

301643 - Approach of the four imams regarding the divine attributes, and some books to refer to concerning that

the question

I want to advise a dear brother of mine so that he can come to the way of Rasulullah (saw) and the Salaf with regards to his 'aqeedah, especially with regards to the Names and Attributes of Allah (swt). I think he believes the a'immah follow the Ash'ariyy 'aqeedah of today unfortunately, because he believes that Allah's Hand means Power instead of accepting the dhahir. I direly ask of you the following:

Authentic sources that specifically show all the 'aqeedah (especially the stance on Asma was-Siffaat) of the following a'immah. The 'aqeedah of imam Abu Hanifa, imam Malik ibn Anas, imam ash-Shaafi'i, imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal, imaam Al-Ghazzaali, imam an-Nawawi, as-Sheykh ibn Kathir, as-Sheykh Ibn Abi Zayd al-Qayrawaniy and as-Sheykh Abu'l Hassan al-Ash'ariyy.

Detailed answer

Firstly:

The approach of the salaf – the Sahaabah and Taabi'een (may Allah be pleased with them) – was to affirm the attributes that Allah affirmed for Himself or His Messenger (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) affirmed for Him, without likening or comparing them (to the attributes of any of His creation), without interpreting them in a manner other than the apparent meaning, and without denying any of the divine attributes. The reports narrated from them concerning that are very many.

We can check the view of the salaf in the well-known classical books, such as as-Sunnah by 'Abdullah ibn Ahmad ibn Hanbal, at-Tawheed by Ibn Khuzaymah, Sharh Usool I'tiqaad Ahl as-Sunnah by al-Laalkaa'i, 'Aqeedat as-Salaf wa Ashaab al-Hadith by as-Saabooni, ash-Sharee'ah by al-Aajurri, al-Hujjah fi Bayaan al-Mahajjah by al-Asfahaani, and others.

Secondly:

Interpreting the Hand of Allah as referring to His power or might is the view of the Jahamis and Mu'tazilah, and also of the later Ash'aris.

The Hand of Allah is one of His attributes that is befitting to His majesty and perfection, and cannot be likened to the attributes of created beings. Rather to each one that is described belongs the attribute that is appropriate in each case.

More than one of the imams or leading scholars have stated that, including Imam Abu Haneefah (may Allah have mercy on him), Imam at-Tirmidhi (may Allah have mercy on him) and Imam Abu'l-Hasan al-Ash'ari (may Allah have mercy on him).

Imam Abu Haneefah (may Allah have mercy on him) said: Allah has a Hand, a Countenance and an Essence as He, may He be exalted, mentioned in the Qur'an. Whatever Allah, may He be exalted, has mentioned in the Qur'an of His having a Countenance, Hand and Essence, these are attributes of His which we affirm without discussing how. It cannot be said that His Hand is His power or blessings, because that is denying the attribute, and is the view of the Qadaris and Mu'tazilah. Rather His hand is a divine attribute, and we do not discuss how it is; His wrath and His pleasure are divine attributes, and we do not discuss how they are.

End quote from al-Fiqh al-Akbar, with commentary by Mullah 'Ali al-Qaari, p. 85.

Imam at-Tirmidhi (may Allah have mercy on him) said, after narrating the hadith, "Allah accepts charity and takes it in His right hand," in his Sunan (no. 662):

More than one of the scholars has spoken about this hadith and similar reports that referred to divine attributes and the descent of the Lord, may He be blessed and exalted, to the lowest heaven every night. They said: We affirm the reports concerning that and we believe in it, but it cannot be imagined or asked how it is. Similarly, it was narrated from Maalik, Sufyaan ibn 'Uyaynah and 'Abdullah ibn al-Mubaarak that they said concerning such hadiths: Let it pass without discussing how. This was the view of the scholars of Ahl as-

Sunnah wa'l-Jamaa'ah. As for the Jahamis, they denied these reports and said that this is likening Allah to His creation.

Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, has mentioned His hand, His hearing and His seeing in more than one place in His Book. The Jahamis misinterpreted these verses and explained them in a way different from the scholars; they said: Allah did not create Adam with His hand. And they said that what is meant by the hand here is power.

Ishaaq ibn Ibraaheem said: Rather likening Allah to His creation is saying that He has a hand like their hand, or hearing like their hearing. If someone says that Allah has hearing like their hearing, this is likening Him to His creation. But if he says, as Allah, may He be exalted, said: A hand, hearing, sight – without discussing how or saying it is like their (attributes), this is not likening Him to His creation; rather it is as Allah, may He be exalted, says in His Book (interpretation of the meaning): “There is nothing like unto Him, and He is the Hearing, the Seeing” [ash-Shoora 42:11]. End quote.

Thirdly:

It is possible to find out the views of the imams mentioned concerning the divine attributes, by reading the books of some of them, such as the following: al-Fiqh al-Akbar by Abu Haneefah (may Allah have mercy on him); al-Ibaanah by Abu'l-Hasan al-Ash'ari (may Allah have mercy on him); Sharh Usool Ahl as-Sunnah wa'l-Jamaa'ah by al-Laalkaa'i; ash-Sharee'ah by al-Aajurri; al-Ibaanah by Ibn Battah al-Hanbali; Tafseer Ibn Katheer (may Allah have mercy on him); al-'Uluw, al-'Arsh and al-Arba'een fi Sifaat Rabb al-'Aalameen – all three by adh-Dhahabi; al-Fatwa al-Hamawiyyah al-Kubra by Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah; Ijtimaa' al-Juyoosh al-Islamiyyah by Ibn al-Qayyim.

And one may learn about that by reading the books on 'aqeedah that we mentioned at the beginning of this answer, which quote the views of Maalik, ash-Shaafa'i and Ahmad. We also recommend the following books:

Usool ad-Deen 'inda al-Imam Abi Haneefah by Dr. Muhammad ibn 'Abd ar-Rahmaan al-Khamees, Dar as-Sumay'i, Riyadh.

I'tiqaad al-A'immah al-Araba'ah by Dr. Muhammad ibn 'Abd ar-Rahmaan al-Khamees, Dar al-'Aasimah, Riyadh.

Al-Masaa'il wa'r-Rasaa'il al-Marwiyah 'an al-Imam Ahmad fi'l-'Aqeedah, by Dr. 'Abdullah ibn Salmaan ibn Saalim al-Ahmadi, Dar Taybah, Riyadh.

All of these books may be found online, on the al-Maktabah ash-Shaamilah website.

And Allah knows best.