمُ بِجُوبِ الْمَعْرِفَةِ مِنْ وَاجِبٍ لِلَّهِ عَشْرِينَ صِفَةً

After, know the necessity of knowing the twenty attributes which are necessary for Allah

فَاللَّهُ مَوْجُودٌ قَدِيمٌ بَاقِيٌ مُخَالَفٌ لِلْخَلْقِ بِالْإِطْلَاقِ

So Allah has existence, without beginning, everlasting, different from the creation absolutely

وَقَانِمٌ غَنِيٌّ وَوَاحِدٌ وَحَيٌّ قَادِرٌ مُرِيدٌ عَالِمٌ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ

Self Subsisting without any need, the One and the Living, Powerful, Willing, Knower of everything

سَمِيعٌ الْبَصِيرُ وَالْمُتَكَلِّمُ لَهُ صِفَاتٌ سَبْعَةٌ تَنْتَظِمُ

All Hearing, All Seeing and Speaking, He has seven attributes which consist

فَقُدْرَةُ إِرَادَةِ سَمْعٍ بَصَرٍ حَيَاةٍ الْعِلْمِ كَلَامٌ إِسْتَمَرُّ

So they are Power, Will, Hearing and Seeing, Life, Knowledge, Speech which is continuous

Commentary: It is compulsory upon every responsible person to know from the attributes of Allah those which are necessary with regards to Him: Which is that whose absence the intellect cannot comprehend.

That which is impossible with regards to Him: Which is whose existence the intellect cannot comprehend.

And the permissible: Which with regards to Him is that which is correct for the intellect to comprehend the existence and absence of.

Likewise it is compulsory for him to know the likes of it with regards to the Messengers (upon them blessings and peace). The author began in these verses by mentioning that which is necessary with regards to Him (تعالى), and they are twenty attributes detailed as follows:

1. Existence: Meaning the establishment (thubut) of a thing. It is certainly necessary for Him (تعالى) due to His essence and not due a cause, meaning that other than Him has not effected/caused His (تعالى) existence.

As for existence which is other than from the essence (ghair dhati) such as our existence, then it is by His (تعالى) action. The evidence for this is the existence of this creation, for if it was not for Him (Glorified and Exalted is He) there would be nothing from the creation (in existence).

He (تعالى) said:

Verily! I am Allah, There is no god except Me, so worship Me [Ta-Ha:14]

And He (تعالى) said:

Do they not think deeply about themselves, Allah has created not the heavens and the earth, and all that is between them, except with truth and for an appointed term. And indeed many of mankind deny the Meeting with their Lord. [al-Rum:8]

The desert Arab was asked regarding the proof, he replied:

The droppings point to the (existence) of the camel and donkey, and the footsteps to the traveller. So the heavens containing stars, and the earth with its mountain passes, and oceans and with its waves, do they not point towards a wise, powerful, all knowing creator?

2. Without Beginning: It is the absence of a beginning to His (تعالى) existence. Meaning that He (تعالى) has no beginning to His existence because He (جل شأنه) is the origin (masdar) of this universe, and creator of all that exists. Therefore He must precede it all, and nothing precedes Him (تعالى). He (تعالى) said:

He is the First and the Last , the Most High and the Most Near. And He is the All-Knower of every thing [al-Hadid:3]

3. Everlasting: It is His (تعالى) existence not coming to an end, meaning that He (تعالى) is continually existent without limit, and everlasting without end. He (تعالى) said:

Everyone in it is annihilating and there only continues the Face of your Lord the Owner of Majesty and Generosity [al-Rahman:26-27]

And He (تعالى) said:

Everything will perish save His Face. His is the Decision, and to Him you (all) shall be returned. [al-Qasas:88]

4. His (تعالى) Non Resemblance to All Events: It is the dissimilarity of any created thing to Him (سبحانه و تعالى), He (تعالى) said:

There is nothing whatever like unto Him, and He is All Hearing and All Seeing. [al-Shura:11]

And He (تعالى) said:

And there is none like unto Him. [al-Ikhlās:4]

5. His (تعالى) Subsisting by Himself: It is the absence of His needing a place in which he resides or location in which he dwells, or someone to bring Him into existence. Rather He is without need of all that is other than Him. He (تعالى) said:

(All) faces shall be humbled before (Him) — the Living, the Self-Subsisting [Ta-Ha:111]

He (تعالى) said:

O mankind! It is you that have need of God: but God is the One Free of all wants, worthy of all praise. [Fatir:15]

He (تعالى) said:

For God is free of all needs from all creation [al-Ankabut:6]

6. Oneness: It is the absence of a multiplicity in His (تعالى) essence (dhat), Attributes (sifat) and Actions (afal).

The meaning of oneness of the essence is: That His essence is not constructed from parts, and that He has no partner in His dominion.

The meaning of oneness in attributes is: That no one has an attribute which resembles any of His attributes.

The meaning of the oneness of actions is: That no one other than Him (تعالى) has any action. For Allah is the creator of everything and originator of everything, and He (تعالى) is independent in creating and originating. He (تعالى) said:

Glory be to Him! He is God, the One, the Irresistible. [al-Zumar:4]

He (تعالى) said:

And your God is One God: There is no god but He, Most Gracious, Most Merciful. [al-Baqarah:163]

He (تعالى) said:

Say: He is God, the One and Only [al-Ikhlās:1]

He (تعالى) said:

If there were, in them both other gods besides God, there would have been confusion in both! [al-Anbiyah:22]

He (تعالى) said:

No son did God beget, nor is there any god along with Him: (if there were many gods), behold, each god would have taken away what he had created, and some would have lorded it over others! Glory to God! (He is free) from the (sort of) things they attribute to Him [al-Muminun:91]

7. Power: It is a beginning less attribute established in His (تعالى) essence by which He brings into existence and non existence.

Indeed God has power over all things. [al-Nur:45]

He (تعالى) said:

Nor is God to be frustrated by anything whatever in the heavens or on earth: for He is All-Knowing. All-Powerful. [Fatir:44]

8. Will: It is a beginning less attribute established in His (تعالى) essence by which He specifies that which is possible with that which is possible for Him. For He (سبحانه و تعالى) can dispose in the universe in accordance to his volition, will and wisdom. So He may make this tall or short, beautiful or ugly, knowledgeable or ignorant in this place or in another. He (تعالى) said:

For to anything which We have willed, We but say the word, "Be", and it is. [al-Nahl:40]

He (تعالى) said:

Your Lord does create and choose as He pleases: no choice have they (in the matter): Glory to God! and far is He above the partners they ascribe (to Him)! [al-Qasas:68]

He (تعالى) said:

Say: "O God! Lord of Power (And Rule), You give power to whom You please, and You strip off power from whom You please: You bestow honour whom you pleases, and you disgrace whom you please: In Your hand is all good. Verily, over all things You have power. [Aal-Imran:26]

He (تعالى) said:

To Allah belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth. He creates what He wills. He bestows (children) male or female according to His Will, Or He bestows both males and females, and He leaves barren whom He will: for He is full of Knowledge and Power. [al-Shura:49-50]

9. Knowledge: It is a beginning less attribute established in His (تعالى) essence by which He knows things. He (تعالى) said:

God has full knowledge of all thing. [al-Mujadilah:7]

He (تعالى) said:

God comprehends, all things in (His) Knowledge. [al-Talaq:12]

He (تعالى) said:

It was We Who created man, and We know what dark suggestions his soul makes to him: for We are nearer to him than (his) jugular vein. [Qaf:16]

10. Life: It is a beginning less attribute of His essence which it is correct to attribute with Power, Will, Knowledge, Hearing, Seeing and Speech. For if He (تعالى) was not living these attributes would not be established for Him. He (تعالى) said:

And put your trust in Him Who lives and dies not [al-Furqan:58]

He (تعالى) said:

He is the Living (One): There is no god but He: Call upon Him, giving Him sincere devotion. [Ghafir:65]

11-12. Hearing and Sight: They are both beginning less attributes established in His (تعالى) essence by which that which exists is revealed. For Allah (تعالى) is All Hearing, and hears everything even the creeping of a black ant over a smooth rock during a dark night. He is All Seeing, viewing everything with a sight which includes all that can be comprehended. He (تعالى) said:

God has indeed heard the statement of the woman who pleads with thee concerning her husband and carries her complaint (in prayer) to God: and God (always) hears the arguments between both sides among you: for God hears and sees (all things) [al-Mujadilah:1]

He (تعالى) said:

Go, both of you, to Fir'aun (Pharaoh), verily, he has transgressed, And speak to him mildly, perhaps he may accept admonition or fear Allah. They said: "Our Lord! Verily! We fear lest he should hasten to punish us or lest he should transgress (all bounds against us).He (Allah) said: "Fear not, verily! I am with you both, hearing and seeing. [Taha:43-46]

13. Speech: It is a beginning less attribute established in His essence, it is neither letter nor sound, indicating to all that is known. He (تعالى) said:

And to Moses God spoke direct [al-Nisa:164]

He (تعالى) said:

When Moses came to the place appointed by Us, and his Lord spoke to him, [al-Araf:143]

He (تعالى) said:

It is not fitting for a man that Allah should speak to him except by inspiration [al-Shura:51]

If Power, Will, Knowledge, Life, Hearing, Sight, Speech are necessary for Him (تعالى), then it is natural that the following attributes also be necessary for Him, and they are:

14. That He is Powerful

15. That He is Willing

16. That He is Knowledgeable

17. That He is Living

18. That He is All Hearing

19. That He is All Seeing

20. That He is Speaking

These twenty attributes are subdivided into four categories:

1. Attributes of Self (Sifah al-Nafsiyyah): Linked/related to the self, meaning the essence. The attribute of the self is that which the essence cannot be rationally conceived of being without, and it is one: Existence.

2. Attributes of Negating (Sifat al-Salbiyyah): Linked/related to [the term] negating, meaning nullifying. They are named negating because they negate from Allah (Exalted) that which does not befit His Majesty. And they are five:

Without beginning, Everlasting, Non resemblance to all events, Self Subsisting, and Oneness.

3. Attributes of Meaning (Sifat al-Maani): They are named as 'Meaning' because they affirm for Allah (Exalted) meanings existing and established in His essence befitting His perfection, and they are seven: Power, Will, Knowledge, Life, Hearing, Seeing, Speech.

4. Attributes Pertaining to Meaning (Sifat al-Manawiyah): Linked/related to the seven (attributes) of meaning of which they are a branch. They are named as 'pertaining to meaning' because they necessarily follow from the meanings. They are that He is: Powerful, Willing, Knowledgeable, Living, All Hearing, All Seeing, Speaking.

The wisdom in mentioning these 'attributes pertaining to meaning' despite their being included in the aforementioned 'attributes of meaning' are the following:

- Mentioning the beliefs in a detailed manner, because the danger of ignorance in it is great.
- A refutation of Mutazilah, as they deny them.

1.2 That Which Is Possible In Regards To Allah (تعالى)

The author said:

وَجَائِزٌ بِفَضْلِهِ وَعَدْلِهِ تَرَكَ لِكُلِّ مُمَكِّنٍ كَفَيْغِهِ

And conceivable with His grace and justice is to leave every possible matter, like doing it

Commentary: That which is possible in regards to Allah (تعالى) is the doing of all that is possible or its being left. Therefore it is compulsory upon every legally responsible person to believe that it is possible for Allah (تعالى) to create and choose from His creation as He wishes. Nothing is compulsory in Him because He is the absolute disposer, and no one has any choice with Him, because in His hands are all matters, the good and the bad. Thus He gives and prevents, honours and debases, benefits and harms, forgives and punishes, rewards and takes to account. He (تعالى) said:

And Your Lord creates whatsoever He wills and chooses, no choice have they (in any matter). [Al-Qasas:68]

And He (تعالى) said:

Say (O Messenger of Allah): "O Allâh! Possessor of the kingdom, You give the Kingdom to whom You will, and You take the Kingdom from whom You will, and You endue with honour whom You will, and You humiliate whom You will. In Your Hand is the good. Verily, You are Able to do All things. You make the night to enter into the day, and You make the Day to enter into the

night, You bring the living out of the dead, and You bring the dead out of the living. and You give wealth and sustenance to whom You will, without limit.”

And He (تعالى) said:

To Allâh belongs All that is In the heavens and All that is on the earth, and whether You disclose what is In Your ownelves or conceal it, Allâh will call You to account for it. Then He forgives whom He wills and punishes whom He wills. and Allâh is Able to do All things. [Al-Baqarah:384]

2 Regarding the Prophets & Messengers, Blessings and Peace Be Upon Them

(What is Necessary in Regards to Them — Possible For Them — Their Protection — Impossible With Regards to Them — Their Number Mentioned In the Qur'an)

2.1 What Is Necessary With Regards to Them (Blessings And Peace Be Upon Them)

The Author, Allah have mercy on him said:

أَرْسَلَ أَنْبِيَاءَ دَوَىٰ فُطَّانَةً بِالصِّدْقِ وَالتَّلْبِيغِ وَالْأَمَانَةِ

He sent messengers possessing intelligence with truthfulness and conveying the message and trustworthiness

Commentary: It is compulsory for every legally responsible person to believe that Allah تعالى has Prophets and Messengers. He تعالى said:

The Messenger believes In what has been sent down to Him from his Lord, and (so do) the believers. each one believes In Allâh, his angels, his Books, and his Messengers. they say, “We make no distinction between one another of his Messengers” – and they say, “We hear, and we obey. (We seek) Your Forgiveness, Our Lord, and to You is the return.” [al-Baqarah:285]

And it is upon him to know that which is necessary with regards to them, that which is impossible and that which is conceivable. There are four attributes which are necessary with regards to them:

1. Intelligence: The proof for this is that if intelligence was negated for them they would be unable to establish a proof against an opponent, and this is impossible because the Quran has shown in numerous places their establishing the proof against an opponent. From it is His تعالى words:

And that was Our proof which we gave Ibrâhim against his people. We raise whom we will In degrees. certainly Your Lord is All-Wise, All-Knowing. [al-Anam:83]

And His تعالى words:

They said: “O Nûh! You have disputed with us and much have You prolonged the dispute with us, now bring upon us what You threaten us with, if You are of the truthful.” [Hud:32]

And His تعالى words:

And debate with them In a Way that is better [al-Nahl:125].

And also because we have been ordered/instructed to follow, and the one being followed is not unintelligent.

2. Truthfulness: The evidence/proof for this is His تعالى words:

Allâh and his Messenger had spoken the truth. [al-Ahzab:22]

And His تعالى words:

And the Messengers spoke truth! [Yasin:52]

And His تعالى words:

And mention In the Book Ismâ'il. Verily! He was true to what He promised, and He was a Messenger, (and) a Prophet [Maryam:54]

And because if lying was possible for them it would necessitate a lie in what He تعالى has informed which is impossible.

3. Conveying: The evidence/proof for this are His تعالى words:

O Messenger! proclaim which has been sent down to You from Your Lord. and if You do not, Then You have not conveyed his Message. [al-Maidah:67]

And His تعالى words:

Messengers as bearers of good news as well as of warning In order that mankind should have no plea against Allâh after the Messengers. [al-Nisa:165]

Giving of glad tidings and warning is not complete except by conveying, for if they did not convey the sacred laws to people they would have been concealing it. This is impossible because it necessitates concealment which is a great deficiency/shortcoming such that anyone who falls short in regards to the sacred law would have an excuse to dispute with Allah تعالى and argue claiming of lack of conveyance, and Allah تعالى has negated this in the previous verse.

4. Trustworthiness: The evidence/proof for this are His تعالى words:

I am to you a trustworthy Messenger [al-Dukhan]

And His تعالى words:

Certainly Allâh likes not the treacherous. [al-Anfal:58]

And because if they were treacherous by committing an unlawful or disliked act that unlawful and disliked act would become obedience with regards to them, because Allah تعالى has ordered us to follow them in their statements, actions and states.