10693 - Learning from Ash’ari shaykhs

the question

We are students who are seeking knowledge. We study ‘aqeedah with some teachers who are teaching us Ash’ari ‘aqeedah. They interpret the hand of Allaah as meaning His power or His blessing, and His being above His throne (istiwaa’) as meaning His sovereignty, and so on. What is the ruling on studying with these teachers?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

These people who interpret the Qur’aan in this manner, whether they are called Ash’aris or some other name, have gone astray from the path of the righteous salaf. Not even one letter of what these people say in their misinterpretations has been narrated from the righteous salaf. Let them bring one word from the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), or from Abu Bakr, or ‘Umar, or ‘Uthmaan, or ‘Ali, to say that they interpreted Allaah’s hand as meaning His power, or that they interpreted His being above the Throne (istiwaa’) as referring to His Sovereignty, or that they interpreted His Face as meaning reward, or that they interpreted His love as meaning reward, etc. Let them produce one word from them to show that they interpreted these aayahs and similar verses in the manner that these people interpret them. If they cannot produce any such thing, let it be said that either the righteous salaf, headed by the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), the leader of the pious, were unaware of the meaning of this tremendous ‘aqeedah (of Islam), or they did know it but they concealed the truth. But neither of these can be said of the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) or of any of the Rightly-Guided Khaleefahs, or of his Companions (may Allaah be pleased with them). If that is the case then we have to follow their path (the path of the Prophet and the Rightly-Guided Khaleefahs).

My advice to these people is to fear Allaah and to abandon what So and so said, and to come back

to the Book of Allaah and the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), and the way of the Rightly-Guided Khaleefahs who came after him. They should know that there will come a Day when they will return to Allaah, when they will not be able to use the opinion of So and so as evidence. By Allaah, So and so will not be able to help them on that Day. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And (remember) the Day (Allaah) will call to them, and say: ‘What answer gave you to the Messengers?’”

[al-Qasas 28:65]

He did not say, Remember the Day when (Allaah) will call to them and say, ‘What answer gave you to So and so…?’

And Allaah says in His Book (interpretation of the meaning):

“So believe in Allaah and His Messenger (Muhammad), the Prophet who can neither read nor write (i.e. Muhammad), who believes in Allaah and His Words, and follow him so that you may be guided”

[al-A’raaf 7:158]

Allaah commanded us to believe in him and follow him. If this is the case then how can a person believe in Allaah and His Messenger in the true and complete sense, then turn away from the Sunnah of His Messenger (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) and the way in which he believed in his Lord, and misinterpret the way in which Allaah has described Himself in His Book or the way in which His Messenger (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) has described Him, simply because of illusions which they call rational thought?

I advise them to come back to Allaah and to abandon any other opinion, and follow what Allaah and His Messenger say, for if they die following that they will have died following the truth. But if they go against that then they are in grave danger and those whose opinions they are following will not protect them from Allaah. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“(Remember) the Day when every person will come up pleading for himself, and every one will be paid in full for what he did (good or evil, belief or disbelief in the life of this world) and they will not be dealt with unjustly”

[al-Nahl 16:111]

I repeat this advice to every believer, to come back to the Book of Allaah and the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) with regard to what he believes about his Lord and God, following the path of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), the rightly guided khaleefahs who came after him, and the imams of the Muslims who led the people in following the Sunnah of the Messenger (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), without referring to rational thought, which is no more than an illusion, concerning issue that have to do with Allaah and His names and attributes. Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah spoke well when he described the ahl al-kalaam (“Islamic” philosophers) as “having been given intelligence but not knowledge, and had having been given smartness but not sincerity.” So one has to deepen one’s knowledge on the basis of the Book of Allaah and the Sunnah of His Messenger (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him). I ask Allaah to help us all to have faith and to cause us to meet Him when He is pleased with us, for He is Able to do all things. Praise be to Allaah, the Lord of the Worlds, and may Allaah send blessings and peace upon our Prophet Muhammad and his family and companions.

I call upon all seekers of knowledge to call their brothers to that which they have heard, for by Allaah it is the truth. Whoever claims to have truth other than this, we will accept it and adhere to it (if it can be proven to be true).