

The Creed of Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī on al-'Uluww

Abu Bakr al-Bāqillānī also affirms al-'Uluww for Allāh, the Exalted, upon the way of his predecessors from the Kullābiyyah. This affirmation also comprises a rebuttal of the Karrāmiyyah Mujassimah with the negation of the meanings of body (*jism*), touch, contact (*mumāssah*, *mulāsaqah*) and what is similar to that, alongside Allāh Himself being above His Throne. The early Kullābī Ash'arites did not see any inconsistency in affirming Allāh to be above His Throne without that necessitating that He is a body (*jism*). They negated the qualities of bodies from Allāh, alongside affirming that He Himself, with His Essence, is above His Throne.

There are a number of manuscripts of at-Tamhīd and Imām Al-Dhahabī, Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn al-Qayyim cite other sections pertaining to al-'Uluww and al-Istiwwā from at-Tamhīd that are also present in Richard J. McArthur's printing of at-Tamhīd⁸⁰⁸ in 1957. McArthur had access to manuscripts that other verifiers did not have, and thus a published edition of at-Tamhīd prior to this was missing several large passages, despite the claim of its two verifiers and publishers that their (Parisian) manuscript was complete.

The Muhaddith and Shaykh Muhammad bin 'Abdur-Razzāq Hamzah, former teacher at al-Masjid al-Harām and the director of Dār al-Hadīth, Makkah, wrote a tract, *al-Imām al-Bāqillānī wa Kitābihī at-Tamhīd* (Imām al-Bāqillānī and His Book at-Tamhīd)⁸⁰⁹, in which he pointed out the crime of Muhammad Zāhid al-Kawtharī against Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn al-Qayyim, accusing them of forging the passage against al-Bāqillānī, based upon the Cairo print of at-Tamhīd which was verified and published by two followers of al-Kawtharī, Mahmūd al-Khudayrī and Muhammad 'Abd al-Hādī Abu Raidah.

Hamzah writes in this tract (p. 117 onwards):

The Imām Abu Bakr bin at-Tayyib al-Bāqillānī has a well-known position amongst the Scholars of Kalām, especially amongst his

⁸⁰⁸ Al-Bāqillānī, Kitāb at-Tamhīd, edited by R.J. McArthur, al-Hikmah University of Bagdhād, (Librairie Orientale, Beirut, 1957).

⁸⁰⁹ This was published in a compilation containing other works from Shaykh Muhammad Bahjat al-Baytār and Shaykh Yahyā al-Mu'allimī in refutation of the crimes of al-Kawtharī against 'ilm al-Hadīth, and the reporters of hadīth.

jamā'ah (group) of the Ash'arites who became famous for their disputation with the Mu'tazilah and others whom they considered opponents to the Sunnah.

And his book at-Tamhīd has its value to the one who knows the status of al-Bāqillānī and his praiseworthy effort in aiding the Sunnah... And Allāh has preserved ... for us a number of manuscripts of this book which vary with each other in the way the contents and preservation of its original (form) has been maintained. From them are:

1. The manuscript of the Ayā Sūfiyā Library under no. 2201, it has been mentioned by al-Ustādh Ritter. He mentioned that the date of its writing returns to 478H.
2. The manuscript of the Library of Mustafā 'Ātif, no. 2223 and the Department of Culture of the Arabic University in Cairo has taken a photocopy of it, and they made me a copy of it for me in so that I can compare it with the third manuscript, which follows. It has 247 pages, and the date of its writing is 555H.
3. The Paris manuscript, and its date of writing, according to what is most correct, is 472H due to an expression that occurs at the end of the manuscript after the sentence "End of the book." However, there occurs after it what indicates that this particular script copy occurred after 900H, so Allāh knows best. It has around 90 pages. And it is strange that its publishers did not mention this expression that indicates the date of it being written (copied).⁸¹⁰

And after comparing the manuscript of Mustafā 'Ātif with the Paris manuscript, we found there to be a deficiency in the Paris manuscript compared to the manuscript of the 'Ātif Library reaching around 72 pages, that would be equivalent to 30 pages in the Parisian manuscript. And the place where the deficiency takes place is between page 60 and 61 [in the Parisian manuscript], and the place [of this deficiency] in the printed edition is from line 14 on page 160, before Chapter 61 (Chapter: The Saying Regarding the Meaning of al-Jabr). Thus, the 'Ātifiyyan manuscript has revealed the aberration in the Parisian manuscript from page 60 onwards,

⁸¹⁰ He is referring to al-Khudayrī and Abū Raydah, the Cairo print, which was used by al-Kawtharī to attack Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn al-Qayyim, and these two authors likewise made insinuations against them both.

just as it witnesses (to the fact) that twenty-five chapters are missing from its [content] which its contents listing has affirmed.

Shaykh Hamzah then proceeds to give details of all of the omitted sections, giving their chapter titles, before reaching the section on al-'Uluww and al-Istiawā.

It should also be pointed out that in a 1997 edition of at-Tamhīd, (tahqīq, 'Imād ad-Dīn Ahmad Haydar, 1st edition, 1997), pp. 300-301, Haydar deliberately omitted the full chapter regarding al-'Uluww and al-Istiawā in which al-Bāqillānī refutes the arguments of the Jahmiyyah and Mu'tazilah and sufficed with just a few sentences from the entire passage. We can now present the full section from at-Tamhīd on this subject, which indicates that al-Bāqillānī did not depart from his Kullābī predecessors.

Al-Bāqillānī wrote:

It is said (in reply): "Refuge is with Allāh, rather He is ascended (mustawinn) above His Throne, just as He informed [us] in His Book, saying, **"The Most-Merciful ascended (istawā) above the Throne"** (20:5), and He said, **"To Him ascends the goodly word and the righteous action, He raises it"** 35:10), and He said, **"Do you feel secure that He who is above the heaven"** (67:16) And if He was in every place, then He would have been in a man's stomach, his mouth, and in the [public] toilets, and in places not desirable to be mentioned, lofty and Exalted is He of that. And it would be necessitated that He increases with the increase of spaces (places) when He creates of them those that did not previously exist, and that He diminishes when they (the spaces) diminish, whenever whatever from them existed [subsequently] perishes. And it would be correct that [people] turn to Him, seeking Him towards the earth, and to behind of us, and to our right and our left. And the Muslims are agreed upon what opposes this and [agreed] upon declaring the one who says this to be erroneous.

And if he says: Has not Allāh, the Mighty and Majestic, said, **" It is He (Allāh) Who is the only deity (deserving of worship) in the heaven and the only deity (deserving of worship) on the earth."** (43:84), so He informed that He is the deity in the heaven and in the Earth, and He said, **"Indeed Allāh is with those who have taqwā (piety) and those who do good"** (16:128), and He said, **"I am with you both, I hear and I see"** (20:46), and He said, **"There is no secret counsel of three, but He is their fourth, nor of five but He is their sixth, not of less than that or more, but He is with them"** (58:7) and

what is equivalent to these verses, so what has made you reject that He is in every place.

It is said to them: The Exalted's saying, "**It is He (Allāh) Who is the only deity (deserving of worship) in the heaven and the only deity (deserving of worship) on the earth.**" (43:84), what is meant by it is that He is a deity to the inhabitants of the Earth and He is a deity to the inhabitants of the heaven, just as the Arabs say, "So and so is honoured and obeyed in Iraq, and honoured and obeyed in the Hijāz." They mean by this that he is obeyed in both places, and to their respective peoples, and they do not mean that the essence of the one mentioned is present in both Iraq and the Hijāz. And His saying, "**Indeed Allāh is with those who have taqwā (piety) and those who do good**" (16:128), with safeguarding, aid, support, He did not intend that His essence (dhātihi) is with them, exalted is Allāh from that.

And His saying, "**I am with you both**" (20:46), is carried upon this same explanation. And His saying, "**There is no secret counsel of three, but He is their fourth**" (58:7) means that He is knowledgeable of them, and what is hidden from their secret and their concealed, hidden discussion.

And [all of this usage in wording] is used as it occurs in the Qur'ān. For that reason it is not permissible for it to be said, by analogizing with this, that Allāh, the Sublime, is with al-Burdān or the city of al-Salām, or that He, the Exalted, is with the ox, and the donkey, and nor that it should be said that He, the Sublime, is with the sinners and mad people, by analogizing with His saying, "**Indeed Allāh is with those who have taqwā (piety)**". It is obligatory that the explanation should be upon the manner we have described, and it is not permitted that the meaning of His istiawā' (ascent) over the Throne is His istilā' (conquering) of it, as the poet has said:

*Bishr has ascended over Iraq, without a sword and
without any blood poured forth.*

And al-Istilā' is *al-qahr* (subduing, over-empowering) and *al-qudrah* (power), yet Allāh has not ceased being all-powerful, subduing, mighty and able (over all things). And His saying, "**Then He ascended over the Throne**" (32:4) means the commencement of this action after it had not occurred, thus what they have said is invalidated.

This is the complete passage and it is what has been quoted verbatim by Ibn al-Qayyim in *Ijtimā' Juyūsh al-Islāmiyyah*⁸¹¹. A comparison between the two indicates that the quotation is accurate to the letter. This renders spurious the slander of al-Kawtharī⁸¹², and exonerates Ibn al-Qayyim and also Ibn Taymiyyah from this allegation who cites this text of al-Bāqillānī in a number of his works. It should be pointed out that despite the enmity shown to Ibn Taymiyyah by his opponents, they could not deny his mastery and precision in citation and quotation, and thus what al-Kawtharī ventured into in the 20th century is not a path that was taken even by the harshest of critics of Ibn Taymiyyah in his time.⁸¹³

⁸¹¹ Refer to the verification of Dr. 'Awwād 'Abd Allāh al-Mu'taq, Maktabah al-Rushd (al-Riyādh, 2nd edition, 1995), pp. 299-300.

⁸¹² The two publishers of the Cairo edition of at-Tamhīd quoted the statement of al-Kawtharī:

Nothing of which Ibn al-Qayyim ascribed to Kitāb at-Tamhīd exists in this Kitāb at-Tamhīd, and I do not know whether Ibn al-Qayyim ascribed to this book what is not in it in order to deceive the Muslims regarding his (al-Bāqillānī's) creed, or whether he thought another book to be the Tamhīd of al-Bāqillānī.

⁸¹³ Imām al-Dhahabī writes of Ibn Taymiyyah in Mu'jam al-Muhaddithīn (p. 25):

And if he was to talk about the various religions and factions, no one who was more vast in knowledge or greater in meticulousness could be seen. He surpassed his contemporaries in every science and my eyes have not seen the likes of him and nor have his eyes seen the likes of himself.

And Ibn al-Wazīr, cites al-Dhahabī's biographical account of Ibn Taymiyyah in full from his Siyar, after coming across it in manuscript form. He mentioned this in *al-'Awāsīm min al-Qawāsīm* (5/261-264), and he quotes therein the statement of al-Dhahabī:

The Shaykh, the Imām, the Scholar, the Mufasssir (Exegete), the Faqīh (Jurist), the Mujtahid, the Hāfidh, the Muhaddith, the Shaykh of Islām, the prodigy of the era, author of amazing works, and (a manifestation) of excessive intelligence, Taqī ud-Dīn Abu al-'Abbās Ahmad the son of the Scholar, the Muftī, Shihāb ud-Dīn 'Abdul-Halīm, the son of the Imām, the Shaykh of Islām, Majd ud-Dīn Abul-Barakāt 'Abdus-Salām...

For certainly, their senior scholars and *imāms* (i.e. of the detractors) humbled themselves in front of the knowledge and sciences and *fiqh* he possessed, acknowledging (at the same time) that they disliked him. And it was as if they affirmed the rarity of his

In summary, al-Bāqillānī, has not departed from his Kullābī Ash'arite predecessors, who themselves were upon the creed of the Righteous Salaf in affirming Allāh's 'uluww, with His essence.

This is corroborated by al-Qurtubī who ascribes this view to al-Bāqillānī and others⁸¹⁴:

And the sixth: The statement of at-Tabarī, Ibn Abī Zayd, al-Qādī 'Abd al-Wahhāb and a group (*jamā'ah*) of *shuyūk* (scholars) of *hadīth* and *fiqh* (jurisprudence) and it is apparent (from) some of the books of the *qādī*, Abu Bakr [al-Bāqillānī] - may Allāh be pleased with Him, and [also] Abū al-Hasan [al-Ash'arī]. And al-Qādī 'Abd al-Wahhāb quoted this from him, I mean from al-Qādī Abu Bakr, textually - which is that He, the Sublime, ascends over His Throne **with His Essence (*bi dhātihī*)** - and in some places they applied (the words) "above His Throne (*fawqa arshihī*)".

The Imām, Abu Bakr (Muhammad bin al-Hasan al-Hadramī al-Qayrawānī) said: "And this is [what is] correct [i.e. Allāh being above the Throne, making *istiwā'* with His Essence], which I speak with, without confinement, nor taking a place, nor being inside of it, and without touching."⁸¹⁵

mistakes. I do not mean those scholars whose characteristic and habit is to belittle him and mock his excellence, who have such intense hatred of him that they declare him to be ignorant and also to be a disbeliever, who attack him without even having looked at his works, who do not understand his words and who do not have any share of vast understanding and cognizance.

Despite all of this animosity, none of these people ever questioned the integrity of Ibn Taymiyyah as it related to honesty in quoting, ascribing and referencing. That only occurred from the lowly and despicable souls from the common riff-raff who had no share of knowledge, but as for those who had knowledge, then no, they submitted to the fact that Ibn Taymiyyah was unrivalled in this regard.

⁸¹⁴ Al-Qurtubī, *al-Asnā Fī Sharh Asmā' Allāh al-Husnā*, (Ed. Majdi Fathi al-Sayyid, Dar al-Sahāba, Tantā, Egypt, 1995) 2/123.

⁸¹⁵ Al-Dhahabī also quotes this statement in *al-'Uluww* and comments upon it saying:

I say: Negating these things and affirming them revolves around the revealed text. If anything was reported regarding that we would have spoken with it, otherwise silence and withholding most

I [al-Qurtubī] say: This is the statement of al-Qādī Abu Bakr in the book of his *Tamhīd ul-Awā'īl*. And we have already mentioned it. And this has also been said by the teacher, Abu Bakr bin Fawrak in *Sharh Awā'īl al-Adillah*, and it is the statement of Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, and al-Ṭalamankī and others from amongst the Andalusians, and [also] al-Khaṭṭābī in the book *Shi'ār ud-Dīn*, and that has already preceded.

As for the statements of these Scholars mentioned by al-Qurtubī, then al-Dhahabī has mentioned them as occurs in *Mukhtasār al-'Uluww*.⁸¹⁶ And the statement of al-Khattābī (d. 386H) is cited by Ibn al-Qayyim.⁸¹⁷

resembles the qualities of the Salaf. Since delving into that is a type of (delving into the) *kayf* which is unknown. And similarly, we seek refuge in Allāh that we should affirm His *istiwa'* with touch, or taking a place without a revealed text or a narration (from the Salaf). Rather, we know in general, that He is above His Throne, just as the (revealed) text has come.

Refer to *al-'Uluww lil-'Aliyy al-Ghaffār*, (ed. Ashraf bin 'Abd al-Maqsūd, Maktabah Adwā' al-Salaf, Riyādh, 1995), p. 261 and *Mukhtasar al-'Uluww* (p. 279).

⁸¹⁶ These are the quotations: Ibn Abī Zayd al-Qayrawānī (d. 389H):

And He, the Exalted, is above His Glorious Throne, with His Essence (*bi dhātihi*) and He is in every place with His knowledge.

And the statement of Abu 'Umar at-Talamankī (d. 429H):

The Muslims from Ahl us-Sunnah are unanimously agreed that the meaning of His statement, "He is with you wherever you may be" and what is similar to that from the Qur'an is that it [refers to] His knowledge, and that All, the Most High, is above the heavens with His Essence (*bi dhātihi*), ascended (*mustawīn*) over His Throne however He wills

And the statement of Ibn 'Abd al-Barr (d. 463H), after discussing the *hadīth* of *an-Nuzūl*:

This is an authentic *hadīth*, none of the Ahl al-Hadīth have differed over its authenticity, and it contains an evidence that Allāh, the Exalted, is above the heaven, over the Throne, above the seven heavens, as has been said by the *jamā'ah* and it is their proof against the *Mu'tazilah*, and this is more famous to the general and specific (folk) and more well-known for it to require frequent quotation.

⁸¹⁷ Refer to *Mukhtasar al-Sawā'iq* (2/318) and also *Tahdhīb Mukhtasar Sunan Abī Dāwūd* (7/109) where al-Khattābī's statement appears, and it is as follows:

The speech that Allāh, the Exalted, is ascended over the Throne: The route to this issue is through pure *tawqīf* (through the revealed texts only), and no evidence can approach this matter except through this angle. And the Book (of Allāh) has spoken of it and more than one verse and authentic narrations have been reported regarding it.

So accepting it from, the angle of [accepting] the revealed texts (*at-tawqīf*), is obligatory and to delve into it and seek its *kaifiyyah* (how it is) is not permissible. And Maalik has said, "*Al-Istiwā'* is known, and the *kayf* is not fathomable, having faith in it is obligatory and asking about (its *kayf*) is an innovation."

So from the revealed texts (*at-tawqīf*) that the Book came with is His saying: "**The Most-Merciful ascended (*istawā'*) over the Throne**", and He said, "**Then the Most-Merciful ascended (*istawā'*) over the Throne**", and He said, "**The raiser (*rafi'*) of ranks and owner of the Throne**", and He said, "**Do you feel secure that He who is above (*fi*) the heaven will not cause the earth to sink with you then it behold it shakes (as in an earthquake). Or do you feel secure that He, Who is above (*fi*) the heaven (Allah), will not send against you a violent whirlwind?**" And He said, "**The Angels and the Spirit (*Jibrīl*) ascend (*ta'ruju*) to Him**", and He said, "**But All raised him (Jesus) unto Himself (*rafa'ahullāhu ilayhi*)**" and He said, "**To Him does the goodly word ascend (*yas'adu*).**"

And He said, quoting Pharoah that he said, "**And Pharaoh said: 'O Haman! Build me a tower that I may arrive at the ways, the ways of the heavens, and I may look upon the deity of Moses'.**" Thus, the desire of the disbeliever (Pharoah) took place (in order to pursue) the direction which Moses had informed of, and that is why he did not seek Him (Allāh) across the length or breadth of the earth and nor did he descend into its lower layers. So what we have quoted of these verses shows that Allāh, the Sublime, is above the heaven, ascended over the Throne, and if He had been in every place (*makān*), there would be no meaning to this specification (of ascending over the Throne in particular), and nor any benefit in it.

And the habit of the Muslims, the special and general amongst them has continued upon them calling upon their Lord in supplicating to Him and in aspiring towards Him, that they raise their hands to the heaven, and this is because of the widespread

A final note is that the heads of the contemporary Jahmiyyah such as G.F. Haddād have sought to fool their audiences by quoting Imām al-Dhahabī's disapproval of the use of the phrase *bi dhātihi* whilst hiding the reality of what al-Dhahabī was really indicating by this disapproval, which is that as it is so abundantly clear and plainly manifest in all of the revealed texts that they are speaking about Allāh himself, then the use of the phrase *bi dhātihi* is redundant and unnecessary. Refer to a fuller treatment of this matter later in this book where Haddād's academic and intellectual fraud in mistranslating the words of al-Dhahabī is documented.

knowledge present with them that their Lord that is being called upon, the Sublime, is above the heaven. And the claim of some of them that the meaning of *al-istiwā'* here is *al-istīlā'* (conquering, subduing), and pulling out an unknown line of poetry (as evidence), then no one whose [statement] is valid as proof has ever said this.