

The Principles of the *Jahmiyyah* and *Mu‘tazilah* Which Led to the Deviations of the *Kullābiyyah*, *Ashā‘irah* and *Māturīdiyyah*⁷⁰—The Story of Jahm Ibn Safwān (ex. 128 AH)

The *Jahmiyyah* and *Mu‘tazilah* hold that the Attributes of Allāh are all created and detached from Him—and this is a futile saying in opposition to the Qur’ān and Sunnah and because it entails negation of the Attributes which Allāh has affirmed for Himself. The *Jahmiyyah* negated the Attributes based upon principles that they innovated which entailed misinterpretation, distortion, and outright rejection of the textual proofs. So, they claimed that Allāh is devoid of all Attributes except that He exists (*Al-Wujūd*). This is the belief of the *Jahmiyyah*.⁷¹

⁷⁰ Refer to *Al-Lāli’u al-Bahīyyah fī Sharh al-‘Aqīdat al-Wāsiṭiyyah* of Shaykh Ṣāliḥ Ibn ‘Abdil-‘Azīz Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Ibrāhīm Ālush-Shaykh pp. 332-349. Much of this chapter is extracted from that excellent work.

⁷¹ The *Jahmiyyah* was a sect named after its founder, Abu Mahriz Al-Jahm Ibn Ṣafwān Ar-Rāsibī Al-Samarqandī (d. 128 AH) the freed slave of Banū Rāsib. He was well-known for debating, argumentation and delving deeply into Speculative Theology (*Al-Kalām*). He is the founder of the sect of misguidance that was ascribed to him (i.e., *Al-Jahmiyyah*). He is chief negator of Allāh’s Attributes and Chosen Actions—he rejected His Names and Attributes claiming that he was freeing Allāh from imperfections: he stated that the Qur’ān was created, he asserted that Allāh is not over the Throne and above His creation but that He (سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى) is in every place; Jahm was a *Jabarī*

The *Jahmiyyah* said: 'If we affirm Attributes for Allāh, it necessitates the *occurrence of events*⁷² in the One being described. And if events occur in the One being described with them, then that necessitates Him being a *jism* (body)—and bodies are originated.' This, however, is a futile statement. They introduced their ideology with this futile premise and from it, they derived false conclusions—then they distorted the Revealed Texts in order to justify their innovated creed.

who believed that people are compelled with actions having no freewill, he would say that *Īmān* (Faith) was mere affirmation of Allāh's existence in the heart even if one speaks with unbelief, and he believed that Paradise and Hell would come to an end. His innovation first appeared in Tirmidh, and he was known for his intelligence and ability to debate and argue. However, the first to speak with the divesting of Allah's Attributes even before Jahm was Ja'd Ibn Dirham (executed in 124 AH), and the scholars and rulers were quick to quell his evil. His foremost student was Jahm Ibn Safwān who adopted this ideology (when they met in Kūfah) and made it widespread. He escaped the authorities and travelled from place to place, and town to town spreading his beliefs. In the end, he was captured and executed (in 128 AH). It is because of his efforts in spreading this false creed that the sect is known as *Al-Jahmiyyah* and not *Al-Ja'diyyah*. The term *Jahmiyyah* is applied [in general terms] to every sect that negates or distorts Allāh's Attributes and Chosen Actions [seeking to invalidate them]—and any person who negates His Attributes, even to a small degree, it is said about him, 'He has with him: *At-Tajahhum*.' See *Al-Wāfi bil-Wafayāt* 11/208, *Al-Kamil* of Ibn Al-Athīr 5/342, *Mizān Al-I'tidāl* 1/426, *Lisān Al-Mizān* 2/142, *An-Nubalā'* 2/26, *Al-Farq bayal-Firaq* pp. 199-200, *Maqālāt Al-Islāmiyyīn* pp. 279-280; also read Hamad At-Tuwaijirī's notes on *Al-Hamawiyyah* p. 244.

⁷² Arabic: *Ḥulūl al-A'rād*.

It is this foundation of the *Jahmiyyah* that was adopted by the *Mu'tazilah*, *Kullābiyyah*, *Ash'ariyyah* and the *Māturīdiyyah* (throughout the first four centuries) and was the cause of their deviation and further division of the *Ummah*—and it misled every other sect that deviated in the arena of the Names and Attributes of Allāh (سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى). Scholars have called this principle *Ḥulūl al-A'rād* which is **the occurrence of incidents and the presence of traits**. By comprehending this principle, we will be able to better understand why the *Jahmiyyah*, *Mu'tazilah*, *Kullābiyyah*, *Ash'ariyyah* and *Māturīdiyyah* negated the Attributes of Allāh, and sought to nullify them or change their meanings with the use of metaphors. So, the *Jahmiyyah* rejected the Attributes of Allāh due to this principle which states that the existence of Allāh cannot be affirmed except by the utilisation of the *proof of the origination of incidents or traits*.⁷³

Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ d. 241 AH) narrated what transpired between Jahm Ibn Safwān and the *Sumaniyyah*⁷⁴ philosophers of India that led him to found his heretical beliefs:

فكان مما بلغنا من أمر الجهم عدو الله، أنه كان من أهل خراسان. من أهل ترمذ، وكان صاحب خصومات وكلام. وكان أكثر كلامه في الله

⁷³ Known as the proof of *Ḥudūth al-A'rād*.

⁷⁴ *As-Sumaniyyah*: a sect that arose from a village in India (called Sumanāt) and spread westward. They believed in reincarnation of the souls into different bodily forms (and creatures), they worshipped idols and claimed that the universe was eternal. According to them affairs are only known and perceived through the five senses. They rejected examination and inference; most of them denied the Hereafter and the resurrection after death. See *al-Farq Baynal-Firaq* p. 253, *Lisan al-ʿArab* 13/220, *Mukhtār aṣ-Ṣiḥāḥ* p. 132, *al-Miṣbāḥ al-Munir* 1/290, *al-Taʿārif* of al-Manāwī p. 415. See Sālih Ālush-Shaikh's explanation of *Al-Wāsiṭiyyah*, p. 338.

تعالى. فلقني أناساً من المشركين يقال لهم السمينة فعرفوا الجهم فقالوا له نكلمك فإن ظهرت حجتنا عليك دخلت في ديننا وإن ظهرت حجتك علينا دخلنا في دينك — فكان مما كلموا به الجهم أن قالوا له: ألسنت تزعم أن لك إلهاً؟ قال الجهم: نعم. فقالوا له: فهل رأيت إلهك؟ قال: لا. قالوا: فهل سمعت كلامه؟ قال: لا. قالوا: فشممت له رائحة؟ قال: لا. قالوا: فوجدت له حساً؟ قال: لا. قالوا: فوجدت له مجسأً؟ قال: لا. قالوا: فما يدريك أنه إله؟ قال: فتحير الجهم فلم يدر من يعبد أربعين يوماً

From that which has reached us concerning Jahm, the enemy of Allāh, is that he was from the people of Khurasān, and Tirmidh. He was a person of argumentation and Speculative Theology (*Kalām*), and most of his speculative speech was concerning Allāh. He met a group of polytheists (*mushrikīn*) called the *Su-maniyyah*. After they became acquainted with Jahm, they said to him, ‘We will debate with you—and if our evidence overpowers you, then you will join our religion but if your evidence overpowers us, we will join your religion.’⁷⁵

⁷⁵ Ma‘an Ibn ‘Isā said: “One day Mālik Ibn Anas (رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ d. 179 AH) left the mosque and he was supporting himself on my hand when a man called Abul-Jīriyyah approached him—and he was accused of holding the beliefs of the *Murji’ah*. He said, ‘O Abu ‘Abdullāh (addressing *Imām* Mālik by his *kunya*), listen to me, I have something to speak to you about—I want to debate with you and inform you of my views.’ So Mālik said, ‘**And what if you overpower me in the debate?**’ He replied, ‘**If I overpower you, then you will follow my views.**’ Mālik said, ‘**What if another man comes along, argues with us, and overpowers us?**’ He replied, ‘**Then we will follow him.**’ Mālik (رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ) said to him, ‘O servant of Allāh! Allāh sent Muhammad

So, among the discussions they had with Jahm was that they said to him, ‘Do you not claim that you have a god (*ilāh*)?’ He replied, ‘Yes.’

They asked, ‘Have seen your god?’ He replied, ‘No.’

They asked, ‘Have you heard his speech?’ He replied, ‘No.’

They asked, ‘Have you smelled his fragrance?’ He replied, ‘No.’

They asked, ‘Have you been able to perceive him with your senses?’ He replied, ‘No.’

They asked, ‘Have you been able to feel him with your touch?’ He replied, ‘No.’

They said, ‘Then how do you know that he is a god?’

So, Jahm was left confused and speechless, and for forty days he did not know what he was worshipping.⁷⁶

Imām Al-Bukhārī (رحمة الله) d. 256 AH) said:⁷⁷

Ḍamrah narrated from Ibn Shawdhab that he said, ‘Jahm abandoned the Prayer for forty days due to doubts. He debated some of the *Sumaniyyah*, fell into doubts and stopped praying for forty days.’

Then Jahm returned with some proofs to counter the *Sumaniyyah*. Imām Ahmad (رحمة الله) explained:

(صلى الله عليه وسلم) **with only one religion—and I see you switching from religion to religion.** ‘Umar Ibn ‘Abdul-‘Azīz (رحمة الله) d. 101 AH) said, ‘**Whoever makes his religion the object of disputation will be changing it often.**’” (See Ibn Baṭṭah nos. 562, 541)

⁷⁶ *Ar-Radd ‘alal-Jahmiyyah waz-Zanādiqah* of Imām Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, pp. 196-198 (Kuwait 2005 CE/1426 AH).

⁷⁷ *Khalq Af‘āl al-‘Ibād* of Al-Bukhārī, p. 31.

He invented a proof like that employed by the heretics among the Christians who claimed that the spirit inside Jesus the son of Mary (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ) is the spirit (*rūh*) of Allāh from the Essence of Allāh. So, whenever Allāh wants to bring something into existence, He enters into some of His creation, and speaks with their tongue—and He commands with whatever He wills and prohibits from whatever He wills. It is a spirit invisible to the eyes.

So, Jahm devised proofs similar to these proofs.

He said to a *Sumanite* philosopher, ‘Do you not have a soul inside you?’ He replied, ‘Yes.’

Jahm said, ‘Have you seen your soul?’ He replied, ‘No.’

Jahm asked, ‘Have you heard it speak?’ He replied, ‘No.’

Jahm asked, ‘Have you perceived it with your senses or been able to touch it?’ He replied, ‘No.’

Upon that Jahm said: **‘This is the case also with Allāh—He has no face that can be seen, no voice that can be heard, no scent that can be smelled, He is invisible to the sights, and He is not in any one place to the exclusion of another.’**⁷⁸

Shaikh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ) said:

Imām Ahmad (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ) stated that Jahm relied on three verses from the Qur’ān⁷⁹ that are ambiguous to the one who does not understand their meanings: (1) The *Āyah* negating the visions

⁷⁸ *Ar-Radd ‘alal-Jahmiyyah waz-Zanādiqah* of *Imām* Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, pp. 198-199.

⁷⁹ See *Ar-Radd ‘alal-Jahmiyyah*, pp. 205-206 where *Imām* Ahmad mentions the verses used by Jahm to support his argument.

from grasping Allāh⁸⁰ which he used as a proof to negate the seeing of Allāh in the Hereafter (*Ar-Ru'yah*) and Him being distinct from the creation; (2) the *Āyah* negating likeness to Allāh⁸¹ which he used to accuse those who affirmed Allāh's Attributes of being *Mushabbihah*⁸²; (3) and the saying of Allāh:

وَهُوَ اللَّهُ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَفِي الْأَرْضِ ط

‘And He is Allāh, [the only deity] in the heavens and the earth.’⁸³ And using this he negated the Highness (*Al-‘Uluww*) of Allāh over the Throne—and he used it to claim that Allāh is indwelling in the creation, and is at one with it, and that He is not distinct and separate from it.

And these are the principles of the *Jahmiyyah* from among the *Mu‘tazilah*: the followers of ‘Amr Ibn ‘Ubayd, and whoever entered *At-Tajahhum*,⁸⁴ or *Al-‘Itizāl*,⁸⁵ or some of its offshoots from the later followers of Abu Hanīfah, Mālik, Ash-Shāfi‘ī and Ahmad (رَحِمَهُمُ اللَّهُ), while these [four] *Imāms* themselves were the furthest of people from the principles of *Jahmiyyah* and *Mu‘tazilah*.⁸⁶

⁸⁰ Al-An‘ām: 103...

لَا تُدْرِكُهُ الْأَبْصَارُ وَهُوَ يُدْرِكُ الْأَبْصَارَ

‘No vision can grasp Him, but He grasps all vision.’

⁸¹ Ash-Shūrā: 11...

لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ

‘There is nothing like unto Him.’

⁸² People who resemble Allāh to the created beings.

⁸³ Al-An‘ām: 3.

⁸⁴ i.e., into the beliefs of the *Jahmiyyah*.

⁸⁵ i.e., into the beliefs of the *Mu‘tazilah*.

⁸⁶ *Dar’u At-Ta‘arūḍ* 5/175, *Al-Fatāwā* 7/383.

Imām Ahmad (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ) further stated about Jahm:

He built the foundation of all his speech upon these verses. He interpreted the Qur’ān upon other than its true interpretation—and he rejected the *Ahādīth* (narrations) of Allāh’s Messenger (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) and claimed that whoever described Allāh with anything from that which He (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) described Himself with in His Book, or what His Messenger said regarding Him is an Unbeliever and from the *Mushabbihah*⁸⁷.

So, after he had formulated his ideas, he continued debating the *Sumaniyyah* and they said to him, **‘Prove to us that these things [around us] are created and that they have a creator?’**⁸⁸ So, he thought about this over a period of time. He knew that they did not believe in the Qur’ān, so he felt compelled to establish an intellectual proof to answer their question. So, what was this intellectual proof of Jahm? He said, ‘We have *incidents* or *traits* (*A‘rāḍ*) that cannot exist by themselves, meaning, we are not able see them because they are not tangible forms or bodies in themselves.’

So, what are these *incidents* or *traits*? He explained, **‘Such as colour, hotness, coolness, and movement. These *incidents* and *traits* do not have a tangible form or body. So, movement as a *trait* has no form, it cannot be seen. Walking as an *incident* has no physical form, it cannot be seen. Likewise, the ascendance of a thing, its highness and its descent cannot be seen—these are incidents. There is no object that is called *highness* that that can be seen as**

⁸⁷ This is a theme that runs through all the Sects of Negation (*Al-Mu‘aṭṭilah*): they accuse *Ahlu-Sunnah wal-Jamā‘ah* (the People of *Hadīth*) who cling to the Path of the *Salaf*, those who affirm Allāh’s Attributes, of being *Mushabbihah*, just as Jahm did right in the beginning of his movement.

⁸⁸ The *Sumaniyyah* believed that the universe was eternal.

a body because *highness* is a *trait*—and there is no object that is called *walking* that can be seen on its own, unlike a building or a mountain. A building and a mountain are physical objects that can be seen.’

So, these *traits, properties, occurrences, and incidents*, Jahm called *Al-Aʿrāḍ* when he was addressing the *Sumaniyyah*. He explained to them that these *Aʿrāḍ* cannot exist by themselves. The *Sumaniyyah* whom he was debating replied, **‘That is true.’**

He said to them, ‘Therefore, if some incident does take place in a thing, then that thing must be in need of other than itself—and there is not a body (*jism*) except that it has in it these incidents and traits (*Al-Aʿrāḍ*). So, a *body* cannot exist except with *Aʿrāḍ*. There is no *body* without the traits (*Aʿrāḍ*) of heat and cold.’

He further said, ‘The occurrence of these incidents and traits in a body means that the body is in need of them. And so long as a body is in need, it cannot independently originate itself. That is because it needs these traits for certain aspects of its own existence. So, therefore, it will need something else to bring it into existence.’ Meaning, if bodies were able to bring themselves into existence, then they would not be in need of these *Aʿrāḍ* (incidents and traits).

The existence of these bodies, and the fact that they did not come into existence by themselves could be proven, according to Jahm, through the principle of *incidental attributes in bodies*.⁸⁹ And *incidental attributes* cannot exist by themselves, likewise *bodies* cannot exist by themselves. Therefore, he concluded, a body is in need of

⁸⁹ i.e., *Hulūl al-Aʿrāḍ fīl-Ajsām*.

other than itself for its existence, so it is necessary that someone must have brought each body (or thing) into existence.⁹⁰

The *Sumaniyyah* said, ‘Yes, this is correct.’ He had proven to them that bodies must have someone that brought them into existence. He said, ‘And the One who brought everything into existence is Allāh, the Most High. He is *Ar-Rabb* (the Lord عَزَّوَجَلَّ). He is the Creator (*Al-Khāliq*) who brought these things into existence from nothing.’ So, they conceded to him that Allāh indeed exists.

Then the *Sumaniyyah* said to Jahm, ‘Describe to us this Lord.’ When he proceeded to describe Him, he looked at the Attributes of Allāh that are in mentioned in the Qur’ān. So, when, each time he wanted to ascribe an Attribute to Allāh, he found that it contradicted the proof that he had used against the *Sumaniyyah*, and he could not

⁹⁰ In other words, the affirmation of bodies (*ajsām*) in the Universe, and that it is not possible for them to come into existence by themselves was proven by the route of the evidence of *Ḥulūl al-A’rāḍ* in bodies, i.e., that incidental attributes and traits cannot exist by themselves, rather they exist in *ajsām* (bodies)—and the body in turn is itself a thing which requires *incidental traits and attributes* (*a’rāḍ*) to exist. So, this means that both *a’rāḍ* and *ajsām* are reliant upon each other—one does not exist without the other—thereby proving, in their view, that all things that are described with *a’rāḍ* must be *ajsām*. And the *ajsām* are reliant and non-independent, and therefore they must have a creator. This was the ‘intellectual argument’ of the *Jahmiyyah* that misguided those who followed them from the *Mu’tazilah*, *Kullābiyyah*, *Ash’ariyyah*, and *Māturīdiyyah*, collectively known as the *Mutakallimūn* or *Ahlul-Kalām* (People of Speculative Theology). They applied this innovated principle to Allāh leading them to negate [or interpret with metaphors] His Attributes and Chosen Actions reported in the Book and Sunnah, claiming that the human intellect cannot accept affirmation of the Allāh’s Attributes and Chosen Actions upon their apparent words and meanings. See Chapter 6 and the statement of Ibn Taymiyyah in this matter.

find any other proof for the existence of Allāh. If he affirmed that Allāh is to be described with His Attributes of the Self (*Az-Zātiyyah*) such as His Hands and Face, they would say, **‘These attributes cannot exist by themselves because for whomever they are affirmed, then He must be a body just like the other bodies that are in need of other than themselves.’** And even more so, they would apply this principle to Allāh’s Attributes of Anger, Pleasure, Highness and so on—all built on this futile and concocted principle of Jahm Ibn Safwān.⁹¹

So, in the view of Jahm, to affirm these Attributes that are mentioned in the Qur’ān and Sunnah would necessitate that that he had affirmed for Allāh the *occurrence of incidents and the presence of traits* which he reckoned can only occur in *bodies*, and in-turn, *bodies* must have someone (or something) that brings them into existence—and this cannot be ascribed to Allāh, that something else brought Him into existence.

This principle which was founded by Jahm ibn Ṣafwān misguided much of the *ummah* because every innovator who came after him (in this arena) stated, “There is not to be found any evidence that can prove the existence of Allāh to the non-Muslim who does not believe in the Qur’ān, the Sunnah or in the Messengership except through this evidence which is known as ‘the proof of the occurrence of incidents (and the presence of traits) in bodies.’”⁹²

⁹¹ Read the details of the debate between Jahm ibn Ṣafwān and the *Sumaniyyah* in *Ar-Radd ‘alaz-Zanādiqah wal-Jahmiyyah* of Ahmad ibn Hanbal, p. 19; *Sharh at-Ṭahāwiyyah* of Ibn Abil-‘Izz al-Ḥanafī p. 591; *Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā* 4/218; *Ijtimā‘ al-Juyūsh al-Islāmiyyah* p. 129; and *Bayān Talbīs al-Jahmiyyah* 1/319.

⁹² Known as the *Dalīl Ḥulūl al-A‘rād fil-Ajsām*.

Shaikh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah explained the reason for the deployment of this innovated and foreign methodology by the sects of Speculative Theology (*Ahlul-Kalām*). He (رحمته الله) said:

They claimed, ‘Allāh’s existence cannot be known except through examination and inference that leads to the affirmation of the Maker (Aṣ-Ṣāni‘).’ They continued, ‘**And there is no route to know that except through affirming the origination of the Universe.**’ They went on, ‘**And there is no route to know that except through the affirming the origination of bodies⁹³.**’ Then they said, ‘**And there is no way to prove that except through the evidence of *Al-A‘rāḍ* (incidental attributes), or at least some *A‘rāḍ* such as movement and stillness or coming together and drifting apart, and these are states of being. So, a *jism* is not free of these *A‘rāḍ*, and they themselves are originated—and whatever is not free of originated events is itself originated (i.e., a creation).**’

They went on to assert, ‘So this principle encompasses four stages: (1) Affirmation of the *A‘rāḍ* (incidental attributes and traits), (2) then affirming that were originated (created), (3) then to affirm the requirement of the body for these *A‘rāḍ*, or [to affirm] that it is not free of them, (4) then the invalidation of events that have no origin to them, thereby necessitating that bodies are originated events.

So, with this, one is compelled (intellectually) to affirm the origination of the universe itself because it consists of bodies, incidental attributes, and occurrences—so, therefore, one is compelled to affirm the Maker (Aṣ-Ṣāni‘) because everything that is originated must have an originator.’

⁹³ *Hudūth al-Ajsām*.

This path is the foundation of Speculative Theology (*Kalām*) that was famously rebuked and refuted by the Salaf and its scholars. And it was due to this foundational principle that they⁹⁴ claimed that the Qur’ān is created, Allāh will not be seen in the Hereafter, that He is not above the Throne and their general rejection of the Attributes of Allāh.⁹⁵

Therefore, according to the *Jahmiyyah* and their offshoots, anything in the Revealed Texts that contradicted this ‘proof’ had to be invalidated or interpreted in a manner that would invalidate it. So, Jahm Ibn Ṣafwān was the first to speak with this principle in Islam and he said, ‘Allāh has no attributes except one, and that is His Unrestricted Existence (*Al-Wujūd Al-Muṭlaq*) because so long as He creates, He must exist.’

So, what did Jahm say about the Attributes of Allāh that are mentioned in the Book and Sunnah? His belief was that they are all created and detached⁹⁶ from Allāh. So, the name of Allāh, the All-Hearing (*Al-Samīr*) means the things that are heard, and His name, the All-Seeing (*Al-Baṣīr*) means the things that are seen. He applied this rule to every Attribute of Allāh whether *Zātiyyah*, *Fi’liyyah* or *Ikhtiyāriyyah*. He interpreted them all to be created and detached.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ The *Mutakallimūn* from the *Jahmiyyah*, the *Mu’tazilah*, their offshoots from the *Kullābiyyah*, *Ash‘ariyyah* and others.

⁹⁵ See *Ar-Risālah aṣ-Ṣafidiyyah* of Ibn Taymiyyah, p. 275-276 (Published by *Dau’ as-Salaf* and *Dār Ibn Hazm*).

⁹⁶ i.e., *Munfaṣilah*.

⁹⁷ See *Al-Lāli’u al-Bahiyyah fī Sharh al-‘Aqīdat al-Wāsiṭiyyah* of Ṣāliḥ Ālush-Shaikh, p. 341.