

40 – more errors re: Allah’s Names and Attributes

QUESTION: What are some of the other errors regarding Allah’s Names and Attributes that people have fallen into?

ANSWER: We mentioned two errors last time.

The first error that some Muslims fall into is to reject some of the Names or Attributes that Islam has affirmed – and we mentioned that the reason for doing this was their trying to rationalise what Allah is like using their (very limited) intellects.

The second error was to try to liken Allah to some of the Creation – an example of this would be to say that the Face of Allah (which is an Attribute mentioned in many places in the Quran) is like our Faces.

In this email, we will mention two more common errors that people fall into.

1) To ascribe a name to Allah that He did not name Himself with.

Muslims believe that the Names of Allah cannot be just ‘made up’ by anyone and everyone.

Rather the Names - and indeed all other information about the Creator – can only be taken from one of two sources, either in the Quran or in the authentic statements of Muhammad (peace be upon him), which is also revelation.

We have mentioned this idea before – that information about Allah is *tawqeefiyyah* – which means that it is restricted to what has occurred in the Quran and/or the authentic Sunnah, both of which, Muslims believe, are revealed from Allah. ¹

Muslims do not agree, for example, with the Christian terminology ‘the Father’ which they believe the Christians have invented for Allah –

¹ Refer to *al qawaa'id ul muthlaa* p49 of Shaykh Muhammad ibn Saalih al 'Uthaymeen for more information

Muslims believing that this is a Name which Jesus (peace be upon him) never told his followers to call God.

2) To try to change the meanings of the Names and Attributes according to one's own whims and desires.

This is a topic we shall touch on in a few emails' time, but briefly for now:

The texts of Islam mention a great deal of information about Allah. Muslims believe that this information is to be taken literally unless there is some information in other texts in the revelation (ie from the Quran or authentic hadeeths) to say otherwise.

But the 'default state' is to take the information literally.

So when Allah states that He has a Face or a Hand (as indeed He does in many, many places in the Quran and hadeeths) or any other Name or Attribute, then Muslims take that literally – i.e. He really does have a Face and a Hand, etc.

This may shock some people reading about this for the first time!

But if the reader reflects on the few basic points that we have mentioned in the previous emails, he/she will see immediately why this is not a problem.

Muslims and non Muslims believe that Allah is different from us. His Names and His Attributes are not like ours, even if they share the same wording – Hand, Face, Anger, Mercy, etc.

All people who believe in a single God believe that He is alive. We too are alive.

But is our life like His Life? Of course not – we die, and He does not. We sometimes get hungry or irritable or bored or sleepy - but of course we would not attribute these characteristics to Allaah.

So even in this one attribute of 'Life', we can already see a difference between the Creator and the Created. How then about all the other Names and Attributes?

The Quran mentions:

There is nothing like Him, and He is the All Hearing, the All Seeing.

Surah ash Shura (the 42nd chapter) verse 11

So Muslims take what He has told us, and accept it, and do not try to change the meaning without a proof from somewhere else in the Quran and hadeeths to say we can change it.

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NEXT TIME:

We will return briefly the error of tashbeeh – likening Allah to His Creation. What exactly is this mistake?