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‘The Discretionary Attributes³⁰ are Established with the Self of Allāh as He Wills’—What does this Mean?

This means that Allāh (سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى) becomes angry with someone after He was not angry with him. Or that He becomes pleased with a person after He was not pleased with him. The evidence for this in the Qur’ān is manifest and clear. Regarding the Attribute of Anger, Allāh (تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى) said:

وَمَنْ يَجْلُلْ عَلَيْهِ غَضَبِي فَقَدْ هَوَى ﴿٨١﴾

“And he on whom My Anger descends, he has indeed perished.”³¹

This proves that the Anger of Allāh descends and afflicts. Yet, the *Kullābiyyah* (and those who followed them from the *Ashā’irah* and *Māturīdiyyah*) say, ‘His Anger was always there unchanging (*qadīm*).’ Allāh (تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى) stated:

وَمَنْ يَجْلُلْ عَلَيْهِ غَضَبِي فَقَدْ هَوَى ﴿٨١﴾ وَإِنِّي لَعَفَّارٌ لِّمَنْ تَابَ وَعَآمَنَ وَعَمِلَ

صَلِيحًا ثُمَّ أَهْتَدَى ﴿٨٢﴾

³⁰ Arabic: *Aṣ-Ṣiḡāt Al-Ikhtiyāriyyah* (or *Aṣ-Ṣiḡāt Al-Fi’liyyah*). Attributes that are subject to Allāh’s discretion as stated earlier.

³¹ Sūrah Tāhā: 81.

And he on whom My Anger descends, he has indeed perished. And verily, I am indeed Oft Forgiving to him who repents, believes and does righteous good deeds, and then remains constant upon guidance.³²

This verse proves that Allāh's Anger descended after it was not present upon that individual. These proofs are also reported in the authentic *Sunnah* in numerous narrations that affirm the Discretionary Attributes. These Prophetic narrations affirm that the Discretionary Attributes are established with the Self of Allāh as He Wills and by His Ability. Allāh is described with them whenever He Wills and with whom He Wills. In this regard, Al-Bukhārī and Muslim report from Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī (رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ) that Allāh's Messenger (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَقُولُ لِأَهْلِ الْجَنَّةِ يَا أَهْلَ الْجَنَّةِ. يَقُولُونَ لَئِبْنِكَ رَبَّنَا وَسَعْدَيْكَ. فَيَقُولُ هَلْ رَضِيتُمْ فَيَقُولُونَ وَمَا لَنَا لَا نَرْضَى وَقَدْ أُعْطِينَنَا مَا لَمْ نُعْطِ أَحَدًا مِنْ خَلْقِكَ. فَيَقُولُ أَنَا أُعْطِيكُمْ أَفْضَلَ مِنْ ذَلِكَ. قَالُوا يَا رَبِّ وَأَيُّ شَيْءٍ أَفْضَلُ مِنْ ذَلِكَ فَيَقُولُ أَجَلٌ عَلَيْكُمْ رِضْوَانِي فَلَا أَسْخَطُ عَلَيْكُمْ بَعْدَهُ أَبَدًا

Allāh will say to the people of Paradise, **'O people of Paradise.'** They will respond, **'Here we are at your service O Lord!'** He will ask them, **'Are you pleased?'** They will reply, **'Why should we not be pleased! You have given us that which you have not given to anyone of your creation.'** He will say, **'I will give you even better than that.'** They will ask, **'O Lord, what can be better than this?'** He will reply, **'I will bestow my Pleasure upon you, and I will never be angry with you after that.'**³³

³² Sūrah Tāhā: 81-82.

³³ Al-Bukhārī no. 6549 and Muslim no. 2829.

The point of evidence in this narration is Allāh’s saying, **‘I will bestow my Pleasure upon you,’** i.e., that His Pleasure is bestowed upon them at that moment. Then He (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) said, **‘and I will never be angry with you after that.’** This proves that Allāh’s Anger and Pleasure takes place at certain times and not at other times.³⁴

Likewise, there is the *ḥadīth* of the intercession on the Day of Resurrection reported by *Imām* Muslim and others from Abu Hurayrah (رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ):

رَبِّي غَضِبَ الْيَوْمَ غَضَبًا لَمْ يَغْضَبْ قَبْلَهُ مِثْلَهُ وَلَا يَغْضَبُ بَعْدَهُ مِثْلَهُ

Today my Lord has become so angry as He had never been before, and He will never be after it.³⁵

This proves that Allāh’s Anger which will occur on the Day of Resurrection has no precedence before it. So, this is an Attribute that

³⁴ Ibn Al-Qayyim (رَحِمَهُ اللَّهُ) stated in some lines of poetry:

“Do you not know that He, the Most Perfect, will truly speak to His party who are in Paradise,

He, the Owner of Majesty, will say, ‘Are you pleased?’ They will say, ‘We are indeed pleased.’

‘How can we not be pleased when you have granted us that which you granted not to any person.’

‘Is there anything besides this that is better than it we can ask from the Bestower of Bounties.’

So, He will say, ‘Better than it is My Pleasure, so no anger will envelope you from the Most Merciful.’”

See *An-Nūniyyah bi Sharh Ibn ‘Isā*, 2/581.

³⁵ Al-Bukhārī nos. 3340, 4712 and Muslim no. 194.

Allāh has affirmed for Himself at a time He has Willed. These principles regarding the Discretionary Attributes of Allāh are clear and apparent in the Revealed Texts, and all praise is for Allāh.

So, after this clarification, we come to understand that *Ahlus-Sunnah wal-Jamā‘ah* firmly believe in affirming for Allāh whatever He has ascribed to Himself of Attributes whether they are unceasing, continual Attributes (*Aṣ-Ṣifāt Az-Zātiyyah*) or Discretionary Attributes connected to His Will (*Aṣ-Ṣifāt Al-Fi‘liyyah*), and we affirm them upon their apparent meanings without likening them to the created beings, and without *ta’wīl*.

Furthermore, Ibn Kullāb was not upon the *‘Aqīdah* of *Imām Ahmad Ibn Hanbal* (رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ) nor upon the creed of the *Imāms* of early *Salaf*—and the scholars would refute his interpretations of the Attributes (*ta’wīl*).

One of the *Salaf*, *Ibrahim Ibn Ahmad Ibn Shāqalā Al-Hanbalī* (d. 369 AH) was talking to a person who was upon the doctrine of *Ibn Kullāb*, called *Abu Sulaimān Ad-Dimashqī*. So, *Ibn Shāqalā* narrated to *Abu Sulaimān* the report of *Anas ibn Mālik* (رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ) wherein the Messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said, “Indeed the hearts of mankind are between the two Fingers of Allah, and He turns them as He Wills.”

So, *Abu Sulaimān* said: “**These (i.e., the two Fingers) are His two Bounties.**” *Ibn Shāqalā* responded, “**And does the narration state that the two Fingers are two Bounties?!**” He rebuked this false interpretation, and said, “**The two Hands are Attributes of Allah’s Self. And no one preceded you in this false interpretation except ‘Abdullāh Ibn Kullāb Al-Qattān whose beliefs you have**

embraced. And there no consideration to be given to the interpretation you mention that the hearts of the servants are between the two Bounties from the Bounties of Allah!”

He continued, “Your belief is that the Speech of Allāh contains no command or prohibition, no ambiguous verses, no abrogating verses and no abrogated verses. You believe that His speech cannot be heard because according to you, Allāh does not Speak with a Voice and Mūsā (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ) did not hear the Speech of Allāh with his own hearing. You believe that Allāh created inside Mūsā (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ) an understanding with which he understood!” So, when Abu Sulaimān saw what Ibn Kullāb was upon of repulsive and ugly beliefs, he said, “I hope by opposing Ibn Kullāb Al-Qattān in this issue I will have rejected his *madhhab* [totally].”³⁶

And Ibn Taymiyyah (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ) stated, “Al-Hārith Al-Muhāsibī ascribed himself to the saying of Ibn Kullāb and for this reason, Ahmad Ibn Hanbal ordered that Al-Muhāsabī should be boycotted—and Ahmad would warn against Ibn Kullāb and his followers.”³⁷

³⁶ See *Tabaqāt Al-Hanābilah* 2/133-135.

³⁷ *Dar‘u Ta‘ārad al-‘Aql wa-Naql*, 2/6.